







ROZGAAR SURVEY REPORT

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANT WORKERS IN INDIA



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FOREWORD

Migrant workers comprise a significant section of India's workforce today. The majority of these workers remain largely undocumented. Given the transient nature of the inter-state migrant workers, travelling for work from one state to another, it is difficult to maintain proper records for them. As most are not formally registered with employers or state authorities, they often do not have the requisite identification cards and documentation required to access various government schemes and benefits under the law.

Daily Wage Worker Platform and Jindal Global University have attempted to address this critical information gap through the development of the Rozgaar Survey. The survey provides a comprehensive overview of the socio-economic character of each migrant worker. Moving beyond age, sex and occupational details, the survey captures a migrant's working conditions prior to the lockdowns and six months later. It documents the challenges migrants face at the workplace, in their skill sets, career aspirations, knowledge and access to government schemes, food security and healthcare. The survey was developed and field-tested by our NGO partners among several migrants and modified accordingly, to accurately document and reflect the ground realities facing migrant workers today.

It is our hope that the survey will provide a framework with which to gather information on migrants across the country and enable development partners and policy makers to develop a holistic solution to address the root causes of the current crisis.

We thank Mahashakti Foundation, Centre for Youth and Development Activities, Adithi and Tatvasi Samaj Nyas for their efforts to survey almost 7,000 migrants in Bihar, Orissa and Maharashtra.

We are grateful to Neha Mallick and Arushi Jain for designing the Rozgaar survey and Nalini Menon for editing the report.

Siddhartha Prakash Founder Daily Wage Worker Platform Sriram Raghavan Director Jindal Global University

Executive Summary

There are over 450 million internal migrants in India today.[1]The mass exodus of migrant workers from cities to villages triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic shed light on the dismal working conditions and rights of migrant workers within India. Migrant workers, already among the most vulnerable within the workforce in India, face multiple challenges in the form of weak social safety nets, delay in wage payment, lack of documentation, harassment by contractors, unavailability of food, housing, healthcare, lack of legal awareness and poor accessibility to skill training. The lockdowns in 2020 laid bare and exacerbated the structural issues impacting workers on a regular basis.

Daily Wage Worker Platform in collaboration with prominent Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) surveyed around 7000 migrant workers from September to November 2020, spanning across states of Bihar, Odisha, and Maharashtra in order to understand the plight of migrant workers during the lockdown and the consequences. It was found that almost 85% of the surveyed workers did not have any source of income after the lockdown and almost 50% reported difficulty due to food shortages. At the same time, they were apprehensive of migrating back to destination states to look for work. Besides the distress caused due to the lockdown, the same structural issues mentioned earlier continue to explain why workers are demotivated to go back to their previous jobs or migrate in search of new jobs. Interestingly, for the workers who were willing to relocate, there was a strong demand for skill trainings, employment support through NGOs and basic amenities and rights covering fair wages, travel allowances, adequate housing and food security in the workplaces.

To mitigate the distress and support the workers through an inclusive recovery process, it is important to implement policies that take into account the demands and needs of these workers who were the hardest hit by the pandemic. Addressing data gaps within the system so that workers are documented and identified for transfers and benefits, ensuring each worker has proper employment documentation, skill training and increasing legal awareness among workers should be some key policy goals. Moreover, broadening the social security net through portability of the Public Distribution System (PDS) and prioritizing workers in the vaccine distribution drive can help to erase the apprehension that workers currently have in terms of migrating back.

As the Government works towards providing these benefits, an innovative approach by the Rozgaar Sahayata Manch aims to address the root causes of the current crisis through the provision of an integrated package of services including data collection, job placements, skill development, access to government schemes and legal awareness. These services will be provided to migrant workers through a consortium of NGO partners across different states.

1.Background and Introduction

India is home to one of the largest labour markets comprising of over 500 million workers today [2]. However, unfortunately almost 74% of the overall workforce in India falls under the category of vulnerable workers (World Bank, 2019) [3]. Among the vulnerable workers, a large section is comprised of migrant workers—people who leave their villages/towns to work in other cities and states. Migrant workers contribute heavily to high-growth industries and services such as construction, manufacturing, transportation and hospitality; yet are among the most vulnerable groups within the workforce. The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns across the country exposed the numerous issues within the labour economy as millions of workers were left stranded with almost no means of sustenance. Seasonal migrants, who are particularly vulnerable, became the face of the migrant worker crisis that struck India in April 2020.

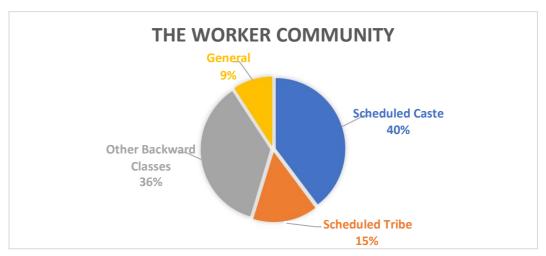


Figure 1

Source: Primary Survey, 2020 Rozgaar Survey

Migration, in itself, is not a new phenomenon. Various factors have contributed to the growth in the number of seasonal migrants across the country. Low growth in the agricultural sector where work is mostly seasonal, combined with aspirations of earning higher incomes pushes workers to migrate to more developed urban areas. Moreover, the findings from our survey and NSS data show that migrant workers belong to non-general categories which means they are already marginalized within the society[4]. On average, if our survey sample is taken to be representative, these workers are likely to have completed education only till 8th grade or never had any formal education at all.

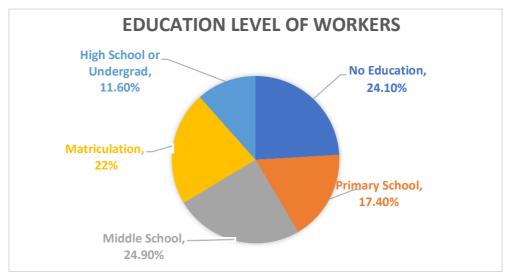


Figure 2

Source: Primary Survey, 2020 Rozgaar Survey

These factors, combined with weak social safety nets, lack of legal awareness, support and bargaining power, make their lives very difficult. The onset of the pandemic devastated the lives of these migrants and daily wagers. The impact of Covid-19, however, was not just temporary. On average, the workforce recovery has not been entirely steady as many workers who had lost their jobs between April to August 2020 had failed to get their jobs back till December 2020. Those that did, lost them again.[5] As a result, there has been a massive loss of livelihood as unemployed workers struggle to make ends meet.

2.Key Challenges faced by Workers

I. In the Destination States

The Constitution guarantees freedom of movement across India. Every year millions of workers – men, women and even children, migrate from the rural areas of various states to urbanized cities and towns looking for work. However, along with this freedom comes a plethora of challenges that these people face at their destination states.

In December 2011, a report by the Standing Committee on Labour stated that the enlistment of labourers under the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (ISMW) Act was low and the use of assurances sketched out in the Act was poor.[6] The report inferred that the Central Government had not put forth any concrete measures to ensure that employers register their workers with the local authorities as per the law, which was the only means to facilitate access to benefits under the Act. Under the ISMW Act, all employers that hire migrant workers need to register them with the local labour department and provide them with a passbook that records their personal and employment details. As per the law, employers have to provide each worker with wages, decent working conditions, insurance, travel allowance and housing support. While some socially responsible companies provide these benefits to their workers, a number of employers fail to honour these commitments. There is no enforcement mechanism in place to defend the rights of workers. During the lockdowns, many businesses were unable to even pay salaries to workers for several months.

The lockdowns shed light on several operational challenges that prevent migrants from accessing basic government support required for survival during a crisis. For example, the absence of transferability of state-given benefits particularly food given through the Public Distribution System (PDS) in a particular state, cannot be accessed by migrants that have moved to another state. Ration cards required to access benefits under the PDS that are issued by state governments and are not valid in a different state. Interstate migrants would need to apply for new ration cards in their city of employment, which proved to be a challenge as these were undocumented workers. Thus millions of interstate migrant workers were denied access to basic rations during the lockdowns, thus precipitating the crisis.

II. During Transit

Migrant workers have been the worst hit financially during the pandemic. They have endured huge challenges during the transition phase of the lockdown. Post the shutdown of industries, migrant workers were deprived of earnings, food security and healthcare facilities. The loss of income meant maids, drivers, street vendors, construction workers and other daily wage earners could not buy their daily rations and pay rent for their accommodation. With the lockdowns, the sick could not access public health facilities that were overwhelmed with Covid-19 patients.

With no support systems in the cities, millions of migrants headed back to their source states in the hope of being supported by family and friends. A report titled 'Recommendations On Addressing Challenges Faced by Migrant Workers during COVID-19'states that migrant workers were stranded due to the lack of transportation facilities available during the lockdown. In desperation, over 500,000 workers walked 300-500 kilometres to their native states.[6] Millions rushed backed in crowded buses and the special train services that were haphazardly arranged by the government after several weeks. The lockdowns witnessed the largest migration in the history of the sub-continent, with the movement of over 30 million workers, all struggling to survive, as compared to 14 million during the partition of India.[7]

Data in the 'Voices of the Invisible Citizens' survey report suggests that around 14% of migrant workers did not have ration cards and 17% of them did not have a bank account. Hence, they faced the brunt of a flawed legal system and could not avail of aid provided by the government. The report further reiterates the vulnerability of the migrant workers' community to Covid-19 due to their meagre lifestyle, poor hygiene and lack of worldly awareness. Migrants were stranded in their destination states with neither the financial resources nor the infrastructure to maintain social distancing and contain the spread of Covid-19.[8] The most vulnerable and populous section of society had the least access to healthcare, putting them at risk of catching the infection. Ironically, thousands of migrants feared death from hunger and starvation more than the disease.

III. In the Source States

The initiation of the lockdown triggered widespread panic among migrants across major cities and destination states in India, initiating concerted attempts to return primarily to rural hometowns in the states of their origin. For many of these labour migrants, the closure of commercial operations essentially cut off their primary source of revenue, leaving them with little to no means to ride out successive national lockdowns. The mental health of migrant workers has also been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated limitations. Migrant workers are already a vulnerable demographic and many current vulnerabilities, such as fear of disease transmission, lack of family and care groups, have been exacerbated by Covid-19.[9]

In addition, during the pandemic, the mishandling of migrant mobility and the accusations migrants faced (due to being the most prominent movers of Covid-19) possibly created a huge deficit of confidence in them. Yet another challenge they faced was resistance from local authorities while crossing state borders. Upon arrival in their home state, thousands were placed under forced quarantine centres with poor infrastructure and overcrowding that led to further exposure to Covid-19. Many villages denied entry to returning workers, fearing they would spread the infection. Under these conditions, millions of workers fell into deeper poverty, debt and bondage.[10] A number of NGOs have documented how marginalised communities such as sex workers were unable to repay loans and forced into destitution. With public schools and colleges closing down across the country for almost a year, millions of under-privileged children were denied an education, unable to access online courses.[11]

3.Current State and Aspirations of Workers

I. About the study and the rationale behind it

The migrant worker crisis that took place in India after the implementation of the first lockdown in 2020 by the Central Government garnered considerable public attention and became a point of discourse for policy practitioners, public intellectuals and civil society. However, as movement restrictions were eased and the economy started to recover, the fate of these workers was largely forgotten again. Many believe the migrant worker crisis is over today.

In 2021, the majority of these workers remain largely undocumented. It is difficult to maintain proper records for interstate migrant workers, given the transient nature of their work that could entail travelling from one state to another. As most are not formally registered with employers or state authorities, they often do not have the requisite identification cards and documentation required to access various government schemes and benefits under the law.

Daily Wage Worker Platform and Jindal Global University conducted this study six months after the lockdown, as a part of the Rozgaar Project in order to understand the vulnerabilities that migrant workers still face. The issue of migrant worker rights is a long-standing one that gained attention due to the pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns. Therefore, in an economy where the informal sector comprises 90% of the workforce[12] and is still recovering from the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to document the current state and needs of the workers in order to ensure that the recovery of the economy happens in an inclusive manner with their voices being heard.

II. Objectives of the Study

The key objective of the study was to understand in what ways the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown impacted the lives of migrant workers while assessing their needs and aspirations:

- To identify key challenges faced by migrant workers and analyse their situation before and after the Covid-19 lockdown.
- To identify the root causes of the issues that persist within the migrant worker economy based on their self-assessment.
- To propose a set of holistic strategies and solutions to address the issues based on the aspirations and needs of the workers.

III. Survey Methodology

The Rozgaar Survey provides a comprehensive overview of the socioeconomic character of each migrant worker. Moving beyond age, sex and occupational details, the survey captures a migrant's working conditions prior to the lockdowns and six months after they commenced.. It documents the challenges he or she faces at the workplace, skill sets, career aspirations, knowledge and access to government schemes, food security and healthcare.

The survey was implemented across three states by our NGOpartners – Tatvasi Samaj Nyas (TSN) and Adithi in Bihar, Mahashakti Foundation in Odisha and the Centre for Youth and Development Activities (CYDA) in Maharashtra between the months of September and November 2020. Primary data was collected through this survey for quantitative and qualitative research purposes. The survey was developed and field-tested by our NGO partners among several migrants and modified accordingly, to accurately document and reflect the ground realities facing migrant workers today.

Sample Size: 6,672 migrant workers.

Sampling Method: A mixed method approach was undertaken (qualitative and quantitative) for the survey. The NGO partners (Mahashakti, CYDA, TSN and Adithi) employed volunteers to undertake the survey covering their districts. Convenient sampling/Purposive sampling was used to identify the participants who were first confirmed to be migrant workers. Further, a structured questionnaire was designed and deployed through a paper-based mode as stated in Annexure1. Participants from Maharashtra represent workers from a destination state whereas the participants from Bihar and Odisha represent workers from source states. The questionnaire was designed to capture the condition of workers at both levels.

Demographic Details:

a. Age: 18-35: 68.3%

35-45: 21.4%

45-60: 8.5%

b. Gender: Male: 90.8%

Female: 9.2%

c. States: Maharashtra: 1,507 workers

Bihar: 3,255 workers

Odisha: 1,910 workers

d. Sector of work: The workers were currently or previously employed under various sectors such as Brick Kilns in Tamil Nadu and Bihar, Construction and Hospitality in Maharashtra, Textiles and Garment Industry in Gujarat.

IV. Findings and Discussion

a. Income and Wages

In order to understand the current scenario of migrant workers, it is important to understand their income patterns and means of sustenance. In India millions of workers live from hand to mouth, surviving on a daily wage, without any savings. As a result, their entire monthly income is used to cover food and rental accommodation needs. In these conditions, the timely payment of wages is critical for survival and the prolonged lockdowns led to an immediate loss of income for millions of workers. In fact, 13.4% of the workers reported not receiving their wages as a problem they faced before the pandemic.

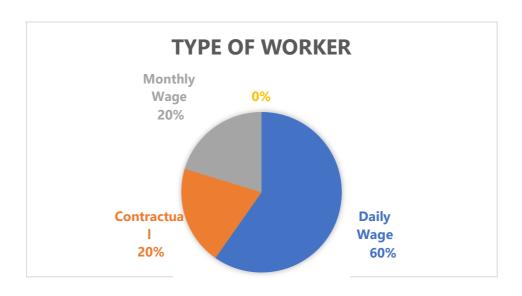


Figure 3

Source: Primary Survey, 2020 Rozgaar Survey

The mode of work was also taken into account in order to understand their dependence on their employers. 60% of the workers surveyed were working on a daily wage basis, 20% were working on a contractual basis and the balance on a monthly wage. However, 45% of them received wages on a monthly basis, 22% on a weekly basis and about 22% on a daily basis. A high percentage of daily wage workers who received income monthly pointed towards a higher dependence on employers as there is decreased job security and workers even tolerate harassment in order to receive their full share of wages. The most

common means of payment was direct cash with only 20% receiving payment through bank transfers. This is despite the fact that almost 75% of the workers had bank accounts. The reason behind bank transfers being more suitable is that they are traceable, reducing the chances of the employer harassing the workers by under-paying them, excluding overtime (52% of the workers reported working for more than 8 hours a day) or not paying them at all. Bank transfers of wages could also lead to potentially higher savings for the workers in the long run.

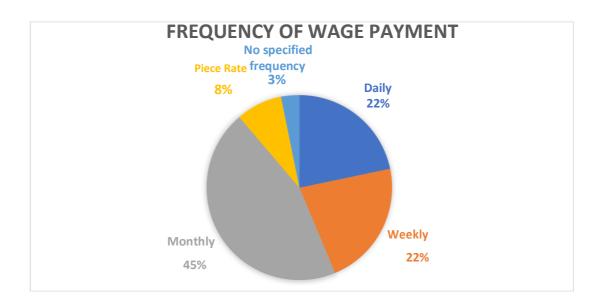


Figure 4
Source: Primary Survey, 2020 Rozgaar Survey

These problems existed before the pandemic as well. After the lockdown and the economic downturn that the country faced, many workers who had managed to return to their home villages did not go back and their situation, as our study shows, is considerably worse. 70% of the respondents of our survey reported that they were unemployed at the time of the survey (i.e. between September to November 2020) .Out of the 6,672 respondents, 5651 (84.7%) reported that they did not have any form of income currently. As incomes fall, food availability and the standard of living get drastically affected. Almost 50% of the respondents reported issues with food availability even when most of them were in their own villages with their informal support structures in place.

This infers that the Government schemes and relief packages that were meant to ameliorate the condition of the workers have not been able to cater to all beneficiaries. Sources of income, even in their own villages are hard to come by and as a result many workers resort to taking money on loan from money lenders at high interest rates in order to keep themselves afloat. The gap exists within the PDS where the benefits have not reached the intended beneficiaries. One of the possible reasons for this is the lack of proper documentation. Alarmingly, 75% of the workers reported not receiving any form of social security benefits or government transfers during their time of employment.

b. Documentation

Documentation such as Aadhaar Cards, Ration Cards, Job Cards, etc. are absolutely essential to migrant workers as they not only serve as proofs of identity which are important for travelling but also identify them as beneficiaries under government schemes and benefits. Ration Cards and Aadhaar Cards that are linked to a bank account play a significant role in India's PDS for direct benefit transfers.

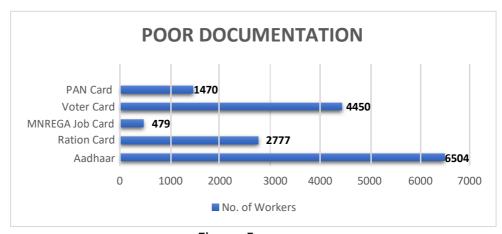


Figure 5

Source: Primary Survey, 2020 Rozgaar Report

Through our survey, we tried to understand what sort of documentation the workers have been issued and then analyse the affects it has. The most common form of documentation was the Aadhaar Card which 97.4% of the respondents had. This is as expected because most of the workers get their Aadhaar registration done at their source villages before migrating. The main issue is with the lack of documentation that is tied to their employment. Out of the respondents, fewer than 3% of the total had been issued an employment card under the Inter State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 (ISMW) during their previous employment. Moreover, 82% of them did not receive a written job contract during their employment. The lack of documentation that actually identifies a person as a migrant worker poses a serious threat to job security, legal backing, access to government schemes, social security benefits etc. While the people

are registered within their villages, they often have no form of documentation that is local to their destination of work, which is where proofs of employment become important. Underpayment and delay in wage payment also stems from workers not having a written contract that can act as a legal guarantee. Our survey shows that having a job contract is correlated to a higher chance of receiving wages through a bank transfer.

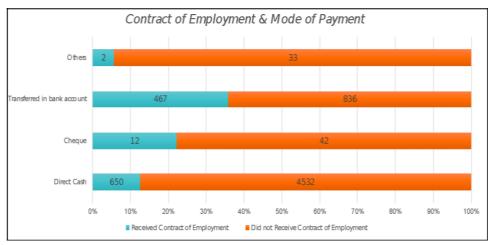


Figure 6

Source: Primary Survey, 2020 Rozgaar Report

This can be attributed to the employers, who are heavily incentivised to underreport the number of labourers they employ. By doing so, they save on compliance costs for social-security payments per employee, costs for employee benefits (such as transportation and living expenses) while themselves availing of the benefits due to units employing fewer workers than the thresholds set under various laws pertaining to factories, industry and unionisation.

c. Role of Contractors

Contractors, who act as middlemen between employers and the workers, play a major role in the migrant worker economy. 60% of the workers received their jobs through a contractor. There is heavy reliance on these contractors as most workers who get employment through them also receive their wages through these contractors. Moreover, employers outsource liability towards wage payment, safety and housing conditions to these contractors as well. As a result, during the pandemic, the employers were absolved of responsibility towards the workers and this responsibility fell upon the shoulders of the contractors. 63% of the workers did not receive any form of support from their contractors during the lockdown whereas around 30% also reported having their wages

withheld by the contractors in this period. During the crisis, a mere 7% of these workers were supported by their employers. Around 30% of the workers who got jobs through contractors also reported having been harassed by their contractors in some form - physically, verbally, or emotionally during their period of employment.

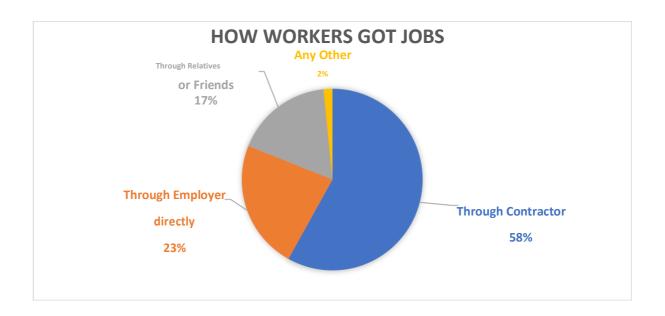


Figure 7
Source: Primary Survey, 2020 Rozgaar Report

Within the migrant labour economy, the contractors act as recruiters who allow many aspirational migrant workers to find jobs in different states. Their contribution in terms of helping workers find job opportunities cannot be denied as they ease the process of looking for work opportunities in distant cities with whose languages the non-native workers may not be familiar. Resultantly, when asked about which mode of gaining employment they would prefer in the future, about 30% of the respondents chose contractors as their go to option. However, more importantly, almost 56% of the workers surveyed said they would prefer alternate mediums of gaining employment such as NGOs and through established contacts of friends/relatives/previous employers, etc. The high rates of harassment combined with the possibility of suppressed wages by contractors pushes workers away from the idea of gaining employment through them.

d. Legal Awareness

Almost all the workers (90%) were unaware of their legal employment rights and entitlements in terms of government benefits. This issue can be linked to various other problems faced by the workers such as not knowing about Employment Cards, Government schemes aimed to help them with housing and rations, safety rights and liabilities that employers have. Moreover, the lack of bargaining power due to a system of contractor-based employment along with almost no membership of trade/labour unions or NGOs adds to the possibility of these workers being exploited. The alarming figure of only about 75% of the workers not receiving social security benefits can also be linked to this issue of lack of legal awareness.

Overall, given the complex system of the PDS in India wherein multiple laws, schemes and agencies to implement these schemes exist at the same time and overlap as well, there is an overwhelming need for higher legal awareness among migrant workers. With the new Labour Codes, although this problem will be mitigated somewhat due to the amalgamation of over 30 different Acts and laws under four broad codes, there is still a gaping need to make the understanding of these Codes more accessible to the people who could use them the most. Strengthening the legal backing that the workers have in their destination cities is also essential as usually, they cannot take time off work to visit courts and lawyers in order to fight for their rights.

e. Skill Mapping and Training

Workers are categorised into three broad categories based on their skill level – skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. In India, given the pre-existing low wage rates and the higher demand for skilled workers, there is a demand for skill training within the migrant community. However, due to time constraints, lack of resources that are required for skilling sessions, and paucity of skilling centres and workshops, workers are usually unable to gain the skills that might help them.

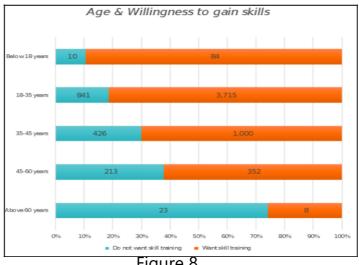


Figure 8

Source: Primary Survey, 2020 Rozgaar Report

Our survey intended to capture the aspirations workers have in terms of skill training in order to understand what would be lucrative and convenient to them. Almost 80% of the workers are willing to undergo skill training sessions in order to decrease their reliance on contractors and become more familiar with job opportunities across industry segments and sectors. Younger workers are more willing to gain skills and this must be kept in mind while designing policies to train the youth. Overall, it can be said that average workers want to undergo skill training and feels that they do not currently have adequate skills. Under skill training, workers seek basic skills and machine-related skills which do not take time to learn. They prefer short-term skilling programmes that last for 15-30 days. There is an increase in demand for work within the skilled or semi-skilled sectors such as driving, retail/wholesale, service sector, etc. as well, especially among workers who want to change their sector of work.

f. Future Aspirations

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated numerous systemic factors which resulted in the deplorable conditions migrant workers had to face once the first lockdown was announced. Almost 70% of the workers lost their employment. As a result of not having adequate social safety nets and benefits from their previous employers, nearly 85% of them don't have a source of income and about 50% have reported issues with food availability – up from

40% previously. With the flailing situation of healthcare centers across the country, 32% of them also reported poor health conditions. Lack of relevant documentation including Ration Cards and Employment Cards resulted in an increased difficulty in accessing government schemes and relief packages.



Figure 9

Source: Primary Survey, 2020

However, due to the sudden loss of livelihood, most workers are still willing to go back to their former employment despite the harassment and poor living situation faced by them there. Through the survey, it was found that almost 56.5% of the workers are willing to return back to work either immediately or after a few months with 84% of them wanting to return to the same sector in which they were previously employed. Most workers expect to be paid a fair wage of 10,000-20,000 INR per month which is 333-667 INR per day, just around the minimum wage of 368 INR. Basic amenities and rights such as appropriate wages, adequate housing, social security benefits, protective clothing, 8-hour long workdays are the requirements to encourage workers to return.

Workers who want to stay back or migrate again after a few months are willing to invest more time in skill training as it might increase their employability whereas workers who want to go back immediately are more interested in short-term skilling programmes and courses.

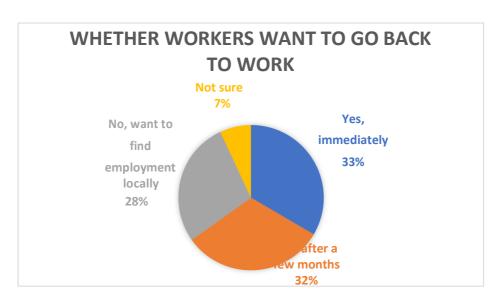


Figure 10

Source: Primary Survey, 2020 Rozgaar Report

Workers who want to stay back or migrate again after a few months are willing to invest more time in skill training as it might increase their employability whereas workers who want to go back immediately are more interested in short-term skilling programmes and courses.

4.Policy Recommendations

Policymakers must take the aspirations of workers into account while framing solutions that will help workers to rebuild their livelihoods and safeguard their welfare. We recommend that Governments, Corporates and NGOs join hands to provide an integrated package of services at the policy, state and local levels. The package will include a standardised set of services for interstate migrant workers:



1. Addressing Data Gaps

Existing gaps in data regarding migrant workers in India poses a serious challenge to both the workers themselves and to policy makers. The Rozgaar Survey provides a comprehensive model to capture the socio-economic character of migrant workers in different states. Moving beyond age, sex and occupational details, the survey captures the challenges migrants face at the workplace, skill sets, career aspirations, knowledge and access to government schemes, food security and healthcare. Such a model could be useful in developing a centralised survey on migrant workers for the government and

development partners to make informed policy decisions and develop appropriate programme interventions.

While the process of creating and implementing a national and or state level survey-based database for interstate migrant workers may take time, the Local Governance System can be effectively leveraged to achieve this through a multiple tier system based on the nature of the flow respective to the states.

- a. In the source states, which are usually rural in nature, records should be enumerated and maintained at the Gram Panchayat level which can be compiled into a District Registry of Migrant Workers which is maintained digitally for easy and regular updation.
- b. In the destination states, which are mostly urban in nature, there should be an enumeration of worker records by the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) who can work with Trade Unions and CSOs to identify and survey hotspot areas of high migration and collect data accordingly.
- c. States with a high influx of workers such as Maharashtra and Telangana, should have a dedicated Nodal Agency under their Labour Departments to oversee the process of data collection by the ULBs and lend their support. States with a high outflow of migrant workers such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh, etc. should have a similar agency, except with the responsibility of looking over the work of data collection through the Gram Panchayats and the Districts.
- d. A Nodal Agency under the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) as mentioned in the ILO-Aajevika 2020[13] report should be established to coordinate the work of the State Level Agencies. This agency will be responsible for the overall formalisation of the migrant worker community across the country.

2. Connecting workers with jobs

A number of public and private initiatives have emerged since the lockdowns that serve to connect migrant workers with employers. State governments have also developed various apps. Innovative start-ups like Bharat Shramik and Bandhu have begun to match supply and demand. These groups have ensured that migrants are provided with a travel allowance, proper contracts and working conditions by connecting them to employers that have a good track record in providing these benefits. Unlike contractors, these groups conduct some due diligence of the companies prior to connecting them with the workers.

While poverty forced millions to return to the cities, a large number of migrants opted to stay back in their home states. A few state governments and NGOs have begun to develop local livelihood programmes to support migrants who wish to remain in their home states.

These organisations have begun to connect workers with the local labour departments to enrol in MNREGA and other employment schemes. The Mahashakti Foundation in Odisha for example, has mobilised women migrants and their families into self-help groups to start local businesses such as handicrafts and organic farming with some financial support. Similarly, NGOs in Bihar have provided returning migrants with skills and loans to start cattle rearing, tailoring and mask production locally. The corporate sector can also leverage their CSR funds to help these communities become self-reliant.

3. Employer handbook of good practices

It is important to develop a handbook of good practices so as to educate employers and especially small businesses on providing employees with regular wages, decent working conditions, leave and social security. Governments should partner with NGOs and law enforcement agencies to encourage employers to follow these practices. The new labour codes provide a unique opportunity to ensure that employers adhere to these standards and stop denying workers their basic rights. In order to protect migrant workers, civil society can work with lawyers to provide legal aid and awareness to both workers and employers to ensure proper enforcement of these new laws.

4. Job Contracts and Documentation

Furnishing copies of the job contracts provided to the migrant workers should be made mandatory for the registration of an establishment under The Occupational, Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020. While increasing the accountability of the employers, this will also help to increase the documentation available to workers and accordingly improve formalisation and registration with urban bodies. According to our survey, this would also ensure higher chances of receiving payments through bank transfers.

In order to increase protection under social security benefits, the required documentation is important. In our survey, 97% of the workers had Aadhaar

Cards but only 30% had them linked to their bank accounts, which makes them ineligible to receive Direct Benefit Transfers under the PDS. 58.4% of the workers did not have Ration Cards, which are required to get access to food grains for free/at subsidised rates under the National Food Security Act, 2013.

5. Legal Awareness and Access to Government schemes

NGOs and State Governments need to increase legal awareness among migrants in both source and destination states about their legal rights of employment and access to Government benefits and schemes. The Government has launched several schemes to help migrant workers including Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhyan and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan RozgarYojana. Yet the percentage of workers who are unaware of these schemes is alarming. While illiteracy among workers still remains an issue, there can be ways of spreading legal awareness through developing modules and content in regional languages, both in source states and in destination states. Workshops that are convenient to workers and held at identified hotspots, radio programmes, billboards with short messages about workers' rights, which can be easily read, etc. are also some ideas that might be helpful. Concerted efforts, by civil society organisations and trade and labour unions that already have established networks within the migrant worker community could make a major impact as well.

Legal awareness needs to be supported with strong enforcement mechanisms. While the new labour codes have reformed India's archaic labour laws, migrant workers will need the support of the legal fraternity to help defend them against future violations. This will require the development a network of lawyers, para-legals and law faculties across India to join hands and provide technical support. A number of NGOs such as Don Bosco are working with local labour departments to help register migrant workers to resolve workplace conflicts and enrol in various state welfare schemes.

In addition, along with a National Helpline to address complaints of migrant workers, there should also be facilitation centres in areas at identified spots close to migration corridors and destination areas in the states. These centers, established under the State Level Agencies, will handle issues of registration under schemes, benefits and employment contracts along with offering services in the various languages that the workers from various states are comfortable with.

6. Skill Training

As seen in our survey results, a considerable percentage of workers are interested in going through skill training and vocational education. Data on the existing skills of workers as well as their future aspirations regarding employment corroborated with other factors such as destination city, demand levels for jobs should be taken into account while formulating adequate skill training sessions. Factors such as the pattern of migration, demand and supply and growth sectors have to be considered. Evening classes and online workshops/training can ensure that workers do not have to make a trade-off between working and learning new skills. This should primarily be done at the source regions. However, classes can also be held at various destinations to help equip workers with skills that have higher market values and to find diverse streams of work which will help reduce their reliance on contractors.

CSOs and trade unions should also contribute to identifying regions of their reach where they can carry out skill training workshops and programmes. The private sector can play a critical role in delivering practical training to diversify workers' skills to help them transition from heavy industry to services. The government's aspiration to transform India into a Gig Economy provides tremendous opportunities for the youth in the IT sector. Given that most are adept at using mobile phones and social media, they need training in sunrise sectors.

7. Investment in Rural Infrastructural Development

Uneven economic development and rural economic distress have been the migration to the kev drivers of interstate cities. Under recommendations of the Working Group of Migration, Commission on Rural Labour and the Second National Commission on Labour, rural/local employment must be increased through investment in rural development and the farming sectors. By subsidising industrial investment in rural areas with an abundance of low-cost labour, improving rural road networks and incentivising transport operators to function in rural areas, infrastructure development can be expedited. Improvement in the implementation of MGNREGA with an increase in average person-days of work generated along with reductions in wage payment delays can also go a long way in addressing the increase in interstate migration.

8. Vaccination Drive

One of the key concerns behind the apprehensions of workers to go back to cities to find work is healthcare. Due to the lack of functioning primary and secondary healthcare centres across rural areas in the country, there is certainly a fear of catching the Covid-19 virus and falling sick. As seen in our survey, 32% of the workers reported healthcare issues since the pandemic began. A vaccination drive aimed at vaccinating these vulnerable migrants might increase their willingness to return to work and also, make it safer in the process.

5.Conclusion and the Way Forward

With the advent of vaccines reviving the global economy, the pandemic may be over for the privileged, but for migrant workers, the impact of the pandemic in terms of loss of employment, health issues, food security and overall socio-economic disenfranchisement remains a reality today. In essence however, the pandemic only laid bare the issues that have long existed within the migrant labour economy by exacerbating it as it did in terms of improper documentation, lack of social security benefits and safety nets, lack of legal awareness regarding their rights as workers and access to Government schemes. In order for these workers to retain a livelihood that was uprooted due to the pandemic, these structural issues will need to be addressed on a war footing.

Migrants have been a major contributor to the country's urbanisation and socio-economic development through providing manpower for various industries. However, during their working tenure, migrants have been exposed to unsafe working and living conditions in factories and city slums. Mostly recruited through informal channels like contractors, they are often underpaid and overworked. As India emerges out of the pandemic, their needs of having their basic rights met in terms of appropriate wages, safe working conditions, adequate housing, food security and access to health need to be addressed through appropriate policy measures. Legal awareness and skill building in order to reduce their dependency on the contractor-based system and open up job prospects in sunrise sectors should be a key policy goal of Governments at the centre and in the states. The IT sector provides tremendous opportunities to engage India's youthful population in the Gig Economy.

The pandemic has presented an opportunity for Governments, corporates and civil society to look inwards and focus on the issues that migrant workers have been facing for so long. We have presented a holistic approach that should address the root of the migrant worker crisis. This will require the public and private sectors to join hands and provide an integrated package of services at the policy, state and local levels.

India's informal sector drives the economy today, with migrants and daily wage workers comprising 90% of the country's workforce. There is no denying the importance of the role that migrant workers can play in realising the government's ambitious goal of making India self-reliant. Their success is India's success.

Endnotes

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APPENDIX

ANNEX I – Survey Questionnaire

Introduction of the survey and receiving the consent - Protocol for Interviewers

Hello, my name is (name of the volunteer) and I am affiliated with (name of NGO). We are conducting a survey with an aim to provide both in-state and out-state migrant workers a package of basic services to safeguard the welfare of migrant workers during the current crisis in the long term. This survey will undertake a detailed profiling and skill matching process of these workers to understand the kind of sector that would like to be employed in.

We will ask some questions to understand your experiences around your employment, skills, and kind of work you would like to undertake. The survey is categorised into 8 sections namely: demographics, personal details, prior record of employment during the lockdown, prior experience of working in different states, skill training, demands for returning to work, safety conditions and wage expectations and willingness to migrate to destination states. The information we collect will only be used by the project for the employment matching process.

If you do not wish to answer any question or wish to terminate the interview at any point, please do let us know. We anticipate that this survey/interview will take 15 minutes to complete. All information that you share with us will remain confidential and any data and research findings shared in the public domain will be anonymised. The information will not be used for commercial purposes Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time. (Signature of participants required in case of a paper-based survey).

Parameters	Sl.no	Questions (Aided/Unaided and Multi/Single Response)	Responses (Open-ended and close-ended)
1.Demographics	1.a	Name (First, Middle and Last)	
	1.b	Age	1. Below 18 2. 18-35 years
			3. 35-45 years
			4. 45-60 years5. Above 60 years
	1.c	What is your Permanent Address and Mobile Number?	+91-
	1.d	Sex	1.Male
			2.Female
			3. Other
			4. Not willing to respond
	1.e	Caste	 Scheduled Caste (SC) Scheduled Tribe (ST) Other Backward Class (OBC) General Not willing to respond

	1.f.	Religion	 Hindu Muslim Christian Buddhist Sikh Others
	1.g.	What is your Education Qualification?	 Primary School (1-V) MiddleSchool (1-VIII) Matriculation (till X) High School (till XII) Undergraduate (completed 3 yrs of degree) & above Illiterate/Never had any formal education Vocational education
	1.h.	Do you have difficulty in any of the following areas?	 1.Visual Impairement/Seeing 2. Hearing Impairment 3. Communication 4. Movement Activity 5. Intellectual Disability/Development Delay 6. Other (Please specify)
	1.i.	Were you working in a state/district that is different from your native district?	1. Yes Please specify
	1.j.	If no, then which state/	Please specify

		district were you working?	
2. Personal Details	2.a.	Which of the following ID documents do you have?	 Bank Account (saving) Ration Card Voter Card Aadhar Card MGNREGA Job Card PAN Card Other (please specifiy)
	2.b.	Is your bank account linked to your Aadhar Card?	1. Yes 2. No
	2.c	Did you have an Employment Card registered under the Inter-State Migrant Workers Act (ISMW) in your previous employment?	1.Yes 2. No
	2.d.	Are you registered under the Building and Other Construction Workmen (BOCW)?	1.Yes 2.No 3.Don't Know
3. Prior record of employment before the lockdown (categorizing the workers as highly skilled, skilled, semi-skilled		What is the type of work you have undertaken in your previous employment?	 Daily Wage Contractual Any other (Please specify)
and unskilled)	3.b.	What did you work as before coming back to	1. Construction Worker (Semi

		very petities along 2 (The	الم المالية الم				
		your native place? (These are examples of sectors)	to unskilled)				
		are examples of sectors)	2. Domestic Help Worker (unskilled)				
			3. Agriculture (Farm-based activities) Semi to unskilled)				
			4. Non-farm based activities (fishing, animal husbandry) (unskilled)				
			5. Mining (Semi to unskilled)				
			6. Textile/Garment Industry Worker (semi-skilled)				
			7. Driving - (Heavy Vehicle and Light Vehicle)- (Skilled-semi skilled)				
			8. Brick Kiln (unskilled)				
						9. Retail/Wholesale Trade (Semi to unskilled)	
							10. Quarry Worker (unskilled)
						11. Self-Employed (having small establishment) (Semi to unskilled)	
			12. Manufacturing				
			13. Service Sector worker (Gig Economy, Hospitality) (Semi to unskilled)				
			14. Waste Collector (unskilled)				
			15. Carpenter and Mason (skilled)				
			16. Others				
	3.c.	Did you know the	1. Yes				
	J.C.	language of the state	1. 103				

		that you last worked in?	2. No
	3.d	What are the languages known to you?	1.Odia2. Hindi3. Tamil4. Malayalam5. Bengali6. Others (please specify)
	3.e.	How many years have you been working in the state/district? (in other states)	 Did not work at all Less than 1 year 1-5 years 5-10 years More than 10 years
	3.f.	How were you employed?	 Through contractor/agent By the company or employer directly (without an agent) Through a relative/friend/contact Any other (Please specify)
	3.g.	Did you receive a written job contract of your last employment?	1.Yes 2. No
	3.h.	What has the frequency of payment in your last employment been?	 Daily payment Regular weekly payment Piece rate payment No specified frequency

	3.i.	What has the mode of receiving the payment in your last employment been?	 Direct Cash Cheque Transferred in bank account Others (please specify)
	3.j.	Are you aware of your legal rights as a migrant worker and government benefits you should get?	1.Yes 2. No
4. Prior experience of working in different states.	4.a	Have you received wages for the work you did before the lockdown started?	 Yes No, but sure of receiving it No, and unsure that it will be provided
	4.b	What were the working hours in your last place of employment? (understand intensity of work)	 8 hours More than 8 hours (specify) Less than 8 hours (specify)
	4.c.	How many days did you work last month and how much did you earn?	
	4.d.	What was the location of your workplace in your last employment?	 in own dwelling unit Attached to own dwelling unit Employer's dwelling unit Street with fixed location Construction/factory site No fixed workplace

	4.e.	Did you avail of any form of social security benefit in your last employment?	1.Yes 2. No
	4.f.	If Yes to 4.d, the what are the type of benefits you availed of? (this will not be applicable for the self-employed/business)	 Provident Fund Health Insurance (ESIC) Maternity Benefits Pension Free or low cost accommodation Paid leave Bonus/overtime Other Social Security (please specify)
	4.g	What was the migration pattern in your last employment?	 Seasonal (agriculture relation) Permanent
	4.h.	For how many months do you work away from your native place/home?	1.For 3 months2. For 6 months3. For 12 months4. More than 12 months5. Other (please specify)
	4.i.	Are you currently engaged in any form of employment?	1. Yes 2. No
	4.j.	If Yes, then please specify	

	4.k. 4.l.	What were the 3 basic problems you faced before the Covid-19 lockdown? What are the 3 basic	 No wage payment No accommodation Lack of food availability Others (please specify) 1.No form of income
		problems you are currently facing after the lockdown?	2. Lack of food availability3. Poor Health Condition4. Other (please specify)
	4.m.	Did you have membership of any associations?	 Trade/labour union NGO/CBO/SHG
5. Skill Training	5.a.	Would you prefer a skill training session?	1.Yes 2. No
	5.b	What kind of skills you would prefer to be trained in?	 Computer skills Handicraft Skills around machine Basic (sewing, masonry etc.) Others
	5.c.	What is the time duration you would like to invest to learn the aforementioned skills?	1.Immediate (15-30 days) 2. Short term(1-3 months) 3. Medium (3-6 months) 4. Long (6 months-1 yrs)
6. Demands for returning to work	6.a.	Do you think you will return to your place of work after the situation gets better?	1. Yes, immediately2. Yes, but after a few months

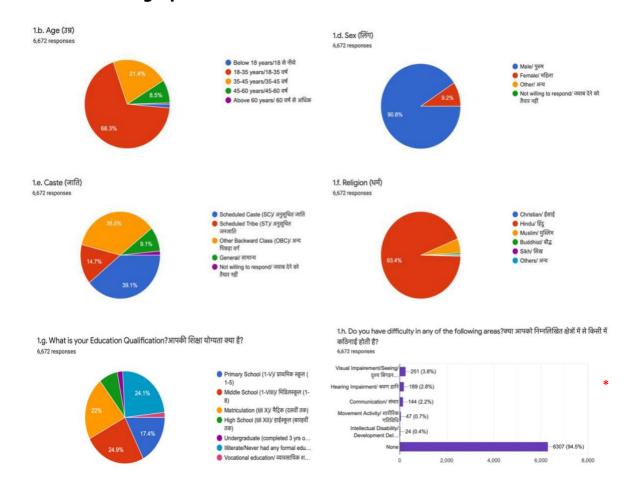
	6.b.	Which kind of sector do	3. No, I will stay with my family and find employment here 4.I don't know 1. Same as before the
		you would prefer working in?	lockdown 2. Any other
	6.c.	If any other, then what would be the sectors?	1. Construction Worker (Semi to unskilled)
			2. Domestic Help Worker (unskilled)
			3. Agriculture (Farm based activities) Semi to unskilled)
			4. Non-farm based activities (fishing, animal husbandry) (unskilled)
			5. Mining (Semi to unskilled)
			6. Textile/Garment Industry Worker (semi-skilled)
			7. Driving - (Heavy Vehicle and Light Vehicle)- (Skilled-semi skilled)
			8. Brick Kiln (unskilled)
			9. Retail/Whole sale Trade (Semi to unskilled)
			10. Quarry Worker (unskilled)
			11. Self-Employed (having small establishment) (Semi to unskilled)
			12. Manufacturing

		13. Service Sector worker (Gig economy, Hospitality) (Semi to unskilled) 14. Waste Collector (unskilled) 15. Carpenter and Mason (skilled) 16. Others
6.d.	What are the basic amenities that you would require if you return back to work?	 1.Appropriate wage rate 2. Flexible working hours 3. Housing facilities 4. Displacement allowance-transportation (as stated in ISMW Act) 5. Social security benefits 6. Medical facilities 7. Protective clothes 8. Others (specify)
6.e.	What would be the suitable working hours that you would prefer?	 1. 1-10 hrs a week 2. 11-20 hrs a week 3. 21-30 hrs a week 4. 31-40 hrs a week 5. More than 40 hrs a week
6.f.	Would you prefer to go through a contractor or through a platform that connects you with your suitable employer?	 Will prefer to go through a contractor Will like to connect through a platform Do not want to go

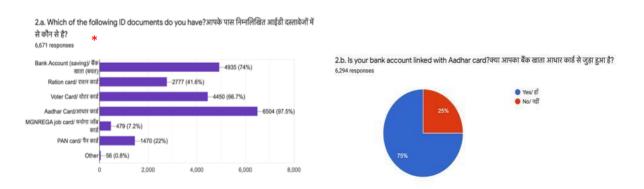
			4. None of the above5. Others
7. Safety conditions and wage expectations	7.a	Will a travel allowance and essential benefits like housing, safe environment etc. motivate you to return?	2. No
	7.b.	What is your monthly salary/wage expectation?	
8.Willingness to migrate to Other States	8.a.	What is your opinion about the future course of action for livelihood?	 Stay back in your source place Go back to your destination place to find employment opportunities
	8.b	Would you prefer to go to other states (Telangana, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh etc.), if they match with appropriate employment opportunities?	1. Yes 2.No
	8.c	If no, then why not?	

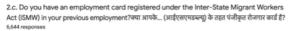
ANNEX 2: Survey Data in Graphs

Section 1: Demographics



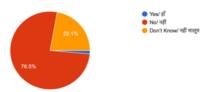
Section 2: Personal Details





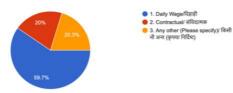
2.d. Are you registered under the Building and Other Construction Workmen (BOCW)?क्या आप भवन और अन्य निर्माण कामगार (बीओसीडब्ल्यू) के तहत पंजीकृत हैं? 6.638 responses.



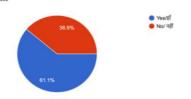


Section 3: Prior record of employment before the lockdown (categorising the workers as highly skilled, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled)

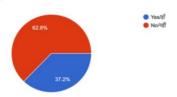
3.a. What is the type of work you have undertaken in your previous employment?आपने अपने पिछले रोजगार में किस प्रकार का कार्य किया है? 6,672 responses



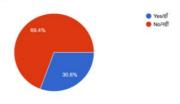
3.b. Did you get the job through a contractor? क्या आपको एक ठेकेदार के माध्यम से काम मिला?)



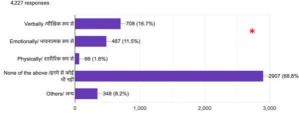
3.b.i. Did the contractor support you with money or food during the lockdown? क्या ठेकेदार ने लॉकडाउन के दौरान आपको पैसे या खाना मुहैया कराया था?



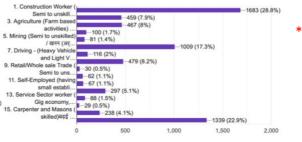
3.b.ii. Did the contractor withhold your wage payment during the lockdown? तालाबंदी के दौरान क्या ठेकेदार द्वारा आपका भुगतान रोक दिया गया था?



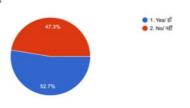
3.b.iii. If you received the job through contractor, did the contractor ever harass you? यदि आपको ठेकेदार के माध्यम से काम मिला है, तो क्या ठेकेदार ने आपको कभी परेशान किया है?



3.c. What did you work on before coming back to your native place? (These are example of sectors)आप अपने पैतृक स्थान पर वापस आने से पहले क्या काम किया करते थे ? (ये सेक्टर्स के उदाहरण हैं) 5,844 responses



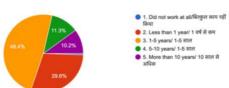
3.d. Did you know the language of the state that you last worked at?क्या आप उस राज्य की भाषा जानते हैं जिस पर आपने पिछली बार काम किया था?



3.e. What are the languages known to you?आपको कौन सी भाषाएं पता हैं? 6,672 responses

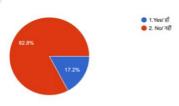


3.f. How many years since you have been working in the state/district? (in other states) आप राज्य/जिले में कितने वर्षों से काम कर रहे हैं? (अन्य राज्यों में) 6672 responses

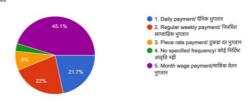


3.g. How were you employed? (आप कैसे कार्यरत थे?)

3.h. Did you receive a written job contract of your last employment?क्या आपको अपने पिछले रोजगार का लिखित नौकरी अनुबंध प्राप्त हुआ था ? 6.574 responses

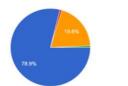


3.i. What has been the frequency of payment in your last employment?आपके पिछले रोजगार में भुगतान की आवृत्ति क्या रही हैं? 6.672 responses

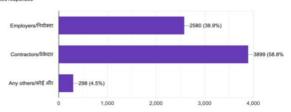


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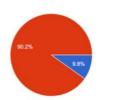
3.j.What has been the mode of receiving the payment in your last employment?आपके पिछले रोजगार में भुगतान प्राप्त करने का तरीका क्या रहा है?



- 1. Direct Cash/রাবरेक्ट কীব
 2. Chequeগৈক
 3. Transferred in bank account/বিক রার में समार्गतित
 4. Others (please specify) মুন্দর্শ (কুম্মা দিহিছে)
- 3.j.i From whom did you received this payment? आपको यह भुगतान किससे प्राप्त हुआ था? 6.635 responses



3.h. Are you aware of your legal rights as a migrant worker and government benefits you should get?क्या आप एक प्रवासी कामगार के रूप में अपने ...कारी लागों के बारे में जानते हैं जो आपको मिलना चाहिए? 6.672 responses



1.Yes/ हाँ2. No/ नहीं

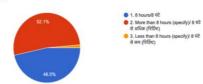
Section 4: Prior experience of working in different states

4.a. Have you received wages for the work you did before the lockdown started?क्या आपको लॉकडाउन शुरू होने से पहले किए गए काम के लिए मजदूरी मिली है? 6,672 responses



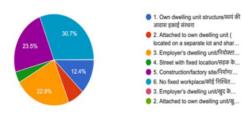
No, and unsure that it will be provided/नहीं, और अनिश्चित है कि यह प्रदान किया जाएगा

4.b. What was the working hours in your last place of employment? (understand intensity of work)आपके रोजगार के अंतिम स्थान में काम के घंटे क्या थे? (काम की तीव्रता को समझें) 6,672 responses

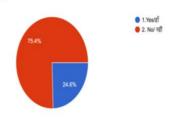


4.d. What was the location of your workplace in your last employment?आपके पिछले रोजगार में आपके कार्यस्थल क्या था?



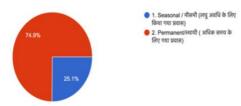


4.e. Did you avail any form of social security benefits in your last employment? क्या आपने अपने पिछले रोजगार में किसी भी प्रकार का सामाजिक सुरक्षा लाभ प्राप्त किया था?



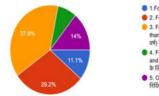
4.g. What was the migration pattern in your last employment?आपके पिछले रोजगार में माइग्रेशन पैटर्न क्या था?

6,672 responses



4.h. For how many months do you work away from your native place/home?िकतने महीनों के लिए आप अपने पैतृक स्थान से दूर काम करते हैं?

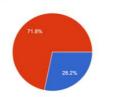




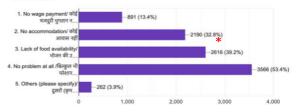
 1.For 3-6 months/3 महीने के लिए 2. For 6-12 months/6 महीने के लिए

- 2. For 6-12 months (1 year) but less than 24 months (2 years) /12 महीने (1 वर्ष) के लिए लेकिन 24 महीने से कम (2 वर्ष) 4. For More than 24 months (2 years and above) 24 महीने (2 বর্ष और अधिक) के लिए
 - 5. Other (please specify)/ अन्य (कृपया निर्दिष्ट)

4.i. Are you currently engaged in any form of employment?क्या आप वर्तमान में किसी भी प्रकार के रोजगार में लगे हुए हैं? 6,672 responses



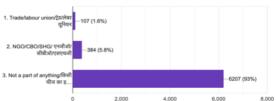
4.k. What were the 3 basic problems you faced before the COVID-19 lockdown? COVID-19 लॉकडाउन से पहले आपको किन 3 बुनियादी समस्याओं का सामना करना पड़ा?



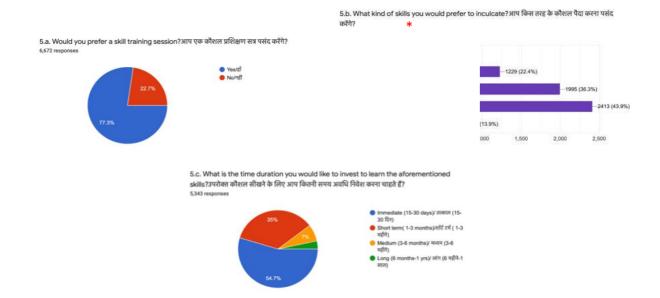
4.I. What are the 3 basic problems you are currently facing after the lockdown?लॉकडाउन के बाद वर्तमान में आप किस 3 बुनियादी समस्या का सामना कर रहे हैं?



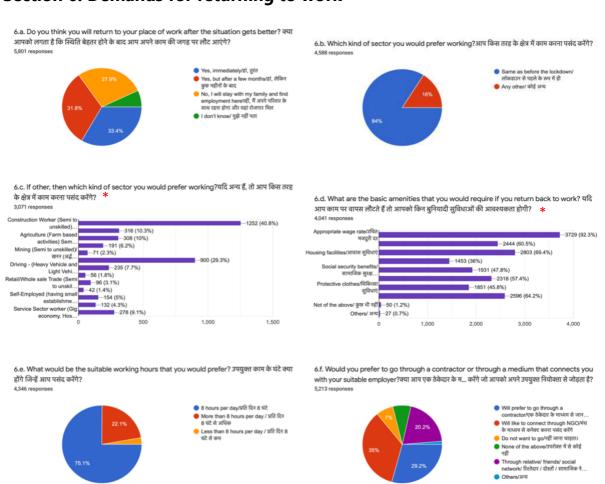
4.m. Did you have membership of any associations?क्या आपके पास किसी संघ की सदस्यता है?



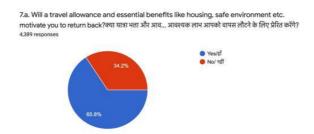
Section 5: Skill Training



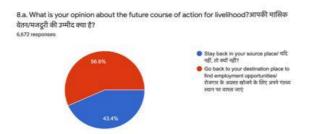
Section 6: Demands for returning to work



Section 7: Safety conditions and wage expectations



Section 8: Willingness to migrate to Other States



*Multiple Response Question i.e. respondent could choose as many options as applicable

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THANK YOU

For any query/feedback write to us on siddhartha@dailywageworker.com

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