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Quarterly Labour Force Survey First Quarter, 2025



NATIONAL STATISTICS BUREAU

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This report stands as a testament to the collective effort and collaboration of all parties involved, and we express our sincere appreciation to each and every contributor.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Labour Force Survey plays an important role in generating the key indicators of the labour market in the country. Information derived from the LFS would not only help in monitoring and evaluating the economic situation of the country, but it would also help in the formulation of policies and plans that are related to employment creation, poverty reduction, and related programmes.

The first quarter Labour Force Survey for 2025 was conducted in the month of February and it aims to provide estimates of labor force-related indicators at both the national and dzongkhag/thromde levels.

However, due to the small sample size, indicators for the youth population (ages 15-24) cannot be estimated at the domain level. The statistics are based on the labour force framework and standards set by the International Labour Organization (ILO), ensuring international comparability.

This report is organized into three sections: Economically Active and Inactive Population; Employment; and Unemployment. Each section provides valuable insights into the dynamics of the labor market, which can inform effective policy interventions. For the first quarter, the sample size was 3,018 households, with 3,001 households participating in the survey. The overall response rate is 99.4%.

1.1 KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Key Indicator (Numbers)	2024				2025
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Labour Force Population					
Sex					
Male	2,29,024	2,26,821	2,38,065	2,31,587	2,33,248
Female	1,54,736	1,42,100	1,53,047	1,55,164	1,57,528
Area					
Urban	1,31,737	1,30,710	1,31,008	1,39,725	1,42,644
Rural	2,52,023	2,38,211	2,60,104	2,47,026	2,48,131
Total	3,83,760	3,68,921	3,91,113	3,86,751	3,90,775
Inactive Population					
Sex					
Male	85,562	85,831	76,521	81,256	85,062
Female	1,31,090	1,42,174	1,32,779	1,28,964	1,32,279
Area					
Urban	92,262	99,655	90,717	89,197	95,915
Rural	1,24,390	1,28,350	1,18,582	1,21,023	1,21,426
Total	2,16,652	2,28,005	2,09,299	2,10,219	2,17,342
Employed Population					
Sex					
Male	2,19,922	2,19,765	2,32,463	2,26,326	2,26,954
Female	1,48,126	1,35,650	1,46,560	1,48,379	1,49,807
Area					
Urban	1,23,091	1,23,225	1,24,385	1,31,990	1,34,551
Rural	2,44,957	2,32,191	2,54,637	2,42,715	2,42,211
Total	3,68,048	3,55,416	3,79,022	3,74,705	3,76,762
Unemployed Population					
Sex					
Male	9,102	7,056	5,603	5,261	6,293
Female	6,610	6,449	6,488	6,785	7,720
Area					
Urban	8,646	7,485	6,623	7,735	8,093
Rural	7,066	6,020	5,467	4,311	5,920
Total	15,712	13,505	12,090	12,046	14,014
Youth Unemployed Population					
Sex					
Male	5,382	4,187	2,645	2,808	2,517
Female	3,549	3,716	4,240	3,790	3,199
Area					
Urban	4,538	4,470	3,635	3,856	3,447
Rural	4,394	3,433	3,250	2,742	2,269
Total	8,932	7,903	6,885	6,598	5,716

Key Indicator (%)	2024				2025
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Labour Force Participation Rate					
Sex					
Male	72.8	72.5	75.7	74.0	73.3
Female	54.1	50.0	53.5	54.6	54.4
Area					
Urban	58.8	56.7	59.1	61.0	59.8
Rural	67.0	65.0	68.7	67.1	67.1
Total	63.9	61.8	65.1	64.8	64.3
Inactivity Rate					
Sex					
Male	27.2	27.5	24.3	26.0	26.7
Female	45.9	50.0	46.5	45.4	45.6
Area					
Urban	41.2	43.3	40.9	39.0	40.2
Rural	33.0	35.0	31.3	32.9	32.9
Total	36.1	38.2	34.9	35.2	35.7
Employment Rate					
Sex					
Male	96.0	96.9	97.6	97.7	97.3
Female	95.7	95.5	95.8	95.6	95.1
Area					
Urban	93.4	94.3	94.9	94.5	94.3
Rural	97.2	97.5	97.9	98.3	97.6
Total	95.9	96.3	96.9	96.9	96.4
Unemployment Rate					
Sex					
Male	4.0	3.1	2.4	2.3	2.7
Female	4.3	4.5	4.2	4.4	4.9
Area					
Urban	6.6	5.7	5.1	5.5	5.7
Rural	2.8	2.5	2.1	1.8	2.4
Total	4.1	3.7	3.1	3.1	3.6
Youth Unemployment Rate					
Sex					
Male	25.7	18.9	11.9	14.5	14.8
Female	19.7	19.6	21.8	21.2	19.5
Area					
Urban	31.5	21.7	20.1	19.8	19.7
Rural	17.9	16.7	13.8	15.5	14.3
Total	22.9	19.2	16.5	17.7	17.1

CHAPTER 2: LABOUR FORCE AND INACTIVE POPULATION

As per the ILO labour force framework (Figure 2.1), all persons 15 years and above are considered as the working-age population. The working age population is divided into two major groups: economically active and economically inactive. The economically active population which is also referred as the ‘labour force’, is further composed of employed and unemployed persons.

2.1 WORKING-AGE POPULATION

Table 2.1 presents the total working age population for the first quarter of the year by sex and area. Of the total working age population (618,117 persons), 52.3% are males and 47.7% are females, indicating more males than females in the working age population. Majority of them are residing in rural (60.8%) than in urban (39.2%) areas. In terms of distribution by sex and area, it shows a similar pattern as that of the previous quarter.

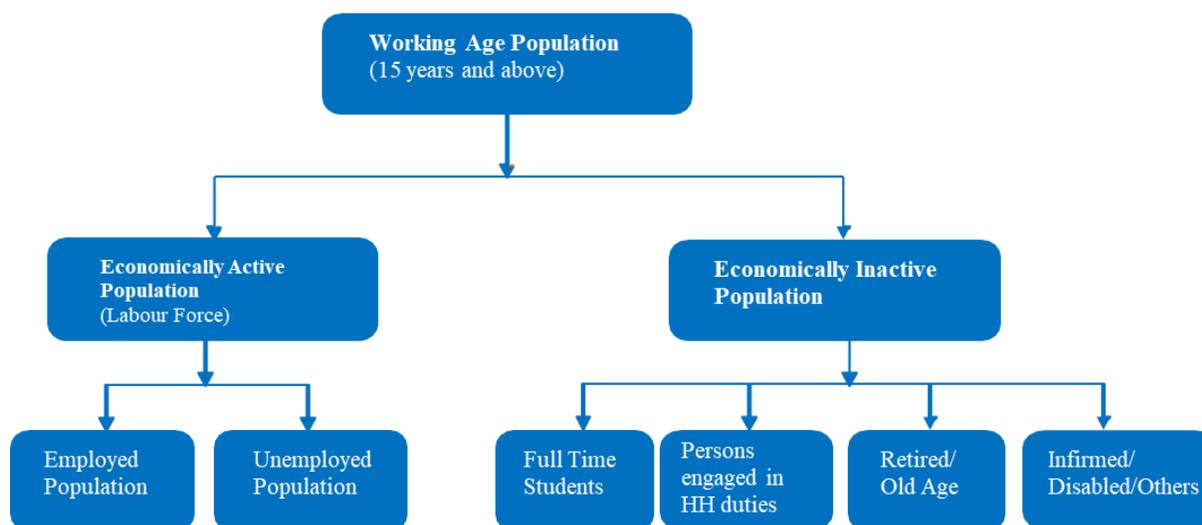


Figure 2. 1 The Basic Building Blocks of the Labour Force

Table 2. 1 Working-Age Population by Area and Sex, First Quarter, 2025

Sex	Numbers			Percent (%)		
	Urban	Rural	Both Area	Urban	Rural	Both Area
Male	124,110	194,200	318,310	52.0	52.6	52.3
Female	114,450	175,357	289,807	48.0	47.5	47.7
Both Sex	238,560	369,557	608,117	100	100	100

2.2 LABOUR FORCE (ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE) POPULATION

All persons aged 15 years and above who are either employed or unemployed during the reference period are considered as economically active population.

Table 2. 2 Distribution of Economically Active Population by Sex and Area, First Quarter, 2025

Sex	Numbers			Percent		
	Urban	Rural	Both Area	Urban	Rural	Percent
Male	90,510	142,738	233,248	63.5	57.5	59.7
Female	52,135	105,393	157,528	36.6	42.5	40.3
Both Sex	142,645	248,131	390,775	100	100	100

Table 2.2 presents the distribution of economically active persons by sex and area. A total of 390,775 persons aged 15 years and older were economically active, out of which 59.7% are males and 40.3% are females. It is more prevalent in rural areas (63.5%) compared to urban areas (36.5%). This also explains that in both areas, a greater proportion of males are employed and available for the production of goods and services during the reference period.

2.3 ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE POPULATION

All persons who neither worked nor were seeking/available for work during the reference period are termed as the economically inactive population. It includes all those persons who are not a part of labour force or fall outside the labour force.

Table 2. 3 Distribution of Economically Inactive Population by Sex and Area, First Quarter, 2025

Sex	Numbers			Percent (%)		
	Urban	Rural	Both Area	Percent	Percent	Percent
Male	33,600	51,462	85,062	35.0	42.4	39.1
Female	62,315	69,965	132,280	65.0	57.6	60.9
Both Sex	95,915	121,426	217,342	100	100	100

Among the inactive population, 39.1% are males and 60.9% are females. More than half of the inactive population are residing in rural areas (55.9%), while 44.1% are in urban areas.

2.4 LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE (LFPR)

The labour force participation rate (LFPR in the diagram below) provides information about the size of the supply of labour currently available for work compared to the whole working-age population.



The overall LFPR for the first quarter stands at 64.3%. It is higher among the males (73.3%) compared to the female (54.4%). By area, the LFPR is higher in the rural areas (67.1%) than in urban areas (59.8%).

Table 2. 4 Labour Force Participation Rate by Sex and Dzongkhag/Thromde, First Quarter, 2025

Dzongkhag/Thromde	Labour Force Population	Sex		
		Male	Female	Both Sex
Bumthang	8,959	70.7	55.8	63.4
Chhukha	34,993	80.6	45.1	63.4
<i>Other than Phuentshogling Thromde</i>	22,051	78.7	52.0	66.6
<i>Phuentshogling Thromde</i>	12,942	83.8	36.2	58.6
Dagana	14,180	76.0	65.8	71.2
Gasa	2,632	76.2	77.0	76.6
Haa	7,058	72.9	56.6	65.7
Lhuentse	7,077	74.7	69.6	72.3
Monggar	16,470	74.0	52.0	62.4
Paro	26,616	73.1	52.6	63.0
Pema Gatsel	12,989	76.9	64.9	71.0
Punakha	15,508	67.3	56.3	62.1
Samdrup Jongkhar	15,678	68.8	48.7	59.4
<i>Other than Samdrup Jongkhar Thromde</i>	11,690	65.6	49.8	58.1
<i>Samdrup Jongkhar Thromde</i>	3,988	78.1	44.7	63.5
Samtse	33,416	78.1	58.9	68.5
Sarpang	28,777	76.3	63.9	70.4
<i>Other than Gelegphu Thromde</i>	21,580	76.3	66.2	71.7
<i>Gelegphu Thromde</i>	7,197	76.2	58.4	66.8
Thimphu	76,703	69.9	43.0	56.8
<i>Other than Thimphu Thromde</i>	9,533	67.7	36.2	52.2
<i>Thimphu Thromde</i>	67,170	70.2	44.0	57.5
Trashigang	19,483	68.9	55.0	62.2
Trashi Yangtse	7,708	69.5	61.4	65.5
Trongsa	13,797	72.9	68.2	71.1
Tsirang	13,974	78.0	67.2	72.8
Wangdue Phodrang	25,700	71.0	63.3	68.0
Zhemgang	9,058	77.6	69.0	73.5
Bhutan	390,775	73.3	54.4	64.3

Table 2.4 presents the labor force participation rate (LFPR) by *Dzongkhag/Thromde* for the first quarter, 2025. Among the *dzongkhags*, Gasa (76.6%) has the highest LFPR, while Thimphu (56.8%) has the lowest. The LFPR for males is higher than that of females in almost all *dzongkhags*, with Chhukha (80.6%) having the highest. Among the females, the highest LFPR is observed in Gasa (77.0%) *dzongkhag* for the current quarter.

By *thromde*, Gelephu (66.8%) has the highest labor force participation rate while, Thimphu (57.5%) has the lowest.

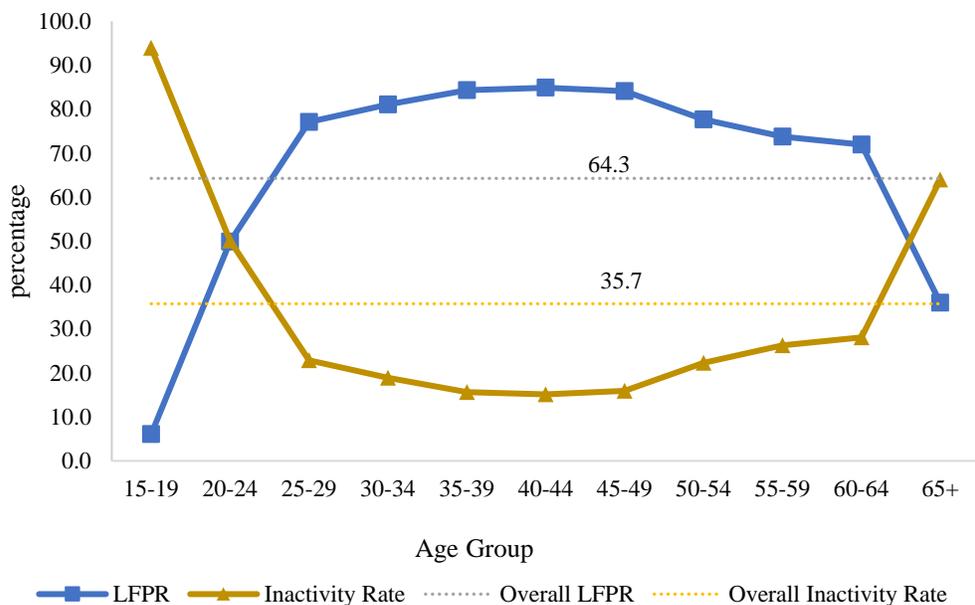


Figure 2. 2 Labour Force Participation Rate and Economically Inactivity Rate by Age group, First Quarter, 2025

The figure 2.2 presents the labor force participation rates (LFPR) and economically inactivity rates across different age groups. It is observed that the lowest (6.1%) LFPR is found among the youngest age group (15-19 years) where the highest inactivity rate (93.9%) is observed.

As individuals enter the workforce, the labour force participation rate increases sharply reaching 49.9% for those aged 20-24 and peaks at 84.9% for the ages 40-44 years. The inactivity rate during the prime working age (30-54) is relatively low, ranging from a low of 15.6% to 22.3%.

Beyond the age of 55 years, the LFPR declines gradually, and plummets to 36.0% for those 65 years and older, while inactivity rises, reaching the high of 64.0% for the same age group. Overall, the total LFPR and inactivity rate stands at 64.3%, and 35.7% respectively reflecting the typical pattern of labour force engagement peaking in midlife and declining toward retirement age. The inactivity rate for female is 45.6% and for male it is 26.7%.

The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in Q1 2025 increased by 0.4 percentage points compared to Q1 2024, rising from 63.9% to 64.3% — reflecting a year-on-year improvement in labour market engagement.

However, on a quarter-on-quarter basis, the LFPR in Q1 2025 decreased by 0.5 percentage points compared to Q4 2024, suggesting a slight slowdown in participation following the previous quarter.

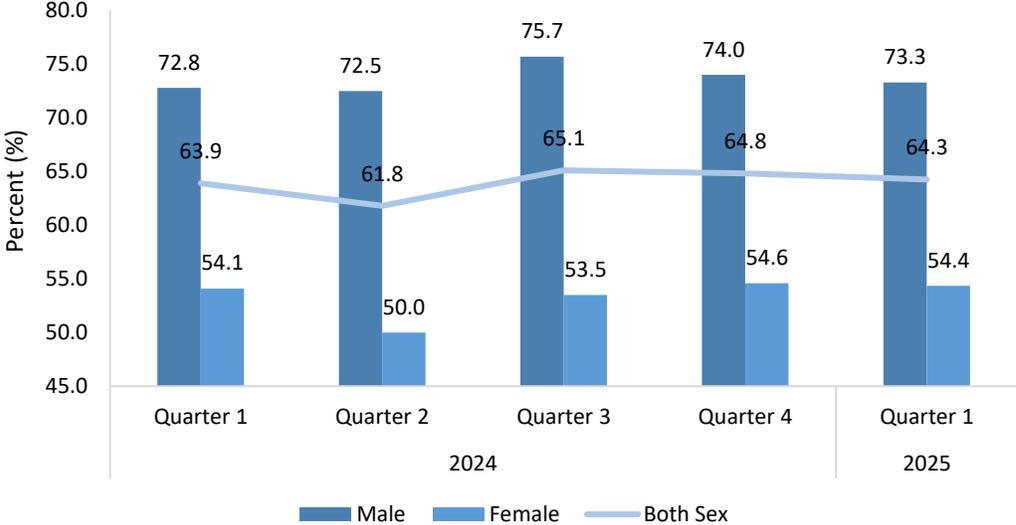


Figure 2. 3. Labour Force Participation Rate by Sex: Quarter 1, 2024 – Quarter 1, 2025

CHAPTER 3: EMPLOYMENT

All those household members who are 15 years and above and are engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay, profit or family gain during the reference period. It comprises employed persons “at work” and “not at work”. Employed persons “not at work” are those persons who still maintained a job attachment during their absences, including those such as sick leave due to their illness or injury and periods of maternity or paternity leave during the reference period.

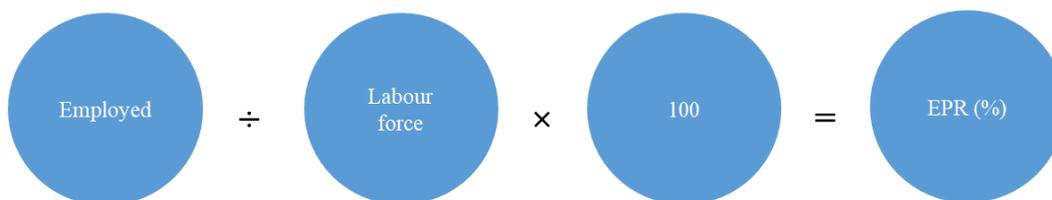
The term “for pay or profit” refers to work done as part of a transaction in exchange for remuneration in cash or in kind. The remuneration may be paid directly to the person performing the work or indirectly to a household or family member.

Three Criteria define employment (including self-employment):

1. **Age:** To be in the age range chosen to define the active population, usually 15 and older:
2. **Duration of the activity:** All persons who have worked at least one hour during a specified brief period (in general, one week) including all those who have a job, but are on leave for various reasons.
3. **Nature of the activity:** Must be an activity of production of goods and services according to the national accounting system (International Conference of Labour Statistics, 1982).

3.1 EMPLOYMENT RATE

The proportion of the employed population to the total labour force.


$$\text{Employed} \div \text{Labour force} \times 100 = \text{EPR (\%)}$$

The overall employment rate in Bhutan for the first quarter 2025 is 96.4% (CI: 95.68, 97.14). It is higher among the males (97.3%) than their female (95.1%) counterparts. Compared to the previous quarter, the rate has decreased by 0.48 percentage points. However, since the confidence intervals (CI: 96.14, 97.63) for the employment rates of the two quarters overlap, the differences between the two quarters are not statistically significant.

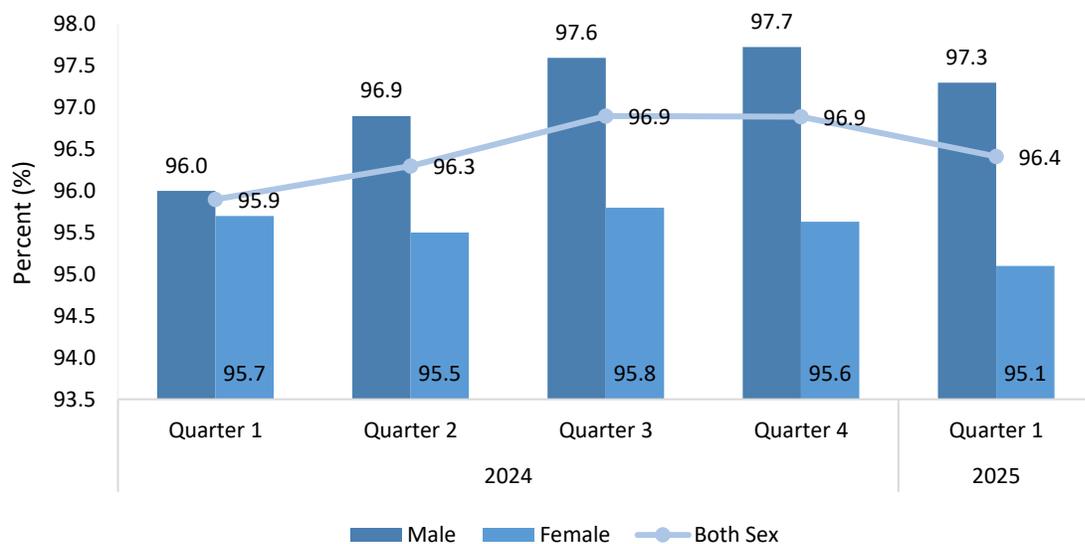


Figure 3. 1 Employment Rate by Sex: Quarter 1, 2024 to Quarter 1, 2025

Further, it is observed that the employment rate is higher in rural areas (97.6%) than in urban areas (94.3%). Among the dzongkhags, Trashi Yangtse has the highest employment rate (100%), followed by Monggar and Tsirang (99.6%). On the contrary, the lowest employment rate is observed in Paro (91.2%), followed by Bumthang (93.8%) and Thimphu (93.9%) dzongkhags. There is also a significant disparity in employment rates between rural and urban areas, as well as across dzongkhags.

Among the *thromdes*, Phuentshogling (96.5%) has the highest employment rate, while Thimphu *Thromde* (93.4 %) has the lowest. This indicates a noticeable variation in employment levels between the thromdes (Table 3.1).

Table 3. 1 Proportion of Employed Persons by *Dzongkhag/Thromde* and Sex, First Quarter, 2025

<i>Dzongkhags/ Thromde</i>	Total	Sex		
		Male	Female	Both Sex
Bumthang	8,402	96.1	90.7	93.8
Chhukha	34,099	97.6	97.1	97.4
<i>Other than Phuentshogling Thromde</i>	21,610	98.3	97.5	98.0
<i>Phuentshogling Thromde</i>	12,489	96.6	96.3	96.5
Dagana	13,951	98.5	98.3	98.4
Gasa	2,614	98.8	100.0	99.3
Haa	6,732	96.2	94.1	95.4
Lhuentse	7,012	100	98.0	99.1
Monggar	16,400	100	99.0	99.6
Paro	24,277	92.7	89.1	91.2
Pema Gatshel	12,422	96.5	94.6	95.6
Punakha	15,155	100	94.7	97.7
Samdrup Jongkhar	14,881	95.0	94.8	94.9
<i>Other than Samdrup Jongkhar Thromde</i>	11,132	94	96.4	95.2
<i>Samdrup Jongkhar Thromde</i>	3,750	97	88.6	94.0
Samtse	32,304	97.7	95.3	96.7
Sarpang	27,261	95.3	94.0	94.7
<i>Other than Gelegphu Thromde</i>	20,477	95.1	94.5	94.9
<i>Gelegphu Thromde</i>	6,784	95.7	92.6	94.3
Thimphu	72,028	95.9	90.5	93.9
<i>Other than Thimphu Thromde</i>	9,313	96.5	100	97.7
<i>Thimphu Thromde</i>	62,715	95.8	89.3	93.4
Trashigang	19,391	100	98.9	99.5
Trashi Yangtse	7,708	100	100	100
Trongsa	13,697	100	97.9	99.3
Tsirang	13,912	100	99.0	99.6
Wangdue Phodrang	25,511	99.0	99.7	99.3
Zhemgang	9,004	100	98.7	99.4
Total	376,762	97.3	95.1	96.4

The distribution of employed persons across different age groups has maintained the pattern that was observed in the previous quarters. For the productive age group (15-64 years), the employment rate is estimated at 96.2%, with 97.2% for males at and 94.8% for females (Table 3.2). In contrast, the youth population (15-24 years) has the lowest employment rate at 82.9%. The males (85.2%) have a significantly higher rate than that of the females (80.5%).

The employment rate for aged 60 years and above is 100% and this suggests that persons in this age group who are available for work are employed during the survey reference period.

Table 3. 2 Proportion of Employed Persons by Age Group and Sex, First Quarter, 2025

Age Group	Total	Sex		
		Male	Female	Both Sex
15-64	356,783	97.2	94.8	96.2
18-64	355,477	97.2	94.8	96.2
15-19	4,049	89.2	85.2	88.2
20-24	23,635	84.2	80.1	82.0
25-29	45,993	94.1	89.2	92.1
30-34	64,111	96.9	95.7	96.4
35-39	59,470	98.7	97.5	98.2
40-44	50,791	99.7	98.1	99.1
45-49	37,881	99.5	99.6	99.6
50-54	30,380	100	98.8	99.5
55-59	21,306	99.2	100	99.5
60-64	19,169	100	100	100
65 and above	19,978	100	100	100
Total	376,762	97.3	95.1	96.4

In terms of the proportion employed persons by sector, the service (45.9%) sector has the highest share, while the industry (12.5%) has the lowest. The share of employment in agriculture sector is 41.7% (Table 3.3). A higher proportion of females are engaged in the agriculture sector, while a larger proportion of males are employed in the industry and service sectors. This pattern highlights the gender-specific trends in employment across different sectors (Table 3.3).

Table 3. 3 Proportion of Employed Persons by Sector, Sex and Area, First Quarter, 2025

Sector	Total	Area			Sex		
		Urban	Rural	Both Areas	Male	Female	Both Sex
Agriculture	156,934	2.9	63.2	41.7	34.9	51.8	41.7
Industry	46,999	16.5	10.2	12.5	15.6	7.7	12.5
Service	172,829	80.6	26.6	45.9	49.5	40.4	45.9
Total	376,762	100	100	100	100	100	100

In the first quarterly survey, it is observed that more than two-fifth of employed persons are classified as paid employees. Among the employed persons in urban areas, majority of them are paid employees, while in the rural areas only 24.8% of them are in the category.

In terms of nature of employment, approximately 32% of employed persons are classified as “Own account workers”, while 26.1% of them are “family worker” employed either in agriculture or non-agriculture. Of employed males (49.4%) are working as wage employees, while it is 27.9% of the employed females. Additionally, a higher proportion of employed females (30.4%) worked as

unpaid family workers in the agriculture sector compared to 17.1% of the employed males (table 3.4).

Table 3. 4 Distribution of Employed Persons by Nature of Employment, Sex and Area, First Quarter, 2025

Nature of Employment	Total		Area		Sex	
	Numbers	Percent	Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Regular paid employee	128,765	34.2	62.0	18.7	39.8	25.7
Casual paid employee	25,100	6.7	5.3	7.4	9.6	2.2
Own-account worker (non-agriculture)	53,663	14.2	23.2	9.3	13.2	15.8
Own-account worker (Agriculture)	68,096	18.1	1.3	27.4	16.6	20.3
Family worker (non-agriculture)	13,764	3.7	5.0	2.9	2.6	5.2
Family worker (Agriculture)	84,359	22.4	1.3	34.1	17.1	30.4
Employer	3,015	0.8	1.8	0.2	1.1	0.4
Total	376,762	100	100	100	100	100

Of the total of 376,762 employed persons, the majority (41.0%) are classified as “skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers”. While approximately 15.6% are employed as “Personal Services Workers”, and about 8.9% works in “professional” occupational groups.

Table 3.5 presents the percentage distribution of employed persons by major occupation, area, and sex. It is observed that the distribution of employed persons across different occupations varies significantly between males and females. This disparity highlights the distinct occupational roles that each sex occupies within the labor market.

Table 3. 5 Percentage Distribution of Employed Persons by Major Occupation and Sex, First Quarter, 2025

Major Occupation Group	Total		Area		Sex	
	Number	Percent	Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Managers	10,698	2.8	4.4	2.0	3.8	1.4
Professionals	33,677	8.9	16.1	5.0	10.3	6.9
Technicians and Associate Professionals	27,692	7.4	12.3	4.6	9.7	3.7
Clerical Support Workers	12,012	3.2	6.3	1.5	2.6	4.1
Personal Services Workers	58,572	15.6	27.5	8.9	12.2	20.6
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers	154,506	41.0	3.0	62.1	34.1	51.4
Craft and Related Trades Workers	27,981	7.4	8.9	6.6	8.3	6.2
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	30,581	8.1	13.6	5.1	13.0	0.7
Elementary Occupations	17,798	4.7	5.7	4.2	4.5	5.1
Armed Forces	3,245	0.9	2.2	0.1	1.4	0.0
Total	376,762	100	100	100	100	100

As presented in Table 3.6, a little more than one-third of employed persons do not possess any formal education. Approximately 13.6% have completed higher secondary education, while 13.4% have primary education and 13.0% have middle secondary education. Additionally, 8.8% of employed persons reported having a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 3. 6 Proportions of Employed Persons by Level of Education, Area and Sex, First Quarter, 2025

Level of Education	Total		Area		Sex	
	Numbers	Percent	Urban	Rural	Male	Female
None	128,674	34.2	17.9	43.2	29.1	41.8
Primary	50,410	13.4	10.7	14.9	16.1	9.2
Lower Secondary	21,974	5.8	6.2	5.6	6.4	5.0
Middle Secondary	48,908	13.0	17.6	10.4	13.2	12.6
Higher Secondary	51,211	13.6	21.6	9.2	13.3	14.1
Certificate/Diploma	9,049	2.4	4.8	1.1	2.6	2.1
Bachelor's Degree	27,954	7.4	14.3	3.6	9.1	4.8
Master's Degree and Above	5,269	1.4	2.3	0.9	1.7	1.0
Monastic Education	12,613	3.4	3.0	3.5	5.4	0.2
Non-Formal Education	20,700	5.5	1.7	7.6	3.1	9.2
Total	376,762	100	100	100	100	100

In Table 3.7, it is observed that 40.7% of employed persons in the first quarter are engaged in agricultural farming, while 30.9% are working in private businesses. About 17.4% are employed in government agencies, and 5.1% work for public or government companies. This distribution illustrates the sectors in which the employed population is actively engaged.

Table 3. 7 Percentage Distribution Employed Persons by Type of Enterprise and Sex, First Quarter, 2025

Organization	Total		Area		Sex	
	Numbers	Percent	Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Government agency	65,377	17.4	27.4	11.8	20.0	13.3
Armed forces (RBP, RBG & RBA)	9,150	2.4	6.1	0.4	3.1	1.3
Agriculture farming	153,198	40.7	2.7	61.8	33.8	51.1
Public/Government Company	19,176	5.1	9.9	2.4	7.1	2.0
Private Limited Company	12,135	3.2	6.0	1.7	4.1	1.9
Private Business	116,557	30.9	47.5	21.7	31.7	29.8
Household(s) as a domestic worker	649	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3
Non-governmental organizations/CSO	519	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1
Total	376,762	100	100	100	100	100

Figure 3.2 presents the mean hours worked per week by employed persons in their primary and secondary jobs, categorized by area and sex. The overall mean is estimated at 48 hours per week. It is observed that male employed persons work more hours, averaging 49 hours, compared to female employed persons, who average 46 hours. Additionally, when comparing by area of residence, those in rural areas work less hours on average (47 hours) than their urban counterparts (48 hours).

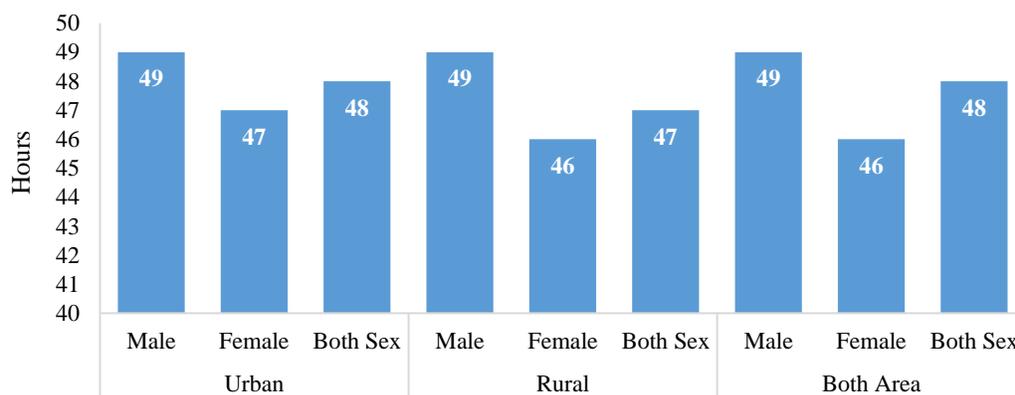


Figure 3. 2 Mean Hours Worked in a Week by Area and Sex, First Quarter, 2025

The monthly income data for employed persons is collected from those classified as paid employees, own account workers, and employers. The mean monthly income for this group is estimated at Nu. 24,545. It is noted that the mean monthly income is higher among male employed persons compared to their female counterparts. A similar disparity in income is also observed between males and females across different areas of residence, (Table 3.8).

Table 3. 8 Mean and Median Monthly Income of Employed Persons by Area and Sex, First Quarter, 2025

Statistics	Urban			Rural			Both Areas		
	Male	Female	Both Sex	Male	Female	Both Sex	Male	Female	Both Sex
Mean (Nu)	33,552	24,710	30,485	21,665	16,128	19,763	26,951	19,976	24,545
Median (Nu)	28,000	20,000	25,000	19,300	11,300	15,000	22,000	15,000	20,000

3.2 THE EMPLOYMENT-TO-POPULATION RATIO

The employment-to-population ratio (shown as EPR in this diagram) is a basic yardstick for understanding the overall demand for labour in an economy. It provides information on the ability of an economy to generate employment.

Employment-to-population ratio represents the percentage of employed persons relative to the working age population.



When the employment-to-population ratio rises over time, it typically indicates an increasing demand for workers within the economy. Conversely, a low percentage suggests that a significant portion of the working-age population is either unemployed or not participating in the labor force.

The overall employment-to-population ratio in the first quarter stands at 62.0%. It is 71.3% for males and 51.7% for females. By area of residence, the employment-to-population ratio is 56.4% in urban areas and 65.5% in rural areas.

Table 3. 9 Employment-to-Population Ratio by Area and Sex, First Quarter, 2025

Area	Employed Person			Working Age Population			Employment to Population Ratio (%)		
	Male	Female	Both Sex	Male	Female	Both Sex	Male	Female	Both Sex
Urban	86,895	47,656	134,551	124,110	114,450	238,560	70.0	41.6	56.4
Rural	140,059	102,151	242,211	194,200	175,357	369,557	72.1	58.3	65.5
Bhutan	226,954	149,807	376,762	318,310	289,807	608,117	71.3	51.7	62.0

CHAPTER 4: UNEMPLOYMENT

The three criteria used to define unemployment

Without work: A person of working age who did not work at all during the reference period (not even for one hour), nor was temporarily absent from work.

Seeking work: The person is actively seeking for work in past four weeks.

Currently available for work: The person is available for employment in the next two weeks.

Youth Unemployment: Those unemployed persons aged 15-24 years.

Unemployment-to-population ratio: The proportion of unemployed persons relative to the total working-age population.

Unemployment rate: The proportion of unemployed persons to the total labor force (known as the economically active population).

Youth unemployment rate: The percentage of unemployed persons in the age group 15-24 years relative to the labor force in the same age group

4.1 UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

The unemployment rate (UR in this diagram) reflects the ability of an economy to generate employment for those persons who want to work but are not doing so, even though they are available for employment and actively seeking work.

It is an important indicator of labour market performance, and a key measure of labour underutilization.

$$\text{Unemployed} \div \text{Labour force} \times 100 = \text{UR (\%)}$$

For the first quarter, 2025, the overall unemployment rate is estimated at 3.6% (CI: 2.9, 4.3). It is higher among females (4.9%) than their male (2.7%) counterparts. Compared to the previous quarter, the unemployment rate has increased by 0.5 percentage-points from 3.1% (CI: 2.4, 4.0) to 3.6% (CI: 2.9, 4.3). However, since the confidence intervals for the unemployment rates overlap, the difference between the two is not statistically significant. The unemployment rate is higher in urban (5.7%) than in rural (2.4%) areas.

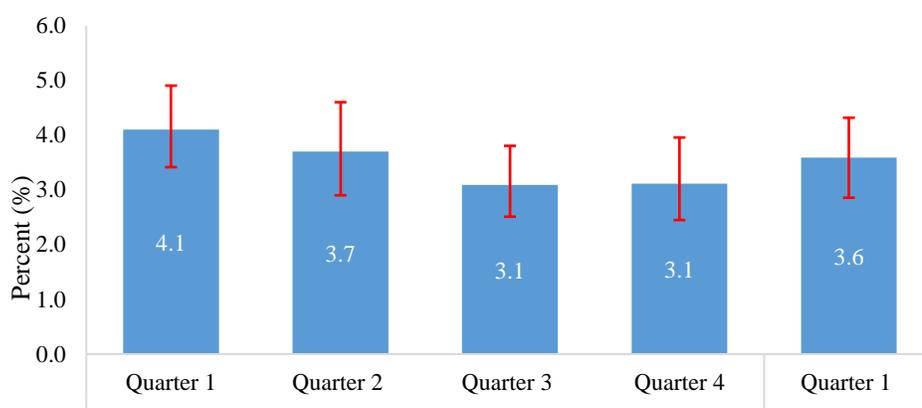


Figure 4. 1 Unemployment Trends: Quarter 1, 2025-Quarter 1, 2025

Table 4. 1 Unemployment Rate by Sex and Dzongkhag/Thromde, First Quarter, 2025

Dzongkhag/Thromde	Total	Unemployment Rate		
		Male	Female	Both sex
Bumthang	557	3.9	9.3	6.2
Chhukha	894	2.4	2.9	2.6
<i>Other than Phuentshogling Thromde</i>	441	1.7	2.5	2.0
<i>Phuentshogling Thromde</i>	453	3.4	3.7	3.5
Dagana	228	1.5	1.7	1.6
Gasa	18	1.2	0.0	0.7
Haa	326	3.8	5.9	4.6
Lhuentse	65	0.0	2.0	0.9
Monggar	70	0.0	1.0	0.4
Paro	2,339	7.3	10.9	8.8
Pema Gatshel	567	3.5	5.4	4.4
Punakha	353	0.0	5.3	2.3
Samdrup Jongkhar	796	5.0	5.2	5.1
<i>Other than Samdrup Jongkhar</i>	558	5.6	3.6	4.8
<i>Samdrup Jongkhar Thromde</i>	238	3.5	11.4	6.0
Samtse	1,113	2.3	4.7	3.3

Sarpang	1,516	4.7	6.0	5.3
<i>Other than Gelegphu Thromde</i>	1,103	4.9	5.5	5.1
<i>Gelegphu Thromde</i>	413	4.3	7.4	5.7
Thimphu	4,675	4.1	9.5	6.1
<i>Other than Thimphu Thromde</i>	220	3.5	0.0	2.3
<i>Thimphu Thromde</i>	4,455	4.2	10.7	6.6
Trashigang	92	0.0	1.1	0.5
Trashi Yangtse*	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Trongsa	100	0.0	2.1	0.7
Tsirang	63	0.0	1.0	0.4
Wangdue Phodrang	188	1.0	0.3	0.7
Zhemgang	54	0.0	1.3	0.6
Total	14,014	2.7	4.9	3.6

Note: *No unemployed persons were observed in the sample for Trashi Yangtse dzongkhag. This does not imply that there is no unemployment in the population.

Of the total 14,014 unemployed persons in the first quarter, 44.9% are males and 55.1% are females. About two third (57.8%) of them are residing in urban areas and 42.2% are residing in rural areas.

Across Dzongkhags, Paro dzongkhag has the highest unemployment rate at 8.8%, while Monggar and Tsirang reported the lowest (0.4%). On the contrary, Trashi Yangtse has no unemployed persons during the first quarter. Among the four thromdes, Thimphu (6.6%) has the highest unemployment rate, while Phuentshogling (3.5%) observed the least.

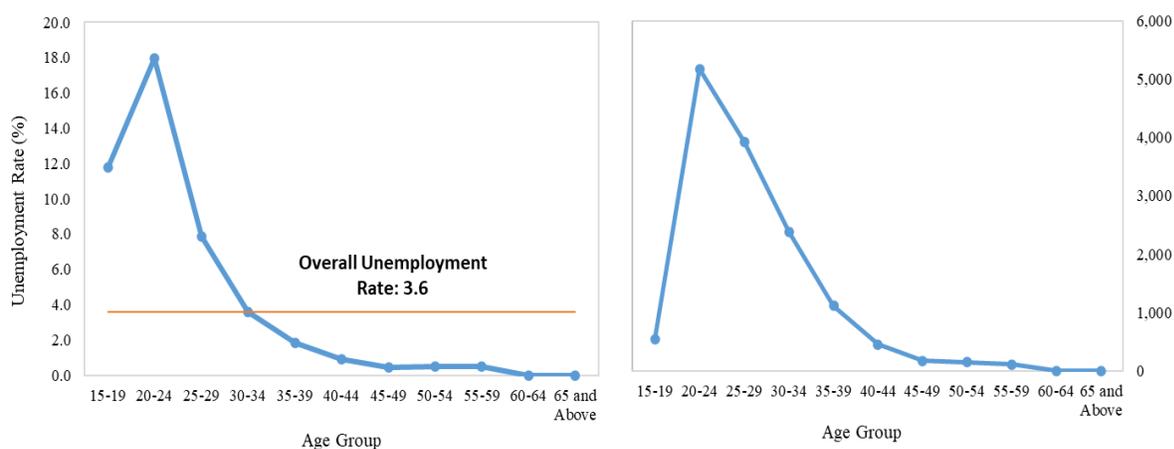


Figure 4. 2 Unemployment Rate and Number of Unemployed Persons by Age Group, First Quarter, 2025

Figure 4.2 illustrates the unemployment rate and the number of unemployed persons by age group. The unemployment rate is highest among the younger age groups, peaking at 20-24 years. It remains above the overall unemployment rate until the 30-34 years age group, and there after

unemployment rate declines steadily and flattens starting from the 45 years and above. Similarly, the number of unemployed persons reaches its peak in the 20-24 years age group and then it declines thereafter.

Table 4.2 Unemployment Rate by Level of Educational Attainment and Sex, First Quarter, 2025

Level of education	Total	Sex		Both Sex
		Male	Female	
None	1,133	0.8	1.0	0.9
Primary	400	0.6	1.4	0.8
Lower Secondary	384	1.8	1.6	1.7
Middle Secondary	2,319	0.8	9.9	4.5
Higher Secondary	5,116	7.1	11.7	9.1
Bachelor's Degree	3,873	8.9	20.3	12.2
Master's Degree and Above	703	14.4	4.4	11.8
Monastic Education & NFE	87	0.3	0.0	0.3
Total	14,014	2.7	4.9	3.6

Table 4.2 presents the unemployment by level of educational attainment. Overall, persons with a Bachelor's Degree have the highest unemployment rate (12.2%), while those with primary education have the lowest (0.8%). When compared by sex, females with a bachelor's degree have the highest unemployment rate (20.3%), while it is 14.4% for males with the Master's degree and above.

4.2 UNEMPLOYMENT-TO-POPULATION RATIO

The unemployment-to-population ratio differs from the unemployment rate as it accounts for the total working age population rather than those only in the labour force. The ratio helps to provide the unemployment situation from another angle and provides an answer to the question "What proportion of the working age population are unemployed?"

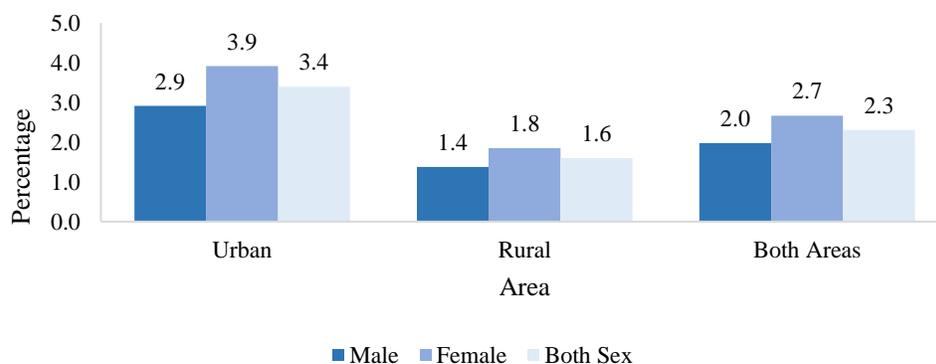


Figure 4.3 Unemployment-to-Population Ratio by Sex and Area, First Quarter, 2025

Of the total (608,117) working-age population, 14,014 persons are unemployed, resulting in an unemployment-to-population ratio of 2.3% (Figure 4.1). The ratio is higher for females (2.7%), compared to males (2.0%). In urban areas, the ratio is 3.4%, more than twice that of rural (1.6%) areas.

4.3 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Among the total unemployed population, 5,716 persons are youth, resulting in a youth unemployment rate of 17.1% (CI: 13.0, 22.2). This rate has decreased by 0.7 percentage-points from the previous quarter i.e. 17.8% (CI: 13.1, 23.6). However, due to the overlap in confidence intervals between the two quarters, this difference is not statistically significant.

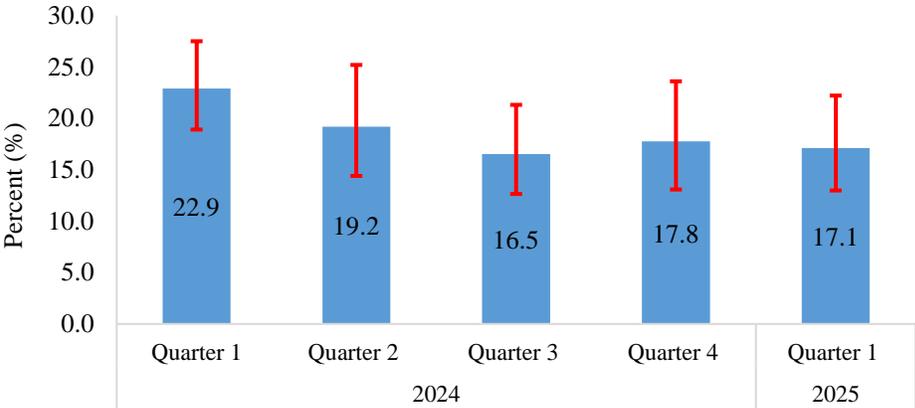


Figure 4. 4 Youth Unemployment Rate from Quarter 1, 2024 to Quarter 1, 2025

The youth unemployment rate is higher for females at 19.5% compared to 14.8% for males. Additionally, youth unemployment is primarily an urban phenomenon, with a rate of 19.7% in urban areas versus 14.3% in rural areas.

Table 4. 2 Youth Unemployment Rate by Sex and Area, First Quarter, 2025

Sex	Total	Area		
		Urban	Rural	Both Areas
Male	2,517	18.7	10.5	14.8
Female	3,199	20.8	18.1	19.5
Both Sex	5,716	19.7	14.3	17.1