The DA's Plan to Turbocharge the Economy

2025

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A Plan to Turbocharge the Economy

South Africa stands at a historic crossroads. Our unemployment rate sits at 33 percent, having risen consistently from 22 percent since 2008.[1] GDP per capita growth has averaged 0 percent since 2008 – meaning South Africans have been getting poorer each year. After more than a decade of economic stagnation, institutional decay, and rising unemployment, the country now faces a pivotal choice: continue down the road of economic decline, or embrace bold, credible reforms which build a super highway to growth, job creation, and renewed hope.

The National Dialogue highlights the difference between the Democratic Alliance ("**DA**") and the African National Congress ("**ANC**"). The ANC may be satisfied with spending R700 million on yet another talk shop, but South Africans are tired of talk – they want action. The DA chooses action because only urgent economic reform will grow our economy, create jobs, and build a better future for South Africa.

Our Six-Point Plan is a blueprint to **turbocharge South Africa's economy**. Since entering the national government one year ago, DA Ministers and Deputy Ministers have already begun turning once-failing departments around. From improving water infrastructure to expanding digital access, modernising public works, and strengthening public finances, DA-led departments are laying the foundation for a more prosperous economy. **This plan builds on that progress and paves a super highway towards growth and prosperity**.

Economic growth and job creation remain the DA's top priority; however, given the balance of power established in the 2024 National Elections, our ability to influence departments which are central to these goals remains limited. If South Africans want to see improved economic growth and job creation, they must **strengthen the DA's hand** in future elections so that we can do more. **A stronger DA, running more national departments, will improve South Africa's outlook for future economic growth and job creation**.

South Africa's economic challenges are deep and structural. The cost of living is rising while wages stagnate. Crime is suffocating enterprise. Young people cannot find work. Infrastructure is collapsing, and Eskom remains a handbrake on growth. However, these are not insurmountable problems. They are solvable - **if we act with the required urgency, clarity, and political will**.

To turbocharge our economy, we need to leverage the most critical levers of reform:

1. **Removing Job-Killing Policies and Laws.** Removing regulatory roadblocks, overhauling race-based empowerment schemes, and creating an enabling environment for investment, entrepreneurship, and job creation.
2. **Creating Energy Wealth.** Fixing South Africa's energy crisis by creating a competitive electricity market and unlocking energy exports to create an affordable and reliable electricity supply that promotes economic growth and job creation.
3. **Saving Our Network Industries.** Turning around our failing railways, ports, and digital infrastructure to restore South Africa's position as a competitive, connected, and modern economy.

4. **Spending for Growth.** Refocusing public expenditure on productive investments, eliminating waste and bailouts, and supporting sustainable, pro-growth public finances.
5. **From Dysfunctional to Delivering Municipalities.** Turning collapsing municipalities into functioning centres of service delivery by stabilising coalitions, professionalising administrations, unlocking investment, and devolving powers to capable local governments.
6. **Arresting the Crime Epidemic.** Cracking down on organised crime and corruption, professionalising policing, and decentralising public safety to capable provinces and municipalities.

What unites these six focus areas is a commitment to economic growth and job creation as a foremost national priority. South Africans deserve more than handouts. They deserve jobs, functioning infrastructure, affordable electricity, functional local government, and the opportunity to improve their lives through hard work and enterprise.

The DA's approach is practical, future-focused, and driven by a simple idea: **if we get our economic fundamentals right, growth and jobs will follow**. This document outlines how we can achieve this goal. **It's time to turbocharge our economy!**

Achievements of DA Ministers and Departments

The DA Gets Things Done

Despite being in national government for only a year, DA Ministers and Deputy Ministers have made significant progress, specifically, in turbocharging South Africa on the superhighway to economic growth and job creation. DA-led Departments are already driving economic reform and job creation, with more to come.

The table below highlights some of the achievements of our DA Ministers and Deputy Ministers over the past year:

Table 1: *DA Ministers and Deputy Ministers' Achievements During the Seventh Administration*

Minister/ Deputy	Department	Achievements that Turbocharge South Africa's Economy
John Steenhuisen	**Agriculture**	• The agricultural sector grew its production by approximately 16 percent in the first three months of the year, adding 0.4 percent to GDP.[2] • Procured animal vaccines and began their rollout to contain and prevent the spread of foot-and-mouth disease.[3] The Department also embarked on the first-ever vaccination of poultry against avian flu, ensuring that food in South African grocery stores is safe to eat.[4] • Uncovered the misappropriation of R500 million allocated for an animal vaccine production facility, which was never constructed. Initiated investigations to ensure accountability and potential recovery of funds.[5] • Initiated the review and reform of legislation and regulations that are outdated or impede the growth of the sector – such as expanding South Africa's trade in dairy, beef and wool through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).[6] • Reopened the export of South African Apples to the Kingdom of Thailand for the first time in 16 years.[7]
Leon Schreiber	**Home Affairs**	• Delivered nearly 3.6 million Smart IDs – almost half a million more than the previous annual record.[8] Home Affairs services form a core part of a functional and fit-for-purpose state. • Finalised regulations for Remote Work and Points-Based Work Visas to attract skilled immigrants.[9] • Established the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme for India & China: a move to enhance job creation from tourism. Dr Schreiber gazetted a call for an expression of interest by tour operators from South Africa to improve tourism from China and India.[10] This initiative has facilitated 25 000 visas for tour groups from China and India since February. • Has dismissed 38 corrupt employees to root out corruption wherever it is found.[11]

Minister/ Deputy	Department	Achievements that Turbocharge South Africa's Economy
Dean Macpherson	**Public Works and Infra-structure**	• Finalised the collaboration with Operation Vulindlela's priority regarding housing and land release projects to ensure dormant land is used to expand opportunities for social housing.[12] • Hosted SIDSSA 2025: Led the Sustainable Infrastructure Development Symposium South Africa (SIDSSA), unveiling over 250 projects valued at R268 billion and securing R600 million for project preparation funding.[13] • Fast tracked 82 Strategic Integrated Projects worth R437 billion, with a focus on transport, water, energy, and housing. [14] • Established the Strategic and Special Delivery Unit (SSDU) and the R180 million infrastructure project preparation facility, to fast-track high-impact projects. • Launched multiple investigations into past irregular procurement processes, governance failures and potential fraud. Disciplinary actions have been recommended against implicated officials and matters have been referred to law enforcement. These efforts form part of a broader clean-up operation, including the restructuring of the Prestige Unit, lifestyle audits of over 400 high-risk officials, a ghost employee audit, and the removal of underperforming contractors.
Solly Malatsi	**Communi-cations and Digital Tech-nologies**	• Successfully lobbied for the removal of the 9 percent import tax on smartphones costing less than R2500, expanding digital access to all South Africans.[15] • Put forward a policy clarifying equity equivalent investment (EEIPs) in the ICT sector as a mechanism to accelerate satellite broadband access and encourage investment typically stifled by B-BEEE.[16] • Introduced new reforms that allow for government departments to procure IT services from the private sector. [17]
Siviwe Gwarube	**Basic Education**	• 373 schools were electrified, 1336 schools connected to clean water, and 1086 schools received new sanitation facilities through the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI).[18] These include all 331 schools previously built from inappropriate materials, such as mud and asbestos, being replaced. • Launched the Social Compact for Early Childhood Development,[19] which aims for universal access to quality early childhood development. This effort has raised nearly R600 million to establish an Outcomes Fund, which will provide early childhood development services to around 100,000 children and improve care quality in 1,500 early childhood development programmes over the next three years. • Operationalised the National Education and Training Council of experts, which will advise on the best way to drive time on task and better education outcomes, ensuring teachers are in class and performing their duties.

Minister/ Deputy	Department	Achievements that Turbocharge South Africa's Economy
Dion George	**Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment**	• South Africa became one of the signatories of the historic Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), known as the 'High Seas Treaty'. The treaty addresses critical gaps in the governance of two-thirds of the ocean that lie beyond national jurisdictions.[20] It introduces tools such as area-based management, environmental impact assessments, and capacity building.[21] This is an important step in protecting our fisheries as both a food source and a means through which many coastal communities support themselves. • 12 proclaimed fishing harbours have been identified as coastal economic hubs, providing opportunities for growth and jobs to the communities they serve, contributing to improved food security.[22] • Allowed subsistence fishers to catch 36% more of legal species. This will reduce the cost-of-living burden on these households and improve food security, whilst not compromising sustainability.[23] • Securing financing to support environmental priorities is crucial for long-term sustainability. The Department is developing innovative financing mechanisms to attract both public and private investment in conservation, eco-tourism, and environmental infrastructure. The National Biodiversity Economy Strategy is projected to generate 397,000 jobs and inject R127 billion into the economy annually by 2036.[24]

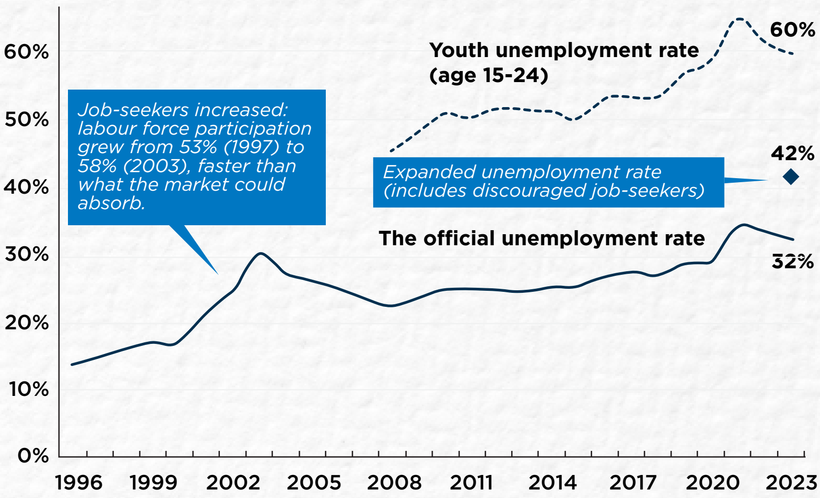
Removing Job-Killing Policies and Laws

Time for Urgent Action

South Africa's economic environment is hostile to business and investment, contributing to low economic growth and job creation.

Several constraints, such as infrastructure bottlenecks, restrictive regulations, market concentration, high cost of doing business, and corruption, have suffocated business dynamism[i] and job creation.[25,26] South Africa's anti-growth environment is unsustainable in a country where job creation is not a luxury, but a national necessity. Unemployment (as per the standard definition[ii]) has surged from approximately 25 percent between 2010 and 2015 to a staggering 32.9 percent in the first quarter of 2025, among the highest rates globally.[27,28,29]

Figure 1: South Africa's 30-year unemployment trend

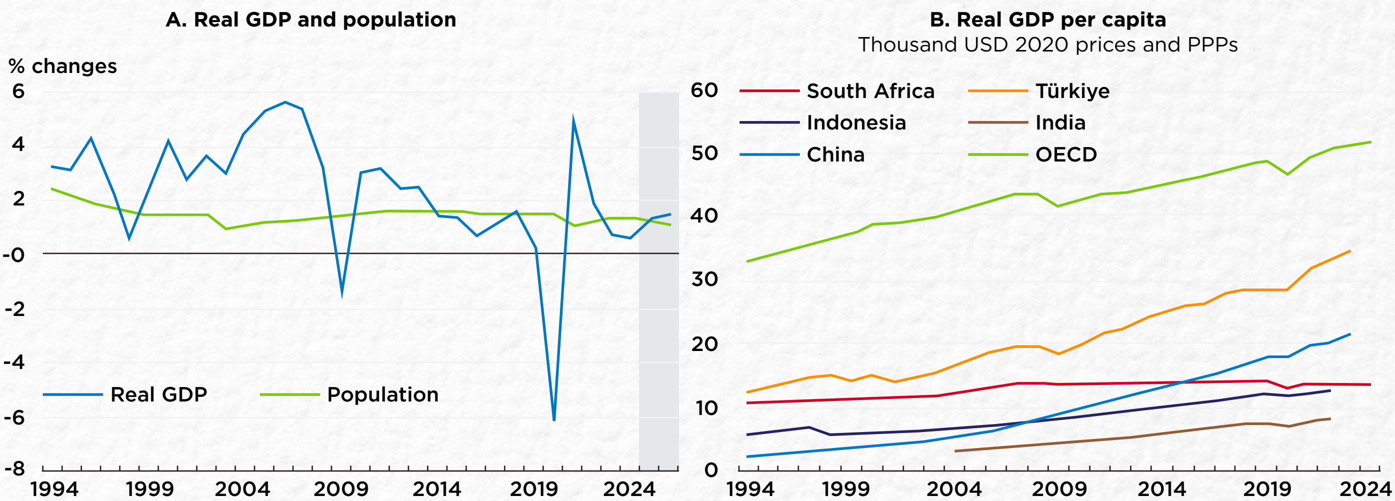


The expanded unemployment rate (which includes discouraged job-seekers) stands at a high 43.1 percent.[30] At the same time, an estimated 34.3 million South Africans (more than half of the population) are living below the upper middle-income poverty line of $6.85 (±R127) per day.[31] Addressing these dire realities requires sustained, inclusive growth. Yet, South Africa's growth remains neither inclusive nor job-rich.

South Africa's GDP per capita[iii] - used to compare the level of prosperity of populations worldwide – has stagnated over the past decade.[32] Growth in GDP per capita has been either negative or nearly stagnant every year from 2014 to 2024, excluding 2021 and 2022 due to the rebound effects of the COVID-19 pandemic's onset and a boom in commodity prices.[33]

Low GDP growth has been insufficient to raise GDP per capita. South Africa's GDP per capita ranks seventh in Africa at approximately $6,400.[34] Growth remains subdued due to ongoing issues such as limited access to electricity, deterioration of the rail network and port operations, weak investment, high cost of doing business, a fragile fiscal position, and corruption.[35]

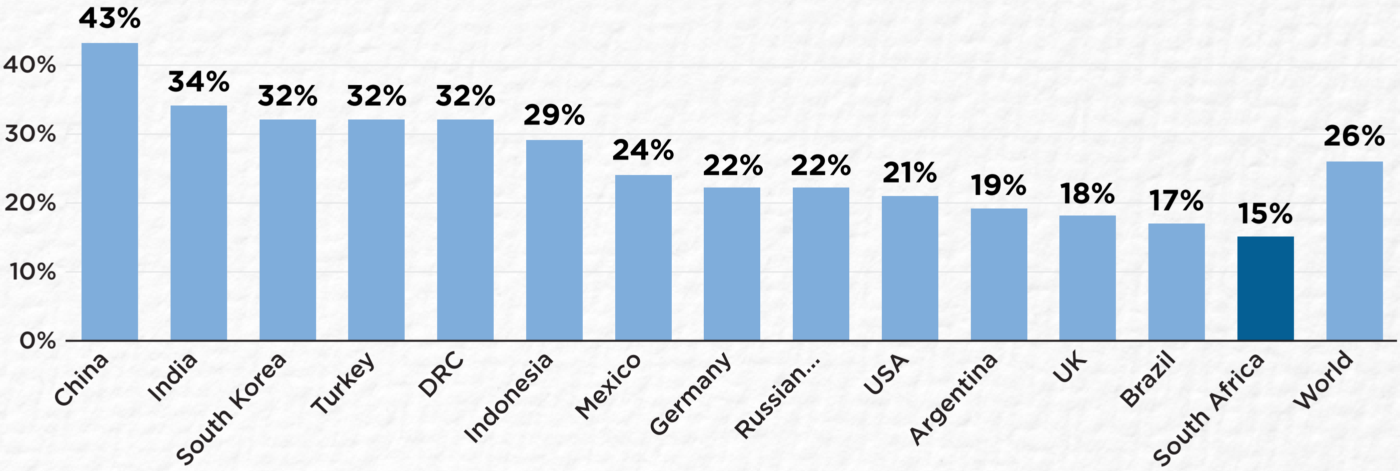
Figure 2: Real GDP and population, and Real GDP per capita



[i] Business dynamism refers to the cycle of new firms forming, growing, shrinking, and exiting within a market.
[ii] The standard definition of unemployment refers to individuals who are able to work and actively looking for a job but cannot find a job.
[iii] GDP per capita is the total GDP divided by the country's population. A higher per capita GDP generally indicates a higher average income and potentially a higher standard of living for the citizens.

Gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) - the investment needed to expand productive capacity - has fallen below 15 percent of GDP, far short of the 30-35 percent required to drive meaningful growth.[36,37] Figure 3 shows how South Africa's investment levels trail both developed and emerging markets - a gap that must close to reignite the economy.[38]

Figure 3: Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) as a percentage of GDP[39]

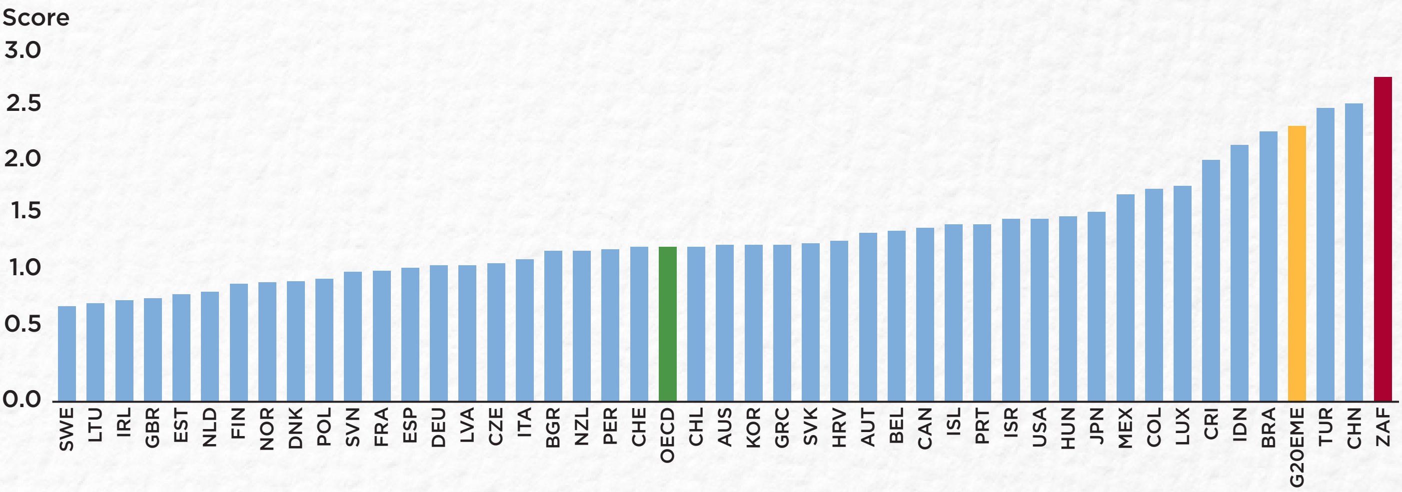


At the heart of this economic dysfunction lies a toxic mix of **anti-growth policies, regulatory overreach, and a political elite unwilling to confront vested interests**. This has created an environment where economic participation is stifled, and the conditions needed for a dynamic, competitive market economy are absent.

Entrepreneurship and new business creation improve competition, but require an enabling regulatory framework that ensures fair opportunities for growth, innovation and job creation.[40] However, South Africa's private sector lacks dynamism and is dominated by large firms and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that account for a disproportionate share of employment and revenue.[41] This concentration restricts small business growth and hinders job creation. Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) employed 59 percent of South Africa's workforce in 2022, well below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 69 percent in 2020.[42] Most micro firms struggle to expand, with around two-thirds comprising self-employed individuals and only one-third employing staff.[43]

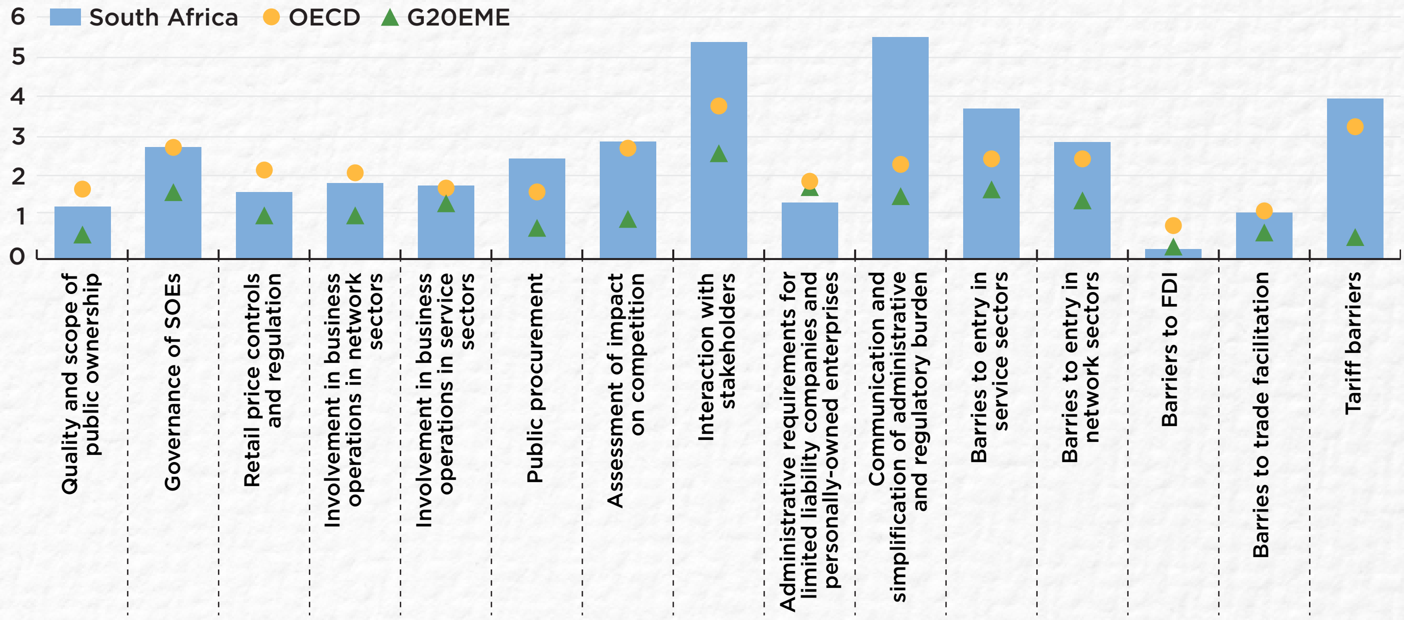
South Africa ranks as the most restrictive economy in terms of product market regulation[iv] among the OECD and major G20 emerging markets. According to the OECD's 2024 Product Market Regulation (PMR) indicators, South Africa ranks poorly regarding international best practice in 13 out of 15 core regulatory areas (Figure 5), especially in areas crucial for business entry, market competition, SOE governance, and procurement.[44]

Figure 4: Overall economy-wide Product Market Regulation Indicators, 2023/2024



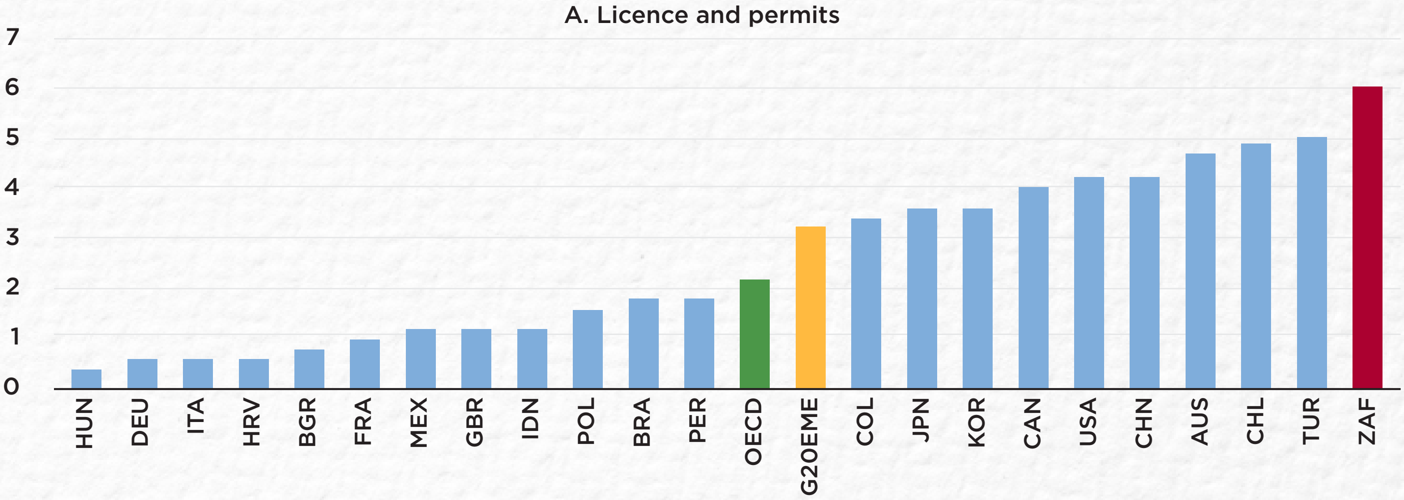
[iv] Product market regulation measures the regulatory barriers to firm entry and competition.

Figure 5: PMR sub-indicators for South Africa, 2023/2024



Starting a business in South Africa remains restrictive.[45] South Africa's licensing and permitting regime is highly restrictive compared to OECD and selected G20 economies, placing unnecessary burdens and raising compliance costs (Figure 6).[v]

Figure 6: Licence requirements for businesses



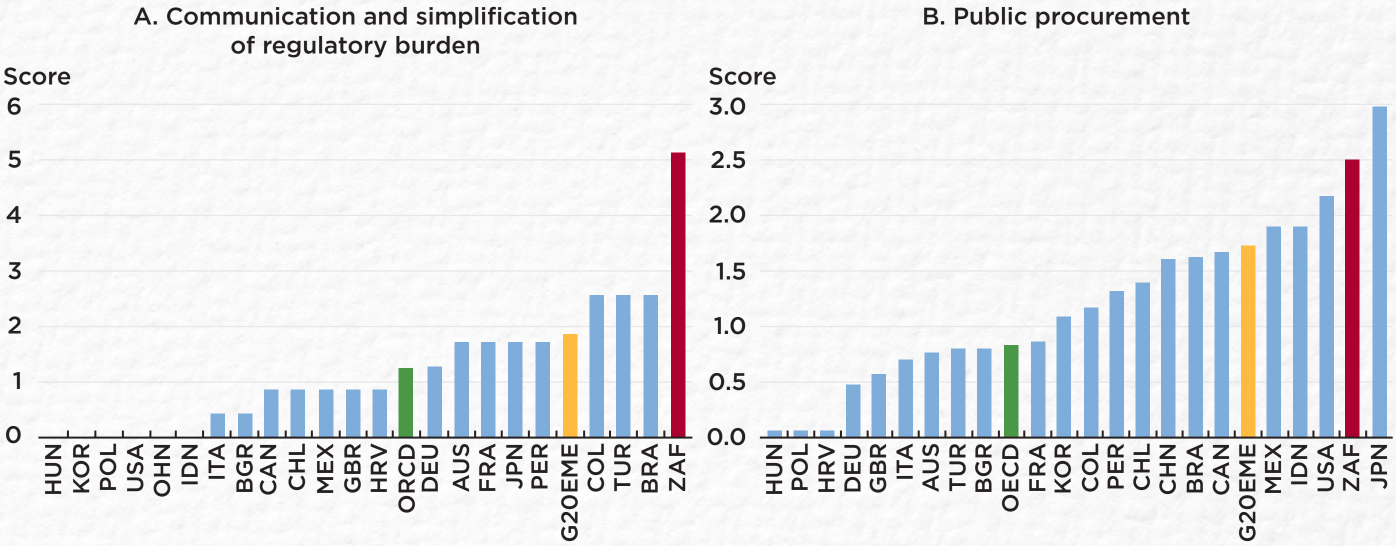
Entrepreneurs also face delays due to the absence of a "silence is consent" rule, which grants automatic approval after a set period. The burden is worsened by the lack of a "once-only" principle, which would prevent businesses from repeatedly submitting the same information.[46] This restrictive environment stifles entrepreneurship and inhibits potential job creation.

Administrative barriers further suffocate firms, costing a larger share of turnover for small businesses. South Africa ranks the lowest among its peers in efforts to communicate and simplify its regulatory burden. Red tape remains excessive, with no "plain language" requirements for legislation, no comprehensive regulatory database, and no adherence to a 'once-only' principle in public administration.[47]

[v] A higher indicator value reflects more regulatory barriers

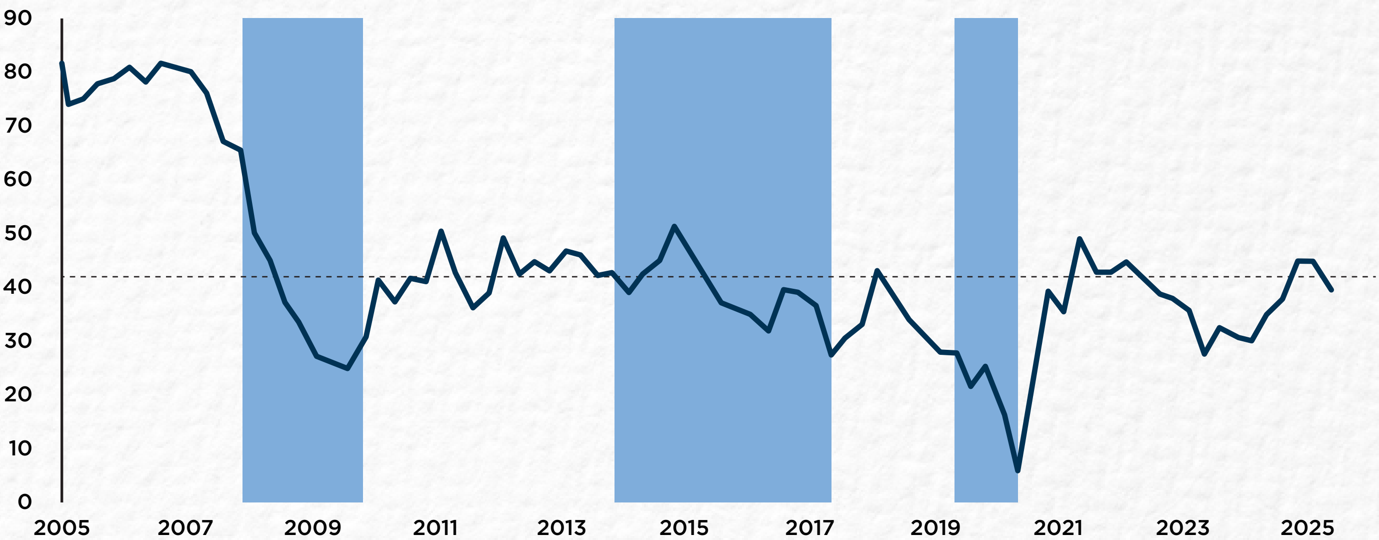
South Africa's public procurement rules are among the least competitive globally. While the Public Procurement Amendment Act (No. 28 of 2024) aims to address some procurement challenges, there are still others that persist. For instance, bid timeframes are not scaled to project complexity, tenders are seldom divided into smaller lots to accommodate SMMEs, and late invoice payments remain endemic, choking cash flow for small suppliers.[48]

Figure 7: Administrative requirements and public procurement procedure



South Africa's business confidence remains weak. The RMB/BER Business Confidence Index (BCI),[vi] remains continuously below the 50 average/neutral level, reflecting the drag of structural constraints, policy uncertainty, logistical failures, and waning business sentiment amid domestic (and global) challenges.[49,50] This discourages entrepreneurship and deters investment.

Figure 8: RMB/BER Business Confidence Index



Unless bold action is taken to dismantle the regulatory stranglehold on business and investment, the country will face escalating unemployment, deepening poverty, and growing inequality.

[vi] The RMB/BER BCI surveys businesses measuring optimism about sales, employment, inventories and prices. The index varies from 0 to 100, where 0 indicates an extreme lack of confidence, 50 neutrality and 100 extreme confidence.

Projected Economic Growth

According to OECD research using a Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium (DSGE) model, South Africa could raise its GDP by up to **4.5 percent** over ten years (Table 2)[51] if structural reforms are implemented that enhance business dynamism and promote fair competition. Key reforms include simplifying the regulatory and licensing framework, easing administrative burdens on small firms, improving the governance of state-owned enterprises, and reducing market entry barriers, particularly in network and professional service sectors. Additionally, reforms to streamline public procurement, modernise the insolvency regime, and create incentives for entrepreneurship and firm restructuring are critical.[52]

Table 2: Estimated impact of selected reforms on GDP

Percentage point deviation in the level of GDP compared to the pre-reform steady state			
Policy reforms	**1 year**	**5 years**	**10 years**
Product market reforms that raise competition in the non-tradable sector	-0.4%	0.3%	0.2%
Product market reforms that raise competition in the tradable sector	2.4%	1.2%	1.3%
Increasing public investment by 1 ppt GDP financed by taxes	1.5%	1.6%	1.9%
Enhanced public procurement policies that lead to a 10% reduction in the price of public investment	0.0%	1%	1.1%

How the ANC Is Getting in the Way

The ANC government is the architect of South Africa's anti-growth environment, designed to benefit a few politically connected elites while excluding job seekers and entrepreneurs.

At the core of this system is Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE), also known as BEE, which, **rather than promoting genuine broad-based empowerment, has resulted in a millionaire class of well-connected insiders**. Over R1 trillion has flowed through BEE deals between just 100 politically connected individuals since 1994. While unemployment remains at over 40 percent,[vii] poverty deepens, and millions remain excluded from economic opportunity.[53,54]

The policy's origins reveal its true nature, conceived in the early 1990s by certain segments of big business to protect their vested interests and curry favour with the incoming ANC government. It was designed to secure business-friendly conditions in exchange for channelling wealth and patronage to political elites. Today, B-BBEE continues to function as a patronage system, entrenching corruption and excluding the very people it purports to uplift.

Public sentiment confirms that BEE policies have failed. An Ipsos survey commissioned by News24 reveals that only 44 percent of South Africans want BEE retained, while 36 percent say it should be scrapped altogether. Furthermore, 46 percent agree that BEE is slowing down economic growth.[55]

[vii] The expanded unemployment rate which includes discouraged job seekers.

Figure 9: South Africans' Views on BEE: Ipsos-News24 Survey Results

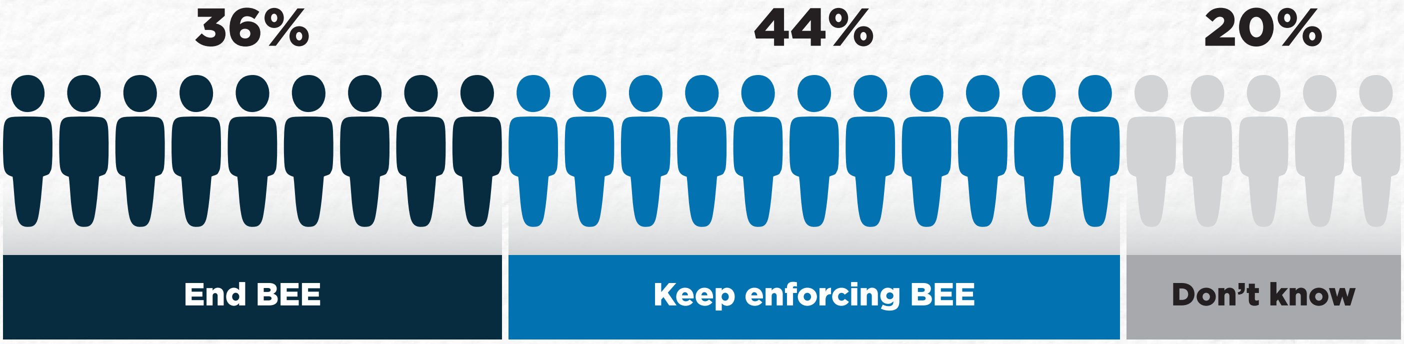
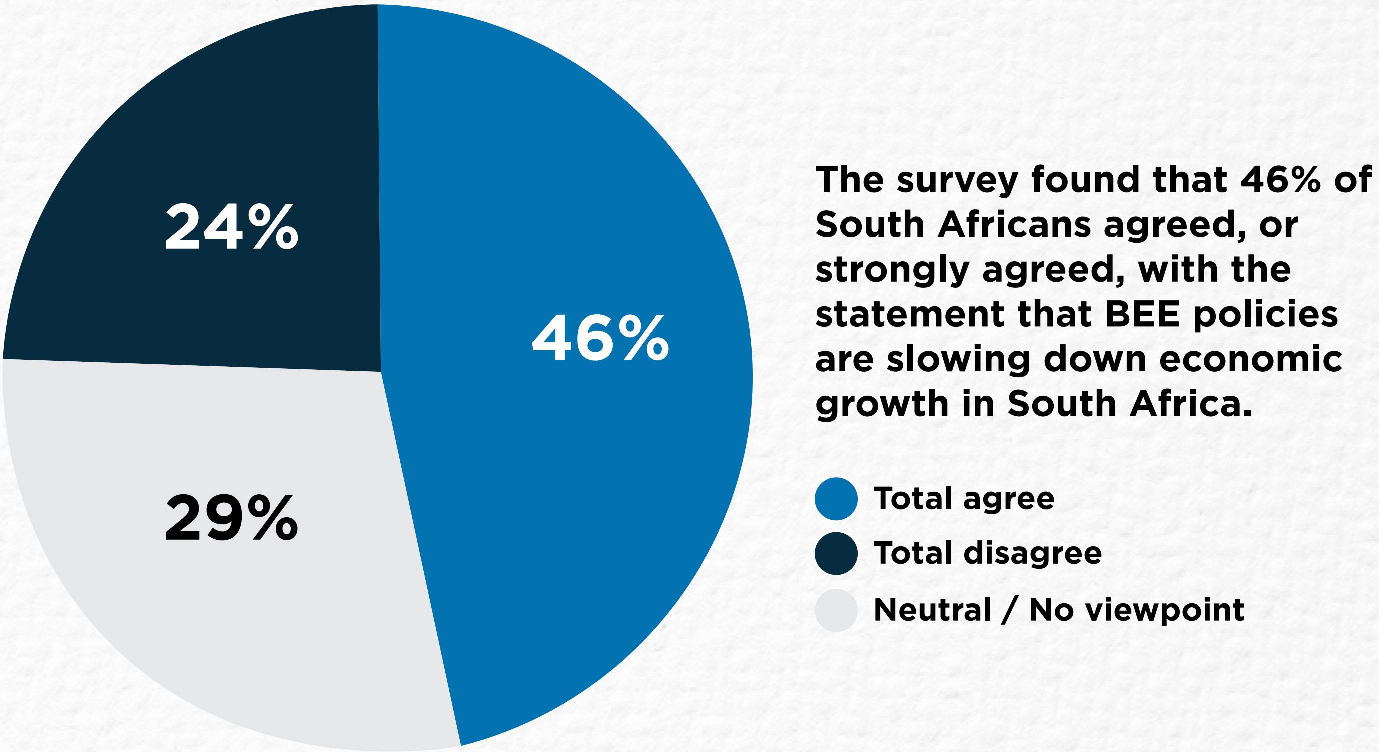


Figure 10: BEE and Economic Growth



Polling by the Social Research Foundation (SRF) furthermore reveals a striking disconnect between government policy and public opinion. The SRF's latest survey shows that 70 percent of the respondents believe South Africa's race-based laws were enacted to enrich the politically connected, not the poor.[56]

BEE has failed to improve the economic circumstances of the black majority. According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), the unemployment rate for Black South Africans stood at 35.8 percent in quarter 4 of 2024, compared to just 6.7 percent for White South Africans.[57] Between 2014 and 2024, the black unemployment rate rose by 8.6 percentage points, while the white unemployment rate dropped by 1 percent.[58]

BEE is also harming South Africa's economy and growth potential – a position supported by economists, business leaders, and the international financial institutions.[59,60] Rigid BEE ownership and empowerment requirements increase costs, limit competitiveness, and deter multinational firms from investing in South Africa.[61,62] Yet, President Cyril Ramaphosa defended BEE in Parliament in May 2025, even as evidence of its catastrophic failures mounted.[63]

The World Bank has stated that South Africa should eliminate its excessive regulatory burden and overhaul its race-based ownership laws. The Bank explained that the government must remove policies that prevent the economy from growing. It added that implementing these changes would steer the country away from the "wrong growth trajectory," increase GDP per capita, and help reduce unemployment.[64,65] According to the World Bank, the *"burden of several industrial and labour policies can be reduced by adjusting them to the reality of the market—for example, by generalising the use of the Equity Equivalence Investment Programs by the Department of Trade and Industry instead of the hard, complex conditions associated with Black Economic Empowerment policies."*[66]

Equally corrosive is the Expropriation Act (No.13 of 2024), which undermines property rights and deters both domestic and foreign investment. The Act grants the state powers to seize land and property, including at nil compensation in certain circumstances. This creates deep uncertainty around property rights and investor security in South Africa. Section 12(3) of the Act lists four instances where it may be considered just and equitable for no compensation to be paid. This provision creates a real risk of government abuse by allowing any expropriating authority, including mismanaged local authorities, to expropriate property without compensation.[67]

The Employment Equity Act (No.55 of 1998) represents another example of **ideological rigidity overriding practical outcomes**. By enforcing rigid racial quotas and targets in the workplace, it discourages business expansion, limits merit-based appointments, and deters investment. These race-based targets ignore the complex socio-economic realities of South Africa and enforce crude racial categorisation at the expense of addressing genuine poverty and inequality.

The ANC's alliance with powerful trade unions and protection of politically aligned bargaining councils have also made South Africa's labour market one of the most rigid in the world. The refusal to deregulate SMMEs and uncouple them from the bargaining councils stifles entrepreneurship and prevents job creation. Calls to exempt them were dismissed, despite the fact that decoupling would cost nothing and unlock jobs.[68,69] Allowing SMMEs to operate outside of these restrictions could enable businesses to hire more freely, grow faster, and absorb more of the unemployed.

The ANC has systematically obstructed every attempt by the DA to introduce reforms to address these challenges. The result is an economy in crisis, and a society growing ever more desperate and divided.

The DA is fighting to get people into jobs based on poverty, not race.

The ANC continuously blocks or is resistant to the DA's proposal to reform BEE and transition to non-racial, need-based empowerment. However, the DA will continue to fight as before:

- **April 2025:** The DA launched a constitutional challenge to Section 15(A) of the Employment Equity Amendment Act (Also known as the Race Quotas Act) (No. 4 of 2022), which will introduce rigid national race "quotas" in the workplace.[70]
- **April 2025:** The DA has objected to the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development regulations requiring homebuyers and sellers to declare their race in Deeds Office transactions.[71]
- **February 2024:** The DA forced Minister Thulas Nxesi to withdraw and revise the original draft Employment Equity regulations, scrapping the most damaging aspect - provincial race quotas.[72]

Stemming from the **DA's Economic Justice Policy**, in June 2023, the DA unveiled the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Amendment Bill, or 'Social Impact Bill' which sought to amend the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act (PPPFA), scrap the B-BBEE Act (No. 53 of 2003), and ultimately enact what PPPFA failed to do with B-BBEE – address the root causes of inequality of opportunity across South African society.[73]

The Social Impact Bill sought to do away with racial considerations in government contracts and replace them with the adoption of the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by private companies tendering for government contracts. This will better serve socio-economic development for the most vulnerable communities in South Africa. Since the development of the Social Impact Bill, the previous ANC-led national Government repealed the PPPFA and replaced it with the Public Procurement Act. The DA is now reworking the Social Impact Bill (renamed the Economic Inclusion Bill) to achieve the same initial goals within the new Public Procurement Act.

It is time to dismantle the ANC's failing economic system and build a new, inclusive economy based on equality of opportunity and fairness.

Bold Solutions:
Repeal of the B-BBEE Act and Amending the Expropriation Act

The DA advocates for a complete Repeal of the B-BBEE Act, together with all related policies, legislation, and regulations, underpinning BBBEE.

B-BBEE has failed and needs to be replaced with the **DA's non-racial, economic empowerment model** outlined within the **DA's Economic Justice Policy**. The DA's approach focuses on the drivers of inequality of opportunity that affect the majority of South Africans.

The DA's non-racial economic empowerment model is based on the internationally recognised UN SDGs - a set of 17 goals which can help direct the actions of government, civil society, and business to address the root causes of inequality of opportunity. While the current redress model primarily relies on crude race-based categories, the DA's model targets the vulnerable and disadvantaged regardless of race, ensuring that no deserving South African is excluded.

The DA recognises the historical injustices of apartheid. However, redress should focus on actual socio-economic disadvantage rather than racial identity. This is at the heart of the **DA's Economic Justice Policy**, which offers sound, tangible, and targeted mechanisms for addressing inequality and expanding opportunity without resorting to racial classification.

In addition to overhauling the B-BBEE Act, the **Expropriation Act should be amended to remove the provision for nil compensation**. This entails removing *"nil compensation"* from the Act and retaining *"just and equitable"* compensation in line with Section 25 of the Constitution to restore investor confidence and protect property rights.

These reforms are vital to restore investor confidence, protect property rights, and, more importantly, unlock inclusive economic growth.

Further recommendations to support economic growth, business and job creation include:

- **Undertaking a full review of red tape and regulation across government** to eliminate frictional costs to the economy, eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy that slows investment, lower costs, and remove delays that prevent business growth.[74]
- **Exploring the implementation of OECD structural reforms proposed**, which can contribute an additional 4.5 percentage points to GDP after 10 years (Table 3).[75] Proposed reforms, among others, include:
    - **Prioritising areas where regulatory barriers could have a significant impact on growth and would support business dynamism**, including simplifying the regulatory framework and easing the administrative burden, further simplifying public procurement and improving the governance of SOEs.[76]
    - **Making the time allotted to bidders and entry requirements, in public procurement, proportional to the value or complexity of the tender** and requiring contracting authorities to consider dividing public procurement contracts into lots.[77]

- **Simplifying the registration process for informal entrepreneurs** and reducing the financial cost of applications. Complex registration and expensive licensing limit people from becoming self-employed.[78]
- **Creating a comprehensive permit inventory, introducing a silence-is-consent principle where appropriate, and differentiating licensing processes based on risk** to reduce administrative costs, encourage firm creation, and boost productivity.[79]

- **Establishing a commission of inquiry into all development finance institutions, such as the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) and others,** to audit how racially based funding has been distributed and to expose how much funding has benefited ANC-linked individuals at the expense of the poor.
- **Exempting SMMEs from the administrative extension of bargaining council agreements.** This will be done by amending the Labour Relations Act so that small businesses are not compelled to participate in collective bargaining agreements. Exempting SMMEs from this obligation will make it easier for them to employ more people.[80]
- **Supporting business growth and job creation by reducing barriers to entry**, improving access to resources, and creating an enabling business environment for entrepreneurship. As captured in the **DA's Economic Policy**, this involves, among other things:
  - **Expanding 'One-Stop-Shops'**, coupled with the rollout of a comprehensive Business Starter Toolkit offering step-by-step guidance and other essential tools.
  - **Removing punitive import duties on essential business tools** (e.g., single-cab bakkies) to lower operational costs for small businesses.
  - **Addressing funding constraints by scaling up microfinance initiatives**, developing SME investment platforms, and promoting alternative financing avenues (e.g., crowdfunding and stock exchange listings).
  - Supporting the informal economy by **simplifying permit processes** through e-registration and **facilitating trading opportunities** in high-traffic areas.[81]

Ensuring Affordable and Reliable Energy to Power the Economy

Time for Urgent Action

South Africa's energy crisis is holding our country back. A failure to manage and maintain our energy supply for decades has throttled the economy, increased unemployment and raised the cost of living. Rolling blackouts became a part of daily life, destroying jobs, shutting down businesses, and scaring off investment. Despite a reprieve from rolling blackouts since 2024, the energy crisis persists with the high electricity costs and uncertainty about South Africa's future energy supply.

The energy crisis is more than just blackouts. **It is a barrier to economic growth and job creation.**

South Africa's energy security is threatened by outdated infrastructure, mismanagement, and a lack of political will. Blackouts have been a constant feature of South African life, with devastating consequences for productivity, job creation, and investor confidence. The International Monetary Fund ("**IMF**") projects 1 percent of real GDP growth in South Africa in 2025, primarily driven by recovering private consumption and investment supported by stable electricity generation. , However, this is possible only if the energy supply is stable and affordable.

Our energy shortage is a structural impediment to the country's economic prospects. The DA proposes bold reforms which will provide affordable and reliable energy to all South Africans and create an abundance of energy wealth. If key reforms are implemented quickly, we can establish a surplus energy supply to sell on international markets.

South Africa needs a working energy market which powers homes, businesses, and schools. Energy wealth will mean that lights always turn on, food can be cooked, and less of your income will go to electricity each month. By restructuring the energy market, we can make South Africa an energy-rich country. Energy wealth means we can create more power than we need and sell our surplus to neighbouring countries. This income will be invested back into our economy to build critical infrastructure and create additional employment opportunities for all South Africans.

There are two leading causes of South Africa's energy crisis: **stability and pricing**.

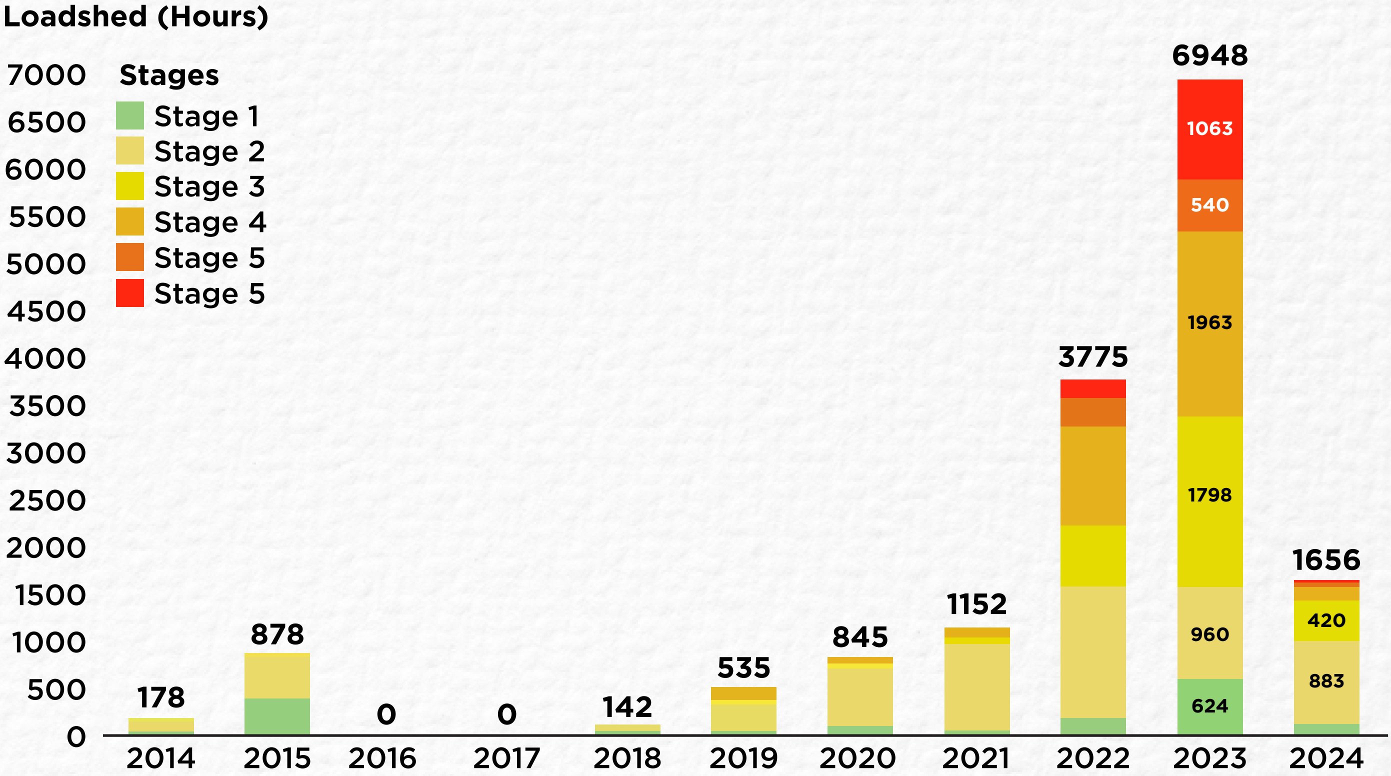
Stability of Supply

If South Africa succeeds in creating economic growth and raising GDP per capita, energy demand will rise alongside it. **Without urgent reform, new demand will overwhelm the existing system.** There is a strong likelihood that, should economic growth return, the additional demand placed on our energy system would result in the return of rolling blackouts. South Africa's low economic growth has unintentionally alleviated some pressure on Eskom. However, if our economy is to grow, we will need an increased energy supply alongside it.

Rolling blackouts in 2023 were the worst on record. There was a total of almost 7000 hours of load shedding, spread out over 290 days.[84] This means that only 75 days in the year experienced uninterrupted electricity supply (see Figure 11). The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research ("**CSIR**") 2025 Utility-scale power generation statistics report stated that rolling blackouts in 2023 cost the economy up to R2.4 trillion – about 4 percent of GDP that year.[85,86]

Rolling blackouts in 2024 decreased significantly. This was due to improved total energy availability (about 10 more TWh) and reduced demand (7 less TWh).[87] However, this still hampered economic growth in 2024. Businesses and households used their spare capital and borrowing capacity to Eskom-proof themselves. However, this money could have been spent expanding their businesses and creating more jobs. Despite improved energy availability, there was no new generation capacity added in 2024, risking the return of rolling blackouts should the economy begin to grow.[88]

Figure 11: Loadshedding hours per year from 2014 – 2024. Graph from CSIR.[89]



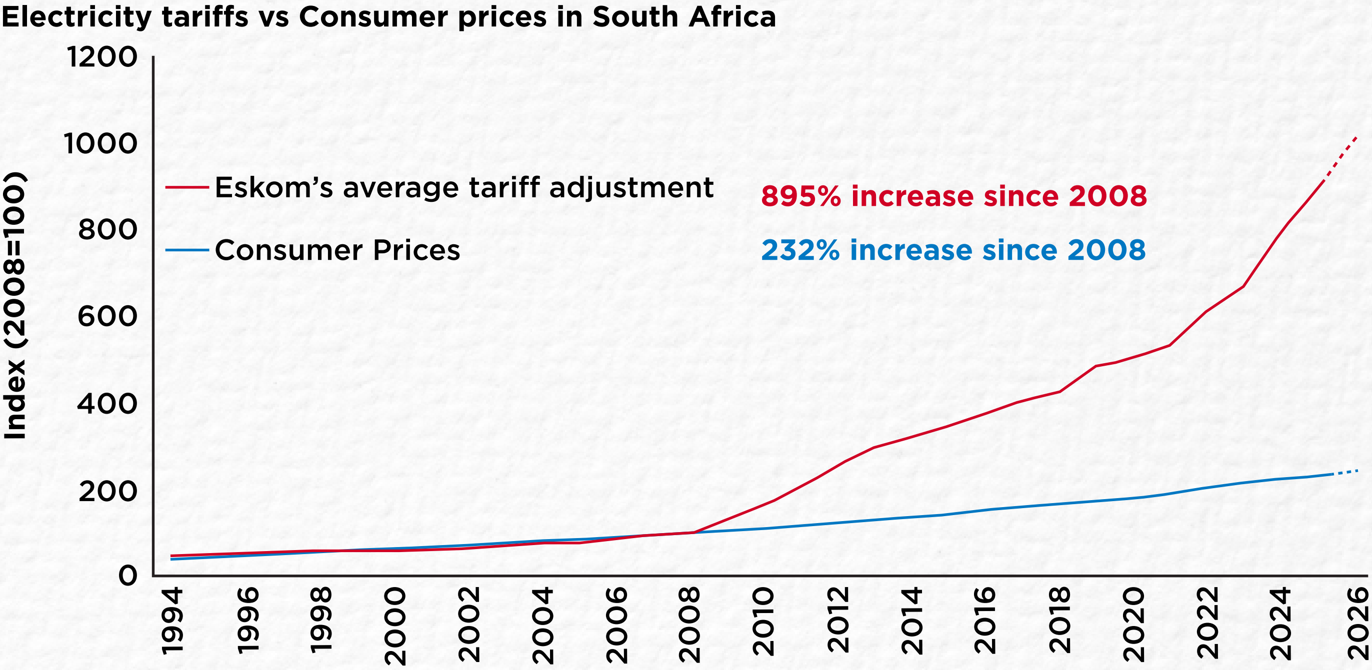
Electricity Cost

Electricity is too expensive. Many ordinary South Africans, both in their homes and their businesses, are financially squeezed by rising electricity costs. The unreliable energy supply has driven up costs for the average South African, with costs having significantly outpaced inflation since 2007; consumer prices are 2.5 times higher in 2025 than in 2007, yet electricity is nine times higher.[90]

Electricity has not been consistently available to South Africans for the last 18 years, and the electricity which is available is increasingly unaffordable. Eskom's aggregate standard tariffs have increased by almost 15 percent per year since 2008, compared to average CPI inflation of approximately 5.8 percent over this period.[91] This means a larger portion of household and business expenditure must go towards electricity.

Figure 12 illustrates how electricity prices since 1994 kept pace with inflation until 2008 – even as electricity access was greatly expanded from approximately 54 percent of South Africans in 1994 to 82 percent in 2008.[92,93] After rolling blackouts began in 2008, electricity prices started to outpace inflation, and even though certain years had little to no rolling blackouts (2014, 2016 – 2018), tariffs were never reduced as Eskom struggled to maintain a consistent energy supply. The consistently above-inflation tariff increases granted by the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) have disproportionately burdened low-income households and small businesses.

Figure 12: Average electricity tariffs vs consumer prices in the rest of the economy from the turn of democracy until 2025, including a projection for 2026 (the dotted portion of the line). Graph from CODERA Analytics.[94]



Source: Eskom Tariff books, Stats SA, EconData, SARB latest CPI forecast, Codera Analytics

The high price of electricity is preventing greater economic growth and job creation. Urgent measures must be taken to ensure electricity prices are at a level which can promote sustained economic growth.

Projected Economic Growth

According to the IMF's 2024 Article IV consultation report on South Africa (2025), South Africa's renewable energy transition has significant potential to boost economic growth. The report projects that South Africa's investment in solar and wind energy generation could add 0.2 to 0.4 percent GDP growth annually between the years of 2025 and 20230, leading to a 2 to 4 percent increase thereafter. The report recommends that both internal and external financing can be utilised for this goal, as external financing can be used for new renewable energy projects to allow domestic funds to be invested into other sectors that will benefit from the increased electricity supply.[95]

How the ANC is Getting in the Way

The history of South Africa's energy crisis has been marked by the ANC's **short-sightedness and a refusal to relinquish state control of the energy market**. Instead of preventing the crisis and improving the living conditions of all South Africans, the ANC have got in the way.

The ANC has been unwilling to let go of its state monopoly, even as poor political leadership prevented Eskom from avoiding rolling blackouts. In 1998, the Department of Minerals and Energy ("**DMRE**") stated that Eskom's current surplus of generation capacity would be fully utilised by around 2007.[96] The 1998 *White Paper on the Energy Policy of the Republic of South Africa*[97] (adopted by the DMRE) also set out the intended structural reforms of Eskom, including the (vertical) unbundling of Eskom's Generation, Transmission, and Distribution divisions. Through this restructuring, it was hoped that the private sector would ultimately contribute approximately 30 percent of South Africa's electricity generation.[98]

These warnings were not heeded. Throughout 1998, Eskom made multiple requests to the Government to permit it to commission additional generation capacity from the private sector. These requests were refused despite the 1998 White Paper commitment to having 30 percent of energy be privately generated.[99] Eskom was thus stripped of its mandate and responsibility for investing in new generation capacity, with this duty being taken over by the DMRE.

President Mbeki would later acknowledge that the decision to refuse Eskom's requests for additional generation capacity was a mistake. At a 2007 ANC fundraising gala dinner, he admitted that:[100]

> *"When Eskom said to government: "We think we must invest more in terms of electricity generation", we said no, but all you will be doing is just to build excess capacity. We said not now, later. We were wrong. Eskom was right. We were wrong".*

Beyond poor political direction, corruption has had a profound effect on Eskom. The report issued by the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into State Capture, Fraud, and Corruption ("**State Capture Report**") found:[101]

> *"... in total, R14.7 billion of Eskom's contracts are calculated to have been afflicted by State Capture".[102] ....quite clearly that part of the reason why some of the state owned companies have performed as badly as they have and why some rely on Government bail outs year in year out is the calibre of some of the people who are appointed as members of the Boards of these companies or who are their Chief Executive Officers and Chief Financial Officers".*

Corruption has led to a decline in Eskom's ability to provide reliable and affordable electricity to South Africans. A key example is the infamous commissioning of the power stations Kusile and Medupi, which were completed eight years late and R300 billion over budget.[103] Eskom circumvented the normal tendering processes, and Medupi and Kusile have been plagued by a litany of design and construction failures, which have delayed their completion and negatively affected their performance.[104] An example of this is when Eskom awarded a R38.5 billion tender to Hitachi Ltd in 2007 to provide faulty boilers to the two plants after improper payments to the value of $6 million were made to the ANC's investment arm, Chancellor House.[105] As of November 2022, Kusile and Medupi had nominal capacities of just 2,880 MW and 3600 MW, respectively, both falling short of the 3,720 MW that each station was designed to have produced.[106]

There has been insufficient effort to increase renewable energy usage. This was actively blocked by Eskom during State Capture. Brian Molefe and Matshela Koko, as Eskom CEOs between 2015 and 2017, refused to conclude agreements with Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers ("**REIPP**"). Molefe and Koko made these decisions in violation of a determination by the Minister of Mineral and Energy in the DMRE's 2010 integrated resource plan ("IRP") that Eskom was to conclude REIPP agreements to mitigate the foreseeable supply constraints.[107,108] This was done to award contracts to Gupta-owned coal companies (e.g. Tegeta, which supplied substandard coal; and the numerous failed quality control tests required that Koko intervene to ensure that it was scored positively).[109] These actions prevented the growth of South Africa's renewable generation capacity.

South Africa needs to be pragmatic. Our existing coal fleet must be maintained and improved to ensure a stable supply of power as we transition to renewables. Looking forward, South Africa needs to diversify its energy mix, as green energy technologies have over time become more reliable and cheaper.[110] This can be done while maintaining coal power stations where appropriate. In 2021, during bid window five of South Africa's REIPP programme, the cost of electricity supplied into South Africa's grid reached its lowest level ever.[111] The cheapest solar bid came in at 37.5c per kWh, and the cheapest wind bid came in at 34.4c per kWh. In contrast, Eskom's average cost of coal purchased in 2020/2021 was 42.1c per kWh.[112]

The decision not to add new generation capacity in 1998, corrupt appointments to Eskom's board and senior executive, and the failure to adequately increase renewable energy utilisation[113] are not just operational failures but political failures. The ANC has **prioritised control over performance and ideology over pragmatism**. As a result, it has stood in the way of cheaper, cleaner, and more reliable electricity for all South Africans.

The DA Demands Urgent Action

The priority for South Africans is reliable and affordable electricity. South Africa must become a hub of energy generation from various sources to stabilise generation and lower the cost of electricity due to increased supply. The DA further envisions a South Africa with abundant **energy wealth**, where we produce surplus power, which is used to grow our economy by building an energy sector which creates more employment opportunities.

Bold Solution: Accelerate The Horizontal Unbundling of Eskom

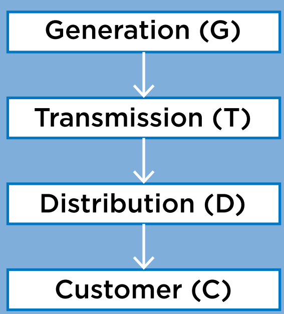
The DA proposes to turbocharge the establishment of a competitive energy market that provides reliable and affordable electricity by horizontally unbundling Eskom. The two primary objectives for energy reform in South Africa are ensuring that electricity is reliable and that it is affordable. The secondary objective is to enhance renewable energy uptake to supplement our existing coal and nuclear generation capacity.

The Electricity Regulation Amendment Act of 2024[114] is a positive step toward achieving these goals. The **DA demands the expedited implementation of this Act, specifically the amended section 34B**, which allows for the unbundling of Eskom by outlining the powers and functions of the transmitter, system operator, market operator and central purchasing agency. For the party, the final aim will be the provision of horizontal unbundling of power providers to enable private capital to enter South Africa's energy market within 12 months.

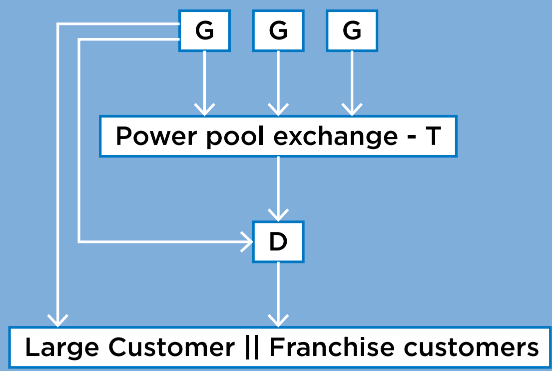
Horizontal unbundling involves breaking up Eskom's generating capacity into several different companies so that the state's monopoly is not simply replaced with a private monopoly. These parts can be sold to private generators or repurposed as independent power producers(IPPs).[115]

These new independent power producers, can provide energy directly to a vertically unbundled transmission market operator, which is separate from Eskom. This power will then be fed into municipalities or to large power users.

Vertical and Horizontal Unbundling[116]



Horizontal Wholesale Market Unbundling



This is the only practical solution if we are to achieve both affordable and reliable electricity supply. The end state of the Electricity Regulation Amendment Act envisages this kind of competitive market, as it creates the regulatory legal framework to move away from an Eskom monopoly.[117] We can either rapidly accelerate down this path or condemn ourselves to continued unreliable and unaffordable electricity supply.[118] However, the mechanism through which we will achieve reliable, affordable electricity is a more diverse and competitive energy market. This must be achieved by ending Eskom's monopoly over generation which currently stands at 86%.[119]

In addition to Eskom's unbundling, the following must be done to end rolling blackouts and bring electricity prices down:

- **Fast-tracking Operation Vulindlela ("OV") reforms for energy.** The phase II quarterly reports for OV contains progress reports on the five reform goals for energy.[120]

  1. Complete the restructuring of Eskom.
  2. Establish a competitive wholesale market for electricity generation.
  3. Streamline the regulatory framework to accelerate energy projects.
  4. Reform the electricity distribution industry to establish financially and operationally sustainable distribution companies.
  5. Strengthen and expand the national transmission network.

None of the reforms have been completed thus far, and reforms 2, 4, and 5 are delayed or off track. These reforms are crucial to creating a sustainable, competitive energy market and are necessary to lower the cost of electricity for all South Africans. As a result, these reforms must be expedited. The regulatory framework is already in place – what is needed now is the political will and drive for rapid implementation.

- **Ringfencing electricity revenue generated by municipalities for infrastructure maintenance and investment.** Municipalities currently use revenue generated from trading services such as electricity sales to subsidise other departments. The revenue instead must be used for maintaining existing infrastructure and investing in new infrastructure. Additionally, as contemplated in the Electricity Regulation Amendment Act, as the restructuring proceeds, each entity will be ring-fenced with its own financial reporting and governance structures.

To create a competitive energy market, we must ensure the:

- **Ending of Eskom bailouts.** Eskom has long been the beneficiary of government bailouts, amounting to approximately R500 billion, since 2008.[121]
- **Ending the National Electricity Regulator of South Africa's granting of above-inflation tariffs year-on-year.** These are covert bailouts which add to the existing cost-of-living crisis in South Africa. The lowering of electricity tariff increases must be achieved by expediting a review of South Africa's electricity pricing framework.[122]
- **Conducting an urgent review of 'sweetheart energy deals'.** These are preferential electricity pricing agreements – known as Negotiated Pricing Agreements ("NPAs") – that Eskom has negotiated with major industrial users.[123] An example of why these are problematic can be found in the deal Eskom has with South32.[124] South32's Hillside Aluminium smelter relies on vast amounts of electricity – 10.3 TWh per year, around 5.6 percent of Eskom's total sales,[125] but pays a lifetime effective discounted rate of 50 percent.[126] This effectively adds to a stage of rolling blackouts in terms of the MW it draws from the grid, and passes on the cost to the consumer. These deals were appropriate at the time when we had an energy surplus, but the prevailing context of a strained energy supply requires reconsideration of these deals.

The DA will establish a more sustainable and competitive energy sector by:

- **Facilitating concessionary "green" finance loans and grants with the private sector to facilitate the just energy transition,** which will be linked to accelerated uptake of renewable energy.
- **Supporting reindustrialisation around the green economy by reskilling and retraining workers.** This will promote significant net job creation within the energy and electricity sector and throughout the economy. Green economies will be more viable in the long term than fossil-fuel-based ones. It is estimated that 1 million USD spent in the green economy translates into seven permanent jobs, compared to three permanent jobs in fossil-fuel economies.[127,128]
- **Removing damaging surcharges on Solar Panel users** by Eskom.

- **Removing or amending regulations** that unnecessarily inhibit and restrict the wheeling of power from distributed embedded generators and independent power producers.
- **Facilitating and encouraging wheeling of power between distributed embedded generators to customers of electricity through the transmission and distribution grids, and facilitating** harmonised national wheeling tariffs structures and standards for this purpose.
- **Establishing 'prosumers' to allow for a more flexible and sustainable energy supply.** People who use electricity but produce more than they need may sell renewable energy back into the grid. Effective feed-in tariff structures will ensure that households and businesses receive payment for feeding their surplus electricity back into the grid. This has been done in the City of Cape Town's '**Cash for Power**' programme.[129] In this setup, if a small-scale embedded generation ("**SSEG**") system generates more electricity than the customer can consume, they apply for a grid-tied feed-in SSEG system. They can then feed that excess generation back into the City's grid and be credited with the **SSEG Feed-in tariff rate**. This credit can be used to offset one's entire municipal account, not just the electricity portion.

The solution to South Africa's economic growth problems depends on increased power generation outside of Eskom, in a competitive energy market. Greater electricity supply will protect South Africans against future rolling blackouts and lower electricity costs. A diversified energy mix will furthermore expand job opportunities in the energy sector. While coal will continue to be a significant employer as the energy sector diversifies, scaling up renewable energy such as solar, wind, and bioenergy will generate new jobs in manufacturing, installation, operation, and maintenance. Investments in energy storage, smart grids, and green hydrogen will require new technical skills and specialist roles. Decentralised and embedded energy systems, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas, can also stimulate local entrepreneurship and small-scale energy businesses.

Breaking Eskom's monopoly will solve multiple problems simultaneously: it will enable us to **increase energy availability, decrease the cost of electricity, reduce corruption, and increase the uptake of renewables**. This improved electricity supply model will ensure that future economic growth levels can be sustained without the threat of future blackouts.

Saving Our Network Industries From Collapse

Time for Urgent Action

Network industries, such as energy, transport, communications and water management, form the **backbone of modern economies**. They connect people, markets, and services, enabling the efficient movement of goods, information, and resources that underpin productivity and growth. When these systems are efficient and reliable, they provide the critical infrastructure upon which sustainable growth and economic opportunity are built.

In South Africa, the state of network industries has become a major obstacle to inclusive growth, job creation, and global trade competitiveness. Deterioration of the freight rail network, chronic inefficiencies in ports, and costly and unequal access to fragmented digital infrastructure and services have deepened economic vulnerabilities, constraining the country's ability to attract investment, move goods competitively, and enable digital inclusion. This failure has a direct impact on South Africans through higher prices for consumer goods, job losses, and declining business confidence.

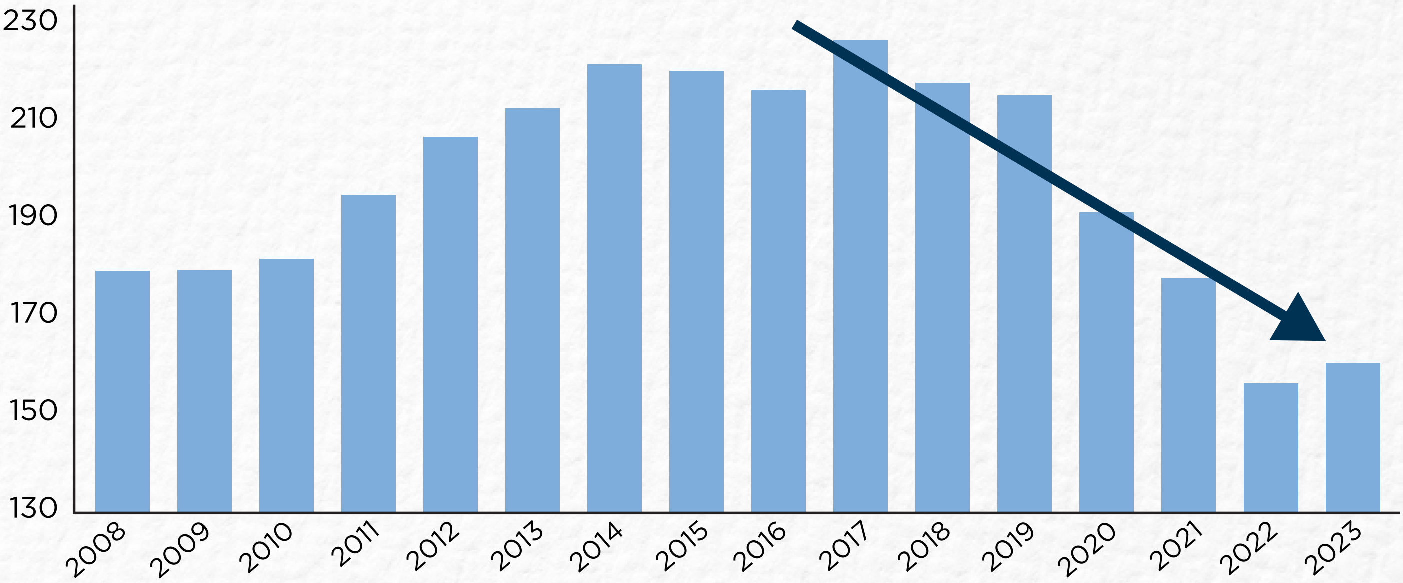
South Africa's freight rail system, once the backbone of the mining economy and with a competitive advantage in global bulk commodity markets, has become a national liability. What was historically the continent's largest and most efficient rail network, moving vast quantities of coal, iron ore, manganese, and chrome, (commodities comprising 48.5 percent of total mining production and contributing 3 percent to South Africa's GDP) is now a failing system crippled by years of underinvestment, policy failure, and financial and operational mismanagement.[130,131,132,133]

> *"South Africa's freight rail system... historically the continent's largest and most efficient rail network... is now a failing system..."*

Systemic maintenance failures have made vital transportation links nearly unusable, severely affecting the country's ability to export resources like coal and iron ore,[134] while widespread vandalism and theft of railway equipment and infrastructure, including cables and metal parts, have further crippled rail operations.[135,136]

Rail freight volumes have plummeted from 226 million tonnes (Mt) in 2017/18 to 149 Mt in 2022/23 and an estimated 152 Mt in 2023/24.[137,138] Freight has increasingly shifted from rail to road as the rail system has become unreliable, unsafe, and incapable of meeting industry demand. More than 80 percent of total freight transportation now takes place on roads, even though road freight is more expensive, dangerous, and results in higher carbon emissions.[139]

Figure 13: South African freight rail volumes (million tons) between 2008 and 2023[140]



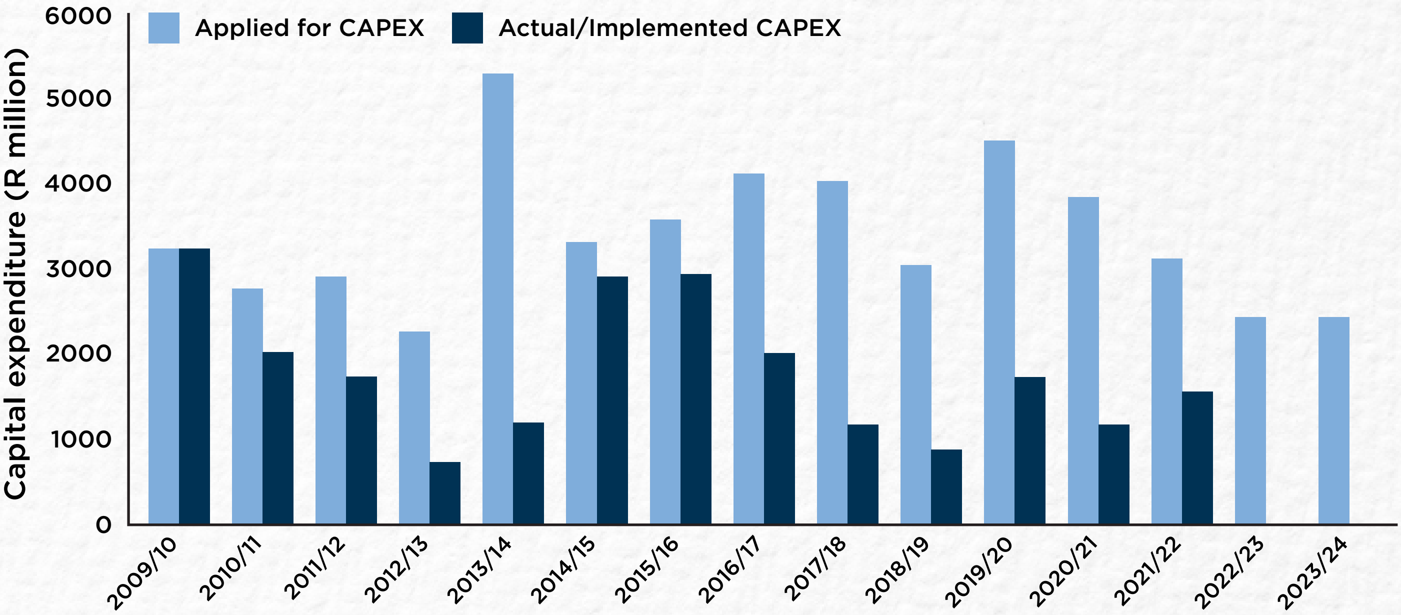
The freight rail system collapse is a direct threat to South Africa's economy, eroding potential tax revenue, jeopardising tens of thousands of jobs, and undermining the competitiveness of key industries like mining. Transnet's[viii] financial crisis, with debt projected to reach R151 billion by 2025 and a maintenance backlog exceeding R50 billion, has plunged the entity into a vicious cycle of falling freight volumes, collapsing revenue, and lost market share.[141,142] While South Africa's 21,000 km rail network once symbolised industrial might and regional leadership, much of it now lies idle and derelict. The decline has drawn global attention, with international markets and investors watching as Africa's most important logistics system teeters on the edge, a stark warning of what state neglect and past ANC governance failure can inflict on critical economic infrastructure.[143]

> *"Transnet's financial crisis, with debt projected to reach R151 billion in 2025 and a maintenance backlog exceeding R50 billion, has plunged the entity into a vicious cycle of falling freight volumes, collapsing revenue, and lost market share"*

South African ports are also among the worst-performing in the world. Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) only spent 55 percent of the capital budget (CapEx)[ix] allowed by the Ports Regulator over the decade up to 2021/22.[144] This demonstrates a significant underspending on port infrastructure development and maintenance. The average time taken to export goods from the country's ports is 92 hours, compared with 12.7 hours in more efficient countries.[145] This contributes to increased costs and delays for exporters, presenting a major challenge to trade competitiveness.

> *"South African ports perform among the worst in the world. TNPA only spent 55 percent of the CapEx allowed... over the decade up to 2021/22. This indicates a significant underspending on port infrastructure development and maintenance."*

Figure 14: TNPA capex applied for versus capex spent (R million)[146]



[viii] Transnet is the South African state-owned company responsible for freight transport and logistics and is the custodian of rail, ports and pipelines.
[ix] Capital expenditures or CapEx are funds used by a company to acquire, upgrade, and maintain physical assets.

According to the 2023 World Bank's Container Port Performance Index (CPPI), South Africa's ports ranked among the lowest globally out of 405 evaluated ports. Cape Town ranked last at 405, Durban at 398, and Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha) at 391 (Table 3). These poor rankings, below all other African ports, signal substantial logistical bottlenecks that inhibit South Africa from becoming a key trading hub for the continent. The lack of investment in port facility infrastructure has prevented South Africa from keeping pace with global standards, driving up freight transport costs and reducing access to international markets.

Table 3: The CPPI 2023: Global Ranking of Container Ports[147]

Port Name	Overall Ranking	Port Name	Overall Ranking	Port Name	Overall Ranking
Port Elizabeth	391	Trieste	396	Tacoma	401
Iskenderun	392	Oakland	397	Cotonou	402
Itajai	393	Durban	398	Mersin	403
Pointe-Noire	394	Prince Rupert	399	Ngqura	404
Savannah	395	Rijeka	400	Cape Town	405

The state of the country's rail networks and ports is costing the economy an **estimated R1 billion per day.[148]** The IMF almost halved its growth outlook for South Africa in 2024, largely due to Transnet's inability to administer freight rail and ports responsibly.[149] The IMF has also cut South Africa's 2025 growth forecast from 1.5 percent to a bleak 1 percent, driven by trade and geopolitical disruptions.[150] The total cost to the economy resulting from Transnet's inefficiencies was approximately R400 billion in 2022 and R450 billion in 2023 (equivalent to 6 percent of GDP).[151,152]

Reform progress in the logistics sector under Operation Vulindlela Phase II is primarily on track, but momentum must be accelerated as reform in this space is urgent to unlock growth and investment. The restructuring of Transnet, the establishment of an independent National Ports Authority and Rail Infrastructure Manager, open access to the freight rail network, the introduction of private sector participation in ports and rail, and the creation of a Transport Economic Regulator must be prioritised.[153] However, the finalisation of the National Rail Bill, which is essential for establishing a legal framework for a competitive and efficient rail sector, remains delayed. Urgent action is required to ensure this critical reform does not continue to be delayed.[154]

The challenges facing South Africa's digital economy are equally severe. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure is essential for business, education, healthcare, and government services. While internet penetration has reached 74.7 percent in 2024 (45.34 million active internet users in South Africa), South Africa's digital landscape remains patchy, costly, and unequal.[155] Rural communities and small towns remain poorly served, with limited access to reliable broadband internet, essential digital services (e.g., e-government services), and the devices (e.g., smartphones) and skills needed to participate fully in the digital economy.[156] This severely affects economic inclusion, preventing rural entrepreneurs, small-scale farmers, and township businesses from competing in digital markets, accessing customers, or utilising online services to improve productivity and efficiency.

Cybersecurity vulnerabilities and infrastructure weaknesses compound digital difficulties. South Africa is identified as the most targeted African country for cybercrime.[157] More than 40 percent of ransomware attacks and approximately 35 percent of information theft incidents in Africa happen in South Africa.[158] Cybercrimes hurt the local economy, affecting 0.14 percent of the national GDP, which is approximately R5.8 billion a year.[159] Yet, the enforcement of the Cybercrimes Act (No.19 of 2020) remains weak, and a significant shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals widens the risk exposure for businesses.[160]

Structural and infrastructural barriers continue to restrict access to the digital economy. High mobile data costs, unreliable electricity supply, and slow spectrum allocation have hindered the expansion of 4G and 5G connectivity and reinforced the digital divide between urban and rural areas. Reducing these costs and expanding digital infrastructure is vital not just for modernisation but for enabling cheaper goods and services, and more competitive business operations. Rural communities lack affordable broadband, digital literacy, and supporting infrastructure, worsening geographic inequalities and limiting digital market expansion.[161]

Market entry and digital trade are obstructed by overlapping local regulations, rigid public procurement processes, and trade barriers. Public sector procurement is often skewed toward large incumbents due to slow, bureaucratic systems and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) requirements, creating barriers for new entrants and foreign firms.[162] Recent amendments to the National Data and Cloud Policy, which mandate local storage and processing of data, reinforce a protectionist stance that could isolate South Africa from international digital ecosystems.[163] Without targeted reforms to harmonise standards, simplify compliance, and improve infrastructure access, South Africa risks marginalising itself in an increasingly globalised and innovation-driven digital economy.[164] This isolationist approach furthermore impacts growth, investment, and innovation opportunities while people face higher costs and fewer service options.

Digital transformation reform progress under Operation Vulindlela Phase II is on track but should remain a priority. Phase II initiatives include the development of a national Digital Transformation Roadmap, the implementation of a digital identity system for secure and remote access to services, introducing digital payments for cost-effective and dignified transactions, creating trusted digital channels for accessing information and services, and establishing a data exchange for evidence-based policymaking and service delivery.[165] These reforms must be implemented with urgency to ensure that digital transformation delivers inclusive access to services, improved efficiency, and evidence-based decision-making across government.

The degradation of South Africa's network industries represents a national crisis. These industries will continue to undermine South Africa's economic recovery unless they are urgently reformed. **It is time for urgent, decisive action. South Africa's economic future depends on it**.

Projected Economic Growth

Reforming South Africa's network industries could significantly boost economic growth. According to the Bureau for Economic Research (BER), pushing reforms on sectors such as rail, ports, water, and energy could have raised annual GDP growth to 3 percent by 2029. However, even with current delays, these reforms could still boost growth by up to **2 percent** if accelerated immediately.[166,167] Addressing inefficiencies in Transnet and fast-tracking the concessioning of freight rail and port terminals could add 60 million tonnes in freight capacity and save the economy billions lost annually due to delays and underperformance - an estimated R450 billion or approximately **6 percent** of GDP.[168] Similarly, expanding affordable, high-speed broadband could yield a **1.21 percent** increase in GDP for every 10 percent rise in penetration, according to the World Bank.[169]

How the ANC Is Getting in the Way

The collapse of South Africa's network industries is no accident. It is the inevitable consequence of **sustained political interference, poor governance, and ideological paralysis** under successive ANC governments.

For decades, cadre deployment, entrenched patronage networks, and corruption have hollowed out the entities responsible for freight rail, ports, and ICT infrastructure. The ANC's rigid insistence on state monopolies, coupled with inefficient, bureaucratic race-based procurement processes, has throttled private sector participation, discouraged investment, and blocked innovation. Despite overwhelming evidence of systemic failure, the ANC continues to resist meaningful reforms to our network industries.

Under successive ANC governments, Transnet was turned into a political patronage vehicle. The disastrous R54.4 billion locomotive procurement scandal, investigated and detailed by the Zondo Commission, exposed how political connections enabled widescale corruption.[170] Transnet unlawfully inflated the price of a 2014 contract to procure 1,064 locomotives from R38.6 billion to R54 billion to favour Chinese suppliers and channel over R6 billion in kickbacks to Gupta-linked companies. The Zondo Commission found extensive evidence of fraud, corruption, and racketeering.[171] This, along with chronic corruption and mismanagement, has contributed to the collapse of the freight rail system. Despite launching the 2022 National Rail Policy[172] and the Roadmap for the Freight Logistics System in South Africa[173] to open the rail network to private operators, the ANC has failed to implement these reforms with urgency. Concession processes remain mired in red tape, while critical maintenance backlogs persist, and theft and vandalism have gone unchecked.

“Transnet unlawfully inflated the price of a 2014 contract to procure 1,064 locomotives from R38.6 billion to R54 billion to favour Chinese suppliers and channel over R6 billion in kickbacks to Gupta-linked companies. The Zondo Commission found extensive evidence of fraud, corruption, and racketeering.”

The ANC’s handling of South Africa’s ports mirrors these failures. Durban, Africa’s busiest port, has repeatedly suffered from chronic congestion, equipment breakdowns, and operational inefficiencies. Backlogs outside the Port of Durban reached a crisis point in November 2023 when an estimated 96 vessels and more than 71,000 containers were reportedly awaiting entry, resulting in the loss of billions of Rands.[174,175] The ANC’s resistance to meaningful private sector participation has crippled opportunities to modernise port operations. While a private operator, International Container Terminal Services (ICTSI), was provisionally awarded a concession to upgrade Durban’s Pier 2 terminal, the project was delayed by legal disputes, costing the South African economy billions of Rands in lost opportunities.[176] The ANC has repeatedly promised to improve port efficiency through the TNPA corporatisation, but these plans remain stalled by vested interests and an unwillingness to relinquish state control.[177,178]

In the ICT sector, the ANC similarly failed to create an enabling environment for affordable, reliable digital infrastructure. The ANC’s continued insistence on over-bureaucratised, race-based procurement frameworks has discouraged private investment in digital infrastructure rollout. Even when the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) finally released high-demand spectrum in 2022, nearly a decade after it was first promised, the process was delayed by litigation.[179] Another example is the barriers to entry by potential low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellite internet providers into South Africa due to regulatory approval issues, particularly concerning the B-BBEE requirements, requiring a 30 percentage equity ownership mandate for historically disadvantaged groups.[180,181]

Transnet has also suffered ICT failures, with a major cyberattack in 2021 forcing it to halt operations at all key container terminals.[182] This incident exposed the consequences of under-investment in ICT security systems. Despite the adoption of the *Roadmap for the Digital Transformation* to address the much-needed shift in transformative governmental operations, progress has been slow.[183] Several challenges have impeded implementation. These challenges include insufficient coordination between departments, legacy technology, siloed systems, overlapping mandates, and unclear lines of accountability. In addition, poor service access due to rolling blackouts and network connectivity further undermine momentum.[184]

The failure of our network industries all share common features: resistance to private investment, rigid procurement policies, and an ideological obsession with preserving inefficient state monopolies. The consequences of these failures, including job losses, higher transport costs, and deteriorating infrastructure, are borne by ordinary South Africans.

The DA has consistently called for structural reforms which would have averted South Africa’s network industry crisis. The DA has repeatedly called for opening State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), such as Transnet, to private sector participation to improve performance and reverse decades of ANC economic mismanagement. These reforms include privatisation or public-private partnerships (PPPs) of rail and ports.[185] Furthermore, enabling spectrum trading and unlocking private investment in broadband infrastructure.[186]

Despite these credible, practical reform proposals, the ANC has refused to listen. Instead, they have clung to outdated state entities, state control of sectors of the economy, and prioritised ideology over operational efficiency. The result is a destructive paralysis that continues to cost South Africa billions in lost investment, growth, and jobs.

The DA Demands Urgent Action

Bold Solution: Fast-Tracking Concessioning of Rail and Ports

Accelerating the concessioning of freight rail lines and port terminals to capable private operators through transparent and competitive tendering processes. While concessioning and private sector participation are actively being pursued, progress has been slow.[187,188,189] Requests for Information (RFI) and Requests for Proposals (RFP) should be fast-tracked, with clear timelines for implementation to unlock private sector investment, operational expertise, and service innovation.

This will introduce much-needed competition, improve reliability, and reduce transport costs that currently burden businesses and consumers. According to a 2024 Bureau for Economic Research (BER) study, if the government decisively rolled out the full set of reforms envisioned under Operation Vulindlela, the economy could have achieved 3 percent growth by 2029. However, the slow pace of reform implementation now suggests these interventions could still contribute up to 2 percent growth, provided urgent action is taken.[190,191] Key among these reforms is fast-tracking port terminal concessions and rail network access frameworks to open the logistics sector to private investment and operational partnerships.

Using data from the South African Association of Freight Forwarders (SAAFF) demonstrating how the port system could be transformed through private sector concessions, the BER estimates that an additional 60 Mt could be added to Transnet's 151.7 Mt capacity in only a few years. This will boost competitiveness, investment, and export capacity.

To improve our rail and port infrastructure performance, the following actions are essential:

- **Prioritising maintenance of existing rail infrastructure.** While the country needs to expand its transport network, priority should also be given to maintaining the existing rail infrastructure.
- **Establishing specialised units within SAPS and local law enforcement authorities** dedicated to combating the theft and vandalism of public infrastructure, such as rail.[193] This is crucial as damage to this infrastructure cost the economy billions of rands
- **Enforcing the Criminal Matters Amendment Act (No. 18 of 2015)**. Greater enforcement of the Act is necessary. The Act criminalises the intentional damage, tampering with, or destruction of essential infrastructure, imposing penalties of up to 30 years' imprisonment or fines of up to R100 million for corporations. It also introduces stricter bail conditions and harsher sentencing to deter infrastructure-related crimes, recognising the growing threat such offences pose to public safety and service delivery.
- **Investing in modernising and upgrading port infrastructure.** This includes upgrading and expanding existing port facilities and equipment, as well as building new terminals and docks to increase capacity and efficiency to meet future capacity demands. Priority should be given to major ports, such as the Port of Durban, which handles about 60 percent of the country's container traffic and suffers from severe congestion and delays.[194]

To complement port and rail reforms and drive export-led growth, a comprehensive overhaul of South Africa's tariff regime is urgently required. This involves:

- **Reviewing tariffs.** Multiple critical manufacturing inputs are subject to a stringent tariff regime, making manufacturing in South Africa uncompetitive. To address this, a comprehensive review of the tariff framework must urgently be undertaken to drive manufacturing and export growth. This review should be complemented by reforms to the tariff and duty regime aimed at supporting competitiveness, lowering input costs, and expanding export opportunities. Key reforms, as captured by the **DA's Economic Policy**, include scrapping import duties on goods not made locally, regularly reviewing existing tariffs, removing harmful export duties, and limiting duty protection for new industries to temporary support only. Furthermore, efficient export rebate systems, ending rigid local content rules that raise prices and hurt trade, removing designated goods from trade restrictions, and cancelling all reciprocal duty agreements to create a more open, dynamic, and competitive economy.

To increase digital access and affordability and position South Africa for growth in the digital economy, the following reforms are necessary:

- **Prioritising the rapid expansion of affordable, high-speed broadband infrastructure to drive economic growth and inclusion.** World Bank research shows that, on average, every 10 percent increase in broadband penetration results in 1.21 percent GDP growth in middle-income countries such as South Africa.[195] Expanding broadband access will unlock opportunities for entrepreneurship, enable remote work, improve access to digital markets, and support job creation for all.

In addition to this essential reform, the following recommendations are drawn from the DA's ICT Policy, Connecting South Africa for Development and Growth:

- **Targeting access and affordability across the entire ICT value chain.**[196] There are several factors which affect the uptake of ICT services and products. They include the cost of services and devices, digital literacy and the online content available. It is therefore important to target all bottlenecks in the ICT value chain to address access and affordability.
- **Investing in more free public Wi-Fi spots, including universal access points in under-serviced areas**, for example, in libraries, municipalities or community halls, where users can access a specified amount of data per month free of charge.[197]
- **Establishing an Office of the Cyber Commissioner** as an independent Chapter 9 institution.[198] The cyber-commissioner will be responsible for *"establishing and maintaining cyber security capabilities of all organs of state and entities dealing with public information"* and *"a cyber security hub for reporting, monitoring and investigation of cyber security incidents and threats"*.[199]
- **Prioritising the development of appropriate public cyber policy, legislation, and an emergency ICT plan**. Government networks and systems are increasingly faced with cyberattacks and terrorism. These will be protected against by establishing an independent entity to research these issues, develop a policy and an emergency plan. The entity will consist of experts from the private sector, legal fields, civic organisations, NGOs, and senior government officials from various departments.[200] Investments into cybersecurity may also result in new industries being formed in South Africa, which creates new employment opportunities. This was experienced in Estonia, where state investment into cybersecurity resulted in the nation becoming a leading provider of cybersecurity solutions to its international peers.[201]

Spending for Growth

Time for Urgent Action

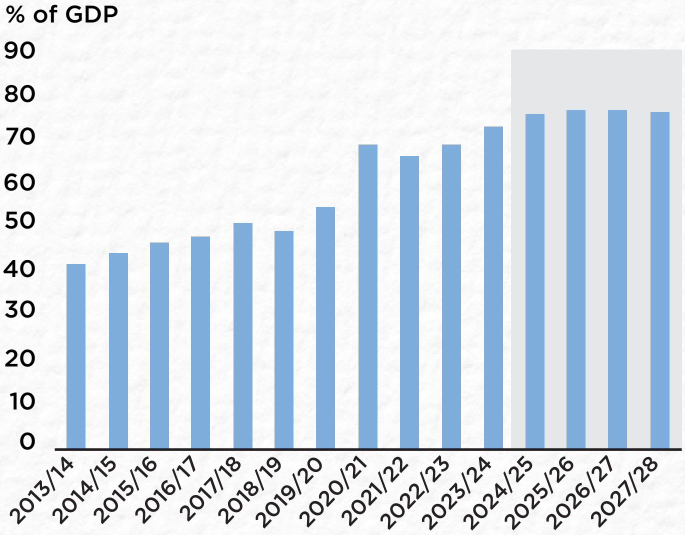
South Africa is in the grip of a deepening economic and fiscal crisis. Economic growth has stagnated, unemployment remains among the highest in the world, and public debt has soared to unsustainable levels.

The World Bank projects that South Africa's GDP growth is to recover from a dire 0.6 percent last year to a still inadequate annual average of just 1.8 percent between 2025 and 2027.[202] The International Monetary Fund has also cut South Africa's 2025 growth forecast from 1.5 percent to a bleak 1 percent, driven by trade and geopolitical disruptions.[203] This sluggish growth trajectory signals how the country is being pushed into even further economic decline. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) latest Economic Survey further warns that without bold fiscal and structural reforms, **South Africa risks tipping into an entrenched economic stall**.[204]

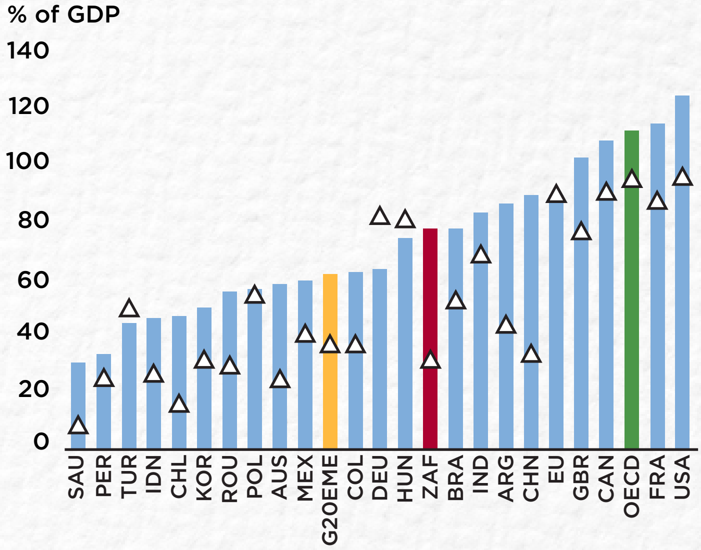
At the heart of this crisis is the ANC's past reckless fiscal management. Public debt has surged from 31.5 percent of GDP in 2010 to a projected 77 percent in 2025, far exceeding the average of peer emerging markets.[205] Debt-servicing costs (money that a government needs to pay back to its creditors over time) alone will absorb 5.2 percent of GDP this year, up from under 3 percent a decade ago, diverting vital financial resources away from schools, hospitals, police stations, and infrastructure.[206] For 2025/26, debt-service costs will account for 22 cents of every rand collected in revenue, with an estimated R1.35 trillion being spent on servicing the debt over the three-year spending period.[207]

Figure 15: South Africa's Fiscal Position[208]

A. Gross government debt in South Africa



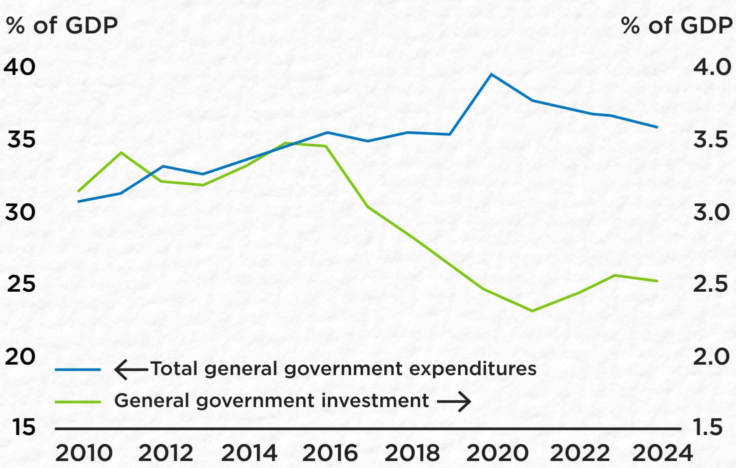
B. General government gross debt across countries

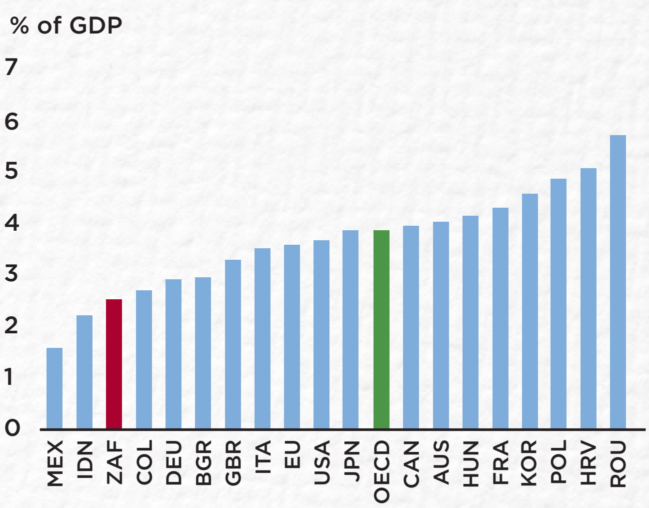


> ***"Public debt has surged from 31.5 percent of GDP in 2010 to a projected 77 percent in 2025, far exceeding the average of peer emerging markets."***

Fiscal mismanagement has not only weakened public services but also crippled the economy's ability to grow. Public investment as a share of GDP has dropped by 26 percent in real terms between 2016 and 2022, contributing directly to the erosion of infrastructure, including crumbling roads, failing power stations, and a collapsed rail network.[209] This chronic underinvestment in infrastructure, coupled with rising debt-service costs, has left South Africa's public finances strained and unable to invest in the building blocks required for growth.

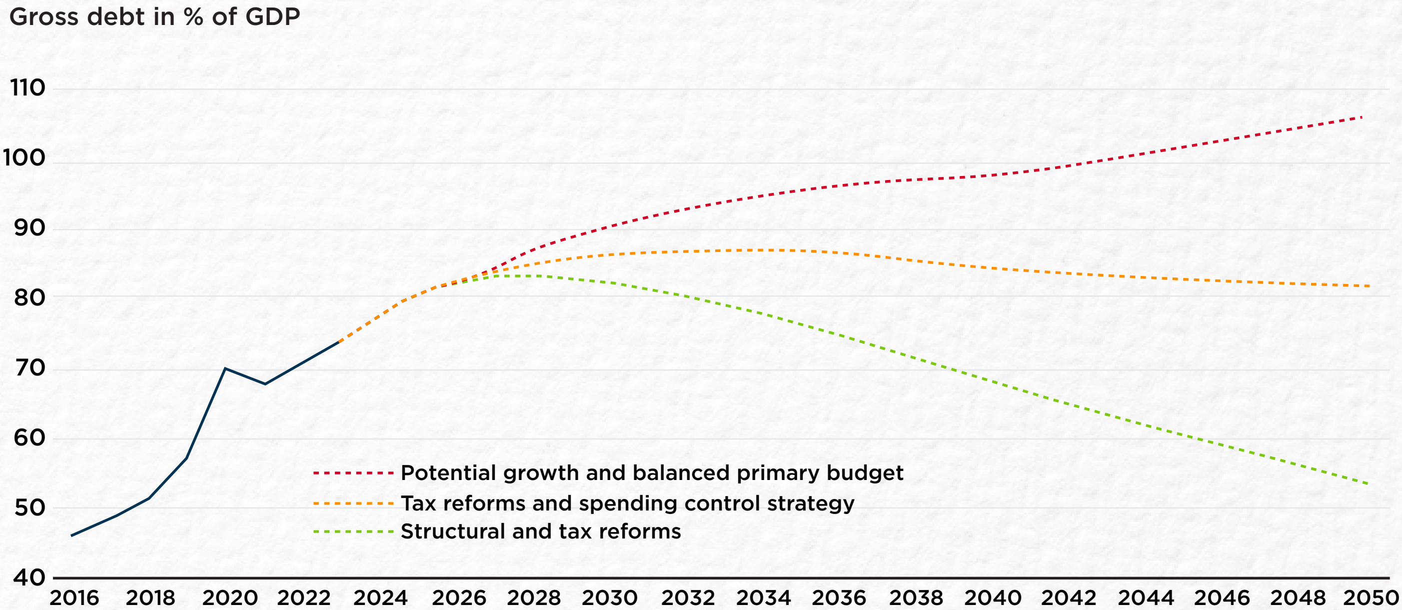
Figure 16: Public investment declining over time[210]





The fiscal outlook is equally bleak. Modest projections suggest that without deep reforms, public debt will spiral to 110 percent of GDP by 2050.[211] The only viable path to reducing the debt ratio meaningfully would require a comprehensive policy package: structural reforms to spur business dynamism, ease product market regulations, attract private investment, and improve infrastructure and public spending efficiency. Combined with tax base expansion and better revenue performance, this would support larger, sustained primary surpluses.[212]

Figure 17: Reforms and fiscal consolidation necessary to stabilise the debt-to-GDP[213]

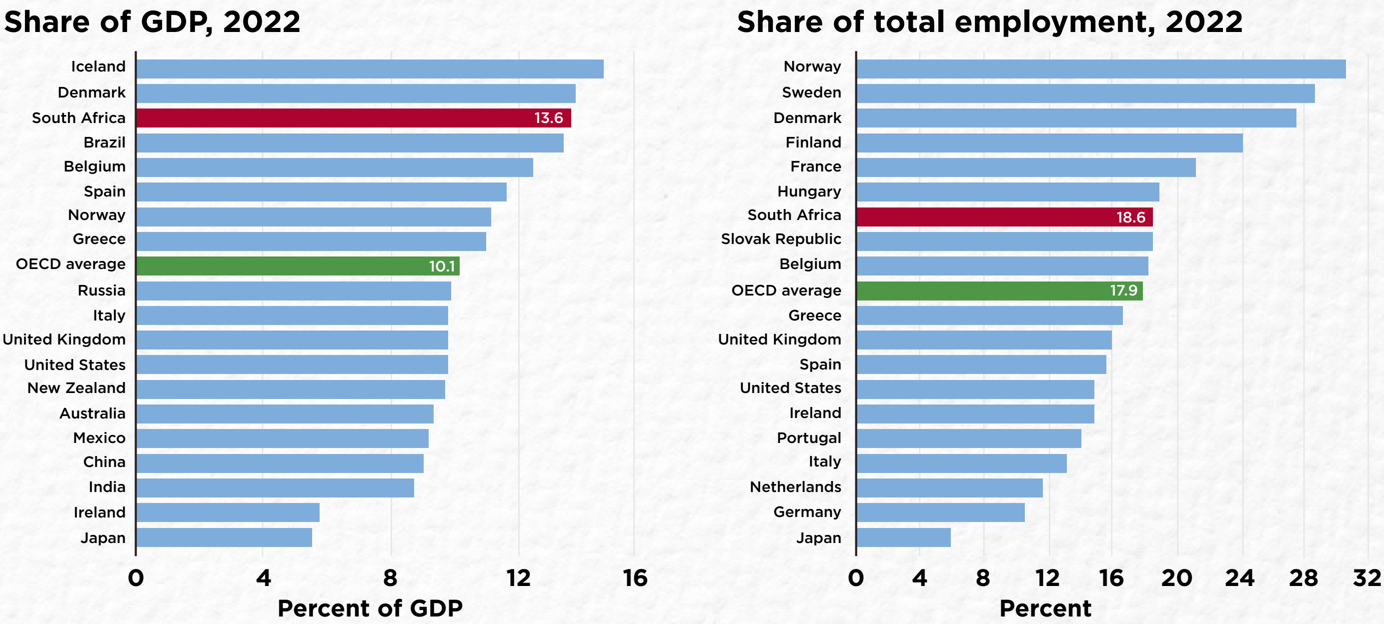


South Africa's State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) remain a deadweight on the fiscus. Since 2008/09, government bailouts have cost taxpayers over R310 billion, nearly 27 percent of GDP.[214] Eskom alone absorbed 70 percent of the bailouts, while its operational failures have throttled the entire economy. Over one-third of South Africa's economic decline from 2010 onwards can be attributed to reduced productivity from public utilities.[215]

> *"Since 2008/09, government bailouts have cost taxpayers over R310 billion, nearly 27 percent of GDP. Eskom alone absorbed 70 percent of the bailouts..."*

Another fiscal pressure point is the inflated public sector wage bill, caused by excessive pay for public officials rather than a bloated headcount. South Africa's public sector wage bill is one of the highest among emerging markets. As a share of GDP, South Africa's wage bill is about 3.5 percentage points greater than the OECD average (10.6 percentage points). Yet, public-sector employment is lower as a share of total employment than in other countries with high wage bills, such as Norway and Denmark.[216] This indicates that high average compensation levels are primarily responsible for South Africa's high public-sector wage bill, rather than growth in the headcount.[217] Furthermore, escalating public-sector wages contributed to higher budget deficits and debt over the past decade.[218] The share of public servants earning over R600,000 annually has increased from 4.4 percent to 19 percent in a decade, and those earning over R1 million have increased from 0.8 percent to 4.5 percent - outpacing both inflation and private sector earnings.[219,220]

Figure 18: Public sector wage bill as a share of GDP and employment as a share of total employment[221]



> *"...high average compensation levels are primarily responsible for South Africa's high public-sector wage bill, rather than growth in the headcount."*

Compounding South Africa's fiscal deterioration is a decline in state revenue. Over the past decade, South Africa's revenues were lower than projected, except in 2022 and 2023, due to favourable commodity prices. In 2023/24, revenue collection weakened significantly, largely due to sluggish growth. Increases in tax rates, including personal income tax and value-added tax (VAT) rates between 2016 and 2020, have had a limited effect on the tax-to-GDP ratio. Key reasons are slow economic growth combined with weakening administrative efficiency at the South African Revenue Service (SARS) during the period of state capture. Further challenges around revenue collection include:[222]

- Personal income tax, which accounts for 37.3 percent of tax revenue, depends overwhelmingly on the top 20 percent of earners.
- VAT, the second-largest tax revenue source, is poorly administered.
- Corporate tax has declined sharply, with 66.5 percent of Corporate Income Tax collected from just 549 companies.
- Municipal property tax systems are dysfunctional and underutilised.

> *"Personal income tax, which accounts for 37.3 percent of tax revenue, depends overwhelmingly on the top 20 percent of earners."*

Public procurement is another challenge for South Africa's deteriorating fiscal landscape. Public procurement is central to service delivery and economic activity, accounting for roughly 15 percent of South Africa's GDP.[223] Yet the system is plagued with challenges. Key issues include a complex regulatory framework causing compliance challenges, ongoing efficiency bottlenecks, capacity shortages that encumber project delivery, and, more importantly, the continuous need to promote Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) through government procurement.[224] These challenges are underscored by systemic problems such as corruption and waste. Over a five-year period (2018/19 – 2022/23), national departments and SOEs spent an accumulated R123.56 billion on irregular, fruitless, and wasteful expenditures. This erodes public trust and value for money.[225]

Value-for-money trumps race-based procurement targets. Polling conducted by the South African Institute of Race Relations (IRR) in March and April 2025 shows a clear national majority, across various demographic groups, in favour of policies that prioritise merit, value-for-money government spending.[226] 81.7 percent of the polling participants indicated that the state should buy from the best-priced supplier. This figure combines those who favour value-for-money procurement without racial considerations (54.1 percent) and those who support value-for-money procurement, where racial considerations are only tiebreakers if two companies present equal monetary value (27.6 percent).[227]

The Public Procurement Act (No. 28 of 2024) was passed following the Zondo Commission report, which found that money was extracted from the state through the abuse of procurement processes. While the Act responded to some of the Commission's recommendations, many substantive gaps in the public procurement system remain to be settled.[228] Furthermore, the Act mandates uniform procurement rules across all government entities, prioritising contracts for black-owned businesses and local firms, which entrenches race-based procurement rather than focusing on value for money, competition, and outcomes. This undermines cost-effective procurement and risks reinforcing inefficiency, corruption, and poor service delivery.

At the core of South Africa's economic malaise lies the chronic mismanagement of public resources. The ANC-led administrations have prioritised patronage-driven bailouts and inflated administrative overheads over essential public services and infrastructure investment. This has hollowed out the state's ability to address poverty, inequality, and unemployment in the country.

South Africa cannot afford another year of ANC economic and fiscal drift. The escalating public spending crisis is not a technical issue; it is a political failure rooted in decades of corruption, inefficiency, and ideological stubbornness.

Why the ANC Is Getting in the Way

South Africa's deepening economic and fiscal crisis is not a product of bad luck or external shocks; it is the direct result of decades of ANC economic mismanagement, corruption, and ideological stubbornness. The ANC's outdated, state-centric economic model and resistance to pro-growth reforms lie at the heart of this national crisis.

The ANC have continuously diverted scarce public funds toward bloated bureaucracies, endless bailouts for failing SOEs, and politically connected contracts. This has hollowed out the capacity of the state while pushing the country toward fiscal crisis. Reckless fiscal management and rising debt have further destabilised the economy, leaving South Africa lagging behind its peers. South Africa, once a leading African economy, has now become one of the continent's largest economic drags.[229]

At every turn, the ANC has blocked or delayed critical reforms proposed by the DA, aimed at making public spending more efficient, transparent, and growth-oriented.

The DA has proposed a suite of pro-growth reforms prior to and during its inclusion in the Government of National Unity (GNU), including enforcing a debt ceiling, cutting wasteful spending, unblocking foreign investment caps (such as B-BBEE ownership requirements), slashing red tape for small businesses, and driving structural reforms. These structural reforms include introducing private-sector participation in energy, transport, and logistics, but each has been systematically blocked or ignored by the ANC. The ANC's recent VAT hike proposal was further evidence of its commitment to sustaining its unsustainable fiscal model as its financial runway narrowed. However, the DA was successful in opposing and stopping the ANC's proposed VAT hikes, which would have burdened an already over-taxed public.

The ANC is standing in the way of the urgent reforms South Africa needs to turn its economy around. Until this changes, public debt will keep rising, essential services will deteriorate, and millions will remain trapped in poverty. It is time to end the ANC's failed path of politically driven, wasteful expenditure and embrace a new model of value-for-money public financial management that prioritises investment, job creation, service delivery, and inclusive growth.

Bold Solution: Commissioning a Comprehensive Spending Review

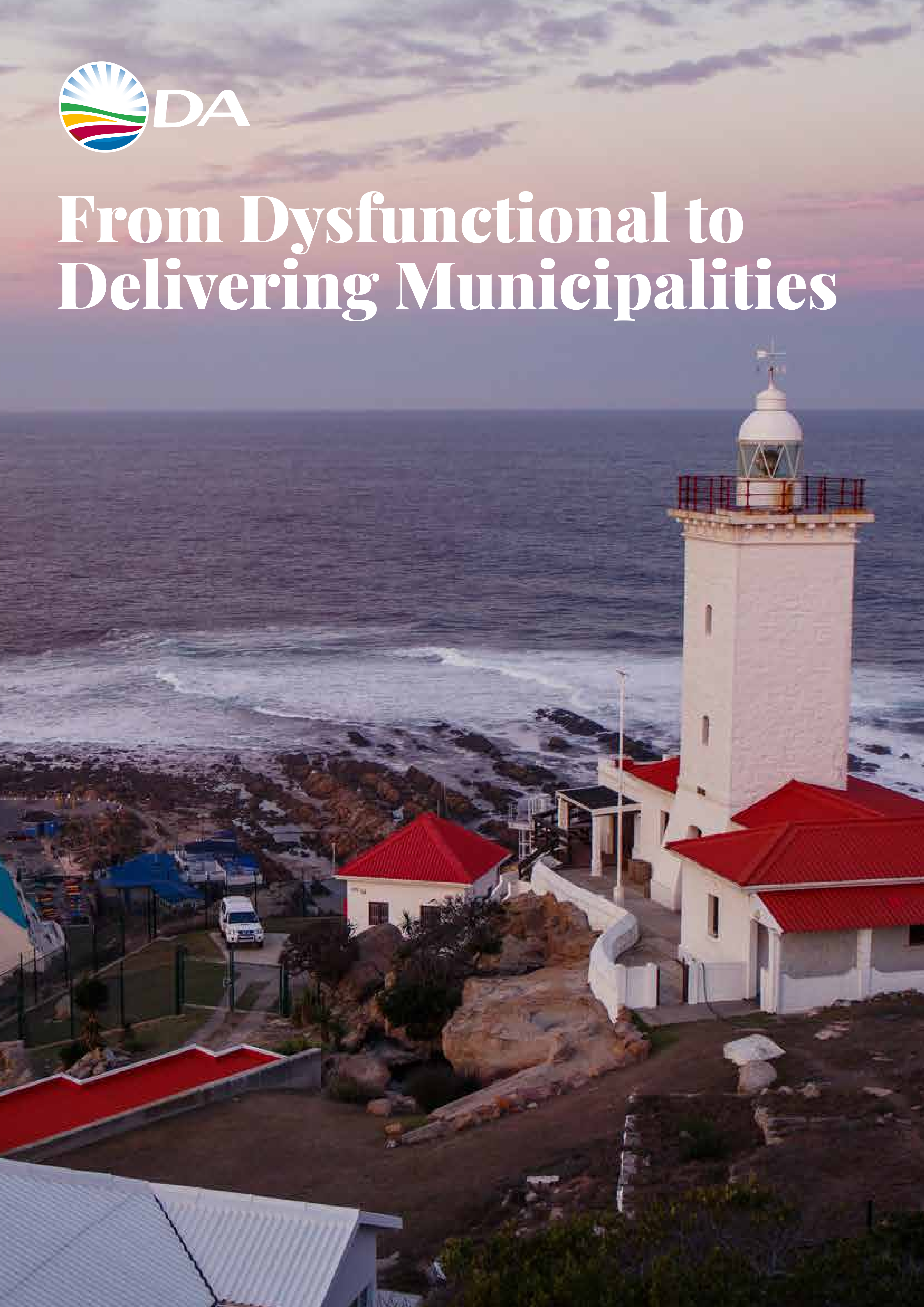
Commissioning a comprehensive, government-wide spending review and urgently strengthening the implementation of recommendations from previous reviews. While numerous spending reviews have been conducted, their findings have largely gone unimplemented.[230]

A three-month emergency review should be undertaken to identify wasteful, underperforming, and duplicative programmes. This would enable the reallocation of funds toward essential public services, such as healthcare, policing, and education, and make it possible to meet legally mandated obligations, like the R7-billion public sector wage increase, without resorting to tax hikes.[231] Clear conditions for the spending review will be set, so that it does not become another exercise in futility. This includes establishing clear, enforceable parameters such as deadlines for implementation, reporting findings to the public, mandatory ministerial responses, and mechanisms to track progress on key recommendations.

The DA will furthermore continue to advocate for:

- **Introducing a fiscal rule into the expenditure framework** that should serve as a clear anchor for fiscal discipline by locking the national debt figure at the level presented in the most recent budget, allowing no net increase in debt. While the optimal debt-to-GDP ratio varies by context, international experience suggests a sensible maximum of 60 percent for developed and 40 percent for developing economies. Given South Africa's current debt level exceeding 70 percent of GDP, a practical target would be to reduce this ratio by 1 percentage point annually over the next decade. This approach would help stabilise the fiscal environment, ensure that public spending remains within the economy's capacity to sustain it, and promote a growth-friendly, forward-looking framework for budget planning and fiscal policy.[232]
- **Cutting waste.** Government (pre-GNU) recorded nearly R8 billion in unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure in the 2023/24 financial year alone. That is R4.9 billion in unauthorised expenditure, R2.9 billion in irregular expenditure, and R161 million in wasteful expenditure.[233] Cost-cutting measures that will free up billions of rands without cutting essential services include cutting unnecessary government expenditure, such as a 50 percent reduction in government advertising budgets and a 33 percent reduction in travel and catering expenditure across departments.[234] Further proposals include a hiring freeze for all non-essential government positions for 12 months and a national audit of "ghost employees". [235]
- **Launching a "ghost employee" payroll audit.** Employing data analytics across the public service to eliminate ghost workers, duplications, and overtime fraud. This is crucial following the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) audit, which revealed that approximately 3,000 of its 17,000 listed workforce were drawing pay cheques but their existence could not be verified.[236]
- **Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of tax administration.** Prioritising spending within the SARS on resources to optimise tax collection, such as improved ICT capacity to enable better compliance levels and enhance the efficiency of dispute resolution processes.[237] Improving tax compliance rates from 63 percent to 67 percent could generate an estimated R60 billion per year.[238]
- **Reforming public sector wage growth.** Ensuring that public sector wages grow in line with inflation over the medium term to offset past overruns.[239] Public sector wage growth has repeatedly outpaced inflation, pushing the wage bill's share of GDP above the OECD average and contributing to fiscal pressure.

- **Ending bailouts for SOEs.** Bailouts amount to massive subsidies for failing institutions, are a deep well of funding for corruption and serve as an incentive to run these enterprises poorly. While there may be some economic pain associated with ending these bailouts, this will force the necessary reforms for failing SOEs and allow for the much-needed private sector participation.
- **Ensuring a clean and efficient government** by outlawing cadre deployment and professionalising the public service, as captured by the **DA's Public Administration Policy**.
- **Reforming the B-BBEE Scorecard to prioritise value for money over race-based preferential procurement.** The DA is in the process of developing a non-racial, outcomes-based procurement scorecard that prioritises value for money and broad-based development impact. Grounded in the **DA's Economic Justice Policy**, this alternative framework will measure supplier contributions to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Enabling legislation to this effect will soon be introduced by the DA to formally replace race-based preferential procurement under B-BBEE with this fairer, more effective alternative.
- **Implementing reforms proposed by the Methodology for Assessing Procurement Systems (MAPS) assessment** aimed at improving South Africa's public procurement system. The 2024 MAPS assessment conducted by the OECD, World Bank, and African Development Bank (ADF) recommends:[240, 241]
    - Strengthening further the regulatory authority of the Public Procurement Office (PPO) and ensuring it has adequate human resources and effective independence.
    - Enhancing the use of digitalisation, internal controls, and internal audits to identify and prevent corruption.
    - Enhancing the transparency of the procurement system and establishing comprehensive financial disclosure regulations along with clear definitions of conflicts of interest.



From Dysfunctional to Delivering Municipalities

Time for Urgent Action

Local government is the bedrock of a growing economy. When municipalities function effectively, they provide the infrastructure, services, and stability that businesses need to invest, grow, and create jobs. However, **South Africa's local governments are in crisis**. Of the country's 257 municipalities, only 34 received clean audits in 2023, with the Auditor-General reporting fruitless and wasteful expenditure reaching up to R7.4 billion in 2023 across all municipalities.[242] In 2023, the number of distressed and at-risk municipalities was also at a high, 196 (or 76 percent) of municipalities.[243] Failures and the risk of collapse of local governments are not primarily the result of structural design flaws, but rather a consequence of poor governance, corruption, and the politicisation of appointments.

Figure 19: Municipal performance (2021 – 2023)[244]

Province 2023	Number of municipalities	Stable 2021	Stable 2022	Stable 2023	Low Risk 2022	Low Risk 2022	Medium Risk 2021	Medium Risk 2022	At Risk 2023	Distressed 2021	Distressed 2022	Distressed 2023
EC	39	0	0	4	14	14	14	14	28	11	11	7
FS	23	0	0	4	1	1	11	11	9	11	11	10
GP	11	1	2	0	1	0	7	7	10	2	2	1
KZN	54	1	11	12	22	14	20	17	39	11	12	3
LP	27	0	0	5	3	3	21	21	20	3	3	2
MP	20	1	1	8	4	4	9	9	12	6	6	0
NC	31	1	1	4	5	5	16	16	18	9	9	9
NW	22	0	3	1	6	3	6	6	18	10	10	3
WC	30	12	12	23	10	10	7	6	7	1	2	0
Total	**257**	**16**	**30**	**61**	**66**	**54**	**111**	**107**	**161**	**64**	**66**	**35**

Part of this dysfunction of local governments stems from the instability of coalition governments. With the number of coalitions increasing from 27 in 2016 to over 80 in 2021, the lack of an electoral threshold allows for one-seat parties to become kingmaker parties, significantly undermining the stability of municipal councils.[245,246,247] Cities like Johannesburg have cycled through multiple mayors in short periods, each time destabilising the administration and compromising service delivery.

The viability of municipalities has been eroded by the decline of trading services and poor stewardship of key networked infrastructure. Trading services like electricity, water, and waste, traditionally cross-subsidising municipal operations, are now loss-making due to billing failures, theft, rising costs, and Eskom's dysfunction. Simultaneously, critical infrastructure such as water pipes, roads, and wastewater systems is collapsing, with over 40 percent of water lost due to leaks and poor infrastructure maintenance.[249] That is billions of rands down the drain in potential municipal revenue.

> ***"Of the country's 257 municipalities, only 34 received clean audits in 2023, with the Auditor-General reporting fruitless and wasteful expenditure reaching up to R7.4 billion in 2023 across all municipalities."***

Local governments must be empowered to drive inclusive economic growth. This means recognising them as vital economic drivers, linking them directly to global markets, trade opportunities, and skills pipelines. South Africa cannot grow if they are failing, and it will continue to fail unless urgent reform is adopted.

Progress on local government reform under Operation Vulindlela Phase II is not on track, as hoped and should be accelerated as reform in this space is urgent to unlock growth and investment.[250] The shift to a utility model for water and electricity services, vital to ensure financial and operational sustainability, has no data available to suggest reform has started. Efforts to standardise and professionalise the appointment of senior officials in local government are facing significant challenges and require urgent intervention. While the review of the institutional structure of the local government system is on track, progress on reviewing the local government fiscal framework, including the use of conditional grants, is delayed but underway.[251] Urgent action is required to ensure this critical reform does not continue to lag.

How the ANC Is Getting in the Way

The ANC's centralised, patronage-driven model of governance is a direct cause of the dysfunction we now see across South Africa's municipalities. Instead of empowering capable administrations to deliver services, the ANC continues to prioritise cadre deployment. This has hollowed out the state's capacity and entrenched a culture of impunity. Municipal appointments are routinely made based on political connections rather than qualifications, leading to underqualified officials managing multi-million-rand budgets and critical infrastructure. Institutional memory and operational effectiveness of local governments have been decimated, which could make reform more difficult the longer they are delayed.

The ANC also resists the devolution of power to local governments, fearing a loss of political control, even as central government departments have failed to perform their responsibilities. The ANC in the national government continues to restrict municipalities from making key decisions on policing, transport, or infrastructure partnerships, areas where they could significantly improve outcomes if given the authority.

Rather than enabling reform, the ANC has doubled down on top-down control, insulating failing municipalities from consequences while punishing reformist administrations. This command-style governance model is incompatible with the agility, professionalism, and innovation needed to turn South Africa's ailing municipalities around.

Until the ANC's grip on local government is broken, economic recovery and service delivery will continue to be obstructed.

Bold Solution: Stabilising Coalitions

Stabilising local government coalitions. The DA has submitted two pieces of private members' legislation to stabilise local government. They are the "**Municipal Threshold Bill**" and the "**Coalitions Bill**". They deal with election seat thresholds and coalition dynamics, respectively and will serve to stabilise local government. Electoral thresholds help reduce one or two-seat parties, which would otherwise destabilise coalitions. The Coalition Bill regulates the frequency of motions of no confidence without just cause and will prevent politically motivated motions of no confidence.

The DA believes that the electoral threshold should be 2 percent. This would require a political party to secure 2 percent of the overall vote to qualify for seats in a legislature or council. Proportional representation electoral systems tend to encourage a fragmentation of political representation into many parties. In South Africa this is particularly exaggerated as a party can obtain a seat in a legislature with just 0.2 percent of the vote.

Yet even a party with small levels of electoral support can collapse a government if that party's seat is needed to make up 50 percent-plus-1 in a coalition. As "king makers", tiny parties can wield power which is significantly out of proportion to their electoral support. We recognise that electoral thresholds involve a trade-off, since they compromise on pure proportionality. This is why the DA suggests a very low threshold compared to many international counterparts. Germany has a 5 percent threshold, while Italy and Spain have 3 percent each.[252]

South Africa's Constitution specifies that elections "must result, in general, in proportional representation" (Section 46(1)(d)). The exclusion of minor parties under an electoral threshold will still satisfy the requirement for "general proportionality", as the vast majority of voters will continue to have their chosen representatives elected.

Building capable local governments that deliver effectively, ethically, and accountably requires reforms focused on professionalising administrations, strengthening skills and capacity, and enforcing accountability:

To build capable local governments that deliver effectively and ethically requires:

- Professionalising administrations. As captured by the DA's **Public Administration Policy**, it entails ensuring municipalities have sufficiently competent civil servants by implementing merit-based appointment, suitable qualification criteria, no cadre deployment, and following through on consequences for poor performance or corruption.

To strengthen governance through improved skills and institutional capacity:

- **Increasing access to upskilling programmes and development opportunities for councillors, staff, and communities**, including MFMA training, legislation, and financial skills development. SALGA offers these; however, these programmes often suffer from limited reach, inconsistent participation, and underfunding. To improve accessibility, municipalities should allocate dedicated budgets for ongoing training, ensuring that all councillors and senior staff undergo mandatory skills development and implement e-learning platforms to provide flexible, cost-effective training for under-resourced municipalities.

To restore accountability and end impunity for municipal failure requires:

- **Enforcing accountability among the civil service for damaging their provinces and municipalities.**[253] Municipal managers who ignore audit findings, politicians who shield corrupt officials, and national leaders who fail to capacitate municipalities are the true culprits of municipal dysfunction. They can be held accountable by enforcing mandatory reporting of disciplinary outcomes of unauthorised, irregular, fruitless, and wasteful expenditure cases via public platforms, as well as implementing national-level oversight of disciplinary, criminal, and performance-related accountability processes to prevent indefinite delays in action. The latter aims to replace the hollow process of consequence management with clear, time-bound enforcement of dismissals, prosecutions, and other serious sanctions.

The DA proposes further reform to rescue local governments by:

- **Reviewing district municipalities to determine their effectiveness as a governance model.** The rationale for such a review is due to several structural failures within district municipalities, such as bureaucratic delays, service duplication and high costs. District structures consume vast financial resources (e.g., R1.6 billion annually in uMgungundlovu, with R91 million spent on council salaries), diverting funds from critical services. The review should be an open question on the continuation of such a model.
- **Devolving functions, such as rail and policing, to competent local governments where appropriate.** Certain functions under the auspices of the ANC national government have deteriorated severely in the last 20 years. There is limited scope for local authorities to address issues like policing or large-scale rail in metro systems if they lack the necessary authority. However, capable local governments can handle these responsibilities effectively without relying on a centralised, top-down approach.
- **Amending legislation to mandate that revenue streams derived from trading services are ringfenced for infrastructure investments.** Only additional revenue beyond a certain level can be used on other municipal expenditures. This would involve ringfencing revenue from trading services and using it to reinvest in network upgrades, metering, and maintenance, and halting the decay of critical infrastructure.
- **Unlocking private sector participation in infrastructure investment.** Many local municipalities suffer from low revenue collection, compounded by high unemployment. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) offer a suitable way to plug the revenue gap. However, the current legislative environment limits the ability of municipalities to enter into long-term infrastructure partnerships and service delivery concessions with the private sector. Reforms include amending Section 33 of the Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003) (MFMA) to allow for long-term PPPs and service concession agreements beyond three years, provided they meet criteria for fiscal affordability, public value for money, and risk mitigation.
- **Revising the Local Government Fiscal Framework.** Treasury should revise the Local Government Fiscal Framework to reflect the diversity of municipal contexts. Smaller, rural municipalities require operational subsidies and technical support, while metros and secondary cities may benefit more from infrastructure finance and access to credit markets. A differentiated model is essential to align resources with the distinct needs and capabilities of various municipalities.

Local government reform is not just about service delivery; it is about ensuring South Africa's cities and towns provide a solid foundation for the country's economic revival and long-term prosperity.

Arresting the Crime Epidemic

Time for Urgent Action

Arresting the crime pandemic is vital for economic prosperity. Crime hampers economic activity by deterring investment, trade, and tourism in affected areas. Furthermore, it increases the costs for businesses through higher insurance rates and private security expenses – expenses that many small businesses cannot afford.

High crime rates lead to missed economic opportunities as they discourage entrepreneurs from opening businesses or expanding existing ones. **This makes South Africa a less attractive investment destination, which throttles economic growth and job creation.**

South Africa is facing an increasing crime epidemic. The United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (2023/2024) has also estimated South Africa's murder rate to be 45 per 100,00 -the second highest of countries reporting.[254] Between January and March 2025, South Africans faced an average of 134.9 non-residential[x] break-ins per day. [255] This demonstrates the daily challenges that business owners face in South Africa, harming their ability to contribute to the economy and protect their livelihoods.

Violence is a daily reality for the average citizen in South Africa. According to the latest crime statistics published by the SAPS,[256] there were 5,727 murders reported in the first three months of this year. **That is 63.6 murders per day**. The statistics continue to state that 6,985 attempted murders (77.6 per day), 43,776 assaults with the attempt to inflict grievous bodily harm (486.4 per day), 31,749 robberies with aggravating circumstances (352.8 per day), and 10,688 rapes (118.7 per day) for the same period. However, **due to a lack of confidence in the SAPS and the criminal justice system**, **there is a chronic underreporting of crime** and, in particular, crimes involving gender-based violence (GBV). Therefore, **the true extent of crime and its effects is distorted.**

Extortion also harms key sectors of the economy, such as the construction, entertainment, and transport industries. **From April 2019 to March 2024, 6,056 extortion cases were reported, leading to only 178 convictions.[257]** Extortion syndicates are a significant problem as they extract money from business owners, which worsens the financial position of small businesses and reduces the attractiveness of opening new businesses in affected areas. Extortion syndicates often target service delivery contractors and large-scale infrastructure projects, which causes a decline in government service delivery.[258] Extortion, therefore, contributes to continued high unemployment numbers in affected areas.

In addition, corruption is a handbrake on economic growth. Following the widespread corruption and maladministration revealed at the Zondo Commission, the government attempted to implement a turnaround strategy on corruption. However, progress has been slow; only a small number of the Commission's recommendations have been implemented, such as passing the Public Procurement Act in 2024, and **several ANC Ministers in the current Ramaphosa cabinet remain implicated in the report.** The OECD's Economic Survey report for South Africa states that the National Prosecution Authority (NPA) and the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation are under-resourced and lack the necessary independence to prosecute high-level corruption successfully.[259] This has severely undermined public trust in the state's capabilities to hold those in power accountable.

[x] The SAPS defines "non-residential" burglaries as "the unlawful intentional forceful removal and appropriation of property from the business of another person."

Corruption has had a severe impact on South Africa's economic prospects, reducing local and foreign direct investment, flows to the stock market, and global competitiveness, ultimately reducing economic growth levels.[260] According to Corruption Watch,[261] *"Corruption and bad management practices eat into the nation's wealth"*. **Corruption costs the South African economy R700 billion each year**,[262] stealing public money from what was meant for schools, hospitals, infrastructure development, policing, and social protection.

Projected Economic Growth

A 2023 World Bank Study found that high-crime levels cost the South African **economy approximately 10 percent of its GDP each year**, while crimes specifically targeting businesses cost the economy 6.5 percent of its GDP per year.[263] A 2025 OECD report highlighted crime, resulting from increased unemployment and a decline in policing services, as a major barrier to enhanced economic activity and investor confidence.[264] Addressing crime must become a **national priority** to kickstart renewed economic growth in South Africa.

How the ANC is Getting in the Way

Certain elements of the South African Police Service (SAPS) have fallen prey to corruption and criminality. The recent allegations[265] made by the Police Commissioner for KwaZulu-Natal, Lieutenant General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi, highlighted what most South Africans already feared- that large-scale criminality and corruption are commonplace among certain elements of the SAPS.

The SAPS suffers from severe capacity constraints, which prevent it from deploying sufficient boots on the ground to respond timeously to crimes, or serve as a deterrent through increased visible policing. This is partially due to a reduction in the SAPS staff from approximately 200,000 in 2011/12 to 180,000 in 2021/22.[266] There has been a loss of specialised functions, a lack of evidence-based policing, and a failure to utilise modern technology or stay up to date with international trends in crime-fighting.

The ANC-led Department of Police has failed to meaningfully integrate private security services, neighbourhood watches, and other private role players in South Africa's policing mix. Instead of recognising and utilising their potential, **the ANC has decided to treat them as enemies.** This is demonstrated by the ANC Minister of Police's introduction of proposed amendments to the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority's (PSIRA) regulations. These regulations aim to restrict where and how armed security officers may operate. In practice, these provisions would undermine officers' ability to provide their services in public areas such as malls, schools, churches, and hospitals, unless those service providers and locations meet a strict list of compliance requirements, placing the public at greater risk.

The DA strongly opposes these measures as we believe they would embolden criminals and make South Africans less safe. According to statistics published in 2022, private security officers far outnumber active police officers employed by the SAPS. Private security companies employ around 580,000 security personnel, compared to the roughly 140,000 employed by the SAPS.[267] **This is a ratio of 4 to 1, highlighting the need to utilise private security as a resource in the fight against crime rather than limiting their ability to keep our citizens safe.**

Past ANC actions have contributed to the high levels of crime, corruption and lawlessness that South Africans experience today. One example of this is the disbanding of the Scorpions in 2009. At the time, the unit was investigating several high-profile ANC officials, including former President Jacob Zuma. What followed was a period now known as "State Capture", overseen by Zuma himself. Ex-Chief Justice, Raymond Zondo, stated that the disbandment of the unit was the "worst decision ever" made in the fight against corruption in South Africa.[268]

The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) lacks the institutional independence or resources to prosecute complex corruption and organised crime cases. To date, **the NPA has secured only four state capture-related convictions, and only one person has been jailed (an engineer who forged his qualifications), with none of these individuals being implicated politicians.[269]** This is despite an increase in the NPA's budget from R4.5 billion to R5.4 billion between 2021 and 2023.[270]

The DA has repeatedly expressed concern over the NPA's failure to fulfil its constitutional mandate. The NPA's inability to hold criminals accountable seriously undermines public confidence in our justice system and suggests to criminals that their misdeeds will go unpunished.

South Africa's State Security Agency (SSA) is deeply compromised. State Intelligence plays a vital role in safeguarding the state and its citizens from both foreign and domestic threats. Alongside the SAPS' crime intelligence unit, it is mandated to combat organised crime, including drug and human trafficking.[271] However, instead of fulfilling its constitutional mandate, it has become a source of corruption, politicking and embarrassment, especially under the previous Zuma administration.[272] Urgent reform is needed to ensure that the country's counter-intelligence capacity is restored and its resources put to use to fight organised crime in South Africa.

Following the Zondo Commission's findings of the SSA's abuse for political means, the DA has called for the SSA to be disbanded and replaced with a fully independent, efficient, and transparent agency with no political interference.[273] South Africa's intelligence capacity challenges were exposed during the June 2021 unrest. The violence and looting experienced **wiped approximately R50 billion from South Africa's GDP in just 8 days**,[274] reflecting how crucial an effective and non-partisan state security apparatus is for protecting the economy and livelihoods.

Bold Solution: Crushing Crime and Corruption

The DA has always been at the forefront of the country's fight against crime and corruption. The party has introduced multiple proposals that it believes would arrest South Africa's crime epidemic. These include the Constitution Twenty-First Amendment Bill (or the "Scorpions 2.0" Bill), the Anti-Extortion Plan, and the Rural Safety Plan. The DA has also outlined many additional measures to address the capacity constraints of the SAPS, NPA and Judicial services in our 2024 Election Manifesto. **Some of these include:**

- **Strengthening anti-corruption enforcement.** This involves adopting the DA's proposed Constitution Twenty-First Amendment Bill (2024), which would establish an Anti-Corruption Commission, which is critical to restoring public trust and deterring corruption.
- **Implementing evidence-based policing** and increasing the use of proven technologies to prevent, combat and investigate crime. This would involve expanding the use of CCTV and drones and the use of AI in risk and pattern recognition.
- **Conducting lifestyle audits for all senior police management** to combat police corruption.
- **Establishing coordinated partnerships with private security, neighbourhood watches, and other private role-players in safety and security through a whole-of-society approach** and rejecting the proposed amendments to the PSIRA Act.
- **Decentralising policing to capable local authorities.** By allowing capable provincial and metro governments to manage their own SAPS forces, they can appropriately tailor their policing plans and deploy their resources according to their specific local needs.
- **Strengthening the Public Order Policing Units** by ensuring that members of the unit are adequately trained and capable of attending to public unrest and protest situations.
- **Taking cybercrime seriously** by using sophisticated technology such as data analytics, AI, and digital forensics to protect the public against it.
- **Establishing provincial teams of specially vetted detectives alongside specialist forensic support** to identify and arrest the most serious and violent criminals operating within their respective provinces.

If the government begins taking decisive action against crime and corruption, we can potentially unlock up to **10 percent of our GDP**, as projected by the World Bank. [275]

The DA's Anti-Extortion Plan, will protect South African businesses and the jobs which they create by implementing the following measures:

- **Centralising intelligence gathering and analysis** by creating a specialised hub to collect, analyse, and disseminate intelligence on extortion activities across South Africa.
- **Enhancing community reporting and support mechanisms** by fostering strong partnerships with communities and businesses to improve intelligence gathering, encourage reporting, and support victims.
- **Using targeted operations** that utilise intelligence-led policing to identify, disrupt, and dismantle extortion syndicates at source.
- **Implementing proactive and early intervention strategies.** Preventing extortion before it occurs through public education, predictive policing, legislative reforms and early intervention.

Crime and corruption must also be crushed to secure livelihoods, generate growth, and expand job creation. To reduce crime, the following measures must be implemented:

- **Fixing the NPA** by implementing the DA's NPA reform package which includes:
  - Amending the Constitution to ensure the head of the NPA is appointed by Parliament, not the President, by following a transparent and rigorous vetting process.
  - Launching a watching brief programme to monitor high-stakes prosecutions and improve outcomes, as the DA has already done successfully in the Western Cape.
  - Demanding a performance audit of the NPA by the Auditor-General and the Public Service Commission.
  - Fighting for better funding, smarter recruitment, and stronger retention of experienced prosecutors.
- **Implementing our Rural Safety Plan**, which will strengthen rural safety, combat stock theft and protect the economy and jobs which are dependent on the agriculture sector. The DA's Rural Safety Plan proposes using technology, such as drones, and a "bottom-up" approach to rural safety. Policing districts will have the capacity to determine their own rural safety plans in alignment with the provincial and national government's plans.

At the local level, **Rural Community Policing Units (RCPUs) will be established for every police station** that serves at least one rural sector. These RCPUs will comprise of volunteers from the local community who will assist the SAPS in rural sector policing. These volunteers will be allowed to join based on a "each contributing according to their ability" principle, and will be divided into one of the following units, each with their own responsibilities:

- Reservists
- Support Members (including specialists)
- Auxiliary members
- Rural Community Volunteers
- Existing Community Policing Forums

The solution to arresting South Africa's crime epidemic requires political will. Implementing the DA's solutions will protect South Africans and their businesses against violent and organised crime through a reformed and functional criminal justice system.

Conclusion

To unlock South Africa's full economic potential, we must clear the roadblocks holding our economy back. The DA's six superhighways to growth and jobs lay out a clear path to unlocking investment, building energy wealth, restoring critical network infrastructure, stabilising public finances, fixing local government and making our communities safer. With the necessary political will and the electoral strengthening of the DA's hand, we can turbocharge our economy, create millions of new jobs and build a **future of opportunity** for all South Africans.

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