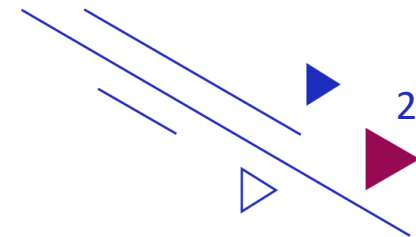# Mental health in a changing world of work

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International Labour Organization (ILO)
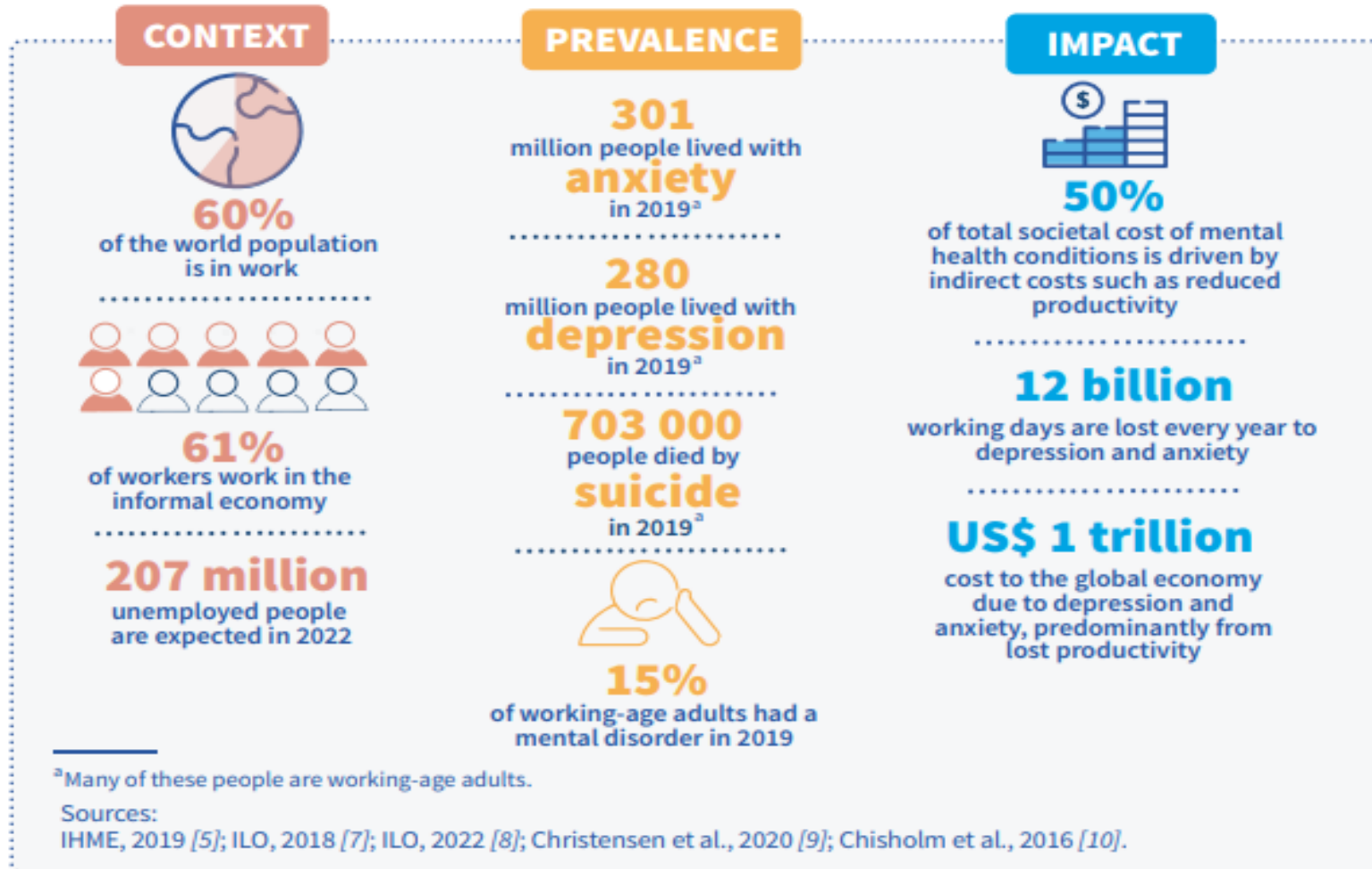
A changing world of work

The rapid changes of the world of work are impacting the mental health of workers:

- Diverse forms of work
- Digitalization and ICT
- Automation and AI
- Changes in demographics
- COVID-19 Pandemic

# Changes in the world of work and emerging psychosocial risks factors

Factors of change	Impact on
Digitalization and ICT Automation Artificial intelligence	Job control Task design Interpersonal relationships at work Employment stability Environment and equipment
Diverse forms of work: Digital platforms, working from home, part-time and on-call work	Job control Task design Career development Home-work interface Income security Interpersonal relationships at work Work schedule Violence and harrasment
Emerging crisis (public health, climate related, conflicts)	Work-life balance PTSD at work Income security Physical working environment
Demographics (Ageing, migration, young workers)	Organizational culture Interpersonal relationships at work Workplace relationships Job demands Discrimination

ilo.org

Mental health and work in numbers

CONTEXT

60% of the world population is in work

61% of workers work in the informal economy

207 million unemployed people are expected in 2022

PREVALENCE

301 million people lived with **anxiety** in 2019[a]

280 million people lived with **depression** in 2019[a]

703 000 people died by **suicide** in 2019[a]

15% of working-age adults had a mental disorder in 2019

IMPACT

50% of total societal cost of mental health conditions is driven by indirect costs such as reduced productivity

12 billion working days are lost every year to depression and anxiety

US$ 1 trillion cost to the global economy due to depression and anxiety, predominantly from lost productivity

[a] Many of these people are working-age adults.

Sources:
IHME, 2019 [5]; ILO, 2018 [7]; ILO, 2022 [8]; Christensen et al., 2020 [9]; Chisholm et al., 2016 [10].
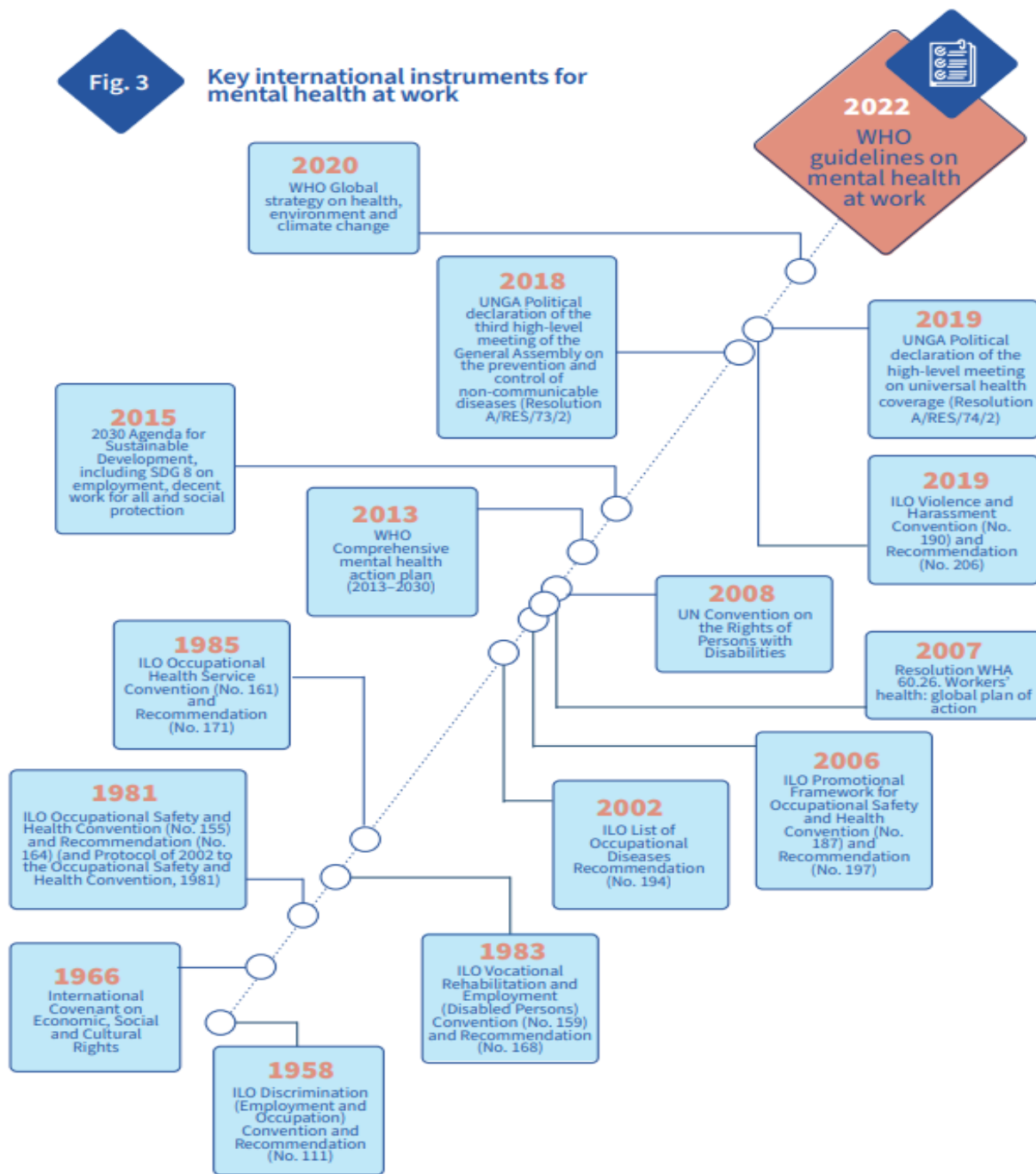
Work: opportunity and risk for mental health

▶ Work and mental health are closely intertwined: A safe and healthy working environment supports mental health and good mental health enables people to work productively

▶ Unemployment, precarious employment and financial insecurity can all be sources of stress and pose a risk to mental health.

▶ Poor working environments create psychosocial risks factors for mental health.

▶ Recent transformations in the world of work have created new psychosocial risks or have exacerbated existing ones.

▶ Mental health is too often misunderstood, under-resourced and deprioritized compared with physical health
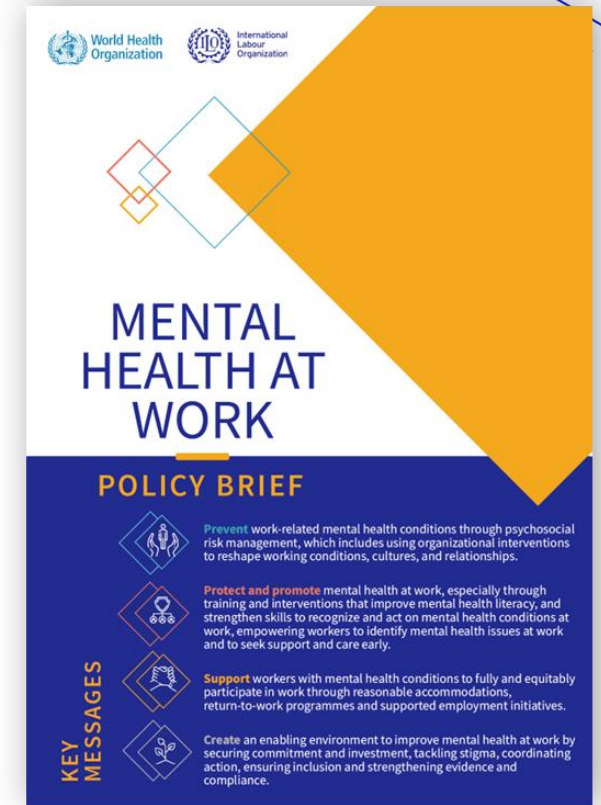
Based on the recommendations from the WHO guidelines on mental health at work considering the principles set in relevant ILO Conventions and Recommendations.

▶ ilo.org

Fig. 3 Key international instruments for mental health at work

2022 WHO guidelines on mental health at work

2020 WHO Global strategy on health, environment and climate change

2018 UNGA Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (Resolution A/RES/73/2)

2019 UNGA Political declaration of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage (Resolution A/RES/74/2)

2015 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including SDG 8 on employment, decent work for all and social protection

2019 ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) and Recommendation (No. 206)

2013 WHO Comprehensive mental health action plan (2013–2030)

2008 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

2007 Resolution WHA 60.26. Workers' health: global plan of action

1985 ILO Occupational Health Service Convention (No. 161) and Recommendation (No. 171)

2006 ILO Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No. 187) and Recommendation (No. 197)

1981 ILO Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No. 155) and Recommendation (No. 164) (and Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981)

2002 ILO List of Occupational Diseases Recommendation (No. 194)

1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

1983 ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention (No. 159) and Recommendation (No. 168)

**1958** ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention and Recommendation (No. 111)

ILO OSH Conventions and Recommendations related to mental health

▶ Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), Recommendation (No, 164) and Protocol of 2002 (No. 155)

▶ Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)   and Recommendation (No. 171)

▶ Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) and Recommendation (No. 197)

▶ Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and Recommendation (No. 206)
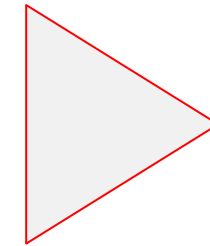
Protection of physical and mental health of workers
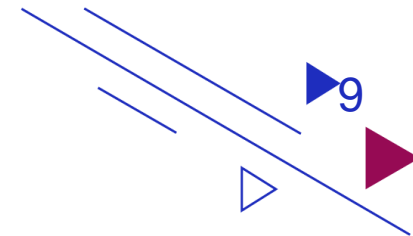
The concept of health for the ILO

The term health , in relation to work, indicates not merely the absence of disease or infirmity; it also includes the physical and mental elements affecting health which are directly related to safety and hygiene at work.

(Art. 3. e Convention No. 155)
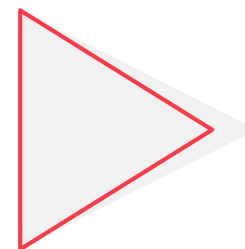
**Physical and mental health of workers**
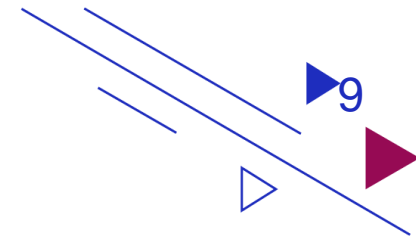
The concept of working environment

The concept of the right to a safe and healthy working environment, as set out in international labour standards, is a broad concept.
This concept can refer to issues related to psychosocial health, violence and harassment in the workplace and encompass all elements of occupational safety and health
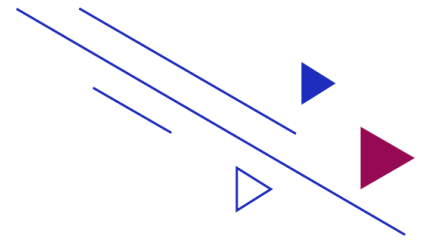
Well-being   at work
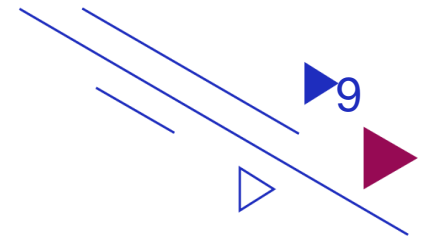
The concept of a national preventative safety and health culture

«(…) refers to a culture in which the right to a safe and healthy working environment is respected at all levels, where government, employers and workers actively participate in securing a safe and healthy working environment through a system of defined rights, responsibilities and duties, and where the principle of prevention is accorded the highest priority.»
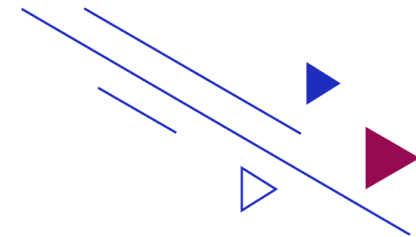
(Art. 1(d) Convention 187)

The principle of prevention

Policy brief: 3 Strategies

01 PREVENT

Reshape work environments to minimize psychosocial risks and **prevent** workers from experiencing mental health conditions

KEY INTERVENTIONS

Psychosocial risk management (organizational interventions)

02 PROTECT & PROMOTE

Strengthen awareness, skills and opportunities for recognizing and acting early on mental health issues to **protect and promote** the mental health of all workers

KEY INTERVENTIONS

Manager training for mental health, worker training for mental health and individual interventions

03 SUPPORT

Support workers with mental health conditions to access, continue working and thrive at work

KEY INTERVENTIONS

Reasonable accommodations, return-to-work programmes and supported employment initiatives

Create an enabling environment
Cross-cutting actions which ensure the implementation of the above strategies include: leadership, investment, rights, integration, participation, evidence and compliance

WHO/ILO (2022). Mental health at work: policy brief

Creating an enabling environment: 7 cross-cutting factors

International Labour Organization

Integration

Integrating action to prevent, protect and promote, and support mental health at work across sectors

Strengthening commitment to mental health at work

Leadership

Participation

Engaging workers and people with lived experience in decision-making about mental health at work at all levels

Securing sufficient funds and resources to protect, promote and support mental health at work

Investment

Evidence

Strengthening the evidence base on the prevalence and impact of work-related risks and effectiveness of interventions

Upholding people's rights to fully and effectively participate in work.

Rights

Compliance

Strengthening uptake of and compliance with laws, regulations and recommendations

Thank you very much for your attention