

# METHODS FOR ESTIMATING MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKER NUMBERS IN THE SADC REGION

METHODS BRIEF PREPARED FOR THE ILO UNDER THE SAMM PROJECT



International  
Labour  
Organization



Funded by  
the European Union



**27<sup>th</sup> April 2002**

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## Introduction

This methods brief is extracted from a broader report on Migrant Domestic Workers in the Southern African Development Community Region which provides estimates of the number of migrant domestic workers and summarises the migration and labour policy environment (ILO 2022). This report was commissioned by the ILO under the Southern African Migration Management (SAMM) Project, and targets the following sixteen countries: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.<sup>1</sup>

There is no established methodology for estimating the number of migrant domestic workers in a country. Recent ILO reports, notably the 2021 Domestic Work report (ILO 2021), developed and applied advanced estimation techniques to official data sources to produce estimated domestic worker numbers globally, regionally and at country level. While these techniques attempt to account for various forms of uncertainty in how domestic work is captured in official data, adding the migration dimension increases this uncertainty many-fold. This methods brief proposes an estimation approach which focuses on understanding the contextual factors in the nature of domestic work and migration in a region and in a country, which provides qualitative information for the interpretation of official data.

The purpose of estimating migrant domestic worker numbers is to inform evidence-based decision-making. This means emphasising three points about the nature of evidence:

- Data which claims to be authoritative in its source or through its format can have a powerful impact on decision-making and resource allocation. Those who generate and interpret such data therefore bear a responsibility to consider who is included as well as who is excluded by the data. Publishing statistics which take the form of definitive estimates and exact numbers, even when authors know there is a wide margin of error, can serve to make those groups who are excluded from official datasets even more marginal by also excluding them from evidence-

based decision-making discussions.

- Generating good quality representative survey data is an important element of improving policy making and advocacy, however most surveys face methodological limitations which tend to undercount the most vulnerable members of society and of the labour force. For forms of largely informal employment like domestic work, survey data can be useful for illustrating the lower bound of an issue and can provide a point of departure for policy making but policies should aim to go further than what can be measured because they have a responsibility to protect not just 'the most', but also the most vulnerable.
- The most useful type and format of the evidence depends on the nature of the policy challenge or the problem to be solved. High level global estimates for the number of migrant domestic workers in a region or the world are useful to raise visibility for a type of vulnerable group. More detailed statistics are however necessary for taking informed policy decisions at a regional or national level. The absolute number of migrant domestic workers in a country is important when prioritising activities to protect the maximum number of migrant domestic workers. Yet the relative size of the migrant population to the local population (or the local domestic worker population) is what is likely to motivate national policy making. A bilateral agreement between countries on migration regularisation, labour rights or social protection portability would require information about a specific nationality's involvement in domestic work, rather than all migrants.

Based on these considerations, we describe the steps for generating realistic upper and lower range estimates of migrant domestic worker numbers for a country, rather than claiming to be able to generate exact numbers. This enables a categorisation of countries into different types of migrant domestic worker destination and/or origin countries, which is often sufficient for informing contextually appropriate policy.

<sup>1</sup> These countries are all member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The SAMM project focuses on the Southern African Region and is funded by the European Commission. This four-year project to improve migration management in the SADC region is implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). For more information, see <https://www.sammproject.org/>

## Context Considerations

Conceptual and methodological considerations when attempting to estimate the size of the migrant domestic worker population in the SADC region arise from a combination of three factors:

01

How the regional nature of domestic work impacts on the reliability of labour statistics

02

How the regional nature of cross-border migration impacts on the reliability of migration statistics

03

How the regional nature of official data sources impacts on the ability to combine labour and migration statistics and extrapolate reliably from small survey samples to small populations of interest

All three, separately and in combination with each other, result in a high level of uncertainty concerning the extent to which official data sources in the region provide reliable information on migrant domestic work volumes and patterns. There are three conditions under which official data can provide fairly accurate estimates of overall migrant domestic worker volumes:

1 largely formal employment conditions,

2 controlled migration flows (such as islands)

3 regular data collection exercises which measure both labour force and migration status.

Most countries in the SADC region, and indeed in Africa, do not fulfil all three or even one of these conditions. In these contexts, official data sources on domestic work, on migrant stocks and on estimated combinations of the two may misrepresent actual populations of interest by large margins. Tanzania provides an example where 2021 ILO estimates of domestic worker data based on official statistics estimate 309,595 employed domestic workers (ILO 2021), but a 2016 ILO study based on 2013 data and a dedicated survey estimated 1,087,000 employed domestic workers and 1,700,000 people carrying out activities which amount to domestic work even though they are not considered employees (Kiaga, Ackson, and ILO Country Office for United Republic of Tanzania 2016). The 2016 report estimated that 0.19% of domestic workers in the country are cross-border migrants but does not provide detail on the extent to which the survey methodology was designed to identify migrants.

It is possible for official data to provide reliable evidence on these populations, but it



requires regular data collection exercises that include questions on informality, appropriate procedures to ensure enumeration of domestic workers in households and survey sample and weighting procedures that ensure representative inclusion of migrants and domestic workers. As an example, the ILO has developed the SADC labour migration survey module as a simple and regionally standardised module of migration questions in labour force surveys (and equivalent multi-purpose surveys) as part of the effort to improve regional evidence-based decision-making on migration and labour in general.

## Official Data and Domestic Employment

Challenges in enumerating domestic workers are well documented globally (ILO 2021) and our review of statistical reports and interviews with national statistics offices confirm that many apply in the SADC region. Censuses and labour force surveys capture information which allows for employment relationships to be coded as formal or informal employment but rely on workers to report their own employment sector and type (ILO 2018). Factors which reduce the likelihood of such self-reporting include:

- The prevalence of part-time or casual domestic work, generally and among migrant domestic workers, while “employment-related questions used to identify domestic workers usually focus on the main job, excluding ... domestic work performed in addition to the main job” (ILO 2018). Lesotho is one of the few countries in the region which report on secondary employment in their labour force surveys, but Lesotho’s reports only include formal second job, which is unlikely to capture the full spectrum of domestic work activities (Lesotho Bureau of Statistics 2021).
- Domestic workers being seen as part of the extended family, whether or not they are actually relatives, and being paid in kind (free accommodation and food, etc.). Survey respondents may therefore not report themselves as being employed as a domestic worker or be aware of having that status. This is especially the case with very young domestic workers, as employers may be aware that their employment is illegal and may pressure the child worker into claiming to be a family member. This is more likely to occur with internal migrants (e.g. young women coming from rural areas to work in urban homes of ‘family members’) but may also be part of international migration patterns in border areas or countries with cross-border ethnic groups and long-standing circular migration patterns.
- The low social status of domestic workers in many contexts, meaning some domestic workers may be reluctant to disclose their activity to a government official out of shame.
- Where migrant domestic workers have an irregular migration status, they may be reluctant to disclose their employment status to a government official.

## Official Data and Migration Status

The enumeration of migrant domestic workers also depends on how migration status is identified. Long histories of intra-regional migration impact on the nature of migrant identities and migration statistics, along with each country’s citizenship rules and naturalisation laws.

- Different ways of measuring migration status can result in radically different results and bear different implications. For example, the 2019 Zimbabwean Labour Force and Child Labour survey recorded both citizenship status and country of birth. It found 1,721,806 non-citizens, but only 253,775 people born outside the country, with over half of them born in South Africa (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency 2020, 215ff). The number of non-citizens in the country is therefore potentially much larger than the number of ‘recent migrants’ (based on country of birth). No combined analysis is provided so it is not possible to know how many of those born outside the country are in fact Zimbabwean citizens returning to their family’s country of origin. Similarly, the 2018 census report for Madagascar identifies 33,187 non-citizens, but 12,712 persons born outside the country. If we are interested in measuring migration status

because it is assumed to be an added level of vulnerability for domestic workers, then a domestic worker who was born in the country but does not have citizenship faces different challenges to one recently entering the country. The 2019 Zimbabwean Labour Force and Child Labour survey furthermore only reports on the employment status and industry of the 30,468 migrants considered “labour migrants”, not on non-citizens more broadly.

- To identify migrant domestic workers, not only must survey respondents choose to report to a survey enumerator that their occupation and industry are domestic work, they must also choose to report their own migration status (in response to questions about country of birth or nationality). Given that most migration into domestic work in SADC countries is intra-regional and from neighbouring countries with similar race, ethnic and language groups (excepting Mauritius and the Seychelles), a significant proportion of migrant domestic workers may be able to ‘pass’ for local towards a surveyor.
- There are situations where people born on the other side of an official border may not consider themselves to be migrants. There are many border areas in the SADC region with cross-border ethnic communities. While people moving across these borders, including in some cases to work as domestic workers in the rural border areas or towns, may legally be migrants, they may not consider themselves as such and therefore not report themselves as migrants when surveyed. Some examples of such border zones include South Africa/Mozambique, South Africa/Lesotho, South Africa/Eswatini, Eswatini/Mozambique, Malawi/Zambia, Zambia/Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe/Mozambique, Malawi/Tanzania, Burundi/Tanzania, and Angola/the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



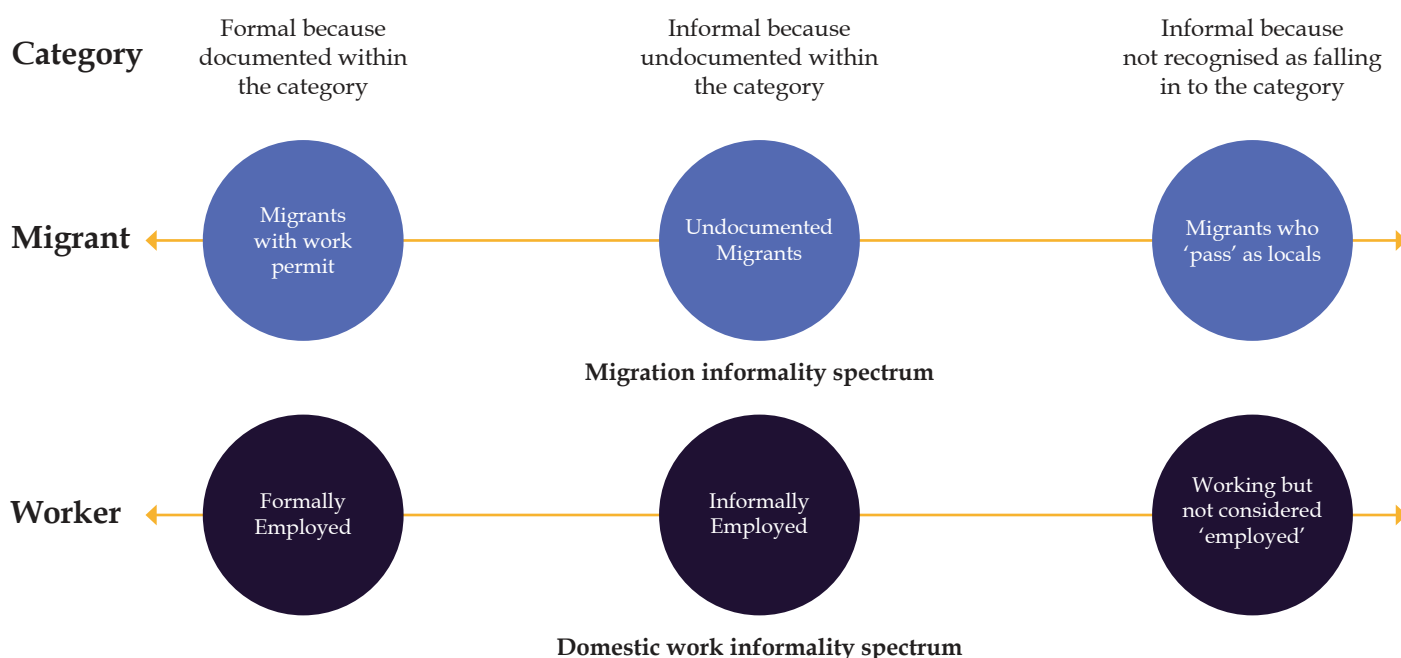
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## Official Data and the Informality Spectrum

Different countries have migration patterns and domestic work patterns which combine different levels of formality and informality. This, in turn, results in different proportions of the migrant domestic worker population being invisible to statistics.

Figure 1: Migration and Domestic Work Informality Spectrums (authors' own diagramme)



- A simplified migration informality spectrum runs from migrants who are documented and formally permitted to work, through undocumented migrants, to migrants who have integrated in the country sufficiently through ethnic, borderland or family networks to 'pass' as local.
- A simplified domestic work informality spectrum runs from formally employed through informally employed to occupied in a household without the activities being considered 'work'. The 'passing' and 'not work' ends of both spectrums are largely invisible to surveys purporting to measure migration status and labour status.

In some countries, like Mauritius, the number of people on the informal ends of both spectrums are small, although there are migrants with permits to work in other sectors who are doing domestic work instead and would therefore be invisible to domestic work statistics. In contrast, in South Africa there are likely to be large proportions of both domestic workers and migrant domestic workers who fall into the invisible ends of both spectrums. A 2016 study of domestic work in Tanzania provides useful insights into the domestic work informality spectrum, by finding that more than half of the people doing domestic work were in fact not considered 'employed' or did not consider themselves as such and so were invisible to statistics (Kiaga, Ackson, and ILO Country Office for United Republic of Tanzania 2016). Given the scope and focus of that study, little attention was paid to the invisible end of the migration informality spectrum and so the estimate that 1% of domestic workers were migrants is also likely to be an undercount.

The design of most labour force surveys takes informal work into account by asking sequences of questions specifically designed to identify forms of work which the respondent may not consider as employment.<sup>2</sup> The 'not work' end of the domestic work informality spectrum is therefore likely to be small if a country's labour force survey is well designed in terms of the

questions and interpretation of responses. Other common measurement challenges which impact on the reliable measurement of migrant domestic workers include:

- samples not explicitly designed to target areas with a high prevalence of migrants
- coverage that excludes migrants who do not live in private households and who do not meet the criteria to be usually resident in the country
- under-reporting of live-in domestic workers as household members
- deliberate under/or misreporting due to irregular status in the country
- non-participation of migrant domestic workers due to language barriers
- mis-reporting due to reliance on proxy respondents, such as household heads/ employers not wishing to be identified as employing a migrant or employing a domestic worker informally



It has taken many years of advocacy for domestic work to be considered an employment industry alongside other formal forms of employment, and so domestic workers are generally reported as a percentage of the overall employed labour force in the country. Migrant domestic workers are reported as a percentage of the overall number of domestic workers in the economy. However, in addition to challenges in establishing the numerator for (migrant) domestic workers, the appropriate denominator for calculating the appropriate percentage is complex. This is because domestic work lies uncomfortably between common categories in labour force statistics. Some people doing care and

cleaning work in households may not consider this as employment and/or the people they work for may not consider it employment and so they may not be captured in statistics measuring employment. They may also not consider themselves unemployed and so would not even be reflected in the overall labour force numbers. Many domestic workers work part time or on a casual basis, and so may consider themselves unemployed and looking for work, or they may consider themselves discouraged work-seekers, not considering their part-time domestic jobs to be real and desirable work and having given up on finding anything else that is considered 'real' work.

2 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS Resolution defines employment as work done for pay or profit, in cash or kind. Labour Force Survey Questionnaires based on 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS Resolution are designed to capture employment activities, even if they are done for only one hour in the reference period, and even if they are only part time and not the job of choice, and even if they are paid in kind.

## Official Data Sources Availability

Beyond the measurement concerns listed in the previous sections, the availability of regularly updated labour and migration statistics in the African region is a much broader challenge. Even general population data is not regularly collected in all countries.

Population census data is a crucial source for estimating migrant domestic workers because it covers both labour and migration status, often includes migrant nationality information, and provides a large enough dataset to allow for reliable disaggregation by industry, occupation, migration status, gender and even sometimes nationality. However, given the usual ten-year cycle for census data collection such data can quickly become out of date, especially when countries undergo major crises or wars that shift employment and migration patterns, such as Zimbabwe in the 2000s. One of the effects of Covid-19 was to delay the planned 2020 round of population censuses in a number of countries in the region, including South Africa. Census preparation and data collection are currently (2021 and 2022) underway in Angola, Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, and the Seychelles, joining the relatively recent censuses completed in Eswatini (2017), Zimbabwe (2017) and Malawi (2018), which will improve the level of data availability on migrant domestic workers in the region in the next few years. In addition, census questionnaires traditionally do not include a detailed enough labour market module. The ILO has introduced a labour market questions module for censuses which allows countries to produce key labour market indicators based on the 19th ICLS Resolution on Work, Employment and Labour Underutilization. Countries in the SADC region are being encouraged to use this module in their census questionnaires.

Historically, data sources which combined employment and migration data outside the census cycle were rare, and state capacities to measure migration regularly are known to generally be weak across Africa. “In 2017,



the African Union Commission produced the first edition of the Labour Migration Statistics in Africa and the report showed that there is a lack of capacities at country and regional level to produce, collect and disseminate timely and quality data on Labour migration in Africa” (AU and Statistics Sweden 2020). The 2015 ILO report, which for the first time estimated migrant worker populations globally, noted that among SADC countries, only Malawi, South Africa and Zambia had all the disaggregated input data on domestic workers, migrant workers and migrant domestic workers to enable empirical migrant domestic worker estimates (ILO 2015).<sup>3</sup> As shown in Table 1, there has been some improvement since 2015, with eight of the sixteen countries running surveys that include both employment and migration data and reporting on employment per industry (including domestic work) and migration status. South Africa included a migration module in its 2017 Quarterly Labour Force Survey (Q3) but has not done so since. In Mauritius, the most recent migration data is from the 2011 census. Angola, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Tanzania generally have weak data environments, although the planned 2022 census in Angola will assist.

**Table 1: Most recent national data sources for labour and migration statistics**

Country	Year	Survey Name	Domestic Work	Migration
Angola	2009	Inquérito Integrado sobre o Bem-estar da População	x	
Botswana	2020	Quarterly Multi-Thematic Survey	x	x
Comoros	2014	Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel aux Comores	x	
The Democratic Republic of the Congo	2012	Enquête sur l'emploi, le secteur informel et sur la consommation des ménages (Enquête 1-2-3)	x	
Eswatini	2017	Census	x	x
Lesotho	2019	Labour Force Survey	x	x
Madagascar	2018	Census: Recensement General de la Population et de l'Habitation	x	x
Malawi	2018	Census	x	x
Mauritius	2020	Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel	x	
Mozambique	2015	Inquérito aos Orçamentos Familiares	x	
Namibia	2018	Labour Force Survey	x	x
Seychelles	2019	Labour Force Survey	x	x
South Africa	2021	Quarterly Labour Force Survey	x	
Tanzania	2014	Labour Force Survey	x	
Zambia	2018	Labour Force Survey	x	
Zimbabwe	2019	Labour Force and Child Labour Survey	x	x



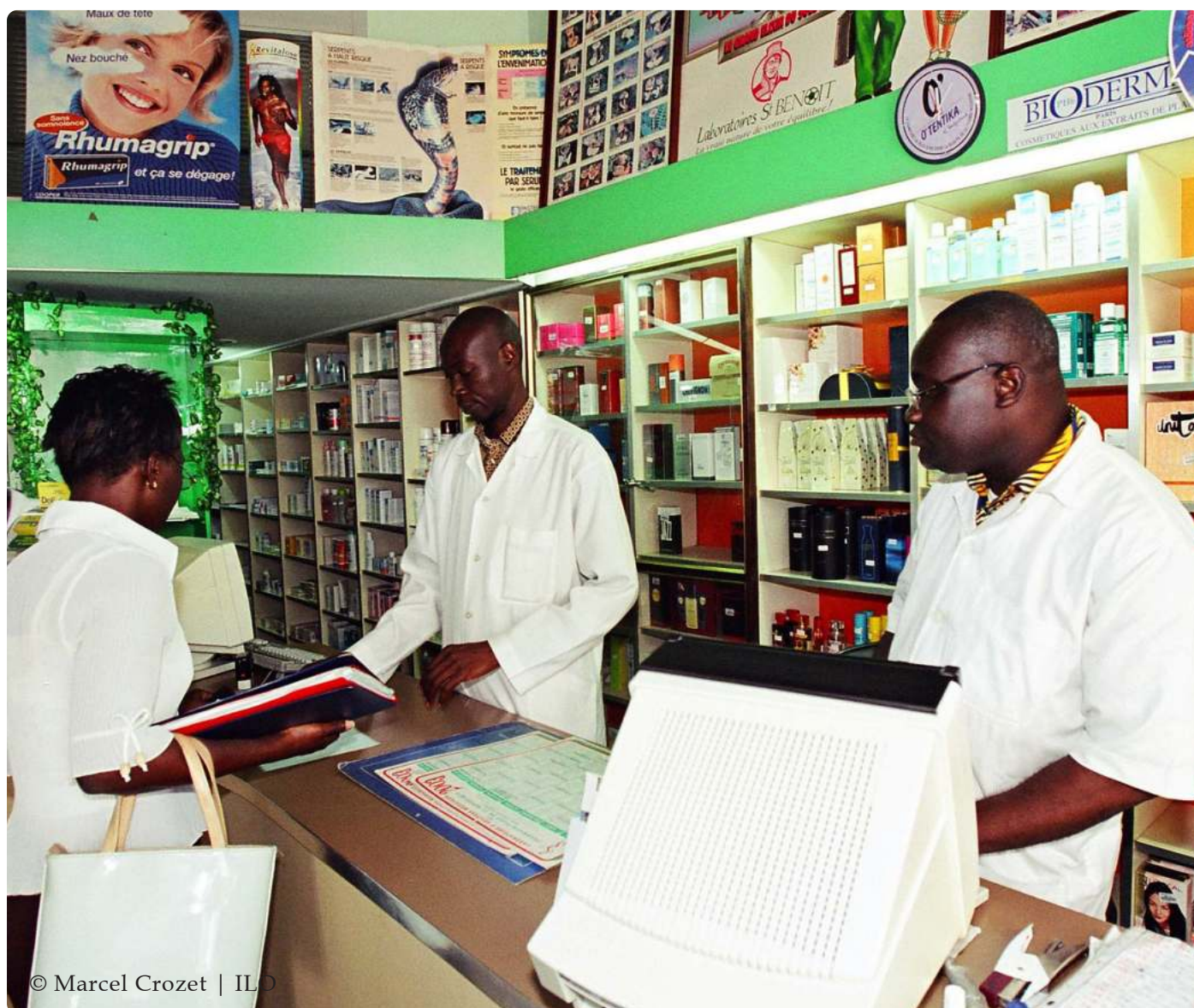


## Official Data Source Interpretation

While an increase in countries with regular sample surveys measuring both employment, industry and migration indicators is welcome, there are still challenges in interpreting the findings of such surveys in relation to migrant domestic work. In addition to the caveats discussed above about forms of domestic work and migration which tend to remain invisible to such surveys, there are also technical statistical limitations to reliable results interpretation related to survey sample size and sample designs which are not optimized to produce reliable statistics separately for international migrants

The South African case is an ideal statistical case in that the QLFS has a large sample (69,260 for QLFS 2017, Quarter 3, which includes the migration module), and the country has both a large domestic work sector (5.2% of total employment) and a large proportion of

migrant domestic workers (12% of domestic workers). In the 2017 QLFS Q3 there are only 59 migrant domestic workers directly identified in the sample, of whom 9 are male and 50 are female. Extrapolating from a sample of 9 to a proportion of the total country population is not reliable. Attempting to disaggregate further by nationality (which was not collected in this dataset) or age group would make these samples even more unreliable. Most countries have labour force surveys and other multi-functional household survey samples in the range of 10,000 - 12,000 and with smaller domestic worker and migrant domestic worker populations, making the absolute enumerated number of migrant domestic worker even smaller. Many LFS sample designs do not include measures which could improve coverage of migrant workers, including oversampling geographical areas with known high populations migrant workers.



## Alternative Data Sources

Given the challenges with official datasets, are there alternative data sources which could be used for reliable estimation of migrant domestic worker numbers and characteristics?

### Administrative Data

The levels of informality in the domestic work sector generally, and especially among migrant domestic workers, mean that administrative data is not available or not useful. Most countries in the region do not have any opportunities for employers to register migrant domestic workers for social benefits. Even in countries like South Africa which have comparatively developed unemployment insurance registration for domestic workers (as discussed further in the section below on labour rights), Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) records are more a reflection of employer preference trends around employment formalisation than an indication of the underlying number of workers.

### Dedicated Surveys

Dedicated surveys which either seek to measure migration and include employment information (Human Sciences Research Council 2011),<sup>4</sup> or measure domestic work and include migration information are an option. Examples of the latter include surveys conducted in Tanzania and Zambia in 2012-13 within the framework of the ILO Global Strategy for Action: Making decent work a reality for domestic workers (Kahayarara 2013; Chibuye and Siyota 2013),<sup>5</sup> which also produced preliminary guidelines for designing and running national surveys of domestic workers (Mehran 2014). While these two studies provided invaluable insights into the overall estimates of domestic work in the countries and into working conditions, they also struggle to provide much information on migrant domestic workers. The Tanzania study estimated that 0.19% of domestic workers are migrants<sup>6</sup> and the Zambia study does not make any mention of migrant domestic workers at all. This may be because they were piloted in countries with very small migrant domestic worker populations. It would therefore be valuable for this dedicated survey programme to be expanded into countries in the region where migrant domestic work is more prevalent, such as South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, and for new studies to ensure the sample design includes measurement of this group as a priority, for example by targeted areas with a high prevalence of migrants. However, while such dedicated surveys can provide important methodological insights and lessons for best practice, as well as generating a 'baseline' against which the coverage reliability of other datasets can be judged, they are not a sustainable approach for the regular production of data about this group of workers. The improved design of regular labour force surveys is the best options for this aim.

### Qualitative Studies

Qualitative studies on domestic work assist with the broad profiling of domestic workers. Examples are available for Mozambique (although only covering the capital Maputo) (Castel-Branco 2012) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (IDAY, CATSR, and WCP 2015). Many qualitative studies, however, do not provide much information on the migration status or nationality profiles of domestic workers, which may reflect the absence of such workers in these contexts, or it may reflect the focus taken by the researchers. Increasing awareness among researchers and organisations working in the domestic worker sector concerning the specific needs of migrant domestic workers would be useful in ensuring inclusion of migrant domestic worker issues in future qualitative studies.

4 This study is not reviewed here since it is out of date and was based on a small sample (2000 respondents) only covering two provinces in the country.

5 These surveys were conducted by the ILO Branch for Inclusive Labour Markets, Labour Relations and Working Conditions (INWORK) and ILO Country Offices for Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda and for Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique.

## Steps for Estimating Migrant Domestic Worker Ranges per Country

Applying the considerations discussed so far, we describe the steps and data sources for estimating the number of migrant domestic workers in the SADC region

### Step 1: Domestic Work patterns

Data sources: ILO has modelled estimates for most countries in the world (ILO 2021).

First identify the number of domestic workers in the country. This number provides the denominator when later estimating the number of migrant domestic workers based on an estimated percentage of total domestic workers in the country. We recommend using ILO modelled estimates rather than raw data from national statistics offices, since modelled data attempts to compensate for a variety of biases often included in official data sources.

### Step 2: Migrant domestic worker nationality profiles

Data sources: qualitative information from domestic worker organisations, migrant community organisations and official data with nationality and labour sector information where available.

There is usually a relatively clear nationality profile of migrant domestic workers in a country, with most migrants not engaging in domestic work. This step is crucial in the estimation process since it allows for a more nuanced engagement with available data about migration into the destination country of interest. Examples from the SADC include:

- Migrants into the SADC Region from other continents and regions (Europe, Asia, North Africa and Middle East, the Americas) very rarely work as domestic workers (apart from very small numbers of domestic workers accompanying Asian professional migrant workers in some countries with mining or large infrastructure projects)
- Even within the Sub-Saharan African continental pool, there are many nationalities who do not enter domestic work when they migrate, based either on relative income and skill levels, status perceptions and historical patterns, or exclusion from the labour force based on their refugee status and isolation in camps. For example, South Africans, Botswana and Namibians who leave their countries for other countries in the region do so mostly as professionals, not as low-skilled workers.<sup>7</sup> Zambians, even though from a low-income country, also are not active as domestic workers in significant numbers in other countries.<sup>8</sup> In addition, most of the migrants hosted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Tanzania are refugees (largely from outside the SADC region: Central African Republic, South Sudan and Burundi), often residing in camps and therefore only partially integrated into the formal or informal labour forces in those countries.

<sup>6</sup> We note that the sample survey on which this estimate is based had a sample of less than 1900 respondents and so this % estimate is based on less than 5 migrant domestic worker respondents, which is not enough to provide a reliable estimate at a national level.

<sup>7</sup> South Africans, Botswana and Namibians do work as domestic workers in their own countries. There are small numbers of Namibian domestic workers in Botswana, but this is the exception.

<sup>8</sup> The identification of nationalities in the region which do and do not tend to enter domestic work when they migrate is based on our interviews with domestic worker organisations.



### Step 3: Relevant Migration Volumes

Data sources: UN DESA data provides estimates of migrant flows, including the origin and destination country.

If we only consider migrants from known migrant domestic worker origin countries, the UN DESA 2020 migrant stock estimates for the SADC region comes to 2.7 million migrants, compared to a total stock of 5.9 million international migrants at mid-year 2020 (UN 2020).<sup>9</sup>

Table 2 shows the estimated total outmigration from origin countries whose nationals are known to engage in domestic work. In the SADC Region, Zimbabwe is by far the largest origin country in terms of absolute numbers, followed by Mozambique, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Malawi. For all these origin countries, the majority of outmigrants do not go into domestic work. Qualitative data tells us that the proportion who do is higher from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Lesotho and Eswatini, with only small proportions from the other countries.

**Table 2:** Estimated total migrant stocks from potential migrant domestic worker origin countries hosted in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region (UN DESA 2020 data)

Country	Estimated sum of migrants from this origin country hosted within the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region	% of total migrants from potential migrant domestic worker origin countries hosted in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region
Zimbabwe	56,42	\$56,424
Mozambique	40.87	\$38,201
Angola	23.91	\$22,241
Democratic Republic of the Congo	9,45	\$8,714
Malawi	286,759	10.6%
Lesotho	200,613	7.4%
Eswatini	46,391	1.7%
United Republic of Tanzania	34,885	1.3%
Madagascar	13,797	0.5%
Comoros	12,920	0.5%

When seeking to understand and measure migrant domestic work in a region which has as much intra-regional mobility as the Southern African region, looking at these wider migration flows between countries is important. It emphasises that migrants who end up in domestic work make choices about their mobility and their income-earning options which are both embedded in broader networks of migration and the nature of origin and destination country economies. As economic conditions in either origin or destination countries change, migrants within existing migration networks or who are already present in receiving countries may move into or out of domestic work, either as formal employment or informal income augmentation. The relative scope for this adaptation is greater for those nationalities with existing links into domestic work networks and

<sup>9</sup> UN DESA, 2020 data. The unedited DESA 2020 estimates of international migrants for the region come to 6.4 million, but this includes 500,000 migrants in Angola who are categorized as 'other' in terms of region and country of origin and who are not corroborated in other migrant stock estimates, such as the 2015 World Development Indicators estimates for Angola (which record 140,000 international migrants). In this report we have therefore reduced the estimate of international migrants hosted in Angola to 154,000 and adjusted the regional total to 5.9 million accordingly.

national ‘reputations’ for domestic work, than for nationalities who have traditionally not done this work. An example is that Ethiopians and Somalis in South Africa have not moved into domestic work, in spite of coming from low-income and conflict-wracked countries, while large numbers of Zimbabweans (including those with good education levels and prior higher-skilled employment experience) did enter domestic work when their country’s economy collapsed.

If we show this population of migrants (only including those from known migrant domestic worker origin countries) from a destination-country perspective (Table 3), we see that 55% are hosted in South Africa, confirming its role as regional migration hub in absolute terms.

**Table 3:** Destination Countries of migrants from dominant migrant domestic worker origin countries (UN DESA 2020), WDI 2020 total country population data

Country	Estimated sum of migrants from dominant MDW-origin countries hosted in this country	% of total regionally hosted migrants from dominant MDW-origin countries	Migrants from dominant MDW-origin countries as % of total hosting population
South Africa	1,496,398	55.3%	2.52%
Zimbabwe	231,414	8.6%	1.56%
Mozambique	225,837	8.3%	0.72%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	177,028	6.5%	0.20%
Zambia	120,543	4.5%	0.66%
Malawi	102,166	3.8%	0.53%
United Republic of Tanzania	92,557	3.4%	0.15%
Angola	90,692	3.4%	0.28%
Botswana	70,550	2.6%	3.00%
Namibia	61,585	2.3%	2.42%
Madagascar	12,153	0.4%	0.04%
Eswatini	2,793	932	1001 - 3000
Comoros	9,748	0.4%	0.95%
Mauritius	2,301	0.1%	0.18%
Seychelles	816	0.0%	0.83%
Lesotho	458	0.0%	0.02%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,705,288</b>	<b>100%</b>	



Absolute numbers of hosted migrants obscure the impact on destination countries with small populations, such as Botswana and Namibia. The right-hand column therefore shows the population of migrants from migrant domestic worker origin countries as a percentage of the destination country population, which also confirms South Africa's role as migration hub in relative terms, along with Botswana and Namibia.

This consideration of bilateral migration flow sizes, combined with qualitative assessments of the prevalence of domestic work among specific nationalities of migrants in a destination country, provides an important sense-check for the final overall estimate of migrant domestic worker numbers.



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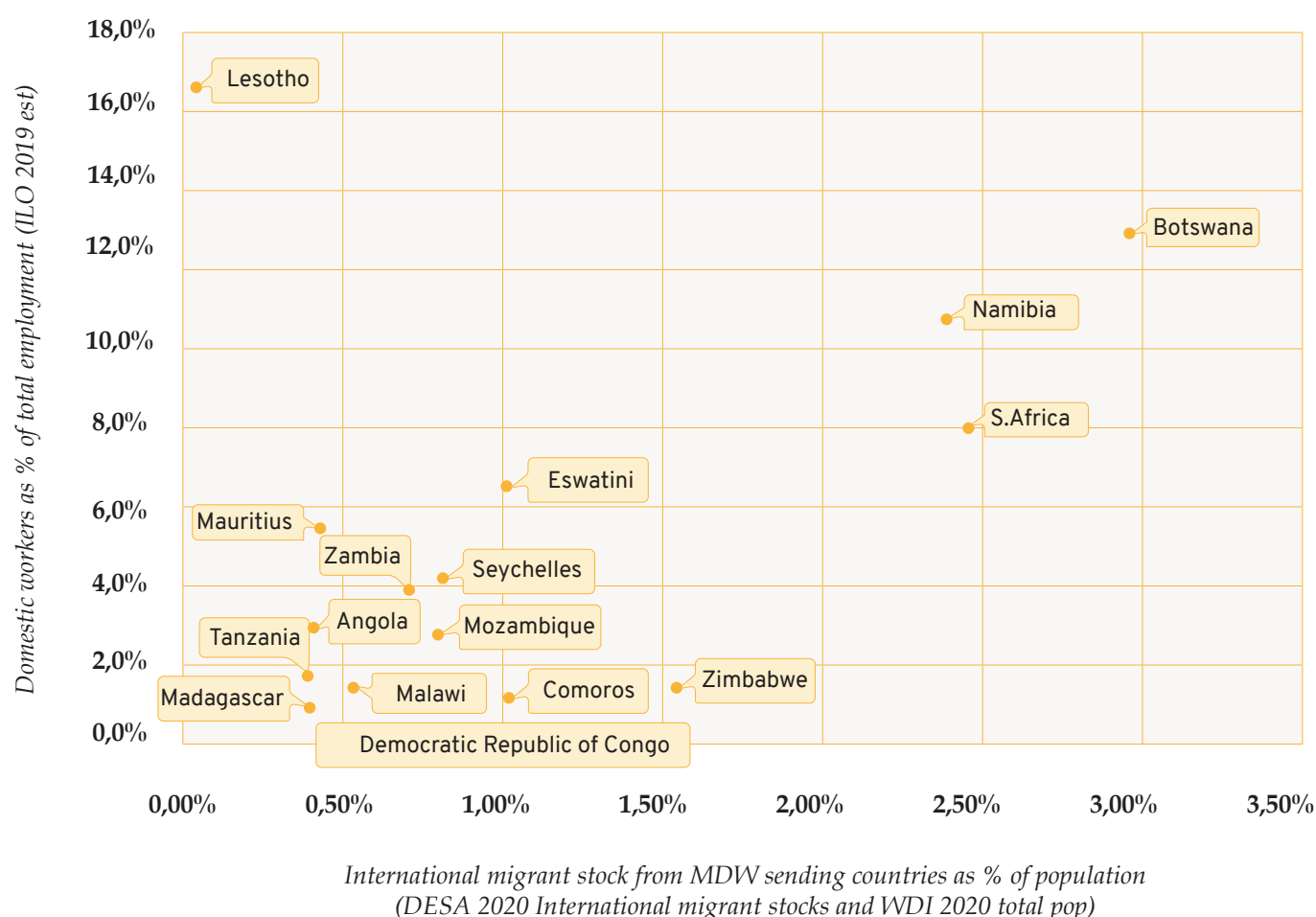
#### Step 4: Relevant Domestic Work Market Size Estimates, combined with migration pattern data

Data Sources: ILO estimates of domestic worker numbers and proportion of labour force per country (ILO 2021)

In addition to narrowing down the migration patterns of the region to those which are relevant to domestic work, we must also understand variations in destination-country demand for domestic work. The ILO 2021 report modelled 2019 estimates for the percentage of domestic workers out of total employment (ILO 2021). Similar to the variation in migration patterns in the region, we see many countries with very small measured domestic work industries, while others, notably the outlier Lesotho with Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, have a large share of their labour force engaged in the sector.

Figure 2 combines the prevalence of domestic work with the prevalence of migrants from migrant domestic worker origin countries. It shows, in relative terms to each country's population, which countries have both significant domestic worker markets and relevant migrant populations. Botswana, Namibia and South Africa clearly emerge as the countries with a major policy concern relating to hosting migrant domestic workers, given they are likely to make up a significant proportion of a significant economic sector.

**Figure 2:** Combined migration patterns and domestic worker employment, proportional to host country population size (DESA 2020 international migrant stocks, ILO 2019 domestic workers as share of employment, WDI 2020 country population estimates)



## Step 5: Estimate upper and lower range percentage of total domestic worker population per country who are migrants

Data sources: Official national datasets, where these measure employment sector and migration status together; qualitative estimates where there is no official data.

We estimate the percentage of total domestic workers in the country who are migrants by generating a range with a lower and upper limit. The range captures the fact that there is always a level of uncertainty in these estimates. The size of the range (the number of percentage points between the lower and upper values) reflects the level of uncertainty.

In some countries, this range is informed by survey data which directly measures the citizenship or country of birth of respondents along with their employment sector. This empirically measured number is used as the lower end of the percentage range, to reflect the probable undercount of most surveys. In the SADC Region, most of the countries where such survey data is not available are countries where qualitative evidence tells us that migrant domestic worker proportions are low. Based on other countries in the region where there is some survey data showing low proportions of migrant domestic workers, such as Tanzania and Zimbabwe, we have therefore applied a generic 0.5-1.5% estimate of migrant domestic worker prevalence among domestic workers for the following countries without good empirical data: Angola, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia.<sup>10</sup>

Table 4 uses these range estimates combined with the ILO estimates for the size of the overall domestic worker population to arrive at upper and lower estimates for the number of migrant domestic workers in each country.

**Table 4: Migrant domestic worker estimates per country**

Country	Estimated Range of MDW per country			Based on:	
	high estimated MDW # 2018	low estimated MDW #	Range of MDW pop	Estimated DW # from ILO 2021	MDW % of DW range
Comoros	38	13	< 100	2,549	0.5-1.5
Seychelles	97	58	< 100	1,939	3-5
Mauritius	365	244	101-500	24,365	1-1.5
Eswatini	349	279	101-500	34,898	0.8-1
Zimbabwe	1,101	440	501-1,500	55,040	0.8-2
Malawi	1,243	414	501-1,500	82,870	0.5-1.5
Lesotho	1,307	436	501-1,500	87,165	0.5-1.5
Zambia	1,457	486	501-1,500	97,104	0.5-1.5
Angola	1,553	518	501-1,500	103,513	0.5-1.5
Madagascar	2,287	762	1001-3,000	152,457	0.5-1.5

<sup>10</sup> While Malawi carried out a census in 2018 which included both labour and migration data, the publicly reported data on employment sector is not broken down to industry level and there is no disaggregation of employment by migration status. Microdata from the census could not be accessed.

Country	Estimated Range of MDW per country			Based on:	
	high estimated MDW # 2018	low estimated MDW #	Range of MDW pop	Estimated DW # from ILO 2021	MDW % of DW range
Mozambique	2,793	931	1001-3,000	186,213	0.5-1.5
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2,874	958	1001-3,000	191,618	0.5-1.5
Tanzania	3,096	1,548	1001-3,000	309,595	0.5-1
Botswana	11,501	7,667	5001-10,000	76,674	10-15
Namibia	12,284	9,827	10001-15,000	81,895	12-15
South Africa	200,301	160,241	100,001-200,000	1,335,343	12-15
<b>SADCTotal</b>	<b>242,647</b>	<b>184,823</b>			

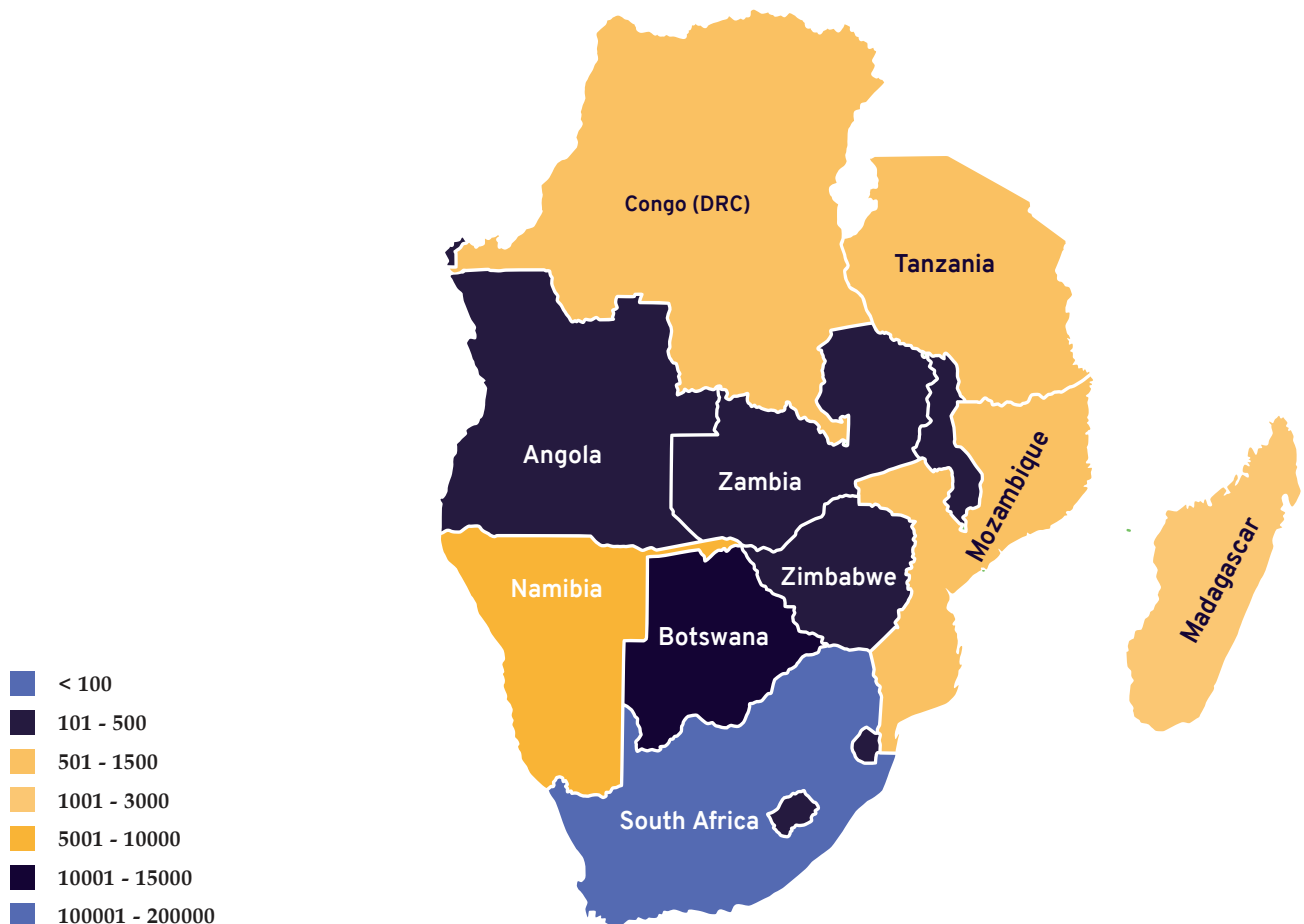
## Step 6: Sense-check the range estimates and survey data against each other

Given all the caveats about hidden populations and weighting reliability described above, not all datasets which directly report migrant domestic worker numbers result in high confidence reflections of the actual number of migrant domestic workers in the country. For example, the 799 female (and no male) migrant domestic workers recorded in the 2020 Quarterly Multi-Theme Survey Quarter 4 for Botswana only reflect ‘formally employed’ domestic workers, which is a large underestimate of the total migrant domestic worker population. For the regional summary table (Table 4 above) we have therefore retained an estimated migrant domestic worker range based on assuming a 10-15% migrant domestic worker proportion of the overall domestic worker population, even though this is 10x as large as the QMTS reported ‘formally employed’ measure. Similarly, in Lesotho, the 92 reported migrant domestic workers are likely to be an underestimate and so we have retained the estimated migrant domestic worker range based on a 0.5-1.5% migrant domestic worker proportion of the overall domestic worker population. Finally, in Zimbabwe, even though the reported 1,331 migrant domestic workers is likely to be an underestimate, this has been retained as the lower range estimate for the summary statistics, since it falls within a reasonable percentage range for the overall estimate of the domestic workers population.

## Conclusion: Reporting an Estimated Range

An estimate of the range within which migrant domestic worker numbers fall is sufficient for most evidence-based decision making related to the overall size of the migrant domestic worker population in a country, or the relative size of these populations across countries. For the SADC countries, these ranges are shown on the map in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Migrant Domestic Worker Prevalence Range Map (Source: own calculations)



This estimated range still needs to be evidence-based, building on a combination of available survey data and well-informed qualitative assessments by domestic worker organisations and/or researchers in each country. Representing this information as a range provides a more accurate reflection of the levels of uncertainty involved in measuring (predominantly) informal types of employment and migration while still enabling well-informed policy discussions and advocacy to take place.

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