

COVID-19: Uncovering the Impact on the World of Work

Research Question: How is the pandemic impacting gig workers, migrant workers, designated groups (minorities and women), unions and health care workers? And what must be done to mitigate the risks?

Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated challenges for workers across sectors and countries, in different forms of precarious employment. Workers experience difficulties daily, ranging from a lack of PPE, to no security net and both physical and mental stress. This project explores the range of impacts the pandemic is having on workers in the Global North and South through extensive data collection including the gathering and sorting (into a digital database) of >700 news articles, academic journal articles, blogs, op-eds and policy briefs published between March-August 2020.

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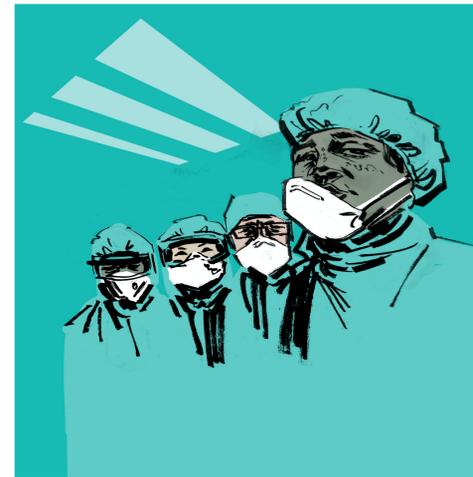


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Methodology:

Five Categories Were Analyzed:

- 1) Changing nature of work, employment and labour rights (Gig workers)
- 2) Migration, citizenship and work
- 3) Gender, race, & indigeneity in work & livelihood practices
- 4) Power & inequality in unions & workers' movement: decline, resistance & revitalization
- 5) Health, wellbeing & work (Health care workers)

Total Resources Consulted: 700 - Combination of newspaper articles, academic journals, reports, etc.

Results

Changing nature of work, employment and labour rights	Migration, citizenship and work	Gender, race & indigeneity	Unions & workers movement	Health, wellbeing & work
Lack of income due to the sparse amount of work and increased competition.	Many migrant workers take jobs that help the food supply chain, such as farming jobs	Members of designated groups (women/minorities) take on essential jobs – higher chance of exposure to virus	Unions have stepped up to negotiate with employers about safety measures,	Nursing homes being run very poorly and the patients being neglected.
No security net	Increased number of outbreaks in the areas they work	Greater possibility losing their job	Negotiating the hourly pay workers deserve for putting individuals at risk	Health care workers, such as nurses and doctors, have faced a heightened level of physical and mental stress from helping COVID-19 patients
Some movement from major corporations (e.g. food carrier and driver companies) to provide basic benefits	Poor working conditions, lack of PPE and general disregard for their safety.	Lack of consideration when it comes to policy making		Shortage of supplies in the hospital supply chain (PPE).

Summary:

- Little to no extrinsic rewards for workers efforts – along with an elevated level of both physical and mental stress
- Gig workers: forced to work in competitive environment with low rewards. Some progress has been made by calling out major corporations (Food delivery/ride sharing).
- Migrant workers: employers do not emphasize migrant workers safety/living condition. More outbreaks occurring with migrant farm workers in Ontario.
- Women/minorities: as a result of their socio-economic ability, these individuals take on essential jobs – consequentially exposing them to the virus
- Unions: Stepped up for workers during the pandemic to convey the unfair conditions employees work in
- Healthcare workers: dealt with issues of shortage of PPE, and both physical/mental stress.

Conclusion:

- Workers who are essential to the economy and society are often the ones who face the hardest challenges
- Awareness is crucial for change
- Academics, activists and policymakers need to work together to ensure safe and healthy work conditions for all

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