

# Domestic workers alarmed by compulsory Hong Kong vaccine plan

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Hong Kong migrant worker groups on Saturday criticised plans to make coronavirus vaccines compulsory for all foreign domestic helpers, labelling the move "discriminatory and unjust".

Health officials said they were planning to roll out mandatory inoculations for the 370,000 domestic helpers in the city, mostly poorly-paid women from the Philippines and Indonesia.

Those wanting to apply for work visas—or renew their current ones—would need to show they had been vaccinated, officials said Friday.

If the plan goes ahead it would be the first time Hong Kong has directly tied working rights for foreigners to vaccines.

"This is clearly an act of discrimination and stigmatisation against migrant domestic workers," Dolores Balladares Pelaez, chair of United Filipinos in Hong Kong, told reporters.

Labour groups representing domestic workers said they were angered other foreigners—and locals working in environments such as [care homes](#)

—were not also required to get vaccinated.

"Again, we are being singled out and targeted," Pelaez added.

Health officials announced the vaccination plan after two domestic helpers were found to be infected with one of the more virulent strains of the [coronavirus](#).

All domestic workers have also been ordered to get tested over the coming days—a measure that did not extend to the families they work for.

Officials said domestic workers were deemed "high risk" both because they enter from overseas and often gather outdoors in large numbers on Sundays—their one day off in the week.

They also tend to take care of elderly and vulnerable people.

Hong Kong labour secretary Law Chi-kwong defended linking domestic [worker](#) visas to vaccination.

"Of course they can choose not to work in Hong Kong as they are not Hong Kong residents," Law said.

Eni Lestari, chair of the International Migrants Alliance, described such comments as "unfair and shocking".

"A lot of employers also do not get vaccinated because of health, personal or even political reasons, so they won't force their workers to be vaccinated," she told AFP.

Migrant groups also pointed out that wealthier foreign migrants—such as the city's white-collar financial workers—are not being forced to get vaccines.

Wealthy Hong Kong has secured ample vaccine doses but there is hesitancy to take them.

So far just 12 percent of the city's 7.5 million people have received one or more doses, a long way from the 60-70 percent needed for herd immunity.

Thanks to strict quarantine measures and economically painful social distancing rules, the city has kept infections to just over 11,000.

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