



NSA STATEMENT ON THE LABOUR FORCE REPORT RELEASED ON 29 JANUARY 2025

1. The purpose of this statement is to assure the nation that the 2023 Labour Force report released on Wednesday 29 January 2025 is in line with the ILO standards and definitions. The data therefore is in line with the requirements of the Statistics Act which stipulates that statistics must be relevant, accurate a reliable source for planning.

2. It is against that background that the NSA would like to clarify that the Unemployment Rate of 36.9% that the NSA released on 29 January 2025 is the Official Unemployment figure as per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards based on the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (19th ICLS).

That is, when the ILO, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), SADC, AU or any other organisation requests for the Official Unemployment rate of Namibia, the figure of 36.9% will be provided. **Therefore, the data that the NSA has released is correct and can be used.**

3. Definitions of unemployment are not set by the NSA or by a particular single country or any individual National Statistics Office but by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians, which normally pass a resolution to adopt a specific definition of unemployment.

4. Implementation of the 19th ICLS

a) Following the adoption of the 19th ICLS in 2013, the decision was taken to update the labour force surveys data collection tools. ILO developed model question sequences and guidelines for LFS aligned to the 19th ICLS standards based on existing good practices.

5. In the Namibian case, the definitions that were used during the last two Labour Force studies (in 2018 and 2023 respectively), are different as they are based on different ICLS resolutions. That is, for 2018, the definition of that time (Broad Unemployment definition) was based on the 13th ICLS while the definition of 2023 (Strict Unemployment definition) was based on the 19th ICLS. Therefore, the unemployment definition of the day is always applicable.

Broad Unemployment vs Strict Unemployment definition:

The **broad** and **strict** definitions of unemployment are used to measure the labour market more inclusively or restrictively, respectively.

a) The **Broad Unemployment definition** includes individuals within the working age population (15 years and above) who are **without work**,

available for work but have not actively sought employment during the reference period.

- b) The **Strict Unemployment definition** includes individuals within the working age population (15 years and above) who are **without work, available for work, and actively searching for employment** during the reference period.
- c) It is inadvertently so that the Unemployment definition at the time of the Labour Force Survey of 2018 and the Unemployment definition at the time of the 2023 Labour Force study are different but that **does not change the Official Unemployment Rates of these two studies which are 33.4 % in 2018 and 36.9% in 2023.**

6. With regards to any allegation and /or insinuation that the NSA has '**cooked**' or '**flawed**' the figures, the NSA would like to make it categorically clear that figures can be worked back to verify how these percentages were arrived at. Anyone who needs to participate in such exercise is welcome to contact the NSA. In addition, the NSA has also worked together with the ILO (International Labour Organisation) in ensuring that the adopted Unemployment definition is applied correctly.

7. The rate of 54.8% is a combination of adding the Unemployment rate (36.9%) and the **Potential** Labour Force rate (17.9%) to add up to 54.8%. This figure and its explanations is in the 2023 Population and Housing Census Labour Force Report and was fully explained during the Labour Force Report release event on 29 January 2025.

- a) The **Potential Labour Force** refers to individuals who are **not employed** but have some degree of **labour market attachment**, meaning they are available or willing to work but do not meet the criteria for unemployment under the **strict definition**. These individuals are typically on the margins of the labour market (for example a final year student who might want to apply now for when he/she completes his/her studies). The Potential Labour Force includes:

- i) *Discouraged Job Seekers* – People who want to work and are available but have stopped looking for jobs due to lack of opportunities or other constraints.

- ii) *Persons Seeking but Not Available* – Individuals who are actively searching for work but are temporarily unavailable due to personal reasons (e.g., illness, education, caregiving duties).

8. With regards to a Workforce (the number of employed people) that shrank from 725,742 to 546,805 employed people, this should be taken into

consideration that the Labour Force size (the employed + the unemployed people) also shrank from 1,090,153 (in 2018) to 867,247 (in 2023).

- a) It does not necessarily mean that if the workforce decreased the unemployment rate will automatically increase due to the reason that an individual labour force status can change anytime, they can be employed today but tomorrow they may become unemployed or even part of the potential labour force.

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