

International labour standard instruments on Work and family

The Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), and the Workers with Family Responsibilities Recommendation, 1981 (No. 165) are the main international standards addressing the issues and concerns regarding the reconciliation of work and family life. They provide considerable guidance on policies and measures which are needed to help workers with family responsibilities and to reduce work–family conflict. The foundation of the Convention and Recommendation is based on the principle of creating equality of opportunity and treatment in employment and occupation between men and women workers with and without family responsibilities.

[ILO Convention No. 156](#) applies to all branches of economic activity and all categories of workers. Countries that ratify this Convention make it the aim of national policy to enable persons with family responsibilities to exercise their right to obtain or engage in employment without being subject to discrimination and, to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities. It also provides that all measures compatible with national conditions and possibilities shall be taken to:

- enable workers with family responsibilities to exercise free choice in employment;
- take account of their needs in terms and conditions of employment and in social security needs and community planning;
- develop or promote community services, such as child care and family services and facilities;
- provide vocational training and guidance to help workers with family responsibilities get into and remain in the labour force;
- promote information and education that contribute to a broader public understanding on the principle of equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers with family responsibilities.

Finally, it states that family responsibilities, as such, should not constitute a valid reason for termination of employment.

[Recommendation No. 165](#), supplements ILO Convention No. 156 by outlining more concrete actions that can be taken by countries to enhance the reconciliation of work and family life. It spells out in more detail than the Convention, but within the framework of the national policy, the need to avoid discrimination against workers with family responsibilities and to enable them to combine work with family responsibilities. It further notes measures that relate to training and employment; terms and conditions of employment; child care, family services and facilities; social security; and help in the exercise of family responsibilities.

[Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 \(No. 156\)](#) and [Recommendation, 1981 \(No. 165\)](#);