

# KIRIBATI

## 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 environmental sectors; (ii) skill levels; (iii) vulnerability of jobs; (iv) jobs in renewable energy; (v) scoring on the Environmental Performance Index; and (vi) air quality.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Kiribati<sup>1</sup> is a nation of 33 atolls and reef islands, with a total land area of 726 square kilometres, divided into the three island groups of Gilberts, Phoenix and Line. Kiribati has an exclusive economic zone that covers 3.5 million square kilometres (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> Its population is mostly urban and growing, with a fertility rate of 3.6 children and life expectancy of 66.7 years. Around 61 per cent of the population is of legal working age (15–64 years) (Fig. 2).

Figure 1. Map of Kiribati

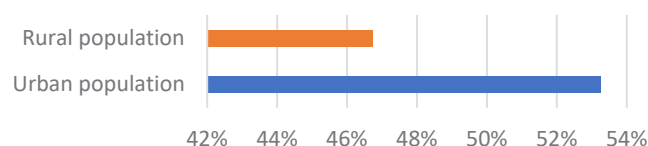


Figure 2. Kiribati population statistics

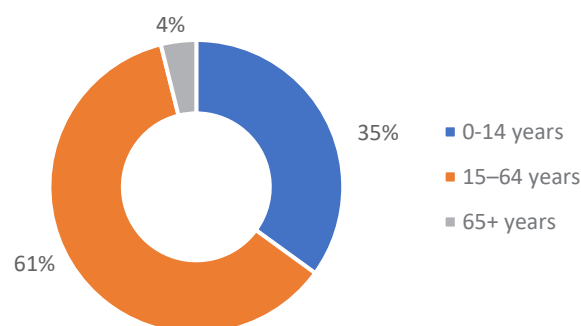
Population:<sup>3</sup> 0.11 million



| Population growth rate | Fertility rate | Life expectancy at birth |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| 1.73%                  | 3.6 children   | 66.7 years               |



Population age categories



Note: All 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/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#> and UN ESCAP Statistics. [http://data.unescap.org/escap\\_stat/](http://data.unescap.org/escap_stat/) (accessed on 28 December 2018).

<sup>1</sup> Kiribati became a member of the International Labour Organization in 2000.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.ilo.org/suva/countries-covered/kiribati/lang-en/index.htm>

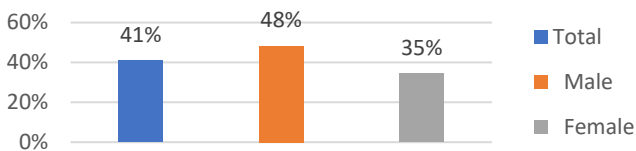
<sup>3</sup> Population data based on 2017 data.

## LABOUR FORCE

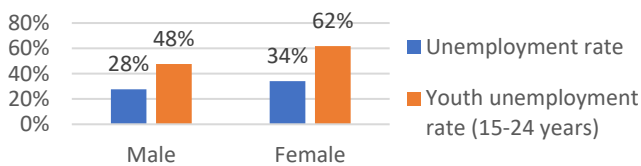
In 2010, the labour force participation rate was 59.3 per cent and the employment-to-population ratio was 41.1 per cent. Both of these rates are more than 13 to 14 percentage points higher for men than for women. The total unemployment rate was 30.6 per cent, and the youth unemployment rate was 54 per cent, with the female youth rate 14.2 percentage points higher than the male rate. Employment is heavily reliant on services<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 3). No data is available regarding occupations.

**Figure 3. Basic employment statistics for Kiribati, 2010**

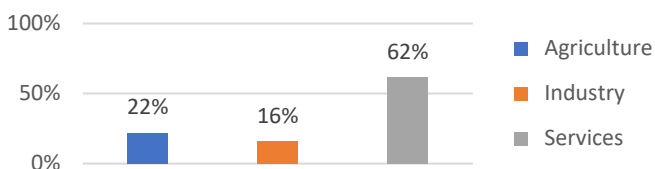
### Employment-to-population, 2010 (15+ years)



### Unemployment, 2010



### Employment by sector, 2010 (15+ years)

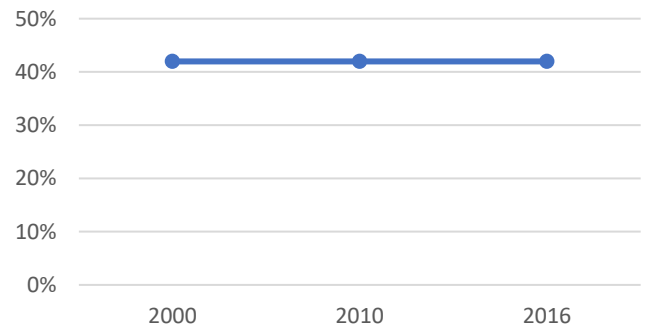


Note: ILO estimates. Labour force participation rate and unemployment: aged 15 years and older. Youth unemployment: aged 15–24 years. Employment by occupation: skill level 1 (low) for elementary occupations; skill level 2 (medium) for clerical, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural and trade 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](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat) (accessed 28 December 2018).

Rural population growth was 0.01 per cent in 2017. The share of agricultural land in total land area remained steady at 42 percentage points between 2000 and 2016 (Fig. 4). No data is available for employment in agriculture (% of total employment).

**Figure 4. Agricultural land, 2000-2016**



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 28 December 2018).

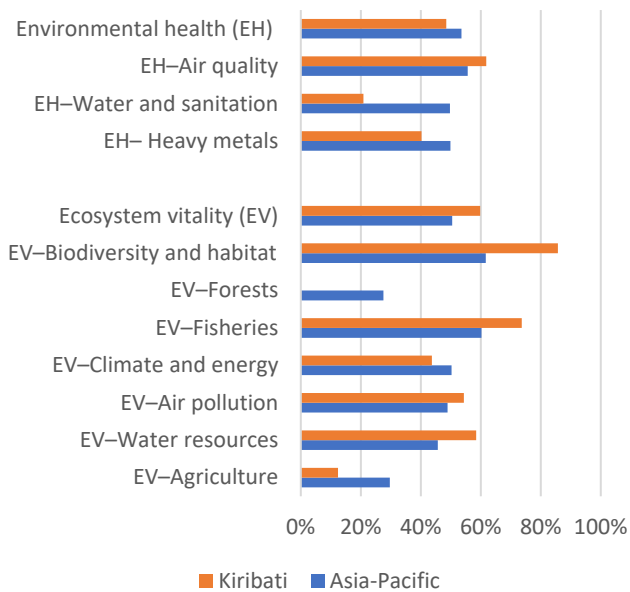
## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Kiribati ranks at number 95 of 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI),<sup>5</sup> with a score of 55.26 (with 0 being furthest from the high-performance benchmark target of 100). Kiribati outperforms the average score for Asia and the Pacific (Fig. 5) in some of the EPI categories, including: air quality; fisheries; air pollution; water resources; and biodiversity and habitat. However, there is room for improvement, especially in environmental health (water and sanitation, and heavy metals) and ecosystem vitality (forests, climate and energy, and agriculture). 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 Kiribati.

<sup>4</sup> Informal employment (self-employed and contributing family members) is excluded from agriculture calculations.

<sup>5</sup> 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>

**Figure 5. Environmental performance index for Kiribati, 2018**

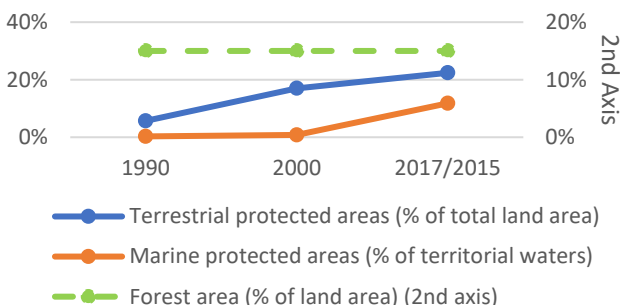


Note: Score 0 (worst) – 100 (best). Asia-Pacific: data is for ILO member states in the region, excluding Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Palau and Tuvalu.

Source: ILO compilation using “2018 EPI Scores – Current”. EPI Yale.

Forest area remained steady between 1990 and 2015, at 15.0 per cent of total land area. From 1990 to 2017, the share of terrestrial protected area increased, reaching 22.4 per cent of total land area, and the proportion of marine protected area also increased (Fig. 6). 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<sup>6</sup>.

**Figure 6. Forest area, terrestrial and marine protection area, 1990–2017**



Note: Data for forest area is from 2015 and other data is from 2017.

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 28 December 2018).

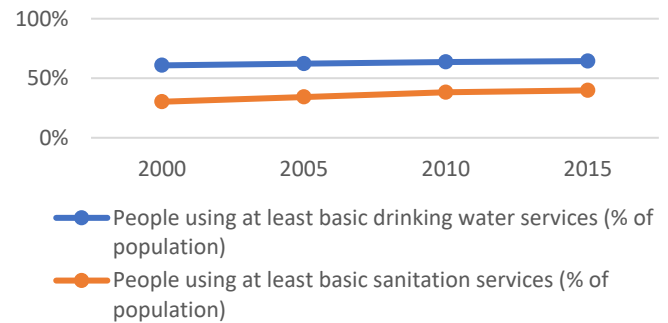
<sup>6</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: *The jobs potential of a shift towards a low-carbon economy*, OECD Green Growth Papers, No. 2012/01 (Paris, 2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k9h3630320v-en>.

<sup>7</sup> The value is calculated on the basis of CAGR (compound annual growth rate).

<sup>8</sup> Republic of Kiribati intended nationally determined contribution; [http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Kiribati%20First/INDC\\_KIRIBATI.pdf](http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Kiribati%20First/INDC_KIRIBATI.pdf)

Since 2000, there has been a slight increase in access to basic drinking water, to an average of 64.4 per cent in 2015, and access to basic sanitation, to an average of 39.8 per cent in 2015 (Fig. 7). 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 7. Basic drinking water and sanitation access, 2000–2015**

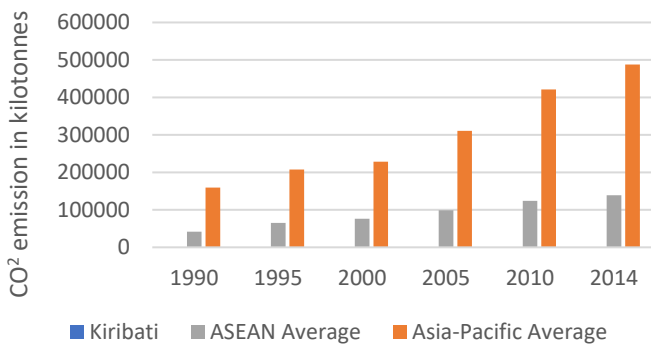


Source: ILO compilation using World development indicators, last updated: 21/05/2018; <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#> (accessed on 28 December 2018).

## AIR QUALITY

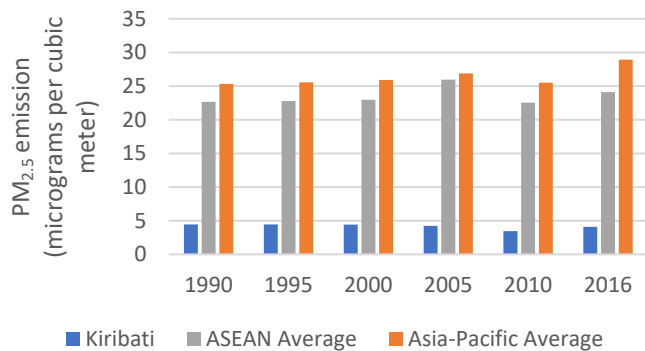
The carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission levels for Kiribati increased slightly, by an average of 4 per cent, from 1990 to 2014 (Fig. 8).<sup>7</sup> The increase was due primarily to the following major sources: electricity generation; transport (sea and land); kerosene for lighting on outer islands; LPG and kerosene for cooking.<sup>8</sup> The level of emissions is so much lower than the Asia-Pacific and ASEAN averages that it appears negligible.

The PM<sub>2.5</sub> (atmospheric particulate matter with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometres) emission levels for Kiribati show a steady level, with a slight decrease in 2010 (Fig. 9). Overall PM<sub>2.5</sub> emission levels did not exceed the World Health Organization’s Air Quality Guideline threshold level, thus indicating low emissions. Kiribati also shows significantly lower levels of emission than the ASEAN and Asia-Pacific averages.

**Figure 8. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for Kiribati, 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, 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 28 December 2018).

**Figure 9. PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions for Kiribati, 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 28 December 2018).

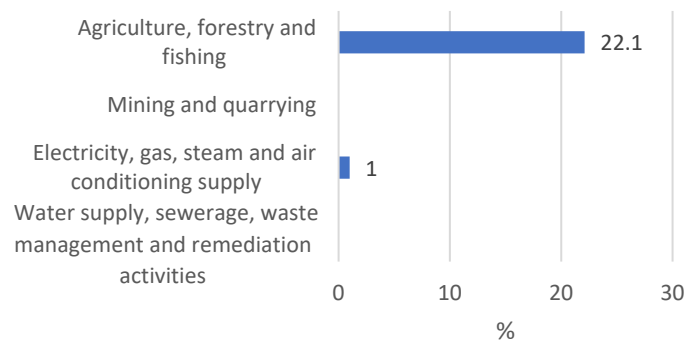
Applying the Just Transition Guidelines, an area of possible intervention includes efforts to reduce harmful emissions, which could potentially generate green jobs in high emitting sectors such as transportation and fuel-intensive industries. Reducing emissions is a significant challenge, which can be 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*,<sup>9</sup> Kiribati has a very low World Risk Index score. It ranks number 164 of 171 countries because of its very low exposure and its medium vulnerability, susceptibility, coping and adaptive capacities. The country's coastal environment is fragile and vulnerable to climate change and rising sea levels. Part of the country's vulnerability relates to the 20.6 per cent of the total population who, in 2010, lived in the 54.6 per cent of the total land area below 5 metres above sea level.<sup>10</sup> According to the *Emergency Events Database*,<sup>11</sup> there have been only four natural disasters since 1980<sup>12</sup>. The natural disasters in that time were droughts, storms and floods. 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.

## GREEN JOBS POTENTIAL

In 2010, 22.1 per cent of total employment was in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector (Fig. 10). Although reliance on agriculture is significant, there are opportunities for job creation in sustainable production and organic farming.

**Figure 10. Employment in sectors with strong green jobs potential in 2010**

Note: These sectors have the most potential for green job opportunities. Employment by selected 1-digit sector level (ISIC - Rev. 4, 2008).

Source: ILO estimates and compilation using ILOSTAT, [www.ilo.org/ilostat](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat) (accessed 28 December 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and United Nations University – EHS (2017) *World Risk Report 2017*, available at: <http://weltrisikobericht.de/english/>

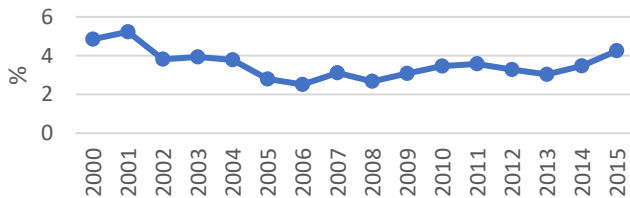
<sup>10</sup> World development indicators, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#> (accessed on 7 August 2018).

<sup>11</sup> EM-DAT: The Emergency Events Database - Université catholique de Louvain (UCL) - CRED, D. Guha-Sapir - [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be), Brussels, Belgium. Data accessed on: 20 July 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Climatological, hydrological and meteorological disasters.

In 2016, 6.0 per cent of the population relied primarily on clean fuel and technology, in the sense that these do not create pollution within the home.<sup>13</sup> The share of renewable energy in total energy consumption has not kept pace with overall consumption. In 2000, it was 4.85 per cent but fell below 4.0 per cent in 2010 and, after some fluctuation, reached 4.25 per cent in 2015 (Fig. 11). However, renewable energy electricity generation has increased over the last 16 years, with solar power being the main renewable energy source in 2016 (Fig. 12). The country's employment rate in electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning was only 1.0 per cent in 2010 (Fig. 10). With the push for increasing reliance on renewable energy, there is the potential for decent job opportunities in the future.

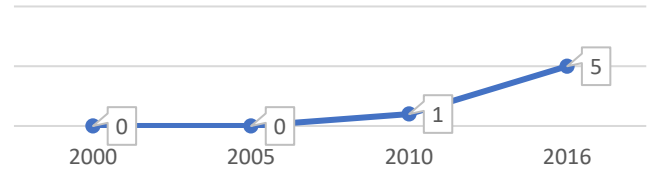
**Figure 11. Renewable energy share in total energy consumption, 2000-15**



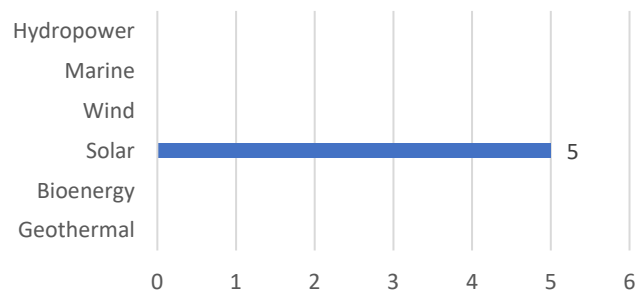
Source: ILO compilation using United Nations statistics division. SDG indicators: Global database. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (accessed on 19 July 2018).

**Figure 12. Renewable energy electricity generation, 2012-2016**

**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.

<sup>13</sup> The proportion of the population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology is calculated as 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>.



Disclaimer: These factsheets are collated on a bi-annual basis and use the most up-to-date available data that meets ILO data collection standards. The designations used in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Labour Office concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers