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Returning home: Effects of COVID-19 on migrant households in Bihar

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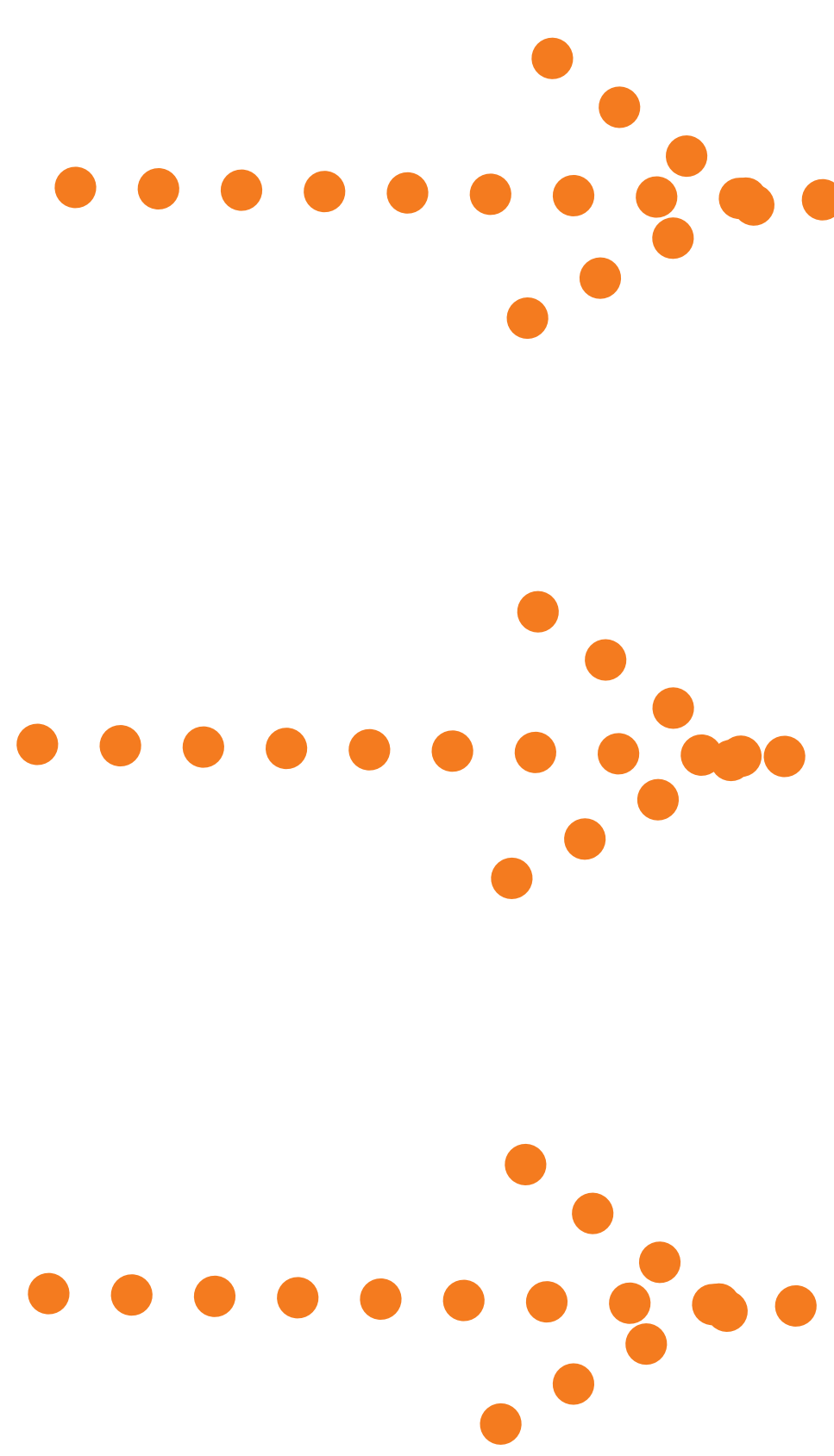
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RETURNING HOME:

EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS IN BIHAR



While there is considerable return migration, not all migrant households reported having their family member returned. Thus, among migrant households, about half of them may experience return migration.

Most of those who returned intend to go back to destination areas in 4-5 months. However, they may experience economic hardship without enough jobs or income.

Half of the migrant households received governmental assistance. And only three-fifths of migrant households reported sufficiency of ration received. Immediate financial or work for cash assistance shall be extended to rural migrant households, especially to those who lost jobs or income.

BACKGROUND

- Many migrants from metro cities of India began to return to their native places with the rise in COVID-19 cases in the cities and the extension of lockdown till May 31, 2020; With relaxation of travel restrictions, Bihar started receiving migrants returning home. The government made arrangements for them to be quarantined before they travelled to their villages and homes.
- The key objectives of this study are to understand the extent of return migration, impact of lockdown on migrant household livelihoods and the opportunities for household economic revival through social protection schemes.

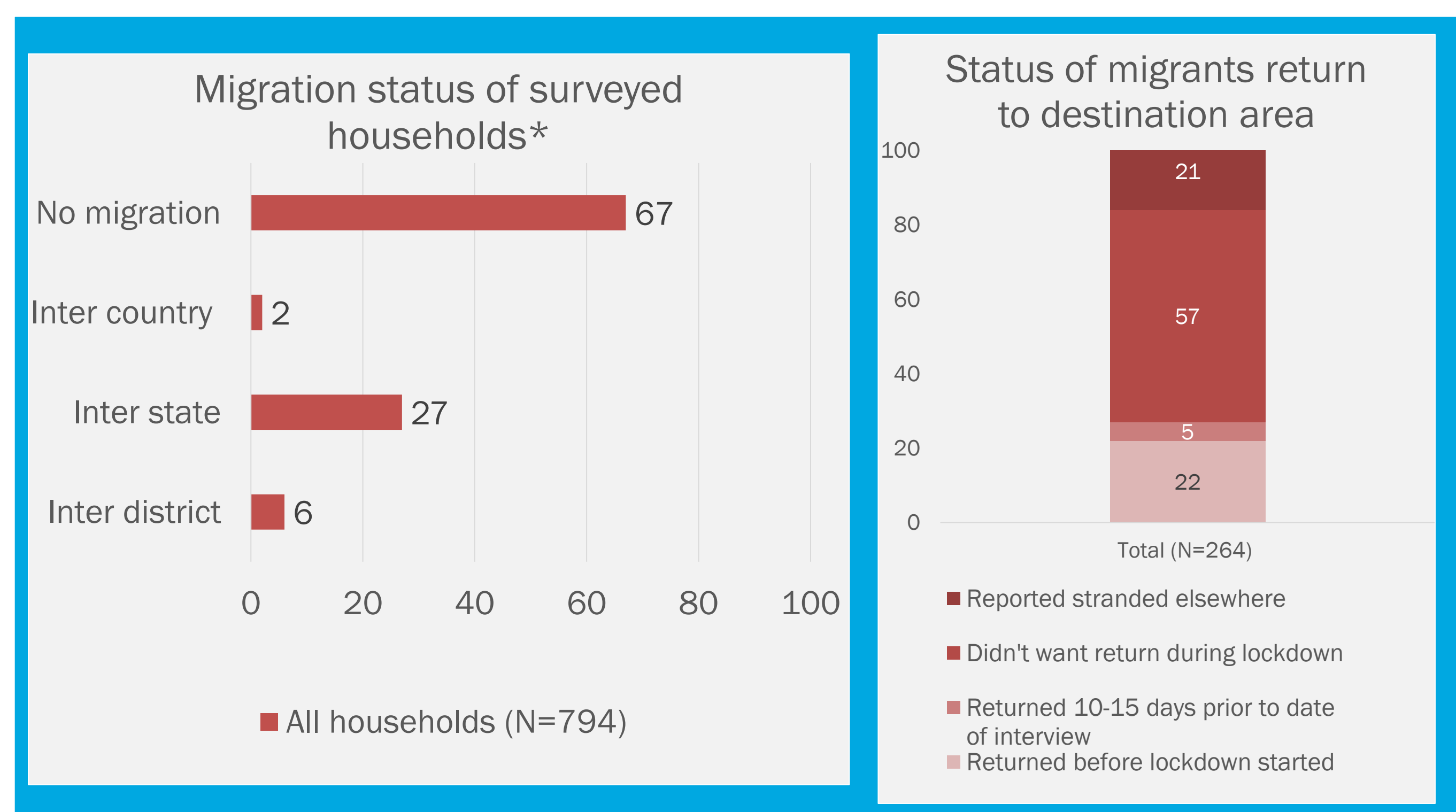
METHODS

- Data was gathered between May 13-22, 2020 from the existing study cohort of households under the project UDAYA (www.projectudaya.in).
- Interviews were conducted with a total of 794 participant households enrolled. Of the 794 households, 264 were migrant households.
- Eligibility: Young boys/girls who were UDAYA participants consented to participate in the regular surveys. Participants who responded to the survey were members of migrant households.

PROFILE AND MIGRATION STATUS

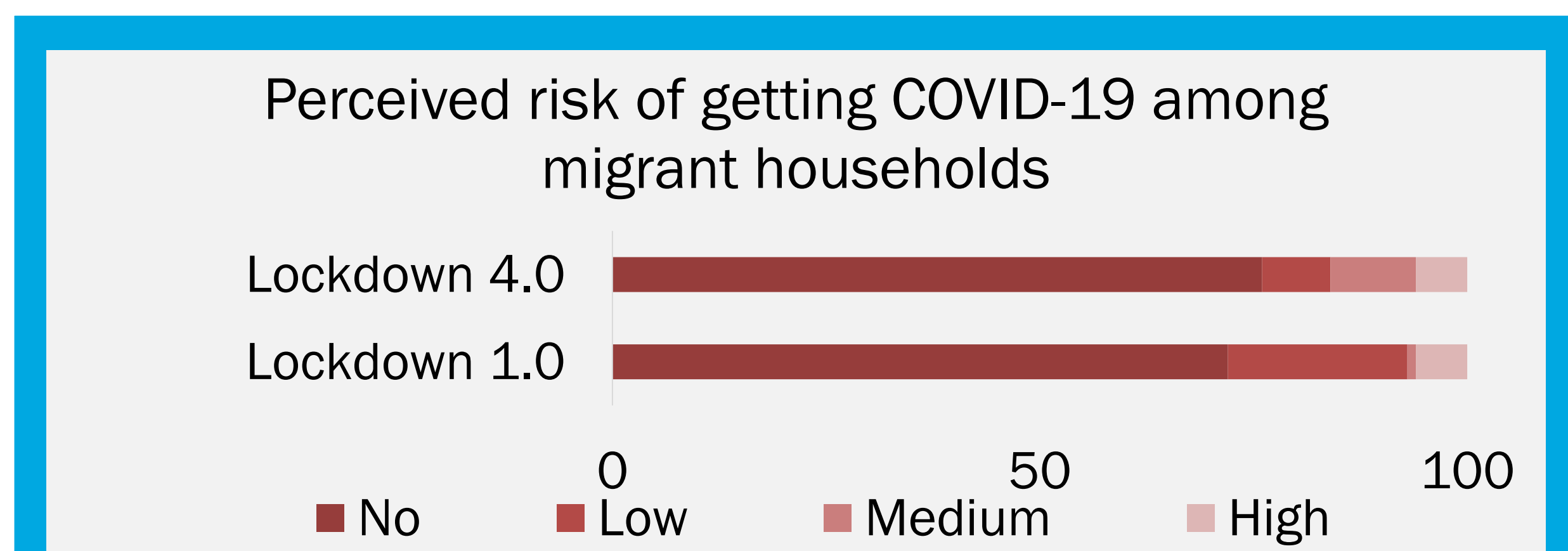
Profile of study participants:

- Mean age (SD): 23.5 years (7.3 years); Males – 33%; Females: 67%; Currently married – 60%; Caste: Scheduled caste/tribe (SC/ST) - 18%, Other backward castes (OBC) – 64%, General caste – 18%.



*Categories are not mutually exclusive

- Migrants from Bihar work in the following states: Delhi – 29%, Maharashtra – 11%, Punjab – 11%, Haryana – 8%, West Bengal – 6%, UP – 5%, Karnataka – 4%.

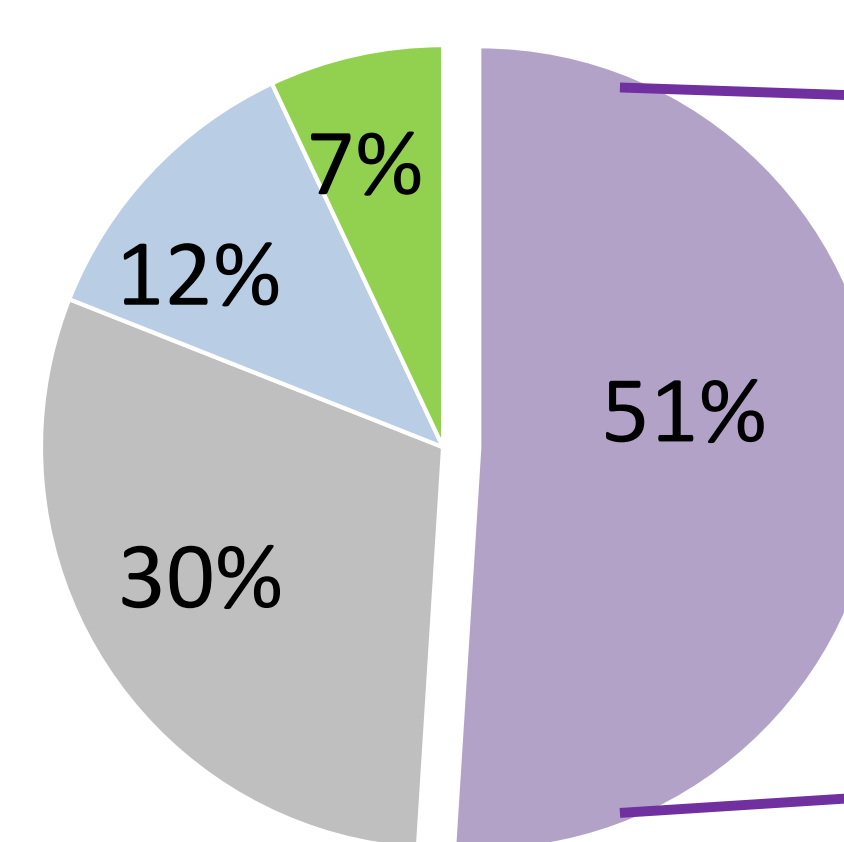


- Perceived risk of getting COVID-19 continues to be low despite households experiencing return migration.

IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN ON MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS

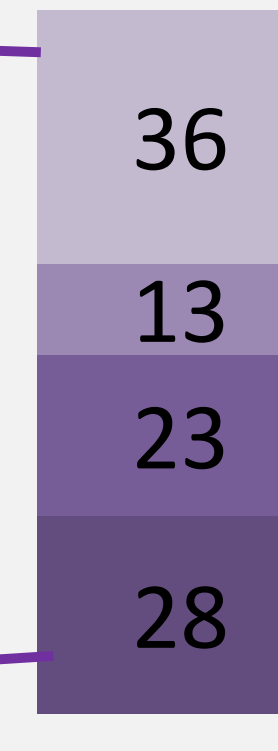
Impact of lockdown on migrant household earnings

- Complete loss of income
- Major reduction in income
- Minor effect
- No impact



Duration for which households with complete loss of income have financial resources to sustain

- More than one month
- Two weeks to one month
- One week to two week
- Less than a week



- About half of the households lost complete income. Over two-thirds of the households who reported complete loss of income due to lockdown reported that they have finances that are sufficient for only less than a month.
- Job loss was relatively higher among the SC/STs. About one-fifth of them reported that their primary source of income was from government schemes.
- Almost all migrant households received ration from the public distribution system (PDS), although only 42% reported sufficiency of ration.
- More than half of the migrant households received financial assistance from the government and the average amount received was Rs.1320.

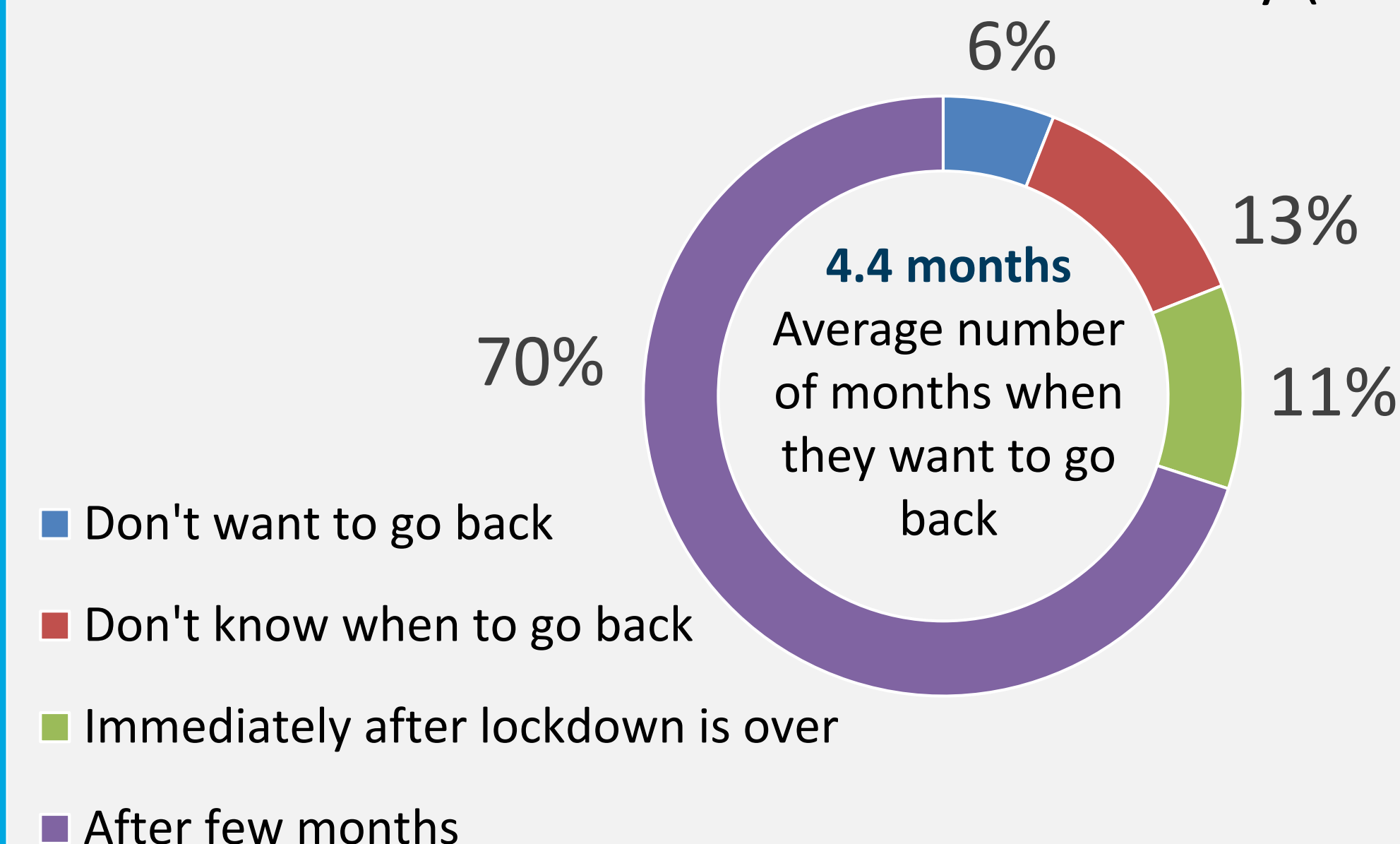
Caste	Reported loss of jobs among migrant households (%)		Major source of income from MGNREGA / govt schemes among migrant households with job loss (n= 182) (%)	
	Reported loss of jobs	Major source of income	Reported loss of jobs	Major source of income
SC/ST (18%)	83	23	66	13
OBC (64%)	66	13	64	20
General (18%)	64	20	73	20
Standard of living index (SLI)				
Low (18%)	73	20	72	26
Medium (20%)	72	26	61	12
High (62%)	61	12		

Note: Results for select categories may be interpreted with caution due to low sample size.

	Received ration from PDS	Reported sufficiency of ration	Other governmental assistance (pensions, JanDhan account, corona relief fund)	Total money assistance in last month: Average (SD)
Among migrant households	95%	42%	56%	1319 (882)
Among households with complete loss of income	95%	42%	58%	1260 (757)

- About 20% of migrant households reported that their family members were stranded.
- Among those who returned, almost everyone reported that they will go back to destination areas for work.
- About 70% reported that they will go to destination areas in an average time of 4.4 months.

Percent migrants who reported intention to go back to destination areas among those who returned to Bihar at the time of survey (n=71)



LIMITATIONS

Results of this brief may be interpreted cautiously due to certain limitations. First and foremost, the survey was conducted among UDAYA cohort of migrant households who had access to phones and consented to participate in the survey. Further, the survey was conducted during the first few days of Lockdown 4.0 in May 2020, around the time when migrants started returning home. Due to this, not many migrant households received their family members back home before the end of the survey. Finally, the brief presents results only of access to services among migrant households.

CONTACT INFORMATION

This work was jointly undertaken by Population Council Institute and UNICEF/Bihar. For more information, contact nsaggurti@popcouncil.org; aporwal@popcouncil.org; pash@unicef.org