

# The Gender Pay Gap in Uganda: Extent and Drivers

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**ABSTRACT**

Despite increasing policy focus on women's economic empowerment, gender pay disparities remain deeply entrenched in Uganda. This study examines the size and causes of the gender pay gap using data from four rounds of the Uganda National Household Survey (2012/13 - 2023/24). Descriptive analysis shows that the "unadjusted" gender pay gap has consistently ranged between 43% and 52%. The disparities are especially evident among employed workers aged 31-64, within the services sector, in rural areas, in informal employment, among individuals with disabilities, and in polygamous unions. Intra-household analysis also reveals that men earned more than women in over 90% of dual-income households, highlighting ongoing economic inequalities within families. The Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition results illustrating the "adjusted" gender pay gap indicate that the gap was 53.5% in 2019/20, driven by observable characteristics (7.3%) such as education, sector, occupation, and region, and unobservable factors (46.2%) including discrimination, entrenched cultural norms, unequal returns to education and skills, undervaluation of women's work, and limited bargaining power. These findings underscore the importance of leveraging education to further close the pay gap, establishing and investing in facilities that reduce care and domestic burdens on women in the workforce, and deliberately fostering an environment that encourages the formalisation of work. Collectively, these measures can promote equitable participation in the labour market and further reduce gender pay disparities.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>CEDAW</b>    | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| <b>EOC</b>      | Equal Opportunities Commission   |
| <b>EPRC</b>     | Economic Policy Research Centre  |
| <b>GDP</b>      | Gross Domestic Product   |
| <b>GPG</b>      | Gender Pay Gap   |
| <b>ILO</b>      | International Labour Organization  |
| <b>LFPR</b>     | Labour Force Participation Rate  |
| <b>MoGLSD</b>   | Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development                          |
| <b>NLFS</b>     | National Labour Force Survey   |
| <b>NOTU</b>     | National Organisation of Trade Unions                                      |
| <b>SDGs</b>     | Sustainable Development Goals  |
| <b>UBOS</b>     | Uganda Bureau of Statistics  |
| <b>UGX</b>      | Uganda Shillings   |
| <b>UN Women</b> | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women     |
| <b>UNHS</b>     | Uganda National Household Survey   |
| <b>UNPS</b>     | Uganda National Panel Survey   |
| <b>WBES</b>     | World Bank Enterprise Survey   |
| <b>WEF</b>      | World Economic Forum   |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The gender pay gap (GPG), a persistent global issue, reflects a systemic inequality where women earn less than men for the same work, impacting their economic empowerment and societal contributions. Worldwide, 68.8% of the gender gap<sup>1</sup> was closed, a 0.3 percentage point improvement from 2024 (WEF, 2025). In 2021, it was shown that women earn an average of 83 cents for every dollar earned by men (WEF, 2021). While progress is being made, full gender parity is still estimated to be 123 years away at the current pace with women facing a lifetime of income disadvantages and a higher risk of poverty in retirement.

In Africa, GPG, like the global one, reflects significant disparities in earnings between men and women for the same work. While the average gap across 41 African countries is 39%, some countries experience a gap as high as 82% (WEF, 2024). This gap has reportedly widened in the past year due to economic challenges and global unrest. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the GPG is estimated to be around 30%, meaning women earn 70 cents for every dollar earned by men (ibid). The UN Women (2023) report 'Why Women Earn Less?' finds that women earn 21% less than men in the East and Southern Africa region, with substantial variations across countries. For example, Van den Broeck et al. (2023) found that in Malawi, Tanzania, and Nigeria, women in urban areas earned 40–46% less than men, with a larger share of the gap in rural areas explained by differences in worker characteristics, such as education and occupation. Furthermore, Mosomi (2019) highlights that even though South Africa's gender wage gap declined from approximately 40% in 1993 to 16% in 2024, significant disparities persisted, especially at the top of the wage distribution.

Evidence within the East African community reveals that, in Kenya, the GPG is 17.7% per hour and 31.3% per month (UNWOMEN, 2023a). Tanzania's statistics vary significantly depending on the metric and context. While some studies indicate a minimal hourly wage gap, others highlight a more substantial difference

in monthly earnings for married individuals and in specific sectors (UNWOMEN, 2023b). In Rwanda, women earn approximately 88 cents for every dollar earned by men, indicating a gender pay gap of 12% (UNWOMEN, 2023c). Furthermore, the unadjusted or raw gender pay gap is 26.2% at the hourly level and 38.5% at the monthly level (ibid). In Burundi, women earn 15% less than men, making it one of the countries with the smallest gender pay gaps in Africa.

Uganda has made considerable efforts to promote gender equality and equity through laws and policies that prevent discrimination in all forms. Despite notable initiatives for equal pay in local government, education, and the health sector, progress in closing the gender pay gap in both the public and private sectors remains limited. A significant GPG persists, with women earning considerably less than men, particularly in the private sector. The Uganda National Labour Force Survey report indicates that, over the years from 2016/17 to 2021, median monthly earnings have consistently been lower for females than for males. In 2016/17, women earned a median of UGX 120,000 per month, compared to UGX 240,000 for men. By 2021, this had increased to UGX 140,000 for females and UGX 250,000 for men (UBOS, 2021). The unadjusted gender pay gap is estimated at 25.2% hourly and 32.3% monthly (UNWOMEN, 2024). This means that, on average, women earn 25.2% less per hour and 32.3% less per month than men (ibid). However, the UNWOMEN (2024) brief utilised the Uganda National Panel Survey (2019/20) to estimate the current GPG; but, the UNPS has a smaller sample and is more suitable for analysing dynamics in GPG for the same cohort of households.

These disparities noted in the literature on the GPG are partly attributed to women's disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, which limits their opportunities in the paid labour market, leading women to work fewer hours in paid employment. Additionally, factors such as occupational segregation, discrimination, differences in education, and sector of employment contribute to these gaps (Blau and Kahn, 2017; Rubery and Koukiadaki, 2016). Thus, addressing the GPG requires a comprehensive approach, including policies that tackle unpaid care work, occupational segregation, and discriminatory barriers within legal

<sup>1</sup> Gender parity is benchmarked across four key areas: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

and economic systems. Furthermore, more recent data and a larger, more comprehensive national household survey are available to provide trends and an up-to-date overview of Uganda's GPG and its underlying drivers. This paper fills this gap and examines the complex nature of the GPG, analysing its current state, drivers, and potential solutions, emphasising the importance of comprehensive strategies to achieve genuine pay equity.

This paper contributes to the literature in Uganda on understanding the GPG over the years. Specifically, the paper:

- i) Examines the role of the macroeconomic environment, policy frameworks and social dialogues in addressing gender pay gaps in Uganda.
- ii) Estimates the national gender pay gap.
- iii) Analyses the drivers of the gender pay gap within a specific context (e.g., a particular sector, industry, occupation segregation, organisation, or region).

The paper proposes strategies to increase awareness about the gender pay gap and foster a culture of gender equality in the workplace.

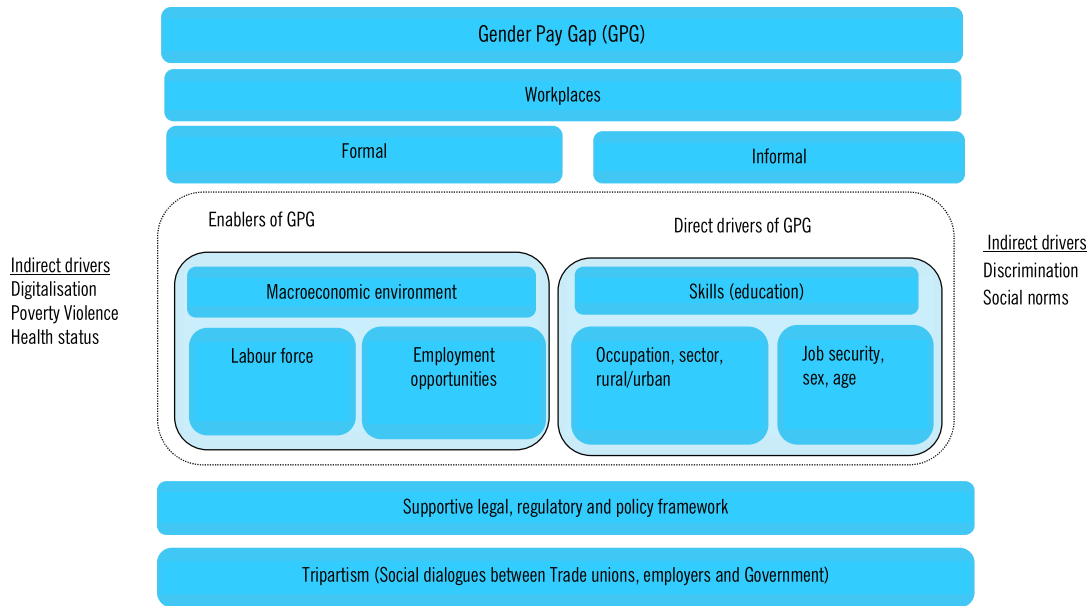
The rest of the paper is organised as follows: Section two presents the conceptual framework for the gender pay gap used in this study, section three describes the methods used to estimate the GPG in Uganda including the unadjusted gaps, intrahousehold comparisons, and the Oaxaca-Blinder decompositions and outlines data sources and their limitations, and section four provides the context and efforts Uganda is making to close the GPG. Section five presents the results on the extent of the GPG in Uganda, following the various methods and the drivers, while section six concludes the paper and suggests policy actions.

## 2. CONCEPTUALISING GENDER PAY GAP

The “Gender Pay Gap” (GPG) refers to the difference between men’s pay and women’s pay as a percentage of men’s pay (Rubery, 2005). This is referred to as the “unadjusted” GPG. Gender pay gaps can be either positive or negative, with a negative gender pay gap indicating that women earn, on average, more than men. Gender pay gaps are an important element in analysing and monitoring progress on equal pay both nationally and within organisations. From Figure 1, GPG often manifests itself in workplaces either formal or informal in nature. In conceptualising the GPG, two pillars are key (i) broad enablers of GPG; and (ii) the direct drivers of GPG if included estimate what is commonly referred to as the “adjusted” GPG. In detail:

- a. *Enablers of GPG.* Here, we consider (i) the macroeconomic environment, as it measures the size of the economy and the drivers of this growth. This indicates whether productivity using the available labour force is contributing to GDP growth. (ii) The labour force examines gendered differences in the working-age population, working population, employed individuals, and formal versus informal employment; as well as the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) and the employment-to-population ratio (EPR). When differences in these variables are minimal, this often reflects smaller GPGs, and vice versa. (iii) Employment opportunities also influence the GPG. When opportunities are more prevalent in male-dominated fields, the GPG will be skewed in favour of men, and vice versa.
- b. *Drivers of GPG.* Here, the focus is on factors that drive differences in GPG. These can be either individual characteristics such as one’s sex, age, level of education, skills, experiences in the labour market, job security status, and institutional characteristics such as area of residence, sector of employment or occupations available. These are examined in the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition methodology (see section on methods).

**Figure 1** Conceptual framework for analysing the Gender Pay Gap



Source: Authors construction, 2025

Influencing the pillars of GPG are indirect drivers that are often not immediately visible, such as discrimination in the job market, gender and social cultural norms, digitalisation, violence<sup>2</sup>, health status, and poverty. These factors are linked to a desperate need to accept any job for any pay, often not by choice. For example, poverty can push women into accepting low-paid or insecure jobs out of necessity. Similarly, socio-cultural norms often reinforce occupational segregation or discourage women from entering certain sectors. Digitalisation, on the other hand, can both create opportunities and widen gaps where access and skills are unequal. Altogether, these indirect factors shape the way direct drivers such as education and occupation translate into wage outcomes.

The prevailing legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks, along with the level of implementation and enforcement, are crucial for addressing GPG in Uganda. The strength of trade unions, through their platforms and negotiations with employers over pay (salary or wages) for their members, can help address GPG disparities. If strong,

they can potentially narrow the GPG, whereas weaker ones with no influence will not advocate for better, equal pay for their members without discrimination along gender lines.

All of the above collectively shape the ecosystem of GPGs within any economy. Thus, our next section shows how the GPG has been estimated, taking into consideration the conceptualisation of GPG in Uganda.

### 3. ESTIMATING THE GENDER PAY GAP

#### 3.1. Approaches

The concept of the GPG refers to the disparity in average earnings between men and women who are employed. Analyses of both the unadjusted<sup>3</sup> and adjusted<sup>4</sup> pay gap in Uganda are presented. For robustness, the GPG was measured in three ways.

<sup>2</sup> A wider gender pay gap is linked to higher rates of physical and emotional violence against women, partly because it increases economic vulnerability and reduces a woman's bargaining power both in the workplace and at home. The pay gap is a significant factor that prevents many victims from leaving abusive situations, as financial abuse occurs in nearly all domestic violence cases. Closing the gender pay gap is therefore seen as a way to not only address economic inequality but also to help reduce domestic violence

<sup>3</sup> This is the overall difference in average or median pay between men and women, without accounting for factors like job title, hours worked, or experience. It provides a broad picture of the overall disparity in earnings between genders.

<sup>4</sup> This approach accounts for factors that are typically associated with differences in pay, such as job role, education, and experience. The adjusted pay gap attempts to assess the difference in pay between men and women doing similar or equivalent work after controlling for these factors.

3.1.1. Overall unadjusted GPG

The *unadjusted* GPG calculates the percentage gap between women’s and men’s pay as a proportion of men’s pay. That is:

$$GPG_{Unadjusted} = \frac{(Men_{median\_pay} - Women_{median\_pay})}{Men_{median\_pay}} * 100 \quad (1)$$

If the GPG is 15% then women, on average, earn 15% less than men. Note that the GPGs can be either positive or negative, with a negative gender pay gap indicating that women earn, on average, more than men.

3.1.2. Intra-household unadjusted pay gap

To assess *unadjusted* GPGs in earnings within households, we also construct the household-level gender pay gap, which is the fraction of the difference between the total earnings of male household members and the total earnings of female household members, each divided by the total household earnings. That is:

$$GPG_{ij} = \frac{\sum_i^n male\_earnings}{\sum_i^N hh\_earnings_j} - \frac{\sum_i^n female\_earnings}{\sum_i^N hh\_earnings_j} \quad (2)$$

Where  $GPG_{ij}$  is the gender pay gap of individual  $i$  in household  $j$ . This variable captures the relative contribution of men versus women to household income.

- A value of 1 indicates that all household earnings come from men, while -1 indicates that all earnings come from women.
- A Value of 0 reflects equal earnings between men and women in that household.
- Positive values imply male dominance in household income, while negative values suggest female dominance.

3.1.3 Adjusted Oaxaca-Blinder Decomposition

To estimate the *adjusted* GPG, we employ the Oaxaca-Blinder Decomposition methodology (Blinder, 1973; Oaxaca, 1973). The Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition analyses the differences in the average pay earned between two groups (i.e., males and females). We decompose the GPG in three steps. First, we analyse earnings functions of the following types:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \sum_{k=1}^k X'_{ik}\beta_k + \varepsilon_i \quad (3)$$

where  $Y_i$  is the logarithm of the monthly median pay of an individual  $i$ , female (F) or male (M).  $X$  is a vector of  $k$  characteristics that influence individual  $i$ 's monthly pay. The determinants of pay include education level (maximum adult female and adult male education), skill level (classified into high, skilled, and low-skill categories), age (proxy for experience), marital status, occupation, sector of employment, and nature of employment. Geographic factors such as region and area of residence are also included (Van den Broeck et al., 2023; Ntuli & Kwenda, 2019; Blau & Kahn, 2017). These variables align with the framework of Blau and Kahn (2017) and Borrowman and Klasen (2020).

Second, we then define the gender pay gap  $D$  as follows:

$$D = E[Y_M] - E[Y_F] \quad (4)$$

Where  $E[Y]$  denotes the expected value of the logarithm of monthly pay of men (M) or women (F). The GPG is calculated in log points and is exponentiated to express it as a percentage.

Third, we follow the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition method and decompose the GPG into a part that is explained by differences in characteristics (i.e. endowment effect) and a part that is explained by differences in returns to these characteristics (i.e. structural effect). That is:

$$D = \left( \sum_{k=1}^K (E[X_{M,k}] - E[X_{F,k}])\hat{\beta}_{*,k} \right) + \left( \sum_{k=1}^K E[X_{M,k}](\hat{\beta}_{M,k} - \hat{\beta}_{*,k}) \right) + \left( \sum_{k=1}^K E[X_{F,k}](\hat{\beta}_{*,k} - \hat{\beta}_{F,k}) \right) \quad (5)$$

3.1.4 Description and measurement of variables used

Table 1 summarises the key variables used in the gender pay gap analysis. The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of an individual’s monthly pay, which allows for interpretation of percentage changes in pay. For the explanatory variables, these are chosen for their known associations with earnings and include demographic, occupational, and geographic factors.

**Table 1** Variable definition and measurement

| Variable name                                   | Definition and Measurement   |
|---|--|
| <b>Dependent variable</b>                       |  |
| Log (Pay)                                       | The natural logarithm of an individual's monthly pay, measured in continuous terms   |
| <b>Explanatory variables</b>                    |  |
| Age group (years)                               | 1. 18-30 (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>2. 31-64 (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>3. 65+ (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)  |
| Sector of employment (using ISIC 2-digit level) | 1. Agriculture (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>2. Production/industry (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>3. Services (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)   |
| Occupation (using ISCO)                         | 1. Managers (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>2. Professionals (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>3. Technicians and associate professionals (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>4. Clerical support workers (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>5. Service and sales workers (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>6. Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>7. Craft and related trades workers (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>8. Plant and machine operators (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>9. Elementary occupations (1=Yes, 0 otherwise) |
| Education                                       | Maximum female education level in the household<br>Maximum male education level in the household   |
| Area of residence                               | Dummy 1=Urban, 0=Rural   |
| Region  | Region of the respondent: Measured by dummies<br>1. Central (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>2. Eastern (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>3. Northern (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)<br>4. Western (1=Yes, 0 otherwise)   |

Source: Authors construction, 2025

### 3.2 Data sources and limitations

One key point to consider is the type of data source used for calculating the GPG. From a statistical perspective, it is essential to select the data source that best captures the specific features of Uganda's labour market. Therefore, there is no standard data source used for calculating the GPG. The available data sources in Uganda include the World Bank Enterprise Surveys (WBES), administrative records from the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), as well as household surveys such as the Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS), Uganda National Panel Survey (UNPS), and Uganda National Labour Force Surveys (UNLFS). The UNHSs have been conducted every three years since 1992/93 through to 2023/24.

The NLFSSs have been conducted annually since 2011, while the UNPS started in 2019/20.

Here, we mainly use the UNHS (sometimes referred to as the Living Standards Measurement Surveys) because the sample size is very large. Missing data points are filled in using the National Labour Force Survey (NLFS), where the household is the basic sampling unit. In other cases, earnings surveys and similar workplace statistics are employed, as these are the most suitable given Uganda's labour market structure. In previous publications, the GPG in Uganda was calculated using the UNPS 2019/20 (UNWOMEN, 2024). In most household surveys, information on employee earnings in both the public and private sectors can be obtained through their main characteristics, such as age, gender,

education level, occupation, tenure, etc.

The NSSF data captures only those who are formally registered; therefore, it is limited to capturing the entire spectrum of the GPG. UBOS collects information on earnings (pay) through household-based surveys. According to the data collected by the NLFS 2021, which has the broadest coverage of various working patterns in Uganda, less than 14% are in the public sector and over 76% are employed without any social security. Despite the wider coverage of the Household Labour Force Surveys, the main purpose of the data collection is not to compile information on income; consequently, no detailed data is provided on the earnings of all wage earners.

Alternatively, information on earnings (salaries/wages) can also be obtained from the UNHSs, where households are the basic units as well. Since women are overrepresented in work patterns not covered by enterprise surveys and NSSF data, household surveys are used as the preferred data source for calculating the GPG. Therefore, for the reasons mentioned above, this paper calculates GPGs for the period 2012/13 to 2023/24, where data is available, using various Uganda National Household Survey data gathered by UBOS to ensure broader coverage of work patterns in Uganda's labour market.

Depending on how the income from employment (earnings) variable is defined—which can be recorded hourly, daily, weekly, twice a month, monthly, or annually, in gross or net terms—these data can also be utilised in gender pay gap calculations. Generally, both full-time and part-time employees are included in the measurement.

## 4 ENABLERS OF GENDER PAY GAP

### 4.1 Macro-economic outlook

The government is prioritising “Full Monetisation of Uganda's Economy” through various sectors such as agriculture, industrialisation, services, and digital

transformation. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), Uganda's GDP grew by 6.3% in 2024/25, up from 6.1% in 2023/24. The size of the economy in nominal terms increased to Uganda shillings 202,725 billion in 2023/24 from 183,004 billion in 2022/23 (UBOS, 2025). Projections indicate an economic growth rate of 7% in 2025/26 (AfDB, 2025). The growth is supported by robust exports (notably gold, coffee, and industrial products), increased industrial output, and digital innovation. Economic growth is expected to lead to improved livelihoods and a reduction in poverty and income inequality. However, macro-level success does not guarantee wage parity since women remain concentrated in low-paying sectors, with over 44.2 % of them employed in subsistence agriculture compared to only 28.1% of their male counterparts (UBoS, 2025).

Uganda has experienced a fluctuating trend in poverty reduction, marked by progress followed by setbacks, particularly due to events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent data indicate a decline in the national poverty rate from 56.4% in 1992/93 to 20.3% in 2019/20, and then to 16.1% in 2023/24 (UBOS, 2025). Despite this progress, approximately 7 million Ugandans still live below the poverty line. The majority of the poor (5.3 million) live in rural areas, while 1.7 million reside in urban settings. Karamoja sub-region has the highest poverty rate at 74.2%, while Kampala has the lowest, at 1.1% (ibid). Since female-headed households have, over the years, remained disproportionately represented among the poorest, with 41.8% falling within the bottom 40% in 2023/24, these poverty patterns deepen gendered income disparities and contribute to a persistent pay gap. Simultaneously, UN Women notes that the cumulative effect of pay disparities can plunge women and their families into poverty and prevent them from securing food, housing and education (UN Women, 2025). Thus, poverty both drives and is driven by the gender pay gap.

Income inequality in Uganda remains a significant challenge, despite some progress in reducing poverty and narrowing the income gap. The national Gini coefficient (which ranges from 0, representing perfect equality, to 1, indicating perfect inequality), a measure of income disparity, dropped from 0.413 in 2019/20 to

0.382 in 2023/24 (ibid). This suggests a more equitable distribution of income across the population and within and between genders. The depth of which is examined further in the subsequent sections, both at the national and household levels.

#### 4.2. Labour force participation and employment

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is the population in the labour force (employed and unemployed) expressed as a percentage of the working age population (19th ICLS of the ILO).<sup>5</sup> The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) was 42.9% among persons aged 14-64 years, with more males (49.0%) than females (38.6%) participating in the labour force (UBOS 2024). Kampala Capital City had the highest LFPR at 62.6%. The LFPR for the working-age population (14-64 years) declined in 2021 to 48.8% from 52.7% in 2016/17 and a low of 42.5% in 2019/20 (UBOS 2022). For PWDS, the LFPR was 42.1% in 2021.

The Employment-to-Population Ratio (EPR) refers to the proportion of the Working Age Population that is in employment (working for pay or profit for the benefit of others).<sup>6</sup> The EPR in 2024 for persons aged 14-64 was 37.5%, with a higher proportion among males (43.0%) than females (33.1%). Sub-regional differences show that those aged 14-64 in Kampala Capital City had the highest EPR (53.5%). Overall, the employment-to-population ratio (EPR) for the 14-64 age group declined from 47.6% to 42.5% between 2016/17 and 2021, primarily due to COVID-19 effects with gender disparities (UBOS 2021).

The key insights here are that the low LFPR indicates the level of inactivity among the working-age population, and the equally low EPR shows that few of the working-age population are employed, albeit gainfully, with gender biases in favour of men. This alludes to the fact that even the GPG will be biased towards men as they are the majority in the world of work.

<sup>5</sup> It indicates the proportion of working age population that is active in the labour market as either employed or actively looking and available for employment. This indicator shows the relative size of the supply of labour available for production of market goods and services in the country.

<sup>6</sup> This is the total number of employed persons expressed as a proportion of the working age population. The EPR, also known as the Employment Rate, provides a good indication of the degree to which the economy is utilizing its key productive labour resource.

#### 4.3. Efforts to address gender pay gaps in Uganda: Laws, regulations and policies

At the international level, the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), states that men and women should receive equal remuneration and social rights for work of equal value. This is one of the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization, adopted by the ILO on 6 June 1951. Uganda ratified this convention on June 2, 2005, and it became effective immediately. Article 1 of the Convention includes the term “Equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value”. Uganda also ratified the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985. Following ratification, Uganda committed to integrating the principles of CEDAW into its national laws and policies. States Parties to CEDAW recognize “the right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work” and are required to eliminate discrimination against women in employment to ensure, on the basis of equality between men and women, the same rights (Article 11, 1/d).

Chapter IV of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda covers the “protection and promotion of fundamental and other human rights and freedoms” under its general provisions in Article 21. It mandates ensuring equality and freedom from discrimination, stating that all persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social, and cultural life, as well as in every other respect, with equal protection of the law. Additionally, without prejudice to clause (1) of this article, a person shall not be discriminated against on grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, social or economic standing, political opinion, or disability. Another general provision pertains to economic rights under Article 40, which mandates that the Parliament of Uganda enacts laws providing for the right of individuals to work under satisfactory, safe, and healthy conditions; guarantees equal pay for equal work without discrimination; and ensures that every worker is entitled to rest, reasonable working hours, paid holidays, and remuneration for public

holidays. Articles 31 and 33, relating to gender equality and women's rights, further reinforce the constitutional framework for equal treatment.

In domestic laws, the right to equal treatment is incorporated in the various labour laws. These include the Employment Act, specifically section 6, outlines that discrimination in employment is unlawful and includes any distinction, exclusion, or preference based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, HIV status, or disability. The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2019 prohibits discrimination based on disability in hiring, promotion, and termination of employment. The Whistle-Blower Protection Act ensures that employees who report wrongdoing are protected from victimisation. Some of these have policy frameworks, such as the 2011 employment policy, which is currently under review, along with its associated strategy. Uganda has legislation, such as the Minimum Wages Advisory Boards and Wages Councils Act, but it has not been effective in establishing and enforcing a new minimum wage. Uganda currently does not have a legally enforceable minimum wage. The last statutory minimum wage was set in 1984 at UGX 60,000 per month, but it has become outdated due to inflation and economic changes. While attempts have been made to establish a new minimum wage, including the Minimum Wage Bill of 2015, these efforts have not been successful. The Labour Unions Act, 2006, seeks to maintain and improve working conditions and raise the economic status of the workers through the creation of unions.

The elimination of the GPG is addressed in Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seeks to "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all by 2030" (UNDP, 2015). Within this framework, SDG 8 targets: "By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, and ensure equal pay for work of equal value." As a measure for this target, calculating gender wage gaps allows monitoring progress. To achieve these objectives, a joint effort at the global level by the International Labour Organization, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment

of Women (UN Women), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has gained momentum.

The institutions responsible for promoting and enforcing equality include the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), which is tasked with eliminating discrimination and inequalities and taking affirmative action to address historical imbalances. The Industrial Court plays a role in fostering equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination in employment. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), particularly the labour department, has Labour officers who are responsible for ensuring compliance with employment laws and promoting fair treatment in the workplace.

In conclusion, advocating for GPG within Uganda is well supported by the laws, regulations, and policies. The institutions responsible for overseeing these laws, promoting gender equity, and regulating discrimination in the workplace are also in place. However, because of weak enforcement, these have not yet resulted in ensuring equal pay in the workplace.

#### 4.4 Social dialogues

Social dialogues are crucial for addressing the gender pay gap in Uganda. These dialogues involve open conversations between various stakeholders, including employers, employees, unions, and government representatives, to discuss and find solutions for pay disparities between men and women. By fostering open communication and collaboration, these dialogues can help identify the root causes of the gender pay gap and develop targeted interventions. By fostering open and inclusive dialogue, Uganda can create a more equitable and just society where women are valued and compensated fairly for their contributions to the economy.

Examples of employee unions in Uganda include the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU), Uganda Medical Workers Union, Uganda Journalists Union, National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers, Uganda Hotel, Food, Tourism and Allied Workers' Union (UHFTAWU), Uganda Railways Workers Union (URWU), National Union of Co-operative Movement Workers'

Union (NUCMWU), Uganda Local Government Workers Union (ULGWU), Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union (UNMU), Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU), Uganda Markets and Allied Employees Union (UMAEU), and Uganda Public Employees Union. These unions represent workers in specific professions, advocating for their rights and interests. The National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU) and Central Organisation of Trade Unions (COFTU) act as umbrella bodies coordinating various trade unions in Uganda.

Working through these unions, Uganda has formalised social-dialogue structures through tripartite and bipartite charters, bringing together the government, employers and unions (Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2022). In recent years, these frameworks have produced joint position papers and a landmark collective bargaining agreement that raised public sector wages by 225 % (ibid). In addition, Memoranda of understanding such as the July 2023 FUE/Industrial agreement are in place to promote decent work, stronger unions and gender equality. Unions advocate for better pay for their workers through dialogues with employers, further fostering a reduction in pay inequalities for similar positions, especially when worker complaints are raised concerning discrimination in pay at work.

## 5 INTERPRETING THE GENDER PAY GAP IN UGANDA

This section presents the GPG in Uganda based on data from various UNHS surveys and the NLFS 2021. The GPG can differ depending on the source of data. Hence, to ensure consistency, we largely use the UNHS and fill in the gap with the NLFS for 2021. The results pertain to the working-age group (14-64 years) who are employed.

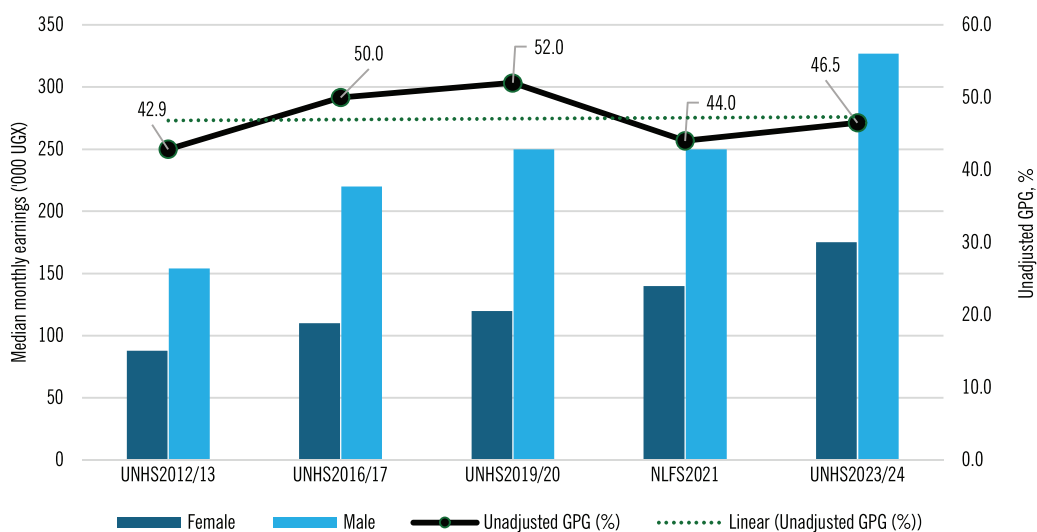
### 5.1 Understanding the “unadjusted” gender pay gap

The findings presented here are from our initial model estimate for the unadjusted GPG drawing on nationally representative survey data for Uganda from 2012/13 to 2023/24.

#### a. Overall GPG-National level

According to Figure 2, despite slight improvements in 2023/24, female employees in Uganda have consistently earned less than their male counterparts over the years. The findings reveal that the unadjusted gender pay gap (GPG) increased overtime, widening from 43% in

**Figure 2** Performance of the national median earnings by gender and gender pay gap, 2012/13 to 2023/24



Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, 2019/20, 2023/24, and NLFS 2021

**Table 2** GPG by age group (%), 2012/13- 2021

| Age group                                   | UNHS2012/13 | UNHS2016/17 | UNHS2019/20 | NLFS2021 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 18-30 years (Youth-Uganda)                  | 30.6        | 43.2        | 25.0        | 33.3     |
| 31-64 years (Adults-Uganda)                 | 64.8        | 48.7        | 65.7        | 25.0     |
| 14-64 years (Working age population-Uganda) | 42.9        | 50.0        | 52.0        | 44.0     |
| 15-24 years (Youth-ILO)                     | 30.0        | 26.7        | 28.6        | 24.4     |
| 15-65 years (Working age population-ILO)    | 44.8        | 50.0        | 52.0        | 40.0     |

Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, 2019/20 and NLFS, 2021

2012/13 to 52% in 2019/20, before declining slightly to 46.5% in 2023/24. These results suggest that despite some progress, women's earnings remain significantly below men's, reflecting deeply entrenched labour market inequalities despite some improvements over time (Diagana, 2022). Additionally, this widened gap is driven by women being disproportionately employed in low-paying sectors such as subsistence agriculture, informal trade, domestic and unpaid care work. It is estimated that closing this earning gap could increase Uganda's GDP per capita by 11.8% (World Bank, 2021).

#### b. *Age and the GPG*

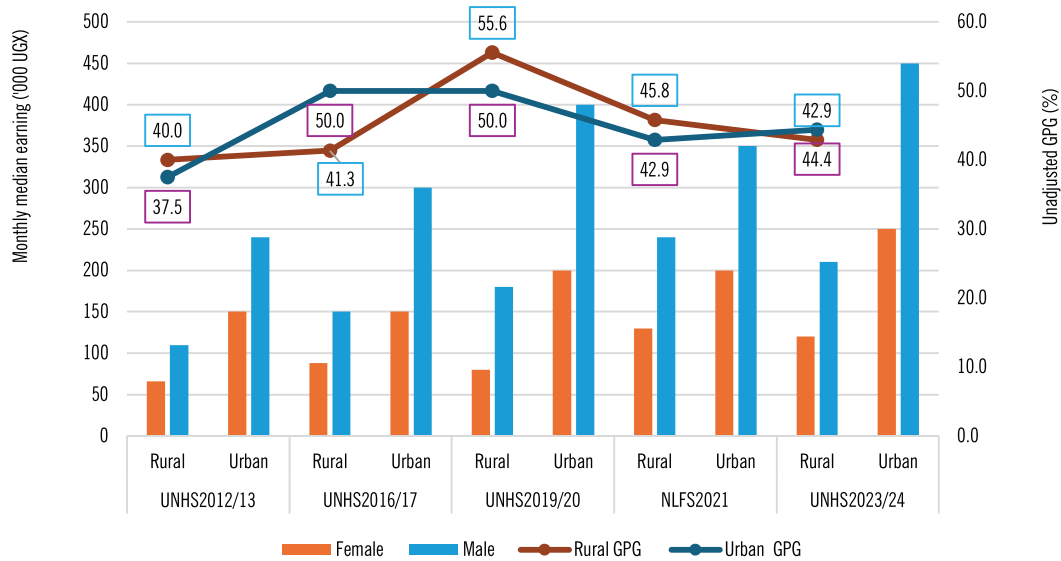
The pay gap increased with age group. The GPG was lowest among the youth, irrespective of whether it was the national definition (18-30 years) or the ILO definition (15-24 years) (Table 2). Among youth (18-30 years), the pay gap has remained smaller than that of adults (31-64 years) over the years. This may be attributed to entry-level wage compression, which narrows differences at the start of employment. For example, when the pay gap was 30.6% among the youth, it was more than twice that for the adults at 64.8% in 2012/13, almost tripling in 2019/20 (25% vs 65.7% respectively). Using the NLFS 2021, the gap was lower among adults at 25% compared to 33.3% among the youth. This is attributed to differences in data survey samples and the period during which the survey was conducted (COVID-19), as most young people who use digital platforms for business transactions could not work especially Facebook. The pay gap among adults (31-64 years) was highest in 2019/20 at 65.7% and narrowed to 25.0% in 2021 (Table 2). However, this decline is not necessarily a sign of improved wage equity but rather is likely attributed to the disproportionate employment losses experienced by women during the COVID-19 lockdown, during which employment fell by

69% compared to 45% for men. This drastic reduction in female employment reduced the observed pay gap, creating a non-existent gender gap as noted by Alfonsi et al. (2024). The insights here reveal that as women age and progress in their careers, they face cumulative hurdles, including those related to motherhood and caregiving, as well as limited promotions and biases, which widen the pay gap over time.

#### c. *Area of residence, regions, and GPG*

From Figure 3, since 2012/13 to 2023/24, employees in urban areas have higher median monthly earnings compared to those in the rural areas. Within resident areas, compared to their male counterparts, females in rural and urban areas also have lower median monthly earnings. However, across residences, female employees in urban areas earn more than male employees in rural areas. This insight is also depicted in the GPG within urban and rural area employees. The pay gap in rural areas was 40% in 2012/13 and highest in 2019/20 at 55.6% and lowered to 42.9% in 2023/24. Rural women are more likely to work in low-paying agricultural or informal jobs, which reinforces large pay gaps, with fewer opportunities for wage negotiation or career growth (Kasirye, 2011). The pay gap for urban employees was 37.5% in 2012/13, increased and remained at 50.0% in 2016/17 and 2019/20 and declined to 44.4% in 2023/24. The urban gap reflects different realities which could be related to the unequal returns to education and "sticky-floor" dynamics, where women remain clustered in low-paying roles despite rising skills (Nkoumou Ngoa and Lemven Wirba, 2021). Importantly, because the cost of living is significantly higher in urban areas especially in housing, transport, and childcare, the persistence of a wide pay gap has more severe consequences for urban women. It limits their ability to afford basic needs, save,

**Figure 3** GPG by area of residence (%), 2012/13 to 2023/24



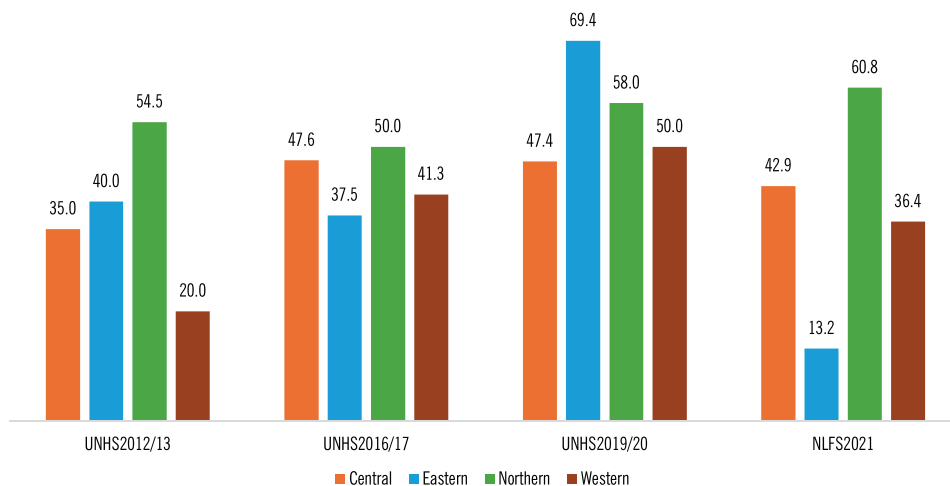
Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, 2019/20, 2023/24, and NLF 2021

or invest in economic advancement, thereby deepening financial insecurity even in areas with greater economic activity.

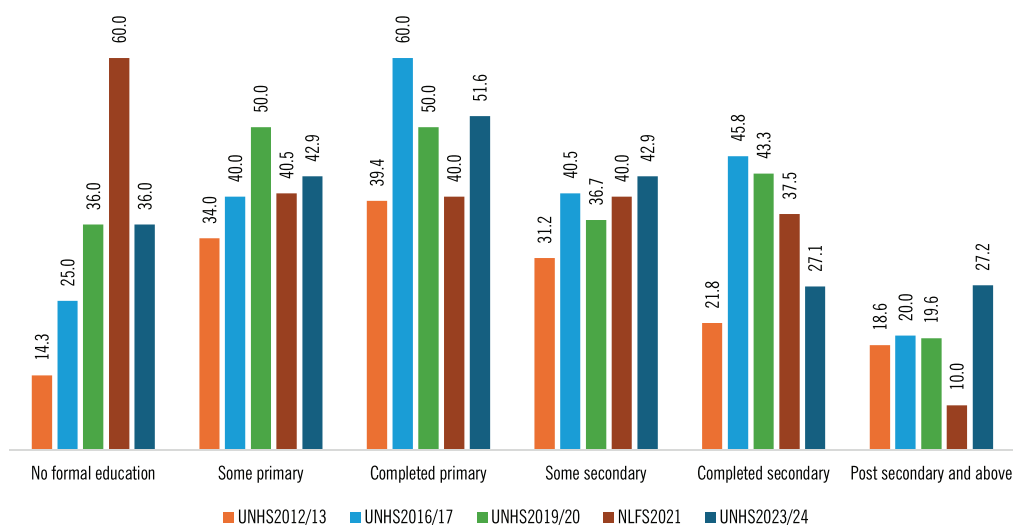
Heterogeneities arise with regional considerations. The northern region has the widest pay gaps, averaging 50%-61%, while the central region maintained a relatively stable gap, around 40%-47%, despite being the most economically active area (Figure 4). The northern region disadvantage is consistent with evidence of higher multidimensional deprivations and thinner formal-sector job opportunities, which constrain females in the region’s earnings more severely than in

other regions (UBOS, 2022). On the one hand, the GPG in the western region continually rose from 20% in 2012/13 to 50% in 2019/20 before easing slightly to 36% in 2021, suggesting women’s earnings over the years have failed to keep pace with men’s wage growth in this region. On the other hand, the eastern region experienced sharp fluctuations, with a spike to 69% in 2019/20 followed by a steep drop in 2021, likely driven by temporary labour market disruptions during COVID-19. Thereafter, economic activity resumed as lockdown restrictions eased, helping to narrow the post-2020 gap.

**Figure 4** GPG by region, (%) - 2012/13 to 2021



Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, 2019/20 and NLF, 2021

**Figure 5** GPG by level of education (%), 2012/13 to 2023/24

Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, 2019/20, 2023/24, and NLFS 2021

#### d. Educational attainment and the GPG

Findings on the pay gap by educational attainment reveal interesting insights. We observe that pay gap disparities varied by year of survey period and were highest among employees with primary education levels, including those with some primary and some secondary education. In 2023/24, the gap was 51.6% and 42.9% respectively (Figure 5). Although persistent, the lowest GPG is observed among employees with post-secondary and higher education levels (Figure 5). The GPG being lower among employees with no formal education compared to those with some primary, completed primary, and some secondary education during most survey periods, except NLFS 2021, indicates that most individuals without formal education hold similar-paying jobs, particularly in agriculture, where job differences are minimal. Therefore, educational attainment, while positively correlated with higher wages, does not eliminate the gender pay gap; however, it helps narrow it for those who complete the educational cycle. This pattern suggests that while education is crucial, it alone is insufficient to eradicate the gender pay gap, as deeper structural barriers continue to suppress women's wages relative to men (Ahaibwe, 2016). Structural barriers such as the unequal burden of unpaid care work, cultural and familial restrictions, and the relegation of women to lower value tasks within sectors, among others, continue to suppress women's pay relative to men (Torsu, 2024).

#### e. Occupation and the GPG

From Table 3, females primarily held positions in service and sales occupations. Furthermore, at least 41.8% of females worked in skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery occupations, as well as elementary occupations (Table 3). However, these are the same occupations with the highest GPGs, and this trend remains consistent across different survey periods (Table 4).

Specifically, managerial roles exhibited a rare instance of wage parity in 2019/20, following negative wage gaps in 2012/13 (-54%) and 2016/17 (-168%), during which women earned more than men (Table 4). Similar findings using the 2019/20 UNPS are reported by UN Women (2024), which found that the pay gap is smaller for managers (at 8.5%), although much larger for the other high-skill occupations (the professionals). This fluctuation may reflect changing dynamics in managerial roles, though it does not necessarily indicate sustained gender parity. However, the NLFS 2021 shows a re-emergence of a gender pay gap (12.5%) in these managerial roles. Furthermore, Table 4 shows that the gap remained strong in male-dominated occupations such as plant and machine operations (40% gap in 2019/20) and craft-related trades (44%). While NLFS 2021 shows a reversal for plant and machine operators (-28.6%), where women out-earned men, the gender gap persisted at 33.3% in craft and related trades, demonstrating the declining but ongoing inequality

**Table 3** Comparisons of the Gender Pay Gap by employment share and occupation using the NLFS 2021

| Occupations                                     | Unadjusted GPG (%) | NLFS2021                  |        | Females' share in employment by sector |
|---|--------------------|---------------------------|--------|--|
|   |                    | Employment Share in total |        |  |
|   |                    | Male                      | Female |  |
| Managers  | 12.5               | 1.1                       | 0.8    | 32.8                                   |
| Professionals                                   | 16.7               | 5.5                       | 4.7    | 37.5                                   |
| Technicians and Associate Professionals         | -10.0              | 3.0                       | 2.8    | 39.5                                   |
| Clerical Support Workers                        | 36.1               | 0.7                       | 0.6    | 35.3                                   |
| Service and sales workers                       | 46.7               | 19.1                      | 36.7   | 57.5                                   |
| Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish workers | 38.5               | 30.2                      | 30.8   | 41.8                                   |
| Craft and related trades workers                | 33.3               | 14.9                      | 8.4    | 28.4                                   |
| Plant and machine operators and assemblers      | -28.6              | 10.8                      | 0.4    | 2.8                                    |
| Elementary occupations                          | 33.3               | 13.8                      | 14.7   | 42.8                                   |
| Armed forces occupations                        |                    | 0.4                       | 0.1    | 9.8                                    |
| Not stated                                      |                    | 0.4                       | 0.1    | 19.8                                   |
| Total   | 40.0               | 100                       | 100    | 41.3                                   |

Source: Authors computations using NLFS, 2021

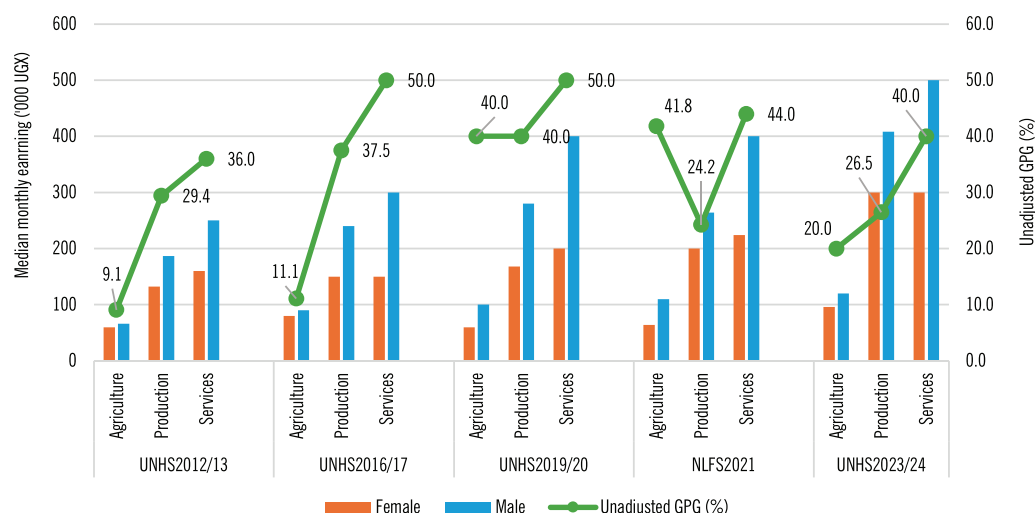
in these trades. Reversals for specific occupations in 2021 are plausibly linked to COVID-19 reallocation and selection effects. Particularly, employment losses and inter-sectoral mobility changed the composition of who remained in certain roles an effect widely documented for the pandemic period (ILO, 2022). Even in elementary occupations, the gap increased over time, with women earning 42% less than men in 2019/20, highlighting inequities even in low-skill work where women have high labour force participation rates (Table 4). This aligns with the “sticky-floor” evidence that within-occupation pay gaps persist even in feminised or low-wage jobs (Nkoumou Ngoa and Lemven Wirba, 2021; ILO, 2022; IWPR, 2024).

A few occupational categories, however, showed encouraging signs of progress. Among professionals, the wage gap steadily declined from 44% in 2012/13 to 26% in 2019/20, and further to 16.7% in 2021, suggesting improved access to higher-skilled, better-paying jobs for women. Similarly, Service and sales workers and craft and related trade workers experienced a reduction in the wage gap from 44% and 52% in 2016/17 to 26% and 40% in 2019/20, respectively. Clerical support workers showed fluctuating trends, with women briefly out-earning men in 2016/17 before the gap returned to 25% in 2019/20 and further increased to 36.1% in 2021. This is consistent with evidence of persistent occupational segregation in Uganda where women are

**Table 4** GPG by occupation type (%), 2012/13 - 2019/20

| Occupation type                                    | UNHS2012/13 | UNHS2016/17 | UNHS2019/20 | NLFS2021 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Managers   | -53.8       | -167.9      | 0.0         | 12.5     |
| Professionals                                      | 44.4        | 34.8        | 25.9        | 16.7     |
| Technicians and Associate Professionals            | 27.8        | 40.0        | 33.3        | -10.0    |
| Clerical Support Workers                           | 20.6        | -8.1        | 25.0        | 36.1     |
| Service and sales workers                          | 51.8        | 50.0        | 40.0        | 46.7     |
| Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers | 100.0       | 0.0         | 50.0        | 38.5     |
| Craft and related trades workers                   | 72.7        | 50.0        | 44.0        | 33.3     |
| Plant and machine operators and assemblers         | -70.0       | 44.0        | 40.0        | -28.6    |
| Elementary occupations                             | 17.5        | 36.4        | 41.7        | 33.3     |

Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, 2019/20 and NLFS, 2021

**Figure 6** GPG by sector of employment (%), UNHS 2012/13 to 2023/24


Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, 2019/20, 2023/24, and NLF2021

over-represented in lower-paid occupations and under-represented in higher-paid ones (UN Women, 2024).

#### f. Sector of employment and the GPG

At a broad level, employees in the services sector generally earn higher wages compared to those in the production and agriculture sectors (Figure 6). The services sector pays a monthly median average earning of UGX 420,000, compared to other sectors like agriculture, where an employee earns UGX 108,000. Within these sectors, gender biases are evident in median monthly earnings (Figure 6). The pay gap is more pronounced in the services sector regardless

of the survey year, with a gap of 36.0% in 2012/13, rising to 50% in 2016/17 and 2019/20, then narrowing to 44.0% in 2021 and currently at 40.0% in 2023/24. In agriculture, the gap increased sharply from 9.1% in 2012/13 to 11.1% in 2016/17, and 41.8% in 2021, but narrowed to 20.0% in 2023/24. Meanwhile, in production, the gap was highest in 2019/20 at 40.0% and is now 26.5% in 2023/24.

As highlighted in Table 5, the substantial gap in services partly reflects women's overrepresentation in lower-paid occupations, such as retail, often informal in nature, trade-related services (54.4%), hotels,

**Table 5** GPG breakdown by industry and employment participation

| Economic activity                  | Unadjusted GPG (%) | Share in total |        | Female's share in employment by sector |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------|--|
|                                    |                    | Male           | Female |  |
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing  | 40.0               | 37.6           | 37.8   | 41.5                                   |
| Mining and quarrying               | -40.0              | 0.6            | 0.6    | 41.1                                   |
| Manufacturing                      | 0.0                | 8.2            | 7.9    | 40.5                                   |
| Electricity generation             | 86.7               | 0.2            | 0.0    | 13.2                                   |
| Water generation                   | 90.0               | 0.0            | 0.1    | 57.9                                   |
| Construction                       | 42.9               | 7.8            | 0.1    | 1.0                                    |
| Trade                              | 35.7               | 17.2           | 29.2   | 54.4                                   |
| Transport and storage              | 58.3               | 10.1           | 0.1    | 0.8                                    |
| Hotels, restaurants, eating places | 40.0               | 1.5            | 7.6    | 78.5                                   |
| Information and communications     | 28.6               | 0.5            | 0.2    | 23.9                                   |

| NLFS2021   |                       |                |        |   |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|--------|---|
| Economic activity  | Unadjusted<br>GPG (%) | Share in total |        | Female's share in<br>employment by sector |
|  |                       | Male           | Female |   |
| Financial and Insurance activities                                   | 38.8                  | 0.4            | 0.2    | 28.6                                      |
| Real estate activities   | 50.0                  | 0.3            | 0.0    | 7.5                                       |
| Professional, scientific and technical activities and administrative | 18.8                  | 0.8            | 0.2    | 13.3                                      |
| Administrative and support activities                                | -45.2                 | 2.1            | 0.6    | 17.4                                      |
| Public administration  | 0.0                   | 3.1            | 0.8    | 16.2                                      |
| Education  | 34.8                  | 3.9            | 3.9    | 41.8                                      |
| Human health and social work activities                              | 25.0                  | 1.8            | 2.6    | 50.2                                      |
| Arts, entertainment and recreation                                   | -66.7                 | 0.2            | 0.1    | 20.7                                      |
| Other service activities   | 47.4                  | 2.6            | 3.4    | 47.7                                      |
| Activities of household employers                                    | 40.0                  | 1.0            | 4.4    | 76.2                                      |
| Activities of extraction   |                       | 0.1            | 0.0    | 28.1                                      |
| Not stated   |                       | 0.0            | 0.0    | 37.4                                      |
| Total  |                       | 100            | 100    | 41.3                                      |

Source: Authors computations using NLFS 2021

restaurants, and eating places (78.5%), participation in activities of household employers (76.2%), and, human health and social work activities (50.2%). They were less represented in higher-paid industrial sector activities such as construction, real estate activities, transport and storage, and professional, scientific, and technical activities among others.

Technological disparities, small plots or cultivation areas, unequal access to high-value crops and inputs, and barriers to extension services all contribute to persistently lower female agricultural earnings in Uganda (Ali et al., 2015). Overall, these ongoing disparities reflect structural barriers that limit women's participation in higher-value chains and industrial activities and entrenched gender norms that confine many women to lower-paying, less secure roles within each sector.

*g. Public/private sector and Informal/formal nature of employment and the GPG*

The GPG for public sector workers on average since 2012/13 to 2021 has been 7.3% much smaller than that of private sector workers (Table 6), which averaged at 45% over the same period. For example, the pay gap was as narrow as 2.2% among public sector workers in 2015/17 and in 2021 it was 4.6%. This is because, in Uganda's civil service, nationally issued salary scales (Circular Standing Instructions) standardise pay across grades and cadres, which compresses wage dispersion and, in turn, helps to keep gender gaps relatively small in government employment (Ministry of Public Service, 2024). Considering the nature of employment, workers who are employed formally depict similar trends as those in the public sector. Informal GPG was as high as 52.2% in 2016/17, and negative for those in formal employment in the same period at -3.4%, showing

**Table 6** GPG by type of employment (%), 2012/13 to 2021

| Variable                    | UNHS2012/13 | UNHS2016/17 | UNHS2019/20 | NLFS2021 |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| <b>Private/Public</b>       |             |             |             |          |
| Private                     | 42.6        | 50.0        | 50.0        | 37.5     |
| Public                      | 13.0        | 2.2         | 9.4         | 4.6      |
| <b>Nature of employment</b> |             |             |             |          |
| Formal employment           | 9.5         | -3.4        | 16.7        | 3.2      |
| Informal employment         | 46.7        | 52.2        | 50.0        | 29.6     |

Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, 2019/20 and NLFS, 2021

**Figure 7** GPG by disability status

Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2019/20, and NLFS 2021

that women in that year who were formerly employed earned more than men. Women are over-represented in the lowest-paid segments, where legal protections and enforcement are weakest. However, while Uganda's Employment Act (2006) enshrines equal remuneration for work of equal value, enforcement gaps, informality in employment limits its effectiveness, allowing sizeable unadjusted pay gaps to persist outside the standardised public pay system. In addition, unpaid care work constrains women's time and productivity, which further disadvantages them in the private and informal sectors where performance is closely tied to earnings.

#### h. *Disability and the GPG*

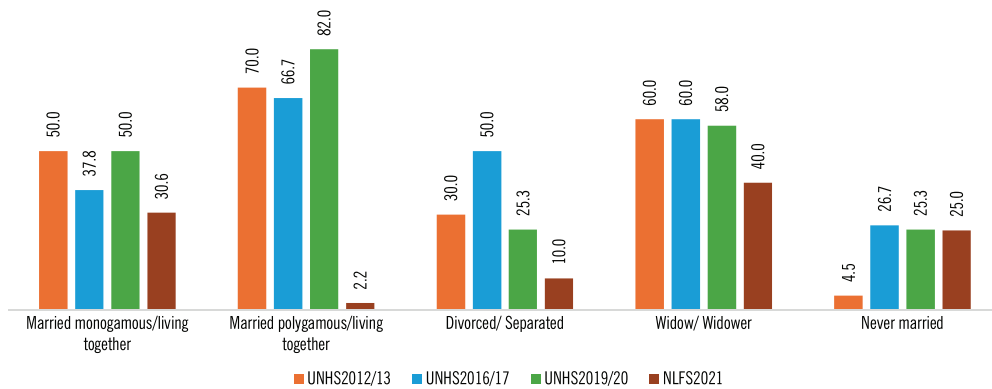
In 2019/20, the pay gap among the disabled workers was 45.5% while that for those without disabilities was 52%. In 2021, the gap widened among the disabled workers by 12.5 percentage points, while that for workers without disabilities narrowed by almost the same margin (Figure 7). Some of these disparities could be due to differences in survey design and focus. Nonetheless, the GPGs persist in all categories of workers irrespective of disability status. In addition, gender and disability related barriers compound the pay inequality, leaving women with disabilities at an even greater disadvantage (EPRC and UN Women, 2023). Female PWDs also receive significantly lower pay compared to the male PWDs, partly due to their lower educational achievements and fewer available opportunities for them (ibid). Furthermore, MoGLSD

(2020) affirms that women with disabilities face double or even triple discrimination due to intersecting stigma, leading to lower employment opportunities and lower/reduced wages.

#### i. *Marital status and the GPG*

The GPG varied by marital status across the survey years 2012/13, 2016/17, 2019/20, and 2021. While the pay gap is there irrespective of one's marital status, it is wide and on the rise among the married polygamously and the widows/widowers (Figure 8). For example, workers in polygamous unions consistently faced the widest gaps, at 70% in 2012/13, 66.7% in 2016/17, and 82% in 2019/20, although it dropped sharply to 2.2% in 2021. Widows experienced persistent gaps of around 40% - 60%, whereas the never-married workers had the narrowest gaps (4% - 26%), suggesting starting in work with fewer discriminatory barriers. These disparities likely reflect household power dynamics and caregiving burdens, as married women often shoulder greater domestic responsibilities that limit their time and opportunities to earn as much as men (EPRC and UN Women, 2025).

**Figure 8** GPG by marital status (%), 2012/13-2021



Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, 2019/20, and NLFS 2021

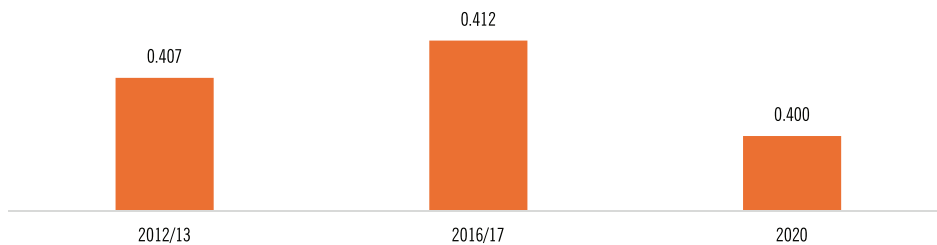
## 5.2 Gender pay gap through an intra-household lens

### 5.2.1 National level intra-household GPG

Analysis within households highlights persistent disparities in earnings between adult working men and women. Throughout the survey years 2012/13 to 2019/20, men consistently contributed approximately

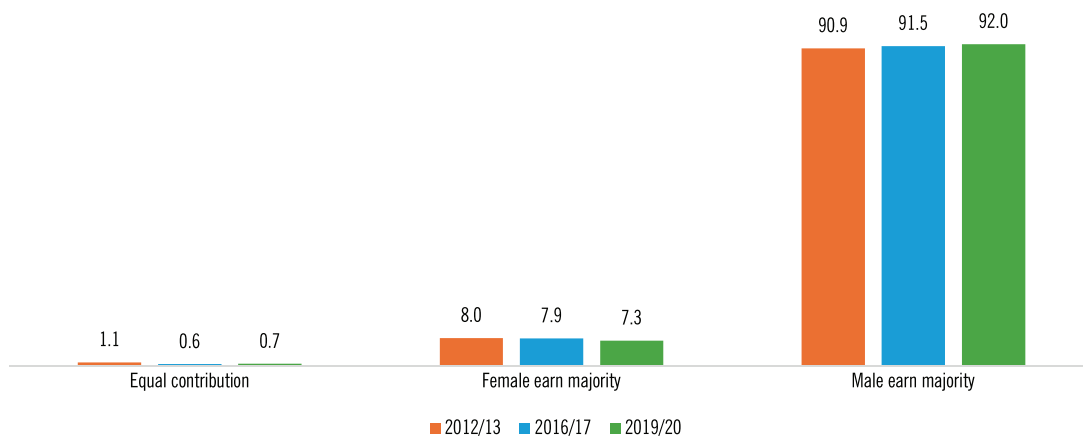
40 percentage points more to household income than women, with minimal progress over time (Figure 9). Households where men earn more increased slightly from 90.9% in 2012/13 to 92% in 2020, while those where women earn more decreased, and cases of equal contributions remained rare (below 1%) across all survey years (Figure 10).

**Figure 9** Intra-household national gender pay gap, 2012/13-2019/20



Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, and 2019/20

**Figure 10** Intra-household income distribution by sex: 2012/13-2019/20



Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, and 2019/20

Women are often limited to unpaid or low-paying informal work and carry the majority of care responsibilities, which reduces their ability to contribute equally to household earnings. In Uganda, for example, women predominantly work in the informal sector and typically earn lower wages, while men have greater access to stable, higher-paying opportunities, further reinforcing intra-household inequality (Wandera et al., 2021; Namuliira, 2024). Additionally, within households, men participate more in paid work than women, while women spend more hours on unpaid care and domestic tasks (Guloba et al., 2025; UN Women, 2024; Gammage et al., 2019).

### 5.2.2 Intra-household GPG by select characteristics

The selected characteristics for intra-household analysis include area or residence, region, marital status, occupations and sector of employment of household employed member. We discuss the results in tandem below.

#### *i) Region and area of residence*

From Table 7--Panel (a), eastern Uganda displayed the widest intra-household gaps, rising sharply between

2012/13 (0.346) and 2016/17 (0.511), before slightly improving to 0.450 in 2019/20. The central region, in contrast, shows relatively lower and stable gaps (0.398 in 2012/13 and 0.355 in 2019/20). Rural households also reported wider intra-household earning pay gaps than urban ones, with a rural gap of 0.474 compared to 0.336 in urban households in 2016/17 (Table 7--Panel (b)). This suggests that women in rural households face even greater barriers, including limited job opportunities, lower market prices for products, restricted access to education, and social norms that impede economic independence. Additionally, women's limited mobility, especially in rural areas, often forces them to sell produce at the farm gate, where prices are lower, further constraining their earnings and widening intra-household pay disparities.

#### *ii) Sector of work*

The sectoral breakdown indicates that production-related work exhibits the highest intra-household pay gaps, reaching 0.782 in 2016/17, before slightly decreasing to 0.659 in 2019/20, reflecting ongoing inequality in male-dominated industries (Table 7--Panel (c)). The intra-household pay gap in the services sector rose from 0.355 in 2016/17 to 0.467 in

**Table 7** Intra-household gender pay gap by select characteristics, 2012/13 to 2019/20

| Variable                            | 2012/13 | 2016/17 | 2019/20 |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Panel (a): Region</b>            |         |         |         |
| Central                             | 0.398   | 0.357   | 0.355   |
| Eastern                             | 0.346   | 0.511   | 0.450   |
| Northern                            | 0.398   | 0.391   | 0.404   |
| Western                             | 0.483   | 0.444   | 0.422   |
| <b>Panel (b): Area of residence</b> |         |         |         |
| Rural                               | 0.446   | 0.474   | 0.447   |
| Urban                               | 0.352   | 0.336   | 0.334   |
| <b>Panel (c): Sector</b>            |         |         |         |
| Agriculture, forestry and fisheries | 0.332   | 0.395   | 0.299   |
| Production                          | 0.696   | 0.782   | 0.659   |
| Services                            | 0.398   | 0.355   | 0.467   |
| <b>Panel (d): Marital status</b>    |         |         |         |
| Married monogamously                | 0.557   | 0.580   | 0.560   |
| Married polygamous                  | 0.261   | 0.366   | 0.318   |
| Divorced/Separated                  | 0.085   | -0.117  | -0.031  |
| Widow/ Widower                      | 0.018   | -0.096  | -0.122  |
| Never married                       | 0.383   | 0.370   | 0.417   |

Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, and 2019/20

2019/20. This may also be due to women within these households primarily working in informal services, such as street vending or home-based work, which are marked by insecurity and low wages (Wandera et al., 2021).

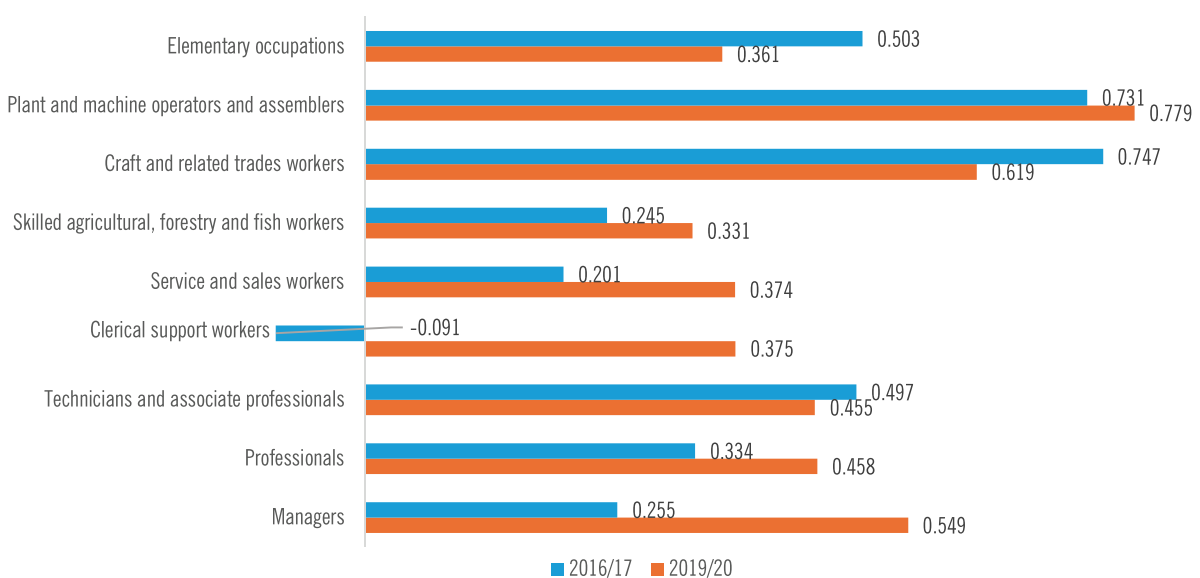
*iii) Marital status*

Married households, particularly monogamous ones, exhibited the largest gaps, reflecting traditional gender roles where men are regarded as the primary breadwinners. The divorced, separated, and widowed appear to fare better, with negative or near-zero pay gaps (-0.031 and -0.122 respectively in 2019/20 (Table 7--Panel (d)). This likely indicates the necessity of economic independence after separation or bereavement. Divorced or widowed women often became the main earners out of necessity, rather than due to improved access to opportunities, highlighting women’s economic vulnerability within families. Consequently, their relative contribution to household income rises when they become the primary earners. Interestingly, the gap among never-married individuals has increased slightly, from 0.383 in 2012/13 to 0.417 in 2019/20, suggesting that being unmarried does not shield women from gendered disadvantages, as they continue to face obstacles in accessing high-paying or secure employment.

*iv) Occupations*

Figure 11 displays the household-level gender pay gap across various occupational categories in Uganda for the years 2016/17 and 2019/20, showing considerable variation by type of work and changes over time. In some cases, wage inequalities between men and women within households have worsened. The largest gaps in 2019/20 are found in traditionally male-dominated occupations. For example, in plant and machine operation, the household pay gap increased from 0.731 in 2016/17 to 0.779 in 2019/20, indicating that men in these roles continue to earn significantly more than women in the same households. A similar trend is evident in craft and related trades, where the gap widened from 0.619 to 0.747, and in elementary occupations, where it rose from 0.361 to 0.503. Interestingly, the clerical support category shows a reversal from a negative gap of -0.091 in 2016/17, indicating women earned marginally more, to a male-dominated gap of 0.375 in 2019/20. This change could reflect declining female access to clerical jobs. For higher-skilled roles, the professional category saw an increase in the gap from 0.334 to 0.458. In contrast, technicians and associate professionals experienced a slight decrease from 0.497 to 0.455, implying that although women are entering these roles, wage disparities still persist. Notably, the managers category

**Figure 11** Household-level pay gap by occupational categories



Source: Authors’ computation using the UNHS 2016/17 and 2019/20

experienced one of the most significant increases, rising from 0.255 in 2016/17 to 0.549 in 2019/20. These widening gaps suggest that men in households still dominate the higher-paying roles within these occupations.

### 5.3 Decomposition of the “adjusted” gender pay gap

#### 5.3.1 Overall adjusted gender pay gap

The Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition of the “adjusted” gender pay gap is shown in Table 8 for three rounds of UNHS cross-sectional surveys. The results indicate that even after controlling for observable factors such as education, occupation, and region, women’s wages consistently remain lower than men’s, with a total pay gap of about 52.7% in 2012/13, 40.3% in 2016/17, and 53.5% in 2019/20, all statistically significant at the 1 percent level. This suggests that, on average, women earn roughly half of what men earn, and this trend has persisted over time. These findings are consistent with UN Women (2024), which reports the “adjusted” gender pay gap in Uganda as 32.2% based on the Uganda Household Panel Survey of 2019/20.

The portion of the gap, although also explained by measurable factors such as differences in education levels and the sectors where men and women work is more due to unexplained characteristics, and these are also statistically significant at the 1 per cent level. This suggests that factors other than observable personal and labour market characteristics (explained variables) affect the GPG in Uganda. This pattern aligns with Nkougou and Lemven (2021), who reveal that returns to endowment effects (the unexplained component) contribute more to gender pay differentials in Uganda.

Specifically, the explained component of the GPG in 2016/17 was negative (-0.123), suggesting that, based on observable characteristics (explained characteristics) such as education and sector of employment, women should have earned slightly more than men. These findings, therefore, highlight that while improving women’s qualifications helps, it will not on its own eliminate the pay gap without tackling deep-rooted biases and structural barriers in Uganda’s labour market. This is consistent with evidence from UN Women (2024) and Nkougou & Lemven (2021), which shows that gains in women’s education and participation in the workforce alone are not enough to close the pay gap.

**Table 8** Oaxaca–Blinder decomposition of the “adjusted” gender pay gap in Uganda. 2012/13- 2019/20

|                                     | 2012/13<br>(1)               | 2016/17<br>(2)               | 2019/20<br>(3)               |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Variables                           | Log of mean monthly earnings | Log of mean monthly earnings | Log of mean monthly earnings |
| Female                              | 11.556***<br>(0.038)         | 11.831***<br>(0.032)         | 11.796***<br>(0.041)         |
| Male                                | 12.083***<br>(0.033)         | 12.234***<br>(0.022)         | 12.330***<br>(0.024)         |
| “Adjusted” Difference (raw pay gap) | 0.527***<br>(0.050)          | 0.403***<br>(0.039)          | 0.535***<br>(0.048)          |
| Explained variables                 | 0.173***<br>(0.025)          | -0.123***<br>(0.021)         | 0.073***<br>(0.018)          |
| Unexplained variables               | 0.354***<br>(0.053)          | 0.526***<br>(0.043)          | 0.462***<br>(0.048)          |
| Observations                        | 1,933                        | 3,783                        | 3,326                        |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Source: Authors computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, and 2019/20

## 5.3.2 Drivers of the adjusted gender pay gap

The key factors influencing Uganda's adjusted GPG are shown in Table 9, illustrating how these factors particularly affect the explained and unexplained aspects of the workers. Regarding age, women aged

31-64 contributed between 0.04 and 0.05 log points to the explained component, indicating that their higher presence in lower-paying roles compared to men of the same age somewhat increases the pay gap. For instance, in 2019/20, this age group contributed

**Table 9** GPG\_ Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition drivers

| Variable   | 2012/13              |                    | 2016/17              |                     | 2019/20              |                     |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
|  | (1)<br>explained     | (2)<br>unexplained | (3)<br>explained     | (4)<br>unexplained  | (5)<br>explained     | (6)<br>unexplained  |
| <i>Age group (Base: 18-30 years)</i>               |                      |                    |                      |                     |                      |                     |
| 31-64 years  | 0.037***<br>(0.006)  | 0.064<br>(0.041)   | 0.047***<br>(0.004)  | 0.016<br>(0.034)    | 0.046***<br>(0.005)  | -0.035<br>(0.046)   |
| 65+ years  | 0.000<br>(0.001)     | 0.001<br>(0.006)   | 0.000<br>(0.000)     | -0.008**<br>(0.003) | -0.004<br>(0.003)    | 0.013<br>(0.020)    |
| Maximum female education                           | -0.019*<br>(0.010)   | 0.048<br>(0.120)   | -0.071***<br>(0.015) | 0.064<br>(0.110)    | -0.045***<br>(0.009) | -0.233*<br>(0.137)  |
| Maximum male education                             | 0.012***<br>(0.004)  | -0.053<br>(0.130)  | -0.018***<br>(0.006) | 0.108<br>(0.118)    | -0.002***<br>(0.000) | 0.450***<br>(0.111) |
| <i>Sector of employment (Base: Agriculture)</i>    |                      |                    |                      |                     |                      |                     |
| Production   | 0.069***<br>(0.016)  | 0.022<br>(0.016)   | 0.093***<br>(0.012)  | 0.041***<br>(0.010) | 0.087***<br>(0.012)  | 0.005<br>(0.010)    |
| Services   | -0.010*<br>(0.006)   | 0.116<br>(0.110)   | -0.038**<br>(0.016)  | 0.484***<br>(0.101) | -0.017**<br>(0.007)  | 0.280***<br>(0.093) |
| <i>Occupations (Base: Managers)</i>                |                      |                    |                      |                     |                      |                     |
| Professionals                                      | 0.015***<br>(0.001)  | -0.004<br>(0.004)  | 0.008<br>(0.016)     | 0.345***<br>(0.123) | 0.002<br>(0.009)     | 0.244***<br>(0.092) |
| Technicians and Associate Professionals            | -0.040***<br>(0.005) | -0.013<br>(0.029)  | -0.000<br>(0.000)    | 0.056**<br>(0.024)  | -0.001**<br>(0.001)  | 0.035**<br>(0.018)  |
| Clerical Support Workers                           | 0.004***<br>(0.001)  | 0.002<br>(0.010)   | 0.002<br>(0.005)     | 0.044**<br>(0.018)  | 0.000<br>(0.002)     | 0.017**<br>(0.008)  |
| Service and sales workers                          | -0.005***<br>(0.002) | -0.002<br>(0.007)  | 0.062***<br>(0.012)  | 0.309***<br>(0.105) | 0.017***<br>(0.003)  | 0.174***<br>(0.053) |
| Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers | -0.021***<br>(0.006) | 0.008<br>(0.032)   | -0.010***<br>(0.003) | 0.012***<br>(0.003) | -0.018***<br>(0.002) | 0.072***<br>(0.017) |
| Craft and related trades workers                   | 0.015***<br>(0.004)  | 0.004**<br>(0.002) | -0.091***<br>(0.017) | 0.067***<br>(0.019) | -0.044***<br>(0.009) | 0.033***<br>(0.008) |
| Plant and machine operators and assemblers         | 0.051***<br>(0.014)  | 0.004<br>(0.005)   | -0.051***<br>(0.016) | 0.036***<br>(0.013) | -0.036***<br>(0.012) | 0.017***<br>(0.005) |
| Elementary occupations                             | 0.090***<br>(0.018)  | -0.004<br>(0.005)  | 0.013***<br>(0.002)  | 0.855***<br>(0.218) | 0.126***<br>(0.014)  | 0.773***<br>(0.217) |
| <i>Region (Base: Central)</i>                      |                      |                    |                      |                     |                      |                     |
| Eastern  | 0.007***<br>(0.003)  | 0.080**<br>(0.040) | -0.021***<br>(0.004) | -0.003<br>(0.016)   | -0.016***<br>(0.002) | -0.017<br>(0.026)   |
| Northern   | -0.004***<br>(0.001) | 0.033<br>(0.022)   | -0.006***<br>(0.001) | -0.012<br>(0.012)   | -0.012***<br>(0.002) | -0.028<br>(0.023)   |

| Variable                               | 2012/13              |                    | 2016/17              |                      | 2019/20              |                      |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|  | (1)<br>explained     | (2)<br>unexplained | (3)<br>explained     | (4)<br>unexplained   | (5)<br>explained     | (6)<br>unexplained   |
| Western                                | -0.012***<br>(0.004) | -0.005<br>(0.033)  | -0.011***<br>(0.002) | -0.018<br>(0.025)    | -0.001***<br>(0.000) | -0.043<br>(0.031)    |
| <i>Area of residence (Base: Rural)</i> |                      |                    |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| Urban                                  | -0.015***<br>(0.004) | 0.044<br>(0.059)   | -0.031***<br>(0.006) | -0.021<br>(0.043)    | -0.009***<br>(0.003) | -0.028<br>(0.041)    |
| Constant                               |                      | -0.013<br>(0.176)  |                      | -1.849***<br>(0.548) |                      | -1.267***<br>(0.487) |
| Observations                           | 1,933                | 1,933              | 3,783                | 3,783                | 3,326                | 3,326                |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Source: Authors' computations using UNHS 2012/13, 2016/17, and 2019/20.

around 0.046 log points to the explained wage gap. This is because more men than women in the 31–64 age bracket earn higher wages, while women of the same age are often employed in lower-paying roles. This trend aligns with evidence that career interruptions, such as caregiving duties, impede women's earnings trajectories, especially during their prime working years (Blau and Kahn, 2016; Delecourt and Fitzpatrick, 2019).

Women's educational attainment increasingly contributes to narrowing the pay gap (–0.019 in 2012/13 and –0.045 in 2019/20). In 2019/20, the earnings advantage associated with women's education slightly reduced the gap (–0.233), but men's education also widened the pay gap by 0.450 log points, adding to the unexplained gap. Uganda's education reform boosted women's empowerment but did not increase their earnings, demonstrating that equal qualifications do not ensure equal pay (Bui, 2023; Ahaiabwe, 2016). This indicates that education alone cannot close the gender pay gap, as deeper issues like possible unequal pay practices and the impact of reproductive roles, as well as discrimination that delays promotions. This prevents women from being competitive, as they miss out on many things during the maternity period.

Regarding the sector, for example, in 2016/17, men's concentration in production contributed +0.093 log points to the wage gap. Women, however, are more concentrated in services (51.5% female versus 44.2% male), but this has not worked in their favour (UBOS 2025). In 2016/17, women's strong presence in

services should have helped narrow the gap (explained component –0.038), but instead, the unexplained effect was very large (+0.484 log points). This indicates that even when women and men work in the same service roles, men are still paid significantly more. The same trend continued in 2019/20, with an unexplained gap of +0.280. According to the UNHS report 2023/24, men are more likely (15.5% male versus 8.7% female) to be employed in production jobs, which generally offer higher wages, partly explaining the gap. Furthermore, although women are well represented in both the service and production sectors, they are often concentrated in lower-paying positions within these sectors, while men tend to occupy the better-paid roles.

Among occupations, in 2019/20, for example, women's overrepresentation in elementary jobs, compared to managerial positions, added +0.126 log points to the explained pay gap. The unexplained pay in elementary occupations was 0.773 log points in 2019/20, indicating that women in these roles earn considerably less than men doing similar work. This pattern also appears in skilled roles, such as service and sales (0.174 log points unexplained) and professional jobs (0.244 log points unexplained). While this pattern may partly stem from gender bias in pay structures and promotion opportunities, other plausible contributors include lower observable productivity linked to women's dual burden of paid and unpaid care work, as well as reduced availability for overtime or training, among others. Therefore, compared to managers, women's concentration in lower-status jobs widens the wage

gap, and the lower pay they receive in both low- and high-skilled roles further deepens it, leading to a double disadvantage. The Institute for Women's Policy Research (2024) confirms this globally, stating that even within the same job categories, women earn less.

Across regions, the central region (as the benchmark with the highest earnings), in 2016/17, women working in the eastern part of the country, compared to those in central, this reduced the gap by -0.021 log points, while in women located in the north, this contributed to a gap of -0.006. The unexplained part, which indicates whether men and women in the same region are treated differently in terms of pay, was also very small and inconsistent across years. This means that discrimination or unequal pay is not strongly tied to where women live and work. Simply put, the region a woman lives in does not make a big difference to the gender pay gap in Uganda. The bigger problem is the type of jobs women do (explained part) and how those jobs are valued compared to men's, as shown earlier.

Regarding areas of residence, results indicate that living in urban areas helped reduce the pay gap. For example, in 2016/17, residing in urban areas decreased the explained gap by -0.031 log points, and in 2019/20 by -0.009. This is because urban areas are known to provide better opportunities, and urban jobs generally pay more than rural ones. In simple terms, being in an urban setting gives women a slight advantage, but it does not eliminate the pay gap. Even in urban areas, women still earn less than men in similar roles.

labour force participation, and policy efforts towards women's economic empowerment. The findings provide clear evidence that Uganda's labour market continues to reward women and men unequally, affecting household welfare, national productivity, and inclusive growth.

Specifically, findings for the "unadjusted" gender pay gaps at the national level show an overall rising trend over the years from 42.9% in 2012/13, increasing to 50.0% in 2016/17, peaking at 52.0% in 2019/20, before slightly narrowing to 46.5% in 2023/24. These results show that the gap has remained high over time, despite overall labour market and demographic changes. The limited progress also indicates that gender pay parity remains a distant goal without targeted and sustained policy measures. The largest gaps are among the 31–64-year age group, which was as high as 65.7% in 2019/20. Geographically, workers in rural areas and those in the north and west face more severe pay gap inequalities. The services sector had the highest pay gaps among workers at 50% in 2019/20, before decreasing to 40% in 2023/24. In the services sector, jobs where women had a larger share of employment also showed high GPGs, such as activities of human health and social work, activities of household employers, hotels, restaurants, and eating places, and trade, especially retail trade. Pay gaps were also wide for workers in polygamous marriages and widows, while those with disabilities still show pay disparities that fluctuate. These findings also illustrate that caregiving roles and marital expectations all influence how women earn.

Findings using the intra-household gender pay gap methods show that men earned more than women in over 90% of dual-earner households. Women earned more than men in only 3% to 5% of such households. The national intra-household gap was 0.400 in 2019/20, aligning with the unadjusted pay gap in the same year. The widest intra-household pay gap was observed in the eastern region, showing an overall rising trend from 0.346 in 2012/13 to 0.511 in 2016/17, before narrowing slightly to 0.450 in 2019/20. The central region had the lowest gaps, reflecting greater access to formal employment opportunities for women in and around Kampala. Rural household earners consistently

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Conclusions

This study examines the extent and causes of the gender pay gap in Uganda using four rounds of nationally representative data from the Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS), covering 2012/13 to 2023/24. It highlights how gender inequalities in earnings persist despite improvements in education,

displayed wider gaps than urban ones, indicating deeper constraints in access to decent work in rural settings and lower prices for products at the farm gate.

Findings for the adjusted pay gap using the Oaxaca–Blinder decompositions show that in 2019/20, the adjusted GPG was 53.5%, similar to the unadjusted pay gap, which was 52% in the same year. Generally, both the explained (observable) and unexplained (unobservable) characteristics significantly contributed to the gap, at 7.3% and 46.2% respectively. However, the larger magnitude of the gap was due to unexplained factors such as discrimination, unequal returns to education and experience, and gender norms that devalue women’s work. The most consistent contributors to the explained gap were occupational segregation and the highest levels of female and male education. Yet despite these gains, the unexplained component related to education remained substantial, indicating that even when women had the qualifications or higher, they did not benefit equally from similar or advanced education credentials. This also suggests that education alone cannot close the GPG, as deeper issues like social norms, the impact of reproductive roles, and discrimination that delay promotions still exist in workplaces; therefore, the GPG in Uganda is not just about unequal pay but also about unequal opportunities, undervalued labour, and persistent social and institutional barriers.

## 6.2. Policy recommendations

- i) **Skilling programmes should be continuous for women and girls.** Leverage education opportunities and programmes that continuously encourage the girl child to complete and attain some form of certification for professional development. While education alone will not eliminate the GPG, it somewhat narrows it faster than any other intervention. Additionally, tertiary institutions should implement special support career services for female students to help link them to better-paying jobs in both public and private sectors.
  - a. MoGLSD and the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) should promote women’s gender-responsive training and placement. For example, public and private-sector training initiatives such as Uganda Skills development Project, Skills Development Facility, and Technical Vocational Education and Training reforms should establish gender placement benchmarks in traditionally male-dominated fields like ICT, energy, and transport. Job placement programmes and mentorship support from private entities and industry associations should accompany this.
- ii) **Expand affordable care infrastructure to ease the unpaid work burden on women in the workforce.** While expanding care infrastructure alone might not resolve the issue, this should be done alongside other measures to encourage women to utilise these services. Care responsibilities, especially among women aged 31–64 and those in polygamous or monogamous marriages, significantly limit women’s ability to earn or engage in higher-paying jobs. The Ministry of Local Government, working with MGLSD and MoFPED, should prioritise investments in community-based childcare and eldercare services, particularly in urban low-income settlements and market centres or trading hubs. Local governments should include care provision in parish-level development plans, while MoFPED allocates targeted funds to support these services. Additionally, workplace childcare facilities should be considered, as they would directly support working mothers by reducing absenteeism and improving retention. This approach would address time poverty directly and increase women’s participation in more stable and better-paid employment.
- iii) **Encouraging and increasing the formalisation of workspaces should be achieved without relying on the stick and carrot approach, as this is linked to narrowing GPGs, especially in the services sector.** The government should assist more businesses in becoming formal without making the process difficult or intimidating. For example, the MGLSD can collaborate with women’s groups and informal workers to educate them about their rights, support them in registering their businesses,

and help them join workers' unions. At the same time, the MoFPED and Uganda Revenue Authority should streamline the registration process for small businesses by reducing taxes and paperwork, making it more affordable. They can also provide simple methods for joining social security schemes like NSSF, so women are protected when they fall ill or retire. Labour officers should visit workplaces regularly, not to punish workers, but to advise them on compliance and improve working conditions. These efforts can focus on market vendors, domestic workers, and other trades and services where many women work but remain outside legal protections.

- iv) **Support women's career advancement in formal employment by establishing mentorship and promotion schemes.** The Ministry of Public Service should guarantee that every government Ministry, Department, and Agency has a clear mentorship and leadership programme aimed at women. Senior female professionals can mentor junior staff, assisting them in overcoming workplace challenges and preparing for leadership positions. The MGLSD can collaborate with private companies and professional associations to encourage similar programmes in the private sector. Employers should also be urged to offer flexible working hours and return-to-work schemes after maternity leave, ensuring women do not miss out on promotions or training opportunities. Finally, workplaces should regularly review their promotion and pay policies to identify gender bias and promote fairness.

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