

Migrant care workers in the 'care mix': lessons for a post-Brexit UK immigration system

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- Significant contribution in most countries, including some low- and middle-income countries (global care chains).
- Care deficit (social care is one of the most rapidly expanding sectors in high-income countries, supply issues) - gaps filled by migrant workers.
- Share, composition, and roles differ across political/legal and welfare regimes and shaped by care, migration and employment systems, and migrant agency.

Challenges to comparative research

- Definition of a 'care worker' can be fluid and context-specific: domestic help/social care/health care;
- Availability of data: care workforce registration and data collection;
- Size of grey economy and undocumented migration;
- Settlement and nationality rules – migrant vs. foreign-born.

Features of care regimes

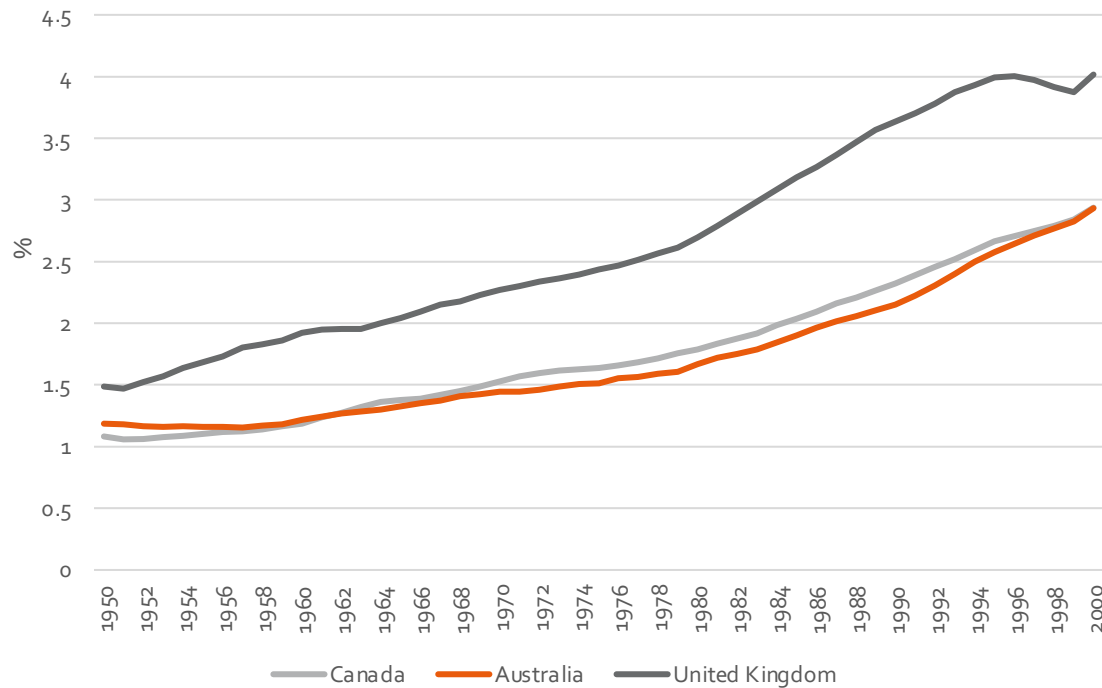
- Formal qualification requirements;
- Attractiveness for resident workforce – pay and job quality;
 - Marketised systems: downward pressure on wage and non-wage labour costs as main source of competitiveness.
 - Familial systems: fragmented, downward pressure on wage costs, high risk of exploitation.
- Opportunity costs of informal caring;
- Societal preferences and discourse around caring, culturally competent care.

Features of migration regimes

- Availability of visa-free access to the labour market for certain groups in some countries;
- Availability and conditions of (temporary) work-visa programmes;
- Regularisation programmes for undocumented migrants/workers;
- Access to long-term settlement and naturalisation.

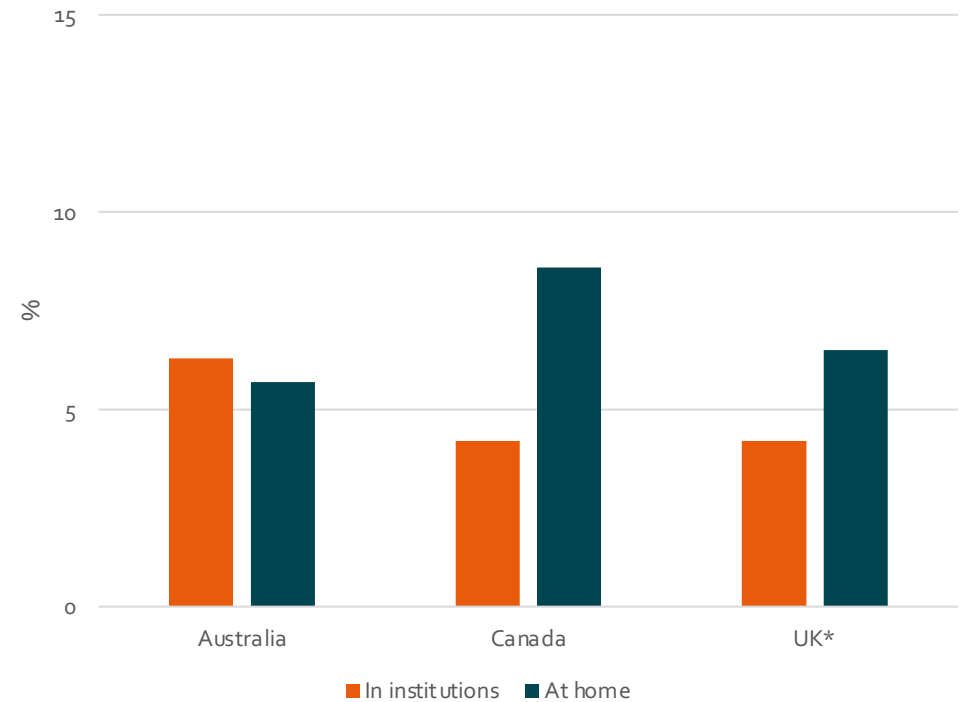
Demographic context

Population aged 80 and over (% of total population)



Source: Historical population data and projection (1950-2060)
https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=POP_PROJ#

Long-term care recipients (% of population aged 65+), 2016

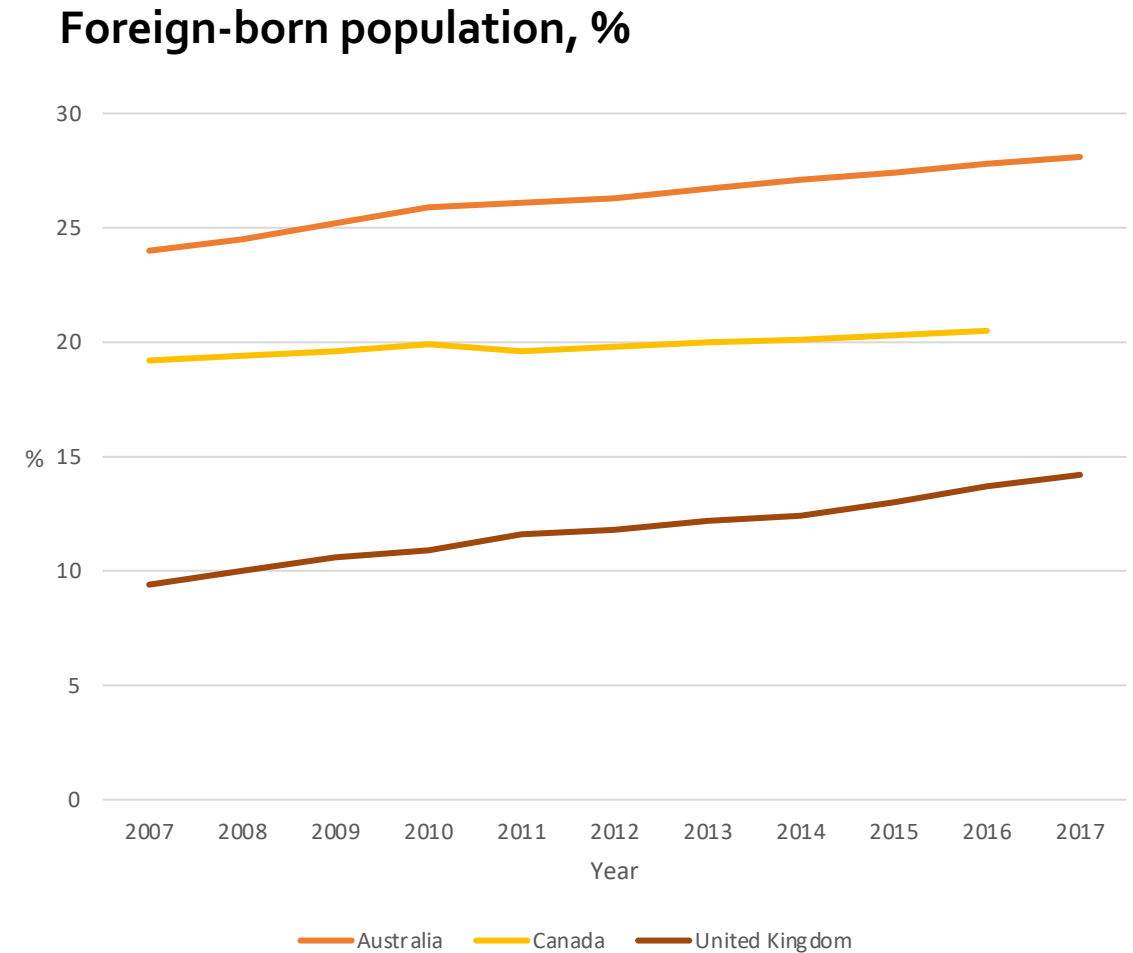


Source: OECD Statistical:
https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=HEALTH_LTICR#. * UK data 2004 estimate

Patterns of migration

Australia and Canada have a long history of permanent migration and settlement; more recently “skills-based” immigration systems.

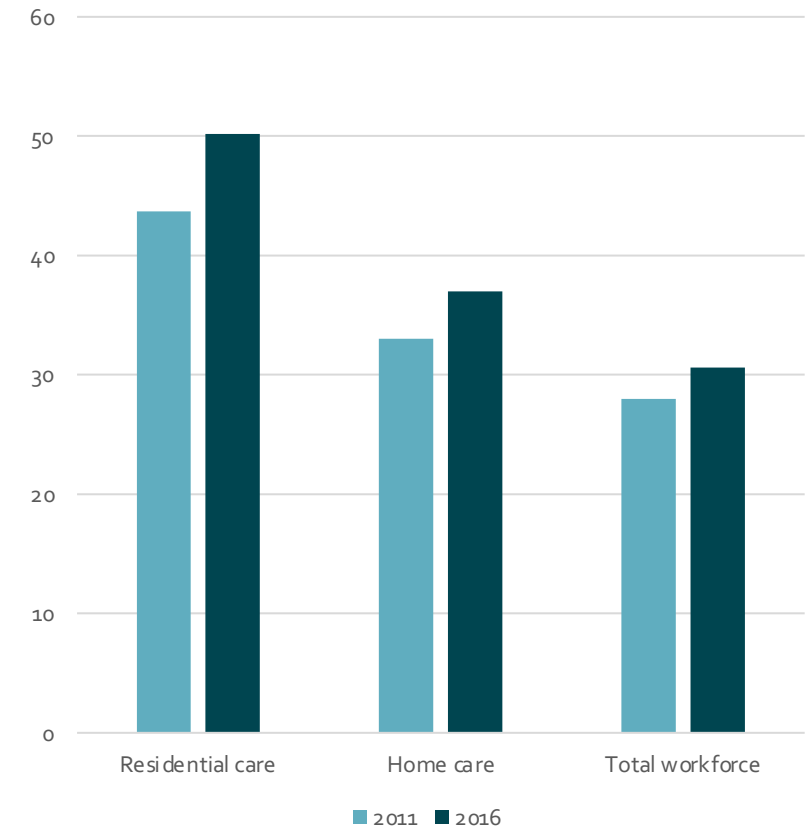
UK has a history of immigration from the Commonwealth, more recently free movement of labour from the European Union and employer-driven/hostile environment for non-EU nationals.



Source: OECD, International Migration Outlook 2018

- No 'front doors' pathways to care work until recently.
- Care work classified as 'low-skilled' - ANZSCO Level 4, skilled visas require minimum of Level 3.
- Current migrant care workers on a mix of temporary student and working holiday visas, permanent humanitarian and 'skilled' visas.
- Large and increasing proportion of migrants (overseas-born) in direct care roles (ABS Census 2011 & 2016). Many are relatively recent arrivals.

Percentage of overseas-born workers



Temporary or sector-specific work visa programmes

Three employer-sponsored pathways for migrant care workers:

- Individual company-specific labour migration agreements between the government and specific employers;
- Designated Area Labour Migration Agreement in Northern Australia;
- Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) allows workers from the Pacific rim to work in Australia outside major cities for up to three years.

- Currently, about one in three care workers are foreign-born.
- Has a long tradition of care-specific migration pathways (with settlement):
 - 1981 Foreign Domestic Worker Program
 - 1992 Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP)
- LCP closed in 2014, care workforce incorporated into the federal Temporary Foreign Worker Programme (low-wage/high-wage streams, LMIA).
- Various provincial programmes.

Immigration pilots for care workers

- Introduced in 2014 and revised in 2019
- Lead to permanent status
- For those who have come in via the TFW Programme and work in care can transition to permanent residence if they meet eligibility criteria (language, education, residency)
- 2014 pilots massively under-subscribed – uncertainty in transitioning
- Reforms in 2019: clearer and more assured pathway, permit is only occupation-restricted (i.e. can change employer), allows for some gaps in employment/part-time work in qualifying period, LMIA removed, allows accompanying family

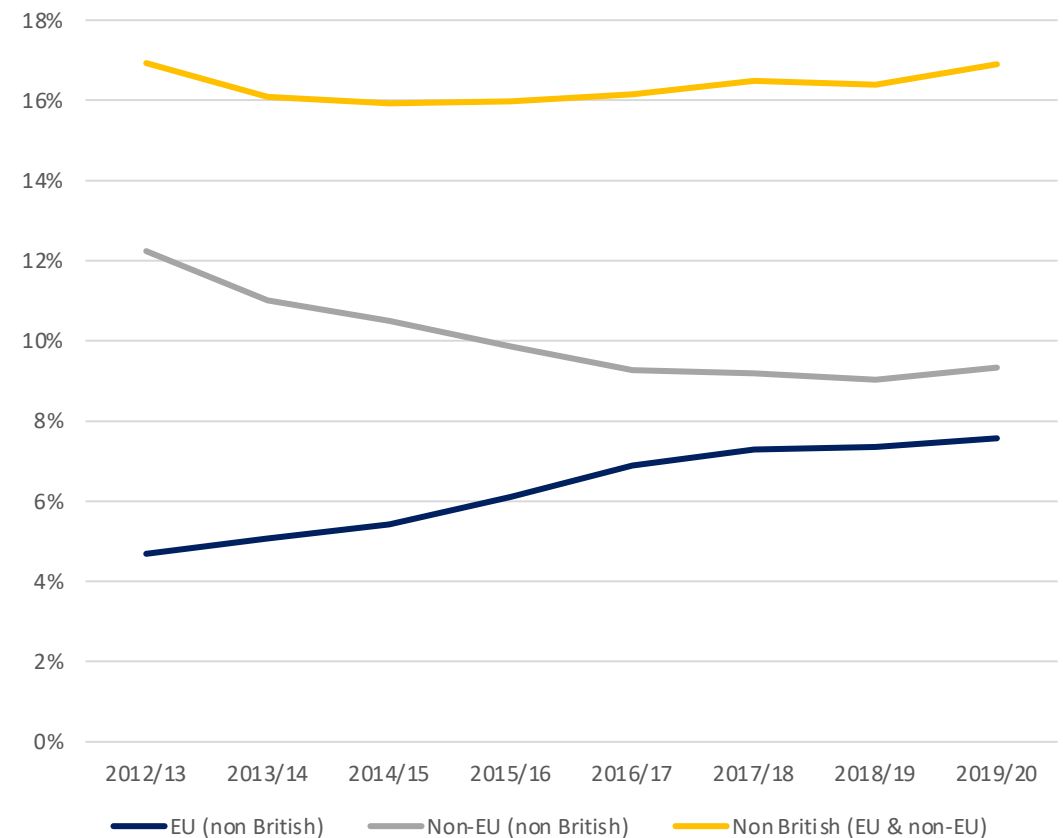
Experiences and challenges

- Favourable labour market outcomes of both care workers and accompanying family members (partly due to the gendered nature of care work).
- Many migrant care workers leave the sector once they obtain permanent status.
- Live-in care worker experiences: working conditions, exploitation, occupational stigma & racialised expectations (Banerjee et al. 2017).

United Kingdom

- 17% of the social care workforce in England are non-British:
 - 8.7% (131 thousand people) non-EU
 - 7.6% (13 thousand people) EU.
- Share of non-British nationals relatively stable but composition shifted.
- 7% of roles vacant in 2019/20
- Migrant workers seem to respond to a consistent demand in the sector.

Composition of the social care workforce by nationality in England



UK post-Brexit immigration system

- Free movement of EU nationals ended on 31 December 2020.
- EU Settlement Scheme for EU nationals already in the country.
- New immigration system is skills- and points-based, with employer sponsorship (job offer) and minimum qualification and salary requirements.
- More permissive than previous work visa for non-EU nationals but more costly.
- Social care workers below the qualification threshold – can't qualify for work visa.
- Senior care workers can qualify for a work visa and have been added to the Shortage Occupation List (reduced salary requirement).

Delphi survey

- Expert survey, 2 rounds (2019, 2020)
- Decline in work migration after Brexit will impact the sector negatively and new immigration system seen as harmful for social care.
- Migrant care workers are important but consensus about making the sector more attractive to resident workforce by increasing pay and improving working conditions (this is seen as unlikely).
- Certain areas, providers, and groups who use services are expected to be more affected by a decline in EU migration – gaps will emerge – while others less so.
- Some support for sectoral visas but caution about potential problems. Improving the general work visa system is seen as more preferable (e.g. reducing minimum salary and qualification requirements, cost of visas).

- Low-wage work visa programmes pose particular challenges for implementation;
- Well-known link between restrictiveness and exploitation of migrant workers;
- Avoid “trapdoor of permanent temporariness” (Howe et al. 2019).
- Sectoral or geographical visa programmes?
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic?

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