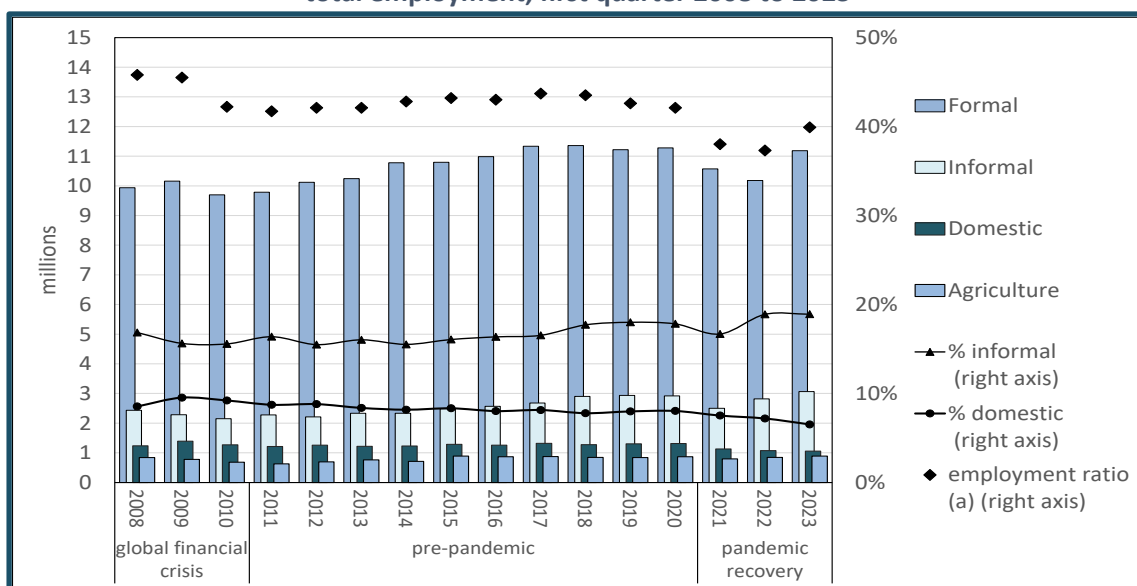


## Employment

Total employment remains lower than in the first quarter of 2020, before the pandemic, mostly because of extraordinary shrinkage in domestic work as well as a very slow recovery in formal employment, primarily for skilled production workers. That said, in the year to the first quarter of 2023, formal employment grew faster than informal employment for the first time since the pandemic lockdown in 2020. The loss of domestic work means that women have suffered disproportionately from the loss of jobs during the pandemic. In the year to the first quarter of 2023, within manufacturing, metals, transport equipment and clothing saw significant employment gains, but food processing faced job losses.

In the year to the first quarter of 2023, total employment increased by 1.3 million, or 8%, to reach 16.2 million jobs. Excluding domestic work, 70 000 more people had employment in the first quarter of 2023 than three years earlier, just before the pandemic. That represented a net gain of 0.5% in total employment. Domestic work, however, lost almost one in five positions after the lockdown in March 2020, declining by 290 000. Including domestic work, there are almost 200 000 fewer employment opportunities, or 1.2%, than before the pandemic. The sharp decline in domestic work meant women bore the brunt of the pandemic job losses.

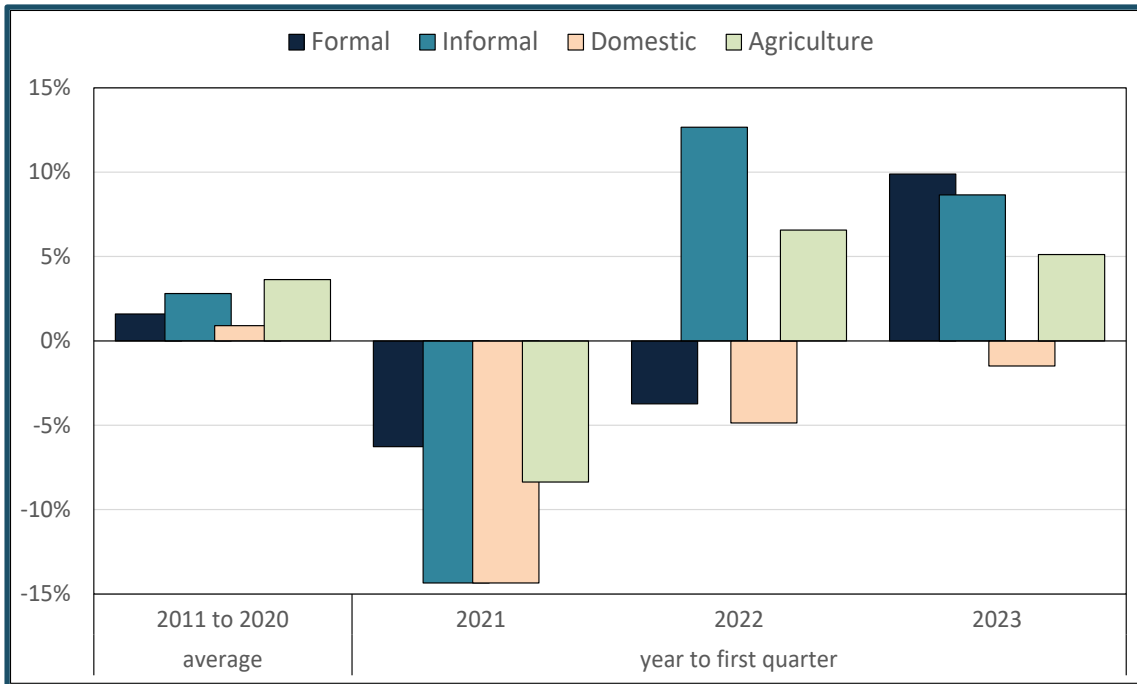
**Graph 10. Formal, informal, domestic and agricultural employment in millions, with the employment ratio (a) and share of informal and domestic work in total employment, first quarter 2008 to 2023**



Note: (a) Employed as percentage of total working aged. Source: Calculated from Statistics South Africa. Quarterly Labour Force survey (QLFS) Trends 2008-2023Q1. Excel spreadsheet.

The past year saw a surge in formal employment, which had declined more gradually than informal work but also recovered more slowly. As a result, the formal sector saw a net gain in jobs for the first time since the pandemic.

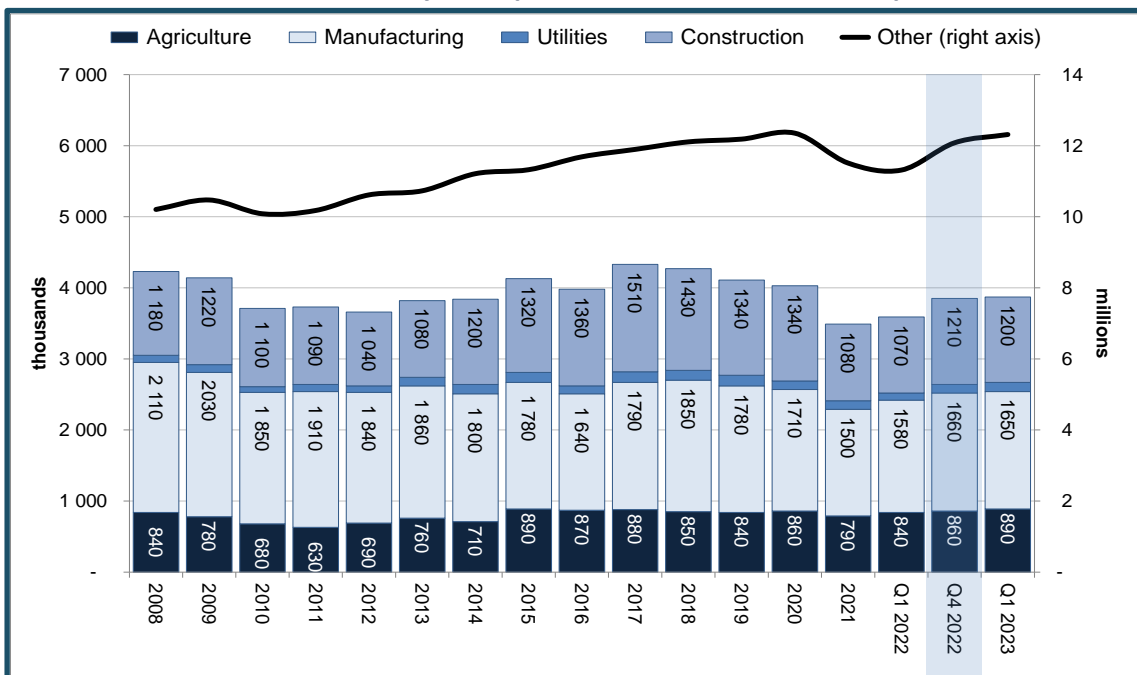
**Graph 11. Percentage change in employment by sector, first quarter, average for 2010 to 2020 and actual percentage change in year to first quarter for 2001 to 2023**



Source: Calculated from Statistics South Africa. QLFS Trends 2008-2023Q1. Excel spreadsheet.

In the real economy, employment increased by 280 000 over the year to the first quarter of 2023. (Graph 12) Construction saw the largest year-on-year growth, adding 130 000 new jobs. Manufacturing saw a net increase of 70 000 jobs in the year to the first quarter of 2023.

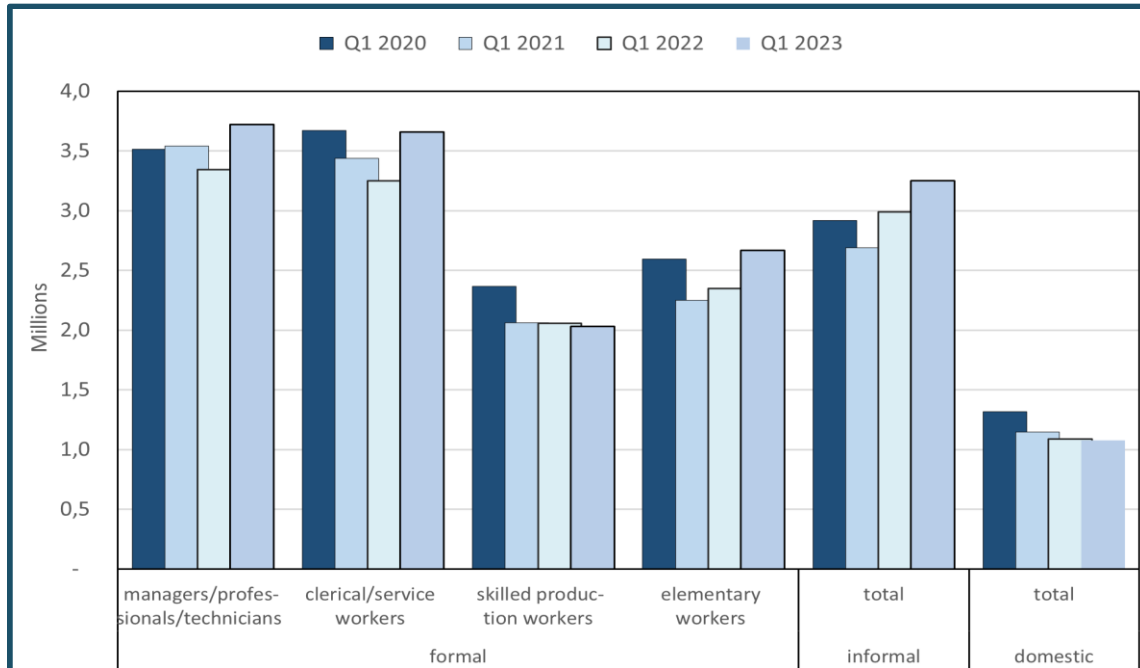
**Graph 12. Employment in agriculture, manufacturing, utilities and construction compared to the rest of the economy, first quarter 2008 to 2023, and first quarter 2023**



Source: Calculated from Statistics South Africa. QLFS Trends 2008-2023Q1. Excel spreadsheet.

The employment recovery in the formal sector continued to favour higher-level workers, although service and elementary jobs both reported strong recoveries in the past year. Formal managers, professionals and technicians, clerical and sales workers, and elementary workers added around 400 000 jobs each in the year to the first quarter of 2023. As a result, employment for highly skilled workers was up by 205 000 or 6% compared to pre-pandemic days, while elementary employment was up by 3% and service work had fully recovered. In contrast, skilled production workers still faced hard times, with around 334 000 fewer jobs than in the first quarter of 2020, for a loss of 14%, with no net employment gains over the past two years (see Graph 13).

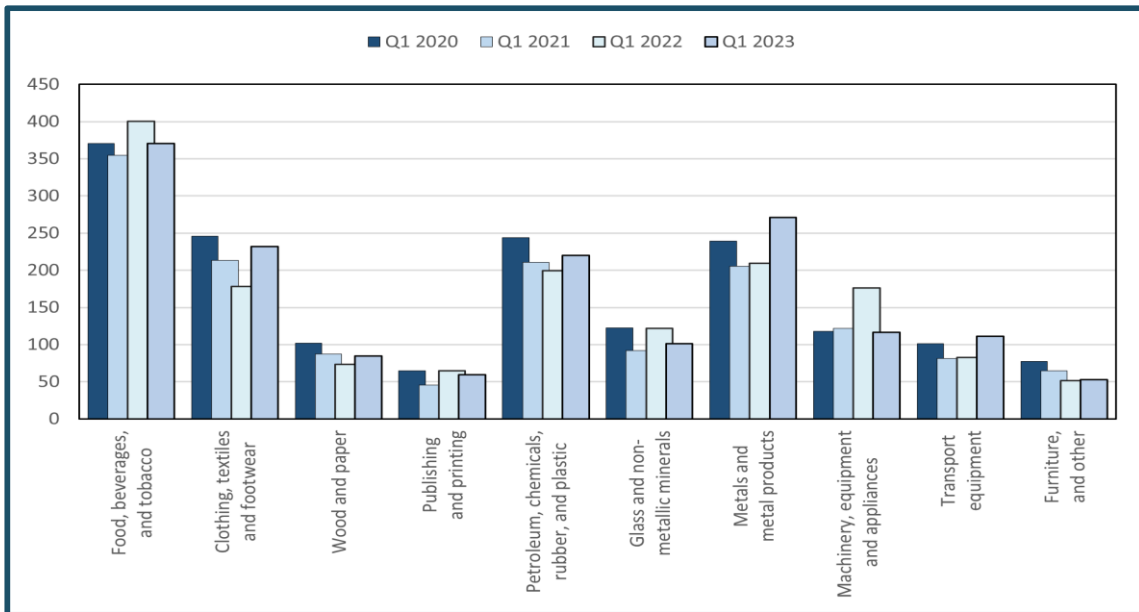
**Graph 13. Employment by occupation, first quarter, 2020 to 2023**



Source: Calculated from Statistics South Africa. QLFS for relevant quarters. Electronic databases.

Within manufacturing, only metals and metal products and transport equipment showed employment growth from the first quarter of 2020, with slightly more than 40 000 jobs added in both industries in the past three years. These industries added more jobs in the year to the first quarter of 2023 than in the preceding two years. Clothing and textiles reported a sharp recovery over the past year, adding more than 50 000 jobs in the year to the first quarter of 2023, up from a low of 180 000 in the first quarter of 2022. In contrast, food, beverages and tobacco, the largest employer in manufacturing, lost about 30 000 jobs in the year to the first quarter of 2023.

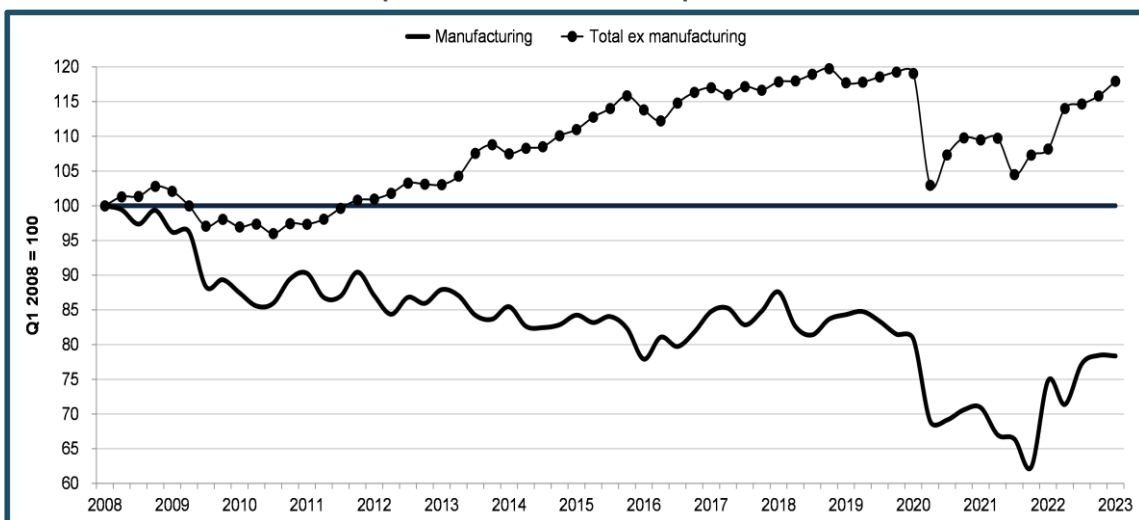
**Graph 14. Employment in manufacturing industries, first quarter 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023**



Source: Calculated from Statistics South Africa. QLFS for relevant quarters. Electronic databases.

Manufacturing declined slightly as a share of total employment, from 10.6% in the first quarter of 2022 to 10.2% in the first quarter of 2023. Even with jobs gains in some years, the QLFS reports that manufacturing employment has declined significantly since 2008. In the first quarter of 2023, it remained well below pre-pandemic levels.

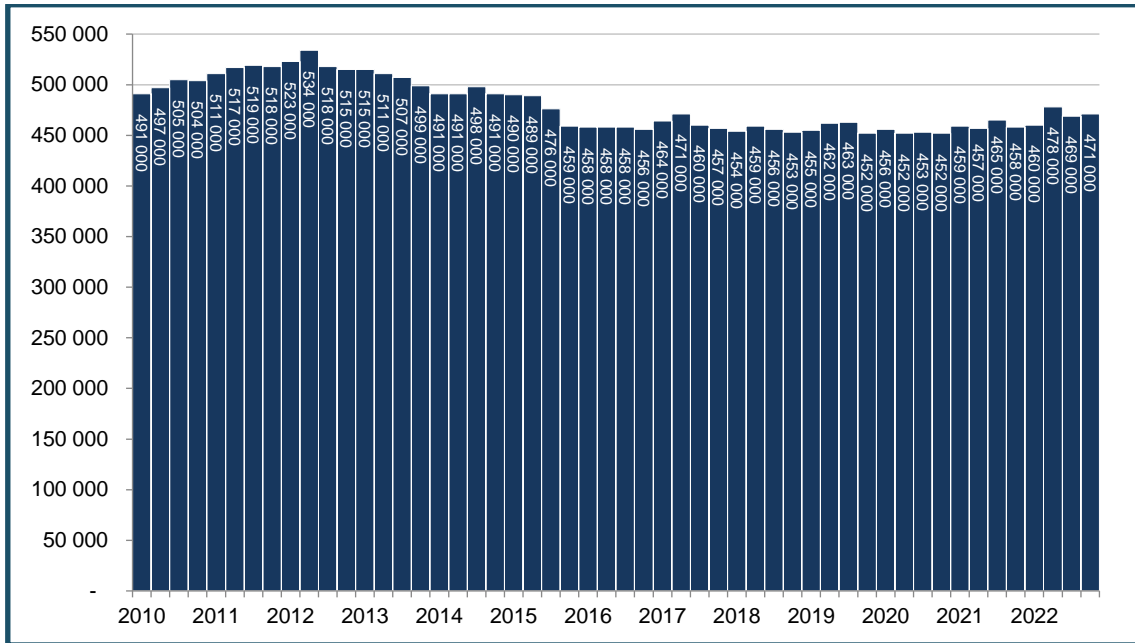
**Graph 15. Employment in manufacturing and the rest of the economy, first quarter 2008 to the first quarter 2023**



Source: Calculated from Statistics South Africa. QLFS for relevant quarters. Electronic databases.

Mining employment reached its highest level (487 000 jobs) in the first quarter of 2022 – the latest reliable data – having fallen from a peak of 534 000 jobs in the second quarter of 2012. The sector had about 471 000 jobs in the fourth quarter of 2022, up about 0.4% over the third quarter of the same year.

**Graph 16. Mining employment, first quarter 2010 to first quarter 2023**



Source: Statistics South Africa. Quarterly Employment Statistics. Detailed breakdown. First quarter 2022 Excel spreadsheet.