
Our Environment and Breast Cancer: Working for a Healthier Future

Deysi Flores

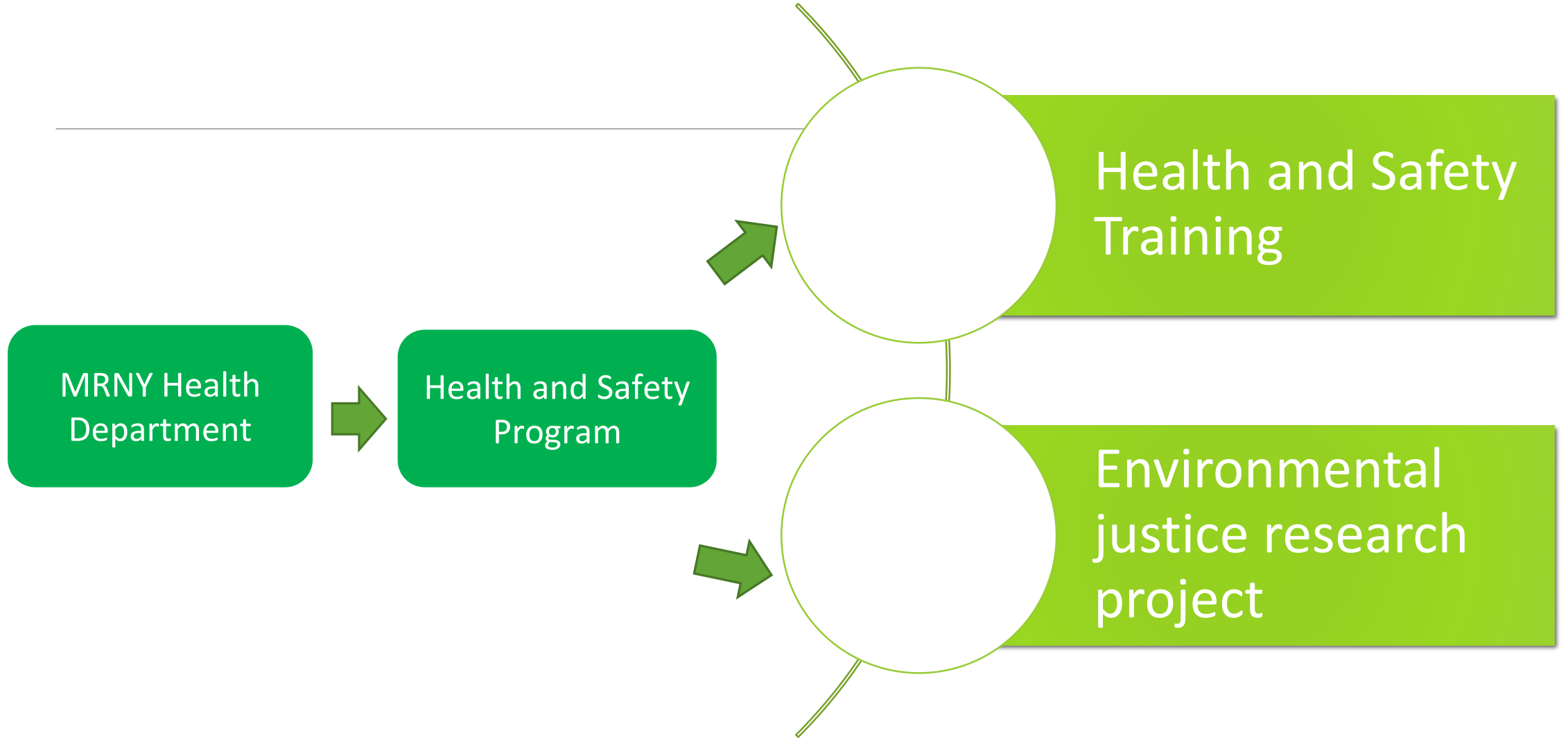
Supervisor of the Workers' Health and Safety Program

Make the Road New York



MRNY builds the power of Latinx and working-class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services.





Promoting EQUITY is a MRNY priority

Health and Safety Training

- MRNY provides Occupational Health and Safety Training, primarily OSHA 30 hours Construction and General Industry, and infectious disease classes. Content includes: workers' rights, hazard assessment, personal protective equipment, among others specific to the industry.
- Since 2016, thousands of latinx workers have had access to our OSHA training, which allows them to get into the workforce and be better informed about safety considerations and their rights as workers.
- Due to the pandemic, OSHA classes are now delivered on-line and free.
- Resilience and Covid-19 training has been delivered to our OSHA students during the pandemic.
- MRNY is member of the Health and Safety Collaborative working group.



Background: Prior intervention research for Latinx day laborers following Superstorm Sandy-**500 workers trained on health & safety and given PPE**



Safe and just cleaners: An academic-worker center collaboration to improve health and safety of latinx household cleaners in NYC

A community participatory research project



Main Research Partners



- QUEENS COLLEGE, CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
 - SHERRY BARON, MD, CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
 - ISABEL CUERVO, PhD, CO-INVESTIGATOR
- MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK
 - DEYSI FLORES, CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, Supervisor of the Workers' Health and Safety Program
 - ANA GONZALEZ, Outreach and Research Associate, Safe and Just Cleaners Research Study
- ICAHN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT MOUNT SINAI, INSTITUTE FOR EXPOSOMIC RESEACRH
 - HOMERO HARARI, ScD, CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, Assistant Professor of Environmental and Public Health

Main Goal:

Understand exposure to cleaning chemicals and disinfectants among Latinx and immigrant household cleaners in NYC and Westchester and reduce future health impacts.

Project Aims



1. SURVEY

400 household cleaners regarding product use, work practices and knowledge & attitudes



2. EXPOSURE ASSESSMENT

Conduct quantitative exposure measurements of chemical components in cleaning products



3. CAMPAIGN

Develop a multi-level prevention campaign to reduce exposures among household cleaners

+ COVID IMPACTS

DEMOGRAPHICS



- Average age: 45 years (21–78 range)
- All immigrants, mainly from Mexico & Ecuador
- On average, have lived in the US 16 years
- 38% Uncomfortable with English

Research findings

Survey conducted prior to Covid-19

400 household cleaners from NYC and Westchester completed this survey



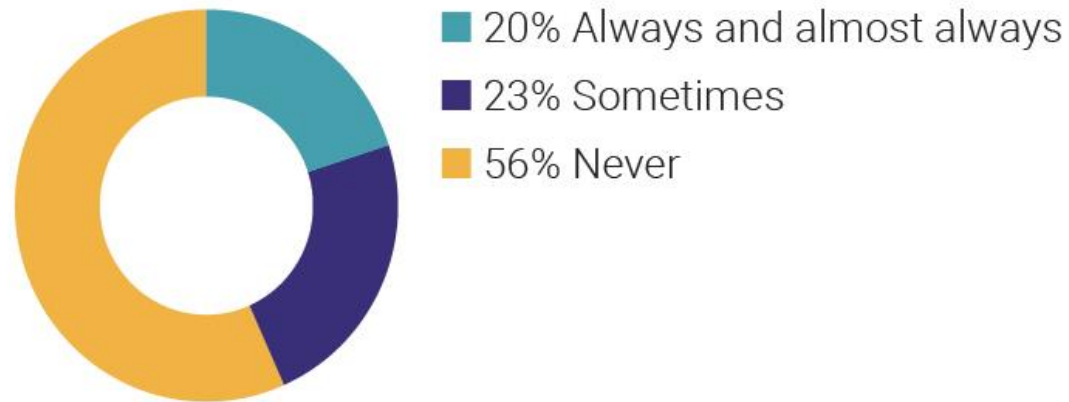
WORKING CONDITIONS



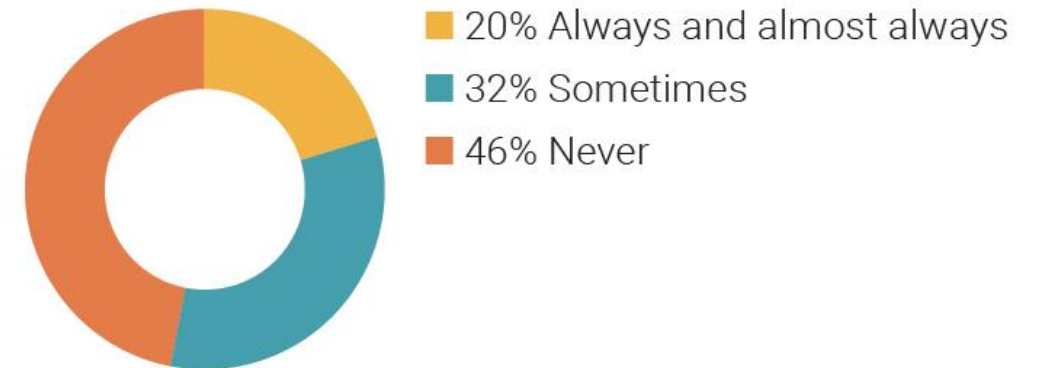
- 76% self-employed & 10% self-employed (work with another cleaner)
- 93% had no formal written contract
- 49% experienced wage theft and/or being paid below the minimum wage at some point
- \$15/hr average pay
- Work hours: 22 hours average work week and on average, cleaners have 3 different clients per week

HIGH WORK DEMANDS

Feel pressured to work quickly in order to satisfy their client:

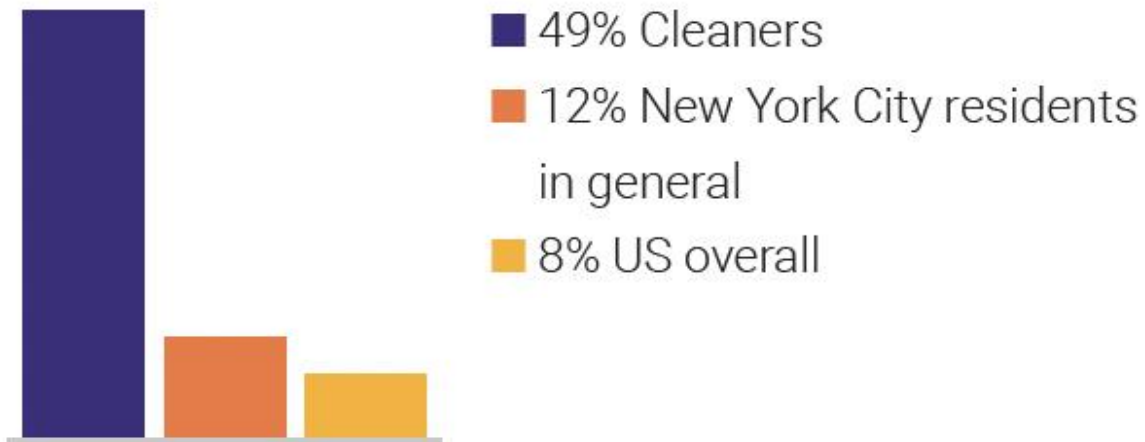


Do not use safety and health precautions in order to get the job done quickly:



INADEQUATE HEALTH PROTECTIONS

Reporting lack of health insurance:



- 85% did not receive any paid sick leave
- 46% felt they could not take sick leave (paid or unpaid) without reprisal.

Work-related Health Conditions



3x higher than the rates of skin rash shown in all US workers based on a national survey using the same survey question

27% complained of skin rash that improves when they are away from work.



1 of 3 workers said that eye irritation was strong enough that they needed to leave the room they were cleaning

74% complained of some eye irritation while working



61% reported working on their knees while cleaning the bathroom and/or the kitchen.

62% reported experiencing musculoskeletal pain during the previous months that lasts longer than a day


KEY FINDINGS

- Housecleaning is mostly conducted alone, part-time, in multiple homes, without a formal written contract, and low-paid.
- Many cleaners in our study do not earn enough income to cover basic expenses, experience high levels of income insecurity, and live below the federal poverty level.
- On average, they are far less likely to have health insurance than other populations and do not access paid sick leave.
- Many commercial household cleaning products contain chemicals that can be harmful to health and most cleaners are aware of this. However, numerous factors exist that increase the risk of exposure.

+ Research Findings

Survey conducted during Covid-19

Data collected in 2021, 296 (74%) participants completed this follow-up survey.



The COVID Burden

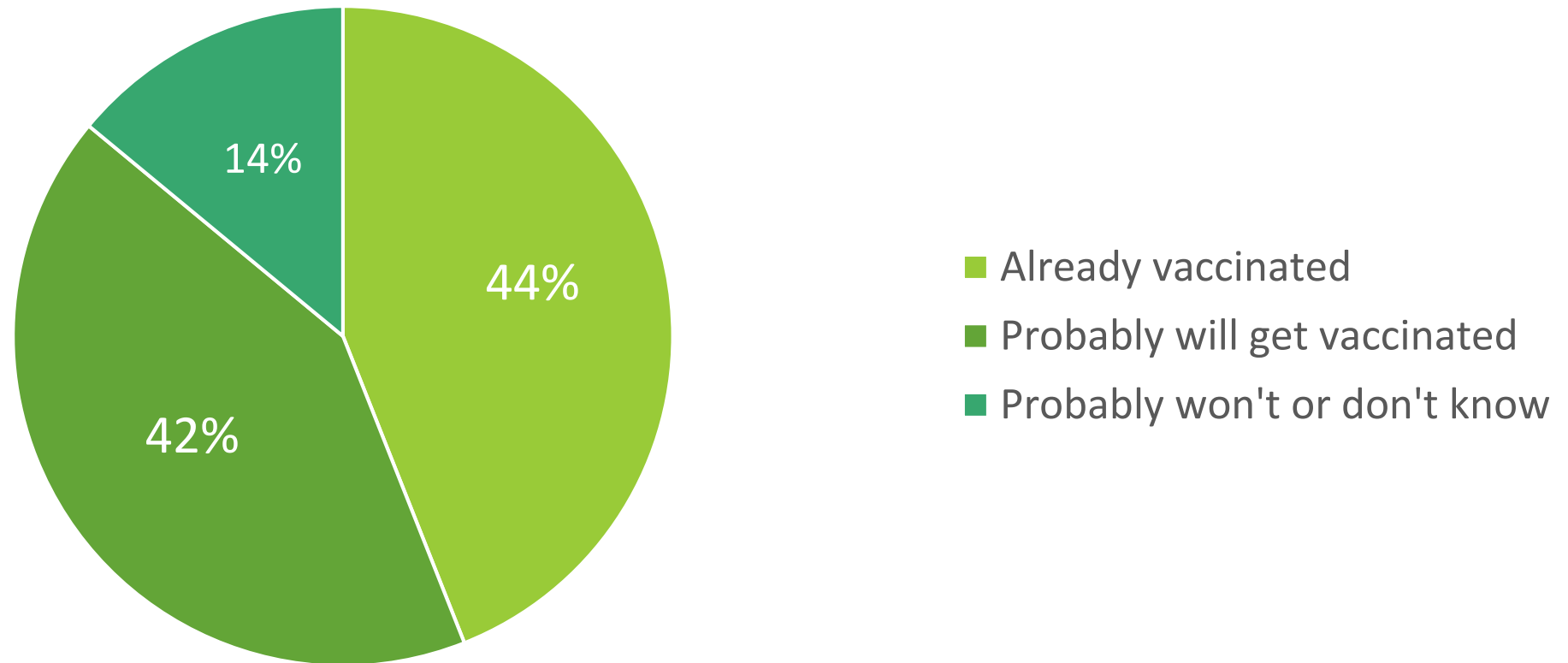
54% of participants reported having had COVID-19

CDC estimates that 37% of the US population was infected with COVID

52% said that a family member or close friend living either in the US or abroad had died of COVID

Based on antibody test results, we estimate that between 55% and 70% of the cleaners in our study had COVID (up till June of 2021)

Attitudes about Vaccination (at the time of our study)



Cleaners' use of disinfecting cleaning products compared to before COVID-19

59% reported using more disinfectants at work

65% reported using more disinfectants in their own home

Said that the most important thing in feeling satisfied with your cleaning is reducing germs

- Before COVID: 14%
- After COVID: 37%

Covid-19 impact on housing and household economy

Housing Insecurity

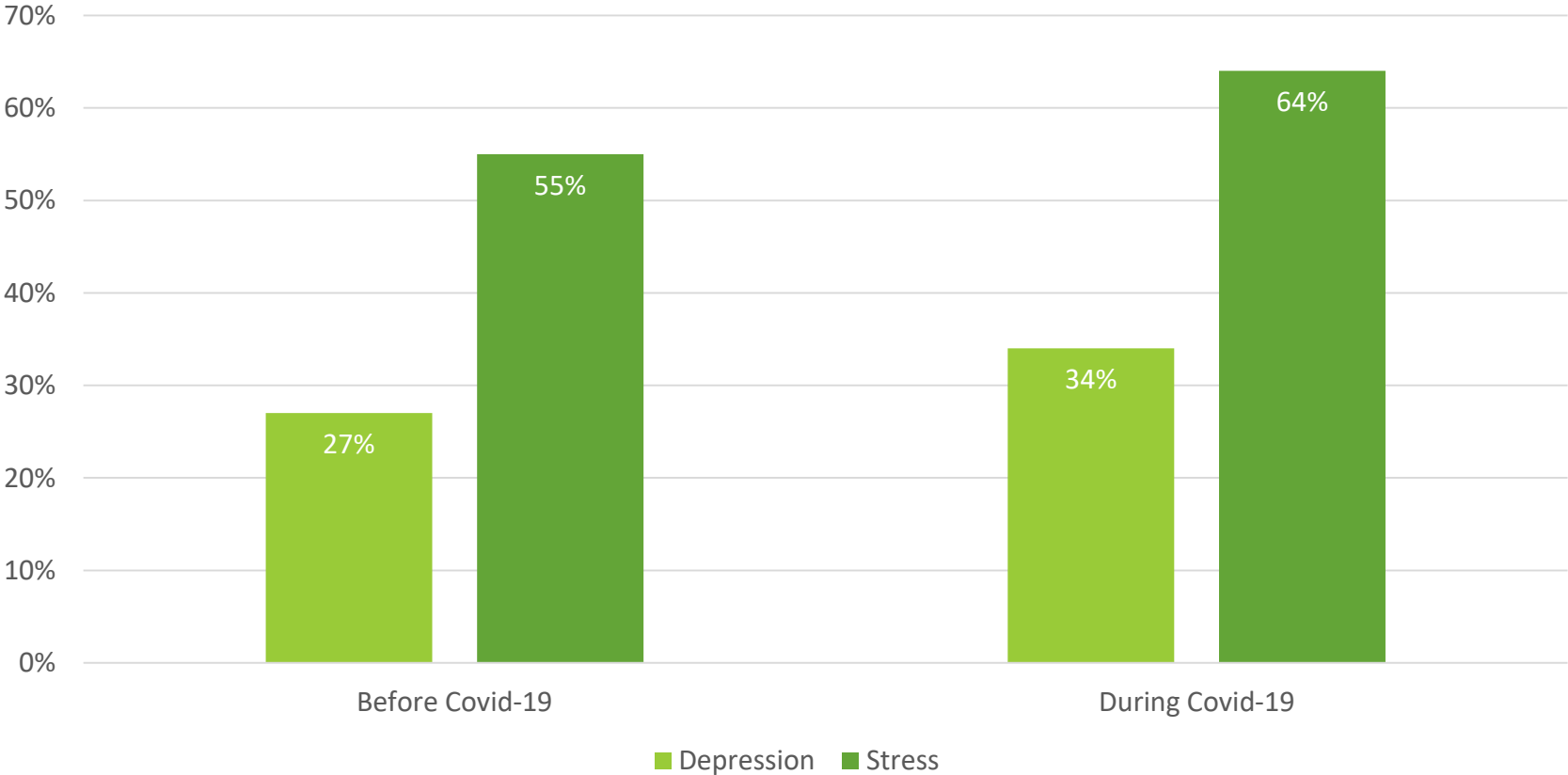
- 37% behind on rent/mortgage
- 40% have a place to live but worry about the future

Financial Insecurity

- 80% report their income has decreased
- 70% earn \$1,000 or less per month
- 45% are the primary wage earners for the family

Impact of Covid-19 on Mental Health

Depression and Stress levels prior and during the Pandemic

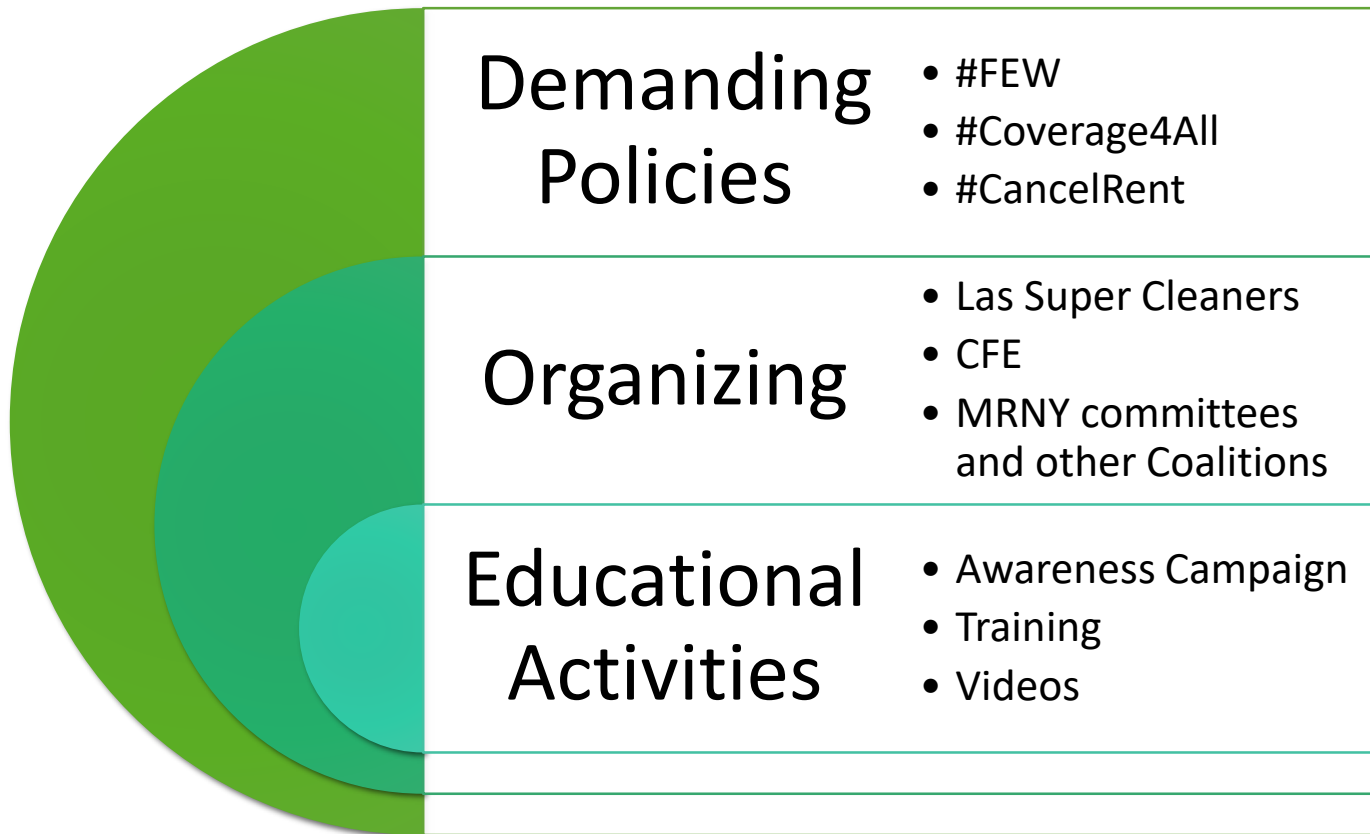


Household Cleaners organized are
advocating to create a safer and just
workplace

From Research to Action – R2A



SJC Campaign led by MRNY is using the Social-ecological framework



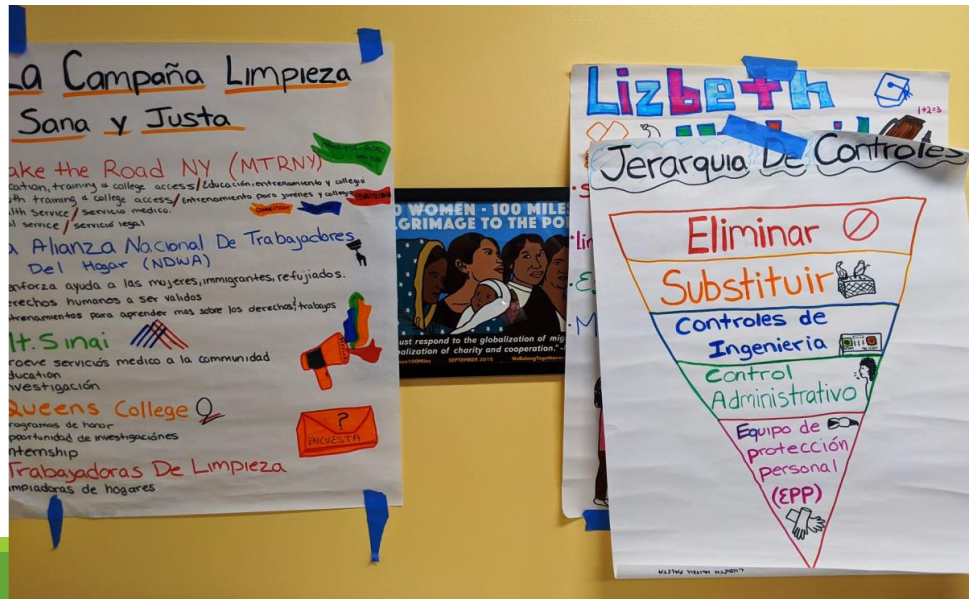
Organizing Household Cleaners in NY

In 2019 MRNY created Las Super Cleaners group, a safe space for household cleaners to meet, learn and work together to increase awareness about environmental toxins and health impacts among household cleaners to reduce exposure to harmful cleaning chemicals, and strive for transformation in their workplaces and personal well-being. as women. Members of Las Super Cleaners Group are actively engaged in MRNY committees, such as immigration and housing.



Train-the-Trainers Initiative

- In collaboration with NDWA (The National Domestic Workers Alliance), a curriculum about “Safety considerations while using household cleaning chemicals” has been developed and a Train-the-trainer program has been delivered in person
- 17 household cleaners graduated from the TTT program
- Trainers have been delivering on-line training reaching dozens of cleaners



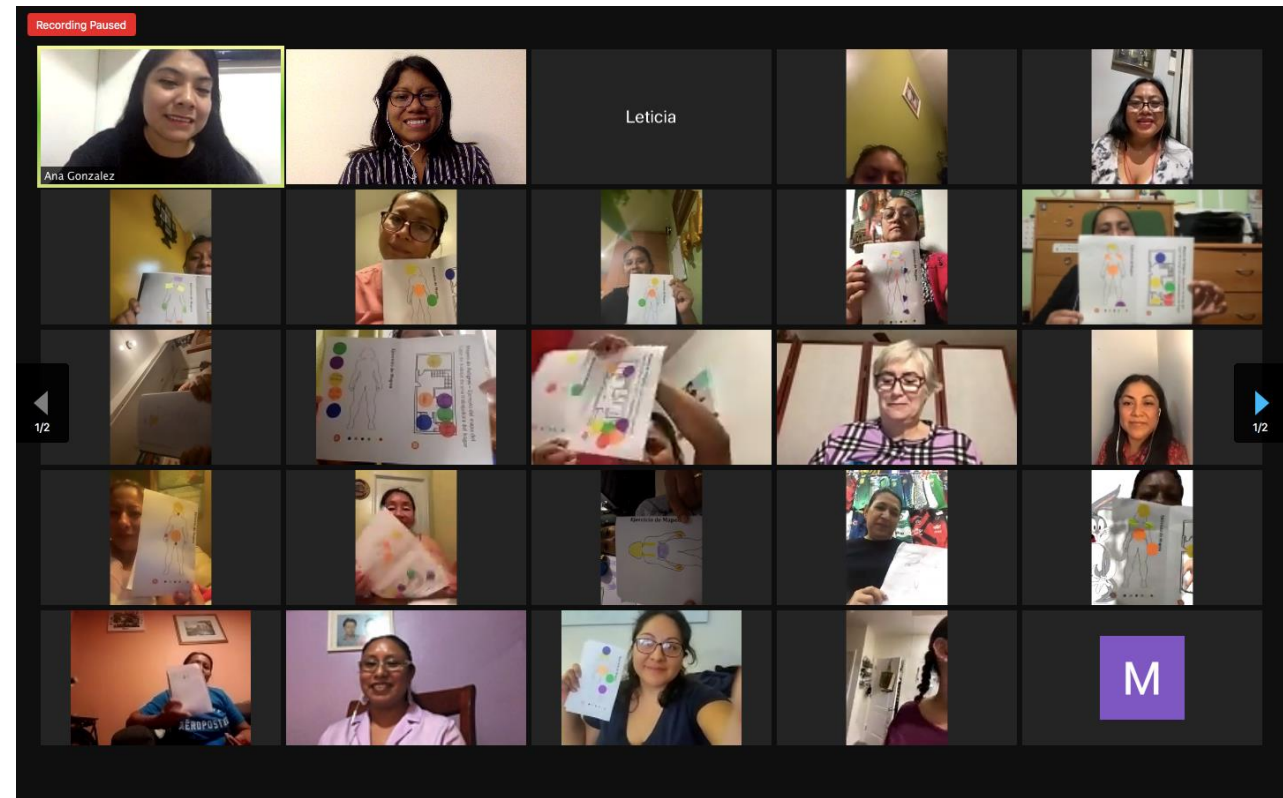
+ Educational activities and tools

- During the pandemic, Las Super Cleaners Group leaders created [educational videos](#) aimed at household cleaners.
- Topics: Cleaning during COVID-19, Disinfecting product use, Returning to work, Protect yourself, After cleaning and Mental health care.



Safe and Just Cleaners Awareness Campaign:

In 2021, MRNY launched “The Safe & Just Cleaning Awareness Campaign’, which consists of a series of workshops and activities focused on building awareness about environmental toxins, reducing exposure to harmful household cleaning chemicals.”



Strengthening collaborations towards reducing exposures to cleaning products among household cleaners

- Make the Road is active member of the Cancer Free Economy Network CFEN
- Since 2020, CFEN has been supporting SJC campaign initiatives.
- CFEN recently launched the **Household Cleaners' Safety Lab**, which is a cross-node collaboration committed to designing and testing solutions for reducing exposures to cleaning products among household cleaners.



#FEW: A policy aiming to address economic insecurity:

In June 2021 the Fund for Excluded Workers appropriated 2.1 billion dollars for economic support for immigrant undocumented workers, who were excluded from other federal COVID-related economic stimulus programs, such as our cleaners.



#CancelRent: Campaign to address housing insecurity due to Covid-19

- The #CancelRent campaign advocated to create a fund to support workers that lost their job and couldn't pay their rent due to Covid-19. It also prohibited evictions.
- MRNY along with the Housing for all Coalition, secured 2.4 million rent relief program, which covers up to 12 months of back rent or utility bills.



#Coverage4All: Addressing lack of health coverage for immigrant workers in NY

The Health Care for All New York campaign, is driven by a coalition of community organizations and labor and immigrant groups, led by Make the Road NY and the New York Immigration Coalition.

Coverage4All is currently advocating for New York State to allocate \$13 million to create a temporary state-funded Essential Health Plan for immigrant workers that lack coverage.

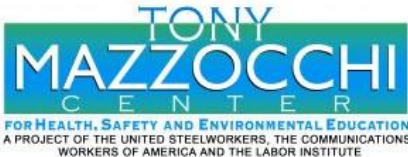


KEY FINAL NOTES

- Economic insecurity, lack of health coverage and poor working conditions are **factors that threaten worker's health and safety.**
- Research findings help to **advocate for policies** that can directly benefit study participants.
- Covid-19 has highlighted the urgency to **increase Health and Safety protections at the workplace**, particularly for workers at risk, as the cleaners of our study.
- **Worker's organizing works.** All victories and campaigns won are the result of multiple actions led by community organizations coalitions.
- Workers are experiencing high levels of stress due to the Covid-19 pandemic. **Accessible mental health services and programs are needed.**



Partners:



Thank you!

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<https://maketheroadny.org/>

<https://safeandjustcleaners.org/>

