Our people

Our employees are essential to our success and we believe that the greater the investment in their development, the stronger and more sustainable the returns. The culture at the John Keells Group allows our employees to question accepted norms, test new ideas, and to see mistakes as an opportunity to learn. Strong values such as Innovation, Integrity, Caring, Excellence and Trust help our employees to develop and positively contribute to our stakeholders.

Human Resource policies, practices and operating processes play a pivotal role in human capital management. The John Keells Group leadership together with the Human Resources division constantly envisions new strategies and initiatives towards talent acquisition and talent retention.

Capability building

Enabling and empowering the future workforce ensures capability building at grassroot level. This year, enhanced focus was given towards capability building of undergraduates in the market with a view to increasing their future employability. Two such initiatives were the Fast Track Internship Programme and the Arrow Work Readiness Programme which were in addition to the current strategies used by the Group and its sectors.

Fast Track Internship Programme

Conducted in partnership with Ceylon Tobacco Company and Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation, Fast Track provided corporate exposure to Sri Lankan undergraduates pursuing their studies both in Sri Lanka and abroad whilst providing a stepping stone towards their future careers. Selected interns were exposed to nine different industries within a six week long internship including hands-on work experience. As part of skill development, the interns were trained in business etiquette, teamwork and showcasing leadership skills through an out-bound training together with a programme on creating their personal brand. Further, the interns were required to work on a project and make their recommendations on a given topic to the senior management of the Group as part of their skill development. The programme was a success, receiving over 800 applications in the first year.

Our People

Arrow Work Readiness Programme

The objective of the programme was to prepare students and provide the necessary skills to enable them to successfully seek employment. The sessions included an induction to the John Keells Group, training in interviewing skills, résumé preparation, business etiquette, communication skills and finally, an internally designed out-bound training as part of experiential learning. In the first year, the Arrow received 210 applications and 130 of them were selected to be a part of the programme. Four candidates were hired during the programme by various businesses of the Group. The remaining candidates' resumes were added to the Group's candidate data base to draw upon as the need arises.

Career guidance

The Group continues to participate in career fairs conducted by universities and professional institutes. At these sessions the undergraduates are offered an opportunity to acquire skills enabling them to successfully seek employment and receive guidance on to making an informed career choice. The Final Step programme organised by the John Keells Foundation is another initiative which allows an undergraduate to acquire the skills necessary when joining the professional work force.

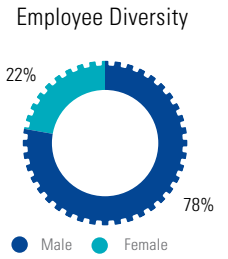
Our employees

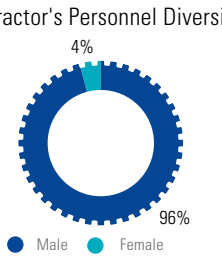
Information regarding employees and workforce has been obtained through the Human Resources Management (HRM) module of the Group's ERP system as well as the HRM modules of individual companies.

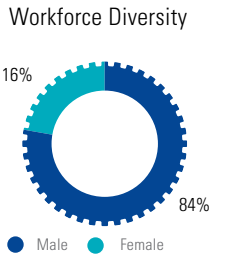
Our workforce as at 31st March 2012 totals 18,060 of which 11,748 are employees while 6,312 are supervised workers or workers deployed by third party contractors. Of these 6,312 workers, 85 per cent are insurance sales agents of Union Assurance PLC who are engaged on a sales and distributor arrangement with Union Assurance. The employee numbers set out in the chart comprise full time employees as per the relevant national legislation. The Group has increased its number of employees by 5 per cent during the reporting year, with the main contributing industry groups being Leisure, Consumer Foods and Retail, and IT.

Employee diversity

Gender and age are two of the key parameters considered by the Group in terms of tracking employee diversity. The Group has maintained its gender percentage as per the previous reporting year.

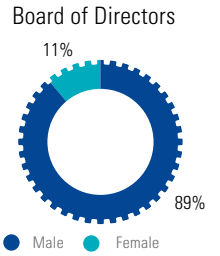


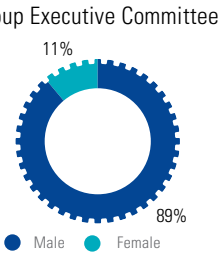


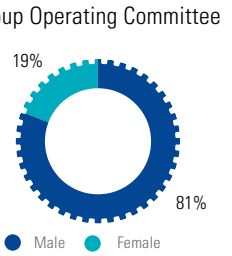


Employee diversity in key decision making bodies in the organisation

The Group Executive Committee is the overlay structure that implements under the leadership and direction of the Chairman-CEO, the policies and strategies determined by the Board. The Group Operating Committee provides a platform to share learning on issues that cross industry groups, sectors, business units and functions while the Group Management Committees are dedicated and focussed towards designing, implementing and monitoring the best practices in their respective industry groups, sectors, functions and strategic business units. The diversity within these governance bodies is as follows:







All Board Directors are over the age of 50, while 4 members of the Group Executive Committee are between the ages of 30-50 and five members are over 50 years of age. 11 members of the Group Operating Committee (including the Group Executive Committee) are between the ages of 30-50, while 10 are over the age of 50.

Total Employee Count	Male	Female	Total
AVP & above	95	20	115
Managers	413	61	474
Assistant managers	398	99	497
Executives	1,307	520	1,827
Non-executives	6,948	1,887	8,835
Total employees	**9,161**	**2,587**	**11,748**
Contractor's personnel	6,085	227	6,312
Total workforce	**15,246**	**2,814**	**18,060**

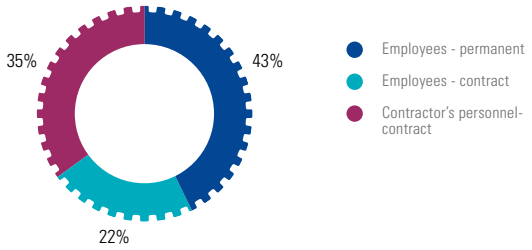
Type of employment

The Group considers the type of employment it offers within the categories of permanent and contract employment. The following depicts the gender-wise breakdown within the said types of employment.

Given the industry and business norms governing the Leisure and Consumer Food and Retail industries, these industry groups are the highest contributors to the Group's contract staff which accounts for 34 per cent of total employees. Initiatives have been introduced by the Retail and IT industry groups to convert contract staff to permanent status by offering learning and development opportunities and identifying high performers for permanent positions which would arise in the future to match their skills and expertise.

Workforce by Type			
	Male	Female	Total
Employees - permanent	5,886	1,856	7,742
Employees - contract	3,275	731	4,006
Contractor's personnel - contract	6,085	227	6,312
Total workforce	**15,246**	**2,814**	**18,060**

Workforce by type of employment

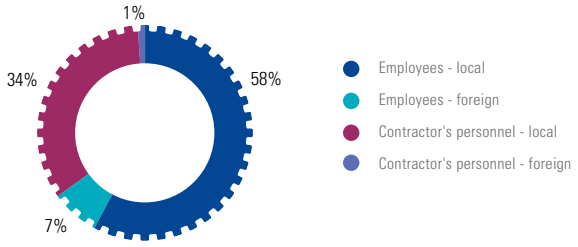


Employment by region

While 11 per cent of our employees are employed outside the country, mainly in the Maldives and India, 89 per cent of the staff is employed within Sri Lanka.

Workforce by Region			
	Male	Female	Total
Employees - local	8,160	2,329	10,489
Employees - foreign	1,001	258	1,259
Contractor's personnel - local	5,933	214	6,147
Contractor's personnel - foreign	152	13	165
Total	**15,246**	**2,814**	**18,060**

Workforce by region



The trend of employee distribution across type, region and gender over the past three years is as follows.

	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10
Employment type			
Permanent	66%	67%	68%
Contract	34%	33%	32%
Employment by region			
Local	89%	90%	89%
Foreign	11%	10%	11%
Employment by gender			
Male	78%	78%	78%
Female	22%	22%	22%

Of the total new hires in the Group during the reporting period, 13.4 per cent is from the executive and above cadre. The main reason for this increase is expansions in the Leisure industry group, with the opening of refurbished properties Chaaya Tranz and Chaaya Wild, and also the increase in new retail outlets. The Leisure and Retail industry group account for the highest percentage of the total new hires of the Group at the non-executive level and on contract basis, this being the result of the nature of their operating model and industry.

The Group's new hire attrition is at 4 per cent, excluding the Retail and Leisure industry groups where attrition is expected to be high and is considered to be an industry norm. The Group's total executive and above attrition stands at 15.6 per cent, which includes the BPO, Retail and Leisure sectors, where high attrition is expected.

Proactive initiatives have been taken to address attrition in industries with high staff turnover. The compensation model of the Retail sector was revisited making it more attractive based on the demographics of the non-executive employees. The sector also continues to pay the joining bonus which assists employees from outstation areas to settle themselves in the appointed outlet area. Further, Retail sector employee engagement strategies have focussed on involving employees in decision making, offering employees the opportunity to share their ideas, and thus ensuring inclusivity. Initiatives taken to foster the above strategy are Young Forums in the sector, with representation from each outlet, and Supiri Hamuwa, a town hall meeting offered to all staff, encouraging participation and a sense of belonging. In addition, Keells Radio, a radio station manned by employees, broadcasts to all outlets every morning and has created excitement and engagement amongst employees. The station allows the employees at the various outlets an opportunity to get to know each other, ensures that recognition schemes reaches all employees of the sector and provides sector wide communication to reach each employee directly. The Retail Academy offers industry and job based training to staff and a familiarisation programme organised by the Human Resource team.

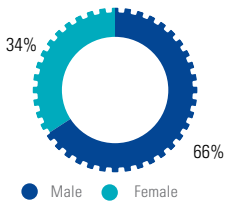
The Leisure sector has partnered with the Sri Lanka Institute of Hospitality Management to provide employment in its hotel properties. The sector continues to work with the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management to offer all its employees a learning experience which will assist the sector to be amongst the best in the global market. While offering its employees great opportunities for learning and development, the Leisure sector has also focussed on upgrading accommodation facilities of staff at its properties. The Group believes that these initiatives would contribute to the reduction in attrition in these sectors.

Our People

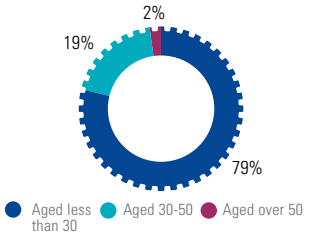
The Group has also witnessed many returning to work in Sri Lanka from overseas, and has managed to attract them to the Group, especially in the Leisure industry group. The Group has also been able to attract specialist technical expatriate staff who in turn bring in global expertise and knowhow.

The total attrition by gender, age and region are as follows.

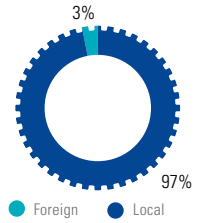
Total attrition by gender



Total attrition by age group

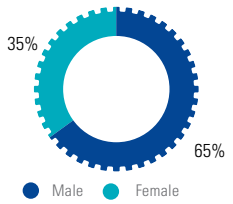


Total attrition by region

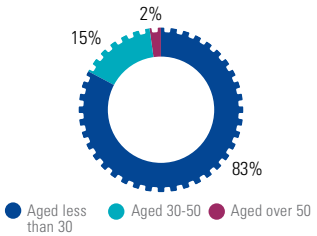


The attrition of new hires by gender, age and region are as follows.

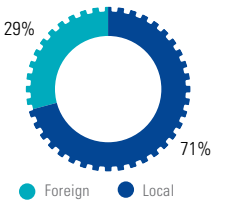
New hire attrition by gender



New hire attrition by age group



New hire attrition by region



Employee engagment

The John Keells Group believes in constant dialogue with all our employees and the creation of organisation citizenship and commitment, ensuring the success of employee relations. We strongly believe in employee engagement as an enabler of positive social impacts for our organisation. We recognise the rights of our employees and provide forums, support groups and policies to hear and address their concerns and resolve issues and conflicts in a fair and transparent manner.

The following employee engagement activities are practiced within the Group:

- Open Door Policy
- Ombudsperson
- Employee direct access to the Chairman through a dedicated and secure e-mail address Chairman Direct
- Regular skip-level meetings
- Joint Consultative Committees
- Young fora at Group level and sector levels
- Welfare Committees
- Joint Operating Committees
- Business Improvement Committees
- Innovation Teams
- CSR Volunteerism
- Peer and subordinate evaluation at manager and above levels
- John Keells Group Sports Club
- JK Connect, JK Blog and other e-communication channels

Voice of Employees survey

A 'Voice of Employees' (VOE) survey was conducted during the reporting year as a dip stick study to check the employee pulse of the employees in the organisation. The Group will use the results as a people management index and monitor its progess as a measure every year. Each business unit and sector will have an individual VOE score which the respective profit center managers and sector heads responsible to maintain at 70 per cent or above. The cumulative score will represent the John Keells Group's VOE score. The results will be captured, analysed and action plans will be drawn up to address the concerns of our employees and build on our strengths.

Collective bargaining

Our policy on collective bargaining ensures that formal and informal types of collective bargaining are prevalent in the Group. While formal collective agreements are found in the Consumer Food sector and the Plantation Services sector, the Retail sector engages in salary negotiations and ensures that employee views are given due consideration. In addition, the Tea Smallholder Factories PLC in the Plantation Services sector is not a signatory of a collective agreement, but the company customarily follows the same structure governing the plantation industry of the country with regards to terms and conditions of employment.

Employees Covered By Formal Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA)	
Consumer Foods and Retail	1,834
Plantation Services	887
Property	5
Percentage of employees covered by CBAs	23%

Resort hotels have entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with employee representatives covering 244 employees in limited areas.

Performance centric culture

All employees of the Group undergo regular appraisals to receive feedback on their performance. The Group performance management policy requires bi-annual formal feedback to be provided to the executive cadre, and to all others at least once a year. While formal feedback is a scheduled occurrence, the performance-centric culture of the John Keells Group encourages and facilitates constant employee feedback at all levels.

Career Committees are the decision making bodies for decisions made with regard to employee performance for executives and above staff levels. Career Committees are convened annually at the end of the performance appraisal cycle, and are held at each business unit for executive and assistant manager level staff, at each sector for manager level staff and at Group level for assistant vice president and above level staff.

The objective of these Committees is to assess employee performance as a committee rather than by a single supervisor, thereby ensuring impartial assessments and enabling benchmarking at each level. The Committees' agenda looks at performance, learning and development, the Group talent pool, succession planning, employee promotions, lateral moves and career aspirations amongst others. The month of May is dedicated to Career Committees and the Group has in the past year, conducted 33 Career Committees with the management spending 400 hours over 50 days.

Learning and development

Learning and development (L&D) is a dedicated function at all business units and is also driven by the Group Human Resources division with regards to new strategies , policies and initiatives. The Group believes in business focussed training for all staff to impart expertise necessary for employees attached to different businesses and industry groups. Further, the Group focuses its training on competency development and leadership development for all employees to address current and future learning needs. The Group's employees have spent a total of 466,040 hours on training, averaging 40 hours per employee, an increase of 33 per cent compared to the previous year.

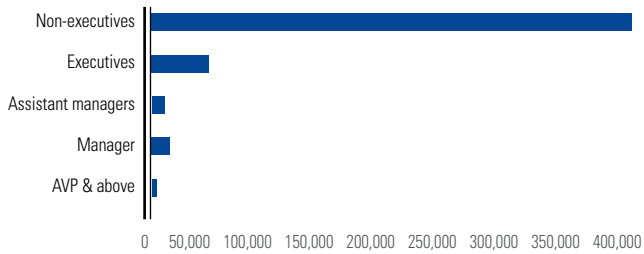
The Group has provided on average 42 hours of training to its male employees while providing 36 hours of training to its female employees. The training provided to non-executive staff was on average 45 hours per employee, while training provided to executive staff cadre was an average of 26 hours per employee.

With the Leisure industry group's focus on learning and development, the training hours provided to non executive staff has significantly increased. The Group also offers leadership training at all levels using various strategic partners. The assistant manager level programme done in partnership with the Post Graduate Institute of Management continues for 10 days covering ten modules. The programme's in-built design allows the trainees to use their learning on the job while continuing the other modules. Harvard Business Publishing India acted as the Group's leadership training partner for manager and above levels during the year. The Learning Management System / e-learning initiative that the Group embarked on during the last financial year has allowed each business unit to upload their respective e-learning catalogues while having access to the Group's main catalogue for competency training.

The Group's internal training faculty caters not only to the entry-level, but also offers many other complex trainings in an array of competencies. The pool of internal training faculty consists of 189 employees from multiple functions. This has also assisted in the Group offering all our employees the opportunity to go beyond their assigned role. The Group's L&D philosophy and practices are flexible and dynamic, accommodating life-long learning, crucial to building a sustainable competitive advantage.

More than just a workplace

As an equal opportunity employer, the John Keells Group does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, nationality, age, social origin, disability, religion, or any other basis. Employee policies from talent acquisition to talent retention are applied to employees based on their performance and merit. Employee hiring is done based on the Recruitment Policy and the Policy on Equal Opportunity, and supported by a Role Clarification document. The Group's operating structure is designed in a manner that ensures all people-related decisions are made by committees and not by individuals. Decisions relating to hiring, performance, promotion, learning and development, career development, compensation management and talent management are also made in this manner.

The Group lays emphasis on creating a favourable working environment for its employees and its human resources policies and practices enable us to attract and retain high calibre employees. The John Keells Group fosters a culture of inclusivity and trust at all times with all our employees committed to making John Keells 'More than just a Work Place'.

Total training hours by staff category