



# SIERRA LEONE 2015 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS

## THEMATIC REPORT ON

# ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS



**STATISTICS SIERRA LEONE (SSL)  
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POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS**

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We wish to thank the Government of Sierra Leone for the financial and oversight support to the project. Special thanks goes to our development partners DFID, Irish Aid, UNFPA and UNDP for providing the funds, technical support and guidance in the implementation of the Census project.

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# CONTENTS

■ Acknowledgements	V
■ List of tables	viii
■ List of figures	ix
■ Abbreviations	ix
■ Executive Summary	01
■ CHAPTER 1: Introduction	03
■ 1.1 Background and context	03
■ 1.2 Concepts and definitions in employment and labour Force	03
■ CHAPTER2: METHODOLOGY	08
■ 2.1 Introduction	08
■ 2.2 Data collection	08
■ 2.3 Estimations of economic characteristics indicators	08
■ CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	09
■ 3.1 Introduction	09
■ 3.2 Analysis by activity status	09
3.2.1 The size of the labour force	09
3.2.2 Activity Rate	12
3.2.3 Paid employment-to-population ratio	14
3.2.4 Employment and unemployment rates	16
■ 3.3 Analysis of the population by industry	18
3.3.1 Distribution of the labour force by industry	18
■ 3.4 Analysis of the Population by Occupation	19
3.4.1 Occupational distribution of the working age population (15-64 years)	19
3.4.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector	23
■ 3.5 Child labour	23
3.5.1 Introduction and definition of terms	23
■ 3.6: Employment in the informal sector	29
■ CHAPTER 4: POLICY IMPLICATIONS	33
■ CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	34
■ 5.1 Conclusions	34
■ 5.2 Recommendations	34
■ APPENDIX	35
■ REFERENCES	36



## LIST OF TABLES

■	Table 3.1: Economically Active Population 15-64 years	11
■	Table 3.2: Distribution of Labour Force by District	12
■	Table 3.3: Refined Activity Rate (RAR) by Sex	13
■	Table 3.4: Refined Activity Rate (RAR) by Age	13
■	Table 3.5: Labour Force Participation Rate by District and Residence	16
■	Table 3.6: Employment and Unemployment Rates by Age (15-64 years) and Sex	17
■	Table 3.7: Occupational Distribution of the Working Age Population (15-64 years) by Sex	20
■	Table 3.8: Occupational Distribution of Working Age Population (15-64 years) by Region	22



## LIST OF FIGURES

■ Figure 3.1: A Schema of the distribution of the census working age population (15-64 years) by economic activity	10
■ Figure 3.2: Age specific activity and inactivity rates	14
■ Figure 3.3: Paid employment -to-population ratio by region	14
■ Figure 3.4: Percentage share of paid employment by district	15
■ Figure 3.5: Labour force participation rate by district and residence	18
■ Figure 3.6: Percentage distributions of employment and unemployment by residence	18
■ Figure 3.7: Percentage distribution of working age population (15-64 years) by industry and region	19
■ Figure 3.8: Percentage distribution of labour force (15-64 years) by industry and district	21
■ Figure 3.9: Occupational distribution of the working age population by district	23
■ Figure 3.10: Percentage distribution of employment status (10-14 years) by region	25
■ Figure 3.11: Percentage distribution of children in labour force and not in labour force by age and region	26
■ Figure 3.12: Distribution of employed and unemployed children by region	27
■ Figure 3.13: Percentage of children (10-14 years ) by activity status	28
■ Figure 3.14: Percentage of children (10-14 years) by status of employed	28
■ Figure 3.15: Percentage of children (10-14 years) employed by industry	29
■ Figure 3.16: Number of persons employed in the informal economy by region	30
■ Figure 3.17: Paid employment and informal sector by industry	31
■ Figure 3.18: Distribution of paid and informal employment by region	32
■ Figure 3.19: Distribution of paid and informal employment by residence	32



## ABBREVIATIONS

AER	Actual Employment Rate
AUER	Actual Unemployment Rate
CLS	Child Labour Survey
EAP	Economically Active Population
EIP	Economically Inactive Population
ESD	Economic Statistics Division, Statistics Sierra Leone
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
GDP	Gross Domestic Product (Total Output)
IE	Informal Economy
IFS	Informal Sector
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities
KILM	Key Indicators of Labour Market
LF	Labour Force
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PEP	Paid Employment
PHC	Population and Housing Census
RAR	Refined Activity Rate
SSL	Statistics Sierra Leone
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2015 Sierra Leone Population and Housing Census shows that the number of economically active people has increased by nearly 1.5 million, from 2,621,773 in 2004 to 3,937,595 in 2015.

However it also reveals that the economically active proportion of the working age population has fallen from about 86.5 per cent in 2004 to about 65 per cent. Unemployment has also increased from about 70,000 in 2004 to 109,034 in 2015. Only 7.1 per cent of the labour force (economically active population) is in paid employment and the data shows that about 21,000 of the labour force are new entrants.

About 39 per cent of the economically active population are youths aged 15-24 years (as high as 65 per cent if the national classification of youth - 15-34 years - is used). The age groups 20-24, 25-29, 30-34 and 35-39 make up the bulk of the employed and points to the fact that Sierra Leone has a young population. This was the same pattern as in the 2004 Census. Men continue to dominate the labour force, even though there are more women (2,029,347) in the working age population than men (1,908,274). Men outnumber women in the labour force by 1,290,871 to 1,266,847.

**3,937,595** economically active people

Men form **73%** of paid employees in the formal sector



**39%** of the economically active population are youths aged 15-24 years

**7.1%** of the labour force (economically active population) is in paid employment

The share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural occupations is about 0.17 per cent. This is very low and indicates that women are still not able to fulfill their potential in Sierra Leone. Women make up about 0.72 per cent of workers in legislative or managerial occupations and just 0.36 per cent of all top flight jobs.

Currently in Sierra Leone, women work mainly in the informal sector. Although men form 73 per cent of paid employees in the formal sector, they make up just 43 per cent of the informal economy.

Western Urban district, which hosts the capital city, has the highest number of those in paid employment in Sierra Leone. This distribution reflects in part the population distribution, with the districts that have larger populations having larger shares of the labour force (labour force is a function of the population).

The refined activity rate for men (0.68) surpasses that of women's (0.62). The age-specific activity rate increases from the 15-19 age band and reaches a maximum 0.88 in the age band 40-44 years.

In terms of labour force participation, Moyamba and Koinadugu districts have the highest labour force participation rate, followed by Kambia and Tonkolili districts. The Northern Region recorded the highest employment.

Agriculture is still the mainstay in the Eastern, Northern and Southern regions. The services sector is thriving in Sierra Leone, but is only predominant in the Western Region.

Some gender stereotyping still exists as more women are engaged in agriculture, service shop, market sales and elementary occupations than men. They also number less than half the men in technical and associate professional, professional work, craft and related trade works and legislator, senior officials and managers.

Census data reveals that less than 15 per cent of all those in employment are technicians and associate professionals (including police and armed forces), professionals and clerks, plant and machine operators and assemblers and legislators, senior officials and managers. Technicians and associate professionals (including police and armed forces) form only two per cent, while just one per cent are legislators, senior officials and managers.

Census data shows that the percentage of children in employment in the Northern Region is far greater than in other regions. The percentage distribution of children aged 10 to 14 years old in employment status as employed, paid employee, paid apprentice, unpaid apprentice and unpaid family workers is largest (82.4 per cent employed) in the Northern Region, followed by the Eastern Region with 78.3 per cent employed, 71.3 per cent in the Southern Region and 52.1 per cent in the Western Region.

The lower numbers of children working in the Western Area may be explained by the region having more educational facilities than the other regions. Farming is the most predominant economic activity outside of the Western Area and children are therefore more likely to be engaged in agriculture as unpaid family workers.

There is more informal employment in the Northern Region than the other regions. The rural areas have a higher proportion of informal

sector employment than the urban areas and while the informal sector is very prominent in rural areas, paid employment is minimal.

All of these findings have policy implications for rural development in the country and the dire need for an improved and innovative technical vocational education curriculum, with trained teachers, to ensure Sierra Leone's young population is employable.

Mandatory schooling should be enforced to help stamp out child labour and there should be penalties for those who allow children to work. Furthermore, Sierra Leone should concentrate on agro-processing and agri-business since the economic structure is predominantly agrarian.



# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and context

Statistics on the economic activities of a population are vital for development planning. They provide information on the size of the labour force. The labour force is the number of people who are employed or are not employed, but are searching and available for work for pay or profit. These statistics were collected during the 2015 Population and Housing Census.

Data on economic activities of a population can be collected using one (or both) of two approaches (current activity and usual activity). In the 'current activity approach', persons are asked about their economic activity during the past week or month. This approach provides data on the size of the labour force (number of employed and unemployed persons) to gain an understanding of the labour market. The statistics produced from this approach fluctuate quite significantly because of the seasonal nature of some jobs, particularly in the agricultural sector.

In the second 'usual activity approach', persons are asked what their usual activity was during the past year, or activity they spent most time on during the preceding 12-month period. This approach provides the type of data that is useful for economic analysis and planning, to provide a stable measure of the work force's size and structure.

The 2015 Census collected data on economic activities using a variant of the 'usual activity approach' which mars the actual level of employment. The definition of work adopted was if 'one worked for at least one hour during the past twelve months.'

To determine the labour force's structure, all persons 10 years old and over, should be asked what their usual activity was during the 12-month period prior to the 2015 Census or the activity engaged in for the longest duration in the past year, if they had changed during the said period. A person who was considered in the labour force, had a job, for pay or profit, or worked without pay in a family farm, firm or business. Persons were also considered in the labour force if they

reported themselves as unemployed or without work, but available for work.

The nature, type and size of the labour force are critical factors in the production of goods and services. The information on labour force is also used to formulate employment policies, to determine training needs and to calculate the expected working lives of the male and female populations and the rates of accession to, and retirement from, economic activity. The focus here is on the type of economic activity, employment status, occupation, industry and employment sector.

Although data was collected on the population ten years and older, the analyses in this section focus more on the population 15-64 years. For those below 14 years, especially 5-14 years, the analysis of child labour is aimed at highlighting their situation in economic activities, either within the framework of child labour or the inactive population.

In the 2015 Census, data was for the first time collected on new entrants into the labour market, as an indicator that would reveal the dynamics of the labour market in the future.

## 1.2 Concepts and definitions in employment and labour Force

The analysis of economic characteristics data collected in the 2015 Census uses the standard labour force framework, as prescribed by the International Labour Organization (ILO). This framework categorizes the population aged 15 years and over into two mutually exclusive groups:

- economically active population or labour force and
- economically inactive population.

The economically active population or labour force consists of the population aged 15 years and above who were working during the reference period, and also those who were not working but were actively seeking a job.

The economically inactive population covers the population aged 15 years and above who neither work nor are seeking to work, for example, those too incapacitated to work, unpaid household workers, retired, full-time students and those who are at home but not looking for work.

Data on occupation and industry in this report are presented by major groupings (this is referred to as one digit level by ILO). The major grouping is defined as a set of jobs whose tasks and duties are characterised by a high degree of similarity. Major groups are summarized from detailed sub-groups for both occupation and industry.

**The labour force** is made up of the employed and unemployed populations. The employed population consists of persons who are working while the unemployed population consists of persons who are not working but who are looking for work and are available for work.

**Employed:** A person 15-64 years old who did any work for at least one hour within the twelve months prior to the census.

**Unemployed:** A person 15-64 years old not working, available for work, and, or looking for work during the previous 12 months or more.

The notion of seeking work is of limited relevance in Sierra Leone because the labour market is limited in scope and fragmented, largely self-employed and informal. Besides, a person without work and currently available for work who had made arrangements to take up paid employment or undertake self-employment at a date subsequent to the reference period should be considered unemployed.

To provide a measure of unemployment that would reflect the current unemployment situation in the country, it is expedient to use one of the following measures:

- (a) those looking for work plus those not working and not looking for work (in some literature termed discouraged workers) and
- (b) those looking for work plus those not working and not looking for work and unpaid family workers (relying on the fact that no one leaves paid work to work for nothing).

Either measures, or at least one of them, will portray the true picture of unemployment in Sierra Leone and also be comparable to unemployment levels in sub-Saharan Africa.

**The usually active population:** all persons above a specified age (for example, 15 years) whose main activity status, as determined in terms of number of weeks or days during a long-specified period (such as the preceding 12 months or the preceding calendar year), was employed or unemployed.

The measurement of the usually active population is based on the activity status of individuals, assessed on the basis of a "main activity" criterion over a long reference period, as opposed to assessment of activity status on the basis of the priority criterion used for measurement of the currently active population through the labour force framework.

Another fundamental difference between the two measurement frameworks concerns subdivisions. In the usual activity framework, individuals are first classified as usually active or not usually active, and then the usually active may be further subdivided as employed persons or unemployed persons according to the main activity during the active period.

**Informal sector:** There is no single accepted definition that completely describes the informal sector, a source of employment growth and one of the survival strategies adopted by the unemployed, youth, migrants in urban areas and wage earners, especially in the face of declining real wages. There is paucity of data on the informal sector because of the apparent absence of an operational definition.

The total employment in the informal sector refers to the total number of persons employed in informal sector enterprises, including the operators of informal sector enterprises, business partners, unpaid family workers and employees.

Estimating the size of this sector is problematic and there are issues relating to self-employment, unpaid family workers and others (activities that cannot be classified but can be described); kind of work, service workers, shop and market sales workers, elementary occupations and private households with employed persons. Thus employment in the informal economy is defined as “the sum of employment in unregistered establishments, unregistered employment in the formal economy and unpaid family workers”.

In this study the informal sector is derived from the self-employed (without employees), unpaid family worker, paid and unpaid apprentices and those who have worked before but are currently looking for work.

**Child labour:** The percentage of children aged 5 to 14 years of age involved in economic activities, a month prior to the census. Child labour is a contentious issue given that the distinction between child work (a process of socialization, in tune with the moral, psychological, physiological development of the child) and exploitative child work (an aspect that exposes the child to disadvantages in present or future life, that is devoid of the child’s protection and interest both in terms of social, health, moral and ethical development) is somehow blurred.

**ILO Convention 182 (1999):** calls for “... immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour.” (Article 3).

“In determining the types of work referred to under Article 3(d) of the Convention, and in identifying where they exist, consideration should be given, inter alia, to:

- work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse;
- work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces;
- work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads.”

The ILO Convention 182 and Recommendation (190) further implicitly recognize such a

distinction among various forms of child labour, by calling for priority in the elimination of the worst forms of child labour (including slavery, bonded labour, child soldiers, commercial sex trade or pornography, drug trafficking, and work which could harm children’s wellbeing).

The ILO KILM notes that the first step in labour market analysis is to determine the breakdown of labour force status within the population. According to the definitions established in the resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2013 (ILO, 2013), the working-age population can be broken down into persons outside the labour force (formerly known as inactive: KILM 13), employed (KILM 2) or unemployed (not working and seeking work: KILMs 9 and 10).

A large share of the population either in unemployment or outside the labour force, or both, indicates substantial underutilization of the potential labour force and thus of the economic potential of a country. Governments facing this situation should, if possible, seek to analyse the reasons for inactivity, which in turn could indicate the policy choices necessary to redress the situation.

For example, if the majority of the population outside the labour force is made up of women who are not working because they have household responsibilities, the state might wish to encourage an environment that facilitates female economic participation through such measures as the establishment of day-care centres for children or flexible working hours.

Alternatively, if disability is a common reason for staying outside the labour force, programmes to promote the employment of the disabled could help to lower the inactivity rate.

It is more difficult to recapture persons who have left the labour market because they are “discouraged”, that is, because they feel that no suitable work is available or that they do not have the proper qualifications, or because they do not know where to look for work.

However, it may be possible to boost their confidence through participation in training programmes and job search assistance.

In any particular national context, the correct mix of policies can only be designed by looking in detail at the reasons for inactivity.

Unemployment itself should be analysed according to sex (KILM 9), age (KILM 10), length of education (KILM 11) and educational attainment (KILM 14) in order to gain a better understanding of the composition of the jobless population and therefore to target unemployment policies appropriately.

Other characteristics of the unemployed not shown in the KILM, such as socio-economic background and work experience could also be significant, and should be analysed, if available, in order to determine which groups face particular hardships. Paradoxically, low unemployment rates may well disguise substantial poverty in a country (see KILM 17), whereas high unemployment rates can occur in countries with significant economic development and low incidence of poverty.

In countries without a safety net of unemployment insurance and welfare benefits, many individuals, despite strong family solidarity, simply cannot afford to be unemployed. Instead, they must eke out a living as best as they can, often in the informal economy or in informal work arrangements within the formal economy. Therefore, the problem in many developing economies such as Sierra Leone, is not so much unemployment as rather the lack of decent and productive work opportunities for those who are employed.

### **Growth rate of labour productivity (GDP per person employed)**

This indicator provides a link between total output (GDP) and employment by measuring the growth of GDP or labour productivity growth per person employed. Labour productivity is often seen as a precondition to sustainably raise living standards, since it tends to be associated with an economy's capacity to generate (productive) employment and increase wage levels.

Increases in labour productivity can be brought about by several factors, including: (i) increased efficiency in the use of labour; (ii) increased use of other inputs, such as physical, natural or human capital; and (iii) labour moving to more productive activities (structural transformation). While it is unlikely that economic and social development can take place in the absence of productivity growth, this is not a sufficient condition to achieve socially desirable outcomes.

In particular, the ILO (2009) suggests combining this indicator with the employment-to-population ratio (see below) to ensure that productivity growth is accompanied by employment growth.

This is because the indicator does not provide information on the quantity of employment – despite the fact that total employment determines labour productivity. For instance, a resource-rich country might exhibit high labour productivity growth owing to an increase in GDP that does not generate any additional employment – due to the high capital-intensity of the sector. Moreover, the indicator does not provide insights on the quality of employment (for example, types of jobs) and inclusiveness (since it cannot be disaggregated by sex, age or income status).

### **Paid employment to population ratio**

This indicator measures the proportion of the working age population that is in paid employment. A low ratio suggests that a significant proportion of the population that could be working are not in paid employment which may be due to high unemployment or inactivity. This indicator is very useful and relevant in Sierra Leone because there is no unemployment benefit provision and it will provide a realistic picture of the status of employment.

### **Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment**

This indicator provides a measure of vulnerable employment, which is based on standard categories of employment status.

To a certain extent, it also provides a proxy for informal work from an individual perspective. In practice, the indicator combines two categories of workers that are more likely to lack formal work arrangements and access to social protection. These are self-employed workers without employees (for example, own-account workers) and contributing family workers (for example, unpaid family workers).

Vulnerable employment is often associated with poverty, precarious work and economic vulnerability, since these forms of employment tend to be poorly paid, less secure, and more susceptible to changes in economic conditions. The indicator can be disaggregated (for example, by sex or age) in order to provide a richer amount of information on the employment vulnerability of different groups.

Self-employed workers with employees (employers), wage and salary workers (employees), and members of producer's cooperatives are only indirectly captured by this indicator (ILO, 2009). This implicitly presumes that workers in these categories are not in a vulnerable position. However, there is significant heterogeneity within each category (for example, regular versus casual wage employment), which may not be adequately captured by this classification. For instance, wage labourers in agriculture tend to be a particularly vulnerable group.

In addition, the assumption that own-account workers are more vulnerable than wage workers is perhaps more relevant in developing countries characterized by segmented labour markets, surplus labour, and weak labour market institutions. In developed countries, own-account professionals might actually be better-off than wage workers. Finally, some studies have suggested that own-account work might be overestimated in developing countries due to unrecorded wage labour in rural areas (Sender et al,2005).

There are a number of complementary employment indicators, which make special reference to youth unemployment as given below.

- Youth unemployment rate (15-24)
- Ratio of youth unemployment rate to adult unemployment rate
- Share of youth unemployed to total unemployed
- Share of youth unemployed to youth population

Unfortunately, the unemployment rate does not have an unambiguous interpretation. Low unemployment rates can be found in poor countries like Sierra Leone which do not have safety nets, because people cannot afford to be unemployed.

# CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

## 2.1. Introduction

The original version of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) was adopted in 1948. In that connection, the United Nations Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 149 A (VII) of 27 August 1948. Wide use has been made of ISIC in Sierra Leone and internationally in classifying data according to kind of economic activity in the fields of economic statistics, such as for production or national income, employment and population. Sierra Leone, being a member of many international organizations such as the United Nations, has utilized ISIC as the basis for developing their national industrial classifications as well as providing statistical series according to ISIC when publishing and analysing statistical data.

Given that changes take place in the organization of economic activities and new types of economic activities become important or emerge, while new analytical requirements develop for data classified according to kind of economic activity, ISIC had undergone four revisions. These take into account the accumulating changes in the economic structure and production patterns around the world which require a careful balancing of continuity with the need for relevance of ISIC and its comparability with other existing industry classifications. The data is analysed using Microsoft Word Excel 2010 version to create tables, graphs and schema for illustrations and clarifications.

## 2.2 Data Collection

The 2015 Census collected data on all inhabitants, the population's socio-economic characteristics and other housing conditions. The portion designated to economic activities of persons 10 years and older has a reference point of the past 12 months preceding the census. Four questions were asked – employment status, employer, occupation and industry.

## 2.3 Estimations of economic characteristics indicators (See Appendix)

The estimations of economic characteristics hinges on subdividing the economic activities of all inhabitants between the ages of 15 and 64 years in the economy into those who are supposed to be working, otherwise called working age population by type of employer-employee relationship; those who are in paid employment; those who are self-employed; occupation; industry engaged in; those who by nature of age are not supposed to work; those who are not working but would wish to work; those who have stopped searching for work; the retired; and the infirm.

Estimates derived are rates that determine the proportion of those engaged in active work or inactivity; proportions that would like to work but cannot work; those not working but are desirous to work; within the age limits of 15 to 64 years, 15 to 24 years and those below 14 years.

# CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

## 3.1 Introduction

The 2015 Census follows the general categorization of the working age population into the economically active and economically inactive population. Within this realm the economically active is also subdivided into those working who have contracts, sick leave, maternity leave, leave allowances, social security; those working but without social security, or medical or maternity leave; paid and unpaid apprentices; unpaid family workers; those who had worked before but are currently looking for work; and new entrants into the labour market.

To assess the manpower needs of Sierra Leone, the 2004 and 2015 censuses provided estimates of labour force (working age population 15-64 years) employment and unemployment. The data on labour force classified by occupation (an inventory of skills workers possess to produce output) and status (paid employee, self-employed, unpaid farm worker, household worker) is useful for planning output requirements of the educational system and the determination of social mobility.

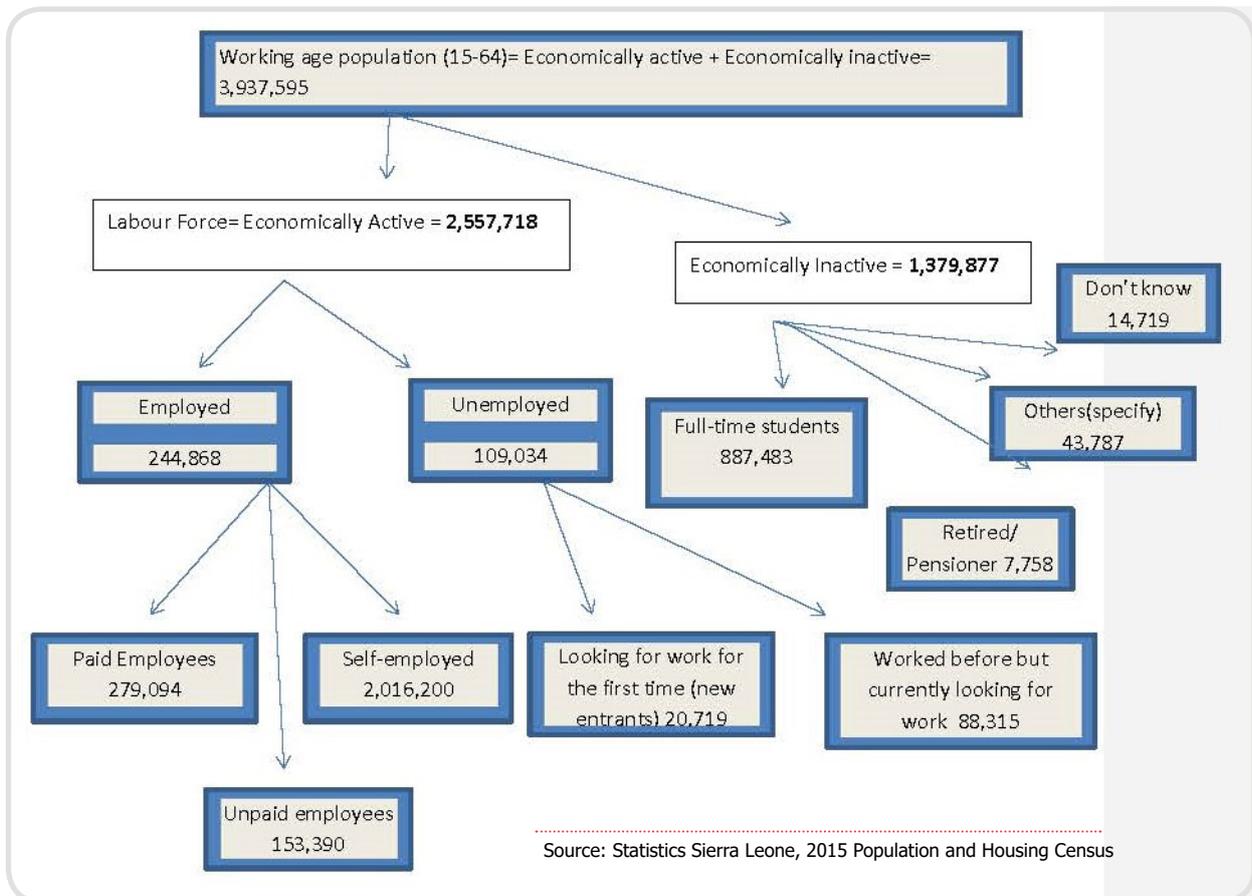
## 3.2 Analysis by activity status

### 3.2.1 The size of the labour force

Only a part of a total population is usually engaged in the production of goods and services. A portion of the total population are precluded from work due to various circumstances ranging from terminal disabilities, to age, general terminal illnesses or engagement in full-time educational activities. A part of the population, the youngest, oldest and the physically or mentally incapacitated, do not engage in economic activities because of their complete inability or due to legal restrictions. Those that do engage in such economic activities are referred to as the economically active, or simply the labour force, of the country. The economically active population comprises all persons of either sex who supply labour for the production of economic goods and services during the reference period. Figure 3.1

shows that at any point in time, an economically active person may be either employed or unemployed.

**Figure 3.1. A schema of the distribution of the census working age population (15-64 years) by economic activity**



The schema illustrates that the economically active in the 2015 Census has increased from 2,621,773 (2004 Census) to 3,937,595 (50.18 per cent increase) and the proportion of economically active of the working age population has fallen to 65 per cent from about 86.5 per cent (2004 Census). The schema indicates that unemployment has increased from about 70,000 (2004) to over 109,034 in 2015. About 96 per cent of the labour force is employed in diverse forms (although most employment might be devoid of decent work and living wage).

The number of the working age population in paid employment is estimated as 7.1 per cent. This means seven people out of every 100 are in paid employment. The schema also shows that about 21,000 of the labour force are new entrants.

Table 3.1 indicates that about 39 per cent of the economically active population are youth in the age band 15-24 years <sup>1</sup>. This implies that government should design strategies to generate or create jobs that youths would be able to undertake.

The total number of the employed (paid employment, self-employed without employees, self-employed with employees (employers), paid apprentices) is 2,448,684. The unemployed total is 109,034, which shows that the number of the unemployed has increased by 45,772 (a percentage increase of about 72 per cent over the eleven-year period 2004 to 2015).

<sup>1</sup> if it is 15-34 years according to our national definition of a youth, it is as high as 65%



Table 3.1. Economically active population 15-64 years

Age group	Economically active population			Economically inactive Not in labour force	Total working age population	Percentage (%) economically active		
	Employed	Un-employed	Total (labour force)			Employed	Un-employed	Total
15 - 19	241,103	12,252	253,355	617,993	871,348	10%	11%	22%
20 - 24	312,388	22,304	334,692	325,746	660,438	13%	20%	17%
25 - 29	409,501	25,803	435,304	170,317	605,621	17%	24%	15%
30 - 34	343,249	15,898	359,147	73,226	432,373	14%	15%	11%
35 - 39	351,632	12,050	363,682	55,803	419,485	14%	11%	11%
40 - 44	255,051	7,451	262,502	35,495	297,997	10%	7%	8%
45 - 49	207,695	5,584	213,279	28,083	241,362	8%	5%	6%
50 - 54	155,933	3,830	159,763	26,522	186,285	6%	4%	5%
55 - 59	89,009	2,172	91,181	19,019	110,200	10%	0%	3%
60 - 64	83,123	1,690	84,813	27,673	112,486	6%	0%	2%
TOTAL	2,448,684	109,034	2,557,718	1,379,877	3,937,595			100%*

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Table 3.2 shows the distribution of the labour force by district. It is not surprising that Western Urban district, which hosts the capital city, has the highest number of the employed in Sierra Leone. Kenema district recorded a fair share of the employed, followed by Port Loko and Bombali districts. This distribution reflects in part the population distribution in Sierra Leone, with the districts that have larger populations having larger shares of the labour force (a function of the population). It shows that about 53 per cent of the labour force exists in the districts that have the five municipalities (Bo, Bonthe, Freetown, Makeni and Kono). These are the business havens of Sierra Leone. Western Urban area has both the largest share of those in the labour force and those not in the labour force.



Table 3.2. Distribution of labour force by district

District	Employed (1)	Unemployed (2)	Labour force (1+2)	District share of labour force	Not in the labour force	District share not in the labour force
Kailahun	183,941	2,226	186,167	7.3%	102,064	7.4%
Kenema	216,686	5,188	221,874	8.7%	120,830	8.8%
Kono	178,160	6,525	184,685	7.2%	91,553	6.6%
Bombali	204,148	7,746	211,894	8.3%	113,091	8.2%
Kambia	123,621	1,663	125,284	4.9%	50,300	3.6%
Koinadugu	155,553	1,585	157,138	6.1%	56,296	4.1%
Port Loko	210,994	8,614	219,608	8.6%	102,757	7.4%
Tonkolili	189,931	5,532	195,463	7.6%	80,469	5.8%
Bo	189,594	6,379	195,973	7.7%	120,089	8.7%
Bonthe	68,553	2,159	70,712	2.8%	36,214	2.6%
Moyamba	120,762	2,140	122,902	4.8%	42,239	3.1%
Pujehun	110,878	5,963	116,841	4.6%	68,686	5.0%
Western Area Rural	147,512	14,399	161,911	6.3%	104,302	7.6%
Western Area Urban	348,351	38,915	387,266	15.1%	290,987	21.1%
Total	2,448,684	109,034	2,557,718	100%	1,379,877	100%

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

### 3.2.2 Activity Rate

The refined activity rate (RAR) is a better measure that relates the labour force to the population in the working age group 15-64 years. This is about 65 per cent, which is considered low, and a recipe for anti-social activities. Below is Table 3.3 showing the RAR by sex. It indicates the gender disparity in the labour force as the RAR for males (0.68) is higher than the female RAR (0.62).



Table 3.3. Refined activity rate (RAR) by sex

	National	Males	Females
Population 15-64 years	3,937,595	1,908,274	2,029,321
Labour force	2,557,718	1,290,871	1,266,847
RAR	0.65	0.68	0.62

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Age-specific activity rate is the proportion of the population in a given age group that is in the labour force. It is computed as the number of persons in the labour force of a specific age group divided by the total persons in that age group. This yields a better measure of the labour participation rate than the refined activity rate.



Table 3.4. Refined activity rate by age

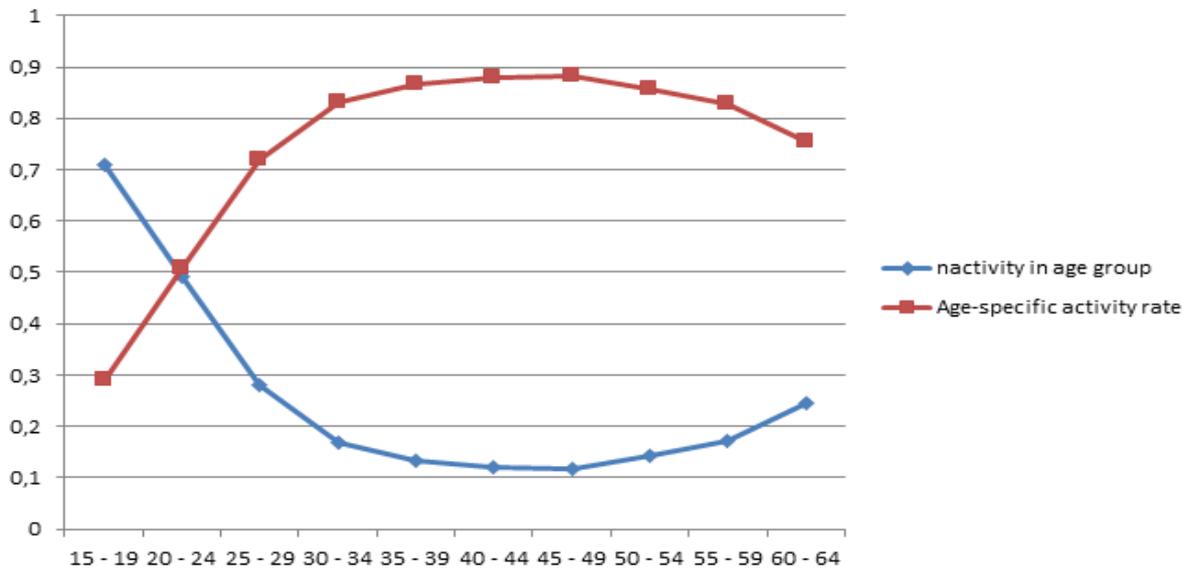
Age group	Age-specific activity rate	Inactivity in age group
15 - 19	0.29	0.71
20 - 24	0.51	0.49
25 - 29	0.72	0.28
30 - 34	0.83	0.17
35 - 39	0.87	0.13
40 - 44	0.88	0.12
45 - 49	0.88	0.12
50 - 54	0.86	0.14
55 - 59	0.83	0.17
60 - 64	0.75	0.25

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Table 3.4 above shows the distribution of activity rates by age, which depicts the natural trend of a person from early childhood (0-14) and a complete period of dependency to one of complete independence and then old age. The age-specific activity rate increases from 15 to 19 and reaches the maximum 0.88 in the age band 40-44 before beginning to decline. However, it is noticeable that even with the 60-64 years age group the 0.75 per cent activity rate is higher than the (0.65) national average.

Figure 3.2, which juxtaposes the activity and inactivity rates, shows that these two rates are inversely related. The two curves intersect at the age group 15-19, where activity rate and inactivity rate are equal.

**Figure 3.2. Age specific activity and inactivity rates**

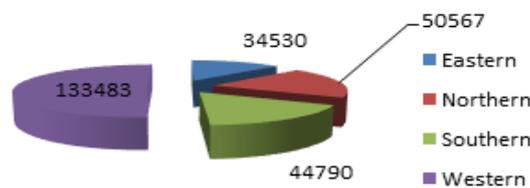


Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015  
Population and Housing Census

### 3.2.3 Paid employment-to-population ratio

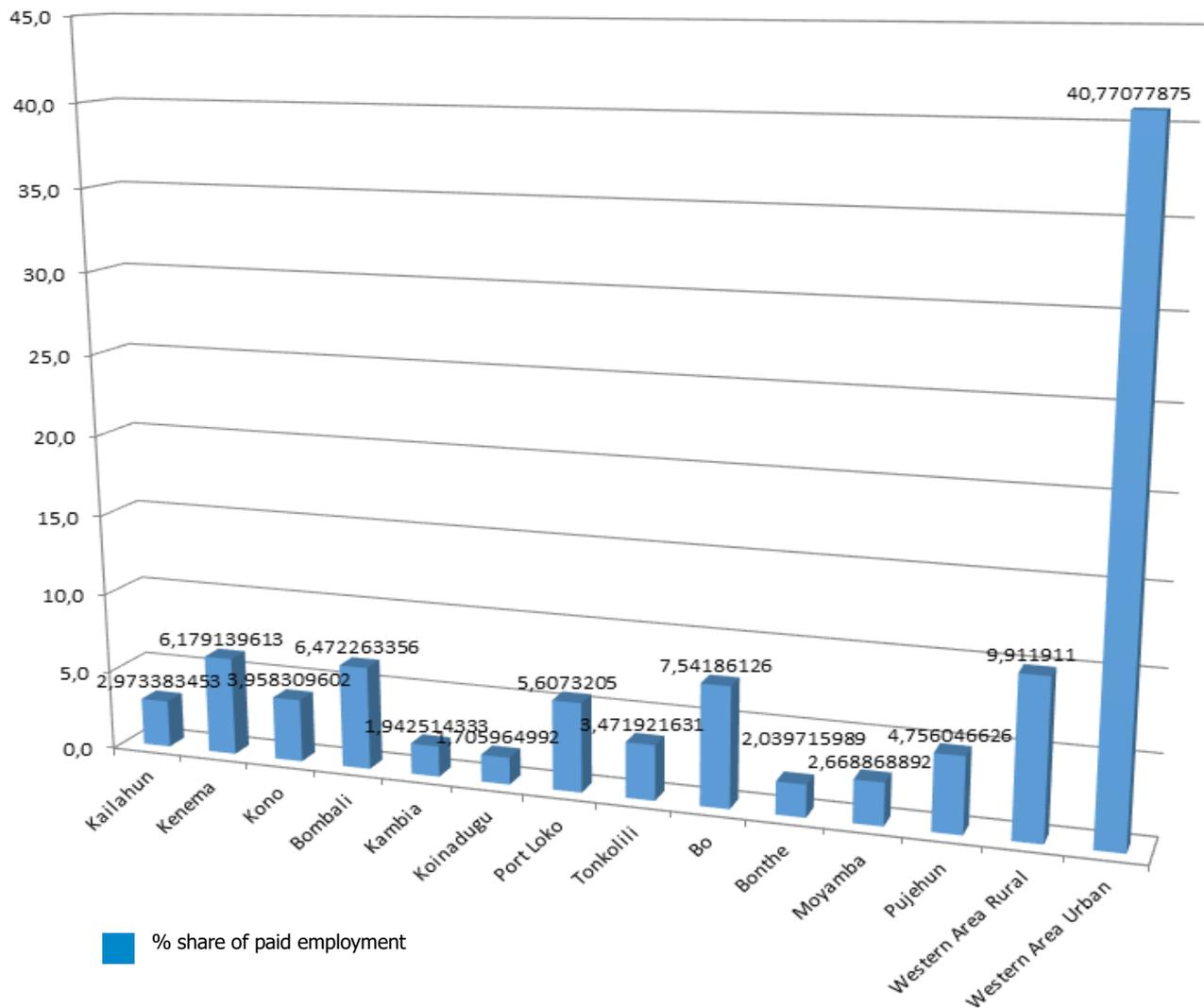
This indicator measures the proportion of the working age population that is in paid employment. The paid employment-to-population ratio provides information on the ability of the economy to create paid jobs that conform to decent work conditions, including minimum wage for the lowest cadre.

**Figure 3.3. Paid employment-to-population ratio by region**



The pie chart shows that the largest proportion of paid employment is in the Western Region, which hosts the capital city, Freetown. The Northern Region has the second largest number of paid employees, less than half the number in the Western Region. It is worthy to note that the sum of all paid employees in the three regions is less than those in paid employment in the Western Region.

**Figure 3.4. Percentage share of paid employment by district**



The bar chart above (Figure 3.4) shows that the Western Urban and Rural districts contain more than 50 per cent of those in paid employment in Sierra Leone. Bo district is third with a share of about 8 per cent, Bombali, Kenema and Port Loko districts contain about 6 per cent each. The implication is that the bulk of the other types of employment are not secure and regular and some of the employed can be classified as working poor.

The labour force participation indicates the potential for persons to work. Table 3.5 below shows the labour force participation by district. The table shows that Moyamba and Koinadugu districts have the highest labour force participation rate, followed by Kambia and Tonkolili districts. The Western Urban district recorded the lowest participation rate. There is also a higher employment-to-population ratio and labour force participation rate in the rural localities (0.71; 0.73) than in the urban ones (0.51; 0.55) respectively.



Table 3.5. Labour force participation rate by district and residence

District	Labour force participation rate
Kailahun	0.65
Kenema	0.65
Kono	0.67
Bombali	0.65
Kambia	0.71
Koinadugu	0.74
Port Loko	0.68
Tonkolili	0.71
Bo	0.62
Bonthe	0.66
Moyamba	0.74
Pujehun	0.63
Western Area Rural	0.61
Western Area Urban	0.73
Total	0.55



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

### 3.2.4 Employment and unemployment rates

The term employment is rather loosely understood to mean persons of working age (15-64 years) who are working/employed by themselves or by someone else for at least one hour during the twelve months prior to the census night. Employment status is classified as paid employee, self-employed or unpaid family worker. Paid employees are those working for others and are paid in cash or kind. Self-employed are people engaged in business or enterprise for themselves, for example, hawkers, shoe repairers, store owners, or farmers who intend to sell their products. The employment rate is the number of persons employed as a percentage of the labour force.

The unemployment rate is defined by the ILO as the “number of persons unemployed as a percentage of the labour force”. The persons of working age are classified as unemployed if “they were not employed or had not worked in any economic activity (paid, employment, self-employment or unpaid work for a family business or farm), were available for work and had taken active steps to seek work during a specified recent period”.

However, the aspect of seeking work or making efforts to get work can be modified given the fragmented and seasonal nature of Sierra Leone’s labour market. The working age for the 2015 Census is set at 15-64 years and the reference (specified recent period) was twelve months.



Table 3.6. Employment and unemployment rates by age (15-64 years) and sex

Age Group	Male		Female	
	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate
15 - 19	5%	0.3%	5%	0.2%
20 - 24	5%	0.5%	7%	0.4%
25 - 29	7%	0.6%	9%	0.4%
30 - 34	6%	0.4%	7%	0.2%
35 - 39	7%	0.3%	7%	0.1%
40 - 44	5%	0.2%	5%	0.1%
45 - 49	5%	0.2%	3%	0.1%
50 - 54	3%	0.1%	3%	0.3%
55 - 59	2%	0.1%	1%	0.3%
60 - 64	2%	0.0%	1%	0.2%
Total	47%	2.7%	48%	2.3%

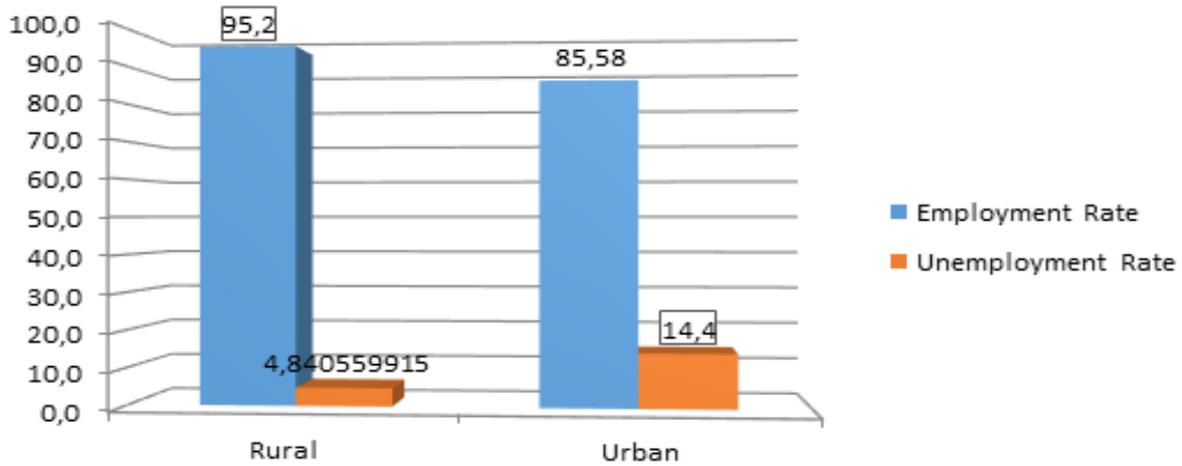
Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Table 3.6 above shows a pattern of employment that does not match developing countries where female employment rate is at par with male employment rate. The pattern, however, can be illustrated in a column graph to show that from age group 15-19 through to 30-34 years, the female employment rate surpasses that of males, but from 35-39 through to 60-64 male employment rate is higher than female employment rate. In total, they are equal at 48 per cent employment rate for both sexes. Despite this parity in employment rate, men are more likely to be unemployed than their female counterparts. The unemployment rate is 2.7 per cent for males, it is 1.6 per cent for females.

The structure of the economy and the lack of adequate social safety nets for the vulnerable, persistent and chronic poor, explains why the employment rate is very high in Sierra Leone, especially in the interior, where agriculture and mining are predominant economic activities. Below is figure 3.5, showing the rate of employment and unemployment by residence. The figure highlights the rural nature of employment, where people can be employed seasonally so employment rates are always higher than in in urban areas.



**Figure 3.5. Percentage distributions of employment and unemployment by residence**



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

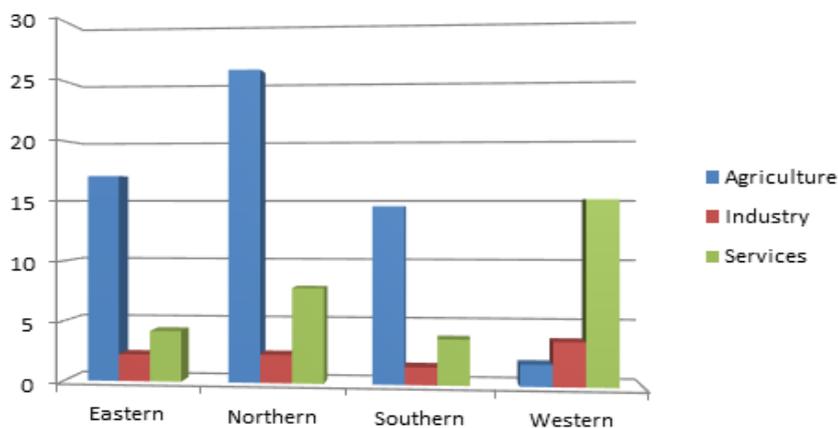
### 3.3 Analysis of the population by industry

#### 3.3.1 Distribution of the labour force by industry

To determine the structure of the economy, it is necessary to analyse the labour force by industry. As countries develop, they move from agriculture, to sometimes semi-processing (value-addition) and then simple industrial systems. The next step is to use advanced technology and science to transit to highly- specialized industrial systems. The growth of the service sector is another pointer to the diversification of the economy.

Figure 3.6 below shows that agriculture is the mainstay in the Eastern, Northern and Southern regions. The services sector is thriving but is predominant in the Western Region. Industrial activities are prominent and very low in the Southern Region.

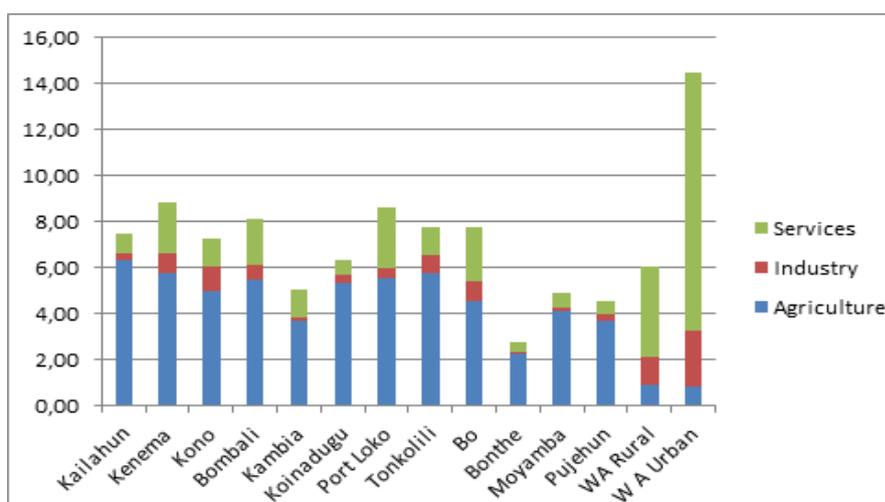
**Figure 3.6. Percentage distribution of working age population (15-64 years) by industry and region**



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

An analysis of the distribution of the labour force by district (see Figure 3.7) reveals that Sierra Leone is an agrarian economy with the agricultural sector predominant in twelve districts. The only districts that have low levels of agriculture are the Western Rural and Western Urban districts, where the service sector is very prominent. Every district has some industrial sector, though the level and type of technological advancement is not clear. Agro-processing, plastic wares, soft drinks and confectionaries and cement production are the main manufacturing activities in Sierra Leone.

**Figure 3.7. Percentage distribution of labour force 15-64 years by industry and district**



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

### 3.4 Analysis of the Population by Occupation

#### 3.4.1 Occupational distribution of the working age population (15-64 years)

The occupational distribution of the working age population is important as it provides an understanding of its professional development. The manpower needs of a country can be discerned from this occupational distribution, indicating whether the economy is agrarian or industrial. A move away from agriculture to service or manufacturing would indicate the level of economic development.



Table 3.7. Occupational distribution of the working age population (15-64 years) by sex

Main occupation	Male	% distribution	Female	% distribution	Total %
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	659,992	26.89	762,029	31.05	58%
Service workers, shop and market sales workers	158,722	6.47	297,304	12.11	19%
Technicians and associate professionals (including police and armed forces)	39,933	1.63	16,010	0.65	2%
Professionals and clerks	91,427	3.73	46,059	1.88	6%
Craft and related trade workers	156,147	6.36	47,719	1.94	8%
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	72,752	2.96	3,781	0.15	3%
Legislators senior officials and managers	17,164	0.70	8,875	0.36	1%
Elementary occupations	29,174	1.19	47,208	1.92	3%
Total	1,225,311	49.9	1,228,985	50.1	100%

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

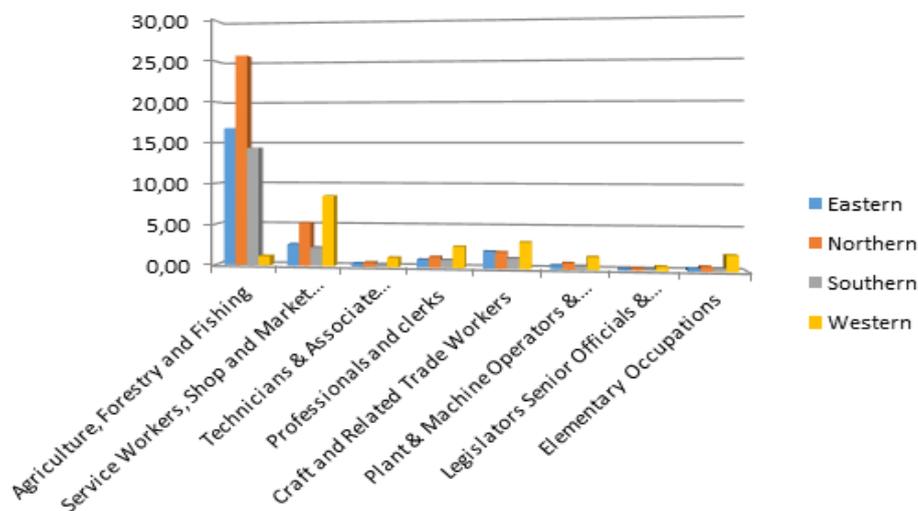
Table 3.7 shows that there are more women in cash-earning employment than men. Some gender stereo-typing is still apparent, as more women are engaged in agriculture, service shop, market sales and elementary occupations than men, but they are less than half the number of men in technical and associate professional, professional work, craft and related trade works and legislator, senior officials and managers. Works pertaining to plant and machines and assemblage attract very few women (3,781). The table displays an agrarian type economy in which women play a major role.

The agrarian nature displayed in the 2015 Census is similar to that found in 2004, but women now work more in elementary occupations (including street trading, shoe cleaning, housekeeping, labourers) than men.

A cursory look at the percentage contribution of each sector to occupation shows that less than 15 per cent of all those in occupation are technicians and associate professionals (including police and armed forces); professionals and clerks; plant and machine operators and assemblers; and legislators, senior officials and managers. Technicians and associate professionals (including police and armed forces) form only two per cent, while legislators, senior officials and managers constitute one per cent. This indicates the capacity problem faced by the country and the low level of competitiveness.

Below is a graph (Figure 3.8) showing the occupational distribution of the working age population (15-64 years) by region. The Northern Region has the most in agriculture, forestry and fishing, followed by the Eastern Region. Very few persons in the Western Region (mostly Western Rural) are engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing. In all other occupations, the Western Region recorded the highest number of persons. This could explain why so many young men and women want to move to Freetown. This has policy implications for rural development and local economic development in Sierra Leone. This analysis is followed by the occupational distribution of the working age population (15-64 years) by district.

**Figure 3.8. Occupational distribution of the working age population (15-64 years) by region**



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census



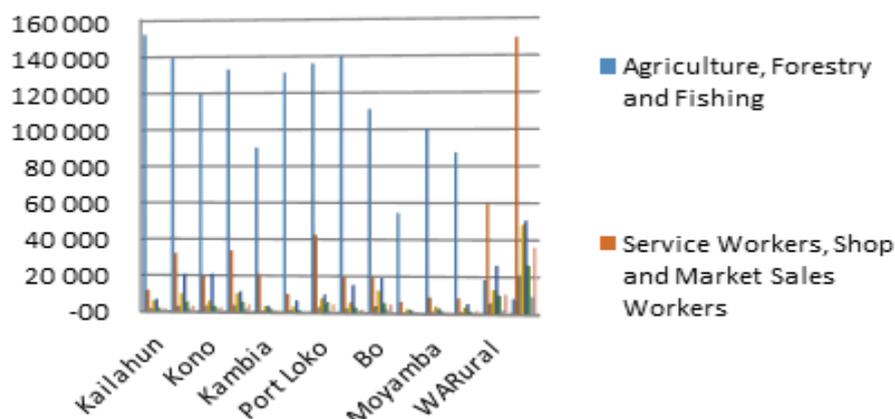
Table 3.8. Occupational distribution of working age population (15-64 years) by region

Domain	Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	411,983	630,152	352,727	27,159
Service workers, shop and market sales workers	63,966	127,815	54,866	209,379
Technicians and associate professionals (including police and armed forces)	8,891	12,125	7,529	27,398
Professionals and clerks	22,461	30,659	22,608	61,758
Craft and related trade workers	48,962	47,512	30,090	77,302
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	11,182	18,206	10,443	36,702
Legislators, senior officials and managers	4,220	5,951	4,129	11,739
Elementary occupations	7,484	12,991	8,894	47,013
Total	579,149	885,411	491,286	498,450

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

The graph below (Figure 3.9) clearly shows that in all the districts in the Eastern, Northern and Southern regions, agriculture, forestry and fishery is the main occupation. Only the Western Area recorded a very low number of persons involved in this sector. Service workers, shop and market sales workers are a thriving sector in all regions and districts. The 2004 Census showed a fairly sizeable number of workers in the legislator, senior officials and manager's category but in 2015 this sector has a very low proportion. This could be because the peace consolidation, rehabilitation and resettlement problems are now in the country's past.

**Figure 3.9. Occupational distribution of the working age population by district**



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

### 3.4.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

This indicator captures the degree to which women have access to wage and salaried work in the industry and service sectors (non-agricultural sector). It provides an insight into women's ability to access better employment opportunities - formal employment outside agriculture. Inclusion in the labour market results in positive outcomes in terms of autonomy, self-reliance and decision-making power within the household. The drawback of this indicator is that it does not provide direct information on the quality (or quantity) of employment. The indicator is mainly focused on gender disparities (inclusiveness) for a specific employment status in the non-agricultural sector. The share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural occupations is about 0.17 per cent. This is very low and indicates that women are still not able to reach their potential in Sierra Leone.

Given also the low share of industry and service in the GDP and low manufacturing output, there are not many chances for women in Sierra Leone at the high cadre level. This is reinforced by the fact that women are only about 0.27 per cent of all paid employees (71,526 out of 263,370). The female share of employment in legislative or managerial occupations is about 0.72 per cent of all the women in the labour force. Considering the total labour force, the share is even lower at about 0.36 per cent.

## 3.5 Child labour

### 3.5.1 Introduction and definition of terms

Child labour has been defined by the ILO Convention No. 138. There are considerable differences in the many kinds of work children do. Classification depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed and the objectives pursued, and may vary from country to country, as well as among sectors within countries. Child labour is, thus, different from child work in that the former is likely to be harmful to the child, whilst the latter is harmless or skills developing.

Child work refers to any activity (light work) that can be beneficial and can enhance a child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development without interference with schooling, recreation and rest. The UN thus defines child work as "children's participation in economic activity that does not negatively affect their health and development or interfere with their education". The ILO also contends that work which does not interfere with the children's education is permitted from the age of 12 years (ILO Convention No. 138).

Helping parents in their household activities and business after school can contribute positively to the development of the child. When such work is truly part of a socialization process (a means of transmitting skills from parents to their children), it is not child labour. Light work, can increase children's status as family members and citizens and help them gain confidence and self-esteem.

Child labour is generally restricted to the 'worst form' activities, involving the nature of work or intensity of work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally harmful to the health and development of children and which deprives them of education.

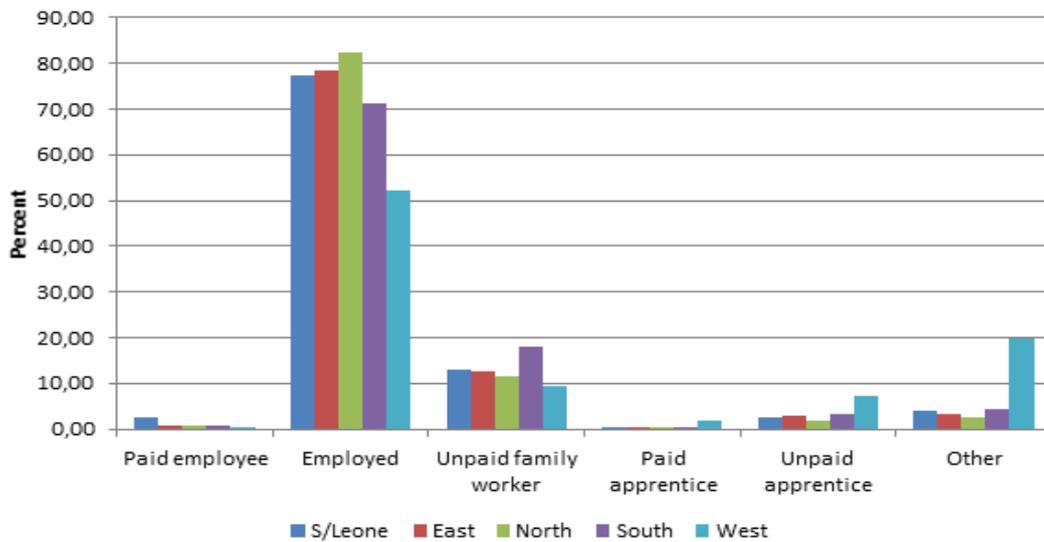
Mostly in developing countries, children from poor homes often have to work under inhuman conditions for their survival. The worst forms of child labour, according to the ILO Convention No. 138, include enslaving children, forcibly recruiting children as prostitutes, trafficking and forcing children into illegal activities and exposing them to hazardous work. Although the UN Convention allows the use of child work, it discourages the use of child labour of all forms.

Activities labelled "worst forms" under Article 3(d) of Convention No.182 are often regarded as "hazardous forms of child labour". The companion recommendation document for Convention No. 182, R190 Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, suggests the following work as hazardous forms of child labour:

- Work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse;

- Work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces;
- Work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools or which involves the handling or transport of heavy loads;
- work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperature, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;
- Work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises or the employer. (R190, Section II.3.a-e).

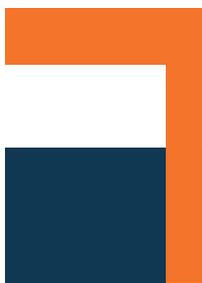
**Figure 3.10. Percentage distribution of employment status by age group 10-14 years by region**



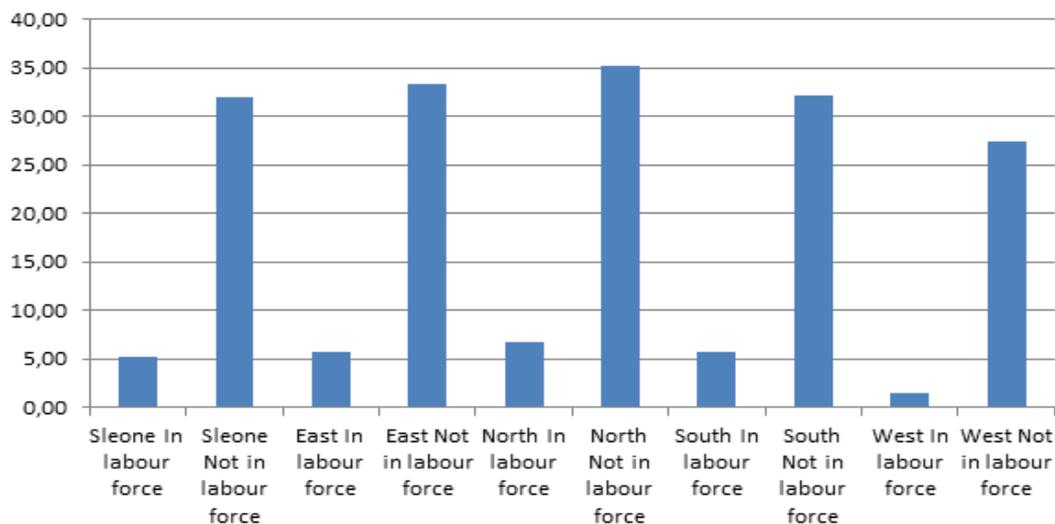
Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Figure 3.10 above shows that the percentage of children in employment and working as paid employees is greatest in the Northern Region. This is probably due to the high numbers of mines in that region.

Most 10 to 14 year olds are employed, paid employee, paid apprentice, unpaid apprentice and unpaid family workers, with the largest proportion of 82.4 per cent employed in the Northern Region. In the Eastern Region there are 78.3 per cent employed, in the Southern Region 71.3 per cent are employed and 52.1 per cent are employed in the Western Region. These two regions (Northern and Eastern) have large agricultural and mining interests, in which children can work as sellers of wares and food or carriers. Thus children in the Northern and Eastern regions are more likely to carry out these activities as unpaid family workers and, or unpaid apprentices.



**Figure 3.11. Percentage distribution of children in labour force and not in labour force by age group, 10-14, and by region**



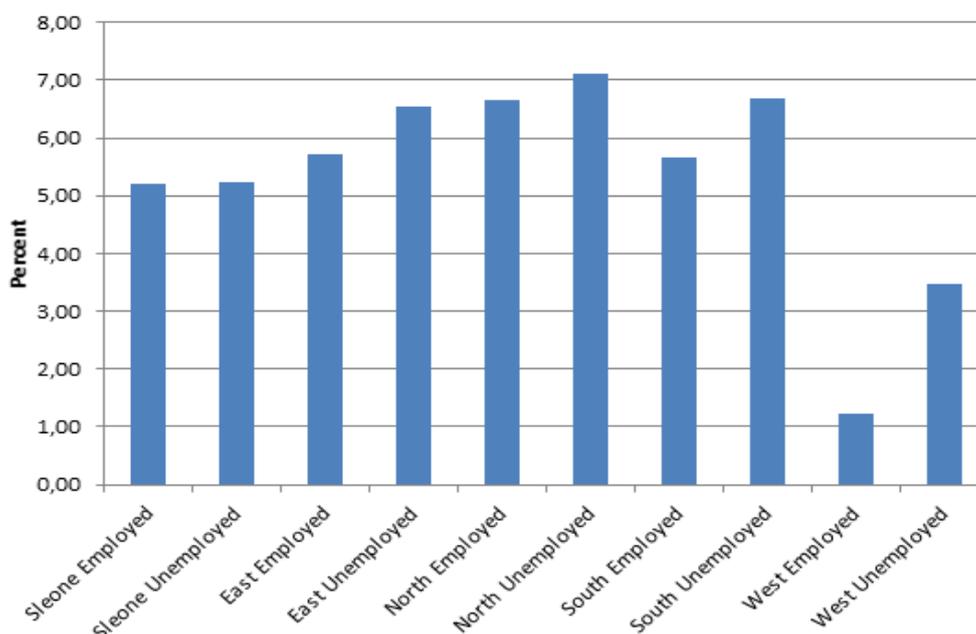
Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Individuals who are neither employed nor unemployed are considered to be not in the labour force. Examples include students, homemakers, individuals who have given up looking for work (discouraged workers) and retired individuals.

Figure 3.11 above reveals the labour force participation rates for children 10 to 14 years old by region. As seen above, children were more economically active in the Northern Region than in other regions.

The low child labour rates for children in the Western Area may be explained by the greater proportion of children in this region who are going to school. Also, children in the other regions where farming is the most predominant economic activity are more likely to be engaged in agriculture as unpaid family workers than those in the Western Area.

**Figure 3:12. Distribution of employed and unemployed children by age group 10-14 years by region**

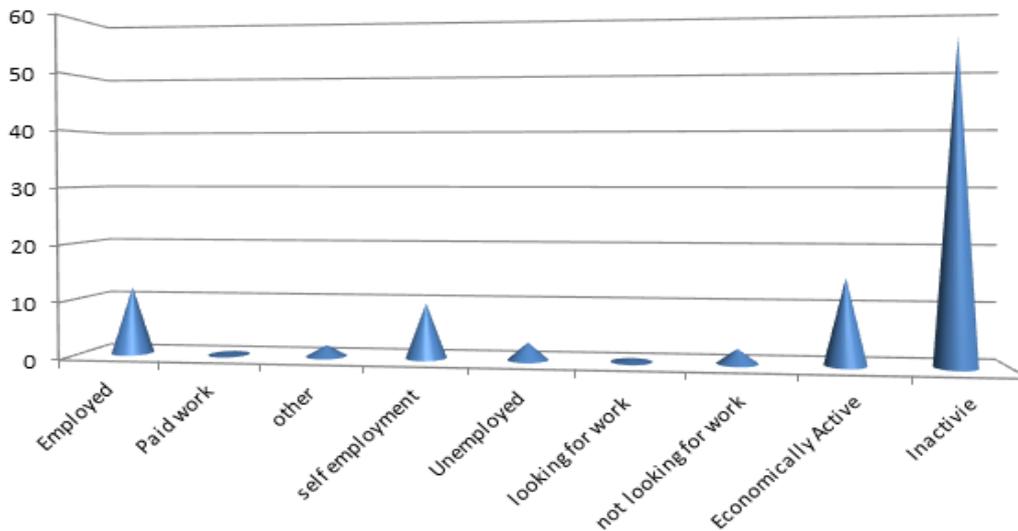


Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

For the purposes of the Child Labour Survey (CLS, 2011), “working children” and “employed children” are synonymous. Unpaid apprentices in training are considered to be “employed” and their employment status is considered to be that of “employee”.

Figure 3.12 shows the regional distribution of labour force participation of children 10-14 at the regional level. The employment rate in the Northern Region is the highest, followed by the Eastern Region, Southern Region and the Western Area. The employed persons were regarded as those in paid employment, self-employment and those engaged as “unpaid”. The high employment of children in the Northern Region could be attributed to the agriculture, iron ore and gold mining activities in that part of the country.

**Figure 3.13. Percentage of children (10-14 years) by activity status**

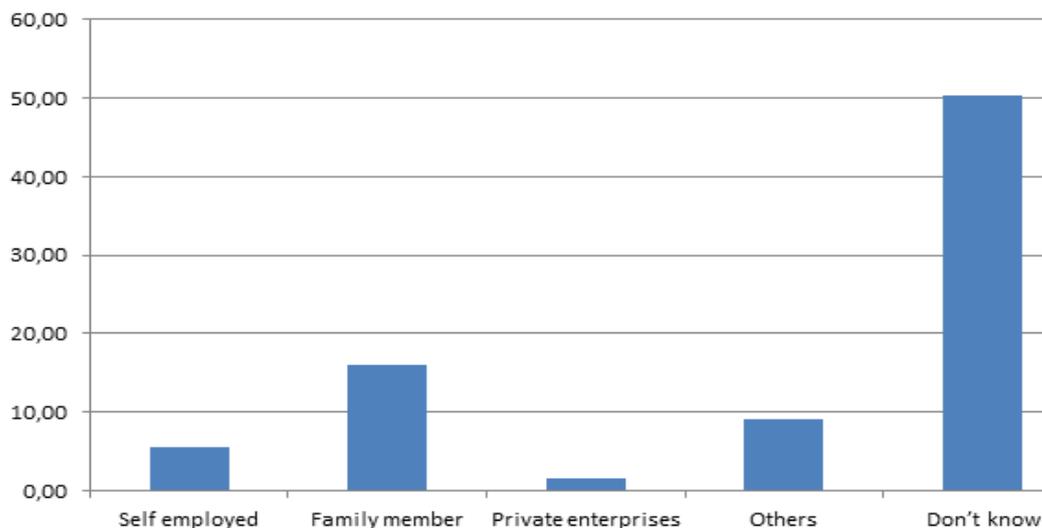


Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Figure 3.13 above shows the percentage distribution of the activity status of children 10 to 14 years old and in employment. Most working children 10 to 14 years old were inactive (55.3 per cent), followed by economically active 14.9 per cent, employed 11.9 per cent, self-employed 9.6 per cent, unemployed 3.0 per cent, not looking for work 2.5 per cent, while the rest were either looking for work or doing paid work.

There is a high percentage of children 10 to 14 years old who were inactive probably because most children do not have the required qualifications or necessary skills to be engaged in an active economic activity. Also, a good number of children (10 to 14 years old) are in school because most parents prefer their children to be in school rather than working.

**Figure 3:14. Percentage of children aged 10-14 years by status of employment**

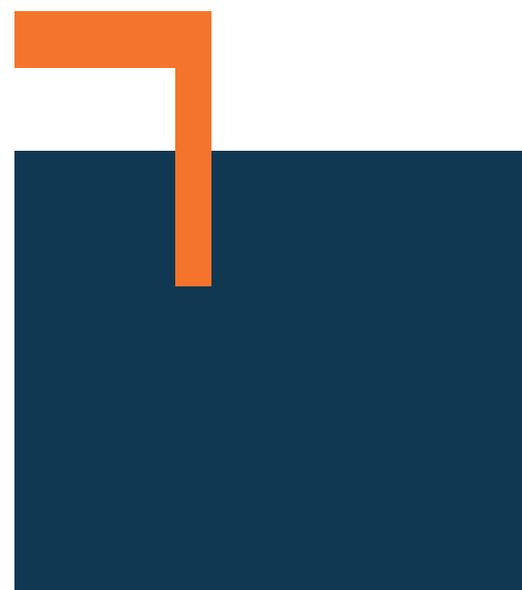
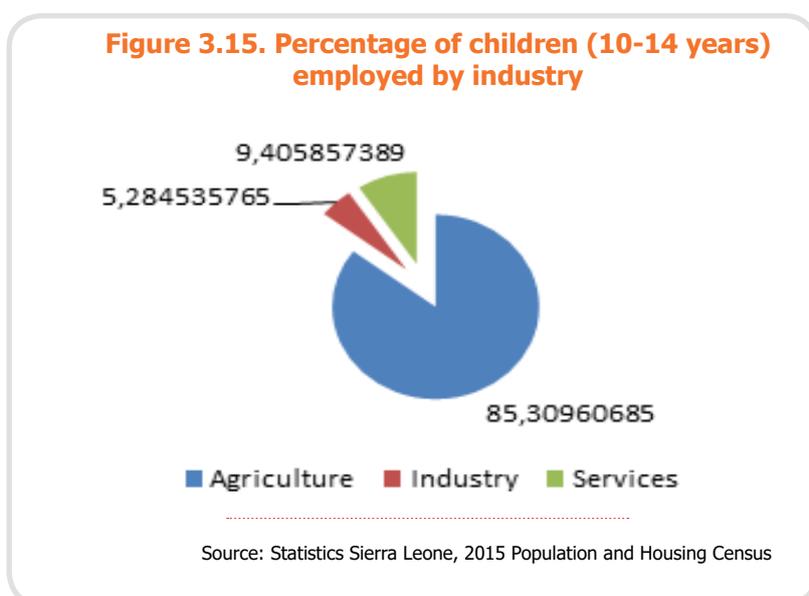


Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Figure 3.14 shows the percentage distribution and status of employed children, 10 to 14 years. The analysis reveals the majority of children are either employed as family members (16.1 per cent) or employed by other organizations (9.05 per cent). Next came self-employed (5.5 per cent) and then 1.6 per cent employed by private enterprises.

A look at the occupational distribution of the working age 10 to 14 years in the country shows that 85.3 per cent of children 10 to 14 years were engaged in agriculture with 9.4 per cent in the services and 5.3 per cent in industry (Figure 3.15). This implies that there were more working children engaged in agriculture in the rural areas than urban areas.

The entire population distribution by occupation, and or by industry, shows that Sierra Leone is still in early stages of development, given that agriculture predominates and the service sector is growing at a slow pace. This implies that industrial development has to be a flagship project for this nation if it is to stride towards modernity.



### 3.6 Employment in the informal sector

Definitions of the informal sector are many and include characteristics that may seem contradictory. The term often appears as a catch-all for all economic activities that do not belong to the formal sector, with activities as diverse as street vending or market hawking, domestic labour, hand-made crafts and sweatshop activities. Even criminal enterprises such as sex work, dealing in drugs or alcohol, the black market and sales of stolen goods are included in the informal economy. But the majority of products and services produced in the sector are legal, and its products are often sold through the formal economy. Lack of regulation (of the employer) and protection (of the employee) characterise the informal economy.

Misra ,P and Alam M.S (2014) said: "In the developing country context, the informal sector is sometimes defined in terms of the activities of the enterprises (ILO, 1972) and sometimes in terms of the kind of work done by individuals as employees or as self-employed people (Hart, 1973). In 1972, the ILO characterized the informal sector as: (a) ease of entry, (b) reliance on indigenous resources, (c) family ownership of enterprise, (d) small scale of operation, often defined in terms of hired workers less than ten, (e) labour-intensive methods of production and adapted technology, (f) skills acquired outside the formal school system, (g) unregulated and competitive markets."

## Characteristics

According to the ILO, the informal economy can be differentiated from the formal economy on the basis of the type of enterprise and conditions of employment.

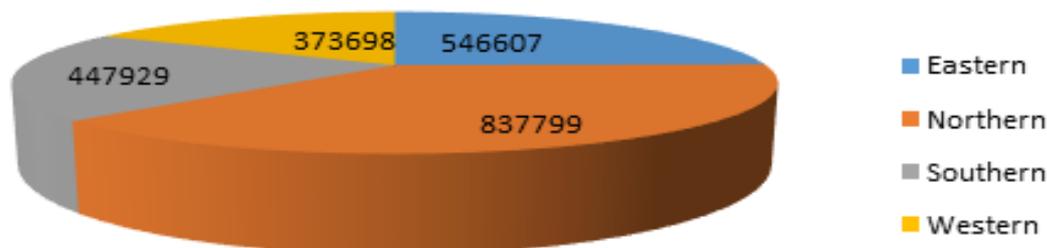
According to a draft paper for the Expert Group Meeting on Accounting for the Informal Sector in National Accounts<sup>2</sup>, “the informal economy is made up of unregistered establishments, household unincorporated enterprises and unregistered employment with no social security. Thus employment in the informal economy is defined as the sum of employment in unregistered establishment, unregistered employment in the formal economy and unpaid family workers”.

It is difficult to evaluate the precise size of the informal sector. However, it exists in all parts of the world, and occupies significant numbers of workers.

Estimated size of informal employment can be derived from the recent 2015 Census and this can be compared with figures from the 2004 Census. Given the diversity in activities, types of employment and modes of operation, the informal sector can be derived from “the self-employed (without employees), unpaid family work, paid and unpaid apprentices and those previously working but currently out of work but seeking a job”.

The operational significance and vital role of the informal economy is clearly shown below by number of persons employed in the informal sector (Figure 3.16). The figure shows that the Northern Region alone contains more informal workers than the Southern and Western regions put together. The Eastern Region has the second largest number of informal sector workers. This could be because both regions (Northern and Eastern) are highly agrarian and engaged in mining (gold, diamond and ore).

**Figure 3.16. Number of persons employed in the informal economy by region**



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

<sup>2</sup> Osman Awoto Soltani- Koroma - Head, Business and Industry Section, Economic Statistics Division (ESD), Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL)

Figure 3.17 below shows that the informal sector is a haven for women since they form such a small proportion of paid employees. Whereas men form 73 per cent of the paid employees, they form just 43 per cent of the informal economy. This indicates that the informal sector is supplementary to the formal sector for men. A very small proportion of women are in paid employment, a sign of the gender inequality in paid employment or possibly discrimination against them in the formal labour market. This provides an avenue for women to seek employment in the informal sector, where start-ups are easy and there isn't much bureaucracy.

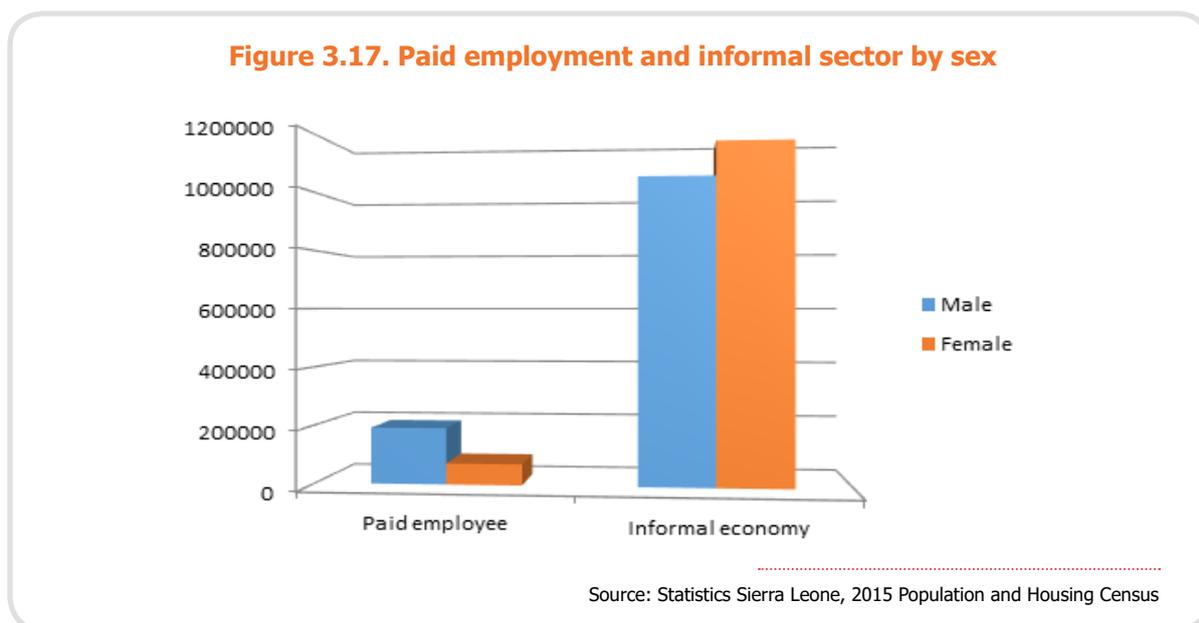
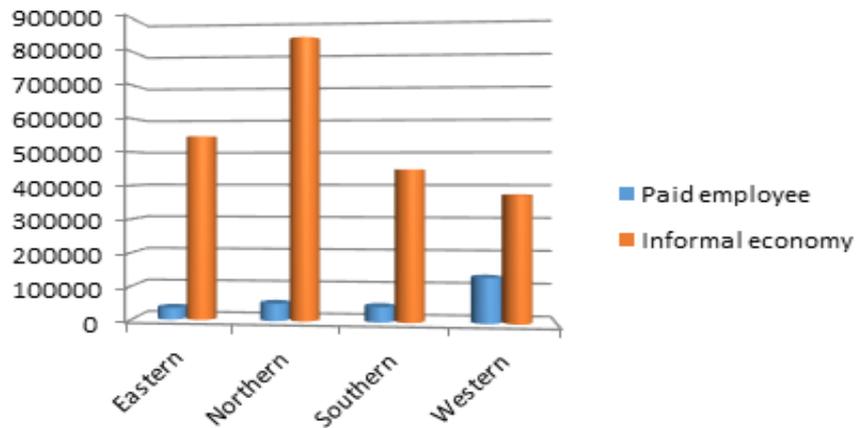


Figure 3.18 shows the distribution of employment between paid employment and informal employment by region. The distribution provides an answer to why the population in the Western Region is growing so fast, outstripping available land and forcing people to build in environmentally precarious areas. It is because paid employment in the Western Region surpasses the total sum of paid employment in all the other three regions.

It is clear that since the rural areas are highly agrarian and have mining as a major activity, they dwarf the Western Region, which predominately urban, in terms of the size of informal employment.

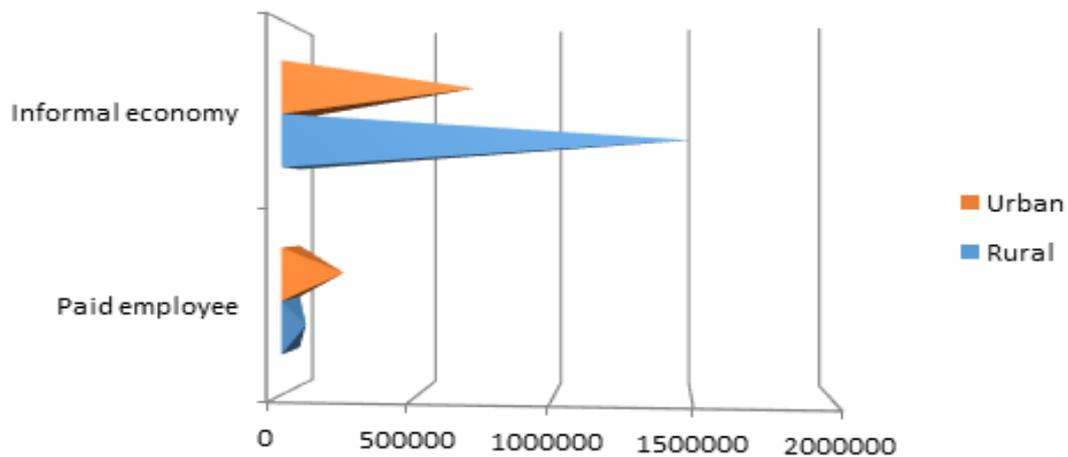
**Figure 3.18. Distribution of paid and informal employment by region**



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Figure 3.19 shows that the rural area has a higher proportion of informal sector employment than the urban areas. The graph shows that rural informal employment is twice that of the urban informal employment. This is due to the agrarian nature of employment in the rural areas of Sierra Leone, where family contributions to work, casual and seasonal work are common and the contribution of women is hardly recognized or given value. As a result, the informal sector is very prominent in rural areas and paid employment is minimal.

**Figure 3.19. Distribution of paid and informal employment by residence**



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

## CHAPTER 4: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The census results show an overall low level of economic activity which can encourage anti-social activities and, as such, calls for a reinforcement of security measures and mechanisms to encourage entrepreneurs and skills development, especially for such a young population.

This youthful population calls for more attention to be paid to educational activities of all types to reduce the mismatch between the demand for labour and the supply of labour and create avenues for job creation through training in entrepreneurship and internships. There is desperate need for a modern, innovative and diversified curriculum for technical and vocational education (TVE) that caters for all, especially for people with disability and women.

The future implications of child labour on the economy is enormous. Therefore, Government should collaborate with UNICEF, ILO and other stakeholders to put mechanisms in place, such as compulsory schooling for children and punitive measures for defaulters. MSWCGA should collaborate with MEST, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO and ILO to provide teaching and learning materials, organize school feeding and provide a safety net for children with vulnerable parents through means testing.

The Government should make provisions for the full ratification, domestication and implementation of the global conventions (especially ILO Conventions No. 138 and No. 182) for the protection of the rights of children against exploitative labour. Knowledge of child labour prohibition can play a significant role in overcoming the problem.

One implication of the agrarian nature of the economy is that Sierra Leone should concentrate on agro-processing, agri-business and diversify agricultural production, especially special processing techniques of the various species of flora, fauna and marine resources.

The agrarian and rural nature of informal sector activities suggests the need for the development of a comprehensive rural development programme for poverty reduction.

Given that Sierra Leone has a large informal economy (two-thirds of the economy) and women play a prominent role in this sector, the Government should consider extending social security to informal sector workers (including health insurance, such as the NASSIT-proposed SLeSHI) and institute matching funds for informal sector workers who enrol in social security programmes.

An affirmative action for women's empowerment (such as establishing health insurance for women in the informal sector, including maternity leave and allowance) would provide an enabling environment for access to credit from financial institutions, in tune with the SME Agency, and would be innovative in Sierra Leone.

# CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Conclusions

The 2015 Census data reveals an increase in the labour force from 2,621,773 to 3,937,595, over the last eleven years, a growth rate of about 50.2 per cent. The proportion of the economically active to working age population (15-64 years) is about 65 per cent but unemployment has increased in absolute terms. For the first time, this census recorded 21,000 new entrants into the labour force. The refined activity rate shows that economic activity is low, 65 per cent, a sign that anti-social practices could grow.

Youth unemployment still looms its ugly head in Sierra Leone, even though 54 per cent of the employed are youth (15-34 years) and 10 per cent are 15-19 years. About 39 per cent of the economically active population are youths aged 15-24 years (using the Sierra Leone definition of youth - 15-34 years - it is as high as 65 per cent).

There are more women in cash earning employment than men. There is some gender stereo-typing as more women are engaged in agriculture, service shop market sales and elementary occupations than men, but are less than half as likely as men to be in more professional roles such as technical and associate professionals and senior officials and managers. Moyamba and Koinadugu districts have the highest employment-to-population ratio and labour force participation rate, followed by Kambia and Tonkolili districts. The Western Urban district recorded the lowest ratio and participation rate. There is also a higher employment-to-population ratio and labour force participation rate in the rural localities (0.71; 0.73) than in the urban ones (0.51; 0.55).

The informal sector accounts for about 68 per cent of the labour market and is more of a rural phenomenon, as the bulk of the employment is in the rural areas.

The Sierra Leone economy can be described as purely agrarian because the number of people in

industry and services are insignificant compared to those in agriculture.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Since Sierra Leone has a young population but high youth unemployment, the Government should design strategies to generate and create jobs for young people. This calls for a review of the TVE curriculum and the training of many more TVE teachers in Sierra Leone. There should also be training for youths in entrepreneurship and the provision of start-up capital to support the establishment of new businesses.

The Western Region, home to the capital Freetown, is providing a huge economic draw for young men and women. This has policy implications for rural development and local economic development in Sierra Leone, and calls for a comprehensive rural development programme.

The Government should ensure alignment and harmonization between laws and policies in the labour, education and social welfare sectors that are involved in child-related issues. In view of this, it is recommended that a strong information, education and communications (IEC) strategy is put in place to create awareness about the 2007 Child Rights Act and the harm child labour can do to children and society as a whole.



## CALCULATION OF INDICATORS

Working Age Population (WAP-usually 15-64 years) = EP + UnEP+ economically inactive

Economically Active Population (EAP) = EP + Unemployed population (UnEP)

Economically Inactive Population (EIP) = WAP-EAP; also WAP=EAP +EIP

Activity Rate (AR) =Labour Force Participatio =  $(EAP/WAP) * 100$

Inactivity Rate (IAR) =  $(EIP/WAP) * 100$

Employed Population (EP) = EAP-UnEP

Actual Employment Rate (AER) =  $(EP/EAP)*100$

Employment-to-population ratio =  $(EP/WAP)*100$

Paid employment-to-population ratio =  $(PEP/WAP)*100$

Actual Unemployment Rate (AUnER) =  $(UnEP/EAP)*100$

Natural Unemployment Rate (NUnER) =  $(UnEP/WAP)*100$

District share of labour force =  $(\text{Total labour force in district})/(\text{Total labour force in SL})$

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