



**DEPARTMENT OF MANPOWER AND EMPLOYMENT  
MINISTRY OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR RELATIONS**

# **LMI BULLETIN 2019**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Labour Market Information Unit of the Manpower Planning, Development and Research Division of the Department of Manpower and Employment is pleased to release the annual Labour Market Information Bulletin for 2019.

Unlike in other factor markets, the labour market has three major constituents; on demand side - the employers who are in search of human resources, on supply side- the potential workforce looking for suitable job opportunities, and the third party is the government, being the market regulator. In any country, the interactions between the job providers and job seekers are often regulated by the laws and statutes as well as facilitated through a number of active labour market interventions, such as career guidance, skills development, unemployment benefit schemes, retirement benefits, etc. Provision of labour market information is also considered to be an active engagement into the labour market interactions, as a part of the facilitator role of the state.

The Labour Market Information is intended to help individuals and firms, or in other words both employees and employers to make decisions about careers, employment, business plans and investments and also to determine which occupations would suit their skills and interests, where the jobs are, and which occupations have the best prospects. It also helps people locate the most appropriate training and educational resources.

We hope that government, non- government agencies, private sector establishments students, job seekers and career counselors would make use of this bulletin for proper planning and decision making.

## SECTION ONE: LABOUR DEMAND

### 1.1 Labour Demand

According to the Annual Labour Force Survey Report (2017), the total employed population was 8.2 million, and 3.4 million of them were in formal sector, out of which 89.2% were Employees, 3.4% were Employers, 5.3% were Own-account workers and 2.1% were Contributory Family workers. Amongst the aforesaid 3.4 million formal-sector employees, the majority were in 'Elementary Occupations' (20.3%), while the proportions in 'Technical & Associate Professionals' (13.8%), 'Professionals' (13.6%), 'Services and Sales Workers' (12.7%) and 'Craft & Related Trade workers' (10.9%) were comparatively higher than other occupational categories.

According to the Annual Labour Force Survey Bulletin (2018), the total stock of Employed population has declined from 8.2 million in 2017 to 8.0 million in 2018, which illustrates an unprecedented recession in employment creation, in comparison with persistent employment growth reported since 2012. Conversely, the Unemployed population has risen from 358,507 in 2017 to 389,406% in 2018, and Economic Inactivity grew from 7.3 million in 2017 to 7.7 million in 2018.

The following information are based on the Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey, which was the first ever nation-wide Enterprise survey of similar nature conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics in 2017. The survey sample was 3500 private-sector establishments with more than 3 employees; thus, the findings were denoted as a proxy to the labour demand in private sector in Sri Lanka.

**Table 1.1 Distribution of Employed Population in Private Sector - by Occupations (2017)**

Occupation		No. of Employments	%
1	Managers	395,974	7.8
2	Professionals	434,374	8.6
3	Associate Professionals	315,251	6.2
4	Service and Sale Workers	1,454,041	28.8
5	Clerical Support Workers	531,405	10.5
6	Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers	45,445	0.9
7	Craft and Related Trades Workers	284,264	5.6
8	Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	740,203	14.6
9	Elementary Occupations	856,159	16.9
Total		5,057,116	100.0

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The Labour Demand Survey has estimated the total number of employments in private sector as around 5 million (out of the total employment slightly above 8.0 million), which comprises of both formal and informal sector employments.

As illustrated above, almost 70% of the private sector employments were reported in semi-skilled and unskilled occupational categories, that indicates Sri Lanka's heavy dependence on primary industries.

**Table 1.2 Distribution of Labour Demand- by Sector (2017)**

Sector	Formal		Informal		Total	
	No. of Employments	%	No. of Employments	%	No. of Employments	%
<b>Industry</b>	152,189	38.8	43,285	41.3	195,474	39.3
<b>Trade</b>	84,380	21.5	26,391	25.2	110,771	22.3
<b>Services</b>	152,906	39.0	35,114	33.5	188,020	37.8
<b>Plantation</b>	3,037	0.8	0.0	0.0	3,037	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>392,512</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>104,790</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>497,302</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The Labour Demand Survey (2017) has estimated the total labour demand both in formal and informal sectors as 497,302, which is less than 10% of the already employed population. When compared with the stock of unemployment (which is less than 400,000), the numbers of available employment opportunities are well above the unemployment, thus (in simple arithmetic sense) one can say that the Sri Lankan labour market has a reasonable balance between the demand and supply. However, in reality, these jobs and unemployed personnel cannot be matched (one-to-one) with each other, owing to various impediments, such as mismatches in physical capacity, skills and expectations; lack of awareness and working attitude; and asymmetry in access to education, employment information, job search assistance, vocational training and investment. Therefore, policies for 'fitting the man for jobs' or vice versa shall be associated with careful consideration of sectoral specificities in labour demand as well as the personal preferences and limitations of the labour supply.

According to the table below, the highest demand for labour has been reported in Elementary Occupations primarily in Apparel sector and related industrial categories. It is evident that these occupations are primarily in labour intensive industries, which require semi-skilled workers specifically trained for the same tasks.

**Table 1.3 Occupations with high Labour demand in Formal - Industry (Except Construction) Sector**

	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No. of vacancies</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1</b>	Sewing Machine Operator	59,659	55.5
<b>2</b>	Other Manufacturing Labourers	17,859	16.6
<b>3</b>	Manufacturing Supervisors	7,874	7.3
<b>4</b>	Tailors, Dressmakers, Furriers and Hatters	7,061	6.6
<b>5</b>	Hand Packers	5,412	5.0
<b>6</b>	Sewers, Embroiders and Related Workers	3,542	3.3
<b>7</b>	Cleaners and Helpers in Offices, Hotels and Other Establishments	1,726	1.6
<b>8</b>	Textile, Leather and Related Pattern Makers and Cutters	1,573	1.5
<b>9</b>	Weaving and Knitting Machine Operators	1,451	1.4
<b>10</b>	Motor Vehicle Mechanics and Repairers	1,274	1.2
<b>Total number of top 10 occupations</b>		<b>107,431</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

Because of the high labour intensity that causes extensive hours of work and exploitation; low value addition in supply chain; global competition that causes lower wages often close to the National Minimum Wage threshold; and persistent strategies adopted by peer establishments to attract experienced personnel through marginally increased benefits, have induced high labour turnover in these industries whereby a considerable proportion of vacancies are visible at any given time. Moreover, the recruitment agents associated with these industries are well recognized for their exaggeration at their 'head hunting' so that the numbers of vacancies would also be over-estimated than the actuals.

**Table 1.4 Occupations with high Labour demand in Informal-Industry (Except Construction) Sector**

	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No. of vacancies</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1</b>	Sewing Machine Operator	13,858	41.7
<b>2</b>	Other Manufacturing Labourers	7,181	21.6
<b>3</b>	Carpenters and Joiners	4,213	12.7
<b>4</b>	Cement, stone and Other Mineral Products Machine Operators	1,545	4.6
<b>5</b>	Handicraft Workers in Wood, Cane and Related Materials	1,311	3.9
<b>6</b>	Metal Processing Plant Operators	1,197	3.6
<b>7</b>	Stone Masons, Stone Cutters, Stone Splitters and Stone Carvers	1,059	3.2
<b>8</b>	Sewers, Embroiders and Related Workers	1,030	3.1
<b>9</b>	Shoemakers and Related Workers	983	3.0
<b>10</b>	Heavy Truck and Lorry Drivers	863	2.6
<b>Total number of top 10 occupations</b>		<b>33,240</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The informal-sector industries other than the Construction sector, have also reported considerably higher proportions of vacancies for semi-skilled workers in Apparel and related sectors. In addition, these non-Construction industries have also indicated high demands for occupations that are directly related to construction matters, such as masonry, carpentry and metal processing works.

According to the Labour Demand Survey, the Construction industry itself contributes for 113,859 private sector employments (out of 1.6 million total employments in Industrial Sector). Amongst them, the largest segment was the Elementary Occupants (29.3%), whereas 'Plant & Machine Operators & Assemblers' (17.9%), 'Craft and Related Trade Workers' (13.4%) and 'Associate Professionals' (12.0%) were also having significant shares.

**Table 1.5 Occupations with high Labour demand in Formal – Construction Sector**

	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No. of vacancies</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1</b>	Building Construction Labourers	4,358	31.4
<b>2</b>	Other Manufacturing Labourers	4,250	30.6
<b>3</b>	Heavy Truck and Lorry Drivers	1,030	7.4
<b>4</b>	Earth-moving and Related Plant Operators	864	6.2
<b>5</b>	Masons (General)	818	5.9
<b>6</b>	Mining and Quarrying Labourers	714	5.1
<b>7</b>	Civil Engineering Technicians	508	3.7
<b>8</b>	Motor Vehicle Mechanics and Repairers	500	3.6
<b>9</b>	Stationary Plant and Machine Operators NEC	429	3.1
<b>10</b>	- Riggers and Cable Splicers	400	2.9
<b>Total number of top 10 occupations</b>		<b>33,240</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

Around 33,240 vacancies had been reported in formal-Construction sector and another 2,376 vacancies were available in informal-Construction sector. Having taken into consideration the wide expansion in Construction sector in Sri Lanka, it is presumed that the stock of employments in the same sector was significantly higher than the above-mentioned estimates.

The interesting fact observed, when the occupational proportions are compared, is that the Construction sector is currently in need of manual labour, primarily unskilled workers in the areas of civil and mining as well as skilled personnel in the areas of logistics (drivers and mechanics), masonry, and heavy machine operators. Almost all the top 10 occupations mentioned in the table above, other than 'Civil Engineering Technicians', do not require high educational attainment, but instead on-the-job training. In such scenario, the policies for bridging the employment gaps in Construction sector should either be focused more on promoting Vocational training for early school leavers and orient them towards job opportunities in this sector; or else to see the optimum possibilities of industry mechanization.



**Table 1.6 Occupations with high Labour demand in Formal – Trade Sector**

	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No. of vacancies</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1</b>	Shop Sales Assistants	22,255	33.5
<b>2</b>	Advertising and Marketing Professionals	20,744	31.3
<b>3</b>	Cashiers and Ticket Clerks	6,808	10.3
<b>4</b>	Stall and Market Salespersons	4,623	7.0
<b>5</b>	Commercial and Sales Representatives	3,650	5.5
<b>6</b>	Stock Clerks	2,482	3.7
<b>7</b>	Packing, Bottling and Labelling Machine Operators	2,184	3.3
<b>8</b>	Hand Packers	1,660	2.5
<b>9</b>	Accounting Associate Professionals	1,045	1.6
<b>10</b>	Motor Vehicle Mechanics and Repairers	919	1.4
<b>Total number of top 10 occupations</b>		<b>66,370</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The table above indicates that the demand for labour in formal Trade sector is tri-fold: firstly, the front-office sales and marketing personnel, secondly the back-office clerical and allied service staff, and thirdly the manual workers such as machine operators and mechanics.

**Table 1.7 Occupations with high Labour demand in Informal - Trade Sector**

	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No. of vacancies</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1</b>	Shop Sales Assistants	4,143	27.0
<b>2</b>	Waiters	1,730	11.3
<b>3</b>	Stall and Market Salespersons	1,514	9.9
<b>4</b>	Sales Workers	1,487	9.7
<b>5</b>	Door to Door Salespersons	1,460	9.5
<b>6</b>	Motor Vehicle Mechanics and Repairers	1,318	8.6
<b>7</b>	Vehicle Cleaners	1,168	7.6
<b>8</b>	Cleaning and Housekeeping Supervisors in Offices, Hotels and Other Establishments	1,038	6.8
<b>9</b>	Commercial and Sales Representatives	876	5.7
<b>10</b>	General Office Clerks	610	4.0
<b>Total number of top 10 occupations</b>		<b>15,344</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The informal trades have also generated more of job opportunities in sales and marketing professions. Taking both formal and informal components together, the Trade sector has around 70,000 vacancies for sales and marketing personnel, which is nearly one seventh (1/7) of the total number of vacancies reported at the Labour Demand Survey.

**Table 1.8 Occupations with high Labour demand in Formal – Service (Excluding tourism) Sector**

	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No. of vacancies</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1</b>	Security Guards	56,674	55.6
<b>2</b>	Commercial and Sales Representatives	14,360	14.1
<b>3</b>	Cleaners and Helpers in Offices, Hotels and Other Establishments	13,712	13.5
<b>4</b>	General office Clerks	4,514	4.4
<b>5</b>	Nursing Professionals	3,021	3
<b>6</b>	Financial Analysts	2,358	2.3
<b>7</b>	Insurance Representatives	1,847	1.8
<b>8</b>	Child Care Workers	1,828	1.8
<b>9</b>	Information and Communication Technology Operations Technicians	1,815	1.8
<b>10</b>	Credit and loans Officers	1766	1.7
<b>Total number of top 10 occupations</b>		<b>101,895</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The Service sector had created 188,020 vacancies, of which 152,906 positions were in formal Service sector. The formal services other than the Tourism, have reported exceptionally high amount of vacancies for Security Guards, which may also be overwhelmed by fierce recruitment strategies. Unlike in Industry sector, the Service sector has a wider mix of demand for skilled Professionals, semi-skilled Technicians and Office workers, and unskilled manual workers.

In considering the informal Service sector, the most salient feature observed was the emergence of beauty culture industry, and most of the prospective job opportunities were in the same discipline. A high degree of informality is associated with the field of Insurance Representatives, which causes more of freelancing and high labour turnover, and thereby having a continuous recruitment cycle.

In Sri Lanka, the hospitality industry has improved significantly with the increased influx of tourism soon after the end of civil war. Simultaneously, the informal services related to food and beverages processing have also developed considerably. This trend has been reflected in the increased demand for workers in the areas of Waiters, Cooks, Confectionary makers and even cleaners and helpers for hotels.

**Table 1.9 Occupations with high Labour demand in Informal – Service (Excluding tourism) Sector**

	Occupation	No. of vacancies	%
1	Hairdressers	4,182	19.7
2	Beauticians and Related Workers	3,624	17.1
3	Creative and Performing Artists	3,347	15.8
4	Insurance Representatives	1,988	9.4
5	General Office Clerks	1,629	7.7
6	Secondary Education Teachers	1,555	7.3
7	Waiters	1,394	6.6
8	Cleaners and Helpers in Offices, Hotels and Other Establishments	1,279	6.0
9	Cooks	1,272	6.0
10	Bakers, Pastry- cooks and Confectionery Makers	954	4.5
<b>Total number of top 10 occupations</b>		<b>21,224</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

**Table 1.10 Occupations with high Labour demand in Tourism Sector**

	Occupation	No. of vacancies	%
1	Waiters	1,451	14.2
2	Cleaning and Housekeeping Supervisors in offices, Hotels and Other Establishments	1,207	11.8
3	Cooks	744	7.3
4	Chefs	611	6.0
5	Bartenders	595	5.8
6	Cleaners and Helpers in Offices, Hotels and other establishments	560	5.5
7	Accounting Associate Professionals	526	5.2
8	Kitchen Helpers	399	3.9
9	Stall and Market Salespersons	371	3.6
10	Car, Taxi and Van Drivers	293	2.9
<b>Total number of top 10 occupations</b>		<b>21,224</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

As mentioned above, the emergence of tourism sector had enhanced job creation in the Country, which has been partly hampered with certain socio-political unrest prevailed recently. Despite such factors, the Tourism industry has also opened up numerous vacancies, especially in the areas of Waiters, Cleaners, Cooks/Chefs, etc. Most of these employments require vocational training, that can be accommodated by the public sector vocational training institutes.

**Table 1.11 Occupations with high Labour demand in Formal – Plantation Sector**

	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No. of vacancies</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1</b>	Tea Pluckers	2,474	81.7
<b>2</b>	Rubber Tappers	437	14.4
<b>3</b>	General Office Clerks	23	0.8
<b>4</b>	Cleaning and Housekeeping Supervisors in offices, Hotels and Other Establishments	21	0.7
<b>5</b>	Agricultural Technicians	20	0.7
<b>6</b>	Crop Farm Labourers	16	0.5
<b>7</b>	Manufacturing Supervisors	13	0.4
<b>8</b>	Cleaners and Helpers in Offices, Hotels and Other Establishments	10	0.3
<b>9</b>	Livestock Farm Labourers	10	0.3
<b>10</b>	Medical records and health Information Technicians	4	0.1
<b>Total number of top 10 occupations</b>		<b>3,028</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The magnitudes of employments reported from Plantation sector for the Labour Demand Survey (2017) were not propounding a favourable growth in the same area. On the other hand, the plantation sector is suffering from an acute dearth of manual workers, which is denoted by the proportion of “Tea Pluckers” and ‘Rubber Tappers”.

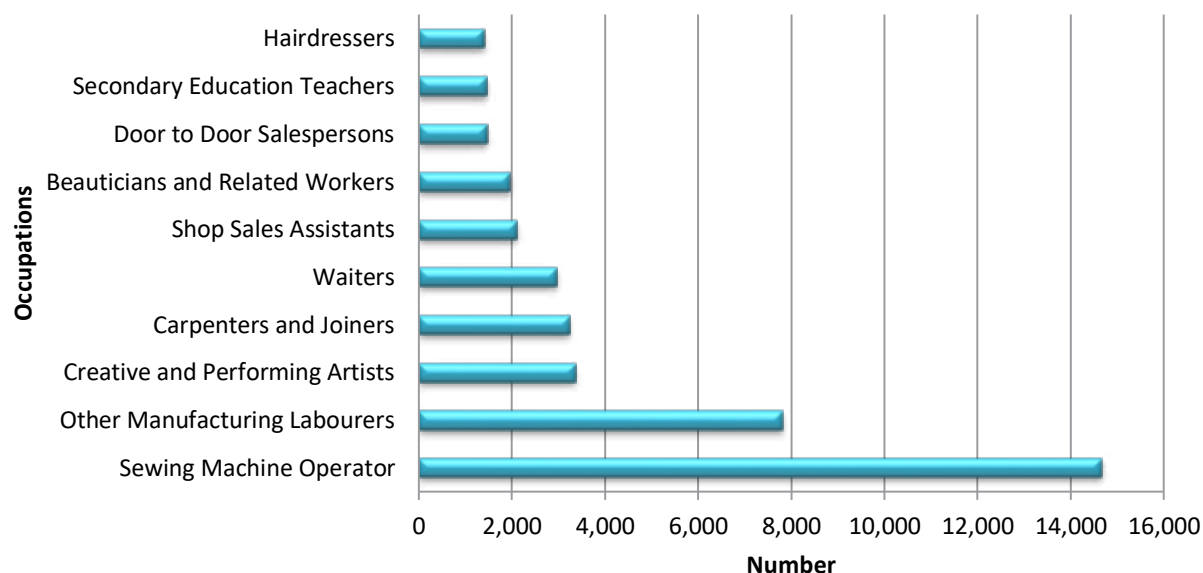
In general, as illustrated in the two graphs below, several positions such as Sewing Machine Operators, Security Guards, Manufacturing Labourers in both formal and informal sectors are found with several difficulties in filling, despite the minimum qualifications required for such posts. Therefore, it can be inferred that the job seekers’ expectations are substantively different from the positions available, which creates the unbridged gap between the demand and supply in Sri Lankan labour market.

**Table 1.12 Main 10 occupations which are difficult to fill in Formal Sector**



Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

**Table 1.13 Main 10 occupations which are difficult to fill in Informal Sector**



Source : Sri Lanka Labour Demand Survey (2017), Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

## SECTION TWO: LABOUR FORCE, EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

### 2.1 Labour Force Participation

Labour Force Participation is one of the key labour market measurements in an economy and it gives an indication of how many people of working age actively engage in labour market. This is defined as the percentage of labour force to the total working age population.

**Table 2.1 Labour Force Participation Rate - by gender and year**

Year	Total	Male	Female
2014	53.2	74.6	34.6
2015	53.8	74.7	35.9
2016	54.1	75.1	36.0
2017	54.1	74.5	36.6
2018	51.8	73.0	33.6
2017 Q1	54.7	75.1	37.6
2018 Q1	52.0	73.4	33.5
2019 Q1	52.6	73.4	34.9

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The female dominance in the overall population statistics in Sri Lanka is not reflected in the labour force, whereas the female proportion is almost half of the male counterpart. This has been a 'chronic decrease' in Sri Lankan labour market, primarily caused by the low female labour force participation. The table 2.1 provides the information on Labour Force Participation Rates for both males and females since year 2014, whereas only one third of females are actively engaged in economic activities that add value to the National GDP.

The female labour force participation rate that was increasing from 34.6% to 36.6% during 2014-2017 period, has been found with a considerable drop to 33.6% in 2018. The male counterpart has shown a marginal increase in labour force participation during 2014-2016 period, followed by a persistent decline during 2016-2018 period. The consequential effect is visible in the overall labour force participation rate, which had been improving gradually over the period 2014-2016, then stagnating at the rate of 54.1% in 2016-2017 period, followed by a sharp decline to 51.8% in 2018.

The salient indication of these statistics is that almost half of Sri Lankan working-age population are not in the labour force, causing a higher degree of 'economic dependency', which shall be remedied with policies and programs that would pay more emphasis on attracting females into workforce.

**Table 2.2 Labour Force Participation Rate - by age group and gender- First Quarter 2019**

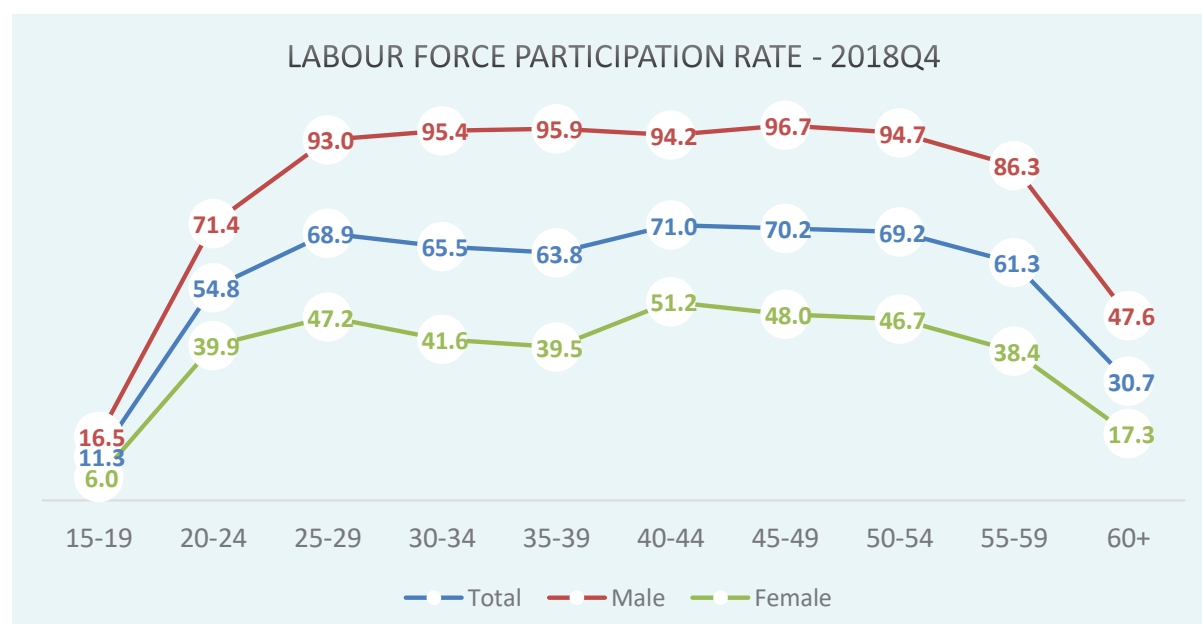
Age Group (Years)	Total	Male	Female
All Ages	52.6	73.4	34.9
15-19	13.6	18.8	8.3
20-24	54.2	72.9	37.7
25-29	67.6	91.9	47.4
30-39	67.8	96.5	45.0
40+	53.0	75.6	34.1

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The labour force participation among males is almost twice of the same for females in all age groups. In Sri Lanka, the working-age is defined as the age of 15 and above, in par with domestic labour legislations and ratification of International Labour Standards. However, the vast majority of teenagers are in formal education, under the auspices of free education policies in Sri Lanka, and the same is reflected in the lower rates of labour force participation in the (15-19) age group.

Meanwhile, comparatively higher participation rate for male teenagers (18.8%) illustrates early entries into labour market, which might be with inadequate educational attainment that would critically affect their career growth in latter years.

**Chart 2.1 Labour Force Participation Rate - by age group and gender- Fourth Quarter 2018**

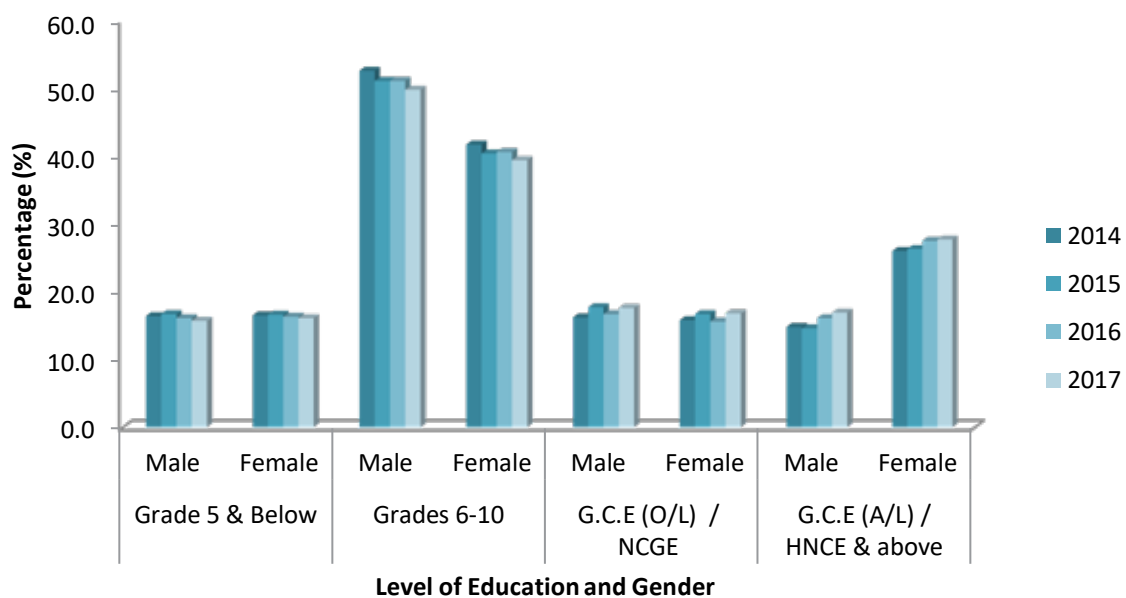


Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2018, 4th Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

According to the LFS 2018Q4 Report, the highest male participation is reported from age group 45-49 years (96.7%), while that for females is reported from 40-44 age group (51.2%). In general, males tend to start their economic activities quite early, and more than 90% of males are economically active until they reach the retirement age of 55 years for private sector. After the compulsory age of retirement in public sector (60 years), the male participation rate drops-down sharply, still almost half of males continue their economic activities beyond the age of 60 years.

In the case of females, the participation rates illustrate two peaks, owing to the considerable drops in 30-39 years age groups. This indicates the females who were tempted to leave the workforce after their marriage, due to family obligations such as child care, but later re-enter the labour market at their early 40s.

**Figure 2.2 Labour Force - by Level of Education and Gender (2014-2017)**



Source: Annual Labour Force Survey, 2017, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

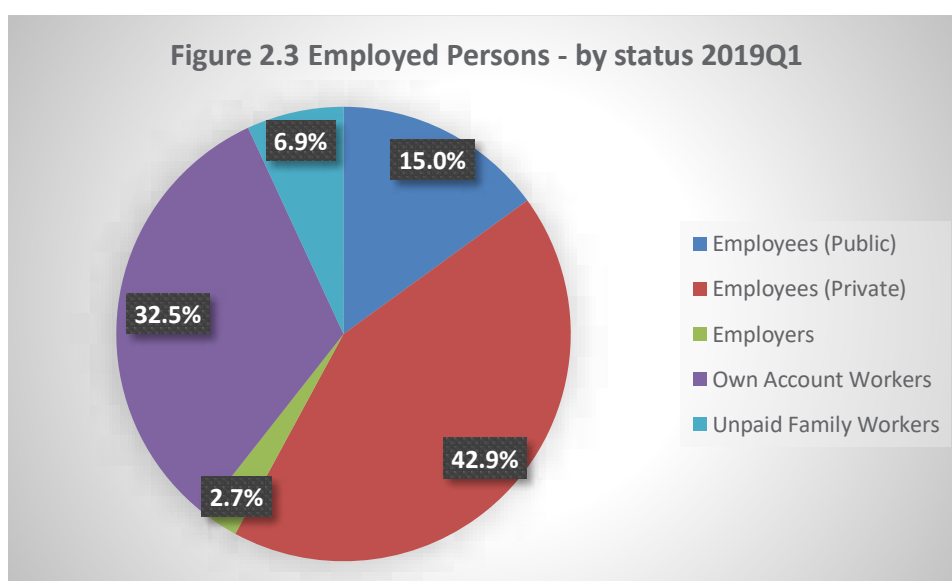
As mentioned earlier, the early entry of males into the labour market would hamper their educational attainment, and the same is demonstrated by the significantly higher proportion of male labour force in Grade (6-10) category. Even among females, a considerable proportion (around 40% of total female labour force) is in the same educational category. In general, more than 50% of both male and female labour force are with educational qualifications less than G.C.E. (O/L). The favourable indication is that the proportions of less-educated males and females are gradually decreasing during the last 4 years.

It is also noted that the relative proportion of females with higher [G.C.E. (A/L) and above] educational level is considerably higher than that of males.



## 2.2 Employment

According to the definition used by Department of Census and Statistics, a person is considered as being employed when she/he works at least one hour during the reference period. The term 'employment' is segregated into four categories, based on the nature of engagement: including 'Employees' (persons working for an establishment or a person on a paid contract), 'Employers' (persons holding an economic activity that hires one or more persons), Own Account Worker (persons engaged in self-employment activities), and 'Unpaid Family Worker' (persons who contribute to family businesses not for payment, but for shared benefits). The 'Employees' are further divided into two: the Public sector (inclusive of public service, provincial public service and semi-government sector) and the Private sector.



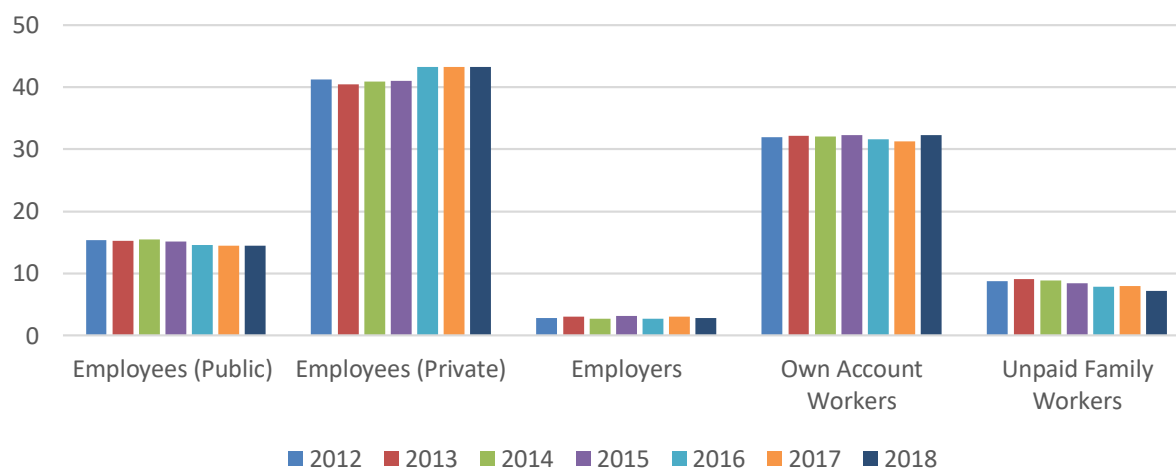
Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

According to the most recent data (Labour Force Survey for 2019 Quarter 1), a stock of 8,182,970 persons were engaged in employment, out of which 15.0% were employees in public sector, 42.9% were employees in private sector, 2.7% were employers, 32.5% were own-account workers and 6.9% were unpaid family workers.

**Table 2.3** Currently Employed Persons - by employment status- First Quarter 2019

Year	Employees		Employers	Own Account Workers	Unpaid Family Workers	Total
	Public	Private				
2012	15.3	41.2	2.8	31.9	8.7	100.0
2013	15.2	40.5	3.0	32.2	9.1	100.0
2014	15.5	40.9	2.7	32.0	8.9	100.0
2015	15.1	41.0	3.1	32.3	8.4	100.0
2016	14.6	43.3	2.7	31.6	7.8	100.0
2017	14.4	43.3	3.0	31.3	8.0	100.0
2018	14.5	43.3	2.8	32.3	7.2	100.0
2017 Q1	14.8	43.4	3.1	30.4	8.3	100.0
2018 Q1	14.3	43.8	2.7	31.8	7.5	100.0
2019 Q1	15.0	42.9	2.7	32.5	6.9	100.0

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

**Figure 2.4** Employed Persons - by employment status 2012-2018

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

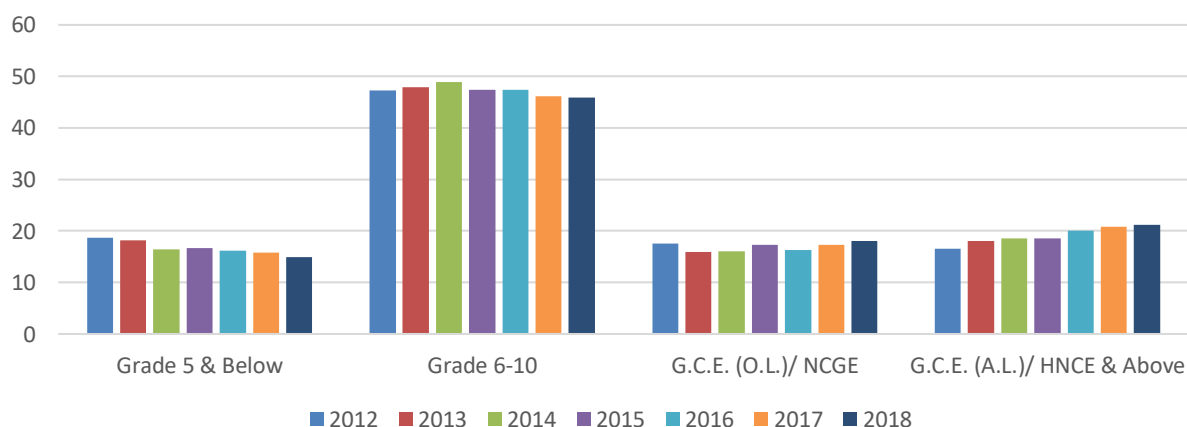
The largest proportion of employed persons was the employees in private sector, which has grown in recent three years, in compared to decline in proportions for public sector employment and unpaid family workers. The proportionate decrease in public sector employment could have been caused by the suspension of major recruitment (such as employment of unemployed graduates) during 2016-2018 period, which has renounced in first quarter of 2019, creating resurrection of public sector proportion to 15.0%.

**Table 2.4 Currently Employed Persons - by Educational Attainment- First Quarter 2019**

Year	Grade 5 & Below	Grade 6-10	G.C.E. (O.L.)/ NCGE	G.C.E. (A.L.)/ HNCE & Above	Total
2012	18.7	47.3	17.5	16.6	100.0
2013	18.2	47.9	15.9	18.1	100.0
2014	16.4	48.9	16.0	18.6	100.0
2015	16.7	47.4	17.3	18.6	100.0
2016	16.2	47.4	16.3	20.1	100.0
2017	15.8	46.1	17.3	20.8	100.0
2018	14.9	45.9	18.1	21.2	100.0
2017 Q1	16.6	46.6	16.7	20.1	100.0
2018 Q1	15.9	46.1	17.2	20.8	100.0
2019 Q1	13.8	45.8	17.7	22.7	100.0

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

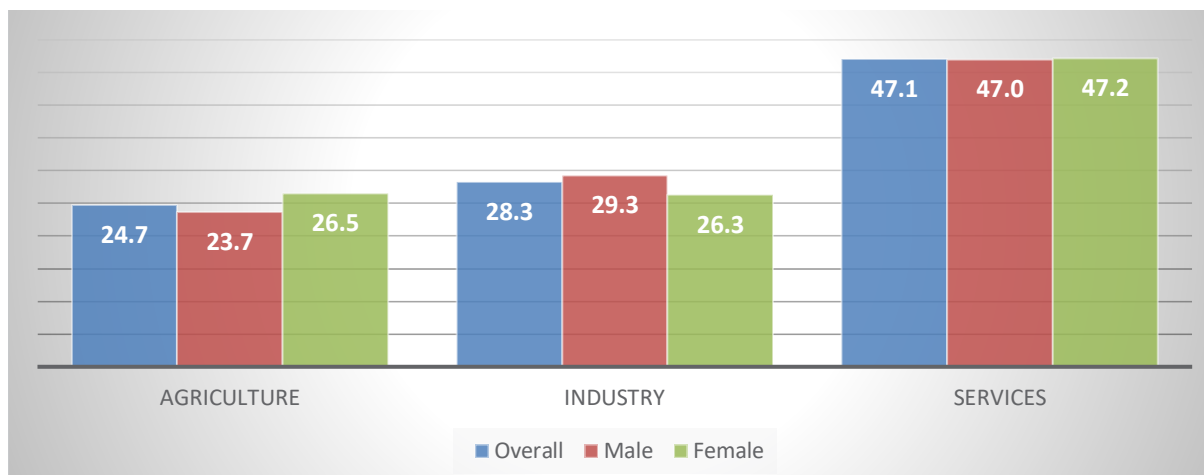
**Figure 2.5 Employed Persons - by Educational Attainment 2012-2018**



Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

Over the past seven years, more than half of the total stock of employed persons were with educational attainment less than G.C.E. (Ordinary Level), of which the proportions have been marginally declined in recent years, against the continuous improvement in the relative segment of educated employees (with G.C.E Advanced Level and above) that can be attributed to a positive indication about the skilling-up of Sri Lankan workforce.

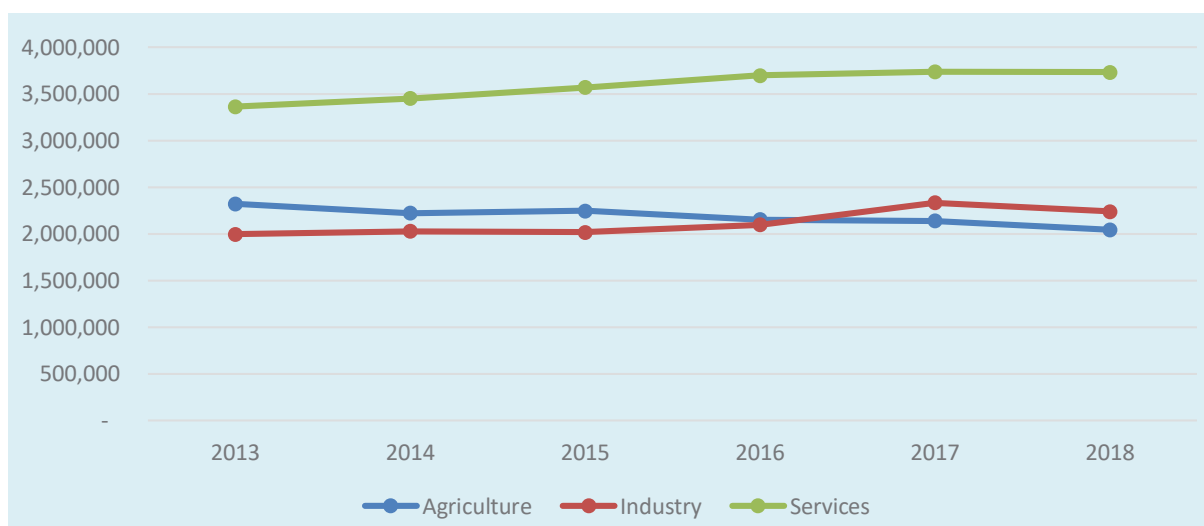
**Figure 2.6 Employed population by main industry and gender**



Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

According to the QLFS 2019 first quarter data, out of 8,182,970 employed persons 5,314,713 were males (64.9%) and 2,868,256 (35.1%) were females. In both genders, around 47% were employed in Service sector, while balance half of employed females are equally distributed among Agriculture and Industry sectors.

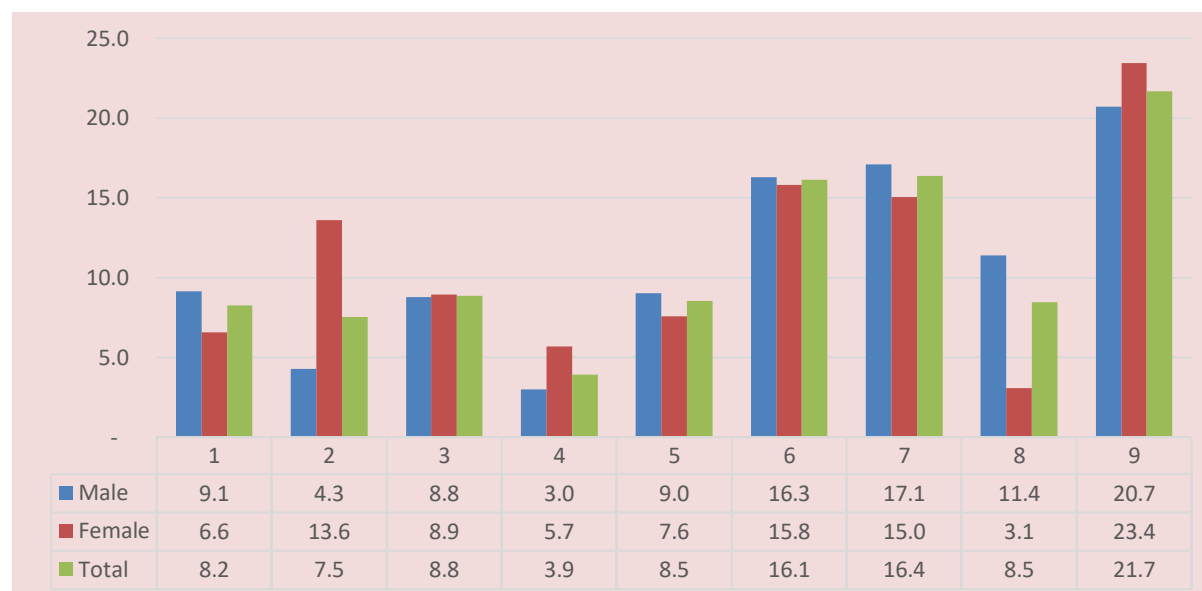
**Figure 2.7 Currently Employed Persons - by Main Industry 2013-2018**



Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

As illustrated in Figure 2.7 above, the number of persons engaged in Agriculture sector has been declining over the past years, whereas the employed persons in other two sectors have been increasing, except for 2018 where marginal declines are visible in employment in all three sectors.

**Figure 2.8 Distribution of Employment by Occupations-2019Q1**



Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019 Q1, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

**Table 2.5 Occupation Category Code**

Occupation Code	Occupation
1	Managers, Senior Officials and Legislators
2	Professionals
3	Technical & Associate Professionals
4	Clerks and Clerical support workers
5	Services and Sales workers
6	Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery workers
7	Craft and Related Trades workers
8	Plant and Machine operators and Assemblers
9	Elementary occupations
10	Armed Forces Occupations

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019 Q1, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The highest shares of employees for both males and females were recorded from “Elementary Occupations”. The survey has resulted in statistically insignificant numbers for occupations in Armed forces, which would have under-stated the actuals, thus the same were not taken into consideration at this analysis. Compared to male counterparts, females are having relatively higher concentration into Professionals, Clerical and Elementary Occupations. Female engagement as “Plant & Machine Operators and Assemblers” is considerably lower than the proportions for other occupations, and also significantly lower than the corresponding rate for males. Most of the male employed persons are concentrated in “Elementary Occupations”, “Craft and related trade workers” and “Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers” categories that would have induced by their relatively low educational attainment before entering into the labour market, as described in early chapters.

## 2.3 Unemployment

Unemployment is a key measure of economic health. According to the definitions of Department of Census and Statistics, “persons available and/or looking for work, and taken steps to find a job during last four weeks and ready to accept a job given a work opportunity within next two week” are considered as unemployed.

**Table 2.6 Unemployment - by Gender 2012-2019**

Year	Male		Female		Total	
	Count	% of LF	Count	% of LF	Count	% of LF
<b>2012</b>	146,629	2.8	163,074	6.3	309,703	4.0
<b>2013</b>	163,533	3.2	188,993	6.6	352,526	4.4
<b>2014</b>	164,609	3.1	183,786	6.5	348,395	4.3
<b>2015</b>	157,794	3.0	225,702	7.6	383,496	4.7
<b>2016</b>	153,554	2.9	209,445	7.0	362,999	4.4
<b>2017</b>	155,352	2.9	203,155	6.5	358,507	4.2
<b>2018</b>	163,926	3.0	208,667	7.1	372,593	4.4
<b>2017 Q1</b>	146,198	2.7	206,677	6.5	352,875	4.1
<b>2018 Q1</b>	157,810	2.9	214,325	7.4	372,135	4.5
<b>2019 Q1</b>	188,514	3.4	211,270	6.9	399,784	4.7

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

Around 399,784 persons claimed to be unemployed, which was 4.7% of the total labour force. Amongst them, 188,514 were males and 211,270 were females, whereby the gender-based unemployment rates were 3.4% and 6.9% respectively. The male unemployment ratio was the highest corresponding rate for past seven years. The female unemployment rate has been twice as much as that of males, however the female unemployment seems to have been cushioned to a greater extent with the recent mass-scale recruitment to public sector, whereas the evidence was a significant dominance of females in such intakes.

**Table 2.7 Unemployment Rate – by age group and gender- First Quarter 2019**

Age Group (Years)	Total	Male	Female
All Ages	4.7	3.4	6.9
15-19	13.7	18.7	9.3
20-24	38.3	43.8	33.4
25-29	19.3	12.4	25.4
30-39	14.1	9.6	18.2
40+	14.5	15.5	13.7

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The highest percentage of unemployment is recorded among youth population of 20-24 years for both genders. For age groups of (25-29) and (30-39), the female unemployment rates were twice than the corresponding rates of males, whereas for all other age groups the rates for males were higher.

**Table 2.8 Unemployment – by Educational Attainment and Gender- First Quarter 2019**

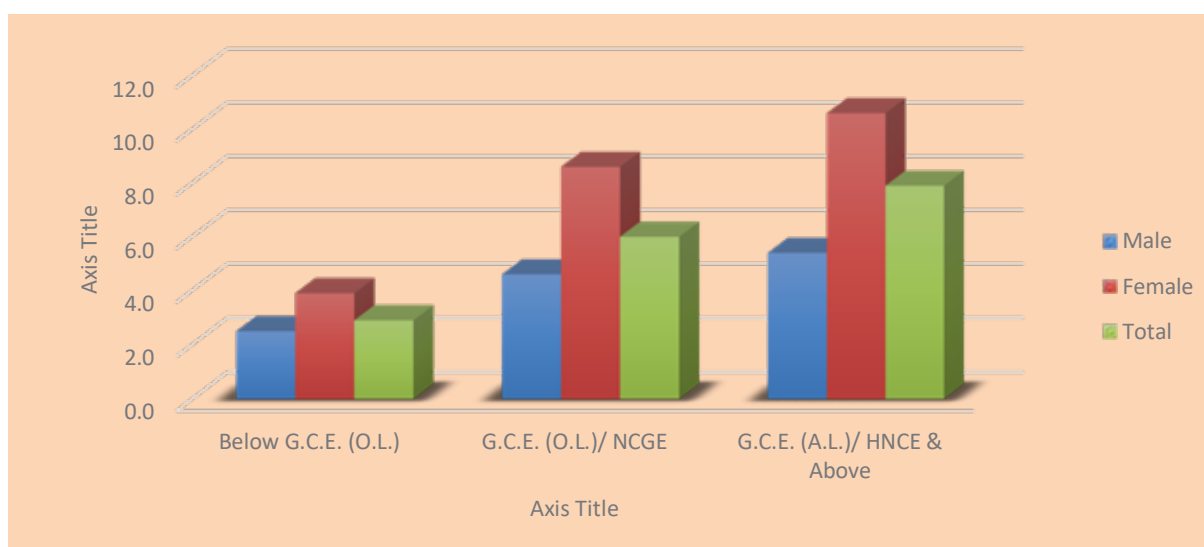
Year	Grade 5 & Below	Grade 6-10	G.C.E. (O.L.)/ NCGE	G.C.E. (A.L.)/ HNCE & Above	Total
Male	3.0	43.3	25.0	28.7	100.0
Female	2.7	26.0	21.1	50.3	100.0
Overall	2.8	34.1	22.9	40.1	100.0

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

The incidence of unemployment is visibly higher amongst educated females, whereas more than half of unemployed females were having G.C.E. (Advanced level) or higher qualifications. This would be primarily because of their queuing for public sector employments, which is a chronic phenomenon amongst university graduates in Sri Lanka that has been motivated by mass-scale intakes incurred for past 20 years.

Among unemployed males, the highest proportion was reported for “Grade 6-10” category, whereas more of males seem to have left the formal education early in search of income earning. This early entrance to the labour market with inadequate competencies would result them positioning in low-skilled low-paid employments, causing inadequate family earnings that would not be sufficient to cover expenses for children’s education, and pressurizing the kids to look for early employments, which has eventually created a vicious cycle in the labour market. The major remedies to break-out the cycle are subsidizing the children’s education, introducing vocational training into school curricula, career guidance at schools and creating public awareness on labour market opportunities.

**Figure 2.9 Unemployment Rate - by Level of Education –2019Q1**



Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019, 1st Quarter, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

More interestingly, the unemployment rate has increased for both genders with the enhancement of educational attainment, and for females the degree of increase is considerably high. Accordingly, one tenth of educated females in labour market were unemployed.

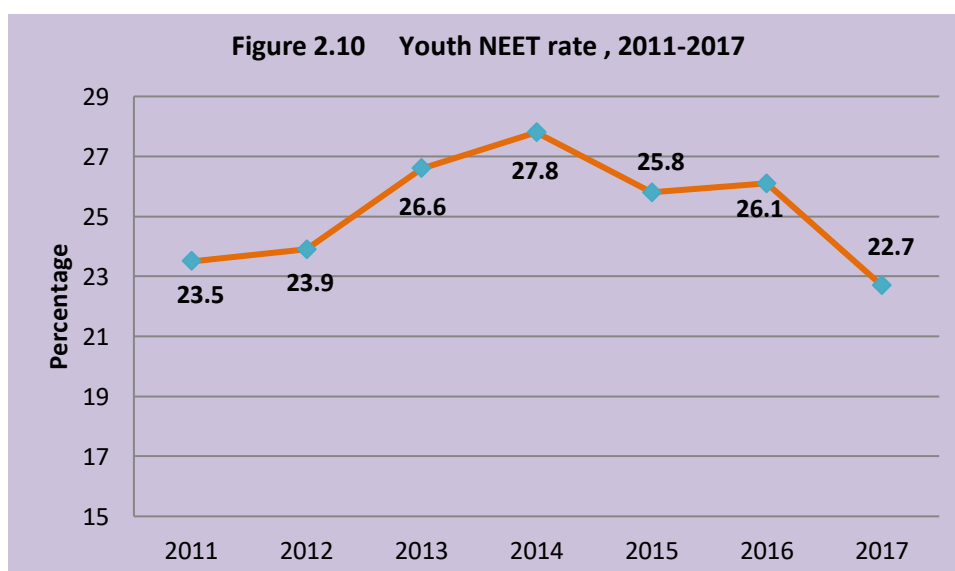


## 2.4 Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

The Youth NEET rate considers all young people in age group 15 -24 who are neither employed nor in education and training. It captures the unutilized labour potential of the youth population and also can identify the vulnerable individuals in terms of income security in long-run. NEET group consists of both unemployed (those are actively looking for work) and inactive youths (neither engaged in any economic activity nor looking for work.)

The most recent data available for Youth NEET are the statistics depicted in Annual Labour Force Survey 2017 report, based on which the following analyses are made.

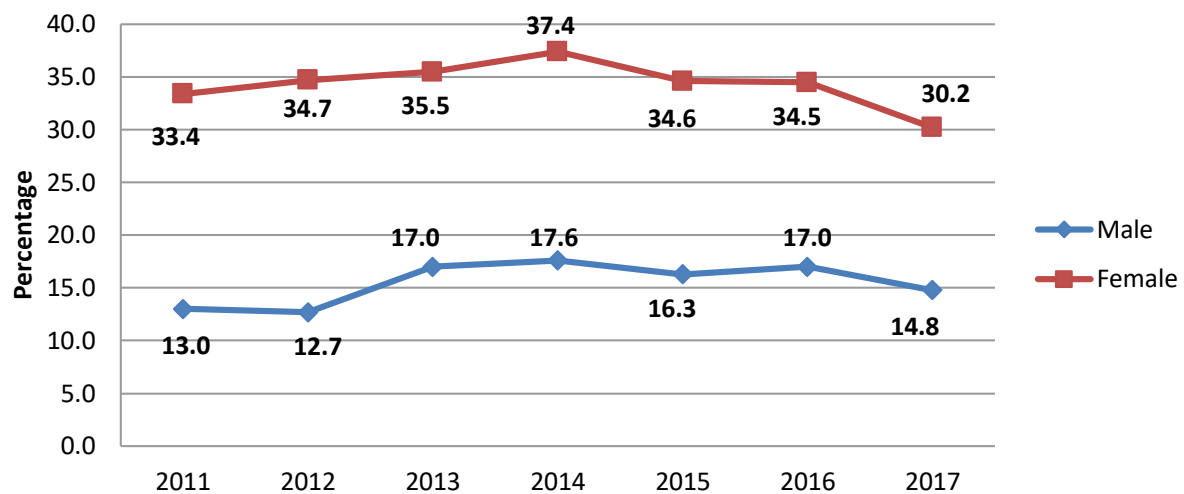
**Figure 2.10 Youth NEET rate , 2011-2017**



Source: Annual Labour Force Survey, 2017, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

Around one forth of young persons (aged between 15-24) have been found in NEET category, with a gradual rise up to 2014 and followed by two sharp declines to end up with 22.7% in 2017. This untapped human resource, if left idling would cause severe socio-economic implications in future, and alternatively can be trained and deployed for productive economic activities. In this regard, motivational and orientation programs specifically targeting these youth groups are necessary.

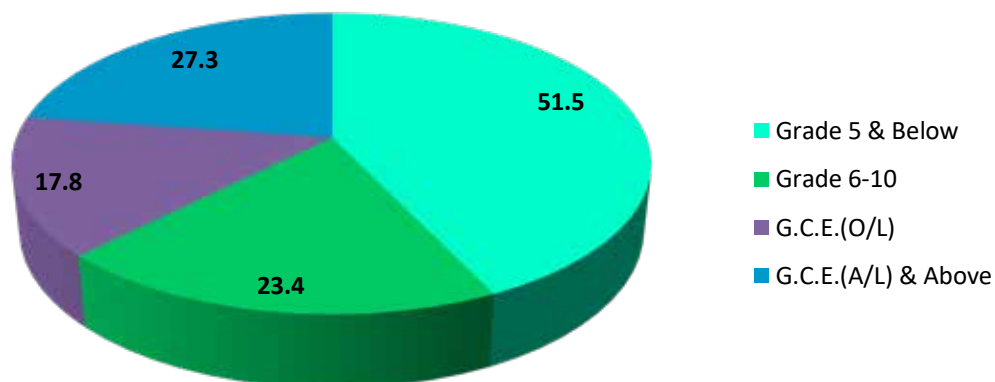
**Figure 2.11 NEET rate by gender, 2011-2017**



Source: Annual Labour Force Survey, 2017, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

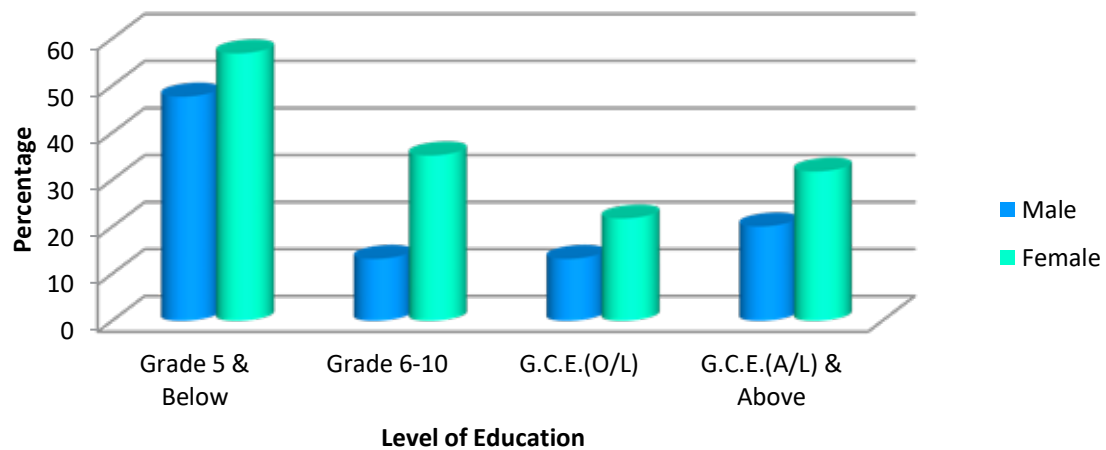
Female NEET rate has been twice as much as the same of males for past seven years. It depicts that one out of every six young males was in the NEET group, while one out of three female youths was in NEET category. The chart also implies a gradual decline in female NEET proportion in consequent to the peak in 2014, which has resulted in similar trend in overall NEET ratio as well.

**Figure 2.12 NEET Rate by Level of Education**



Source: Annual Labour Force Survey, 2017, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

**Figure 2.13 NEET Rate by level of education and gender - 2017**



Source: Annual Labour Force Survey, 2017, Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka

As illustrated above, the largest proportions of Youth NEET were with educational qualifications of Grade 5 and below, for both males and females. This should be seriously considered whereas these least educated personnel tend to have been brought up to the age of 15-24 with their family support or some other social welfare measure that would not guarantee the sustenance till their old ages. A considerable segment of these youth NEET could be persons with physical and mental impairments, which would also require additional attention of the state.

## SECTION THREE: FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT

### 3.1 Private Remittances through Foreign Employment

Year	Private Remittance	Tea	Rubber	Coconut	Garment	Total Export	Private Remittances as a % of Total Export
2011	569,103	164,869	22,811	29,394	463,509	1,167,588	48.74
2012	763,980	180,429	15,726	26,594	508,607	1,245,531	61.34
2013	827,689	199,446	9,194	26,488	583,046	1,344,054	61.58
2014	916,344	212,588	5,916	46,517	643,688	1,453,176	63.06
2015	948,957	182,054	3,548	47,745	654,794	1,431,431	66.29
2016	1,054,489	184,778	4,758	53,283	710,768	1,500,766	70.26
2017	1,091,972	233,338	5,920	53,037	767,254	1,732,440	63.03
2018 (a)	1,138,124	231,750	5,088	50,465	865,975	1,933,533	58.86

Source: Central Bank Annual Report, 2018

The private remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad have been increased significantly. It has risen to 70% of total export earnings in 2016. However, the rate of increase of private remittances has slowed down after 2016, and with the resurrection of Garments industry during 2016-2018 period, the relative proportion of Private remittances has been reduced to 58.86% by 2018. Still, the higher rate for Private remittances indicates the heavy dependence of Sri Lankan economy on foreign employment.

It is advisable to promote skilled employments abroad, not by quantity but by way of upgrading skills of personnel leaving for foreign jobs; attracting more of productive employments through the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment; targeting high-profile jobs in international labour market through redesigning the secondary and university education; and encouraging expatriates for investing in Sri Lankan workforce development to meet global demand through macro-economic policies and incentive programs.

### 3.2 Contribution of Middle – East as a percentage of Total Remittances

Year	Remittances (Rs. Million)		Middle East as a % of Total Remittances
	Middle East	Total	
2011	335,201	569,103	58.9
2012	428,593	763,980	56.1
2013	460,195	827,689	55.6
2014	509,487	916,344	55.6
2015	512,437	948,957	54.0
2016	566,260	1,054,489	53.7
2017	565,642	1,091,972	51.8
2018 (a)	582,719	1,138,124	51.2

(a) Provisional

Source: Central Bank Annual Report, 2018

Remittances from the Middle East countries have depicted a persistent increase during 2011-2018 period, but the share of remittances from Middle East out of the Total remittances have been marginally declined from 58.9% in 2011 to 51.2% in 2018.

### 3.3 Departures for Foreign Employment by Sex

Year	Male		Female		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
2009	119,381	48	127,745	52	247,126
2010	148,001	55	119,506	45	267,507
2011	136,307	52	126,654	48	262,961
2012	144,135	51	138,312	48	282,447
2013	175,185	60	118,033	40	293,218
2014	190,217	63	110,486	37	300,703
2015	172,788	66	90,655	34	263,443
2016	160,306	66	82,510	34	242,816
2017	139,268	66	72,724	34	211,992
2018 (a)	129,774	61	81,685	39	211,459

(a) Revised (b) Provisional

Source: Central Bank Annual Report, 2018 / Information Technology Division-SLBFE

The number of males departed for foreign employments outnumbered the female counterpart in 2010, indicating the success of government's focused strategies to promote departure for professional employments. On the other hand, the total stock of departure has started a decline since its peak in 2014, but without mitigating the foreign remittances (in Rupee value) throughout.

### 3.4 Departures for Foreign Employment by Manpower Category

Year	Housemaids	%	Skilled Labour	%	Unskilled Labour	%	Other	%
2009	113,678	46	61,321	25	50,173	20	21,954	9
2010	112,752	42	71,537	27	60,422	23	22,796	9
2011	107,500	41	67,746	26	63,642	24	24,073	9
2012	119,011	42	67,150	24	62,907	22	33,379	12
2013	96,900	33	73,707	25	70,977	24	51,634	18
2014	88,628	29	73,162	24	79,519	26	59,394	20
2015	73,226	28	81,682	31	77,985	30	30,550	12
2016	65,015	27	76,545	32	71,656	30	29,600	12
2017(a)	55,884	26	68,980	33	61,054	29	26,074	12
2018 (b)	64,938	31	67,053	32	51,719	24	27,749	13

(a) Revised

Source: Central Bank Annual Report, 2018

(b) Provisional

Percentage of departure for housemaids has been decreasing during last ten years, making the numbers in 2018 almost equivalent to half of the count in 2009, causing increases in percentages for other employment categories. However, any significant growth in numbers were not visible in the other three categories, which require more attention towards 'skilled labour' segment specially.

### 3.5 Departures for Foreign Employment through Registered sources by Country 2014-2018\*

Country	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018*	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Saudi Arabia	55,721	31.5	49,750	42.6	35,521	40.37	15,842	23.19	16,935	25.30
U.A.E	22,413	12.6	11,989	10.3	8,212	9.33	6,878	10.07	4,946	7.39
Bahrain	1,506	0.8	1,202	1.03	560	0.64	537	0.79	386	0.58
Oman	2,337	1.3	3,258	2.79	5,557	6.32	4,719	6.91	4,283	6.40
Kuwait	24,262	13.7	18,255	15.64	11,553	13.13	16,247	23.78	23,430	35.01
Qatar	57,997	32.8	22,152	18.97	17,353	19.72	15,685	22.96	8,320	12.43
Jordan	4,984	2.8	3,535	3.03	2,487	2.83	2,653	3.88	2,296	3.43
Singapore	564	0.3	390	0.33	353	0.40	403	0.59	414	0.62
Lebanon	905	0.5	664	0.57	501	0.57	418	0.61	398	0.59
Japan	49	0.1	87	0.07	94	0.11	130	0.19	149	0.22
Cyprus	775	0.4	741	0.63	1,091	1.24	1,093	1.6	1,267	1.89
Maldives	927	0.5	711	0.61	1,080	1.23	1,008	1.48	1,083	1.62
Mauritius	129	0.1	168	0.14	229	0.26	118	0.17	159	0.24
Malta									17	0.03
Malaysia	2424	1.4	2463	2.11	2,086	2.37	1,155	1.69	1408	2.10
Hong Kong	107	0.1	48	0.04	113	0.13	127	0.19	73	0.11
Seychelles	247	0.1	131	0.11	143	0.16	179	0.26	217	0.32
Poland									22	0.03
Turkey					69	0.08	82	0.12	66	0.10
Israel	803	0.45	672	0.58	626	0.71	649	0.95	446	0.67
South Korea	45	0.03	8	0.01						
Iraq			1		13	0.01	4	0.01		
Lithuania	33	0.02	13	0.01	46	0.05	59	0.09	69	0.10
Comoros	38	0.02	10	0.01						
Yemen	12	0.01								
Kurdistan	399	0.23	253	0.22	138	0.16	95	0.14	39	0.06
Ethiopia									34	0.05
Kenya					12	0.01	5	0.01	9	0.01
Afghanistan	99	0.06	85	0.07						
Egypt	15	0.01	21	0.02					1	
Rumania			122	0.10	137	0.16	222	0.32	450	0.67
Other	38	0.02	20	0.02	8	0.01	11	0.02	7	0.01
Total	176,829	100	116,749	100	87,982	100	68,319	100	66,924	100

**3.6 Total Departures for Foreign Employment through all sources - by Country 2014-2018\***  
(for top ranked countries)

Country	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	80,480	74,894	63,293	37,745	35,866
<b>Qatar</b>	84,622	65,139	59,523	56,637	50,774
<b>U.A.E</b>	50,347	43,666	40,117	36,667	32,836
<b>Kuwait</b>	43,552	38,473	32,400	37,410	46,951
<b>Oman</b>	5,759	7,082	9,729	8,865	8,345
<b>South Korea</b>	6,686	6,967	8,630	5,807	5,409
<b>Maldives</b>	4,511	4,813	6,116	6,279	7,300
<b>Jordan</b>	6,197	4,809	3,867	3,925	4,163
<b>Bahrain</b>	3,979	3,722	3,225	3,002	2,922
<b>Malaysia</b>	3,312	3,239	2,914	1,996	2,455
<b>Lebanon</b>	3,058	2,604	2,644	2,408	2,229
<b>Israel</b>	2,012	1,990	2,271	2,487	2,033
<b>Cyprus</b>	1,656	1,578	2,054	2,110	2,249
<b>Singapore</b>	1,470	1,461	1,841	1,795	1,917
<b>Seychelles</b>	536	464	702	852	827
<b>Hong Kong</b>	468	493	574	636	584
<b>Bangladesh</b>	242	283	573	520	590
<b>Mauritius</b>	129	196	250	140	195
<b>Kurdistan</b>	445	288	222	186	227
<b>India</b>	141	123	188	158	229
<b>Iraq</b>	78	110	171	162	262
<b>Japan</b>	88	106	144	402	746
<b>Rumania</b>	3	128	139	225	482
<b>Total</b>	<b>300,703</b>	<b>263,443</b>	<b>242,816</b>	<b>211,992</b>	<b>211,459</b>

\*Provisional

Source: Information Technology Division-Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment



## SECTION FOUR: LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY

**Table 4.1 Total Labour Productivity**

	Unit	2014	2015	2016	2017
GDP at Current Market Price	Rs Mn.	10,361,151	10,950,621	11,996,083	13,418,287
Total Employment	Nos.	8,424,000	7,831,000	7,948,000	8,208,000
Labour Productivity		1.23	1.40	1.51	1.63

Source: Central Bank Annual report ,2018

The GDP at current market price has increased year 2014 to 2017, against the employment numbers fluctuated, causing the labour productivity regularly increased from 1.23 to 1.63.

**Table 4.2: Labour Productivity in Agriculture Sector**

	Unit	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
GDP at current Market price	Rs. Mn	735,382	829,577	896,229	890,925	1,044,218
Total Employment	Nos.	2,321,215	2,222,859	2,244,547	2,153,874	2,140,185
Labour Productivity		0.32	0.37	0.40	0.41	0.49

Source: labour force survey 4th quarter,2017/Central Bank Annual report 2018

Total employment in Agriculture sector was decreased from year 2013 to 2017 gradually, while the GDP at current market price was increased, and thereby, the Labour Productivity has been increased year by year from 2013 to 2017.

**Table 4.3: Labour Productivity in Industry Sector**

	Unit	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
GDP at current Market price	Rs. Mn	2,797,328	2,931,998	2,975,232	3,337,428	3,661,945
Total Employment	Nos.	1,996,730	2,027,426	2,018,171	2,097,503	2,331,494
Labour Productivity		1.40	1.44	1.47	1.59	1.57

Source: labour force survey 4th quarter,2017/Central Bank Annual report 2018

The GDP at current market price in Industry sector has increased during the 2013 to 2017, while the total employment has increased from 2013 to 2017 with a slight drop in 2015. The resultant labour productivity in Industry sector varies from 1.4 to 1.57 during those years.

**Table 4.4: Labour Productivity in Services Sector**

	Unit	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
GDP at current Market price	Rs. Mn	5,406,544	5,895,618	6,283,379	6,771,236	7,473,723
Total Employment	Nos.	3,363,334	3,450,205	3,568,259	3,696,306	3,736,500
Labour Productivity		1.61	1.71	1.76	1.83	2.00

Source: labour force survey 4th quarter,2017/Central Bank Annual report 2018

Relative to the Industry sector and Agriculture sector, both the GDP at current Market Price and the employment numbers in the Services sector are recorded higher values with continuous increases over the period from 2013 to 2017. Therefore, the labour productivity in Service sector has recorded a persistent growth while the rates were considerably higher than the corresponding rates for Industry and Agriculture sectors.

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