

# Markets, Migration & the Work of Care



## FACT SHEET 1: Migrant Workers in Frontline Care

Christine Eastman, Sara Charlesworth & Elizabeth Hill<sup>1</sup>

Migrants form a significant and growing portion of Australia's non-professional frontline care workforce. Frontline care workers make up the majority of the direct care workforce in Australia and provide personal care to young children, the elderly and people with a disability.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing and other ABS surveys<sup>2</sup> show the main demographic and employment characteristics of overseas-born workers in the three main frontline care occupations: child carers, aged and disability carers, and personal care assistants. These occupations are ranked as 'low-skilled' at Level 4 in the five-level Australian & New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO).

Australia's migrant care workers are on average younger, less likely to be male and have a higher level of formal qualifications than their Australian born peers. They increasingly come from non-English speaking countries, with recent migrants more likely to arrive on temporary visas. The shifting composition of Australia's care workforce requires policymakers to ensure better integration of migration policies and employment strategies, and to address the potential vulnerability of newly arrived migrants working in these occupations.

### Demographics

In 2016, 37.1% of Australia's 295,324 frontline care workers were born overseas, up from 31.2% in 2011, and higher than the proportion of overseas-born workers in the total workforce (30.6%).

### Overseas-born Care Workers 2011-2016

Within each of the three care occupations significant increases in the share of overseas-born workers were recorded between 2011 and 2016: from 26.2% to 34.6% among child carers, from 33% to 37% among aged and disabled carers, and from 43.7% to 50.2% among personal care assistants (Figure 1). In the same period, the share of overseas-born workers throughout Australia's total workforce increased only slightly, from 28% to 30.6%.

### Who are Australia's Frontline Care Workers?

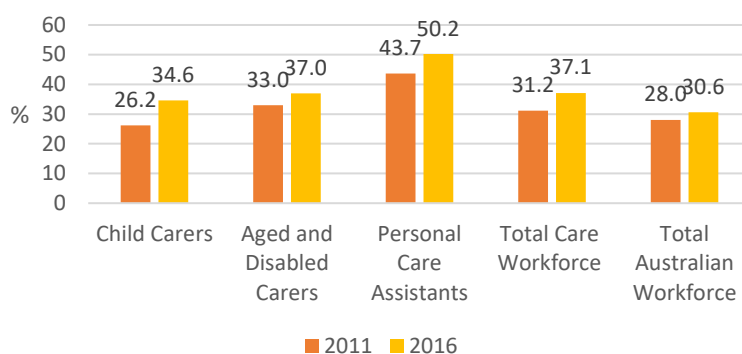
#### ABS Occupational Definitions (ABS 2018)

**Child Carers (4211):** Provide care and supervision for children in residential homes and non-residential childcare centres. This includes Child Care Workers, Family Day Care Workers, Nannies, and Out of School Hours Care Workers.

**Aged and Disabled Carers (4231):** Provide general household assistance, emotional support, care and companionship for aged or disabled people in their own homes.

**Personal Care Assistants (423313):** Provide routine personal care services to people in a range of health care facilities or in a person's home. Tasks include assisting patients with their personal care needs such as showering, dressing and eating, as well as their mobility and communication needs.

Figure 1: Overseas-born Workers in Care Occupations and the Total Workforce, Census 2011 and 2016

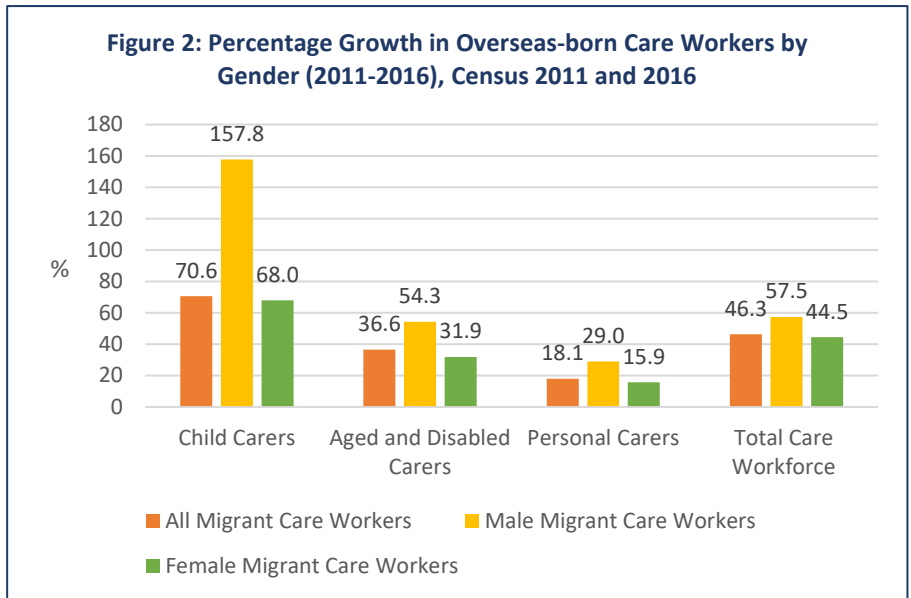


<sup>1</sup> Fact Sheet 1 is output from Australia Research Council DP160100175, Markets, Migration and the Work of Care in Australia and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Partnership Grant No. 895-2012-1021, Gender, Migration and the Work of Care. Corresponding author: Professor Sara Charlesworth, RMIT University: [sara.charlesworth@rmit.edu.au](mailto:sara.charlesworth@rmit.edu.au)

<sup>2</sup> This fact sheet draws on ACMID and CoRMS data, in addition to Census data.

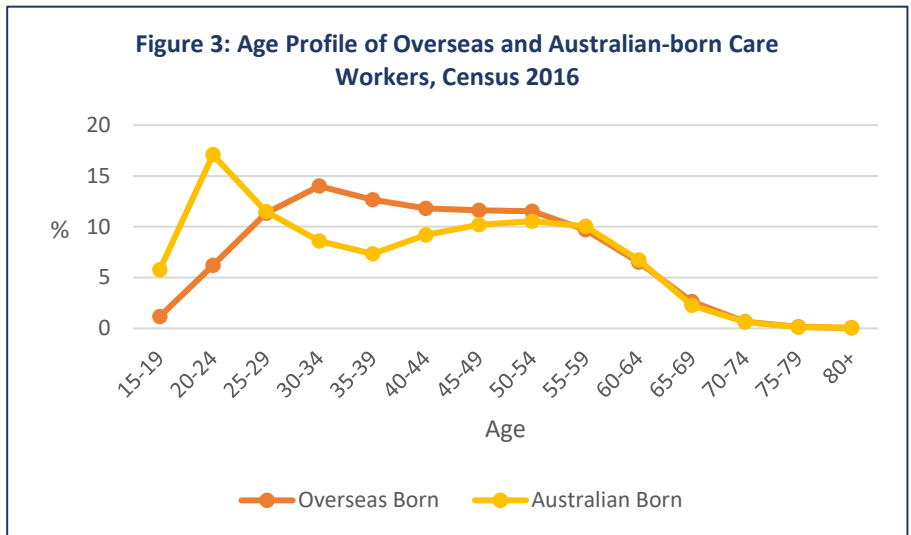
### Gender

Almost one in nine (87.5%) of the total Australian frontline care workforce is female. Of all overseas-born care workers, 85% are female. Between 2011 and 2016 the proportion of male workers has grown in each occupational category, suggesting a trend towards the recruitment of male migrant care workers (Figure 2). However, overall numbers of male overseas-born care workers remain low. Among the overseas-born care workforce, 4.3% of child carers, 23.8% of aged and disabled carers and 18.3% of personal care assistants are male.



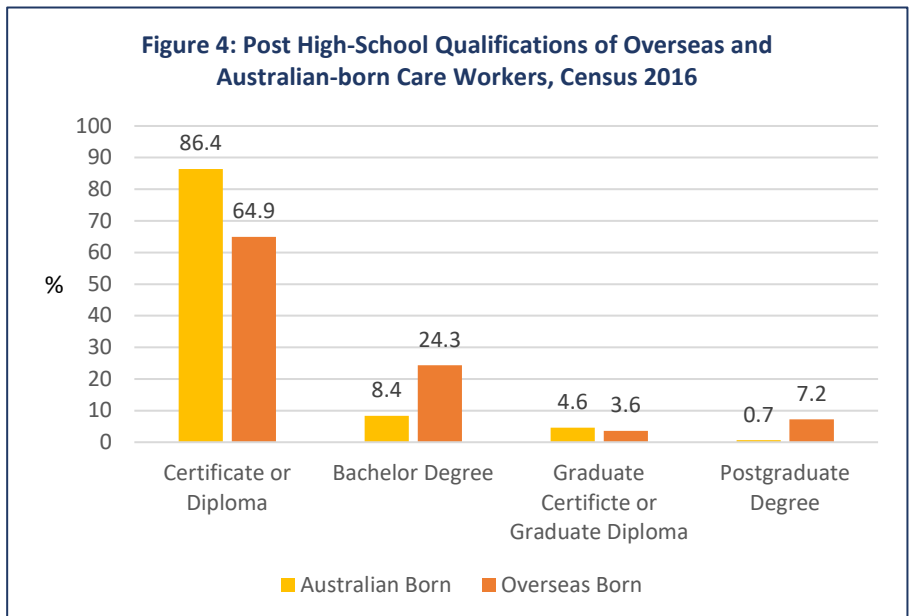
### Age Profile

Overseas-born care workers have a more compressed age profile than their Australian-born counterparts (Figure 3). Migrant child carers (median age of 35-39) are typically older than Australian-born child carers (25-29), but migrant aged and disabled carers are slightly younger (median age 45 vs 48) as are migrant personal care assistants (median 40-44 vs 45-49).



### Education

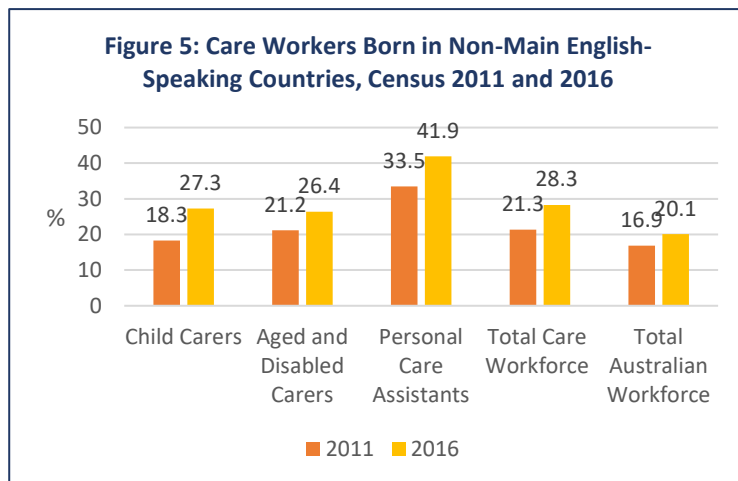
Overseas-born care workers have higher levels of formal education than Australian-born care workers (Figure 4). Australian-born care workers are more likely to hold a Certificate or Diploma than their overseas-born counterparts. However, 24.3% of overseas-born care workers hold a bachelor degree, compared to 8.4% of Australian-born care workers, while 7.2% of migrant care workers hold a postgraduate degree, compared to just 0.7% of their Australian-born peers.



## Care Workers Migration Pathways

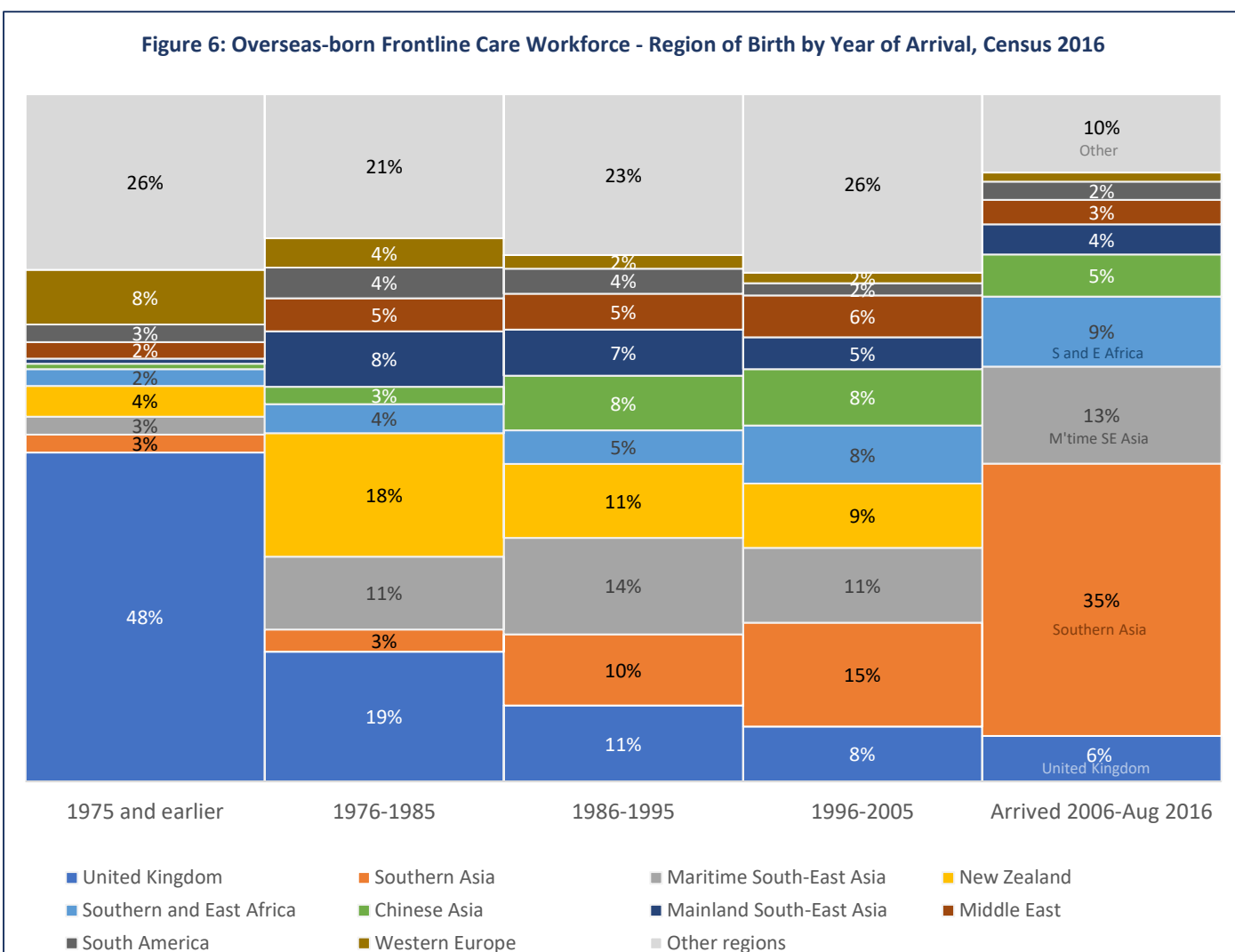
### Migrant Care Workers from Non-Main English-Speaking Countries

The proportion of Australia's frontline care workers who come from non-main English-speaking countries<sup>3</sup> has increased across all three care occupations between 2011-2016. As seen in Figure 5, the proportion of frontline carers born in non-main English-speaking countries is much higher than is the case for the total Australian workforce.



### Region of Birth

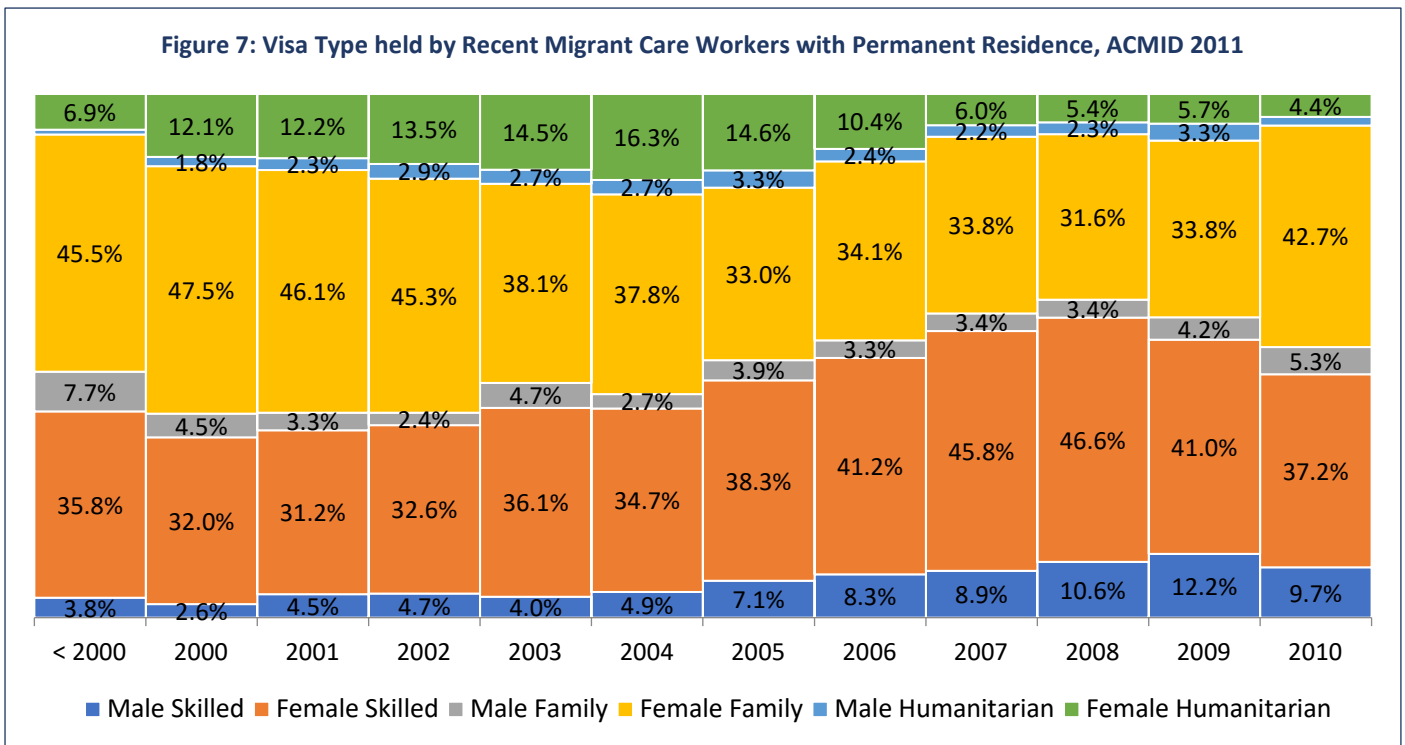
There has been a distinct change in the composition of the overseas-born care workforce over time (Figure 6). There is a clear growth in the proportion of workers born in Southern Asia (mainly India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh), as well as a steady increase in the proportion of workers from Africa, and since 1976 stable inflows of workers from Maritime South-East Asia (mainly the Philippines). The proportion of care workers born in the United Kingdom and New Zealand have declined dramatically over time.



<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that being from a non-main English-speaking country (non-MESC) does not imply a lack of proficiency in English.

## Visa Pathways

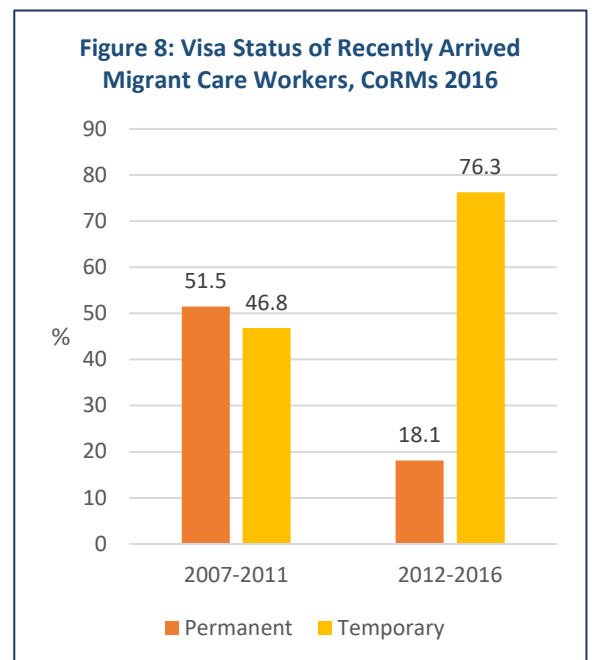
The Census does not collect data on visas held by overseas-born workers. The Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset (ACMID)<sup>4</sup> provides data from the 2011 Census and the Department of Social Services settlement database on visas held by *permanent* migrants who entered Australia between 2000 and 2011, as of the 2011 census date. There were three different types of visa holders: humanitarian, family reunification and skilled. Figure 7, below, shows that most entrants arrived as family and skilled visa holders. The annual proportion of those who held humanitarian and family visas decreased over time, whereas those who held skilled visas increased. However, this trend appeared to reverse as of 2009, which may reflect the stricter migration criteria for permanent skilled visa holders after this time.



## Permanent or Temporary?

The Characteristics of Recent Australian Migrants (CoRMs) survey 2016 is a labour force survey that provides information on migrants who arrived between 2006 and 2016 on both permanent and temporary visas.<sup>5</sup> Figure 8 indicates that of those working as care workers in 2016, 46.8% had arrived on temporary visas in the 2007-2011 period. While in the 2012-2016 period, 76.3% arrived on temporary visas. This trend is consistent with shifts in Australia’s migration policy towards temporary migration during this period.

Overall, around 64% of migrant care workers who arrived between 2006 and 2016 entered Australia on temporary visas. Around 38% (18,800 people) arrived on temporary student visas. Around 75% of those from the top five countries – India, the Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh – arrived on a temporary visa, compared to around 25% of migrant carers from other countries.



<sup>4</sup> ACMID 2011 data available on request.

<sup>5</sup> As the CoRMS is a labour force survey not a Census, the care work occupations were aggregated to increase the reliability of the data estimates. CoRMS 2016 data analysis available on request.