



Exploring the nature of labour exploitation among domestic workers in the UK

October 2023



Acknowledgements

The team that contributed to the project includes Mr Selim Yilmaz, Research Associate in the Rights Lab and Dr Caroline Emberson, Nottingham Research Fellow in Nottingham University Business School and the Rights Lab. The Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham is the world's leading and largest group of modern slavery researchers. Our team develops research to help achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 8.7: ending modern slavery by 2030.

Our 80+ researchers work across four research programmes—Business and Economies; Measurement and Geographies; Law and Policy; and Wellbeing and Society—to deliver new and cutting-edge research that provides rigorous data, evidence and discoveries for the anti-slavery effort. Our team leads for stakeholder impact and engagement translate research findings for key stakeholders via policy analysis, briefings and training, and work with partners on filling evidence gaps. Across all five research programmes, we work to ensure all our research is survivor-informed.

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Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Executive summary	5
Who are domestic workers in the UK?	6
Key findings	7
What forms of exploitation are faced by domestic workers in the UK?	7
How satisfied are domestic workers with their jobs?	8
Recommendations	9
Aims and objectives	11
Domestic work in the UK	11
Indicators of exploitation	13
Survey methods	16
Research design	16
Piloting and data collection	17
The sample	18
Findings	18
Descriptive characteristics of respondent sample	18
Age profile	19
Job tasks	21
Working time	21
Payment rates	21
Domestic workers' networks	22
Job satisfaction in domestic work	23
Reported indicators of forced labour by employment type	24
Level of freedom	25
Payment	26
Physical experience	28
Labour rights	29
Mental health	30
Well-being and support	30
Conclusion and recommendations	31
Appendices	35



Executive summary

This report presents the findings and recommendations arising from a research project conducted between September 2022 and August 2023, which aimed to examine levels of job satisfaction and the nature and extent of labour exploitation among domestic workers in the UK.

The tasks completed by domestic workers are generally conducted within private household premises and cover various types of work, from cleaning, gardening, cooking, and grocery shopping according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2011).¹ The isolated nature of domestic work variously intersects with gender and migration status to create vulnerabilities for migrant workers. Several existing studies have reported problematic working conditions in the sector. While the current literature provides insight into the implications of prevailing legal and criminal justice systems for domestic workers in the UK, rather less attention has been paid to the exact nature and extent of the labour exploitation to which domestic workers may be exposed.

As the official statistics provided by the Office of National Statistics only report data about the number of Overseas Domestic Worker visas issued, it is difficult to estimate the precise composition of the workforce of domestic workers in the UK with European Economic Area (EEA) citizens also eligible to work in this and other UK sectors for up to six months. Anecdotal evidence suggesting that a grey market may exist which may include both domestic workers who are EEA citizens and other migrants who have become undocumented due to the expiry of their temporary Overseas Domestic Worker visas. Our research reported here sought to shed further light on the employment status of these migrant domestic workers, their levels of job satisfaction and the nature of labour exploitation they face in the UK.

Our data is drawn from a survey of 97 domestic workers, all of whom had worked in this sector in the UK in the past 12 months. Our sample included respondents drawn from three continents (Asia, Latin America, and Europe), with data gathered using an online survey which we circulated in four languages (Portuguese, Spanish, English and Tagalog) and which was completed by our participants on their mobile phones rather than through a face-to-face, in-person, interview. An innovative approach to data collection was used called Respondent Driven Sampling or RDS. This was designed to increase respondent anonymity and to improve access to this hard-to-reach population by using a sampling technique in which respondents referred other suitable social contacts known to them personally. We refer to the combination of our online data collection and the RDS sampling we conducted as WebRDS.

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The isolated nature of domestic work variously intersects with gender and migration status to create vulnerabilities for migrant workers.”

¹ ILO Domestic Workers Convention 2011 (No. 189)

Who are domestic workers in the UK?

The focus of our study was that part of the paid domestic work sector in the UK, carried out primarily by migrant workers. Before 2019, official statistics incorporated domestic workers visa data into a non-Points Based System/ Other category. In 2020, the number of Overseas Domestic Worker visas dropped to 70% (14,727 visas) of its 2019 level. And in 2021, at the height of the pandemic, only 8,944 new Overseas Domestic Worker visas were issued. By December 2022 (data published in March 2023), the Home Office reported that it had issued 18,553 Overseas Domestic Worker visas that year.² These domestic workers came from various countries in South America and Asia, including many from the Philippines. In March 2023, the *Financial Times* reported a big shift in the source countries of migrants arriving in the UK on the Overseas Domestic Worker and other types of worker visas.³ Migrant domestic workers from the Philippines and India accounted for the single largest number of applications granted (10,186 and 3,858 visas respectively), followed by smaller, but still significant, numbers of workers arriving from Bangladesh (465), Nigeria (446), Sri Lanka (444), Egypt (422), and Ethiopia (285), and in the same period, smaller numbers of applications for UK domestic work were also accepted from workers from other source countries including, but not limited to the Sudan, Nepal, Ghana, Kenya, the Lebanon, Eritrea, Iran, Turkey, Yemen, Malaysia, Thailand and Morocco.

² Home Office (2023) [Why do people come to the UK? To work](#).

³ Strauss, D. and Cocco, F. (2023) [Britain after Brexit: The surprising surge in skilled migrants](#) March 12, 2023.

Origin of overseas domestic workers

14,727 visas
issued in 2020

8,944 visas
issued in 2021

18,553 visas issued
in 2022

Single largest number of applications granted to workers from the Philippines and India (10,186 and 3,858 visas respectively)

Followed by workers arriving from Bangladesh (465), Nigeria (446), Sri Lanka (444), Egypt (422), and Ethiopia (285)

Source: Home Office Overseas Domestic Worker visa figures

Key findings

Evidence of unsatisfactory working conditions and exploitative labour practices, some of them severe, were widely reported by our sample of domestic workers working in the UK in the past 12 months. However, the labour rights and protections they enjoyed as individuals varied due to the diverse employment statuses that they reported: 45% of our sample regarded themselves as self-employed; 39% identified themselves as employees and 16% reported that they were workers.

45% of our sample regarded themselves as self-employed	39% identified themselves as employees	16% reported that they were workers
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What forms of exploitation are faced by domestic workers in the UK?

Our survey included composite indicators of six types of labour exploitation, including severe forms of labour abuse that may indicate criminal exploitation in the form of modern slavery, servitude and forced labour. Our findings paint a concerning picture about the existence of widespread levels of verbal abuse and a lack of privacy; reported payments at below national living wage levels; a lack of freedom over the choice of working hours and reports of more severe forms of exploitation including physical or sexual violence; withholding wages or identity documents and the potential for debt bondage.

- **82%** reported that they had suffered verbal abuse from their employers.
- **Over 44%** of domestic workers 'often' suffered from privacy issues during their work.
- All the respondents in our sample had reached the age of 23 at which those who were employees and workers were entitled to receive wages at the level of, or higher than, the national living wage. However, **43% of domestic workers surveyed** reported that they had received payments lower than this minimum standard. The exploitative nature of such payments risks is complicated by the fact that the earnings level of self-employed domestic workers is not covered by legal minimum wage protections. Due to the variations in reported employment status **this was an illegal rate of pay for 6% of domestic workers** in the overall sample.
- **Nearly a quarter (24%)** of those domestic workers in the UK we surveyed reported that they worked over forty hours per week. **Nearly half** of these respondents (11 respondents) reporting that they did not receive pay at a level at or above that of the **national minimum level** for this work.
- **Only 23%** of domestic workers 'always' had the freedom to manage the time they spent at work and their daily working hours. Their **visa status** and the **fear of losing the job served to limit domestic workers' freedom** with **over 58%** of the domestic workers we surveyed reporting that they **needed to remain in their job to stay in the UK**.
- **10%** reported that they **worked between 12 and 24 hours per day**.
- **7% of domestic workers reported restrictions on the level of freedom they experienced in relation to their work**.

The individual nature of domestic worker supervision and the lack of work standardisation could lead to overwork, with the relatively high number of self-employed domestic workers in our survey lacking legal labour rights protections for work breaks and rest periods, annual leave, sick pay, protection against offence and harm, and flexible working.

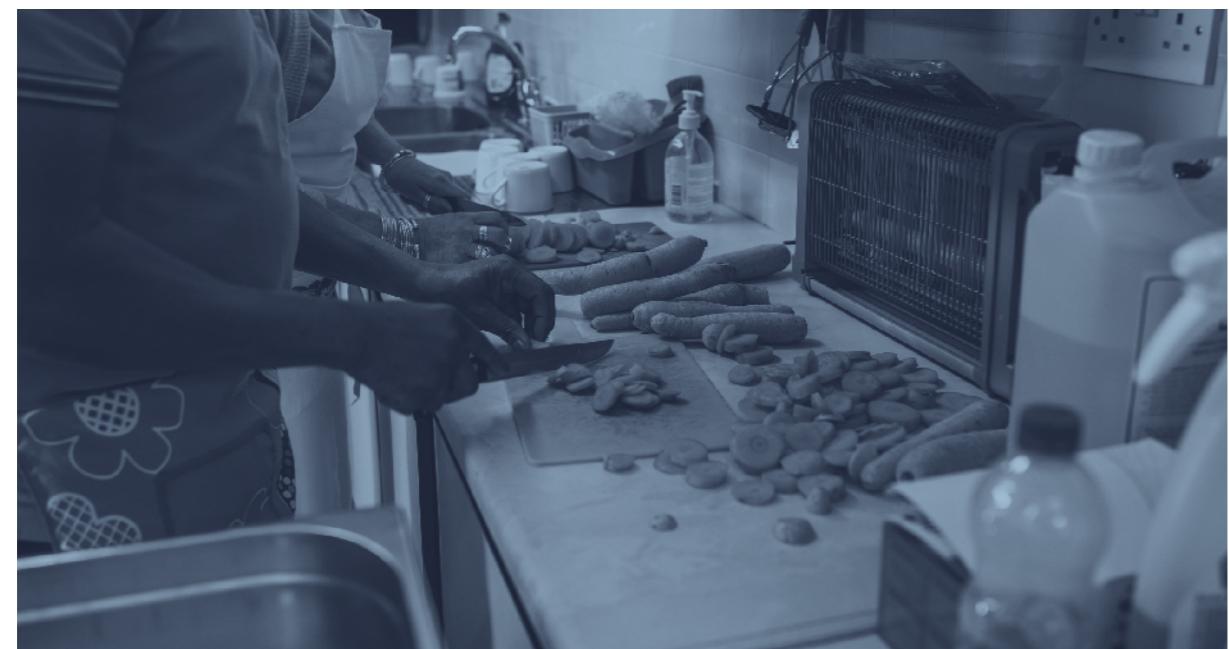
- Only 42% of domestic workers enjoyed a break that lasted longer than 24 hours each week.
- 14% of workers felt that they were 'always' working excessively.

Concerning evidence of more severe forms of labour exploitation included:

- 42% of the sample reported threatened or intimidating behaviour from their employer, with over a third of domestic workers reported experiencing physical violence from their employer and 24% reporting that they had received a lasting injury as result.
- Over 41% reported that they had experienced the withholding of payments to which they were entitled.
- 41% of domestic workers reported that their employers always or sometimes withheld their travel and identity documents.
- 29% of domestic workers reported needing to use their salary to pay off debts to people who helped them to find jobs.

How satisfied are domestic workers with their jobs?

As the first attempt to understand the job satisfaction among domestic workers, this research discovered that 55% of the domestic workers sampled reported they 'always' or 'sometimes' felt that they would like to leave their current job, illustrating the need for greater attention on issues related to job satisfaction. Elements of holiday, basic level of pay and the opportunity to increase earnings through overtime were the top three factors reported by domestic workers that influenced their job satisfaction.



Recommendations

In this report we identify four areas in which we make recommendations to improve job satisfaction and reduce the risk and extent of labour exploitation for all domestic workers, not just migrants. First, greater transparency is required of employers to ensure domestic workers' labour rights and well-being is protected. We recommend therefore that the UK government introduces a registration scheme for employers of domestic workers. Second, the laws and regulations concerning domestic work, domestic workers and other home-based, domestic service, employment need to be standardised and enforcement powers applied in such a way as to be commensurate with those enjoyed by workers in other UK sectors.

We recommend that the UK Government prepares the way for UK ratification of ILO C189: Domestic workers convention (2011) by ensuring that the employment conditions of domestic workers are no less favourable than those enjoyed by other UK workers. Indeed, we believe that there is a case to be made for domestic workers and those notionally self-employed in this sector to have the right to a national minimum and living wage for domestic work. Furthermore, the range of exploitative labour practices that were reported to us suggests the need for a clearer reporting pathway which could be achieved by, for instance, the proposed move to a Single Enforcement Body. Third, we recommend building the self-awareness and self-defence of the domestic workers themselves through education, training workshops and peer support to improve the health of the sector.

To increase domestic workers agency, in particular we recommend that upon existing work to increase UK visa and immigration (UKVI), in addition to the provision of rights-based training and information to domestic workers newly arriving in the UK and, through the embassies of the source countries from which migrant domestic workers are recruited, specifically:

- explain the limited circumstances in which UK employers can make legal deductions from an employee or workers' wages
- how to make a claim related to wage deductions and/or other illegal employment practices through an employment tribunal
- and to signpost domestic workers to governmental and non-governmental organisations operating to protect their UK labour rights including current labour market enforcement bodies, such as:
 - » The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority
 - » His Majesty's Revenue and Customs National Minimum Wage National Living Wage team (HMRC NMW)
 - » Citizens Advice
 - » Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

Contact details for these organisations may be found in the [conclusions and recommendations section](#) of this report.

Trust in these authorities is vital if vulnerable migrant domestic workers are to have the confidence to report abuse. This leads to our fourth recommendation, which is that the UK Government introduces a firewall between immigration and labour market enforcement bodies.



Aims and objectives

This report aims to provide quantified empirical data to help unpack the nature and extent of labour exploitation among domestic workers in the UK. We hope that the research presented will contribute to a more detailed understanding of the type and intensity of labour exploitation experienced by domestic workers in the UK that will help policymakers to make more targeted decisions to improve working conditions in the sector.

To achieve this aim, our study makes use of a web-based version of respondent-driven sampling (WebRDS) and is, we believe, the first study to apply such a method within the field of exploitation and servitude within domestic work. This report aims to test the use of this methodological approach while at the same time contributing to the evidence base to help reduce future exploitation.

Domestic work in the UK

Domestic workers are defined as ‘all those who perform work in or for a private household or households’.⁴ Tasks range from cooking, cleaning, taking care of adults and children, grocery shopping, petting, parcel-taking and more.

In the UK, domestic work is predominantly carried out by migrant workers. In the early 2000s, survey reports suggest that the majority of workers came from India and the Philippines.⁵ Since then, these workers have been joined by migrants from a number of other nationalities, with domestic workers arriving in the UK from Asia, South America, the Middle East and Africa. Though this is not the only access route, the latest data showed that 19,780 domestic workers had been granted ‘Overseas Domestic Work’ visas to work in the UK in the year to June 2023.⁶

The nature of domestic work may make these workers particularly vulnerable to exploitation for four main reasons. First, there is a pervasive difficulty in criminalising employers. The current legal system in the UK still contains obvious gaps which enable employers to find loopholes to exploit domestic workers. The isolated nature of domestic work makes it easier for employers to violate domestic workers’ holiday entitlements, employment contracts, regular pay, childcare and working hours.⁷ A failure to consider domestic work as a profession means that employers’ treatment of domestic workers in private households may fall below acceptable standards.⁸ While the UK Family Worker Exemption may inadvertently exacerbate such problems as employers can claim that, rather than an employee, their domestic worker is

“Tasks range from cooking, cleaning, taking care of adults and children, grocery shopping, petting, parcel-taking and more.”

⁴ ILO (2011) [The ILO Domestic Workers Convention: New Standards to Fight Discrimination, Exploitation and Abuse](#).

⁵ Kalayaan and Oxfam (2008) [The New Bonded Labour? The impact of proposed changes to the UK immigration system of migrant domestic workers](#).

⁶ Home Office (2023) [Why do people come to the UK? To work](#).

⁷ Green, O., Ayalon, L., 2018. Violations of workers’ rights and exposure to work-related abuse of live-in migrant and live-out local home care workers – a preliminary study: implications for health policy and practice. *Isr Journal of Health Policy Research*, 7(1): 32.

⁸ Kalayaan and Oxfam, 2008 [The New Bonded Labour? The impact of proposed changes to the UK immigration system of migrant domestic workers](#).

considered part of the family, and is therefore not entitled to employee status or its associated labour rights.

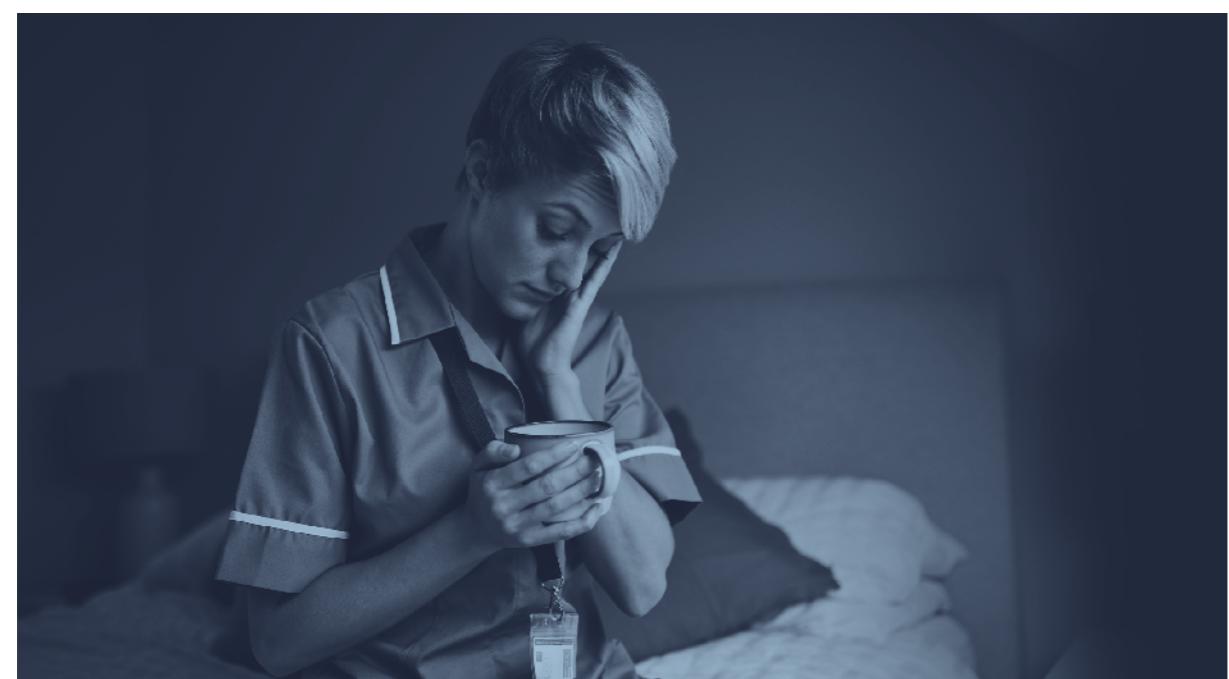
Second, the visa and limitations around the rights to live and work in the UK increase domestic workers' fear of deportation. The high level of irregularity in the domestic work sector coupled with limited vacancies and opportunities means that domestic workers experience insecurity and may worry about becoming undocumented.⁹ As a result, domestic workers may put up with exploitative conditions to remain in the country to protect their visa status. Furthermore, the Overseas Domestic Worker visa lasts only six months which means that domestic workers may become undocumented if they overstay.

Third, domestic workers' lack of awareness of their labour and human rights, coupled with a deficiency in English language skill, may limit their resilience to labour exploitation, including extreme forms such as servitude. Existing research suggests that employers may exploit domestic workers' inexperience, lack of language skills and superficial knowledge about UK society or may violate domestic workers' employment rights in relation to payment, rests, breaks, annual leave, the national minimum and living wage and safe working conditions while perpetrating physical (restriction to freedom, access to food and water and sexual exploitation) and psychological abuses.¹⁰ Combined with domestic workers' precarious situation, their lack of knowledge about labour

“...domestic workers' lack of awareness of their labour and human rights, coupled with a deficiency in English language skill, may limit their resilience to labour exploitation,...”

⁹ Mullally, S., Murphy, C., 2014. Migrant domestic workers in the UK: Enacting exclusions, exemptions, and rights. *Human Rights Quarterly* 36, 397. And Demetriou, D., 2015. 'Tied Visas' and Inadequate Labour Protections: A formula for abuse and exploitation of migrant domestic workers in the United Kingdom. *Anti-Trafficking Review* (5), p.1-10. Also, Mantouvalou, V., 2016. Modern slavery? The UK visa system and the exploitation of migrant domestic workers. British Politics and Policy at LSE.

¹⁰ Rose, Howard, Zimmerman and Oram, 2021. A Cross-sectional Comparison of the Mental Health of People Trafficked to the UK for Domestic Servitude, for Sexual Exploitation and for Labour Exploitation, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 7(3), p. 258-267.



rights has resulted in excessive working hours and, sometimes extreme, levels of under-payment.¹¹ Parry-Davis reports, for example, a case in which a domestic worker worked sixty hours each week yet only received a payment of £500 per month.¹²

Fourth, vulnerability may cause a chain reaction of exploitation. Previous studies have found domestic workers in a legal and immigration vacuum suffer severe abuse.¹³ Due to the temporary nature of the domestic workers' visa, employers may abuse the situation of undocumented domestic workers and allow poor working conditions with low payment rates knowing that undocumented workers labour rights cannot be guaranteed.¹⁴ What studies there have been of the sector report troubling working conditions.¹⁵ The non-profit organisation Voice of Domestic Workers reports that over 74% of workers worked for over a year for their employer, and 80% of these workers' said that their working and living conditions had deteriorated over time. Documented workers reported working 226 hours per month and earning on average £1,604, while undocumented workers reported working 278 hours per month for an average of only £1,466. Worsening working conditions upon the expiration of the domestic worker's visa seemed to be a normalised practice, with over 69% of workers reporting this outcome.

This report argues that the apparent risks of servitude and other forms of labour exploitation among domestic workers in the UK may be challenged if gaps in our knowledge about the exact nature and scale of the phenomenon can be filled. Domestic workers should not be generalised or homogenised, policy makers need rather to identify which characteristics and which combination of traits put workers in the sector at risk of exploitation and then act to redress these problems. In the following section we discuss how we sought to identify and quantify the current nature of exploitation experienced by domestic workers in the UK.

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Indicators of exploitation

Various indicators of modern slavery, labour exploitation and forced labour exist. To examine labour exploitation in domestic work, this report draws upon three typologies published respectively by the UK Home Office, the FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).¹⁶

¹¹ Kalayaan and Oxfam, 2008 The New Bonded Labour? The impact of proposed changes to the UK immigration system of migrant domestic workers.

¹² Parry-Davis, E. (2020) 'A chance to feel safe' Precarious Filipino migrants amid the UK's coronavirus outbreak Kanlungan.

¹³ Mantouvalou, V., 2016. Modern slavery? The UK visa system and the exploitation of migrant domestic workers. British Politics and Policy at LSE.

¹⁴ Op. cit.

¹⁵ Jiang, J., 2019. A Special Vulnerability: Migrant Domestic Workers Enslaved by The Non-renewable Overseas Domestic Worker Visa in the UK VODW.

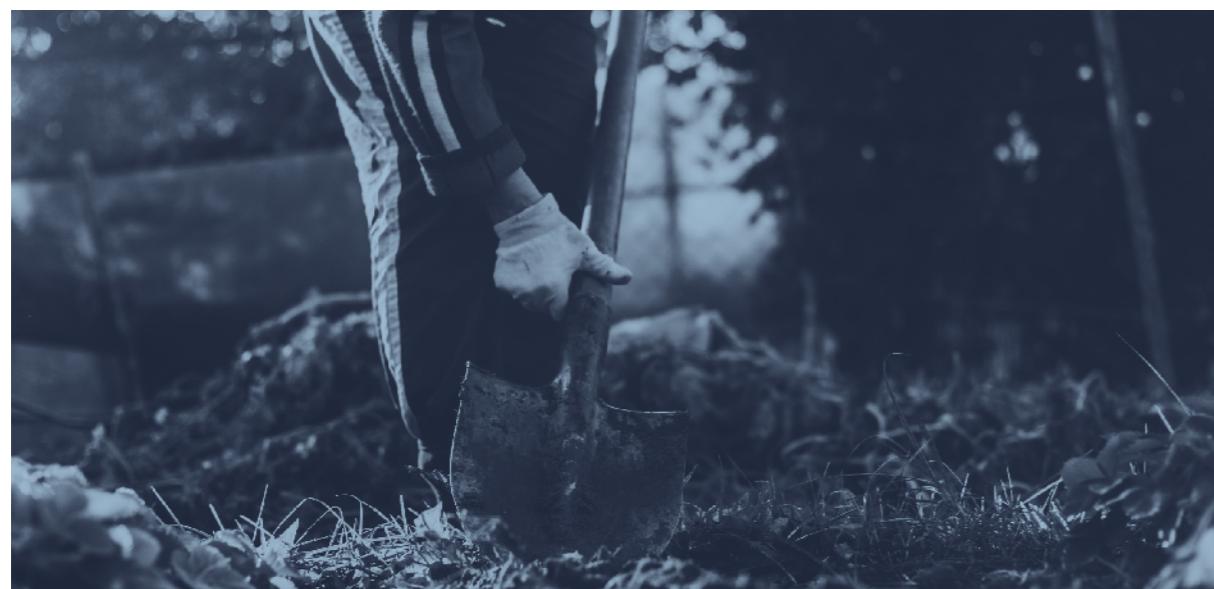
¹⁶ Home Office, 2015. Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and Non-Statutory Guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland, FRA, 2018. Severe labour exploitation of migrant workers: FRA report calls for 'zero tolerance' of severe labour exploitation; ILO (2011) Indicators of forced labour.

The UK Home Office's indicators of modern slavery provide general, physical, psychological, situational, and environmental indicators. The list of 36 general indicators focuses broadly on the mentality and behaviour of those exploited. Physical and psychological indicators reflect forms of medical symptoms due to slavery. Situational and environmental indicators such as lack of information about rights as workers and restriction of movements are also included. The Home Office's model enables the development of a broad understanding of modern slavery as an umbrella concept, within which domestic servitude is included.

The FRA understands the issue of labour exploitation through the different roles of the parties involved. Such an approach takes a more processual perspective and considers the role of each party at each stage. In this model, which aims at protecting migrant workers, the mechanisms, strategies and situations faced by exploited workers are used as indicators to judge the level of exploitation. The model starts from recruitment stage, through working and living conditions to the formulation of employers' strategies and produces a linear set of systemic indicators. Such a design helps to develop survey questions since, unlike cases of human trafficking and child labour, in practice an activity might not start out as exploitative but may evolve into exploitative conditions over time. This is another reason why identification of the most severe forms of exploitation, such as servitude, need to be clearly focused on exploitation on a regularised, normalised basis and examine how exploitation develops through problematic daily activities.

The ILO model introduces eleven single indicators which may provide evidence of another form of exploitation, that of forced labour. The model highlights eleven aspects including abuse of vulnerability, deception, restriction of movement, isolation, physical and sexual violence, intimidation and threats, retention of identity documents, withholding of wages, debt bondage, abusive working and living conditions and excessive overtime.

Survey measurement scales, shown in table 1, were compiled from these three sets of indicators to provide composite measures which would enable comparison of the nature and extent of labour exploitation among domestic workers in the UK.



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The ILO model introduces eleven single indicators which may provide evidence of another form of exploitation, that of forced labour.”

Table 1: Indicators for exploitation among domestic workers

Indicators (Indicators of this research)	Home Office model	FRA model	ILO model
Level of freedom	Situational and environmental	Working, living conditions of exploited workers	Restriction of movement; intimidation and threats
Payment	Physical		
Physical experience	Situational	Employers' strategy to keep workers in a condition of exploitation	Debt bondage – withholding of wages
Labour rights	Psychological and physical		
Mental health		Exploited workers' access to justice	Abuse of vulnerability; Physical and sexual violence
Well-being and support			Excessive overtime
			Isolation; deception

These scales enabled us to disaggregate the nature of labour exploitation in UK domestic work and present a more heterogeneous picture of the nature of labour exploitation workers reported experiencing. Specifically, we sought to identify the nature of labour exploitation faced by domestic workers in the UK and how this might differ between groups dependent upon the workers' employment status.

In addition, to understand what contributes to the happiness and satisfaction of domestic workers in the UK, we also asked questions based on theories of job satisfaction. The following items have been shown to contribute to job satisfaction:

1. flexible working arrangements
2. nature of supervision
3. the basic level of pay
4. opportunities for increasing earnings through over time
5. opportunities for increasing earnings through promotion
6. relationship with co-workers
7. childcare
8. holiday entitlement.

Survey methods

Research design

Data was collected using Web-based Respondent Driven Sampling (WebRDS). Respondent-driven sampling, which utilises respondents' social connections, has been shown elsewhere to help to research a hard-to-reach population as it relies on respondents themselves to refer others known to them through their social connections to participate in the research.¹⁷ To gain the confidence of respondents in a hidden population is a time-consuming task, and hearing from a trusted friend or colleague about the research questionnaire has been proven elsewhere to be more convincing than a researcher approaching members of the population directly.

WebRDS sampling requires several 'waves' of respondents. Starting from a sample of initial respondents called 'seeds', each respondent is encouraged to invite up to five friends from his or her connections to participate in the research.¹⁸ Eventually, the sample will develop into a chained structure which can also indicate a network of the target population. In our study respondents received incentives in the form of grocery vouchers both to complete the survey themselves and to nominate other contacts who fit the sampling profile. It is important to note that through these personal connections WebRDS collects data from a non-randomised sample. While the RDS method has been used extensively in the public health literature to examine exploitation, it remains an underused approach to understanding the nature of employment among hard-to-reach employees in sectors such as domestic work.¹⁹ Though the debate on whether a web-based RDS method enhances data collection is controversial, the use of the internet and phone is necessary for the 21st century. However, there are challenges in this innovative approach that do not exist with traditional RDS methods. One of the biggest challenges reported is that many seeds do not forward the email or tell their referrals that they have invited them to participate.²⁰

“...hearing from a trusted friend or colleague about the research questionnaire has been proven elsewhere to be more convincing than a researcher approaching members of the population directly.”

¹⁷ Gile, K.J., Handcock, M.S., 2015. Network model-assisted inference from respondent-driven sampling data. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A, (Statistics in Society)* 178, 619.

¹⁸ Gile, K.J., Johnston, L.G., Salganik, M.J., 2015. Diagnostics for respondent-driven sampling. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A, (Statistics in Society)*. 178, 241.

¹⁹ Bernard, J., Daňková, H., Vašát, P., 2018. Ties, sites and irregularities: Pitfalls and benefits in using respondent-driven sampling for surveying a homeless population. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 21, 603–618; Brunovskis, A., Surtees, R., 2010. Untold stories: biases and selection effects in research with victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. *International Migration* 48, 1–37; Bryant, J., 2014. Using respondent-driven sampling with 'hard to reach' marginalised young people: problems with slow recruitment and small network size. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 17, 599–611.; McCreesh, N., Tarsh, M.N., Seeley, J., Katongole, J., White, R.G., 2013. Community understanding of respondent-driven sampling in a medical research setting in Uganda: importance for the use of RDS for public health research. *International journal of social research methodology* 16, 269–284.; Zhang, S.X., Dank, M., Vincent, K., Narayanan, P., Bharadwaj, S., Balasubramaniam, S.M., 2019. Victims without a voice: Measuring worst forms of child labor in the Indian State of Bihar. *Victims & Offenders* 14, 832–858.

²⁰ Bauermeister, J.A., Zimmerman, M.A., Johns, M.M., Glowacki, P., Stoddard, S., Volz, E., 2012. Innovative Recruitment Using Online Networks: Lessons Learned From an Online Study of Alcohol and Other Drug Use Utilizing a Web-Based, Respondent-Driven Sampling (webRDS) Strategy. *J Stud Alcohol Drugs* 73, 834–838

Piloting and data collection

An online questionnaire was devised to collect data about the nature of labour exploitation among domestic workers in the UK, and to provide details of respondents' networks for subsequent estimation of the scale of abuse. The survey, including the composite measures described in table 1, was first piloted among a small sample of academic experts and domestic workers recruited by three organisations representing domestic workers, including charitable organisations that advocate for the Filipino and Latin American communities.

In addition to questions designed to understand the nature of any labour exploitation experienced, demographic data related to respondents' age, nationality and gender was requested. The online survey questions also included 'how many' questions to gather data on each respondents' existing connections with other domestic workers and their awareness of others' exploitation experiences. Respondents were asked about the number of mobile phone contacts to estimate accurately the extent of their social networks. Connections among respondents across the entire social network surveyed can therefore be visualised through the mapping of these unique phone numbers. The survey was administered using the JISC online survey tool. Initial sample seeds were recruited with the help of specialist NGOs working with domestic workers. With the necessary corrections to questions, the survey was launched in March 2023 and remained open until the end of June 2023.

A double incentive for completion of the survey and recruitment of further participants was designed to be £10 for each completed survey and an additional £5 for each referral. In addition, all participants were entered into a free prize-draw for an opportunity to win a £150 grocery voucher.

The online WebRDS method requires a different procedure to that of data collection through interviews. To avoid the possibility that the online survey responses were submitted by others than those in a domestic work situation, follow-up phone calls were made to each survey respondent to ensure check their validity and that no more than one survey response had been submitted. The efficacy of this approach was demonstrated when it enabled us to eliminate a number of spam responses with fictitious follow-up contact details. Within the survey, respondents provide their email and contact number, and the latter is used to contact the respondents with a post-survey phone call to ensure the validity of their questionnaire responses, help administer the voucher and prompt them to refer the survey to other domestic-worker contacts. The voucher was then sent to the phone and email addresses of the respondents after the confirmation phone call. Onward referrals identified in survey responses and through telephone conversations were contacted by the researcher and invited to complete their own survey and introduce their own domestic worker connections to move on to the next wave. Each referral was rewarded with an additional voucher, and all participants were entered into a free prize draw. The respondents were given unique identification numbers and each onward connection and its link to the original referee was carefully tracked.

“To avoid the possibility that the online survey responses were submitted by others than those in a domestic work situation, follow-up phone calls were made to each survey respondent to ensure check their validity...”

The sample

The data used for analysis was collected from a sample of completed questionnaires from 97 respondents.

Domestic workers whose responses were included in subsequent data analysis reported that they were:

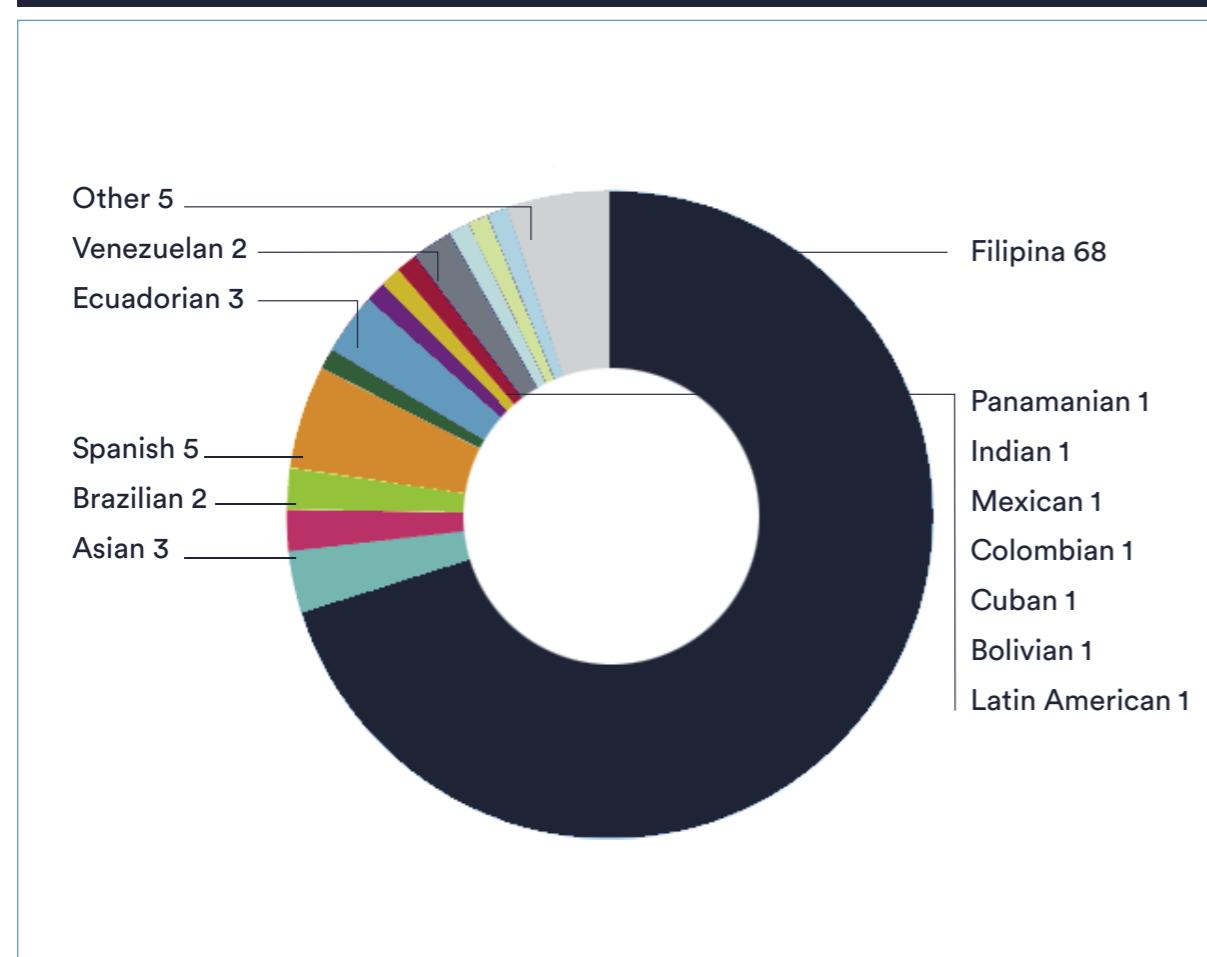
- a. Currently working or had worked in domestic work full-time or part-time in the UK in the past 12 months.
- b. Broadly defined as 'all those workers who perform work in or for a private household or households' (ILO, 2011).

Findings

Descriptive characteristics of respondent sample

The sample consists predominantly of migrant domestic workers, with 90 respondents (93 percent) identifying themselves as non-British nationals. Of the 97 respondents, 64 respondents (66% of the total), and the largest single nationality group, reported that they had a Filipina background. Other nationalities represented included Dominican, Brazilian, Spanish, Colombian, Bolivian, Venezuelan, Cuban and Panamanian. The reported nationalities of respondents are shown in the pie chart below (figure 1). Female domestic workers made up 97% of the sample, with 3% of the sample comprised of male domestic workers.

Figure 1: Country of origin



Age profile

The age structure of the domestic worker was skewed towards those over 45 years old, with such workers representing over half of the sample (See table 2). The age structure of the sample indicates that those domestic workers contracted either as employees or workers in the sample are legally entitled to payment of at least National Living Wage and the respective labour rights of an adult.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age	23-25	26-35	36-45	45+
Number of respondents	2	24	23	48

When discussing labour rights, it is important to know the employment status of the worker. There are three possible types of employment status in the UK: worker, employee and self-employed. In each case, the related rights and responsibilities are different. In general, employee status provides the highest form of protection in terms of rights (for example, protection from unfair dismissal, the right to a redundancy payment and family rights such as maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave), while self-employed status brings with it the fewest protections. The table on page 20 illustrates the rights, responsibilities and the employment statuses reported by those within our study sample.

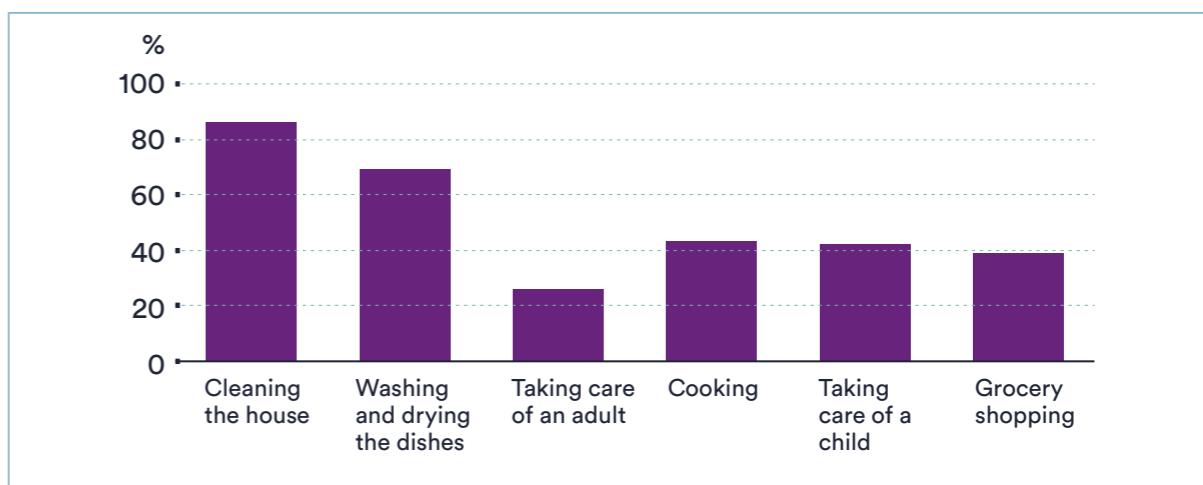


Table 3: Breakdown of domestic workers' employment status, rights and responsibilities

Employment status	Rights	Responsibilities	Percentage in sample
Self-employed	Only: Protection of their rights against discrimination	Tax obligations; paying their own national insurance	45%
Employee	As for those of workers, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The right to request flexible working ✓ Protection against unfair dismissal ✓ Time off for emergencies ✓ Statutory redundancy pay ✓ Maternity leave ✓ Paternity leave ✓ Parental leave 	Required to work regularly unless on leave Required to do a minimum number of hours and expect to be paid for time worked A manager and supervisor are responsible for the workload Only work for the employer, or if they do have another job, it's completely different from their work for the other business	39%
Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ National Minimum or Living Wage ✓ Minimum of 5.6 weeks paid holiday ✓ Statutory minimum length of rest breaks ✓ Payslips ✓ Join pension scheme Protection against: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » unlawful deductions from wages » unlawful discrimination » whistle-blowers who report wrongdoing in the workplace » less favourable treatment if they work part-time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Statutory sick pay, statutory maternity pay ✓ Statutory paternity pay ✓ Statutory adoption pay ✓ Shared parental pay 	There are few obligations, but one needs to complete the hours agreed	16%

Job tasks

The job tasks of domestic workers are illustrated in figure 2. The main activity reported was cleaning the house (reported by 89 percent of respondents), while taking care of an adult was reported by 27 percent of respondents. Other tasks mentioned by respondents included car cleaning (1%), gardening (1%), dog sitting (5%), ironing clothes (5%), liaising with plumbers (1%), laundry (4%), and answering the door (1%).

Figure 2: Job tasks in percentages

Working time

The reported weekly working time ranged from 0 to 45 hours. Over 34% of domestic workers reported that they worked between 6 to 12 hours per week, while 24% domestic workers worked over 40 hours per week. Taken as a whole, 76% of domestic workers worked under 40 hours. There were 24% of workers at risk of excessive working hours. Forty-three percent of domestic workers reported a daily work period of between 8 to 12 hours, 10% of domestic workers reported working between 12 hours and 24 hours per day.

Payment rates

All the respondents in our sample had reached the age of 23 at which those who were employees and workers were entitled to receive wages at the level of, or higher than, the National Living Wage. However, 43% of domestic workers surveyed reported that they had received payments lower than this minimum standard. Such exploitative payments are compounded by the fact that the earnings level of self-employed domestic workers is not covered by legal protection. In addition, over 41% reported that they had experienced the withholding of payments to which they were entitled.

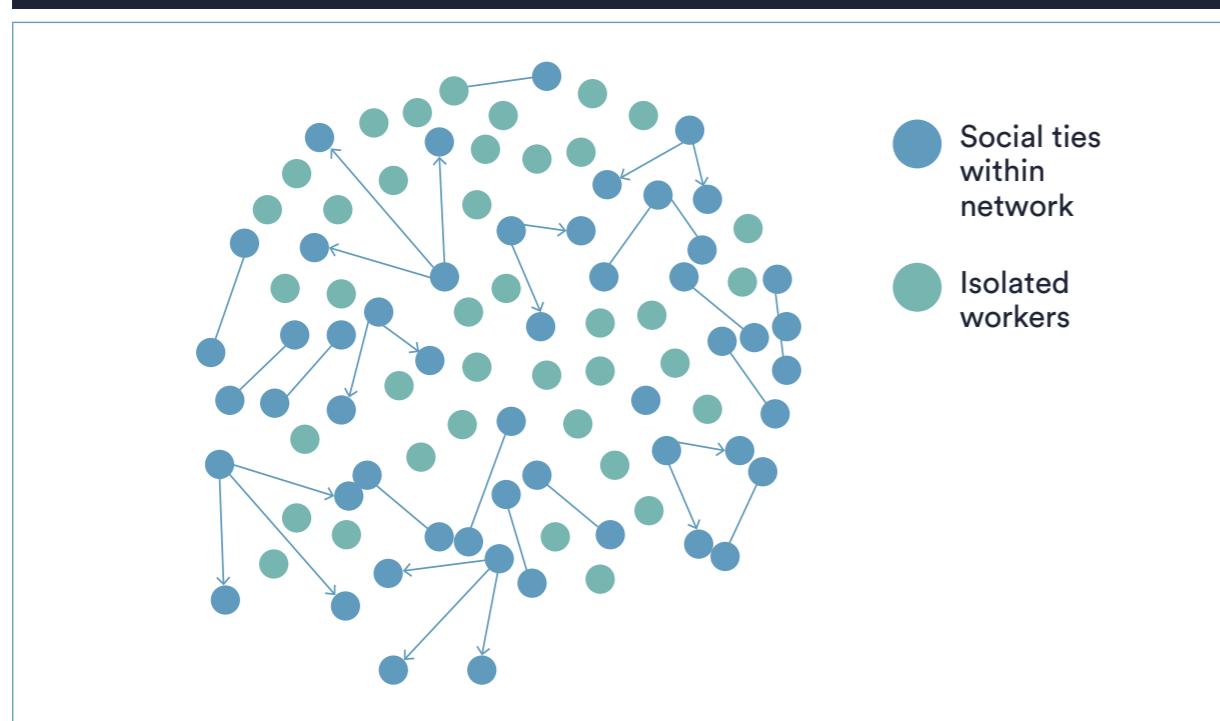
Around a quarter of our domestic worker sample (23 respondents) reported that they worked over 40 hours per week. Forty-eight percent of these respondents (11 domestic workers) did not receive payment at or above the national minimum payment for these working hours. Of these workers, 6 people (around 6% of our total sample) reported that they were employees and thus legally entitled to payment at or above the nationally agreed living wage. Ten of the 23 respondents working over 40 hours per week described themselves as self-employed and were not therefore entitled to the legal protection of a minimum wage. Thus, around 6% of the total sample domestic workers in this case experienced an *illegal* rate of pay. However, the question has to be asked, why are payments to notionally 'self-employed' workers so low when the nature of the work is similar? The legal system seems to have created a gap

for private employers to exploit these notionally self-employed domestic workers without actually breaking employment law. It could be argued that this 'legalised' exploitation system creates a significant risk of exploitation within the domestic work sector. Only slightly more than half (54%) of the sampled domestic workers were paid at or over the national living wage, while 27% of domestic workers were paid only between £5.28 and £10.17 per hour.

Domestic workers' networks

Figure 3 demonstrates the network connections among the sampled domestic workers. The average network size was 9.4. This may be compared to the results of other RDS studies. For example, a study of marginalised young females reported a similar average of eight people in their networks.²¹ Both of these results are higher than the average network size of five calculated for female sex workers but are significantly lower than that of the average network size of people who inject drugs (55) and that of the homeless population in two Czech cities (also 55).²² This means that, relatively speaking, domestic workers are not highly interconnected with each other. On average, each domestic worker knew only around 9 other domestic workers. For this reason, domestic workers are at higher risk of isolation and lack of social communication, and they might not know or be able to find peers to exchange their experiences with, especially experiences related to exploitation.

Figure 3. Network connection of domestic workers



21 Bryant, J (2014) Using respondent-driven sampling with 'hard to reach' marginalised young people: problems with slow recruitment and small network size, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 17:6, 599-611.

22 Uusküla A, Johnston LG, Raag M, Trummal A, Talu A, Des Jarlais DC. 2010. Evaluating recruitment among female sex workers and injecting drug users at risk for HIV using respondent-driven sampling in Estonia. *J Urban Health*; 87(2): 304-317; Bernard, J, Daňková, H & Vašát, P (2018) Ties, sites and irregularities: pitfalls and benefits in using respondent-driven sampling for surveying a homeless population, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 21:5, 603-618.

Job satisfaction in domestic work

Despite the attention that has been paid to working conditions, existing data about domestic workers in the UK says little about their job satisfaction. Individual levels of current job satisfaction and mutual respect between domestic workers and their employers reported by those who replied to our survey were generally found to be high. Despite the concerning evidence of exploitation, fewer than 7% of domestic workers from our sample disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with the statement that their current job satisfaction was high. It seems domestic workers expect to work excessive hours, often without the payment of overtime. And even though a further 20% of the sample expressed that they were not close with their employers, domestic workers did report that there was mutual respect. Likewise, only 5% of domestic workers reported that their employers were disrespectful to them and treated them only as paid workers. Indeed 22% of the sample reported that they had become like family.

Despite this, there seemed to be greater dissatisfaction with the nature of domestic work itself, with over half of the domestic workers surveyed 70% reporting that they 'sometimes' or 'always' felt that they would like to leave their current job. Among the sample, over 16% of the domestic workers 'always' felt like leaving their current role, and 11% of the sample expressed that they 'often' felt this way.

Domestic workers identified holiday entitlement as the most important element of their job satisfaction. The other top elements included the basic level of pay, childcare and opportunities for increasing earnings through overtime. Meanwhile, the least important elements identified were the nature of supervision which attracted the highest votes for 'not so important' and 'not a concern at all' and, perhaps unsurprising given the relative isolation of domestic work, relationship with co-workers. The most important factors that influenced the job satisfaction of domestic workers are highlighted in pink in table 4 below.

Table 4: Importance of job satisfaction factors to domestic workers

Job satisfaction element	Very important	Important	Neutral	Not so important	Not a concern at all
Flexible working arrangements	53	28	12	1	2
Nature of supervision	25	30	23	5	4
Basic level of pay	72	17	8	0	0
Opportunities for increasing earnings through overtime	65	20	7	2	3
Opportunities for increasing earnings through promotion	57	25	8	2	3
Relationship with co-workers	39	30	10	2	0
Childcare	67	16	16	1	3
Holiday entitlement	74	17	3	1	2

Highlighted pink are highly important factors that influence the job satisfaction of domestic workers, highlighted purple are the least important factors that influence the job satisfaction of domestic workers. The figures in this table are the number of respondents.

Reported indicators of forced labour by employment type

Domestic workers who had employee employment status suffered particularly from the withholding of wages, physical violence, and excessive overtime. Those with 'worker' status reported higher levels of identity document retention and debt bondage. However, those domestic workers who reported that they were self-employed also reported concerning levels of the withholding of wages, physical violence and restriction of movement.

Figure 5: Indicators of forced labour by reported employment status

Indicators/ employment status	Employment status and exploitation indicators		
	Employee	Worker	Self-employed
Abuse of vulnerability	✓	✓	✓
Deception	✓	✓	✓
Restriction of movement	63%	50%	66%
Isolation	5%	29%	14%
Physical and sexual violence	34%	33%	34%
Intimidation and threats	26%	40%	20%
Retention of identity documents	29%	47%	16%
Withholding of wages	32%	36%	39%
Debt bondage	32%	47%	28%
Abusive working and living conditions	21%	20%	9%
Excessive overtime	29%	13%	23%

The percentages shown in red indicate categories of significant exploitation suffered by domestic workers in the respective employment status group.

Our survey summarised these, and other, indicators that reflect the nature of working conditions experienced by domestic workers in the UK including measures of modern slavery, and labour exploitation. The danger of the emergence of the most severe forms of exploitation, such as modern slavery, forced labour and servitude, in domestic work seem to be exacerbated by limited freedom and labour rights, under-payment or lack of entitlement to the national minimum or living wage, and the absence of effective support networks for domestic workers. The following sections will unpack in detail each of the six composite indicators we investigated.

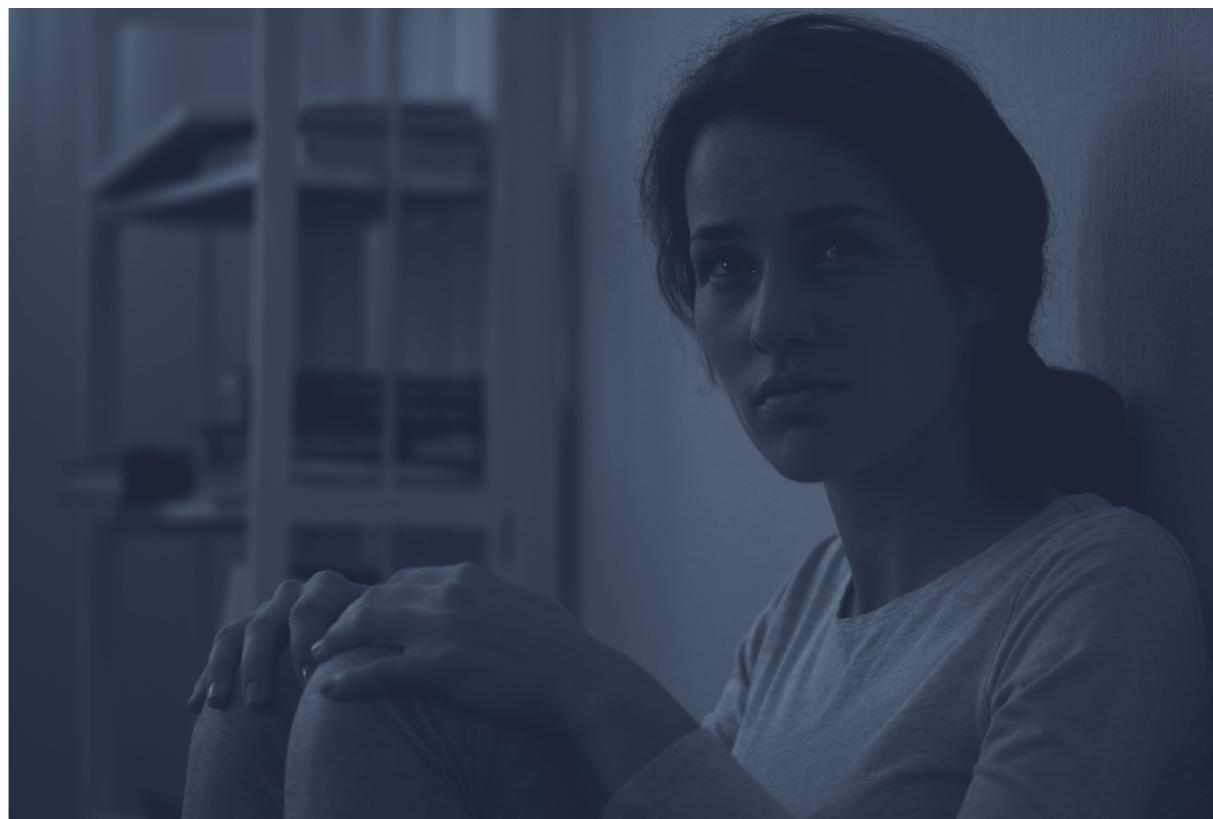
Level of freedom

Only 24% of domestic workers reported that they 'always' had control of their daily working hours, with 16% of the sample reporting that they 'never' had any such control. Thirty-eight percent reported that they 'sometimes' had control of their daily working time, while others reported that they felt the need to account to their employees for their activities. As one of our respondents (female, 45+), who had been in her most recent role for less than one month, described:

'...dealing with kids specially if parents don't care how their children treat us. Employers don't see how hard you've been working (for) more than 12hrs a day and still questioning you what you have been doing.'

The opaque nature of domestic work is a result, in part, on its private household setting and that such work in a household may be done repetitively many times each day. The 35% of our sample who stayed and worked full-time with their employers reported less control over their own time than others who lived separately from where they were employed. Meanwhile, many of the migrant domestic workers represented (59% of the sample) needed to remain securely in their job to retain their right to live in the UK for visa reasons. Most members of the UK labour market can choose where they stay or rest regardless of the time and intensity of the job. Seven percent of our domestic worker sample reported that they could not make such decisions freely. This reliance upon a tied-work visa and the fear of both losing their job and the right to remain in the UK could provide a perverse incentive to stay in exploitative conditions.

The relatively precarious nature of domestic work, added to uncertainties related to the level of freedom, creates exploitation risk for domestic workers. Despite 18% and 30% of the sample describing their working conditions as 'very good' and 'good' respectively, there were still 8% of domestic workers who were employed in 'poor' and 7% of domestic workers who reported facing 'unacceptable' working conditions.



Payment

Regardless of employment type, the wage structure of the sample of domestic workers reveals concerning levels of wage exploitation across the sector with a total of 43% of workers reporting that they received less than the National Living Wage (NLW). This national regulation sets a legal minimum wage for employees and workers in the UK ([Gov.uk](#)). These legal regulations stipulate the cost of apprentice labour (under 18), rising with age to a legal national living wage for those who are 23 years or older. Our sample consists of domestic workers who were all above the age of 23, and for whom all of those who reported their status as either an employee or worker deserved to be paid the national living wage of at least at £10.42 per hour.

However, as illustrated in table 5, over 28% of respondents who indicated that they were either employees or workers, and therefore legally entitled to the national living wage, reported illegal levels of pay, with a further 15% of those identifying themselves as self-employed receiving wages below this national living wage level. Five per cent of all the domestic workers surveyed were paid under £5.28 per hour, with 4% of the sample paid only between £5.28 and £7.49. Furthermore, over 22 percent of these domestic workers reported payments of between £7.49 and £10.18. Only 54% of the sample received a payment at or above the national living wage level.

If they do not have ‘worker’ status or the family exemption applies, domestic workers are not legally entitled to the national living wage. However again, as shown in the table 5 and table 6, self-employed or employee domestic workers were more likely to receive a wage under £5.28.

“

Our sample consists of domestic workers who were all above the age of 23... an employee or worker deserved to be paid the national living wage of at least at £10.42 per hour.”

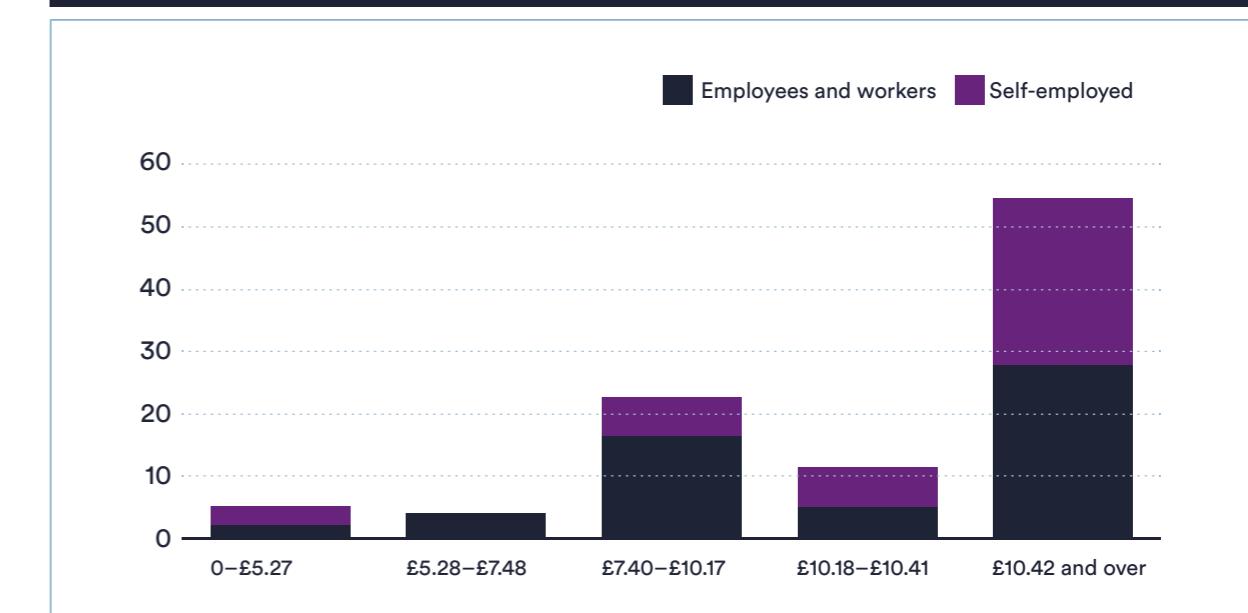


Table 5: Comparison of wage and age structure

National minimum / living wage	Age range provided by Gov.uk	Age structure of sample	Wage structure of employee and worker status	Wage structure of self-employed
£0–£5.27	/	/	2%	3%
£5.28	Apprentice / under 18	0	4%	0
£7.49	18-20	0	16%	6%
£10.18	21-22	0	5%	6%
£10.42	23 and over	97	28%	27%

(2% of sample described as ‘I don’t know’ for their wage). More information on National Minimum Wage can be found at [HM Government](#). ‘/’ means no data available.

Table 6: Reported hourly wages of employees and workers and the self-employed



Similar to the wage level, the frequency of payment is relevant to the financial exploitation of labour. Only 28% of domestic workers in the sample were paid monthly, with most workers paid weekly (55%), and 11% paid daily. Frequency of income impacts the sense of vulnerability of domestic workers. Over 6% of respondent domestic workers reported that the frequency of their payments varied, painting a precarious picture for the sector.

Perhaps of even greater concern, 29% of domestic workers reported that part of their wages was used to pay off a debt to someone who helped them to find work. The fear of not being able to pay off debt of this sort may provide further motivation for domestic workers to accept potential poor working conditions and lower wages as domestic workers pay back their debts to the person who helped them to travel and set up initial arrangements for their life in the UK.

The situation is even worse for some of the domestic workers sampled, with 41% of respondents reporting that their employers had withheld their income. The fear of failing to pay debtors while employers control payment for work done places the domestic worker in a position where they may have no other option but to remain silent and accept excessive working hours and lower wages, or otherwise lose their only source of income and right to continue to work in the UK.

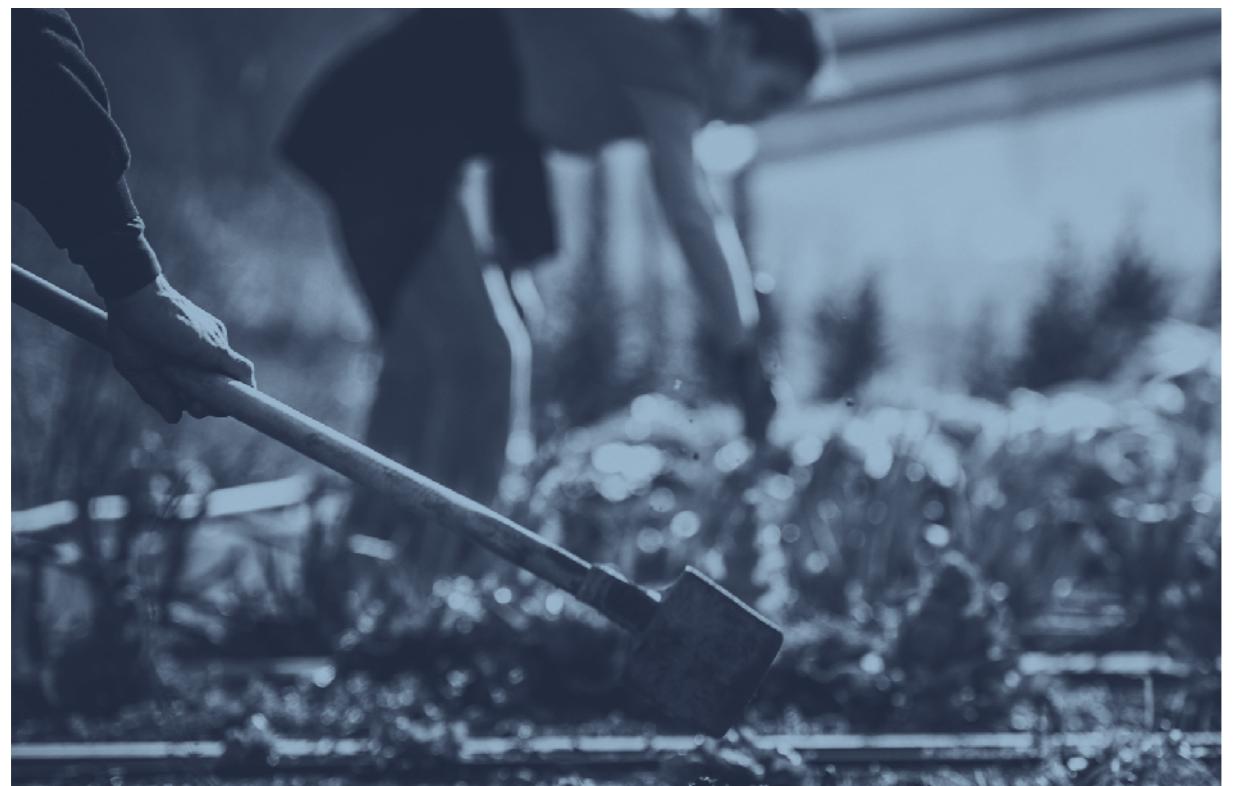
Physical experience

Combined with the controlling behaviours, limitations on their freedom and the lack of adequate or withheld pay discussed earlier, the exploitation reported by domestic workers also had a physical aspect. Over a third of the domestic workers sampled had experienced some form of abuse, harassment, or physical violence. A quarter of the domestic workers sampled even reported a lasting injury as a result of an assault by their employers. Among the sample, 10% of the domestic workers reported that they had experienced sexual violence as a result of their work situation.

Over 82% of domestic workers reported that they had suffered verbal abuse by their employers. This included shouting, verbal insults, attempts at humiliation and name calling. For a quarter of the sample population, verbal abuse happened often in their daily work. One of the challenges for domestic workers was described by respondents as the need to

‘deal with other people and employers’ character [temper].’

The fear of being abused was further strengthened by these threatening and intimidating behaviours. A quarter of the domestic workers surveyed reported that they were ‘always’ threatened or intimidated by their employers. While 42% of the sample expressed experiencing some level of threatening and intimidation abuse during their work.



Labour rights

Our survey evidence suggests that employers take advantage both of a lack of awareness by domestic workers of their rights, and the lack of rights afforded by some employment statuses. Within the sample, a quarter of the domestic workers surveyed reported that they did not have the option to negotiate working arrangements with their employers. Most domestic workers (61%) expressed that they did not have a signed and written contract from their employers. For those domestic workers who described their status as an employee, over 47% did not have a signed contract. While some parts of a contract may be verbal and implicit, in the UK an employer has to give a worker a written statement of the main terms of their employment contract. Having a written statement provides domestic workers with a level of certainty, which is especially important for those workers who need a job as a requirement for their visa to stay in the country.

Table 3 [on page 20] shows that employment status creates distinctive differences in the rights and obligations for domestic workers, and as such the legal situation for each of these types of domestic worker varies. The existing literature already provides evidence that domestic workers suffer from low wages, excessive hours and poor working conditions. However, the lasting and continuous exploitation of labour rights of domestic workers in the UK is fuelled by such legal inconsistencies which result from this divergent employment status, and which are reflected in different employer responsibilities. As an example, there is no guarantee of maximum working hours or a national minimum or living wage for self-employed workers.

However, regardless of employment status, domestic workers often reported feeling overworked. Employers make use of the legal gap between different employment status to push domestic workers to work overtime, while workers and the self-employed enjoyed more limited legal protections. More than 14% of the domestic workers sampled ‘always’ felt that they were working excessively, while 12% and 45% of workers ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’ felt this way. One respondent mentioned:

‘The long hours of work with no time off. It is very difficult to take care of an adult or a child 24 hours a day and the family does not understand that you need time off.’

Our findings also suggest that insufficient rest and breaks are a widespread problem. Only 42% of the sample reported that they always had a weekly break that lasted longer than 24 hours. And the problem is compounded where payment is not forthcoming for these extra hours. Of these respondents, for those who reported that they were self-employed domestic workers (27 respondents), 61% did not always enjoy a 24-hour period of rest each week. Of those who were employees (18 respondents), over 47% did not always enjoy 24 hours consecutive rest per week, while of those who classified themselves as workers (11 respondents), over 73% did not always enjoy this right. Excessive working was also reported most by self-employed workers, with over 95% of all self-employed domestic workers (41 respondents) describing this as their experience. Ninety-three percent of all domestic workers with worker status (14 respondents) reported that they had experienced excessive working hours compared with around 76% (29 respondents) of all those surveyed who were employees.

“... there is no guarantee of maximum working hours or a national minimum or living wage for self-employed workers.”

The domestic work sector relies on upon personal networks and connections. Domestic workers frequently rely on personal connections to find and secure a job. More than 68% of the sample found their most recent jobs through personal recommendation, with a further 16% of the sample reporting that they found work in response to a private advertisement. This reliance on personal recommendation and private adverts reinforces the hierarchical power structures that exist between employers and workers.

Domestic workers, especially those who live with their employers, also reported suffering from exploitation in relation to their privacy. Only 44% of the domestic worker sample expressed that they did not feel a lack of privacy in their work, while a further 44% of the sample felt that they 'often' suffered from a lack of privacy due to the strict supervision of their employers.

Mental health

The ILO indicators of forced labour include isolation. The research operationalised the understanding of 'isolation' in association with the network of domestic workers, as well as in terms of friendships outside of work. Around 12% of the sample expressed that they did not have any friends outside of work. Working conditions could also add to the mental pressure of domestic workers, as one respondent mentioned:

'... but the dog, he is bigger than me in the house.'

Well-being and support

While the labour rights of domestic workers may create a diverse range of pressures, domestic workers also reported threats to their well-being and adequate levels of support to ensure their personal health and safety. Over 15% of domestic workers reported that employers and agents 'always' withheld their travel and identity documents, and a further 10% of employers or agents 'sometimes' did so.

Meanwhile, only 34% of domestic workers expressed that they were provided with good-quality food, water and sanitation. Regardless of their employment status, domestic workers who lived full-time in the work premise faced serious – and potentially hazardous – health and safety problems where access to food, water or sanitation was not available to them. Furthermore, another aspect of physical well-being is represented by access to medical services. More than 19% of the domestic workers did not have or did not know where to access medical care.

In addition, a lack of knowledge about UK society would mean that domestic workers might not know how to seek help when necessary. Over 44% of the domestic workers sampled did not know who might help them if they were not being properly paid or treated. This is a troubling statistic, if recourse to the full range of existing enforcement powers is to be improved.

"Only 34% of domestic workers expressed that they were provided with good-quality food, water and sanitation."

Conclusion and recommendations

Labour exploitation among domestic workers may be considered the result of problematic interactions between two main parties – the employer and the domestic worker themselves. This relationship, however, is governed by an equally problematic socio-legal context in the UK created by policymakers. Solutions to fix the spectrum of exploitative behaviours which can, in extreme cases, result in severe forms of labour abuse such as modern slavery, forced labour and servitude, therefore need to consider this wider regulatory context if there is to be systemic improvement across the sector. While the criminalisation of labour exploitation enshrined in the UK Modern Slavery Act is to be welcomed, to reduce exploitation, more emphasis needs to be put on the effective protection of workers' rights and provision of suitable remedies for the survivors' sufferings.

Based upon our quantified data, this report identifies four main areas for recommendations.

First, further action is needed by policymakers to regulate private employers.

The private nature of the sector means that employers and private households are convinced that their actions are not seen or known about, and that any physical or mental exploitation will not result in any form of punishment. The absence of control of these employers intensifies the exploitation risks faced by domestic workers. Employers need to be regularly checked and the legal power of labour inspection extended to the homes in which domestic workers live to identify cases of non-compliance. Greater transparency is required of employers to ensure domestic workers' labour rights and well-being is protected.

We recommend therefore that the UK government introduces a registration scheme for employers of domestic workers.

Our results in relation to job satisfaction also have implications for policymakers, as they seek to address inequalities in domestic workers' pay and conditions.

Given the diversity of employment statuses we found represented in our sample, there is a case to be made that policies such as an exemption from the National Minimum and Living Wage regulations should not apply to those in domestic work. This is coupled with a need to provide further support to ensure the right to holidays, basic pay, overtime pay and childcare are commensurate with those of other workers.

We recommend that the UK government prepares the way for UK ratification of ILO C189: Domestic workers convention (2011) by ensuring that the employment conditions of domestic workers are no less favourable than those enjoyed by other UK workers. This would include the removal of tied visas for domestic work. Many domestic workers also mentioned the precarious nature of their job, especially after retirement. The lack of social insurance for domestic workers needs to be addressed if parity between domestic and other workers is to be ensured. Furthermore, rather than the three separate labour market enforcement bodies that currently exist, a single enforcement body would provide a clear and easy pathway for workers to lodge cases related to the full range of exploitation evidenced here.

Thirdly, education and training to raise awareness among domestic workers, their employers and the wider public may be necessary.

Public campaigns about the value of domestic work for employers and society are needed. Targeted awareness-raising about the potential for human rights and labour abuse problems among domestic workers may be beneficial.

To increase domestic workers' agency and improve working conditions across the sector, we recommend that UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) build upon existing work to increase the provision of rights-based training, information and encourage peer-to-peer support among domestic workers arriving in the UK and, through the embassies of the source countries from which domestic workers are recruited, specifically explain the limited circumstances in which UK employers can make legal deductions from an employee or workers' wages; how to make a claim related to wage deductions and other illegal employment practices through an employment tribunal; and to signpost domestic workers to governmental and non-governmental organisations operating to protect the rights of workers in the UK including labour market enforcement bodies, such as:

- The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (by emailing: intelligence@gla.gov.uk)
- His Majesty's Revenue and Customs National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage team ([HMRC NMW](#))
- Citizens Advice and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) by using their telephone helpline and associated interpretation service on 0300 1231100 (or, for those that cannot speak on the telephone, its text relay service on 18001 0300 123 1100).

Trust in these authorities is vital if vulnerable migrant domestic workers are to have the confidence to report abuse.

This leads to our fourth recommendation, which is that the UK Government introduces a firewall between immigration and labour market enforcement bodies.



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Appendices

Survey questions

1. Introduction

- 1a. Have you worked in any form of domestic work in the UK in the past 12 months?
- Yes
 - No

1. Introduction

Please answer the following questions in relation to your current, or most recent, employment as a domestic worker.

- 1b. How long were you/have you been in your most recent domestic worker role?
- One month or less
 - Between one and six months
 - Between six months and one year
 - Between one and three years
 - More than three years
- 1c. How often do you stay overnight in your workplace?
- Never
 - Once a month
 - At least once a week
 - I live at my workplace full-time

2. Basic Information

- 2a. What is your nationality?
- British
 - Other (Please specify)

If you selected Other, please specify:

- 2b. How long have you been in the UK?
- Less than 3 months
 - Between three months and one year
 - Between one and three years
 - More than three years

- 2c. What is your gender

- Male Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

2d. How old are you?

- Under 18
- 18-20
- 21-22
- 23-25
- 26-35
- 35-45
- 45+

- 2e. If you come from overseas, do you believe that you have to stay in the job you are in as a condition to stay in the UK?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- I do not come from overseas

- 2f. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who are engaged in domestic work in the UK (please answer based on the number of domestic workers whose contact details you have in your contacts list on your mobile phone)? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know).
- Please enter a whole number (integer).

- 2g. Of these people, do you know anyone personally of any other domestic workers who are DISSATISFIED with their current working conditions? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know)
- Please enter a whole number (integer).

3. Job Tasks – Please answer the questions in relation to your current, or most recent, role as a domestic worker

- 3a. How long have you been working (part-time or full-time) in the domestic work industry in the UK?
- Under a year
 - One to three years
 - Between three years and five years
 - Between five years and ten years
 - Over ten years

3b. In terms of weekly hours, on average I work____:

- 0-5 hours
- 6-12 hours
- 13-16 hours
- 17-35 hours
- 35-40 hours
- 40-45 hours
- 45-70 hours
- 70+ hours

3c. On average, how many hours do you/did you work each day?

- Under 8 hours
- 8-12 hours
- 12-20 hours
- Up to 24 hours

3d. Please select the tasks that you were/ are required to perform (Please select all that apply)

- Cleaning the house
- Washing up and drying dishes
- Taking care of an adult
- Cooking
- Taking care of a child
- Grocery shopping
- Other work in or for a household (please specify)

If you selected Other, please specify:

4. Job Satisfaction and Autonomy

4a. To what extent would you say you enjoy your job and working conditions?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4b. Employer Relations: What best describes your relationship with your most recent employer?

- We are close like a family
- We became friends
- We are not so close, but we respect each other
- We don't have any interaction apart from my job
- They disrespect me and only see me as a paid worker

4c. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who do NOT have good relations with their employers? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know). Insert number here
 Please enter a whole number (integer).

4d. How much do you like your profession?
 I enjoy my profession
 I am good at it but do not like it
 Neutral
 I don't enjoy it
 I don't know

4e. How satisfied are you with your working conditions?
 Very Satisfied
 Satisfied
 Neutral
 Not satisfied
 Extremely unsatisfied

4f. Do you ever feel like moving from your current job to another employer?
 Always
 Often
 Sometimes
 Never
 I don't know

4g. We want to understand the extent of job satisfaction problems, do you know personally of any other domestic workers who do NOT enjoy their work? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know). Insert number here
 Please enter a whole number (integer).

4h. Which of the following elements are important to your satisfaction?

4h1. Flexible working arrangements (your ability to reduce the number of the hours, or when, you work)
 Very Important
 Important
 Neutral
 Not so Important
 Not a concern at all
 I don't know

4h2. Nature of supervision (the way your employer checks your work)

- Very Important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not so important
- Not a concern at all
- I don't know

4h3. The basic level of pay

- Very Important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not so important
- Not a concern at all
- I don't know

4h4. Opportunities for increasing earnings through overtime

- Very Important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not so important
- Not a concern at all
- I don't know

4h5. Opportunities for increasing earnings through promotion

- Very Important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not so important
- Not a concern at all
- I don't know

4h6. Your relationship with your co-workers

- Very Important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not so important
- Not a concern at all
- I don't know

4h7. Any childcare or childcare-related benefits

- Very Important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not so important
- Not a concern at all
- I don't know

4h8. The holidays that you are allowed

- Very Important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not so Important
- Not a concern at all
- I don't know

4i. Taken as a whole, did the pay and benefits in your most recent role meet your expectations?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

4j. How important do you feel your safety in the workplace is to your employer?

- Very important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not so important
- Not a concern at all
- I don't know

5. Indicators (A): Level of Freedom

Please answer the following questions in relation to your current, or most recent, role as a domestic worker:

5a1. Have you ever been forced to do any work by your employer or household against your will?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5a2. Do you have control over the times of the day that you work?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5a3. Do you have the freedom to decide how you do your tasks?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5a4. In your most recent job, have you ever felt that you could not leave your work premises?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5a5. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers that are currently experiencing any restrictions on their freedom? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know).

Insert number here

5a6. How would you describe your working conditions?

- Very good
- Good
- Acceptable
- Poor
- Unacceptable

If poor to unacceptable, can you briefly explain why?

5a7. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers that suffer from bad working conditions? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know).

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5. Indicators (B): Payment

Please answer the following questions in relation to your current, or most recent, role as a domestic worker:

5b1. How much are you paid an hour, before tax and other deductions?

- 0 - £5.27
- £5.28 - £7.48
- £7.49 - £10.17
- £10.18 - £10.41
- £10.42 and over
- I don't know

5b2. How frequently are you paid?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- It varies
- I don't know

5b3. Can you tell me what the hourly legal minimum wage is for the work that you do? (Please enter this in the format of £xx.xx per hour, or state "0" if you do not know).

Required figure

5b4. Do you have to use some or all of what you earn to pay off a debt to someone who helped you find work?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

5b5. Were you already in the UK or overseas when you incurred the debt?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

5b6. Did the debt cover your travel to come to the UK?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

5b7. Has your pay ever been withheld by your employer?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5b8. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who have experienced problems with debt or pay? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know). Insert number here

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5. Indicators (C): Physical Experience

Please answer the following questions in relation to your current, or most recent, role as a domestic worker:

5c1. Have you experienced any forms of abuse, harassment, or physical violence?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Have you suffered any injuries as a result of the assault?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Have you ever experienced sexual violence?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

5c2. Have you been forced, deceived or threatened into poor working conditions?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

5c3. Can you choose whether or not to stay permanently in the household overnight?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5c4. Has your employer ever threatened or intimidated you?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5c5. Has your employer ever verbally abused you (e.g. shouted, insulted, tried to humiliate you, or called you names, etc.)?

- Yes, Often
- Yes, Sometimes
- Maybe once or twice
- Never
- I don't know

How often does this happen per month on average? Insert number

5c6. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers that have had any experiences related to the use of threat or force? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know). Insert number here

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5. Indicators (D): Labour Rights

Please answer the following questions in relation to your current, or most recent, role as a domestic worker:

5d1. Do you have the option to negotiate your working arrangements?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

5d2. Do you have a written statement or a signed contract with your agency or employer?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If so, have you been requested to perform additional unpaid tasks outside your agreed responsibilities?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

5d3. Are you self-employed, work as an employee, or work under a domestic work agency (agency worker)?

- Self-employed
- Employee
- Agency worker

5d4. Would you like to check the employment protections to which you are entitled?

- Yes
- No

Indicators D(2): Labour Rights

Please tick the option that applies to you:

- 1. employment protections for a privately-employed worker
- 2. employment protection for an agency worker
- 3. return to main survey

Indicators D(2): Labour Rights

Please mark, if you have NOT received any of the following (you can select more than one option):

- Protection from unlawful deductions from wages
- 5.6 weeks of paid annual leave (both part-time and full-time)
- The statutory minimum length of rest breaks: one 20 minute rest break during working day for more than 6 hours of each work day; 11 hours rest between working days and a 24 hour break without any work each week.
- To work no more than 48 hours on average per week or to opt out of this right if you choose
- Protection against unlawful discrimination
- Protection for 'whistle blowers' who report wrongdoing in the workplace
- Sick pay
- Maternity pay
- Paternity pay
- Parental pay

Indicators D(2): Labour Rights

Please mark if you have NOT received the following information as part of your contract (you can select more than one option):

- The minimum rate of pay you can expect
- A sample payslip giving an estimate of your take home pay after things like National Insurance, Income Tax or private healthcare
- Who is paying you
- If you have any fees to pay
- If you're entitled to any benefits

Indicators D(3): Labour Rights

5d5. Who is your employer?

- A private individual
- An agency
- I'm self-employed
- Other (please specify)
- I don't know

If you selected Other, please specify:__

5d6. How did you get your most recent job?

- Personal referral
- Responding to a private advertisement
- Through a UK-based agency
- Through an agency based overseas
- Other (please specify)

If you selected Other, please specify:__

5d7. How good is a match there between your skills and qualifications and the requirements of your role?

- There is a good match
- I am over-qualified for this role
- I am underqualified for this role
- I don't know

5d8. Does your weekly rest last longer than 24 hours consecutively?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5d9. How often have you worked overtime than that you felt was excessive?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5d10. Do you feel you suffer from a lack of privacy in your work?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5d11. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who have experienced any of the above related to labour rights? (Including working excessive overtime, a failure to obtain daily or weekly breaks or annual leave) If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know). Insert number here

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5. Indicators (E): Mental Health

Please answer the following questions in relation to your current, or most recent, role as a domestic worker:

5e1. Do you have friends outside your work?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

5e2. Do you feel you rely too much on your employer for emotional support?

- Yes
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5e3. Please tick all that apply to you:

- I am generally comfortable and happy.
- I am generally fearful and anxious.
- I am interested and engaged in activities outside my work.
- I am not interested or engaged in activities outside my work.
- I am generally happy, calm and peaceful.
- I am generally shifting between sadness and aggression.
- I believe I can trust others around me.
- I find it difficult to trust others.
- I can make my own decisions.
- I find it difficult to make even simple decisions.
- I don't have any problems with concentration or memory.
- I often have problems with concentration and memory.
- Other, please specify

If you selected Other, please specify:__

5e4. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who suffer from mental ill health? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know) Insert number here

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5. Indicators (F): Well-being and Support

Please answer the following questions in relation to your current, or most recent, role as a domestic worker:

5f1. Does your agent or employer ever speak to people in authority (e.g. government official; local authority representative or inspection agency) on your behalf?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5f2. Has your employer, or their agent, withheld from you your travel and identity documentation?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5f3. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who do not have access to their own travel and identity documents? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know) Insert number

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5f4. Do you feel your working environment is safe and healthy?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5f5. Do you have access to medical care?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

5f6. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who do not have access to medical care? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state 'zero' if this does not apply to anyone you know) Insert number here

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5f7. Other than family or friends, have you met with anyone who wanted to check on your wellbeing or working conditions?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5f8. Do you have access to good-quality food, water and sanitation?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't know

5f9. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who suffer from bad environmental conditions? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know) Insert number here.

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5f10. Do you know who might help you if you are not being properly paid or properly treated?

- Yes
- No

5f11. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who do NOT know where to go for help? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know)

Please enter a whole number (integer).

NRM (National Referral Mechanism)

5f12. Have you or someone you know personally been advised to enter the NRM?

- I have been advised to enter the NRM and was referred I was advised, but decided not to enter the NRM
- I know someone personally who was advised to enter the NRM and was referred
- I know someone personally who was advised to enter the NRM, but decided not to
- No
- I don't know

NRM (National Referral Mechanism) 1

5f13. How accessible did you find the NRM system?

- Very accessible
- Fairly accessible
- Fairly inaccessible
- Very inaccessible
- No opinion

5f14. Which, if any, organisations supported your referral?

- the police
- the Home Office
- UK Visas and Immigration
- Border Force
- Immigration Enforcement
- National Crime Agency
- A local authority
- Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA)
- Salvation Army
- Migrant Help
- Medaille Trust
- Kalayaan
- Barnardo's
- Unseen
- NSPCC (CTAC)
- BAWSO
- New Pathways
- Refugee Council
- Other (please specify)
- I did not receive any formal support
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:_____

5f15. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who went through the NRM system? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know). Insert number

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5f16. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who have suffered from severe forms of labour exploitation such as human trafficking or modern slavery who have NOT used the NRM? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know) Insert number here

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5f17. In what, if any, ways could the NRM system be made more accessible for domestic workers?

NRM (National Referral Mechanism) 2

5f18. Why did you not want to be referred?

5f15. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who went through the NRM system? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know). Insert number

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5f16. Do you know personally of any other domestic workers who have suffered from severe forms of labour exploitation such as human trafficking or modern slavery who have NOT used the NRM? If so, how many? (Please indicate the number, or state '0' if this does not apply to anyone you know) Insert number here

Please enter a whole number (integer).

5f17. In what, if any, ways could the NRM system be made more accessible for domestic workers?

Please enter a whole number (integer).

NRM (National Referral Mechanism) 3

5f14. Which, if any, organisations supported their referral?

Required

If you selected Other, please specify:_____

5f17. In what, if any, ways could the NRM system be made more accessible for domestic workers?

NRM (National Referral Mechanism) 4

5f18. Why did they not want to be referred?

5f17. In what, if any, ways could the NRM system be made more accessible for domestic workers?

6. Conclusion and Contact Numbers

6a. What do you think is the most satisfying aspect of your work?

6b. What do you think is the most unsatisfactory aspect of your work?

6c. Are there ways your work could be done that would make it easier for you?

6d. Please add any further comments.

6e. With the questions asked above, what do you feel best describes the working conditions that you experience as a domestic worker?

- Decent work
- Acceptable work
- Neither decent work nor exploitation
- Minor Exploitation
- Severe Exploitation
- I don't know

6f. Tick as many as that applies to what you want to do next [tick fore more info]_____

- I am happy to carry on with my job as it is
- I would like help to make changes to my job
- I would like to move to do the same type of work but in a different place
- I would like to do a different job (please explain what)
- I don't know
- Other

More info

If you selected Other, please specify:_____

Conclusion

Once you submit your survey, one of our team will phone you to confirm your reward voucher, please do not hesitate to let us know your thoughts.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. If you would like to nominate other domestic workers working in the UK whom you know personally

complete this survey, you can do so now. You will be rewarded with an additional £5 Tesco voucher for each domestic worker that we approach and who completes a survey!

Would you like to nominate another domestic worker to complete this survey?

- Yes
- No

Please enter below the mobile number of the domestic worker that you would like to nominate (Please obtain their permission first).

Contact number 1: Optional_____

Contact number 2:_____

Contact number 3: Optional_____

Contact number 4:_____

Contact number 5:_____

Conclusion

If completing this survey has raised any concerns for you about your own situation or the working conditions of someone that you know, you can read our signposting guide that includes the contact details for organisations that will be able to offer you further guidance and support.

https://static.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/media/account/171/survey/986708/question/signposting_guide.pdf Thank you again for your interest and participation in the survey.

Claim

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey.

Your responses are very important to us.

Please insert your own mobile phone number and email address here to claim your voucher:

Contact Number: _____

Email: _____

If you wish, please use this space to add any further comments that you would like to make.



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