



# Sri Lanka Labour Force Statistics Quarterly Bulletin

Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter - 2020

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## Department of Census and Statistics

Ministry of Finance, Economy and Policy Development

### Highlights

- Labour force participation rate is 51.0% for the First Quarter of 2020.
- Unemployment rate for the survey period is 5.7%.

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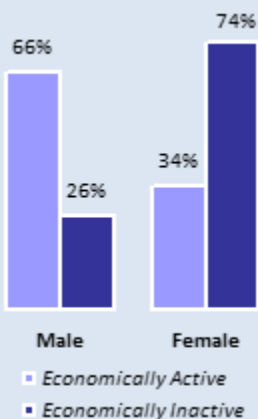


Figure 1: Distribution of Economically active/Inactive population - First quarter - 2020

Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey (LFS) is designed to measure the levels and trends of employment, unemployment and labour force in Sri Lanka. LFS has been conducted quarterly, since the first quarter of 1990.

This bulletin contains labour force, employment and unemployment statistics for the first quarter 2020 based on the data collected in January, February and March in 2020 covering the whole country.

### Labour Force ....

#### (Economically Active Population)

Table 1: Economically active population by gender and sector – First Quarter 2020

Sector	Economically active population					
	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
Sri Lanka	8,503,617	100.0	5,585,314	65.7	2,918,304	34.3
Urban	1,358,282	100.0	925,697	68.2	432,585	31.8
Rural	6,755,767	100.0	4,426,599	65.5	2,329,168	34.5
Estate	389,569	100.0	233,018	59.8	156,551	40.2

Table 2: Economically inactive population by gender and sector – First Quarter 2020

Sector	Economically inactive population					
	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
Sri Lanka	8,186,108	100.0	2,133,958	26.1	6,052,150	73.9
Urban	1,522,935	100.0	410,932	27.0	1,112,003	73.0
Rural	6,361,143	100.0	1,621,985	25.5	4,739,158	74.5
Estate	302,031	100.0	101,041	33.5	200,990	66.5

Table 3: LFPR by gender and year - All Island

Year	Total	Male	Female
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
2019	52.3	73.0	34.5
2018 Q1	52.0	73.4	33.5
2019 Q1	52.6	73.4	34.9
2020 Q1	51.0	72.4	32.5

Table 3 provides the information on LFPRs since year 2015. Referring the Table 3, it is important to note that, male participation to the labour force is always higher than that of female.

Considering the Table 4, the distribution of LFPR by age group and by gender depicts high male participation compared to female in all age groups. The highest participation rate for male is reported from age group 35–39 years (97.1%), while that for female is reported from 45–49 age group (48.3%).

### Labour Force

This is the currently economically active population. Which is the number of persons (age 15 years & above) who are employed or unemployed during the reference one week period.

### Labour force participation rate (LFPR)

Labour force population expressed as a percentage of the population, age 15 years and over, defined as LFPR.

According to the Table 1, the estimated economically active population is about 8.5 million in the first quarter 2020. Of which 65.7 percent are males and 34.3 percent are females. The economically inactive population is about 8.2 million. Out of the economically inactive population 26.1 percent are males and 73.9 percent are females (Table 2).

Table 4: LFPR by age group and gender - First Quarter 2020

Age group (Years)	Total	Male	Female
Sri Lanka	51.0	72.4	32.5
15 - 19	11.0	15.3	6.9
20 - 24	56.3	72.4	41.7
25 - 29	65.0	90.3	44.7
30 - 34	66.1	95.8	41.3
35 - 39	68.4	97.1	43.2
40 - 44	66.5	94.4	44.5
45 - 49	69.9	93.0	48.3
50 - 54	67.0	92.7	42.8
55 - 59	57.2	83.3	36.2
60+	29.6	48.4	14.3

## Definition of 'Employed'

Persons, who worked at least one hour during the reference period, as paid employees, employers, own account workers or contributing family workers are said to be employed. This also includes persons with a job but not at work during the reference period.

### Reference Period :

Previous week of the survey week

## The Employment Rate

The proportion of employed population to the total labour force.

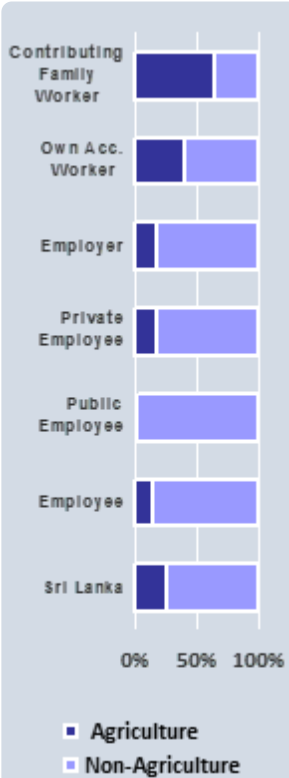


Figure 2: Distribution of employed population by employment status and Agriculture/Non-Agriculture sector - First quarter 2020

## Employment ...

Table 5: Distribution of Employed population by main industry (First quarter 2019 – First quarter 2020)

Quarter	Sri Lanka	Major Industry Group		
		Agriculture	Industries	Services
2019 Q1 (No.)	8,182,970	2,018,951	2,312,671	3,851,348
(%)	100.0	24.7	28.3	47.1
2019 Q2 (No.)	8,203,018	1,990,892	2,319,047	3,893,079
(%)	100.0	24.3	28.3	47.5
2019 Q3 (No.)	8,155,341	2,062,790	2,205,072	3,887,479
(%)	100.0	25.3	27.0	47.7
2019 Q4 (No.)	8,181,442	2,215,128	2,196,895	3,769,420
(%)	100.0	27.1	26.9	46.1
2020 Q1 (No.)	8,020,446	2,127,212	2,174,148	3,719,086
(%)	100.0	26.5	27.1	46.4

Table 5 shows the percentage distribution of employed population by main industry from first quarter 2019 to first quarter 2020. During first quarter of 2020, the total number of employed persons in Sri Lanka is estimated as about 8.0 million. Of which, about 46.4 percent engaged in Service sector, 27.1 percent in Industry sector and 26.5 percent in Agriculture sector. In the first quarter of 2020, there is an increase in employment in the agriculture sector compared to the first quarter of 2019 by 108,261.

Table 6: Distribution of employed population by employment status in Agriculture and Non-Agriculture sectors – First quarter 2020

Employment Status	Sri Lanka		Sector			
			Agriculture		Non-Agriculture	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sri Lanka	8,020,446	100.0	2,127,212	26.5	5,893,234	73.5
Employee	4,622,324	100.0	661,606	14.3	3,960,718	85.7
Public	1,198,722	100.0	27,853	2.3	1,170,869	97.7
Private	3,423,602	100.0	633,752	18.5	2,789,850	81.5
Employer	202,933	100.0	35,875	17.7	167,058	82.3
Own Account Worker	2,663,080	100.0	1,085,325	40.8	1,577,755	59.2
Contributing Family Worker	532,109	100.0	344,406	64.7	187,702	35.3

These figures are to be treated with caution as the corresponding CV (Coefficient of variation) values are high.

Table 7: Percentage distribution of Employed population by main industry & gender – First quarter 2020

Major Industry Group	Sri Lanka	Gender	
		Male	Female
Sri Lanka	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agriculture	26.5	25.9	27.7
Industry	27.1	27.6	26.0
Services	46.4	46.4	46.2

## Main industry categories and sub sectors

### Agriculture

1. Agriculture Forestry and Fishery (A)

### Industries

1. Mining & Quarrying (B)
2. Manufacturing (C)
3. Construction, Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply, Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (D, E, F)

### Services

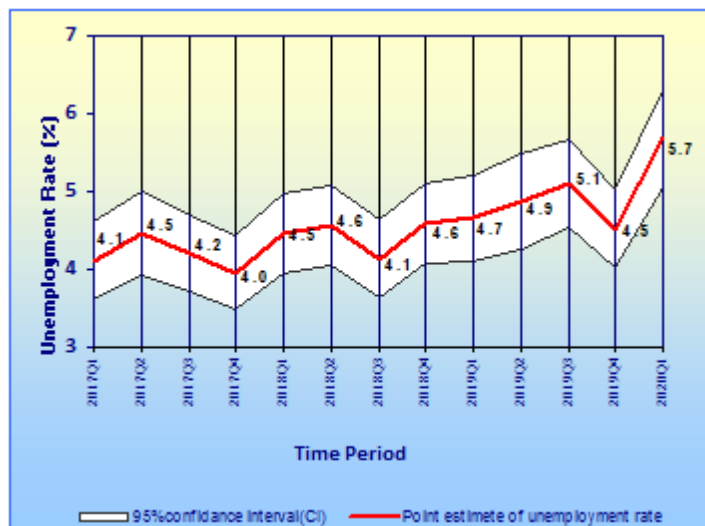
1. Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles (G)
2. Transportation and storage (H)
3. Accommodation and food services activities (I)
4. Information and communication (J)
5. Financial and insurance activities (K)
6. Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)
7. Administrative and support service activities (N)
8. Public administration and defense compulsory social security (O)
9. Education (P)
10. Human health and social work activities (Q)
11. Other service activities (S)
12. Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services - producing activities of households for own use (T)
13. Real estate activities (L) Arts, entertainment and recreation (R) Activities of extra territorial organizations & bodies (U)

Majority of the workforce are private sector employees followed by own account workers (Table 6).

Table 7 depicts the percentage distribution of male and female employed population by main industry sectors. Highest employment share is in service sector and this is true for both male & female, while the lowest shares are for agriculture sector. Among employed females 27.7 percent is in agriculture sector while this share is 25.9 percent for males.

# Unemployment ...

Figure 3 : Unemployment rates and its 95% confidence intervals (2017Q1 - 2020Q1)



<sup>1</sup>Sampling error : When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, estimates differ from the true values of population they represent. This difference, or sampling error, occurs by chance, and its variability is measured by the sampling error of the estimate.

For more details, please refer the explanatory note given under the labour force link in the DCS website; [www.statistics.gov.lk](http://www.statistics.gov.lk)

Table 8: Number of Unemployed and Unemployment rate by age group and gender – First quarter 2020

Age group (Years)	Unemployment Rate (%)			
	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Gender	
	Number		Male	Female
Sri Lanka	483,172	5.7	3.7	9.6
15–24	266,743	26.8	21.1	36.3
25–29	94,561	11.6	7.1	18.9
Over 30	121,867	1.8	0.8	3.8

As can be seen from Table 8, overall unemployment rate reported for female is 9.6 percent and it is 3.7 percent for male. Youth unemployment rate (age 15 – 24 years) corresponding to the first quarter 2020 is 26.8 percent and that is the highest reported unemployment rate among all age groups. Further the unemployment rates for males and females are 21.1 and 36.3 percent respectively for age group 15 – 24.

The survey results further reveals that the unemployment among females is higher than that of males, in all age groups. Youth and female unemployment contribute more to the overall unemployment of the country.

Table 9: Number of Unemployed and Unemployment rate by level of education – First quarter 2020

Level of Education	Unemployment Rate (%)			
	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Gender	
	Number		Male	Female
Sri Lanka	483,172	5.7	3.7	9.6
Below GCE O/L	170,784	3.4	2.7	5.4
GCE O/L	108,584	7.2	5.2	11.1
GCE A/L & above	203,804	10.1	5.5	14.7

The highest unemployment rate is reported from the G.C.E (A/L) and above group which is about 10.1 percent. Corresponding percentages are 5.5 percent and 14.7 percent for males and females respectively. Female unemployment rates are higher than those of males in all levels of education.

Survey results further shows that the problem of unemployment is more acute in the case of educated females than educated males, which was observed consistently over the results of previous survey rounds as well.

## Definition of 'Unemployed'

Persons available and/or looking for work, and who did not 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 weeks are said to be unemployed.

The number of unemployed persons is estimated as 483,172 during the first quarter 2020. The unemployment rate for the first quarter 2020 is 5.7 percent.

As shown in Figure 3, it is very important to note that, when the changes in unemployment rate is explained the corresponding sampling errors<sup>1</sup> and the confidence limits need to be considered.

## The Unemployment Rate

The proportion of unemployed population to the total labour force.

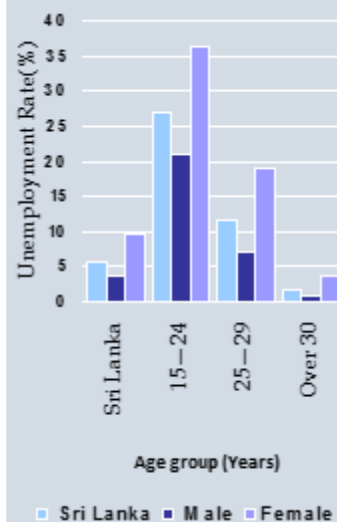


Figure 4: Unemployment rate by age group and gender – First quarter 2020

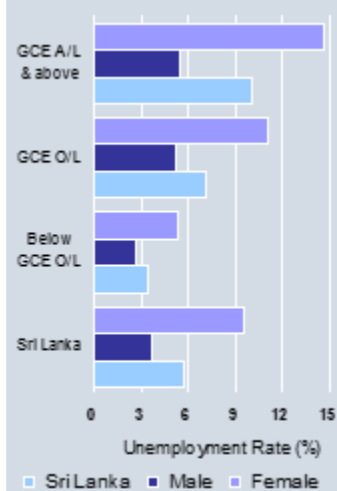


Figure 5: Unemployment rate by level of education and gender – First quarter 2020



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dedicated staff under  
a strategic leadership  
to become a prosper-  
ous nation in the  
globalized environ-  
ment."*

## Selected Labour Force Indicators ...

Indicator	Year							
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2018Q1	2019Q1	2020Q1
<b>Labour force participation rate</b>								
<b>By Gender</b>								
Total	53.8	53.8	54.1	51.8	52.3	52.0	52.6	51.0
Male	74.7	75.1	74.5	73.0	73.0	73.4	73.4	72.4
Female	35.9	35.9	36.6	33.6	34.5	33.5	34.9	32.5
<b>By residential sector</b>								
Total	53.8	53.8	54.1	51.8	52.3	52.0	52.6	51.0
Urban	48.6	49.8	50.5	49.6	50.2	49.7	51.0	47.1
Rural	54.8	54.6	54.8	52.3	52.7	52.4	52.9	51.7
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>								
<b>By Gender</b>								
Total	4.7	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.8	4.5	4.7	5.7
Male	3.0	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.3	2.9	3.4	3.7
Female	7.6	7.0	6.5	7.1	7.4	7.4	6.9	9.6
<b>By selected age Group (Year)</b>								
20 – 29	14.2	14.2	13.5	15.0	15.3	15.7	14.5	18.8
20 – 24	19.7	19.9	17.8	20.1	20.3	21.2	21.0	26.1
25 – 29	9.4	9.2	9.5	10.4	11.0	10.7	9.0	11.6
<b>By selected educational level</b>								
<b>GCE A/L and above</b>								
Total	9.2	8.3	8.1	9.1	8.5	9.5	7.9	10.1
Male	4.7	4.7	5.0	5.1	5.0	5.0	5.4	5.5
Female	13.5	11.9	11.3	13.2	11.9	14.1	10.6	14.7
<b>Employed population</b>								
<b>By Gender</b>								
Total	7,830,976	7,947,683	8,208,179	8,015,166	8,180,693	7,961,358	8,182,970	8,020,446
Male	5,097,798	5,149,948	5,279,158	5,300,310	5,368,896	5,292,148	5,314,713	5,381,218
Female	2,733,178	2,797,735	2,929,021	2,714,855	2,811,796	2,669,210	2,868,256	2,639,227
<b>By industry (Percentage)</b>								
Total	7,830,976	7,947,683	8,208,179	8,015,166	8,180,693	7,961,358	8,182,970	8,020,446
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agriculture	2,244,547	2,153,874	2,140,185	2,043,698	2,071,940	2,139,057	2,018,951	2,127,212
%	28.7	27.1	26.1	25.5	25.3	26.9	24.7	26.5
Industry	2,018,171	2,097,503	2,331,494	2,239,262	2,258,421	2,224,455	2,312,671	2,174,148
%	25.8	26.4	28.4	27.9	27.6	27.9	28.3	27.1
Services	3,568,259	3,696,306	3,736,500	3,732,206	3,850,332	3,597,846	3,851,348	3,719,086
%	45.6	46.5	45.5	46.6	47.1	45.2	47.1	46.4
<b>By no. of hours worked per week (percentage)</b>								
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0#	5.5	4.4	4.7	5.6	6.4	3.5	3.8	12.7
1 – 9	1.7	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	2.3
10 – 39	27.2	26.2	26.1	25.7	26.8	25.1	27.0	27.7
40 & above	65.7	67.9	67.5	66.9	65.1	69.8	67.6	57.2

# has a job but not at work during the reference week

Note : Working age population considered as (age 15 & over population)