After the primary sector it is the tertiary sector that plays the next most important economic role in Myanmar, and within this sector trade and transport predominate. The tertiary sector’s contribution to GDP rose from 33.0% in 2000/01 to 36.7% in 2010/11 and 37.7% in 2014/15. The proportion accounted for by trade fell from 24.0% in 2000/01 to 20.1% in 2010/11 and 18.7% in 2014/15, while the figures for the transport sector in these three periods rose from 5.7% to 11.5% and then remained at 11.5%. Slight increases were also reported in the shares accounted for by communications (0.3% to 0.8% and 1.9%) and social and administrative services (1.5% to 2.3% and 3.1%) (all data: MNPED 2015: 203).

Regional differences in the tertiary sector’s contribution to GDP – both overall and specifically through trade and transport – are also informative. As expected, the geographical focal points are the cities of Yangon and Mandalay. A large proportion of trade is concentrated in the central lowlands in general, the Greater Yangon area and the southern Sagaing Region. The lowlands also account for a large proportion of transport, as do Rakhine and Mon States, where the tertiary sector is almost the sole generator of GDP. Trade dominates in large parts of the mountainous areas of the Sagaing and Tanintharyi Regions and Shan State. As is to be expected, tertiarisation is particularly strong in the capital city: more than 75% of the GDP generated there comes from employment in public administration. Administrative and social services also make a noticeable contribution to GDP generation in the structurally weak mountainous areas – that is, in Chin State and the peripheral townships of Kachin State.