



MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

# Skills Development Needs in Mpumalanga

Investigating MMS-related skills gaps, community training needs and strategic opportunities in Mpumalanga — South Africa's primary coal-producing province navigating a Just Energy Transition.

## PROVINCIAL UNEMPLOYMENT VS NATIONAL



## 3 DISTRICT MUNICIPALITIES COVERED

Ehlanzeni

Gert Sibande

Nkangala

80%

OF SA'S COAL PRODUCED IN MPUMALANGA

415

COMMUNITY MEMBERS SURVEYED ACROSS 3 DISTRICTS

64,958

PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN MINING (2024 Q1)

11

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS PROPOSED

5.1M

TOTAL POPULATION (2022)

27 yrs

MEDIAN AGE

20-30%

MINING'S SHARE OF PROVINCIAL GDP

52.6%

FEMALE SHARE OF POPULATION

Mpumalanga is South Africa's **primary coal-producing province**, producing 80% of the country's coal and housing a large MMS workforce. Mining contributes **20–30% of provincial GDP**. The province is navigating a **Just Energy Transition** away from coal while building capacity in renewable energy, NEVs and agro-processing. The study surveyed **415 community members** across Ehlanzeni, Gert Sibande and Nkangala.

**5.1M**

TOTAL POPULATION (2022)

**52.6%**FEMALE SHARE OF  
POPULATION**27 yrs**

MEDIAN AGE

**1.8M**

YOUTH AGED 15–34

**EDUCATION PROFILE · AGES 20+****Qualification Attainment**

Only **10%** hold post-school qualifications — the most critical bottleneck to skilled employment.

**NEET — NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING****496K**

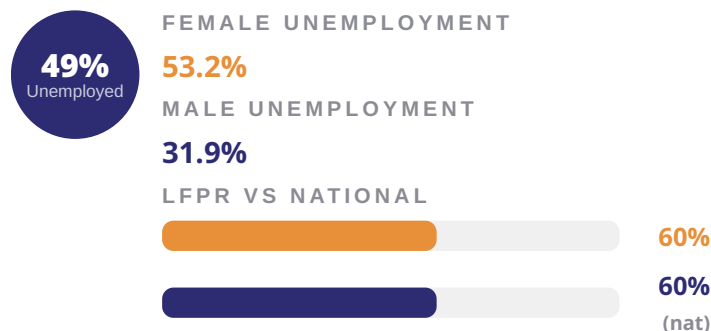
AGES 15–24

**804K**

AGES 25–34

**1,036K**

AGES 35–60

Total NEET in province: **2,336,000****LABOUR MARKET · 2024 Q1****Unemployment Snapshot**

Discouraged work-seekers increased by 7,000 — from 351,000 to 358,000 (2023 Q2 to 2024 Q2).

**PROVINCIAL SKILLS PROFILE (EMPLOYED)**

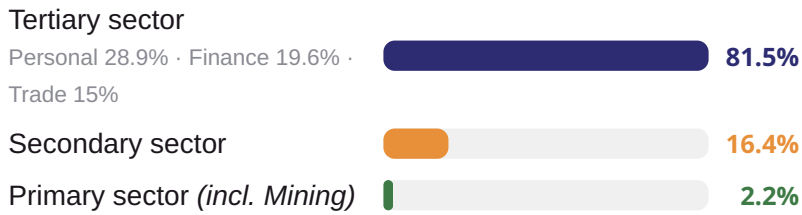
Engineering LFPR: **82% employed** — strong absorption where qualifications exist.

**"** Community members described **increased crime, substance abuse and exploitation of young women** as direct social consequences of prolonged joblessness in Mpumalanga's coal communities. **"We want to work and do business. We are capable and do not want to depend on social grants."**

# Mining Sector Profile & Skills Gaps

## PROVINCIAL ECONOMY — GVA CONTRIBUTION

### GVA BY SECTOR (2024 Q1)



## KEY MINERAL DEPOSITS IN THE PROVINCE

Coal (Primary) — 80% of SA production

Magnetite — Mpumalanga

Chromite — Mpumalanga

Silica — Mpumalanga

## HARD-TO-FILL VACANCIES · PRIMARY CAUSE



**JET Context:** Mpumalanga is transitioning away from coal dependency. Skills for NEVs, renewable energy and agro-processing are emerging priorities alongside coal sector maintenance.

## CRITICAL ROLES UNFILLED

General Manager Mining

Engineering Manager

Diesel Mechanic

Mine Manager

Boilermaker

Mine Safety Officer

## MOST PROMINENT SKILLS GAPS — TOP-UP SKILLS ACROSS OCCUPATIONS

**Occupational Health & Safety**  
Most prominent

**Planning & Organising**  
Multiple roles

**Communication Skills**  
Cross-cutting

**Computer Literacy**  
Operations roles

**Project Management**  
Coal/Mining roles

PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN MINING (2024 Q1)

**64,958**

MINING GVA CONTRIBUTION

**R601M**

## CRITICAL TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION GAP

**3**

of 15  
PROGRAMMES  
DELIVERED

**7**

of 192  
INDIVIDUALS  
TRAINED

**Only 3.6% delivery rate.** 15 programmes planned · 3 delivered · 192 targeted · 7 trained. MQA must urgently investigate barriers with coal mining companies.

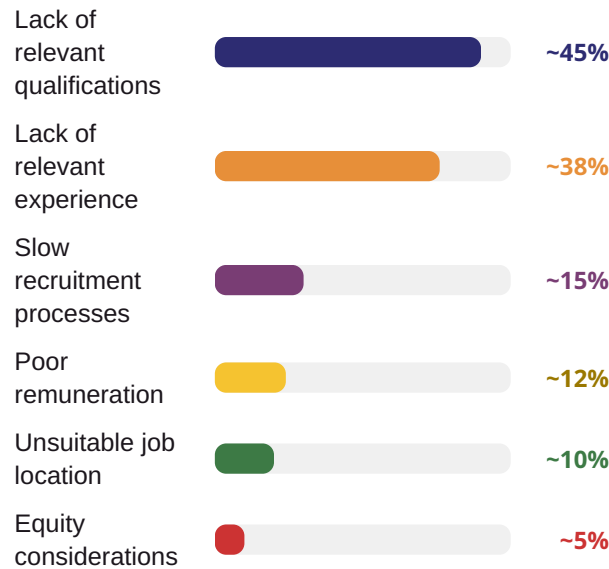
# Hard-to-Fill Vacancies (HTFV) Analysis

**Hard-to-fill vacancies** are occupations that an employer was unable to fill within 12 months (WSP-ATR 2024). Occupations reported by 5 or more companies in Mpumalanga. **Lack of relevant qualifications** is the largest single barrier, followed by lack of experience and slow recruitment processes.

## OCCUPATIONS IDENTIFIED AS HARD-TO-FILL

Occupation	OFO Code	Primary Reasons
Human Resource Manager	2021-121201	Lack of experience
Training Manager	2021-121202	Poor remuneration Lack of experience Lack of qualifications
Engineering Manager	2021-132104	Poor remuneration Unsuitable location Lack of experience
Chief Surveyor (Mining)	2021-132202	Lack of qualifications Lack of experience
Mining Engineer	2021-214601	Lack of qualifications
Electrical Engineer (Mines)	2021-215101	Lack of qualifications Lack of experience Slow recruitment
Bulldozer Operator	2021-734203	Lack of qualifications Lack of experience Poor remuneration
Diesel Mechanic	2021-653306	Lack of experience
Fitter (including Machining)	2021-653303	Unsuitable location Lack of qualifications
Boilermaker	2021-651302	Lack of qualifications Lack of experience Slow recruitment
Mine Safety Officer	2021-325705	Lack of qualifications Lack of experience
General Engineering Supervisor	2021-312103	Lack of qualifications Lack of experience
Mine Manager	2021-312101	Poor remuneration Unsuitable location Equity considerations

## PRIMARY RECRUITMENT BARRIERS



**Top 3 hardest to fill:** General Manager Mining · Engineering Manager · Diesel Mechanic (reported by the highest number of companies in the province). These signal persistent senior management and artisan shortages across coal, chrome and magnetite operations.

## COLOUR-CODE KEY (NO. COMPANIES REPORTING)

• 5–10 companies

• 11–20 companies

• 20+ companies

## TOP-UP SKILLS — RECURRING GAPS

Leadership & Management

Mine Production Process

OHS Skills

Computer Literacy

Planning & Organising

Technical (Job-specific)



## TOP SKILLS NEEDED BY COMMUNITIES (SURVEY)



## MQA COMMUNITY AWARENESS

**38%**

Familiar with MQA

Familiar with MQA	38%
Somewhat familiar	9%
Not familiar	53%

Ehlanzeni: 5% aware · Gert Sibande: **highest familiarity** among districts

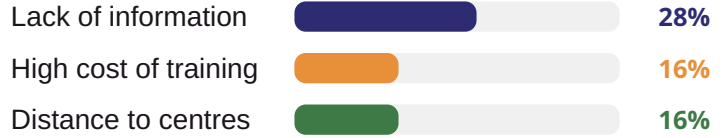
## BARRIERS TO ACCESSING TRAINING (SURVEY)

**51%**

SAY ACCESS IS "VERY DIFFICULT"

**73%**

UNAWARE OF ANY MMS TRAINING PROGRAMME



## EMERGING OPPORTUNITY SECTORS

### Renewable Energy

Wind turbine technicians · Solar PV · Battery storage

Nkangala DM

### NEVs & Auto Manufacturing

Mechatronics · NEV mechanics · Toolmakers

Gert Sibande

### Agro-processing & Small Mining

Agri-business · GIS surveying · Extraction

Province-wide

### JET Transition Economy

Environmental management · Reclamation · Green tech

Ehlanzeni DM

## PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREAS (SURVEY)

**30%**

Prepare Youth for Mining Careers

**23%**

Alternative Skills / Economic Diversification

**23%**

Support Local Businesses / Mining Sector

**17%**

Upskill Current Mining Workers

**SMART Framework — 11 Recommendations.** Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound — addressing Mpumalanga's critical skills gaps and Just Energy Transition imperatives.

1

### Assess Youth Development Initiatives

Evaluate effectiveness of youth skills programmes; develop strategy supporting MQA's unemployed youth programme across coal-dependent communities.

🕒 2026/27 Financial Year

3

### Career Guidance for NEET Youth

Host community-based career campaigns targeting NEET individuals across Ehlanzeni, Gert Sibande and Nkangala.

🕒 Within 12 Months

5

### Map CBO Skills Needs

Develop a district stakeholder matrix; map CBOs across 3 districts and align MQA-supported projects with identified skills needs.

🕒 2026/27 Research Agenda

7

### OHS Training in Mining Operations

Initiate OHS training province-wide — the most prominent skills gap across coal mining and related operations.

🕒 2026/27

9

### Accreditation Support for Artisans

Build provider capacity in diesel mechanics & plant fitting — critical for coal mining maintenance and NEV manufacturing transition.

🕒 2026

2

### Enhance Women's Economic Participation

Initiate gender-specific skills study; develop a gender strategy. Women = majority of population and 71% of unemployed in the survey.

🕒 2026/27 Financial Year

4

### Community Outreach for MQA Visibility

Launch outreach programme — especially in Ehlanzeni (5% aware). Host feedback sessions sharing study findings with communities.

🕒 Immediate — 2026

6

### JET & Entrepreneurship Partnerships

Establish partnerships with DSBD, SEFA and JET bodies to align entrepreneurship skills with Mpumalanga's post-coal transition.

🕒 2026/27 Financial Year

8

### Engage Mining Companies on Training Gap

Investigate why only 3/15 programmes delivered and only 7/192 individuals trained. Focus on major coal producers in Nkangala and Gert Sibande.

🕒 2026

10

### Establish Multi-Stakeholder Skills Forum

Coordinated platform for industry, government, education, labour & communities — focused on coal transition, renewables, NEVs and agro-processing.

🕒 2026

11

### Implement JET-Aligned Mining Support Programme

Roll out MQA's Small-Scale Mining Support Programme alongside JET transition skills — capitalise on Mpumalanga's coal, magnetite and chromite deposits while building green economy capacity.

🕒 2026/27