



# **Status of Women in Public Administration in the Republic of Mauritius**

An in-depth gender gap review and policy support for promoting women's access to leadership positions in public administration in Mauritius and Rodrigues

**Commissioned by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme Mauritius and Seychelles in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare**

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>CEDAW</b>	<b>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</b>
<b>CSCM</b>	Civil Service College Mauritius
<b>ESI</b>	Economic and Social Indicators
<b>GFP</b>	Gender Focal Point
<b>HR</b>	Human Resource
<b>HRMM</b>	Human Resource Management Manual
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>LGSC</b>	Local Government Service Commission
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MGEFW</b>	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
<b>MPSAIR</b>	Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms
<b>MUR</b>	Mauritian Rupees
<b>NGP</b>	National Gender Policy
<b>PRB</b>	Pay Research Bureau
<b>PSC</b>	Public Service Commission
<b>RRA</b>	Rodrigues Regional Assembly
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SM</b>	Statistics Mauritius
<b>TSMs</b>	Temporary Special Measures
<b>WFH</b>	Work from Home

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## Background

Gender Equality in public institutions is a priority of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 and its target 5, emphasizes the importance of “women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”<sup>1</sup>. This commitment is further supported by SDG 16, including target 7, which aims to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Research shows that promoting gender equality fosters social and economic development and enhances overall outcomes for everyone and sustainability<sup>2</sup>.

Good governance and democracy require inclusive leadership and representation. A larger number of women in office can influence gender-responsive public policies and institutional practices. When women are excluded from decision-making processes on issues that have a direct impact on their lives, such as education, health, and economic development, policy outcomes are likely to become detrimental and ineffective, potentially resulting in the violation of women’s rights (UN Women, 2017)<sup>3</sup>. The National Gender Policy 2022-2030 reiterates ‘the sustained commitment of the Republic of Mauritius to engender an all-inclusive legal, policy and administrative environment that promotes gender equality and equity as the basis for promoting sustainable development’.

Public administration is the instrument through which national policies and programmes are implemented. In an ideal world, public administration is guided by principles of fairness, accountability, justice, equality and non-discrimination, and the civil service should serve as a model where women and men equally participate and lead, including in decision-making positions (UNDP, 2014)<sup>4</sup>. However, in many countries, public administration is still a patriarchal institution that perpetuates gender-biased traditions, attitudes, and practices. Gender equality governance is essential for effective, inclusive and accountable public policymaking and implementation alongside the delivery of high- quality public services. This necessitates the integration of gender mainstreaming across all policies. Promoting gender equality in governance necessitates the equitable involvement and leadership of women in public institutions, particularly at decision-making levels. This should be complemented by extensive gender sensitization for all decision-makers, fostering a cultural shift that actively encourages and supports female leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>

<sup>2</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/51c285f6-0200-590c-97d3-95b937be3271>

<sup>3</sup> UN Women (2017). "Women’s Participation and Leadership in Decision-Making in Africa: An Agenda for Accelerating Progress."

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.undp.org/publications/global-report-gender-equality-public-administration-gepa>

Gender equality awareness and the implementation of gender mainstreaming are still evolving in Mauritius. Cultural norms and stereotypes, including traditional gender roles, present significant challenges for women leaders. These continue to influence perceptions of women's leadership abilities, making it difficult for them to advance to top positions.

Advancing gender equality in public administration aligns with the fundamental right of women to actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring that public administration reflects the diverse composition of society. By harnessing the full potential of the workforce, gender equality contributes to a more representative and inclusive governance. Moreover, the impact of gender diversity on shaping policy outcomes is undeniable, as diverse perspectives and experiences contribute to more comprehensive and effective decisions. Research also suggests that public administration teams characterized by greater diversity often demonstrate improved performance, fostering innovation and enhanced problem-solving capabilities (Brody, 2009; Finkel et al., 2021). Ultimately, integrating gender equality into public administration not only upholds principles of fairness and justice but also holds the potential to optimize government functioning for the benefit of all.

Mauritius is participating in the project '[Building capacities for promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions at national and local levels](#)', which is implemented by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (UNDESA/DPIDG) in collaboration with UNDP and UN Women. The project is funded by the Government of Italy. The project aims to (i) Strengthen the capacity of government officials in Mauritius, Senegal, Bhutan and Lao People's Democratic Republic (project countries) to develop and implement an action plan that prioritizes gender equality and promotes women's career progression toward leadership positions in public institutions; (ii) Enable South to South knowledge exchanges among the project and partner governments of Cambodia, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Zambia.

### Purpose of the national review

The purpose of this report is to review, in consultation with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, the institutional framework, public sector policies and practices for the advancement of women and gender parity at national and local levels in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The National review takes stock of existing policies and capacities that can be employed to advance gender equality goals in the country's public institutions; to present gaps and barriers to gender equality; and identify a country-specific list of priorities and action points to address gender gaps.

### Methodology

The review gathered data using the UNDP-OECD analytical framework and an addendum provided by UN DESA, stemming from a global analysis of existing laws, organizational policies and good practices that have proved to be effective in enhancing women's access to decision-

making roles in public administration. The methodology was adapted to the local context. Firstly, a desk review of policy reports, legislation and legal documents was undertaken to capture the institutional framework of gender equality in public administration in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Statistics on employment in public administration were obtained from Statistics Mauritius and analysed. Qualitative data was gathered from interviews and focus group discussions with officials from the public administration in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Annex 1 compiles the sources of information collected. An analysis of the data gathered from the different sources was undertaken to identify a list of priorities and action points for promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions at national and local levels.

This national review is organized in five sections:

- i. Institutional and policy framework for gender equality in public administration
  - i.a. Accountability mechanisms and gaps in monitoring gender equality policies
- ii. Women’s participation and leadership across different sectors of the public and local levels
- iii. Evidence and data-based analysis, commitments and resources
- iv. Human resource policies and practices
- v. Synthesis of findings and recommendations
  - v.a. Gender equality policies
  - v.b. Strengthening institutional arrangements
  - v.c. Human resource mechanisms
  - v.d. Data collection for evidence-based policy

## Institutional and policy framework for gender equality in public administration

Gender equality practices require governments and institutions to “intentionally remove inequities through policies, processes, resource allocation and laws”.<sup>5</sup> Taking a holistic approach involves integrating gender as a fundamental aspect of policymaking, institutional processes, programmes and resource allocation rather than implementing isolated gender equality policies (UNDESA, 2022). The public sector in Mauritius is a key employer of women and has over the years made efforts to promote equal opportunities and to address gender imbalances in decision-

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<sup>5</sup> <https://publicadministration.un.org/Portals/1/Analysis-good-practices-Rev-version-for-website%2001-03-23.pdf>

making. Mauritius adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and is committed to improving women's engagement in public administration including in leadership and decision-making roles in government. Other international and regional Treaties and commitments for which Mauritius is a signatory and that promote gender equality in public institutions are listed below (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, 2022):

1. [International Conference on Population and Development](#)
2. [Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)
3. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) 1976
4. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) 1976
5. [Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) 2015
6. [Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No.190\) of Work](#)

Regional Treaties:

1. [Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want](#)
2. [African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa 2017](#)
3. [Solemn declaration on Gender Equality in Africa 2004](#)

### **The Constitution of Mauritius**

At the national level, the [Constitution of Mauritius](#), as amended in 1995, forbids discrimination based on sex. Under Chapter II, Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Individual, Chapter 2, Section 3, speaks to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, and Chapter 2, Section 16, speaks to the protection from discrimination.

Specific statutes that promote gender equality in the workplace include:

1. [Workers' Right Act in 2019](#) amended in 2020
2. [Equal opportunities Act 2008](#), amended in 2011 and 2017

### **The Workers' Right Act 2019**

The Workers Rights Act 2019 prohibits discrimination under Section 5: Discrimination in employment and occupation, and defines "discrimination" as including affording different treatment to –(a) different workers attributable, wholly or mainly, to their respective description by age, race, colour, caste, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender, HIV status, impairment, marital



or family status, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, place of origin, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.

The Workers Rights Act, under Section 52, makes provision for maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks. This applies to both public and private sector employees. In addition, every employer shall comply with the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value. It also introduced 5 days' continuous paternity leave, but the right is only available to those under marriage by law and not common law.

### **The Equal Opportunities Act 2008**

The Equal Opportunities Act 2008 aims to eliminate discrimination in all sectors and the Equal Opportunity Commission investigates related complaints before referring them to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal for dispute settlement. The Equal Opportunities Act 2008 also outlaws discrimination based on sex. However, Section 13 of the Act introduces exceptions: "(1) Notwithstanding sections 10 to 12, an employer or prospective employer may discriminate on the ground of sex where being of a particular sex is a genuine occupational qualification for employment, promotion, transfer or training."

Being a signatory to international and regional treaties and enacting legislation to promote gender equality is only the initial step. Subsequently, policies need to be translated into government directives, budgetary allocations, institutional arrangements, bureaucratic procedures, and monitoring standards.

### **National Gender Policy 2022-2030**

The National Gender Policy 2022-2030 adopted by the Government of the Republic of Mauritius maps strategies, governance tools and institutional settings to drive and support gender equality goals (NGP, 2022). The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare is the primary agency responsible for implementing the NGP 2022-2030.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of the NGP is to have guidelines that support the Government's commitment to integrate gender into all development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The NGP recognizes that Mauritian women have participated in decision-making at all levels. However, 'there are still few women in decision-making positions' which highlights the need to increase their representation in senior leadership roles.

The NGP aims to promote the publication of gender equality statements by ministries, departments and parastatals in annual reports; to review labour laws and practices to allow the

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<sup>6</sup> Each ministry develops its gender policy and gender statement.

introduction of flexible patterns of work and family-friendly work practices that will reconcile family responsibilities with paid work; engender employment policies for greater inclusion of women at all levels of decision-making, promotion of equal opportunities with career prospects for women and elimination of gender pay gap across all cadres and positions; promote the collection of gender responsive disaggregated statistics to measure the value of unpaid care work; undertake studies to consider investing in social welfare services that include child-care, care for older persons and healthcare to reduce the burden of women on care work.

Chapter 2 of the NGP discusses ‘critical gender challenges that impact on the realization of gender equality in Mauritius’. One key priority area that still presents challenges is **gender inequality in legislation and policies**. The Law Reform Commission<sup>7</sup> has examined the laws and legislations in Mauritius in 2022 to produce reviews of (i) laws to identify discriminatory laws in Mauritius and (ii) to identify any discrepancies that may exist in the definition of ‘discrimination against women’ in the provisions of the Constitutions (Sections 3, 16 and 75) and of the Equal Opportunities Act (Sections 2, 5-7). In the concluding remarks of the CEDAW Committee on Mauritius’ eighth periodic report, these areas of the constitutional and legislative framework were expressed as areas of concern. Consequently, a ‘Review Paper on Discriminatory Laws against Women in Mauritius’ was prepared. The accepted recommendation by Mauritius in the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Mauritius (2019) – Addendum on ‘Protection and empowerment of women’ Section (xiii) 115.124 calls for stepping up ‘efforts to promote gender equality, particularly concerning the underrepresentation of women in political and decision-making positions.’ The review report proposed that under the Equal Opportunities Act, regulations on equal pay for work of equal value be enforced; women in higher-skilled jobs and decision-making positions be empowered; complaints from women and discriminatory social norms that confine women to their reproductive role or subordinate economic role (e.g. unpaid family work, low-responsibility jobs) should be addressed and facilitated.

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<sup>7</sup> The Law Reform Commission of Mauritius is an independent statutory body set-up by parliament, under Act No. 26 of 2005, to review in a systematic way the law of Mauritius, to make proposals for its reform and development, and to ensure the law is understandable and accessible. The Commission consists of (a) a Chairperson, appointed by the Attorney-General; (b) a representative of the Judiciary appointed by the Chief Justice; (c) the Solicitor-General or his representative; (d) The Director of Public Prosecutions or his representative; (e) a barrister appointed by the Attorney General; (f) an attorney appointed by the Attorney General; (g) a notary appointed by the Attorney General; (h) a full-time member of the Department of Law of the University of Mauritius; (i) two members of the civil society appointed by the Attorney General.

Chapter 4 of the NGP 2022-2030 describes the policy objectives and strategies. Box 1 below provides an extract of a policy objective and strategy that is relevant to the national review.

*Box 1: Extract from **National Gender Policy 2022-2030***

Policy Objective

**4.2.3 To ensure equitable participation and representation of men and women in governance, in both public and private sector.**

Strategy

**(vi) promote representation of men and women in all areas of decision making including providing special measures where there is need to bring women into the decision-making levels**

Chapter five of the NGP outlines the institutional framework for implementing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the policy, detailing the roles and responsibilities of the different implementing institutions.

### **The National Gender Machinery**

The **Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare** (MGEFW) acts as the National Gender Machinery and is the lead agency on gender mainstreaming at the government level, including promoting gender equality at the ministerial and cabinet levels. Gender cells at the level of each ministry and public agency or department have the mandate to institutionalize gender mainstreaming in all plans, programmes and budgets of their respective institutions. Gender cells have been formed in line ministries by senior officials from different sections. Gender focal points chair gender cells. They are mandated to assess the level of implementation of their respective sectoral gender policies; identify gaps or challenges that hinder the implementation of those policies; and take remedial actions accordingly.

The National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming, which was launched in August 2022, demonstrates a strong commitment to prioritizing gender equality in the public sector. In October 2022, an Inter-Ministerial Gender Technical Working Committee was established, comprising gender focal points (GFPs) from all Ministries. Its purpose is to assess planned actions from a gender perspective within their respective sectors and determine whether any assistance is required. However, a limited impact assessment on the implementation of gender mainstreaming within government ministries has been conducted and is therefore recommended.

Each institution or organization has established gender cells, led by gender focal points, with specific terms of reference. The Inter-Ministerial Gender Technical Working Committee, composed of GFPs from all Ministries, has been formed to review planned actions from a gender perspective within their respective sectors and to determine whether any assistance is required.

### Challenges to implement gender equality strategies

The Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development budgeted MUR 200,000 over the last few years to government ministries for gender mainstreaming. Initially, five ministries were included in a pilot project in 2016-2017 government budget. The amount provided acts as seed money to integrate gender into the ministry's policies and programmes. The onus is on the ministry to decide how the budgeted amount will be spent for gender mainstreaming. Activities undertaken include the formulation of gender policy documents; gender policy action plans; awareness-raising and training on gender.

Although 15 government ministries have formulated gender policy statements and developed gender policy documents and action plans, they have limited success in fully integrating and institutionalizing gender policy statements.

Additionally, in 2018, the Parliamentary Gender Caucus, with the support of UNDP, commissioned a gender audit of the Civil Service. This audit identified various constraints, including human and financial limitations, as well as a lack of systemic approaches and technical capacity to effectively undertake the mainstreaming role. Additional constraints include a lack of understanding of the gender mainstreaming process; insufficient human resources within the Gender Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare to undertake monitoring and oversight; limited time devoted by gender focal points to the gender mainstreaming tasks; absence of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework; and absence of national costed gender action plan to guide implementation and resource mobilization for gender mainstreaming efforts.

### Accountability mechanisms and gaps in monitoring gender equality policies

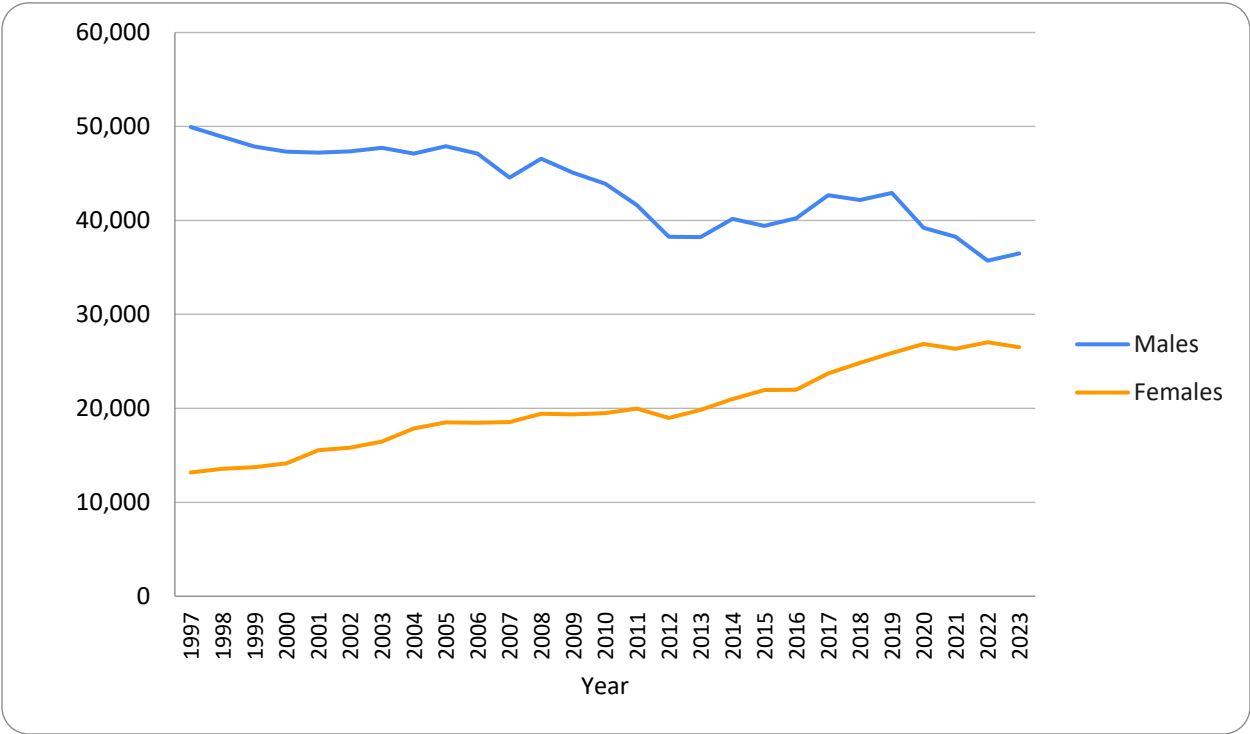
Mechanisms in place to monitor the progress of the implementation of gender equality policies include the National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming which is chaired by the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare. The Committee comprises supervising officials of every Ministry to report progress made by their ministries/departments. Despite the coordination of MGEFW and the functions of the National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming, accountability for implementation and monitoring is not clearly established, with no uniform reporting mechanism on measurable gender equality outcomes. The MGEFW's oversight powers can be strengthened to include sanctions or incentives.

# Status of women’s participation and leadership across different sectors of the public administration at the national level including in Rodrigues

## Gender and employment in the civil service

Historically, the civil service in the Republic of Mauritius was dominated by male employees. Although there are currently more male employees in the civil service, the number of female employees is increasing and the gap between male and female civil servants is narrowing (Figure 1). In 1997, female employees in the civil service comprised only 21 per cent, while male employees constituted 79 per cent out of a total workforce of 63,108 employees. A decade later in 2007, there were 44,561 (71 per cent) male and 19,408 (29 per cent) female civil servants. In contrast, in 2017, there were 42,672 male civil servants (64 per cent) and 23,717 (36 per cent) female civil servants. In 2023, male employment in the civil service had dropped to 36,492 (58 per cent) in contrast with the number of women civil servants which rose to 26,498 (42 per cent). Figure 1 highlights the total employment in the civil service by sex from 1997 to 2023.

Figure 1: Total employment in the civil service by sex (1997-2022)



## Evidence and data-based analysis

Research has shown that countries that systematically collect data to perform gender analyses to track progress toward gender equality in public administration may see improvements in the presence of women in areas where they have been scarcely represented (UNDP, 2014)<sup>8</sup>. Accurate and timely data, reflecting the conditions and challenges faced by women, is essential for shaping well-informed policies and strategic objectives.

For the national review, sex-disaggregated data on employment in public administration for the Republic of Mauritius was obtained from the Gender Statistics<sup>9</sup> Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare. Statistics Mauritius, which falls under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, is the central statistical authority and depository of all official statistics produced in Mauritius. The First Schedule of the amended Statistics Act 2017 includes gender. Consequently, Statistics Mauritius has the authority to collect, compile, analyse and disseminate accurate, relevant, timely and high-quality statistics and related information on social, demographic, economic and financial activities for public and private uses<sup>10</sup>. Activities of Statistics Mauritius are decentralized with the establishment of statistical units in government ministries. These units are staffed by a Statistics Officer from Statistics Mauritius, who works directly with the respective ministries to collect data. The Gender Statistics Unit of the MGEFW compiles sex-disaggregated data to produce the Economic and Social Indicators and Gender Statistics reports.

Although Mauritius has initiated actions to collect sex-disaggregated data in the public service, additional strides are needed to improve the analysis and generate evidence-based policymaking. For instance, official statistics do not include sex-disaggregated data across ranks and sectors of public administration. Such information is important for assessing the progress on women in leadership positions in public administration. Similarly, official statistics do not capture sex-disaggregated data for sexual harassment in the workplace. The Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (MPSAIR) conducts a survey on sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the civil service twice yearly, with data disaggregated by gender. However, the data is not published officially.

Statistics on the allocation of training opportunities between men and women in the civil service could provide valuable insights into any potential discrepancy in capacity-building efforts. Participants in focus groups mentioned, that in some cases, women tend to accept only short-

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<sup>8</sup> UNDP. (2014). Gender Equality in Public Administration. New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme, p. 35

<sup>9</sup> Gender statistics refers to gender-disaggregated data that reflect gender inequality embedded in society and organizations. Statistics Mauritius recognizes the need for sex-disaggregated data for gender analysis to guide evidence-based policy and decision-making and publishes an annual volume of Economic and Social Indicators (ESI) on gender, also known as Gender Statistics.

<sup>10</sup> Request for microdata can be made to Statistics Mauritius.

term training because of family commitments. Therefore, analysing sex-disaggregated data on the training received by civil servants is crucial for recommending appropriate measures to improve gender parity and support women in reaching leadership positions.

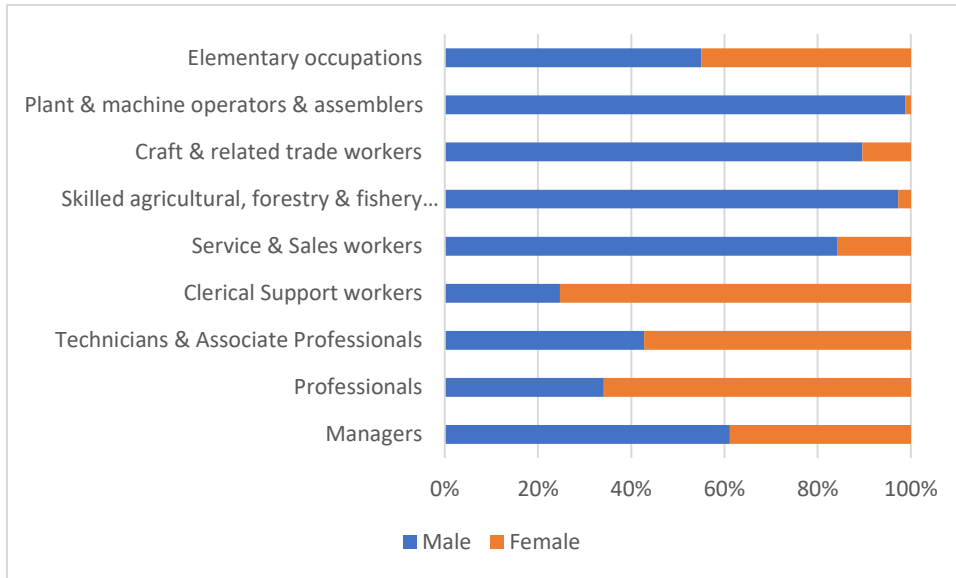
### Employment by Job category at national and local levels

Statistics Mauritius uses the National Standard of Classification of Occupations, which is an adapted version of the International Classification of Occupation developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO). For this review, leadership positions fall under the 'manager' category. Across all the government ministries, at the decision-making levels in public administration - which includes chief executives, senior officials, legislators and managers - women constituted 38.8 per cent in 2023 (See Figure 2). Men dominate in leadership and decision-making positions in public administration in Mauritius.<sup>11</sup> This trend may be changing nowadays with more women being recruited in the Civil Service (see Section on Recruitment, retention and promotion practices below). In occupations such as clerical work, technicians and professionals, women are represented more than men in the government services (Figure 2).

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<sup>11</sup> The MPSAIR explained that the higher percentage of men in the 'manager' category is due to a past recruitment trend where more men were hired into the public service. Since promotions to leadership and decision-making positions are based on seniority, with those having more years of service advancing, this historical recruitment pattern contributes to a higher proportion of men in these roles in 2023.

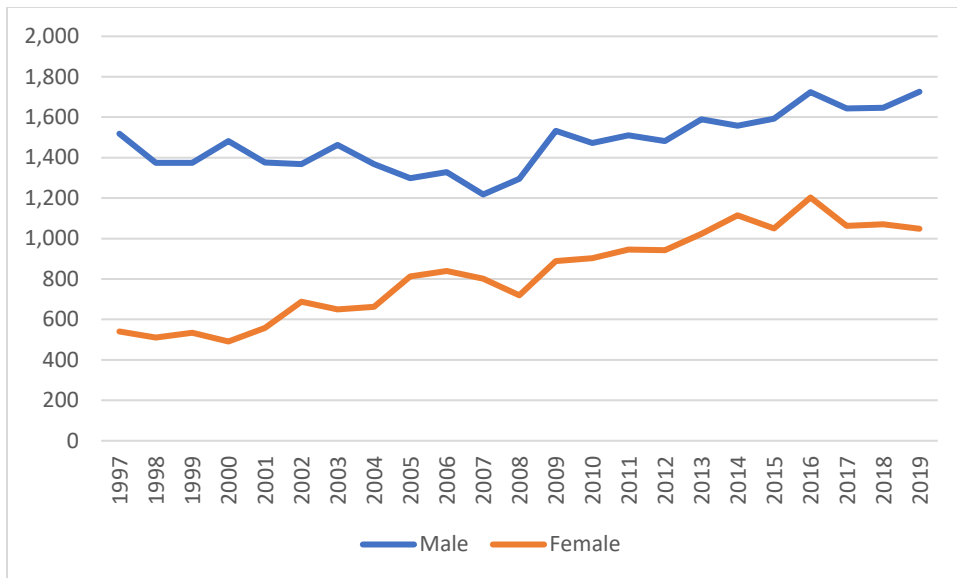
Figure 2: Employment in Government Services by occupational group and sex in the Republic of Mauritius for the year 2023



During the consultative meetings, administrative officials forecasted that in the future, more women will take leadership and decisional positions with the current trend of recruitment. However, a deep dive analysis of the trend over-time indicates that, even though the number of women in that category is increasing, the gender gap in employment at the managerial level is perpetuated over time (Figure 3). Human resource policies that are gender-neutral do not necessarily lead to the closure of the employment gap for women in senior positions. Therefore, corrective actions are required for gender parity in decision-making levels.

Figure 3 Trend in employment by sex for legislators, senior officials and managers in government services.





A breakdown of sex-disaggregated data by occupation for the different ministries is illustrated in Annex 2. In several ministries, gender equality has been achieved, and in some cases, women hold a higher percentage of managerial positions. From the data, ministries that have achieved gender equality in 2023 at the managerial level are the Attorney General’s Office; the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security; and the Minister Mentor’s Office, the Ministry of Defence and Rodrigues. More than 50 percent of the employees in the ‘managers’ category are women (values given in parentheses) according to 2023 statistics in the following ministries:

1. Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science & Technology (57%)
2. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (54.5%)
3. Ministry of Public Service, Administrative & Institutional Reforms (55%)
4. Ministry of Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity (57%)
5. Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity (56%)

According to Brody (2009), women face inequality within governance institutions and procedures. Despite their active participation, women continue to contend with unequal treatment and acknowledgment. Frequently, they find themselves marginalized in governmental decision-making, restricted to areas like health and education, commonly termed "soft policy" domains. The current governance systems perpetuate this marginalization, often centralizing critical decisions within closed "inner circles" dominated by men. This observation applies to ministries that have an equal or higher percentage of women. Corrective measures to promote gender equality are required to ensure a greater number of women in high-level positions across other important ministries which can lead to more responsive and accountable policies.

At the local level, the breakdown of staff employed in the municipalities and district councils for the year 2023 is shown in Table 1 below. The overall figures indicate that employment is dominated by men (80 percent). The reason provided through interviews with senior officials indicated that local authorities employ more men in the lower grade categories for positions such

as refuse waste collectors. Therefore, this accounts for the higher percentage of men in local authorities. The wider gender gap observed can be explained by the fact that local authorities have traditionally been male-dominated which discourages women from working in such an environment. Despite this challenge, there is a gradual increase in the number of women applying for positions in local authorities.

Table 1 Sex disaggregated data for employment in local authorities

Staff in Local Authorities	Number	Male	Female
City Council of Port Louis	1,230	80%	20%
Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill	691	71%	29%
Municipal Council of Curepipe	681	81%	19%
Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes	775	83%	17%
Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix	366	83%	17%
District Council of Black River	327	86%	14%
District Council of Flacq	345	80%	20%
District Council of Moka	341	82%	18%
District Council of Pamplemousses	442	74%	26%
District Council of Riviere du Rempart	357	80%	20%
District Council of Grand Port	295	81%	19%
District Council of Savanne	223	76%	24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,073</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>20%</b>

Source: Budget Speech 2023-2024

[https://budgetmof.govmu.org/documents/V\\_05\\_002023\\_24VPMLGovtall.pdf](https://budgetmof.govmu.org/documents/V_05_002023_24VPMLGovtall.pdf)

Figures 4 and 5 show the trends in employment for non-elected positions at the local level in the Municipalities and District councils of Mauritius by occupational categories. The majority of decision-making positions are held by men, while professional and clerical occupations tend to have a higher percentage of women. Statistics on employment in municipal councils in 2023 in Mauritius indicate that women represented 37 per cent in decision-making positions while at the level of district councils, 39 per cent of women were in managerial positions. Interviews with senior officials of the local authorities indicate that the legislation and regulations do not specifically address gender balance considerations during recruitment. Nevertheless, the opportunity to redress gender inequality exists as promotion in local authorities is by selection. This offers an opportunity to explore the possibility of introducing temporary special measures or affirmative action policies.

Figure 4: Employment in Municipal Councils, 2023

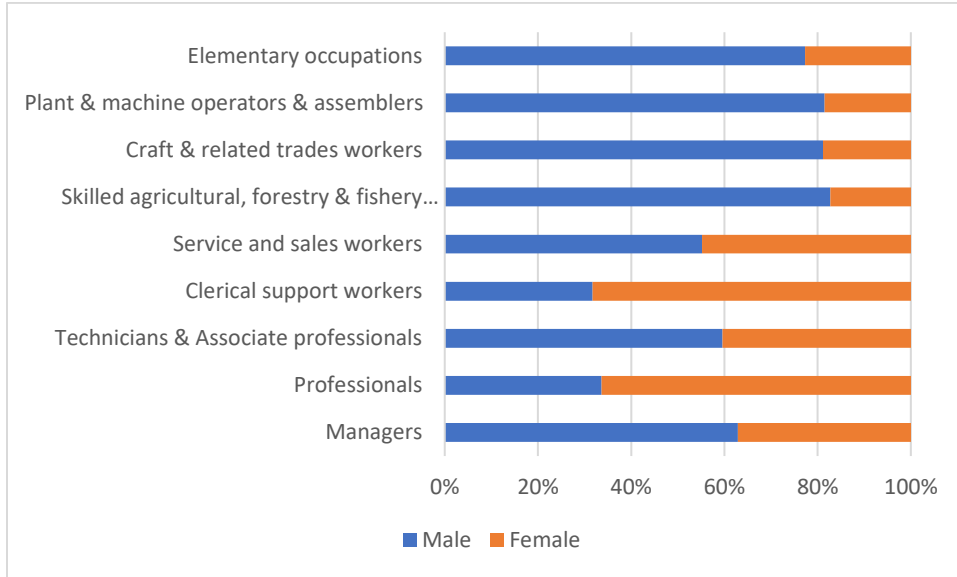
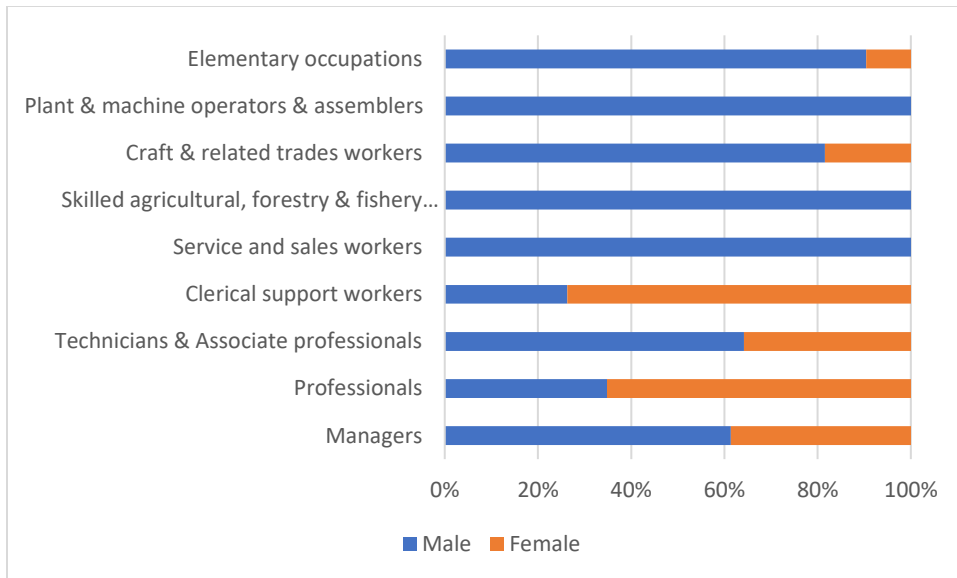


Figure 5: Employment in District Councils, 2023

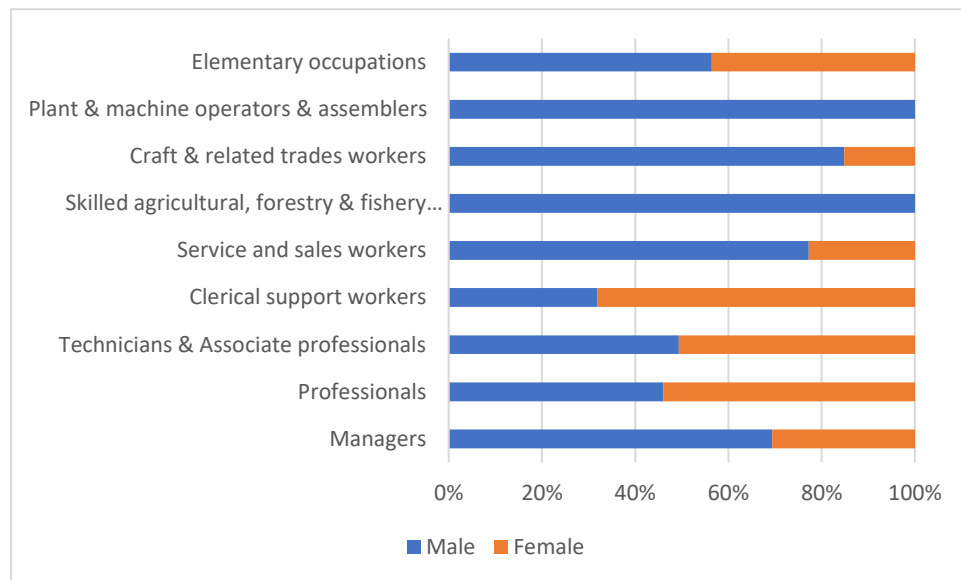


At the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, women occupy only 31 per cent of the managerial positions. In the professional, technician and clerical support worker categories, a higher percentage of women are employed compared to men, whereas lower grades are predominantly male-dominated. During focus group discussions (FGDs), officials of the Rodrigues<sup>12</sup> Regional Assembly

<sup>12</sup> An administratively autonomous territory of the Republic of Mauritius

(RRA) stated that they were not aware of any policies and measures aimed at promoting gender parity, both overall and in decision-making positions.

Figure 6: Employment in Rodrigues Regional Assembly, 2023



## Human resource policies and practices

The MPSAIR is responsible for administrative reforms, human resource development and management in the public service. The Human Resource Management Manual (HRMM), prepared by the MPSAIR, contains the different provisions such as the Public Service Commission Regulations, as provided by the different sections of the constitution and all the relevant provisions ensuring legal compliance in the public sector. The provisions of the Pay Research Bureau’s Report are also taken into consideration in the HRMM. The manual provides guidelines and sets procedures that ensure standardisation in the application of rules, regulations and conditions of service in public administration<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, special consideration was given to ensuring gender-neutral job titles and job descriptions as far as applicable. Currently, the HRMM is being reviewed and updated<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> The HRMM is gender-neutral, except for clauses related to retirement upon marriage, which apply only to female officials. This exception is stipulated by the Pensions Act and is in line with Section 16 of the Constitution, which addresses exceptions to non-discrimination on the grounds of sex.

<sup>14</sup> To date, no information is available on whether HRMM has been reviewed with a gender lens.

## Recruitment, retention and promotion

Recruitment of civil servants at the national level falls under the responsibility of the Public Service Commission while the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) is responsible for recruiting employees in local authorities. The Public Service Commission (PSC) was established under section 88 of the Constitution of Mauritius. The PSC regulated under Section 89 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius, is vested with powers for appointing persons to hold or act in any office in the public service for the exercise of disciplinary control over such persons and their removal from office. Box 2 is an extract of the PSC Regulations guiding appointments, promotions, and confirmation of appointments in the civil service.

*Box 2: Extract from the **Public Service Commission Regulations***

...Part III on appointments, promotions, confirmation of appointments, and termination of appointments section 14 (1) states:

*In exercising its powers of appointment and promotion, including, subject to paragraph (5), promotion by selection, the Commission shall –*

*(a) have regard to the maintenance of the high standard of efficiency necessary in the public service;*

*(b) give due consideration to qualified officers serving in the public service and to other Mauritian citizens provided they hold the required qualifications; and*

*(c) in the case of officers serving in the public service, take into account qualifications, experience, merit and suitability for the office in question before seniority.*

For local authorities, the LGSC is established under the Local Government Act No. 37 of 1975 which came into force on 18 August 1983. The Commission holds the exclusive authority for the appointment, promotion, disciplinary control, removal from office and approval of retirement in respect of all Local Government Officials. Recruitment is transparent and based on the qualifications and expertise of the applicant. Box 3 provides an extract from the Local Government Act that describes the human resource management principle to be ensured by the Chief Executive of Local Authorities.

*Box 3: Extract from Section 70 of the Local Government Act*

(Updated in 2015) on the Human resource management principle states that:

The appropriate Chief Executive shall ensure that –

(a) every officer –

(i) is given reasonable access to training and development;

(ii) is afforded equal opportunities to secure promotion and advancement;

(iii) is treated fairly and consistently, and not subject to arbitrary decisions;

(iv) has access to suitable processes to deal with grievances concerning working conditions or the decisions of supervisors;

(v) is given regular reports on his performance;

(vi) is provided with safe and healthy working conditions; and

(b) there is no unlawful discrimination against officers in the administration of the local authority on the ground of sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, race, caste, opinion, physical or intellectual impairment, age, or any other ground and that there is no other form of unjustifiable discrimination exercised against officers”.

The recruitment and promotion exercises in the civil service are gender-neutral. During the data collection process, the MPSAIR informed that both women and men who meet the requirements for a vacant position advertised are considered.<sup>15</sup> The MPSAIR also indicated the recruitment selection process is based solely on the profile of the applicants including their academic and professional qualifications, experiences and other attributes specified in the respective scheme of service. Additionally, it mentioned that institutions and existing regulations ensured transparency in the recruitment process without discrimination in the civil service recruitment policies and strategies.

Any public official who feels that he or she is facing discrimination may report the case to the Equal Opportunity Commission. The latter will scrutinize the case and refer to the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal (PBAT) should the need arise.

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<sup>15</sup> However, it must be noted that factors including the length of service requirements or geographical postings could have gender differentiated consequences.

The MPSAIR informed, during consultations, that special consideration was given to the use of gender-neutral job titles and job descriptions as far as applicable. Some exceptions are linked to the Scheme of Service<sup>16</sup>, for instance, the recruitment of Charge Nurse (Female) in the Ministry of Health is solely for women given the nature of the job where access to female wards in public hospitals is for women only. Glass walls exist for example, the post of receptionist tends to be dominated by women while the post of driver tends to be male-dominated although no distinction is made in the scheme of service. Similarly in local authorities, lower-grade posts are male-dominated. However, the LGSC informed that women are starting to apply for such positions. In the local government, certain job titles such as ‘tradesman’ still need to be changed as they tend to indicate a male position. In such cases, including provisions in job descriptions that encourage women to apply can help address the concentration of men in certain positions.

Promotion in the Civil Service is guided by the Public Service Commission Regulations. Vacant positions are publicly advertised for recruitment open to external applicants and internally advertised for seniority positions. Promotions to senior positions may either be through seniority or a selection exercise depending on the scheme of service.

*Box 4: Extract from Part III section 14(4) of the Public Service Commission Regulations*

States that:

*"Recommendations made to the Commission for promotion, ... shall state whether the person recommended is the senior public officer in the particular class or grade eligible for promotion and, where this is not the case, detailed reasons shall be given in respect of each person in that same class or grade over whom it is proposed that the person recommended should be promoted."*

Section 14(5) of the PSC Regulations states that:

*"Where the scheme of service of a post specifically provides for promotion of public officers to that post through a selection exercise, the Commission may require the responsible officer to make a report on each of the candidates on any matter related to the scheme of service."*

During FGDs, participants perceived that promotion in the civil service is fair. Moreover, MPSAIR stated that appropriate institutions and existing regulations including the PSC Regulations, LGSC Regulations and the decisions by the PBAT on any matter related to appointment and promotion, ensure transparency in the recruitment and promotion process. However, participants in the FGDs observed that the recruitment panel at the PSC comprised only men. This is because there is no provision for gender parity. Therefore, the question of whether a gender bias existed or not

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<sup>16</sup> From Section 15(3) of PSC Regulations: The scheme of service shall specify the salary level, the qualifications required and duties, and, where appropriate, the mode of appointment, as well as the office to which it relates.

in the recruitment was questionable. Participants recommended the establishment of gender-balanced recruitment panels. One proposition is to consider quotas across public bodies or temporary special measures (TSMs). This includes targeted recruitment and promotion, in line with Article 4 of CEDAW. TSMs in public administration build a pipeline of qualified women candidates to move into decision-making.

### Remuneration, allowance and benefits

The Pay Research Bureau (PRB) regulates remuneration and continually reviews the pay and grading structures and conditions in the public sector. The PRB conducts research, formulates policies and makes recommendations on public sector management reforms, salaries, allowances, and other conditions in the civil service. HRMM requires that employees are equally remunerated for work of equal value implying no gender discrimination (see Box 5).

*Box 5: Extract from **Appendix 5F** from the **HRMM***

**Equal remuneration for work of equal value**

*(1) Every employer shall ensure that the remuneration of any worker shall not be less favorable than that of another worker performing the same type of work.*

Interviews and FGDs revealed that, in some cases, allowances are provided to officials taking on extra responsibilities, for example, when a junior staff replaces a more senior staff member who is on leave. There are cases where women staff may decline these opportunities because of family commitments. Similarly, for overtime allowance, more men tend to accept longer hours as women have family and household commitments. These scenarios are a critical barrier to career advancement. Measures such as the provision of childcare facilities in the public service should be considered for those having to work extra hours. Innovative public policies for gender equality such as counting unpaid care in national accounting systems, universal social and care services, and transforming social norms through fiscal policies (such as parental leave, taxation benefits, and public transfer) support institutional change within public administration (Finkel et al., 2021).



## Work-life balance

Work-life balance practices are “designed to support women and men manage their work and care responsibilities” (UNDESA, 2022). Measures that promote work-life balance in public administration include work-from-home (WFH), flexible work arrangements and flexible hours of work.

Effective strategies for achieving work-life balance play a crucial role in the effort to attract, retain, and advance women in roles traditionally occupied by men, given that women, on average, bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic responsibilities compared to men. During FGDs, participants indicated that in Mauritius, the societal expectations placed on women may impede their complete involvement in the workforce across the public sector, especially in positions of leadership and decision-making. Participants struggled to identify effective work-life balance policies or measures implemented in public administration.

### ***Work-from-home***

The concept of WFH which had gained prominence during the Covid pandemic is gradually fading away in the civil service in Mauritius as the implementation of WFH policies is not easy. The major concerns cited include the confidential nature of files and the length of the reporting. During the consultative meetings, one official in Rodrigues mentioned that the e-parliament system is paperless and therefore can readily apply WFH policies. Other officials stated that the nature of the work, which involves seeking approvals from higher management and requires files to move through a hierarchical process, complicates the implementation of WFH policies. Officials agreed that WFH policies are beneficial for working men and women who provide care for children and older persons. Another example supporting WFH policies is the recent torrential rain and weather warnings in Mauritius. Schools and childcare facilities were closed following notices issued by the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, and Science and Technology. In such cases, parents without any support to look after children had to take leave. Under such circumstances, WFH policies would be highly relevant for working parents. Similarly, Mauritius is facing an aging population, and many women, in particular, bear the responsibility to care for elderly parents. WFH policies can help alleviate the burden of leaving older parents on their own. As of date, the MPSAIR has issued three circular letters on the procedures for WFH. The Public Sector Business Transformation Bureau of the MPSAIR is working on a WFH policy to be implemented, through the eGovernment services, for the benefit of both men and women. Other projects such as the eDocument Management System (eDMS) and the eHuman Resource System (eHR) complement the WFH policy. Therefore, a well-thought-out implementation plan is highly relevant for the promotion of work-life balance in the civil service.

### ***Flexible working hours***

The MPSAIR developed a framework to create a supportive environment for adopting **flexible working hours**. This initiative aims to enhance efficiency, promote social distancing and improve work-life balance (PRB, 2021). A flexible pattern of attendance has been introduced as a measure to address excessive or regular tardiness to attend duty and to provide more flexibility in the hours of attendance (Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, 2011). The regulations for implementing flexible hours of attendance and work arrangements are detailed in the PRB report (2021). These provisions allow officials to accumulate work hours that can be used for time off, or in the case of lateness, to make up for the lost hours within a given month. During consultations, public officials reported that these provisions are no longer applied since the pandemic. At the RRA, officials work from 8.00 a.m. to 3.15 p.m. and are supportive of flexible working hours. The interview with the senior manager at the RRA revealed that no one opts for flexible work arrangements in RRA.

### ***Leave and other related policies***

An analysis of the gender gap in public administration as outlined in the PRB 2021 report, revealed that gender inequalities exist in the provisions for parental leave. **Maternity leave** increased from 12 to 14 weeks and is given to only female officials. However, **paternity leave**, which is limited to 5 days, is deducted from vacation leave. According to PRB 2021, besides the normal casual leave entitlement, a male official may, subject to exigencies of service, take up to 10 days from his accumulated vacation leave, which is inclusive of the normal five days of accrued leave taken at a stretch or on and off, around the time of childbirth. During the FGDs, the extension of paternity leave for an initial period of 4 weeks was suggested as changes are occurring in society with more nuclear families and less support from grandparents. Therefore, fathers should be given the opportunity to take care of their newborns through improved paternity leave.

A scenario raised during the FGDs is that women may resort to leave without pay after maternity leave to spend more time with their newborn child. Consequently, the number of years of service and seniority is impacted. For positions in the government for which promotion occurs by seniority, women who resort to leave without pay following maternity leave, are penalized (See section on Recruitment, Retention and Leave).

Another gender gap observed is that women can choose to retire on marriage grounds, after completing 5 years of service, under the laws and policies. However, the same is not expected of men employed in the public administration.

The government of Mauritius introduced a '**family responsibility leave**' for both women and men for the purpose of looking after the family contributing to work-life balance (PRB, 2021). This leave policy is highly relevant for officials who need to care for not only children but also older persons. During an interview, a male senior official from the local authority mentioned that he recently approved early retirement for a female official because she had to look after older persons. With an aging population in Mauritius, more working women face the challenges of taking care of older

parents. A scheme that works for both men and women who care for older parents can support work-life balance.

The PRB Report 2008 introduced **part-time employment** in the public sector, allowing public officials aged 50 years or older (excluding officials in scarcity areas below the level of Deputy Permanent Secretary) to opt for part-time work for the remainder of their career. This initiative aims to provide officials with the opportunity for a more balanced lifestyle encompassing family responsibilities, training, leisure, or civic activities. A survey was conducted to assess part-time working modality in the Public Sector (PRB, 2021). The findings revealed a low prevalence of part-time work in the sector.

### Workplace harassment protection

Women in the public sector often encounter workplace harassment which is “even more pronounced for women occupying male-dominated positions and other positions in male-dominated organizations” (UNDESA, 2022). Mauritius has ratified the ILO ‘Violence and Harassment Convention 2019 (No. 190) in 2021. The labour laws in Mauritius contain provisions to protect women, more precisely Section 114 of the Workers’ Rights Act 2019, safeguards workers from workplace violence, including sexual harassment. Section 25 of the Equal Opportunities Act 2008 also criminalizes sexual harassment. Part XI, Section 54 of the HRMM governing public administration protects employees against violence at work whereby “No person shall – (a) harass, sexually or otherwise; (b) assault; (c) verbally abuse, swear at or insult; (d) express the intention to cause harm; (e) bully or use threatening behaviour; (f) use aggressive gesture indicating intimidation, contempt or disdain; (g) by words or act, hinder, a worker, in the course of or as a result of his work.”<sup>17</sup>

The Parliamentary Gender Caucus in Mauritius conducted a capacity-building exercise for Gender Focal Points to address workplace gender-based violence with the support of the UNDP country office. Although policies and laws aimed at safeguarding employees exist, in practice victims of harassment lack a well-defined reporting mechanism. During the FGDs and interviews, officials were not very clear on the procedures in cases of harassment. Some officials stated that a case should be reported to the police or to their HR Manager or, in Rodrigues, to the Commission for Labour. Participants referred to a case of harassment which was reported to the Island Chief Executive in Rodrigues and no action was taken. The Trade Unions intervened, and a fact-finding committee was set up. The accused official was found to be guilty, and the contract of the latter was not renewed.

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<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that the language of the latest draft of the HRMM is under review to ensure greater gender neutrality.

CEDAW recommends the encouragement of reporting of gender-based violence, as well as awareness-raising campaigns on reporting mechanisms and remedies. Greater transparency and anonymity in the procedures for reporting harassment are needed to prevent officials from facing victimization, as relying solely on punitive transfers for offenders is insufficient. It is imperative to ensure that reports on gender-based violence against women are duly investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished and that victims have access to redress mechanisms, including compensation. Another scenario revealed by female officials is the harassment of women in senior positions by male officials who were unwilling to accept and follow instructions from these higher-level women. Women in senior positions must handle such situations with tact. FGDs and interviews indicated that training and awareness workshops on workplace harassment are required in public administration.

The Government of Mauritius agreed to introduce a policy on sexual harassment in the workplace in 2024. The policy includes the collection of sex-disaggregated data on the number of cases of harassment from different ministries.

### Training in the civil service

The PRB (2021) report recognizes that ‘Public Officers are today at the helm of complex challenges of administration in critical sectors which require domain expertise, competencies to deliver and deep insights into the social and economic realities besides qualities of leadership, capacity to manage and response to change’. Training, a critical component of human resource development, ‘aims at improving the performance and productivity of staff and ensures that public sector employees have the relevant updated skills, knowledge and commitment to change entrenched mindsets.’ Capacity building of public officials, through sensitization, awareness raising and training is crucial for understanding gender concepts and implementing gender mainstreaming. This is essential for achieving gender equality in public administration and supporting the promotion of women to leadership positions.

Civil Service College Mauritius (CSCM), the training arm of public administration in Mauritius, provides a range of training courses to civil servants either online or face-to-face, ranging from leadership; emotional intelligence, to gender equality; gender mainstreaming; and gender-based violence.<sup>18</sup> The procedure for allocating training is based on seniority of staff. Some trainings are offered based on candidates’ qualifications. However, leadership and mentoring opportunities for men and women are lacking in public administration. Furthermore, the consultations with the

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<sup>18</sup> The PRB (2021) report provides a list of training proposed by management and staff in the Annex for appropriate action by the MPSAIR and CSCM. Gender-related training does not appear in the list although the CSCM runs training programmes. The courses provided are in Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Based Violence, E-Learning – Gender Equality & Gender Equality Concept. The number of officials trained for 2021-2022 was 1239 while that of 2022-2023 was 683. The target audience ranges from Workmen group, Support Staffs, Frontline/Supervisory/Technical Grades & Middle Management.

ministries, local authorities and RRA indicated that officials are not aware of policies and measures (such as gender quotas, affirmative action, or other temporary special measures) that exist to promote gender parity overall and in decision-making positions in public administration at national and local levels.

Participants highlighted that capacity building is necessary to effect institutional change in the perception of gender among both men and women working in the civil service. Therefore, mandatory courses are required. Mechanisms for incentivizing public officials to attend training on gender-related courses must be reviewed. One suggestion was to provide time-off for officials to attend training at the CSCM. A training needs assessment is required to develop customized training courses for both men and women aspiring to leadership positions in the public sector.

### Digital literacy in public administration

During the FGDs and interviews, respondents across different ministries stated that no digital divide exists between men and women officials in public administration. However, interviews in Rodrigues showed that there are still men who think that computer skills are not for women. Addressing gender divides in digital literacy in public administration is increasingly important in the context of ongoing digitalization processes. The MPSAIR, through its recently created Public Sector Business Transformation Bureau, is adopting electronic document management systems, and an electronic HR system is already being implemented.

## Synthesis of findings and recommendations

This section synthesizes the findings and reviews the gender gaps, providing action points to inform the gender equality action plan to support women's access to leadership positions in public administration in the Republic of Mauritius. The information generated is based on the desk review, interviews and focus group discussions, and the analysis of gender-disaggregated statistics gathered.

### Gender equality policies

The Republic of Mauritius adopted the National Gender Policy 2022-2030 which is the guiding policy document to support the promotion of women's access to leadership positions in public administration in both Mauritius and Rodrigues. The aim of the Policy Objective 4.2.3 of NGP is to ensure equitable participation and representation of men and women in governance including in the public sector. The strategy (vi) to implement this policy objective is to promote equal representation of men and women in all areas of decision making including through the provision of special measures where need.

Yet, sex-disaggregated data on the representation of men and women at the 'manager' level in public administration at the national and local levels, including at the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA), shows that the overall percentage of men in decision-making positions is higher than that of women. At the national level, only 39 per cent of women were represented at the 'manager' level in 2023. In the local government, women accounted for 37 and 31 per cent of 'manager' positions in municipal councils and the RRA, respectively. It is recommended that awareness be raised across ministries, local authorities and the RRA regarding Policy Objective 4.2.3, emphasising the importance of increasing women's representation in leadership positions within public administration.

### *Social norms constrain women's participation in public administration*

Even though laws and policies are designed to promote women's role in public administration, gender stereotypes can hinder their implementation and impact. Interviews and the focus group discussions (FGDs) revealed that home and family often remain primary priorities for women. Gender stereotypes are among the reasons explaining the lower percentages of women in leadership positions although participants agreed that society is gradually changing with better inclusion of women in the workplace. Some respondents indicated that, in some cases, women do not appear to aspire to attain higher positions in public administration because of family commitments. Some women opt against pursuing senior positions citing the perceived strain of juggling decision-making responsibilities alongside familial and household duties. For similar reasons, women officials may also be reluctant to attend long-duration training that could advance their careers. Moreover, in some cases, the working arrangements of public institutions are inflexible, making it more difficult to attain a work-life balance. An example provided is that officials in the Prime Minister's Office may be called upon to work late at night which disrupts the family-work-life balance for women officials. On the other hand, a change in the mindset of men to share household responsibilities is required. Therefore, there is a need to shift social norms to build a workplace that is conducive for women to progress and promote women's right and participation in public administration. This will require **raising awareness and sensitizing** community, the media, men and boys and different generations of women, so that the norms can be adjusted through deliberate action.

## Strengthening institutional arrangements

Promoting gender equality is a collective responsibility that requires both men and women to work together to transform institutions and systems. It is important to systematically examine institutions and their operations, encompassing facilities, policies, procedures, written and unwritten rules, norms and cultural practices, to identify and address “unseen” barriers hindering women’s participation. Institutions, traditionally shaped by male perspectives, have inherent biases that limit women’s opportunities for decision-making. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (MGEFW) promoted the setting up of gender cells in each ministry or department to ensure gender sensitivity in policy and programming. Fifteen ministries have gender policies or action plans already in place. Understanding the constraints faced by the other ministries and local authorities for not having gender action plans can provide insights into actions required to promote institutional change within public administration. An improved accountability mechanism, such as a **Gender Equality Monitoring System**, is required. Such procedures will ensure the promotion of gender parity across all ministries, allowing both women and men to advance equally to leadership positions.

## Human resources mechanisms

The Human Resource practices and policies in public administration in the Republic of Mauritius, captured in the Human Resource Management Manual (HRMM), are gender neutral, which implies that any current gender disparity is perpetuated as no measures to redress the situation are available. Therefore, the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (MPSAIR) is encouraged to enhance gender-responsiveness in the upcoming review of regulations and propose well-thought-out mechanisms to address gender inequalities in employment in public administration.

### Recruitment

The consultative meetings with officials at the national and local levels, including Rodrigues stated that recruitment procedures adopted by the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) were fair and based on qualifications and experience. However, a suggestion was made to ensure that the recruitment panels be gender-balanced, and not solely comprising men.

Another suggestion to support the recruitment of female officials in male-dominated positions is the use of affirmative action and clearly states that “females are encouraged to apply” when advertising vacancies, especially in the case of jobs at the level of the LGSC where a greater gender disparity exists.

### Promotion

Promotions in the civil service to reach senior positions are either by seniority or by selection and processes differ for positions at the PSC and the LGSC. As seen in Figure 3, the gap between male and female officials in senior positions has remained more or less constant in the last 19 years. Unless actions are taken to close the gender gap, the disparity will persist over time. The MPSAIR will need to establish a mechanism to address existing gender disparities in leadership positions and adjust the recruitment proportions of men and women. While the current promotion process is considered gender-neutral, it may still contribute to gender imbalance. One proposition is to consider quotas across public bodies or temporary special measures (TSMs). This includes targeted recruitment and promotion, in line with Article 4 of CEDAW. TSMs in public administration build a pipeline of qualified women candidates to move into decision-making.

### Remuneration, allowance and benefits

Officials agreed that men and women are remunerated according to the same salary scale for the different positions based on PRB recommendations. However, in some cases, officials are asked to represent their agencies in public boards and committees. Such assignments are remunerated and many of the boards tend to be male dominated. Therefore, it is recommended to balance gender representation on boards to ensure a fairer system. Moreover, men are more likely to accept overtime duties as well as extra responsibilities compared to women who have family commitments. The provision of childcare facilities may alleviate such situations.

### Work-life balance in public administration

#### ***Work-from-home***

The Covid pandemic provided public administration officials with an opportunity to work from home. Measures were put in place, with the support of UNDP, to develop WFH policy. However, a return to normal is observed in the public service. The reasons advanced include the need for physical presence of officials required on site; need for face-to-face interactions for the delivery of services; no proper mechanism to gauge official's performance; no access to office software; and confidentiality of data (PRB, 2021).

Consultative meetings in Rodrigues highlighted that the e-parliament system is paperless and therefore WFH policy can be applied also by public agencies. Other officials stated that approvals are required from higher management to interfere with the process of implementing work-from-home policies. MPSAIR is working on a policy to be implemented in the civil service. Participants in FGDs agreed that work-from-home policies are beneficial for working men and women who also must care for children and older persons. Therefore, a well-thought-out implementation plan is highly relevant for promoting work-life balance in the civil service.

#### ***Flexible working hours and flexible work arrangements***

A flexible pattern of attendance has been introduced as a measure to address excessive or regular tardiness to attend duty and to provide more flexibility in the hours of attendance (HRMM, 2011). The regulations for implementing flexible hours of attendance and flexible work arrangements are contained in the PRB report (2021). The onus for deciding whether a flexible pattern of attendance would be applicable for officials rests upon the responsible supervising official.

#### ***Provision of Care***

The provision of care for children and older persons is an area where women in Mauritius devote considerable time and energy. Measures that alleviate the burden on working women and support their progression to leadership positions are crucial in public administration. An appropriate strategy should be devised to support such women to encourage them to remain in the workplace while at the same time providing care for children or older persons. Measures such as part-time work; work-from-home policies; flexible working arrangements; and support for care for older persons could be possible solutions for many women working in public administration.



## Workplace Harassment

Toxic workplace culture, biases, and a lack of human resource policies and reporting procedures to hold individuals accountable can result in gender-based harassment and put women in vulnerable positions (UNDESA 2022). A survey on harassment in public administration is done at the level of the MPSAIR twice a year. The mechanism for reporting cases of harassment was not very clear to officials interviewed. The MPSAIR agreed to introduce a policy on sexual harassment in the workplace. A guideline for handling sexual harassment at the workplace will be useful to generate awareness, to prevent and to manage gender-based harassment complaints. In addition, training on the subject should be provided to officials through the Civil Service College Mauritius.

## Data collection for evidence-based policy

During consultations, officials informed that departments and ministries compile sex-disaggregated statistics as this is a requirement when submitting budget proposals to the Ministry of Finance. In addition to systematically collecting data, the gender statistics unit should perform and disseminate gender analyses to track progress toward gender equality in public administration. This would help to monitor the presence of women in areas where they are poorly represented. In Rodrigues, no agency is mandated to collect data on gender equality, nor to audit HR practices. A recommendation was to set up a unit within the Commission of Women Affairs to compile and analyse subnational government data. The e-HR system implemented by MPSAIR provides new opportunities to monitor progress in gender equality in public administration.

Even though data can be made available, the capacity to undertake the analysis of the data to generate evidence-based policies in favour of gender equality is lacking. It is therefore recommended to develop the capacity to assess the impact of measures to achieve gender equality and women's access to leadership positions.

*Table 2: Summary of findings and recommendations*

**Gender gap review and policy support for promoting women’s access to leadership positions in public administration in Mauritius and Rodrigues**

**National gender policy objective 4.2.3:** To ensure equitable participation and representation of men and women in governance in public sector.  
**Strategy (vi):** promote representation of men and women in all areas of decision making including special measures where there is need to bring women into the decision-making levels.

<b>Key findings</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of awareness of policy and measures that exist to promote gender parity overall and in decision-making positions in public administration at national level, local level and in Rodrigues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Create awareness on the policy objective 4.2.3 across ministries, local authorities and RRA</li> <li>(ii) Disseminate the rationale for increasing women in decision making position in public administration</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional culture and mechanism</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gender stereotypes persist across the public administration; some men in public administration still have biases against women in leadership positions</li> <li>▪ Only 15 ministries have gender policy documents and action plans</li> <li>▪ Limited discussions during meetings in public administration on questions of professional equality or gender inequality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Challenge and reform the overall workplace culture in public administration to promote gender equality</li> <li>(ii) Conduct awareness training on gender bias/ stereotype in public administration</li> <li>(iii) Put mechanisms in place for accountability to monitor the presence of women in leadership positions, for example, through a Gender Equality Monitoring System</li> </ul>
<b>Human resource policies and practices</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recruitment and promotion at the national and local levels are gender-neutral and can perpetuate gender gaps in leadership positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) MPSAIR to develop mechanisms to address the gender gap prevailing in senior position through a reform of recruitment and promotion processes and possible TSMs.</li> <li>(ii) Conduct HR audits in public administration to collect data, track and report progress in the number of women in senior management positions</li> <li>(iii) Use of affirmative action such as “females are encouraged to apply” when advertising the vacancy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recruitment panels at the PSC are male-dominated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Ensure that recruitment panels are gender balanced</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No training on harassment in the workplace ( however, MPSAIR agreed to introduce a policy on sexual harassment )</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Develop guidelines and dispense training on harassment in the workplace following the adoption of the Sexual harassment workplace policy; CSCM can provide e-training or face-to-face training. Incentives to follow training should accompany the mandatory courses</li> <li>(ii) Set up clear grievance mechanisms for public officials to report cases of harassment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policies in public administration should be improved to promote work-life balance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) MPSAIR to set up guidelines for work from home to improve flexible working arrangements within the public sector</li> <li>(ii) Explore the possibility of hybrid working arrangements for senior managers and other public officers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Care facilities (for children and older persons) are lacking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Set up mechanisms to provide dependable care to release the burden on working men and women in public administration</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remuneration in public service is fair for both men and women. However, participation in paid public committees and boards is not gender-balanced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Ensure that public committees and boards in public administration are gender-balanced while concurrently addressing the challenges women face in accepting these assignments (care responsibilities etc).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited training opportunities in leadership for men and women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Work out HR training plan to provide women opportunities for training/ coaching/mentoring to access leadership positions (financial resources to be included in the government budget)</li> <li>(i) Invest in leadership training and professional development for women public administration employees to address the gender gap in senior management levels</li> </ul>
<b>Data collection for evidence-based policy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Statistics Mauritius is making good progress to collect sex-disaggregated data on employment in public administration. A systematic approach is needed for performing and disseminating gender analyses to track progress toward gender equality in public administration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Commit and invest in quality data collection on gender parity in public administration to support evidence-based policy.</li> <li>(ii) Produce annual gender statistics reports in public administration and make them publicly available to track progress toward gender equality in public administration</li> <li>(iii) Explore possibility of e-HR system of the MPSAIR to generate yearly gender disaggregated data</li> <li>(iv) Analyse and identify constraints and challenges; anchor policies and response measures aimed at advancing women to senior positions in public administration on statistical evidence</li> </ul>



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## Annex 1: List of participants for Interviews and FGDs

### Interviews

<b>Ministry/Local Authority</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Sex</b>
Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation	Deputy Permanent Secretary	Female
Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare	Head of unit	Female
Ministry of Health and Wellness	Director	Male
Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training	Director	Male
Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change	Environment Officer	Female
Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology	Director	Female
Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms	Deputy Permanent Secretary	Male
Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development	Permanent Secretary	Female
Municipality of Quatre Bornes	Chief Executive	Male
Local Government Service Commission	Secretary	Male
Rodrigues Regional Assembly	Manager, Human Resource	Female

### FGD

#### Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology

<b>Position/grade</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Principal ICT Technician	Female
Assistant Permanent Secretary	Male
Management Support Officer	Female
Office auxiliary	Male
Technical Officer	Male
Technical Officer	Male
Assistant Permanent Secretary	Female
Office Management Assistant	Female
ICT officer	Female

**Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training**

<b>Position/grade</b>	<b>Gender</b>
STM Trainee	Female
Employment Counselling Officer	Female
Word Processing Operator	Female
Management Support Officer	Female
Management Support Officer	Male
YEP Trainee	Male
Telephone operator/receptionist	Male
Office Auxiliary	Female

### Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (MPSAIR)

Deputy Permanent Secretary	Female
Director, Public Sector Business Transformation Bureau	Male
Director, Safety and Health	Male
Human Resource Management Officer	Female
Manager, Human Resources	Female
Manager, Human Resources	Female
Manager, Human Resources	Male
Manager, Financial Operations	Female
Assistant Permanent Secretary	Female
Assistant Permanent Secretary	Male
Procurement and Supply Officer/Senior Procurement and Supply Officer	Female
Human Resource Executive	Female
Office Management Executive	Male
Office Management Executive	Female
Senior Library and Documentation Officer	Female
Management Support Office	Male
Office Management Assistant (Secretary)	Female

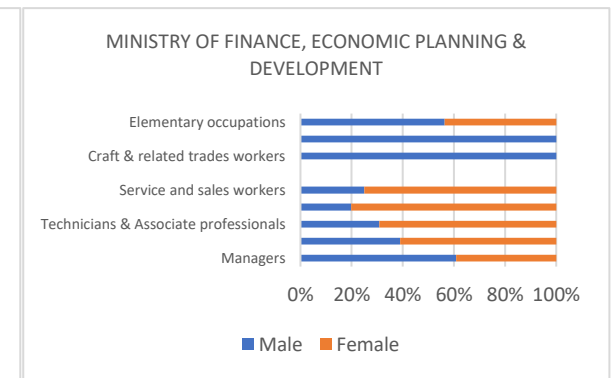
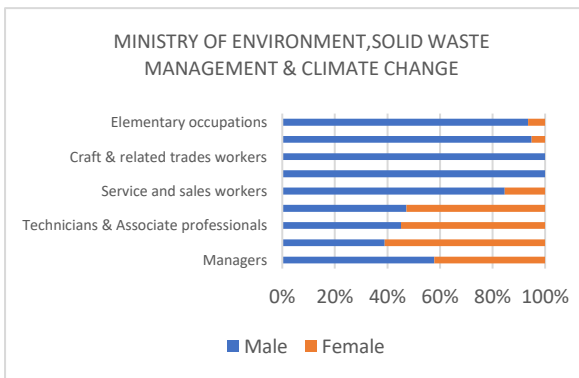
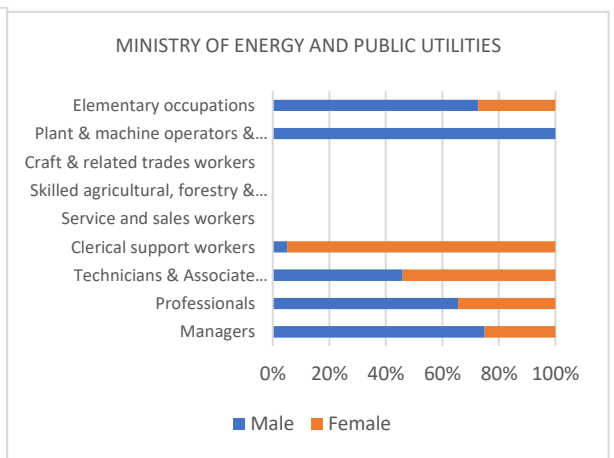
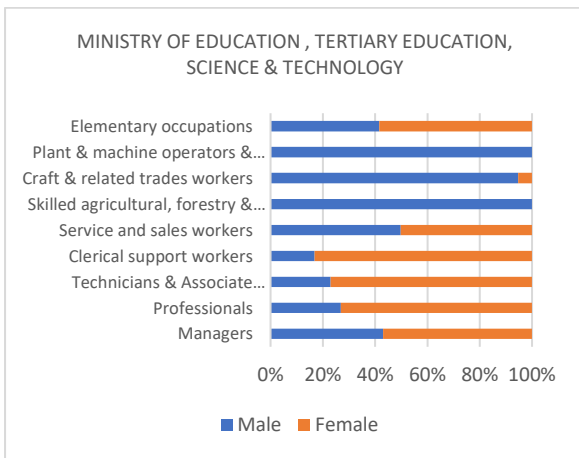
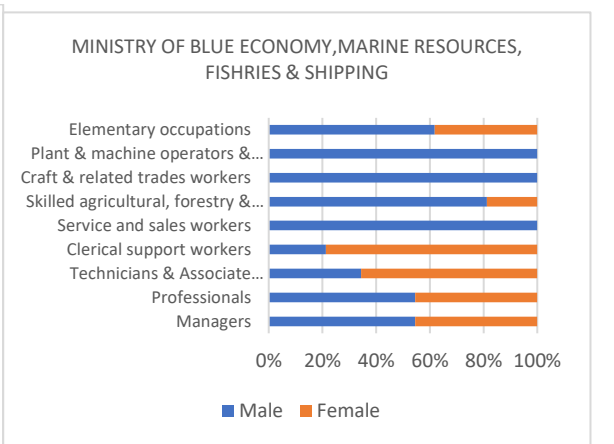
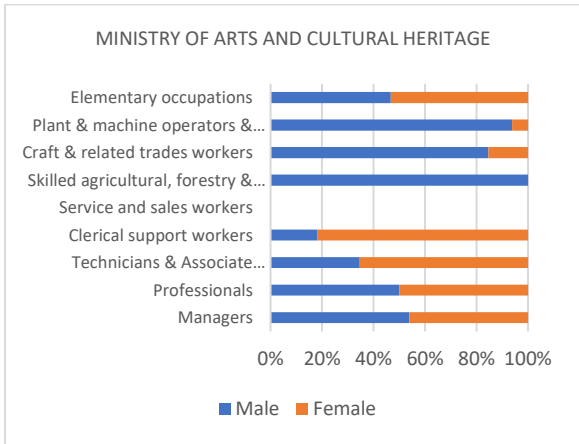
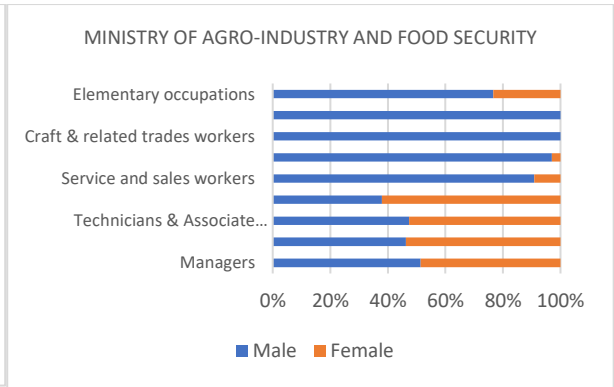
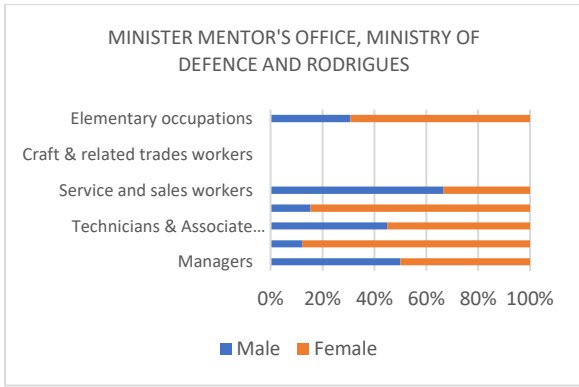
### Rodrigues Regional Assembly

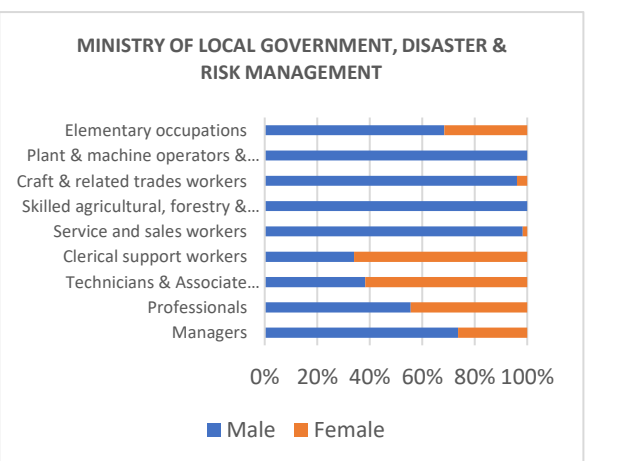
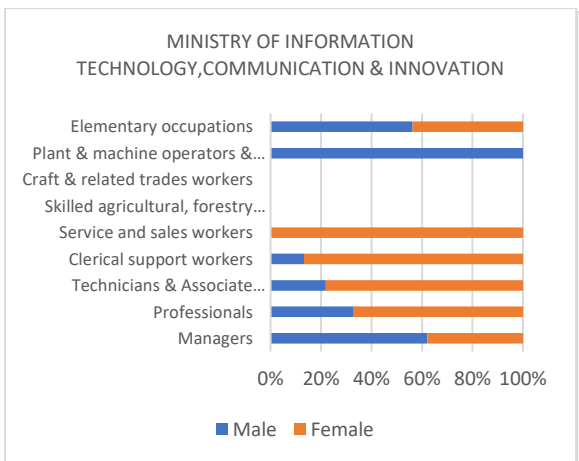
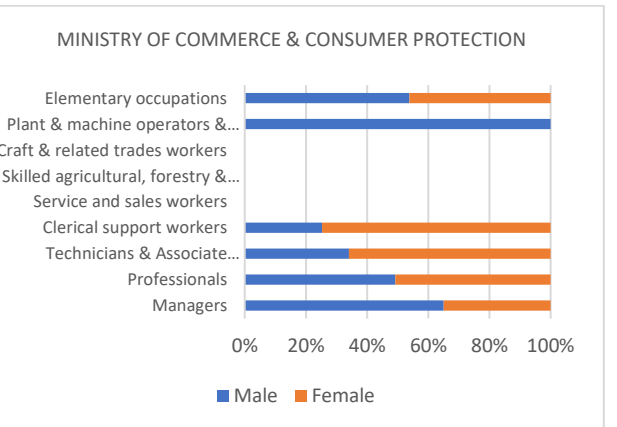
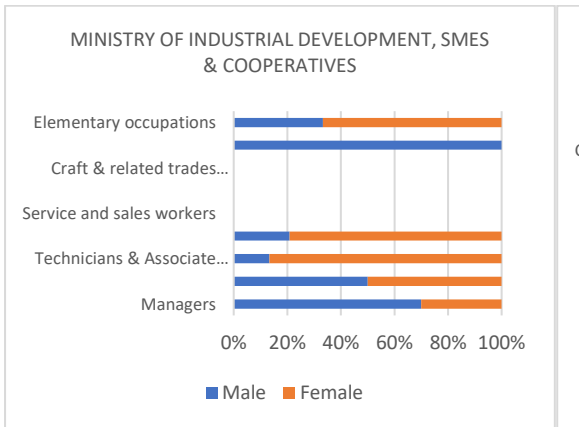
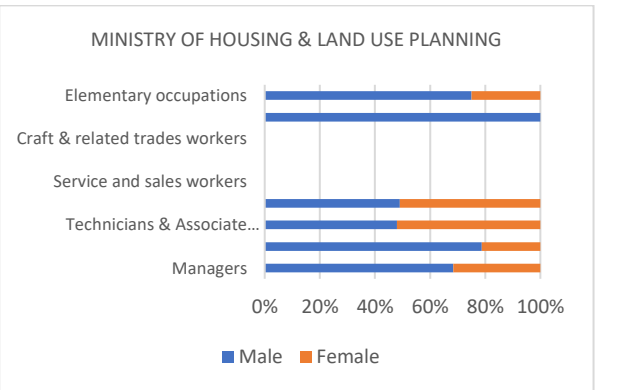
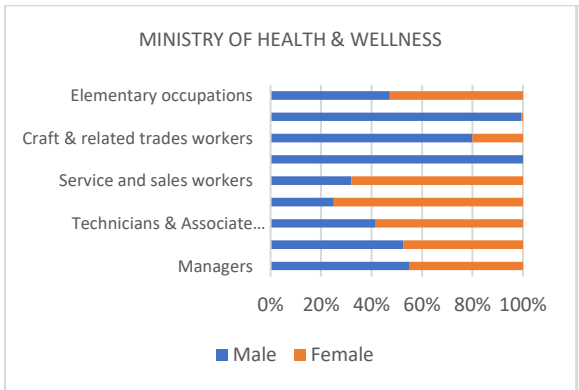
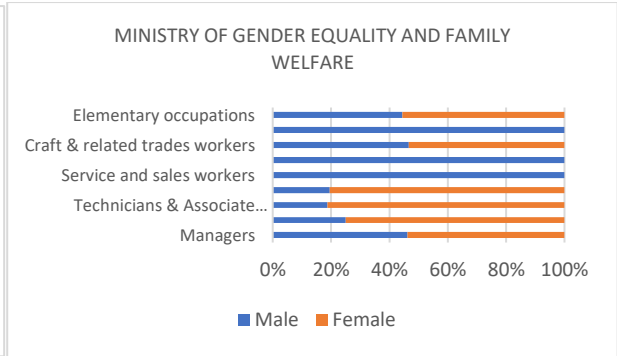
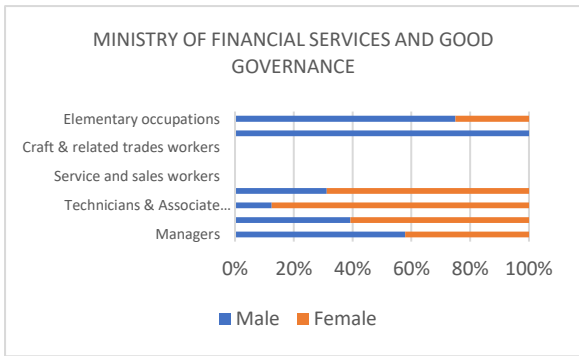
<b>FGD 1</b>	
Clerk, Regional Assembly	Female
Administrative Officer, Commission for Health	Male
STM, Commission for Social Security	Female
FNPO, Commission for Women's Affairs	Female
AO, Commission for State Land	Male
Departmental Head, Commission for Women's Affairs	Female
<b>FGD2</b>	
Office Management Executive	Male
Labour & Industrial Relations Officer	Female
Occupational Safety and Health Officer	Female
Human Resource Executive	Female
Office Management Executive	Female
Human Resource Executive	Female
Human Resource Executive	Female
Human Resource Executive	Female
Administrative Officer	Male
Administrative Officer	Female

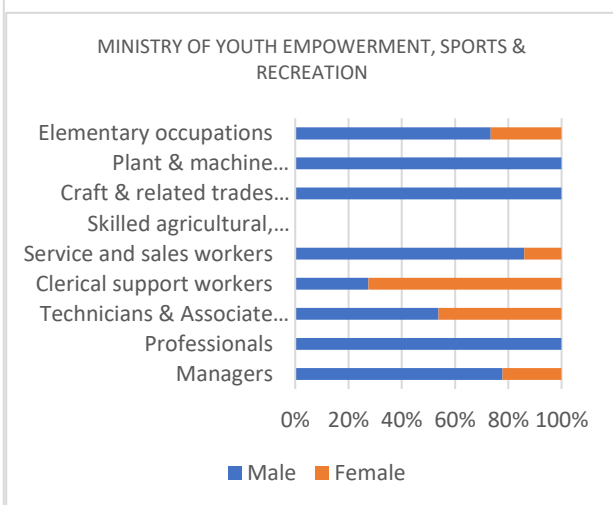
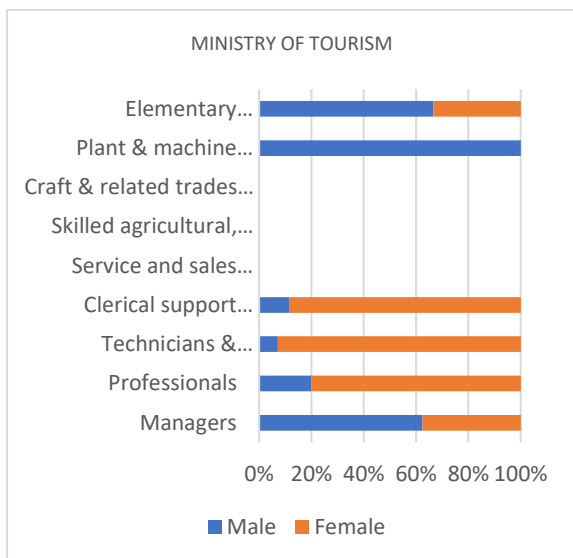
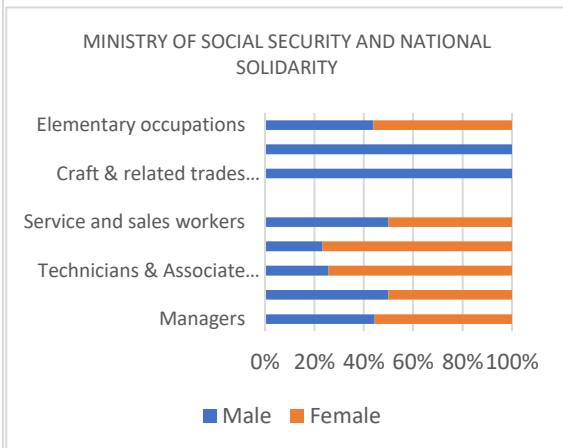
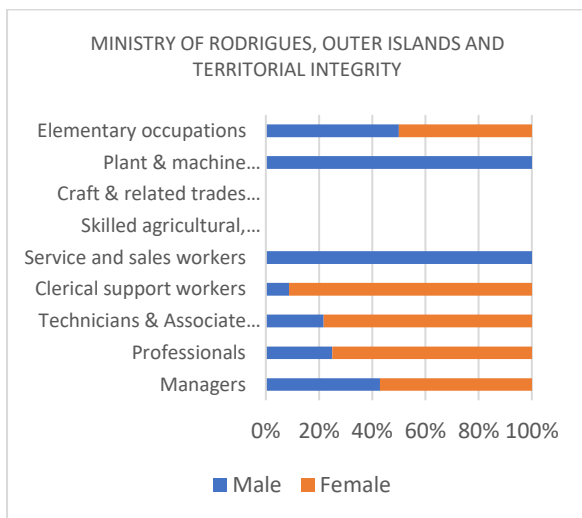
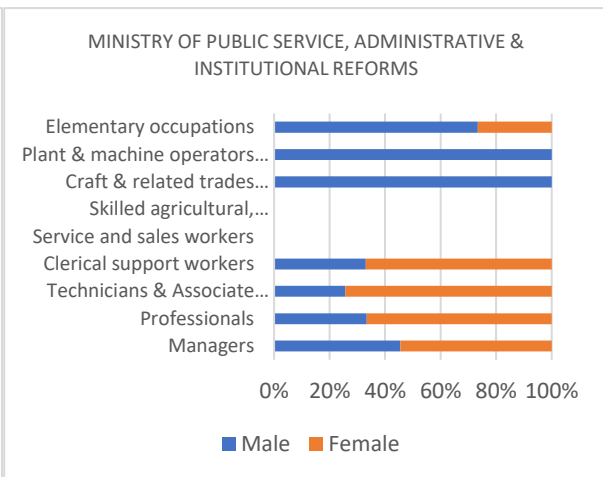
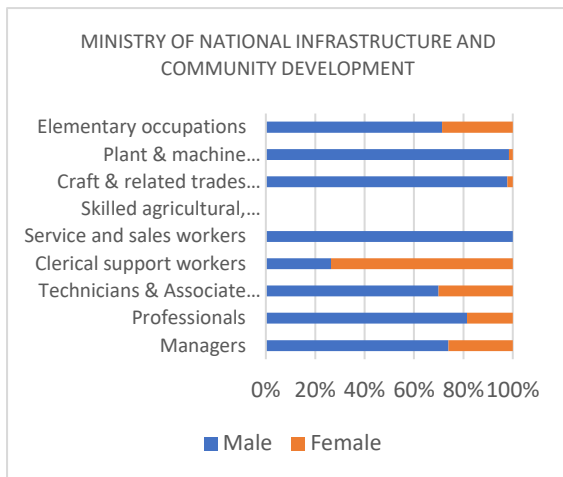


## Annex 2: Employment in government ministries by sex and occupational category

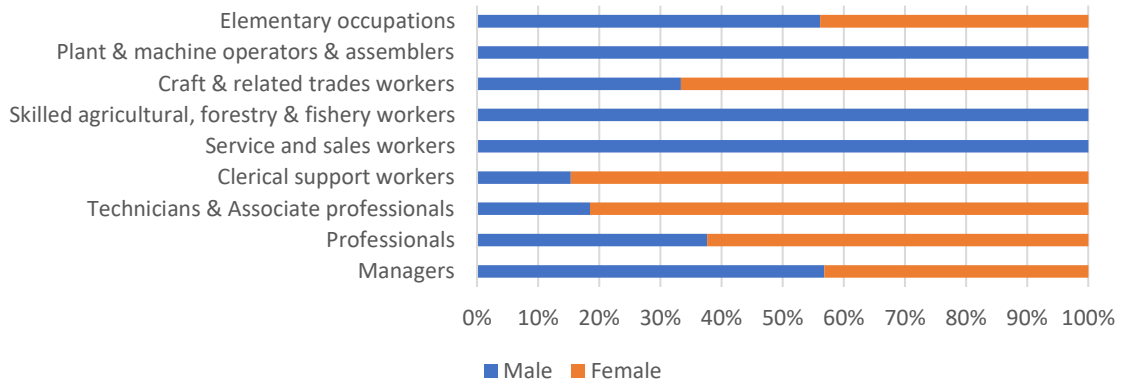




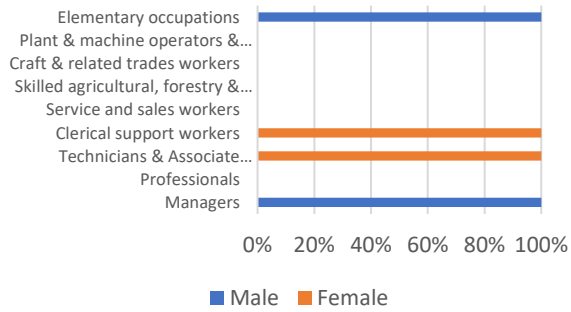




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OFFICE OF OMBUDSPERSON FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES



PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

