



► Policy Brief

October 2026

Preventing and Addressing Violence and Harassment in the Informal Economy and through Formalization: Key principles

Key points

- **Workers in the informal economy often face heightened risks of violence and harassment** due to poverty, economic insecurity, unsafe working conditions, weak protection systems and limited access to justice. Women and groups in vulnerable situations, including migrant workers, domestic workers, home-based workers and workers in public spaces, face compounded risks of gender-based violence and harassment linked to discrimination, stigma and unequal power relations.
- **These risks are reinforced by structural features of informality**, including limited legal coverage, weak enforcement, restricted access to social protection and representation, and unsafe or isolated work environments.
- **International labour standards take a dual and mutually reinforced approach:** immediate action to address decent-work deficits and ensure rights and protection in the informal economy, alongside a gradual, inclusive and gender-responsive transition to formality. The Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204) itself reflects both dimensions while the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 206) complement and reinforce this framework by ensuring that protection from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment, extends to all workers and economic units regardless of formal status.

This is the first of two complementary policy briefs on preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the informal economy and through formalization. The companion brief (<https://doi.org/10.54394/00035564>) focuses on promising practices. The development of these policy briefs was made possible with the financial support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Introduction

Violence and harassment in the world of work is a pervasive global challenge that affects workers across all sectors and economies. Workers and economic units¹ in the informal economy, however, face particular and heightened vulnerabilities. In low- and middle- income countries, the informal economy represents up to 35 per cent of GDP and encompasses a wide range of workers and economic units undertaking market and non-market activities that are not, in law or in practice, covered by formal arrangements or adequately protected. Workers in the informal economy may face vulnerabilities associated with poverty and economic insecurity, limited labour and social protection, unsafe or unregulated working environments, isolation, and work carried out in public or private spaces with limited oversight. Women and groups in situations of vulnerability may face compounded risks linked to discrimination, stigma and unequal power relations, including gender-based violence and harassment.

The characteristics and conditions associated with informality can exacerbate exposure to violence and harassment and make it more difficult to prevent, report and remedy. Gaps in legal and effective protection, weak enforcement, economic insecurity, power imbalances, marginalization and limited access to justice can combine to increase vulnerability. Addressing violence and harassment in this context therefore requires extending legal protection, ensuring effective access to that protection in practice, and tackling the structural drivers that sustain vulnerability and inequality. The diversity of work settings in the informal economy also means that exposure to violence and harassment occurs across environments with varying degrees of control and influence by different actors.

International labour standards provide for a dual approach in this regard. They provide for complementary action within the informal economy and through the transition to formality. ILO's Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), calls both for measures to address rights and protection deficits affecting those in the informal economy and for a gradual transition to formality. ILO's Violence and Harassment

Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 206), reinforce this framework and call for protection of those working both in the formal and informal economy.

This Brief, the first in a two-part series, aims to support tripartite constituents by examining the specific drivers of vulnerability to violence and harassment in the informal economy and sets out the key principles arising from relevant international labour standards, in particular Convention No. 190, Recommendation No. 206 and Recommendation No. 204. The companion policy brief, [*Preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the informal economy and through formalization: Promising practices*](#), provides some examples of how these principles can be translated into practical measures to strengthen prevention, protection and redress.

Key Principles and Context

What informality means and entails

From a policy perspective, as noted in Recommendation No. 204, the term “informal economy” (a) refers to all economic activities by workers and economic units that are – in law or in practice – not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements; and (b) does not cover illicit activities. In 2023, the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians adopted a resolution concerning statistics on the informal economy (ILO 2023a), which is aligned conceptually with informality as set out in Recommendation No. 204. It defines the informal economy as comprising all productive activities carried out by persons or economic units that are – in law or in practice – not covered by formal arrangements, whether or not they are carried out for pay or profit. This conceptual definition is reflected in operational definitions of core elements of the informal economy, namely, the informal sector and informal employment. Informal employment refers to any activity for pay or profit that is – in law or in practice – not covered by commercial laws, income taxation, labour legislation and social security laws. Persons in informal employment can work in informal economic units (often small-scale entrepreneurs), in formal enterprises or in households. The informal economy also includes

¹ Although Recommendation No. 204 does not define the term “economic units”, it uses this expression rather than “enterprises” to encompass a broader range of arrangements in the informal economy. These include households employing domestic workers, which are not generally regarded as enterprises, as well as activities that do not correspond to

the conventional understanding of an enterprise, such as street vending and other production activities carried out without identifiable premises or a fixed location.

underdeclared wages, hours and profits for or by persons in formal employment as well as informal work activities other than employment such as own-use production work, volunteer work, unpaid trainee work and other unpaid work.

The informal economy is a major feature of the world of work. At the global level, informality has been gradually declining over the past two decades, but progress remains slow. As of 2026, informal employment represented just under 58 per cent of total employment, compared to 60 per cent in 2006. Given the pace of growth in population and employment, the numbers of workers in informality continues to rise, and reached over 2 billion in 2026. The figures range from 9 per cent in high-income countries to close to 90 per cent of workers in low-income countries (ILO 2026a).

Informality is particularly prevalent in some sectors and occupations, including care work, home-based and domestic work (ILO 2021a),² street vending, recycling and waste picking, construction and mining, and rural and agricultural work (ILO 2023b; ILO 2025a). Persons living in rural areas are twice as likely as those in urban areas to be in informal employment, with agriculture being the sector with the highest level of informal employment. Own-account and temporary workers face substantially higher levels of informality than other workers (see Box 1) and informality of both enterprises and workers decreases as the size of the enterprise increases.

► Box 1. Informal employment: key data highlights



Similarly, women as well as groups in situations of vulnerability are often at higher risk of informality and

often face specific barriers to formalization (ILO 2025a). Data show that women are more likely than men to be in informal employment in most countries (see Box 1), and 70 per cent of persons with disabilities are in informal employment as opposed to 58 per cent of workers with no disabilities (ILO 2023c). This is also true of migrant workers who are more likely to be in the informal economy than national workers. Based on data for 18 developing and emerging countries, the average incidence of informal employment is three percentage points higher for the foreign-born population than for the native-born population; it is seven percentage points higher for non-citizens than for workers who are citizens of the country in which they live (OECD 2023). Indigenous and tribal peoples are also more likely to be in informal employment than other workers (ILO 2020).

For most workers and economic units, participation in the informal economy is not by choice but as a consequence of a lack of opportunities in the formal economy and the absence of other means of livelihood.

Why the risk of violence and harassment may be exacerbated in the informal economy

Informality is one of the structural barriers to advancing decent work, social justice and sustainable development. It limits the realization of workers' rights, including the fundamental principles and rights at work, weakens effective labour protection, and restricts universal access to comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection. It also undermines the rule of law, hinders productivity and has a negative impact on the development of sustainable enterprises, public revenues, governments' scope of action, the soundness of institutions and fair competition in national and international markets. These structural deficits not only perpetuate poverty and inequality but also create conditions in which violence and harassment may be more likely to occur and less likely to be effectively prevented or remedied.

According to ILO data, more than one in five persons in employment (23 per cent) have experienced at least one form of violence or harassment at work, whether physical, psychological or sexual during their working life (ILO,

² More than 80 per cent of the world's 75.6 million domestic workers – of whom 76 per cent are women – are in informal employment, twice the share of other employees.

Gallup and LRF 2022). Although evidence on violence and harassment in the informal economy remains limited, available research suggests that workers in informal employment may face heightened risks. Recent ILO research in three countries with high levels of informality found that 65 per cent of workers in Senegal, 58 per cent in Côte d'Ivoire and 43 per cent in Burkina Faso reported having experienced violence and harassment at work (ILO 2026b). The research points to interconnected determinants related to gender inequalities, socio-economic and organizational factors, and legal and institutional gaps. These factors can intersect with the conditions and circumstances associated with informal employment, including limited access to labour and social protection, to heighten workers' vulnerability to violence and harassment.

Legal, institutional and socio-economic barriers

Weak public institutions and regulatory gaps, combined with complex or poorly implemented regulatory frameworks, administrative constraints and limited institutional capacity, are among the factors that can contribute to informality and increase exposure to violence and harassment. At the same time, many micro and small economic units operate under significant resource, administrative and productivity constraints that may limit their capacity to comply with complex formal requirements or to implement preventive measures without adequate support and enabling conditions. This can create a vicious cycle, as informality can, in turn, restrict the realization of fundamental principles and rights at work and limit workers' and economic units' access to representation and social dialogue, weakening important mechanisms for preventing and addressing violence and harassment.

Gaps in legal coverage, weak enforcement and limited access to justice and public services can further undermine prevention, protection and accountability. Extending labour protection and social security to informal economy workers is therefore important to reduce vulnerability and ensure access to protection and remedies. Yet, legal coverage alone is insufficient. Even where reforms have taken place, weak enforcement, limited awareness of rights, complex procedures and fear of retaliation can make those protections difficult to access in practice (ILO

2026c).³ Globally, only slightly more than half of victims disclose their experiences of violence and harassment, often turning to friends or family rather than formal mechanisms (ILO, Gallup and LRF 2022).

The absence or limited applicability and enforcement of occupational safety and health regulations and labour inspection mechanisms in informal workplaces, including private homes and small-scale enterprises, further constrain prevention. Moreover, in contexts where certain informal activities are stigmatized, partially criminalized or subject to restrictive local regulation, workers may avoid reporting violence and harassment for fear of fines, eviction, loss of livelihood or other sanctions. This dynamic reinforces conditions in which violence and harassment can occur with limited accountability.

While poverty and economic insecurity can increase workers' vulnerability to violence and harassment by reducing their options to avoid or leave harmful situations, limited or non-existent access to social protection can further exacerbate the consequences of violence and harassment, particularly where psychosocial, physical or other injuries or illnesses result in incapacity to work (ILO 2021b). On a worldwide basis, earnings of workers in informal wage employment are 56 per cent of the earnings of a formal wage worker (ILO 2023c). Informal workers (either wage or non-wage workers) are also twice as likely as formal workers to live in poor households (ILO 2023d). Many informal workers cannot afford to lose income or refuse work opportunities, resulting in significant power imbalances. These vulnerabilities may be exploited by clients, intermediaries, employers or even public authorities, depending on the specific work arrangement and context.

Informal workers also face significant structural barriers in accessing justice. Informal work arrangements often lack structured workplace-level grievance handling mechanisms. While criminal proceedings may technically be available, victims frequently encounter procedural complexity, cost barriers, limited legal assistance and institutional mistrust. Street vendors may face eviction, confiscation or destruction of their goods, and physical harm under the enforcement of restrictive regulations (Recio and Gomez 2013). In some contexts, women seeking

³ The drivers of informality are numerous, multifaceted, and deeply interrelated. While this brief focuses on drivers directly relevant to addressing and preventing violence and harassment in the informal economy and through the transition to formality, other drivers are

detailed in Point 7 of the [ILC.113/Resolution IV](#) (Resolution concerning addressing informality and promoting the transition to formality for decent work).

to register their businesses have reported experiencing sexual harassment by government officials, which can deter them from formalizing their activities (ILO 2014). These gaps not only heighten risk, but also erode trust in public institutions; a trust that is essential for effective prevention, reporting and redress, as well as for the transition to formality.

Marginalization in society, including discrimination and stigma

Marginalization and discrimination are not only among the drivers of informality but also central structural drivers of violence and harassment. Workers and economic units operating outside formal regulatory frameworks are frequently perceived as peripheral or illicit, and their contributions to society undervalued and invisible. At the same time, activities that are socially undervalued, particularly those associated with care, low-wage services or historically marginalized groups, are more likely to be excluded from formal recognition and remain informal. Informality and social devaluation therefore mutually reinforce each other. This reciprocal dynamic entrenches stigma and unequal treatment, creating environments in which violence and harassment can occur with reduced scrutiny, diminished accountability and limited institutional response.

Women in the informal economy face heightened vulnerabilities to violence and harassment and, in particular, to gender-based violence and harassment, due to the intersection of informality and gender inequality. Persistent stereotypes and gender norms about women's roles, particularly those related to unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, contribute to women's concentration in low-paid, undervalued and often unregulated sectors or modalities of work, such as domestic work, street vending, home-based work, contributing family work or unpaid forms of work. Globally, women continue to perform the majority of unpaid care work (ILO 2018),⁴ and informal work arrangements are in many cases among the few available options compatible with balancing caregiving responsibilities.

The intersection of informality with discrimination can magnify economic dependence and power imbalances, heightening vulnerability to violence and harassment (ILO 2016a). Migrant workers, particularly those in vulnerable

situations, including undocumented migrant workers and those working in the informal economy, may face heightened risks of violence and harassment due to discriminatory practices, unequal power relations and barriers to accessing rights and protections. Policies regulating admission and stay of temporary migrant workers often tend to bring these workers outside of the scope of labour law protection (ILO 2025b, ILO 2022b), Restrictive migration policies and employment arrangements that limit workers' ability to change employers or leave abusive situations can increase vulnerability to violence and harassment, as well as to forced labour and trafficking in persons. Language barriers, limited access to information and services, and fear of retaliation, detention, deportation or loss of migration status may further discourage workers from seeking assistance, reporting abuses or accessing available protection and remedies (ILO 2022a, ILO 2016b).

Indigenous and tribal peoples, as well as individuals belonging to religious or ethnically diverse groups, may encounter systemic discrimination that limits access to decent work and increases exposure to violence and harassment (ILO 2007; ILO 2026c). Historical marginalization, including the legacies of colonialism and inter-generational trauma, can reinforce such exclusion (Solidarity Center 2023). Addressing violence and harassment in the informal economy while promoting the transition to formality therefore requires confronting not only immediate risks, but also the structural and historical inequalities that shape vulnerability.

Isolation and specific work arrangements

Isolation and certain work arrangements common in the informal economy can significantly heighten exposure to violence and harassment. In low- and middle-income countries, only one in four informal workers operates from fixed, visible premises. The vast majority work in non-fixed locations (62 per cent) or within a home environment (14 per cent). Notably, women in informal employment are 2.7 times more likely than men to work from their own home or someone else's home (ILO 2023c). Evidence from a recent ILO report covering Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal shows that third parties, particularly clients, customers, patients and members of the public, are among the main perpetrators of violence and harassment. This

⁴ According to ILO data, globally, women continue to perform over three quarters of unpaid care work.

reflects the structure of many service-oriented and informal jobs. Such incidents occur not only in traditional workplaces, but also in digital spaces, clients' premises and during commuting, often beyond the direct control of a single actor and requiring coordinated responses across different stakeholders (ILO 2026b).

Where work is performed behind closed doors, in private homes, in remote locations or without co-workers or supervisory oversight, the risk of violence and harassment can be exacerbated. Home-based and domestic workers, many of whom are women, may be particularly vulnerable to violence and harassment, including by third parties such as family members or others residing in or visiting the home. Similarly, the overlap between domestic and work settings can blur boundaries and create environments in which violence and harassment remain hidden, and where prevention and response mechanisms may be more difficult to implement (Box 2).

► **Box 2. Domestic violence and informal economy workers: compounding risks, vulnerabilities and impacts**

Where home and work overlap, domestic violence can spill directly into working life, and in some cases, work-related dynamics can make it worse. This is especially true for workers in the informal economy whose work takes place in or around the home, such as home-based workers and others engaged in livelihood activities where the line between private life and work is hard to draw (ILO 2021c). In these settings, violence originating in the household can have immediate consequences for a worker's safety, health, income, and ability to keep working. The COVID-19 pandemic brought this into sharp relief: confinement measures that restricted movement and cut off access to external networks were associated with a significant increase in domestic violence, including for workers in domestic and home-based settings (UN Women 2021).

Informal workers may also face particular barriers to seeking help, as precarious income, economic dependency on the abuser, isolation and fear of retaliation can make it harder to report violence and harassment, or access support (Homenet South Asia 2020). Shifts in household income patterns or changes in economic roles within the family can also generate tensions that heighten the risk of domestic violence (ADB 2023).

These intersections are explicitly recognized in Convention No. 190, which calls on Member States to acknowledge the effects of domestic violence in the world of work and to take measures to mitigate its impact where reasonably practicable.

Digital labour platform workers, including those providing ride-hailing, delivery, domestic or at-home beauty services, may similarly work in private or unfamiliar spaces in isolation with clients. Where workers are self-employed or outside formal employment relationships, access to labour protection and mechanisms to prevent and address violence and harassment may also be limited, while the dispersed nature of platform work can pose additional challenges for prevention and oversight (Fairwork 2023). At the same time, digital labour platforms may, in some contexts, contribute to formalization by increasing the visibility and traceability of work, facilitating access to information, and enabling the development of reporting, monitoring and accountability mechanisms, which can support efforts to prevent and address violence and harassment.

Workers operating in public spaces — including some digital platform workers — may face different but equally significant risks. Street vendors, waste pickers or others most at risk of carrying out their activities informally in public spaces, often occupy subordinate positions in relation to public authorities, clients and third parties. Poor lighting, lack of secure sanitation facilities and night-work, can further increase exposure to violence and harassment. Workers in remote areas, such as plantations and out of town factories, may also face violence and harassment during commuting or transportation. Cross-border women traders in certain regions report high prevalence of violence and harassment, both at border crossings but also during transportation and in destination countries (Jacobson and Joekes. 2019).

► **Box 3. Drivers of violence and harassment in the informal markets in Abidjan, Ouagadougou and Dakar**

Research conducted in major urban markets of Abidjan, Dakar and Ouagadougou explores the determinants of violence and harassment in the informal economy, specifically in trade, catering and tailoring sectors. Across the three cities, verbal violence was identified as the most prevalent (26 per cent of respondents in Abidjan, 43 per cent in Dakar, 47 per cent in Ouagadougou), followed by

physical violence (7 per cent, 13 per cent, 8 per cent, respectively) and sexual violence and harassment (2 per cent, 5 per cent, 4 per cent, respectively).

The findings highlight several common determinants. Across all three cities, informal working conditions and frequent interactions with clients significantly increase the likelihood of violence and harassment. Sector- and location-specific risks are also evident, particularly in the tailoring sector in Abidjan, the catering sector in Ouagadougou and in crowded markets in Dakar. Sex is a key determinant of sexual violence and harassment, with women consistently at greater risk. Low income, a higher number of dependants and the lack of recognized social role or marginalization were also associated with greater exposure. In addition, higher work intensity and longer tenure are associated with increased exposure, particularly to verbal violence, suggesting a normalization effect over time. The impact of legal awareness is mixed, offering some protective effects but remaining limited in contexts where enforcement is weak.

Source: Fakhfakh F. et al. Forthcoming.

How international labour standards respond to violence and harassment in the informal economy: the dual approach

Formalization, guided by the ILO Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), is essential to expanding protection and reducing structural vulnerability. By addressing the underlying drivers of informality, the formalization process can help mitigate factors conducive to violence and harassment. In this regard, Recommendation No. 204 calls for an integrated policy framework to facilitate the transition to the formal economy, which should also address the promotion of equality and eliminate work-related discrimination and violence, including gender-based violence.⁵ Complementing this approach, the Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206), provides that, “in facilitating the transition from the informal to the formal economy, Members should provide resources and

assistance for informal economy workers and employers, and their associations, to prevent and address violence and harassment in the informal economy” (para. 11).

Further, and critically, international labour standards recognize that rights and protection in the informal economy cannot be made contingent on formalization. Recommendation No. 204 calls upon members to “promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work for those in the informal economy” and “promote and extend occupational safety and health protection to employers and workers in the informal economy”. The 2025 [Resolution concerning the general discussion on addressing informality and promoting the transition to formality for decent work](#) reaffirms this complementary approach, calling for integrated, gradual, inclusive, gender- and context-responsive formalization approaches, while emphasizing that the realization of fundamental principles and rights at work in practice cannot and should not depend on the transition to formality but should instead support and facilitate that transition.

With respect to violence and harassment, the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 206) provide the comprehensive normative framework for prevention, protection, enforcement and redress, covering workers in both the formal and informal economy. Convention No. 190 defines “violence and harassment” as a “*range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm and includes gender-based violence and harassment*” (Art. 1(a)). Together with Recommendation No. 206, it is the first treaty to clearly set out a comprehensive framework for prevention, protection, enforcement and redress. Convention No. 190 applies to workers irrespective of their contractual status and covers both the public and private sector, as well as the formal and informal economy (Art. 2). It extends protection to violence and harassment occurring “in the course of, linked with or arising out of work” (Art. 3), thereby encompassing public and private spaces when they are a space of work, and other locations where work-related activities take place. This broad scope

⁵ Reaffirming the continued relevance of Recommendation No. 204, the [Resolution concerning the general discussion on addressing informality and promoting the transition to formality for decent work](#) calls members to “address violence and harassment in the world of work, in accordance with ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)”. The [Follow-up to the resolution concerning the general discussion](#)

[on addressing informality and promoting the transition to formality for decent work](#) subsequently endorsed by the Governing Body in November 2025 provides a basis for future technical assistance and sustained promotion of C.190 in the context of informality.

is particularly significant for workers and economic units in the informal economy whose work often occurs outside traditional workplace settings.

Convention No. 190 expressly requires Member States to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work and to further promote decent work (Art. 5-6) as part of any strategies to address violence and harassment. It calls for the adoption of an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach (Art. 4) structured around three pillars: protection and prevention (Art. 7-9); enforcement and remedies (Art. 10); and guidance, training and awareness-raising (Art. 11). Importantly, it recognizes the role of public authorities in both preventing and addressing violence and harassment towards informal economy workers (Art. 8), while also emphasizing the role of employers and workers and their organizations in prevention and response measures. Convention No. 190 builds on a broader body of international labour standards that address violence and harassment, or at least some of its manifestations, affecting informal economy workers. In particular, some sector-specific and group-specific instruments that further reinforce protection include the Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193), the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006) as amended, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), the HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010 (R. 200), and the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205).

Conclusions and Way Forward

A significant share of the global workforce, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, earns a livelihood in the informal economy. Yet, the structural characteristics of informality can intensify exposure to violence and harassment. Gaps in legal and effective coverage, occupational safety and health regulations, and access to effective remedies can reinforce conditions in which violence and harassment persist with limited accountability. Discrimination, stigma and gender inequality further entrench vulnerability, particularly for women and groups in situations of marginalization. When work is undertaken in isolation, in private homes, in poorly

regulated public spaces or at night, there are increased risks and limited access to support mechanisms.

International labour standards provide a coherent framework to address these vulnerabilities through a dual and mutually reinforcing approach: extending effective rights and protection in the informal economy without waiting for formalization, while facilitating a gradual transition to formality that can strengthen and sustain decent work over time. Recommendation No. 204 reflects both dimensions. It calls for measures to achieve decent work and respect, promote and realise fundamental principles and rights at work for those in the informal economy, including immediate action to address unsafe and unhealthy working conditions and the extension of occupational safety and health protection. At the same time, it recognises transition to the formal economy as essential to achieving decent work and as a means of progressively extending and strengthening labour and social protection. The 2025 ILC Conclusions reaffirm this complementary approach by explicitly calling for integrated, gradual, inclusive, gender- and context-responsive formalization approaches. Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206 complement and reinforce this approach by establishing the framework specifically applicable to violence and harassment, including in the informal economy. Prevention and protection from violence and harassment should therefore not be postponed pending formalization; rather, immediate measures to prevent and address such unacceptable behaviours and practices and longer-term efforts to facilitate transition to formality should reinforce one another.

Effective responses also need to reflect the diversity of the informal economy. Workers and economic units operate across private homes, public spaces, markets, farms, small economic units, digital platforms and other settings, with different actors exercising different degrees of control or influence. Risks and barriers are also shaped by gender and other forms of discrimination and inequality. An inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach therefore requires measures adapted to these different realities, with governments, employers and workers and their organizations acting within their respective responsibilities and degrees of control.

References

- ADB. 2023. [“Women’s Economic Empowerment and Violence Against Women and Girls: Evidence on the Relationship and the Response in the Pacific Region”](#) (Brochure 1).
- Fairwork. 2023. [“Gender and Platform Work: Beyond Techno-Solutionism”](#).
- Fakhfakh, F. et al. Forthcoming. *“Violence and harassment at work in the informal economy: Evidence from Abidjan, Dakar and Ouagadougou”*.
- HomeNet South Asia. 2020. Research on Violence Against Women in the Context of Home-Based Work in Nepal.
- ILO. 2007. [“Eliminating discrimination against indigenous and tribal peoples in employment and occupation: A guide to ILO Convention No. 111”](#). Geneva.
- . 2014. [“Women’s Entrepreneurship Development in Uganda”](#). Geneva.
- . 2016a. [“Final Report: Meeting of Experts on Violence against Women and Men in the World of Work”](#). Geneva.
- . 2016b. [“Promoting fair migration: General Survey concerning the migrant workers instruments”](#). Geneva.
- . 2018. [“Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work”](#). Geneva.
- . 2020. [“Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an Inclusive, Sustainable and Just Future”](#). Geneva.
- . 2021a. [“Making decent work a reality for domestic workers: Progress and prospects ten years after the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 \(No. 189\)”](#). Geneva.
- . 2021b. [“Inequalities and the World of Work”](#). Geneva.
- . 2021c. [“Violence and Harassment in the World of Work: A Guide on Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206”](#). Geneva.
- . 2022a. [“Securing Decent Work for Nursing Personnel and Domestic Workers, Key Actors in the Care Economy”](#). International Labour Conference, 110th Session. Geneva.
- . 2022b. [“Synthesis report - Temporary labour migration: Unpacking complexities”](#). Geneva.
- . 2023a. [“Resolution concerning statistics on the informal economy”](#), ICLS/21/2023/RES. I (October 2023). Geneva.
- . 2023b. [“Leaving No One Behind: Building Inclusive Labour Protection in an Evolving World of Work”](#). International Labour Conference, 111th Session. Geneva.
- . 2023c. [“Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Update”](#). Geneva.
- . 2023d. ICLS/21/2023/Room document 5 [“Contextualising informality: The Informal Economy Indicator Framework”](#). Geneva.
- . 2025a. [“Innovative Approaches to Addressing Informality and Promoting the Transition to Formality for Decent Work”](#). ILC.113/Report VI. Geneva.
- . 2025b. [“Temporary labour migration: Towards social justice”](#). Geneva.
- . 2026a. SDG indicator 8.3.1. – ILO Modelled Estimates”, ILOSTAT database, accessed 13 August 2026.
- . 2026b. [“Making the Invisible Visible: Understanding and Combating Violence and Harassment at Work in Three West African Countries”](#). Geneva.
- . 2026c. [“In conditions of freedom and dignity: Pathways to racial equality in the world of work”](#). Geneva.
- ILO, Gallup and Lloyd’s Register Foundation (LRF). 2022. [“Experiences of Violence and Harassment at Work: A Global First Survey”](#). Geneva.
- Jacobson, J., and S. Joekes. 2019. [“Violence against Women Traders at Border Crossings”](#).
- OECD. 2023. [“Informality and Globalisation: In Search of a New Social Contract”](#). Paris.
- Recio, R., and J. Gomez. 2013. [“Street Vendors, their Contested Spaces, and the Policy Environment: A View from Caloocan, Metro Manila.”](#) *“Environment and Urbanization ASIA”* 4(1): 173–190.
- Solidarity Center. 2023. [“Eradicating Gender-based Violence and Harassment at Work”](#).
- UN Women. 2021. [“Measuring the Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during COVID-19”](#).



Licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) © International Labour Organization 2026

ILO. *Preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the informal economy and through formalization: Key principles*, Policy brief, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2026. ©ILO. <https://doi.org/10.54394/00035404>

Contact details

International Labour Organization

Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

T: +41 22 799 7239

E: <https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/informal-economy>