



Women in Informal Employment:  
Globalizing and Organizing

# Covid and Informal Work: Evidence from 11 cities

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# Context and Study Overview

- 1.6 billion informal workers are among the most severely affected by the pandemic.
- During the first months of the crisis, informal workers lost 60%—82% of their earnings (ILO, 2020).
- Gap: distinct pathways of impact among subgroups + recovery needs of the informal workforce.



# Covid-19 and the Informal Economy Study

## Cities featured in the study:



- |                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1- Accra (Ghana)            | 7- Durban (South Africa) |
| 2- Ahmedabad (India)        | 8- Lima (Peru)           |
| 3- Bangkok (Thailand)       | 9- Mexico City (Mexico)  |
| 4- Dakar (Senegal)          | 10- Pleven (Bulgaria)    |
| 5- Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) | 11- New York City (USA)  |
| 6- Delhi (India)            | 12- Tiruppur (India)     |

4 main sectors (domestic workers, waste pickers, home-based workers, street vendors)

73% women

2,009 informal workers (excluding Dar es Salaam)



A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a green polo shirt and a floral face mask, is focused on working on a small, round object. She is wearing white gloves and a gold bracelet. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor or semi-outdoor setting with plants and a building.

# Overall Findings:

# The pandemic adversely impacted informal workers' economic security across cities and sectors

## Loss of ability to work

During the peak of lockdown 74 % of the respondents reported not working. By mid-2020, about 21% were still unable to work.

## Loss of earnings

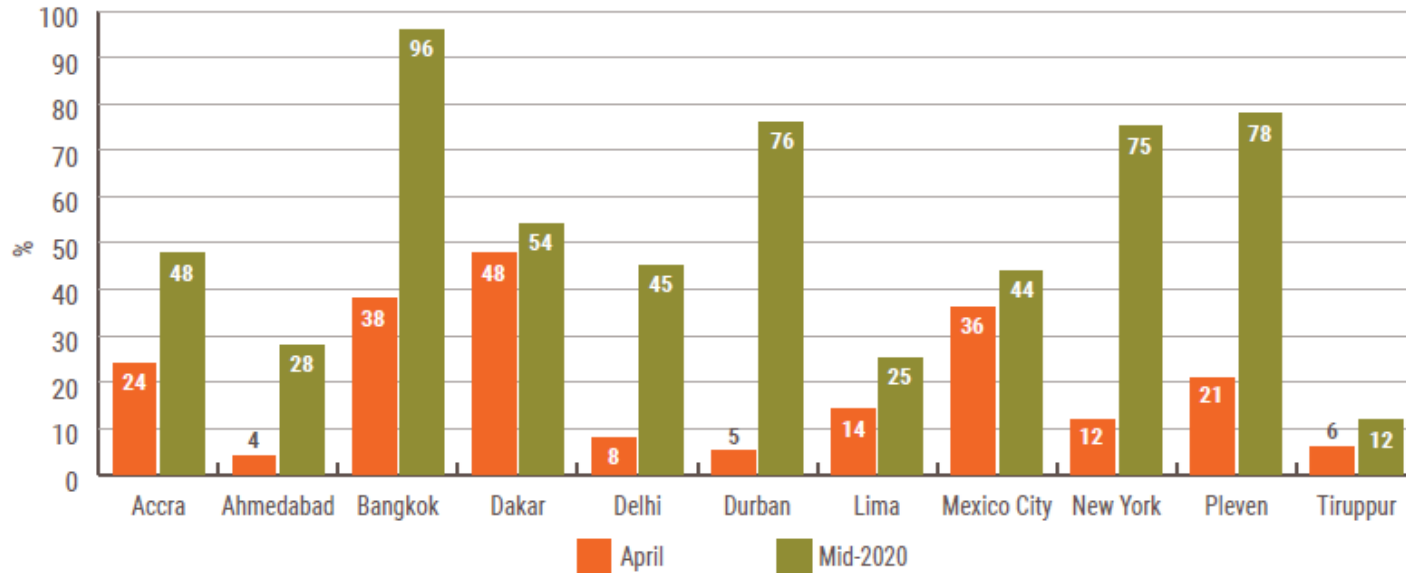
During the peak of lockdown, workers' earnings were only 19%, on average, of pre-COVID earnings. By mid-2020, the total sample reported earning only 56% of their earnings pre-COVID.



# Impact by City and Sector:

# Disruptions to workers' economic activities and security varied by city

Figure 3 - Average Earnings (as a % of pre-COVID average earnings), by City: April and Mid-2020

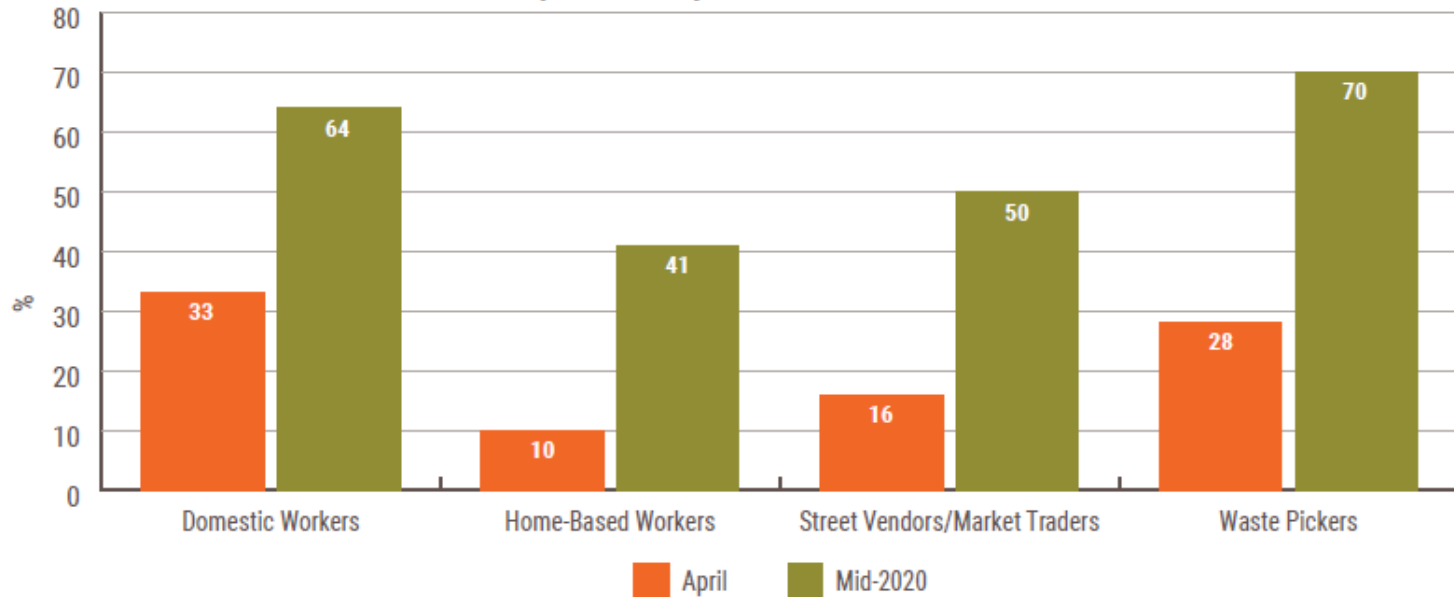


Source: WIEGO COVID-19 Crisis Study (2020)



# The pandemic impacted workers in different sectors differently

Figure 8 - Average Earnings (as per cent of pre-COVID-19 average earnings), by Sector: April and Mid-2020



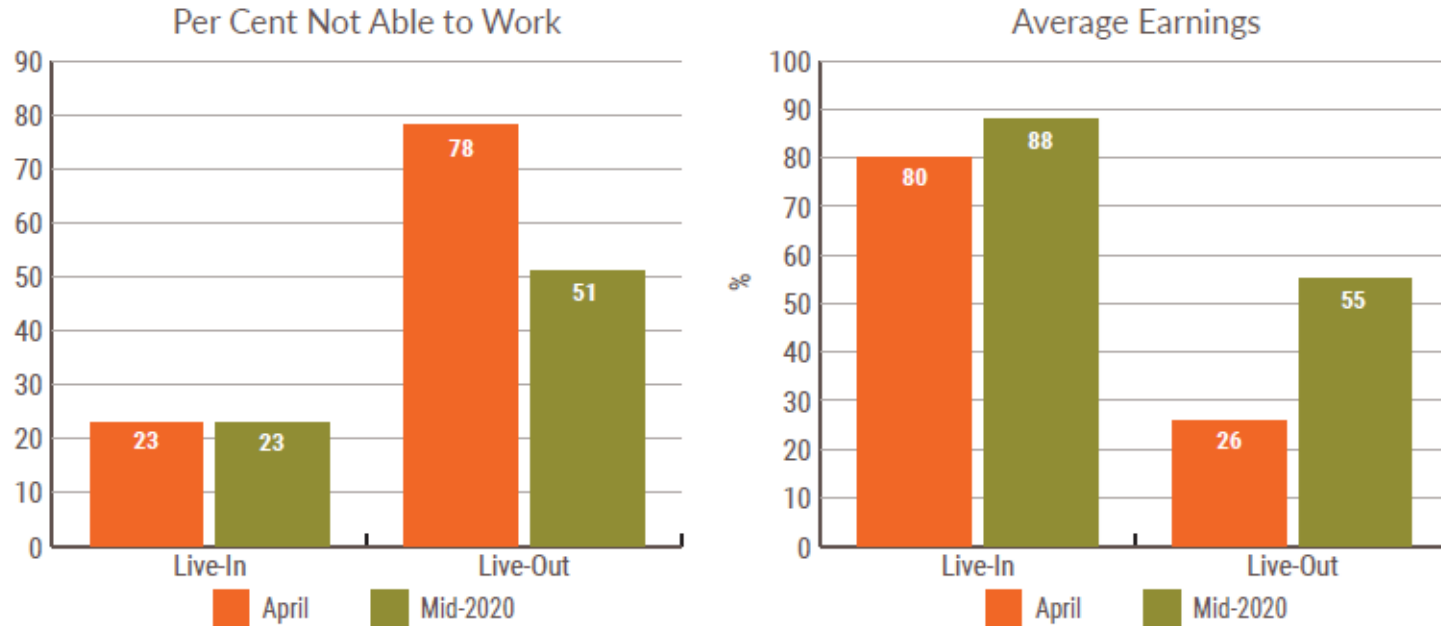
Source: WIEGO COVID-19 Crisis Study (2020)



# Distinct Pathways by Sector

# Live-out Domestic workers were hit harder than those who live in

Figure 10 - Live-in and Live-out Domestic Workers: Per Cent Not Able to Work and Average Earnings (as per cent of pre-COVID-19 earnings): April and Mid-2020



# Sub-Contracted Home Based Workers were hit harder than those Self Employed

Figure 13 – Self-Employed and Subcontracted Home-Based Workers: Per Cent Not Able to Work and Average Earnings (as per cent of pre-COVID-19 earnings): April and Mid-2020



Source: WIEGO COVID-19 Crisis Study (2020)

# Non-food vendors were hit harder than food vendor during the peak of lockdown

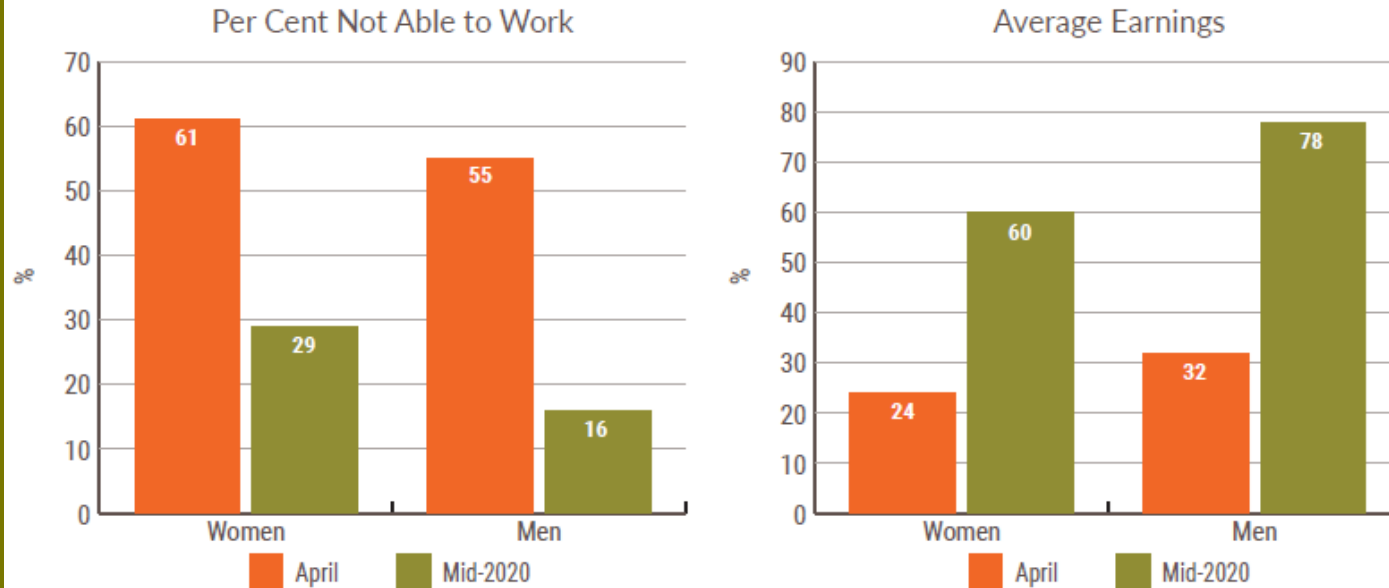
**Table 3 – Food and Non-Food Street Vendors and Market Traders: Per Cent Not Able to Work and Monthly Earnings (as per cent of pre-COVID-19 monthly earnings): April and Mid-2020**

	Not Able to Work				Average Earnings as Per Cent of pre-COVID-19 Average Earnings			
	April		Mid-2020		April		Mid-2020	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Food	76	69	33	35	21	21	38	44
Non-food	93	86	42	29	5	10	47	61

Source: WIEGO COVID-19 Crisis Study (2020)

# Women waste pickers were hit harder than men waste pickers

Figure 17 - Women and Men Waste Pickers: Per Cent Not Able to Work & Average Earnings (as per cent of pre-COVID-19 average earnings): April and Mid-2020

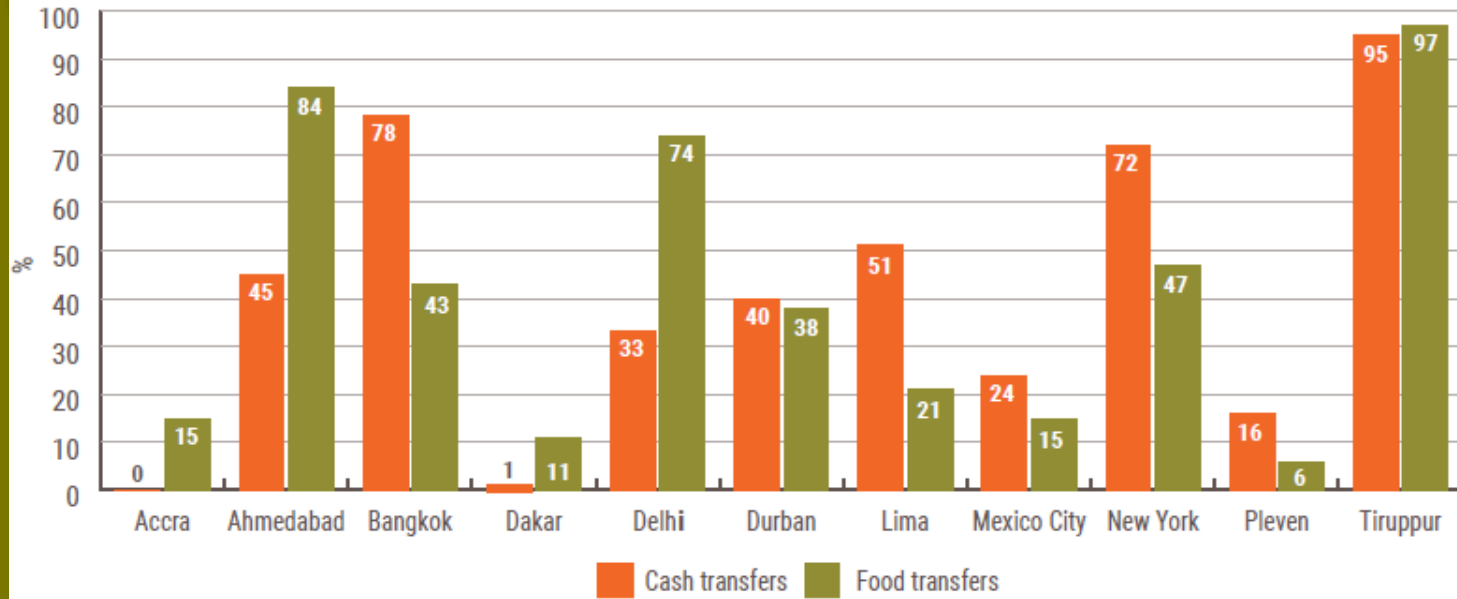


Source: WIEGO COVID-19 Crisis Study (2020)

# Role of the State: restrictions and relief

# Workers access to relief differed depending on the existing social protection infrastructure, the policy context, and the capacity of workers

Figure 18 - Per Cent who Received Cash Grants and/or Food Aid, by City



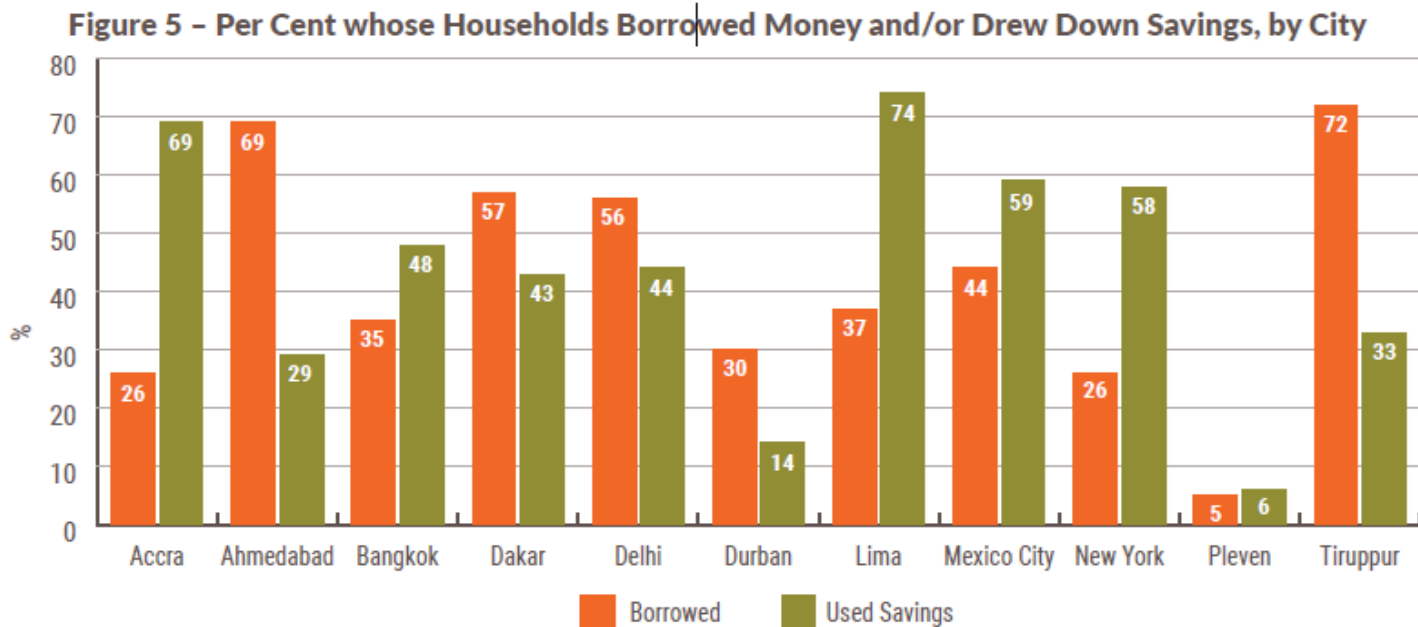
Source: WIEGO COVID-19 Crisis Study (2020)



# Coping Mechanisms



# The two most prevalent coping strategies across the sample were borrowing and drawing down savings



Source: WIEGO COVID-19 Crisis Study (2020)

# Recovery and way forward



# Role of workers' organizations

- Advocacy with governments
- Support in accessing relief
- Information on health and safety protocols
- Provision of PPE

*“The only person who was interested in our lives is the chairman of the organization. Moral support is very important for all of us... It is essential [that] someone stand behind us”.*



# Demands

- **Do No Harm!**
- **Immediate financial relief**
- **Recovery support** for work and livelihoods
- **Social Protection**
- **Enabling Policy and Legal Environments:** National and urban

*No recovery without us!*

**See:**

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*Towards a Better Deal for the  
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