

# GENDER AND LABOUR IN ST LUCIA: EVIDENCE FROM HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

## INTRODUCTION

St Lucia's Quarterly Labour Force Surveys of 2012 suggest that the educational achievements of women aged 15 years and above are noticeably higher than those of men in the same age group. Thus 12 per cent of women record having a diploma, certificate or degree with a further 31 per cent having a General Certificate of Education (GCE), whereas the comparable percentages for men are 8 and 27 per cent respectively. The gender differences are even larger for young people aged 15 to 29 years. Among young women, 11 per cent have a diploma, certificate or degree and 55 per cent have a GCE; among young men, the percentages are 6 and 48 respectively. Women's average education achievements were already higher than men's in 2005/2006, the earlier date covered in this paper.

However, despite higher educational achievements, women are less well-off than men in the labour market in terms of key indicators such as participation, employment and unemployment rates, as well as earnings. How do we understand these seeming anomalies?

This paper does not give conclusive answers to this question. Instead, it draws together findings from an analysis of data from two surveys conducted in St Lucia (the St Lucia Survey of Living Conditions of 2005/2006, and the Quarterly Labour Force Surveys conducted in 2012) in the hope that the evidence presented can be used as a basis of further discussion among relevant policymakers.

At the outset, it is important to note that the findings must be treated with some caution. First, the Survey of Living Conditions reflects the situation about eight years ago, before the global economic and financial crisis. Second, in respect of both the Survey of Living Conditions and the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, the survey data include some errors and missing data. Third, the sample size for the surveys was relatively small, and with each level of disaggregation the results become less reliable. Findings in respect of small groups must

thus be treated with particular caution. Fourth, the questions asked often differed across the two surveys—even in respect of the same issue—limiting comparability. Nevertheless, despite these caveats, the patterns shown by both surveys reveal believable patterns.

## Key findings

### Key labour market indicators

Table 1 disaggregates the population age 15-plus into three work status categories. The **employed** are those who report having done employment-related work over the past seven days (the international standard period for asking about employment); the **unemployed** are those who did not work in the past seven days but looked for work in the last two months; the **not economically active** are those who neither worked nor looked for work.

The table also shows key labour market indicators. The **unemployment rate** is calculated by dividing the number of unemployed by the total of those employed and unemployed. It shows the extent to which people

**TABLE 1.**  
**Work Status Last 7 Days by Sex, 15+ Years**

Work status	2005/2006			2012		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Employed	34226	26214	60440	39496	33616	73112
Unemployed	3037	3554	6591	9587	10379	19967
Not economically active	16638	31346	47983	17454	24683	42137
Total	53901	61114	115015	66538	68678	135216
Unemployment rate	8%	12%	10%	20%	24%	21%
Labour force participation rate	69%	49%	58%	74%	64%	69%
Employment rate	63%	43%	53%	59%	49%	54%

who want work are unable to find it. The **labour force participation rate** is calculated by dividing the sum of employed and unemployed by the total of all three categories. This rate shows the extent to which people would like to work. The **employment rate** is calculated by dividing the number employed by the total in the age group. This rate shows the extent to which people are employed. In respect of all indicators, the term 'want work' must be understood to refer to those whose family and personal circumstances allow them to make themselves available for employment-related work. Further, as illustrated below, the term 'employment' refers to all sorts of compensated work, whether as an employee, employer, self-employed or unpaid family worker.

Table 1 shows that in 2012, as in 2005/2006, women are less likely (64 per cent versus 74 per cent in 2012) than men to want to work (labour force participation rate). However, while the participation rate for men increased by 5 percentage points over the period, that for women increased by 14 percentage points. The gender gap is thus much smaller than before. This counters Andaiye's observation (Andaiye, 2003: 79), based on data available in 2001, that the gap between women and men in terms of labour force participation was not narrowing.

Table 1 shows that in 2012, as in 2005/2006, among those who wanted to work in 2012, women are four percentage points more likely than men to be unemployed (24 per cent versus 20 per cent). However, the level of the unemployment rates is substantially higher than before for both women and men. Finally, the employment rate for women is still lower than that of men, but the gender gap has fallen from 20 percentage points to ten percentage points. Men's employment rate has fallen; women's has increased. These patterns could reflect the impact of the global crisis, where unemployment increased for both women and men and a decrease in opportunities for men has forced more women into the labour market.

Women are less likely than men to participate in the labour market, are less likely than men to be employed and more likely than men to be unemployed.

## Reasons for non-participation

Unfortunately, there are many missing responses to the questions that asked why people did not work or look for work in the past week. In 2005/2006, among the 37,789 not economically active for whom there were responses, school accounted for 26 per cent of males and 20 per cent of females, and retirement for 33 per cent of males and 24 per cent of females. In contrast, (unpaid) housekeeping, caring and pregnancy accounted for 19 per cent of females but only 2 per cent of males. The extent to which unpaid housekeeping, caring and pregnancy account for non-employment by women indicates the extent to which unpaid care work interferes with income-earning.

Similarly, in 2012, of the not economically active, 11 per cent of the women but only 1 per cent of the men gave as the reason that they were a housewife or homemaker. When those who said that they wanted work but had not taken any steps to find work were asked for the reason, 19 per cent of women but only 2 per cent of men said that personal or family responsibilities were the reason, while 13 per cent of women and 2 per cent of men cited illness, injury or pregnancy.

Women are far more likely than men to be held back from employment by family and household responsibilities.

**TABLE 2.**  
**Work Status Last 12 months of Men by Family Form, 18+ Years**

	Child and man	Child, woman and man	Man only	Woman and man	Total
2005/2006					
Total distribution	3%	57%	15%	25%	100%
Unemployment rate	0%	3%	5%	3%	3%
Labour force participation rate	75%	83%	68%	67%	77%
Employment rate	75%	80%	65%	65%	74%
2012					
Total distribution	2%	37%	26%	35%	100%
Unemployment rate	21%	11%	11%	13%	12%
Labour force participation rate	95%	88%	80%	75%	81%
Employment rate	75%	78%	71%	65%	72%

**TABLE 3.**  
**Work Status Last 12 Months of Women by Family Form, 18+ years**

Work status	Child and woman	Child, woman and man	Woman only	Woman and man	Total
2005/2006					
Total distribution	16%	54%	10%	20%	100%
Unemployment rate	6%	7%	3%	2%	6%
Labour force participation rate	62%	58%	45%	47%	55%
Employment rate	59%	53%	44%	46%	52%
2012					
Total distribution	13%	38%	17%	32%	100%
Unemployment rate	21%	21%	12%	15%	18%
Labour force participation rate	81%	74%	66%	63%	70%
Employment rate	64%	59%	58%	53%	58%

## Family form

Table 2 and Table 3 investigate the extent to which work status of women and men is affected by the form or structure of the household (family form) in which they live. Family form is defined on the basis of the presence of child/ren under 18 years ('child'), men aged 18 or above ('man') and women aged 18 or above ('woman') in the household.<sup>1</sup>

The total distribution rows in Table 2 reveal that in 2005/2006, more than half (57 per cent) of adult men lived in households that contained at least one man, one woman and one child. The male labour force participation and employment rates were higher for this family form than for any other. The labour force participation and employment rates were higher for households consisting of at least one man and one child but no woman than for those with male and female adults. However, the man and child households accounted for only 3 per cent of all adult men.

By 2012, there had seemingly been strong shifts from the profile in 2005/2006. Only 2 per cent of men now lived in households with only men and children. This grouping is again probably too small to provide reliable results, although the pattern seems similar to that for 2005/2006 of intense engagement with the labour market. Only 37 per cent of men lived in households with men, women and children, while the percentages living only with adult men or with only adult men and women have increased dramatically. The labour market indicators show the strongest attachment to the labour market for men living only with children, followed by those living with both women and children. Engagement is lowest for households with no children but with at least one woman alongside the man.

Disregarding the small group of men living only with children for whom the pattern is different in 2005/2006 and 2012, labour market attachment among men is strongest among those living with at least one woman and at least one child.

Table 3, which presents similar information in respect of women, reveals that in 2005/2006 over half (54 per cent) of adult women lived in households with at least one child, one woman and one man. A further 20 per cent lived in households with at least one man and one woman but no children. In strong contrast to the situation for adult men, 16 per cent of adult women lived in households consisting only of women and children.

In 2005/2006, the labour force participation and employment rates were highest in the women-and-children households and lowest in the woman-only and woman-and-man households. The pattern for the woman-only households is largely explained by the fact that many of these women are elderly, as seen by the fact that the median age of the women in this situation is 59 years (as compared to the median age of 48 years for men in man-only households). Where the household consisted of at least one woman, one man and one child, women's labour force participation and employment rates were closer to those of the woman-and-child households than to those for households that were made up only of adults only or adult women. Where a single woman was living with one or more children, the employment rate was 65 per cent and the labour force participation rate was 70 per cent i.e. these women were the most likely to (need to) do paid work (these percentages are not shown in the table).

In 2012, the labour force participation and employment rates were, as before, highest in the women-and-children households, followed by the households with children, women and men. The unemployment rate was highest in household with children, women and men, but the rate was almost as high in the households with only children and women.

Labour market attachment among women is highest among women living only with children. This group accounts for a much larger proportion of women than the comparable group of men living only with children.

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, this analysis is less accurate in 2012 than in 2005/2006. The recording of age in five-year age groups in the 2012 dataset means that those aged 18 to 19 years are excluded from the analysis because we cannot differentiate them from children aged 15 to 17 years.

**TABLE 4.**  
**Status in Employment of Employed by Sex, 15+ Years**

Employment status	2005/2006			2012		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Employee government	11%	22%	16%	10%	16%	13%
Employee statutory body	4%	4%	4%	2%	4%	3%
Employee private sector	62%	57%	60%	47%	52%	49%
Own account worker	18%	13%	16%	20%	13%	17%
Employer	5%	3%	4%	7%	3%	5%
Unpaid family worker	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Other/not stated	0%	0%	0%	13%	11%	12%
Total %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

## Status in employment

Table 4 suggests that in 2005/2006, employed women were twice as likely as employed men to be government employees, but less likely than men to be employees of private companies or own-account workers. Overall, 77 per cent of employed men and 83 per cent of employed women were employees.

By 2012, while employed women were still more likely than men to be government employees, the pattern was not as strong as in 2005/2006. Women were also now more likely than men to be employees in the private sector. Unfortunately, the comparison with 2005/2006 is not as exact as one would like as no status in employment information was provided for more than a tenth of both women and men in 2012. The fact that the percentage reported to be own-account workers is as large, or larger, than in 2005/2006 despite the 10 per cent-plus unknown suggests that there was a shift away from employee to self-employed status. This could reflect an effect of the ongoing economic crisis.

Women are more likely than men to work for government and, by 2012, are also more likely than men to be employees in the private sector.

## Industry

In 2005/2006, the largest industry for both women and men was services. This sector accounted for 36 per cent of employed women versus 29 per cent of employed men. Construction accounted for only 1 per cent of employed women, but more than one fifth of employed men. Men also dominated heavily in agriculture and transport, while women were far more likely than men to be found in trade, administration and social security, and education and social services. The latter two areas partly reflect women's clustering in government employment.

In 2012, among those for whom industry information was available, there was again a strong male bias in agriculture, construction and transport. Conversely, there was a strong female bias in trade and

hospitality, as well as some female bias in sectors such as public administration, education and health that are mostly associated with government employment. Construction accounted for 16 per cent of male workers for whom industry information was available, versus 2 per cent of female workers. The strong male bias in construction of 2005/2006 thus persists, but is slightly less marked than in 2005/2006.

Traditional industry patterns persist in women's and men's employment, with women concentrated more in the service-related industries that deal more with people while men cluster in industries that deal with goods.

## Occupation

Table 5 and Table 6 provide the breakdown by occupation, using standard international occupational classifications. These classifications provide for ten high-level groups that, for the most part, are organized in descending order of skill and specialization. The first exception is the first group, managers, which is defined on the basis of authority or decision-making power rather than skill. The second exception is the final group, armed forces occupations, which is defined on the basis of the sector. This group is often not captured well in household surveys as army personnel often live in specialized barracks or areas.

In 2005, for women, services and sales was the most common occupation, accounting for nearly three in every ten employed women. For men, craft (skilled) occupations accounted for a similar proportion. Men were also far more likely than women to be operators, while women were more likely than men to be professionals (such as teachers and nurses). Women were somewhat more likely than men to be categorized as managers, undermining simplistic arguments that women are excluded from decision-making positions. However, the fact that 25 per cent of the female 'managers', as compared to 12 per cent of male managers, were own-account workers raises questions as to the interpretation of this term as managing in an own-account situation would not normally imply substantial authority or decision-making power. The pattern also suggests that the St Lucia situation is similar to that reported by Andaiye

**TABLE 5.**  
**Occupation of Employed by Sex, 15+ Years**

Occupation	2005/2006			2012		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Managers	8%	10%	9%	7%	10%	9%
Professionals	5%	13%	8%	5%	11%	8%
Technical/Associate professional	5%	5%	5%	5%	7%	6%
Clerks	3%	17%	9%	3%	8%	5%
Services/sales	15%	29%	21%	15%	30%	22%
Skilled agriculture	11%	4%	8%	11%	4%	8%
Craft	29%	4%	18%	14%	3%	9%
Operators	10%	2%	6%	8%	1%	5%
Elementary	15%	17%	16%	12%	10%	11%
Unspecified				19%	15%	17%
Total %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

for Jamaica, where 95 per cent of owners of micro enterprises were women, compared to 45 per cent of owners of small businesses and only 25 per cent of medium-sized businesses. Similarly, in St Vincent and the Grenadines, 75 per cent of micro-enterprises were reportedly owned by women (Andaiye, 2003: 81).

By 2012, the dominance of services and sales was at the same level as before even with 17 per cent of responses for occupation unspecified. This suggests that the dominance was even stronger than before. Men continued to be far more likely than women to be employed as craft workers and operators, while women continued to be more likely than men to work in occupations classified as managers and professionals. Unlike the situation in 2005/2006, 54 per cent of male managers were now own-account workers, as compared to 48 per cent of female managers. A further 18 per cent of the female managers were employees of statutory boards, as against only 1 per cent of the male managers. This is in stark contrast to 2005/2006 when 7 per cent of male managers and no female managers were reported as working for statutory boards. These very different patterns could be the result of relatively small samples and the panel nature of the 2012 data (which results in some individuals being surveyed more than once) rather than real changes in occupational patterns.

Women are more likely than men to work in service and sales and professional positions, while men are more likely to be in occupations where skills relate to production of goods.

## Earnings

The tables that follow present patterns in respect of earnings. Earnings are an essential consideration if we are interested in economic empowerment. As Andaiye states bluntly: “My view

is that it is money and not the fact of employment itself that empowers” (Andaiye, 2003: 107). She cites the definition of economic empowerment used in a study by Marilyn Carr and colleagues as “an economic change/material gain plus increased bargaining power and/or structural change which enables women to secure economic gains on an on-going and sustained basis.” This definition emphasizes not only employment, but also the extent of economic gain (which can be proxied by earnings) and associated power and control. Andaiye emphasizes that power relations need to change within the household, but also within the wider economy and culture (Andaiye 2003: 90).

The 2005/2006 survey included a relatively complicated set of questions on employment-related income in a part of the questionnaire that was separate from the other employment-related questions. This approach resulted in several complications in interpreting the data. These included relatively substantial non-response and missing data, as well as responses that contradicted each other. The analysis presented here relies on estimates of monthly earnings derived by St Lucia’s Central Statistical Office on the basis of the available information. These estimates exclude those whose pay period was specified as daily, as these individuals are likely to receive very erratic pay. Overall earnings estimates are missing or zero (and thus not included in the analysis) for 17 per cent of employed people (18 per cent of male employed and 16 per cent of female employed) in the 2005/2006 data.

The 2012 Quarterly Labour Force Survey enquired about (gross monthly) income from employment in brackets rather than in terms of the actual number. Unfortunately, responses were not provided for a quarter of employed people. In order to allow further analysis, each individual for whom there was information was assigned an income value midway between the lower and upper bands of their bracket.

**TABLE 6.**  
**Mean Earnings by Occupation and Sex, 15+ Years**

Occupation	2005/2006			2012		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
Managers	3120	2322	2718	3489	2622	3073
Professionals	2813	2420	2540	3224	2912	3016
Technical/Associate professional	2722	1697	2242	2512	2371	2428
Clerks	1739	1348	1429	1875	1979	1950
Services/sales	1421	922	1115	1669	1168	1367
Skilled agriculture	1017	705	955	1040	1177	1073
Craft	1599	759	1532	1965	1036	1793
Operators	2106	767	1919	2446	998	2297
Elementary	1061	718	901	1162	1056	1115
Total	1694	1309	1524	1906	1725	1821

For example, for the bracket 201–399, we assign the value 300. For the topmost bracket, which does not have an upper bound, the value 800 was assigned. These values were then used to generate crude means for different categories.

Table 6 presents mean earnings by occupation and sex using the broad occupational groupings for the two periods. Although the occupational categories are meant, apart from the manager level, to record increasing levels of skill, the median wages do not neatly follow this pattern. In both years, mean operator earnings are much higher than expected; craft worker earnings are also higher than services/sales and skilled agriculture earnings. As seen above, both the craft and operator categories are male-dominated while the services/sales category is female-dominated. The relative gap between male and female earnings is also largest for operators, followed by craft workers. For all occupations combined, the female mean was 77 per cent of the male mean in 2005/2006 but, if the crude imputations of

income from the brackets are reliable, had risen to 91 per cent of the male mean by 2012.

Table 7 presents similar information, but this time by highest level of education. (The total values differ across tables because the tables in each case exclude individuals for whom occupation, education or whatever the relevant variable for that table, is missing.) Again, female mean earnings are below male mean earnings for all educational levels for both 2005/2006 and 2012. This table refutes the suggestion that lower female earnings can be explained by women having less education or ‘human capital’ than men.

The gender patterns in respect of occupation and education remain if the analysis is restricted to employees rather than covering all employed people.

Further exploration of differences across status in employment, shown in Table 8, suggests that employees of statutory boards and governments tend to have higher wages than private sector

**TABLE 7.**  
**Mean Earnings by Highest Education and Sex, 15+ Years**

Educational level	2005/2006			2012		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
None	1355	835	1172	1421	1032	1274
School-leaving	1627	875	1308	1485	1025	1299
GCE	1801	1344	1573	1999	1570	1773
Diploma/certificate	2236	1930	2066	3862	3378	3565
Degree	4950	2902	3571			
Professional qualification	3709	2557	3079			
Other	1529	1355	1438	1695	1317	1539
Total	1720	1313	1541	1916	1730	1829

**TABLE 8.**  
**Mean Earnings by Status in Employment, 15+ Years**

Employment status	2005/2006			2012		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
Employee government	2012	1727	1842	2501	2384	2435
Employee statutory board	2407	1906	2187	2022	2304	2203
Employee private sector	1583	1193	1419	1749	1615	1685
Own account worker	1604	944	1358	1446	896	1249
Employer	2426	1262	2132	3200	1934	2838
Total	1711	1311	1536	1908	1715	1818

employees. Among men, employer earnings are similar to those of the relatively highly paid employees of statutory boards in 2005/2006, and noticeably higher than board employees in 2012. Among women, in contrast, the earnings of employers are less than those of board employees in both years. Among men, own-account workers tend to earn slightly more than private-sector employees in 2005/2006 but less than these employees in 2012. Among women, own-account workers tend to earn substantially less than all other categories in both years. Mean earnings of women are lower than those of men in the same category across all categories in both years except the relative small category of statutory board employees in 2012.

Table 9 shows that for 2005/2006 gender differentials in earnings are found among both the younger group aged 15 to 29 years and those aged 30-plus years. Younger people tend to earn less than older people, but the relative gender differential is larger among those aged 30-plus than among the younger workers. For 2012, as in 2005/2006, older people tend to have higher earnings than younger people. However, female earnings tend to be very slightly higher than male earnings among those aged 15 to 29 years. The difference is almost certainly too small to be statistically significant, especially considering the crude measure used based on income groups. The difference between the age groups is at least partly explained by the higher educational levels of women shown above.

Across a range of different comparisons—occupation, industry, status in employment and educational achievement—women tend to earn less than men. The fact that this finding holds in respect of analysis by educational achievement suggests that lack of education is not the reason behind women’s lower earnings. Instead, the difference might in part reflect the clustering of women in the less monetarily valued service-oriented industries and occupations.

## Hours of work

It is sometimes suggested that the reason that women earn less than men is that they tend to work fewer hours. Analysis of usual working hours in the St Lucia Quarterly Labour Force Survey of 2012 (for those recording non-zero hours) suggests that the median weekly hours for both women and men was 40, while for the mean there was only two-hour difference (42 hours recorded for men and 40 hours for women). The same pattern held among employees, but among own-account workers mean hours were 46 for men and 42 for women. The mean hours for women and men living in households with a child under five years were two hours less than those for other employed women and men. For both women and men, 9 per cent of employed people reported usual hours of less than 35 per week.

There is some tendency for women to work shorter hours than men, reflecting the household and family responsibilities that they bear alongside their income-earning work. The differences in hours spent in income-earning work are, however, relatively small.

**TABLE 9.**  
**Mean earnings by age group**

Age group	2005/2006			2012		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
15 to 29 years	1323	1130	1244	1532	1548	1540
30+ years	1868	1370	1644	2035	1790	1921
Total	1710	1308	1534	1906	1725	1821

## Conclusions

The available datasets produce a picture of gendered employment in St Lucia that is not unusual internationally. Women are clustered in particular industries and occupations, they are less likely than men to be employed and more likely to be unemployed. Across virtually all categorizations, women tend to earn less than men.

The provisional finding of a lower gender earnings gap in 2012 than 2005/2006, and the narrowing or even reversal of the gap among young people, suggests that there might have been some improvement in the relative position of women and men in terms of earnings. This must, however, be seen against the background of an overall deterioration in the economy and earnings opportunities as a result of the global financial and economic crisis.

Unfortunately, the current data do not allow as much investigation of the extent to which women and men are engaged in precarious work. The addition of questions that would allow analysis of formal and informal employment and the formal and informal sector would help in understanding the position of the increased number of workers (when compared to 2005/2006) who are self-employed and own-account workers, as well as of employees who do not have the protections associated with decent work.

## References

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This brief was written by Debbie Budlender and submitted to UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean.

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