Exploitation of International Students: A Role for the International Education Sector

AIEC

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12 October, 2018
Participants on student visas

2,392 survey participants held a student visa during their lowest paid job.

International student participants’ type of educational institution
Nationality of student participants: universities

Top 10 nationalities of international student participants studying at a university

- China (incl. Hong Kong): 32%
- India: 10%
- Indonesia: 6%
- Vietnam: 5%
- Malaysia: 4%
- United States of America (USA): 3%
- Pakistan: 2%
- Colombia: 2%
- United Kingdom (UK): 2%
- Nepal: 2%
Top 10 nationalities of international student participants studying at a vocational or English-language college
Lowest paid job types for participants overall

- Waiter/kitchen hand /food server: 38%
- Professional services: 11%
- Fruit/vegetable picker or packer or farm worker: 9%
- Cleaner: 9%
- Shop assistant/retail job/sales: 8%
- Work in a private home (including inhome care and other health and care services): 4%
- Other: 4%
- Para-professional office services: 4%
- Hospitality and tourism (includes food and food delivery): 3%
- Factory worker: 2%
- Construction/building worker: 2%
- Convenience store/petrol station attendant: 2%
- Meat or poultry worker: 1%
- Health and care worker: 1%
- Removals, delivery, taxi: 1%
- Car wash: 0%
- Child care: 0%
- Internship: 0%
Students’ hourly wages

A quarter (25%) of international students earned $12/hr or less; 43% earned $15 or less.

Hourly wage rates in lowest paid job, comparing university and college students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wage Range</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0-5</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6-10</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10-12</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$13-15</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15-17</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hourly wage rates in participants’ lowest paid job for students working 21 hours + per week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wage Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0-5</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<td>$6-10</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>$13-15</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>$15-17</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$18+</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Key findings on wage rates by nationality for all participants

- Wage rates of $12 per hour or less were reported by at least a fifth of temporary migrants from every major nationality.

- Participants from China, Germany and Vietnam had the largest proportions of nationals earning $10 per hour or less.

- Around three quarters (75-81%) of Chinese, Taiwanese and Vietnamese participants earned $17 per hour or less, compared with 35-41% of American, Irish and British participants.
Two thirds (64%) of international students reported that they worked between 9 and 20 hours each week, and 13% reported that they worked 21 hours per week or more.

Average hours worked per week in international students’ lowest paid job, comparing college and university students.
Cash payments and non-provision of pay slips

- 50% of participants rarely or never received a pay slip in their lowest paid job
- 49% of international students were paid in cash in their lowest paid job
- 70% of participants earning $12 per hour or less were paid in cash
- Cash payments were most prevalent among Chinese (65%), Korean (55%) and Colombian (46%) participants
Knowledge of minimum wages in Australia

Proportion of college and university student participants earning $15 per hour or less who knew the minimum wage in Australia is $16 per hour or more

- College: 86%
- University: 69%
Perception of the prevailing wage among migrants on the same visa

Responses of international student and Working Holiday Maker participants earning less than $15/hour to the question: ‘What proportion of temporary visa holders on your visa do you think are paid less than $17.70/hour?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All or almost all</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Many</th>
<th>Some/ almost none/ none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working holiday visa</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student visa</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Very few underpaid international students try to recover unpaid wages

• Among international students who tried to recover unpaid wages, the institution from which they most commonly sought help was their education provider; very few went to the Fair Work Ombudsman

• A substantial proportion of international students are open to recovering unpaid wages in the future
The role of the international education sector

The FWO and government agencies have critical roles to play. So do education providers and their agents.

*How can education providers better support international students to avoid and address exploitation?*

Better information

- Pre-departure
- Onshore

Better support services

- Legal advice and assistance
- Other forms of support
Information for Impact: Enabling education providers to address exploitation of international students in accommodation and at work

- New sector-wide collaboration funded by StudyNSW’s Partner Projects scheme

- Objective: Provide universities, VET and ELICOS institutions, and education agents with evidence that enables collective development and delivery of information to more effectively assist international students to avoid and address workplace and accommodation-related exploitation

- Partners: English Australia, ISANA NSW, Fair Work Ombudsman, CISA, Redfern Legal Centre, education agents, UNSW, UTS

- Advisors: ATO, Commonwealth Education Department
How to support the project and be involved

1. Distribute online survey to international students onshore and pre-departure (early 2019)

2. Distribute call for international student participants in focus groups onshore (early 2019)

3. Share your views (now):
   - What information do students receive from your institution in relation to accommodation and work?
   - What information do students need and how and when should they receive it?

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