

Skilled migrants risk depression in low-paid jobs

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(Medical Xpress) -- Skilled migrants who can't find jobs that use their education and qualifications are more likely to suffer mental health problems after three and a half years of arriving in Australia, according to a new study led by a researcher from The University of Western Australia.

"It seems many migrants will take any job when they first arrive - often including cleaning, waiting in restaurants, labouring, working in factories or driving taxis - even if they are university-educated or have other skills," Associate Professor Alison Reid said.

"This is due to the cost of migration and because it takes a while for migrants to get their qualifications recognised. However, skilled migrants can suffer [mental health problems](#) such as [anxiety disorders](#) if they are still in those first jobs after an extended period of time."

The study - conducted for the UWA-affiliated Western Australian Institute for Medical Research - used a migrant questionnaire at six months, 18 months and three and half years after arrival

Results showed no significant difference in migrant mental health during the first two periods, but well-being declined if skilled migrants could not find work that suited their qualifications by three and a half years.

"Skilled migrants are selected to enter Australia on criteria such as age, [language ability](#), qualifications and [work experience](#) because they are

expected to fill gaps in the Australian [labour force](#)," Associate Professor Reid said.

"However this study shows there is a large under-use of skills among [migrant workers](#) up to three and a half years after they arrive in Australia.

"Australia's immigration program has focused since the mid-1990s on encouraging skilled migration. What is needed now are support programs such as employment training, mentoring and supervision if - after a year - skilled migrants can't get work in their field."

Associate Professor Reid's study, which showed that skilled migrants are more likely than Australian-born workers to work in jobs for which they're over-qualified, has been published in *Australian New Zealand Journal of Public Health*.

Provided by University of Western Australia

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