



COVID-19 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON RETURNEE MIGRANT WORKERS IN LAO PDR



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence against women and girls



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This executive summary presents the findings of the study Assessing COVID-19 related socio-economic impacts on returnee migrant workers in informal employment (especially women) in Laos. The objective of this research is to increase the understanding and evidence base on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods of returnee migrant workers in informal employment, especially women, in Laos. The study explores the workers' situation in three moments: the period before the COVID-19 lockdown (before March 2020), during the COVID-19 lockdown (from late March to June 2020) and the period after the COVID-19 lockdown (from late June to September 2020).

In Laos, the Centre of Information and Education for Health had confirmed 41 cases as of 18th December 2020. Governments have imposed various measures to contain the spread of the virus, including lockdowns of borders, the economy and transportation, virus surveillance through mass testing and contact tracing, as well as social distancing and quarantine policies. Many Laotian migrant workers lost their jobs when shops, retail outlets and local markets in Thailand were closed to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. The lockdown in Thailand led to peaks in unemployment, income loss among the most vulnerable and queues at overland crossings to return to Laos. The total number of returning migrant workers, the majority from Thailand, during March-June is estimated at around 120,000 (Lao Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare cited in ILO 2020a).

Additionally, the research has specific interest in understanding the divergent impacts of the COVID-19 situation on different groups of workers. The study analyzes the socio-economic impacts, coping mechanisms, and outlooks on the future of these key

groups: female workers, male workers, non-migrant workers, internal migrant workers, cross-border migrant workers, workers in informal employment and workers in formal employment. This is among the first studies with this unique and contemporary data on vulnerable workers' populations in Laos.

The research methodology relies on a quantitative analysis of surveys with respondents in Laos, using descriptive statistics techniques to analyze the results.

FINDINGS

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Most respondents were female workers, cross-border migrants and workers in informal employment. Education levels were relatively low among respondents. Men, internal migrants, and cross-border migrants were higher educated than women, and non-migrants. The level of education was similar between workers in formal and informal employment.

Most people came from rural areas and identified their ethnicity as Lao/Lao loum. Internal migrants and cross-border migrants had more financial dependents at their households of origin than at their households of destination. All cross-border migrant workers who participated in this survey had lived in Thailand. Most workers stayed at their household of origin during the COVID-19 situation.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 SITUATION

Almost half of respondents lost their job during the COVID-19 lockdown. The workers most affected were cross-border migrants and those in informal employment. A similar percentage of men and women lost their jobs during the lockdown.

We found that unemployment rates remained high as of late 2020 after the lockdown was lifted. Large decreases in paid employment (stable contracts and short-term contracts), home-based work and paid domestic work explain the rise in unemployment among surveyed workers. Some unemployment might have been offset by people who started to work in family businesses as contributing family workers.

Women workers, cross-border migrants and non-migrants were more affected in the immediate term by current unemployment rates than men workers and internal migrants. Furthermore, findings showcase that negative impacts on employment have lasted longer among women than men. We saw that a similar share of men and women had lost their jobs during the lockdown, but some months after the lockdown the unemployment rate was higher among women than men.

Most respondents worked in the services sector, which was the hardest hit sector during the COVID-19 lockdown. The findings show the agricultural sector has marginally absorbed part of the COVID-19 impacts on unemployment. Yet the number of hours worked decreased since lockdown and border closures began. Cross-border migrants, non-migrants, and workers in informal employment were more affected by the reduction in the number of hours worked. Moreover, those who still have their pre-COVID job or who found new work upon return home, worked fewer hours.

Most workers lost some or all of their personal income during the COVID-19 lockdown. More

than 60% of workers did not have a personal income at the time of the survey. Before the pandemic, only 7% did not have a personal monthly income. Workers lost on average 64% of their personal monthly income. Cross-border migrant workers were the most affected by income loss.

More than 60% of respondents in remittance-receiving households experienced a reduction of remittances. Among those, more than 70% of respondents reported about half or more than half of their total income lost due to remittances loss. Additionally, 44% of families ran out of food during the lockdown in Laos on at least one day, and 39% of families could not access the same types of foods as before the lockdown.

According to our findings, women tend to carry the main burden of unpaid care work at the respondents' households, and such responsibilities increased in most households during the COVID-19 lockdown. However, men and women had different views on these responsibilities. Higher percentages of women thought that women or mostly women are responsible for unpaid care work and that such work had increased more for women during the lockdown, compared to men.

Awareness about the increased risks of gender-based violence associated with the COVID-19 lockdown was low among respondents. Less than half of respondents agreed (46%) that women and girls were at increased risk of violence during the lockdown. This opinion was similar between men (45%) and women (47%).

Two out of five respondents felt discriminated against or stigmatized at the place where they stayed during the lockdown. Cross-border (36%) and internal migrants (53%) were more likely to have felt discriminated against than non-migrants (23%). This suggests that the return of migrants, both internal and cross-border, generated some tensions in the

households and/or communities of origin, as most of the respondents had returned from migration destinations and were in households of origin during the lockdown.

A considerable share of migrants (59%) felt at risk of violence when they were returning to their households of origin. We found that women migrants and internal migrants felt more unsafe than men migrants and cross-border migrants. The sources of unsafety came from the community, relatives, and family members. More often than men migrants, women migrants said that relatives or family members made them feel unsafe when they were returning to their household of origin. Experiences of unsafety may worsen as 43% of respondents did not know where to seek help in case they saw a friend or neighbor experiencing violence.

COPING MECHANISMS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

A majority of respondents did not have any form of social security to mitigate socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 situation. Only 9% of respondents were registered for access to unemployment insurance, and 12% were registered for health insurance. 52% believed they would receive some type of paid sick leave. These levels of insurances coverage and access to paid sick leave were similar for men and women.

Additionally, only a small number of workers had received compensation from unemployment insurance (25% of registered workers), which the majority judged as not enough to cover their needs. In practice, health insurance services and paid sick leave operated slightly better to workers' benefit. While only 26% of registered workers had used health insurance during the COVID-19 pandemic, 82% of these workers rated the quality of health services received as very good or good. Regarding paid sick leave benefits, only 36% of respondents believed

that their employers would pay their entire salary if taking sick leave.

Inequalities in access to social protection were linked to the migratory status of workers. Overall, internal migrants had the lowest levels of coverage across all forms of social protection studied. Also, internal migrants and non-migrants were less informed about their unemployment and health insurance condition as compared to cross-border migrants. Many internal migrants and non-migrants did not know whether they were registered for these social security schemes.

Although cross-border migrants held a relatively better position in terms of coverage of social security (unemployment and health insurance), most of them had access to such benefits in Thailand (more than 90%). Thus, effective access to unemployment insurance was often limited. In practice, visas to stay in Thailand are linked to migrant workers' jobs. If workers lose their jobs, under normal circumstances they must leave in a short period providing little time for making arrangements for the drawing of benefits. As many workers had lost their jobs during the COVID-19 situation and returned to Laos, the health benefits would not apply on their return.

Finally, in order to cope with the COVID-19 situation, most respondents sought COVID-19 related information, either from official government sources or online media sources. More than half of the respondents tried to spend less money and around half considered it important to return to their household of origin. Some workers also relied on the financial and non-financial support of family, friends, and community.



Oxfam team meeting with informal waste pickers in Vientiane, Lao PDR. (© Oxfam)

OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE AND NEEDS OF SOCIAL SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 SITUATION

Most people felt able to cope with the current circumstances in Laos (at the time of the survey), but many felt uncertainties or worried in case they must deal with a similar situation again. These perceptions were similar for men and women.

Furthermore, almost half of migrant workers (49%) preferred re-migrating rather than staying in Laos, while a quarter (24%) preferred to stay and get a job in Laos. (19% of migrants have not decided yet.) Both migrants who want to re-migrate and migrants who want to stay in Laos most frequently cited 'job opportunities' as a precondition for their decision to re-migrate or stay in Laos. It is important to mention that around half of internal migrants (52%) mentioned the regulation of migratory status to be an important precondition for re-migrating. This suggests that some internal migrants are considering emigrating abroad.

The survey also tried to gauge what respondents' immediate needs and key priorities for support were. Free water/electricity, free health care

and cash assistance were the three services that most respondents considered as much needed. Moreover, labor rights, health care and financial support were the most mentioned key priorities regarding support. The needs in terms of social services and key priorities were similar across all groups, and between migrants who wanted to re-migrate and migrants who wanted to stay in Laos.

Also, more than half of non-migrants and internal migrants said that regulation of migratory status was key priority for support. This might indicate that some workers are considering emigrating abroad.

Finally, respondents considered that public offices were in more need of preparing better for a situation such the COVID-19 pandemic than CSOs/NPAs, INGOs, UN, labor organizations or employers.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in unemployment, income loss, remittances loss and less food access in Laos, while aggravating gender inequalities concerning unpaid care work, discriminatory behaviors (especially towards migrant returnees) and potential risks of gender-based violence. Women and cross-border migrants are the groups most affected by unemployment and income loss. Findings show that the negative impacts on employment will likely last longer among women workers compared to men workers. Moreover, access to and provision of social security schemes for workers to cope with the pandemic are very limited. When workers have social protection coverage, the level of benefits received in practice is very low. Overall, families in rural areas and women are most affected by the negative impacts of the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the report's findings and conclusion, the research team discussed recommendations for the national government, consortium partners and other stakeholders. The agreed on recommendations fall into five broader intervention areas.

The first intervention area considers the identification and mapping of the current needs of employers and labor market demands in Laos and in Thailand, to which many cross-border migrants preferred to re-migrate due to higher incomes. This intervention area may also include the provision of small grants to businesses that have had their value chains affected by closed borders, but could resume and/or expand their operations with the help of returnee migrant workers now in Laos.

The second intervention area considers the development of a national labor market strategy plan by the national government for better identification and linking of cross-

border and internal migrants as well as the unemployed and graduating students with the job market in Laos. The strategy plan should focus on better accreditation of skilled workers and matching them with job opportunities, based on local infrastructure and value chains. Furthermore, access to decent work for migrants would also benefit from targeted facilitation of vocational training, specifically cross training from skilled migrant workers to unskilled workers in Laos. This intervention area may also include exploring measures to increase the minimum wage and other factors that could support migrants to stay in Laos.

The third intervention area considers the provision more information on the benefits of social protect system for migrants/workers in order to encourage them to register. Key topics include: labor rights and social protection policies; gender-based violence and associated risks during lockdowns; where to seek help in case of experiencing or witnessing any type of violence; and accurate information about COVID-19. Any information should be clear and user-friendly, available in ethnic languages, and accessible for workers who cannot read.

The fourth intervention area considers the extension of social security coverage for migrant workers by the national government, based on improvements and support in terms of registration processes, portability of social security entitlements, and processes for workers to change/update their working status. Moreover, this may include the provision of free water/electricity, free health care and cash assistance in situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on a mapping of stakeholders that support migrant workers to see a clear picture on all existing support programs to avoid overlap and increase more collaboration, INGOs and CSOs can support strengthening the social protection system in Laos. They can support cross-border migrants with official

registration procedures for immigration permits, work permits and social security schemes in destination countries. They can also provide training to government officers, local authorities, employers, trade union representatives and workers to build better understanding on the three main pillars of the social protection system in Laos: healthcare, social security, and social welfare.

The fifth intervention area considers the development of a migration sensitive national action plan on violence against women by the national government in order to address prevention and response to gender-based violence and discrimination. This has to be based on more analysis/information on the impact on gender-based violence, including what makes women returnee migrant workers feel unsafe. The goal would be to ensure that better coordinated quality services responding to gender-based violence, tools to ensure cross-border referral, and case management when needed are available for all migrants.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the study Assessing COVID-19 related socio-economic impacts on returnee migrant workers in informal employment (especially women) in Laos. The study was implemented as part of the Gender Justice program of Oxfam in Laos.

The objective of this research is to increase the understanding and evidence base on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on returnee migrant workers in Laos. More specifically, it assesses the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on returnee migrant workers in informal employment, especially women. The study explores the workers' situation during three periods: before the COVID-19 lockdown (before March 2020), during the lockdown (from late March to June 2020) and after the lockdown (from late June to September 2020). Furthermore, it focuses on three areas: i)

impacts on workers' livelihoods, income and wellbeing, ii) workers' coping mechanisms to mitigate these impacts, and iii) workers' outlooks on the future. In this research, migrant workers are understood as including returnees from neighboring countries and people who migrate within Laos. The report gives disaggregated details for both of these groups. Furthermore, workers are considered to have informal employment if at the time of the survey they are not registered for access to health insurance and/or unemployment insurance, either public or private and either in Laos or abroad. If workers do hold such registration at the time of the survey, they are considered as workers in formal employment.

The research findings contribute to documenting the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on returnee migrant workers in informal employment in Laos, while contributing to the base of evidence on the working conditions of migrant workers. Furthermore, the research presents recommendations for strengthening social protection efforts. As such, the findings can support partners' evidence-based advocacy and discussions with the Government of Laos and other actors.

The audience of this research is non-governmental organizations, workers' organizations, donors and the Government of Laos. They are urged to use the findings and recommendations to better understand perspectives and needs of migrant workers in informal employment. This is intended to contribute to the development of more appropriate approaches to social protection in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report has six chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the situation in Laos in the context of COVID-19. The second chapter presents the research questions that this study aims to answer. In the third chapter, the report describes the research design, which includes the sampling strategy,

analysis techniques and limitations. The fourth chapter discusses the main findings of the study. Finally, the last two chapters of the report include the conclusions and recommendations.

1 COVID-19 IN LAOS

There are over 61.8 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 1.4 million deaths, globally as of 29th November 2020 (WHO, 2020). In Laos, the Centre of Information and Education for Health had confirmed 41 cases as of 18th December 2020. Governments have imposed various measures to contain the spread of the virus, including lockdowns of borders, the economy and transportation, virus surveillance through mass testing and contact tracing, as well as social distancing and quarantine policies.

Around 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy are significantly impacted by lockdown measures and/or working in the hardest-hit sectors. These workers are already among the most vulnerable in the labor market. Women are overrepresented in high-risk sectors¹ (42% of women workers work in high-risk sectors compared to 32% of men) (ILO 2020b). Income losses for people employed in the informal economy are likely to be disproportionately high. The crisis has resulted in a decline in earnings of workers in informal employment who comprise 62% of the global workforce (ILO, 2020b). While global earnings have declined 10.7% in the first three quarters of 2020, informal economy workers would likely have seen disproportionate declines (ILO 2020c).

This unfolding COVID-19 crisis is affecting the entire population of Laos. However, certain population groups are disproportionately affected due to greater gender inequality, ill-health and impoverishment risks. Cross-national analyses show that the crisis' socio-economic impact is particularly affecting the most vulnerable, especially workers in informal

employment, migrant workers, and women, as they have limited coping strategies at their disposal. In Laos, most of the workforce is in informal employment, which has a share of 82.7% in total employment, one of the highest in the world. This share is slightly higher among women than men (LSB, 2017).

Laos is primarily an agrarian country. According to the Lao Population and Housing Census, around 4.4 million people (67% of the population) live in rural areas. An estimated 551,000 people (36% of the labor force) work in agriculture, forestry and fishing (LSB, 2017). Almost all of these people are in informal employment. People living in rural areas are characterized by low incomes, low income security, poor working conditions, and little access to contributory social protection mechanisms in case they lose their jobs or fall sick.

The lockdown of neighboring countries has significantly affected household incomes and the economy of Laos. To illustrate, remittances sent home by Laotian migrants in 2019 equaled US\$285 million and accounted for 1.6% of national GDP². These remittances often support the poorest households, and therefore the most vulnerable households are more affected by this loss of vital income.

Migrant workers face complex challenges. Many Laotian migrant workers lost their jobs when shops, retail outlets and local markets in Thailand were closed to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. The lockdown in Thailand led to peaks in unemployment, income loss among the most vulnerable and queues at overland crossings to return to Laos. The total number of returning migrant workers, the majority from Thailand, between March and June is estimated at around 120,000 (Lao Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare cited in ILO 2020a). However, this figure is likely underestimated as many returnees may have crossed through unofficial border points.

¹ Sectors considered at high risk of disruption on economic output are accommodation and food service activities; manufacturing; real estate, business and administrative activities; and wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (ILO 2020a).

² World Bank Open Data. Consulted online on 18th December 2020: <https://data.worldbank.org/>

Data on the total of Laotian migrant workers who have not returned to Laos was not available at the time of finalizing this report. Nonetheless, the number of documented migrant workers in Thailand from Laos can give an estimation of such figure. As of August 2020, the Thai Ministry of Labour reported 205,587³ documented Laotian migrant workers in Thailand, the majority being women (55%).

Furthermore, gender inequalities can intensify during emergencies. For instance, care work responsibilities increased disproportionately for women, especially when any people infected with COVID-19 were at home. Also, there are indications that levels of sexual, intimate partner and other forms of violence against women may have risen during lockdowns when people spend more time together indoors. These have negative and potentially severe short- and long-term impacts on women's well-being (ILO and UN Women 2020).

In summary, the livelihoods of millions of workers in Laos are significantly affected by the pandemic. Most workers in informal employment do not have access to social welfare. Low-skilled workers, especially female migrants, working in affected industrial sectors, have been among the first to be suspended or laid off in the pandemic. The thousands of cross-border Lao workers that have returned home face limited means of earning an income, while gender inequalities aggravate the impacts of the pandemic on women.

While it is clear the pandemic has already – and will continue to have – substantial negative and gendered impacts on migrant workers in informal employment, there is a lack of evidence to understand and substantiate the severity of the situation at grassroots levels. The objective of this study is to increase the understanding and evidence base on the

gendered impacts of COVID-19 on livelihoods, care work, gender-based violence, coping mechanisms and outlooks on the future of migrant workers in informal employment, especially women, who have returned home either from abroad or from different places within Laos.

2 LEARNING QUESTIONS

The research objective guided the learning questions listed below (Table 1). These learning questions subsequently determined which indicators to measure to assess the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant workers in informal employment who have returned to Laos, as well as coping mechanisms and outlooks on the future.

Additionally, the research has specific interest into understanding the divergent impacts of the COVID-19 situation on different groups of workers. Hence, across the learning questions the study analyzed the socio-economic impacts, coping mechanisms and outlooks on the future of these key groups: female workers, male workers, non-migrant workers, internal migrant workers, cross-border migrant workers, workers in informal employment and workers in formal employment.



A group of informal workers prepare to take part in the assessment survey in Champasak Province, Lao PDR. (© Oxfam)

³This total includes 64 migrant workers under section 59 Nationality Verification documentation, 178,831 migrant workers under MOU documentation, and 26,692 migrant workers under section 59 Cabinet resolution. No migrant workers were under Cabinet Resolution Under section 64. For more information, see Thai Ministry of Labor (2020).



Survey participants taking part in an orientation in Champasak Province, Lao PDR. (© Oxfam)

Table 1. Overview of learning questions

| The learning questions this study intends to answer are: | | |
|--|--|---|
| Socio-economic impacts | Coping mechanisms | Outlooks on the future |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What is the key impact of the COVID-19 situation on livelihoods (income and wellbeing) of workers, especially women? •What are the gendered socio-economic impacts on their families and communities, including women-specific impacts related to care work and gender-based violence? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What coping mechanisms do workers use to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 situation on their lives? •Has (lack of) access to social protection related services influenced their coping behavior? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What are workers' outlooks on the future? •What are feasible measures/solutions (social protection, livelihoods support, support for women migrants, and so forth) that could help them to better deal with the current situation and similar events in the future? |
| Are there differences between men and women on the impacts on livelihoods, coping mechanisms and outlooks on the future? | | |
| Are there differences between non-migrant, internal migrant and cross-border migrant workers on the impacts on livelihoods, coping mechanisms and outlooks on the future? | | |
| Are there differences between workers in formal and informal employment on the impacts on livelihoods, coping mechanisms and outlooks on the future? | | |



A male waste picker carries two bags with recyclable materials in Vientiane, Lao PDR. (© Oxfam)

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 MIGRANTS AND INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT DEFINITIONS

This study considers those who have lived outside of their household of origin in the last 12 months as migrant workers, either because they migrated within Laos or abroad. The household of origin is the household where the worker has the closest family ties. This can be the family they grew up with or the family they have formed. Table 2 shows

the three key groups of workers defined by migration experiences that were identified in the analysis:

Informal employment is regarded as “the total number of informal employment, whether carried out in formal sector enterprises, informal sector enterprises, or households, during a given reference period” (ILO 2003: 5). This includes self-employment in informal sector enterprises (small and unregistered enterprises), contributing family workers, members of informal producers’ cooperatives, and wage employees holding informal

Table 2. Operational criteria for workers’ migratory status

| Migratory status | Operational criteria |
|------------------------------|---|
| Non-migrants | Workers who have not lived outside of their “household of origin” in the last 12 months |
| Internal migrant workers | Workers who have lived outside of their “household of origin” in the last 12 months, who had migrated within Laos (Vientiane capital, provincial towns or district towns) |
| Cross-border migrant workers | Workers who have lived outside of their “household of origin” in the last 12 months, who had migrated abroad |

employment (unregulated and unprotected jobs) in formal sector enterprises, informal sector enterprises, or households (ILO 2003). Informal employment does not include illicit activities, or the illicit production and trafficking of goods forbidden by law, drugs, firearms, persons, and money laundering (ILO 2015).

This study considers that workers in informal employment are those who have jobs that “in law or in practice, (are) not subject to national labor legislation, income taxation, social protection or entitlement to certain employment benefits (advance notice of dismissal, severance pay, paid annual or sick leave, etc.)” (Husmanns 2004: 6). Thus, the research operationalized informal employment as the lack of coverage of health insurance and/or unemployment insurance, either public or private and either in Laos or abroad. (Ginneken 2003, Ginneken 2009). In other words, workers were considered to be in informal employment if they were not registered in health or unemployment insurance schemes at the time of the survey, either in Laos or abroad.

3.2 SAMPLING STRATEGY AND SAMPLE SIZE

Migrant workers in informal employment are a particularly hard-to-target group, as there is no sampling frame, or lists of this population of interest available. Therefore, this research used a snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is a non-random sampling method that relies on asking current respondents to identify new respondents. Thus, starting from a respondent identified initially, the enumerators asked this respondent to provide names and contact details of new respondents (i.e., other migrant workers). This technique ultimately leads to a long chain of respondents that ‘fill’ the sample.

In snowball sampling, most respondents will refer people in their own social sphere which are likely workers with similar demographic and job characteristics. Therefore, to be able to make comparisons, it was important to maximize the variability of the sample. To maximize the variety of respondents, the snowball sample started with seeking the first contact in a variety of groups.

Table 3. Operational criteria for informal employment

| Informality in employment | Operational criteria |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Informal employment | Workers who are not registered for access to health insurance or unemployment insurance at the time of the survey, either public or private and either in Laos or abroad |
| | Workers who do not know whether they are registered or not |
| Formal employment | Workers who are registered for access to health insurance and/or unemployment insurance at the time of the survey, either public or private and either in Laos or abroad |

At the inception of this study, the primary target group was Laotian female migrant workers who had jobs in conditions of informal employment and had returned to the provinces where consortium research partners have an existing presence. Hence, the sampling strategy aimed at 70% female respondents in such provinces.

The fieldwork was conducted in the provinces of Houaphanh, Luang Prabang, Attapeu, Champasak, Khammouane, Savannakhet, Bokeo, Luang Namtha, Oudomxay and Vientiane Capital between September and November 2020. The data collection was carried out by enumerators of GRET (in partnership with BNDA and Confluence), HELVETAS (in partnership with ADWLE), HPA, the joint ILO-UN Women Safe and Fair Programme, as part of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, CAMKID, IWAA and LFTU. The national consultant Anousone Phimmachanh coordinated, supervised, and trained the enumerators, with the support of the IMK team.

Enumerators made an important effort to collect the data in the context of the pandemic. The initial respondents were identified based on lists of workers, with whom the consortium partners have conducted previous activities. In order to avoid physical proximity in the context of the COVID-19 situation, the data collection team tried to conduct the interviews via phone calls. However, as some workers on the lists did not have phone numbers, some interviews had to be conducted on site. In such cases, health security protocols were implemented to avoid health risks associated with COVID-19. Local authorities collaborated and supported the fieldwork team to make appointments with the respondents.

The study is based on a sample size of 999 respondents⁴, with 294 male respondents and 699 female respondents. The Table 4 shows the sample size of male and female respondents in each province⁵.

⁴Please note that more interviews were collected during the fieldwork, with a total of 1,002 interviews. However, the sample size used in this research was smaller than the total number of interviews collected because IMK conducted data quality checks in consultation with the national consultant and Oxfam in Laos, and we did not use three of the interviews.

⁵Sample size by province and partner can be found in the Annexes

Table 4. Sample size

| Province / Partner | Male | Female | Other / De-clined to answer | Total |
|--------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| Houaphanh | 10 | 28 | 1 | 39 |
| Luang Pra-bang | 24 | 76 | 0 | 100 |
| Attapeu | 13 | 37 | 0 | 50 |
| Champasak | 81 | 144 | 0 | 225 |
| Khammouane | 33 | 91 | 1 | 125 |
| Savannakhet | 53 | 150 | 2 | 205 |
| Bokeo | 6 | 21 | 0 | 27 |
| Vientiane Cap-ital | 49 | 83 | 2 | 134 |
| Luang Namtha | 10 | 30 | 0 | 40 |
| Oudomxay | 13 | 27 | 0 | 40 |
| Other | 2 | 12 | 0 | 14 |
| Total | 294 | 699 | 5 | 999 |

Once data collection was completed, preliminary analysis showed disaggregated analyses between several types of workers was possible, as sample sizes were large enough within each sub-group. Therefore, research objectives were expanded to detect differences between the groups mentioned in the previous section: female workers, male workers, non-migrant workers, internal migrant workers, cross-border migrant workers, workers in informal employment and workers in formal employment. The distribution of these groups is presented in chapter five.

Finally, gender disaggregated analysis according to migratory and informality status was deemed relevant by the research consortium and IMK. However, the sample size of some groups was not large enough to conduct such type of disaggregated analysis. Nonetheless, annex 8.2 presents estimates for the group of women migrant workers in informal employment (405 respondents), which is the primary target group of the research consortium.

3.3 ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The research methodology relies on a quantitative analysis of surveys with 999 respondents in Laos. The quantitative analysis used descriptive statistics techniques to analyze the results, testing statistical differences between the key groups at a confidence level of 95% ($\alpha < 0.05$). This means that if the survey were to be re-run 20 times, we would find the observed differences in 19 of those 20 times. Therefore, when the report text mentions a significant difference, it means that the difference in that indicator between two key groups was statistically significant. If this is not mentioned, the results can be attributed to sampling fluctuations and the margins of error associated with drawing samples.

Most figures in this report visualize the results as bar graphs that show the percentage of respondents answering a question in a

certain way, or the average response to a given question by respondents. As a general rule, we mention in the text the most relevant statistically significant differences. The reader can find in the annexes the results for each group and indicator.

3.4 LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of the study is the sample representativeness of the whole population of non-migrant workers and migrant workers who have returned to their household of origin during the COVID-19 situation (internal migrants and cross-border migrants). This means that the estimates (i.e., the figures in the findings) should not be generalized to the entire population of Laotian workers. This limitation comes from the use of non-probability sampling strategy.

As mentioned before, it was not possible to use a probability sampling strategy as there was no sampling frame or lists of the population of interest available. Hence, snowball sampling was considered the most appropriate sampling technique under the conditions upon which this research was carried out.

Furthermore, this study was not meant to generate accurate and specific information on experiences related to gender-based violence, nor its frequency, but more on the general perceptions around the issue. The research was meant to investigate the level of knowledge on the associated risks of gender-based violence during the pandemic and on the available services responding to it. Based on ethical protocols, the survey was not designed to ask for precise information on respondents' experiences. The data collected, therefore, only reflects the views and perceptions of the respondents and cannot be generalized.

However, this does not mean that the findings and conclusions do not provide relevant insights about the impact of COVID-19 situation on workers. Conversely, the conclusions from this research provide important information

to better understand the socio-economic impacts, coping mechanisms and social services needs of different groups of Laotian workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is among the first studies with this unique and contemporary data on vulnerable worker populations in Laos.

4 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the main findings of the study⁶ and is structured in four sections. The first section describes the socio-demographic profile of respondents. Secondly, the chapter presents the main socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 situation on workers. The third section shows the coping mechanisms that workers have used to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 situation. Finally, the fourth section presents the workers' outlook on the future, their social services needs and in what key areas they need support.

4.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

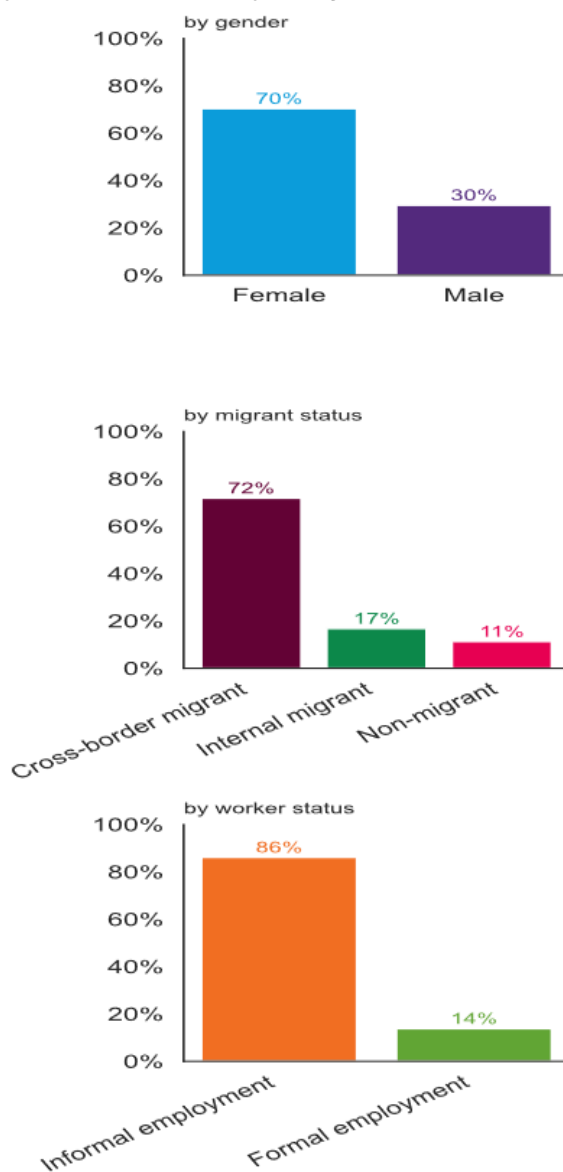
This section gives a socio-demographic overview of the respondents. Here, we present the distribution of respondents by gender, migratory status, and condition of informality. Also, the section describes characteristics such as education, marital status, age, ethnicity, and other migration characteristics.

Most respondents in this study were female workers, cross-border migrants and in conditions of informal employment (Figure 1). This is in line with the main population of interest of this study: Laotian female migrant workers in informal employment at the moment of the survey.

Figure 1 shows that 70% of workers interviewed were women. Regarding migratory status, 72% of workers were cross-border migrants, 17% internal migrants and 11% non-migrant workers. Almost 7 out of 8 workers interviewed had jobs in conditions of informality.

⁶Please note that the sample size for each indicator can be different from the sample size mentioned in section 3.2. For some indicators, the sample size is smaller than the total sample size because some respondents did not answer the question(s) related to that indicator (i.e., they declined to answer that particular question).

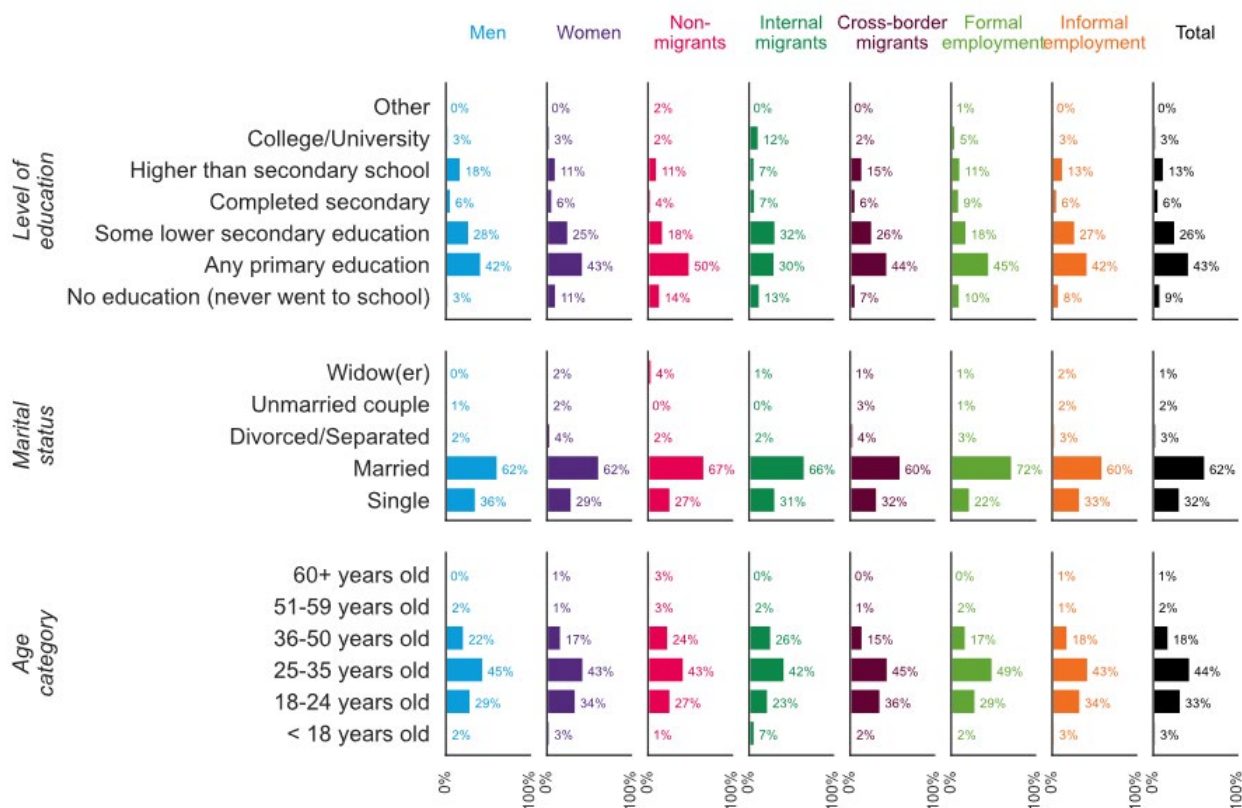
Figure 1. Gender, migratory status and informality



Respondents had a relatively low level of schooling. Figure 2 shows that 43% had only attended primary education, 26% had some lower secondary education and 9% had never gone to school.

Men were higher educated than women. The percentage of workers who had attended a level of education higher than secondary school was bigger among men than women. Also, the percentage of men who had never gone to school was lower as compared to women.

Figure 2. Level of education, marital status and age



Migrant workers, both internal and cross-border, had slightly higher levels of education compared to non-migrants. Figure 2 shows that 14% of non-migrant workers had never gone to school and 50% had only some element of primary education. There were no significant differences between internal and cross-border migrants.

Figure 2 shows that the percentages of cross-border migrants in the levels of any primary education and higher than secondary school were higher as compared to internal migrants. Conversely, the percentages of internal migrants who had never gone to school, who had some lower secondary education and who had attended a college or university were higher as compared to cross-border migrants.

Regarding workers in formal and informal employment, we found that the average level of education was similar between these two groups. Nevertheless, we found that the percentage of workers in informal employment

who have attended some lower secondary education was higher as compared to workers in formal jobs (Figure 2).

Additionally, Figure 2 shows most workers were married. Overall, 6 out of 10 respondents in almost all groups of workers were married. This was slightly higher among workers in formal jobs. Among this group, 7 out of 10 respondents were married.

Also, Figure 2 shows that respondents were relatively young. Across all groups, more than 65% of workers were 35 years old or younger. On average, women were slightly younger than men. Cross-border migrants were younger than non-migrants and internal migrants. The differences mentioned before are statistically significant. We did not find significant age differences between non-migrants and internal migrants, and between workers in formal and informal employment.

The survey also asked whether workers had any kind of disability. We found that only 32 workers (or 3%) reported to have a disability. Furthermore, 7 out of 10 workers identified their ethnicity as Lao/Lao loum (72%), 11% as Khmu, 5% as Phutai, 3% as Lue, 2% as Hmong and 7% as other. The figures regarding these findings by key group can be found in the annexes.

Most respondents had their household of origin in a rural village (roughly 80%), as shown in Figure 3. This was similar across all groups. However, higher percentages of non-migrant workers and workers in formal jobs had their household of origin in a district town as compared to their peers.

Most respondents had lived outside of their household of origin for 6 months or more, except internal migrants. The percentage of men and women who had lived outside their household of origin for 6 months or more was

around 65%, with no significant differences between genders. Also, cross-border migrants had lived outside of their household of origin for a longer period as compared to internal migrants. When comparing workers in formal and informal employment, the percentage of workers who had lived outside of their household of origin for 6 months or more was higher among workers in formal employment than workers in informal employment.

Most respondents in the sample were cross-border migrants. Figure 4 shows that 8 out of 10 migrant workers had lived in Thailand and the rest were internal migrants in Laos. This finding was similar for men and women. Regarding internal migrants, 42% had lived in a provincial town in a province different than their household of origin, 35% in Vientiane Capital, 11% in a district town in a district different than their household of origin, 10% in a provincial town in their same province, and 2% in a district town in their same district.

Figure 3. Is your household of origin in a rural village or district town? Have you lived outside of your household of origin in the last 12 months?

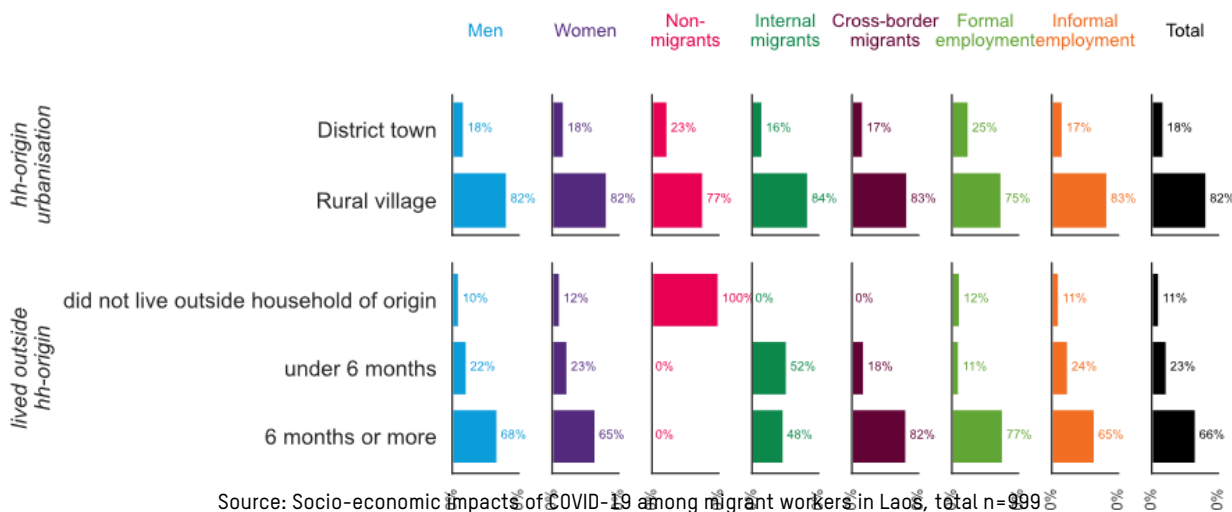


Figure 4 shows that a higher percentage of workers in formal jobs had lived in Thailand as compared to workers in informal employment. Overall, 9 out of 10 migrant workers in formal employment and 8 out of 10 migrant workers in informal employment had lived in Thailand. This suggests that cross-border migrants are more likely to have jobs in better conditions as compared to internal migrants.

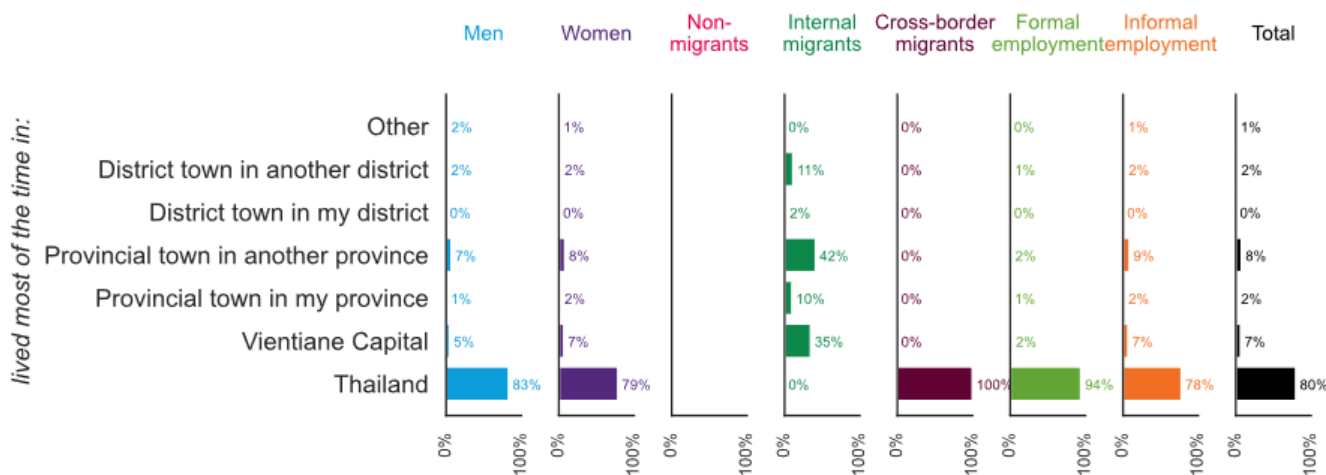
of destination. There were 91% of workers with one or more financial dependents at the household of origin, versus only 61% of workers with financial dependents at the household of destination. Figure 5 shows that in all groups the average number of financial dependents was higher at the household of origin as compared to the household of destination.

Figure 4 shows that a higher percentage of workers in formal jobs had lived in Thailand as compared to workers in informal employment. Overall, 9 out of 10 migrant workers in formal employment and 8 out of 10 migrant workers in informal employment had lived in Thailand. This suggests that cross-border migrants are more likely to have jobs in better conditions as compared to internal migrants.

Furthermore, internal migrants had more financial dependents at the household of destination than cross-border migrants. On the other hand, cross-border migrants had a higher average number of financial dependents at the household of origin than internal migrants (Figure 5). This was expected, as internal migrants still lived in Laos and might have felt more confident to form a new family or household at the place of destination. Hence, they might have been dividing their financial support between dependents at the place of destination and origin.

The workers interviewed for this study had more financial dependents at their households of origin than at their households

Figure 4. Where have you lived most of the time during the period that you migrated? (only migrant workers)

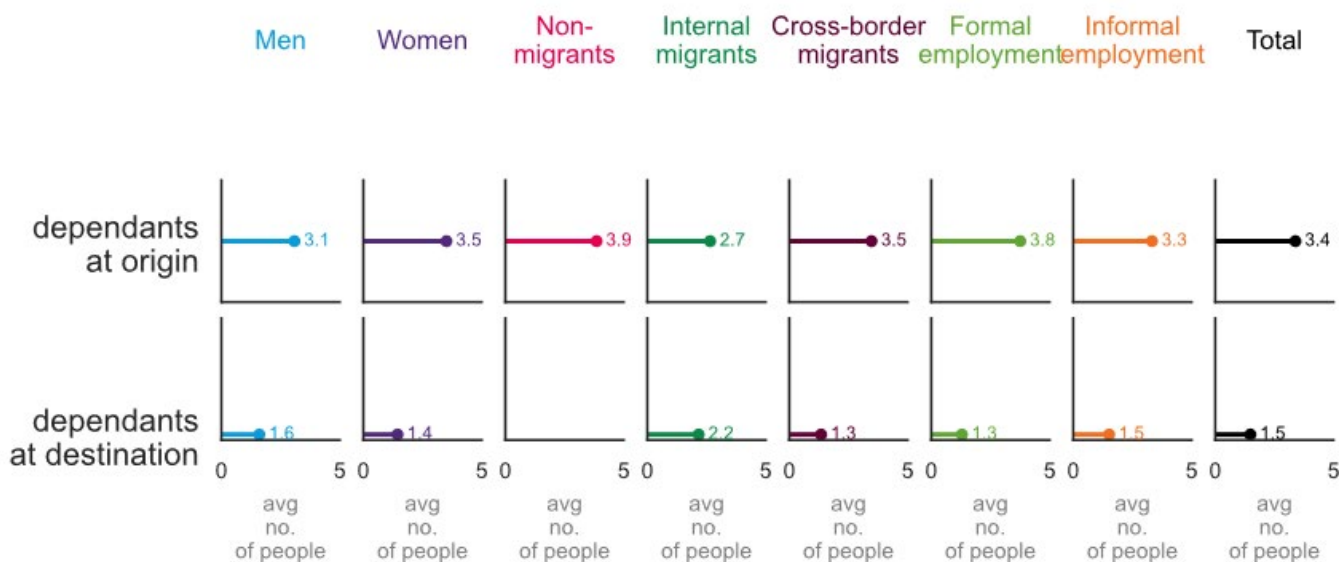


We also found that women, non-migrant workers and workers with formal jobs had on average more financial dependants at the household of origin as compared to men, internal migrants and workers with informal employment, respectively (Figure 5).

difference is significant in comparison with non-migrants and cross-border migrants. Also, the percentage of non-migrant workers that stayed with friends was higher as compared to cross-border migrants.

It is worth noting that around one fifth of

Figure 5. How many people depend on your financial support?



The study asked respondents where they stayed during the COVID-19 lockdown⁷. Figure 6 shows that most workers stayed at their household of origin during that period. However, we found some significant differences between key groups. A higher percentage of male workers stayed at the household of origin as compared to female workers. Also, a higher percentage of workers with informal employment stayed with other relatives or at a quarantine camp, as compared to workers with formal jobs.

non-migrant workers (21%) reported having stayed at a quarantine camp. This finding is puzzling, as we expected that cross-border migrants were more likely to have stayed at a quarantine camp than non-migrants. Consortium staff mentioned that this might be due to a misunderstanding related to the timeframe of the COVID-19 lockdown among the respondents. Despite enumerators explaining this timeframe, it might be that some respondents misunderstood that we were inquiring about the period from the official COVID-19 lockdown (starting in late March) until the interviews (starting in September). The quarantine camps were temporary and generally at district level. As the interviews took place several months after cross-border migrants came out of the camps, they might have stayed longer at their household of origin between late March until September.

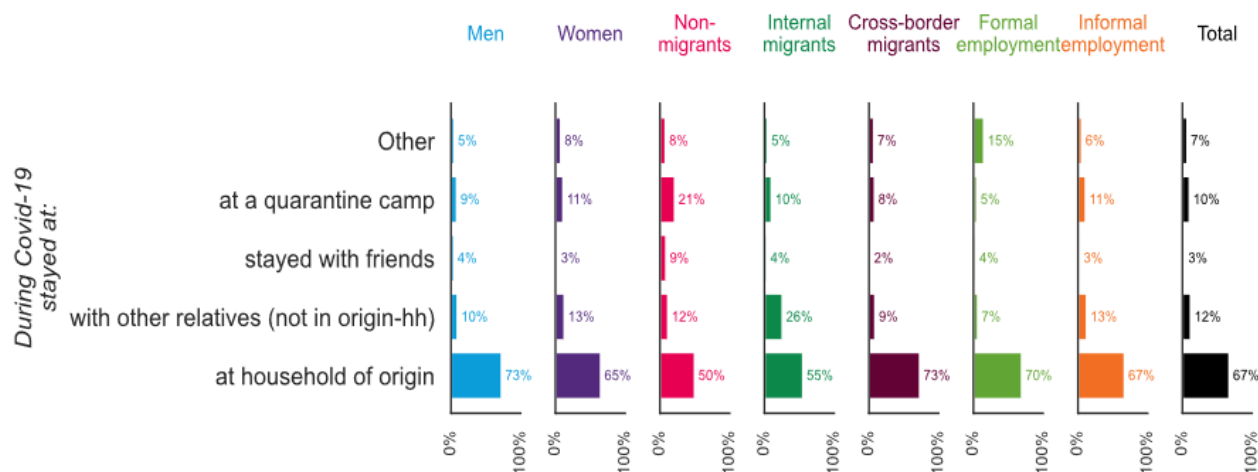
Additionally, the percentage of workers who stayed at the household of origin was higher among cross-border migrants (74%) than among internal migrants (55%) and non-migrants (50%), and these differences are significant. Moreover, Figure 6 shows that around one quarter of internal migrants (26%) stayed with other relatives different than the household of origin. We found that this

⁷Henceforth, when this study refers to 'COVID-19 lockdown', it means the period between late March and early June 2020.

Overall, the findings in Figure 6 indicate that most cross-border migrants returned to stay with their families, which might have directly increased the financial, emotional, care and social burden of these families, compounded with a loss of remittance income from the migrant returnees.

Most workers had stayed in their household of origin during the COVID-19 pandemic. This might have directly impacted the financial, emotional, care and social conditions of their families.

Figure 6. Where did you stay most of the time during the COVID-19 lockdown?



This section showed that most respondents were female workers, cross-border migrants and in informal employment. Schooling levels were relatively low among respondents. Men, internal migrants, and cross-border migrants were generally higher educated than women, and non-migrants. The level of education was similar between workers in formal and informal employment.

Most people come from rural areas and identified their ethnicity as Lao/Lao loum. Internal migrants and cross-border migrants had more financial dependents at their households of origin than at their households of destination. All cross-border migrant workers had lived in and returned from Thailand.



A Lao family with a newly born child, in Bokeo Province, Lao PDR (© Oxfam)



Lao women factory workers producing garments in Lao PDR. (© Oxfam)

4.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 SITUATION

This section aims to answer the following learning questions: What is the key impact of the COVID-19 situation on livelihoods (income and wellbeing) of workers, especially women? And What are the gendered socio-economic impacts on their families and communities, including women-specific impacts related to care work and gender-based violence?

The section explores the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on workers by focusing on changes in employment, income, remittances, food access and care work between the period before the COVID-19 lockdown and the months of the lockdown in Laos (late March to early June). Also, it investigates perceptions on gender-based violence, risks when returning to Laos, and in general, socio-economic challenges the workers faced during the lockdown.

4.2.1 IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

This sub-section explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment. We asked respondents whether they lost their job during the COVID-19 lockdown, their employment status before and after the lockdown, and their sector of work pre- and post-lockdown.

Almost half of the respondents lost their job during the COVID-19 lockdown (Figure 7). The workers most affected were cross-border migrants, as 52% of them lost their jobs in Thailand during the lockdown period there (which was similar in timing to that in Laos). This share is significantly higher as compared to non-migrant and internal migrant workers.

Almost half of respondents lost their jobs, with similar shares of men and women. A similarly large share of workers in informal employment lost their jobs (50%). While the difference is not statistically significant, those in formal employment seem slightly less likely to have lost their jobs (41%).

Additionally, we found a large increase in unemployment rates across all groups when comparing the employment status⁸ of respondents before the COVID-19 lockdown with their current employment status (Figure 8). Also, Figure 8 shows that current unemployment rates are very high, indicating many workers who lost their jobs during the lockdown are still unemployed.

Overall, female workers, cross-border migrants and non-migrants were more affected by unemployment in the immediate term as compared to male workers and internal migrants. The unemployment rate is not significantly different between those in informal and formal employment.

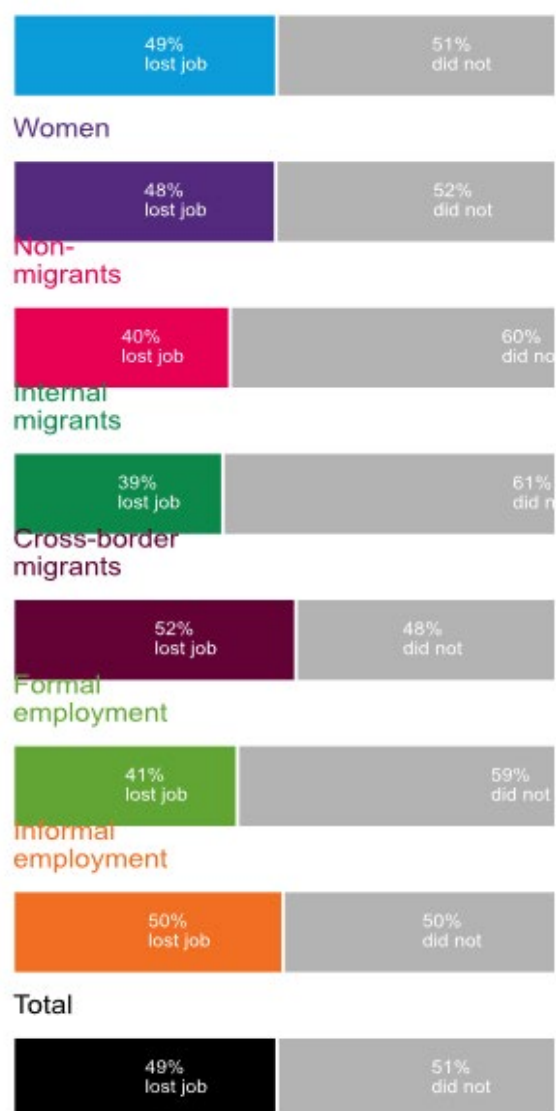
Only 2% of men and 4% of women reported to be unemployed before the COVID-19 lockdown. However, unemployment has risen enormously due to the COVID-19 lockdown. More than a third of men, and 45% of women reported to have lost their job. The steep rise in unemployment is explained by large decreases in paid employment (stable contracts and short-term contracts), home-based work and paid domestic work. Among the respondents who had become unemployed, 52% lost jobs as paid employees, 16% as home-based workers and 12% as paid domestic workers.

Figure 8 shows for almost all groups an increase from pre- to post-lockdown in the percentage of respondents in jobs as contributing family workers.⁹ Contributing family workers are those workers who hold a job in a market-oriented establishment operated by a relative in the same household. This suggests that some unemployment might have been offset by people that started to work in the family business.

⁸The definitions for each employment status can be found in the annexes.

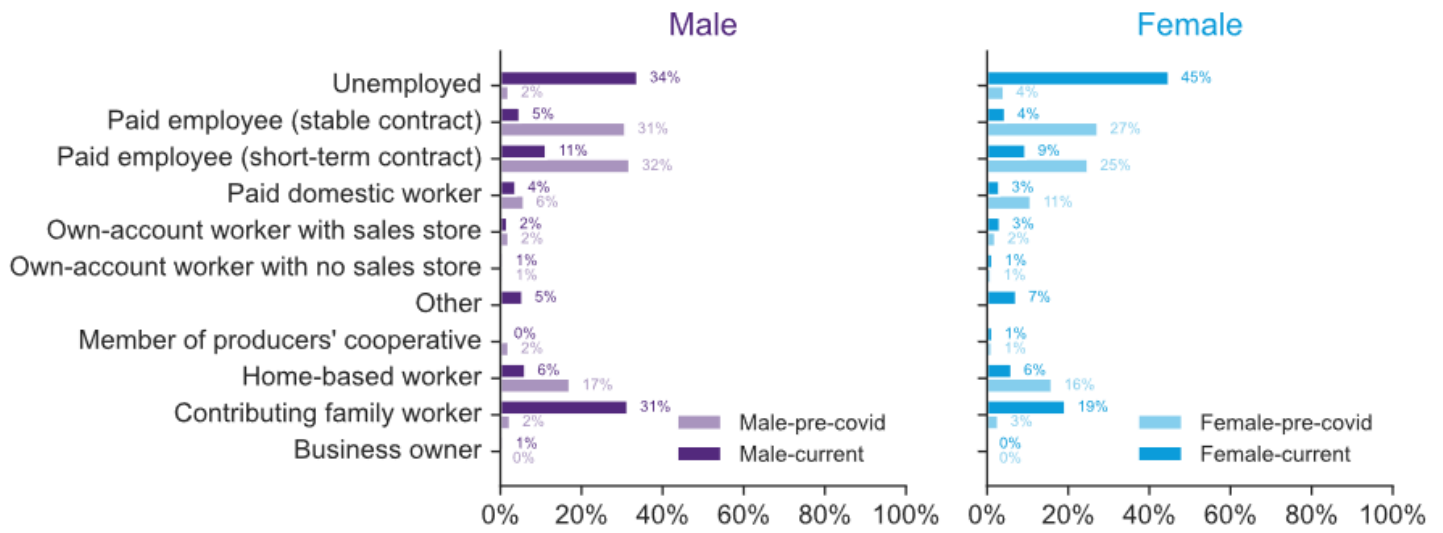
⁹The non-migrant workers are the only exception of this finding.

Figure 7. Workers who lost their job during the COVID-19 lockdown

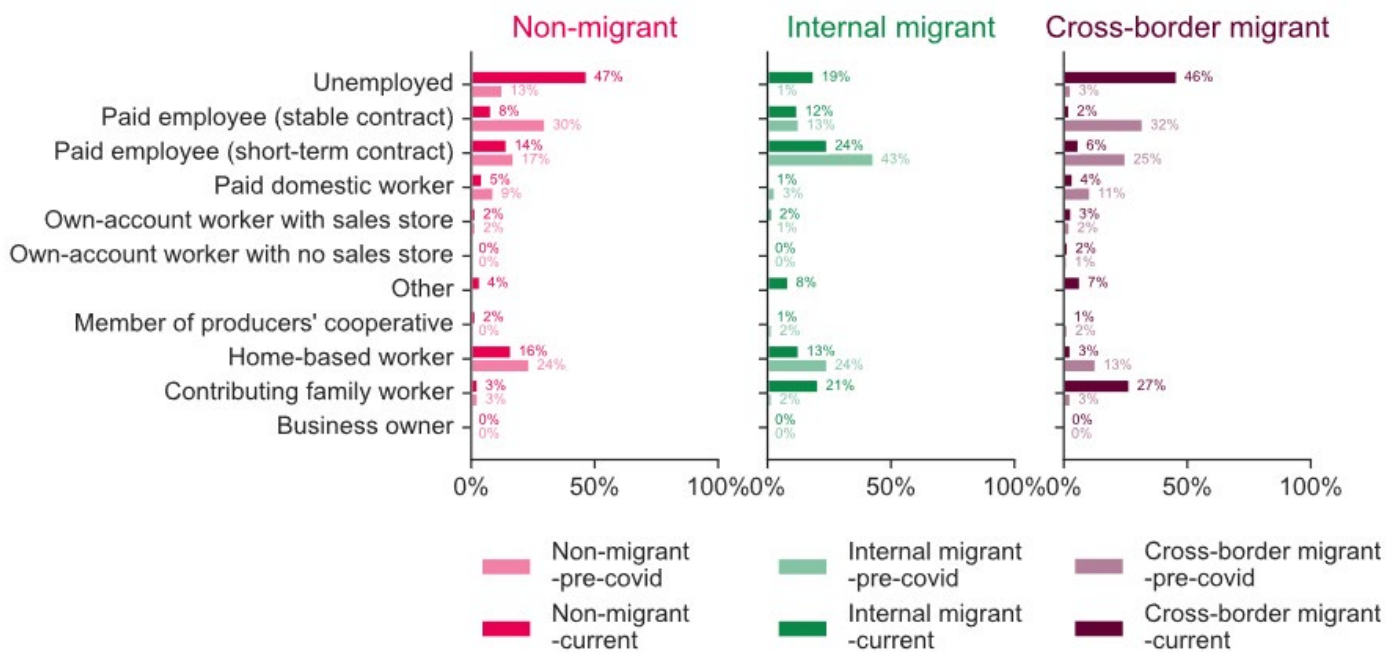


Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=950

Figure 8. Changes in employment status before and after the COVID-19 lockdown



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999.



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999.



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999.

We compared the employment sector of respondents before the COVID-19 lockdown with their current employment sector (Figure 9). Before the lockdown, most workers had jobs in the services sector (except internal migrants). Findings show that the services sector was the hardest hit sector. We found the largest reduction in the percentage of jobs in that sector. The large impact in this sector could be explained by the many accommodation and food related businesses that had to close due to lockdown measures.

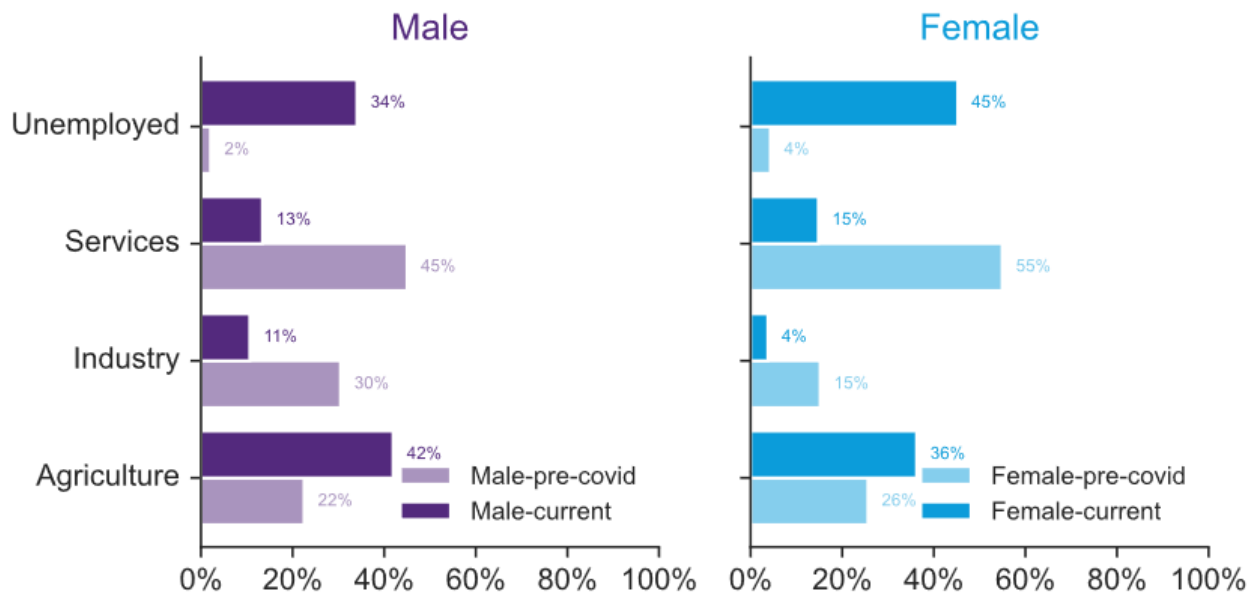
We found the agricultural sector has marginally absorbed part of the COVID-19 impacts on unemployment. In almost all key groups we found a significant increase from pre-lockdown to post-lockdown in the percentage of workers in the agricultural sector. The exceptions were internal migrants and non-migrants. Among internal migrants the increase is not significant, whereas we found a significant decrease among non-migrants.

Nevertheless, the increase in employment in the agricultural sector does not directly imply a compensation in income loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will see in the next section that most respondents lost their income during the COVID-19 lockdown.

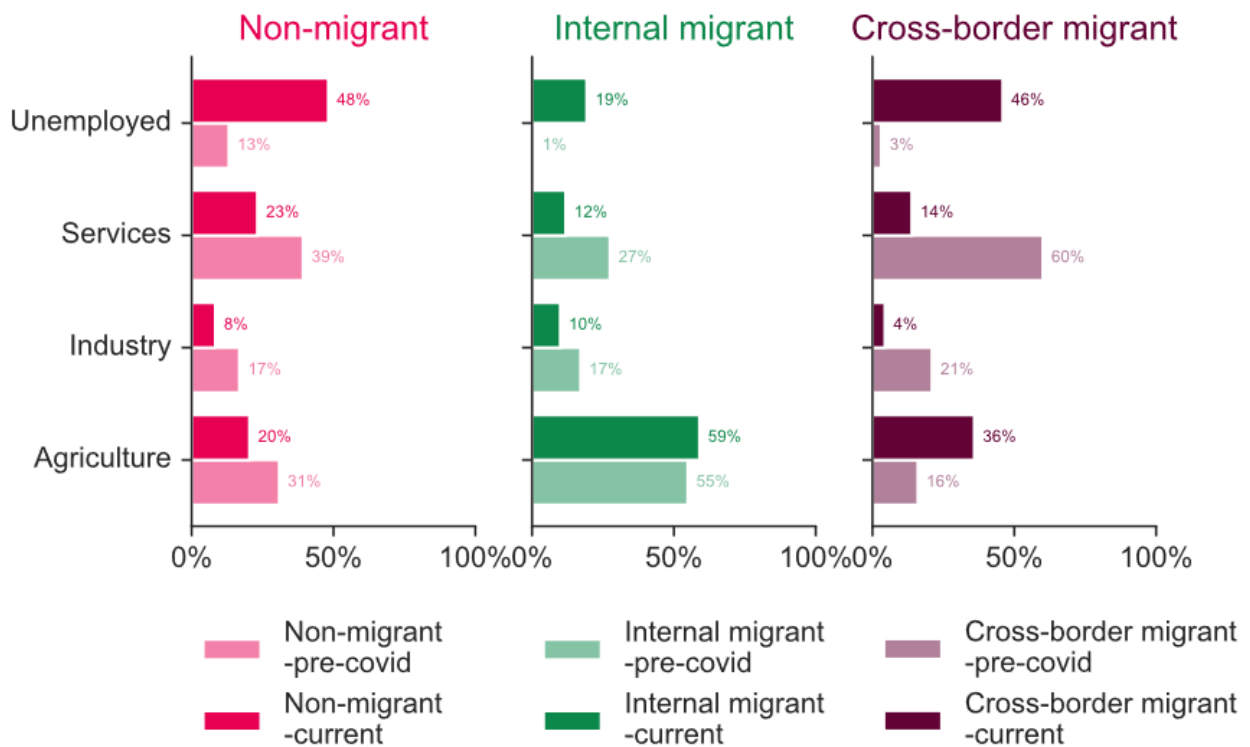


A female vegetable vendor crochets at a market in Lao PDR (© Oxfam)

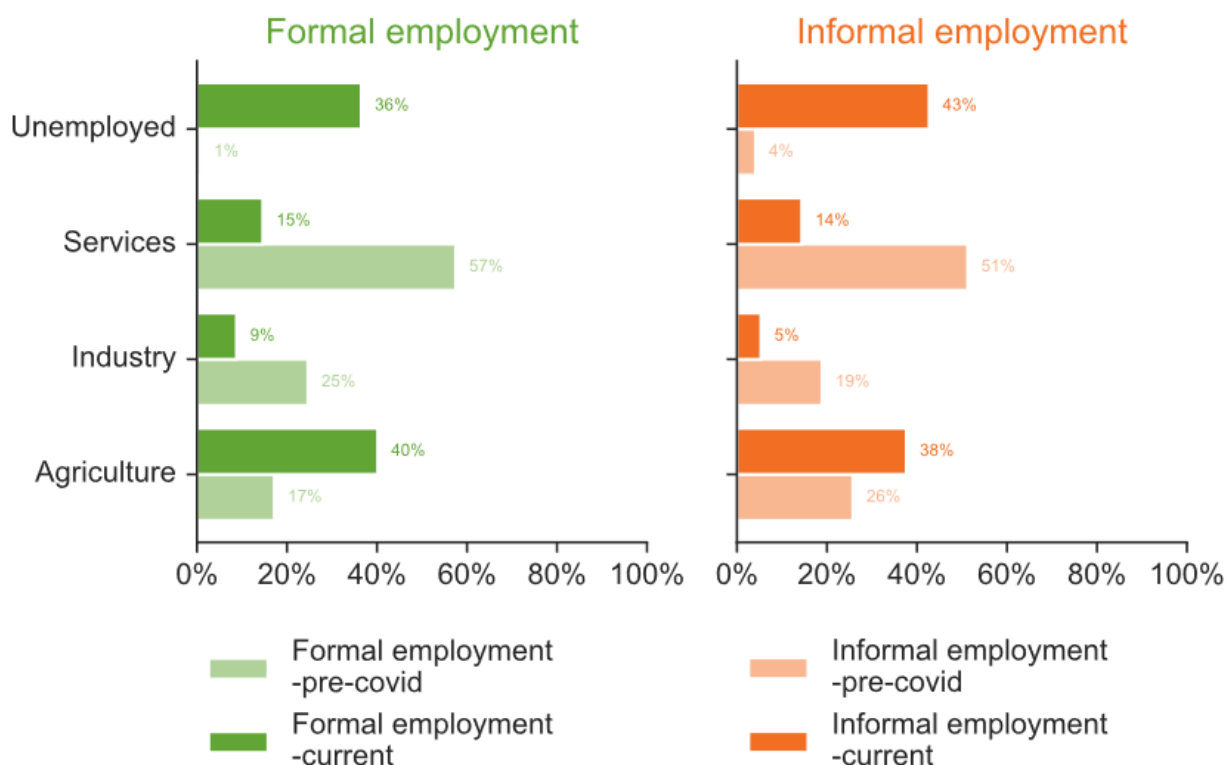
Figure 9. Changes in employment sector before and after the COVID-19 lockdown



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999.



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999.



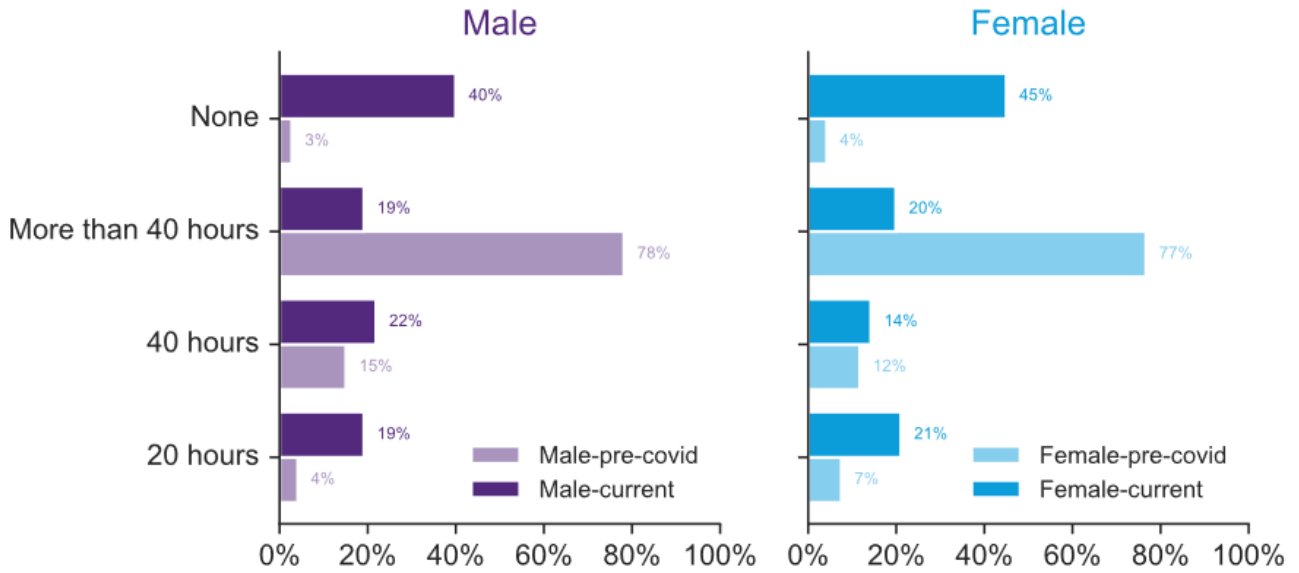
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999.

The COVID-19 lockdown had a negative impact on number of hours worked. Most workers were working more than 40 hours before the lockdown. This might suggest that many workers had to work extended working hours per week due to them not having regulated and protected jobs and/or wanting to earn additional income to send as remittances to their families.

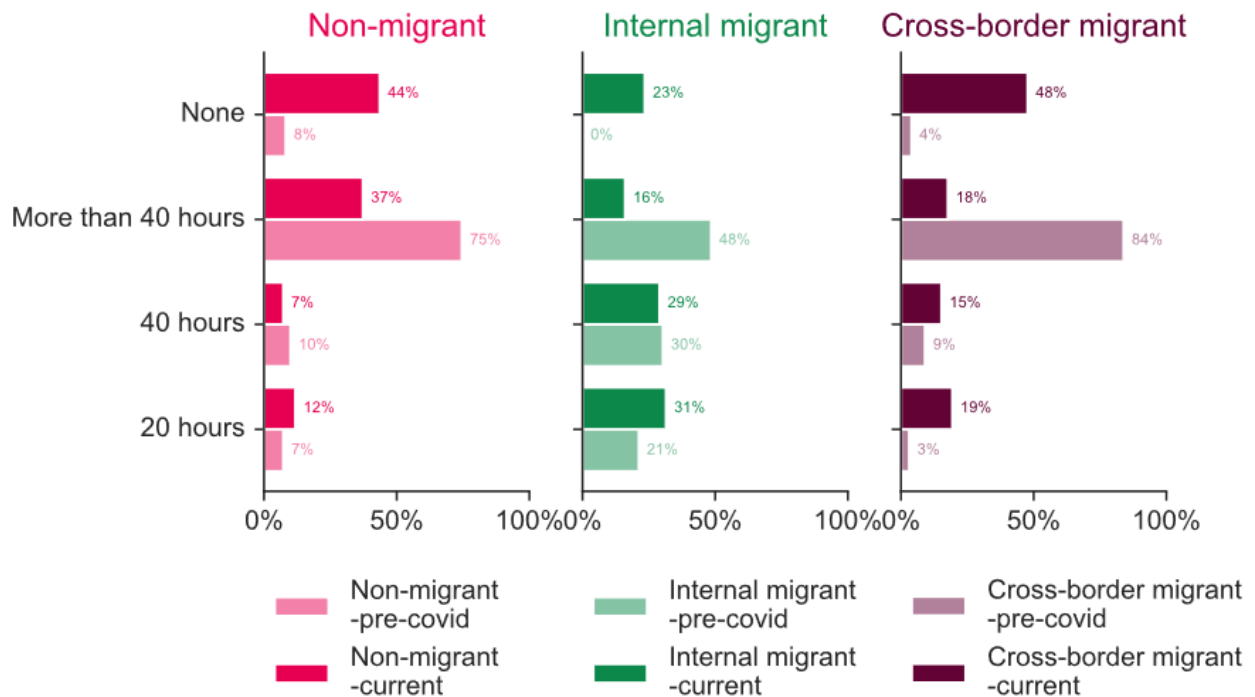
We asked respondents how many hours they spent on income generating activities in a week prior to the lockdown and during the lockdown. Generally, there was a decrease in the number of hours worked since the

pandemic started (Figure 10). The decrease in number of hours worked was similar for men and women. Cross-border migrants, non-migrants, and workers in informal employment reported to be more affected, as they worked fewer hours compared to other groups. Additionally, those who still had a job also work fewer hours. This holds for all groups distinguished by the study.

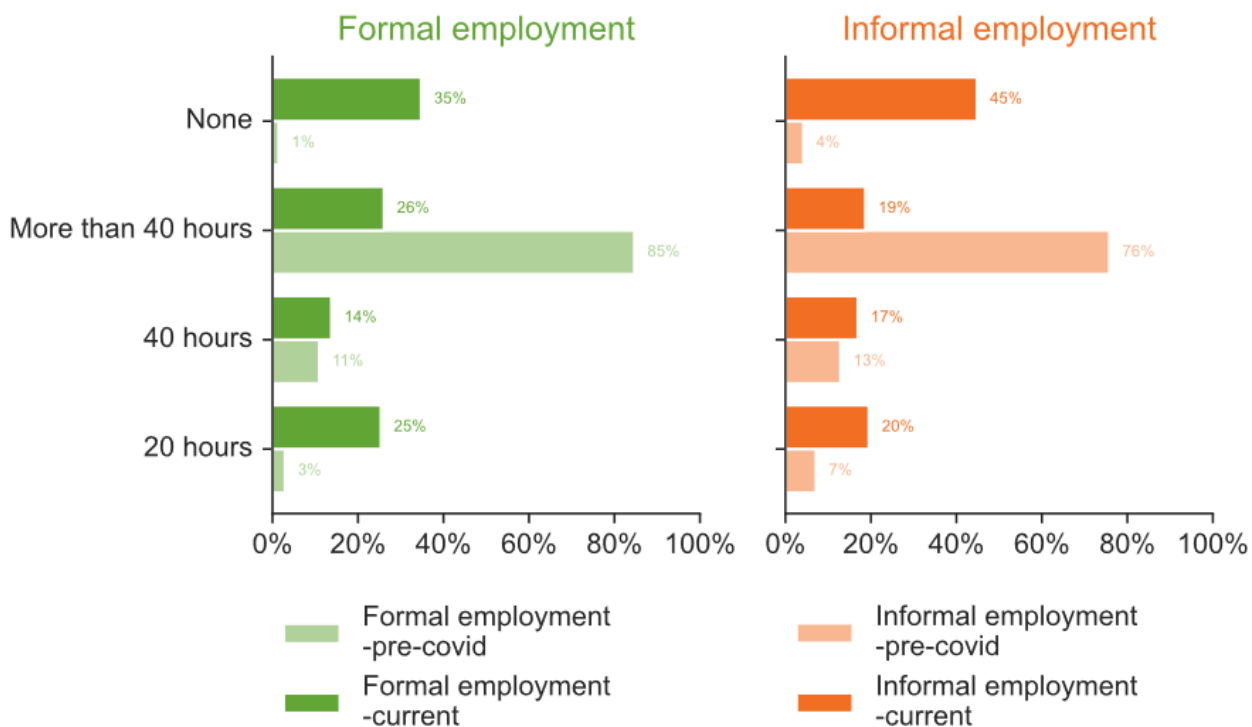
Figure 10. Changes in weekly hours spent to earn an income before and during the COVID-19 lockdown



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999.

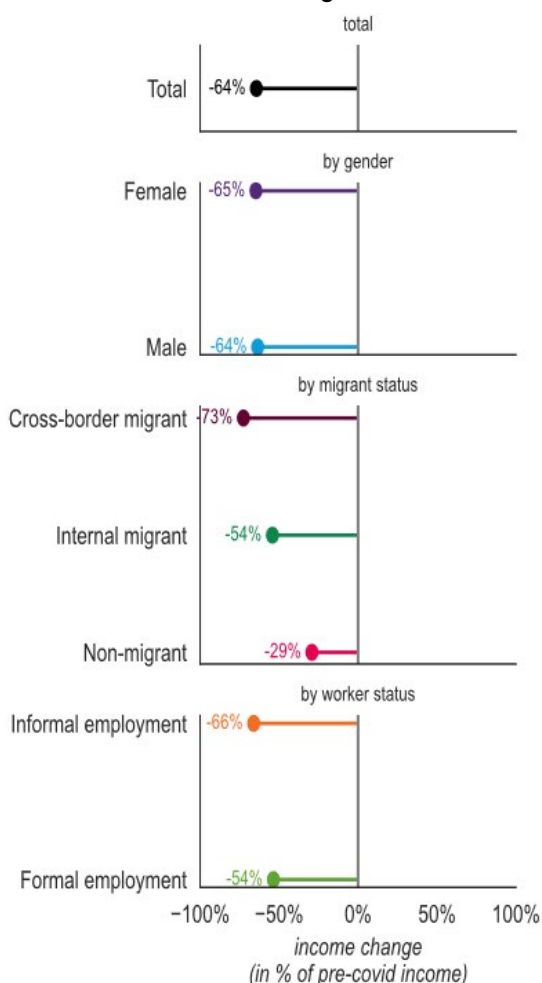


Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999.



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999.

Figure 11. Income loss during the COVID-19 lockdown (Rate of change)



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=888.

4.2.2 IMPACT ON INCOME

Most workers lost their income during the COVID-19 lockdown.¹⁰ Before the lockdown, 7% of respondents did not have a personal monthly income, a figure which increased to 64% during the lockdown. This means that around 2 out of 3 workers did not have a personal monetary livelihood during the lockdown. Most likely they had to rely on the financial support of their families or their personal savings.

Figure 11 shows that respondents lost on average more than 60% of their monthly income¹¹. This means that a typical worker, who would earn 1 million LAK per month pre-COVID-19, would earn 360,000 LAK per month post-COVID-19. On average, cross-border migrant workers lost the most income (73%), while internal migrants lost more than half of their income (54%) and non-migrants losing slightly less than a third (29%).

The income loss was 65% among female workers and 64% among male workers, the difference not statistically significant.

¹⁰ We asked respondents how much on average their personal monthly income was in the months before the COVID-19 lockdown and during the lockdown in a set of relevant currencies. A total of 62 outlier values were detected using Median Absolute Deviation criteria and excluded from the analysis. Also, 49 respondents declined to answer the questions about their income.

¹¹ The average income by key groups can be found in the annexes.

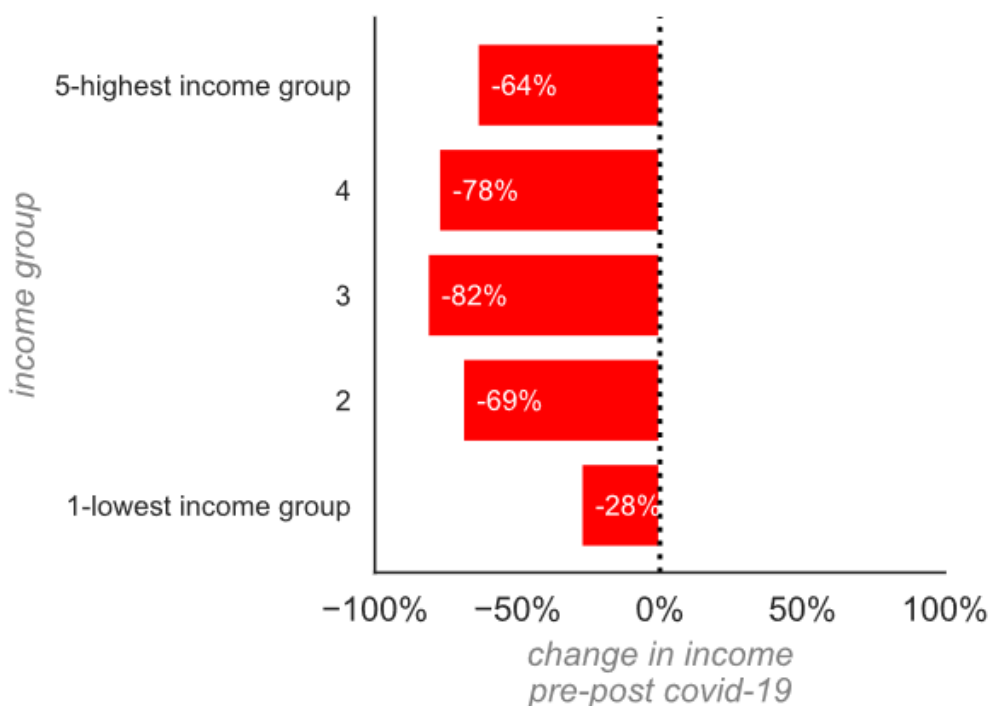
Furthermore, the loss was 66% among workers in informal employment and 54% among workers in formal employment, again a not statistically significant difference. On average, the loss of income was the same between workers in informal and formal employment.

Furthermore, workers in the lowest income group were less affected while the middle-income group reported the highest income loss during the COVID-19 lockdown. Figure 11 shows that the average income loss in the lowest income group was 28%, in the second group was 69%, 82% in the middle-income group, 78% in the fourth income group and 64% in the highest income group.

4.2.3 IMPACT ON REMITTANCES

Looking into the impact of COVID-19 on remittances, we found that 1 out of 4 respondents (25%) lived in remittance-receiving households (Figure 13). However, these figures might be higher in reality, as most respondents in this study were cross-border migrants and thus likely to have previously sent the remittances to their household of origin. Since these migrants had already come back to the household of origin at the time of the interviews, most of them might have stated that their household was (currently) not receiving remittances.

Figure 12. Changes in personal monthly income before and during the COVID-19 lockdown by income quintiles



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=871.

The study only found significant differences related to remittances impacts by informality status. Among workers in informal employment, the percentage of respondents in households that receive remittances was higher as compared to workers in informal employment.

We also asked respondents in remittance-receiving households whether the pandemic led to a decrease in those remittances, finding

that more than 60% of those households experienced such a decrease. The most affected group were internal migrants, with 84% saying that their household was affected by a reduction of such income flows. However, the small sample size in this indicator might have influenced the likelihood of finding significant differences.

Figure 13. Workers in remittance-receiving households

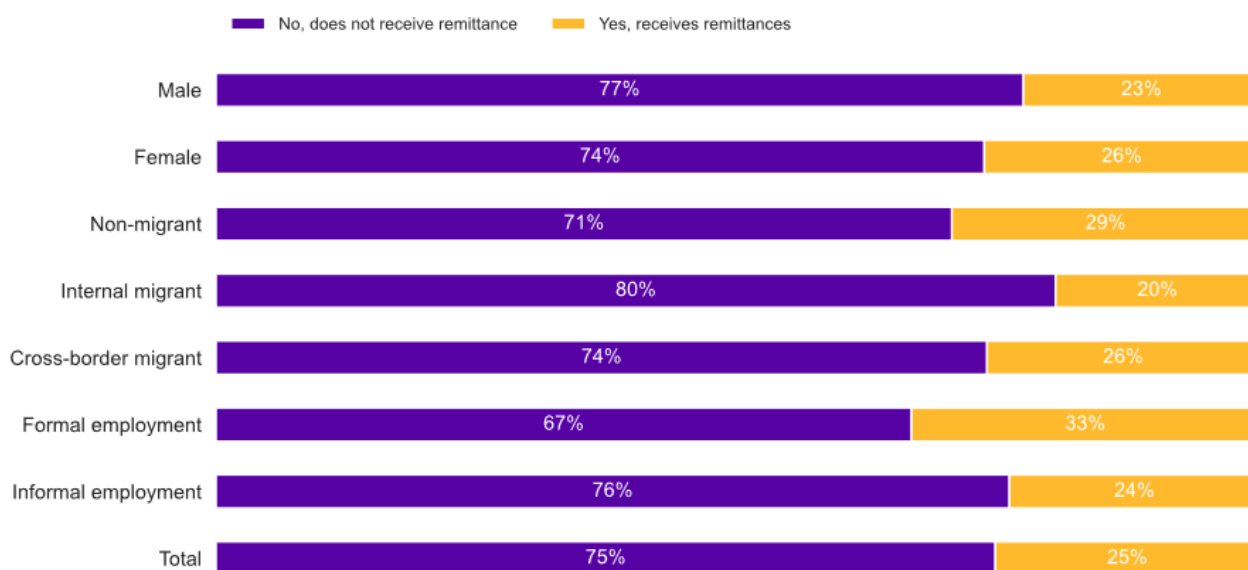
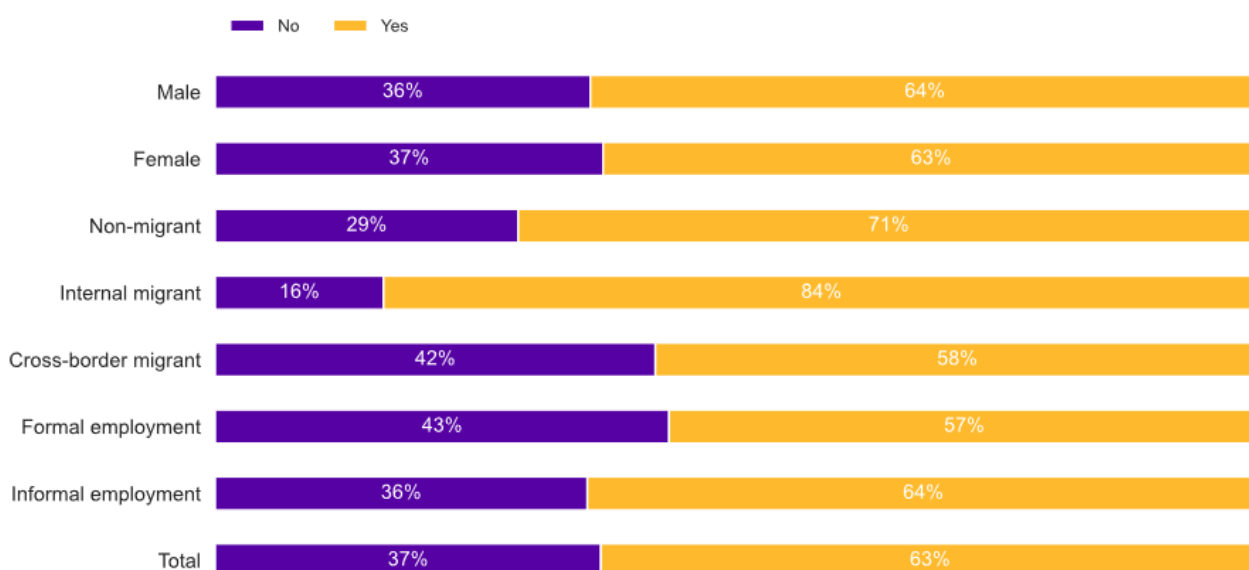


Figure 14. Workers in households that were affected by reduction of remittances during the COVID-19 lockdown (only asked to respondents in remittance-receiving households)



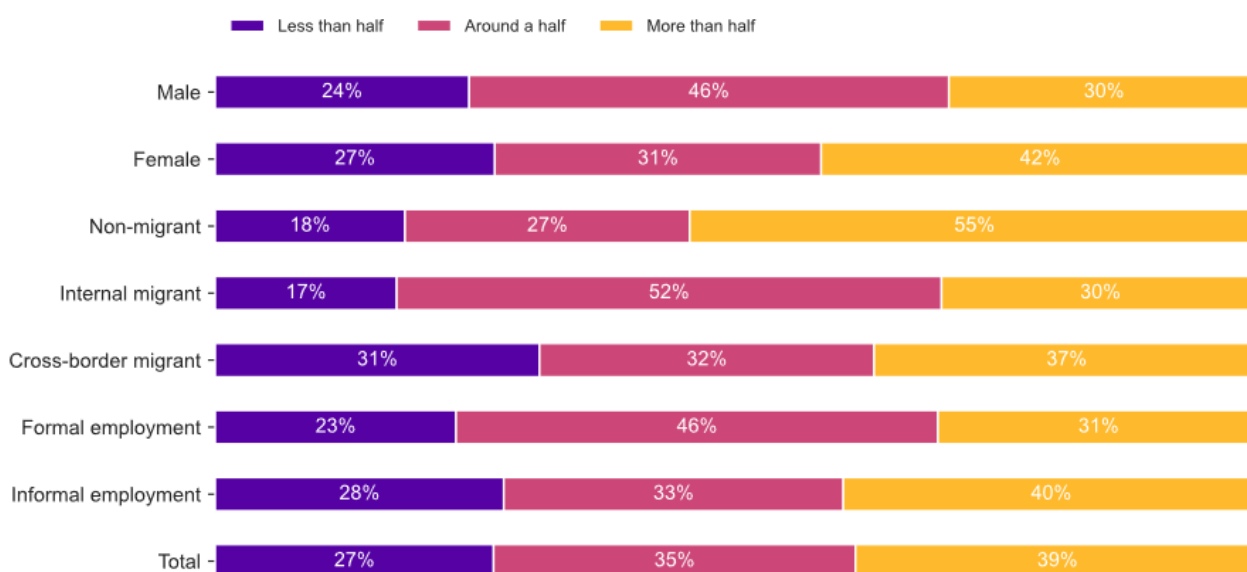
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=996.

Finally, we asked the respondents how much the household income was affected by the reduction of remittances. More than 70% reported about half or more than half of their total income lost as a result of remittance loss. We also found that for 27% of households, the reduction of income was less than half of their total household income. We did not find significant differences between the key groups. Like the previous figure, the sample size for this indicator was small.

challenge 9 days between late March and early June. For this finding, there were no significant differences between the key groups.

Moreover, 39% of families could not access the same types of foods as before the lockdown (Figure 16). A lower percentage of workers in formal employment could not access the same types of foods, as compared to workers in informal employment.

Figure 15. How much was your household income affected by the reduction of remittances? (only asked to respondents in households that were affected by a reduction of remittances)



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=150.

4.2.4 IMPACT ON FOOD ACCESS

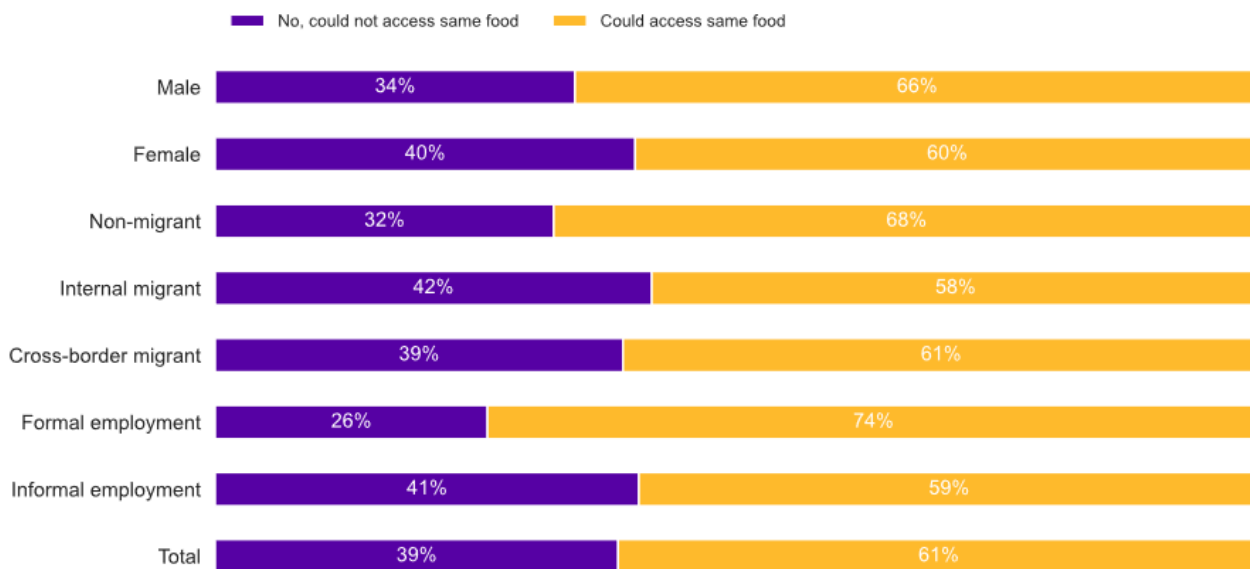
The findings show that the lockdown had an impact on food access, with some families facing difficulties to buy food or to access the same types of foods as before the lockdown. We asked how many days the family ran out of food and there was no money to buy more. Moreover, we inquired whether the household could access the same types of foods as before the lockdown. We found that 44% of families ran out of food during the lockdown on at least one day. Among these families that ran out of food, on average they faced this

The main reasons why these households could not access the same types of foods were loss of income or unemployment. Nevertheless, two out of five households reported price increases as a reason for not being able to buy the same types of food. The findings suggest that reasons related to restrictions of movement, safety or closure of markets were less important.

4.2.5 IMPACT ON CARE WORK

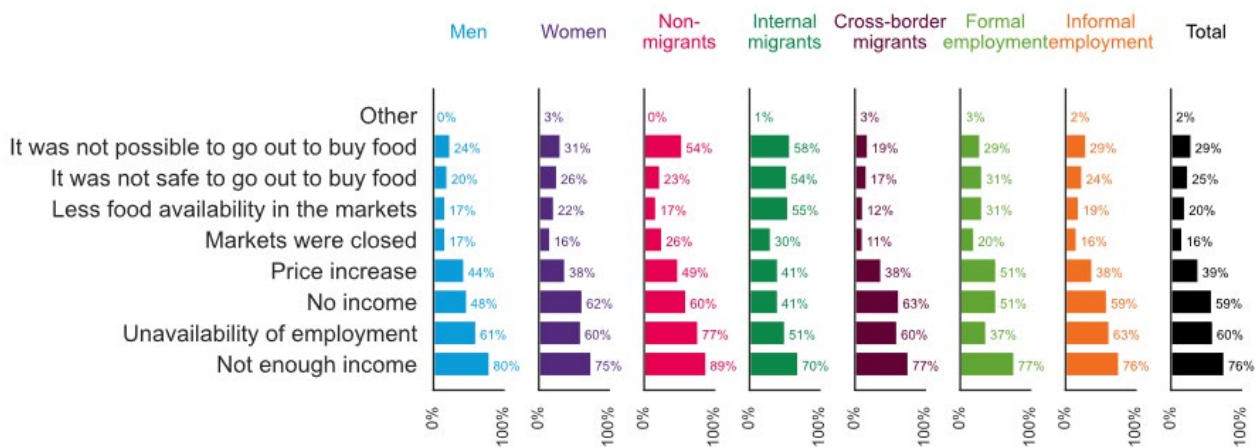
Across the Asia-Pacific region, women carry higher care burdens than men (ILO

Figure 16. During the COVID-19 lockdown, could your household access the same types of foods as before?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=995.

Figure 17. What were the reasons why your household could not access the same type of foods as before?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=379.

2018). Findings indicate that among Laotian respondents the situation is similar to that of the region more broadly. Women carried the main burden of unpaid household work¹² at the respondents’ households. Figure 18 shows that more than half of respondents (52%) said that only women or mostly women are responsible for taking care of the unpaid household work, while 39% said that responsibilities are equally divided between men and women, and only 9% said that only men or mostly men are responsible for unpaid care work.

However, men and women had very different views on the distribution of unpaid care work responsibilities in the households. Around 60% of female respondents said that only women or mostly women were responsible for unpaid care work, whereas only 33% of male respondents gave this answer. On the other hand, 32% of female respondents thought that unpaid care tasks were equally divided between men and women, compared to 55% of male respondents. These differences are statistically significant.

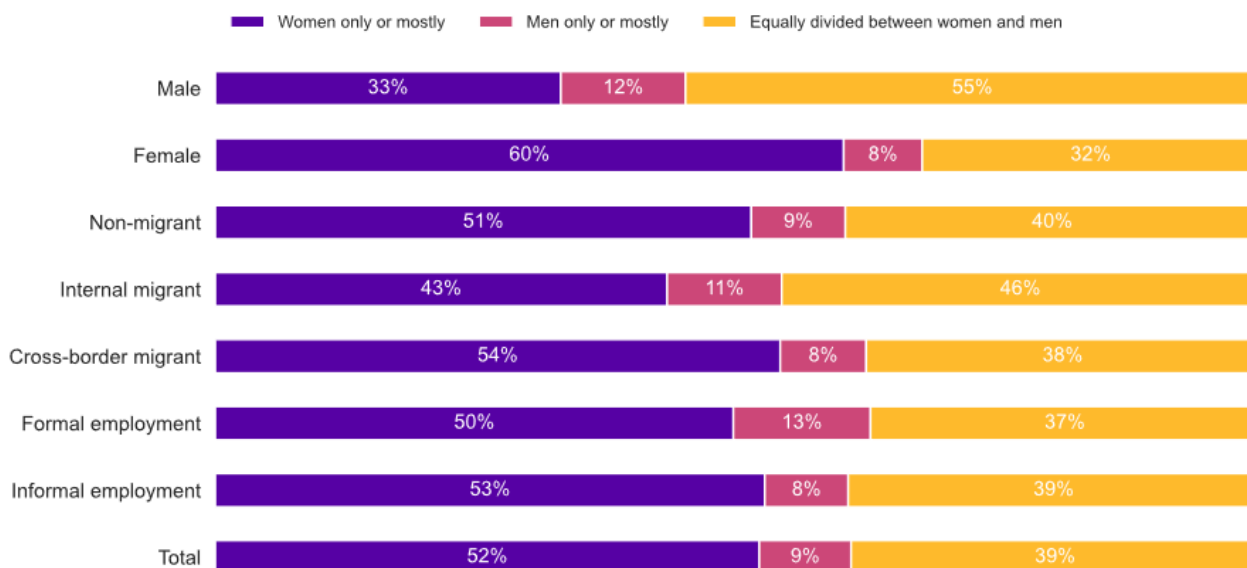
12 Unpaid household/care work is the care work performed on an unpaid basis in the home. This means without any explicit monetary compensation Care work includes the production of goods and services necessary for the physical, social, mental and emotional well-being of care-dependent groups, such as children, the elderly, the ill and people with disabilities, as well as healthy, prime working-age adults (ILO 2018).

Care work responsibilities increased during the pandemic, among others, as a consequence of increases in the number of people who were sick due to the virus and school closures. This led to more time spent taking care of the ill and children at home (UN Women 2020 and GiHA Working Group 2020 cited in ILO and UN Women 2020).

The lockdown increased the responsibilities of unpaid household work at most respondents’ households. More than 60% of respondents thought that responsibilities increased, and less than 40% did not perceive a change. Figure 19 shows that 27% of respondents said that unpaid household work responsibilities increased more for women, 27% that they increased equally for men and women, and only 8% that they increased more for men.

Figure 18. In your household, who is it that normally takes care of the unpaid household work?¹³

13 Using the definition in the previous footnote, the enumerators explained to respondents what unpaid household/care work entails.



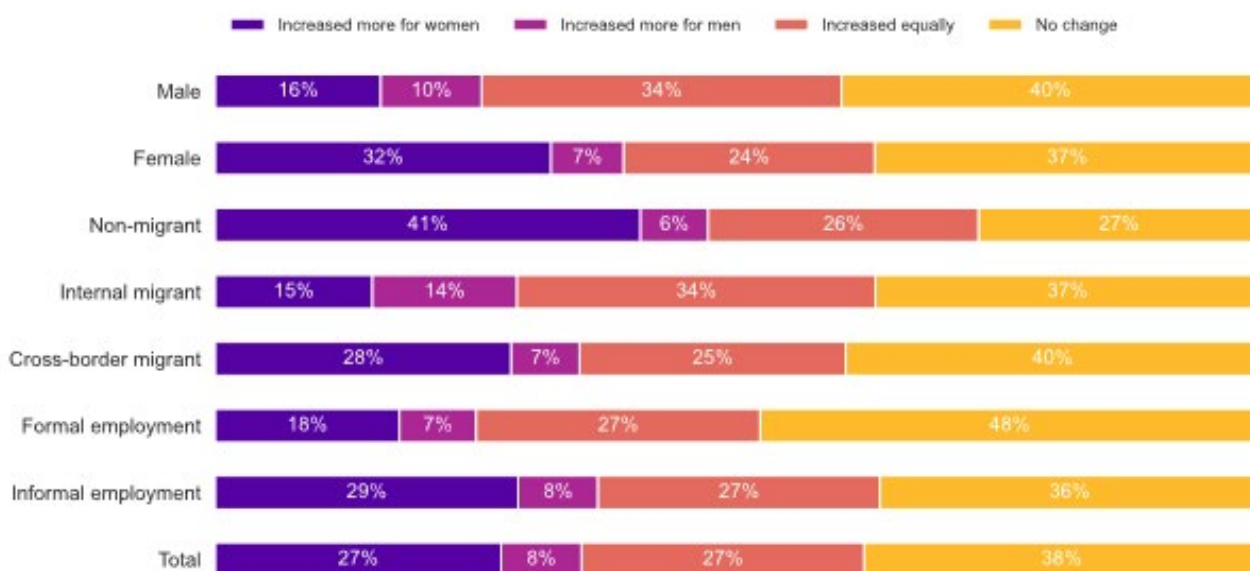
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=990.

Additionally, the findings suggest relevant differences in the perceptions of men and women. Figure 19 shows that 32% of female respondents perceived that unpaid household work responsibilities increased more for women, but this opinion is only shared by 16% of male respondents. In a different way, 34% of male respondents thought that responsibilities increased equally, but only 24% of female respondents had the same perception. These differences are statistically significant.

2020). This has a negative impact on women, as “violence has serious short- and long-term consequences on women’s physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health as well as on their personal and social well-being” (ILO and UN Women 2020: 3).

Awareness about the increased risks of gender-based violence associated with the COVID-19 lockdown were low among respondents. Figure 20 shows that less than half of respondents agreed (46%) with the statement that women and girls

Figure 19. In your household, have the responsibilities related to unpaid household work equally increased for men and women during the COVID-19 lockdown?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=986.

4.2.6 PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Levels of sexual, intimate partner and other forms of violence against women grow more acute during humanitarian crisis. Increased stress, disruption of social and protective networks, lockdowns with reduced mobility, and decreased access to services can all exacerbate the risk of violence for women, including women migrant workers, during the COVID-19 pandemic (UN Women 2020a, 2020b; UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNODC and UNDP

are at increased risk of violence during the lockdown. This was only slightly higher than the percentage of respondents that disagreed (39%).

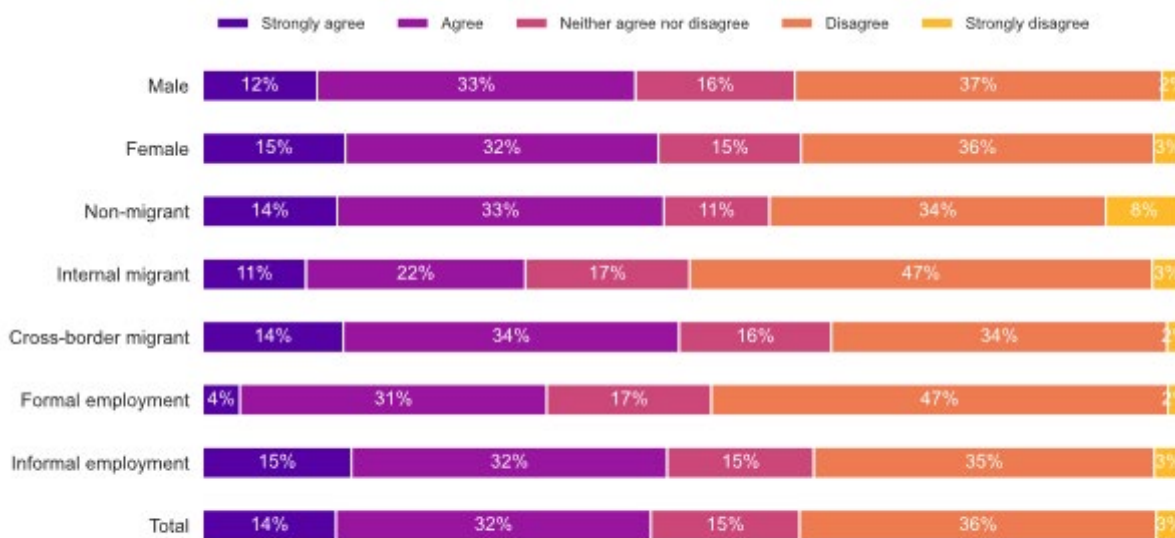
Awareness about the risks of gender-based violence associated with the lockdown was higher among cross-border migrants as compared to internal migrants. Also, awareness of gender-based violence during the lockdown was higher among workers in informal employment as compared to workers

in formal employment. Interestingly, we did not find any statistically significant differences between men and women.

protocols to ensure safety and confidentiality of respondents.

Cross-border migrants were more likely to feel discriminated than non-migrants.

Figure 20. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Women and girls are at increased risk of violence (in the house, at work, in public spaces) during the COVID-19 lockdown.



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=962.

4.2.7 EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION AND UNSAFETY

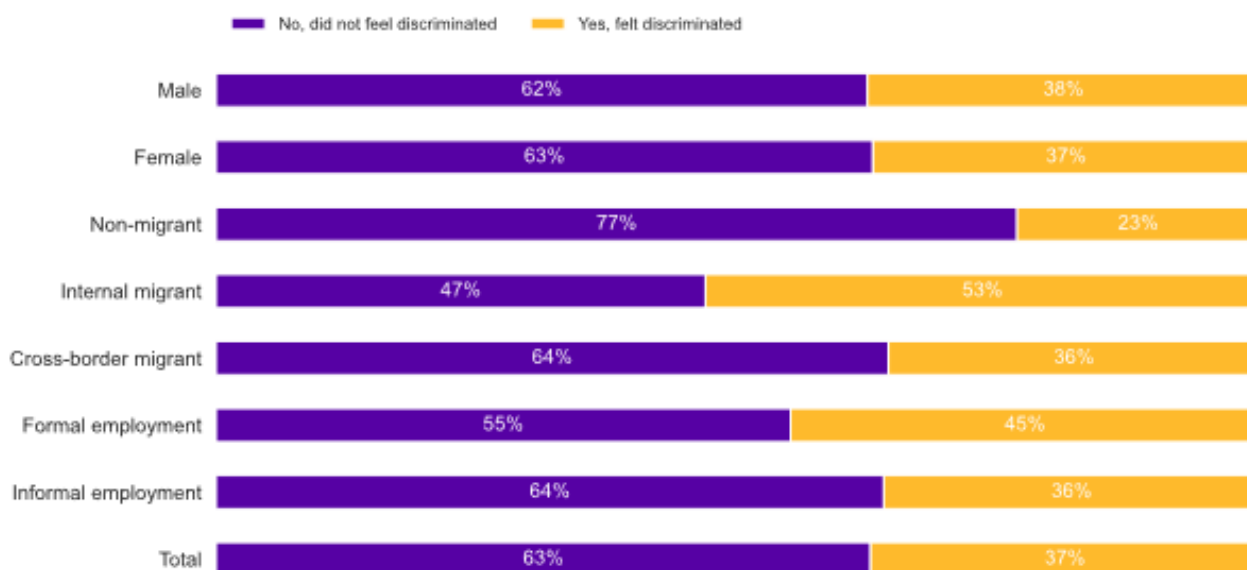
We asked respondents whether they felt discriminated or stigmatized during the lockdown and whether they felt unsafe when they were returning to the household of origin. Figure 21 shows that around 40% of respondents felt discriminated or stigmatized at the place where they stayed during the lockdown. We saw in section 4.1 that most respondents stayed at their household of origin. Hence, this finding suggests that some workers may have experienced discrimination in their households and/or communities of origin.

Furthermore, we found that the percentage of internal migrants that felt discriminated was higher as compared to cross-border migrants. A possible explanation for why cross-border migrants were less likely to experience discrimination is them having a higher status among community members due to their experience of living abroad and better earnings. Overall, however, the return of migrants, both internal and cross-border, generated some tensions in the households and/or communities of origin.

However, we do not have specific information on the types of experiences that made respondents feel discriminated or stigmatized. Asking for details about the experiences would have required a different research methodology, including the application of

We found that the percentage of workers in formal jobs that felt discriminated was higher as compared to workers in informal employment. Regarding gender, we did not find significant differences. Nevertheless, it is important to note that no question was asked about gender-based discrimination. This could explain why we did not find gender differences in Figure 21.

Figure 21. Were there situations that make you feel discriminated or stigmatized in the place where you stayed during the COVID-19 lockdown?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=993.

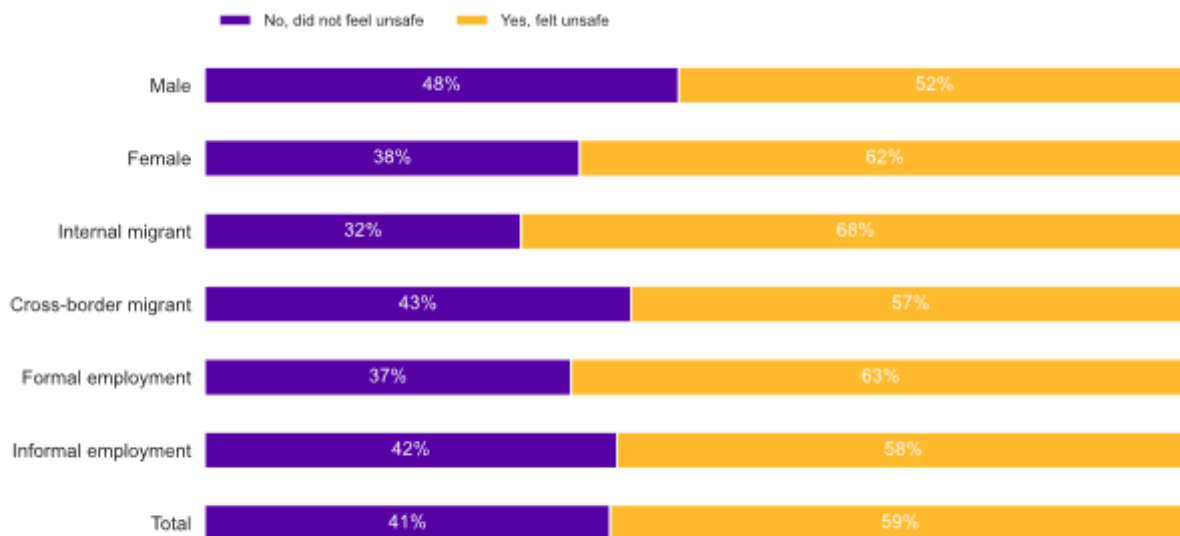
Additionally, returnee migrant workers, especially women, are at risk of experiencing violence and harassment on their journeys back home, including in mandatory COVID-19 quarantine facilities. Findings show a sizeable share of migrants felt unsafe when they were returning to the household of origin. Figure 22 shows that around 6 out of 10 migrants (59%) had this feeling. We found that women migrants and internal migrants felt more unsafe than men migrants and cross-border migrants, respectively. We did not find significant differences by informality status.

Moreover, we asked migrants who made them feel unsafe while they were returning to the household of origin. Findings suggest that the sources of unsafety were coming from the community and relatives, and not as much from risks associated with the travel or health hazards. 88% of migrants said that community members made them feel unsafe, 27% mentioned the relatives or family members,

12% said immigration officials, 7% said the government authorities, 6% the police, 5% the employers, 5% the doctors or nurses, 3% other, and 1% the drivers.

It is worth noting that women migrants reported that relatives or family members made them feel unsafe when they were returning to the household of origin more often than men migrants. Among women migrants, 31% had feelings of unsafety from relatives or family, which was only 17% among men migrants. After returning home and during lockdowns, family members spend more time in close contact, and families cope with additional stress and economic losses. Also, in lockdowns perpetrators may use fears brought upon by the pandemic to employ psychological violence and controlling behavior to isolate women further (ILO and UN Women 2020).

Figure 22. Did you feel in any way unsafe while you were returning to your household of origin due to COVID-19 lockdown? (only asked to internal and cross-border migrants)



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=882.

Finally, we asked respondents whether they knew where to seek help in case of seeing a friend or neighbor experiencing violence. Accessing life-saving health, psychosocial care, police and justice or social services is critical during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for women affected by violence. However, due to lockdown measures, some services addressing violence were closed or downscaled (ILO and UN Women 2020).

Although more than half of the workers said that they knew where to seek help, there were 43% of respondents who did not know (Figure 23)¹⁴. This is relevant, given that we saw in Figure 21 and Figure 22 that an important percentage of respondents had experienced some sort of discrimination during the lockdown or feelings of unsafety during their return journeys.

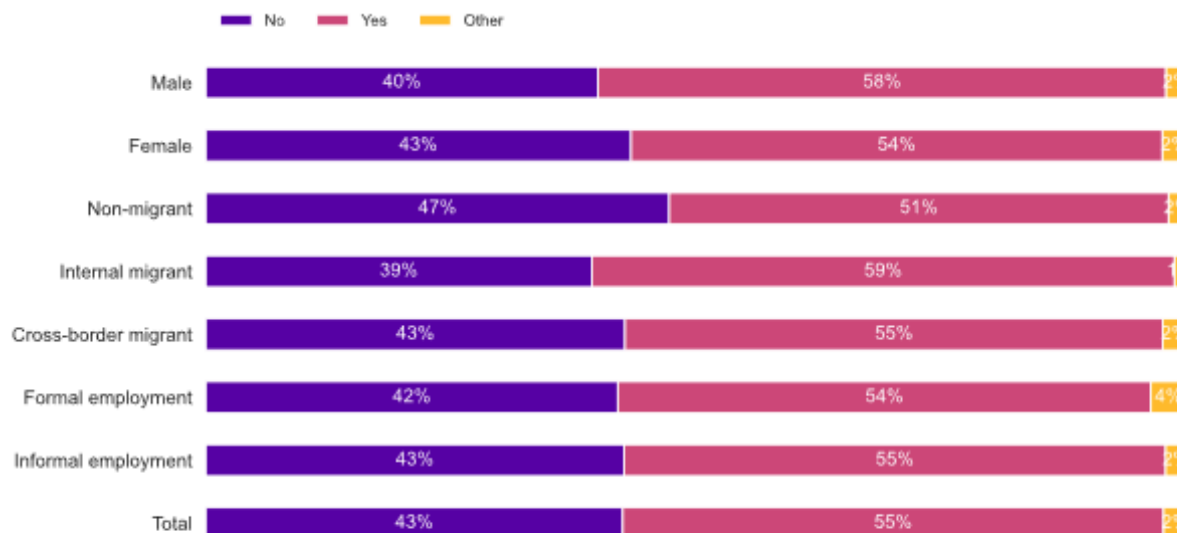
This points to the need to provide more information to workers about where to seek support in



A man carries lumber across a bridge in Lao PDR. (© Oxfam)

¹⁴ There are no significant differences between the groups.

Figure 23. During the COVID-19 lockdown, did you know where to seek help in case you saw a friend/neighbor experiencing violence?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=990.

4.2.8 GENERAL CHALLENGES

We asked respondents what were the biggest challenges that they and their households have faced due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Figure 24 shows that more than 95% of respondents faced one or more big personal challenge. In general, we found that the most common challenges were related to unemployment, price increases and insufficient income. These were similar across all key groups. The challenges mentioned most frequently were “I could not work the same”, “I had less money”, “food and non-food essentials were getting more expensive”, and “I felt bad because I could not provide financially”.

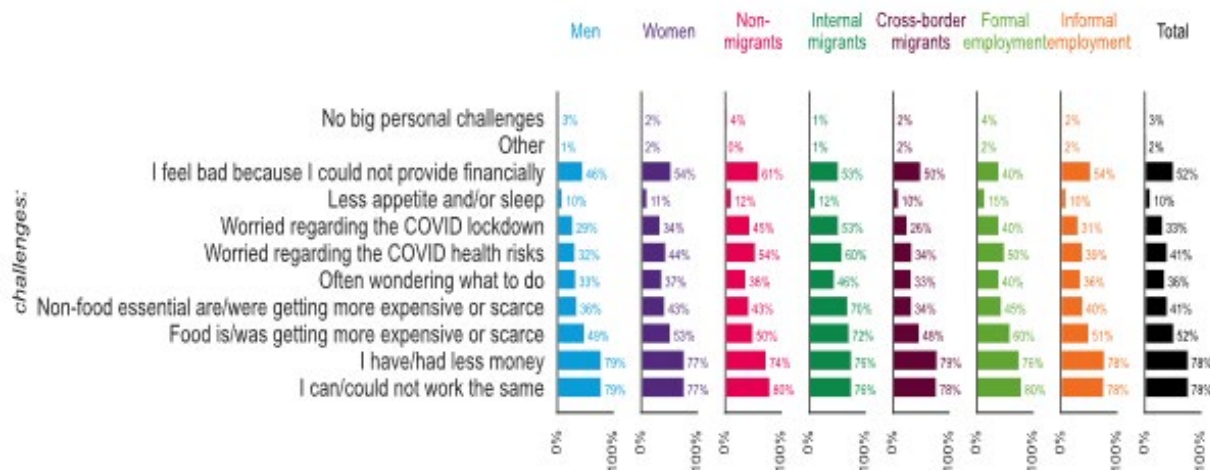
cases of violence.

4.2.9 SUMMARY

The section showed that almost half of the respondents lost their job during the COVID-19 lockdown. The workers most affected were the cross-border migrants and those in informal employment. A similar share of men and women lost their jobs during the lockdown.

We found that unemployment rates remained high after the lockdown. Large decreases in paid employment (stable contracts and short-term contracts), home-based work and paid domestic work explain the steep rise in unemployment. Nevertheless, some unemployment might have been offset by people that started to work in the family business as contributing family workers.

Figure 24. What are/were the biggest challenges that you and your household faced due to COVID-19 lockdown?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999.

Women workers, cross-border migrants and non-migrants were more affected in the immediate term by current unemployment rates than men workers and internal migrants. Furthermore, findings highlight that negative impacts on employment last longer among women workers compared to men workers. We saw that a similar percentage of men and women lost their jobs during the lockdown. However, some months after the lockdown the unemployment rate was higher among women as compared to men.

Most respondents worked in the services sector, which became the hardest hit sector during the COVID-19 lockdown. The agricultural sector marginally absorbed part of the COVID-19 impacts on unemployment. The number of hours worked decreased as soon as and since lockdown measures went into place. Cross-border migrants, non-migrants, and workers in informal employment were more affected by the reduction in the number of hours worked. Moreover, those who still had a job, worked fewer hours.

Most workers lost their personal income during the COVID-19 lockdown. More than 60% of workers did not have a personal income at the time of the survey. Before the pandemic, only 7% did not have a personal monthly income. Workers lost on average 64% of their personal

monthly income. Cross-border migrant workers were the most affected by income loss.

More than 60% of respondents in remittance-receiving households experienced a reduction of remittances. Among those, more than 70% reported about half or more than half of their total income lost because of remittance loss. Additionally, 44% of families ran out of food during the lockdown at least one day and 39% of families could not access the same types of foods as before the lockdown.

Women carried the main burden of unpaid care work at the respondents' households, and such responsibilities increased at most households during the COVID-19 lockdown. However, men and women had very different views on these. Higher percentages of women thought that women or mostly women were responsible for unpaid care work and that such work increased more for women than men during the lockdown.

Awareness about the increased risks of gender-based violence associated with the COVID-19 lockdown was low among respondents. Less than half of respondents agreed that women and girls were at increased risk of violence during the lockdown. This opinion was similar between men and women.



A Lao woman informal worker picks up cardboard boxes for recycling (© Oxfam)

Two out of five respondents felt discriminated or stigmatized at the place where they stayed during the lockdown. Cross-border and internal migrants were more likely to feel discriminated against than non-migrants. This suggests that the return of migrants, both internal and cross-border, generated some tensions in the households and/or communities of origin, as most of them stayed there during the lockdown.

A considerable share of migrants felt at risk of violence when returning to the household of origin (59%). We found that women migrants and internal migrants felt more unsafe than men migrants and cross-border migrants. The sources of unsafety came from the community, relatives, and family members. Women

migrants said more often that the relatives or family members made them feel unsafe when they were returning to the household of origin, compared to men migrants. There were 43% of respondents who do not know where to seek help in case they saw a friend or neighbor experiencing violence.

4.3 COPING MECHANISMS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

This section aims to answer the following learning questions: What coping mechanisms do workers use to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 situation on their lives? And Has (lack of) access to social protection related services influenced their general coping behavior?

The section looks at the mechanisms that workers have used to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 situation on their lives by exploring accessibility to unemployment and health insurance, access to different types of foods, financial and non-financial coping mechanisms that workers have used, and their perception to cope with the current situation.

4.3.1 UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

We saw in the previous chapter that one of the major impacts of COVID-19 lockdown was the increase in unemployment and income loss. Under such circumstances, unemployment insurances, if available, are one of the coping mechanisms that workers could use to cover their financial needs. However, the overwhelming majority of workers did not have any form of employment insurance. Figure 25 shows that only 9% of respondents were registered for access to unemployment insurance. Internal migrants had the lowest level of coverage of unemployment insurance (3%), compared with 11% among cross-border migrants and 9% among non-migrants.

We found similar levels of unemployment insurance coverage between genders.¹⁵ Most

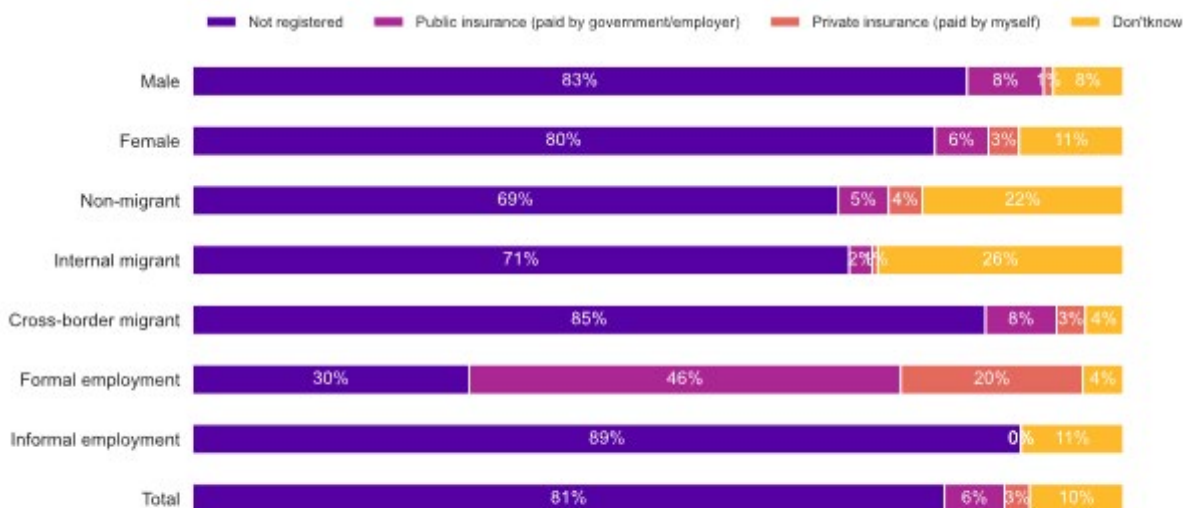
of the small share of cross-border migrants with unemployment insurance (91%) did so in the country of destination (Thailand). Nevertheless, being registered for unemployment insurance did not translate to immediate and sufficient support during the COVID-19 situation. We found that only 25% of the small number of registered workers received compensation from the unemployment insurance during the COVID-19 situation, and 52% of those said that the compensation was not enough to cover their needs¹⁶. As noted above, most of these workers were registered in Thailand and found it hard to access unemployment benefits in practice. When workers lose their job, they also lose their visas to stay and have only two weeks to arrange to leave. Hence, making arrangements for the drawing of unemployment benefits in a short period is very difficult (Olivier 2018).

Furthermore, local workers (internal migrants and non-migrants) were less informed about unemployment insurances as compared to cross-border migrant workers. Figure 25 shows that around 25% of local workers did not know whether they are registered for access to unemployment insurances. This was only 4% among cross-border migrants.

¹⁵ According to the operational criteria used in this study, workers in informal jobs are not registered for unemployment insurance. Therefore, we do not mention in the text the difference observed in the Figure 25.

¹⁶ According to the operational criteria used in this study, workers in informal jobs are not registered for unemployment insurance. Therefore, we do not mention in the text the difference observed in the Figure 25.

Figure 25. Are you registered for access to unemployment insurance?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=994.



A Lao woman home-based worker produces garments in Vientiane, Lao PDR. (© Oxfam)

4.3.2 HEALTH INSURANCE

In the context of a worldwide health pandemic, health insurance constitutes an important protection mechanism. However, the level of health insurance coverage was very low among respondents. Figure 26 shows that only 12% of respondents were registered for access to health insurance. Internal migrants had the lowest level of coverage of health insurance (3%), compared with 13% among cross-border migrants and 13% among non-migrants. Levels of health insurance coverage were similar between male and female workers.¹⁷

Most of the small share of cross-border migrants with health insurance (90%) did so in

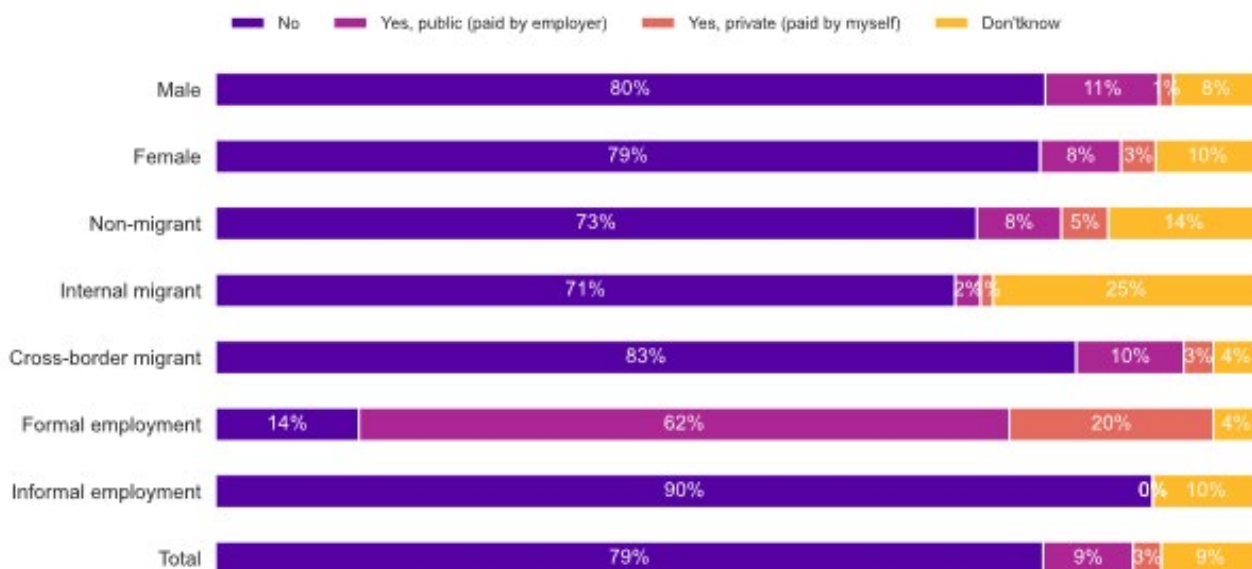
¹⁷ Workers in informal jobs are not registered for health insurance as per operational criteria used in this study. Therefore, we do not mention in the text the difference observed in the Figure 26.

the country of destination (Thailand). Additionally, we found that 26% of registered workers had used health insurance during the COVID-19 situation. Among these workers, 82% rated the quality of health services received as very good or good.¹⁸

Finally, Figure 26 shows that 14% of non-migrant workers and 25% of internal migrants did not know whether they are registered for access to health insurances. This was only 4% among cross-border migrants, indicating that in general, local workers in Laos (internal migrants and non-migrants) are less informed about their unemployment and health insurance condition as compared to cross-border migrants working in Thailand.

¹⁸ Data on place of registration and compensation of health insurances can be found in the annexes.

Figure 26. Are you registered for access to health insurance?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=996.

4.3.3 PAID SICK LEAVE

Access to paid sick leave is an important coping mechanism during the COVID-19 situation, as in case of infection, many workers cannot continue to work. Among respondents, the coverage of paid sick leave was higher than the coverage of unemployment and health insurances. In total, 52% of workers mentioned that they would receive some type of paid sick leave. Figure 27 shows that 36% of respondents thought that employers would pay the entire salary if workers would take sick leave and 16% thought that employers would pay the salary only partially.

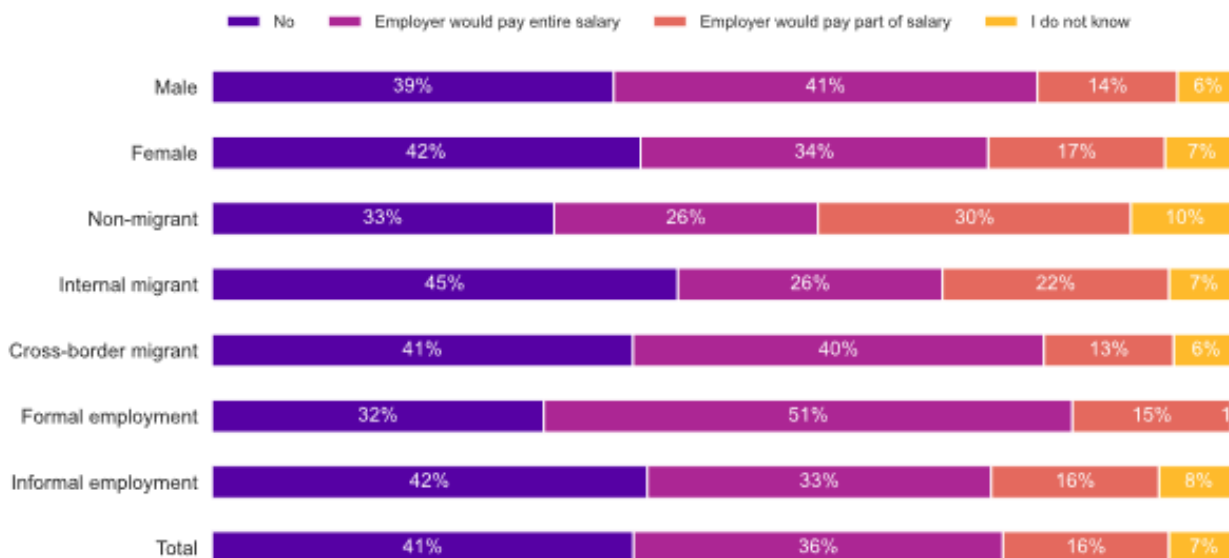
Coverage of paid sick leave was similar for men and women. Nevertheless, findings in Figure 27 suggest that level of benefit would be better for male workers, as employers would pay their whole salary. The percentage of male workers that thought that their employer would pay

the entire salary was 41% as compared to 34% among female workers.

Furthermore, cross-border migrants and non-migrants were better covered in case of getting sick than internal migrants. The level of coverage of paid sick leave was higher among cross-border migrants and non-migrants as compared to internal migrants. However, we found differences in the level of benefits. Figure 27 shows that 40% of cross-border migrants would receive the entire salary, as compared to only 26% among internal migrants and non-migrants.

Finally, workers in formal employment had higher levels of coverage and benefits of paid sick leave than workers in informal employment. The differences mentioned in the paragraphs above are statistically significant.

Figure 27. If you would feel sick and take a few days off, would your employer continue paying your salary for the days that you could not work?



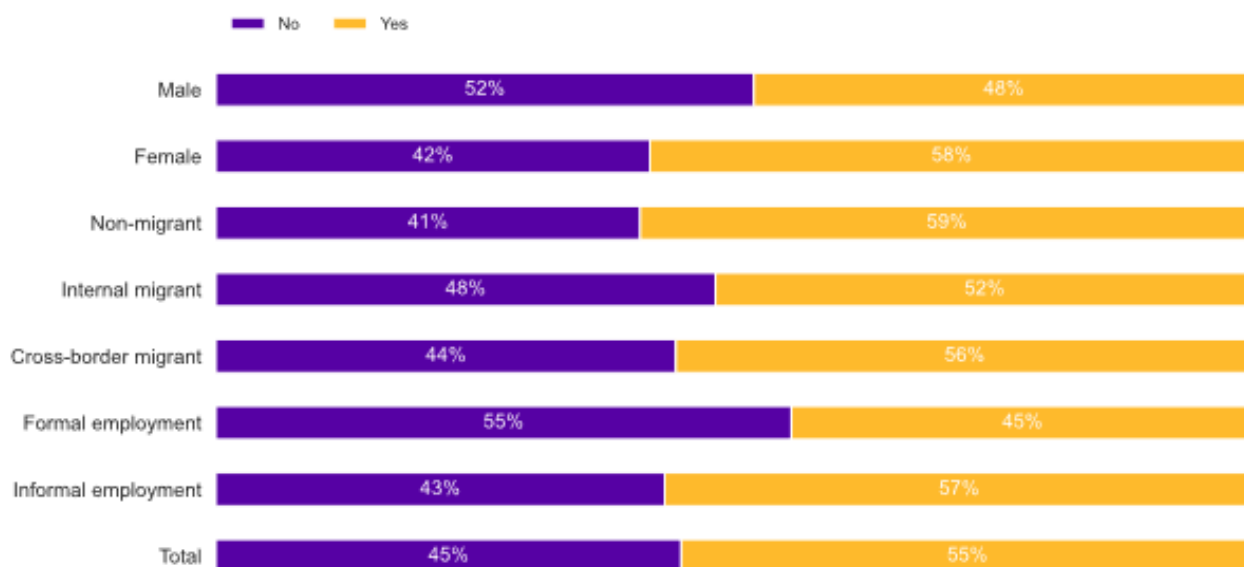
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=976.

4.3.4 TYPE OF FOOD ACCESS

We saw in section 4.2.4 that 39% of families could not access the same types of foods during the lockdown. We also asked respondents whether they have accessed different types of foods to cope with this situation. Figure 28 shows that more than half of respondents (55%) accessed different types of foods. Regarding differences between key groups, we found that the percentage of female workers and workers in informal employment that accessed different types of foods was higher as compared to male workers and workers in formal jobs. We did not find significant differences between groups of migrants.

The most common type of foods that workers accessed to cope with the COVID-19 lockdown were wild vegetables and bamboo, collected animals and insects from rice fields, horticulture products and available dried food. This indicates that workers mainly coped with the lack of food through agricultural products. The least common types of foods were animals raised in the household and hunted products.

Figure 28. Are there different types of foods that are now accessed to cope with the COVID-19 situation?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=992.

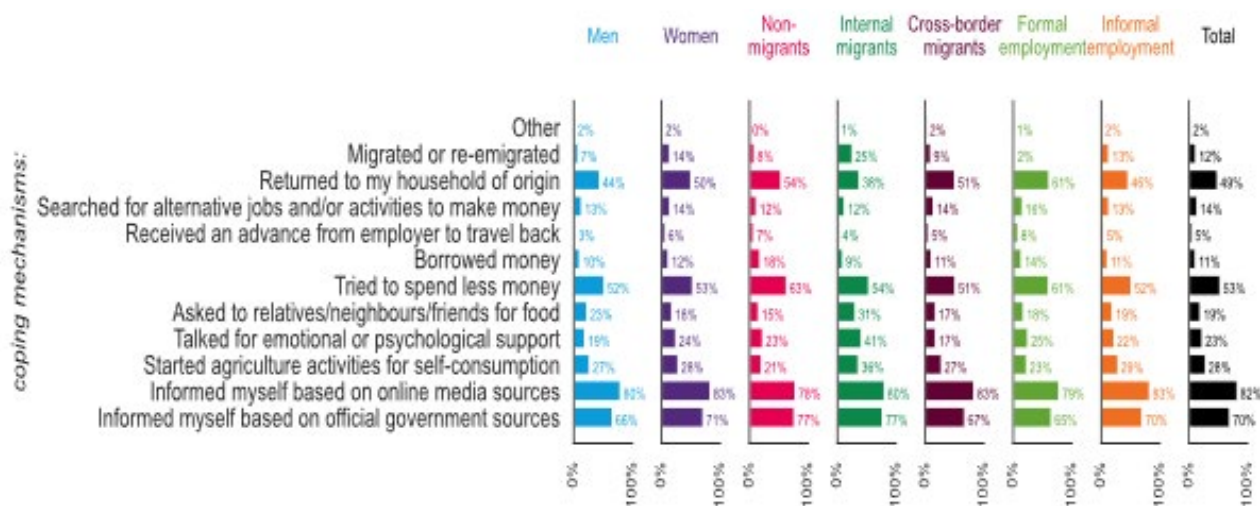
4.3.5 GENERAL COPING MECHANISMS

We asked respondents about what they have done in general to cope with the COVID-19 situation. Figure 29 shows that the most common actions taken by respondents were related to access to information, either from official government sources or online media sources. This suggests that respondents tried to inform themselves to face the many uncertainties about the health, economic, and social impacts of the pandemic.

Additionally, more than half of respondents tried to spend less money. This was expected as many workers lost their jobs and personal income. Around half of respondents considered it important to return to the household of origin to cope with the COVID-19 situation. More than 70% of those respondents said that they were supported by family, friends and/or neighbors.¹⁹

¹⁹

Figure 29. More generally, what have you done to cope with the COVID-19 situation?





A Lao woman informal worker prepares to deliver vegetables to her customer during lockdown (© Oxfam)

4.3.6 SUMMARY

The section showed that an overwhelming majority of workers did not have any form of social security to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 situation. Only 9% of respondents were registered for access to unemployment insurance and 12% were registered for health insurance. 52% believed they would receive some type of paid sick leave. These levels of insurances coverage and access to paid sick leave were similar for men and women.

Only a very small number of workers had received compensation from the unemployment insurance (25% of registered workers), which the majority judged as not enough to cover their needs. Health insurance services and paid sick leave offered slightly better benefits. Only 26% of registered workers had used the health insurance during the COVID-19 pandemic, although 82% of those rated the quality of health services received

as very good or good. Regarding paid sick leave benefits, 36% of respondents believed that the employers would pay the entire salary if workers would take sick leave.

Inequalities in access to social protection were linked to the migratory status of workers. Overall, internal migrants had the lowest levels of coverage across all forms of social protection studied. Internal migrants and non-migrants were also less informed about their unemployment and health insurance condition, and many of them did not know whether they were registered for these social security schemes.

Although cross-border migrants held a relatively better position in terms of coverage of social security (unemployment and health insurance), most of them had access to such benefits only in Thailand (more than 90%). Thus, effective access to unemployment insurance was often limited. In practice, visas to stay in Thailand are linked to migrant

workers’ jobs. If workers lose their jobs, under normal circumstances they must leave in a short period providing little time for making arrangements for the drawing of benefits. As many workers had lost their jobs during COVID-19 and returned to Laos, for them the health benefits would not apply on return.

Finally, the section showed that most respondents tried to inform themselves to cope with the COVID-19 situation, either from official government sources or online media sources. Additionally, more than half of respondents tried to spend less money and around a half considered it important to return to the household of origin. Some workers also relied on the financial and non-financial support of family, friends, and community.

4.4 OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE AND NEEDS OF SOCIAL SERVICES DURING COVID-19 SITUATION

This section aims to answer the following learning questions: What are workers’ outlooks on the future? And What are feasible measures/solutions (social protection,

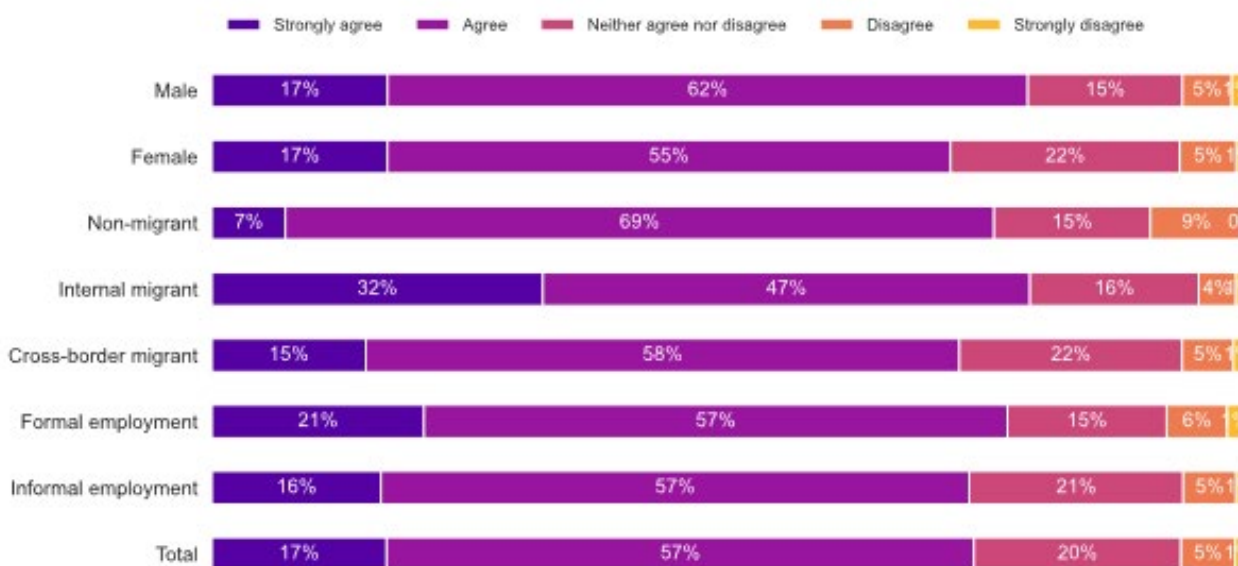
livelihoods support, support for women migrants, etc.) that could help them to better deal with the current situation and similar events in the future?

The section explores the workers’ perceptions about their opportunities to cope with any situation similar to the COVID-19 lockdown in the future, their outlook on re-migration, their social services needs and the key priorities where they need support.

4.4.1 GENERAL OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE

To better understand the workers’ outlook during the COVID-19 situation, we asked respondents about their perception to cope with the situation in the current moment and their perspectives on the future. We found that most respondents felt optimistic regarding their household ability to cope with the current situation. Figure 30 shows that 74% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement ‘At this point in time, I consider my household to be able to cope with the current situation’. Also, we found that internal migrants felt more optimistic compared to non-migrants and cross-border migrants. We did not find significant differences between men and women and informality groups.

Figure 30. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: At this point in time, I consider my household to be able to cope with the current situation



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=991.

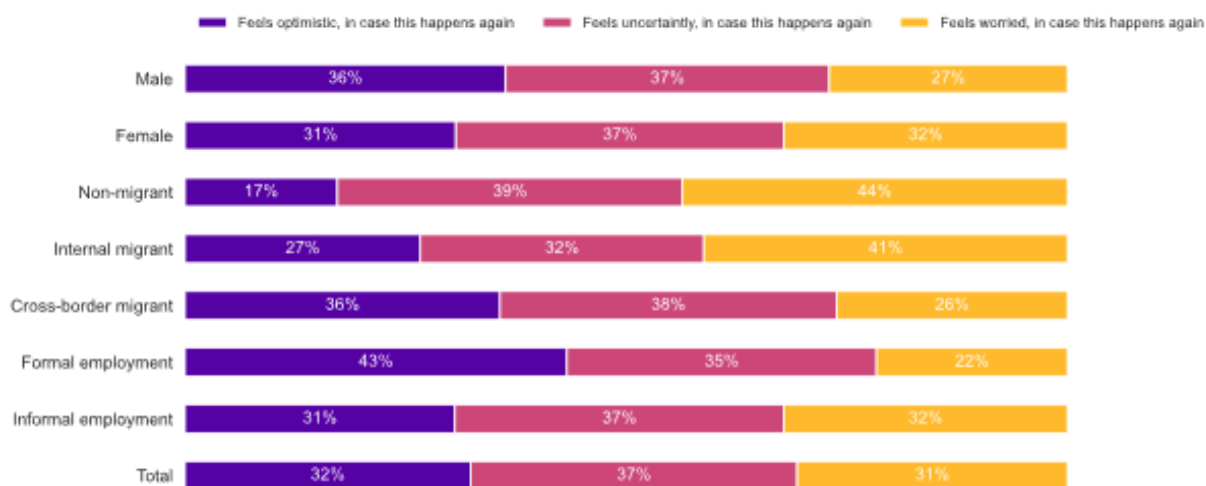
Nonetheless, workers' outlook on the future was mixed. Figure 31 shows that only 32% of respondents feel optimistic if a similar situation happened again. On the other hand, 37% felt uncertain and 31% felt worried. Moreover, we found that among non-migrants and internal migrants, the percentage of respondents that felt uncertainty or worry was higher than among cross-border migrants. A possible explanation for this finding is that cross-border migrants might perceive that they have wider options in the future, based on their work experience abroad and potential return to Thailand. Hence, cross-border migrants might feel less dependent on the economic evolution in Laos.

Also, the percentage of workers in informal employment that felt uncertainty or worry was higher than among workers in formal employment. We did not find differences between men and women.

Additionally, only a small percentage of respondents (3%) considered that they could continue earning enough income if a similar situation happened again. Figure 32 shows that 57% of respondents thought that they could continue earning an income, but this would not be enough, and 40% said that they could not continue earning an income. We found that the perspectives of female workers and cross-border migrants about their chances to earn an income were lower, as compared to male workers and local workers.

Overall, it seems that most respondents felt able to cope with the current circumstances, despite the impacts of COVID-19 lockdown on their livelihoods. However, they felt uncertainty or worry in case they had to deal with a similar situation again in the future, partly because they did not expect to earn enough income during a similar scenario.

Figure 31. In case a COVID-19 lockdown/situation would impact again, how would you rate your opportunities to cope with the situation again?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=979.

Figure 32. In case a COVID-19 lockdown/situation would impact again, do you think you could continue earning an income?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=979.

4.4.2 OUTLOOK ON RE-MIGRATION

Almost half of migrants (49%) preferred re-migrating rather than staying in Laos. 19% of migrants had not decided yet. Only about a quarter (24%) preferred to stay and get a job in Laos, and merely 7% preferred to just stay and rest. Less than 1% of respondents did not have a preference (Figure 33). It is worth noting some significant differences between the groups. The percentage of

migrants that have not decided yet was higher among men migrants and migrants in informal employment as compared to women migrants and migrants in formal employment, respectively. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents that wanted to stay and get a job in Laos was higher among migrants in formal employment as compared to migrants in informal employment.

Figure 33. If you had to choose between re-migrate or stay, what is your preference? (only asked to internal and cross-border migrants)



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=881.

The study asked migrants what preconditions would be important for them in order to re-migrate or to stay in Laos (Figure 34 and Figure 35). We found that in both cases, the precondition mentioned most frequently was job opportunities. This suggests that most workers probably would decide to re-migrate or to stay in Laos depending on the chances to find employment.

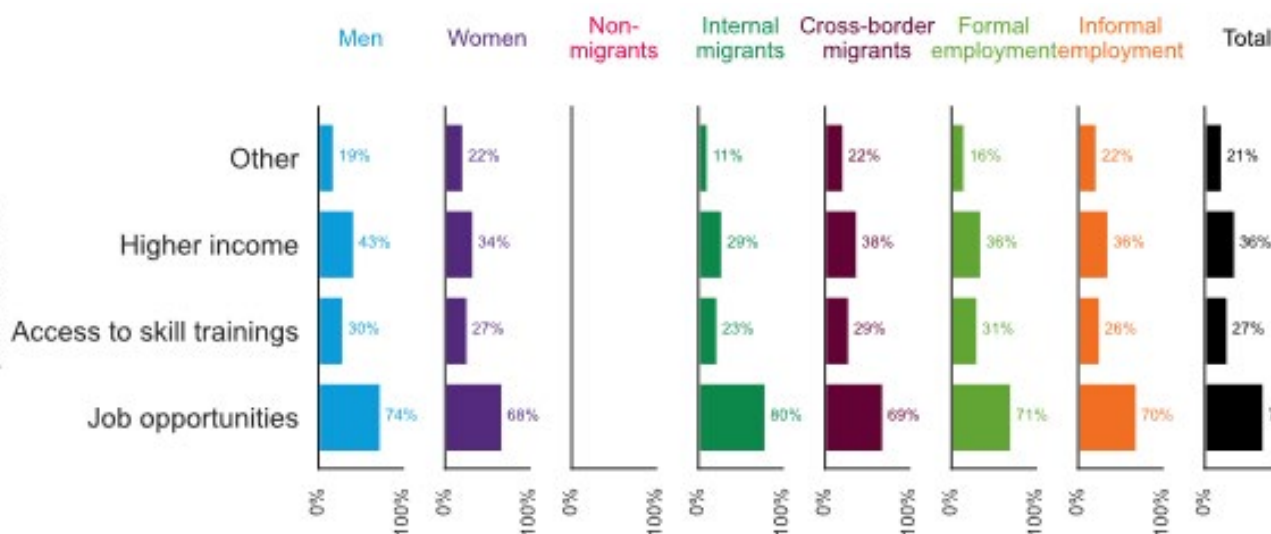
Finally, it is important to mention that around half of internal migrants (52%) mentioned the regulation of migratory status to be an important precondition for re-migrating. This suggests that some internal migrants are considering emigrating abroad.

Figure 34. Which preconditions will be important for you in order to re-migrate to make a living away? (only asked to migrants who want to re-migrate)



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=426.

Figure 35. Which preconditions will be important for you in order to ensure you can make a living here? (only asked to migrants who want to stay and get a job)



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=197.



A Lao woman homebased worker stands by the river with her child (© Oxfam)

4.4.3 NEEDS OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND KEY AREAS FOR SUPPORT

The top three needs reported by the respondents were free water/electricity, free health care and cash assistance (Table 5). A high percentage of respondents, more than 75%, considered the other social services listed on the questionnaire as also much needed. However, free financial credit seems to be the least urgently requested social service.

Across almost all key groups, the findings were as those mentioned in the paragraph above. However, there were differences among non-migrants and internal migrants. Non-migrants highlighted the necessity of support in the form of food, and internal migrants highlighted the necessity of assistance/services for migrants and assistance/services for women. Additionally, we analyzed whether the needs of social services were different between migrants who wanted to re-migrate and migrants who wanted to stay in Laos and get a job. In this regard, the conclusions were similar to the findings mentioned in the paragraphs above.²⁰

²⁰ The disaggregated data can be found in the annexes.

Figure 33. If you had to choose between re-migrate or stay, what is your preference? (only asked to internal and cross-border migrants)

| Group | Support in form of money | Support in form of food | Free health care | Free financial credit | Free water/ Electricity | Assistance/ services for migrants | Assistance/ services for women | Other |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| Men | 80% | 72% | 85% | 53% | 86% | 80% | 71% | 73% |
| Women | 88% | 80% | 88% | 57% | 87% | 80% | 81% | 75% |
| Non-migrants | 77% | 85% | 90% | 47% | 85% | 80% | 84% | 75% |
| Internal migrants | 90% | 68% | 77% | 53% | 69% | 78% | 80% | 64% |
| Cross-border migrants | 86% | 79% | 89% | 58% | 92% | 81% | 76% | 77% |
| Formal employment | 78% | 63% | 85% | 44% | 90% | 80% | 76% | 73% |
| Informal employment | 87% | 80% | 87% | 58% | 87% | 80% | 78% | 75% |
| Total | 86% | 78% | 87% | 56% | 87% | 80% | 78% | 75% |

Respondents mentioned most frequently labor rights, health care and financial support as key priorities in which workers in informal employment need support (Figure 36). In general, more than 65% of respondents mentioned those as key priorities. Moreover, 56% of respondents mentioned regulation of migratory status as a key priority. Training had the lowest priority. Overall, the findings in this paragraph were similar across the key groups of workers.

INGOs, UN and labor organizations were much needed to prepare better for a situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings in Table 6 suggest that respondents considered public offices to be most important in this regard. The opinions regarding the necessity of these providers of social services were similar among the key groups of workers.

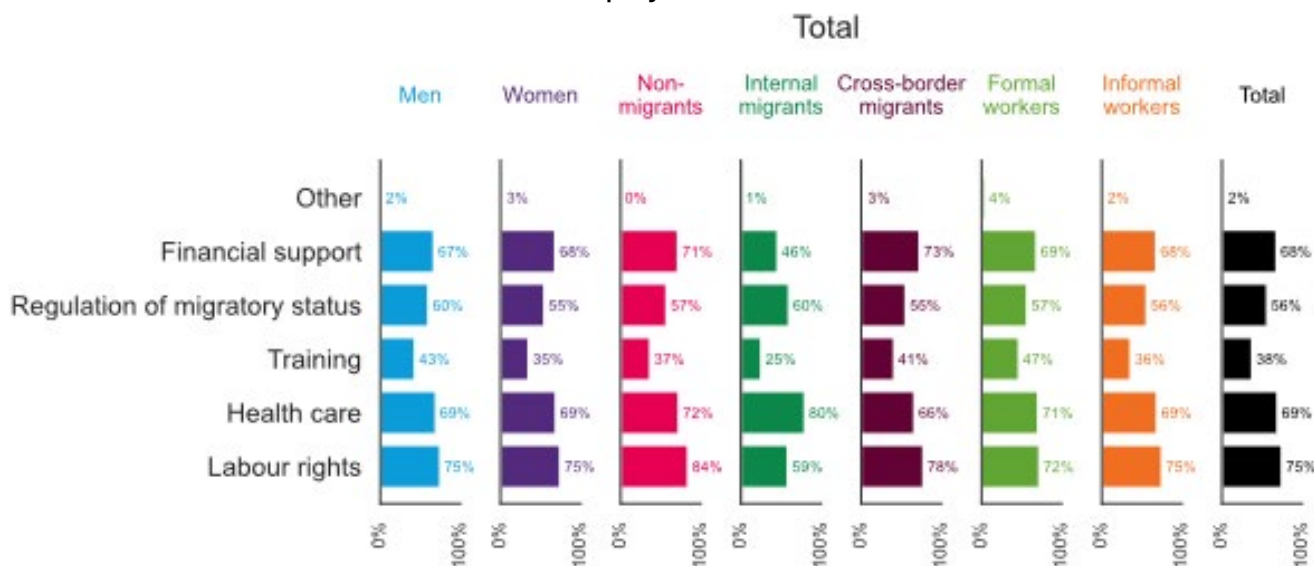
4.4.4 SUMMARY

Furthermore, respondents' opinions about key priorities were similar between migrants who wanted to re-migrate and migrants who wanted to stay in Laos and get a job. Hence, the findings were like those mentioned in the paragraphs above.²¹ Finally, most respondents mentioned that public offices, CSOs/NPAs,

Workers' views on the present were more optimistic than on the case of a new lockdown. Most respondents felt able to cope with the current circumstances, but many felt uncertainties or worried in case of dealing with a similar situation again. These perceptions were similar for men and women.

²¹ The disaggregated data can be found in the annexes.

Figure 36. In your opinion, what would be the key priorities for support to workers in informal employment?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=985.

Table 6. How would you rate the importance of these providers of social services when preparing better for a situation such as COVID-19? (percentage of workers that answer ‘much needed’)

| Group | Public offices (national, provincial, district, village) | Employers | CSOs/NPAs, INGOs, UN | Labor organizations | Other |
|--------------------------|---|-----------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Men | 94% | 70% | 79% | 84% | 69% |
| Women | 95% | 67% | 81% | 87% | 76% |
| Non-migrants | 92% | 59% | 73% | 86% | 80% |
| Internal migrants | 96% | 59% | 82% | 84% | 62% |
| Cross-border migrants | 94% | 71% | 82% | 86% | 76% |
| Formal employment | 90% | 62% | 73% | 90% | 79% |
| Informal employment | 95% | 69% | 82% | 85% | 74% |
| Total | 94% | 68% | 81% | 86% | 74% |

Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=992

Furthermore, almost half of migrants preferred re-migrating rather than staying in Laos (49%). A quarter of migrants (24%) preferred to stay and get a job in Laos. However, 19% of migrants had not decided yet. Most migrants probably would decide to re-migrate or to stay in Laos depending on the chances of finding employment. Migrants who wanted to re-migrate and migrants who want to stay in Laos and get a job mentioned most frequently ‘job opportunities’ as a precondition for re-migrating or staying in Laos. Some internal migrants were considering emigrating abroad. Around half of internal migrants (52%) mentioned the regulation of migratory status to be an important precondition for re-migrating.

Free water/electricity, free health care and cash assistance are the three services with the highest percentage of respondents that

considered them as much needed. Moreover, labor rights, health care and financial support were the most mentioned key priorities in which workers in informal employment needed support. The needs in terms of social services and key priorities were similar across all groups, and between migrants who wanted to re-migrate and migrants who wanted to stay in Laos.

Finally, respondents considered public offices of highest need to prepare better for a situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The study’s conclusions are structured in two parts. The first part presents the conclusions regarding the learning questions and is divided into three parts: i) socio-economic impact of COVID-19 situation, ii) coping mechanisms

to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, and iii) outlook on the future and needs of social services during the COVID-19 situation. The second part presents the main conclusion of this study.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS FOR EACH LEARNING QUESTION

5.1.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 SITUATION

The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted employment. The rise in unemployment during the pandemic resulted in income loss, remittance loss and less food access. Also, findings suggest gender inequalities related to unpaid care work and fear of gender-based violence increased during the pandemic. Rural areas assumed the biggest impact of the crisis as most migrants returned to their households in rural villages.

Cross-border migrants and those in informal employment were the most affected by loss of employment during the lockdown, with similar effects on men and women. Furthermore, unemployment rates continued to be high even after the lockdown. Women workers, cross-border migrants and non-migrants were more affected by unemployment rates in the immediate term than men and internal migrants. The study also shows that negative impacts on employment lasted longer for women workers compared to men workers. A similar percentage of men and women lost their jobs during the lockdown, but some months after the lockdown the unemployment rate was higher among women as compared to men.

The COVID-19 situation reduced the income flows of the workers and their households. Most migrant workers lost their personal income during the COVID-19 lockdown, with cross-border migrants being the most affected. Also, remittance-receiving households

experienced a reduction in remittances. In this context of lacking employment and income, some families did not have sufficient access to food.

Unpaid care work responsibilities increased during the COVID-19 lockdown, particularly for women, who are the ones carrying most of the unpaid household work burden.

The return of migrants might have generated tensions in their communities and households of origin in rural areas, as some migrant workers felt discriminated or stigmatized there. A sizable share of migrants felt at risk of violence when returning to their household of origin. For most migrants, feelings of unsafety stemmed from their community, relatives, and family members. Women migrants were more likely than men migrants to experience feelings of unsafety from relatives or family members.

Finally, low awareness about the increased risks of gender-based violence associated with the COVID-19 lockdown, and lack of information about where to seek help might exacerbate gender-based violence. Less than half of respondents agreed that women and girls were at increased risk of violence during the lockdown, and two out of five respondents did not know where to seek help in case they saw a friend or neighbor experiencing violence.

5.1.2 COPING MECHANISMS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Access and provision of social security schemes for workers to cope with the pandemic were very limited. Only very few workers were registered for access to unemployment and health insurance (around 10%). Although access to paid sick leave is relatively better, only half of workers believed that they would receive some type of paid sick leave. The levels of coverage studied were similar for men and

women.

Internal migrants were the least protected group under the social protection schemes investigated by the study. Also, internal migrants and non-migrants were less informed about their unemployment and health insurance condition as compared to cross-border migrants. Many internal migrants and non-migrants did not know whether they were registered or not for these social security schemes.

Additionally, access to and level of social protection benefits were very limited. The very small number of workers who had received compensation from unemployment insurances said that it was not enough to cover their needs. Regarding paid sick leave benefits, only one third of respondents believed that their employers would pay the entire salary if workers would take sick leave. Most cross-border migrants had access to social security services in Thailand. However, there were challenges with accessing these benefits on job loss or on return to Laos.

Most respondents tried to inform themselves to cope with the COVID-19 situation, either via official government sources or via online media sources. Additionally, more than half of respondents tried to spend less money and around a half considered it important to return to their household of origin. Overall, workers mainly relied on family, friends, and community to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic.

5.1.3 OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE AND NEEDS OF SOCIAL SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 SITUATION

Most people felt able to cope with the current circumstances around COVID-19, but many felt uncertainties or worry in case of having to deal with a new lockdown. Almost half of migrants had a preference for re-migrating and a quarter of them for staying and getting a job in Laos, while others had not decided yet. In any case, most migrants likely would

base their decision to re-migrate or to stay in Laos on the chances of finding employment. Free water/electricity, free health care, cash assistance and labor rights are the areas that workers considered most needed to be better prepared for situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, more than half of non-migrants and internal migrants were interested in support concerning regulation of migratory status. This might indicate that some workers are considering emigrating abroad.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a rise in unemployment, income loss, remittances loss and less food access. The pandemic also aggravated gender inequalities concerning unpaid care work, discriminatory behaviors, especially towards migrant returnees and potential risks of gender-based violence. Women and cross-border migrants were the groups most affected by unemployment and income loss. Findings show that the negative impacts on employment will likely last longer among women workers compared to men workers. Moreover, access to and provision of social security schemes for workers to cope with the pandemic were very limited. When workers had social protection coverage, the level of benefits received in practice was very low. Overall, families in rural areas and women were most impacted by the negative impacts of the pandemic.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

For national government:

- Identify and map current needs of employers and labor market demands in Laos and in Thailand as the major country of destination for migrant workers. Some cross-border migrant returnees have existing skills but cannot find jobs in Laos, while others might need skills training according to the needs of the national labor market. Challenges may



A Lao male informal worker holding a basin of growing vegetables, shows how his family coped during the lockdown © Oxfam

include that many cross-border migrants prefer to re-migrate due to higher income when working in Thailand than in Laos, even in cases of only slightly higher income.

- Develop a national labor market strategy plan for better identification and linking of cross-border and internal migrants as well as the unemployed and graduating students with the job market in Laos. This plan should focus on better accreditation of skilled workers and matching them with job opportunities, based on local infrastructure and value chains. This could contribute to mitigating the current impacts of the pandemic in terms of job losses, while also considering contingency measures for unemployment in the event of a situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic occurring again.
- Provide more information on the benefits of social protect system for migrants/workers in order to encourage them to register. Challenges may include that the social security system in Laos is based on voluntary registration as well as that some migrant workers avoid and some employers do not support registrations in the social security system.
- Extend social security coverage for migrant workers, based on improvements and support (for instance, via an online platform) in terms of registration processes, portability of social security entitlements, and processes for workers to change/update their working status. This could be achieved through unilateral measures (country of origin or country of destination) and/or bilateral agreements. In case of unilateral measures, the Government of Laos could ensure that migrant workers have equal rights to access social protection as every worker in Laos.
- Provide guidance on how INGOs and CSOs can support strengthening the social protection system in Laos, including more specific recommendations for all relevant stakeholders (roles of each stakeholder in which sector, which ministries or which organization), including how CSOs could engage on supporting migrants. This has to be based on a mapping of stakeholders that support

migrant workers to see a clear pictures on all existing support programs to avoid overlap and increase more collaboration.

- Develop a migration sensitive national action plan on violence against women to address prevention and response to gender-based violence and discrimination.
- Provide free water/electricity, free health care and cash assistance in situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

For national government and consortium partners:

- Disseminate to all groups of workers the following information that is clear and user-friendly, available in ethnic languages, and accessible for workers who cannot read: Labor rights and social protection policies. Gender-based violence and associated risks during lockdowns. Where to seek help in case of experiencing or witnessing any type of violence. Accurate information about COVID-19.
- Collect information on skills of migrants for labor matching, including what are key skills that migrants need.
- Explore increasing the minimum wage and other factors that could support migrants to stay in Laos.
- Support cross-border migrants with official registration procedures for immigration permits, work permits and social security schemes in destination countries. For example, this could be achieved by encouraging migrants to go through companies support for migration or by collaborating with migrants' support organizations in destination countries.
- Provide training to government officers, local authorities, employers, trade union representatives and workers to build better understanding on the three main pillars of the social protection system in Laos: healthcare, social security, and social welfare.

- Facilitate vocational training, specifically cross training from skilled migrant workers to unskilled workers in Laos, for better access to decent work. Research shows that cross-border migrant workers tend to be more skilled and qualified than internal migrant workers. Most workers mentioned job opportunities as a precondition to either re-migrate or stay in Laos. Training should contribute to match labor market demand with skills of workers. Challenges may include that migrant workers do not have an interest to join vocational training, even when provided for free to migrants, including their daily standard allowance and travel expenses.

- Provide small grants to businesses that have had their value chains affected by closed borders, but could resume and/or expand their operations with the help of returnee migrant workers now in Laos. For example, raw produce previously sent abroad for processing could instead be processed within Laos. This could contribute both to reducing the consequence of income loss during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as leading to better employment and higher economic growth in the longer term.
- Provide more analysis/information on the impact on gender-based violence, including what makes women returnee migrant workers feel unsafe.
- Ensure coordinated quality services responding to gender-based violence, tools to ensure cross-border referral and case management when needed are available for all migrants.

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8 ANNEXES

ANNEX 8.1. ADDITIONAL TABLES AND GRAPHS

Statistical annexes, such as tables and results of statistical tests.

Table 7. Sample size by province and partner

| Province / Partner | GRET | HELVETAS | HPA | ILO | CAMKID | IWAA | LFTU | Total |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| Houaphanh | 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 39 |
| Luang Prabang | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 80 | 100 |
| Attapeu | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 50 |
| Champasak | 0 | 122 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 103 | 225 |
| Khammouane | 0 | 0 | 125 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 125 |
| Savannakhet | 0 | 0 | 119 | 86 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 205 |
| Bokeo | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 27 |
| Vientiane Capital | 0 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 106 | 0 | 134 |
| Luang Namtha | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 40 |
| Oudomxay | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 40 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| Total | 60 | 150 | 244 | 86 | 40 | 106 | 313 | 999 |

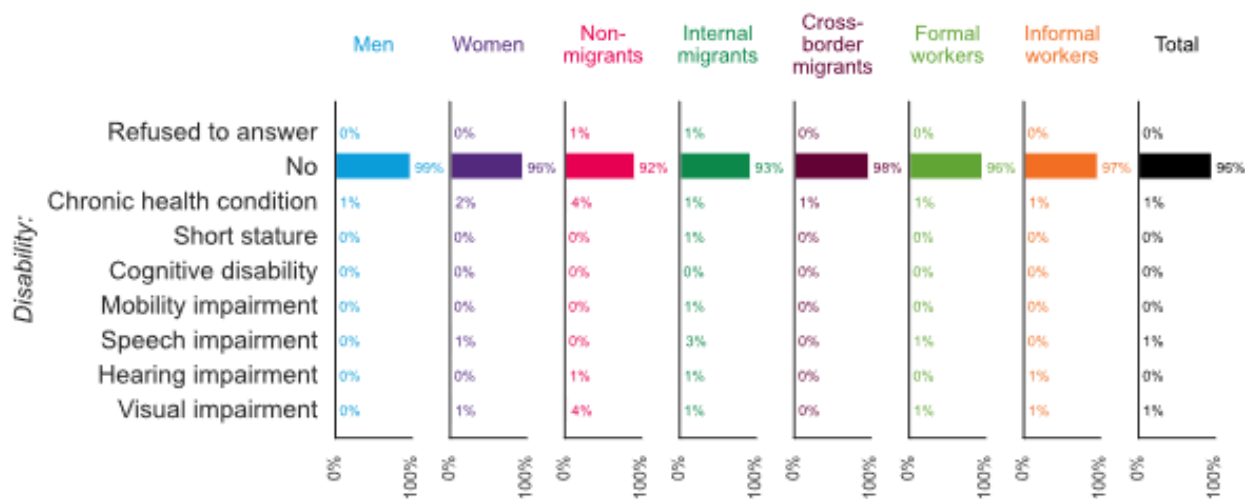
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999

Table 8. Ethnicity of respondents

| Ethnicity | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Lao/Lao loum | 718 | 72% |
| Khmu | 114 | 11% |
| Phutai | 49 | 5% |
| Lue | 29 | 3% |
| Hmong | 15 | 2% |
| Other | 74 | 7% |
| Total | 999 | 100% |

Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=999

Figure 37. Do you have any kind of disability?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among (in)formal migrant workers in Laos, 32 respondents reported to have disability.

Table 9. Average income before COVID-19 lockdown and during the lockdown (Hundred-thousands LAK)

| Group | Average (Hundred-thousands LAK) | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Before COVID -19 lockdown | During COVID -19 lockdown |
| Men | 27,11 | 9,05 |
| Women | 25,08 | 8,14 |
| Non-migrants | 23,87 | 14,65 |
| Internal migrants | 20,55 | 9,96 |
| Cross-border migrants | 27,31 | 7,05 |
| Formal employment | 29,64 | 11,81 |
| Informal employment | 25,06 | 7,88 |
| Total | 25,7 | 8,41 |

Figure 38. Income loss by income quintiles and key groups of workers

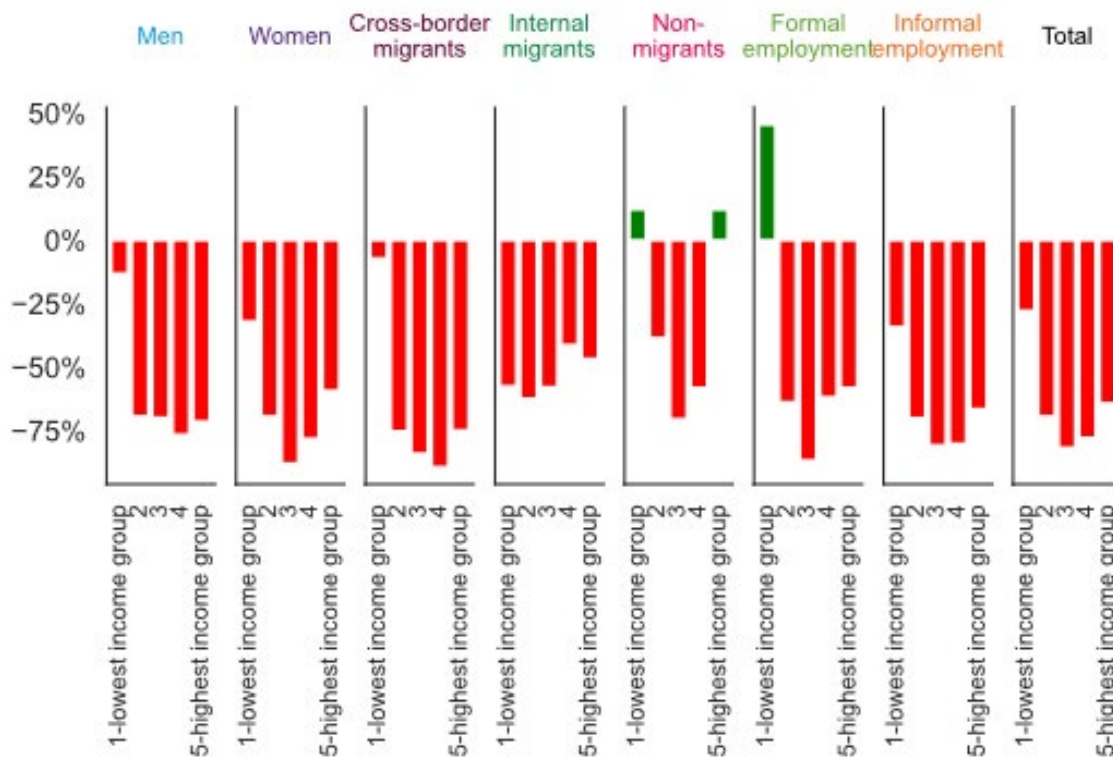
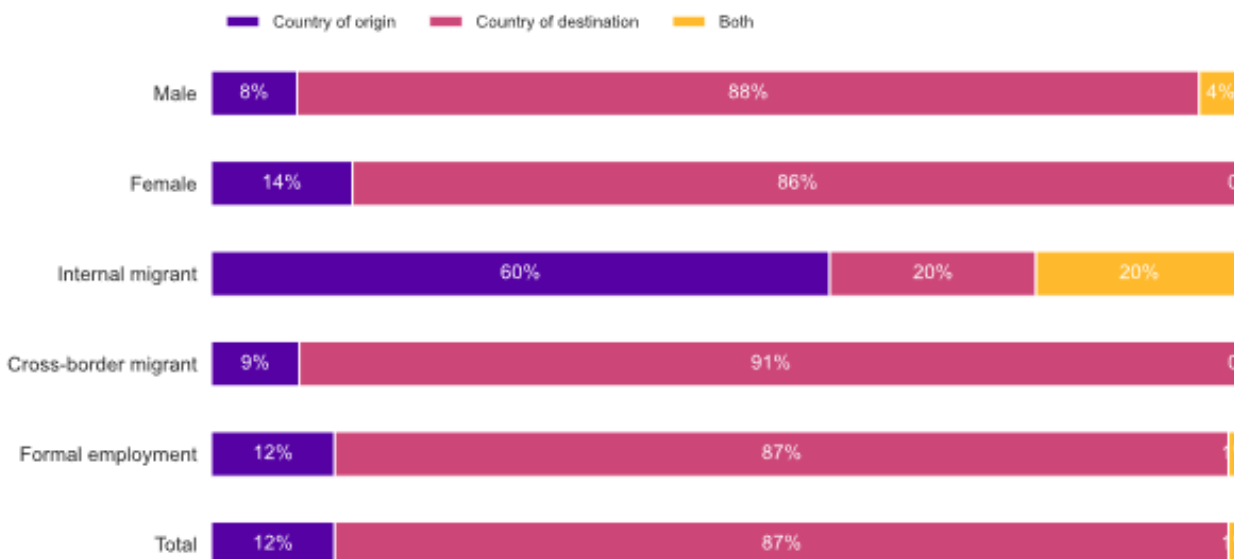
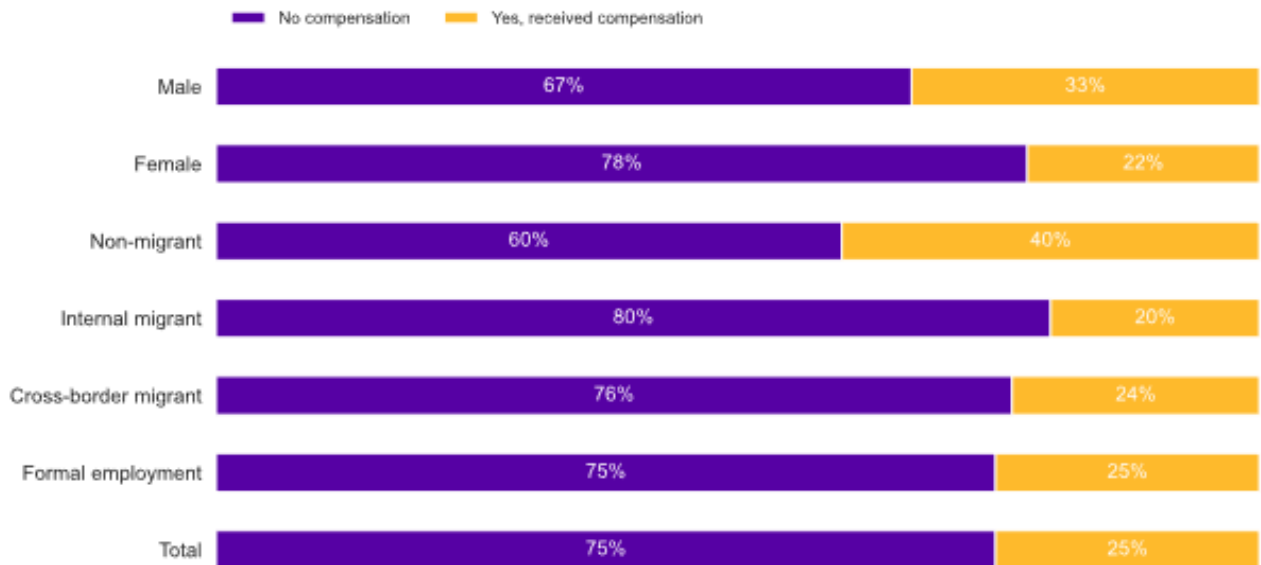


Figure 39. Where do you have access to unemployment insurance?



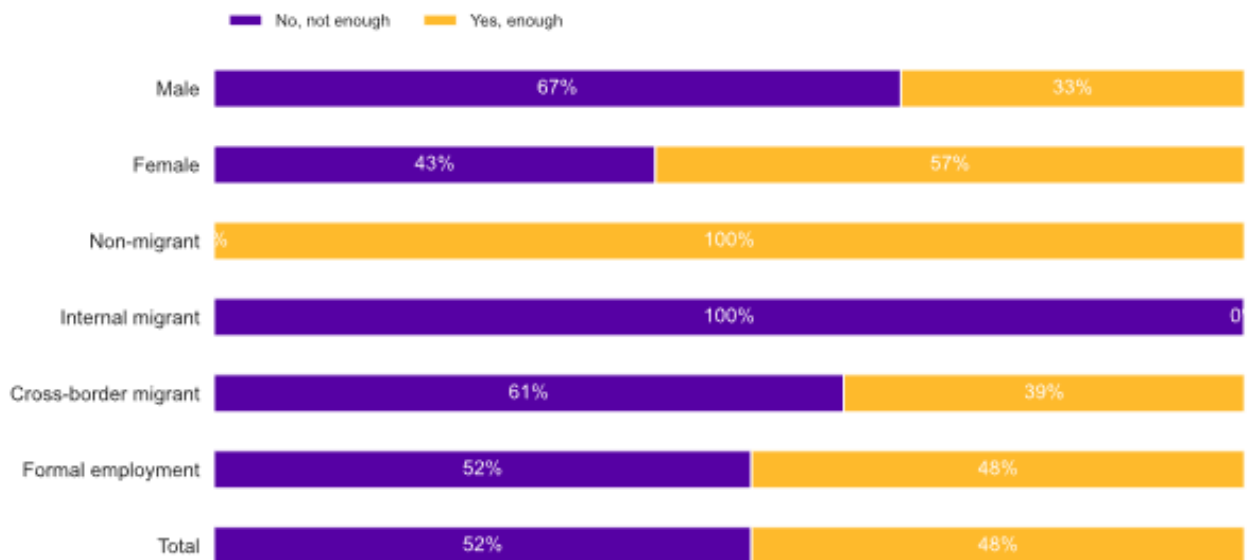
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=75.

Figure 40. Have you received any compensation from the unemployment insurance during the COVID-19 situation?



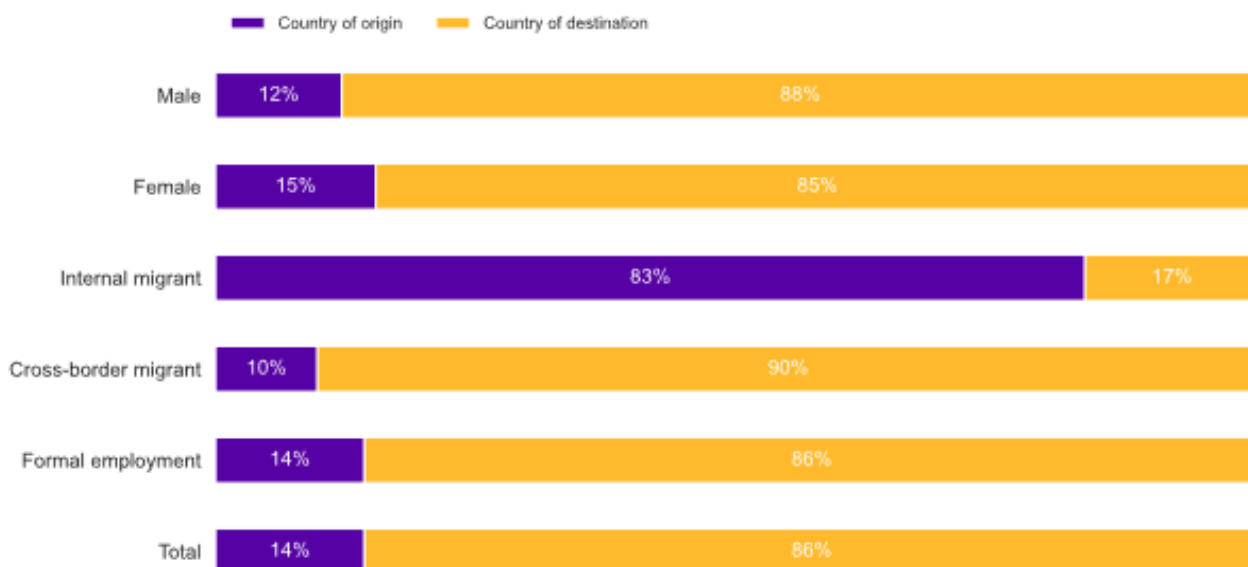
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=91.

Figure 41. Was the compensation enough to cover all your needs during the COVID-19 situation?



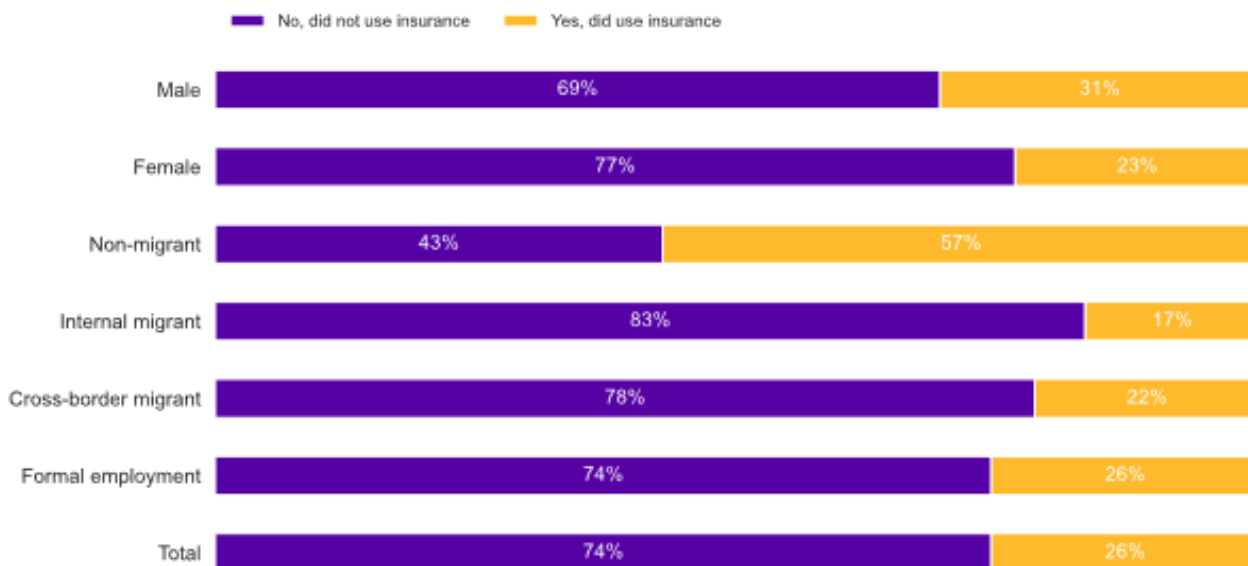
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=23.

Figure 42. Where do you have access to health insurance?



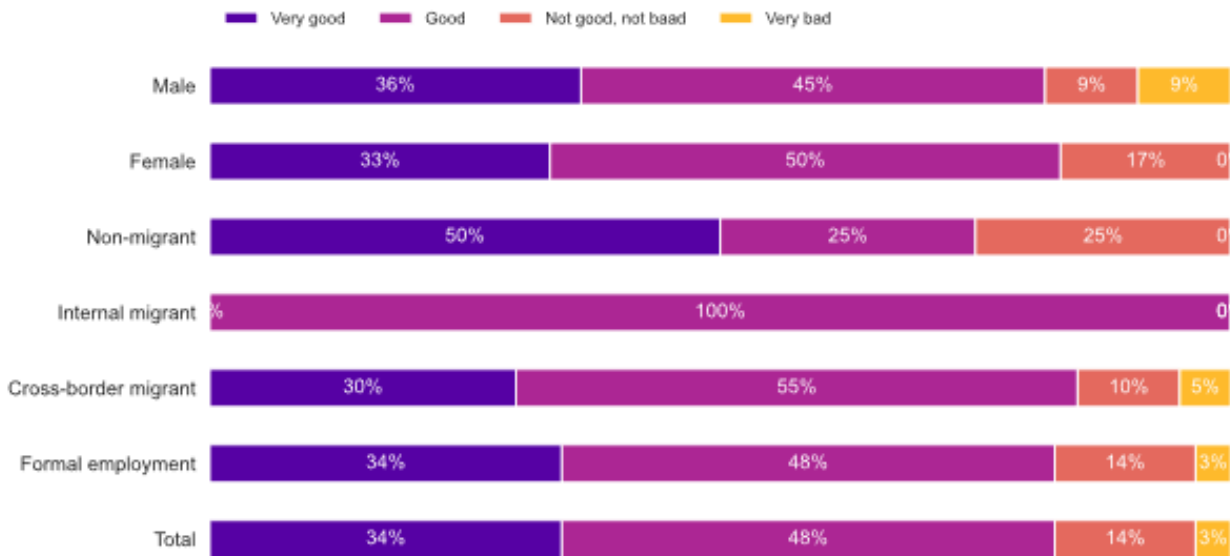
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=98.

Figure 43. Have you made use of the health insurance during the COVID-19 situation?



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=113.

Figure 44. What is your opinion on the quality of the health services covered by the health insurance?

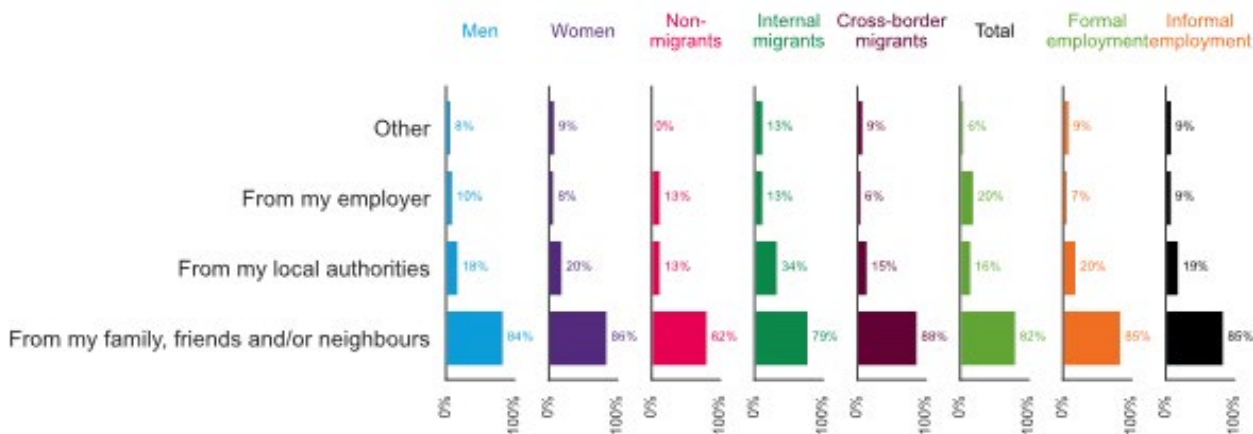


Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=29.

Figure 45. Can you give some example of these foods? (only asked to respondents who accessed different types of foods)

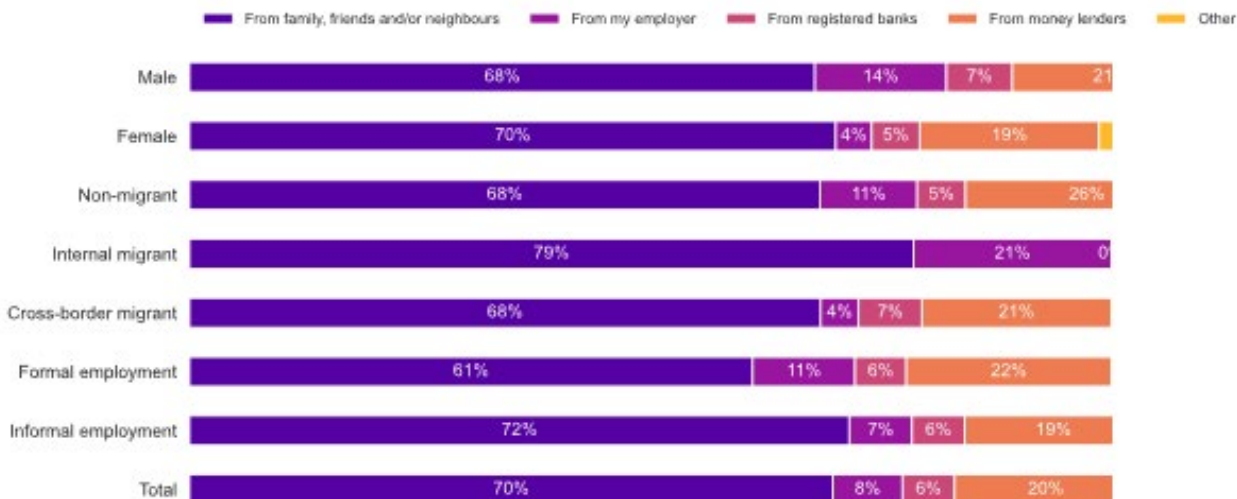


Figure 46. You mentioned that you relied on non-financial support (family agriculture, emotional support and/or asked for food). From whom did you receive that support?



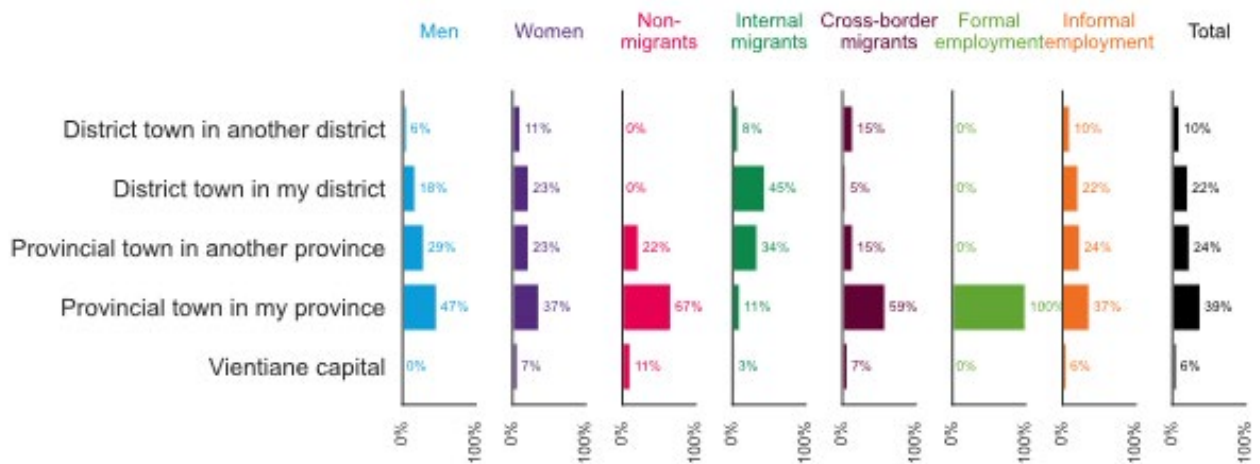
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=420.

Figure 47. You mentioned that you borrowed money. From whom did you borrow money?



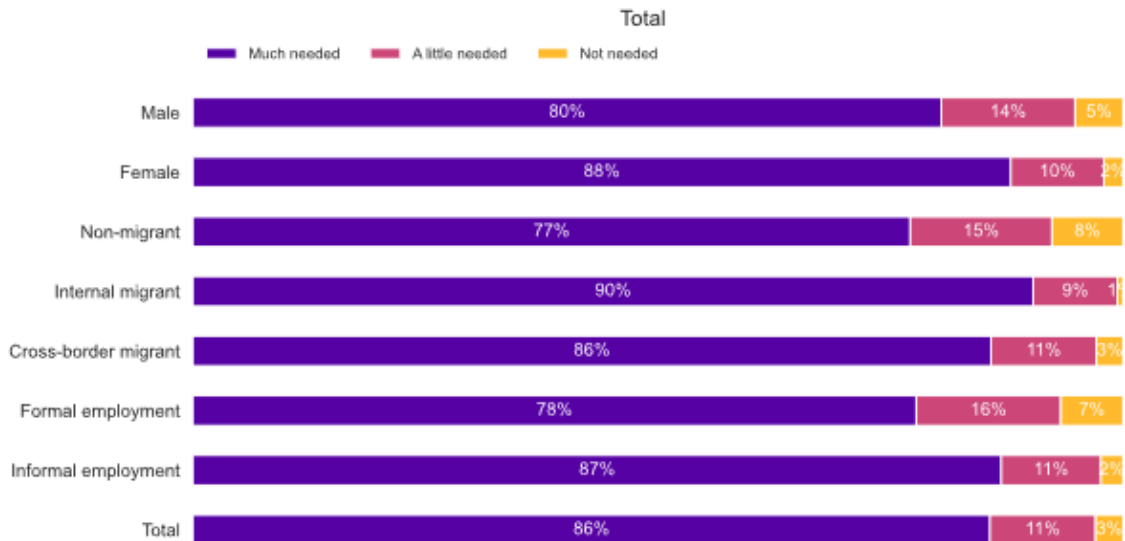
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=103.

Figure 48. You mentioned that you migrated or re-emigrated. Where did you migrate or re-emigrate?



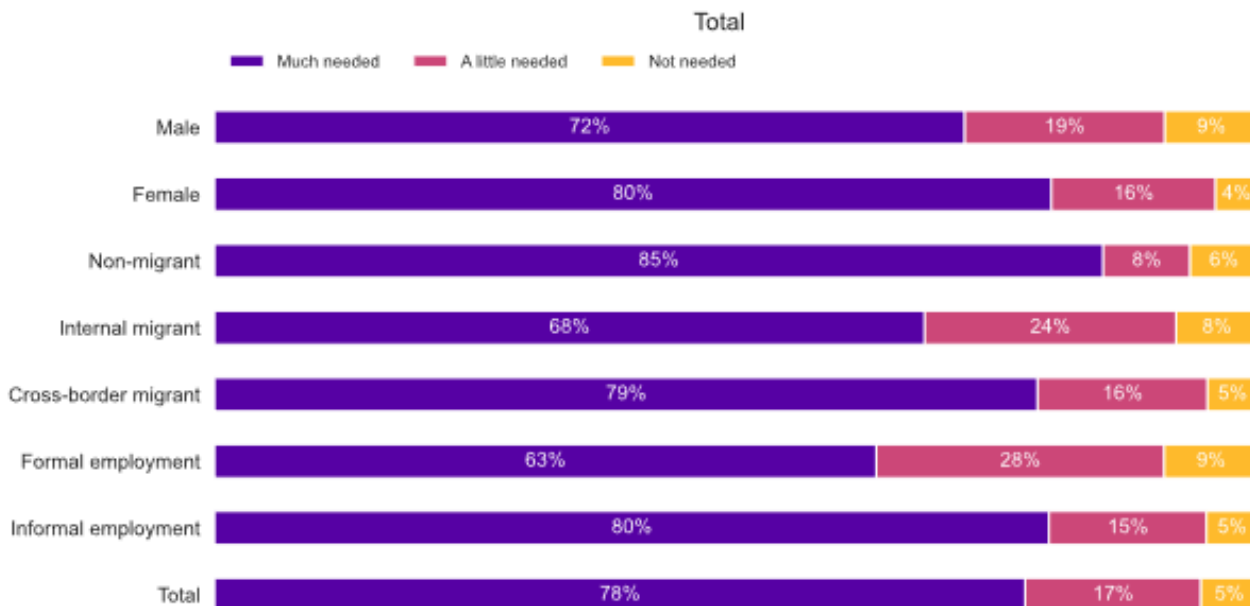
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=88.

Figure 49. What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID-19? - Money



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=987.

Figure 50. What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID-19? - Food



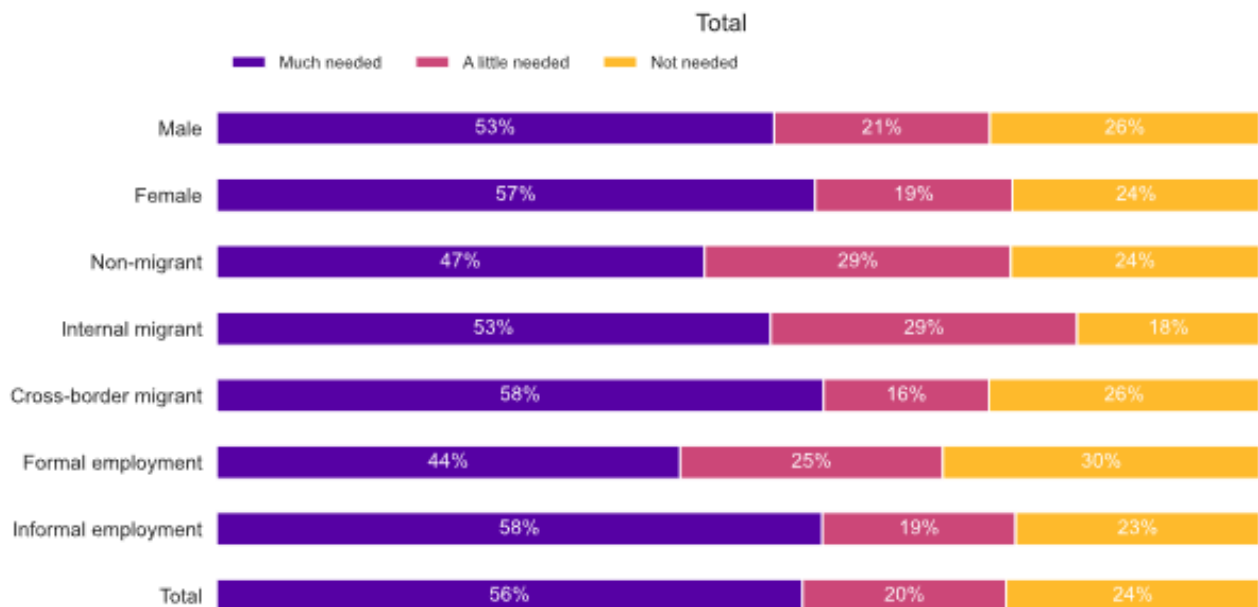
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=991.

Figure 51. What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID-19? - Free health care



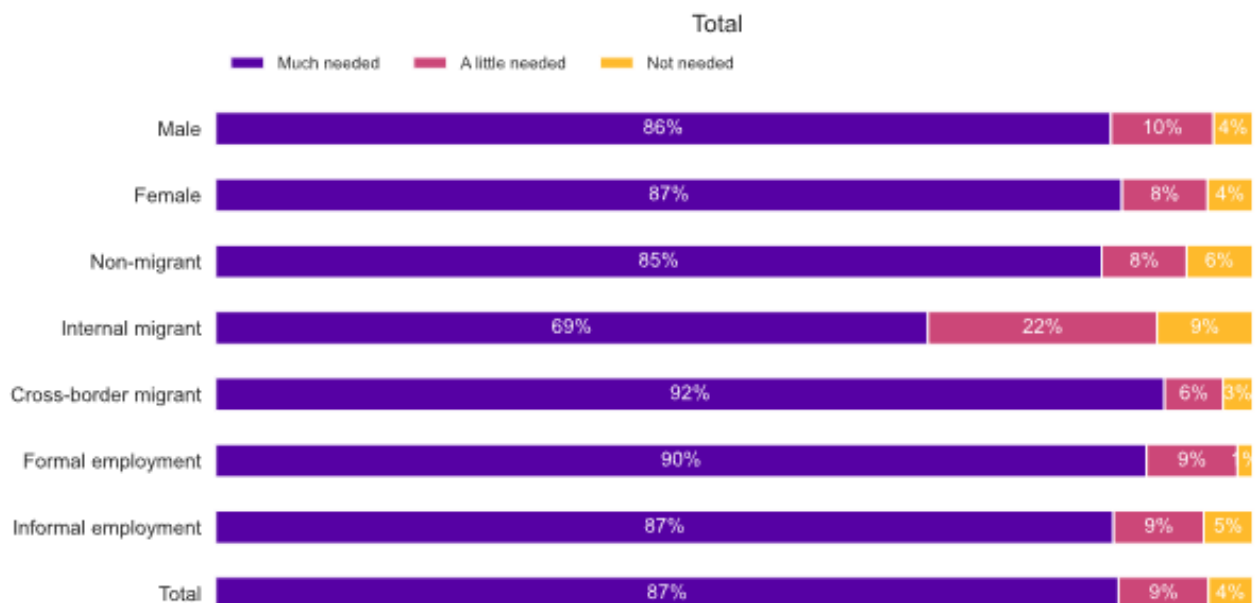
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=994.

Figure 52. What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID-19? – Free financial credit



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=979.

Figure 53. What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID-19? – Free water/electricity



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=990.

Figure 54. What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID-19? – Assistance/services for migrants



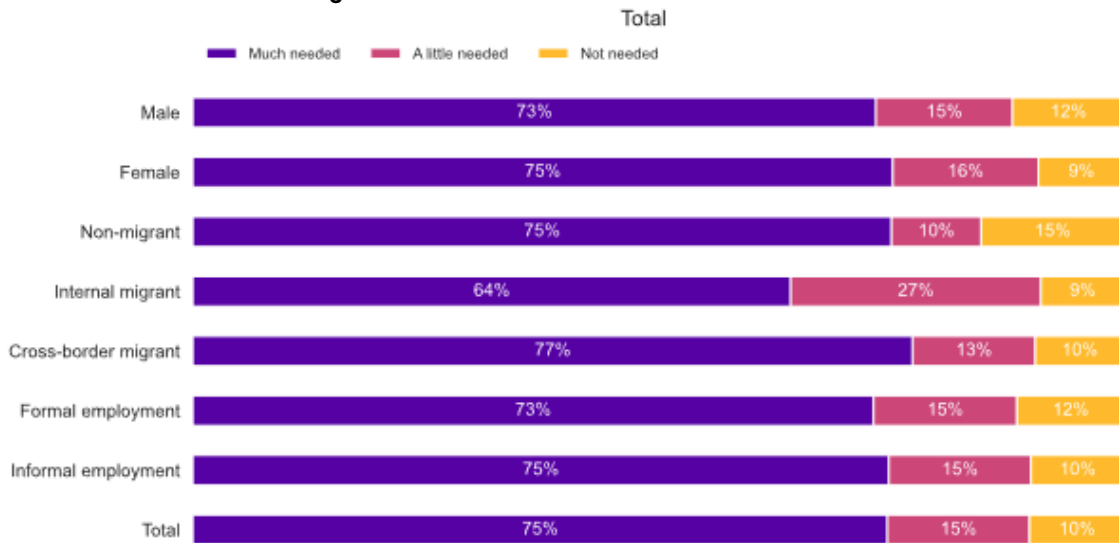
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=992.

Figure 55. What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID-19? – Assistance/services for women



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=978.

Figure 56. What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID-19? – Other



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=511.

Figure 57. How would you rate the importance of these providers of social services when preparing better for a situation such as COVID-19? – Public offices (national, provincial, district, village)



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=992.

Figure 58. How would you rate the importance of these providers of social services when preparing better for a situation such as COVID-19? – Employers



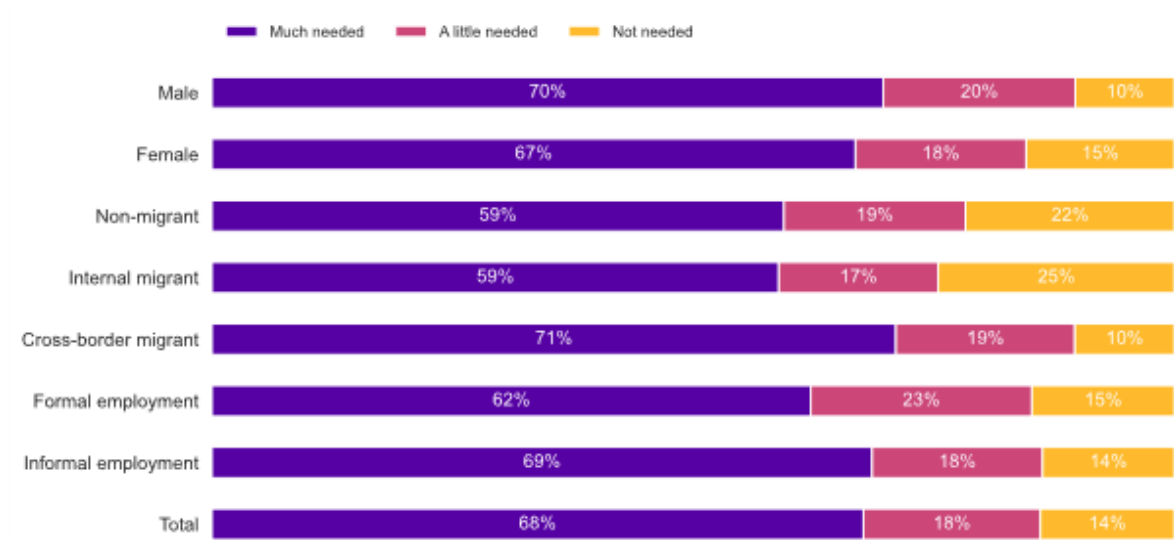
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=984.

Figure 59. How would you rate the importance of these providers of social services when preparing better for a situation such as COVID-19? – CSOs/NPAs, INGOs, UN



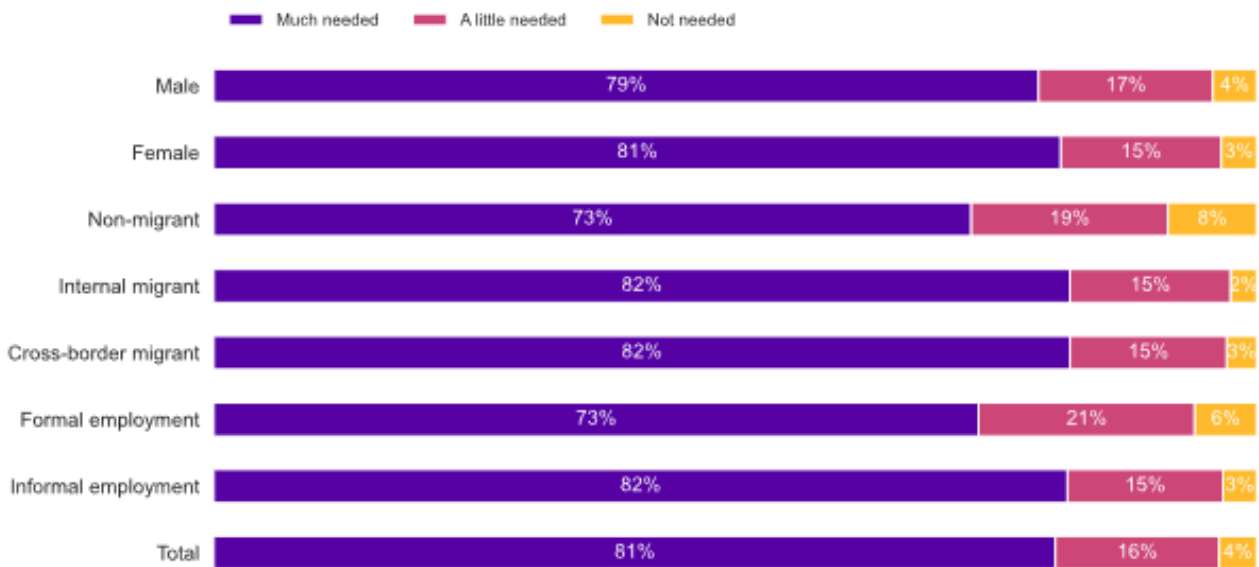
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=975.

Figure 58. How would you rate the importance of these providers of social services when preparing better for a situation such as COVID-19? – Employers



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=984.

Figure 59. How would you rate the importance of these providers of social services when preparing better for a situation such as COVID-19? – CSOs/NPAs, INGOs, UN



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=975.

Table 10. What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID-19? (percentage of workers that answer 'much needed', only migrants who want to re-migrate)

| Migrant workers who prefer to re-migrate | Money | Food | Free health care | Free financial credit | Free water/ electricity | Assistance/ services for migrants | Assistance/ services for women | Other |
|--|-------|------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| Men | 84% | 71% | 83% | 54% | 86% | 80% | 65% | 65% |
| Women | 89% | 79% | 87% | 53% | 87% | 77% | 76% | 67% |
| Internal migrants | 88% | 70% | 74% | 40% | 64% | 75% | 81% | 65% |
| Cross-border migrants | 87% | 78% | 88% | 56% | 92% | 79% | 71% | 68% |
| Formal employment | 84% | 55% | 80% | 33% | 90% | 75% | 68% | 67% |
| Informal employment | 88% | 80% | 86% | 56% | 86% | 79% | 73% | 66% |
| Total | 87% | 76% | 86% | 53% | 87% | 78% | 73% | 67% |

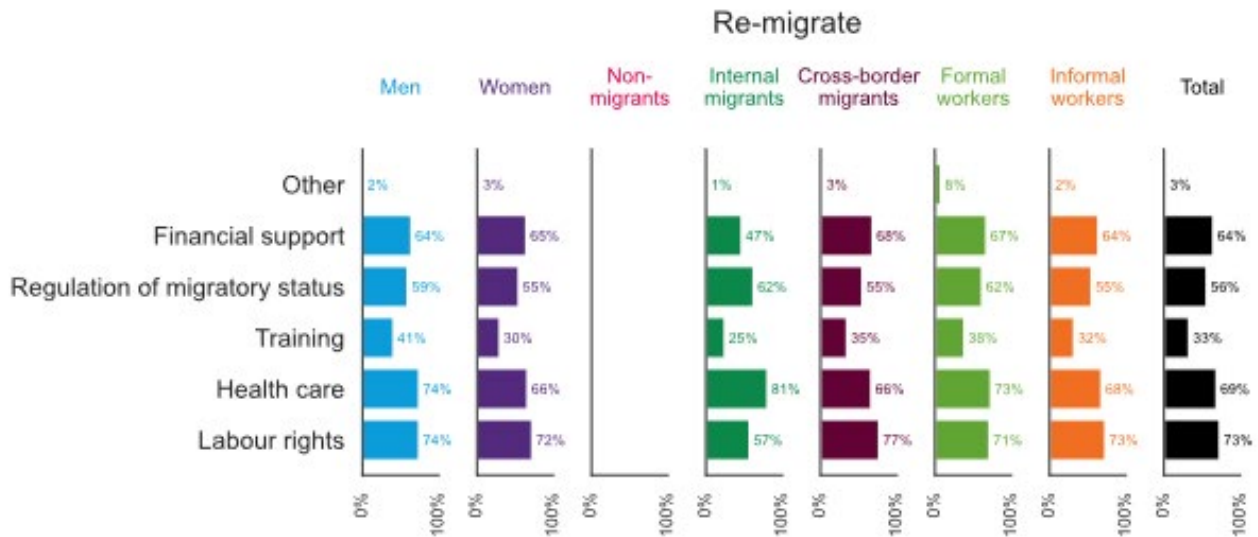
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=430

Table 11. What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID-19? (percentage of workers that answer 'much needed', only migrants who want to stay in Laos and get a job)

| Migrant workers who prefer to stay in Laos and get a job | Money | Food | Free health care | Free financial credit | Free water/ electricity | Assistance/ services for migrants | Assistance/ services for women | Other |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| electricity | Assistance/ services for migrants | 71% | 83% | 54% | 86% | 80% | 65% | 65% |
| services for migrants | Assistance/ services for women | Other | 87% | 53% | 87% | 77% | 76% | 67% |
| Men | 85% | 70% | 90% | 47% | 82% | 83% | 72% | 82% |
| Women | 84% | 76% | 87% | 58% | 89% | 80% | 83% | 85% |
| Internal migrants | 87% | 67% | 85% | 71% | 82% | 87% | 79% | 86% |
| Cross-border migrants | 84% | 76% | 89% | 51% | 89% | 79% | 80% | 85% |
| Formal employment | 74% | 62% | 83% | 52% | 93% | 80% | 80% | 71% |
| Informal employment | 87% | 78% | 89% | 56% | 85% | 81% | 79% | 88% |
| Total | 84% | 75% | 88% | 55% | 87% | 81% | 80% | 84% |

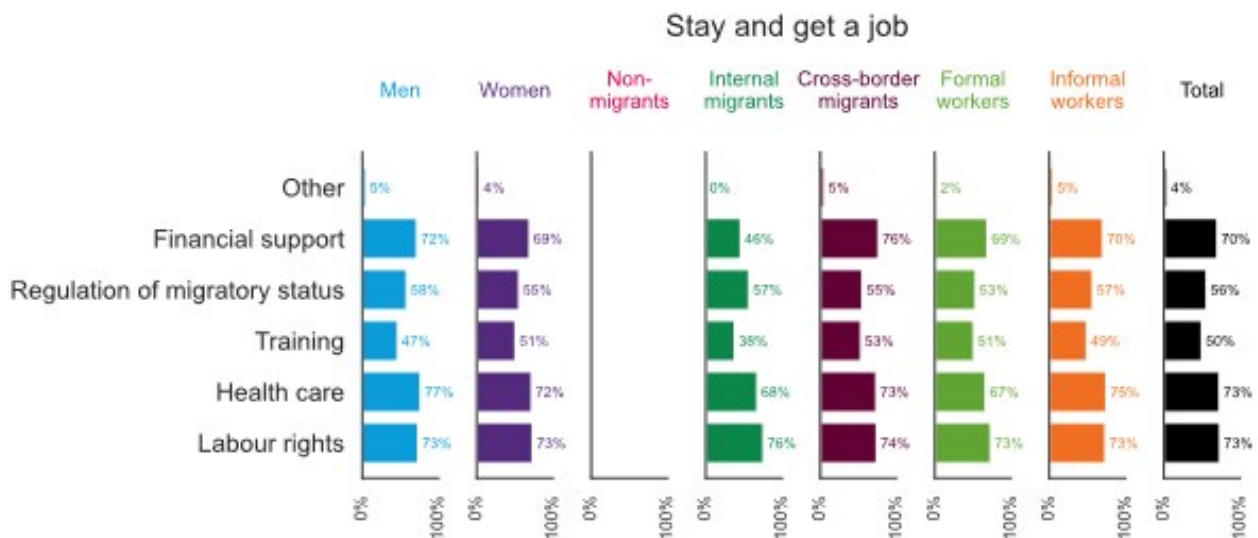
Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=211

Figure 62. In your opinion, what would be the key priorities to support for workers in informal employment? (only migrants who want to re-migrate)



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=428.

Figure 63. In your opinion, what would be the key priorities to support for workers in informal employment? (only migrants who want to stay and get a job in Laos)



Source: Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Laos, total n=207.

ANNEX 8.2. ESTIMATES FOR FEMALE CROSS-BORDER MIGRANTS IN INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT

| Indicator | WW | Value | Lower bound of confidence interval (95%) | Upper bound of confidence interval (95%) | N | Standard Error |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------|--|--|-----|----------------|
| What is your education level? | No education (never went to school) | 7% | 5% | 10% | 405 | 0,0130 |
| | Any primary education | 46% | 41% | 51% | 405 | 0,0248 |
| | Some lower secondary education | 26% | 22% | 30% | 405 | 0,0219 |
| | Completed secondary | 5% | 3% | 7% | 405 | 0,0110 |
| | Higher than secondary school | 14% | 10% | 17% | 405 | 0,0170 |
| | College/University | 1% | 0% | 3% | 405 | 0,0060 |
| | Other | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| What is your current partnership status? | Single | 32% | 28% | 37% | 405 | 0,0232 |
| | Married | 57% | 52% | 62% | 405 | 0,0246 |
| | Divorced/Separated | 5% | 3% | 7% | 405 | 0,0108 |
| | Unmarried couple | 4% | 2% | 6% | 405 | 0,0097 |
| | Widow(er) | 2% | 0% | 3% | 405 | 0,0065 |
| What is your age? | Younger than 18 years old | 2% | 1% | 3% | 403 | 0,0070 |
| | 18-24 years old | 40% | 36% | 45% | 403 | 0,0245 |
| | 25-35 years old | 42% | 37% | 47% | 403 | 0,0246 |
| | 36-50 years old | 14% | 10% | 17% | 403 | 0,0171 |
| | 51-59 years old | 1% | 0% | 2% | 403 | 0,0055 |
| | 60+ years old | 1% | 0% | 2% | 403 | 0,0043 |
| Is your household of origin in a rural village or district town? | Rural village | 83% | 80% | 87% | 405 | 0,0186 |
| | District town | 17% | 13% | 20% | 405 | 0,0186 |
| Have you lived outside of your "household of origin" in the last 12 months? | 6 months or more | 81% | 77% | 85% | 405 | 0,0196 |
| | Less than 6 months | 19% | 15% | 23% | 405 | 0,0196 |
| | No | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| Where have you lived most of the time during that period? | Thailand | 100% | 100% | 100% | 405 | 0,0000 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| Where have you lived most of the time during that period? | Vientiane Capital | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| | Provincial town in my province | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| | Provincial town in another province | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| | District town in my district | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| | District town in another district | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| | Other | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| | College/University | 1% | 0% | 3% | 405 | 0,0060 |
| | Other | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| How many people from your household of origin does depend on your financial support? | Average number of financial dependents | 3,6 | 3,4 | 3,8 | 404 | 0,1051 |
| In the place of your destination, how many people lived with you that depended on your financial support? | Average number of financial dependents | 1,3 | 1,2 | 1,5 | 400 | 0,0749 |
| Where did you stay most of the time during the COVID situation from late March to early June? | I stayed at my household of origin | 71% | 67% | 76% | 405 | 0,0225 |
| | I stayed with other relatives | 11% | 8% | 14% | 405 | 0,0153 |
| | I stayed with friends | 2% | 1% | 3% | 405 | 0,0069 |
| | I stayed at a quarantine camp | 10% | 7% | 13% | 405 | 0,0147 |
| | Other | 6% | 4% | 9% | 405 | 0,0122 |
| Did you lose your job during the COVID situation (between late March and early June)? | No | 46% | 41% | 51% | 389 | 0,0253 |
| | Yes | 54% | 49% | 59% | 389 | 0,0253 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| What was your main employment status in the months before the COVID lockdown (before March)? | Paid employee (stable contract) | 30% | 25% | 34% | 404 | 0,0228 |
| | Paid employee (short-term contract) | 24% | 20% | 28% | 404 | 0,0212 |
| | Business owner | 0% | 0% | 0% | 404 | 0,0000 |
| | Own-account worker with no sales store | 2% | 0% | 3% | 404 | 0,0065 |
| | Own-account worker with sales store | 3% | 1% | 5% | 404 | 0,0085 |
| | Homeworkers | 12% | 9% | 15% | 404 | 0,0161 |
| | Member of producers' cooperative | 1% | 0% | 2% | 404 | 0,0055 |
| | Contributing family worker | 3% | 2% | 5% | 404 | 0,0091 |
| | Paid domestic worker | 13% | 9% | 16% | 404 | 0,0165 |
| | Unemployed | 3% | 2% | 5% | 404 | 0,0091 |
| | Other | 9% | 6% | 12% | 404 | 0,0144 |
| What is your current employment status? | Paid employee (stable contract) | 2t% | 0% | 3% | 404 | 0,0065 |
| | Paid employee (short-term contract) | 5% | 3% | 7% | 404 | 0,0105 |
| | Business owner | 0% | 0% | 0% | 404 | 0,0000 |
| | Own-account worker with no sales store | 2% | 1% | 4% | 404 | 0,0074 |
| | Own-account worker with sales store | 4% | 2% | 6% | 404 | 0,0103 |
| | Home-based worker | 2% | 1% | 3% | 404 | 0,0069 |
| | Member of producers' cooperative | 1% | 0% | 2% | 404 | 0,0055 |
| | Contributing family worker | 21% | 17% | 25% | 404 | 0,0201 |
| | Paid domestic worker | 3% | 1% | 5% | 404 | 0,0088 |
| | Unemployed | 53% | 48% | 58% | 404 | 0,0249 |
| | Other | 7% | 4% | 9% | 404 | 0,0127 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------|-------|-------|-----|--------|
| What was your employment sector in the months before the COVID lockdown (before March)? | Unemployed | 4% | 2% | 5% | 388 | 0,0095 |
| | Agriculture | 15% | 12% | 19% | 388 | 0,0183 |
| | Industry | 15% | 12% | 19% | 388 | 0,0184 |
| | Services | 66% | 61% | 70% | 388 | 0,0241 |
| What is your current employment sector? | Unemployed | 53% | 48% | 58% | 404 | 0,0249 |
| | Agriculture | 30% | 25% | 34% | 404 | 0,0228 |
| | Industry | 1% | 0% | 3% | 404 | 0,0060 |
| | Services | 16% | 12% | 19% | 404 | 0,0181 |
| What were your (average) hours spent per week to earn an income before the COVID lockdown (before March)? | None | 4% | 2% | 6% | 404 | 0,0103 |
| | 20 hours | 4% | 2% | 6% | 404 | 0,0097 |
| | 40 hours | 8% | 5% | 10% | 404 | 0,0133 |
| | More than 40 hours | 84% | 80% | 88% | 404 | 0,0183 |
| What were/are your (average) hours spent per week to earn an income during the COVID lockdown (from late March to early June)? | None | 52% | 47% | 57% | 403 | 0,0249 |
| | 20 hours | 20% | 16% | 24% | 403 | 0,0199 |
| | 40 hours | 12% | 9% | 15% | 403 | 0,0163 |
| | More than 40 hours | 16% | 12% | 19% | 403 | 0,0182 |
| What was your (average) personal monthly income in the months before the COVID lockdown (before March)? | Average income in Hundred-thousands LAK - before COVID lockdown | 26,73 | 25,53 | 27,92 | 351 | 0,6073 |
| What was your (average) personal monthly income during the COVID lockdown (from late March to early June)? | Income in Hundred-thousands LAK - during COVID lockdown | 5,74 | 3,56 | 7,92 | 351 | 1,1079 |
| Income loss during the COVID-19 lockdown | Rate of change LAK before-during COVID lockdown | -79% | -87% | -71% | 341 | 0,0400 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| Does your household receive remittances? | No | 73% | 69% | 78% | 405 | 0,0220 |
| | Yes | 27% | 22% | 31% | 405 | 0,0220 |
| During the COVID situation (from late March to early June), was your household affected by the ceasing of remittances? | No | 44% | 35% | 54% | 108 | 0,0480 |
| | Yes | 56% | 46% | 65% | 108 | 0,0480 |
| How much was your household income affected by the ceasing of remittances? | Less than half (less than 50%) | 34% | 21% | 46% | 59 | 0,0622 |
| | Around a half (around 50%) | 24% | 13% | 35% | 59 | 0,0559 |
| | More than half (more than 50%) | 42% | 29% | 55% | 59 | 0,0649 |
| During the COVID lockdown (from late March to early June), how many days in total did you run out of food for you and your family and there was no money to buy more? | One day or more | 42% | 38% | 47% | 405 | 0,0246 |
| During the COVID lockdown (from late March to early June), how many days in total did you run out of food for you and your family and there was no money to buy more? | Average number of days | 4 | 2 | 5 | 405 | 0,6234 |
| During the COVID lockdown (from late March to early June), could your household access the same type of foods as before? | No | 43% | 38% | 48% | 404 | 0,0246 |
| | Yes | 57% | 52% | 62% | 404 | 0,0246 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| You mentioned that your household cannot access the same type of foods as before. What were the reasons? | Not enough income | 74% | 67% | 80% | 170 | 0,0339 |
| | Unavailability of employment | 64% | 57% | 71% | 170 | 0,0369 |
| | No income | 70% | 63% | 77% | 170 | 0,0353 |
| | Price increase | 34% | 26% | 41% | 170 | 0,0363 |
| | Markets were closed | 11% | 6% | 15% | 170 | 0,0237 |
| | Less food availability in the markets | 10% | 5% | 15% | 170 | 0,0231 |
| | It was not safe to go out to buy food | 16% | 11% | 22% | 170 | 0,0285 |
| | It was not possible to go out to buy food | 19% | 13% | 25% | 170 | 0,0304 |
| | Other | 4% | 1% | 6% | 170 | 0,0142 |
| In your household, who is it that normally takes care of the unpaid household work? | Women only or mostly | 66% | 62% | 71% | 400 | 0,0237 |
| | Men only or mostly | 6% | 4% | 8% | 400 | 0,0119 |
| | Equally divided between women and men | 28% | 23% | 32% | 400 | 0,0224 |
| In your household, have the responsibilities related to unpaid household work equally increased for men and women during the COVID situation (from late March to early June)? | Increased more for women | 38% | 33% | 42% | 400 | 0,0242 |
| | Increased more for men | 6% | 3% | 8% | 400 | 0,0117 |
| | Increased equally for women and men | 22% | 18% | 26% | 400 | 0,0207 |
| | No | 35% | 30% | 40% | 400 | 0,0239 |
| To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Women and girls are at increased risk of violence (in the house, at work, in public spaces) during the COVID lockdown. | Strongly agree | 18% | 14% | 22% | 398 | 0,0193 |
| | Agree | 34% | 30% | 39% | 398 | 0,0238 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 14% | 11% | 18% | 398 | 0,0176 |
| | Disagree | 31% | 27% | 36% | 398 | 0,0232 |
| | Strongly disagree | 2% | 1% | 3% | 398 | 0,0070 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|--------|--------|
| Were there situations that make you feel discriminated or stigmatized in the place where you stayed during the COVID lockdown (from late March to early June)? | No | 68% | 63% | 72% | 404 | 0,0233 |
| | Yes | 32% | 28% | 37% | 404 | 0,0233 |
| Who did make you feel discriminated or stigmatized in the place where you stayed during the COVID lockdown? Choose one or multiple answers | Employers | 5% | 1% | 8% | 130 | 0,0185 |
| | The police | 8% | 4% | 13% | 130 | 0,0245 |
| | The doctor/nurse | 3% | 0% | 6% | 130 | 0,0152 |
| | The drivers | 3% | 0% | 6% | 130 | 0,0152 |
| | The immigration officials | 12% | 6% | 17% | 130 | 0,0281 |
| | Relatives / family members | 31% | 23% | 39% | 130 | 0,0406 |
| | Community members | 88% | 83% | 94% | 130 | 0,0281 |
| | Government authorities | 2% | -1% | 4% | 130 | 0,0108 |
| Other | 4% | 0% | 7% | 130 | 0,0169 | |
| As a migrant, did you feel in any way unsafe while you were returning to your household of origin due to COVID situation? | No | 42% | 37% | 47% | 402 | 0,0246 |
| | Yes | 58% | 53% | 63% | 402 | 0,0246 |
| Who did make you feel unsafe while you were returning to your household of origin? | My employer | 7% | 4% | 9% | 384 | 0,0126 |
| | The police | 9% | 6% | 12% | 384 | 0,0149 |
| | The doctor/nurse | 4% | 2% | 6% | 384 | 0,0096 |
| | The drivers | 18% | 14% | 22% | 384 | 0,0197 |
| | The immigration officials | 22% | 18% | 26% | 384 | 0,0212 |
| | Other | 28% | 23% | 32% | 384 | 0,0229 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| Were there situations that make you feel discriminated or stigmatized in the place where you stayed during the COVID lockdown (from late March to early June)? | No | 68% | 63% | 72% | 404 | 0,0233 |
| | Yes | 32% | 28% | 37% | 404 | 0,0233 |
| Who did make you feel discriminated or stigmatized in the place where you stayed during the COVID lockdown? Choose one or multiple answers | Employers | 5% | 1% | 8% | 130 | 0,0185 |
| | The police | 8% | 4% | 13% | 130 | 0,0245 |
| | The doctor/nurse | 3% | 0% | 6% | 130 | 0,0152 |
| | The drivers | 3% | 0% | 6% | 130 | 0,0152 |
| | The immigration officials | 12% | 6% | 17% | 130 | 0,0281 |
| | Relatives / family members | 31% | 23% | 39% | 130 | 0,0406 |
| | Community members | 88% | 83% | 94% | 130 | 0,0281 |
| | Government authorities | 2% | -1% | 4% | 130 | 0,0108 |
| As a migrant, did you feel in any way unsafe while you were returning to your household of origin due to COVID situation? | No | 42% | 37% | 47% | 402 | 0,0246 |
| | Yes | 58% | 53% | 63% | 402 | 0,0246 |
| Who did make you feel unsafe while you were returning to your household of origin? | My employer | 7% | 4% | 9% | 384 | 0,0126 |
| | The police | 9% | 6% | 12% | 384 | 0,0149 |
| | The doctor/nurse | 4% | 2% | 6% | 384 | 0,0096 |
| | The drivers | 18% | 14% | 22% | 384 | 0,0197 |
| | The immigration officials | 22% | 18% | 26% | 384 | 0,0212 |
| | Other | 28% | 23% | 32% | 384 | 0,0229 |
| During the COVID lockdown, did you know where to seek help in case you saw a friend/ neighbour experiencing violence? | No | 42% | 38% | 47% | 401 | 0,0247 |
| | Yes | 56% | 51% | 60% | 401 | 0,0248 |
| | Other | 2% | 1% | 3% | 401 | 0,0070 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----|-----|-----|--------|--------|
| What are/were the biggest challenges that you and your household faced due to COVID situation? | I can/could not work the same | 76% | 72% | 80% | 401 | 0,0213 |
| | I have/had less money | 79% | 75% | 83% | 401 | 0,0204 |
| | Food is/was getting more expensive or scarce | 47% | 42% | 52% | 401 | 0,0249 |
| | Non-food essential are/were getting more expensive or scarce | 34% | 29% | 38% | 401 | 0,0236 |
| | Often wondering what to do | 35% | 30% | 39% | 401 | 0,0238 |
| | Worried regarding the COVID health risks | 35% | 30% | 39% | 401 | 0,0238 |
| | Worried regarding the COVID lockdown | 27% | 22% | 31% | 401 | 0,0221 |
| | Less appetite and/or sleep | 10% | 7% | 13% | 401 | 0,0153 |
| | I feel bad because I could not provide financially | 55% | 50% | 60% | 401 | 0,0249 |
| | Other | 2% | 1% | 3% | 401 | 0,0070 |
| No big personal challenges | 2% | 1% | 3% | 401 | 0,0070 | |
| Are you registered for access to unemployment insurance? | No | 95% | 93% | 97% | 405 | 0,0105 |
| | Public insurance | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| | Private insurance | 0% | 0% | 0% | 405 | 0,0000 |
| | I do not know | 5% | 3% | 7% | 405 | 0,0105 |
| Where do you have access to unemployment insurance? | In the country of origin | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| | In the country of destination | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| | Both | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| Have you received any compensation from the unemployment insurance during the COVID situation? | No | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| | Yes | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| Was the compensation enough to cover all your needs during the COVID situation? | No | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| | Yes | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| Are you registered for access to health insurance? | No | 96% | 94% | 98% | 404 | 0,00942 |
| | Public insurance | 0% | 0% | 0% | 404 | 0 |
| | Private insurance | 0% | 0% | 0% | 404 | 0 |
| | I do not know | 4% | 2% | 6% | 404 | 0,00942 |
| Where do you have access to health insurance? | In the country of origin | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| | In the country of destination | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| Have you made use of the health insurance during the COVID situation? | No | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| | Yes | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| What is your opinion on the quality of the health services covered by the health insurance? | Very good | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| | Good | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| | Not good and not bad | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| | Very bad | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0 |
| If you would feel sick and take a few days off, would your employer continue paying your salary for the days that you could not work? | No | 43% | 38% | 48% | 397 | 0,02487 |
| | Entire salary | 37% | 32% | 42% | 397 | 0,02423 |
| | Only partially | 13% | 10% | 16% | 397 | 0,01695 |
| | I do not know | 7% | 5% | 10% | 397 | 0,01308 |
| | No | 38% | 34% | 43% | 404 | 0,02422 |
| Are there different type of foods that are now accessed to cope with the COVID situation? | No | 38% | 34% | 43% | 404 | 0,02422 |
| | Yes | 62% | 57% | 66% | 404 | 0,02422 |
| Can you give some example of these foods? | Animal raising in the HH | 45% | 39% | 51% | 249 | 0,03159 |
| | Horticulture products | 49% | 43% | 55% | 249 | 0,03174 |
| | Hunting | 31% | 25% | 37% | 249 | 0,02935 |
| | Collect animals and insects from rice field | 56% | 50% | 62% | 249 | 0,0315 |
| | Wild vegetables and bamboo | 62% | 56% | 68% | 249 | 0,03085 |
| | Available died food | 50% | 44% | 56% | 249 | 0,03175 |
| | Other | 10% | 7% | 14% | 249 | 0,01942 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|-----|-----|-----|---------|---------|
| More generally, what have you done to cope with the COVID situation? | Informed myself based on official government sources | 71% | 66% | 75% | 392 | 0,02303 |
| | Informed myself based on online media sources | 85% | 81% | 88% | 392 | 0,01821 |
| | Started agriculture activities for self-consumption | 30% | 26% | 35% | 392 | 0,0232 |
| | Talked for emotional or psychological support | 19% | 15% | 22% | 392 | 0,01969 |
| | Asked to relatives/neighbours/friends for food | 15% | 11% | 19% | 392 | 0,01808 |
| | Tried to spend less money | 48% | 43% | 53% | 392 | 0,02527 |
| | Borrowed money | 10% | 7% | 14% | 392 | 0,01548 |
| | Received an advance from employer to travel back | 6% | 4% | 8% | 392 | 0,01189 |
| | Searched for alternative jobs and/or activities to make money | 16% | 12% | 19% | 392 | 0,01833 |
| | Returned to my household of origin | 52% | 47% | 57% | 392 | 0,02527 |
| | Migrated or re-emigrated | 13% | 9% | 16% | 392 | 0,01687 |
| Other | 2% | 1% | 3% | 392 | 0,00715 | |
| To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement? <i>At this point in time, I consider my household to be able to cope with the current situation.</i> | Strongly agree | 12% | 9% | 16% | 401 | 0,01652 |
| | Agree | 57% | 52% | 62% | 401 | 0,02476 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 25% | 21% | 29% | 401 | 0,02163 |
| | Disagree | 5% | 3% | 7% | 401 | 0,01088 |
| | Strongly disagree | 1% | 0% | 2% | 401 | 0,00431 |
| In case a COVID lockdown/ situation would impact again, how would you rate your opportunities to cope with the situation again? | I feel optimistic | 31% | 27% | 36% | 392 | 0,02347 |
| | I feel uncertainty, but not too much | 39% | 34% | 43% | 392 | 0,02461 |
| | I feel worried | 30% | 26% | 35% | 392 | 0,0232 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|-----|------|-----|---------|---------|
| In case a COVID lockdown/ situation would impact again, do you think you could continue earning an income? | No, not at all | 45% | 40% | 50% | 392 | 0,02515 |
| | Not enough income | 53% | 48% | 58% | 392 | 0,02525 |
| | Earnings would be enough | 2% | 1% | 4% | 392 | 0,00757 |
| If you had to choose between re-migrate or stay, what is your preference? | Re-migrate | 54% | 49% | 59% | 401 | 0,02492 |
| | Stay and get a job | 21% | 17% | 25% | 401 | 0,02044 |
| | Stay and rest | 5% | 3% | 8% | 401 | 0,01139 |
| | I have not made a decision yet | 19% | 15% | 23% | 401 | 0,0196 |
| | I don't have a preference | 0% | 0% | 1% | 401 | 0,00249 |
| Which preconditions will be important for you in order to ensure you can make a living here? | Job opportunities | 67% | 56% | 78% | 79 | 0,0532 |
| | Access to skill trainings | 29% | 19% | 39% | 79 | 0,05144 |
| | Higher income | 37% | 26% | 48% | 79 | 0,05458 |
| | Other | 30% | 20% | 41% | 79 | 0,05207 |
| What would you rate your needs regarding social services for better getting through a situation such as COVID? (Much needed) | Support in form of money | 90% | 87% | 93% | 402 | 0,01478 |
| | Support in form of food | 87% | 83% | 90% | 403 | 0,01699 |
| | Free health care | 92% | 89% | 94% | 403 | 0,01386 |
| | Free financial credit | 63% | 59% | 68% | 400 | 0,02414 |
| | Free water/electricity | 94% | 92% | 96% | 404 | 0,01178 |
| | Assistance/services for migrants | 82% | 78% | 86% | 401 | 0,01929 |
| | Assistance/services for women | 80% | 76% | 84% | 397 | 0,02006 |
| Other | 79% | 74% | 84%w | 230 | 0,02685 | |
| In your opinion, what would be the key priorities to support for informal workers? | Labour rights | 78% | 74% | 82% | 399 | 0,0207 |
| | Health care | 65% | 60% | 70% | 399 | 0,02392 |
| | Training | 37% | 32% | 42% | 399 | 0,02421 |
| | Regulation of migratory status | 55% | 50% | 60% | 399 | 0,02494 |
| | Financial support | 74% | 70% | 79% | 399 | 0,02187 |
| | Other | 3% | 1% | 5% | 399 | 0,00856 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| How would you rate the importance of these providers of social services when preparing better for a situation such as COVID? (Much needed) | Public offices (national, provincial, district, village) | 96% | 94% | 98% | 404 | 0,00971 |
| | Employers | 72% | 67% | 76% | 402 | 0,02245 |
| | CSOs/NPAs, INGOs, UN | 85% | 81% | 88% | 399 | 0,01804 |
| | Labor organizations | 88% | 85% | 91% | 402 | 0,01634 |
| | Other | 78% | 73% | 83% | 237 | 0,02694 |

ANNEX 8.3. EMPLOYMENT STATUS DEFINITIONS

Paid employee with a stable contract (ILO 1993)

These are workers who have had, and continue to have, an explicit (written or oral) or implicit contract of employment, or a succession of such contracts, with the same employer on a continuous basis. "On a continuous basis" implies a period of employment which is longer than a specified minimum determined according to national circumstances. Paid employees with a stable contract receive a basic remuneration that is not directly dependent upon the revenue of the unit for which they work.

They are typically remunerated by wages and salaries, but may be paid by commission from sales, by piece-rates, bonuses, or in-kind payments such as food, housing or training. Also, the employing organization is

responsible for payment of relevant taxes and social security contributions and/or where the contractual relationship is subject to national labor legislation.

Paid employee with a short-term contract (ILO 1993)

Paid employees with short-term contract include "casual workers", "short-term workers" or "seasonal workers".

Casual workers are workers who have an explicit or implicit contract of employment which is not expected to continue for more than a short period, whose duration is to be determined by national circumstances.

Workers in short-term employment are workers who hold explicit or implicit contracts of employment which are expected

to last longer than the period used to define "casual workers", but shorter than the one used to define "regular employees".

Workers in seasonal employment are workers who hold explicit or implicit contracts of employment where the timing and duration of the contract is significantly influenced by seasonal factors such as the climatic cycle, public holidays and/or agricultural harvests.

Business owner (with one or more employees) (ILO 1993)

Business owners are workers who, working on their own account or with one or a few partners, hold the type of job where the remuneration is directly dependent upon the profits (or the potential for profits) derived from the goods and services produced (where own consumption is considered to



A group of Lao female informal workers share the challenges they and their families experienced during the lockdown (© Oxfam)

be part of profits). And, in this capacity, on a continuous basis have engaged one or more persons to work for them in their business as “employee(s)”.

Own-account worker with no sales store -i.e., street vendors- (without paid employees) (ILO 1993)

Own-account workers are those workers who, working on their own account or with one or more partners, hold the type of job where the remuneration is directly dependent upon the profits (or the potential for profits) derived from the goods and services produced (where own consumption is considered to be part of profits). However, different from the business owners, own-account workers have not engaged on a continuous basis any ‘employees’ to work for them during the reference period. Also, own-account workers with no sales store or sales point, do not have a fixed space where they sell the goods and services produced.

Own-account worker with sales store -i.e., market vendors with a stall- (without paid employees) (ILO 1993)

Own-account workers with sales stores are similar to own-account workers in the definition above, except that they have a fixed space where they sell the goods and services produced.

Homeworkers (ILO 1993 and ILO 2015)

Homeworkers are dependent, subcontracted workers who work directly or indirectly for employers or their intermediaries, usually on a piece rate basis – also known as piece rate workers, outworkers or workers in the putting-out system. Homeworkers do not include unpaid care work in one’s own home and paid domestic work and care work in the households of others.

Member of producers’ cooperative (ILO 1993)

Members of producers’ cooperatives are workers who working on their own account or with one or more partners hold a job in a



A young woman takes part in the assessment survey in Champasack Province, Lao PDR. (© Oxfam)

cooperative producing goods and services, in which each member takes part on an equal footing with other members in determining the organisation of production, sales and/or other work of the establishment, the investments and the distribution of the proceeds of the establishment amongst their members. It should be noted that 'employees of producers' cooperatives are not to be classified to this group.

Contributing family worker (ILO 1993)
Contributing family workers are those workers who hold a job in a market-oriented establishment operated by a related person living in the same household, who cannot be regarded as partners, because their degree of commitment to the operation of the establishment, in terms of working time or other factors to be determined by national circumstances, is not at a level comparable to that of the head of the establishment. Also, contributing family worker includes the cases where it is customary for young persons, in particular, to work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a related person who

does not live in the same household.

Domestic worker (ILO 2011 and ILO 2018b)

Domestic workers are those workers who perform their job in or for a household or households and are engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship.

Unemployed (ILO 1982)

Unemployed are those workers a) without work during the reference period, i.e., were not in paid employment or self-employment; b) currently available for work, i.e., were available for paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; and c) seeking work, i.e., had taken specific steps in a specified recent period to seek paid employment or self-employment.

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This report has been produced by the Impact Measurement and Knowledge team, with Francisco Bolaños as the main author and lead of this study, in close collaboration with Oxfam in Laos and consortium staff. Data analysis was carried out by Francisco Bolaños, in consultation with Rik Linssen. Rik Linssen elaborated the visualizations and gave comments to a preliminary version.

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The photo on the cover page shows a migrant worker participating in a group discussion at a recycling factory in Laos (2019).

The photo on the back page shows the research team driving to the survey location in Champasak, Lao PDR (2020).

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