



Individualised risk in platform-mediated home care and domestic work: Insights from migrant workers in Ireland

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Shifting risk onto migrants

1. Work Environment – Privatised

- No formal oversight (no HR, managers, structures)
- Work is private & publicly invisible (Christensen & Manthorpe 2016)
- Roles become blurred and personalised
- Increases dependency on employer/client (Christensen & Manthorpe 2016)
- Higher exposure to risk

• 2. Work Nature – Informal

- Self-employed (McDonald 2021)
- Work is informal and socially undervalued
- Seen as “help” rather than formal employment (Pulignano et al. 2023)
- Weak recognition & limited protections

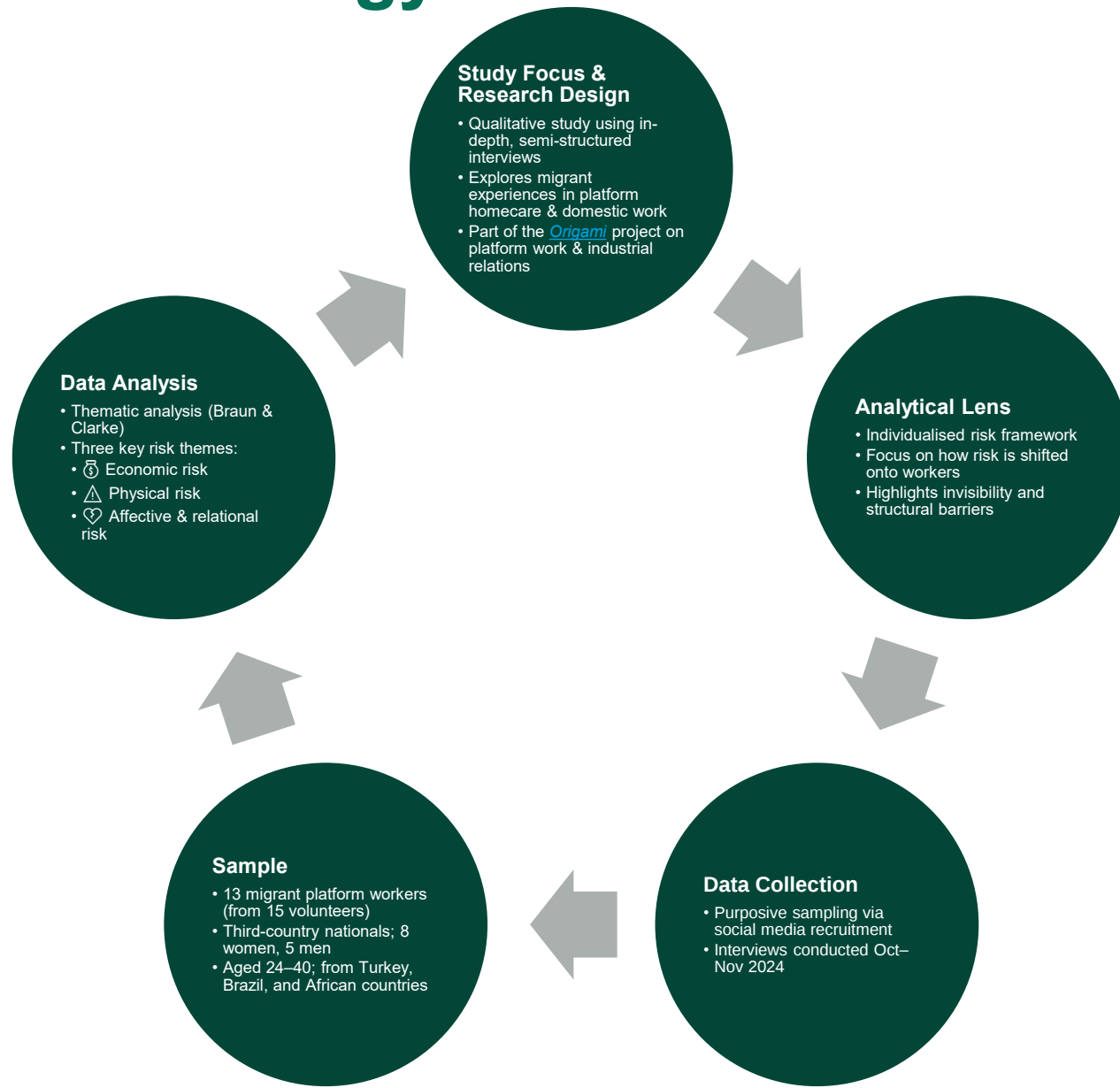
3. Worker Status – Layered Vulnerabilities

- Precarious migration/residency status
- Inequalities (race, gender, class)
- Limited access to stable employment
- Exclusion from social protection systems (Foley et al. 2024)
- Intersectional vulnerability (Crenshaw 1991)

Summary: Embedded Risk

- Private | Informal | Unregulated work
- High dependence on platforms & clients
- Greater exposure to abuse or inappropriate behaviour
- These conditions become **normalised**

Research Context & Methodology



More: Ryan, M. and Murphy, C. (Q4 2026) 'Risks in Ireland's Platform-Based Home Care and Domestic Work Sector: Migrant perspective', Platformizing Domestic Work. Work Organization and Worker Protection across Europe, Springer.

Economic Risk

 **Drivers:** Limited employment options & minimal entry requirements

"Most of them [are] people who can't pay tax like (...) they don't have visas (...). And then some families are kind enough to say, OK, like, I'll give you cash in hand."

 **Income Insecurity:** Irregular and insufficient work & unpaid labour (gaps, monitoring, cancellations)

"If you're not working, you're not getting paid. That's basically it. And sometimes you really have need for this money, especially when you're raising two kids alone."

 **Client-Driven Pay & Conditions:** Constant negotiation; pressure to accept low pay and unpaid extra tasks and post-job rate reductions

"You have to, like, negotiate with the client before you even meet. And the first client that messaged me wanted to hire me for half, actually, not even half less than that, less than half my pay rate."

 **Solo Agents:** Lack of clarity around rights and obligations & lack of protection

"The platform takes a percentage of your income for your tax. It pays your tax directly before you're able to withdraw the basic take-home for yourself."

 **Algorithmic Control of Earnings:** Visibility tied to ratings, availability, fast responses, accepting all gigs

"High-availability carers are subject to like change of job opportunities. So, your rejection offers kind of like pushes you down the list (...). Your visibility is kind of affected because of your response time."

"After you start like talking to a certain employer, and you don't agree to their terms, they leave you a bad review."

Physical Risk

⚠ **Unsafe Work Environments:** Private homes, unpredictable and unfamiliar settings; Exposure to violent or unpredictable client behaviour; Can lead to trauma and lasting psychological stress

"Sometimes I become very unsettled if I hear any strange movement around me (...). Sometimes, I'll tell myself this is not my home. This is a stranger's home, and I can't really say how safe it would be for me. So, I realised that the event kind of created a trauma in my head that I needed to manage when I'm working."

☐ **Health Risks:** Exposure to illness and contagious diseases

🦿 **Manual Strain & Injury:** Lifting patients or heavy objects without proper equipment; Lack of training or ergonomic support

"I have to basically move them, and that person doesn't even have like the right tools (...). There's a type of bed, that would help with that but it's not available there. So, I have to do all that work myself."

🚫 **Limited Protection & Reporting:** Workers often manage incidents themselves; Reporting mechanisms exist but are barely used by workers

Affective & Relational Risk

💔 **Emotional Strain & Attachment:** Strong empathy for clients leads to worry and emotional burden

"Most of the times, after I'm out, I do still struggle thinking about how they are doing, what may happen, if the next person is taking charge (...). [Are they] capable of managing them well?"

🧠 **Mental Health Pressures:** Risk of burnout, stress, and psychological fatigue & limited or unaffordable access to support

"When you are working, you really need that job. But the client isn't understanding, (...). The client is hell of a person, yelling at you, calling you names. You have no one to complain to. You have no one to share to. You can't even afford therapy."

⚖️ **Abuse & Discrimination:** Exposure to verbal abuse, racism, and hostility; Often endured to protect income and ratings

"Some clients can be so aggressive sometimes."

"I've had few instances where some people said they were not comfortable working with me because of my nationality, because of my skin colour."

⚖️ **Power Imbalances & Lack of Redress:** Dependence on clients for income and no platform oversight lead to weak bargaining power: Workers feel compelled to tolerate poor treatment

"Even when your client is kind of rude (...). You're the one who needs the job."

Conclusions

Risk Shift to Workers

- Platforms profit while avoiding responsibility
- Risks transferred onto vulnerable migrant workers (Rodríguez-Modroño et al. 2022)

Intensified Invisibilisation

- Platform work deepens social invisibility and marginalisation (Gruszka & Böhm 2022)
- Undermines prospects for decent work

Reinforced Precarity

- Sustains or worsens economic, physical, and relational insecurity
- Limits pathways out of precarious work

Individualisation of Risk

- Removal of protections shifts responsibility for risks onto workers (Pulignano et al. 2023)
- Digital visibility ≠ labour protection

Intersectional Marginalisation

- Migration status, race, and gender intensify vulnerability
- Structural barriers push workers further to the margins

Need for Structural Response

- Challenge commodification of migrant labour (van Doorn et al. 2023)
- Require intersectional, multi-level policy action:
 - Social protection, Immigration, Employment rights, Strengthen worker voice and participation



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Thank You!!!

Questions Welcome 😊

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