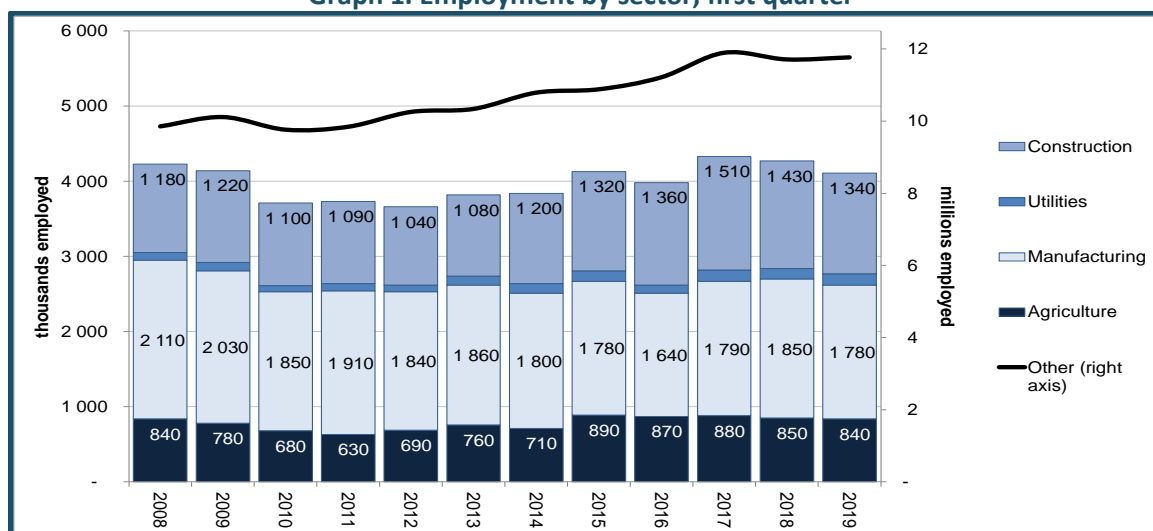


Employment

Employment in the real economy fell by 160 000 jobs in the year to the first quarter of 2019. It is now at the same level it was in 2015. Manufacturing and construction accounted for the bulk of the net loss in jobs. In the rest of the economy, community and social services lost more than 200 000 jobs while other sectors gained employment. Overall, employment as a whole lost jobs for only the second time since 2010.

Employment data are not seasonally adjusted, and the first quarter generally sees net job losses. For this reason, only annual figures, comparing the same quarter of each year, are meaningful. As **Graph 1** shows, employment in the real economy in the first quarter, excluding mining, has fallen for the past two years. Virtually all of the job losses came from construction, followed by agriculture. In the rest of the economy, employment flattened out over the past two years. Taken together, these developments meant that the economy as a whole lost jobs in the year to the first quarter of 2019 for only the second time since 2010 (the first time was in the year to June 2016).

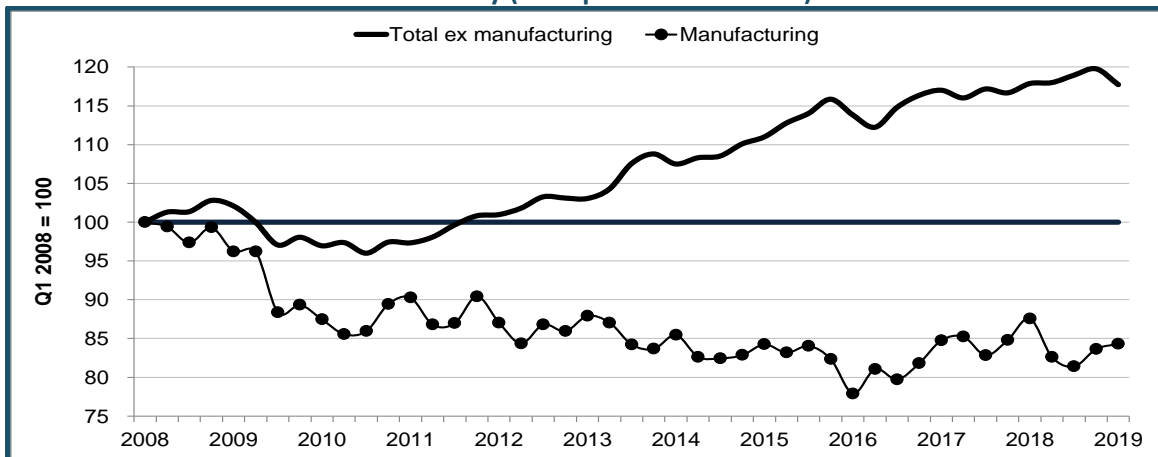
Graph 1. Employment by sector, first quarter



Source: StatsSA. QLFS –2008-2019 Q1. Electronic database. Downloaded from www.statssa.gov.za.

As Graph 8 shows, manufacturing employment remains below its levels in 2008, on the eve of the global financial crisis. It is now at the same levels seen in 2014, despite some fluctuations. In contrast, employment in the rest of the economy is over 15% higher than it was in 2008, although job losses in the first quarter of 2019 far outstripped the customary seasonal decline for the period.

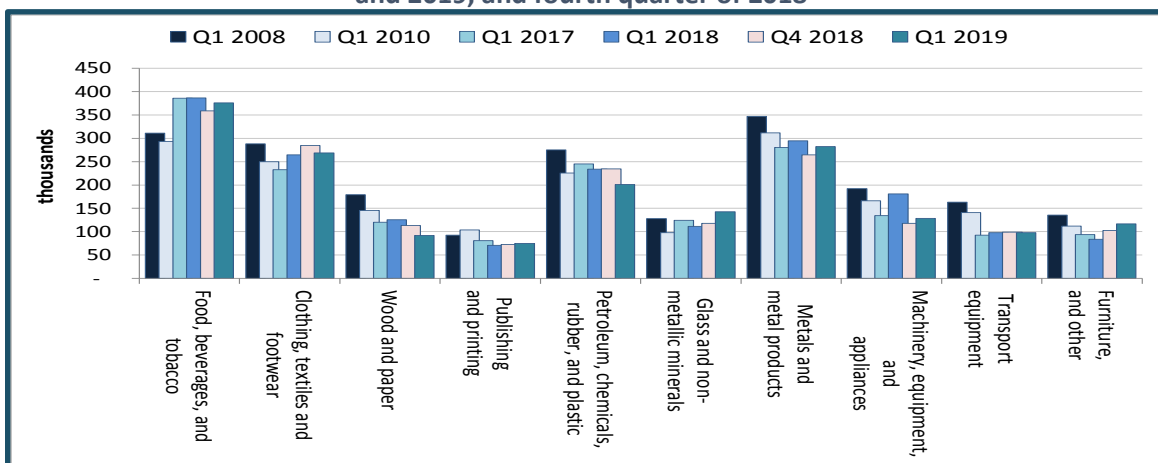
Graph 2. Indices of employment in manufacturing and the rest of the economy (first quarter 2008 = 100)



Source: StatsSA. QLFS –2008-2019 Q1. Electronic database. Downloaded from www.statssa.gov.za.

In the year to the first quarter of 2019, the largest job losses were in machinery and equipment, down 53 000, or 29%; wood and paper, down 33 000 or 26%; and chemicals and plastics, also down 33 000 or 14%. All three industries are significant importers, suggesting the impact of the slowdown in major trading partners (see [Briefing Note: The economic slowdown](#)). In contrast, employment in clothing was stable, while metals and food saw comparatively small net job losses.

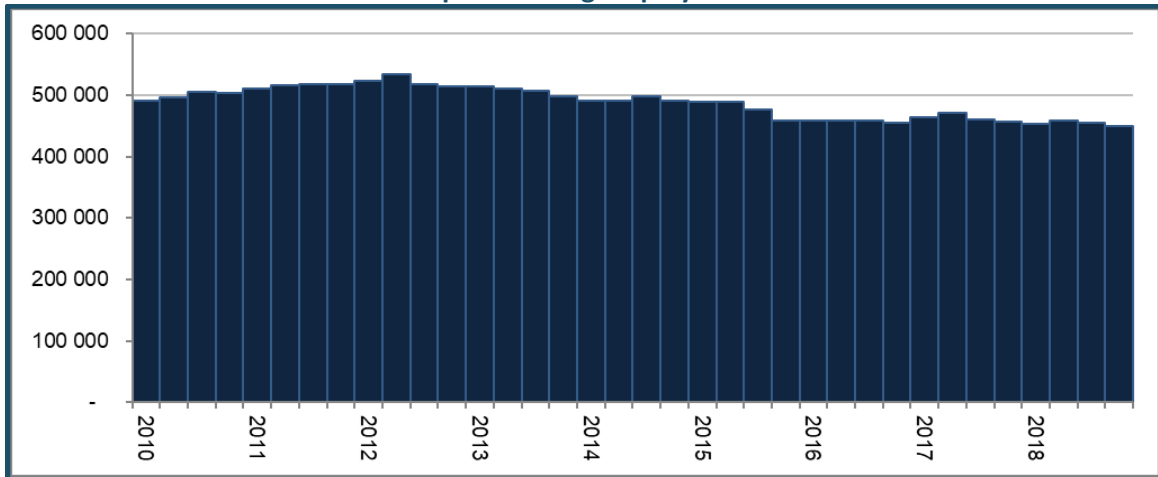
Graph 3. Employment by manufacturing industry, first quarter of 2008, 2010, 2017, 2018 and 2019, and fourth quarter of 2018



Source: StatsSA. QLFS –2008-2019 Q1. Electronic database. Downloaded from www.statssa.gov.za.

For technical reasons, figures on mining employment from the employer survey, the Quarterly Employment Statistics, are considered more reliable than the household based Quarterly Labour Force Survey. They are, however, only available through the fourth quarter of 2018. In 2018, mining lost 8 000 jobs, or 2% of the total. Since the fourth quarter of 2011, when the commodity boom ended, some 70 000 miners – around one in seven – have lost their jobs.

Graph 4: Mining employment



Source: StatsSA. Quarterly Employment Statistics. December 2018.