

Media Update

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ILO

PRESS RELEASE

Occupational safety and health in teleworking

Crucial changes needed to protect workers' health while teleworking

New analysis from the ILO and WHO sets out recommendations for safe and productive hybrid and teleworking.

GENEVA (ILO/WHO News) – The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have called for measures to be put in place to protect workers' health while teleworking.

A [new technical brief on healthy and safe teleworking](#), published by the two UN agencies, outlines the health benefits and risks of teleworking and the changes needed to accommodate the shift towards different forms of remote work arrangements brought on by the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and the digital transformation of work.

Among the benefits, the report says, are improved work-life balance, opportunities for flexible working hours and physical activity, reduced traffic and commuting time, and a decrease in air pollution – all of which can improve physical and mental health and social wellbeing. Teleworking can also lead to higher productivity and lower operational costs for many companies.

However, the report warns that without proper planning, organization and health and safety support the impact of teleworking on the physical and mental health and social wellbeing of workers can be significant. It can lead to isolation, burnout, depression, domestic violence, musculoskeletal and other injuries, eye strain, an increase in smoking and alcohol consumption, prolonged sitting and screen time and unhealthy weight gain.

The report outlines the roles that governments, employers, workers and workplace health services should play in promoting and protecting health and safety while teleworking.

“The pandemic has led to a surge of teleworking, effectively changing the nature of work practically overnight for many workers”, said Dr Maria Neira, Director, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health, WHO. “In the nearly two years since the start of the pandemic, it’s become very clear that teleworking can easily bring health benefits and it can also have a dire impact. Which way the pendulum swings depends entirely on whether governments, employers and workers work together and whether there are agile and inventive occupational health services to put in place policies and practices that benefit both workers and the work.”

“Teleworking and particularly hybrid working are here to stay and are likely to increase after the pandemic, as both companies and individuals have experienced its feasibility and benefits,” said Vera Paquete-Perdigão, Director of the ILO’s Governance and Tripartism Department. “As we move away from this ‘holding pattern’ to settle into a new normal, we have the opportunity to embed new supportive policies, practices and norms to ensure millions of teleworkers have healthy, happy, productive and decent work.”

Measures that should be put in place by employers include ensuring that workers receive adequate equipment to complete the tasks of the job; providing relevant information, guidelines and training to reduce the psychosocial and mental health impact of teleworking; training managers in effective risk management, distance leadership and workplace health promotion; and establishing the “right to disconnect” and sufficient rest days. Occupational health services should be enabled to provide ergonomic, mental health and psychosocial support to teleworkers using digital telehealth technologies, the report says.

The report offers practical recommendations for the organization of telework to meet the needs of both workers and organizations. These include discussing and developing individual teleworking work plans and clarifying priorities; being clear about timelines and expected results; agreeing on a common system to signal availability for work; and ensuring that managers and colleagues respect the system.

Enterprises with teleworkers should develop special programmes for

teleworking, combining measures for the management of work and performance with information and communication technologies and adequate equipment, and occupational health services for general health, ergonomic and psychosocial support.

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UNDP

PRESS RELEASE

6 in 7 people worldwide plagued by feelings of insecurity, reports UN Development Programme

New UNDP report shows growing sense of insecurity among people despite years of development growth prompting calls for solidarity and refocusing development efforts

8 February, New York – Global development progress does not automatically lead to a greater sense of security, according to a new United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on human security released today.

New data and analysis in the report, [New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene](#), shows that people's sense of safety and security is at a low in almost every country, including the richest countries, despite years of upwards development success. Those benefiting from some of the highest levels of good health, wealth, and education outcomes are reporting even greater anxiety than 10 years ago.

To tackle this disconnect between development and perceived security, the report calls for greater solidarity across borders and a new approach to development; one that allows people to live free from want, fear, anxiety and indignity.

“Despite global wealth being higher than ever before, a majority of people are feeling apprehensive about the future and these feelings have likely been exacerbated by the pandemic”, said Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator. “In our quest for unbridled economic growth, we continue to destroy our natural world while inequalities are widening, both within and between countries. It is time to recognise the signs of societies that are under immense stress and redefine what progress actually means. We need a fit-for-purpose development model that is built around the protection and restoration our of planet with new sustainable opportunities for all.”

The imperative to act now has never been more clear, as new findings also show that global life expectancy at birth is falling for a second year because of COVID-19, and overall human development measures are also moving downward. Furthermore, climate change is likely to become a leading cause of death around the world. Even with moderate mitigation of emissions, some 40 million people might die because of changes in temperatures before the end of the century.

The report examines a cluster of threats that have shifted to become more prominent in recent years including those from digital technologies, inequalities, conflicts, and the ability of healthcare systems to tackle new challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing these threats, report authors argue, will require policy makers to consider protection, empowerment, and solidarity alongside one another so that human security, planetary considerations and human development all work together and not despite each other. This means that solutions for one problem shouldn't exacerbate other problems.

“A key element for practical action highlighted in the report is building a greater sense of global solidarity based on the idea of common security. Common security recognises that a community can only be secure if adjacent communities are too. This is something we see all too clearly with the current pandemic: nations are largely powerless to prevent new mutations of this coronavirus from crossing borders,” said Asako Okai, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Director, UNDP Crisis Bureau.

The report also notes the strong association between declining levels of trust and feelings of insecurity. People with higher levels of perceived human insecurity are three times less likely to find others trustworthy.

Other new findings in the report include:

- The more highly developed countries tend to capitalize more on the benefits from planetary pressures and suffer less of their consequences, highlighting how climate change is pushing inequalities further apart.
- About 1.2 billion people live in conflict-affected areas, with almost half of them (560 million) in countries not usually considered to be fragile, indicating that the traditional ideas about which countries are most vulnerable to conflict need to be revisited.
- In 2021, despite the highest global GDP in history, and despite COVID-19 vaccines becoming more readily available in some countries, global life expectancy declined for the second year in a row. Declining by about one and a half years on average compared to a pre-COVID world.
- There are large and widening gaps in healthcare systems between countries. According to the report's new Healthcare Universalism Index, between 1995 and 2017, the inequality in healthcare performance between countries with low and very high human development worsened.

The concept of human security, first introduced in UNDP's milestone 1994 Human Development Report, signaled a radical departure from the idea that people's security should be only assessed by looking at territorial security, emphasizing the importance of people's basic needs, their dignity, and their safety to live secure lives.

For the full report, visit [HERE](#).

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