

Challenges Faced by Foreign Workers in Host Countries: Social, Economic and Legal Perspectives

Qurbonova Dildora Murotovna

Management Development Institute of Singapore in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Received: 19 July 2026; **Accepted:** 05 August 2026; **Published:** 31 August 2026

Abstract: International labour migration has become an important component of contemporary global mobility, contributing significantly to the economic and social development of both countries of origin and destination. Foreign workers frequently fill labour shortages in sectors such as construction, agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality, healthcare, and domestic services. Nevertheless, migration to a host country often exposes workers to a complex combination of social, economic, and legal challenges. This article examines the major difficulties encountered by foreign workers, focusing on social integration, employment conditions, wage inequality, access to social protection, legal status, discrimination, and institutional barriers.

Keywords: Foreign workers, labour migration, host countries, migrant workers, social integration, employment, labour rights, discrimination, social protection, migration policy, legal status, economic challenges.

Introduction: International labour migration has become an increasingly significant feature of the global economy. Differences in wages, employment opportunities, demographic structures, and labour demand encourage millions of people to cross national borders in search of employment. Host countries, in turn, frequently rely on foreign workers to address labour shortages and maintain economic activity in sectors where domestic labour supply is insufficient. According to recent international migration reports, migrant workers represent a substantial component of the global labour force and play an important role in sustaining production, services, and demographic balance.

However, the economic contribution of foreign workers does not necessarily correspond to the level of protection and social inclusion they experience. Migrants may encounter difficulties that are less common among local workers, including language barriers, unfamiliarity with institutions, cultural adaptation, discrimination, insecure employment, and uncertainty regarding immigration status. Temporary and irregular migrants are particularly vulnerable because their ability to remain in the host country may

depend on maintaining a specific employment relationship.

Social Challenges and Integration Barriers. One of the most immediate challenges encountered by foreign workers is social integration. Moving to another country requires adaptation to a new linguistic, cultural, institutional, and social environment. Foreign workers may experience difficulties communicating with employers, colleagues, public institutions, healthcare providers, and members of the local community. Language barriers are particularly significant because they may limit access to information about employment rights, social services, education, and legal procedures.

Cultural differences can create additional challenges. Foreign workers may be unfamiliar with local workplace norms, communication styles, social expectations, and institutional practices. Misunderstandings can negatively affect professional relationships and contribute to social isolation. Workers employed in occupations with limited interaction with the broader community may have fewer opportunities to develop social networks outside their migrant communities.

Economic Challenges and Employment Conditions.

Economic factors are among the primary reasons people migrate for employment, yet foreign workers may face significant economic disadvantages in host countries. One major problem is wage inequality. Migrants may receive lower wages than local workers performing similar tasks, particularly when they have limited bargaining power or work in low-skilled sectors.

Foreign workers are often concentrated in occupations characterised by labour shortages, physically demanding conditions, temporary contracts, or limited career opportunities. Construction, agriculture, hospitality, domestic work, logistics, and certain manufacturing activities frequently employ significant numbers of migrant workers. Such occupational concentration may increase vulnerability to unstable employment and workplace exploitation.

Legal Status and Labour Rights. The legal status of foreign workers strongly influences their ability to exercise employment and social rights. Migration systems commonly distinguish between permanent migrants, temporary workers, seasonal workers, highly skilled migrants, refugees, students with work rights, and irregular migrants. Each category may be subject to different rules concerning employment, residence, social protection, and mobility between employers.

Temporary migration schemes can create particular vulnerabilities. When a residence permit is directly connected to a specific employer, workers may hesitate to complain about unpaid wages, excessive working hours, unsafe conditions, or harassment because they fear losing their employment and consequently their legal status. This relationship between immigration status and employment can create a structural imbalance between employers and foreign workers.

Social Protection, Healthcare and Access to Public Services. Access to social protection constitutes another major challenge for foreign workers. Social protection systems in host countries may be linked to residence status, employment history, social insurance contributions, or citizenship. Consequently, temporary migrants and workers in informal employment may have limited access to unemployment benefits, pensions, healthcare, family benefits, and other forms of social protection.

Healthcare access can be particularly problematic. Foreign workers may lack information about the healthcare system, experience language difficulties, or avoid medical services because of cost or uncertainty concerning their eligibility. Workers employed in hazardous occupations may face increased occupational health and safety risks, making access to healthcare and workplace protection especially

important.

CONCLUSION

Foreign workers make an important contribution to host-country economies by filling labour shortages, supporting key industries, contributing to tax and social-insurance systems, and enriching the social and cultural environment of destination countries. Nevertheless, their experiences demonstrate that economic contribution does not automatically guarantee equal treatment or social inclusion. The principal challenges faced by foreign workers are interconnected. Social isolation, language barriers, discrimination, low wages, insecure employment, limited recognition of qualifications, restrictive immigration regimes, and insufficient access to social protection can reinforce one another and increase migrants' vulnerability. Legal status is particularly important because workers whose residence depends on a specific employment relationship may have limited opportunities to challenge abusive conditions.

REFERENCES

1. Castles, S., de Haas, H., & Miller, M. J. (2024). *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (7th ed.). Guilford Press.
2. International Labour Organization. (2024). *ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers: Results and Methodology*. International Labour Office.
3. International Labour Organization. (2024). *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024*. International Labour Office.
4. International Organization for Migration. (2024). *World Migration Report 2024*. IOM.
5. OECD. (2023). *International Migration Outlook 2023*. OECD Publishing.
6. OECD. (2024). *International Migration Outlook 2024*. OECD Publishing.
7. United Nations. (2023). *International Migration 2020: International Migrant Stock 2020*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs.