WHY WOMEN EARN LESS

GENDER PAY GAP AND LABOUR-MARKET INEQUALITIES IN MAURITIUS

UN WOMEN

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UN Women is the United Nations organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports United Nations Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society organizations to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the United Nations system's work in advancing gender equality.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

Despite progress in women's economic and political participation, formal employment and education attainment, a gender pay gap remains a pervasive labour-market feature across the world. Globally, women earn only 73 cents for each US dollar earned by men.[1] The gender pay gap is a broader reflection of the work-related and economic inequality of women, including their lack of economic independence, lack of decision-making power both in the household (e.g. spending decisions) and in society (e.g. managerial decisions), and experience of violence. Mauritius has a population of approximately 1.26 million (as at 2022).[2] Since gaining independence in 1968, its economy has progressed significantly and is currently categorized as an upper-middle-income economy.[3] Despite these advancements, achieving gender equality remains an ongoing challenge, with only 20 per cent of parliamentary seats held by women as at February 2021.[4] Furthermore, the gender pay gap is still a pervasive labour-market feature in Mauritius.

The existence and persistence of the gender pay gap has unfavourable outcomes at both the individual and societal levels. For example, the gap is more frequently connected with higher levels of poverty and inequality among women. Moreover, women's pay being lower than men's during their working years translates into women's incomes from social security and pensions after retirement and other social benefits, such as life insurance, also being lower. The adverse effects of shorter working hours and low-paid jobs, typically associated more with women than with men, are reflected in lower pension levels, lower seniority premiums and lower levels of other coverage related to employment contributory schemes.[5]

When households and society undervalue women, other severe outcomes become likely. As a result of low economic power within the household, some women may tolerate abusive and unhealthy relationships, and domestic violence. Women's families are likely to benefit when the share of household income that women control increases; for instance, women tend to invest more in their children's nutrition, health, education and housing with increased income.[6] Overall, women's lower earnings can lead to a reduction in bargaining power and less independence, and lifetime income inequality between genders, which contributes to maintaining the lower status of women in society and ultimately contributes to lower rates of gross domestic product (GDP) and GDP growth.

The objective of the present study is to present an overview of the adjusted gender pay gap and labour-market inequalities in Mauritius. This is part of a larger 2023 UN Women study titled "Why Women Earn Less: Gender Pay Gap and Labour-Market Inequalities in East and Southern Africa". Understanding the gender pay gap and its determinants would raise awareness among employees, employers and policymakers; lead to actions for the mitigation of economic inequalities; support women in realizing their productive potential; and ultimately support economic growth. Therefore, the study contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for gender equality, within SDG 5, and for decent work and economic growth, within SDG 8. SDG 5 considers inequality more broadly than simply in terms of the gender pay gap: its ambition is to achieve gender equality in the labour market (e.g. equal access to jobs and top decision-making roles), in education (e.g. achieving gender parity in education), in access to health and

in an array of other target areas, with the aims of reducing gender-based violence and discrimination, and empowering women and girls. SDG 8 also seeks to promote the collection and dissemination of sex disaggregated data on other labour-market indicators, including on employment, unemployment, informal employment and rates of those not in education, employment or training.

The report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 briefly discusses the methodology and data used in this study, Chapter 3 presents the main findings of the study and, finally, Chapter 4 concludes.

2 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

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The study analyses the gender pay gap and other labour-market inequalities in the region using quantitative techniques from labour economics, including regression analysis, quantile regression analysis, Oaxaca–Blinder decomposition and segregation indices. These methodologies disentangle multifaceted factors contributing to the gender pay gap to understand the drivers of gender-based labour-market disparities in the region.

The **raw** or **unadjusted gender pay gap** is the difference between the average pay earned by women and men in the labour market, expressed as a percentage of the average pay for men:[7]

$$\text{Gender pay gap} = \frac{\text{(Men' average pay - women's average pay)}}{\text{(Men's average pay)}} \times 100\%$$

Such a raw gender pay gap hides important information about how personal and labour-market characteristics affect the wage differential. Thus, the Mincerian earnings function[8] is used to analyse wages as a function of the productive capacity of an individual. The Mincerian earnings function takes the form::

$$ln(y_t) = \alpha + \beta_1 gender_i + \sum \gamma_j * X'_t + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where $ln(y_t)$ is the log of the hourly wage of person i; $gender_i$ is a dummy variable, taking a value of 1 for women and 0 for men; and X'_t is a vector of other individual and labour-market characteristics (including education, age and its square, experience, tenure, occupation and sector).[9] The coefficient β_1 measures the **adjusted** gender pay gap. If the vector of explanatory variables X'_t is not included, then β_1 would measure the **unadjusted** gender pay gap, i.e. the calculation would estimate only a simple difference of logged mean wages.

Specifically, the empirical models estimated are:

$$ln(y_t) = \alpha + \beta_1 gender_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

$$ln(y_t) = \alpha + \beta_1 gender_i + \beta_2 age_i + \beta_3 age\_squares_i + \beta_4 education_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (3)$$

$$ln(y_t) = \alpha + \beta_1 gender_i + \beta_2 age_i + \beta_3 age\_squares_i + \beta_4 education_i + \beta_5 marrital\_status_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (4)$$

$$ln(y_t) = \alpha + \beta_1 gender_i + \beta_2 age_i + \beta_3 age\_squares_i + \beta_4 education_i + \beta_5 marrital\_status_i + \beta_6 sectors_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (5)$$

$$ln(y_t) = \alpha + \beta_1 gender_i + \beta_2 age_i + \beta_3 age\_squares_i + \beta_4 education_i + \beta_5 marrital\_status_i + \beta_6 occupations_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (6)$$

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$$ln(y_t) = \alpha + \beta_i gender_i + \beta_2 age_i + \beta_3 age\_squares_i + \beta_4 education_i + \beta_5 marrital\_status_i + \beta_6 sectors_i + \beta_7 occupations_i + \beta_8 informal\_job_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (8)$$

where notations are self-explanatory.

A regression estimate of the raw pay gap is performed using Equation 2, with gender being the only explanatory variable. In Equation 2, age and its square, and education, represented by three levels – (1) primary or lower, (2) secondary and (3) tertiary or higher – are added as individual characteristics to explain the gender pay gap. Note that information on work experience or tenure was not available from the survey used for this study. In Equation 4, marital status is added, represented by two levels: (1) married and (2) single and other individuals. In Equation 5, occupation dummies (reference category: managers) are added and occupations are defined using the one-digit International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08) classification.[10] In Equation 6, instead of occupation, sector dummies (reference category: agriculture) are added and sectors are defined using the one-digit Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE) Rev.2 classification.[11] In Equation 7, both sector and occupation dummies are added. Finally, in Equation 8, an indicator of whether or not a job is undertaken with or without written contract (formality status) is added. For estimation, ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates were used.

The study also estimates the gender pay gap at different percentiles of the pay distribution. The quantile regression was developed as a semi-parametric method used to analyse pay, considering pay structure and distribution.[12] While OLS estimates report the mean effects, the quantile regression method allows for the study of the marginal effects of covariates on the dependent variable at various points in the pay distribution, not only the mean. Hence, in this work, quantile regression is used, providing estimates of the gender pay gap for each of the 10 deciles along the pay distribution, as well as for the top centile. The algorithm developed by Koenker and Bassett,[13] which is based on conditional quantile regressions, is followed.

The sociologist and demographer Evelyn Kitagawa first introduced decomposition techniques in 1955.[14] The standard decomposition technique, widely applied to the gender pay gap, was introduced to economics by Oaxaca[15] and Blinder.[16] The method enables the decomposition of the mean differences in log wages based on linear regression models in a counterfactual manner. The procedure divides the pay differential between women and men into two parts: one that is "explained" by group differences in productivity characteristics, such as education or work experience; and a residual part (the "unexplained" part) that cannot be accounted for by such differences in pay determinants. This "unexplained" part is often used as a measure of discrimination, but it also includes the effects of group differences in unobservable characteristics. More information about this methodology can be found in Fortin et al., 2011.[17]

Although the analysis focuses on the gender pay gaps, other indicators relating to gender inequalities in labour markets in East and Southern Africa are also used and calculated. The first part of the analysis is to observe the gender employment gap, which is the difference between the employment rates among women and men, expressed in percentage points (p.p.). Furthermore, employment shares per sector, occupation or formality status of the job are used, which are calculated for wage employees only. Using such indicators related to employment, the aim is to capture the differences in the

attachment to the labour market by the two genders, reflecting two important ideas. The first idea is that women are usually less attached to the labour market and, hence, less frequently in employment than men because of the traditional roles that they need to undertake in the household and in taking care of children and the elderly, i.e. unpaid care work. The second idea is the fact that, when employed, women tend to be segregated into specific occupations that are frequently low status and hence lower paid.

Also calculated is the gender hours gap, which is the difference in hours worked between women and men, expressed in "hours". Capturing this difference in hours has two important roles. The first is to draw attention to the differences in gender pay gaps calculated on a monthly versus an hourly level. The basic definition of the gender pay gap uses the average hourly wages of women and men, because wages at monthly levels reflect differences in hours worked (per week or per month), in addition to differences in individual and job characteristics. This leads to the second role of this analysis. It highlights that women work shorter hours than men in paid work. This is because women invest more time in unpaid care activities, hence reducing the time they have available for paid working hours. In addition to this, hours worked are analysed by sector and occupation.

Note that negative values of gaps indicate that women are in a worse position than men.

Horizontal gender segregation is analysed using the Duncan Segregation Index.[18] This is a measure of occupational or sectoral segregation based on gender that gauges whether or not there is a larger than expected presence of one gender over the other in a given occupation or sector. Intuitively, it shows the share of employed women and men who would need to change places with one another across industries (occupations) for their distribution to become identical.[19] A Duncan Segregation Index value of 0 indicates perfect gender integration within the workforce, while a value of 1 indicates perfect gender segregation. The analysis delves deeper into the "managers" occupational group to investigate vertical segregation, where it was provided beyond the one-digit level. The shares of women and men in each sub-occupation are calculated, to obtain an indication of whether or not women are less represented than men at the very top of the occupational ladder.

This study uses data from Mauritius's Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey 2019. This survey comprises 11,280 households and 37,382 individuals, of whom 25,179 are aged 15–64 years and are included in the analysis of employment. While the Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey 2019 is not the primary survey for labour-market analysis, it includes a section on labour-market outcomes.

The determination of employment status is based on specific conditions, including if the individual was engaged in any work for pay, profit or family gain during the reference week, even if only for one hour; if the individual participated in activities from a specified list, such as agriculture, crafts and housing; and if the individual was absent from work during the reference week for a period not exceeding three months. The wage analysis relies on reported basic salary in the last month, provided by 12,639 wage employees. This includes 269 individuals with zero wages (typically apprentices or new hires) and nine with missing hours; however, these individuals have been excluded from further analysis. Therefore, a sample of 12,361 individuals constitutes the data set used for wage analysis. To calculate hourly wages, the monthly reported wage is divided by the average hours per week worked, adjusted for the monthly level.

3 RESULTS

3 RESULTS

3.1 Employment structure

The employment rate in Mauritius is 63.2 per cent for individuals aged 15–64 years and 55.2 per cent for individuals aged 15 years or over. This is similar to the employment rate of the country for 2019 of 55.3 per cent as reported by the World Development Indicators for individuals aged 15 years or over. **Table 1** looks at the employment rate by gender and shows that the employment rate among women is lower than among men, with an employment gap of 29.4 p.p. Mauritian women with the lowest levels of education and in the oldest age group face much lower employment rates than men.

Table 1

Employment rates of women and men, by age and educational level

	Employment rate (%)		Gender employment gap (p.p.)
	Men	Women	
Employment rate	78.0	48.6	–29.4
Age group (years)			
15–24	41.4	27.2	–14.2
25–49	91.9	63.5	–28.4
50–64	79.2	37.6	–41.6
Educational level			
Primary or less	82.0	39.7	–42.3
Secondary	76.5	43.9	–32.6
Tertiary or more	77.6	66.7	–10.9

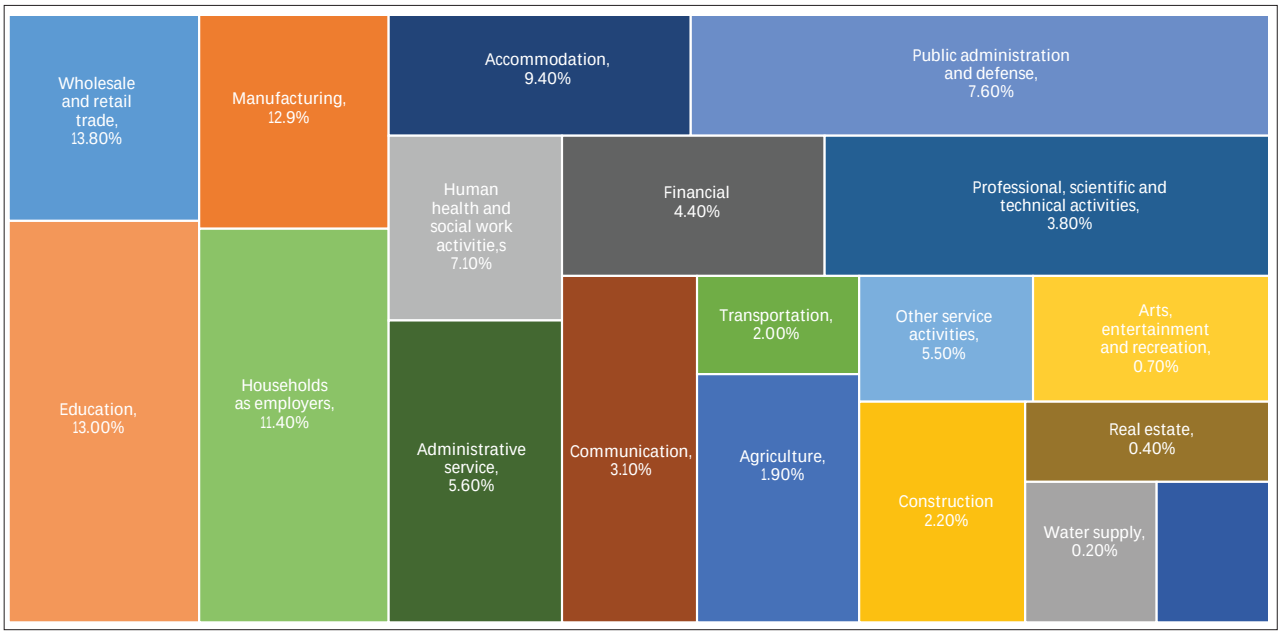
Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

Figure 1 shows the sectors that account for the majority of women's employment, in terms of women's wage employment in each sector as a percentage of women's total wage employment. Wholesale and retail trade (13.8 per cent), education (13 per cent) and manufacturing (12.9 per cent) are the top three sectors for women's employment in the country. Meanwhile, the top three sectors for men's wage employment are public administration and defence (13.5 per cent), construction (13.1 per cent) and manufacturing (12.1 per cent) (**Figure 2**). Furthermore, within care sectors, women exhibit clear dominance. Specifically, the sector households as employers accounts for 11.4 per cent of women's employment but only 1.1 per cent of men's employment; the education sector accounts for 13 per cent of women's and only 4.8 per cent of men's employment; and the health and social work sector accounts for 7.1 per cent of women's and 3.4 per cent of men's employment. **Figures 3** and **4** show women's and men's employment shares by occupation. Services and sales work account for the majority of employment for both women and men. About 21.5 per cent of women and 19.5 per cent of men are employed in services and sales occupations. In addition to these occupational classes, Mauritian women are predominantly employed in

high- and medium-skilled occupations, for instance as professionals (16.2 per cent) and technical professionals (12.5 per cent), as well as in clerical support work (15.6 per cent). On the other hand, after services and sales work, men work most often in craft and related trade occupations (19.8 per cent) and as technical professionals (11.5 per cent) and professionals (10 per cent). There is no apparent difference in the shares of women and men in formal and informal wage employment (**Table A.1**). However, it is important to note that the feminization of informal jobs may be more apparent if data were available on contributing family members.

Figure 1

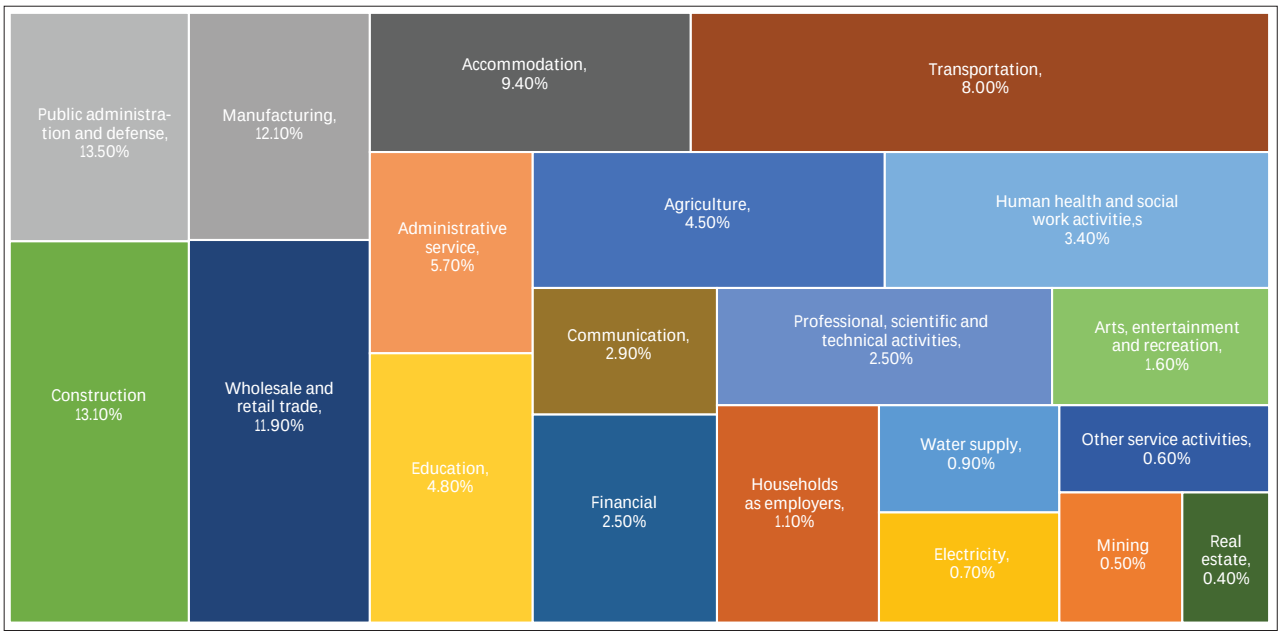
Women's share of wage employment by sector, as a percentage of women's total employment



Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

Figure 2

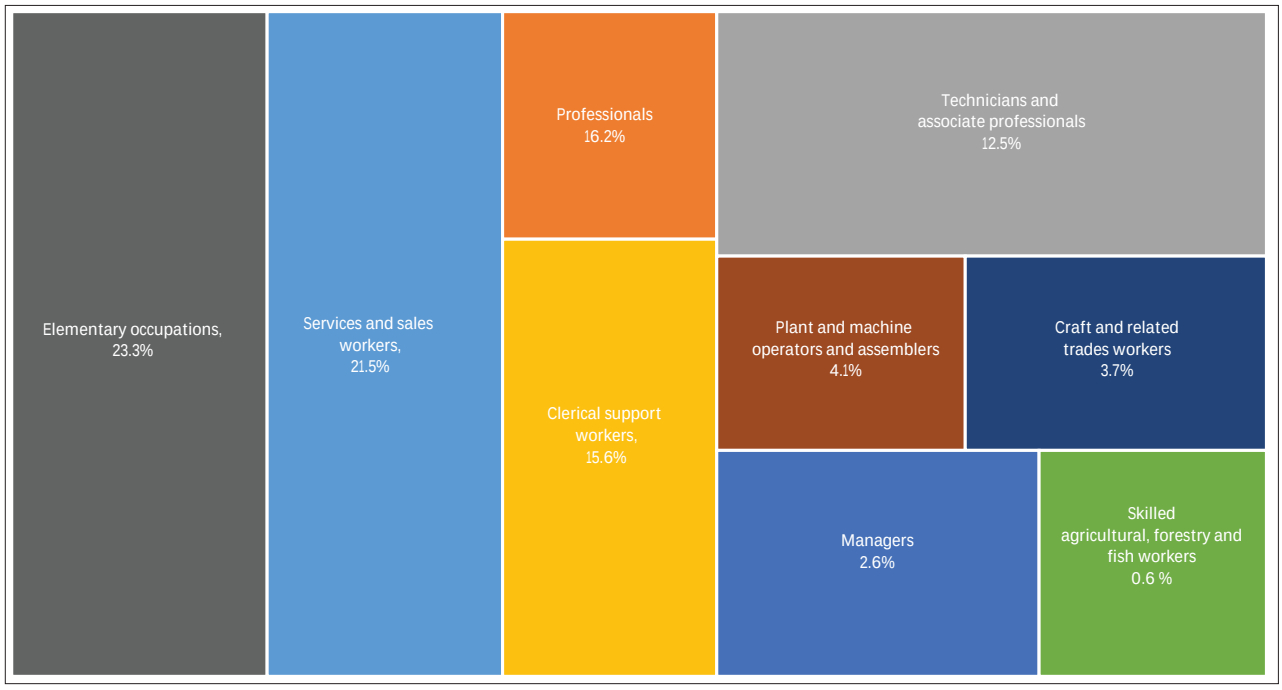
Men's share of employment by sector, as a percentage of men's total employment



Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

Figure 3

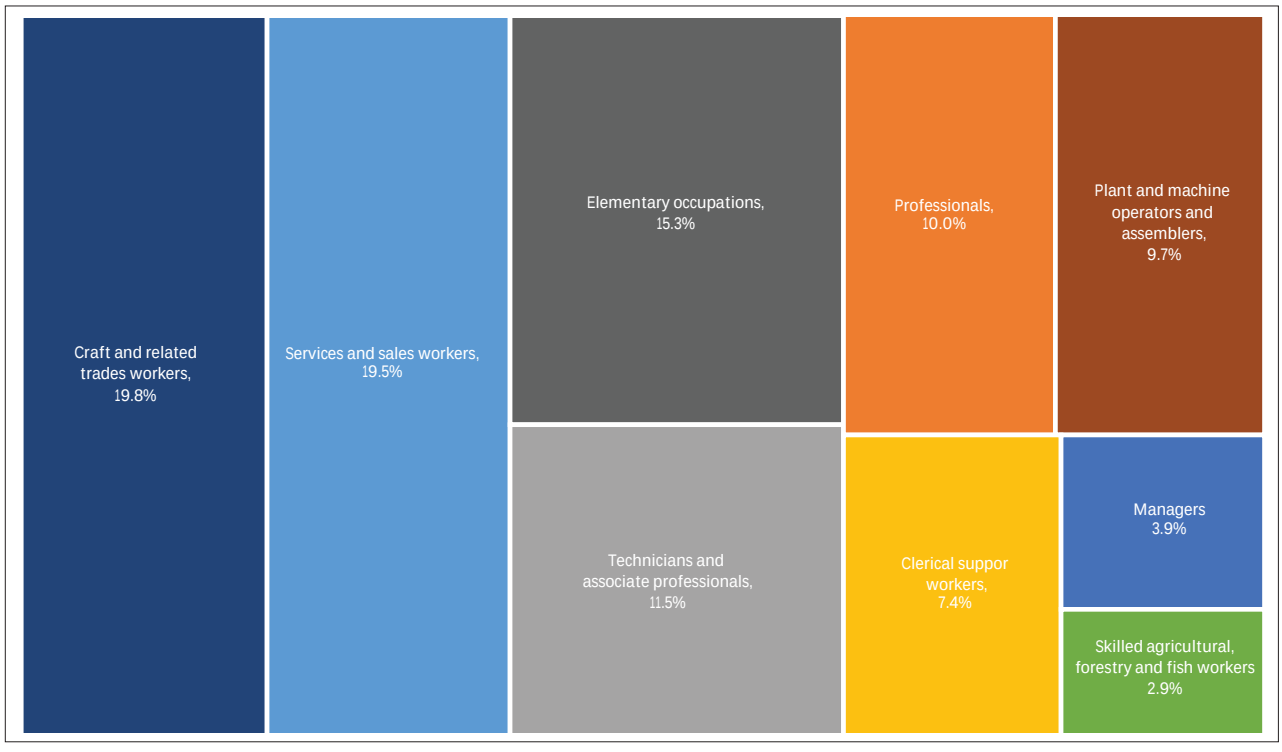
Women's share of employment by occupation, as a percentage of women's total employment



Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

Figure 4

Men's share of employment by occupation, as a percentage of men's total employment



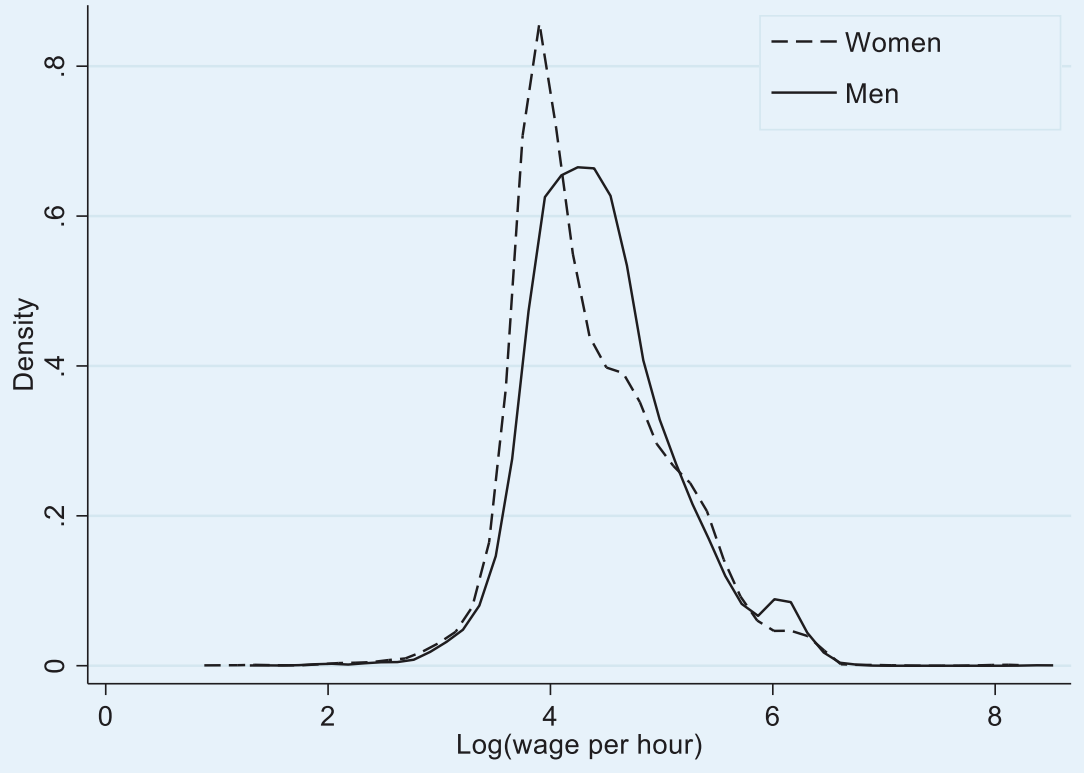
Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

3.2 Raw gender pay gap

Figure 5 shows the distribution of the log hourly wages of women and men. The dashed line, representing women, is, in general, to the left of the solid line, representing men, suggesting that women are more likely to earn lower wage levels than men.

Figure 5

Distribution of log hourly wages, by gender



Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

The raw gender pay gap in Mauritius is 27.2 per cent when considered at the monthly level and 11.3 per cent when considered at the hourly level (**Table 2**). This suggests that, on average, women work significantly shorter hours than men in Mauritius. From this point onwards, only the hourly gender pay gap is considered. Although a gender pay gap exists for all levels of education, it decreases with educational level. The gap is widest among individuals with a primary educational level, at 27.1 per cent, and narrowest among those with a tertiary educational level, at 4.2 per cent. The gender pay gap is also affected by marital status: the gap is almost non-existent but positive for single individuals, at 0.6 per cent, while married individuals face a negative gender pay gap of 19.4 per cent.

Table 2

Log wages and raw gender pay gaps, by educational level and marital status

	Men	Women	Gender pay gap (%)
Log monthly wages	9.681	9.409	–27.2
Log hourly wages	4.472	4.359	–11.3
Log wage per hour, by educational level			
Primary or less	4.167	3.896	–27.1
Secondary	4.327	4.147	–18.0
Tertiary or above	4.89	4.848	–4.2
Log wage per hour, by marital status			
Single	4.283	4.289	0.6
Married	4.598	4.404	–19.4

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

Table 3 shows the log wages and raw gender pay gaps by sector and shows that the gaps vary significantly by sector. The gaps are widest in the sectors manufacturing (31.3 per cent); electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (35.4 per cent); and financial and insurance activities (36.4 per cent). Women are more represented in the manufacturing sector (although the difference is minimal) and the financial sector, while men are more represented in the electricity sector. On the other hand, the most substantial positive gaps, at 29.4 per cent in water supply, 20.4 per cent in construction and 22.6 per cent in transportation and storage, occur in sectors where men dominate. The presence of a positive gap could be attributed to the limited representation of women in these sectors.

Table 3

Log wages and raw gender pay gaps, by sector

Sector	Log wages per hour		Gender pay gap (%)
	Men	Women	
All	4.472	4.359	–11.3
Agriculture	4.258	4.018	–24.0
Mining and quarrying	4.279	4.348	6.9
Manufacturing	4.277	3.964	–31.3
Electricity	5.085	4.731	–35.4
Water supply	4.415	4.709	29.4
Construction	4.227	4.431	20.4
Wholesale and retail trade	4.226	4.053	–17.3
Transportation	4.472	4.698	22.6
Accommodation and food service activities	4.259	4.03	–22.9

Sector	Log wages per hour		Gender pay gap (%)
	Men	Women	
Information and communication	4.942	4.684	–25.8
Financial and insurance activities	5.096	4.732	–36.4
Real estate activities	4.732	4.705	–2.7
Professional, scientific and technical activities	4.91	4.723	–18.7
Administrative service	4.114	4.159	4.5
Public administration and defence	4.872	4.994	12.2
Education	5.248	4.995	–25.3
Human health and social work activities	4.709	4.534	–17.5
Arts, entertainment and recreation	4.399	4.284	–11.5
Other service activities	4.071	3.988	–8.3
Activities of households as employers	4.089	3.966	–12.3
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	5.375	na	na

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

Note: *NA refers to Not Applicable.*

Table 4 presents the raw gender pay gaps by occupation. A gender pay gap is present across all occupations, with the most pronounced disparity observed for the occupational class plant and machine operators and assemblers, at 42.3 per cent. Despite a slight underrepresentation of women in managerial positions, the gender pay gap in the managers occupational class is minimal, at 1.9 per cent. Among women-dominated occupations, the gap fluctuates significantly, from 23.5 per cent for professional occupations to an almost non-existent gap of 0.5 per cent for clerical support jobs.

Table 4

Log wages and raw gender pay gaps, by occupation

Occupation	Log wage per hour		Gender pay gap (%)
	Men	Women	
All	4.472	4.359	–11.3
Managers	5.484	5.465	–1.9
Professionals	5.274	5.039	–23.5
Technicians and associate professionals	4.83	4.733	–9.7
Clerical support workers	4.505	4.5	–0.5
Services and sales workers	4.314	3.991	–32.3
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish workers	4.164	3.902	–26.2
Craft and related trades workers	4.195	4	–19.5
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	4.248	3.825	–42.3
Elementary occupations	4.167	3.968	–19.9
Elementary occupations	2.345	2.19	–15.5

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

Table 5 ppresents the raw gender pay gaps by formality status of wage employment and shows that women in formal employment, despite being represented equally to men, experience a more pronounced gender pay gap than women in informal employment. Specifically, the gender pay gap is 15.8 per cent in formal employment and only 4.3 per cent in informal employment.

Table 5

Log wages and raw gender pay gaps, by formality status of wage employment

	Log wage per hour		Gender pay gap (%)
	Men	Women	
All	4.472	4.359	–11.3
Formal	4.427	4.269	–15.8
Informal	4.53	4.487	–4.3

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

3.3 Adjusted gender pay gap

Table 6 shows regression estimates for log wages, corresponding to estimates derived from Equations 2–8. Row (1) reports the raw gender pay gap previously discussed. The

adjusted gender pay gap in Mauritius is 15.1 per cent, as shown in row (7), which is 3.8 p.p. larger than the raw gender pay gap. Although this might seem peculiar, it suggests that working women, on average, have better personal characteristics than working men and/or work in better paid sectors/occupations. Consequently, it implies that factors related to personal characteristics and job attributes alone do not explain the gender pay gap in Mauritius.

The coefficients are analysed group by group. Row (2) adds only personal characteristics and suggests that education offers positive returns, as a secondary educational level brings a higher wage than a primary educational level, by about 36.3 per cent, indicating that wages grow concavely with age (**Table A.2**). Row (3) adds marital status and this reveals that, after controlling for other personal characteristics, married individuals receive a 12.3 per cent higher wage than single individuals, on average.

In row (4), the addition of sector indicators has minimal impact on the gender pay gap. With the exception of the sectors accommodation, other services and households as employers – which are sectors that predominantly comprise women – most sectors exhibit higher wages than agriculture (the reference category). This observation suggests that the gender pay gap is not substantially influenced by the inclusion of sector indicators, except for by including indicators for sectors where women are disproportionately represented and earn lower wages (**Table A.2**). The addition of sectors reduces the influence of personal characteristics, indicating the possibility of sectoral segregation based on education. Row (5), which adds occupations, amplifying the adjusted gender pay gap to 19 per cent, reveals that women in the workforce tend to occupy higher-paying occupations than their male counterparts. This finding is supported by the diminishing coefficients on education, indicating a correlation between occupational segregation and educational attainment (**Table A.2**). When personal characteristics, sectors and occupations are put together (row (6)), the gap reduces to 15.1 per cent, which indicates that there is some sectoral/occupational segregation by educational level.

Table 6

Adjusted gender pay gap (regression results on log hourly wages)

Row No.	Particular		Coefficient	Standard error
(1)	**Raw/ Unadjusted GPG**		–0.113***	(0.013)
(2)	**Adjusted GPG**	Personal characteristics only	–0.136***	(0.011)
(3)		Personal + marriage	–0.138***	(0.010)
(4)		Personal + sector	–0.136***	(0.011)
(5)		Personal + occupation	–0.190***	(0.010)
(6)		Personal + sector + occupation	–0.151***	(0.010)
(7)		All (personal + sector + occupation + informality)	–0.151***	(0.010)

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

Note: **, ** and *** represent statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively. Results robust to heteroskedasticity. For detailed regression results, refer to Table A.2.*
GPG, gender pay gap.

3.4 Gender pay gap decomposition

Table 7 presents the Oaxaca–Blinder decomposition of the gender pay gap in Mauritius and concludes that personal and labour-market characteristics do not explain the gap, as the explained part is statistically insignificant. The unexplained part of the gap, capturing 14.9 per cent of the gender pay gap, may be driven by factors not measured in the data set, such as structural differences between women and men in bargaining power and social networks, as well as labour-market discrimination.

Table 7

Oaxaca–Blinder decomposition of the gender pay gap

	Average log hourly wages
Men	4.472***
	(0.008)
Women	4.359***
	(0.010)
Difference (raw pay gap)	0.113***
	(0.013)
Explained part, i.e. explained by characteristics	–0.00087
	(0.017)
Unexplained part	0.149***
	(0.012)
Interaction of the two parts	–0.0350**
	(0.016)

Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

Note: **, ** and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively. Standard errors given in parentheses. Results robust to heteroskedasticity.*

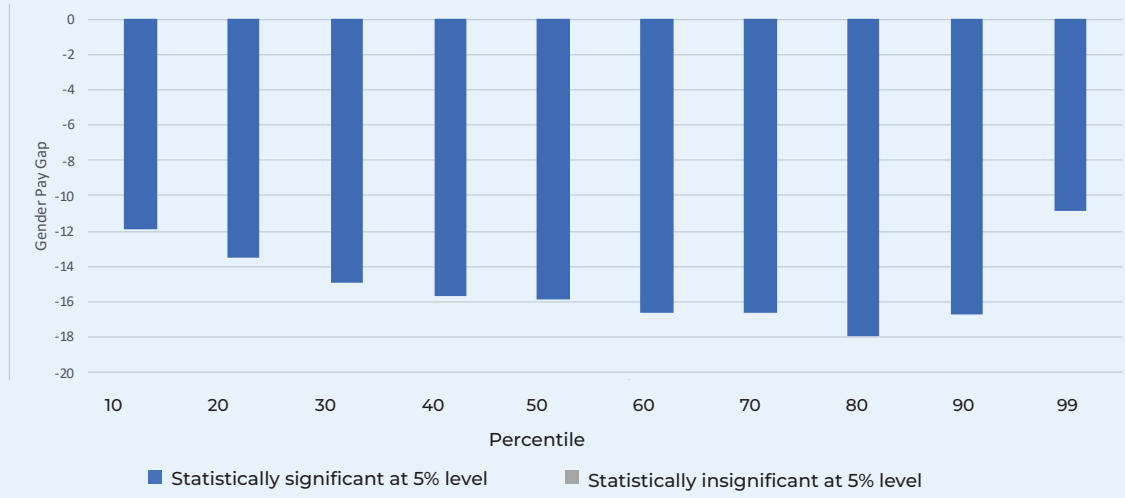
3.5 Adjusted gender pay gap by percentile

Understanding the gender pay gap at different points of the wage distribution can be used to examine the prevalence of a sticky floor and glass ceiling in the economy. A sticky floor refers to a labour market where workers, usually women, in low-paying jobs have low job mobility and face barriers to career advancement. A glass ceiling refers to impediments that prevent women from accessing top managerial and leadership positions. Figure 6 presents the adjusted pay gap through deciles (and the top centile). The gender pay disparity is large and statistically significant across all wage levels and it increases along the wage ladder. Notably, the gap is smaller than the average gender pay gap for the lowest three deciles, which suggests that there is no sticky floor in Mauritius. On the other hand, the largest gap, at 17.9 per cent, is observed at the eight decile. This disparity may be due to the overrepresentation of women in certain high- and medium-skill occupations, where they receive lower wages than men. The gap stands at 16.7 per cent for the nineth decile and at 10.9 per cent

for the top 1% earners; as the gap is larger than the average at the top of the wage distribution, there is evidence for a glass ceiling.

Figure 6

Adjusted gender pay gap by decile and top percentile



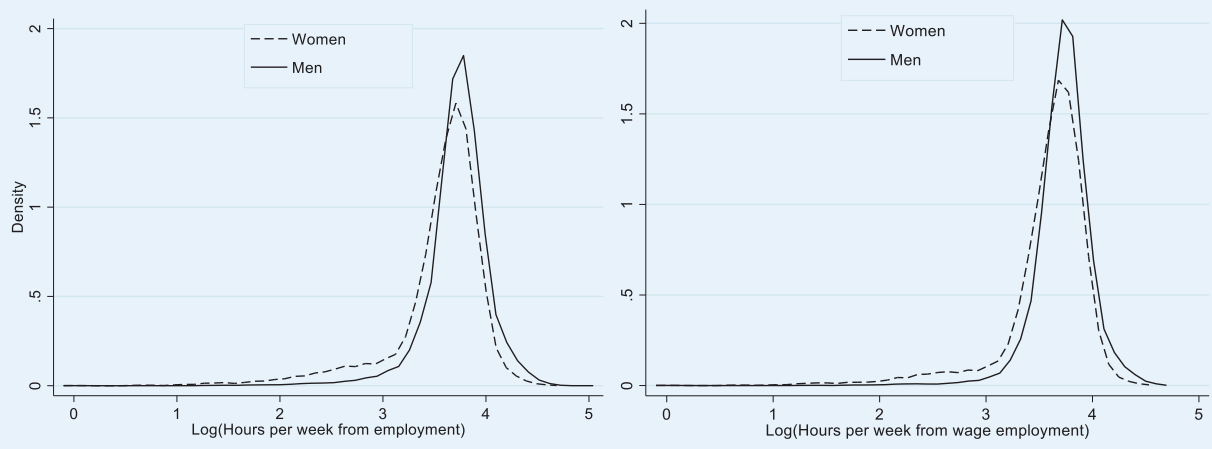
Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly*

3.6 Gender differences in hours worked in paid employment

Figure 7 presents a density distribution of hours worked by women and men in total employment and in only paid wage employment. Women work fewer hours than men along the entire distribution, i.e. for both short and long working hours, when both total and wage employment are considered.

Figure 7

Hours worked by women and men in employment (left) and in wage employment (right)

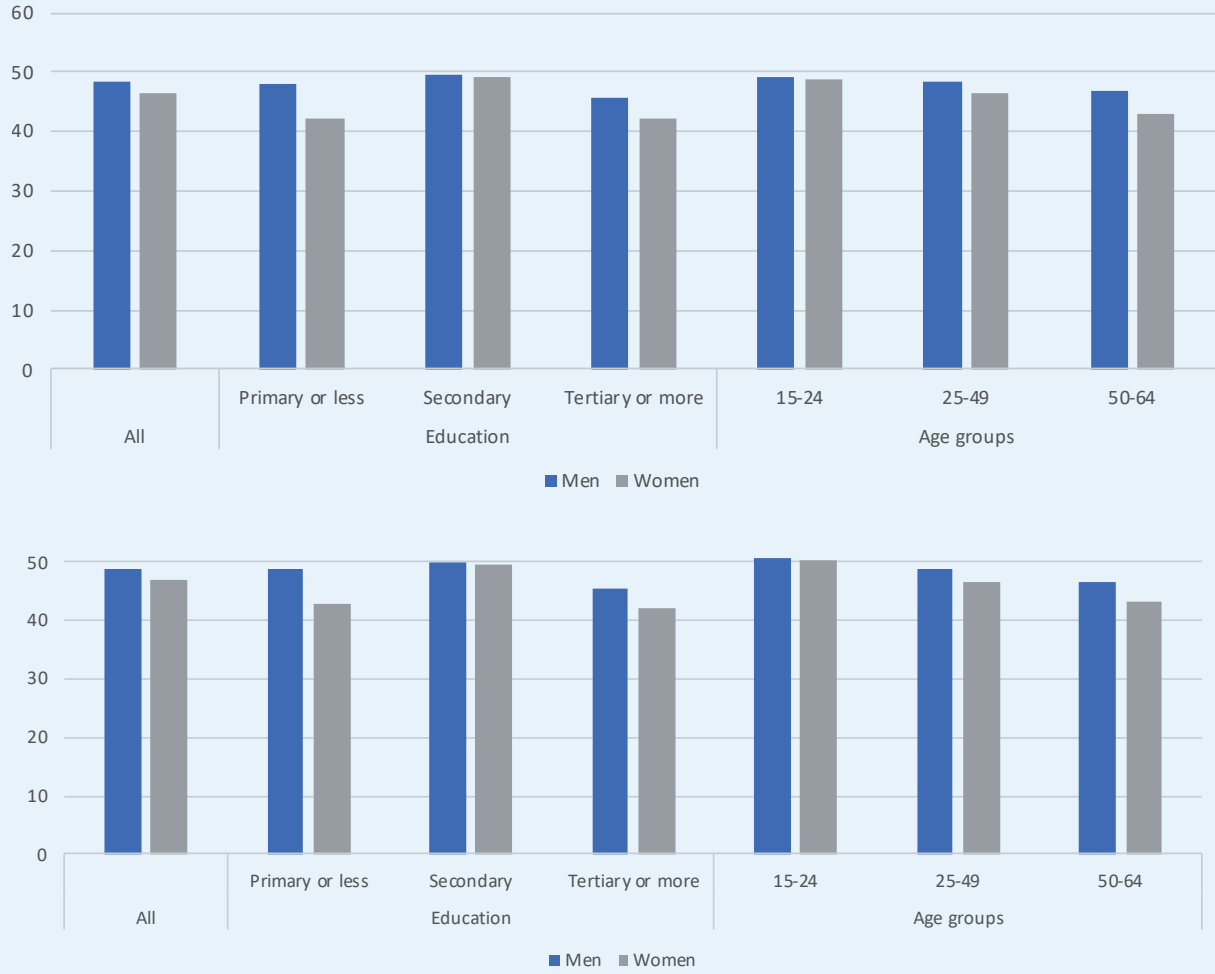


Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

Figure 8 (top) shows that women work fewer hours in total employment and wage employment than their male counterparts. The gap is widest among primary-educated individuals and individuals in the oldest age group (50–64 years).

Figure 8

Hours worked by women and men weekly, by age and education, in total employment (top) and wage employment (bottom)



Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

In the remainder of this chapter, only hours worked in wage employment are considered, as hours could be matched with sector/occupation for wage employees only. **Table 8** shows that hours spent on paid work in each sector vary by gender. Women work shorter hours in all sectors. The hours gap is smaller in women-dominated sectors such as education and human health and social activities, at 1.66 per cent and 1.53 per cent, respectively. By occupation, the gap is widest in elementary occupations, at 7.87 per cent. In terms of formality status, women work fewer hours in both formal and informal employment, although the difference is more stark in informal employment.

Table 8

Average hours worked per week and gender gaps in hours, by gender, sector, occupation and formality status

	Men	Women	Gender gap in hours
Sector			
Agriculture	39.04	29.98	–9.06
Mining and quarrying	43.93	33.91	–10.02
Manufacturing	44.14	43.26	–0.88
Electricity	42	36.26	–5.74
Water supply	43.58	35.06	–8.52
Construction	42.89	38.7	–4.19
Wholesale and retail trade	44.14	43.61	–0.53
Transportation	45.12	40.86	–4.26
Accommodation and food service activities	46.86	42.97	–3.89
Information and communication	41.07	39.94	–1.13
Financial and insurance activities	40.89	38.34	–2.55
Real estate activities	43.27	36.34	–6.93
Professional, scientific and technical activities	40.75	37.93	–2.82
Administrative service	48.03	42.02	–6.01
Public administration and defence	40.01	35.47	–4.54
Education	33.47	31.81	–1.66
Human health and social work activities	43.29	41.76	–1.53
Arts, entertainment and recreation	42.96	39.75	–3.21
Other service activities	41.1	39.02	–2.08
Activities of households as employers	29.23	24.02	–5.21
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	41	na	na
Occupation			
Managers	44.17	39.79	–4.38
Professionals	37.53	34.27	–3.26
Technicians and associate professionals	41.94	39.72	–2.22
Clerical support workers	41.76	39.05	–2.71
Services and sales workers	47.79	42.84	–4.95
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish workers	37.32	30.84	–6.48
Craft and related trades workers	42.98	41.43	–1.55
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	44.48	44.28	–0.2
Elementary occupations	39.95	32.08	–7.87

	Men	Women	Gender gap in hours
Formality status			
Formal	44.67	41.36	–3.31
Informal	40.25	32.75	–7.5

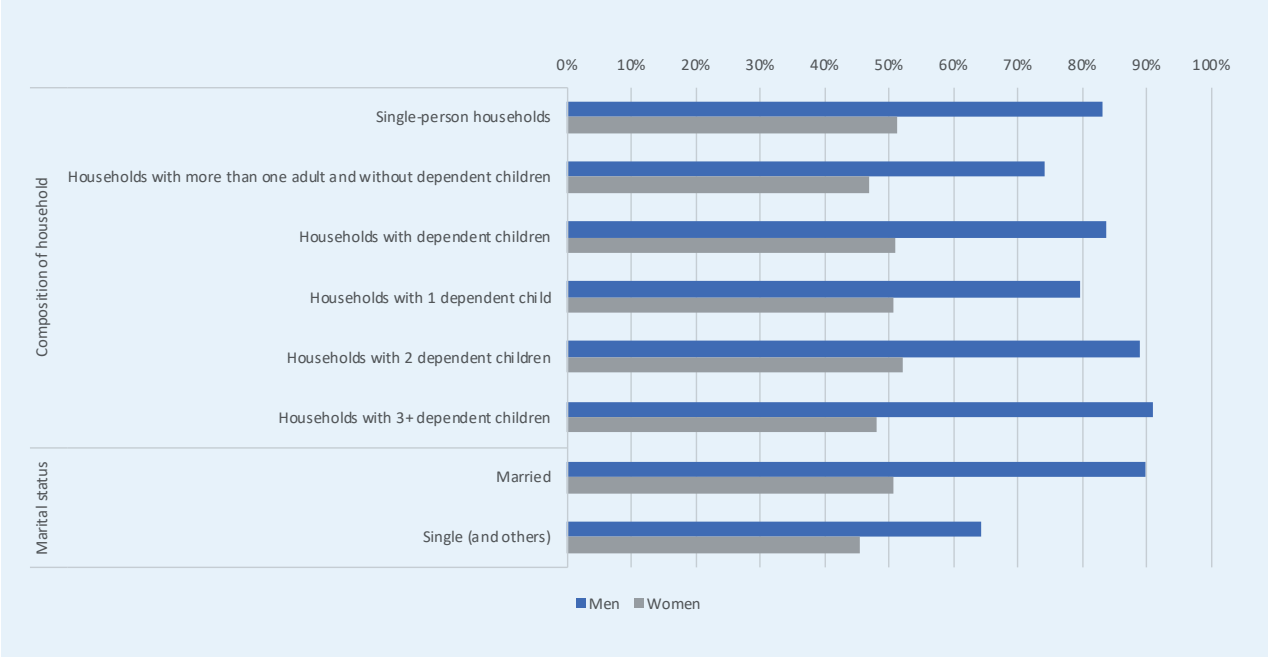
Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*
Note: *NA refers to Not Applicable.*

3.7 Gender inequality related to household structure and marital status

Figure 9 presents the labour-market status of both women and men by household type. For all the household types, employment rates are lower among women than among men. The gender pay gap is smallest in households with more than one adult and no children, at 27.3 p.p., and is largest in households with three or more children, at 42.8 p.p. By marital status, the difference is stark: married individuals face a gender employment gap of 39.2 p.p., while among single individuals the gap is only 18.8 p.p.

Figure 9

Employment rates of women and men, by household type and marital status



Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly*

These numbers are broken down by age in **Table 9**. In general, the gender employment gap increases with age, from 14.2 p.p. for the age group 15–24 years to 41.6 p.p. for the age group 50–64 years. The gender employment gap is largest for households with three or more children in the age group 50–64 years, at a staggering 57.2 per cent. Similarly, the gender pay gap increases for the 15–24 years and 25–49 years age groups with number of children. This suggests that the presence of children increases women's caring responsibilities more than it increases men's caring responsibilities. By marital status, the gender employment gap is larger in absolute terms among married

individuals than among single individuals across all age groups. Interestingly, the gap is largest for the age group 15–24 years, at 53.5 per cent.

Table 9

Employment rates and gender employment gaps, by gender, household type, marital status and age group

	Aged 15–24 years			Aged 25–49 years			Aged 50–64 years		
	Men (%)	Women (%)	Gender employment gap (p.p.)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Gender employment gap (p.p.)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Gender employment gap (p.p.)
Composition of household									
Single-person households	78.5	na	na	90.1	81.4	–8.7	77.5	45.7	–31.8
Households with more than one adult and without dependent children	42.7	30.9	–11.8	87.8	65.8	–22.0	77.8	38.2	–39.6
Households with dependent children	38.7	21.2	–17.5	95.8	61.7	–34.1	84.2	33.1	–51.1
Households with one dependent child	36.8	20.7	–16.1	94.5	64.4	–30.1	85.5	36.2	–49.3
Households with two dependent children	38.7	19.3	–19.4	97.1	60.6	–36.5	75.8	25.0	–50.8
Households with three or more dependent children	56.4	29.4	–27.0	97.0	53.3	–43.7	90.9	33.7	–57.2
Marital status									
Married	92.0	38.5	–53.5	96.7	59.5	–37.2	81.6	36.1	–45.5
Single (and others)	40.0	26.2	–13.8	85.3	75.1	–10.2	68.3	41.2	–27.1
Total	41.4	27.2	–14.2	91.9	63.5	–28.4	79.2	37.6	–41.6

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

A similar correlation between the gender employment gap and household structure can be found when the data are broken down by educational level (Table 10). The gender employment gap reduces with educational level, but the existence of children in the household results in the same pattern as previously, i.e. the presence of children in the household widens the gender employment gap, indicating that the presence of children increases women's caring responsibilities more than it increases men's caring responsibilities. Even for tertiary-educated individuals in households with three and more children, the gender employment gap stands at 30 p.p. The gender employment gap among married individuals is almost twofold that of single individuals, for all educational levels, although the gap reduces with educational level.

Table 10

Employment rates and gender employment gaps, by gender, household type, marital status and educational level

	Primary or less			Secondary			Tertiary or more		
	Men (%)	Women (%)	Gender employment gap (p.p.)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Gender employment gap (p.p.)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Gender employment gap (p.p.)
Composition of household									
Single-person households	85.2	45.9	–39.3	84.3	52.4	–31.9	74.2	76.9	2.7
Households with more than one adult and without dependent children	77.4	35.8	–41.6	73.0	42.8	–30.2	73.7	64.9	–8.8
Households with dependent children	88.2	45.5	–42.7	81.0	44.9	–36.1	84.6	69.3	–15.3
Households with one dependent child	86.5	44.6	–41.9	76.8	46.6	–30.2	79.3	65.4	–13.9
Households with two dependent children	89.9	45.7	–44.2	86.9	42.6	–44.3	91.4	77.3	–14.1
Households with three or more dependent children	91.6	49.5	–42.1	88.4	43.1	–45.3	95.8	65.8	–30.0
Marital status									
Married	86.3	38.7	–47.6	90.9	47.4	–43.5	93.2	76.8	–16.4
Single (and others)	71.5	42.0	–29.5	62.2	38.2	–24.0	64.7	57.6	–7.1
Total	82.0	39.7	–42.3	76.5	43.9	–32.6	77.6	66.7	–10.9

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

3.8 Segregation by gender

Table 11 pesents the Duncan Segregation Index values. Overall, the occupational segregation value is 0.26, while the sectoral segregation value is 0.31, reflecting medium levels of gender segregation in Mauritius. This means that about a third of women and men employees would need to change places across occupational categories and across sectors for distribution to become identical. However, the index values suggest that both occupational and sectoral segregation decline with educational level.

Table 11

Horizontal gender segregation index values, by occupation and sector

	All	Educational level		
		Primary or less	Secondary	Tertiary or above
Occupation	0.255	0.390	0.305	0.227
Sector	0.306	0.438	0.347	0.261

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

4 CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

4 CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this study was to calculate and shed light on the gender pay gap and other labour-market inequalities in Mauritius. Strikingly, there is a 29.4 p.p. employment gap between women and men, with women facing lower employment rates, particularly those with lower levels of education and in the older age group. Among the employed population, women consistently work fewer hours than men. The raw gender pay gap in Mauritius is 27.2 per cent at the monthly level and 11.3 per cent at the hourly level, highlighting differences in working hours. The unadjusted gender pay gap is seen across all educational levels, being widest among primary-educated individuals and narrowest for tertiary-educated individuals. In terms of marital status, the gender pay gap is notably larger among married individuals than among single individuals. After accounting for individual and labour-market characteristics, the gender pay gap increases, to give an adjusted gender pay gap of 15.1 per cent.

A significant portion of the gender pay gap (14.9 p.p.) is not explained by personal and labour-market characteristics, indicating that unmeasured factors such as differences in motivation, bargaining power, social networks and labour-market discrimination affect the gender pay gap in Mauritius. Occupational and sectoral horizontal segregation levels are medium, and about a third of women and men would need to switch occupational categories and sectors for distributions to become equal. Notably, occupational and sectoral segregation is most pronounced among primary-educated individuals. The gender pay gap varies across different wage deciles, revealing a pronounced glass ceiling effect.

Closing the gender pay gap and addressing other labour-market inequalities is important for improving women's socioeconomic position and achieving social justice for more than half of the world's population. However, as this study highlights, the gender pay gap and other labour-market inequalities are complex issues influenced by various factors, such as occupational segregation, differences in education and care responsibilities, discrimination and societal norms. Addressing these issues, therefore, requires a comprehensive approach that involves multiple stakeholders, including governments, employers, civil society organizations and individuals.

The Mauritian Government could strengthen existing legislation to ensure that women and men are entitled to equal remuneration for work of equal value. This includes effectively enforcing measures such as transparency in the recruitment process, for example by disallowing the collection of personal information (e.g. marital status) while hiring, prohibiting pay discrimination based on gender and promoting pay equity by making pay scales publicly available in the public and private sectors. Employers could also promote transparency in pay structures within organizations, ensuring that salary ranges, pay scales and benefits are clearly defined and communicated. Accessible and responsive complaint mechanisms could also be put in place, so that violations of the law or company policies and any discrimination can be reported.

Social protection policies, including measures such as minimum wage legislation and social security benefits, can be effective if they consider the specific needs and

vulnerabilities faced by women in the labour market. For instance, since its inception, the minimum wage law in Mauritius has been effective in addressing pay differences for earners in the lowest deciles of the earnings distribution. In fact, this might explain the lack of evidence for a sticky floor in the country. More research is required in the Mauritian context to understand the effects of minimum wage legislation. Nevertheless, policies to increase employment formalization, supporting workers' unions and social protection programmes, are also important for complementing minimum wage legislation.

Substantial sectoral and occupational segregation, as observed in Mauritius, can be challenging to tackle directly. An economy-wide approach needs to be taken to encourage the breaking down of gender segregation by promoting women's participation in non-traditional fields and sectors, where they are underrepresented. This can be done through targeted recruitment, training programmes, addressing discriminatory practices and making workplaces safer for women in traditionally "masculine" sectors. Governments and employers can also support the reintegration of women into the labour force after periods of absence, for example after maternity leave. Reintegration policies may include training programmes, upskilling opportunities and support for continuing education, enabling women to update their skills and stay competitive in the job market. This would reduce occupational segregation, wherein women are underrepresented in high-paying and competitive jobs, and minimize the negative impact of career breaks.

For an optimal result, these changes should go hand in hand with policies to recognize, redistribute and reduce women's unpaid care work responsibilities. Research has shown that unpaid care work affects women's labour-market inputs not only in terms of time spent in paid employment but also in terms of how women enter and remain in paid work. It affects their occupation selection, the quality of their jobs and their job-market attachment.[20] Policies that support work–life balance, such as flexible working arrangements, setting an upper limit to the number of working hours in the week, parental leave (where both parents are encouraged to take time off), and affordable and good-quality childcare, care for people with disabilities and elderly care, can encourage women to fully participate in the labour market. This would help to reduce the gender pay gap while also ensuring that household and caregiving responsibilities can be redistributed more equitably between men and women.

Ultimately, it is important to promote societal norms that encourage gender balance. Societal norms often assign specific gender roles and expectations, leading to the perpetuation of gender inequalities in the labour market. Thus, they affect how women and households make decisions regarding education, occupations, sectors and working hours. Societal norms can also contribute to discriminatory practices and unconscious biases that affect hiring, promotion and pay decisions. By shifting societal norms and challenging discriminatory beliefs, labour markets can become more inclusive, valuing skills and contributions over gender stereotypes.

In conclusion, achieving gender pay equality and addressing labour-market inequalities require a multifaceted approach involving various stakeholders across the economy. Better data on the pay distribution, collected at frequent intervals, would enable a better understanding of the gender pay gap in the region and inform work to advocate for policies to address it. Public policy efforts to tackle the "explained" part of the gender pay gap could prioritize enhancing educational opportunities for women and girls, promoting women's participation in high-paying and traditionally "masculine"

occupations and sectors, supporting women's labour force reintegration after career breaks and providing a robust social protection system. Tackling the "unexplained" part of the gender pay gap requires regulating the private sector, to ensure that equal compensation and equal opportunities are provided to women, and introducing interventions to break down gendered cultural norms.

Policies to recognize, reduce and redistribute women's and girls' unpaid care work responsibilities would complement all policy efforts to reduce the gender pay gap. In this way, Mauritius can unlock the full potential of its workforce, fostering socioeconomic advancement, innovation and sustainable economic growth.

ANNEX

Table A.1

Women's and men's shares in wage employment, by sector, occupation and formality status

	Men (%)	Women (%)
Sector		
Agriculture	4.5	1.9
Mining and quarrying	0.5	0.1
Manufacturing	12.1	12.9
Electricity	0.7	0.0
Water supply	0.9	0.2
Construction	13.1	0.7
Wholesale and retail trade	11.9	13.8
Transportation	8.0	2.0
Accommodation and food service activities	9.4	9.4
Information and communication	2.9	3.1
Financial and insurance activities	2.5	4.4
Real estate activities	0.4	0.4
Professional, scientific and technical activities	2.5	3.8
Administrative service	5.7	5.6
Public administration and defence	13.5	7.6
Education	4.8	13.0
Human health and social work activities	3.4	7.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.6	1.2
Other service activities	0.6	1.5
Activities of households as employers	1.1	11.4
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	0.0	0.0
Occupation		
Managers	3.9	2.6
Professionals	10.0	16.2
Technicians and associate professionals	11.5	12.5
Clerical support workers	7.4	15.6
Services and sales workers	19.5	21.5
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish workers	2.9	0.6
Craft and related trades workers	19.8	3.7
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	9.7	4.1
Elementary occupations	15.3	23.3
Elementary occupations		
Formal	56.2	59.0
Informal	43.8	41.0

Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

Table A.2

Adjusted gender pay gap (regression estimates on log hourly wages)

	Raw/ Unadjusted GPG	Adjusted GPG					
		Personal characteristics only	Personal + marriage	Personal + sector	Personal + occupation	Personal + sector + occupation	All
Dependent variable: log hourly wages							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Secondary		0.363***	0.355***	0.262***	0.204***	0.160***	0.161***
		(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Tertiary or above		1.026***	1.022***	0.756***	0.508***	0.395***	0.396***
		(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Age		0.0488***	0.0373***	0.0342***	0.0350***	0.0309***	0.0311***
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Age squared		–0.000367***	–0.000252***	–0.000239***	–0.000243***	–0.000217***	–0.000219***
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Marital status (1 = married)			0.123***	0.0920***	0.107***	0.0781***	0.0783***
			(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Mining and quarrying				0.086		0.0445	0.0468
				(0.081)		(0.068)	(0.068)
Manufacturing				–0.0656**		–0.127***	–0.124***
				(0.029)		(0.028)	(0.028)
Electricity				0.512***		0.350***	0.348***
				(0.086)		(0.078)	(0.078)
Water supply				0.054		–0.0333	–0.0364
				(0.068)		(0.061)	(0.062)
Construction				0.0337		–0.0435	–0.0448
				(0.031)		(0.031)	(0.031)
Wholesale and retail trade				–0.0397		–0.109***	–0.107***
				(0.030)		(0.029)	(0.029)
Transportation and storage				0.197***		0.123***	0.123***
				(0.034)		(0.033)	(0.033)

	Raw/ Unadjusted GPG	Adjusted GPG					
		Personal characteristics only	Personal + marriage	Personal + sector	Personal + occupation	Personal + sector + occupation	All
Accommodation				–0.0192 (0.030)		–0.0863*** (0.029)	–0.0835*** (0.029)
Information and communication				0.412*** (0.041)		0.0725* (0.039)	0.0745* (0.039)
Financial and insurance activities				0.459*** (0.041)		0.181*** (0.038)	0.182*** (0.038)
Real estate activities				0.378*** (0.092)		0.116 (0.087)	0.117 (0.087)
Professional, scientific and technical activities				0.426*** (0.041)		0.169*** (0.036)	0.170*** (0.036)
Administrative service				–0.0671* (0.036)		–0.172*** (0.033)	–0.169*** (0.033)
Public administration and defence				0.477*** (0.029)		0.427*** (0.028)	0.421*** (0.030)
Education				0.543*** (0.034)		0.227*** (0.033)	0.224*** (0.034)
Human health and social work activities				0.219*** (0.034)		0.0955*** (0.033)	0.0912*** (0.033)
Arts, entertainment and recreation				0.136*** (0.047)		–0.0168 (0.045)	–0.0154 (0.045)
Other service activities				–0.241*** (0.056)		–0.281*** (0.054)	–0.282*** (0.054)
Activities of households as employers				–0.0823** (0.034)		–0.0491 (0.033)	–0.0522 (0.034)
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies				0.485*** (0.030)		–0.254*** (0.038)	–0.252*** (0.038)
Professionals					• –0.209*** • (0.032)	–0.334*** (0.032)	–0.335*** (0.032)
Technicians and associate professionals					–0.534*** (0.031)	–0.614*** (0.030)	–0.615*** (0.030)

	Raw/ Unadjusted GPG	Adjusted GPG					
		Personal characteristics only	Personal + marriage	Personal + sector	Personal + occupation	Personal + sector + occupation	All
Clerical support workers					–0.679***	–0.763***	–0.763***
					(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Services and sales workers					–0.966***	–1.018***	–1.020***
					(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish workers					–1.079***	–1.079***	–1.081***
					(0.040)	(0.039)	(0.039)
Craft and related trades workers					–1.016***	–0.991***	–0.994***
					(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Plant and machine operators and assemblers					–1.072***	–1.066***	–1.067***
					(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Elementary occupations					–1.049***	–1.093***	–1.095***
					(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Informal worker							0.0104
							(0.012)
Constant	• 4.472***	• 2.663***	• 2.855***	2.962***	3.993***	4.183***	4.177***
	• (0.008)	• (0.059)	• (0.062)	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Observations	• 12,361	• 12,361	• 12,361	12,361	12,361	12,361	12,361
R-squared	• 0.007	• 0.369	• 0.375	0.475	0.518	0.581	0.581

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

Note: **, ** and *** represent statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively. Standard errors given in parentheses. Results robust to heteroskedasticity. GPG, gender pay gap*

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