



Department of Employment and Labour

Annual Industrial Action Report 2025





employment & labour

Department:
Employment and Labour
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ANNUAL INDUSTRIAL ACTION REPORT 2025

Publisher

Department of Employment and Labour
Chief Directorate of Communication
Private Bag X117
Pretoria
0001

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
BACKGROUND	1
Literature review	1
CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS INCIDENTS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET, 2021-2025	4
INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER TWO: ANALYSIS OF THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS IN WORK STOPPAGES, 2024 AND 2025	17
INTRODUCTION	17
2.1. Industrial distribution of work stoppages and wages lost by industry	17
2.2. Industrial distribution of working days lost	18
2.3. Industrial distribution of working hours lost	19
2.4. Working days lost per 1 000 employees by industry	20
2.5. Work stoppages by employment size of establishments	21
2.6. Duration of work stoppages,	22
2.7. Trade union involvement in work stoppages, 2025	23
CHAPTER THREE: THE ROLE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN WAGE SETTLEMENTS, 2025	25
INTRODUCTION	25
3.1. Wage settlements concluded after the strikes ended in various industries	25
3.2. Wage settlements concluded without strike incidents, 2025	26
3.2.1. Averted strike incidents	26
3.2.2. Abandoned strike incidents	29
CONCLUSION	30
REFERENCES	31
ANNEXURE A	32
Profile of work stoppages, 2025	32
ANNEXURE B	39
Data Appendix	39

ANNEXURE C	43
ANNEXURE D	45
Technical notes	45
LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 1: Trends in the number of work stoppages in South Africa, 2021 - 2025	5
Figure 2: Distribution of work stoppages by their nature, 2021 – 2025	7
Figure 3: Percentage distribution of how disputes were resolved, 2024 - 2025	9
Figure 4: Distribution of work stoppages by industry, 2021 – 2025	10
Figure 5: Percentage distribution of replacement labour used during the strikes, 2024-2025	11
Figure 6: Trends in working days lost in South Africa, 2021-2025	11
Figure 7: Working days lost per 1 000 employees (time-loss ratio) due to strikes, 2021-2025	12
Figure 8: Trends in working hours lost in South Africa, 2021 - 2025	13
Figure 9: Wages lost due to work stoppages in South Africa, 2021-2025	13
Figure 10: Percentage distribution between the protected and unprotected strikes in South Africa, 2021 – 2025	14
Figure 11: Trend in the working days lost and number of strikes, 2024 - 2025	19
Figure 12: Percentage distribution of work stoppages by employment size, 2024-2025	21
Figure 13: Percentage distribution of work stoppages by duration, 2024-2025	22
LIST OF TABLES	
Table 1: Distribution of employee's participation in work stoppage by industry, 2025	6
Table 2: Distribution of working days lost by principal cause of disputes, 2021-2025	8
Table 3: Distribution of how annual salary increments were negotiated in South Africa, 2024 – 2025	9
Table 4: Distribution of work stoppages and wages lost by industry, 2024 – 2025	17
Table 5: Distribution of working days lost by industry, 2024 - 2025	18
Table 6: Distribution of working hours lost by industry, 2024-2025	19
Table 7: Time-loss ratio by industry, 2024-2025	20
Table 8: Distribution of work days lost by trade union membership involved, 2024-2025	23
Table 9: Median wage settlement in various industries, 2024-2025	25
Table 10: Distribution of final wage settlement in selected industries, 2025	26

ABBREVIATIONS

ASU	Administrative Services Union
AMCU	Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DEL	Department of Employment and Labour
DEMAWUSA	Democratic Municipal and Allied Workers Union of South Africa
DENOSA	Democratic Nursing Organization of South Africa
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DSD	Department of Social Development
GDP	Growth Domestic Product
ICHAUWU	Independent Commercial Hospitality and Allied Workers Union
ILAWU	Independent Liberation and Allied Workers Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMATU	Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LMIS	Labour Market Information and Statistics
LRA	Labour Relations Act
MRBPS	Medium Term Budget Policy Statement
NEHAUWU	National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union
NTM	National Transport Movement
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
NUPSAW	National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers
PSA	Public Servants Association
PSCBC	Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council
SACCA	South African Cabin Crew Association
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers' Union
SATAWU	South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union
SIC	Standard International Classification
YKWUSA	Yarona Kopano Workers Union of South Africa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) acknowledges receipt of the strike information provided by all affected organizations in compliance with the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995). We appreciate your cooperation and timely submission, which significantly contributes towards our efforts in monitoring and maintaining sound labour relations in South Africa. Your commitment to fulfil this legal obligation helps ensure transparency and supports the DEL in recording up to date strikes and lockouts information across sectors in the country.

To the management, in particular the Labour Policy and Industrial Relations (LP&IR) Branch and the Labour Market Information and Statistics (LMIS) team, your thorough work and dedication in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the strike data plays a vital role to the successful preparation of this important industrial action report. Thus, the Annual Industrial Action (AIA) report is a key resource for understanding labour disputes in South Africa and your input directly contributes to the development of evidence-based policies and the management of labour relations



in the country. Thank you for your continued dedication to the Department's mandate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Industrial Action report (AIA) is one of the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) reports with its overarching aim of providing policy makers and stakeholders with insights into the performance of South Africa's economic and labour market disputes at a given period. It draws on the data sources from both the available administrative records and survey data. The 2025 Annual Industrial Action Report presents a comparative analysis of strike activities and lockouts in South Africa from 2021 to 2025, with specific focus on developments in 2024 and 2025. The AIA primarily relies on data submitted by employers using the Labour Relations Acts (LRA) 9.2 forms. Additional data on wage settlements and others were extracted from Statistics South Africa and other statistical agencies.

Our overall analysis illustrates that strikes and lockouts activities affected directly or indirectly the corporate culture, the working and living conditions of employees.

The following is a summary of the main findings of the Annual Industrial Action (AIA) 2025 report:

- The findings emphasize the notable improvement in the South African labour market environment in 2025 compared with 2024. This was characterized by a decrease in the number of strikes and lockouts, working days, duration of strike, number of workers participating in strike and wages lost.
- In absolute terms, the DEL strike database indicates that the number of work stoppages declined by 21.1% from 114 in 2024 to 90 in 2025, signaling an easing of industrial unrest. The decline in strike activity was also accompanied by a significant reduction in the financial impact of the strikes. The number of working days lost decreased by 72.7% from 832 490 in 2024 to 227 247, while the wages lost decreased by 64.5% to R47.3 million in 2025. In many industries unions averted or called off potential strikes, providing workers with labour stability and extending gains to employers to ensure that industries are protected from business interruptions.
- Over the years, the community industry has been mostly impacted by strike. It is one of the industries that services are considered essential because it is directly linked to public safety, health and social stability. In 2025, the community industry recorded more than half (57%) of strikes, resulting in 74 480 working days lost. These strikes were mainly caused by the local authority and health workers who downed tools over the demand for higher wages, including delayed salaries, grievances over unpleasant working conditions in the industry.
- Relatively, the manufacturing and transport industries experienced 8.8% and 12% of all strike and lockout activities in 2025. Meanwhile, most industries recorded fewer work stoppages and lower levels of working days and wages lost in 2025, especially in the mining, manufacturing, construction, and trade industries. However, the agriculture and transport industries emerged as areas of disagreement, with increases in the number of working days, working hours and wages lost from 2024 to 2025.
- According to employers, disputes over wages, bonuses and other compensation continued to be the principal cause of strikes in the country. The dilemma is that companies were confronted with affordability constraints because of poor development and workers sought to safeguard real salaries against rising living expenses.
- Despite the high demand for wages and other compensation, there was a significant drop alongside the underlying causes of disputes. Total working days lost due to principal causes of work stoppages decreased from 832 490 working days lost in 2024 to 227 247 in 2025. This was a significant decrease of 72.7% over time. This notable decrease suggests that the industrial unrest in 2025 was less unproductive than it was in 2024.
- Approximately R 47 million as a result of the participation in work stoppages were lost in 2025. It was less by 64% from R133 million in wages lost in 2024. The estimates are associated with lower worker participation and fewer working days lost as a result of work stoppages in 2025.
- Between 2024 and 2025, unprotected strikes fell from 54% to 49%, while the percentage of protected strikes rose little from 32% to 35%. Unprotected strike action was most prevalent in the community and agriculture industries, where disputes were predominantly linked to wage demands, working conditions and broader grievances against employers.
- In terms of the duration of strikes, most of the strikes were resolved at a short space of time in 2025. On average, the duration of most strikes lasted less than ten (10) working days at 70% while 14% of strikes lasted longer than 31 working days.

- In 2025, non-unionized workers contributed an increasing percentage of working days lost, pointing to changing dynamics in workplace representation and dispute worker's participation. In this context, more than 2 500 NUMSA members from the manufacturing and agriculture industries went on strike against employers to demand recognition and grant the union organizational rights to represent workers at the company.
- On the other hand, the results of collective bargaining in 2025 were characterized by wage settlements that were moderate and mostly above inflation, with a median wage increase of about 7% in most industries. These wage settlements reflected ongoing efforts to strike a balance between worker demands and employer affordability.
- Several multi-year wage agreements in some important industries like manufacturing, construction and mining were reached in 2025 without the need for strikes. Proactive negotiation proved helpful in negotiating several multi-year deals, such as the motor industry deal that offered up to 6% in year one and Transnet's three-year pay pact that offered 6% and 5.5% wage increases.

IMPACT OF STRIKES ON THE WORKER'S PURCHASING POWER IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY, 2025

In 2025, strikes and lockouts activities in South Africa continued to affect the labour market, especially in some key industries using the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) such as community, transport, manufacturing and agriculture leading to significant economic and social effects. Although strikes remain an important mechanism for workers to demand better wages and working conditions, their impact has been felt in an economy characterized by sluggish growth, high unemployment and rising inflation.

For example, the annual consumer price inflation (CPI) was 3.6% in December 2025, up from 3.5% in November 2025. The CPI increased due to housing and utilities (4.9% and contributing 1.2 percentage point); food and non-alcoholic beverages (4.4% and contributing 0.8 of a percentage point); and insurance and financial services (7.0% and contributing 0.7 of a percentage point)¹. The CPI was lowest in March 2025 at 2.7%. High CPI intensifies wage demands as workers and unions sought to protect their purchasing power, especially in inflation-linked and public-sector wage negotiations. This economic situation puts pressure on employers and the government to find a balance between raising wages and maintaining productivity and fiscal sustainability.

Meanwhile higher interest rates aimed at controlling inflation further constrained investment and job creation. The true power of a wage depends on its purchasing power, meaning the ability to afford the essentials goods and meet basic household needs. In other words, factors like high inflation, rising costs and unequal access to necessities can quickly erode the value of wage increases, leaving workers to continue struggling despite official promises of higher pay salaries.

Our strike database indicates that the decline in strike activities during 2025 could suggest growing caution among workers and unions. Given the slow economic growth conditions, job insecurity and high unemployment of 31.4% in December 2025, there was likely less willingness to engage and participate in prolonged industrial actions. This points to a labour market under strain, highlighting the importance of focusing on employment stability rather than causing disruptions. In any case, workers would have been better off if they accepted a "fair" initial offer and avoiding strikes rather than facing consequences of the *"no work, no pay policy"*.

1. Statistics South Africa (2025), Consumer Price Index, Pretoria, December 2025, p.2-3



BACKGROUND

At the global level, the year 2025 was characterised by a global turbulence counting the rising cost of living, geopolitical conflicts and various economic-climate challenges. These factors, among others, contributed to employment changes in the labour market. Furthermore, global economic growth was forecasted to slow to 3.2%, with inflation expected to reach 3.5% by the end of 2025². Despite these projections, the cost of living remained high worldwide. In contrast, South Africa, experiencing a resurgence in economic activity after a prolonged period of structural challenges, policy uncertainty, and weakened investor confidence, has pushed many South African trade union members go on strike, demanding higher wages to offset the increased cost of living. While challenges remain, recent developments point to the country is gradually but steadily moving towards stability.

Improvements in fiscal discipline, economic growth performance, employment trends, and international standing suggest that South Africa's economic narrative is shifting from stagnation to recovery³. Economic growth data reinforces this emerging stability where a 0.5% increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the third quarter of 2025, marking the third consecutive quarter of expansion. After years of volatility, sustained expansion indicates resilience and improved economic coordination and implementation.

Nevertheless, industrial action continues to be an important aspect of labour relations, illustrating the changing relationships between employers, employees and trade unions across key sectors of the economy. In 2025, these strikes and lockouts activities unfolded within the same macroeconomic framework marked by slow economic growth, high official unemployment rate (above 30%) and rising cost-of-living pressures, all of which influenced collective bargaining processes as detailed elsewhere in the report.

OBJECTIVE OF THE AIA REPORT IN DEL

It provides a comprehensive account of strikes and lockouts activities, covering their frequency, duration, time-ratio and sectoral distribution of work stoppages, as well as the principal causes of labour disputes. It further examines the economic and social impacts of industrial action, particularly in relation to productivity, wages lost, and labour market stability. Through the analysis of administrative and reported data, the policy makers are equipped to make evidence-based decisions that support the development of fair, stable and constructive labour relations within the South African labour market.

The AIA report 2025 is compiled by the Labour Market Information and Statistics (LMIS) unit within the Labour Policy and Industrial Relations (LP&IR) Branch. The report is divided into three chapters: **Chapter One** provides an overview of industrial action detailing the number and duration of work stoppages and their associated economic impact measured by employees' wages lost. **Chapter Two** analyses strikes and lockouts activities across industries, the number of working days lost by union proportion, and the causes of strikes. **Chapter Three** reviews wage settlements, including agreements concluded with/out strikes, abandoned strikes, and the median wage settlements by industry in South Africa. Lastly, Annexure presents detailed profiles of strike incidents identified in the media, monitored and reported by affected companies to the DEL from January to December 2025.

Literature review

In analyzing the economic impacts of strikes, the literature highlights various aspects, such as decreased company productivity (due to work stoppages), employment impacts, loss of workers' wages and impact on the GDP. For DEL's purpose, this report focusses on three different aspects: workplace representation, the strike duration and the impact on both employers and employees. These factors are important indicators for moderating workplace conflicts and ensuring a sustainable labour market.

South Africa has a long history of wage negotiations and industrial that relates to investor decision in the economy. In many situations, the size of worker's organisation had played a critical role since it had strengthened the ability to undertake collective action. In other words, the increasing in union membership gives a certain assurance to workers

2. International Monetary Fund (IMF), "Policy Pivot, Rising Threats", World Economic Outlook, October 2024, 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEQ/Issues/2024/10/22/world-economic-outlook-october-2024>.

3. South Africa's global standing was enhanced by its leadership role in the G20 during 2025. By hosting and guiding G20 discussions, the country became a focal point for global economic and political dialogue, reinforcing its status as a credible voice for emerging markets and the global South.



CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS INCIDENTS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET, 2021-2025

to strike. In the literature, this general point about union organization being a prerequisite for strikes holds, although a distinction between different types of workplace representation has yet to be made (Addison and Teixeira, 2002:3)⁴.

Regarding the duration of strikes, it is observed that some strikes are short while others last longer. The challenges in determining the strike duration reside in the capacity to access and obtain information about the opposing side's intentions. According to Hicks' model, the employer's tendency to make concessions in wage bargaining and the union's resistance to offering concessions are respectively directly and inversely related to the expected duration of a strike (Hicks, 1963)⁵. If both parties are equally well informed about the other's concession strategies, there will be no strike, and a clear solution will be reached at the point where the two concession curves intersect in terms of wage and expected strike duration. Furthermore, Card (1990: 410)⁶ has noted that this lack of information among union workers sets "the framework for later one-sided asymmetric information models" where the parties have unequal access to the same information. In general, most strikes in South Africa since 1996 have been of short duration because of lockouts and the 'no work, no pay' policy (Ndungu, 2009:91)⁷.

Research has also shown that strikes lead to decreased productivity and loss of sales revenue for employers, while also having a significant impact on the lives of the workers involved. This has been the case in South Africa over the years. Banjo and Balkaran (2009:121)⁸ observed that the 2007 strikes were regarded as the longest and most intense the country has experienced. Thus, workers' wages loss challenges could lead to wider economic damage, as they had to spend less in the community businesses. In Parker's research paper, over 81% of the students surveyed believed that the government should intervene to resolve disputes when strikes take place (Parker, 2012:447)⁹.

In the economic theory, Nevin (2007:64)¹⁰ commented that excessive wage increases could push local inflation out of its target range 3% to 6% at that time, leading to higher interest rates. This underlines the knock-on effect of abnormal wage increases, affecting the inflation rate, which in turn affects interest rates and the cost of capital and ultimately, shareholder value.

Following the above arguments, we note that strikes often lead to worker wins when union density is high, they also impact on the economy through lost working days and reduced profitability. Jordaan and Ukpere (2011:1093)¹¹ observed that industrial relations should be seen as a jewel with many facets, such as power, collective bargaining, different approaches, conflict, employers, employees, trade unions and the relationship between employers and employees. They also concluded that South Africans would only be able to maintain a harmonious labour relationship leading to sustainable economic growth, if it is based on equity, justice and love for humanity. Handley (2005:235)¹² corroborated this view in stating that state and business interests are joined in their pursuit of economic growth.

In line with these perspectives, the primary bargaining tool at the worker's disposal in South Africa is industrial action. Wage negotiation processes must result in fair offers that shift inflationary pressures from essential household goods to other services. In the rest of chapters, we analyse strikes and lockouts data collected in line with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidelines.

4. Addison, J.T., and P. Teixeira (2022). The Incidence and Outcomes of Industrial Action: New Evidence from the 2019 European Company Survey. CESifo Working Paper No. 9685: 1-39

5. Hicks, John R. (1963). The Theory of Wages. London: Macmillan.

6. Card, D. (1990). "Strikes and Bargaining: A Survey of the Recent Empirical Literature." American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings 80(2): 410-415.

7. Ndungu, S.K. (2009), Perspectives on collective bargaining in the global south. The case of South Africa. International Journal of Labour Research. Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 81-97.

8. Banjo, A. & Balkaran, S. (2009), A descriptive analysis of the 2007 public sector strike in South Africa. South African Journal of Labour Relations, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 120-131.

9. Parker, K. (2012), Government and the economy: Student perspectives from South Africa. International Business & Economics Research Journal, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 443-450.

10. Nevin, T. (2007), South Africa: Was the strike political muscle flexing? African Business. Aug/Sep, pp. 62-64.

11. Jordaan, C. & Ukpere, W.I. (2011), South African Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 and current affirmative action: An analysis of labour economic history. *African Journal of Business Management*, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 1093-1101.

12. Handley, A. (2005), Business, government and economic policymaking in the new South Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 211-239.

CHAPTER ONE:
Overview of strikes
and lockouts incidents
in the South African
labour market,
2021-2025

INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, the South African economy has been marked by slow economic growth, rising operational costs and ongoing fiscal pressures affecting both the public and private sectors. These conditions either directly or indirectly impacted on labour relations, as employers encountered limited profits while employees experienced increasing cost-of-living pressures. In this context, employees' wage demands remain a strong reason to secure compensation for the decline in real income caused by inflation, rising food and fuel prices and growing household debts. The pressures were particularly noticeable in some labour-intensive sectors in the manufacturing, transport and community sectors. Nevertheless, employers encountered limited capacity to fulfill these high wage demands due to slow economic growth, declining productivity in these sectors and persistent operational challenges, such as energy supply constraints and supply chain logistical inefficiencies.

Notwithstanding this, recent data shows that average monthly earnings in South Africa have increased at a rate above inflation, offering some relief for many workers facing increasing living costs. The increase in monthly earnings occurs despite a drop in employment numbers in some quarters in 2025, highlighting the complex dynamics at play in today's job market. While the increase in earnings appears encouraging, remuneration experts have urged employees to limit expectations for 2025 and beyond the unpredictable nature of the global economic landscape shaped by everything from shifting commodity prices to geopolitical uncertainty¹³.

The strikes and lockouts data collected using the LRA 9.2 from employers in 2025 indicates a notable reduction in the number of work stoppages in South Africa, decreasing by 21.1% in comparison to 2024. This decline in industrial actions directly influenced the labour costs, with wages lost due to work stoppages fall sharply to R47.3 million in 2025, down from R133.4 million in the previous year. A more stable labour relations environment is shown in the decline in wages lost which is a result of fewer and shorter disruptions to work operations.

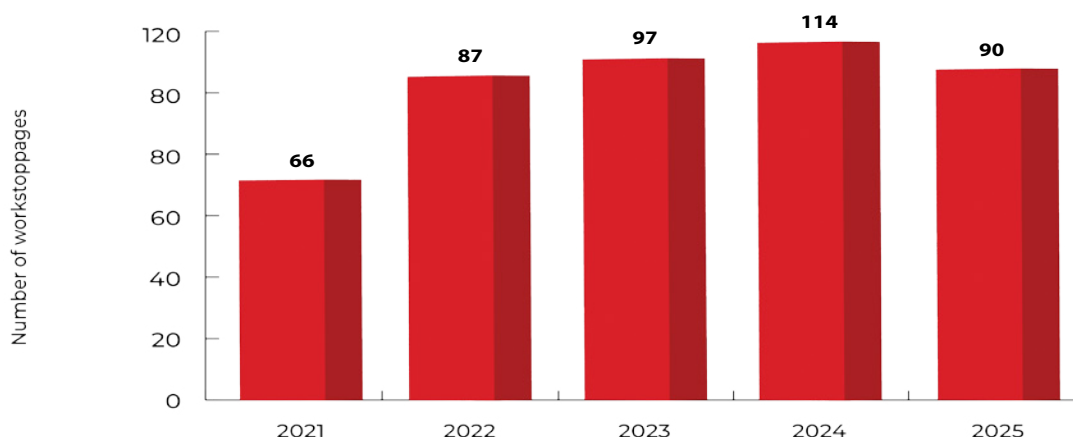
Furthermore, the number of working days lost also declined as several potential strikes were called off across major industries such as construction, utilities, mining and trade. The withdrawal of these planned industrial actions prevented work stoppages that would typically result in significant productivity losses. Because of this, there were generally fewer strike-related disruptions contributing to fewer days lost compared to previous periods. The community industry recorded the highest number of strikes (52) with a total of 17 120 employees who were involved in strike activities. This represented about 8.1% of the total workforce involved in strike incidents in 2025. Furthermore, about 74 408 working days were lost in the same industry, representing almost a third (32.7%) of the total working days lost due to work stoppages. With 11 strikes, the transport industry was the second largest, accounting for 12% of all work stoppages in 2025.

From 832 490 working days lost in 2024 to 227 247 working days lost in 2025, the total number of working days lost because of labour unrest decreased by 72.7%, illustrating a significant improvement in labour stability. The public sector remained the dominant contributor, accounting for 94.7% of working days lost in 2024 and 91.9% working days lost in 2025 despite a substantial 73.5% decline in the community working days lost. Local and provincial government continued to be the main sources of disruptions, indicating ongoing challenges at sub-national government level.

Even though it contributed fewer working days lost, the private sector saw a 58.0% decrease in working days lost, from 44 092 to 18 526, with its share of total days lost increased close to 8.1% in 2025. The remainder of this report presents the strikes results in compliance with the ILO standards and utilizing the DEL strike database.

¹³ Shirley Combe. Pay Solutions, 17 July 2025

Figure 1: Trends in the number of work stoppages in South Africa, 2021 - 2025



Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2021-2025

Drawn from the LRA 9.2 strikes forms, the number of work stoppages decreased from 114 in 2024 to 90 in 2025, representing a decrease of 21.1%, as illustrated in **Figure 1**. According to the above literature, strikes are more common when there are mistrust and strained relationships at work. In this context, workers use higher wage demands as a strategy of escaping poverty when the labour market is strained by slower economic growth, rising cost of living, high interest rates and CPI.

A yearly comparison shows work stoppages increase steadily between 2022 and 2024, with a sharp increase of about 32% from 2021 to 2022, followed by smaller increases of approximately 11.5% (2022-2023) and 17.5% (2023-2024). However, the trend reversed in 2025, with a notable decrease of 21.1% in the number of work stoppages compared to 2024, suggesting a potential easing of strike activities after several years of relative economic growth and earlier wage settlements. Like in the previous year, the winter months of April-June and July-September saw the largest percentages of strikes and lockouts, accounting for more than half (55.5%) of all strikes in 2025 compared to 52.2% in 2024.

To be more specific, the DEL strike database indicates workers strikes were still occurring in 2025 despite better negotiated deals that averted strikes in some few industries. For instance, Transnet reaching a wage agreement and ongoing union negotiations in key Utilities like Eskom. The Transnet and the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (SATAWU) agreed to 17.5% above-inflation wage increases for rail and port workers for the next three financial years on 27 March 2025 preventing a strike. In contrast, the community and transport industries registered relatively high percentages of strike incidents in the same year.

Table 1: Distribution of employee's participation in work stoppage by industry¹⁴, 2025

Industry	Number of employees 2025*	Employees involved 2025	Percentage distribution of Employees involved per industry
Agriculture	11 674	4 719	40.4
Mining	2 159	833	38.5
Manufacturing	5 700	4 277	75.0
Utilities	464	238	51.3
Construction	10 971	324	2.9
Trade	31 738	338	1.1
Transport	7 593	1 823	24.0
Finance	6 984	867	12.4
Community	210 413	17 120	8.1
TOTAL	287 696	30 539	10.6

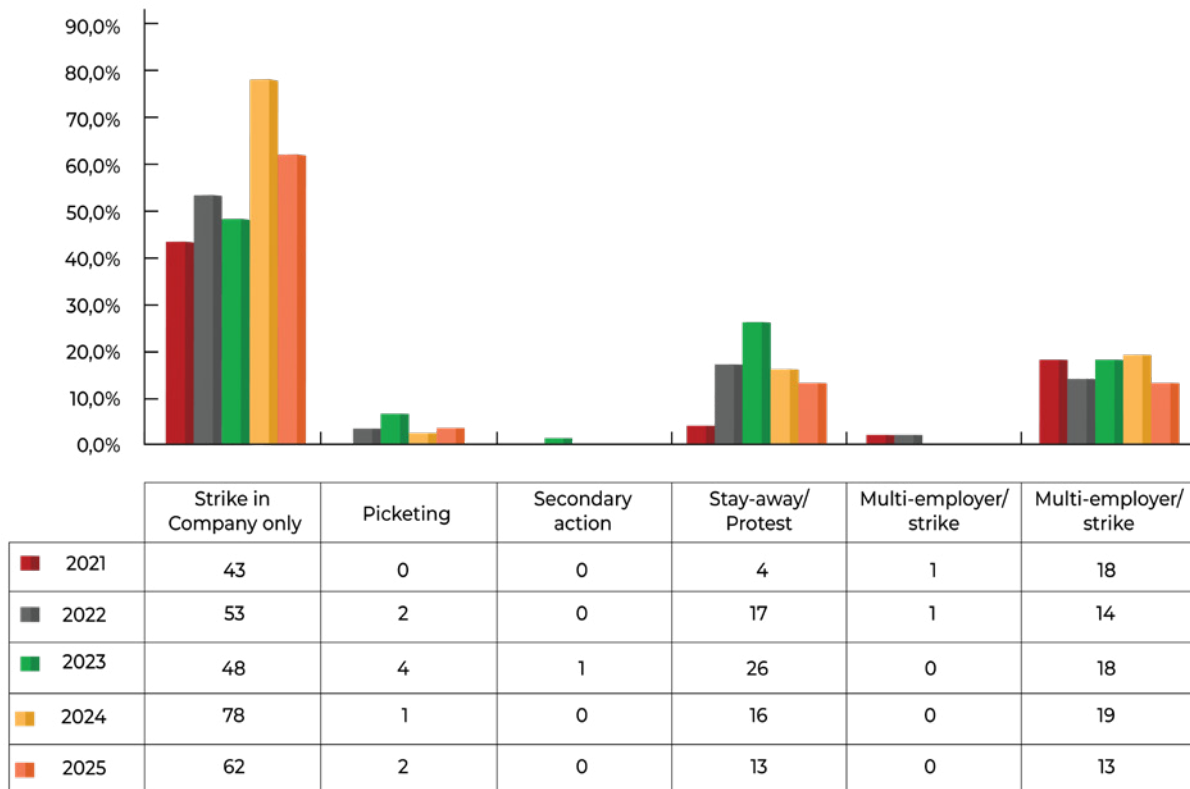
Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2025 (*the statistics as reported by employers using the LRA 9.2 forms)

Table 1 presents the number of employees involved in strikes across various industries. While others refrained from being involved in strikes activities, 10.6% of employees participated in work stoppages in 2025. The number of employees participated in strikes and lockouts was at 30 539 in 2025 lower than the 65 501 participants in 2024. The manufacturing industry recorded the highest involvement rate at 75.0%, followed by utilities (51.3%), agriculture (40.4%), and mining (38.5%). These industries showed strong engagement despite having relatively smaller workforces as reported in the LRA 9.2 forms.

In contrast, the construction (2.9%) and trade (1.1%) industries recorded very low involvement rates even though they reported large numbers of workers participation. The community industry, on the other hand, contributed largely to the number of employees involved in strikes (17 120) in 2025, although its involvement rate remained low at 8.1%.

¹⁴ As per the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC).

Figure 2: Distribution of work stoppages by their nature, 2021-2025



Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2025

Figure 2 shows the most frequent type of strikes were strikes that took place within individual companies. These strike incidents increased progressively from 43 incidents in 2021 to a peak of 78 in 2024, before decreasing to 62 in 2025. Only few picketing and secondary actions have been identified. Stay-away and protests saw significant growth, reaching a peak at 26 incidents in 2023 before declining to 13 in 2025, underscoring their role as notable but fluctuating types of labour unrest in South Africa. Meanwhile, lock-outs, which are employer-initiated, remain consistent, fluctuating between 13 and 19 incidents annually, with a minor decrease in 2025. Work stoppages were mostly caused by corporate strikes; however other types were less common and vary in frequency.

Data collected from the LRA 9.2 form have shown the lockout in the manufacturing of basic metals, fabricated metal products, machinery and equipment where employees embarked on a strike because of their demand for trade union recognition and organizational rights for workers at the workplace.

Overall, company strikes dominated with all work stoppages, while other forms varied in frequency but generally remained less prevalent. As far as the strike impact is concerned, the interest rates are also used as a proxy for the cost of money. It is argued that the higher the interest rate, the more negatively it affects the worker's present value of net gain or loss (JHvH de Wet, 2012:405)¹⁵.

¹⁵ JHvH de Wet (2012). The financial impact of strikes: a worker's perspective. Corporate ownership & control, volume 9, issue 4, continued – 4, p.405, University of Pretoria.

Table 2: Distribution of working days lost by principal cause of disputes, 2021-2025

Principal cause	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Wages, bonus and other compensation benefits	522 529	3 152 216	2 316 639	613 678	72 331
Working conditions	27 071	39 919	31 261	11 440	35 137
Disciplinary matters	11 386	1 140	520	3 158	3 000
Grievances	22 860	5 866	43 139	46 007	32 389
Socio-economic and political conditions	19 799	3 028	369	2 129	3 255
Secondary actions	0	18 396	388	270	0
Retrenchment/redundancy	16 112	0	7 849	4 706	25 127
Refusal to bargain	6 546	25 053	26	44 170	3 262
Trade union recognition	8 449	7 800	10 660	94 078	23 155
Other reasons	62 094	90 219	39 466	12 854	29 591
TOTAL	696 846	3 343 637	2 450 317	832 490	227 247

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2025

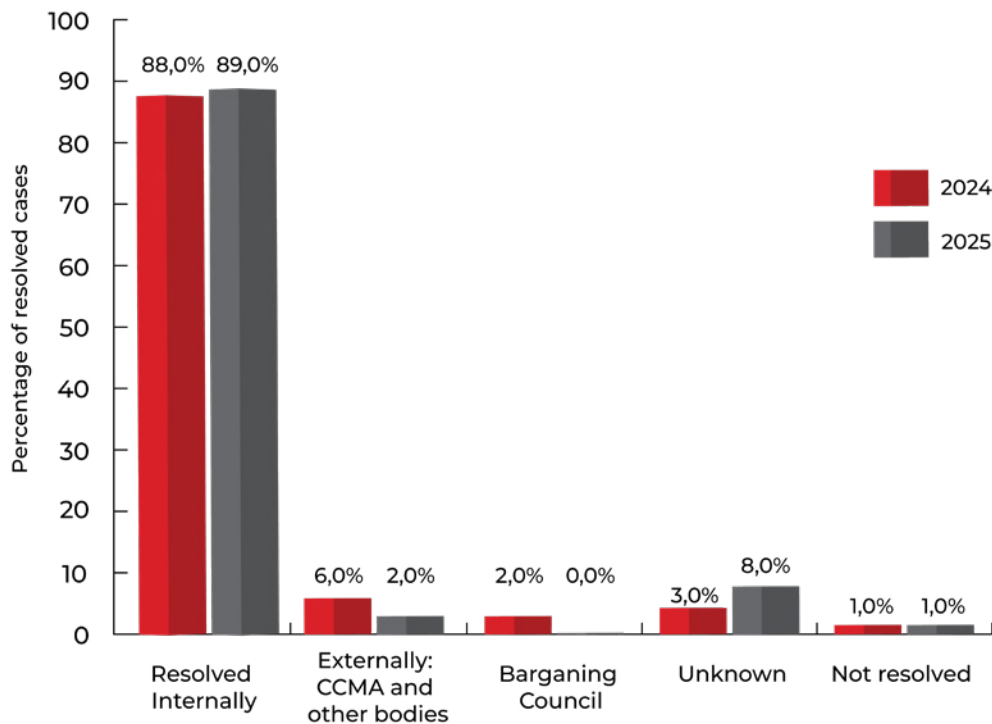
Over the years, the strike analysis stressed that workers commonly go on strike over wage increases that do not keep pace with the rising cost of living, as well as disputes about working conditions, job security and other related workplace reasons. More broadly, high inequality and strong union traditions make strike action a key tool for workers to press for “fair treatment and improved livelihoods”. The analysis in **Table 2** reveals the changes in the distribution of working days lost relative to the contribution of each cause to labour disputes from 2021 to 2025.

Evidently, the demand for wages, bonuses and other compensation benefits remained the main reason workers embarked on work stoppages. For many, wages that once seemed enough are now stretched thinner than ever, leaving families scrambling to make ends meet. Wages are no longer just numbers on a pay slip, they are a lifeline, shaping the everyday survival and dignity of ordinary people. Remaining the largest single cause for work stoppages accounted for 31.8% for working day lost in 2025 declining from 73.7% of total working days lost in 2024. This indicates a decline of remuneration issues in 2025.

The Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) results in December 2025 have shown that the average salary in the country has hit a record high. This is a strong and positive for salary earners in South Africa, marking real growth in earnings against the low inflation environment. According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), the increase in earnings was driven by key industries, with the manufacturing industry experiencing the fastest growth also due to increases in the business services, community services, mining, manufacturing, utility and construction industries. On year-on-year gross earnings increased by 3.2% between September 2024 and September 2025.

Although the overall industrial action over wages, bonus and other compensation benefits significantly dropped, disputes related to retrenchment, working conditions and other related issues increased over the two years. The number of working days lost over working conditions and disputes related to retrenchment increased in the manufacturing of basic metals, fabricated metal products, machinery and equipment and health and social work sectors refused to bargain against the union's demands.

Figure 3: Percentage distribution of how disputes were resolved, 2024-2025



Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2025

Labour dispute resolution plays a critical role in maintaining stability in South Africa's workforce, helping to address conflicts between employers and employees before they escalate into prolonged work stoppages. The distribution of dispute resolution between 2024 and 2025 shows that most disputes were resolved internally in both years, with a margin of disputes resolved through external bodies. **Figure 3** illustrates that labour disputes resolved internally, accounted for 88.0 % in 2024 and 89.0% in 2025. On the other hand, intervention of the CCMA and bargaining councils as a dispute resolution mechanism declined over the period, while the proportion of cases with unknown resolution outcomes increased from 3.0% to 8.0%. Despite this, the CCMA successfully saved 30 581 jobs in 2025, mitigating the impact of retrenchments from affected industries and reaffirming its role as a stabilizing catalyst in the labour market¹⁶.

Table 3: Distribution of how annual salary increments were negotiated in South Africa , 2024-2025

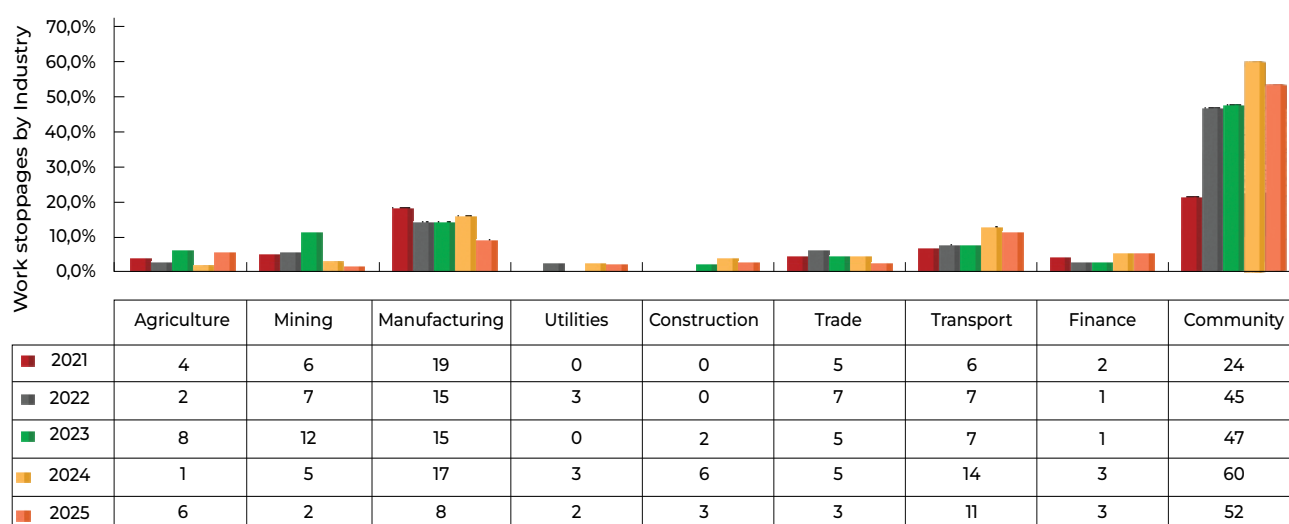
	Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-March 2025	Apr-June 2025	July-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	Year on Year change (%)
Individual and employer	1 088 000	1 090 000	1 010 000	1 066 000	1 116 000	2.6
Union and employer	2 911 000	2 764 000	2 890 000	2 838 000	2 769 000	-4.9
Bargaining council	1 432 000	1 437 000	1 359 000	1 274 000	1 436 000	0.3
Employer only	7 832 000	7 693 000	7 752 000	7 931 000	7 929 000	1.2
No regular increments	797 000	780 000	773 000	930 000	968 000	21.4
Unspecified	28 000	33 000	52 000	54 000	50 000	82.0

Source: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), quarter 4 of 2025

¹⁶ Department of Employment and Labour, Newsflash Strategic Planning, January 2026

As reported from Statistics South Africa, **Table 3** illustrates a similar trend of the South African salary increments determined by employers remaining dominant, leaving it largely stable method of wage negotiations over the two-year period. This however records a slight growth, increasing slightly by 1.2% in a year-on-year period. Individual negotiations also increased, while bargaining council agreements showed overall stability with minimal changes. In contrast, union and employer negotiated increments declined moderately over the period. The most significant shift was the sharp rise in employees not receiving regular increments, which increased substantially year on year.

Figure 4: Distribution of work stoppages by industry, 2021 – 2025



Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2021-2025

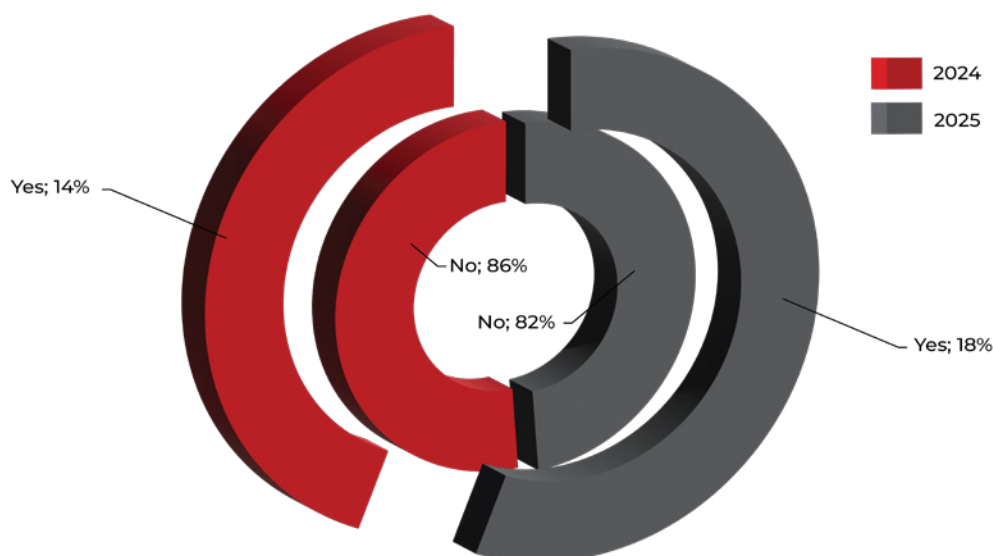
Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of workplace disputes by industry over the past five years. Work stoppages declined across most industries, reflecting a general moderation in industrial actions in the country between 2024 and 2025. Despite a 13.3% drop in work stoppages from 60 to 52 over the two-year period, the community industry continued to be the most affected industry. Meanwhile, the effectiveness and successful negotiations over wage demand between the state and together with various trade unions prevented a potential strike in the community industry where major disruptions would have been caused by more than 250 000 public employees. Although the community industry accounted for many strikes, the health and local municipality sectors were the primary sources of strikes due to requests for wages, working conditions and other grievances or complaints against employers.

In the same analysis, the mining industry recorded a significant decrease to 60%, the manufacturing industry declined by 52.9% and construction recorded a decrease of 50% of work stoppages over the same period. In contrast, the agriculture industry experienced a marked increase in work stoppages whilst transport continued to record relatively high levels of industrial action. The agriculture industry experienced a notable increase in “unprotected work stoppages” over grievances against the employer. The strikes in the agriculture industry increased from one incident in 2024 to six in 2025, representing a significant increase of 500% of work stoppages¹⁷ (year-on-year changes). From the transport industry, over 2000 pilots in FlySafair’s aviation embarked on strike demanding a 10.5% wage increase, improved rostering and better working conditions¹⁸.

¹⁷ Although the number remains relatively small compared to sectors such as community services and manufacturing, the sharp increase signals emerging labour relations pressures within the agricultural industry in 2025.

¹⁸ Due to the strikes by pilots, passengers have reported frustrations with cancellations, though FlySafair minimized disruptions by scaling down to 80-90% capacity. Domestic routes like Johannesburg-Cape Town are affected, with advice to book alternatives.

Figure 5: Percentage distribution of replacement labour used during the strikes, 2024-2025

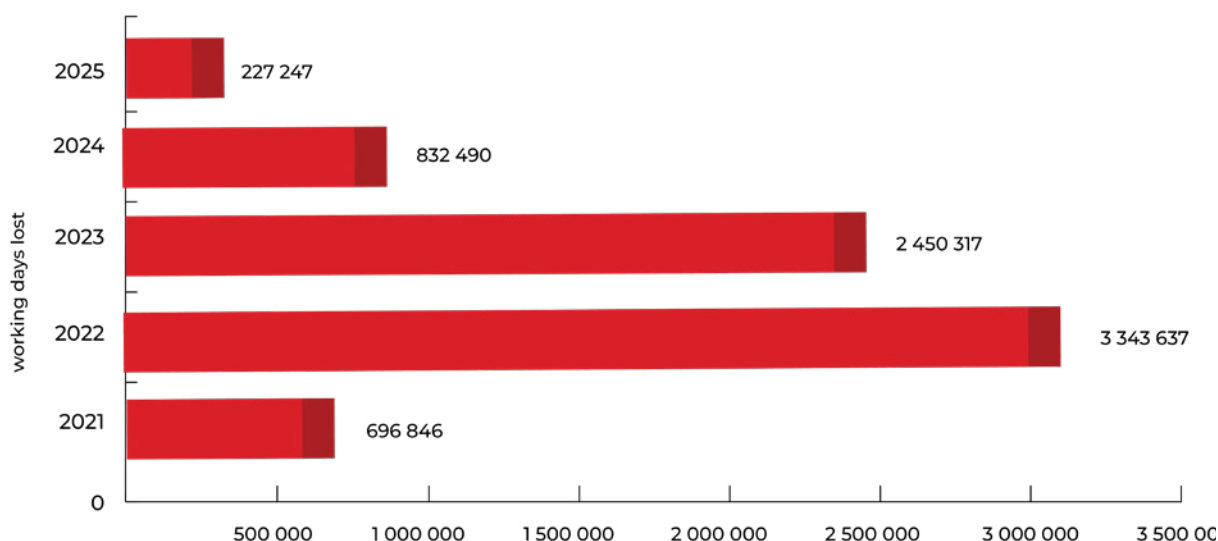


Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2024-2025

Although the proportion of replacement labour during strikes remained minimal in 2024 and 2025, companies have strategically substitute labour at 18% in 2024 and 14% in 2025. This represents about 4 percentage point decreased over the same period. According to **Figure 5**, the trend grew slightly in 2025, with 86% more strikes occurring without replacement labour. The community and manufacturing industries which were relatively affected by work stoppages, used replacement of labour during strikes in 2025. This was noticeable in the health and social work sector where nurses in the Mpumalanga clinics embarked on strike because of work and safety issues. Workers who went on strike because of wage demands were replaced by the management in the transport equipment manufacturer in the Gauteng North region.

Overall, the reduced reliance on replacement labour in 2025 suggests the possibility of change towards improved negotiation processes or a decrease in the operational capacity to deploy replacement workers during industrial actions.

Figure 6: Trends in working days lost¹⁹ in South Africa, 2021-2025



Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2021-2025

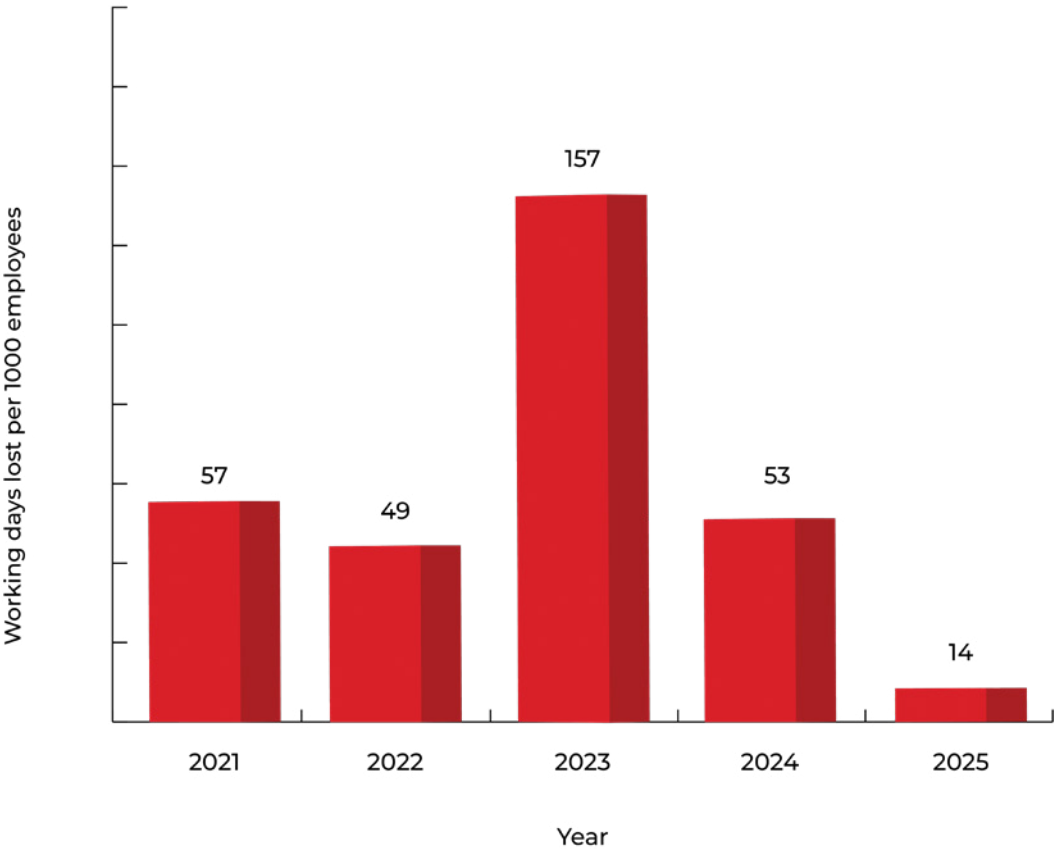
¹⁹ The working days lost due to strike implies the total number of workers involved directly in the strikes or lockouts multiplies by the length of work stoppage. These are of little use purposes of international comparisons. The number of days not worked per 1 000 employees will be the best estimate for such international comparison.



Industrial action is typically measured by “days not worked” or “working days lost” due to strikes or lockouts. Between 2021 and 2025, working days lost due to industrial action fluctuated significantly because of the length and number of workers involved in a particular strike incident. **Figure 6** illustrates that after a moderate level of 696 846 days lost in 2021, it increased to 3 343 637 days in 2022, before falling to 2 450 317 days in 2023. Furthermore, working days lost fell from 832 490 in 2024 to 227 247 in 2025, while the total number of strikes, workers involved and the duration have also decreased during the same period.

Approximately, a decrease of 72.7% in the working days was lost across all industries over the two years and 67.4% over the five years. This trend indicates that not only were fewer strikes but those that did occur were shorter in durations (averaging between 1-10 days) and less disruptive, reflecting a significant easing of industrial action in 2025.

Figure 7: Working days lost per 1 000²⁰ employees (time-loss ratio) due to strikes, 2021-2025

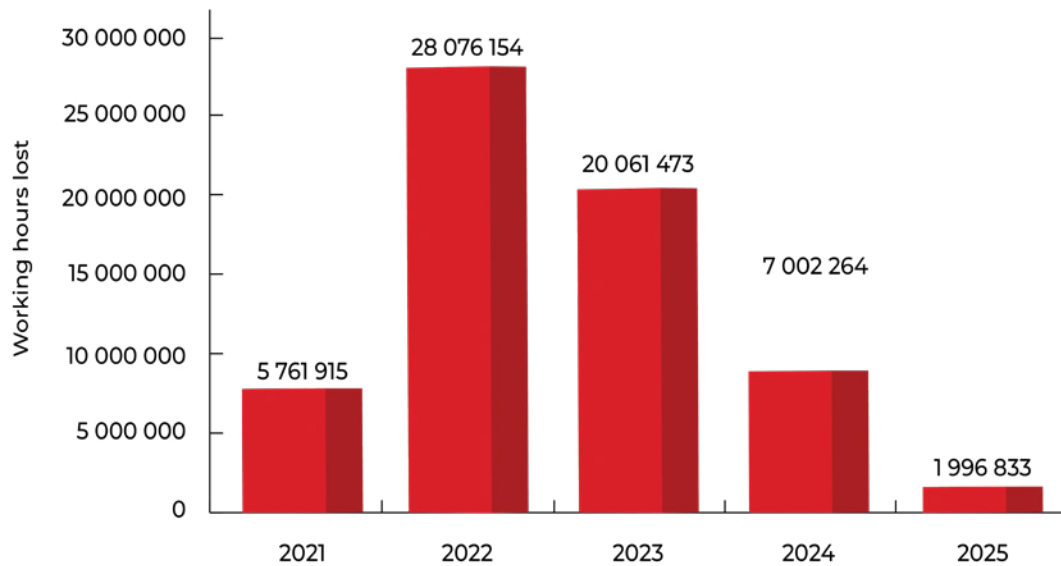


Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database 2021-2025

Figure 7 shows trends in working days lost for every 1 000 employees who participated in a strike with a significant decline in working days lost per 1 000 employees between 2024 and 2025. In 2024, the time-loss ratio stood at 53 days per 1 000 employees in strikes, decreasing sharply to 14 days per 1 000 employees in 2025. This represents a decline of 39 days per 1 000 employees who participated in work stoppages over the two years. The sharp decrease indicates a substantial decline in industrial action intensity and duration in 2025 compared to 2024. The year 2025 marks the lowest level of working days lost per 1 000 employees in the five-year period, suggesting improved labour stability, fewer strikes, shorter disputes or more effective dispute resolution mechanisms.

²⁰ This indicator allows for international comparison in strike activity where data is available. For international comparison, the ratio distinguishes which country is “strike-prone” when compared to another country.

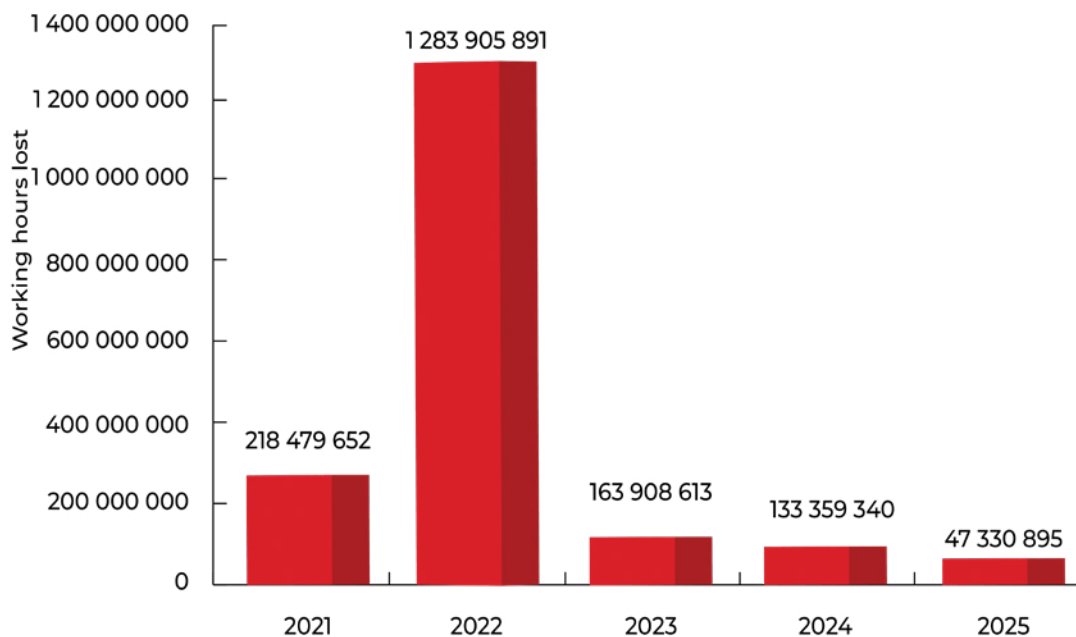
Figure 8: Trends in working hours lost in South Africa, 2021 - 2025



Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database 2021-2025

It has been shown that the number of working days and hours lost strike exhibits consistent patterns over time. In this case, the working hours lost due to industrial action declined substantially, resulting from a sharp decline in working days lost during the years 2024 and 2025. **Figure 8** shows the number of working hours lost decreased by 71.5%, from 7 002 264 hours in 2024 to 1 996 833 hours in 2025. The results closely align with the 72.7% decrease in working days lost. This similar pattern of indicators confirms that industrial actions in 2025 were shorter in duration with fewer workers participating in strikes activities.

Figure 9: Wages lost²¹ due to work stoppages in South Africa, 2021-2025



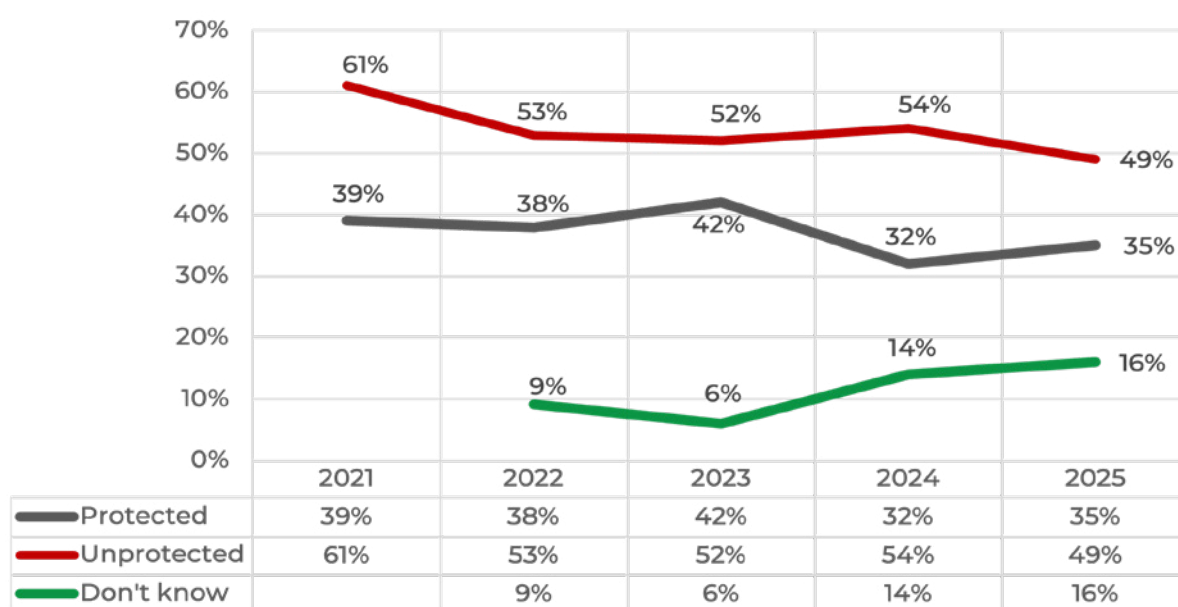
Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2021-2025

As per the literature provided above, the results presented here reveal that the nature of strike carries a financial cost on the employees who took part in the strike. This is associated with the no-work-no-pay policy. Following periods of heightened strike activity, wages lost declined sharply from R133.4 million in 2024 to R47.3 million in 2025, representing a 64.5% decrease, as shown in **Figure 9**.

The significant drop is consistent with observed declines in working days lost, hours lost and the duration and the number of employees participating in strikes compared to the previous year. Furthermore, a key contributing factor to the lower wages lost was the calling of potential strikes through early dispute resolution. When strikes are averted, employees continue working and earning their wages, thereby avoiding the immediate income losses typically associated with work stoppages. This outcome is particularly important for lower-income workers, for whom even short interruptions to earnings can have adverse effects on household financial stability. Thus, the disputes in 2025 were more contained and less disruptive than in earlier periods which resulted in a reduction in economic and income effects.

There were fewer stoppages in the community, manufacturing, transport, mining, construction and trade industries in 2025 compared with 2024. Where labour disputes occurred, most of them were effectively managed through early interventions, negotiations and internal dispute resolution mechanisms, preventing escalation into prolonged or large-scale strikes. These changes contributed materially to the reduction in wages lost and point to better labour relations and more efficient dispute resolution in the South African labour market during 2025.

Figure 10: Percentage distribution between the protected and unprotected strikes in South Africa, 2021-2025



Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2021-2025

Regarding workers' compliance with the Act, employers offer their perspective of the nature of strike in line with the three options provided in the LRA 9.2 form. In other words, work stoppages can be classified as protected or unprotected based on whether they comply with the legal and procedural requirements set out in the labour legislation²¹.

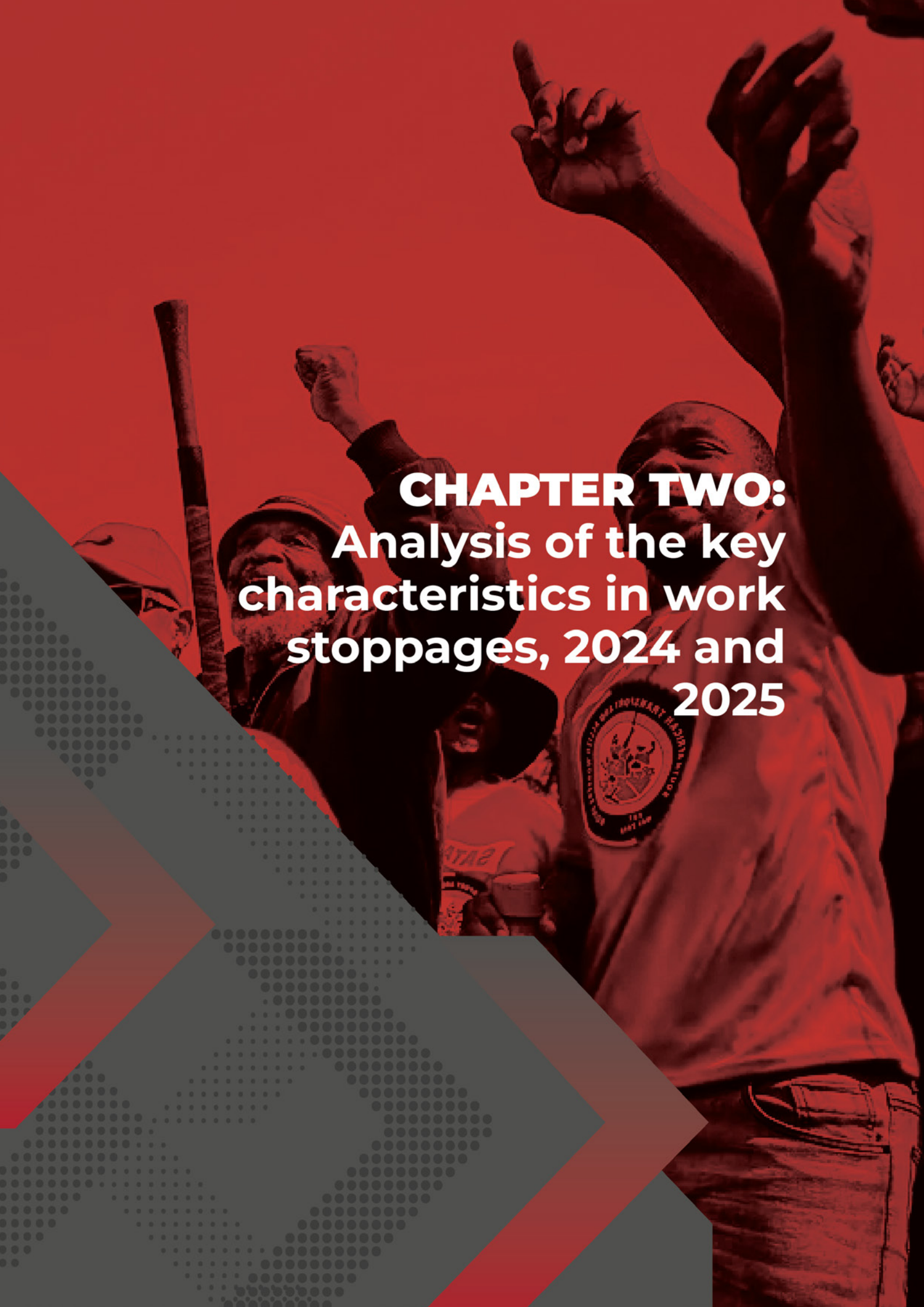
Clearly, the results above show moderate improvement in the formalization of strikes over the five-year period. **Figure 10** illustrates that while unprotected strikes decreased from 54% to 49% between 2024 and 2025, the percentage of protected strikes climbed somewhat from 32% to 35%. Furthermore, the percentage of protected strikes fluctuated over the period with 39% in 2021, 38% in 2022, 42% in 2023, dropping to 32% in 2024 before increasing slightly to 35% in 2025. In contrast, the percentage unprotected strikes decreased from 61% in 2021 to 53% in 2022, remaining stable at 52% in 2023, then rising slightly to 54% in 2024 before dropping to 49% in 2025.

Unprotected strike action was most prevalent in the community and agriculture industries, where disputes were predominantly linked to wage demands, working conditions and broader grievances against employers. A group of

²¹ Protected strikes are those conducted in accordance with the law, often following formal dispute-resolution processes and notification requirements and are shielded from certain legal repercussions. Unprotected strikes, on the other hand, do not meet these legal criteria and may expose participants and unions to potential legal action.

City of Tshwane workers associated with SAMWU, including those previously dismissed for participating in a violent march in 2024, gathered outside Tshwane House to protest despite their strike being declared illegal. The workers were demanding payment of an outstanding 3.5% salary increase for the 2021/22 period and the reinstatement of the dismissed workers. Even though workers embarked on unprotected strikes, the increase in protected strikes alongside a decrease in unprotected strikes points to a potential strengthening of formal strike mechanisms and legal adherence in 2025.





CHAPTER TWO: Analysis of the key characteristics in work stoppages, 2024 and 2025

INTRODUCTION

As discussed above, changes in the macroeconomic and geoeconomics, as well as the cost of living, and inflationary pressures are driving employers and workers to continuously negotiate to find balance between better working conditions and company profitability. This in turn allows the labour market to be reshaped and provide a labour market environment for decent job and required skills. This chapter provides in depth analysis on key strike indicators in accordance with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). These indicators include the distribution of work stoppages, wages lost, working days and hours lost, the duration of the stoppages, employment size of the affected enterprises, and trade union involvement.

Easing inflationary pressures, gradual economic recovery and improved business conditions in 2025, have all supported more stable labour relations, enabling employers and workers to settle disputes with less recourse to prolonged industrial action. This resulted in fewer and shorter work stoppages, which translated into significantly lower time and wage losses for a number of labour-intensive businesses, including manufacturing, mining and community industries. However, uneven economic conditions across industries meant that gains were not uniform, with sectors facing structural pressures such as agriculture and transport industries continuing to experience higher labour unrest despite the broader economic improvement. Notwithstanding that, agriculture and transport emerged as key areas of concern in 2025, with sharp increases in working days and hours lost, reflecting more prolonged and disruptive labour disputes.

2.1. Industrial distribution of work stoppages and wages lost by industry

Table 4: Distribution of work stoppages and wages lost by industry, 2024-2025

Industry*	No. of work stoppages 2024	Worker's wage lost (Total 2024 (Rand's))	No. of work stoppages 2025	Worker's wage lost (Total 2025 (Rand's))
Agriculture	1	0	6	5 113 724
Mining	5	39 079 241	2	734 056
Manufacturing	17	53 393 390	8	17 267 777
Utilities	3	0	2	686 682
Construction	6	3 933 895	3	1 532 121
Trade	5	1 556 719	3	50 248
Transport	14	5 410 527	11	14 545 372
Finance	3	97 233	3	567 983
Community	60	29 888 335	52	6 832 932
TOTAL	114	133 359 340	90	47 330 895

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2024-2025 (*Note that the Standard International Classification (SIC) was used (excluding the Private household sector).

Table 4 shows the breakdown of lost wages and work stoppages by industry. The results highlight a comparatively stable labour market in South Africa in 2025, with 90 strikes recorded in 2025 compared to 114 in 2024. In other words, work stoppages declined by 21.1% and 64.5% in wages lost over the same periods. As seen in **Table 4**, most industries recorded fewer disruptions and lower losses in wages particularly in the mining industry, where stoppages and wages lost decreased almost by 60% and 98%, respectively. In 2025, the manufacturing (36.5%), transport (30.7%) and community (14.4%) have largely contributed to the total wages lost. This was not the case in 2024.

During the winter season, the agriculture industry saw large-scale and intense unprotected protests over wage increments, retrenchments, trade union recognition and unresolved grievances. For instance, more than 2 000 permanent and contracted employees at the Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry and Fishing in the Western Cape, Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces have initiated an indefinite strike, protesting what they describe as unilateral

and unjust actions by their employer, Oceana Group. The strike came in response to Oceana's alleged withdrawal of a seasonal allowance previously granted to workers, replacing it with a 13th cheque that has been deemed inferior.

Meanwhile, the community industry, which recorded the highest number of work stoppages in 2024 and 2025, experienced a drop in work stoppages of 13.3% and a decrease of 8 percentage point in wages lost. In the manufacturing industry, wages lost fell by 3.6 percentage point, while work stoppages saw an almost 53% drop over the same period. On the other hand, the transportation industry saw a 26.7 percentage point gain in wages lost and a 21.4% drop in work stoppages between 2024 and 2025. There was a 50% decrease in work stoppages and an increase of 3.6 percentage point in wages lost in the construction industry. The primary causes of these work stoppages were disputes related to wages, bonuses, working conditions and unresolved grievances.

2.2. Industrial distribution of working days lost

Table 5: Distribution of working days lost by industry, 2024 - 2025

Industry	Working days lost 2025		
	2024	2025	% Change
Agriculture	2 330	23 289	899.5
Mining	79 132	20 561	-74.0
Manufacturing	172 581	62 941	-63.5
Utilities	1 844	2 914	0.0
Construction	22 005	2 795	-87.3
Trade	28 334	998	-96.5
Transport	21 646	35 237	62.8
Finance	479	4 032	741.8
Community	504 139	74 480	-85.2
TOTAL	832 490	227 247	-72.7

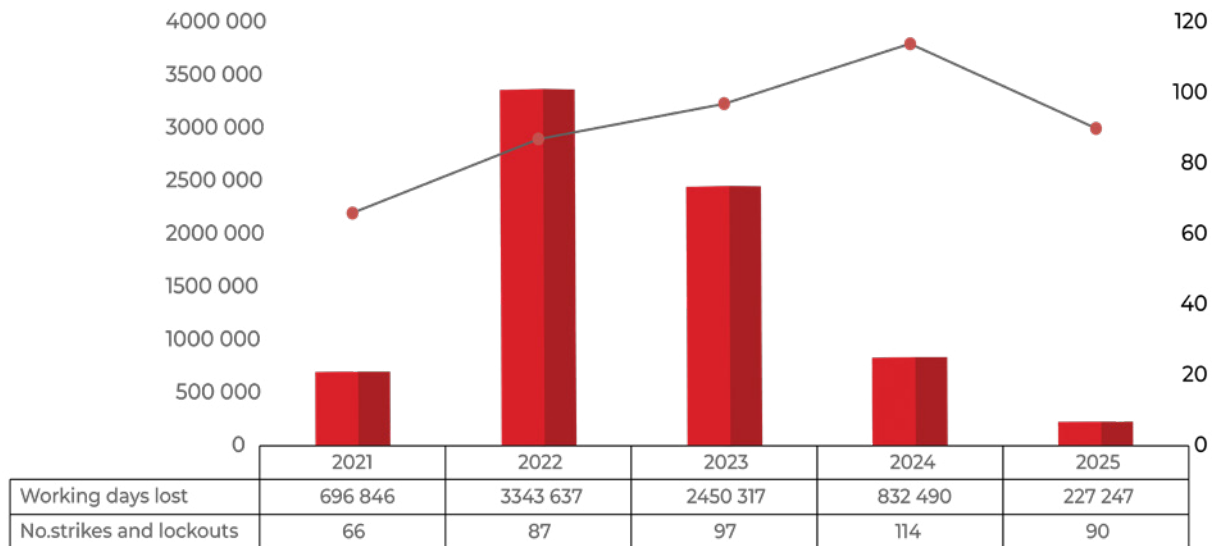
Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2024-2025

The data in **Table 5** shows a significant decline in working days lost across industries in 2025, with an average working day loss falling by 72.7% from 832 490 in 2024 to 227 247 in 2025, indicating a marked reduction in the intensity of industrial action. However, this overall improvement masks deviating trends across specific industries. For example, the agriculture industry experienced the most dramatic increase, with the number of working days lost rising sharply by 899.5% from 2 330 to 23 289 days pointing to a significant escalation of labour disruptions in the industry that had previously recorded relatively low strike activity. Similarly, the transport industry saw working days lost increase by 62.8% from 21 646 to 35 237 days suggesting more prolonged or impactful strikes despite broader labour market stability in 2025.

Following this, it was reported that the residents of Rustenburg and surrounding villages in the North West were left stranded as hundreds of employees of Bojanala Bus Services went on strike. Democratic Municipal and Allied Workers Unions of South Africa (DEMAWUSA) members embarked on a month-long protected strike demanding the employer to implement fair labour practices in the public transport sub-industry. In contrast, the community industry, while still recording the highest absolute number of days lost in 2025 (74 480), showed a substantial improvement, with an 85.2% decline from 504 139 days lost in 2024. This sharp decline indicates fewer or shorter disruptions in a sector historically prone to large-scale strikes.

Overall, while 2025 was characterized by fewer working days lost across most industries, the agriculture (6) and transport (11) industries emerged as the most affected industries where labour disputes intensified, partially offsetting gains made in the community industry.

Figure 11: Trend in the working days lost and number of strikes, 2024 - 2025



Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2024-2025

The trend in working days lost and the number of strikes and lockouts in South Africa between 2021 and 2025 are depicted in **Figure 11**. Although there was an overall rise in strikes and lockouts from 66 in 2021 to a record high of 114 in 2024, there was a following reduction to 90 strikes and lockouts in 2025.

Conversely, the number of working days loss peaked dramatically in 2022 at over 3.3 million despite fewer stoppages (87) that year, indicating longer or more disruptive strikes. Following the year 2022, working days lost steadily decreased each year, dropping sharply to 227 247 in 2025. This suggests that while industrial action remained frequent, its intensity and duration were significantly reduced in 2025.

2.3. Industrial distribution of working hours lost

Table 6: Distribution of working hours lost by industry, 2024-2025

Industry*	Working hours lost 2025		
	2024	2025	% Change
Agriculture	20 970	173 564	727.7
Mining	868 928	245 592	-71.7
Manufacturing	1 455 158	561 538	-61.4
Utilities	14 752	23 426	0.0
Construction	197 765	25 155	-87.3
Trade	228 293	7 804	-96.6
Transport	201 171	259 748	29.1
Finance	3 832	32 274	742.2
Community	4 011 395	667 732	-83.4
TOTAL	7 002 264	1 996 833	-71.5

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database; 2024-2025 (*Note: The Private household sector is excluded because of zero work stoppages were recorded).

All industries together lost 71.5% fewer working hours in 2025 than in 2024 at 65%, as shown in **Table 6**. The working hours lost increased largely in agriculture (727%) and finance (742%) compared to other industries. Relative to the agriculture industry, the results show an uneven trend because of the contracting performance across subsectors resulting in deepened climate conditions and trade dynamics. The transport industry also experienced a moderate increase of 29.1% while utilities industry recorded a slight increase. On the other hand, significant decreases in lost working hours were noted in the mining (-71.7%), manufacturing (-61.4%), community (-83.4%), trade (-96.6%), and construction (-87.3%) industries between 2024 and 2025.

2.4. Working days lost per 1 000 employees by industry

Table 7: Time-loss ratio²² by industry, 2024-2025

Industry	Time-loss ratio	Time-loss ratio	Total number of workers*	Total number of workers*
	2024	2025	2024	2025
Agriculture	2.4	24.5	934 000	950 000
Mining	163.4	46.3	484 000	444 000
Manufacturing	105.5	40.7	1 635 000	1 548 000
Utilities	14.5	0.0	127 000	134 000
Construction	15.9	2.0	1 381 000	1 425 000
Trade	8.1	0.3	3 469 000	3 326 000
Transport	20.6	30.9	1 047 000	1 140 000
Finance	0.1	1.4	2 716 000	2 962 000
Community	12.4	18.5	4 021 000	4 034 000

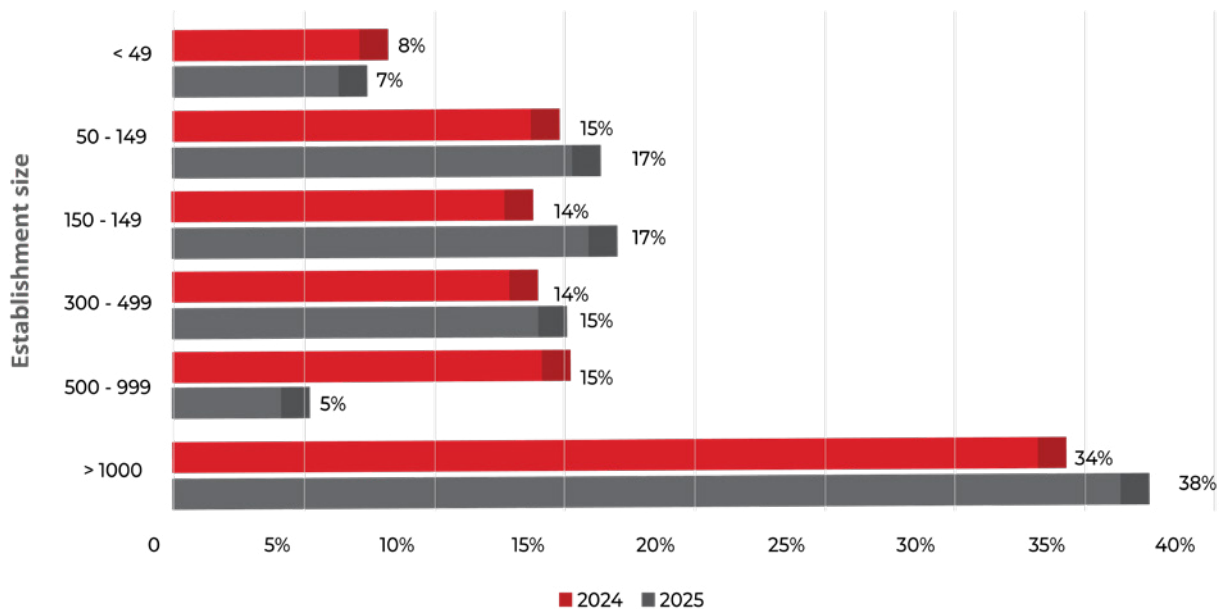
Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database (Note: * Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, quarter 4 of 2025 Total employment by industry (excl. Private households' industry))

Table 7 illustrates the time-loss ratio of working days lost per 1 000 employees by industry in 2024 and 2025. It is noticeable that the mining, manufacturing and transport industries were mostly affected with time loss due to industrial disputes in 2025. In the mining industry "Metal ores, except gold and uranium" recorded the highest value of 46.3 days lost per 1 000 employees in 2025. Strikes in the trade and finance industries lasted for fewer days at 0.3 and 1.4 in 2025. This is associated with the number of employees who participated in the short duration of strikes in the industries.

²² This is the measure which best reconciles the number of days lost due to industrial action with the varying sizes of the countries employed population and provides a reasonable basis for international comparisons. In this report, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter four of 2025, were used regarding the total number of employees by industry.

2.5. Work stoppages by employment size of establishments

Figure 12: Percentage distribution of work stoppages by employment size, 2024-2025



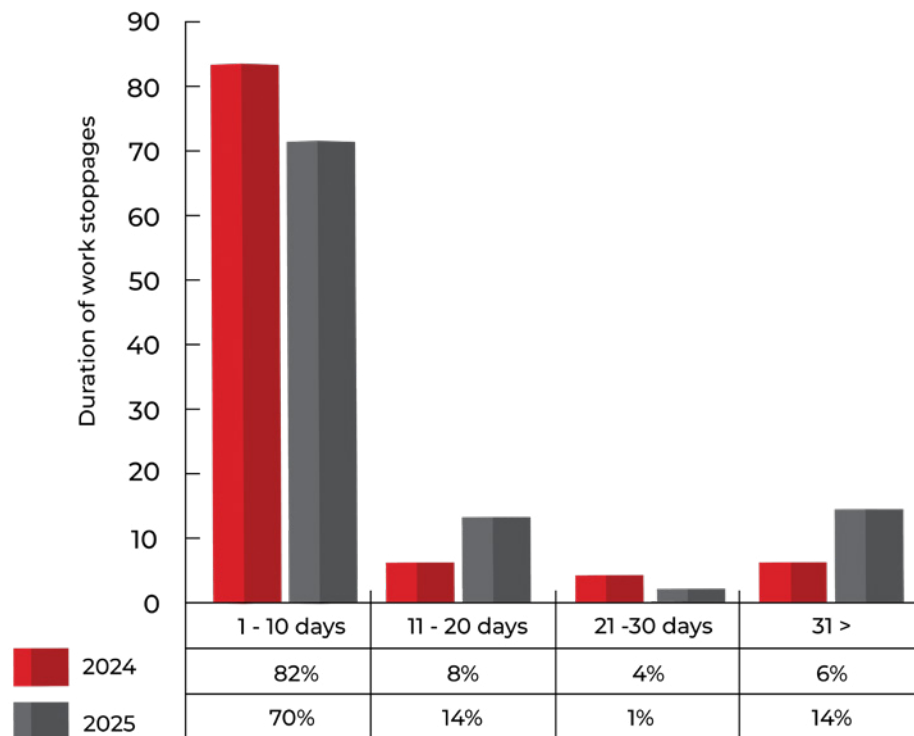
Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2024-2025

In **Figure 12**, most work stoppages in both years happened in large establishments with over 1 000 employees, which accounted for 34% of stoppages in 2024 and 38% in 2025. This suggests a modest increase in industrial activities among the largest employers. Overall, the data indicates that although the largest establishments continued to experience the highest proportion rate of work stoppages, mid-to-large enterprises observed an uptick in industrial activity in both the largest (>1 000) and employee establishments (500-999) increased slightly in 2025 compared to 2024.

The loss of production and services mainly occurred in the community industry's local authority and the health sector where workers (about 20 000) went on strike protesting over wage increases, working conditions and grievances against their employers. Smaller establishments (> 49 employees) accounted for the smallest share of work stoppages, increasing from 7% in 2024 to 8% in 2025. Notably, work stoppages in establishments sized 500-999 employees rose significantly from 5% in 2024 to 15% in 2025.

2.6. Duration of work stoppages,

Figure 13: Percentage distribution of work stoppages by duration, 2024-2025



Source: Department of Employment and Labour Strikes Statistics database 2024-2025

The data in **Figure 13** shows a significant change in the duration of work stoppages between 2024 and 2025. In 2024, many work stoppages (82%) lasted on average from 1 and 10 days, indicating that most strikes were relatively shorter. Nonetheless, in 2025, this percentage decreased significantly to 70%, suggesting reduced work stoppages. This explains why wages lost significantly by 64%, despite the occurrence of several prolonged strikes. Adversely, longer strikes increased in 2025 lasting on average from 11 to 20 days, rose from 8% to 14% and extended beyond 31 days and more doubled from 6% to 14%. Meanwhile, work stoppages, lasting on average from 21 to 30 days, declined from 4% to 1%.

2.7. Trade union involvement in work stoppages, 2025

Table 8: Distribution of work days lost by trade union membership involved, 2024-2025

Name of the union	Employees involved per trade union in 2024	Days lost per trade union in 2024	%	Employees involved per union in every strike in 2025	Days lost per trade unions in 2025	%
ASU	285	1 893	0.2	0	0	0
AMCU	1 082	5 410	0.6	0	0	0
BCAWU	0	0	0	3	30	0
BWAWUSA	284	7 100	0.9	0	0	0
DEMAWUSA	0	0	0	200	6 400	2.8
DENOSA	499	2751	0.3	115	585	0.3
FAWU	428	1 399	0.2	1 022	5 110	2.2
GIWUSA	131	8 135	1	0	0	0
HOSPERSA	253	1120	0.1	127	1 204	0.5
ICHAWU	172	1 336	0.2	0	0	0
IMATU	54	90	0	248	1 248	0.5
ITU	150	9 300	1.1	0	0	0
NEHAWU	2 366	20 344	2.4	1 930	9 739	4.3
None reported	17 072	55 939	6.7	1 022	7 919	3
None Union Member	13 299	287 443	34.5	12 167	126 548	55
NUM	1 032	5 160	0.6	289	424	0.2
NUMSA	5 256	64 235	7.7	2 020	22 061	9.7
NUFBSAW	0	0	0	235	235	0.1
NUPSAW	271	789	0.1	139	484	0.2
PSA	456	2 734	0.3	166	579	0.3
SACCA	0	0	0	224	2 464	1.1
SACCAWU	0	0	0	118	118	0.1
SACTWU	0	0	0	290	2 170	0.1
SADTU	1 290	3 470	0.4	3 267	3 267	1.4

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2024-2025 *Not all LRA 9.2 forms provided accurate estimates in terms of number of employees involved per union membership names. Follow ups were made with employers but limited responses were received by the time of writing the report. Thus, readers must take the “not reported figures” with caution.

The observation in **Table 8** shows that work stoppages in both 2024 and 2025 were concentrated among a limited number of trade union groups. None-union members represented the largest portion of days lost in both years, increasing sharply from 34.5% in 2024 to 55% in 2025. Among registered unions, NUMSA consistently recorded the highest proportion of working days lost, rising from 7.7% in 2024 to 9.7% in 2025, followed by NEHAWU, rising from 2.4% to 4.3%. NUMSA members embarked on a three-week strike after Macsteel’s forced retrenchment of employees who refused to accept a retrenchment package of R40 000 imposed by the company. The layoffs or retrenchments triggered an indefinite strike, as the union insisted that Macsteel reinstate all affected employees to their positions.

On the other hand, other unions contributed relatively small proportions, mostly below 1%, although FAWU, DEMAWUSA and SADTU showed moderate increases in 2025. Overall, the findings indicate that industrial action was increasingly driven by non-unionized workers and a small number of dominant unions in 2025. The finding is surprising to still have un-unionized workers as by law workers are within the right to unionize and to have access to social protection, earn a living wage and be protected against unfair labour practice.



CHAPTER THREE: The role of collective bargaining in wage settlements, 2025



INTRODUCTION

Trade unions play a major role in wage settlements in South Africa, especially in industries including manufacturing, public services, transportation, and mining. Important participants in the collective bargaining process are unions like the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

In 2025, collective bargaining in South Africa remained a vital tool for addressing wage settlements while operating in a complex environment. Factors such as economic instability, inflation, unemployment, technological changes and the ongoing struggle for social equality all influenced the bargaining process. While unions continue to play a significant role in securing better wages and working conditions, the effectiveness of collective bargaining depended on the ability of workers, employers and the government to engage in meaningful dialogue addressing the pressing socio-economic issues facing the country.

In the current year, the impact of inflation and increasing costs of energy, transport and food has put pressure on unions to demand wage increases above inflation rates. In this regard, this chapter examines how wage settlements were concluded in various industries due to strikes. In addition, the distribution of final wage settlements in selected industries and wage settlements concluded with/out strike incidents is also discussed.

3.1. Wage settlements concluded after the strikes ended in various industries

Table 9: Median²³ wage settlement in various industries, 2024-2025

Industry	2024 (%)	2025 (%)
Agriculture	7%	5.1%
Construction	6.5%	6%
Mining	7%	6%
Manufacturing	7%	6%
Utilities	7%	7%
Finance	7%	6%
Transport	7%	6%
Trade	7%	6%
Community	6%	6%

Source: Labour Research Service, Wage settlements Trends, December 2024- 2025

According to information collected from the Labour Research Service (LRS), data shows that median wage settlement rates dropped slightly in 2025 compared with 2024, with the average collective bargaining settlement around 6.2% to 5.7% over the two years. **Table 9** illustrates that most industry shared marginal decline from 2024 to 2025, reflecting slow but stable economic growth. Utilities and community industries remained stable, while agriculture, mining, manufacturing, finance, transport and trade saw slight declines from 7% to 6%, respectively. Meanwhile, the agriculture sector who faced several climate challenges impacting food security and rural livelihoods, settled 5.1% of wages agreements in 2025 compared to 7% reached agreements in 2024.

Even though wage agreements settled in 2025 were lower, overall salary outcomes remained resilient, with average salary budgets generally around 5-6% across many industries and real wages increasing due to lower inflation.

²³ The median is the number, which found in the middle of a range of numbers. For example: if the range of numbers is 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 then the median is 10.

Table 10: Distribution of final wage settlement in selected industries, 2025

Industry	Employer	Agreement date	Initial demand	Employer offer	Settlement	Protected/unprotected
Community, Social & Personal Services	City of Tshwane	August	3.5%	0%	3.5%	Protected
	National Lotteries Commission	May	12.5%	6.5%	7%	Protected
Transport, Storage & Communication	Flysafair	August	10.5 %	5.7%	6-9%	Protected

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2025

In **Table 10**, the final wage settlements reached in selected South African industries during 2025 are presented and compares them with prevailing national wage settlement trends and inflation conditions. In many industries, unions averted or called off potential strikes, bringing labour stability while extending gains to employers to ensure sector wide protection from business interruptions. Collectively, the agreements reflect strengthened collective bargaining outcomes, improved worker welfare and greater certainty for employers and employees alike. To those industries with strikes activities, wage settlements were concluded with trends of moderate and mostly above-inflation increases.

For instance, in **Table 10**, the City of Tshwane concluded a 3.5% agreement, which was below the national average and broadly aligned, indicating constrained municipal finances and limited real wage growth. In contrast, the National Lotteries Commission settled wage demands at 7%, exceeding the national average and delivering a clear real wage gain for employees. FlySafair's settlement, ranging between 6% and 9%, was at or above the national norm, reflecting stronger bargaining outcomes in the transport and aviation sector. All agreements were concluded under protected bargaining processes.

Overall, the settlements illustrate uneven wage outcomes across sectors, shaped by employer affordability, sectoral conditions and bargaining strength.

3.2. Wage settlements concluded without strike incidents, 2025

Wage settlements that are reached without any strike incidents lead to a positive outcome in labour relations, reflecting effective negotiation and mutual understanding between employers, employees and labour unions. These agreements typically arise when parties engage in constructive dialogue and compromise, avoiding the costly and disruptive impact of work stoppages.

Transport, manufacturing, public service, education, engineering, energy and chemicals are just a few of the important sectors of the South African economy where several pay agreements were successfully reached throughout 2025. These wage settlements were largely led by unions such as NUMSA, SATAWU, UNTU, UASA and others. The wage settlements were relatively above inflation wage that improved allowances and enhanced benefits for hundreds of thousands of workers. Many wage deals have shifted to **multi-year contracts (2 to 3 years)**, smoothing annual settlement volatility and keeping average pay levels elevated even as annual negotiated increases moderately.

3.2.1. Averted strike incidents

The following provides information on the successful resolution mechanism that assisted to avert a potential strike incident. These near miss events highlight the importance of proactive conflict management and effective negotiation between employers and workers, or their representatives was demonstrated to avoid possible workplace disruption. To some extent, it might be seen as a game changer that promotes a peaceful and stable labour market when industries pledged for multi-year agreements. The wage agreements below entail that:

- The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) has called off a strike set for 23 January 2025 at Silulumanzi, a water services company in Mbombela, Mpumalanga, after agreeing to a 6.5% pay increase. The

increase is applicable from 1 January to 31 December 2025. This comes after Numsa's demand for a 7% wage increase followed by the revised wage demand of 6.5%.

- On 27 March 2025, Transnet and the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (SATAWU) averted a strike and agreed to the above-inflation wage increases of 17.5% over the next three financial years for rail and port workers. The agreement encompassed a 6% wage increase across the board for workers in the 2025/26 financial year, a 6% wage increase in 2026/27 and a 5.5% increase in 2027/28. Also included in the agreement are increases in pension fund contributions and housing allowances and access to affordable medical aid.
- With an agreement effective from 1 April 2025, the University of Venda has successfully concluded wage negotiations with the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union. The culmination of months of collaborative engagement was formalized through the signing of a Wage Collective Agreement at the Disability Unit Laboratory on 8 April 2025. The result was a five percent salary increase for employees on salary bands P6 through P17 excluding P1 – P5 (executives).
- The state, Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA) together with various trade unions averted a wage increase and reached an agreement on 17 February 2025. The agreement binds the state as the employer and all employees who are employed by the state and fall within the registered scope of the council. The agreement stated that the employer would pay the employees on levels 1-12 and those appointed in terms of an OSD in the Public Service pensionable salary increases for the period of three years as follows, 5.5% salary increases in 2025/26, projected CPI for the financial year 2026/27 and same in 2027/28. In addition to the wage increase, the government has proposed and agreed to the below adjustments to various allowances, including:
 - *Housing Allowance*: Increased from R1 784 to R1 900 starting on 1 April 2025, with further adjustments based on CPI for the 2025/26 financial year.
 - *Medical-Aid Subsidy*: Adjusted in line with the Medical Price Index (MPI) for 2026/27 and 2027/28, with an additional 0.5% added to MPI, compared to the previous offer of MPI alone.
 - *Danger Allowance*: Increased from R623.29 to R650 for the 2025/26 financial year, with future increases tied to CPI.
 - *Special Danger Allowance*: Adjusted from R931.82 to R950 on 1 April 2025, with further increases based on CPI for the 2025/26 financial year and beyond.
 - *Police Service Allowance*: Increased from R700 to R950 starting on 1 April 2025, with subsequent adjustments based on CPI from 2026/27 onward.
- The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa has welcomed the signing of an above-inflation wage agreement as part of the Plastic Industry Main Collective Agreement (PIMCA). NUMSA, representing the majority of the 34 000 workers nationally in this sub-sector of the Metals Engineering Industries Bargaining Council (MEIBC), signed the agreement alongside several employer associations. The agreement was effective from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028 and included wage increases of 7% followed by 6% increases in each of the next two years.
- The two largest unions at the Passenger Rail Agency of SA (PRASA), the United National Transport Union (UNTU) and the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (SATAWU), has accepted the rail operator's final wage offer of 5.5% for 2025/26 after a mandate-seeking process yielded positive results. The SATAWU and UNTU'S consolidated wage demands had included a 15% across-the-board wage increase, R3 000 housing subsidy, a standby allowance of R50/hour, a night shift allowance of R10/hour, a moratorium on retrenchments and a medical aid subsidy, with the employer contributing 70%. The agreement was reached on the 24 July 2025 with implementation of August 2025 payroll.
- Gautrain's Bombela Operating Company and NUMSA sealed a 4.2% wage agreement. Parties agreed on a one-year above-inflation deal after employees voted against striking BL Premium on 17 July 2025. The agreement was reached after the union's wage demand of 7% increase while the employer was offering a 4.2% wage increment.
- The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa and companies in the pharmaceutical sector have signed a **two-year wage agreement** on 14 August 2025. The deal would see the sector's 10 000 workers getting an increase of 5.5% from 1 July 2025, which would rise to 6% from January 2026. Another increase of 5.5% would



apply from July 2026, increasing to 6% from January 2027. It is alleged that workers would now receive 75% of their basic salary for the first four months, up from 45% for six months. The agreement would be extended to non-party employers to ensure broader protection for workers across the sector on 14 August 2025.

- The National Union of Metalworkers of SA (NUMSA) and companies in the motor industry signed a **multi-term** above-inflation wage deal on the 24 August 2025. A deal was reached for increases of up to 6% in the first year, 5% in the second year and 5% in the final year of the agreement. The wage deal was set to benefit more than 300 000 workers falling under the Motor Industries Bargaining Council (MIBCO). The employers at MIBCO were represented by the Retail Motor Industry Organization (RMI) and the Fuel Retailers Association (FRA). The motor sector comprises employees in component manufacturing companies, fuel stations, car dealerships, tire shops, aftermarket sales, glass-fitment centres, car cleaning, car parts assembly and panel-beating workshops. According to the agreement, forecourt attendants would receive increases of 6%, 5% and 4% over the three-year period, while cashiers would receive pay hikes of 6%, 4% and another 4%. The union also secured primary healthcare benefits for the first time for garage workers in the sector.
- Workers in the sugar manufacturing and refining industry have secured a 6.5% wage increase through a **one-year** agreement facilitated by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). Trade union United Association of South Africa (UASA), which represented workers in the talks, confirmed that the wage agreement applied to all employees within the A1 to C3 job grades and was backdated to 1 April 2025. This wage increase brought relief and renewed hope to workers as it translated directly into better living standards and improved financial stability for thousands of workers in the sector.
- The Bargaining Council for the Civil Engineering Industry (BCCEI) had concluded a new **three-year settlement** for two of its collective agreements in the civil engineering sector. The agreement was officially signed on 4 August 2025 by employer organizations, the Consolidated Employees Organization of South Africa (CEO) and the South African Forum of Civil Engineering Contractors (SAFCEC) together with trade unions, the Building, Construction and Allied Workers Union (BCAWU) and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). In terms of wage adjustments, all employees covered by the new Wage and Task Grade Collective Agreement would receive an across-the-board increase of 6% in the first year, followed by increases of 5.5% in the second and third years, respectively.
- The Automobile Manufacturers Employers Organization (AMEO) and NUMSA concluded a **three-year wage agreement**, thereby averting a potential strike in South Africa's automotive sector. The agreement provides for a 7% wage increase in the first year, followed by increases of 5.5% in the second and third years, as well as a once-off gratuity of R12 500 and improved benefits. The settlement followed initial deadlocks and strike threats, with NUMSA having demanded increases of 9% in the first year and 8% in the outer years, later calling on employers to consider an 8% increase in the first year and 6% in the second and third years. The agreement applies to major manufacturers including Toyota, Ford, BMW and Mercedes-Benz, providing certainty and stability for both workers and the industry.
- About 3 000 workers in the glass sector secured above-inflation wage increases after NUMSA reached a **two-year agreement** with employers on 30 July 2025. The deal provides for a 5.5% increase in 2025 and 6% in 2026, raises the monthly minimum wage from R8 700 to R9 300 and will be extended to non-party employers to ensure sector-wide benefits.
- On 2 December 2025, Sibanye-Stillwater announced the successful conclusion of a **three-year wage agreement** at its South African gold operations in Johannesburg, following negotiations that began in July 2025. The agreement reached with AMCU, NUM, UASA and Solidarity would run from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028 and provide for an estimated average annual basic wage increase of approximately 5.4% across the bargaining unit, including benefits. Under the agreement, Category 4-8 employees will receive increases of the greater of R850 or 4.5% in year one, R900 or 4.8% in year two and R1 000 or 5.0% in year three, while miners, artisans and officials will receive percentage increases of 4.5%, 4.8% and 5.0% over the three years, respectively. This settlement followed earlier tensions in negotiations, during which Sibanye-Stillwater had initially offered a R650 increase, prompting unions to consolidate their demands in October 2025 to R1 300 for the lowest paid workers and 6.5% for higher level employees.

3.2.2. Abandoned strike incidents

- Union members at CHEP SA PTY (LTD) went on strike from 21 August to 19 December 2025 over a wage increase demand of R2 500 against the employer of 5.5 %. Due to a deadlock during negotiations members returned to work with no agreement being reached.
- NUMSA union members embarked on strike on 18 July 2025 against DENEL. The union was demanding 7% against the employer offer of 4-45 %. Members decided to return to work after both parties could not reach an agreement.
- In the South African Airways Pilots Association and National Transport Movement against the South African Airways, the unions embarked on strike action after no agreement was reached on their demand for a wage increase of CPI (+ 3% or 7.66%) or an average staff increase of +3%, whichever was higher for the 2025 and 2026 financial years. After no agreement was reached, the workers returned to work.
- In YKWUSA Tzaneen Spar, members embarked on strike action demanding a 10% salary increase, against the employer's offer of 4.4%. No agreement was reached and the employees subsequently returned to work.



CONCLUSION

Over the five years, South Africa experienced a persistent pattern of industrial action marked by frequent strikes across various industries, with a decline in strikes in 2025 involving temporary and permanent workers. In the literature, strike incidence is found to be elevated in establishments where union density is higher and workers are covered by mixed-level collective agreements.

The analysis provided in the Annual Industrial Action (AIA) report 2025 in comparison with 2024 shows that South Africa's labour market has gradually moved toward labour market stability despite persistent economic pressures and structural constraints. While the number of strike incidents was significant, lower the overall impact in terms of worker participation, duration of strikes and wages lost declined over the same period. Specifically, 114 work stoppages were reported in 2024, resulting in an estimated R133 million in wages lost, with 832 490 working days lost in 2024 compared to R47 million in 2025 with 227 247 working days lost in 2025, indicating shorter and less disruptive strikes.

Wage-related disputes remained the main driver of industrial action, accounting for over 30% of strikes with the local government and public institutions, that were largely affected due to financial pressures within the community industry. Notwithstanding this, success in settling wage demands above-inflation wage in several industries was noted. However, the local authority and health sectors had limited real wage growth for some workers. Other key productive industries, including manufacturing and transport, continued to experience industrial disputes in some of their sectors, emphasizing the ongoing importance of collective bargaining.

Overall, the decline in the frequency of strikes and lockouts and wages lost between 2024 and 2025 signals a prospect of a stable labour market with less economic disruptions that enhanced productivity and disposable income among companies. In addition, the rate of unprotected strikes persisted in some companies but declined in 2025, signaling some compliance level to labour laws and the effectiveness of dispute-resolution mechanisms. These trends likely supported economic performance that has been shown with subsequent GDP growth during the period of a slow global and domestic economy.

Finally, the reduction in working days lost, lower wage losses and the prevalence of effective wage negotiation settlements should be maintained, which could lead to a consistent improvement in the South African labour market. By fostering early engagement, promoting multi-year agreements, avoiding potential long strikes duration and ensuring wage settlements are aligned with economic realities, that can enhance and protect workers' real incomes, and reduce disruptions during production chain and minimize the financial impact of strikes. In this context, the DEL will continue to support and develop evidence-based policy interventions, strengthen bargaining councils and facilitate dialogue among social partners to ensure fair, transparent and sustainable labour practices that contribute to inclusive economic growth. This is in line with the strategic view of the Government of National Unity (GNU).

Key points for policy considerations

- The South African government must pursue significant reform effort and address many of structural constraints. Continuing with this progress will help rebuild potential growth as supply constraints ease, business and investor confidence increase and job creation initiatives accelerate.
- Policymakers to note the importance of the financial impact of strikes. This is a significant feature that must be factored into the decision-making process. Unfortunately, this requires further research since the information collected through LRA 9.2 form is limited.
- The literature underlines that the wage lost (at the time of the strike) for worker may be significant based on the difference between the percentage increase settled on, employer's offer, the length of the strike in days and the interest rate used as a proxy for the cost for money. *The report's conclusions, however, highlight the need for more investigation to ascertain the financial toll that the strikes and lockouts have taken on the employers' side.*

Limitations of the strikes data coverage

The implications of the following limitations are significant, leading to inaccurate reporting of strikes collection and thus ultimately affects our ability to effectively analyse strike data and coverage:

- Many employers are hesitant to share details about strikes, fearing that doing so may lead to accusations of non-compliance with labour laws. This concern is not without merit, as there have been cases where disclosures were utilized as evidence in labour disputes, potentially resulting in court settlements.
- Often smaller businesses lack the resources to document strikes thoroughly. Strikes occurring in informal settings often go unreported unless mentioned on social media, resulting in limited coverage and inaccurate data collection.
- Many employers sometimes avoid disclosing strike actions to maintain a positive public image. Admitting to strikes can imply poor labour relations, which could deter investors or customers as it is alleged.

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ANNEXURE A

Profile of work stoppages, 2025

To comprehend the workplace conflicts, we have profiled work stoppages by the date they occurred. With a chronological viewpoint, employers, policy makers and labour organizations may foresee possible disruptions and take prompt action to moderate strike actions. Below are the ways that striking activities occurred and were monitored daily from the 1st January to 31st December 2025⁶ through direct and indirect communication with the affected employers and other employer associations in the Department of Employment and Labor's media monitoring data system.

January 2025

- Workers affiliated with Nehawu embarked on an indefinite strike at the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications in Pretoria. They have downed tools over a salary dispute. The employees were also accusing the organization of freezing posts and withholding bonuses. **Source: You Tube,1 January 2025.**
- Mammothlake Hospital's water crisis forced healthcare workers to strike. The Department of Health in Mpumalanga has attributed the 20-day water shortage at Mmametlhake Hospital to a broken water pump, which disrupted healthcare services and forced workers to down tools due to the insufficient water supply. The hospital, located in the Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality, serves a population of 254 331. Opened in May 2024, the hospital has failed to meet its promise of providing accessible healthcare to scores of community members. The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) has expressed deep concern over the situation, labelling the water shortage a violation of human rights. **Source: IOL News,9 January 2025.**
- Over a hundred employees have embarked on a strike action at all nature reserves managed by the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency. This came after the agency announced that it was facing financial difficulties and plans to implement cost-cutting measures, including job cuts. The strike has forced the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) to temporarily close all its nature reserves, leaving tourists wishing to visit the sites with no choice but to go elsewhere. **Source: Sabc 19 January 2025**

February 2025

- Healthcare workers affiliated with the Public Servants Association (PSA) picketed outside the Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital in Umlazi, south of Durban. Workers have been complaining about poor working conditions, that the hospital has been without water for two weeks affecting hygiene and patient care. According to the workers, the hospital is also facing a critical shortage of medication. **Source: Sabc News,10 February 2025.**
- Some of the staff at Kruger Adventure Lodge in Hazyview embarked on a protest after complaining about being underpaid and that those who have joined a labour union are being retrenched. The protest started at the lodge's gate on 28 January 2025. The disgruntled staff members had approached the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) on several occasions, but it failed to resolve their issues. Despite the DEL visiting the lodge, interacting with the staff and taking note of the working conditions, nothing has changed. According to the staff, they are being paid less than the South African national minimum wage (NMW) of R27.79 an hour. **Source: Mpumalanga News,10 February 2025.**
- Members of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) in KwaZulu-Natal picketed outside Woodburn Rugby Stadium during the official event to mark the opening of the KZN Legislature. The first day of the Legislature opening includes an address by Zulu King Misuzulu kaZwelithini while Premier Thami Ntuli will deliver the State of the Province address on Friday. The protest was in response to the union's unresolved grievances with the Office of the Speaker concerning working conditions and employment practices. The union has raised several grievances, including the failure to compensate workers for overtime hours, the necessity of insourcing currently contracted staff members and the urgent need to fill vacant positions. They also demanded the implementation of the developmental policy, which aims to enhance the skills and capabilities of the workforce, a comprehensive review of job evaluation procedures to ensure fairness and equity and the adoption of cost-cutting measures that do not unfairly burden employees. Furthermore, the union has called for the provision of post-retirement medical aid, car allowances for eligible employees and the absorption of contract managers with five years of service into permanent positions within the KZN Legislature. **Source: The Mercury,27 February 2025.**



March 2025

- The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) at Tradekor (Pty)Ltd and Thembis's People in the Eastern Cape have embarked on a protected strike in pursuit of fair working conditions, improved wages and respect for employee rights. The strike, which commenced on 3 March comes after failed negotiations between the NUM and the management of the two companies. Despite numerous attempts to engage with both companies in good faith, the employees' concerns have been ignored, leaving them with no choice but to exercise their constitutional right to strike. **Source: Num Media statement,3 March 2025.**
- The cops picketed outside the gate of Tshwane Metro Police Department (TMPD) on Tuesday, 4 March. According to the executive of TMPD, officials had not considered them when there were promotional posts. **Source: Daily Sun 4 March 2025.**
- The Deeds Office in Johannesburg has ground to a halt with more than 5 000 property transfer files unattended as staff protest over unsafe working conditions in the Marble Towers building in the CBD. The Deeds Office provides critical services and the disruptions are affecting thousands of people, businesses and the economy. **The Citizen,10 March 2025.**
- Johannesburg Metrobus operations remained suspended due to drivers' strike. Commuters had to look for alternative transport after drivers decided to stop working. Employees affiliated with the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) were striking over wages. **Source: IOL News,11 March 2025.**
- Traffic officers in Msunduzi Municipality held a picket on Wednesday in the Pietermaritzburg CBD. The traffic officers raised a raft of issues, including delayed payment of overtime, lack of resources, abuse of power and management failures. According to South African Municipal Workers' Union leader, officers had previously lodged complaints against a senior manager for worker abuse, assault of junior staff and threats against an employee, but these issues were not addressed. **Source: The Mercury,12 March 2025.**
- City of Ekurhuleni (EMPD) officers embarked on a strike action over pay cuts. Officers were frustrated and demanded the reinstatement of their overtime hours after the City of Ekurhuleni officially reduced overtime from 40 to 16 hours per month, effective from 1 March 2025, as a cost-saving measure. **Source: The Citizen,12 March 2025.**
- The South African Airways Pilots embarked on a strike amid pay dispute. The South African Airways expressed "deep regret" over a decision by members of two associations, SAA Pilots Association (SAAPA) and National Transport Movement (NTM) to embark on 'work-to-rule" industrial action. **Source: Algoa Fm,19 March 2025.**
- The Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) grappled with operational disruptions due to an unprotected strike by its employees. The striking workers were demanding permanent appointments for temporary staff whose contracts were set to expire at the end of March 2025. The industrial action has led to the closure of several key tourist attractions in the province, raising concerns about the impact on the local tourism industry and the broader economy. Their closure posed a significant setback to the province's tourism sector, which is still recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Source: Mpumalanga News, 23 March 2025**

April 2025

- On 1 April the South Africans Radical Union of Workers (SARUW) marched to the M.J Labs offices in Silverton, Tshwane, to hand over their memorandum of demands. The workers demanded a salary increase as the cost of living is very high, also demanding better working conditions. **Source: Daily Sun, 1 April 2025.**
- The South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) in the Eastern Cape marched to the Buffalo City Metro Municipality on Tuesday,8 April over issues affecting its members and the city. The march aimed to highlight alleged financial mismanagement, corruption within the metro, union-bashing and a breach of labour rights amongst other matters. The union reported that "The bone of contention was the attack on the collective agreement, especially sections 84-1A and 85 of labour relations, which talks about the consultation that had to take place between management and labour, which is not happening in Buffalo City. On the other hand, there was non-payment of the COVID and danger allowances, which is a long-standing issue which they promised to pay at the time there was COVID. **Source: Sabc News,8 April 2025.**



- South African Municipal Workers Union in Tshwane went on strike demanding the City of Tshwane to honour the historical wage agreement, which includes salary increases of 3.5% and 5.4% from 2021 and 2023, respectively. The union describes the outstanding salary increases for municipal workers as a “festering injustice” that remains unresolved due to ongoing labour court processes. **Source: IOL News, 13 April 2025.**
- More than 40 farm workers employed by the Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency (Mega), Tekwane Citrus Farm were dismissed without warning only to be offered six-month contracts after a two-week protest demanding reinstatement. The protest erupted after workers received termination letters dated 31 March instructing them not to return to work the next day. **Source: Sunday World, 17 April 2025.**
- The National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers (Nupsaw) went on strike demanding the permanent absorption of 1 600 community health workers (CHWs), as well as health facility assistants, in the Northern Cape on salary level 3, with benefits. Marches and pickets were held in Kuruman, Groblershoop and Heuningsvlei to protest over poor working conditions and the termination of contracts for CHWs who are over the pensionable age of 65, as of 31 March 2025. Memorandums were handed over, giving the Northern Cape Department of Health seven days to respond to the workers’ demands. **Source: DFA, 17 April 2025.**
- On 23 April, Makana Municipality workers affiliated to Samwu staged a picket outside City Hall to demand protective clothing, among many other grievances. **Source: Facebook news, 23 April 2025**
- The start of the council meeting on 24 April was disrupted by a group of Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium workers over job contracts. Workers went on a protest to demand the end of month-to-month contracts. It is alleged that about 20 protesters responsible for cleaning the stadium grounds and hospitality services for events walked into the meeting and lined up at the front, displaying signs to stunned councilors. **Source: The Herald 25 April 2025**

May 2025

- Patients from the Clinics in Kimberley were unable to collect their chronic medication or access health-care services due to strike action when the gates to the clinics in the city closed down. Nehawu provincial secretary reported that members marched to the district offices in the ZF Mgcawu, Pixley ka Seme, John Taolo Gaetsewe, and Namakwa districts on 2 May demanding answers over delayed salaries. **Source: DFA, 2 May 2025**
- Staff at the Uitenhage Provincial Hospital downed tools on Monday 5 May 2025, staging a picket over staff shortages, unsafe working conditions and ongoing union squabbles. The protest, held at the Channer Street hospital, drew a string of healthcare workers demanding immediate intervention from the Eastern Cape health department. **Source, The Herald, 5 May 2025**
- About 100 employees of the National Lotteries Commission (NLC) marched from their offices to the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition in Pretoria, complaining about wages, working conditions and the “modernization” of the NLC. Protesters dressed in the black T-shirts of the Public Servants Association (PSA) were joined by a few members of the National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers. It is alleged, that the protest followed weeks of picketing by employees after wage negotiations for the 2025/26 financial year deadlocked when the PSA was demanding an 8.5% increase from the NLC’s offer of 6.5%. **Source: Ground UP 9 May 2025.**
- Waste removal and maintenance of lifeguard’s services were disrupted as municipal workers from KwaDukuza belonging to SAMWU, downed tools over the municipality’s job grading process, calling the system unfair. **Source: The Citizen 9 May 2025.**
- Staff at the Helen Bishop Home in Kimberley embarked on strike action suspending their services after promises of outstanding April salaries failed to materialize. Tires were set alight outside the Centre while the police were called to the scene. Workers stated that while they were essential staff, but because of starvation they no longer had the strength to continue to care for their vulnerable patients. **Source: DFA, 16 May 2025.**
- On 28 May, Satawu led a march on behalf of Great North Transport over unpaid provident funds. Limpopo’s union-led march, which started at SABC Park and proceeded to Ledet’s offices, aimed to protest alleged maladministration, statutory non-compliance, and unpaid Provident Fund contributions at GNT. **Source: The Citizen, 28 May 2025.**

- Workers at the Mafube Local Municipality downed tools after outstanding salaries, sparking a strike that has brought service delivery to a standstill. The striking workers alleged they are enough with continued delays in salary payments and are demanding immediate intervention from municipal leadership and the free state provincial government. **Source: Central News - X,29 May 2025.**

June 2025

- Operations at Barberton District Hospital in Mpumalanga have been disrupted after a group of armed intruders stormed the facility during a night shift over the weekend of the 3rd of May, prompting some health workers to down tools in protest over safety concerns. It was confirmed that due to a limited number of security personnel on duty during the night shift, the suspects were able to gain access to the hospital without resistance. As a result of the incident, a decision was taken to deploy additional guards, armed response with a vehicle, to try and beef up the situation until normality returns. **Source: Jacaranda FM,3 June 2025**
- The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) members at Samancor's Waterkloof Operations in Rustenburg marched to the company's offices in North West, against wage offer. The workers went on strike demanding that the company equalize its wages between all Samancor mines and smelters. **Source: Sabc News, 4 June 2025**
- A protest action at the Middelburg Provincial Hospital by doctors and nurses went in full swing presumably affecting the provision of medical services on 6 June. Hospital personnel were striking due to overtime grievances and the decaying hospital conditions. It is alleged the decaying conditions at the hospital have been a pressing issue for several years, with overgrown premises. **Source: The Citizen,6 June 2025.**
- The South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), on behalf of its members and employees at Umhlathuze Local Municipality, commenced over a protected strike action. The protected strike action, commencing on 17 June, stems from a comprehensive list of grievances, including but not limited to:
 - Persistent unfair dismissals and a pattern of victimization against union-affiliated employees,
 - Gross Negligence in Workplace Safety and Security,
 - Non-Compliance with Employment Equity and Disability Inclusion: **Source: Samwu Web News,17 June 2025.**
- NUMSA affiliated workers staged a protest at Denel over delayed 7 percent wage increase. Union has demanding a salary increase for the past five years, with no success. The union alleged that members were demanding that the members of the board of Denel implement an increase that has been promised to workers for five financial years. **Source: EWN. 18 June 2025.**
- Refuse removers from the Middleburg municipal solid waste department went on strike demanding that they be promoted to higher salary classifications, with general workers demanding a bump from T4 classification to T5. Drivers currently on T7 classifications are demanding an upgrade to T9. It has been reported that workers have locked the gates at the municipal stores, escalating the situation by keeping other employees from accessing the workplace. **Source: The Citizen,23 June 2025**
- Employees of the Nkomazi Municipality in Mpumalanga have downed tools over outstanding salaries on 26 June 2025. Workers alleged that management informed them that they will not receive their full June month-end salaries due to severe financial constraints. **Source: Sabc News,26 June 2025**

July 2025

- Operations at Super Spar Tzaneen came to a standstill on 1 July as more than 50 employees downed tools and staged a protest outside the store, demanding a 10% salary increase and the end of alleged nepotism within the company. The disgruntled workers, holding placards and singing struggle songs, gathered peacefully outside the store's entrance, vowing to continue picketing until their voices are heard. **Source: Tzaneen Voice,1 July 2025.**
- Employees of the Ratlou Local Municipality near Mahikeng began a strike on 1 July, protesting over a range of unresolved issues, including the non-recognition of their trade union, unfair recruitment practices and the irregular appointment of acting officials without proper procedures. Workers, supported by unions SAMWU and



IMATU, gathered outside the municipal offices in Setlagole, chanting slogans and holding placards demanding fair labour practices and transparency. Among their key concerns was the alleged bloated municipal staff structure, which they claim consumes 60% of the operational budget. **Source: Sabc News, 1 July 2025.**

- About 100 workers of Daybreak Farm in Delmas at a Mpumalanga poultry farm where thousands of chickens had to be slaughtered as they had no food and started cannibalizing each other, staged a protest on the morning of 2 July over unpaid June salaries. **Source: SowetanLIVE, 2 July 2025**
- Residents of Rustenburg and surrounding villages in the Northwest have been left stranded as employees of Bojanala Bus Services went on strike. Democratic Municipal and Allied Workers Unions of South Africa (Demawusa) members embarked on a protected strike demanding fair labour practices. For participation on the strike, the employer decided to dismiss over a hundred employees. **Source: Sabc News, 16 July 2025.**
- Boomerang Fruits workers in Cape Town caused disruptions at the farms following a dispute over overtime wages that spiraled into a wildcat strike and social media campaign against its management. It is alleged on 25 April, a payroll error led to 35 workers at Boomerang's Elgin packhouse receiving incorrect overtime payments, short by just R120 to R176 per person. **Source: IOL News, 18 July 2025.**
- Tshwane workers were stopped from picketing despite having permission under the Gatherings Act, triggering outrage. A group of Tshwane municipal workers staged a march action on 22 July over outstanding 3.5 percent salary increases and the reinstate of 182 employees who were dismissed after the municipal strike in 2021. **Source: The Citizen, 22 July 2025.**

August 2025

- Workers of North West Transport Investment (NTI), a subsidiary of North West Star, a wholly owned company of the NW provincial government embarked on a shutdown over unpaid salaries. **Source: OFM, 1 August 2025**
- Tensions rose on 5 August as staff members at Spar Supermarket in Acornhoek Mall, Mpumalanga, staged a protest outside their workplace. Allegedly the employees were demanding fair wages with the protest believed to be fueled by a dispute over salaries between workers and management. Shoppers arriving at the store were met with closed doors and signs of unrest as staff voiced their concerns in hopes of reaching an agreement. **Source: Mkhuhlu Online, 5 August 2025.**
- Demanding recognition of their union, workers based in Thaba Nchu town of Free State province, have started an indefinite strike at Big5 Cookware manufacturer, which describes itself as South Africa's "largest supplier and brand leader of cookware products. Faced with the company's refusal for union recognition, the union escalated a labour dispute before the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). **Source: People's Dispatch, 5 August 2025.**
- The controversy erupted when NEHAWU members marched to Ithala's Durban offices on 7 August 2025, presenting a memorandum of demands to the board chairperson and the KwaZulu-Natal department of economic development, tourism and environmental affairs. The memorandum highlighted alleged financial mismanagement, negligence in infrastructure maintenance, and a decline in the investment environment. Specific complaints included decaying industrial estates with 40% vacancy rates, the departure of key tenants like Defy and Mensu, and non-operational shopping centres despite insurance payouts. **Source: TimesLive, 7 August 2025.**
- Truck drivers affiliated with the Tirisano Transport and Services Workers Union went on strike on 11 August at Autoforce Kalahari in Markman. The strike came eight months after Kalahari tried to commence retrenchments in December 2025. A group of drivers with the Tirisano Transport and Service Workers Union picketed outside the facility, levelling several allegations against the company including unfair labour practices and failure to pay provident fund contributions. **Source: The Herald, 12 August 2025.**
- The strike by municipal workers of the Modimolle-Mookgophong Local Municipality has led to significant service delivery disruptions in Naboomspruit (Mookgophong). The strike stemmed from a wage dispute dating back to the merger of the Modimolle and Mookgophong Local Municipalities in 2016. **Source: Facebook News, 19 August 2025**
- More than 2 000 permanent and contracted employees at the Lucky Star fish processing plant and its



associated Amawandle Pelagic Fishing plant in the Western Cape have initiated an indefinite strike, protesting unilateral and unjust actions by their employer, Oceana Group. The strike came in response to Oceana's alleged withdrawal of a seasonal allowance previously granted to workers, replacing it with a 13th cheque that has been deemed inferior. The union was also demanding the reinstatement of the full-time shop steward position, the reopening of the union office on-site and the immediate restoration of the previously held seasonal allowance.

Source: The Mercury 21 August 2025.

- On Thursday 21 August, workers at CHEP SA (Jet Park) went on a protective strike outside the warehouse in Boksburg. The reason for the strike was over the delayed outcome from the CHEP management. The workers' demands were:
 - Wage increases of R2 500 per month across the board
 - Share Scheme
 - Study Assistance
 - Housing allowance of R5 000
 - Medical Aid
 - Branded CHEP PPE
 - Pay slips directly from CHEP. **Source: Ground UP 21 August 2025.**
- Tensions escalated outside the depot, as a group of Msunduzi waste workers under the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) from Msunduzi Municipality expressed frustration over what they describe as municipality turning a blind eye to their concerns. Gathering outside the Havelock Road offices, a group of 259 EPWP who were employed on a 12-month contract blocked the entrance, demanding decent wages, permanent employment and proper protective clothing. **The Witness, 23 August 2025**
- The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) set an intense strike action at a steel maker, Macsteel on 22 August over what it has labelled hostile retrenchments. NUMSA accused the company of forcefully retrenching workers and issuing voluntary severance packages without consulting the union. **Source: Sabc News, 25 August 2025.**

September 2025

- Workers affiliated with the Municipal Employee Civil and Servant Union (MECSU) have embarked on a strike in Ekurhuleni on 15 September. This comes after a Labour Court ruling that barred the union from picketing at the municipal offices' entrances and exits. The union wanted an end to the outsourcing of services, including security and contract workers, to be converted into permanent employees. **Source: Jacaranda FM: 15 September 2025**
- On 16 September, hundreds of South African Municipal Workers' Union members marched down Oxford Street in East London over the outsourcing of primary services, including waste collection, water, sanitation and electricity and creating a parallel work force that enriches entrepreneurs. The union's other grievances included unpaid covid incentives, salary disparities between workers doing the same job and Public Works permanent employment of the temporary employers. **Source: Groundup, 16 September 2025**

October 2025

- More than 150 pupils with severe intellectual disabilities have missed school for almost a month and a half because of a strike by the hostel staff. Boarding pupils from Estralita School in Mashishing, Mpumalanga, including those with epilepsy, cerebral palsy and autism, have not had any lessons since 1 September, but had hoped to return to class when schools reopened for the fourth term. Meanwhile staff have raised concerns regarding late hour working allowances". **Source: News24, 15 October 2025**
- More than 200 Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers marched in Johannesburg on Monday, 20 October demanding the end to short-term contracts. The march was organized by the Independent Liberation and Allied Workers Union (Ilawu). Joining the march were former EPWP workers from the housing company, former and current community healthcare workers, workers from community policing forums (CPF), and former



members of the Sawubona Mhlali Service Delivery Brigades. **Source: Grounup, 20 October 2025**

November 2025

- Ekapa Mine general in Kimberly has reported that workers affiliated to National Union of Mine Workers of South Africa (Numsa) had embarked on an unprotected strike due to lay-offs. It is alleged Numsa and its affiliate's illegal activities have disrupted operations and prevented employees from going to work, which has resulted in substantial revenue losses. **Source: DAF, 3 November 2025.**
- South Africa's largest domestic airline, FlySafair has entered a rare employer-initiated work stoppage after wage negotiations with the South African Cabin Crew Association (Sacca) broke down on Monday night, 3 November. The low-cost carrier says it took this step "to facilitate a swift and orderly resolution" rather than wait for a strike that might have caused "maximum disruption to the flying public". It is alleged cabin crew were expected to work through legally mandated lunch breaks, sometimes without access to proper rest facilities or even the ability to eat on duty. Additional cabin crews rejected FlySafair's offer of 7% salary increase, 5% annual bonus, experience-based pay progression and additional monthly allowances. **Source: Daily Maverick, 5 November 2025.**
- National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu) in Mpumalanga shuts down pathology services at two services from Monday 17 November, calling on the Department of Health address their unresolved grievances. The union alleged they were concerned about the lack of staff and tools of trade to perform their duties. **Source: Daily Sun 23 November 2025.**
- The Nearly 100 Nelson Mandela Bay infrastructure and engineering workers descended on City Hall demanding four months' worth of unpaid overtime from acting city manager. **Source: The Herald 25 November 2025.**
- Employees of the Free State Gambling, Liquor and Tourism Authority affiliated with the education and health union Nehawu went up in arms demanding intervention over salary increases, alleged maladministration and other grievances. On Tuesday 25 November, workers entered the second day of protest action outside the authority's Bloemfontein offices claiming that the entity has failed to honor agreed salary increments of 5% and 2.5% for the 2024/2025 financial year. They also claimed they were still owed increases for 2025/2026 and accuse management of stalling negotiations and refusing to engage meaningfully. Workers have vowed to continue their picket until their demands were addressed, insisting the authority can no longer operate without accountability and transparency. **Source: OFM News, 25 November 2025.**

December 2025

- Security guards and cleaning staff deployed by Diphetogo at the Knysna Municipality staged a protest in front of the municipal building in Clyde Street on 4 December 2025. Security guards and cleaning staff embarked on a strike due to delayed annual bonuses that were expected at the end of October. Tensions have escalated as several workers involved in the action were reportedly suspended, heightening friction between employees, the company and the municipality. **Source: Knysna-Plett Herald, 4 December 2025**

ANNEXURE B

Data Appendix

The following supplementary tables contain data not included in the main report:

Table B.1: Distribution of work stoppages and wages lost by province 2021-2025

Province	Work stoppages					Wages lost Total (R)				Wages lost Total (R)	
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total ®
Gauteng	60	50	35	48	29	86 378 633	913 467 431	74 131 444	70 729 504	27 536 111	1,172,243,123
Western Cape	18	9	15	12	7	30 116 880	5 130 914	5 413 760	2 459 435	5 169,874	48,290,863
Mpumalanga	5	6	6	15	14	1 479 685	34 112 379	7 274 997	109 452	784,268	43,760,781
KwaZulu-Natal	27	12	16	22	10	19 985 044	18 630 070	30 188 236	9 602 392	2,763,738	81,169,480
Eastern Cape	15	20	4	22	17	28 121 057	2 668 569	3 093 097	5 956 669	3,217,255	43,056,647
Limpopo	1	7	4	8	5	350 000	285 301 737	0	171 707	245,888	286,069,332
North-West	5	8	7	6	2	36 969 646	23 862 699	118 766	38 335 338	3,000,000	102,286,449
Northern Cape	2	1	7	4	5	13 334 146	732 092	20 532 160	805 755	2,466,182	37,870,335
Free State	2	0	7	4	5	1744 561	0	10 941 297	5 189 088	2,147,579	20,022,525
TOTAL	135	113	101	141	94	266 898 061	447 554 053	151 693 757	133 359 340	47,330,895	1,834,769,535

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2021-2025

24. The total number of work stoppages differs from the total of strikes at the national level. This is due to national work stoppages that may affect a number of branches or establishments in the nine provinces, being counted as one in the national but according to workplaces affected in several provinces being counted more than once.

Table B.2: Distribution of employees involved by industry, 2021-2025

Industry (SIC)	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Agriculture	1 386	4 186	5 494	233	4 719
Mining	43 513	73 040	12 179	15 901	833
Manufacturing	28 164	11 579	3 297	8 466	4 277
Utilities	0	2 763	0	684	238
Construction	0	0	415	945	324
Trade	4 565	12 057	5 615	1 652	338
Transport	879	24 063	1 608	2 936	1 823
Finance	166	3 919	45	232	867
Community	11 626	21 920	39 870	34 452	17 120
TOTAL	90 299	153 527	68 523	65 501	30 539

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2021-2025

Table B.4: Distribution of working days by cause of working conditions by industry, 2025

Industry	Disciplinary	Grievances	Other Compensation	Other Reasons	Refusal	Retrenchment / Dismissals	Secondary strike	Socio-Economic	Trade Union	Wages	Working	Total
Agriculture	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	6
Mining	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Manufacturing	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	8
Utilities	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Construction	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Trade	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
Transport	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	11
Finance	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Community	0	15	9	2	1	0	0	1	0	5	19	52
TOTAL	1	19	19	8	2	2	0	2	2	13	22	90

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2025





Table B.5: Number of strikes lasting fewer than five days per Industry, 2025

Industry (ISIC)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Agriculture	1	1	0	0	2
Mining	1	0	0	0	1
Manufacturing	1	1	1	0	3
Utilities	0	1	0	0	1
Construction	1	0	1	0	2
Trade	0	0	2	1	3
Transport	1	1	1	0	3
Finance	1	0	1	0	2
Community	11	17	5	2	35
TOTAL	17	21	11	3	52

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2025

Table B.6: Number of strikes lasting five days or longer by industry.

Industry (ISIC)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Agriculture	0	2	2	0	4
Mining	0	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	2	0	2	1	5
Utilities	1	0	0	0	1
Construction	0	1	0	0	1
Trade	0	0	0	0	0
Transport	3	1	3	1	8
Finance	0	1	0	0	1
Community	7	4	2	4	17
TOTAL	13	9	9	7	38

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2025

ANNEXURE C

Table C.1: Number of workers involved, working days lost and working hours lost by industry/sector, 2025

Industry/Sector	Workers involved	Working days lost	Working hours lost
Finance	867	4 032	32 274
Financial intermediation, except insurance and pension funding	656	656	5 266
Other service activities	211	3 376	27 008
Construction	324	2 795	25 155
Construction of buildings	9	9	81
Construction of civil engineering structures	315	2 786	25 074
Utilities	238	2 914	23 426
Electricity, gas, steam and hot water supply	38	114	1 026
Collection, purification and distribution of water	200	2 800	22 400
Trade	338	998	7 804
Wholesale trade in agricultural raw & materials & livestock	338	998	7 804
Manufacturing	4 277	62 941	561 538
Basic metals, fabricated metal products, machinery and equipment	3 008	44 968	360 100
Manufacture of furniture; manufacturing n.e.c.; recycling	168	14 616	164 430
Manufacture of textiles, clothing and leather goods	337	2 593	30 896
Manufacture of transport equipment	764	764	6 112
Community, social and personal services	17 120	74 480	667 732
Education	3 299	5 347	49 016
Health and social work	3 601	15 248	177 124
Local Authority	8 972	48 116	385 648
Other community, social and personal services activities	55	55	440
Other services activities	64	704	6 336
Public administration and defence activities	553	880	7 040
Recreation, cultural and sporting activities	434	1 858	14 864
Security Services	142	2 272	27 264
Mining and quarrying	833	20 561	245 592
Metal ores, except gold and uranium	833	20 561	245 592
Transport, storage and communication	1 823	35 237	259 748
Air transport	531	5 405	61 620
Land transport; transport via pipelines	75	300	2 700



Industry/Sector	Workers involved	Working days lost	Working hours lost
Passenger transport	542	12 989	101 865
Public Transport	615	13 543	57 563
Water transport	60	3 000	36 000
Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	4 719	23 289	173 564
Agriculture, hunting and related services	1 112	11 254	95 574
Fishing, operation of fish hatcheries and fish farms	1 607	8 035	45 990
Manufacture of food products, beverages and tobacco products	2 000	4 000	32 000

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2025

Table C.2: Number of working days lost by nature of Organization, 2024-2025

	2024	2025
Central Government General	299	167
Government Enterprise	65 045	9 582
Local Government General	373 575	47 845
Provincial Government General	349 479	151 127
Private Sector	44 092	18 526
TOTAL	832 490	227 247

Source: Department of Employment and Labour, Strikes Statistics database, 2025

ANNEXURE D

Technical notes:

D1. Methodology for monitoring industrial action by DEL.

The collection and analysis of industrial action statistics is guided by the guidelines and practices that have been developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The point of departure can be found in the ILO Resolution adopted by the Fourteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians in January 1993, concerning statistics of strikes, lockouts and other action due to labour disputes. This resolution is accommodative rather than prescriptive in its approach. It states that; "Each country should aim at developing a comprehensive programme of statistics of strikes, lockouts and where relevant other action due to labour disputes in order to provide an adequate statistical base for the various users, taking into account the specific national needs and circumstances" (ILO Bulletin of Labour Statistics, 1993-2, Annex I, XI).

The Department has been provided with a legislated instrument (LRA 9.2 Form) to collect data on labour disputes. The Labour Relations Act 66 Of 1995 section 205 (3) states that (a) An employer must keep a record of the prescribed details of any strike, lock-out or protest action involving their employees, (b) An employer must submit those records in the prescribed manner to the registrar.

D2. Definitions

Section 213 of the Labour Relations Act, 1995 provides the following definitions:

A strike:

The partial or complete concerted refusal to work, or the retardation or obstruction of work, by persons who are or have been employed by the same employer or by different employers, for the purpose of remedying a grievance or resolving a dispute in respect of any matter of mutual interest between employer and worker, and every reference to work in this definition includes overtime work, whether it is voluntary or compulsory (s 213).

A lockout:

The exclusion by an employer of workers from the employer's workplace, for the purpose of compelling the workers to accept a demand in respect of any matter of mutual interest between employer and worker, whether or not the employer breaches those workers' contracts of employment during or for the purpose of that exclusion.

A protest action:

The partial or complete concerted refusal to work, or the retardation or obstruction of work, for the purpose of promoting or defending the socio-economic interests of workers, but not for a purpose referred to in the definition of strike".

Barker, F et al (1996) in "South African Labour Glossary" defined the following concepts as follows:

Picketing:

Action by employees or other persons to publicize the existence of a labour dispute by patrolling or standing outside or near the location where the dispute is taking place, usually with placards indicating the nature of the dispute. The aim of picketing might simply be to communicate the grievance to the public or it might be to persuade other employees in that workplace not to work and to take their side in the dispute, to deter scab labour, to persuade or pressurize customers not to enter the workplace, to disrupt deliveries or drum up public support.

A secondary strike:

This refers to a strike in support of a strike by other employees against their employer. The strikers have no issue with their employer, but that employer might be in a strong position (due to there being a close business relationship as either an important customer or supplier) to pressurize the employer who is in dispute.



Stay away action:

This is an industrial action by a group of employees in the form of absenting themselves from work without permission in support of some socio-political or socio-economic issue, which does not relate to their employment situation.

Work stoppage:

A work stoppage is made up of a series of events, all relating to the same issue. Work stoppages have two characteristics, type and degree. The type of action is either a strike (action initiated by an employee), or a lockout (action initiated by an employer). The statutory definitions of strikes and lockouts are given in the LRA, 1995.

Industrial action:

This is an action by unions and employees to pressurize the other party in the furtherance of an industrial dispute. It usually refers to strikes and lockouts but could also include picketing, product boycotts, sit-ins, go-slow strikes and other actions, which disrupt the production process.

Establishment involved:

An establishment involved is one in which one or more groups of employees are directly involved in action due to a labour dispute, or in which such actions is affected by the employer.

Work hours:

It refers to those hours during which an employee is obliged to work.

D3. Coverage

Data collection attempts to cover the entire country, all economic activity and all sectors of the economy, legal and illegal industrial action. The system attempts to cover all industrial action due to labour disputes. The figures in this report are inclusive of all industrial actions, which come to the knowledge of the Department, and the methods taken to secure information practically preclude probability of omissions of a serious nature. **This is a painstaking exercise, and it is believed that the statistics indicates the conditions of labour disputes in the country with “reasonable accuracy”.** Since LRA 9.2 Form has been redesigned, the Department is now able to cover employees both directly and indirectly involved in industrial action separately, that is, those who participate directly or indirectly by stopping work.

Workers absent from their normal place of work at the time of a strike or stoppage, for reasons such as sick leave, vacation, business or personal reasons, whether authorized or unauthorized, are excluded from participating in industrial actions and are therefore not counted.

The LRA excludes independent contractors from the definition of employee. The LRA further excludes from the scope of coverage certain categories of workers, namely members of the National Defense Force, National Intelligence Agency and South African Secret Service. The coverage by the Department of Industrial Action, however, includes all of the above, provided they embarked on industrial action in the period under consideration.

D4. Strike Data collection

In addition to the legal obligation on employers to report industrial action, the Department has introduced an active media-monitoring programme that is enforcing the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 section 205 subsection (3) subparagraph (a) and (b) on employers to submit the strike information in the prescribed manner to the registrar. Through this system, media information on industrial action is used as a source of information to contact employers and to encourage compliance with reporting strike incidents. Telephone, emails, SMS, WhatsApp, and telefax tools were used as means of communication with the affected employers to ensure “a reasonably, accurate and large coverage” of all labour disputes in the country.

The cooperation that exists with the private sector employers has also speeded up the process of data collection. After completing the LRA 9.2 form, most employers send it to the Head Office of the Department of Labour. Some employers will probably keep a blank form with them, which will proactively be completed when a strike arises in the company and they are voluntarily forward it to the department in time.

After receiving the form either directly from the employer or from the provincial office, Head Office staff members will check and assess if the information provided is sufficient and correct. In case it is not, the Department of Labour staff within the

LMIS unit will contact employers with the aim of getting missing information. From this process, the strike information is captured into a database specifically designed for monitoring industrial action in the country. The information includes workers who were directly and indirectly involved during the industrial action, excluding all those who were on leave.

This method of data collection and processing has consistently remained the same over time.

The Department must rely on the employers affected by labour disputes for detailed information on various indicators such as employment size, duration of strikes, reason given for striking, etc., which are required by 1995 Labour Relations Act. Some attempts are made to contact other parties involved in resolving the disputes. This information is also analyzed and reported. However, employers constitute a principal source of strikes data.

D5. Calculations

Working days lost

All calculations are made based on information recorded on the LRA 9.2 Form. After capturing the data, the loss of working days is calculated by multiplying the number of workers involved in each stoppage by the duration of the stoppage in days lost and adding the totals for all stoppages during the reference period. For example, if during the reference period there were one stoppage, involving 2 000 workers and lasting four days, working days lost would be computed as follows:

- $2\,000\text{ worker's} \times 4\text{ days} = 8\,000\text{ working days lost}$

Working hours lost

Working hours lost is the aggregate number of working hours lost stemming from all work stoppages during the reference period. The statistics are calculated by multiplying the number of workers involved in each stoppage by the number of hours of the stoppage and summing the products thus obtained for all stoppages during the period. For example, if during the reference period there is one stoppage, involving 4 000 workers and lasting four hours and four days working hours lost would be computed as follows:

- $2\,000\text{ worker's} \times 4\text{ hours lost} \times 4\text{ days worked} = 32\,000\text{ working hours lost}$

Estimated working hours are computed by multiplying the employment for the period by the number of days typically worked by most employed workers during that period. In some cases, Saturdays (when customarily not worked), Sundays, and established holidays are excluded. It is also to determine the normal hours of work for groups of workers since LRA 9.2 Form provides for this. An average eight-hour day is used to represent the normal working day in the country.

Time- loss ratio (Working days lost per 1 000 employees)

- This is the number of working days lost per 1 000 employees due to strike. It is the standard method that has been used to convert working days lost into a strike rate that takes account of the size of total employment. This also enables comparisons to be made across industries and provinces that differ in employment size. For example, a country with 16 069 000 employees in December 2016 and losing 946 323 working days will have a ratio of 58.9 arrived at as follows: $946\,323/16\,069\,000 \times 1\,000$.

Measurements

The criterion used to identify a single strike and lockout is the Labour dispute in question. In line with the ILO recommendations, the DEL denotes one industrial action as follows:

- A temporary work stoppage, due to an industrial action, occurred among workers in one establishment at one time.
- Temporary work stoppages, due to one industrial action, occurring among workers in several establishments at the same time.
- Temporary work stoppages, due to one industrial action, occurring among workers in one establishment at different times, in which the period between stoppages is not more than two months; and
- Temporary work stoppages, due to one industrial action, occurring among workers in several establishments at different times, in which the period between stoppages is not more than two months.

While attempts to satisfy the ILO requirements are made, the instrument of data collection (LRA 9.2 Form) remains as the point of departure, to meet the specific needs of the Department and the country.

<p>LRA Form 9.2 Section 205(3)(a) Labour Relations Act, 1995</p>	<p align="center">RECORD OF STRIKE, LOCK-OUT OR PROTEST ACTION</p> 
<p>READ THIS FIRST</p>  <p>WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?</p> <p>An employer must keep a record of any strike, lock-out or protest action involving its employees.</p> <p>WHO FILLS IN THIS FORM?</p> <p>The Employer / relevant Employers' Organization</p> <p>WHERE DOES THIS FORM GO?</p> <p>The Director-General, Department of Labour, Private Bag x117, Pretoria, 0001 Tel: (012) 309 4004 Fax: (012) 309 4406 E-mail: Strikes@labour.gov.za</p> <p>OTHER INSTRUCTIONS</p> <p>The employer must submit this form within seven days of the completion of the strike, lockout or protest action.</p> <p>If a strike, lockout or protest action occurs in more than one workplace of a single employer then a separate form must be completed for each workplace.</p>	<p align="center">RECORD OF DETAILS OF STRIKE, LOCKOUT OR PROTEST ACTION TO BE KEPT BY EMPLOYER IN TERMS OF SECTION 205(3)(a)</p> <p>1) EMPLOYER DETAILS</p> <p>Name company:</p> <p>Contact Person:</p> <p>Physical address:</p> <p>Province:</p> <p>Tel: Fax:</p> <p>E-mail address:</p> <p>Industry:</p> <p>Sub-Sector / Nature of business</p> <p>2) EMPLOYEE DETAILS</p> <p>2.1 Total number of workforce:</p> <p>2.2 Working time <i>(Please complete where applicable)</i></p> <p>Number of ordinary <i>hours</i> worked per day: / Shift</p> <p>Number of ordinary <i>days</i> worked per week: / Shift</p> <p>3) DETAILS OF THE ACTION (see definition on Page 3)</p> <p>3.1 Nature of action:</p> <p>☐ Strike in company only</p> <p>☐ Multi-employer strike</p> <p>☐ Lockout</p> <p>☐ Stay-away, protest action</p> <p>☐ Other industrial action, specify</p> <p>.....</p>

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Yes	No
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	Yes	No
Was replacement labour used?		

Began:
(Date) (Time)

Ended:
(Date) (Time)

Duration in workdays (or hours if relevant)

Number of employees participating¹:Number of employees affected²:

Total work-hours lost:

Total wages not paid (in Rands):.....

3.4 Unions involved:	Yes	No
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Name of Trade Union	Number of employees involved per union
TOTAL	

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3.5 Compliance with the Act

Was the action in compliance with the Act? (e.g. procedural or un-procedural)

Yes	No	Don't know
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3.6 Strike reasons:

☐ Wages only (If the action was a wage strike, kindly indicate the following):- Percentage demanded by Union..... Percentage offered by employer Percentage agreed on by both parties..... ☐ Bonuses and other compensation ☐ Retrenchments / Dismissals ☐ Working conditions ☐ Socio-economic / political conditions	☐ Refusal to bargain ☐ Secondary action from another dispute ☐ Grievances ☐ Disciplinary matters ☐ Organizational rights
☐ Any other reason, (please specify).....	
<p>¹ Workers <i>participating</i> are those workers who went on strike or were locked out as a result of the dispute.</p> <p>² Workers <i>affected</i> are those workers not involved in the strike but could not continue with their normal duties as a result of the strike.</p> <p>Name of employer (<i>in full</i>):</p> <p>Signature of employer: Date:</p>	

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DEFINITIONS**Strike:**

The partial or complete concerted refusal to work, or the retardation or obstruction of work, by persons who are or have been employed by the same employer or by different employers, for the purpose of remedying a grievance or resolving a dispute in respect of any matter of mutual interest between employer and worker, and every reference to work in this definition includes overtime, whether it is voluntary or compulsory (section 213).

Lockout:

The exclusion by an employer of workers from the employer's workplace. For the purpose of compelling the workers to accept a demand in respect of any matter of mutual interest between employer and worker, whether or not the employer breaches those workers' contracts of employment in the course of or for the purpose of that exclusion.

Secondary strike:

A strike in support of a strike by other employees against their employer. The strikers have no issue with their employer, but that employer might be in a strong position (due to there being a close business relationship as either an important customer or supplier) to pressurise the employer who is in dispute.

Protest action:

The partial or complete refusal to work, or the retardation or obstruction of work, for the purpose of promoting or defending the socio-economic interest of workers, but not for a purpose referred to in the definition of "strike".

Stay away:

Industrial action by a group of employees in the form of absenting themselves from work without permission in support of some socio-economic issue which does not relate to their employment situation.

Work hours:

Hours during which an employee is obliged to work. Work hours lost is calculated by multiplying the number of all workers involved in each stoppage by the number of hours the stoppage lasted.

Working days lost:

Days during which an employee is obliged to work working days is calculated by multiplying the number of workers involved in each stoppage by the duration of the stoppage in days lost and adding the totals for all stoppages during the reference period.





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