

FAILING TO CARE FOR CARE WORKERS:

STRUCTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT AND HEALTH OF MIGRANT WOMEN PERFORMING IN-HOME CARE WORK IN CANADA

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Book chapter in the *Occupational Health in a New World of Work*, (2026)



BACKGROUND

Canada has relied on racialized migrant women from the Global South, arriving on temporary caregiver work permits, to fill this gap in care. However, the Canadian state inadequately addresses care workers' exposure to occupational health and safety risks, undermining care workers' ability to maintain health and functionality at work.

MAIN ARGUMENT

The health inequities associated with migrant care workers are not accidental but made through legal, economic, and bureaucratic systems that make these workers seem invisible, disposable, and unworthy of reciprocal forms of care. Care workers' uncertain status in Canada and workplace vulnerabilities operate as structural determinants of health that unfairly expose them to violence, stress, and burnout.

KEY TERM

Structural Determinants of Health: These are the factors, such as immigration laws, the economy, and social standing, that shape a person's daily life. For care workers, these systems shape who has access to safety and support, and who is left exposed to higher health risks.

CONCLUSION

Decision-makers should aim to mitigate migrant care workers' precarity and exploitation. This includes **stronger enforcement of employment standards and occupational health protections** in private homes, universal access to mental and physical healthcare and compensation, and fewer and more inclusive eligibility requirements for retirement benefits.

Importantly, care worker immigration programs must shift the health impacts of imbalanced employment relations facing migrant care workers by **granting them permanent residence**.

KEY ISSUES

Temporary Immigration Status

Temporariness magnifies employer-worker power imbalances that exposes care workers to high degrees of exploitation, isolation, and even abuse while limiting their privacy and autonomy.

Retirement & Abandonment

Eligibility criteria for several of Canada's public retirement supports, including Old Age Security, exclude many care workers from accessing adequate entitlements after the age of retirement (65).

Bureaucratic Violence

When migrant care workers do attempt to address unsafe or exploitative conditions through Canadian legal systems, they encounter multiple bureaucratic barriers rather than pathways to justice.

