



Tourism employment vulnerability assessment

15 October 2025 – Learning Event

UK PACT

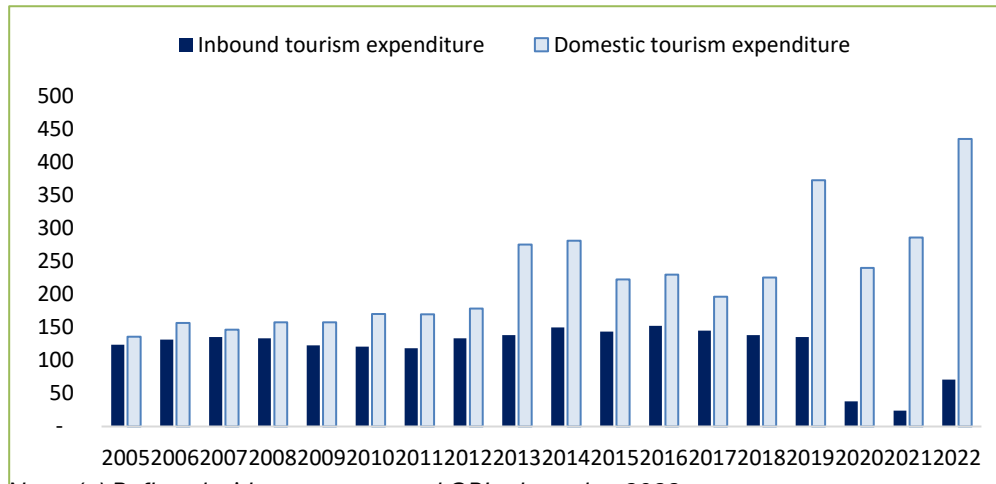
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Presentation outline

1. Introduction: key concepts
2. Approach:
 1. Employment by industry
 2. Employment by geography
 3. Employment by climate supply-side vulnerability
 4. Employment vulnerability of workers
3. Conclusion

Introduction

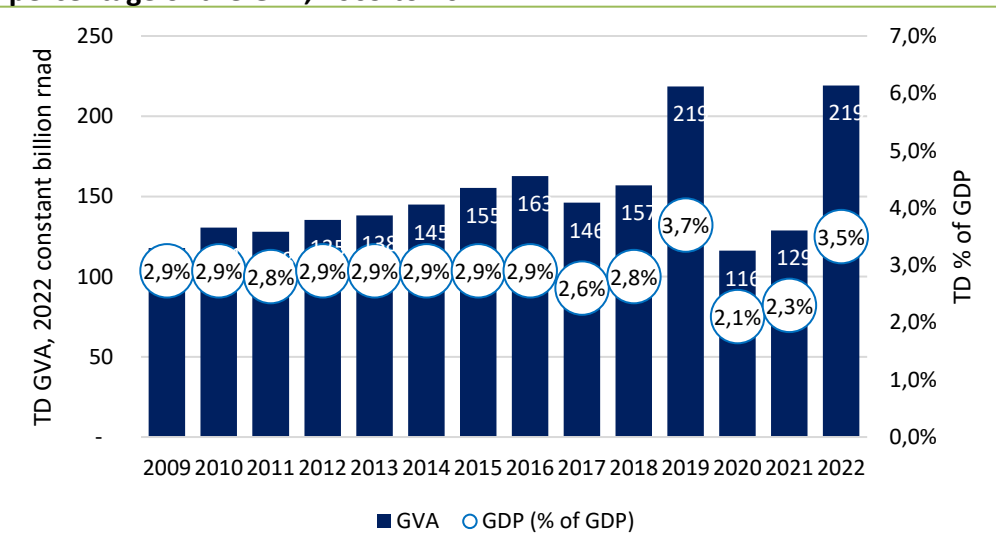
Expenditure by domestic and foreign tourists to South Africa, 2005 to 2022, in billions of constant (2022) rand (a)



Note: (a) Reflated with average annual CPI rebased to 2022.

Source: Statistics South Africa. Tourism Satellite Account.

Gross value added in tourism in billions of constant rand (a) and tourism as percentage of the GDP, 2009 to 2022



- Tourism is a **consumption-based sector**
- A tourist is someone travelling outside of their normal environment for not more than one consecutive year **for any purpose other than work remunerated** in the destination.
- Tourists can be **foreign or domestic, including intraprovincial**.
- The **dataset for domestic tourism** collected by South African Tourism was **updated in 2019**
- The **Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA)** brings together many tables of data to estimate tourism's contribution to the economy.
- **COVID** hit the sector hard but it has bounced back.

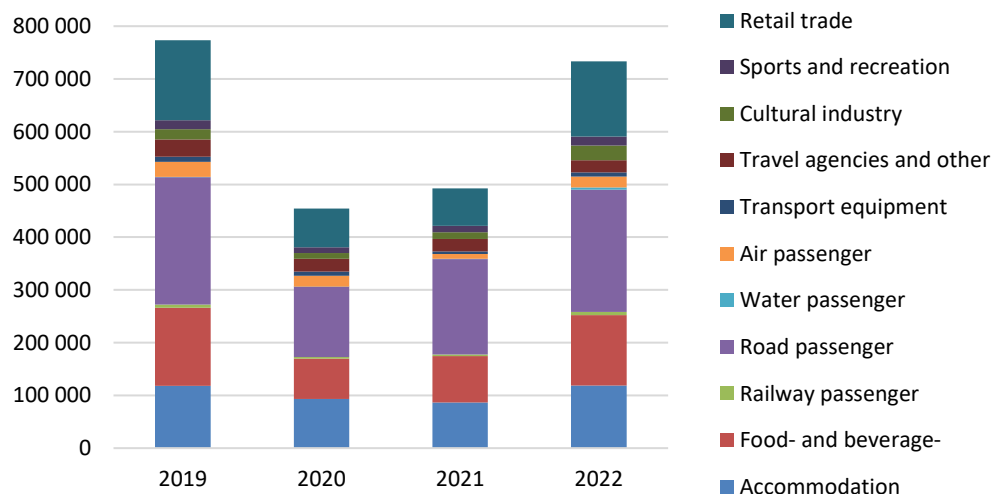
Employment in the tourism sector

Estimated employment from tourism in thousands and as a percentage of total national employment



Source: Statistics South Africa. Tourism Satellite Account 2022. Pretoria.

Estimated employment from tourism by industry, 2019 - 2022



- **Tourism jobs have largely recovered 2019 levels.** +/- 733 000 tourism jobs in 2022, close to 2019 (775 000)
- In 2022, these had not yet recovered in F&B, air passenger transport, travel agencies and other reservation services, and retail trade. Still not recovered in air passenger transport.
- **Tourism jobs are about 4,7% of total employment.** The main industries in which tourism jobs are created:
 - Accommodation, and Food & Beverage services
 - Transport – water, air, road, and equipment
 - Sports and recreation, and cultural industries
 - Travel agents and other reservations
 - Retail

Employment in the tourism sector, cont.

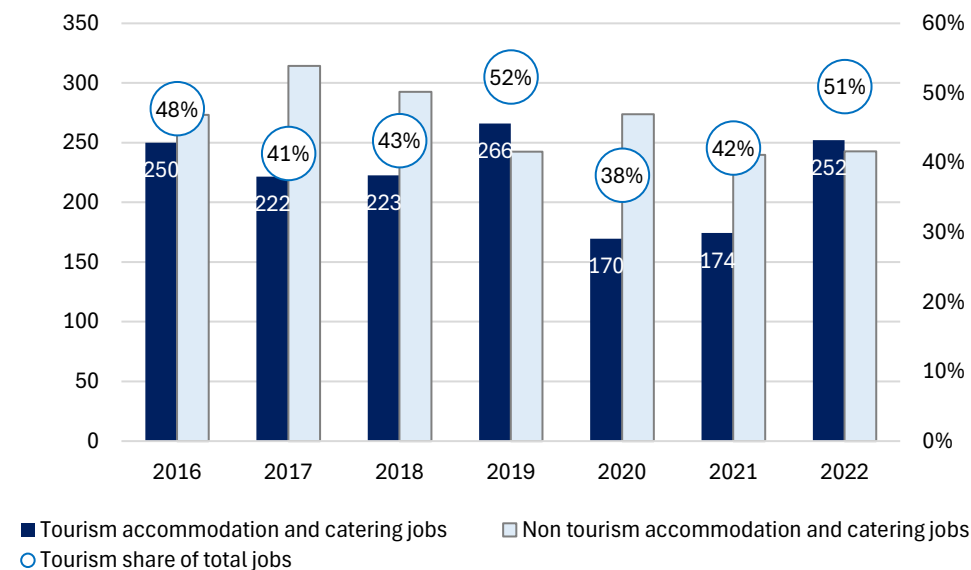
Estimated employment from tourism by industry, 2022



Industries rely on tourist consumption and other consumption. Highly tourism-dependent industries like travel agents and air transport, are small numbers of employees in total, located in metros, skilled/ highly-skilled

In 2022, tourism jobs in accommodation and F&B were about 34% of all tourism jobs and tourism is responsible for more than 50% all jobs in accommodation and F&B.

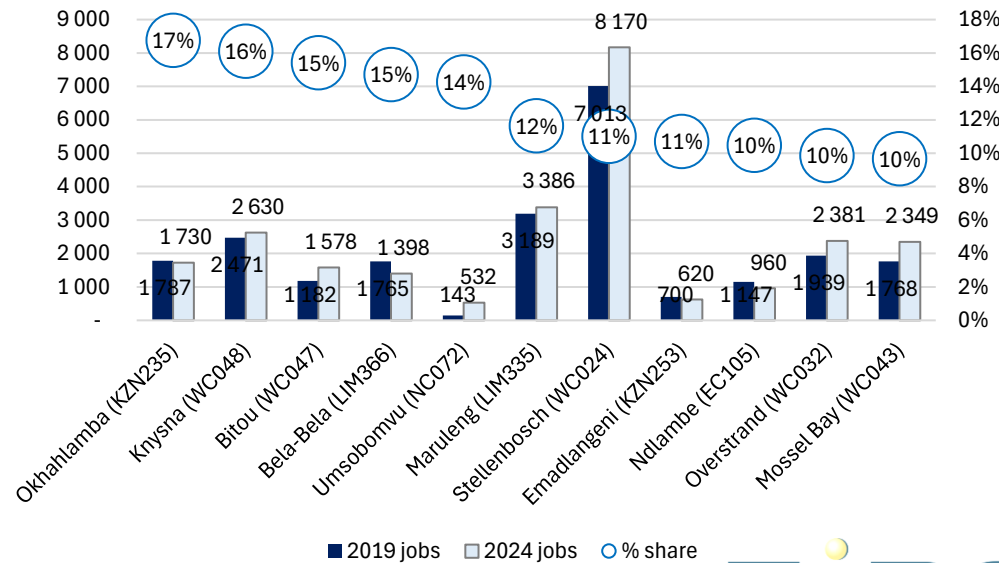
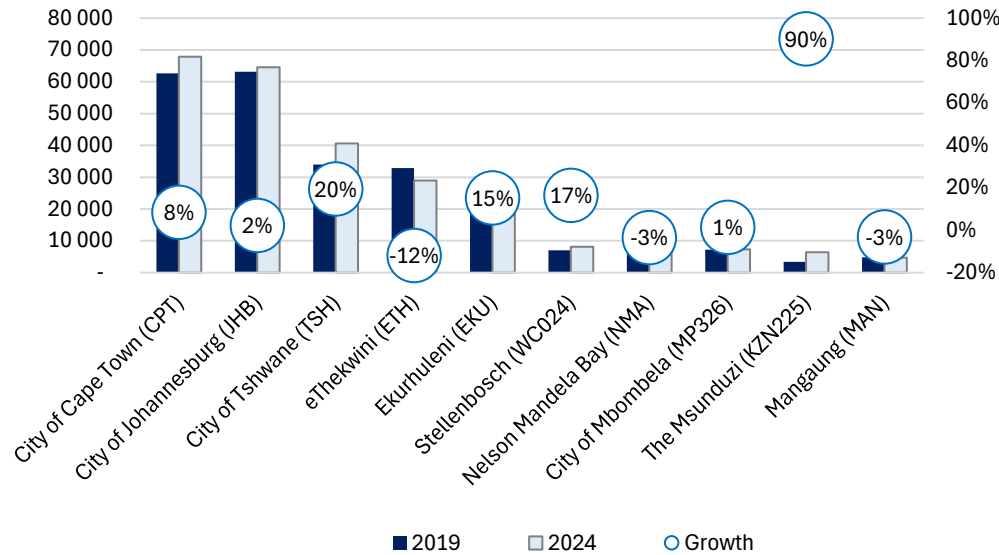
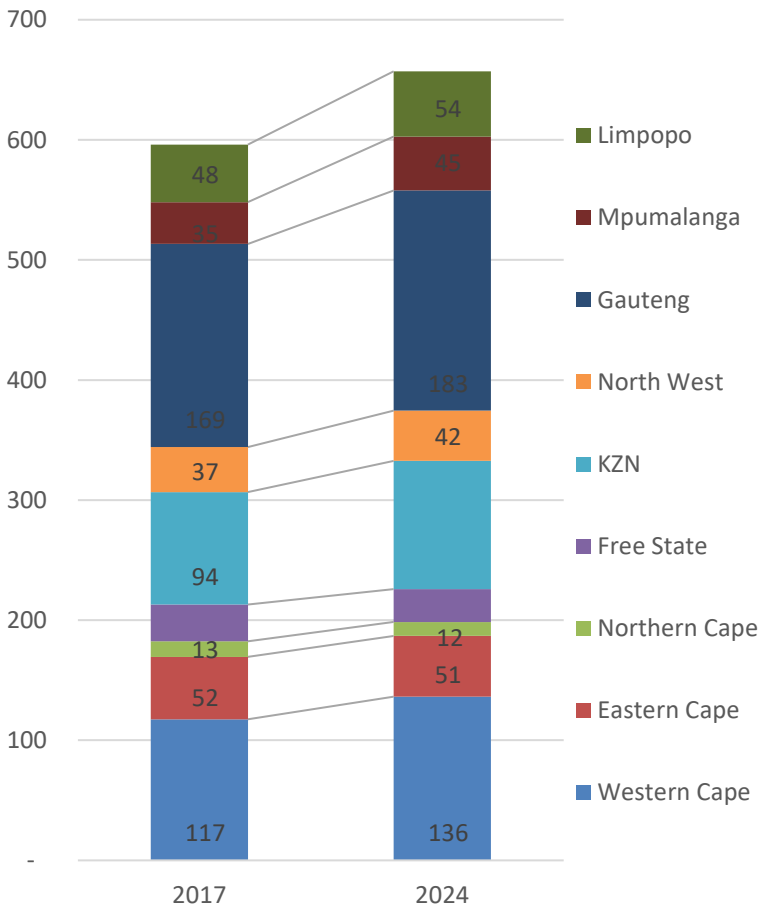
Tourism and non-tourism accommodation and F&B serving industry employment, in thousands



Source: Statistics South Africa. Tourism Satellite Account 2022. Pretoria.

Spatial dimension: Employment in Accommodation and F&B

Provincial employment in F&B and accommodation (together, in '000's), 2017 and 2024



Source: QLFS and Spatial Economic Activity data, 2024.



Climate dimension: natural attractions/ sites

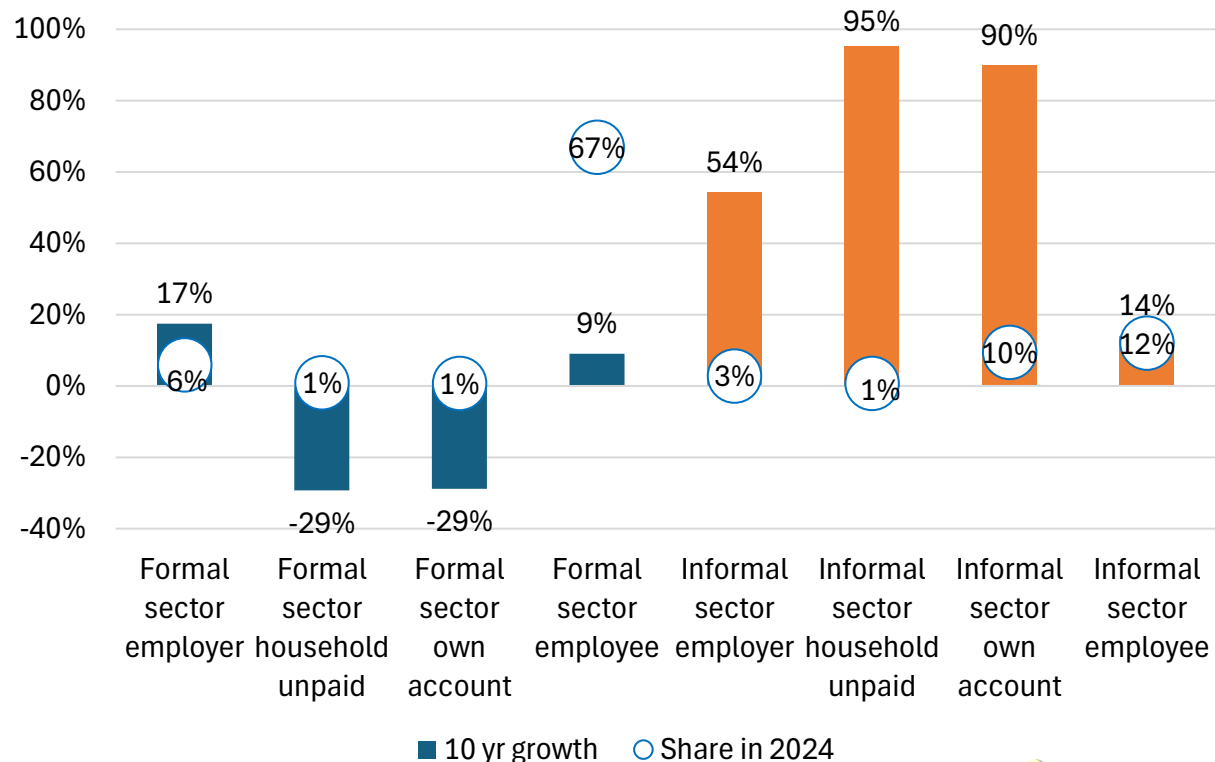
Foreign tourists per province visiting the most popular natural sites and the number of visits in 2024.

	2019	2023	2024	2024 visits
W Cape				
Boulders Beach	42%	56%	56%	784 000
Mpumalanga				
Kruger National Park	87%	85%	85%	1 785 000
Limpopo				
Kruger National Park	61%	66%	66%	396 000
E Cape				
Addo Elephant National Park	54%	56%	55%	165 000
North West				
Pilanesberg game reserve	49%	42%	46%	184 000
KZN				
North Coast (beaches)	23%	35%	39%	273 000
Free State				
Golden Gate National Park	24%	13%	16%	112 000
Northern Cape				
Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park	25%	19%	23%	23 000
TOTAL 2024 FOREIGN VISITS TO TOP NATURAL ATTRACTIONS				3 722 000

- **Nature-based tourism** is the main attraction for foreign holiday tourists. This was valued at about R20 billion in expenditure in 2024.
- **Natural attractions** may be affected by drought, floods, wildfire, and by rising sea levels.
- **Biodiversity** is also threatened by climate change, with key species, at risk.
- **"Day Zero" drought** in the Western Cape: in accommodation and F&B, between 2016 and 2017, these two industries lost 22 000 jobs,
- More recently, the **2022 KwaZulu-Natal floods** saw 459 people lose their lives, and 45 000 people temporarily left unemployed. The spatial tax jobs data clearly shows 4 000 jobs were lost in the accommodation and F&B industries in eThekweni between 2019 and 2024.
- Another climate impact is **wildfires**, with hiking trails closed; properties impacted particularly in the W Cape.
- From a **demand-side perspective**, in the future, long haul air travel may be subject to emission taxes, and this could affect the foreign holiday market to SA.

Vulnerable groups: Accommodation and F&B industries

- **Most jobs are in smaller enterprises.** In terms of VAT registered accommodation, micro-enterprises accounted for 56% of employment; in F&B, 67% of the employment was supported by SMEs.
- **In 2024, formal sector employees were 67% of all employees** across the two industries.
- **Informalisation has however grown at a pace:** while formal sector jobs in accommodation and food and beverages services increased by only 8% between 2014 and 2024, informal sector jobs grew by 41%.
- **Informal sector own account workers grew by 90%** and comprised 10% of all jobs by 2024.
- Many people appear to have **moved between formal and informal employment** between 2020 and 2022 indicating the impact of major events (in this place COVID) on vulnerability.



Dimensions of vulnerability: Accommodation and F&B

- There is a **far higher share of female employees** than the rest of the economy. In the 2024 QLFS data, female employees occupied about 59% of formal jobs, and 56% of informal jobs across the two industries.
- There was a **larger share of limited-duration jobs** in both formal and informal employment than in other industries in the economy. About 20% of formal jobs and 74% of informal jobs were limited duration. Given the seasonal nature of tourist flows, casual staff are hired during peak periods in both accommodation and food and beverages serving industries, which could explain this trend.
- Workers in food and beverages services and accommodation have **relatively low pay**. In formal accommodation, the mean average annual salary in 2022 was R120 486, slightly down from R121 512 in 2018. For F&B, it was R71 442 in 2022.
- **The share of matric certificate holders in 2024 was 52% compared with 40% in informal employment.** Less than 10% of workers in formal hospitality businesses held post-matric qualifications, significantly lower than for jobs in other formal industries. For other informal industries, it was similar to informal hospitality, around 6%.
- Low levels of unionisation: about **17% and 1,2% of staff in formal and informal hospitality, respectively, were unionised in 2024. 78% of formal staff had UIF deducted from pay, and 76% got sick leave. This dropped considerably to 28% with UIF deductions and 37% with sick leave for informal staff.** For the formal sector, this was less than other industries; for the informal sector, hospitality workers had similar shares of UIF and sick leave as other informal workers.
- **Sharing economy impacts: jobs impacts of Airbnb are not clear.** Airbnbs tend to cater to a longer-stay, family and/ or family and friends' demographic, and are more likely to have displaced Self-catering, Bed&Breakfast and Guesthouse accommodation which has similar job characteristics: sometimes informal, domestic work; possibly of limited-duration and lacking protection. It is not clear how much Airbnb has eroded hotel employment, or created employment in smaller towns.

Conclusion

- Tourism is a large source of employment, particularly in areas that are well-known for their natural attractions
- Jobs are located across several industries, with many in F&B and accommodation.
- Foreign holiday tourism demand is most at risk from climate change with a high proportion occurring in the Western Cape and around Kruger (both Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces). Foreign holiday tourists spend the most on the formal tourism value chain.
- Climate events threaten to continue to impact the sector, particularly floods and droughts, and could undermine natural attractions.
- These climate shocks appear to exacerbate the trend towards informalisation and vulnerability.
- Employees in informal accommodation and F&B firms in districts outside of the metros have the greatest increased vulnerabilities in the face of the changing climate.
- This is due to their lower skills (relative to, for example, air transport and travel agency employees), limited social protection, as well as the lack of economic diversification in smaller holiday towns and the exposure to climate events.