

Lecture Note

Gender Economics (EE364)

Chapter 1: The evolution of male and female roles in the economic system



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Chapter 1

The evolution of male and female roles in the economic system

1.1 Gender Economics

Gender Economics is a new field of economics. It was first taught in economics in Thailand at the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, in 2004 (Daomanee,2007). Currently, this course is being taught in many universities that offer courses in economics throughout Thailand. Gender Economics integrates gender dimensions into economic theory by applying the basic principles of economics to the analysis. Dr. Gary Becker, Nobel Laureate in Economics, pioneered the integration of perspectives on gender differences into economic theory. Agent analysis is the focus in the basic principles of economics. The only assumption is that a person (or agent) is rational. This agent is a consumer, producer, or policy maker. However, this assumption does not consider whether one is female or male. In reality, male representatives or female representatives has differences in decision-making such as different preferences.

Gender Economics will integrate a gender dimension to economic analysis and aim to understand the effect of gender differences on welfare at the individual level, household level, up to the national level. The study in Gender Economics begins by applying basic economic principles in a process analysis, the decision-making process, outcomes, and impacts of decision making. The main issues of Gender Economics begin in the smallest sub-unit, which is decision making at the individual, household, and national levels. At every level, the gender dimension is involved in the analysis. The study topics discussed are as follows:

1. Individual level - Decision of males and females to establish a family, choose a spouse for marriage, and make decision to have children until divorce

2. Household level - Time allocated by males and females to household tasks and the labor market. Intra-household bargaining between males and females, demand and supply factors affecting differences between males and females in their careers and income, role switching between males and females in different occupations

3. National/Organization level - Role of women in society, economy, and politics; government policies or welfare affecting males and females differently; males and females in the aging economy; economic crisis, household management, and the effects on the female and male

labor market; issues of gender wage equality, employment, and leadership at the organization and national levels; and the role of LGBTQ people in the economy.

1.2 Gender Roles and Gender Equality

To understand gender roles, we must know the difference between “sex” and “role” (Blau and Winkler, 2018) - “Female” and “male” (biological differences) is the classification of humans according to the physical characteristics present at birth. “Gender differences are defined according to social or cultural conditions in which each individual plays a role and performs tasks.

Gender Equality refers to equality of males and females in society. There is equality in terms of rights, duties, responsibilities, and opportunities. Social conditions facilitate the equality and exercise of human rights and participation in creating equal benefits for society. This equality is the basic “human right,” an important basic principle worldwide. All human beings must have equality in how they are treated and given opportunities, and equality in demonstrating their potential.

Gender equality is now globally and universally recognized as a fundamental right that all human beings deserve equally. This is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5). Thailand has emphasized this issue. Its aim is to create gender equality in the country. In Thailand, this is expressed in the form of domestic law as follows:

- (1) **The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560 (2017)** has emphasized the equality of people’s opportunities.

Article 27 states that “all persons are equal before the law and shall have rights and liberties and be protected equally under the law. Men and women shall enjoy equal rights”

- (2) **The Gender Equality Act B.E. 2558 (2015)** protects and prevents the rights of those who are discriminated against based on their gender and promotes equality between men and women including groups of people who are sexually diverse. This law is considered the first law in Thailand to protect LGBTQ people.

Section 17 Paragraph 1 stated “Prescribing policies, ordinances, rules, notifications, Measures, Projects or procedures for state agencies, private organizations or any person which appear to discriminate unfairly by gender shall be prohibited.” This section

intends to prohibit unfair gender-based discrimination against all people, including men, women, and LGBTQ people.

- (3) **The Labor Protection Act (No. 7) B.E. 2562 (2019)** is a law to protect female workers to ensure they receive equal treatment to male workers by employers in terms of wage discrimination.

“Section 53 requires the employer to pay equal wage rates to male and female employees if their work performances are of the same nature, quality, and quantity or equivalent value”

“Section 41 A pregnant female employee is entitled to maternity leave of not more than ninety-eight days for each pregnancy.

The days of maternity leave referred in this section shall include leave for pregnancy check-up before delivery.

The leave under paragraph one shall include holidays that occur during the leave period.”

“Section 59. An employer shall pay the wage of an employee on maternity leave under section 41, at a rate equal to the wage of a normal working day, for the entire period of time the leave being taken but not exceeding forty-five days.”

Note that –

- This Act extends maternity leave for female employees from 90 days to 98 days, in accordance with the standards under ILO Convention No.183 on Maternity Protection
- January 2022 - The cabinet approved the principle to increase the period of paid maternity leave for civil servants from 90 days to 188 days (6 months). This aim to help mothers and to support the government’s policy of breastfeeding. The six-month period will allow a mother to continue to breastfeed her newborn baby.
- In Thailand, there is a paid paternity leave of up to 15 days for male state officials or male employees in public sector. However, male employees in the private sector are not entitled to paid paternity leave; the employers have the right to decide whether to offer paid/unpaid paternity leave to employees or not.

- (4) **The Family Institute Development and Protection Promotion Act, B.E. 2562 (2019)** aims to take action on family promotion and development, and welfare protection. This Act aim to strengthen family and develop family institutions (in terms of family violence prevention and welfare protection of family members).

In addition, Thailand has also signed international treaties to promote women's rights both internationally and regionally as follows:

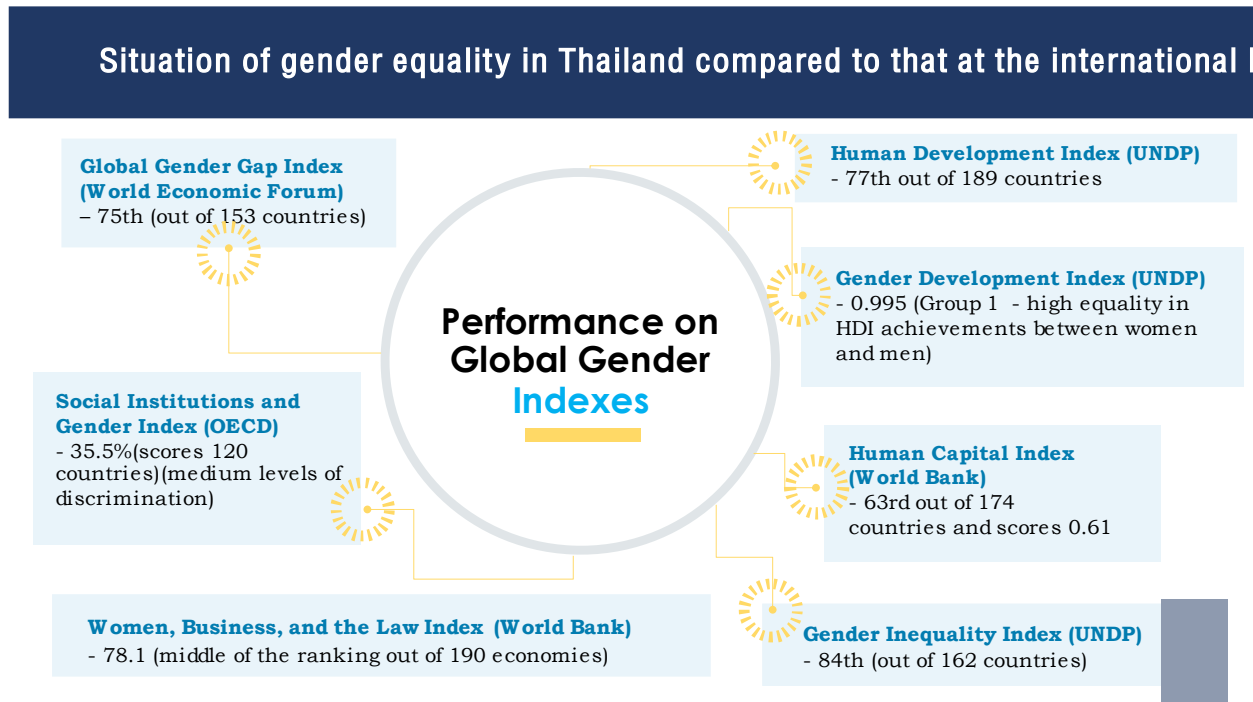
- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** - The main objective is to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, including ensuring that women and men have the right to equal treatment and care from the State.
- **Declarations within ASEAN**, such as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the Elimination of Violence Against Children in ASEAN. The main objective is to promote gender equality and the role of women to contribute to the development of the economy and society of the ASEAN Community.

For example, The 3rd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women (AMMW) was organized under the theme of "Social Protection for Women and Girls: Toward the ASEAN Community Vision 2025"

1.3 Situation of gender equality in Thailand compared to that at the international level

The situation of women in Thailand is moderate compared to the rest of the world. The ranking in terms of equality is ranked by international organizations worldwide (Figure 1.1). Overall, the country has made progress in all dimensions in the gender equality indexes, especially high scores in the health and education dimension (i.e., high life expectancy at birth, low maternal mortality ratio, high years of schooling). However, the country has received a low score on the part of women's political participation. There is a high level of political discrimination against women (95 percent of members of the House of Representatives are men). There are no political quotas at the national and local levels.

Figure 1.1 – Situation of gender equality in Thailand compared to that at the international level



Source: Author's compilation

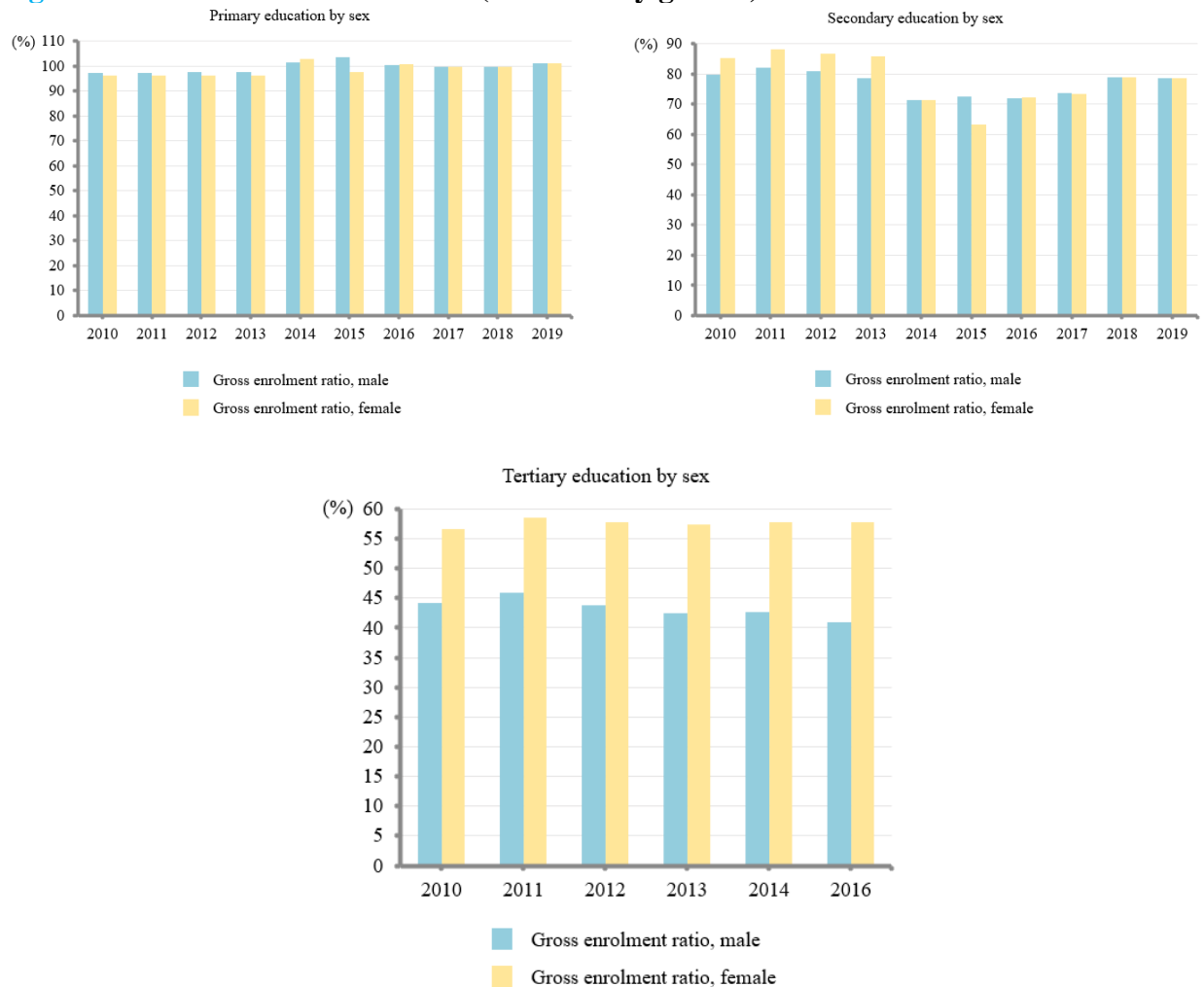
For example, Thailand has the most advanced in Human Development Index (HDI) ranking from 2013 to 2018. The country has improvements in four key indicators: life expectancy at birth, school years (both expected and mean), and total national income (GNI) per capita. Thailand's Gender Development Index (GDI) (0.995) made the country in Group 1 (high level of parity in the achievements of HDI between women and men). In the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020 (indicators to track gender equality improvements), women's political participation caused Thailand to have a low score.

Based on Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) (legal factors affecting Thailand's ranking), Thai women do not have the same rights as men in granting citizenship to non-citizen spouses. Furthermore, even though there was a reform to improve gender equality in employment, in which a new law states employers are required to pay equal wages for men and women engaging in work of equal value, the country still needs to reform the issues related to parental status (maternity leave) (based on World Bank's Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) index, 2021).

1.4 The evolution of the roles of men and women in the Thai economy

In the past, the role of Thai men was mainly to work and earn money outside the home, while the role of Thai women was in the home doing household chores. However, at present, the overall role of women is very good in terms of educational opportunities and having a job. The role of women in economic participation has significantly improved. Thailand has successfully expanded opportunities for women to participate in the economy. The main factor is the country's investment in education. There are opportunities for women to be educated. There is no problem supporting girls' education. The country's huge investment in education has been the main force enabling Thailand to achieve gender equality in education.

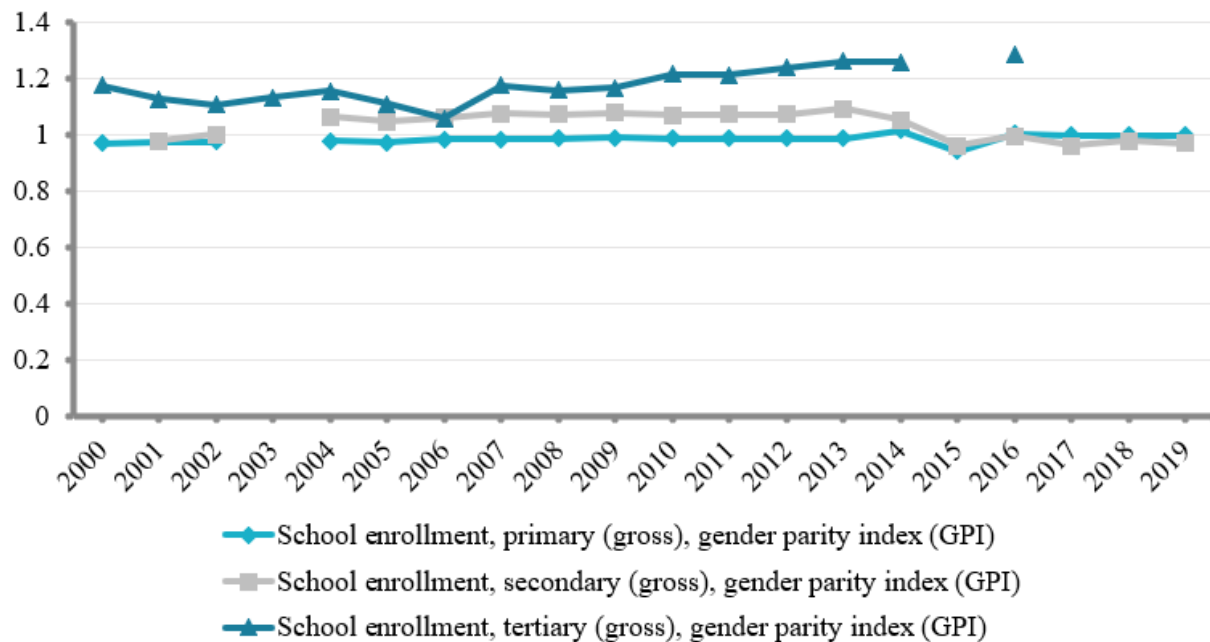
Figure 1.2 – Gross enrolment rates (classified by gender) 2010-2019



Source: Gross enrolment rates in Thailand. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/th>.

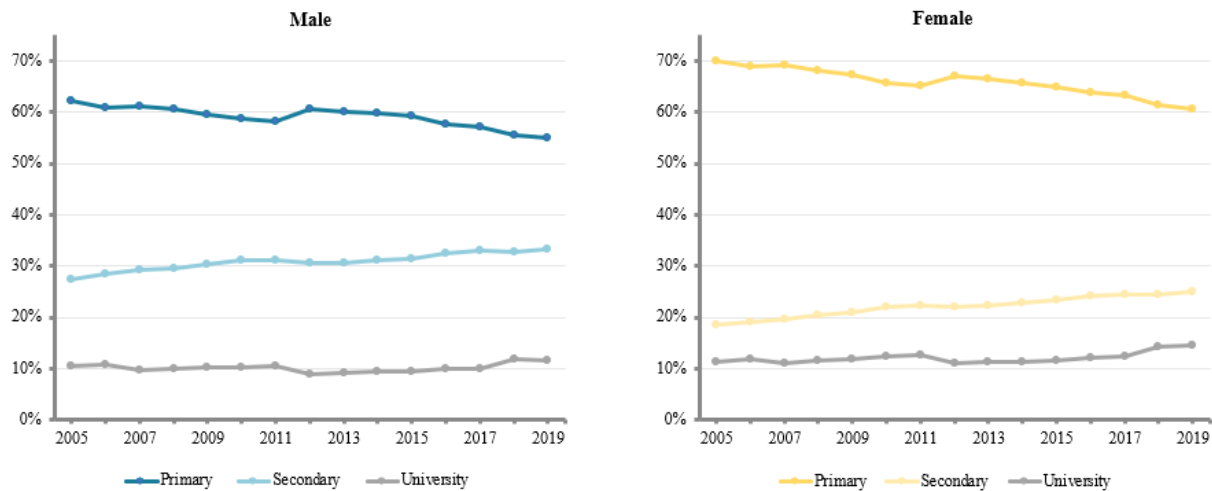
Thailand has made remarkable progress in terms of female tertiary enrollment rates. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in Thailand's higher education increased from 1.18 in 2000 to 1.29 in 2016. The GPI trend in secondary and primary education has been relatively stable over 20 years, indicating that the country almost achieved gender equality in access to education. Compared to other countries, the GPI of Thailand (Primary 0.998, Secondary 1.019) is below the average of two ASEAN countries: Vietnam (Primary 1.021) and Malaysia (Secondary 1.078) (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 – Gender Parity Index (GPI) 2000-2019



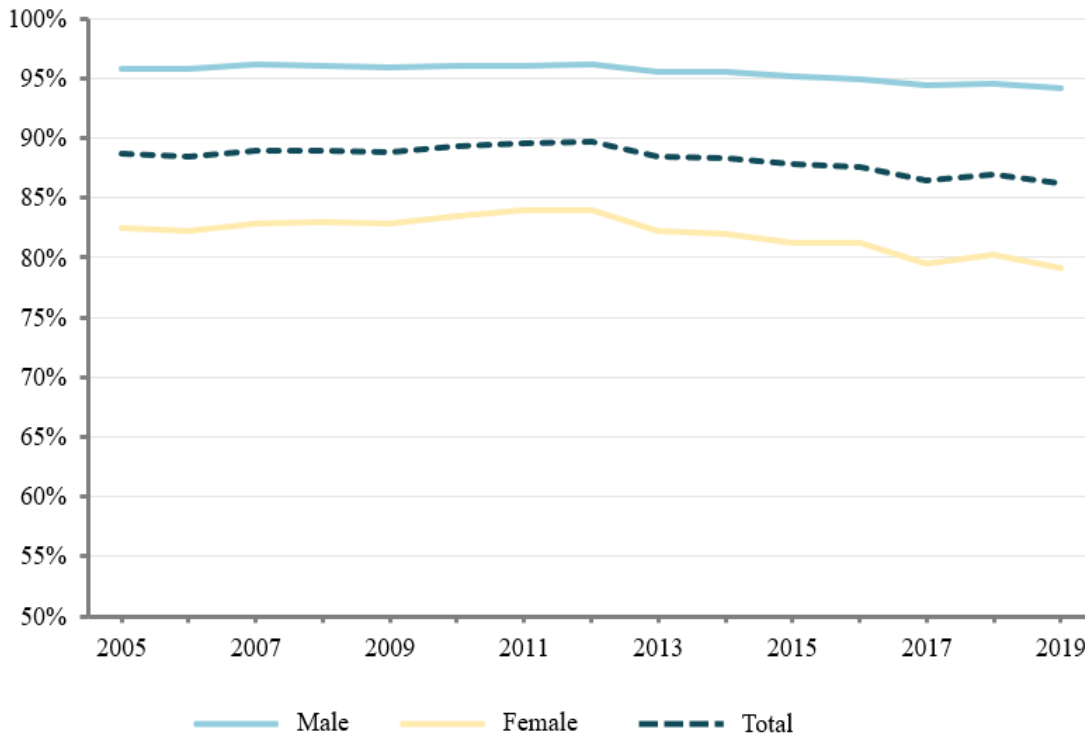
Source: Gender Parity Index in Thailand. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/th>.

On average, the educational level of most Thai workers (aged 25-54 years) is primary education (55 percent men, 60 percent women). However, the share of women in secondary education increased from 18 % in 2005 to 25% in 2019. Additionally, while the percentage of men with university degrees has remained constant (10-11%), the percentage of women with university degrees has increased and outpaced the percentage of men in 2019 (14%) (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4 – Education level of Thai workers (prime working age) (2005–2019)

Source: Author's calculation from Thailand Labor Force Survey 2548–2562.

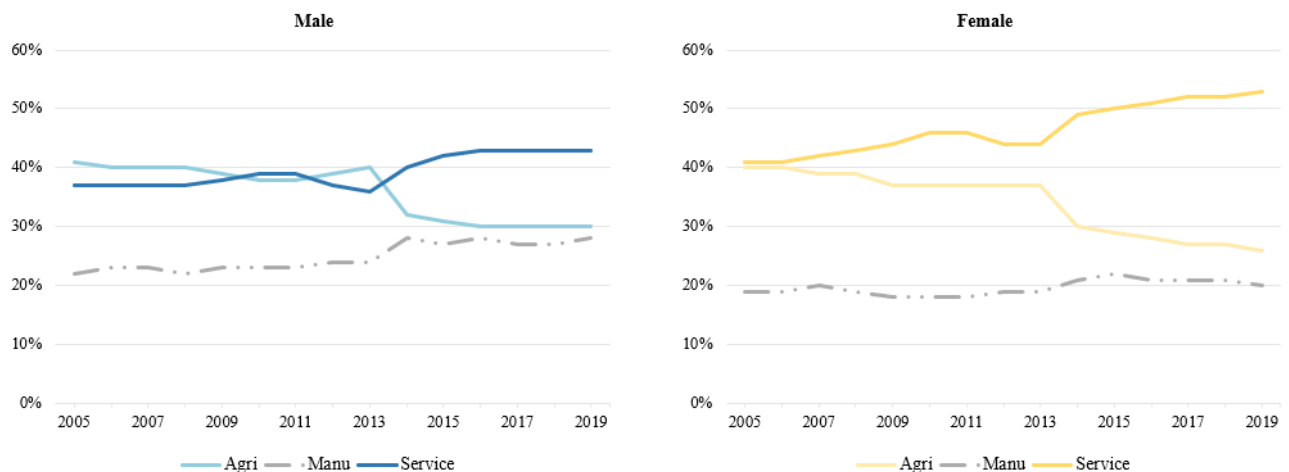
As a result of Thailand's improvement in human capital, currently, women are one of the country's main labor forces. The female labor force participation rate in the country is high (around 80%) compared to male 95% (Figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5 – Labor force participation rate of prime working age (2005 -2019)

Source: Author's calculation from Thailand Labor Force Survey 2548–2562.

Important factors driving the role of Thai women - Structural economic shifts have changed the pattern of women’s participation in the labor market. This shifts women from unpaid jobs in the informal sector to paid jobs in the formal sector. The change in emphasis from agriculture to a manufacturing and service-oriented economy benefits women with more flexible jobs that match their skills and abilities. The proportion of women employed in the agricultural sector has declined dramatically. The proportion of employment in the manufacturing sector remained stable, while that in the service sector increased. Currently, the service sector is considered the primary economic sector in Thailand. Women play a significant role in the economy. Thailand is engaging in the “feminization of the workforce” (Paweenawat and McNown, 2018) - Women have emerged as the labor force in the labor market and have a significant role in the Thai economy.

Figure 1.6 – Employment share of prime working age classified by sector (2005–2019)



Source: Author’s calculation from Thailand Labor Force Survey 2548–2562.

However, although Thai women have a significant role in the economy, in the Thai labor market there is still a very high level of gender discrimination. For example, at the executive level with decision-making powers, such as the level of the permanent secretary, and managing director, despite the increasing number of women, there is a smaller proportion than men.

Exercises

- 1) Provide a definition of gender economics and examples of issues that have been studied at the individual, household, and national levels. Include a discussion on the differences between male and female roles in different societies related to age, race, religion, beliefs, and values.
- 2) Discuss SDG5 and provide examples of Thailand's current progress toward the achievement thereof. Compare the situation of Thai women to that for women in the rest of the world. Consider this in conjunction with global gender equality rankings.
- 3) Discuss the Labor Act B.E. 2562, which is a law to protect female workers from being discriminated against compared to male workers in terms of welfare coverage and benefits. The law prevents discrimination against female workers. Do you think this law is sufficient? If not, why not? Why and what issues should the government address? Give an example.
- 4) Thai women have an active role in the economy. Summarize the key factors driving the role of Thai women from past to present. Do you agree that despite having an important role, there is still inequality between men and women in the labor market? Why?
- 5) Based on the information in the Global Gender Gap Report, please select a country of interest (except Thailand), analyze the rankings and scores of this country, and study the positive/negative factors affecting the scores of this country. What policies should be implemented if we want to increase the score?

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