

***The Issue of School Dropouts in the Estate Sector of
Sri Lanka***

July In-house Seminar

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Background

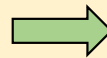
Education in the Estate Sector

- Highest percentage of population with no schooling (8.3%)
- Highest percentage of population with only primary education (35.5%)
- Many schools are type 3 (up to grade 5 or 8)
- Lowest net enrolment rates

Sector	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary	Collegiate
Urban	95.9	92.3	86.2	45.8
Rural	95.3	93.3	81.4	39.7
Estate	93.1	83.5	53.8	12.8

Source: Sri Lanka Human Development Report

Estate sector net enrolment rate decreases significantly beyond lower secondary level



High School Dropouts

Background (contd.)

COVID-19 and Online Education in the Estate Sector

- Access to Computer/Internet Facilities → Access to Education

Sector	Ownership of a Desktop/Laptop (%)
Urban	37.1
Rural	20.1
Estate	3.8

Online learning is not viable in estate regions. High risk of dropping out

Source: Labour Force Survey, 2020

- COVID-19 adversely affected the livelihoods of many (financial difficulties/loss of employment)

Higher risk of dropping out and engaging in child labour

Research Objectives

1

Examine the factors that affect school dropouts in the estate sector

2

Examine the impact of child labour on children dropping out of school in the estate sector

3

Examine the impact of COVID-19 on children dropping out of school in the estate sector

Data and Methodology

- **Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)** – 956 school aged children from the estate sector
- **Child Activity Survey (CAS)** – 987 school aged children from the estate sector

Objective 1 & Objective 2 (Examine the factors that affect school dropouts / Impact of child labour on children dropping out)

- Descriptive analysis
- Logistic regression (2 models)

Dependent variable : “1” if student has dropped out, “0” if student is currently attending school

Independent variables : gender, age, household income, child labour, parents’ education, head’s occupation, head’s employment status, household debt, household size, household number of school aged children, time spent on housekeeping, parents’ residence, transport, distance to nearest bus halt/primary school/secondary school

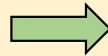
Objective 3 (Examine the impact of COVID-19 on children dropping out of school in the estate sector) – study ongoing

- Key Informant Interviews : teachers, principals, zonal education officers (estate sector)

Descriptive Analysis

Comparison of School Dropouts across Sector, Gender, and Level of Education

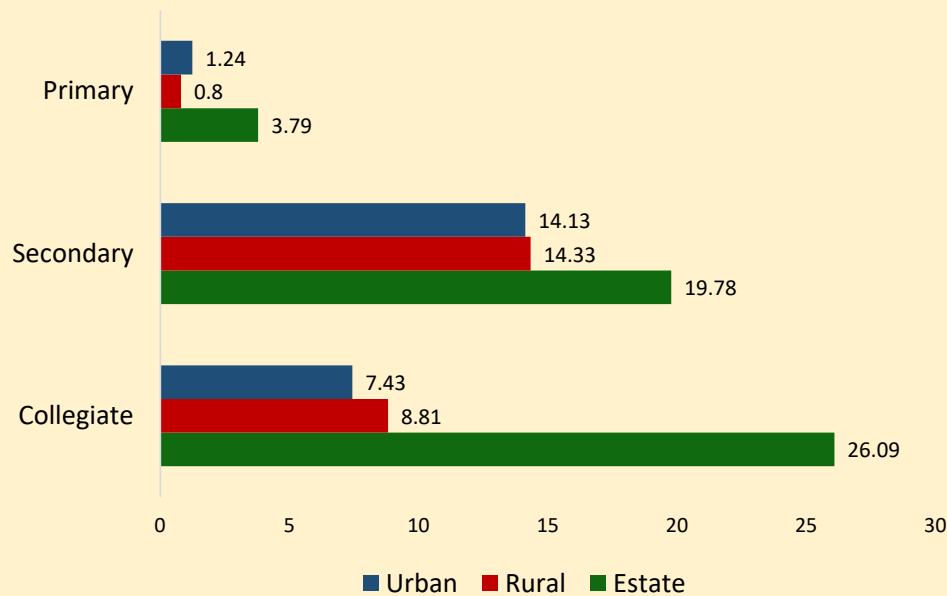
School Dropout Rates (%)	
Sri Lanka	8.41
Urban	8.30
Rural	8.19
Estate	12.29
Male	9.59
Female	7.21
Primary	1.03
Secondary	14.55
Collegiate	8.97



Estate sector has the highest level of school dropouts

School Dropouts and Level of Education

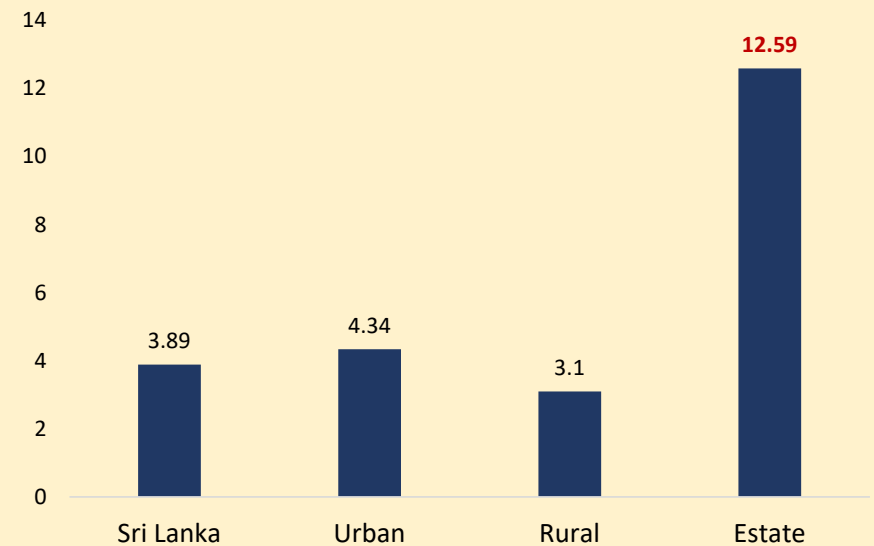
School Dropouts by Sector and Level of Education



Estate sector has the highest percentage of dropouts in all three levels of education

Dropouts increase as the level of education advances

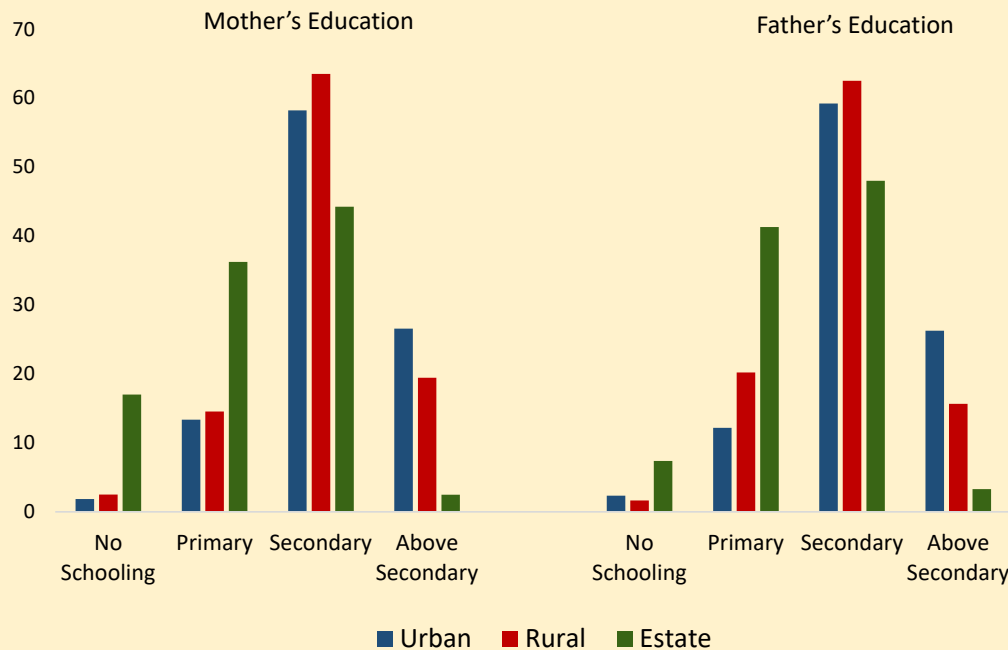
Primary Level Contribution to Overall School Dropouts in each Sector



Estate sector has a considerably high proportion of its dropouts from primary grades

School Dropouts and Parents' Education

Parents' Education by Sector



Estate sector has the highest percentage of parents with very low or no education qualifications

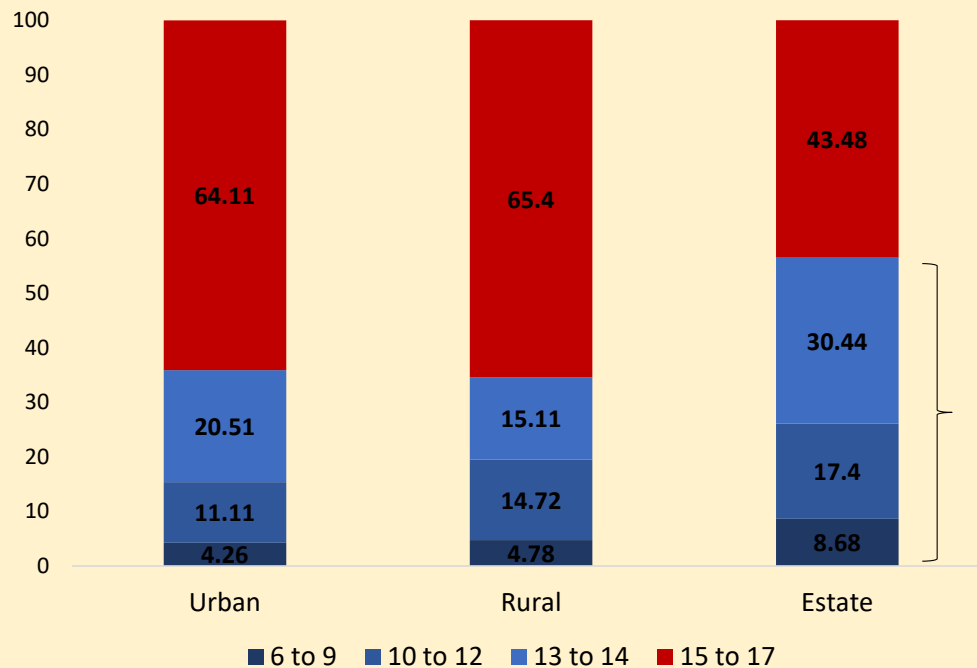
School Dropouts by Parents' Education in each Sector

Mothers' level of education	Urban (% of dropouts)	Rural (% of dropouts)	Estate (% of dropouts)
No Schooling	5.42	6.07	25.71
Primary	25.00	25.93	45.71
Secondary	60.42	62.97	27.62
Above Secondary	9.17	5.03	0.95
Fathers' level of education	Urban (% of dropouts)	Rural (% of dropouts)	Estate (% of dropouts)
No Schooling	6.34	4.55	14.43
Primary	24.88	39.17	55.67
Secondary	59.02	51.82	28.87
Above Secondary	9.76	4.45	1.03

Parents of most of the school dropouts in the estate sector have only a primary education

School Dropouts and Age Category

School Dropouts by Sector and Age of Dropping Out

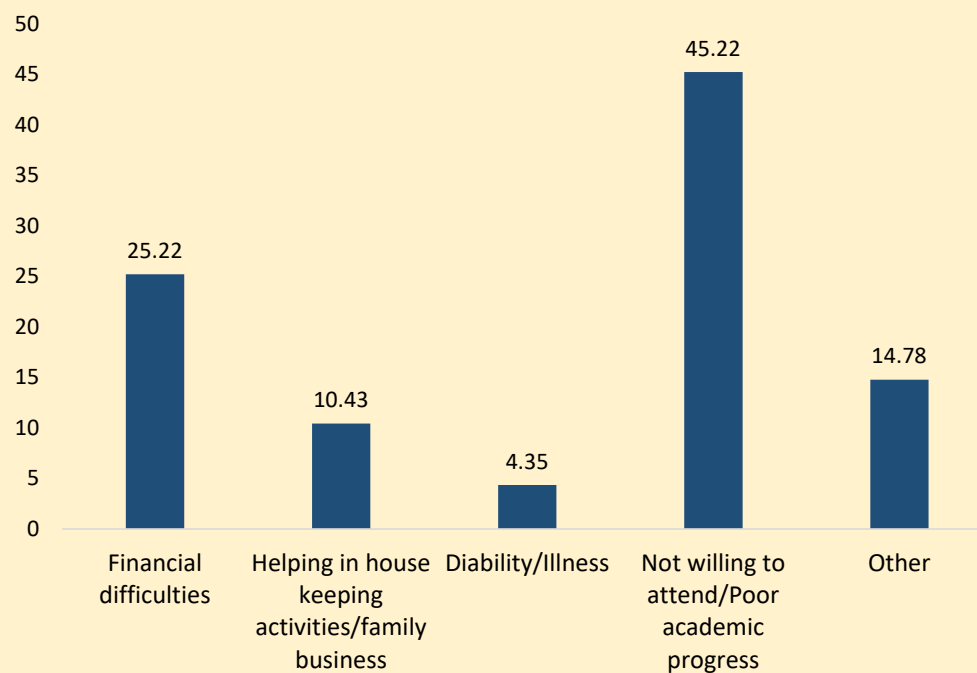


Estate sector has a higher proportion of its dropouts from age below 15

Percentage of dropouts increases as age increases

Reasons behind Children Dropping Out of School in the Estate Sector

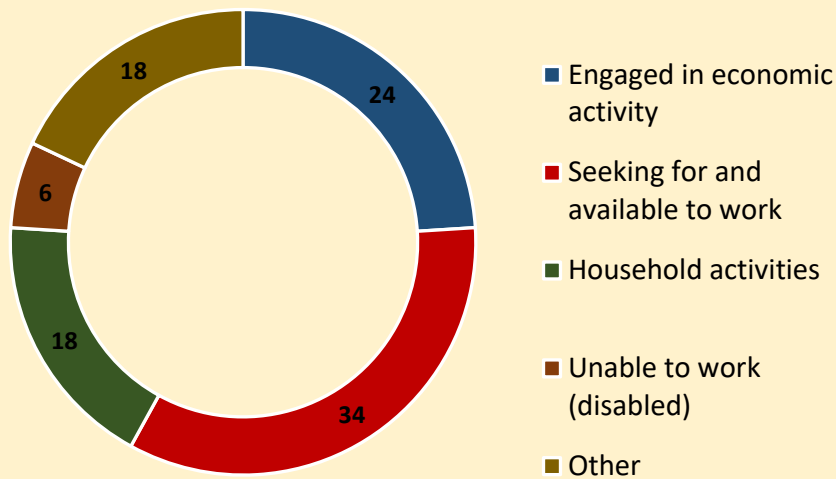
District	Contribution to Overall Dropouts in the Estate Sector (%)
Kalutara	5.22
Kandy	5.22
Matale	0.87
Nuwaraeliya	40.00
Galle	2.61
Matara	7.83
Badulla	8.70
Ratnapura	12.17
Kegalle	9.57
Other	7.83
Total	100



The highest proportion of school dropouts in the estate sector are from Nuwara Eliya district

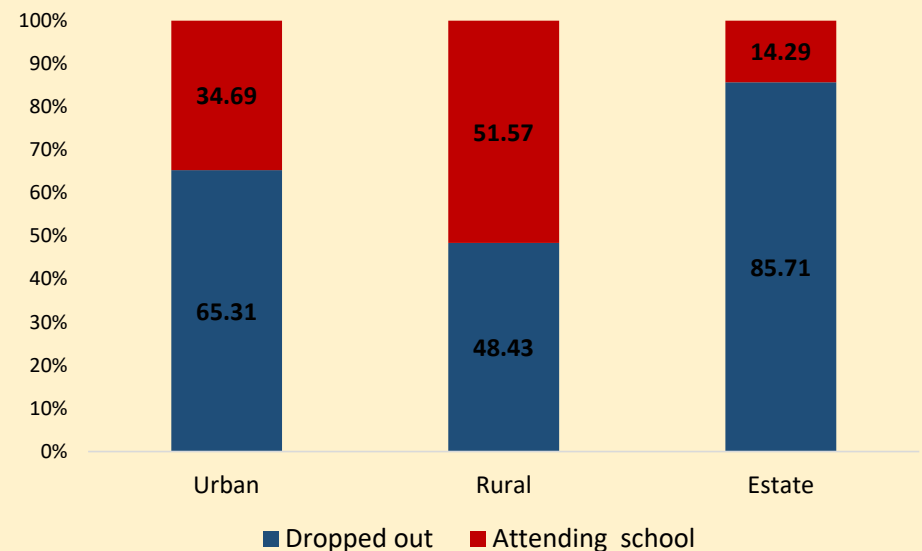
School Dropouts and Child Labour in the Estate Sector

Estate Sector School Dropouts by Main Activity Engaged in



Around 58% of school dropouts in the estate sector engage in/seeking to engage in economic activities

Proportion of Working Children that have Dropped Out



Nearly 86% of working children in the estate sector have dropped out of school

Logistic Regression 1 - Factors Affecting School Dropouts in the Estate Sector

Dependent Variable (dropout=1)			
Female	0.087	Occupation of head of household (Ref: Managers and professionals)	
		Clerks, sales workers, and skilled agricultural/fishery workers	2.552
		Elementary occupations, craft workers, and machine operators	2.094
Age	1.069	Head is an own account or contributing family worker (Ref: other)	-0.141
Household monthly income	-0.00002	Household owns at least one vehicle	0.388
Number of school aged children in household > 2	0.139	Monthly debt of household	3.300
Household size > 6	0.801		
Mother's Education (Ref: No schooling)			
Primary	-0.324	Distance to nearest bus halt > 1km	-0.574
Secondary	-0.415	Distance to nearest primary school ≥ 5km	0.391
Above secondary	0.130	Distance to nearest secondary school ≥ 10km	-0.430
Father's Education (Ref: No schooling)			
Primary	-1.767		
Secondary	-2.735		
Above secondary	-2.017		
		Constant	-16.861
Observations: 672			
Likelihood Ratio χ^2 : 338.41			
Prob > χ^2 : 0.000			
Pseudo R^2 : 0.5949			

Significant at 1%, 5%
 Significant at 10%

Logistic Regression 2 - Impact of Child Labour on Children Dropping Out in the Estate Sector

Dependent Variable (dropout=1)			
Child Labour	7.57	<i>Current activity of head of household (ref: regular employee)</i>	
		Casual employee	-2.46
		Household activities	-1.88
Female	-0.74	Own account worker	-3.02
Age	1.97		
Household monthly income	-0.00017	Household does not own a vehicle	1.89
Number of school aged children in household > 2	-0.53	Time spent on housekeeping activities	0.13
Household size >=5	-1.16		
<i>Mother's Education (ref: primary)</i>		<i>Mother's Residence (ref: lives at home)</i>	4.53
Secondary or above	-0.54	Away from home (within country/abroad)	
<i>Father's Education (ref: primary)</i>		<i>Father's Residence (ref: lives at home)</i>	0.02
Secondary or above	-0.39	Away from home (within country/abroad)	
		Constant	-30.01
Observations: 637 Likelihood Ratio chi ² : 166.00 Prob > chi ² : 0.000 Pseudo R ² : 0.7226			

Significant at 1%, 5%
 Significant at 10%

Factors Affecting School Dropouts in the Estate Sector

- Age
- Household size > 6
- Child labour
- Time spent on housekeeping activities
- Mother lives away from home
- Household debt
- Household does not own a vehicle
- Occupation of household head
(Clerks, sales workers, skilled agricultural/fishery workers,
elementary occupations, craft workers, and machine operators)

*Probability of children
dropping out of school
increases*

- Household income
- Father's education

*Probability of children
dropping out of school
decreases*

Impact of COVID-19 on Children Dropping Out of School in the Estate Sector (study ongoing)

Key Informant Interviews – Estate Sector Teachers

- The shift to online modes of education during the prolonged school closure has affected school attendance and worsened the issue of school dropouts in the estate sector
- In all the interviews (teachers) – Class attendance (online) decreased by 35% - 50%
Cases of school dropouts after schools reopened
 - Lack of access to devices (phones/computers)
(Multiple students living nearby each other get together to join an online class using a single phone / Only one child from a family can attend an online class / Able to attend online classes only when parents are at home / Borrowing phones)
 - Signal/coverage issues
 - Unsuitable home environment (line houses)
 - Loss of income/financial difficulties (e.g.: inability to purchase data packages etc.)
 - Non-supportive parents
 - Engage in economic activities (plantations/vegetable cultivation/work in Colombo), Household activities
- Most of the estate schools conducted online classes only for O/L students
(Possibility of higher dropouts among lower grades)

Conclusion

- Estate sector children are more likely to drop out of school in higher grades
- With the shift to online learning there is a risk of high dropouts among lower grades as well since many estate schools did not have online classes for grades below O/L
- Children from extended families are more vulnerable since such families have high expenditure compared to their earnings from working in plantations
- Engaging in child labour and/or household activities have a significant impact on children dropping out of school in the estate sector
- Mothers living away from home could cause children to drop out of school
- High household income and father's education qualification would positively affect the continuation of schooling
- Issue of school dropouts in the estate sector has worsened due to COVID-19 and the consequent shift to online modes of education (online learning not viable)

Policy Implications

Poor education performance contributes to poverty in the region in the future

- Importance of attaining the goal of zero child labour (SDG) since child labour has a significant impact on children dropping out of school in the estate sector
- COVID-19 has worsened the issue of school dropouts in the estate sector mainly due to the lack of access to devices
- Special financial assistance programmes for deprived regions would be beneficial
- COVID-19 and the consequent shift to online learning has made estate children in both lower and higher grades more vulnerable to dropping out, necessitating more attention
- Importance of encouraging estate schools to conduct online classes for lower grades (below O/L) as well (in periods when online classes is the main mode of education)

Thank you