

# Survey to expose exploitation of temporary workers

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Credit: University of Technology, Sydney

Foreign workers in Australia are being asked to detail their experiences amid growing concerns over their possible exploitation by unscrupulous employers engaged in what researchers describe as "wage theft".

The [nationwide survey](#) is being conducted jointly by the University of New South Wales, the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Sydney and is the first large-scale national study of its kind.

It will target international students, working holiday makers or backpackers, skilled workers on 457 visas and anyone else working in Australia on a temporary visa.

"This survey gives temporary migrants an opportunity to tell their stories about experiences at work and, for those underpaid, their experiences of trying to recover wages," said UTS Faculty of Law academic Dr Laurie Berg.

"It is clear from the near constant flow of news reports and smaller scale research that wage theft and other mistreatment of temporary visa holders is common in Australia. Yet we lack a picture of the true extent of these problems across all industry sectors and all parts of the country," explained Dr Stephen Clibborn, of the University of Sydney's Business School.

Bassina Farbenblum of UNSW Law went on to say that many temporary visa holders never recover underpaid wages from their employers.

"Some of them never try and others hit barriers when they do. This survey will identify exactly what it is that prevents temporary workers from asserting their rights, and how experiences may differ across nationality groups, industries, and visa categories," she said.

There are an estimated 1.8 million temporary workers current in Australia and the three researchers say the results of the survey will benefit them, Australia's policy makers, and service providers currently developing policies to support workers vulnerable to exploitation, including the government's newly established Migrant Worker

Taskforce.

**More information:** The survey is available in 10 languages here:  
[sydney.edu.au/business/research ... a-holder-work-survey](https://sydney.edu.au/business/research/2016-10-survey-expose-exploitation-temporary-workers.html)

Provided by University of Technology, Sydney

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