WHY WOMEN EARN LESS

GENDER PAY GAP AND LABOUR-MARKET INEQUALITIES IN NAMIBIA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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. Namibia is an upper-middle-income country with a population of approximately 2.5 million (as at 2022).[2] Since the start of the 21st century, the country has made progress towards gender equality in terms of women's economic and political participation, formal employment and education attainment. For instance, as at February 2021, 44.2 per cent of seats in parliament were held by women.[3] Yet, the gender pay gap remains a pervasive labour-market feature in Namibia.

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.[4] Namibia successfully reduced poverty rates from 26.9 per cent in 2009 to 15.6 per cent in 2015, based on the US$2.15 per day poverty line.[5] However, despite this achievement, the country is one of the most unequal countries in the world, with a Gini coefficient of 59.1 in 2015, surpassed only by South Africa.[6] Persistent socioeconomic disparities, stemming from the historical legacy of apartheid governance, continue to be glaringly high and were exacerbated by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, impediments to growth and structural constraints have hindered both productivity gains and job creation in the country. Thus, addressing the gender pay gap would contribute to poverty reduction and reduce inequality.

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.[7] 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 Namibia. 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

2 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

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:[8]

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

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[9] is used to analyse wages as a function of the productive capacity of an individual. The Mincerian earnings function takes the form::

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

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).[10] 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:

$$ln(y_t) = \alpha + \beta_1 gender_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{2}$$

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

$$ln(y_t) = \alpha + \beta_1 gender_i + \beta_2 age_i + \beta_3 age\_squares_i + \beta_4 education_i + \beta_5 marital\_status_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{4}$$

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

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

$$ln(y_t) = α + β_1 gender_i + β_2 age_i + β_3 age\_squares_i + β_4 education_i + β_5 marital\_status_i +$$
$$β_6 sectors_i + β_7 occupations_i + ε_i \qquad (7)$$
$$ln(y_t) = α + β_1 gender_i + β_2 age_i + β_3 age\_squares_i + β_4 education_i + β_5 marital\_status_i + β_6 sectors_i$$
$$+ β_7 occupations_i + β_8 informal\_job_i + ε_i \qquad (8)$$

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.[11] 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.[12] 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[13]. 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,[14] which is based on conditional quantile regressions, is followed.

The sociologist and demographer Evelyn Kitagawa first introduced decomposition techniques in 1955.[15] The standard decomposition technique, widely applied to the gender pay gap, was introduced to economics by Oaxaca[16] and Blinder.[17] 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.[18]

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 then men.

Horizontal gender segregation is analysed using the Duncan Segregation Index.[19] 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.[20] 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 the Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2015/2016. This survey comprises 10,091 households and 41,583 individuals, of whom 23,372 are aged 15–64 years. Although not primarily designed for labour-market analysis, the survey includes a labour section. It was determined whether or not individuals had worked for pay (for at least an hour) in the last seven days, operated a business, been absent from work or engaged in agricultural work partially for sales (excluding those exclusively producing for personal use).

The initial employment category pertains to individuals working for wages with an employer, totalling 8,550. Wage information is available for 7,394 individuals, with 61 individuals with zero wage excluded. Therefore, information on wages and relevant characteristics is available for 7,333 individuals, and this forms the basis of the wage analysis. To calculate hourly wages, the time period covered by the wage (hour, day, week, month or year) is considered and divided by the average hours worked per week.

3 RESULTS

3 RESULTS

3.1   Employment structure

The employment rate in Namibia is calculated at 48.3 per cent for individuals aged 15–64 years and 45.8 per cent for individuals aged 15 years or more. This is similar to the official employment rate of the country for 2016 of 46.3 per cent as reported by the World Development Indicators for individuals aged 15 years or more. **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 10.7 p.p. Employment rates are lower among Namibian women than among Namibian men for all age and educational level groups, but the employment gap is widest among those with the lowest levels of education and in the oldest age group.

Table 1

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

	Employment rate (%)		Gender employment gap (p.p.)
	Men	Women	
Employment rate	53.9	43.2	–10.7
Age group (years)			
15–24	26.0	18.7	–7.3
25–49	71.7	59.3	–12.4
50–64	60.0	43.5	–16.5
Educational level (%)			
Primary or less	55.5	36.6	–18.9
Secondary	65.9	52.6	–13.3
Tertiary or more	90.3	84.4	–5.9

Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

As shown in **Figure 1**, 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, are households as employers (13.8 per cent), education (13 per cent) and wholesale and retail (12.6 per cent). The first two of these sectors involve care work. Agriculture (17.2 per cent), construction (16.8 per cent) and manufacturing (8.3 per cent) account for the majority of men's wage employment (**Figure 2**). **Figures 3** and **4** show women's and men's employment shares by occupation.

Elementary occupations account for the majority of employment for both women and men. About 30.1 per cent of employed women and 32.1 per cent of employed men are employed in elementary jobs. In addition to this occupational class, Namibian women are predominantly employed in medium- and high-skilled occupations, namely as clerical support workers (17 per cent), in services and sales work (16.5 per cent), as professionals (13.6 per cent), as technical professionals (8.5 per cent) and as managers (6.9 per cent). On the other hand, men, after elementary occupations, work most often

| **WHY WOMEN EARN LESS**
Gender Pay Gap and Labour-Market Inequalities in Namibia

as craft and trade workers (18.4 per cent), services and sales workers (8.9 per cent), plant and machine operators (8.5 per cent), professionals (7.6 per cent) and technical professionals (5.9 per cent). There is some difference in the shares of women and men in formal and informal wage employment, with women overrepresented in formal employment and men overrepresented in informal employment (**Table A.1**). However, it is important to note that the feminization of informal jobs may become 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
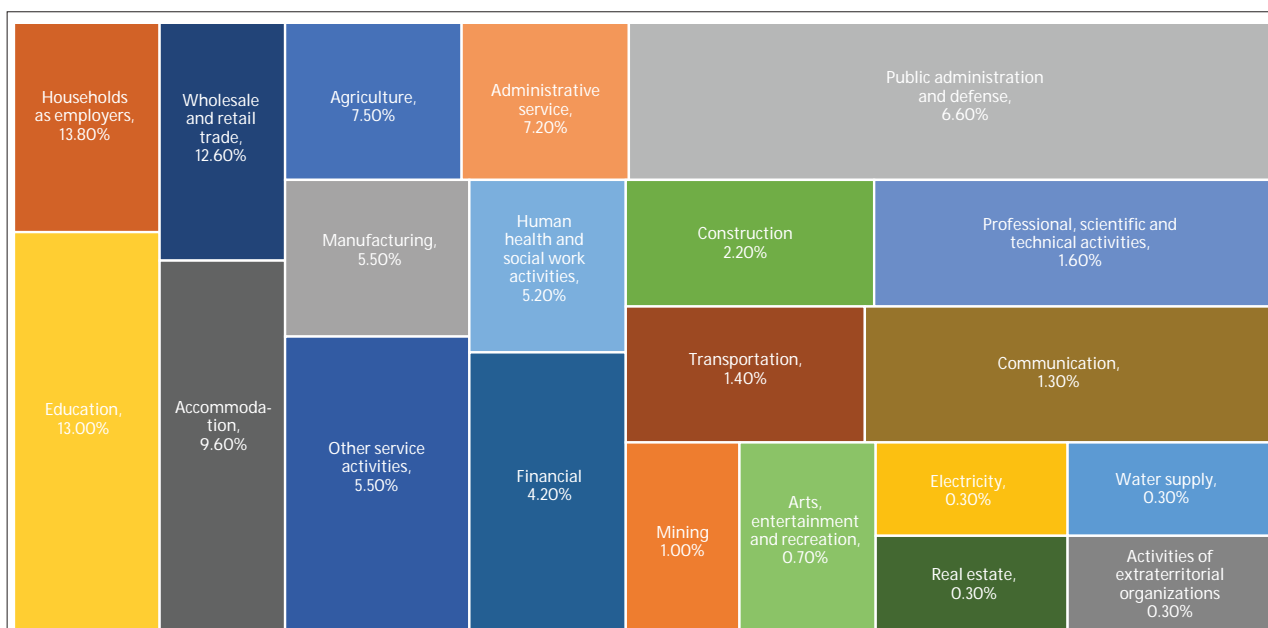
Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

Figure 2

Men's share of employment by sector, as a percentage of men's total employment
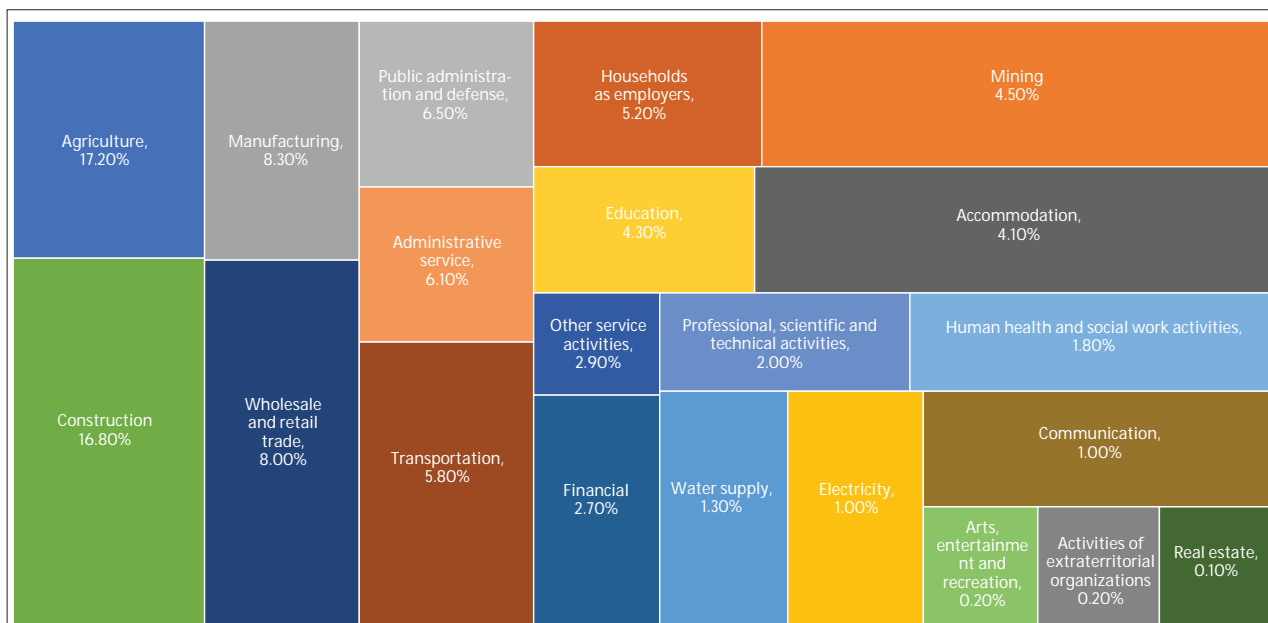
Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

Figure 3

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

Elementary occupations, 30.1%

Clerical support workers, 17.0%

Professionals 13.6%

Technicians and associate professionals 8.5%

Services and sales workers, 16.5%

Managers 6.9%

Craft and related trades workers 3.2%

Armed forces, 2.2%

Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish workers 1.4%

Plant and machine operators and assemblers 0.6%
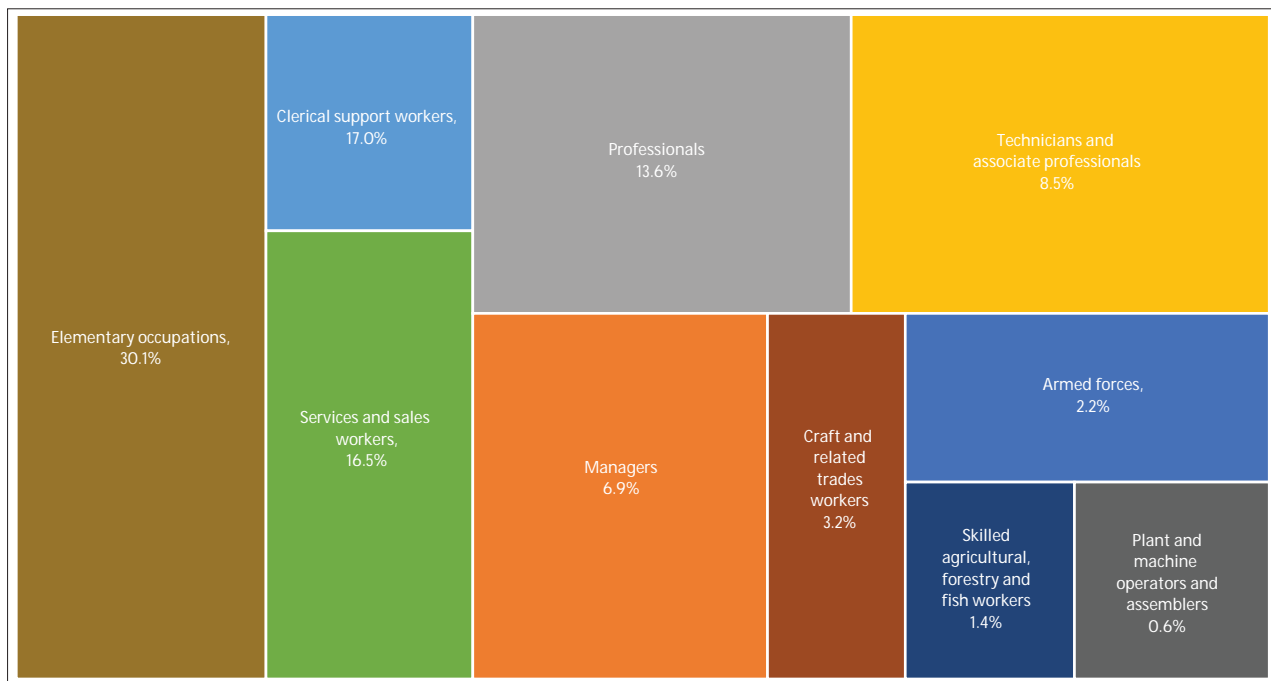
Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

Figure 4

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

Elementary occupations, 32.1%

Craft and related trades workers, 18.4%

Plant and machine operators and assemblers, 8.5%

Professionals, 7.6%

Services and sales workers, 8.9%

Technicians and associate professionals, 5.9%

Clerical suppor workers, 4.9%

Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish workers 4.5%

Managers 4.9%

Armed forces, 4.4%
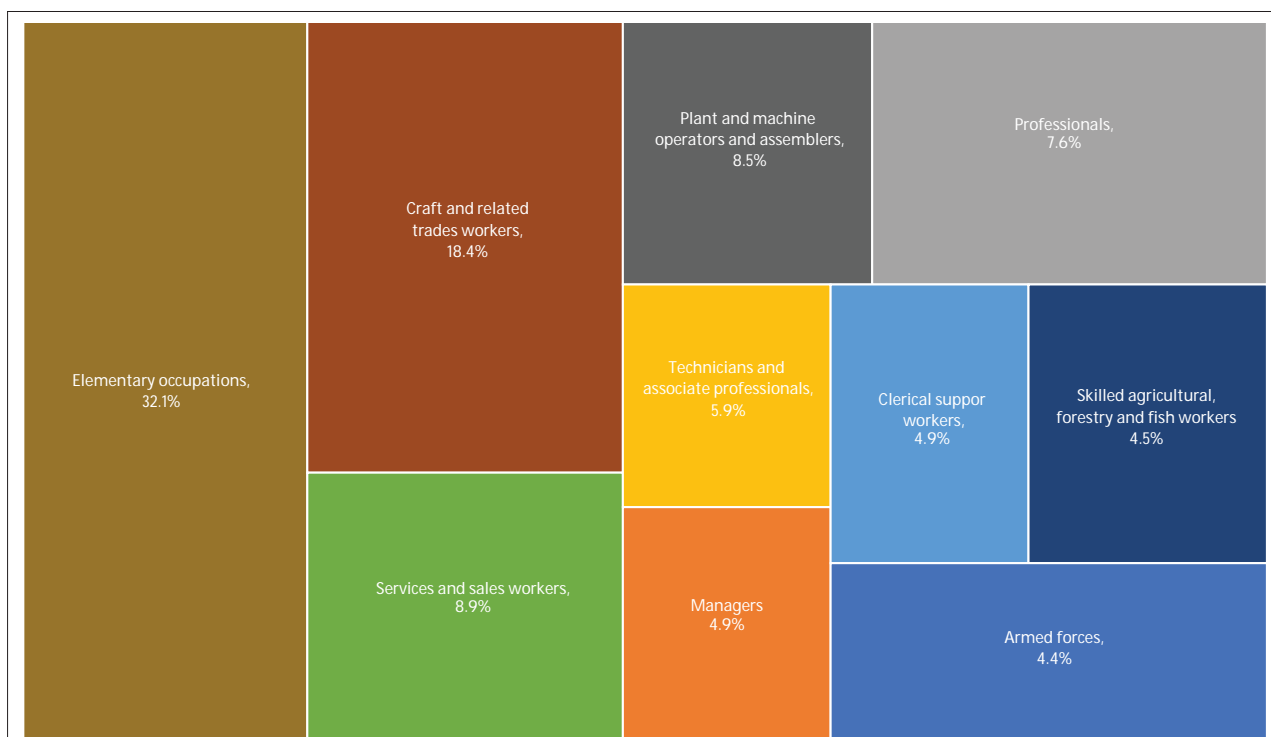
Source: *Authors' own calculations.*

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.

Interestingly, the first (of the two) peaks of the women's wage distribution, is about as high as the first peak of the men's wage distribution. The second peak of women's wage distribution is higher than the second peak of men's distribution and to its left.

Figure 5

Distribution of log hourly wages, by gender

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*
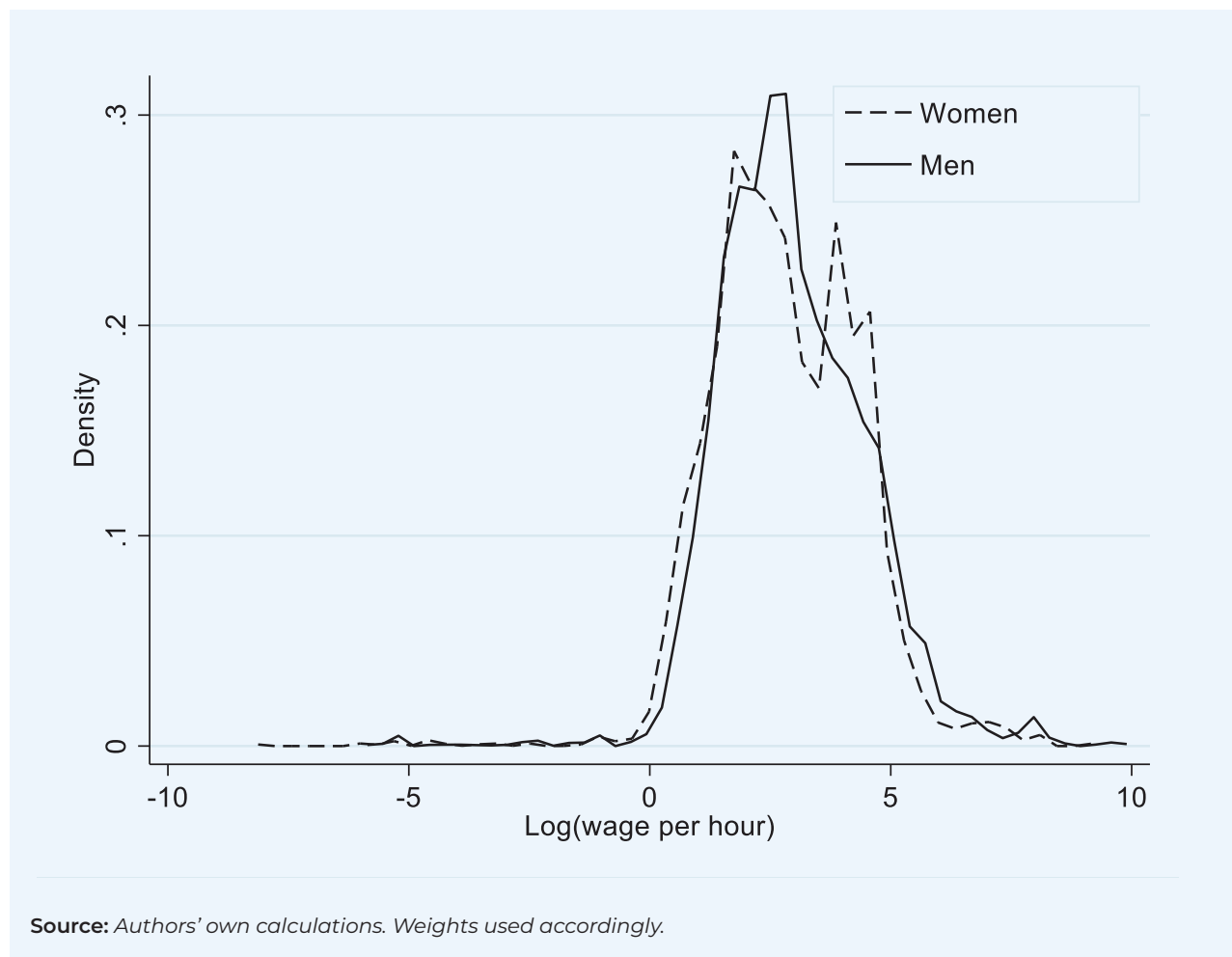
Figure 5 The raw gender pay gap in Namibia is 18.3 per cent when considered at the monthly level and 13.6 per cent when considered at the hourly level (**Table 2**). This suggests that, on average, women work shorter hours than men. From this point onwards, only the hourly gender pay gap is considered. A gender pay gap exists for all levels of education. Although it slightly decreases with educational level, the gap is still high for individuals with a tertiary educational level, at 33.3 per cent. By marital status, interestingly, the gap is smaller for married individuals than for single individuals, at 7.6 per cent and 10.9 per cent, respectively.

Table 2

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

	Men	Women	Gender pay gap (%)
Log monthly wages	3.079	2.896	–18.3
Log hourly wages	2.959	2.823	–13.6
Log wage per hour, by educational level			
Primary or less	2.259	1.859	–40.0
Secondary	2.904	2.552	–35.2
Tertiary or above	4.468	4.135	–33.3
Log wage per hour, by marital status			
Single	2.707	2.598	–10.9
Married	3.243	3.167	–7.6

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

A negative raw gender pay gap is seen in most but not all sectors (**Table 3**). In sectors where women dominate, the gap ranges from a negative 18.4 per cent for households as employers to a negative 55.4 per cent for education, with both gaps being larger than the overall gender pay gap (of negative 13.6 per cent). In sectors where men dominate, the raw gender pay gaps vary from a positive 78.2 per cent in construction, indicating that women earn 78.2 cents more per hour than men in construction, to a negative 46.2 per cent in manufacturing.

Table 3

Log wages and raw gender pay gaps, by sector

Sector	Log wages per hour		Gender pay gap (%)
	Men	Women	
All	2.959	2.823	–13.6
Agriculture	1.948	2.244	29.6
Mining	3.718	3.721	0.3
Manufacturing	3.073	2.611	–46.2
Electricity	3.473	3.415	–5.8
Water supply	3.594	3.409	–18.5
Construction	3.008	3.79	78.2
Wholesale and retail trade	2.631	2.129	–50.2
Transportation and storage	3.115	3.64	52.5
Accommodation and food service activities	2.492	1.931	–56.1
Information and communication	3.72	4.185	46.5
Financial and insurance activities	4.358	3.945	–41.3

Sector	Log wages per hour		Gender pay gap (%)
	Men	Women	
Real estate activities	2.731	3.883	115.2
Professional, scientific and technical activities	4.264	3.962	–30.2
Administrative and support service activities	3.088	2.981	–10.7
Public administration and defence	3.598	3.659	6.1
Education	4.382	3.828	–55.4
Human health and social work activities	3.341	3.692	35.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	3.5	2.407	–109.3
Other service activities	2.864	2.336	–52.8
Activities of households as employers	2.144	1.96	–18.4
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	3.781	4.105	32.4

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

Table 4 presents the raw pay gaps by occupation. Women employed as managers, service and sales workers, and plant and machine operators are paid significantly less than men (with gaps of 57.2 per cent, 61.8 per cent and 67.6 per cent, respectively). The gap is also negative for high-skill occupations, although it is smallest for professionals, where women are represented almost equally to men but earn 4.9 per cent less than their male counterparts.

Table 4

Log wages and raw gender pay gaps, by occupation

Occupation	Log wage per hour		Gender pay gap (%)
	Men	Women	
All	2.959	2.823	−13.6
Armed forces	3.59	3.716	12.6
Legislators, government officials and managers	4.411	3.839	−57.2
Professionals	4.266	4.217	−4.9
Technicians and associate professionals	4.102	3.789	−31.3
Clerical support workers	3.054	2.863	−19.1
Services and sales workers	2.477	1.859	−61.8
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	1.857	2.407	55.0
Craft and related trades workers	2.986	2.48	−50.6
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	3.127	2.451	−67.6
Elementary occupations	2.345	2.19	−15.5

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

Table 5 presents the raw gender pay gaps by formality status and reveals that women in informal employment, despite being slightly underrepresented compared with men, face a gender pay gap that is almost 3.5 times larger than the average, at 47 per cent.

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	2.959	2.823	−13.6
Formal	3.406	3.341	−6.5
Informal	2.31	1.84	−47.0

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) indicates the raw gender pay gap previously discussed. The adjusted gender pay gap in Namibia is 18.9 per cent. The observable characteristics

of individuals and job characteristics cannot explain the gender pay gap, as the adjusted gender pay gap is 5.3 p.p. higher than the raw gender pay gap.

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 higher wages than a primary educational level, by about 41.5 per cent, while a tertiary educational level leads to a 186.4 per cent increase in wages compared with a primary education (**Table A.2**). Personal characteristics cannot explain the gender pay gap, as adding them increases the gap to 25.2 per cent. This further suggests that working women have better personal characteristics than working men. Row (3) adds marital status and this reveals that, after controlling for other personal characteristics, married individuals earn 23.2 per cent higher wages than single individuals, on average.

Row (4) adds indicators for sectors, and their addition increases the adjusted gap to 16 per cent. Almost all sectors pay higher wages than agriculture (the reference category). In addition, adding sectors reduces the role of personal characteristics, which may suggest that some sectoral segregation by educational level takes place. The addition of occupations (row (5)) also increases the adjusted gap, to 26.5 per cent. At the same time, coefficients on personal characteristics declines, implying that some occupational segregation by education is also in place (**Table A.2**).

When personal characteristics, sectors and occupations are put together (row (6)), the adjusted gap increases to 18.1 per cent, which indicates that there is some sectoral/ occupational segregation by educational level. Finally, on adding an indicator for formality status (row (7)), the adjusted gender pay gap increases to 18.9 per cent. Controlling for other labour-market and personal characteristics, informal workers receive 53 per cent lower wages than formal workers (**Table A.2**).

Table 6

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

Row No.	Particular		Coefficient	Standard error
(1)	**Raw/ Unadjusted GPG**		–0.136***	–0.045
(2)	**Adjusted GPG**	Personal characteristics only	–0.252***	–0.042
(3)		Personal + marriage	–0.233***	–0.042
(4)		Personal + sector	–0.160***	–0.046
(5)		Personal + occupation	–0.265***	–0.041
(6)		Personal + sector + occupation	–0.181***	–0.044
(7)		All (personal + sector + occupation + informality)	–0.189***	–0.043

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 Namibia. The data shown suggest that personal and labour-market characteristics do not explain the gap. The explained part is small in magnitude (4.8 per cent) and statistically insignificant at the 5 per cent level. The unexplained part of the 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	2.959***
	(0.029)
Women	2.823***
	(0.034)
Difference (raw pay gap)	0.136***
	(0.045)
Explained part, i.e. explained by characteristics	0.0479
	(0.071)
Unexplained part	0.234***
	(0.045)
Interaction of the two parts	−0.146**
	(0.071)

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 gap is slightly above the average value for the lowest two deciles, which suggests the existence of a sticky floor. It then slightly decreases before increasing up the wage ladder, yet remaining close to the average gender pay gap. At the ninth decile, the gender pay gap is 33 per cent, which suggests a strong glass ceiling effect. Interestingly, the gap is statistically insignificant for the top 1 per cent of wage earners.

Figure 6

Adjusted gender pay gap by decile and top percentile

Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly*
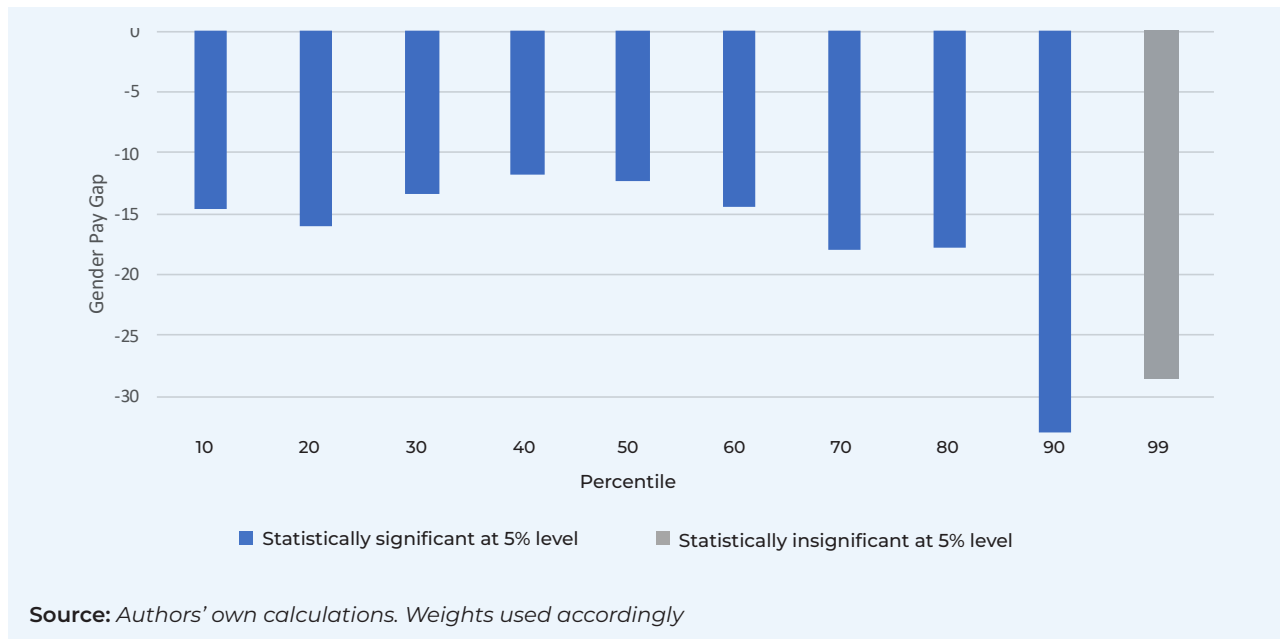
3.6   Gender differences in hours worked in paid employment

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 total employment is considered. However, the hours gap is wider when hours from total employment are considered than when hours from only wage employment are considered, which reveals that most of the hours gap is derived from non-wage employment.

Figure 7

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

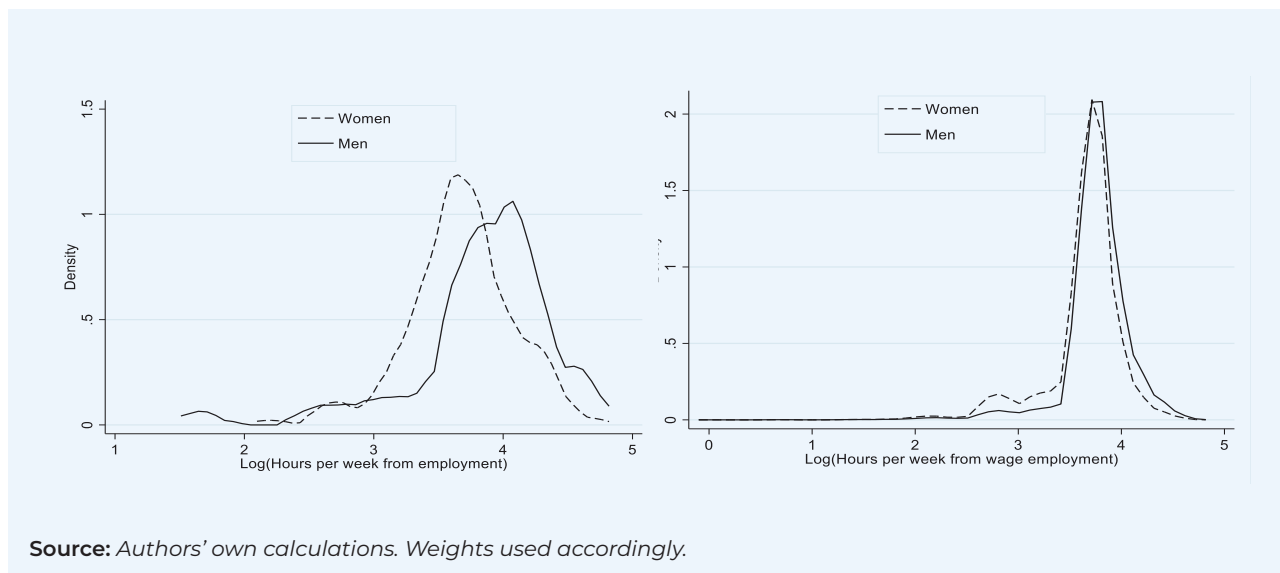**Source:** *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly.*

Figure 8 shows that women work fewer hours than men in both total employment and wage employment. The gap is widest among primary-educated individuals and individuals in the oldest age group.

Figure 8

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.*
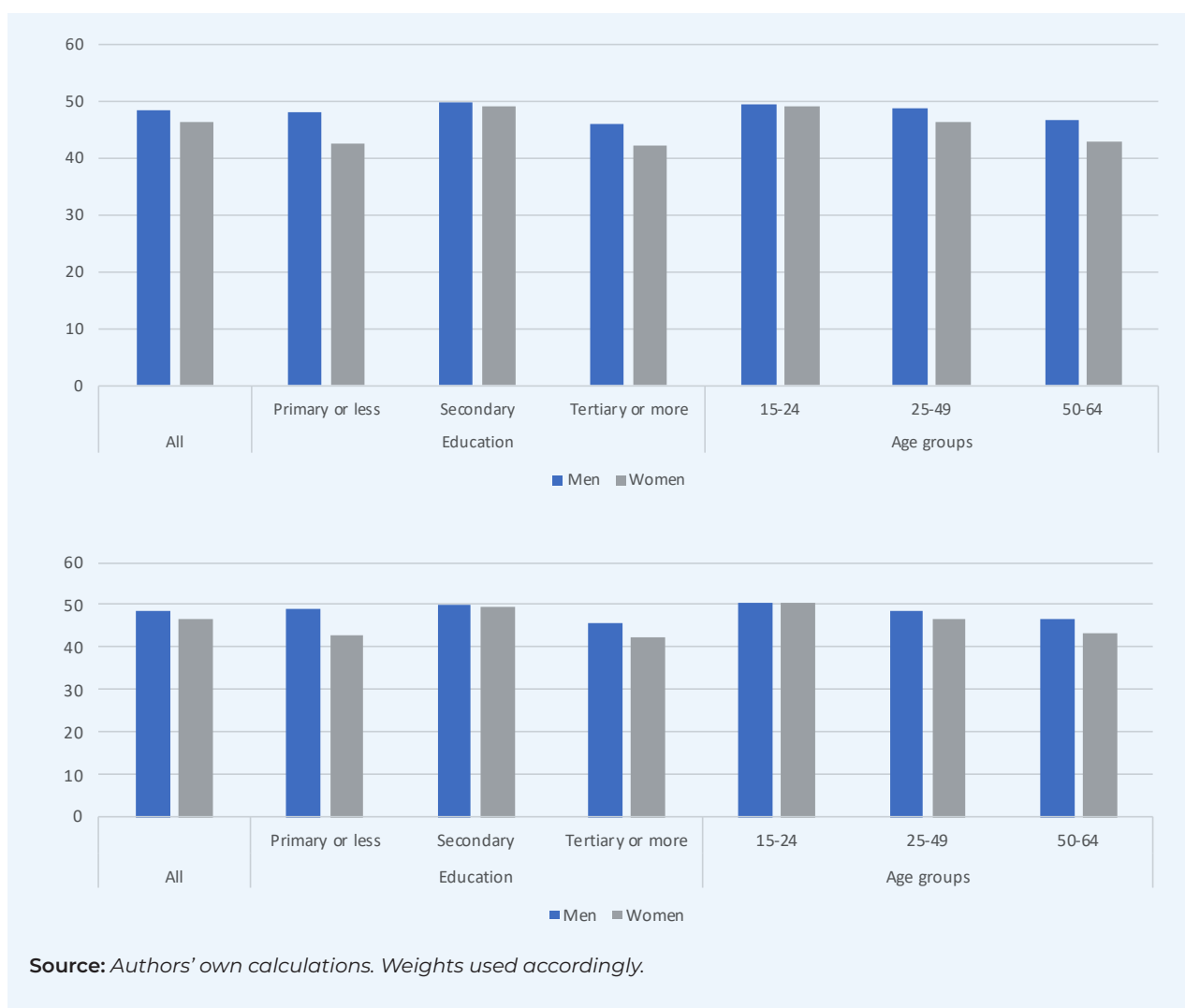
In the remainder of this chapter, only hours worked in wage employment are considered, as hours could be matched with sector/ occupation for wage employees only. **Table 8** shows that hours spent on paid work in each sector vary by gender. The hours gap is smaller in most women-dominated sectors, but in wholesale and retail trade, arts, entertainment and recreation and activities of extraterritorial organizations the hours gap is positive, i.e. women earn more than men on an hourly basis and work for longer hours in these sectors. Women and men work similar hours in managerial occupations; however, women tend to work shorter hours in other high-skilled occupations, such as professional and technical professional occupations, despite being overrepresented in these jobs. In terms of formality status, women work longer hours in informal jobs, although the difference is small, and shorter hours in formal jobs.

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	50.38	45.35	–5.03
Mining	50.68	43.64	–7.04
Manufacturing	46.02	47.38	1.36
Electricity	46.4	39.24	–7.16
Water supply	41.04	44.25	3.21
Construction	45.86	46.3	0.44
Wholesale and retail trade	51.19	56.75	5.56
Transportation and storage	58.7	45.39	–13.31
Accommodation and food service activities	54.22	56.03	1.81
Information and communication	46.22	44.76	–1.46
Financial and insurance activities	45.48	41.92	–3.56
Real estate activities	49.02	41.1	–7.92
Professional, scientific and technical activities	45.14	40.25	–4.89
Administrative and support service activities	54.61	48.08	–6.53
Public administration and defence	49.58	45.44	–4.14
Education	37.73	38.17	0.44
Human health and social work activities	52.04	45.1	–6.94
Arts, entertainment and recreation	38.96	52.26	13.3
Other service activities	53.29	52.67	–0.62
Activities of households as employers	40.16	40.51	0.35
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	43.6	49.82	6.22
Occupation			
Armed forces	53.44	49.27	–4.17
Managers	45.67	45.29	–0.38
Professionals	42.06	39.58	–2.48
Technicians and associate professionals	46.68	43.33	–3.35
Clerical support workers	48.19	49.63	1.44
Services and sales workers	59.86	57.76	–2.1
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish workers	48.05	49.93	1.88
Craft and related trades workers	46.17	46.1	–0.07
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	56.39	47.99	–8.4
Elementary occupations	47.3	43.41	–3.89
Formality status			

|	Men	Women	Gender gap in hours
Formal	49.18	45.36	–3.82
Informal	48.18	49.54	1.36

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

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 household types, employment rates are lower among women than among men. The gap is largest, interestingly, for households of more than one adult with no children, at 12 p.p., and smallest for households with two dependent children, at 3.1 p.p. By marital status, the difference is stark: the gender employment gap among married individuals is 23.8 p.p., while among single individuals it is 4.9 p.p.

Figure 9

Employment rates of women and men, by household type and marital status
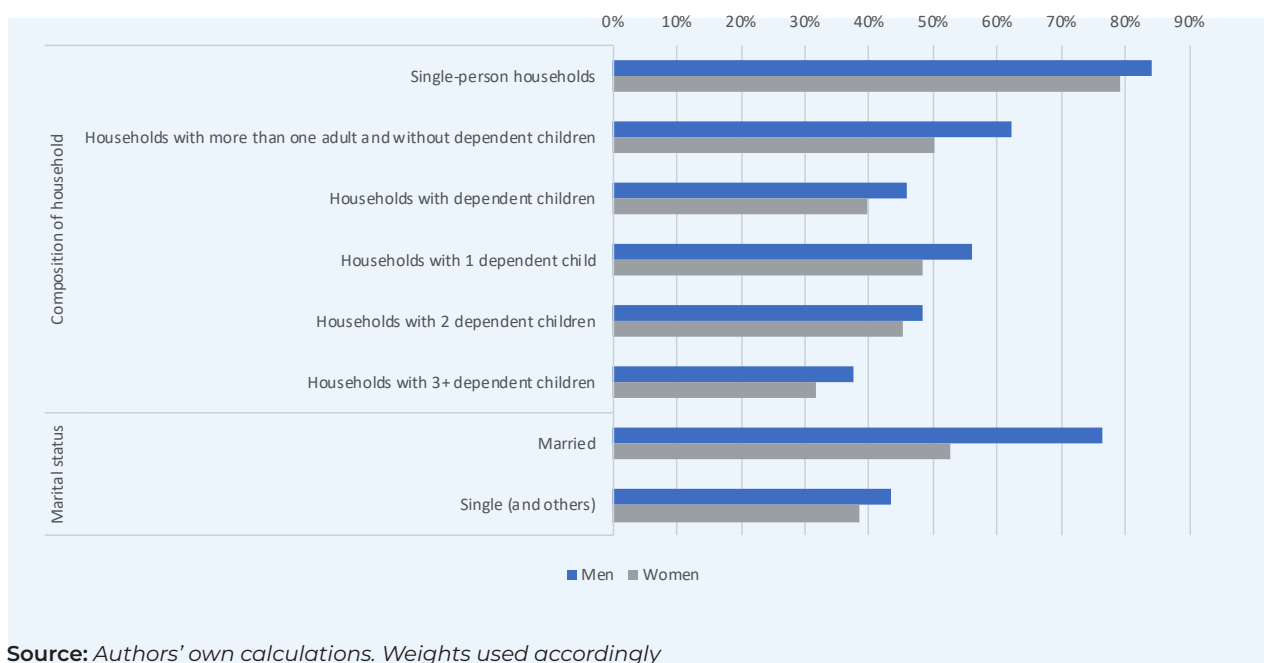
Source: *Authors' own calculations. Weights used accordingly*

These numbers are broken down by age in **Table 9.** The gender employment gap grows with age. For single-person households, it is largest for the age group 15–24 years and smallest but positive, at 0.1 p.p., for the age group 25–49 years. Interestingly, for the age group 15–24 years, after single individuals, the gap is the largest for households with more than one adult and without dependent children (12.4 per cent) and smallest for households with two dependent children. On the other hand, for the age group 25–49 years, the gender employment gap is largest among households with three or more dependent children (12.8 per cent) and smallest for households with two dependent children (6.8 per cent), excluding single-person households. Overall, the largest

employment gap is for the age group 50–64 years, totalling 16.5 per cent. By marital status, the gender employment gap is larger in absolute terms among married individuals than among single individuals across all age groups.

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	79.5	56.2	–23.3	87.5	87.6	0.1	73.4	56.7	–16.7
Households with more than one adult and without dependent children	38.1	25.7	–12.4	74.8	66.0	–8.8	69.9	50.6	–19.3
Households with dependent children	18.8	16.4	–2.4	66.8	55.6	–11.2	51.9	40.9	–11.0
Households with one dependent child	23.9	21.5	–2.4	74.8	64.8	–10.0	61.3	48.4	–12.9
Households with two dependent children	19.9	20.2	0.3	69.0	62.2	–6.8	48.2	40.6	–7.6
Households with three or more dependent children	16.0	12.3	–3.7	58.8	46.0	–12.8	46.3	37.1	–9.2
Marital status									
Married	62.9	33.3	–29.6	82.4	58.3	–24.1	62.7	42.4	–20.3
Single (and others)	24.9	17.2	–7.7	63.8	60.2	–3.6	51.7	44.7	–7.0
Total	26.0	18.7	–7.3	71.7	59.3	–12.4	60.0	43.5	–16.5

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

In general, the gender employment gap declines with educational level in Namibia (**Table 10**). For the primary educational level group, the gap is, interestingly, largest among single-person households and households without dependent children, at 21 per cent and 21.8 per cent, respectively.

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	81.7	60.7	–21.0	84.2	87.1	2.9	97.9	94.1	–3.8
Households with more than one adult and without dependent children	65.1	43.3	–21.8	70.0	58.7	–11.3	90.6	81.8	–8.8
Households with dependent children	46.8	35.0	–11.8	60.4	48.6	–11.8	87.9	84.1	–3.8
Households with one dependent child	57.2	40.6	–16.6	68.7	57.5	–11.2	88.6	87.5	–1.1
Households with two dependent children	45.5	39.6	–5.9	61.3	51.7	–9.6	87.5	86.3	–1.2
Households with three or more dependent children	42.1	31.0	–11.1	52.5	40.2	–12.3	87.4	78.2	–9.2
Marital status									
Married	64.8	37.1	–27.7	81.2	56.4	–24.8	93.9	84.8	–9.1
Single (and others)	49.1	36.1	–13.0	57.7	50.5	–7.2	85.7	83.9	–1.8
Total	55.5	36.6	–18.9	65.9	52.6	–13.3	90.3	84.4	–5.9

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

3.8   Segregation by gender

Table 11 presents Duncan Segregation Index values. The occupational segregation value is 0.3, while the sectoral segregation value is 0.37, reflecting modest-to-high levels of gender segregation in Namibia. This means that about a third of women and men employees would need to change places across occupational categories for distribution to become identical, and almost two in five would need to do this for distribution to become equal across sectors.

By educational level, the index values suggest that levels of occupational and sectoral segregation are highest among primary-educated individuals. In this group, about a third of women and men employees would need to switch jobs across occupations and 50 per cent across sectors for their distribution to become identical.

Table 11

Horizontal gender segregation index values, by occupation and sector

	All	Educational level		
		Primary or less	Secondary	Tertiary or above
Occupation	0.303	0.328	0.304	0.238
Sector	0.371	0.499	0.348	0.362

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

Table 12 shows the composition of occupational group 1, which includes legislators and managerial workers and is considered the highest-skill occupational group as per the ISCO-08. Women are only slightly underrepresented as legislators and general managers and slightly overrepresented as corporate managers compared with men. For the group overall (i.e. legislators, government officials and managers), the gender pay gap is significant, at 57.2 per cent (**Table 4**). In addition, the gender pay gap is insignificant among the top 1 per cent of earners, although it was found to be largest and significant among the ninth decile of earners, suggesting a glass ceiling effect (**Table 9**). Overall, the representation of women in the highest-skill occupational group and the evident glass ceiling provide mixed evidence for vertical segregation in Namibia, namely Namibian women appear to climb the occupational ladder fairly easily, but, once at the top, they are underpaid compared with men.

Table 12

Proportion of employment in the highest-skill occupational group, by gender

	Men (%)	Women (%)
Legislators and senior officials	56.5	43.5
Corporate managers	41.1	58.9
Production and specialized services managers	57.4	42.6

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 Namibia. Strikingly, there is a 10.7 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 Namibia is 18.3 per cent at the monthly level and 13.6 per cent at the hourly level, highlighting differences in working hours. This 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, interestingly, smaller for married individuals than for single individuals. After accounting for individual and labour-market characteristics, the gender pay gap increases, to give an adjusted gender pay gap of 18.9 per cent, indicating that observable characteristics of individuals and job characteristics cannot explain the gender pay gap.

A significant portion of the raw gender pay gap (23.4 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 Namibia. Occupational and sectoral horizontal segregation levels are moderate to high, and about a third of women and men would need to switch occupational categories and almost two in five would need to change 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 in the highest decile.

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 Namibian 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.

Namibia lacks a statutory minimum wage, with wages typically negotiated directly between employees and employers through collective bargaining or alternative fair wage negotiation methods. The effectiveness of social protection policies, such as minimum wage regulations and social security benefits, hinges on their ability to address the distinct needs and vulnerabilities experienced by women in the labour market. There are concerns that minimum wage laws might contribute to increased unemployment, especially among young people, and this remains an ongoing area of research. Nonetheless, policies aimed at fostering employment formalization, supporting workers' unions and implementing social protection programmes are also crucial complements to minimum wage legislation.

Substantial sectoral and occupational segregation, as observed in Namibia, 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.[21] 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 country 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, Namibia 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, forestry and fishing	17.2	7.5
Mining	4.5	1.0
Manufacturing	8.3	5.5
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	1.0	0.3
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	1.3	0.3
Construction	16.8	2.2
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	8.0	12.6
Transportation and storage	5.8	1.4
Accommodation and food service activities	4.1	9.6
Information and communication	1.0	1.3
Financial and insurance activities	2.7	4.2
Real estate activities	0.1	0.3
Professional, scientific and technical activities	2.0	1.6
Administrative and support service activities	6.1	7.2
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	6.5	6.6
Education	4.3	13.0
Human health and social work activities	1.8	5.2
Arts, entertainment and recreation	0.2	0.7
Other service activities	2.9	5.5
Activities of households as employers	5.2	13.8
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	0.2	0.3
Occupation		
Armed forces	4.4	2.2
Managers	4.9	6.9
Professionals	7.6	13.6
Technicians and associate professionals	5.9	8.5
Clerical support workers	4.9	17.0
Services and sales workers	8.9	16.5
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish workers	4.5	1.4
Craft and related trades workers	18.4	3.2
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	8.5	0.6
Elementary occupations	32.1	30.1
Elementary occupations		
Formal	59.2	65.4
Informal	40.8	34.6

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
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Dependent variable: log hourly wages							
Gender (1 = female)	-0.136***	-0.252***	-0.233***	-0.160***	-0.265***	-0.181***	-0.189***
	(0.045)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.041)	(0.044)	(0.043)
Secondary		0.415***	0.416***	0.247***	0.261***	0.212***	0.142***
		(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.048)	(0.048)
Tertiary or above		1.864***	1.846***	1.317***	1.037***	0.916***	0.807***
		(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.074)	(0.073)	(0.072)	(0.070)
Age		0.0778***	0.0638***	0.0445***	0.0598***	0.0462***	0.0376***
		(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Age squared		-0.000658***	-0.000523***	-0.000333**	-0.000526***	-0.000382***	-0.000297**
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Marital status (1 = married)			0.232***	0.190***	0.157***	0.153***	0.120***
			(0.043)	(0.040)	(0.039)	(0.038)	(0.038)
Mining				1.258***		1.043***	0.833***
				(0.123)		(0.126)	(0.125)
Manufacturing				0.747***		0.567***	0.449***
				(0.083)		(0.085)	(0.085)
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply				1.048***		0.796***	0.640***
				(0.173)		(0.160)	(0.157)
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities				1.282***		1.115***	0.946***
				(0.149)		(0.149)	(0.145)
Construction				0.990***		0.864***	0.852***
				(0.086)		(0.095)	(0.094)

	Raw/Unadjusted GPG	Adjusted GPG					
		Personal characteristics only	Personal + marriage	Personal + sector	Personal + occupation	Personal + sector + occupation	All
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles				0.336***		0.182**	0.143*
				(0.077)		(0.087)	(0.086)
Transportation and storage				0.943***		0.654***	0.567***
				(0.096)		(0.102)	(0.099)
Accommodation and food service activities				0.0989		0.0215	-0.0486
				(0.082)		(0.090)	(0.089)
Information and communication				1.416***		0.882***	0.716***
				(0.242)		(0.237)	(0.237)
Financial and insurance activities				1.705***		1.199***	1.037***
				(0.118)		(0.119)	(0.117)
Real estate activities				1.102***		0.760***	0.641**
				(0.304)		(0.280)	(0.306)
Professional, scientific and technical activities				1.647***		1.194***	1.082***
				(0.177)		(0.190)	(0.190)
Administrative and support service activities				0.876***		0.639***	0.509***
				(0.092)		(0.091)	(0.089)
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security				1.268***		0.918***	0.734***
				(0.087)		(0.095)	(0.095)
Education				1.266***		0.829***	0.689***
				(0.089)		(0.105)	(0.106)
Human health and social work activities				1.091***		0.663***	0.527***
				(0.103)		(0.107)	(0.107)
Arts, entertainment and recreation				0.702***		0.409*	0.359*
				(0.232)		(0.219)	(0.204)
Other service activities				0.501***		0.414***	0.423***
				(0.111)		(0.112)	(0.110)
Activities of households as employers				0.109		0.165**	0.292***
				(0.073)		(0.072)	(0.071)

	Raw/Unadjusted GPG	Adjusted GPG					
		Personal characteristics only	Personal + marriage	Personal + sector	Personal + occupation	Personal + sector + occupation	All
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies				1.617*** (0.366)		1.475*** (0.416)	1.304*** (0.481)
Professionals					-0.0419 (0.095)	-0.216* (0.111)	-0.188* (0.110)
Technicians and associate professionals					-0.0608 (0.091)	-0.198** (0.090)	-0.188** (0.089)
Clerical support workers					-0.751*** (0.099)	-0.729*** (0.096)	-0.700*** (0.094)
Services and sales workers					-1.478*** (0.092)	-1.311*** (0.093)	-1.212*** (0.091)
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish workers					-1.699*** (0.110)	-1.200*** (0.117)	-1.065*** (0.114)
Craft and related trades workers					-0.861*** (0.091)	-0.901*** (0.097)	-0.770*** (0.096)
Plant and machine operators and assemblers					-0.801*** (0.107)	-0.800*** (0.115)	-0.732*** (0.114)
Elementary occupations					-1.356*** (0.081)	-1.143*** (0.086)	-1.022*** (0.085)
Armed forces					-0.285** (0.144)	-0.484*** (0.151)	-0.456*** (0.150)
Informal worker							-0.530*** (0.045)
Constant	2.959*** (0.029)	0.622*** (0.220)	0.828*** (0.220)	0.707*** (0.206)	2.129*** (0.216)	1.839*** (0.211)	2.287*** (0.213)
Observations	7,333	7,333	7,333	7,333	7,333	7,333	7,333
R-squared	0.002	0.215	0.219	0.379	0.318	0.365	0.384

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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