

# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DOMESTIC WORKERS IN AFRICA

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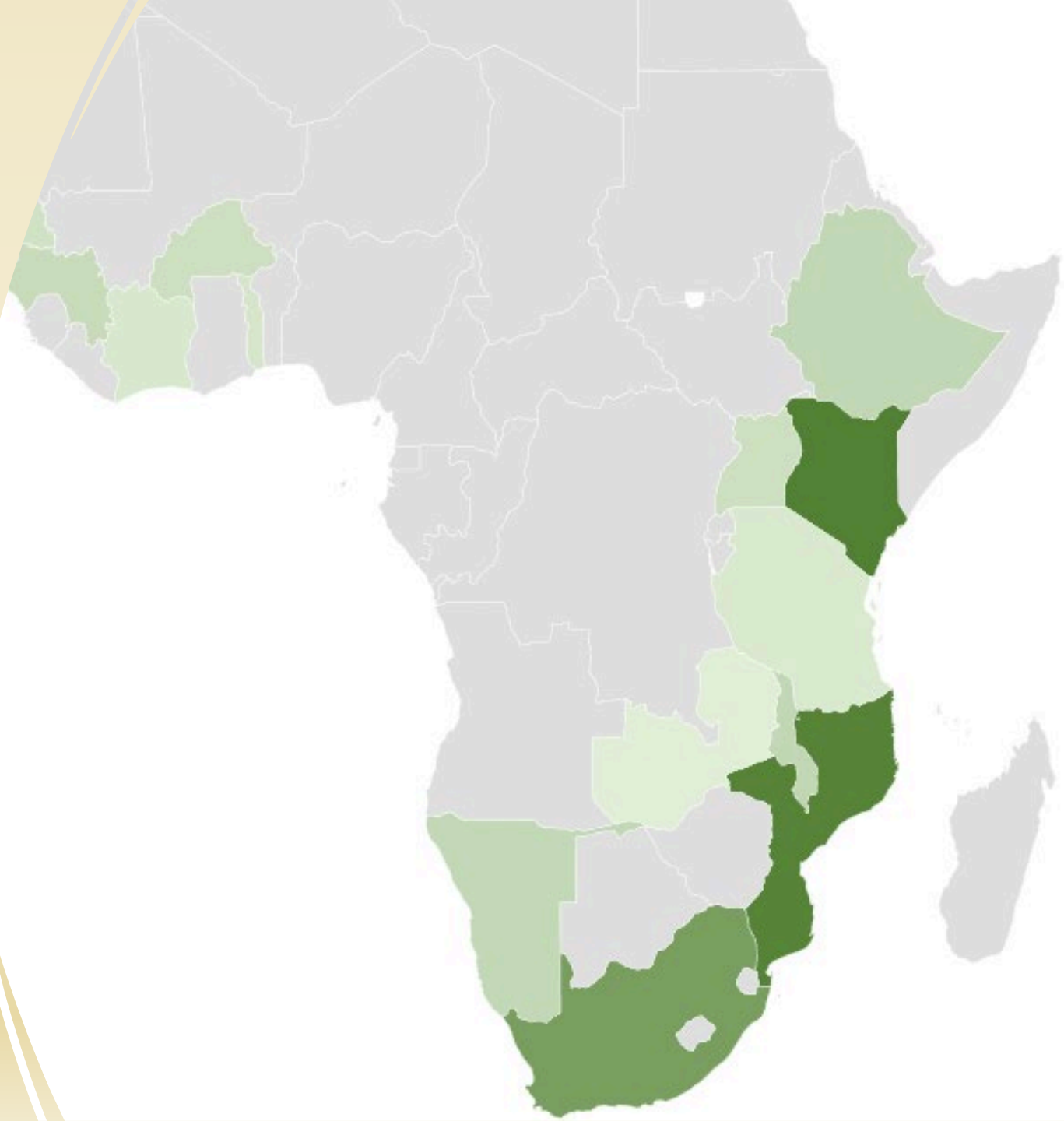


# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ▶ What was the impact of lockdown measures on domestic workers' working conditions?
- ▶ What kinds of State support did domestic workers receive during the lockdown period?
- ▶ What alternative sources of sustenance did domestic workers turn to in the absence of State support?
- ▶ How have domestic workers navigated the ongoing occupational health and safety hazards of intimate work during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- ▶ How can the experience of domestic workers during the first waves of the pandemic shape State policy and union responses towards a post-pandemic recovery?

# METHODOLOGY

- ▶ Survey design: IDWF and affiliated researchers
- ▶ Enumerators: trained domestic workers surveyed 3,419 peers in 14 African countries
- ▶ Data collection: Google forms
- ▶ Data analysis: IDWF affiliated researchers

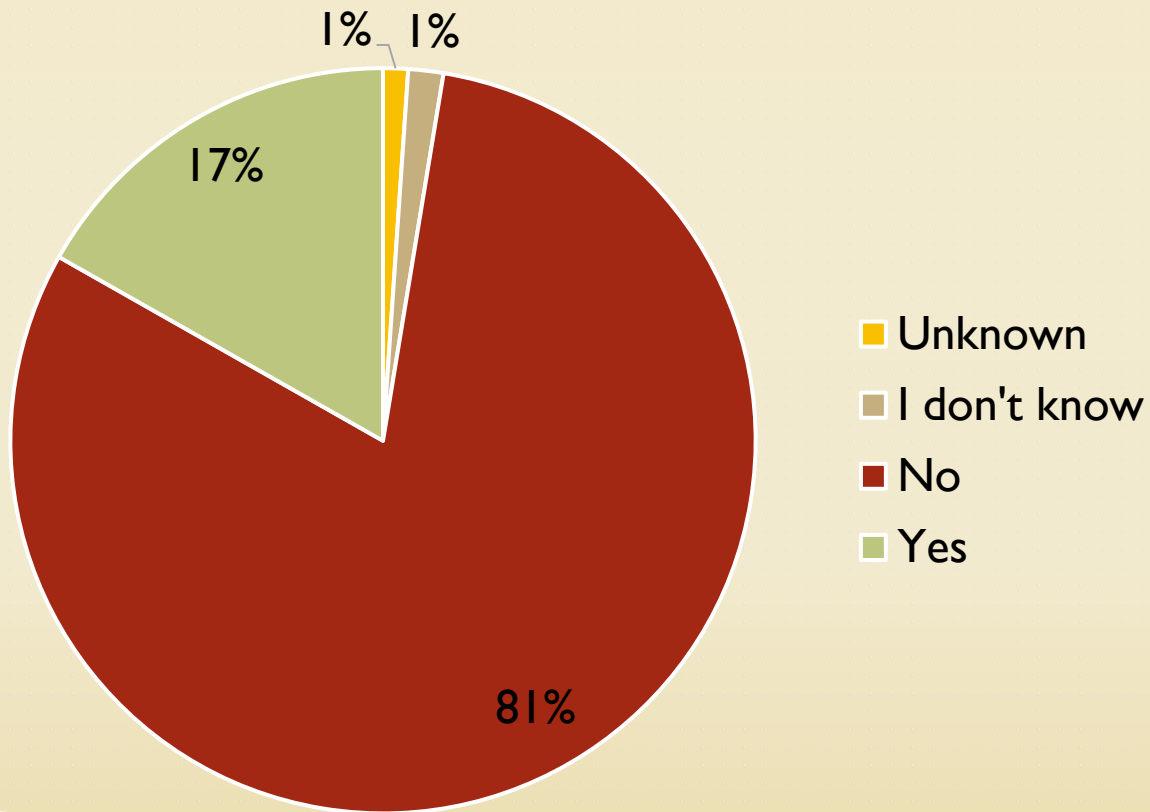


# Key demographic characteristics

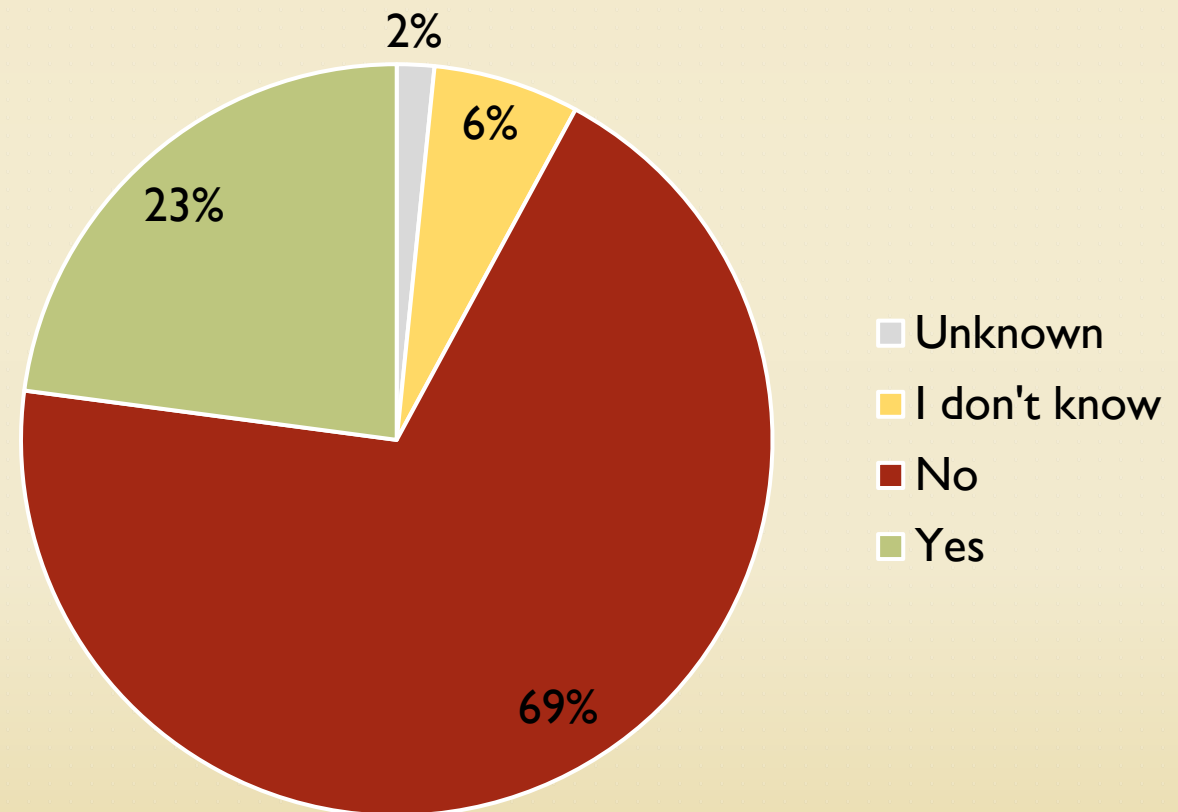
- ▶ 65% live in urban areas
- ▶ 24% of national migrants and 6% of international migrants
- ▶ 87% of women
- ▶ 85% are the main breadwinner of their household
- ▶ For 94%, domestic work is their main source of income

# HIGH INFORMALITY RATES

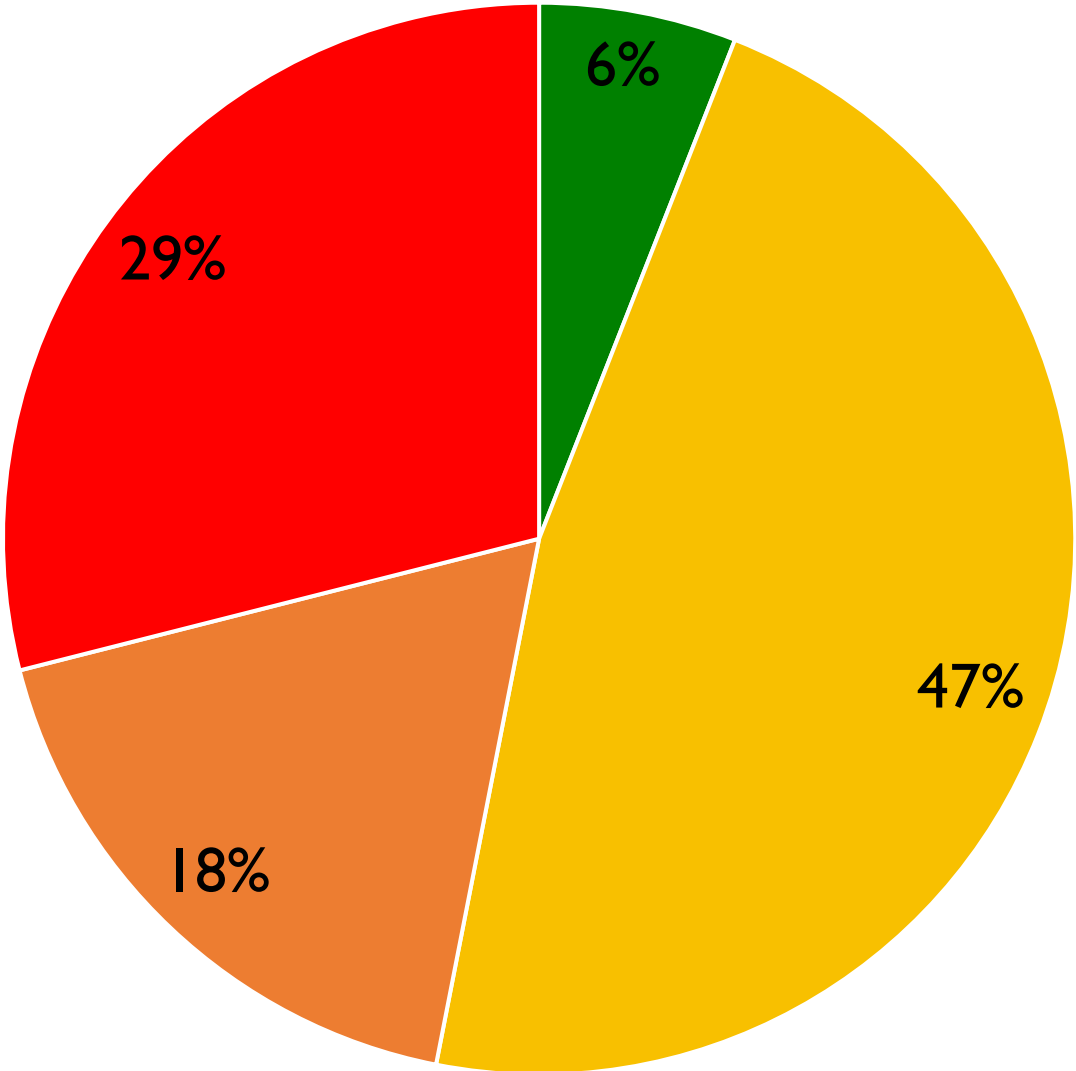
## Written contract



## Social security



# EMPLOYMENT SITUATION DURING THE CRISIS



- Stayed home but continued to draw a salary
- Continued working normally
- Hours and wages were reduced during the lockdown period
- Suspended or laid off

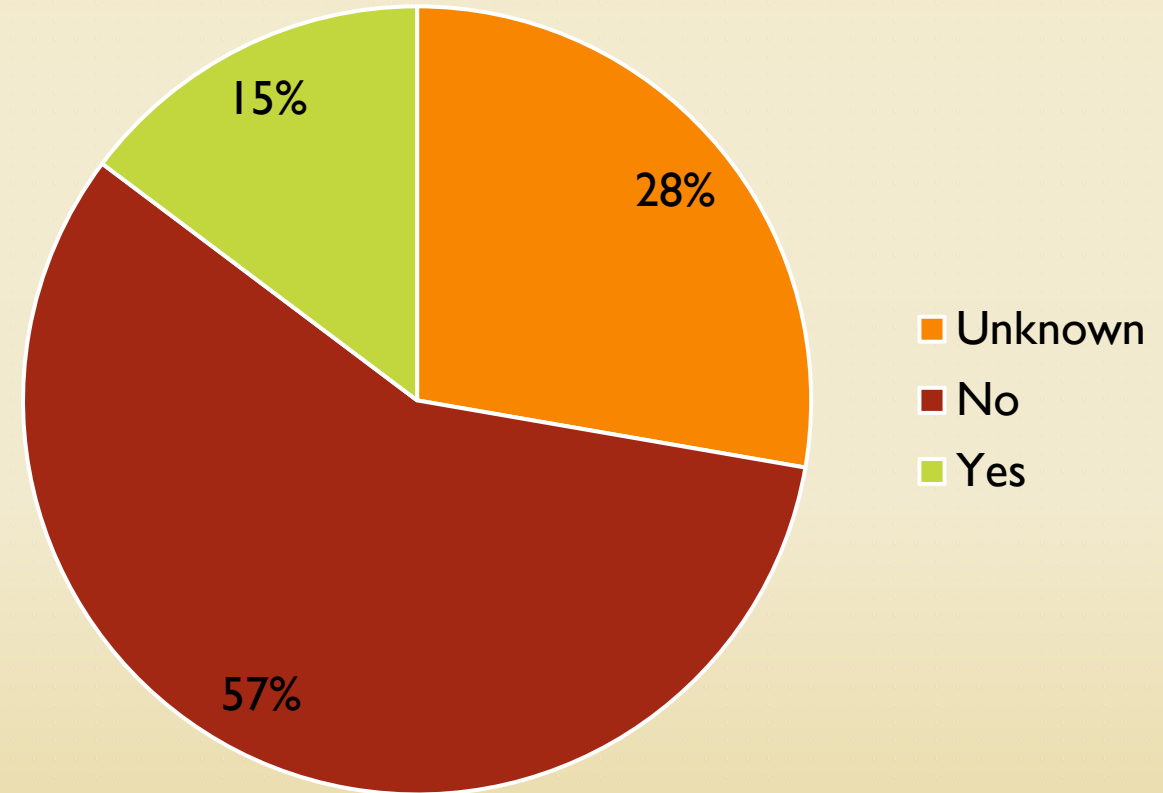
# CONSEQUENCES OF INFORMALITY

- ▶ Nearly half of surveyed domestic workers experienced a reduction in income, suspension of work or layoffs.
- ▶ Layoffs were most common in countries which applied strict lockdown measures such as South Africa, Senegal and Kenya.
- ▶ 85 percent of domestic workers who were laid off, received no severance pay
- ▶ It took workers up to six months to secure new employment.
- ▶ Reduction in income had a dramatic impact on the household.
- ▶ Rising food and fuel prices, amidst widespread price speculation.


# LACK OF STATE SUPPORT

- ▶ Only 30% of domestic workers contributed to social insurance and many social insurance schemes exclude unemployment.
- ▶ While many African governments did introduce income-support measures, these were highly targeted and overlooked the “missing middle”.
- ▶ Over half of respondent did not even apply to government support schemes, the main reason being that domestic workers were not included.
- ▶ Consequently, only **17% of domestic workers received some form of state support.**

**Did you apply for state support?**



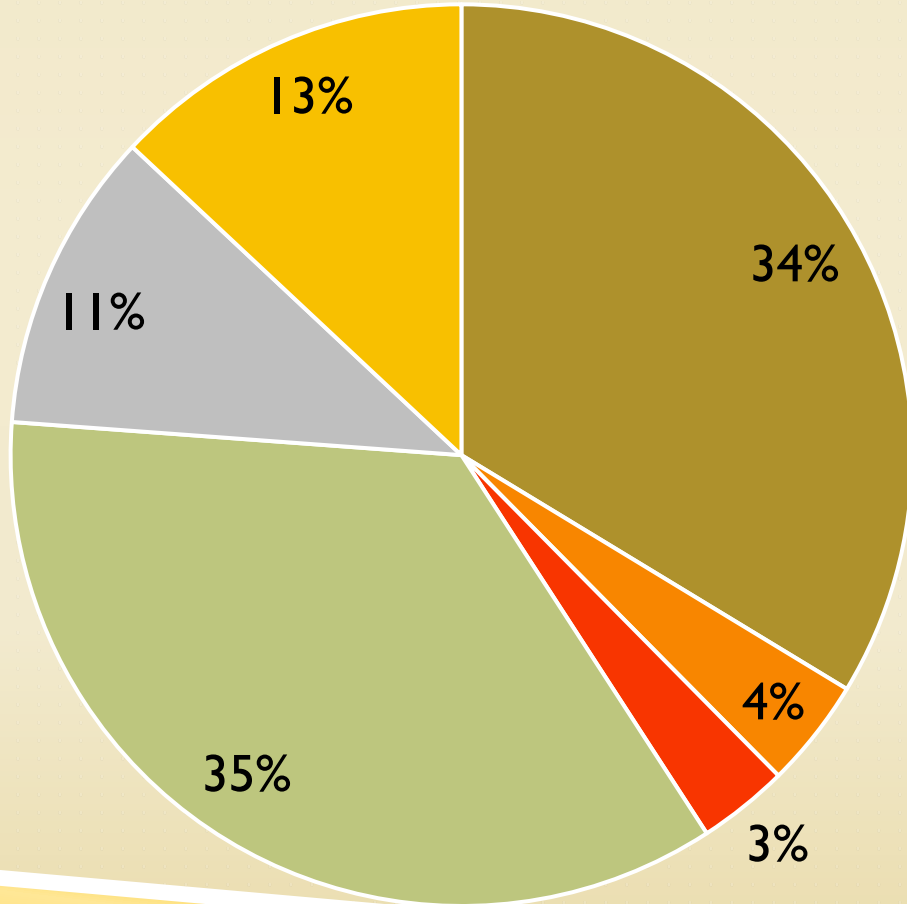




***“There were no specific measures for domestic workers. If workers received benefits such as sanitation kits or a waiver of utility fees, it was because they happened to be in a household that was included in the program, not because they were a domestic worker.”***

	<b>Cancellation of water or electricity bills</b>	<b>Emergency financial aid</b>	<b>Food basket or food vouchers</b>	<b>Unemployment benefit</b>	<b>Support for rent</b>	<b>Nothing</b>
Burkina-Faso	<b>13.70%</b>	<b>3.40%</b>	2.60%	0.00%	<b>7.70%</b>	72.60%
Ethiopia	2.90%	<b>2.40%</b>	<b>13.00%</b>	1.40%	0.00%	80.20%
Guinea Conakry	0.00%	0.00%	0.80%	0.00%	0.00%	<b>99.20%</b>
Ivory Coast	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
Kenya	0.40%	<b>2.20%</b>	<b>5.80%</b>	0.20%	0.40%	<b>91.00%</b>
Malawi	1.40%	2.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	<b>96.50%</b>
Mozambique	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
Namibia	0.00%	<b>11.60%</b>	3.20%	<b>45.00%</b>	0.00%	40.20%
Senegal	<b>84.80%</b>	0.00%	0.70%	0.00%	0.00%	14.60%
South Africa	0.20%	0.20%	0.70%	3.30%	0.00%	<b>95.60%</b>
Tanzania	0.00%	0.40%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	<b>99.60%</b>
Togo	<b>33.30%</b>	0.00%	0.00%	1.20%	0.00%	65.50%
Uganda	0.00%	0.80%	<b>33.90%</b>	0.00%	0.00%	65.30%
Zambia	0.00%	0.00%	2.30%	2.30%	0.00%	<b>95.50%</b>

## How did you survive?



- I borrowed money from friends or relatives
- I had to move back to my parents or a relative's house
- I turned to the rotating savings group/stokvel/xitique
- I used my personal savings
- I started selling home made products (food, masks, clothes...)
- I contracted a debt / loan

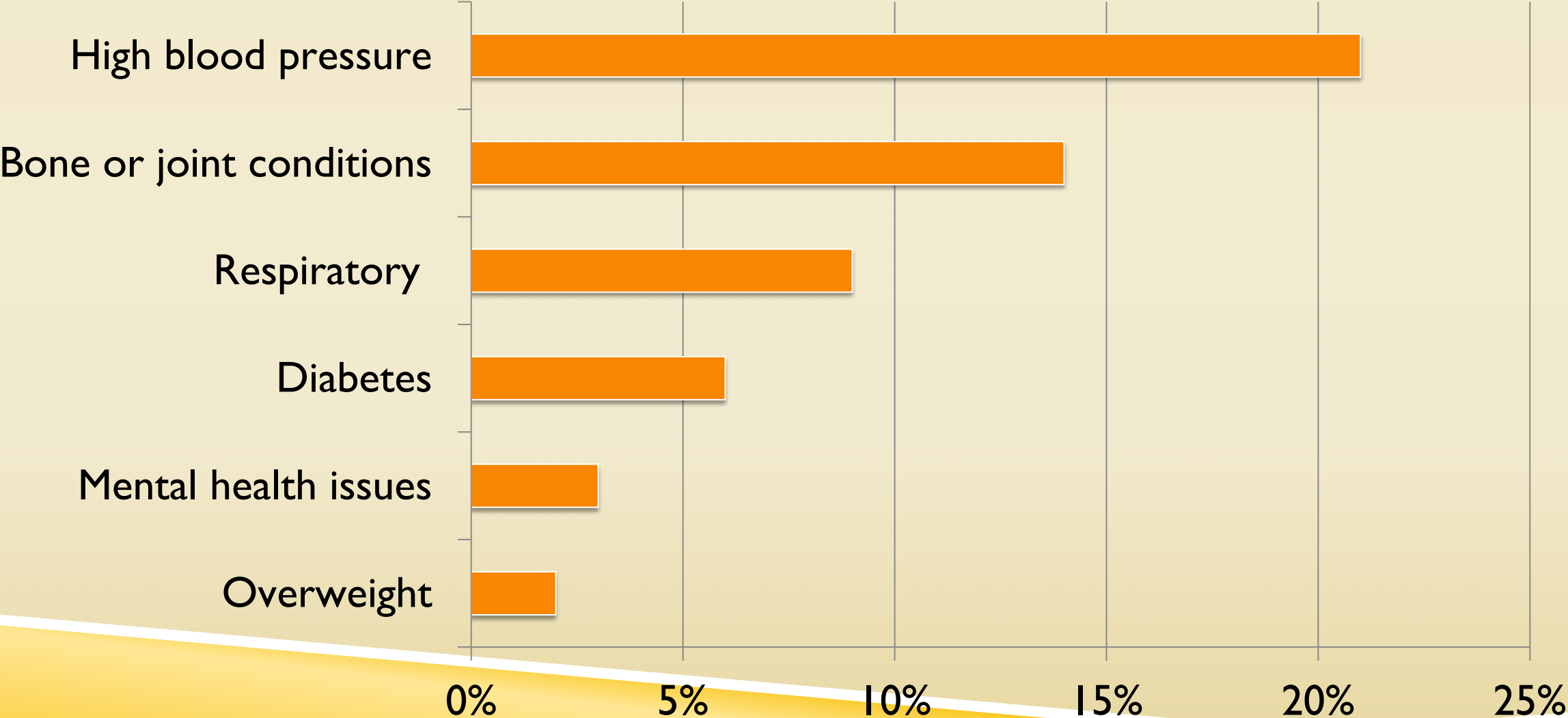
**67%** said they received support from their union

***“During Covid 19, we were locked in, no visiting families, so it was impossible to borrow food from your family because of hunger. From this period of Covid-19, I learned that even your immediate family could not support you when you have a problem because everybody was just looking after themselves.”***

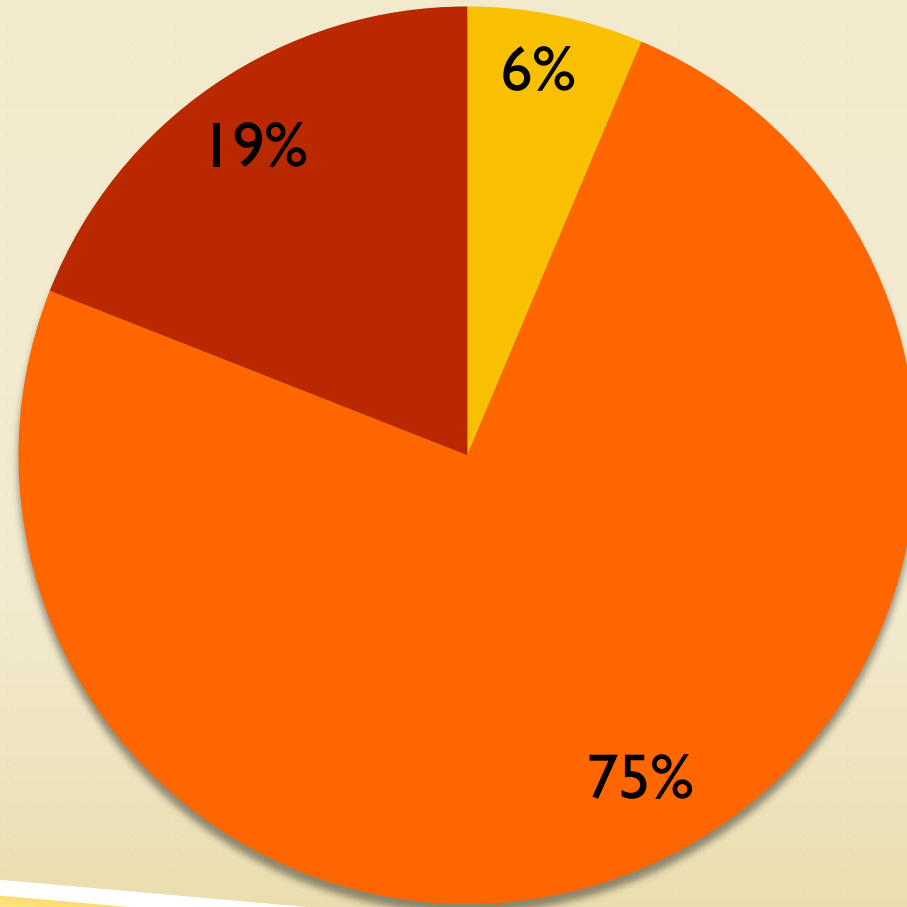
# HEALTH AND SAFETY

- ▶ Although 75% have now returned to work, **58 percent said that they felt either unsafe or very unsafe** due to the lack of personal protective equipment, safe transportation and the intimate nature of domestic work.
- ▶ **53% do not have access to paid sick days**, which increases the risk of infection and undermines domestic workers' ability to take care of themselves and their families.
- ▶ Given the stressful nature of domestic work, many workers have preexisting conditions including high blood pressure, respiratory diseases and diabetes.
- ▶ The risk of succumbing to Covid-19 is further exacerbated by the deterioration of health care services and access to medication.

# PRE-EXISTING HEALTH CONDITIONS



# IRREGULARITIES AT THE WORKPLACE



- I had to take care or work with someone who got covid-19
- I had to work more than usual
- I was forced to stay at my employer's house during the lockdown

# THE ROLE OF UNIONS





# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STATE

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- ▶ Awareness-raising campaigns regarding occupational health and safety standards, workers' rights and employer responsibilities.
- ▶ Distribution of **personal protective equipment** at key access points such as bus and taxi ranks.
- ▶ The introduction of **price controls**.
- ▶ The **expansion of emergency income-support measures** to domestic workers.
- ▶ The **extension of contributory social insurance** to domestic workers.
- ▶ The introduction of a **contributory unemployment benefit**, where absent.
- ▶ The **ratification of Convention 189 and 190**, adoption of complementary national legislation and implementation of an appropriate enforcement framework.
- ▶ Improved **access to medical assistance** and safe public transportation.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIONS

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- ▶ Awareness-raising campaigns on occupational health and safety.
- ▶ Recruitment drives to **expand membership and strengthen union dues collection.**
- ▶ Consolidation of **unions' emergency welfare fund.**
- ▶ Expansion of the union **training program** to include “know your rights”, leadership development, and income-generating workshops.
- ▶ Campaign to pressure states to **ratify Convention 189 and 190.**
- ▶ Adopt complementary legislative reforms including the effective expansion of social protection to domestic workers.