



Waste Picker Health & Safety

An exploratory health risk mapping was conducted in five waste picker cooperatives in Brazil to understand waste pickers' work routines, workplace conditions, and highlight the specific risks they face. These risks are often exacerbated by the fact that waste pickers are excluded from labour and social protection measures. Here's what we learned:

Lack of proper infrastructure and equipment can have negative impacts for waste pickers including:



ergonomic problems



repetitive movements



interpersonal tensions



inefficient work routines



unhygienic workplaces

On the other side, the provision of adequate protective gear can lead to more hygienic workplaces and to more efficient work routines



Waste pickers expressed concern over:



Emotional wellbeing



Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension



Gender-based vulnerabilities



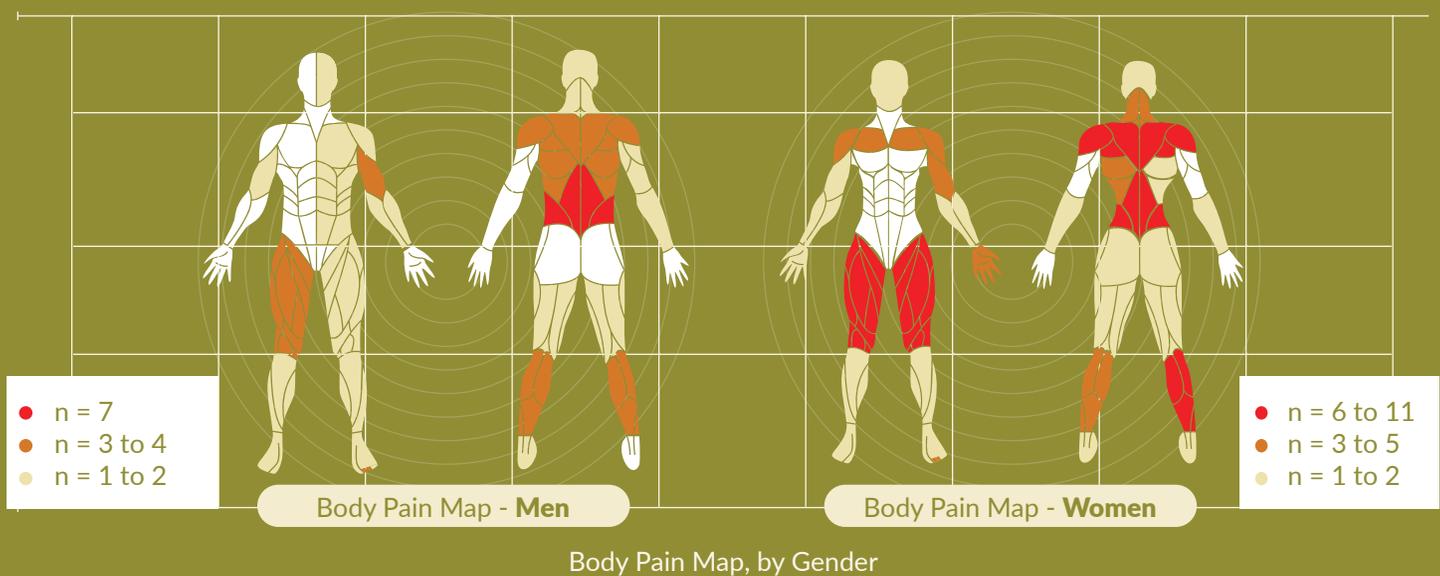
Community-based violence and socio-economic vulnerabilities



Waste Picking Presents Different Health Risks for Men and Women

Activities involving the handling and processing of recyclable materials affect waste pickers' bodies in different ways. The most frequently mentioned pains are highlighted in red, orange and beige. The sexual division of labour in cooperatives also brings distinct body pains for men and women, particularly depending on the degree of repetitive movements and static posture often associated with women's sorting tasks. Holding leadership responsibilities has additional impacts on waste pickers' stress levels and emotional well-being.

Source: Cuidar Project Health Risk Mapping, Survey data (2017) (n=48)



Policy Recommendations:

1. Environmental education for better source segregation, including proper household and medical waste segregation
2. Better planning processes with and for waste pickers on adequate infrastructure and equipment
3. Commitment to improve workplace infrastructure
4. Easy access to information on public health issues, nutritional practices, vaccinations for tetanus, hepatitis B, yellow fever and others
5. Access to simple health exams and preventive health services
6. Access to training on adequate, durable and comfortable protective equipment
7. Training on proper ergonomic exercises

To improve the overall health and well-being of workers, they need support from governments and stakeholders, commitments to decent work conditions and a favourable policy and regulatory environment. These are key to addressing sustainable goals including:

