

Global Policy Responses to Digital Labour Platforms: A Study through the Lens of the Decent Work Agenda

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Abstract: *The paper examines global policies, rules, and regulations governing digital labour platform workers. This study aims to provide a brief overview of the policies adopted by various countries worldwide. An attempt has been made to analyse it using the decent work framework. ILO launches Global Policy Tracker on Digital Labour Platforms, a new ILO resource to support evidence-based policymaking and social dialogue on platform work. The present work is based on this Global Policy Tracker on digital labour platforms. The study is based on the ILO's draft Convention and Recommendation on decent work in the platform economy, prepared for the second discussion at the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference in 2026. The study identifies areas needing clarification-such as worker classification, occupational safety and health duties, pay, data privacy, and the oversight of automated decision-making systems - and suggests revisions to improve coherence, adaptability, and relevance across different national settings.*

Keywords: Digital labour platforms, Decent work framework, Platform worker regulation, ILO global policy tracker, platform economy governance

1. Introduction

Digital labour platforms¹ are an essential component of the Platform economy. There are two types of digital labour platforms: location-based and online. If services are provided from specific locations, it is a location-based platform; if they are provided remotely, it is an online platform. (ILO, 2024). The platform economy marks a significant change in the world of work, driven by digitalisation. Its expansion has opened new markets for businesses and generated new jobs and income sources, often offering high flexibility and low entry barriers for workers. Consumers benefit from more affordable and accessible goods and services, especially in underserved regions. However, this economy also fundamentally alters how work is organised and carried out, raising new challenges to ensure that platform workers have access to fair and decent employment (ILO, 2024). This new digital labour market is flexible and cost-effective.

The platform economy generally consists of online marketplaces involving at least three parties. The platform provider acts as an intermediary, coordinating the supply and demand sides of the other two parties. This intermediary role enables the platform provider to transfer most costs, risks, and liabilities to the other parties. Usually, the platform provider does not bear the costs of labour or production methods. Since it offers a purely virtual service- such as an app or website- it can expand rapidly without the costs of production increasing proportionally, due to very low marginal costs. Additionally, the platform provider is the only party with full access to and control over the platform's data, processes, and rules (Schmidt, F. A., 2017). Digital platforms simplify millions of lives, and it's hard to picture modern life without them. Their

usefulness, importance, and omnipresence make analysing their functioning crucial. This is especially true as labour markets are increasingly organised through digital platforms. Since these platforms operate internationally, they pose significant challenges for national legislation, which typically operates only at the national level (ibid).

A platform worker is defined as “a person engaged in a work arrangement outside of a traditional employer-employee relationship in which organisations or individuals use an online platform to access other organisations or individuals to solve specific problems or to provide specific services or any such other activities which the Central Government may notify in exchange for payment”. (Sections 2(60) and (61), the Code on Social Security, 2020)

2. Background of the Study and Review of Literature

The report 'Digital Platforms and Labour Laws in India' (IFMR LEAD, 2024) critically explores how India's current labour laws interact with the growing gig and platform economy. It points out the fragmented legal protections for digital platform workers, highlighting gaps in social security, collective bargaining rights, and enforcement. The authors note that while platforms offer new income opportunities, they also create job insecurity by classifying workers as “independent contractors,” which excludes them from traditional labour protections. The study situates India's regulatory issues within global debates on platform work, emphasising the importance of gender-sensitive reforms and stronger institutional safeguards to protect workers' rights (IFMR LEAD, 2024).

¹ The term “digital labour platform” means a legal person or, where applicable under national law, natural person that, through digital technologies, using automated decision making systems: (i) organizes and/or facilitates work performed by persons for

remuneration or payment, for the provision of a service, upon request of the recipient or requestor; (ii) regardless of whether that work is performed online or in a specific geographic location (ILO convention 347th Session, March 2023)

The article 'Platform workers and digital agency: Making out on three types of labour platforms' by Alasoini et al. (2023) provides a detailed sociological analysis of how platform workers - such as food couriers, freelancers, and interim managers- exercise digital agency within various control systems. Based on 32 semi-structured interviews and platform webpage analysis, it shows that while all workers can exercise agency, its form and extent differ: food couriers often question and subtly manipulate opaque algorithmic systems, freelancers focus on reputation and disintermediation, and interim managers depend on trust networks with less gaming. The authors suggest that platform work reproduces offline inequalities, with algorithmic control increasing the vulnerabilities of low-skilled workers while diminishing professionals' autonomy.

The article "Towards a Fairer Platform Economy: Introducing the Fairwork Foundation" by Mark Graham and Jamie Woodcock critically explores the growth of digital labour platforms and their effects on workers globally. It highlights issues such as fragmented employment, wage suppression due to international competition, and limited bargaining power caused by information asymmetries. The authors classify platform work into three categories: location-specific services (such as Uber and Deliveroo), microtask crowdwork (such as Amazon Mechanical Turk), and freelance macrotasks (such as Upwork)- to highlight the distinct challenges each poses to labour rights. In response, they introduced the Fairwork Foundation, a certification system based on Fairtrade principles, designed to enforce standards such as minimum wage guarantees, bans on non-payment, pay transparency, and collective bargaining rights. Although the initiative provides a promising framework for accountability and advocacy, its success hinges on overcoming cross-border regulatory challenges and platform resistance, making it a bold but essential step toward securing decent work in the gig economy (Graham & Woodcock, 2017).

Keshav's 2024 article, ' Digital Labour Platforms – An Indian Labour Law Study, ' examines how the digital economy is transforming work structures and employer–employee dynamics in India. It discusses the growth of technology companies and the rising trend of remote work, portraying digital labour as flexible, location-independent, and skill-oriented. The study critically places these changes within the framework of Indian labour laws, raising important questions about regulation, worker protections, and whether current laws are sufficient. By focusing on the socio-economic effects of digitisation, the paper adds to ongoing discussions about how labour laws need to evolve to accommodate new digital work practices. The majority of Platform workers are self-employed; hence, they are outside the purview of the government's labour laws. This paper analyses the policies and rules governing platform workers across various countries. To ensure decent work for them, it is essential to formulate appropriate policies. Otherwise, they will fall outside the scope of decent work.

3. Objectives of the study

- 1) To analyse global policy responses to digital labour platforms by examining the policies of different countries.

- 2) To examine the policies within the decent work concept of the ILO

4. Methodology of the Study

This study uses a narrative review to explore global policies on digital labour platforms, with a focus on the International Labour Organisation (ILO). It aims to synthesise academic research, policy reports, and regulatory frameworks that influence the working conditions and rights of platform workers. Relevant literature was gathered from major academic databases, including Google Scholar, as well as from ILO conventions, recommendations, working papers, and global policy reports. The search strategy used keywords like 'digital labour platforms', 'gig economy', 'platform work', and 'ILO and platform work'. The review examined literature published from 2010 to 2024, a period during which platform-mediated labour grew substantially.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Global policies for Platform workers

The ILO report indicates that approximately 46 laws across different countries encompass platform workers alongside other workers. The following table provides details of various countries and the number of regulations concerning platform workers.

Table 1: Regulations Affecting Platform Workers and Country-Specific List

Name of the country	No of laws
Australia	2
Belgium	1
Canada (British Columbia)	2
Canada (Ontario)	1
Chile	2
China	7
Croatia	1
France	1
Greece	1
India	2
India (Rajasthan)	1
Indonesia	2
Italy	1
Kazakhstan	1
Kenya	1
Malta	1
Mexico	1
Portugal	2
Republic of Korea	3
Singapore	1
Spain	1
Tanzania	1
Thailand	1
US (City of New York)	1
US (City of Seattle)	1
US (State of California)	2
US (State of Indiana)	1
US (State of Massachuesets)	1
US (State of Minnesota)	1
US (State of Washington)	1
Urguay	1
Total	46

Source: ILO website

In India, the 'Motor Vehicle Aggregators Guidelines 2020,' issued under the Motor Vehicles Act 1988, establish a regulatory framework for aggregators providing passenger transport services through digital platforms. These aggregators connect drivers with passengers using online applications or platforms.

In India, the 'Social Security Code 2020', as amended by the Code on Social Security Amendment Act 2022/2023, consolidates and replaces nine existing labour laws concerning social security. It covers workers across both the organised and unorganised sectors, including gig and platform workers under Chapter IX (Articles 109–114). The recent amendments expand the implementation framework and clarify rules regarding registration, eligibility, and benefit extensions for these schemes.

In India, the Rajasthan state government passed the 'Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act 2023'. The Act establishes a legal framework for registration, social security, and welfare for platform-based gig workers in Rajasthan, India. It covers gig workers using digital platforms and the aggregators that operate within the state. Its objectives include identifying digital platform workers, securing access to welfare benefits, and supporting social security provisions.

In Australia, there are two laws which include platform workers: the 'Fair Work Act 2009 as amended by Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes No. 2) Act 2024' and 'Fair Work (Digital Labour Platform Deactivation Code) Instrument 2024 under the Fair Work Act'. The Code sets out requirements for warning notices, deactivation notices, response opportunities, review procedures, communication of decisions, and record-keeping. It applies to workers engaged in digital platform work who are considered regulated workers under the Act. In Belgium, 'Program Law (I) of December 27, 2006, as amended by the Law of 25 August 2012 and Law of 3 October 2022', includes various labour provisions aimed at modernising Belgian employment regulation. The Canadian government introduced three labour laws relating to platform workers: 'Employment Standards Regulation - B.C. Reg. 396/95, as amended by the Labour Status Amendment Act 2023 and B.C. Order in Council No. 340/2024, which ensures employment conditions for prescribed workers, including app-based ride-hailing and delivery workers. The amendments introduce minimum daily earnings, written wage statements, compensation for expenses, and conditions for suspending or deactivating platform access. Another labour law, the Workers Compensation Act, R.S.B.C. 2019, as amended by B.C. Reg. 141/2024 – Online Platform Workers Regulation - enacted by B.C. Order in Council No. 341, Province of British Columbia, Canada, on 17 June 2024, introduces a definition for platform workers. The Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, 2022, outlines the rights of workers engaged in digital platform work in Ontario. It sets regulations concerning pay statements, minimum wages, tips, notice of removal, and dispute resolution. The amendments introduce procedures for workers to file complaints related to removal from the platform and broaden the remedies available to them.

In Chile, the two labour laws that cover platform workers are statutory acts. The most recent labour law concerning

platform workers in Uruguay, 'Law 20396 - Establishment of Minimum Protection Levels for Workers Engaged in Tasks Through Digital Platforms (2025)', came into effect in 2025. It emphasises protecting workers involved in digital platform tasks, especially for goods delivery and urban passenger transport. The law addresses definitions, making contract terms transparent and accessible; automated monitoring and decision-making processes; protection of digital reputation and data portability; working hours; pay for dependent workers; rights for self-employed individuals; and occupational health and safety.

The Chinese government have seven laws which include these platform workers. The laws are the following: 1) Guidelines for services for the protection of the rights and interests of workers in new forms of employment. Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) [released on 23 February 2024] No. 50; 2) Guidelines for the protection of the rights and interests of rest and labour remuneration for workers in new forms of employment. Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) [released on 23 February 2024] No. 50'; 3) 'Guidelines for the publicity of labour rules for workers in new forms of employment' Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) [released on 23 February 2024] No. 50'; 4) 'Guidelines for the Conclusion of Labour Contracts and Written Agreements for Workers in New Forms of Employment [released on 12 September 2023] (for Trial Implementation)'; 5) 'Guiding Opinions on Safeguarding the Labour Security Rights and Interests of Workers in New Employment Forms - Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS)[2021] No. 56'; 6) 'Trade Union Law of the People's Republic of China as amended in 2021'; 7) 'Notice on Strengthening One-Stop Mediation of Labour Disputes in New Forms of Employment -Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) [2024] No. 4'. These laws emphasise that labour contracts include essential details about the employer and worker, such as contract duration, nature of work, location, working hours, rest periods, pay, social insurance, and labour protections. Additionally, they may address topics like probation, training, and benefits. The contracts should also specify platform and worker information, order dispatch and confirmation processes, payment terms, working hours and rest, occupational safety, contract modifications, termination procedures, liability for breaches, and dispute resolution.

Table 1 indicates that in the United States, seven labour laws pertain to platform workers; however, these laws are not applicable nationwide, as they are limited to specific states. In countries such as Spain, Croatia, Mexico, Singapore, Tanzania, Thailand, Belgium, France, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kenya, and Malta, there are only single law dedicated to platform workers.

5.2 Decent work and platform workers

Digital platforms lower transaction costs when offering goods and services and minimise information asymmetries in the market, enabling users to compare services based on price or quality before choosing (ILO, 2025). Some consider the algorithm revolution and cloud computing as the foundations of the platform economy. Algorithms are vital for processing

and monitoring large data volumes, which is key for platforms that need to match supply and demand efficiently. They can detect demand peaks and advise suppliers on the best times and locations to offer services, reducing transaction costs by limiting resource idleness. Moreover, they enable dynamic pricing for real-time price adjustments. Algorithms also help identify consumer behaviour and profile customers, enabling personalised solutions (ibid). ILO's World Employment and Social Outlook 2021 reported that the number of platform workers increased from 193 in 2010 to 1070 in 2023. Among these, 357 were online platforms, 334 were in the delivery sector, 119 were in individual passenger transport, 121 were in care work, 117 were in domestic work, and 22 were hybrid platforms engaged in the provision of various services.²The Online Labour Observatory provides data on the top 15 countries worldwide about the share of all workers on major online platforms.

Table 2: Share of workers on online platforms (Top 15 countries worldwide %)

Country	Share of workers
Kenya	1.01
Canada	1.07
Sri Lanka	1.13
Serbia	1.37
China	1.42
Indonesia	1.52
Egypt	1.79
Russian Federation	2.57
Ukraine	2.62
Philippines	3.33
United Kingdom	3.83
United States	5.59
Pakistan	12.05
Bangladesh	14.62
India	26.90

Source: The Online Labour Index 2020: Online Labour Supply

The ILO's decent work framework consists of four main pillars: international labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; employment creation; social protection; and social dialogue. These platform workers are part of the unorganised sector, making it challenging to ensure decent work for them. The laws mentioned above in different countries aim to include these workers alongside other organised workers.

Concerning the platform economy, the CEACR³ is of the view "that the full range of fundamental principles and rights at work apply to platform workers in the same way as to all other workers, irrespective of their employment status" (ILO, Promoting Employment and Decent Work in a Changing Landscape). The risk of child labour and forced labour is higher in sectors of the global economy where work is concealed. For online platforms, work often occurs at home behind a screen, complicating external oversight to verify that children are not working under an adult's account. (Cherry,2009). While considering occupational safety and

health, platform workers face problems such as depression, stress, anxiety, and sedentary work, which can lead to risks like visual fatigue, musculoskeletal disorders, and repetitive strain injuries. While formulating rules and laws, these factors must also be considered. Regarding remuneration, location-based platforms often charge a percentage commission to workers (and customers) upon task completion. Online platforms may employ various fee structures, optional subscription plans or a combination of both.

Article 3 of the Convention for Decent Work for Platform Workers explains the fundamental principles and rights at work. Each member country must try to protect the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, eliminate forced labour, eliminate discrimination in respect of employment, and ensure a safe and healthy working environment. Article 4(1) of the convention outlines the basic principles governing digital labour platforms' duty to prevent workplace accidents, occupational illnesses, and other health-related injuries. Article 5 emphasises the importance of providing digital labour platform workers with information and training in occupational safety and health.

When existing social security schemes do not protect all digital platform workers against contingencies arising from occupational accidents and diseases, Members should implement effective measures to extend such protection to excluded digital platform workers gradually. Nowadays, many countries have enacted laws that aim to include platform workers within their national laws. For example, the Social Security Code in India now includes platform workers in the national law.

The ILO's Decent Work in the Platform Economy report (2025) outlines the development of a draft Convention and Recommendation to set international labour standards for digital platform work, following an initial discussion at the International Labour Conference in 2025. It describes the consultative process with Member States, emphasises the Committee's preference for a principles-based, flexible instrument, and outlines proposed revisions- including more precise definitions, scope adjustments, and streamlined occupational safety and health provisions. The commentary also encourages further input from governments on key issues such as worker classification, wage rates, data privacy, and the effects of automated systems, in preparation for the second discussion at the 114th Session in 2026.

Workers on digital labour platforms are an emerging segment of the global workforce. They offer employment opportunities to many young people, regardless of gender. Therefore, governments in various countries should take steps to ensure their social security and benefits.

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² ILO reported that at the time of study it covered 98 countries around the world and platforms in some of the low income countries were not listed.

³ Committee of experts on the application of conventions and recommendations-This is an ILO (International Labour Organization) supervisory body that monitors how member countries apply ILO Conventions and Recommendations.

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