Employment Transitions in an Era of Change in Thailand

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Abstract:
The last three decades offer much evidence of greater access to new avenues of employment with globalisation and rapid economic development in South-east Asia including Thailand. Associated with this pattern is a trend towards employment related migration out of rural areas. In this paper, we look at the implications of globalisation from a rural perspective by examining the direct impact on employment of rural residents who migrate to urban areas, or the indirect impact on rural residents through the experiences of urban migrants. Within this framework, we examine whether men and women have similar migration and associated employment outcomes or whether the impact of these changes varies by changes in the individual's stage in the life course. We use the CEP-CPC Nang Rong data to examine employment of working age individuals from Nang Rong district in Thailand in 1984, 1994 and 2000 to determine general employment trends during this period in rural and urban Thailand. An associated analysis follows a single cohort of individuals from Nang Rong aged 8-25 years in 1984 to examine changes in their employment patterns in subsequent years, 1994 and 2000. We discuss the factors influencing some individuals to remain employed in Nang Rong, while others migrate, either permanently or temporarily to urban areas. We compare categories of sector of employment, including individuals not employed, those employed in agriculture, and other non-agricultural activities such as blue collar occupations, in the service sector or in government, professional or other jobs to examine these questions.

Introduction: Globalisation and Employment

Until recently, Thailand was a predominantly agricultural economy. Even now, 80 per cent of the population lives in rural areas. Over the past three decades, however, Thailand transformed into a fast growing, industrialising economy (Phananiramai 1996). Only half of the labour force is now engaged in agriculture (http://www.worldbank.org/data/) as compared to more than 75 per cent in 1970 (Phananiramai 1996). Agriculture as a share of GDP has also decreased, contributing only a little more than 10 per cent by 2000. Industry, especially manufacturing, has increased its share to 40 per cent, with services holding steady at about 50 per cent of GDP. Average annual growth rates have varied, but reached levels as high as 8 per cent in the period 1980-1990, sufficient to absorb a rapidly growing labour force (Mason and Campbell 1993). Growth rates in manufacturing have been particularly notable, reaching levels of 10 per cent per annum in the period 1980-1990 and 12 per cent in 1999. The average annual rate of growth peaked in the late 1980s as a result (Galenson 1992; Ogena et al. 1997). Economic growth has been

These dramatic changes in the structure of Thailand's economy have occurred in the context of, and in many ways as a consequence of globalisation. Globalisation refers to the process by which economic, financial, technical, and cultural transactions between different countries and communities throughout the world become increasingly interconnected (Pearson 2000). The increasing integration of the world economy has had consequences for patterns and trends in employment within countries. In Thailand, the growth in the manufacturing sector was (and is) directly tied to large increases in foreign investment and the growth of export based manufacturing industry (Kurian 1999) in addition to government policies to promote this sector (Rigg and Nattapoolwat 2001). Globalisation has resulted in the movement of production activity from more to less developed countries, consolidating an international division of labour that takes advantage of cheap labour in the latter. Though not new (Moghadam 1999; also see Dickinson 1997), globalisation has gained unprecedented impetus since the 1970s (Beneria et al. 2000; Moghadam 1999).

The impact of globalisation on employment has been well documented. Job creation associated with this trend involves manufacturing activities as a result of direct foreign investment and particularly through the creation of export processing zones (Pearson 2000; Rama 2001; Standing 1989). Trade related employment in the service sector such as tourism, finance, and information processing is also evident (Pearson 2000; United Nations 1999). In Thailand, for instance, tourism grew to become a very important provider of foreign exchange (Bell 1998). The impact of these trends is most evident in urban areas—not surprisingly, as urban centres are foci of production activity and provision of services, catering to markets domestically and in other countries. Accordingly, the literature linking globalisation, international trade and other economic changes with employment patterns and trends within countries has a distinct urban bias.

Although the economic forces associated with globalisation have their most obvious impact in the major urban areas of developing countries, it is also important to consider their impact on marginal populations, especially people living in the rural areas of developing countries. Only a few authors have done this (e.g., Rigg and Nattapoolwat 2001). Globalisation is implicated in the

commercialisation of agriculture and the shift to production of more profitable cash crops in conjunction with Thailand's emphasis on economic development through export promotion from around 1970 (Charoenlert 1992). For instance, the cultivation of cassava as a cash crop in Thailand was in direct response to a demand for this product in Europe (as a supplement to cattle feed), and a change in European Economic Commission (EEC) import regulations that made it possible for Thai farmers to respond to this demand. Economic forces may operate "at a distance", as in the cassava example, or they may intrude directly into the rural economy. Some farmers in Thailand have subcontracted their family plots to multinational corporations in order to produce cash crops or raise shrimp under contract to these companies (Rigg and Nattapoolwat 2001; Stephens 1995). With the commercialisation of agriculture, some household members in rural Thailand also diversified into employment as brokers and traders (Ayuwat 1997). Globalisation may not always serve to increase economic opportunities in rural areas. Some argue that the opening of urban markets to cheaper agricultural imports and the removal of agricultural subsidies result in the loss of employment among small-scale farmers (United Nations 1999).

In this paper, we focus on economic change in the context of globalisation in Thailand especially emphasising on the growth of economic and employment opportunities. We further elaborate on the consequences of globalisation for rural populations, with particular reference to the situation in Thailand, and especially the role that migration plays. Indeed, migration is part and parcel of the globalisation process. Communities have become increasingly interconnected within as well as between countries. The economic, financial, technical, and cultural transactions that link communities together (cf. Pearson 2000) involve the movement of people as well as flows of money, goods, information, and ideas. When migrants cross international borders, their role in the process of globalisation is clear (Massey et al. 1993). The same processes that give rise to international migration of labour from less to more developed countries motivate rural-to-urban migration of labour within developing countries (Van Wey 2001). In Thailand, as in many countries, the establishment and growth of manufacturing concerns in and around urban centres is associated with employment related migration from rural areas.

By migrating to urban areas, the rural population may participate directly in the growth of employment in manufacturing associated with foreign investment and export oriented industry, as well as the growth in construction and services that may accompany it. In turn, these migrants affect the rural economy in several ways. Migrants may send remittances to their origin households, thus improving the quality of life in rural areas and possibly also providing the capital to create or expand household businesses (Guest 1996). They may return and bring with them a taste for an urban lifestyle, an unwillingness to work in agriculture, the skills to obtain some other kind of employment outside of agriculture, or the wherewithal to build some kind of non-agricultural concern. These migration-related consequences of globalisation for the rural population are in addition to the impacts on agriculture that are generally the focus in the literature (for an exception, see Rigg and Nattapoolwat 2001). Our study of migration and patterns and trends in employment, in rural areas and of rural migrants to urban areas, thus fills a gap in the literature on globalisation and employment.

Although our main interest is in general patterns and trends, similarities and differences in the experiences of men and women are also of interest. In an economy known for its high female labour force participation rate (Sussangkorn and Chalamwong 1996; TDRI 1994), the growth of economic opportunities outside of agriculture has encouraged the movement of women as well as men. In contrast to other developing countries, where men typically constitute a major part of the migrant labour force, both men and women have been important in Thailand. The majority of the labour force in the new labour intensive manufacturing sectors that produce goods for the global economy are typically women (Dollar and Gatti 1999). This has been true in the case of Thailand as well, where in 1980, female workers out-proportioned male workers in the manufacturing, commerce and service sectors (Phananiramai 1996).

Nang Rong: An Example

Our study is set in Nang Rong, a rural district in the Northeast of the country (see Map 1). The Northeast is one of the poorest regions of Thailand and is a major supplier of migrants to the urban areas of Thailand, especially Bangkok and the Eastern Seaboard. According to the National Migration Survey, a significant proportion of the migrants to Bangkok come from the Northeast region (Guest et al. 1994; Guest 1996). Many of them are temporary migrants and are registered in their region of origin (Chamratrithirong et al. 1995). According to others, migration is more permanent. Migrants tend to stay year round in urban areas although without severing their ties with the rural households (Chalamwong 1998). Such employment based migration provides rural households with more wage employment opportunities to supplement their earnings through seasonal migration (Medhi 1995). Alongside a greater demand for labour in urban centres in recent decades, the development of better transportation and infrastructure facilities has facilitated the corresponding increase in the level of employment based migration. Although employment in urban areas in the global era has been characterised negatively as being “flexible,” “casual,” and “informal” with a low wage potential, for residents of rural villages, it offers a better wage than can be earned locally, along with the opportunity and access to an urban life style.

Among residents of the Nang Rong study villages, migration is exceedingly common. As we show later, two-thirds of young men aged 8-25 living in the study villages in 1984, and just over half of the young women, migrated away in the ensuing decade, many to Bangkok and other urban centres. The high level of migration is not surprising given poverty, reliance on agriculture, population pressure on land, low level of industrialisation and limited access to other economic activities in Nang Rong, and in the Northeast generally. Paddy rice cultivation is the dominant economic pursuit in the Nang Rong villages, and given the dependence on monsoon rains, there is a single crop each year. Many migrate to urban areas during the slack agricultural season, returning when it is time to plant and transplant rice again. Others migrate for a longer period, although returning to help with the harvest, and perhaps returning for good later on. Still others migrate permanently.

Our study is set in the context of trends occurring in the late 20th century, from 1984 to 2000. Taken as a whole, the period 1984-2000 was a period of unprecedented economic growth in Thailand. However, the same forces that encouraged foreign investment and created a global market for Thailand’s

industry also exposed the country to external influences and global crises. The consequences were especially evident in the financial crisis of 1997, which resulted in job loss in the urban areas and return migration to rural areas. There are mixed reports on the impact of the 1997 crisis in rural areas. Some claim that the impact was decidedly negative (e.g., Chalamwong 1998; Phongpaichit and Baker 2000). Others have argued that there was only a short-term impact (e.g., Rigg and Nattapoolwat 2001). National data show that the growth of investment was positive for all years between 1994 and 2000 except for 1997 and 1998, and likewise, the growth of exports was positive for all years between 1994 and 2000 except for 1996, 1997, and 1998 (http://www.worldbank.org/data/). The economy had recovered to some extent by 2000, the end point of our study.

Within the context of globalisation in Thailand, we use data from the CEP-CPC surveys to analyse the employment picture in 1984, 1994, and 2000 for residents of rural Nang Rong, and in 1994 and 2000 for rural-to-urban migrants. We investigate employment patterns from several perspectives. First, we consider trends in the employment of men and women in rural Nang Rong villages 1984-2000 and in the employment of migrants from these villages to Bangkok and other urban destinations 1994-2000. In particular, we are interested in whether, and to what extent, employment in agriculture declined in rural Nang Rong during this period, as opposed to an increase in non-agricultural activity. In this context, are changes in the economic activities of migrants from Nang Rong to urban areas also evident during this time period? We also focus on youth to examine whether there are differences in their employment behaviour in this changing economic scenario, especially with respect to their transition from school to work. Second, we consider the aggregate and individual employment experiences of a cohort of young people aged 8-25 years in 1984 as they age over the 16-year period through the year 2000. We examine the changes in their migration and employment activities over their life course, focusing on the trajectories of young men versus women. We touch on the effects of the 1997 economic crisis in our analysis of the 1994-2000 data. However, a full assessment of the 1997 crisis and its consequences for employment would require more detailed data than we report here.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. The next section describes the data, measures, and analytic approach in greater detail. The following section documents employment trends over the 1984-2000 period for men of women of prime working age, first for residents of rural Nang Rong villages and then for migrants to urban areas. After that, we shift to a cohort perspective, taking advantage of the longitudinal strength of the data set to study change over the live course. The paper concludes with a discussion of the trends shown in each part of the analysis relating them to the context of globalisation in which they occurred.

Data and Approach

In the changing context of economic opportunities in Thailand, we examine employment patterns of men and women from a rural perspective. We analyse data from a set of surveys undertaken by the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University and the Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill known collectively as the Nang Rong

CEP-CPC surveys.[1] The surveys are both prospective and retrospective, include migrants from Nang Rong to Bangkok and selected urban areas, and cover a crucial period in the recent history of the country. With these data, it is possible to examine trends over the period, and it is possible to examine the experiences of a particular cohort of individuals as they move through their life course. The experiences of migrants can be compared with those of return migrants and non-migrants. As the first paper to document employment trends with the Nang Rong CEP-CPC data, this paper will focus on a description of major trends, the role of migration, and gender differences in employment patterns.

The Nang Rong CEP-CPC surveys began in 1984. The first surveys were fielded in 51 study villages in that year. Data were collected on all persons in all households in the 51 study villages. Likewise, in 1994 and 2000, data were again collected on all persons in all households in the 51 villages (including all administrative splits).[2] The 1994 and 2000 data cover persons who may have migrated into the study villages as well as those 1984 residents still (or perhaps again) residing in those villages. We use the data from the 1984, 1994, and 2000 cross-sections to describe employment patterns at each of these dates, more specifically, to document whether there is a shift out of agriculture among rural residents. We focus on men and women aged 18-35, but for information about trends in the timing of labour force entry, we also look at patterns among youth aged 11-17. Occupational data were collected for all household members aged 11 and older.

In addition to surveying all residents of the 51 study villages at each date, the CEP-CPC surveys also followed up all of the original 1984 residents in 1994 and 2000, and all of the 1994 residents in 2000. As part of the 1994 survey, an annual life history was collected for those aged 18-35, and in 2000 for those aged 18-41. The life history provides retrospective information about migration experience and allows us to distinguish rural residents who have migrated and returned from those who have never migrated (since age 13, when the life history starts).[3] Further, in 1994 and 2000, in a subset of 22 villages, out-migrants were followed to select urban destinations: Bangkok, the Eastern Seaboard, Korat, and Buriram.[4] For 1994 and 2000, it is thus possible to examine the employment patterns of Nang Rong migrants who live in urban areas. Here is where we might expect to see some impact of the 1997 financial crisis. Given the longitudinal design of the CEP-CPC surveys, it is also possible to follow cohorts as they move through their life course. In this study, we examine the employment patterns of a cohort of young persons in 1984 as they migrate or not, return or not, in the context of dramatic macro-economic change over the 1984-2000 period.

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[1] See http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/nangrong for a more detailed description.

[2] Between 1984 and 2000, the original 51 villages had split administratively into 76 villages in 1994 and 92 villages in 2000. All persons and all households in all descendant villages are included in the 1994 and 2000 data collections. For ease of exposition, we refer simply to the 51 study villages.

[3] Migration is defined in the survey as a move lasting at least two months.

[4] Migrants to Buriram were followed in 1994 but not in 2000, because there were so few of them. In 2000, the migrant follow-up included a rural as well as urban component. Migrants to other villages in Nang Rong (including non-study villages) were followed up in 2000. We do not use the rural migrant data in this paper.

Measuring Employment

The key variable of interest in our descriptive analysis is main sector of employment.[5] The measure of employment is based on primary occupation, as recorded in the household roster of the Nang Rong household and migrant follow-up surveys. Consistent with the rural context of the data collection, formal definitions of the labour force and of employment were not used. As a formal concept, the International Labour Office (ILO) uses the term "labour force" to identify persons who are working (employed), or are without work but have looked for work during a specified reference period (unemployed). Such concepts do not apply well in agricultural settings, where seasonal unemployment is common. It is not our goal to describe patterns of seasonal unemployment, but rather, to capture broad trends over time. In Nang Rong, the household surveys were fielded during the agricultural slack season (deliberately—so that people had time to participate). Thus, we are interested in people's usual occupation, not whether they are in fact working at the time of the survey. In addition, we are interested in unpaid as well as paid work. Rural Nang Rong is composed largely of small farmers, who work first for subsistence and then sell the surplus. Formal definitions of the labour force and employment do not always include unpaid family members working on family farms or in family businesses, distorting gender patterns of employment, especially in rural areas (Beneria 1981; Dixon 1982). Thus, while broad and including a subjective element (i.e., respondents decide what constitutes an occupation), our measure of employment fits with the reality of the setting we are trying to describe.

We use information on primary occupation to classify employment into categories.[6] As Nang Rong is a poor district in the Northeast region of Thailand where agriculture or other related activity is the predominant occupation, our interest lies in examining a move away from agriculture, with an expectation of an increase in non-agricultural opportunities in recent years. Therefore, at the first stage of this analysis, we broadly define employment sector based on whether or not an individual is employed in agriculture (or other related activities such as animal husbandry), non-agricultural activities, or has no occupation. Individuals who are classified as not employed are in school, college or undergoing vocational training; housewives or stay at home fathers; or have no job or occupation (who may or may not be seeking a job). All of these are individuals of working age with the potential to be employed.

We also examine main employment in non-agricultural activities in more detail. This includes observing what individuals do when employed outside of agriculture. Furthermore, we are interested in examining patterns of movement between these non-agricultural sectors over time among rural residents (non-migrants and return migrants) and among rural-to-urban migrants. We classify all non-agricultural activities as skilled or unskilled blue collar work which involve any production activity; employment in the service sector; and government, professional and other activities. We use this classification for two reasons. First, the literature on globalisation and employment primarily focuses

[5] Although some of the working age population has a secondary occupation, as is the case in many developing countries, we restrict this analysis to analysing main employment to see how individuals allocate a majority of their time to a productive activity in an era of changing economic opportunities in Thailand.

[6] All respondents aged 11 years or over provided information on their primary occupation.

on the growth of the manufacturing and service sectors. It also alludes to a gender bias in employment in these sectors. While globalisation initially creates opportunities for unskilled and semi skilled labour especially for young women, there is a transition in later time periods. In later years, the development of industry creates a market for the service sector resulting in higher employment in service sector work (Pearson 2000). Second, a simple descriptive analysis of the Nang Rong data confirms that these sectors are the most important (details not shown). In particular, employment in factories or as construction labour is the most important blue collar work activities in our data. Work as traders, food service workers, commercial transport drivers and domestic workers are the most important service activities in our data.

Analysis Samples

Our analysis of employment in this paper capitalises on the information available in the Nang Rong CEP-CPC data. There are two steps to the analysis. The first uses the data as a time-series of cross-sections to study trends, and the second uses the data to follow the experiences of a cohort over time. Figure 1 presents details of the sample fallings in each of these two analyses.

The cross-sectional analysis represented by the solid grey bars in the figure is restricted to men and women of prime working age (18-35 years) at three time points: 1984, 1994 and 2000. The data for employment patterns in Nang Rong refer to residents of all 51 villages. There were 9,993 such individuals in 1984, 7,776 in 1994, and 8,693 in 2000. The respondents in each of these time periods are not necessarily the same because of ageing (into or out of the defined age group) and because of migration. Some of the residents of Nang Rong in 1984 have migrated out of Nang Rong by 1994 or 2000. Another possibility is that individuals who resided outside Nang Rong and were therefore not surveyed in 1984 may have migrated (back) into Nang Rong in 1994 or 2000. The cross-sectional analysis also includes urban migrants from Nang Rong in 1994 and 2000. The data for Nang Rong migrants refer to urban migrants from the 22 villages featured in the migrant follow-up survey. There were 2,013 urban migrants aged 18-35 in the 1994 survey, 2,173 in the 2000 survey. A secondary part of the cross-sectional analysis examines employment patterns of youth aged 11-17 years to see if economic changes have had a differential impact on their employment. The number of Nang Rong residents in this age category was 6,371, 5,034, and 4,477 in 1984, 1994, and 2000, respectively. The number of urban migrants in this category was quite small, 286 in 1994 and 100 in 2000.

The longitudinal part of the analysis represented by the striped bars in Figure 1 follows a cohort of 4,550 individuals aged 8-25 years who lived in 22 villages of Nang Rong in 1984 and were surveyed again in 1994 and 2000, either as residents of Nang Rong or as migrants to selected urban areas.[7] In 1994 and 2000, these individuals fall in the age groups 18-35 years and 24-41 years respectively. We describe the experience of the cohort as a whole as

[7] This cohort analysis focuses on the 1984 residents of the 22 study villages featured in the 1994 and 2000 migrant follow-up surveys. We do this so that we can follow all individuals in the specified cohort through the period 1984-2000. We focus on those individuals who resided in Nang Rong in 1984 and may have continued to reside in the same villages or may have migrated to urban areas by 1994 and 2000.

well as investigate the experiences of the individuals who make up the cohort. This cohort analysis is based on cases with complete data. Therefore, we only include individuals having information on employment in the subsequent time periods, 1994 and 2000, as well as in 1984.[8] This means that individuals who left the study villages and moved to rural destinations are not included. Nor are migrants living in urban destinations who could not be found.

Employment Trends: 1984-2000

The first part of our analysis provides a rural perspective on general employment trends. Tables 1 and 2 present the picture for individuals aged 18-35 years at three points in time, 1984, 1994 and 2000. They display snapshots of male and female employment patterns as the Thai economy went through periods of dramatic economic growth, crisis, and initial recovery. Each table presents two sets of results. The top half differentiates the sample by employment status – agricultural employment, non-agricultural employment, or no occupation. The lower half of the tables further explores the occupation of those employed outside of agriculture – either as blue collar workers, service sector workers, or in government, professional or other occupations.

Table 1 about here

As expected, we find a majority of the prime working age population residing in the Nang Rong villages engaged in agriculture in each of the time periods. According to figures shown in Table 1, in 1984, 82 per cent of the residents of the study villages who were aged 18-35 worked in agriculture; in 1994, the figure was 83 per cent; in 2000, it was 70 per cent. The decline is considerable, especially in 1994-2000, agreeing with other research (Phananiramai 1996). The decline for women is especially noticeable, 15 percentage points compared to 9 percentage points for men, with a slight reversal in the differential. Non-agricultural employment increased over these same years, from 13 to 18 per cent. Again, the increase was more pronounced for women than men, erasing an initial tendency for greater involvement in non-agricultural pursuits among men than women. Considering 1994-2000 within the context of economic growth overall, this trend might reflect a slow increase in non-agricultural opportunities in rural Nang Rong, as local factories are built, the rural economy grows and diversifies, district towns increase in size, and the state pursues an active economic development policy emphasising on industrial development. There is also evidence of increasing employment of individuals in rural areas as labourers as a result of the expansion of rural factories and the risks in cash crop production (Ayuwat 1997). As 1994-2000 is a period punctuated by a major financial crisis in 1997, it might also be that more migrants returned as a consequence of that crisis, with a preference and skills that qualify them for non-agricultural employment (Chalamwong 1998).

The decrease in agricultural employment in the rural villages also coincided with an increase in the numbers of prime age men and women without a job, from 5 per cent in 1994 to 12 per cent in 2000. It is tempting to see the increase in relation to the financial crisis of 1997. Migrants losing their

[8] As only respondents aged 11 years or over provided information on their primary occupation, the cohort aged 8-25 in 1984 includes individuals who were too young and therefore did not provide any information on their employment. These individuals are included in our analysis.

jobs may have returned home—perhaps there was not enough work, or perhaps they were not willing to do it. This is possible, but first, we need to address an alternative explanation—namely, that either as part of economic growth and change generally, or in response to the crisis, young men and women are delaying their entry into the labour force. We return to this issue momentarily, after first addressing employment patterns among Nang Rong migrants.

Table 2 about here

Changes in employment patterns among residents of Nang Rong district are apparent from Table 1, especially between 1994 and 2000. We might wonder whether the patterns changed for migrants to Bangkok and other urban destinations over the same period. Table 2 shows employment characteristics of migrants based on the Migrant Follow up survey in 1994 and 2000. It provides information on occupations of migrants aged 18-35 years to urban areas from a subset of 22 villages in Nang Rong. Urban migrants are typically engaged in non-agricultural activities, especially as blue collar workers in factories or on construction sites. An interesting trend however is the growing importance of the service sector. While 17 per cent of migrants were employed in the service sector in 1994, 23 per cent of urban migrants were so employed in 2000. This shift may be part of a longer-term increase in the tertiary labour force associated with continued economic growth and urbanisation. Alternatively, employment opportunities in manufacturing and construction may have declined with the crisis, prompting a shift into service sector work. There is no way to know from our data whether the shift was because of a decline in economic opportunities in manufacturing and construction, an increase in opportunities in the service sector, or possibly both.

Another trend among urban migrants is an increase in those reporting no occupation, particularly among women. It is possible that the increase reflects the effects of the 1997 crisis and reduced opportunities in manufacturing work for women. It is also possible that a gender difference in return migration is responsible for this shift. Because of migration, the expected increase in unemployment might not be visible among urban migrants. Single men and women who lost their jobs in the 1997 crisis might have returned to Nang Rong. Married men losing their jobs may also have returned, bringing their families with them. It is unlikely that married women losing their jobs would have returned if their husbands did not also return, however. Moreover, even when times are good, not all women work. Among urban migrants, even in 1994, more than twice as many women as men 18-35 do not have an occupation. Given their stage in the life course, possibly with young children, this is to be expected. If the economic downturn discouraged continued rural-to-urban migration, and encouraged return migration, housewives may have simply increased their representation among migrants in the 1994-2000 period. In spite of this, the data show that as much as 85 to 90 per cent of women are employed, confirming the high level of female labour force participation in both urban and rural areas.

The above results refer to the working age population. The large percentage increase in the non-working population between 1994 and 2000 among both migrants and Nang Rong's residents aged 18-35 years raises the

question whether this is a reflection of "harder" times after the 1997 economic crisis. It is not very clear whether these individuals of prime working age are losing their jobs and are therefore unemployed or whether they intentionally delayed their entry into the work force. Either way, it encourages us to examine whether there is a trend toward delayed entry of younger individuals.

Table 3 about here

Table 3 compares employment outcomes in 1984, 1994 and 2000 of male and female youth 11-17 years residing in Nang Rong as well as migrants in urban centres. The table indicates that there is a large decrease in the economic activity of youth in both areas over time. While 51 per cent of youth in Nang Rong were employed in 1984, the percentage decreased to 37 per cent in 1994 and 16 per cent in 2000. This decrease in gainful activity corresponds to increased schooling. Although a substantial percentage of youth aged 11-17 were reported to be in school in 1984, the percentage rises to almost 95 per cent in 1994 and 2000. There is no way to determine whether those in school were there as a matter of choice or because lean times may have limited their opportunity in the labour force. However, that the trend was well established before the 1997 crisis suggests that the former played at least some role. Data from the World Bank also corroborates the increasing levels of education in Thailand. Between 1980 and 1997, the gross enrolment ratio at the secondary level increased from 29 to 59 per cent in Thailand (http://devdata.worldbank.org/hnpstats/).

The decrease in the work activity of youth is even more substantial among migrants, although our sample is small. In 1994, most migrant youth were in the labour force, mainly in manufacturing and construction. This is not surprising given that much of the migration to urban centres in Thailand has been employment based (Phongpaichit 1993). It appears that in the period of growing economic opportunities, as in the 1990's, a large proportion of youth in urban areas were in demand in the labour force. In fact, other research shows that migrants to Bangkok generally had higher levels of employment as compared to non-migrants in Bangkok (Guest 1996). As with older individuals, most of them worked as factory or construction workers. This picture is truer in the case of adolescent females. However, the scenario appears to have changed by the year 2000; a significant percentage dropped out of the labour force. The table shows that as much as 58 per cent of migrant youth aged 11-17 years were not employed in 2000, almost all of whom reported that they were still in school. We see this change as a trend towards the delayed entry associated with economic change, which has probably been exacerbated by the economic crisis. The decline is most evident in agriculture in the rural areas and in factory and construction work among urban migrants.

Life Course Transitions in Employment

The next part of the analysis in Tables 4 through 6 follows a single cohort of 4,550 individuals through the period of interest, 1984-2000. The results are based on employment outcomes in 1984, 1994 and 2000 for individuals aged 8-25 years in 1984 and at that time residing in the 22 Nang Rong villages featured in the migrant follow-up. During the 16-year period of interest in our analysis, some of the original residents remained in the villages, some moved

to urban areas and were still there in 1994 and 2000, while others returned to their original villages. We examine employment outcomes in the context of changes in the life course as well as changes in the macro-economic context.

Tables 4 and 5 about here

The first two tables in this series, Tables 4 and 5, show employment in the aggregate in 1984 and 1994, and in 2000, respectively. In 1984, all members of the cohort resided in the subset of 22 study villages that were the focus of the migrant follow-up surveys. Most worked in agriculture at that time, although consistent with the ages of the younger members of the cohort, a sizeable minority did not have an occupation at all. By 1994, when the cohort was 18-35 years, there was an increase in the fraction working in agriculture, and a corresponding decrease in the fraction without an occupation among those who stayed in, or returned to, the Nang Rong villages. Well over 80 per cent of the cohort members living in Nang Rong in 1994 worked in agriculture. The fraction remains high in 2000, with some drop off among returned migrants. There is some change in rural employment patterns associated with migration. Among those living in Nang Rong in 1994, we see an emerging difference in the work patterns of non-migrants and return migrants. Those who had never migrated were less likely to have a non-agricultural job than those with some migration experience, 6 versus 10 per cent. This difference widened between 1994 and 2000. As the proportion without an occupation among the return migrants remained low over the interval, it seems that there is a shift in the character of the work done by return migrants. Regardless of migration experience, however, rural employment patterns differed sharply from those of rural-to-urban migrants. By 1994, those moving to Bangkok and other urban areas had jobs almost entirely outside of agriculture, and this high level was maintained in 2000, although there was a shift from blue collar to service work, especially among men (Table 5).

These patterns and trends can be interpreted in terms of the life course embedded in a context of macro-economic change (Elder 1998). Basically, we see a cohort entering into the prime working years. The percentage without an occupation declines from 1984 to 1994. For many in the cohort, migration is part and parcel of the early work years. The likelihood of migration, and therefore of return migration, is low initially but increases over the adolescent years. This is one reason why the percentage without an occupation is lower among return migrants than never migrants. Migration to urban areas moves young men and women into non-agricultural work. What that work is depends on the opportunities available, which appear to have shifted between 1994 and 2000. Whereas in 1994, two-thirds of the urban migrants had blue collar occupations (Table 4), the number had declined to just over half by 2000 (Table 5). Some migrants return; others do not. Female migrants to urban areas appear less likely than male migrants to return, perhaps because of ties created after they arrive. Marital ties might explain the greater level of unemployment among women than men, among the migrants to urban areas, and the fact that they remain rather than returning to the rural villages. Those who return appear to bring with them a preference for non-agricultural work, skills that make them attractive to potential employers, or possibly, the capital to start a small business. Return migrants are more involved in non-agricultural

work than non-migrants, although of course, not at the same level as in urban areas. Either because of an increasing labour pool of experienced return migrants, or because of shifts brought about by the activities of the migrants themselves, their involvement in non-agricultural work increased between 1994 and 2000. In contrast to the considerable shift from blue collar to service work among urban migrants, both increased among the return migrants.

Table 6 about here

We extend this analysis of life course transitions in employment to better examine what happened to individuals in our selected cohort over the sixteen year period, especially with rural employment. Table 6 shows the patterns for individuals in 1994 and 2000 given categories of employment in 1984: agriculture; non-agriculture; no occupation; too young (information was not collected for members of the cohort who were aged 8-10 in 1984). Each row of the table shows the distribution of employment outcomes, given 1984 employment. Table 6 is best read and interpreted in conjunction with Tables 4 and 5. As an example, Table 6 shows that, among young men 8-25 years in 1984 who were engaged in agriculture, 34 per cent lived in the village and were employed in agriculture in 1994, 2 per cent worked outside of agriculture, virtually none were without employment, and 63 per cent had moved outside the village. Thus, for example, 43 per cent of young men 8-25 years were engaged in agriculture in 1984 (Table 4); 34 per cent of them—15 per cent—were in agriculture in 1994 (Table 6).

Especially in relation to Tables 4 and 5, Table 6 demonstrates the centrality of migration to the life course experiences of young people in Nang Rong. Among young men 8-25 years in 1984, 66 per cent had moved away by 1994, 70 per cent by 2000. The fraction is a little lower, but still substantial for young women. Among young women 8-25 years in 1984, 53 per cent had moved away by 1994, again 53 per cent by 2000. Although a greater number of young men than young women leave the village, as indicated by Table 5, slightly more young women are found and interviewed in urban destinations. As we describe more fully in a moment, young men have less to keep them in the village than young women, and so they leave, sometimes to urban places but also to rural places. Although women are less likely to leave, those who do, however, are more likely to move to top urban destinations, and not return (Entwisle and Van Wey 2000).

Table 6 confirms the movement toward non-agricultural employment in the rural areas. In Tables 4 and 5, we saw an increasing trend in this direction over the life course, particularly among return migrants. In Table 6, we see that young people with a non-agricultural job in 1984 were slightly more likely than others to hold such a job in 1994 and 2000, but what is striking is the extent to which this is not the case. Among young men with a non-agricultural job in 1984, 6 per cent had one in 1994 and 8 per cent had one in 2000. Certainly, this is not a picture of strong job continuity. The same is true for young women. If anything, young persons having a non-agricultural job in 1984 are more likely than others to leave the village. Turning it around, Nang Rong residents with non-agricultural jobs in 1994 and 2000 are as or more likely to have held an agricultural as a non-agricultural job in 1984. Putting this together with our interpretation of Tables 4 and 5, it seems that migration is an important source

of the preferences and skills for non-agricultural work. This is speculative, but migration appears to mitigate the impact of initial differences.

Table 6 also reveals an important gender difference in employment trajectories. For both young men and young women, agriculture is the most likely occupation in 1984 according to Table 4: 43 per cent among young men and 48 per cent among young women 8-25 years. Table 6 shows that over half of the young women are slightly more likely to be engaged in agriculture, but what follows that involvement differs sharply by gender. Over half of the young women in agriculture in 1984 are still in agriculture a decade later, whereas this is true of only a third of the young men. The different trajectories are possibly due to differences in the demand for male and female labour in places of destination, perhaps also in conjunction with a desire to control the movements of young women more than young men. It is possible that despite the socio-economic changes in Thailand, women are still trying to perform the roles expected of them in traditional society including the obligation of taking care of parents (Curran 1995). At the same time, out-migration is common for both genders, and similarities are more striking than differences in the employment of urban migrants. Rather, agricultural employment may have different significance for young men and young women in the rural villages. In rural Thailand, although there are exceptions, the traditional pattern is for daughters to inherit family land, with the youngest also inheriting the parental home (Foster 1984; Singhanetra-Renard and Prabhudhanitisarn 1992). Perhaps for young women, agricultural employment is a step in this direction. Interestingly, the migration propensities of young women not initially in agriculture resemble those of young men.

Discussion

In this paper, we examined employment trends of men and women in Thailand from using data from 1984-2000, a period of increasing globalisation, export-oriented development and overall unprecedented economic growth in Thailand despite the 1997 financial crisis. Globalisation has economic, financial, technical and cultural implications. Thailand has witnessed changes in all these areas. Our emphasis was primarily on the aspect of economic growth and its consequences on changing economic opportunities and employment outcomes.

We focused on changes in occupations among residents of rural Thailand, including those employed in rural areas or as temporary or permanent migrants to urban centres. Given the strong ties of urban migrants with their origin households in rural areas, in financial as well as social or cultural terms, we believe that changes in rural areas are highly connected to the economic changes occurring in urban areas. This is particularly true in poor, primarily agricultural rural areas such as Nang Rong district, areas that otherwise offered little opportunity for alternate employment outside of agriculture, especially in the dry season. We have further conceptualised employment and migration as varying by the stage of the individual's life course. Using the Nang Rong CEP-CPC data, we rely on this connection in examining employment trends over an extended period of time, based on individuals' past migration history as well as the stage in their life course, all situated in a context of increasing economic opportunities.

Our research highlights some interesting patterns. Most apparent is the growing trend of non-agricultural employment in urban and rural areas, validating the fact that the macro-economic changes in Thailand have permeated to rural areas as well. An increasing percentage of men and women are employed as skilled or unskilled labour in factories, rice mills and other construction work. Therefore, a trend towards the diversification of household activities outside of agriculture is taking place, even in Nang Rong, although it is slow and delayed or even small, as compared to what urban migrants do. The largest increase in non-agricultural activity is evident between 1994 and 2000, indicating possibly a lag in the impact of growing opportunities on poor rural areas such as Nang Rong.

Migrants, both urban and rural, are likely players in this process, as an examination of past migration patterns of individuals in rural areas indicates. With poverty and population pressures on land, both seasonal and permanent migration from rural areas has increased. The development of transport and infrastructural facilities in rural Thailand in conjunction with the country's overall focus on economic development has facilitated this movement. Individuals who have had the opportunity to migrate in the past are more likely to move into non-agricultural employment especially in factories or even as construction labour even when they are back in rural areas. Given the drudgery of agricultural work, they now have added incentive to move away to other non-agricultural activities, which are increasingly becoming available, particularly in small towns adjoining rural areas. Equally likely is the possibility that the remittances of urban migrants have led to a slow transformation of rural areas creating new employment opportunities. A change is evident in urban areas as well. Especially in the late 1990s, there is a trend towards greater employment in the service sector as manufacturing activities lead to the need for better services. This change, though small, is evident in rural Nang Rong too, but is significant considering that our conservative definition of employment in the service sector includes only employment as traders, food service workers, transportation and domestic workers.

These trends are further confirmed in our cohort analysis that follows a single cohort of individuals aged 8-25 from 1984 and 2000. They also display gender differences in the patterns of movement from rural Nang Rong to urban areas. Much of the globalisation and migration literature on Thailand and other South-east Asian countries alludes to the large role played by youth, particularly women, in the growth of labour intensive industries and the service sector. This is evident in Nang Rong as well. Both women and men play a part in the migration process, however with gender differences. While all young men have a tendency to migrate to urban areas, only some women do; mainly those women who previously engaged in some non-agricultural activity. Therefore, it appears that those young women who have stronger ties to land remain in their villages, while a majority of men seek out new opportunities in both urban and rural areas. But patterns of return migration are also interesting, again with distinct gender differences. They tend to be small, even between 1994 and 2000 despite assertions in other research on high rates of return migration after the 1997 financial crisis. While men keep stronger ties to their origin households and are more likely to return, it is the opposite case with women.

Throughout the paper, we have made references to the 1997 financial crisis in our discussions of changing employment and migration patterns, levels of unemployment and a possible delay in the entry to work among youth. However, we intend to be cautious in assessing its impact. As others have indicated (e.g. Rigg and Nattapoolwat 2001), the effects of the crisis may have been immediate but without creating a major dent in the high growth levels in Thailand over the long term (see Chalamwong 1998 for a contrasting view). It is difficult to assess the impact on the rest of the economy. Most of the analyses, as in the case of the impact of the crisis in Indonesia are based on aggregate statistics and so do not always present a true picture of the change over time (Aslanbeigui and Summerfield 2000; Frankenberg et al. 1999). Even in Thailand, our analysis between 1994 and 2000 possibly excludes the intricacies of what exactly went on in the shorter term in the intervening period. Therefore, high levels of unemployment after the crisis may only mean job turnovers rather than larger stints of unemployment when we look at the trajectories of men and women. Others have also shown that the return migration as a result of the economic crisis in Thailand was not permanent (TDRI 2000). We do find that the levels of unemployment are consistently low at all three time points including 2000, except possibly among adolescents and youth who are still being educated. However, a deeper analysis of the retrospective employment history data for individuals from Nang Rong, which we will undertake in a subsequent paper, is required to better examine this aspect.

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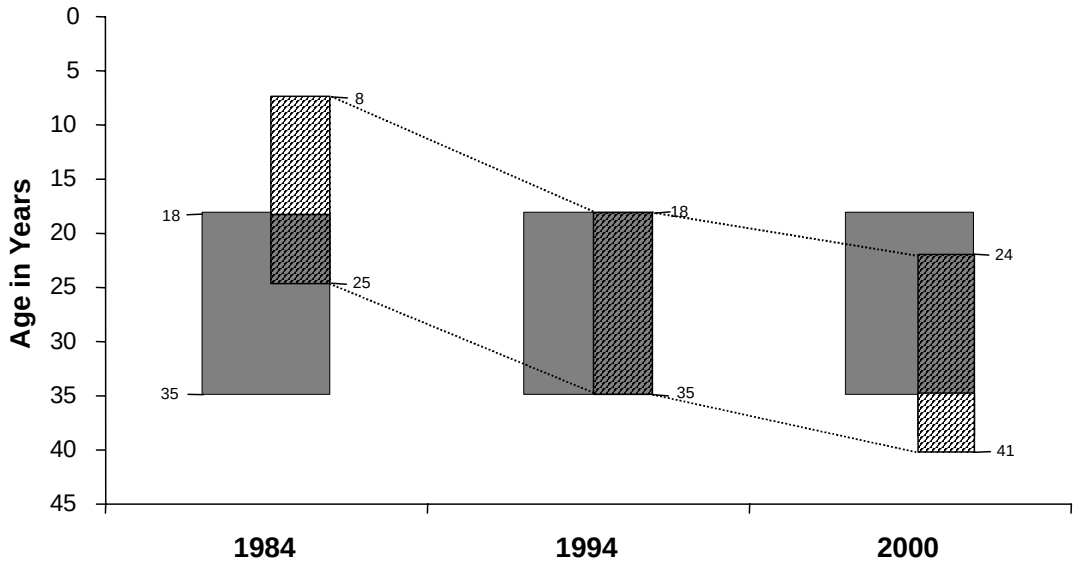
Map 1. Study area location, Nang Rong District, northeast Thailand.

Figure 1: Analysis Samples



Cross-sectional analysis : 51 villages - 18-35 years (1984,1994,2000)

Longitudinal analysis: 22 villages - 8-25 years (1984), 18-35 years(1994), 24-41 years (2000)

Table 1: Employment sector of residents of Nang Rong district, Thailand aged 18-35 years, 1984-2000

	1984			1994			2000		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Agriculture	79.6	84.8	82.2	81.6	83.7	82.7	72.1	68.2	70.1
Non agriculture	15.7	9.8	12.7	14.7	10.9	12.7	18.0	18.8	18.4
Not employed	4.7	5.4	5.1	3.7	5.4	4.6	9.9	13.1	11.5
Employment category									
Agriculture	79.6	84.8	82.2	81.6	83.7	82.7	73.0	68.8	70.9
Blue Collar Workers	7.4	5.5	6.4	8.4	6.5	7.4	10.3	11.4	10.9
Service Sector	1.6	2.8	2.2	2.8	2.9	2.8	4.6	4.0	4.3
Govt./Professional/Other	6.7	1.5	4.1	3.5	1.6	2.5	2.9	3.3	3.1
Not employed	4.7	5.4	5.1	3.7	5.4	4.6	9.9	13.1	11.5
Total	4933	5060	9993	3715	4061	7776	4250	4443	8693

Note: Soldiers and monks comprise the high percentage of men employed in Government/professional and other jobs in 1984

Table 2: Employment sector of migrants from Nang Rong district, Thailand aged 18-35 years in 1994 and 2000

	Urban migrants (1994)			Urban migrants (2000)		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Agriculture	2.5	2.0	2.2	2.6	1.5	2.0
Non agriculture	93.6	87.3	90.4	91.6	82.8	86.8
Not employed	4.0	10.8	7.4	5.8	15.7	11.2
Employment category						
Agriculture	2.5	2.0	2.2	2.6	1.5	2.0
Blue Collar Workers	68.8	67.2	68.0	56.0	56.8	56.5
Service Sector	18.0	15.6	16.8	28.2	18.2	22.8
Govt./Professional/Other	6.7	4.4	5.6	7.3	7.7	7.6
Not employed	4.0	10.8	7.4	5.8	15.7	11.2
Total	1009	1004	2013	996	1177	2173

Note: Data on urban migrants is limited to 22 villages only

Table 3: Employment sector of young residents and migrants from Nang Rong district, Thailand, aged 11-17 years, 1984-2000

	Residents of Nang Rong			Urban migrants	
	1984	1994	2000	1994	2000
Males					
Agriculture	44.2	32.2	14.5	1.5	5.5
Non agriculture	4.8	5.3	4.2	83.8	40.0
Not employed	51.0	62.6	81.4	14.7	54.6
Total	3223	2625	2210	136	55
Females					
Agriculture	47.7	31.8	9.7	0.0	2.2
Non agriculture	5.2	4.5	4.1	81.3	35.6
Not employed	47.1	63.7	86.2	18.7	62.2
Total	3148	2409	2267	150	45
Total					
Agriculture	46.0	32.0	12.0	0.7	4.0
Non agriculture	5.0	4.9	4.1	82.5	38.0
Not employed	49.1	63.1	83.9	16.8	58.0
Total	6371	5034	4477	286	100
Employment category					
Males					
Agriculture	44.2	32.2	14.5	1.5	5.5
Blue Collar Workers	3.2	4.0	3.2	70.6	29.1
Service Sector	0.4	0.5	0.5	12.5	10.9
Govt./Professional/Other	1.3	0.8	0.4	0.7	0.0
Not employed	51.0	62.6	81.4	14.7	54.6
Females					
Agriculture	47.7	31.8	9.7	0.0	2.2
Blue Collar Workers	3.1	3.7	3.2	72.0	15.6
Service Sector	2.1	0.7	0.7	9.3	20.0
Govt./Professional/Other	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0
Not employed	47.1	63.7	86.2	18.7	62.2
Total					
Agriculture	46.0	32.0	12.1	0.7	4.0
Blue Collar Workers	3.1	3.9	3.2	71.3	23.0
Service Sector	1.2	0.6	0.6	10.8	15.0
Govt./Professional/Other	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.0
Not employed	49.1	63.1	83.8	16.8	58.0

Note: Data on urban migrants is limited to 22 villages only

Table 4: Employment sector based on migration history of a single cohort of residents and migrants from Nang Rong district, Thailand, who were aged 8-25 years in 1984 and 18-35 years in 1994

	1984 (8-25 years)			1994 (18-35 years)								
	In Nang Rong			Never migrated			Ever migrated			Urban migrants		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Agriculture	42.7	47.5	45.1	81.6	86.2	84.7	87.6	86.2	86.9	2.4	1.6	2.0
Non agriculture	9.7	5.7	7.7	6.2	5.9	6.0	9.5	10.2	9.9	92.8	89.9	91.3
Not employed	26.6	24.2	25.4	12.3	8.0	9.4	2.9	3.6	3.3	4.8	8.5	6.7
Too young	21.0	22.6	21.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Employment category												
Agriculture	42.7	47.5	45.1	81.6	86.2	84.7	87.6	86.2	86.9	2.4	1.6	2.0
Blue Collar Workers	4.9	3.7	4.3	4.5	2.9	3.4	4.8	5.6	5.2	64.3	68.7	66.6
Service Sector	0.6	1.3	1.0	1.7	2.7	2.3	2.1	2.3	2.2	19.1	17.8	18.5
Govt./Professional/Other	4.3	0.8	2.5	0.0	0.3	0.2	2.6	2.3	2.4	9.4	3.4	6.2
Not employed	26.6	24.2	25.4	12.3	8.0	9.4	2.9	3.6	3.3	4.8	8.5	6.7
Too young	21.0	22.6	21.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	2269	2281	4550	179	376	555	582	696	1278	502	555	1057

Note: Results are based on analysis of data from 22 villages only
Never and ever migrated individuals were both residents of Nang Rong district in 1994
Soldiers and monks comprise the high percentage of men employed in Government/professional and other jobs in 1984
Individuals younger than 11 years are categorised as "Too young" in 1984

Table 5: Employment sector based on migration history of a single cohort of residents and migrants from Nang Rong district, Thailand who were aged 24-41 years in 2000

	Residents of Nang Rong								
	Never Migrated			Ever Migrated			Urban Migrants		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Agriculture	81.7	86.9	85.7	80.8	79.2	79.9	3.7	1.7	2.6
Non agriculture	3.3	10.1	8.5	16.5	15.5	15.9	93.5	88.0	90.5
Not employed	15.0	3.0	5.8	2.7	5.4	4.3	2.9	10.3	6.9
Employment category									
Agriculture	81.7	86.9	85.7	80.8	79.2	79.9	3.7	1.7	2.6
Blue Collar Workers	1.7	6.0	5.0	8.6	8.0	8.2	47.7	56.4	52.5
Service Sector	1.7	1.5	1.5	3.7	3.4	3.5	35.7	23.9	29.2
Govt./Professional/Other	0.0	2.5	1.9	4.2	4.1	4.1	10.2	7.7	8.8
Not employed	15.0	3.0	5.8	2.7	5.4	4.3	2.9	10.3	6.9
Total	60	199	259	547	763	1310	384	468	852

Note: Results are based on analysis of data from 22 villages only

Table 6: Employment transition from 1984-2000 for individuals from a single cohort aged 8-25 years in 1984 from 22 villages of Nang Rong district, Thailand

	1994				2000					
1984	Agriculture	Non-agri.	Not employed	Migrants	Agriculture	Non-agri.	Not employed	Migrants	Total %	Total
Males										
Agriculture	34.3	2.4	0.1	63.2	30.9	3.6	0.5	65.0	42.6	967
Non agriculture	20.4	5.9	0.0	73.8	15.4	7.7	1.4	75.6	9.7	221
Not employed	22.6	4.7	1.7	71.1	15.9	5.0	1.3	77.7	26.5	602
Too young	30.7	3.5	6.2	59.5	25.2	4.2	2.5	68.1	21.2	482
Total	29.1	3.6	1.8	65.5	24.2	4.5	1.3	70.1	100.0	
	661	81	41	1489	543	101	28	1572		2272
Females										
Agriculture	54.2	3.4	0.8	41.6	50.2	5.4	2.3	42.2	47.4	1084
Non agriculture	25.4	8.5	1.5	64.6	20.8	10.8	1.5	66.9	5.7	130
Not employed	28.0	5.5	2.2	64.4	26.2	7.9	2.8	63.2	24.1	550
Too young	29.7	2.9	6.4	61.1	29.2	6.5	2.0	62.4	22.7	519
	40.7	4.1	2.5	52.8	37.9	6.5	2.3	53.3	100.0	
Total	928	93	56	1206	853	147	51	1200		2283

Note: Total size of the cohort aged 8-25 years in 1984 does not match the size in 1994 and 2000 due to missing information on employment in 1994 and 2000