VMUN 2026

International Labour Organization

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Vancouver Model United Nations

The Twenty-Fifth Annual Session | January 23rd-25th, 2026

Dear Delegates,

My name is Jasmine Luk, and it is my honour to serve as the Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in this iteration of Vancouver Model United Nations. I am currently a senior at Little Flower Academy, and alongside my Chair Joshua Huh and Assistant Director Leon Hy, we would like to extend a warm welcome to ILO!

Ever since attending my first Model UN conference four years ago as a distressed delegate, I have been captivated by the fast pace and dynamic nature of committees. From chaotic note passing to intense table banging, Model UN has not only allowed high schoolers to engage in necessary and spirited debates, but also broadened my perspectives, honed my speaking skills, and helped me build meaningful friendships and confidence. It is through these fulfilling experiences that I have been inspired to contribute to diplomacy. I hope this committee will strive to create an engaging, inclusive, and enriching experience for all delegates.

The ILO places a strong emphasis on balancing the interests of governments, employers, and workers; thus, I implore all delegates to actively share their perspectives. Whether it's raising your placard to speak or contributing to debate in unmoderated caucuses, diplomatic efforts will be essential to the committee's success. At VMUN 2026, the ILO will explore two timely topics: *Artificial Intelligence and Labour Rights* and *Regulating the Gig Economy*.

I wish you the best in your conference preparations and look forward to meeting all of you soon. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at ilo@vmun.com. On behalf of your Dais team, welcome to ILO at VMUN 2026!

Sincerely,

Jasmine Luk
ILO Director

Position Paper Policy

What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For ILO, position papers, although strongly recommended, are not required. However, delegates who wish to be considered for an award must submit position papers.

Formatting

Position papers should:

— Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee

— Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins

— Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders

— Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research

(not included in the 1-page limit)

Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by **January 12, 2026, at 23:59 PT**. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email. Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award. The email address for this committee is ilo@vmun.com.

Artificial Intelligence and Labour Rights

Overview

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially within automation, is revolutionizing the future of employment. From opaque algorithmic hiring systems to real-time employee behavioural monitoring, digital technologies and generative AI tools are gradually impacting the workplace. Yet, the AI industry is considerably unregulated, and social systems have not adapted to its accelerated growth. While these innovations correlate directly with increased productivity and the creation of new jobs, they also pose significant challenges such as job displacement, algorithmic bias, inequalities and workers' rights.[1]

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and other international organisations have acknowledged the significant impact of technology and artificial intelligence, especially within the context of employment and work. Historically, legislations such as 1944 Declaration of Philadelphia and the 1984 Human Resources Recommendation established the fundamental principles of economic justice and rights of workers, aligning with ILO's previous commitment to social justice and workers' protections during technological transitions.[2] Ongoing efforts are evolving in scope and purpose, such as the 2019 Commission on the Future of Work, focusing on a human-centered approach on AI; the EU AI act, emphasizing the balance between privacy and security; and UNESCO's ethics of AI Recommendation, highlighting the importance of fairness, transparency and accountability. These initiatives stress the importance of global engagement and cooperation in shaping an inclusive and adaptive world of work.

Algorithmic and AI backed infrastructures are restructuring labour systems—sometimes with adverse effects—particularly within vulnerable economies. Pivotal issues such as data privacy, growing global inequality, infrastructure, and access to AI education must be addressed in order to ensure the protections of human rights worldwide.[3] The ILO can lead efforts to promote digital equity, support global reskilling, and ensure worker protections in an increasingly automated economy.[4]

Timeline

June 8, 1944 — The ILO adopts the Declaration of Philadelphia, reaffirming its role in ensuring social justice during industrial and technological transitions.[5] The Declaration acts as a renewed pledge to the ideals of peace,

[1] "The Work of the Future: Building Better Jobs in an Age of Intelligent Machines," MIT Task Force on the Work of the Future, 2020, https://workofthefuture.mit.edu/research-post/the-work-of-the-future-building-better-jobs-in-an-age-of-intelligent-machines/.
[2] International Labour Organization, "Declaration of Philadelphia," June 8, 1944, https://www.ilo.org/philadelphia; and International Labour Organization, "Recommendation No. 195 on Human Resources Development," 1984, https://www.ilo.org.
[3] International Labour Organization and Poland's National Research Institute, "Global Index of Occupational Exposure to Generative AI," May 2025; OECD AI Policy Observatory, https://oecd.ai/en/.
[4] Gilbert F. Houngbo, "ILO DG Calls for Human-Centred AI Approach," February 2025, https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_XXX; ILO Virtual Observatory on AI and Work, https://www.ilo.org/ai-observatory.
[5] "ILO Declaration of Philadelphia," International Labour Organisation, May 10, 1944, https://webapps.ilo.org/static/english/inwork/cb-policy-guide/declarationofPhiladelphia1944.pdf.

development and social justice.[6] As AI accelerates shifts in the labour market, often accompanied by weakened worker protections, the declaration's principles remain crucial in safeguarding human rights amid rapid technological transformations.

August 19, 1964 — The United States Congress passes the National Commission on Technology, Automation, and Economic Progress, which studies the social impacts of technological advancements and inventions on the economy and workforce, as well as proposes solutions for challenges and opportunities.[7]

1984 — U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) begins the project to fund the first DNA-sequencing automation prototype, demonstrating early government support for biotech automation.[8]

June 17, 2004 — The ILO adopts the Recommendation No.195 on Human Resources Development in response to the rising automation of the workforce.[9] It urges member states to prepare and provide capacity training to workers for technological change.

April 22, 2017 — The United Kingdom passes the Digital Economy Act 2017, strengthening the digital landscape through regulations on electronic communications infrastructure, data sharing, and intellectual property protection.[10]

May 20, 2020 — The ILO publishes policy "Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond," addressing accelerating digitization, automation, and remote work policies. Regulations on teleworking, digital labour rights, and digital inclusion are addressed.[11]

June 21, 2021 — The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) publishes the report on the implementation of its AI Principles, making it the first intergovernmental standard on AI in the world. It sets a foundation for reputable and human-centered AI for regulations to come.[12]

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[6] "The Declaration of Philadelphia: 1944 – 2004 / François Agostini – ILO Former Officials," The Section of Former Officials of the ILO, ILO Staff Union, July 17, 2019, https://anciens-bit-ilo.org/en/2019/07/17/the-declaration-of-philadelphia-1944-2004-francois-agostini.

[7] Bill Signing, "The American Presidenct Project," UC Santa Barbara, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-upon-signing-bill-creating-the-national-commission-technology-automation-and.

[8] Robert, Mullan Cook-Deegan, "The Human Genome Project: The Formation of Federal Policies in the United States, 1986-1990," National Library of Medicine, United States Government, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK234203/.

[9] "R195 - Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004," Information System on International Labour Standards, International Labour Organisation, June 17, 2004, https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:12100:13636359114766:12100:NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312533:.

[10] "Get in on the Act Digital Economy Act 2017," Local Government Association, May 2017, https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/digital-economy-act-2017-get-act.

[11] Lorraine Charles, Shuting Xia and Adam P. Coutts, "Digitalization and Employment, A Review," International Labour Organisation, 2022, https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_854353.pdf.

[12] "The state of implementation of the OECD AI Principles four years on," OECD Artificial Intelligence Papers, No.3, OECD Publishing, October 27, 2023, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/the-state-of-implementation-of-the-oecd-ai-principles-four-years-on_835641c9-en.html.

May 27, 2023 — The ILO and the UN releases a joint policy brief on digital wage payments, which are wages paid into a bank or mobile account or a prepaid card.[13] This policy shows promise in benefits for workers, employers, and governments if digital payments are designed and integrated responsibly.

Aug 1, 2024 — The EU AI Act enters into force, becoming the world's first binding AI regulation based on risk tiers.[14] The Act enforces new compliance obligations for employers, ensuring AI systems used in the workplace are transparent, monitored, and trained. Strict penalties for violations of the act are also imposed.[15]

October 30, 2023 — U.S. President Biden signs Executive Order 14110 on Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy AI, setting federal governance principles on the subject matter.[16] It requires numerous federal agencies to create dedicated "Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer" positions within their organizations.[17]

July 18, 2024 — The African Union Executive Council, composed of 55 African states, approves the AU AI Continental Strategy.[18] The policy aims to create awareness of the risks of AI use and serves as a guide for African nations developing and adopting AI regulations.[19]

September 25, 2024 — The ILO launches a virtual Observatory on AI and Work in the Digital Economy. It becomes the leading international knowledge hub on the world-of-work and AI, increasing the volume and profile of evidence, analysis, and dialogue in the field.[20]

February 10, 2025 — The ILO Director-General, Gilbert F. Houngbo, calls for a human-centered approach to Artificial Intelligence, stating that AI stands to have a net positive impact on employment.[21] He also notes that women are more likely to be affected by automation than men, which threatens to widen the current gender pay gap.[22]

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[13] Ibid.
[14] "High-level summary of the AI Act," EU Artificial Intelligence Act, Future of Institute, February 2024, https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/high-level-summary/.
[15] Andre Zimmermann, Marianna Urban, Jonas Banse, "The EU AI Act: What Employers Should Know," Orrick, September 13, 2024, https://www.orrick.com/en/Insights/2024/09/The-EU-AI-Act-What-Employers-Should-Know.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Mercy King'ori, "The African Union's continental AI strategy: Data protection and governance laws set to play a key role in AI regulation," Future of Privacy Forum, November 18, 2024, https://fpf.org/blog/global/the-african-unions-continental-ai-strategy-data-protection-and-governance-laws-set-to-play-a-key-role-in-ai-regulation/.
[19] Ibid.
[20] "Launch of the ILO Observatory on AI and Work in the Digital Economy," International Labour Organisation, September 25, 2024, https://live.ilo.org/event/launch-ilo-observatory-ai-and-work-digital-economy-2024-09-25.
[21] "ILO Director-General calls for placing decent work at the heart of automation and AI adoption," International Labour Organisation, February 18, 2025, https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo-director-general-calls-placing-decent-work-heart-automation-and-ai.
[22] Ibid.

May 20, 2025 — A joint study between the ILO and Poland's National Research Institute releases a Global Index of Occupational Exposure to Generative AI.[23] It finds that one in four jobs worldwide is susceptible to automation from generative artificial intelligence, though it emphasizes that transformation, rather than outright replacement, is the most likely outcome.[24]

Historical Analysis

AI is not the first phenomenon to disrupt the labour market in such a volatile manner; major technological transformations, beginning with the First Industrial Revolution (1760-1840), transformed labour and workplaces, bringing both opportunities and challenges for workers. It introduced mechanized labour and prompted early labour rights movements.[25] While urban growth, innovation, rising wages, and new industries emerged, harsh working conditions, child labour, overcrowding, and job displacement also surfaced.[26] Workers formed informal trade unions to improve wages, protections, and conditions through collective bargaining. Though founded formally in 1919 through the Treaty of Versailles, the ILO also emerged in response to such injustices rooted in the First Industrial Revolution.[27]

The Third Industrial Revolution (1950-2000), also known as the Digital Revolution, was marked by the shift from mechanical electronic technology to digital electronics. Automation was gradually adopted by almost all industries throughout the development period of computers and early robotics.[28] Automatic mechanisms and robots replaced simple yet repetitive tasks, which then led to the automation of entire production processes. Advanced communication protocols, such as email instant messaging platforms and cloud-based systems, enabled faster data handling, increasing average efficiency.[29]

However, automation also resulted in job displacement in various sectors, including the industries of manufacturing and administration, and demanded a shift in skill acquisition from society. Workers who lacked computer literacy were more likely to experience job displacement, highlighting the need for retraining and education to adapt to the evolving job market.[30] Businesses and societal structures pivoted to the rise of personal computers, the internet, and telecommunications infrastructure, which collectively transformed productivity, communication, and access to information. In response to these shifts, the ILO strengthened its efforts to promote equitable access to technological progress, notably through initiatives including the 2001 World Employment Report, while continuing to promote social justice and mitigate negative impacts on workers.[31]

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[23] Ibid.
[24] "One in four jobs at risk being transformed by GenAI, new ILO-NASK Global Index show," International Labour Organization, May 20, 2025, https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/one-four-jobs-risk-being-transformed-genai-new-ilo%E2%80%93nask-global-index-shows.
[25] James Chen, "Industrial Revolution: Definition, History, Pros, and Cons," Investopedia, May 31, 2025, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/i/industrial-revolution.asp.
[26] "Industrialization, Labour and Life," National Geographic, https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/industrialization-labor-and-life/.
[27] Leguey-Feilleux, Jean-Robert, "International Labour Organisation is Established," EBSCO, 2023, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/diplomacy-and-international-relations/international-labor-organization.
[28] Antonio Armenta, "A History of Industrial Revolutions and How They've Impacted Manufacturing," Control.com, August 5, 2021, https://control.com/technical-articles/a-history-of-industrial-revolutions-and-how-theyve-impacted-manufacturing/.
[29] Ibid.
[30] "The stages of industrial revolution and its impact on Jobs," Accountancy SA, February 26, 2020, https://www.accountancysa.org.za/the-stages-of-industrial-revolution-and-its-impact-on-jobs/.
[31] Ibid.

In the 21st century, algorithmic management began to emerge, with AI replacing not only manual tasks but also cognitive functions, including hiring, scheduling, and performance tracking. Algorithmic management, a part of the aforementioned cognitive function mechanization, refers to algorithmic systems that process user data to organize, assign, monitor, supervise, and evaluate work.[32] It uses data-driven rules embedded in software to perform human-resources-related tasks, often with limited human intervention. Computer models are able to predict potential user characteristics, including their identities, demographic attributes, preferences, and even likely future behaviours.[33] For example, Amazon warehouse workers are monitored through algorithmic systems that track performance metrics such as task duration and productivity rates.[34] These systems evaluate workers against predetermined benchmarks, and can automatically issue warnings or terminations, often with a lack of human oversight. Moreover, continuous employee surveillance has also been highly associated with psychological distress, negative effects and impaired well-being.[35] Constant monitoring can induce a higher sense of scrutiny, increasing stress and anxiety. Workers are increasingly reluctant to voice concerns or share suggestions in fear of their digital footprint.[36]

Nonetheless, driven by concerns related to security, quality control, and efficiency, many employers implement AI-backed performance monitoring systems. However, such systems have been found to replicate—and in some cases amplify—existing societal biases, disproportionately disadvantaging certain groups.[37] "Black box" or non-transparent algorithmic decisions, often driven by machine learning, are difficult to interpret, even for AI developers.[38] The steps the algorithm takes to arrive at its conclusions remain hidden, indicative of a black box.[39] In the workplace, this phenomenon extends beyond the court, as algorithms hold a strong influence on hiring, performance, and termination decisions. Inaccurate or biased outcomes may form as a result, disproportionately disadvantage vulnerable groups of workers, such as people of colour.[40] This potential lack of oversight may leave members of society without meaningful explanation or reasoning when they are evaluated or fired.[41]

[32] "Algorithmic management in the workplace," International Labour Organisation, https://www.ilo.org/algorithmic-management-workplace.
[33] Brookings. "Algorithmic Bias Detection and Mitigation: Best Practices and Policies to Reduce Consumer Harms." https://www.brookings.edu/articles/algorithmic-bias-detection-and-mitigation-best-practices-and-policies-to-reduce-consumer-harms/.
[34] "'You feel like you're in prison': workers claim Amazon's surveillance violates labor law," The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/may/21/amazon-surveillance-lawsuit-union.
[35] Glavin, Paul, Alex Bierman, and Scott Schieman. "Private Eyes, They See Your Every Move: Workplace Surveillance and Worker Well-Being," Social Currents 11, no. 4 (2024): 327–45. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11300163/.
[36] Thomas Costa, "'Why do I feel like somebody's watching me?' Workplace surveillance can impact more than just productivity," U.S. Government Accountability Office, October 29, 2024, https://www.gao.gov/blog/why-do-i-feel-somebodys-watching-me-workplace-surveillance-can-impact-more-just-poductivity.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Hassija, Vikas, Vinay Chamola, Atmesh Mahapatra, et al. "Interpreting Black-Box Models: A Review on Explainable Artificial Intelligence." Cognitive Computation 16, no. 1 (2024): 45–74. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12559-023-10179-8.
[39] Tsang, Daisy. "White Box vs. Black Box Algorithms in Machine Learning." ActiveState, July 19, 2023, https://www.activestate.com/blog/white-box-vs-black-box-algorithms-in-machine-learning/.
[40] Ibid.
[41] C. Michael Mitchell, John, C. Murray, "The changing workplaces review, an agenda for workplace rights. Final report," May 2017, https://files.ontario.ca/books/mol_changing_workplace_report_eng_2_0.pdf.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the deployment of artificial intelligence and digital technologies across various industries, especially in healthcare and public sentiment analysis.[42] Specifically, AI was implemented in the areas of diagnostics classification, vaccine development, and resource allocation.[43] Sentiment-based analysis tools also helped track public opinion, misinformation, and crisis trends to inform policy and communication strategies.[44] The widespread adoption of workplace productivity software and monitoring tools that tracked employees through screenshots, location data, and focus time analytics also became prevalent. Considering past technological disruptions in labour, these developments serve as a reminder to carefully study previous transformations to guide responsible and just integration of AI into the world of work.

Past UN/International Involvement

ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work

The ILO Global Commission highlighted the unprecedented extent to which algorithmic management and artificial intelligence were changing the workplace and called for a human-centered approach to managing this technological transition.[45] This has been one of ILO's main agendas, ensuring workers' rights and dignity are at the forefront of technological transformations.[46] The commission recommends guaranteeing universal access to lifelong learning, ensuring that all workers have the opportunity to acquire the skills required to adapt to rapid technological change. It also calls for the proactive management of technological transitions by leveraging innovation to create accessible work opportunities and establish international governance standards, particularly for digital labour platforms. Lastly, it encourages reshaping business incentives by promoting long-term investment strategies and emphasizing sustainability across business models and operations.[47] The report notes that artificial intelligence, automation, and robotics will lead to job loss as skills become obsolete. However, these same technological advances, along with the greening—the shift toward environmentally sustainable industries—of economies, will create millions of jobs if new opportunities are seized.[48] Nonetheless, this commission, especially its human centered agenda, has faced criticism for favouring employer perspectives regarding deregulation and national policy.[49] Critics also note that the policy fails to recognize the imbalance of power; for instance, refusing to consent to the collection of certain data may lead to job loss.[50] Overall, while the commission outlines a vision for inclusive and sustainable technological change, its implementation is prompting growing dissent pertaining to power dynamics and worker protections in the digital age.

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[42] Ding, Xiaojun, Bingxing Shang, Caifeng Xie, Jiayi Xin, and Feng Yu. "Artificial Intelligence in the COVID-19 Pandemic: Balancing Benefits and Ethical Challenges in China's Response," Humanities and Social Sciences Communications 12, no. 1 (2025): 1–19. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-025-04564-x.

[43] Zhoulin Chang, Zhiqing Zhan, Zifan Zhao, Zhixuan You, Yang Liu, Zhihong Yan, Yong Fu, Wenhua Liang, Lei Zhao 7, "Application of artificial intelligence in COVID-19 medical area: a systematic review," National Library of Medicine, December 13, 2021, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8743418/.

[44] Ibid.

[45] "Human-centred approach to increasing workplace productivity, evidence from Asia," International Labour Organisation, 2023 https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@inst/documents/publication/wcms_906606.pdf.

[46] "Work for a brighter future," Global Commission on the Future of Work, International Labour Organisation, January 22, 2019, https://www.ilo.org/publications/work-brighter-future.

[47] "Global commission on the future of work" International Labour Organisation, January 22, 2019, https://www.ilo.org/publications/work-brighter-future.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Silva, Vicente. "The ILO and the Future of Work: The Politics of Global Labour Policy," Global Social Policy 22, no. 2 (2022): 341–58. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/14680181211004853.

[50] IndustriALL. "REPORT: The Future of Work, and IndustriALL Global Union," May 21, 2019, https://www.industriall-union.org/report-the-future-of-work-and-industriall-global-union.

ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work

Adopted at the 108th International Labour Conference, the ILO Centenary Declaration is a concise but crucial statement that addresses challenges and opportunities for the future of work.[51] It covers topics varying from technology to climate change, calling for demographic shifts, education, and reskilling.[52] It reiterates the importance of a human-centred approach, meaning investment in jobs, skills, social protection and supporting gender equality.[53] The declaration emphasizes the need to act with urgency to seize the opportunities and challenges to shape a future that is fair, inclusive, and productive.[54] However, this declaration has faced criticisms regarding its neglect of the informal economy as it emphasises skill development in formal job sectors irrelevant to informal workers, further widening the gap between the two labour markets.[55] Dissent regarding the lack of emphasis on the challenges faced by specific groups of workers, such as women, migrant workers, and refugees, also surfaced—particularly from civil society organisations, who criticize the ILO for not adequately addressing these workers' unique vulnerabilities.[56]

UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI

The first global standard for AI ethics, the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, was unanimously adopted by UNESCO's 194 member states. The protection of human rights and dignity is the cornerstone of this recommendation. Its extensive range of topics encourage policymakers to embody values within topics such as data governance, environment ecosystems, gender, education, research, as well as health and social wellbeing.[57] However, the legislation is not legally binding, leading to challenges regarding effective enforcement globally. Specifically, governments with limited resources may lack the financial and technical capacity for the implementation of this policy, while others may value economic growth over compliance for ethics. Implementing this policy across widespread sectors can be both timely and costly. Lack of transparency of AI systems also raises challenges to understand how decisions are made and to identify ethical issues.[58] While the UNESCO recommendation on the Ethics of AI provides a strong ethical framework for further action, it faces challenges to global enforcement and accountability due to its non-binding nature.

The European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act

The European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act is the world's first comprehensive AI law. It establishes a risk-based AI classification system emphasizing worker protection through employer obligations and AI supply chain regulations.[59] The act ensures that previously high-risk AI tools used in job recruitment, such as resume screeners

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Greg Vines, "Five Questions about the ILO Centenary Declaration," 108th Session of the International Labour Conference, International Labour Organisation, July 1, 2019, https://www.ilo.org/resource/article/five-questions-about-ilo-centenary-declaration.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Global, the. "Where Is the ILO Going with the Centenary Declaration? • The Global," The Global, December 10, 2019, https://theglobal.blog/2019/12/10/where-is-the-ilo-going-with-the-centenary-declaration/.

[56] "Statement of the International Catholic Migration Commission during the plenary session of the International Labour Conference (ILC)" International Labour Conference, June 14, 2019, https://www.icmc.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/190614-icmc-statement-ilo-contribution-civil-society-decent-work-migrants-refugees.pdf.

[57] Ibid.

[58] "Artificial Intelligence: examples of ethics dilemmas," UNESCO, April 21, 2023, https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics/cases.

[59] Zahra Yusifli, "Labour Rights and the EU Artificial Intelligence Act: How to Get Away with High-Risk AI," University of Luxembourg, January 15, 2025, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5098359.

and automated interview scorers, comply with strict obligations and regular monitoring through phased enforcement, under which requirements are gradually implemented in stages to allow time for compliance.[60] Additionally, the use of AI to infer emotions or sensitive traits from behavioural or biometric data was restricted in the workspace.[61] Despite its positive focus on AI ethics and human rights, critics argue that the EU AI Act's strict obligations may disproportionately affect smaller businesses as they often lack the technical resources, legal expertise, and financial capacity to meet compliance standards.[62] It is important to keep in mind that this regulation is only binding for EU countries, meaning its legal obligations apply solely within EU member states. Regardless, its influence has expanded beyond Europe, inspiring new frameworks such as the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work.

Current Situation

Automation and Skill Disparity

Technological change has reshaped the labour market long before automation, but the pace and potential labour market disruption of AI development is largely without precedent.[63] Research by McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) shows that current technologies could fully automate less than five percent of the global economy.[64] There is growing polarization of labour-market opportunities between high and low skill jobs, which is resulting in youth underemployment, stagnating household incomes, and income inequality.[65] While highly skilled workers stand to benefit from working with technology and AI, low-skilled workers—despite improved output and productivity—may face wage pressure, given the oversupply of labour in that sector.[66] Currently, the ILO and OECD have launched reskilling programs, such as the *Reskilling 4 Employment Programme*, which has re-skilled thousands of workers across Europe through a platform that matches learners with employers.[67] Yet, developing countries may struggle as training initiatives are underfunded, and access for vulnerable groups are limited.

Employment and Opportunities

Hiring websites, such as LinkedIn, are increasing transparency and efficiency in labour markets. Its powerful search capabilities and screening algorithms minimize the duration of time for which individuals are involuntarily unemployed.[68] In 2024, the global market size reached $13.2 billion USD while ameliorating many persistent issues including underemployment and skill misalignment.[69] Moreover, these technologies could improve the limited access to formal job opportunities individuals face in developing regions—with an estimated 540 million people benefitting from online talent platforms, including 230 million people who could secure employment

[60] "What employers should Know," https://www.orrick.com/en/Insights/2024/09/The-EU-AI-Act-What-Employers-Should-Know.
[61] "Article 5: Prohibited AI Practices," EU Artificial Intelligence Act, February 2, 2025, https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/article/5/.
[62] Giuseppe Ciccomasacolo, "First-Ever AI Regulation: EU's AI Act Pros and Cons," CCN, December 11, 2023, https://www.ccn.com/analysis/eu-ai-act-pros-cons/.
[63] Tahsin Mehdi, Marc Frenette, "Exposure to artificial intelligence in Canadian jobs: Experimental estimates," Economic and Social reports, Statistics Canada, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2024009/article/00004-eng.htm.
[64] Ibid.
[65] James Manyika, "Technology, jobs, and the future of work," Mckinsey Global Institute, May 24, 2017, https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/technology-jobs-and-the-future-of-work.
[66] Ibid.
[67] "Reskilling 4 Employment," OECD, October 8, 2024, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/providing-local-actors-with-case-studies-evidence-and-solutions-places_eb108047-en/reskilling-4-employment_8edec592-en.html.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

quicker and 200 million part-time or inactive workers who could acquire additional working hours through freelancing.[70] Countries with persistently high unemployment and low labour force participation rates, such as Greece, Spain, and South Africa, could benefit the most from this development. By contrast, improved automation has less potential in countries including China and Japan on account of their low unemployment and subsequent high costs and barriers of adoption.[71]

In a US survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation, in partnership with Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and the New York Times, researchers found that about 75 percent of stay-at-home mothers would be likely to work if they had flexible work arrangements.[72] This suggests that AI-powered hiring tools and online recruitment platforms could decrease systemic barriers, creating opportunities for more women to enter the workforce. Automation can reduce time spent on job searches and improve access. Overall, these tools may not increase efficiency but also expand workforce participation. Digital technology can also support new forms of entrepreneurship, as workers in small businesses can benefit from higher income earning opportunities. A new category of knowledge-enabled jobs will emerge as machines embed intelligence that less-skilled workers can access.[73]

Although it poses the threat of employment replacement, automation is creating work in new industries. 33 percent of jobs created by automation in the United States in the past 25 years were positions that previously did not exist.[74] Moreover, a 2011 study by McKinsey's Paris office reported that the Internet had replaced 500,000 jobs in France in the previous 15 years, yet its impact had created 1.2 million new job opportunities.

Cross-Border Migration Tensions

Migration and its effect on domestic employment have become a sensitive political issue in many advanced economies. Migration boosts global productivity, but can pose a threat to the job security of non-migrant workers.[75] In 2015, approximately 247 million people were international migrants, a number that has almost tripled in the past 50 years.[76] This movement of skilled and educated workers, such as doctors, engineers, and researchers, from low and middle income countries to wealthier nations is often referred to as 'brain drain'.[77] This often occurs as workers seek better job opportunities, higher wages or greater political stability abroad. Consequently, low and middle income countries suffer from labour and talent shortages, further widening the gap between developing and developed economies.[78] Migration boosts productivity but raises political and economic tensions, especially as skilled workers leave vulnerable economies, deepening global inequality.

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[70] James Manyika, Susan Lund, Kelsey Robinson, John Valentino, and Richard Dobbs, "Connecting talent with opportunity in the digital age," Mckinsey Global Institute, June 1, 2015, https://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/connecting-talent-with-opportunity-in-the-digital-age.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Liya Palagashvili, "Consequences of Restricting Independent Work and the Gig Economy," Mercatus Center, George Mason University, November 19, 2022, https://www.mercatus.org/research/policy-briefs/consequences-restricting-independent-work-and-gig-economy.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Petronella Képes, "The Effects of Migration on Germany," Research Association for Interdisciplinary Studies, https://rais.education/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/026PK.pdf.
[77] Catia Batista, Daniel Han, Dean Yang, "Brain drain or brain gain? Effect of high-skilled international emigration on origin countries," Economics, Science, https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.adr8861.
[78] Ibid.

AI Job Displacement in Developing Economies

According to the World Economic Forum, 170 million new jobs, often high-skill and tech based, are predicted to be created this decade.[79] At the same time, the rise of AI-powered tools threatens to automate as many jobs as it creates, particularly for entry-level jobs that dominate developing economies.[80] Bloomberg, an American conglomerate, reports that AI could replace more than 50 percent of the tasks performed by market research analysts and sales representatives relative to just around 15 percent for their managerial counterparts.[81] Additionally, workers in developing economies often lack access to training and education programs, such as coding courses and internet infrastructure, to make the transition into a specific AI related occupation. Developing economies also make use of part-time employment, often relying on gig work and freelancing, such as Uber and Lyft. Concerningly, this industry is part of a vulnerable informal sector increasingly at risk of automation. In contrast, nations with advanced AI capabilities are pulling further ahead, deepening the global divide.

The possibility of an economy which heavily leverages AI is hindered by the disparity of skilled technology labour between developing and developed nations.[82] Additionally, due to decreased investment, inadequate digital infrastructure, limited access to education, and weak social security, developing nations may be disproportionally affected by the global adoption of AI and automation. Limited awareness about the impacts and effects of AI can also hinder proactive engagement with new technologies and training programs.[83] Moreover, women, especially in rural communities, face additional challenges to access digital literacy and workplace participation, further exacerbating this gap.[84]

Generative Artificial Intelligence

Generative artificial intelligence, also known as Generative AI, is a subfield of Artificial Intelligence that analyses previous data, identifies patterns, and then uses generative models to create new content and ideas, including conversations, stories, images, or videos.[85] Some examples of Generative AI are ChatGPT, Perplexity and Gemini. In addition to the aforementioned capabilities of automation, Generative AI is also able to replicate knowledge-based tasks, such as email drafting, programming, and content creation. Goldman Sachs reports that Generative AI could raise the global GDP by 7 percent, and estimates that 300 million full-time jobs globally could be affected by Generative AI tools.[86] While its advertised boost in productivity allows workers to focus on more cognitively

[79] Till Leopold, "Future of Jobs Report 2025: The jobs of the future—and the skills you need to get them," World Economic Forum, January 8, 2025, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/01/future-of-jobs-report-2025-jobs-of-the-future-and-the-skills-you-need-to-get-them/.
[80] "How AI is reshaping the career ladder, and other trends in jobs and skills on Labour Day," Jobs and the future of work, World Economic Forum, April 30, 2025, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/04/ai-jobs-international-workers-day/.
[81] Shivani Tiwari, "AI and the layoff wave: is there workforce entering an era of permanent disruption?" Entrepreneur India, May 19, 2025, https://www.entrepreneur.com/en-in/news-and-trends/ai-and-the-layoff-wave-is-the-workforce-entering-an-era-of/491844.
[82] Jonathan Kenigson, "Disparities in the AI Economy: Development Challenges in Global Technology Access," The AI Journal, April 23, 2025, https://aijourn.com/tag/ai-economics/.
[83] "Towards an Inclusive Human-Centered Approach for New Challenges in the World of Work," G7 Research Group, University of Toronto, September 13, 2024, https://www.g7.utoronto.ca/employment/2024-declaration.html.
[84] Tania Saba, Anne-Marie Hubert, Myriam Bernet, "Shaping Human Capital Standards: Exploring the Intersections of the Future of Work and Artificial Intelligence," Obvia, University of Montreal, January 2025, https://www.obvia.ca/sites/obvia.ca/files/ressources/202412-OBV-Pub-HumanCapital_FuturWorkAI-EN_0.pdf.
[85] "What is Generative AI?" AWS, https://aws.amazon.com/what-is/generative-ai/.
[86] "Generative AI could raise global GDP by 7%" Artificial Intelligence, Goldman Sachs, April 5, 2023, https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/articles/generative-ai-could-raise-global-gdp-by-7-percent.

advanced tasks, Generative AI may generate inaccurate, biased, or plagiarized content, leading to misinformation and lack of accountability.[87] Although it has not currently caused widespread replacement, Generative AI has started reshaping employment expectations in media, customer service, and marketing. Policies similar to the EU AI Act address the rise of Generative AI through requiring systems to disclose AI generated material; similar action will need to be taken internationally to avoid the societal risks of utilizing and depending on inaccurate content.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

The key to leveraging the benefits of AI while mitigating its negative impacts depends on proactive policy measures, investment in education, and commitment to ethical AI implementation.

Global Reskilling and Upskilling Programs

Providing workers with the necessary technological skills in an AI-driven economy can turn unemployment risk into career advancement opportunities.[88] The rise of Generative AI coincides with the need for AI skills training; specifically, this would entail basic digital literacy, cybersecurity awareness, and coding skills.[89] In addition, governments, especially those in developing nations and in high-displacement economies, could be encouraged to invest in accessible AI training and education through digital upskilling programs.[90] The ILO can encourage accessible STEM training and reskilling opportunities in partnership with tech companies and governments. A global multilateral fund could be established, providing grants for internet access and literacy to assist developing economies in bridging AI in developing nations. Policy makers could develop government-led initiatives focusing on digital literacy skills across society.[91] Consequently, companies implementing AI technologies would build resilient workforces by prioritizing upskilling efforts, both to retain valuable employees and to support the transition into AI-dominated infrastructure. This solution promotes inclusive workforce adaption and equips workers with AI-related skills. Furthermore, AI can benefit education in rural areas, where chatbots can supplement pre-existing learning systems by providing tutoring support, answering student questions, and offering accessible personalized practice.[92] This can assist in bridging teacher shortages and expand access to education.[93]

However, developing countries may face infrastructure gaps or cultural misalignment in Western-led training models. Non-western aligned nations may prefer to implement local frameworks as compared to externally imposed models. Instead, regional cooperation, or domestic-driven programs may be preferred.

[87] "Generative Artificial Intelligence: Using GenAi Responsibly," Research Guides, https://libguides.usask.ca/gen_ai/using.
[88] Ali Zarifhonarvar, "Economics of ChatGPT: A Labor Market View on the Occupational Impact of Artificial Intelligence," Journal of Electronic Business & Digital Economics 3, no. 2 (December 5, 2023): 100–116, https://doi.org/10.1108/JEBDE-10-2023-0021.
[89] Matt Crabtree, "Reskilling and Upskilling in the Age of AI: Challenges and Opportunities For Organizations," Data Camp, July 25, 2024, https://www.datacamp.com/blog/reskilling-and-upskilling-in-the-age-of-ai#.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Dakar, Nairobi and São Paulo, "Could AI transform life in developing countries?" The Economist, January 25, 2024, https://www.economist.com/briefing/2024/01/25/could-ai-transform-life-in-developing-countries.
[93] Ibid.

Ethical AI Frameworks and Regulations

While existing policies such as the OECD AI Principles (2019) and UNESCO's AI Ethics Recommendation (2021) set a strong foundation to transition into an AI-integrated economy, the voluntary nature of these policies signifies that the ILO could develop a labour-specific and ethical AI framework with a strong focus on Generative AI.[94] An emphasis could be placed on increased transparency through human oversight to reduce malicious bias, especially with software that affects hiring decisions. For example, requiring full disclosure regarding workplace AI tools could be established to protect worker authority and promote company accountability. Workers would be notified if automated tools are in place and would be able to access explanations of both the outcome and operation information. Although this may add regulatory burdens, especially for small businesses, governments could provide funding and resources to start ups in their early stages for support.

Nations have varying opinions regarding regulation compliance, especially the distinction between binding or non-binding legislation. The ILO can build on the EU AI act by developing an international regulation that adopts a risk-tiered policy for AI used in the workplace. Establishing an international standard may provide clarity and restrict or ban high-risk AI, including emotional recognition or automated hiring globally.[95] For example, real-time surveillance could be limited, and all workers would have the right to disconnect from work systems beyond working hours.[96] A focus on human oversight and a comprehensive appeals process could also be implemented. Moreover, international bodies could advance initiatives aiming at reducing inequality by promoting inclusive AI development and providing targeted support for vulnerable groups. Overall, developing labour-specific AI standards strengthen workers' rights and protection; however, stringent regulations may burden startups, particularly in developing countries.

Human Oversight and Appeals

Concerns pertaining to mass job displacement and algorithmic biases may be alleviated through AI-human collaboration, where AI tools work alongside humans rather than completely replace workers.[97] Modeled after the ILO agenda of a human centered approach, new AI systems could be created to complement human skills, allowing for human creativity and complex problem solving skills.[98] Above all, worker protection policies to safeguard privacy should be upheld internationally. Workers could be granted the right to challenge AI decisions through human-led appeals, which would subsequently be enforced by requiring employers to offer mandatory review procedures. For instance, under the GDPR, workers can appeal automated decisions and request human intervention.[99] Governments or the ILO could establish oversight agencies to handle reinforcement or systemic cases. That said, developing nations may lack the resources for regulatory infrastructure or external oversight to efficiently enforce appeals. Although this implementation may cause potential delays or pose a risk of overregulation in fast-paced industries, it reinforces accountability in AI-based and algorithmic decisions and protects workers from unfair consequences or dismissal.[100]

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[94] Gabriela Ramos, "Ethics of Artificial Intelligence," UNESCO, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380455.
[95] High-level summary of the AI Act, https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/high-level-summary/.
[96] Ibid.
[97] "We Always Hear That AI Will Take Our Jobs. But What Jobs Will It Create?" World Economic Forum, September 18, 2023, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/09/jobs-ai-will-create/.
[98] Dylan Walsh, "A New Look at the Economics of AI,"Artificial Intelligence, MIT Management Sloan School, January 21, 2025, https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/a-new-look-economics-ai.
[99] "Automated individual decision-making, including profiling," Intersoft Consulting, https://gdpr-info.eu/art-22-gdpr/.
[100] "Artifical Intelligence," OECD, https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/policy-issues/artificial-intelligence.html.

Promoting Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Encouraging AI focused innovation can help create new job opportunities. Government supported accelerators and programs for AI start ups can be implemented, providing funding, training and mentorship to AI-focused ventures. This would foster job creation and encourage AI development in technological sectors.[101] Additionally, integrating AI models to implement human labour, rather than completely replacing it, encourages AI adoption in non-conventional industries, such as textiles or agriculture.[102] However, the owner of AI-generated outputs, that is, textile designs or website extensions, must be clarified through ownership, patent laws, or international guidelines to prevent legal disputes and enable effective adoption of these innovations.[103] Digital literacy and entrepreneurship education could also be integrated into primary or secondary curriculum, fostering literacy and thinking at a young age.

Moreover, the establishment of youth technology fellowship programs could be encouraged globally. For example, the African Union's "1 million by 2021" digital skill campaign was a successful initiative that benefits long term equity and promotes global innovation.[104] The implementation of these training exchanges would allow youth from underrepresented or low-income communities to gain experience and insight to AI and technology. Although the short term impact would be limited and costly, ILO partnerships with UNESCO or UNICEF could enable the use of existing UN training hubs and digital learning platforms, such as the ILO-UNICEF work-based learning systems, which integrate classroom instruction with practical training to prepare vulnerable groups for future labour markets.[105] This solution empowers economic growth, especially if extended to non-traditional sectors; however, its viability is weakened as the countries that would benefit most often face significant implementation barriers, such as weak infrastructure, to limited funding. The impact may be delayed in developing countries lacking access to capital or foundational education.

Bloc Positions

The following section outlines potential stances that countries may take based on their general political and economic situations. These summaries are broad and may not reflect every nuance of a country's position. Delegates are encouraged to conduct further research into their assigned country's specific history, priorities, and context to develop a well-informed position.

Countries Prioritizing Ethical AI and Worker Protections

Members of this bloc are highly developed states with diversified economies, such as the UK, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia, and European countries. The approach to AI from this bloc focuses on balancing technological innovation, ethical oversight, and fundamental workers' rights.[106] Establishing human-centric, trustworthy, and transparent AI systems is the goal for many of these countries. Moreover, these countries prioritise investment in

[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Bao Tran, "The legal future of machine-generated inventions: Who owns the IP?" Patent PC, July 13, 2025, https://patentpc.com/blog/the-legal-future-of-machine-generated-inventions-who-owns-the-ip.
[104] " Auc Chairperson's report on the 1 million by 2021 initiative," African Union, November 2021, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41498-doc-1_Million_By_2021_Report_.pdf.
[105] "ILO and UNICEF launch new work-based learning package," UNICEF Lebanon, March 16, 2023, https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/stories/ilo-and-unicef-launch-new-work-based-learning-package.
[106] "European approach to artificial Intelligence," Shaping Europe's Digital Future, https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/european-approach-artificial-intelligence.

talent and infrastructure, including high quality data access, AI skills training, and education.[107] Responsible innovation that respects fundamental rights, as well as human oversight and accountability, is highly valued.[108] Currently, while lacking federal legislation, the U.S. is experiencing a rise of state-level AI regulations targeting employment biases, transparency, and risk management.[109] The UK is pursuing similar approaches through draft legislation; Japan and South Korea are also supporting rapid AI innovation alongside ethical safeguards.[110] In short, this bloc pushes for risk-based international frameworks, international cooperation, and intelligence sharing.[111]

Rapidly Developing Digital Powers

This bloc consists of China, India, Turkey, Mexico, and similarly aligned countries. These are emerging economies but possess significantly higher rates of informal labour and vulnerability to job displacement.[112] These nations view AI as an economic engine but also a source of intense labour market disruption.[113] This is caused by a large share of the workforce performing easily-automatable or gig-based tasks.[114] While China has promoted and developed nation-wide policies that focus on AI standards, they strongly emphasize national security and social stability over workers' protections.[115] As such, these nations seek global investment and knowledge-sharing and affordable training access, especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups. Yet, existing binding regulations are regarded by these governments as too forceful, and concerns over innovation stunts, pertaining to delayed or restricted progress, have arisen across these nations.[116] Instead, they argue for scalable compliance focused on building capacity, education, and narrowing the digital divide.[117] Overall, this bloc views AI as a critical driver of growth, emphasizing a flexible, capacity building approach prioritizing inclusion and workers' rights.

Low-Income and Vulnerable Economies

This category consists of Sub-Saharan Africa and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Asia and the Pacific. Countries in this bloc face widening disparities as a result of AI adoption, with limited digital infrastructure, skilled workers, and pre-existing relevant regulation. Many of these economies depend on low-wage and low-skill labour, which are sectors susceptible to mechanization.[118] As few workers are covered by labour protections,

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[107] Ibid.

[108] The Mensch, "EU AI Act Compliance 2025: A Complete Guide for Business Leaders," Indeed, June 2, 2025, https://www.indeed-innovation.com/the-mensch/eu-ai-act-compliance-2025/.

[109] Robert T. Dumbacher, Alyce Ogunsola of Hunton Andrews Kurth, "AI Legislation on the Rise: What Should Employers Expect in 2025," Law review, December 18, 2024, https://natlawreview.com/article/ai-legislation-rise-what-should-employers-expect-2025.

[110] Kristalina Georgieva, "AI Will Transform the Global Economy. Let's Make Sure It Benefits Humanity," Artificial Intellginece, IMF Blog, January 14,2024 https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2024/01/14/ai-will-transform-the-global-economy-lets-make-sure-it-benefits-humanity.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Francesca Prandstraller, "AI Will Have a Greater Impact in Advanced Economies," Bocconi, March 28, 2025, https://www.unibocconi.it/en/news/ai-will-have-greater-impact-advanced-economies.

[114] "Navigating Labor's Response AI, Proactive Strategies for Multinational Employers Across the Atlantic," Baker Mackenzie, June 24, 2025, https://www.bakermckenzie.com/en/insight/publications/2025/06/navigating-labors-response-to-ai.

[115] Samuel Yang, Chris Fung & Bill Zhou, "AI Ethics: Overview (China,)" Digital Economy & AI, Anjie Broad, January 20, 2025, https://www.chinalawvision.com/2025/01/digital-economy-ai/ai-ethics-overview-china/.

[116] Jon Chun, Christian Schroeder de Witt, Katherine Elkins, "Comparative Global AI Regulation: Policy Perspectives from the EU, China, and the US," Arxiv, October 2024, https://arxiv.org/abs/2410.21279.

[117] Clara Helming, "What works and what doesn't: AI systems and labor law," Algorithm EWatch, July 9, 2024, https://algorithmwatch.org/en/ai-and-labor-law-explained/.

[118] "AI Will Transform the Global Economy. Let's Make Sure It Benefits Humanity." https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2024/01/14/ai-will-transform-the-global-economy-lets-make-sure-it-benefits-humanity.

automation is more likely to worsen poverty and inequality.[119] The expense of implementing technology to less developed populations could be minimal should the cost of AI development and training decrease.[120] Additionally, AI can benefit education in rural areas, where chatbots can supplement pre-existing learning systems.[121] Therefore, this bloc aims for significant international investment in internet connectivity, AI education, and technical assistance. International funds, flexible AI regulations, and job creation are crucial for members of this bloc.

Discussion Questions

1. How should governments determine which AI applications in the workplace require human oversight, and how can this be enforced across different legal systems?

2. How can countries ensure that global reskilling initiatives genuinely benefit marginalized communities, including rural populations, women, and informal workers?

3. To what extent should employers be required to disclose the use and logic of algorithmic decisions that impact hiring, promotion, or termination?

4. How can countries prevent AI adoption from further exacerbating the digital divide between high-income and low-income economies?

5. How can proposed solutions, such as reskilling, appeals mechanisms, or AI regulation, be adapted to respect cultural norms, governance structures, and gaps across different regions? How might a solution such as the EU's 'phased enforcement' be implemented in other regions?

6. In the face of AI-induced job displacement, should international efforts prioritize job creation through innovation or protection of existing jobs through regulation? Why or why not?

7. How can the ILO ensure that policies created in response to Generative AI remain relevant in the face of rapidly evolving technologies?

8. To what extent should international AI frameworks protect fundamental rights such as privacy, non-discrimination, and fair treatment in the workplace? How can these protections be enforced globally?

Additional Resources

OECD AI Policy Observatory:
https://oecd.ai/en/

[119] Ibid.
[120] Dakar, Nairobi and São Paulo, "Could AI transform life in developing countries?" The Economist, January 25, 2024, https://www.economist.com/briefing/2024/01/25/could-ai-transform-life-in-developing-countries.
[121] Ibid.

UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence:
https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence

MIT Task Force on the Work of the Future:
https://workofthefuture.mit.edu/research-post/the-work-of-the-future-building-better-jobs-in-an-age-of-intelligent-machines/

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Zarifhonarvar, Ali. "Economics of ChatGPT: A Labor Market View on the Occupational Impact of Artificial Intelligence." *Journal of Electronic Business & Digital Economics* 3, no. 2 (December 5, 2023): 100–116. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEBDE-10-2023-0021.

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Regulating the Gig Economy

Overview

The gig industry is a growing part of the digital economy, especially with the rise of companies like Uber, DoorDash, Fiverr, and Deliveroo. Today, 'gig' describes any freelance work including online tutoring, food delivery, and virtual assistants. 'Gig work' describes short-term tasks or one-time projects for clients through digital platforms, usually paid after completing a series of tasks rather than receiving a regular paycheck.[122] While gig opportunities are expanding, concerns regarding labour protections, taxation, and workers' rights are prevalent.[123]

Historically, labour protections were designed for formal, long-term employment structures. However, many modern gig workers are classified as independent contractors instead of employees. Due to this classification, most gig workers do not receive social benefits, including health insurance, paid leave, minimum wage, or workers' compensation.[124] Irregular hours, unpredictable workload, and isolation may also negatively affect the well-being of gig workers. Therefore, there are increasing worldwide efforts to legally reclassify gig workers for their benefit. For example, Canada establishes that "all workers—including gig workers—are considered employees unless proven otherwise when their classification is contested."[125] Yet, most developing nations have ineffective regulations regarding the protection of freelance workers.[126] This is especially concerning given that, according to the World Bank, the demand for gig workers is growing faster in developing countries.[127]

Laws including California's AB5, the ILO's International Standards on Gig Work, and the EU's laws regarding the gig economy strengthen worker projections by setting clear and strict rules for employee classification. The diverse nature of the gig economy worldwide results in lengthy implementations undertaken by gig companies, highlighting the importance of a comprehensive policy framework for this labour market.

Furthermore, with the rise of job automation, 86 percent of employers predict that AI will transform their businesses by 2030.[128] While AI offers flexibility and opportunity for economic growth, its integration into app-based platforms may deepen income inequality and job insecurity by reinforcing opaque pay systems, limiting

[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] "Policy in Progress: Shaping a Fairer Future for Gig Workers," Women's Centers Connect, January 30, 2024, https://womenconnect.ca/policy-in-progress-shaping-a-fairer-future-for-gig-workers/.
[125] "Legislative changes to support federally regulated employees," employment and social development Canada, Government of Canada, June 21, 2024, https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2024/06/legislative-changes-to-support-federally-regulated-employees.html.
[126] Kaosarat Lawal, "Gig economy: an analysis of global legislations," Jus Corpus Law Journal, November 24, 2024, https://www.juscorpus.com/gig-economy-an-analysis-of-global-legislations/.
[127] Datta, Namita Rong, Chen Singh, Sunamika Stinshoff, Clara Iacob, Nadina Nigatu, Natnael Simachew Nxumalo, Mpumelelo Klimaviciute, Luka "Working Without Borders. The Promise and Peril of Online Gig Work," Economic and Sector Work Studies, World Bank Group, July 24, 2023, https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/75ec866c182238e087167ce03244c8da-0460012023/original/Reading-Deck-Working-without-borders-updated.pdf.
[128] "The Future of Jobs Report 2025," World Economic Forum, January 7, 2025, https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/.

worker autonomy through automated decision-making, and increasing dependence on short-term contracts.[129] With a lack of transparency and accountability within these systems, algorithmic bias and privacy violations could become defining features of the gig industry. Therefore, as AI continues to reshape the gig labour market through algorithmic management and automated job matching, labour regulation must adapt accordingly to ensure the rights for platform-based workers.[130]

Timeline

March 1, 1995 — Craiglist, the first major "gig provider," is established.[131] The site started as an email list to friends regarding events within the San Francisco Bay Area.[132]

March, 2009 — Uber, a digital platform company that provides ride, food, and courier services, is founded in San Francisco.[133] It marks a significant shift for app-based gig work as a mainstream form of employment.[134] Uber's arrival disrupts the taxi industry and prompts the rise of the gig economy.[135]

October 28, 2016 — The United Kingdom employment tribunal rules that Uber must be granted the same rights as full-time employees rather than being classified as self-employed.[136] This ruling highlights a growing pressure to reassess how the gig economy operates.[137]

May 22, 2018 — The UK government sets out new policies to improve conditions for millions of workers—particularly those in the gig economy—by granting them better compensation and more robust contracts.[138] All workers gain a new right to request a more stable contract.[139] Additionally, a campaign is launched to raise awareness about workplace rights, particularly ensuring that new mothers understand their entitlement to request flexible work arrangements.[140]

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[129] Timothy Papandreou, "AI and the Gig Economy is Reshaping The Workforce. Here's How," Enterprise Tech, Innovation, Forbes, October 3, 2024, https://www.forbes.com/sites/timothypapandreou/2024/10/03/ai-and-the-gig-economy-is-reshaping-the-workforce-heres-how/.
[130] Adele Jacquard, "The gig economy is booming, but is it fair work? And other trends in jobs and skills this month," Jobs and the future of work, World Economic Forum, June 4, 2025, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/06/the-gig-economy-ilo-labour-platforms/.
[131] "Gig economy: past, present, future," Observa, https://www.observanow.com/gig-economy-past-present-future/.
[132] James Doubek, Mary Louise Kelly, "At 25 years, understanding the longevity of craigslist," NPR Network, https://www.npr.org/2020/02/24/808965078/at-25-years-understanding-the-longevity-of-craigslist.
[133] Henry Hoenig, "The History of Uber," Investopedia, February 24, 2025, https://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/111015/story-uber.asp.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Sarah Lee, "Riding the Gig Economy," Number Analytics, May 27, 2025, https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/ultimate-guide-uber-gig-economy-precarious-work.
[136] Hilary Osborne, "Uber loses right to classify UK drivers as self-employed," The Guardian, October 28, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/oct/28/uber-uk-tribunal-self-employed-status.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Joe Watts, "Gig Economy: Theresa May promises to improve conditions for millions of workers," UK Politics, Independent, February 7, 2018 https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/gig-economy-workers-rights-theresa-may-holiday-sick-pay-contracts-a8197906.html.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.

April 16, 2019 — The European Union strengthens minimum rights and transparency for all gig workers, promising predictable hours and compensation for cancelled work.[141] This legislation aims to end all "abusive practices" within gig-labour contracts.[142]

January 1, 2020 — California introduces Assembly Bill 5 (AB5), reclassifying contract workers and requiring them to operate independently, perform non-core tasks, and run their own business in the same field.[143] In response to this, Uber attempts to avoid the reach of this new state law by allowing workers to set their own rates and reject ride requests without penalty.[144]

June 30, 2020 — India enacts its Code on Social Security, becoming one of the first countries to legally recognise gig workers as a separate labour sector.[145] The policy grants all platform workers life and disability insurance, health benefits, maternity benefits, and retirement pensions.[146]

November 3, 2020 — Californians pass Proposition 22, with 58 percent in favour, making it the most expensive ballot-measure in state history.[147] Uber and Lyft, opposing Prop 22's impact on their businesses, spend USD 200 million on ads, media, and mailers.[148] The measure exempts app-based drivers from AB5, allowing them to remain classified as contractors without full employee rights.[149]

March, 2021 — Spain introduces the 'Rider Law' after six months of negotiations between unions and business associations, classifying food-delivery workers as employees.[150] The policy also mandates all businesses to inform food-delivery riders regarding how AI and machine-learning algorithms affect working conditions and decisions.[151]

November 4, 2022 – Paris court rules that Deliveroo, a digital food delivery platform, is concealing employment by classifying its delivery riders as independent contractors rather than employees.[152] Subsequently the first

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[141] "EU law fixes minimum rights for 'gig economy' workers," BBC, April 16, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47947220.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Kari Paul, "Uber changing app to avoid reach of California's new gig workers law," The Guardian, February 7, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/feb/07/uber-ab5-changes-drivers-california.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Aishwarya Raman, Sreelakshmi Ramachandran, S.K. Sasikumar "India's Social Security Code, 2020: A Catalyst for Promoting and Protecting Platform Labour," *Labour & Development, Vol. 28, No.1*, (June 2021): 1 https://vvgnli.gov.in/sites/default/files/India.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Kari Paul, Julia Carrie Wong "California passes Prop 22 in a major victory for Uber and Lyft," The Guardian, November 4, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/nov/04/california-election-voters-prop-22-uber-lyft.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Gorka R. Pérez, "Spain approves landmark law recognizing food-delivery riders as employees," GIg Economy, EL PAIS, May 12, 2021, https://english.elpais.com/economy_and_business/2021-05-12/spain-approves-landmark-law-recognizing-food-delivery-riders-as-employees.html.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Natasha Lomas, "Deliveroo fined in France after court rules it abused riders' rights," Tech Crunch, April 19, 2022, https://techcrunch.com/2022/04/19/deliveroo-france-lawsuit/.

criminal trial in France against a platform-based company results in severe fines and heightened scrutiny of gig work classification.[153]

June 13, 2025 — The ILO develops binding global standards for decent work in the gig economy, reaching a positive international breakthrough for gig worker rights. This policy prevents companies using legal loopholes to misclassify platform workers, ensuring all gig workers worldwide retain their labour protections.[154] The binding treaty focuses on types and scopes of standards, defining gig workers and their companies.[155]

Historical Analysis

The gig economy today is defined by flexible, short-term and app-based employment. Its origins are rooted in a storied history of informal, part-time, and contractual jobs. With major shifts in labour markets and the rise of technology, the gig industry has grown rapidly over the last decades.

The notion of 'one person, one career' is a relatively recent construct, emerging in the mid-20th century. In earlier centuries, much of the working and middle class relied on multiple occupations to make a living. Before the Industrial Revolution, such diversified work provided independence but rarely ensured financial security.[156] Diaries of three men during the Industrial Revolution reveal that work held value beyond wages, with each job providing a distinct form of fulfillment, ranging from financial gain to social status.[157] As the BBC observed, networking, reputation, and power could be just as important as income.[158] During the Industrial Revolution, day laborers would gather at specific locations to be hired for short-term tasks, while migrant workers would travel between regions to work on temporary jobs.[159] These early forms of gig work were defined by low pay, harsh working conditions, limited social protections, and exploitation of rights.[160]

In the status quo, gig work is still reliant on prior reputation, with workers relying on user ratings and platform reviews to secure subsequent job opportunities. This reliance has grown alongside the accelerated rise of the gig economy in the early 21st century.[161] The introduction of new technologies, such as the internet, facilitated gig work by connecting workers and clients digitally. Shifts in workforce demographics, particularly the rise of the Millennial and Gen Z workers in the 21st century, have also contributed to the growth of the gig economy. With an emphasis and preference for flexibility and autonomy, the new workforce has driven demand for and the supply of gig employment.[162]

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[153] "What's new in the gig economy? A global round-up," Lus Laboris, August 31, 2022, https://iuslaboris.com/insights/whats-new-in-the-gig-economy-a-global-round-up/.
[154] "ILO Commits to International Standards on Gig Work," Human Rights Watch, June 13, 2025, https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/13/ilo-commits-to-international-standards-on-gig-work.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Tawny Paul, "The gig economy of the 18th Century," BBC, July 22, 2017, https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20170721-the-gig-economy-of-the-18th-century.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Lee, "Gig Economy's Labour History Roots," https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/gig-economy-labor-history-roots.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.

This demand laid the groundwork for the modern platform economy, whose roots can be traced to early internet marketplaces such as Craigslist and eBay, both founded in 1995.[163] Each company coordinated informal exchanges and freelance service offerings. Primarily acting as bulletin boards or auction sites, these companies connected buyers and sellers; notably, they operated with limited oversight or formal regulation, allowing for malicious business practices.[164] Following the 2008 financial crisis, unemployment skyrocketed, leading to a significant decrease in employment security.[165] Subsequently, many turned to gig work, creating a large pool of available workers in the freelance labour market.[166] Platform companies began to bloom, including Uber, Lyft, Deliveroo, Fiverr and Upwork.

Uber, founded in 2008, disrupted the taxi industry. The company embraced its disruptive reputation by launching services in cities where its operations violated existing taxi or licensing laws; still, the company forged ahead, expanding its operations internationally.[167] Uber faced many controversies during its expansion, including taxi driver strikes in European cities, tire burnings in Paris, and a 2014 ban in India following the sexual assault of a passenger while using the service.[168] In 2015, authorities raided Uber offices in Amsterdam due to claims of illegal operation; as a result of this, anti-Uber protests in France escalated into violence, with taxi drivers physically attacking Uber drivers.[169] In the following years, Uber would experience a net loss of USD 4.5 billion dollars, and would get sued by Google in 2017.[170] In 2019, the company's stock underperformed, yet, by 2025, Uber shares were trading near an all-time high driven by its expansion into food delivery and freight services.[171]

Ever since the coronavirus pandemic, the gig economy has grown exponentially due in part to the increased reliance on gig workers to home-deliver items to consumers in developed nations. Additionally, the crisis changed traditional employment arrangements and increased the number of employees in gig work, either as primary or secondary source of income.[172] The gig worker participation has increased by 14 to 20 percent since 2014; yet further progress needs to be made in the area of developing fair protections for gig workers.[173]

[163] Bonnie Goldstein, "eBay v. Craiglist," Slate, May 15, 2008,
https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2008/05/ebay-v-craigslist-2.html.
[164] "eBay and Craiglist," Economics: Chapter 6, Theory Through Applications, Saylor Academy, 2012,
https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_economics-theory-through-applications/s10-00-ebay-and-craigslist.html.
[165] "World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with jobs," International Labour Organisation, May 14, 2018,
https://www.ilo.org/publications/world-employment-and-social-outlook-2018-greening-jobs.
[166] Lee, "Gig economy's labour history roots," https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/gig-economy-labor-history-roots.
[167] Hoenig, "The History of Uber," https://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/111015/story-uber.asp.
[168] Johana Bhuiyan and Dan Milmo, "'Embrace the chaos': a history of Uber's rapid expansion and fall from favour," July 15, 2022,
https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/jul/15/embrace-the-chaos-a-history-of-ubers-rapid-expansion-and-fall-from-favour.
[169] Hoenig, "The History of Uber," https://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/111015/story-uber.asp.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Rebecca Henderson, "How COVID-19 Has Transformed the Gig Economy," Careers, Leadership, Forbes, December 10, 2020,
https://www.forbes.com/sites/rebeccahenderson/2020/12/10/how-covid-19-has-transformed-the-gig-economy/.
[173] Ibid.

Past UN/International Involvement

OECD: Regulating Platform Work in the Digital Age

Published in 2020, this regulation addresses working conditions in platform work, especially regarding job and income security, access to social protection, career development, and the right to collective bargaining.[174] It describes key policy issues and identifies initiatives to improve the working conditions and rights of workers.[175] This policy illustrates the concept of the portability of rights, transferring conventional labour standards to the digital space. Furthermore, aspects including minimum wage, working time, facilitation with dispute resolution, and occupational safety were improved.[176] Through classifying platform workers, enforcing existing regulations, simplifying the process to challenge employment status, and holding employers accountable, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) aligns with ILO's emphasis on universal projection regarding this topic.[177]

G20 Principles for Platform Work

Adopted in 2023 as a response to amplified social protection gaps for platform workers, the G20 Principles prioritize sustainable social protection and decent work for gig workers.[178] Although this regulation is not legally binding, it urges G20 countries to attain the necessary legal and social protections for gig workers, adopt fair and transparent payment mechanisms, enhance data privacy, and emphasize human oversight.[179] These principles indicate a growing consensus among major economies to reaffirm their commitment to inclusive social protection systems for vulnerable workers.

European Union's Platform Work Directive

The EU Directive 2024/2831 went into effect on December 1, 2024, imposing new obligations on companies within the gig economy.[180] This legally binding directive will implement strict requirements for digital platforms using automated decision making or monitoring systems, ensuring adherence to the EU AI Act.[181] Companies will be required to inform workers when AI will be used no later than their first working day, and must notify job candidates in advance if AI will be used in hiring.[182] Some key regulations in the directive pertain to human oversight and review, well-being and workers' safety, access to information regarding updated workplace AI tools, and data privacy.[183] EU member states have until December 2, 2026 to implement this into national law; as such,

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[174] M. Lane, "Regulating Platform Work in the Digital Age," OECD Going Digital Toolkit Notes, OECD Publishing, June 9, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1787/181f8a7f-en.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] "G20 Labour & Employment Ministers' Meeting," G20 Policy Priorities on Adequate and Sustainable Social Protection and Decent Work for Gig and Platform Workers, July 21, 2023, https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2023/ewg_gig.pdf.
[179] Ibid.
[180] "Directive (EU) 2024/2831 of the European Parliament" Access to European Union Law, Official European Union law, November 11, 2024, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024L2831.
[181] Patty Shapiro, "It's Official: The EU platform work directive is here," Ogletree Deakins, January 3, 2025, https://ogletree.com/insights-resources/blog-posts/its-official-the-eu-platform-work-directive-is-here/.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.

the consequences of noncompliance are unknown.[184] Yet, penalties are expected to be effective, proportionate, and scaled to the number of workers affected by the infringement. As the first regional binding regulation focused on gig work, this directive sets a legal precedent for the broader international community.

ILO International Standards on Gig Work

Prior to this binding international regulation, the ILO Digital Labour Platforms and the Future of Work Report (2018), the Global Commission on the Future of Work (2019), and the ILO's World Employment and Social Outlook reports (2021–22) collectively emphasized the urgency of adopting labour standards to the emerging gig economy.

On June 13, 2025, the ILO passed the first binding international agreement on decent work in the platform economy.[185] At the same time, a non-binding recommendation providing guidance on the responsibilities of the convention was also released.[186] These agreed-upon standards included ensuring fair pay, extending social security, regulating algorithmic management, promoting collective bargaining, and establishing effective grievance mechanisms.[187] At the 113th International Labour Conference in Geneva, the majority of the member states and workers' delegates supported this decision; only the employer government delegates from Switzerland, India, and the United States opposed the move.[188] The ILO recognizes this as a unique and time-sensitive opportunity to ensure all platform workers—who make up a significant part of the workforce—are able to access their rights.[189] The specifics of this joint declaration by 33 organisations will be negotiated and finalised at the 2026 International Labour Conference, and will be formally adopted if member states, employers' and workers' representatives come to a consensus.[190]

[184] Ibid.
[185] "ILO Commits to International Standards on Gig Work," https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/13/ilo-commits-to-international-standards-on-gig-work.
[186] "ILO: Adopt Binding Treaty to Protect 'Gig' Workers," Human Rights Watch, June 3, 2025, https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/03/ilo-adopt-binding-treaty-protect-gig-workers.
[187] Ibid.
[188] "ILO Commits to International Standards on Gig Work," https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/13/ilo-commits-to-international-standards-on-gig-work.
[189] "ILO: Adopt Binding Treaty to Protect 'Gig' Workers," https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/03/ilo-adopt-binding-treaty-protect-gig-workers.
[190] "ILO Commits to International Standards on Gig Work," https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/13/ilo-commits-to-international-standards-on-gig-work.

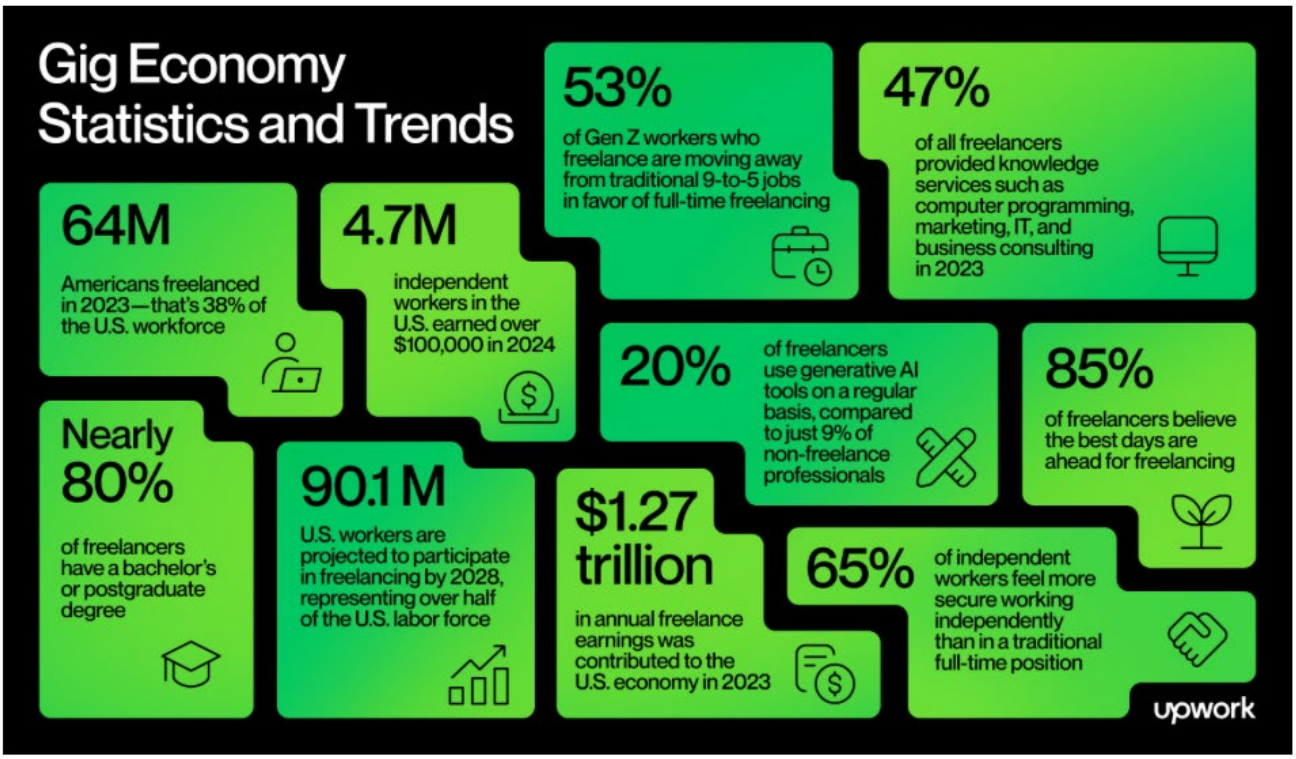

Figure 1: Statistics and Trends of the Gig Economy.[191]

The gig labour workforce is expected to reach over 1.5 billion workers globally in 2025.[192] Due to increased internet accessibility and the proliferation of digital platforms, gig work has experienced significant exponential growth.[193]

Furthermore, gig companies must balance worker flexibility with their government's labour regulation. The distinction between independent contractor's employees must be noted, as this determines gig workers' rights and access to benefits such as overtime. Gig workers often struggle financially, facing ambiguous payment systems, low wages, or delayed payments. Consequently, they are unable to challenge these pay practices as they lack the bargaining power of traditional employees. Moreover, platform workers spend 30 to 40 percent of their wages on work-related expenses, in addition to additional expenses, such as external social security protections, incurred as a result of their legal labour status. A Human Rights Watch report found that when accounting for these expenses, gig workers' wages in the US are far below the living wage, with an effective hourly wage of USD 5.12.

[191] Beth Kempton, "Gig Economy Statistics and Market Takeaways for 2025," Upwork, November 7, 2024, https://www.upwork.com/resources/gig-economy-statistics.
[192] "Winners and losers in the gig economy: What delivery platforms mean for workers. Guest post by Pascuel Plotkin," World Bank Blogs, Development Impact, December 04, 2024, https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/impactevaluations/winners-and-losers-in-the-gig-economy--what-delivery-platforms-m.
[193] "The Gig Economy: An Opportunity for Talent and Business," Tealenteum, 2025, https://talenteum.com/the-gig-economy-an-opportunity-for-talent-and-business/.

Opportunities for Business

The gig industry spotlights various specialized skills when needed, enhancing innovation and allowing businesses to tackle complex projects cost-efficiently.[194] Companies abolish long-term salaries and benefits to allocate their resources more efficiently.[195] During peak consumer periods, companies can quickly strengthen their workforce by hiring additional gig workers; conversely, these companies adapt to fluctuating demand by reducing their workforce during seasonal lows.[196] Additionally, the gig economy can enhance innovation within businesses, as companies can rapidly seize new opportunities with this adaptable workforce, such as testing new products, entering emerging markets, or responding to sudden changes in consumer preferences.[197]

Challenges for Employers

Despite significant opportunities the gig economy enables, many freelance workers still lack employment benefits and social protections. To mitigate these issues, gig workers often rely on personal strategies such as budgeting and savings, which are vulnerable to periodic economic fluctuations. There has been a recent increase in labour laws, such as the ILO's International Standards on Gig Work and European Union's Platform Work Directive, which has granted more protections and rights to these workers, covering areas such as data privacy and occupational safety. Yet, such binding and strict obligations can create uncertainty and legal risks for both employers and employees.[198] Notably, the EU Platform Work Directive introduces a rebuttable presumption that gig workers are employees unless proven otherwise. This landmark legislation now means that employers carry the burden of proving employment and the increased risk of costly misclassification lawsuits.[199]

Challenges for Employees

Challenges extend beyond low wages and limited protections. For instance, 62 percent of gig workers report a lack of access to job information as their most significant barrier, while 32 percent are hindered due to not knowing English.[200] These challenges show the need for a democratic, accessible platform that provides transparent information all together to both parties. In addition, inadequate working conditions are a pressing concern: 59 percent of gig workers report discomfort in their roles, 13 percent find the work physically demanding or unsafe, and many lacking access to safety equipment or insurance coverage. In response, the emergence of international policies such as the EU Platform Work Directive, which defaults gig workers to employee status. Given the importance of the gig industry in the coming years, it is imperative for employers to make these roles more attractive and satisfactory.[201]

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[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Michal Kowalewski, "EU Platform Work Directive and Its Impact on Hiring Contingent Workforce," Deel, March 12, 2025, https://www.deel.com/blog/eu-platform-work-directive/.
[200] Narasimha Raju, "Gig workforce to add over 9 million jobs by 2025: Indeed report," 2022, https://cxotoday.com/research-whitepapers/gig-workforce-to-add-over-9-million-jobs-by-2025-indeed-report/.
[201] Ibid.

Challenges in Developing Countries

The rapid growth of the gig economy in developing countries exposes workers to pressing challenges due to diverse economic structures and digital divides. The average global hourly rate for independent workers is currently USD 23; this masks the wage disparity, with Canadian and American workers earning USD 56 per hour and Central American workers earning only USD 18 per hour.[202] In developing countries, over half of gig workers lack social insurance and labour protections, and more than 90 percent of the total labour force work in the informal employment sector.[203] Additionally, developing countries' technological gaps—such as unequal access to smartphones and the internet—along with the lack of platform labour regulation hinder the growth of platform work.[204, 205] The shortage of government regulation in these regions allows for exploitation and arbitrary terminations which create an atmosphere of poor labour standards.[206]

Figure 2: Average hourly freelance rate by region.[207]

[202] "Freelancer Insights Report," Payoneer, 2023 https://pubs.payoneer.com/docs/2023-freelancer-insights-report.pdf.
[203] "Working WIthout Borders," Jobs, Solutions for Youth Employment, World Bank Group, https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/40066.
[204] "The Future of Jobs Report 2023," World Economic Forum, April 30, 2023, https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/.
[205] Pierre Nguimkeu, "Africa's growing gig economy: What is needed for success," BROOKINGS, July 21, 2025 https://www.brookings.edu/articles/africas-growing-gig-economy-what-is-needed-for-success/.
[206] Ibid.
[207] "Freelancer Insights Report," https://pubs.payoneer.com/docs/2023-freelancer-insights-report.pdf.

Discrimination and Biases

Gig work provides economic opportunities that may be less accessible within traditional work: women participate in the gig economy at higher rates compared to conventional sectors.[208] However, this increased participation has not closed the gender wage gap. A study by the ZEW Indicator of Economic Sentiment, surveying over 23,000 platform workers, found that women in freelancing earn around 30 percent less per hour than men.[209] In China's gig sector, this disparity is even more prominent, with the wage gap accounting for over 90 percent of gender-based discrimination.[210] This is in contrast to the traditional sector, where differences are driven more by characteristic factors, such as education or experience. Moreover, women often face harassment and discrimination in their roles as gig labourers. For instance, delivery couriers in Edinburgh often reported sexual harassment, unwanted attention, and lack of platform support for safety concerns.[211] Given these biases, it is imperative that the ILO implement discrimination-preventing aspects to international labour legislations.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

The following proposals represent key areas of consideration in regulating the gig economy and should be reflected in delegate positions. This section provides only a broad overview; delegates are strongly encouraged to conduct further research into their country's past actions, current policies, and potential initiatives on these issues.

Legal Reclassification

One key solution proposed to improve gig workers' rights is legal reclassification. There are many ways in which this solution could be facilitated; for instance, governments could pass legislation legally recognizing gig workers as employees. An alternative approach is to create a new hybrid category that grants social protections including minimum wage, paid leave, and unemployment benefits.[212] This approach can reduce exploitation and provide stability for workers, clarifying the responsibilities of platform companies.[213] Reclassification would only be effective if supported by legislation that establishes and enforces protections for gig workers. Without such a framework, this solution alone would merely redefine the issue without addressing the underlying absence of worker protections. This approach faces backlash from platforms and employers, however, as it is lengthy, costly, and inadaptable. On the worker side, this may reduce the amount of freelance employment available. For example, if platforms are required to provide full employee benefits, they may limit the number of active workers on the app to reduce costs, leading to fewer available gig jobs overall.

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[208] Beth Kempton, "Gig Economy Statistics and Market Takeaways for 2025," Upwork, November 7, 2024, https://www.upwork.com/resources/gig-economy-statistics.
[209] "Why women earn less in the gig economy," ZEW study on gender wage gap in the gig economy, ZEW, March 6, 2025, https://www.zew.de/en/press/latest-press-releases/why-women-earn-less-in-the-gig-economy.
[210] Jiachen Han, MingmingLi, Shi Li, Yingying Hu, "The widening gender wage gap in the gig economy in China: the impact of digitalisation," 2024, https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-024-04172-1.
[211] Megan Carnegie, "The gig economy is much worse for women," Business, Wired, May 8, 2023, https://www.wired.com/story/the-gig-economy-is-much-worse-for-women/.
[212] Catalina Russu, "The pros and cons of the gig economy in developing countries," Development Aid, February 7, 2024, https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/174420/the-pros-and-cons-of-the-gig-economy-in-developing-countries.
[213] Iffath Sharif, Christine Zhenwei Qiang, "The Promise and Peril of Online Gig Work in Developing Countries," World Bank Blogs, Voices, September 7, 2023, https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/voices/promise-and-peril-online-gig-work-developing-countries.

Algorithmic Transparency

Algorithms control task allocation, pay, and account suspension; however, their non-transparent nature prohibits full understanding about its actions.[214] Increasing algorithmic transparency and human oversight while granting freelance workers agency dispute resolution over platform decisions is also imperative. To this end, transparent payment structures could be established to facilitate gig workers in understanding how their earnings are calculated.[215] Despite this, platforms often resist such measures, arguing that disclosing detailed algorithmic processes could expose proprietary systems or trade secrets of algorithms considered valuable intellectual property, representing years of investment, data collection, and market analysis.[216] Moreover, this also limits the capacity for independent audits and assessments for algorithmic fairness while smaller platforms struggle under the high cost of implementing transparency measures.[217] These companies often lack the financial and technical capacity of larger firms, making it difficult to invest in tools for documentation, audits, or human oversight and appeals processes.[218]

Mandating Data Portability and Worker Access to Digital Records

Granting gig workers the legal right to access, download, and transfer their work-related data across platforms including ratings, performance metrics, schedules, income history, and deactivation records—could enhance transparency and bargaining power.[219] Data portability empowers workers to contest unfair platform decisions, build professional portfolios, and facilitate multi-platform employment.[220] Yet, establishing well-defined data formats and secure transfer mechanisms requires regulatory coordination along with expensive and complex infrastructure.[221] Consequently, the incentive for platforms to invest in innovation would be diluted, slowing adoption of portability and reducing the efficiency of the practice.[222] Collective initiatives, such as worker data trusts, could be helpful, though they demand high levels of coordination and technical collaboration among workers, researchers, and unions.[223]

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[214] David Lee, "Governing Global Gig Platforms aWhen the Manager is an Algorithm," University of Oxford, July 25, 2025, https://blogs.law.ox.ac.uk/oblb/blog-post/2025/07/governing-global-gig-platforms-when-manager-algorithm.
[215] Ibid.
[216] "Regulating Platform work in the digital age," https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2020/06/regulating-platform-work-in-the-digital-age_9e7b4a7c/181f8a7f-en.pdf.
[217] "Algorithmic accountability in gig work," Sustainability Directory, April 11, 2025, https://prism.sustainability-directory.com/scenario/algorithmic-accountability-in-gig-work/.
[218] "Bending the algorithm: The unintended consequences of creative compliance in the gig economy," Qestrom world, https://questromworld.bu.edu/platformstrategy/wp-content/uploads/sites/49/2025/07/PlatStrat2025_paper_64.pdf.
[219] Manuel Pizarro, "REPORT on Fishers for the future: Attracting a new generation of workers to the fishing industry and generating employment in coastal communities," European Parliament, July 5, 2021, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0230_EN.html.
[220] Ibid.
[221] "Data portability, interoperability and digital platform competition," OECD Competition Discussion Paper, 2021, https://www.oecd.org/daf/competition/data-portability-interoperability-and-competition.htm.
[222] Thomas M. Lenard, "If data portability is the solution, what's the problem?" Technology Policy Institute, January 2020, https://techpolicyinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Lenard_If-Data-Portability.pdf.
[223] Karen Gregory, "'Worker data science' can teach us how to fix the gig economy," December 7, 2021, WIRED, https://www.wired.com/story/labor-organizing-unions-worker-algorithms/.

Supporting Collective Bargaining and Representation

Explicit legal recognition of gig worker councils or unions, regardless of contractor status, can empower workers to negotiate working conditions collectively.[224] Legislations including Spain's Rider's Law, enacted by royal decree in 2021, grant independent contractors the right to union representation, marking a foundational step to create the legal standing necessary for collective negotiation.[225] It also obliges platforms to inform workers about algorithmic rules that influence tasks, incentives, and performance evaluations.[226] Worker representation encourages platforms to negotiate minimum pay, sick leave, and algorithmic appeal rights.[227] However, employers contend that extending employment rights to self-employed workers introduces legal ambiguity, as it challenges the foundational distinction between employees and independent contractors.[228] This raises complex questions about eligibility for statutory benefits, collective bargaining rights, and employer obligations, areas traditionally reserved for formal employment relationships under existing labor law frameworks.[229]

Portable Social Protection and Benefits

Implementing portable benefits systems enables gig workers to contribute to social welfare systems—health insurance, pensions, and unemployment protection, to name a few—irrespective of employment status.[230] In 2023, the OECD and the ILO jointly recommended flexible contributory systems independent of employer-employee relationships.[231] Similarly, in a 2021 report, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) urged regional coordination to develop portable benefits models while facilitating contributions from multiple platforms to a shared benefits pool.[232] This model increases coverage and stability for workers with intermittent gig income who often sustain themselves through multi-platform work.[233] That said, there is a need for interoperable digital identity systems, including universally recognized, privacy-protected digital jurisdictions.[234] Achieving interoperability means aligning on shared technical standards, trust frameworks, and governance models so workers can easily transfer and verify their credentials between gig platforms.[235]

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[224] Ibid.

[225] Ben Wray, "Spain's elections pit gig workers against the far right," Wired, July 28, 2023, https://www.wired.com/story/spain-elections-gig-workers-far-right.

[226] Ruth Green, "Gig economy: Rider revolution forcing changes in legislation," International bar association, November 18, 2021, https://www.ibanet.org/Gig-economy-Rider-revolution-forcing-changes-in-legislation.

[227] "Breaking the Vicious Circles of Informal Employment and Low-Paying Work," OECD Publishing, January 15, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1787/f95c5a74-en.

[228] Ibid.

[229] Morgan Meaker, "Europe to End Robo-Firing in Major Gig Economy Overhaul," Wired, December 13, 2023, https://www.wired.com/story/platform-work-eu-overhauls/.

[230] "Publication: Working Without Borders: The Promise and Peril of Online Gig Work," World Bank Group, July 24, 2023, https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/ebc4a7e2-85c6-467b-8713-e2d77e954c6c.

[231] "Providing adequate and sustainable social protection for workers in the gig and platform economy," https://www.ilo.org/publications/providing-adequate-and-sustainable-social-protection-workers-gig-and.

[232] Ibid.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid.

[235] APEC human resources development group, " Guidelines on Providing Social Protection to Digital Platform Workers,' APEC, December, 2021, https://www.apec.org/publications/2021/12/guidelines-on-providing-social-protection-to-digital-platform-workers.

Bloc Positions

Western Economies with Advanced Digital Infrastructure

Canada, Germany, France, UK, Australia, and other developed Western nations emphasize strict employment rights and governance along with job creation in their gig economies.[236] Many have adopted the ILO Recommendation 198, which clarifies worker classification, to guide the legal recognition of worker status and promote collective bargaining and representation across unconventional industries.[237] For instance, the European Union's Platform Directive sets legal standards for reclassification while introducing human oversight over algorithmic management. These countries support algorithmic transparency, collective bargaining regulations, and human oversight.[238] At the same time, they also aim to balance labour projections while maintaining flexibility and fostering innovation, ensuring that regulations do not stifle technological progress. This bloc's approach combines worker protections, such as reclassification and human oversight, with efforts to maintain platform flexibility and innovation.

Developed Asian Economies with Strong Rule of Law

This bloc includes advanced digital economies such as Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. These nations are characterised by strong labor protections, but limited experience in regulating platform work. While cautious about reclassifications within existing frameworks, these governments have begun adapting existing labour frameworks to better address gig and freelance work. They support algorithmic transparency legislation and the collection of digital work metrics, aiming to gradually integrate gig workers into social protection systems.[239] In addition to this, Japan and South Korea are exploring hybrid benefits models tied to new labor categories for freelancers, independent professionals working on a project basis, and freelancers-for-hire, contracted individuals operating under recurring platforms or agencies.[240] These systems aim to gradually extend social projections without fully redefining employment categories.[241] This bloc aims to develop their current labour legislation infrastructure to better clarify gig labour's role in their economies.

Growing Asian Economies

Members of this bloc include India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, and Pakistan. In rapidly growing economies, gig platforms offer vital employment opportunities for youth and informal-sector participants, especially in urban areas.[242] Governments in these countries tend to favor hybrid classifications or voluntary codes of conduct rather than granting freelancers full employee status. This bloc aims to preserve the flexibility gig

[236] "Europe to End Robo-Firing in Major Gig Economy Overhaul," https://www.wired.com/story/platform-work-eu-overhauls/.
[237] "ILO: Adopt Binding Treaty to Protect 'Gig' Workers," https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/03/ilo-adopt-binding-treaty-protect-gig-workers.
[238] "Europe to End Robo-Firing in Major Gig Economy Overhaul," https://www.wired.com/story/platform-work-eu-overhauls/.
[239] Ibid.
[240] "Exploring the gig economy: Challenges and opportunities. A self guided resource," https://www.ilo.org/publications/exploring-gig-economy-challenges-and-opportunities-booklet.
[241] "Handbook on Measuring Digital Platform Employment and Work," OECD Publishing, March 31, 2023, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/handbook-on-measuring-digital-platform-employment-and-work_0ddcac3b-en.html.
[242] Fatima Hussein, "Online gig work is growing rapidly, but workers lack job protections, a World Bank report says," AP, September 8, 2023, https://apnews.com/article/online-gig-workers-labor-employment-world-bank-40b81a789fd5f0fb366e83f0223d832f.

labour provides while still supporting innovation within new industries.[243] These nations are becoming more receptive to algorithmic transparency and data portability, especially when it is tied to international standards, as an extension of domestic regulation.[244] Due to less comprehensive labour protections and enforcement mechanisms, delegations may support these portable benefits through regional cooperation or internationally led programs.[245] Delegates within this bloc would show interest in prioritizing worker rights and protections, but would likely focus on capacity-building as a foundational step before broader implementation.

Middle-Tier Economies with Development Priorities

This bloc includes both low-income economies with large informal labour bases, such as Nigeria, Kenya, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Haiti, and politically cautious, high-income countries including the United States, Brazil, Israel, and the UAE. In low-income countries, gig work serves as an extension of informal labor, as full-time employment opportunities are limited.[246] Governments across these diverse economies favor gradual, capacity-building initiatives, such as portable social protection policies and digital literacy campaigns, over classification reforms.[247] These delegations may support algorithmic transparency, choosing to align with international standards due to limited domestic enforcement capacity.[248] This limitation is rooted in factors such as underfunded labour inspectors, widespread gig work beyond formal governance structures, corruption, and weak institutional capacity.[249] As a result, this bloc prefers actions which are regionally or internationally coordinated over those that are domestic in scope.

Discussion Questions

1. To what extent should gig workers be reclassified as employees, and how can nations balance this with the need for flexibility, innovation, and job access—particularly in lower income and emerging economies?

2. How can governments enforce algorithmic transparency without compromising platform companies' proprietary technology or discouraging startup innovation?

3. What role should international organizations (such as the ILO or OECD) play in regulating platform work, given the global nature of gig work and the varying capacities of national governments?

[243] "Regulating platform-based work in developing countries: how to balance job opportunities and workers' protection?" https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/jobs/regulating-platform-based-work-developing-countries-how-balance-job-opportunities-and-workers.
[244] "Publication: Working Without Borders: The Promise and Peril of Online Gig Work," https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/ebc4a7e2-85c6-467b-8713-e2d77e954c6c.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Ibid.
[247] "Regulating platform-based work in developing countries: how to balance job opportunities and workers' protection?" https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/jobs/regulating-platform-based-work-developing-countries-how-balance-job-opportunities-and-workers.
[248] Ibid.
[249] "Tackling Vulnerability in the Informal Economy, Development Centre Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1787/939b7bcd-en.

4. Should gig workers be guaranteed collective bargaining rights regardless of their legal employment status? If so, how can such rights be implemented across jurisdictions with weak union infrastructure?

5. How can portable social protections be practically implemented in countries with informal labor markets and limited digital infrastructure?

6. What are the ethical and realistic ways to ensure that women and marginalized groups have equal access to protections and opportunities in the growing gig economy?

7. To what extent do digital platforms take responsibility for gig workers' mistreatment in the form of workplace accidents, loss of income, or unfair treatment?

Additional Resources

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EU Platform Work Directive – Directive (EU) 2024/2831
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/2831/oj/eng.

World Bank – Working Without Borders: The Promise and Peril of Platform Jobs for Cross-Border Workers (2023)
https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/40066.

G20 – Principles for Platform Work (2023)
https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2023/230721-gig.html.

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