

4.4.5. Access to employment

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Unlike the 1990s, the de facto authorities have not outright banned paid employment for women.1345 Women have however faced limitations in pursuing various professions,1346 and working women have been impacted by the general restrictions on them.1347 Women public officials working for the previous government were instructed to stay home after the Taliban takeover,1348 with exceptions in areas such as education, healthcare and certain security institutions.1349 Reportedly some women still work at airports and as security in detention facilities,1350 and UNAMA noted that there were female de facto MPVPV inspectors in the provincial capital of Baghlan.1351 Some women still work in the de facto Directorate General of Passports,1352 and additionally, as reported by Amu tv, the de facto MoI also mentioned women working in public services, and checkpoints.1353 UN OHCHR noted that 'some limited peripheral functions within the de facto administration were also permitted'.1354 Reportedly, women could still work in the banking sector.1355 In June 2024, salaries of female government employees and school teachers were cut to 5 000 afghanis.1356 A letter later clarified that this applied only to women civil servants who remained at home at the de facto authorities' request.1357 Zan Times and Amu TV reported that hundreds of female professors were dismissed in May 2025. 1358

Women have been banned from working in international and national NGOs since December 2022, and for the UN since April 2023. Most foreign embassies were also informed in April 2023 that Afghan women could no longer work in their offices, as reported by the UN.1359 Many NGOs reported that exemptions on the ban were negotiated with local authorities for women working in health, nutrition and education sectors.1360 Since the Morality law, there has been a general increase in the enforcement of restrictions for NGOs.1361 In December 2024, the de facto Ministry of Economy disseminated a letter reiterating the 24 December 2022 ban of women working for domestic and international NGOs,1362 warning that NGOs not complying would lose their license to operate in Afghanistan.1363 In reaction to this, some NGOs stopped recruiting Afghan women, as recorded by the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group. 1364 In some provinces, women's applications for work permits related to employment in NGOs were denied, as reported by UNAMA.1365 A survey by UN Women of 2025 found that the ban on women NGO workers has intensified.1366 Some NGOs advised their female staff to work from home, whereas others continued to allow them to work from offices where gender-segregated facilities were available and where exemptions to the decree applied.1367 In May 2025, dozens of Afghan women received death threats in relation to their work for UN agencies,1368 resulting in interim measures by the UN to protect their safety,1369 such as working from home.1370 In

September 2025, Afghan women, including local staff and contractors, were prevented from entering UN compounds by de facto security officials.1371

Women in other professions have also been impacted, including former women security personnel who lost their jobs amid the Taliban takeover,1372 and women lawyers and judges who have been barred from practicing.1373 Women journalists have been facing severe restrictions and it is estimated that around 80 % of female journalists have left Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover.1374 The number of female teachers has also decreased due to the restrictions on secondary education for girls, on women teaching male students and other restrictions targeting women and girls.1375 In July 2023, the de facto authorities ordered beauty salons to shut down.1376 Several beauty salons have however continued to operate underground, but in 2025, the de facto authorities conducted house-to-house searches shutting down such salons, confiscating beauty products, and detaining women beauticians. Those arrested were later released after a warning or after they committed not to repeat the same act. 1377

The private sector has been one of the few areas for women to work in.1378 Home-based self-employment and small-scale economic activities1379 have become the predominant form of employment among women in Afghanistan.1380 The de facto authorities highlight their support for women-led businesses, but have at the same time restricted women entrepreneurs.1381 For instance, the de facto authorities have ordered the closure of women-run shops in some provinces,1382 and have barred women from participating in some trade fairs.1383 In November 2024, the de facto authorities have ordered the closure of all women-only cafés in Herat.1384 Amid reports about the closure of women-markets in some areas,1385 for example in Kandahar Province,1386 in other places, women-markets are still in place.1387 Women in the private sector have also been impacted by general restrictions on them,1388 including travel restrictions,1389 having suppliers refusing to sell material to them,1390 and being requested to operate in a gender segregated environment and to cater to female consumers only.1391 Since the enactment of the Morality law, hurdles for businesswomen have increased.1392

According to reports, the lack of employment prospects has increasingly pushed more women living in the main cities to stroll the streets selling second-hand goods or simple food goods from carts.1393 In May 2024, the de facto authorities adopted anti-begging laws. Several women were arrested and detained under these laws and reportedly there have been cases of torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence and verbal abuse by de facto officials.1394

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