DOMESTIC SERVITUDE IN TUNIS, TUNISIA: FINDINGS FROM TWO SAMPLING METHODS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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PRIF Study Aims

1. The UML team is part of the PRIF project where a total of six teams were asked to explore ways to estimate the prevalence of human trafficking in different target populations and countries.

2. Like all teams, we used two methods to estimate the prevalence of domestic servitude in Greater Tunis, Tunisia.

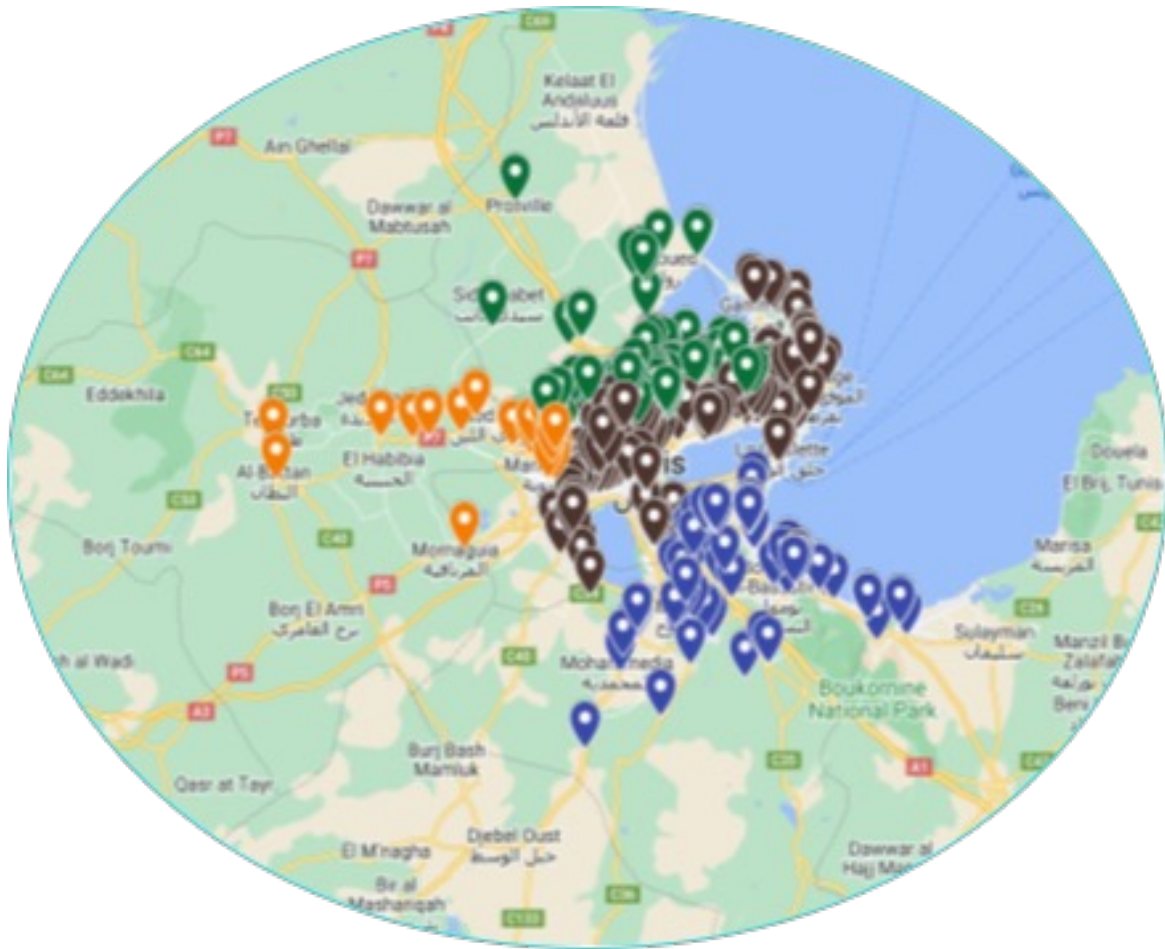1. Reports of abusive labor practices in domestic work. No systematic prevalence estimates prior to this study.

2. No official registries to allow proper sampling, and impractical to seek employers' permission to conduct survey in private homes.

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Methods to Study Domestic Workers

1. **Time-location sampling.** Use public venues and hours where and when domestic workers are likely to congregate/pass to establish a sampling frame.
2. **Mark-recapture.** Repeated sampling of the same target population in different locations to quantify population size.
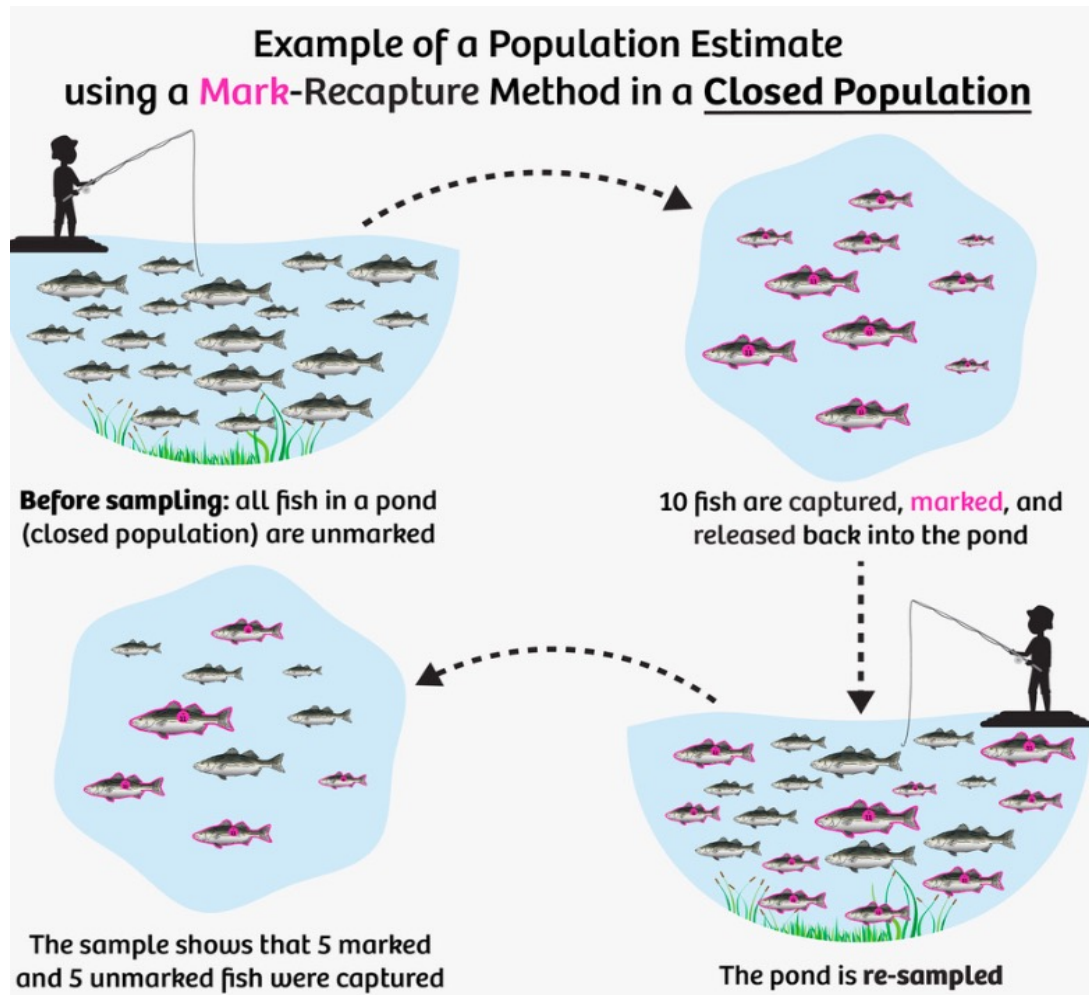
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TLS Sampling Procedure

Greater Tunis

- ➤ 356 sites identified to form the sampling frame
- ➤ Four major time blocks (6 a.m. – 10 p.m.)
- ➤ Estimated number of domestic workers passing through based on site observations

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Mark-Recapture (MR)

Repeated sampling in different locations, with an emphasis on identifying respondents who are interviewed more than once.

$$\frac{MM}{R} = \frac{M^2}{R}$$

Population Size Estimates

Time Location Sample

N: 1,029 surveys completed

Estimated Population Size:
6,281 female domestic workers
(95% CI 3,885 to 8,577)

Estimator: Horvitz-Thompson and Sparse MSE

Mark Recapture

N: 923 (+93 recaptures)

Estimated Population Size:
5,388 female domestic workers
(95% CI 4,351 to 6,737)

Estimator: Sparse MSE

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Defining Forced Labor–PRIF Indicators

A total of 39 common indicators have been established under the PRIF program, from which 12 core indicators are included in this study.

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Two Thresholds (Either Qualifies)

Threshold 1

(a) having to perform sex acts to pay off debt or receive wages; or

(b) losing freedom of movement due to surveillance, experiencing isolation within the workplace, or losing the freedom to communicate with friends or family.

Threshold 2

Experienced two or more of the abuses from two separate of the 10 categories, such as:

- Abuses during recruitment
- Abusive practices and penalties
- Infringement on personal life and properties
- Degrading work conditions
- Debt bondage
- Violence at workplace

Prevalence of TIP Victimization

TIP Thresholds for Current Job	TLS		MR	
	Sample* (N= 1,029)	Population Adjusted**	Sample* (N=923)	Population Adjusted**
	%	%	%	%
Meets Threshold 1	7.97	8.24	12.78	13.00
Meets Threshold 2	21.57	23.84	23.73	24.25
Meets Either Threshold 1 or 2	**22.55**	**24.65**	**25.89**	**26.38**

Risk and Protective Factors

Which characteristics of respondents are associated with the likelihood of experiencing TIP?

Time Location Sample

Of those experiencing Threshold 1, 90% also met Threshold 2

Of those experiencing Threshold 2, 31% also met Threshold 1

Mark Recapture

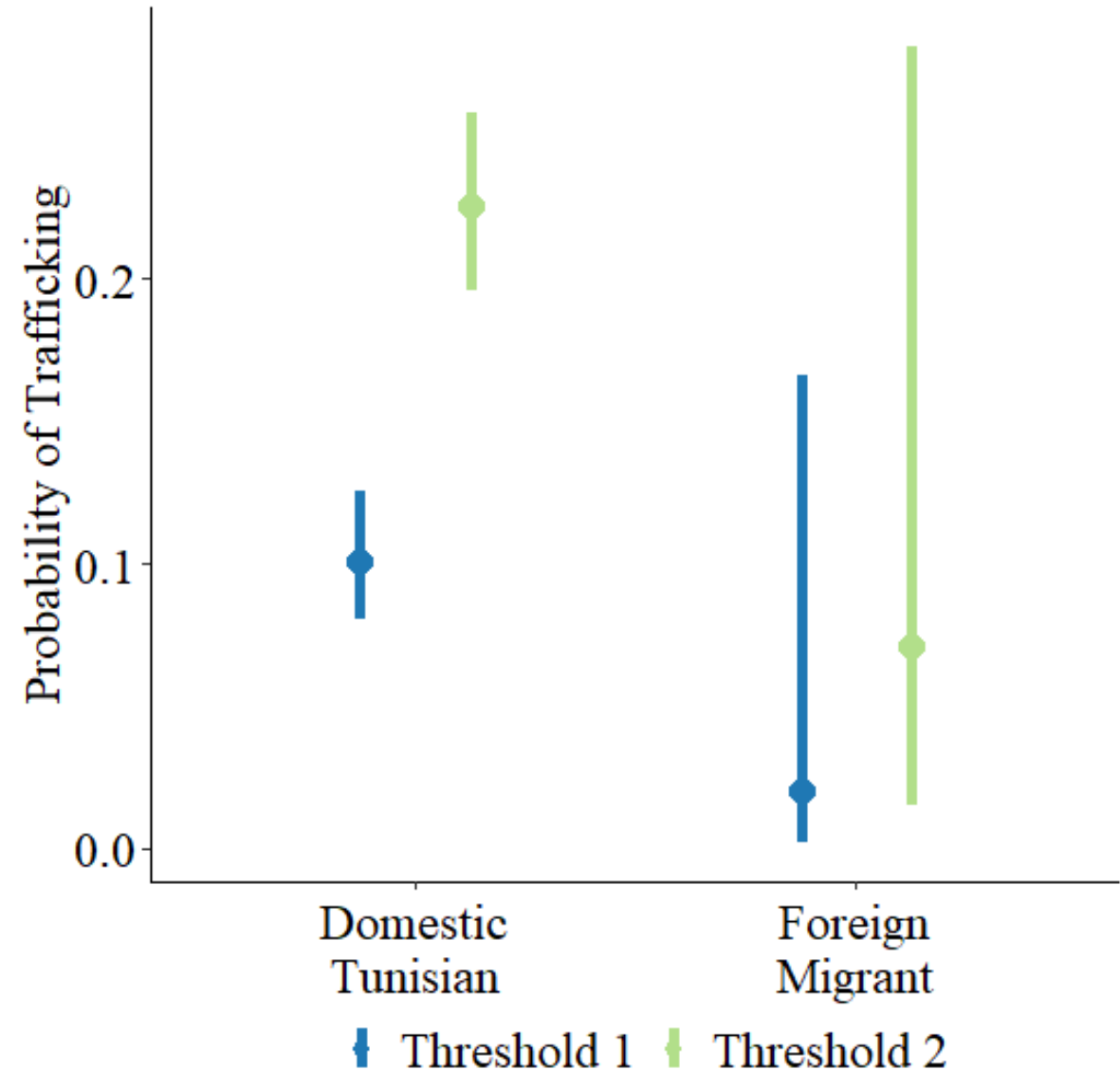Of those experiencing Threshold 1, 84% also met Threshold 2

Of those experiencing Threshold 2, 45% also met

Demographic Factors

Overall – demographic factors did little to predict variation in TIP

Foreign migrants captured in these data were **less** likely than domestic Tunisians to experience trafficking
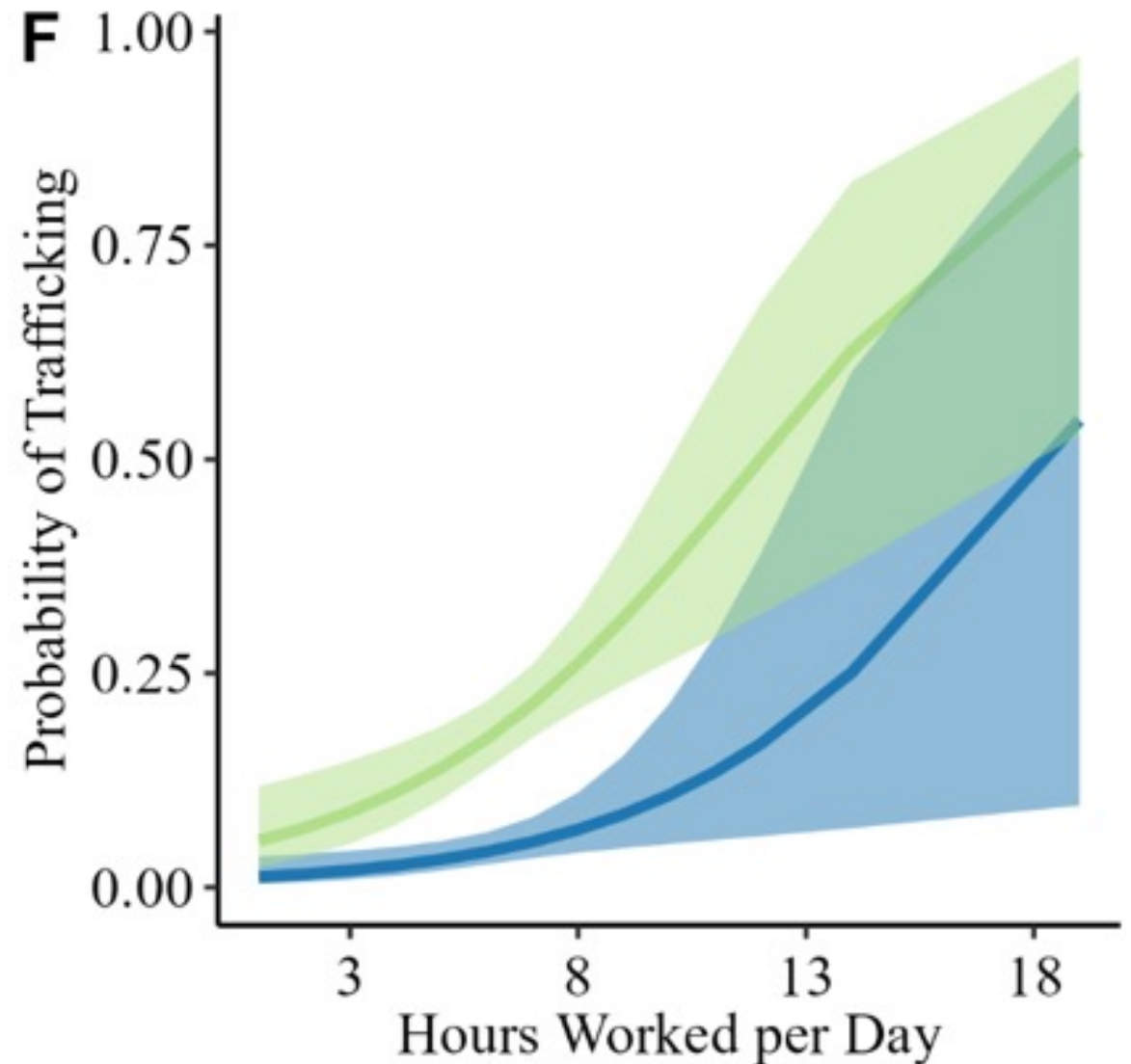
Figure from MR sample

Employment Characteristics

Overall – employment characteristics more predictive of TIP, but inconsistent across TLS and MR samples

Every additional hour worked daily multiplied the odds of TIP by ~30%

Figure from TLS

Employment Characteristics

The combination of being young and working for French-speaking employers predicted higher TIP victimization
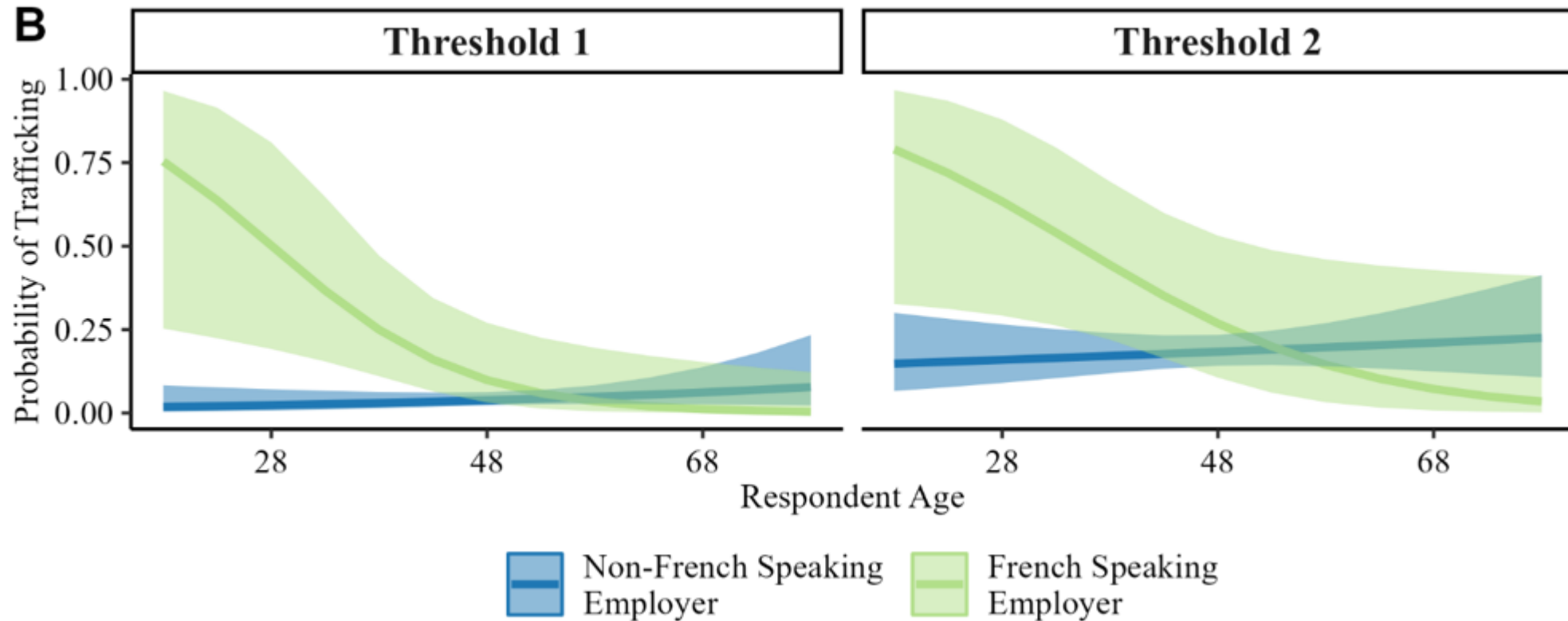

Figure from TLS
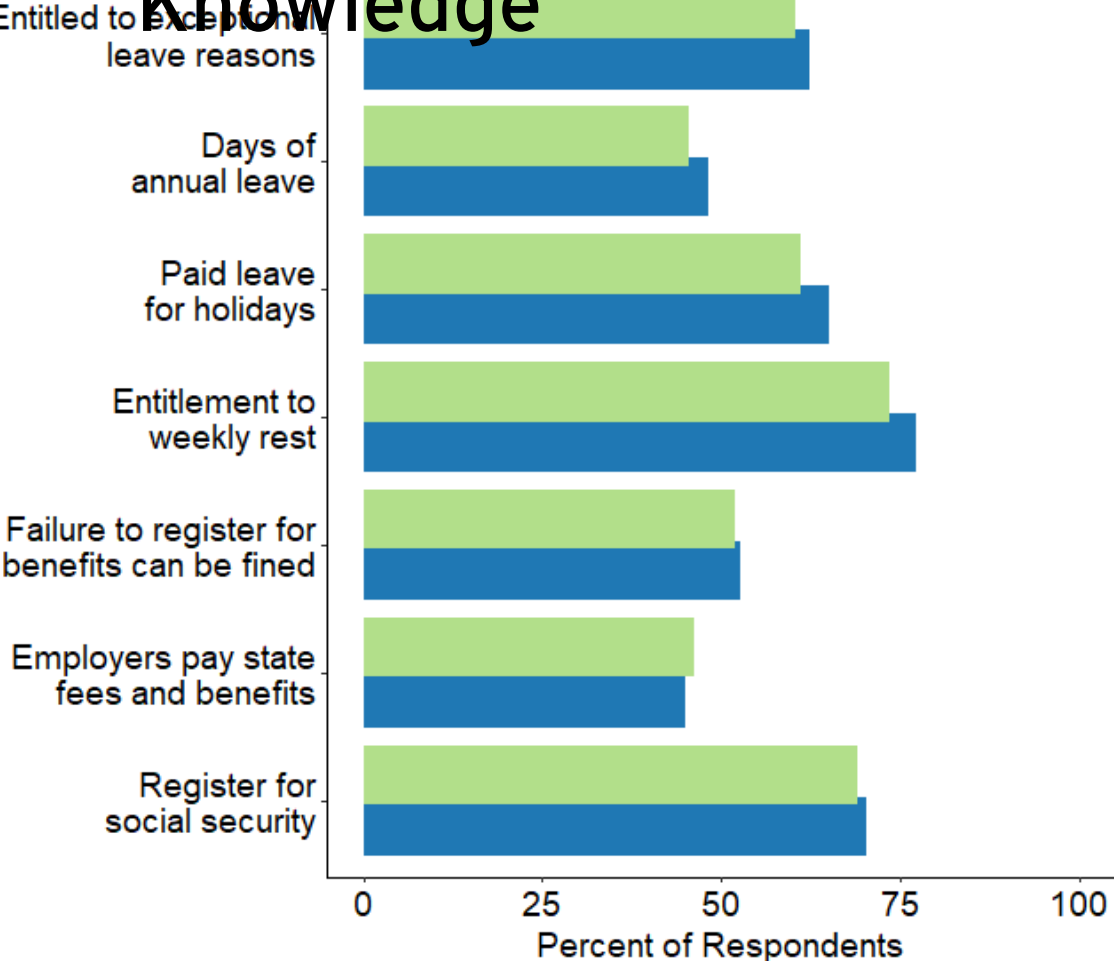
Service Received

Few among domestic workers who were victimized ever sought help, with both estimation strategies yielding very similar results.

➢ Of the 786 respondents (76.38%) in the **TLS sample** who reported experiencing any of the workplace abuses, only 69 of them (8.78%) ever sought help.

➢ Of the 789 respondents (85.48%) in the **MR sample**, only 67 of them (8.49%) ever sought help.

Knowledge of Labor Laws

Policy Recommendations
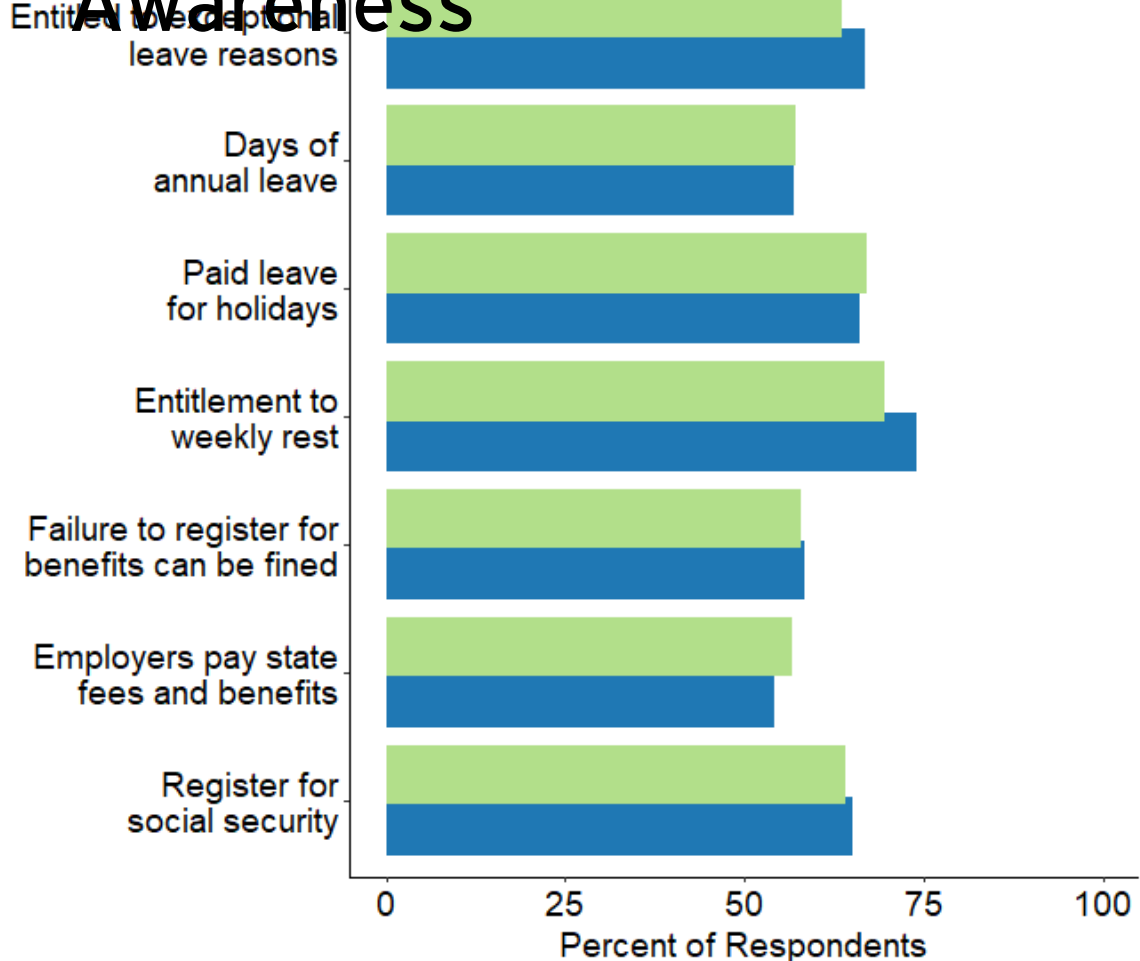
➢ Both civic society organizations (CSOs) & government agencies need to engage in grassroots campaigns & public awareness education.

➢ Deterrence & Legal Liability Insurance should become part of the government & societal enforcement mechanism to deter & prevent trafficking violations.

➢ Legal services, mental health, & shelters should be better developed by the government and civil society.

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Policy Recommendations

Committed government involvement in enforcing the existing labor laws through a combination of criminal justice interventions and awareness raising via public venues:

➢ Monitor and patrol this market sector by imposing credible sanctions to compel employers to register their domestic workers

➢ Announce the workers' entitlements upon the first day of hiring a domestic

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Study Limitations

Photo by Bilal Ayadi on Unsplash

Much of the media coverage was on foreign domestic workers, but few of them were captured in either sampling method, suggesting a different recruitment method is required to reach the non-Tunisian population.

Open space recruitment, limiting reach to publicly available respondents.

Data collection limited to daylight

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Project Expansion

1. **Partnering with** [Avocats Sans Frontières](#) (ASF)

2. Action Main Goals

   a) Awareness Campaign ("Mon Droit" "حقي" "My Rights")— through flyers, pamphlets, video, social media posts.

   b) Training workshops
      i. Social workers
      ii. Psychologists
      iii. Educators
      iv. Domestic workers
      v. Civil society organization reps

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Project Expansion

b) Establish legal mechanisms to protect the rights of domestic workers against employer abuses—legal consultation, legal assistance, development of a strategic litigation on domestic servitude

c) Increase engagement of decision-makers at local/national levels to develop policies and strategies to protect domestic workers

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Project Expansion

e) ASF and UML team are currently exploring ways to accelerate these outreach efforts, with a primary focus on reaching domestic workers.

THE END!

Thank you!

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