Pilot Study on the Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka

An Initiative by the Sri Lanka Women Parliamentarians' Caucus of the 9th Parliament of Sri Lanka

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MESSAGE BY THE SPEAKER

At the outset, I would like to commend the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus (WPC) of the ninth Parliament for their outstanding work. I admire the unwavering determination of the WPC, led by its Chairperson, supported by two able Deputy Chairpersons and enthusiastic women parliamentarians in implementing impactful projects since its inception, especially during the ninth Parliament. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) have been strong pillars of support throughout all these stages, consistently strengthening the WPC in fulfilling its mandate.

Research, in areas lacking an evidence base, is critically important. The gender pay gap in Sri Lanka is one such area that has been scarcely studied, and I believe that understanding the gender pay gap is a crucial step for promoting gender equality. It is not only an economic issue, but also an issue concerning social and gender justice. Today, as Sri Lanka navigates a critical period of economic recovery, this study makes a significant stride in identifying a barrier that limits the full potential of our workforce. Comprehensive research of this nature provides policymakers with the data needed to create effective legislation and policy interventions to address the root causes of pay inequality. Corrective measures therefore premised on the findings of the gender pay gap study, if implemented, can thereby contribute to a significant boost in economic growth. Therefore, I would also like to extend a special thanks to the Women and Media Collective (WMC) for conducting this timely pilot study.

I understand that this initiative was inspired by the New Zealand study tour supported by USAID and NDI. It is proof that a well thought out and structured study tour of this nature can strengthen parliamentarians to make impactful and relevant interventions in the course of their work for the benefit of citizens. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity again to extend my heartfelt gratitude to USAID and NDI for their unwavering support in implementing various projects dedicated to women's rights and gender equality in partnership with Parliament, including this study on the gender pay gap. Their steadfast commitment and invaluable assistance have been instrumental in advancing these crucial initiatives, and we deeply appreciate their partnership in this vital work, being a pillar of strength in our efforts to create a more equitable and just society.

Hon. Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena

MESSAGE BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS' CAUCUS

This pilot study is an initiative by the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus (WPC) of the 9th Parliament of Sri Lanka, supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and conducted by the Women and Media Collective (WMC). In July 2023, the WPC participated in a study tour to New Zealand organised by NDI and this research was also inspired by a gender pay gap study conducted in New Zealand under the Labour Government, where we learned about its research methodology and its impact on policy. However, the methodology of our pilot study was adapted to suit the context of Sri Lanka.

The gender pay gap is a complex issue influenced by various factors. It is a measure of inequality and indicates how various economic, social, and cultural factors influence and impact how men and women are remunerated for their work differently. This has led to blatant, and at times covert, discrimination. Women spend many hours of their days on household work which is unaccounted for and unpaid, which widens the gender pay gap.

With the aim of raising awareness about the existing gender pay gap in Sri Lanka among the public in general, and parliamentarians and policymakers in particular, the primary objective of this study is to identify the association between the extent of unpaid care work in Sri Lanka and the intensity of the gender pay gap in the country as revealed in quantitative data and qualitative real life stories. It also aims to advocate for equal pay for all employees in Sri Lanka, irrespective of gender.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to USAID and NDI for providing the technical assistance and funding to conduct this critical pilot study and WMC for having implemented the research in a very short space of time. I also wish to thank the team in New Zealand who shared invaluable insights and made themselves available either directly or through sharing of tools and other resources that strengthened our technical understanding.

Women disproportionately bear the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, limiting their availability for paid employment, opportunities for career advancement and related economic empowerment. Addressing it requires comprehensive policies and societal changes to promote gender equality. Thus, efforts to reduce the gender pay gap are essential for fostering a more equitable and prosperous society.

Sri Lanka has committed to implementing the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on non-discrimination and protecting and promoting the rights of women in formal and informal employment, thereby agreeing to protect, promote and realise the full potential of all women. While reiterating this commitment, we believe that the awareness created through this study would take us a step closer towards the prospect of a future where women in Sri Lanka can enjoy equal pay for work of equal value.

Hon. Dr Sudarshini Fernandopulle

MESSAGE BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF PARLIAMENT

The gender pay gap remains a significant issue, affecting the economic well-being and career advancement of countless women across the world including in Sri Lanka. On average, women continue to earn less than their male counterparts for equivalent work, a disparity that hinders our progress towards a fair and just society. Addressing this gap is not only a matter of fairness but also a strategic imperative for enhancing Sri Lanka's economic potential and social cohesion.

As the Secretary General of Parliament, I encourage all citizens to support this initiative by the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus and contribute to the growing body of research on the gender pay gap. Closing the gender pay gap can significantly boost economic output by increasing women's participation and productivity in the labour force. Together, we can pave the way towards a future where every individual, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

I also take this opportunity to thank the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for facilitating this study with financial support from the USAID, and the Women and Media Collective (WMC) for carrying out the study.

As the Parliament Secretariat, we are highly appreciative of the impactful work conducted by the WPC since its inception in 2006, and we continue to support the WPC in carrying forward their work to empower women in Sri Lanka, particularly in realising the recommendations set out in this research report.

I believe it is essential to be aware of existing issues that disproportionately affect women and better understand how to mitigate factors contributing to them. This study, therefore, would elevate public awareness regarding the gender pay gap in Sri Lanka. I believe this initiative will also be a critical step towards achieving meaningful gender equality and economic justice for all.

Ms. Kushani Rohanadeera

MESSAGE BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

Gender-based discrimination in hiring, promotions, and salary negotiations can result in women being paid less than men for the same work. This is primarily due to the asymmetry in power relations, particularly in the world of work. Globally, women are segregated in low-paid jobs such as nursing and teaching whereas some occupations and industries such as the IT sector and the corporate sector leadership positions are primarily run by men. This report, based on a pilot study of the gender pay gap in Sri Lanka, digs deep into the underlying invisible causes of these visible phenomena.

Inspired by international best practices, including a notable study conducted by the New Zealand government, this pilot study is an effort to understand the gender pay gap and factors contributing to it. The study has identified unpaid care work as a major factor influencing the gender pay gap and makes policy recommendations to address it.

Women globally perform a significant majority of unpaid care work - a fundamental, yet often overlooked, component of the economy and social structure of a country. Studies show that women carry out at least two and a half times more unpaid care and domestic work than men. This disparity affects women's ability to participate in paid employment and limits their economic opportunities and independence while resulting in widening the gender pay gap. Addressing gender-based discrimination and the gender disparities in unpaid care work is crucial for achieving equal pay and gender equality, enabling women to participate more fully in economic and social life.

The study employed a methodology tailored to our unique socio-economic context ensuring that the findings are relevant and actionable for Sri Lanka. This study is not merely an academic exercise but a call to action for all stakeholders - the legislature, government agencies, the private sector, civil society organisations, and the general public. We must work together to foster a culture of substantive equality and inclusivity in our workplaces.

While wishing all success to the Women Parliamentarians Caucus in ensuring that the policy recommendations are put in force, we take this opportunity to thank the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for their continuous financial support in strengthening the Sri Lankan legislature to take such steps to enhance inclusive democracy in Sri Lanka. Last, but not least, we would also like to thank the Women and Media Collective for conducting this study and cooperating with NDI in finalising the study despite limitations in the availability of time and resources.

Ensuring equal pay for equal work is a matter of fairness and justice, contributing to broader social equality. We believe this study would allow us to add to the expanding body of research on the gender pay gap and strengthen evidence-based research to guide policy towards achieving meaningful and substantive gender equality in the country.

PREFACE

PILOT STUDY ON THE GENDER PAY GAP: A STUDY FOR THE WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS' CAUCUS

WOMEN AND MEDIA COLLECTIVE
JULY 2024

1.1 Introduction

The background to this study by the Women and Media Collective (WMC) is research that was carried out on Unpaid Care Work in six districts, in collaboration with the Social Scientists' Association[1]. The Time Use Survey (TUS), that the WMC developed, adopted a methodology that attempted, through the use of the Diary method, to capture the simultaneous aspects of unpaid housework and care activities carried out in the home. We recognized that a Diary that would ask the respondent to note down activities carried out during specific time brackets instead of asking for an assessment of the time taken for individual activities, better captured the simultaneous nature of household care activities. We aimed at obtaining a more nuanced and realistic coverage of a range of unpaid care activities in the home while also contributing to analyses of unpaid care work data such as that of the Department of Census and Statistics TUS (2020)[2]. Sex disaggregated Time Use Surveys are bringing out hitherto 'hidden' aspects of the division of labour in households. We found that women spent on 8.2 hours and men spent on average 5.09 hours per day on housework (cooking, washing utensils/kitchen, cleaning, buying groceries, washing clothes).[3]

This data is integral to broadening the discourse on women's labour beyond the current main concern about women's low labour force participation. Available data now enables the adding-on of such problematics as the sectoral concentration of employed women mainly in the lower echelons of the labour market as well as other notable socio-economic gender discriminatory issues.

1.2 From Time Use Survey Data to the Gender Pay Gap

The WMC study and the Department of Census and Statistics TUS direct us to better understand factors that account for women's labour force participation in Sri Lanka being less than half that of men. It has widened the inquiry into why women are found mostly concentrated at the lower echelons of the labour market. Why women's involvement in the labour market tends to be less regular when compared to that of men, i.e. women tend to move in and out of paid work more often. It also pushes us to understand better why, even with similar qualifications, women are found to earn less than men or, why there are more men in higher paying jobs than men. It brings into focus the Gender Pay Gap. In mainstream analysis of the Gender Pay Gap (GPG), issues that impact on the differential pattern of women's and men's labour force participation such as the greater time spent by women on unpaid care work, the effect of marital status and social norms for women and men, childcare responsibilities and

[1] Women and Media Collective (2023). Working Hours: Gender Dimensions of Unpaid Care Work in Sri Lanka. eds. Sepali Kottegoda and Pradeep Peiris. Colombo.

[2] Department of Census and Statistics, (2020). Sri Lanka Time Use Survey: Final Report. 2017. Colombo.

[3] Women and Media Collective, (2023). pp.52-63

barriers to access to skills upgrading for women are categorized as 'unexplained' factors. For example, women who are intermittently in paid work lose on benefits such as pensions or EPF/ETF savings that impact heavily on their access to financial security on retirement or old age.

The concept of the Gender Pay Gap hence takes on more meaning when we are looking to better economic and social opportunities and standard of living for women.

The main objective of this study was to pilot test a GPG methodology based on good practices that will critique the methodology, and come up with a report on the workplace reality in the chosen pilot area/sector/industry or shop floor. It will provide recommendations for adapting a data infrastructure to capture an inclusive analysis to address this complex phenomenon of the GPG in the long term.

The WMC Pilot study on the Gender Pay Gap comprises two components. A Qualitative analysis from interviews with selected employers and employees from a range of sectors to illustrate some key concerns of women as paid and unpaid workers and a Quantitative analysis of the labour force survey data to explore further some of the 'unexplained factors'.

We acknowledge the support given to us to carry out this Pilot Study by the Sri Lanka Parliamentary Women's Caucus and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Sri Lanka. This has enabled the Women and Media Collective to contribute to the growing body of research on the Gender Pay Gap and to enabling the strengthening of evidence-based research to direct policy towards the country's path to meaningful gender equality.

The study is structured as follows:

Part 1 is on the 'Gender Pay Gap: A Qualitative Study' by Dr Sepali Kottegoda, Anushka Opatha and Menasha Samaradiwakara, supported by Tharanga de Silva at the Women and Media Collective. Part 2 is on 'Exploring Gender Pay Disparity in Sri Lanka: the Unseen Impact of Unpaid Care Work' by Nilupulee Rathnayake and Kanishka Werawella. Part 3 comprises the 'Conclusion' which puts together analysis of the findings of Parts 1 and 2 and, the 'Recommendations' for policy makers, the private sector, employers and trade unions.

1.3 Limitations

This Pilot Study was undertaken in a short period of four months. The task was to (a) conduct analysis through a desk study of selected data sets from the Sri Lanka Labour Force data, which aimed at capturing some key aspects of what is called 'unexplained' factors such as unpaid care work and, (b) conduct interviews for a qualitative analysis of selected corporate policies on female employment and (c) brief case studies of women in paid work from different sectors in assessing the Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka.

The study focus was on the urban sector, and on the private sector employers. This may curtail its applicability to be generalised as a comprehensive study. The years 2010, 2015 and 2019 were chosen as this was the data available prior to the Covid 19 pandemic and the economic crisis which followed. We believe that this study does make an important contribution to the growing research on the Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Women and Media Collective would like to express our sincere gratitude to the National Democratic Institute for supporting us in carrying out the pilot study on the Gender Pay Gap. We would like to thank the Honourable Members of Parliament and members of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, Dr. Harini Amarasuriya and Dr. Sudharshini Fernandopulle, for their interest in this study. We extend our thanks also to Tharanga de Silva Director Operations, WMC.

We would like to thank the research team members of the Qualitative and the Quantitative sections of this study.

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MSc in Development Economics, University of Nottingham, UK
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We extend our thanks Dr. Ramani Gunathilake for her review and comments on the first draft of the report. We are grateful to the Department of Census and Statistics for providing the survey data that underlies part two of the report. We are especially thankful for the eight courageous women who shared their stories with us.

We extend our gratitude to all the key stakeholders for sharing their policy insights and progressive strategies. Finally, we thank the staff of Women and Media Collective whose help was invaluable for the completion of this project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, global attention has heightened regarding women's development, economic empowerment, and the imperative to eradicate gender inequality and discrimination in the workforce. This discourse has gained momentum alongside efforts to boost women's labour force participation and enhance their skills for better integration into employment markets. The implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has amplified focus on achieving gender equality, especially in bridging gaps in economic opportunities and breaking into traditionally male-dominated sectors. Central to this discourse is the persistent challenge of the gender pay gap, reflecting wider societal gender disparities and profoundly impacting women's economic empowerment and financial autonomy.

This pilot research used a qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore factors contributing to the gender pay gap. Through key informant interviews and structured questionnaires, insights were gathered from stakeholders, including companies, trade unions, and employees in sectors such as Free Trade Zones (FTZ) and port services in Colombo. The study focused on understanding the gender pay gap, efforts to reduce it, strategies for increasing female representation in decision-making roles, addressing gender-based harassment and discrimination, tackling hiring biases, reducing the care work burden on women, and attracting more women to male-dominated sectors.

Fourteen interviews were conducted, comprising six key stakeholder interviews and eight case studies. The stakeholders included selected companies and trade unions involved in sectors where male employment dominates or where women remain confined to labour intensive low paying jobs. The interviews aimed at gathering information on the understanding of the gender pay gap, actions taken to minimise it, strategies for gender diversity, efforts to address harassment and discrimination, bias in hiring, initiatives to reduce the care work burden on women, and attract women to male-dominated sectors. The case studies focused on understanding the role of factors like gender based discrimination, gendered biases, and structural barriers in driving pay disparities, as well as the connection between unpaid care work and pay inequality.

Qualitative insights from employers, trade unions, and employees reveal key issues such as the double burden on women balancing unpaid care work with demanding jobs, significant gender bias in recruitment, salary negotiation, pay, and promotion, and the lack of quality, affordable care facilities, which limit women's workforce participation. The Quantitative analysis confirms the existence of a gender pay gap influenced by unpaid care work, gender-based discrimination, biases, and structural patriarchal impediments.

The study highlights the need for flexible work arrangements and systemic changes to promote gender equality in the workplace. Gender responsive unionization is identified as a crucial factor in narrowing the gender pay gap and expanding opportunities for women in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Some private sector companies in Sri Lanka have implemented proactive measures, such as merit-based evaluations, equal pay policies, and Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) committees, yielding positive results like high return rates from maternity leave and fostering inclusive work environments.

This study highlighted the complex nature of gender discrimination in the workforce and the significant barriers women face in achieving economic equality. Despite ongoing efforts, challenges persist due to unpaid care work burdens, gender-based discrimination, biases in recruitment and promotion, and structural impediments rooted in patriarchal values.

The qualitative analysis revealed that women from various occupational backgrounds face a double burden of balancing work and caregiving responsibilities. Discrimination and disparities in pay and career advancement opportunities underscore the urgent need for systemic changes to promote gender equality in the workplace. While some initiatives in Sri Lanka to advance gender equality show promise, these measures remain limited, assessing long-term results and wider adoption of such policies is crucial. Collaboration between employers, policymakers, trade unions, and civil society is needed to implement holistic solutions that empower women, dismantle discriminatory practices, and create opportunities for all individuals to thrive in the workforce, irrespective of gender.

PART I

Gender Pay Gap: An Exploration of 'Unexplained Factors'

1 Introduction

Since the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda, a considerable amount of attention has been given to implement gender equality in different spheres. In particular, there is increased focus on women's economic empowerment, bringing women more to the labour force, maintaining gender inclusivity in every sector, and specifically, on bringing women into the areas which are dominated by men. SDG goal 08 is on Decent Work and Economic Growth, where target 8.5 includes the equal pay for equal value. This is an important aspect of the labour market in Sri Lanka where women's earnings are comparatively lower than men's.

Sex disaggregated Time Use Surveys (TUS) that are bringing out hitherto 'hidden' aspects of the division of labour in households are contributing, albeit somewhat slowly in Sri Lanka, to a better understanding of its implications when formulating economic development plans, especially in relation to increasing women's labour force participation. Even more importantly, it is shedding light on issues such as domestic violence, women's health as well as indicating the need for resource allocation for social support systems.

One can argue that since women in Sri Lanka have opportunities to access education and women have higher educational qualifications than men[4], there should be no issue for women entering the labour market. However, the issue is that the path to enter the labour market for women is more challenging than for men in Sri Lanka. According to the LFS data the Sri Lankan female labour force participation (FLFP) rate is significantly lower than that of men[5]. The FLFP rate increases during specific historical moments over time. The first notable increase occurred between 1946 and 1970, when significant progress in women's literacy and educational attainment contributed to more women entering the labour market. *"The expansion of the state-dominated services sector, particularly in teaching, healthcare, clerical, and finance-related occupations, not only provided new and diverse job opportunities but also roles deemed suitable for women, thereby increasing the demand for female labour. The second increase resulted from higher economic growth following the structural changes that began with the liberalisation of the economy in 1977"*[6] (ILO, 2024). After these two specific periods, the FLFP rate in Sri Lanka has not seen a significant increase. This stagnation suggests that additional barriers and challenges continue to hinder further increases in the FLFP rate.

While having a lower labour force participation, women in Sri Lanka have faced a myriad of challenges during the last few of years due to the impact of COVID-19 which was followed by an economic crisis. The impact of these crises not only caused an increase of the double burden on women but also resulted in reducing their access to or ability to obtain or keep their paid work. An IPS policy report found that the impact of COVID-19 on employed women in Sri Lanka was more severe compared to men. The data showed a greater decrease in the number of employed women and a significant rise in the economically inactive female population (IPS, 2022).[7] Given the current economic crisis, similar labour market effects are anticipated, as women are predominantly employed in informal jobs. Paid work in the informal sector is vulnerable to economic downturns and offer less robust social protection[8].

[4] According to the DCS data on Performance of candidates of G.C.E. (O/L) examination by district and sex in 2019, 78.3% of women has qualified for A/L, while 62.8% men did. http://www.statistics.gov.lk/GenderStatistics/StaticalInformation/Education/PerformanceOfCandidatesOfGCE-OL-ExaminationByDistrictAndSexhttp://www.statistics.gov.lk/GenderStatistics/StaticalInformation/Education/PerformanceOfCandidatesOfGCE-OL-ExaminationByDistrictAndSex, Also, in the year 2019-2020 the percentage of female who qualified of A/L was 71.6% and for men it was 54.2%. http://www.statistics.gov.lk/GenderStatistics/StaticalInformation/Education/PerformanceOfCandidatesOfGCE-ALExaminationByDistrictAndSex, The percentage of women and men graduated in the year 2021 is 68% and 32% respectively. http://www.statistics.gov.lk/GenderStatistics/StaticalInformation/Education/GraduateOutputByAcademicProgrammeAndSexAcademicYear, and the percentage of women and men who had gain postgraduate qualification in the year of 2021 60.5% and 39.5% respectively. http://www.statistics.gov.lk/GenderStatistics/StaticalInformation/Education/PostgraduateOutputByAcademicProgrammeAndSexAcademicYear.

[5] According to the LFS data between 2018 - 2022 years the FLFP rate is varied between 31.8% - 34.5%. http://www.statistics.gov.lk/LabourForce/StaticalInformation/AnnualReports#gsc.tab=0.

[6] International Labour Organisation, (2024) The Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka: A Statistical Review with Policy Implications. Pp.26.

[7] Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, 28th Nov. 2022, Sri Lanka's Economic crisis: an Opportunity to Advance Gender Parity, Policy Insights.

[8] Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, 28th Nov. 2022, Sri Lanka's Economic crisis: an Opportunity to Advance Gender Parity, Policy Insights.

Such findings signal an aspect of the Sri Lankan labour market economy's trend in absorption of women as a subordinate group, easily removing them from productive activities during an economic downturn and reintegrating them during an economic boom (Rubery, 2021). The concern here appears to be the expectation that women will be removed from productive activities, relegated to reproductive roles, and burdened with increasing unpaid care work.

The importance of considering these factors, which position women as a subordinate group in the economy, cannot be overstated. These dynamics significantly impact on the wages women earn through paid work, ultimately resulting in a persistent pay gap between men and women. Addressing these issues is crucial for achieving gender equity in the workplace and ensuring fair economic opportunities for all.

1.1 Gender Pay Gap: Literature Review

Numerous studies on the gender pay gap, both globally and within the Sri Lankan context, have demonstrated that this disparity negatively affects women more than men. Identifying and addressing the pay gap between men and women is crucial not only for benefiting women but also for improving the economy as a whole. Reducing the pay gap can help discourage discriminatory practices in the labour market, making it more equitable and inclusive. Additionally, it can attract more women into the workforce, thereby enhancing overall economic productivity and growth.

1.1.1 Motherhood Penalty and 'Greedy Work'

Goldin (2014) explains several key concepts contributing to the gender pay gap between men and women. She argues that earning penalties for time spent out of the workforce, excessive work hours, inflexible job structures, gendered domestic roles, and discrimination in pay and promotion detrimentally impact women's income levels[9]. Goldin refers to the unexplained portion of the gender pay gap as the 'residual portion'. She compares selected occupations to discern as to why a gender pay gap exists in certain categories while being absent in others. She argues that if one can isolate the features of occupations that have high and low residual differences by gender one can figure out what factors make for more equal pay (Goldin, 2014). Identifying and comprehending the role of unexplained factors in the pay gap between men and women is just as crucial as understanding the explained factors. This understanding is essential for achieving pay equality between both genders[10]. Goldin introduces the concept of "greedy work" to shed light on one of the underlying factors contributing to the persistent pay gap between men and women[11]. "Greedy work" refers to occupations that demand exceptionally high levels of time and least exibility, often at the expense of personal and family life. This phenomenon creates a significant conflict between women's careers and family responsibilities, particularly in the context of unpaid care work within the household.

High-demand careers often require long hours, intense focus, and an unwavering commitment, making it challenging for individuals to balance professional and personal obligations. Consequently, women who are engaged in paid work frequently face a difficult dilemma: whether to continue pursuing demanding careers and delay starting a family, or to opt for jobs with lower demands that allow for greater flexibility and time to dedicate to family care.

This dilemma is exacerbated by societal expectations and traditional gender roles, which place the burden of unpaid care work on women. As a result, many women may feel compelled to choose career paths that are less demanding but also less financially rewarding. This trade-off contributes to the persistent pay gap, as women are more likely to be found in occupations that offer lower salaries and fewer opportunities for advancement.

Women who choose to remain in careers that demand higher time face challenges in advancing their careers due to the need to balance work and family responsibilities. This in turn, affects their earning potential and career progression compared to their male counterparts, who may not face the same

[9] Goldin, C. (2014). A Grand Gender Convergence: Its Last Chapter. American Economic Review.

[10] Goldin, C. (2014). A Grand Gender Convergence: Its Last Chapter. American Economic Review, p. 1102

[11] Goldin, C. (2021). Career and Family: Women's Century-long Journey towards Equity. Princeton University Press. pp 9,10. ""

level of conflict between professional and personal life. Political economists have argued that women are often used as subordinates in the labour market due to the reproductive responsibilities that they bear[12] (Rubery, 2021).

1.1.2 Differential Gender Pay Gap of Women Heads of Households

The study conducted by the National Business Initiative (NBI) in New Zealand on the Gender Pay Gap in 2021 reveals several significant factors contributing to the pay gap between men and women and its impact on women[13]. The report provides evidence explaining why they focused on identifying the causes of the gender pay gap in the country. The 2019 NBI report on Gender Equity in the Workplace revealed complex societal and economic inequities and how these dual dynamics affected women. These challenges are contributed to pay disparity and income inequality. According to the report, nearly 42.6% of households in New Zealand are headed by women who have a higher dependency ratio, meaning they shoulder greater responsibility for children and other dependents. Nevertheless, the report stated that in 2015, 52.2% of women-headed households were poor. Equally worrying is that women experience higher levels of unemployment, and those who are employed are paid 19% to 37% less than men[14]. Based on these findings, the NBI conducted a pilot study on the gender pay gap. The study revealed that the pay gap between men and women negatively affects women[15]. It further showed that the explained portion of the pay gap is higher than the unexplained portion[16].

1.1.3 Gender Division of Labour and Social Support Systems

Despite various interventions aimed at ensuring equality gender discrimination persists as a barrier, manifesting in various ways such as racial discrimination; immigrant status; gender discrimination; lack of jobs; transportation; neighbourhood/location; and general structural factors (Hong, Gumz, Choi, Crawley & Cho, 2021). This further explains how the gendered division of labour plays a role in locating women in low wage occupation categories within organisations and how it affects women discriminatively.

At the same time, structural impediments, ranging from inadequate support systems like affordable childcare to inflexible work arrangements create barriers that impede women's career trajectories, relegating many to lower-paying occupations and industries. Moreover, the pervasive influence of traditional gender roles perpetuates unequal gendered division of labour, confining women to social caregiving responsibilities and domestic duties, thereby limiting their ability to fully engage in the workforce and access opportunities for professional growth[17] (Harlan and Berheide, 1994).

1.1.4 Gender in the Online and the Gig economy

The issue of the pay gap between men and women extends beyond the traditional labour market. A study conducted by the World Bank Group in 2024 on "Decoding Gender Disparity in Online Gig Work" reveals that the online gig economy is expanding rapidly, now comprising 12% of the global labour force. Female representation in this economy is around 42%, surpassing the 31.8% participation rate in the traditional labour market[18]. According to the study's findings,

"Data from one of the largest global freelancing platforms, women quote approximately 10% lower hourly rates than men, likely reflecting differences in confidence. Although the gaps fluctuate across regions and task categories, the disparity remains, indicating that online work patterns mirror those of the traditional labour market". (World Bank Group, 2024).

[12] Rubery, Jill (2021) "Gendering the Analysis in Economic Crisis" In: The Routledge Handbook of Feminist Economics. New York: Routledge. PP. 363

[13] National Business Initiative, (2021) Gender Pay Gap Pilot Report. pp. 01.

[14] National Business Initiative, (2021) Gender Pay Gap Pilot Report. pp. 01.

[15] National Business Initiative, (2021) Gender Pay Gap Pilot Report. pp. 01.

[16] National Business Initiative, (2021) Gender Pay Gap Pilot Report. pp. 13.

[17] Harlan, S.L and C.W. Berheide (1994) Barriers to work place advancement experienced by women in low paying occupations. pp. ii – v

[18] World Bank Group, (2024) Decoding Gender Disparities in Online Gig Work: Is the Gender Rate Gap a Confidence Gap. pp 03.

These findings are particularly important because a many women worldwide are considering online work due to its flexible working patterns, which facilitate a successful work-life balance. However, this indicates that gender biases and discrimination persist even on these platforms, acting as negative factors for women.

Not only have studies conducted on a global level reveal the gender pay gap between men and women, but several studies conducted in Sri Lanka also highlight this issue.

1.1.5 Factoring Education Inequality in Gender Pay Gap

In one of the early studies on the Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka, Gunewardena (2002) explores whether closing educational inequality could reduce the wage gap between men and women in Sri Lanka. Using data from the 1990/91 Household Income and Expenditure Survey and the 1985/86 Labour Force and Socio-economic Survey, the study identifies the determinants of earnings in Sri Lanka[19]. The findings showed that *"returns to education were positive and significant for both genders, increasing between 1985/86 and 1990/91, while returns to age decreased for males. Marital status and government employment positively influenced incomes, with a persistent advantage for government employees"*[20]. Living outside the Western region negatively impacted earnings, highlighting the need for policy focus on developing outlying regions. Gender differences in earnings determinants favoured females, with higher returns to education for women but lower returns to experience compared to men. Occupational segregation was evident, with male professionals earning more than production workers, unlike female professionals, indicating wage depression in female-dominated professions like teaching and nursing. Although the gender wage gap narrowed between 1985 and 1991, initial disadvantages prevented higher returns from eliminating the gap. Without discrimination, women would earn more than men, indicating discrimination as a significant factor[21]. Despite the benefits of education for women's status, bias persists, particularly among unskilled labour.

1.1.6. Economic growth, impact on gender pay gap in upper and lower wage distribution

Seneviratna's study (2020) on the gender wage gap during the period of post-reform growth in Sri Lanka analysing the Labour Force Survey (LFS) data from 1992 to 2014, during a time of robust economic growth driven by pro-market reforms[22]. The findings reveal that the overall mean wage gap between men and women steadily declined over this period. Using unconditional quartile regression, the study explains that the decline in the wage gap was primarily observed in the upper half of the wage distribution. This reduction was attributed to women enhancing their observable human capital, such as education and work experience. However, despite the overall decline in the mean wage gap, the study found that the pay structure became more unequal. This means that the difference in wages due to factors like experience and education became more pronounced, particularly due to differences in unobservable determinants of wages, such as negotiation skills or discrimination. In the lower half of the wage distribution, the gender gap in the pay structure widened significantly. This was associated with lower returns to women's work, especially in manufacturing industries and production jobs that faced increased international competition[23]. The study also highlights that selection bias leads to an underestimation of the gender wage gap and an overestimation of the progress made toward equality. Selection bias occurs when the sample of women working in the labour market is not representative of all women, often because those who remain in the workforce are those who face better conditions or have higher qualifications[24].

1.1.7 Gender Wage Gap in selected Sectors

Kulathunga (2020) in her paper focused on three major sectors such as the apparel, tea and tourism sectors based on the Sri Lanka labour force survey data in the years of 2015 & 2018 and found that both apparel and tea exporting sectors record an unexplained gap in wages of approximately

[19] Gunewardhana, D. (2002) Reducing the Gender Wage Gap in Sri Lanka: Is Education Enough. Pp. 07.

[20] Gunewardhana, D. (2002) Reducing the Gender Wage Gap in Sri Lanka: Is Education Enough. Pp. 21.

[21] Gunewardhana, D. (2002) Reducing the Gender Wage Gap in Sri Lanka: Is Education Enough. Pp. 20 - 21.

[22] Seneviratne, P. (2020) Gender wage inequality during Sri Lanka's post-reform growth: A distributional analysis. p. 01.

[23] Seneviratne, P. (2020) Gender wage inequality during Sri Lanka's post-reform growth: A distributional analysis. Pp. 01.

[24] Seneviratne, P. (2020) Gender wage inequality during Sri Lanka's post-reform growth: A distributional analysis. Pp. 01.

20 percent as a percentage of women's wages compared to men's wages[25]. The unexplained gap in the tourism sector is in the negative region compared to male counterparts. She further explains that the reason for observing a negative gap in the tourism sector is due to the low number of matched female observations, resulting in lower female representation compared to the other two sectors. She observes that despite matching factors such as education, occupations, occupational hierarchies and other characteristics, a significant earning gap still exists in the export-oriented sectors in Sri Lanka[26]. In her analysis of the plantation sector, Kulathunga introduces ethnicity as a gendered intersection. She explains that a significant portion of unexplained wage inequalities exists among Sinhala women in the tea plantation sector, while the unexplained factors are negative for minority/Tamil women (Kulathunga, 2020).

1.1.8 Education, gender gap in management and low-wage occupations

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) report on the Gender Pay Gap (GPG) in Sri Lanka (2024), uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis to understand the extent and nature of the GPG in Sri Lanka. The quantitative analysis focuses on Labour Force Survey (LFS) data from 2013 to 2021, with a special focus on 2019, complemented by a range of primary and secondary sources. The report analyses the distribution of male and female employees across various sectors and occupations, revealing that, on average, women have higher educational attainments than men and are more likely to be employed in mid- to high-skilled occupations, although less likely to hold managerial positions. Women are predominantly found in sectors like manufacturing, education, and public administration, with a higher likelihood of working in the public sector and formal economy[27]. Despite these trends, women are disproportionately represented at the lower end of the wage distribution rather than in mid-range job functions[28].

Based on 2019 LFS data, the ILO study reveals that average female hourly wages were approximately 27% lower than male hourly wages. The gap is particularly large among workers in the informal sector and those with lower educational attainment. According to the report the GPG in Sri Lanka is higher than the global average and higher than the average among lower-middle-income countries. The report further reveals that *"differences in endowments, job functions, and workplace characteristics only partially explain the GPG, with most of it remaining unexplained. The decomposition exercise conducted shows that, based on observable characteristics, women should earn higher wages than men at all wage levels, yet they receive lower wages, indicating that the GPG is likely driven by discrimination. The unexplained component is especially significant among low-skilled workers*[29]". Qualitative data confirms that gender biases in the labour market contribute to the GPG in Sri Lanka. Stakeholder interviews with a wide range of representatives from the public and private sectors highlighted the important role of gender stereotypes and cultural norms in perpetuating gender inequalities. Stakeholders also mentioned that unsafe working conditions, gaps in social protection legislation, and occupational segregation are crucial factors behind the persistence of gender wage differentials in the country[30].

The gender pay gap persists as a multifaceted issue revealing the complex interplay of societal, economic, and structural factors contributing to pay disparities between men and women. These findings emphasise the need for extended comprehensive research to build sufficient convincing evidence for policy measures addressing gender bias, occupational segregation, and discrimination across sectors and regions. By addressing these systemic issues and promoting gender equity in education, employment, and wages, countries can work towards narrowing the gender pay gap and fostering more inclusive and equitable societies.

[24] Seneviratne, P. (2020) Gender wage inequality during Sri Lanka's post-reform growth: A distributional analysis. Pp. 01.

[25] Kulathunga, T.K.S. (2021) Economy for All, (eds.) S.P.Premaratna, Naveen Wickremeratne, Umesh Moramudali, Colombo University Press, pp. 84-85

[26] Kulathunga, T.K.S. (2021) Economy for All, (eds.) S.P.Premaratna, Naveen Wickremeratne, Umesh Moramudali, Colombo University Press, pp. 85-88

[27] International Labour Organisation, (2024) The Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka: A Statistical Review with Policy Implications. Pp 11 - 12.

[28] International Labour Organisation, (2024) The Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka: A Statistical Review with Policy Implications. Pp. 12.

[29] International Labour Organisation, (2024) The Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka: A Statistical Review with Policy Implications. Pp. 12.

[30] International Labour Organisation, (2024) The Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka: A Statistical Review with Policy Implications. Pp. 12.

2. Qualitative Insights on the Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka

The brief overview of the literature (above) underscored by a wealth of global research and, growing contributions from Sri Lanka and illustrates the urgent need for concerted action to dismantle these systemic inequities for transformative changes towards inclusive workplaces where gender disparities are eradicated, ensuring all individuals are afforded equitable opportunities to thrive and succeed.

The existence of these factors can negatively affect women's earnings and lead to gender segregation in employment pushing women into low wage-earning sectors in the labour market.

The qualitative aspect of this pilot research explores some of the complex factors influencing the disparity in pay between men and women, that would indicate the 'residual' (Claudia, 2014) elements that are, in practice, not addressed by quantitative analyses on gender pay gaps. Through this qualitative inquiry, the study provides some insights to understand the nuances surrounding the gender pay gap phenomenon.

2.1 Sampling Method

The study applies the case study method and utilises purposive sampling to select the required sample. Purposive sampling was chosen because the study focuses on a specific aspect of the gender pay gap—the unexplained portion—and its existence in the female labour market. Under this sampling method, cases were selected for the study categorised into two groups.

2.2 Interviewees

Table 1. Sample of Interviewees

	Category of the interviews	Number of interviews
01	Stakeholder[31] Interviews	06
02	Case studies[32]	08
	Total number of interviews	14

2.3 Key Stakeholder Interviews

The key stakeholder interviews were conducted with a selected number of leading organisations i.e. corporate employers and, selected trade unions dedicated to advocating for the rights of employees, one that works with workers the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) sector and the Colombo port service provider and one that looks to the rights of employers. The selection of stakeholders for the interviews was based on the objectives of this study, with particular consideration given to capturing sectors where male employees dominate and a sector where the bulk of employees are female.

[31] The Stakeholders were from the Private Banking Sector, Corporate Sector and Trade Unions

[32] Case Studies comprised women in informal sector employment, FTZ women employees, Manpower sector, Professionals in private sector including Apparel sector, IT sector.

2.4 Case Studies

The case studies focused on understanding how the unexplained factors[33] such as gender discrimination, gender bias, and structural barriers[34] in the labour market play a significant role in driving pay disparities and also to understand the interconnection between unpaid care work and pay inequality. Different names have been given to the interviewees to maintain confidentiality.

2.5 Data Collection Method

Qualitative data was collected by applying the tool of key informant interview, complemented by the development of a structured questionnaire to elicit insights from participants. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and employees of some institutions, in order to facilitate a better understanding of diverse perspectives and experiences. To accommodate the varied contexts of the interviews, questionnaires were modified for each category of selected stakeholders in an attempt to capture some factors at play in the gender pay gap.

2.6 Questionnaire for Key Stakeholders

The questionnaires were designed to gather data on several key points: the extent to which employers and trade unions understand the concept of the gender pay gap, if there are steps to minimise the pay gap between male and female employees, strategies and policies in place to increase female representation in decision-making positions and maintain gender diversity in the workplace, efforts if any to minimise gender-based harassment and discrimination, if and how biases are addressed in hiring practices, initiatives aimed at reducing the care work burden on women with the aim of encouraging their continued participation in employment, and strategies to attract women workers to sectors traditionally dominated by males.

2.7 Questionnaire for Case Studies

A questionnaire was formulated to capture the experiences of women related to pay inequality within the workplace and discrimination, training and skill development opportunities they have received, and their role as an unpaid care worker within the family sphere.

2.8 Analysis Method

The study explores themes and patterns emerging from the interviews to shed light on the drivers behind the unexplained portion of the gender pay gap. Potential findings from the case studies may include issues such as gender bias and disparities in negotiation practices between genders, limitations in access to high-paying roles or career advancement opportunities for women, and the inadvertent perpetuation of pay inequities between women and men through organisational policies, the extent to which employers understand the issue and strategies (in any) to minimise this gap.

The interviews conducted for the purpose of the WMC pilot study with stakeholders and female employees in the formal and informal sectors aimed at identifying how unexplained factors such as marital status, pregnancy, number of children, gender biases, structural barriers and sexual division of labour act as challenges and obstacles for women to obtain paid work and to participate in the labour market.

This analysis therefore, attempts to identify the existing discriminative factors that impact on women negatively, ultimately leading to a gender pay gap.

[33] Blinder & Oaxaca (1973), the unexplained part of the wage gap is customarily considered as the wage differential that manifests from labour market discrimination. (as cited in Kulathunga, 2021, pp. 72)

[34] Structural barriers refer to the condition that no matter how good the individual's qualifications may be, elements within the social and economic structures make it difficult for the individual to obtain employment. These elements include secondary labour market; racial discrimination; immigrant status; gender discrimination; lack of jobs; transportation; neighbourhood/location; and general structural factors (Hong, Gumz, Choi, Crawley & Cho, 2021).

3. Case Studies: Experiences of Women Employees

3.1 Understanding unexplained portion of gender pay gap

The in-depth qualitative analysis for this pilot study involved eight female workers, each representing distinct occupational backgrounds in both the formal and informal sectors: a Free Trade Zone (FTZ) worker, a crane operator, a manpower worker, an office assistant, a paid household cleaning worker, a former Merchandising Manager in Apparel Sector, a former employee in a Human Resource Management Institution and, a Senior Software Engineer. Their ages ranged from 22 to 64 years, with the respondents' educational attainment varying from no schooling to Grade Nine, Ordinary Level, Advanced Level, and Diploma to Degree.

During the case study analysis, we identified key factors that are discriminatory toward women in lower income earning categories. We also observed how some of the causes previously identified in studies on women in paid work persist in the cases of our respondents, even when they had achieved high educational qualifications and were holding mid or upper-level positions in their respective institutions. The following discussion hopes to shed some light on the contradicting nature of the double burden on women and 'greedy work' in the workplace for women who occupy different levels in the occupational hierarchy, are of different ages, have varying educational backgrounds, and come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. These cases will provide a nuanced picture of the discriminatory nature of the world of work, which contributes to the pay gap between men and women.

3.2 Single Mother, 'Frontline' Garment Factory Worker

Nayana: At 41, she is a mother of two children (a 15-year-old son and an 8-year-old daughter) who is separated from her husband. She had studied up to O/Level. She has previously worked in various garment factories situated in the Katunayake Free Trade Zone (FTZ) and is currently, employed as a manpower worker[35]. During the interview, she elaborated on the reasons behind resigning from her then regular job in a garment factory to become a manpower worker.

She was previously employed as a full-time machine operator in a garment factory within the Katunayake FTZ. The nature of her work in the garment factory was demanding both in terms of labour and time, leaving her with limited time to attend to the needs of her two children. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the garment factory adjusted its operating hours to commence at 7 am, a schedule that initially provided some degree of convenience for her. However, post pandemic the factory changed its working hours to a start time at 6 am which posed much difficulties for workers like her, in managing the demands of her children's care work alongside her paid employment. In her own words, she vividly articulates the struggles she faced, highlighting the difficulties in balancing her familial responsibilities and the demands in her professional commitments.

> *"I resigned from my job last year (2023). Balancing work and my children's schooling required me to take time off regularly. I wanted to prioritise attending their school activities. However, managing both children's school schedules meant dedicating two days a week, allocating two hours each time. Initially, when I worked overtime, I could cover for the children's school commitments. My monthly salary was Rs. 23,875, but with overtime I could earn around Rs. 35,000-37,000. However, taking time off from 8 hours daily labour requirement resulted in deductions from my leave balance. This raised concerns, leading to inquiries from HR about the accumulated leave deductions. Since January last year, there was an expectation of returning to pre-COVID schedules, and the start time shifted to 6 a.m. Consequently, I had to wake the children earlier to prepare for school before leaving for work, where I had to clock in using fingerprint recognition……*

[35] Manpower Agencies hire workers on a daily basis, depending on which enterprise requires such workers. A Manpower worker is not covered by labor regulations that ensure protection of workers rights.

[36] During the Covid Pandemic, the apparel sector continued production for export while most of the country was in lockdown and the predominantly female workforce in effect became part of the frontline workforce working long hours; however, they did not enjoy the perks of 'greedy work'.

"Adjusting to this new routine was challenging. Due to these challenges, I couldn't focus much on the children's schooling; including minimal involvement in school activities like cleaning. Despite my dedication to the company for six months, my efforts seemed unappreciated[36], especially after informing them of concerns raised by the school that my child was not excelling. Although I had to face such questions from the school, I prioritised the company's demands over the past six months. When I left the factory, there was no overtime payments. Ultimately, I regret how the company handled the situation."

Goldin (2014), points to the importance of 'temporal flexibility', in order to reduce pay gap between men and women. She highlights a critical issue regarding the challenges faced by women in balancing their unpaid care work responsibilities with their paid employment, which often leads to them leaving the workforce. This struggle underscores the importance of employers providing flexible work environments and facilities to support women in remaining engaged in the labour force. As Goldin notes, "By offering flexibility, employers can enable women to better manage their work-life balance, thereby reducing the likelihood of them leaving their jobs due to conflicting demands. Moreover, addressing the gender pay gap is closely linked to ensuring women's continued participation in the labour force".[37]

This respondent's situation shows that due to the lack of flexibility in the existing job, the respondent decided to resign from her job and enrol with a Manpower Agency where she can engage in paid work, albeit not regularly, but still allowing her a degree of flexibility to accommodate her unpaid work. She now works from 8am to 5pm and earned Rs. 1300 per day with an additional Rs. 200 for transport. However, she has no formal stipulated 'leave' or off-days. Most recently she had been sick and unable to report for work and when she did, she had not been offered work for several days, as the Manpower Agencies supply labour as demanded by factories and are generally able to find alternate workers on most days. She was hopeful that she would be called to work the next day.

Despite the absence of certain worker benefits and facilities typically provided by formal sector employment arrangements, such as regular work schedules, benefits such as Employee Provident Fund (EPF)/Employee Trust Fund (ETF), stipulated days of leave, or medical facilities, women like Nayana opt for daily paid work from Manpower Agencies. In Nayana's case, the decision was driven by the convenience it offered in managing both paid and unpaid work responsibilities. The 'flexibility' of manpower work is viewed by such workers as enabling the respondents of both spheres of work and maintain a semblance of work-life balance. The lack of quality and affordable care facilities, such as day care centres for children, and the subsequent burden constrains women's ability to allocate time to paid work rather than unpaid work. When women are primarily responsible for childcare due to inadequate support structures, it restricts their participation in the labour force and limits their opportunities for economic advancement. By investing in accessible and high-quality care facilities, societies can alleviate this burden on women, allowing them to participate more fully in paid employment and contribute to both their own economic well-being and the broader economy.

As Nayana disclosed, *"Places to leave children who are not yet in school, during holidays or after school hours is unsafe today. Although it's called a day care, it's not properly organised. They're just there to collect money. There's no safety for the children. What do they do with the child during those 8 or 12 hours after we leave? We don't know. We drop off the child in the morning and pick them up in the evening. The very young children can't communicate what happens there. They're too young. Children who are 1 ½ or 2 years old don't even understand. We don't know what they eat or drink or what activities they engage in."*

[36] During the Covid Pandemic, the apparel sector continued production for export while most of the country was in lockdown and the predominantly female workforce in effect became part of the frontline workforce working long hours; however, they did not enjoy the perks of 'greedy work'.

[37] Goldin, C. (2014), A Grand Gender Convergence: Its Last Chapter. American Economic Review. Pp. 1104.

3.3 From Paid Work to Unpaid Care Work: Observations of a daughter

Asha: She is a 22 years old employee in the FTZ. Asha has studied up to A/Levels. She is currently single and spoke about her mother, who had given up full time paid work in order to take on care of the family at home. Asha's account sheds light on the burden of unpaid care work and family responsibilities, which ultimately led to her mother leaving her paid employment. Asha highlighted her mother's and her own struggle to reconcile with seeing someone give in to the pressure by becoming financially dependent on her husband.

> *"Even after I was born, my mother continued to work, which meant she never attended any of our parent meetings. Instead, it was always our father who went. Our teachers had never even seen my mother. When I received my O/L results, I had to start my A/L classes. I told my mother that I didn't want to go because no one knew who my mother was. The teachers only recognized my mother when I was leaving school. After that incident, I urged my mother to quit her job since my younger sisters needed guidance at home".*

Now, as a young factory employee, Asha realises how important having paid work had been to her mother. "*My mother now believes that those who work outside the home should be admired. It's often said that a woman who earns her own money cannot simply stay at home, and I've observed this first hand with my mother". Her father now provides for all their household expenses and her mother now refrains from asking her father for money. "My mother is given some money for her personal expenses, but it's perplexing when my father hands her 7000 rupees for monthly expenses, while she used to earn a monthly salary of sixty or seventy thousand. I witnessed my parents arguing for the first time since she started staying home. With my maternal grandparents now staying with us, my mother has even more responsibilities. This additional workload adds pressure, especially when my father questions her about the increased electricity bill at the end of the month. He often reminds her to use the washing machine sparingly and avoid using the iron excessively. Can anyone truly understand the daily struggle of hand washing clothes for a family of five?".*

Asha's story not only reveals the challenges of the sexual division of labour within the family but also brings out the importance of a woman having access to her own income. Where a woman had been employed but had to leave her employment for family welfare, the brunt of household and caregiving responsibilities fall on her. It is with hindsight, Asha realised how important being employed with own income was to her mother.

The two cases above illustrate how on the one hand the excessive demands of employers for long working hours and inflexible job structures place significant pressure on women and on the other pressure to comply with gendered social norms and the sexual division of labour in the home impact on the ability of women to be in paid work.

3.4 From Child Labourer to Office Assistant

Rasitha: She is 50 years old, educated up to Grade 9, and currently employed as an office assistant. Rasitha started to work at age 14 in a garment factory, earning a monthly salary of Rs.1,000. After seven years, she migrated to Abu Dhabi and worked in a garment factory for three years, earning a monthly salary of Rs. 10,000 at that time.

On her return to Sri Lanka, she got married at age 29 and found work again in a garment factory. With the birth of her first child, she moved out of employment and earned some income through sewing. When her daughter turned 3 years old, she went back to work in a garment factory. She would drop her daughter at a day care centre located closer to her house, and her husband picked up the daughter in the evening. This was a government day care centre which provided care without a fee.

After the birth of her second child and faced with mounting debts, both Rasitha and husband migrated overseas. This time she found employment as a housemaid. She left her two daughters with her sister to whom she sent money for their care and also to make repayments on the loans they had taken. She returned to Sri Lanka after three years with no debts all of which had been repaid through her remittances. Her husband had not found regular paid work overseas. Rasitha had her third child at the age of 42. She stayed home until the child was 2 and then found her current employment as an office assistant. She now earns Rs. 40,000/- monthly, has the benefit of EPF/ETF facilities.

The story of Rasitha reveals various factors related to the pay gap. Due to her low educational qualifications, her entire career has been positioned at the lower end of the pay distribution. With two children and unable to take up paid work outside her home, she took up sewing baby items. She had to quit her job multiple times due to pregnancy and childcare responsibilities. These interruptions hindered career progression. Her work history is concentrated in garment factories and as a housemaid—sectors traditionally dominated by women and often associated with lower pay. This segregation can lead to persistent pay disparities because women are overrepresented in lower-paying industries and roles.

Rasitha's husband worked in various places overseas but didn't earn enough to pay off debts effectively. In contrast, Rasitha's determination to look for income was significant in managing the family's financial burdens. Rasitha's current job provides EPF/ETF facilities, which is not available in informal or lower-tier jobs. The availability of day care facilities for free for low-income families was an important factor in her ability to have paid work when the family was young. Access to such benefits can influence job stability and overall earnings.

3.5 No schooling, Continuous Unpaid Care Work and Low Paid Employment

Subhalaxmi: She is a 64 years old widow with two married children. She is currently living with her son in Colombo. Her husband passed away 22 years ago when Subhalaxmi was 42 years old. Before marriage, she was the third child and the eldest daughter of a family with nine siblings. She never went to school and is only able to write her name. As the eldest daughter of the family, the care responsibilities of her younger siblings fell to her. She also started to work at the age of 11, cutting grass. At the age of 20 she got married and went to live with her husband who was a mason in Talawakelle in the Central Province. There she worked as a tea plucker.

She worked during each of her pregnancies returning to work 3 or 4 months after childbirth. She would take the children to the day care centre provided by the employer. She would start work at 7:30 am and would go back to the day care centre at 9 am to feed her children, then returned to work at 10 am. She would work till 12 noon return home with children for lunch between 12 noon and 1:30 pm. She would take the children back to the day care centre till 4 pm and pick them up on her way home. When her husband became paralysed and bedridden, she became the sole breadwinner of the family. For 8 years after her husband’s death, she continued to work as a tea plucker. Her daughter was given in marriage at a young age and lives in the hill country.

At the age of 52, with her son she moved to Colombo and stayed with her brother for two years. At this time, she had Rs. 200,000.00 from her EPF/ETF fund. She used that money to rent a house and lives with her now married son. She found paid work as a house cleaner. However, due to her own health issues, she could not work regularly. She used to earn Rs. 500 working from 8 am to 12 noon at one house. She found another job where she earned Rs. 250 for two hours of work. She was only able to find regular work in three houses. At present, she works three to four days a week and earns around Rs. 1,500.00 for four hours of work and Rs. 1,000 for two hours of work. Her travel costs around Rs. 500 per day. Since she has low blood pressure, she has to go to the government hospital clinic to get medicines. If the hospital does not provide her medicine, she has to spend Rs. 2,000 for medicines per month. She also has to pay Rs. 1,500 per month as rent; her son pays the utility bills.

Subhalaxmi's story highlights several unexplained factors contributing to the gender pay gap in the informal sector. Despite her extensive work experience and significant personal sacrifices, her lack of education appears to be a primary factor in Subhalaxmi's earnings remaining low. Her work history is concentrated in low-paying jobs traditionally dominated by women, such as tea plucking and house cleaning. This occupational segregation contributes to persistent pay disparities because these roles are often undervalued and underpaid. Her career was frequently interrupted due to family responsibilities. Women like Subhalaxmi often face penalties for taking time off to fulfil caregiving roles. Since she never went to school and is only able to write her name, her access to better-paying jobs is limited. In the informal sector, there are often fewer opportunities for education and vocational training, which exacerbates the pay gap for women who have not had the chance to acquire higher skills or qualifications. Subhalaxmi's jobs in the informal sector do not provide the social security benefits available in the formal sector, such as pensions, health insurance, or paid leave. However, her period of formal employment in the tea plantation industry enabled her to have some savings in her EPF/ETF. It was this saving that permitted her to rent housing space in Colombo.

3.6 Professional Qualifications, Better Pay, Challenges in Career Advancement

Deepthi: She is a 49-year-old mother of two, and a former Merchandising Manager in the Apparel Sector. She holds a diploma in Business Administration and has completed the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) program. After completing her diploma, she joined the apparel company and quickly advanced to the position of Merchandising Manager.

Her role in the company was very demanding, overseeing approximately 25 subordinates. As a Merchandising Manager, she was responsible for direct customer interactions, product development, and operational management. Her job also required frequent overseas travel, as the company had customers from abroad and a branch in Bangladesh.

Deepthi was a hardworking employee who achieved notable success, becoming part of the approximately 25% of women managers in a male-dominated field. However, she found it challenging to adapt to the working environment after taking maternity leave.

> *"(There are) lesser numbers of females at managerial level. About 25% would have been female, the majority were men. When I returned to work after my maternity leave, it was very difficult. Because to get back to the things first. One thing is that I knew for a fact that I would not have the same amount of (contribution) that I might need make, even though I had only been on maternity leave a maximum of three and a half months."*

After the birth of her second child, Deepthi returned to work. However, after nearly three years of stress at her workplace, she decided to resign from the job.

> *"So, in that context, it seemed like men were given priority. I was under so much pressure, and responsibilities were being assigned to men who were offered better salaries even at the same level, with the rationale that they would manage better. I tried to get some assurance, but I felt that responsibilities and opportunities were being taken away from me. I had to wait a couple of months after returning to work following the birth of my second child. Eventually, I had to write to HR and ask about my future with the company because I found myself doing menial tasks, almost like an office assistant, and my previous subordinates were no longer reporting to me. These were the personal issues I faced, and I had to reach out to HR to ask if they could clarify my future prospects with the company."*

As she explained in the above statement, she was treated as less competent than she had been before maternity leave. The work environment always expected full-time commitment from employees, creating a toxic atmosphere where women were eventually treated as if they were no longer useful, prompting them to leave. She felt that this environment favours men over women, underlying the 'norm' that hiring men is more profitable.

3.7 Differential Treatment of Salary Increments for Women

With regard to salary increments, Deepthi said, *“one of the reasons I decided to leave my job at that time was the lack of a salary increment. Even my senior colleagues who worked with me were given certain assurances. Initially, I was told that the company was not doing well and that they had to hold off on salary increments. I was assured that the situation would improve within a year, but I ended up waiting for three years without any increment. Finally, they said there would be no increments again. They were not providing any kind of assurance, and I couldn't see any future benefits. When you have multiple responsibilities, especially being married, it becomes even more challenging. Women are often treated as if they are not useful, and this attitude persists.”*

Kristine: She is a 40-year-old mother of a 9-year-old daughter and a 4-year-old son and works as a Senior Software Engineer at an IT company. Her experience of gender biases within workplace when it comes to pay and promotion was:

> *“Management considers experience, (however) although they do not mention it, there is a gender bias there. They tend to get more males for managerial positions than women. These biases were not only limited to promotions but were also reflected in the annual reviews when salaries were decided.”*
>
> *"We have an annual review process, and only after this review, do we receive increments. However, despite putting in full effort on projects or development tasks, this effort is often not recognized during the review. I sometimes burn the midnight oil on these projects, but it feels like this isn't considered when it comes to appraisals. Instead, it seems like the increments are pre-decided without considering our hard work. It also appeared that before the acquisition (of the company by a US entity), males often received better increments even if they didn’t put in as much effort. However, since the acquisition, this has changed."*

Kristine’s story also highlights the challenges women face in reaching higher positions within her organization. She noted that out of a total of 60-65 staff members, only 15-20 are women. Her organization consists of software engineers and testers, with most of the women working in the testing department, where male and female representation is roughly equal. However, the number of women software engineers is significantly lower.

Kristine pointed out that out of the 10 managerial positions, only three are held by women. Within the organizational structure, there are several key managerial positions, including CEO, COO, Software Engineer, and Senior Software Engineer, the latter being her current role. This situation illustrates a gradual decline in women's representation up the career ladder, highlighting the persistent gender disparity in leadership roles.

Zara: She is 29 years old and has two children, aged four years and two and a half years. She has a degree in Business Management and last worked as a Secretariat Coordinator at an institution related to Human Resource Management. Despite her qualifications, Zara has faced difficulties in securing a job after a five-year break from employment. According to Zara’s observations on her job interviews: *"I've noticed that recently, when I go for interviews, employers perceive that I really need a job and take advantage of that, offering lower salaries. I've seen this discrimination after returning to work following childbirth. When trying to go back to work, they often try to lower the salary. For instance, if I was earning 70,000 five years ago, I would now request a salary of 150,000 due to the increased cost of living and inflation. However, they might say, 'No, I don’t think that is possible; we’ll pay you 100,000 or 120,000,' or they might even bring it down to 80,000, arguing that my last salary was 70,000. I have to explain that was five years ago and doesn't reflect current living costs. This is often because men in higher positions see women as less valuable, especially after childbirth. They think you really need the job and try to exploit that, using you to the maximum extent possible. They manipulate the situation to their advantage."*

3.8 Career or Marriage: Women in Professional Occupations

Kristine disclosed that during the job interviews, she often felt insecure when the interviewer asked about her marital status and having a child or planning to have a child. These types of questions are severely gendered as these questions are almost never raised while interviewing a man. Even if it is raised men might not feel insecure about losing the opportunity, since primary care responsibilities for children are expected to fall on women's shoulders.

Kristine had got married during her previous job. *"After that, it was a bit difficult for me to get into a new place with all the technical questions, when they asked whether I was married, I felt like ah okay, it's going to be a minus point for me. Then they asked whether I had children, at that time I didn't have any. At some interviews they have asked, 'are you planning for a child soon', that question also. I felt it's going to hinder. Experience plus performance are the things they mention but in the interviews that I faced, just because I am a woman and married, I will not get that chance."*

Kristine observes, *"The barriers come after marriage, I should say. Before marriage, there were no such barriers because I was free from most of the responsibilities I carry today. Some barriers come with being a mother, maintaining the house, and managing everything else. These barriers hinder my professional career as well. Although I want to advance up the career ladder, my responsibilities and daily activities mean I need to prioritize my children and my home, which sometimes causes my career to stall. Even though I want to take on more work or continue learning, my other responsibilities interfere. At the moment, I am balancing job and being a mother and a housewife."*

The discrimination against women's access to employment even at higher levels is not only encountered when they move from one workplace to another within a continuous career engagement, but also when they seek to take a career break after childbirth due to care work responsibilities.

According to Deepthi, *"When my children were small, I wanted to take a break and give them my full attention because that was one of my most important responsibilities at the time. I had to travel overseas, and I couldn't leave small children alone. I lost my mother when I was doing my A-levels, so it was difficult for me to leave the kids with anyone I could trust. It was especially hard when I had to be away for a few days. When my son was born, and later when my second child was born, my mother-in-law, stayed with us for a few years. But eventually, it wasn't right to keep her with us because her husband was alone back home. At that point, I had no option but to take a break and give my full attention to the kids. Even though I was working in a good position, it was hard to manage. I requested to work online or part-time, but maybe because of the nature of the job, they preferred employees who could take on a lot of responsibilities and didn't want to give significant responsibilities to women. Perhaps they didn't trust that I could do the same work while staying away from the office."*

During interviews, Zara has been asked questions about her marital status, children, and how she plans to balance childcare with office work. These discriminatory questions make it clear that having children is seen as a disadvantage in securing a job.

Zara shared her experience: *"Basically, the questions asked were, how you would manage your household chores, plus your children plus the workload? Could you balance all that, they would ask. That's the most frequent question. And also, they would ask whether you have anywhere to take care of your children in your absence. Those are the questions that they most frequently asked. Whether you have help at home to look after your kids in case you get late from work and all that."*

3.9 Flexible Working Hours and Women in Senior Positions

One of the positive aspects of women's employment is exemplified in the type of policies that an employer can adopt.

Kristine's employer is software a company, owned by a US corporation, which has a research and development centre in Sri Lanka. Kristine has been with this company for nearly 10 years. Before joining her current employer, Kristine began her career as a student counsellor and a part-time lecturer at a private institution. She then transitioned into the software engineering sector, working at two other companies in the same field. Notably, her husband also works in the software engineering industry.

The company offered Kristine 84 days of maternity leave along with two hours of feeding time for her child. *"With my first kid, I had to go into office. I am located in Kalutara (about 1 hour from Colombo) but my office is in Colombo so with my first child I had to travel to work. I was allowed two hours to go home to feed the baby and return to work. But when there was increased urgent work requirements, I was not able to take that time because I was required to complete my tasks. However, I was able to utilise this provision more than 60 - 70 percent.*

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the company introduced a flexible working environment which was very helpful to her during her second pregnancy and 'returning' to work after maternity leave.

> *"We (now) have flexi hours. The normal office hours are 8:30am to 5:30pm. Now that I'm working from home, I start my work at 9 am. Normally, it finishes at 6pm. Although it says six, it can drag on sometimes when we have any urgent product development. So, it can drag until to 7 or 8pm sometimes. Sometimes, we'll get a break and again do work. Sometimes I might start my work at 9.30am and then finish work at 6.30pm. What they wanted is nine-hour work day. Nine hours in the sense with the lunch break, so it is an eight hours work. And with the lunch break, it's nine hours altogether"*

When the company introduce work from home facility, she said it was more helpful during her second child's birth.

> *"With my second child (who was born during the Covid-pandemic period), they had allowed us to do the work from home. So, that became a plus point for me, I utilized my maternity and the two hours feeding time for my child's since I was at home".*

Despite having the two hours for feeding her child, with the birth of her first child, it wasn't very practical for her due to her daily commute from Kalutara to Colombo. Additionally, she often had to work regardless of whether there were important or urgent tasks. However, during the pandemic when her second child was born, she was able to take advantage of working from home and effectively use the two hours allocated for feeding her child to manage her work responsibilities. She said, *"I have to acknowledge the support given by mother when I had to report to office when my first child was born. Also, my husband would sometimes help around the house, like looking after the children if I was still working online".*

However, most employers in Sri Lanka do not offer the option of flexible work arrangements which results in detrimental effects on women's career advancement. Due to the demanding working environment and inflexible workplace policies, Deepthi had no option but to leave her job. Despite holding a managerial position and having a high-performance record, she was not offered the flexibility to work from home or online. The issue was not her competence but the prejudices against women managing both work and childcare responsibilities. Regardless of her performance and years of experience, she was undermined due to her care responsibilities. Deepthi resigned from her job when her elder child was six years old and her youngest was one and a half years old. After a six-year break, she started seeking job opportunities again.

Gender-based bias and structural barriers act invisibly to position women at a certain level beyond which they find barriers not faced by men. Despite having the required qualifications, women who take breaks for care responsibilities are often unable to demand their expected salaries. This is not due to a lack of experience but rather because of gender-based discrimination and the assumption that women with children will accept lower salaries. Employers manipulate these situations, expecting women to agree to lower pay due to their perceived need for a job.

These cases provide evidence of the range of discriminatory practices that contribute to the pay gap between men and women. The question arises, if a man with the same qualifications applied for the same job, would he face the same challenges and discriminatory practices? This disparity highlights the persistent and systemic nature of gender discrimination in the labour market.

3.10 Breaking Gender Norms in Employment

Hiranya: She is 22 years old and studied up to A/Level. She is a crane operator. She said, *"I truly believed that my experience would be different. Nowadays, when people talk about girls, they usually refer to teaching jobs or office positions. I wanted something a bit different, to break away from that stereotype and explore a different path without being confined to the same framework. And I hope to continue on this journey, gaining valuable experience along the way, so that I can teach and inspire more children and eventually become a trainer"*.

In the case of Hiranya, her decision to train as a crane operator represents a significant departure from traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Historically, crane operation and similar roles have been predominantly male-dominated, with societal expectations often dictating that certain jobs are more suitable or appropriate for men. By choosing to pursue this career path, Hiranya challenges these stereotypes and demonstrates that women are equally capable of excelling in roles traditionally reserved for men. Following an intensive 11-month training program, Hiranya was offered a permanent position as a crane operator, joining eight other women in the same role as of May 2024.

Furthermore, this opportunity is not just about breaking gender stereotypes; it's also a source of personal pride and fulfilment for the young woman. By mastering her skills as a crane operator, she feels she has gained a sense of accomplishment and confidence in her abilities. This empowerment is essential not only for her individual growth but also for challenging broader societal perceptions about women's capabilities in non-traditional fields.

4. Stakeholder Perspectives

An aspect that is often not statistically captured by quantitative studies is the presence of gender biases in recruiting women for top-tier jobs and in determining women's salaries. These biases stem from preconceived notions that women employees do not contribute as much as men do. As Gould, Schieder and Geier (2016) point out, women are likely to be paid less than similarly educated men at every level of education[38]. It also may be affected by certain challenges that disproportionately affect women's ability to secure jobs at the top of the pay distribution, such as earnings penalties for time out of the workforce, excessive work hours, domestic gender roles, and pay and promotion discrimination.

4.1 Gender Biases in Recruitment, Salary Negotiation and Pay and Promotion Discrimination

Women are more likely to face discrimination during the recruitment process, with employers favouring male candidates over equally qualified female candidates. Additionally, gender-biased factors may influence salary decisions, leading to disparities in pay between men and women performing the same roles. These biases perpetuate gender inequality in the workplace and contribute to the persistent gender pay gap. Addressing these biases requires systemic changes in recruitment practices and salary determination processes, as well as efforts to promote gender equality and diversity in the workplace.

> *"I have participated in career committees where the issue arises of the expectation of a female employee would after marriage become pregnant. There is deliberation over whether to delay a promotion for up to two years. I have heard discussions on this matter, even recently, although not within this specific context but rather, in the private sector. There is often a perspective of offering some form of assistance or higher compensation, but simultaneously aiming to extract maximum productivity. This mind-set applies not only to traditional gender roles but also extends to non-binary individuals."* (Stakeholder 1 - Financial HR Professional)

Despite efforts by some companies to uphold gender equality, instances of discrimination persist due to deeply entrenched prejudices. These biases often result in women being unfairly disadvantaged in terms of their progress towards better wages. Such practices are evident where employers fail to recognize this discrimination due to social norm that women should primarily shoulder the responsibilities of social reproduction activities. As a result, women are often undervalued and their contributions to the workforce diminished, leading to disparities in wages and opportunities for career advancement. Addressing these biases requires a concerted effort to challenge traditional gender norms and promote a more inclusive and equitable workplace culture where all individuals are valued and treated fairly, regardless of gender.

This existence of gender discrimination against women during salary negotiation in top-tier jobs is brought to light in the following observation by Stakeholder 1.

> *"In terms of negotiating and bargaining, gender disparity isn't typically evident. However, at the senior level, there's often scepticism regarding a woman's capacity to assertively negotiate her worth, especially when transitioning to roles like the CEO. While a man's commitment to the job is generally assumed to be unwavering, concerns arise about a woman potentially taking time off for family obligations. Consequently, when determining compensation for executive positions like a CEO, there's a prevailing bias towards investing more in men, valuing their contributions higher than those of women, often regardless of qualifications."* (Stakeholder 1)

The double standard emerges as women are often viewed as potentially prioritising family obligations over work, whereas men's dedication is unquestioned, especially arise in decisions for appointments to executive positions regardless of relative similar qualifications. These biases collectively undermine

[38] Gould, E., Schierder, J., & Geier, K., (2016) what is the gender pay gap and is it real? Economic Policy Institute. Pp. 03

women's opportunities for advancement and contribute to the persistence of gender inequality in the workplace. Addressing these biases is crucial for fostering a more equitable and inclusive work environment.

These insights also highlight the existence of a wage penalty for women due to time taken out of work which is also referred to by economists as the 'motherhood penalty'. The higher share of domestic and care work performed by women is also a disadvantage for women in high-prestige, high-wage jobs in which employers demand very long hours as a condition of work (Gould, Schieder, & Geier, 2016). As women typically take maternity leave and other forms of leave related to family care responsibilities, employers may hesitate during salary negotiations for top-tier positions. They may favour men, perceiving them as more committed to the job because they have likely not taken comparable periods of time off. Such discriminatory practices stem from prejudiced views about women.

> *"For women aiming for senior positions, maintaining focus can be exceptionally challenging, given the multifaceted responsibilities they often shoulder. In addition to their professional roles, they are mindful of their roles as unpaid caregivers for children, elderly family members, and infants. This awareness underscores the importance of flexibility in their work arrangements. Subconsciously, they seek this flexibility, which often translates into a willingness to accept a premium in cash-based remuneration in exchange for accommodating their needs. Negotiations frequently hinge on this aspect. Interestingly, numerous accomplished women choose to prioritise their partners' career advancement over their own, even though they may possess greater intellectual capabilities than their partners. They opt to step back and allow their partners to take the lead and progress professionally."* (Stakeholder 1)

These observations also suggest that flexibility is indeed important for work-life balance. Another aspect that emerges is where ingrained notions of gender roles result in a woman who might give priority for her partner's career advancement over her own. Her notion that accomplished women prioritise their partners' career advancement over their own reinforces the socially entrenched idea that women's career success is secondary to that of men. This can contribute to women's underrepresentation in leadership positions and perpetuate the gender pay gap.

> *"When it comes to hiring practices of employers there is no gender equality. Let's say there are 2000 employees in an organisation among them around 200 will be men and others will be women. The limited positions such as Human Resources, cutting section, quality controller and supervisor with better wages are given to men. Women are recruited in large numbers for positions like machine operators (sewing), helper, and ironing section. Jobs with high intense labour and lower wages."* (Stakeholder 2 – Head of Women led Trade Union)

These observations point to the types of discrimination in hiring practices that women encounter when looking for paid work. This is also a barrier that prevents women's ability to take positions with higher salaries compared to men.

In the case of Free Trade Zones, though there is a higher female representation of women as employees in FTZs, the representation of women in the decision-making level positions is lower compared to men.

> *"We are working on equal pay for equal work, but in the FTZs during the period of COVID 19 pandemic, most of the night shift work was given to men because the company couldn't provide sufficient security for women. Hence, when women had earned a monthly salary of around Rs.35, 000.00, men had earned Rs. 72,000-75,000. We had seen this also in company operations in the North. What we are saying is to pay equal salary for everyone who is engaged in the same level of work. Because the majority of workers are women."* (Stakeholder 2 - Head of Women led Trade Union)

The lack of workplace flexibility acts as a discriminatory factor against women, ultimately resulting in lower wages. This scenario underscores the failure of employers to provide necessary infrastructure, such as transportation for workers during night shifts, which disproportionately affects women and leads to their lower wages compared to men.

4.2 Looking into Employers'/Employees' Rights

Perspectives of the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) were sought to obtain the views of the organisation that acts as a trade union for employers. According to Stakeholder 3 (Senior Management at EFC), there are nearly 700 corporate members of the EFC, and it is a formidable organization that commands the attention of policymakers in relation to labour policy.

> *"EFC has encouraged member organizations to remove discriminatory laws to improve employer liability. We encouraged the introduction of anti-harassment laws. Additionally, we are in line with ILO C190 law. We encourage employers to adopt a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to workplace harassment. We also conduct capacity-building trainings and awareness programs for employers…… We conduct gender audits and promote inclusivity and diversity among employers. We also provide legal and policy support for member organizations to reduce gender discrimination, promote an inclusive workplace for women, implement flexible working hours, and increase opportunities for women in the labour force. We encourage upholding these initiatives. We have also introduced a hotline for grievance handling where employees can call and share their work-related issues."* (Stakeholder 3 -Senior Management)

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon has taken several initiatives to promote and increase female labour force participation in the labour market and encourage member employer organizations to adhere to gender-responsive policies and codes of ethics within the organization. -

Trade Unions that look into the rights of employees and which adopts a gender responsive approach have looked at programmes that seek to create openings in hitherto male dominated sectors.

Gender discriminatory hiring practices manifest differently in male-dominated sectors. Stakeholder 4 - Head of male-led trade union that is related to the maritime sector which is predominantly male sheds light on gender prejudices and discriminatory practices, as articulated in the statement below.

> *"In the terminals in the Colombo port, you don't find a single woman in technical jobs. What they (the companies) say is recruiting women in technical jobs is troublesome for them. We have to give materially and you cannot be in night shift work. So, this is their opinion. As a policy, they don't even call for applications."* (Stakeholder 4 – Head of a Trade Union)

Despite the maritime sector offering higher wage categories from lower to top levels relative to other employers, the opportunities for women to enter this sector remain limited. It appears that a pervasive perception among employers is that hiring women is burdensome and costly, particularly due to the requirement of regulations such as maternity leave. It further accentuates a discriminatory factor wherein women are associated primarily in reproductive activities, while men are predominantly associated with productivity in the labour market.

The trade union has adopted a policy to push for women union membership being offered opportunities to enter male-dominated sectors in the labour market realises that this was one strategy to labour market opportunities for women.

> *"We trained 8 female crane operators. They are currently employed in the Chinese terminal of the Colombo port. They are getting above average salary. Now they are undergoing training. And they are paid Rs. 85,000. So that is above average in Sri Lanka"* (Stakeholder 4)

It represents a positive step towards challenging existing gender stereotypes that are biased against women. By entering traditionally male-dominated sectors through unionisation, women not only broaden their career prospects but also contribute to breaking down barriers and promoting gender equality in the labour force.

In the US, working women in unions are paid 89 cents for every dollar paid to unionised working men; non-unionized working women are paid 82 cents for every dollar paid to non-unionised working men. (Gould, Schieder, & Geier, 2016). Unionisation can also be considered as an important aspect in narrowing the pay gap between men and women. Drawing from the interviews carried out for the current study, the importance of unionisation and collective bargaining also emerged as a relevant aspect in measures to reduce the pay gap between men and women.

Gender responsive trade unions though relatively few in Sri Lanka include, those led by women. One such trade union is actively advocating for an increase in the minimum monthly basic salary of FTZ workers, aiming for it to reach at least Rs. 35,000 (at current living costs). These interventions hold significant benefits for women, as it would ensure they accumulate a substantial proportion of EPF/ETF funds for their retirement. Unionisation not only serves to bolster women's salaries but also ensures they have sufficient financial resources upon retiring from paid work. The need to ensure decent wages for women workers is integral to ensuring that there is no negative impact

> *"What we are advocating for is the establishment of a fair minimum wage. If employers could ensure a minimum wage of Rs. 35,000, workers wouldn't need to resort to overtime work to earn a decent wage. In the garment sector, the maximum production cost is approximately 21%, encompassing labour expenses, shipping, and other overheads. However, only 2% of their earnings are allocated to labour costs. This means their profit margin is nearly 75%. Consequently, some of these garments may be sold in the market for prices exceeding the monthly salary of these workers. If one piece can fetch such a high price, it begs the question: how many pieces are these workers sewing?" (Stakeholder 2)*

Despite the progress made significant barriers remain for women seeking to enter male-dominated sectors. Socially embedded biases and unfair patriarchal norms continue to shape perceptions about gender roles and limit opportunities for women in certain industries. These biases can manifest in various ways, including hiring practices that favour men, workplace cultures that marginalise women, and societal attitudes that discourage girls from pursuing careers in fields traditionally associated with men.

Addressing these barriers requires a concerted effort to challenge and dismantle entrenched gender stereotypes and biases. This includes promoting gender equality in education and training, advocating for inclusive workplace policies and practices, and fostering a culture that values diversity and inclusion. By actively working to break down these barriers, we can create more opportunities for women and girls like Hiranya to thrive in traditionally male-dominated sectors and contribute to a more equitable society.

Among the stakeholders interviewed, two employers showed great promise in their strategies for reducing gender biases in the workplace, and thereby not only increase female labour force participation but also reduce any existing gender pay gaps.

4.3 Employer Strategies to Reduce Workplace Gender Discrimination and Biases

The representatives of two companies in the corporate sector interviewed, emphasised the active protocols that they follow to counter structural inequalities that lead to gender biases and discrimination within their own workforces. These practices are some of the innovative programmes that have emerged in the corporate sector in Sri Lanka in the last few years to create diversity at the top levels and, inclusion protocols to aid in gender equality. These measures have been recognised as a direct outcome of the crisis experienced by the sector during the Covid19 pandemic which, to them, showed up the structural inequalities that prevail. These strategies not only aim at eliminating gender biases within the workplace but also to prioritise the creation of more flexible working environments, especially for women. The aim is to create an environment that enables women to balance their caregiving responsibilities with paid work effectively. Additionally, these strategies seek to create opportunities for women to enter sectors traditionally dominated by men.

4.3.1 Merit-based evaluations and promotions irrespective of Gender

Stakeholder 5 (Senior Management, Corporate Sector - a) interviewee provided a detailed explanation of the organisation's multifaceted approach towards fostering gender equality, supported by specific data and initiatives. Firstly, the commitment of the company to merit-based evaluations and promotions is highlighted, with the stakeholder emphasising that gender and experience are not considered criteria. Instead, the organisation prioritises performance and potential.

4.3.2 Extended Maternity Leave and provision for Paternity Leave

As explained by Stakeholder 5, by introducing a 100-day paid maternity leave policy the company had achieved a 100% return ratio of women employees after maternity leave.[39] This provision extends the government regulations on maternity leave by 16 days. This company also offers three days paternity leave as per government regulations.

In the second private company interview the senior manager pointed out that the company has provisions for both maternity leave and paternity leave. *"We've extended maternity leave from the statutory 84 days to a more supportive 100 days. Additionally, as of August 2022, we've introduced 100 days of paternity leave for fathers who work at John Keells. This leave is available to fathers whose names appear on the birth certificate of the child, whether through birth or adoption, within the first 200 days of the child's arrival. Importantly, this parental leave policy is applicable at all levels within the organisation. To ensure awareness and support, we collaborated with FPA to conduct sessions on early childcare. In the inaugural year of this policy, we recorded 300 instances of parental leave, with 200 of those instances being taken by fathers, indicating a positive uptake of the benefit"* – (Stakeholder 06 - Senior Management, Corporate Sector -b)

Extending maternity leave beyond the statutory 84-day maximum to 100 days was a policy implemented by both stakeholder 2 and stakeholder 3, yielding positive outcomes. Furthermore, this company's introduction of 100 days of paternity leave for fathers signifies a notable departure from traditional gender roles. (Stakeholder 6) It acknowledges the crucial role of paternal involvement in childcare and challenges societal norms that assign caregiving primarily to women.

However, the EFC's main argument with regard to increasing provisions for women to enter the labour force, is that the state should take a substantial proportion of responsibility to bring laws and policies such as parental leave or 100 days of maternity and paternity leave. According to Stakeholder 3, there is only one employer who provides 100 days of paternity leave, and the cost of providing this leave is borne solely by the employer. Therefore, it is not fair to ask employers to take all the initiatives; the government should also take responsibility in this matter.

[39] The government statutory regulations require all employers of formal sector institutions to provide 3 months maternity leave.

In the deliberations on best practices for getting more women into the labour, it is important to note the different, at times, contradictory approaches of major employers and the union that works for the rights of employers. While corporate sector entities are pushing for expanding employment conditions to draw in and keep women in the workforce, the employers' federation (Stakeholder 3) appears to be pulling back and citing the responsibility of the state to make relevant interventions.

4.3.3 Diversity and Inclusion protocols

Stakeholder 6 disclosed that the company had also established a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) committee, led by a female representative, comprising members from various sectors and levels, which is tasked with driving gender equality initiatives within the organisation. It has adopted initiatives such as empowering women and increasing female representation in senior management positions, along with the organisation's commitment to addressing gender disparities through recruitment and performance management strategies.

4.3.4 Pay Equity

Stakeholder 6 stated that their focus was pay equity irrespective of the gender of those who work in these specific roles. Thus, while they acknowledge the existence of the gender pay gap, they focus on strategies that help them achieve pay equity.

Stakeholders noted that there tends to be higher numbers of men in STEM-based disciplines, with opportunities to be paid higher salaries, particularly in jobs like analytics. This contributes to the gender pay gap, which becomes evident when comparing salaries at the same organisational level. Despite individuals being in similar positions, disparities may exist in their compensation. Addressing this, Stakeholder 6 noted, 'requires a deeper dive into pay equity, focusing on whether individuals in comparable roles receive equal pay regardless of gender'.

Stakeholder 6 also noted that internally, efforts to enhance gender equality have shown some progress, with a 4% increase in female representation at senior levels over the past four years. However, the Stakeholder acknowledged that this improvement fell short of their desired levels. At lower organisational levels, gender parity is closer to 50-50, indicating a more balanced distribution. However, certain sectors and businesses still exhibit disproportionate gender representation.

"At lower levels within certain sectors like transport and leisure, the recruitment of women faces operational challenges and cultural stigmas. However, there's now a focused initiative to increase female representation. An illustrative example is found in our retail sector, particularly in supermarkets. A decade ago, women were rarely seen in roles like the meat counter. Consequently, a deliberate effort was made to hire more women for these positions. Similarly, there was a conscious decision to recruit more men for cashier roles, countering stereotypes about male capability. Currently, we have 3 to 4 female outlet managers in retail, demonstrating a shift towards female empowerment. Additionally, there are two outlets exclusively managed by women, with over 90% female staff." (Stakeholder 6 - Senior Management, Corporate Sector - b)

4.3.5 Breaking into male dominated occupations

Stakeholder 6 said that the company has introduced a strategy and a declared goal to challenge and dismantle traditional gender norms and stereotypes within the workplace. By deliberately hiring women for roles that have been male-dominated, such as meat cutting, and encouraging men to take on positions like cashiers, which are often given to women, the strategy aims to break down the rigid gender divisions that have long characterised the labour market.

It acknowledges the existence of cultural stigmas and operational challenges that may deter women from entering certain industries or roles and works to create a more inclusive and supportive environment where women are valued and respected. Importantly, the strategy recognizes the intersectional nature of gender inequality, considering factors such as race, class, and ethnicity in its approach to promoting diversity and inclusion.

The active exploration of gender gaps in employment sectors, coupled with efforts to recruit and train women for roles traditionally dominated by men, was also observed in one of the trade unions surveyed during this pilot study. For instance, Hiranya (not her real name), employed as a crane operator at the private terminal of the Colombo port, participated in a campaign advocating for the recruitment of female crane operators. These proactive initiatives aimed at addressing gender disparities in employment have demonstrated their effectiveness in enhancing accessibility and, consequently, in mitigating gender pay gaps.

Table 2. List of Stakeholders

Number	Stakeholder
01	Financial HR Professional
02	Head of a Women-led Trade Union – Dabindu Union
03	Senior Management – EFC
04	Head of a Male-led Trade Union - NUSS
05	Senior Management, Corporate Sector (a) - Aitken Spence
06	Senior Management, Corporate Sector (b) - JKH

PART II

Exploring Gender Pay Disparity in Sri Lanka: The Unseen Impact of Unpaid Care Work

1. Introduction

Gender pay disparity persists as a significant challenge in labour markets worldwide, despite decades of research and policy interventions aimed at reducing it. Traditional explanations, which have historically centred on disparities in human capital between men and women, have played a significant role in understanding the wage gap over the course of several decades. However, the relative importance of these factors is diminishing as gender differences in education and experience narrow over time. Instead, gender differences in occupations, industries, and roles, as well as the gender division of labour, continue to play significant roles in perpetuating the gap. Furthermore, discrimination remains a key factor, supported by research utilizing experimental evidence, although the exact mechanisms of discrimination are complex and multifaceted (Blau & Kahn, 2017).

More importantly, the unequal distribution of unpaid care work remains an often overlooked yet, crucial, factor influencing gender pay disparities (Budlender, 2010; Ferrant, Pesando, & Nowacka, 2014). This unpaid care work, encompassing household chores, caregiving responsibilities, and other domestic tasks, is disproportionately shouldered by women due to entrenched gender norms and expectations (Darko, Kanji, & Vasilakos, 2022). As women engage in both paid employment and unpaid care work, they face a "double burden" that limits their opportunities for labour force participation, working hours, promotions, and ultimately, their earnings (Qi & Dong, 2015; Ferrant, Pesando, & Nowacka, 2014).

In Sri Lanka, like in many other countries, gender pay disparity is a recognized issue, though not extensively studied. Previous research has identified the existence of a gender-based pay gap that is less favourable to females, particularly at the lower end of the wage distribution (Gunawardena, 2008; Senevirathne, 2020). These studies are mainly focused on traditional explanation of gender pay gap, which is human capital differences between men and women, however understanding the other possible underlying causes of the gender pay gap is crucial for developing effective strategies to promote gender equality in the labour market. This is mostly because Sri Lanka still lags behind in achieving gender equality in employment and politics despite positive advancements in education and health indicators (Asian Development Bank & Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, 2015).

Despite its profound implications for women's economic empowerment, studies on women's unpaid care work in developing countries, have often been small-scale and qualitative, focusing more on the production of goods rather than caregiving services (Budlender, 2010). However, quantitatively measuring the direct impact of unpaid care work on gender pay disparity is challenging due to data limitations, yet it is crucial to understand its role in shaping gender pay disparities.

Thus, this research aims to fill this gap by utilizing data from the Sri Lankan Labour Force Survey to explore the relationship between women's unpaid care work burden and gender pay disparity. Drawing on insights from existing literature, the study seeks to investigate the indirect links of how societal norms imposing unpaid care responsibilities on women to influence various aspects of their labour market outcomes ultimately leading to a gender pay gap. By mainly examining the intersection of paid and unpaid work, labour force participation, and working hours, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which unpaid care work contributes to the gender pay gap. By highlighting the significance of unpaid care work as a missing link to gender pay disparity, this study informs policy interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and creating more equitable opportunities for women in the workforce.

1.1 Unequal Distribution of Unpaid Care Work in Sri Lanka

Unpaid care work, encompassing services provided within a household such as care of persons, domestic chores, and voluntary community work, has long been overlooked by researchers. Globally, women bear a disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work, largely due to prevailing gender norms that define domestic work as a female prerogative. In South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, this burden is even higher, with women undertaking nearly 80-90% of total care and domestic work in the economy as per time-use data from around the world (Perera, 2017).

Time Use Surveys (TUS) are household-based surveys that measure and analyse time spent by women and men, and girls and boys, on different activities over a specified period. According to the International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics (ICATUS 2016), the Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka conducted a time use survey in 2017 with nine broad categories, which aggregate into even broader categories. These categories align with the System of National Accounts (SNA) used to calculate gross domestic product (GDP). This survey findings distinctly demonstrate how Sri Lankan women are double burdened by both care work responsibilities and economic activities. The tables in this section illustrate selected categories among nine broad categories that demonstrate the unpaid care work burden of women.

Table 3. Participation rates of non-SNA productive activities by gender

Labour Status	Participation rates	
	Male (%)	Female (%)
Non-SNA		
Employed	65.9	94.7
Unemployed	66.4	95.5
Economically inactive	56.1	89.9

Source: Sri Lanka Time Use Survey 2017, Department of Census and Statistics.

As shown in Table 1, 94.7% of employed women are engaged in these unpaid care activities, compared to 65.9% of men, indicating an increased burden on women.

Table 4. Participation rates of SNA and non-SNA productive activities by gender

Productive activities	Participation rates	
	Male (%)	Female (%)
System of National Accounts (SNA)		
Employment and related activities	60.8	27.7
Production of goods for own final use	6.9	10.8
Non-SNA		
Unpaid domestic services for household and family members	54	86.4
Unpaid caregiving services for household and family members	19.5	38.4
Unpaid volunteer, trainee, and other unpaid work	3.7	5.6

Source: Sri Lanka Time Use Survey 2017, Department of Census and Statistics.

According to gendered participation rates of both SNA and non-SNA productive activities in the working age population, women are more engaged in unpaid care activities compared to employment and related activities (Table 2). For instance, 86.4% of women are involved in unpaid domestic services for household and family members, compared to 54% of men. Also, 38.4% of women are involved in unpaid caregiving services for household and family members, compared to 19.5% of men (Table 2). Women spend an average of 5 hours per day on unpaid domestic services for household and family members, while men spend 2.1 hours. For unpaid caregiving services for household and family members, women spend 3.4 hours per day compared to 1.9 hours of men (Table 3).

Table 5. Mean actor time spend on SNA and non-SNA productive activities by gender

Productive activities	Mean actor time (hours) per day	
	Male (%)	Female (%)
System of National Accounts (SNA)		
Employment and related activities	9.2	7.1
Production of goods for own final use	2.2	1.4
Non-SNA		
Unpaid domestic services for household and family members	2.1	5
Unpaid caregiving services for household and family members	1.9	3.4
Unpaid volunteer, trainee, and other unpaid work	2.2	2.2

Source: Sri Lanka Time Use Survey 2017, Department of Census and Statistics.

At a more disaggregated level, the participation rate of women in food and meal management and preparation is 76.4%, compared to only 15.4% for men. Similarly, cleaning and maintaining the dwelling and surroundings and care and maintenance of textiles and footwear are primarily done by females in Sri Lanka. Further, 34.8% women compared to 13.8% of men are engaged in childcare and instruction activities. All 2-digit level of ICATUS 2016 of productive activities are dominated by female participation illustrating the unequal distribution of care work between men and women (Table 4).

Table 6. Participation rates of non-SNA productive activities by gender at 2-digit level of ICATUS 2016

Productive activities	Participation rates	
	Male (%)	Female (%)
Unpaid domestic services for household and family members		
Food and meals management and preparation	15.4	76.4
Cleaning and maintaining of own dwelling and surroundings	22.6	61.4
Care and maintenance of textiles and footwear	11.7	47.9
Pet care	2.4	3.2
Shopping for own household and family members	19.8	17.6
Unpaid domestic services for household and family members		
Childcare and instruction	13.8	34.8
Care of dependent adult	0.7	1.7
Help to non-dependent adult household and family members	0.8	2.1
Travelling and accompanying goods or persons related to unpaid caregiving services	8.6	12.2

Source: Sri Lanka Time Use Survey 2017, Department of Census and Statistics.

These results suggest that unequal care responsibilities may be a significant factor contributing to pay disparities, even if it has not been adequately explored. Women are burdened with an average of 7.1 hours per day for employment and related activities, 5 hours for domestic services, and 3.4 hours for caregiving (Table 3). Due to this unequal burden of care work, men have more time available for paid work compared to women. Further, in terms of career advancement and workplace productivity, factors such as mental freedom, adequate sleep, and engagement in supplementary professional or educational activities can exert considerable influence. However, the burden of caregiving significantly restricts women's available time for such pursuits compared to men. Thus, it may result in women being pushed out of the labour force or being forced to engage in part-time or irregular employment, and to concentrate in lower-paid jobs and remain in static positions over extended periods without opportunities for promotion, ultimately contributing to the gender pay gap.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Background: Unpaid Care Work as an Explanation for the Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap has been extensively studied over the last couple of decades, yet it remains as a crucial and growing field of research given that there is a persistent pay dissimilarity between men and women in labour markets across the globe. The existing evidence reveals a sizeable reduction of this gender-based wage gap over time though a substantial gap could still be observed across countries (Blau and Kahn, 2017). Blau and Kahn demonstrated how both traditional and recent explanations have contributed to understanding the persistence of the gender wage gap over the last few decades, drawing from a comprehensive survey of existing literature. They argue that the conventional explanation attributing the pay gap to human capital variables has diminished in importance as the education and experience gap between men and women has gradually narrowed. Instead, they emphasize that gender differences in occupations, industries, and roles, as well as the gender division of labour, continue to play significant roles in perpetuating the gap and discrimination remains a key factor as per research supported by experimental evidence. However, the discrimination channel remains somewhat ambiguous due to technical complexities in demonstrating it.

These gender disparities in the division of labour between paid and unpaid work persist, as evidenced by men spending more time in remunerative employment while women predominantly undertake unpaid work (Budlender, 2010). Consequently, despite their economic contributions, women experience lower returns to education, and gender-based wage differentials persist. Market segmentation and occupational segregation further exacerbate these inequalities. Unless significant changes occur in how jobs are evaluated and wages are set, achieving economic parity for women will depend on their migration into mainstream "male" jobs, moving away from the predominantly low-paying jobs held by women (Reskin, 1984).

These gender differences in occupations and industries, as well as gender roles and the division of labour, are heavily influenced by the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work placed on women. Unpaid care and domestic work entail household tasks performed by family members for the upkeep and well-being of the family without financial compensation (Gender and Development Network, 2014). Darko, Kanji, and Vasilakos (2022) observe that across many countries, girls tend to perform more unpaid work than boys. Budlender (2010) also underscores that the majority of unpaid care work, across diverse economies and cultures, is carried out by women. Through research spanning seven countries—Argentina, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Nicaragua, South Africa, and Tanzania—Budlender (2010) finds that men are more likely than women to engage in System of National Accounts (SNA) work and to do so for longer durations, while women are 50% more likely than men to engage in unpaid care work and caregiving, and they spend more time on these tasks than men. The analysis also reveals that several common factors influence the amount of time spent on unpaid care work and caregiving across countries, including employment status, having children in the household, marital status, and age. Reich-Stiebert, Froehlich, and Voltmer (2023) further highlight gender inequality in mental labour within the context of unpaid household work and childcare. Kim (2023) suggests that traditional gender roles contribute to gender disparities in unpaid work time, especially for individuals with children. He notes that the burden of unpaid work on wives could hinder their ability to work full-time.

Thus, Ferrant, Pesando, and Nowacka (2014) argue that gender inequality in unpaid care work is the missing link that influences the gender disparities in labour outcomes. They assert that the gender gap in unpaid care work significantly affects women's ability to participate actively in the labour market and the quality of employment opportunities available to them. Time is a limited resource, divided between labour and leisure, productive and reproductive activities, paid and unpaid work. Every additional minute a woman spends on unpaid care work represents one less minute she could potentially spend on market-related activities or investing in her education and skills. They highlight that women typically devote disproportionately more time to unpaid care work than men, driven by gendered social norms that consider unpaid care work a female responsibility. Women from various regions, socioeconomic classes, and cultures spend a significant part of their day fulfilling domestic and reproductive roles, in addition to their paid work, leading to what is termed the "double burden" for women.

Despite this, the studies on women's unpaid work in developing countries have often been small-scale and qualitative, focusing more on the production of goods (such as subsistence agriculture) than on services like caregiving (Budlender, 2010). Due to data limitations at the national level, quantitatively measuring this concept is challenging. However, it is crucial to investigate how unpaid care work contributes to the gender pay gap by leading to reduced work hours, lower labour force participation, and the segregation of women into occupations offering low pay and flexible working hours.

2.2 Empirical Evidence

Goldin, Kerr, and Olivetti (2022) assert that women, especially mothers, earn less than men. The gender pay gap widens after family formation when mothers reduce their work hours. However, as children grow older and women increase their hours of work, the motherhood penalty diminishes, particularly for the less-educated group. Goldin, Kerr, Olivetti, and Barth (2017) further explain that the gender earnings gap is dynamic, widening with age, especially in the 15 to 20 years after leaving school. It expands further for married individuals and even more so for those with young children. Their research shows that over 40 percent of the increased gender gap in earnings is due to men disproportionately shifting into higher-paying establishments, while around 60 percent is attributed to women's lesser ability to advance their earnings within firms. The majority of this widening occurs in the first seven years of the age range, coinciding with the formation of families.

Qi and Dong (2015) examined the impact of unpaid care work on the earnings of men and women in China. Their regression estimates indicate that while the time spent on unpaid care work negatively affects the earnings of both genders, the interference of unpaid work with paid work disproportionately reduces women's earnings compared to men's. Quantitatively, the gender differences in time spent on unpaid care work and its interference with paid work account for 28 percent of the gender earnings gap in China. Samtleben and Müller (2022) have statistically demonstrated that the unequal division of household chores and caregiving responsibilities within couples has adverse effects on women's labour market participation and working hours. They suggest that reducing the overall burden of housework and caregiving and achieving a more balanced distribution within couples can enhance female integration into the labour market.

Weeden, Cha, and Bucca (2016) assessed how changes in the social organization and compensation of work hours over the past three decades are associated with changes in wage differentials among mothers, fathers, childless women, and childless men. Their findings suggest that the gender gap in wages among childless adults could have been 8 percent lower, the motherhood wage penalty 9 percent lower, and the fatherhood wage premium 18 percent lower than observed between 1984 and 2014. They argue that policy changes benefiting workers who work long hours, such as raising the salary threshold for overtime pay, may inadvertently exacerbate gender and family wage gaps. Their results indicate that the gender gap in human-capital adjusted wages among parents could have been 15 percent lower if the hourly wages for long work hours had not increased.

Unpaid care work link to pay disparity mainly through reduced work commitments of women to paid work due to the disproportionate care work burden. As Cha (2010) notes, reducing time spent in the paid workforce can lead to fewer opportunities for advancement, especially in managerial and professional occupations where long hours are often associated with reaching the top positions. Employers may interpret a worker's reluctance to work long hours as a lack of dedication to their job. This limited advancement potential can contribute to the gender wage gap, which, though present from a young age, tends to widen as women and men reach their early thirties (Hegewisch et al., 2015), particularly when many are raising young children. While men may also face consequences at work for requesting time to provide care, data show that more women tend to reduce their time in the paid workforce. Consequently, many men continue to receive promotions in the early years of their careers, while women's upward mobility often stagnates.

Kato, Ogawa, and Owan (2017) also argue that long working hours signal a worker's commitment to the firm, influencing the surplus produced when the worker is promoted. Consequently, firms provide managerial training only after observing the employee's hours worked, which serves as a

signal of commitment to the firm. Additionally, the decision to provide training depends on the firm's private information about the worker's on-the-job training ability, which affects future productivity upon promotion. When social norms place greater demand on women for household production compared to men, the cost distribution of long working hours is likely to be more skewed for women. Consequently, high-ability female workers may be more constrained in increasing their working hours due to the high cost, while low-ability female workers may find it more feasible to reduce their working hours due to the same cost factor, compared to male workers.

On the other hand, Floderus, Hagman, Aronsson, and Wikman (2015) found that having children may lead to fatigue and poor self-rated health, especially among women working 40 hours or more per week. Student mothers and job-seeking mothers were also at increased risk of poor self-rated health. The lack of family-friendly work policies in many workplaces, such as paid family and medical leave and paid sick days, exacerbates the challenges faced by workers in balancing family care and work demands, leading to lower rates of labour force participation for women (Blau and Kahn, 2013).

Overall, the global evidence suggests that the burden of unpaid care work is a significant factor contributing to the enduring gender pay gaps observed across countries.

2.3 Evidence from Sri Lanka

Despite these global developments in understanding the gender pay gap, in the context of Sri Lanka, the gender pay gap, which is unfavourable to women, has been explored by a few studies, although not extensively. Gunewardena et al., (2008) found wider wage gaps at the bottom of the wage distribution in both the private and public sectors, but little evidence of larger gaps at the top of the wage distributions. The decomposition exercise of male-female earnings by Arun, Borooaha, and Arun (2013) indicates a significant extent to which the gender disparity in earnings represents 'discrimination' against women in Sri Lanka. Senevirathne (2020) states that the gap in mean wages between men and women decreased steadily over the period 1992 – 2014. Quantile regression reveals that the decline in gender wage inequality was driven by the upper half of the distribution and was due to improvements in women's observable human capital, suggesting the decreasing importance of human capital variables in explaining the gender wage gap over time. Kulatunga (2021) demonstrates that not only has the total wage gap persisted, but unexplained wage gaps have also increased. Compared with 2015, there is an increase in the unexplained gender wage gap in 2018. Her study, focusing on the external sector including tea, apparel, and tourism sectors, found gender wage gaps present in all three export sectors.

However, despite the significance of unpaid care work in Sri Lanka, as in the rest of the world, none of these studies have attempted to link it as an explanation. Even if it is vastly challenging to measure in developing countries like Sri Lanka due to data limitations, linking care work burden to explain the gender pay gap is notably essential as suggested by international literature. Yet, many studies could be found focused on unpaid care work to explain disparities in labour markets, providing insights that contribute to wage differences between men and women.

Satharasinghe's (1999) pioneering study using time diaries to measure the time spent on family work, childcare, and paid work by husbands and wives. The study revealed that employed wives were overburdened by an additional 1.8 hours per day compared to employed husbands. On average, an employed wife worked 15.9 hours a day, while the total work time for husbands remained around 13.8 hours, regardless of whether the wife was employed. This clearly demonstrated the unequal distribution of care work in Sri Lanka, with women shouldering a disproportionate burden. Traditional and cultural beliefs about gender roles may be a contributing factor. Building on this, Gunatilake (2016) investigated the perceptions of wives and husbands regarding gender roles and how these perceptions influenced the wife's decision to participate in the labour market. The study found that both husbands and wives held similar traditional views on gender roles. These perceptions, along with the time spent on household chores and care work, were significant predictors of Whether wives would engage in market work.

Gunawardena (2015) offered similar insights from a different perspective by examining the role of education. She investigated why Sri Lanka has struggled to translate its high educational achievements for girls into increased female labour force participation. One key factor she identified is the gender division of labour within households. Analysing data from the 2012 World Bank STEP Skills Measurement survey, which includes self-reported measures of cognitive and non-cognitive skills for working-age individuals, she found that for women, being married and having young children significantly reduces the likelihood of paid employment. Conversely, for men, being married increases the probability of participating in paid work, and having young children has no effect on their employment status. These findings suggest a persistent adherence to traditional cultural norms regarding the division of household labour.

Kottegoda and Peiris (2023) also found care responsibilities as a direct explanation to women's less participation in paid work. Their comprehensive time use survey across five districts in Sri Lanka—Kurunegala, Gampaha, Kandy, Batticaloa, and Colombo—revealed an increase in caregiving responsibilities associated with marital status as married women spend an average of 971.21 minutes daily on non-SNA (System of National Accounts) activities, significantly more than the 499.97 minutes spent by single women. The researchers highlight that the primary barrier preventing women from entering paid work is not lack of interest but rather the insufficient availability of support services to manage or share their extensive caregiving responsibilities, which are shaped by gender norms. They also emphasize the role of education in empowering women to challenge patriarchal norms as they found that women with Advanced Level or higher education were more likely to be expected to engage in paid work after marriage. In a related analysis using the same data, Gunawardena and Perera (2023) measured the value of unpaid care work. They found that women's unpaid labour holds a higher value, ranging from LKR 703 to LKR 2,320 per day, compared to men's unpaid work, which ranges from LKR 459 to LKR 1,513 per day. These findings underscore the significant disparity in the distribution of caregiving responsibilities between men and women in Sri Lanka.

Gunatilake and Chandrasiri (2022) provided insights on unpaid care work burden of women through a study conducted to understand the attributes of firms that influence the demand for women workers in Sri Lanka, focusing on firm characteristics and management attitudes. Analysing primary data from private, formal enterprises in the manufacturing, trade, and service sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic, they found evidence of gender stereotypes and gender-based discrimination affecting employers' demand for women workers. Specifically, the inability to offer flexible working hours and night shifts, as well as challenges related to financing maternity benefits, were linked to significantly lower demand for female employees. Another key insight from their study focused on work-from-home policies during the pandemic. While remote work has the potential to increase female workforce participation, the existing burden of unpaid care work may limit these benefits to more educated and affluent women who can rely on extended family and domestic help for household and care responsibilities.

Against this backdrop, it is evident that gender gaps in job quality and access remain wide in Sri Lanka (Bulmer, 2020). Through a recent study in Sri Lanka, the International Labour Organization (2024) also reveals that female employees have higher educational attainments than male employees however, they are likely to be employed in certain mid- to high-skilled occupations and are less likely than men to be employed in managerial roles. Thus, women are located at the lower end of the wage distribution, resulting in large gender wage gaps. Solotaroff et al. (2020) highlights how women continue to face significant disadvantages in areas like employment, wages, and employment types. According to them, although the average raw earnings gap has narrowed over time, women still experience significant wage disparities, with the largest gaps in the estate sector and the smallest in the urban sector. Additionally, women are vastly overrepresented among unpaid workers. Men are more likely to be self-employed or employers, while women are more likely to be unpaid contributing family workers. Furthermore, women are overrepresented in public sector employment and underrepresented in the private sector. This was also emphasized by Gunatilake (2013), pointing out that the lack of family-friendly policies in private institutions drives women to seek public sector jobs, where work norms are less rigidly enforced and thus more accommodating to family needs.

3. Data, Methods & Descriptives

3.1 Data and Variable Development

The study relies on three years of annual Labour Force Survey (LFS) data from the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) of Sri Lanka. Specifically, the years examined are 2010, 2015, and 2019. 2019 was selected as it was the latest year without any major disruptions to the Sri Lankan economy, such as the Covid-19 pandemic or economic and political crises. Additionally, 2010 was chosen because it followed nearly thirty years of ethnic conflict, while 2015 marked the beginning of a new regime, ending a decade-long existing regime.

The LFSs have seen improvements in their questionnaire design and methodology, particularly in 2013. These surveys provide comprehensive data on various socio-demographic characteristics of the entire population in Sri Lanka, including age, gender, marital status, level of education, and current employment status. Additionally, they gather information on different aspects of the labour force, such as the number of individuals employed, unemployed, underemployed, and those who are not actively participating in the labour force. Since there is limited longitudinal data available in Sri Lanka that tracks individuals' labour force outcomes over time, using cross-sectional data proves to be valuable.

To proxy the unpaid care work of the labour force, researchers created additional variables apart from those available in the LFSs. Specifically, two variables were developed to identify mothers and fathers, which were then used to examine the impact of care work burden, aligning with the main hypothesis of the study. However, it's important to note that the LFS does not include questions to directly identify individuals' parenthood status, so the authors devised novel methods to address this, which may have certain limitations. Mothers were identified based on four conditions: being female, having a marital status of married, widowed, divorced, or separated, being either the head of the household or the spouse to the head of the household, and belonging to a household with individuals below the age of 18 who are considered children to the head of household. If all these criteria were met, the individual was considered a mother. The same four conditions were used to identify fathers, except for the first one, which required the individual to be male.

In addition, various variables were created to identify the impact of children on the household. These variables indicated the number of children in each household below the ages of 1, 3, and 18 years. Based on these children and parenting variables, another set of variables was developed to determine how many children each parent had. Moreover, to incorporate the burden of adult dependence into the analysis, the number of adults dependent on each household was calculated. Additionally, several household-related variables were developed, including household size, the education level of the household head, family income, and the income level of the household head.

Additionally, the study created classifications for industries and occupations at the one-digit level, using the Sri Lanka Standard Classification of Industry Revision – 4 and the Sri Lanka Standard Classification of Occupation (SLSCO - 08) respectively. Formal and informal employment categories were determined according to the guidelines outlined in the 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In Sri Lanka, there is a clear distinction between monthly and daily wage earners, which the LFS accounts for. The analysis encompasses three income types: 1. Daily wages of employees, 2. Monthly wages of employees, and 3. Monthly income of employers and own account workers. Daily wages are converted to monthly wages for simplicity in the descriptive analysis, with a focus on monthly wages. However, for the gender wage gap analysis, hourly incomes are transformed into natural logarithms. Given that considerable number of females are categorized as own account workers and employers, the analysis considers income rather than wages. It is worth noting that the study uses "Gender Wage Gap", “Gender Pay Gap” and "Gender Income Gap" interchangeably, denoting the same concept.

The analysis primarily involves four main components: exploring women's labour force participation, investigating the gap in working hours and analysing the gender wage gap, associated with the unequal distribution of care work between men and women.

3.2 Labour Force Participation

The determinants of labour force participation will be examined based on the neoclassical theory of utility maximization in which the individual or the household chooses between work or leisure or a suitable combination of both given the going wage rate.

The utility maximizing agent compares the utility from work and/or leisure and makes a choice under the usual assumption of rationality. Thus, the random utility model is defined as:

$$U^k = U^k (X' \beta^k) \quad (3)$$

Where k =1 if the individual or the household decides to work and zero otherwise. U is the utility being maximized and X is the vector of factors determining U.

Since U^k and β^k (k=0,1) are not directly observable, the final outcome (whether to work or not) is observed while the coefficients of β's are estimated using two basic logit models.

$$LPF_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_X X_i' + \mu_1 \quad (4)$$

$$LPF_i = \beta_0 + \beta_X X_i' + \beta_H H_i' + \mu_2 \quad (5)$$

Two vectors (X_i and H_i) of variables are posited to be influencing the dichotomous participation rate which is the dependent variable LPF_i which takes value 1 if the respondent works in the labor market and zero otherwise. The vector X_i is a set of standard exogenous variables that influence labor force participation such as age, educational status, marital status, sex, region of residence, location of respondent whether rural or urban, and so on. The vector H_i is a set of household variables which includes whether the respondent is father or mother of household, the gender of the household head (whether the household is male or female-headed), the size of the household, number of children and status of the other members of the household (whether wife, son, daughter or other blood relations).

In equation (4) we examine the partial effects of standard exogenous predictor variables on labour performance of respondent in the sample. In equation (5) we add the household variables to the standard exogenous variables influencing labour supply to verify their effects on participation.

3.3 Gender pay gap and the gap in work hours

This analysis is grounded in Mincer's (1974) Human Capital Earnings function, which shows that an individual's logarithmic wage is influenced by their years of education, years of experience, and the square of their experience. Initially, the study identifies wage determinants in the Sri Lankan context using Mincer's framework, with some modifications and additional context-specific independent variables, as also utilized by Gunawardena (2008).

$$\ln(W)_i = \delta + \beta X_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Equation 1 depicts a regression model where δ represents the constant term, W is the dependent variable (log hourly wage), and X is a vector of independent variables. The X variables consist of demographic factors like age categories, gender, marital status, and education level. Additionally, care work-related variables pertaining to parents, children and adults, as well as household-related variables, are included. The model also integrates variables associated with employment type and sector. The term ε denotes the error, and ι represents the individual within the sample.

The wage equation is then used in the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition, to determine the extent of the gap at the conditional mean of the wage distribution. Oaxaca (1973) and Blinder (1973) introduced a quantitative method to estimate average discrimination in the labour market, which will be analysed using descriptive statistics.

The Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition first estimates male and female wage equations separately as in equations 2 and 3.

$$\ln(W)_m = X_m\beta_m \quad (2)$$

$$\ln(W)_f = X_f\beta_f \quad (3)$$

Then the gap between male and female wages can be calculated as in equation 4.

$$\ln(W)_m - ln(W)_f = X_m\beta_m - X_f\beta_f + \varepsilon \quad (4)$$

The right-side part of equation 4 is further explained by equations 5. Then equation 4 can be re-written based on equation 5 as follows in equation 6.

$$X_m\beta_m - X_f\beta_f = X_f(\beta_m - \beta_f) + \beta_m(X_m - X_f) \quad (5)$$

$$\ln(W)_m - \ln(W)_f = X_f(\beta_m - \beta_f) + \beta_m(X_m - X_f) + \varepsilon \quad (6)$$

The first term on the right side of equation 6 represents the portion of the gap explained by wage determinants. The second term considers the unexplained portion of the gap, or discrimination according to Oaxaca (1973), although this is subject to debate. Pacheco, Li, and Cochrane (2017) argue that this portion cannot solely be attributed to gender discrimination, as there may be other factors at play, such as differences in the quality of characteristics and gender-based preferences for non-wage aspects of jobs. Many previous studies on gender pay disparity have expanded upon regression quantiles introduced by Koenker and Bassett (1978) to identify variations in the pay gap across different earnings levels. Studies by Arunampalam, Booth, and Bryan (2007) and Melly (2005) have applied various decomposition methods at regression quantiles.

$$Q_\theta \ln(W)_i = \delta_\theta + X_i\beta_\theta + \varepsilon_i \quad (7)$$

The wage equation can be applied into quantile regression as in equation 7. θ represents the Conditional quantile or the location of the wage distribution (θ –25th, 50th, and 75th quantile). Equation 8 represents the Oaxaca-Blinder decompositions at regression quantiles.

$$Q_\theta \ln(W)_m - Q_\theta \ln(W)_f = Q_\theta X_f(\beta_m - \beta_f) + Q_\theta\beta_m(X_m - X_f) + \varepsilon \quad (8)$$

Regression quantiles are less sensitive to outliers and works better than OLS with the presence of heteroskedasticity and non-normal error term (Deaton, 1997, as cited in Gunawardena, 2008). Gaps widen at the bottom of the wage distribution consider to be sticky floors while the widened gaps at the top of the distribution consider to be glass ceilings (Arunampalam, Booth & Bryan, 2007).

The study adopted the same method to pinpoint the gap in working hours. It is based on the weekly usual working hours of all employed individuals.

3.4 Limitations of the Study

To ensure unbiased and efficient estimates, the study addressed several potential econometric issues. One of the most extensively recognized issues is selection bias when estimating unbiased gender income gap estimates (Albrecht et al., 2009). Seneviratne (2020) notes that participants in the sample differ from non-participants not only in observable characteristics but also in non-observable features, which can significantly influence income determination. She further argues that the likelihood of experiencing selection effects is higher for females due to gender-based cultural and social conditions. Additionally, Ahmed and Maitra (2015) assert that selection effects play a significant role, especially in developing countries, due to their impact on gender in determining occupation and industry choice, employment rate, and employment type. Therefore, it is crucial to consider endogenous selection to estimate the gender income gap accurately.

This study employs Heckman's seminal two-step method (Heckman, 1974, 1979) to tackle selection bias. Further a multinomial logit model-based method was employed to address the selection bias issue, particularly associated with wage regression. In this selection model, the non-employed population served as the base category, while the employed population was divided into four categories based on the broad skill level of occupations provided by the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) by the International Labour Organization (ILO). However, there are two primary limitations associated with this method in this study. Firstly, quantile regressions do not include the assumptions required to construct the selection term (Arellano & Bonhomme, 2017). Secondly, there is debate on how to conduct the decomposition of the selection term (Neuman & Oaxaca, 2004). Therefore, this study conducts the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition followed by Heckman's two-step method only at the mean of the income distribution, not at quantiles, which is recognized as a study limitation.

Furthermore, the endogeneity issue related to education is not addressed by any of the above models, which constitutes another limitation of the study. Additionally, robust standard errors were calculated to tackle heterogeneity issues. Moreover, to mitigate multicollinearity, variance inflation factor (VIF) values were maintained below 10 in the models.

3.5 Descriptives

To illustrate the gendered roles in the labour market and the intersection between paid work and unpaid work, the study adopts a descriptive approach using visually appealing evidence from Sri Lankan Labour Force Survey data. Specifically, the employment of women as contributing family workers, women in informal work, and women in part-time and irregular employment against men across different industry and occupation categories are explained.

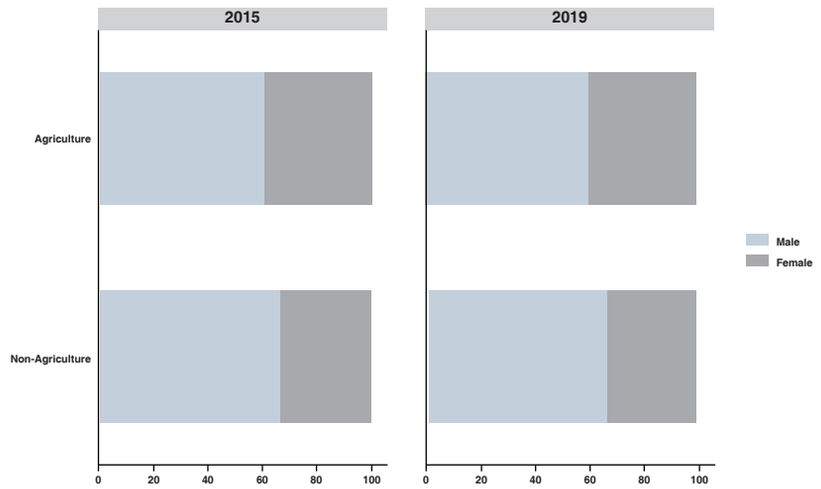
3.5.1 Gendered disparities in employment in the labour market

Traditional gender roles and women's predominant responsibility for nonmarket work can have a negative impact on women's labour market outcomes beyond just their labour force participation. While industry and occupational differences between men and women have been extensively studied, this section aims to briefly outline the employment patterns of both genders in paid work.

Gender segregation in industries and occupations

Gender disparities in occupation and industry continue to be significant factors contributing to the gender wage gap, even as women experience occupational advancement relative to men over time.

Figure 1. Share of male and female employees in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors



Source: Authors' illustrations using LFS, DCS

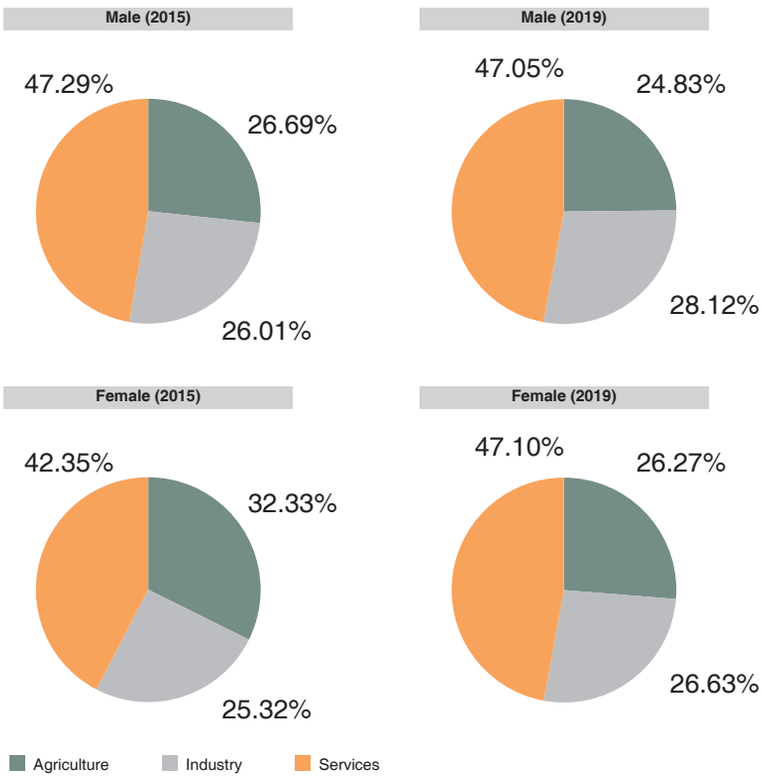
The distribution of employment by sector, as shown in the Figure 1, indicates that the proportion of male workers in the non-agricultural sector is higher compared to the proportion of male workers in the agricultural sector, while the share of females in the agricultural sector is higher compared to the share of females in the non-agricultural sector, although not significantly so. Over time, the female share in agriculture has decreased, while the non-agricultural share has slightly increased from 2015 to 2019. In both agriculture and non-agriculture sectors, male workers account for over 60% of the workforce compared to women, reflecting women's lower participation in the labour force. Table 5 also displays the higher share of women in agriculture sector compared to men however it has reduced from 2015 to 2019.

Table 7. Employee distribution of agriculture and non-agriculture sectors by gender

Industry Category	Male	Female	Total	Male (as a % of total male count_employed)	Female (as a % of total female count_employed)
2019					
Agriculture	1333249	738692	2071940	24.83	26.27
Non-agriculture	4035648	2073105	6108752	75.17	73.73
Total	5368896	2811796	8180693		
2015					
Agriculture	1360831	883716	2244547	26.69	32.33
Non-agriculture	3736967	1849462	5586429	73.31	67.67
Total	5097798	2733178	7830976		

Source: Authors' calculations using LFS, DCS

Figure 2. Employee distribution of agriculture, industry, and services sectors by gender

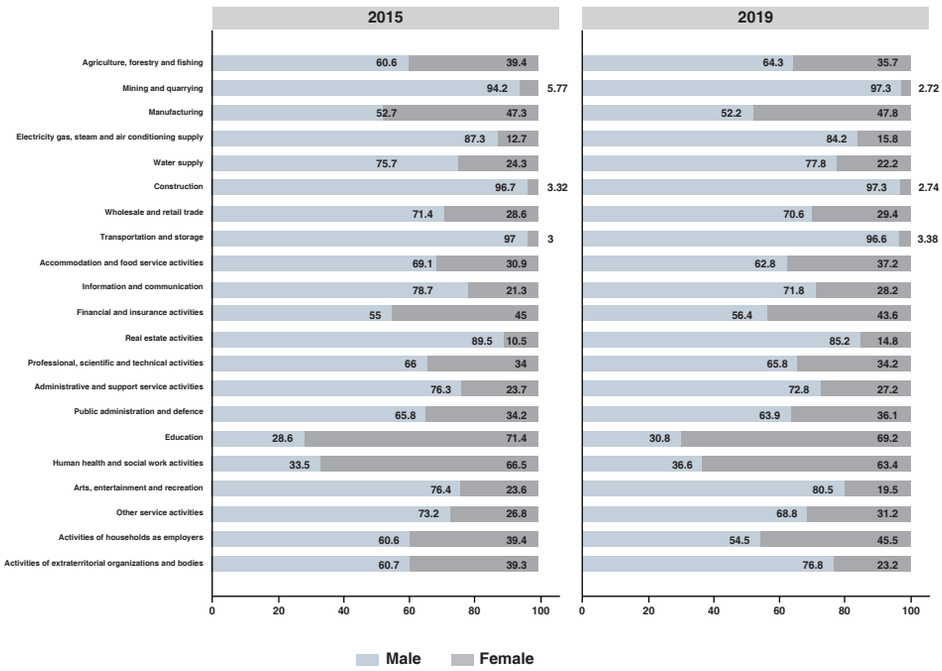


Source: Authors' illustrations using LFS, DCS

The Figure 2 also reveals few differences in employment shares of agriculture, industry and services between employed male and female. The proportion of female workers in agriculture decreased by 2019, while there was an increase in the share of female workers in the services sector. The industry share is lower for females compared to males, but it has slightly increased over time for both genders. This corresponds with Antonopoulos (2009), who notes that in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, North Africa, and certain economies in Latin America and the Caribbean, women tend to have a higher representation in agricultural employment, especially in economies with low per capita income. According to their results women generally have a lower share of employment in industry compared to men. However, in the service sector, the share of female workers is higher than that of men in almost all countries.

Recent data from Sri Lanka indicates an improvement over time in industry segregation, with women increasingly moving from the agriculture sector to other sectors, as shown in the Figure 1 and 2. However, there is still room for further improvement. Figure 3 provides a more detailed breakdown of industries, illustrating how women are under-represented in industries such as mining and quarrying, construction, and transportation and storage, which are predominantly male dominated and over-represented in service-related industries such as education, human health and social work activities (Table 6 displays the employee shares of major industry categories as a percentage of total employed population by gender. Employee numbers in these categories are in Table A1 in Appendix A).

Figure 3. Male and female share of employees in major industry categories



Note: Industry categories are based on ISICr4

Source: Authors' illustrations using LFS, DCS

Table 8. Employee shares of industries as a percentage of total employed population by gender

Industry Category	Male (as a % of total male count_employed)	Female (as a % of total male count_employed)
2019		
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	24.83	26.27
Mining and quarrying	1.10	0.06
Manufacturing	14.62	25.59
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0.39	0.14
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	0.39	0.21
Construction	11.62	0.63
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	14.91	11.88
Transportation and storage	9.26	0.62
Accommodation and food service activities	2.72	3.08
Information and communication	0.86	0.64
Financial and insurance activities	1.97	2.91
Real estate activities	0.21	0.07
Professional, scientific and technical activities	1.11	1.10
Administrative and support service activities	2.78	1.98

Industry Category	Male (as a % of total male count_employed)	Female (as a % of total male count_employed)
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	5.19	5.60
Education	2.44	10.49
Human health and social work activities	1.15	3.82
Arts, entertainment and recreation	0.73	0.34
Other service activities	1.73	1.50
Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	1.90	3.02
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	0.08	0.05
2015		
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	26.69	32.33
Mining and quarrying	1.12	0.13
Manufacturing	14.55	24.38
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0.24	0.07
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	0.19	0.11
Construction	9.91	0.63
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	14.84	11.10
Transportation and storage	9.14	0.53
Accommodation and food service activities	2.75	2.30
Information and communication	0.81	0.41
Financial and insurance activities	1.56	2.38
Real estate activities	0.19	0.04
Professional, scientific and technical activities	0.84	0.81
Administrative and support service activities	1.80	1.05
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	7.75	7.50
Education	1.82	8.46
Human health and social work activities	0.90	3.34
Arts, entertainment and recreation	0.64	0.37
Other service activities	2.07	1.41
Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	2.11	2.55
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	0.08	0.10

Source: Authors' calculations using LFS, DCS

According to Blau and Khan (2017), historically in general terms, women were significantly more concentrated than men in administrative support and service occupations. They were also slightly more represented in professional jobs overall, particularly in traditionally female-dominated professions such as teaching and nursing. Conversely, men were much more likely to hold managerial positions and were highly concentrated in blue-collar occupations, including relatively high-paying craft and skilled positions. Thus, increasing women's presence in higher-paying occupations will help to narrow the gender wage gap.

Figure 4. Male and female shares of employees in major occupation categories

Note: Category 1 - Legislators, senior officials, and managers; Category 2 - Professionals; Category 3 - Technicians and associate professionals; Category 4 - Clerks; Category 5 - Service workers and shop and market sales workers; Category 6 - Skilled agricultural and fishery workers; Category 7 - Craft and related workers; Category 8 - Plant and machine operators and assemblers; Category 9 - Elementary occupations; Category 0 – Armed forces and other.

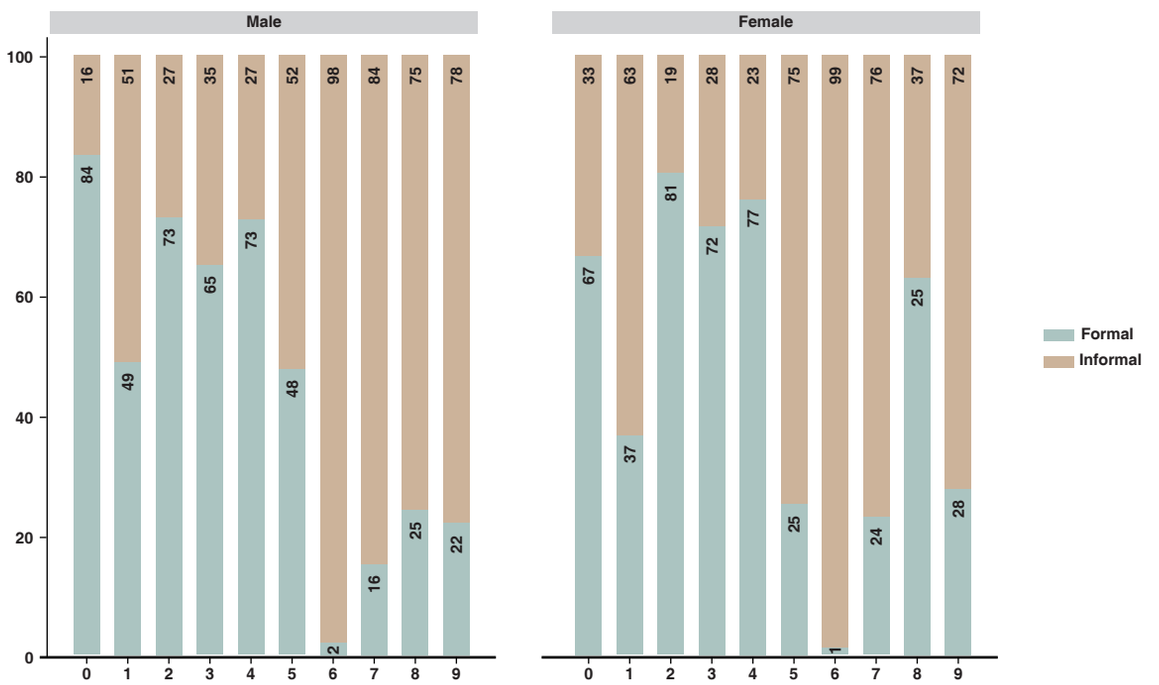
Source: Authors' illustrations using LFS, DCS

Gender disparities in occupations have been, and continue to be, prominent, although they have decreased significantly over time. Confirming the historical occupational segregation as demonstrated by Blau and Khan (2017), labour force survey data from Sri Lanka indicates that women dominate the professional (category 2) and clerical categories (category 4), with representation exceeding 50%, as shown in Figure 4. In contrast, managerial positions (category 1) are predominantly held by males; however, the female share has shown a slight increase from 2015 to 2019, which is a positive trend.

Goldin (2014) emphasizes the significance of occupational characteristics in determining the costliness of providing flexibility, with empirical evidence supporting this claim. The wage penalty for flexibility is likely to be high in occupations that involve meeting deadlines, interacting with others, maintaining interpersonal relationships, adhering to strict schedules, and performing tasks for which substitutes are not readily available. For instance, as Goldin (2014) says lawyers at large, high-powered firms may face significant penalties for working shorter hours or experiencing workforce interruptions not because of the reduced accumulation of human capital or the depreciation of their skills during time away from work, but rather due to interruptions in client service and the challenges in smoothly transferring work to other employees. This provides insights into occupational gender segregation, highlighting the connection between women's commitment to a job and the burden of unpaid care work. As a result, women may be concentrated in occupations that require fewer commitments in terms of work hours and responsibilities.

Figure 5 indicates that males are more likely to be informally employed across most occupation categories compared to women, possibly due to differences in education levels. Gunatilake (2009) suggests that women tend to have higher levels of education compared to men, and the likelihood of informal employment decreases with higher education levels in a monotonic relationship. The share of informally employed individuals is lower in managerial (category 1), professional (category 2), other and armed forces (category 0), and clerical (category 4) occupations relative to elementary level job categories (category 6, 7, 8, 9), as shown in the figure for both genders. The female shares of informally employed individuals is much lower than that of males in all categories except for managers. Notably, in the manager category (category 1), the informal share of males is lower than that of females, providing insights into occupational gender segregation. In category 8, which includes machine operators, the formal share is higher for females, likely due to a high proportion of apparel workers engaged in formal sector work compared to male machine operators. While informal employment may be prevalent in Sri Lanka, with overall informal employment comprising close to one third of the employed population, policy efforts should focus on ensuring decent work standards in informal jobs for both genders.

Figure 5. Formal & Informal share of employment across major occupation categories by gender



Note: Category 1 - Legislators, senior officials, and managers; Category 2 - Professionals; Category 3 - Technicians and associate professionals; Category 4 - Clerks; Category 5 - Service workers and shop and market sales workers; Category 6 - Skilled agricultural and fishery workers; Category 7 - Craft and related workers; Category 8 - Plant and machine operators and assemblers; Category 9 - Elementary occupations; Category 0 – Armed forces and other.

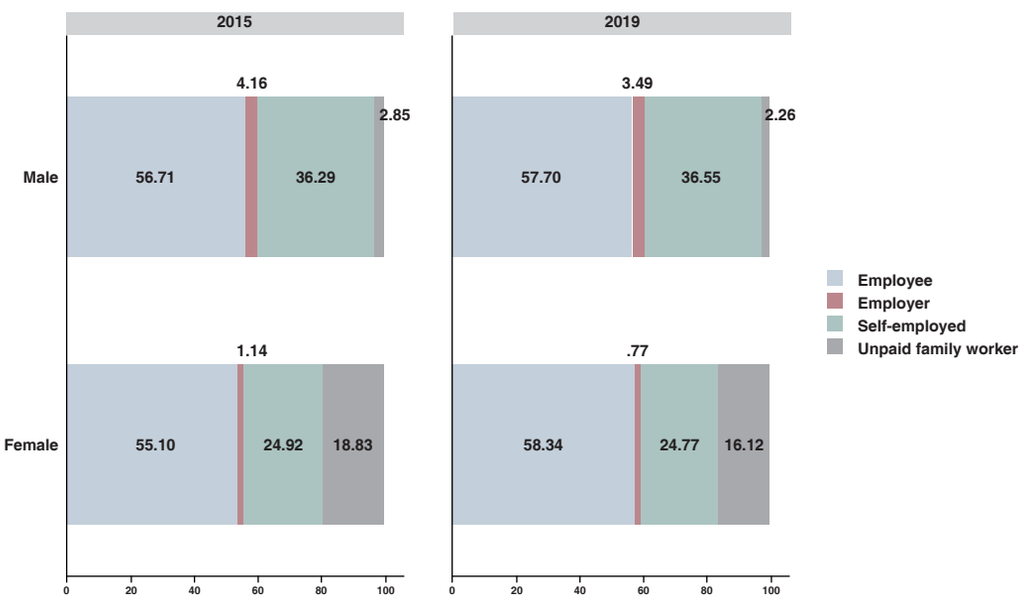
Source: Authors' illustrations using LFS, DCS

The gendered patterns of occupational and industrial segregation described above are linked to women taking on roles that resemble unpaid care work. Consequently, women's work is often undervalued. Occupations and sectors dominated by women are typically perceived as less significant, requiring lower skills, and consequently deserving of lower earnings compared to those dominated by men. Men working in these occupations and sectors are also penalized in terms of pay.

3.5.2 Employment status

Gender segregation in employment status is also equally important as occupational and industrial segregation to understand the pay disparity. According to the International Classification of Status in Employment (2018), these workers provide vital labour inputs but do not receive a regular wage or make the main decisions and work in a firm which is operated by a related person living in the same household. Globally, there is a decreasing trend in the number of people working as contributing family workers, with an overall inverse relationship to the level of economic development, as noted by Antonopoulos (2009). Another notable characteristic of this type of work is that a significantly higher proportion of women are found to be unpaid contributing family workers.

Figure 6. Employee, employer, self-employed and unpaid family worker share of persons in employed population by gender



Source: Authors' illustrations using LFS, DCS

In Sri Lanka as well, while only 2.26% of men are in this category, 16.12% of employed women were engaged in such work in 2019 (Figure 6). However, there is evidence of a downward trend, as shown in the labour force survey results, with the percentage decreasing from 18.83% in 2015 to 16.12% in 2019 for females. On the other hand, the Figure 6 shows a higher share of males as employers compared to females. The share of self-employed females is also lower than that of males in both years. Table 7 displays the number of employees in four categories as mothers and fathers. It indicates that there are 4,157 employed fathers who are only contributing unpaid family workers, compared to 271,653 mothers. The count of mothers who are employers is only 10,900, while there are 95,928 fathers in this category.

Table 8 further provides insights to understand the connection between unpaid care responsibilities and labour force participation. In Sri Lanka, there are 251,466 mothers of working age with A/L or higher education qualifications who are not in the labour force, compared to 20,169 fathers in the same category. Importantly, this number has increased from 2015 to 2019, as shown in the table.

Table 9. Number of employees in the four categories of employment status by gender and parenthood

Employment Status	Female		Male	
	Mother	Not a mother	Father	Not a father
2019				
Employee	526785	1113595	1208168	1889696
Employer	10900	10779	95928	91552
Self-employed	292503	403946	785890	1176396
Unpaid family worker	181636	271653	4157	117109
2015				
Employee	511250	994803	1194388	1696396
Employer	11642	19539	117656	94158
Self-employed	302002	379148	789969	1059962
Unpaid family worker	220639	294155	5955	139315

Note: Please refer to the method section for information on how the mother and father variables were created.

Source: Authors' calculations using LFS, DCS

Table 10. Number of employees in the three categories of labor status by education categories and parenthood

Labour Status	Below O/L		O/L but below A/L		A/L or higher	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
2019						
Employed	526041	1363566	172929	370206	312854	360372
Unemployed	17339	7873	8973	4427	14588	2715
Not in labour force	876203	55396	325561	23548	251466	20169
2015						
Employed	596984	1428734	177133	370594	271416	308640
Unemployed	23347	5789	5035	4386	13439	1100
Not in labour force	934736	59262	320847	17659	195231	16472

Note: Please refer to the method section for information on how the mother and father variables were created.

Source: Authors' calculations using LFS, DCS

3.5.3 Where are women positioned in work hours and pay distributions?

Henceforth, the study focusses on work hours and income of primary job of employed workers by gender to understand the care work burden as a link to gender pay disparity. Table 9 indicates that the proportion of workers in part-time employment is higher among females compared to males in both 2015 and 2019. However, it is positive to note that the share of female part-time workers has decreased from 2015 to 2019, though it still accounts for approximately 16% of total employed women. This disparity, where a larger share of women than men are part-time workers, is a common trend observed in almost all economies according to the International Labour Organization (2003). Evidence suggests that working part-time is associated with significant pay penalties, even in developed countries (Manning and Petrangolo, 2007).

Table 11. Share of employees in part-time employment of primary job by gender

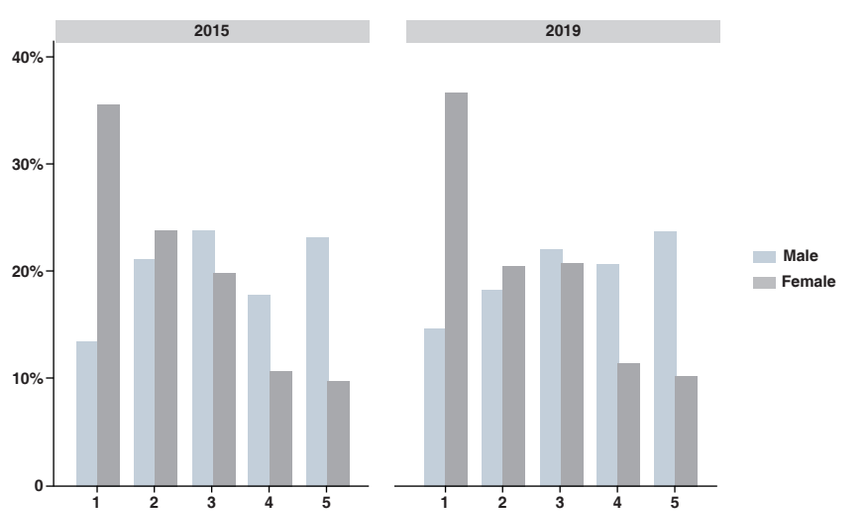
Year	Gender	No. of Employees	As a % of total male and female employees
2019	Male	391101	12.62
	Female	261791	15.96
2015	Male	370759	12.83
	Female	252214	16.75

Note: Part-time work is defined as less than thirty hours of work per week in the primary job.

Source: Authors' calculations using LFS, DCS

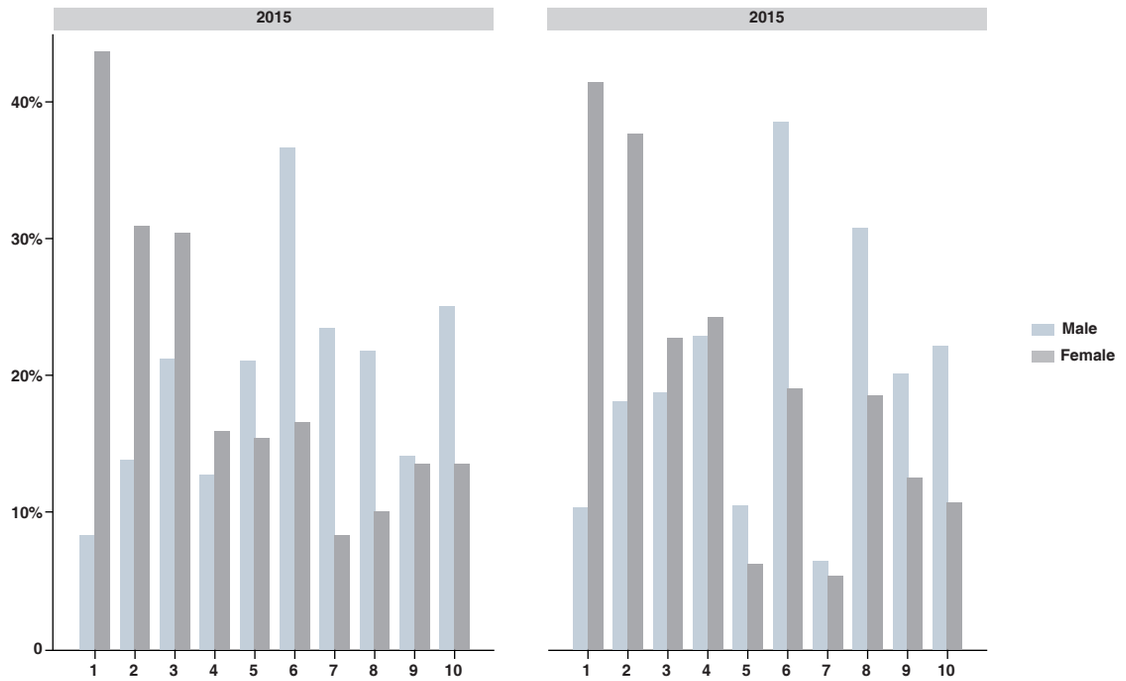
Figure 7 presents an interesting finding from this study, indicating that the percentage of males in the top quintiles of usual work hours for primary jobs is higher compared to females in both years. Conversely, in the bottom quintiles, the female share is higher than that of males. This disparity could be attributed to the significant care work burden on women, which may discourage them from pursuing jobs that require high commitments. Consequently, this contributes to pay disparities as women are less likely to engage in high-paid jobs and may face obstacles in advancing their careers, as employers often expect high levels of commitment and minimal interruptions in work cycles for promotions.

Figure 7. Employee percentages at quintiles of usual work hours distribution of primary job by gender



Source: Authors' illustrations using LFS, DCS

Figure 8. Employee percentages at deciles of income distribution of primary job by gender



Source: Authors' illustrations using LFS, DCS

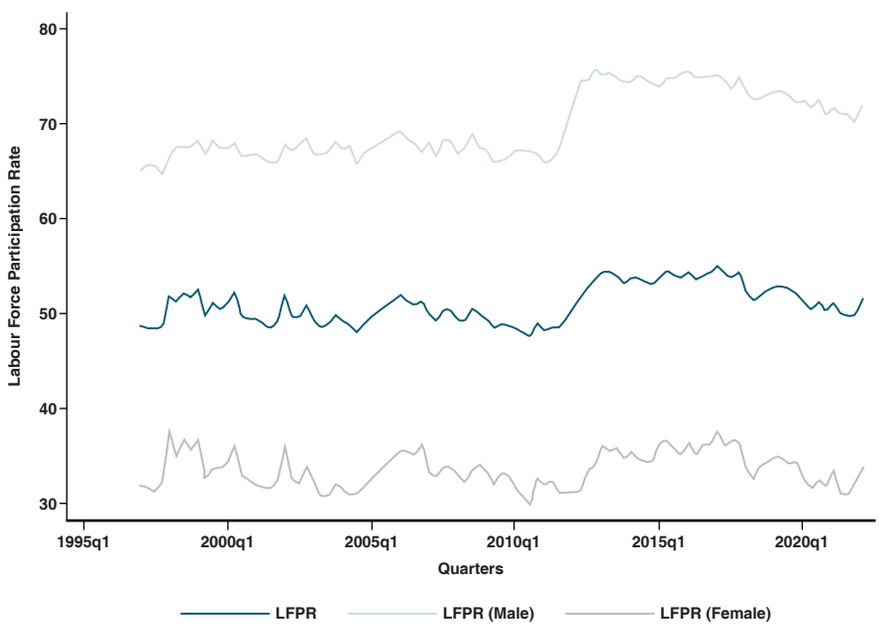
Figure 8 provides evidence of how females are predominantly concentrated in lower-paid jobs. At the bottom end of the income distribution, the percentage of females is higher than that of males, while beyond the median, the top end is dominated by males with higher percentages of employees compared to females. This pattern persists in both years and hints at the existence of a gender pay disparity in the Sri Lankan labour market. Various factors discussed in this section might contribute to this disparity, along with many other factors. However, unequal distribution of care work in the country likely plays a significant role, as high-paying jobs require substantial commitment, which may be avoided by women due to the disproportionate burden of care work.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Labour Force Participation

Sri Lanka has maintained a relatively stable Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) over the past few decades, showing no significant increases. This trend applies not only to the overall LFPR but also to both male and female participation rates. Notably, the female LFPR has consistently remained at around half of the male LFPR over the years considered. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2016), the female labour force participation rate in Sri Lanka has stayed within a low range of 30 to 35 percent for the past two decades. This trend is unexpected given the consistently high educational achievements and favourable social indicators of women in the country. However, there has been a decline in LFPRs across all groups since around 2013. As seen in Figure 9, there was a slight increase in LFPR following the adjustment in the labour force definition in 2013. However, subsequently, a gradual decline in LFPR has been observed up to the present date, a trend not observed in most other peer countries.

Figure 9. Labor force participation rate (1997 - 2021)



Source: Authors' compilations based on CBSL data

4.1.1 Determinants of the labour force participation

Determinants of labour force participation were estimated for all three years using primarily three different models based on different samples: firstly, the overall working-age population; secondly, the male working-age population; and thirdly, the female working-age population[40]. For the overall model, four sub-models were estimated for each year. In sub-model 1, only demographic characteristics were considered as independent variables, while in model 2, various children and adult dependency variables were included. The third model incorporated children and adult dependency variables interacted with the gender variable, while model 4 considered different parenthood estimates (Appendix B).

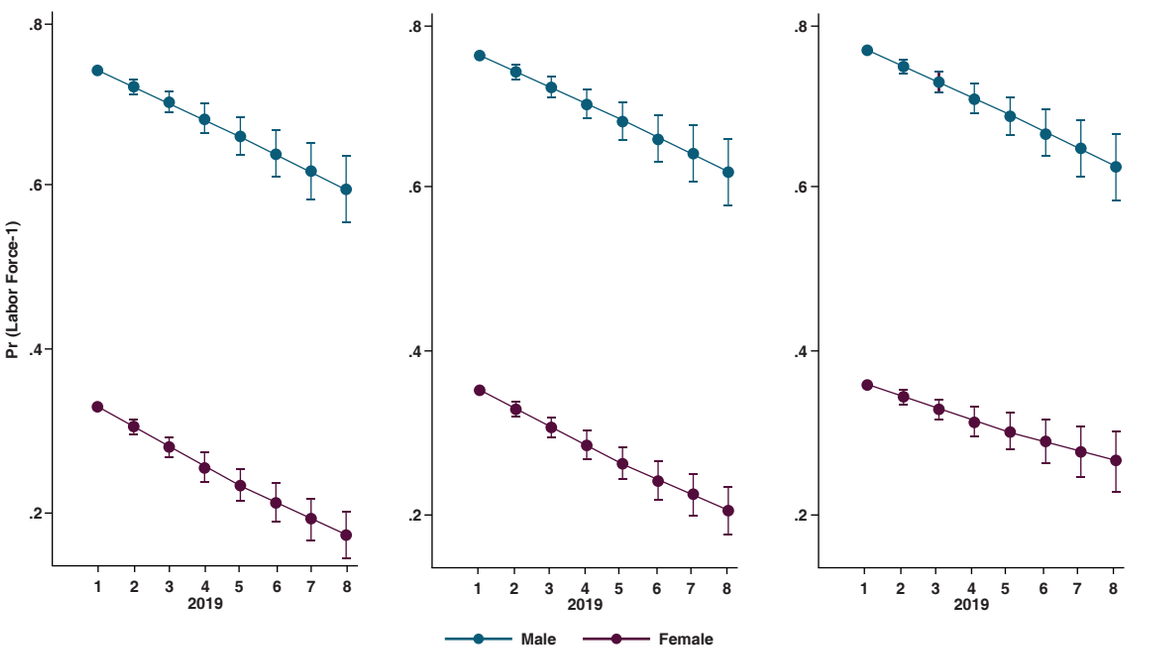
In the overall model, as expected, females consistently show a lower likelihood of participating in the labour force compared to males across all years and sub-models. Three variables representing the number of children in the family under the ages of 1, 3, and 18 were included. Confirming our initial hypothesis, the results indicate that individuals, both males and females, are less likely to participate in

[40] The regressions conducted based on these three samples will be referred to hereafter as the overall model, male model, and female model, respectively.

the labour force when there are more children in the household. Interestingly, individuals with children under 3 years old are more likely to participate in the labour force compared to those with younger children, while those with children aged 18 and below has an even higher likelihood of participation. Another significant finding is that a higher number of adult dependents in the household is associated with a lower probability of labour force participation. This supports the idea that increased caregiving responsibilities lead individuals to opt out of the labour force.

To further investigate this, all the children variables were interacted with the gender variable to assess whether there is a difference in the probabilities of labour force participation between males and females based on the number of children in the household. The results consistently favour the notion of a greater care work burden for females. Across all three children variables and years, females in households with a higher number of children have a lower probability of participating in the labour force compared to males in similar households. This trend is evident in the Figure 10 provided, depicting the probabilities for both males and females in households with children under 18 years old.

Figure 10. Predictive margins of sex and children under the age of 18 years with 95% CIs



Source: Authors' compilations based on DCS – LFS data

As shown, the probability of female labour force participation is significantly lower than that of males in all three years. Additionally, it's important to highlight that a higher number of children in the household tends to decrease the probability of labour force participation for both males and females.

Parenthood variables were estimated in sub-model 4 for each year. The results indicate that mothers with a higher number of children under the ages of 1 and 3 have a lower probability of participating in the labour force compared to non-mother females. However, mothers with a higher number of children under 18 years old have a positive probability of labour force participation. The situation is different for fathers, as only fathers with a higher number of children under 1 year old have a lower probability of labour force participation compared to non-father males. In the other two scenarios, fathers have a positive probability of labour force participation compared to the base category.

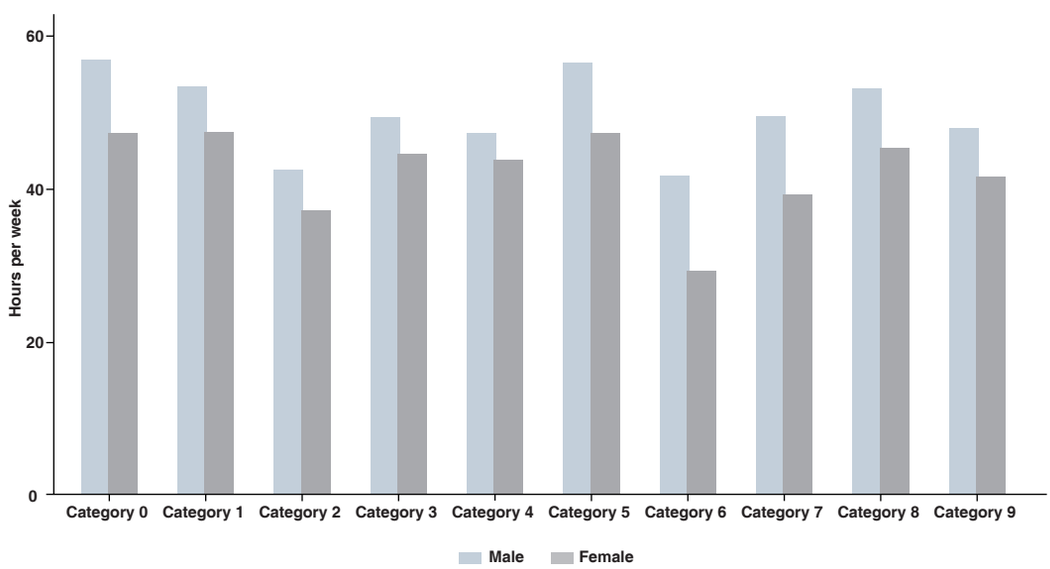
The male model (Appendix B) and female model (Appendix B) further support the findings of the overall model. Males in households with children aged 1 and 3 years have a positive probability of engaging in the labour force, while females have a negative likelihood in such scenarios. Interestingly,

both males and females in households with adult dependents show a reduced likelihood of labour force participation. In the female model, a similar scenario is observed, with individuals with a higher number of children being less likely to participate in the labour force. In the male model, the likelihood of fathers participating in the labour force given an increase in the number of children is unclear, as the estimates are insignificant. In contrast, the female model strengthens the finding that mothers are less likely to participate in the labour force when they have a higher number of children under the age of 1 and 3 years, while mothers with children below 18 years old show a positive likelihood.

4.2 Working Hours Gap Analysis

This section presents the findings of the working hour's gap analysis. Initially, it provides a descriptive overview of the current work hour's gap using data from the 2019 Labour Force Survey. Figure 11 illustrates the average work hours of males and females across major occupation categories. The data clearly indicate that male average work hours exceed those of females across all occupation categories in 2019, with the widest disparity observed in skilled agricultural and fishery workers (category 6).

Figure 11. Average work hours over occupations (usual hours worked per week)

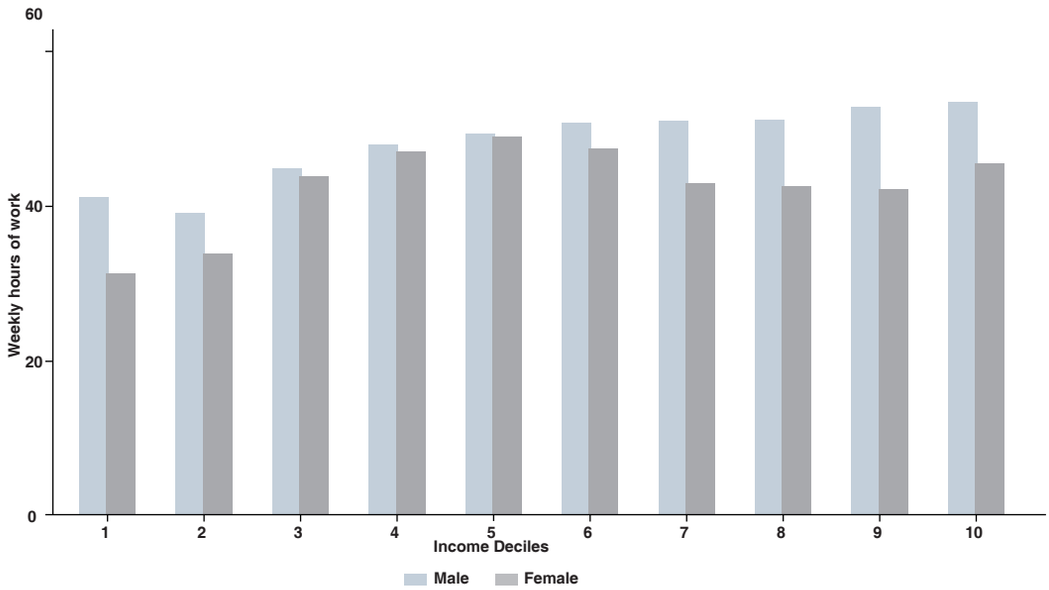


Source: Authors' compilations based on DCS – LFS - 2019

Note: Category 1 - Legislators, senior officials, and managers; Category 2 - Professionals; Category 3 - Technicians and associate professionals; Category 4 - Clerks; Category 5 - Service workers and shop and market sales workers; Category 6 - Skilled agricultural and fishery workers; Category 7 - Craft and related workers; Category 8 - Plant and machine operators and assemblers; Category 9 - Elementary occupations; Category 0 – Others.

Subsequently, the Figure 12 illustrates the average work hours of men and women across work hours deciles. The average work hours of men are higher at the top end of the distribution considerably compared to women in those top end deciles. This might be due to unpaid care work burden which prevent women taking part in jobs that need higher work hours. However, around the median, the gap is comparable between men and women. Again, at the lower end the gap is widened showing high average work hours for men compared to women.

Figure 12. Average work hours over income deciles (usual hours worked per week)



Source: Authors' compilations based on DCS – LFS – 2019

The Figure 13 presents the kernel density distribution of work hours for both men and women across major occupation categories in 2019, highlighting the disparity in wage distributions between genders. Across almost all occupation categories, there is a noticeable difference between men and women, with a higher concentration of men in higher work hour brackets. Conversely, women are more concentrated in work hours brackets which are lower than 45 hours per week. The means of the distributions are different from occupation to occupation and by gender.

Table 12. Gender work hours gap at mean (usual hours worked per week)

	2010	2015	2019
Male	51.764*** (0.458)	49.505*** (0.355)	51.992*** (0.413)
Female	49.838*** (1.137)	45.833*** (1.026)	51.456*** (1.078)
Difference	1.926 (1.226)	3.672*** (1.085)	0.536 (1.155)
Explained	4.966*** (0.474)	7.158*** (0.400)	4.644*** (0.431)
Unexplained	-3.040*** (1.164)	-3.486*** (1.010)	-4.108*** (1.092)

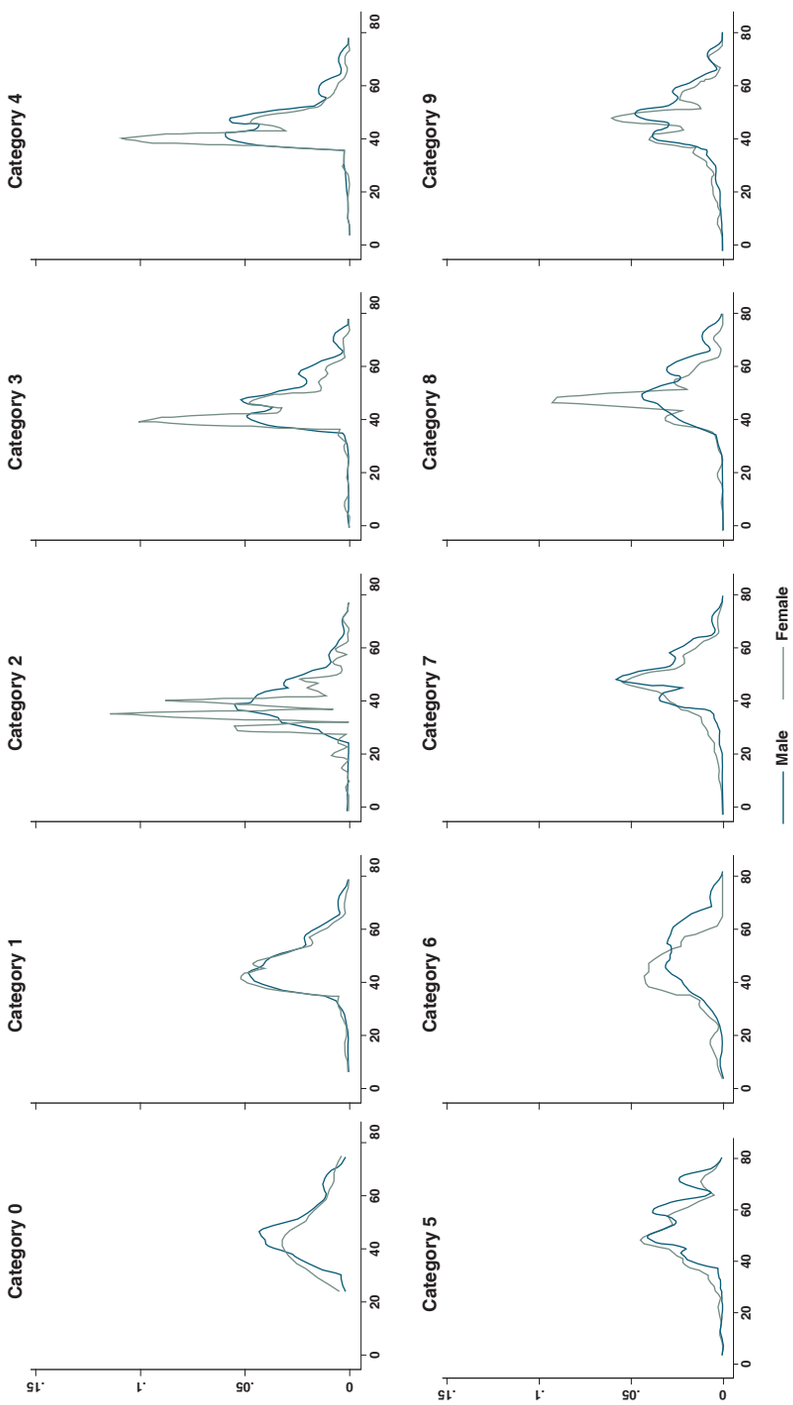
*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

Table 10 displays the regression output of work hours decomposition using Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition at the conditional mean of the work hours distribution. The model includes controls for basic demographic characteristics, children and adult dependents related controls within the household and parenthood-related controls. The results reveal a positive work hours gap that is unfavourable to female employees in all three years. The gap widened in 2015 compared to 2010 but reduced in 2019, even falling below the 2010 level. (For full regression outputs see Appendix C)

This work hours gap after controlling to children and adult dependents related controls within the household and parenthood-related variables is an empirically proved evidence of women's disproportionate care work burden which prevents them in engage in jobs that need high commitment. As discussed in the review of literature, this gap ultimately leads to pay dissimilarities between men and women as women are concentrated in low paid jobs which needs less commitment to save more hours to engage in care work which is productive though unpaid.

Figure 13. Work hours distributions over occupations (usual hours per week) – 2019



Source: Authors' compilations based on DCS – LFS - 2019

Note: Category 1 - Legislators, senior officials, and managers; Category 2 - Professionals; Category 3 - Technicians and associate professionals; Category 4 - Clerks; Category 5 - Service workers and shop and market sales workers; Category 6 - Skilled agricultural and fishery workers; Category 7 - Craft and related workers; Category 8 - Plant and machine operators and assemblers; Category 9 - Elementary occupations; Category 0 – Armed forces and other..

4.3 Link between Unpaid Care Work and Wages

The Mincerian wage equation, as specified in the methodology section, was utilized to examine the effects of care-related variables on employee wages. The coefficients for both parenthood statuses, being a mother and being a father, were found to be positive. This suggests that fathers tend to earn higher wages than male employees without children, and similarly, mothers tend to earn higher wages than female employees without children. However, the wage premium associated with parenthood is less pronounced for mothers compared to fathers. The results shed light on how women's care work burden shapes their wages. Specifically, female employees with children under 1 and 3 years old typically earn less than their female counterparts without children, whereas fathers with children under 1 and 3 years old tend to earn higher wages compared to other male employees (Table 11). This highlights a possible gender wage gap stemming from the burden of care work, where women's wages are adversely affected while fathers' wages are comparatively higher.

Table 13. Wage determinants

	2010	2015	2019
Mother	13.353***	38.381***	16.522
	(1.916)	(6.337)	(12.961)
Father	26.583***	84.198***	98.660**
	(3.135)	(16.458)	(44.636)
Dummy - Adult Dependents	0.387	0.582	1.380
	(1.254)	(3.354)	(13.063)
Dummy - Mother (Children with below 1) (Base: Non mother females)	-1.968	-6.229	-30.831
	(4.290)	(9.941)	(19.705)
Dummy - Mother (Children with below 3) (Base: Non mother females)	-11.117***	-41.787***	-39.074
	(3.561)	(14.269)	(33.978)
Dummy - Father (Children with below 1) (Base: Non father males)	5.557***	-1.410	42.932
	(1.854)	(5.501)	(32.557)
Dummy - Father (Children with below 3) (Base: Non father males)	4.708***	10.321**	-32.592
	(1.527)	(5.248)	(30.560)
Constant	86.222***	204.661***	345.377***
	(3.397)	(17.808)	(40.919)
Observations	14,693	17,480	17,640
R-squared	0.576	0.572	0.254
Adj. R-squared	0.575	0.572	0.253

*Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

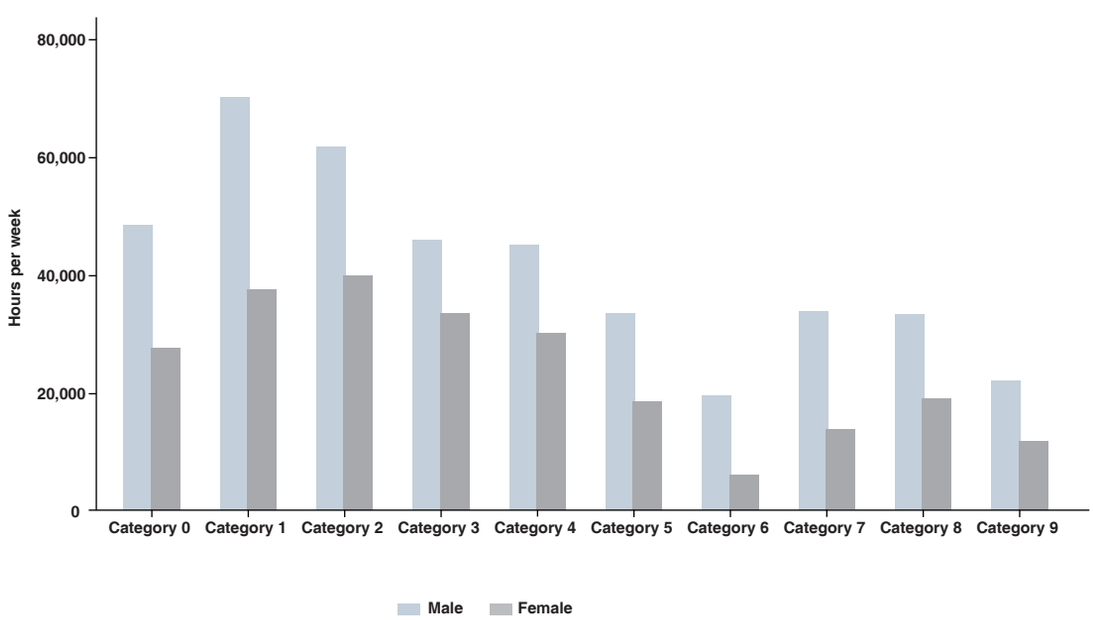
To address the selection bias in the wage equation, a multinomial logit model was employed for the selection equation using occupations categorized by broad skill levels, as described in the methods section. This analysis reveals that women with children under the age of 3 have a lower probability of participating in all three types of jobs—high-skilled, low-skilled, and medium-skilled—compared to women without children. Moreover, among women, the probability of participation in high-skilled jobs is even lower for those with children under 3 years old compared to other skill groups. Similarly, fathers with children under 1 year old in all skilled groups in all three years of consideration except the medium skilled group in 2010 exhibit a lower probability of participation compared to other men. However, this trend reverses for fathers with children under 3 years old, who demonstrate a higher probability of participating in all job types compared to other men. This suggests that while fathers may be more involved in childcare when their children are very small, in contrast women continue to bear the major responsibility for childcare even as their children grow older (Table D 1-Appendix D).

4.4 Gender Pay Gap Analysis

This section presents the findings of the gender wage gap analysis. Initially, it provides a descriptive overview of the current gender wage gap using data from the 2019 Labour Force Survey. Figure 14 illustrates the average wages of males and females across major occupation categories. The data clearly indicate that male average wages exceed those of females across all occupation categories in 2019, with the widest disparity observed in managerial roles (category 1).

Subsequently, the Figure 15 illustrates the average incomes of men and women across income deciles in 2019. In nearly all deciles, the average incomes of men and women are comparable. However, a notable gap emerges at the upper end of the income distribution, where men have a distinct advantage. This top end represents the highest-paid jobs, where women earn considerably less compared to men, as depicted in the graph.

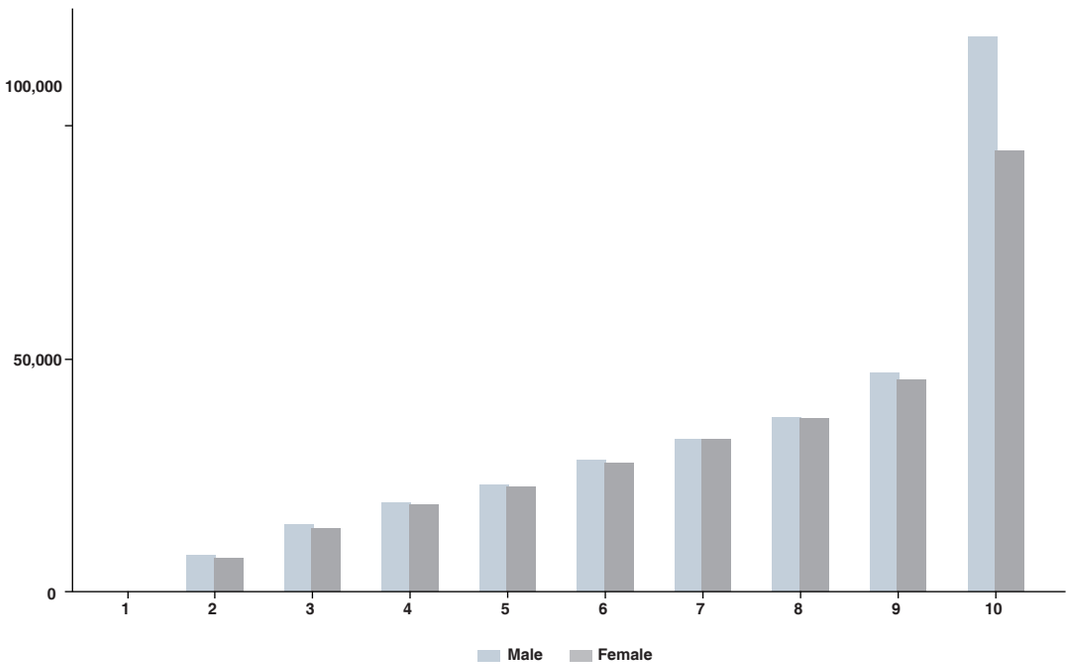
Figure 14. Average wages over occupations



Source: Authors' compilations based on DCS – LFS - 2019

Note: Category 1 - Legislators, senior officials, and managers; Category 2 - Professionals; Category 3 - Technicians and associate professionals; Category 4 - Clerks; Category 5 - Service workers and shop and market sales workers; Category 6 - Skilled agricultural and fishery workers; Category 7 - Craft and related workers; Category 8 - Plant and machine operators and assemblers; Category 9 - Elementary occupations; Category 0 – Armed forces and other.

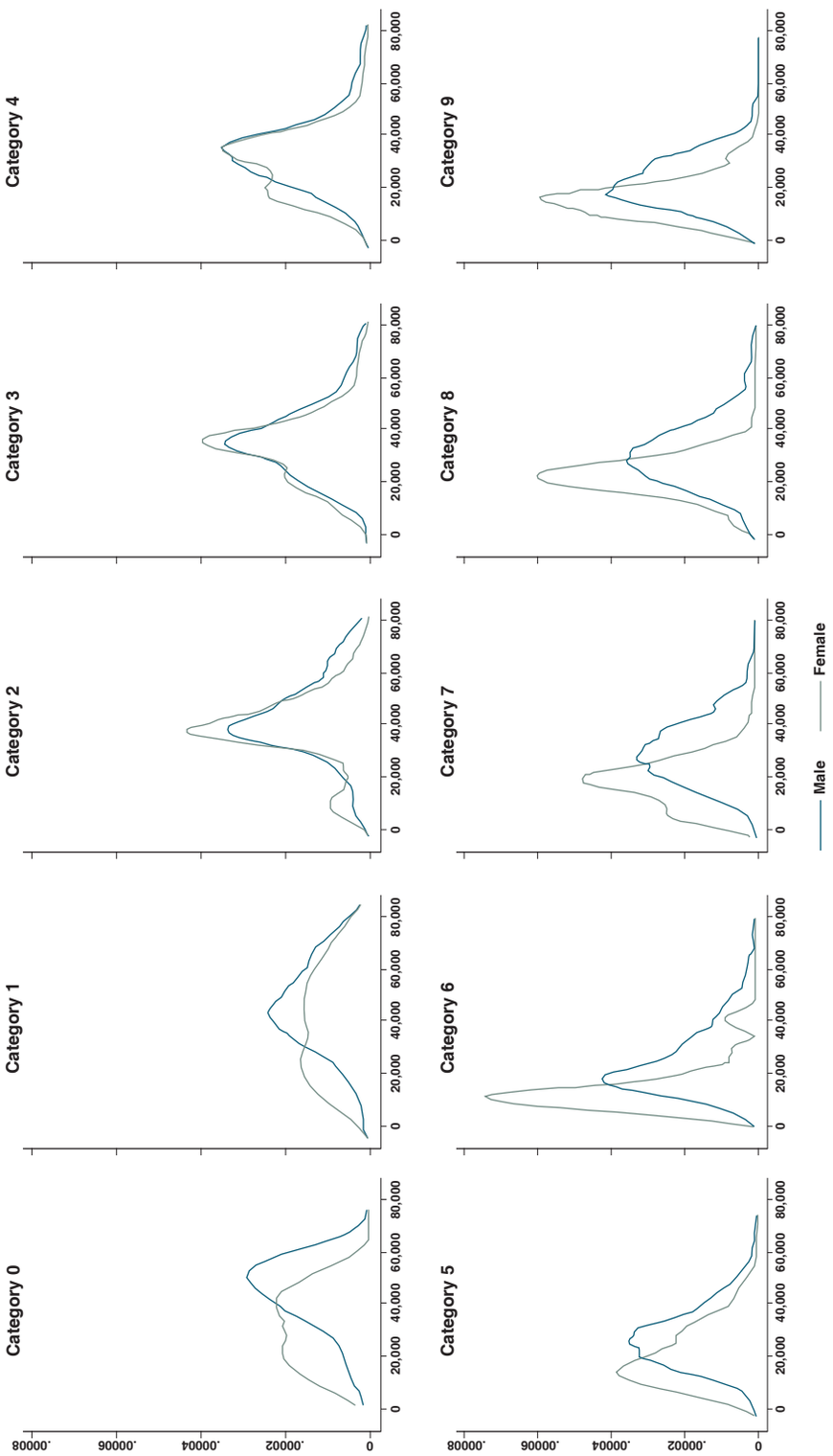
Figure 15. Average wages over income deciles



Source. Authors' illustration based on DCS – LFS – 2019

The Figure 16 presents the kernel density distribution of wages for both men and women across major occupation categories in 2019, highlighting the disparity in wage distributions between genders. Across almost all occupation categories, there is a noticeable difference between men and women, with a higher concentration of men in higher wage brackets. Conversely, women are more concentrated in lower wage brackets compared to men.

Figure 16. Wage distributions over occupations - 2019



Source: Authors' compilations based on DCS – LFS - 2019

Note: Category 1 - Legislators, senior officials and managers; Category 2 - Professionals; Category 3 - Technicians and associate professionals; Category 4 - Clerks; Category 5 - Service workers and shop and market sales workers; Category 6 - Skilled agricultural and fishery workers; Category 7 - Craft and related workers; Category 8 - Plant and machine operators and assemblers; Category 9 - Elementary occupations; Category 0 – Armed forces and other.

Table 12 displays the regression output of wage decomposition using Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition at the conditional mean of the wage distribution. Model one includes controls only for basic demographic characteristics such as age, sex, education, sector, ethnicity, religion, and marital status. Model two further includes variables related to children and adult dependents within the household, in addition to the basic demographic characteristics. Model three extends to include parenthood-related variables along with all controls used in model two. The results indicate a positive wage gap unfavourable to female employees in all three years. Moreover, the gap appears to have widened over time from 2010 to 2019, however the reason is not clear. The portion of the gap explained by control variables substantially increased after accounting for children and adult dependents-related variables, as well as parenthood-related variables in all three years. These controls serve to proxy the unpaid care work burden of women, and the results suggest a significant effect of this burden on the gender pay gap. Nearly all the results are statistically significant at a 99% confidence level; however, there are not enough statistically significant results to discuss the unexplained portion of the gap. (For full regression outputs see Appendix E).

Table 14. Gender wage gap at mean of the wage distribution

	2010			2015			2019		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Male	3.922***	3.922***	3.922***	4.477***	4.477***	4.477***	4.832***	4.832***	4.832***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Female	3.704***	3.704***	3.704***	4.240***	4.240***	4.240***	4.609***	4.609***	4.609***
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Difference	0.218***	0.218***	0.218***	0.237***	0.237***	0.237***	0.223***	0.223***	0.223***
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Explained	0.002	0.218***	0.218***	-0.043***	0.237***	0.237***	-0.056***	0.223***	0.223***
	(0.008)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.005)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Unexplained	0.216***	-0.000	-0.000	0.280***	-0.000	-0.000	0.279***	0.000	0.000
	(0.022)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.013)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.011)	(0.001)	(0.001)

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

To address the limitations such as effects of outliers of OLS regression conducted at the mean of the distribution, separate regressions were performed at different percentiles of the wage distribution. These regressions include all controls as in model three of the OLS regression at the mean including children and adult dependents-related variables as well as parenthood-related variables. The Table 13 presents the results at different percentiles, indicating a positive and unfavourable gap for women at both the 25th and 50th percentiles in all three years. However, there is not a considerable gap at the 75th percentile in 2019, and it is negligible in 2015 and negative in 2010, indicating it is unfavourable to men in 2010. This suggests even if the descriptive statistics show a gap in average wages between men and women at the top end of the wage distribution, the regression results do not show such a gap. However, the explained portion is much lower at the 75th percentile, indicating the presence of other factors affecting wages at the high end of the distribution. Unlike the gap at the mean, quantiles reveal a considerable unexplained portion in both the 25th and 50th percentiles in 2010 and 2015 and in all percentiles in 2019. (For full regression outputs, see Appendix E).

Table 15. Gender wage gap at different percentiles of the wage distribution

	2010			2015			2019		
	25th Percentile	50th Percentile	75th Percentile	25th Percentile	50th Percentile	75th Percentile	25th Percentile	50th Percentile	75th Percentile
Male	3.647*** (0.008)	3.990*** (0.007)	4.372*** (0.008)	4.124*** (0.006)	4.541*** (0.005)	4.937*** (0.006)	4.475*** (0.006)	4.863*** (0.005)	5.249*** (0.006)
Female	3.342*** (0.012)	3.716*** (0.011)	4.392*** (0.025)	3.744*** (0.011)	4.224*** (0.011)	4.932*** (0.018)	4.127*** (0.011)	4.595*** (0.011)	5.249*** (0.012)
Difference	0.305*** (0.014)	0.274*** (0.013)	-0.020 (0.027)	0.380*** (0.012)	0.317*** (0.012)	0.006 (0.019)	0.349*** (0.013)	0.268*** (0.012)	0.000 (0.013)
Explained	0.056*** (0.012)	0.052*** (0.011)	0.012 (0.012)	0.058*** (0.011)	0.042*** (0.008)	0.012 (0.010)	0.027*** (0.011)	0.010 (0.009)	-0.027*** (0.009)
Unexplained	0.249*** (0.018)	0.222*** (0.016)	-0.032 (0.027)	0.322*** (0.016)	0.274*** (0.013)	-0.006 (0.020)	0.322*** (0.016)	0.258*** (0.014)	0.027* (0.014)

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

These above findings provide insights into the persistent gender pay gap, which is influenced by disparities in labour force participation and working hours, primarily due to the burden of unpaid care work on women.

Overall, the findings of this study underscore the critical link between unpaid care work and the gender pay gap. The unequal distribution of caregiving responsibilities significantly hinders women's labour force participation, limits their career advancement opportunities, and perpetuates disparities in working hours and wages. Addressing these inequalities requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy interventions aimed at redistributing care work and promoting gender equality in the workplace.

PART III

1. Conclusion

The aim of this pilot study was to understand and substantiate with evidence, the existence of a Gender Pay Gap in Sri Lanka. The qualitative analysis of 'unexplained factors' conducted for this pilot study focused on the experiences of eight female workers from different occupational backgrounds and with representatives from the Corporate Sector and Trade Unions. The quantitative analysis of the labour force data for selected years, shows that while the Gender Pay Gap exists, there are several unexplained factors, including but not limited to unpaid care work burden, gender-based discrimination, biases and structural impediments such as entrenched patriarchal values in every field including education, employment.

One significant issue highlighted in the analysis is the double burden placed on women who must balance unpaid care work responsibilities and the requirements and demands of the paid work they undertake. The underlying thread of care responsibilities in the home links the lives of the women interviewees as they negotiate income earning activities or professional careers and their care responsibilities.

The findings of this study underscore the persistent gender pay gap which is closely intertwined with unpaid care work. Through an analysis of labour force participation, and wage and working hours differentials, it becomes evident that women continue to face significant disadvantages in the labour market compared to their male counterparts. The conclusions drawn from these analyses are crucial in understanding the complexities of gender inequality in labour market outcomes due to unequal distribution of care work and in formulating effective strategies to address them.

The descriptive statistics on women's employment in the labour market underscores persistent gender disparities in industries, occupations, and employment status. Despite progress, women remain underrepresented in higher-paying industries and occupations and are concentrated in lower-paid service roles. Additionally, a significant proportion of women are engaged in part-time and unpaid family work, which possibly could lead to pay disparities. This shows how traditional gender roles and the burden of care work hinder women's access to high-paid jobs and career advancement opportunities, perpetuating the gender pay gap in Sri Lanka's labour market.

Labour force participation analysis further elucidates the impact of unpaid care work on women's employment opportunities. Despite high educational achievements and favourable social indicators among women, the female labour force participation rate remains significantly lower than that of men. This disparity is exacerbated by the presence of children and adult dependents in the household, with women more likely to withdraw from the labour force as caregiving responsibilities increased.

The working hours gap analysis provides additional insights into the challenges faced by women in the labour market. Men consistently work longer hours across occupation categories, indicating a significant disparity in work hours between genders. This gap persists and is explained by the demographic characteristics and caregiving responsibilities, highlighting the pervasive nature of women's disproportionate burden of care work. This not only limits women's access to higher-paying jobs and promotions that require longer hours but also perpetuates their concentration in low-paid, part-time employment.

Women are compelled to move in and out of the labour market intermittently as they attempt to balance their unpaid care responsibilities and employment. These trajectories also affect their ability to have reasonable savings through the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and Employee Trust Fund/EPF for formal sector workers and individual savings for those in the informal sector. For low-income earners concentrated in the lower echelons of the labour market, EPF/ETF are often the mainstay of their lives savings. When women are compromised by having to leave the formal labour force for any period of time, their ability to contribute and grow these savings are affected and adds to their income vulnerability in old age.

Gender biases in recruitment, salary negotiation, and promotion discrimination were evident. Women often face discrimination during the recruitment process due to their gendered assigned reproductive roles. They may encounter disparities in pay and opportunities for career advancement compared to equally qualified male counterparts. This highlights the urgent need for systemic changes to promote gender equality in the workplace.

The absence of quality and affordable care facilities, such as day care centres for children, exacerbates the burden on women, limiting their participation in the labour force. Addressing this issue requires investment in accessible and high-quality care facilities to support women in balancing work and family responsibilities.

Most of the existing care needs for the elderly and for family members with disabilities in Sri Lanka are met through unpaid care work, primarily performed by women. This creates a significant barrier for women entering the workforce and places a double burden on those engaged in both full-time paid work and unpaid care at home, a trend exacerbated during the pandemic. Therefore, the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies is crucial in addressing this disparity and promoting women's economic empowerment. Such services free up women's time to participate in paid work while ensuring the autonomy and rights of all people who need care. This issue demands urgent attention, especially due to the challenging economic situation in Sri Lanka, first influenced by the pandemic and then by the worst economic crisis since independence. Since the fourth quarter of 2021, there has been an increase in large-scale migration of workers, including white-collar employees, seeking better-paid jobs overseas as a direct result of economic distress.

Gender Responsive Unionisation emerges as a crucial factor in narrowing the gender pay gap and expanding labour market opportunities for women. Trade unions (albeit a few) that advocate for fair minimum wages and provide opportunities for women to enter traditionally male-dominated sectors need to be recognised. These measures are important in challenging gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality in the workforce.

A few companies in Sri Lanka have undertaken initiatives to support gender equality within their organisations. These efforts encompass a multifaceted approach, ranging from merit-based evaluations and promotions irrespective of gender identities, to the establishment of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) committees. By prioritising performance and potential over gender or experience, these companies have reportedly seen positive outcomes, including a 100% return ratio of employees from maternity leave following the implementation of extended paid leave policies. Moreover, the formation of D&I committees, composed of diverse members, underscores a commitment to driving gender equality initiatives across various sectors and hierarchical levels.

Parallel to these internal measures, the some private sector entities, only a few at present, have showcased strategies to address pay equity and to challenge traditional gender norms in the workplace. Acknowledging the existence of the gender pay gap, these companies have implemented policies aimed at ensuring equal pay for individuals in comparable roles, regardless of gender. One Trade Union by actively recruiting and training women for positions historically dominated by men, such as crane operators, join these companies challenging entrenched stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive work environment. This concerted effort represents a significant departure from traditional gender roles and underscores a commitment to dismantling structural inequalities.

The introduction by these companies of extended parental leave policies, including paternity leave, signifies the possibilities for a broader policy shift that would acknowledge the importance of paternal involvement in childcare. Such policies if applied beyond these few companies, would not only promote gender equality in caregiving responsibilities but also challenge societal norms that have long assigned such duties primarily to women. By implementing diverse and comprehensive strategies, albeit in limited scale, some corporate entities in Sri Lanka are attempting to create workplaces where gender biases and discrimination are actively countered, paving the way for more inclusive and equitable environments where all employees can thrive.

The Gender Pay Gap Analyses in Sri Lanka adds to the growing body of research which illustrates the complex nature of gender discrimination in the workforce and the formidable obstacles hindering women's attainment of economic equality. Despite efforts to promote gender parity even in legislation and in a few operational policies, the pay gap as well as challenges to realise gender equality persist, fuelled by factors such as the burden of unpaid care work, and entrenched gender bias in recruitment and promotion, and systemic barriers rooted in patriarchal norms.

In-depth research into the gender pay gap, sustained advocacy and collaborative action are imperative to drive meaningful change. This entails continued engagement between employers, policymakers, trade unions, and civil society to implement comprehensive strategies that empower women, dismantle discriminatory practices, and create pathways for gender-inclusive workforce participation. By prioritising gender equality, Sri Lanka can cultivate workplaces that are not only inclusive and equitable but also contribute to broader societal advancement.

2. Policy Recommendations

The quantitative analysis of labour force in this pilot study identified how the burden of unpaid care work on women exacerbates the pay gap between men and women. The study also reveals that the majority of women are in lower wage occupation categories despite having higher educational qualifications than men. Women in the Sri Lankan labour force often cannot advance beyond a certain occupational level due to the burden of unpaid care work, which they must prioritise at a certain age to fulfil family responsibilities. Furthermore, in the Sri Lankan labour market, male-dominated occupation categories receive higher wages compared to female-dominated ones.

The qualitative analysis in this study reveals that unexplained factors such as gendered discriminatory practices, gender biases, and structural barriers contribute to widening the pay gap between men and women. Based on the case studies, it is evident that the care work burden on women plays a major role in determining their representation in the labour force, impacting on both their active participation and the types of occupations they take up. These findings are corroborated by earlier referenced studies. Therefore, the recommended policies should focus on addressing both the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study.

2.1 State and Private Sector

Instances of discrimination and disparities in pay and career advancement opportunities underscore the pressing need for systemic reforms aimed at fostering gender equality in workplaces. In order to minimise the gender pay gap, the state should take the primary initiative to address the structural and logistical issues that prevent women from entering and remaining within the labour force.

Proactive policy measures to encourage both the public and private sectors to address the social and economic needs of female employees including expanding the availability of meaningful paternity leave for male employees is a necessity. Increasing state and private sector recognition of social reproduction as a core principle and improving care infrastructure facilities such as state or private facilitated accessible (in terms of cost and geographical proximity) child care, elderly care and care of persons with disabilities can be prioritised in state and private sector annual budgets. The provision of quality elder care services is of particular importance given the demographic changes in the country with a sharply increasing elderly population. These services can take the form of quality facilities as well as a means of support for family members who are the primary caregivers for their elder family members. Such support would enable these family members to obtain or upgrade marketable skills to obtain paid work.

Examples of effective legislative and policy focus on expanding and redistributing care work demonstrate that laws can also play a supportive role in addressing redistribution of care work. The National Integrated Care System in Uruguay[41] has transformed the understanding of “care”. Civil society and academia in Uruguay advocated for a redefinition of "care" as a collective and societal concern, moving it away from the realm of private and family responsibility and positioning it as a human rights issue. Under this legislation, all children, individuals with disabilities, and elderly persons have the right to receive care. The state not only offers care services but also ensures their quality through training and regulations.

There is considerable inequality in access to paid care services, disproportionately affecting individuals who are disadvantaged by class, gender, ethnicity, and disability. These groups often have a reduced capacity to afford the care they need. Paradoxically, the need for care is greatest when individuals are least able to gather the necessary resources to pay for it. For instance, adults with disabilities are likely to have a diminished earning capacity, making market-based care services inaccessible to those who need them most.

[41] https://lac.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Americas/Documentos/Publicaciones/2019/10/SNIC%20web%20INGLES.pdf

Macroeconomic policies that promote economic growth, job creation, and opportunities for decent work for both women and men drawing in also those in the informal sector accompanied by skills upgrading programmes for women can contribute to the Gender Pay Gap, including a focus on drawing in women employees in the informal economy. Programmes that facilitate unpaid caregivers to take up paid work can include avenues and opportunities that will increase women's representation in higher wage/pay levels as well as making programmes available accessible to women to enter into traditionally male dominated occupation categories (STEM field).

There needs to be targeted investment in comprehensive data collection and analysis on gender pay differentials, regular surveys and studies to monitor progress and identify areas needing intervention. Academic focus and policy research can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented policies and identify best practices. The private sector needs to adopt gender-neutral hiring practices and gender-sensitive interview processes as well as implement gender diversity policies and quotas to increase the representation of women in leadership positions and address the "glass ceiling" effect.

2.2 Employers

Employers should effectively implement policies that minimise workplace gender-based discrimination and harassment. Existing provisions in law and policy are for the most part not monitored for effectiveness. There also needs to be strong policies that ensure transparency in recruitment processes, pay and promotion, through enforcing of pay transparency measures that would require companies to report pay data disaggregated by gender. This can help address information asymmetries and enable female employees to challenge discriminatory practices. Compliance can be incentivised through public procurement policies, similar to successful models like those in Switzerland.

Increasing women's representation in decision making levels through proactive avenues and training for women to better access to training and pay negotiations.

Providing flexible working hours can and do bring in more productive outputs especially from women employees, as was seen in the qualitative analysis of this study. Additionally, there should be provisions for equal leave policies for both parents, policies that are well-paid and non-transferable have gained significant global attention in recent years. These policies, which are being adopted by some, albeit few, companies in Sri Lanka in recent years appear to be showing effective results. However, there needs to be an expansion of such provisions throughout both the private and public sectors with accompanying constructive awareness programmes on encouraging men to take on caregiving responsibilities. Promoting greater equality in the household, workplace, and society as a whole should be part of broader strategies aimed at reducing and redistributing care work.

2.3 Trade Unions

This study has brought to light approaches of trade unions on addressing the low participation of women in the labour force and on what measures need to be taken. The employer's trade union acknowledges the need for employers to remove discriminatory laws and to adopt anti-harassment protocols. Their view is that provisions such as maternity and paternity leave should be financed by the state and not the private sector.

The impact of gender responsive trade union approaches to expand employment opportunities for women and also provide opportunities for technical skills training for women to break into 'traditional' male dominated occupations emerges as an encouraging step in bolstering women's entry into the labour force. These trade unions also give voice to the need to minimise women's relegation to lower wage jobs, such advocacy can be taken up by the dominant male headed trade unions.

To take such interventions further, trade unions must introduce gender-sensitive curricula and vocational training programs that encourage women to enter non-traditional fields. Scholarships and incentives can be given for women pursuing higher education and training in high-demand sectors to bridge the skill gap and increase female participation in the workforce.

There needs to be a more focused approach to implement policies to ensure safe working conditions for women, including measures to facilitate night work and ensure workplace safety. Trade Unions can work towards strengthening social protection policies within the union, including support for maternity leave and childcare support, to reduce the motherhood pay gap and support women's continuous participation in the workforce.

Trade Unions can ensure that minimum wage legislation is gender-neutral and adequately enforced, particularly in sectors with high female employment. While recent changes in labour laws have weakened provisions for collective bargaining as a means to address pay disparities, trade unions should push to encourage female representation in trade unions and at all collective bargaining processes.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Table A 1. Number of employees in major industry categories by gender

Industry Category	Male	Female	Total
2019			
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1333249	738692	2071941
Mining and quarrying	59244	1658	60902
Manufacturing	784687	719627	1504314
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	20897	3924	24821
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	20931	5965	26896
Construction	623898	17590	641488
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	800488	334008	1134496
Transportation and storage	497102	17368	514470
Accommodation and food service activities	145858	86486	232344
Information and communication	46255	18126	64381
Financial and insurance activities	105999	81934	187933
Real estate activities	11460	1992	13452
Professional, scientific and technical activities	59418	30899	90317
Administrative and support service activities	149307	55701	205008
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	278608	157567	436175
Education	131014	294916	425930
Human health and social work activities	61889	107344	169233
Arts, entertainment and recreation	39023	9467	48490
Other service activities	93078	42169	135247
Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	101972	84998	186970
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	4520	1365	5885
Total	5368897	2811796	8180693

Industry Category	Male	Female	Total
2015			
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1360831	883716	2244547
Mining and quarrying	57116	3498	60614
Manufacturing	741643	666265	1407908
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	12409	1809	14218
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	9605	3091	12697
Construction	505405	17329	522734
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	756298	303507	1059805
Transportation and storage	465920	14418	480338
Accommodation and food service activities	140042	62738	202780
Information and communication	41206	11165	52372
Financial and insurance activities	79485	65023	144508
Real estate activities	9526	1114	10640
Professional, scientific and technical activities	42853	22097	64950
Administrative and support service activities	91940	28579	120519
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	394989	204958	599947
Education	92824	231350	324174
Human health and social work activities	45976	91389	137365
Arts, entertainment and recreation	32657	10110	42767
Other service activities	105307	38461	143768
Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	107469	69786	177255
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	4295	2775	7070
Total	5097798	2733178	7830976

Note: Industry categories are based on ISICr4

Source: Author's calculations using LFS, DCS

Appendix B

Table B 1. Determinants of Labor Force Participation – Overall working age sample

LFPR - Overall	2019			
VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	-0.015***	-0.013***	-0.013***	-0.013***
	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)
Female (Base: Male)	-1.143***	-1.134***	-1.146***	-0.915***
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.013)
Education	0.018***	0.017***	0.017***	0.015***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Rural (Base: Urban)	0.009	0.014	0.013	0.012
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.016)
Estate (Base: Urban)	0.246***	0.254***	0.255***	0.306***
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Sri Lankan Tamil (Base: Sinhala)	-0.025	-0.028	-0.032	-0.020
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.038)
Indian Tamil (Base: Sinhala)	0.061	0.072	0.069	0.079
	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Sri Lankan Moor (Base: Sinhala)	-0.437***	-0.447***	-0.459***	-0.422***
	(0.141)	(0.142)	(0.141)	(0.140)
Malay (Base: Sinhala)	-0.052	0.005	0.002	0.060
	(0.188)	(0.188)	(0.185)	(0.187)
Burger (Base: Sinhala)	0.111	0.135	0.138	0.131
	(0.153)	(0.155)	(0.156)	(0.169)
Other (Base: Sinhala)	-0.221	-0.286	-0.295	-0.220
	(0.269)	(0.268)	(0.266)	(0.258)
Hindu (Base: Buddhist)	-0.129***	-0.130***	-0.126***	-0.140***
	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.041)
Muslim (Base: Buddhist)	0.021	0.048	0.051	0.025
	(0.141)	(0.142)	(0.140)	(0.139)
Christians (Base: Buddhist)	-0.152***	-0.158***	-0.156***	-0.159***
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)
Other (Base: Buddhist)	0.297	0.332	0.284	0.418
	(0.287)	(0.303)	(0.290)	(0.278)
Married (Base: Never married)	0.834***	0.715***	0.715***	0.421***
	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.023)

2015				2010			
Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
-0.014***	-0.012***	-0.012***	-0.012***	-0.014***	-0.012***	-0.012***	-0.013***
(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
-1.136***	-1.130***	-1.108***	-0.897***	-1.158***	-1.144***	-1.137***	-0.948***
(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.018)	(0.014)
0.014***	0.011***	0.010***	0.011***	0.003*	-0.000	-0.001	-0.001
(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
0.080***	0.079***	0.078***	0.088***	0.103***	0.104***	0.105***	0.108***
(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
0.351***	0.347***	0.350***	0.381***	0.330***	0.327***	0.329***	0.344***
(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.042)
-0.093**	-0.082**	-0.080**	-0.070*	0.034	0.053	0.057	0.047
(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.050)	(0.051)
0.090*	0.110**	0.115**	0.144***	0.002	0.011	0.019	0.021
(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.055)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.062)
-0.325**	-0.303**	-0.319**	-0.344***	-0.135	-0.141	-0.157	-0.188
(0.128)	(0.127)	(0.127)	(0.129)	(0.114)	(0.111)	(0.112)	(0.120)
-0.170	-0.117	-0.132	-0.169	0.085	0.096	0.078	0.067
(0.159)	(0.160)	(0.160)	(0.166)	(0.161)	(0.157)	(0.159)	(0.171)
-0.242	-0.181	-0.181	-0.116	-0.504**	-0.497**	-0.477**	-0.649***
(0.158)	(0.157)	(0.158)	(0.159)	(0.217)	(0.214)	(0.212)	(0.231)
-0.685***	-0.673***	-0.705***	-0.848***	0.283	0.243	0.215	0.232
(0.254)	(0.242)	(0.254)	(0.295)	(0.386)	(0.391)	(0.394)	(0.372)
-0.117***	-0.122***	-0.127***	-0.124***	-0.050	-0.068	-0.073	-0.045
(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.053)
-0.115	-0.119	-0.117	-0.054	-0.277**	-0.258**	-0.252**	-0.192
(0.128)	(0.128)	(0.127)	(0.129)	(0.114)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.120)
-0.126***	-0.135***	-0.143***	-0.135***	-0.138***	-0.144***	-0.144***	-0.138***
(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.028)
0.635	0.623	0.647*	0.608	-0.492	-0.578	-0.566	-0.372
(0.395)	(0.389)	(0.375)	(0.397)	(0.456)	(0.453)	(0.453)	(0.473)
0.785***	0.643***	0.638***	0.331***	0.766***	0.607***	0.598***	0.335***
(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.024)

LFPR - Overall	2019			
VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Widowed (Base: Never married)	0.457***	0.317***	0.293***	0.146***
	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Divorced (Base: Never married)	1.338***	1.230***	1.207***	1.035***
	(0.089)	(0.090)	(0.088)	(0.089)
Separated (Base: Never married)	1.151***	1.012***	1.010***	0.819***
	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Dummy – Family (children below1)		-0.097***	-0.023	-0.035
		(0.036)	(0.073)	(0.092)
Dummy – Family (children below3)		-0.006	0.518***	0.165***
		(0.025)	(0.050)	(0.057)
Dummy–Family (children below18)		-0.067***	-0.063***	-0.290***
		(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Dummy–Family (adult dependents)		-0.274***	-0.420***	-0.216***
		(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.011)
Dummy – Mother (children below1)				-0.185*
(Base: Non mother females)				(0.108)
Dummy – Mother (children below3)				-0.482***
(Base: Non mother females)				(0.074)
Dummy–Mother (children below18)				0.517***
(Base: Non mother females)				(0.024)
Dummy–Father (children below1)				-0.206
(Base: Non father males)				(0.172)
Dummy–Father (children below3)				0.402***
(Base: Non father males)				(0.130)
Dummy–Father (children below18)				1.519***
(Base: Non father males)				(0.035)
Female # Family (children below1)			-0.125	
			(0.091)	
Female # Family (children below 3)			-0.786***	
			(0.062)	
Female # Family (children below18)			-0.011	
			(0.011)	
Female # Family (adult dependents)			0.280***	
			(0.020)	

2015				2010			
Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
0.390***	0.233***	0.205***	0.046	0.372***	0.189***	0.166***	0.051
(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.037)
1.045***	0.893***	0.876***	0.686***	1.097***	0.927***	0.908***	0.763***
(0.090)	(0.091)	(0.090)	(0.089)	(0.106)	(0.106)	(0.105)	(0.105)
1.049***	0.883***	0.870***	0.676***	1.003***	0.824***	0.813***	0.659***
(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.066)
	-0.075**	0.061	0.034		-0.068*	0.114	0.054
	(0.032)	(0.070)	(0.086)		(0.035)	(0.072)	(0.091)
	-0.018	0.513***	0.179***		-0.015	0.495***	0.077
	(0.022)	(0.046)	(0.051)		(0.025)	(0.047)	(0.057)
	-0.063***	-0.064***	-0.286***		-0.049***	-0.066***	-0.249***
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.009)		(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.009)
	-0.282***	-0.404***	-0.225***		-0.261***	-0.368***	-0.198***
	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.012)		(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.013)
			-0.209**				-0.263**
			(0.098)				(0.106)
			-0.568***				-0.473***
			(0.065)				(0.072)
			0.575***				0.576***
			(0.023)				(0.025)
			-0.213				-0.010
			(0.144)				(0.170)
			0.219**				0.490***
			(0.104)				(0.118)
			1.537***				1.339***
			(0.035)				(0.036)
		-0.200**				-0.264***	
		(0.085)				(0.089)	
		-0.799***				-0.785***	
		(0.056)				(0.059)	
		-0.004				0.026**	
		(0.011)				(0.011)	
		0.237***				0.204***	
		(0.021)				(0.024)	

LFPR - Overall	2019			
VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	0.622***	0.785***	0.792***	0.825***
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.036)
Observations	74,811	74,811	74,811	74,811
p	0	0	0	0
chi2	12959	12825	13434	12400

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

Table B 2. Determinants of Labor Force Participation – Male working age sample

	2019		
VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	-0.033***	-0.031***	-0.029***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education	-0.002	-0.009***	-0.010***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Rural (Base: Urban)	0.067***	0.065***	0.065***
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.025)
Estate (Base: Urban)	0.003	0.017	0.048
	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.058)
Sri Lankan Tamil (Base: Sinhala)	0.086	0.081	0.131**
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.062)
Indian Tamil (Base: Sinhala)	0.143	0.140	0.163*
	(0.087)	(0.088)	(0.090)
Sri Lankan Moor (Base: Sinhala)	-0.563**	-0.526**	-0.510**
	(0.267)	(0.259)	(0.253)
Malay (Base: Sinhala)	-0.225	-0.086	-0.005
	(0.314)	(0.307)	(0.310)
Burger (Base: Sinhala)	0.136	0.121	0.077
	(0.225)	(0.221)	(0.241)
Other (Base: Sinhala)	-0.655*	-0.755**	-0.615*
	(0.356)	(0.362)	(0.356)
Hindu (Base: Buddhist)	-0.104	-0.104	-0.120*
	(0.064)	(0.063)	(0.066)

2015				2010			
Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
0.621***	0.829***	0.833***	0.816***	0.696***	0.899***	0.913***	0.917***
(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.037)
76,280	76,280	76,280	76,280	63,763	63,763	63,763	63,763
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13073	12908	13297	12196	11417	11135	11473	10709

2015			2010		
Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
-0.031***	-0.029***	-0.026***	-0.031***	-0.029***	-0.029***
(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
-0.003	-0.012***	-0.009***	-0.008***	-0.018***	-0.015***
(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
0.120***	0.122***	0.145***	0.102***	0.107***	0.114***
(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.031)
0.109*	0.111*	0.125*	0.071	0.078	0.061
(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.068)	(0.064)	(0.065)	(0.068)
0.109*	0.139**	0.181***	-0.037	0.009	0.003
(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.063)	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.080)
0.134	0.175**	0.207**	-0.207**	-0.190**	-0.200**
(0.086)	(0.086)	(0.090)	(0.093)	(0.093)	(0.097)
0.256	0.318	0.257	-0.061	-0.069	-0.093
(0.247)	(0.242)	(0.235)	(0.167)	(0.163)	(0.174)
0.510*	0.602**	0.468	-0.048	0.013	0.017
(0.302)	(0.299)	(0.296)	(0.240)	(0.244)	(0.272)
-0.077	0.011	0.118	-0.678**	-0.619**	-0.836***
(0.255)	(0.254)	(0.236)	(0.273)	(0.271)	(0.296)
0.218	0.129	-0.110	0.492	0.398	0.385
(0.427)	(0.437)	(0.499)	(0.671)	(0.677)	(0.628)
-0.178***	-0.198***	-0.181***	0.098	0.063	0.121
(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.067)	(0.082)	(0.081)	(0.084)

VARIABLES	2019 Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Muslim (Base: Buddhist)	0.402	0.394	0.427*
	(0.267)	(0.258)	(0.253)
Christians (Base: Buddhist)	-0.070	-0.072	-0.060
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.045)
Other (Base: Buddhist)	0.328	0.357	0.743
	(0.477)	(0.498)	(0.571)
Married (Base: Never married)	1.881***	1.681***	1.259***
	(0.033)	(0.039)	(0.035)
Widowed (Base: Never married)	1.118***	0.902***	0.710***
	(0.060)	(0.066)	(0.062)
Divorced (Base: Never married)	1.705***	1.551***	1.384***
	(0.174)	(0.174)	(0.181)
Separated (Base: Never married)	1.698***	1.478***	1.283***
	(0.109)	(0.112)	(0.114)
Dummy – Family (children below1)		-0.075	-0.183
		(0.079)	(0.139)
Dummy – Family (children below3)		0.383***	0.373***
		(0.053)	(0.077)
Dummy–Family (children below18)		-0.135***	-0.443***
		(0.009)	(0.015)
Dummy–Family (adult dependents)		-0.337***	-0.270***
		(0.016)	(0.016)
Dummy–Father (children below1)			-0.086
(Base: Non father males)			(0.167)
Dummy–Father (children below3)			
(Base: Non father males)			
Dummy–Father (children below18)			1.460***
(Base: Non father males)			(0.045)
Constant	0.878***	1.193***	1.540***
	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.160)
Observations	35,288	35,288	35,288
p	0	0	0
chi2	3912	3583	4208
age	-0.033***	-0.031***	-0.029***

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

	2015			2010	
Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
-0.404	-0.441*	-0.281	-0.055	-0.015	0.081
(0.247)	(0.242)	(0.236)	(0.167)	(0.164)	(0.174)
-0.121***	-0.148***	-0.120***	-0.103**	-0.104**	-0.091**
(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.044)	(0.045)
-0.346	-0.228	-0.108	3.830***	4.212***	4.484***
(0.676)	(0.601)	(0.588)	(0.256)	(0.241)	(0.248)
1.843***	1.618***	1.170***	1.764***	1.519***	1.173***
(0.032)	(0.039)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.041)	(0.037)
0.974***	0.724***	0.491***	0.884***	0.613***	0.475***
(0.059)	(0.065)	(0.061)	(0.065)	(0.070)	(0.067)
1.545***	1.327***	1.157***	1.452***	1.213***	1.122***
(0.172)	(0.177)	(0.183)	(0.201)	(0.199)	(0.214)
1.611***	1.343***	1.109***	1.505***	1.228***	1.075***
(0.112)	(0.115)	(0.119)	(0.113)	(0.115)	(0.118)
	0.004	0.135		0.089	0.050
	(0.076)	(0.155)		(0.077)	(0.140)
	0.360***	0.336***		0.337***	0.112
	(0.050)	(0.094)		(0.050)	(0.089)
	-0.133***	-0.423***		-0.122***	-0.363***
	(0.009)	(0.014)		(0.009)	(0.014)
	-0.309***	-0.252***		-0.278***	-0.213***
	(0.018)	(0.018)		(0.019)	(0.019)
		-0.374*			-0.022
		(0.193)			(0.203)
		0.000			0.370***
		(0.133)			(0.142)
		1.460***			1.233***
		(0.044)			(0.044)
0.784***	1.142***	1.091***	0.914***	1.279***	1.282***
(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.059)	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.060)
35,830	35,830	35,830	30,185	30,185	30,185
0	0	0	0	0	0
4157	3414	4091	3916		
-0.031***	-0.029***	-0.026***	-0.031***		

Table B 3. Determinants of Labor Force Participation – Female working age sample

	2019		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	-0.007***	-0.006***	-0.007***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education	0.027***	0.028***	0.027***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Rural (Base: Urban)	-0.020	-0.016	-0.018
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Estate (Base: Urban)	0.424***	0.422***	0.464***
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.048)
Sri Lankan Tamil (Base: Sinhala)	-0.141***	-0.142***	-0.139***
	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)
Indian Tamil (Base: Sinhala)	-0.017	0.004	0.007
	(0.073)	(0.074)	(0.074)
Sri Lankan Moor (Base: Sinhala)	-0.498***	-0.522***	-0.489***
	(0.180)	(0.182)	(0.177)
Malay (Base: Sinhala)	0.072	0.089	0.088
	(0.246)	(0.247)	(0.248)
Burger (Base: Sinhala)	0.082	0.132	0.149
	(0.211)	(0.215)	(0.221)
Other (Base: Sinhala)	-0.074	-0.122	-0.112
	(0.338)	(0.334)	(0.340)
Hindu (Base: Buddhist)	-0.116**	-0.119**	-0.129**
	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.055)
Muslim (Base: Buddhist)	-0.171	-0.132	-0.154
	(0.179)	(0.181)	(0.176)
Christians (Base: Buddhist)	-0.198***	-0.204***	-0.208***
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Other (Base: Buddhist)	0.215	0.248	0.242
	(0.329)	(0.341)	(0.330)
Married (Base: Never married)	0.045	0.042	-0.128***
	(0.030)	(0.028)	(0.031)
Widowed (Base: Never married)	-0.261***	-0.263***	-0.325***
	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.042)
Divorced (Base: Never married)	0.820***	0.807***	0.702***
	(0.099)	(0.099)	(0.100)

	2015			2010	
Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
-0.006***	-0.006***	-0.006***	-0.006***	-0.005***	-0.006***
(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
0.019***	0.018***	0.018***	0.004*	0.003	0.003
(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
0.055***	0.051**	0.054**	0.121***	0.120***	0.121***
(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
0.513***	0.500***	0.529***	0.520***	0.506***	0.532***
(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)
-0.246***	-0.238***	-0.234***	0.065	0.075	0.071
(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.065)
0.022	0.042	0.068	0.130*	0.138*	0.150*
(0.068)	(0.068)	(0.069)	(0.076)	(0.076)	(0.077)
-0.694***	-0.680***	-0.677***	-0.325**	-0.328**	-0.371**
(0.181)	(0.182)	(0.182)	(0.165)	(0.162)	(0.170)
-0.607**	-0.572**	-0.564**	0.081	0.064	0.048
(0.240)	(0.242)	(0.247)	(0.226)	(0.222)	(0.233)
-0.377	-0.343	-0.303	-0.364	-0.374	-0.411
(0.245)	(0.246)	(0.251)	(0.310)	(0.300)	(0.307)
-5.903***	-6.136***	-5.725***	0.051	0.011	-0.091
(0.342)	(0.206)	(0.234)	(0.668)	(0.664)	(0.607)
-0.082	-0.084	-0.086	-0.140**	-0.150**	-0.139**
(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.068)
-0.033	-0.027	-0.016	-0.390**	-0.381**	-0.321*
(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.182)	(0.164)	(0.161)	(0.169)
-0.135***	-0.141***	-0.146***	-0.173***	-0.178***	-0.175***
(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.037)
1.102**	1.010**	0.961*	-4.663***	-4.934***	-4.908***
(0.501)	(0.509)	(0.535)	(0.183)	(0.174)	(0.156)
0.021	-0.027	-0.226***	0.006	-0.054*	-0.235***
(0.031)	(0.029)	(0.031)	(0.036)	(0.032)	(0.035)
-0.260***	-0.308***	-0.392***	-0.282***	-0.348***	-0.404***
(0.044)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.050)	(0.046)	(0.047)
0.503***	0.433***	0.305***	0.607***	0.536***	0.439***
(0.104)	(0.104)	(0.104)	(0.120)	(0.118)	(0.119)

	2019		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Separated (Base: Never married)	0.588***	0.563***	0.449***
	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Dummy – Family (children below1)		-0.139***	0.009
		(0.053)	(0.118)
Dummy – Family (children below3)		-0.158***	0.068
		(0.037)	(0.073)
Dummy–Family (children below18)		-0.042***	-0.196***
		(0.008)	(0.012)
Dummy–Family (adult dependents)		-0.187***	-0.150***
		(0.015)	(0.015)
Dummy – Mother (children below1)			-0.205
(Base: Non mother females)			(0.130)
Dummy – Mother (children below3)			-0.360***
(Base: Non mother females)			(0.087)
Dummy–Mother (children below18)			0.558***
(Base: Non mother females)			(0.027)
Constant	-0.260***	-0.174***	-0.085*
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.045)
Observations	39,523	39,523	39,523
p	0	0	0
chi2	1790	2112	2474

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

	2015			2010	
Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
0.510***	0.436***	0.308***	0.481***	0.405***	0.293***
(0.071)	(0.070)	(0.071)	(0.080)	(0.078)	(0.079)
	-0.137***	-0.057		-0.138***	0.058
	(0.048)	(0.107)		(0.052)	(0.119)
	-0.177***	0.084		-0.167***	0.045
	(0.032)	(0.062)		(0.036)	(0.072)
	-0.036***	-0.201***		-0.014*	-0.176***
	(0.008)	(0.011)		(0.008)	(0.011)
	-0.217***	-0.180***		-0.211***	-0.166***
	(0.016)	(0.016)		(0.017)	(0.017)
		-0.106			-0.261**
		(0.117)			(0.130)
		-0.434***			-0.388***
		(0.074)			(0.085)
		0.623***			0.646***
		(0.026)			(0.028)
-0.199***	-0.043	0.021	-0.169***	-0.044	0.012
(0.045)	(0.044)	(0.046)	(0.049)	(0.046)	(0.049)
40,450	40,450	40,450	33,578	33,578	33,578
0	0	0	0	0	0
3673	4246	5235	2696	3400	4194

Appendix C

Table C 1. Gender working hours gap at quantiles – 2010 (Oaxaca Blinder Decomposition)

Hours Gap			2010	
VARIABLES	Overall	Adjusted	Explained	Unexplained
Age			-0.087***	-1.220
			(0.024)	(0.767)
Female (Base: Male)			3.911***	-3.911***
			(0.445)	(0.445)
Education			0.027	2.274***
			(0.017)	(0.550)
Rural (Base: Urban)			-0.025*	-0.139
			(0.013)	(0.504)
Estate (Base: Urban)			0.100***	-0.201**
			(0.019)	(0.085)
Sri Lankan Tamil (Base: Sinhala)			-0.001	-0.229**
			(0.006)	(0.105)
Indian Tamil (Base: Sinhala)			-0.022	-0.291***
			(0.017)	(0.104)
Sri Lankan Moor (Base: Sinhala)			0.086	0.304
			(0.089)	(0.208)
Malay (Base: Sinhala)			-0.000	0.001
			(0.002)	(0.014)
Burger (Base: Sinhala)			0.001	-0.003
			(0.001)	(0.003)
Other (Base: Sinhala)			-0.001	-0.000
			(0.001)	(0.001)
Hindu (Base: Buddhist)			-0.029**	0.162
			(0.014)	(0.167)
Muslim (Base: Buddhist)			0.004	-0.132
			(0.089)	(0.216)
Christians (Base: Buddhist)			0.000	0.086
			(0.007)	(0.060)
Other (Base: Buddhist)			0.000	-0.000
			(0.001)	(0.000)
Married (Base: Never married)			-0.097***	5.754***
			(0.032)	(0.664)

2015				2019			
Overall	Adjusted	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Adjusted	Explained	Unexplained
		-0.093***	-0.659			-0.054*	-2.064***
		(0.025)	(0.735)			(0.029)	(0.766)
		5.517***	-5.517***			3.870***	-3.870***
		(0.375)	(0.375)			(0.403)	(0.403)
		0.010	2.607***			0.150***	3.702***
		(0.024)	(0.635)			(0.028)	(0.739)
		-0.026*	1.155***			-0.047***	0.061
		(0.015)	(0.419)			(0.016)	(0.388)
		0.053***	-0.002			-0.025***	0.125**
		(0.014)	(0.065)			(0.009)	(0.056)
		-0.055***	-0.323**			0.004	-0.193
		(0.021)	(0.149)			(0.016)	(0.174)
		0.031**	-0.218***			0.002	-0.125**
		(0.015)	(0.081)			(0.006)	(0.052)
		0.046	-0.299			0.225*	-0.082
		(0.128)	(0.296)			(0.119)	(0.308)
		-0.004	-0.012			0.000	0.001
		(0.004)	(0.010)			(0.001)	(0.008)
		0.000	0.002			-0.000	-0.002
		(0.001)	(0.002)			(0.001)	(0.006)
		-0.001	-0.001			-0.001	-0.003
		(0.002)	(0.001)			(0.001)	(0.004)
		0.007	0.141			-0.003	-0.166
		(0.006)	(0.187)			(0.008)	(0.187)
		-0.031	0.444			-0.175	0.204
		(0.129)	(0.305)			(0.118)	(0.313)
		0.015**	0.141**			0.002	-0.006
		(0.006)	(0.062)			(0.005)	(0.061)
		0.003	0.002			0.000	-0.000
		(0.002)	(0.002)			(0.001)	(0.002)
		0.036	5.253***			-0.118***	6.571***
		(0.030)	(0.627)			(0.032)	(0.669)

Hours Gap			2010	
VARIABLES	Overall	Adjusted	Explained	Unexplained
Widowed (Base: Never married)			-0.020	0.263***
			(0.045)	(0.059)
Divorced (Base: Never married)			0.008	0.021
			(0.009)	(0.015)
Separated (Base: Never married)			0.023**	0.060**
			(0.011)	(0.027)
Dummy – Family (children below1)			-0.005	0.139
			(0.037)	(0.152)
Dummy – Family (children below3)			0.091**	-0.364*
			(0.040)	(0.221)
Dummy–Family (children below18)			0.027**	-0.789**
			(0.013)	(0.321)
Dummy–Family (adult) dependents)			-0.008	-0.247***
			(0.005)	(0.093)
Dummy – Mother (children below1)			-0.046	-0.084
(Base: Non mother females)			(0.060)	(0.073)
Dummy – Mother (children below3)			0.207**	0.154
(Base: Non mother females)			(0.092)	(0.117)
Dummy–Mother (children below18)			1.377***	0.079
(Base: Non mother females)			(0.190)	(0.214)
Dummy–Father (children below1)			-0.057	-0.039
(Base: Non father males)			(0.092)	(0.059)
Dummy–Father (children below3)			-0.269**	0.076
(Base: Non father males)			(0.125)	(0.076)
Dummy–Father (children below18)			-0.231	-0.339**
(Base: Non father males)			(0.209)	(0.163)
Male mean wage	49.267***	51.764***		
	(0.113)	(0.458)		
Female mean wage	40.795***	49.838***		
	(0.154)	(1.137)		
Difference	8.472***	1.926		
	(0.191)	(1.226)		

2015				2019			
Overall	Adjusted	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Adjusted	Explained	Unexplained
		-0.099**	0.225***			-0.082*	0.400***
		(0.041)	(0.055)			(0.045)	(0.062)
		-0.002	0.038**			0.014	0.047***
		(0.007)	(0.016)			(0.011)	(0.018)
		-0.003	0.072***			0.024*	0.126***
		(0.010)	(0.025)			(0.014)	(0.033)
		0.039	-0.386**			0.037	-0.105
		(0.040)	(0.177)			(0.030)	(0.126)
		0.051	0.143			0.007	0.166
		(0.034)	(0.173)			(0.033)	(0.170)
		0.054***	-0.684**			0.057***	-1.486***
		(0.017)	(0.316)			(0.018)	(0.303)
		0.003	-0.264***			-0.024***	-0.187*
		(0.005)	(0.085)			(0.009)	(0.097)
		0.125**	0.176**			0.074	0.039
		(0.062)	(0.082)			(0.049)	(0.058)
		0.178**	-0.131			0.091	-0.125
		(0.080)	(0.090)			(0.071)	(0.092)
		1.473***	0.131			1.166***	0.586***
		(0.169)	(0.203)			(0.164)	(0.187)
		-0.134	0.163**			-0.131*	0.032
		(0.099)	(0.079)			(0.076)	(0.052)
		-0.166	-0.072			-0.138	-0.086
		(0.105)	(0.061)			(0.100)	(0.054)
		0.128	-0.180			-0.283	-0.337**
		(0.203)	(0.157)			(0.201)	(0.156)
48.794***	49.505***			48.921***	51.992***		
(0.102)	(0.355)			(0.108)	(0.413)		
40.295***	45.833***			40.353***	51.456***		
(0.141)	(1.026)			(0.147)	(1.078)		
8.498***	3.672***			8.568***	0.536		
(0.174)	(1.085)			(0.183)	(1.155)		

Hours Gap	2010			
VARIABLES	Overall	Adjusted	Explained	Unexplained
Explained		4.966***		
		(0.474)		
Unexplained		-3.040***		
		(1.164)		
Constant				-4.425*
				(2.266)
Observations	26,618	26,618	26,618	26,618
N_2	8929	8929	8929	8929
N_1	17689	17689	17689	17689

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

2015				2019			
Overall	Adjusted	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Adjusted	Explained	Unexplained
	7.158***				4.644***		
	(0.400)				(0.431)		
	-3.486***				-4.108***		
	(1.010)				(1.092)		
			-5.433**				-7.330***
			(2.119)				(2.335)
31,303	31,303	31,303	31,303	30,446	30,446	30,446	30,446
10769	10769	10769	10769	10278	10278	10278	10278
20534	20534	20534	20534	20168	20168	20168	20168

Appendix D

Table D 1. Multinomial Logit Model: Overall working age sample

	2010			
	Low skilled	Medium skilled	High Skilled	Armed forces and other
Mother	0.423***	0.390***	0.610***	-0.878
	-0.06	-0.04	-0.054	-0.755
Father	1.993***	1.721***	1.802***	2.123***
	-0.075	-0.06	-0.069	-0.191
Dummy - Adult Dependents	-0.126***	-0.410***	-0.433***	-0.604***
	-0.039	-0.027	-0.04	-0.18
Mother (Children with below 1) (Base: Non mother females)	-0.11	-0.516***	-0.556***	12.990***
	-0.161	-0.122	-0.175	-0.716
Mother (Children with below 3) (Base: Non mother females)	-0.490***	-0.574***	-0.736***	-11.995***
	-0.126	-0.084	-0.118	-0.711
Father (Children with below 1) (Base: Non father males)	-0.047	0.082	-0.119	0.830*
	-0.308	-0.294	-0.303	-0.495
Father (Children with below 3) (Base: Non father males)	1.093***	1.081***	1.171***	0.519
	-0.22	-0.209	-0.216	-0.413
Constant	-4.958***	-2.163***	-3.129***	-7.925***
	-0.105	-0.072	-0.104	-0.507
Observations	58156	58156	58156	58156
p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
chi2	96637	96637	96637	96637

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DC.

2015				2019			
Low skilled	Medium skilled	High Skilled	Armed forces and other	Low skilled	Medium skilled	High Skilled	Armed forces and other
0.343***	0.299***	0.388***	0.206	0.299***	0.225***	0.384***	0.642
-0.055	-0.036	-0.049	-0.492	-0.049	-0.039	-0.051	-0.539
2.223***	1.977***	1.887***	2.580***	2.079***	1.950***	1.991***	2.365***
-0.074	-0.06	-0.068	-0.222	-0.069	-0.06	-0.067	-0.241
-0.077**	-0.387***	-0.442***	0.048	-0.096***	-0.374***	-0.447***	-0.466**
-0.036	-0.024	-0.036	-0.171	-0.03	-0.024	-0.035	-0.205
-0.115	-0.470***	-0.225	14.357***	-0.217	-0.431***	-0.215	15.936***
-0.129	-0.118	-0.164	-0.71	-0.139	-0.14	-0.212	-0.717
-0.368***	-0.751***	-0.958***	-14.397***	-0.463***	-0.672***	-1.080***	-15.900***
-0.101	-0.08	-0.116	-0.408	-0.105	-0.096	-0.15	-0.421
-0.352	-0.249	-0.321	-0.571	-0.37	-0.246	-0.099	-0.982*
-0.26	-0.244	-0.257	-0.492	-0.305	-0.294	-0.308	-0.576
0.704***	0.662***	0.839***	0.607*	0.831***	0.823***	0.721***	1.240***
-0.201	-0.187	-0.197	-0.36	-0.232	-0.224	-0.235	-0.4
-4.759***	-1.163***	-1.492***	-7.316***	-4.373***	-1.242***	-1.213***	-8.637***
-0.108	-0.073	-0.109	-0.59	-0.1	-0.077	-0.114	-0.745
61598	61598	61598	61598	61632	61632	61632	61632
0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
56648	56648	56648	56648	41653	41653	41653	41653

Appendix E

Table E 1. Gender wage gap – 2010 (Oaxaca Blinder Decomposition)

		Model 1	
Variables	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
Age		0.001*	-0.164*
		(0.001)	(0.091)
Female (Base: Male)			
Education		-0.057***	-0.157***
		(0.005)	(0.053)
Rural (Base: Urban)		-0.012***	0.097**
		(0.002)	(0.049)
Estate (Base: Urban)		0.019***	0.020
		(0.003)	(0.013)
Sri Lankan Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	0.004
		(0.001)	(0.013)
Indian Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		0.009**	-0.005
		(0.004)	(0.015)
Sri Lankan Moor (Base: Sinhala)		0.010*	-0.002
		(0.005)	(0.010)
Malay (Base: Sinhala)		0.001	-0.001
		(0.000)	(0.001)
Burger (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.001)
Other (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Hindu (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	0.009
		(0.003)	(0.023)
Muslim (Base: Buddhist)		-0.010*	0.002
		(0.005)	(0.010)
Christians (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	0.002
		(0.000)	(0.008)
Other (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)

	Model 2			Model 3	
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	0.001*	-0.131		0.001	-0.138
	(0.001)	(0.092)		(0.001)	(0.094)
	0.215***	-0.215***		0.215***	-0.215***
	(0.022)	(0.022)		(0.028)	(0.028)
	-0.057***	-0.153***		-0.056***	-0.153***
	(0.005)	(0.054)		(0.005)	(0.054)
	-0.012***	0.093*		-0.012***	0.092*
	(0.002)	(0.049)		(0.002)	(0.049)
	0.019***	0.019		0.019***	0.018
	(0.003)	(0.013)		(0.003)	(0.013)
	0.000	0.004		0.000	0.004
	(0.001)	(0.013)		(0.001)	(0.013)
	0.009**	-0.005		0.008**	-0.004
	(0.004)	(0.015)		(0.004)	(0.015)
	0.010*	-0.003		0.010*	-0.003
	(0.005)	(0.010)		(0.006)	(0.010)
	0.001	-0.001*		0.001	-0.001*
	(0.000)	(0.001)		(0.000)	(0.001)
	0.000	-0.000		0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.001)		(0.000)	(0.001)
	0.000	-0.000		0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	-0.000	0.008		-0.001	0.009
	(0.003)	(0.023)		(0.003)	(0.023)
	-0.011**	0.001		-0.010*	0.001
	(0.005)	(0.010)		(0.005)	(0.010)
	-0.000	0.002		-0.000	0.002
	(0.000)	(0.008)		(0.000)	(0.008)
	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)

Variables	Overall	Model 1 Explained	Unexplained
Married (Base: Never married)		0.036***	0.008
		(0.004)	(0.043)
Widowed (Base: Never married)		0.005	0.007
		(0.005)	(0.005)
Divorced (Base: Never married)		-0.001*	0.001
		(0.001)	(0.001)
Separated (Base: Never married)		0.001	0.003
		(0.001)	(0.003)
Dummy – Family (children below1)			
Dummy – Family (children below3)			
Dummy–Family (children below18)			
Dummy–Family (adult dependents)			
Dummy – Mother (children below1)			
(Base: Non mother females)			
Dummy – Mother (children below3)			
(Base: Non mother females)			
Dummy–Mother (children below18)			
(Base: Non mother females)			
Dummy–Father (children below1)			
(Base: Non father males)			
Dummy–Father (children below3)			
(Base: Non father males)			
Dummy–Father (children below18)			
(Base: Non father males)			
Male mean wage	3.922***		
	(0.010)		
Female mean wage	3.704***		
	(0.019)		
Difference	0.218***		
	(0.022)		
Explained	0.002		
	(0.008)		

	Model 2			Model 3	
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	0.035***	-0.010		0.028***	-0.001
	(0.004)	(0.044)		(0.004)	(0.047)
	0.005	0.006		0.008*	0.007
	(0.005)	(0.005)		(0.005)	(0.005)
	-0.001	0.001		-0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)		(0.001)	(0.001)
	0.001	0.003		0.002	0.004
	(0.001)	(0.003)		(0.001)	(0.003)
	0.002	0.001		-0.000	-0.006
	(0.001)	(0.007)		(0.002)	(0.010)
	0.001	0.002		0.006*	0.019
	(0.002)	(0.009)		(0.004)	(0.018)
	0.001	0.006		-0.007***	0.018
	(0.001)	(0.018)		(0.002)	(0.025)
	-0.002**	-0.016**		-0.002***	-0.016*
	(0.001)	(0.008)		(0.001)	(0.008)
				-0.000	0.003
				(0.006)	(0.005)
				0.009	-0.010
				(0.008)	(0.009)
				-0.060***	-0.008
				(0.016)	(0.014)
				0.005	0.002
				(0.006)	(0.004)
				-0.017*	-0.008
				(0.010)	(0.007)
				0.071***	-0.002
				(0.014)	(0.007)
3.922***			3.922***		
(0.010)			(0.010)		
3.704***			3.704***		
(0.019)			(0.019)		
0.218***			0.218***		
(0.022)			(0.022)		
0.218***			0.218***		
(0.022)			(0.022)		

Variables	Overall	Model 1 Explained	Unexplained
Unexplained	0.216***		
	(0.022)		
Constant			0.392***
			(0.124)
Observations	14,686	14,686	14,686
N_2	4801	4801	4801
N_1	9885	9885	9885

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

Table E 2. Gender wage gap – 2015 (Oaxaca Blinder Decomposition)

Variables	Overall	Model 1 Explained	Unexplained
Age		-0.007***	-0.149***
		(0.001)	(0.050)
Female (Base: Male)			
Education		-0.064***	-0.281***
		(0.003)	(0.039)
Rural (Base: Urban)		-0.008***	0.060**
		(0.001)	(0.027)
Estate (Base: Urban)		0.014***	-0.004
		(0.002)	(0.005)
Sri Lankan Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		-0.003***	0.003
		(0.001)	(0.012)
Indian Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		0.002	-0.001
		(0.001)	(0.006)
Sri Lankan Moor (Base: Sinhala)		-0.002	0.007
		(0.006)	(0.015)
Malay (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	0.001
		(0.000)	(0.001)
Burger (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	-0.000*
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Other (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)

	Model 2			Model 3	
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
-0.000			-0.000		
(0.002)			(0.002)		
		0.388***			0.387***
		(0.126)			(0.128)
14,686	14,686	14,686	14,686	14,686	14,686
4801	4801	4801	4801	4801	4801
9885	9885	9885	9885	9885	9885

	Model 2			Model 3	
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	-0.007***	-0.111**		-0.007***	-0.103*
	(0.001)	(0.052)		(0.001)	(0.052)
	0.279***	-0.279***		0.217***	-0.217***
	(0.013)	(0.013)		(0.016)	(0.016)
	-0.064***	-0.270***		-0.064***	-0.272***
	(0.003)	(0.039)		(0.003)	(0.039)
	-0.008***	0.055**		-0.008***	0.057**
	(0.001)	(0.027)		(0.001)	(0.027)
	0.014***	-0.004		0.014***	-0.004
	(0.002)	(0.005)		(0.002)	(0.005)
	-0.004***	0.002		-0.003***	0.003
	(0.001)	(0.012)		(0.001)	(0.012)
	0.002	-0.001		0.002	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.006)		(0.001)	(0.006)
	-0.002	0.006		-0.002	0.007
	(0.006)	(0.015)		(0.006)	(0.015)
	0.000	0.001		0.000	0.001
	(0.000)	(0.001)		(0.000)	(0.001)
	0.000	-0.000*		0.000	-0.000*
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)

Variables	Overall	Model 1 Explained	Unexplained
Hindu (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	0.006
		(0.000)	(0.015)
Muslim (Base: Buddhist)		0.002	-0.003
		(0.006)	(0.015)
Christians (Base: Buddhist)		0.000	0.006
		(0.000)	(0.004)
Other (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Married (Base: Never married)		0.034***	0.146***
		(0.003)	(0.025)
Widowed (Base: Never married)		-0.008**	0.011***
		(0.003)	(0.004)
Divorced (Base: Never married)		-0.001*	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.001)
Separated (Base: Never married)		-0.002**	0.004***
		(0.001)	(0.001)
Dummy – Family (children below1)			
Dummy – Family (children below3)			
Dummy–Family (children below18)			
Dummy–Family (adult dependents)			
Dummy – Mother (children below1)			
(Base: Non mother females)			
Dummy – Mother (children below3)			
(Base: Non mother females)			
Dummy–Mother (children below18)			
(Base: Non mother females)			
Dummy–Father (children below1)			
(Base: Non father males)			
Dummy–Father (children below3)			
(Base: Non father males)			
Dummy–Father (children below18)			
(Base: Non father males)			

	Model 2			Model 3	
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	-0.000	0.005		-0.001	0.005
	(0.000)	(0.015)		(0.000)	(0.015)
	0.002	-0.003		0.003	-0.003
	(0.006)	(0.015)		(0.006)	(0.015)
	0.000	0.005		0.000	0.006
	(0.000)	(0.004)		(0.000)	(0.004)
	-0.000	0.000		-0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	0.033***	0.123***		0.025***	0.096***
	(0.003)	(0.026)		(0.003)	(0.028)
	-0.007**	0.009**		-0.003	0.007
	(0.003)	(0.004)		(0.003)	(0.004)
	-0.001*	-0.000		-0.001	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.001)		(0.000)	(0.001)
	-0.001**	0.003***		-0.001	0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)		(0.001)	(0.001)
	0.000	-0.010***		0.001	-0.002
	(0.001)	(0.003)		(0.002)	(0.008)
	0.001	0.002		-0.002	-0.017
	(0.001)	(0.006)		(0.003)	(0.014)
	0.001*	0.037***		-0.004***	0.020
	(0.001)	(0.012)		(0.001)	(0.017)
	-0.001**	-0.009		-0.001***	-0.007
	(0.000)	(0.006)		(0.000)	(0.006)
				-0.006*	0.001
				(0.003)	(0.004)
				-0.000	0.009
				(0.006)	(0.007)
				-0.015	-0.026***
				(0.010)	(0.010)
				-0.006	0.001
				(0.004)	(0.003)
				0.009	0.004
				(0.007)	(0.005)
				0.089***	-0.011***
				(0.008)	(0.004)

		Model 1	
Variables	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
Male mean wage	4.477***		
	(0.006)		
Female mean wage	4.240***		
	(0.011)		
Difference	0.237***		
	(0.013)		
Explained	-0.043***		
	(0.005)		
Unexplained	0.280***		
	(0.013)		
Constant			0.475***
			(0.075)
Observations	28,477	28,477	28,477
N_2	8694	8694	8694
N_1	19783	19783	19783

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

Table E 3. Gender wage gap – 2019 (Oaxaca Blinder Decomposition)

2019 GWG		Model 1	
Variables	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
Age		-0.007***	-0.107**
		(0.001)	(0.047)
Female (Base: Male)			
Education		-0.070***	-0.299***
		(0.004)	(0.040)
Rural (Base: Urban)		-0.011***	0.035*
		(0.002)	(0.020)
Estate (Base: Urban)		0.009***	-0.007**
		(0.001)	(0.003)
Sri Lankan Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		-0.003***	-0.025**
		(0.001)	(0.011)
Indian Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		0.003***	-0.005
		(0.001)	(0.003)

	Model 2			Model 3	
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
4.477***			4.477***		
(0.006)			(0.006)		
4.240***			4.240***		
(0.011)			(0.011)		
0.237***			0.237***		
(0.013)			(0.013)		
0.237***			0.237***		
(0.013)			(0.013)		
-0.000			-0.000		
(0.002)			(0.001)		
		0.437***			0.442***
		(0.076)			(0.076)
28,477	28,477	28,477	28,477	28,477	28,477
8694	8694	8694	8694	8694	8694
19783	19783	19783	19783	19783	19783

	Model 2			Model 3	
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	-0.007***	-0.064		-0.007***	-0.063
	(0.001)	(0.048)		(0.001)	(0.048)
	0.279***	-0.279***		0.232***	-0.232***
	(0.011)	(0.011)		(0.013)	(0.013)
	-0.069***	-0.290***		-0.069***	-0.290***
	(0.003)	(0.040)		(0.003)	(0.040)
	-0.011***	0.032		-0.011***	0.032
	(0.002)	(0.020)		(0.002)	(0.020)
	0.009***	-0.007**		0.009***	-0.007**
	(0.001)	(0.003)		(0.001)	(0.003)
	-0.003***	-0.027**		-0.003***	-0.027**
	(0.001)	(0.011)		(0.001)	(0.011)
	0.003***	-0.005*		0.003***	-0.005*
	(0.001)	(0.003)		(0.001)	(0.003)

2019 GWG		Model 1	
Variables	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
Sri Lankan Moor (Base: Sinhala)		-0.007	-0.014
		(0.006)	(0.017)
Malay (Base: Sinhala)		-0.000	-0.001*
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Burger (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Other (Base: Sinhala)		-0.000	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Hindu (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	0.029**
		(0.001)	(0.011)
Muslim (Base: Buddhist)		0.002	0.019
		(0.006)	(0.017)
Christians (Base: Buddhist)		0.001*	0.010***
		(0.000)	(0.004)
Other (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Married (Base: Never married)		0.032***	0.113***
		(0.002)	(0.020)
Widowed (Base: Never married)		-0.004	0.008**
		(0.003)	(0.003)
Divorced (Base: Never married)		-0.001	0.002*
		(0.001)	(0.001)
Separated (Base: Never married)		-0.001	0.005***
		(0.001)	(0.001)
Dummy – Family (children below1)			
Dummy – Family (children below3)			
Dummy–Family (children below18)			
Dummy–Family (adult dependents)			
Dummy – Mother (children below1)			
(Base: Non mother females)			
Dummy – Mother (children below3)			

	Model 2			Model 3	
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	-0.006	-0.015		-0.006	-0.015
	(0.006)	(0.017)		(0.006)	(0.017)
	-0.000	-0.001*		-0.000	-0.001*
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	0.000	-0.000		0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	-0.000	-0.000		-0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	-0.000	0.030***		-0.000	0.030***
	(0.001)	(0.011)		(0.001)	(0.011)
	0.002	0.019		0.002	0.020
	(0.006)	(0.017)		(0.005)	(0.017)
	0.001*	0.010***		0.001*	0.010***
	(0.000)	(0.004)		(0.000)	(0.004)
	-0.000	0.000		-0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	0.031***	0.086***		0.026***	0.075***
	(0.002)	(0.021)		(0.002)	(0.022)
	-0.004	0.006		-0.001	0.004
	(0.003)	(0.004)		(0.003)	(0.004)
	-0.001	0.002*		-0.000	0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)		(0.001)	(0.001)
	-0.001	0.004***		-0.000	0.004***
	(0.001)	(0.001)		(0.001)	(0.001)
	0.001	-0.003		0.002	-0.007
	(0.001)	(0.003)		(0.002)	(0.007)
	0.000	-0.004		-0.001	-0.002
	(0.001)	(0.004)		(0.002)	(0.009)
	0.001*	0.041***		-0.004***	0.033**
	(0.001)	(0.009)		(0.001)	(0.013)
	-0.002***	-0.004		-0.003***	-0.003
	(0.001)	(0.005)		(0.001)	(0.005)
				-0.000	0.004
				(0.003)	(0.004)
				-0.004	0.002

2019 GWG	Model 1		
Variables	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
(Base: Non mother females)			
Dummy–Mother (children below18)			
(Base: Non mother females)			
Dummy–Father (children below1)			
(Base: Non father males)			
Dummy–Father (children below3)			
(Base: Non father males)			
Dummy–Father (children below18)			
(Base: Non father males)			
Male mean wage	4.832***		
	(0.006)		
Female mean wage	4.609***		
	(0.010)		
Difference	0.223***		
	(0.011)		
Explained	-0.056***		
	(0.005)		
Unexplained	0.279***		
	(0.011)		
Constant			0.517***
			(0.073)
Observations	27,843	27,843	27,843
N_2	8479	8479	8479
N_1	19364	19364	19364

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

	Model 2			Model 3		
	Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
					(0.004)	(0.005)
					-0.009	-0.026***
					(0.008)	(0.007)
					-0.003	0.003
					(0.004)	(0.003)
					0.002	0.000
					(0.005)	(0.002)
					0.069***	-0.012***
					(0.007)	(0.003)
	4.832***			4.832***		
	(0.006)			(0.006)		
	4.609***			4.609***		
	(0.010)			(0.010)		
	0.223***			0.223***		
	(0.011)			(0.011)		
	0.223***			0.223***		
	(0.011)			(0.011)		
	0.000			0.000		
	(0.001)			(0.001)		
			0.470***			0.474***
			(0.074)			(0.075)
	27,843	27,843	27,843	27,843	27,843	27,843
	8479	8479	8479	8479	8479	8479
	19364	19364	19364	19364	19364	19364

Table E 4. Gender wage gap at quantiles – 2010 (Oaxaca Blinder Decomposition)

		Mode 1 (25th Percentile)	
Variables	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
Age		-0.002**	0.104*
		(0.001)	(0.057)
Female (Base: Male)		0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Education		-0.032***	0.016
		(0.003)	(0.042)
Rural (Base: Urban)		-0.004***	0.060**
		(0.001)	(0.027)
Estate (Base: Urban)		0.012***	-0.020*
		(0.003)	(0.011)
Sri Lankan Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	0.019*
		(0.000)	(0.011)
Indian Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		0.009**	0.013
		(0.003)	(0.014)
Sri Lankan Moor (Base: Sinhala)		0.018**	0.007
		(0.009)	(0.008)
Malay (Base: Sinhala)		0.001	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Burger (Base: Sinhala)		-0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Other (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Hindu (Base: Buddhist)		0.005*	-0.029
		(0.003)	(0.020)
Muslim (Base: Buddhist)		-0.017**	-0.007
		(0.009)	(0.009)
Christians (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	0.007
		(0.000)	(0.004)
Other (Base: Buddhist)		0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Married (Base: Never married)		0.025***	0.054**
		(0.003)	(0.025)
Widowed (Base: Never married)		-0.002	0.012
		(0.007)	(0.009)
Divorced (Base: Never married)		-0.000	0.001
		(0.001)	(0.002)

	Mode 2 (50th Percentile)			Mode 3 (75th Percentile)	
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	-0.000	0.012		0.003***	-0.297***
	(0.000)	(0.048)		(0.001)	(0.093)
	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	-0.042***	-0.068*		-0.066***	-0.773***
	(0.004)	(0.036)		(0.005)	(0.063)
	-0.007***	0.030		-0.011***	0.249***
	(0.002)	(0.026)		(0.002)	(0.057)
	0.016***	-0.015		0.018***	0.079***
	(0.003)	(0.010)		(0.003)	(0.017)
	0.000	0.009		0.000	0.035**
	(0.001)	(0.009)		(0.001)	(0.016)
	0.012***	-0.001		0.009***	0.041**
	(0.003)	(0.012)		(0.003)	(0.020)
	0.008	-0.006		0.003	-0.010
	(0.007)	(0.006)		(0.007)	(0.012)
	0.000	-0.001		0.000	-0.001
	(0.000)	(0.001)		(0.000)	(0.002)
	0.000	-0.000		0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	0.000	0.000		0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	0.000	-0.001		-0.001	-0.007
	(0.002)	(0.017)		(0.003)	(0.029)
	-0.009	0.003		-0.009	-0.006
	(0.007)	(0.007)		(0.007)	(0.013)
	-0.000	0.002		-0.000	0.007
	(0.000)	(0.004)		(0.000)	(0.009)
	0.000	0.000		-0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	0.019***	0.028		0.016***	-0.269***
	(0.003)	(0.023)		(0.003)	(0.045)
	-0.003	0.018**		-0.000	0.018*
	(0.005)	(0.007)		(0.005)	(0.010)
	-0.000	0.001		-0.000	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)		(0.001)	(0.002)

Variables	Mode 1 (25th Percentile)		
	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
Separated (Base: Never married)		-0.000	0.005*
		(0.001)	(0.003)
Dummy – Family (children below1)		-0.007**	-0.014
		(0.003)	(0.008)
Dummy – Family (children below3)		0.011***	0.029***
		(0.003)	(0.011)
Dummy–Family (children below18)		-0.006***	0.014
		(0.002)	(0.017)
Dummy–Family (adult dependents)		-0.001**	-0.002
		(0.001)	(0.005)
Dummy – Mother (children below1)		0.000	-0.003
(Base: Non mother females)		(0.000)	(0.006)
Dummy – Mother (children below3)		0.000	-0.002
(Base: Non mother females)		(0.000)	(0.009)
Dummy–Mother (children below18)		0.000	-0.047***
(Base: Non mother females)		(0.000)	(0.015)
Dummy–Father (children below1)		0.015**	0.000
(Base: Non father males)		(0.007)	(0.000)
Dummy–Father (children below3)		-0.024***	0.000
(Base: Non father males)		(0.008)	(0.000)
Dummy–Father (children below18)		0.058***	0.000
(Base: Non father males)		(0.011)	(0.000)
Male mean wage	3.647***		
	(0.008)		
Female mean wage	3.342***		
	(0.012)		
Difference	0.305***		
	(0.014)		
Explained	0.056***		
	(0.012)		
Unexplained	0.249***		
	(0.018)		
Constant			0.033
			(0.081)

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

Mode 2 (50th Percentile)			Mode 3 (75th Percentile)		
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	-0.000	0.007***		-0.001	0.007**
	(0.001)	(0.002)		(0.001)	(0.003)
	-0.000	0.003		0.001	-0.008
	(0.003)	(0.007)		(0.003)	(0.012)
	0.005	0.016*		0.003	0.030*
	(0.003)	(0.009)		(0.004)	(0.017)
	-0.007***	0.015		-0.005***	0.063***
	(0.002)	(0.014)		(0.002)	(0.024)
	-0.002***	-0.006		-0.002***	-0.037***
	(0.001)	(0.005)		(0.001)	(0.011)
	0.000	-0.010**		0.000	-0.003
	(0.000)	(0.005)		(0.000)	(0.011)
	0.000	-0.005		0.000	-0.041***
	(0.000)	(0.007)		(0.000)	(0.015)
	0.000	-0.055***		0.000	-0.091***
	(0.000)	(0.012)		(0.000)	(0.026)
	0.005	0.000		0.003	0.000
	(0.006)	(0.000)		(0.007)	(0.000)
	-0.014*	0.000		-0.012	0.000
	(0.008)	(0.000)		(0.009)	(0.000)
	0.072***	0.000		0.064***	0.000
	(0.009)	(0.000)		(0.011)	(0.000)
3.990***			4.372***		
(0.007)			(0.008)		
3.716***			4.392***		
(0.011)			(0.025)		
0.274***			-0.020		
(0.013)			(0.027)		
0.052***			0.012		
(0.011)			(0.012)		
0.222***			-0.032		
(0.016)			(0.027)		
		0.246***			0.983***
		(0.073)			(0.137)

Table E 5. Gender wage gap at quantiles – 2015 (Oaxaca Blinder Decomposition)

		Mode 1 (25th Percentile)	
Variables	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
Age		-0.015***	0.030
		(0.002)	(0.050)
Female (Base: Male)		0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Education		-0.036***	-0.066
		(0.003)	(0.041)
Rural (Base: Urban)		-0.006***	0.048**
		(0.001)	(0.023)
Estate (Base: Urban)		0.015***	-0.031***
		(0.002)	(0.006)
Sri Lankan Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		-0.003***	-0.001
		(0.001)	(0.011)
Indian Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		0.003**	-0.004
		(0.002)	(0.007)
Sri Lankan Moor (Base: Sinhala)		-0.000	0.013
		(0.007)	(0.012)
Malay (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	0.001
		(0.000)	(0.001)
Burger (Base: Sinhala)		-0.000	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Other (Base: Sinhala)		0.000**	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Hindu (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	0.020
		(0.000)	(0.015)
Muslim (Base: Buddhist)		0.003	-0.004
		(0.007)	(0.012)
Christians (Base: Buddhist)		0.000	0.012***
		(0.000)	(0.004)
Other (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Married (Base: Never married)		0.038***	0.183***
		(0.003)	(0.025)
Widowed (Base: Never married)		-0.011*	0.014
		(0.006)	(0.008)
Divorced (Base: Never married)		0.001	-0.002
		(0.001)	(0.002)

Mode 2 (50th Percentile)			Mode 3 (75th Percentile)		
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	-0.006***	0.092**		0.001	-0.105
	(0.001)	(0.045)		(0.001)	(0.068)
	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	-0.042***	-0.327***		-0.072***	-1.033***
	(0.002)	(0.036)		(0.004)	(0.056)
	-0.006***	0.095***		-0.006***	0.140***
	(0.001)	(0.023)		(0.001)	(0.041)
	0.014***	0.002		0.011***	0.037***
	(0.002)	(0.005)		(0.002)	(0.007)
	-0.003***	0.005		-0.006***	-0.032**
	(0.001)	(0.010)		(0.001)	(0.015)
	0.003**	-0.003		0.006***	-0.008
	(0.001)	(0.006)		(0.001)	(0.009)
	0.000	0.016		-0.005	-0.026
	(0.008)	(0.013)		(0.010)	(0.017)
	0.000	0.001		0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.001)		(0.000)	(0.001)
	0.000	-0.000		0.000	-0.001*
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	-0.000	0.010		-0.001*	0.009
	(0.000)	(0.013)		(0.001)	(0.020)
	-0.003	-0.013		0.001	0.019
	(0.008)	(0.014)		(0.010)	(0.017)
	0.000	0.009**		0.000	0.009
	(0.000)	(0.004)		(0.000)	(0.006)
	-0.000	-0.000		-0.000	-0.001*
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	0.032***	0.072***		0.027***	-0.151***
	(0.003)	(0.024)		(0.003)	(0.037)
	-0.007*	0.004		-0.009**	0.002
	(0.004)	(0.006)		(0.004)	(0.009)
	0.000	-0.002		-0.001	-0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)		(0.001)	(0.002)

Variables	Mode 1 (25th Percentile)		
	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
Separated (Base: Never married)		-0.002*	0.006**
		(0.001)	(0.003)
Dummy – Family (children below1)		0.002	0.012
		(0.003)	(0.008)
Dummy – Family (children below3)		-0.005**	-0.025***
		(0.003)	(0.009)
Dummy–Family (children below18)		-0.004***	-0.001
		(0.001)	(0.015)
Dummy–Family (adult dependents)		-0.000	-0.013**
		(0.000)	(0.005)
Dummy – Mother (children below1)		0.000	-0.009
(Base: Non mother females)		(0.000)	(0.006)
Dummy – Mother (children below3)		0.000	0.022***
(Base: Non mother females)		(0.000)	(0.008)
Dummy–Mother (children below18)		0.000	-0.020
(Base: Non mother females)		(0.000)	(0.014)
Dummy–Father (children below1)		-0.009	0.000
(Base: Non father males)		(0.006)	(0.000)
Dummy–Father (children below3)		0.016**	0.000
(Base: Non father males)		(0.007)	(0.000)
Dummy–Father (children below18)		0.072***	0.000
(Base: Non father males)		(0.009)	(0.000)
Male mean wage	4.124***		
	(0.006)		
Female mean wage	3.744***		
	(0.011)		
Difference	0.380***		
	(0.012)		
Explained	0.058***		
	(0.011)		
Unexplained	0.322***		
	(0.016)		
Constant			0.137*
			(0.076)

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

Mode 2 (50th Percentile)			Mode 3 (75th Percentile)		
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	-0.002*	0.004**		-0.001	0.002
	(0.001)	(0.002)		(0.001)	(0.003)
	-0.000	0.003		-0.003	0.002
	(0.002)	(0.007)		(0.002)	(0.010)
	-0.003	-0.016*		-0.002	-0.030**
	(0.002)	(0.009)		(0.002)	(0.014)
	-0.002***	0.029**		-0.002*	0.057***
	(0.001)	(0.015)		(0.001)	(0.021)
	-0.001**	-0.009*		-0.002***	-0.026***
	(0.000)	(0.005)		(0.001)	(0.008)
	0.000	-0.008		0.000	-0.019**
	(0.000)	(0.006)		(0.000)	(0.009)
	0.000	0.013*		0.000	0.013
	(0.000)	(0.008)		(0.000)	(0.013)
	0.000	-0.035**		0.000	-0.079***
	(0.000)	(0.014)		(0.000)	(0.022)
	-0.002	0.000		0.006	0.000
	(0.005)	(0.000)		(0.005)	(0.000)
	0.013**	0.000		0.005	0.000
	(0.006)	(0.000)		(0.007)	(0.000)
	0.059***	0.000		0.062***	0.000
	(0.007)	(0.000)		(0.009)	(0.000)
4.541***			4.937***		
(0.005)			(0.006)		
4.224***			4.932***		
(0.011)			(0.018)		
0.317***			0.006		
(0.012)			(0.019)		
0.042***			0.012		
(0.008)			(0.010)		
0.274***			-0.006		
(0.013)			(0.020)		
		0.332***			1.217***
		(0.072)			(0.111)

Table E 6. Gender wage gap at quantiles – 2019 (Oaxaca Blinder Decomposition)

	Mode 1 (25th Percentile)		
Variables	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
Age		-0.014***	0.119**
		(0.002)	(0.054)
Female (Base: Male)		0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Education		-0.042***	-0.144***
		(0.003)	(0.047)
Rural (Base: Urban)		-0.007***	0.068***
		(0.001)	(0.021)
Estate (Base: Urban)		0.011***	-0.036***
		(0.002)	(0.005)
Sri Lankan Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		-0.003***	-0.033**
		(0.001)	(0.013)
Indian Tamil (Base: Sinhala)		0.004***	-0.008*
		(0.001)	(0.005)
Sri Lankan Moor (Base: Sinhala)		-0.017**	-0.015
		(0.008)	(0.016)
Malay (Base: Sinhala)		0.000	-0.001*
		(0.000)	(0.001)
Burger (Base: Sinhala)		-0.000	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Other (Base: Sinhala)		-0.000	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Hindu (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	0.047***
		(0.001)	(0.015)
Muslim (Base: Buddhist)		0.015*	0.026
		(0.008)	(0.017)
Christians (Base: Buddhist)		0.001*	0.016***
		(0.001)	(0.004)
Other (Base: Buddhist)		-0.000	-0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Married (Base: Never married)		0.034***	0.129***
		(0.003)	(0.025)
Widowed (Base: Never married)		-0.007	0.014*
		(0.006)	(0.009)
Divorced (Base: Never married)		-0.001	0.002
		(0.001)	(0.002)

Mode 2 (50th Percentile)			Mode 3 (75th Percentile)		
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	-0.006***	0.058		0.000	-0.230***
	(0.001)	(0.047)		(0.001)	(0.049)
	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	-0.051***	-0.424***		-0.066***	-0.592***
	(0.003)	(0.040)		(0.003)	(0.043)
	-0.007***	0.081***		-0.008***	0.051*
	(0.001)	(0.022)		(0.001)	(0.026)
	0.010***	0.010**		0.008***	0.010***
	(0.002)	(0.004)		(0.001)	(0.004)
	-0.004***	-0.022*		-0.004***	-0.037***
	(0.001)	(0.013)		(0.001)	(0.013)
	0.004***	-0.004		0.003***	-0.007*
	(0.001)	(0.004)		(0.001)	(0.004)
	-0.008	-0.003		-0.006	-0.011
	(0.008)	(0.015)		(0.009)	(0.017)
	-0.000	-0.001*		-0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.001)		(0.000)	(0.001)
	-0.000	0.000		0.000	-0.001
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.001)
	0.000	-0.000*		-0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	-0.000	0.019		-0.000	0.014
	(0.001)	(0.014)		(0.001)	(0.014)
	0.004	0.007		0.003	0.007
	(0.008)	(0.016)		(0.008)	(0.018)
	0.001*	0.005		0.000	0.004
	(0.000)	(0.004)		(0.000)	(0.005)
	-0.000	0.000		-0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
	0.031***	0.052**		0.025***	-0.059**
	(0.003)	(0.024)		(0.002)	(0.026)
	-0.013***	0.015**		-0.012***	0.010
	(0.004)	(0.007)		(0.004)	(0.007)
	-0.000	-0.000		-0.001	0.002
	(0.001)	(0.002)		(0.001)	(0.002)

Variables	Mode 1 (25th Percentile)		
	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
Separated (Base: Never married)		-0.002	0.004
		(0.001)	(0.003)
Dummy – Family (children below1)		0.001	-0.003
		(0.002)	(0.008)
Dummy – Family (children below3)		-0.000	-0.004
		(0.002)	(0.010)
Dummy–Family (children below18)		-0.005***	-0.004
		(0.001)	(0.015)
Dummy–Family (adult dependents)		-0.000	-0.014**
		(0.001)	(0.006)
Dummy – Mother (children below1)		0.000	0.004
(Base: Non mother females)		(0.000)	(0.006)
Dummy – Mother (children below3)		0.000	0.004
(Base: Non mother females)		(0.000)	(0.008)
Dummy–Mother (children below18)		0.000	-0.013
(Base: Non mother females)		(0.000)	(0.014)
Dummy–Father (children below1)		-0.003	0.000
(Base: Non father males)		(0.005)	(0.000)
Dummy–Father (children below3)		-0.003	0.000
(Base: Non father males)		(0.006)	(0.000)
Dummy–Father (children below18)		0.065***	0.000
(Base: Non father males)		(0.009)	(0.000)
Male mean wage	4.475***		
	(0.006)		
Female mean wage	4.127***		
	(0.011)		
Difference	0.349***		
	(0.013)		
Explained	0.027***		
	(0.011)		
Unexplained	0.322***		
	(0.016)		
Constant			0.164*
			(0.084)

*Note. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.*

Source. Authors' compilation based on LFS – DCS.

Mode 2 (50th Percentile)			Mode 3 (75th Percentile)		
Overall	Explained	Unexplained	Overall	Explained	Unexplained
	-0.002**	0.004		-0.002**	0.006***
	(0.001)	(0.002)		(0.001)	(0.002)
	0.003	-0.001		0.001	-0.005
	(0.002)	(0.007)		(0.002)	(0.007)
	-0.002	-0.007		0.000	0.009
	(0.002)	(0.009)		(0.002)	(0.009)
	-0.003***	0.036***		-0.002	0.044***
	(0.001)	(0.014)		(0.001)	(0.013)
	-0.002***	-0.007		-0.004***	-0.011*
	(0.001)	(0.006)		(0.001)	(0.006)
	0.000	0.004		0.000	0.003
	(0.000)	(0.006)		(0.000)	(0.006)
	0.000	-0.003		0.000	-0.015*
	(0.000)	(0.008)		(0.000)	(0.008)
	0.000	-0.037***		0.000	-0.053***
	(0.000)	(0.013)		(0.000)	(0.013)
	-0.007	0.000		-0.002	0.000
	(0.005)	(0.000)		(0.005)	(0.000)
	0.007	0.000		0.001	0.000
	(0.005)	(0.000)		(0.006)	(0.000)
	0.056***	0.000		0.037***	0.000
	(0.007)	(0.000)		(0.007)	(0.000)
4.863***			5.249***		
(0.005)			(0.006)		
4.595***			5.249***		
(0.011)			(0.012)		
0.268***			0.000		
(0.012)			(0.013)		
0.010			-0.027***		
(0.009)			(0.009)		
0.258***			0.027*		
(0.014)			(0.014)		
		0.476***			0.890***
		(0.078)			(0.080)