Decent Work

International Labour Organization

AFGHANISTAN

EMPLOYMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY FACT SHEETS 2019

The Employment and Environmental Sustainability Fact Sheets series provides key features of employment and environmental sustainability performance. Jobs that are green and decent are central to sustainable development and resource productivity. They respond to the global challenges of environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion. Such jobs create decent employment opportunities, enhance resource efficiency and build low-carbon, sustainable societies. The fact sheets include the most recently available data for selected indicators on employment and environmental sustainability: (i) employment in environmentalsectors;(ii) skill levels; (iii) vulnerability of jobs; (iv) jobs in renewable energy; (v) scoring on the Environmental Performance Index; and (vi) air quality.

DEMOGRAPHICS

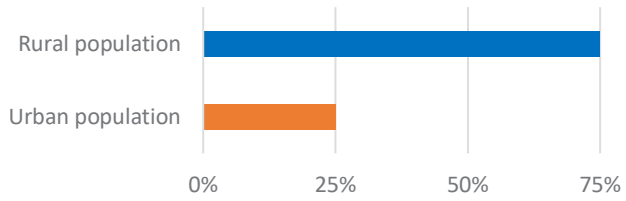
Afghanistan[1] is a landlocked country located at the crossroads of Central, South and West Asia (Fig. 1). Its population is mostly rural and growing, with a fertility rate of 4.3 children and life expectancy of 64.4 years. Around 54 per cent of the population is of legal working age (15–64 years) (Fig. 2).

Figure 1. Map of Afghanistan

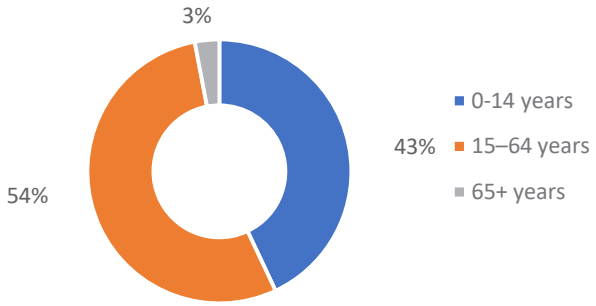
Figure 2. Afghanistan population statistics

Population:[2] 35.5 million

Population growth rate	Fertility rate	Life expectancy at birth
2.5%	**4.3 children**	**64.4 years**



Population age categories



Note: Data is for 2017, except fertility rate and life expectancy (2018 data).

Source: ILO compilation using World development indicators, last updated: 28/06/2018; http://databank.worldbank.org (accessed on 29 October 2018).

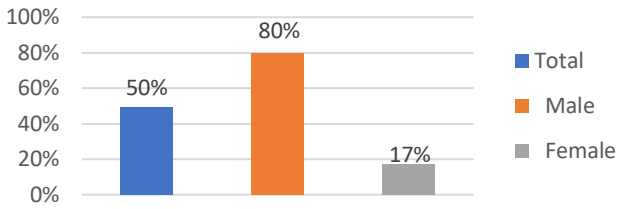
[1] Afghanistan became a member of the International Labour Organisation in 1934.
[2] Population data based on 2017 data.

LABOUR FORCE

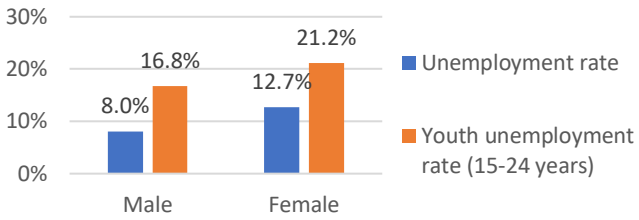
In 2018, the labour force participation rate was 54.2 per cent and the employment-to-population ratio was 49.5 per cent. Both these rates are more than 61 to 62 percentage points higher for men than for women. The total unemployment rate in 2018 was 8.84 per cent, and the youth unemployment rate was 17.7 per cent, with the female unemployment rate for this group being 4.37 percentage points higher than the male rate. Employment is heavily reliant on agriculture, and on medium-skilled occupations (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Basic employment statistics for Afghanistan, 2018

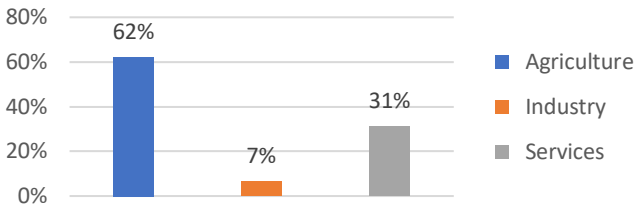
Employment-to-population, 2018 (15+ years)



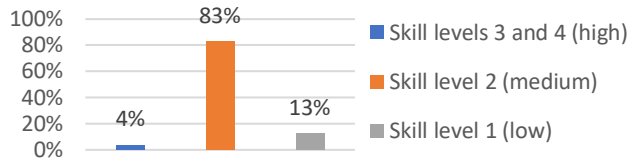
Unemployment, 2018



Employment by sector, 2018 (15+ years)



Employment by occupation, 2018

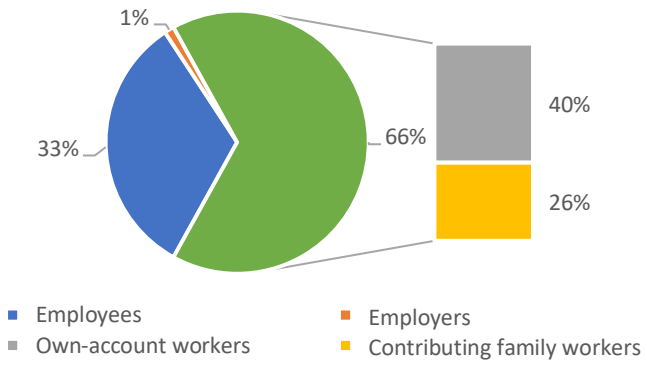


Note: ILO estimates. Labour force participation rate and unemployment: aged 15 years and older. Youth unemployment: aged 15–24 years. Employment by occupation: skill level 1 (low) for elementary occupations; skill level 2 (medium) for clerical, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural and trade workers, plant machinists and assemblers; and skill levels 3 and 4 (high) for managers, professionals and technicians.

Source: ILO estimates and compilation using ILOSTAT, www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed 29 October 2018).

Vulnerable employment in Afghanistan as of 2018 accounted for 66.1 per cent of the labour force, with the majority of those workers having own-account status (Fig. 4). Own-account and contributing family workers are more likely to experience lower job and income security than employees and employers, as well as lower coverage by social protection systems and employment regulation.

Figure 4. Vulnerable employment, 2018

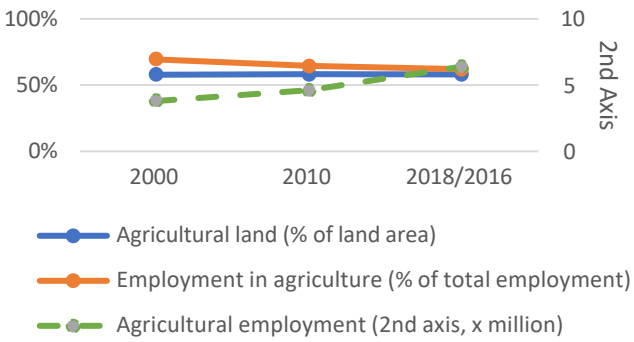


Note: ILO estimates. Vulnerable employment includes own-account workers and contributing family workers from ILO status of employment data.

Source: ILO estimates and compilation using ILOSTAT, www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed 29 October 2018).

Rural population growth was 2.2 per cent in 2017. The share of agricultural land in total land area remained steady between 2000 and 2016, while agricultural employment increased from 4 million to 6 million people. The share of agricultural employment within the total employment figure fell by approximately 7 percentage points due to much faster job creation in other sectors (Fig. 5).

Figure 5. Agricultural land and agricultural employment, 2000-2018



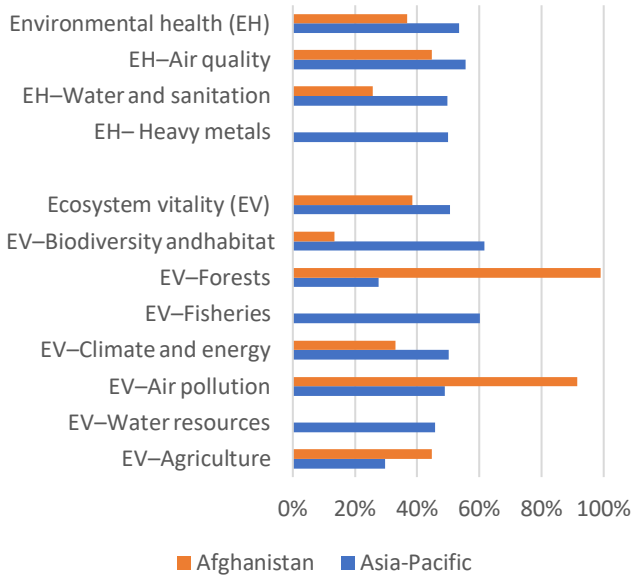
Note: data for agricultural land is from 2016 other data is from 2018.

Source: ILO compilation using World development indicators, last updated: 28/06/2018; http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators# (accessed on 29 October 2018).

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Afghanistan ranks at number 168 of 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI)[3], with a score of 37.74 (with 0 being furthest from the high-performance benchmark target of 100). Afghanistan outperforms the average score for Asia and the Pacific (Fig. 6) in some of the EPI categories, including forests, air pollution and agriculture. However, there is room for improvement, especially in ecosystem vitality (biodiversity and habitat) and environmental health (water and sanitation). Action to address climate change and improve environmental health, ecosystem vitality and resilience to weather disasters all have the potential to provide job creation, green economy growth and innovation in Afghanistan.

Figure 6. Environmental performance index for Afghanistan, 2018

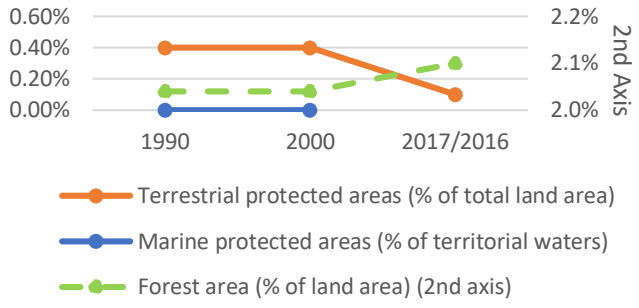


Note: Score 0 (worst) –100 (best). Asia-Pacific: data is for ILO member states in the region, excluding Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Palau and Tuvalu.

Source: ILO compilation using "2018 EPI Scores – current", EPI Yale.

Forest area remained fairly steady between 1990 and 2016. From 2000 to 2017, the share of terrestrial protected area decreased slightly down to 0.1 per cent of total land area, while the proportion of marine protected area remained steady (Fig. 7). There will be greater prospects for employment opportunities if there is a commitment to transition to a low-carbon and resource-efficient economy, such as jobs in resource management and environmental services.[4]

Figure 7. Forest area, terrestrial and marine protection area, 1990-2017

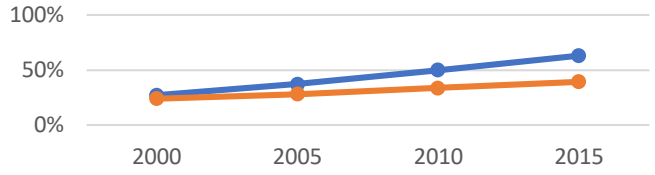


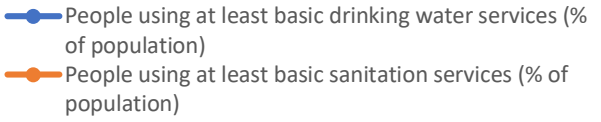
Note: Forest area data is from 2016 and other data is from 2017. Marine area data for 2017 is not available.

Source: ILO compilation using World development indicators, last updated: 28/06/2018; http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators# (accessed on 18 March 2019).

Since 2000, there has been a gradual increase in access to basic drinking water, to an average of 63 per cent in 2015, and access to basic sanitation, to an average of 39.2 per cent in 2015 (Fig. 8). Both are well below the ideal threshold of 100 per cent. Improvement in water supply and sanitation access could provide decent job opportunities in the future.

Figure 8. Basic drinking water and sanitation access, 2000-2015





Source: ILO compilation using World development indicators, last updated: 21/05/2018; http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators# (accessed on 29 October 2018).

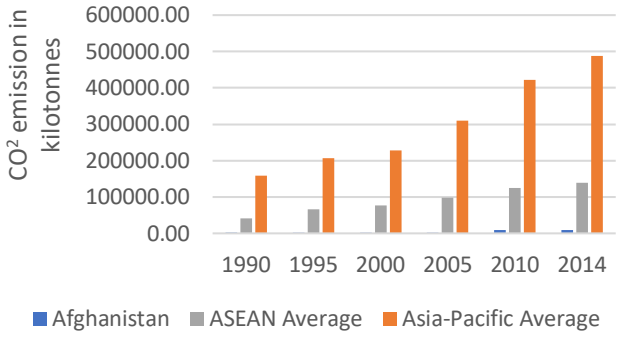
[3] Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy / Center for International Earth Science Information Network at Columbia University. "2018 EPI Scores – Current". EPI Yale. Retrieved 14-06-2018. Available: https"//epi.envirocenter.yale.edu.
[4] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: The jobs potential of a shift towards a low-carbon economy, OECD Green Growth Papers, No. 2012/01 (Paris, 2012),

AIR QUALITY

The carbon dioxide (CO^2) emission levels for Afghanistan have increased slightly by an average of 6 per cent from 1990 to 2014 (Fig. 9).[5] The increase was due primarily to two major sources: land-use change and forestry; followed by the energy sector.[6] The level of emissions is significantly lower than the Asia-Pacific and ASEAN averages.

The $PM_{2.5}$ (atmospheric particulate matter with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometres) emission levels for Afghanistan show a considerable rise from 1995 to 2016 (Fig. 10). Overall $PM_{2.5}$ emission levels exceeded the World Health Organization's Air Quality Guideline threshold level, thus indicating high emissions. Afghanistan also shows higher levels of emissions than the ASEAN and Asia-Pacific averages. The increase in $PM_{2.5}$ emissions in Afghanistan is due to windblown dust and dust storms, as well as local combustion sources such as open-pit refuse burning, compression ignition vehicles, aircraft engines, diesel electric generators, households and local industry.[7]

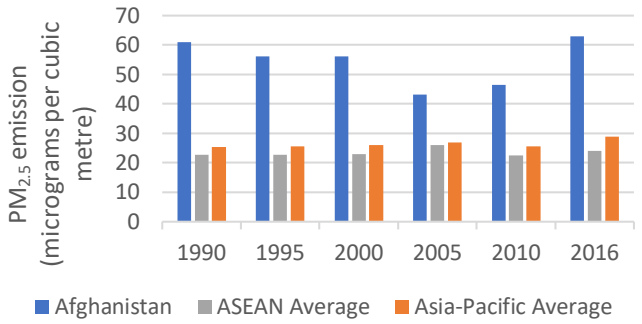
Figure 9. CO^2 emissions for Afghanistan, 1990-2014



Note: Data for ASEAN and Asia-Pacific are the average of all the ILO member states of the regions. Asia-Pacific data excludes Cook Islands and Timor-Leste (1990, 1995, 2000).

Source: ILO compilation using World Bank indicators; https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.KT?locations=IR (accessed on 29 October 2018).

Figure 10. $PM_{2.5}$ emissions for Afghanistan, 1990-2016



Note: Data for ASEAN and Asia-Pacific are the average of all the ILO member states of the regions. Asia-Pacific data excludes Cook Islands, Palau and Tuvalu.

Source: ILO compilation using World Bank indicators; https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.PM25.MC.M3?view=chart (accessed on 29 October 2018).

Applying the Just Transition Guidelines, an area of possible intervention includes efforts to reduce harmful emissions, which could potentially generate green jobs in high emitting sectors such as transportation and fuel-intensive industries. Reducing emissions is a significant challenge, which can be achieved not only by mitigation methods, but also by adapting to, and coping with, the changes required by the transition to a low-carbon economy.

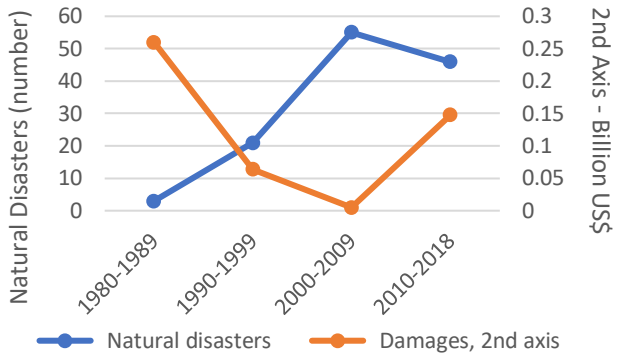
CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

According to the *World Risk Report*[8], Afghanistan has a high World Risk Index score. It ranks number 40 of 171 countries because of its high exposure to natural hazards and limited institutional capacity to cope with and adapt to these. According to the *Emergency Events Database*[9], there was a substantial increase in natural disasters[10] and associated damage costs between 2000 and 2018 (Fig. 11).

The natural disasters in that time were mostly floods, landslides, avalanches, heavy snowfall and earthquakes. Damage costs have increased significantly since 2000. Developing preventative measures to limit infrastructure and property damage and increase institutional capacity to respond to climate events, particularly for small businesses, can be a source of decent job creation while building resilience.

[5] The value is calculated on the basis of CAGR (compound annual growth rate)
[6] Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - Intended nationally determined contribution submission to the United Nations Framework convention on climate change, 21 September 2015 http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Afghanistan%20First/INDC_AFG_20150927_FINAL.pdf
[7] Use of visual range measurements to predict PM 2.5 exposures in Southwest Asia and Afghanistan https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5177516/
[8] Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and United Nations University – EHS (2017) World Risk Report 2017, available at: http://weltrisikobericht.de/english/
[9] EM-DAT: The emergency events database - Universite catholique de Louvain (UCL) - CRED, D. Guha-Sapir - www.emdat.be, Brussels, Belgium. Data accessed on: 20 July 2018.
[10] Climatological, hydrological and meteorological disasters.

Figure 11. Natural disaster occurrence and damage costs in Afghanistan

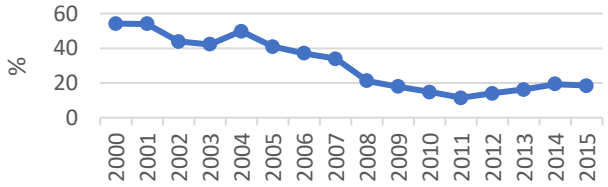


Note: Natural events include climatological, hydrological and meteorological disasters.

Source: EM-DAT: The emergency events database - Universite catholique de Louvain (UCL) - CRED, D. Guha-Sapir - www.emdat.be, Brussels, Belgium. Data accessed on: 29 October 2018.

In 2016, 32 per cent of the population relied primarily on clean fuel and technology, in the sense that these do not create pollution within the home.[11] The share of renewable energy in total energy consumption has not kept pace with overall consumption. In 2000, it was 54.2 per cent but fell to 14.8 per cent in 2010 and, after some fluctuation, reached 18.4 per cent in 2015 (Fig. 12). However, renewable energy electricity generation has increased over the last 16 years, with hydropower being the main renewable energy source in 2016 (Fig. 13). With the push for increasing reliance on renewable energy, there is the potential for decent job opportunities in the future.

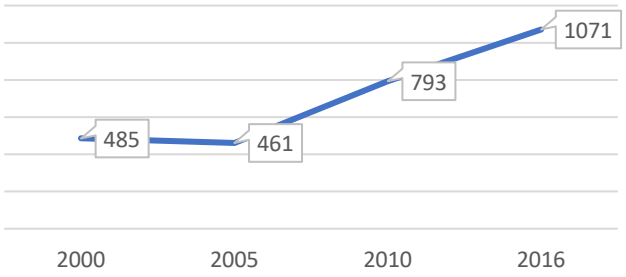
Figure 12. Renewable energy share in total energy consumption, 2000-15



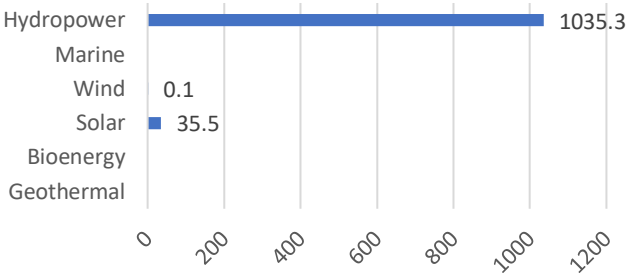
Source: ILO compilation using United Nations Statistics division. SDG indicators: Global database. Available at: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/ (accessed on 29 October 2018).

Figure 13. Renewable energy electricity generation, 2000-2016

Total renewable energy electricity generation (gigawatt hours - GWh)



Renewable energy electricity generation (GWh) in 2016, by technology



Source: ILO compilation using Source: IRENA (2018); Renewable electricity capacity and generation statistics, June 2018. Available at: http://resourceirena.irena.org

Better data collection relating to the green economy and the environmental sector would be very valuable for policy-makers in Asia-Pacific countries. In particular, better data on green and decent jobs is needed, to assess the impact of climate change and climate-related policies on social inclusion. Without better data it will be difficult to determine what policy changes are needed to ensure a just transition to environmental sustainability and to monitor progress going forward.

[11] The proportion of the population with a primary reliance on clean fuels and technology is calculated as being the number of people using clean fuels and technologies for cooking, heating and lighting divided by the total population reporting any cooking, heating or lighting, expressed as a percentage. "Clean" is defined by the emission rate targets and specific fuel recommendations (against unprocessed coal and kerosene) included in the normative World Health Organization guidelines for indoor air quality; see the data for household fuel combustion: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-07-01-02.pdf.