
Sri Lanka Labour Force Statistics

Quarterly Bulletin, Fourth Quarter 2023

Department of Census and Statistics

Ministry of Finance, Economic Stabilization and National Policies

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 fourth quarter 2023 based on the data collected in October, November and December in 2023 covering the whole country.

This bulletin is based on the quarterly sample of 6,430 housing units. The survey covers persons living in housing units only and it excludes the institutional population.

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- ❑ Labour force participation rate is 47.1% for the fourth quarter of 2023.
 - ❑ Unemployment rate for the survey period is 4.3%.
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Source Publication

 <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/LabourForce/StaticInformation/Bulletins/4thQuarter2023>

Labour Force

All persons aged 15 years & over who are currently economically active during the reference period (Labour Force = employed persons + unemployed persons)

Reference Period:

Previous week of the survey week
(3rd week of every month)

Labour force participation rate (LFPR)

Labour force as a percentage of the population aged 15 years and over.

Labour Force (Economically Active Population)

Table 1: Economically active population by gender and sector, fourth quarter - 2023

Sector	Economically Active Population					
	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
Sri Lanka	8,170,434	100	5,436,230	66.5	2,734,204	33.5
Urban	1,303,786	100	866,399	66.5	437,387	33.5
Rural	6,471,504	100	4,314,576	66.7	2,156,928	33.3
Estate	395,144	100	255,255	64.6	139,889	35.4

Table 2: Economically inactive population by gender and sector, fourth quarter - 2023

Sector	Economically Inactive Population					
	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
Sri Lanka	9,183,112	100	2,627,306	28.6	6,555,807	71.4
Urban	1,632,061	100	494,263	30.3	1,137,799	69.7
Rural	7,201,687	100	2,028,257	28.2	5,173,429	71.8
Estate	349,364	100	104,786	30.0	244,579	70.0

According to the Table 1, the estimated economically active population is about 8.1 million in the fourth quarter 2023. Of which 66.5 percent are males and 33.5 percent are females. The economically inactive population is about 9.2 million. Out of the economically inactive population 28.6 percent are males and 71.4 percent are females. (Table 2)

Table 3: LFPR by gender and year, 2019 - 2023Q4

Year	Total	Male	Female
2019	52.3	73.0	34.5
2020	50.6	71.9	32.0
2021	49.9	71.0	31.8
2022	49.8	70.5	32.1
2021 Q4	49.5	70.2	32.0
2022 Q4	48.9	69.0	31.6
2023 Q1	49.9	69.6	32.7
2023 Q2	48.6	68.8	31.1
2023 Q3	48.8	68.4	32.0
2023 Q4	47.1	67.4	29.4

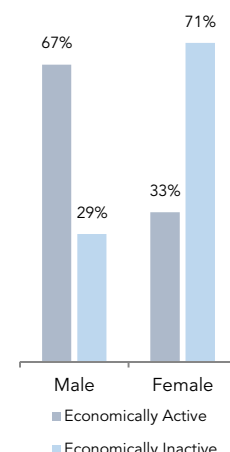
Table 3 provides the information on LFPRs by gender since year 2019. Referring the Table 3, it is important to note that, male participation to the labour force is always higher than that of female.

Table 4: LFPR by age group and gender, fourth quarter - 2023

Age group (Years)	Total	Male	Female
Sri Lanka	47.1	67.4	29.4
15 - 19	6.9	9.6	4.1*
20 - 24	42.5	56.0	30.8
25 - 29	65.5	85.7	45.1
30 - 34	67.8	94.1	42.6
35 - 39	67.1	94.3	45.3
40 - 44	66.9	94.5	43.4
45 - 49	67.0	94.0	42.9
50 - 54	62.1	88.8	39.8
55 - 59	57.5	84.9	32.7
60+	26.8	44.0	13.3

*These Figures are to be treated with caution as the corresponding CV (Coefficient of Variation) Values are high.

Figure 1: Distribution of economically active vs inactive population, fourth quarter 2023



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 40 - 44 years (94.5%), while that for female is reported from 35 - 39 age group (45.3%).

Employment**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.

Employment Rate

The proportion of employed population to the total labour force.

Table 5: Distribution of employed population by main industry (fourth quarter 2022 - fourth quarter 2023)

Quarter	Sri Lanka	Major Industry Group		
		Agriculture	Industries	Services
2022 Q4	8,015,006	2,258,476	1,946,352	3,810,178
(%)	100.0	28.2	24.3	47.5
2023 Q1	8,199,792	2,187,563	2,090,031	3,922,198
(%)	100.0	26.7	25.5	47.8
2023 Q2	8,014,492	2,058,421	2,104,249	3,851,822
(%)	100.0	25.7	26.3	48.1
2023 Q3	8,006,250	2,032,281	2,001,320	3,972,650
(%)	100.0	25.4	25.0	49.6
2023 Q4	7,819,131	2,075,112	1,977,017	3,767,002
(%)	100.0	26.5	25.3	48.2

Table 5 shows the percentage distribution of employed population by main industry from fourth quarter 2022 to fourth quarter 2023. During fourth quarter of 2023, the total number of employed persons in Sri Lanka is estimated as 7.8 million. Of which, about 48.2 percent engaged in service sector, 26.5 percent in agriculture sector and 25.3 percent in industry sector. In the fourth quarter of 2023, there is an increase in employed persons in industry sector compared to the fourth quarter of 2022.

Main industry categories and sub sectors

Agriculture

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 defence 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)

Table 6: Distribution of employed population by employment status in agriculture and non - agriculture sectors, fourth quarter - 2023

Employment Status	Sector					
	Sri Lanka		Agriculture		Non-Agriculture	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sri Lanka	7,819,131	100.0	2,075,112	26.5	5,744,019	73.5
Employee	4,541,837	100.0	748,524	16.5	3,793,313	83.5
Public	1,042,305	100.0	15,775*	1.5*	1,026,530	98.5
Private	3,499,532	100.0	732,749	20.9	2,766,783	79.1
Employer	200,765	100.0	25,496*	12.7*	175,269	87.3
Own Account Worker	2,667,262	100.0	1,079,381	40.5	1,587,881	59.5
Contributing Family Worker	409,268	100.0	221,711	54.2	187,556	45.8

*These Figures are to be treated with caution as the corresponding CV (Coefficient of Variation) Values are high.

According to the Table 6 Majority of the workforce are private sector employees followed by own account workers. Non agriculture sector covers 73.5 percent of employed population in Sri Lanka, employees and own account workers are highly constraining in that sector.

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 industry sector. Among employed females 25.3 percent is in agriculture sector while this share is 27.1 percent for males.

Figure 2 : Distribution of employed population by employment status and Agriculture/ Non- Agriculture sector, fourth quarter - 2023

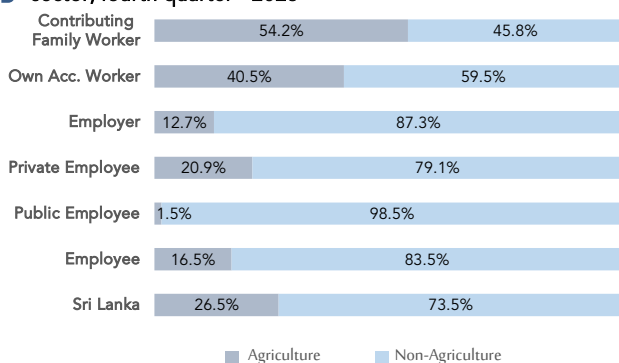


Table 7: Percentage distribution of Employed population by major industry group & gender, fourth quarter – 2023

Major Industry group	Sri Lanka	Gender	
		Male	Female
Sri Lanka	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agriculture	26.5	27.1	25.3
Industry	25.3	25.5	24.9
Services	48.2	47.4	49.8

Unemployment

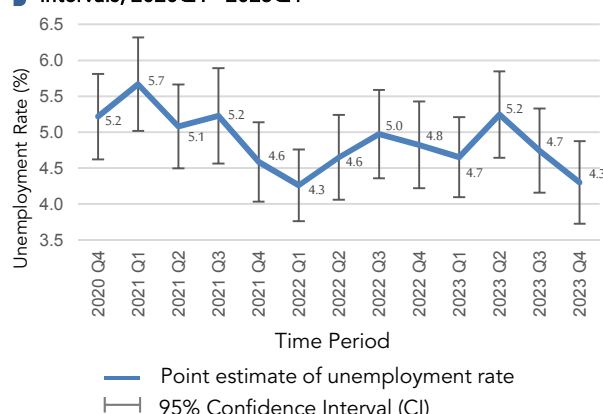
Unemployed

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 defined as be unemployed.

Unemployment Rate

The proportion of unemployed population to the total labour force.

Figure 3 : Unemployment rates and it's 95% confidence intervals, 2020Q4 - 2023Q4



The number of unemployed persons is estimated as 351,303 during the fourth quarter 2023. The unemployment rate for the fourth quarter 2023 is 4.3 percent.

As shown in Figure 3, it is very important to note that, when the changes in unemployment rate is explained the corresponding sampling errors¹ and the confidence limits need to be considered.

Table 8: Number of unemployed and unemployment rate by age group and gender, fourth quarter - 2023

Age group (Years)	Unemployment Rate (%)			
	Sri Lanka		Gender	
	Number	Sri Lanka	Male	Female
Sri Lanka	351,303	4.3	3.1	6.8
15 - 24	155,384	20.2	15.7	27.9
25 - 29	98,118	13.6	9.4	21.7
Over 30	97,800	1.5	1.0	2.3

1 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

Figure 4 : Unemployment rate by age group and gender, fourth quarter 2023



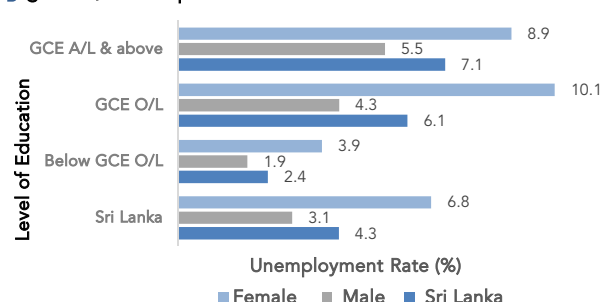
As per the table 8, overall unemployment rate reported for female is 6.8 percent and it is 3.1 percent for male. Youth unemployment rate (age 15 – 24 years) corresponding to the fourth quarter 2023 is 20.2 percent and that is the highest reported unemployment rate among all age groups. Further the unemployment rates for males and females are 15.7 and 27.9 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, fourth quarter - 2023

Level of Education	Unemployment Rate (%)			
	Sri Lanka		Gender	
	Number	Sri Lanka	Male	Female
Sri Lanka	351,303	4.3	3.1	6.8
Below GCE O/L	110,624	2.4	1.9	3.9
GCE O/L	92,586	6.1	4.3	10.1
GCE A/L & above	148,092	7.1	5.5	8.9

Figure 5 : Unemployment rate by level of education and gender, fourth quarter 2023



The highest unemployment rate is reported from the G.C.E.(A/L) and above group which is 7.1 percent. Corresponding percentages are 5.5 percent and 8.9 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.

Selected Labour Force Indicators

Indicator	Year									
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2021Q4	2022Q4	2023Q1	2023Q2	2023Q3	2023Q4
Labour force participation rate										
by gender										
Total	52.3	50.6	49.9	49.8	49.5	48.9	49.9	48.6	48.8	47.1
Male	73.0	71.9	71.0	70.5	70.2	69.0	69.6	68.8	68.4	67.4
Female	34.5	32.0	31.8	32.1	32.0	31.6	32.7	31.1	32.0	29.4
by residential sector										
Total	52.3	50.6	49.9	49.8	49.5	48.9	49.9	48.6	48.8	47.1
Urban	50.2	47.0	46.9	47.2	46.8	45.9	47.5	46.8	45.2	44.4
Rural	52.7	51.3	50.5	50.3	50.0	49.5	50.4	49.0	49.6	47.6
Unemployment rate										
by gender										
Total	4.8	5.5	5.1	4.7	4.6	4.8	4.7	5.2	4.7	4.3
Male	3.3	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.3	3.9	3.4	4.1	3.7	3.1
Female	7.4	8.5	7.9	6.5	7.0	6.5	7.0	7.4	6.7	6.8
by selected age group (year)										
20 – 29	15.3	18.1	18.3	16.2	16.3	17.2	17.1	16.4	17.7	16.6
20 – 24	20.3	25.2	26.8	21.8	23.6	23.3	21.5	22.0	23.1	20.0
25 – 29	11.0	12.0	11.4	11.7	10.3	12.3	13.6	11.6	13.4	13.6
by selected educational level										
GCE A/L and above										
Total	8.5	9.8	9.1	7.8	7.6	7.2	8.3	8.0	8.4	7.1
Male	5.0	6.2	6.2	5.5	5.5	5.2	4.7	6.3	6.8	5.5
Female	11.9	13.6	12.2	10.1	9.6	9.3	12.0	9.9	9.9	8.9
Employed population										
by gender										
Total	8,180,693	7,999,093	8,113,507	8,147,731	8,146,367	8,015,006	8,199,792	8,014,492	8,006,250	7,819,131
Male	5,368,896	5,372,947	5,414,280	5,373,965	5,353,688	5,279,881	5,402,656	5,323,491	5,234,273	5,269,831
Female	2,811,796	2,626,146	2,699,228	2,773,766	2,792,679	2,735,125	2,797,136	2,691,001	2,771,977	2,549,300
by industry (percentage)										
Total	8,180,693	7,999,093	8,113,507	8,147,731	8,146,367	8,015,006	8,199,792	8,014,492	8,006,250	7,819,131
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agriculture	2,071,940	2,169,679	2,213,015	2,158,559	2,127,835	2,258,476	2,187,563	2,058,421	2,032,281	2,075,112
%	25.3	27.1	27.3	26.5	26.1	28.2	26.7	25.7	25.4	26.5
Industry	2,258,421	2,152,746	2,109,482	2,158,199	2,198,797	1,946,352	2,090,031	2,104,249	2,001,320	1,977,017
%	27.6	26.9	26.0	26.5	27.0	24.3	25.5	26.3	25.0	25.3
Services	3,850,332	3,676,668	3,791,011	3,830,973	3,819,735	3,810,178	3,922,198	3,851,822	3,972,650	3,767,002
%	47.1	46.0	46.7	47.0	46.9	47.5	47.8	48.1	49.6	48.2
by no. of hours worked per week (percentage)										
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0*	6.4	14.6	9.6	5.8	4.8	4.9	4.7	4.8	4.5	3.0
1 – 9	1.7	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.8	2.1	2.6	2.8	2.0
10 – 39	26.8	27.1	29.6	31.9	30.4	31.6	30.5	32.6	30.9	31.0
40 & above	65.1	56.2	58.7	60.3	63.2	61.7	62.7	60.0	61.8	64.0

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


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

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The Mission of DCS

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