

Hidden Hazards: The Experiences of Migrant Workers in Home-Based Care

Research highlighting the unique physical, psychosocial and systemic risks faced by migrant workers in the Australian home-care sector

The Work Landscape



Health Care and Social Assistance is now the nation's largest employing industry



Home-based care and personal support roles are projected to grow in the coming decade



Growing demand and staff shortages have increased reliance on **migrant workers**

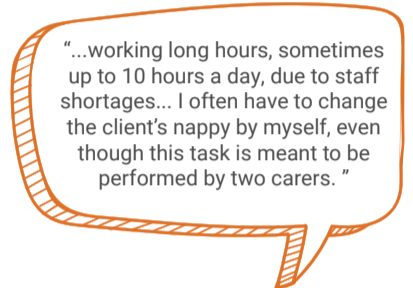


Despite their growing numbers, migrant workers' perspectives are often missing from **policy and system design**

Workplace Hazards



Physical hazards such as unsafe environments, manual handling and pets



Psychosocial hazards such as complex client needs, abuse, family members and emotional demands



Structural Hazards

Marketisation of care
emphasises care of the client over the health and safety of the worker

Poor hazard identification and reporting systems

Job insecurity and exploitation

Lack of debrief and support systems

Segmented labour market
creates challenges for regulatory bodies

Risks Were Compounded for Migrant Workers

"When settling in a new country, the priority is often to feed your family, so losing a job is not an option. This can mean tolerating verbal abuse, unfair treatment, underpayment, or poor working conditions."

Migrant workers can face additional risk factors such as racism and discrimination, and challenges with language and culture

"...people from African backgrounds are sometimes assumed to have less knowledge or skills compared to others [at work]. These stereotypes can make it harder to be recognised for our abilities and can affect how we are treated at work."

Implications for Policy and Practice



Proactive Risk Prevention

Workforce growth and increased migration to fill shortages make proactive risk prevention critical



Inclusive Approach

Culturally responsive and participatory methods improve engagement with under-represented workers

This research sought to pilot a collaborative, participatory, qualitative approach to better access the voices of migrant workers employed in home-care.

Bicultural, bilingual community ambassadors supported culturally safe access by conducting interviews in participants' preferred language and format.

"I think it's nice because it feels more comfortable and personal. It's easier to open up to someone from the same community."

This research summary was prepared in March 2026. Please contact ISCR (info@iscrr.com.au) for more information about ISCR Project 405 which informed this summary.



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Institute for Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research

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