

2022

**PERSPECTIVES OF MIGRANT WORKERS FROM
TURKEY IN LONDON'S LABOUR MARKETS**

REPORT

PREPARED BY

**REFUGEE AND WORKERS
CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
GIK-DER UK**

**WEDGE HOUSE,
WHITE HART LN,
LONDON N17 8HJ**

☎ 07938 844942

✉ gikderuk@gmail.com

🌐 www.rwca.org.uk

This research and report
has been funded by
Trust for London Better
Work Programme


Trust for London
Tackling poverty and inequality


GIK-DER


RWCA
refugee & workers cultural association

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out using questionnaires which utilised both quantitative and qualitative methods. Data was obtained from 351 face-to-face and 67 online surveys of Turkish and Kurdish speaking migrant workers in London between 10 December 2021 and 10 May 2022. The questionnaire included 1 sliding scale question and 29 multiple choice questions.

Participants were limited to Turkish and Kurdish speaking migrant workers from Turkey across various sectors in a bid to accumulate more targeted and specific data sets in accordance with the Social Scientific method.

Field work took place at an array of locations where migrants from Turkey traditionally socialise and work such as social clubs, community, faith, religious, and cultural centres alongside restaurants, cafes, markets and off licenses. Each interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. With consent from participants, some interviews were recorded in audio and video formats alongside the paper questionnaire. The rate of audio and video agreement was limited due to the participants' concerns. Furthermore, due to ethical anxieties relating to some of these concerns, as well as those surrounding data protection, participants' personal details such as names and addresses were not recorded.

Interview questions are classified under five headings. The first part concerned demographic information. The second part engaged with queries

around immigration, such as the date of arrival to the UK, relative conditions, circumstances and current status. The third part was related to working conditions, such as hours, earnings, workplace conditions, treatment, and whether participants were aware of their general rights surrounding employment. The fourth part involved participants' living conditions. The fifth and final part was concerned with the social and family lives of participants outside of immediate living and working conditions.

Further to direct issues, a large proportion of the labour in question constitutes or is relative to discussions surrounding the informal economy. As per the International Labour Organisation (ILO): 'Work in the informal economy is often characterized by small or undefined work places, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, low levels of skills and productivity, low or irregular incomes, long working hours and lack of access to information, markets, finance, training and technology. Workers in the informal economy are not recognized, registered, regulated or protected under labour legislation and social protection. The root causes of informality include elements related to the economic context, the legal, regulatory and policy frameworks and to some micro level determinants such as low level of education, discrimination, poverty and, as mentioned above, lack of access to economic resources, to property, to financial and other business services and to markets. The high incidence of the informal economy is a major challenge for the rights of workers and decent working conditions and has a negative impact on enterprises, public revenues, government's scope of action, soundness of institutions and fair competition.'

A BRIEF HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION FROM TURKEY TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

Immigration from Turkey to the United Kingdom started with diplomatic agreements between the two countries in the 1960s. When compared with other European countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, immigration from Turkey to the UK in this period is less notable. However, as a result of socio-political conditions in Turkey, immigration spiked in the 1980s. In particular, the Maraş massacre of Alevis in 1978 led to a wave of migration of Alevi-Kurds. The military coup of September 12th 1980 further intensified this situation. The late 1980's and early 1990's were the most intense period of immigration from Turkey to the United Kingdom as these were predominantly political migrants that claimed asylum in the UK. In the 2000's the ECAA-2 method otherwise known as Ankara Agreement, signed between Turkey and the European Community in 1963, facilitated and granted the right of permanent residence to individuals from Turkey who set up their own business in the UK. This became the most significant source of migration in the last 20 years. Beneficiaries then had the opportunity to bring their families to the UK. The Ankara Agreement was terminated by the UK on 31 December 2019 upon cessation of the UK's EU membership.

‘One of the addresses of emigration from Turkey to abroad is the United Kingdom. When we look at the Ankara Agreement applications made from Turkey and the United Kingdom by years, it is seen that the interest in the agreement has increased in recent years. The number of applications in the last four years constitutes 46% of the total applications made since 2002. This shows that the United Kingdom is one of the important addresses of Turkey's out-migration in recent years.’ (Bilecen, 2020)

In general, Immigration is the result of a lack of human rights in the lands worked and lived on. If we look at migrant workers from Turkey to London specifically, we see immigration in its most crucial form of social, economic and even psychological alienation.



TURKISH AND KURDISH MIGRANT WORKERS – Terminologies

What is a worker?

A worker is someone who does not own or manage any capital of their own, instead selling his or her manual and mental labour to someone who does own or manage capital in exchange for a wage. Turkish and Kurdish migrant workers appear in almost every sector in London, but most predominantly in the retail and hospitality sectors.

What is wage labour?

Wage labour is a relationship between the worker and the employer who buys his or her labour power. Like any commodity, the value of labour power is determined by the socially necessary labour time needed to reproduce itself. This value must account for the many needs of a worker sufficient to allow them to continue to offer their labour in the market, including material needs such as food, shelter, clothes and energy, as well as sociocultural needs which will enable him or her to go back to work the next day. 'Wages' is a broad monetary expression of the value of all these needs. Wage levels are determined indirectly at a socio-historical level by a struggle between workers and employers in general, and in the day-to-day by the relationship between the individual employee and employer which is dependent on the relative strength or weakness of each party.

Migrant workers are more generally in a weaker bargaining position than native ones for a variety of reasons, corresponding, as we will see, to a lower wage level.

What is the minimum wage?

The lowest level that can be legally paid to workers is called the minimum wage, below which workers will not sell their labour. A worker's needs for nutrition, clothing, transportation, health, education, etc. are ostensibly accounted for in determining this level, which varies from country to country. The minimum wage in the UK is set at £9.50 per hour as of April 2022. However, the London Living Wage of 2021/2022 determined that it was necessary to earn at least £11.05 per hour to live in London. Earning less than this amount indicates that the worker will essentially fall short of meeting his or her needs.

THE CONDITION OF MIGRANT WORKERS FROM TURKEY IN LONDON

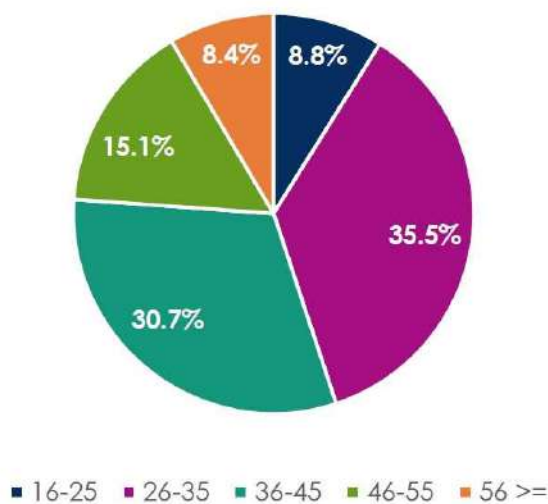
Migrant workers do not simply offer their labour to their employer. They also present their lives and dreams, their pasts and futures. The individual who is compelled to migrate in order to overcome the economic problems of their homeland becomes part of the working class of their new country, but, due to their particular legal and socioeconomic conditions, they are forced to work in worse conditions for lower wages.

Demographic information of the participants

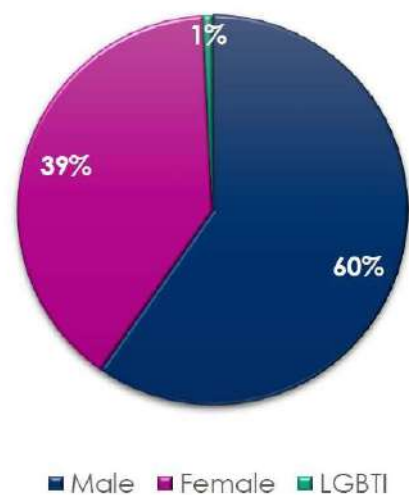
The first data on the demographic status of migrant workers, which constitutes the first part of our research, is related to age group. 35.5% of the participants are between the ages of 26 and 35, making up the largest segment. This is followed by workers between the ages of 36 and 45 at 30.7%. 15.1% are between 46-55 years old, 8.8% are between 16-25 years old and 8.4% are 56 and over.

Participants therefore tend towards being younger in these industries, which may be reflective of the physical stamina and energy required to perform such jobs at such hours.

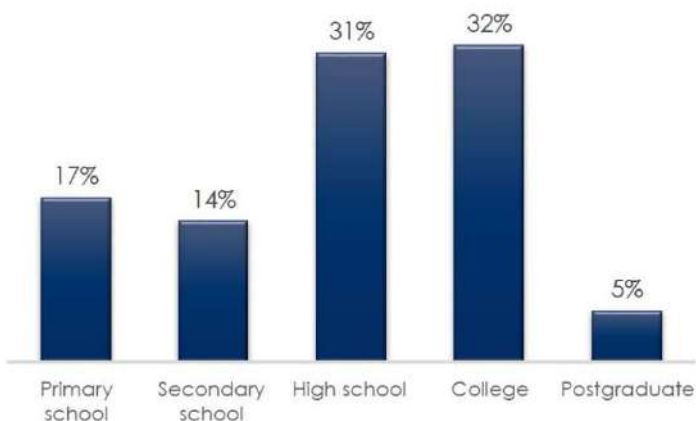
Graphic 1: AGE



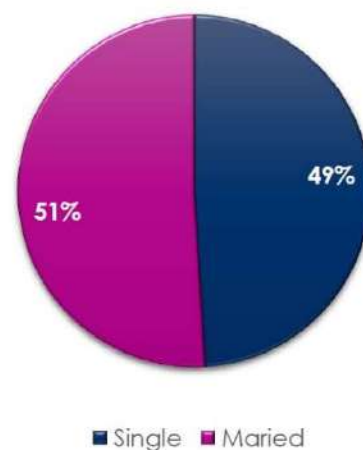
Graphic 2: Gender



Graphic 3: Education



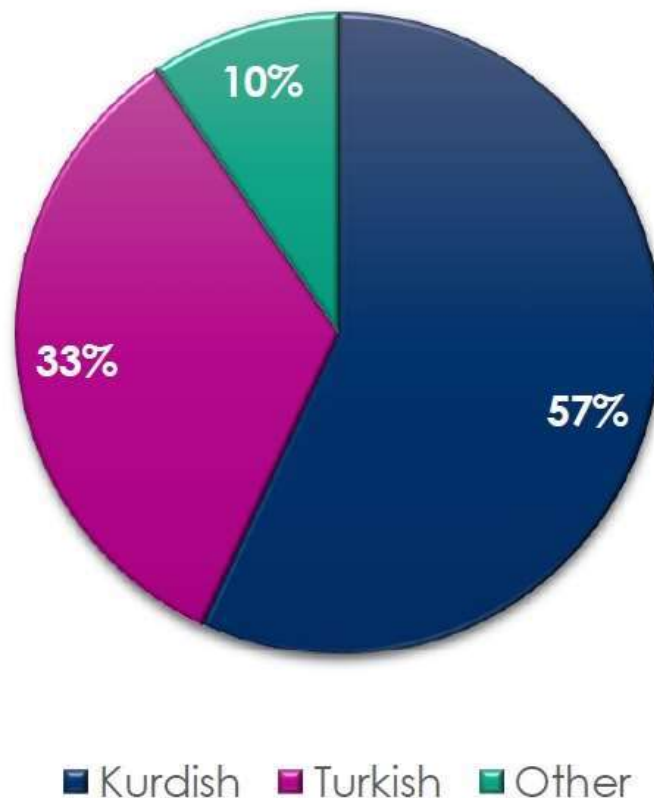
Graphic 4: Marital Status



60% of the participants identified as male and 39% as female, indicating the predominance of the male labour force across the sectors in question. 1% are LGBTI, 51% of participants are married and 49% are single.

The following data on the educational status of migrant workers is also reflective of the level of awareness and enjoyment of workers' rights. Compared to the first wave of migration from Turkey to London, the education level of Turkish and Kurdish migrant workers who have arrived in recent years is quite high. The biggest group, 32%, are university graduates. 5% are educated at graduate and higher levels. 31% are high school graduates, 17% went to primary school and 14% to secondary school. Participants with a higher level of education were more conscious of their rights, but nonetheless could not benefit from these rights due to the victimization and obligation of remaining silent as an immigrant. 51% of participants are married and 49% are single.

Graphic 5: Ethnic Identity



Social connections established through this migrant culture, which is continually renewing itself through social connections and continued migration, constitute a primary dynamic of the “ethnic economy” of the Turkish community in London.

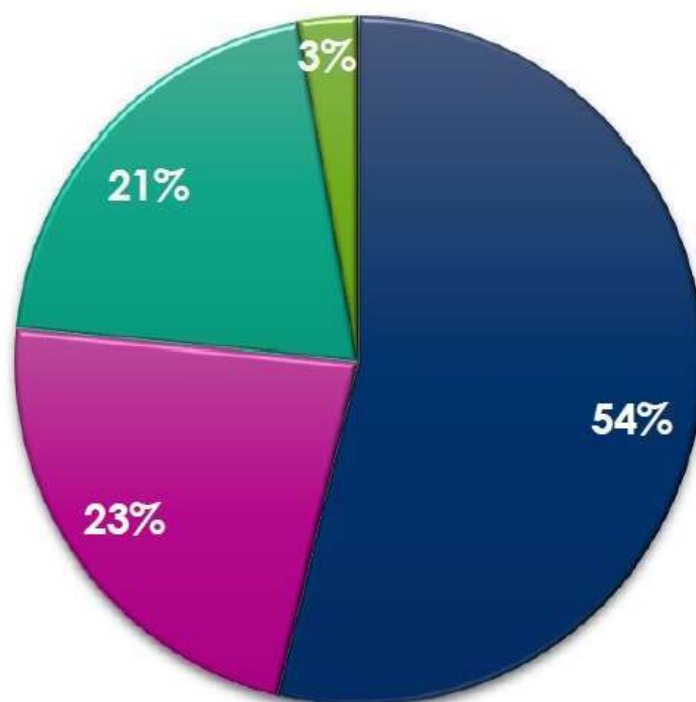
Religious belief has a very important place in the lives of immigrants. As of our study, among Turkish and Kurdish migrant workers, Alevi are the most concentrated belief group with 54%. Muslims (Sunni) come next with 23%. 21% are non-believers.

Faith itself does not concern us in terms of this study, but is important in the sense that when immigrants first arrive, they establish relationships with people with whom they share commonalities of faith, ethnicity, language and other factors. The migrant worker obtains most or all of his or her job opportunities through these commonalities. It is also a factor which conceals exploitation beneath a veil of shared cultural references, be this Turkishness, Kurdishness or Alevism. This is an important foundation of the ethnic economy.

Interviewee 92 says the following about this issue: *“Because I am with my relatives, I am not exposed to ill-treatment or scolding, but there is still a great deal of exploitation of labour. Many employers use and exploit the grievances of Ankara Contractors a lot. Once my wife and I applied for a job at a market, they offered £275 for working 72 hours 6 days a week. We said it was very little, they said if you don't work, you know I can find someone who will.”*

Interviewee 61 says: *“I was working in the Turkish branch of the cafe where I am currently working. I made an Ankara Agreement and started working at its branch in London. My boss asked me to come. We had great problems 1.5 years ago, but since we met the boss for a long time from Turkey, we became like a family, we closed the problem by saying “what happens in the family stays in the family”, but I was still the victim.”*

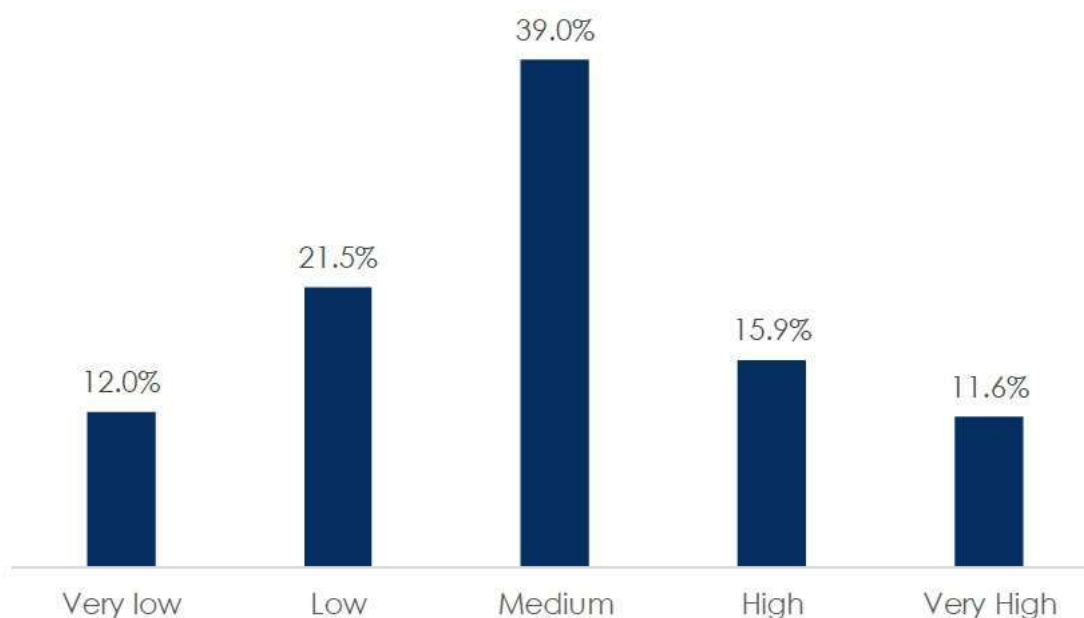
Graphic 6: Religious Belief



■ Alevi ■ Muslim ■ No religious ■ Other

At the beginning of the 1990s, the period when immigration from Turkey to Britain was the most intense, immigrants started to work in this sector by immigrating to the North and East London regions where the textile sector was dominant. Immigrants from Turkey have shown considerable progress and expansion in the textile sector over time. However, due to the textile industry becoming reliant on cheaper labour from overseas, job opportunities decreased especially. In response, Turkish and Kurdish immigrants who accrued a certain amount of savings started businesses such as restaurants, cafes, and off-licenses in North London and have taken control of a large part of that service sector today. One of the biggest reasons immigrants engage in this kind of work is language barriers. Our research shows that migrant workers who speak "Intermediate" English make up the largest segment with 39%. The language barriers of Turkish and Kurdish migrant workers also trap them in the ethnic economy, despite the high level of education we show in Chart 3.

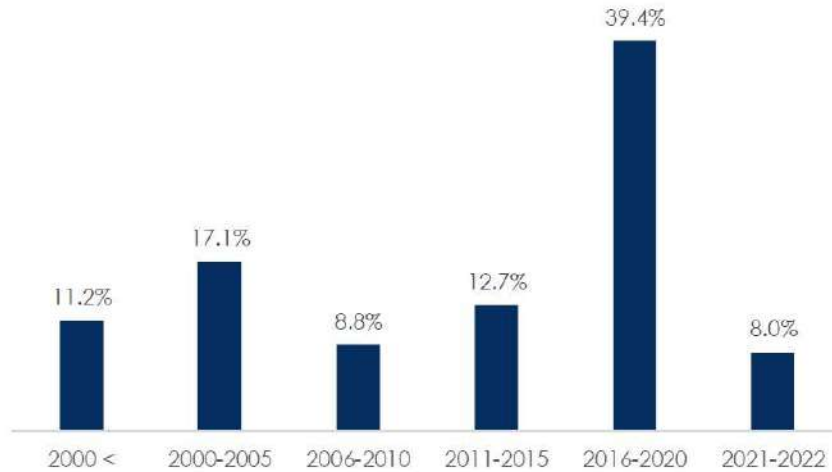
Graphic 7: Level of Proficiency in English



Interviewee 289: *"I have never taken advantage of paid annual leave. Now I learn from you that I have such a right. We do not know the language in order to can seek our rights."*

The second part of our research is on "Immigration Status" of the participants. The majority of the Turkish and Kurdish population living in the UK reside in London. The population of Turkish and Kurdish immigrants continued to increase throughout the 1990s. When we look at the surveys made in terms of our research, the date of immigration to the UK shows the highest, 39.4% having arrived between 2016-20. 8% of them entered the UK in 2020-21. Socioeconomic uncertainty and political tension in Turkey have caused an intense migration wave in recent years. These relatively educated immigrants started to work mostly in the service sector.

Graphic 8. The Year that Arrived in United Kingdom



Visa types of migrant workers give us important clues about their work and working life. As we mentioned in the previous graphic, the increase in recent migration and the excess of migrant workers have emerged due to the Ankara Agreement. Of the 418 workers we surveyed, 175 of them, 42%, are Ankara Agreement workers. Then comes the Political Asylum Seekers with 115 people, 27%. These workers, who generally have a high level of education and speak intermediate English, have found a place for themselves in the ethnic economy.

Ankara Agreement workers are the most exposed to abuse, as they have to work informally due to their visa types which disallow them from working as employees rather than running their own businesses. Their employers use this informal situation to their advantage.

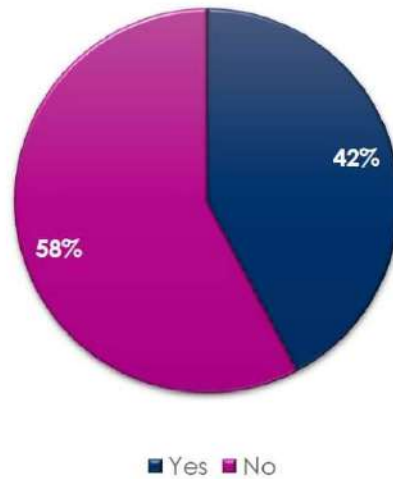
Interviewer 34: *“They pay less salary to those with Ankara Agreement. Sometimes there is boss pressure. Where I used to work, they didn't allow us to drink bottled water, we could only drink tap water. They say not to come to work when the work is quiet, they cut the shifts. They don't even compensate us. But when it comes to work, even when it is very busy, when we work overtime, they do not reward us for our work. We are exhausted.”*

Chart 1. Visa Type

	N	(%)
Ankara Agreement	175	42%
Political Refugee	115	27%
Marriage Visa	82	20%
Tourist Visa	13	3%
Student Visa	13	3%
UK Citizen	12	3%
Corporate Sponsorship	8	2%
Total	418	100%

Although being a British citizen would seem to provide some advantages in terms of job opportunities and worker rights, such a picture does not emerge in our study. According to the census carried out in December 2021, 48,000 Turkish immigrants live in the UK, up from around 44,000 in 2008.¹ Of our 418 participants, 42% are UK citizens. The remaining 52% are not UK citizens.

Graphic 9. UK Citizenship



“Working Status”, the most important part of our research, shows us in which jobs, how many hours a week, how many hours a day Turkish and Kurdish migrant workers work, how much they earn, their employment rights, whether they are aware of and benefit from these rights.

Our research has revealed the existence of serious labour exploitation originating from the common denominator of identities. 330 of the 418 participants, or 79%, found their job through relatives, acquaintances and friends due to such commonalities.

Chart 2. How / where did you find your current job?

	N	(%)
My relative, friend etc...	330	79%
Social Media, newspaper	57	14%
Directly applied	18	4%
Job Center	8	2%
The Community Centre that I am a member of	3	1%
No Answer	2	0%
Total	418	100%

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1253074/turkish-population-in-united-kingdom/#:~:text=There%20were%20approximately%2048%20thousand,the%20United%20Kingdom%20in%202008.>

This situation shows that organising around an identity, migrant or not, does not eliminate exploitation or automatically allocate social justice to protect the basic rights of workers. On the contrary, this network of feudal relations insidiously perpetuates exploitation across borders and prevents workers from enjoying their basic rights.

Interviewee number 81 says the following on this subject: *“When the boss is a relative, you cannot do anything. You can't change jobs just because I can't find another job. We live in a vicious circle in the service sector. I am on annual leave, but I am not paid. I said that my child was born, I couldn't even take a day off from work to go to him.”*

Due to the fact that Turkish and Kurdish immigrants own businesses in the service sector such as restaurants, cafes and off-licences, and due to the feudal kinship relations and identity common denominators mentioned above, most migrants from Turkey find work in such businesses. In the surveys we conducted 22% of participants worked in restaurants, 22% in cafes and 20% in off licenses. 8%, were cleaners, 5% couriers of some kind.

Chart 3. Please indicate the work you do in your current job?

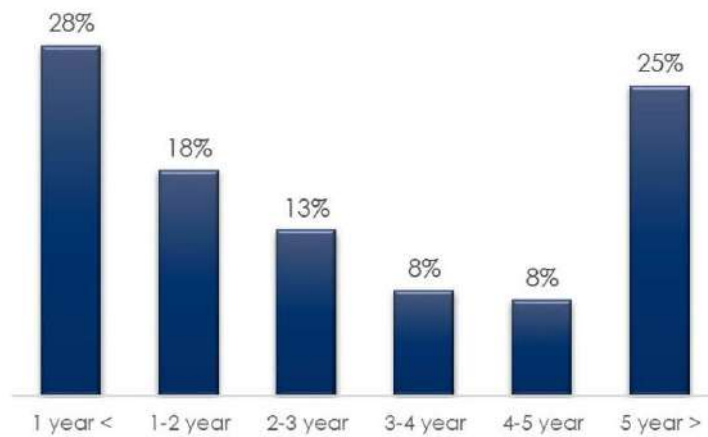
	N	(%)
Restaurant	93	22%
Cafe	92	22%
Off Licence	83	20%
Cleaning Worker	32	8%
Delivery	22	5%
Open Air Market	10	2%
Diğer	87	21%
Total	418	100%

Across the surveys we conducted, we determined that especially the workers working in restaurants and cafes faced bullying and harassment cases. Regarding this, female interviewee 39 working at the restaurant says:

“I have experienced sexual harassment. One day, my colleague secretly drank a lot at work and got drunk. When I saw him like that, I took him out so that he wouldn't be fired, and tried to sober up. He tried to kiss me, so I slapped him and went inside. The bosses watched on CCTV, but because he was a British citizen, they tried to fire me, not him. I could not seek my legal rights for fear of being deported, and there was no one to guide me. Because I'm a woman at work, they tried to make me a mannequin by saying, “Come, dress up, dress nicely.” I was also treated discriminatory because I am Turkish and the rest were Kurdish.”

The answers to the questions asked about how long the workers have been working in their current jobs and the graphic is as follows:

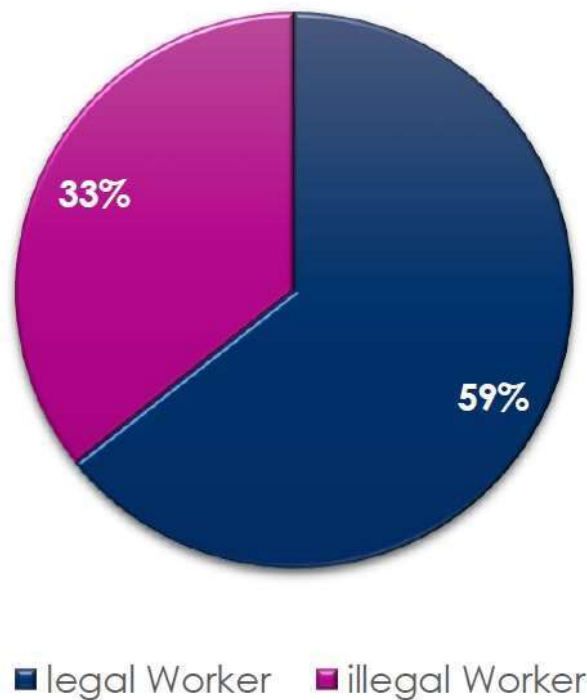
Graphic 10. How long have you been working in this job?



Workers who have been working for less than 1 year constitute the largest group with 28%. This continuous displacement reduces the living standards of the worker and causes him or her to continue to be deprived of working rights with unstable, short-term working patterns.

One of the reasons why workers change jobs frequently is to do with legal work permits. As we have seen, 42% of the participants have limited work permits through the Ankara Agreement, pushing them to work short-term jobs “off the books”. Legal workers are in the majority with 59%, but the remaining 41% are illegal workers.

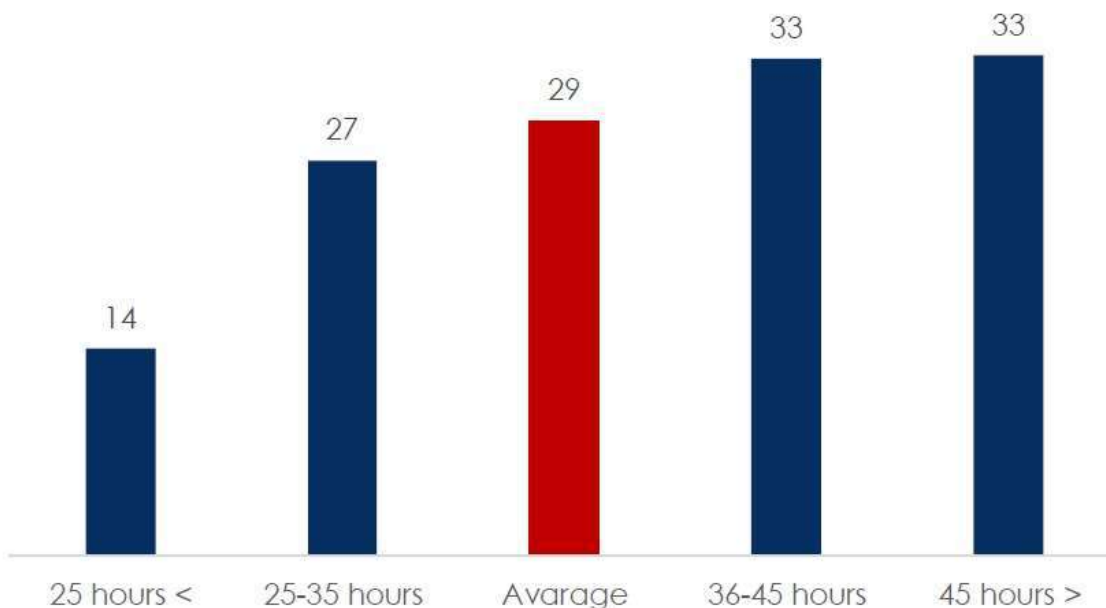
Graphic 12. Legal and Illegal Working View



This situation is often abused by employers. The obligation of the worker to work illegally in order to survive is reflected in additional victimisation and exploitation.

According to the graph of hours worked compared to hours are formally declared, workers are generally shown to be working more hours than declared. Accordingly, those who work more than 36 hours are declared at an average of 33 hours officially. This situation makes the workers more dependent on the employer and obliges them to work the same way as the Ankara Contractors above.

Graphic 13. How many hours a week do you work legally?

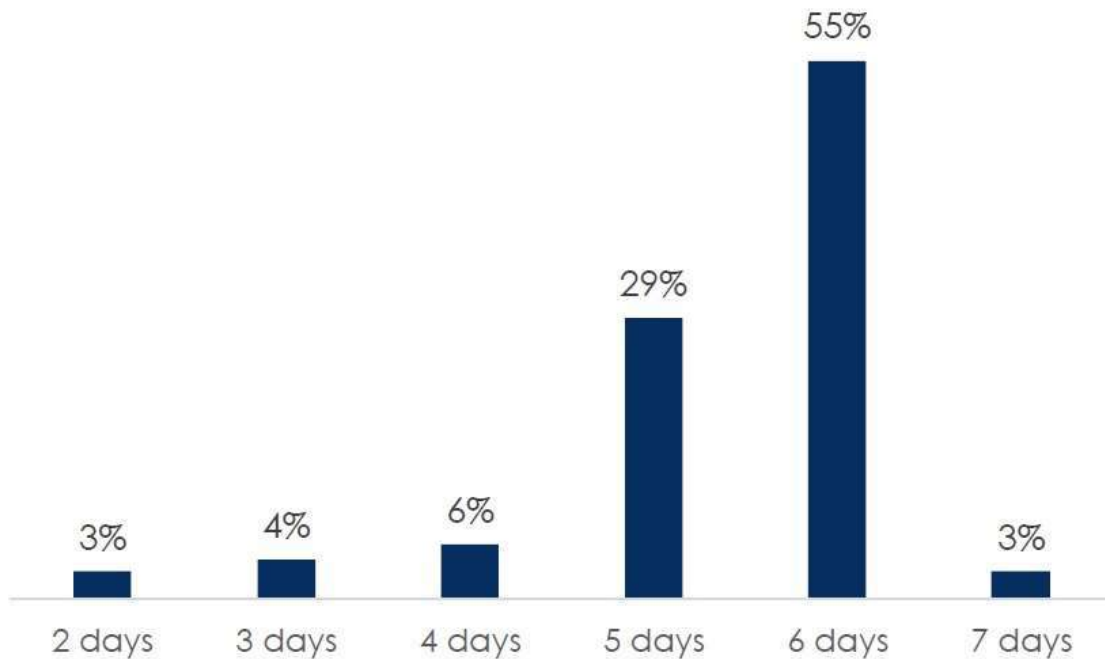


In the surveys, especially flexible working hours, the starting time of the shift is certain, but the exit time is uncertain according to the intensity of the work and the arbitrary request of the employer. On this subject, Interviewee 81 states the following: *“They are not loyal to their working hours. My arrival time for work is certain, but my exit time is not. Especially on weekends, we always leave late in the evening and these extra shifts are not paid. They want us to come to work 15 minutes early and get ready, but they don't leave when the evening is over.”*

Another remarkable situation regarding working hours is the time spent by the worker on the way to work. Workers, mostly living in poor areas of London, report that they spend more than 2 hours a day commuting to and from work. Interviewee 156, who is a cleaning worker on this subject, says: *“I work 8 hours a day, 2 hours on the road. I pay the fare out of my own pocket, it's not worth the money I earn. I am not paid when I am sick. The people I have worked with for 5 years do not even give a Christmas holiday.”*

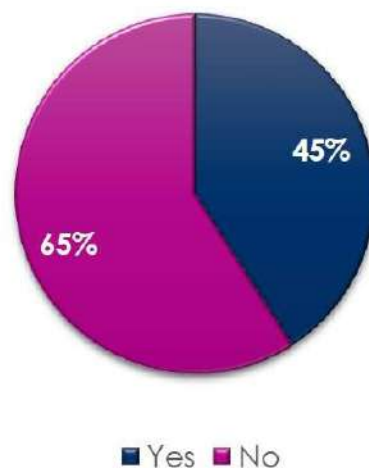
The rate of workers working 6 days is in the first place with 55%. These extra days and long hours of work bring free time down to a minimum and cause workers to become alienated from themselves and their environment as individuals.

Graphic 14. How many days a week do you work at this job?



When we come to the weekly earnings of the workers, we are faced with an important problem. In the UK, the minimum wage set as of April 2022 is £9.50.² However, a fee of £11.05 per hour has been set for London, the so-called “London Living Wage”.³ This fee is calculated independently to reflect the high cost of living in London.

Graphic 16. Have you ever had any problems with the employer?



² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-national-minimum-wage-in-2022>

³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/london-living-wage#:~:text=The%20London%20Living%20Wage%20is,the%20essentials%20and%20to%20save.>

We also asked about workplace bullying or mobbing, such as psychological harassment, violence, hostile attitude, etc. 45% of participants said they had experienced problems with their employer.

37% of the participants say they have been discriminated against and not paid. 34% of them say that they have been subjected to bullying, and 20% of them say that their working days are cut. Some cases emerged of employers getting angry with workers and cutting shifts and therefore pay as punishment.

Interviewee 339 said the following about employer behaviour: *“My life has been spent working. Wherever we work, we must fight fearlessly. I don't like to go to my job, I have to. This job is hurting me. The boss discriminates among the workers. Good friends with some and bad with others. He practices harsh bullying. He's too harsh on us. I would work more efficiently if he treated us well.”*

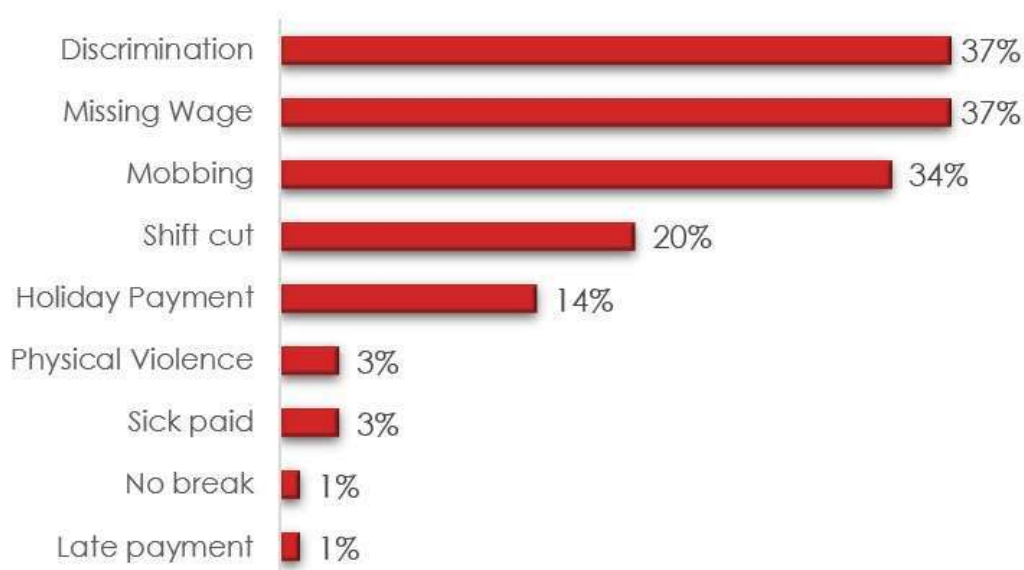
Restaurant workers face some serious problems. Interviewee 54:

“They are mobbing. You negotiate a certain amount of money, but they don't stick to it. They do not distribute the tips equally. We get the tips, but they give more to the chefs and managers. Service charge is taken from the customer but not given to us. Although I work in the restaurant, we do not have the right to eat there. When we eat, we pay for it. There is staff food, but we are fed only one type. My health deteriorated from eating pasta and pizza every day. We do not have the right to drink bottled water or soft drinks. They drink water from the tap. Sometimes I go and buy water from outside, but the bosses are not bothered by it, they are not ashamed, but they always talk about justice. I'm afraid of losing my job, and the bosses come to us more because they know this. They are not loyal to their working hours.”

The Participants 66 describes his treatment as follows: *“The boss is very harsh, he yells. I'm 40 years old, some things are hurting me. I come at 9 in the morning and work non-stop until 5 in the evening. I even eat my food standing in the kitchen. Before this job, I worked at a cheese shop for 4 days, he gave me 2 days' wages and fired me.”*

Statistics on this subject show the following:

Graphic 17. What are the Causes of Problems with the Employer?



Most workers do not take action to solve these problems. The biggest reason for this is the fear of losing their job. In this regard, Participant 131 says:

Chart 4. Where did you apply for problems with the employer?

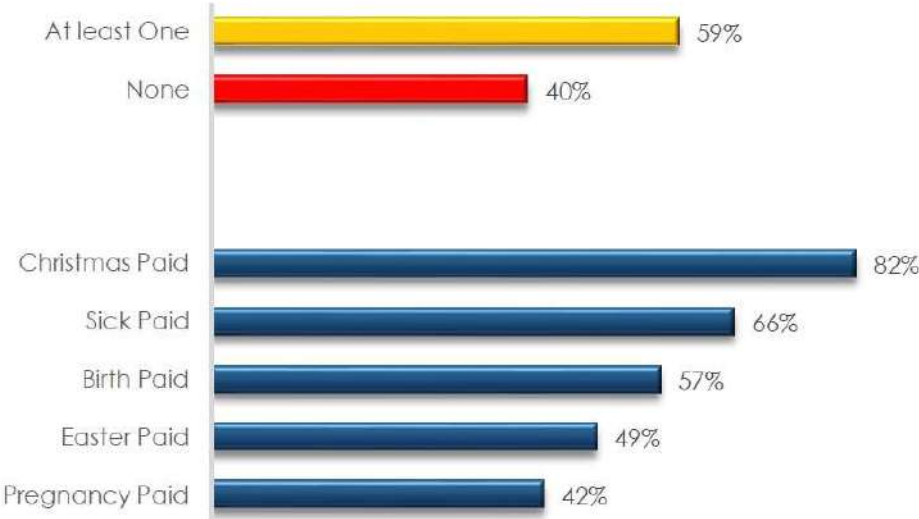
	N	(%)
No, I did not.	380	91%
Union	19	4%
Community Centres	9	2%
Court	9	2%
Total	418	100%

“We can’t work by the clock. They don’t charge extra and pay. They pay more for those who have a residency. When it comes to words, they say we are socialists, we are revolutionaries. For the first time in my life, I want to get psychological support. I was not bullied, but a lot of other workers were bullied in front of my eyes. We couldn’t speak out either because we were afraid of being fired.”

Participant 293, who applied to the court to seek his rights, states that she was exposed to threats:

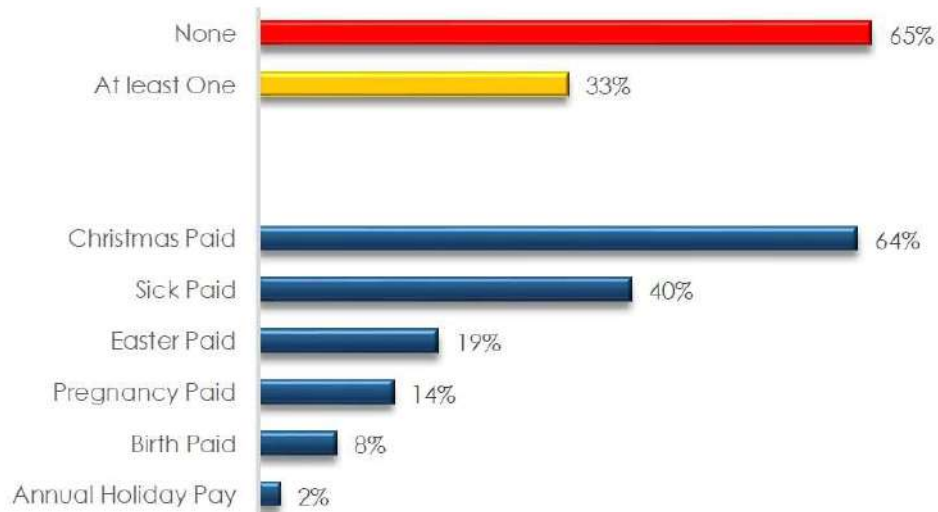
“I had a lot of problems at the workplace where I worked before, they dragged me into depression. We were in court. They threatened me by email. I quit my job and went to where I am now. I’m looking after my son, I’m a single mum. We are having a very difficult time.”

Graphic 18. Which of the following rights do you know?



According to this graph, 59% of the workers we surveyed are aware of at least one of their rights to pay sick pay, maternity leave, and public holidays such as Christmas and Easter. However, 40% of them are not aware of any of these rights. Even if workers are aware of their rights, the statistics of benefiting from these rights are as follows:

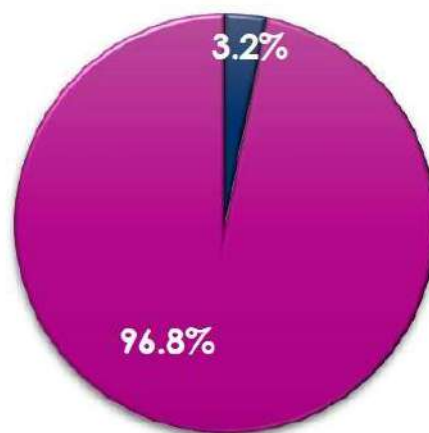
Graphic 19. Which of these rights have you benefit before?



65% of the workers we surveyed did not benefit from any of the rights we mentioned in the previous chart.

The most important institutional structures related to workers' rights are undoubtedly trade unions. Only 3.2% of our 418 participants are union members.

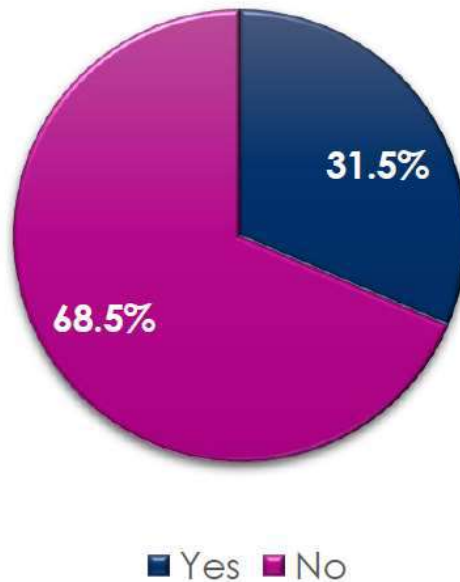
Graphic 20. Are you a member of any union?



■ Yes ■ No

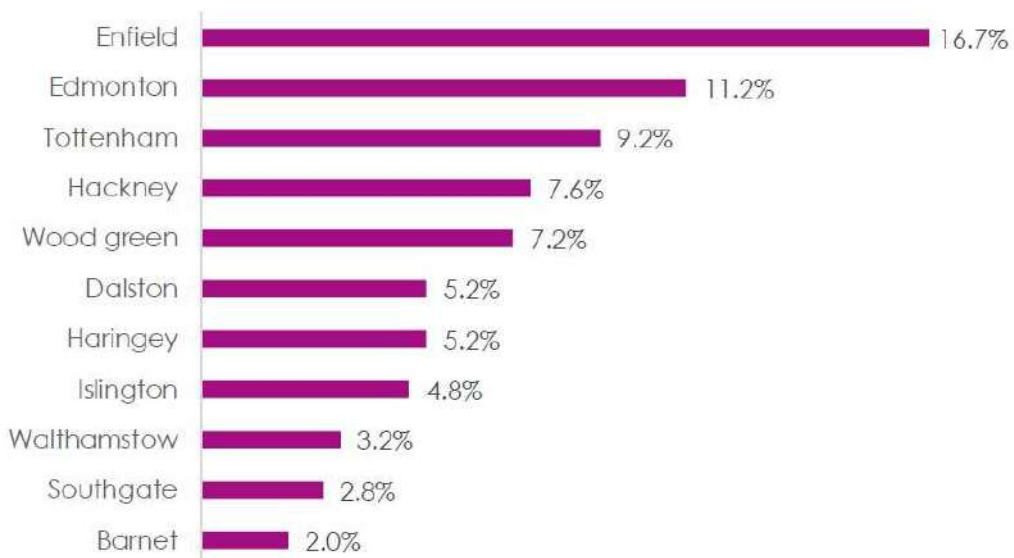
The UK supports people who have permanent residence permit through Universal Credit. 68.5% of participants do not receive such assistance.

Graphic 21. Do you get benefit?



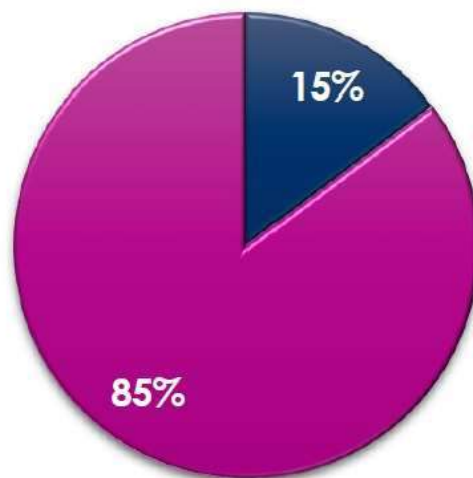
The vast majority of the workers we surveyed live in North London. Enfield is a borough that hosts a large number of Turkish and Kurdish immigrants, with 16.7% of our participants living in Enfield.

GRAPHIC 22. Which part of London do you live in? *



* Regions with less than 5 participants are not included in the graphic. These regions accounted for approximately 23% of the total.

Graphic 23. Does the house you live in belong to you?



■ Owner ■ Tenant

Chart 6. Which of the following best describes where you live?

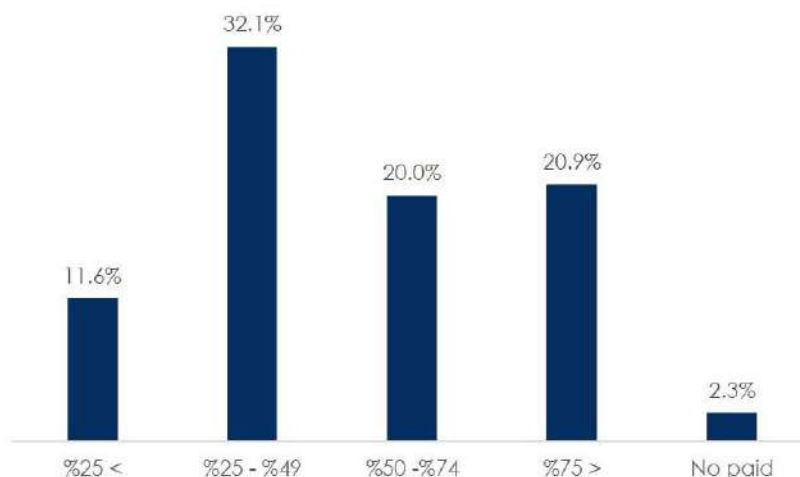
	N	(%)
I live alone in the room that I rent	115	27%
I living with my family in house that we rent	115	27%
I live with my partner in the room that we rent	70	17%
I live alone in the house that I rent	56	13%
I live with my friend, relative without pay	29	7%
I live in council house	21	5%
I live with my partner in the house that we rent	6	1%
No Answer	6	1%
Total	418	100%

The housing problem of the workers is one of the most important problems when considering the exorbitant rental prices in London, which saw its highest increase in the last 20 years of 8.4% during the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers living in the room they rent alone account for 27% of participants. Another 27% live in houses they rent with their families. Migrant workers living in studio flats or bedsits, where most utilities are contained in a single room, are mostly unable to spend time at home because of working. Their homes are effectively hostel rooms. The worker comes home late, eats, sleeps, wakes up early and goes back to work. They live their lives alienated from the accommodation for which they pay exorbitant amounts.

Workers pay a very large part of their wages out in rent and bills. This situation forces workers to prefer cheaper and unhealthy housing that can only be used for sleeping. 32% of workers spend 25% to 49% of their monthly earnings, 20.9% spend 75% of their earnings, and 20% spend 50% to 74% on housing costs.

These realities do not provide the worker with many social opportunities. 39% of participants can only socialise “Sometimes” and 38% do not socialise at all.

Graphic 24. How much of your monthly/weekly earnings do you spend to accommodation expenses? (Rent, bills, council tax etc)

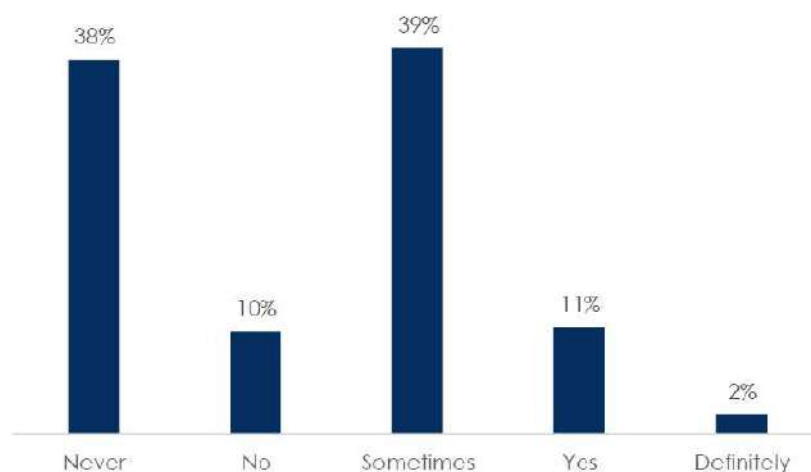


Many surveyed workers' free time consisted of taking walks in the park and meeting with friends in the cafe. Social activities such as going to the theatre or concerts are an unaffordable luxury for many.

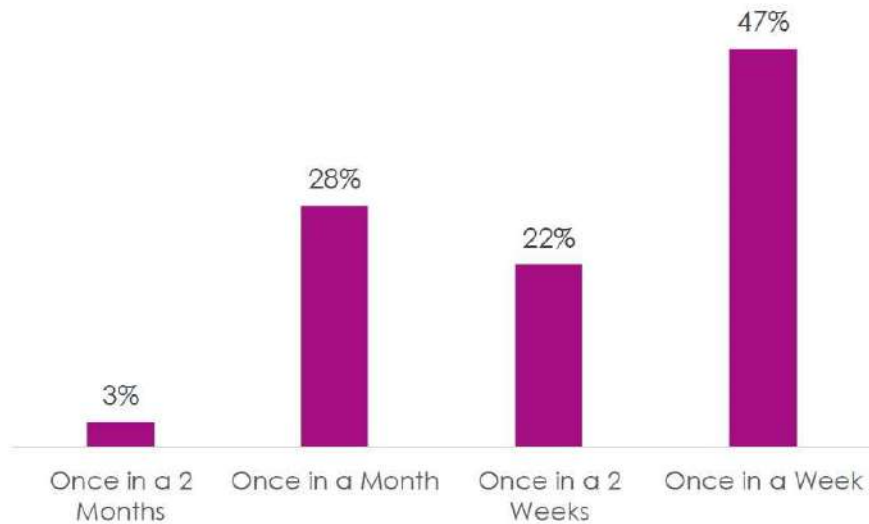
71% cite intense working hours and conditions as the reason for their limited socialisation. Economic problems are a factor for 22% and lack of free time with 19%. The conditions of the workers therefore create a fairly monotonous life.

Participant 355 says: *“Last week, on our holiday day, we wanted to go to a concert with my wife, but the ticket was expensive for both of us. We made sandwiches at home, went to the park, ate, took a walk. I love football, England is the centre of football, but I couldn't even go to football matches. I hope we have a better life in the future.”*

Graphic 25. Can you spare how much time for social activities apart from work?



Graphic 26. How often do you attend in social activities?



	N	%
Busy and hard Working	145	71.9%
Financial Problems	45	22.3%
I don't have spare time	38	19.0%
Spending time for my home-family-children	23	11.6%
I don't have a friend	3	1.7%
Language Barrier	3	1.7%
Personal reasons	2	.8%
My shifts are not sultable	2	.8%
Covid 19 reasons	2	.8%
No Answer	3	1.7%

Surveyed workers earn an average of £8.77 per hour, but it is worth noting that bakers push up this average significantly. There are some workers making £3 or £4 per hour.

Chart 9. Hourly Earnings

Wage (Hourly / Pound)					
	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	N	Standard Deviation
Restaurant	9,26	16,67	4,67	65	2,80
Cafe	8,46	12,22	5,00	65	1,66
Off Licence	7,37	12,50	4,29	58	1,72
Cleaning Workers	8,75	11,67	5,00	18	2,25
Delivery	10,94	20,00	6,36	13	4,26
Open Air Market	7,45	8,89	5,71	5	1,61
Others	9,53	15,56	3,09	65	2,50
Total	8,77	20,00	3,09	290	2,49

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our study constitutes an overview of the diverse reality and multiple facets of informality, exploitation and outcomes relative to a substantial proportion of Turkish and Kurdish migrant workers predominantly based in North-East London and surrounding regions. These comprehensive portraits of adversities, covering individuals, households and economic units, expands upon existing knowledge about the well-being of Turkish and Kurdish migrant workers and their households providing essential information that is not captured by traditional economic indicators. It is further observable that London has become a symbol of the reality of social inequality for migrants, where people's lives are consumed by low-wages, lengthy working hours, occupational risks and exploitative conditions. Lack of access to social protection and appropriate risk management instruments thus pushes many migrant workers into income insecurity or vulnerability to income poverty and it is evident that women are further exposed to a greater extent. In the absence of effective, gender-sensitive policies to manage risks, men and women informal workers will remain particularly exposed, and vulnerability will continue to be passed on to other segments of the population, particularly children and older individuals, who disproportionately live in households relying on the income generated through these adverse conditions.

As working hours and days increase, the average hourly wage decreases inversely. Even when the worker works very long hours, there is no substantial increase to his salary. Due to factors such as immigration status, employers have undue influence in determining the floor and ceiling wage levels, and therefore on the lives of workers. Interviewee 391 says: "We have no security of life in this country. I have a health problem, but we cannot make an appointment with the GP. The workplace does not allow me to go to Turkey and be treated. I can't even make decisions about my own health. We work day and night. I feel physically exhausted. I don't have time to think about social activities." In the course of interviews, it was also observed that workers had a severe lack of awareness about their legal employment rights. Even workers who were aware of their rights could not pursue them due to their own job insecurity. Raising awareness and informing people about employment rights will be a very important factor in solving these problems.

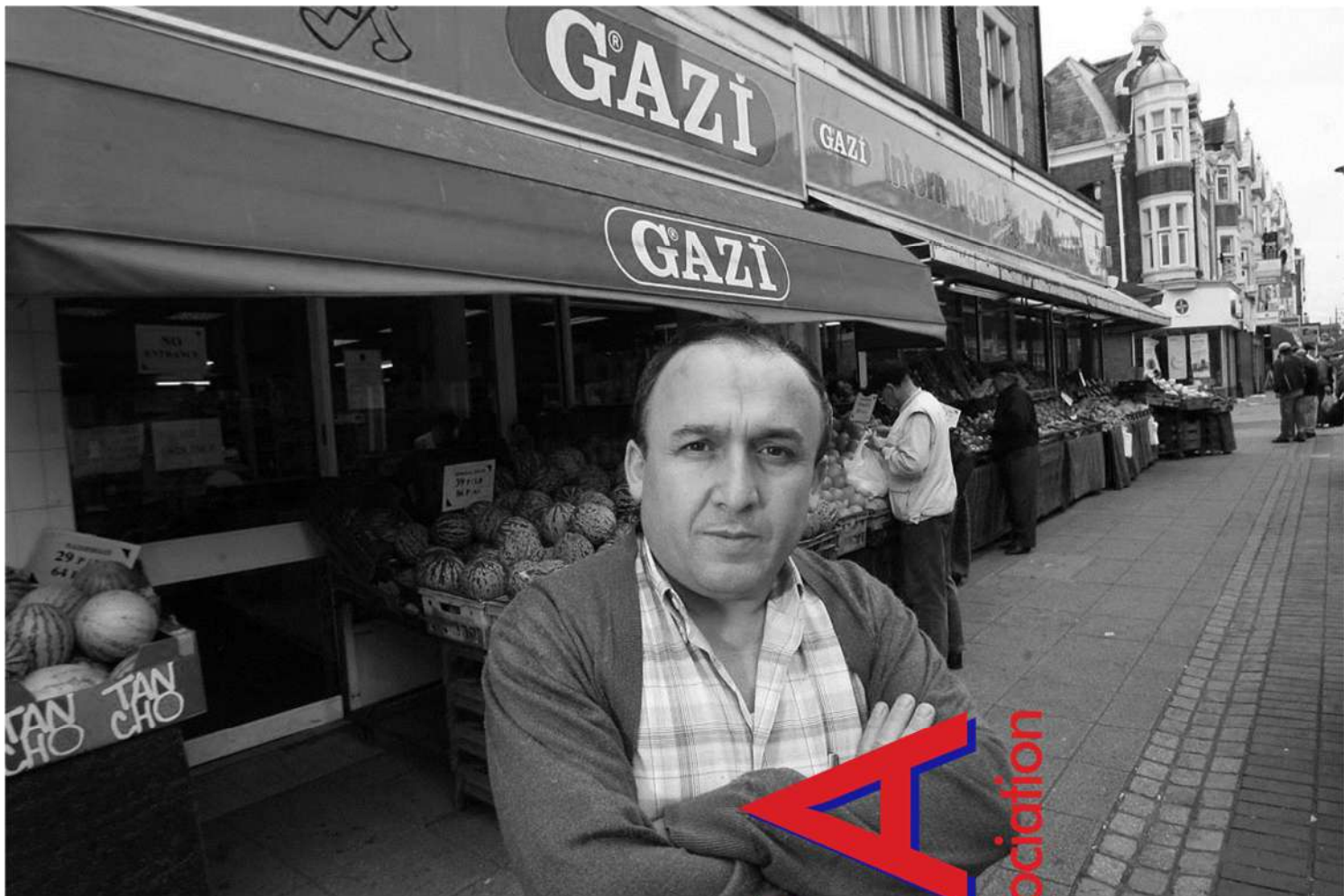
Migrant workers clustered by cultural, faith and family ties are more receptive to the support of non-governmental institutions such as community and faith centres. The support of these associations by local government and the voluntary sector therefore plays a key role in reaching communities and raising their awareness of key issues. For workers who cannot take advantage of their rights due to language barriers, information should be translated into Turkish and Kurdish and presented at community hubs. Meetings, panels and seminars should be organised for an information campaign, making use of new and traditional media and bringing both employers and employees to the table for the benefit of the whole community. Local and national government must be pressured by community institutions and voluntary sector organisations to improve policy and ensure it is properly enforced for the protection of worker's rights. Crucially, migrant workers must be enabled and encouraged to join and participate in trade unions.

Identification and registration of informal workers as well as encouraging participation in the wider and recorded economy is interlinked with government policy. We recommend a revision to employment laws to recognise and account for all types of work. Furthermore, London is the epicentre of our study. Factors such as high rents and access to social benefits regarding areas such as housing, in most cases, outweigh the advantages of declaring employment, thus causing subjugation, exploitation of workers and making them vulnerable as employees. Taking into consideration the current economic conditions, progressive and radical reforms are crucial to ensure that workers are not compelled to take risks or falsify their income declarations to gain access to social benefits in a bid to fulfil living or rent obligations. This study was limited to the service sector, but we believe its findings are reflected in a variety of industries in which migrant labour predominates. As such, our future activities informed by this study must aim to benefit not only Turkish and Kurdish workers in the service sector in North London, but all workers of all ethnicities living in London and beyond.

Recommendations

- 1) A fundamental rights-based approach to migration and development to ensure social protection and right to work for migrant workers in all stages of migration including when they are awaiting decisions on asylum applications.
- 2) London is infamous for extravagant levels of rent. Subsidisation of rent with should be incorporated into the social protection scheme to promote formal work, removal of disparities between being employed and losing access to social security or being unemployed and gaining access to social securities.
- 3) Access to justice must be upheld to ensure these workers who are victims of violations are protected, compensated and perpetrators are sanctioned. There must be legal reassurances to ensure that they are not penalised under employment regulations when reaching out for legal assistance.
- 4) Enforcement of employment rights to ensure decent work conditions for migrants, such as wage equality and conditions with local workers, antidiscrimination policies, occupational health & safety and protect their rights to join and organise in trade unions. Labour and foreign affairs departments must be more effective in following up on cases.
- 5) Development and prioritisation of a campaign against Gender-based violence of women migrant workers. Women are more exposed and vulnerable to infringements of their rights in a male-dominated economy. This is particularly evident for those working in supermarkets and restaurants in positions such as cashiers or waitresses.
- 6) Advocate that low skilled migrant workers should have the same rights as high skilled migrant workers and access to the same services in particular portability of work permits, family reunification and possibilities of permanent settlement. There are significant contrasts between the services Investors from Turkey receive and those who seek asylum.
- 7) A more constructive approach to taxation whereby an emphasis is built upon indirect taxes contributed by those working informally rather than vilification and further alienation across media. All the whilst, Increase awareness of the benefits of formalisation, the costs of informality, and informal economy workers' positive contributions to society and non-negligible contributions to tax collection to make the case for investing in tax-financed protection instruments as an enabling condition for a gradual transition to formality.
- 8) Government-funded training and education to help eradicate barriers surrounding language and skills. Workers will inevitably grow the confidence to seek formal employment if they are able to fulfil job specifications.
- 9) Reduce costs and complexities to declare workers, and put in place a systemic strategy for an upright alignment of policies, regulations and institutions aimed at enhancing productivity growth, strengthening compliance and enforcement of legal requirements.

Formalisation of their workers should be more feasible for businesses, economically advantageous and should outweigh the benefits of employing them informally.
- 10) Promote freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining between authorities, employers and workers through initiatives to support organisations and representation of Turkish/Kurdish migrant workers, alongside their engagement in social dialogue, as an integral part of efforts to support transition to the formal work.



RWCA

refugee & workers cultural association

PREPARED BY
REFUGEE AND WORKERS
CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
CIK-DER UK
WEDGE HOUSE,
WHITE HART LN,
LONDON N17 8HJ
☎ 07938 844942
✉ gikderuk@gmail.com
🌐 www.rwca.org.uk



This research and report has been funded by
Trust for London Better Work Programme - August 2022

