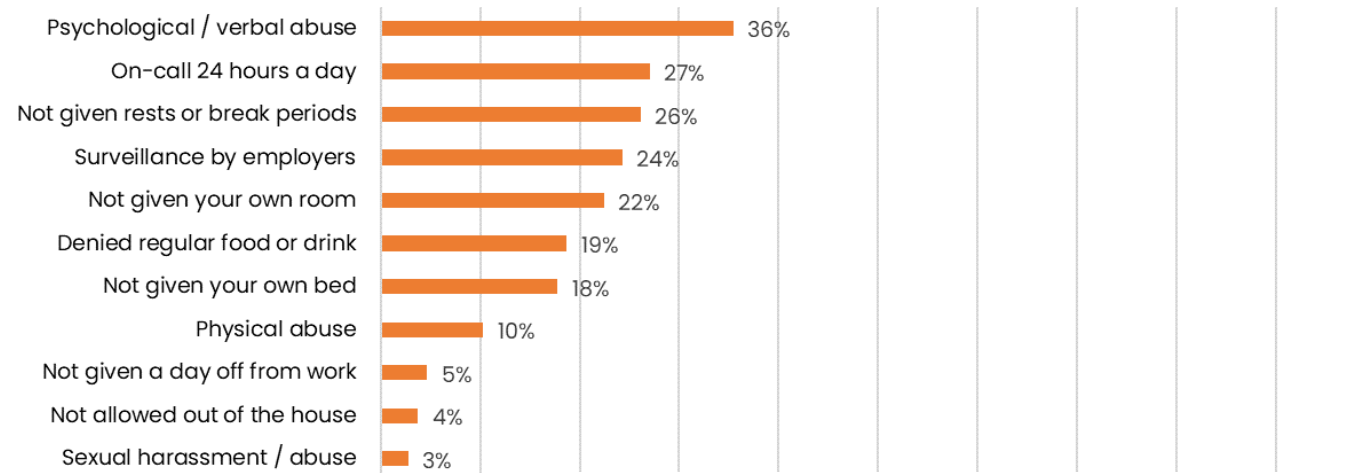


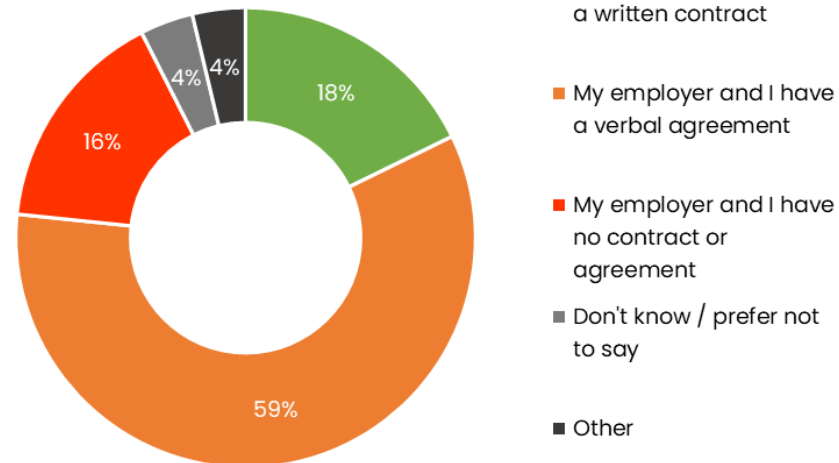
## HOW ARE DOMESTIC WORKERS TREATED BY THEIR CURRENT EMPLOYERS?

Over half of our survey respondents (55%) are working as domestic workers for a new employer after escaping their first employer. Unlike their first employers, most of their current employers are British (54%), with employer from the Arab Nations only making up 9% of employers (n=106). Although workers are treated relatively better by their current employers than those that they came to the UK with, the chart below shows that exploitation and abuse are still far too common.

Have you ever experienced any of the following with your current employer? (n=107)



Which of the following best describes your current situation? (n=107)



Workers receive a median wage of **£9.60 per hour** (£460 for 48 hours of work a week) from their current employers, much more than 52p, but still **less than the National Living Wage of £10.42**. As the chart on the right shows, this low wage may be due to the fact that **only 18% have a written contract** with their current employers.

### HOW DID WE DO THE SURVEY?

This survey was designed and analysed by members of The Voice of Domestic Workers with the help of Matt Reynolds, PhD Researcher in the Sociology Department at London School of Economics and Political Science. The survey was open from 4 August to 20 September 2023 and was distributed online via The Voice of Domestic Workers' mailing list, social media channels, and word-of-mouth. All participants had to give informed consent before being able to complete the survey questionnaire. Notes:

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS\\_146243/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS_146243/lang--en/index.htm),

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_802551/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_802551/lang--en/index.htm),

<sup>3</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/event/19268/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session/>

# DOMESTIC WORK IS WORK

Findings from a Survey of 200 Overseas Domestic Workers in the UK



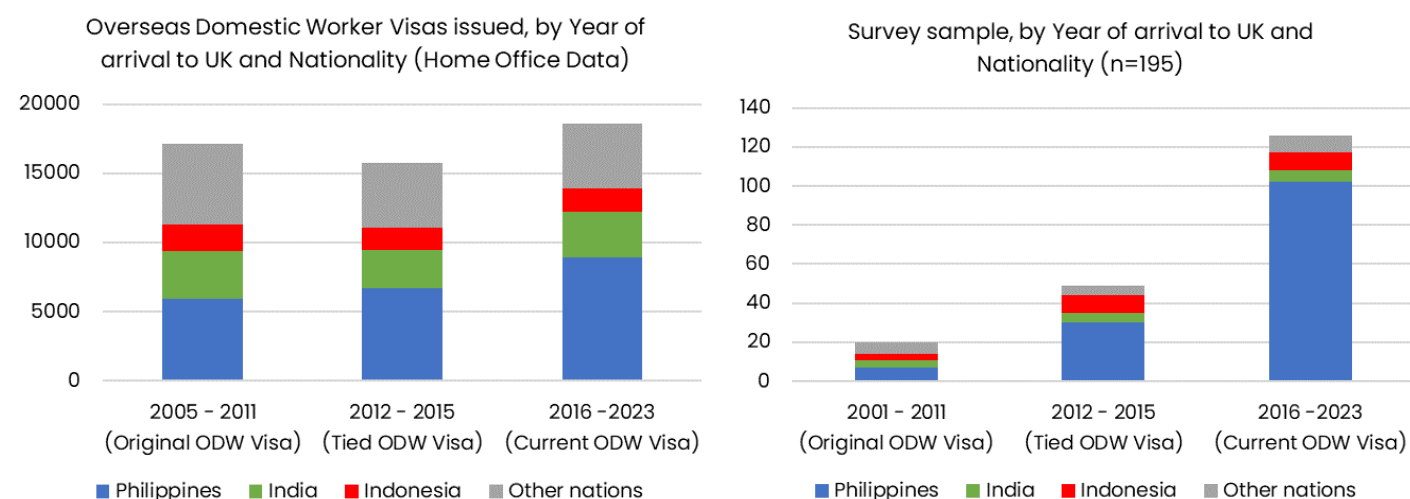
## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE OVERSEAS DOMESTIC WORKER (ODW) VISA

		Right to change employer?	Right to renew visa?	What did this mean for Overseas Domestic Workers?
Before 1998		X	X	With no official visa, nor any ability to seek alternative employment, workers were frequently mistreated and abused during this period.
1998 – 2012		✓	✓	After campaigning by a coalition of groups including Unite the Union, Labour introduced the first ODW visa. With more rights, workers' conditions improved dramatically. The ILO cited this visa as international best practice. <sup>1</sup>
2012 – 2016		X	X	The coalition government's new visa prevented workers from asserting their basic rights and the abuse reported by workers rapidly increased.
2016 –		✓ (in theory)	X	After further campaigning, the government accepted that workers need an escape route from abuse and removed the employer tie from the visa. However, <b>as this report shows</b> , without the option to renew their visa, employers' abuse has continued and workers who have escaped often work without a contract for below minimum wage.
2024		✓ ?	✓ ?	<b>Will a new Labour Government help free workers from exploitation by restoring the original Overseas Domestic Worker Visa? In this report, we provide evidence for why they should.</b>



## WHERE DO OVERSEAS DOMESTIC WORKERS, AND THEIR EMPLOYERS, COME FROM?

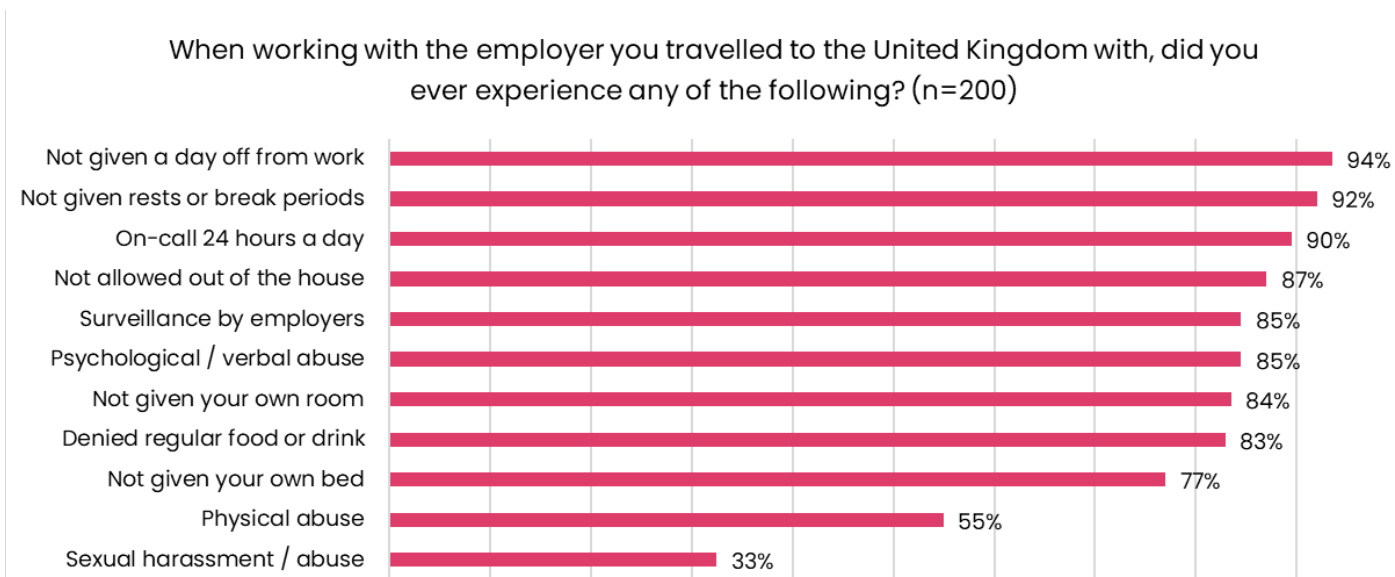
According to Home Office Data, the countries which have issued the most ODW Visas are the **Philippines, India, and Indonesia**. Our sample of 200 is similar, but with a skew towards those who have arrived since 2016, under the current visa regime.



In our survey, employers from the **Arab States** (e.g., Saudi Arabia and Qatar) make up **79%** of those who bring Overseas Domestic Workers with them to the UK, followed by **China** (5%) and **the UK** (5%) (n=198). This largely mirrors international trends of domestic work reported by the ILO.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW ARE OVERSEAS DOMESTIC WORKERS TREATED BY THEIR EMPLOYERS IN THE UK?

As the chart below highlights, most workers who answered our survey had to work around the clock, live in inhumane conditions, and face multiple forms of abuse, all within the UK.



## 52p per hour

The median wage of our survey respondents - £73 for 140 hours of work a week. (Q: How many hours a week did you work with this employer? (n=186), Q: How much were you paid by this employer, if at all? (n=184) Converted from multiple currencies to £ at exchange rates as of Sept 23)

## HOW DOES THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT ALLOW THIS ABUSE TO HAPPEN?



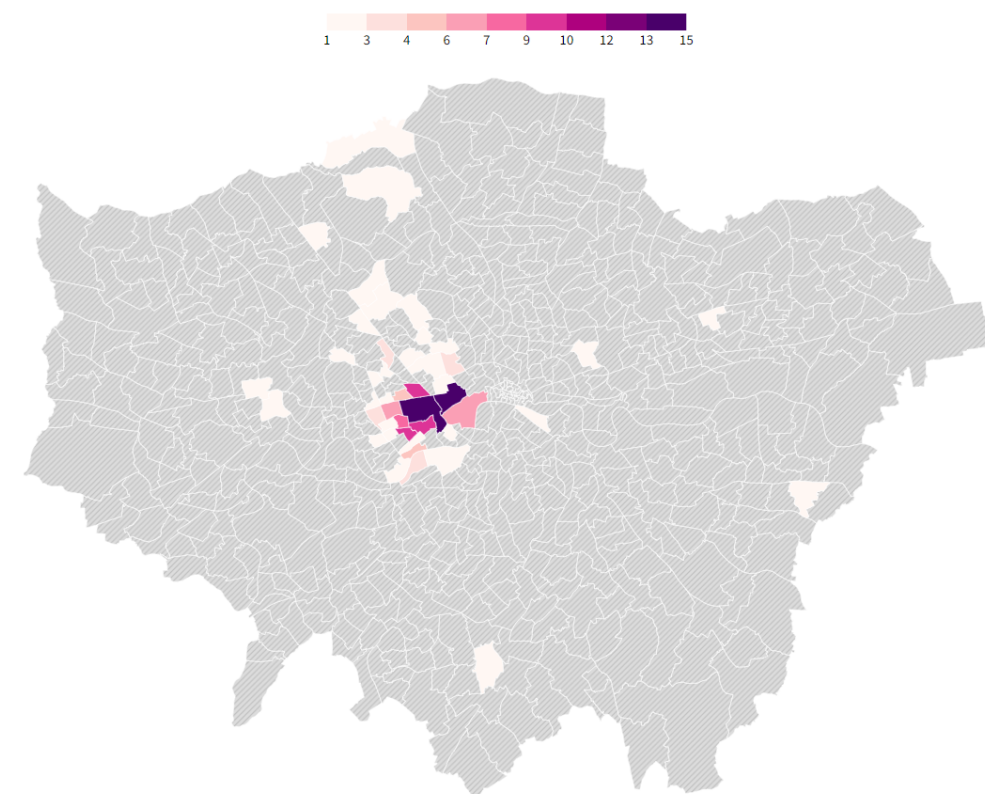
Workers should be interviewed at a Visa Application Centre but **only 34%** of survey respondents were (n=195). Of those who *did* attend an interview **only 15%** (n=67) were given a leaflet explaining their employment rights, and how to access support in the UK.



Workers should sign a written contract before they come to the UK, but **only 33%** of survey respondents did so (n=195). Of those who *did* sign a contract, **only 29%** read and understood their contract before signing it, and **only 6%** were given a copy to keep (n=65).

## WHERE IS THIS ABUSE HAPPENING?

In our survey, **80%** of workers stayed with their employers in **Greater London** (n=200). As this map shows, ODW employers are clustered in some of the UK's wealthiest neighbourhoods - Kensington, Knightsbridge, Belgravia, and Mayfair. However, this is also a national issue: we received survey responses from workers in every corner of the country, from Brighton, Glasgow, Gloucester, Swansea, and Manchester.



## HOW ARE WORKERS SUPPORTED AFTER THEY ESCAPE THEIR EMPLOYERS?

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) should allow Overseas Domestic Workers to be identified as potential victims of modern slavery and receive appropriate support. Despite the abuse our survey respondents faced, **only 44%** have been referred to the NRM (n=174), and those who have expressed their frustration with the process in responses to a question about their experiences:

*"It's confusing because there's no point in this process. It will end with nothing, and I will still be stuck in my situation."*

*'How many years in NRM? And no update still.'*

## 786 days of waiting

The median waiting time for ODWs between a reasonable grounds decision (where the Home Office decides if somebody *may* be a victim of modern slavery) and a conclusive grounds decision (when the Home Office accepts or rejects this evidence), according to five years of client data from **Kalayaan**, a charity who supports migrant domestic workers in the UK through the NRM process.<sup>3</sup>