

Produced by  
**SweepSouth**



# 2023

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## DOMESTIC WORKER PAY AND WORK CONDITIONS SOUTH AFRICA

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6<sup>th</sup> Annual Report

**SweepSouth**



**Luke Kannemeyer**  
SweepSouth Managing Director

**In SweepSouth's sixth annual Report on Pay and Working Conditions for Domestic Workers, we are provided with unique insights into the lives and livelihoods of the women and men who care for our homes and our families. First published in 2018, we have shown the progress in domestic worker pay and conditions leading up to the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent regression as the pandemic spiralled and lockdown restrictions were implemented. While our 2021 report showed some signs of recovery, much of the optimism that this would continue into 2022 was snuffed out. Instead, we saw rising inflation and economic turmoil triggering social upheaval across the world, with emerging economies bearing the brunt. It is against this backdrop that the 2023 report was compiled.**

# Executive Summary

This year's report generated over 5,500 responses from across South Africa. Our results continue to emphasise the disproportionate burden that domestic workers carry in their households. The majority are women (94%), sole breadwinners (84%), single caregivers (64%), and support an average of four dependents. Cleaning was the most commonly reported primary role (96%), followed by childcare (26%). While those in caring roles (child, elderly, special) earned the most, gardening was the lowest earning role. Earnings increased by taking on more roles, and many seek other work to earn additional income (42%).

Workers continue to sacrifice basic needs as costs outstrip earnings. Food is the largest expenditure item with the greatest increase since last year (+12%). Poor South Africans were hit hardest as food inflation hit a 14-year high in March 2023. Primarily driven by the electricity crisis, vegetables, wheat and corn-based products, and plant-based oils (such as vegetable oil) increased the most. These items make up a disproportionate portion of food in low-income households. With few workers having any savings (2023: 9%, 2022: 10%), many take on debt. Thankfully, debt-levels appear to be decreasing (2023: 35%, 2022: 39%), primarily driven by non-South Africans (2023: 20%, 2022: 32%) while South Africans are largely static (2023: 59%, 2022: 60%).

This burden has been exacerbated by devastating job losses, with 28% of respondents losing their job as a domestic worker in the last year (2022: 25%). Around 1 in 4 lost their job due to affordability, similar to 2022. However, employers moving home increased considerably (2023: 40%, 2022: 25%), with the majority moving overseas (59%). Many respondents felt that loadshedding played a role in them losing their job, and of particular concern, 40% of those dismissed did not believe they were dismissed for a

valid reason. It is no wonder then that the risk of unemployment is the greatest driver of poor mental health among our respondents, increasing from 47% in 2022 to 52%.

It's encouraging to report a continued recovery in earnings, especially among SweepStars, workers who work on the SweepSouth platform (+1% to R2992 off, +19% to R4999 on the platform). We continue to work towards a living wage at SweepSouth and are proud of the inroads we have been able to achieve over the past two years. However, for those not working on the platform, the increases are failing to keep pace with inflation and still fall significantly below a monthly minimum wage. With earnings under pressure, SweepSouth has looked at decreasing costs through bulk-buying and group-risk offerings for SweepStars. We hope to roll these out to workers beyond the platform in the near future.

We saw the impact of our electricity crisis on the lives of domestic workers throughout the report. Many workers have multiple employers, and almost half have lost one or more of their employers due to loadshedding (35% definitely, 12% maybe). Over half of the respondents report feeling less safe travelling to and from work due to increased crime rates, inadequate lighting and darkness due to blackouts, mobile networks failing, as well as needing to leave for work earlier due to increased congestion from traffic lights not working and getting home later due to their work day increasing because of having to wait for power to return to use appliances.

This summary is just the tip of the iceberg. We want this report to motivate you to be part of driving change in the domestic work industry. Dive into it now to find out how.

# Introduction

**The past year has been a difficult period for domestic workers. All South Africans have been impacted by rolling power cuts, volatile commodity prices, and geopolitical instability and conflicts. High food and energy prices have continued to place a strain on households' expenditure baskets, placing severe pressure on household incomes. However, as is often the case, it is those at the bottom of the economic ladder who suffer the most during difficult economic periods.**



According to Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey, unemployment in South Africa stood at 32.9% overall in the first quarter of 2023. This was a slight increase from the last published figure of 32.7% in the fourth quarter of 2022. In the same report, Stats SA found that 67,000 fewer people were employed as domestic workers versus the previous quarter (down 7.7%). Domestic work accounted for 5% of total employment in the first quarter of 2023.

Past reports have sought to give an in-depth look at the lived financial realities and changing conditions for domestic workers in South Africa. In 2023, we want to focus on the impacts of inflation, the cost of living crises, and the impacts of loadshedding on the working conditions, safety, and mental health of domestic workers. This is where the sixth 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 connecting domestic workers to employers. Core to SweepSouth's mission is promoting the improvement of working conditions within the domestic work sector.



## Survey Design

This year's survey was circulated by SMS and WhatsApp to domestic workers in South Africa, some on the SweepSouth platform and some not. The survey was sent to around 27,000 domestic workers and the data was reverse-billed, meaning that respondents did not require mobile data to complete the survey to promote wider access. The survey was completed online which would generally require the respondents to have access to a smartphone.

We received a total of 8,331 responses in South Africa. The analysis was restricted to respondents who worked as a domestic worker or lost their job as a domestic worker in the last year (after May 2022). This makes our survey the largest and most detailed of its kind in Africa, and offers the most comprehensive view to date of the impact of inflation and loadshedding on domestic workers in South Africa.

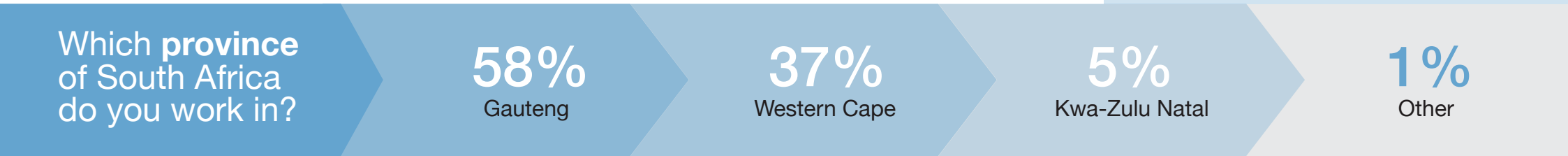
Study Time  
Frame  
19 - 25 June  
2023

# Study Demographics

	<p>SOUTH AFRICA</p> 		
		GENDER	
Median Age	37	Women	94%
Sample Size	5628	Men	6%
Nationality	<p>39% SA 56% Zim 5% Other</p> 	Other	0.1%
		Prefer not to say	0.2%

Consistent with previous years, the majority of respondents were women (94%) and between the ages of 26 and 41 (65%). Nationality of respondents was split between South Africa (39%) and Zimbabwe (56%), with Malawi (2%), Lesotho (1%) and other nationalities making up the remainder.

The regional distribution of respondents remains broadly unchanged to past years.

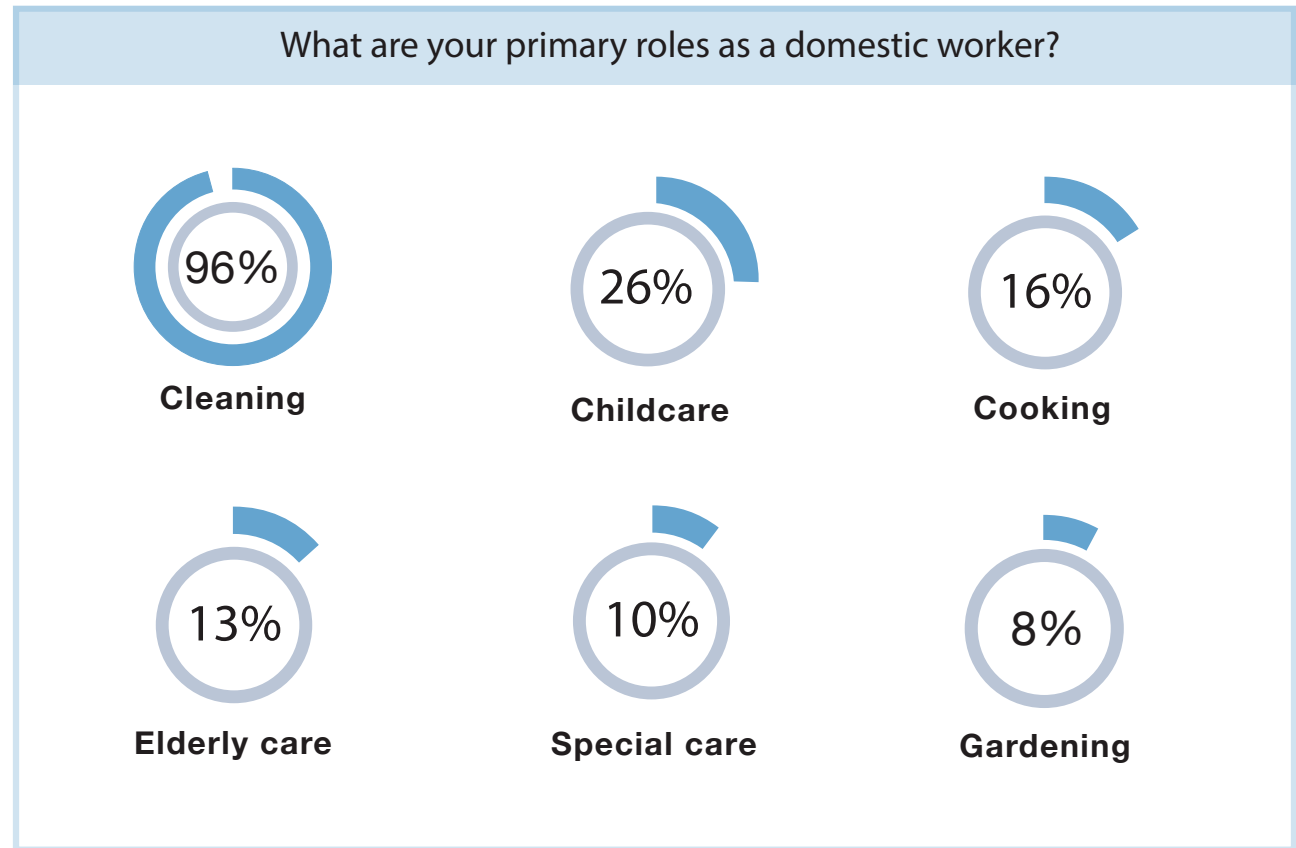




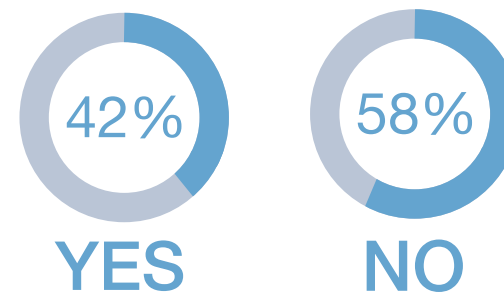
# Employment Dynamics

Just over 40% of respondents earn income from employment other than domestic work.

The vast majority of respondents (96%) reported that cleaning is one of their primary roles while just over one in four respondents (26%) reported childcare as one of their primary roles.

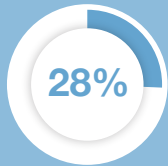


Additional income from other work:

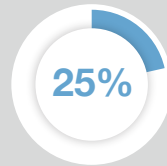


# Job Losses & Compliance

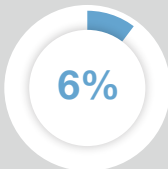
Domestic workers who have lost their jobs in the last year



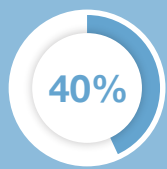
Lost jobs due to affordability



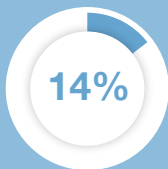
Lost jobs due to dismissal



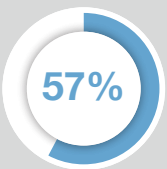
Lost jobs due to employer moving homes



Domestic workers who lost their job who were registered for UIF



UIF registered domestic workers who lost their job and submitted a claim



Of the respondents to this year's survey, 28% indicated that they lost their job as a domestic worker in the last year. The percentage of those who lost their jobs because their employer could no longer afford to pay them remained stable from the previous annual survey (25% in 2023 compared to 24% in 2022), as did those who lost their jobs because they were dismissed by their employer (6% in 2023 compared to 8% in 2022). **However, 2023 has seen a significant increase in the percentage who lost their jobs because their employer moved home (40% in 2023 compared to 25% in 2022).**

Employers who moved home primarily moved overseas (59%) while a significant portion moved to a different city within South Africa (28%). These trends have been compounded by the accelerating emigration of skilled professionals as well as the evolving semigration trends seen since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic due to remote work possibilities.

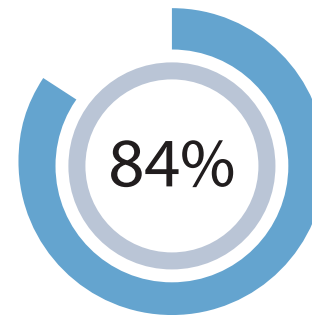
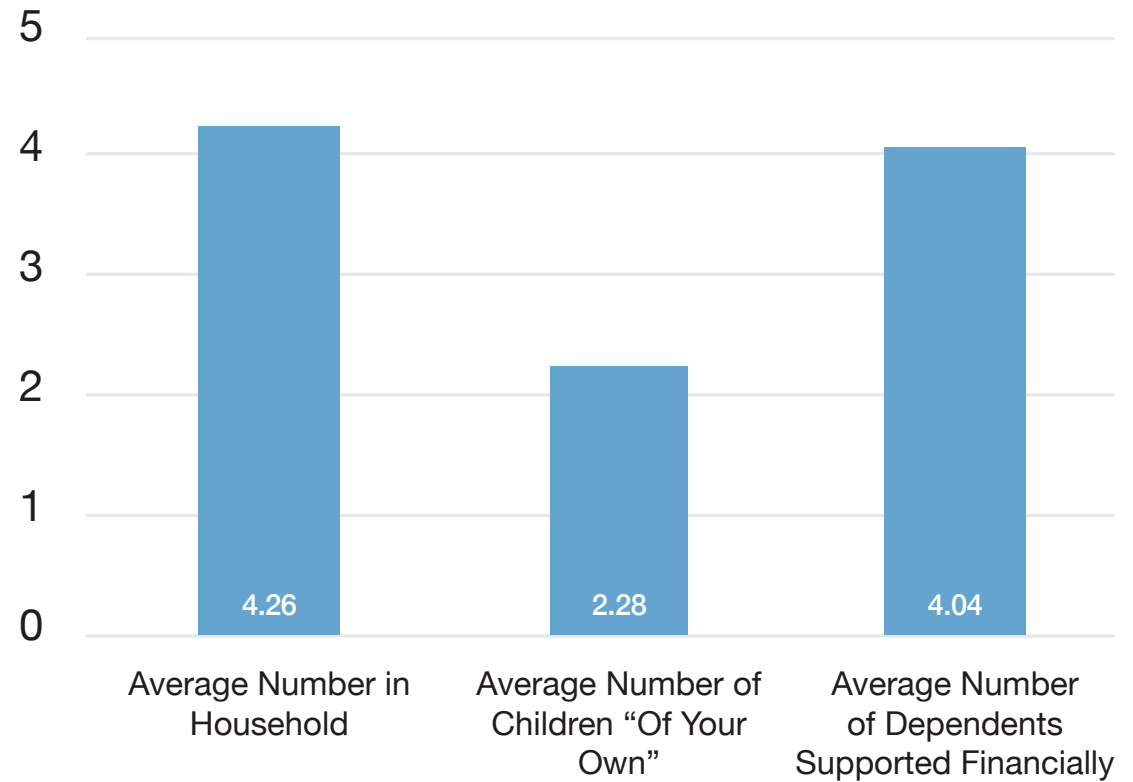
Of those respondents who were dismissed by their employer in the last year, 40% do not believe they were dismissed for a valid reason. **While a decrease from 2022's annual survey, this figure is still concerning and warrants further investigation.**

Just under one in five respondents who lost their jobs as a domestic worker in the last year believe that loadshedding *definitely* played a role with a similar proportion believing it *could* have been a factor.

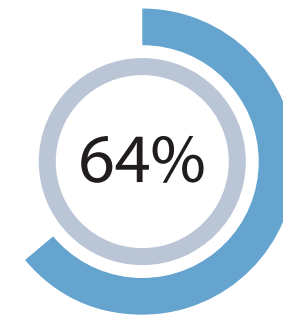
# Family Structure

The average number of dependents supported financially, as well as the percentage of respondents who are the breadwinners in their household, has remained relatively stable compared to 2021 and 2022, after they increased significantly at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

However, the financial pressure on domestic workers remains high, with 84% being the main earners in their household and 59% supporting four or more people (children and adults) in their household.



**Breadwinners**



**Single Parent Household**



# Earnings Analysis

## Median earnings per month from domestic work\*

2019	2020 <small>(from COVID-19 report)</small>	2021	2022	2023
Currently a SweepStar**				
R3 600	R3 359	R3 470	R4 203	R4 999
All Non-SweepStars				
R2 400	R2 814	R2 730	R2 963	R2 992
Never a SweepStar				
-	-	R2 615	R2 810	R2 911
Ex-SweepStar				
-	-	R2 916	R3 634	R3 540
Minimum wage (R25.42 an hour, assume 160 hrs a month)				
R2 699	R2 740	R3 054	R3 710	R4 067

**SweepStar median earnings have increased significantly in 2023 on the back of our recent increase in minimum pay per job.** We have also observed a steady rise in voluntary contributions from clients which has helped bolster earnings. On the back of our past reports, we have made an effort to educate customers and other domestic employers about the burden of costs on domestic workers and what constitutes a living wage. We believe that this work is beginning to pay off.

Overall, earnings of domestic workers who are not on the SweepSouth platform remain static. Domestic workers who had previously been on the SweepSouth platform had significantly higher earnings than those who had not. However, these earnings still fall below a monthly minimum wage.

The increases in minimum wage for domestic workers over the past few years have contributed to an upward pressure in earnings. However, the recent tide of job losses due to a sluggish economy and migration of employers highlight the continued need for better enforcement of regulations and support for domestic worker employers and employees in the years to come.

\*Survey question: "How much money do YOU earn on average per month as a domestic worker? Including tips, transport money, and any additional pay from your employer."

\*\*SweepStar median earnings calculated based on average job earnings and utilisation for post-probation workers, available at least 5 days per week.



# Earnings Analysis

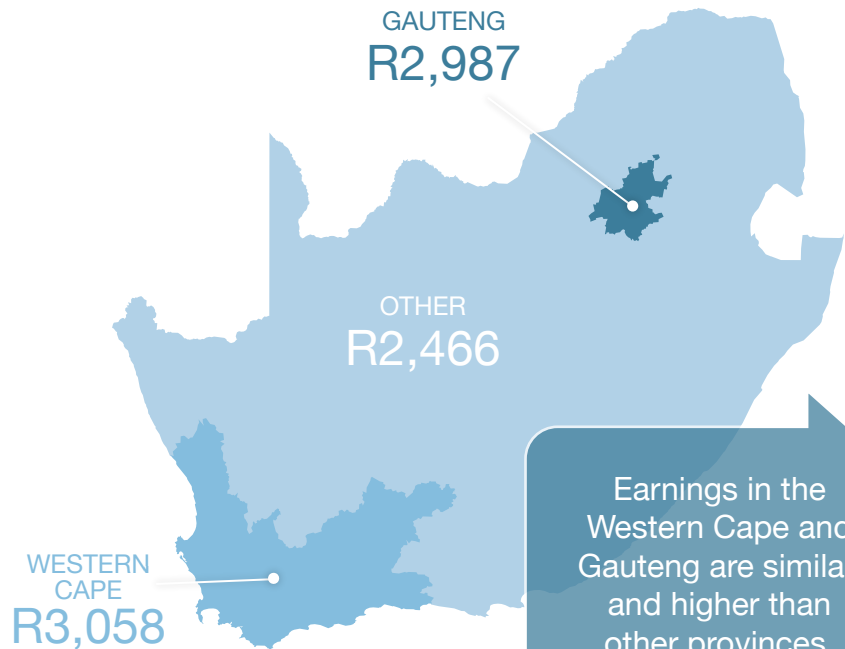
## Median domestic work earnings



R2,989



R2,812



Earnings in the Western Cape and Gauteng are similar, and higher than other provinces.

## Median domestic work earnings, included as primary role



Cleaning  
R2,978



Gardening  
R2,843



Childcare  
R3,208



Elderly care  
R3,285



Cooking  
R3,120

Elderly care and childcare are the most lucrative roles, while gardening earns the lowest. This is consistent with male respondents reporting lower earnings.



Special Care  
R3,130

## Median domestic work earnings by number of primary roles



R2,915



R3,032










R3,324

Most domestic workers have a single primary role, but the more primary roles they have, the greater their earnings.

# Expenditure Breakdown

The data shows that costs have increased by 3% overall from 2022 to 2023. **The most considerable increase is that of food costs, increasing by 12% since last year's report.** It is worth pointing out that only some respondents will benefit from the reduction in school fees (decreasing by 5% since last year's report). These increases in domestic worker expenses will put further pressure on their budgets, eating into their disposable income and affecting their ability to put money into savings and pay off any debts they have incurred.



	Monthly spend on:								
	 Food	 Data/Airtime	 Housing	 Transport	 Electricity	 Other Items	TOTAL EXCL. SCHOOL FEES	 School Fees	TOTAL INCL. SCHOOL FEES
2019	1100	115	1136	445	279	-	3075	62	3137
2020	1667	74	1525	486	371	-	4123	102	4225
2021	965	82	1054	481	308	380	3270	136	3406
2022	1043	92	1105	531	333	445	3549	77	3626
2023	1170	94	1081	550	330	447	3672	74	3745
Annual Increase	12%↑	2%↑	2%↓	4%↑	1%↓	1%↑	3%↑	5%↓	3%↑

# Expenditure Breakdown

A rough calculation of total median expenses for food (R1170), housing (R1081), transport (R550), electricity (R330), data/airtime (R94), and other items (R447) brings the basic cost basket to R3,672 per month. This shows a deficit between earnings and basic costs for South African domestic workers. It is encouraging to see that SweepStars can cover their basic expenses and that the new minimum wage in South Africa is above the reported basic expenses. However, a minimum wage is only as good as its adoption and enforcement.

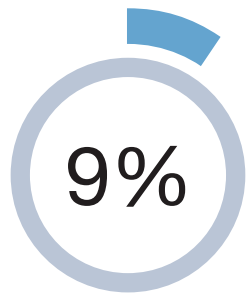
Monthly costs as a % of surveyed domestic work earnings

Food	Data/Airtime	Housing	Transport	Electricity	Other Items	TOTAL COSTS EXCL. SCHOOL FEES	Surplus/ Earnings Deficit
39%	3%	36%	18%	11%	15%	123%	(R694)

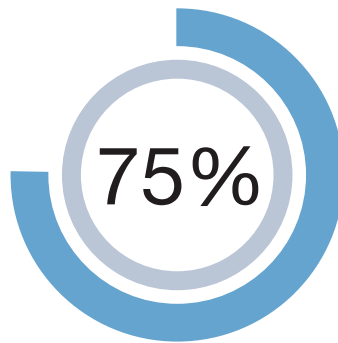
“I'm always stressed of my salary that doesn't cover all necessities”

Median monthly household income is approx R4,501

# Saving Habits & Financial Security



Have savings/pension?



Don't make enough money to save

Three quarters of domestic workers report not making sufficient money to save on a monthly basis. Just 9% say they have any savings or a pension, and 16% participate in a stokvel (rotating savings). A low savings rate leaves households vulnerable to any financial shocks.

Only 1% of domestic workers report having a private medical aid. This makes them reliant upon government-provided healthcare for their physical and mental health, unless they can find a way to spare enough money in their budget to pay out-of-pocket for private healthcare.

Do you have medical aid?



1%

Do you have a funeral plan?



52%

Are you part of a stokvel?



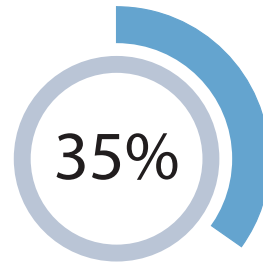
16%

# Debt Levels & Repayment

Debt levels are still concerning among domestic workers, with 35% of respondents reporting that they are currently in debt. South African nationals showed higher levels of indebtedness than foreign respondents. This is likely due to a reduced ability of foreigners to access credit. Just over a third of respondents who said they are in debt felt that their repayment situation was “hopeless”.

**Half of the respondents in debt owe money to a shop or store, which shows the high level of easy credit and predatory lending practices in South Africa.**

## Domestic workers in debt:



## Breakdown by Nationality

South African	Other
59%	20%

## Who do you owe money to?

A shop/store	50%
Friends	26%
Loan shark	19%
Family	17%
My bank	15%
Stokvel	5%

# R3,599

Median owed debt amount (out of those who have debt)





# Work Days & Commute

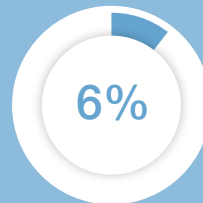
## Median number of days worked



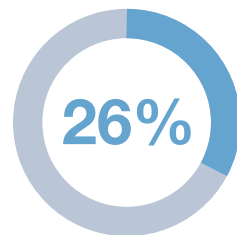
Work more than 9 hours a day



Work 7 days a week



## Spend more than 1 hour commuting to work in one direction



The evidence collected shows a clear correlation between better employment protections for domestic workers and the work conditions for domestic workers. South Africa introduced extensive protections specific to domestic workers in 2002, and has ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 189 (C189), which lays down specific basic rights and principles that aim at achieving decent work for domestic workers.

This year's survey indicates the median number of days worked in a normal week as a domestic worker is 4 days, with 6% of respondents working 7 days in a normal week. This is likely as a result of economic pressures but is also likely to have a knock-on effect on the workers' well-being and the well-being of their families.

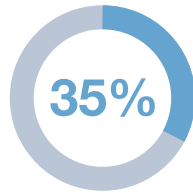
# Loadshedding Impact

“

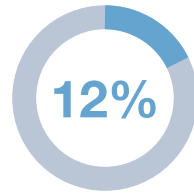
I fail to accept my bookings on time due to network problems when there's loadshedding.

”

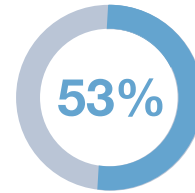
Has loadshedding caused you to lose any of your employers?



Yes

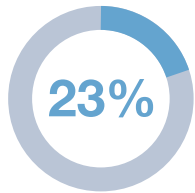


Maybe

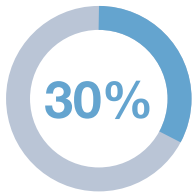


No

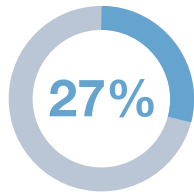
Has loadshedding affected how safe you feel travelling to and from work?



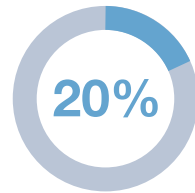
Yes, always



Yes, most of the time

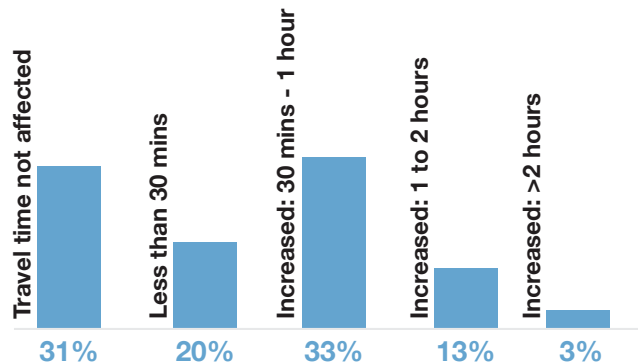


No, not often

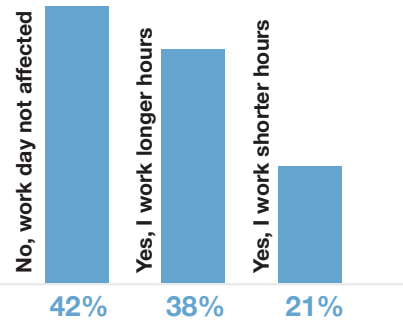


No, never

Has loadshedding increased your commute time to work?



Has loadshedding impacted how long you have to work in a day?\*



This year's survey also included questions about loadshedding and its impact on the life and work of a domestic worker. Just over a third of respondents think that loadshedding was definitely a factor in causing them to lose some of their employers.

In terms of the impact of loadshedding on a domestic worker's day, 58% believe that it has had an impact on their working hours – either longer or shorter. Loadshedding also appears to have had an impact on their commute, with 69% saying it has added extra time to their travel from home to work. More than half say it has affected how safe they feel during their commute.

“

Crime is high, kids struggling to study, and for work adding hours because you can't leave work undone.

”

\*Note that percentages add up to 101% due to rounding

# Loadshedding Impact

How else has loadshedding affected your life and work as a domestic worker? (*Open-ended*)

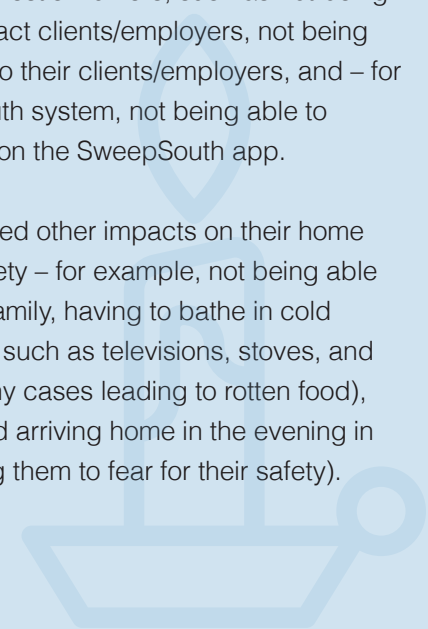
<b>Words Mentioned</b>	Iron, wash, laundry, vacuum, dishes, dishwasher, chore	26%
	Phone, battery, network, communication	11%
	Hours	10%
	Cook, takeaway, meal, stomach, hungry	7%
	Bath, water	4%
	Dark	4%
	Traffic, robot	2%
	Fridge, tv, television, gadget	2%
	Safe, robber, robbed, gangster, crime, criminal	2%

“ Sometimes we don't have power to charge our phone and we can't use GPS properly and get to work late. ”

Domestic workers were asked to elaborate on how else loadshedding has affected their life and work as a domestic worker. Around one in four respondents mentioned the impact on electrical appliances at their workplace (ironing, vacuuming, laundry, and so on). In some cases, this would change their preferred routine throughout the working day as adjustments would need to be made depending on the loadshedding schedule. In most cases, however, they would be prevented from doing these tasks altogether – meaning that the tasks pile up for their next visit.

Around one in ten respondents noted the impact on their phones – the two most cited problems were not being able to charge their mobile devices when there are long periods of loadshedding, and the lack of network/signal during loadshedding. These problems cause a variety of issues for domestic workers, such as not being able to use their phones to contact clients/employers, not being able to find directions/navigate to their clients/employers, and – for those who are on the SweepSouth system, not being able to access/confirm/close bookings on the SweepSouth app.

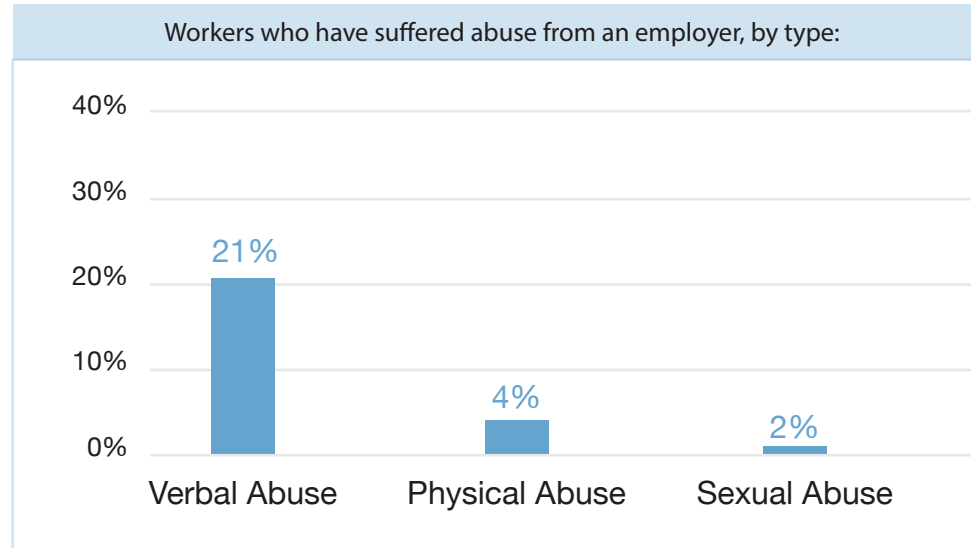
Many respondents also mentioned other impacts on their home life and personal health and safety – for example, not being able to cook for themselves or their family, having to bathe in cold water, and electrical appliances such as televisions, stoves, and refrigerators not working (in many cases leading to rotten food), leaving home in the morning and arriving home in the evening in the dark (in many cases causing them to fear for their safety).



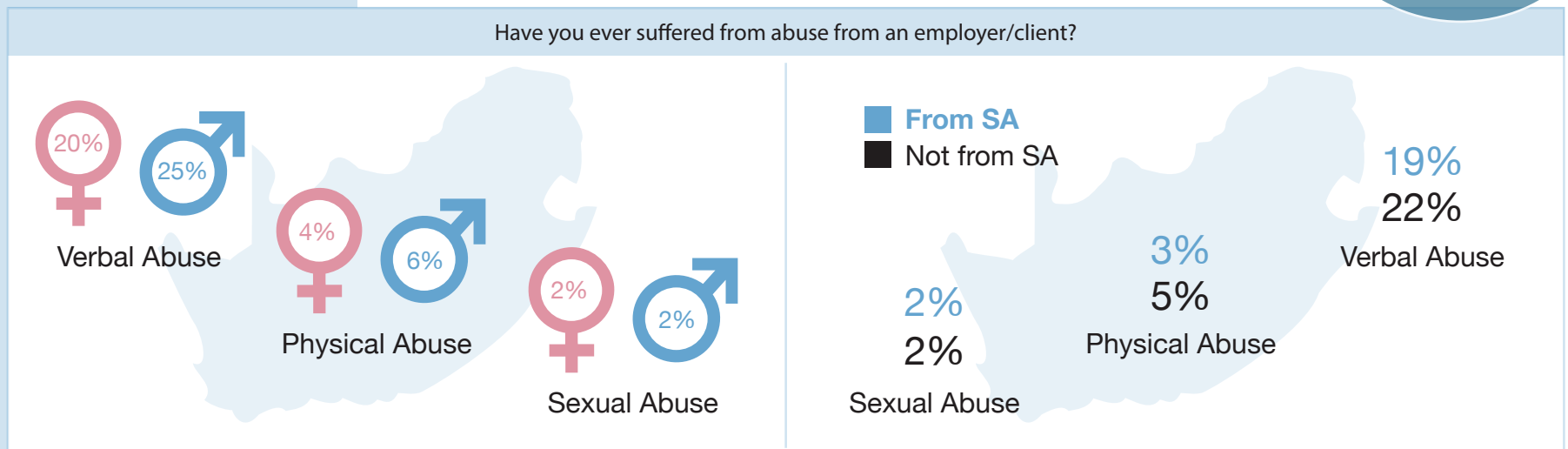
# Abuse in the Workplace

Just over one in five respondents (22%) say they have suffered from either verbal, physical or sexual abuse in their workplace.

According to the survey, men were slightly more likely to have experienced verbal or physical abuse than female workers, while foreign workers were more likely to have experienced this abuse than locals.



Foreigners are more likely to have experienced verbal or physical abuse

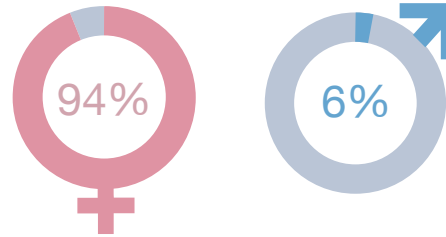


# Abuse at Home

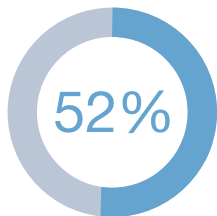
Domestic workers who are **currently** suffering abuse at home

5%  
**YES**  
PREFER NOT TO SAY: 5%

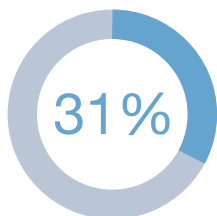
Gender of respondent suffering abuse



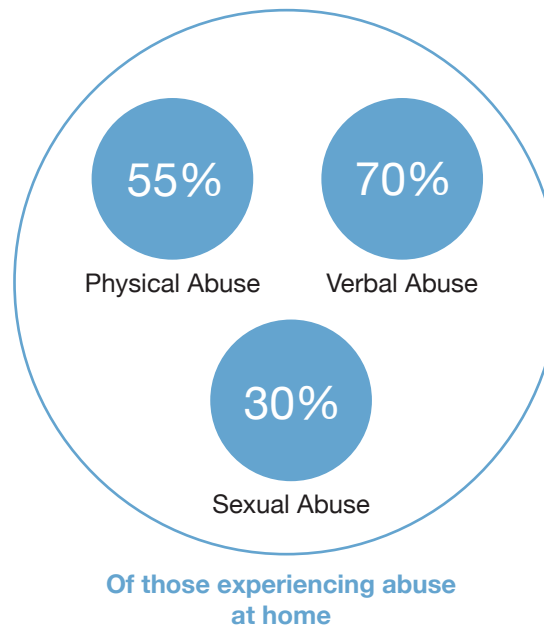
Had to support a close friend or family member who has been abused?



Reported any instances of abuse to the police (SAPS)?



Types of abuse from your partner or from another person in your household?



Domestic abuse is rife within South Africa, but especially so among poor black women. According to a recent global report published by Lancet Psychiatry on intimate partner violence, figures available for South Africa indicated that one in three women and girls aged 15 and older have experienced sexual violence and one in two have experienced physical violence, in their lifetime.

The study participants were asked about their **current experience** with abuse at home. 5% of respondents indicated that they experience abuse at home. Studying intimate partner violence is difficult, and these questions were optional, so this should not be interpreted as a total incidence rate. Of those who shared that they experience abuse at home, 70% experience verbal abuse, 55% experience physical abuse, and 30% experience sexual abuse. Just over half said they have supported a close friend or family member who has been abused.



# Mental Health

Around one in ten domestic workers had their mental health negatively affected in the last year, a decrease from levels reported in the last few years' reports.

Mental health is another difficult topic to address, and this section of the survey was optional for domestic workers to answer. The largest aggravator was unemployment, followed by debt / financial stress and family problems. The largest sources of 'comfort' or support to take care of their mental health are through church attendance or spending time with their minister / religious community, followed by spending time with friends or family. A higher proportion of women than men reported that they don't do anything specific to care of their mental health. This is likely impacted by the fact that women typically have unpaid domestic responsibilities, such as caring for children and cooking, that they need to attend to when returning home from work.

Access to mental health treatment remains relatively low; of those who said their mental health had been negatively affected in the last year, one in five respondents had received a mental health diagnosis by a nurse or mental health professional.

Has your mental health been negatively affected in the last year?	Women	Men
YES	12%	14%
NO	82%	78%
I do not want to answer questions about my mental health	6%	8%

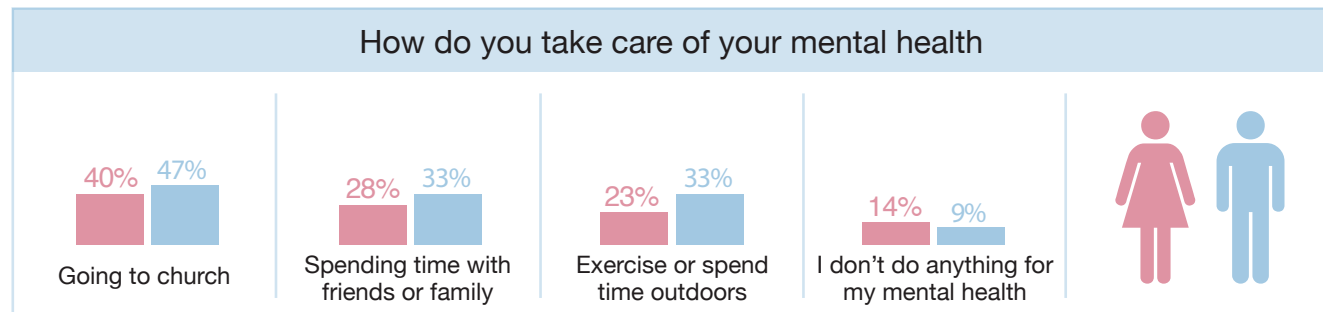
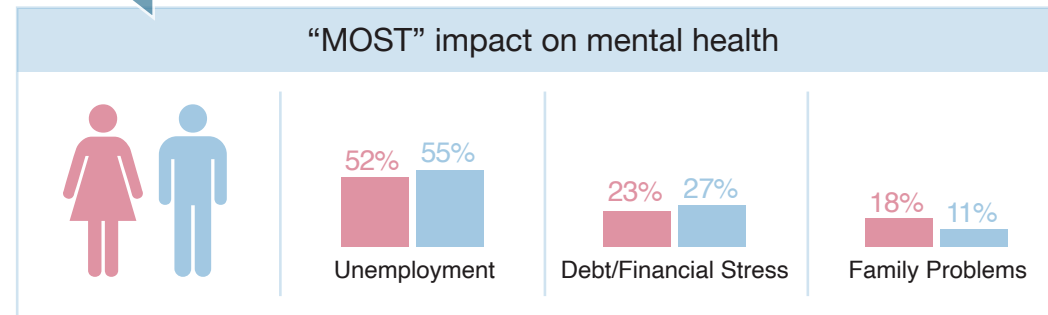
  

Have you been diagnosed with a mental illness by a nurse or mental health professional in the past year?	19% YES
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# Mental Health

Domestic workers were asked to elaborate on how their mental health had been affected in the last year. Of those who said their mental health had been negatively affected in the last year, one in five (19%) mentioned stress, depression and/or anxiety, one in five (19%) mentioned their finances (money, salary, employment, financial situation), one in eight (13%) mentioned a toll on their physical health (headaches, blood pressure, flu, sleepless nights, etc.), and 7% mentioned the loss of a family member taking a toll on their mental health.

“  
*I often feel depressed because of the strain lack of employment has caused.*  
”



“  
*I have been having sleepless nights on how I'm going to feed my kids and pay my other bills.*  
”

# Conclusion

**As the dust settles just over a year after all COVID-19 restrictions were lifted in South Africa, many of us would have predicted that the worst would be behind us. While the recovery of livelihoods was never expected to be a smooth ride, few would have predicted the dire circumstances we find ourselves in today with unprecedented levels of loadshedding and a cost of living crisis. Interest rates have increased steadily in an effort to curtail rising inflation resulting in all segments feeling the pinch, especially new homeowners who were able to take advantage of low interest rates during the pandemic. This has compounded the job losses and economic hardship for domestic workers and even though some encouraging signs are evident in this year's report, the general outlook is still grim.**

This report was conceived as part of an effort to establish the status quo so we could measure the impact of civil society, government, and the work of SweepSouth and other industry players working towards the improvement of domestic worker pay and conditions with each passing year. It has been tremendously difficult for us to see some trends stagnate and many reverse. Even some encouraging signs should be taken with a pinch of salt. Though earnings appear to be increasing, much of this benefit will be eroded by inflation and it still falls short of a living wage. The earnings data also only represents those who remain employed. Job losses mean that many domestic workers and their families will be

pushed to the brink.

The next few years will be a trying time, and we will need strong and decisive leadership to weather the storm. South Africa will face a test in the next general elections held in 2024. We cannot let politicking, corruption, and violence undermine the efforts to rebuild our economies and the livelihoods of our most vulnerable citizens. This means holding our leaders accountable and using what power we have to drive change within our homes, workplaces, and communities.

## **So what are we doing to effect change at SweepSouth?**

We have expanded our approach to not just working with individual domestic workers themselves, but have begun working with industry players to agree to a minimum set of work standards and benefits. Progress in this regard has been slow, but we are slowly feeling the momentum shift with a new representative body for platforms due to launch in the coming months. We continue to take a data-driven approach to increase SweepStar earnings through raising minimum platform pricing, increasing the opportunities for customers to contribute more, and continuously encouraging them to do so.

We have also introduced new innovative products like **same-day bookings** and **express bookings** to expand the earning opportunities for SweepStars. This has allowed us to expand our

customer use cases, and through our matching algorithm, we can provide SweepStars with the opportunity to work more than one booking in a day, greatly increasing their earning potential. We continue to enhance our rewards programme for SweepStars to leverage our relationships with other brands to help reduce their cost of living. Additionally, we are working on expanding this programme to domestic workers and their employers beyond the SweepSouth platform.

We are looking to expand the reach of the SweepSouth Foundation, an ongoing initiative to raise funds for domestic workers and help better their lives. Through the Foundation, we have successfully helped fund a number of different causes, such as providing a new electric wheelchair to the child of one of our SweepStars, supporting new business ventures founded by domestic workers, and providing flood and fire relief to domestic workers, their families, and community.

We continue to engage with governments across Africa to help inform regulations around platforms similar to ourselves, and to motivate for greater pay and social protection for platform workers, and domestic workers in particular.

We also continue to push ourselves to be an example to other platforms around the world and an example of best practice. Testament to this work was seen in 2022 when we achieved the *highest Fairwork score in South Africa*.

# Conclusion

We continue to provide education to domestic workers, helping them to leverage technology for their benefit and similarly, we use initiatives such as this report to educate the general public about the lived experiences of domestic workers and how employers can implement better practices in their homes.

## So what can you as a domestic worker-employer do to effect change?

One of the most important things you can do is aim to pay your domestic worker a living wage. You can measure how you are doing in terms of pay by using tools like the Living Wage Calculator. ([living-wage.co.za](http://living-wage.co.za))

Ensure you are treating your domestic worker in the same way you would like to be treated. Be sensitive to not just their physical health needs, but their mental health needs as well. Recognise that many domestic workers are caregivers who shoulder the responsibilities and challenges this brings about.

Ensure that you comply with relevant labour law such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), Sectoral Determination Seven on Domestic Work, and the annually gazetted National Minimum Wage (NMW). Simply put: annual leave, sick leave, lunch breaks, and reasonable work hours are rights, not privileges. Ignorance is not an excuse. To access a user-friendly guide to employing a domestic worker, visit [izwi.org.za](http://izwi.org.za)

Be sensitive to the impact of loadshedding on not only your domestic worker's ability to do their work, but also their home life and commute to work. Lack of power not only affects the use of cleaning appliances, lengthening their work day, but it also lengthens the time for your worker to look after their own domestic responsibilities, such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare, further compounded if they arrive home late.

Increased commute times due to traffic may cause them to arrive late and having to leave earlier in pitch darkness affects how safe they feel during their daily commute. This inevitably impacts their mental and physical health. Compromise and understanding is key to fair and dignified workplace.

Results from other surveys show that domestic workers most appreciate gifts of food from their employer. Due to an inability to bulk buy, limited transport options and lack of refrigeration capacity, buying food is more expensive for your domestic worker than it is for you. So where you can, if buying the bulk pack is just a little more expensive, get the extra and share it with your domestic worker. It will go a long way to easing the cost burden on their family and also help to improve nutrition.

Change begins at home, and the minds you can most easily change are those of your family and friends. Discuss domestic worker pay with them. Share the insights in this report with them. Share it with your neighbourhood through your local

WhatsApp or Facebook groups.

Get involved in your community around campaigns to help more economically vulnerable communities. This can be through community outreach groups you are part of or at your children's school, perhaps work within your faith-based community to partner with a similar community in a disadvantaged area.

Be an agent of change on social media, adding your voice to topics about domestic workers in your neighbourhood Facebook or WhatsApp groups.



# Key Recommendations

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## 1. Enforce and expand legal protections

While South Africa has minimum wage and other labour legislation protecting domestic workers, the report indicates that this is often not adhered to. Without better implementation and enforcement, domestic workers will not see much benefit. Work in private homes is difficult to regulate so we encourage the development of more creative solutions. Governments should work with tech partners to make compliance quick and easy for employers and employees.

Domestic work is often occasional and for many different employers. In addition, many domestic workers are foreign. This often disqualifies domestic workers from legislation intended to protect them or introduces a complex administrative burden. Legislation needs to evolve beyond the basic assumption of one employee, one employer on a high repeat basis and seek to better match the nature of domestic work in order for workers to enjoy expanded protections.

## 2. Implementing multipronged solutions for loadshedding

Loadshedding is having a severe impact on the working conditions, personal safety, and the mental health of domestic workers.

While it is not feasible to expect all clients/employers to provide back-up solutions in their homes (such as solar power or inverters), there are solutions from government and private companies that could

provide relief. We strongly support community lighting with back-up power with an aim to increase personal safety of domestic workers and their families while travelling during the early mornings and evenings. Another possible solution is expanding the load-limiting project, implemented during stage 1 to stage 4 loadshedding to manage and optimise the supply and demand of electricity on the grid, with a focus on keeping lights on and cellphone networks live. Furthermore, focus on ensuring the smooth flow of traffic during peak times can free up precious time lost.

## 3. Improved access to mental health care

Consistent with previous reports, we can see the significant burden placed on domestic workers to support themselves and their families at home. Continued economic difficulties will compound the pressure on workers. With our respondents stating that unemployment has the biggest impact on their mental health, we will face an ever worsening crisis as access to quality mental health care is only available to very few.

We would recommend training programmes for religious leaders on how to provide care for the mental health of their congregation. Furthermore, we believe that safety has a significant impact on women accessing the outdoors to care for their mental health. Through a combined effort of community safety and recreation programmes, the creation of safe spaces for women to exercise and spend time outdoors should be a priority.

## 4. Increased support for workers facing abuse at home and in their workplace

Better effort needs to be made to support workers who face abuse in their home lives and at their places of work. Often the power asymmetry present between employers and employees will mean that workers will rarely report instances of abuse for fear of losing their job. Similarly, the burden carried by workers, especially female workers, puts them in a vulnerable position to take action when facing abuse at home.

While lip service is often given to fighting gender-based violence by the government and other quarters of society, these efforts fall far short of addressing the needs of those facing an abusive situation. Material support needs to be provided for survivors of abuse to enable them to adequately escape the situation.





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**SweepSouth**

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