Socio-Demographic
and Economic Survey

Economically Active Population

Provinces of Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan

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Acknowledgments

The Central Statistics Organization (CSO) of Afghanistan would like to thank all the organizations and individuals involved in conducting, supporting and facilitating the Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey (SDES). CSO extends its gratitude to the Government of Japan for supporting the survey in five provinces and making the preparation of the reports possible and to the United Nations Population Fund for technical support.

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Credits

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Foreword

We are pleased to introduce this study of Economically Active Population and employment in the first six provinces of Afghanistan (Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kabul, Kapisa and Parwan). The data was collected through the Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey (SDES).

The SDES is a historic undertaking led by the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) with technical assistance from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). It aims to provide an unprecedented snapshot of the state of Afghanistan's population, down to the level of individual villages. This data and its rigorous analysis will be the basis of informed and effective policymaking and service delivery across the country. The Thematic Report on Labour forms part of a series of studies conducted on the first six published SDES datasets.

The landscape of work and employment in Afghanistan is a complicated one, and this report sheds new light on some of its less understood corners. The report shows us that the Afghan labour market in the provinces surveyed is largely dominated by the agriculture sector, and much work performed is seasonal or unstable, with many people self-employed or family workers. Women are severely under-represented, with only a 6.4–12.7 percent share of the total employment; this is a major reason for the low economic activity ratio. Youth unemployment is high, and ranges between 17 and 31 percent in the six provinces. A worrying proportion of youth are neither in school nor in work, exceeding 50 percent in some provinces. Kabul, the capital, has the largest proportion of women in skilled occupations (49.6 percent), many of them in the teaching profession. Ghor, on the other hand, has the poorest indicators for decent work.

The information contained in this report serves as a basis for policy decision making, programme management, and project evaluation. CSO aims to widely disseminate this analysis to promote better understanding of the situation throughout the country.

The SDES data, and the analyses emerging from it, is the fruit of the labour of countless people across Afghanistan. We take this opportunity to thank those who contributed, such as the donors who made this complex endeavor possible, the provincial governors who led their governments in supporting the surveys, and the media. We thank the surveyors, supervisors, and other SDES staff who monitored in the field, often in extremely challenging circumstances. And we thank the residents of these six provinces and across Afghanistan who recognized the importance of the SDES and agreed to participate in its conduct.

Engr. Shir Mohammad Jamizada
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Contents

Tables

Figures

List of Acronyms

CSO	Central Statistics Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities
MoEc	Ministry of Economy
MoLSAMD	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
SDES	Socio Demographic and Economic Surveys
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

Key indicators for decent work methodology

Employment opportunities

usually active population to population in working age – proportion of working age population (over 15 years-old) who worked for 6 months or more or were available for work

% of population seeking or available to work – proportion of working age population (population over 15 years-old) who were actively seeking work or were available for work but did not seek work

employment-to-population ratio – proportion of total population who worked at any time in the 12 months prior to the survey (regardless of the number of months)

Quality of employment

% of self-employed of family worker – proportion of those who worked any time during the past 12 months (regardless of the number of months) and who has the employment status of "self-employed" or "family worker".

% of employment in agriculture sector – proportion of those who worked any time during the past 12 months (regardless of the number of months) and who has economic activity of "agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing".

Children and youth

% children not in school (5–17 years-old) – proportion of those 5–17 year olds who were not attending school.

% children working and not in school (5–15 year old) – proportion of those 5–17 year olds who were not attending school and who worked any time during the past 12 months (regardless of the number of months).

youth unemployment rate (15-24 years-old) – proportion of those 15-24 years-old who did not work or worked less than 6 months and were actively seeking work or were not seeking work but available for work.

% of youth neither studying nor working (15–24 year olds) – proportion of 15–24 year olds who were neither attending school nor worked any time during the past one year.

Gender inequality

% share of women in total employment – proportion of women among those who worked any time during the past 12 months (regardless of the number of months).

ratio of female/male unemployment rate – ratio of women to man who worked for less than six months or who have not worked but are actively seeking for work or were not seeking for work but available for work.

% of women in high-skilled occupations – proportion of women who worked any time during the past one year and worked as "managers, legislators and officers" or "professionals of sciences".

Executive Summary

Rada Akbar/UNFPA

Due to its high levels of fertility both past and present, Afghanistan has a very young age structure. However, recent evidence shows that the country is experiencing the first stages of a gradual transition towards a lower fertility regime (UNFPA, 2015). As a consequence, population growth rates are slowing and, more importantly, the population age structure is changing, becoming increasingly concentrated in the working ages. An extensive literature provides solid evidence of the economic benefits of this demographic scenario, referring to the consequences of the change in age structure as a demographic bonus, demographic gift or demographic dividend. However, these economic benefits may or may not take place depending on a number of conditions. An extremely productive adult population, with high rates of economic activity and low levels of unemployment, is key to transforming the demographic opportunity into an economic dividend (Mason, 2003).

Employment and decent work are central to reducing poverty, achieving the Millennium Development Goals and fostering equitable, inclusive and sustainable development (UNDP, 2012). Facing major political and economic uncertainties, a high priority challenge in Afghanistan is to create sustainable jobs and equal employment opportunities to lift people and their families out of poverty.

The vast majority (81 percent) of the employed population in Afghanistan work on an informal basis (NRVA, 2011–2012) and are characterized by low-paid, irregular, insecure and low-productivity jobs. Workers in the farming and livestock sub-sectors – who account for 40 percent of the employed population – are almost entirely in vulnerable employment (own-account worker, unpaid family workers and day labourers). In the manufacturing/processing, construction, trade and private service sectors, which employ another 43 percent of workers, the share of vulnerable employment reaches 84–94 percent. In this context, the aim of this report is to analyse the multiple dimensions of work and employment in Afghanistan, pointing out aspects that require greater attention from policy makers.

Methodology

The Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey (SDES) includes one block with five questions focusing on the following aspects, to be answered for persons five years old and above:

- If worked any time during the past one year
- Number of months worked during past year
- Main occupation during the past year (full details)
- Type of industry (full details)
- Employment status (employer, employee, self-employed, family worker)
- Non-economic activity (student, household duties, dependent, pensioner, rentiers, etc)
- Seek/available for work during the past 12 months
- Numbers of months of seek/available for work during the past 12 months
- Most important related variables:
- Sex
- Age
- Area of residence (urban or rural)
- Marital status
- Educational status (constructed variable)

Based on the SDES variables, a set of indicators for the decent work framework and related to the dimensions of economic and social context, and employment opportunities, may be developed. In addition to this framework, other relevant aspects of the Afghan condition were considered. We analysed economic status by education, residence area and marital status. These classifications were broken down by sex and age group, providing important information on age-related differentials in economic status, which is useful in guiding policies related to adolescents and young people. We examined the economic status distribution by the categories of industry, occupation and status in employment. We also analysed the differentials of usually active population rates by wealth quintiles.

As the information available in SDES refers to work performed during the past one year (long reference period) we used the usually active population approach. We also explored the distribution of employment of those who work by type of industry, occupation and status in employment. The SDES data allows the classification of the type of industry according to International Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (ISIC-version 2) and the main occupation according to International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). In this report we used the first digit classification to group the occupation and industry.

The economically active population and employment estimates were presented for each of the six provinces. To buffer statistical variance, whenever necessary, we presented aggregate estimates from the combination of all samples, which we term aggregate provinces from here on.

Main Findings

The results show that the Afghan labour market is characterized by the strong dominance of the agriculture sector, the underrepresentation of women, and relatively few opportunities for young people. The ratio of economic activity is low, mainly because of the exclusion of women from the workforce. The proportion of the working age population seeking or available for work (but not actively seeking) is high, reflecting seasonality and the instability of women's work. There is a large share of self-employed and family workers, pointing to the high level of informality in the labour market, which is associated with the prominence of the agricultural sector in the economy.

The indicators related to childhood and youth show a high prevalence of children out of school. The vast majority of these children are not working, except in Bamiyan, where about 5.7 percent were not in school but working. Youth unemployment is very high (17.0–31.3 percent), but even more alarming is the proportion of young people who neither work nor study, exceeding 50 percent in some provinces. Women's participation in the visible portion of the country's economic activity is low (6.4–12.7 percent). Unemployment rates are higher among women than men, and women are largely excluded from the more skilled occupations.

Kabul has the smallest proportion of employment in the agriculture sector among the provinces examined, and a more dynamic economy with a lower proportion of people seeking work, self-employment and family workers. The best opportunities for the youth are in Kabul. Despite its lower economic activity ratios, the proportion of women in high-skilled occupations is the largest (49.6 percent). On the opposite side, Ghor shows much worse key indicators for decent work. The traditional agricultural sector is by far the largest employer and there are very few opportunities (jobs and schooling) for children, youth and women.

The labour analysis is limited by the data available in SDES. In order to have a more accurate view of the labour market in Afghanistan, it is necessary to obtain additional information, including data on hours worked, earnings – remuneration in cash or in kind paid to employee – other sources of income and labour costs, among others.

1

Introduction

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Due to its past and present high levels of fertility, Afghanistan has a very young age-structure. However, recent evidence shows that the country is experiencing the first stages of a gradual transition towards a lower fertility regime (UNFPA, 2015). As a consequence, population growth rates are slowing and, even more importantly, the population age structure is changing, becoming increasingly concentrated in the working ages. In the coming decades, the child dependency ratio will decline while elderly dependency ratios will not have reached high levels. An extensive literature provides solid evidence of the economic benefits of this demographic scenario, referring to the consequences of the change in age structure as a demographic bonus, demographic gift or demographic dividend. However, the economic benefits arising from demographic dynamics may or may not take place depending on a number of conditions. An highly productive adult population, with high rates of economic activity and low level of unemployment, is key to transforming the demographic opportunity in an economic dividend (Mason, 2003).

Employment and decent work are central to reducing poverty, achieving the Millennium Development Goals and fostering equitable, inclusive and sustainable development (UNDP, 2012). Facing major political and economic uncertainties, a high priority challenge in Afghanistan is to create more sustainable jobs and equal employment opportunities to lift people and their families out of poverty. With an estimated 400,000–500,000 new labour entrants per year during this decade, the country needs to increase the demand for labour while raising the skills of workers to improve productivity and sustainable growth (Government of Afghanistan, Ministry of Economy, 2013).

Agriculture is the largest sector of employment in the country, and the non-farm sector is dominated by employment in family-based, small-scale trade activities. The formal labour market is small and the public sector is the main employer. The relatively low open unemployment1 is counterbalanced by the severity of underemployment. There are also strong sectorial differences in the education and gender composition of the labour force. Education levels are improving for younger cohorts who are benefiting from post-conflict investments in education, but literacy levels in the working population remain extremely low, especially among women. The work force is male-dominated due to significantly lower female participation, particularly in urban areas (Government of Afghanistan, Ministry of Economy, 2013).

The National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2011–2012 showed that due to Afghanistan's young population age distribution, only 54 percent (14 million) is in the working age groups (14 years and older). About half of these are currently economically active, either by working or by looking for work. Differences by gender are substantial: the proportion of economically active men is much higher (81 percent) than women (19 percent). Afghan male participation rates are similar to those in neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Iran, but the female rates are significantly lower.

Labour force participation rates in rural areas are higher than in urban areas, for both men and women (51 percent against 43 percent, for both sexes combined). This difference is considered typical of less developed economies, in which most people are engaged in labour-intensive agricultural activities and opportunities for school attendance in urban areas are higher.

1 Defined as the proportion of labour force who actively seek work.

The NRVA 2011–2012 shows that the vast majority (81 percent) of the employed population in Afghanistan work on an informal basis, characterized by low-paid, irregular, insecure and low-productivity jobs. Workers in the farming and livestock sub-sectors – accounting for 40 percent of the employed population – are almost entirely in vulnerable employment (own-account workers, unpaid family workers and day labourers). In the manufacturing/ processing, construction, trade and private service sectors, which employ another 43 percent of workers, the share of vulnerable employment reaches 84–94 percent.

In this context, the aim of this report is to analyse the multiple dimensions of work and employment in Afghanistan, pointing out aspects that require greater attention from policy makers. The data come from the first six provincial SDES in Afghanistan, conducted by the CSO with technical support from UNFPA. In addition to a wide range of information about size, age, sex composition, education, migration and other socio-demographic characteristics, the survey provides information on economic status, main occupation, industry and employment status. As of the writing of this report, surveys in six provinces have been completed: Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kabul, Kapisa and Parwan. This report analyses and compares the results on the economic status obtained from each.

2

Data and methodology

Lorenzo Tugnoli

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations more broadly work actively, in cooperation with other multilateral agencies, to develop policies and programmes that support the creation of decent work opportunities. The agenda of decent work provides a conceptual framework for the construction of indicators that reflect its principles and are methodologically appropriate to evaluate and compare the development of countries. This report on labour force conditions in Afghanistan adopts as far as possible the framework of Decent Work Indicators presented to the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in December 2008.

The decent work agenda is based on four strategic pillars: full and productive employment, rights at work, social protection and the promotion of social dialogue. The ILO framework to analyse labour market conditions covers ten substantive elements corresponding to these pillars:

- employment opportunities;
- adequate earnings and productive work;
- decent working time;
- combining work, family and personal life;
- work that should be abolished;
- stability and security at work;
- equal opportunity and treatment in employment;
- safe work environments;
- social security; and
- social dialogue, employers' and workers' representation.

These ten substantive elements are converted into several statistical indicators which capture each of the dimensions of decent work. The full framework is extensive and requires very complete statistics to be fully implemented. In the case of Afghanistan, the limitations of the data available and the specific problems of the country have to be taken into account.

SDES variables on economic and non-economic activity

The SDES contains one block on economic data with the following eight questions (answered by persons 5 years old and above):

- If worked any time during the past one year[2]
- Number of months worked during past year
- Main occupation during the past year (full details)
- Type of industry (full details)
- Employment status (employer, employee, self-employed, family worker)

2 A feature of this research is that a remarkable effort was made to capture the unpaid family work of women, elderly and children, which are usually underestimated in official statistics. The SDES interviewer manual emphasizes the varying manifestations of this kind of work and gives clear examples and illustrations of activities which are very common in country, such as "help provided during ploughing, sowing, harvesting or collection of farm produce; agricultural labour for wages in cash or in kind, and self-employed or unpaid family work in home-bases industries as production of fruit, vegetables, sauces, jellies, etc., manufacturing of bakery products, spinning and weaving of textile fibre, embroidering, knitting of woollen sweaters, etc." (SDES interviewer manual).

- Non-economic activity (student, household duties, dependent, pensioner, rentiers, etc.)
- Seek/available for work during the past 12 months
- Numbers of months of seek/available for work during the past 12 months

Most important related variables:

- Sex
- Age
- Area of residence (urban or rural)
- Marital status
- Educational status (constructed variable)

Based on the SDES variables a select set of indicators for the decent work framework, related to the dimensions of economic and social context for decent work; employment opportunities; working children not attending school and equal opportunities and treatment in employment can be estimated. Other relevant aspects of the Afghan condition are also considered. We analyse the economic status by education, residence area and marital status. These classifications are broken down by sex and age group, providing important information on age-related differentials in economic status, which is a useful guide for policies related to adolescents and young people. Further, we examine the economic status distribution by categories of industry, occupations and status in employment. As the labour market gender gap is particularly relevant in Afghanistan and is an essential dimension of the decent work agenda, all analyses in this report are made by sex, differentiating the labour market conditions for women and men.

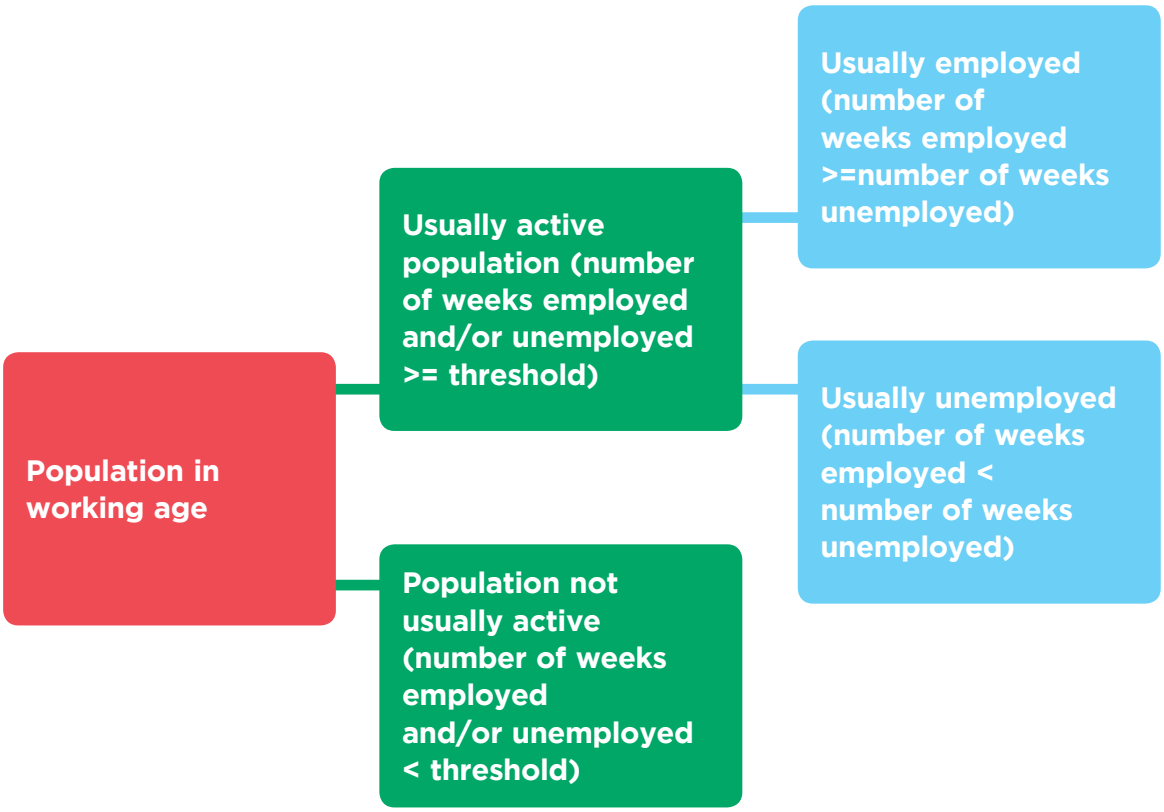
DEFINITIONS

The economically active population comprises all persons of either sex who make up the supply of labour for the production of goods and services during a specified time-reference period. There are two different measures of the economically active population: (i) usually active population measured in relation to a long reference period, normally a year; and (ii) currently active population, or equivalently, the labour force, measured in relation to a short reference period such as one day or one week (LABOURSTA, Main statistics).

As the information available from the SDES refers to work performed during the past one year (long reference period) the usually active population approach was used in this report. Considering the reference period of last 12 months prior to the survey for usual activity, international rules will be followed to determine how individuals are classified in the main groups. If a person spends more time as economically active (employed and/or unemployed) than as not economically active, they are considered usually economically active; and the converse holds for a person who is not usually economically active. If an economically active person spends more of their active time as employed than as unemployed, then they are taken as usually employed and the converse holds for the person to be usually unemployed (Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses of the United Nations). Figure 1 illustrates these definitions.

FIGURE 1

Economically active population over long reference period



In order to adapt these definitions to the SDES, we assume the usually active population as those who worked for six months or more or have actively sought work. Using SDES data on "how many months did the person seek or was available for work" it is possible to apply the concepts of usually employed and usually unemployed. In order to have a broad approach to job search and availability for work, we show the proportion of working age people who were actively seeking work or were available for work but were not actively seeking work during the past 12 months.

The CSO, Ministry of Economy (MoEc) and Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled (MoLSAMD) of Afghanistan have also developed national definitions of employment, unemployment and underemployment to suit to the country's specific context. It is argued that in Afghanistan, as in other less developed countries characterized by low-paid, low-productivity employment and the absence of pensions and unemployment insurance, unemployment may not be an option for the poor and consequently only a small part of the labour force is actually unemployed. Most of the population needs to engage in any activity, even if poorly paid or for few hours. Hence, a more relevant indicator than the unemployment rate is the percentage of the labour force that is not gainfully employed, including the unemployed and the underemployed, defined as persons who need more or other employment in order to provide sufficient income or livelihood (NRVA, 2013). However, we were not able to apply these national definitions for underemployment and not gainfully employed SDES data

because the survey did not include questions about the number of hours worked and if persons were available for or wanted additional hours of work.

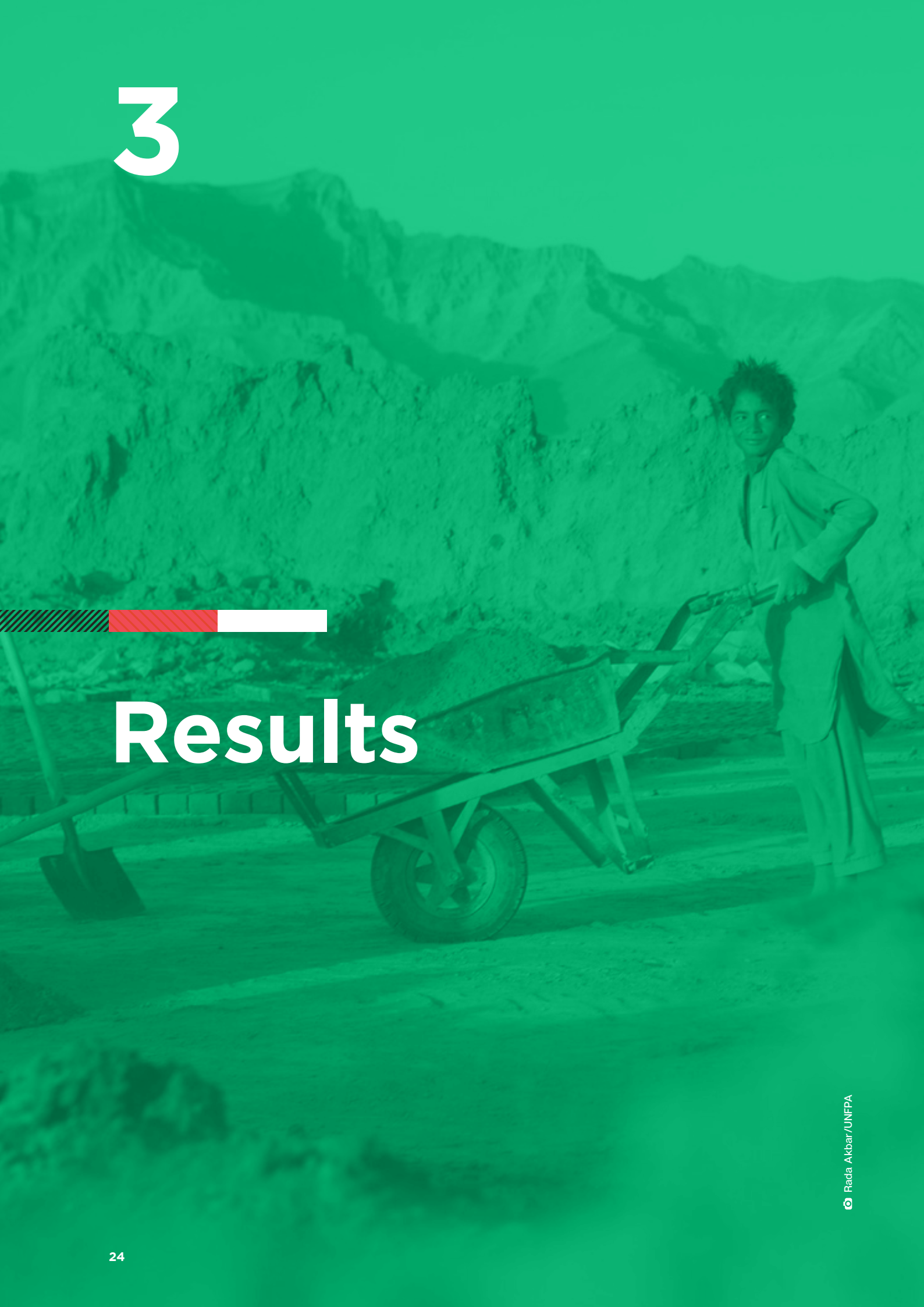
We also explore the distribution of employment of those who worked at any time during the 12 months preceding the survey. Employment can be categorized by type of industry, occupation and status in employment. Industry is the main economic activity carried out where work is performed while occupation is the main type of duties performed. All persons working in a given establishment are classified under the same industry irrespective of their particular occupations. Occupation, on the other hand, brings together individuals working in similar types of work. The status in employment classifies jobs with respect to the type of explicit or implicit contract of employment. The basic criteria for status in employment related to the type of economic risk and authority over the establishment and other workers. Thus, the main groups used for this purpose are employers, own-account workers, employees, and unpaid family workers (OIT, LABOURSTA Internet).

SDES data allows the classification of the type of industry using the International Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (ISIC-version 2) and the main occupation according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). In this report we use the first digit classification to group the occupation as well as the types of industry.

Finally, it is noted that the economically active population and employment estimates are presented for each of the six provinces. To buffer statistical variance, whenever necessary, we present aggregate estimates from the combination of all samples, which we call aggregate provinces from here on.

3

Results



Rada Akbar/UNFPA

Economically active population profiles

TABLE 1

Percent of the population 15 years old and over by economic status (Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)

		Male	Female	Total
% of population aged 15 and older who worked in the 12 months prior to survey	Kabul	68.99	6.46	39.05
	Bamiyan	69.86	25.36	48.68
	Daykundi	68.15	15.09	42.38
	Ghor	81.61	23.02	53.73
	Kapisa	56.55	11.13	34.12
	Parwan	57.64	6.31	32.74
% of population aged 15 and older who did not work or worked less than 6 months and actively seek	Kabul	8.84	6.11	7.53
	Bamiyan	29.91	60.27	44.35
	Daykundi	12.57	32.36	20.71
	Ghor	10.45	23.99	16.89
	Kapisa	12.03	13.29	12.65
	Parwan	6.75	5.29	6.04
% of those who worked	Kabul	2.3	3.6	2.4
	Bamiyan	6.0	16.5	7.5
	Daykundi	8.9	24.9	10.0
	Ghor	7.6	22.2	9.4
	Kapisa	6.9	22.6	8.8
	Parwan	3.7	14.0	4.5

Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

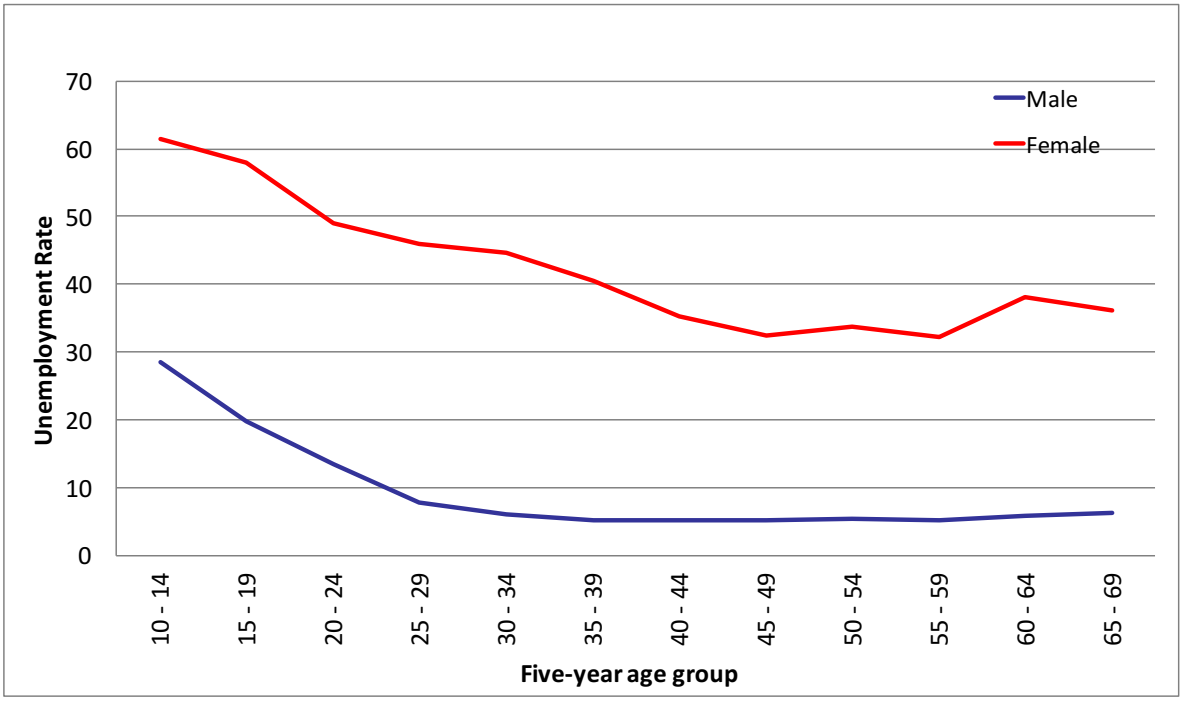
Several studies of the Afghan labour market have pointed out the huge gap in participation levels between women and men. The level of unemployment for women is much higher than for men. Table 1 supports these findings for all six provinces. In particular, the proportion of men who worked in the previous 12 months is higher for Ghor province, where agriculture is the bedrock of the economy. On the other end of the spectrum is Parwan, whose population is highly urban.

In Bamiyan, Daykundi and Ghor, and particularly amongst women, the proportion of the working age population who did not work, or had worked for less than six months and were actively seeking work, or were available for work, is very high. This reflects in part the particularity of the available information which reports a long-term job search, and also the difficulty women face in finding stable and long-term jobs. As Figure 2 shows, this is more evident for younger women.

As Table 1 shows, the percentage of those who have worked less than six months is quite high (except in Kabul) and is higher for women than for men. Moreover, as employment conditions in rural areas are directly related to the agricultural season, the provinces with the highest proportion of rural population (Ghor, Daykundi and Bamiyan) have higher proportions of the working age population seeking or available for work, especially among women.

FIGURE 2

Percentage of those who actively sought work or were available for work but did not seek it, by age group and sex (Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)



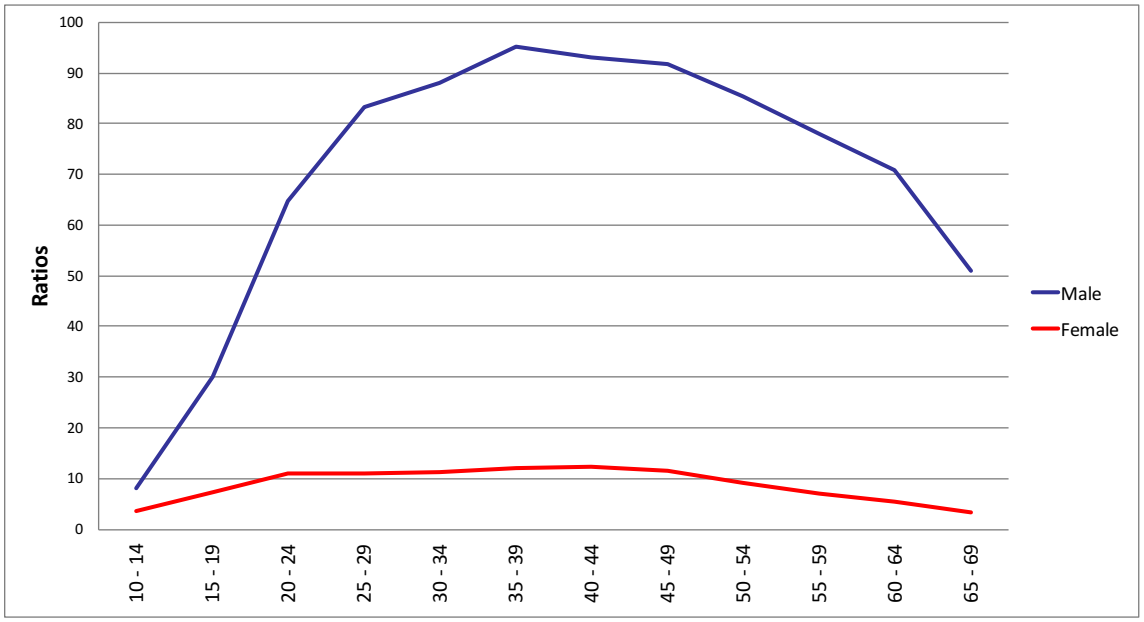
Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

Usually active population to the population of working age ratio

Despite the differences in the level of the usually active population to the population of working age ratios, age profiles tend to be similar among provinces. For this reason, it is useful to present the mean profile of the aggregates, which illustrate the marked difference in these ratios for men and women (Figure 3). While the level and shape of the curve of the male profile does not differ much from that in other countries, the female profile is flat across all ages, only just exceeding 10 percent even at the most productive ages.

FIGURE 3

Usually active population to the population of working age ratio, by age group and sex (aggregate for Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)



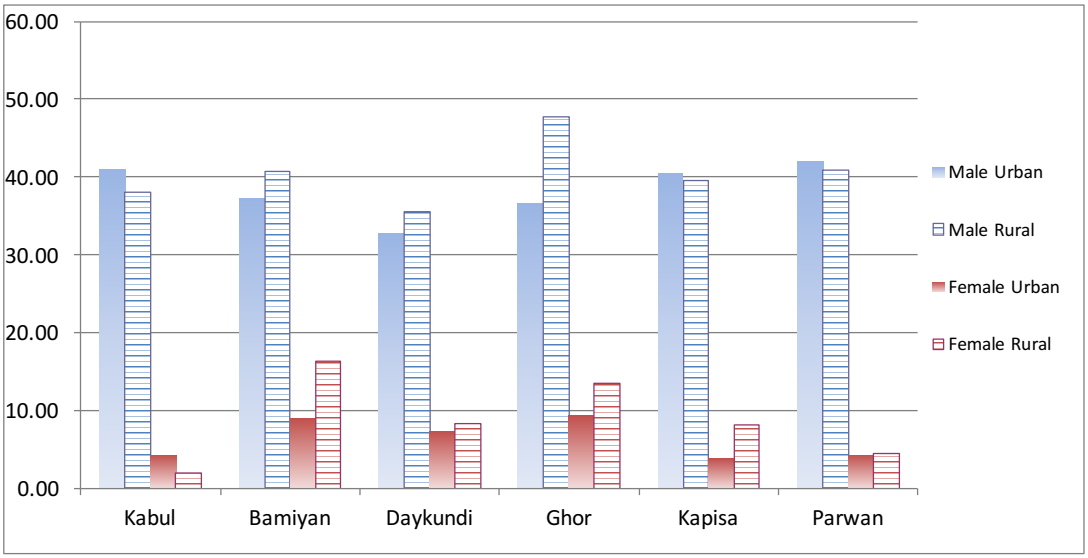
Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

Usually active population to the population of working age ratio by residence area

The usually active population to population in working age ratio by residence area helps to better grasp differences in the levels of economic activity among all provinces. Typically, and for women and for the youth and elderly in particular, this ratio tends to be higher in rural areas, where agricultural labour favours family work. Male activity ratios in rural areas are higher than in urban areas for Bamiyan, Daykundi, and Ghor, which also have a higher level of rural population. These differences are also notably higher for female participation ratios in rural areas than in urban areas, except in Kabul, whose proportion of population in rural areas is only 22 percent (Figure 4). The age profiles of the usually active population to population in working age ratio by area of residence shows that the level of economic activity is higher for the youth and the elderly among males, whereas for women their participation rate in the rural area is independent of age (Figure 5).

FIGURE 4

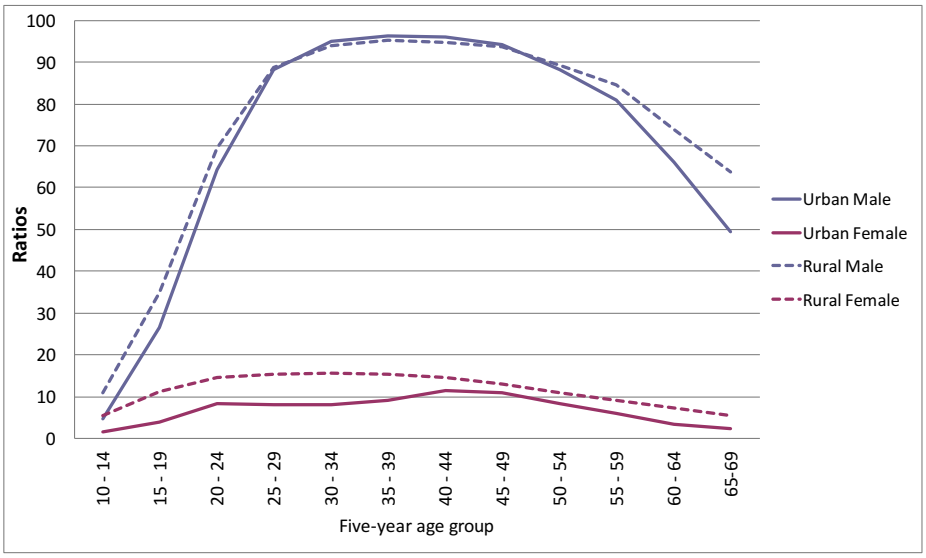
Ratio of usually active population to the population of working age, by sex, residence area and province (Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)



Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

FIGURE 5

Usually active population to population in working age ratio, by age group, residence and sex (aggregate for Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)



Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

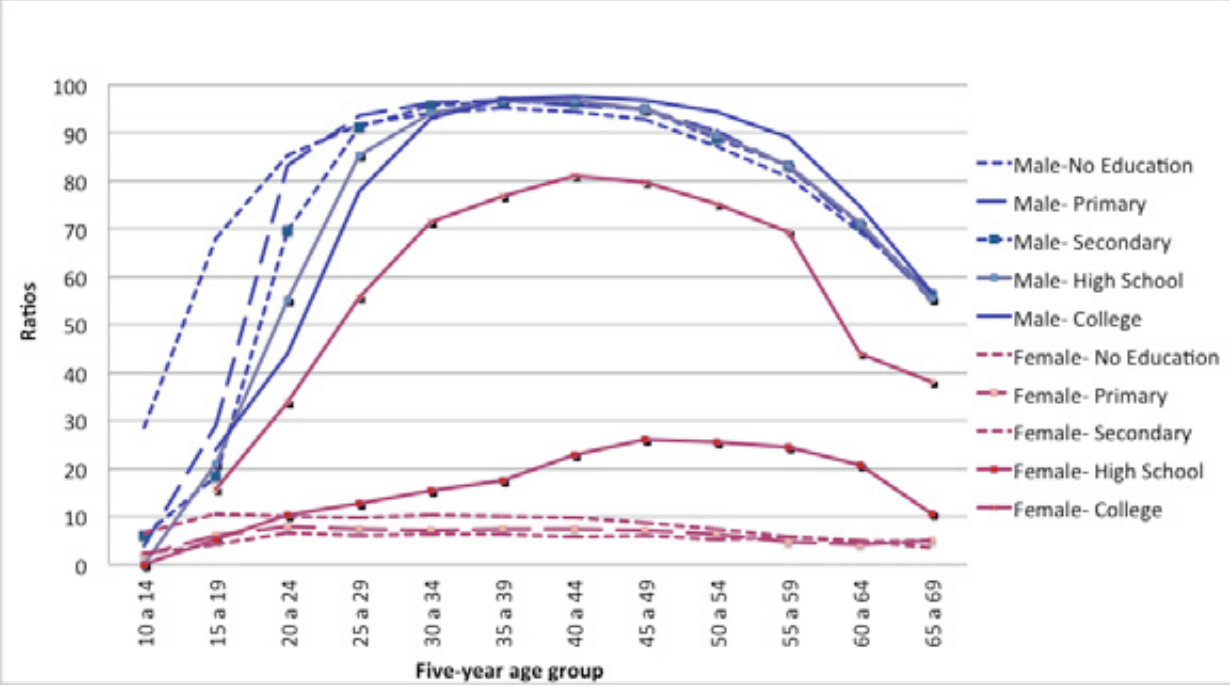
Usually active population-to-population in working age ratio by education

Figure 6 shows how education is strongly related to female economic activity. In Afghanistan, only a minority of women complete secondary education, and even fewer complete higher education. For those who do complete higher levels of education the ratio of usually active population to population in working age is similar to that in developed countries.3 It is important to note that these women, despite their high economic participation, are strongly segregated when it comes to their occupational profile, which is generally restricted to typically female occupations such teaching, as discussed below.

Since the Afghanistan economy is strongly grounded in agricultural activities and urban activities of low productivity, for males education is not an important factor in determining levels of occupation, as occurs in more developed countries. The main difference, when it comes to male activity ratios, is that higher levels of education determine lower levels of active population to working age population ratios at younger ages, while capital formation is underway. Higher levels of education also determine higher levels of economic activity at older ages, as the more educated suffer less loss in productive labour capacity with age.

FIGURE 6

Usually active population to population in working age ratio by education, age groups and sex (aggregate for Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)



Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

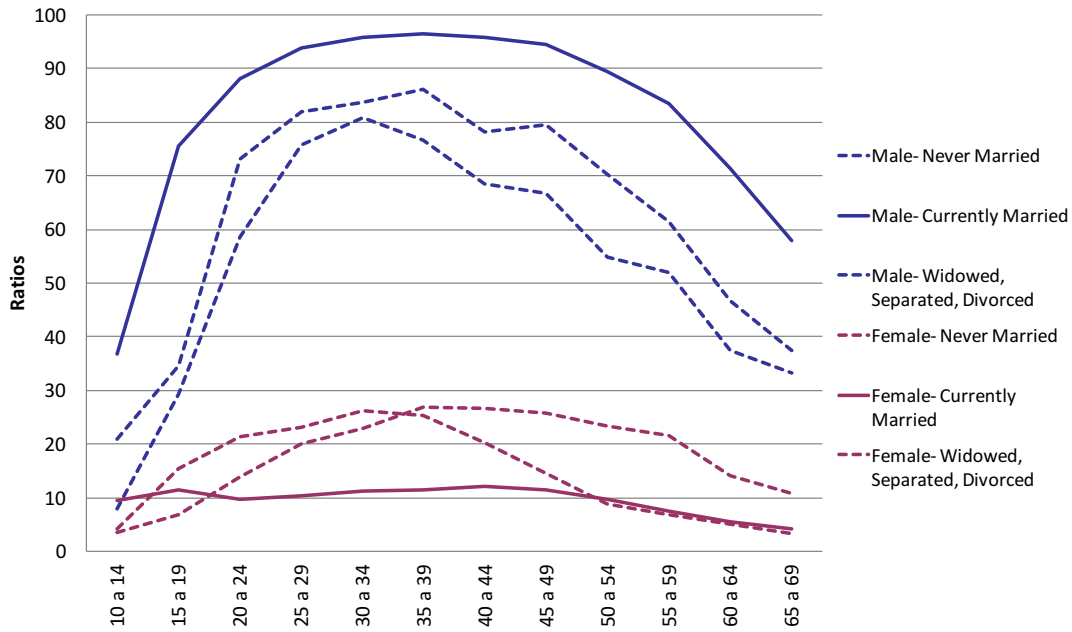
3 See International Labour Organization Statistics and databases.

Usually active population to population in working age ratio by marital status

The age profile of the usually active population to population in working age ratio, by marital status (Figure 7) describes the restrictions on female economic activity in the Afghanistan context. While married men have the highest share of economic activity, never married women have higher ratios compared to widowed, separated and divorced women; this increases with age. The profile for married women coincides with the profile observed for all women, as the majority of adult women are married (81 percent of women aged 20+ years in the six provinces) and present an extremely low activity ratio which is steady and flat at all ages. Separated, divorced and widowed women showed a higher level of economic activity, increasing with age, but this rapidly decreases from 40 years of age. The early decline of the economic activity of these women is possibly due to the fact that most have children who provide financial support for their mothers.

FIGURE 7

Usually active population to population in working age ratio, by marital status, age group and sex (aggregate for Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)



Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

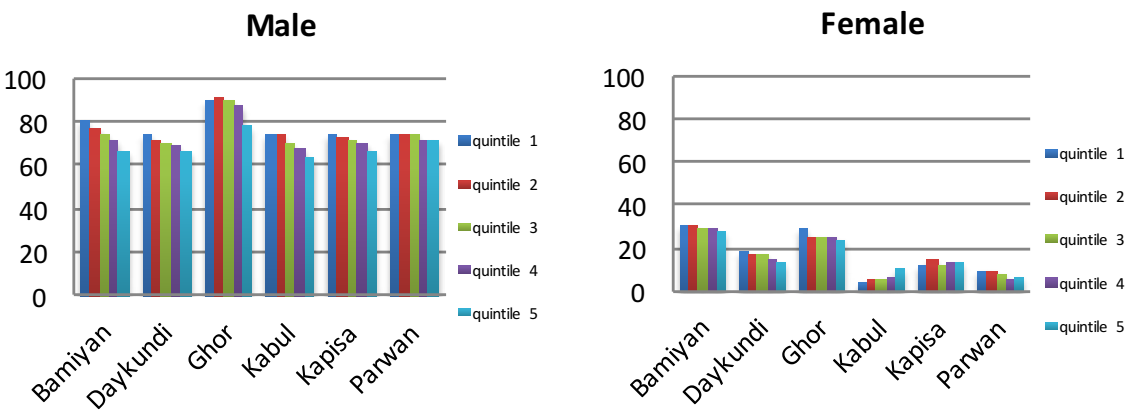
Usually active population to population in working age ratio, by wealth quintile

Figure 8 shows the distribution of the usually active population-to population in working age ratios by wealth quintiles in Afghanistan provinces. As expected, wealth decreases the level of economic participation of men in all provinces. For women the trend is less clear. In most cases, greater wealth is associated with lower participation. However, women in the highest income quintile are the most

usually active in Kabul. This is because female occupations in Kabul's urban context require a higher level of education, which wealthier families are more likely to achieve.

FIGURE 8

Usually active population to population in working age ratio, by wealth quintile, sex and province (Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)



Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

Employment distribution of the usually economic active population

Table 2 shows the employment distribution in Afghanistan along three dimensions: economic sector of employment or industry groups (first panel); occupational groups (second panel) and status in employment (third panel). As for the distribution of employment by industry sector, except in Kabul, the agricultural sector is the most important in every province. It is particularly dominant in Bamiyan, Daykundi and Ghor where it absorbs over 60 percent of employment. In Kabul, community, social and personal services – including public administration – are the major employers, and are the second largest sector in Kapisa and Parwan. Construction is also a very important sector in Kapisa and Parwan.

In the occupational group distribution, again, with exception of Kabul, agricultural workers represent the majority of workers. Elementary occupations are also very important in Ghor and Parwan, while services and sale workers and craft and related trades workers are among the most important occupations in Kapisa and Parwan. Kabul is essentially an urban province and its economically active population is divided into occupations related to trade, services and elementary occupations. As the largest city and the national capital, Kabul (along with Kapisa) is the main employer of managers, legislators, officers and science professionals.

In Kabul, Bamiyan, Kapisa and Parwan, the employment status shows a majority of employees. In Daykundi and Ghor the majority are self-employed, possibly because these provinces have the largest share of people living in rural areas, where agriculture is the main sector. For the same reason, Ghor and Bamiyan have the largest share of family workers. Interestingly, Ghor and Bamiyan have the highest female economic participation (Table 1). Currently active females as family workers have the

largest relative participation. In these provinces the female participation in economic activity is higher, but their work is largely confined to domestic spaces.

TABLE 2

Employment distribution by occupational group, industry group and status in employment (Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)

EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION BY INDUSTRY, OCUPATIONAL GROUPS AND STATUS IN EMPLOYMENT (%)

INDUSTRY GROUPS	KABUL	BAMIYAN	DAYKUNDI	GHOR	KAPISA	PARWAN
Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry and Fishing	5,0	68,0	67,7	74,4	36,6	35,8
Mining and Quarryng	0,4	0,5	0,4	0,0	0,2	0,4
Manufacturing	9,7	8,8	5,6	6,3	4,7	6,2
Eletricity, Gas and Water	0,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,1	0,1
Construction	12,7	1,5	0,0	1,7	14,5	11,3
Wholesale and Retail Trade	19,5	3,0	3,4	2,6	8,0	10,5
Transport, Storage and Communication	11,5	3,4	1,9	0,6	3,9	7,3
Financing, Insurance, Business Serv.	2,7	0,7	13,8	0,5	0,7	1,2
Community, Social and Personal Services	38,1	14,1	7,2	13,8	31,3	27,1
TOTAL	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
WORKING POPULATION	862.678	82.090	113.721	234.275	68.081	148.646

OCUPATIONAL GROUPS	KABUL	BAMIYAN	DAYKUNDI	GHOR	KAPISA	PARWAN
Managers, legislators and officers	4,5	1,2	0,5	0,2	5,5	1,9
Professionals of science	10,1	4,0	2,6	2,5	8,1	6,2
Technicians and associate professionals	3,9	1,0	0,5	0,8	4,7	3,1
Clerks	4,8	1,1	0,2	0,4	0,7	0,5
Services and sales workers	24,5	9,8	6,2	3,5	14,6	18,8
Agricultural and fishery workers	4,5	63,1	66,4	39,0	35,2	31,1
Craft and related trades workers	15,4	7,5	7,4	13,4	16,4	10,4
Plant and machine operators	10,1	3,2	1,9	1,2	3,9	6,4
Elementary occupations	22,2	9,0	14,3	39,1	10,9	21,6
TOTAL	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
WORKING POPULATION	862.678	82.090	113.721	234.275	68.081	148.646

STATUS IN EMPLOYMENT	KABUL	BAMIYAN	DAYKUNDI	GHOR	KAPISA	PARWAN
Employer	1,3	2,8	0,4	2,8	0,9	0,6
Employee	60,9	42,1	42,0	38,3	50,7	49,4
Self employed	35,9	34,2	51,3	41,2	39,2	42,5
Family worker	1,8	20,8	6,3	17,7	9,3	7,5
TOTAL	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
WORKING POPULATION	862.678	82.090	113.721	234.275	68.081	148.646

Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

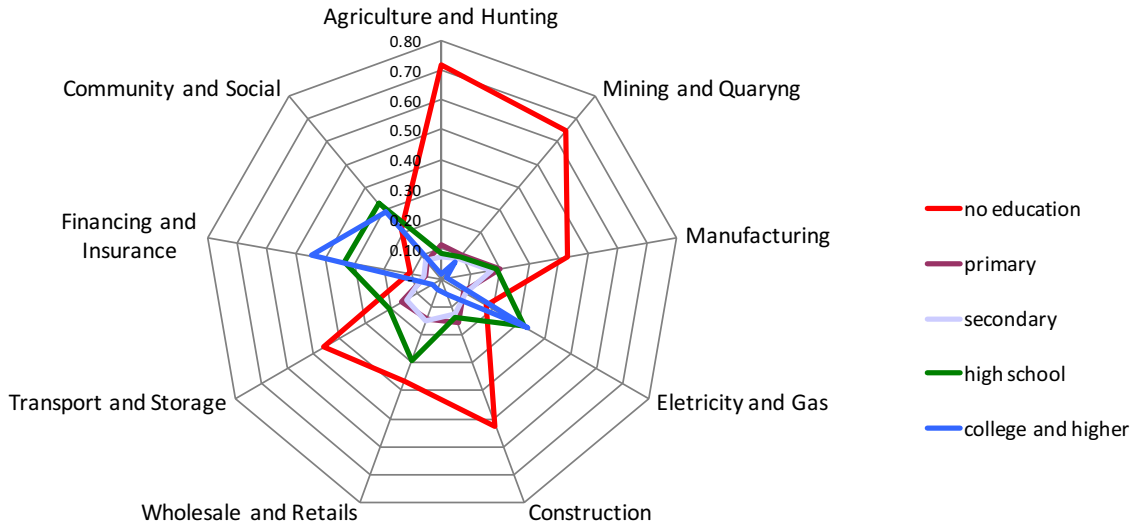
Human capital stock is extremely low in Afghanistan and despite educational improvements in the younger cohorts, the education deficit remains very high compared to countries at the same level of economic development. Poor human capital endowments constrain the potential growth of the country. The educational gap in strategic sectors for economic growth is particularly challenging (Government of Afghanistan, 2013).

Figure 9 shows the educational level of workers by sector of economic activity in Kabul. Even with the best level of education among the six provinces surveyed in the SDES, there is a worrying concentration of workers with very low or no education in the strategic sectors of agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction, commerce, transport, storage and communication. A small portion of workers with a higher level of education appears only in sectors related to public administration and finances. Massive investment in education is crucial for a more productive and competitive workforce, and to develop an qualified labour supply is available for strategic sectors in the reconstruction and development of the country.

The relative prominence of women in the community, social and personal services sector is mainly due to their role in teaching, even in Kabul where the level of female education is the highest among the six provinces. Table 3 shows that the two most prevalent occupations for women in Kabul are "secondary education teacher" and "primary school and early childhood teacher".

FIGURE 9

Education level of workers by sector of economic activity (Kabul 2013)



Source: CSO Afghanistan, Kabul SDES 2013

TABLE 3

The most prevalent occupations for females (Kabul 2013)

Three digit occupational groups (ISCO-08)	%
Secondary education teachers	19.09
Primary school and early childhood teachers	15.24
General office clerks	5.27
Handicraft workers	11.07
Garment and related trades workers	8.70
Domestic, hotel and office cleaners and helpers	4.59
Total	**63.96**

Source: CSO Afghanistan, Kabul SDES 2013

Figures 10 and 11 show the proportion of males and females by activity sector (Figure 10) and by occupation group (Figure 11), indicating the degree of gender segregation in the Afghan labour market. The percentage of females in all sectors of economic activity and all occupation groups is extremely low. The highest proportion of female workers is observed in manufacturing, community, social and personal services in Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi and Ghor. In Kapisa and Parwan, the sectors with the highest percentage of women are manufacturing and agriculture. These findings support the assertion that "in addition to taking care of the family, women in Afghanistan are visible in three sectors – agriculture, animal husbandry and handicraft work" (Srinivas, Tavva et al, 2013).

A closer look at the proportion of females in occupational groups for all six provinces (Figure 11), shows the relative importance of women as professionals of science (where teaching activities are placed) in Kabul and Parwan. In the other provinces, the occupational groups with the highest female participation demand lower educational levels (elementary occupations, plant and machine operators, craft and related trades workers and agricultural and fishery workers). Not surprisingly, in these provinces the percentage of women working as family workers is higher, indicating their lower integration into the monetary economy.

Children and young adults involved in economic activities

Two important topics within the decent work agenda are child labour and opportunities for youth. These are distinct but interconnected agendas, since youth opportunities largely depend on the conditions of childhood.

Children's or adolescents' participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere in their schooling is generally regarded as positive. This includes activities such as helping parents at home, assisting in the family business or earning pocket money outside school hours or during school holidays (ILO definitions of child labour). Thus, the term "child labour" should be defined as work that deprives children of their childhood and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that: (i) is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; (ii) interferes with their schooling; (iii) deprives them of the opportunity to attend school; (iv) obliges them to leave school prematurely; or (v) requires them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work (ILO). Measuring this type of work requires detailed data which is often not available, however, the literature suggests a simple proxy: the percentage of children not attending school. While universal school enrolment is a goal in its own right for child

welfare, there is a strong correlation between school non-enrolment and economic activity of children (Anker, et al. 2002). In this report, therefore, we analyse this measure as much as the percentage of children working before they reach 15 years of age, Afghanistan's minimum legal age of employment.

Regarding opportunities for youth, the indicators for the decent work agenda include, along with the labour force participation rate, unemployment rates and underemployment rate, the proportion of youth neither enrolled in school nor working. This is considered particularly relevant as youth in this category risk missing out on the opportunity to achieve economic self-sufficiency and multiple additional poor outcomes (Child Trends Data Bank, 2015).

In this report, data on school enrolment and work for the population aged 5–29 years was analysed by age and sex for the six provinces (Figure 12). A significant proportion of children between 5 and 17 years of age are not attending school as they should. In all provinces this proportion declines until 11 years of age, and then starts to increase. As the Thematic Report on Education shows, Kapisa has the highest attendance rates for children aged 7–12 years, followed by Kabul. This is apparent also in Figure 12. The Thematic Report on Education also found that the lowest gender gap in school attendance occurs in Daykundi, but girls have lower overall school enrolment than boys.

Work is increasingly important for males starting in their teens and, in Afghanistan (unlike other countries) this means withdrawal from school, since very few youngsters both work and study. The extremely high proportion of young males who are not in school or work is particularly striking in Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan. For girls, the situation is even more critical. In all six provinces the proportion of girls in school is lower than boys (with the exception of Daykundi, where the educational gender gap is lower) and peaks at 11 years of age; in the extreme case, Ghor, the peak is as low as 40 percent. At older ages the presence of girls at school declines substantially and there is no parallel increase in their economic activity, which is minimal among girls and young women except in Bamiyan, which has the highest level of female labour participation, and where one sees the highest percentage of young females who only work.

If Afghanistan aims to invest in opportunities for its youth as a means of propelling sustainable growth and socioeconomic development, it is of paramount urgency to have universal school access and to foster specific policies for female inclusion and school retention. It is necessary to better understand the determinants of the high proportion of young people who neither work nor study, in order to create opportunities for human capital accumulation for these youngsters.

Synthesis and discussion

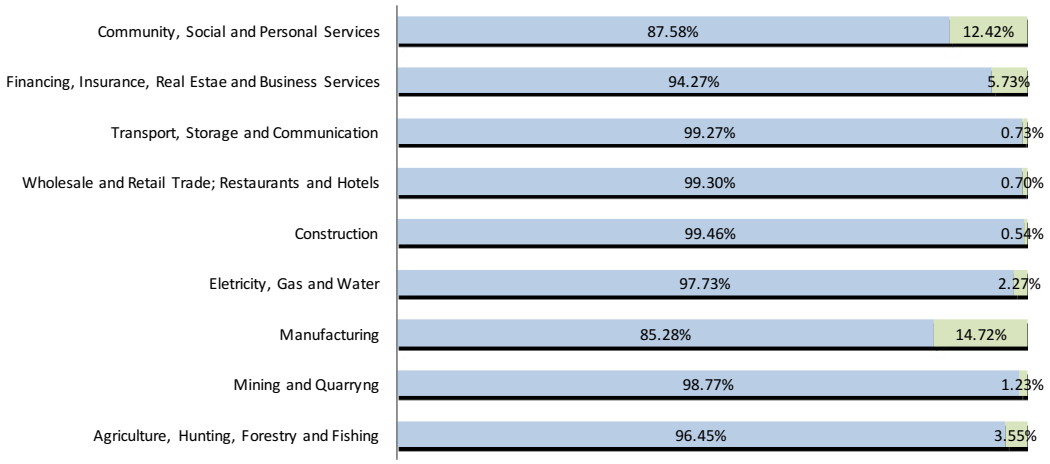
To summarize the main results of this report a set of key decent work indicators in Table 4 was presented, including indicators of employment opportunities, quality of employment, children and youth, and gender inequality in the workforce in the SDES survey for six provinces. As shown in earlier studies, the Afghanistan labour market is characterized by the dominance of the agriculture sector, the underrepresentation of women and relatively few opportunities for young people. The ratio of economic activity is low, mainly because of the exclusion of women from the workforce. The proportion of the working age population who are seeking or available for work (but not actively seeking) is high, reflecting seasonality and the instability of women's work. There is a large share of workers who are self-employed or family workers, pointing toward the high level of informality in the labour market, which is, again, associated with the importance of the agricultural sector in the economy.

The indicators related to childhood and youth show a high prevalence of children out of school. The vast majority of these children are not working, except in Bamiyan, where about 5.7 percent are not in school but are working. Youth unemployment is very high (17.0–31.3 percent), but even worse is the proportion of young people who do not work or study, and account for over 50 percent in some provinces. With respect to gender inequality, the indicators confirm that women's participation in visible economic activity is low (6.4–12.7 percent). Unemployment rates are higher among women than men, and women are strongly segregated from the more skilled occupations.

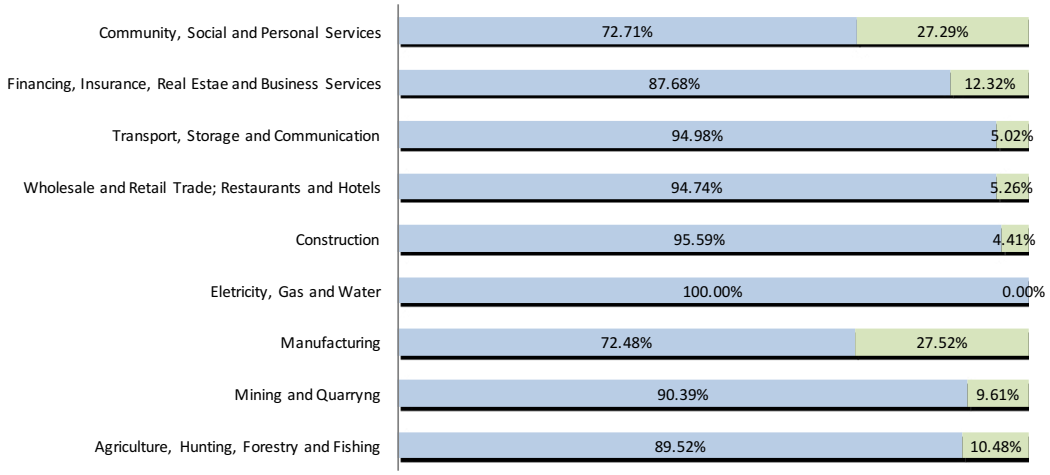
FIGURE 10

Proportion of males and females by sector of economic activity (Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)

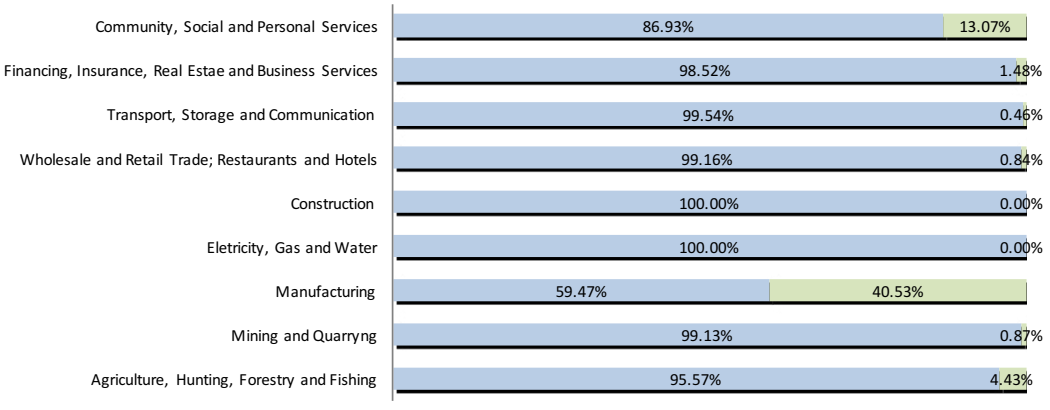
KABUL



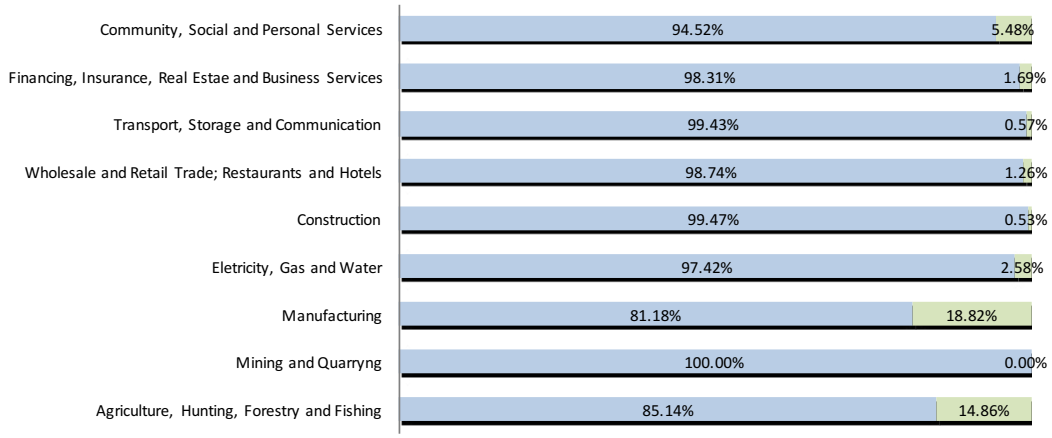
BAMIYAN



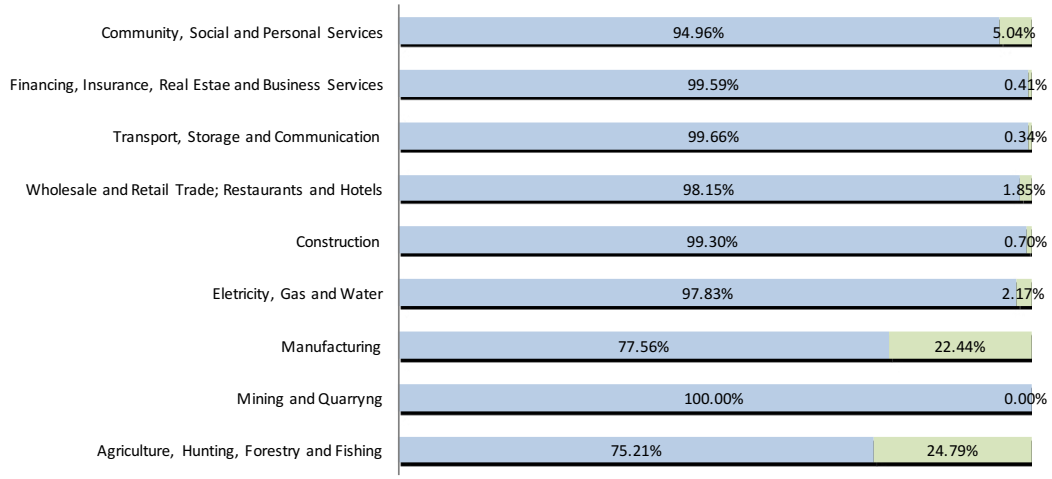
DAYKUNDI



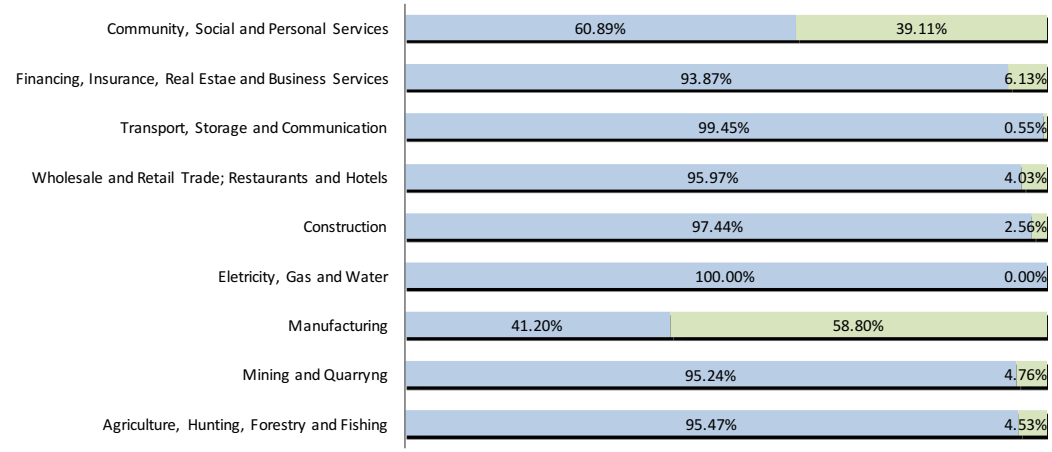
PARWAN



KAPISA



GHOR

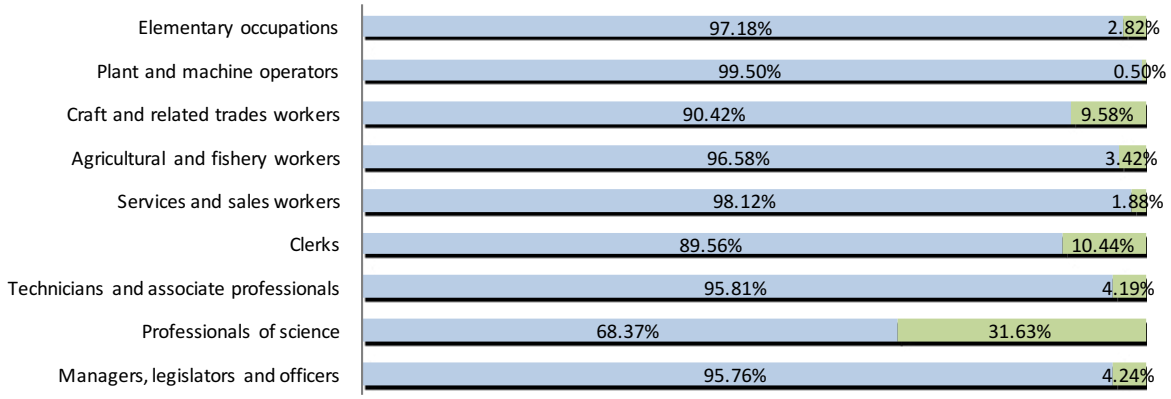


Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

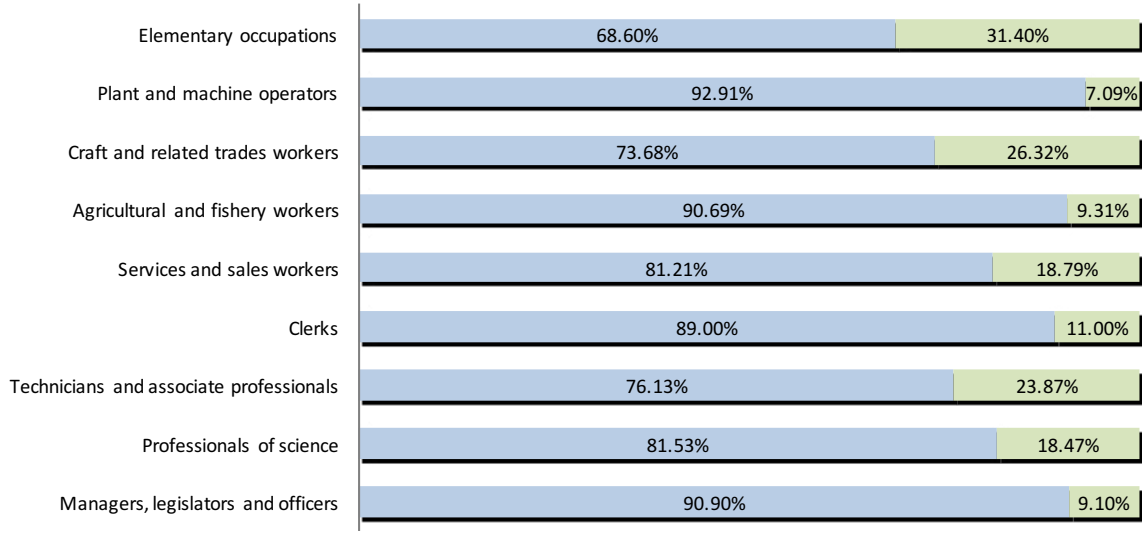
FIGURE 11

Proportion of males and females by occupational group (Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)

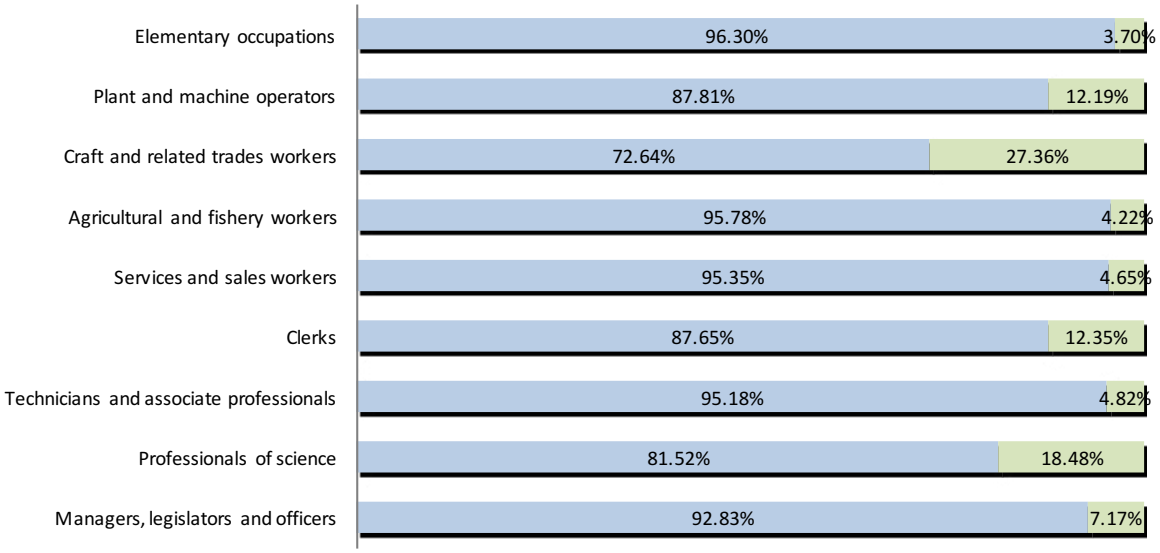
KABUL



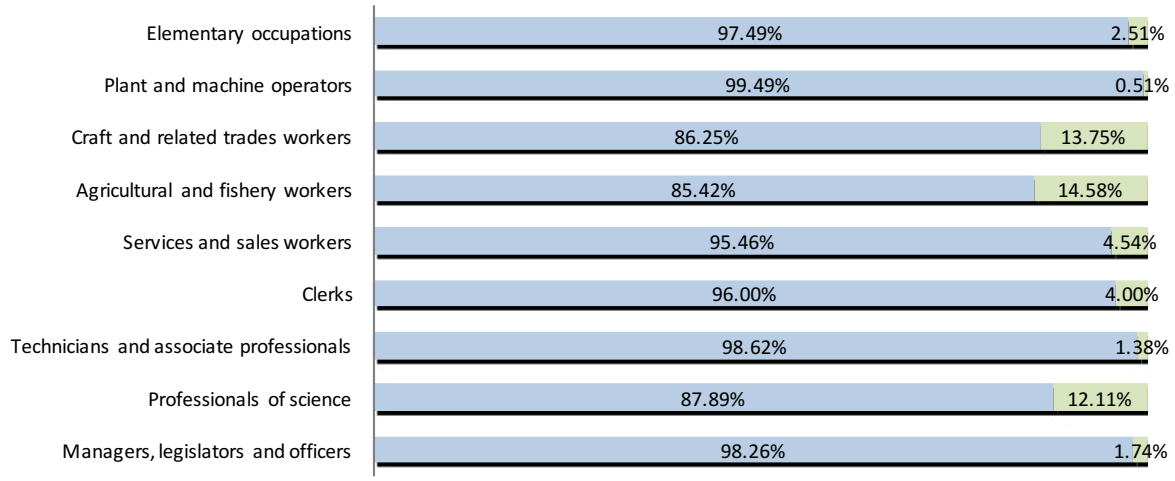
BAMIYAN



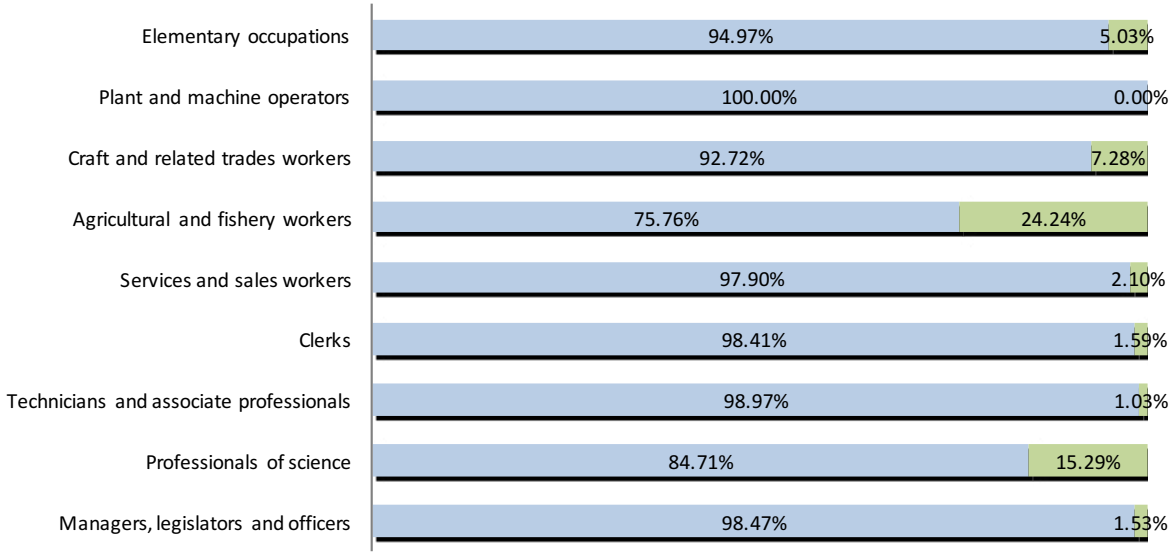
DAYKUNDI



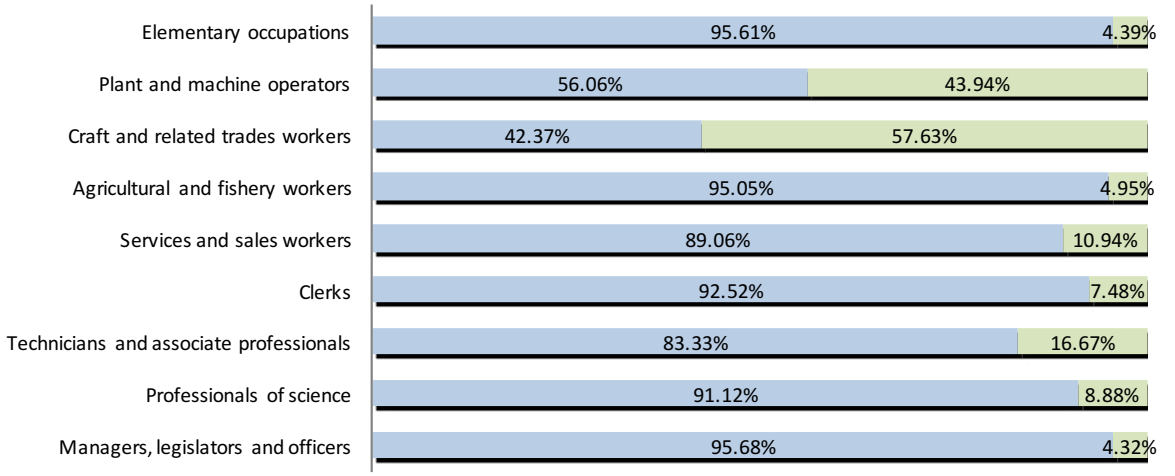
PARWAN



KAPISA



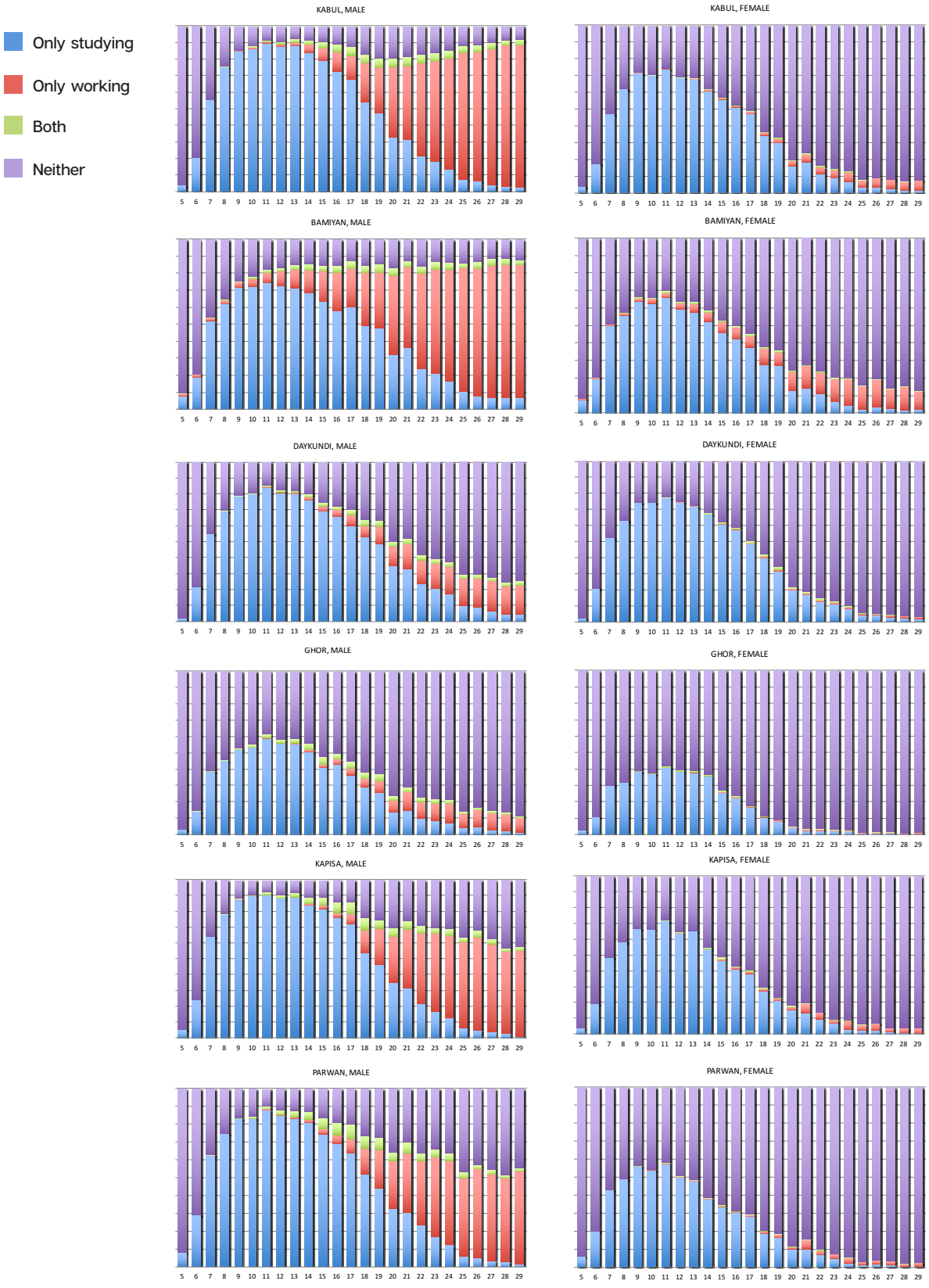
GHOR



Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

FIGURE 12

Economic activity and school attendance by age group and sex (Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)



Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

TABLE 4

Decent work indicators by province (Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa and Parwan 2011–2014)

Key Decent Work indicators	Kabul	Bamiyan	Daykundi	Ghor	Kapisa	Parwan
Employment opportunities						
Usually active population-to-population in working age ratio	39.4	50.5	42.7	56.1	42.1	41.5
% of population seeking or available to work	7.5	44.3	20.7	16.9	17.3	6.1
Employment -to-population ratio	35.4	38.2	32.9	44.6	28.2	29.7
Quality of employment						
% of self-employed and family worker	37.8	53.5	57.6	58.9	48.5	49.9
% of employment in agriculture sector	5.0	68.0	67.7	74.4	36.6	35.8
Children and Youth						
% Children not in school (5-17 years-old)	38.3	46.8	39.7	64.3	38.8	45.0
% Children working and not in shool (5-15 years-old)	1.9	5.7	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.8
Youth unemployment rate (15-24 years-old)	18.1	30.6	31.3	22.3	30.2	17.0
% of youth neither studing nor working (15-24 years-old)	39.9	38.5	50.5	76.8	47.6	58.0
Gender inequality						
Share of women in total employment, %	6.8	14.0	6.4	12.7	12.0	8.2
Ratio of female / male unemployment rate	2.9	6.5	6.6	7.5	3.2	3.4
% of women in high-skilled occupations	49.6	6.0	7.9	1.8	11.0	9.5

Source: CSO Afghanistan, SDES 2011-2014

Table 4 also casts light on the differences across the six provinces. Kabul has the smallest proportion of employment in the agriculture sector among the six provinces examined, and a more dynamic economy with smaller rates of people seeking work, self-employment and family workers. The best opportunities for the youth are in Kabul. Despite the lower economic activity ratios in Kabul, the proportion of women in highly skilled occupations is the largest (49.6 percent). On the opposite end, Ghor shows much worse key indicators of decent work. The traditional agricultural sector is by far the largest employer and there are very few opportunities (jobs and schooling) for children, youth and women.

The labour analysis is limited by the data available from the SDES exercise in these six provinces. For a more accurate view of the labour market in Afghanistan, additional data would be required, including hours worked, earnings (in cash or in kind), other sources of income, labour costs, among others.

4

Recommendations

Lorenzo Tugnoli

The key factors preventing the development of a productive and engaged labour force in Afghanistan are the low level of adult education; the low level of school attendance of boys and girls; the high prevalence of young adults out of both school and the workforce; and the exclusion of women from the labour force. Therefore, the main recommendations emerging from this report are:

- Although child labour is already prohibited by law, monitoring is required to prevent it.
- School attendance for boys and girls must be a national priority and should be closely monitored. Efforts should be made to ensure longer periods of attendance and higher levels of achievements.
- Career and technical education should be an alternative for young people who wish to improve the skills required by the labour market as it modernizes.
- The gender divide should be addressed in public policy. Besides investments in women's education, it is important to create specific policies to ensure that women are included in strategic economic activities such as education, health, transportation, commerce and services. The presence of women in key positions in these sectors will create greater opportunities for other women to circulate through public spaces and participate actively in society.
- Since agriculture is the main employer in Afghanistan, the sector's productivity should be raised by investing massively in production, transport and commercialization.

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د ملګرو ملتونو د وګړو صندوق

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