CENTRAL BANK OF ESWATINI
UMNTSHOLI WEMASWATI

KINGDOM OF ESWATINI

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Annual Company Survey Report 2025

Annual COMPANY SURVEY REPORT 2025

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE) and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD) extend their sincere appreciation to all institutions, companies, and individuals whose contributions made the 2025 Company Survey possible.

We express our profound gratitude to the senior leadership of both institutions for their continued guidance and strategic direction, which remain central to the successful execution of this survey each year. Their support ensures that the exercise maintains its integrity, relevance, and value as a key input into national policy formulation and economic planning.

Most importantly, we extend heartfelt thanks to the joint Company Survey Team drawn from the Central Bank of Eswatini and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. Over the years, this team has demonstrated unwavering professionalism, collaboration, and technical excellence.

Their commitment to data quality, sector engagement, and rigorous analysis continues to enhance the credibility and usefulness of the Company Survey as a national economic monitoring tool. The long-standing partnership between the two institutions remains a model of effective inter-agency cooperation.

To everyone involved, **Siyabonga**, for your dedication, hard work, and continued support in ensuring that the Company Survey remains an invaluable resource for evidence-based policymaking and economic development in Eswatini.

THE TEAM

NO.	SURNAME	NAME	RESPONSIBILITY	INSTITUTION
1	Khumalo	Vusi	Chair	CBE
2	Dlamini	Nombuso	Co-Chair	MEPD
3	Dlamini	Vangile	Leader	CBE
4	Mabuza	Nomvuyo	Leader	CBE
5	Nxumalo	Welcome	Leader	CBE
6	Simelane	Nonhlanhla	Leader	CBE
7	Zikalala	Mcebo	Leader	CBE
8	Bhangu	Sizwe	Member	CBE
9	Dlamini	Khetsiwe	Member	CBE
10	Dlamini	Ntobeko	Member	CBE
11	Dlamini	Ziyanda	Member	CBE
12	Hadebe	Ntokozo	Member	CBE
13	Hlophe	Bongani	Member	CBE
14	Hlophe	Nomvuyo	Member	CBE
15	Kunene	Sive	Member	CBE
16	Magagula	Zamokuhle	Member	CBE
17	Mamba	Nonhlanhla	Member	CBE
18	Mamba	Sinethemba	Member	CBE
19	Mansoor	Sandra	Member	MEPD
20	Mdladla	Thandeka	Member	CBE
21	Motsa	Fezile	Member	MEPD
22	Ndlovu	Sinothando	Member	CBE
23	Shongwe	Sibusiso	Member	MEPD
24	Sibiya	Thokozani	Member	CBE
25	Thwala	Phepsile	Member	CBE
26	Hlophe	Temabhengu	Member	CBE
27	Bolaji	Menzi	Member	CBE
28	Maduna	Wandile	Member	CBE
29	Shabangu	Siphosethu	Member	CBE
30	Skosana	Sipho	Member	CBE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year presents unique economic developments that shape companies' performance in terms of production volumes, revenues, profitability, investment, and employment. Changes in the domestic, regional, and global economic environment can significantly influence firms' investment decisions and labour demand, while also introducing new dimensions of business challenges and opportunities. In this context, timely and accurate information on the performance of both private and public sector entities is essential for evidence based policymaking. Such information supports the formulation of policies aimed at improving the business environment by addressing binding constraints to growth, while simultaneously enabling firms to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

It is against this background that the Company Survey is conducted annually. The main objective of the survey is to assess recent performance trends among sampled entities in terms of production volumes and financial outcomes. The survey further analyses industry specific performance drivers, short to medium term prospects, employment dynamics, investment behavior, and the evolving landscape of challenges and opportunities, thereby providing critical inputs for policy analysis and advocacy. This report presents developments in 2024 relative to 2023, alongside the short to medium term outlook covering the period 2025 to 2027.

Key findings from the 2025 Company Survey indicate that out of the 133 companies surveyed, ninety seven (97), representing 72.9 percent, recorded positive revenue growth in 2024, while twenty eight (28) companies, or 21.1 percent, reported a decline in revenues. In terms of profitability, eighty two (82) companies (61.7 percent) reported positive profit margins during the review period, whereas thirty three (33) companies (24.8 percent) experienced losses, signaling a moderation in profitability compared to the previous year.

Regarding business sentiment and the outlook, one hundred and five (105) companies, equivalent to 78.9 percent of the total sample, expressed a positive outlook for 2025. However, uncertainty remains elevated, with 9.0 percent of companies reporting uncertainty and 5.3 percent projecting a negative outlook for the short term. For the medium term (2026–2027), the proportion of companies anticipating positive performance declines to ninety six (96), representing 72.2 percent, while uncertainty increases to twenty nine (29) companies, accounting for 21.8 percent of responses. Despite generally favorable output expectations, employment prospects remain subdued, as only 64 entities (48.1 percent) indicated plans to increase employment in the short term, while a slightly larger share, 69 entities (51.9 percent), reported no intentions to expand employment.

Investment activity remained relatively strong in 2024. Survey results show that 109 companies (82.0 percent) undertook some form of capital spending during the review period, while twenty four (24) companies (18.0 percent) did not invest, largely reflecting financial constraints or consolidation phases. In line with the broader findings of the report, capital spending was predominantly directed towards machinery and equipment, buildings, vehicles, and other productive assets, underscoring companies' focus on maintaining capacity, improving efficiency, and supporting longer term competitiveness.

Consistent with the concluding assessment of the report, regulatory constraints emerged as the most significant cross cutting challenge in the 2025 survey, followed by company specific operational challenges and intensifying competition. These regulatory concerns were most prominent within the financial services, manufacturing, wholesale and retail, and ICT sectors. Overall, the survey findings point to an economy that remains resilient but characterised by uneven sectoral performance, modest employment growth, and a continued need for targeted reforms to strengthen the business environment and support sustainable economic growth in the medium term.

BACKGROUND, PURPOSE, AND METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND PURPOSE

The Company Survey is an annual exercise conducted from late January through June, aimed at supporting policy formulation and development. Its core purpose is to provide timely insights into recent economic trends and the medium-term outlook, thereby equipping key stakeholders with relevant information for strategic decision-making.

Through this exercise, the team collects data on production, employment, and investment across various sectors to construct an aggregated view of the macroeconomic landscape. Additionally, the survey captures sector-specific challenges and emerging opportunities, which are analysed to inform policy makers and stakeholders. These insights contribute to the development of national strategies, including the National Development Plan (NDP), and have consistently served as a valuable input for both local and external audiences, over the past decade.

> The core purpose of the survey is to provide timely insights into recent economic trends and the medium-term outlook for strategic decision-making.

METHODOLOGY

DATA OVERVIEW

The survey gathers both qualitative and quantitative data with a view of obtaining insights on sectorial performance and short-to-medium term outlook for local companies. The process of data collection entails interviewing businesses, where primary data is collected, and captures attributes such as, products and services supplied, volumes and values of products, employment numbers, income & expenditures, export volumes, major trading partners, capital investments, challenges, and opportunities for each respective company.

SAMPLING

The population frame for the Company Survey consists of 295 companies from an in-house database that features institutions that supply frequent data to both the Central Bank of Eswatini and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. This in-house database is updated annually during the first two months of each calendar year, prior to the commencement of the survey exercise, to incorporate new entrants into the business register. For the 2025 survey, a list of 143 companies was selected as a sample using a simple random sampling procedure, taking into consideration the following criteria: production volumes that is representative of the sector; having significant influence in the sector; and willingness and availability to be surveyed.

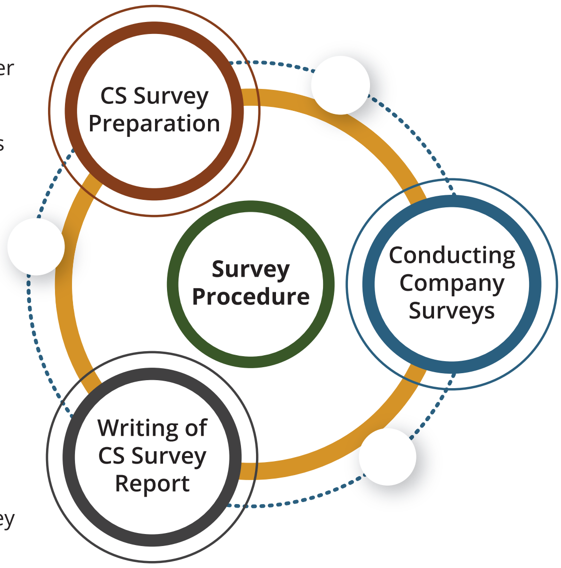
SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

The survey instruments include a self-administered questionnaire, a tracker, and online meeting platforms. The data is collected using sector specific self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires specifically sources information on the general company profile, ownership structure, performance indicators, total revenue and profits, employment, capital expenditure, sources of inputs, and destinations of exports. The tracker is an excel based tool that is employed to schedule and notify the survey team on calendar meetings over the survey period. The hybrid approach used to carry out the Company Survey 2025 meetings, consists of both physical meetings on company premises, and online meeting platforms.

SURVEY PROCEDURE

The survey procedure details how the company survey team conducts the exercise. This is done in a series of steps which can be better illustrated by Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: SURVEY PROCEDURE



01

- Updating of Sample Frame, Questionnaires and thereafter Sampling
- Updating CBE and MEPD Calendar Schedules to assess Team Members' availability

02

- Calling and Scheduling of meetings by Secretariat team
- Attending of Meetings, virtually or physical by a team of four (4) representatives
- Capturing of Survey Questionnaires by Data Team
- Preparing of Company-Specific Report of Meeting Proceedings

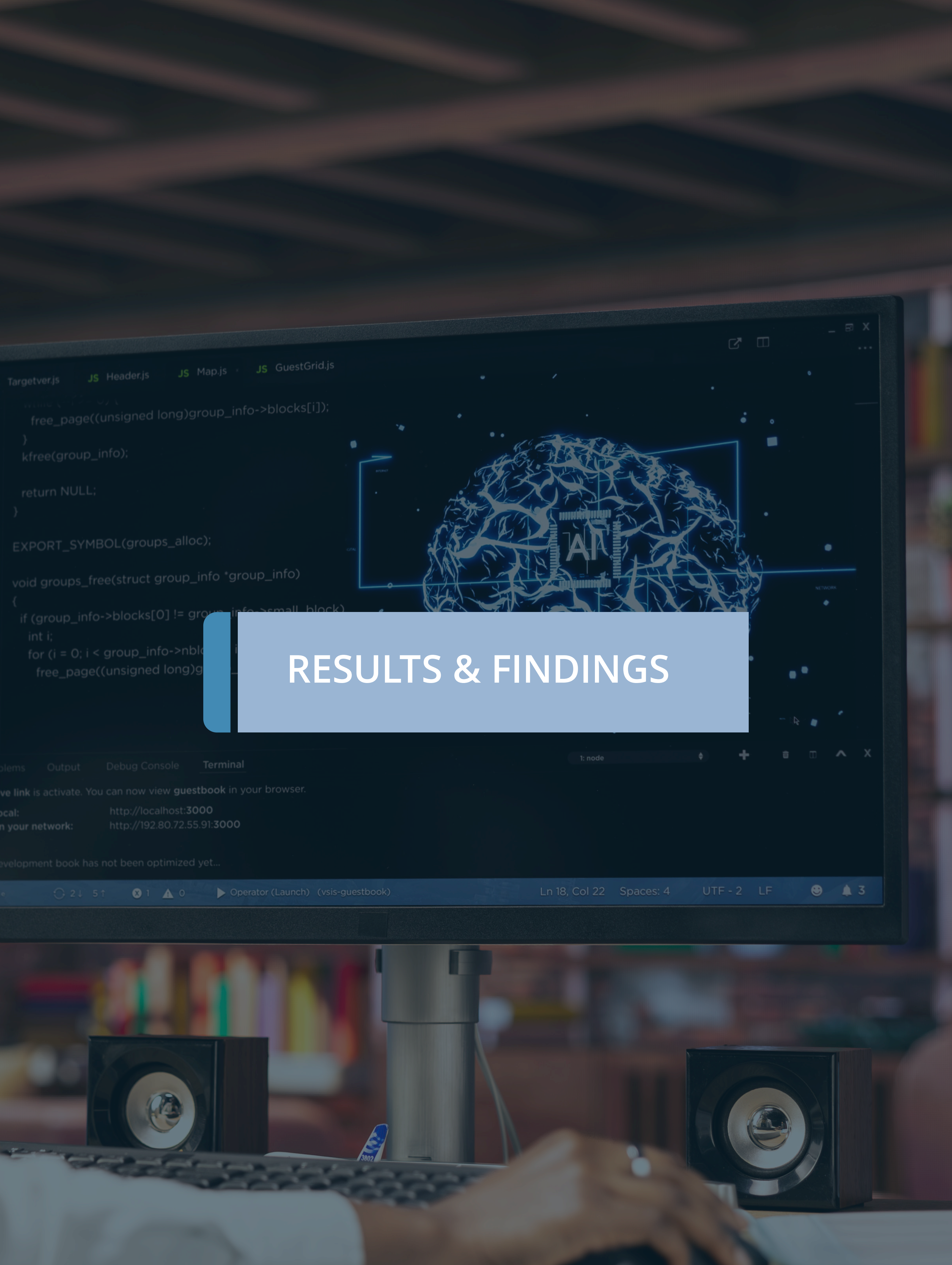
03

- Consolidation of Summary of Meeting Proceedings
- Capturing into Company Survey Database
- Report Writing of the Overall Exercise

SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

Companies were approached for a virtual meeting, primarily via Microsoft Teams. A sector-specific questionnaire (with guidelines) was sent to the sampled companies prior to the meeting. Meetings were convened to discuss the performance trends of the review period based on the dynamics presented in the completed questionnaires, opportunities envisaged by the companies in the medium-term, as well as the challenges they face in their operations. Upon conclusion of the meetings with the companies, a detailed company-specific report is prepared by the participating Team. These individual reports are then compiled to produce the Company Survey Consolidated Report. The Consolidated Report is then summarized into sectoral performances through the Company Survey Summary Report detailing sector performance, challenges and opportunities. This report is shared with relevant stakeholders to provide sector specific insights on the aforementioned business aspects. The historic, present and future performance indicators play a pivotal role as inputs for the process of revisions of GDP estimates as well as the medium-term GDP growth forecasts. Moreover, the summary report is used as an advocacy tool aimed at stimulating discussions with policy makers from an informed perspective, to encourage gainful change.

"The summary report is used as an advocacy tool aimed at stimulating discussions with policy makers from an informed perspective"



RESULTS & FINDINGS

RESULTS & FINDINGS

COVERAGE

The 2025 Company Survey comprised a total of 143 companies from the target sample, that were unchanged from the 2024 exercise. Overall, survey coverage improved significantly in 2025, reaching 93.7 percent, with responses received from 132 companies and two government departments. This represents a notable increase from the 88.1 percent response rate recorded in 2024, reflecting enhanced engagement with survey respondents. The adoption of a blended data collection approach, combining virtual and physical interactions, contributed positively to this outcome by mitigating limitations associated with reliance on a single mode of engagement.

Sectoral coverage is presented in Table 1. The results indicate strong response rates across the primary (80.0 percent), secondary (94.2 percent), and tertiary (93.0 percent) sectors, pointing to broad based participation across the economy. However, comparatively lower response rates were observed in the mining sector and within the residual "other sectors" category. The combined average response rate for these sectors stood at 63.3 percent, below the overall survey average, suggesting the need for targeted interventions to improve participation in future survey rounds.

TABLE 1: SURVEY COVERAGE STATISTICS

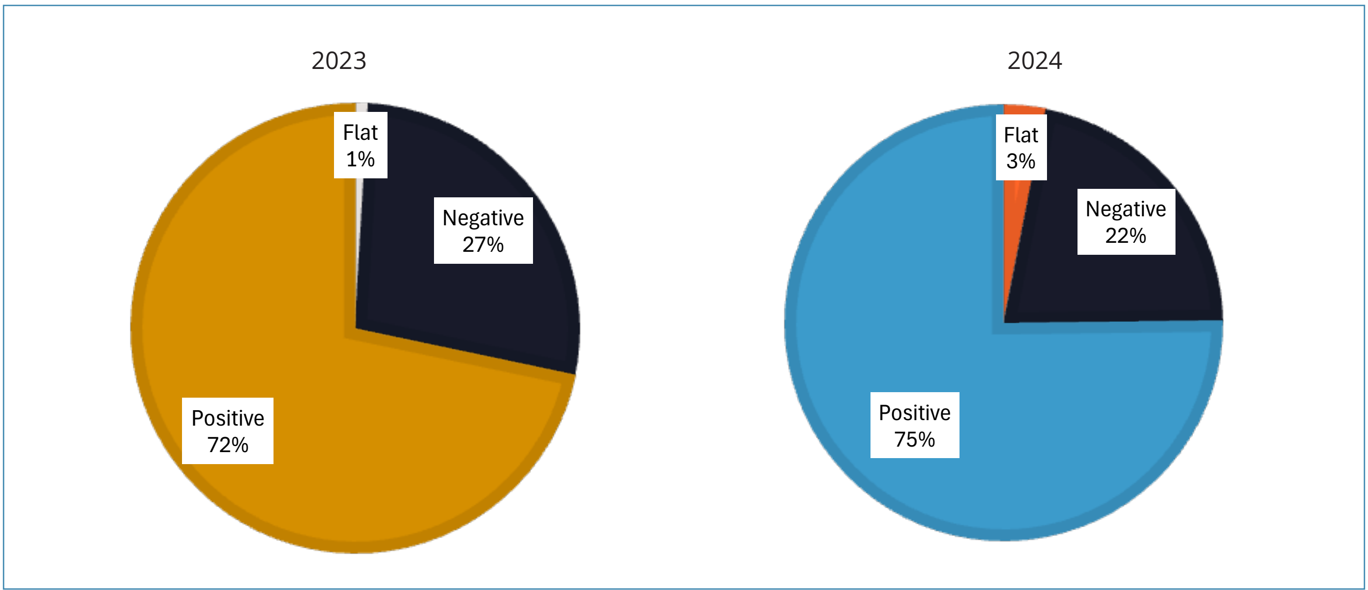
Sector	Target sample				Surveyed				Coverage (percent)			
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2022	2023	2024	2025	2022	2023	2024	2025
Agriculture	11	10	7	9	4	5	7	9	36.4	50	100	100
Construction	7	7	4	6	3	4	4	5	42.9	57.1	100	83.3
Education	3	3	2	3	1	2	2	3	33.3	66.7	100	100
Financial Services	24	22	22	23	20	20	22	23	83.3	90.9	100	100
Government	5	4	5	5	3	3	5	5	60	75	100	100
Health	3	6	6	5	2	5	4	5	66.7	83.3	66.7	100
ICT	7	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	71.4	100	100	100
Manufacturing	39	39	38	38	24	31	34	36	61.5	79.5	89.5	94.7
Marketing Board	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	100	100	80	80
Mining	4	4	3	5	3	2	2	3	75	50	66.7	60
Other Services	10	11	5	3	2	6	3	2	20	54.5	60	66.7
Real Estate	6	5	2	2	3	3	2	2	50	60	100	100
Tourism	16	15	14	10	8	8	9	9	50	53.3	64.3	90
Transport	13	8	7	6	6	7	6	6	46.2	87.5	85.7	100
Utility	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	100	100	100	100
Wholesale & Retail	23	16	14	14	7	11	13	13	30.4	68.8	92.9	92.9
	179	**164**	**143**	**143**	**99**	**121**	**126**	**134**	**55.3**	**73.8**	**88.1**	**93.7**

Source: Company Survey (2025)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Out of 133 companies surveyed, 129 reported revenue data in the 2025 Company Survey. Of these, 97 entities (75%) recorded positive revenue performance. This rate is marginally higher than the 72 percent recorded in the 2024 survey. The growth in revenues was in part supported by growth in volumes of sales where applicable. In the 2025 Survey, 61.7 percent of companies reported an increase in volume sales. In line with the frequency of the distribution of surveyed companies, the number of companies that reported positive growth in revenues in the 2025 Survey was dominated by manufacturing (29 of 36 companies) and financial services (19 of 23 companies) sectors. In addition, positive performance was reported in tourism sector (9 of 9 companies) and wholesale and retail (9 of 11 companies).

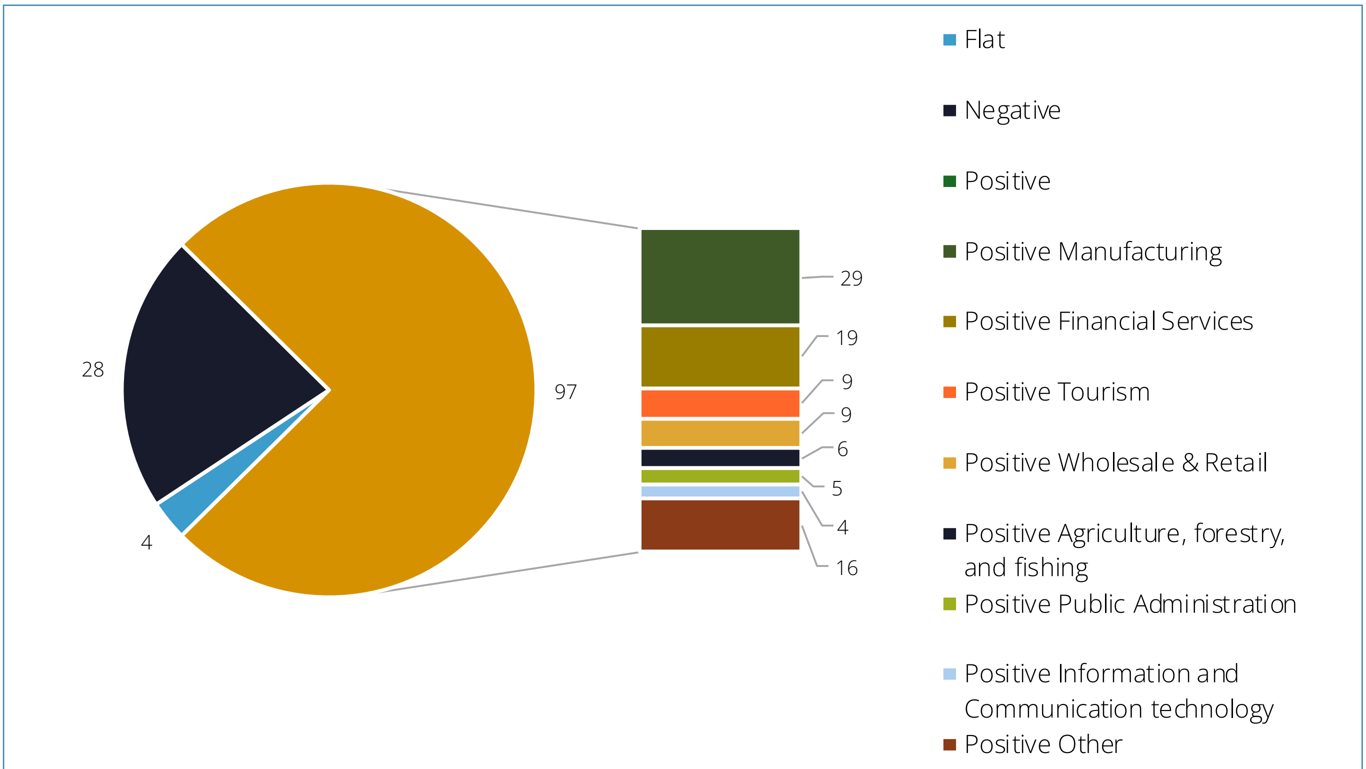
FIGURE 2: OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN TERMS OF REVENUE



Source: Company Survey (2025)

On the contrary, twenty-eight companies (22 percent) of the 129 reported a negative trend in revenues. This rate represents an improvement from the 27 percent reported in the 2024 Company Survey results. In terms of proportions in relation to 'within sector' sample, sectors that performed poorly included the 'transportation & storage' (4 of 6), 'human health & social work activities' (3 of 5), real estate (2 of 2) and construction (2 of 5). Evidently, 25.6 percent of companies reported lower sales volumes and most of these recorded lower revenues in the review period. Four (4) companies representing 3.0 percent of the total surveyed entities reported that their revenues in the review period were unchanged from the previous year.

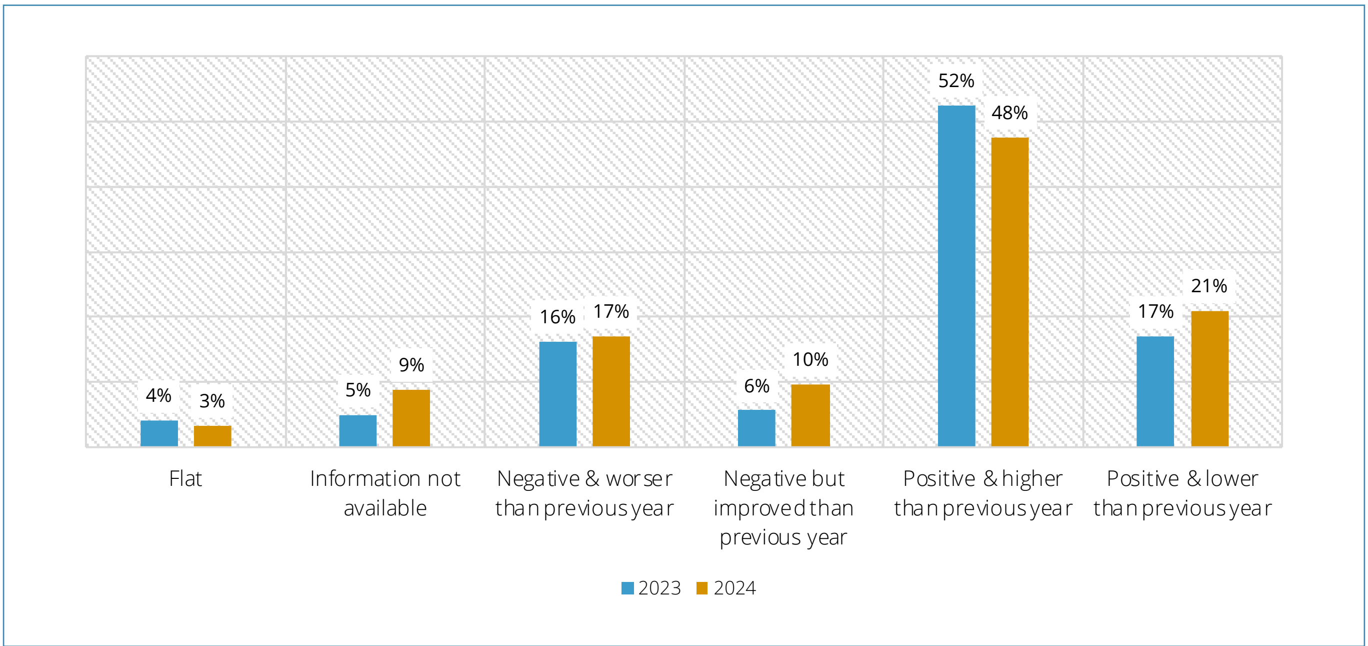
FIGURE 3: REVENUE PERFORMANCE BY SECTOR 2024



Source: Company Survey (2025)

In terms of profitability, 122 companies reported their performance on profits. Eighty-five (85) of these companies (69.7 percent) reported that they recorded a profit in the review period. Of these, fifty-nine (59) entities (48.4 percent) reported that their profits were higher than the previous year while twenty-six (26) entities (21.3 percent) noted that, while positive, their profit margins were lower than the previous year. On the contrary, thirty-three (33) entities (27.0 percent) reported losses in the bottom line. Of these, twenty-one (21) companies (17.2 percent) reported that their losses were worser than the previous year while twelve (12) companies (9.8 percent) noted an improvement in the loss position. Relative to the previous year, profitability trends worsened.

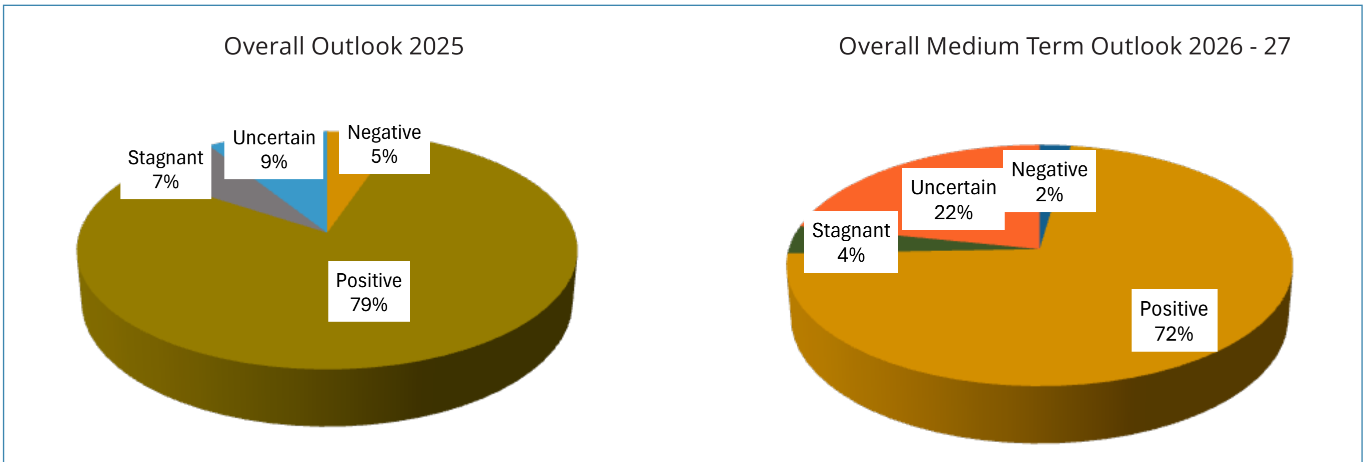
FIGURE 4: PROFITABILITY PERFORMANCE 2024



Source: Company Survey (2025)

In terms of short-term outlook, 105 of the 133 entities (78.9 percent) reported that they expect a positive outlook for 2025. Twelve (12) companies (9.0 percent) were uncertain of how they will perform in the short term while the proportion of companies that projected stagnation and negative growth stood at 6.8 percent and 5.3 percent respectively. For the medium-term (i.e., 2026 to 2027), ninety-six (96) companies (72.2 percent) envisaged positive outlook while a notable twenty-nine (29) entities (21.8 percent) reported that they were uncertain on the trajectory of their performance in the medium-term (i.e., 2026-2027). Eight companies (6 percent) reported that they either expect flat growth or negative performance in the medium term.

FIGURE 5: OVERALL OUTLOOK



Source: Company Survey (2025)

AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY

CROP PRODUCTION

Maize

In the 2024/25 growing season, maize production contracted by 1.7 percent to 73,638 MT, compared to 74,947 MT recorded in the previous season, driven by reduced area planted, climate-change induced erratic weather patterns as well as pest and disease infestations. The total hectarage under maize production fell slightly by 1.4 percent to 67,116 hectares (ha) down from 68,081 ha in 2023/24. The relatively modest contraction was attributable to a combination of factors. These included erratic weather patterns, characterised by periods of dry spells and flash floods, coupled with pest and disease outbreaks (i.e., infestation of fall army worm). As a result, the national maize yield also dipped marginally, falling by 0.4 percent from 1.101 MT per ha to 1.097 MT per ha, in the period. On a positive note, the government continued implementing farmer support initiatives such as the input subsidy program, the tractor hire program, as well as the commercial maize project through various stakeholders. In the short-to-medium term, maize production in anticipated to be on an upward trajectory, benefiting from expansions in area planted though contract-farming, farmer support initiatives such as the commercial maize program. In the long term, additional land is anticipated to become available from the Mkhondvo-Ngwavuma Water Augmentation Programme (MNWAP), where land has been set aside for maize production.

Cotton

Cotton production increased by 27 percent to 639 MT, in the 2023/24 season, compared to 503 MT in 2022/23. The growth in cotton production was primarily driven by a 7.5 percent increase in the area cultivated by large scale growers, to record 172 ha in 2023/24. In addition to the increased cotton area, cotton yields improved following the adoption of the genetically modified (GMO) cotton seed from South Africa.

On the contrary, the area under production for small scale growers contracted by 31.3 percent to 310 ha in 2023/24, from 451 ha in 2022/23. Noteworthy, early drought warning at the start of the 2023/24 season deterred most farmers from planting cotton. As such, the number of small-scale growers declined by 32.6 percent to 298 in 2023/24, from 442 in 2022/23. Small scale growers predominately utilised the GM cotton from India. Following the increase in production levels, the output from the cotton ginnery plant experienced a 15.7 percent growth, as lint volumes increased to 228 MT in 2023/24, from 197 MT in 2022/23. Similarly, fuzzy seed volumes increased by 14.2 percent to 273 MT, from 239 MT.

In the short-to-medium term, cotton production is expected to increase further by 46.9 percent to 939 MT in 2024/25, driven by the recovery in the area under cotton production by small growers. Hectarage under cultivation is expected to increase by 75.1 percent to 845 ha, benefiting from the 870 farmers registered in 2024/25. The anticipated increase in area planted would also benefit from the provision of free cotton seeds by the Eswatini Cotton Board.

Sugarcane

In the 2024/25 season, the hectarage under sugarcane cultivation grew slightly by 2.6 percent to 64,607 ha, up from 62,970 ha in 2023/24. Correspondingly, the area harvested increased marginally by 0.7 percent to 60,085 ha from 59,672 ha in 2023/24. The sugarcane yield measured in tons cane per hectare (TCH) improved from 87.37 in the previous year to be recorded at 90.40 in 2024/25. The slight improvement in area planted, as well as better yields translated to a 4.6 percent increase in sugarcane production, growing to 5,451,671 MT in 2024/25 from 5,213,699 MT in 2023/24. In the review period, small scale farmers were reported to be facing challenges, particularly with erratic weather patterns as well as pest and disease infestations. Sucrose production increased by 6.6 percent to 754,705 MT in 2024/25, growing from 707,970 MT in 2023/24.

Banana

Banana production recorded an increase in production volumes despite mixed performance amongst industry players. On the positive side, growth was driven by expansion in the area planted, with more hectarage coming under banana cultivation. Conversely, some producers continued to face supply side challenges, with the recovery from the severe storms of 2021, and 2023, proving to be protracted as replanting efforts progress gradually.

Banana production is anticipated to increase in the short-to-medium term, driven by planned expansions in the area planted.

Citrus

Citrus production volumes continued to contract in both the Highveld and the Lowveld, driven by a shift in consumer preference in major markets, coupled with erratic weatheritions. In the European Union (EU) market, demand patterns have diverged towards alternative citrus products, weighing on traditional exports. Meanwhile, global citrus prices experienced dramatic shocks as Brazil, the world's largest producer for citrus, faced supply disruptions from the citrus green disease, creating a supply deficit that pushed up prices by more than double, in the period.

In the medium term, citrus production volumes in the Lowveld are anticipated to recover. However, legacy challenges stemming from shifts in consumer preferences for citrus products are also likely to persist in the medium term, necessitating realignment to market demands. Meanwhile, the supply disruptions in Brazil are likely to keep citrus prices elevated.

ANIMAL PRODUCTION

Cattle

In 2024, the number of calves reflected a 4.2 percent decline, from 99,967 in 2023 to about 95,777. The drop in cattle calves was attributable to various factors, such as increased cattle deaths, as well as reduced grazing conditions affecting cattle fertility. Cattle deaths recorded a significant increase of 19.0 percent to 35,177 deaths from 29,564. The main causes for cattle mortality were accidents and diseases, with the growth in cattle deaths reported as an anomaly as few cattle died, in the previous year, due to good weather and grazing conditions. Cattle slaughters recorded a 2.9 percent decline, falling to 38,179 in 2024, from 39,332 the previous year, largely due to reduced availability for cattle for both commercial and home slaughters. Commercial cattle slaughter dropped by 4.1 percent from 16,960 in 2023 to 16,262 in 2024, equivalent to a carcass yield of 2,927.2 tonnes of beef. Home slaughters also declined by 2.0 percent from 22,372 in 2023 to 21,917 in 2024, equivalent to a carcass yield of 3,945.4 tonnes. As a result, the combined total beef production stood at 6,872.58 tonnes, reflecting a 2.9 percent slight decline from the 7,079.76 tonnes produced in the previous year.

Poultry

In 2024, domestic poultry production continued to suffer from supply chain disruptions stemming from the avian influenzas outbreak in South Africa. As a result, alternative sources for hatching eggs and chicks were sought, with eggs sourced from Brazil, via Mozambique. The number of day-old chicks (DOC) placed plummeted by 48.7 percent, falling from 15.2 million in 2023 to 7.8 million in 2024. Similarly, the number of birds slaughtered also fell by 40.2 percent, dropping from 13.2 million in 2023 to 7.9 million in 2024. Simultaneously, total chicken production also followed suit, declining by 22.2 percent to 17.104 million kilograms, in 2024. On the contrary, chicken exports grew by 17.3 percent in the period from 754,179 kgs in 2023 to 884,688 kgs.

Piggery

Despite the sustained ban on cloved and hoofed animals due to Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), local pork production thrived in the period under review. Total pork slaughters increased by 2.0 percent, increasing from 33,532 in 2023, to 34,209 in 2024. Consequently, domestic pork production increased by 3.0 percent, growing from 1,915 MT in 2023, to 1,973 MT in 2024. The country continued to implement its import substitution program, with no pork imports permitted. However, 462.26 MT of processed pork (sausages, bacon etc.) was imported to cover the local demand, during the review period. In 2024, 27.64 MT of pork were exported.

Raw Milk

The dairy herd declined marginally by 1.9 percent from 5,278 cows in 2023, to 5,179 in 2024. The decline was partially attributable to the inability to replace the breeding stock coupled with the effects of an aging herd. The number of dairy farmers fell by 1.6 percent from 699 farmers in 2023, to 688 farmers in 2024, on account of supply constraints in the herd. The domestic dairy industry continued to battle with the effects of the FMD in some parts of neighbouring Republic of South Africa (RSA) and domestically, inhibiting the ability to import cloved and hoofed animals. Contrastingly, domestic milk production grew marginally by 0.9 percent to 19.53 million litres in 2024/25, from 19.35 million litres in the previous period.

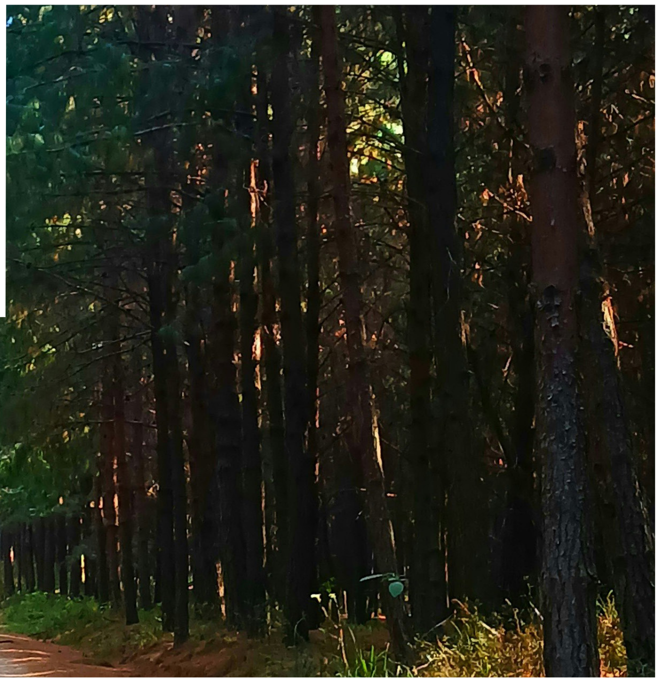
The increase in production volumes was driven by technical efficiencies adapted by industry players to boost productivity. Enhanced pasture management improved feed quality, which in turn raised the nutritional intake of the herd. Notably, the milk yield increased modestly by 8.6 percent from 10.22 litres to 11.1 litres per cow daily.

In the short-to-medium term, restrictions emanating from FMD are anticipated to remain. However, milk production is also anticipated to maintain its upward trajectory benefiting from improved efficiencies and access to financing which will drive productivity.

> In the 2024/25 season, the hectarage under sugarcane cultivation grew slightly by 2.6 percent to 64,607 ha, up from 62,970 ha in 2023/24.

FORESTRY

Two (2) companies were surveyed in the forestry sector in 2024 and both entities reported positive performance.



The robust performance in 2024 stemmed from a recovery in losses induced by supply disruption, due to the great woodchip fire incident at the NCT Richards Bay harbour, in RSA. Additionally, efficiency enhancing strategies were employed to boost production such as processing of trees in the forest and adaptation of newer harvesting methods.

In the short-to-medium term, forestry output is projected to grow due to increasing demand which has required some players to expand the area under cultivation, venture into value addition, as well as acquisition of new markets. Furthermore, price adjustments are also anticipated to drive growth in revenues.

MINING & QUARRY

In the period under review, coal production remained on an elevated trend, increasing by 25.2 percent from 393,328 MT in 2023 to 492,355 MT in 2024. The growth benefitted from an increase in the run of mine (ROM) locally, on lease area. However, the core yields were lower in 2024, due to intensifying geological constraints, as a result mining companies continued to import ROM from RSA to blend local coal and improve yields and meet demands for exports, in the review period.

Despite the high volumes mined during the year, the coal proceeds decreased due to a notable fall in anthracite coal prices. International coal prices were in part affected by tensions between the US and China that led to the slowdown in the demand for steel products. Evidently, the anthracite coal prices declined from approximately E4,000 per tonne in 2023 to average E3,200 in 2024, dampening the industry's financial performance. Gold production rose significantly by 59.7 percent to 36.9 kilograms (kg) in 2024, from the 23.1kg mined in the previous year, benefitting from improvements in mining expertise for the mineral.

There was an increase in the quarrying of stones in 2024, with volumes reported to have increased by 16.9 per cent to 187,154 MT from 160,117 MT in the previous year. As a result, revenues rose from E60.2 million to E77.3 million, depicting a growth of about 28.4 percent, between the two years. The observed growth benefitted from the ongoing construction works in the domestic economy, including irrigation canals that were built in the southern part of the country, Mpakeni dam construction, as well as other projects.

On other quarrying activities, a new product called green chert was reported to have been mined to the value of 6,000 MT between 2023 and 2024, following the award of a mining license to a Chinese owned company.

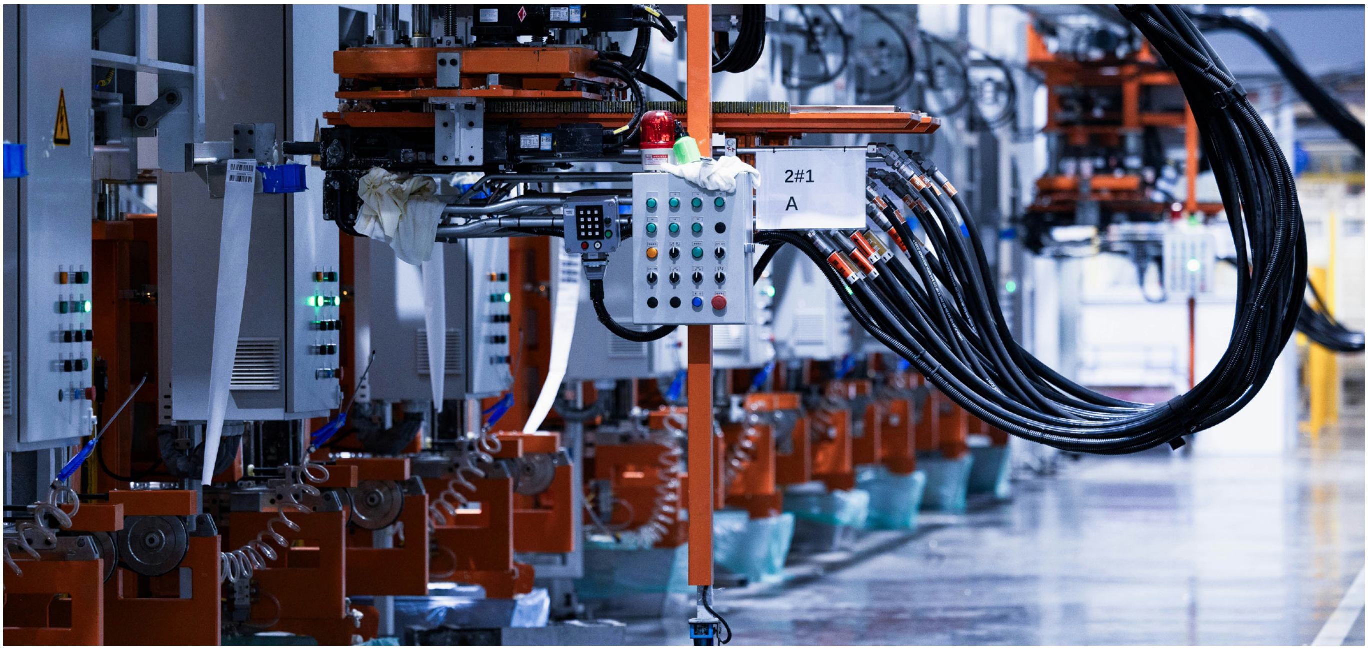
Prospectively, the mining industry is expected to remain robust. Coal production is forecasted to grow, driven by mine expansions, exploration of more crown lands and entrance of new additional players, though uncertainties in the steel industry and global prices persist. Quarried stone production is also expected to remain elevated driven by the peak of the Mpakeni dam construction and upcoming road activity i.e., Siphofaneni-Sithobela-Maloma-Nsoko (MR14), Maloma-Siphambanweni (MR21), and Sithobelweni-Hlathikhulu (MR25).

MANUFACTURING

In 2024, thirty-six (36) companies were surveyed from the manufacturing sector. Of these, 64 percent recorded an increase in production volumes, 31 percent posted a decline, while 5 percent did not share information on volumes. In line with the volume trends, revenues were positive for twenty-nine (29) companies, in the period under review. One (1) company reported flat growth in revenues, whist five (5) companies reported a decline. The positive performance in revenues reflected increased global demand, resilience against global competition, despite worsening supply chain disruptions, and ever-shifting consumer preferences.

Considering the positive performance in revenues recorded in the year, twenty-four (24) of the surveyed companies reported profits, where fifteen (15) companies posted higher profits year-on-year and nine (9) made profits that were lower than those of 2023. Two (2) companies reported unchanged movement in profits. Furthermore, seven (7) of the survey participants recorded losses in 2024, where three (3) posted better losses in the year and four (4) had worsened bottom lines when compared to 2023. The weakened exchange rate exacerbated input costs, which eroded company profits margins. Agro processors were not spared as local producers continued to struggle to satisfy industry input needs forcing producers to import.

The sector expressed positive expectations for the short-to-medium-term. At least twenty-four (24) of the surveyed manufactories posted a positive outlook on account of expansions and anticipated spinoffs from implementation of government projects and other private sector developments. At least nine (9) companies reported that they were either uncertain about the future, or maintained a negative outlook. These companies were quite apprehensive about rising input costs, the weak exchange rate, unpredictable weather conditions and global instability.



Manufacture of Food & Beverages

Out of sixteen (16) companies in the food and beverages manufacturing subsector, ten (10) reported an increase in output, five (5) produced lower volumes and one (1) did not provide information on production volumes. Entities that recorded a decrease in production volumes were mainly in the agro-processing space, and were affected by erratic weather conditions, the outbreak of the foot and mouth disease (FMD) and challenges sourcing some inputs. Positive performance in revenues was reported in all except one company in this subsector. Eleven (11) of the surveyed entities within this subsector were profitable in the review period. Of these, seven (7) recorded higher profits year-on-year, three (3) recorded lower profits while one (1) company maintained an unchanged position in profits. On the contrary, three (3) companies recorded losses in 2024, which were worser than those recorded in the preceding year. Two (2) companies failed to provide profits data for the year under review. Manufacturers of food and beverages are positive in their expectations for the short-to-medium-term, as they continue to diversify into new products to meet client needs, and secure new markets in the continent and beyond.

Textiles and Wearing Manufacturing

Textile manufacturers reported mixed performances in the year; of the six (6) surveyed entities, two (2) recorded improved production volumes as a result of increased client demand. The four (4) entities that produced less year-on-year, faced competition from Chinese producers, logistical delays when sourcing inputs, and a shrinking South African market. Revenue performance was split equally, with three (3) companies recording a year-on-year increase and the other three (3) surveyed textile manufacturers posting a decrease in revenues in the review period. Market diversification remained the key strategy to sustaining the sector amidst the rising competition from Asian suppliers. Five (5) of the surveyed companies were able to record profits in 2024, with three (3) recording higher year-on-year profits and two (2) recording narrower profits in comparison to 2023. This performance was enhanced by cost cutting measures through increased efficiencies, automating some processes and fluctuating staff in accordance with production pressure. Only one (1) of the textile producers surveyed registered losses in the year. The industry outlook for the short-to-medium term is positive, anchored around securing new business and new opportunities presented by the U.S tariff differential that has increased competitiveness for the local textile industry as the country has a relatively low tariff compared to its peers.

Other Manufacturing

'Other manufacturing' refers to manufacturing excluding 'food & beverage' and 'textile manufacturing'. In 2024, the Team was able to meet manufacturers of construction materials, handmade products, and appliances, among others. Fourteen (14) companies were survey participants in the year, with twelve (12) registering higher year-on-year production volumes, whilst two (2) produced less in comparison to 2023. Similarly, twelve (12) companies reported an increase in revenues, one (1) reported flat revenue whilst another posted lesser year-on-year revenues in the year. Profitability in the sector was impressive, as ten (10) of the companies (i.e. 71 percent) were profitable in 2024. Of these, five (5) recorded higher profits, four (4) recorded lower profits, and one (1) had a bottom line that remained unchanged from the previous year. Three (3) companies reported losses in the review period. Two (2) companies reported improved losses and one (1) posted a worser loss in comparison to 2023. One (1) company did not provide information on profits in this category. The sector outlook is positive, benefitting from the implementation of government and private-sector projects as well as strong global demand.

ELECTRICITY & WATER SERVICES

Electricity

Two (2) companies in the energy sector were surveyed including the energy regulator. Total electricity generation dropped by 12.9 percent to reach 280.61 Gigawatt per hour (GWh) in 2024/25, due to relatively drier weather conditions compared to the previous year. Electricity consumption, on the other hand, marginally increased from 1,172.86 GWh in 2023/24 to 1,180.76 GWh in 2024/25. To compensate for the shortfall, electricity imports subsequently grew by 3.7 percent to 1,084.01 GWh.

Electricity tariffs for the 2024/25 financial year were initially proposed at 29 percent and 26 percent for 2025/26. The final approved tariff by the Government, however, was significantly lower at 8.0 percent and 7.0 percent in the respective financial years. Additionally, the contractual agreement with Eskom was extended to an additional ten (10) years.

Prospects for the sub-sector hinge on the successful implementation of planned projects. These include Upper Maguga (10MW) with a contract value of E470.0 million, Lower Maguga (23MW), Lower Maguduza 13.5MW estimated at E1.200 billion implemented through an Independent Power Producer (IPP) and currently at construction phase. Other projects include 75MW solar projects valued at E2.900 billion and 110MW in biomass projects which will be undertaken by IPPs. At full implementation, these projects will ensure the country attains self-sufficiency in electricity supply.

Water

In 2024, one company was surveyed and reported a positive shift in water management efficiency as production volumes increased. Treated water volumes sold rose by 8.3 percent to 15.6 million cubic metres in 2024, from 14.4 million cubic metres sold in the previous year. Water loses were reduced from 45 percent in 2023 to 42 percent in 2024, signalling an improvement in the company's ability to manage resources and reduce waste. In addition, the was an increase in the number of connections (additional 242 customer connections), reflecting effective implementation of initiatives aimed at increasing clean water access across the country.

In the short-to-medium term, water connections are envisaged to continue rising, benefiting from continued implementation of projects. Ongoing projects include the Eswatini Water Supply and Sanitation Access Project, valued at E783.8 million, the Manzini Region Water and Sanitation Project, valued at E825.0 million, the Ezulwini Water and Sanitation project, valued at E435.5 million, and the Lomahasha-Namaacha Water Supply Project, valued at E238.6 million.

CONSTRUCTION

In the construction sector, five (5) companies were surveyed in 2025, including the regulator. In the period under review, the sector observed mixed performances with three (3) of these companies reporting a reduction in revenue. The decline in revenue was mainly driven by prolonged fiscal challenges, which affected the quantum of projects available and the implementation rate of publicly financed projects. Despite this setback, two (2) of these entities achieved surpluses in 2024 on account of cost containment measures and timely payments of projects. On the other hand, one company reported an increase in revenue, resulting from innovative strategies to scout for projects in the private sector. In terms of regulation, the number of registered contractors decreased by 9.9 percent in 2024 compared to 2023. However, revenue from penalties surged, reflecting improved monitoring and compliance enforcement by the regulator.

In the short-to-medium term, the sector players reflected mixed views. Some companies remain positive as they hope to benefit from the ongoing and upcoming mega public and private projects such as the Strategic Oil Reserve, Siphofaneni-Sithobela-Maloma-Nsoko (MR14) and Maloma-Siphambanweni (MR21) roads project, Five-Star Hotel project, Mkhondvo-Ngwavuma Water Augmentation Project (phase 1B), as well as Phase 1 of the Central Bank building project, amongst others. However, in the short-to-medium term, other sector players were pessimistic due to regulatory challenges and increased competition from foreign contractors.

WHOLESALE & RETAIL

Thirteen (13) companies were surveyed in the wholesale and retail sector, and seven (7) of those performed well in volume terms in the review period when compared to 2023. One (1) entity recorded flat growth, whilst four (4) reported a decline in sales volumes in the period. For one (1) company it was difficult to determine quantity movements. Revenue performance for the thirteen (13) companies surveyed was as follows; ten (10) of the survey participants registered increases, one (1) maintained sales receipts similar to the previous year and two (2) companies observed reduced revenues. Profits for all the surveyed companies were positive, as seven (7) companies reported profits higher than 2023 figures and six (6) companies posted lower margins in 2024.

Car Dealerships

Four (4) car dealerships participated in the survey in 2024, and three (3) reported improved sales volumes in the year and one (1) posted a decline. Positive performance was supported by tendering to Government, coupled with the sale of smaller model cars to households. However, local demand remained constrained due to squeezed disposable income, elevated interest rates, and subdued economic growth. Revenues were similar to volume trends, with three (3) companies posting higher revenues in 2024, and one (1) company posting a decline. All the retailers were profitable in the year, with three (3) posting higher profits and one (1) posting lesser profits when compared to 2023. Car dealerships are positive about the short-to-medium-term, as they already have orders in the pipeline from Government, the private sector and households.

Fuel Retailers

Three (3) fuel retailers and the regulator participated in the survey exercise in 2024, reporting a positive performance for the year, in both volumes and revenues. Three (3) of the interviewed entities reported better volumes sold and revenues in the year. One entity recorded a decline in volumes sold and similarly, one (1) retailer recorded a decline in revenues for the year. All the entities surveyed were profitable in 2024, with 50 per cent reporting improved profits and the other half reporting lower profits compared to 2023 numbers. Sentiments for the short-to-medium-term are positive as fuel retailers reported to have plans for expansion, spreading their footprint around the country. Government projects are at the helm of sector growth expectations.

Supermarkets

Three (3) supermarkets were surveyed in 2024, where one (1) recorded growth in volumes sold, the other a reduction and one (1) was unable to provide data on the indicator. Regardless of the mixed performance in volumes sold in the year, improved revenues were reported by all the surveyed entities, as they invested in new stores, employed vigorous marketing strategies, and made price adjustments to achieve growth in the year. All three (3) entities recorded profits, although, for two (2) of the supermarkets the profits were lower than in 2023, owing to high salary and commodity costs.

Wholesalers

Two (2) wholesale companies participated in the survey in 2024, recording diverging trends in sales volumes. Revenue recorded was better for one (1) wholesaler in the year than in 2023, while the revenue for the other entity shrank. Both wholesalers were profitable in the review period, where one (1) was able to generate profits that were higher in 2024, against 2023, whilst the other reported lower profits. The outlook for the two entities was mixed, as one (1) is optimistic about the future and the other projected flat growth in the short-term to medium-term, hinging on anticipated consumers' demand.

TRANSPORT & STORAGE

Air Transport

The commercial aviation industry reported positive performance in 2025, driven by increasing demand for air transport and improved strategic direction to enhance operational capacity, ensuring sufficient response to the increasing demand. This was evidenced by a 31.9 percent increase in passenger volumes in the period. Cargo operations remained on a positive trajectory, which was reflected by increased volumes and revenue. While the sector benefited from aggressive pricing adjustments implemented during the period, this led to a divergence in financial outcomes among the players. One (1) player reported a profitable year, capitalizing on strong demand in its primary routes, whilst the

other company faced significant profitability pressures. The outlook is envisaged to be largely positive, justified by anticipation of the addition of new routes, continued strengthening of demand, as well as diversification. Geopolitical tensions as well as trade policy risks remain as key risk factors.

Land Transport

In the 2025 survey, two (2) companies were surveyed under land transport, with one (1) company surveyed under the rail subsector and one (1) company surveyed under road transport.

The rail subsector reported a negative performance as the company contended with a multitude of challenges on account of adverse weather patterns, derailments on main corridors as well as shortage of rolling stock. This was further exacerbated by regional socio-political instability in Mozambique in the last quarter of the year causing further suppression of business operations. Trade performance was mixed among different commodity groups, where on one hand exports showed resilience, supported by diversification and recovery of some commodities whilst on the other hand, import operations faced constrained volumes of some commodities with other import commodities completely cut-off. These developments were a result of a combination of changes to regulatory frameworks and logistical inefficiencies. Containerized cargo and transit traffic depicted volatility owing to socio-political unrest in the region.

Under road freight activities, 2024 was reported to be a tough year for the company. Freight volumes declined as a result of changes in tax controls, leading to significant declines in imports of fuel volumes. Cement volumes declined due to intensifying competition in the market, whilst agricultural haulage depicted lower volumes as output suffered effects of erratic weather patterns and rising operational expenses. Despite the fall in revenues, profitability improved due to a significant containment on costs for the surveyed entity.

Warehousing and Courier Activities

The warehousing and support activities for transportation subsector was represented by a single company, which reported a negative performance in 2024. The downturn was a result of changes in client's procurement strategies, which negatively affected key performance indicators including revenues. However, declining expenses as well as strategies to generate additional income cushioned profitability outcomes. In the courier subsector, the surveyed company reported 2024 to have been a good year, regardless of the regional instability that threatened business operations. Resilience was made possible through high client retention, as well as augmenting efforts towards improved operational performance initiatives. As a result, the company realised growth in business activities across a significant portion of their business divisions. The efforts implemented translated to a favourable financial performance evident in revenue and pre-tax profits strengthening in the year. The medium-term is envisaged to be broadly positive, with the company maintaining resilience due to the non-cyclical nature of demand, continued improvements in the company's operational capacity, and the nature of the business, which presents operational stability.

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

A total of five (5) companies, and one (1) regulator were surveyed from the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. All five (5) entities provided information on volume, revenue, and profitability indicators.

In terms of volumes, there were two indicators provided namely, voice and data. Three (3) companies were able to report on call minutes volumes, wherein two (2) reported a decrease while one reported an increase in 2024. For the two companies that reported a decrease, it was attributable to the increased customer uptake of other web-based applications, such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, then what they offer, as well as increased competition in the space. One (1) company recorded an increase in call minutes emanating from vigorous marketing strategies, network expansions (increasing geographical base stations in rural areas), and growing demand for an 'all-in-one' product, by customers.

In terms of volumes, the ICT industry reported mixed performances in 2024, similar to those reported in 2023. Following the completion of the staggered wholesale and retail price reduction in 2023, the industry has had to withstand vigorous competition from legacy technologies, as well as the entrant of a new player introducing a new product in the market.

On the second volume indicator (i.e., data), all five (5) companies surveyed reported growth in data consumption. The roll-out of theft and vandalism proof technology (e.g., fibre, and wireless technologies) has immensely supported the volume growth in 2024. The growth in data volumes was also supported by the installation of additional base stations across the country and the introduction of a new satellite technology, which improved bandwidth availability.

All five (5) companies reported information on revenue performance. Two (2) companies reported negative revenue performance emanating from price competitiveness, coupled with a decrease in the customer base as customers shifted between different providers for variated service offering. One (1) company reported flat revenues. On the other hand, two (2) companies reported positive revenue performance benefitting from increased network coverage, lower ICT-related product pricing, as well as customer diversification. Notably, all companies surveyed in the ICT sector recognized the impact of increased competition within the sector, during the year, which inhibited price increases, thus affecting timely improvements in their invested technologies.

All surveyed companies reported a positive outlook, conditional on the ability to restore services on copper-theft affected areas, continuous roll-out of newer technologies to customers, network upgrades, additional base stations, among other company-specific infrastructure investments. The sustained availability of robust ICT infrastructure will be a key driver of economic dynamism. It facilitates the growth of other sectors critically dependent on technology, such as the development and scaling of FinTech platforms and a wide array of other digital solutions.

The regulator reported that revenue growth in the industry slowed down, constrained by intense competition, as multiple entities share the same customer base. The regulator also noted the growing Internet Service Providers (ISPs) space, having awarded three (3) new licenses in the review period, increasing the total number of ISPs to twenty-one (21). Despite the increased licenses, ICT-related activities are still below expectations, translating to inactive licensed ISPs. In the short-to-medium term, the regulator expects gradual growth of the sector due to the introduction of new products. Furthermore, the regulator expects wholesale prices to remain unchanged to foster continuous competition among the players. Also, the regulator suspended the issuing of ISP licences in the short term.

REAL ESTATE

Two (2) real estate companies were surveyed, and they both reported a negative performance, reflected in declining revenues and profits. Contrasting dynamics were observed on property sales, wherein one (1) company reported a decline, whilst the other recorded a slight improvement. One (1) of the two companies recorded an increase in rental income, supported mainly by upward rental price adjustments. The other company reported a decline in rental and sales commission, as rates remained the same in the reference period. An increase in the informal market caused by regulatory challenges, was cited as a contributor to the declining property sales and rental commissions. Property transactions undertaken through the informal market increased, particularly on properties on Swazi Nation Land (SNL). It has also been observed that some property transactions are facilitated by banks, while others are done by property owners to avoid related costs, thus reducing the market share for real sector agents.

On the outlook, one (1) company anticipates a positive trajectory, benefitting from the implementation of new focused strategies and initiatives, while the other company projects a steady outlook, on account of low disposable incomes that impact on affordability, dampening performance of the property market.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The public administration sector consists of municipalities and other government agencies. In 2025, there were five (5) entities surveyed, consisting of four (4) municipalities and one (1) public enterprise. Notably, all the entities reported increases in revenues in 2024 compared to the preceding year. The improved revenue collection for the municipalities was mainly attributable to an increase in rates collection, largely as a result of intensified efforts to recover outstanding rates. Two (2) of the four (4) municipalities indicated that they were engaged in infrastructural development in 2024, complemented by private sector projects. Some of the municipal infrastructural investments included the repair and installation of streetlights, road construction and upgrades, as well as the upgrades of informal settlements. On profitability, one (1) of the four (4) municipalities, was reported to be in deficit driven by higher costs of delivering services and maintenance.

In the short-to-medium term, the public sector entities reflected mixed views. Of the surveyed municipalities, three (3) indicated an optimistic view as they expect to leverage on the new private investments which are expected to boost their revenues. However, one (1) municipality was pessimistic on account of the fiscal challenges which hinder the implementation of infrastructural projects. The government agency was also positive as they expect to review a number of domestic and international mergers, in view of increasing cross-border investments.

HEALTH & EDUCATION

A total of eight (8) entities were surveyed under the health and education sectors in 2025, of which five (5) were health institutions and three (3) were educational institutions. Of the 5 health institutions, three (3) reported increases in revenue in 2024 relative to 2023. The improvement in revenue during the period was mainly attributable to a rise in government subventions as well as the increase in the offering of special medical services. Two (2) entities reported a decrease in revenues in the review period, mainly driven by patients' medical aid-related challenges as well as delayed government payments which worsened the entities' cashflow challenges. Despite the positive performance on revenue, some of these entities reported losses due to an uptick in operational costs.

Health institutions were optimistic about the short-to-medium term. Some of the factors driving this optimism include the prolonged national health crisis, which presents opportunities to provide affordable health services to the public. Additionally, other players in the sector expect to benefit from the Phalala Fund referrals by the government and leverage on the scarce medical specialist skills to reduce referrals to neighbouring countries while others hope to attract more clients that use medical aid cover.

In the education sector, all three (3) institutions reported a negative performance in 2024 compared to 2023. Enrolment was reported to have declined during this period on account of a reduction in government scholarships for some programs as well as financial challenges, which increased attrition among the self-sponsored students. The reduced enrolments, coupled with lower tuition fees, in turn contributed to a reduction in revenue for the sector players. Therefore, in view of the higher costs incurred in providing education, they recorded losses in the period under review. In the short-to-medium term entities within the education sector remain positive as they believe that enrolments will increase mainly in line with the continued roll-out of new programs. These developments are anticipated to increase revenues and profits. Other players hope that their application for the review of tuition fees will drive growth in revenue in the medium term.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Two (2) companies were surveyed, reporting good performance in the period. Revenue for both companies increased, driven by high demand of audit services as a result of mandatory 3-year rotation amongst service providers. One (1) company reported an increase in advisory services. Profitability surged for one company, while the other company experienced a decline. The decline was on account of increased costs associated with the high training costs of new staff following a high staff turnover in the period.
The surveyed companies reported a mixed outlook. One (1) company presented a pessimistic view, mainly as a result of funding uncertainties and proposed funding cuts by the US. This policy affected some major clients that were financed by the United States of America under the United States AID (USAID) in particular. Moreover, the mandatory policy on rotation of contracts is expected to continue negatively affect performance of auditing firms. On the other hand, the reported optimism was fuelled by confidence in a stable client base, as well as cost reduction measures that are planned for the medium-to-long-term.

TOURISM

Information was gathered from a survey of eight (8) companies, and the regulator. The regulator reported that the tourism sector is still on a recovery path from the impact of COVID-19, with an increase of 14.5 percent in tourism arrivals when compared to the previous year. A total of 964,361 visits were recorded in 2024, remaining below pre-COVID- 19 levels of approximately 1.2 million arrivals. Notable increases in visits from neighbouring countries; South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, were observed during the year under review, while Malawi, Lesotho, and Botswana have emerged as significant markets, with each country recording over 50 per cent growth year-on-year. France led the European market on international arrivals, followed by the Netherlands, the USA, Germany, and the UK, indicating stability in the country's traditional overseas markets. Growth in arrivals was also supported by the operations of a new player in the industry, which have enhanced the ease of inbound tourism, with the Harare route outperforming other routes, primarily driven by business travel opposed to leisure travel. There is a notable increase in Air Bed and Breakfast's (Air BnB), which are not yet regulated.

All establishments surveyed recorded positive performance compared to the previous year, though at varying levels, with three (3) either remaining below pre-COVID-19 level or below set targets. All companies reported increases in revenues while (6) six companies recorded profits. Conferencing remained the major driver of growth in the sector, followed by accommodation, restaurants and bars. Rigorous marketing initiatives, particularly those facilitated by the regulator, led to the resurgence of bus tours. Three (3) companies cited national and cultural events as a contributor to their positive performance, attracting both inbound and domestic tourism.

Regarding day visitors, three (3) companies reported an increase owing to targeted packages and strategies, while one (1) company reported a decline despite efforts to attract local customers. The other four (4) establishments did not report on this line. A common challenge highlighted by the entities related to utilities, particularly the high cost of electricity, which continued to be a major headwind confronting the sector, thus reducing profit margins.

A positive outlook is expected in the medium-to-long term, with all establishments putting in place strategies to enhance performance. However, the external headwinds like US policy on foreign aid continue to cause uncertainties as a number of establishments benefitted from conferencing funded by donor financed NGOs.

FINANCIAL SECTOR

Banking Sector

All five (5) banks, including a building society, were surveyed in 2025. Total revenue reported by four (4) banks, rose by 8.9 per cent to E3.974 billion in 2024. One (1) bank recorded a decline in revenue stemming from a contraction in the loan book. The increase in revenue was buoyed by a notable growth in both interest and non-interest income. Interest income benefitted from an increase in loans and advances to individuals, and businesses. The industry also benefited from the favourable high-interest rate environment, with the discount rate reaching a high of 7.5 per cent between January and August 2024, and downward adjustments only noted in the latter part of the year.

All banks reported growth in non-interest income during the year under review. This follows an increase in fees and commissions, with growth in digital products, card withdrawals, lending commissions, an increased footprint, in line with enhanced representation and outreach made through Automated Teller Machines (ATM's), and increased point of sale (POS).

The performance for the loan book was mixed, with four (4) banks reporting good growth driven by business from the agricultural sector, particularly the sugar-cane industry, large corporates, manufacturing sector, fast moving goods, and small & medium enterprises (SMEs). However, the one (1) bank that reported a decline in the loan book, was negatively affected by the clearing of some loans, with a slow replacement ratio. Across the surveyed banks, the mortgage loan portfolio was reported to be declining, on a year-on-year basis. This was as a result of a revision in the residential pricing in scheme agreements for two (2) banks, which made the loans expensive and resulted in a decline in loan uptake.

The industry also reported a decline in the uptake of personal unsecured loans, owing to job losses, retrenchments from companies linked to construction activity, and poor performance of the SMEs. Two (2) of the surveyed banks reported a slow-down in demand from the haulage logistics business, mainly that is linked to coal activity with heightened pressure on borrowers and an increase in defaults.

The quality of the loan book was mixed across the surveyed banks, with three (3) reporting notable declines in non-performing loans (NPL's), and the other two (2) banks reporting a worsening position. Improvements benefitted from a stance to pursue quality business, improved collection efficiencies, system improvements, and implementation of good risk management practises. On the negative, NPLs were reported to be fuelled by Government funded projects (which are riddled with problems of delayed payments), a strain from the property and rental business, a struggling transport and haulage sector, as well as effects of climate change on agriculture and forestry sectors.

On the liabilities side, four (4) out of five (5) banks reported deposits while one (1) bank did not report. The four (4) banks registered improvements in deposits, with data provided depicting an average growth of 8.4 per cent during the year under review, despite the challenging financial and economic environment. Increased activity was noted across most of the transactional accounts, though two (2) banks reported that demand for call and savings products was increasing at a slower rate, as clients are observed to be favouring different placement options. Fixed deposits were highlighted to be on the high side as banks were offering higher returns in line with the elevated interest rates, which created an appetite among its clients. Four (4) banks reported a profit averaging 10.2 per cent, during the reference period, whilst one (1) bank recorded a worsening loss.

The financial sector is projected to remain robust in the short-to-medium term, with quality lending envisaged for the agriculture, and construction sectors with the aim to also reduce NPLs across the sector. The commercial and retail portfolios across the banking industry also reported plans to intensify efforts to increase the client base, which will include poaching from the local asset management subsector by offering competitive rates. The positive outlook reported by the sugar industry, works on the Mkhondvo-Ngwavuma dam construction project, and strategic oil reserve, together with prospective projects in the energy sector, cemented the optimism of business for the banking sector. Improved efficiencies and continued ICT infrastructure to support reliable systems for better customer experience also remain a target for the financial sector. Moreover, the industry expressed eagerness towards the full implementation of the Eswatini Payment Switch (EPS).

Non-Banking

This sector covers four (4) sub-sectors inclusive of insurance, pension funds, asset managers, and other non-bank financial institutions.

Insurance

A total of five (5) companies were visited during the 2025 company survey under the insurance sub-sector. Overall performance was reported to be positive, with differing magnitudes and dynamics within the non-life (short-term) and life (long-term) policy portfolios. Depicting a robust industry, regardless of strained disposable incomes in the domestic economy, all five (5) entities recorded growth in membership, total revenue and gross premiums collected. Four (4) out of the five (5) entities surveyed reported total revenue to have increased by 13.8 per cent to E1.683 billion in 2024, relative to E1.479 billion in 2023. Industry players implemented aggressive marketing strategies for their products, lowered premiums as means to target even the lower income band and improved efficiencies of the services offered to the public, resulting in an increase in new clients.

Three (3) companies conveyed that short-term policies were the main driver for industry growth, particularly insurance for motor vehicles, industry players implemented aggressive marketing strategies for their products, lowered premiums as means to target even the lower income band and improved efficiencies of the services offered to the public. One (1) of the industry players reported an upsurge in premiums from the ongoing construction activity, through the required bond guarantees. Moreover, two (2) of the companies involved in the health sector highlighted the notable growth of the products in that space, and the positive trajectory in membership, which also benefitted from the entrance of newer and affordable products. Two (2) companies mainly focused on life insurance products, indicated muted performance, which was due to competition within industry, especially for the group insurance schemes, together with effect of annuities. Policy surrenders were reported to have been on a declining trend, benefiting from efforts made by the industry to encourage customers to maintain their policies till maturity.

Claims were indicated to be on the high-side for both short term and long-term insurance. On short-term, large claims emanated from motor-vehicle accidents, fire and storm damages, and health related claims. On the other hand, long-term claims were significant on funeral and group life covers. Notwithstanding the above, industry players reported that claim containment strategies were in place (on a continuous basis) to improve the net premium position. Evidently, premiums collected grew at a faster pace than the rise in claims translating to double-digit growth in profits for reporting entities in the period under review.

The surveyed insurance companies were optimistic in the short-to-medium term's performance, with a high anticipation for growth in revenues, premiums, and maintaining recorded surpluses. Envisaged growth momentum is set to benefit from revamping some products in the market, particularly in life and health insurance, coupled with innovation from the reinsurance space specific to developing products tailored for the local market. Continuous investments in digital products were noted to be the core anchor for growth of the insurance industry. In addition, it was reported that the proposed insurance bill presents an opportunity for the industry in terms of driving growth in the medium term. On a negative note, the uncertainty around the United States (US) funding cuts and USAID funding for the ARV programme remains a negative risk for the industry.

Pension and Retirement Funds

The survey team visited two (2) retirement funds during the 2025 company survey exercise, who reported overall positive performance though with differing magnitudes. For both entities, total revenue was relatively positive, driven by stronger investment income benefiting from a strong property portfolio in the domestic economy. Exceptional performance was also noted for the RSA investment portfolio, which recorded double-digit growth, benefiting from currency gains and markets performing well during the review period. Moreover, the strong revenue growth also benefitted from increased contributions for both entities, mainly driven by upward revision of statutory contributions for both players, and an increase in membership for one player. On the downside, the offshore portfolio's performance was below benchmark, negatively affected by the uncertainties posed by the US tariffs and other global economic instabilities. One (1) player reported growth of membership, benefiting from implemented strategies aimed at increasing registration by companies in smaller sectors. The other player's membership numbers were reported to have declined, owing to heightened retirement rates relative to a declining replacement ratio. Similarly, performance was mixed in terms of benefits paid out. Both surveyed entities recorded operating surpluses during the review period, benefiting from investment gains together with market asset valuations.

The short-to-medium term outlook for the industry was reported to be positive, though engulfed by the uncertainties surrounding the US policies with its associated impacts on global and other portfolios outside of Eswatini from the investment side. For both entities, the outlook in terms of membership and contributions is also highly dependent on the outcome of the proposed conversion of a provident fund to a pension fund.

Asset Management

In the asset managers sub-sector, four (4) companies were surveyed, all reporting strong double-digit growth in investment performance in assets under management in 2024. This growth was primarily driven by improved global investor sentiment, stemming from positive economic developments at the global, regional, and domestic levels. Post-US elections of November 2024, equities reacted favourably to the US tariff adjustments and deregulation policies, which contributed to a rise in offshore bond yields. Regionally, increased investor confidence was bolstered by South Africa's 2024 elections, which enhanced fiscal stability - evidenced by the Government of National Unity (GNU) position. Also, the easing load-shedding challenges supported a recovery for most companies bolstering their share values in the equity market. Domestically, the subsector benefited from a high-interest rate environment, supporting robust investment returns.

In terms of revenue performance, three (3) out of the four (4) entities reported data on revenue. These entities realized growth in revenue on account of an increase in commission fees received, coupled with the good performance observed in the growth in assets under management. Profitability results were mixed among the three (3) entities that disclosed figures: two (2) entities posted gains in 2024, fuelled by revenue increases, while the third saw profits drop due to falling revenue amid rising costs.

The short-to-medium-term outlook, however, remains mixed. The first quarter of 2025 proved challenging, impacted by interest rate cuts in South Africa and China, along with shifts in US trade policy including tariffs implemented in March 2025. Looking further ahead, asset managers are optimistic about sustained profitability through maintaining existing business lines and enhancing product offerings for their current client base. The positive outlook is further strengthened by ongoing digitization initiatives aimed at improving capital-raising activities within Eswatini.

EMPLOYMENT

The analysis of employment trends for the period under review was conducted using a pooled cross-sectional sample of 145 companies. The year 2022 was designated as the base year for all comparative analyses. A carry-forward imputation method was applied for missing data from the 2025 Company Surveys. For companies that did not report their 2025 employment figures, the values from their 2024 Survey responses were used as a proxy, with the assumption of no change in headcount, unless stated qualitatively.

A forward imputation technique was utilized for newly added companies in the 2025 Survey that lacked prior employment data, unless the company is a new entrant in the Eswatini business landscape, altogether. These companies' current employment data was assumed to represent their historical headcount, or it was adjusted based on supplementary qualitative information provided. This approach ensures a consistent dataset for longitudinal analysis, although it introduces a potential for bias, due to the imputation of constant values.

The final dataset, comprising the pooled sample, provides a comprehensive basis for analysing employment dynamics across the surveyed companies.

Analysis of the pooled sample indicated that employment levels rose by 3.6 percent in 2024. The main contributors to the growth were 'industry' and 'services' sectors. The 'industry' employment rose by 3.0 percent and contributed 1.7 percentage points to the overall growth. Within the 'industry' sector, growth emanated from the 'construction' (9.0 percent), and 'manufacturing' (2.8 percent) subsectors, while 'mining' and 'utilities' subsectors contracted by 3.6 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively.

The services sector grew by 5.2 percent, contributing 1.3 percentage points to the overall employment growth. Services that hired more people in 2024 were 'wholesale & retail' (15.9 percent), 'government' (6.6 percent), 'tourism' (4.5 percent), 'financial services' (2.1 percent), and 'human health services' (2.5 percent), among others. On the contrary, employment receded on the 'education' (-2.1 percent), and 'ICT (-3.7 percent) subsectors, in the review period.

Employment in 'agriculture & forestry' sector increased by 3.3 percent to record 11,197 in 2024, contributing 0.6 of a percentage point to the overall growth. The growth recorded in the sector mainly emanated from 'growing of crops,' and 'forestry' activities.
In the short-term, the expected growth in employment levels is not broad-based, but rather concentrated within a few key sectors. Though the proportion of companies that plan to increase employment rose to 47.4 percent in the 2025 Survey, from 40.3 percent in the 2024 Survey, the magnitude of growth in employment levels is minimal. Evidently, employment levels from the pooled sample are expected to grow by a meagre 0.8 percent in 2025, with mixed developments across sectors. The 'industry' sector is expected to contract by 0.6 percent, contributing -0.3 of a percentage point to the overall growth.

Notably, the mining subsector is expected to contract by 39.4 percent, owing to challenges faced in the ferrochrome industry in RSA, that has led to closures of some companies in the steel industry in RSA, the main buyers for local anthracite coal. Thus, retrospectively, the weak external demand has led to production cutbacks in domestic mining. In addition, the construction subsector projects to shed 20.3 percent of jobs, on account of completion of projects, and competition with foreign construction companies that have been awarded works in mega projects. On a positive note, employment levels are expected to rise in the agriculture and forestry subsector mainly on crops production (sugarcane and banana) as well as forestry related activities. In addition, the manufacturing sector will also add more jobs mainly of food processing and textile & wearing apparel subsectors. The 'wholesale & retail' sector is expected to grow modest at 1.5 percent, a slowdown from 15.9 percent in the previous year.

TABLE 2: EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

Sector	Number of employees			Growth Rates (GR)		Contributions to GR	
	2023	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025
Agriculture & Forestry	10,841	11,197	11,662	3.3%	4.2%	0.6%	0.8%
Industry	32,917	33,906	33,717	3.0%	-0.6%	1.7%	-0.3%
Services	14,970	15,742	15,944	5.2%	1.3%	1.3%	0.3%
Total Headcount	**58,728**	**60,845**	**61,323**	**3.6%**	**0.8%**	**3.6%**	**0.8%**

Source: Company Survey (2025)

TABLE 3: EMPLOYMENT BY SUB-SECTOR

Sector	Number of employees			Growth Rates		Contributions to Growth Rates	
	2023	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025
Agriculture & forestry	10,841	11,197	11,662	3.3%	4.2%	0.6%	0.8%
Construction	2,495	2,719	2,166	9.0%	-20.3%	0.4%	-0.9%
Education	1,140	1,116	1,073	-2.1%	-3.9%	0.0%	-0.1%
Financial Services	2,717	2,775	2,851	2.1%	2.7%	0.1%	0.1%
Government	574	612	647	6.6%	5.7%	0.1%	0.1%
Health	1,635	1,676	1,672	2.5%	-0.2%	0.1%	0.0%
ICT	1,476	1,421	1,410	-3.7%	-0.8%	-0.1%	0.0%
Manufacturing	28,280	29,080	29,560	2.8%	1.7%	1.4%	0.8%
Mining	603	581	352	-3.6%	-39.4%	0.0%	-0.4%
Professional Services	1,126	1,138	1,139	1.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Real Estate	98	101	101	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Tourism	1,246	1,302	1,314	4.5%	0.9%	0.1%	0.0%
Transport	1,005	1,019	1,086	1.4%	6.6%	0.0%	0.1%
Utility	1,539	1,526	1,639	-0.8%	7.4%	0.0%	0.2%
Wholesale & Retail	3,953	4,582	4,651	15.9%	1.5%	1.1%	0.1%
Total Headcount	**58,728**	**60,845**	**61,323**	**3.6%**	**0.8%**	**3.6%**	**0.8%**

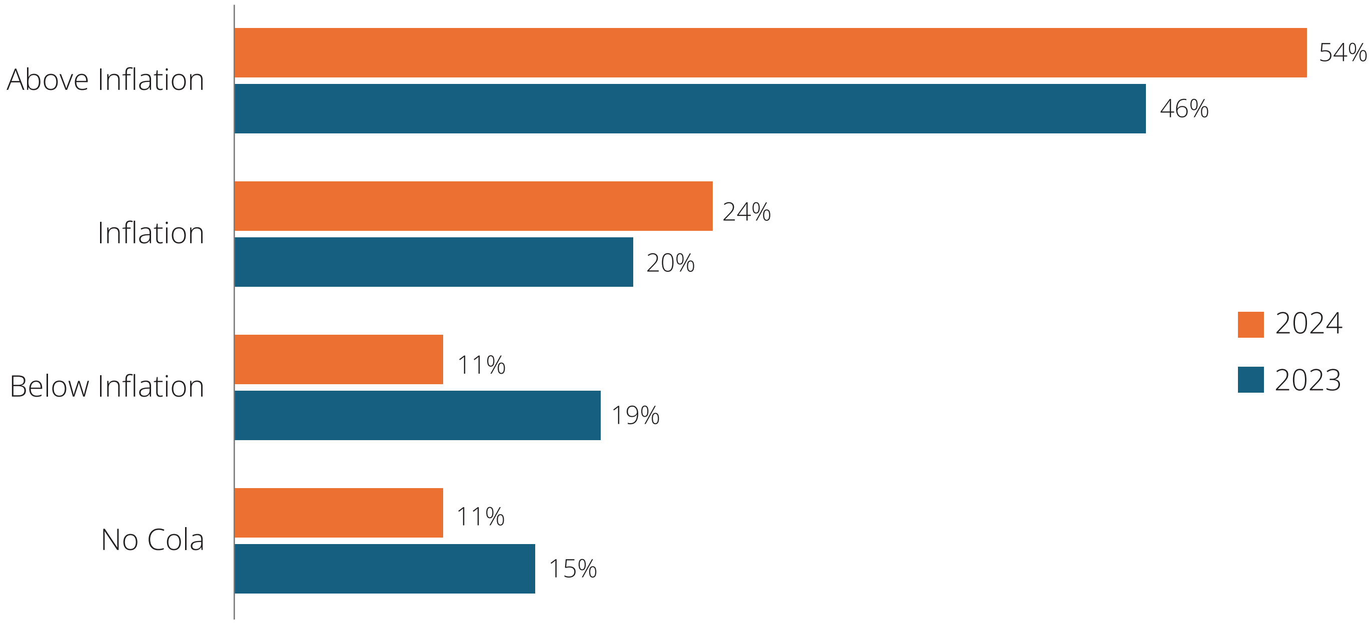
Source: Company Survey (2025)

Other Labour Developments

In 2024, inflationary pressures moderated by 1.0 percentage point to record 4.0 percent, brought about by a deceleration in food and transport inflation. In the 2025 Survey, seventy-two (72) companies (54 percent), awarded cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) that is above inflation, relative to the 57 companies (46 percent), in the 2024 Survey. On the other hand, thirty-two (32) companies (24 percent) awarded the prevailing inflation rate for COLA adjustments, relative to the twenty-five (25) companies (20 percent), in the previous Survey.

Fourteen (14) companies (11 percent) awarded below inflation COLA, against twenty-three (23) companies (19 percent), in the previous year, whilst fifteen (15) companies (11 percent) did not award COLA in the period, against 19 companies (15 percent) in the 2024 Survey. The provision of COLA was contingent on company performance, as financially underperforming firms were constrained from providing such compensation during the review period. Regarding reported labour strife, seven (7) companies (5.3 percent) of the surveyed entities reported experiencing labour strife during the review period, up from the six (6) companies (4.8 percent), in 2023. The distribution of companies that experienced labour strife in the year were 'services sector' four of seven, 'industry' two of seven, and 'agriculture & forestry' one of seven.

FIGURE 6: COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENTS

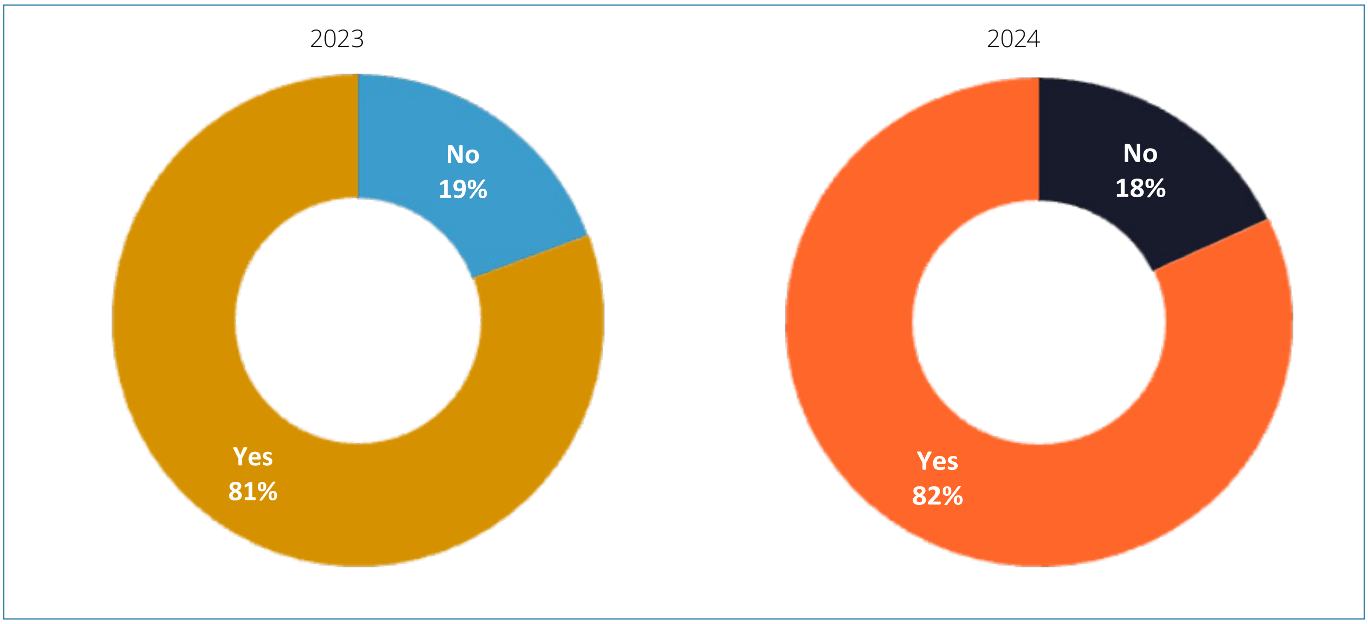


Source: Company Survey (2025)

INVESTMENT

Of the 133 entities surveyed in the 2025 Survey, at least 109 companies (82 percent) reported that they embarked on some form of capital expenditure over the reviewed period while twenty-four (24) entities (18 percent) reported no capital expenditure. Relative to the previous year, investment spending was almost unchanged.

FIGURE 7: OVERALL INVESTMENT



Source: Company Survey (2025)

Imputation: the statistical process of replacing missing data with estimated, plausible values to maintain dataset integrity, reduce bias, and avoid listwise deletion.[1]

Capital expenditure was broadly reported in the 'manufacturing', 'financial services', 'wholesale & retail', 'tourism', 'ICT' and 'agriculture & forestry' sub-sectors.

Those that reported no capital expenditure were broadly in 'non-bank financial services', 'transport & storage', as well as 'human health services' sub-sectors. Companies that did not invest in capital expenditure cited reasons that included, inter alia, limited funds, being in a consolidation phase, or having already made significant investments in the previous financial year(s).

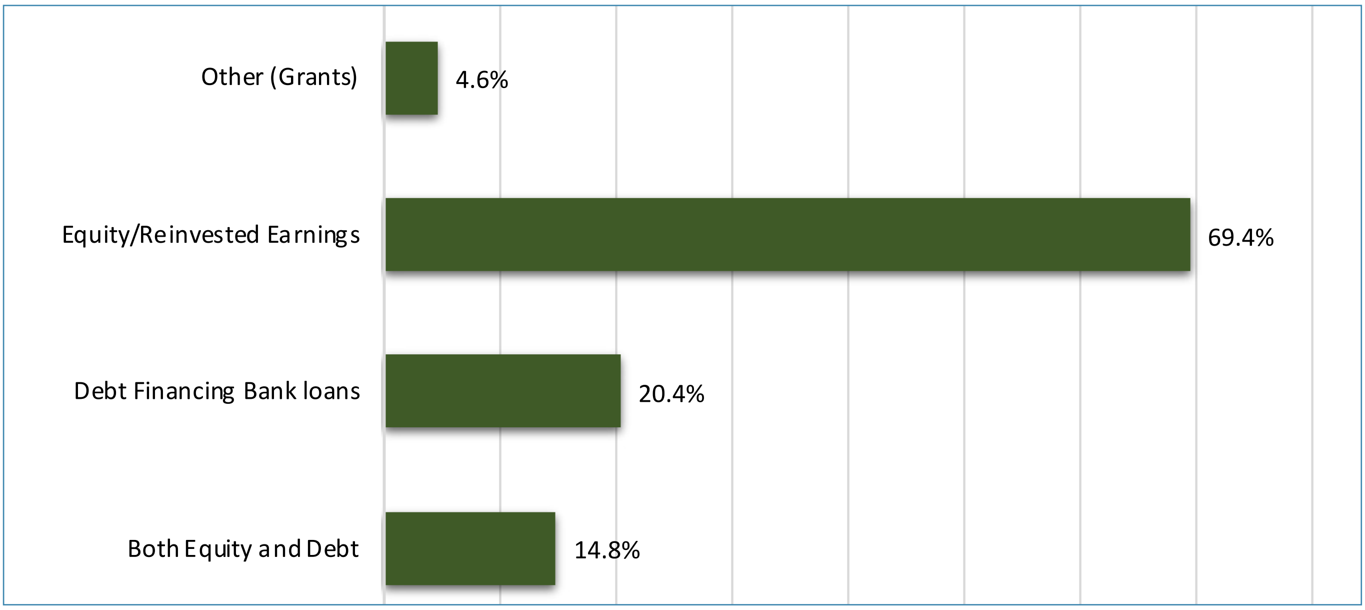
Sources of financing for investment spending are dominated by reinvested earnings/equity at 69.4 percent, followed by debt financing (mainly bank loans) at 20.4 percent. This means that investment spending is highly linked to how companies have performed in terms of the bottom line, as opposed to the availability of credit. Capital expenditure was broadly reported in the 'manufacturing', 'financial services', 'wholesale & retail', 'tourism', 'ICT' and 'agriculture & forestry' sub-sectors.

Those that reported no capital expenditure were broadly in 'non-bank financial services', 'transport & storage', as well as 'human health services' sub-sectors. Companies that did not invest in capital expenditure cited reasons that included, inter alia, limited funds, being in a consolidation phase, or having already made significant investments in the previous financial year(s).

Sources of financing for investment spending are dominated by reinvested earnings/equity at 69.4 percent, followed by debt financing (mainly bank loans) at 20.4 percent. This means that investment spending is highly linked to how companies have performed in terms of the bottom line, as opposed to the availability of credit. The information collected revealed that total capital expenditure stood at E5.287 billion in 2024, increasing significantly by 56 percent from the E3.380 billion recorded in the previous year. The uptick was partly attributed to the inception and continued implementation of projects by some companies within the 'manufacturing', 'financial service', 'wholesale & retail', and 'agriculture' subsectors in the reporting period.

A high-level analysis of companies that invested in capex in 2024 by sector depicted that the manufacturing sector was the biggest investor in capital expenditures, accounting for 30.9 percent of total investment. The 'financial services' sector and 'utilities sector also featured prominently representing 29.9 percent and 15.5 percent, respectively. The wholesale and retail sector also recorded significant investment in 2024, accounting for 10.8 percent of total investment. Additionally, the information and communication sector accounted for 5.7 percent of total investment in 2024. Sectors such as 'agriculture', 'government', 'construction', 'tourism' and 'telecommunication', each accounted for less than 5.0 percent of total investment.

FIGURE 8: INVESTMENT SOURCE OF FINANCE



Source: Company Survey (2025)

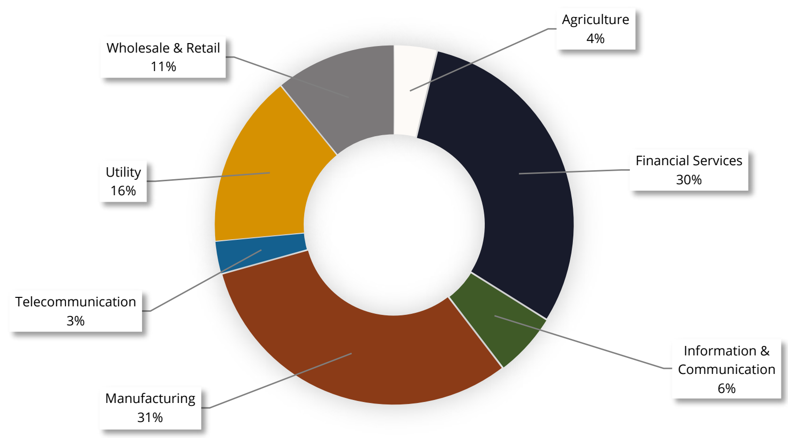
A further detailed analysis of investment by sector indicates that the manufacturing sector recorded the highest investment in 2024, totalling to E1.631 billion, indicating a year-on-year increase of 14.3 percent. The bulk of the investment was directed towards machinery and buildings, with companies citing automation, upgrades in factory, replacements in machinery, as well as expansions as the main drivers for investment. Investment in the financial sector amounted to E1.580 billion in 2024, up by 64.2 percent from the E962 million in the previous year. A significant portion of the investment in the financial sector was spent on software and buildings, with most institutions mentioning automation, implementation of new systems, and expansion in branches as the main activities undertaken during the period.

Investment from the utilities sectors amounted to E820 million in 2024, up by more than three-fold from the E178 million in 2023. Most of the spending was directed to other investments such as maintenance, particularly refurbishments as well as furniture. The wholesale and retail sector invested E571 million in 2024, significantly up by more than five-fold from the E83.7 million registered in 2023. A large portion on the investment was directed in towards other investments including advertising and branding, furniture, as well as vehicles. Investment from the information and communication sector, totalled E300 million, increasing by 144.0 percent from the E123 million reported in 2023.

A breakdown of capital investment by expenditure item shows that in 2024, a significant proportion of the expenditure was directed toward other investments including maintenance, and furniture amongst others. Companies allocated E1.867 billion towards maintenance, and furniture i.e., other investments, representing a 62.0 percent increase from the previous year, as companies prioritised upkeep in their infrastructure and vehicles. Capital expenditure on vehicle procurement surged to E607 million in 2024, marking an increase from the E86.1 million reported in 2023. Investment in buildings amounted to E474 million, up 14.5 percent from the E415 million recorded in 2023.

On the contrary, capital spending on machinery and software declined during the review period, falling by 42.2 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively. Investment on machinery stood at E838 million in 2024 dropping from E1.451 billion investment in 2023. Likewise, capex on software was broadly flat at E94.01 million, moderating slightly from E94.89 million in the previous year.

FIGURE 9: INVESTMENT BY SECTOR



Source: Company Survey (2025)

Outlook

In the short-to-medium term total investment is anticipated to reach a cumulative E6.275 billion between 2025 and 2026, though projected to moderate slightly in the medium term at E3.928 billion for 2025 before slowing down to E2.347 billion in 2026. Sectors such as manufacturing, financial services, telecommunication, and utilities are expected to drive investment in the medium term. Most of the planned investment will be directed towards machinery, vehicles, and software as companies position themselves to enhance their efficiencies and ultimately boost profitability.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGES OVERVIEW

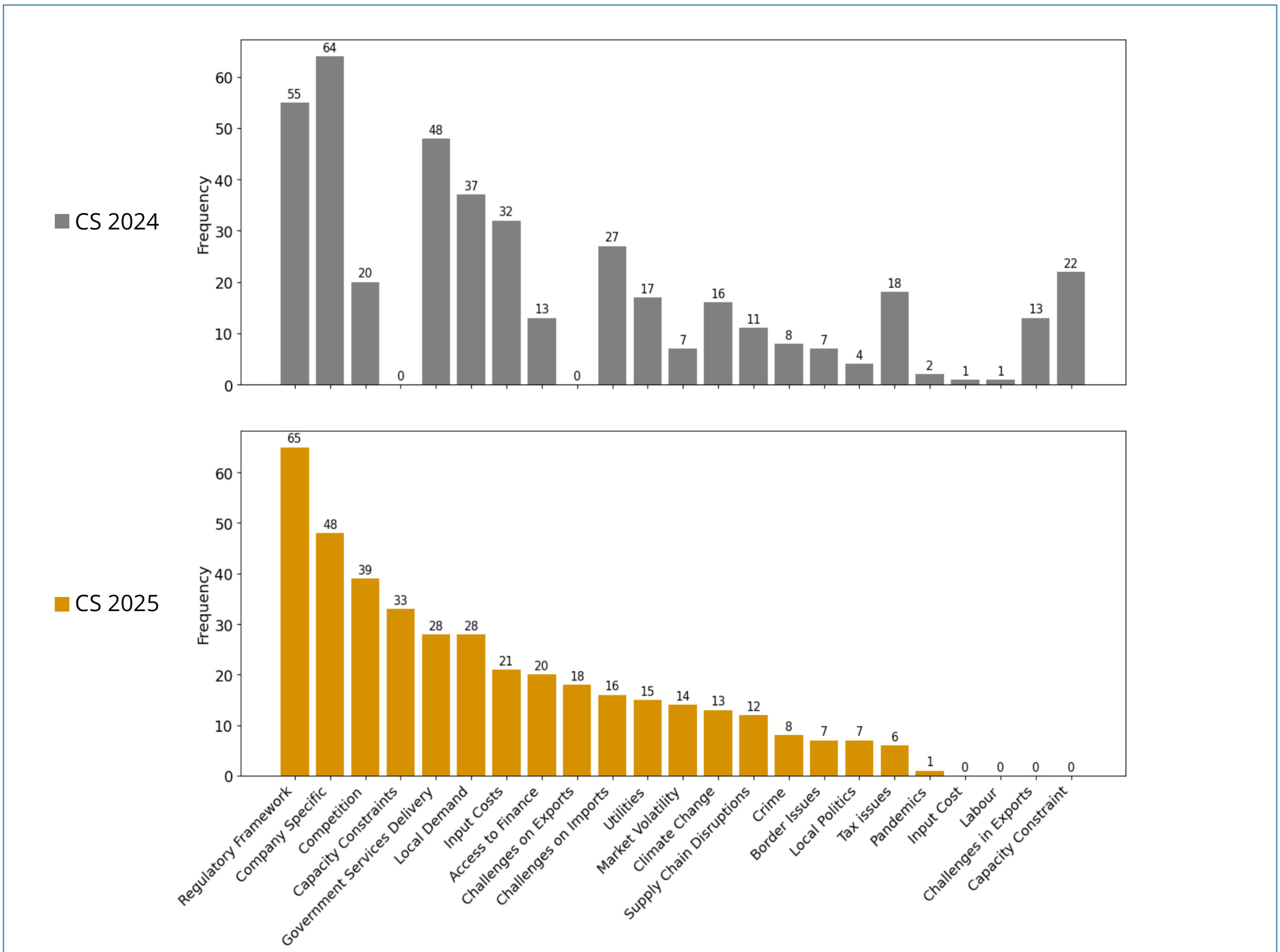
A total of 399 challenges were reported in the 2025 Survey, marking a slight decline from 420 in the previous survey. Figure 10 illustrates the top 12 business challenges reported in 2024, with regulation-related issues emerging as the most prominent concern among companies and organizations. These accounted for 87 percent of the 19 distinct challenge categories identified in the survey.

Notably, the 'Regulatory Framework' rose to the top position in 2025 Survey, up from second place in the 2024 Survey and third in 2023 Survey, highlighting its growing impact on business operations. The second most reported challenge was 'Company-Specific' issues, which encompass unique, organization-level concerns not captured within the predefined list of 20 challenge categories. This category dropped from the top spot in the 2024 Survey. 'Competition' ranked third in the 2025 Survey, climbing five places from eighth in the previous year, its highest position in the past four years. 'Capacity Constraints' followed in fourth place, up from seventh in the 2024 Survey, indicating a shift in operational pressures faced by firms.

At the lower end of the top 12 were challenges related to 'Utilities' and 'Market Volatility', together comprising 8 percent of the reported issues. Utility-related concerns include the cost and reliability of water, electricity, and communications infrastructure such as internet and mobile/landline phones. Market volatility challenges reflect external factors like regional and global geopolitical tensions.

Previously dominant issues such as 'Taxation', 'Local Politics', and 'Pandemics' now rank among the bottom three of the 19 challenge categories, underscoring the evolving nature of business constraints in Eswatini over the past five years.

FIGURE 10: OVERVIEW OF CHALLENGES BY CATEGORY 2024



Source: Company Survey (2025)

Challenge 1: Regulatory Framework

Regulatory Framework challenges were reported in 15 out of the 16 sectors surveyed in 2025, accounting for 16 percent of the total 399 challenges. The financial services sector was the most affected, contributing 40 percent of these regulation-related concerns, followed by manufacturing services at 14 percent.

In the non-bank financial subsector, companies expressed concern over excessive regulation, citing the high cost of legislative compliance. A uniform levy charged across all investment firms, regardless of ownership structure, was flagged as inequitable, particularly for foreign-owned entities. Meanwhile, commercial banks raised concern over the emergence of non-bank financial service providers entering the lending space under lighter regulatory oversight. This shift, often referred to as shadow banking, poses risks to financial stability, especially as banks continue to operate under stringent regulatory conditions, including high levies and strict consumer protection laws.

Manufacturing services highlighted operational disruptions stemming from recent changes in the Common Monetary Area (CMA) payment system. The transition from electronic fund transfer (EFT) to the SWIFT banking system platform introduced delays, due to approval requirements and non-processing during national holidays. These changes increased transaction costs and complicated cross-border payments within SACU countries.

In the wholesale and retail sector, businesses reported growing frustration with expanding compliance obligations, particularly in relation to anti-money laundering, data protection, and the newly implemented tax compliance system. Although designed to improve regulatory efficiency, the system has inadvertently imposed additional operational costs.

A recurring issue over the years has been the perceived unfair regulation of car dealerships. While Eswatini residents can purchase vehicles from South Africa, South African consumers are restricted from buying vehicles from Eswatini, creating a competitive disadvantage for local dealers.

In the ICT sector, concerns were raised about anti-competitive practices stemming from a single entity acting as both regulator and market participant, undermining fair competition.

Land governance challenges also emerged, particularly regarding illegal land allocations on government farms by local authorities. One cited case involved a planned township development obstructed by homesteads illegally placed by a neighbouring chiefdom. The absence of a national land policy continues to create friction among land management institutions, hindering development efforts.

Challenge 2: Company Specific

All 16 sectors surveyed reported company specific challenges. The top 4 contributors to this class of challenges were ICT, wholesale & retail, manufacturing, and financial services with a collective share of 56 percent. The brain-drain of civil servant nurses and teachers to developed nations, leaving unpaid debts, has become a huge burden for one non-bank institution, ultimately causing a notable increase in their non-performing loans. One manufacturing company incurred significant costs in the development of a product for a large multi-national franchise in South Africa, due to frequent revisions to product standards, which necessitated repeated design modifications and testing. While this investment positioned the company for substantial future revenue once supply commences, it did erode their profit margins during the 2024 financial year. In the wholesale & retail, it was reported that extended time lags between an order placement and delivery (induced by company specific challenges) directly affected sales.

There was an increase in fuel theft incidents in one company in the land transport sub-sector, prompting the company to enhance security measures across key facilities and transit routes. Eight (8) challenges regarding crime were reported for the 2025 Survey. It was also noted that one foreign company in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities sectors, operating locally, was at times restricted from taking consultancy work locally that conflicted with work that was taken by related enterprises in foreign jurisdictions, which was a huge challenge for the company because it had set strategic targets to meet. In the agricultural sector, one (1) company faced a strategic dilemma in balancing financial prudence with growth prospects. Capital constraints, compounded by a cautious stance against debt financing, slowed recovery from severe weather-related disruptions faced by the company. While the incremental replanting approach helped manage financial risk in the company, it also limited production capacity, hindering the ability to capitalize on strong market demand for its agricultural outputs. This conservative financial strategy, though protective, has come at the cost of missed revenue opportunities and slower growth.

Challenge 3: Competition

Competition-related challenges were reported in 12 of the 16 sectors surveyed, with a total of 39 cases recorded. The manufacturing sector accounted for 10 of these, highlighting its vulnerability to both domestic and regional competitive pressures. In both manufacturing and tourism, companies reported increasing difficulty in retaining skilled workers due to heightened competition for talent, necessitating frequent retraining and onboarding. In the wholesale & retail subsector, fuel wholesalers experienced intensified competition, with a growing number of service stations leading to a shrinking market share for each retailer. Notably, hardware retailers cited the cost advantage held by some Asian traders, whose lower overheads allow them to undercut established market players. Additionally, competition from Mozambican cement suppliers has forced local firms to reduce prices to remain competitive.

In the ICT sector, the entry of a new international internet service provider has introduced aggressive pricing, prompting existing firms to lower prices and enhance service packages to retain market share. Postal and courier services face a fragmented competitive landscape, including multinational corporations, regional operators, and informal individual service providers. These low-cost models are eroding pricing power and market share for established firms. One long-standing company reported a significant decline in its market share despite maintaining contractual relationships with major corporate clients, underscoring the impact of this hyper-competitive environment.

The real estate sector is also under pressure from developments on Swazi Nation Land, which are increasingly competing with formal housing markets.

Challenge 4: Capacity Constraints

Capacity-related challenges were reported in 12 of the 16 sectors surveyed, with a total of 33 cases recorded. The manufacturing sector registered the highest number of these challenges, followed by the human health and social work activities sector. A common theme across sectors was the shortage or mismatch of skills required for specialized operations. In many cases, new hires possessed general qualifications but lacked the specific expertise needed for their roles.

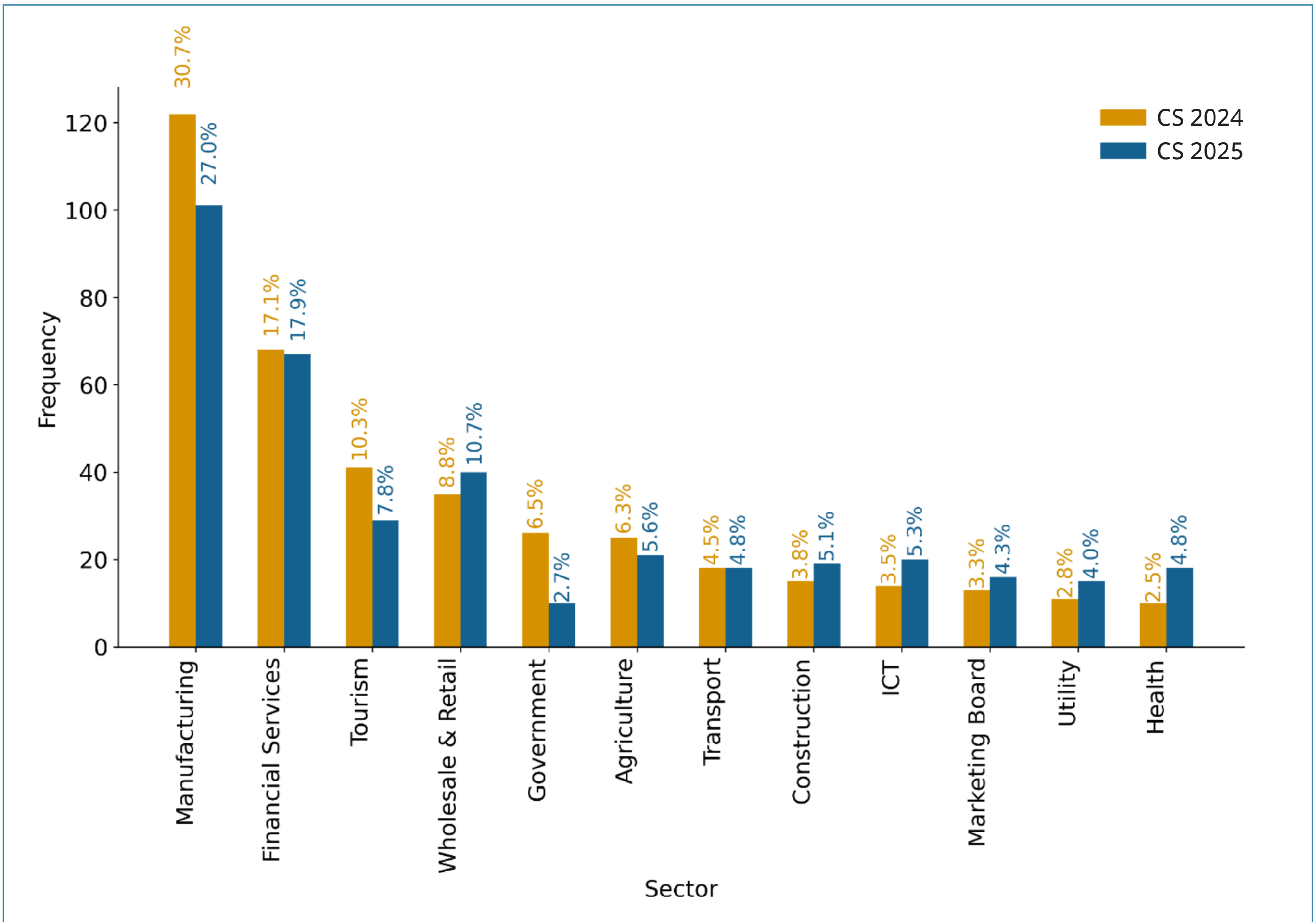
Critical skill gaps were identified in areas such as specialized construction, workshop services, modern vehicle mechanics, and mining equipment operation. In the health sector, the absence of key medical services, such as cardiac catheterization and efficient renal care, was flagged as a nationwide concern, posing serious risks to patient outcomes. Government departments also reported prolonged vacancies in strategic roles and a lack of expert capacity to oversee specialized industries, which in turn hampers sectoral growth and policy implementation.

High staff turnover on specialised skills leading to frequent recruitment cycles has compounded the skills gap challenge. As a coping measure, companies reported that they were increasingly turning to foreign recruitment for specialised skills. However, obtaining work permits for foreign specialists remains a significant hurdle, especially in the manufacturing sector where technical expertise is urgently needed. This has forced firms to invest heavily in training local staff, placing additional pressure on operational budgets.

CHALLENGES BY SECTOR

In the survey, companies in the manufacturing, financial services, and tourism sectors consistently reported the highest levels of challenges in both 2024 and 2025, continuing a trend observed in previous years. In 2025, entities from the government sector reported slightly more challenges than those from the agriculture sector; however, in 2024, agriculture recorded a slightly higher challenges than government.

FIGURE 11: TOP 12 SECTORS WITH MOST CHALLENGES



Source: Company Survey (2025)

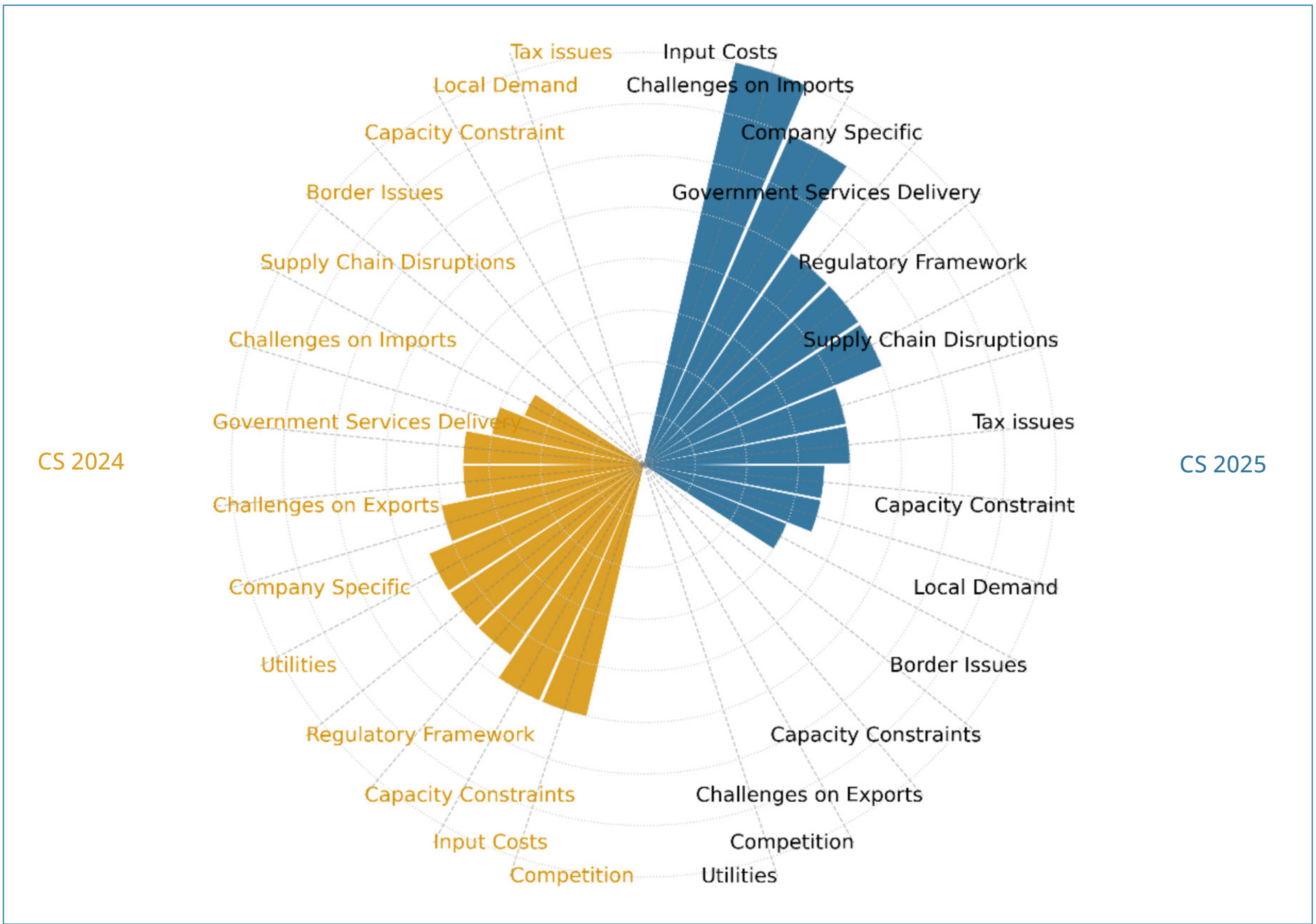
TOP 5 CHALLENGES BY SECTOR

Manufacturing

In the 2025 survey, the manufacturing sector reported the most challenges. The top 5 categories observed under this category were 'competition', 'input costs', 'capacity constraints', 'regulatory framework' and 'utilities.'

Evidently, 'competition' related challenges intensified, moving from lowest rank, in 2024, to top position in 2025. These covered both local and international competition. Competition issues entailed industry saturation which exerts downward pressure on pricing, whilst international competition covered issues of tariffs, compliance standards and trading requirements. High input costs such as electricity, water and transport were amongst the leading challenges. Similarly, challenges relating to 'capacity constraints', moved 4 levels up to third position, mainly relating to scarcity of skilled personnel. Challenges associated with 'regulatory framework' and 'utilities' were dominated by lack of regulations and complaints relating to higher electricity and water costs.

FIGURE 12: CHALLENGES IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR



Source: Company Survey (2025)

Financial sector

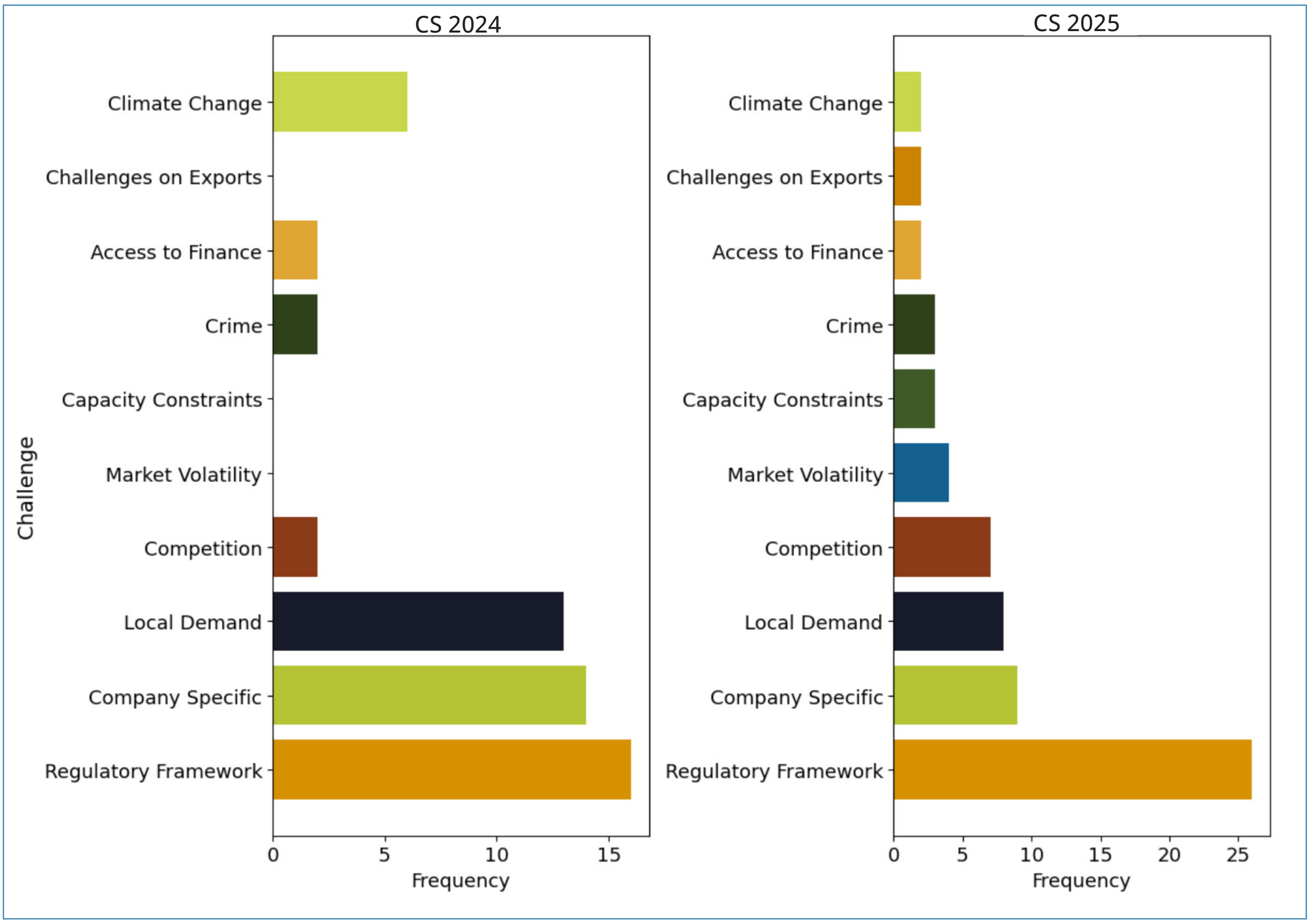
In the financial sector, issues relating to 'regulatory framework', continued to be the highest reported. These issues pertained to limited regulation, stringent compliance and lack of policies that encourage industry growth. Company specific challenges maintained the second position in the sector, showing a lower 13.6 percent (from 25.5 percent) of total challenges reported. Other categories include 'local demand', 'competition' and 'market volatility'.

In these categories issues such as deteriorating fiscal policy, sluggish economic growth and unfavourable international policies were reported.

In the financial sector, challenges related to 'climate change' and 'access to finance' have reduced significantly. These challenges pertain to sporadic weather which had increased claims on insurance and affected access to credit requirements.

Previously dominant issues such as, 'Taxation', 'Local Politics', and 'Pandemics' now rank among the bottom three of the 19 challenge categories, underscoring the evolving nature of business constraints in Eswatini over the past five years.

FIGURE 13: CHALLENGES IN THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

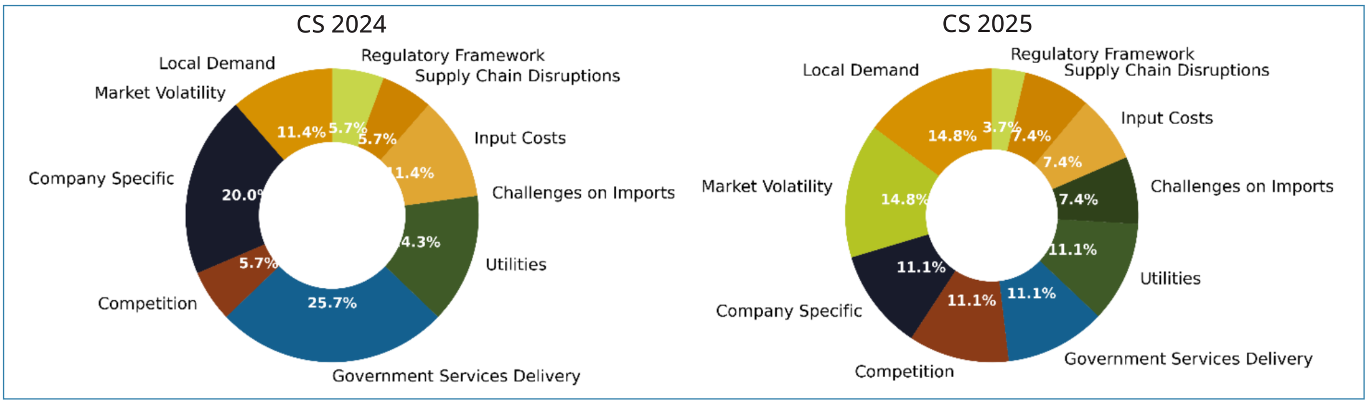


Source: Company Survey (2025)

Tourism

In the 2025 survey, challenges associated with 'local demand', 'market volatility', 'company specific', 'competition', and 'government services delivery' were the most reported for the 'tourism' sector. On local demand, lower disposable income was the main factor militating against local participation. Challenges related to 'market volatility,' particularly the US economic policies, were the second-most-cited problem for companies.

FIGURE 14: CHALLENGES IN THE TOURISM SECTOR



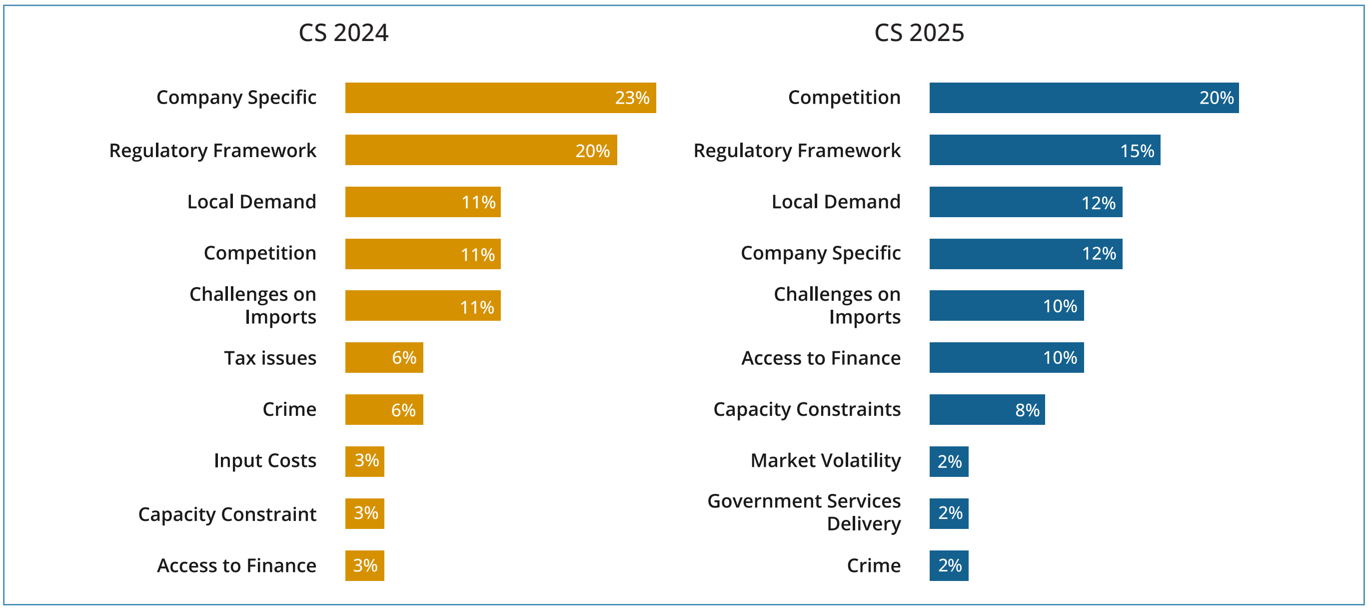
Source: Company Survey (2025)

Of note, 'government services delivery' and 'company specific' dropped to fifth and fourth place in 2025, from first and second place in 2024, respectively. Challenges in these categories ranged from poor road infrastructure to government systems.

Wholesale & Retail

Challenges in the 'wholesale & retail' sector transitioned in rank, with 'competition' becoming dominant over 'company specific' challenges in the 2025 survey. Market expansion efforts by key competitors in the sector were the main issue reported to be propelling competition. Challenges related to 'local demand' and 'regulatory framework' continued to stifle the 'wholesale & retail' sector. This was driven by costs related to regulatory compliance and slow economic growth persisting in 2024. 'Challenges on Imports' maintained their ranking as the 'wholesale & retail' sector suffered from trade barriers as a result of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). Owing to the high-interest-rate environment in 2024, which raised borrowing costs for the industry and consumers, challenges related to 'access to finance' gained traction and advanced in the rankings. Other reported challenges, such as 'tax issues 'and 'crime', moved down the rankings, indicating a drop in the severity of these challenges.

FIGURE 15: CHALLENGES IN WHOLESALE & RETAIL

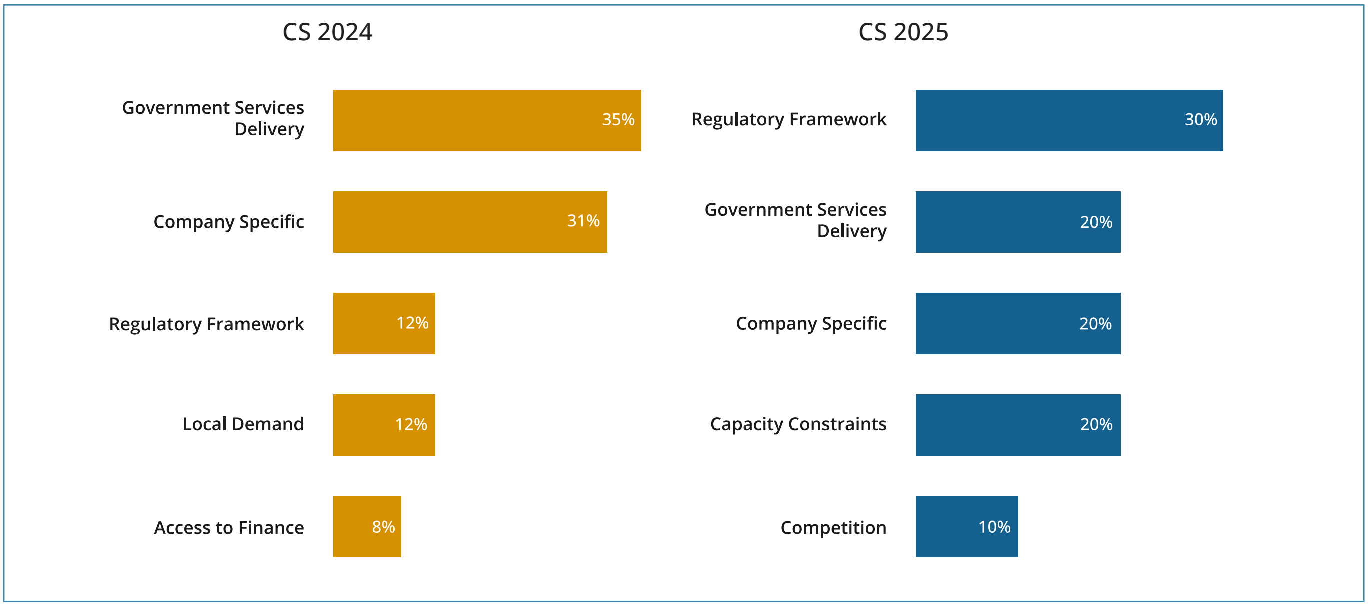


Source: Company Survey (2025)

Government Sector

The 'government' sector observed more challenges reported on the 'regulatory framework' in 2025, moving it up from its previous third rank position. This was largely attributable to the outdated legal framework. While 'government service delivery' challenges and 'company specific' challenges moved down the ranking, they remained in the top three challenges in the 'government' sector, signalling sustained structural and organizational problems. The 'government' sector also encountered challenges related to 'capacity constraints', and 'competition' emanating from uncompetitive salaries leading to high staff turnover.

FIGURE 16: CHALLENGES IN THE GOVERNMENT SECTOR



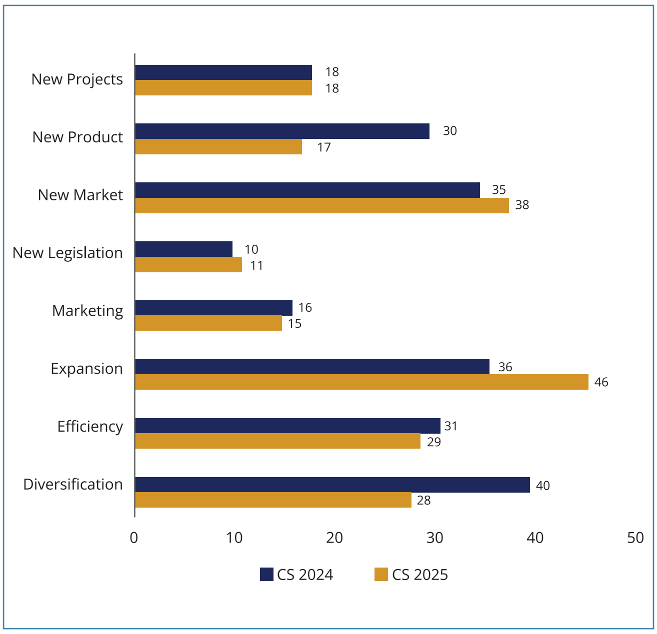
Source: Company Survey (2025)

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities Overview

During the survey, companies identified opportunities they plan to pursue in the short-to-medium term, predicated on company and industry-specific dynamics. These opportunities are presented in figure 17 below, ranked by frequency across sectors. In the 2025 survey, 'expansion,' 'new markets,' and 'efficiency,' were the leading areas of opportunity reported by companies and organizations. This represents a shift from the pattern observed in the year 2024, where 'diversification' was the leading area of opportunity, followed by 'expansion' and 'new markets.' Plans related to 'new projects' remained generally flat over both periods.

FIGURE 17: OPPORTUNITIES BY CATEGORY



Source: Company Survey (2025)

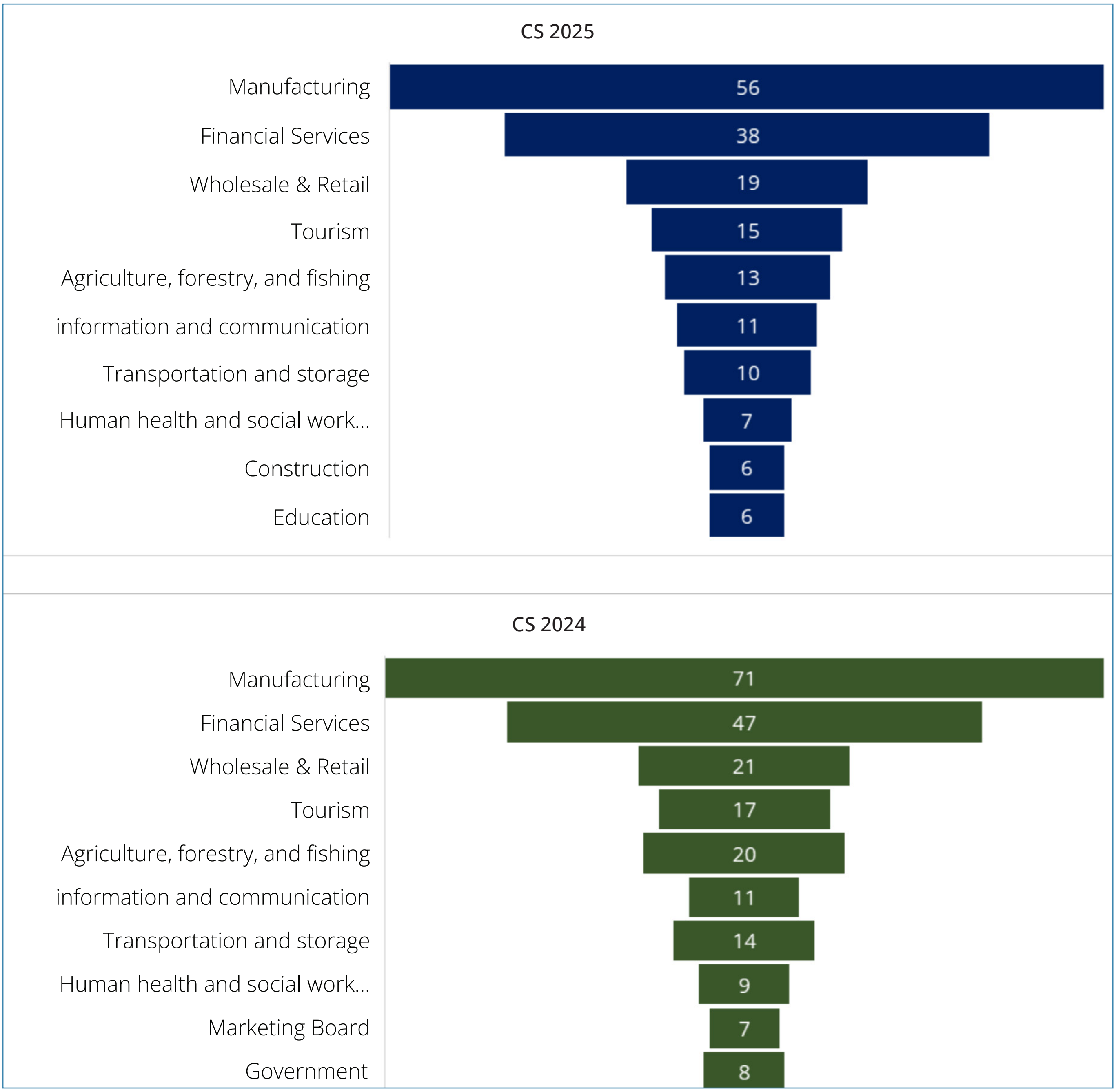
Top five opportunities

The top five opportunities in 2025 were expansion (46), new markets (38), efficiency (29), diversification (28), and new projects (18). For the companies that identified opportunities in expansion, fourteen (14) were in the manufacturing sector, seven (7) were in financial services, whilst five (5) were in the 'wholesale & retail' sector. Similarly, opportunities in 'new markets' primarily featured companies in the manufacturing sector, whilst 'new projects' were dominated by companies in the financial services sector.

Opportunities by sector

Opportunities by sector indicates that most were identified by companies in the manufacturing sector (56), which is 21.1 percent lower than the levels indicated in the 2024 survey, for this sector. The financial services sector (38), and the 'wholesale & retail' sector (19) completed the top three spots, with the 'tourism' and 'agriculture' sectors following closely. Companies in the 'utilities', 'professional services', and 'mining' sectors reported the least opportunities.

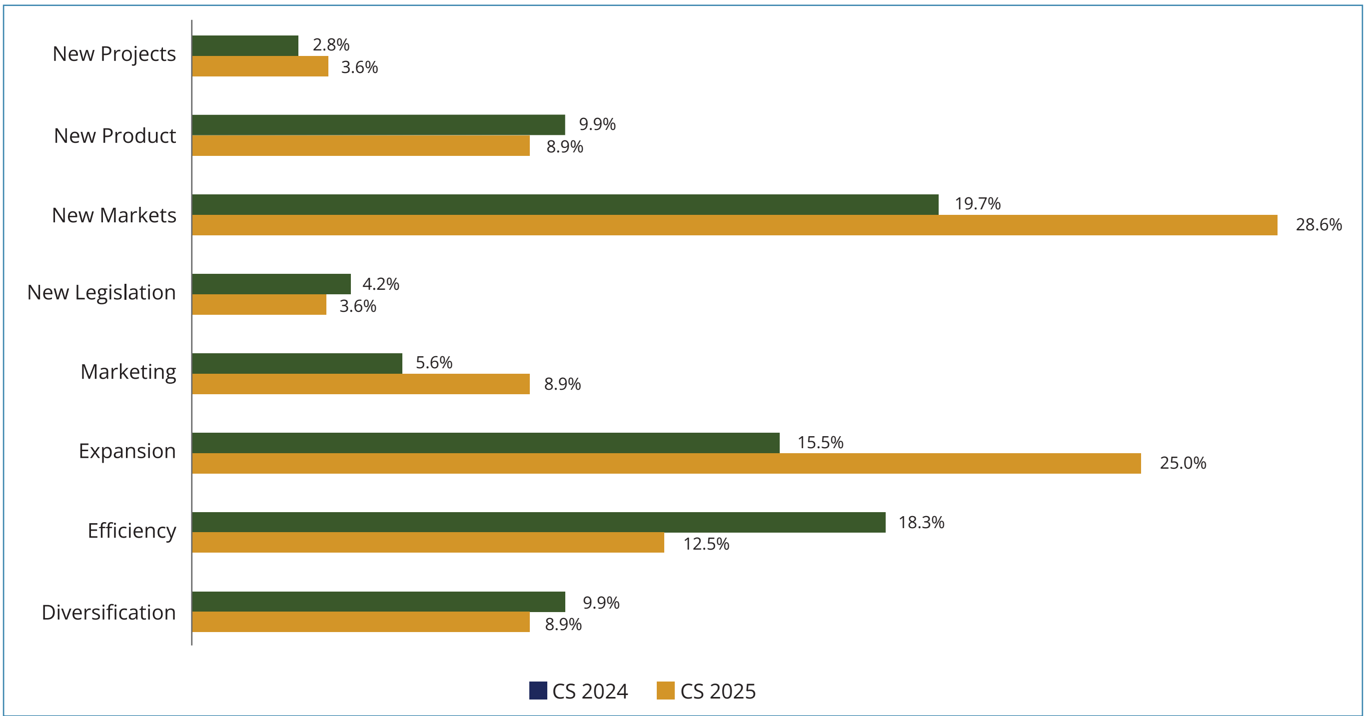
FIGURE 18: OPPORTUNITIES BY SECTOR (FREQUENCY), 2024 AND 2025



Source: Company Survey (2025)

Figure 19 shows the top areas of opportunity in the manufacturing sector. Companies reported that they primarily saw opportunities in exploring new markets (28.6 percent), expansion (25.0 percent), and Efficiency of production (12.5 percent). The foregoing areas of opportunity within the sector signal a robust appetite for growth underpinned by expansion in production while keeping costs contained. Notably, diversification ranked relatively low compared to the previous year, suggesting a shift in focus for businesses in this sector.

FIGURE 19: TOP 10 OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

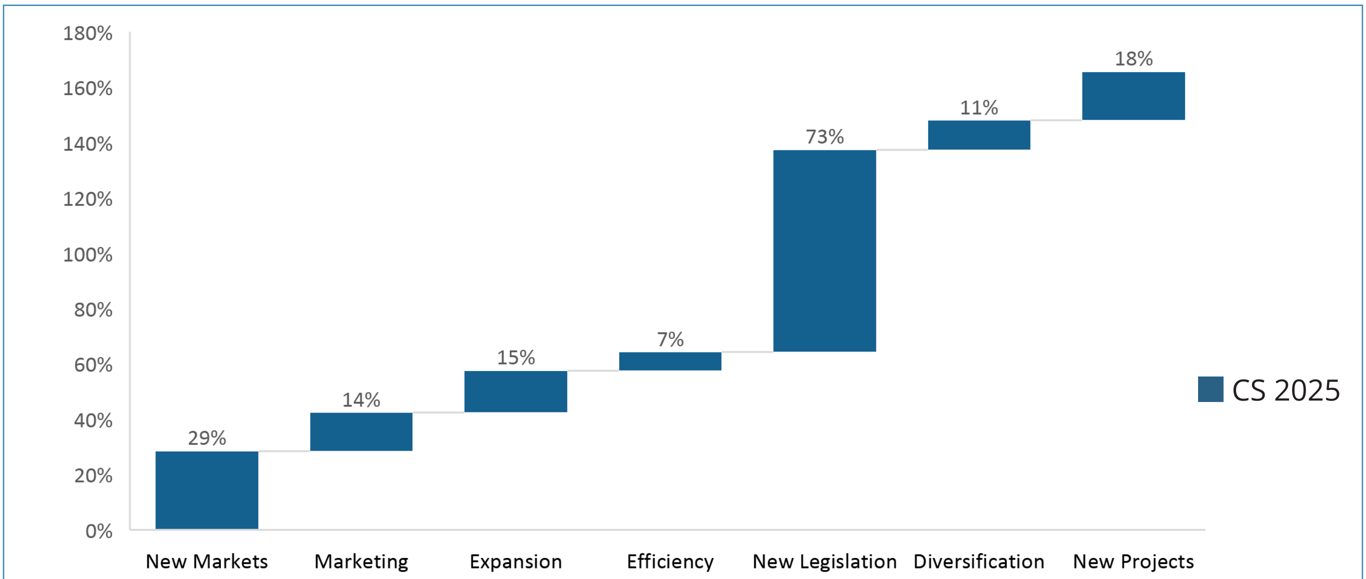


Source: Company Survey (2025)

Companies in the financial services sector reported opportunities mainly in new legislation, market expansion, new projects, and diversification efforts. Leading the way in driving growth is the introduction of new legislation, which accounts for 73 percent of the sector's opportunities. Recent legislative developments, such as converting the national provident fund into a pension fund, enables greater participation into the pension fund. Meanwhile, the regulatory framework is spurring fintech innovation via initiatives like the National Payments System, which advances digital payments and diminishes cash dependency.

New markets (29 percent) represent the second most prominent opportunity area. New technology in the financial sector (fintech) presents strong potential, especially through digital payment solutions that serve unbanked populations. Emerging solar energy investments and infrastructure developments, like the Mpakeni Dam, create demand for asset-based financing. This is captured in Figure 20.

FIGURE 20: OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

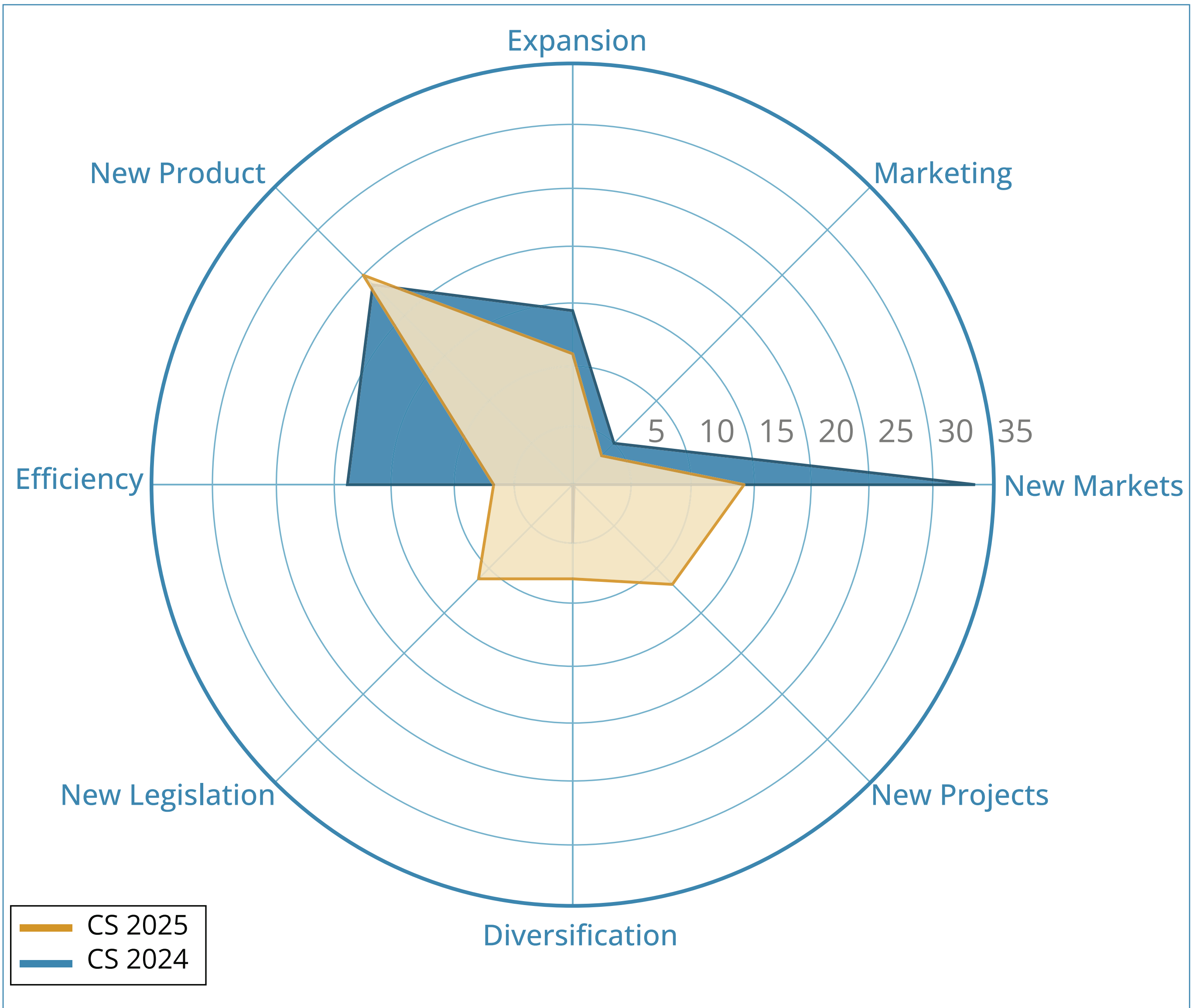


Source: Company Survey (2025)

The 'wholesale & retail' sector in Eswatini shows strong growth potential driven by several key opportunities. 'New products' represent the largest share at 25 percent, comprising of premium vehicle brands and expansion of food supply chains with centralized bakeries, butcheries, and livestock feedlots. New markets account for 14.3 percent, focusing on under-served peri-urban areas, remote fuel stations, and commercial customers. Expansion (10.9 percent) involves opening new retail outlets annually, express stores at fuel stations, and increasing vehicle dealership branches.

New projects (11.8 percent) mainly consist of large public infrastructure, and construction ventures. Efficiency improvements benefited from alignment with multinational retail groups, promoting accountability and productivity. Diversification targets electric vehicles, product range expansion, and positioning as market leaders. Lastly, new legislation, at 11.1 percent, to influence market saturation management and compliance in fuel sales.

FIGURE 21: OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WHOLESALE & RETAIL SECTOR



Source: Company Survey (2025)

In the agricultural sector, discussions on opportunities mainly centred around diversification (4) and new markets (4), while efficiency and expansion received less mention. Companies in the sector were specifically looking at diversifying into new crops and sourcing new markets for products in a bid to hedge against adverse market conditions and stiff competition.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 Company Survey reflects an economy demonstrating resilience amid mixed sectoral performance. Most companies reported improvements in revenue, profitability, and investment activity, particularly in manufacturing, financial services, and agriculture, despite notable pressures in construction, mining, and some service industries. Persistent challenges, especially regulatory burdens, competition, and capacity constraints, continue to shape business operations across sectors, highlighting the need for ongoing reforms and supportive policy frameworks.

Employment growth remained modest and uneven, with gains in agriculture and services offset by declines in industry-related sectors. Nonetheless, the survey reveals strong forward-looking sentiment, with companies identifying opportunities in expansion, new markets, diversification, and efficiency improvements. These opportunities, if supported by enabling policies and infrastructure, position the private sector to drive medium-term economic growth, strengthen competitiveness, and enhance overall business confidence.

SECTION 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Company Name:	
Financial Year End (Month):	
Please indicate whether the questionnaire is being answered according to the company's financial year or the calendar year:	

SECTION 2. OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE

Q.2.1. Please indicate the Section 3. Performance Indicators ownership structure of the company:

Shareholder Name	Shareholder Current Country of Residence (for a year or more)	Share (%)

Q.2.2. Please indicate any subsidiaries (if any) within and outside Eswatini with the associated percentage shareholding:

Subsidiary Name	Share (%)

SECTION 3. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Q.3.1. Please identify the company's main product lines and their units of measurements:

No.	Unit of Measurement	Product Description

Q.3.2. Please indicate the company's production levels for each product line above:

No.	December 2023	December 2024	December 2025	December 2026	December 2027

Q.3.3. Please indicate the company's turnover for each product line above (E Million):

No.	December 2023	December 2024	December 2025	December 2026	December 2027

SECTION 4. TOTAL REVENUE AND PROFITS

Q.4.1. Please indicate the company's total revenue, net rental income, net interest income and pre-tax profit (E Million):

	December 2023	December 2024	December 2025	December 2026	December 2027
Total Revenue					
Net Rental Income					
Net Interest Income					
Total Expenditure					
Cost of Goods Sold					
Utilities Costs					
Pre-Tax Profit					

SECTION 5. EMPLOYMENT

Q.5.1. Please provide details of employment levels:

Type	December 2023	December 2024	December 2025	December 2026	December 2027
Permanent					
Temporary					
Total					

Q.5.2. Please indicate the total amount of remuneration (E Million):

	December 2023	December 2024	December 2025	December 2026	December 2027

SECTION 6. TRADE

Q.6.1. Please state the sources of your inputs (as % of total input cost) and the markets in which you operate (as % of total revenue):

Country	Inputs (% of total input cost)		Markets (% of total revenue)	
	2024	2025	2024	2025
Eswatini				
South Africa				
Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia				
Rest of Africa				
United States				
European Union				
Rest of Europe				
Rest of the World				

SECTION 7. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Q.7.1. Did the company make any CAPEX in 2024?

Yes	No

Kindly tick the box that suits your answer.

Q7.2 Please provide details of capital expenditure (E Million):

	December 2023	December 2024	December 2025	December 2026	December 2027
Total Capital Expenditure					
Buildings					
Vehicles					
Machinery					
Software's					
Other					

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