

# Gender and Platform Work: Beyond Techno-Solutionism



**Fairwork's 2023 Gender and Platform Work report builds on research into working conditions on online platforms spanning four years, 38 countries, over 190 unique platforms, and interviews with more than 5000 platform workers. It finds that:**

- Commonplace practices in the platform economy—such as failing to guarantee a living wage, safe working conditions, and failing to tackle gender-based discrimination—risk widening the gender pay gap, reducing workforce participation rates of women and cementing gender inequality.
- Though many women and gender minorities want to participate in location-based digital platform work (such as delivery and ride-hailing), few can do so because of entrenched gender-based discrimination and harassment.
- Women's participation in the platform economy is highly visible in beauty, care, and domestic work. Historically, such “feminised” work has taken place within private homes. Yet many platforms fail to successfully account for and fully monetise this work, leading to workers conducting unpaid work, and being inadequately protected from workplace harassment and abuse.
- When confronted with deep-seated social issues like gender discrimination, many platforms deploy technological solutions such as unilaterally banning female workers from doing perceived ‘unsafe jobs’ and working at night, as well as subjecting them to intrusive and uncompensated surveillance measures to monitor their work. These quick-fix technical solutions can decrease earnings and increase platform control, while doing little to keep workers safe or providing them with ownership over their work.

## Platform Solutions:

### Dos and Don'ts



#### Fair Pay

Pay all workers a living wage, after costs, and ensure consistent earnings amongst them.



#### Fair Conditions

Prioritise workers' safety and access to benefits like parental leave, sick pay and insurance.



#### Fair Contracts

Platforms should prioritise worker safety in data collection and sharing information through their user interfaces.



#### Fair Management

Implement meaningful anti-discrimination policies, as well as mechanisms for regularly seeking worker feedback.



#### Fair Representation

Enable interaction among women and gender minorities and collaborate with existing women and gender minority-led collectives, associations and trade unions.

## Policymakers and the Regulatory Field

Left unchecked, the platform economy perpetuates and amplifies gender divisions. Policymakers need to draft protections that benefit the platform economy as a whole. These include:

- Require platforms to share gender disaggregated information on active workers, including annual gender pay gap data, and hours worked disaggregated by gender.
- Make platforms liable for accident reporting and providing adequate safety gear for active workers.
- Grant platform workers access to existing worker tribunals and legal mechanisms around workplace discrimination and harassment—particularly regarding unfair platform policies that constrain women and gender minorities' earning potentials.
- Incorporate the advice of women and gender minorities workers collectives and trade unions in platform work-related regulation initiatives at all stages.

# The Way Forward

We encourage institutional consumers to join our mission by signing the Fairwork Pledge. Meanwhile, individual consumers should consult Fairwork's country ratings and keep up with new publications and announcements. Consumers have the unique ability to pressure platforms to provide for and treat their workers more fairly. Get in touch with local trade unions and help spread the message!

There is nothing inevitable about poor working conditions or entrenched gender inequities in the platform economy; however, the inconsiderate and unregulated growth of platform work risks undoing decades of work on improving worker participation and narrowing the gender pay gap. The Fairwork methodology insists that fair working conditions can and are achievable for all workers, regardless of gender identity — and that everyone has a role to play in making that vision a reality.

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