GENEVA GRADUATE INSTITUTE

INSTITUT DE HAUTES ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

THE GENEVA CHALLENGE 2026
The International Contest for Graduate Students to Advance Development Goals

"The Challenges to the Future of Work"

Last year, 313 teams composed of 1093 graduate students from 92 different countries registered to partake in the 12th edition of the Geneva Challenge, tackling the challenges of migration. Building on this success, the Geneva Graduate Institute continues to encourage interdisciplinary problem-solving amongst graduate students from around the world. Thanks to the vision and support of Ambassador Jenö Staehelin, a long-standing partner of the Geneva Graduate Institute, we are now proud to launch

The 13th edition of the Geneva Challenge – Advancing Development Goals Contest – to address

"The Challenges to the Future of Work"

Work is central to human well-being, social cohesion, and economic development. It is a primary source of income and social protection, a key channel for social mobility, and a cornerstone of individual dignity and participation in society. The availability, quality, and distribution of work are therefore fundamental to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This includes poverty reduction (SDG 1), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), gender equality (SDG 5), and sustainable development more broadly.

The world of work is undergoing profound and accelerating transformation. Technological change - particularly in artificial intelligence, automation, robotization, and digitalization - is reshaping occupational structures in labour markets across regions. Demographic shifts are altering global labour supply as ageing high-income economies confront shrinking workforces and lower- and middle-income countries face the challenge of generating productive employment for large and growing youth populations. Climate change is transforming labour demand. It threatens livelihoods in climate-vulnerable sectors and regions, risking labour displacement and inequality, particularly in the developing world. The green transition creates new employment opportunities and has the potential to increase productivity and support sustainable growth.

These forces interact to redefine employment relationships and skill requirements, often magnifying existing inequalities across gender, age, skill level, and geography. They also accelerate the expansion of non-standard forms of employment, including platform-mediated work, temporary contracts, and

informality. At the same time, the future of work is not predetermined. Public policy, labour-market institutions, education and training systems, social protection frameworks, and mechanisms of collective representation play a decisive role in shaping how technological and structural change translates into labour-market outcomes. The central challenge is to ensure that transitions are inclusive, workers are supported, and productivity gains are shared broadly across society.

As an aid to participants, this Call for Proposals outlines key dimensions of the challenges to the future of work and highlights areas where innovative solutions are urgently needed. Participants are invited to analyse these challenges and think beyond them, assess their implications for development, and propose actionable strategies that shape a productive, inclusive, and sustainable future of work.

OVERVIEW ON THE FUTURE OF WORK:

TECHNOLOGY: Around 22% of global jobs are expected to be structurally transformed by 2030, with 170 million new roles created and 92 million displaced, resulting in a net employment gain.[1] Artificial intelligence, automation, robotics, and digitalization are major drivers, particularly affecting administrative, clerical, and routine manual operations.

AUTOMATION AND DIGITALIZATION: Across OECD countries, an estimated 28% of jobs are at high risk of automation, with routine intensive occupations facing the greatest exposure.[2] Jobs held by workers with lower levels of formal education are disproportionately affected, while occupations requiring problem-solving, interpersonal interaction, and creative skills face lower automation risks.

DEMOGRAPHICS: The global working-age population is shifting to lower-income countries. By 2050, lower-income countries are projected to account for close to 60% of the working age population, with South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa supplying most new labour-market entrants.[3] Simultaneously, high income economies have ageing populations and shrinking workforces, facing labour shortages in key sectors.

YOUTH: Over the next decade, around 1.2 billion young people in developing economics will reach working age, while global labour markets are likely to generate only 420 million new jobs.[4] As a result, large numbers of young people risk unemployment, informality, or disengagement, including persistent challenges among youth who are not in employment, education, or training (NEETs).

CLIMATE: Employment in renewable energy reached approx. 16.2 million jobs globally in 2023, accounting for more than half of all employment in the energy sector.[5] At the same time, climate change, natural disasters, and environmental degradation are disrupting livelihoods in climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and tourism, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

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Note:

While this document highlights a range of challenges associated with the future of work, it is limited by the availability of research that largely focuses on how the world of work will be impacted over the next 10-20 years. We encourage participants, as members of the younger generation, to take an expansive and innovative approach to offer pragmatic solutions to a relevant problem stemming from the challenges to the future of work.

KEY ASPECTS OF CHALLENGES TO THE FUTURE OF WORK

Artificial Intelligence, Digitalisation, and the Automation Transition

Technological change - particularly in artificial intelligence, automation, and digitalisation - is a central driver of transformation in the world of work. There is also rapid innovation occurring in neural implants, quantum computing, and more that can change how humans interact with the workplace and the world. International evidence highlights that its effects are widespread but uneven, with significant implications for tasks, employment, and income distribution.

- *Employers quantify a rapid shift in the human–machine frontier - toward a world where most tasks are technology-delivered or technology-mediated.*
  WEF reports that in 2025, 47% of tasks are performed mainly by humans alone, 22% mainly by technology, and 30% by a combination; by 2030, employers expect these shares to be roughly evenly split (33% human, 34% technology, 33% combination).[6] These projections imply that future-of-work outcomes will depend less on whether jobs "disappear" and more on whether workers can move into technology-complementary task bundles. Human-centric AI therefore will take centre stage in reimagining how we merge skillsets between humans and technology in the workplace.

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[1] World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs Report 2025 (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2025), 5–9, 29–31.
[2] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD Employment Outlook 2024 (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2024), chap. 3.
[3] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Population Prospects 2024 (New York: United Nations, 2024), chap. 3.
[4] World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs Report 2025, 18–21; International Labour Organization, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 (Geneva: ILO, 2024), 9–13.
[5] International Renewable Energy Agency, Renewable Energy and Jobs – Annual Review 2024 (Abu Dhabi: IRENA, 2024), 3–6; International Labour Organization, World Employment and Social Outlook: Greening with Jobs (Geneva: ILO, 2018), 21–25.
[6] World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report 2025* (Geneva, 2025), 31–34

- *The direction of change is predominantly automation, not only augmentation - raising distributive questions about who captures productivity gains.*
  WEF estimates that of the near 15 p.p. decline in human-only share of task delivery from 2025 to 2030, about 82% is attributable to advancing automation and 19% to expanded human-machine collaboration.[7] WEF explicitly frames this as a distributional question: if firm output derives from machines/algorithms, how will human workers share in that prosperity?
- *Automation can depress employment and wages in highly exposed labour markets.*
  Peer-reviewed evidence indicates automation can depress local employment and wages in exposed labour markets - consistent with concerns about unequal distribution of AI gains. Acemoglu and Restrepo find robust negative effects of industrial robots on employment and wages in U.S. commuting zones exposed to robot adoption, supporting the claim that technology shocks can impose local costs absent offsetting job creation and policy support.[8]
- *Adjustment costs from technological change are spatially and socially concentrated.*
  International organisations emphasise that the labour-market impacts of AI and automation are often geographically concentrated, affecting specific industries, and communities. Without adequate adjustment mechanisms - including reskilling opportunities, income support, and labour-market mobility - displaced workers may face prolonged unemployment or wage scarring, even when aggregate employment effects remain limited at the national level.[9]
- *Technological transformation raises social and ethical challenges for workplace governance.*
  The expansion of algorithmic management, workplace surveillance, and data-driven performance systems can weaken worker autonomy, reinforce bias and exclusion, and shift power toward employers and platforms. Without robust regulation and social dialogue, these trends risk eroding trust, privacy, and fairness at work, with larger spillover effects in society.

Demographic Change and the Global Workforce Imbalance

Demographic change is reshaping global labour markets in increasingly uneven ways. Differences in population growth and ageing are altering where labour is available, and where shortages emerge. All of this affects how economies and labour markets adjust to structural change.

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[7] Ibid. 36–38.
[8] Daron Acemoglu and Pascual Restrepo, "Robots and Jobs: Evidence from U.S. Labor Markets," *Journal of Political Economy* 128, no. 6 (2020): 2188–2244.
[9] International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2023* (Geneva: ILO, 2023), chap. 3; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Employment Outlook 2024* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2024), chap. 2.

- *Diverging demographic trajectories are reshaping global labour supply:*
  Many high-income economies are experiencing rapid population ageing and shrinking working-age populations, while lower- and middle-income countries - particularly in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa - are projected to account for most future growth in the global labour force. By mid-century, lower-income countries are expected to represent close to 60% of the global working-age population, while many advanced economies face sustained labour-supply constraints.[10] This divergence is reshaping global patterns of labour availability and economic pressure.
- *Investment in youth upskilling and employment as a key to a stable future of work:*
  Even where headline unemployment rates are moderate, many young people, particularly in emerging economies, are concentrated in low-quality, unstable, or low-productivity employment. Prolonged transitions from education to stable work increase the risk of long-term labour-market scarring, reducing lifetime earnings, weakening skill accumulation, and constraining productivity growth. Youth labour-market outcomes are further shaped by structural barriers, including weak education-to-work linkages, limited access to work-based learning, and unequal access to digital infrastructure. Persistent youth unemployment also carries broader socio-economic costs, including higher poverty rates, emigration pressures, and greater risk of social and political instability. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated investments in job creation, vocational/apprenticeship systems, entrepreneurship support, and policies that facilitate early and sustained attachment to decent work.
- *Ageing economies face labour shortages and rising demand for care work:*
  Population ageing is contributing to persistent labour shortages in key sectors, including health, long-term care, and other labour-intensive services. At the same time, ageing populations are increasing demand for paid care services while unpaid care responsibilities remain unevenly distributed, particularly along gender lines. These trends place growing pressure on labour supply, public finances, and productivity, and are increasingly influencing employer strategies related to automation and job redesign.[11]
- *Migration is a partial adjustment mechanism with uneven outcomes:*
  Cross-border labour mobility has become an important response to workforce shortages in ageing economies, particularly across OECD countries. This is seen in labour markets through

[10] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects 2024* (New York: United Nations, 2024), chap. 3; World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report 2025* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2025), 20–23.
[11] International Labour Organization, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work* (Geneva: ILO, 2018), 11–16; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Employment Outlook 2024* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2024), chap. 5.

the rise of digital migrants, and teleworking connecting employers and workers around the world. However, institutional barriers - including legal status, recognition of qualifications, language constraints, and administrative hurdles - limit migrants' effective integration into host-country labour markets. As a result, demographic gains from migration are accompanied by market segmentation, concerns about brain-drain and unequal employment outcomes.

Skills, Education, and Training Systems

Rapid technological change is transforming skill requirements across labour markets, increasing demand for new competencies while rendering others obsolete. International evidence highlights that with the longevity of workers rising, it is necessary to consider how switching careers and transferability of skills across sectors can shape future labour market mobility. The scale, distribution, and governance of reskilling are central determinants of how the future of work affects productivity, employment, and inequality.

- *Large-scale reskilling and upskilling needs are emerging across the global workforce.* According to employer surveys compiled by the World Economic Forum, around 59% of the global workforce is expected to require some form of training by 2030. Of these workers, approximately 29% are projected to be upskilled in their current roles, 19% reskilled and redeployed into new roles, and 11% expected to require training but unlikely to receive it.[12] This distribution points to significant capacity constraints in training systems and the risk of a growing group of workers being left behind by technological change.
- *Access to training is uneven across sectors, firms, and regions.* Evidence from international organisations indicates that participation in employer-provided training varies sharply by sector, firm size, and geography. Companies in high-income regions are more likely to invest in workforce training than those in low- and middle-income countries, while workers in small firms, informal employment, or non-standard contracts face significantly lower access to reskilling opportunities.[13] Sectoral differences are also pronounced, with technology-intensive industries reporting the highest training needs alongside persistent gaps in training provision.
- *Skill mismatch and job polarization persist despite rising educational attainment.* Despite global increases in educational attainment, labour markets continue to exhibit

[12] World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report 2025* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2025), 35–39.
[13] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Employment Outlook 2024* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2024), chap. 4.

substantial skill mismatch, with both overqualification and underqualification widespread. Task-based research shows that technological change tends to reduce demand for routine tasks while increasing returns to non-routine cognitive and interpersonal skills, contributing to job polarization and widening wage dispersion.[14] These dynamics underscore the limits of formal education alone in addressing future-of-work challenges.

- *Financing and governance of training shape distributional outcomes.*
  Employers expect to finance the majority of reskilling efforts, with surveys indicating that over 80% of firms anticipate covering training costs internally, while public and hybrid funding play a smaller but critical role in certain sectors.[15] This financing structure risks reinforcing inequalities between firms and workers with strong training capacity and those without, highlighting the importance of public policy in expanding access to lifelong learning, portable credentials, and active labour-market programmes.

Gender and Social Inequalities in the Future of Work

The future of work will not affect all workers equally. Existing inequalities across gender, age, race, and disability lines create labour-market segmentation, with limited social protections shaping who can benefit from new opportunities - and who faces heightened risk of exclusion.

- *Unpaid care work remains a major constraint on labour-force participation and job quality.*
  In 2023, the ILO estimates that 748 million working-age people were out of the labour force due to care responsibilities - 708 million of them women.[16] Women and girls also perform more than three-quarters of total unpaid care work, reinforcing gender gaps in paid employment, hours worked, and access to higher-quality jobs.[17]
- *Digital inequality limits who can access technology-enabled work and training.*
  In 2024, the ITU estimates 70% of men used the Internet globally compared to 65% of women - around 189 million fewer women online.[18] Gaps are far wider in least developed countries, where Internet use remains substantially lower for women than men, constraining access to digital skills, job search, and platform-mediated income opportunities.

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[14] David H. Autor, "The Labor Market Impacts of Technological Change," *NBER Working Paper* no. 30074 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022), 12–19.
[15] World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report 2025*, 41–44.
[16] International Labour Organization, *Care at Work: Investing in Care Leave and Services for a More Gender-Equal World of Work* (Geneva: ILO, 2022), 7–9; International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2023* (Geneva: ILO, 2023), statistical annex.
[17] International Labour Organization, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work* (Geneva: ILO, 2018), 3–6.
[18] International Telecommunication Union, *Facts and Figures 2024: Measuring Digital Development* (Geneva: ITU, 2024), 6–8.

- *Exposure to AI-driven change can be unequal even within the same labour market.*
  Recent World Bank research using occupation-based exposure measures finds higher occupational exposure to AI for women (and for higher-educated and higher-earning workers) across countries; complementary IMF analysis estimates nearly 40% of global employment is exposed to AI (about 60% in advanced economies), underscoring the scale of potential reallocation pressures.[19] Yet, it is important to consider complementarity vs. replacement when it comes to AI exposure, as recent MIT research has shown that human expertise continues to remain valuable even with AI adoption.[20]
- *Gaps in protection and labour-market outcomes persist for vulnerable groups.*
  ILO evidence indicates gender gaps in effective social protection coverage: women's effective coverage for at least one social protection benefit is 50.1% compared to 54.6% for men.[21] Inequalities extend beyond gender: a 2024 ILO working paper finds that workers with disabilities are paid about 12% less per hour on average than other employees, even after accounting for observable characteristics.[22]

Remuneration, Job Quality, and the Value of Work

How the gains from growth and technological change translate into incomes depends on wage-setting institutions, job quality, and the reach of social protection. Recent evidence points to growing stress on labour's share, purchasing power, and security at work.

- *Inflation shocks have impacted workers' purchasing power.*
  The ILO estimates that global real wages fell by 0.9% in 2022 (and by 1.5% if China is excluded), reflecting the cost-of-living crisis; this is a concrete marker of the recent squeeze on purchasing power even where employment remained comparatively resilient.[23]
  Distributional consequences of automation depend on the balance between displacement and the creation of complementary tasks and new industries

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[19] World Bank, *Women, Jobs, and the Impact of Artificial Intelligence* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2024), 11–16; International Monetary Fund, *Gen-AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2024), 5–9.
[20] Isabella Loaiza and Roberto Rigobon, The EPOCH of AI: Human-Machine Complementarities at Work, MIT Sloan Research Paper No. 7236-24, SSRN Scholarly Paper (November 21, 2024)
[21] International Labour Organization, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition* (Geneva: ILO, 2024), 18–21.
[22] International Labour Organization, *Disability, Employment, and Wage Gaps: Evidence from Linked Employer–Employee Data* (Geneva: ILO, 2024), 22–26.
[23] International Labour Organization, *Global Wage Report 2024–25: Is Inequality Threatening Social Justice?* (Geneva: ILO, 2024), 3–5.

- *Minimum wages often failed to protect low-paid workers during the inflation surge.*
  In a large ILO sample of countries, about 60% adjusted minimum wages in 2022, but only around one-quarter achieved an increase in the *real* value of minimum wages; the report also notes that in 55% of countries real minimum wages increased in 2023, yet often not enough to offset earlier declines.[24]
- *Social protection gaps remain a defining dimension of job quality.*
  The ILO reports that 52.4% of the world's population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, while 47.6% remain unprotected - an essential backdrop for understanding income insecurity and resilience to shocks among workers.[25] As more work shifts to temporary, platform, and contract arrangements, wage levels alone may not secure livelihoods without benefits, insurance, and predictable hours. This aligns with policy discussions emphasizing portable benefits, clearer worker classification rules, and collective representation mechanisms for non-standard workers to prevent a two-tier labour market.[26]

Gig Work, Platform Economies, and Algorithmic Management

Platform-mediated work is expanding across both online and location-based services, reshaping how labour is allocated, monitored, and paid. Evidence highlights measurement challenges, but also increasingly robust estimates of scale and working conditions.

- *The online gig workforce is larger than earlier estimates suggested.*
  World Bank research estimates 154 million unique registered online gig workers worldwide, and notes broader estimates ranging up to 435 million depending on definitions and measurement methods.[27]
- *Algorithmic management is central to platform work and increasingly visible beyond it.*
  The ILO defines algorithmic management as algorithmic systems that organize, assign, monitor, and evaluate work based on tracked data; this governance model can shift control from human supervisors to platform rules and ratings, raising concerns around transparency,

[24] International Labour Organization, *Global Wage Report 2024–25*, 34–38 and 41-44.
[25] International Labour Organization, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition* (Geneva: ILO, 2024), 2–4.
[26] Ramy Zeid et al., *The Gig Economy and the Future of Work: Global Trends and Policy Directions for Non-Standard Forms of Employment* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2024), https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099060524074041161/pdf/P1796471e104d70c8193971d1ead6456d2e.pdf (accessed January 6, 2026).
[27] World Bank, *The Gig Economy: An Overview and Global Estimates* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2023), 9–13.

contestability, discrimination, and effective wage floors.[28] Using survey evidence from 3,500 workers in 75 countries across major microtask platforms, the ILO found average pay of US$4.43/hour for paid work time, falling to US$3.31/hour when paid and unpaid hours are considered - illustrating how unpaid time (searching, waiting, contesting rejections) shapes real earnings.[29] As AI tools are integrated into dispatch, pricing, and evaluation, the future of gig work is increasingly a question of algorithmic accountability as much as labour law.

- *Academic evidence highlights simultaneous autonomy and control in platform work.*
  A large comparative study in *Work, Employment and Society* and another by the World Bank documents how platform workers may experience flexibility while also facing strong forms of algorithmic control through ratings, surveillance, and task allocation - helpful framing for proposals that examine power, bargaining, and governance in digital labour markets, along with how we frame policy responses in the form of labour regulations and social protections.[30]

Informality, Urbanisation, and Non-Wage Employment

Informality and non-wage employment remain defining features of labour markets in much of the world and are central to conceiving how the future of work unfolds outside high-income economies.

- *Informality accounts for the majority of employment in many regions and sectors.*
  The International Labour Organization estimates that around 2 billion workers globally, representing approximately 60% of total employment, are engaged in informal work.[31] Informality exceeds 85% of employment in low-income countries and remains widespread even in middle-income economies, particularly in construction, trade, transport, domestic work, and small-scale services.[32] These employment relationships typically fall outside labour regulation, taxation, and social insurance systems.[33]
- *Urban employment growth is increasingly driven by informal and own-account work.*
  Urban areas generate most new jobs globally, yet a large share of urban employment growth

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[28] International Labour Organization, *Algorithmic Management in the Workplace* (Geneva: ILO, 2021), 1–4.
[29] Janine Berg et al., *Digital Labour Platforms and the Future of Work: Towards Decent Work in the Online World* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2018), 65–69.
[30] Vili Lehdonvirta et al., "The Platform Economy: New Trade-offs for Workers?" *Work, Employment and Society* 33, no. 1 (2019): 56–75.
Zeid et al., *The Gig Economy and the Future of Work* (World Bank, 2024).
[31] International Labour Organization, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, 3rd ed. (Geneva: ILO, 2018), 23–25.
[32] International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024* (Geneva: ILO, 2024), chap. 3.
[33] International Labour Organization, *Transitioning from the Informal to the Formal Economy* (Geneva: ILO, 2015), 7–10.

takes place outside formal wage employment. In many developing regions, more than half of urban workers are informally employed, including in rapidly expanding megacities.[34] Evidence from international organisations shows that urbanisation alone does not guarantee formalisation, and that productivity gains from urban growth are often limited by congestion, inadequate infrastructure, and the prevalence of low-productivity informal activities.

- *Non-wage and self-employment remain dominant entry points into work:* Own-account work and contributing family work account for a substantial share of global employment, particularly among new labour-market entrants. Globally, nearly 45% of workers are self-employed, with much higher shares in Africa and South Asia.[35] These forms of work often provide limited income security, weak links to training systems, and minimal social protection, shaping long-term earnings trajectories and labour-market mobility.

Climate Change, Sustainability, and Labour Markets

Climate change is increasingly influencing labour markets through its effects on productivity, sectoral employment, and geographic distribution of work, while climate mitigation policies are reshaping labour demand.

- *Climate change is reducing labour productivity through heat stress and environmental shocks.* Rising temperatures are directly affecting the future of work through two channels: impact on physical capital and impact on human capital, affecting workers' capacity to perform physical/outdoor labour. The ILO estimates that heat stress could lead to the loss of 80 million full-time equivalent jobs globally by 2030, primarily through reduced working hours, with large impacts in agriculture, construction, and informal urban services.[36] Climate-related disasters further disrupt employment through displacement, infrastructure damage, and income losses.
- *Employment exposure to climate risk is highly concentrated by sector and region.* A large share of the global workforce is employed in climate-sensitive sectors. Globally, over 1 billion workers are employed in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry, while hundreds of millions work in construction and tourism - sectors particularly vulnerable to climate

[34] UN-Habitat, *World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities* (Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2022), chap. 4.
[35] International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024* (Geneva: ILO, 2024), statistical annex.
[36] International Labour Organization, *Working on a Warmer Planet: The Impact of Heat Stress on Labour Productivity and Decent Work* (Geneva: ILO, 2019), 13–17. International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2023* (Geneva: ILO, 2023), chap. 2.

variability.[37] Workers in low- and middle-income countries face disproportionate exposure due to higher reliance on outdoor informal work and lower access to protective technologies.

- *Climate mitigation policies are reshaping labour demand unevenly across economies.* The transition toward low-carbon energy systems is generating employment growth in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and environmental services, while employment in fossil-fuel-intensive activities is expected to decline. Despite growing investment in both mitigation-focused preventative strategies (like energy transitions), along with adaptation-centric remedial strategies, international estimates suggest that employment gains from the green transition are likely at the global level, but sectoral and regional adjustment costs are significant, requiring labour reallocation across industries and locations.[38]

A Call to Action

There is a pivotal need for an interdisciplinary approach in confronting these pressing global challenges. Solutions should come from a broad scope of participation in various fields including (but not limited to) anthropology, business administration, computer science, data science, development studies, economics, engineering, geography, history, international affairs, international development, international relations, law, management, machine learning, mechanics, neuroscience, physics, political science, public policy, psychology and behavioural science, social policy, sociology, medical and health studies. We hope that graduate students from around the globe will view this call for proposals as a starting point, will embrace these challenges as opportunities, and will devise innovative solutions to tackle the pressing issues related to the future of work and advance our collective development goals.

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[37] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *FAOSTAT Employment Database*. International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Greening with Jobs* (Geneva: ILO, 2018), 23–28.

[38] International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Greening with Jobs* (Geneva: ILO, 2018), 9–12; International Renewable Energy Agency, *Renewable Energy and Jobs – Annual Review 2025* (Abu Dhabi: IRENA, 2025).

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