CSVR
Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

UN WOMEN

FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

FACT SHEET

Perceptions of Migrant Women in South Africa

Between April and August 2026, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), with funding from UN Women, asked people living in South Africa how they see migrant women, how much contact they have with them, and whether they think migrant women are safe.

2,003
adults took part, from all nine provinces

66%
meet migrant women face to face daily or weekly

51%
have a positive view of migrant women, 35% are neutral

77%
say migrant women should be protected from discrimination and assault like South African women

54%
would be comfortable with a family member marrying a migrant woman

46%
think migrant women are safe in their community

FIVE THINGS WE LEARNT

1. Strong support in principle, weaker up close. Three in four respondents back protection for migrant women, but only about half are comfortable with a migrant woman as a neighbour (57%) or in the family (54%). Support for migrant women having a say in community decisions (60%) also trails support for their protection.

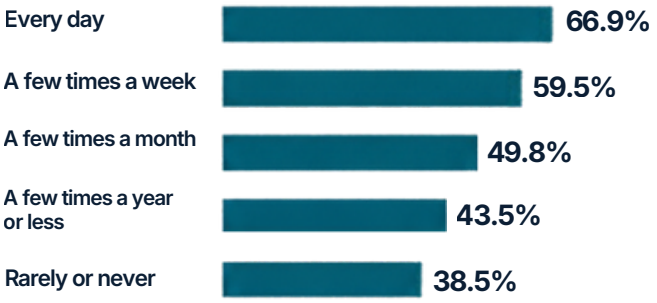
2. Contact matters, especially friendship. People who meet migrant women daily are far more willing to act: 67% would join a community dialogue, against 39% of those who rarely or never meet them. Those who count migrants as friends are the most positive.

3. Hardship, not job fears, is linked to weaker rejection of violence. One in four respondents in households without enough money for food did not agree that violence against migrant women is never acceptable, the highest share of any group. The share was lowest, about one in ten, among those who meet basic needs without difficulty, but nearly one in five among the most comfortable. Believing migrant women "take jobs" made no measurable difference.

4. Protection is seen as weak. Fewer than half think the authorities respond to violence against migrant women as they would for South African women (47%) or that people know where to get help (44%). Only 38% think there are enough services, and 62% believe this violence is under-reported.

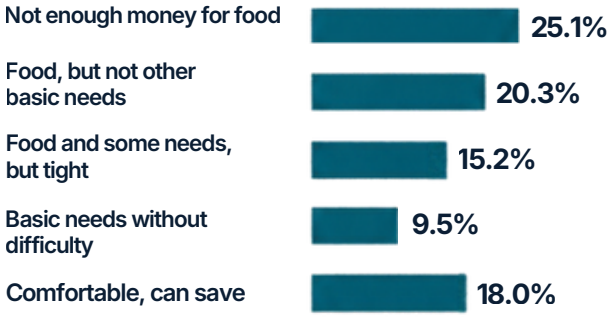
5. People value migrant women and want to help. 60% say migrant women support the local economy through small businesses, and 70% say migrants are often unfairly blamed for crime and unemployment. Only 8% would take none of the actions offered to reduce violence.

Contact builds willingness to act



Would attend a community dialogue, by how often respondents meet migrant women (n = 1,871).

Hardship is linked to weaker rejection of violence



Do not agree that violence against migrant women is never acceptable, by household economic situation (n = 1,724).

WHAT PEOPLE ARE READY TO DO

55% would attend a community dialogue to reduce violence and xenophobia

53% would sign a petition against violence towards migrant women

50% would support a migrant woman neighbour who was threatened

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN

- Make protection and services reachable for all women, regardless of documentation status.
- Build trust and accountability where people seek help, so that violence is reported and acted on.
- Open local decision-making to migrant women.
- Invest in sustained, facilitated contact between communities, such as dialogues, sport and cultural events.
- Link violence prevention to economic support and better service delivery.
- Share accurate, positive information about migrant women's contributions.
- Strengthen data on migrant women's experiences of violence.

About the survey: Online and in-person survey of 2,003 adults living in South Africa conducted between April and August 2026. Respondents were not randomly selected (most were women, Black Africans, and from Mpumalanga, Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal), so the results describe the people who took part and are not national estimates.