Decent Work

International Labour Organization

SRI LANKA

EMPLOYMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY FACT SHEETS 2017

The Employment and Environmental Sustainability Fact Sheets series provides key features of employment and environmental sustainability performance. Jobs that are green and decent are central to sustainable development and resource productivity. They respond to the global challenges of environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion. Such jobs create decent employment opportunities, enhance resource efficiency and build low-carbon, sustainable societies. The fact sheets include the most recent available data for selected indicators[1] on employment and environmental sustainability: (i) employment in environmental sectors; (ii) skill levels; (iii) vulnerability of jobs; (iv) jobs in renewable energy; and (v) scoring on the Environmental Performance Index.

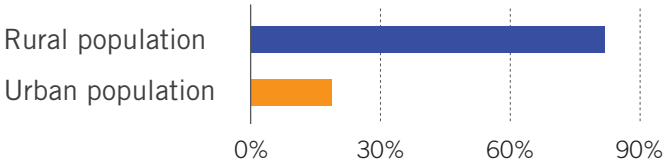
Figure 1. Map of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka[2] is an island nation in South Asia (Fig. 1). Its population is mostly rural and growing, with a fertility rate of 2.1 children and life expectancy at 68.1 years. Around 66 per cent of the population is of legal working age (15–64 years) (Fig. 2).

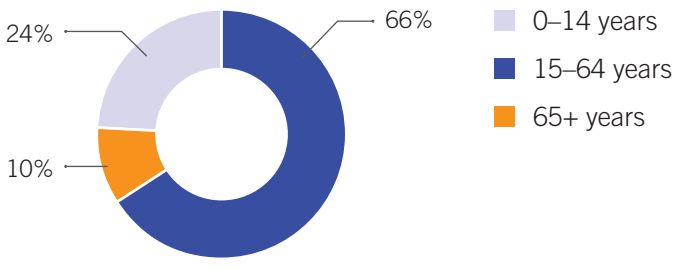
Figure 2. Demographics for Sri Lanka

Population: 21.2 million

Population growth rate	Fertility rate	Life expectancy at birth
1.1%	2.1 children	68.1 years



Population age categories



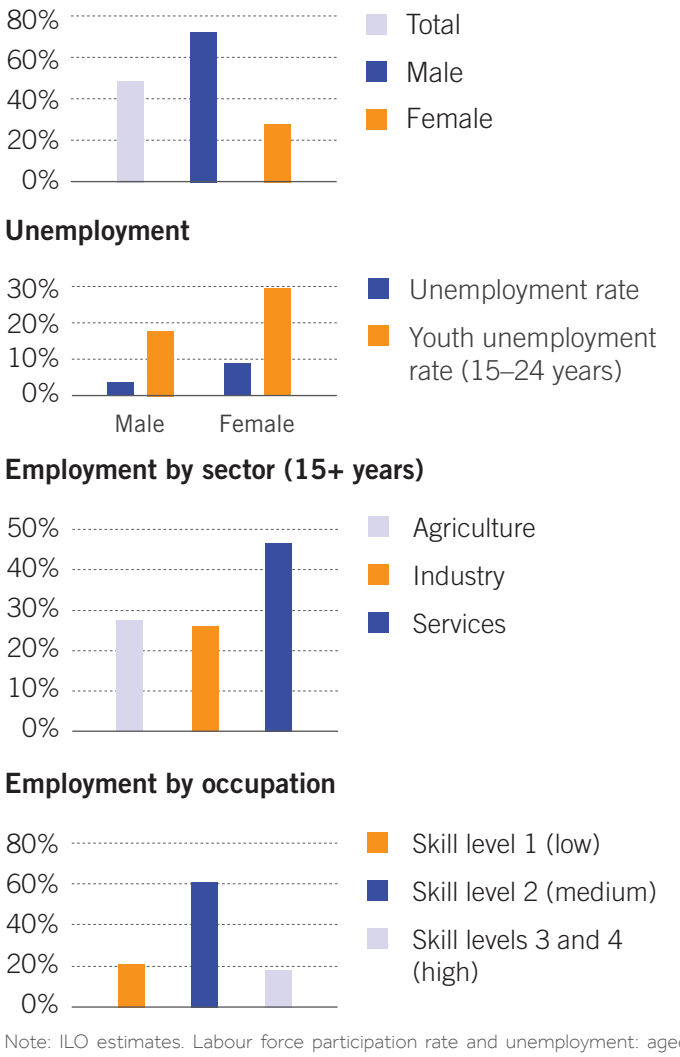
Note: All data for 2016, except fertility and life expectancy, which are 2015.

Source: ILO compilation using World Bank: World development indicators, last updated 20 July 2017, http://databank.worldbank.org (accessed 30 July 2017).

1. The fact sheet is based on available data only.
2. Sri Lanka became a member of the International Labour Organization in 1948.

As of 2017, the labour force participation rate is 51.5 per cent and the employment-to-population ratio is 48.8 per cent. Both of those rates for men are more than 44 percentage points higher for men than for women. The total unemployment rate is 5.2 per cent, and the youth unemployment rate is 21.9 per cent, with the female youth unemployment rate 11.7 percentage points higher than the male rate. The youth (aged 15–24 years) not in employment, education or training rate was 27.7 per cent in 2014. Formal employment is heavily reliant on services and on medium-skilled occupations (Fig. 3).[3]

Figure 3. Basic employment statistics for Sri Lanka, 2017

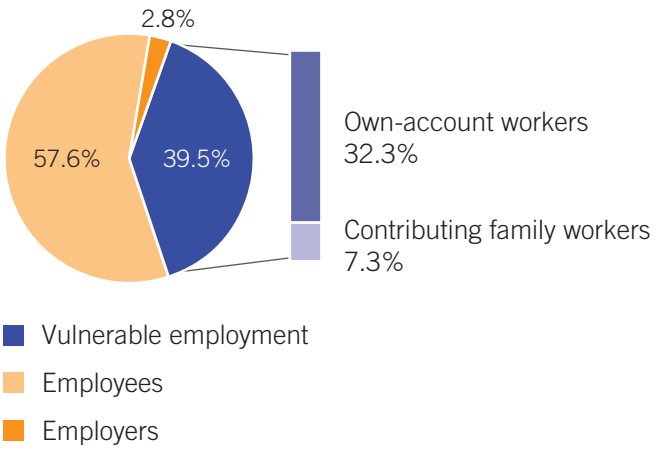


Note: ILO estimates. Labour force participation rate and unemployment: aged 15 years and older. Youth unemployment: aged 15–24 years. Employment by occupation: skill level 1 (low) for elementary occupations; skill level 2 (medium) for clerical, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural and trade workers, plant machinists and assemblers; and skill level 3 and 4 (high) for managers, professionals and technicians.

Source: ILO compilation using ILOSTAT, http://www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed 17 July 2017).

Vulnerable employment in Sri Lanka as of 2017 accounts for 39.5 per cent of the labour force, with the majority of those workers having own-account status (Fig. 4). Own-account and contributing family workers are more likely to experience low job and income security than employees and employers, as well as lower coverage by social protection systems and employment regulation.

Figure 4. Vulnerable employment, by status, 2017



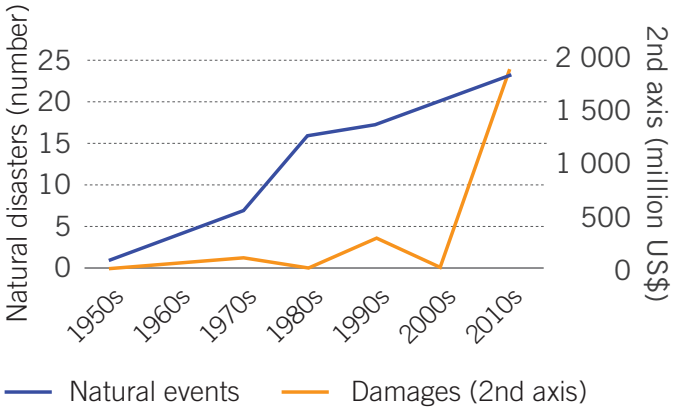
Note: Vulnerable employment includes own-account workers and contributing family workers.

Source: ILO compilation using ILOSTAT, http://www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed 17 July 2017).

According to the *World Risk Report*,[4] Sri Lanka has a high World Risk Index score. It ranks 63 (of 171 countries) because of its high exposure to natural hazards and limited institutional capacity to cope and adapt. Additionally, the country's vulnerability relates to the 3 per cent of the total population who lived in the 2.1 per cent of the total land area below 5 meters above sea level in 2010.[5] According to the Emergency Events Database,[6] there was a substantial increase in natural disasters[7] and associated damage costs between the 1950s and the 2010s (Fig. 5). The natural disasters in that time were mostly tropical cyclones, storms, floods, landslides and droughts which resulted in more than 3,488 deaths (1957–2017). Developing preventive measures to limit infrastructure and property damage and increase institutional capacity, particularly for small businesses to respond to climate events, can be a source of decent job creation while building resilience.

3. Informal employment (self-employed and contributing family members) is excluded from the agriculture calculations.
4. Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and United Nations University: *World risk report 2016* (Berlin, 2016), http://weltrisikobericht.de/english/.
5. World Bank: World development indicators, last updated 20 July 2017, http://databank.worldbank.org/.
6. EM–DAT: The Emergency Events Database – Université catholique de Louvain (UCL) – CRED, D. Guha-Sapir – www.emdat.be, Brussels, Belgium.
7. Climatological, hydrological and meteorological disasters.

Figure 5. Natural disaster occurrence and damage costs in Sri Lanka, 1950s–2010s

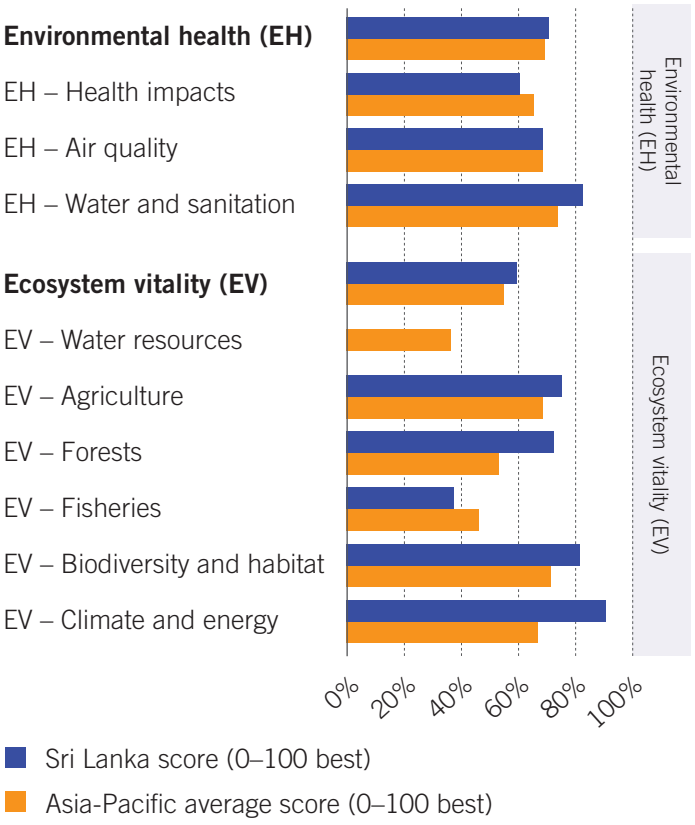


Note: Natural events include climatological, hydrological and meteorological disasters. 2010s data are only for the first half of the decade.

Source: ILO compilation using EM-DAT: The Emergency Events Database – Université catholique de Louvain (UCL) – CRED, D. Guha-Sapir – www.emdat.be, Brussels, Belgium.

Sri Lanka ranks 108 of 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), with a score of 65.55 (with 0 furthest from the high-performance benchmark target of 100). Sri Lanka outperforms the average score for Asia and the Pacific (Fig. 6) in some of the EPI categories, including water and sanitation, agriculture, forests, biodiversity and habitat, and climate and energy. Still, there is room for improvement, especially in environmental health (in health impacts and air quality) and ecosystem vitality (in water resources and fisheries). Action to improve environmental health, ecosystem vitality, climate change and resilience to weather disasters all have the potential to provide job creation, green economy growth and innovation in Sri Lanka.

Figure 6. Environmental Performance Index 2016 for Sri Lanka



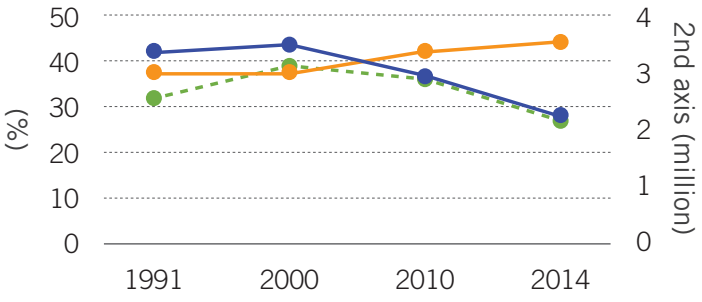
Note: Score 0–100 best. Asia-Pacific: Each score is an average of all data for ILO member States in the region, excluding four countries with no data (Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Palau and Tuvalu).

Source: ILO compilation using, A. Hsu et al.: *2016 Environmental Performance Index* (New Haven, CT, Yale University, 2016), www.epi.yale.edu.

Rural population growth was 0.9 per cent in 2015. The share of agricultural land in total land area increased by 6.3 per cent between 1991 and 2014, while agricultural employment dropped from 2.6 million to 2.2 million people. The share of agricultural employment in total employment fell by approximately 13.3 percentage points due to the combination of declining agricultural employment and job creation in other sectors (Fig. 7). Forest area decreased between 1990 and 2014, to approximately 33.1 per cent of total land area. During that same period, the share of terrestrial protected area slightly increased, reaching 23.2 per cent, while the proportion of marine protected area amounted to 1.3 per cent of total territorial waters in 2014 (Fig. 8). Also in 2014, 28.5 per cent of total employment was in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector (Fig. 9). Although reliance on agriculture is significant, there are opportunities for job creation for sustainable production

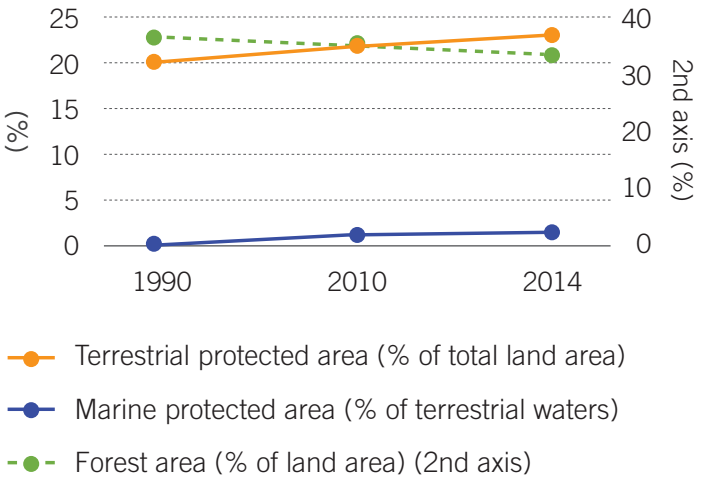
and organic farming. There will be greater prospects for employment opportunities if there is commitment to transition to a low-carbon and resource-efficient economy, such as jobs in resource management and environmental services.[8]

Figure 7. Agricultural land and agricultural employment, 1991–2014



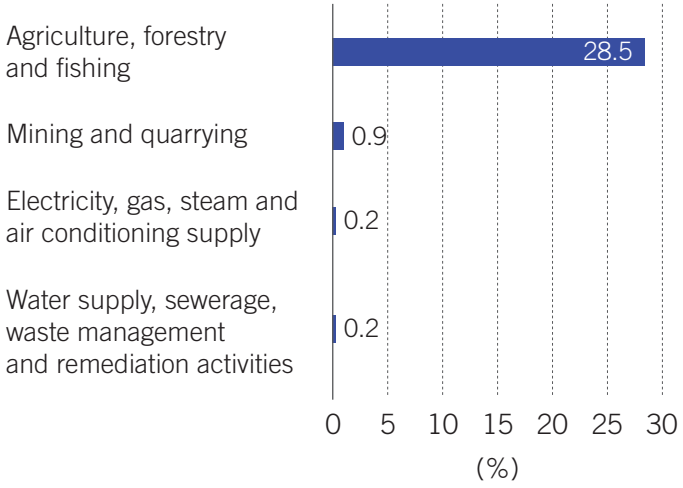
Source: ILO compilation using World Bank: World development indicators, last updated 20 July 2017, http://databank.worldbank.org/; ILOSTAT, http://www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed 30 July 2017).

Figure 8. Forest area and terrestrial and marine protected areas, 1990–2014



Source: ILO compilation using World Bank: World development indicators, last updated 20 July 2017, http://databank.worldbank.org/ (accessed 30 July 2017).

Figure 9. Employment in sectors with strong green jobs potential, 2014



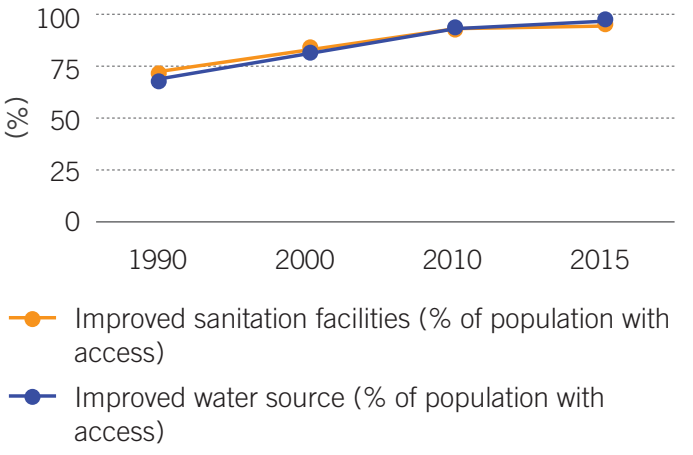
Note: These sectors have the most potential for green job opportunities. Employment by selected 1-digit sector level (ISIC-Rev. 4, 2008).

Source: ILO compilation using ILOSTAT, http://www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed 16 November 2017).

Since 1990, the percentage of the population with access to improved water supply has increased 27.3 percentage points, to 95.6 per cent in 2015. There was a 24.4-percentage point increase in access to improved sanitation between 1990 and 2015, reaching 95.1 per cent (Fig. 10). Both rates, however, have not reached the ideal threshold of 100 per cent. Growth of the country's urban population has meant an increase in solid waste.[9] According to the World Bank, municipal solid waste generation in Sri Lanka in 2003 was 5.1 kg per capita per day and is expected to decrease to 4 kg per capita per day by 2025.[10] Most of the waste in 2008 was organic (at 76 per cent), followed by paper (at 11 per cent) and plastics (at 6 per cent) (Fig. 11).[11] Waste disposal is often open dumping, which causes pollution of the soil, air and waterways.[12] Only 0.2 per cent of the country's labour force was employed in water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities in 2014 (Fig. 9). Improvements in safe water supply and sanitation access and the much-needed implementation of a municipal waste management system for collection, safe and sustainable disposal, recycling and composting practices will provide decent job opportunities in the future.

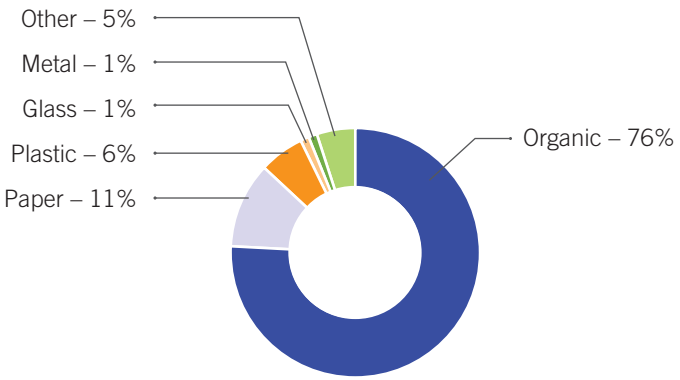
8. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: The jobs potential of a shift towards a low-carbon economy, *OECD Green Growth Papers*, No. 2012/01 (Paris, 2012), http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k9h3630320v-en.
9. See http://waste2resource.org/sri-lanka/.
10. World Bank: *What a waste: A global review of solid waste management* (Washington, DC, 2012).
11. ibid.
12. See http://waste2resource.org/sri-lanka/.

Figure 10. Improved sanitation and water supply access, 1990–2015



Source: ILO compilation using World Bank: World development indicators, last updated 20 July 2017, http://databank.worldbank.org/ (accessed 30 July 2017).

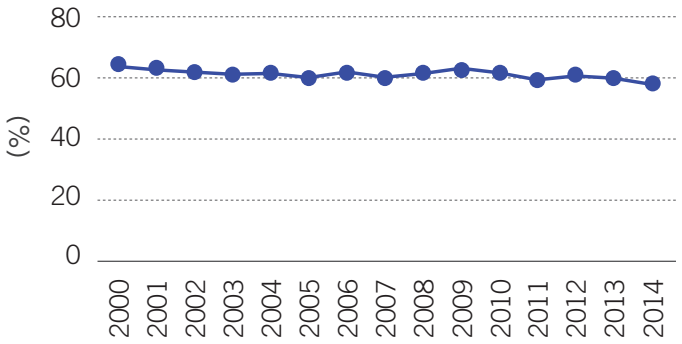
Figure 11. Waste composition, 2008



Source: ILO compilation using World Bank: *What a waste: A global review of solid waste management* (Washington, DC, 2012).

In 2014, 19.3 per cent of the population relied primarily on clean fuel and technology, in the sense that they do not create indoor pollution within the home.[13] The share of renewable energy in total energy consumption has not kept pace with overall consumption. In 2000, it was 62.9 per cent but fell below 60 per cent in 2011 and continued to decline, to 57.6 per cent in 2014 (Fig. 12). Renewable energy generation was highly variable between 2011 and 2015, with some indication of an upward trend and hydropower the main source in 2015 (Fig. 13). There are no data on the number of employed persons in the renewable energy sector. The country's employment rate in electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning was only 0.2 per cent in 2014 (Fig. 9). With the push for increasing reliance on renewable energy, there will be potential for decent job opportunities in the future.

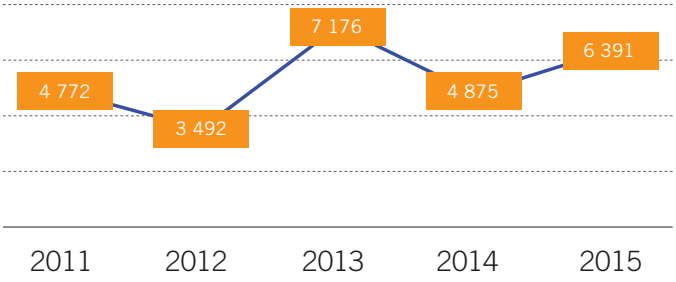
Figure 12. Renewable energy share in total final energy consumption, 2000–14



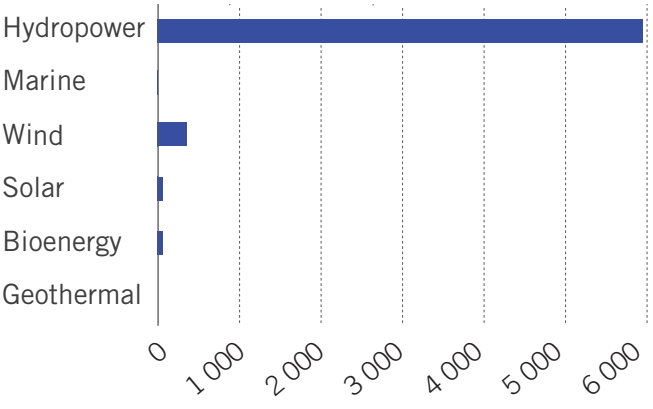
Source: ILO compilation using UN: SDG indicators: Global database (2017), https://unstats.un.org/ (accessed 17 July 2017).

Figure 13. Renewable energy generation, 2011–15

Total renewable energy electricity generation (GWh)



Renewable energy electricity generation (GWh), by technology 2015



Source: ILO compilation using International Renewable Energy Agency: Dashboards (2017), http://resourceirena.irena.org/gateway/dashboard/ (accessed 17 July 2017).

13. The proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology is calculated as the number of people using clean fuels and technologies for cooking, heating and lighting divided by total population reporting any cooking, heating or lighting, expressed as a percentage. "Clean" is defined by the emission rate targets and specific fuel recommendations (against unprocessed coal and kerosene) included in the normative World Health Organization guidelines for indoor air quality; see the data for household fuel combustion, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-07-01-02.pdf.

Better data collection relating to the green economy and the environmental sector would be valuable for policy-makers in Sri Lanka and Asian-Pacific countries. Better data on green and decent jobs is particularly needed to assess the impact of climate change and climate-related policies on social inclusion. Without better data, it will be difficult to determine what policy changes are needed to assure a just transition to environmental sustainability and to monitor progress going forward.