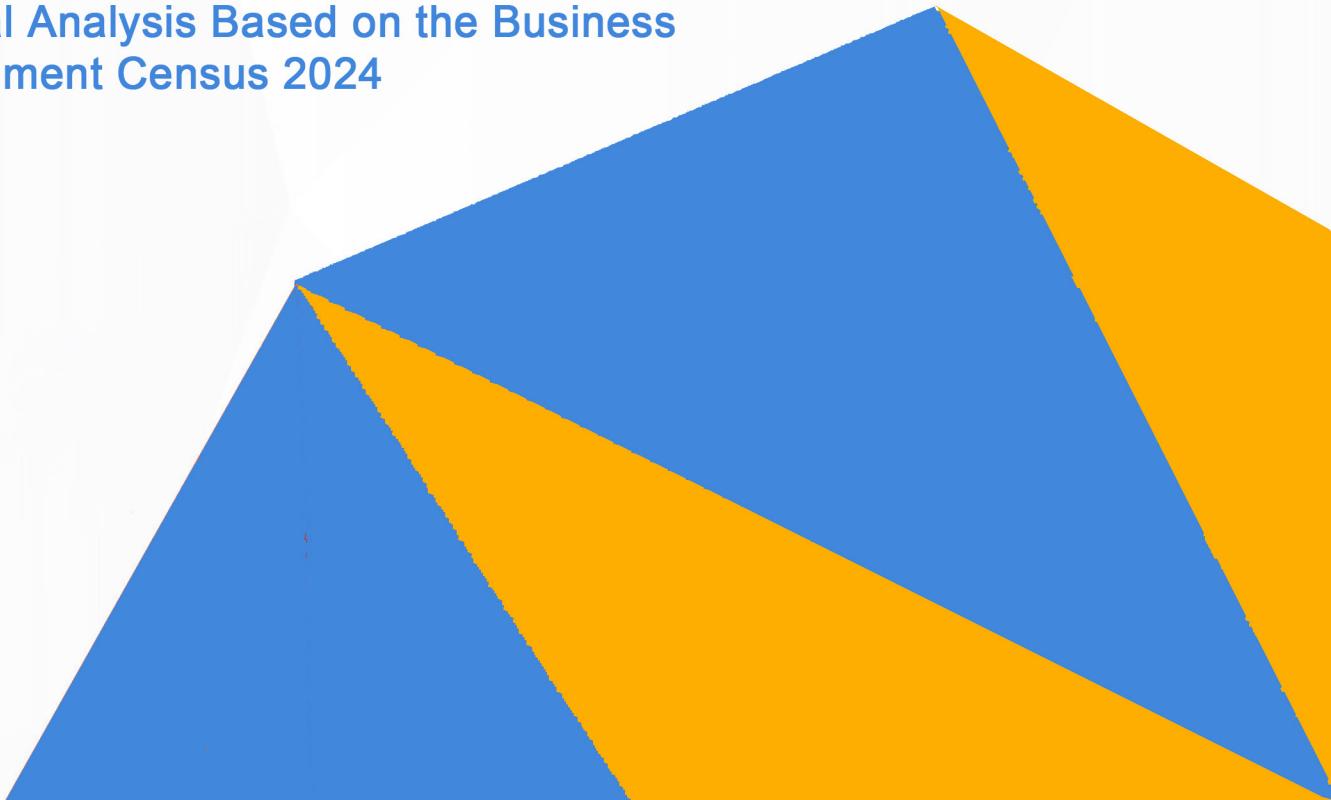


YOUTH

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

in Somalia

Statistical Analysis Based on the Business
Establishment Census 2024





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Foreword

I am pleased to present this Youth Entrepreneurship Booklet, produced by the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics (SNBS), based on data from the 2024 Business Establishment Census. At a time when Somalia's youth population is rapidly growing and formal employment remains limited, entrepreneurship continues to be a vital pathway for livelihoods, innovation, and economic resilience. This report provides timely evidence on the profile of youth-owned and youth-managed enterprises, where they operate, the sectors they engage in, and the barriers that affect their growth.

As a statistical institution, SNBS is committed to producing credible, policy-relevant data that supports national planning, private sector development, and job creation. The findings and recommendations in this report are intended to inform government institutions, development partners, and the private sector in shaping practical interventions that expand opportunity for young entrepreneurs, strengthen the enabling environment, and promote more inclusive growth.

I extend my appreciation to the SNBS technical teams for their dedication in producing this booklet, and to all stakeholders whose collaboration contributed to the successful implementation of the 2024 Business Establishment Census. I also extend my sincere appreciation to UNDP and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, whose invaluable support made the development of this Booklet possible. It is my hope that this publication will encourage coordinated action and targeted investments that help unlock the full potential of Somalia's youth as drivers of enterprise and national development.



Abdisalam Abdirahman Mohamed
Director General
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Acknowledgements

The Somalia National Bureau of Statistics, SNBS, extends its sincere appreciation to all individuals and institutions whose dedication and collaboration made the production of the Youth Entrepreneurship Report possible. This publication, informed by findings from the 2024 Business Establishment Census, reflects a shared commitment to strengthening Somalia's evidence base for youth economic participation, private sector development, and inclusive growth.

SNBS conveys special gratitude to Dr. Abdisalam Abdirahman Mohamed, Director General, for his strategic leadership, guidance, and unwavering support in advancing the Bureau's data production agenda and promoting the use of official statistics for national development planning. We also acknowledge Mr. Abdirahman Omar Dahir, Deputy Director General, for his continuous technical oversight and institutional direction, ensuring the quality and relevance of SNBS statistical outputs.

We further recognize the important contributions of Mr. Abdirashid Khalif, whose support and coordination were instrumental in facilitating the implementation processes underpinning this report, including engagement and follow-up with relevant technical teams and stakeholders. SNBS is especially grateful to Director Fadumo Mumin and to Mr. Sakariye Ahmed for technical contributions throughout the analysis and development of the report.

SNBS also expresses its deep appreciation to UNDP, for its sustained technical support and partnership in strengthening Somalia's national statistical capacity, including support to key data production initiatives that contribute to significantly raising data availability at SNBS. We further acknowledge the generous and unwavering support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, whose support has been vital in enabling statistical development efforts and advancing the availability and use of official statistics in Somalia.

Finally, SNBS acknowledges the efforts of all SNBS staff and field teams involved in the Business Establishment Census 2024, and extends thanks to business owners, managers, and respondents across Somalia who provided the information that forms the foundation of this report. Their cooperation and trust are essential to producing credible official statistics that serve Somalia's development priorities.

Executive Summary

Youth entrepreneurship plays a central role in Somalia's economic structure, particularly in an environment characterized by limited formal employment opportunities and a rapidly growing youth population. This report provides a comprehensive statistical analysis of youth entrepreneurship in Somalia using data from the Business Establishment Census 2024 conducted by the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics. For the purposes of this report, youth are defined as individuals aged thirty-four years and below.

The analysis is based on a total of 1,116 youth owned or youth managed business establishments operating in urban areas across the country. The findings show that youth entrepreneurship is heavily concentrated among individuals aged twenty-six to thirty-four, who account for 91.49 percent of all youth business owners. Younger youth below the age of twenty-six represent only 8.51 percent, indicating delayed entry into business ownership.

Formal establishments dominate youth entrepreneurship, accounting for 66.76 percent of all establishments, followed by informal establishments at 25.09 percent and micro establishments at 8.15 percent. This suggests gradual formalization among youth owned businesses, although informal and micro enterprises remain important entry points.

Youth entrepreneurship is highly concentrated in major urban centers, particularly Mogadishu, Bosaso, and Hargeisa. Sectorally, wholesale and retail trade is the dominant activity, followed by accommodation and food services. Manufacturing and higher value sectors remain limited.

The report highlights significant regional, sectoral, and age based disparities and identifies key constraints faced by youth entrepreneurs, including access to finance, regulatory barriers, limited skills, and infrastructure gaps. Drawing on comparative evidence from East African countries, the report concludes with policy recommendations aimed at strengthening youth entrepreneurship as a driver of inclusive growth and employment.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

The Somalia National Bureau of Statistics conducted the Business Establishment Census 2024 as national initiative to strengthen the country's National Statistical System. Somalia has long faced challenges related to limited administrative records, weak business registers, and insufficient data for national accounts and policy formulation. In response, the census was designed to create a comprehensive Statistical Business Register (SBR) that provides an exhaustive listing of business establishments operating across the country. The census aligns with international statistical standards, including the System of National Accounts (SNA 2008) and the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC Rev.4), thereby enhancing the comparability and reliability of Somalia's economic statistics. By covering formal, informal, and micro-establishments, the census addresses critical data gaps and lays a solid foundation for evidence-based economic planning, private sector development, and sustainable growth.

Somalia is characterized by a youthful demographic profile, with young people constituting a majority of the population. This demographic structure presents both opportunities and challenges. While youth represent a potential engine for economic growth, the limited availability of formal wage employment has resulted in high levels of unemployment and underemployment among young people. In this context, entrepreneurship has emerged as one of the most important

pathways through which youth engage in economic activity. Youth entrepreneurship in Somalia is largely shaped by structural factors such as prolonged conflict, weak institutional capacity, limited access to finance, and a narrow industrial base. These factors have constrained the growth of large scale enterprises and formal employment, pushing many young people into self-employment and small business activities. As a result, youth owned enterprises play a critical role in income generation, service provision, and local economic resilience.

The Business Establishment Census 2024 provides the first nationally consistent dataset capable of supporting a detailed analysis of youth entrepreneurship in Somalia. By enumerating all eligible business establishments operating in urban areas, the census captures formal, informal, and micro enterprises, many of which are owned or managed by youth.

This report leverages the census data to fill critical knowledge gaps related to the age structure of business owners, the types of establishments operated by youth, regional and city level distribution, and sectoral concentration. The findings are intended to inform government institutions, development partners, and the private sector in the design and implementation of youth focused economic policies.

Despite its importance, youth entrepreneurship has historically been under documented due to the absence of comprehensive business data. Most available information has been fragmented, outdated, or limited in geographic and sectoral coverage. This has constrained evidence based policymaking and hindered the design of targeted interventions to support young entrepreneurs.

1.2 Definition of Youth

For the purposes of this report, youth are defined as individuals aged thirty-four years and below. This definition aligns with African Union youth policy frameworks while reflecting Somalia's socioeconomic realities, where delayed transitions into stable employment are common.

The analysis focuses on non-agricultural business establishments operating in urban areas. Agricultural activities, mining, transport, and construction were excluded due to methodological considerations and limited coverage within the census.

1.3 Objectives of the Census

The primary objective of this report is to provide an evidence-based assessment of youth entrepreneurship in Somalia using data from the Business Establishment Census 2024 conducted by the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics. The report seeks to generate robust statistical insights to inform policy dialogue, program design, and investment decisions aimed at promoting youth employment, private sector development, and inclusive economic growth.

Specifically, the report aims to:

- ◊ Profile youth-owned and youth-managed business establishments, focusing on the demographic characteristics of business owners aged thirty-four years and below.
- ◊ Analyze the structural characteristics of youth enterprises, including their level of formality, registration status, and institutional integration within the private sector.
- ◊ Assess the geographic distribution of youth entrepreneurship across regions and major urban centers, identifying spatial disparities and concentrations of economic activity.
- ◊ Examine the sectoral composition of youth enterprises in line with ISIC Rev.4 classifications, highlighting dominant activities and sectors with potential for productivity and value addition.
- ◊ Evaluate the size distribution of youth enterprises based on employment thresholds and assess their contribution to employment generation.
- ◊ Analyze patterns of digital adoption and use of information and communication technologies among youth-owned enterprises.

1.4 Scope and Coverage

The census covered business establishments operating primarily in urban areas, where economic activity is concentrated. It included formal establishments operating from fixed structures with recognized licenses, informal establishments operating outside regulatory frameworks, and micro establishments operating from small or semi permanent locations.

Public utilities and activities covered through other administrative data sources were excluded to avoid duplication. The census focused on market oriented non agricultural activities, consistent with international business census practices.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Census Design and Approach

The Youth Entrepreneurship analysis presented in this report is based on data from the Business Establishment Census 2024 conducted by the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics. The census adopted a nationwide establishment listing approach designed to comprehensively identify and enumerate all eligible non-agricultural business establishments operating in urban areas across Somalia.

The census employed a full enumeration methodology rather than sampling, ensuring complete coverage of business establishments within the defined scope. Enumerators

conducted systematic canvassing of urban areas to identify all active establishments. Each identified establishment was interviewed using a structured questionnaire administered through computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) devices. This approach was particularly effective in capturing informal and micro establishments, which are prevalent among youth entrepreneurs and often excluded from administrative records.

2.2 Target Population and Statistical Units

The target population for the census comprised all active non-agricultural business establishments operating in urban areas within the Federal Government of Somalia at the time of enumeration. Public utilities and activities covered through alternative administrative data sources were excluded to avoid duplication.

For the purposes of this youth entrepreneurship report, the analytical focus is on establishments that are youth-owned or youth-managed, defined as those where the owner or principal manager is aged thirty-four years and below.

The statistical unit of observation was the establishment, defined as a single economic unit engaged primarily in one economic activity at a specific geographic location. Each establishment was treated as an independent unit regardless of ownership structure or enterprise size.

2.3 Questionnaire Design and Key Modules

The census questionnaire was designed to capture comprehensive structural and operational information on business establishments. It was developed in line with international best practices for economic censuses and adapted to Somalia's institutional and economic context.

Key questionnaire modules included:

- ◊ Identification and location information
- ◊ Ownership and management characteristics, including age and sex of owners/managers
- ◊ Main economic activity and secondary activities
- ◊ Establishment type and level of formality
- ◊ Employment characteristics, including total number of workers and sex disaggregation
- ◊ Registration status with relevant authorities
- ◊ Period of operation and year of establishment
- ◊ Use of information and communication technologies

These modules enable detailed analysis of youth entrepreneurship, including demographic, sectoral, geographic, and structural dimensions.

2.4 Classification Systems Used (ISIC Rev.4)

Economic activities of business establishments were classified according to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) Revision 4. Classification was conducted at Level I for the purposes of analysis presented in this report.

The use of ISIC Rev.4 ensures international comparability of results and facilitates alignment with national accounts, labor statistics, and private sector development indicators. Establishments were classified based on their primary economic activity, defined as the activity generating the largest share of output or revenue.

2.5 Field Operations and Data Collection

Field data collection was carried out by trained enumerators under the supervision of field supervisors and regional coordinators. Enumerators conducted face-to-face interviews with business owners or managers at establishment locations.

The use of CAPI technology enabled real-time data capture, automated skip patterns, and immediate validation checks, improving data accuracy and reducing processing time. Field operations followed a standardized enumeration protocol to ensure consistency across regions and urban centers.

Special emphasis was placed on identifying informal and micro establishments, which are common among youth entrepreneurs and may operate outside formal business premises.

2.6 Data Processing and Validation

Data processing was conducted centrally by the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics following the completion of fieldwork. This process included data synchronization, consistency checks, verification of classification codes, and treatment of missing or inconsistent responses.

Automated validation rules embedded in the data collection system were complemented by manual review and logical consistency checks. Outliers and anomalies were identified and resolved through follow-up verification where possible. The final dataset was cleaned, anonymized, and prepared for statistical analysis.

2.7 Data Quality Assurance and Limitations

A comprehensive data quality assurance framework was implemented throughout all stages of the census. This included rigorous enumerator training, field supervision, daily monitoring of data submissions, automated validation checks, and post-enumeration data cleaning.

Despite these measures, some limitations should be noted. The census focused exclusively on urban, non-agricultural establishments, limiting the generalizability of findings to rural areas and agricultural activities. Certain sectors, including mining, construction, and transport, were excluded due to methodological constraints. In addition, information is self-reported by respondents and may be subject to reporting errors or recall bias.

Nevertheless, the Business Establishment Census 2024 represents the most comprehensive and reliable source of data currently available for analyzing youth entrepreneurship in Somalia and provides a robust empirical basis for the findings and policy recommendations presented in this report.

Chapter 3: Overview of Youth Establishments in Somalia

3.1 Distribution of Age Groups of Owners

Table 1 shows how many business owners there are by age group, with a total of 1,116 owners. Most owners, 91.49% 1,021 owners, are between 26 and 34 years old, while 8.51% 95 owners are under 26. This indicates that a significant proportion of ownership is held by individuals aged 26 to 34.

Table 3.1 Distribution of Age Groups of Owners

Age group of the owner in the year	count	Percentage
<26	95	8.51
26-34	1,021	91.49
Total	1,116	100

3.2 Establishment Type

Table 2 presents the distribution of establishment types recorded in the census. In total, there are 1,116 establishments, with 745 formals, 280 informal, and 91 micro establishments/Kabar. Formal establishments account for 66.76% of the total, while informal establishments make up 25.09%, and micro establishments represent 8.15%.

Table 3.2 Distribution by Establishment Type

Establishment Type	Count	Percentage
Formal	745	66.76
Informal	280	25.09
Microestablishment/Kabar	91	8.15
Total	1,116	100

3.3 Distribution of Establishments by Region

Table 3 presents the regional distribution of 1,116 establishments. As indicated in Table 3, the largest number of businesses is located in Banadir with 277 establishments 191 formal, 77 informal and 9 micro establishments, showing the largest business density. Next is Bari 200 establishments with 119 formal, 33 informal and 48 micro-establishments followed by Waqooyi Galbeed 198 establishments, which has 121 formal, 64 informal, and 13 micro establishments. The formal sector leads in all regions, most notably in Banadir and Bari, whereas the informal and micro establishments dominate in regions such as Bay and Bakool While Bakool, Shabeellaha Hoose, Gedo or Shabeellaha Dhexe have fewer total establishments.

Table 3.3 Distribution of Establishments by Region

Region	Formal	Informal	Microesta	Total
Waqooyi Galbeed	121	64	13	198
Togdheer	27	11	0	38
Bari	119	33	48	200
Nugaal	82	18	5	105
Mudug	110	27	5	142
Galgaduud	20	4	4	28
Hiiraan	21	3	1	25
Shabeellaha Dhexe	2	1	0	3
Banadir	191	77	9	277
Shabeellaha Hoose	6	2	0	8
Bay	16	32	2	50
Bakool	0	1	0	1
Gedo	9	0	0	9
Jubbada Hoose	21	7	4	32
Total	745	280	91	1,116

3.4 Distribution of Establishments by city

Table 4 provides a description of the distribution of 1,116 establishments. The highest number of establishments is in Mogadishu with 277 191 formal, 77 informal,9 micro establishments followed by Bosaso having a total of 200 establishments 119 formal, 33 informal and 48 micro establishments and Hargeisa with a total of 166 establishments 113 formal,40 Informal,13 micro establishments, In terms of formal establishments, Mogadishu, Bosaso, and Hargeisa lead the way, while informal and micro establishments are more common in cities like Beletxawo 9 establishments, Jowhar 3 establishments, Barawe 8 establishments, Hudur 1 establishment.Barawe, Hudur, and jowhar have the fewest establishments.

Table 3.4 Distribution of Establishments by city

City	Formal	Informal	Microestablishment	Total
Hargeisa	113	40	13	166
Berbera	8	24	0	32
Burao	27	11	0	38
Bosaso	119	33	48	200
Garowe	82	18	5	105
Galkayo	110	27	5	142
Dhusamareb	11	3	0	14
Adado	9	1	4	14
Beledweine	21	3	1	25
Jowhar	2	1	0	3
Mogadishu	191	77	9	277
Barawe	6	2	0	8
Baidoa	16	32	2	50
Hudur	0	1	0	1
Beletxawo	9	0	0	9
Kismayo	21	7	4	32
Total	745	280	91	1,116

Chapter 4: Economic Activity

4.1 Distribution of establishments by economic activity (ISIC Rev 4, Level I)

Table 5 presents the distribution of 1,116 establishments. The Wholesale and Retail Trade sector leads with 678 establishments 429 formal, 169 informal, and 80 micro establishments, followed by Accommodation and Food Services with 139 establishments and Manufacturing at 52 establishments. In most sectors, formal businesses are the most common. Smaller sectors like Real Estate Activities and Water supply; sewerage have fewer establishments, with Agriculture having just one micro establishment.

Table 4.1 Distribution of establishments by economic activity (ISIC Rev 4, Level I)

ISIC level I	Formal	Informal	Microesta	Total
Agriculture, forestry	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	34	18	0	52
Electricity, gas, ste	1	0	0	1
Water supply; sewerag	2	1	0	3
Wholesale and retail	429	169	80	678
Accommodation and foo	75	56	8	139
Information and commu	8	2	0	10
Real estate activitie	2	0	0	2
Professional, scienti	30	0	0	30
Administrative and su	19	5	0	24
Education	36	7	0	43
Human health and soci	25	3	0	28
Arts, entertainment	9	0	0	9
Other service activ	75	19	2	96
Total	745	280	91	1,116

4.2 Level of Registration of Business Establishments

The level of registration of business establishments provides important insights into the degree of formality, regulatory compliance, and institutional integration of enterprises. Registration with administrative authorities such as the Somalia Revenue Authority, the Ministry of Commerce, Chambers of Commerce, or relevant State Authorities is a key indicator of a business's engagement with the formal economy and its potential access to government services, financial systems, and legal protection.

The results show that out of a total of 1,116 establishments, 762 establishments, representing 68.3 percent, reported being registered with at least one recognized administrative authority. This indicates that more than two thirds of all establishments have some level of formal recognition within the national or sub national regulatory framework.

However, a substantial proportion of establishments remain outside the formal registration system. A total of 335 establishments, accounting for 30.0 percent, reported that they are not registered with any administrative authority.

A small share of establishments, 19 in total or 1.7 percent, reported their registration status as unknown or preferred not to state.

Table 4.2 Level of Registration of Business Establishments

Registration of establishment	Count	Percent
Entity is nowhereregistered	335	30.0
Register in Establishment	762	68.3
Unknown or prefer not to state	19	1.7
Total	1,116	100

Chapter 3: Employment Characteristics, Internet and Digital Tools Usage

5.1 Distribution of Enterprises by Size Based on Number of Workers

The distribution of enterprises by size, measured by the total number of workers employed, provides critical insight into the scale, employment capacity, and growth potential of business establishments. This analysis covers formal and informal establishments and excludes micro establishments as a separate legal category, while size classification follows international standards based on employment thresholds.

The results show that micro sized enterprises employing between one and nine workers overwhelmingly dominate the business landscape. Out of a total of 1,116 establishments, 1,071 enterprises, representing 95.97 percent, fall within the micro size category.

Small enterprises employing between ten and forty-nine workers account for only 43 establishments, equivalent to 3.85 percent of the total. Medium sized enterprises employing between fifty and two hundred forty-nine workers are extremely rare, with only 2 establishments, representing 0.18 percent.

Distribution of enterprise by size based on the number of workers for Formal and informal except Microestablishment.

Table 5.1 Distribution of Enterprises by Size Based on Number of Workers

Employment Size	Count	Percent
Micro (1-9 workers)	1,071	95.97
Small (10-49 workers)	43	3.85
Medium (50-249 workers)	2	0.18
Total	1,116	100

5.2 Distribution of City Enterprises by Size

The city level distribution further reinforces the dominance of micro enterprises across all urban centers. In Mogadishu, which has the largest number of establishments, 260 out of 277 enterprises fall within the micro category. Only 16 establishments are classified as small and 1 establishment as medium.

Similarly, Bosaso records 193 micro enterprises out of 200 establishments, with only 7 small enterprises and no medium sized enterprises.

Medium sized enterprises are observed only in Garowe and Mogadishu, with one medium enterprise in each city. All other cities, including Baidoa, Beledweyne, Kismayo, and Galkayo, are characterized almost entirely by micro enterprises, with very few small enterprises and no medium sized ones.

Table 5.2 Distribution of City Enterprises by Size

City	Micro(1-9 workers)	Small (10-49 workers)	Medium (50-249 workers)	Total
Hargeisa	159	7	0	166
Berbera	30	2	0	32
Burao	38	0	0	38
Bosaso	193	7	0	200
Garowe	97	7	1	105
Galkayo	140	2	0	142
Dhusamareb	13	1	0	14
Adado	14	0	0	14
Beledweine	25	0	0	25
Jowhar	3	0	0	3
Mogadishu	260	16	1	277
Barawe	7	1	0	8
Baidoa	50	0	0	50
Hudur	1	0	0	1
Beletxawo	9	0	0	9
Kismayo	32	0	0	32
Total	1,071	43	2	1,116

5.3 Employment Distribution by Economic Activity and Enterprise Size

The distribution of enterprises by size across economic activities provides further insight into sectoral employment patterns. Wholesale and retail trade dominates in terms of enterprise count, with 670 micro enterprises, 8 small enterprises, and no medium enterprises, totaling 678 establishments.

Accommodation and food services follow a similar pattern, with 129 micro enterprises and 10 small enterprises, reflecting modest employment expansion in hospitality related activities. Manufacturing records 50 micro enterprises and only 2 small enterprises

Notably, the education sector stands out as the only sector with medium sized enterprises, recording 2 medium establishments alongside 12 small and 29 micro enterprises.

Other sectors, including professional services, health, administrative services, and information and communication, are dominated by micro enterprises, with very few small establishments and no medium enterprises.

Table 5.3 Employment Distribution by Economic Activity and Enterprise Size

ISIC level I) Micro	Micro (1-9 workers)	Small (10-49 workers)	Medium (50-249 workers)	Total
Agriculture, forestry	1	0	0	1
Manufacturing	50	2	0	52
Electricity, gas, ste	1	0	0	1
Water supply; sewerag	2	1	0	3
Wholesale and retail	670	8	0	678
Accommodation and foo	129	10	0	139
Information and commu	8	2	0	10
Real estate activitie	2	0	0	2
Professional, scienti	30	0	0	30
Administrative and su	22	2	0	24
Education	29	12	2	43
Human health and soci	27	1	0	28
Arts, entertainment	9	0	0	9
Other service activ	91	5	0	96
Total	1,071	43	2	1,116

5.4 Distribution of ICT Use in Business Operations

The use of information and communication technology in business operations is an important indicator of modernization, productivity, and market integration. The results on ICT usage reveal mixed levels of digital adoption among enterprises.

Out of the establishments assessed, 25 enterprises report using the internet, while 15 do not use the internet. This indicates that a majority of businesses have some level of internet access, although a substantial proportion remains digitally excluded. In contrast, social media usage is reported by 37 enterprises, while only 3 enterprises report not using social media.

Website ownership remains relatively limited, indicating that while businesses are increasingly using digital platforms for communication and marketing, more advanced digital integration remains low.

Table 5.4 Distribution of ICT Use in Business Operations

Internet and Digital Tools Usage		
Internet usage	Social media	Website
Use	25	37
Do not use	15	3
Total	40	40

