African Industrialisation Monthly Research Summary — September 2026

1 September 2026

Produced by the Centre for African Industrialisation, part of TWIMS Africa

Executive summary

Statistics South Africa published the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for the second quarter of 2026 (released 11 August 2026), the Manufacturing: Production and Sales release for June 2026 (released 11 August 2026), and the Mining: Production and Sales release for June 2026 (released 13 August 2026). The fourth item is the Absa/BER Purchasing Managers' Index for July 2026 (released 1 August 2026, reported 3 August 2026).

Headline findings: South Africa's official unemployment rate rose to 33.6% in the second quarter of 2026 from 32.7% in the first, with youth unemployment at 47.4% and the expanded rate at 46.3%; manufacturing production fell 1.7% year-on-year in June, a third consecutive monthly decline; mining production fell 4.0% year-on-year in June, led by platinum group metals and coal, and contracted 2.7% over the second quarter; and the Absa Manufacturing PMI fell to 46.8 in July from 47.3 in June, a second consecutive month in contractionary territory and a seven-month low.

Summary of key findings, by report

1. Statistics South Africa — Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 2: 2026 (P0211)

Citation. Statistics South Africa, 2026. Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 2: 2026 (P0211). Pretoria: Stats SA. Released 11 August 2026.

Link: https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02112ndQuarter2026.pdf

The official unemployment rate rose to 33.6% in the second quarter of 2026, up from 32.7% in the first quarter. The number of unemployed persons increased by 345,000 to 8.5 million, while employment fell by 16,000 to 16.7 million; the labour force grew by 329,000, or 1.3%. The expanded unemployment rate, which includes discouraged work-seekers and others available for work but not actively searching, stood at 46.3%. The combined rate of unemployment and time-related underemployment was 36.6%. Youth unemployment for those aged 15 to 34 was 47.4%, with 5 million young people recorded as unemployed.

2. Statistics South Africa — Manufacturing: Production and Sales, June 2026 (P3041.2)

Citation. Statistics South Africa, 2026. Manufacturing: Production and sales, June 2026 (P3041.2). Pretoria: Stats SA. Released 11 August 2026; figures reported by CNBC Africa, 11 August 2026.

Link: https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P30412/P30412June2026.pdf

Manufacturing production decreased by 1.7% year-on-year in June 2026. This was an easing from a downwardly revised 4.4% year-on-year decline in May, and marked a third consecutive month of year-on-year contraction in the sector. On the released data, manufacturing contracted for a second consecutive quarter in the second quarter of 2026, continuing the weakness recorded in the first quarter. Manufacturing remained one of the weakest components of South Africa's productive economy over the period.

3. Statistics South Africa — Mining: Production and Sales, June 2026 (P2041)

Citation. Statistics South Africa, 2026. Mining: Production and sales, June 2026 (P2041). Pretoria: Stats SA. Released 13 August 2026; figures reported by Mining Weekly and Business Day, 13 August 2026.

Link: https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P2041/P2041June2026.pdf

Mining production decreased by 4.0% year-on-year in June 2026. The largest negative contributor was platinum group metals, down 8.4% and subtracting 2.4 percentage points from the total, followed by coal, down 6.6% and subtracting 1.7 percentage points, and iron ore, down 10.2%. Manganese ore, chromium ore and gold rose by 13.3%, 8.6% and 6.2% respectively. On a seasonally adjusted monthly basis, mining output rose 0.3% compared with May. Over the second quarter of 2026, mining production contracted by 2.7%.

4. Absa / BER — Absa Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), July 2026

Citation. Absa Group and Bureau for Economic Research (BER), 2026. Absa Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), July 2026. Stellenbosch: BER. Released 1 August 2026; reported by Engineering News and CNBC Africa, 3 August 2026.

Link: https://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/absa-pmi-declines-in-july-but-domestic-demand-and-new-sales-orders-improve-2026-08-03

The seasonally adjusted Absa Manufacturing PMI fell to 46.8 in July 2026 from 47.3 in June, a second consecutive month below the neutral 50 level, and the lowest reading in seven months. Weak export demand and continued inventory draw-downs weighed on the headline index. The PMI report notes that domestic demand and production continued to recover, with shorter supplier delivery times, but that firms remained uncertain that stronger demand would persist. Input-cost pressures stayed elevated relative to the pre-conflict period, and higher diesel prices were expected to renew cost pressures for manufacturers.

Media & policy table

Date	Source	Topic	Link
3 Aug 2026	Engineering News	Absa PMI declines to 46.8 in July, but domestic demand and new sales orders improve.	Open
3 Aug 2026	CNBC Africa	South Africa's manufacturing sentiment wanes in July as Absa PMI stays in contraction.	Open
11 Aug 2026	Statistics South Africa	QLFS Q2 2026: official unemployment rate rises to 33.6% from 32.7%; youth rate 47.4%.	Open
11 Aug 2026	CNBC Africa	South Africa's June manufacturing output falls 1.7% y/y (third consecutive decline).	Open
13 Aug 2026	Business Day	Mining shrinks 2.7% in the second quarter, raising economic red flags.	Open
13 Aug 2026	Mining Weekly	Mining production decreased 4% y/y in June; PGMs, coal and iron ore the main drags.	Open
17 Aug 2026	UNECA	ECA calls on SADC to turn mineral and agricultural wealth into industrial prosperity.	Open
28 Aug 2026	World Bank	What's next for Africa's integration agenda — AfCFTA, regional value chains and industrialisation.	Open
Aug 2026	African Business	Manufacturing success: how to secure Africa's industrial future (on the AfDB Africa Industrialisation Index 2025).	Open
Aug 2026	SA Instrumentation & Control	Africa's industrial future is still being written — commentary on continental industrialisation.	Open
1 Aug 2026	naamsa (via Novus Press Bulletin)	naamsa releases July 2026 new vehicle sales statistics; H1 2026 sales up 12.9%.	Open