



**PAY AND WORKING
CONDITIONS FOR
DOMESTIC WORK IN
SOUTH AFRICA
2020**

COVID-19 EDITION

PRODUCED BY SWEEPSOUTH

Executive summary

The third annual SweepSouth Report on Pay and Working Conditions for Domestic Work in South Africa paints a stark picture of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of the women who clean our homes and offices.

This report was compiled from almost 5000 responses, overwhelmingly from women (97%) with an even split between South Africans (48%) and Zimbabweans (49%). The demographics of the respondents showed no notable changes in age and education level since the 2019 SweepSouth study, but there was a greater representation of respondents from the Western Cape (44%, up from 39%) and a decrease in the proportion of respondents from Gauteng (50%, down from 57%).

There has been a significant increase in the cost of living for domestic workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The total average monthly basic expenses increased by 34% to R4 225 per month. The most notable increases were in food (up 52%) and school fees (up 65%). This is likely as a result of a combination of inflation and an increase in the number of sole breadwinners (up 13%). The only costs to decline were data and airtime (down 36%), likely a result of increased governmental attention.

Financial dependency was seen to increase across the workers surveyed. Workers with 5 financial dependents increased to 17% (up from 12% in 2019) and those with 6 or more financial dependents increased to 20% (up from 14% in 2019). This was matched by decreasing financial security, with the number of respondents with a funeral plan, medical aid and making stokvel contributions falling substantially.

Despite an increase in financial responsibility, workers saw their earnings drop from 63% earning more than R2500 before the pandemic hit, to 74% earning less than R2500 after the onset of the pandemic and subsequent lockdown. This was coupled with an increase in 'underemployment' with 80% of workers reporting that they worked fewer than 8 hours per day (up from 73% in 2019). This placed severe downward pressure on spending with 85% of respondents forced to reduce spending, with the majority reducing their food budget (75%).

The decrease in income due to the pandemic meant that 69% of workers could not afford to pay their rent, with most reporting that they will have to catch up the payments they have missed (57%). A worsening of the debt crisis was observed as 46% of workers increased their debt during lockdown. Many workers did not have an end in sight for when they could repay their debt (42%). These effects were observed to have a disproportionate impact with non-South Africans feeling a greater pressure to reduce spending and increase their levels of debt.

Governmental support during the pandemic was broadly appreciated by South African respondents, with 75% of respondents claiming some sort of governmental support during the lockdown. Only a small number of foreign workers received governmental support (4%). Some workers were also able to receive support from their clients (35%) but the support from NPOs was limited (8%).

Respondents showed a comprehensive awareness of the precautions to take to avoid COVID-19 infection (99%), the symptoms of infection (93%) and where to get tested (90%). The health impact was varied with only 4% of workers diagnosed with the illness and none facing serious complications. Some 29% reported other knock-on effects for their physical health and a deeply concerning 57% reported that the lockdown influenced their mental health. All active workers on the SweepSouth platform were supported through the SweepSouth COVID-19 SweepStar Relief Fund.

Respondents state getting back to work (33%) as their greatest need at the moment, followed by rental assistance (30%) and food parcels (24%).

Given the severe and long-lasting impact a nutritional crisis would have on young children during this time, the first key recommendation is that urgent food relief is needed for domestic workers and their families. The other key recommendations include an immediate return of work for domestic workers, rental assistance for workers facing eviction, mental health intervention to assist with the increased social, psychological and psychiatric effects of the lockdown on struggling families, and policy reform targeted at considering greater inclusion of foreign workers in the social welfare system and an expansion of UIF to cover all workers in South Africa.

Introduction

2020 has been a difficult period for all South Africans as our nation faced an unprecedented global crisis in the COVID-19 pandemic. This was compounded by South Africa struggling with a stagnant economy and marginal growth in the years leading up to 2020. This has placed severe downward pressure on household incomes with as many as 34% of households expected to exit the middle class as a result. Given domestic workers earn a subset of the income of the homes they work in, the pandemic is expected to have dire consequences for their livelihoods.

Domestic work accounts for 6% of total employment and around 15% of the employment of women in South Africa. Most domestic workers are poor, Black African women and the income generated from domestic work is often the only funds available to uplift those still stuck in the vicious economic cycle rooted in this country's troubled history.

SweepSouth's previous report showed that 79% of domestic workers are sole breadwinners, with 71% being single mothers and on average supporting 3 dependents. Any economic impact on this sector is expected to reverberate across South Africa at large and place the most vulnerable in an even more precarious position.

The Stats SA Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2020 found that 9000 fewer people were employed as domestic workers versus Q4 2019. Furthermore, the National Income Dynamics Study - Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey - Wave 1 report showed an 18% decline in employment between February and April 2020, with 1 in 3 income earners in February not earning an income in April.

It is expected that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on domestic workers. Women accounted for two thirds of the job losses between February and April, and almost half of those employed during April reported working fewer or no hours. Among those already facing a disproportionate number of job losses (the less educated, the poor, Black Africans and informal workers), women faced even further job losses putting them at a 'double disadvantage'.

Awareness of the trends into the early part of the pandemic is important, but more recent data is sorely needed to inform the approach to the reopening of the economy. With the delay of the QLFS for Q2 2020 and without a detailed understanding of the dynamics within a fundamental sector like domestic work, we are missing a vital piece of the puzzle.

This is where the third annual SweepSouth Report on Pay and Working Conditions for Domestic Work in South Africa seeks to shed light. SweepSouth is Africa's leading online platform for connecting domestic workers to homeowners. Core to SweepSouth's mission is promoting the improvement of working conditions within the domestic work sector.

Past reports have sought to highlight the lived financial realities and changing conditions within the domestic work industry in South Africa. This report increases this scope to focus in on the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent government response for domestic workers.

In order to generate these insights, questions relating to pay, working conditions and the effect of the pandemic were circulated to a large number of domestic workers, some working on the platform and some not. Just under 5000 responses were recorded and analysed over three different surveys conducted online between July and August 2020. This offers the most robust view to date of the effect of COVID-19 on domestic workers across the country.

Study Time Frame:

07 June 2020



21 August 2020

Survey demographics

Consistent with past years, most respondents were women. This has decreased slightly to 97% of respondents as the successful launch of SweepSouth's outdoor cleaning and gardening product has resulted in more men joining the platform. Unfortunately, the number of men was too small at this stage to draw meaningful conclusions, but there is an anticipation of being able to separate the data in SweepSouth's 2021 report.

Respondents were evenly split between South Africans (48%) and Zimbabweans (49%), with Malawi (1%) and DRC (1%) making up the remainder. All workers currently reside and work in South Africa. The majority of respondents are split between Gauteng (50%) and the Western Cape (44%). KwaZulu-Natal trails far behind (4%) followed by the Eastern Cape (1%) and Mpumalanga (1%).

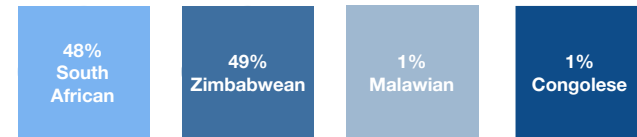
The average age of respondents has also remained consistent with past reports with 81% of workers being between the ages of 25 and 44.

The profile of respondents remains unchanged from past years. Most respondents hold a Matric or O-Level qualification, are single mothers and are the main breadwinner in their households.

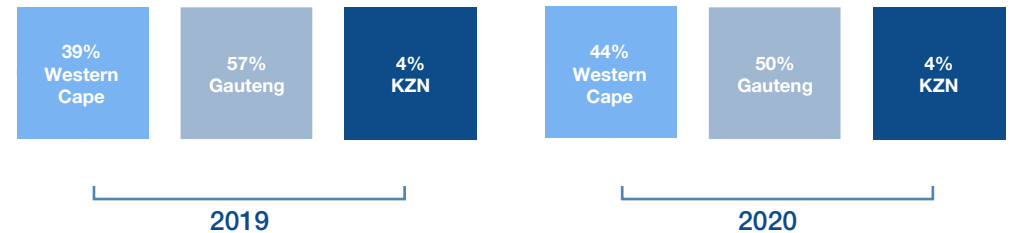
The relative increase in Western Cape respondents may result in a shift in comparability to past reports but given the consistency of other variables, the overall impact is likely to be minor.

The overwhelming majority of respondents live and work in an urban centre. The survey was administered online which means that all respondents would need to have access to a smart device.

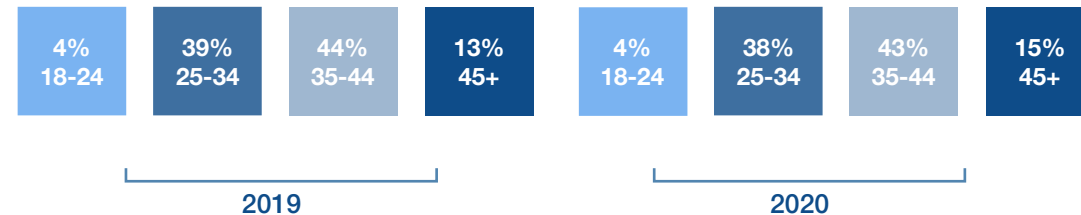
Nationality:



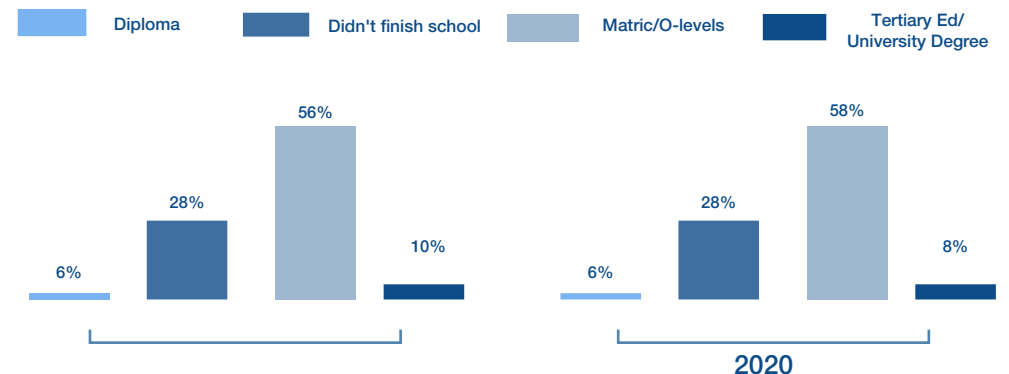
Region:



Age:



Education Levels:



The rising cost of living

The data shows a sharp rise (44%) in the cost of living for domestic workers during the COVID-19 pandemic when compared to 2019. This stands in sharp contrast to the annual consumer price inflation figures reported by Stats SA for June 2020 of 2.2%. The Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group's (PEJD) Household Affordability Index found a significantly larger rise in core expenses of 7.8% in July 2020 but this still falls short of this report's findings.

However, this discrepancy can be adequately explained by the significant increase in sole breadwinners which we have observed this year (up 13%). This would increase the burden of costs on the individual.

Bucking the annual trend of inflation are data and airtime expenses. The decrease in data costs is likely related to increased government regulation in the sector following a December 2019 Competition Commission ruling. This shows the significant power government has to reduce costs for the poor and working class.

This year's average expense basket is slightly lower than the expected R4 423 to cover basic necessities for a household of 4 as reported in the PEJD Household Affordability Index. The difference may be explained by the exclusion of other necessities such as cleaning and hygiene products.

Average expenses

2019

FOOD R1667 PER MONTH	R1100 PER MONTH 52% ↑
DATA/AIRTIME R74 PER MONTH	R115 PER MONTH 36% ↓
RENT R1525 PER MONTH	R1136 PER MONTH 34% ↑
TRANSPORT R486 PER MONTH	R445 PER MONTH 7% ↑
ELECTRICITY R371 PER MONTH	R279 PER MONTH 33% ↑
SCHOOL FEES R1228 PER YEAR	R744 PER YEAR 65% ↑

TOTAL AVERAGE MONTHLY BASIC EXPENSES:

R4 225 PM (34% 2019: R3 137 PM)

DOMESTIC WORKER MONTHLY MINIMUM WAGE:

R2 740 PM (AS OF JAN 2020)

Increased financial dependency

2020 has seen a significant increase in the number of domestic workers who are now the main breadwinners in their family versus 2019 (up 13%).

Overall, there is a significant shift to larger households (see addendum), with decreases in the number of domestic workers with 2 or fewer financial dependants and a significant increase in the number of workers with 5 financial dependants (17%, up from 12% in 2019) and those with 6 or more financial dependants (20%, up from 14% in 2019).

The increase in the proportion of breadwinners and the increase in financial dependants is almost certainly as a result of the lockdown which has resulted in a severe impact on livelihoods. With the escalating costs of more financial dependants, already stretched domestic worker incomes have reached breaking point.

This is paired with a substantial decrease in financial security, with a reduction in the proportion of workers with funeral plans, medical aids and stokvel participation.

With the removal of these safety nets, any unplanned future expenses may leave families destitute.

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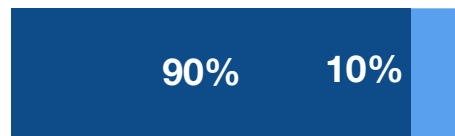
I support 6 children. Now that they are staying at home during the day and we are not working, we cannot afford food from morning until evening. They used to eat at school in the morning. Thankfully, the COVID-19 grant has helped.

”

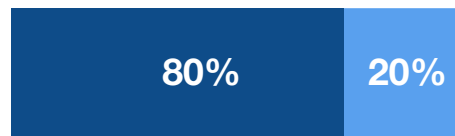
Financial dependency

Main Breadwinner in the family

2020



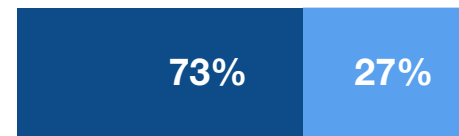
2019



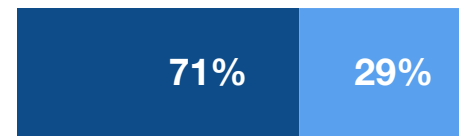
Yes No

Single Parent

2020



2019



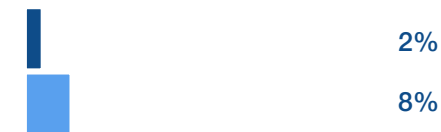
Financial security

2019 2020

Have a funeral plan



Have a pension



Have a medical aid



Participate in a stokvel



Substantial drop in earnings

The data shows not only a dramatic drop in earnings due to the pandemic, but a continued trend prior to the lockdown of domestic workers not earning enough to cover their most basic needs. While most workers were earning greater than R2500 (63%) before lockdown, only a small minority (14%) were earning above R4000 which is generally considered to be a living wage.

The establishment of a national minimum wage was a notable achievement, but it is clear that this is becoming increasingly inadequate to cover even the bare minimum of household expenditure. This has forced many families to take on debt which often spirals out of control.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, the majority of workers fell below the R2500 threshold (74%). Given that their costs have shown no sign of decreasing, this has placed phenomenal pressure on already struggling households.

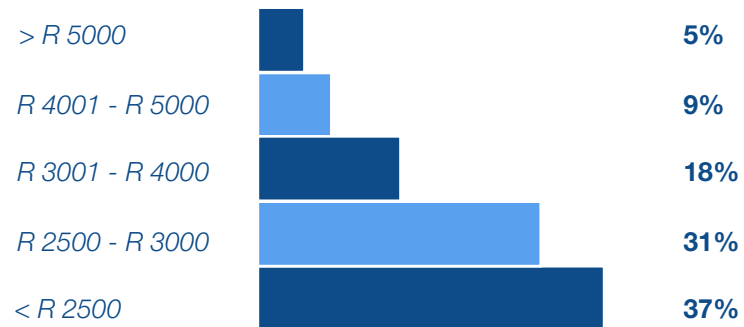
Another issue which appears to have risen is 'underemployment'. In 2019, 73% of respondents worked less than 8 hours a day. This has increased to 80% in 2020. This may show a tendency of middle-class households to reduce work hours to increase affordability, however a reduced duration has very little impact on the fixed costs a worker incurs to perform their job on a given day. This is why SweepSouth has ensured that even the shortest bookings on the platform cover the daily minimum wage.



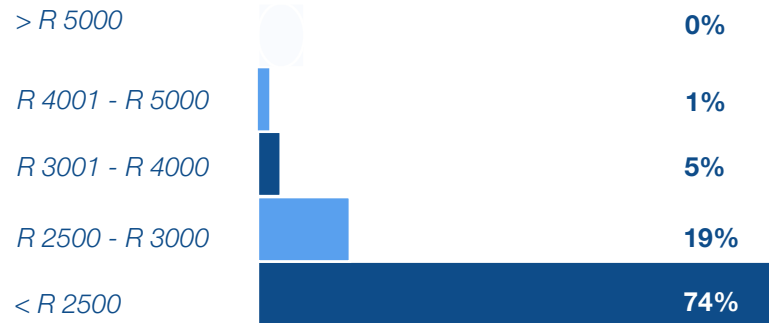
80%

Work **fewer than 8 hours** per day
(73% in 2019)

Average monthly domestic worker earnings before COVID-19 lockdown



Average monthly domestic worker earnings during COVID-19 lockdown



Average total earnings (ZAR)



Pressure on spending

Consequently, the downward pressure on earnings and increase in expenses is forcing workers to reduce spending wherever possible. Unfortunately, one of the few items poorer households typically have control over is one of the most vital to their wellbeing – food.

The results show that the majority of domestic workers have been forced to reduce their spending and overwhelmingly, the reduction in their spending came from reducing their budget for food. This means households are forced to opt for less nutritious and smaller volumes of food.

This is one of the most terrifying knock-on effects of the pandemic and lockdown. Balanced nutrition is vital to ensure that physical and mental development progresses smoothly in children. Malnutrition while in the womb or as a child has a number of effects, such as cognitive impairment, stunted growth and behavioural problems. Many of these issues are not likely to manifest immediately but will be felt for many years to come.

“

I had a part-time job 3 days a week and I lost it because of Covid-19 but at least the grant increase really helped but the food prices they increased so much during lockdown we end up spending all the grant on food.

”

Impact on spending



What have you reduced your spend on during the COVID-19 lockdown?



“

We need help with food, it's hard to look at our families starving. Some of us can't go out there to work because of underlying health problems.

”

Unaffordable and disproportionate housing expenses

The data collected shows the vastly disproportionate burden housing costs place on non-South Africans.

The reduction of incomes due to the pandemic meant that 69% of workers could not afford to cover their housing costs. 8% of workers were forced to borrow funds to cover their rent, while 4% moved somewhere cheaper. The majority however are sitting in limbo, having missed payments but expected to repay these at some later point. This may result in further workers going into debt or facing eviction.

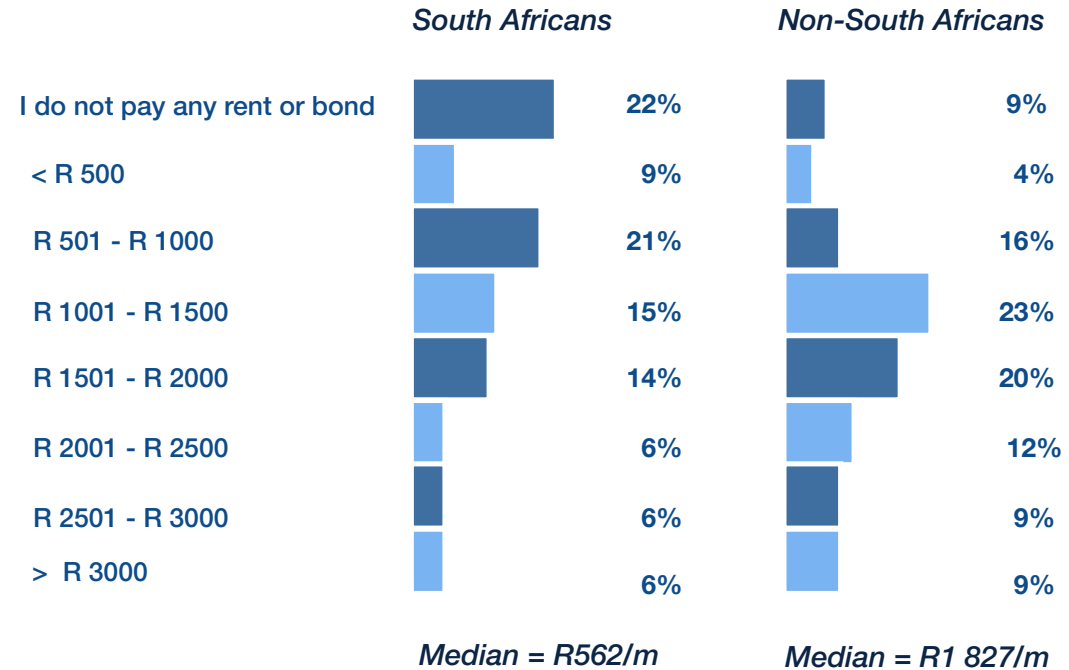
For some, the threat of homelessness looms.

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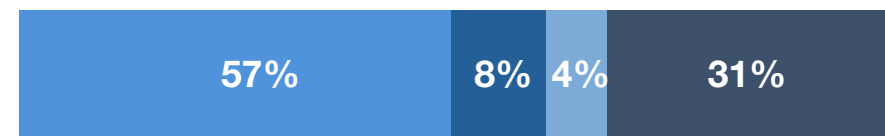
The government made a good decision to shut down the country because the spread of the virus was going to be worse and they supported us. But my landlord is chasing us out of the building because of not paying rent.

”

Housing expenses



Impact of reduced income on housing:



Debt crisis worsens

Where spending cannot be reduced further, debt is often the only remaining option for a domestic worker to support their household's basic needs.

With South Africa already considered to be in a 'debt crisis', it is of no surprise that 70% of domestic workers surveyed are in debt.

What is worrying but not unexpected is that the pandemic and subsequent lockdown has plunged 46% of workers further into debt. More worrying still, 42% of workers do not have an end in sight for when they can repay their debt with 28% feeling like their situation is hopeless (data not shown).

Generally, domestic workers are borrowing funds from their family and friends. With almost half not knowing when they can pay back their debt, this reveals a potentially larger problem in that when they default, this can have both social implications as well as financial implications for themselves and others within their community.

“

The government should have considered the issue of rental mostly because it affected a lot of people and we are in debts and the landlords are very hard on us.

”

Debt situation



Are you in debt?

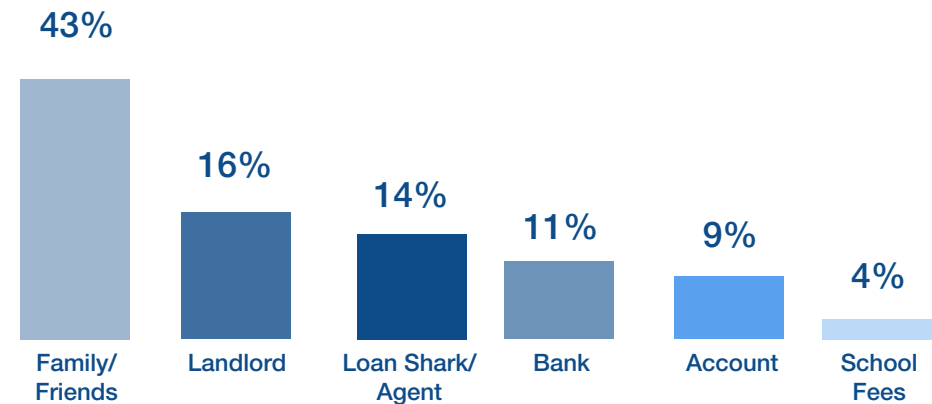


Has your debt increased during Lockdown?



Top sources of debt

Who do you owe money to?



A deeper look at spending and debt

Breaking down the collected data on debt by region and citizenship yielded valuable insights.

Looking at the reduction in spending data, it can be concluded that in Gauteng, the pressure to reduce spending was uniform whether a respondent was a South African or non-South African citizen. In the Western Cape on the other hand, there does appear to have been more acute pressure on non-South Africans to reduce spending. However, the general trend across the country was a significant reduction in spending across all groups.

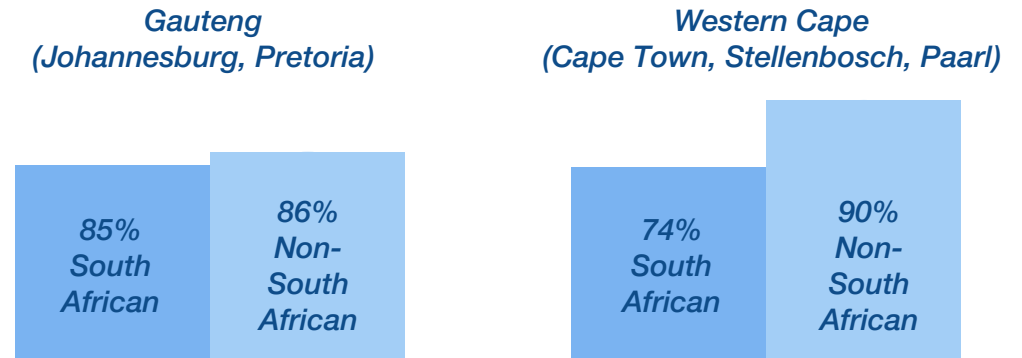
When looking at the average increase in debt levels, a pattern can be observed once more. In Gauteng, over double the number of non-South Africans increased their level of debt during the lockdown when compared to South Africans. In the Western Cape, the effect was even more pronounced with over four times the number of non-South Africans as South Africans needing to increase their debt over the lockdown.

It appears that independent of the location of non-South Africans between the country's two largest urban centres, the experience under lockdown was consistent. Interestingly, South Africans and non-South Africans in Gauteng seem to track more closely than South Africans and non-South Africans in the Western Cape.

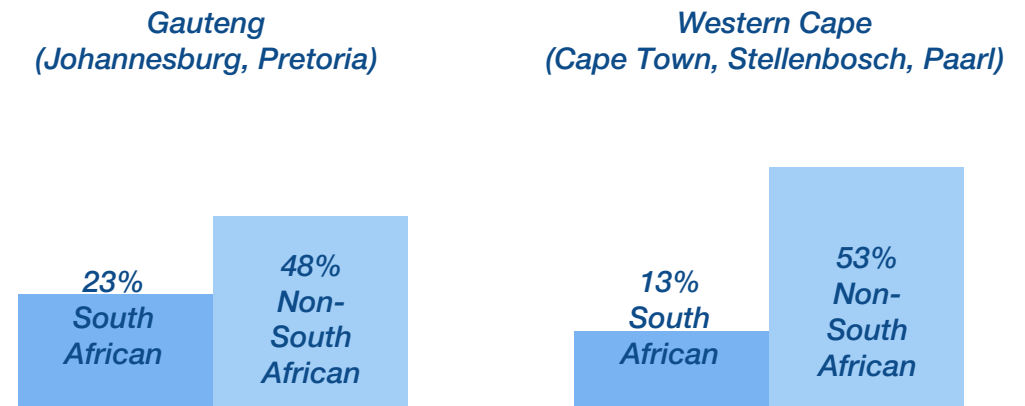
Reasons for the increased pressure on spending for non-South Africans in the Western Cape and the general increase in debt levels across non-South Africans nationally is likely due to the greater housing cost burden as well as the lack of access to governmental support for foreign workers. This is explored further in the subsequent pages.

Disproportionate impact on foreigners

% of respondents forced to reduce spending



% of respondents where debt levels increased during COVID-19 lockdown



Governmental support broadly appreciated

Among the respondents, 69% of South African respondents stated that at least one person in their household is a recipient of a social grant. This is significantly higher than the population average of 30% of homes in Gauteng and 37% in the Western Cape as reported in the Stats SA General Household Survey 2018. Most grants are child support grants (88%) followed by old age pension (8%) (not shown).

It is encouraging to see that South Africa's welfare system has closed some of the gap between earnings and expenses, with 75% of South African respondents claiming some sort of governmental support during the pandemic.

The expansion of the social grants system in post-Apartheid South Africa has meaningfully impacted overall household poverty levels, and the child grant in particular has had a demonstrable effect on children's health and welfare. However, the grants system is not without its criticism.

Food price inflation in South Africa is high and the child support grant has barely kept pace. The supplementation of the child support grant from May 2020 as part of the government's COVID-19 relief efforts has been met with widespread appreciation among the South African respondents.

The appreciation among the South African respondents is contrasted by the pleas of the non-South African respondents. The data shows how foreign workers have had little support during the lockdown. Given the continued contribution of foreign workers to the local economy, consideration should be given to their inclusion within the South African social welfare system.

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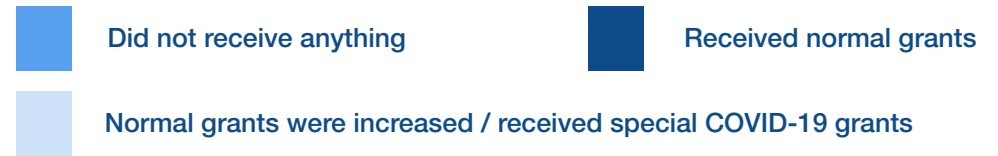
I would ask the government to please wipe my tears and allow me to get kids grant even though I am a foreigner but my kids were born here. This could help me a lot as a single parent.

”

Support from clients

Grant support by citizenship

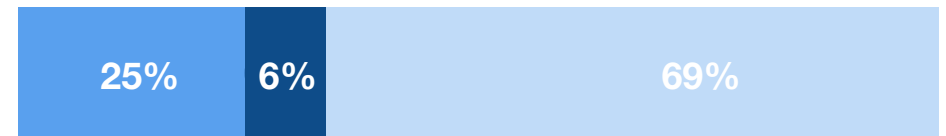
Did you or someone in your household get support from from clients during lockdown?



Non-South Africans



South Africans



Support from government

Of those who received government grants before lockdown - what support from government grants did you receive during lockdown?



Limited support from other sources

The results showed that the majority of clients of domestic workers chose not to provide support during the lockdown. While many employers of domestic workers may have faced pressure on their own income, we would have hoped to see a larger number contribute to their worker's welfare, even if at a reduced rate.

Civil society in South Africa are rightly praised for often filling the voids where government lacks. The lockdown saw the proliferation of Community Action Networks (CANs) which paired wealthier suburbs with an underprivileged area to ensure the provision of vital goods, such as food and clothing. Numerous other organisations have also been working tirelessly to uplift those left vulnerable during this time.

Unfortunately, only very few of the domestic workers surveyed reported having been provided some support from NPOs during lockdown. This is unlikely to be due to a lack of effort on the part of NPOs. A possible explanation is that NPOs may have targeted unemployed and poorer segments of the population rather than the relatively better off economic group that many domestic workers within the study cohort typically occupy.

“

It was very bad for me, but I'm lucky because SweepSouth gave me something.

”

Received help from clients during COVID-19 lockdown

- Some support including money, food vouchers, clothes
- No support



“

Most of the time, we don't have money to buy food and I can't even ask for money from home. I have been relying on friends.

”

Received help from NPO's during COVID-19 lockdown

- Some support including money, food vouchers, clothes
- No support



All SweepStars active during the month before lockdown have continued to receive financial support each week from the SweepSouth COVID-19 SweepStar Fund.

Comprehensive COVID-19 awareness

The domestic workers that were surveyed showed considerable awareness of precautionary measures to take to avoid COVID-19 infection, how to identify possible infection and what to do if they suspected infection.

SweepSouth ran an initiative during the early stages of lockdown to educate workers on the platform (known as SweepStars) around how to reduce the risk of infection in general as well as when cleaning a client's home, how to identify possible infection and how to identify if they are at high-risk. We also circulated updates as the general scientific consensus around transmission and risk factors evolved. SweepStars are also required to confirm that they are free of symptoms ahead of each of their bookings.

The results of this targeted campaign can be seen in the data as SweepStars are seen to be more familiar with the symptoms of COVID-19 and where to get tested. Comprehensive knowledge of precautionary measures as mandated by government was seen to be very high among all respondents.

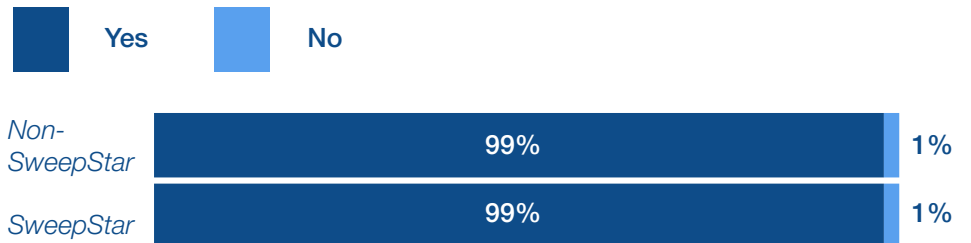
Ultimately, the data shows that domestic workers are well informed about COVID-19 as an illness and are generally well informed enough to reduce the risk of infection and if infection is suspected, take the right steps to ensure their household is protected, as well as the households in which they work.

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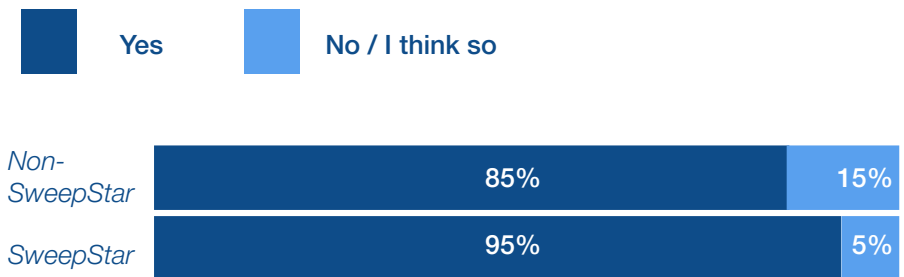
It has been a difficult journey but now I'm more informed about this virus. I practice social distancing, wear my mask and sanitise regularly.

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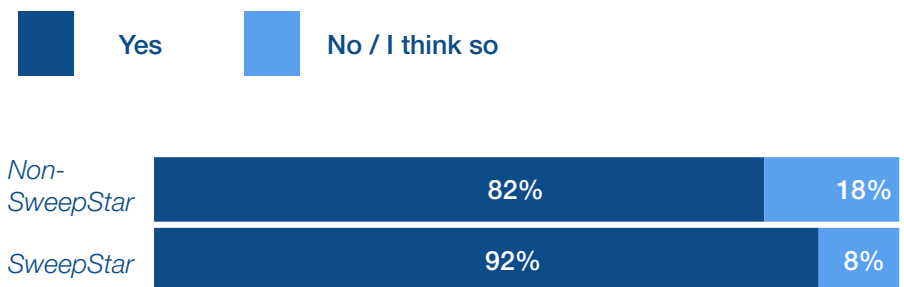
Do you know what “social distancing” means?



Do you know the symptoms of COVID-19?



Do you know where to get tested for COVID-19?



Impact on health of COVID-19

As President Ramaphosa stated from the beginning, the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown was about a delicate balance of saving lives and livelihoods. While there are no reported deaths due to COVID-19 among the total cohort of SweepStars (~20 000), some 16% of respondents had experienced a friend or family member passing from the disease.

A high rate of COVID-19 testing was observed among the respondents, especially given that the National Institute of Communicable Diseases reports that around 3.5 million tests have been administered by September 2020. Reasons for the high rate could be that many urban domestic workers live in hotspot areas and given the reported rate of losing a friend or family member to the illness, many are likely to have participated in community screening and passive case finding. There may also have been pressure to get tested in order to return to work. The positive testing rate of 4% is also lower than the overall rate which supports the possibility of non-symptomatic testing among the respondents.

A negligible number of respondents reported any effect of COVID-19 infection on their health, which is unsurprising given that only 5% of cases are expected to result in hospitalisation. However, other impacts on physical health were observed in almost 30% of respondents. The predominant reasons were an inability to afford medicine when needed and being unable to visit a clinic when sick. Other reasons broadly included an inability to collect medicine or receive chronic care.

More than half of the respondents reported impacts on their mental health (57%). This is especially worrying given the stigma around mental health in poor, black communities and that UCT researchers reported in 2019 that only 1 in 10 mental health patients in South Africa receive the care that they need.

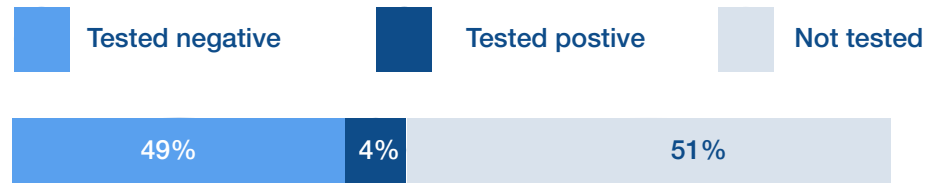
“

On the 25th of March I was starting TB treatment. But then doctors closed and I got very sick with no food, no support, and no TB grant. I am really struggling up until now.

”

Experience of COVID-19

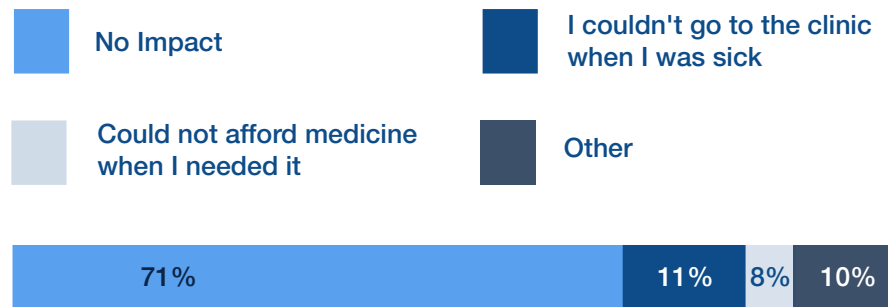
Did you get tested for COVID-19?



Do you know someone personally (family / friend) who passed away from COVID-19?



COVID-19 lockdown affect on physical health



COVID-19 lockdown affect on mental health



What domestic workers need the most right now

While it is clear that domestic workers across South Africa are experiencing a number of different pressures at the moment, to find out which immediate solutions would help ease their burden, the respondents were asked to classify what they most need right now.

Responses were restricted to one item so this data should not distract from the fact that there are multiple needs among domestic workers and their households. Less immediate but still very important needs for the future welfare of their household like educational assistance and debt counselling should not be ignored.

The greatest reported need is to return to work. This demonstrates the desperate willingness of domestic workers to restore their livelihoods through their own hard work.

The second highest need and the leading need among non-South Africans is for rental assistance. This disparity likely comes from the much higher expenditure non-South Africans have on housing and the higher ownership proportion or zero-cost rentals among South Africans. It should also be acknowledged that this is the second highest reported need among South Africans.

At a similar rate to rental assistance, South Africans reported food parcels as their third highest need. Non-South Africans reported this need at a similar rate to South Africans.

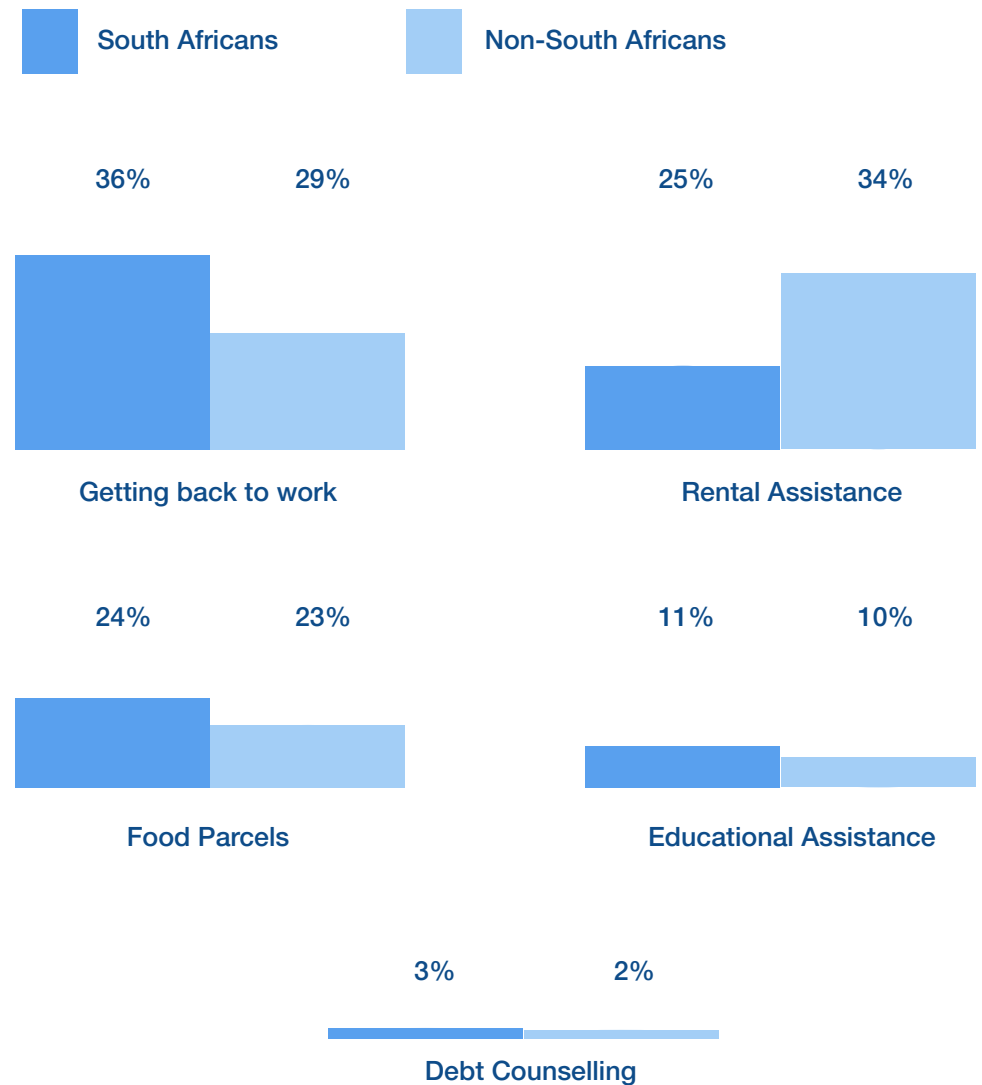
“

It has put me in debt, hunger and my mentality has gone down because of stress about how I will survive with my kids with no food and a place to stay. My kids haven't been going to school also affects them and how or when I will recover from debts I don't know.

”

What do you need the most right now?

% respondents agree that their number 1 need is:



Survey conclusion

This year's report paints an even graver picture than what has come before. With the third annual report, we had hoped to be able to demonstrate the continued albeit slow improvement in pay and conditions within the domestic cleaning industry. With rapidly escalating expenses, even returning to work at the pay levels reported prior to lockdown, domestic workers and their households will still be under severe pressure.

As South Africa reopens the economy and enters a new normal, we require a radical rethink of our approach to paying the domestic workers who play such an integral role in many households. The pay of your domestic worker is not something you should seek to minimise. While SweepStars are generally better paid, SweepSouth has hit a stubborn equilibrium where increases in pricing leads to a decrease in SweepStar earnings due to an unwillingness to pay more.

SweepSouth has implemented a number of initiatives to increase the pay of SweepStars such as tipping and changing the price structure to ensure that even the shortest bookings cover the minimum wage for a full day of work. SweepSouth has called for an increase to minimum wage legislation and continues to educate their customers and the general public as to what constitutes a living wage.

We are grateful to all South Africans who continued to support their domestic worker during the lockdown and SweepSouth is proud to have been able to do so for SweepStars through the SweepSouth COVID-19 SweepStar Fund. This report has painted a mixed picture of how many South Africans were immensely grateful for the governmental support received over the past year, but that questions remain about the greater inclusion of foreign workers.

There is a long and tough road ahead of us as South Africa attempts to fuel an economic recovery. There needs to be cognisance of the struggles and inequalities that were in place before this crisis. With that in mind, our nation should not just aim to restore the economy that was, but build a better, more inclusive future.

Key recommendations

1. Food Relief – the most urgent need faced by domestic workers and their households is food. Maternal and child nutrition is vital for healthy physical and mental development. Sustained malnutrition will not disappear after lockdown, and will scar a generation. This cannot be allowed to happen

2. Return to Work – given what is now known about the severity of COVID-19 and the mode of transmission, following simple precautions like washing hands, wearing masks when in the same room or conversing, ensuring adequate airflow and keeping more than a 1.5m distance from each other, domestic cleaners can return to work with relatively low risk.

3. Rental Assistance – many domestic workers and their families are facing eviction and possible homelessness. Greater protection is needed for tenants and landlords through some form of financial support coupled with messaging against illegal evictions. Proactive support from the Rental Housing Tribunal is welcomed. The situation is only likely to worsen without proper support for tenants against evictions and landlords against income loss.

4. Mental Health Intervention – with over half of domestic workers reporting that their mental health has been affected by the lockdown, government needs to implement specific interventions to tackle the increased social, psychological and psychiatric effects of the lockdown on struggling families. This should be paired with debt counselling as this report highlights this as a looming crisis which will have a severe impact on the mental wellbeing of workers and their families.

5. Policy Reform – the exclusion of support for most foreign workers during the lockdown should be reconsidered given their contribution to the local economy. Grant reform is needed to ensure that children born in South Africa are covered. There is also an urgent need to extend UIF protections to independent contractors, part-time workers and those accessing work on an ad-hoc basis.

Addendum – supplementary data

Some additional data is included which was gathered in order to provide year on year trends on some data points from previous reports.

Important data which was beyond the socioeconomic scope of the COVID-19 edition of this report is also included.

This does not make it any less serious.

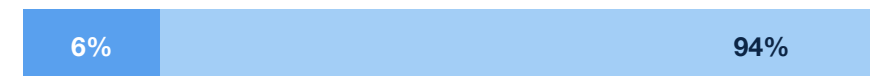
Living and working environment

While some promising year on year trends which demonstrate an improvement in living conditions can be observed, the data indicates that there is still much scope for progress. This report primarily focused on the socioeconomic implications of the lockdown. Given the sensitive nature of the topic of abuse and reports of increases in incidents of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during lockdown, participants were surveyed on their experiences with physical or verbal abuse, and on safety both at home and when travelling for work. All survey participants who reported being victims of spousal abuse were referred to SweepSouth's existing partner, The Warrior Project, for support.

Home Environment



Suffered physical or verbal abuse from a spouse/ partner during lockdown:



Do you feel safe in your home during the COVID-19 lockdown?

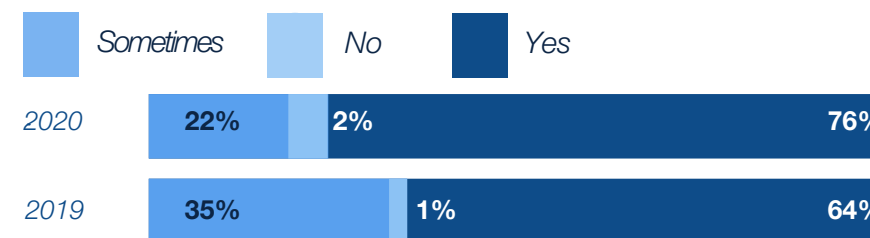


Work Environment

Suffered physical or verbal abuse from someone they worked for:



Feel valued and respected at work:



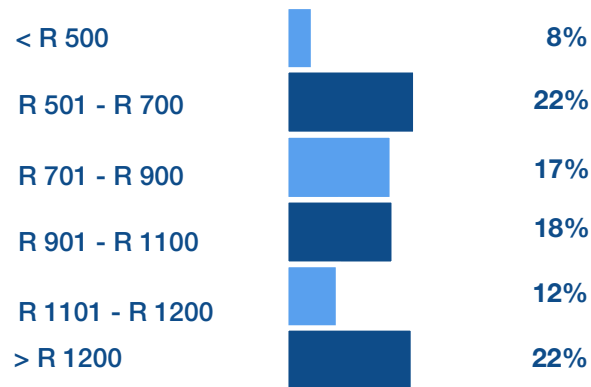
Feel safe when travelling from home to a cleaning job:



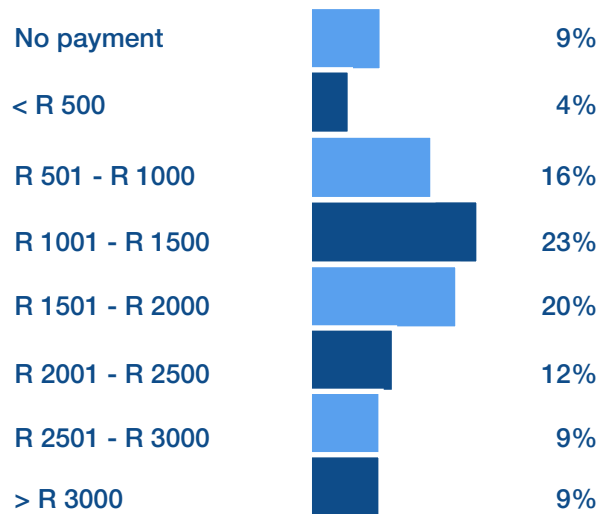
Monthly expenses

A further breakdown of the monthly expenses of the surveyed domestic workers

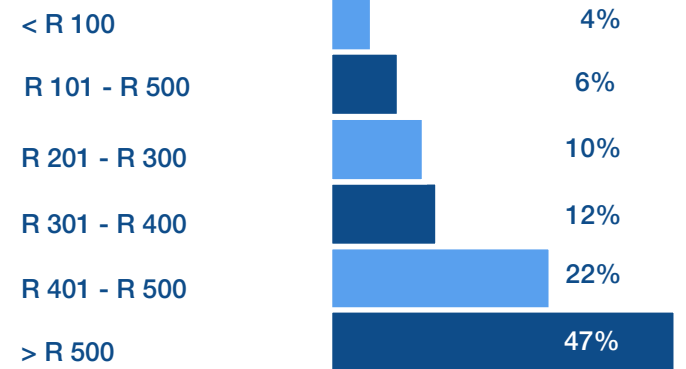
FOOD



RENT

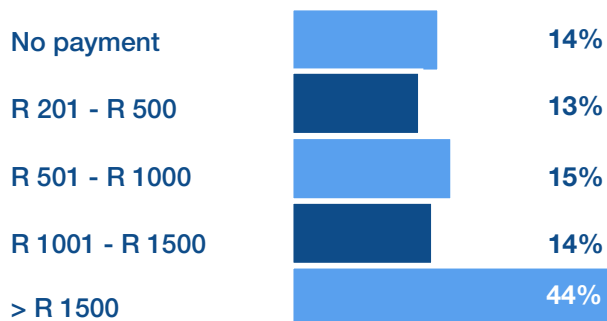


TRANSPORT

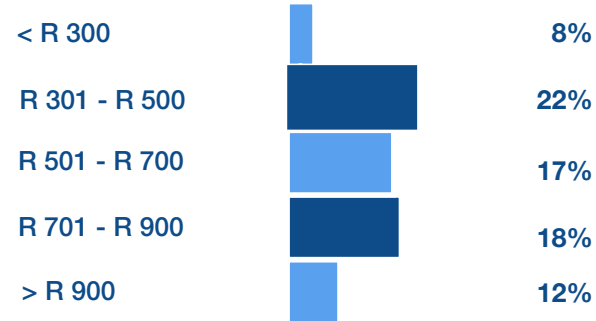


SCHOOL FEES

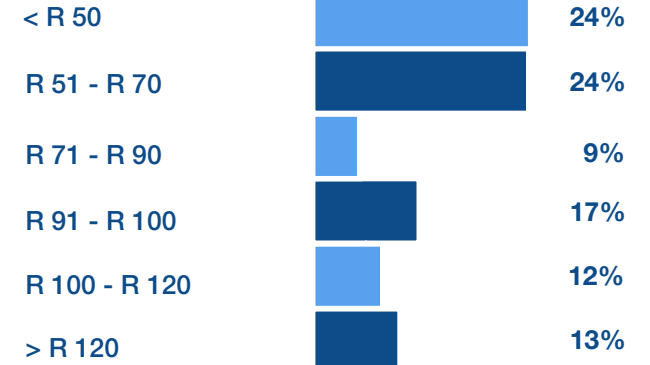
per year



ELECTRICITY

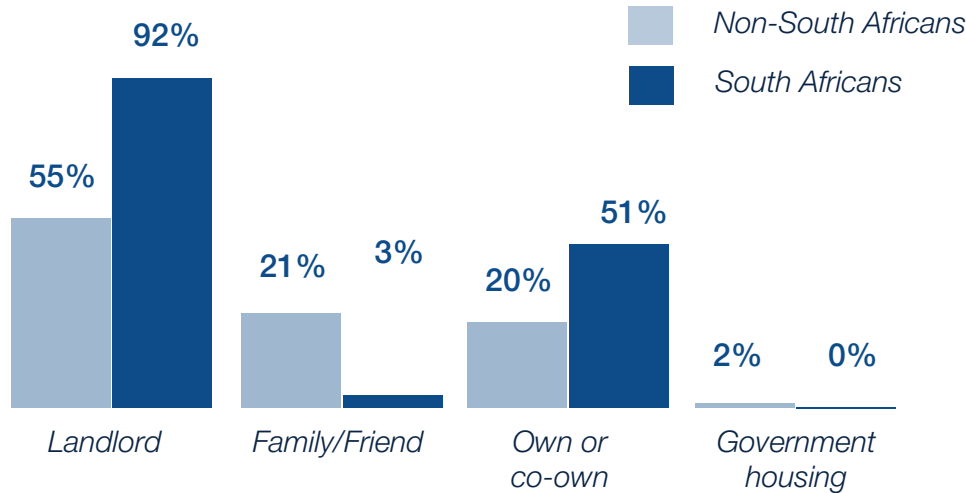


DATA AND AIRTIME

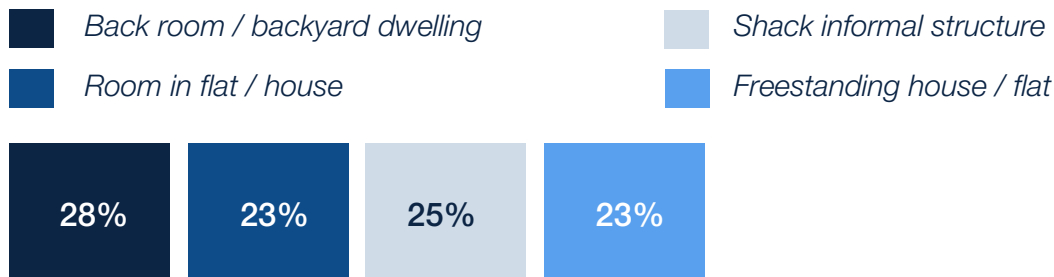


Living arrangements and financial dependency

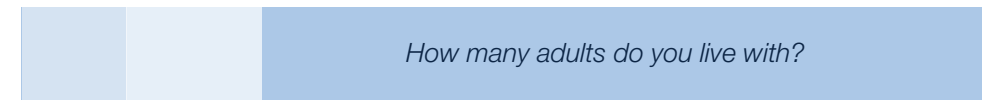
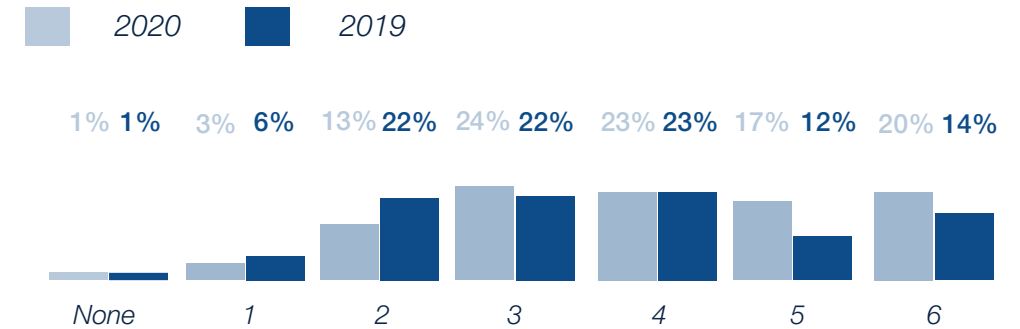
Housing ownership



Home structure



Number of family members supported financially by domestic worker



		0	1	2	3	4	5	>5	T	%
How many children do you live with?	None	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	4	1%
	1	1	10	8	3	1	0	0	22	22%
	2	2	15	12	6	3	1	0	37	37%
	3	1	8	8	3	2	0	0	23	23%
	4	0	2	3	2	1	0	0	8	8%
	5	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	3	3%
	>5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2%
	Total	5	38	31	14	7	2	2	100	100%

Education

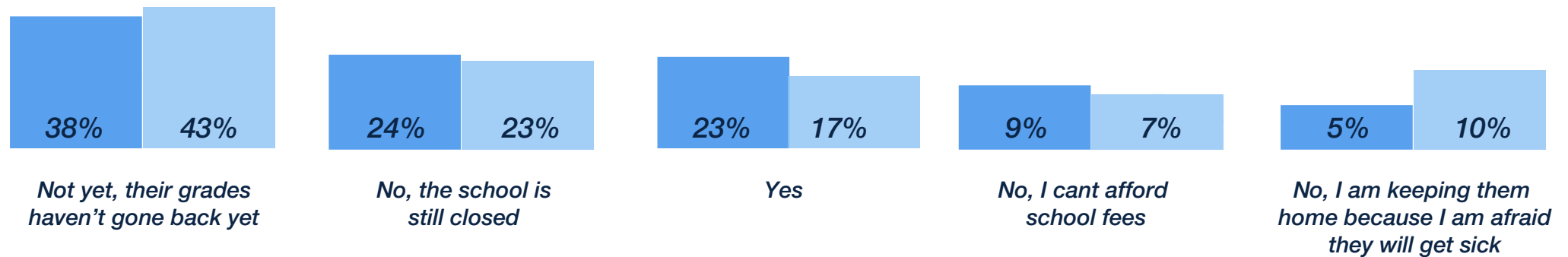
“

The government must close the schools until next year or provide all the schools computers or laptops so that all learners can learn at home to reduce people moving.

”

Are your children back at school?

■ Gauteng ■ Western Cape



Have your children continued learning while away from school (online/receiving homework)?

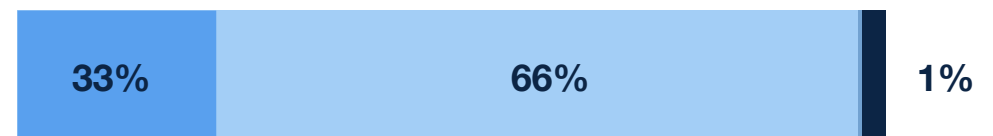
■ Yes ■ No



Do your children use technology/apps/websites to help them with school?

■ Yes ■ No, but I would like to

■ No, I don't think this will help them



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SweepSouth

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CONDITIONS FOR
DOMESTIC WORK IN
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2020**

COVID-19 EDITION

PRODUCED BY SWEEPSOUTH