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Awareness of and receiving social protection measures during COVID-19 lockdown in Bihar, India

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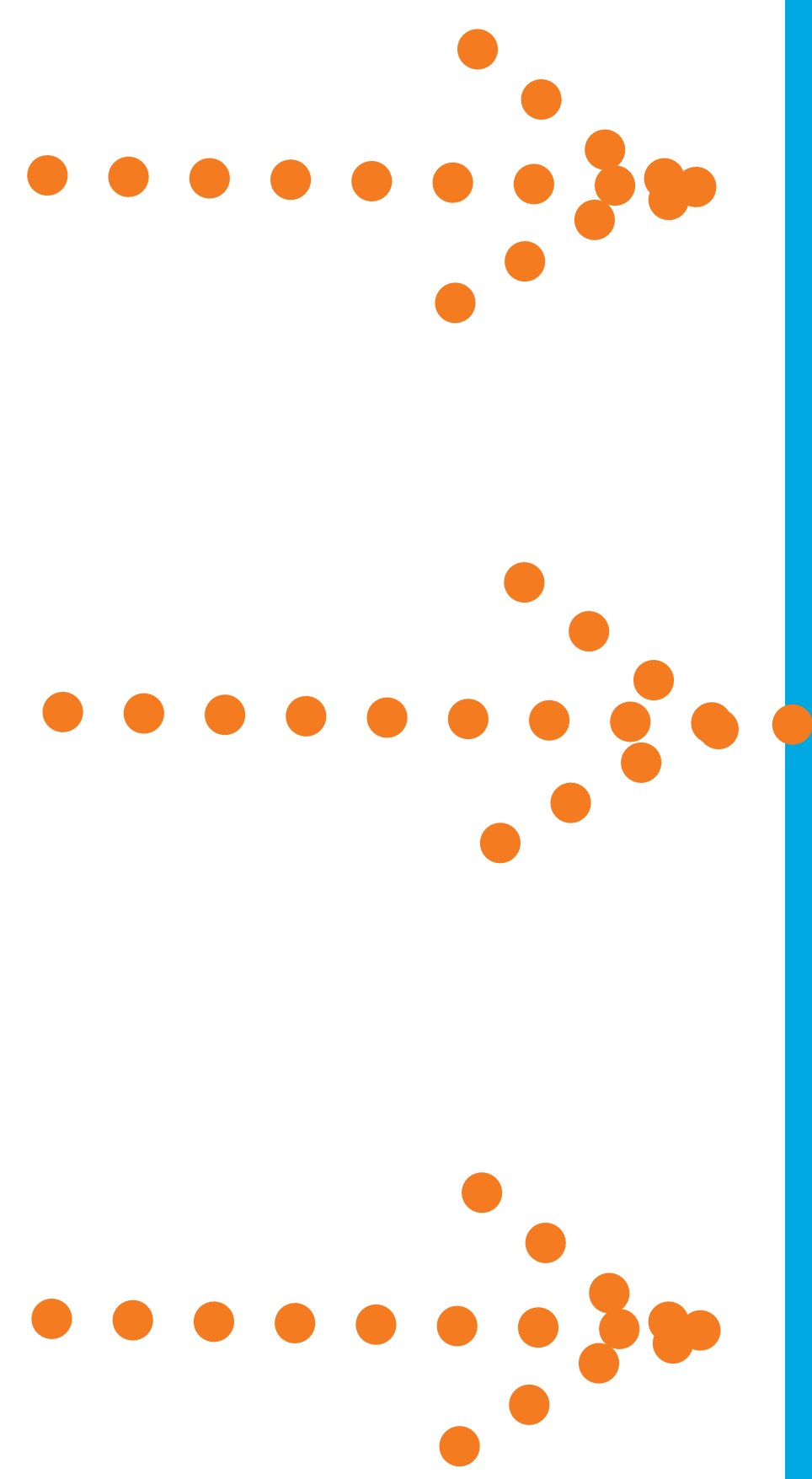
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AWARENESS OF AND RECEIVING SOCIAL PROTECTION MEASURES DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN IN BIHAR, INDIA



Majority of respondents (64%) reported a family member losing their job/income earning opportunity and lacking resources to survive for long.

Awareness of social protection schemes was high (88%).

68% households reported having ration cards - 95% out of those reported having received ration in the month preceding the survey, 40 percent ration card holders found the quantities of ration insufficient.

55% received cash benefits from various social protection schemes. Identification of households in need of social protection and streamlining the disbursement of these benefits are also required. Given the pervasive job difficulties and limited resources households have had to survive, increasing the amount of cash transfers and creating local job opportunities need to be considered.

BACKGROUND

- Economic hardships caused by the nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are reported across the country. Social protection measures have been announced by the state and central governments to ease these hardships.
- The key objectives of this research brief are to examine the awareness and the social protection measures received during COVID-19 lockdown and the socio-economic differentials in receiving these measures.

METHODS

- The sample households for the KAP surveys were drawn from an existing state-representative cohort study of adolescents and young adults under project UDAYA (www.projectudaya.in) in Bihar. However, it is noted that respondents who participated in the COVID-19 KAP surveys were better educated, wealthier and less likely to have belonged to disadvantaged castes and tribes (SC/ST), compared with those who did not. There were no differences in terms of rural-urban or religious distributions.
- 242 men and 552 women were interviewed between May 13–22, 2020. (See Table below for the profile of study participants).
- Data was also drawn from the survey of SHG leaders (N=179); more details can be found in the brief entitled **Self help group: A potential pivot of Bihar's response to COVID-19**.

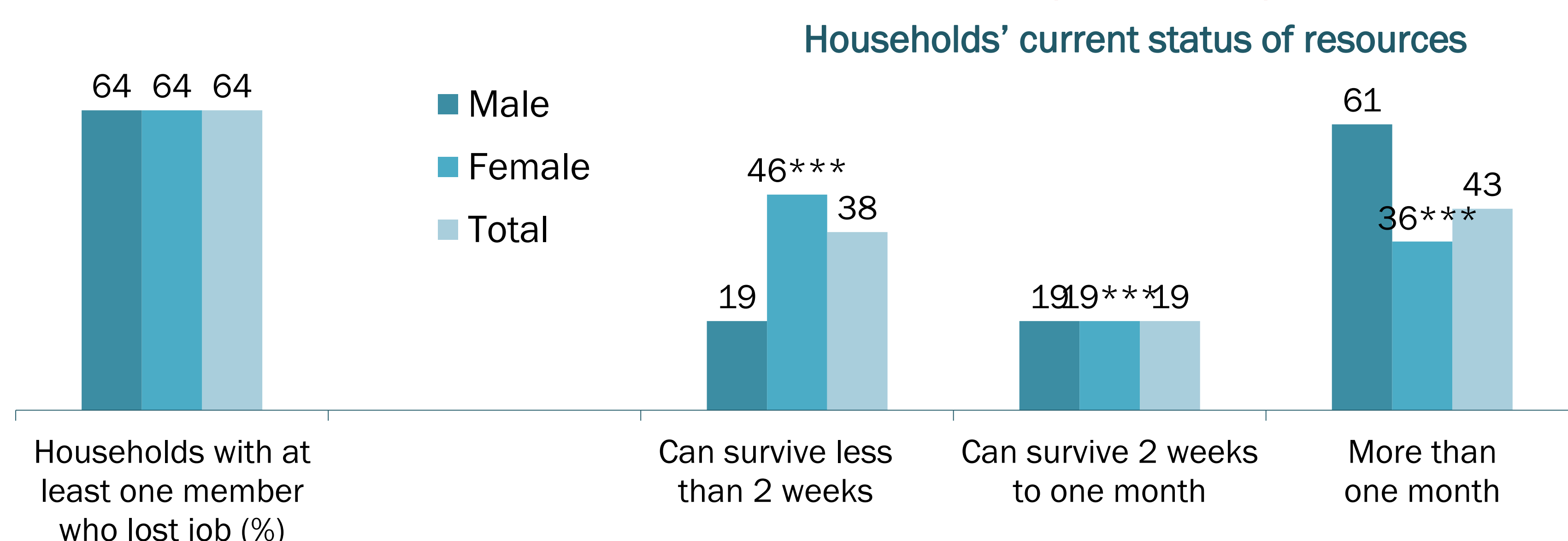
STUDY PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Characteristics	Male (N=242)	Female (N=552)	Total (N=794)
18-24-year-olds (%) ¹	80	89***	86
Mean years of schooling	11	10***	10
% Rural	61	62**	62
% Hindu	84	86	86
Caste (%)			
SC/ST	16	17	16
Other backward caste	63	64	64
General	21	19	20
Wealth index (quintiles as of UDAYA 2015-16 survey)²			
Bottom two quintiles (poor)	8	16	14
Medium	15	13	14
Top two quintiles (rich)	77	71	72
Migrant households (%)	36	32	33
Households with at least one school-going child aged 6-14	41	36	38
Households with at least one school-going child attending a government school	24	19	20
Households with a pregnant or lactating woman or a child aged 6-72 months	29	58***	49
Households holding a ration card	72	67	68

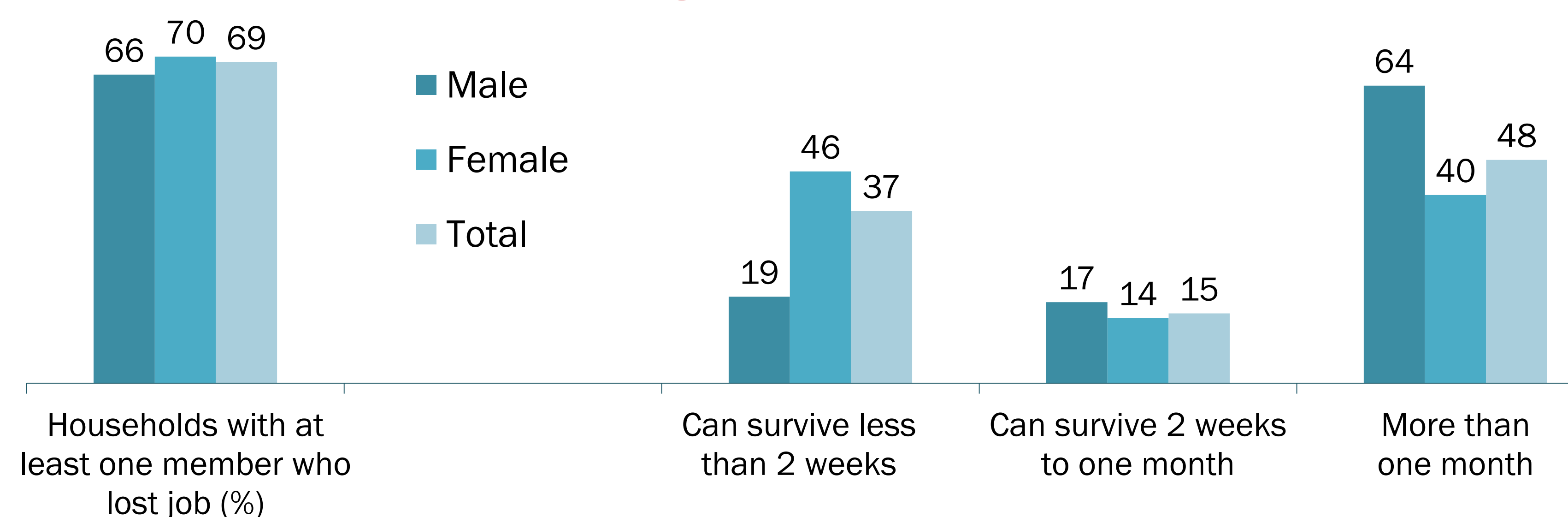
Note: ¹The remaining respondents were aged 25 and above; ²Household wealth index was calculated based on ownership of selected durable goods and amenities, as of UDAYA survey in 2015-16, with possible scores ranging from 0 to 57

ECONOMIC SHOCKS DURING LOCKDOWN

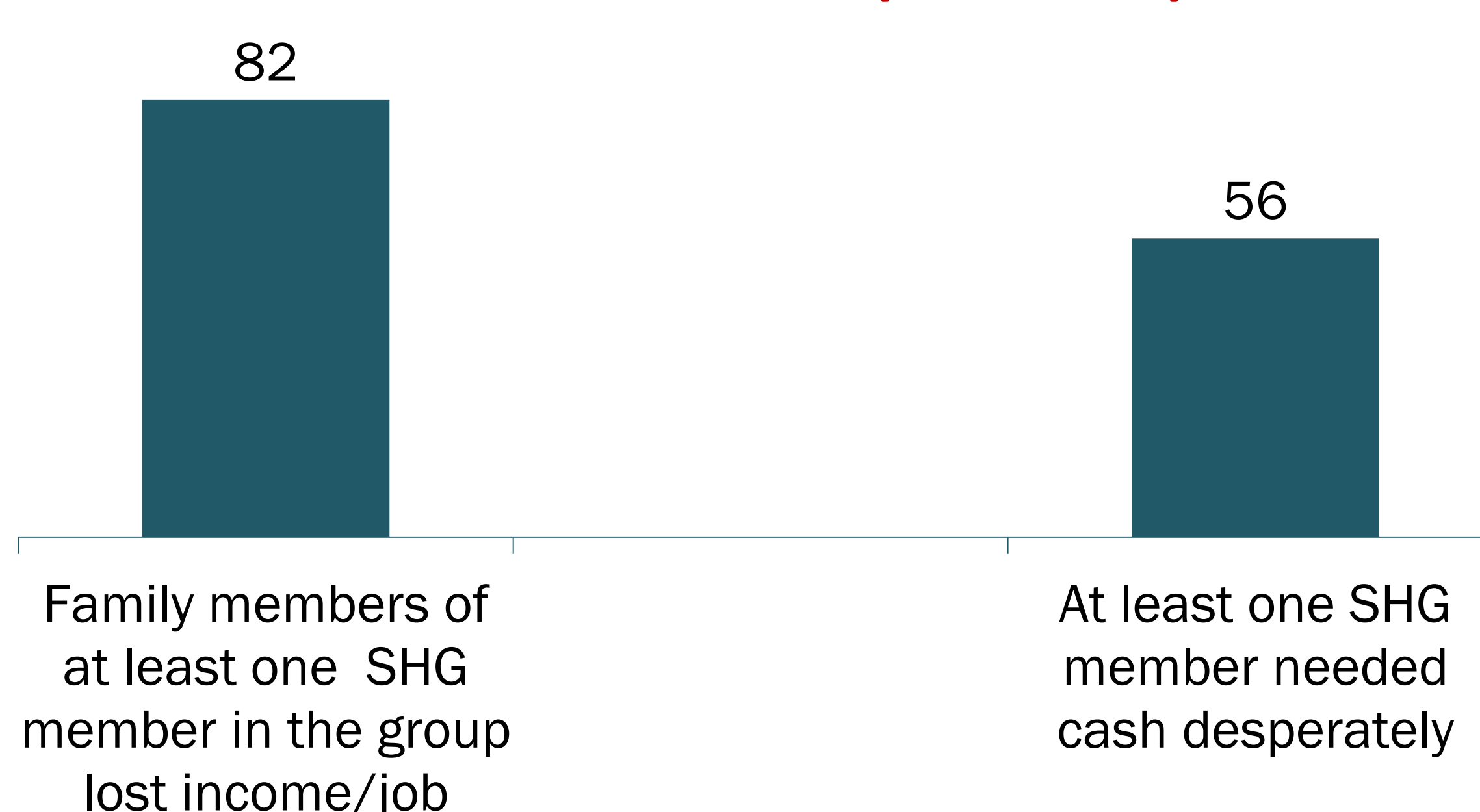
UDAYA cohort households (N=794)



UDAYA cohort migrant households (N=264)

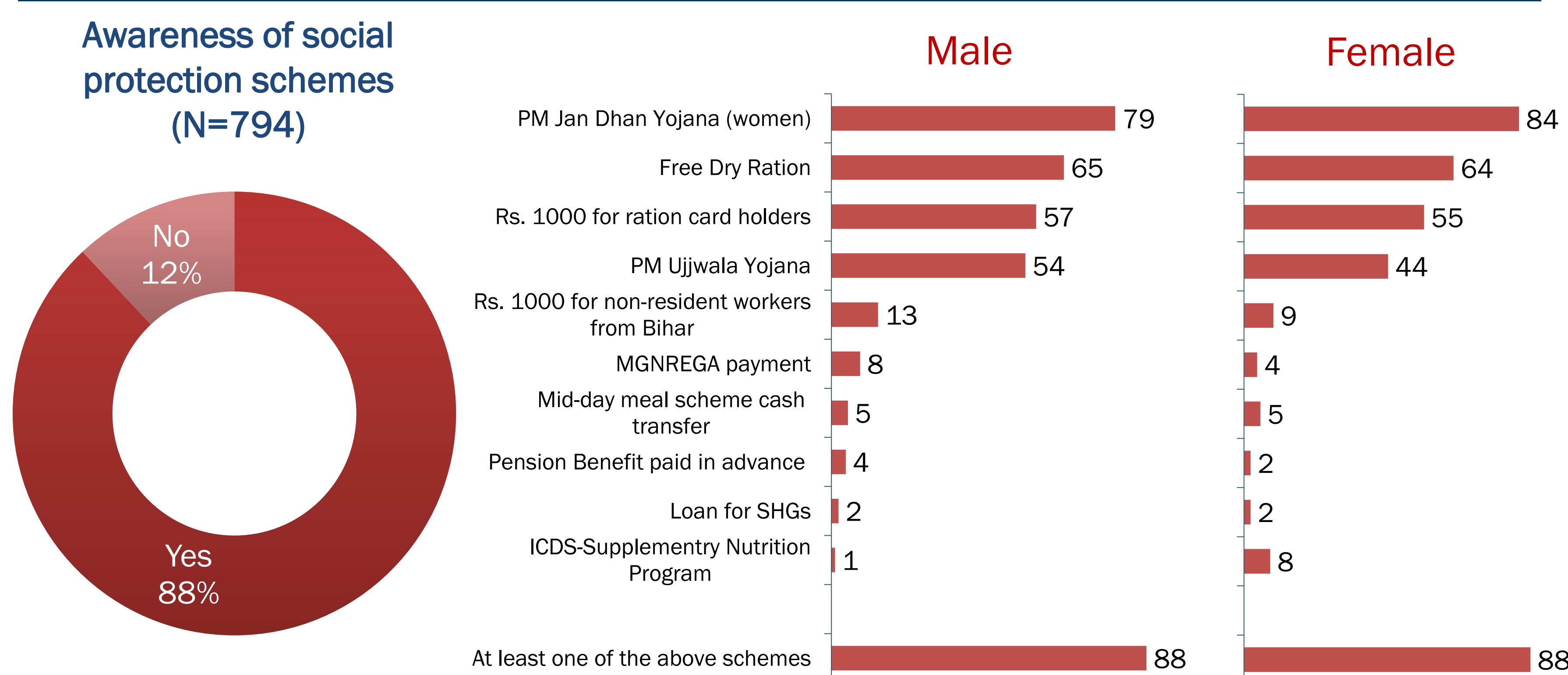


SHG leaders (N=179)



- Majority of participants in the household survey and the survey of SHG leaders reported loss of job/income earning opportunities and limited resources to survive.

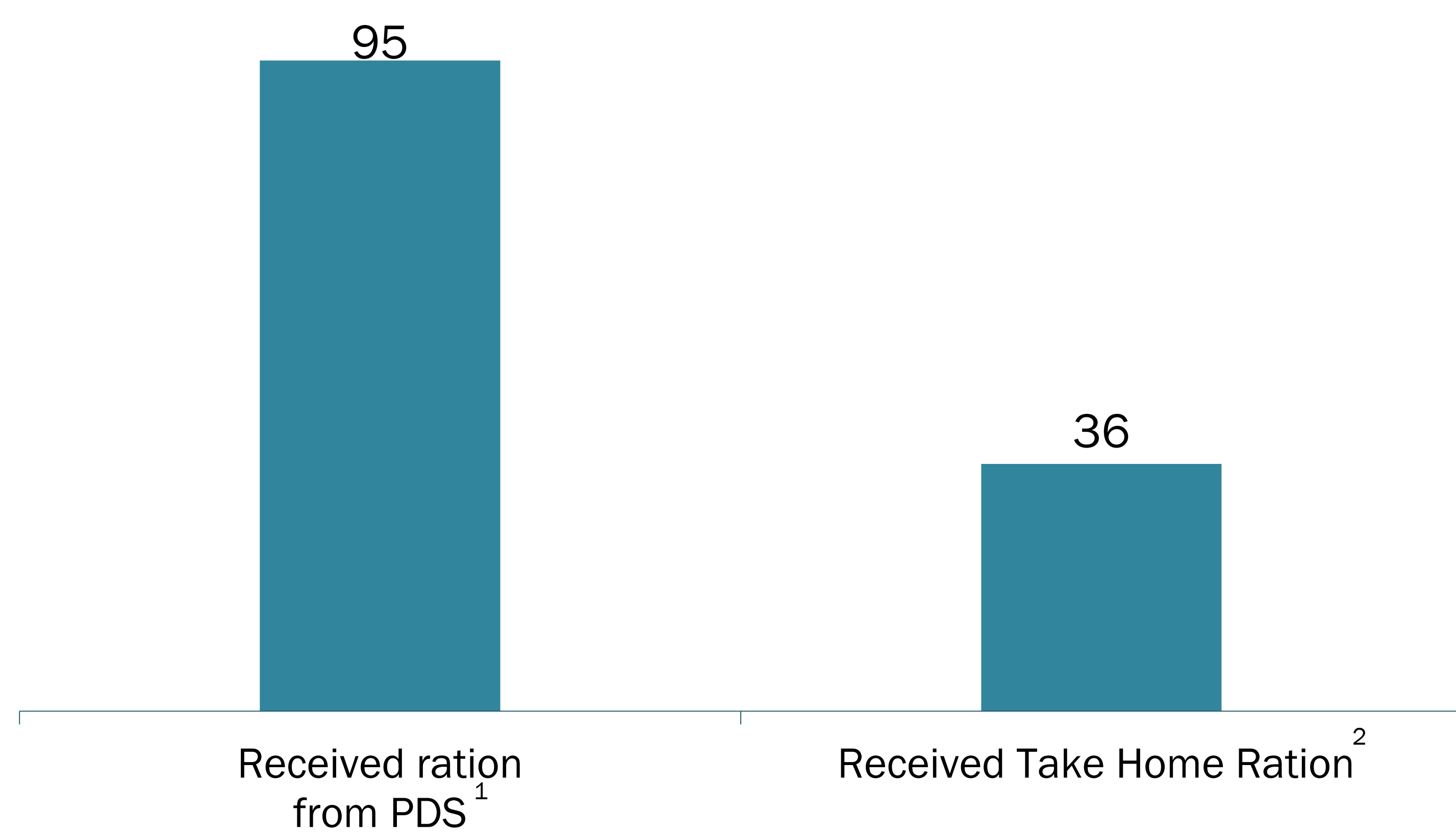
AWARENESS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEMES[@]



Note: [@]Based on answers given spontaneously in response to a single question about the awareness of social protection schemes, multiple responses possible.

- Almost 9 out of 10 participants, regardless of sex, were aware of at least one social protection measure.
- Most widely known measure was PM Jan Dhan Yojna (83% listed it spontaneously), followed by free dry ration (65%).
- Most participants heard about these measures either from television (64%) or social media (51%).

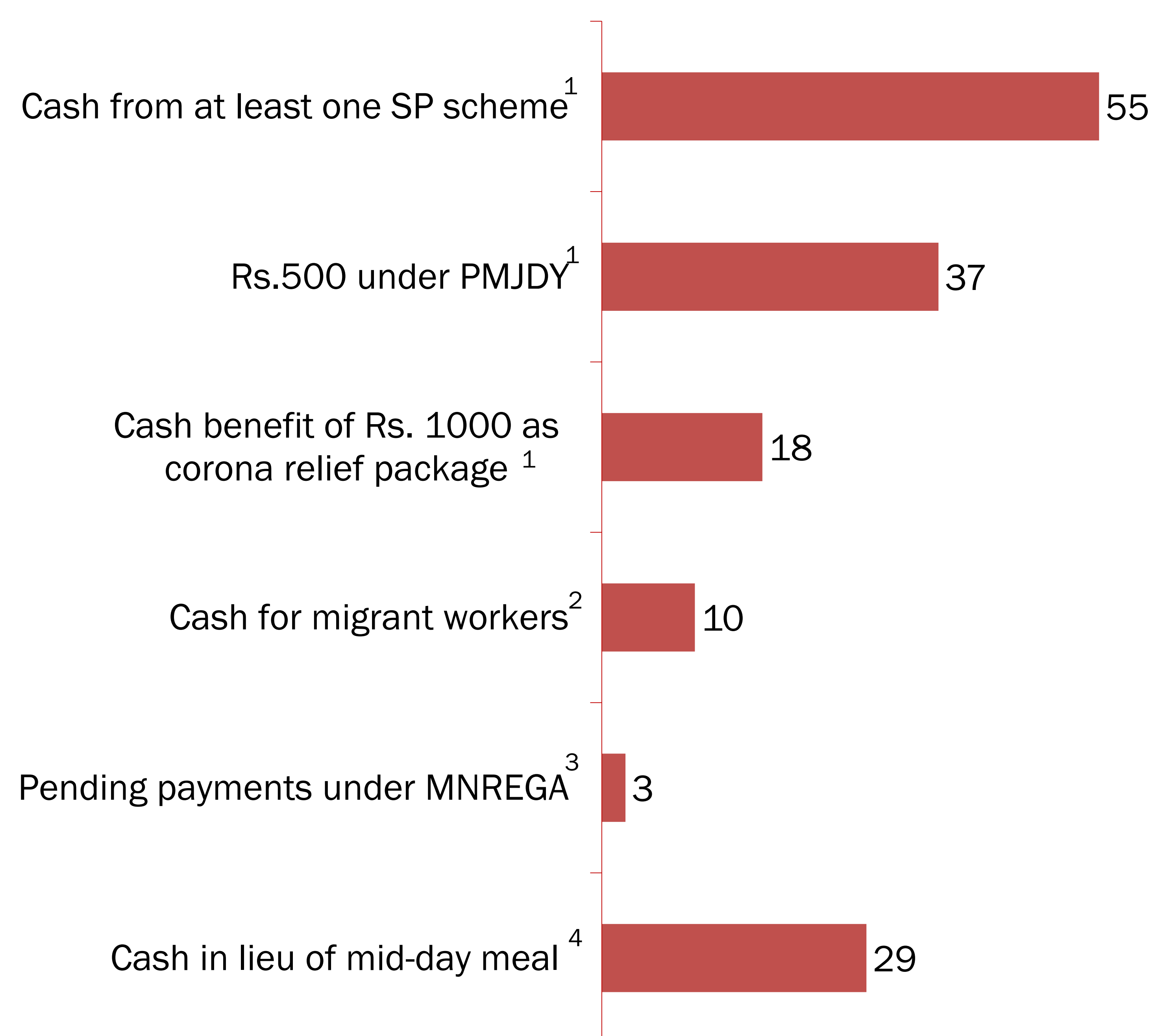
RATION RECEIVED DURING LOCKDOWN



Note: ¹of households that had a ration card (N=543); ²of households that had a pregnant or lactating woman or a child aged 6-72 months (N=391)

- 68% of households had a ration card (74% among poor/poorest, 80% among medium and 65% among rich/richest group)
 - Almost all of them (95%) with a ration card received ration in the month preceding the interview.
 - Only two-fifths of them (40%) with a ration card reported that the ration received was sufficient.
- 49% of households had a pregnant/lactating woman or a child aged 6-72 months.
 - One-third of (36%) them received take-home ration in the month preceding the interview.
 - Those who did not receive (60% migrant HH) mentioned reasons such as anganwadi worker did not provide, respondent did not know that take-home ration is distributed through the anganwadi centre (15%), the household name was not in the anganwadi centre list (26%), and respondent/family member could not go to the centre to take the ration because of lockdown (10%).

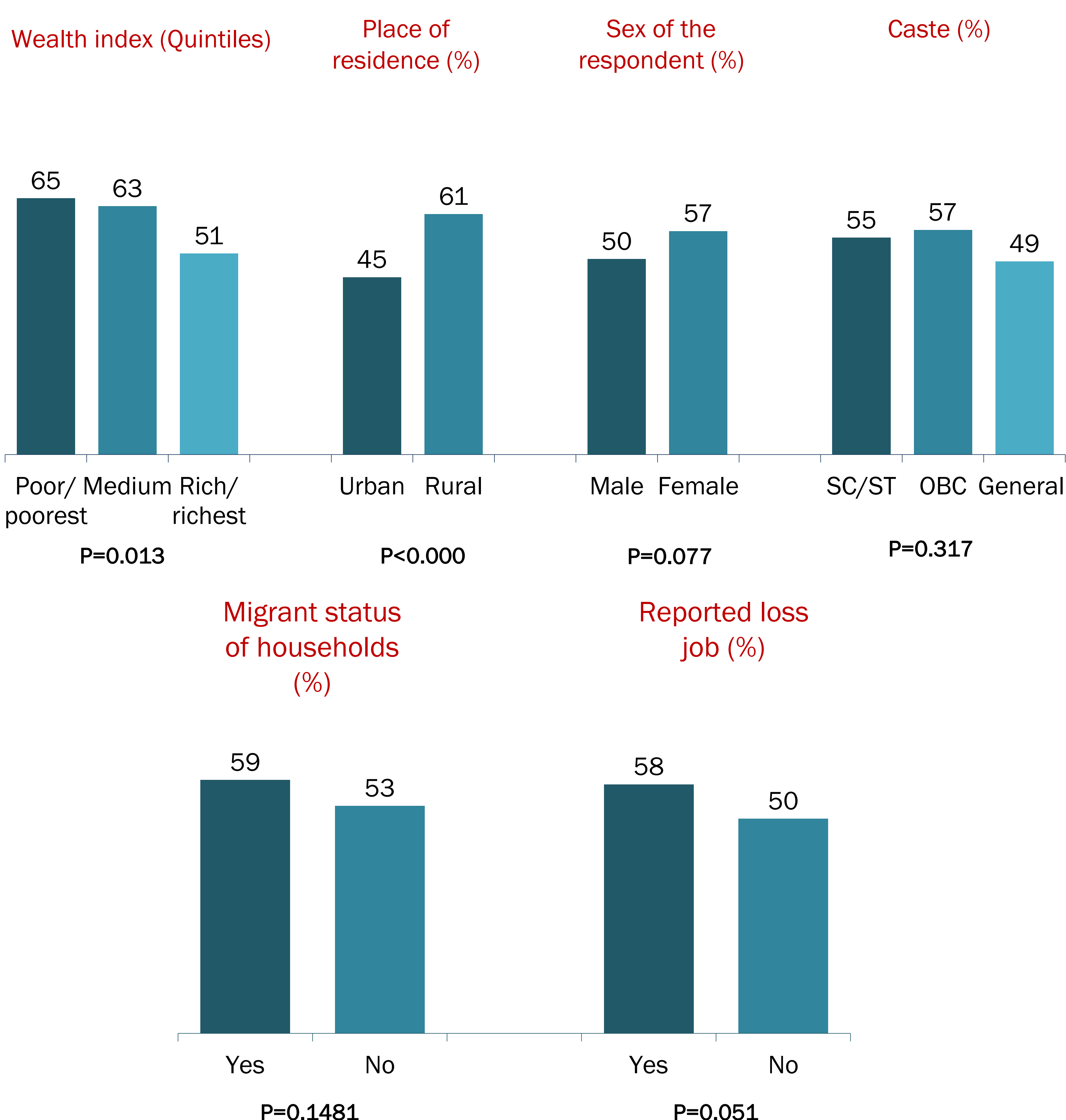
CASH BENEFITS RECEIVED



Notes: ¹based on full sample (N=794); ²based on total number of migrant households (N=264); ³ of those who were eligible to receive MNREGA benefits (N=620); ⁴of households that had a child aged 6-14 attending a government school (N=176). Approximately 12% of study participants were not aware of any cash transfer schemes, and 3-8% of respondents did not know whether they had received the cash transfer in their account.

- More than half of the respondents (55%) received cash benefits from at least one social protection scheme.
- Two-fifths (37%) received INR 500 under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna (PMJDY).
- About a fifth (18%) received INR 1,000 as COVID-19 relief package.
 - 92% of these households were able to withdraw and use the money thus received.
- 38% of households had a migrant.
 - 10% of these households received cash for migrant workers.
- 20% of households had a child aged 6-14 attending a government school.
 - A little over a quarter (29% 95% CI: 22.2, 35.7) received cash in lieu of mid-day meals.
- Participants who received any cash benefits, received on average a modest amount of INR 1000 (Median).

ANY CASH BENEFITS RECEIVED BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS[§]#



Note: [§]Of the full sample #adjusted percentages estimated after controlling for social caste, wealth status, religion, education attainment, migrant HH status, job loss and gender

A larger proportion of respondents belonging to economically poor or average households, residing in rural areas, had received cash benefits from at least one social protection schemes than others.

LIMITATIONS

- Findings cannot be generalized to the overall situation in Bihar given the selection bias in the sample, as mentioned in the Method section.
- Given the need to keep the duration of the telephone survey short enough to ensure the quality of data, questions to assess the eligibility of respondents to avail social protection measures were not included. Therefore, findings on the coverage of the social protection measures in this brief should be taken as indicative rather than definitive.

CONTACT INFORMATION

This work was jointly undertaken by Population Council Institute and UNICEF/Bihar.

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