



Women in Tourism

SRI LANKA
TOURISM
ALLIANCE

A study identifying opportunities for enhancing women's employment in the tourism sector



INT



**Australian
Aid** 

Business Case



11.4 million people of Sri Lanka population are women, of which **55%** are employable (20-60 age category).

Source: Department of Census and Statistics



30% - 35% of which are economically active.



Less than **10%** of tourism employees are women.



Sri Lanka's tourism is in recovery – but labour shortages are looming.



The pandemic and economic crisis has resulted in significant migration.

Investing in more women is crucial to bridge the gap. However, a scalable solution hinges on understanding the needs and challenges faced by women.

About the study



Objective:

To investigate the underlying factors influencing the low participation of women in the tourism sector.

Within the trade

- Island-wide survey
- 745 respondents
- 12 Focus group discussions
- Interviews with industry stakeholders

Outside the trade

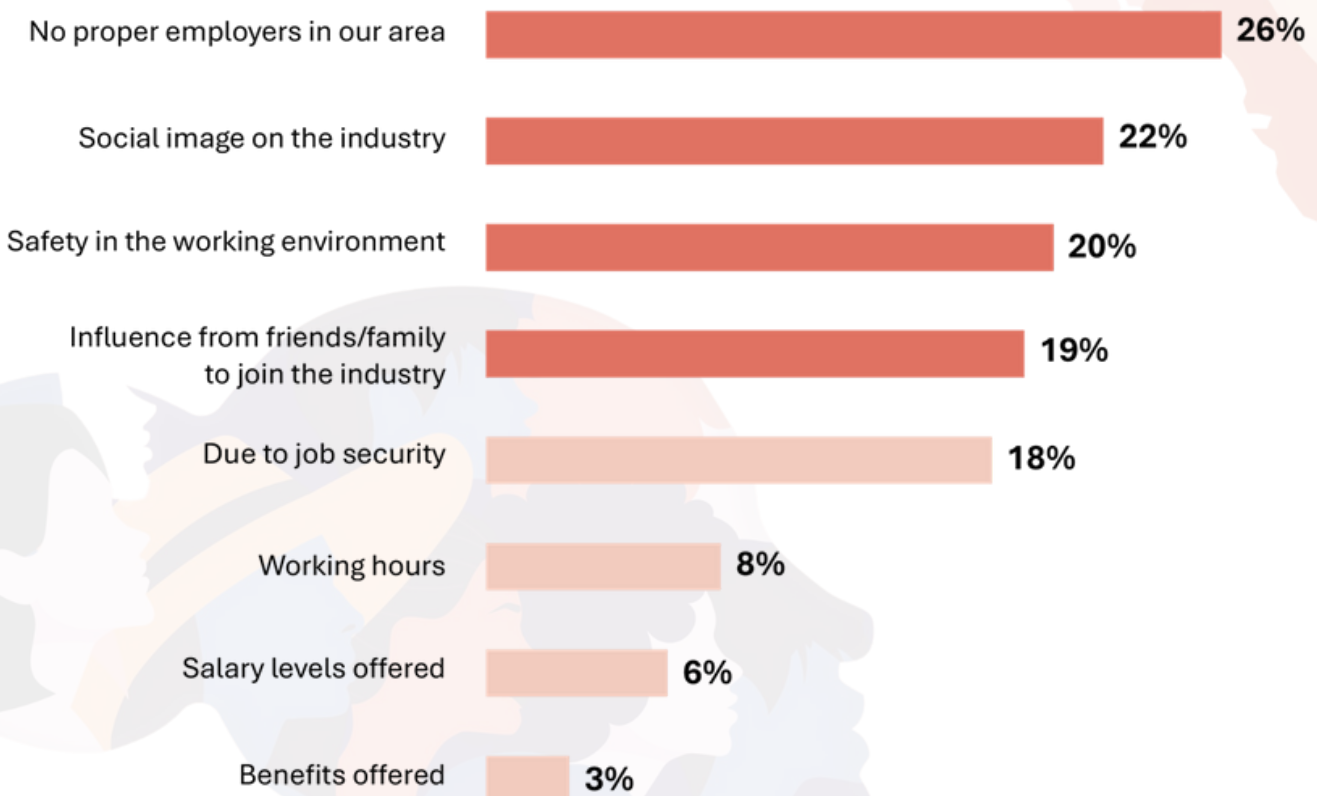
- Island-wide survey
- 453 respondents
- In-depth interviews across multiple sectors

What do we already know?

- Social Stigma
- Job Security
- Pay & equal opportunity
- Transport & accommodation concerns
- Long hours and work life balance

Stigma VS Awareness of Available Opportunities

Key factors that keep women away from tourism industry

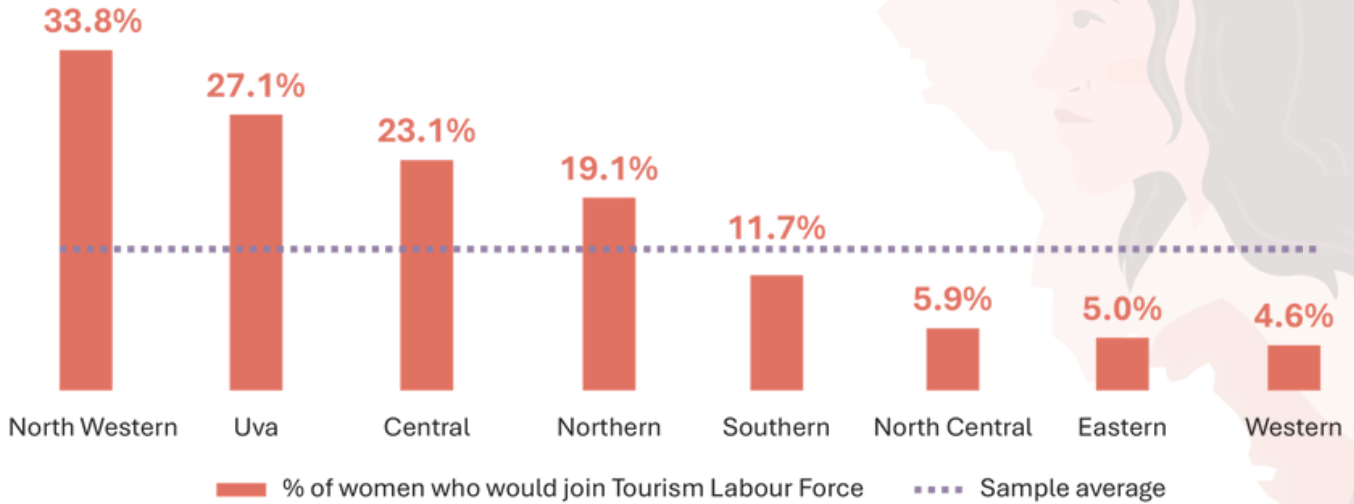


More women reported that they were not aware of the job opportunities available in tourism.

Society's negative perceptions of women in tourism surfaced as widespread.

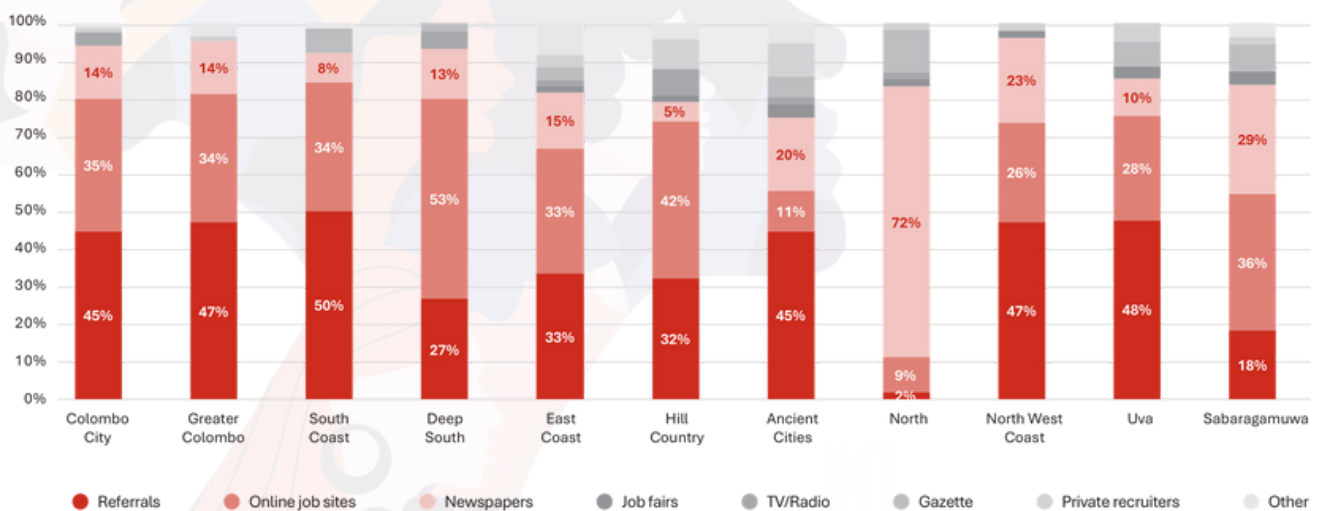
Provincial Insights

Percent of women who would join tourism industry (by region)



Uva, Central, and North Western Provinces exhibit a greater inclination among women to join the tourism industry compared to the Western province.

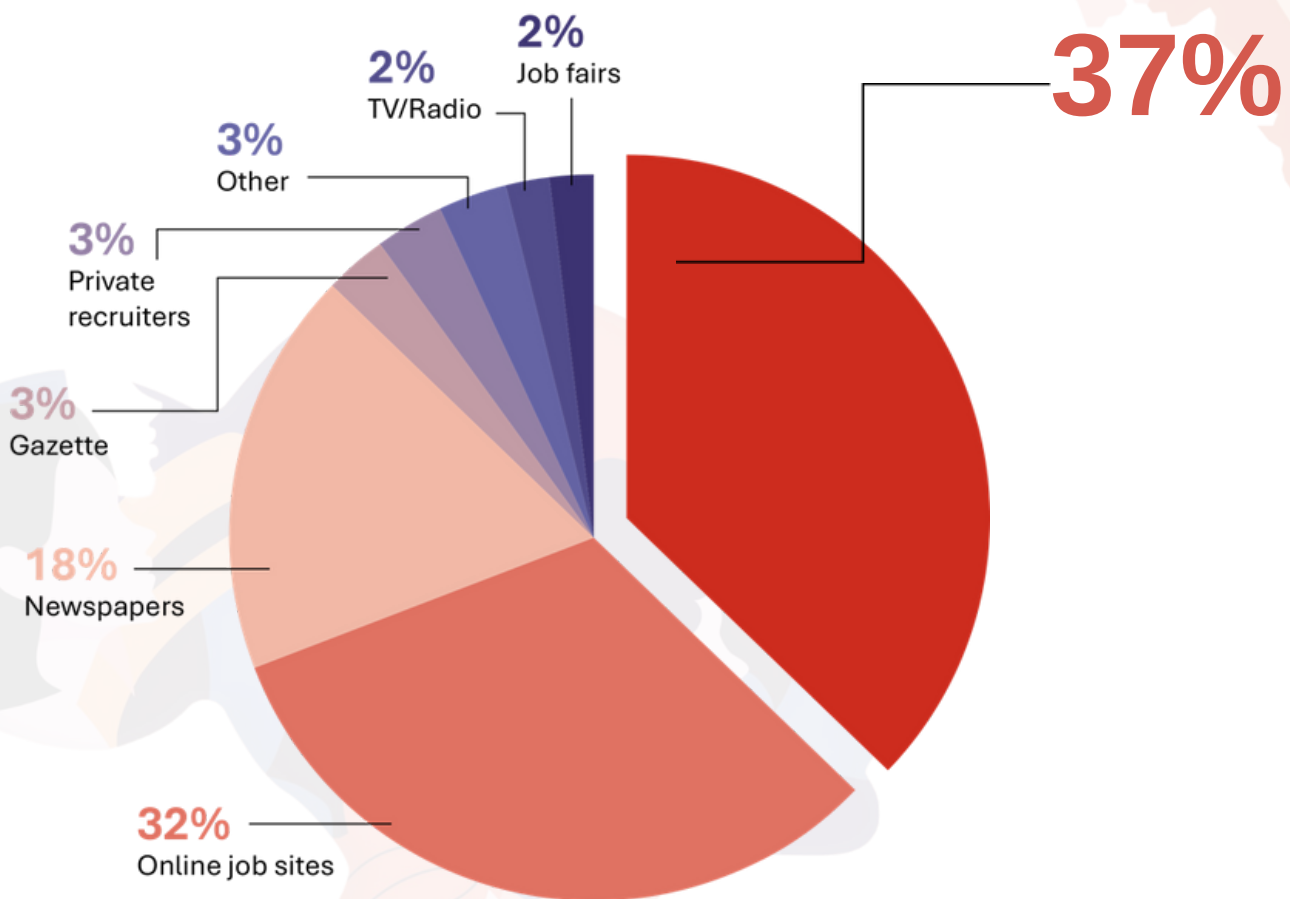
Primary influencers for female tourism employee - already employed in tourism



We asked women about their preferred source for job opportunities

Where do women find job opportunities?

We asked women about their preferred source for job opportunities



Referrals were the most preferred mode of joining the trade.

Employee retention strategies and referral incentives create better traction in hiring women.

Tackling the Stigma



Has the industry done enough to reduce negative societal perceptions around women working in tourism?

Most influential person/factor in deciding employment and choice of industry

Outside the trade:

- **31%** stated that significant external influences did not affect their ability to make independent employment decisions.
- **44%** said a male member of their family, father or spouse, have a primary influence on employment choices
- The South Coast and Hill Country had more women citing significant influence from male household members on their employment decisions.

Considerations for the trade



- **The negative perceptions women have about tourism** often change after they join the trade.
- **Difficulty in retaining women after marriage** is a major complaint from the trade.
- **Language skills** have always been a challenge!
- **Unsupportive middle management** is a common complaint made by women from the trade.
- **The retail, ICT and apparel** sectors have invested significantly, and had some success in, attracting women.