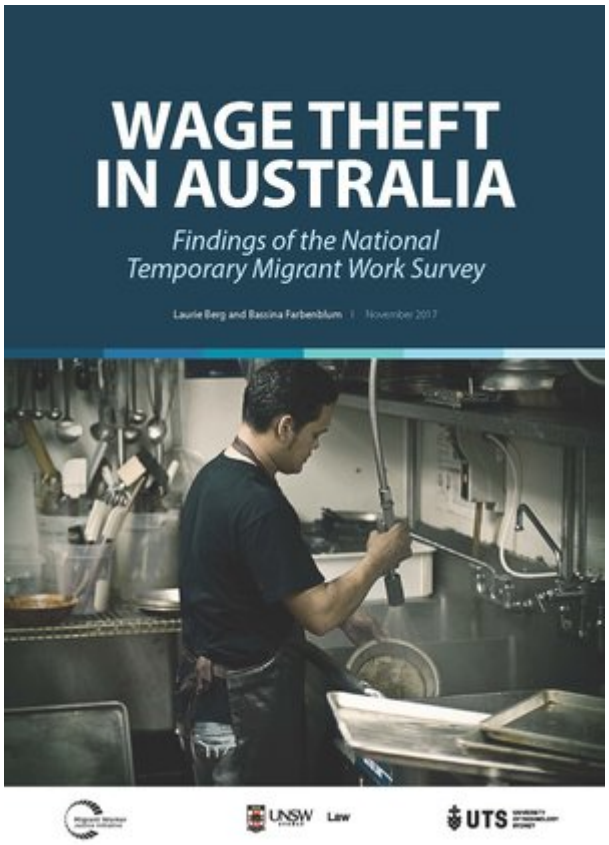
Wage theft in Australia: Findings of the National Temporary Migrant Work Survey



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Released on 21 November, 2017, *Wage Theft in Australia* indicates that Australia has a large silent underclass of migrant workers, primarily made up of international students and backpackers, who are paid well below the minimum wage in at least 12 main industries.

Key findings include:

- Almost a third (30%) of international students and backpackers earned $12 per hour or less. This is about half the minimum wage for a casual employee in many of the jobs in which temporary migrants work.
- Underpayment was widespread across numerous industries but was especially common in food services, and especially severe in fruit and vegetable picking
- Severe underpayment was experienced by every major nationality of backpackers and international students in this country - at least one in five Americans, British, Indians, Brazilians, and Chinese earned roughly half the minimum wage.
- At least three quarters of underpaid international students and backpackers know that they're being paid less than the minimum wage. One reason they stay in these jobs paying illegally low wages is that the overwhelming majority believe that everyone else on their visa is earning less than the minimum wage too.
- A substantial number also work in conditions that could amount to criminal forced labour, including being required to pay cash back to their employer after receiving their wages, having their passport confiscated by their employer, or paying an upfront 'deposit' for their job

About the survey

The National Temporary Migrant Work Survey is the most comprehensive study of wage theft and working conditions among international students, backpackers and other temporary migrants in Australia. Among the 4,322 respondents, 2,392 were international students, 1,440 were Working Holiday Makers (backpackers), 301 were skilled 457-visa holders, and the remainder were on other temporary visas when they worked in Australia.

The survey asked participants about the wages and other conditions in their lowest paid job in Australia, as well as a range of questions about their experiences, perceptions and knowledge of their rights at work. The survey's findings are intended to improve the effectiveness of government institutions, policies, services and advocacy on behalf of migrant workers by ensuring they are responsive to workers' experiences and attitudes.

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Download executive summary

Media release

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