

Risks associated with ‘Vulnerable Worker’ categories

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Background

The vulnerable worker analysis part of the Sedex risk assessment tool analyses risks to female and migrant workers, and risks associated with employment terms. Analysing these risks allows you to identify workers who are at heightened risk of vulnerability or marginalisation in society. This enables you to pay special attention to how risks might impact these individuals in your supply chain workforce and to design risk management and improvement plans with their particular needs in mind.

This document maps four key vulnerable worker types against the topics covered within the tool in order to show the relationship between the two.

Flag Categorisations

Minor	The vulnerable worker group is slightly more exposed to this risk than other workers
Major	The vulnerable worker group is moderately more exposed to this risk than other workers
Critical	The vulnerable worker group is significantly more exposed to this risk than other workers

Female Workers

Data points in the SAQ to consider:

% total workforce that are female

% total workforce that are female and also: migrant, temporary or agency, or young workers.

TOPIC	FLAG	DETAILS
Wages	Critical	Female workers may not receive equal pay for equal work due to discrimination, or because their work is informal, casual or temporary.
Gender	Critical	Female workers will be exposed to gender-specific discrimination e.g. in recruitment, employment, pay; and are vulnerable to sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and physical violence.
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	Major	Low-skilled female workers are less likely to form or join a union because their work is more likely to be informal, casual or temporary, or because cultural norms deter their participation
Children & young workers	Major	Female workers caring for pre-school children may rely on the business to provide childcare facilities. These facilities should be separate from the work environment to prevent risks to children.
Working hours	Major	Low-skilled female workers are likely to work excessive hours due to low wages, and they may not be paid overtime premiums.
Discrimination	Major	Low-skilled female workers are vulnerable to gender discrimination in recruitment, employment and pay. Those who are also migrants or young workers may also be subject to discrimination on grounds of nationality, ethnicity, or age, as well as gender.
Regular employment	Major	Low-skilled female workers are likely to have access only to casual work, without formal contracts, or to temporary or agency work without full employment protections.
Forced labour	Major	Low-skilled women who are migrants, young workers, or temporary/agency workers often receive very low wages, have limited bargaining power and union representation and are exposed to sexual harassment and violence, exacerbating vulnerability to human trafficking and exploitation in forced labour.
Health, safety & hygiene	Minor	Female workers may receive inadequate health and safety training or PPE because they are in low-skilled, low-paid roles

Off-site Workers

Data points in the SAQ to consider:

% total workforce that are "off-site"

Employment of homeworkers

TOPIC	FLAG	DETAILS
Children & young workers	Critical	Home workers may rely on child labour to help meet performance-related pay quotas
Wages	Critical	Home workers may receive very low wages because they are paid piece rate or performance related wages. They may not receive legal benefits.
Gender	Critical	Home workers are more likely to be women and so will be exposed to gender-specific discrimination e.g. in recruitment, employment, pay; and are vulnerable to sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and physical violence.
Regular employment	Critical	Homeworkers are more likely to have access only to casual work, without formal contracts, or to temporary or agency work without full employment protections. Their work may depend on seasonal or varied demand.
Health, safety & hygiene	Major	Off-site or homeworkers workers operate at sites that are either outside or distant from the health and safety oversight of their employer. Homeworkers may receive inadequate training or PPE; they may also have children in the homework environment.
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	Major	Off-site or homeworkers workers may be deterred from forming or joining a union because they work far away from the work site where union activities occur.
Working hours	Major	Home workers may work excessive hours in order to meet piece rate or performance related quotas for wages.
Discrimination	Major	Home workers are more likely to be women as they manage home work with caregiver obligations. As such they may be subject to gender discrimination in recruitment, employment and pay
Forced labour	Minor	Home workers may be vulnerable to forced labour because they are isolated, have less opportunity to form or join a union, and are distant from business oversight and safeguarding mechanisms.

Migrant Workers

Data points in the SAQ to consider:

% total workforce that are migrant workers

% total workforce that are migrant and also: temporary or agency workers.

TOPIC	FLAG	DETAILS
Forced labour	Critical	Migrant workers are vulnerable to human trafficking because they move within and across borders to seek work and are dependent on third parties who facilitate travel and jobs. Migrant workers are also vulnerable to exploitation because they are isolated from support networks, less likely to form or join a union, face language barriers and typically trapped in low-paid work. Undocumented migrant workers are most exposed given their lack of legal status.
Health, safety & hygiene	Critical	Language barriers may hinder migrants' understanding of health and safety instructions and guidelines. Workers who are engaged on a temporary basis, or via an agency, may not receive standard health and safety training or PPE. Job insecurity may inhibit these workers from removing themselves from a dangerous situation.
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	Critical	In some countries, migrant workers do not have the right to form or join unions. Where they do have such a right, migrants may lack the opportunity because work is casual, temporary or agency; or their participation may be deterred by discrimination.
Children & young workers	Critical	Migrants who are young workers or apprentices will be doubly vulnerable because of their age and lack of experience, and isolation from family members
Wages	Critical	Migrant workers may receive lower wages than non-migrant workers for equal work.
Working hours	Critical	Migrant workers are likely to work excessive hours due to low wages. Discrimination, lack of awareness and the precarious nature of migrant work may result in them not receiving overtime premiums.
Discrimination	Critical	Migrant workers are often subject to discrimination on grounds of nationality, ethnicity or faith, if they have migrated within a country, or across borders.
Gender	Critical	Migrant workers who are female will be exposed to discrimination on grounds of nationality, ethnicity or faith, and also to gender-specific discrimination e.g. in recruitment, employment, pay; and are vulnerable to sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and physical violence.
Regular employment	Critical	Migrant workers are more likely to have access only to casual work, without formal contracts, or to temporary or agency work without full employment protections.

Employment Terms

Data points in the SAQ to consider:

% total workforce that are temporary and agency workers

% total workforce that are only employed during the peak season

Employment of young workers or apprentices.

TOPIC	FLAG	DETAILS
Forced labour	Critical	Low-skilled temporary workers and agency workers are vulnerable due to the precarious and low paid nature of their work. Like seasonal workers, they are also likely to move to seek work. This means they may be isolated from support networks and could face language barriers. Both types of workers may be targeted by unscrupulous gangmasters and trafficking networks. Young workers and apprentices are vulnerable to exploitation because of their low pay, dependence on the employer, and lack of life experience.
Wages	Critical	Temporary and agency workers may receive lower wages than permanent workers for equal work. They may not receive legal benefits.
Health, safety & hygiene	Major	Workers who are engaged on a temporary basis, or via an agency, may not receive standard health and safety training or PPE. Job insecurity may inhibit these workers from removing themselves from a dangerous situation.
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	Major	Temporary and agency workers are less likely to form or join unions because contracts are short-term and they change work sites frequently.
Children & young workers	Major	Young workers and apprentices in temporary or agency roles are doubly vulnerable because of their age and lack of experience, as well as the precarious nature of their work
Working hours	Major	Low-skilled temporary and agency workers may work excessive hours due to low wages, and they may not be paid overtime premiums.
Regular employment	Major	Temporary or agency workers may not receive full employment protections equal to those received by permanent workers
Discrimination	Minor	Temporary and agency workers may be in these roles because they are excluded from permanent or higher skilled roles due to discrimination on grounds of nationality, ethnicity, gender, faith etc.
Gender	Minor	Women who are temporary or agency workers will be exposed to gender-specific discrimination e.g. in recruitment, employment, pay; and are vulnerable to sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and physical violence.