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Factors Affecting Women's

Labour Force Participation in Sri Lanka

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ILO Country Office for Sri Lanka and the Maldives

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Forward

Empowerment of women and equality between women and men are prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among all peoples. There have been many attempts global, regional and national, to promote this. The process that formally began in 1975, which was proclaimed International Women's Year by the United Nations General Assembly. In 1979, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which entered into force in 1981 and set an international standard for what was meant by equality between women and men.

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development has reaffirmed the consensus on the importance of gender equality and its contribution to the achievement of the 17 SDGs, more jobs and quality jobs for women, universal social protection and measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and household work are imperative to delivering on the SDG agenda, which aims to reduce poverty (Goal 1) and inequalities (Goal 2) to achieve gender equality (Goal 5) and promote inclusive and sustainable, full and productive employment and decent work for all (Goal 8).

The ILO strongly believes that gender equality at the workplace is, not just the right thing to do, but that it is good for business. There is growing awareness and evidence that gender equality boosts enterprise productivity, spurs economic growth and improves the welfare of families. The ILO four key Conventions that aim to promote gender equality in the world of work form the basis of all other ILO activities promoting gender equality in employment. The four key equality conventions are the Equal Remuneration convention (No. 100), Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (No. 111), Workers with family Responsibilities (No. 156), and Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183). Sri Lanka has ratified all four conventions. However, the implementation and enforcement still have lots of work to do.

In Sri Lanka, the labour force participation rate of women is low and has remained at a low rate between 30-35 percent in the past two decades, which is surprising given the high levels of educational attainments and other social indicators. Women's participation in the labour market varies greatly across countries reflecting differences in economic development, education levels, social norms and access to childcare and other support services. As per a latest ILO study "Women at work Trends 2016" the global female labour for rate has decreased from 52.4 to 49.6. The corresponding figures for men are 79.9 and 76.1. Hence worldwide the chances for women to participate in the labour market remains 27 % lower than those for men.

The first section of the report aims to identify those demand-side constraints through direct data from key players while the second section address research gaps related to women's participation in the labour force. I would like to acknowledge the authors Shyamali Ranaraja, Shafinaz Hassendeen and Ramani Gunatilaka who conducted these studies for a praiseworthy job. Their work has provided invaluable insights into understanding of the female labour force participation in the Sri Lankan economy and delivers useful analysis for policy makers and other stakeholders involving in promoting decent work in the country. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the ILO technical specialists Reiko Tsushima, Sher Verick, Ravi Peiris, DWT New Delhi and Rossana Merola, ILO Geneva. The paper has also benefitted from the contributions from academia, especially from Prof Dileni Gunawardene, Prof Amala de Silva, Dr Asha Abeyasekera and Ranmini Vithanagama.

I would also like to place on record my appreciation to CENWOR and Prof Swarna Jayaweera and her team, particularly Girty Gamage for coordinating the survey and the field research under very difficult time constraints. Finally I would like to thank the ILO Country office staff Indra Tudawe, Chandana Karunaratne and Pramodini Weerasekera, for coordinating and facilitating this study.

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Section I:

Demand-side Factors Affecting Women's Labour Force Participation in Sri Lanka

Shyamali Ranaraja

Shafinaz Hassendeen

Executive Summary

Female labour force participation rate in Sri Lanka has remained low between 30 – 35 per cent in the past two decades, which is surprising given the consistently high educational attainment levels and other social indicators of women in the country. While research has focused on the supply-side factors that have kept female labour force participation rate at low levels, data on demand-side constraints is sparse. This study identifies those demand-side constraints through direct data from key players.

Based on the likely constraints to demand for female labour identified in available literature, Key Person Interviews were carried out of selected employers in the formal private sector to ascertain the views of employers on the identified constraints and experiences in addressing those and other constraints. Due to the difficulties of obtaining access, the employers/representatives who have been interviewed are those who agreed to participate in the study; it is therefore not a survey of a representative sample of employers in Sri Lanka. The analysis of the interviews will provide recommendations for policy makers and is also intended to provide the basis for a sample survey of employers in the private sector in Sri Lanka at a later date to expand and test the findings of this study.

Demand-side constraints on the participation of women in the labour force, theoretically, is visible in occupational segregation, income inequality, discrimination in employment, differences in the quality of jobs available to women versus the quantity of such jobs, and lack of entrepreneurship amongst women; it is caused by a combination of factors including a restrictive legislative environment, and the status and nature of employment in the country. This theoretical basis was examined in relation to Sri Lanka through interviews of senior managers in selected private sector organisations (Key Persons Interviews). The findings largely confirm the existence of constraints as indicated in the theoretical framework, and provide insights into the reasons for such constraints: a combination of restrictive legislation, the role played by the public sector in creating alternate and privileged employment, inability to adapt to changing work environments, the lack of skills and qualifications in women applicants for certain types of jobs, and social and cultural factors.

The results of the interviews have also provided the basis for suggestions for changing the conditions which make these constraints possible, and has provided the basis for a subsequent and more detailed study to explore these preliminary findings further.

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1 Introduction

Demand-Side Factors Affecting Women's Labour Force Participation in Sri Lanka

The relatively low female labour force participation rate in Sri Lanka has puzzled many researchers, especially given the consistently high educational attainment levels of women in the country. Despite significant achievements unique to the sub region in many human development indicators and in gender equality, it is surprisingly similar to the trend in other South Asian countries which rank lower in those indicators when it comes to the participation of women in the labour force. Female labour force participation has stagnated at between 30 to 35 percent in the past two decades, which is much lower than one would expect given the achievements in social indicators. However, with the labour force predicted to start shrinking in 2026 and a rapidly ageing population, the country needs more of its working age women in the labour force to achieve and sustain its growth strategies.

There is a large body of research available on the supply side factors which have attempted to shed light on the reasons which have kept female labour force participation rate at low levels. One of the most recent studies, used data from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2009/10 of the Department of Census and Statistics, to identify supply-side factors constraining women's participation (Gunatilaka (2013)), such as remittances from abroad; Islamic Moor ethno-religious identity; disability; education up to Ordinary level; the presence of children less than five years of age; the employment and education characteristics of male household members and male head of household. Having children later rather than earlier was also found likely to be a significant constraint. The study also look briefly at demand-side determinants and found that local labour market conditions, such as whether relatively more people were employed in manufacturing and services rather than in agriculture, were associated with a reduced likelihood of labour market participation.

But by and large, Sri Lankan literature on the factors that affect demand for female workers is sparse, and the available information is based on interpretation of studies and research in other areas; for instance, while many have argued that impact of labour regulation on the demand for workers in general (such as TEWA), and the demand for female workers in particular (such as restrictions on the employment of women at night under the Shop and Office Employment Act, especially in the service sectors), there is a lack of direct information and data available to policy makers. Keeping this gap in literature in mind, the proposed study aims to identify key demand-side barriers to the entry of women to the labour market.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The study aims to identify key demand-side constraints to labour force participation, and make policy recommendations aimed at improving hiring decisions by employers.

1.2 Methodology

The study is based on a literature review of both published and unpublished material (key published documents, during the time frame 2009-2014 and 2000-2009, and any significant unpublished material, including seminar and workshop papers) to identify constraints on labour demand affecting the Labour Force Participation of women; the literature review will be prefaced by a brief statistical overview of the nature and features of female labour force participation in Sri Lanka. Based on the likely constraints identified in literature, Key Person Interviews will be carried out of employers in the formal private sector

to ascertain the views of employers on the identified constrains and experiences in addressing those and other constraints. Due to the difficulties of obtaining access, the employers/representatives who have been interviewed are those who agreed to participate in the study; it is therefore not a survey of a representative sample of employers in Sri Lanka. The analysis of the interviews will provide recommendations for policy makers and is also intended to provide the basis for a sample survey of employers in the private sector in Sri Lanka at a later date to expand and validate the findings of this study.

2 Literature Survey

A labour market exits where there is an exchange of labour services between demanders (employers) and sellers (workers), and negotiations between buyers and sellers determine in part the employment of workers in jobs with specified wages, benefits and conditions of employment. The demand for labour is determined by the cost of labour, the productivity of the workforce, the current and anticipated level of production, and the price that the firm can command for its product or service. Job opportunities arise when employers establish enterprises, expand operations, or replace employees who leave the enterprise such as through retirement. The supply of labour, very simply, is the number of people currently working or actively seeking to take up the job opportunities that are available (Kaufman and Hotchkiss, 2003). However, although the labour market is described in terms of demand and supply, unlike other market, there are laws norms or conventions which prevent or reduce the applicability of the standard market framework to the labour market (Boeri and van Ours, 2013).

Gunatilaka (2013) exhaustively examined supply-side factors which prevent women from wage work in Sri Lanka using available statistical information from the Department of Census and Statistics. The study found important differences in the factors that appear to enable and constrain married and single women, and female heads of households, from participating in the labour market, which can be summarised as follows:

Table 1: Factors that enable/constrain women's participation in the labour market in Sri Lanka

Group	Enabling condition	Constraint
Married women	Age	Remittances from abroad
	Educational attainment from GCE Advanced Level and beyond	Islamic Moor ethno-religious identity and disability;
	Higher per capita household consumption	Education up to Ordinary Level
	Availability of domestic help	Employment and education characteristics of male household members and male head of household
	A higher share of employed females, relative to males with the same educational attainment as the individual in the district	More people employed in manufacturing and services, relative to agriculture in the district
	Living on estates	Residence in Central, Eastern and North Western Province
	Having children later rather than earlier	
Single women	Age	Relatively higher status of household consumption
	All levels of education above primary level	Greater rate of unemployment
	The presence of other adult women in the household	
	A higher share of employed females in the district, relative to males in the same education category as the individual	
	Living on estates	

Group	Enabling condition	Constraint
Female Heads of Households	Age	Remittances from abroad
	A university education	Earnings of male members of household
	A large informal sector in the district	They have children below 5 years of age
	Living on estates	More people employed in manufacturing and services, relative to agriculture in the district
		Whether they are residing in all provinces outside the Western Province.

Source: Adapted from Gunatilaka (2013)

Examining the constraints further, Gunatilaka (2013) found that the for married women and female heads of household, the constraints include cultural and status-related perceptions and attitudes about the role of married women in the household and the gender division of household and care labour within the family unit; however, even where conditions encouraged women to seek wage employment it was noted that the legal framework governing work in the private sector imposed constraints on the nature and type of work that women were able to take up.

These findings have been largely been affirmed by contemporaneous research by Chowdhury (2014), and Nistha (2012) which have identified similar characteristics in labour supply in Sri Lanka. An ongoing study on Womens' activity outcomes, preferences and time use is likely to yield rich dividends in testing the available research on supply constraints but the findings will not be available for review in relation to this this study.

Where the demand-side of the labour market is concerned available literature has identified numerous factors which cause deviations in the labour market such as Government regulation through employment protection legislation. For instance, in a standard application of market forces, demand and supply would determine the wages of every individual employee; however, the Wages Boards Ordinance determines the minimum wages for some categories of work in Sri Lanka, and it would be illegal to pay a worker a lesser wage than the minimum even if s/he is willing to accept a lower wage. Other factors may also affect wage setting, such as collective bargaining, different types of contracts of employment, and the non-competitive hiring in the public sector (Fields, 1986).

Another school of thought is that the tendency to look a labour market institutions and instruments as something that "distorts" competition should be revisited. The ILO especially has maintained that the labour market must be regulated to prevent a 'race to the bottom' due to compulsion and low bargaining power of certain workers: markets are not perfect, and instruments such as minimum wage is not a "deviation" but an important mechanism to regulate the labour markets on a rights based approach.

Lim (1996) examines the implicit and explicit policies regarding the inclusion or exclusion of women and their treatment in the economy and labour market, and highlights four factors, namely, (a) labour market (occupational) segregation and concentration, (b) pay differentials, (c) differences in quality of jobs available to women versus the quantity, and (d) discrimination and disadvantages in accessing employment, as being the most critical constraints in relation to the demand for women workers. The survey of enterprises carried out for this study loosely follows these identified constraints in order to provide a basis for analysis.

2.1.1 Occupational Segregation

Lim (1996) defines segregation as the tendency for men and women to be employed in different occupations which includes both vertical and horizontal segregation: horizontal segregation being where women tend to be confined to specific occupations in comparison with men and vertical segregation where women are concentrated at different levels within a specific occupations. Explaining further, Lim states that segregation is a factor of skill, responsibility, pay, status and power, and the jobs in which women are predominant often offer less advantaged employment than jobs in which men predominate, such as lesser pay, lack of pensions and sickness benefits, and less advantageous types of work, hours of employment, types of employment contracts and opportunities for promotion.

Occupational segregation and concentration is visible worldwide, and ILO data indicates that more than two-thirds of the global labour force in garment production is female and this sector absorbs almost one-fifth of the total female labour force in manufacturing. Nearly two-thirds of women in manufacturing are categorized as labourers, operators and production workers; only 5 per cent are in professional and technical occupations, and 2 percent in administrative and managerial positions. Other data for some 500 non-agricultural occupations in the United States, the United Kingdom and France indicate that approximately 45 per cent of the labour force is in gender-dominated occupations where either women or men make up at least 80 per cent of the occupation (KLIM, 2013).

Not only do women and men have different occupations; some occupations are more desirable than others. Men commonly do work of higher pay and status. There is a strong relationship between segregation and lower pay levels for women. Not surprisingly, men dominate the highest-paying occupations, and women the lowest-paying ones.

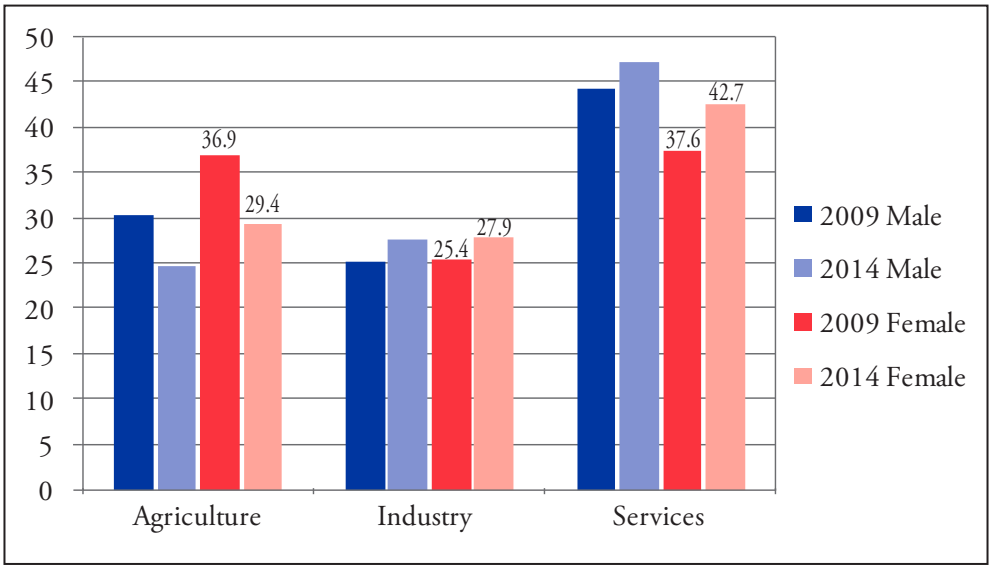
Occupational segregation and concentration tend to be perpetuated by customary or cultural prescriptions regarding job appropriateness for each sex and the claim that such an organizing principle accommodates women's domestic role. In addition, if employers expect that women will have lower and intermittent participation as compared to men because of their conflicting domestic responsibilities, they tend to restrict women's access to particular job ladders. Thus, women end up in dead-end positions or ones involving limited mobility.

Since overt wage discrimination is often illegal, employers react by diversifying labour demand. Jobs can be segregated between women and men so that the principle of comparison cannot apply. Employers may expect women to be more productive than men as a compensation for higher costs (such as those associated with maternity leave and benefits). Therefore, studies have found that employers impose higher qualifications in screening female applicants for a job (Lim, 1996), thus creating a 'knock-on' effect of occupational segregation.

2.1.2 Occupational Segregation in Sri Lanka

The service sector is the currently the dominant source of demand for labour in Sri Lanka, and has been expanding in terms of its share of GDP. For example, hotels and restaurants, telecoms, and government services had among the highest sectoral rate of GDP growth in the last few years. Among men, employment in the service sector has grown steadily to become the dominant employment sector with 45 percent of all employed men, although agriculture and industry still account for roughly 25 to 30 percent of male employment. Among women, agriculture used to be the dominant sector of employment in the early part of the last decade, but by 2014, womens' share of employment in services has grown to nearly 40 percent whereas in contrast in 2009, close to 40 percent of women were engaged in agriculture.

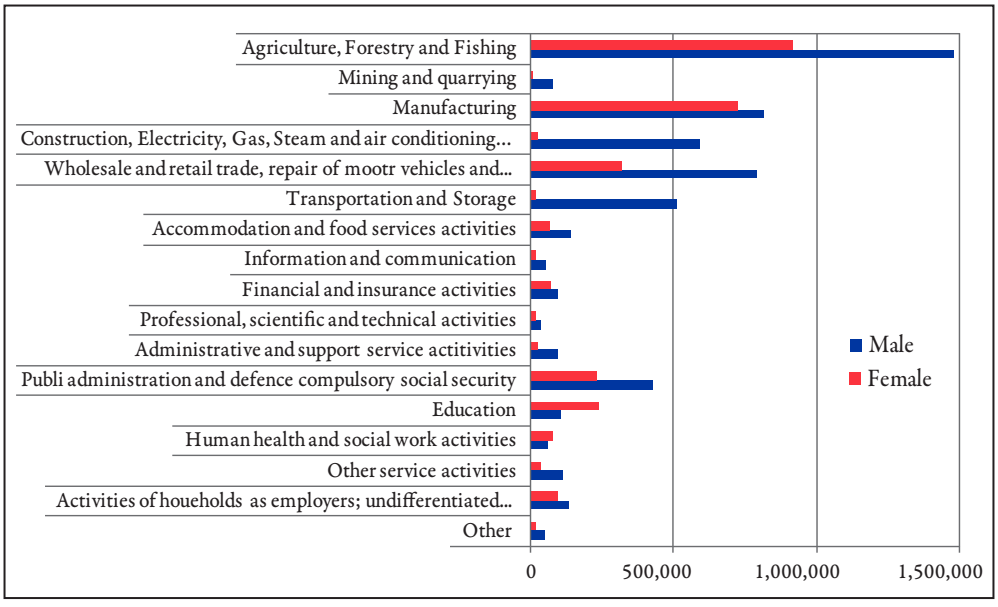
Figure 1: Distribution of employed population by industry and gender: 2009/2014



Source: Calculation based on Annual Labour Force Survey, various years, Department of Census and Statistics.

Within the services sector, women are employed mainly in education and health services, whereas men are mainly employed in the traditional, non-tradable sectors of wholesale and retail trade, public administration and defence, and transport (see Figure 2).[1] and it can be seen that men dominate all sectors except education, health and manufacturing; even service sectors such as accommodation (hospitality), wholesale and retail, and agriculture where women could reasonably be expected to be employed in larger number, employ more male workers.

Figure 2: Currently employed persons by Industry group and gender: 2014



Source: Computation based on Annual Labour Force Survey (2014), Department of Census and Statistics.

Women predominate in the expected sectors of health and education, as most teachers, nursing and medical staff are female, and are well represented in industry groups that rely on professional services such as insurance and banking. There is clearly visible horizontal segregation in these industry groups. This

[1] The classifications are based on the ISIC (4th Revision).

segregation is not unique to Sri Lanka; In a study similar to Gunatilaka (2013), a study in India found women continue to be more likely to join traditional stereotyped jobs that are socially perceived as suitable for women (Chakraborty, 2013), and other studies in Bangladesh and Pakistan have demonstrated similar findings. One study attributes this to the resistance of the South Asian region to role-changes required by the rapid economic development in these countries (Sutharshan, 2014).

Women are also segregated to some extent by occupational level as indicated by data from the current Annual Labour Force Survey. Only one fourth of women workers are at senior levels but as the survey data also includes public sector data this level of contribution of females to the managerial category is likely benefit from the presence of more women in the public sector hierarchy; the actual numbers in the private sector are likely to be much lower. Women perform much better in the professional category with 64 per cent in that category being women again due to high levels of achievement by women in tertiary and professional education (Gunatilaka, 2013), but despite that women are still clearly at a disadvantage in breaking through the 'glass-ceiling' described by Wickremasinghe and Jayathilaka (2006).

Within the occupational segregation is also hidden the issue of the absence of opportunities for career progression of women workers: even in the strata that women work in, there does not appear to be numerous opportunities for opportunities for promotion and growth. Wickremasinghe and Jayathilaka (2006) also noted a double 'jeopardy' for women workers as, on the one hand, women workers were not considered for promotion even where they had the required experience and educational qualifications due to a perceived lack of certain personality traits considered desirable; on the other hand, a capable and efficient women worker would not be promoted as it was difficult to replace her with someone as capable in that position. Other factors such as more than one pregnancy, inability or unwillingness to participate in the organizations' social activities due to family responsibilities, also played a part in women not progressing on the career path, as well as the absence of a career path in some of the organisations in which women workers were employed as a majority in certain occupations (nursing, teaching, secretarial work, etc.) due to the flat structure within such organisations.

Table 2: Employed population by occupation and gender: 2014

	Total	Male	Female	% contribution of females to the total employment
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	34.1
Managers, Senior Officials and Legislators	4.5	5.2	3.3	24.8
Professionals	6.4	3.5	12	64.3
Technical & Associate Professionals	5.9	6	5.8	33.1
Clerks & Clerical support workers	4.3	3.1	6.5	52.1
Services & Sales Workers	11.8	12.5	10.4	30.3
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry & Fishery workers	20.2	19.9	20.8	35.2
Craft & Related Trades Workers	17.2	17.5	16.6	32.9
Plant & Machine operators and Assemblers	8.3	11.1	3	12.2
Armed Forces occupations	0.4	-	-	-

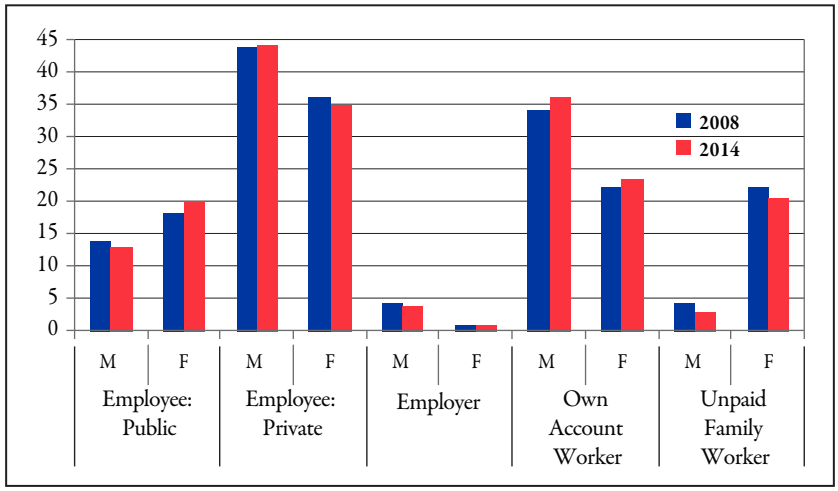
Source: Annual Labour Force Survey (2014), Department of Census and Statistics

Chowdhury (2014) identifies some occupations where gender segregation is "striking": 'professional category' is dominated by women where 64 percent of working women are professionals, as compared with only 3.7 percent men; plant and machine operator and assembler", where only 12 percent of women are engaged which raises queries given the concentration of women in the apparel manufacturing sector; it is likely however, that even in this sector, that women are engaged in less skilled types of work. Overall,

a large proportion of women are employed as clerks and clerical support workers, due mainly to the high number of females employed in these categories in the public sector.

The status of employment, or the relative economic positions held by women have not improved in terms of security over time. Figure 3 is a comparison of the status of employment of men and women; over time the share of private sector wage employment of women has decreased, while public sector employment as well as own account work has increased slightly. This reduction in private sector wage employment is of concern, given the policy of the Government to make employment creation in the private sector a priority, and brings with it different challenges in terms of ensuring that workers in such sectors are also protected under current labour legislation.

Figure 3: Employment Status by gender: 2009/2014



Source: Calculation based on Annual Labour Force Survey, various years, Department of Census and Statistics.

Nistha (2012) notes that between 1992 and 2009, most female entrants to the labour market found employment in education/health/social work, manufacturing, hotels and restaurants, wholesale and retail trade, financial institutions, as clerks, professionals, technical and associate professionals, and educators, but that the overall patterns of segregation did not change markedly. While women made some inroads into occupations such as managers/senior officials/legislators, they remained a very small share of employment in these jobs.

2.1.3 Inequality of wages

One of the main inequalities between men and women at work is the inequality of wages received; the Global Wage Report (ILO, 2015) found that worldwide, women's average wages are between 4 to 36 per cent less than that of men, and identified the underlying factors which cause such inequality, namely, an undervaluation of women's work, workplace characteristics, occupational segregation channelling women into low value added jobs, the overall wage setting mechanism in each country, the view of women as economic dependants, the likelihood that women are in unorganized sectors or not represented in unions and the multiple roles women are required to play, especially within the family.

In Sri Lanka, there are several mechanisms which set wages for different occupations and sectors. The Pay Commissions for public sector jobs (which are not considered in detail here as this report looks only at private sector employment), tripartite Wages Boards that set minimum wages for a range of specific occupations, and collective bargaining which sets wages for specific enterprises or across industries (such as plantations). institutions for formal private sector jobs. However, although Wages Boards set wages based on skills and occupations and not gender, real wages have remained unequal for men and women (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014, pp.92). In addition, these wage-setting practices are also considered to

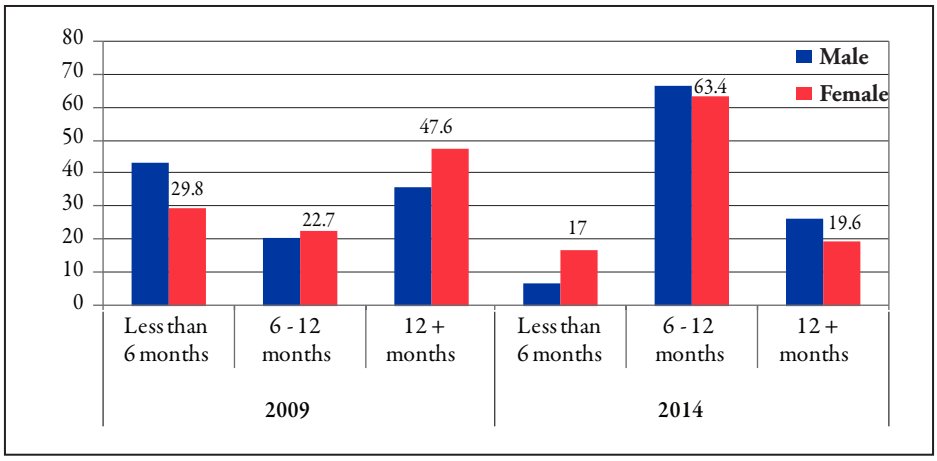
have raised labour costs, hampering employment growth and shifting jobs to the informal sector (World Bank, 2006).

Using the Annual Labour Force Survey Data, Nistha (2012), found that male workers earn between 30 to 36 percent more than women workers in the private sector/semi-government organizations; the cause of the inequality remains unexplained although factors such as lower levels of education, lower labour market experience, or discrimination by employers could have an impact on wage differences (World Bank, (2006)). However, the study found that there was gender parity in earnings in the public sector which could act as a strong incentive for women to seek public sector employment.

2.1.4 Public sector employment

The impact of public sector employment affects labour market demand in several ways. The public sector continues be the main source of formal jobs in Sri Lanka, because as much as 60 percent of employment in the private sector is located in the informal sector (LFS, 2014). Given the higher wages and relative wage parity in the public sector, this creates an impetus for both men and women to give preference to obtaining employment in the public sector. The queuing hypothesis, which argues that the unemployed wait for an opportunity to take up 'good jobs' in the public sector characterized by job security, generous, fringe benefits, low work effort, and high social status (Rama, 2003, and Gunathilaka, et al., 2010), has been shown in Sri Lanka to cause the unemployed to wait long periods in the hope of gaining employment in the public sector. This has been more marked for women, but has improved over time (see Table 2) but remains a constraint to taking up available employment opportunities.

Figure 4: Currently unemployed persons by gender and duration of employment 2009/2014



Source: Annual Labour Force Survey (various years), Department of Census and Statistics.

Although women don't wait as long to find employment, those waiting between 6-12 months have nearly trebled; even the reduction of the proportion of women waiting longer than 12 months is likely to be due to the increasing number of females who migrate for foreign employment each year, rather than an increase in jobs available. The preference for public sector employment and the queuing hypothesis also explains the phenomenon where women in well paid, high status formal sector jobs in the private sector, voluntarily leave such employment in the expectation of or to take up jobs in the public sector.

2.1.5 Employment protection legislation

Very often, labour and employment protection legislation and regulations affect the demand side of the market. The World Bank (2006) analysed the Termination of Employment of Workman Act (TEWA) to ascertain its impact on enterprise behaviour. Under the TEWA, employees who have worked in firms with

15 or more workers for more than 180 days in a twelve month period enjoy protection from termination by the employer except for disciplinary reasons; the employer must obtain government authorization to terminate or lay off such workers and obtaining such authorization is a cumbersome and lengthy process. The study found that the restrictions on the firing of workers were considered to be a reason for firms' reliance on temporary workers, keeping the number of full-time employees below the TEWA threshold of 15 employees (World Bank, 2004 and 2006). An analysis of firm based on the returns filed in relation to the payment of Employees' Provident Fund benefits for the above study (World Bank, 2006) showed that the majority of workers in both agriculture and non-agriculture private sector are employed in organizations with no regular employees; the remaining workers are employed either in very small firms (less than 5 workers) or in large firms in the case of manufacturing/construction/electricity-gas-water supply. The "missing middle"– very few workers employed in firms with 5 to 99 workers – was likely to be an evasive mechanism intended to avoid the application of legislation such as TEWA[2] based on a 15 worker "threshold" for application.

Therefore, the argument is that the restrictions on the right to fire employees under legislation such as the TEWA makes employers cautious in hiring employees, or create a push towards hiring them under conditions which can circumvent the application of the TEWA; either by maintaining the number of employees below 15, or keeping employees on a casual or informal basis in order to indicate that there are less than that number of workers. Casual, temporary or time bound contracts of employment may be used to avoid the need to apply to the Commissioner General of Labour or to avoid paying compensation when firing workers. Although these issues will affect both male and female workers alike, women are likely to be more vulnerable as they are employed in larger numbers in lower paying and lower skilled categories of work that are more likely to be abolished in difficult economic conditions. Heckman, J.J. and C. Pagés (2000).

Legislation that has implications for women in relation to other terms of employment are the Maternity Benefits Ordinance which require that a female worker be granted paid maternity leave at childbirth of up to three and a half months (84 working days) regardless of length of service; there is no State subsidy of such paid leave, and the employer bears the entire cost including that of a replacement worker notwithstanding the acceptance in International Conventions that the State has an obligation towards ensuring maternity protection for all workers. In addition, some industries are required to grant nursing intervals of up to one hour for mothers' breastfeeding infant children. Restrictions on night work for women in the manufacturing sector,[3] prohibition on overtime work for women employed in Shops and offices,[4] restrictions on employment in certain occupations considered to be hazardous,[5] which have often been identified as causing distortions in demand for women workers (Ranaraja, 2006). These legislative provisions were enacted mainly in the period immediately before or after the end of British rule in Sri Lanka in 1948 and at that time was intended to protect women from exploitation and the effects of unequal bargaining power; however, more than half a century later although women are more empowered and working conditions have improved, these protectionist legislative provisions have remained unchanged. Rather than preventing exploitation and hazardous employment, such legislation often leads to indirect discrimination against employing women, as discussed in the following section.

2.1.6 Flexible work arrangements

Worldwide, women's share in the labour force has continued to rise, but the nature of their participation has changed significantly; increases in the quantity of employment for women have not been matched by improvements in quality. Jobs available for women have moved away from permanent, regular full-time employment, to temporary or casual work, multiple part-time jobs, home-working, subcontracting

[2] The Payment of Gratuity Act grants a terminal benefit to workers in enterprises with 15 or more workers, and the Employees' Provident Fund Act, and the Employees' Trust Fund Act, require social security payments in respect of every worker.

[3] Factories Ordinance.

[4] Shop and Office Employees' (Special Remuneration) Act

[5] Employment of Women Young Persons and Children Act

or outsourced systems, and self-employment in micro-enterprises and small firms in the informal sector. While some of these atypical or non-standard forms of work have increased the flexibility for women to work within the limitations they face within the family unit, these forms of work also tend to expose women to job and income insecurity and a real risk of marginalization in the labour market as it is characterized by low pay, little or no wage benefits, lack of rights or social protection, and limited training opportunities or career prospects.

While these non-traditional forms of work are often seen as providing the flexible environment needed to allow enterprises to adjust or adapt efficiently to the changing economic environment, such work may not benefit women in the long term; but while it is true that some women choose such work because of the flexible hours, greater compatibility with family responsibilities and relatively easier access, for many women part-time or temporary employment and informal sector work is involuntary; they go into such employment because no other opportunities are open to them.

In a survey of over 800 global participants to compile "A New Way to Work Index" by Unify[6], 43% of employees stated that they would choose flexi-work over a pay rise; a large majority of women (83%) indicated that flexible work arrangements would help them to remain in employment longer. An examination of best practices in flexible work arrangements also indicated that employees were not expecting an 'all-or-nothing' approach, but would accept working a few days a week, or the part of the day on a flexible basis. However, issues such as security of information, performance monitoring, time management, are issues that must be dealt with in implementing flexible work arrangements.

In a study of professionals employed in the IT sector in Sri Lanka, it was found that female workers were more positive towards flexible work arrangements as it helped to balance work and social life (Wickramasinghe and Jayabandu (2007)). However certain issues such as feelings of disconnection from the workplace was identified as having to be dealt with prior to such work arrangements being implemented.

2.1.7 Discrimination and disadvantages in accessing employment by women

The Constitution of Sri Lanka (1978) states that all ***persons*** are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law (Article 12(1)). The concomitant rights of this universal right are less generous in scope; Article 12(2) provides that "no ***citizen*** shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any such grounds". Age has been excluded from the list of discriminatory factors, as age is lawfully and inherently linked with many other rights, such as the right to vote. The fundamental right to equality is not simply a latent right; the State has a proactive role to play in relation to specific groups of its citizens. Article 12(4) provides that these Constitutional provisions shall not prevent "special provision being made, by law, subordinate legislation or executive action, for the advancement of **women**, children or disabled persons". This provision recognises that affirmative action may be required where groups of citizens are considered to be underprivileged or requiring of greater protection, and such "special arrangements" shall not constitute discrimination as against persons outside the protected class of persons. Therefore, the underlying principle in these Constitutional provisions is that there shall be no discrimination among equals except as provided in the Constitution itself.

In relation to employment the Constitution guarantees all citizens "the freedom to engage by himself or in association with others in any lawful occupation, profession, trade, business or enterprise" (Article 14(1)(g)). The decision to engage in any occupations, etc., must therefore be made freely, and accordingly, the right to freedom from bonded labour or forced labour is also recognised. This is of particular importance in relation to the employment of youth and women as it places an obligation on the State to ensure that this freedom of choice is safeguarded. The Constitution also guarantees the freedom to form and join a trade union (Article 14(1)(d)). The right is not restricted to persons in employment or to persons in a

[6] Accessed at http://www.unify.com/us/news/2846D70A-ACA6-4146-9B00-955E6114038E/

particular sector of employment, and therefore any male or female, whether employed or not, and whatever the occupation, can form and join a trade union as provided in law.

The fundamental rights contained in Articles 12, 13 and 14 can only be curtailed by such restrictions as may be prescribed by law in the interests of racial and religious harmony or national economy and national security. Therefore, the legal framework governing equality and employment clearly outlaws all form of discrimination, not only against women, but on basis of race, religion, etc.[7] However, in social and cultural factors, as well as individual prejudices cause discrimination in numerous ways against the employment of women.

In Sri Lanka the disadvantages and discrimination women face, both before and after entry into the labour market, are clearly inter-linked. But as a basis for action, it is useful to distinguish between two situations: (a) those in which employers do not hire or promote women, or else pay them less than men and (b) those based on prejudices and gender biases. Wickramasinghe and Jayathilaka (2007) identify a number of instances of overt and covert discrimination. For instance, in a manufacturing situation employers contend that women are paid lower wages on average than men because they may have less educational/vocational qualifications, may not work the same hours as men nor have equivalent work experience; interruptions in work experience because of child-bearing or family responsibilities may compound their disadvantage; they may then argue that they do not hire women because they are less productive, participate intermittently in the labour force, and therefore cost relatively more than men. But what should be remembered is that these differences between male and female workers may actually reflect earlier discrimination which prevented women from obtaining education, training or experience in the first place. This 'cyclical' view of discrimination is evident in some of the responses obtained in the Key Persons' Interviews detailed in the following section.

Very often, discrimination is multi-faceted and difficult to pinpoint. It may take the form of assumptions, prescriptions or prejudices on the part not only of employers but also of families, the wider community or society and even women workers themselves, regarding the gender division of labour. Such assumptions or prejudices are rooted in culture, tradition or religious beliefs and may have become non-negotiable norms of conduct or behaviour. These norms may be reflected in the value assigned to education for girls, delegation of the reproductive role to women and the productive role to men, prescriptions regarding "appropriate" jobs for women and men, and the perception of women as secondary earners and non-committed members of the workforce.

These gendered norms can ultimately translate into discrimination – but veiled as time constraints arising from multiple roles of care for children and the elderly, housework/household management). For instance, Gunatilaka (2013) found that 70 percent of Sri Lankan married women with at least 1 child under 5 are not in the labour market and spend their time in housework. For urban mothers with at least one child under the age of 5, this rate is about 75 percent, and for rural mothers it is 71 percent. This is also clear in the reasons cited by women who are economically inactive (not in the labour force or looking for work) where the majority of women have cited housework as the reason for their inactive status.

[7] There is no special legislation to ensure equal opportunities in employment at present in Sri Lanka, although a draft Equal Opportunity Bill was canvassed several years ago as an initiative of some non-governmental organisations active in advocacy on social issued. One of the main reasons for the lack of interest in enacting such legislation was the view that the fundamental right to equality enshrined in the Constitution was sufficiently broad in scope to provide the protection contained in the Bill. For instance, any person who is denied recruitment or career advancement on the basis of gender, even in the private sector, may seek a declaration from the District Court that his/her fundamental right to equality has been violated. However, the long delays involved in litigation Sri Lanka, makes it unlikely that any aggrieved party would seek to resolve such a dispute through legal means.

Table 3: Reasons for being economically inactive by gender: 2014

Reason	Male	Female
Engaged in Studies	37.9	13.8
Engaged in housework	6.8	62.8
Retired/old age	34.8	16.1
Physical illness/disability	13.3	4.3
Other	7.2	2.9

Source: Annual Labour Force Survey (2014), Department of Census and Statistics

These features, although appearing to affect the supply side of the labour market more, have an impact on labour demand by affecting the perceptions of employers, society and women themselves regarding the need and nature of an economic role for women. Therefore, any policy aiming at releasing women's time can play a substantial role in encouraging them to take active role in labour force by freeing up their time to do so. Subsidies to or public provision of child care have been used in developing and middle-income countries such as Mexico, Columbia, Argentina, Brazil, states of India and the like to compensate women for the costs they incur within their home from participating in economic activities. Many studies have found that subsidized childcare and free kindergarten facilities, combined with the transformation of public kindergarten from part-time to full-time, had a large and statistically significant impact on the participation of mothers with preschool children (Baker, Gruber, and Milligan (2005)). However, these policies may not have the intended results unless designed with the specific societal and cultural conditions in mind.

For instance, a study based on a survey of 200 households with at least one pre-school child in urban Sri Lanka suggests that women's non-market work is not dependent on husband's income but rather on the share of housework and childcare of other adults in the household. Mothers are more likely to participate in the labour force when they can share their childcare and housework responsibility with others; the decision to buy formal child care is affected by the age of children, cost of day-care centers, household income, types of occupation, level of education and quality of child care (Premaratne, S.P., 2011). Therefore, it's not simply the availability of childcare but the quality and affordability of child-care services that positively influences female labour force participation; similar factors are likely to apply to geriatric care as well, as due to a rapidly ageing population, women face a further responsibility as primarily caregivers to the elderly members of households.

2.1.8 Low levels of entrepreneurship among women

Women's share of employers, and own account workers in Sri Lanka remains low and has only improved marginally over time (see Figure 3 above). Given the constraints faced by women in accessing wage employment in the private sector, another way of increasing the economic participation of women would be to encourage more women to become entrepreneurs, employers or own account workers as this would provide women with the ability to make more flexible work arrangements. Typically, existing business training experiments have typically found rather limited impacts of business training on female microfinance clients who already own businesses; women completing training undertake a few more of the practices taught by the training in their enterprises, but this is generally found not to have measurable impacts on business profitability or employment levels.

One study in Sri Lanka, with a representative sample of existing poor female business owners provide a similar picture, and suggest training alone is not enough to get subsistence businesses run by women to grow; adding capital leads to a temporary boost in profitability in the first year following training, but these enterprises are no more profitable than the control group two years after training (De Mel, S.,

McKenzie, David, and Woodruff, Christopher, (2012)). These results highlight the challenge in getting subsistence-level female-owned microenterprises to grow, and suggest that the constraints on the growth of these businesses may not be simply due to shortcomings in access to capital and skills.

Based on the above survey of available research and data on constraints that operate on the demand for women workers, the existence of these constraints in actual enterprises and labour market situations was surveyed through interviews with 31 enterprises in the Greater Colombo area, the results of which are detailed in the next section.

3 Key Persons' Interviews

The literature survey highlighted constraints arising from occupational segregation, inequality, discrimination, the nature and type of jobs for women, cultural and social factors, and lower levels of entrepreneurship, as reducing the participation of women in the labour force; based on the identified constraints guidelines were developed for the Key Persons' Interviews (KPIs) to ascertain the views of representatives of the identified organisations on the perception and opinion of key persons on the procedure and practice in recruitment of female workers; work arrangements and practices aimed at the retention and development of female workers; impact of labour legislation on hiring of women workers; whether skill and experience differed between men and women workers; and the impact of socio-cultural norms on the demand for women workers.

With the assistance of the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) which is the largest employer representative organisation in the country, access was gained to some of the EFC's members in the identified sectors, and others were sourced through the personal contacts of the researcher and/or publicly available data. The interviews were conducted over a four week period and faced constraints of time and access to key persons; data availability was also at the discretion of the enterprises selected and there is a considerable lack of uniformity in the data that was made available and the analysis and conclusions were necessarily constrained by these limitations.

The enterprises were selected on a purposive basis and ranged from small /medium to large scale enterprises as well as a cross section of enterprises from different sectors. These included the manufacturing, service and plantation sectors. Sub sectors in the manufacturing sector included enterprises in the apparel sector, food and beverage, boat building, hardware, furniture. The service sector included hospitality, retail services (clothing and supermarket), banks, insurance, Telecom/IT services, health services and construction. Those interviewed included both women and men (see annexure 2 for the enterprises /sectors interviewed).

The findings of the KPI have been grouped under five headings: occupational segregation, discrimination in employment, the impact of employment protection legislation, flexible work arrangements, and dealing with wage inequality. The analysis is based entirely on the views and opinions expressed by the KPI respondents and the data provided by the organisations.

3.1.1 Limitations

One of the limitations was that it was mostly confined interviews of persons based in Colombo and the outlying suburbs region due to time constraints. However, to overcome this a number of enterprises with branches/subsidiaries in other parts of the country were selected and key persons from these establishments were interviewed. Another limitation was that it was restricted to the formal private sector. Neither the informal sector not the self-employed women were included in this study due to constraints of both time and accessibility.

As mentioned earlier this is part of a larger study which is looking at both supply side issues as well as the demand side issues that constrain women's participation in the labour market. It is envisaged that some of the constraints faced by the segments of employers and workers not included in this study, such as self-employed women, women workers in the informal sector, especially casual workers, would be captured in the supply side study.

3.1.2 Profile of enterprises selected

The employee data contained in this report has been provided by the Companies interviewed at the request of the researcher. However, it was not possible to extract the data in relation to standard staff categories, etc., as the companies had differing employee categories, which makes any comparision difficult. Some of the companies provided only the gender breakdown in percentage form and did not provide actual numbers. The number of employees in the companies interviewed are represented in approximate form in the following table (two of the Companies of the 31 interviewed did not provide any employee data).

Table 4: Companies interviewed by employee strength

100-500	501-1000	1001-5000	5001-10000	Above 10001
7	4	8	5	5

All three main sectors of employment – agriculture, services and manufacturing – were represented and the main business activities of the companies could be categorised as follows:

Table 5: Companies interviewed by sector of main business activity

Insurance	2
IT	2
Banking	2
Apparel	4
Plantations	4
Confectionary	2
Hotel and Tourism	4
Healthcare	1
Telecommunications	1
Boat building	1
Dairy Products	1
Other manufacturing	5
Retail	2
Total	31
Chambers/BOI	3

There were four groups of companies and these were involved in more than one sector and one business activity. Women's share of employment was high in the plantation sector (between 53-59 percent), but this was only at field worker level; there were only a few women supervisors ("Kanganies") and no female estate managers or assistant managers. In the other sectors, the proportion of women employees varied depending on the type of business activity: for instances, while 43 percent of the employees in the respondent company engaged in banking was female, the proportion of female worekrs in companies in the hospitality sector were in the 10-11 percent category. Similary, the companies in the apparel sector and confectionary sector indicated that 80 percent and 46 percent respectively of their employees were female, while women were only employed in the clerical category in battery manufacturing, not being represented at all in the actual manufacturing process.

The highest proportion of women employees in the executive/management grades was respectively in the banking sector (47%), the information technology sector (40%), the apparel sector (35%) and the confectionary sector (55%). However, there was no indication of the length of service of the employees, and therefore it is not possible to ascertain whether the women in executive and higher grades had been recruited or had progressed in their careers to such positions.

Outcomes of Key Persons Interviews

4

Many of the KPIs were with senior managers of the selected Companies, including Chief Executive Officers, in general management and responses are therefore based on their experiences both in relation to the supply-side and demand-side of the labour market. The responses are therefore grouped accordingly, and some broad conclusions have been drawn with regard to demand side constraints.

4.1 Occupational Segregation: Is Occupational Segregation visible in the enterprises interviewed ?

It has been well documented that societal expectations limit women's employment options channelling them into a narrow range of segregated occupations at lower levels of the hierarchy. Women and men tend to be employed in different occupations (horizontal segregation) and at different levels and grades, positions and seniority (vertical Segregation). The study attempted to get the perceptions of the employers to ascertain whether this was in fact the case in Sri Lanka. A majority of those interviewed at the outset stated that except for of a physically challenging work which was difficult for women to undertake due to reasons of endurance or strength, one could not categorize jobs into gender specific occupations. However, during the course of the discussion it became apparent that in Sri Lanka in general and in their enterprises there was some degree of segregation, and more significantly, that this was considered "normal" and hence not unacceptable.

4.1.1 Views of KPI respondents

Women were seen as better than men in certain occupational categories because of their dexterity, their ability to multi task, as well as their commitment and conscientiousness. This included some managerial/ professional jobs and clerical and support roles in the office where the ability of women to multi-task, as well as their commitment and conscientiousness were seen as important attributes while at the other end dexterity, ability to multi task and do continuous monotonous work were the qualities that were seen as significant for the stereotypical jobs in the factory, shop floors or fields, i.e. assembly line workers (now called associates) in the factory, cashiers and sales persons in the shop floor, harvesters (tea pluckers/latex collectors) in the agricultural sector.

Conscientiousness, accountability, better soft skills and commitment were cited as qualities/ abilities that made them better in certain managerial posts such as human resource managers. The legal department was mentioned often as staffed by women and accountants were another category that was seen as a favoured job for women.

Some respondents mentioned marketing as a job that women were good at but said that very often this was confined to posts in the office; the women who were in marketing jobs were in urban or office-based situations, such as overseeing distribution and point of sales activities, as these companies considered the employment of women in "field" based activities to be constrained by social issues. Some respondents stated that very often women did not either apply for such job vacancies or did not wish to take up such a job as an internal promotion citing socio cultural issues i.e. husband or family did not approve or due to childcare/ family responsibilities. In other instances, they were not assigned or considered for such jobs even where they possessed the skills required but because there was tacit acceptance that women needed additional "protection" to function in such positions, such as chaperones, transport, and the need to overcome security problems associated with staying overnight on long assignments, especially as accommodation in areas outside of their residence could present some problems.

In other companies, women were considered capable of doing jobs that required technical or vocational qualifications, but there were very few women applicants for such jobs, especially in the manufacturing and construction sectors. . In another manufacturing company, not a single women was employed in a factory making batteries but this was explained as to possible health issues in the event of pregnancy etc. However, this hesitancy was based not on any scientific or research based information, but more as a self-imposed precautionary measure, based possibly on the need to avoid complaints should a health hazard occur.

Vertical segregation was visible in many of the Companies interviewed as women were clearly under-represented in the upper echelons of management. However, many respondents explained this as being influenced by socio-cultural factors rather than by organisational factors. For instance, at least 15 percent of respondents stated that women working in the shop/factory floor did not aspire to career advancement[8]; many women workers were from rural areas and usually worked for five years or a little more so as to collect sufficient money to get married (the implication being that the gratuity payable by statute if a worker left employment after completing five years of service was in reality a sort of a 'dowry' in the event of marriage). This however, appears to be an overly simplistic view of a phenomenon which cannot be considered as being applicable to all such women.

Similarly, the low numbers of women in senior managerial positions was explained by social-cultural factors; on the one hand the number of women applying for such jobs was very low (although the KPI respondents did not reveal any reason as to why there should be such few applications, and no data was available on applications made for such vacancies to prove or disprove this assertion), and on the other hand women leaving their jobs either at marriage or when starting a family was stated to be quite common; even with regard to women employees who continued in employment after marriage or after starting a family, the duties in relation to attending school functions, picking up children after school and attending parent-teacher and school development society meetings also appeared to fall mainly to women. A number of examples of bright young women executives and managers with potential and opportunity to progress in their careers, but who gave up employment usually at the behest of their husbands or families were cited in support of this point of view.

Interviews carried out in several companies in the apparel sector and the confectionary sector indicated that these enterprises employ female workers predominantly at lower levels, i.e. in the production line or machine operators. Women managers, and supervisors on the factory floor were fewer, and these companies did not employ women in work considered as "heavy" or "complicated" as being too difficult for women to handle. The reasons given by responders for low numbers of managers and supervisors was that, even though there were only a very small number of men on the production line/factory floor, they could not be supervised or 'handled' by women. Where there were women line supervisors it was mostly when they were supervising women only or when the majority in that section were women. A few responders (ironically, one of them a female senior manager) said that women were too emotional, and/or not decisive enough to make decisions quickly, and thus were not considered as good management material.

However, some of the women executives interviewed for the project identified the existence of a "glass-ceiling" regardless of opinions to the contrary and the difficulty in breaking down this barrier; these respondents cited organizational cultures as a bottleneck for women who aspired to positions of senior management and pointed out that very often their male colleagues were preferred when it came to promotions. One KPI revealed that very often, women who are in senior managerial positions are often quite young (mid-to-late thirties) and when they applied for a promotional position, the male applicants would be much older, and the interview panel would select an older male on the basis that the female applicant was too young, or that she 'had more time' to aspire to such a position at some time in the future.

[8] As confirmed in Wickramasinghe and Jayathilaka (2006).

4.1.2 Measures taken by enterprises to overcome segregation

In the boat building enterprise that was interviewed the majority of the builders were men with the exceptions being some women engaged in carpentry[9] and a sole naval architect. The Company had however trained some women together with men on boat building for an ILO-funded project and these women were continuing to use those skills in the North of Sri Lanka

Even in the Information Technology ("IT") sector where women could be expected to be better represented at different levels given the high numbers of women registered in IT training courses, it was observed that only in one company interviewed was the ratio of women software engineers was 23%, in all others it was much less; this is difficult to explain given that women make up more than 50% of those seeking to acquire skills in IT (DCS, 2014). It was felt that this sector is one where changes are taking place albeit at a slow pace, with the advantage that the digital divide is not based on gender demarcations but rather on age, which was considered by the respondents in the IT companies as encouraging more women to take up employment in this sector.

The companies interviewed in the hospitality sector demonstrate some startling departures from the expected; although globally this sector is dominated by women (75% women and 25% men (KLIM, 2013) in Sri Lanka (and in the companies interviewed) men outnumber women by a wide margin in all categories whether it be professional categories (chefs, cooks), managers, room and restaurant staff, the only exceptions being Guest Relations and Front Office staff, and in the city-based marketing functions; it is estimated that in 2012 only 26% of those employed in the tourism sector were women (Chandrasiri and Gunatilaka, 2015, p.16). One of the responders stated that the Companies were willing to employ women but that women did not wish to take up jobs available in these areas. [10]

Although different strategies had been used to attract women as the soft skills perceived to be possessed by women workers were desirable in these functions, these had had mixed results. A well-documented example was the 'Skills for Youth' program funded by the John Keells Foundation partnering with CARE International which specifically focused on attracting young women into the hospitality sector where they were under-represented.[11] Although a number of such programs had been conducted in rural areas, the long-term success of the program was still being measured. Similar programs have also been partnered by other Non-Governmental Organisations such as Word University Services of Canada (WUSC) and the Aitken Spence Group, and the impact of these initiatives are currently being assessed.

There were, however, some breakthrough experiences: one of the companies interviewed employ three women general managers of very popular resort hotels; another company responded that they were able to get women to join the hospitality sector in Trincomalee (on Sri Lanka's Eastern Coast) but considered this to be due to the fact that these women were single mothers from war-affected areas and were willing to take up any job, rather than in indication of changing employment demographics.

In the plantations women were mainly field-workers (tea pluckers), while men were traditionally used in "harder" work such as digging ditches, pruning; although some men were also engaged in harvesting tea during the peak season or when there is a labour shortage but women are preferred due to the agility of their fingers in plucking the tender tea leaves, and at ensuring the quality of the tea that is picked. Some of the plantation companies to have tried to diversify these "gendered" roles by experimenting with women "Kangani's" (Supervisors) but it has not been markedly successful as only a few of those trained to take

[9] The Chairman of the Company had been interested in training and employing women in non- traditional jobs but had a hard time in retaining women in these fields.

[10] In other research, the General Manager of a hotel of an international hotel group in the south of Sri Lanka expressed concern at the poor response of women for employment in the hotel. He noted that 900 women were working at the Saltern in close proximity to the hotel in tiring and often difficult conditions with no hope of betterment, but had not applied for vacancies advertised locally at the hotel. The hotel had offered free training to women who wish to join hospitality sector in a bid to attract female workers (Nanayakkara, 2015, p.7).

[11] Accessed at http://www.cinnamonhotels.com/media/cinnamon-hotels-%26-resorts-launches-skills-for-youth-programme-,press-releases_viewItem_91-en.html

over such jobs have continued. The difficulties also arise from the inability of these women supervisors (usually from the Tamil community) to interact as needed in the workplace with the estate manager who is invariably male. One of the respondents from the plantation sectors stated that he had interviewed and recruited female assistant estate managers and engineers into the plantations some years ago but the women recruited had left after a very short stint in the estates, possibly due to the lack of social acceptance in a male dominated occupation.

Banking /insurance is one sector where women are better represented but here again the vertical gender divide is apparent with men at the top and the percentage of women increasing lower down the scale. Again, as in marketing functions, the "field" agents in the insurance sector were mainly men but the number of women agents was indicated to be increasing and there were now a few teams headed by women. An example was cited of a very successful woman agent/team leader (from the Muslim Community) as an agent with a very high value portfolio, her success being attributed to personality including the ability to build a team of mainly women agents, as well as contacts within the community.

As expected in the health sector women made up the vast majority those employed as women were respected and accepted as doctors, nurses, midwifes, support staff . The nursing profession especially is dominated by women with only about 10% of the nurses being male. The establishment recruits both trained nurses as well training new recruits in its' own Nurses' training school and more than than 90% of applications for both were from women. The explanation for low representation of men in this profession was that not only was nursing perceived by both job applicants as well as patients as a "female job" but also that male nurses were not considered to be acceptable to nurse women patients. In response to a question by the researcher on whether this perception applied to male doctors, it was stated that Doctors were considered to be a engaged in a high "status" occupation and as such it was considered acceptable to treat female patients; there is no other explanation to this curious segregation of jobs other than this apparent contradiction in perception. Despite a 3 year training programme with assured employment on completion, there was still a shortage of recruits to the nursing cadre with a constant shortage of staff. Most of the applications were from rural areas although the interest in the occupation was stated to be much less in recent years. One reason given by the respondent was that potential recruits aspired to government training and government employment, due to higher salaries in the government service, better work arrangements, and the lack of recognition for training qualifications obtained from private medical institutions for possible future employment abroad.

Turnover among nursing staff was somewhat high even though they had hostel accommodation (free board and lodging during training and employment) for both men and women in Colombo (11 hostels for women and 1 for men), which could be considered an added inducement to attract and retain staff due to the high cost of board and lodging in the city. However, even amongst those who continue in employment after training, about 10% – 15 % leave when they get married.

Respondents in the retail sector, clearly preferred to recruit young women between the ages of 18 - 25 on the shop floor, the perception being that well-groomed women were more suitable as sales staff as well as those handling the cash counters, while men were mostly assigned jobs in the stores, drivers, marketing and field sales (product distribution).

One large apparel company has recognized that there is a serious problem and has set targets to increase the number of women in management positions, initially aiming at increasing HR managers to 50 % by the end of March 2016.

4.1.3 Solutions suggested by KPI respondents

One KPI raised the need for the proactive setting of targets to increase the number of women managers by private sector organisations; the targets announced by the company represented by this KPI had resulted in an increased interest by women in applying for managerial jobs and had improved retention rates of women managers.

With regard to the self-evident preference of both men and women for government jobs, many examples were cited of promising women employees and managers leaving their well-paying jobs for a job in teaching or other Government jobs at less than a third of the salary drawn in the private sector; this appears to give some validation to the constraint identified in the literature survey on the impact of public sector recruitment on labour demand. Some of the KPI respondents therefore appear to suggest that terms of employment in the private and public sectors need to be brought into a more comparable level if the "pull" factor asserted by the public sector as a source of employment for women is to be lessened.

4.2 Discrimination: Do employers discriminate against women at recruitment, and during employment?

A recurring note in many of the KPIs was that although the management was willing to employ women for managerial posts and advertised on a gender neutral basis they did not receive very many applications from women for such posts; however, some respondents accepted that if a man and a woman were equally qualified it was likely that the company would prefer to recruit the man due to extraneous considerations such as the higher probability of the woman having family responsibilities. That this was a vicious cycle was clearly not apparent to the respondents, that until this covert preference for male workers for management positions was removed women would not consider applying for such posts.

Many of the smaller establishments and even some of the bigger ones were open to taking more women for technical and non-traditional jobs for women (carpentry, electrical wiring, plumbing etc.) but said that the onus was on women to acquire the skills required for jobs in this well-paid sector, and to training institutions to introduce strategies to attract more women trainees to such non-traditional training courses. However, at the same time some KPI respondents considered that women over the age of 30 were not capable of being trained, thus revealing an inherent bias against older women which would adversely affect women seeking to re-enter employment after taking time off to raise a family. The maximum period of time out of employment to care for family was considered to be around 1 to 2 years, and it was stated that it would be difficult for a female worker (especially a manager) to return to work after any further lapse of time.

These experiences clearly need to be investigated further in a more detailed survey as there seems to be a degree of latent discrimination in the labour market which prevents women from accessing available employment opportunities, even in 'good' jobs; the discrimination appears to originate both from the assumptions made by employers as well as gendered norms and preferences accepted the women workers as well.

4.2.1 Views of KPI respondents

Most respondents stated that they did not mention gender preferences when advertising for vacancies but a number of Companies said that they did specify age limits (especially for jobs in the factory or shop floor) often between 18 - 25 or 18 - 30. This was stated to be because older persons were difficult to train and found it difficult to adapt to the organisational culture, which in turn is ironic as it is discriminatory against older workers. When it was suggested that this may be one of the problems in attracting labour since many persons in the age group of 18-25 were shown to be pursuing education and skills acquisition these respondents accepted that this was a likely consideration, but were still reluctant to advertise without the age restriction. This would clearly have implications for women returning to the labour force after engaging in child care activities until their children started education or alternate arrangements were made for their care.

One SME with manufacturing facilities in the rural Southern areas of the country (Hambantota and Embilipitiya) said that the shortage of female labour faced by them was largely due to the 'stigma' associated with work in a factory.[12] The experience of this KPI was that younger women preferred to migrate to urban areas in search of other work or to seek foreign employment as domestic workers go rather than working in a factory in their village; recruiting older women to overcome this shortage was considered a problem because of the intricate nature of the work and the fact that older women would be difficult to train. This highlights the underlying problem in removing discrimination, as even companies that consider themselves to be equal opportunity employers engage in some discriminatory practices based on preconceived and incorrect assumptions.

Women account for about 30-40 % of the staff of IT companies, these establishments recruit directly from universities and focus on the qualifications of the graduates regardless of gender. However, the respondents stated that where vacancies in the sector were advertised in the media or at job fairs, the majority of the applications were from men.

A striking factor in this regard is that the majority of those interviewed across all sectors responded that their enterprises were facing labour shortages. Some companies wanted to expand but could not do so due to a shortage of labour. They were of the view that this was not a case of skills-mismatch as most of the vacancies advertised did not require specialized qualifications other than standard secondary qualifications (General Certificate of Education ("G.C.E.") Ordinary Level or Advanced Level; however, the response rate from women resident in the vicinity of these Companies was not encouraging and some of the larger Companies have resorted to providing transport facilities to bring in female workers from outside of the locations of the companies, at a much higher labour cost. However, other KPI respondents revealed that there was a skills mismatch in that often many of the applications did not meet the advertised requirements and the Company would usually have to implement a complete training program for the new entrants. Even where applicants met the required qualifications on paper, the educational system was clearly not providing the standard of skills required by the respondents and most recruits male and female had to be trained in-house to achieve those standards.

Officials of the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka ("BOI") which is in charge of the Economic Processing Zones, confirmed that there were no applicants for around 30,000 vacancies in all companies coming under the BOI and 10,000 vacancies in the EPZs); however, it was stated that most of the vacancies for female workers in the apparel sector were as 'associates' (factory /shop floor workers) as was the case in the retail sector.

4.2.2 Measures taken by enterprises to recruit more women employees

In some sectors such as the hospitality sector respondents stated that there were vacancies for both males and females especially in skilled occupations which had not been filled.[13] In order to overcome this to some extent, these Companies were now having to recruit those with no skills or entry level skills and provide in-house training for most of the categories (especially in the nursing, hospitality and IT sectors) even in the case of applicants with graduate qualifications. However, very few women applied for vacancies especially in skilled occupations, and special efforts have been made to recruit women by visiting rural areas for recruitment drives and awareness creation, providing special training courses for women, support services such as transport, separate quarters with matron and security, etc. Even in such instances KPI respondents revealed that they have not been successful in retaining trained women.

[12] This respondent narrated an incident where all the managers and workers had been invited to the wedding of a fellow worker; however, when they arrived at the venue, it turned out that the groom and his family had not been told that the prospective bride was working in a factory and they were objecting to the wedding going ahead as they did not approve of the bride working in a factory. It was only after the owner/manager had made a speech indicating (falsely) that the bride was an assistant manager that the marriage had taken place. No rational basis was evident for this prejudice other than a vague impression of immorality of young women employed in the Economic Processing Zones elsewhere in the country.

[13] The KPI respondents revealed that the majority of advertisements did not specify a gender preference but that there were only a few women applicants for even some managerial jobs, probably due to a perception that such jobs generally involved "men's work".

As in the hospitality sector, although HR teams both the apparel sector and the hospitality sector have ventured into rural areas with BOI officials to attract new recruits, and linked with local government and other village officials and religious leaders, it has not been sufficient to fill these vacancies. Pervasively negative socio-cultural perceptions and family pressures were cited as the main reasons for this failure. Thus it would seem that the gendered norms accepted very often by women workers themselves act as a constraint to the type of occupations, and the status of employment of women workers.

Other enterprises have offered free or subsidized hostel accommodation to encourage rural women to take up available employment opportunities in urban areas although some KPI revealed (especially in the apparel sector) that Brands/buyers they supply to demand standards for such accommodation that are not viable for individual organisations to comply with. There are also other problem areas, such as the need to make EPF and ETF contributions in respect of subsidized food and lodging which discourage even enterprises that can afford such facilities.

4.2.3 Solutions offered by KPI respondents

In order to encourage more women to aspire for promotions some female KPI responders suggested that Mentoring programs by other women holding high positions, networking mechanisms for women in professional and managerial positions to interact, and membership in professional and industry associations had positive outcomes on the willingness and aspirations of women managers to break through the glass ceiling. These female KPI responders were also willing to participate in such mentoring programs where organisations or associations were able to organise these programs.

One KPI who was also a member of the Institute of Directors mentioned the assertiveness and leadership training programs organised by the Institute for women identified as having the potential to be appointed to Boards of Directors/senior managerial positions of their organisations. Such training had had a positive impact on the trainees and several had gone on to take up promotions and appointments as Directors.

Some KPI respondents revealed that, although the literacy standards of both men and women were high in Sri Lanka quite often functional literacy did not come up to the standards required in the private sector. Therefore, improving functional literacy at school level, together with career guidance programs could have a positive impact on encouraging women to acquire technical skills and seek employment in non-traditional occupations.

Sexual Harassment: A few KPI respondents noted that a proactive approach to dealing with complaints of sexual harassment was necessary to attract and retain more female workers, especially in regional areas; although Sri Lanka had stringent laws to deal with sexual harassment awareness of the seriousness of these provisions was quite low and companies should be encouraged to set out a policy on sexual harassment in order to encourage compliance and complaints where harassment takes place. If such action was not initiated, women workers could be discouraged from applying to new sectors where job opportunities were available such as in the construction or transportation industry.

4.3 Does Labour and employment protection legislation constrain the demand for women employees ?

Employment protection legislation and labour regulations discourage employers from employing women in certain occupations and industries, e.g. in jobs which required overtime work which is prohibited for women under the SOE; other legislation which regulate night work, maternity benefits, and other working conditions can work against the employment of women by requiring employers to provide special and costly benefits and conditions. Other legislation such as the TEWA restrict the right to fire in respect of both men and women, but tends to inhibits growth of jobs especially in areas where women are working (please see section 2.1.5 above).

4.3.1 The experiences of KPI respondents

As set out in the preceding section Sri Lankan labour legislation is perceived as distorting labour market outcomes, and one section of the KPIs focused on whether these companies found such legislation to be a hindrance in any way. Most of those interviewed were of the opinion that laws such as those pertaining to maternity benefits and night work did negatively impact the decision to employ women; even if those at a senior management level indicated that there was no gender bias in recruitment, the actual recruitment decisions were made by middle level/line managers who preferred to employ men as these managers considered these legislative benefits provided for women were burdensome to the Company; since these managers were responsible for the day to day affairs of production delivery etc., they often preferred to employ men to in order to eliminate the possible productivity concerns arising from women employees taking maternity leave, etc.

Surprisingly the small and medium scale establishments were less concerned with the labour laws and said that they felt that maternity leave was something that they planned for; further, these Companies planned without working a night shift with women workers (which required more stringent conditions) or if they did work at night it was invariably the males who were engaged for the night shift. If the necessity arose for women to do night work during peak season times it would be well before 11 pm. Many of the smaller enterprises seemed to take a paternalistic/protectionist approach towards the welfare of women workers and thus planned their work arrangements accordingly. Although some respondents appeared to indicate that if night work was allowed there were possibilities to expand their business, but were not sure if women would apply for such jobs.

All of the larger enterprises interviewed said that they provide maternity leave according to the applicable statutory provisions although it was sometimes a challenge to accommodate the needs of the organisation, especially in industries where larger numbers of women were employed. Some of the respondents (both male and female) even said that the laws should be revised to allow the same entitlements for the third child as was for the first two children.[14] The respondents stated that the regulations on nursing intervals for mothers with infants was confusing and should be streamlined, as this concession was granted only to women working in the industrial manufacturing sector and not to the retail or clerical employees. When questioned as to whether paternity or parental leave should be introduced a few responders said that they already gave a few days' paternity leave. The reaction to parental leave was mixed: many of the women and some men thought that it was something that Sri Lanka should consider but not in the immediate future. Some (one female responder in particular) were vehemently against it saying that Sri Lanka was certainly not ready for it and that the economy will be affected negatively if this is introduced.

The other laws that were mentioned as affecting women's employment outcomes negatively were the Gratuity, ETF and EPF laws. Most of the single women from rural areas work for 5 years, sometime a few years more and leave to get married. Most of them also take their EPF and ETF as female workers are also entitled to take their EPF and ETF if they leave employment within three months of marriage (this benefits is only for female workers). These women may or may not re-enter the labour force but if they do so with new EPF and ETF accounts, thus losing the benefit that should be derived from continuous service, and the longer period of contribution to such funds. In providing this 'benefit' the Legislature assumes that women will leave or will be required to leave their employment upon marriage, and indirectly provides an impetus for women to leave employment due to the financial consideration of being able to access the earned superannuation benefit. Therefore, this provision as well as the provision that enables women to retire prematurely on reaching the age of 50 years (the retirement age for men is 55 years) would have to be revised to encourage women to remain in employment.

[14] In Sri Lanka, the cost of paid maternity leave is entirely borne by the employer, and the entitlement on the birth of the first or second child is eighty for days/working days, as opposed to 42 days/working days for the third or subsequent child.

4.3.2 Solutions offered by KPI respondents

A CEO of one of the leading apparel manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka said that while labour laws in Sri Lanka are archaic and need to be streamlined to face challenges of the globalized world he felt that this was something that would probably not receive priority in the near-term by the State, and that the private sector needed to think creatively on how to overcome the constraints imposed by legislation on labour market outcomes relating to women.

The larger establishments in the export and retail sectors however did say they would prefer the relaxation of the laws on night work. A number of them were of the opinion that the differences in entitlements pertaining to the same issue i.e. maternity benefits, night work, overtime in the different laws such as Maternity Benefits Ordinance, the Shop and Office Employees Remuneration Act, the Factories Ordinance and the Wages Boards Ordinance, should be removed, and the same policies should be implemented for all women workers irrespective of the sector in which they were employed.

With regard to the provision to enable women to withdraw EPF/ETF benefits upon marriage if they leave their employment with no intention of resuming such employment, as well as the provision that enables women to retire prematurely on reaching the age of 50 years (the retirement age for men is 55 years) would have to be revised to encourage women to remain in employment.

The majority of KPI respondents indicated that amending or revising laws that determine work arrangements such as hours of work, work week, day of rest, leave, inability to engage contract labour instead of paying regular workers to work overtime, etc., also improve the nature and number of job opportunities open to women as well as introducing labour laws that would facilitate flexible work arrangements. However, the Trade Unions needed to be consulted and made aware of the constraining effect of such legislation; the example was cited in relation to the Plantation Industry where a discussion was initiated to enable the weekly holiday for workers in the rubber plantations to be rostered to enable continuous tapping of latex but Trade Unions were opposed to this arrangement and insisted that Sunday should continue to be the weekly holiday as that was the day on which school going children and spouses could all be together as a family. The benefit to the industry as a whole and the positive impact on employment generation was not given much weight.

With regard to the TEWA the majority of KPI respondents revealed that it did not alter or constrain demand for female labour, but some of the respondents in companies with more than 5000 workers stated that the provisions of this law should be relaxed to offer more flexibility to arrange personnel requirements, including temporary, seasonal or short term recruitment; one suggestion was that the requirement for obtaining permission from the Commissioner General of Labour should be removed, and compensation could be paid to workers being laid off or terminated based on the published formula for severance pay.

Labour legislation therefore is not stated to have the kind of constraining impact identified in earlier studies. However, this may be due partly to the lack of familiarity of the impact of labour laws by the persons interviewed. A more focused survey directed for response by specialised personnel/managers within the organisations may provide a more accurate assessment of this aspect.

4.4 Do Flexible work arrangements/special work arrangements encourage more women to work?

New and more flexible work arrangements were viewed by the majority of KPI respondents as having a greater impact on labour market outcomes for women. Almost all of them were in agreement that the traditional roles and responsibilities of women in the household i.e. of homemaker, mother, carer has not changed even though they were in full time employment; many examples of capable, skilled women workers at all levels leaving their employment on getting married, or when starting families were cited. The responses were almost equally divided on whether family responsibilities affected the work performance and productivity of women workers, or whether the ability of women to multi-task meant that they managed multiple roles without letting it affect productivity and performance negatively. However, many of the KPI respondents did acknowledge that this juggling multiple roles may play an undue burden on

such women and that it could affect them negatively, especially in relation to personal health and mental well being.

However, at least half of the KPI respondents indicated that while some women managed these multiple roles effectively for some time but that after some time the double burden of work and family responsibility almost inevitably led to these women workers leaving the labour force. Options such as flexibility in hours of work, overtime, the traditional work week, part-time work, leave regulations could be rethought in the light of this dual burden to enable women to stay on in the labour force to some extent, or to enable them to return without lasting effects on career progression or skills upgrading. Teleworking experiments tried out by several KPIs were expected to encourage more women to stay in employment, but had not increased the number of female workers accessing such opportunities, probably due to lack of status of employment under these arrangements.

While the issues of stigma and "suitable jobs" also seem to some extent be a factor for women entering middle-level jobs, workplace traditions, segregation patterns and work-life balance seem to be factors in them and those at the upper levels leaving employment at a later stage. Some KPI stated that even women from urban backgrounds working in higher positions (and sometimes from certain ethnic backgrounds) made the decision to leave employment especially when starting families. Very often, it was the women themselves that made the decision to leave, without any apparent family or spousal pressure. A majority of those interviewed said that this was due to the inability of women to juggle traditional responsibilities of women as the homemaker, being responsible for childcare as well as care of the elderly etc. as these had not changed, although a few said that in urban areas traditional roles were changing to some extent.

4.4.1 Measures taken by KPI respondents on flexible/special working arrangements

One HR manager noted that such arrangements as limited time unpaid leave with the right to return at the end of such leave without loss of seniority would see skilled and capable women returning to the workplace after taking some time to manage the work-life balance.[15]

A number of establishments (about 18 percent of the enterprises interviewed) had introduced flexible work arrangements including flexitime and tele-working; one large group of companies even had policies and guidelines on flexitime and tele-working, but the number of employees availing themselves of this facility was very low. Flexi-time is being considered for introduction in at least two other establishments, and two others responded that they would consider permitting flexitime arrangements for certain categories of staff, mainly office workers; a contrary point of view was stated that it would create dissatisfaction if such arrangements were not introduced across all categories and all levels. The majority stated that the introduction of flexible work arrangements would depend on the nature of employment in each Company. About 20 percent of KPI respondents indicated that they were not in favour of flexible work arrangements because according to them Sri Lanka was not ready for it as not all workers were committed, responsible or disciplined enough for such a system and introduction of such schemes could lead to more disadvantages than advantages to the company. Another KPI pointed out that it should be considered whether such arrangements could be introduced only for women workers as otherwise men would be better placed to take advantage of these arrangements and even do multiple jobs.

Another factor to be considered is that Sri Lankan labour legislation does not recognize or provide for the special conditions of flexible work arrangements, such as home-working, tele-working, part-time or temporary work. For instance, an employer would have the same liability with regard to statutory benefits such as EPF, ETF or leave, overtime and holiday regulations for a part-time worker or homeworker as for a permanent, full time employee; similarly, in the event of a termination of such flexible work arrangements the employer would be required to compensate such workers under the TEWA if the enterprise is covered

[15] This response cannot be taken as a tacit acceptance that men would not or need not have a similar right to take responsibility for their work–life balance since the focus was on conditions of work for women; the issue simply did not arise.

by its provisions. This would discourage employers from adopting flexible work arrangements as a norm as providing such arrangements may not be cost effective from a economic point of view.

Creches /day care centres have been established in some enterprises – such as Asiri Hospitals, WSO 2. and BOI. Initially there were problems in setting up the centre in the BOI as some of the staff had not wanted to send their children to the same centre where the children of the "associates" attended but after much delay and discussions it was subsequently established. The others however said that the introduction of these facilities had been a success in retaining female workers. Most of those interviewed said that such facilities should be provided by the state as this would ensure standards (well trained staff) as well as security for the children. They opined that many did not send their children to daycare centres that have mushroomed in urban areas because they were not sure about the safety of their children.

Box 1

Childcare facilities at Standard Chartered Bank

In 2008 Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) started a crèche for the children of its employees in a rented building under the supervision of a female employee with Montessori qualifications. Received initially with some caution, all available vacancies were utilized speedily, and currently has a long waiting list. The demand continued to rise, especially as 48.5% of the workforce at SCB was female, and 5 out of 8 officers in the Management Committee were mothers with young children, and facilty was expanded as the "Kidkare" centre, and now caters to 50 children from 06 months to 12 years of age.

The SCB meets two thirds of the operational costs with the balance borne by the parents. The management considered the investment to be justified by the returns in terms of more female employees at all levels continuing to work after childbirth.

Qualified and trained staff ensures that children are given quality Early Childhood Education during the regular crèche calendar, and special events are organized during the holiday months with outings and excursions. After school at Kidkare means that children who attend regular school come home to Kidkare to refresh themselves, have a nutritious meal and attend to their studies under the supervision of qualified teachers, complete homework, ensuring that the parents enjoy quality time with their children and can maintain a healthy work-life balance when they return home.

A female manager stated that she preferred the crèche to a domestic maid or nanny, because children tend to enjoy being around other children and that over the years her child has become more independent, sociable and sharing; in addition she stated that her career rise has also been consistent, as she her responsibilities have been rearranged in the best possible manner.

The SCB has also extended maternity leave to 100 days from the maximum of 84 working days. Combined with flexible work arrangements for some jobs (although there is no official policy as yet), employees have clearly found the crèche has effectively addressed the child care concerns faced by them.

Source: Based on KPI, and supplemented by the article - SCB expands its crèche to accommodate demand posted at http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=33453

4.4.2 Solutions offered by KPI respondents

Many of those interviewed were of the opinion that special arrangements to encourage women into the labour force would not be effective without changing the socio-cultural barriers that prevented women from doing so. For instances some KPI respondents had attempted to overcome labour shortages by going to rural areas and working with temples and community organisations to create awareness among the community regarding the quality of jobs, accommodation, subsidized food etc., issues of stigma and "good jobs" still prevented even those women who needed employment from taking up these jobs. Further, work-life balance seemed to be a bigger factor for women workers at middle-level and above, and that the women themselves decided to leave employment when starting families. This was also to be seen in certain ethnic groups where it would be contrary to the view of women as the home-maker and the spouse as the bread winner for her to remain in employment once they had started a family. A few responses stated that this was changing in urban areas but not rapidly enough.

Better infrastructure such as transport and child care facilities, as well as better law enforcement to prevent sexual harassment and violence against women needed to be improved if women were to take advantage of flexible work arrangements. For instance, although women without child care and family responsibilities would be willing to work night shifts (if permitted by law) would be unable to do so unless there were safe and regular transport facilities to enable them to report for work at night; at present transport facilities even in urban areas at night are inadequate at best.

4.5 Wages: is wage inequality a factor which affects employment of women

The Companies that have provided employee data indicate that the majority of the women are in lower status low paying jobs. The response of all those interviewed was that there was no discrimination on wages and salary on the basis of gender, with most of the larger establishments and even some of the smaller ones stating that they have a salary structure determining the salary (bands) for different levels. When asked as to what they thought about the UN Women Report – Progress of the World's Women 2015 -2016 that the wage gap in Sri Lankan is that women earn 31% less than men, they said that this was not the case in their enterprises. However, they stated that in other enterprises it could be possible that at the point of entry men were able to negotiate higher salaries than women thus being placed higher within a particular scale; a smaller number said that women negotiated for higher salaries or were better negotiators than men.

4.5.1 Measures taken by enterprises to prevent wage inequality

Most of the enterprises said that promotions and increments were based on performance and not on gender. Many said that they had a very stringent system to decide on promotions some having committees that were responsible for this. As noted above the majority of KPI respondents said that the performance and productivity of women was not affected by their household responsibilities, while a minority said that it did and that it could also have a bearing on promotions.

Two KPI respondents said that there was some discrimination and that men earned more, and one KPI explained that the men were paid more than women for the same work on the factory floor because the men worked for longer hours, including overtime. The other KPI elicited the information that in the larger enterprises that men at the higher end did earn more than women.

The work norms in the plantation sector were also mentioned as a possibility for the earnings gap where women work longer hours than men but get the same daily wage as women have a weight-based daily plucking target to achieve as compared to normal manual labour for men. Although a few KPI respondents from the plantation sector stated that the piece work that the men did was harder and could not be done by women, the majority accepted that the wage/earnings gap was indeed a problem and that the wage structure should be changed to one based on performance/productivity and that it would not only be beneficial to women but also a urgent need for the very existence of the industry.

However low wages were not considered by KPI respondents as a barrier for women entering the labour market; the majority saw women's income as one that supplements the earnings of the male members of the household as the primary breadwinner.

4.5.2 Solutions offered by KPI respondents

Several KPI responders noted that due to the lower wages in certain occupations where women were likely to be employed, it was too expensive for women to take up employment outside the home. For instance, costs of transport, clothing, food and lodging may make it too costly for women from rural areas to take up jobs in the urban sector; similarly, the high cost of acceptable child care would prevent women with one or more young children from taking up employment outside the home as the income in jobs which are available to her may not be cost-effective. Therefore, since increasing wages across industries may not be possible in the short term, providing subsidized good quality child care and geriatric care may encourage women to enter the labour force.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

5

The constraints on demand for female labour in the Sri Lankan model do not appear to follow the theoretical constraints. Firstly, although occupational segregation is visible both horizontally and vertically, the single most significant barrier to removing such segregation appears to be socio-cultural norms imposed on women in the labour market by not only society, family and ethnic groups, but also the women themselves through their inability to overcome the negative norms applied to them. Secondly, there appears no shortage of employment opportunities in the formal sector for women workers; on the contrary, employers are facing shortages of female labour despite attractive incentives specifically designed to overcome other constraints such as lack of accommodation, transport, etc. Thirdly, the legal framework prohibits discrimination and while socially and economically there is no overt discrimination between men and women in the workplace, stereotypical perceptions by employers about the relative strengths and qualities of men and women and a protectionist approach create indirect discrimination against women. And finally, despite clear evidence that flexible work arrangements can and will attract more women into the labour force, Sri Lankan legislation is not conducive to such arrangements and indeed can make some arrangements illegal.

Based on the foregoing analysis, the following policy recommendations are made to overcome the constraints identified.

5.1.1 Revisions to labour market institutions and labour legislation

Countries that have experienced high levels of employment creation have made reforms to labour market institutions readily and rapidly; in one study, during the observation period from 1980-2007 almost 883 such reforms were counted in just 14 countries, that is, more than 2 reforms per year and country (Boeri, T. and Van Ours J. (2013)); on the contrary, Sri Lanka has not amended legislation or affected reforms to labour market institutions at the rate of even one per year. While this is not held out by any means as a yardstick for proficiency, the inability to respond rapidly to changes in the labour market will exacerbate the existing constraints.

Much of Sri Lanka labour legislation originates from a perceived need to 'protect' women on the paternalistic notion that women cannot take a stand for themselves and stand in danger of being exploited unless protected; this view of women is outdated, especially in a country that produced the world's first female Head of State. Revisions to the numerous pieces of legislation that have been identified as needing reform should commence from the point of view of what working women and women who want to enter the labour force want, rather than inaccurate assumptions based on a paternalistic duty to protect women.

5.1.2 Gender sensitisation in the private sector

Many of the gendered norms that eventually morph into constraints to labour demand originate in the family unit, are built on in the education system, and are cemented into place in society. While it is difficult, there is a critical need to remove attitudinal and societal bias towards traditional gender roles, and self-imposed but impractical codes of conduct for women; norms created by ethnicity and religious groupings are unlikely to be removed or overcome completely, yet much may be done to remove the stigmatisation of types of work and the false values which prevent women from achieving their full potential.

Some of the KPI respondents suggested private sector initiatives, such as media campaigns using popular personalities, revisions to school curricula, and more and better intervention in the education system

through placement programs, etc., to give girls and young women access to more opportunities, which would supplement any national activities. This could be undertaken as a private sector initiative, perhaps under EFC leadership, so that employers can focus on sectors where there is a shortage fo female labour.

As noted in the KPI findings, some of the responders were not aware of the gender bias of some policies and presumptions, even though the companies stated that they did not discriminate against women either in relation to the types of work for which women were recruited or to their career progression. However, the responders themselves acceptted that some line managers could act in a gender insensitive or discriminatory manner due to ingrained perceptions. Therefore, employers need to be proactive in ensuring that discriminatory policies and practices are eliminated within their organisations, and that affirmative action is taken to create more job opportunities for women and to ensure that more women are recruited. While certain sectors such as the apparel sector, has been canvassing in regional areas to raise awareness amongst women of the job opportunities that are available, a similar exercise must be carried out within organisations to ensure that women are treated without discrimination once they are recruited.

Professional associations should ensure that women are present on their management committees and also create awawrenss fo the need to include women in greater numbers on Boards of Directors. In additiona, enterprises should ensure that interview boards convened for consideration of applicants for promotions, especially if there are women applicants, should have a fair representation of women at each interview level with the authority to particpate in the decision making process.

The EFC could highlight best practices in flexible work arrangements, gender awareness and gender equality programs of their members and other private sector employers through documenting and disseminating such information. A competitive process to identify and recognise equal opportunity employers or gender equal workplaces with appropriate national recognition and publicity could also serve as a means of raising awareness and encouraging compliance by employers.

Introduction for mentoring and skills development programs for women in managerial positions at all levels, either in-house or by sponsored training through the EFC or other organisations could also have a positive impact on more women risiging through the career path. Reserving a fixed proportion of positions at all levels for women managers, supervisors and team leaders as some entprises have committed to, will also create a culture where women's participation in high positions is recognised and encouraged.

Job rotation programs, and task reallocation programs to encourage women to take up tasks which have traditionally been performed by men is also a mechanism which could encourage an end to the stereo-typical employment culture that prevails in many organisations, specially if carried out in conjunction with universities and vocational training institutions to encourage internships and work-placement programs in non-traditional jobs and occupations.

5.1.3 Improving infrastructure and support systems for women

While some private sector enterprises have provided childcare and nursery facilities for children of all employees, this will not be practical or possible for the vast majority of employers; moreover, it would not be possible to provide the level of qualify required, or to maintain appropriate standards that would urge women to make use of such facilities (Premaratne, 2011). The availability of such facilities, preferably at a community based level, which could have ripple effects on other aspects of the work-life balance.

Transport systems, affordable and quality child care, better enforcement of law and order, better access to telecommunications and information technology, are also required to enable women to access arrangements such as flexitime and teleworking.

5.1.4 Incentives for employers and investors to create quality jobs for women in regional areas

Employment subsidies, whereby employers are offered financial support for the extra jobs they create, account for a large percentage of expenditure on active labour-market programmes in many countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The advocates of low-wage employment subsidies argue that such subsidies help relatively unskilled workers obtain low-paid jobs, which they would otherwise be unable to obtain, since their potential productivity is below the market wage. It has been stated that low-wage subsidies are both non-discriminatory and cost-effective. They enable employers to hire more workers, contributing to the fall in unemployment, which in turn causes most of the subsidy to be paid out as direct or indirect labour compensation.

Given the far more difficult situation facing women in regional areas, tax holidays and other incentives for enterprises which create jobs in regional locations can generate labour market demand in these areas. However, in order to be sustainable, infrastructure development in these areas must be undertaken to facilitate job creation efforts of enterprises and entrepreneurs.

5.1.5 Micro-insurance and microcredit schemes

Microfinance and microcredit have become hugely popular as development tools; they are strongly supported by the United Nations, and are promoted within the International Labour Organization by its Social Finance Programmes. In 2006, the Nobel Peace Prize was given to the founder of the Grameen Bank, the pioneering microcredit scheme for Bangladesh. Examples also exist across Africa and Asia such as the "common minimum programme" of the Government of India includes a commitment to expand microcredit. While there are problems associated with some of these mechanisms they are useful ways to encourage women to engage in some form of economic activity, thus drawing them into the labour force.

5.1.6 Next steps

Some logical next steps arise from the forgoing discussion, and can be initiated as a natural progression of this initial study, together with ongoing initiatives such as discussion for labour law reforms.

a. Survey of demand side of the labour market at a larger more systematic level, industries, by sector and region to assess characterics of demand for labour and the cconstraints if any.

b. A broader more in-depth study on the types of flexible work arrangements which will attract more women into the labour force and the revisions required to existing labour laws which would make such arrangements possible

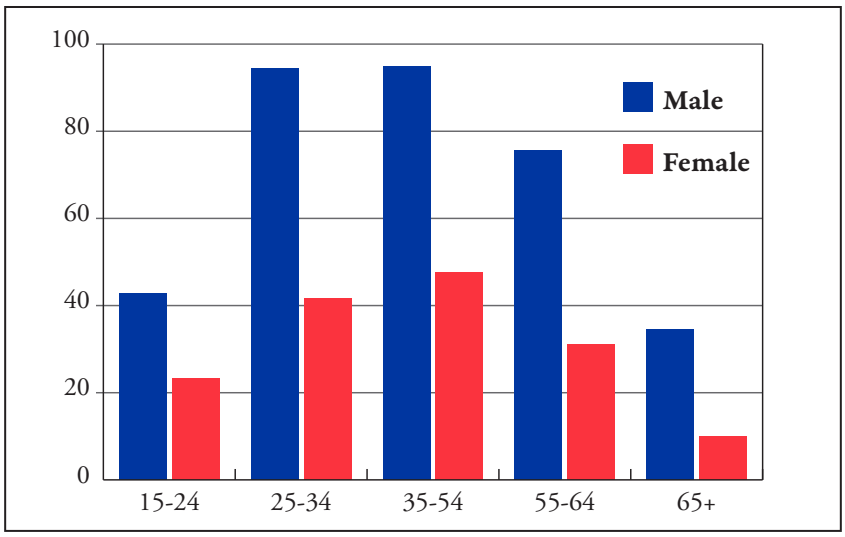
c. Enacting revisions to legislation that have already been agreed at tripartite level, such as enacting the new Occupational Safety and Health Law, and removing restrictions on night work for women in the retail and IT sectors, as well as providing uniform workplace benefits to all women regardless of the sector of employment (such as maternity benefits).

Annex I:

A brief overview of the nature of Female Labour Force Participation in Sri Lanka

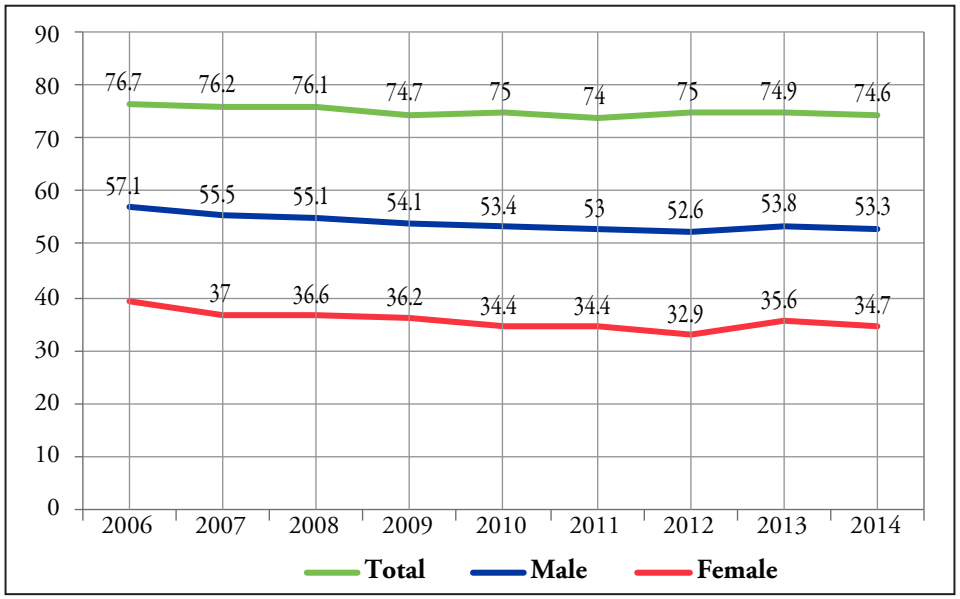
In the past two decades, the labour force and the number of employed in Sri Lanka have shown steady growth, but overall labour force participation and employment rates have reduced. This can be attributed to demographic changes, mainly the reduction of economic activity and participation in the labour force of youth aged 15-24 as a result of spending a longer time in full time education; the fast-ageing population has also contributed to this reduction to a lesser degree. With regard to women, low rates of labour force participation, high unemployment and considerable wage disparity between the sexes, and the static concentration of female workers in the informal sector indicate that females are at a distinct disadvantage in the labour force.

Figure 5: Labour Force Participation Rates by sex: 2014



Source: Annual Labour Force Survey 2014, Department of Census and Statistics

Figure 6: Labour Force Participation Rates by sex: 2006-2014

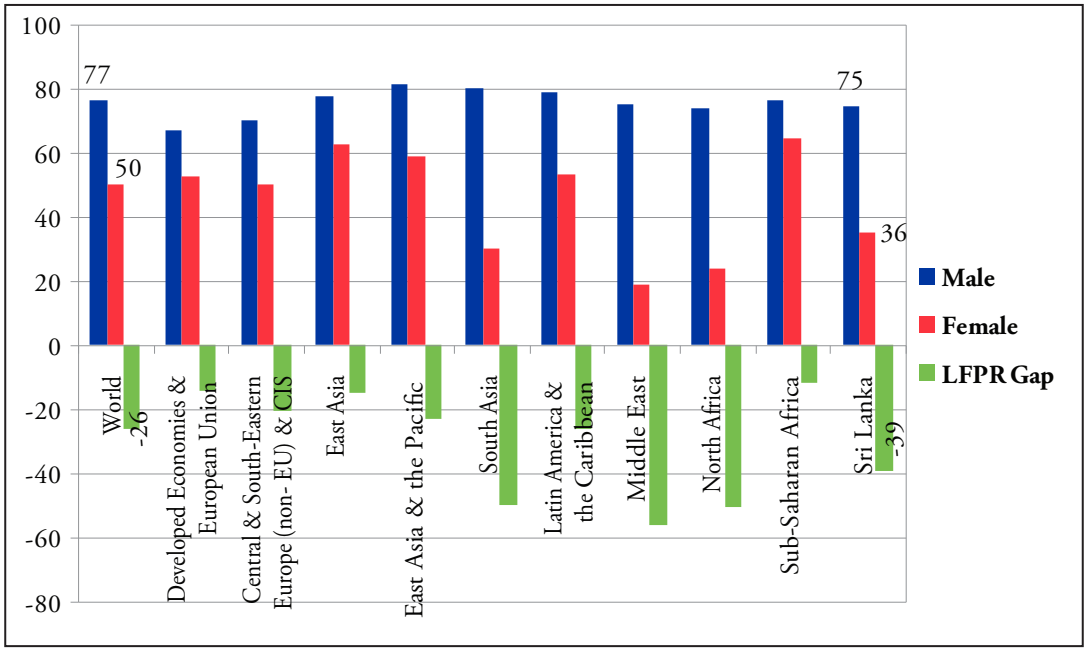


Source: Annual Labour Force Survey 2014, Department of Census and Statistics

In the most productive age groups of 25-54 male labour force participation is at almost saturation levels while the female LFPR is less than half that of men.

As noted earlier, the high levels of achievement made in gender related development indicators by Sri Lanka is at variance with this disparity in male/female labour force participation rates; to put it into context Sri Lanka has one of the highest gender gaps in LFPR worldwide.

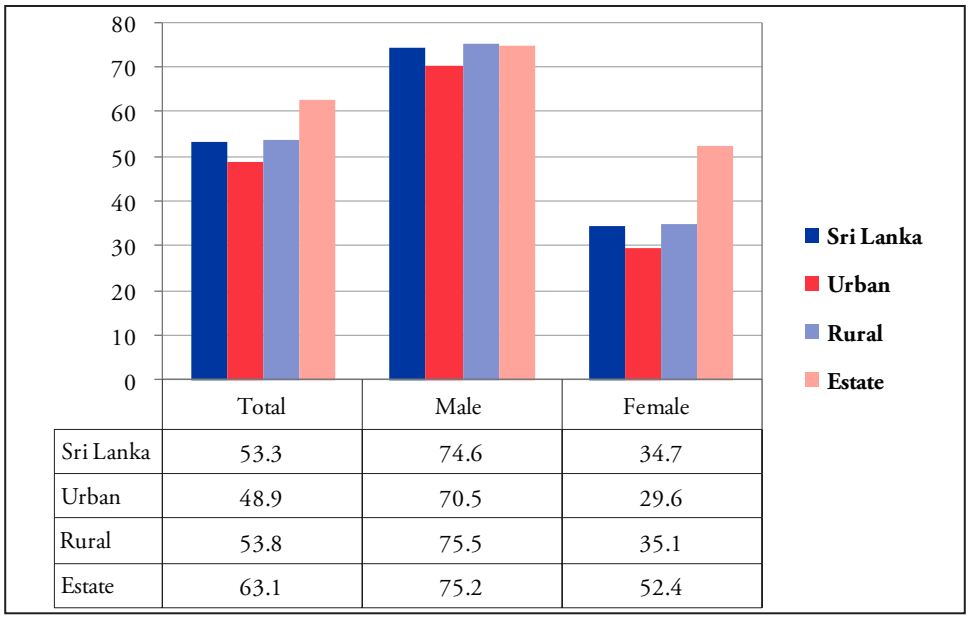
Figure 7: LFPR by sex, and LFPR Gap (regional) 2013



Source: KLIM, 8th Edition

While Sri Lanka has a LFPR Gap that is less than the South Asian average, it is still well over the world LFPR Gap of 26 percent. The participation of women in the labour force varies not only by age but also by residence (urban/rural/estate) and at every level is lower than that of men.

Figure 8: Labour force participation rate by sex and residence: 2014



	Total	Male	Female
Sri Lanka	53.3	74.6	34.7
Urban	48.9	70.5	29.6
Rural	53.8	75.5	35.1
Estate	63.1	75.2	52.4

Source: Annual Labour Force Survey 2014, Department of Census and Statistics

Overall and by residence (except the estate sector) the Labour Force Participation Rate ("LFPR") for women is less than half that of men; contrary to expectations based on the likelihood of there being more employment opportunities in urban areas, women's LFPR is lowest in the urban sector. The plantation sector has the highest LFPR for women, which is due to the higher concentration of women employees in the plantation sector. Across Districts, the lowest LFPR for women is 15.3 percent in Mannar in the Eastern Province, and the highest is 52.2 percent in Nuwara Eliya in the Central Province.

Annex II:

List of Companies for Key Persons' Interviews

1. Jetwing
2. Ceylon Biscuits
3. Talawakelle Plantations
4. Fashion Bug :
5. National Chamber of Exporters
6. Kahawatte Plantations
7. Lanka Fishing Flyies
8. Motha Confectionaries
9. Penthouse Group (Neil Marine)
10. Hatton National Bank
11. John Keells Hotels
12. Sri Lankan Airlines
13. Virtusa
14. PelawatteDairy / Master Divers
15. Board of Investment of Sri Lanka
16. Amana Takaful Life
17. John Keells Holdings
18. Nawaloka Group :
19. Associated Battery Manufacturers
20. Kegalle, Maskeliya and NamulnukulaPlantations
21. Janashakthi Insurance
22. Aitken Spence Group
23. Trendywear
24. Brandix
25. WSO2 (IT)
26. Standard Chartered
27. Asiri Hospitals
28. Hayleys Ltd.
29. Nidro
30. MAS
31. Dialog Axiata
32. Sierra Readymix Pvt. Ltd.
33. Fashion Bug Ltd.
34. Womens' Chamber of Commerce and Industry
35. Trendywear Pvt. Ltd.

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Section II:

Women's Activity Outcomes, Preferences and Time Use in Western Sri Lanka

Ramani Gunatilaka

Executive Summary

Introduction

This study uses data collected through a questionnaire administered to 500 women and their husbands in a contiguous area straddling urban, peri-urban, rural and estates divisions, in the districts of Colombo, Kalutara and Ratnapura to address three research gaps related to women's participation in the labour force. First, it investigated women's perceptions about the activities they were engaged in, whether what they were currently doing was what they liked to do, and what other activities they might consider taking up. If they were currently not engaged in market work but were willing to consider looking for jobs in the future, this study investigated the supportive conditions they required to take up market work. The study also investigated perceptions of wives and husbands about gender roles and investigated the extent to which these perceptions were associated with the wife's decision to participate. The analysis also looked at the division of paid and unpaid work between women and their husbands, and investigated the extent to which time spent on unpaid work was associated with the probability of wives participating in the labour market.

Findings

Fifty six of the sample were full time homemakers. The main reasons why they did not undertake paid work because they liked being homemakers, had always wanted to do just that, had by and large not worked before, and had wanted to look after their children themselves in order that the children were provided with the best possible care. These supply side factors appear to be far more important than demand side factors such as the availability of jobs and working conditions in influencing women's labour force participation decision. These results suggest that for at least a third of them, marriage and motherhood remain sufficiently fulfilling and that by and large, they are not motivated to develop a role for themselves out of the home and in the world of paid work. The main reasons advanced for giving up employment to become fulltime homemakers also relate to childcare, and are also true of the small number of women who gave up their businesses to become fulltime homemakers instead. At least a fifth of full-time homemakers would like to take up paid work as employees in the future. While this proportion itself is rather small, whether they would actually do so was contingent on a number of enabling factors. Among them were the following: the possibility of working from home, the possibility of working part-time; the availability of suitable jobs in the area; safe and convenient transport to and from work; and, a supportive husband, trustworthy childcare and better wage rates. Only 5 per cent of those working in the private sector as employees wished to continue in the job and would not consider another option. In contrast nearly 30 per cent would rather have been doing something else. Private sector employment also scored relatively more negative preferential votes, and relatively fewer positive preferential votes. Wives and husbands seem to have similar and traditional perceptions about gender roles. The results of the econometric analysis of the factors associated with participation analysis confirm that education beyond secondary levels, lower levels of household consumption, husband being a blue collar rather than a manual worker and residence on estates, are associated with an enhanced probability of women's labour market participation. The study also found that husbands' and wives' perceptions of gender roles and time spent on household chores and care work are significant predictors of whether wives will engage in market work.

Implications for policy

Any policy strategy designed to attract substantial numbers of full time homemakers into the labour market needs to include the following measures:

a. Create opportunities for working from home;

b. Create a policy and legislative environment that supports part-time work and night work;

c. Provide a safe and convenient public transport system for women and children;

d. Ensure work environments which protect women from sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination;

e. Create opportunities for work that offers better wages; and,

f. Provide crèche facilities that can provide a quality childcare service.

The legislative framework governing employment in Sri Lanka in particular, imposes many barriers to women's employment. For example, The Shop and Office Employees Act of 1954 and amendments prohibit the employment of women at night in the services sector. But it is this same sector that can provide better jobs like ITC-related, call centre work for women. While a few firms do at present employ women at night in shops and offices, it is in violation of the law. At the same time, Sri Lanka's labour law does not support part-time work because statutory obligations of employers are set out in law only for full-time work and not for part-time work. So a firm employing a worker part-time would be liable to the same conditions covering full time work such as the compensation that needs to be given to a worker on retrenchment according to the Termination of Employment of Workmen (sic) (Special Provisions) Act No. 45 of 1971.

This study also revealed that women looking to engage in market work prefer jobs in self-employment, or even in the family business, rather than in the private sector. On the face of it, the finding suggests that policies and programmes supporting the growth of microenterprises and the small and medium sector are appropriate policy measures that will help grow businesses, employment, and particularly the employment of women. However, the self-employed women whose perceptions were canvassed in the course of this study revealed that relatively few of them were given the impetus to start their own businesses by government, non-government, or donor-driven programmes. The desire for an independent source of income which also provided flexibility to manage household duties, and acquiring a certain skill or some experience were the key motivating factors. Other research suggests that women's microenterprises are hardly profitable compared to men's (de Mel et al 2008) and that, "getting women to start subsistence businesses is easier than getting these businesses to grow" with the binding constraints on growth possibly lying "outside the realm of capital and skills" (de Mel et al. 2014, pp. 207). The difficult environment that Sri Lankan women face in running viable businesses could derive from many factors. Where cultural norms dictate that women are the principal caregivers, their domestic responsibilities make it difficult for them to work outside the home, procuring inputs and technologies, enforcing contracts in the informal economy, transporting inputs and raw materials, and marketing the output. Cultural norms can themselves dictate what sort of business is appropriate for women, and these may be exactly those activities that have the lowest returns. Therefore, rather than roll out generic livelihood programmes that aim to encourage women to start their own businesses, we suggest that further research be carried out to find out what makes married women's businesses successful and viable, and compare them with viable businesses run by men, which are also better able to draft in (female) family labour, in order to identify the factors making for success in each case. It is likely that the findings of such research will help design business development programmes that can be more successful in identifying potential winners, whether female-owned or family-owned businesses, by providing them with the necessary supports.

Given that educational attainment beyond secondary level is correlated with a greater probability of participating in the labour market, Gunatilaka (2013) suggested that investment in skills training beyond secondary education, particularly in job-oriented technical and vocational education, if they are unable to continue in general education, can help women engage in paid work even after they are married. However, Gunewardena's (2015) recent research shows that better skills do not translate into better wages for women. Unless women are able to invest in the acquisition of education and skills from an early age, and thereby acquire very high levels of skills that will enable them to get jobs which offer wages that are at the high end of the distribution, there is little incentive for them to acquire skills beyond the GCE O' Levels, especially since the results obtained at the GCE O' Levels determine whether the candidate can progress further to A' Levels and beyond. As a policy measure to address this problem, Gunewardena et al. (2008) argue for policies that address gender bias in wage setting - especially in the low and unskilled occupations –as well as for policies that address gender bias in hiring and in workplace practices, which they argue may be

more effective in reducing the gender wage gap, than policies that try to improve women's productivity-enhancing characteristics.

Directions for future research

While anti-discriminatory policies such as Gunewardena et al. (2008) advocate are indeed necessary, whether they will be wholly effective in encouraging more women to invest in skills acquisition and participate in the labour market is an open question. In the final count, with 61 per cent of Sri Lankan workers in informal employment (Department of Census and Statistics 2015), there are just not enough jobs around, even for men who are more advantaged in the labour market anyway, that offer decent wages, regularity of employment, security of tenure and social protection.

Women, on the other hand, have yet another livelihood option, and that is marriage to an income-earning male, who, all else being equal, will be earning more in the labour market than she can anyway, for the reasons discussed above. The theoretical and empirical literature suggests that large and persistent gender wage differentials make a strong case for marriage and specialization in tasks within marriage in developing countries. In fact, for the majority of women in developing countries such as Sri Lanka, marriage offers many material advantages that available jobs do not. In a relationship-based society rather than a rules-based society such as ours, social capital made up of networks of relatives, friends and neighbours, enable one to access scarce resources and opportunities. And with marriage a woman can at least double her social capital which she can hope to leverage to her own advantage. Investing her time in raising children will provide her with a more secure old age that even a government pension on its own cannot provide. Dysfunctional public institutions or the lack of any institutions at all, makes marriage and family the only reliable institutions that can provide protection and succor for the majority of people in developing countries. This may be an important reason why, given a choice, a woman will invest in them rather than in employment, unless she is from a poor family and has little choice but to work at any job she can find, even if poorly paid, uncongenial and arduous.

Sri Lanka may also be stuck in transition: the large mass of the country's workers trapped in the vast borderlands between low-skilled, low-paid agriculture-based work in the rural sector, and high-skilled, high-waged technical and knowledge-based work in the cities though not towns; educated enough to aspire to middle-class status, but without the skills and connections to rise beyond the lower middle classes. And significant numbers of working-age women are not so unskilled and poor that they marry poor men and need to go out to work. But nor are they so highly educated that they can get jobs which offer them economic independence, or so rich with inherited wealth that they need not invest in marriage for the pecuniary benefits it offers. It is entirely possible that the traditional perceptions of gender roles discussed in previous sections may be the socially acceptable way in which individuals caught in this vast transitional space, justify rational choices made in response to unfavourable individual and macroeconomic circumstances.

The findings of this study suggest that there may be two further and complimentary avenues for research that may prove fruitful in producing many more useful insights about the reasons underlying low female labour force participation rates, not only in Sri Lanka, but in the region at large. One of these avenues of research is in the field of economics itself, where household bargaining models can be applied to analyze the relationship between the institution of marriage and the labour market in developing countries with particular cultural contexts, with a view to looking at the drivers and constraints of women's labour supply. It should be recalled that much of the theoretical literature in economics related to family, marriage and labour markets emerged to help explain the socio-economic milieu that prevailed in advanced economies after World War II, when the war itself had caused a structural shift in the demand for women's labour in white collar positions which persisted into the decades that followed. This makes it clear that the theories and models used for the analysis of women's labour market behaviour in advanced economies cannot be applied in the same way to understand the forces underlying women's labour supply in developing countries where conditions resemble those that prevailed a century ago in today's advanced economies. Doing so will invariably lead observers to patronizingly and insensitively dismiss as the outcome of patriarchal social

norms, what may actually be a rational choice made in a disadvantageous working environment. That the hostility of the working environment to women's paid work may be partly due to patriarchal values and the predatory behavior of males dominating society and the workplace is a different issue altogether. Here we argue that the theoretical framework needs to be developed further to explain more reliably the reasons why, when faced with a choice, women in many developing counties opt for marriage and household work rather than market work. Investigating whether in such contexts, marriage and market work are complements or substitutes may be a good place to start.

At the same time, we wish to argue that the process of developing appropriate theories and models needs to be informed by a second and complimentary avenue of research that approaches the institution of marriage and its interconnectedness with the labour market from a social anthropological perspective. Modern economists accept in practice, though not yet in theory, that societies are highly varied in the cultural practices they engage in and in the economic arrangements they make. Drawing on insights from the research of social anthropologists on marriage, family and work in developing countries is likely to produce a new generation of economic theories and models that may more effectively explain the reasons underlying women's participation decisions in the developing world.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives

Despite the recent interest in issues related to women's employment both by researchers and policy makers in Sri Lanka, several critical gaps in knowledge remain about the factors underlying women's decision to participate in the labour market. In the first place, other than for the earlier studies by Malhotra and De Graff (1997 and 2000) none investigated perceptions about gender roles or activity preferences, and attempted to incorporate such information into econometric analyses of labour force participation.[1] On the other hand, recent econometric analyses of the factors associated with labour force participation (for example, Gunatilaka 2013 and World Bank 2015) used information about activity outcomes to infer the motivating factors underlying women's decisions to participate.

At the same time, while it is well-known that the time spent by women on unpaid work, largely due to social norms, is a critical determinant of participation in paid work, there is little information about how women's time use in Sri Lanka impacts on their decision to enter the labour market. In fact, apart from Satharasinghe's (1999) study based on a survey of 300 individuals in Colombo district conducted nearly 20 years ago, there has been little interest in finding out how Sri Lankan women and their husbands allocate their time between paid and unpaid work.

This study is a first attempt at addressing these critical gaps in the Sri Lankan literature and is based on information from a survey of 500 married women and their husbands in three districts in western Sri Lanka (Colombo, Kalutara and Ratnapura). The study has two overarching objectives. It first investigates the reasons why women choose the activities they do engage in, by directly soliciting their opinions and perceptions about the following: (a) their activity choices and preferences; (b) the barriers they face in participating in the labour market and in finding and maintaining jobs; and, (c) the kind of work arrangements, facilities and support systems that they believe are necessary for them to be able to go out to work. In other words, instead of going on the basis of revealed preferences as manifest through outcomes which is the way in which economists usually set about investigating individuals' economic decisions, this study asks the necessary questions from women and their husbands on the reasonable assumption that they are likely to know better than anybody else why they make such decisions. The study's focus on married women is driven by the recognition that sooner or later, most Sri Lankan women marry. Therefore, if the objective is to increase women's labour force participation rates, policy makers need to especially target married women. This research also looks at gender-related attitudes to market work, housework and care-related work of both men and women, and attempts to find out the extent to which perceptions about gender roles by both wives and husbands influence the decision to participate in the labour market.

The second overarching objective of the present study is to quantify the time spent by both partners on different categories of paid and unpaid work and then see the extent to which time spent on household maintenance and care work influences the probability of participation. Ferrant (2014) argues that time use data have manifold uses for analysis and policy formulation, She notes that they have been especially useful for the study of unpaid care and gender inequality since they make visible work that is usually invisible as such work does not involve pecuniary transactions which represent market production. Time use data can also increase the efficiency of policies such as the public provision of electricity, roads and water, on women's empowerment as they can show the impact of these policies on women's unpaid work.

[1] Weerackody and Fernando (2009) looked at the relationship between gender roles and subjective well-being among communities affected by conflict and the Tsunami of 2004, and found that well-being declined with the change of roles that men and women play in a family, with well-being dropping even further when one partner fails in the assigned new role. However, their study used qualitative analytical methods and did not attempt to link gender roles with the supply of labour.

In terms of the present study's objectives, however, the most important contribution that time use data can make is by reflecting how the division of labour in a household is shaped by the gender roles attributed to women and men. Nevertheless, the collection of information on wives' and husbands' time use can provide opportunities in the future for further analyses which can even go beyond examining factors underlying women's labour force participation in Sri Lanka.

The study is organized as follows. In the rest of the introductory chapter we contextualize the study in terms of background, motivation and a review of the literature. We also introduce the data and methods used, as well as their limitations. The second chapter makes up the core of this analysis as it presents a thematic overview of women's activity outcomes, preferences and outcomes based on a descriptive analysis of the survey data. Chapter 3 presents the results of the econometric analysis of the factors associated with the probability that women participate in the labour force. The final chapter presents a summary of the findings and draws the implications for policy and research.

1.2 Background and rationale

Twenty years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995, described by UN Women as 'the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights'[2] was produced, a spate of reports have emerged to show that actual progress has fallen far short of expectations.

The Platform for Action 'imagines a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realize all her rights, such as to live free from violence, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work' (ibid.). But the UNDP's (2015) most recent Human Development Report on work (not jobs) shows that while women still carry out 52 per cent of the world's work, this is the sum of only 21 per cent of paid work but 31 per cent of unpaid work by women. In contrast, men's total work is made up of 38 per cent of paid work, and only 10 per cent of unpaid work. Thus, women's share of unpaid work is three times that of men, while their share of paid work is a little more than half of men's share of paid work. And even while women carry out a fifth of the world's paid work, they are paid less for the work they do, face more discrimination, tend to be glued to sticky floors and bang their heads oftener against glass ceilings. The new McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) report, *The power of parity: How advancing women's equality can add $12 trillion to global growth* (2015), approaches the same issue but from the angle of potential gains to economic expansion. It argues that if women were to play an identical role in labour markets as men, as much as $28 trillion, or 26 per cent, could be added to global annual GDP by 2025.

Meanwhile, the ADB's (2015a) report on *Women in the Workforce: An Unmet Potential in Asia and Pacific* notes that while education and health gaps between females and males in Asia and the Pacific have been closing, the labour market still offers women lower wages and lower quality jobs than it offers men, a result driven largely by the way that women allocate their time between market and non-market activities. Women's allocation of time is in turn often determined by social norms that emphasize domestic work as the primary responsibility of women. This is one reason why the average labor force participation rate of women around the globe has stagnated over the last 25 years at just over 50 per cent of the economically active female population. The report points out that even the 'high' rate of 53 per cent for Asia and Pacific masks significant variations across countries. However, while increasing women's participation in the workforce can have significant benefits for economic growth and welfare, neither economic growth nor increasing education appears sufficient to draw them into the labour force.

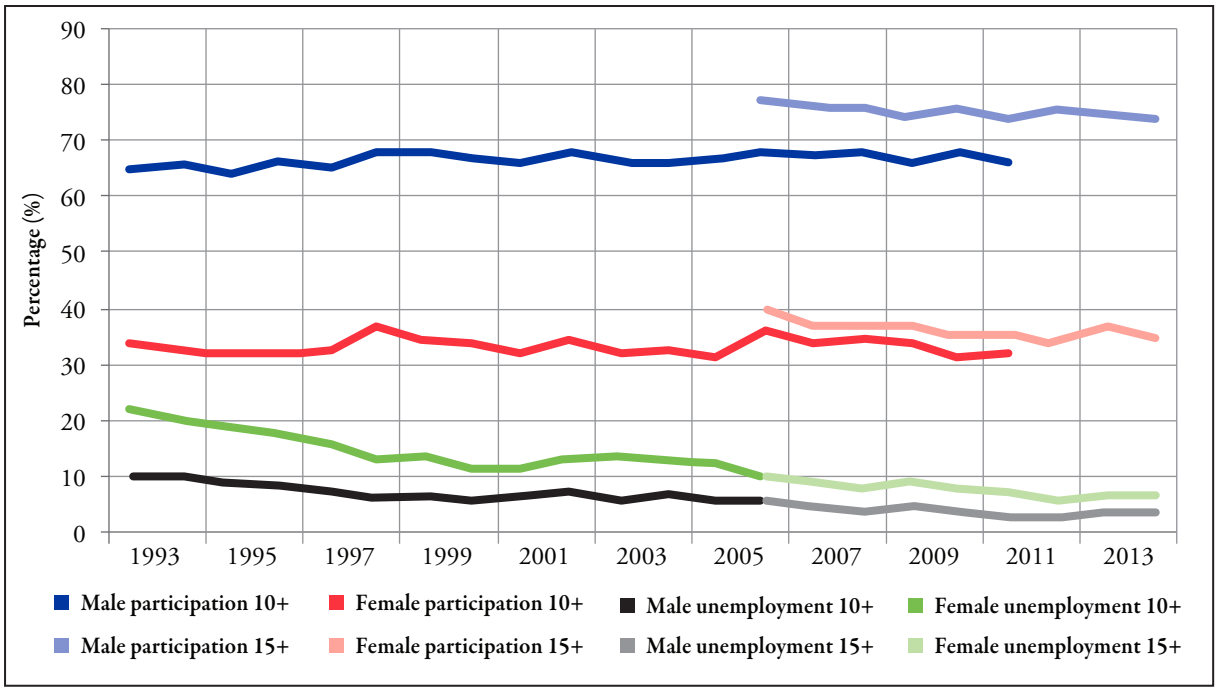
These observations are particularly relevant for Sri Lanka. Roughly 8.8 million Sri Lankans 15 years of age and more are either currently employed or are looking for work. Of them, 65 per cent is male and 35 per cent per cent is female (Department of Census and Statistics 2015) and women's participation rates have been consistently half that of male participation rates.. In fact, Figure 1 shows that labour force participation rates for both sexes have been remarkably stable over the last two decades. A decline in the unemployment

[2] See UN Women, 'The Beijing Platform for Action Turns 20', http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about, accessed 18 April 2016.

rate and a rise in the employment-population ratio appear to underlie the stability in participation. Thus, while a reasonable rate of economic growth (5.12 per cent annually since liberalization in 1977 according to World Bank data) and better education (women have more years of education than men according to the World Bank's STEP 2012 data, see Gunewardena (2015)), may have succeeded in reducing the numbers of the unemployed, neither have been able to draw more women into the labour force. In fact, Dasgupta and Verick (forthcoming), argue that this is the case for much of Asia. As countries become richer, women's participation converges at a level where a considerable gender gap remains, reflecting the continuing impact of social norms, preferences and constraints on women's participation.

The issue is of critical policy significance. As a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), it is incumbent upon Sri Lanka's Government to ensure equal opportunities for employment. In a more practical sense, as men's participation rates have reached the maximum, more Sri Lankan women need to engage in paid work if the economy is to maintain current economic growth rates, raise living standards, and generate savings to fund social protection for the present generation of Sri Lankans (Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower et al. 2009; Institute of Policy Studies 2012). In any case, a large body of empirical research in many countries has shown that women's access to employment and resources in women's hands increase human capital and capabilities within households and promote economic growth (Kabeer 2012). Engaging in market work and thereby having access to independent means of income are also essential for women's greater economic empowerment. Therefore, increasing women's participation in paid work is likely to fuel economic expansion while reducing gender inequalities. In fact, low rates of workforce participation and parliamentary representation have negated Sri Lanka's achievements in health and education in the country's Gender Inequality Index (UNDP Sri Lanka 2012).

Figure 1: Labour force participation and unemployment rates, Sri Lankan men and women 1993-2014



Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Annual Report of the Labour Force Survey, various years.

Nevertheless, it is only recently that the issue of low rates of women's labour force participation in Sri Lanka has caught the attention of researchers and analysts. Malhotra and De Graff (1997 and 2000) were the first to investigate the issue, using data from a sample of nearly 1500 women surveyed in Kalutara District in 1992 to look at the factors associated with the labour force participation of single women and whether women's roles as unmarried daughters versus wives were relevant in shaping women's labour force activity.

At that time, however, Sri Lankan policy makers and researchers were more preoccupied with issues of youth unemployment and did not pay much attention to issues of women's employment. However, by the late 2000s, spurred by the implications of the impending demographic transition, policy makers began to turn their attention to the issue of women's labour force participation. For example, the Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower et al.'s (2009) *Labour and Social Trends in Sri Lanka 2009* was the first official document to highlight the implications of low female participation rates for economic growth. Almost simultaneously, Madurawala (2009) used data from three micro-surveys to identify the issues and constraints faced by women of child-bearing age in entering and remaining in the labour market.

Recently, Gunatilaka (2013) analyzed data from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2009/10 of the Department of Census and Statistics to investigate the probable drivers of married women's participation decisions. She found the following factors to be positively and significantly associated: age; educational attainment from GCE Advanced Level and beyond, with a U-shaped relationship between education and participation grazing secondary education at its lowest point; higher per capita household consumption; a higher share of employed females relative to males with the same educational attainment as the individual, in the district; and whether respondents were living on estates. Having children later rather than earlier was also found likely to be an important factor. Constraints to married women's participation were found to be remittances from abroad; Islamic Moor ethno-religious identity; disability; education up to GCE Ordinary Level; the presence of children less than five years of age; the employment and education characteristics of male household members and male head of household; and, more people employed in manufacturing and services, relative to agriculture in the district.

Even more recently, the World Bank (2015) in its Systematic Country Diagnostic has drawn attention to the need to increase women's labour force participation rates to ensure social inclusion for shared prosperity and poverty reduction. Based on an analysis of LFS data from 2003 to 2012, the report notes that participation rates declined for those with only primary education or less, relative to those with at least university education. Among constraining factors, it suggests that marriage and childcare, social norms about women's roles and culturally appropriate employment, gender wage gaps and occupational segregation, as well as discrimination in hiring practices (though hard to prove) are holding back women's engagement in market work.

Admittedly, women who do decide to participate face a host of problems. The gender wage gap where women are on average paid less than men even when they share the same productive characteristics, has been highlighted in several previous studies (see Gunatilaka (2008) using LFS 2006, Gunewardena (2010) using LFS 1996-2004). In fact, Gunewardena's (2010) decompositions of the gender wage gap showed that women are underpaid in all sectors and for all ethnic groups, even when unconditional wage gaps favour women. Meanwhile, Gunatilaka (2015) used HIES 2009/10 data to show that while women are not significantly more likely to be poor than equivalent men, working women are significantly more likely to be poor than working men. This implies that what working men earn is more likely to help keep them out of poverty than working women's earnings are likely to keep working women out of poverty. This underlines the fact that what is of critical importance for a woman's own welfare is not really whether she engages in market work or not, but whether the work she finds offers decent terms and conditions. In Sri Lanka's case, it is evident that the majority of women are in low-skilled occupations, which are unlikely to afford good wages, a protective working environment or social security. For example, according to labour force survey data, 54 per cent of working women (and 62 per cent of working men) were in the informal sector in 2014 and were hence unlikely to be engaged in decent work (Department of Census and Statistics 2015).

More recently, Gunewardena (2015) used the World Bank's STEP 2012 data to show that while Sri Lankan women have higher measured cognitive skill than men, and that they possess non-cognitive skills that the market values almost as much as men do while being just as extraverted, open, agreeable, good at decision-making and risk-taking as men, they earn more only for their openness. If women have high decision-making ability, they actually get paid less. In contrast, men are rewarded for all these qualities as well as for being neurotic and for displaying hostile attribution bias. Given these findings, Gunewardena (2015) argues that skills acquisition alone will not eliminate gender gaps in earnings and that affirmative labour market policies are necessary to ensure gender equity. She also points out that more investigation

and research is necessary to find out whether the differentials in returns are due to occupational segregation by gender, or whether employers treat the same skills differently, depending on whether they are displayed by men or women.

The present study aims to contribute to the literature by finding out more about the factors underlying Sri Lankan women's decisions about whether or not to participate in the labour market. It aims to do this by asking women themselves why they are engaged in the activity they do, whether they would consider doing something else, and if so, what are the supporting conditions that they are looking for. The study also looks at the extent to which perceptions about gender roles of both wives and husbands influence the decision to participate. Since the decision to participate is also dependent on the time that a woman can spare from carrying out household and caring work that she is not paid for, we also investigate how wives and husbands allocate their time, and see the extent to which time spent on unpaid work influences the probability that she is likely to engage in paid work.

1.3 Data and methodology

The analysis is based on primary data collected through a survey of 500 married women between 20 and 64 years of age, and their husbands, in a contiguous geographic area straddling several administrative divisions of each of the districts of Colombo, Kalutara and Ratnapura. The administrative divisions were as follows: Sitawaka, Homagama and Moratuwa in Colombo District; Horana, Kalutara, Millaniya and Agalawatte in Kalutara District; and, Eheliyagoda in Ratnapura District.[3] There are many reasons why this area was selected for the survey. First, it allowed the purposive selection of administrative divisions covering urban, peri-urban, rural and plantation sectors in the country's south western quadrant where more than 25 per cent of its population lives. In this area, livelihood activities are diverse, and relative proximity to the metropolitan city of Colombo means that people in the area can potentially benefit from the spinoffs from economic diversification and growth generated from the agglomeration forces centring on Colombo. Secondly, with government policy focusing on developing much of this region as a megapolis, increasing numbers will live in towns or peri-urban areas and will be expected to find work in industry and services in the future. Therefore, we thought it important to see the extent to which traditional gender roles and the division of household tasks can be expected to respond to the labour market opportunities that are likely to emerge in the new economic environment. Accordingly, 26 per cent of the sample was made up of married women living in urban areas, 29 per cent of the sample lived in peri-urban areas, 36 per cent in rural areas, and 9 per cent on estates.

The survey questionnaire was made up of several schedules. In addition to the usual information about the demographic characteristics of household members, their usual activities, earnings and household expenditure, the questionnaire elicited detailed information about the wife's activity choices and preferences, her perceptions about gender roles and about how fair she thought that the division of household chores was. Some of these questions were also asked of the husband. The questionnaire also included time use schedules for a typical week day, and a Sunday, for both wife and husband. These schedules were modelled on the Time Diary Schedule of the Time Use Pilot Survey of 2012 conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2013). The activities were then coded using the classification system used by Hirway (2000) for the Indian Time Use Survey, as being most appropriate for Sri Lanka's socio-economic context.

The Time Diary Schedule method for collecting information about time use has the advantage of being able to provide more accurate data of better quality, compared with time use modules which ask people to estimate the total time they spend on various activities. Although easier and cheaper to implement, time use modules focus on specific pre-determined activities rather than on all activities undertaken by the individual. Besides, they do not capture activities performed simultaneously and underestimate the time devoted to certain tasks such as childcare. On the other hand, the Time Diary Schedule is time consuming

[3] The Grama Niladhari Divisions the survey covered were as follows: Diddeniya, Godagama, Homagama, Kadugoda and Rawatawatte East in Colombo District; Horana North, Horana South, Kalutara, Kalutara North, Kalutara South, Punsiripura, and Ridirekagama in Kalutara District; and Bulugahapitiya and Divurampitiya in Ratnapura District.

and costly to administer, and is usually not combined with schedules collecting information on other socio-demographic and economic characteristics (Ferrant 2014).

However, for this study, whose main objective is to look at the factors associated with women's labour force participation, we needed accurate information about time use, as well as information on socio-demographic and economic characteristics in order to be able to control for the influence of these factors on the labour force participation decision. These requirements lengthened the survey questionnaire and increased costs of administration, so that the original sample of 1500 women and their husbands had to be pared down to 500 women and their husbands.

The contraction of the sample size imposed certain restrictions on the kind of econometric analysis that could be undertaken with the data. For example, it was originally intended that in addition to investigating the factors associated with labour market participation, that the study look at factors associated with activity outcomes, that is, in addition to labour market participation, that the study investigates the association of individuals' characteristics with the probability of being self-employed, employed in the family business, employed in the private sector, and in the government sector. However, the small size of the sample meant that very few of the marginal effects of the explanatory variables turned out to statistically significant. This forced us to abandon this avenue of inquiry.

It is also possible that the small size of sample limited the explanatory power of certain variables even in the econometric analysis of the factors associated with the probability of participation. Given these limitations, this study needs to be regarded as exploratory rather than as definitive. Its main contribution is in pointing the directions in which further investigation is likely to be most fruitful in uncovering the layers of complex and inter-connected factors underlying low rates of female labour force participation in Sri Lanka.

1.4 Literature review

A review of the theoretical literature must necessarily begin with the standard neoclassical static labour supply model as it is probably the first theory that emerged in the mainstream economics literature to explain the labour supply of individuals. Based on the trade-off between work and leisure, the theory suggests that an increase in the wage increases the price of leisure, and hence reduces the demand for leisure and thereby increases the supply of labour (substitution effect). On the other hand, an increase in the individual's or household's income will increase the demand for leisure, and so reduce labour supply (income effect). So whether an individual undertakes market work or not will depend on the relative strengths of the income and substitution effects.

However, the static labour supply model cannot answer the question of who in a married couple's household works how much, and how the resulting income is divided between the two of them and others in the household. One of the earliest of household models that attempted to do so was the 'unitary' model of the household which derived from the maximization of a household utility function subject to budget and time constraints (Becker 1965). The models assumed that individuals form a household when it is more beneficial to them than remaining alone: household goods can be produced more efficiently than when single and economies of scale can be exploited when producing and sharing goods. However, the model did not take into account individual preferences or human capital considerations, but instead pooled household income to derive a model of family labour supply behavior. The model predicted that an increase in women's wages would increase women's participation through the reallocation of time within households. However, the model did not permit the analysis of intra-household welfare analysis and its theoretical foundations were found to be weak (Chiappori 1992). Many empirical studies, too, rejected the hypotheses of income pooling (Schultz 1990, Thomas 1990) and of jointly determined family labour supply behavior in unitary models (Lundberg 1988). For example, Schultz (1990) found differential effects of male and female non-labour income on female labour supply and fertility in Thailand while Lundberg (1988) used data from the U.S.A. to show that husbands and wives without pre-school children act as separate individuals in the labour market and that their labour supply is not jointly determined.

In contrast, 'bargaining' models of households attempt to account for individual preferences and the existence of intra-household decision-making. Like the unitary models bargaining models also assume that individuals form a household when it is more beneficial to them than remaining alone. But the bargaining models further assume two agents with specific utility functions with the gains accruing from household formation distributed across members according to a sharing rule. Households maximize the product of each member's utility in excess of a reservation level which are individual threat points, or the utility levels individuals in a marriage could reach in the absence of an agreement with the partner (Browning et al. 2014). Any variable that is relevant for a threat point is potentially a distribution factor, and such factors can be external and take the form of the existence of a marriage market and the probability of remarriage, or the nature of divorce settlements (Manser and Brown 1980; McElroy and Horney 1981; Chiappori et al. 1998). Alternatively distribution factors may be internal and spouses may jointly consume family goods but no longer cooperate in the production of those goods. A special case of an inefficient, non-cooperative equilibrium is where traditional gender roles make men the breadwinners and women the homemakers (Lundberg and Pollak 1993).

Over the years, the collective model has become the workhorse of economics of the family, used to analyze issues such as marriage, divorce (Friedberg and Stern 2003; Cherchye et al. 2016), and even love (Friedberg and Stern 2014). As importantly, the model has enabled the analysis of time allocation and the labour supply of husbands and wives in the presence of a sharing rule and factors such as a marriage market (for example, see Chiappori et al. 1998). With respect to individuals' labour supply, the model predicts that the spouse's wage matters for an individual's demand for leisure, but only through its impact on the sharing rule, that is, through an income effect, while the same is true of non-labour income and of distribution factors (Browning et al. 2014). A change in the wage structure which causes a rise in women's wages can induce an increase in female labor force participation through the reallocation of time within households as well as enable women to renegotiate the gains from marriage on the basis of the new earnings opportunity (Hoddinot et al. 1997).

The empirical literature that applies bargaining models to assess women's labour supply is vast and much of it is concentrated on developed countries. In economically advanced societies, the elasticity of women's labour force supply in response to own wage changes appears to have declined markedly. Fewer married women remain on the margin between participating and not, and increasing divorce rates and greater career orientation may be making women's labour supply less sensitive to theirs and to their husbands' wages (Blau and Kahn 2007). Nevertheless, the greater the instability in marriage and the more unequal a couples' (future) bargaining powers, the higher is the wife's incentive to improve her relative bargaining position by staying in the labour market (Diekman and Kleine 1991 as cited in Beblo 2000; Beblo 2000). This insurance aspect is most important for women with poor bargaining positions in advanced economies where divorce is more prevalent.

While bargaining models of the household regard the division of housework and care work between men and women as the outcome of housework conflict and bargaining, women's ability to bargain within the household is also constrained by socialized gender-roles. These are learned at a very young age from social agents such as parents, teachers, peers and the media (Witt 2000; Mahalik et. al 2005). Occupational segregation can reinforce these gender norms as women crowd into certain occupations and sectors that are considered socially appropriate, resulting in them losing out on jobs with better wages and conditions of work that are available to men (Badgett and Folbre 1999). Women from wealthier social strata or certain ethnic groups can be constrained in their activities because of concerns about sexual purity or social status and discouraged from venturing out of the domestic and social spheres (Malhotra and De Graf 2000). Women may also be made to assume the greater share of household chores to demonstrate their gender identities (West and Zimmerman 1987; Braun et al. 2008; Rupanner 2010).

There is a substantial literature on the influence of gender norms on women's labour force participation particularly from developing countries. Fleck (1996) included a measure of the probability of men's domination as a reflection of social norms in her estimation of women's labour force participation in the Honduras and found that the extent to which the husband dominated in households had a significantly negative effect on the wife's labour supply. Malhotra and De Graf (2000) found that while poverty promoted

women's market work regardless of marital status in Sri Lanka, unmarried daughters in upper-class families were more often viewed as receiving care and not impelled by family obligations and responsibilities to work, unless it was for personal fulfilment. Rising religious and cultural conservatism have been associated with declining rates of female participation in Turkey (Goksel 2012). And in India, caste, religion, marital status and other social norms operate at multiple levels in society to restrict women's access to paid work, while husbands and in-laws actively limit women's movement outside the home (Chaudhary and Verick, 2014).

An important strand in the theoretical literature that pertains to women's labour force participation relates to different aspects of the interaction between unpaid work, the cultural context and macroeconomic conditions. Cultural norms and issues of status may also interact with structural change in the economy to either encourage or inhibit the participation of women in the labour market in a U-shaped relationship between female labour force participation and economic development (Goldin 1995; Mammen and Paxsen 2000). For example, it has been observed that women's labour force participation tends to be high in poor, predominantly agricultural economies, where women work on family-owned farms. However, once employment shifts from agriculture to manufacturing and education levels among men rise faster, men are drawn into the manufacturing sector. Even though the shift of males out of agriculture may see women's wages rise in the sector, as household income rises due to higher wages earned by men in manufacturing, women's participation falls. Since poverty no longer requires that women also work and earn, women are discouraged from working as it would erode the newly acquired status of the household with manufacturing rather than agriculture being the main source of income. Social norms that discourage women working outside the home may also kick in at this point in the trajectory. However, later on as women become better educated and the services sector expands along with socially acceptable white-collar opportunities, female labour force participation rates may rise again. Empirical evidence in support of this relationship derives mainly from cross country analyses, whereas panel analyses have produced mixed results (Cagatay and Ozler 1995; Tam 2010; Gaddis and Klasen 2014). In contrast, Dasgupta and Verick (forthcoming) argue quite categorically, that in Asia, a U-shaped relationship between female labour force participation and economic development does not exist. Rather, as countries become richer, women's participation converges at a level where a considerable gender gap remains, reflecting the continuing impact of social norms, preferences and constraints on women's participation.

The U-shaped relationship between economic or educational status and women's labour force participation at a given point in time, posited by Klasen and Pieters' (2012), provides yet another perspective through which to analyze the phenomenon. According to this view, poorly educated women are forced to combine farm work with care work and housework in order to survive. But as educational levels among men rises, the household's economic status increases, and the household is able to manage without women's earnings, as 'sending one's wife out to work' is seen as lowering social status. Consequently the labour force participation of women belonging to such households may be low. However, among the very highly educated, high wages as well as the high social status associated with those high-skill occupations may encourage women to work. Using sample survey data from India, Klasen and Pieters (2012) conclude that economic growth in India has created attractive labour market opportunities for highly educated women at the same time that poverty has driven low-skilled women to engage in market work.

Yet another strand in the theoretical literature holds that women's labour force participation rates move counter-cyclically in added-worker effects, as women move from non-employment to paid and self-employment during recessions (Fallon and Lucas 2002; Attanasio et al. 2005). In such situations, women's labour supply becomes an insurance mechanism for households. Presenting supportive evidence from Asia and Latin America, Bhalotra and Umana-Aponte (2010) argue that counter-cyclicality is strongest in households with limited alternative means to cope with income shocks.

While the above theories apply to women in general, whether married or single, the growth of light manufacturing has been associated with higher levels of demand for low-wage, young, unmarried, female employment, in particular. Economic liberalization and the advancement of modern technologies have changed skills and job structures, thereby eroding the labour rights of unionized male wage workers and minimum wage legislation (Standing 1989, 1999). The labour of these workers have been substituted with

the labour of young women whose low aspiration wages and low efficiency wages,[4] together with their willingness to work for low wages for long work weeks, have made them an attractive alternative. Menon and Rodgers (2009) for example, found that increasing trade openness was associated with higher residual wage gaps between men and women in India's more concentrated manufacturing industries. Madurawala (2009) found that employers preferred to employ women in Sri Lanka's export-oriented garments sector because they perceived them as being more' manageable', flexible' and as having 'patience' conducive to the smooth running of labour–intensive production processes than men.

However, while analyses of the different rates of female labour force participation across countries have identified per capita income, education and the specialization of the economy in female-friendly industries as underlying factors, if these determinants are controlled for, what remains are important differences in gender roles that have persisted over time. Friedberg and Stern (2003) suggest that women may have historically specialized in household production and men in market production because since women bear children they need to withdraw from market work for a length of time. And since women bore many more children in the era before contraceptives than they do now, historically, women could engage in market production only intermittently. This is likely to have resulted in their historical specialization in household work rather than market work. Friedberg and Stern (2003) also point out that men's wages have historically far exceeded women's wages with the gap narrowing only in recent years. This has meant that as the ratio of women's wages to men's declines relative to women's marginal productivity in household production, men will increasingly specialize in market production and women in household production.

Recent studies about the role of culture in explaining women's labour force participation rates across countries offer interesting insights about the historical specialization of gender roles. They argue that historically, men's greater marginal productivity in market production is likely to have derived from their capacity to deploy production techniques that required greater upper body strength. For example, Alesina et. al. (2011) provide supportive evidence for Boserup's (1970) early proposition that current differences in gender attitudes and female behaviour have in fact been shaped by historical differences in agricultural systems that gave rise to specialization of agricultural production along gender lines. This may have in turn given rise to cultural beliefs about the appropriate role that women should play in society. Alesina at al. (2011) show that individuals, ethnicities and countries whose ancestors used plough cultivation which required significant upper body strength which favoured males, as opposed to labour-intensive, shifting cultivation, subscribe to gender norms that are correlated with greater gender inequality today. Even today, such societies have less female participation in non-domestic activities such as market employment, entrepreneurship, and politics. Several recent studies emphasize the role of traditional culture in driving labour force participation rates of women. Adopting an epidemiological approach to study second-generation American women to control for factors not related to culture, Fernández (2007) uses female labor force participation and attitudes in the woman's country of ancestry as cultural proxies and shows that both cultural proxies have quantitatively significant effects on women's work outcomes. Meanwhile, Fernández et al. (2004) show that the slow evolution in cultural beliefs about the appropriate role of women in society underlay the gradual increase in women's labour force participation in many advanced countries while Fortin (2005) makes the same point, but from a different angle. She argues that while anti-egalitarian views are most strongly correlated with female employment rates and gender pay gaps in 25 OECD countries, these views are softening among more recent cohorts.

While bargaining models of households enable the economic analysis of time allocation between paid and unpaid work between spouses (see Beblo 2000 for an early review), the empirical literature on time use and time poverty offers further insights about the factors associated with women's decision to participate in market work. While time is something that everybody has access to, regardless of age, gender or income, the way in which this infinite resource is allocated over different tasks also depends on factors such as age, gender, household structure, social class, and the country's level of development. An individual is considered as being time poor when he or she has very little necessary time and no discretionary time at all. The analysis of data from time use surveys all over the world reveals that those most prone to time poverty

[4] Managers may pay their employees more than the market-clearing wage in order to increase their productivity or efficiency, or reduce costs associated with turnover in industries where it is costly to replace labour. Such wages are known as efficiency wages.

are women and girls, mainly due to the gender division of labour that forces on them the large part of the burden of unpaid work within the household (Kes and Swaminathan 2005). It stands to reason that the more a woman has to spend time on unpaid work, the less time she would have to undertake paid work, and the less time she would have to invest in skills training that would enable her to be more productive and to earn more.

A review of several time use analyses in the Asia Pacific region by the OECD reveals that women always do more unpaid work than men, with the gender gap varying from five hours in India and Pakistan, through three hours in Japan and Korea, to two hours in China, Australia and New Zealand (OECD 2011). Men were found to have slightly more free time than women, with the gender gap in free time favouring men by 95 minutes in India, through 44 minutes in China, to 29 minutes in Korea, 11 minutes in Japan and 4 minutes in Australia. Pakistani, Armenian and men from New Zealand had around 4 to 8 minutes less free time than women of these countries did (ibid.). The gender gap in unpaid work was likely due to men's time on unpaid work being spent on less time-consuming activities such as household repairs and gardening which are also ad hoc chores, rather than the activities on which women spend their time, such as cooking, cleaning and childcare which need to be carried out every day, and many times a day (McGinnity and Russell, 2008). In an analysis of time use data from Argentina, Nicaragua, India, the Republic of Korea, South Africa and Tanzania, Budlender (2008) found that in all six countries, the mean time spent on unpaid care work by women was more than twice that for men. The gender gap was most marked in India, where women spent nearly 10 times as much time on unpaid care work as men, and suggests a sharp division of labour between paid and unpaid work. Conversely, men tended to spend more time than women on work classified in the system of national accounts (SNA) across all countries. When SNA and unpaid care work were combined, women were found to do noticeably more work than men in all countries. Budlender (2009) also found that the volume of the total work done by men ranged from 74 per cent of the total amount done by women in South Africa, to 94 per cent of the amount done by women in India.

However, contrary to expectation, women spent similar amounts of time on unpaid activities in OECD countries and in non-OECD developing countries, belying the expectation that the diffusion of household appliances will reduce the time spent on household work (OECD 2011). Meanwhile improvements to rural water and irrigation systems, domestic energy, and rural transportation can help reduce women's time spent on unpaid care work, but in many contexts, the time saved has been found to be spent on leisure rather than market work. For example, a nine-country study including three in Asia - India, Nepal, and Pakistan - found no evidence to show that improved access to water led to more off-farm work for women (see Koolwal and van der Walle 2009). Yet, improved access to water did lead to improved schooling for both boys and girls in countries where a large gender gap existed. Similarly, an impact evaluation of rural water supply and sanitation projects in Pakistan's Punjab did not find that time freed up from fetching water was used for income-generating activities. But the evaluation did find significant benefits for women and girls in a reduction of drudgery measured in terms of pain and other health impacts caused by carrying water, and in increased attendance of girls in high school (Asian Development Bank 2009). In contrast, an evaluation of the Third Water Supply and Sanitation Project in Sri Lanka found that 82 per cent of women found it easier to collect water after the project, and 57 per cent of women increased their monthly incomes because they were able to use time saved in collecting water to pursue income-generating activities (Asian Development Bank 2011). The impact on health as a result of this project was also significant, as incidence of waterborne diseases among beneficiaries decreased from 17 per cent to less than 1 per cent, which may also have contributed to the increased time available for income-generating activities.

Thus the evidence related to infrastructure services suggests that a reduction in the time spent on unpaid work brought about by improved amenities may be needed to allow woman to engage in paid work. Whether she actually does so depends on a number of other factors, among which social norms and gender roles are probably critical.

Overview of Women's Activity Outcomes, Preferences and Time Use

2

2.1 Introduction

This chapter forms the core of this study and takes up more than half its length, as it presents insights about activity outcomes, activity preferences and time use of respondents drawn from the information collected through the survey questionnaire. The chapter also presents the reasons why women chose one option over the other, or why they would consider a different option, based on the responses that women themselves gave to probing questions that the survey asked. Given its length and the range of issues covered, the chapter has a relatively comprehensive concluding section which pulls together and presents in one place, the insights offered by the descriptive analysis.

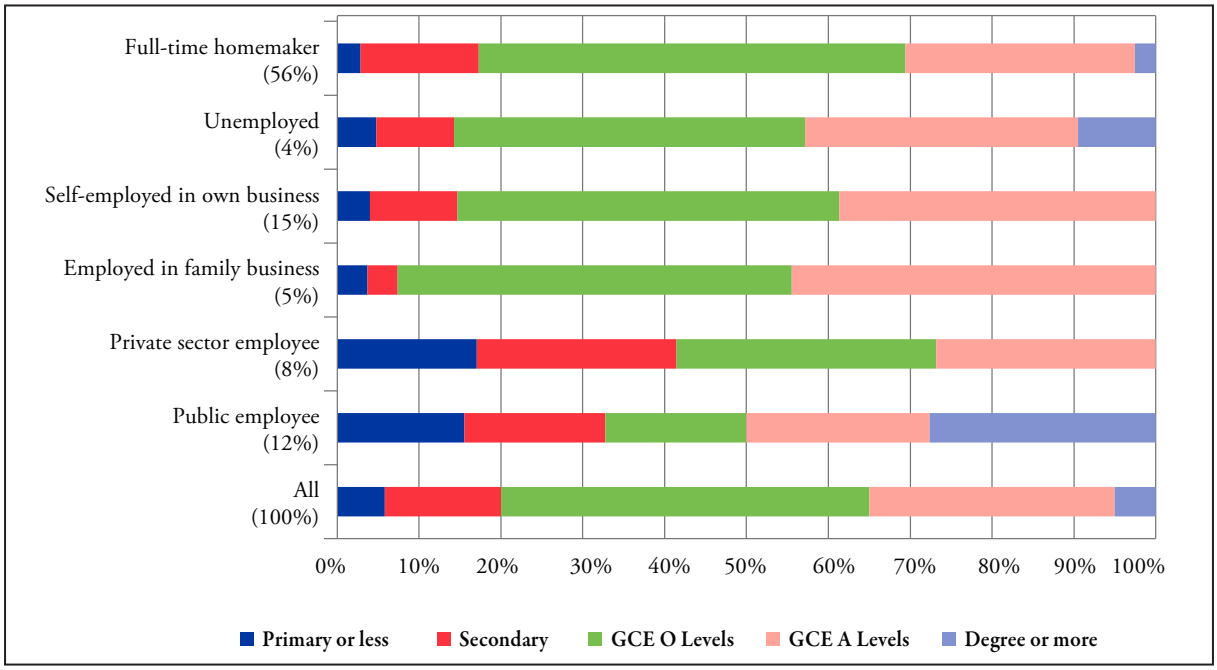
2.2 Overview of outcomes and preferences

In the sample of 500 married respondents living with their husbands, 56 per cent were full-time home-makers while the rest were participating in the labour market. Thus, in our sample, the labour force participation rate at 44 per cent is somewhat higher than the national average of 37 per cent for the population of women aged 20 years and over a year earlier (DCS 2015). The unemployment rate, at 4 per cent, was conversely slightly lower than the unemployment rate for women 20 years and more (6 per cent) in the country at large in 2014 (ibid.). One reason for the difference could be that the sample covered in this study consists of married women only, whereas the population of women between 20 and 64 years nation-wide also includes single, young women who may not be participating in the labour force due to other reasons such as being still engaged in education. In this study, however, we have been able to distinguish between the different types of businesses women are working in, whether it is their own business or a family business, or whether it is in private sector organizations which are not owned by either the respondents or their families. Accordingly, while 15 per cent was self-employed in her own businesses, a much smaller proportion, 5 per cent, was working in the family business. Eight per cent of the sample was engaged as private sector employees, while 12 per cent worked for the public sector.[5]

As Figure 2 shows, the majority of respondents had received education up to the GCE Ordinary Level (45 per cent). A further 30 per cent had studied up to the Advanced Level. Just 5 per cent had completed tertiary education, while 14 per cent had secondary level education. In terms of activity status, the most educated were public sector employees, of whom nearly a third had degrees. Of the unemployed respondents, 10 per cent were graduates who were probably waiting to get a job that was in line with their qualifications and aspirations. No graduates in private sector employment had been picked up by the survey, but all other four levels of education were fairly evenly represented among this group. Of the full-time homemakers, three per cent were graduates, more than half had at least O' Levels, and 28 per cent had GCE A' Levels. There were in graduates among those engaged on own or family business. More than 80 per cent of such respondents had studied at least up to the O' Levels.

[5] Out of the sample of 500 women, four were engaged in two activities rather than only one, while the rest were engaged only in one activity. One respondent engaged in both her own business as well as the family business. Another was a public employee who also had her own business. The third was a public employee who was also engaged in the family business. The last was a private sector employee who also engaged in the family business. In all four cases, the respondent's main activity was identified as the activity which earned the most income.

Figure 2: Women's activity status by highest level of education attained



Source and notes: Survey of Women's Labour Force Participation and Time Use in Western Sri Lanka 2015. Figures in parentheses denote share of women in each activity category in the total sample of 500 respondents.

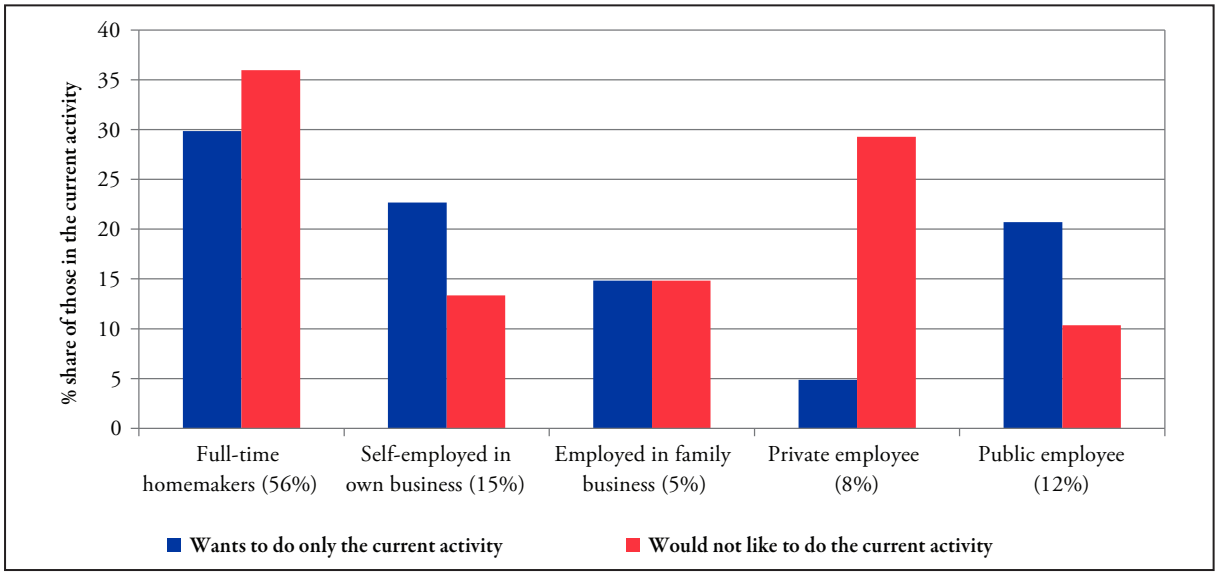
The survey asked respondents what they would like to do in terms of six options: full-time homemakers, their own business, engage in a family business, work as employees in the private sector, work as employees in the public sector, or go abroad. Respondents were required to say 'yes' or 'no' to each of these options. Given the structure of the question and the multiple responses it facilitated, we were able to find out whether the respondents would choose only one of these activities, whether they would not like to do what they were currently engaged in, and total preference scores in terms of the activities which they would be willing to do (positive preferences) and those they would not consider doing (negative preferences).

Accordingly, Figure 3 shows the share of individuals currently engaged in each of the activities who only wanted to continue in the same activity, and those who did not like to do what they were currently doing. Those who wanted to continue in the same activity amounted to 117 individuals or 23 per cent of the sample and of these individuals the overwhelming majority or 71 per cent were full-time homemakers. These women accounted for a little less than a third of full-time homemakers who were happy doing just that, while a little more than a third preferred to do something other than making homes. While a much smaller proportion of those employed in the family business (12 per cent) would not consider doing anything else, a somewhat higher proportion (15 per cent) would rather have been doing something else. However, the biggest difference between the share of those content with the current activity and those looking for something else, were those working as private sector employees. Only 5 per cent wished to continue working for the private sector and would not consider another option, while nearly 30 per cent would rather have been doing something else. In contrast, among the self-employed and those employed in the public sector, the proportion content to remain in those activities and not look for other options is considerably higher than those wanting to opt out.

In Figure 4 we present what women who did not want to continue in the same activity would like to do instead. The figure is based on the data in Table 1. Of the entire sample of 500 women, 132 did not want to remain in their current activity and would have rather been doing something else. Of this number, again the majority were full-time homemakers, as they dominate the sample. Ten were self-employed, 12 were in the private sector, and half of that in the public sector. Of the 12 respondents in the private sector, half would like to do their own business. Of the 4 women engaged in the family business, at least 2 would like to stay at home as full-time homemakers. Only 10 women out of a total of 132 wanted to go abroad.

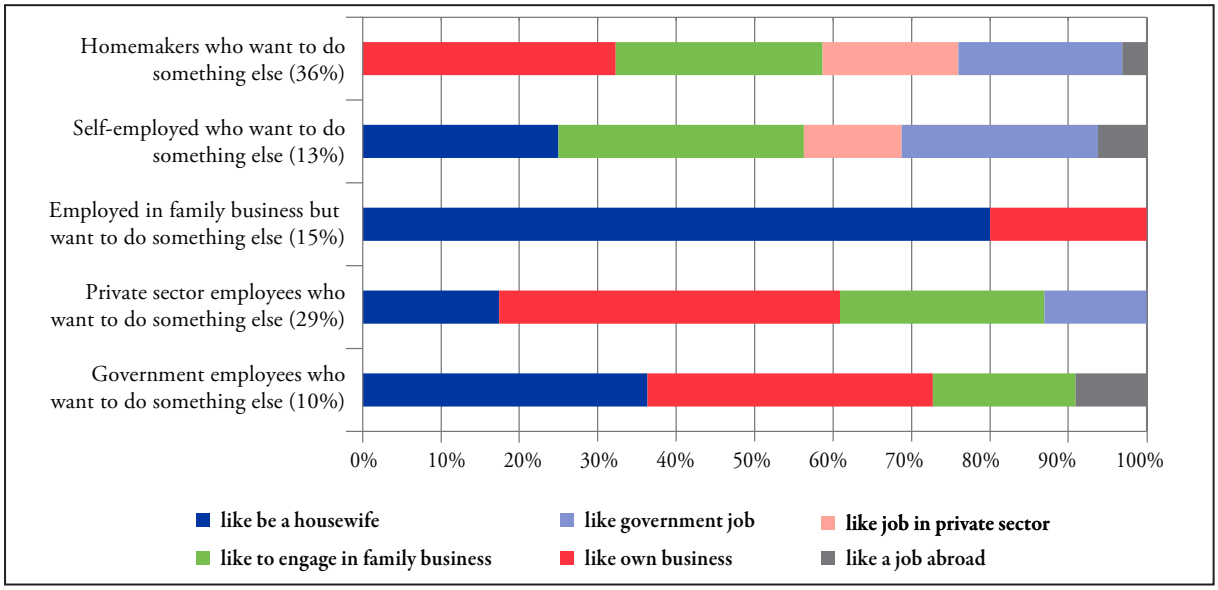
In Figure 5 we present the distribution of 'no' voters for each option by the highest level of education attained. These proportions are fairly even across all options, suggesting that education levels are unlikely to be correlated with negative preferences. In contrast, Figure 6 presents the educational attainment of those 117 respondents who chose only one of the options available, regardless of whether it was their current activity or not. Those only wanting to do a private sector job accounted only for 2 per cent of the 117 selecting only one option, and of them, two individuals had only primary education or less, one had GCE A' Levels, and the other had a degree. A little more than half of those selecting only one option were full-time homemakers (this group is in any case the largest, since of the entire sample, 56 per cent were full-time homemakers) and nearly 70 per cent had at least GCE O' Levels. The majority of respondents who wanted to engage in either their own business or the family business also had at least GCE O' Level qualifications. There were no graduates among them.

Figure 3: Share of women who only wanted to continue in the same activity, and those who did not want to do what they were currently doing



Source and notes: As for Figure 2.

Figure 4: What women who did not like to continue in the same activity, would like to do instead

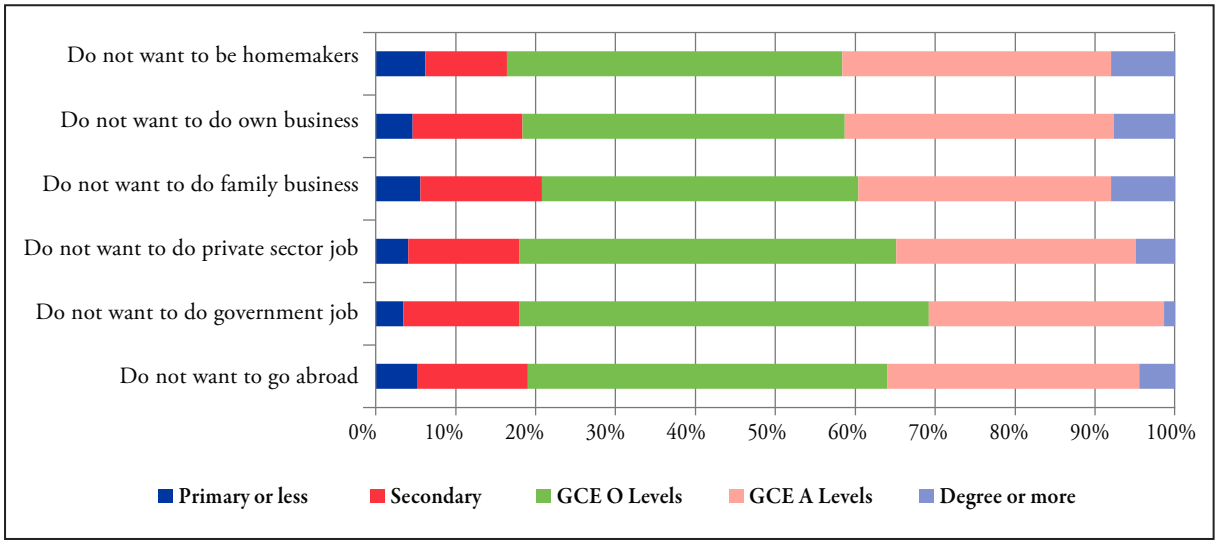


Source and notes: Survey of Women's Labour Force Participation and Time Use in Western Sri Lanka 2015. Figures in parentheses denote the share of the total 132 respondents engaged in the current activity who did not want to continue in the same activity.

Table 1: What women who did not like to continue in the same activity, would like to do instead

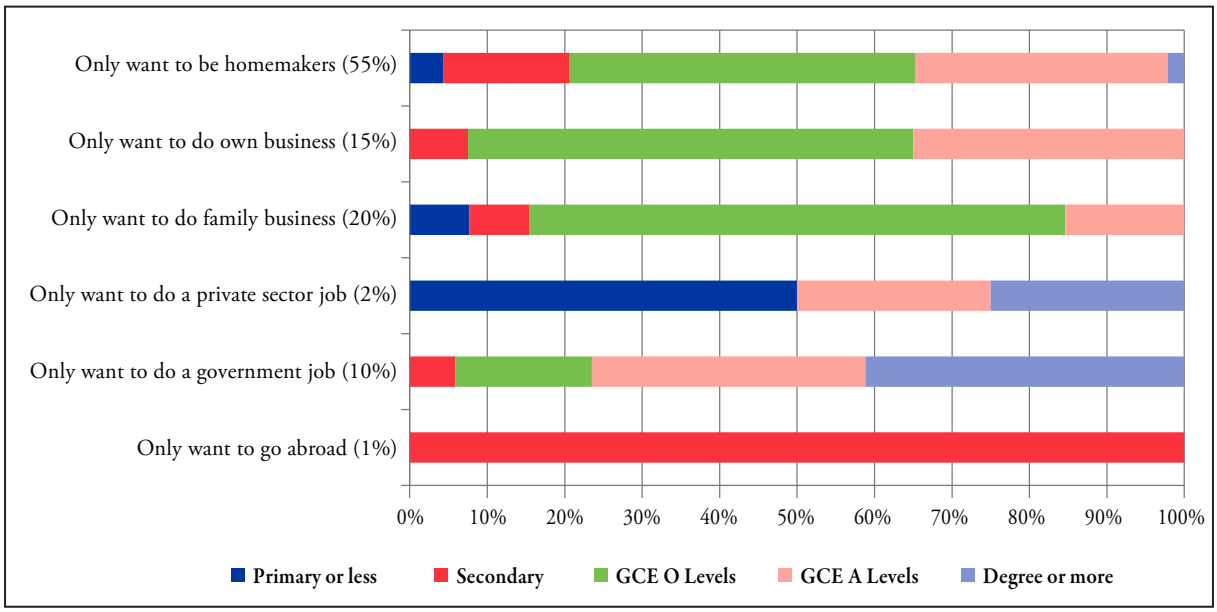
	Like be a housewife	Like own business	Like to engage in family business	Like job in private sector	Like govern-ment job	Like a job abroad	Total (num-ber) row
Homemakers who want to do something else (36%)	0	32	26	17	21	3	254
Self-employed who want to do something else (13%)	25	0	31	13	25	6	16
Employed in family business but want to do something else (15%)	80	20	0	0	0	0	5
Private sector employees who want to do something else (29%)	17	43	26	0	13	0	23
Government employees who want to do something else (10%)	36	36	18	0	0	9	11
Total (number) column	210	207	170	87	151	23	

Figure 5: Education level of those respondents looking to engage in some activity other than their current activity



Source: Survey of Women's Labour Force Participation and Time Use in Western Sri Lanka 2015.

Figure 6: Education level of those respondents selecting only one option



Source: Survey of Women's Labour Force Participation and Time Use in Western Sri Lanka 2015. Figures in parentheses denote share of women of the total number of women wanting to remain in the current occupation, who accounted for 117 respondents, or 23 per cent of all 500 respondents.

The multiple positive preferences and multiple negative preferences to the six activity options that respondents were presented with are set out in Figure 7 and Figure 8. The information in these two charts can be regarded as score cards, or how many preferential positive votes or negative votes each option scored. It should be kept in mind, though, that full-time homemakers' preferences dominate the first two bars of both charts as they make up the largest group in the entire sample.

Getting a job abroad is clearly the least popular option as it scores the least number of positive votes and the largest number of negative votes. The second least popular is employment in the private sector. Preferences about private sector employment could be driven by the kind of jobs which such employees were already engaged in and education levels. For example, since at least 40 per cent of such employees had secondary education or less (15 per cent had only primary education), and that there was not a single graduate in the sample, it is very likely that the jobs they were engaged in were relatively less skilled, and hence entailed poorer terms and conditions of work. On the other hand, private sector employees with low levels of education probably realized that the jobs that they currently held were the most they could aspire to. Working as a private employee is regarded positively mainly by those already working in the private sector, and those who are unemployed. A public sector job appears to be the least unacceptable (Figure 8). By and large, self-employment appears to be a more desirable activity than engaging in the family business, possibly because of the flexibility and autonomy of decision-making that it offers. The desire for self-employment could also reflect the need to be employed at home.

Figure 7: All activities that women would like to be doing, by current activity

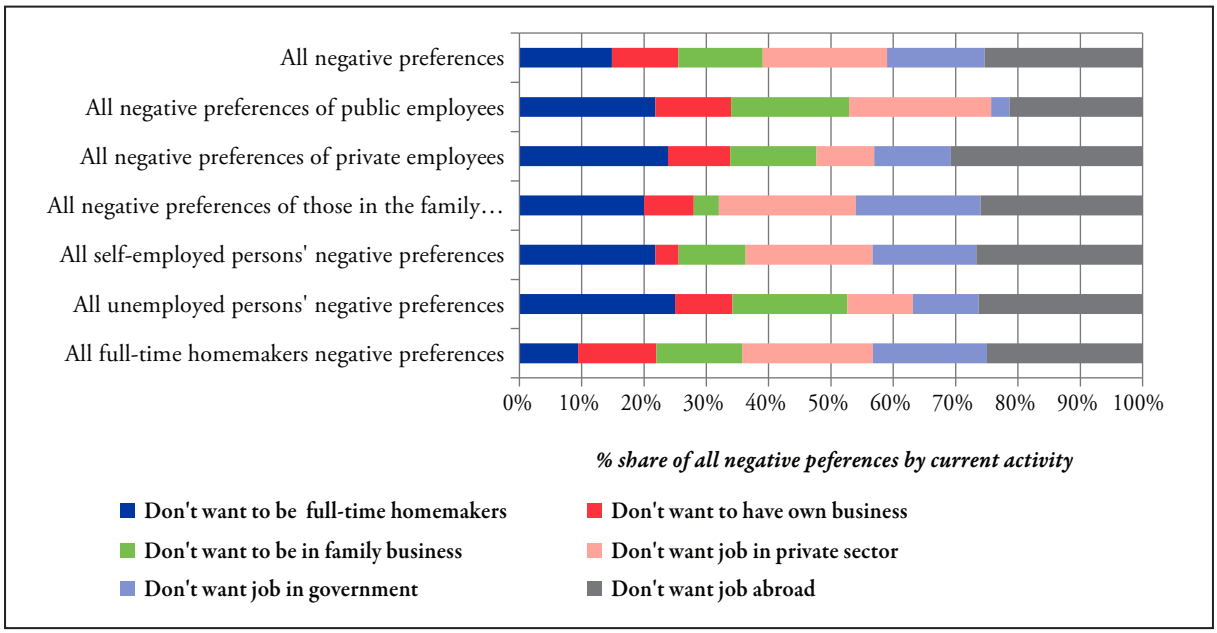
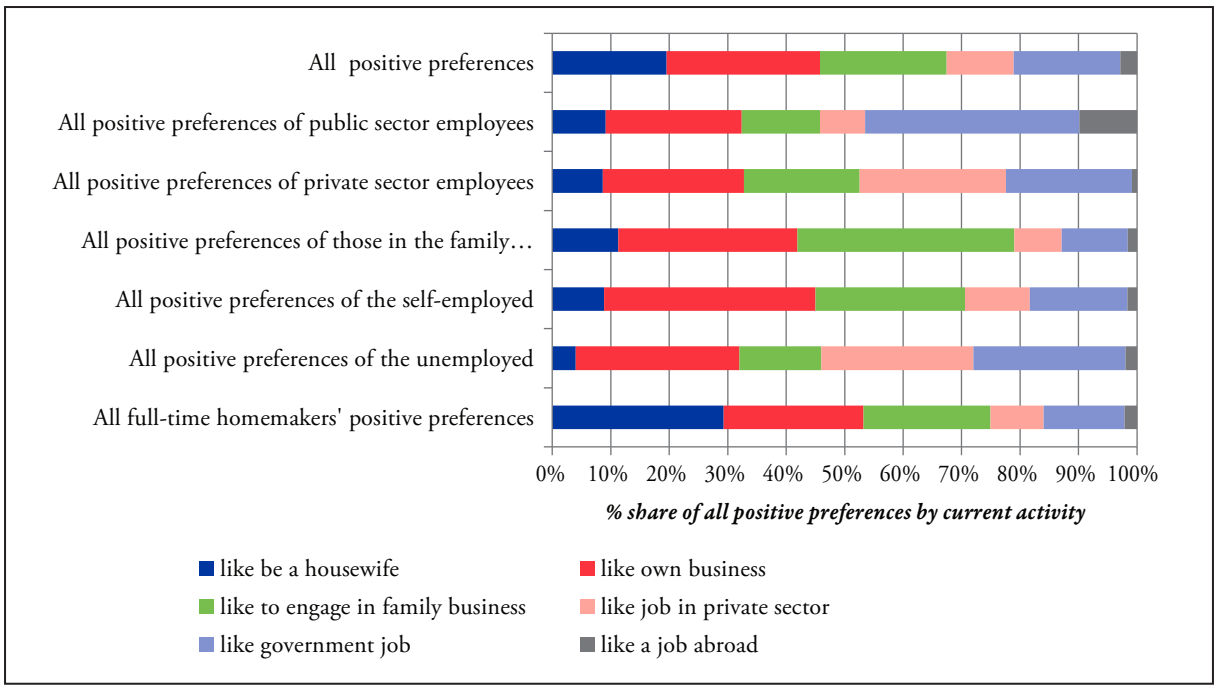


Figure 8: All activities that women would not like to be doing, by current activity



Source: Survey of Women's Labour Force Participation and Time Use in Western Sri Lanka 2015.

In the sections to follow we investigate the perceptions that may have given rise to these activity outcomes and preferences.

2.3 Perceptions of full-time homemakers

The main reasons why full-time homemakers do not undertake paid work are as follows: they like being homemakers, had always wanted to do just that, had by and large not worked before, and had wanted to look after their children themselves in order that the children were provided with the best possible care. These supply side factors appear to be far more important than demand side factors such as the availability of jobs and working conditions.

Of the sample, 56 per cent of respondents were full-time homemakers. But as described in section 2.2, of them, 29 per cent only want to be homemakers. For another third, staying at home is one among several preferred options, while 36 per cent would much rather be doing something else and were homemakers out of necessity rather than choice. Of the positive multiple activity preferences of the entire sample, being a full-time homemaker scored a fifth of all votes. Of all the negative preferences, full-time homemaking scored 15 per cent of all negative votes and became the fourth least acceptable activity outcome.

We attempted to find out why women opt to choose unpaid domestic and care work over paid work by asking them the extent to which they agree with certain statements about being a homemaker. Table 2 sets out these statements along with the share of all homemakers who either strongly agreed with, or simply agreed, with these statements.

As can be seen from the table, the most important reasons why women chose to be full-time homemakers were that they enjoyed doing housework, and reasons associated with having children. Among the latter were that they wanted to spend time with their children; that they and their husbands believed that children would be neglected if they were to work; and, that childcare in any case occupied much of their time leaving little time left to engage in market work as well. The last of these reasons suggests that in not taking up market work, these women were making a constrained choice. More than three fourths of full-time homemakers agreed with these reasons. For women willing to have others look after their children while they worked, the cost of childcare and finding somebody they could trust enough to leave the children with, were important reasons why they did not go to work. In any case, although 55 per cent of full-time homemakers had worked previously, only a fifth of full-time homemakers had stopped working once the children came along. Half of all full-time homemakers agreed that the length of time taken to get to work and back was a reason why they stayed at home. Negative societal attitudes about women going out to work appear to constrain only a third of the sample or less. Two fifths agreed that a woman's place is in the home while a half of the sample agreed that they always wanted to be full-time homemakers, suggesting that these women had never regarded undertaking paid work as something that they would have liked to do.

It is possible that educational attainment is correlated with these views. For example, of women who selected full-time homemaking as an activity preference among other preferences, nearly half had studied only up to the GCE O' Levels, while a quarter had studied up to GCE A' Levels, with only 3 per cent having degrees. In contrast, ten per cent of preferences for a government job were backed by a university degree.

In contrast, demand side factors appear to be considerably less important in the decision to become full-time homemakers with about a third or less than that agreeing that there was gender-based discrimination in hiring practices and the payment of wages.

Table 2: Share of full-time home-makers who agree with, or strongly agree with, the following statements about being home-makers

	%
I enjoy doing housework	92
If I were to work, my children would be neglected	84
I want to spend all the time I can with my children	82
My husband thinks that the children will be neglected/go astray if I also work	77
My husband wanted me to stay at home	76
Child care takes up too much of my time and there is no one else to do it	76
Seeing to children's activities leaves little time to do a job also	76
Cooking and cleaning takes up my time and there is no one else to do it	69
There is backbiting and jealousy and politics in workplaces	69
I don't have anybody whom I can trust to look after my children while I work	64
I can't afford to pay for child care	54
It takes too long to get to work and back	50
Women get harassed in workplaces	49
I have always wanted to be a home maker	46
I think a woman's place is in the home	42
I used to work for an income but stopped and became a housewife after I got married	38
There is no need for me to earn because my husband/children earn enough	38
There aren't suitable jobs in this area	36
Community is not supportive of women who work	32
Employers pay men more for the same work	30
Employers prefer to employ men	27
Salaries and wages are low so it is not worth my while. I may as well stay at home.	23
I used to work for an income but stopped and became a housewife after the children came along	22
I am worried about personal safety going about livelihood activities	22
I am not interested in undertaking income-generating activities	21
Caring for elderly/disabled takes up my time and there is no one else to do it	17
Society looks down on women who work	13
I don't have the necessary education or skills to do income earning activities	8
There is no need for me to work and earn because the money we get from relatives/friends abroad is sufficient	4
There is no need for me to work and earn because relief/handout we get from I/NGOs is sufficient	1

While 55 per cent of full-time homemakers had engaged in paid work previously, the main reason why they gave it up to take up unpaid work full time, was to get married (Table 3). A half of all such women said that they gave up their jobs to get married. A fifth cited having children as the main reason for giving up work. Childcare and the time it takes was also cited as the second most important reason for giving up work by 16 per cent of homemakers who had been employed previously. In contrast, work-related issues such as discrimination and workplace relations appear not to have been important factors in the decision to give up paid work. Together with the factors discussed above as underlying women's desire to be home-makers, these results suggest that for at least a third of them, marriage and motherhood remain sufficiently fulfilling and that by and large, they are not motivated to develop a role for themselves out of the home and in the world of paid work.

The main reasons advanced for giving up employment to become fulltime homemakers are also true of those 21 women who gave up their businesses to become fulltime homemakers instead (Table 4). Nearly a third gave up their businesses to look after children as there was nobody else to do it, while 14 per cent cited the financial risk associated with running a business as the main reason for giving it up. Old age and

poor health together were the main reasons why 40 per cent of former own-account workers gave up their businesses to stay at home.

Table 3: The three main reasons why women who had been employed previously, gave up their jobs to become full-time home-makers

Number of women 152	Main reason %	Second reason %	Third reason %
I stopped working to get married	48	2	1
I stopped working when the children came along	20	5	2
I retired because I was too old.	9	0	0
I was not strong enough, health-wise, to work	6	5	3
Transport became difficult	4	3	3
I didn't like the work	3	5	3
I stopped working to study and get further qualifications	3	0	0
They didn't pay me enough	1	7	6
I stopped working when my parents grew old and I had to look after them	1	4	1
Cooking and cleaning now takes up my time and there is no one else to do it	1	3	2
Child care and seeing to children's activities takes up too much of my time now	1	16	6
I don't have anybody whom I can trust with whom to leave my children	1	2	12
I felt that I was neglecting my children to do work, so I gave it up	1	8	9
My former employer's business folded up	1	1	0
My husband didn't like me to work and kept complaining about my working	1	1	3
I stopped working because I had to look after the grandchildren	0	0	0
I stopped working to start my own business because I wanted to be independent	0	0	0
I started working in the family business	0	0	0
I realized that the woman's place is in the home	0	1	5
I was laid off even though my employer's business continued	0	0	0
They brought in machines/technology to do what I was doing. So they didn't need me any longer.	0	0	0
We had to move, so I lost that job	0	5	6
I was sexually harassed at work	0	0	0
My boss/supervisor/co-workers were nasty to me	0	0	0
My boss/supervisor didn't appreciate my work, didn't give me promotions and increments. So I left.	0	0	0
I was discriminated against because I am a woman, so I left	0	0	0
I was discriminated against because of my religion so I left	0	0	0
I was discriminated against because of my ethnicity so I left	0	0	0
There is now no need for me to work and earn because my husband/children earn enough	0	0	1
There is now no need for me to work and earn because the money we get from relatives/ friends abroad is sufficient	0	0	0
There is now no need for me to work and earn because relief/handout we get from I/ NGOs is sufficient	0	7	9
My in-laws didn't approve of my working and kept grumbling to my husband	0	0	0
Society looks down on women who work	0	0	0
I became worried about personal safety going about livelihood activities	0	9	11

Table 4: The three main reasons why women who had done their own business previously, gave up their businesses to become full-time home-makers

Number of women 21	Main reason %	Second reason %	Third reason %
Child care takes up too much of my time now and there is no one else to do it	29	10	5
Running my own business was too risky, financially.	14	0	10
I became too old to do my business	10	0	0
I was not strong enough, health-wise, to work	10	14	0
I got a good job as an employee in an organization, so I gave up my business	10	0	0
I lost interest	5	0	0
I had to sell my equipment/animals/raw materials because of hardship caused by shocks	5	5	0
There was too much competition from other producers	5	0	0
I got a suitable job as an employee in an organization	5	0	0
There is no need for me to work and earn now because my husband/ children earn enough	5	0	0
We had to relocate, so I lost my market and networks	0	0	0
I couldn't get the new technology which my competitors got	0	5	10
I became worried about personal safety going about livelihood activities	0	0	5
There was too much theft, no security for my investment	0	0	0
I had labour problems – it was very difficult to find reliable workers to do the business	0	0	0
I started working in the family business so gave up my own business	0	0	0
Poor transport facilities	0	5	0
My customers didn't pay me on time and my business folded up	0	5	0
There is no need for me to work and earn now because the money we get from relatives/friends abroad is sufficient	0	0	0
There is no need for me to work and earn now because relief/handout we get from I/NGOs is sufficient	0	0	0
Cooking and cleaning takes up my time now and there is no one else to do it	0	14	10
I didn't have anybody whom I can trust to look after my children while I run my business	0	10	10
I felt that I was neglecting my children to do my business, so I gave it up	0	14	14
Caring for elderly/disabled takes up my time now and there is no one else to do it	0	0	0
My spouse/family, didn't like me to do my own business and were not supportive	0	0	0
I realized that a woman's place is in the home	0	0	0
Society looked down on women who did their own business	0	0	0
Community was not supportive of women being self-employed	0	0	0

Nevertheless, at least a fifth (55 respondents) of full-time homemakers would like to take up paid work as employees in the future. While this proportion itself is rather small, whether they would actually do it was contingent on a number of enabling factors. More than 90 per cent of them agreed that they would take up employment if there was a possibility of working from home, a possibility of working part-time, or if there were suitable jobs in the area (Table 5). Considering taking up work in the future was motivated primarily by a desire to have one's own income in order to be independent (87 per cent). Safe and convenient transport to and from work was required for 85 per cent of those who would like to take up work in the future to actually do so and 84 per cent would be motivated to work as employees if they had a supportive employer and belonged to a community supportive of women working. Three fourths required a supportive husband, trustworthy childcare and better wage rates, but only 31 per cent would take up crèche facilities provided by the employer. The gap between those who agree that they needed childcare that they could trust, and those who would take up crèche facilities provided by employers, suggests that many of these women are not convinced that can trust the crèche facilities provided by employers to look after their children well. Three fifths would take up employment if they were assured that they would not be vulnerable to sexual harassment in the workplace while 56 per cent would take up employment if they did not have to spend so much time taking children to and fro from school, tuition classes and other activities.

Table 5: Share of full-time homemakers who agree with, or strongly agree with, the following statements about taking up work as employees in the future

		%
a.	I would work if there was a possibility of working from home	98
b.	I would work if there was a possibility of working part-time	93
c.	I would work if there were suitable jobs in this area	91
d.	I would like to work to earn my own money and be independent	87
e.	I would work if I had safe and convenient transport to get to and from work	85
f.	I would work if my community was more supportive of women working	84
g.	I would work if I were to find a more understanding and supportive employer	84
h.	I would work if wage rates were better	73
i.	I would work if I could get someone trustworthy to look after my children	71
j.	I would work if my husband were more encouraging and supportive	71
k.	I would work if I was sure I wouldn't get sexually harassed in the workplace	60
l.	I would work if I didn't have to spend so much time taking the children to and from school, tuition classes and other activities	56
m.	I would like to work if my husband helped more with household chores and childcare	45
n.	I would work if my husband didn't spend such long hours at his own job	42
o.	I would like to work if I could get affordable child care	36
p.	I would work if my employer provided a crèche/day care centre	31
q.	I would work if I could find somebody to look after my parents/disabled household members	16

2.4 Perceptions of women running their own businesses

Women running their own businesses account for 15 per cent (75 respondents) of the full sample of 500 women. While more than two thirds were motivated by the desire to earn income as Table 6 shows, enjoying running their own business and recognizing the flexibility it gave them while balancing housework and childcare, appear to be the most widespread motivating factors. Relatively few such women began their own businesses as a result of intervention by the government (7 per cent), a private company (4 per cent) or an I/NGO (0 per cent). Developing a business idea or acquiring a skill appears to have been more powerful motivating factors, while the demonstration effect was an underlying factor only for a fifth, with only 11 per cent of such women doing their own businesses because they inherited a family business.

Table 6: Share of women running their own businesses agreeing with, or strongly agreeing with, the following statements about doing own-account work

	%
I enjoy doing it	93
My family's income was not enough to meet expenses	69
I wanted my own independent source of income under my own control	68
I wanted to have a regular additional income source for the future	79
No other job was available	37
I wanted to do my own business because it gives me flexibility to do my household work and children's work.	92
My husband is unable to go out to work, so I have to earn	17
I had a business idea which led to the commencement	67
I had worked before and I had that experience to start my own business	44
I acquired a skill which encouraged me to start my own business	72
I had financial resources which I wanted to invest	16
I inherited a family-owned business	11
I wanted to start a business which can be handed over to a child for his or her future security	28
I was persuaded by others in the community to start a business	33
A livelihood programme started in the area and I was encouraged to join	12
I was encouraged by the government	7
I was encouraged by a private company	4
I was encouraged by a bi-lateral/multilateral donor	4
I was persuaded by and I/NGO	0
I saw some other person in the community do this, so I decided to follow	21
A relative from abroad persuaded/encouraged me	3

2.5 Perceptions of women working as employees in the public and private sectors

Altogether 20 per cent of the entire sample works as employees, 8 per cent is in the private sector and 12 per cent in the public sector. Almost all public sector employees and 85 per cent of private sector employees agreed that they felt personally fulfilled because they worked (Table 7).

While at least three fourths of such employees felt that their efforts were appreciated at their workplaces, private sector employees appear to feel that their efforts were appreciated more, suggesting that the private sector had a more effective system in place to motivate and reward effort, even though the public sector was not far behind. This is confirmed by the fact that 40 per cent of public sector workers agreed that there was no system in place at their place of work to recognize and reward people who perform well, whereas only 22 per cent of private sector employees concurred. Nevertheless, only about a third agreed that they believe that they are underpaid relative to the work they do.

While more than half of all public and private employees agreed that they would take up opportunities to work more hours than they already do at their jobs, nearly as many public sector employees (55 per cent), and somewhat fewer private sector employees (39 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that they were exhausted all the time, juggling family-related work with work related to their jobs. A little more than two thirds of private sector employees would work part-time if the opportunity presented itself, but the desire to take up part-time work was somewhat lower among public sector employees (45 per cent). Working entailed empowerment within the family in relation to husband and in-laws for more than half of such women, more so for private sector employees than public sector workers. However, costs of leaving current employment on account of sexual harassment at the workplace appear to be higher for public sector workers: two thirds of private sector employees said that they would leave if this were to happen, but 45 per cent of public sector employees agreed that they would respond in a similar manner. Likewise, while half of private sector employees said that they would give up work if they had the financial wherewithal to do so, only 37 per cent of public sector employees said that they would do the same. When asked to stay

and work later than their usual hours, employees appeared to be more stressed by the thought that their children's dinner would get late than by the prospect of their husbands reacting negatively. But in both scenarios, proportionately more public sector workers agreed that these were cause for concern than did private sector workers. Difficulties in getting transport when they were asked to stay later than usual at work was of more concern for private employees than public employees. By and large, women employees appear to be very well aware of the costs and benefits of working for public or private entities and appear to prefer to work as employees rather than stay at home and be full-time homemakers.

Table 7: Share of women working as employees in the public and private sectors agreeing with, or strongly agreeing with, the following statements about working as an employee

	Public sector employee %	Private sector employee %
If I had the financial wherewithal, I would give up working tomorrow	37	51
If there were a possibility of working more hours than I do currently, I would take it up	57	54
If there was a possibility of working part-time, I would take it up	45	71
My work involves very poor working conditions	12	10
I find it very stressful to manage being a good employee while being a good wife and mother	5	12
I am exhausted all the time, juggling my family work with work related to my job	55	39
At my workplace, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs and devoting attention to their family or personal lives.	15	15
At my workplace, employees who put their family or personal needs ahead of their jobs are not looked on favorably.	32	20
I feel I am underpaid relative to the work I do	33	39
I feel underpaid compared to what my colleagues are being paid	5	10
If I am sexually harassed at my workplace, I have to put up with it, or leave my job	8	2
If I am sexually harassed, I will leave my job	45	68
In my workplace, only the boss's favourites get increments and promotions	7	7
In my workplace, only the boss's favourites get opportunities for further training	10	10
Political victimization is very common in my workplace	17	2
I feel that men get all the interesting work	10	5
I feel that men get paid more, even if women are as qualified as they are	13	17
I feel that in my organization, men have a better chance of being promoted	3	12
I feel that in my organization, men have a better chance of getting further training	3	7
In my organization, there is no fair system to recognize and reward people who perform well	40	22
When I am asked occasionally to stay and work later than my usual hours I get stressed wondering how to get back home	30	39
When I am asked occasionally to stay and work later than my usual hours I get stressed wondering how my husband will react when I get back home late	27	20
When I am asked occasionally to stay and work later than my usual hours I get stressed thinking that I will get late to go home and get the dinner and my children will be hungry	43	27
When I am asked occasionally to stay and work later than my usual hours I have to say no because I can't get transport when it is late	27	32
When my work involves interacting with male colleagues, my husband gets paranoid and suspicious	12	5
When I work, I can forget about the problems I have at home	40	56
Because I work and earn my own money, my husband can't always have his way	52	56
Because I work and earn my own money, my in-laws can't push me around.	55	61
At my workplace, I feel that my efforts are appreciated	73	83
Because I work, I feel personally fulfilled	98	85
Total number of employees (number)	58	41

2.6 Working mothers' childcare arrangements

Women running their own businesses, working in the family business or working as employees in the public or private sectors deploy a variety of strategies to have their children looked after in their absence (Table 8). There appears to be heavy reliance on husbands, especially among the self-employed, private sector employees and those employed in the family business, and working women and their husbands probably juggle their working schedules to ensure that their children are not left on their own. Women also call upon their own mothers to help, as well as on their mothers-in-law, as was also noted by Madurawala (2009) in her study of working women and those who had given up work. Only public sector employees appeared to rely also on their maids in the absence of close family members. Relatively few relied on crèches at workplaces or day care centres. The cost and availability of these institutional options may be a discouraging factor.

Table 8: Who looks after the children while she works?

	Self-employed in own business	Employed in family business	Private sector employee	Public sector employee
	%	%	%	%
Her mother	19	7	12	17
Her husband	25	19	24	14
Her mother-in-law	9	26	10	17
Her sister	1	0	2	3
Her neighbour/s	5	4	10	5
Her friend/other relative	3	4	7	3
A crèche at workplace	0	0	2	7
Her father	3	0	10	10
Her father in law	3	11	5	2
Her sister-in law	0	7	0	5
Her maid	0	0	0	12
Her grandparents/Her husband's grandparents	0	0	2	2
A day care centre	1	0	5	2
	100	100	100	100
Total number of respondents	7	2	41	58

2.7 Perceptions of gender roles

In the survey, we asked respondents and their husbands the extent to which they agree with almost identical statements about gender roles. The questionnaire was constructed in this way in order to uncover discrepancies and to build in checks in case individuals tried to present themselves in a more positive light than warranted by the facts. Table 9 sets out in its first five columns the extent to which wives in five categories of activity status either strongly agree or simply agree with the statements, followed by the sixth column which sets out the extent of agreement for all women, and the seventh column which sets out the extent of agreement for all men. The last column sets out the difference between the extent to which all women agree with the statements, and the extent to which all husbands agree with the statements. In contrast, Table 10 sets out the proportions of wives and husbands of different residential sectors strongly agreeing with, or simply agreeing with, these statements.

Consider the information in Table 9 first. What is most remarkable is the extent to which husbands and wives think alike. This is evident from the differential in the last column, which never exceeds 14 percentage points. For example, wives and husbands appear to have similar and traditional perceptions about gender roles. To begin with, at least 85 per cent of both men and women agreed that it was the woman's main responsibility to manage household affairs and see to the children. At least two thirds of men and women agreed that in a household, it was the man's responsibility to earn income, but more men (83 per cent) than women (69 per cent) agreed with this statement. But it is noticeable that only 52 per cent of wives working in the private and public sectors concurred, even though 74 per cent of them agreed that it was the woman's main responsibility to manage household affairs and see to the children. A third of all wives and husbands agreed that husbands would prefer it if they were to wait their meals so that they could eat with them. Sixty nine per cent of men, and 61 per cent of women agreed that children would be neglected and would go astray if the wife were also to work. However, while 76 per cent of full time homemakers agreed with this statement, only 40 per cent of public or private employees, and 46 per cent of women employed in the family business agreed. Nevertheless, since three fourths of homemakers agreed with this statement, these perceptions are likely to keep them back from engaging in work outside the home. And while 72 per cent of husbands and 58 per cent of wives agreed that all things considered, it would be best if in a family the wife were to stay at home, nearly two thirds of men and women (more women than men) agreed that generally speaking, husbands preferred that their wives stayed at home rather than went out to work.[6]

Given these perceptions of traditional gender roles, the fact that women did go out to work was probably for reasons of income, even though husbands appear to be less prepared to tolerate some of the consequences. For example, a total of 92 per cent of wives, and 82 per cent of husbands agreed that the extra income earned by a working wife was useful and helped reduce the pressure on husbands. But almost a third (28 per cent) of all husbands admitted that they would get very annoyed if their wives were to do a job and get late to come home from work, and the identical number of wives agreed that that would indeed happen. And only about half of all husbands and wives agreed that if the wife were doing a job and were to come home late, the husband would start to prepare the dinner.

Perceptions of gender roles are likely to be influenced by individuals' own experience of family life as children and the division of responsibilities between their parents. For example, 86 per cent of women and men agreed that when they were children, mothers did all the housework and childcare, but only around a fifth of all men and women agreed that when they were children, fathers did not do any work around the house and did not look after children. About two thirds of husbands and wives agreed that when they were children, mothers were mainly responsible for disciplining naughty children, whereas 57 per cent of husbands said that if their children did something wrong, it was they themselves who would correct them. But in the next statement, 72 per cent of them agreed that it was mostly their wives who would correct the children. As for the wives themselves, 71 per cent said that they themselves corrected the children while in the next question 58 per cent said that it was most often their husbands who corrected the children. These perceptions suggest that the responsibility for bringing up children was more or less shared between husbands and wives, and this had been mostly the case even in the previous generation. Nevertheless, both husbands and wives overwhelmingly (86 per cent) agreed that mothers knew best how to look after sick children.

Perceptions about the division of household chores suggest that even though only a fifth of all husbands and wives agreed that the husband need not help with household chores and childcare if the wife were a full time homemaker, by and large husbands chipped in with the housework and care work, and that oftentimes, wives did not even have to ask them. For example, at least 86 per cent of wives and husbands agreed that the husband helps with housework if requested; at least 88 per cent of wives and husbands agreed that husbands see what needs to be done and do it without waiting to be asked; and, at least 85 per cent of wives and husbands agreed that husbands took over the household and care work if the wife were sick. In contrast, only 8 per cent of wives said that they had given up asking their husbands to do any

[6] These findings are congruent with some of Sanjeewanie's (2012) findings from her study of gendered dimensions of well-being in Badulla district. She found that men always expected the women to be full time homemakers and take care of children even though women were often more educated than men.

household chore because husbands never did them the way they should while only 5 per cent of husbands said that they have given up doing any because their wives always criticized the way they did them.

Table 10 sets out the proportions of wives and husbands of different residential sectors strongly agreeing with, or simply agreeing with, these statements. There are some interesting differences in the responses by location of residence. For example, while society in the plantations sector is generally considered the most traditional and patriarchal, and the urban sector least so, this is not apparent in the perceptions of husbands and wives towards gender roles in these different communities. It is well-known that historically rural and plantation women have worked in agriculture, and such societies may have not historically accommodated restrictions about women's work that may derive from a very conservative interpretation of more patriarchal gender norms and traditions. In fact, a far smaller proportion of husbands and wives from the plantations agreed that husbands or wives preferred that the wife stay at home rather than go to work, and higher proportions of husbands and wives in the plantations agreed that husbands would begin to prepare dinner if the wives got late from work, and lower percentages of them agreed that the husband would get annoyed if the wife came home late from work. Besides, only about a half of all husbands and wives on estates agreed with the statement that all things considered, husbands preferred if the wife were to stay at home. In rural areas, three fourths of both husbands and wives agreed with this statement. In contrast, 83 per cent of urban husbands agreed with that statement, while a considerably lower 57 per cent of urban wives agreed that all things considered, it would be best if the wife were to stay at home. This suggests that a process of 'gentrification' arising from urbanization maybe encouraging husbands to think it more desirable for women to stay at home. This is despite the fact that, as Gunewardena (2015) finds, urban women in Sri Lanka enjoy an earnings premium relative to rural women, suggesting that good jobs for women may be easier to come by in urban locations with their large service sectors.

An explanation may be found in the theoretical literature. For example, Klasen and Pieters (2012) argue that a U shaped curve exists between economic or educational status and women's labour force participation at a given point in time. Similarly, Goldin (1995) and Mammen and Paxson (2000) suggest that until the service sector expands to provide more socially acceptable white-collar job opportunities for women, women's labour force participation may actually decline with the urbanization process as women move out of agriculture. In Sri Lanka, too, the predominantly female workforce in the manufacturing sector, particularly the garments sector, is drawn from rural areas rather than from the urban areas in which the factories are almost invariably located.

To explore the relationship between status concerns and perceptions of gender roles, we investigated whether the extent to which husbands agreed with the statements varied with their levels of education. We selected education rather than occupation because occupation is almost invariably determined by education, and because while education could be used as a proxy for class, better education can be reasonably expected to mediate traditional conservatism and encourage more progressive views. However, the results set out in Table 11 are disappointing: There appears to be very little variation that is worthy of note in husbands' perception of gender roles according to the highest level of education attained in the descriptive statistics. This motivated us to estimate the relationship between the extent to which the husband agrees with the eight statements used as explanatory variables in the analysis of women's labour force participation described in the next chapter, with several demographic and other factors included in the models as controls. We found no evidence that the husband's level of education was a significant predictor of the extent to which he agreed with these statements. The lack of significance could be due to the small size of sample. On the other hand, the results may suggest that better education is not associated with more progressive views about gender roles.

The evidence suggests that the transformation of Sri Lanka's western region into a megapolis may not bring forth the greater employment of women in market work as expected unless jobs commensurate with individuals' and families' social aspirations are also created and made accessible. If policy makers do not also focus on increasing transport connectivity with the hinterland, rising wage costs in the megapolis may well choke off employment growth in the region.

Table 9: Wives' and husbands' perceptions of gender roles by wives' activity status

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
		Full-time home-maker	Job seeker	Self-employed in own business	Employed in family business	Public or private sector employee (%)	All wives	All husbands	Difference Col. (6)-Col. (7)
1	When I was a child, mothers did all the housework and looked after the children	86	81	83	85	90	86	86	0
2	When I was a child, fathers did not do any housework and did not see to children's needs	19	5	24	26	29	22	20	1
3	When I was a child, mothers were mainly responsible for disciplining naughty children	67	48	69	59	75	67	60	7
4	In a household, the main responsibility of earning money is the man's	76	67	63	81	54	69	83	-14
5	A woman's main responsibility is to manage household affairs and see to the children	87	86	92	96	76	86	85	1
6	The extra income earned by a working wife is useful and helps reduce the pressure on husbands	89	100	99	74	98	92	82	10
7	If the wife also works, the children are likely to be neglected and go astray	73	57	49	48	40	61	69	-8
8	If the wife is a full-time home maker, a husband need not help with household chores and childcare	22	14	15	22	20	20	22	-2
9	I think the mother knows best how to look after sick children	87	71	88	85	85	86	86	0
10	My husband (*I*) helps (*help*) my children with their homework	74	67	75	63	77	74	80	-6
11	My husband (*I*) helps (*help*) me (*my wife*) with house work and care work if I (*she*) ask (*s*)	87	62	89	89	84	86	93	-7
12	My husband *(I)* observes (*observe*) whether I (*she*) need (*needs*) help with house work and care work and helps (*help*) accordingly	87	76	91	89	89	88	93	-5
13	When a household chore needs to be done, my husband *(I)* sees *(see)* it and does (*do*) it. He *(I)* doesn't *(don't)* wait to be asked.	77	62	77	81	85	78	88	-10
14	My husband never does any household chore I ask him to do, the way it should. So I have given up asking him. *(My wife always criticizes the way I do household chores, so I have given up doing them.)*	9	10	5	4	6	8	5	2
15	My husband *(I)* can cook if necessary	62	71	64	63	80	66	72	-6
16	If I am sick, my husband takes over the household chores and look after the children, even though it is difficult with his job. *(When my wife is sick, I take over the household chores and look after the children, even though it is difficult with my job.)*	84	76	88	74	89	85	95	-10
17	My husband likes me to wait to eat with him so that we can eat together *(I would like for my wife to wait her meals for me so that we can eat together)*	34	24	33	33	33	33	35	-1
18	All things considered, it would be best if in a family the wife is able to stay at home	71	48	53	63	28	58	72	-14
19	If I were doing a job and got late to come home from work my husband would be very annoyed and get into a bad mood. *(If my wife were doing a job and got late to come home from work I would be very annoyed.)*	33	19	29	22	14	28	28	0
20	If I was doing a job and I was to get late to come home from work, my husband would start making the dinner. *(If my wife were doing a job and told me that she would be getting late to come home from work I would start making the dinner.)*	39	38	45	44	63	45	50	-5
21	When the children have done something wrong, it is most often I who correct them.	72	43	71	67	74	71	57	14
22	When the children have done something wrong, it is most often my husband (*my wife*) who corrects (*corrects*) them.	57	57	57	59	63	58	72	-14
23	My husband (*my wife*) always wants me to accompany him (*her*) to social occasions involving his (*her*) family/friends	95	90	93	100	93	94	96	-2
24	My husband (*my wife*) is happy to accompany me to social occasions involving my family/friends	98	95	97	100	96	97	96	1
25	I think, generally speaking, that husbands prefer for their wives to stay at home rather than go out to work	76	67	80	70	41	69	63	6
	Total row (%)	56	4	15	5	20	100	100	0
	Total number	278	21	75	27	99	500	500	

Notes: Where the statements in the husband's schedule differ from the wife's, the differences are highlighted by italics in parentheses.

Table 10: Wives' and husbands perceptions of gender roles by sector of residence

		Urban		Semi-urban		Rural		Estates	
		Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands
1.	When I was a child, mothers did all the housework and looked after the children	84	91	81	77	92	89	85	87
2.	When I was a child, fathers did not do any housework and did not see to children's needs	20	16	14	17	25	25	36	26
3.	When I was a child, mothers were mainly responsible for disciplining naughty children	66	54	60	60	69	60	89	79
4.	In a household, the main responsibility of earning money is the man's	68	88	66	76	73	90	68	70
5.	A woman's main responsibility is to manage household affairs and see to the children	76	89	92	87	87	82	87	83
6.	The extra income earned by a working wife is useful and helps reduce the pressure on husbands	98	83	96	90	83	73	100	96
7.	If the wife also works, the children are likely to be neglected and go astray	64	84	49	50	68	76	68	64
8.	If the wife is a full-time home maker, a husband need not help with household chores and childcare	3	11	18	19	32	30	26	28
9.	I think the mother knows best how to look after sick children	90	88	82	85	83	83	100	94
10.	My husband (*I*) helps (*help*) my children with their homework	75	84	72	75	74	83	77	72
11.	My husband (*I*) helps (*help*) me (*my wife*) with house work and care work if I (*she*) ask (*s*)	90	98	84	94	87	95	74	70
12.	My husband *(I)* observes (*observe*) whether I (*she*) need (*needs*) help with house work and care work and helps (*help*) accordingly	90	95	89	94	87	93	83	83
13.	When a household chore needs to be done, my husband *(I)* sees *(see)* it and does (*do*) it. He *(I)* doesn't *(don't)* wait to be asked.	73	79	77	91	82	92	83	87
14.	My husband never does any household chore I ask him to do, the way it should. So I have given up asking him. *(My wife always criticizes the way I do household chores, so I have given up doing them.)*	11	5	6	5	6	4	15	11
15.	My husband *(I)* can cook if necessary	54	58	66	68	68	78	94	96
16.	If I am sick, my husband takes over the household chores and look after the children, even though it is difficult with his job. *(When my wife is sick, I take over the household chores and look after the children, even though it is difficult with my job.)*	91	95	77	94	84	96	89	96
17.	My husband likes me to wait to eat with him so that we can eat together *(I would like for my wife to wait her meals for me so that we can eat together)*	36	33	29	34	36	35	28	40
18.	All things considered, it would be best if in a family the wife is able to stay at home	57	83	47	66	73	75	43	51
19.	If I were doing a job and got late to come home from work my husband would be very annoyed and get into a bad mood. *(If my wife were doing a job and got late to come home from work I would be very annoyed.)*	37	30	12	17	34	37	23	21
20.	If I was doing a job and I was to get late to come home from work, my husband would start making the dinner. *(If my wife were doing a job and told me that she would be getting late to come home from work I would start making the dinner.)*	29	34	43	43	51	58	74	85
21.	When the children have done something wrong, it is most often I who correct them.	70	40	57	50	78	71	85	72
22.	When the children have done something wrong, it is most often my husband (*my wife*) who corrects (*corrects*) them.	39	74	62	62	65	77	72	74
23.	My husband (*my wife*) always wants me to accompany him (*her*) to social occasions involving his (*her*) family/friends	95	98	94	98	94	95	91	89
24.	My husband (*my wife*) is happy to accompany me to social occasions involving my family/friends	98	95	98	99	97	96	94	94
25.	I think, generally speaking, that husbands prefer for their wives to stay at home rather than go out to work	80	70	62	63	72	62	53	47
	Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
	Total number	**129**		**145**		**179**		**47**	

Notes: Where the statements in the husband's schedule differ from the wife's, the differences are highlighted by italics in parentheses.

Table 11: Husbands' perceptions of gender roles by husbands' educational attainment

		Primary or less	Secondary educated	GCE O' Levels	GCE A' Levels	Degree and above
1.	When I was a child, mothers did all the housework and looked after the children	88	87	86	85	85
2.	When I was a child, fathers did not do any housework and did not see to children's needs	27	29	19	17	11
3.	When I was a child, mothers were mainly responsible for disciplining naughty children	82	61	58	57	63
4.	In a household, the main responsibility of earning money is the man's	82	84	83	84	81
5.	A woman's main responsibility is to manage household affairs and see to the children	88	89	83	86	85
6.	The extra income earned by a working wife is useful and helps reduce the pressure on husbands	91	78	84	79	85
7.	If the wife also works, the children are likely to be neglected and go astray	70	73	74	62	56
8.	If the wife is a full-time home maker, a husband need not help with household chores and childcare	36	20	24	18	11
9.	I think the mother knows best how to look after sick children	97	93	83	84	81
10.	I help my children with their homework	67	72	84	80	89
11.	I help my wife with house work and care work if she asks	76	93	95	92	100
12.	I observe whether my wife needs help with house work and care work and help accordingly	82	94	96	91	93
13.	When a household chore needs to be done I see it and do it. I don't wait to be asked.	82	86	90	87	93
14.	My wife always criticizes the way I do household chores, so I have given up doing them.	15	6	5	2	7
15.	I can cook if necessary	82	70	69	72	81
16.	When my wife is sick, I take over the household chores and look after the children, even though it is difficult with my job.	94	94	96	95	93
17.	I would like for my wife to wait her meals for me so that we can eat together.	30	37	32	40	33
18.	All things considered, it would be best if in a family the wife is able to stay at home	58	71	77	71	59
19.	If my wife were doing a job and got late to come home from work I would be very annoyed.	15	33	28	30	22
20.	If my wife were doing a job and told me that she would be getting late to come home from work I would start making the dinner.	64	55	48	48	48
21.	When the children have done something wrong, it is most often I who correct them.	70	59	52	60	59
22.	When the children have done something wrong, it is most often my wife who corrects them.	85	67	73	71	63
23.	My wife always wants me to accompany her to social occasions involving her family/friends	85	98	99	93	100
24.	My wife is happy to accompany me to social occasions involving my family/friends	88	98	97	96	100
25.	I think, generally speaking, that husbands prefer for their wives to stay at home rather than go out to work	55	60	66	64	56
	Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
	Total (number)	33	83	229	128	27

2.8 How fair is the division of household chores?

Table 12 tabulates the responses of husbands and wives to the question how fair they think that the division of household chores in their home is, between husbands and wives. What is remarkable about the results is the extent to which wives believe that the division is unfair by them, and that husbands also emphatically agree. Observe that none of the wives perceive the division as being very unfair to their husbands, while only 2 per cent think that it is very unfair to (the wives) themselves. The majority (77 per cent), however, thinks that the division of household chores unfair by the wife, and 85 per cent of husbands admit that this is indeed the case. The sense of unfairness in the division of household chores is felt most acutely by women employed in the public sector (91 percent) and in the family business (89 per cent), and this appears to be recognized and accepted by their husbands (95 per cent and 92 per cent respectively). The most remarkable difference between the perceptions of husbands and wives on the extent on fairness in the division of household chores, however, is that not a single husband thinks that the division of household chores is very unfair to himself, while a little more than one per cent thinks that it is very unfair to the wife.

Table 12: Wives' and husbands' perceptions about the division of household chores by wife's activity status

Wife's activity status	Wife's perception of division of household chores				
	Very unfair to me	Unfair to me	Fair to both of us	Unfair to my husband	Very unfair to my husband
Full-time housewife (56%)	2.52	74.10	18.71	4.68	
Unemployed (4%)	14.29	71.43	9.52	4.76	
Self-employed in own business (15%)	0.00	73.33	22.67	4.00	
Employed in family business (5%)	0.00	88.89	11.11	0.00	
Private Employee (8%)	2.44	73.17	21.95	2.44	
Public Employee (12%)	0.00	91.38	8.62	0.00	
Total (%)	2.20	76.60	17.60	3.60	
Total (number)	11	383	88	18	
Wife's activity status	**Husband's perception of division of household chores**				
	Very unfair to me	Unfair to me	Fair to both of us	Unfair to my wife	Very unfair to my wife
Full-time housewife (56%)		0.36	16.85	81.36	1.43
Unemployed (4%)		0	9.52	90.48	0
Self-employed in own business (15%)		1.37	16.44	82.19	0
Employed in family business (5%)		0	3.85	92.31	3.85
Private Employee (8%)		0	7.32	90.24	2.44
Public Employee (12%)		0	5	95	0
Total		0.40	13.6	84.8	1.2
Total (number)		2	68	424	6

Table 13 which tabulates this information by sector of residence suggests that the division of household chores is seen as least unfair to the wife in the urban sector. A total of 62 per cent of such women perceive the division as being unfair by them, while 76 per cent of the husbands of such women agree that the division of household chores is unfair by their wives. In contrast, 79 per cent of peri-urban, rural and estate wives perceive the division of household chores as being unfair by the wives, while at least 84 per cent of their husbands agree with them.

Table 13: Wives' and husbands' perceptions about the division of household chores by sector of residence

Sector of residences	Wife's perception of division of household chores				
	Very unfair to me	Unfair to me	Fair to both of us	Unfair to my husband	Very unfair to my husband
Urban (26%)	1.55	62.02	30.23	6.20	
Semi-urban (29%)	5.52	79.31	13.79	1.38	
Rural (36%)	0.56	79.33	15.64	4.47	
Estates (9%)	5.52	79.31	13.79	1.38	
Total (%)	2.20	76.60	17.60	3.60	
Total (number)	11	383	88	18	
	Husband's perception of division of household chores				
	Very unfair to me	Unfair to me	Fair to both of us	Unfair to my wife	Very unfair to my wife
Urban (26%)		0.00	24.03	75.97	0.00
Semi-urban (29%)		0.69	8.28	88.28	2.76
Rural (36%)		0.56	13.97	84.36	1.12
Estates (9%)		0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00
Total (%)		0.40	13.60	84.80	1.20
Total (number)		2	68	424	6

2.9 How wives and husbands spend their time

In this section we summarize and discuss some of the main findings of this study, that is the way wives and husbands actually spend their time. Time Diary Schedules for both wife and husband obtained the information separately, from both partners, for a typical weekday as well as for a Sunday. However, for this analysis we are more concerned about whether the time a woman has to spend on unpaid activities during a typical working day precludes her being able to take up paid employment as well. Therefore, we only analyze the time use data for a typical weekday. The Time Diary Schedules also covered simultaneous activities. However, since there is as yet no theoretically and practically satisfactory approach to measure time spent on these activities (see United Nations 2005), we only present the time spent on the primary activity in this report which may under-estimate the actual time spent on a task. But space constraints preclude our presenting time use on secondary and tertiary activities that are carried out simultaneously as well. Given the economic and cultural similarities between India and Sri Lanka, the time spent was classified according to the three digit system that Hirway (2000) used for the Indian Time Use Survey.

Table 14 presents the average time spent in hours by wives' and their share of total household time spent on three-digit level activities by the wife's activity status. If the time spent on certain activities, such as that spent on indoor and outdoor sports participation seems excessive, it needs to be remembered that this time is likely to have been spent by only a small fraction of the sample. Other activities such as attending weddings, funerals, births and other celebrations are also ad hoc and would not have been engaged in by the majority in the sample.

While the information in Table 14 is detailed and extensive, the large differentials in the time spent by men and women on market-oriented production activities and unpaid work such as household maintenance and care work are glaringly obvious. Women's share of time spent on market-oriented production activities in primary activities is for the most part negligible other than for activities such as fetching of fruits, vegetables, berries, mushrooms etc. where self-employed women account for nearly all and women working

in the family business account for half, of total time spent by husband and wife on the activity. There is no record of any woman in the sample spending any time on activities relating to either mining, quarrying, digging, cutting or construction-related activities with the exception of two fifths of household time on other activities related to mining spent by a woman/women working in the family business. Women engaged in business appear to account for the larger part of household time spent on food processing and cooking for sale, the manufacturing of textiles and garments and handicrafts, activities that are similar to those that women have historically carried out, within and without the household. The short time spent on average by full-time homemakers is probably related to sewing for own consumption. Working women in all activity outcomes appear to have spent time buying and selling goods in the formal sector, with self-employed women accounting for two thirds of household time spent on such activities. Public and private sector employees on average spend up to a half of household time spent on activities related to providing private or government services. Providing petty services and professional services such as giving private tuition also appear to be means of livelihood accounting for between a tenth and a half of household time spent on such activities.

Table 14: Average number of hours spent on a weekday and average share of total household time spent on activities classified at 3-digit level, by the economic activity status of the principal female respondent

	Full-time homemaker		Unemployed		Own business		Family business		Private employee		Public employee	
	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %
Crop farming, kitchen gardening, etc.												
Ploughing, preparing land, cleaning of land	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sowing, planting, transplanting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Application of manure, fertilizer, pesticides and watering, preparing organic manure, harvesting, threshing, picking, winnowing	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Weeding	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.75	40.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel to work	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.92	40.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Animal husbandry												
Tending animals – cleaning, washing shed, feeding, watering, preparation of feed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.75	20.95	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Milking and processing of milk collecting, storing of poultry products	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00	37.49	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel to work	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fishing, forestry, horticulture, gardening												
Planting, tending, processing of trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.22	74.82	4.31	58.48
Collecting, storing & stocking of fruits, etc	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.33	100.00	2.06	78.63
Wood cutting, chopping & stocking firewood	0.46	51.69	0.42	45.65	0.54	65.06	0.00	0.00	0.64	67.37	1.00	100.00

	Full-time homemaker		Unemployed		Own business		Family business		Private employee		Public employee	
	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %
Fish farming, cleaning sea-bed, feeding fish catching fish, gathering other aquatic life	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Care of house plants, indoor and outdoor garden work	0.74	41.57	1.44	100.00	1.23	62.76	0.42	31.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Flower gardening – landscaping, maintenance, cutting, collecting, storing	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.33	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sale and purchase related activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel to the work	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.17	86.67	1.17	66.48
Fetching fruits, water, plants, etc. storing and hunting												
Fetching of fruits, vegetables, berries, mushrooms etc. edible goods	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.42	93.19	4.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Processing and storage												
Milling, husking, pounding	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.67	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel to the work	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mining, quarrying, digging, cutting, etc.												
Mining / digging / quarrying of stone, slabs, breaking of stones for construction of building road, bridges, etc.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Digging out clay, gravel and sand	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Digging out minerals – major and minor	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Any other related activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	41.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sale and purchase related activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel to the work	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Construction activities												
Building & construction of dwelling (laying bricks, plastering, thatching, bamboo work, roofing) and maintenance and repairing of dwelling	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Construction of public works / common infrastructure – roads, buildings, bridges, etc.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Any other activity related	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel to the work	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

	Full-time homemaker		Unemployed		Own business		Family business		Private employee		Public employee	
	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %
Manufacturing activities												
Food processing and cooking for sale – making pickles, spices and other products; canning fruits, jams & jellies; banking; beverage preparation; selling readymade food, etc.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.68	84.99	2.17	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Butchering, curing, processing, drying, storing, etc. of meat, fish, etc.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Manufacturing of textiles – spinning, weaving, processing of textiles; knitting, sewing, garment making of cotton, wool and other materials	0.70	18.47	1.83	100.00	4.36	96.04	1.92	51.20	7.70	100.00	0.00	0.00
Making handicrafts, pottery, printing and other crafts made primarily with hands (wood based, leather based crafts, embroidery work, etc.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.80	71.70	1.78	24.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Assembling machines, equipment and other products	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Production related work in large and small factories in different industries – as production workers, maintenance workers paid trainees and apprentices, sales administration and activities management	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sale and purchase activity	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.17	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel for the work	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.57	81.43	0.00	0.00	2.07	100.00	0.00	0.00
Trade, business and services												
Buying and selling goods – such as capital goods, intermediate goods, consumer durable, and consumer goods – in the organized and formal sectors.	0.36	4.12	0.00	0.00	5.33	66.46	2.00	19.98	0.00	0.00	2.21	24.56
Petty trading, street and door to door vending, hawking shoe cleaning, etc.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Transporting goods in trucks, tempos and motor vehicles	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Transport of passengers by motorized and non-motorized vehicles	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Services in government and semi-government organizations (salaried)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.27	3.40	0.00	0.00	2.96	31.29	4.78	52.47
Services in private organizations (salaried)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.37	56.53	0.00	0.00

	Full-time homemaker		Unemployed		Own business		Family business		Private employee		Public employee	
	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %
Petty services: domestic servants, sweepers, washers, priest, cobbler, gardener, massaging, prostitution, (wages) watching and guarding	0.06	0.72	0.00	0.00	0.78	10.51	0.00	0.00	3.63	43.68	3.24	48.36
Professional services: medical and educational services (private tuition, non-formal teaching, etc.) financial services and management and technical consultancy services	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.67	77.75	0.00	0.00	7.50	50.00	6.69	77.61
Professional services: computer services, xerox/ photocopying services, beauty parlors, hair cutting saloons, etc.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.50	36.60	0.00	0.00	12.33	100.00	0.00	0.00
Technical services: plumbing, electrical and electronic repair and maintenance and other related services	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.11	20.31
Others	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel to work	0.02	1.01	0.00	0.00	0.13	5.75	0.24	9.92	0.83	35.93	1.34	48.73
Household maintenance, management and shopping for own household												
Cooking food items, beverages and serving	3.31	94.30	3.57	93.21	3.34	93.04	3.48	95.34	2.44	83.56	2.73	88.64
Cleaning and upkeep of dwelling and surroundings	2.17	89.30	1.81	96.79	1.56	81.25	1.94	94.17	0.69	62.16	1.02	61.82
Cleaning of utensils	0.67	98.53	0.67	100.00	0.77	100.00	0.72	100.00	0.44	100.00	0.62	100.00
Care of textiles: sorting, mending, washing, ironing and ordering clothes	1.11	93.28	0.89	93.68	1.05	88.98	0.89	92.71	0.77	89.53	0.64	79.01
Shopping for goods and non-personal services; capital goods, household appliances, equipment, food and various household supplies	0.69	58.97	0.00	0.00	0.48	34.78	0.00	0.00	0.08	12.12	0.00	0.00
Household management: planning, supervising, paying bills, etc.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.17	100.00	2.50	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Do-it-yourself home improvements and maintenance, installation, servicing and repair of personal and household goods	1.71	40.24	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel related to household maintenance, management and shopping	0.71	57.72	0.67	44.67	0.54	36.73	0.28	41.79	0.44	38.94	0.11	8.15

	Full-time homemaker		Unemployed		Own business		Family business		Private employee		Public employee	
	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %
Household maintenance, management and shopping not elsewhere classified	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Care for children, the sick, elderly and disabled for own household												
Physical care of children: washing, dressing, feeding	2.89	90.60	2.95	87.28	1.83	81.33	2.11	90.17	1.36	91.28	1.45	57.09
Teaching, training and instruction of own children	1.33	85.81	1.50	73.53	1.37	81.07	1.21	77.56	0.79	83.16	0.87	66.92
Accompanying children to places: school, sports, lessons, etc. /PHC/doctor	1.42	87.12	0.81	82.65	0.66	80.49	1.63	83.16	1.89	70.79	0.53	49.07
Physical care of sick, disabled, elderly household members; washing, dressing, feeding, helping	0.82	91.11	0.56	100.00	1.11	94.87	1.50	100.00	0.61	100.00	1.33	100.00
Travel related to care of children	0.63	85.14	0.64	85.33	0.58	85.29	0.75	100.00	0.39	86.67	0.30	63.83
Travel related to care of adults and others	0.33	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Taking care of guests / visitors	0.17	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Any other activity not mentioned above	1.86	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.42	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

	Full-time homemaker		Unemployed		Own business		Family business		Private employee		Public employee	
	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %
Community services and help to other households												
Community organized constructions and repairs; buildings, roads, dams, wells, ponds, etc. community assets	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.75	58.33
Volunteering with/for an organization (which does not involve working directly for individuals)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Participation in meetings of local and informal groups / caste, tribes, professional associations, union, fraternal and political organizations	3.17	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Informal help to other households	2.17	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Community services not elsewhere classified	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel related to community services	0.50	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	100.00	0.67	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.67	79.76
Learning												
Studies, homework and course review related to general education	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.83	45.75
Other training / education	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Social and cultural activites, mass media, etc.												
Participating in social events: wedding, funerals, births and other celebrations	2.83	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Participating in religious activities: religious ceremonies, practices, etc.	0.93	50.82	0.00	0.00	0.83	100.00	1.28	79.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Socializing at home and outside the home	0.59	32.78	2.75	100.00	0.33	29.73	0.33	33.00	0.60	28.99	0.39	23.35
Arts, making music hobbies and related courses;	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Indoor and outdoor sports participation and related courses	2.33	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Games and other past-time activities	1.33	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

	Full-time homemaker		Unemployed		Own business		Family business		Private employee		Public employee	
	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %	Hours spent	Time share %
Reading other than newspaper and magazines	0.93	64.58	0.75	60.00	0.96	76.80	1.50	61.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watching televisions and video	2.37	54.48	2.53	56.10	2.10	49.18	1.93	53.61	1.24	36.90	1.37	45.51
Listening to music / radio	0.93	58.86	0.72	64.86	0.58	48.74	0.28	35.90	0.67	67.00	0.00	0.00
Accessing information by computing	0.61	23.37	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Visiting library	1.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Reading newspaper and magazine	0.54	46.96	1.00	100.00	0.39	32.23	0.42	42.00	0.22	33.33	0.22	26.51
Travel related to social, cultural and recreational activities, social cultural and recreational activities not elsewhere classified, mass media use and entertainment	0.73	62.93	1.00	100.00	0.47	60.26	0.33	55.00	0.58	41.13	0.27	21.60
Personal care and self-maintenance												
Sleep and related activities	7.60	49.38	7.75	50.42	6.82	47.00	7.04	48.29	6.67	45.62	6.86	46.92
Eating and drinking	1.51	43.14	1.37	41.14	1.34	41.23	1.26	40.38	1.65	44.00	1.47	44.95
Personal hygiene and health	0.84	50.30	0.90	55.90	0.80	49.08	0.86	49.71	0.83	45.36	0.86	50.29
Walking, exercise, running, jogging, yoga, etc	0.14	11.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Receiving medical and personal care from professional	1.67	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.67	100.00	1.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Receiving medical and personal care from household members	0.83	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Talking, gossiping and quarreling	0.65	59.63	0.92	87.62	0.38	46.34	0.00	0.00	0.67	42.14	0.13	14.77
Doing nothing, rest and relaxation	1.54	61.60	2.00	82.99	0.90	43.48	0.75	36.59	0.64	48.12	0.57	34.55
Individual religious practices and meditation	0.66	82.50	0.70	75.27	0.51	70.83	0.64	77.11	0.29	42.03	0.64	84.21
Other activities	0.15	20.55	0.13	19.12	0.11	18.97	0.09	16.07	0.44	46.81	0.56	57.14
Travel related to personal care and self-maintenance	0.89	41.40	1.50	66.67	0.50	27.32	2.67	100.00	0.13	14.44	0.00	0.00

We take a closer look at the two main components of unpaid work in Table 15 and Table 16. The tables make clear the extent to which in Sri Lanka, too, women shoulder much of the burden of household maintenance and care work, which are all unpaid. As Table 15 shows they spend on average around three hours each day cooking and serving whereas men spend twenty minutes a day at the most. Women also do almost all the washing up. Wives who are private or public employees spend slightly less time on cooking. Two thirds of the time spent in the household on cleaning, and upkeep of dwelling and surroundings is also carried out by them. They account for at least three fourths of household time devoted to the washing and caring of clothes and spend at least 45 minutes on average on this task on a working day. Here, too, public and private employees spend slightly less time on these tasks than women engaged in other activities, but the bulk of such work in the household is carried out by them. It is only in the shopping for goods, household appliances, food and various household supplies that men contribute substantial time and account for between three fifths and nine tenths of the time spent on such tasks, other than in the case of homemakers' husbands who account for two fifths of the time spent on household shopping.

Table 15: Time spent by wives and husbands on household maintenance, management and shopping for own household by wife's activity status (hours)

	Full-time homemaker		Un-employed		Self employed		Family business		Private employee		Public employee	
	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband
Cooking food items, beverages and serving	3.31	0.20	3.57	0.26	3.34	0.25	3.48	0.17	2.44	0.48	2.73	0.35
Cleaning and upkeep of dwelling and surroundings	2.17	0.26	1.81	0.06	1.56	0.36	1.94	0.12	0.69	0.42	1.02	0.63
Cleaning of utensils	0.67	0.01	0.67	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.72	0.00	0.44	0.00	0.62	0.00
Care of textiles: sorting, mending, washing, ironing and ordering clothes and linen	1.11	0.08	0.89	0.06	1.05	0.13	0.89	0.07	0.77	0.09	0.64	0.17
Shopping for goods and non-personal services; capital goods, household appliances, equipment, food and various household supplies	0.69	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.48	0.90	0.00	1.33	0.08	0.58	0.00	0.33
Household management: planning, supervising, paying bills, etc.	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	5.17	0.00	2.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Do-it-yourself home improvements and maintenance, installation, servicing and repair of personal and household goods	1.71	2.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.00
Travel related to household maintenance, management and shopping	0.71	0.52	0.67	0.83	0.54	0.93	0.28	0.39	0.44	0.69	0.11	1.24
Household maintenance, management and shopping not elsewhere classified	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Table 16 shows the division of household time spent on care work. The five panels of Figure 2.8 illustrate the allocation of time on tasks related to household maintenance and care between wives and husbands in five of the six activity outcomes. Women spent between two to three hours a day washing, dressing and feeding children and account for more than 80 per cent of household time devoted to these tasks other than public employees who account for 60 per cent of the time spent on such activities. They also account for three fourths of the time spent on teaching, training and instructing their children, spending between one to two hours a day on such activities except in the case of public employees who account for three fifths of the time spent by both husband and wife on such activities. Women also account for more than two thirds of the time spent accompanying children to places and travel related to the care of children taking up roughly two hours every day; public employees account for between half and three fifths of the time spent

on this activity in their households. Women across all activity outcomes provide all the physical care of sick, disabled, and elderly household members, washing, dressing, feeding and helping them.[7]

Table 16: Time spent by wives and husbands on care for children, the sick, the elderly and disabled for own household by wife's activity status (hours)

	Full-time homemaker		Un-employed		Self employed		Family business		Private employee		Public employee	
	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband
Physical care of children: washing, dressing, feeding	2.89	0.30	2.95	0.43	1.83	0.42	2.11	0.23	1.36	0.13	1.45	1.09
Teaching, training and instruction of own children	1.33	0.22	1.50	0.54	1.37	0.32	1.21	0.35	0.79	0.16	0.87	0.43
Accompanying children to places: school, sports, lessons, etc. /PHC/doctor	1.42	0.21	0.81	0.17	0.66	0.16	1.63	0.33	1.89	0.78	0.53	0.55
Physical care of sick, disabled, elderly household members; washing, dressing, feeding, helping	0.82	0.08	0.56	0.00	1.11	0.06	1.50	0.00	0.61	0.00	1.33	0.00
Travel related to care of children	0.63	0.11	0.64	0.11	0.58	0.10	0.75	0.00	0.39	0.06	0.30	0.17
Travel related to care of adults and others	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.17	0.00	0.58
Taking care of guests / visitors	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Any other activity not mentioned above	1.86	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.42	0.00	0.00	1.33	0.00	0.00

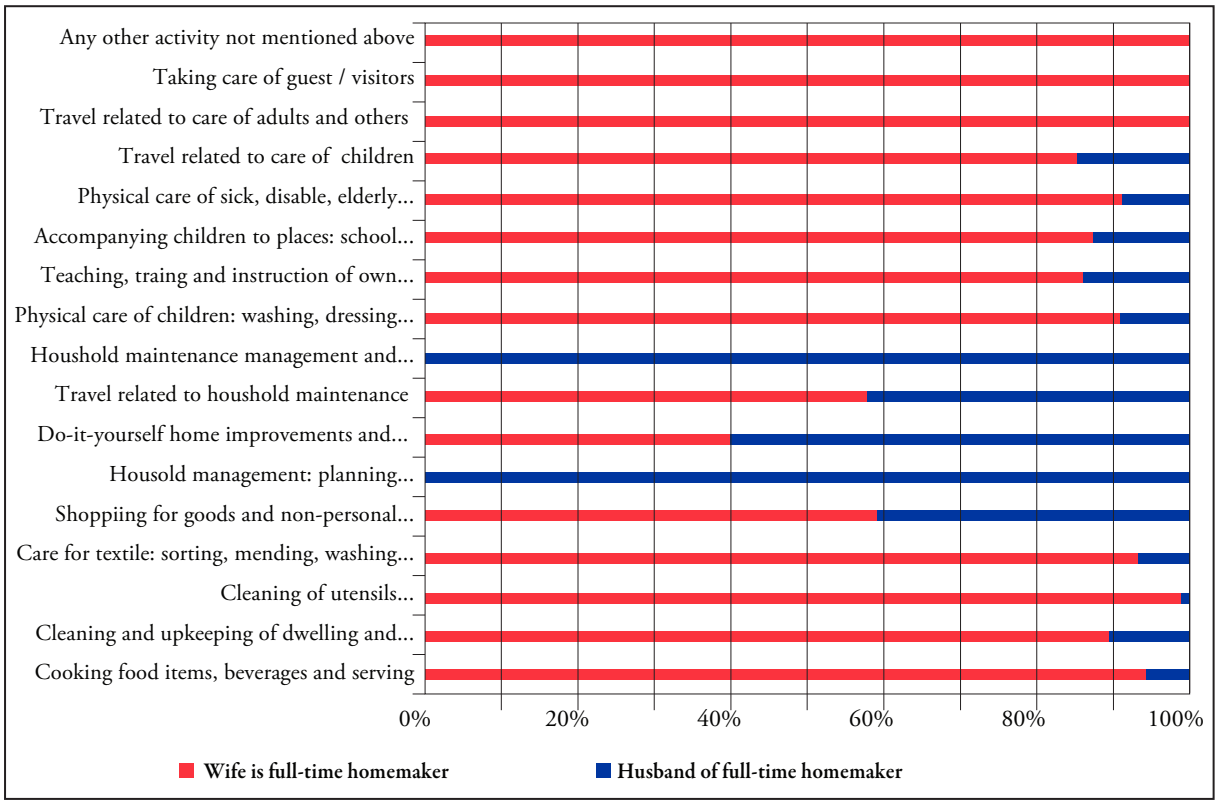
Homemakers and self-employed wives also shouldered the bulk of community services and help to other households, accounting for 75 per cent of the household's total. Public sector employees shouldered considerably less of the burden than did women engaged in other activities. For example, they accounted for a little more than half the time spent by the household on such activities while wives employed in the family business shouldered the entire burden.

It is worth noting, however, that all women spend almost as much time on personal care and self-maintenance as do their husbands (Table 14). Generally husbands sleep for about 20 minutes longer, but both husbands and wives on average clocked in a healthy 7 hours of sleep a day. Women spent hardly any time on physical exercise, but husbands of homemakers and employees appear to spend at least an hour walking or exercising, and husbands of others spent about ten minutes doing the same. Generally men spent more time than women relaxing and doing nothing, even though homemakers were able to spend almost as much time as men doing the same (at least an hour) while self-employed women and women working in the family business were able to spend at least 40 minutes doing the same. On average, husbands spent at least twice as much time as their wives talking, quarreling or gossiping. Public sector employees had the least time for such activity. However, women spent more time on individual religious practices than men did although private employees and their husbands spent about 10 minutes each, while home makers and those running their own businesses or working in the family business spent at least half an hour.

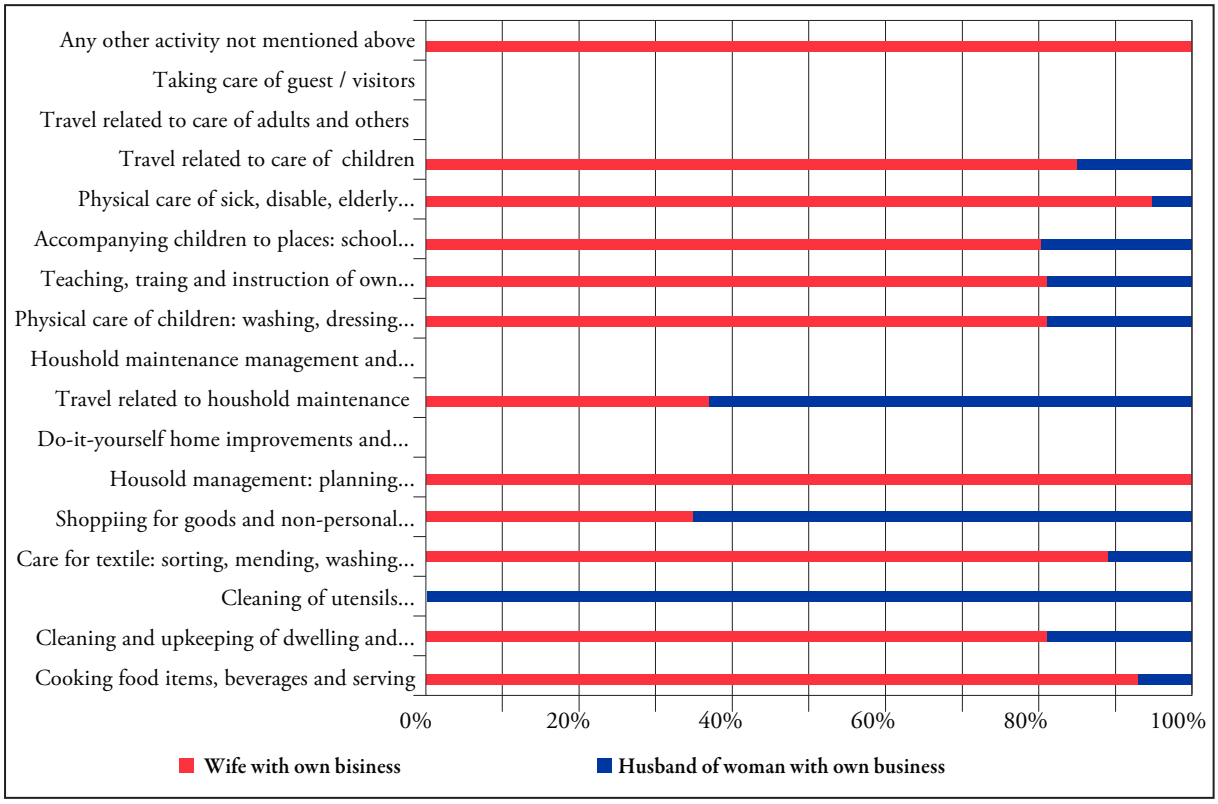
[7] The results are congruent with Satharasinghe's (1999) findings. He found that an employed wife on average spends 4.8 hours on house work, 3.2 hours on childcare 7.9 hours on family work and 8.0 hours on paid work totaling 15.9 hours per day whereas the husband's total work time (paid work as well as housework) comes to 13.8 hours.

Figure 9: Average share of time spent by women and their husbands, on three-digit level activities related to household maintenance and care, by women's activity status

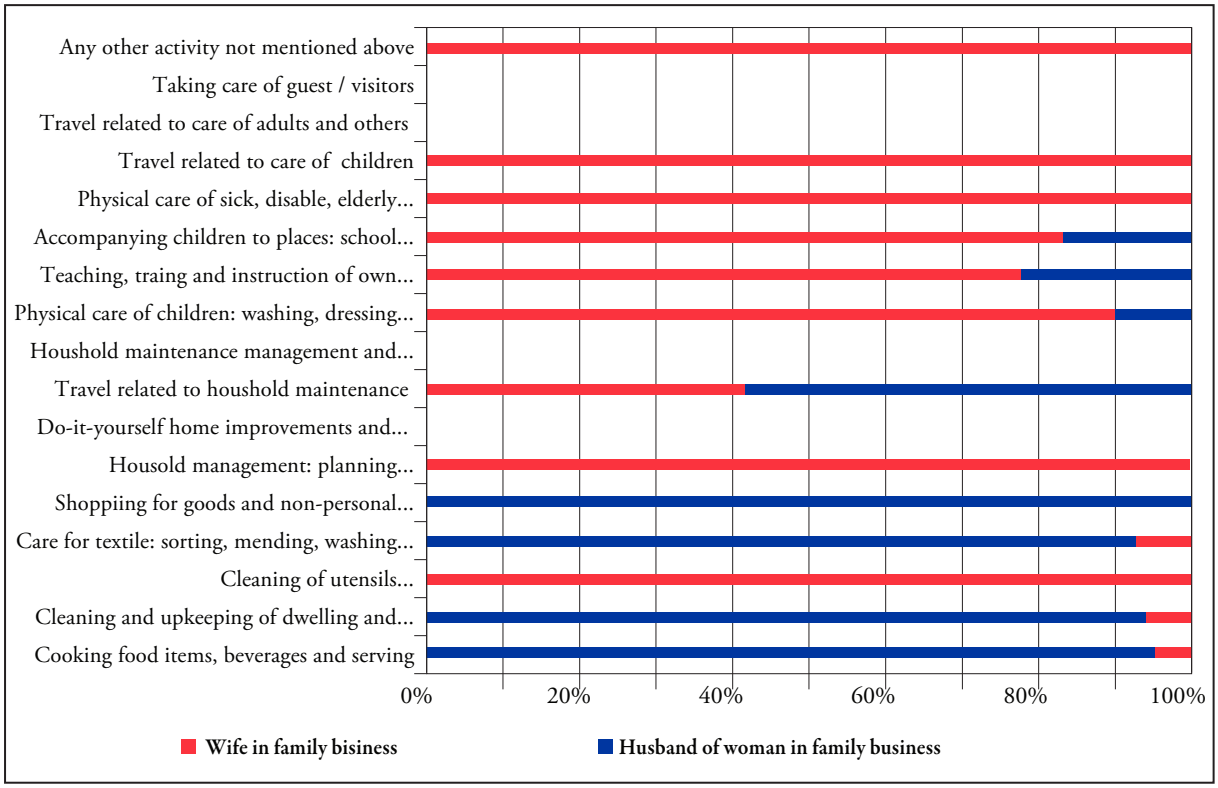
a. Wife is a full time homemaker



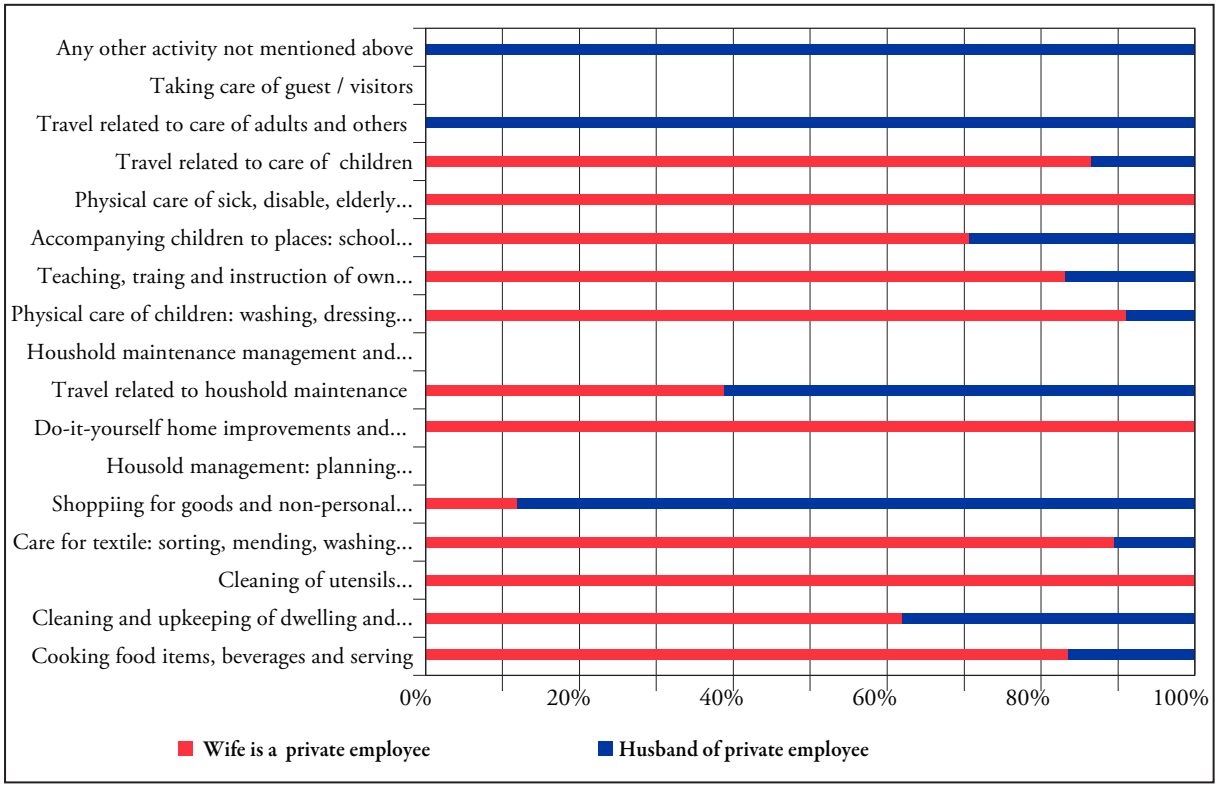
b. Wife is self-employed



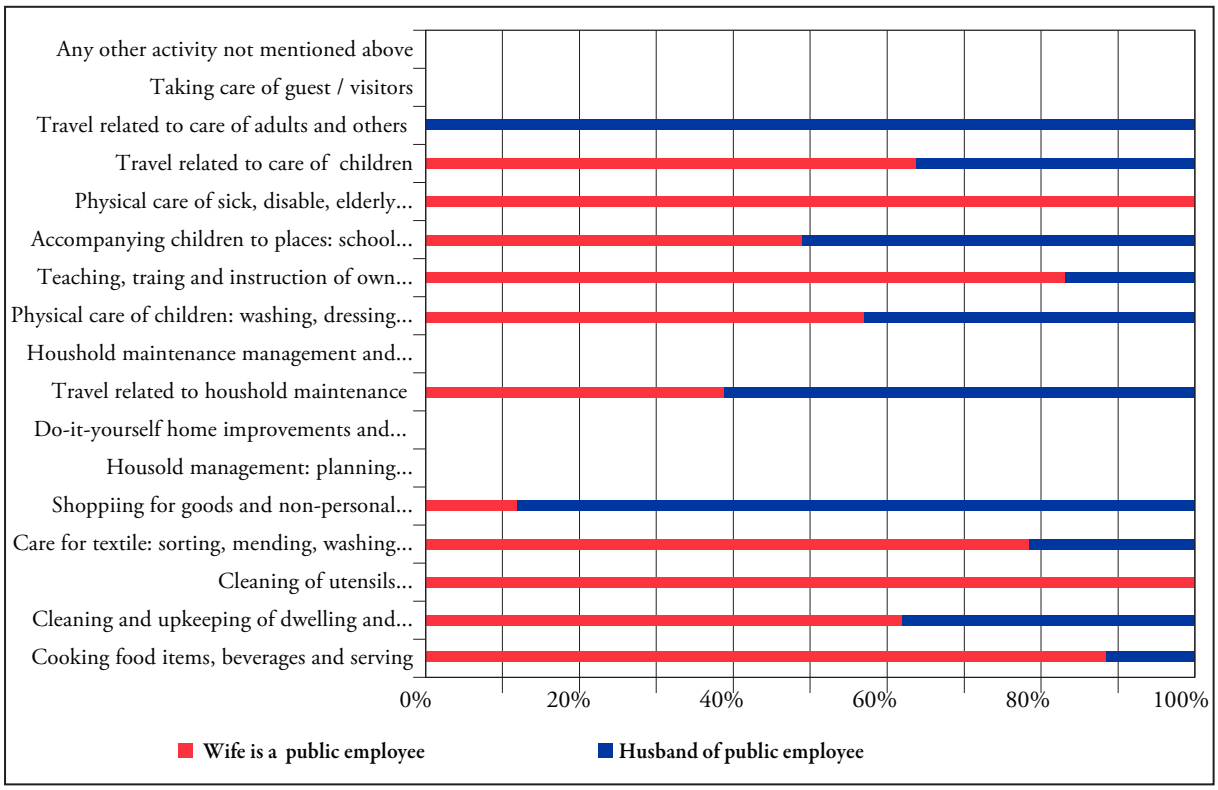
c. Wife works in the family business



d. Wife is an employee in the private sector



e. Wife is a public sector employee



Since the time spent on travel has implications for how much time can be devoted to more directly productive activities, in Table 17 we look especially at the time spent by wives and their husbands on travel related to different types of activities. It is to be noted that while wives spend about one and a half hours on average on a working day on travel related to paid work in manufacturing or services, husbands spend nearly two hours or more on travel related to these activities. However, wives account for nearly two thirds of the total time spent by the household on travel associated with care for children, the sick, elderly and the disabled and for two thirds of the time spent accompanying children to places. In fact, accompanying children to places and travelling with them takes up at least three and a half hours each day, of which the wife accounts for a little more than two thirds. These findings attest to the lack of a safe environment for children, requiring parents to accompany them everywhere, and suggest that this factor may also mediate the kind of market-related activity a woman can undertake, especially when part-time work is not available.

Table 17: Average number of hours spent on a weekday on travelling related to activities

Travel related to:	Time spent by wife	Time spent by husband	Total household time	Wife's share of total household time (%)
Crop farming, kitchen gardening, etc.	0.92	1.06	1.98	46.5
Animal husbandry	0.00	0.83	0.83	0.0
Fishing, forestry, horticulture, gardening	1.22	1.11	2.33	52.4
Processing and storage	0.00	0.17	0.17	0.0
Mining quarrying, digging, cutting, etc.	0.00	1.75	1.75	0.0
Construction activities	0.00	1.87	1.87	0.0
Manufacturing activities	1.68	2.25	3.93	42.7
Services	1.46	1.98	3.44	42.4
Household maintenance, management and shopping for own household	0.97	1.30	2.27	42.7
Accompanying children to places	1.56	0.78	2.34	66.7
Care for children, the sick, elderly and disabled for own household	0.76	0.44	1.20	63.3
Care of adults and others	0.33	0.70	1.03	32.0
Community services and help to other households	0.71	3.00	3.71	19.1
Social and cultural activities, mass media, etc.	1.00	1.05	2.05	48.8

2.10 Summary conclusions

Since this chapter covered a lot of ground, this section draws together the main findings of the descriptive overview looking at activity outcomes, preferences and time use of the sample of 500 married respondents living with their husbands who were covered in the survey.

Fifty six percent of the sample consisted of full-time home-makers, 15 per cent was self-employed in their own businesses, while a much smaller proportion, five per cent, worked in the family business. Eight per cent of the sample was engaged as private sector employees, while 12 per cent worked for the public sector. Forty five per cent of all respondents had received education up to the GCE Ordinary Level. Another third had studied up to the Advanced Level. Just 5 per cent had completed tertiary education, while 14 per cent had secondary level education. Public sector employees tended to be among the better educated, with nearly a third having been to university. In contrast, only 3 per cent of full-time homemakers were graduates.

Regardless of what they were engaged in at the time of the survey, respondents were asked what they would like to do in terms of six options: full-time homemakers, their own business, engage in a family business, work as employees in the private sector, work as employees in the public sector, or go abroad. Respondents were required to say 'yes' or 'no' to each of these options. Given the structure of the question and the multiple responses it facilitated, we were able to find out whether the respondents would choose only one of these activities, whether they would not like to do what they were currently engaged in, and total preference scores in terms of what activities they would be willing to do and those that they would not consider doing.

Those who wanted to continue in the same activity amounted to 117 individuals or 23 per cent of the sample and of these individuals the overwhelming majority or 71 per cent were full-time homemakers. These women accounted for a little less than a third of full-time homemakers who were happy doing just

that, while a little more than a third preferred to do something other than making homes. The biggest difference between the share of those content with the current activity and those looking for something else, were those working as private sector employees. Only 5 per cent wished to continue working for the private sector and would not consider another option, while nearly 30 per cent would rather have been doing something else. Private sector employment also scored relatively more negative preferential votes, and relatively fewer positive preferential votes. For example, while getting a job abroad was the least popular option as it scored the least number of positive votes and the largest number of negative votes, working as a private employee was regarded positively mainly by those already working in the private sector, and those who were unemployed. A public sector job scored the least number of negative votes. Preferences about private sector employment could be driven by the kind of jobs which such employees were already engaged in. Since at least 40 per cent of such employees had secondary education or less (15 per cent had only primary education), and that there was not a single graduate in the sample, it is very likely that the jobs they were engaged in were relatively less skilled, and hence entailed poorer terms and conditions of work. However, the education profile of these women is remarkably similar to the profile of employed women based on national sample survey data (Labour Force Survey 2014). According to national sample survey data, 42 per cent of Sri Lankan employed women in the working age cohort nationwide have only secondary education, and a further 16 per cent having studied up to the GCE O' Levels (Department of Census and Statistics 2015). These statistics suggest that in the country at large, the majority of women are similarly educated and likely to have access to the same kind of private sector jobs that the sub-sample of private sector employees in this study's sample have, and which they would rather not be doing.

The analysis found that the main reasons why full-time homemakers did not undertake paid work were the following: they liked being homemakers, had always wanted to do just that, had by and large not worked before, or had wanted to look after their children themselves in order that the children were provided with the best possible care. These supply side factors appear to be far more important than demand side factors such as the availability of jobs and working conditions in influencing women's labour force participation decision. These results suggest that for at least a third of them, marriage and motherhood remain sufficiently fulfilling and that by and large, they are not motivated to develop a role for themselves out of the home and in the world of paid work. The main reasons advanced for giving up employment to become fulltime homemakers also relate to childcare, and are also true of the small number of women who gave up their businesses to become fulltime homemakers instead.

A little more than a third of full-time homemakers would rather be doing something else, and at least a fifth of them would like to take up paid work as employees in the future. While this proportion itself is rather small, whether they would actually do so was contingent on a number of enabling factors. Among them were the following: the possibility of working from home, the possibility of working part-time; the availability of suitable jobs in the area; safe and convenient transport to and from work; and, a supportive husband, trustworthy childcare and better wage rates. Only a third cited crèche facilities provided by the employees as a factor that would encourage them to undertake paid work. Three fifths of those willing to take up work in the future would do so if they were assured that they would not be vulnerable to sexual harassment in the workplace while a little more than half would take up employment if they did not have to spend so much time taking children to and fro from school, tuition classes and other activities. The analysis of time use suggests that parents spend on average two and a half hours a day accompanying children to places. The lack of a safe environment for children and the absence of a safe public transport system for children is clearly taking its toll on the ability of their mothers to take up regular employment.

Remarkably, wives and husbands seem to have similar and traditional perceptions about gender roles. For example, more than four fifths of both men and women agreed that the wife's main responsibility was to manage household affairs and look after children, while at least two thirds of both men and women agreed that in a household it was the man who was mainly responsible for earning income. At least three fifths of the sample of both men and women also agreed that that it would be best if in a family the wife were able to stay at home and two thirds of both husbands and wives agreed that generally speaking, husbands preferred that their wives stayed at home. But nearly four fifths of both husbands and wives agreed that the extra income that a wife earned was useful and reduced pressure on husbands, and by and large, husbands

appeared to be able and willing to chip in and help with household chores and childcare. Most did not wait to be asked, and only a few refused when asked. But a third of all husbands still expected their wives to wait their own meals until they were able to eat themselves, whether the wives were homemakers, were working in either their own, or the family business, or were employees in either private or public institutions.

The overwhelming majority of wives believed that the division of household chores was unfair by them, and an even higher share of husbands agreed. The analysis of time use confirmed that women shoulder most of the work related to household maintenance, care and community services activities which are all unpaid. In contrast, men account for between two thirds to three fourths of total household time spent on production-related activities destined for the market for which they earned income. Women spent on average around three hours each day cooking and serving whereas men spend twenty minutes a day at the most doing the same thing. Women also do almost all the washing up and spend two thirds of the total time spent in the household on cleaning, and upkeep of dwelling and surroundings. They account for at least three fourths of household time devoted to the washing and caring clothes and spend at least 45 minutes on average on this task on a week day. Women spent four times as much time on washing, dressing and feeding children and accounted for three fourths of the time spent on teaching, training and instructing them. They spent nearly twice as much time on household maintenance, management and shopping for the household, as men did. They also spent four times as many hours on care work, as did men. Women also spent twice as many hours as men did on community services and in helping other households.

In the next chapter we take a more careful look at the underlying factors associated with women's activity outcomes by applying econometric analytical techniques to the data.

Factors Associated with the Probability of Participation

3

3.1 Introduction

This chapter applies a probability model to identify the factors associated with women's participation in the labour market in Sri Lanka's Western Region. In addition to many of the usual factors included in such models in the empirical literature, the unique data set collected for the purpose of this analysis presents a much needed opportunity to examine the extent to which wives' and husbands' perceptions of gender roles and time use impact on the wife's decision to participate in the labour market. Accordingly, this chapter first describes the econometric strategy in the next section by defining the model used to estimate the probability of participation, and defining the variables included in the model. The following section discusses the results and the final section summarizes and concludes.

3.2 Econometric strategy

The econometric analysis in this chapter investigates the factors associated with the probability of women's participation in the workforce. This is estimated by implementing the following model where the binary dependent outcome *p* takes the value one if respondent *i* is a participant, and zero if not.

The model that we fit is,

$$p_i = F(\alpha + \beta X_i) \quad \text{..... (1)}$$

where $F(z) = e^Z/(1+e^Z)$ is the cumulative logistic distribution and the parameters β are estimated by maximum likelihood. The vector X consists of eight groups of explanatory variables, including the individual's perceptions about gender roles, her husband's perceptions about gender roles, demographic characteristics, educational attainment, household characteristics, her husband's characteristics, total household time taken for household maintenance and care activities, and spatial characteristics. It should be noted that the model does not address the issue of causality to distinguish whether participation is a cause or a consequence of various individual and other characteristics.

Neoclassical theory posits that the expected hourly market wage can influence the individual's decision to participate. However, since wages are observed only for employed persons, wages need to be imputed for individuals who are not employed and whose decision to participate may be determined by the wage that they are likely to get. The usual procedure is to estimate a standard wage equation with Heckman selection bias correction (Heckman 1979) as do Klasen and Pieters (2012), Heim (2007) and Blau and Kahn (2007). However, Klasen and Pieters (2012) found the wage not to be a good predictor of labour force participation in India, and Gunatilaka (2013) who used the hourly wage received by similarly educated employees in the same district from national sample survey data from the previous year, found that the same held for Sri Lanka. This finding, together with the fact that the sample used for the analysis in this study is small - just 500 observations - and the difficulties associated with finding an exclusion restriction necessary to implement the Heckman procedure, encouraged us to leave out the expected market wage from the models estimated for this study.

But the neo-classical model also predicts that an increase in non-labour income or the incomes of other household members reduces the labour supply (substitution effect) of the individual concerned. So we included the *log of monthly earnings of the respondent's husband* in initial estimations, but because it consistently proved not to be significant, we excluded the variable from the final models presented here.

However, we included the *log of per capita household expenditure* to denote how well-off the household is as this has been found to be a significant predictor of women's labour force participation in several empirical studies. So this variable was included in the model under the category of 'household characteristics'.

A unique contribution of the present study to the Sri Lankan literature is that the survey obtained information about wives' and husbands' perceptions of gender roles in order to investigate their relationship with activity outcomes. Of the extensive list of perceptions of both husbands and wives, we selected eight which appeared to be most relevant to the decision to engage in paid work. So the model included the extent to which first the wife, and then the husband, agreed with these statements. The statements are as follows. First, *In a household, the main responsibility of earning money is the man's.* Second, that, *A woman's main responsibility is the management of household activities and looking after children*. Third, that, *The extra income earned by a working wife is useful and helps reduce the pressure on husbands*; Fourth, that, *If the wife also works, the children are likely to be neglected and go astray*. Fifth, that, *All things considered, it would be best if in a family the wife is able to stay at home*. Sixth, that *If the wife were doing a job and were to get late to come home from work, that the husband would be very annoyed and get into a bad mood*. Seventh, that *If the wife were doing a job and were to get late to come home from work, then the husband would start making the dinner*. And eighth '*Generally speaking, husbands prefer for their wives to stay at home rather than go out to work*.'

The second group of variables included in the model relate to the individual's demographic characteristics. Thus *age* and its *square* are included in the model. Although ethnic characteristics such as belonging to the Islamic Moor ethnic group have been found to be highly correlated with the likelihood of women's labour force participation (Gunatilaka 2013), we were unable to control for ethnic characteristics in this study due to the scarcity of observations relating to the smaller ethnic groups.

The third group of variables related to the highest level of education that the individual has attained. The reference category for the group of education variables was *Primary* which included all persons with less than six years of education. The dummy variables *Secondary, GCE Ordinary Levels, GCE Advanced Levels* and *Degree* denote different levels of educational attainment.

Household characteristics, such as its economic situation and demographic composition, have been found to be important correlates of participation in the empirical literature. For example, economic need may drive women from poorer families to work. Hence we include in our model the *log of per capita household consumption expenditure* to denote the economic situation of the household. We use consumption rather than income because consumption expenditure is a more accurate measure of individual and household welfare in developing countries. Large informal sectors made up of self-employment, small business, and subsistence agriculture make the gathering of accurate income data difficult in developing countries, while means-tested income support programs can encourage underreporting of income. Moreover, consumption expenditure is a direct measure of individual and household welfare, whereas income streams exhibit transitory fluctuations (Deaton and Zaidi 2002). The care burden of being a *mother of children less than 5 years of age* may prevent married women from market work. Having to care for *elderly parents* (more than 70 years of age) may prevent women from working, hence we attempt to control for this by including the share of household members who are elderly parents of either the principal female respondent or her husband in our model.

The fifth group of variables relates to husband's characteristics. We first estimated the relationship between the highest level of education he has achieved and the probability of the respondent's labour force participation, in terms of the same education variables that we used to denote the highest level of education attained by the respondent. However, these, and an additional variable denoting his earnings turned out not to be significant in repeated estimations with different combinations of explanatory variables. Therefore we only included a dummy variable which takes the value one if the *husband is engaged in a white collar job*, and zero if not. The rationale for including this variable was that husbands in white collar jobs may have at their disposal an important source of social capital that can be leveraged to find suitable jobs and may encourage participation (Malhotra & De Graff 1997; Amarasuriya 2010).

Two variables were included in the model to capture the *total time (in minutes) that the household required both husband and wife to spend on household maintenance, management and shopping for own household*, and on *care for children, the sick, elderly and disabled for own household*. Total household time was included rather than simply the time spent by either husband or wife because the division of time spent on these activities may be influenced by the wife's activity status and would therefore have been endogenous to the model.

Finally, the relationship between spatial factors and activity outcomes were captured by three dummy variables: *peri-urban, rural* and *estates*, with the *urban* sector being the reference category.

In the next section we discuss the results of the econometric analysis.

3.3 Factors associated with labour market participation

The marginal effects of estimating five models are set out in Table 18 in order to demonstrate the impact of the addition of other variables to the explanatory power of the variables used in the previous model. The first column reports the means or proportions of the variables appearing in the model with all the variables, in column 6.

Consider the results related to women's perceptions of gender roles first. When only the wife's perceptions of gender roles are included as explanatory variables, four out of eight are significant, of them two at the one per cent critical level (column 2). However, with the addition of other explanatory variables, only two remain significant at the 10 per cent level (column 6). Thus, the full model shows that the more a woman agrees with the statement that '*If the wife also works, the children are likely to be neglected and go astray*' increases by one point, the chances that she participates in the labour market reduces by 4 percentage points. Similarly, the extent to which she agrees that, '*All things considered, it would be best if in a family the wife is able to stay at home',* the less likely that she will participate in the labour market. Both results are significant at the 10 per cent critical level.

The correlation between the extent to which a woman's husband agrees with these statements and her likelihood of engaging in market work is significant in terms of four out of the eight statements. So, for example, if the extent to which the husband agrees with the statement, *The extra income earned by a working wife is useful and helps reduce the pressure on husbands*' increases by one, then the likelihood that the wife participates in the labour market increases by seven percentage points, all other factors held constant. However, the more he agrees that '*All things considered, it would be best if in a family the wife is able to stay at home'* is associated with a reduction in the likelihood of his wife going out to work. Likewise, the more the husband thinks that this is a universal sentiment, or in other words, that generally men tend to think in this way, that is '*I think, generally speaking, that husbands prefer for their wives to stay at home rather than go out to work'*, then the less likely that his wife would be undertaking paid work. Together, these two variables are associated with a ten per cent reduction in the likelihood that wives will engage in market work. One other variable representing the husband's perception of gender roles is significant at the 10 per cent critical level: the results show that the extent to which the husband agrees that '*If my wife were doing a job and got late to come home from work I would be very annoyed*' is correlated with an increased probability of participation. However, this is likely to be the result of actual experience, with husbands agreeing with this statement, actually getting annoyed because their working wives have got late to come home from work.

Neither of the variables denoting age is significant in the full model, although the two variables are significant and show expected signs in the more parsimonious model in column 4. In this model, the marginal effects of age and age squared suggest that the likelihood of participating increases with age but at a diminishing rate. Of the education variables, a woman with just secondary level education is less likely to participate, all other characteristics being equal, than a woman with primary education or less, although the results are not significant. But as educational attainment increases beyond that, the likelihood of participation increases even though only the marginal effect of the woman being educated up to the GCE Advanced

Level has a significantly positive effect on labour force participation, compared to if she had schooled only up to primary level or less. A woman with A' Levels was 16 per cent more likely to participate in the labour market than if she only had primary level education and the results are significant at the 5 per cent critical level. A degree would increase the probability of participation by 14 per cent, but the results are not significant, probably because of the small number of observations. Nevertheless, these results as well as the signs on the other education variables, suggest a U-shaped relationship between education and participation, and agree with the relationship between the two variables obtained by Gunatilaka (2013) using national sample survey data. In that study, as in this, it was found that education is one of the strongest predictors of the probability of participation.

In better-off households, women are less likely to participate. As the log of per capita consumption increases by one point, the likelihood of participation reduces by nearly 9 percentage points. Also note that if the husband is likely to hold a white collar job, the wife's probability of participation drops by nearly 10 per cent, suggesting the gentrification effect of non-manual work. The result is significant at the 10 per cent critical level. The two variables denoting household composition, the first a dummy that takes one if the woman has children under the age of five, and the share of elderly members in the household, are not significantly associated with the participation decision. This remains the case even in the model which does not include variables denoting the time spent on childcare and the elderly members of the family. However, when these time use variables are included they are both negative and significant, although their size is rather small, which stands to reason as the unit of measurement is minutes. Thus, an increase in the total time spent by the household on maintenance, management and shopping by one minute, reduces the probability that a wife will participate by less than one per cent, and the result is statistically significant at the one per cent critical level. A similar result is obtained for the total time spent by the household on care work.

Residence on estates increases the probability of female participation by 24 per cent compared to residence in urban areas, and the result is statistically significant at the 5 per cent critical level. None of the other spatial variables is significant, even though the sign of the coefficients suggests that rural women are more likely to participate than urban women whom they resemble in all other respects, and that peri-urban women are even less likely to participate than urban women.

3.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter estimated the factors associated with the probability of women's labour market participation. We investigated the relationship between the probability of participation and eight groups of factors, among which were several, such as a woman's level of education, the household's income status, the husband's occupation and the household's residential location, that have been found to be significantly associated with women's labour market participation in the Sri Lankan and international literature. In terms of these standard variables, the results of the analysis confirm rather than question the findings of other studies: better education, lower levels of household consumption, husband being a white collar rather than a manual worker, and residence on estates are associated with an enhanced probability of women's labour market participation.

However, this study's contribution to the literature is the econometric analysis of the relationship between husbands' and wives' perceptions of gender roles and the probability of wives engaging in market work, as well as of the relationship between the time that households spend on household chores and care work and the probability of participation. The results suggest that husbands' and wives' perceptions of gender roles are significant predictors of whether wives will engage in market work. Time spent on household chores and care work is also significant.

In the next chapter we draw together the main findings of the descriptive analysis in chapter 2 and the econometric analysis in this chapter, and extract the implications for policy and future research.

Table 18: Factors associated with labour force participation: Marginal effects of logistic regression

		Mean or proportion	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Extent to which the wife agrees with the following statements							
1.	In a household, the main responsibility of earning money is the man's	3.70	-0.0385*	-0.0353	-0.0325	-0.0323	-0.0323
2.	A woman's main responsibility is the management of household activities and looking after children.	4.06	0.019	0.0165	0.0253	0.0301	0.0252
3.	The extra income earned by a working wife is useful and helps reduce the pressure on husbands	4.21	0.1076**	0.0836*	0.0722	0.0699	0.0450
4.	If the wife also works, the children are likely to be neglected and go astray	3.44	-0.0758***	-0.042	-0.0422*	-0.0431*	-0.0429*
5.	All things considered, it would be best if in a family the wife is able to stay at home	3.33	-0.0765***	-0.0446*	-0.0432*	-0.0465*	-0.0424*
6.	If I were doing a job and got late to come home from work my husband would be very annoyed and get into a bad mood	2.61	-0.0299	-0.0221	-0.0191	-0.0254	-0.0214
7.	If I was doing a job and I was to get late to come home from work, my husband would start making the dinner	3.06	0.0377	0.0168	0.0086	-0.0028	-0.0065
8.	I think, generally speaking, that husbands prefer for their wives to stay at home rather than go out to work	3.65	-0.0165	0.0041	0.0028	0.0085	0.0153
Extent to which the husband agrees with the following statements							
1.	In a household, the main responsibility of earning money is the man's	4.11		0.0194	0.0233	0.0261	0.0147
2.	A woman's main responsibility is the management of household activities and looking after children.	4.08		-0.0238	-0.0284	-0.0252	-0.0234
3.	The extra income earned by a working wife is useful and helps reduce the pressure on husbands	3.97		0.0772**	0.0724*	0.0669*	0.0738**
4.	If the wife also works, the children are likely to be neglected and go astray	3.64		-0.0264	-0.0289	-0.0285	-0.0271
5.	All things considered, it would be best if in a family the wife is able to stay at home	3.69		-0.0822***	-0.0770**	-0.0813***	-0.0504*
6.	If my wife were doing a job and got late to come home from work I would be very annoyed.	2.58		0.0369	0.0289	0.0332	0.0441*
7.	If my wife were doing a job and told me that she would be getting late to come home from work I would start making the dinner.	3.12		0.0151	0.0189	0.0253	0.0194
8.	I think, generally speaking, that husbands prefer for their wives to stay at home rather than go out to work	3.55		-0.0550**	-0.0537**	-0.0534**	-0.0528**

	Mean or proportion	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Demographic variables						
Age	41.76			0.0301*	0.0197	0.0280*
Age squared	1863.76			-0.0004*	-0.0003	-0.0004*
Education variables						
Secondary education	0.89			-0.1974*	-0.1905*	-0.0801
GCE O' Levels	0.45			-0.0236	0.0087	0.0971
GCE A' Levels	0.30			-0.0016	0.0592	0.1642**
Degree	0.05			-0.1006	-0.0056	0.1415
Household variables						
Log of per capita expenditure	9.16				-0.0777*	-0.0855**
Respondent is a mother of toddlers	0.30				-0.0911	0.0336
Share of elderly parents who are members of the household	0.01				0.1921	0.3107
Husband's variables						
Husband has a white collar job	0.16				-0.1013	-0.1079*
Time use in minutes						
Total household time spent on household maintenance, management and shopping for own household	396.20					-0.0005***
Total household time spent on care for children, the sick, elderly and disabled for own household	169.39					-0.0007***
Spatial variables						
Peri-urban location	0.29					-0.0227
Rural	0.36					0.0090
Estates	0.10					0.2432**
No of observations	489	489	489	489	489	489

Conclusions, Implications for Policy and Further Research

4

4.1 Introduction

This study addressed three important gaps in knowledge and research about women's labour force participation in Sri Lanka. While previous research used national sample survey data to infer factors underlying women's participation decisions through actual outcomes, this study aimed to ask these questions of women themselves. Thus, it investigated women's perceptions about the activities they were engaged in, whether what they were currently doing was what they liked to do, and what other activities they might consider taking up. If they were currently not engaged in market work but were willing to consider looking for jobs in the future, this study investigated the supportive conditions they required to take up market work. The study also investigated perceptions of wives and husbands about gender roles and investigated the extent to which these perceptions were associated with the wives' decision to participate. At the same time, this study looked at the division of paid and unpaid work between women and their husbands, and investigated the extent to which time spent on unpaid work was associated with the probability of wives participating in the labour market.

In this chapter we summarize the findings of the research presented in the two previous chapters and draw out its policy and research implications. The chapter is structured accordingly.

4.2 Overview of research findings

The analysis in this study was based on data collected through a questionnaire administered to 500 women and their husbands in a contiguous area straddling urban, peri-urban, rural and estates divisions, in the districts of Colombo, Kalutara and Ratnapura. The majority of the sample, 56 per cent, consisted of full-time home-makers, 15 per cent was self-employed in their own businesses, while a much smaller proportion, five per cent, worked in the family business. Eight per cent of the sample was engaged as private sector employees, while 12 per cent worked for the public sector.

Of the sample of 500 women, a fifth wanted to remain in the same activity. A little more than two thirds of those who wanted to remain in the same activity were homemakers, who accounted for a little less than a third of the total number of full-time homemakers. A little more than a third of full time homemakers preferred to do something other than make homes. The remainder was willing to consider an array of options. Next to going abroad for employment, private sector employment was regarded as the least desirable. For example, 5 per cent of those already working as private sector employees wished to continue working for the private sector and would not consider another option, but nearly 30 per cent would rather have been doing something else. Private sector employment also scored relatively more negative votes, and relatively fewer positive preferential votes. Preferences about private sector employment could be driven by the kind of jobs which such employees were already engaged in and their levels of education. For example, since at least 40 per cent of such employees had secondary education or less (15 per cent had only primary education), and there was not a single graduate in the sample, it is very likely that the jobs they were engaged in were relatively less skilled, and hence entailed poorer terms and conditions of work. On the other hand, private sector employees with low levels of education probably realized that the jobs that they currently held were the best they could aspire to. A public sector job was the most popular option as it scored the least number of negative preferences.

The main reasons why full-time homemakers did not undertake paid work were as follows: they liked being homemakers, had always wanted to do just that, had by and large not worked before, and had wanted

to look after their children themselves in order that the children were provided with the best possible care. These supply side factors appear to be far more important than demand side factors such as the availability of jobs and working conditions in influencing women's labour force participation decisions. These results suggest that for at least a third of them, marriage and motherhood remain sufficiently fulfilling and that by and large, they are not motivated to develop a role for themselves out of the home and in the world of paid work. The main reasons advanced for giving up employment to become fulltime homemakers also relate to childcare, and are also of the reasons why the women gave up their businesses to become fulltime homemakers instead.

At least a fifth of full-time homemakers would like to take up paid work as employees in the future. While this proportion itself is rather small, whether they would actually do so was contingent on a number of enabling factors: the possibility of working from home, the possibility of working part-time; the availability of suitable jobs in the area; safe and convenient transport to and from work; and, a supportive husband, trustworthy childcare and better wage rates. Only a third cited crèche facilities provided by the employees as a factor that would encourage them to undertake paid work. Three fifths of those willing to take up work in the future would do so if they were assured that they would not be vulnerable to sexual harassment in the workplace while a little more than half would take up employment if they did not have to spend so much time taking children to and fro from school, tuition classes and other activities. The analysis of time use suggests that parents spend on average two and a half hours a day accompanying children to places. The lack of a safe environment for children and the absence a safe public transport system for them is clearly taking its toll on the ability of their mothers to take up regular employment.

Wives and husbands seem to have similar and traditional perceptions about gender roles. For example, more than four fifths of both men and women agreed that the wife's main responsibility was to manage household affairs and look after children, while at least two thirds of both men and women agreed that in a household it was the man who was mainly responsible for earning income. At least three fifths of the sample of both men and women also agreed that that it would be best if in a family the wife were able to stay at home and two thirds of both husbands and wives agreed that generally speaking, husbands preferred that their wives stayed at home. But nearly four fifths of both husbands and wives agreed that the extra income that a wife earned was useful and reduced pressure on husbands, and by and large, husbands appeared to be able and willing to chip in and help with household chores and childcare. Most did not wait to be asked, and only a few refused when asked. But a third of all husbands still expected their wives to wait their own meals until they were able to eat themselves, whether the wives were homemakers, were working in either their own, or the family business, or were employees in either private or public institutions.

The overwhelming majority of wives believed that the division of household chores was unfair by them, and an even higher share of husbands agreed. The analysis of time use confirmed that women shoulder most of the work related to household maintenance, care and community services activities which are all unpaid. In contrast, men account for between two thirds to three fourths of total household time spent on production-related activities destined for the market for which they earned income. Women spent on average around three hours each day cooking and serving whereas men spend twenty minutes a day at the most doing the same thing. Women also do almost all the washing up and spend two thirds of the total time spent in the household on cleaning, and upkeep of dwelling and surroundings. They account for at least three fourths of household time devoted to the washing and caring clothes and spend at least 45 minutes on average on this task on a week day. Women spent four times as much time on washing, dressing and feeding children and accounted for three fourths of the time spent on teaching, training and instructing them. They spent nearly twice as much time on household maintenance, management and shopping for the household, as men did. They also spent four times as many hours on care work, as did men. Women also spent twice as many hours as men did on community services and in helping other households.

The results of the econometric analysis of the factors associated with participation analysis confirm that education beyond secondary level, lower levels of household consumption, husband being a white collar rather than a manual worker and residence on estates, are associated with an enhanced probability of women's labour market participation. The study also found that husbands' and wives' perceptions of gender

roles and time spent on household chores and care work are significant predictors of whether wives will engage in market work.

4.3 Implications for policy and research

This study aimed to find out more about the factors underlying women's participation in the labour market in order to inform policy making targeted at encouraging more married women to join the labour force. The analysis suggests that two thirds of married women who are currently full-time homemakers in Western Sri Lanka, are willing to consider taking up market work. A fifth would consider taking up work as employees. The study also sought the views of respondents about the supporting conditions necessary for them to be able to take up market work. According the these findings, any policy strategy designed to attract substantial numbers of full time homemakers into the labour market needs to include the following measures:

a. Create opportunities for working from home;

b. Create a policy and legislative environment that supports part-time work and night work;

c. Provide a safe and convenient public transport system for women and children;

d. Ensure work environments which protect women from sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination;

e. Create opportunities for work that offers better wages; and,

f. Provide crèche facilities that can provide a quality childcare service.

These policy recommendations have been made before (see Gunatilaka (2013), Gunewardena (2015), World Bank (2015)) and almost all of them do not need further, detailed elaboration: this study only confirms that women themselves are looking for these same supports. However, with respect to the first of these measures about creating opportunities for working from home, we need to bring into the discussion the findings of some recent investigations into the profitability of businesses run by women.

Recall that the present study revealed that women looking to engage in market work prefer jobs in self-employment, or even in the family business, rather than in the private sector. The desire for an independent source of income which also provided flexibility to manage household duties, and acquiring a certain skill or some experience were the key motivating factors. On the face of it, the finding suggests that policies and programmes supporting the growth of microenterprises and the small and medium sector are appropriate strategies that will help grow businesses, employment, and particularly the employment of women. However, the self-employed women whose perceptions were canvassed for this study revealed that relatively few of them were given the impetus to start their own businesses by government, non-government, or donor-driven programmes. At the same time, while our study was not able to find out whether these businesses were viable, profitable, or only provided labour income for their operators, we can draw on other work which investigated the viability of subsistence businesses.

In a study of the effect of 'treatment' grants on male and female-owned enterprises in three tsunami-affected districts in Sri Lanka, de Mel et al (2007) found that returns to capital were zero among female-owned microenterprises but in excess of 9 per cent per month for male-owned enterprises. They also found that large returns for males showed that, on average, male-owned enterprises were more likely to generate the return on investment necessary to repay microloans. Differences in treatment effects by gender did not appear to be due to differences in the amount of the treatment invested, differences in access to capital, differences in ability, differences in risk aversion or due to females taking the grants out of the business and spending them on household investments. Differences in industry accounted for some of the difference but the rest remained unexplained.

In a more recent study of business training, female enterprise start up and growth, de Mel et al. (2014) note that one reason why physical capital alone is not enough to raise the incomes of subsistence-level businesses

owned by women may be one of adverse selection, that is, labour market imperfections may draw women with low levels of business skills into self-employment rather than wage work. To test this and whether providing business training in addition to capital made a difference to profitability, the authors conducted a randomized experiment with two samples of Sri Lankan women who received business training from ILO's Start-and-Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme . Women in the first sample were current subsistence business owners, while the second sample was made up of women who were out of the labour force at baseline but were interested in starting a business within the next year. The authors found that training alone was not enough to generate growth in subsistence businesses that were already run by women before the intervention. While adding capital boosted profitability in the first year following training, the effect was only temporary, leaving these enterprises two years later, no more profitable than those of the control group who did not get any training. For the sample of potential business owners, training, particularly when combined with a grant, was found to speed up the process of starting a business but after 16 months after training, this entry effect was found to dissipate. Nevertheless, with potential entrants assigned to training having higher profits and better management practices two years after completion of training than businesses started by the control group, the authors conclude that training appears to enable more successful businesses to be started. Besides, the improvement in profitability comes in spite of the fact that training appears to induce more entry by women with lower measured cognitive skills, and a higher rate of exit by women with higher cognitive skills, suggesting that adverse selection related to cognitive ability may not be a factor driving profitability. The authors conclude that these results suggest that, "getting women to start subsistence businesses is easier than getting these businesses to grow" and point out that "the binding constraints on growth may lie outside the realm of capital and skills" (de Mel et al. 2014, pp. 207). For example, Andersen and Muriel (2007) found that the entire gender gap in profitability in urban microenterprises in Bolivia seems to derive from the much smaller scale (with less productive capital and fewer employees) of women-owned enterprises than those which men owned. And one of the reasons why women preferred not to grow their enterprise was because the business would then lose some of the features that made a micro-business particularly attractive for women, such as not depending on others, the ability to care for children at the same time, flexible working hours and daily revenues

Indeed, the difficult environment that Sri Lankan women face in running viable businesses could derive from many factors. Where cultural norms dictate that women are the principal caregivers, their domestic responsibilities make it difficult for them to work outside the home, procuring inputs and technologies, enforcing contracts in the informal economy, transporting inputs and raw materials, and marketing the output. Cultural norms can themselves dictate what sort of business is appropriate for women, and these may be exactly those activities that have the lowest returns. Therefore, rather than roll out generic livelihood programmes with credit and training that aim to encourage women to start their own businesses, we suggest that further research be carried out to identify the socio-economic, cultural and psychological factors that make married women's businesses successful and viable, and compare them with viable businesses run by men. The latter, it should be noted, are usually also better able to draft in (female) family labour. It is likely that the findings of such research will help design business development programmes that can be more successful in identifying potential winners, whether female-owned or family-owned businesses, by providing them with the necessary supports.

In this study we also need to underline what we see as the policy which is entirely up to the government to implement. That is, creating a policy environment that supports part-time work and night work through the reform of labour law. As pointed out in Gunatilaka (2013) and more recently by Ranaraja and Hassendeen (2016), in this same volume the legislative framework governing employment in Sri Lanka imposes many barriers to women's employment. For example, The Shop and Office Employees Act of 1954 and amendments prohibit the employment of women at night in the services sector. But it is this same sector that can provide better jobs like ITC-related, call centre work for women. While a few firms do at present employ women at night in shops and offices, it is in violation of the law. At the same time, Sri Lanka's labour law does not support part-time work because statutory obligations of employers are set out in law only for full-time work and not for part-time work. So a firm employing a worker part-time would be liable to the same conditions covering full time work such as the compensation that needs to be given to a worker on retrenchment according to the Termination of Employment of Workmen (*sic*) (Special Provisions) Act No. 45 of 1971.

Given that educational attainment beyond secondary level is correlated with a greater probability of participating in the labour market, Gunatilaka (2013) suggested that investment in skills training beyond secondary education, particularly in job-oriented technical and vocational education if they are unable to continue in general education, can help women engage in paid work even after they are married. However, given Gunewardena's (2015) recent research on the comparison of returns to cognitive and non-cognitive skills of men and women, several qualifications seem to be in order.

Using the World Bank's STEP data of 2012, Gunewardena (2015) found that while women have higher measured cognitive skills than men, and that they also possess equivalent levels of non-cognitive skills, they are rewarded only for their openness, not for any of their other cognitive or non-cognitive skills. In earlier work, while Gunewardena (2010) found that women were underpaid relative to their productive characteristics in all sectors and for all ethnic groups, Gunewardena at al. (2008) found evidence of wider gender wage gaps at the bottom of the distribution, relating to low and unskilled occupations, in both the private and public sectors. Nevertheless, the authors found little evidence of larger gaps at the top of the distribution, suggesting that poorer, unskilled women suffer more wage discrimination than do better off skilled women. These findings tie in with the reluctance of many women in the sample used for analysis in the present study, to consider work as employees in the private sector. These women are mainly secondary-educated and according to Gunewardena et al.'s (2008) research, are more likely to face wage discrimination than their better educated peers. On the other hand, as Gunewardena (2015) argues, higher levels of skills do not translate into better wages. This means that unless women are able to invest in the acquisition of education and skills from an early age, and thereby acquire very high levels of skills that will enable them to get jobs which offer wages that are at the highest end of the distribution, there is little incentive for them to acquire skills beyond the GCE O' Levels, especially since the results obtained at the GCE O' Levels determine whether the candidate can progress further to A' Levels and beyond. As a policy measure to address this problem, Gunewardena et al. (2008) argue for policies that address gender bias in wage setting - especially in the low and unskilled occupations –as well as for policies that address gender bias in hiring and in workplace practices, which they argue may be more effective in reducing the gender wage gap, than policies that try to improve women's productivity-enhancing characteristics.

While such anti-discriminatory policies are indeed necessary, whether they will be wholly effective in encouraging more women to invest in skills acquisition and participate in the labour market is an open question. In the final count, with 61 per cent of Sri Lankan workers in informal employment (Department of Census and Statistics 2015), there are just not enough jobs around, even for men who are more advantaged in the labour market anyway, that offer decent wages, regularity of employment, security of tenure and social protection.

Women, on the other hand, have yet another livelihood option, and that is marriage to an income-earning male, who, all else being equal, will be earning more in the labour market than she will be able to anyway, for the reasons discussed above. As economic models of the household recognize, individuals form a household when it is more beneficial to them than remaining alone: household goods and services, whether market-oriented or not, can be produced more efficiently than when single, and gains from economies of scale and specialization can be exploited when producing and sharing goods (Becker 1973, 1974). Marriage also provides basic insurance against adverse life events (Becker 1981). Specialization enables one of the spouses to accumulate human capital, for example, through work experience, in tasks demanded in the labour market. This enables married people to earn more than single people, taking other factors into consideration, even when one controls for reverse causation (Chun and Lee, 2001; Korenman and Neumark, 1991; Loh, 1996). In Germany, couples with large wage differentials before marriage were found to gain the most from specialization after marriage (Stutzer and Frey 2006). Spouses practicing division of labour reported higher average life satisfaction than dual income couples, with mainly women and couples with children benefiting from specialization (ibid.).

If this is the case in advanced economies like Germany, even larger and more persistent gender wage differentials must be making even a stronger case for marriage and specialization in tasks within marriage in developing countries. In fact, for the majority of women in developing countries such as Sri Lanka, marriage

offers many material advantages that available jobs do not. In a relationship-based society rather than a rules-based society such as ours, social capital made up of networks of relatives, friends and neighbours, enable one to access scarce resources and opportunities. And with marriage a woman can at least double her social capital which she can hope to leverage to her own advantage. Investing her time in raising children will provide her with a more secure old age that even a government pension on its own cannot provide. Dysfunctional public institutions or the lack of any institutions at all, makes marriage and family the only reliable institutions that can provide protection and succor for the majority of people in developing countries. This may be an important reason why, given a choice, a woman will invest in them rather than in employment, unless she is from a poor family and has little choice but to work at any job she can find, even if poorly paid, uncongenial and arduous. In contrast, at the other end of the wealth continuum, a woman who already has access to parental wealth and assets, as well as to networks of socially influential friends and relatives, may not invest in skills development, employment or marriage, because she does not need to, even though these same resource endowments may see her doing all three for reasons other than economic survival (see Malhotra and De Graff 2000).

Thus, in contrast to the situation in advanced countries where the instability of marriage makes women invest in the labour market (Beblo 2012), in countries such as ours, it is very likely that it is the instability of the labour market, and the poor conditions that most women are forced to endure if they do go out to work, that impel them and their parents to invest in marriage and family rather than skills and employment if a sufficiently high level of education and skills cannot be acquired. Anecdotal evidence from Sri Lanka's otherwise highly successful garments sector can be adduced in support of this observation. Throughout the years, it has been mainly young women from poor rural homes who have been drawn to work in this sector, but as soon as they complete five years in employment and are eligible for gratuity payment under the Payment of Gratuity Act, they leave to get married (which additionally enable them to access their superannuation from Employment Provident Fund and Employment Trust Fund contributions). In fact, many observers have noted that much of the time they spend working is devoted to finding a suitable marriage partner and collecting enough money for a dowry that will enhance their own attractiveness as a marriage partner.

We can draw some insights from the well-being literature to cast further light on why women make the choices that they do. Beja Jr. (2012), using cross-country data from the World Values Survey for the 2000s, found that in middle-income economies, part-time working wives are happier than housewives, and that both part-time working wives and housewives are happier than full-time working wives. There was no difference in happiness between working and non-working wives in upper and low-income economies. Even closer home, Panditharatne (2016) uses data from a survey of nearly 900 employed women and full-time homemakers in Panadura Division in Kalutara District in Sri Lanka (near the present study's field location) to show that employed women are less happy than fulltime homemakers after other conditioning characteristics such as age, education and household income, are controlled for.

This is a good point in the discussion to recall the theories that posit a U-shaped relationship between structural change in the economy and women's labour force participation, as well as educational attainment and women's participation in market work, that were described in section 1.4 of the introductory chapter. If we look at Sri Lankan women's activity outcomes in the light of these two theories, it appears that we may be simply stuck in transition: the large mass of the country's workers trapped in the vast borderlands between low-skilled, low-paid agriculture-based work in the rural sector, and high-skilled, high-waged technical and knowledge-based work in the cities though not towns; educated enough to aspire to middle-class status, but without the skills and connections to rise beyond the lower middle classes. And significant numbers of such working-age women are not so unskilled and poor that they marry poor men and need to go out to work. In fact, their husbands may be earning enough to enable them to meet basic needs and they may have decided, together with their husbands, that family welfare would be maximized if they were to invest time in looking after children and making sure that they got a good education. The fact that such families now had only two or three children at the most, while the network of relatives who could be called upon to help look after them had also declined, may have also mediated this activity outcome. Such women would lack the education, skills and connections to get jobs that can offer them economic

independence. Nor would they be so rich with inherited wealth that they did need not invest in marriage for the pecuniary benefits it offers. So it is entirely possible that the traditional perceptions of gender roles discussed in previous sections may be the socially acceptable way in which individuals caught in this vast transitional space, justify rational choices made in response to unfavourable individual and macroeconomic circumstances.

The findings of this study suggest that there may be two further and complimentary avenues for research that may prove fruitful in producing many more useful insights about the reasons underlying low female labour force participation rates, not only in Sri Lanka, but in the region at large. One of these avenues of research is in the field of economics itself, where household bargaining models can be applied to analyze the relationship between the institution of marriage and the labour market in developing countries with particular cultural contexts, with a view to looking at the drivers and constraints of women's labour supply. It should be recalled that much of the theoretical literature in economics related to family, marriage and labour markets emerged to help explain the socio-economic milieu that prevailed in advanced economies after World War II, when the war itself had caused a structural shift in the demand for women's labour in white collar positions which persisted into the decades that followed (Goldin and Olivetti 2013). This makes it clear that the theories and models used for the analysis of women's labour market behaviour in advanced economies cannot be applied in the same way to understand the forces underlying women's labour supply in developing countries where conditions resemble those that prevailed a century ago in today's advanced economies. Doing so will invariably lead observers to patronizingly and insensitively dismiss as the outcome of patriarchal social norms, what may actually be a rational choice made in a disadvantageous working environment. That the hostility of the working environment to women's paid work may be partly due to patriarchal values and the predatory behavior of males dominating society and the workplace, is a different issue altogether. Here we argue that the theoretical framework needs to be developed further to explain more reliably the reasons why, when faced with a choice, women in many developing counties opt for marriage and household work rather than market work.

At the same time, we wish to argue that the process of developing appropriate theories and models needs to be informed by a second and complimentary avenue of research that approaches the institution of marriage and its interconnectedness with the labour market from a social anthropological perspective. Modern economists accept in practice, though not yet in theory, that societies are highly varied in the cultural practices they engage in and in the economic arrangements they make. Drawing on insights from the research of social anthropologists on marriage, family and work in developing countries is likely to produce a new generation of economic theories and models that may more effectively explain the reasons underlying women's participation decisions in the developing world.

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