

ENHANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND OPPORTUNITY INFOGRAPHIC

INTRODUCTION

Women's economic participation and opportunity is one of the four areas within the Gender Gap Index that measures the levels of inequality between men and women. Women's economic participation and opportunity gap remains the headline gender disparity as it is expected to be the second-slowest gap with **41.9%** which remains to be closed. This is way above the average gender gap that stands at **32%**. The current gap is evident that more needs to be done to enhance women's economic participation and opportunity.



Dimensions of Women's Economic Participation and Opportunity

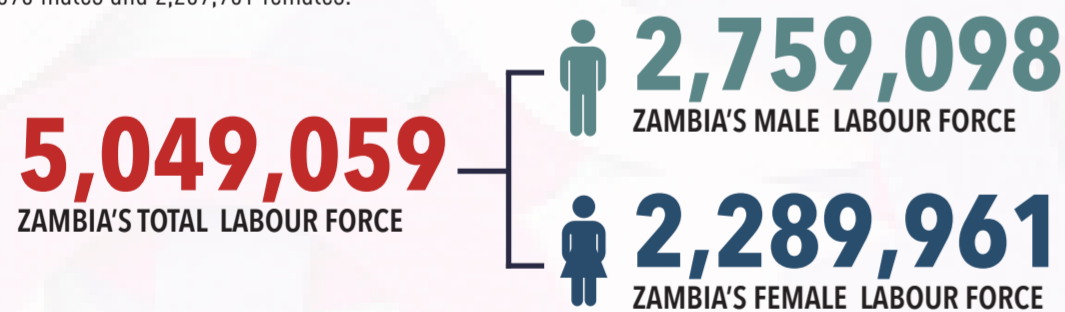
Women's economic participation and opportunity contains three dimensions:

- **The Participation Gap** which is captured using the difference between women and men in labour force participation rates.
- **The Remuneration Gap** which is captured through a hard data indicator (ratio of estimated female-to-male earned income) and a qualitative indicator gathered through the World Economic Forum's Annual Executive Opinion Survey (wage equality for similar work).
- **The Advancement Gap** which is captured through two hard data statistics; the ratio of women to men among legislators, senior officials and managers, and the ratio of women to men among technical and professional workers.

The Status of Women's Economic Participation and Opportunity in Zambia

Zambia has made notable strides in enhancing women economic participation and opportunity, this is evident from the increased number of women in key decision making positions in both the private and the public sector as well as women's participation in economic activities.

- The Participation Gap is measured by the Labour Force Participation Rate. The Labour Force Participation Rate or Activity Rate, measures the proportion of the economically active population in the total working-age population.
- The 2017 Labour Force Survey (LFS) stated that the country's labour force stood at an estimated 5,049,059 persons with 2,759,098 males and 2,289,961 females.



- The overall Labour Force Participation Rate was 37.5%. **The Labour Force Participation Rate for males was higher than that of females at 47.3% and 28.6%, respectively**, which is an indication of low rates of women who are economically active.



47.3%
Males

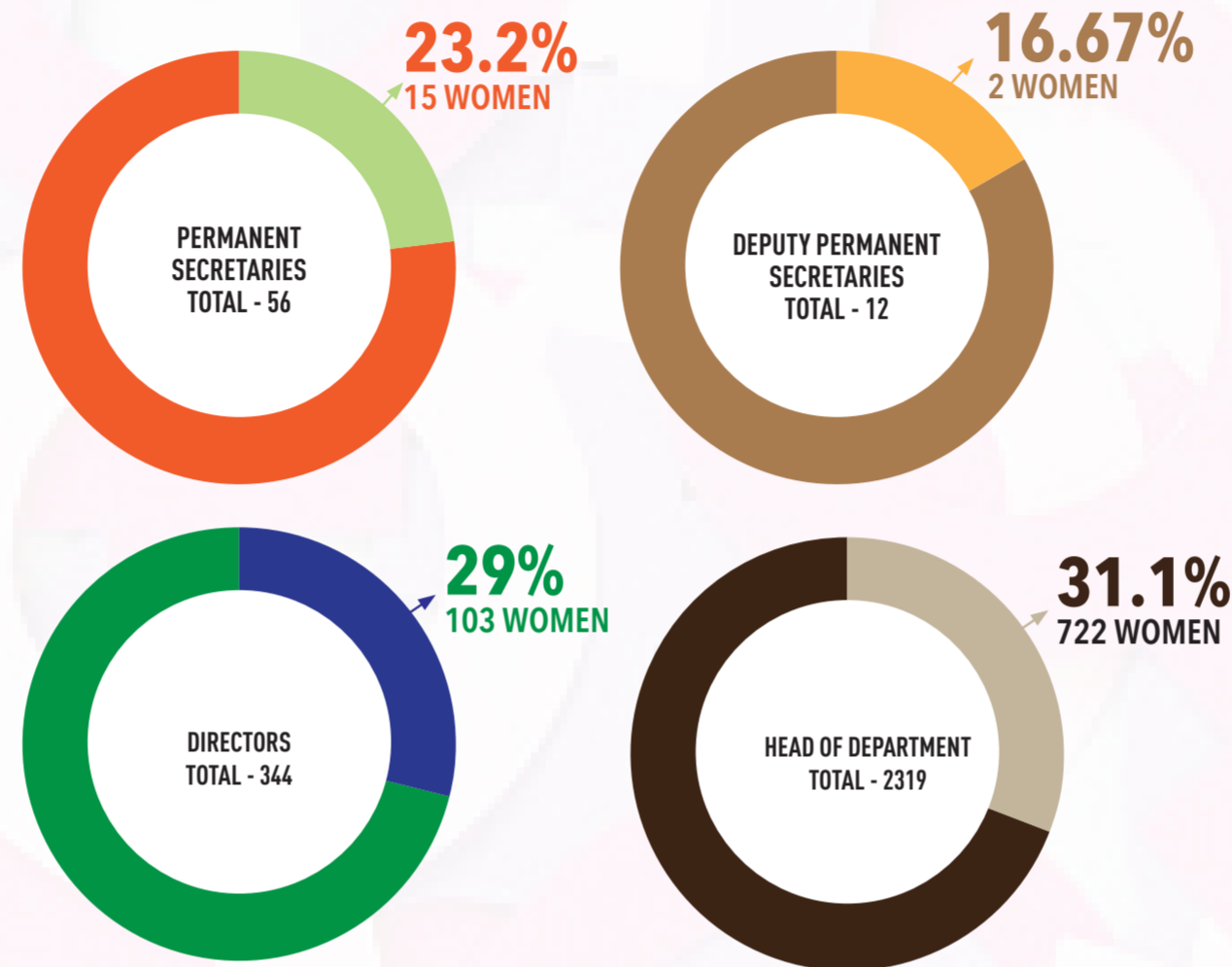
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE



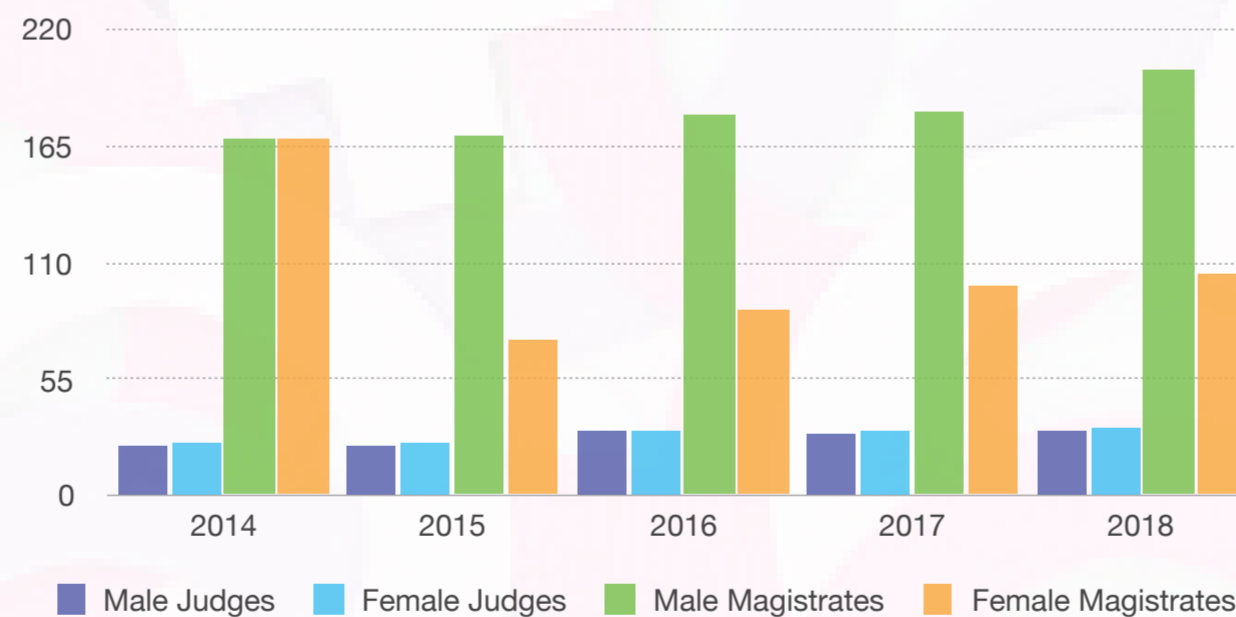
28.6%
Females

- With regards to the **Remuneration Gap**, **Zambian Labour Laws state that no person shall be discriminated against on basis of race, gender, colour or religion**. But this law has been flouted, mostly due to lack of stringent implementation measures.
- With regards to the **Advancement Gap**, **the 2018 statistics show that women hold less than 50% of the public sector management positions** which include Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Permanent Secretaries, Directors and Heads of Departments.

Women in Management Positions in the Public Sector 2018



Women in the Judiciary 2014-2018



Barriers to Women's Economic Participation

Globally, women continue to face significant cultural, institutional and structural barriers to meaningful economic participation which include:

- 1. Lack of child care**
- 2. Low investment in women's education and health**

Absence of good child care options and decent maternity leave. In the absence of affordable childcare facilities, working women have no option but to alter the amount and type of market work they engage in so that they can be able to balance it with household responsibilities.

Not having a school within easy reach of home is an important barrier to girls' enrolment. A significant barrier to better health for women is the lack of access family planning services, to help plan for the number and timing of pregnancies. The various aspects related to maternity impose a substantial burden on women's time.

3. Lack of access to credit

Lack of access to credit both formal and informal is another major barrier, often restricting women's ability to smoothen consumption over time and undertake productive activities. In developing economies women are 20% less likely than men to have an account at a formal financial institution and 17% less likely to have borrowed formally in the past year.

4. Legal and regulatory barriers

Legal and regulatory barriers prevent women in some countries from fully participating in formal labour markets. The World Bank's 2016 report on Women, Business and the Law offers a stark picture of the ways in which laws and policies continue to undermine women's economic productivity.

5. Societal perceptions

In almost all societies, women are perceived as primary caretakers/ homemakers, while men take on the role of providers.

6. Career and family planning

The age at which many women begin to think about starting a family coincides with one of the most productive periods of one's career.

Strategies of Enhancing Women's Economic Participation and Opportunity

- 1. Education** - Development of strategies for expanding girls' enrolment which include reserving places for girls, establishing single-sex schools or classrooms, recruiting more female teachers and designing school facilities to conform to the cultural standards of the community.
- 2. Health** - It has been observed that community-based health services have been cost effective in improving women's health. Also research has shown that integrated services which combine nutrition, family planning, maternal and child health services and primary healthcare tend to be the most effective in reaching women.
- 3. Wage labour** - The principal strategies for increasing women's participation in the labour force include; providing affordable childcare, removing legal and regulatory barriers, raising women's productivity through learning and development and increasing women's access to inputs of production such as land.
- 4. Agriculture** - Given that most poor rural women work in agriculture, the main strategy is to help women obtain title to land and to open the door to services as well as Government assistance.
- 5. Financial Services** - Innovative programs have demonstrated that financial services, mainly credit and savings, provided to poor women at competitive cost group lending has broken down the barriers of high transaction costs, high perceived risks of default and lack of collateral.

Recommendations

As a way of improving women's economic participation and opportunity in Zambia, PMRC recommends the following:

1. There is need for increased access to education, skills and training for all women and increasing financial support towards women's education. This will ensure that women have access to information that will make them compete fairly with men in terms of advancements in their careers.
2. PMRC urges Government and the private sector to create a conducive environment and encourage good child care options which should be made affordable so as to lessen the child care burden that women and girls face.
3. There is need for a needs assessment to be carried out within the public sector to identify challenges that women face, with regards to holding senior government positions. The results of this assessment can be used to inform policy direction aimed at addressing the advancement gap that women face within the public sector.
4. PMRC urges employers to provide decent maternity leave and flexible working hours for nursing mothers in line with the conditions stated within the new Employment Code Act No. 3 of 2019.
5. PMRC urges the public to eliminate societal perceptions and patriarchal norms that hinder the advancement of women in their careers.

