

# Addressing Inequalities in the World of Work

## Scoping Review on ‘What Works’

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# 1 Introduction

This study presents a systematic scoping review of the current literature concerning inequalities in the world of work. It attempts to trace the main mechanisms and channels of the interventions employed in the global world of work to reduce its inequalities, while simultaneously investigating the methodologies and indicators used in evidence-based research on them to systematically elaborate the current state of the art on inequalities in the world of work.

The following section presents a typology of policies that directly or indirectly tackle inequalities in the WoW both within the labour market and outside this domain (e.g. education policy). The section also makes an attempt to clearly identify the theoretical mechanisms and channels through which policies are expected to impact inequalities in forms of work and ultimate labour market outcomes.

The ILO has a policy approach to reducing inequalities in the world of work segmented into five major focus areas: employment creation, access to education, labour rights protection, formalization, gender equality and diversity, and social protection (ILO, 2022b). Each of these areas in turn rests on a variety of more specific emphases which further describe the potential implemented policy measures.

The rest of the study is structured as follows: Section 2 will introduce the world of work, as well as the ILO's approach to inequalities within it, and provide a variety of other recent approaches to make sense of inequalities in the world of work. Section 3 will then introduce the method applied in the scoping review of this study, before introducing the initial identified literature as a coherent sample. Section 4 will synthesize findings on a variety of intervention found in the literature, organized by general policy area of intervention pursued. Section 5 will then provide a brief discussion on these findings from the perspective of individual inequalities, the interventions found to reduce them, and resulting policy implications, before Section 6 briefly concludes.

## 2 The world of work

The policy areas and their respective focus perspectives are based in the conceptual understanding of the world of work, following the definition of work being activities performed by persons of any sex and age producing goods or providing services for “economic units [which] can be allocated mutually exclusively to one of the following sectors:” the formal sector, the informal sector, or the community and household own-use sector (ILO, 2023b, p. 6). This is the broader understanding of work which specifically separates itself from a more narrow conception of those in employment who are engaging in “production for pay or profit”, whether for the informal or the formal market economy (see especially ILO, 2023b, Point 18ff). The key differentiations for these concepts are founded on an understanding of the production of goods or provision of services, as well as the distinctions between use by others for ultimate own-use and that of working for pay and/or profit – that is, as part of a market transaction in exchange for remuneration or in the form of profits derived from the goods or services.

Whether these services or goods are produced in what is defined as the informal economy, the formal economy or under informal employment outside the informal sector is, for the general encapsulation of no importance – they occur in the world of work. Here, conceptually, it should be captured under one of the five mutually exclusive forms of work (ILO, 2023d, p. 4, Point 7c) to be understood as: own-use production work, performing “any activity to produce goods or provide services for own final use” (ILO, 2013, p. 5); employment work comprising those performing work for others in exchange for pay or profit introduced above; unpaid trainee work, performing “any unpaid activity to produce goods or provide services [...] to acquire workplace experience or skills” (ILO, 2013, p. 7); and volunteer work, that being “any unpaid, non-compulsory activity to produce goods or provide services for others” (ILO, 2013, p. 8).

Any activity falling under work as defined above on the one hand, but not under any of these forms of work on the other, is instead designated as other work activities in the following considerations. The key concepts between these categories come down to a varying intensity of participation, the distinction of working for pay and/or profit mentioned above, whether it is for ultimate own-use or the use by others, and its compulsory nature.

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Table 1: ILO focus areas for inequality reduction

area of policy	focus	related
employment creation	pro-employment framework	
	gender-transformative framework	
	promotion of business sustainability	productivity increases
		reduction in productivity gaps
	promotion of digital infrastructure	technology for decent work
access to education		reducing digital divide
	quality of education/training/skills development	green transition
	relevance of education/training/skills development	digital transition

area of policy	focus	related
	gender-transformative career guidance	
	improvements of public services/social protection	
	work-life balance	juggle paid work and family care
	targeted support for disadvantaged groups	targeted education
labour rights protection	promotion of rights for all workers	collective bargaining systems
	minimum wage	
	inclusive labour market institutions	
	equal pay for work of equal value	
	wage transparency	
formalization	equality-driven approach to formalization	gender-responsive
	increase decent work in formal economy	country-tailored
	absorb informal workers / economic units	comprehensive
		non-discriminatory
gender equality	removal of discriminatory practice	removal of stereotypes
diversity	promotion of equality of treatment	removal of discriminatory law
	promotion of equality of opportunity	
	data collection improvements	gender-focus
	occupational gender segregation	age-focus
	unequal pay for work of equal value	disability-focus
	gender-based violence	race-focus
	gender-based harassment	ethnicity-focus
	gender unequal division of unpaid care work	migrant status-focus
social protection	extend reach of social protection schemes	
	reach those not adequately protected	

area of policy	focus	related
	ensure access to social protection	comprehensive social protection adequate social protection sustainable social protection

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ILO (2022b).

## 2.1 Inequalities in the world of work

Inequalities in the world of work have to be fundamentally conceptualized along two axes: On the one hand, vertical inequality captures the “income inequality between all households in a country” (ILO, 2021b). Measurements of vertical inequalities is a perspective which focuses primarily on incomes as data, with debate of top income percentiles versus the remaining body of people often posing the primary area of debate (ILO, 2021a). Horizontal inequalities, on the other hand, occur when “some groups within the population find themselves disadvantaged and discriminated against on the basis of their visible identity, for example their gender, colour or beliefs, among others” (ILO, 2021a).

Importantly, these inequalities do not act in a vacuum but create an interplay through overlaps and accumulations which take on their own driving dynamics for people belonging to multiple disadvantaged groups, captured in the idea of inequality’s intersectionality (ILO, 2022b). Here, especially horizontal inequalities may be hard to disentangle for impact finding, an important aspect of effective rigorous analysis in quantitative studies.

Thus, for a study on inequalities, or in turn a study on policies aimed at reducing inequalities in the world of work to be one of rigorous analysis, it must clearly define the type of policy taken as its object of analysis (its independent variable) as well as the types of inequalities targeted for reduction through the respective policy and measured as channels of impact. Ultimately, then, the individual outcome measures need to be clearly specified and disentangled, most clearly reflecting in labour market outcome measures (dependent variables). Only then can the targeted inequality be delineated as a clear channel.

In targeting an increase in equality, there are then two approaches to take: either levelling the playing field so that characteristics beyond an individual’s control can not influence their future perspectives, nor limit the potential of the powers they possess, through achieving equality of opportunity; or strive for an equality of outcomes, in factual observed resulting (in-)equalities. As the ILO established, such a focus on equality of outcomes can be of great importance since “high levels of inequality today tend to reduce social mobility tomorrow” (ILO, 2021a), making it that much more difficult to ultimately ensure equality of opportunity for following generation. The key concepts here are thus the distinction of within-group and between-group inequalities, their overlapping characteristics, as well as policies enabling an equality of opportunity or of outcome.

Income inequality is still the primary lens of inequality that many approaches target, as well as the main focus point of many inequality measurements such as the Gini coefficient or ratios such as the Palma ratio (DFI, 2023). Following the ILO, “labour income is the main source of income for most households in the world [thus] unequal access to work and working poverty are major drivers of inequalities” (ILO, 2021b). Income inequality, here, can be affected by a wide set of factors: status in employment, forms of work, the sector of activity, the respective occupation, type of enterprise, type of contract for those in waged work, and the status of formality among others (ILO, 2019). Income inequality should also not be seen as separate from, nor standing above, other inequalities, but closely linked to other inequalities. As the ILO states, “income inequality, inequality of employment outcomes more generally and inequality of opportunities are intimately related” (ILO, 2022b). At the same time the exact linkages of these factors remain under-analysed, which is the reason why the channels of inequalities and the policies to reduce them will pose a fruitful space of analysis for this research.

While income inequality holds a primary position of importance for many analyses from a perspective of quantity, it should not be understood as carrying more importance qualitatively for itself compared to other inequalities but rather be understood “like a prism, which reveals many other forms of inequality, including those generated in the world of work” (ILO, 2021a, p. 13). It is the primary measure of vertical inequality, however, with other inequalities describing primarily the concept of horizontal inequality.

Here, of primary focus for the ILO, and many studies on inequality in the world of work, is gender inequality. It describes the inequalities that arise because of an individual’s gender. Generally, while the type and extend of other inequalities does vary substantially by global location and country, “gender inequalities, despite some progress over the past decades, remain persistent and pervasive” (ILO, 2021b).

Following a report on the gendered make-up of work globally, women are making up a larger part of those in underemployment, they primarily make up the service sector – a rising trend – while suffering a persistently substantial wage gap, tend to work shorter hours in employment but in turn have longer working days when including unpaid work, as well as contributing disproportionately to family work (ILO, 2016). The domestic area of work is also dominated by women, who make up 76.2 per cent of it, in addition to domestic work being overwhelmingly informal labour globally (ILO, 2023c).

These inequalities in the world of work in turn also reflect in women being hindered in accessing adequate education, training, as well as the possibility for lifelong learning, and furthermore access to quality jobs, housing, mobility, capital, land, and adequate social protection – disparities which, on the basis of deeply rooted inequalities of gender roles, education and places of residence remain largely static if not on the rise. These channels and outcomes, viewed intersectionally, must thus represent the primary lens through which to disentangle the gender inequality in the world of work today.

There are additional socio-demographic inequalities beyond gender which are based on the innate, most often visible, identification of a person. These are made up of, though not limited to, ethnic and racial inequalities, those based on religion and beliefs, based on a person's status as a migrant, a person's age, sex, or disabilities (ILO, 2021a). For example, young people generally fare significantly worse in labour markets shown through outcomes such as a higher incidence of temporary employment throughout youth and the young labour force (ILO, 2019, 2023a).

As a report on the global conditions of work established, over “7% of workers felt they had been discriminated against in the 12 months prior to the survey on grounds of sex, race, religion, age, nationality, disability or sexual orientation” (ILO, 2019) in the EU alone, making socio-demographic inequalities a prevalent and important to tackle angle of horizontal inequality. Here, it will be especially important to correctly disentangle individual sources or contributing characteristics from each other in finding their linkages to relevant outcomes.

Another form of inequality are spatial inequalities, those that arise because of an individual's location relative to other. These inequalities exist primarily between different regions of a country: those between urbanity and rurality or more peripheral areas, but also between richer and poorer regions and, as the ILO established, can even lead to a ‘growing sense of fractured societies’ (ILO, 2021b).

One of the channels this can manifest itself is through an unequal access to decent work opportunities or economic opportunities more generally, an unequal access to financial resources, quality public services or even overall access to an essential social service infrastructure and digital infrastructure, as well as quality access to education or relevant training. For spatial inequalities it will be especially important to take note of locally bound differences versus more generalizable results, with the dimensions and contributing factors to its outcomes potentially varying widely between different geographies and national contexts.

In mentioning unequal access to quality education or public infrastructure another important dimension of inequalities becomes highlighted: the dimension of pre-existing inequalities, that is, inequalities which exist prior to an individual's interaction with the labour market and, though closely intertwined with socio-demographic inequalities, will prove useful to analytically differentiate between. A differentiation which becomes especially important with a view on the inter-generational effects of inequality, highlighted in recognizing the difference between equality of opportunity and outcome. The level of education, an individual's poverty, productivity on the labour market and similar inequalities in opportunities are often the result of long-running pre-existing inequalities such as unequal access to health services, education, lacking property rights or clear ownership of assets, the lack of formal recognition as an individual, no access to formal banking (ILO, 2021a). Understanding such channels becomes difficult if not taking pre-existing inequalities into account as a separate category of inequality and long-term impacting channel.

Addressing these inequalities, in turn, is just as important to reducing inequalities within the labour market (as well as beyond) since they do play such a role for intergenerational social mobility and

their impacts can be seen, once again, reflecting in the prism of subsequent income inequality. For pre-existing inequalities, it will be especially important to understand the often delayed and more opaque nature of the roots of many outcomes, with channel being more difficult to identify and clearly label – especially in an intersectional context. These five dimensions of inequalities — income inequality, gender inequality, socio-demographic inequality, spatial inequality and pre-existing inequalities — will thus provide the categorical anchors along which the reviewed studies will be analysed for their policy effects, each with a slightly different focus in linkages between inequality, policy and outcome.

## 2.2 Existing reviews: alternative approaches

Aside from the general typology by the ILO introduced above, there are a variety of differing approaches to the interplay of inequalities and outcomes, outlined in the following section.

Chaudhuri et al. (2021) conduct a systematic review to look at coping strategies and the effects of food insecurity, often through poverty, on social and health outcomes for women and children. They find that one of the primary non-food coping strategies for women is to look for outdoor employment, mostly farm work, which can in turn lead to what the authors argue as *time* poverty when their time for childcare or personal nutrition is now cut short. This in turn can, in combination with food-based coping strategies such as food rationing (in size or frequency), nutritional switches or food sharing, lead to negative health outcomes for children including disrupted socio-cognitive development as well as coping through dropping out of school, thereby furthering the rift of pre-existing inequalities.

Finlay (2021) looks at the effects of female women’s reproductive health on female labour force participation, especially career advancement, job quality and hours worked, to find a variety of responses differing between low-income, middle-income and high-income countries. The main findings are that in low-income countries because of the prevalence of informal work, women are forced to adopt individual strategies of balancing child rearing and labour force participation through job type selection, reliance on other women in the household for child care, or birth spacing. In middle-income countries, women have to juggle child rearing and labour force participation with an overall income inequality; here, early childbearing or lone motherhood especially can perpetuate poverty. In high-income countries, social protection policies can assist in balancing child rearing and work but many underlying issues of gender inequality remain. Throughout all countries, childbearing significantly interrupts career advancement.

Chang et al. (2021) use a qualitative systematic review to look at the linkages of breast-feeding and returning to paid employment for women and identify multiple barriers provided through inequalities discouraging continued breast-feeding after return to employment — an experience often experienced as physically and emotionally difficult and potentially providing a barrier to full labour force participation. Aside from individual motivation and support from employers, colleagues, and family members, women highlighted the importance of having workplace legislation in place to facilitate breast-feeding during employment, as well as access to convenient child care. The review concludes indicating remaining gender and employment inequalities in accessing and receiving the



support needed: gender role expectations viewing women as responsible for domestic work or child-care, with shorter maternity leave further discouraging breast-feeding especially of women not in managerial roles.

Looking strictly at the impact of basic income interventions on labour market, health, educational, housing and other outcomes, Pinto et al. (2021) find that, while workforce participation is the primary outcome in most studies, the evaluations have shifted over time to include a wider array of outcomes, perhaps reflecting an understanding of lower health and social care spending offsetting some of the basic income investments. Most of the studies investigating basic income perspectives focus on advanced economies such as the US.

Undertaking a systematic review to find the effects of brain tumours in individuals on their labour market outcomes, Silvaggi (2020) find an impact of neuropsychological functioning on work productivity, issues for their process of returning to work, and often an exit from employment (job loss) for long-term survivors of brain tumours. While the channels are primarily viewed as stemming from the high short-term mortality and depressive symptoms or cognitive deficits, environmental barriers are identified as one channel as well, with the review ending in the policy recommendation of increased vocational rehabilitation for affected persons.

De Paz-Banez et al. (2020) use a systematic review of empirical studies to look at the effects of universal basic income on labour supply to find that, with no evidence of significant reductions in labour supply, instead the labour supply would increase globally among adults, men, women, young and old. The insignificant reductions they found they assumed functional, since they were in the categories of: children, elderly, sick, people with disabilities, women with young children, young people continuing their studies and were offset by the otherwise increased supply.

Looking at the impact of gender on the employment outcomes for young disabled adults, Lindsay et al. (2018) find that while youth with disabilities are half as likely to be employed, gender inequalities may play a compounding role with men being more likely to be in employment than women, working longer hours and having higher wages. The identified channels here are different social supports, gender role expectations, as well as women's lower job expectations and overprotection from parents or guardians discouraging their independence.

Kumari (2018) looks at the relationship of both economic growth and gender disparity on the labour supply in investigating their effects on female work participation. They see a U-shaped participation rate and some evidence of cross-sector gender pay disparity which is affected by demographic factors such as migration, marriage, child care and fertility, as well as economic factors such as per capita income, unemployment, infrastructure and the prevalence of non-farm jobs. Ultimately, they argue that the labour supply inequalities are based on inequality between the sexes and, while regulatory measures such as adequate family and childcare policies, tax regimes and the presence of subsidized healthcare help, changes to the female labour force participation fundamentally require the replacement of such a traditional value system itself.

While undertaking a systematic review concerning the effects of adopting technology on employment in LICs or LMICs, Ugur and Mitra (2017) find when adoption favours product innovation positive effects are somewhat likely. They also find, however, that existing income inequalities can make the possible positive effects of its adoption more ambiguous and may in turn widen the rift of demand for skilled versus unskilled labour. Lastly, policies favouring green transition technologies may in turn reduce income inequality, providing another possible linkage.

Lettieri and Diez Villoria (2017) find that hiding mental illness is one of the primary strategies for improved employment outcomes in a meta-review looking at barriers to labour market inclusion for people mental disabilities. This act of concealment of identity and self-stigmatization can seem necessary, they argue, due to the channels of workplace prejudices, perceiving them missing skills, as dangerous or unpredictable, or seeing the act of their hiring as charity due to expectations of lower productivity; but also due to discriminatory hiring practices and pre-existing inequalities leading to them being lower-skilled individuals due to prior discrimination, cultural and social barriers to training and work inclusion. Here, relevant policies include interventions of supported employment (removing an environmental barrier), cognitive behavioural or computer-assisted therapies (cognitive barrier) or vocational rehabilitation programmes (human capital).

Taukobong et al. (2016) review various dimensions of female empowerment and their effects on a variety of health and development outcomes, including the access and use of financial services for the poor. They find that, aside from gender inequalities being both highly contextual and intersectional, especially the channels of control over one's income, assets, resources, having decision-making power and individual education affected these outcomes across all dimensions, reflecting their position as channels of gender inequality. Additionally, personal mobility, safety and equitable interpersonal relationships are associated with some health and family planning outcomes. Ultimately, the review shows that due to the contextual nature, interventions need to identify the variations of inequality at their start, see where inequalities exist, overlap and work as barriers for an effective implementation.

Ruhindwa et al. (2016) review a variety of barriers to adequate workforce inclusion for people with disabilities, proposing an inclusive approach in which the individual is given space to take ownership of the solutions addressing challenges experienced in the employment sector. Similarly, they view hiring discrimination and workplace stigmatization as the largest channels through which inequalities of disability manifest themselves. They see especially employment support practices, with focus on enabling this, as relevant policy strategies, as well as national campaigns to ease disclosing one's disability in the labour market.

In looking at the various dimensions affecting the labour market outcomes of supported employment interventions for people with disabilities, Kirsh (2016) finds that most literature still only regards the overall efficacy of the interventions without taking into account compounding intersectional characteristics. They find that generally men are more likely to find employment through the intervention, possibly resting on current programmes focus on manual labour, as well as younger people generally finding better employment. This highlights the intersectional nature of inequalities between

disability, gender and age. One relevant policy they see is that of vocational rehabilitation.

Hastbacka et al. (2016) undertake a scoping review to find the linkages between societal participation and people with disabilities, looking at specific interventions for the identity of participants, types of participation analysed, and channels of effect. They see most literature focusing on labour market participation and viewing disabled people as coherent group instead of intersectional. The main channels of inequality providing barriers they identify are financial factors, attitudes of discrimination, health issues and unemployment, while the main driving mechanisms identified are legislation and disability policies, as well as support from people in close contact with disabled people and attitudes in society and the hiring process.

In a systematic review looking at the effectiveness of workplace accommodations on employment and return to work, Nevala et al. (2015) find few studies with rigorous design leading to conclusive evidence. They do find moderate evidence that employment in disability can be increased through workplace accommodations such as vocational counselling or guidance, education, self-advocacy, positive perception and help by others. There is also low evidence for return to work being increased by education, work aids and techniques and cooperation between employers and other professionals (such as occupational health care, or service providers).

## **3 Methodology and data**

### **3.1 The search protocol**

This section will discuss the systematic scoping review methodology that is proposed to conduct the review of the literature on policy interventions that are expected to address inequalities in forms of work and labour market outcomes. Unlike purely systematic reviews which typically focus on specific policy questions and interventions, systematic scoping reviews focus on a wider spectrum of policies, where different study designs and research questions can be investigated. Since scoping reviews allow both broad and in-depth analyses, they are the most appropriate rigorous method to make a synthesis of the current evidence in this area (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

The scoping review allows broad focus to be given to a subject for which no unified path with clear edges has been laid out yet by prior reviews, as remains the case with policies targeting inequalities in the world of work. It does so through a breadth-first approach through a search protocol which favours working through a large body of literature to subsequently move toward a depth-favouring approach once the literature has been sufficiently delimited. Its purpose, clearly mapping a body of literature on a (broad) topic area, is thereby useful on its own or in combination with a systematic approach (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). With an increasingly adopted approach in recent years, with rigorous dichotomy of inclusion and exclusion criteria it provides a way of charting the relevance of literature related to its overall body that strives to be free of influencing biases which could affect the skew of the resulting literature sample (Pham et al., 2014).

The search protocol will be carried out based on the introduced areas of policies as well as the possible combination of definitions and outcomes in the WoW. For each dimension of definitions, a cluster containing possible utilized terms will be created, that is for: definitions of work and labour, forms of work, definitions of inequality, forms of vertical and forms of horizontal inequalities, labour market outcomes, and definitions of policy. Each of the clusters contains synonymous terms as well as term-adjacent phrase combinations which are in turn used to refine or broaden the search scope to best encapsulate each respective cluster, based on the above definitions.

The search protocol then follows a three-staged process of execution: identification, screening and extraction. First, in identification, the above categorizations are combined through Boolean operators to conduct a search through the database repository Web of Science. While the resulting study pools could be screened for in multiple languages, the search queries themselves are passed to the databases in English-language only. Relevant results are then complemented through the adoption of a ‘snowballing’ technique, which analyses an array of published reviews for their reference lists to find cross-references of potentially missing literature.

To identify potential studies and create an initial sample, relevant terms for the clusters of world of work, inequality and policy interventions have been extracted from the existing reviews as well as the ILO definitions. Identified terms comprising the world of work can be found in Table 2, with the search query requiring a term from the general column and one other column.

Table 2: World of work term cluster

General	Forms of work	Labour market outcomes
work	own-use	employment outcomes
labour	employment	labour rights
production of goods	unpaid trainee	equality of opportunity
provision of services	volunteer	equality of outcome
own-use	other work activities	labour force participation (Pinto et al., 2021)
use by others	wage-employed	labour force exit (Silvaggi et al., 2020)
of working age	self-employed	job quality (Finlay, 2021)
for pay	formal work	career advancement (Finlay, 2021)
for profit	informal work	hours worked (Finlay, 2021)
remuneration	domestic work	wage
market transactions	care work	salary
	unpaid work	return to work (Silvaggi et al., 2020)

The world of work cluster, like the inequality and policy intervention clusters below, is made up of a general signifier (such as “work”, “inequality” or “intervention”) which has to be labelled in a study to form part of the sample, as well as any additional terms looking into one or multiple

specific dimensions or categories of these signifiers (such as “domestic” work, “gender” inequality, “maternity leave” intervention). At least one general term and at least one additional term have to be mentioned by a study to be identified for the initial sample pool.

For the policy intervention cluster, a variety of terms have been identified both from the ILO policy areas and guidelines as well as existing reviews, as can be seen in Table 3. Where terms have been identified from previous reviews outside the introduced ILO policy guidelines, their source has been included in the table. For the database query, a single term from the general category is required to be included in addition to one term from *any* of the remaining categories.

Table 3: Policy intervention term cluster

General	Institutional	Structural	Agency & social norms
intervention	support for childcare (Perez et al., 2022)	cash benefits	credit programs (Perez et al., 2022)
policy	labour rights	services in kind	career guidance
participation	minimum wage	green transition	vocational guidance (Nevala et al., 2015)
targeting/ targeted	collective bargaining	infrastructure	vocational counselling (Nevala et al., 2015)
distributive	business sustainability promotion	digital infrastructure	counteracting of stereotypes
redistributive	work-life balance promotion equal pay for work of equal value	quality of education public service improvement	commuting subsidies (Perez et al., 2022) housing mobility programs (Perez et al., 2022)
	removal of (discriminatory) law	lowering of gender segregation	encouraging re-situation/migration (Perez et al., 2022)
	law reformation	price stability intervention	encouraging self-advocacy (Nevala et al., 2015)
	social dialogue	extended social protection scheme	cognitive behavioural therapy (Lettieri & Diez Villoria, 2017)
	guaranteed income (Perez et al., 2022)	comprehensive social protection	computer-assisted therapy (Lettieri & Diez Villoria, 2017)

General	Institutional	Structural	Agency & social norms
	universal basic income (Perez et al., 2022)	sustainable social protection	work organization (Nevala et al., 2015)
	provision of living wage (Perez et al., 2022)	supported employment (Lettieri & Diez Villoria, 2017)	special transportation (Nevala et al., 2015)
	maternity leave (Chang et al., 2021)	vocational rehabilitation Lettieri & Diez Villoria (2017) unionization	collective action

Lastly, the inequality cluster is once again made up of a general term describing inequality which has to form part of the query results, as well as at least one term describing a specific vertical or horizontal inequality, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Inequality term cluster

General	Vertical	Horizontal
inequality	income	identity
barrier	Palma ratio (DFI, 2023)	demographic
advantaged	Gini coefficient (DFI, 2023)	gender
disadvantaged	Log deviation	colour
discriminated	Theil	beliefs
disparity	Atkinson	racial
horizontal inequality	class (Kalasa et al., 2021)	ethnic
vertical inequality	fertility (Kalasa et al., 2021)	migrant
	bottom percentile	spatial
	top percentile	rural
		urban
		mega-cities
		small cities
		peripheral cities
		age
		nationality
		ethnicity
		health status
		disability
		characteristics

A general as well as category-specific term from each cluster will be required, using an intersection merge (Boolean ‘AND’), as well as in turn a single of those from each of the three clusters using an intersection merge. The resulting sample pool will thus include a term and specific dimension of inequality and of policy intervention within the world of work.

Second, in screening, duplicate results are removed and the resulting literature sample is sorted based on a variety of excluding characteristics based on: language, title, abstract, full text and literature supersession through newer publications. Properties in these characteristics are used to assess an individual study on its suitability for further review.

Narrowing criteria are applied to restrict the sample to studies looking at i) the effects of individual evidence-based policy measures or intervention initiatives ii) attempting to address a single or multiple of the defined inequalities in the world of work. iii) using appropriate quantitative methods to examine the links of intervention and impact on the given inequalities. The narrowing process makes use of the typology of inequalities, of forms of work, and of policy areas introduced above as its criteria.

An overview of the respective criteria used for inclusion or exclusion can be found in Table 5. It restricts studies to those that comprise primary research published after 2000, with a focus on the narrowing criteria specified in Table 5.

Table 5: Study inclusion and exclusion scoping criteria

Parameter	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Time frame	study published in or after 2000	study published before 2000
Study type	primary research	opinion piece, editorial, commentary, news article, literature review
Study recency	most recent publication of study	gray literature superseded by white literature publication
Study focus	inequality or labour market outcomes as primary outcome (dependent variable) policy measure or strategy as primary intervention (independent variable) specifically relates to some dimension of world of work focus on dimension of inequality in analysis	neither inequality nor labour market outcomes as dependent variable no policy measure/strategy as intervention or relationship unclear exists outside world of work for both independent and dependent variables no focus on mention of inequality in analysis

To facilitate the screening process, with the help of ‘Zotero’ reference manager a system of keywords is used to tag individual studies in the sample with their reason for exclusion, such as ‘ex-

cluded::language', 'excluded::title', 'excluded::abstract', and 'excluded::superseded'. This keyword-based system is equally used to further categorize the sample studies that do not fall into exclusion criteria, based on primary country of analysis, world region, as well as income level classification. To that end, a 'country::', 'region::' and 'income::' are used to disambiguate between the respective characteristics, such as 'region::LAC' for Latin America and the Caribbean, 'region::SSA' for Sub-Saharan Africa; as well as for example 'income::low-middle', 'income::upper-middle' or 'income::high'. These two delineations follow the ILO categorizations on world regions and the country income classifications based on World Bank income groupings (ILO, 2022a).

Similarly, if a specific type of inequality, or a specific intervention, represents the focus of a study, these will be reflected in the same keyword system, through for example 'inequality::income' or 'inequality::gender'. The complete process of identification and screening is undertaken with the help of the Zotero reference manager, ultimately leaving only publications which are relevant for final full-text review and analysis. Last, for extraction, studies are screened for their full-texts, irrelevant studies excluded with 'excluded::full-text' as explained above and relevant studies then ingested into the final sample pool.

Should any literature reviews be identified as relevant during this screening process, they will in turn be crawled for cited sources in a 'snowballing' process, and the sources will be added to the sample to undergo the same screening process explained above.

All relevant data concerning both their major findings and statistical significance are then extracted from the individual studies into a collective results matrix. The results to be identified in the matrix include a study's: i) key outcome measures (dependent variables), ii) main findings, iii) main policy interventions (independent variables), iv) study design and sample size, v) dataset and methods of evaluation, vi) direction of relation and level of representativeness, vii) level of statistical significance, viii) main limitations.

## 3.2 Data

The query execution results in an initial sample of 1643 potential studies identified from the database search as well as 753 potential studies from other sources, leading to a total initial number of 2396. This accounts for all identified studies without duplicate removal, without controlling for literature that has been superseded or applying any other screening criteria. Of these, 151 have been identified as potentially relevant studies for the purposes of this scoping review, from which 38 have been extracted.

The currently identified literature rises somewhat in volume over time, with first larger outputs identified from 2014, as can be seen in Figure 2.

Anomalies such as the relatively significant dips in output in 2016 and 2012 become especially interesting against the strong later increase of output. While this can mean a decreased interest or different focus points within academia during those time spans, it may also point towards alternative



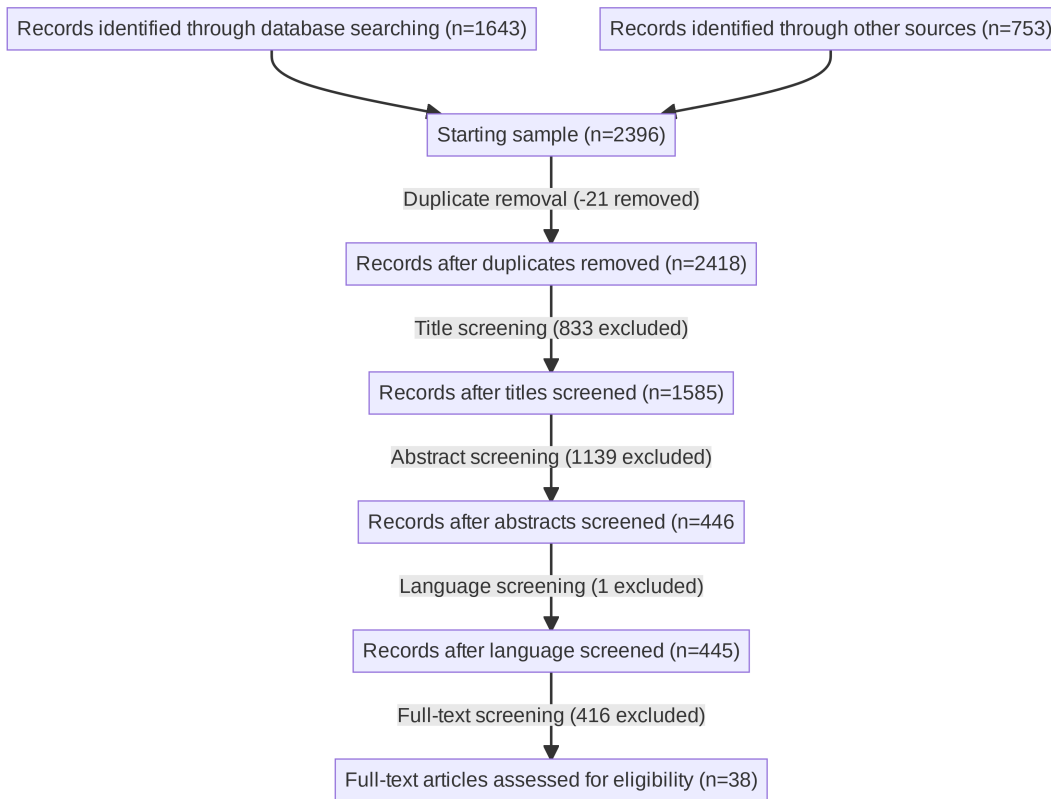


Figure 1: Sample sorting process through identification and screening

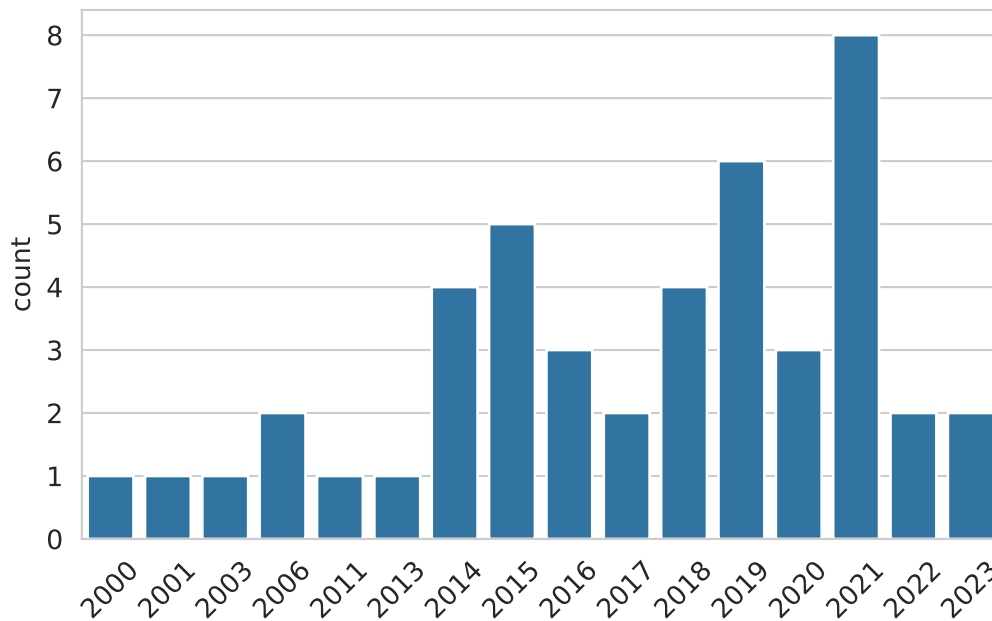


Figure 2: Publications per year

term clusters that are newly arising, or a re-focus towards different interventions, and should thus be kept in mind for future scoping efforts.

The predominant amount of literature is based on white literature, with only a marginal amount solely published as gray literature. This represents a gap which seems reasonable and not surprising since the database query efforts were primarily aimed at finding the most current versions of white literature. Such a stark gap speaks to a well targeted identification procedure, with more up-to-date white literature correctly superseding potential previous publications.

Figure 3 shows the average number of citations for all studies published within an individual year. From the literature sample, several patterns emerge: First, in general, citation counts are slightly decreasing - as should generally be expected with newer publications as less time has passed allowing either their contents be dissected and distributed or any repeat citations having taken place.

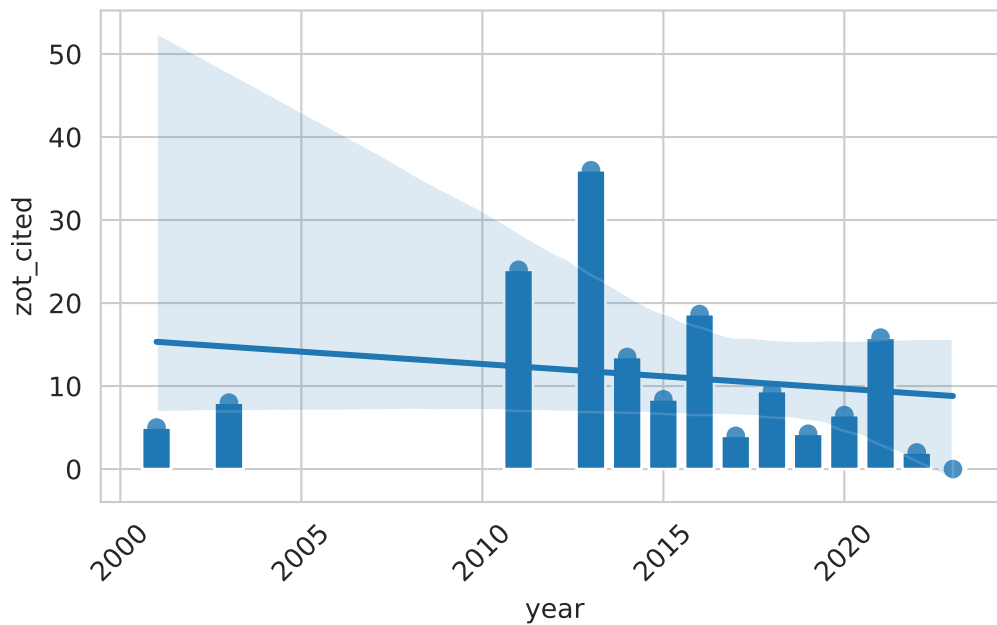


Figure 3: Average citations per year

Second, while such a decrease is visible the changes between individual years are more erratic due to strong changes from year to year. This suggests, first, no overall decrease in academic interest in the topic over this period of time, and second, no linearly developing concentration or centralization of knowledge output and dissemination, though it also throws into question a clear-cut increase of *relevant* output over time.

Positive outlier years in citation amount can point to clusters of relevant literature feeding wider dissemination or cross-disciplinary interest, a possible sign of still somewhat unfocused research production which does not approach from a single coherent perspective yet. It can also point to a centralization of knowledge production, with studies feeding more intensely off each other during the review process, a possible sign of more focused knowledge production and thus valuable to more closely review during the screening process.

It may also suggest that clearly influential studies have been produced during those years, a possibility which may be more relevant during years of more singular releases (such as 2011 and 2013). This is because, as Figure 2 showed, the overall output was nowhere near as rich as in the following years, allowing single influential works to skew the visible means for those years.

In all of these cases, such outliers should provide clear points of interest during the screening process for eventual re-evaluation of utilized scoping term clusters and for future research focus. Should they point towards gaps (or over-optimization) of specific areas of interest during those time-frames or more generally, they may provide an impetus for tweaking future identification queries to better align with the prevailing literature output.

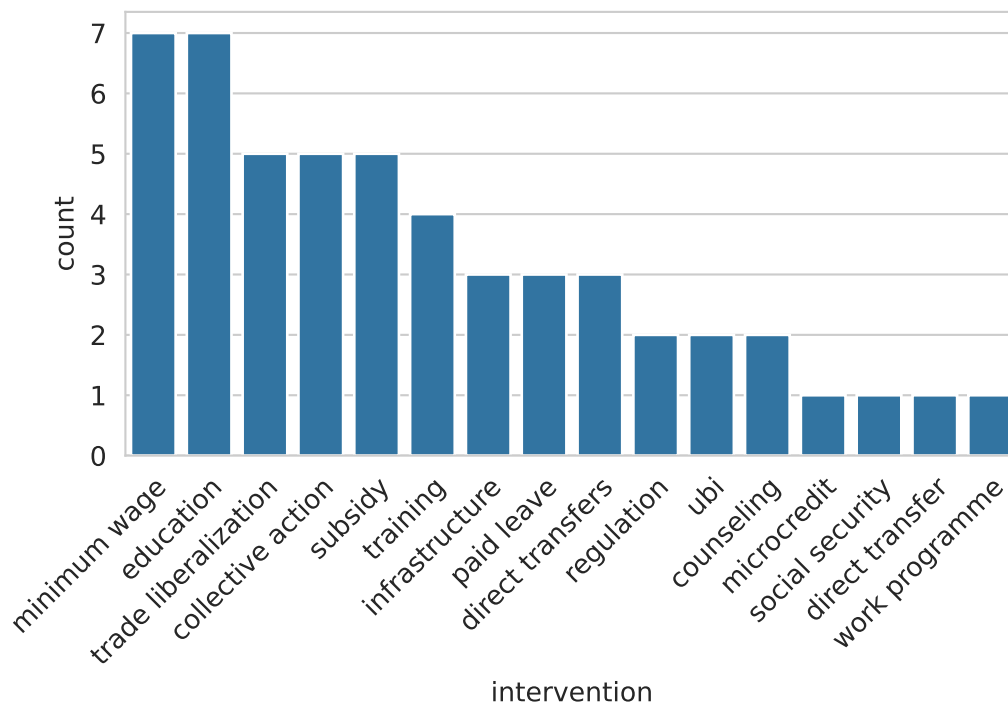


Figure 4: Predominant type of intervention

Figure 4 shows the most often analysed interventions for the literature reviewed. Overall, there is a focus on measures of minimum wage and education interventions, as well as collective action, subsidies, trade liberalization changes and training. This points to a spread capturing both institutional, as well as structural and agency-driven programmes.

## 4 Synthesis: A multitude of lenses

This section will present a synthesis of evidence from the scoping review. The section will also present a discussion on the implications of the current evidence base for policy and underscore key knowledge gaps.

One of the primary lenses through which policy interventions to reduce inequalities in the world of work are viewed is that of income inequality, often measured for all people throughout a country or

subsets thereof. At the same time, the primacy of income should not be overstated as disregarding the intersectional nature of inequalities may lead to adverse targeting or intervention outcomes, as can be seen in the following studies on policies to increase overall income equality.

Since policies employed in the pursuit of increased equality can take a wide form of actors, strategy approaches and implementation details, the following synthesis will first categorize between the main thematic area and its associated interventions, which are then distinguished between for their primary outcome inequalities.

#### **4.1 Institutional**

Whitworth (2021) analyse the spatial consequences of a UK work programme on spatial factors of job deprivation or opportunity increases. The programme follows a quasi-marketized approach of rewarding employment-favourable results of transitions into employment and further sustained months in employment. The author argues, however, that the non-spatial implementation of the policy leads to spatial outcomes. Founded on the approach of social ‘creaming’ and ‘parking’ and applied to the spatial dimension, the study shows that already job-deprived areas indeed experience further deprivations under the programme, while non-deprived areas are correlated with positive impacts, thereby further deteriorating spatial inequality outcomes. This occurs because of providers in the programme de-prioritizing the already deprived areas (‘parking’) in favour prioritizing wealthier areas for improved within-programme results.

Carstens & Massatti (2018) conduct an analysis of the potential factors influencing mentally ill individuals in the United States to participate in the labour force, using correlation between different programmes of Medicaid and labour force status. In trying to find labour force participation predictors it finds employment motivating factors in reduced depression and anxiety, increased responsibility and problem-solving and stress management being positive predictors. In turn barriers of increased stress, discrimination based on their mental, loss of free time, loss of government benefits and tests for illegal drugs were listed as barriers negatively associated with labour force participation. For the government benefits, it finds significant variations for the different varieties of Medicaid programmes, with the strongest negative labour force participation correlated to Medicaid ABD, a programme for which it has to be demonstrated that an individual cannot work due to their disability. The authors suggest this shows the primary channel of the programme becoming a benefit trap, with disability being determined by not working and benefits disappearing when participants enter the labour force, creating dependency to the programme as a primary barrier. Two limitations of the study are its small sample size due to a low response rate, and an over-representation of racial minorities, women and older persons in the sample mentioned as introducing possible downward bias for measured labour force participation rates.

#### 4.1.1 Minimum wage

Chao et al. (2022), in a study looking at the effects of minimum wage increases on a country's income inequality, analyse the impacts in a sample of 43 countries, both LMIC and HIC. Using a general-equilibrium model, it finds that there are differences between the short-term and long-term effects of the increase: In the short term it leads to a reduction of the skilled-unskilled wage gap, however an increase in unemployment and welfare, while in the long term the results are an overall decrease in wage inequality as well as improved social welfare. It finds those results primarily stem from LMIC which experience significant effects driven by a long-term firm exit from the urban manufacturing sector thereby increasing available capital for the rural agricultural sector, while in HIC the results remain insignificant. The study uses the Gini coefficient for identifying a country's inequality. Some limitations of the study include the necessity to omit short-term urban firm exit for the impact to be significant, as well as requiring the, reasonable but necessary, prior assumption of decreased inequality through increased rural agricultural capital.

Alinaghi et al. (2020) conduct a study using a microsimulation to estimate the effects of a minimum wage increase in New Zealand on overall income inequality and further disaggregation along gender and poverty lines. It finds limited redistributive effects for the policy, with negligible impact on overall income inequality and the possibility of actually increasing inequalities among lower percentile income households. Additionally, while it finds a significant reduction in some poverty measures for sole parents that are in employment, when looking at sole parents overall the effects become insignificant again. The authors suggest this points to bad programme targeting, which at best has negligible positive impact on income equality and at worst worsens income inequality in lower income households, due to many low-wage earners being the secondary earners of higher-income households but low-wage households often having no wage earners at all. A pertinent limitation of the study includes its large sample weights possibly biasing the impacts on specific groups such as sole parents and thus being careful not to overestimate their significance.

In a study on the impacts of minimum wage increases in Ecuador Wong (2019) specifically looks at the income and hours worked of low-wage earners to analyse the policies effectiveness. The study finds that, generally, there was a significant increase on the income of low-wage earners and also a significant increase on wage workers hours worked which would reflect positively on a decrease in the country's income inequality. At the same time, it finds some potential negative effects on the income of high earners, suggesting an income-compression effect as employers freeze or reduce high-earners wages to offset low-earners new floors. The findings hide internal heterogeneity, however: For income the effect is largest for agricultural workers while for women the effect is significantly smaller than overall affected workers. For hours worked there is a significant negative impact on women's hours worked, a fact which may point to a decreased intensive margin for female workers and thus also affect their lower income increases. Limitations of the study include some sort-dependency in their panel data and only being able to account for effects during a period of economic growth. Thus, while overall income inequality seems well targeted in the intervention, it may exacerbate the gender

gap that already existed at the same time.

Gilbert et al. (2001) undertake a study looking at the distributional effects of introducing a minimum wage in Britain, with a specific spatial component. Overall it finds little effect on income inequality in the country. It finds that the effects on rural areas differ depending on their proximity to urban areas. While overall income inequality only decreases a small amount, the intervention results in effective targeting with remote rural households having around twice the reduction in inequality compared to others. Rural areas that are accessible to urban markets are less affected, with insignificant impacts to overall income inequality reduction. One limit of the study is that it has to assume no effects on employment after the enactment of the minimum wage for its results to hold.

In a study on the impacts of minimum wage and direct cash transfers in Brazil on the country's income inequality, Silveira Neto & Azzoni (2011) especially analyse the way the policies interact with spatial inequalities. It finds that incomes between regions have converged during the time frame and overall the cash transfers under the 'Bolsa Familia' programme and minimum wage were accounting for 26.2% of the effect. Minimum wage contributed 16.6% of the effect to overall Gini reduction between the regions while cash transfers accounted for 9.6% of the effect. The authors argue that this highlights the way even non-spatial policies can have a positive (or, with worse targeting or selection, negative) influence on spatial inequalities, as transfers occurring predominantly to poorer regions and minimum wages having larger impacts in those regions created quasi-regional effects without being explicitly addressed in the policies. Some limitations include limited underlying data only making it possible to estimate the cash transfer impacts for the analysis end-line, and minimum wage effects having to be constructed from the effects wages equal to minimum wage.

Militaru et al. (2019) conduct an analysis of the effects of minimum wage increases on income inequality in Romania. They find that, generally, minimum wage increases correlate with small wage inequality decreases, but carry a larger impact for women. The channels for the policies effects are two-fold in that there is an inequality decrease as the number of wage earners in total number of employees increases, as well as the concentration of workers at the minimum level mattering — the probable channel for a larger impact on women since they make up larger parts of low-income and minimum wage households in Romania. Limitations to the study are some remaining unobservables for the final inequality outcomes (such as other wages or incomes), the sample over-representing employees and not being able to account for any tax evasion or behavioural changes in the model.

#### **4.1.2 Paid leave & child care**

Broadway et al. (2020) study the introduction of universal paid maternal leave in Australia, looking at its impacts on mothers returning to work and the conditions they return under. It finds that, while there is a short-term decrease of mothers returning to work since they make use of the introduced leave period, over the long-term (after six to nine months) there is a significant positive impact on return to work. Furthermore, there is a positive impact on returning to work in the same job and under the same conditions, the effects of which are stronger for more disadvantaged mothers

(measured through income, education and access to employer-funded leave). This suggests that the intervention reduced the opportunity costs for delaying the return to work, and especially for those women that did not have employer-funded leave options, directly benefiting more disadvantaged mothers. Some potential biases of the study are its inability to account for child-care costs, as well as not being able to fully exclude selection bias into motherhood. There also remains the potential of results being biased through pre-birth labour supply effects or the results of the financial crisis, which may create a down-ward bias for either the short- or long-term effects.

In a study on the labour force impacts for women Hardoy & Schøne (2015) look at the effects of reducing child care costs in Norway. It finds that overall the reductions in child care cost increased the female labour supply in the country (by about 5 per cent), while there were no significant impacts on mothers which already participated in the labour market. It also finds some internal heterogeneity, with the impact being strongest for low-education mothers and low-income households, a finding the authors expected due to day care expenditure representing a larger part of those households' budgets thus creating a larger impact. Though it may alternatively also be generated by the lower average pre-intervention employment rate for those households. Interestingly when disaggregating by native and immigrant mothers there is only a significant impact on native mothers, though the authors do not form an inference on why this difference would be. A limitation of the study is that there was a simultaneous child care capacity increase in the country, which may bias the labour market results due to being affected by both the cost reduction and the capacity increase.

Davies et al. (2022) conduct a study on the return to work ratios for high-skill women workers in public academic universities in the United Kingdom, comparing the results for those in fixed-term contract work versus those in open-ended contracts. It finds that there is a significantly decreased return to work probability for those working under fixed-term contracts, and most universities providing policies with more limited access to maternity payment for fixed-contract staff. This is possibly due to provisions in the policies implicitly working against utilization under fixed-terms: there are strict policies on payments if a contract ends before the maternity leave period is over, and obligations on repayments if not staying in the position long enough after rtw. Additionally, most policies require long-term continuous service before qualifying for enhanced payments in the maternity policies. There is high internal heterogeneity between the universities, primarily due to the diverging maternity policy documents, only a small number of the overall dataset providing favorable conditions for fixed-term work within.

In a study on the effects of introductions of a variety of maternity leave laws in Japan, Mun & Jung (2018) look at the effects on employment numbers and job quality in managerial positions of women. Contrary to notions of demand-side mechanisms of the welfare state paradox, with women being less represented in high-authority employment positions due to hiring or workplace discrimination against them with increased maternity benefits, it finds that this is not the case for the Japanese labour market between 1992 and 2009. There were no increases in hiring discrimination against women, and either no significant change in promotions for firms not providing paid leave before the

laws or instead a positive impact on promotions for firms that already provided paid leave. The authors suggest the additional promotions were primarily based on voluntary compliance of firms in order to maintain positive reputations, signaled through a larger positive response to incentive-based laws than for mandate-based ones. Additionally, the authors make the conjecture that the welfare paradox may rather be due to supply-side mechanisms, based on individual career planning, as well as reinforced along existing gender divisions of household labour which may increase alongside the laws. Limitations of the study include foremost its limited generalizability due to the unique Japanese institutional labour market structure (with many employments, for example, being within a single firm until retirement), as well as no ability yet to measure the true causes and effects of adhering to the voluntary incentive-based labour policies, with lasting effects or done as symbolic compliance efforts and mere impression management.

Clark et al. (2019) undertake an experimental study on the impacts of providing childcare vouchers to poor women in urban Kenya, estimating the impacts on their economic empowerment. The empowerment is measured through disaggregated analyses of maternal income, employment probability and hours worked. It finds that, for married mothers there was a significantly positive effect on employment probability and hours worked, suggesting their increased ability to work through lower childcare costs increasing personal agency. For single mothers, it finds a negative effect on hours worked, though with a stable income. The authors suggest this is due to single Kenyan mothers already working increased hours compared to married mothers, though the effect shows the ability of single mothers to shift to jobs with more regular hours, even if they are not compatible with childcare. Minor limitations of the study are its restriction to effects within a period of 1 year, and a somewhat significant attrition rate to the endline survey.

Hojman & López Bóo (2019), in an experimental study looking at the effects of providing free childcare for poor urban mothers in Nicaragua under the ‘Programo Urbano’, examine the effects on inequality for mothers and children. It finds that providing free childcare for young children of poor mothers significantly increases the employment probability of the mothers (14ppts) independently of the childcare quality. It also finds significantly positive impacts on the human capital of the children, though dependent on the quality of childcare facilities. This suggests childcare costs being removed through a quasi-subsidy reducing the required childcare time burden on mothers, increasing parental agency and employment choices. Some limitations to the study include a relatively small overall sample size, as well as employment effects becoming insignificant when the effect is measured on randomization alone (without an additional instrumental variable).

#### **4.1.3 Unionization & collective action**

Alexiou & Trachanas (2023) study on the effects of both political orientation of governments’ parties and a country’s trade unionization on its income inequality. It finds that, generally, strong unionization is strongly related to decreasing income inequality, most likely through a redistribution of political power through collective mobilization in national contexts of stronger unions. It also sug-



gests that in contexts of weaker unionization, post-redistribution income inequality is higher, thus also fostering unequal redistributive policies. Lastly, it finds positive relations between right-wing orientation of a country's government and its income inequality, with more mixed results for centrist governments pointing to potential fragmentations in their redistributive policy approaches. The study is mostly limited in not being able to account for individual drivers (or barriers) and can thus not disaggregate for the effects for example arbitration or collective bargaining.

Ferguson (2015) conducts a study on the effects of a more unionized workforce in the United States, on the representation of women and minorities in the management of enterprises. It finds that while stronger unionization is associated both with more women and more minorities represented in the overall workforce and in management, this effect is only marginally significant. Additionally, there are drivers which may be based on unobservables and not a direct effect — it may be a selection effect of more unionized enterprises. It uses union elections as its base of analysis, and thus can not exclude self-selection effects of people joining more heavily unionized enterprises rather than unionization increasing representation in its conclusions.

Cardinaleschi et al. (2019) study the wage gap in the Italian labour market, looking especially at the effects of collective negotiation practices. It finds that the Italian labour market's wage gap exists primarily due to occupational segregation between the genders, with women often working in more 'feminized' industries, and not due to educational lag by women in Italy. It also finds that collective negotiation practices targeting especially managerial representation and wages do address the gender pay gap, but only marginally significantly. The primary channel for only marginal significance stems from internal heterogeneity in that only the median part of wage distributions is significantly affected by the measures. Instead, the authors recommend a stronger mix of policy approaches, also considering the human-capital aspects with for example active labour-market policies targeting it.

Dieckhoff et al. (2015) undertake a study on the effect of trade unionization in European labour markets, with a specific emphasis on its effects on gender inequalities. It finds, first of all, that increased unionization is related to the probability of being employed on a standard employment contract for both men and women. It also finds no evidence that men seem to carry increased benefits from increased unionization, although in combination with temporary contract and family policy re-regulations, men do seem to experience greater benefits than women. At the same time women's employment under standard contracts does not decrease, such that there is no absolute detrimental effect for either gender. It does, however, pose the question of the allocation of relative benefits between the genders through unionization efforts. The study is limited in that, by averaging outcomes across European nations, it can not account for nation-specific labour market contexts or gender disaggregations.

Ahumada (2023 MAR 26 2023) on the other hand create a study on the effects of unequal distributions of political power on the extent and provision of collective labour rights. It is a combination of quantitative global comparison with qualitative case studies for Argentina and Chile. It finds that, for societies in which power is more unequally distributed, collective bargaining possibilities are

more limited and weaker. It suggests that, aside from a less entrenched trade unionization in the country, the primary channel for its weakening are that existing collective labour rights are often either restricted or disregarded outright. Employers were restricted in their ability to effectively conduct lobbying, and made more vulnerable to what the authors suggest are ‘divide-and-conquer’ strategies by government with a strongly entrenched trade unionization, due to being more separate and uncoordinated. A limit is the strong institutional context of the two countries which makes generalizable application of its underlying channels more difficult to the overarching quantitative analysis of inequality outcomes.

## **4.2 Structural**

Shin & Moon (2006) look at the effects of providing relatively higher wages for teachers, as well as fertility differences, on labour market participation of young female teachers. They find that providing relatively higher wages for teaching professions as compared to non-teaching professions significantly increases female labour force participation for teachers, though the strongest determinant for it is possessing a college major in education, with overall education level being another determinant. The study also looks at the effects of the presence of a new-born baby and finds that it significantly decreases female labour force participation and is almost twice as large for women in the teaching profession as compared to non-teaching jobs, though it does not have an effect on the choice of job between teaching or non-teaching. The authors suggest this relatively higher exit from the labour market for women with new-born babies in teaching professions may once again be due to low wages: teachers leaving the labour market experience relatively lower temporary wage losses than in other professions, decreasing the exit-cost. A limitation of the study is its restricted focus on strictly female underlying panel data which does not allow for comparisons between genders within or across professions.

### **4.2.1 Trade liberalization**

Adams & Atsu (2015) study the effects of labour, business and credit regulations, FDI and school enrolment looks at their long-term correlations to income inequality in developing countries from 1970 to 2012. They find that in MENA, SSA, LAC and to some extent AP increased labour and business regulations are actually negatively related to equitable income distribution, with market regulation not having significant effects. Similarly, FDI is negatively related and the authors suggest it is unlikely to generate general welfare effects in developing countries as it often has the wrong targeting incentive structure and can only generate more equity when correctly targeting connections from the local to surrounding economies. The authors identify developing countries lacking in institutional capability to accomplish regulatory policies optimized for benefits and see the need for policies requiring more specific targeting of inequality reduction as their agenda. On the other, they find school enrolment and thus education-oriented policies to be positively related with an equitable income distribution, suggesting it increases the capacity of public administration practitioners and in turn lead to more adapted policies specific to developing countries’ institutional contexts. Overall, the authors suggest

that regulatory policy in developing countries needs to be built for their specific contexts and not exported from developed countries due to their different institutional capabilities and structural makeup. The study is limited in its design focus that lying purely on the macro-level regional analyses and can thus, when finding correlations towards income inequality, also only identify far-reaching structural and institutional possible root causes. While the literature on policy efforts towards income redistribution is large, studies which focus on the direct effects of individual policy interventions on income inequality and its possible linkages with other inequalities tends to focus on policies such as minimum wage impositions, direct transfers from the state or subsidies for individual life aspects.

Xu et al. (2021) study the effects of trade liberalization and FDI on income inequality in 38 countries in the Sub-Saharan region. It finds that increased FDI is negatively correlated with income inequality measured through the Gini coefficient, while trade liberalization is positively correlated with income inequality — as are corruption, political stability, rule of law and education, which contradicts a variety of previous studies. The authors suggest this may be due to the difference in sample and variables used, and the periods under study. They suggest that FDI may primarily go to the agricultural sector which can employ low-skilled labour and thereby reduce inequalities, while trade openness in fact creates jobs in other countries through higher import than export rates. They do not provide clear channels through which education positively correlates with inequality, though some possibilities are an unequal access to education (through excluding factors such as those based on spatial, gender or financial inequalities), as well as a differentiated quality of education. Limitations of the study are the region-wide level of analysis which may obscure context-dependent mechanisms within the different institutional-structural contexts of the countries and potential hidden unobservables which may bias the results.

A simulation study on the effects of trade liberalization through FTA by Khan et al. (2021) looks at income inequality in Pakistan between different households, measured through the Gini coefficient. It finds that there is no clear general direction for changes through FTA visible, with its impact primarily depending on micro-economic factors. Some large trade agreements are negatively correlated with the Gini while others are positively related, similar to regional and bilateral agreements. Generally, this is due to increases in the income of poor rural agricultural farm households being dependent on grain (which is the largest export good often rising under FTA), while livestock predominantly owned by poor rural households decreases in returns under FTA. The deciding channel can then be increases on the wages of farm workers (after among others grain export increases) increasing income equity, which, when they do not happen, can in turn lead to an overall decrease. Lastly, there are wage compression effects between urban and rural households, with richer urban households often decreasing processed food or service production. A greater mobility would dissipate all short-term gains and losses, as changes would get more evenly distributed across regions and households, while over the long term some positive aspects on income equality are visible if increased agricultural growth can be sustained. The study may have some limits to its generalizability due to the production factor

reallocations for agricultural households being specific to the rural poor context in Pakistan.

Liyanaarachchi et al. (2016) run a simulation model on the effects of trade liberalization in Sri Lanka on income inequality and absolute poverty. It finds that the complete elimination of tariffs results in an overall reduction in absolute poverty, while tariff elimination with resulting fiscal policy responses to balance the budget would result in more mixed results but still pointing to an absolute reduction in poverty. On the other hand, income inequality is seen to increase for most sectors over the short term and for all sectors over the long term. The primary channels for this change are increased wage differences — especially the increased wages for managers, professionals and technicians, as well as increased differences between urban workers — and low-income households being more dependent on private or government transfers, which do not increase with trade liberalization.

Rendall (2013) undertake a cross-country analysis on the impacts of structural changes in Brazil, Mexico, Thailand and India from 1987 to 2008, and its effects on female labour market participation and the gender wage gap. Basing its analysis on the theory of capital displacing brawn in production for transition economies, it finds that all countries had reduced brawn requirements over time, though with large heterogeneity: Thailand lead the change with 15 percentage points while India had the smallest change with 0.2 percentage points. Following this, there was the largest steady labour market participation inequality in India, while there were mixed results for Mexico and Thailand, with Brazil having female employment shares changes similar to that of the United States. The channels here are seen as a reduced requirement for physical labour replaced by for example more service-oriented economies ('brawn' to 'brain'). For female wage shares, in Brazil the wage gap closed most rapidly, though it began widening in 2005, while Thailand and India had converging but mixed changes. In Mexico, while the gap widened during the 1990s, it began closing again afterwards. The differences in wage gap effects compared to both other countries and the respective country's physical labour market requirements show that contextual structural changes played a large role in each case: with erstwhile reduced returns on Brazilian returns for brain intensive occupations, the introduction of a female-lead manufacturing sector in Mexico in the 90s, and widely diverging basic labour market skill structures in Thailand and India necessitating subsistence-oriented participation; the results show impacts of structural changes, though limited through a variety of mediating factors influencing each case.

#### **4.2.2 Education**

Looking at the returns of the Tanzanian 'Universal Primary Education' programme on consumption and on rural labour market outcomes, Delesalle (2021), finds outcomes that additionally differ along spatial and gender lines. The programme both attempted to increase access to schools but also changed curricula to contain more technical classes, judged relevant to increase equity in rural areas. Even though the programme aims to increase universal equality of access to education, the study finds that gender, geographical and income inequalities persist throughout, with individuals that complete primary education more likely to be male urban wage workers. The study measures

returns purely on consumption of households to show the estimated effect on their productivity — here, it finds generally positive returns but greatest for non-agricultural work, self-employed or as wage work. Importantly, the introduction of more technical classes, however, also changes employment sector choices, with men working less in agricultural work and more in non-farm wage sectors and an increased probability for rural women to both work in agriculture and to work formally. Limitations of the study include the inability to directly identify intervention compliers and having to construct returns for each household head only and a possibly unobserved ‘villagization’ effect by bringing people together in community villages for their education leading to other unobserved variable impacting the returns.

Pi & Zhang (2016) conduct a study on the impacts of allowing increased access to social welfare provisions and education to urban migrants in China, looking at the effects on wage inequality between skilled and unskilled sectors and workers. It uses skilled-unskilled inequality instead of rural-urban inequalities since the real wages of the rural sector are already much lower in China, making comparisons along the 90th to 10th decile ratios more difficult. The study finds that reforms to increase access to social security and education for urban migrants decreases wage inequality between the sectors if the skilled sector is more capital intensive than the unskilled sector, though it makes no specific identification of individual channels. There are several limitations to the study such as no disaggregation between the private and the (very important for the Chinese economy) public sector, job searching not being part of the model, and, most importantly, a severely restricted generalizability due to the reform characteristics being strongly bound to the institutional contexts of Chinese *hukou*<sup>1</sup> systems.

Suh (2017) studies the effects of structural changes on married women’s employment in South Korea, looking specifically at the impact of education and family structure. It finds that educational interventions significantly increase the employment probability of married women, and it finds overall female labour force participation showing a negative correlation with income inequality. However, education alone is only a necessary not a sufficient condition for increased employment, with a married woman’s family size and family structure having an impact as well. Finally, education also has an intergenerational impact, with the female education also positively relating to daughters’ education levels.

Coutinho et al. (2006) study the impacts of special education between young men and women on their relative employment probabilities and incomes. It finds that, overall, young women with disabilities were significantly less likely to be employed, earned less than males with disabilities, had lower likelihood of obtaining a high school diploma and were more likely to be a biological parent. For the employment outcomes, the primary channels identified were men with disabilities being in employment both more months in the preceding period and more hours per week on average than

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<sup>1</sup>The hukou system generally denotes a permission towards either rural land-ownership and agricultural subsidies for the rural hukou or social welfare benefits and employment possibilities for the urban hukou, and children of migrants often have to go back to their place of registered residence for their college entrance examination. This study looks at reforms undoing some of the restrictions under the system.

women with disabilities. Overall, more women were employed in clerical positions and substantially more men employed in technical or skilled positions for both special education and the control samples. Similarly, for income there was a gender-based difference for the whole sample, though with substantial internal heterogeneity showing only marginal differences between men and women in the high-achieving subsample and the largest differences in the low-achieving and special needs subsample. The suggestions include a strengthening of personal agency to remain in education longer and delay having children through self-advocacy and -determination transition services for young women to supplement structural education efforts. Some limitations include initial subsample selection based on parent-reporting possibly introducing selection bias and the special education sample not including students with more severe impairments due to the requirement of self-reporting.

Mukhopadhyaya (2003) looks at the income inequality in Singapore and how national education policies impact this inequality, focusing especially on the ‘Yearly Awards’ scheme and the ‘Edusave Entrance Scholarship for Independent Schools’. It finds that, generally, income inequality for migrants in Singapore is relatively high, primarily due to generated between-occupational income inequalities and migration policies which further stimulate occupational segregation. Then, for the higher-education interventions, it identifies issues which may exacerbate the existing inequalities along these lines: Already-advantaged (high-income) households generally stem from non-migration households and are also reflected in higher representation of high-achievement education brackets. The education policies thus may exacerbate income inequality through their bad targeting when considering inter-generational academic achievements with high-education households remaining the primary beneficiaries of the policies, a finding which is more significant for the ‘Edusave Entrance Scholarship for Independent Schools’ than the ‘Yearly Awards’ scheme which has fewer benefit accruals to wealthier households. More generally, the study suggests that the system of financing for higher education in Singapore aiming for providing equal education opportunity for all, may in fact further disadvantage poorer, low-income households that have a low-education parental background.

#### **4.2.3 Infrastructural change**

Kuriyama & Abe (2021) look at the effects of Japan’s move to decarbonise its energy sector on employment, especially rural employment. It finds that, while employment in general is positively affected, especially rural sectors benefit from additional employment probability. This is due to the renewable energy sector, while able to utilise urban areas for smaller scale power generation, being largely attached to rural areas for larger scale projects such as geothermal, wind power or large-scale solar generation. The study also suggests some possible inequality being created in between the different regions of Japan due to the Hokkaido region having limited transmission line capacity and locational imbalance between demand and potential supplies. Limitations include its design as a projection model with multiple having to make strong assumptions about initial employment numbers and their extrapolation into the future, as well as having to assume the amount of generated power to increase as a stable square function.

In an observational study looking at the inclusive or exclusionary effects of infrastructure development, Stock (2021) analyses the ‘gender inclusive’ development of a solar park in India which specifically aims to work towards micro-scale equality through regional uplifting. The project included a training and temporary employment to local unskilled/semi-skilled labour. It finds that the development instead impacted equality negatively, creating socio-economic exclusion and disproportionately negatively affected women of lower castes. While acquiring basic additional skills, none of the women participating in training remained connected to the operators of the solar park and none were hired. An insignificant amount of women from local villages were working at the solar park, of which most belonged to the dominant caste, and the redistributive potential was stymied through capture by village female elites. The author suggests this is an example of institutional design neglecting individual agency and structural power relations, especially intersectional inequalities between gender and caste. The study is limited in explanatory power through its observational design, not being able to make causal inferences.

Blumenberg & Pierce (2014) look at the effects of a housing mobility intervention in the United States on employment for disadvantaged households, and comparing its impacts to the ownership of a car for the same sample. It follows the ‘Moving to Opportunity’ programme which provided vouchers to randomized households for movement to a geographically unrestricted area or to specifically to a low-poverty area (treatment group), some of which are in areas with well-connected public transport opportunities. The sample for the study is made up predominantly of women (98%). No relationship between programme participation and increased employment probability could be established. However, a positive relationship exists between owning an auto-mobile and improved employment outcomes for low-income households, as well as including those households that are located in ‘transit-rich’ areas. Access to better transit itself is related to employment probability but not gains in employment - the authors suggest this reflects individuals’ strategic relocation to use public transit for their job. However, moving to a better transit area itself does not increase employment probability, perhaps pointing to a certain threshold required in transit extensiveness before it facilitates employment. Ultimately, the findings suggest the need to further individual access to auto-mobility in disadvantaged households or for extensive transit network upgrade which have to cross an efficiency threshold. Some limitations of the study are its models low explanatory power for individual outcomes, more so among disadvantaged population groups, as well as some remaining possibility of endogeneity bias through unobserved factors such as individual motivation or ability.

Adam et al. (2018) model the effects of transport infrastructure investments in Tanzania on rural income inequalities and household welfare inequalities, modelled through consumption indicators. Generally it finds that the results of public investment measures into transport infrastructure largely depend on the financing scheme used. Comparing four financing schemes when looking at the effects on rural households, it finds that they are generally worse off when the development is deficit-financed or paid through tariff revenues. On the other hand, rural households benefit through increased income

from measures financed through consumption taxes, or by external aid. The general finding is that there is no Pareto optimum for any of the investment measures for all locations, and that much of the increases in welfare are based on movement of rural workers out of quasi-subsistence agriculture to other locations and other sectors. The study creates causal inferences but is limited in its modelling approach representing a limited subset of empirical possibility spaces, as well as having to make the assumption of no population growth for measures to hold.

## **4.3 Agency-oriented**

### **4.3.1 Training & accommodation**

Similarly, Shepherd-Banigan et al. (2021) undertake a qualitative study on the significance of vocational and educational training provided for disabled veterans in the United States. It finds that both the vocational and educational services help strengthen individual agency, autonomy and motivation but impacts can be dampened if the potential for disability payment loss due to the potential for job acquisition impedes skill development efforts. The primary barriers of return to work efforts identified are an individual's health problems as well as various programmes not accommodating the needs of disabled veteran students, while the primary Facilitators identified are financial assistance provided for education as well as strengthened individual agency through motivation. Some limitations include a possible bias of accommodations required through the sample being restricted to veterans with a caregiver, which often signals more substantial impairments than for a larger training-participatory sample, as well as the data not being able to identify the impact of supported employment.

An experimental study on the impacts of benefits and vocational training counselling for disabled veterans in the United States by Rosen et al. (2014) measures the effects on return to work through average hours worked. It identifies time worked through a timeline follow-back calendar, measuring the change in days worked in the 28 days preceding the final study measurement. Here, it finds the sessions having a significant increase on more waged days worked, with an additional three days for the 28 preceding days on average. One limitation is the inability of the study to locate an active ingredient: Though the intervention clearly aims at strengthening some aspect of individual agency, the exact mediators are not clear, with neither beliefs about work, beliefs about benefits, nor provided service use for mental health or substance abuse impacted significantly.

The studies thus not only reinforce recommendations for strength-based approaches, emphasizing the benefits of work, but also highlight the targeting importance of subsidy programmes in general on the one hand, in the worst case reducing equity through bad targeting mechanisms, and their negative reinforcement effects widening existing inequalities of gender, age and racial discrimination through such targeting on the other.

With a similar focus on agency, Gates (2000) conducts a qualitative study on the mechanisms of workplace accommodation for people with mental health conditions to allow their successful return-



to-work. The intervention is based on an accommodation which disaggregates the effects of social and technical components of the process and included a disclosure and psycho-educational plan. It finds that successful return-to-work through accommodation requires consideration of the social component ('who is involved'), with unsuccessful accommodation often only relying on the functional aspect ('what is involved'). The primary barrier identified for successful return-to-work are actually relationship issues not functional ones, with supervisors playing a key role for the success of the accommodation process. Additionally, it highlighted the necessity of strengthening the individual agency of the returnee, accomplished in the intervention through a concrete training plan with the worker but also with other key workplace players such as the supervisors. Additionally, providers must be willing to develop a disclosure plan with the employee and enter the workplace itself to adequately assist in the accommodation process. Limitations to the study include the limited generalizability of its findings with a small non-randomized sample size and restriction to mental health disability.

A study looking at the effects of vocational rehabilitation on employment probabilities, Poppen et al. (2017) look at the factors influencing successful employment for disabled people in the United States. It finds that the primary factors negatively correlated with successful employment were for women in the sample, for having mental illness or traumatic brain injury as the primary disability, having multiple disabilities, an interpersonal or self-care impediment and receiving social security benefits. On the other hand, having participated in a youth-transition training programme, as well as making use of more vocational rehabilitation services, are correlated with an increased employment probability. It thereby highlights the gendered dimension of employment probabilities and points to a necessity to focus training and rehabilitation efforts along multiple dimensions. Some limitations of the study include its limited generalizability, having a sample located in a single state, as well as a dataset intended for service provision not academic pursuits possibly introducing unreliability in its data and not measuring service quality.

#### **4.3.2 Direct transfers**

Emigh et al. (2018) study the effects of direct state transfers to people in poverty in the post-socialist market transition countries of Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. It first looks at the correlations of socio-demographic characteristics with poverty to find that in each country there was an increased probability for poverty of low-education, larger and predominantly Roma households. It also found that poverty itself was most feminized in Hungary, the country with the most advanced market transition in the study period, and least feminized in Bulgaria, the country with the least advanced market transition, and suggests that poverty may have feminized as the market transitions progressed. For the state transfers it found that while the level of payments may have been too small to eliminate longer-term adverse effects of the market transitions, in each country's case the transfers to individuals reduced their poverty and were beneficial at least in the short term. The authors thus suggest that their findings may be compatible both with an institutionalist perspective seeing poverty-eliminating benefits in the short term and with an underclass perspective which contends that nonetheless the transfers do not eliminate the deprivations members of disadvantaged groups

face, while providing little evidence for generating welfare dependency proposed in a more neoclassical perspective. However, due to no long-term panel data available to fully analyse the underclass and neoclassical arguments, these findings should not be understood too generalizable.

Wang & Van Vliet (2016) undertake an observational study on the levels of social assistance benefits and wages in a national comparative study within 26 developed countries. It finds that real minimum income benefit levels generally increased in most countries from 1990 to 2009, with only a few countries, mostly in Eastern European welfare states, showing decreases during the time frame. The majority of changes in real benefit levels are from deliberate policy changes and the study calculates them by a comparison of the changes in benefit levels to the changes in consumer prices. Secondly, it finds that changes for income replacement rates are more mixed, with rates decreasing even in some countries which have increasing real benefits levels. The study suggests this is because benefit levels are in most cases not linked to wages and policy changes also do not take changes in wages into account resulting in diverging benefit levels and wages, which may lead to exacerbating inequality gaps between income groups.

An experimental study of providing UBI for villages in India by Standing (2015) looks at the effects on absolute low-income household debts, utilizing a combination of qualitative and quantitative experimental research. It finds that the provision of UBI significantly reduced household debts, finding generally agreeing with assumptions in the literature, but goes beyond this by investigating the qualitative causes going beyond purely monetary value into what the authors call 'emancipatory value'. They find UBI reduces dependency risk - primarily to lenders with high associated fees by allowing the repayment of existing debt, not having to work for the lender directly or by providing them parts of their wages, avoiding taking on new debts and, if new debts have to be taken on, allows choosing less exploitative forms of borrowing (such as from relatives or friends). The last channel especially is a point of interest of the study: the intervention did not just reduce absolute debts through an individual possessing more money, it generally infused more money into the local contexts, reducing its scarcity and allowing others such as neighbors and friends to provide more collective risk spreading in the villages.. The intervention also significantly increased possibility of saving in treatment households, allowing for an increased economic security and empowerment, which was also influenced by household head education, landholding, the household's caste and size. The main channel this is accomplished through is a shift to institutionalized saving, with provides increased resilience against shock events.

Cieplinski et al. (2021) undertake a simulation study on the income inequality effects of both a policy targeting a reduction in working time and the introduction of a UBI in Italy. It finds that while both decrease overall income inequality, measured through Gini coefficient, they do so through different channels. While provision of a UBI sustains aggregate demand, thereby spreading income in a more equitable manner, working time reductions significantly decrease aggregate demand through lower individual income but significantly increases labour force participation and thus employment. It also finds that through these channels of changing aggregate demand, the environmental outcomes are

oppositional, with work time reduction decreasing and UBI increasing the overall ecological footprint. One limitation of the study is the modeling assumption that workers will have to accept both lower income and lower consumption levels under a policy of work time reduction through stable labour market entry for the results to hold.

### 4.3.3 Microfinance

Al-Mamun et al. (2014) conduct a study on the impacts of an urban micro-finance programme in Malaysia on the economic empowerment of women. The programme introduced the ability for low-income urban individuals to receive collateral-free credit. The study finds that the programme, though not specifically aimed at women, indeed increased women's economic empowerment with an increase in household decision-making, as well as increased personal economic security. Primarily this is due to the increased access to finance, though it also functions through an increase of collective agency established for the women in organised meetings and trainings. It also finds, however, that the empowerment outcomes are constrained by the inability for individuals to obtain loans, with the programme only disbursing group loans which are harder to achieve through obstacles to collective organisation by different racial and socio-demographic backgrounds in each dwelling. The study is somewhat limited in its explanatory power since even through its random sampling design it can not establish control for all factors required in experimental design.

In turn, Field et al. (2019) undertake an experimental study looking at the effects of granting women increased access to their own financial accounts and training on their employment and hours worked, as well as more long-term economic empowerment. The background of the experiment was the rural Indian MGNREGS<sup>2</sup> programme which, despite ostensibly mandated gender wage parity, runs the risk of discouraging female workers and restricting their agency by depositing earned wages into a single household account — predominantly owned by the male head of household. To grant increased financial access, the treatment changed the deposits into newly opened individual accounts for the women workers, as well as providing additional training to some women. It found that, short-term, the deposits into women's individual accounts in combination with provided training increased their labour supply, while longer-term there was an increased acceptance of female work in affected households and a significant increase in women's hours worked. The impacts on increased hours worked were concentrated on those households where previously women worked relatively lower amounts and there were stronger norms against female work while less constrained households' impacts dissipated over time. The authors suggest the primary channel is the newly increased bargaining power through having a greater control of one's income, and that it in turn also reflects onto gender norms themselves.

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<sup>2</sup>The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, one of the largest redistribution programmes on the household level in the world, entitling each household to up to 100 days of work per year.

## 5 Discussion & policy implications

As can be seen in Figure 5, taken by region for the overall study sample, the evidence base receives a relatively even split between the World Bank regional country groupings. Studies tend to base their analyses more in national comparative studies for the North American and Europe and Central Asian regions, while relying more on case studies restricted to a single country context for developing countries in other regions, though this trend does not hold strongly everywhere or over time. A slight trend towards studies focusing on evidence-based research in developing countries is visible, though with an overall rising output, as seen in Figure 2, and the ability for reliance on more recent datasets, this is to be expected.

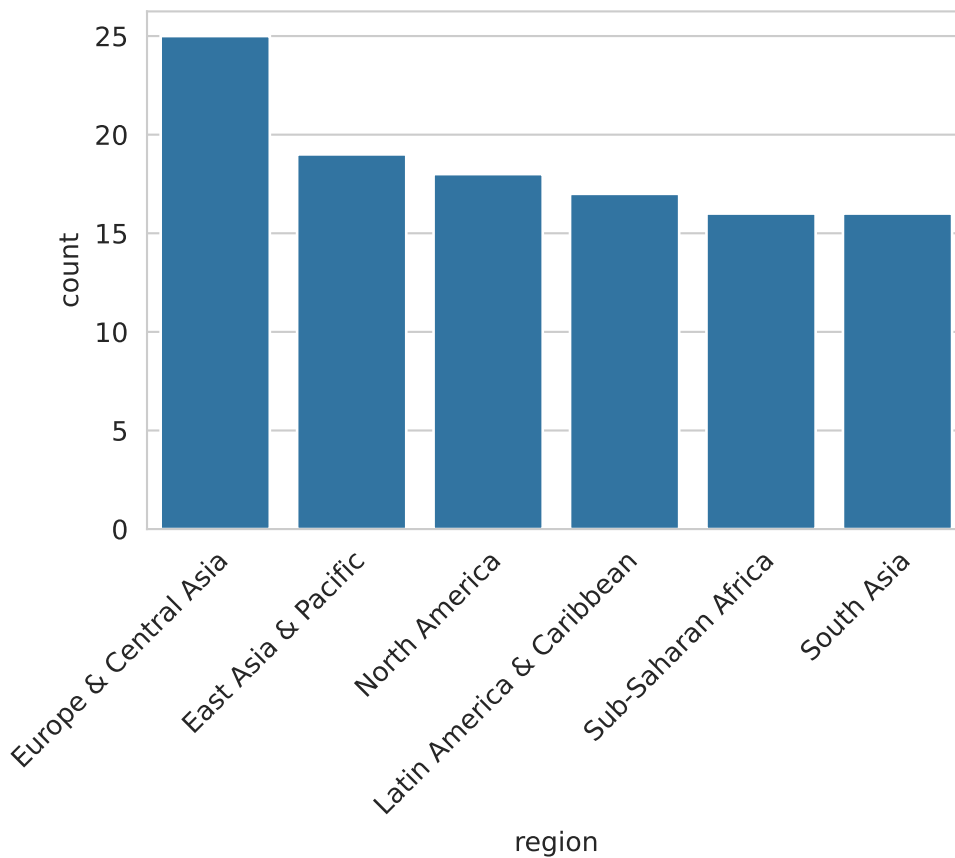


Figure 5: Studies by regions analysed

Policy interventions undertaken either with the explicit aim of reducing one or multiple inequalities, or analysed under the lens of such an aim implicitly, appear in a wide array of variations to their approach and primary targeted inequality, as was highlighted in the previous section. To make further sense of the studies shining a light on such approaches, it makes sense to divide their attention not just by primary approach, but by individual or overlapping inequalities being targeted, as well as the region of their operation.

As can be seen in Figure 6 which breaks down available studies by targeted inequalities, income inequality is the type of inequality traced in most of the relevant studies. This follows the identified

multi-purpose lens income inequality can provide, through which to understand other inequalities — many studies use income measurements and changes in income or income inequality over time as indicators to understand a variety of other inequalities’ linkages through. Often, however, income inequality is not the primary inequality being targeted, but used to measure the effects on other inequalities by seeing how the effects of respective inequality and income intersect, as will be discussed in the following section.

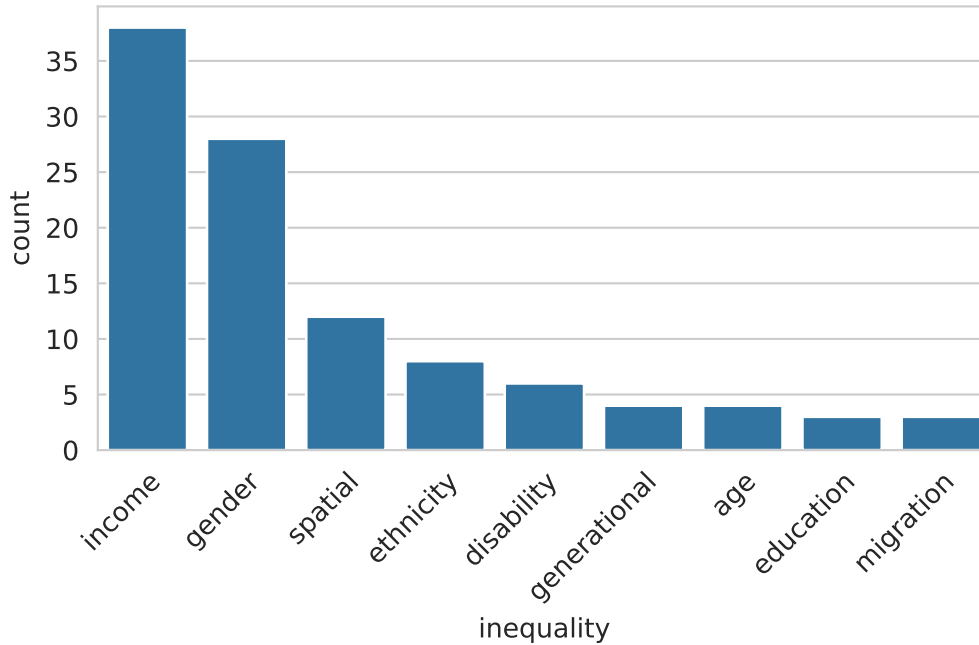


Figure 6: Types of inequality analysed

With income inequality on its own often describing vertical inequality within a national context, the remaining inequalities gathered from the data rather form horizontal lenses to view their contexts through. The second most analysed inequality is that of gender, followed by spatial inequalities, disabilities, generational inequalities, inequalities of migration, education and age. The following sections will dive deeper into each predominant identified inequality, discuss what the main interventions analysed in the literature are and where gaps and limitations lie.

Only a small amount of studies carried analysis of inequalities surrounding migration, generational connections, education and age into the world of work, being the focal point of almost no studies at all. Age-related inequalities predominantly factored into studies as an intersection with disability, in focusing on the effects of older people with disabilities on the labour market (Kirsh, 2016). Studies that solely or mainly target age-related inequalities themselves often do so with a stronger focus on the effects on seniors’ health outcomes and long-term activation measures, with some extending into the effects of differentiated pension systems.

While a pursuit both worthwhile in its own right and, by the nature of pensions, closely tied to labour markets, the studies ultimately focus on impacts which rarely intersect back into the world of work itself and are thus beyond the scope of this review (see Van Der Heide et al., 2013; Zantinge

et al., 2014). Equally, for migration few studies strictly can delineate it from racial inequalities or considerations of ethnicity. For the purposes of discussion, studies analysing both inequalities concerning ethnicity and migration will be discussed as part of one socio-demographic point of view, though results that do only speak to migration will be highlighted accordingly.

Surprisingly few studies focus on the eventual outcomes in the world of work of earlier education inequalities. The majority of studies analysing education-oriented policies focus on direct outcomes of child health and development, education accessibility itself or social outcomes (see Curran et al., 2022; Gutierrez & Tanaka, 2009; Newman et al., 2016; Stepanenko et al., 2021; Zamfir, 2017). Similarly, rarely do studies delineate generational outcomes from income, gender or education issues enough to mark their own category of analysis within.

Thus, for the current state of the literature on analyses of policy interventions through the lens of inequality reduction within the world of work, there are strong gaps of academic lenses for generational inequalities, age inequalities, education inequalities and inequalities of non-ethnic migration processes going purely by quantity of output. Care should be taken not to overestimate the decisiveness of merely quantified outputs — multiple studies with strong risk of bias may produce less reliable outcomes than fewer studies with stronger evidence bases — however, it does provide an overview of the size of evidence base in the first place.

The following sections will instead discuss in more depth the implications for individual inequalities, as well as providing a comparative view of the respective intersection with income inequality.

## 5.1 Gender inequalities

Due to its persistent characteristics, gender inequality is an often analysed horizontal dimension of workplace inequality in the study sample, with a variety of studies looking at it predominantly through the lens of female economic empowerment or through gender pay gaps. Figure 7 shows that there is a somewhat higher output of research into this inequality in both East Asia & the Pacific and Europe & Central Asian regions just ahead of North America, though the overall sample is relatively balanced between regions.

Looking into the prevalence of individual interventions within the gender dimension, Table 6 shows that subsidies, notions of unionisation and collective action, education and paid leave received the most attention. Thus there is a slight leaning towards institutional and structural interventions visible, though the dimension seems to be viewed from angles of strengthening individual agency just as well, with subsidies often seeking to nourish this approach, and training, and interventions towards financial agency being represented in the interventions.

Approaches of paid leave, child care and education agree with the findings of Zeinali et al. (2021) on the main barriers at the intersection of gender and social identity: The main barriers limiting women's access to career development resources can be reduced access to mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, as well as a reduced recognition, respect, and impression of value at work for women

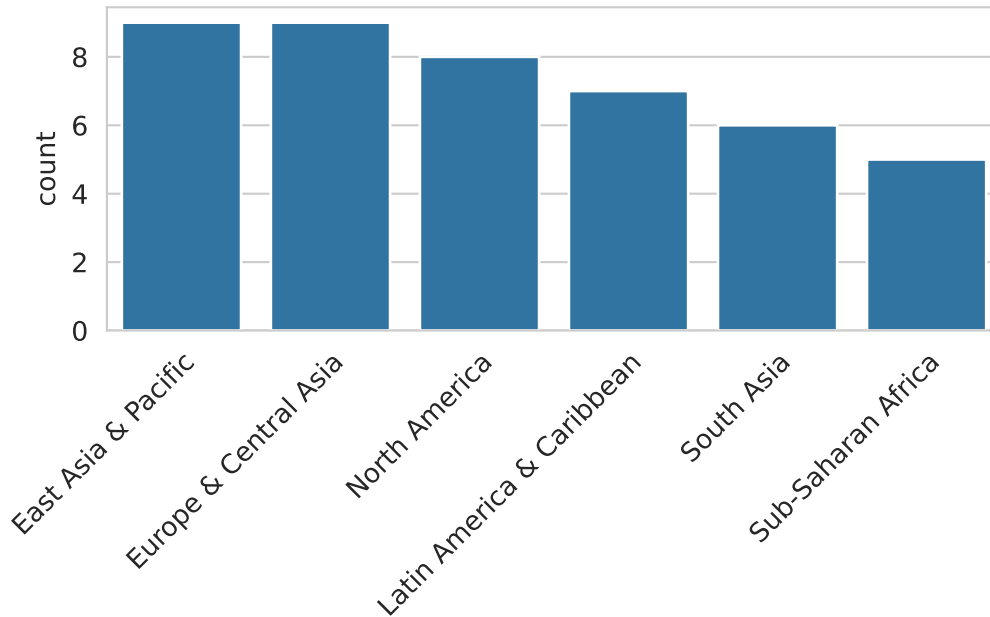


Figure 7: Regional distribution of studies analysing gender inequalities

in leadership positions, with inequalities entrenching these barriers being an increased likelihood for women to take on the ‘dual burdens’ of professional work and childcare or domestic work, as well as biased views of the effectiveness of men’s over women’s leadership styles.

Table 6: Interventions targeting gender inequalities

inequality	gender	income
Intervention		
subsidy	5	1
collective action	4	3
education	4	6
paid leave	4	1
minimum wage	3	9
training	3	1
infrastructure	2	2
trade liberalization	2	7
direct transfers	1	3
microcredit	1	1
regulation	1	2

Whereas institutional programmes such as minimum wage and structural interventions such as education or the contextual trade liberalization are strongly viewed through the lens of income effects, with more studies targeting gender along income dimensions and the income dimension on its own, studies of agency-based interventions approach gender inequalities less through this dimension. In-

stead, they tend to rely on employment numbers or representation in absolute terms or as shares for their analyses.

A variety of studies also look at female economic empowerment outcomes through a more generational lens, focusing on the effects of interventions aimed at maternity support for the mother and/or children — childcare programmes, paid leave and maternity benefits.

## 5.2 Spatial inequalities

Spatial inequalities are less focused within European, Central Asian and North American regions, as Figure 8 shows. Instead, both Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are the primary areas of interest, with studies especially into Tanzania, India and Pakistan. The distribution of spatial inequality analyses otherwise is primarily conducted in the contexts of the United States and the United Kingdom.

This may point to the countries' large rural populations or wider inequality gaps between rural and urban populations. While large rural populations are a sign of a predominantly agrarian economy, widening gaps are argued to be specifically appearing between rural and urban locations in post-industrial societies: Under modes of financialization, a spatial redistribution of high- and low-income sectors and increasing occupational segregation, rural locations are often left behind economically and require structural-institutional interventions to be rectified (Crouch, 2019).

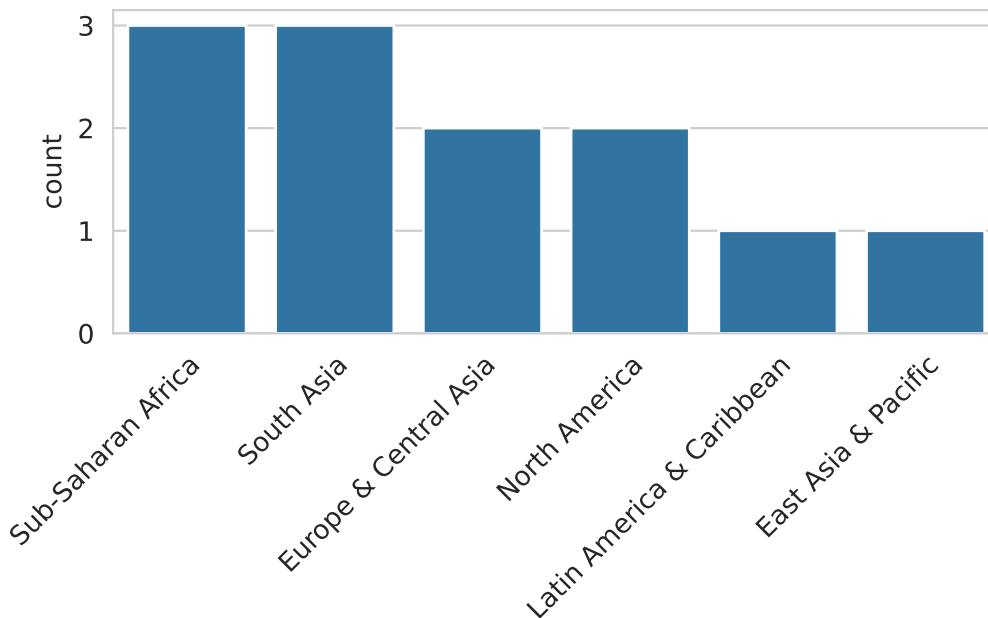


Figure 8: Regional distribution of studies analysing spatial inequalities

Interventions affecting spatial inequalities are often viewed through indicators of income, as can be seen in Table 7. The primary intervention aiming at reduction of spatial inequalities is based on infrastructural changes, which aligns with expectations of the infrastructural rift between urban and rural regions.



Table 7: Interventions targeting spatial inequalities

inequality	income	spatial
Intervention		
infrastructure	2	4
education	6	2
minimum wage	9	2
direct transfers	3	1
subsidy	1	1
trade liberalization	7	1
training	1	1
work programme	0	1

Additionally, education interventions target spatial inequalities, with the effects of minimum wage, interventions strengthening financial agency, trade liberalization and training all playing a more marginal role. Thus, structural interventions are the dominant approach to reducing spatial inequalities, with institutional and agency-driven interventions often not targeting them specifically.

This can pose a problem, as even non-spatial policies will almost invariably have spatially divergent effects, be they positive: as is the case for higher positive income effects on rural households due to unintentional good targeting of minimum wage to lower-income households (Gilbert et al., 2001); or negative: as seen in the further exclusion of already disadvantaged women from employment, infrastructure and training opportunities in India under bad targeting and elite capture (Stock, 2021).

Policies, even those of an ostensibly non-spatial nature, must thus keep in mind possibly adverse targeting effects if not specifically adjusting for potential impacts on spatial inequalities. Rural communities relying on agricultural economies in particular may be vulnerable to exogenous structural shock events such as climate change, which may thus need to be a focal point for future structural interventions (Salvati, 2014).

The measures used to investigate spatial effects of policy interventions follow an even split between relative inequality measured through indicators such as the Gini coefficient or urban-rural employment shares, and absolute measures such as the effects on rural employment. With the level of analysis mostly taking place at the household level, some individual horizontal inequalities such as intra-household gender roles and economic participation or racial intersections can be considered, however, analyses of spatial inequalities often remain solely focused on spatial employment and income effects.

Spatial inequalities move both ways, however, as also shown by Perez et al. (2022) in a multi-disciplinary systematic review of the association between a person’s income, their employment and

poverty in an urban environment. They find, similarly to the rural-urban divide, that employment plays a significant role in the poverty of urban residents, though here the primary barriers are identified as lack of access to public transport, geographical segregation, labour informality and inadequate human capital. They also agree with the potential policy interventions identified to counteract these inequalities: credit programs, institutional support for childcare, guaranteed minimum income/universal basic income or the provision of living wages, commuting subsidies, and housing mobility programs, which largely map onto structural or institutional efforts identified by the studies. Like the study pool shows, many of the highlighted barriers can be mapped onto channels of inequality: gender inequality’s impact, through traditional gender roles and lack of empowerment, a lack of childcare possibilities, or unequal proportions of domestic work; spatial inequality, through residential segregation or discrimination, lack of access to transportation, and a limited access to work; as well as pre-existing inequalities, here defined as the generational persistence of poverty, larger household sizes, and its possible negative impacts on human capital.

### 5.3 Disability inequalities

The dimension of disabilities in inequalities remains strictly focused on developed nations, through analysis of effects on inequality in the world of work in a context of the United States labour market, as can be seen in Figure 9.



Figure 9: Regional distribution of studies analysing disability inequalities

Few studies approach disability inequalities primarily through the prism of income inequality, with more analyses focusing on other outcome measures as can be seen in Table 8. The interventions targeting such inequalities in the world of work favour an approach to measuring inequalities through employment, by absolute amounts of hours worked, return to work numbers or employment rates

instead. Only when looking at the intersection of disability and gender is income the more utilized indicator, through measuring female income ratios compared to those of males.

Table 8: Interventions targeting disability inequalities

	inequality	disability	income
Intervention			
counseling	2		0
training	2		1
education	1		6
subsidy	1		1

Studies into interventions within the dimension of disabilities are predominantly focused on agency-based perspectives, with counselling and training being the primary approaches. Structurally approached interventions are also pursued, looking at the overall effects of education, or subsidies in health care, though even here, the individual effects of activation play a role (Carstens & Massatti, 2018).

The findings for a need toward agency-based interventions reflect in frameworks which put the organizational barriers into focus and simultaneously demand a more inclusive look into (re)integration of people with disabilities into the labour market and within the world of work (Martin & Honig, 2020). Here, in addition to the predominantly used measures of employment and return to work rates, meaningful achievement and decent work should be measured from individual economic and social-psychological indicators, especially in view of the already predominantly agency-based variety of interventions. There is a clear bias in studies on disability interventions towards studies undertaken in developed countries and, more specifically, based on the Veteran Disability system in the United States which has been the object of analysis for a variety of studies but equally highlights gaps in research on the topic in other contexts and other regions.

#### 5.4 Migration & ethnic inequalities

The effects of policy interventions targeting migratory and ethnic inequalities in the world of work are viewed primarily through the regions of North America, Europe, and Central, South and East Asia, and the Pacific, as can be seen in Figure 10. Especially the specifics regarding migration are reviewed in an Asian context, while studies in North America focus predominantly on ethnicity in their analyses, though both dimensions are deeply intertwined and hard to disentangle for most studies.

As seen in Table 9, in terms of primary interventions analysed for these dimensions, most focus on structural interventions such as education or infrastructure, as well as institutional contexts such as the possibility for collective bargaining and unionisation, or the effects of universal income on the world of work.

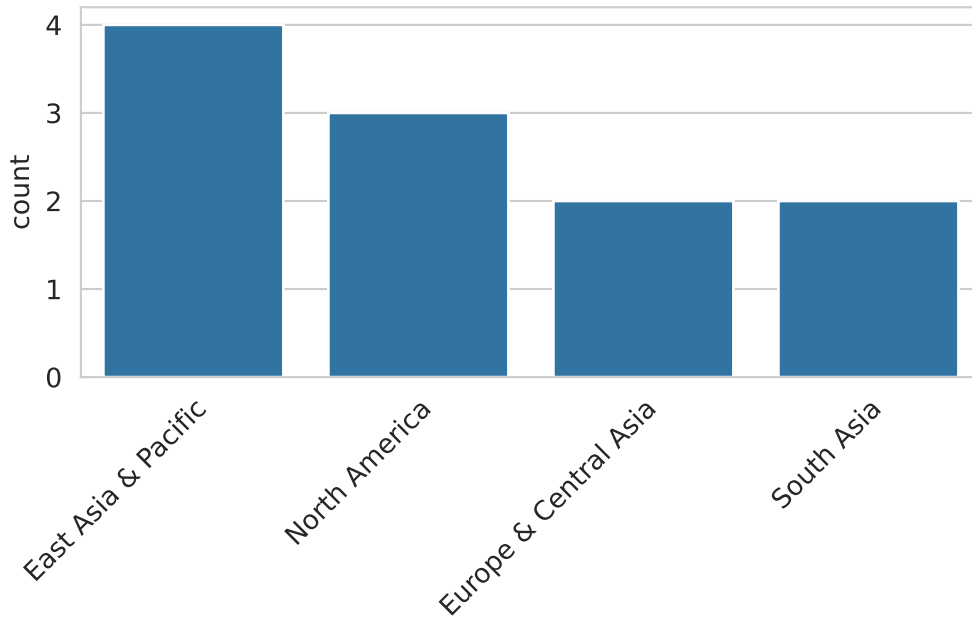


Figure 10: Regional distribution of studies analysing migration and ethnicity inequalities

Table 9: Interventions targeting migration and ethnicity inequalities

Intervention	inequality	ethnicity	income
education		2	6
ubi		2	3
collective action	1		3
direct transfers	1		3
infrastructure	1		2
social security	1		1
subsidy	1		1

There is a mixed approach to using income-based indicators of inequality or other markers such as employment. At the same time, there is a somewhat stronger focus on absolute measures of inequality, such as poverty, debt or savings, or hours worked in absolute terms. Relative indicators have a wider spread with the Gini coefficient, the Theil index, decile ratios or employment rates for sub-samples used.

From an organisational perspective, the focus on structural effects is in agreement with perspectives which highlight the conceptualisation of workplace ethnicity as separate from the majority in many places as a structural power structure (Samaluk, 2014). At the same time in a broader context, job insecurities, both produced by the dis-embeddedness of migrants and the broader contemporary institutional work organisational context speak to the same institutional-structural focus required as

is already pursued in the literature (Landsbergis et al., 2014).

While some frameworks do put agency-driven necessities to the foreground (see Siebers & van Gastel, 2015), the consensus seems a requirement for structural approaches enabling this agency and their institutional embedding before more agency-driven interventions alone increase their effectiveness (see for structural necessities Do et al., 2020; Goodburn, 2020; for institutional contexts see Clibborn & Wright, 2022).

## 6 Conclusion

The preceding study undertook a systematic scoping review of the literature on inequalities in the world of work. It focused on the variety of approaches to policy interventions, from institutional to structural to more agency-driven programmes, and highlighted the inequalities targeted, analysed in subsequent study, their methods and limitations, to arrive at a picture of which lays out the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches.

Wide gaps exist between the research on existing topics within the areas and intersections of inequalities in the world of work. First, while regionally research on such inequalities seems relatively evenly distributed, focus prevalence on individual inequalities varies widely.

Research into interventions preventing income inequality are still the dominant form of measured outcomes, which makes sense for its prevailing usefulness through a variety of indicators and its use to investigate both vertical and horizontal inequalities. However, care should be taken not to over-emphasize the reliance on income inequality outcomes: they can obscure intersections with other inequalities, or diminish the perceived importance of tackling other inequalities themselves, if not directly measurable through income. Thus, while interventions attempt to tackle the inequality from a variety of institutional, structural and agency-oriented approaches already, this could be further enhanced by putting a continuous focus on the closely intertwined intersectional nature of the issue.

Gender inequality is an almost equally considered dimension in the interventions, a reasonable conclusion due to the inequality's global ubiquity and persistence. Most gender-oriented policy approaches tackle it directly alongside income inequality outcomes, especially viewed through gender pay gaps and economic (dis-)empowerment, tackling it from backgrounds of structural or agency-driven interventions. While both approaches seem fruitful in different contexts, few interventions strive to provide a holistic approach which combines the individual-level with macro-impacts, tackling both institutional-structural issues while driving concerns of agency simultaneously.

Spatial inequalities are primarily viewed through rural-urban divides, concerning welfare, opportunities and employment probabilities. Spatially focused interventions primarily tackle infrastructural issues which should be an effective avenue since most positive interventions are focused on the structural dimension of the inequality. However, too many interventions, especially focused on reducing income inequalities, still do not take spatial components fully into view, potentially leading to worse

outcomes for inequalities along the spatial dimension.

Disabilities are rarely viewed through lenses other than employment opportunities. While most interventions already focus on dimensions of strengthening agency and improved integration or reintegration of individuals with disabilities into the world of work, a wider net needs to be cast with future research focusing on developing regions and the effects of more institutional-structural approaches before clearer recommendations can be given based on existing evidence.

Ethnicity and migration provide dimensions of inequalities which are, while more evenly distributed regionally, still equally underdeveloped in research on evidence-based intervention impacts. Currently, there is a strong focus on institutional-structural approaches, which seems to follow the literature in what is required for effective interventions. However, similarly to research on inequalities based on disability, there are clear gaps in research on ethnicity and especially migration, before clearer pictures of what works can develop.

The intertwined nature of inequalities, once recognized, requires intervention approaches which heed multi-dimensional issues and can flexibly intervene and subsequently correctly measure their relative effectiveness. To do so, perspectives need to shift and align towards a new, more intersectional approach which can incorporate both a wider array of methodological approaches between purely quantitative and qualitative research, while relying on indicators for measurement which are flexible yet overlapping enough to encompass such a broadened perspective.

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## 8 Appendix

### 8.1 Full search query

```
TS=
(
  (
    work OR
    labour OR
    production of goods OR
    provision of services OR
    own-use OR
    use by others OR
    of working age OR
    for pay OR
    for profit OR
    remuneration OR
    market transactions
  ) AND
  (
    (
      own-use OR
      employment OR
      unpaid trainee OR
      volunteer OR
      other work activities OR
      wage-employed OR
      self-employed OR
      formal work OR
      informal work OR
      domestic work OR
      care work OR
      unpaid work
    ) OR
    (
      employment outcomes OR
      labour rights OR
      equality of oppoertunity OR
      equality of outcome OR
```

```

labour force participationOR
labour force exit OR
job quality OR
career advancement OR
hours worked OR
wage OR
salary OR
return to work
)
)
) AND
TS=
(
(
intervention OR
policy OR
participation OR
targeting/targeted OR
distributive OR
redistributive
)
AND
(
(
support for childcare OR
labour rights OR
minimum wage OR
collective bargaining OR
business sustainability promotion OR
work-life balance promotion OR
equal pay for work of equal value OR
removal of (discriminatory) law OR
law reformation OR
guaranteed income OR
universal basic income OR
provision of living wage OR
maternity leave

```

)

OR

(

cash benefits OR  
services in kind OR  
green transition OR  
infrastructure OR  
digital infrastructure OR  
quality of education OR  
public service improvement OR  
lowering of gender segregation OR  
price stability intervention OR  
extended social protection scheme OR  
comprehensive social protection OR  
sustainable social protection OR  
supported employment OR  
vocational rehabilitation

)

OR

(

credit programs OR  
career guidance OR  
vocational guidance OR  
vocational counselling OR  
counteracting of stereotypes OR  
commuting subsidies OR  
housing mobility programs OR  
encouraging re-situation/migration OR  
encouraging self-advocacy OR  
cognitive behavioural therapy OR  
computer-assisted therapy OR  
work organization OR  
special transportation

)

)

) AND

TS=



```
(
  (
    inequality OR
    inequalities OR
    barriers OR
    advantaged OR
    disadvantaged OR
    discriminated OR
    disparity OR
    disparities
  )
  NEAR/5
  (
    (
      income OR
      "Palma ratio" OR
      "Gini coefficient" OR
      class OR
      fertility OR
      "bottom percentile" OR
      "top percentile"
    )
    OR
    (
      identity OR
      demographic OR
      gender OR
      colour OR
      beliefs OR
      racial OR
      ethnic OR
      migrant OR
      spatial OR
      rural OR
      urban OR
      mega-cities OR
      "small cities" OR
      "peripheral cities" OR
    )
  )
)
```

age OR  
nationality OR  
ethnicity OR  
"health status" OR  
disability OR  
characteristics

)

)

)