

Research Focus

This paper explores the mental health and recovery needs of mobile/rotational workers (such as fly-in fly-out workers) in remote workforce camps, particularly in Canada's resource extraction sectors. It investigates how the physical and social environments of camps, long shift cycles, and workplace cultures that stigmatize mental illness or help-seeking, can affect mental health outcomes and the potential for recovery.

Research Overview

The authors reviewed scholarly and grey literature and incorporated experiential insights from Canadian and international contexts, especially Alberta and Western Australia. They focused on how the camp environment, job structure, and organizational norms affect workers' mental health and substance use recovery. The analysis is based on the concept of "recovery capital," recognizing that health outcomes are shaped by environmental, social, and individual resources. It applies a recovery-oriented lens to evaluate how these elements either constrain or support individuals' efforts to manage mental health and substance-related challenges. Special focus is placed on the role of employers, camp operators, and policymakers in shaping healthier work environments.

Key Findings

- Rotational work is associated with increased psychological distress due to extended shifts, fatigue, family separation, and limited social connection.
- Camp infrastructure can contribute to distress. Poor sleep environments, inadequate food, and limited internet access intensifies stress, while facilities designed to increase quality of life and pro-social behaviour support well-being.
- Rotational schedules and camp remoteness make it hard to access timely, confidential care for workers that may need it the most.
- Peer dynamics and leadership matter: supportive leadership fosters recovery, while toxic leadership or workplace culture discourages vulnerability and help-seeking.
- Policy gaps persist as employers and camp operators often lack coordinated mental health strategies tailored to mobile work realities.
- Recovery capital can be built through thoughtful changes such as enhancing peer support, leadership training, camp design, and health programming. These can help foster a recovery-friendly environment.

CoRE Insights

- 1 **Remote Work Camps Pose Extra Risks:** Remote work camps can compound mental health risks through isolation, fatigue, stigma, and limited access to care; especially for individuals with, or at risk of, mental or substance-related disorders.
- 2 **Remote Work Sites can be Designed Better:** The design and operation of workforce camps are modifiable and can be optimized to support recovery capital through improved infrastructure, services, and peer support.
- 3 **Stigma can Hold Back Recovery:** Collaborative workplace cultures that support seeking help early for illness are essential to encourage resilience, productivity, and long-term recovery among rotational workers.

How to Take Action

Employers

- Adopt recovery-friendly policies that support mental health and reduce stigma, including clear procedures for accessing confidential care without fear of job loss.
- Train supervisors and frontline leaders in mental health literacy and compassionate communication to identify and respond to distress early.
- Offer flexible and accessible support services, such as rapidly accessible tele-mental health, mobile employee assistance programs (EAPs), and integration of risk mitigation strategies.
- Revise rotational work schedules to allow for sufficient rest and recovery between cycles, especially after high-stress periods.
- Offer educational supports and training to assist with stressors such as intermittent or temporary work conditions that may be experienced by mobile workers.
- Promote a culture of psychological health and safety.

Employees

- Engage with available mental health supports before issues begin to impact work and life.
- Prioritize self-care practices such as sleep hygiene, nutrition, and maintaining social connections during and between rotations.
- Foster peer-to-peer networks to break stigma and build solidarity among colleagues facing similar challenges.
- Participate in workplace mental health education to better understand the signs of distress and how to address them in a healthy way.
- Advocate for safer, recovery-supportive work environments through feedback channels, unions, or leadership engagement.

Camp Operators

- Designate and enforce drug- and alcohol-free camp environments whenever possible, including check-in searches and random room checks.
- Improve sleep environments by reducing noise, light exposure, and room-sharing to protect circadian rhythms and mental health.
- Offer nutritional food options to support physical and mental well-being.
- Ensure reliable and private internet access to allow workers to maintain contact with family, access virtual care, and reduce isolation.
- Design inclusive communal spaces that support social connection while offering private, quiet zones for recovery and downtime.

Links to Research Materials

[Facilitating Recovery for Mobile/Rotational Workers Working in Remote Locations](#)