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Province beating back unemployment, poverty

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The labour market is slowly inching back to the pre-covid levels.

According to the 2023 Quarterly Labour Force Survey results for the second quarter announced earlier this month, 16,3 million South Africans of working age are employed. In contrast, the unemployed margin remains high at 7,9 million.

In South Africa, there are around 23 million residents of working age. This age group is considered between 15 and 64. The statistics also include a further 16,5 million people who are not economically active. This is anyone not of working age. A further 3,2 million of these residents are discouraged job seekers – of working age but are no longer looking to engage in the workforce.

According to the stats, the official unemployment rate is 32,6%.

But while facts and figures look positive for those in positions of authority, the reality for the youth of Cape Town is less than positive.

Unemployed woman Jamielah Bowers says for the youth, unemployment is rife. “I did not finish school, so for me without a matric certificate, I can’t find work. The job market is tough for unskilled workers and there is no work,” she says. “Having no job and having to live with many

COMPETE FOR THE SAME FEW JOBS

unemployed people in one house, we rely on grants and pensions. There is no future for us and it makes us feel useless.”

Bradley Adonis says the best way to make ends meet, is to try and find your way. “There is nothing other than for youth to sit on street corners. I started a small delivery service that brings in money. It is not a lot, but this is the only way to make a bit of honest money. I have been unemployed since leaving school and everywhere you apply, you get turned away,” he says. “I have matric, but never had the option of studying. We compete for the same few jobs with hundreds of others.”

With the cost of living, the closure of businesses and the competition for few jobs, temporary employment opportunities may bring some relief.

The City of Cape Town, through its Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), has created hundreds of thousands of opportunities. “EPWP provides valuable support to job seekers who have not been able to find formal employment. It provides an income as well as opportunities to develop skills and networks that could lead to formal employment in future,” says the City in a statement.

In the Western Cape, 368 000 jobs were created between the second quarter of last year and the second quarter of this year. That is a 15,7% increase in employed people year-on-year, well ahead of all other provinces, with Gauteng creating 201 000 jobs over the same period.

Of this, 54 000 jobs were created between quarters one and two.

Western Cape Premier Alan Winde is pleased with these results. “We are making significant inroads in beating back unemployment and poverty, thanks to our efforts to enable and empower the private sector,” he said in the statement.

The province recorded the largest decrease in the unemployment rate, down by 6,6 percentage points compared to the same period last year.

Western Cape Minister of Finance and Economic Opportunities Mireille Wenger says: “The Western Cape continues to have the lowest expanded and official unemployment rates in South Africa while also creating more jobs than any other province. This is very welcome news. Guided by the recently launched ‘Growth For Jobs’ strategy, premised on enabling the private sector, including the formal, informal, and township-based businesses, we will push harder than ever to stimulate economic growth, that leads to the creation of many more jobs in the Western Cape.”