

WHY WE WORK

WORK AS A CURSE

“And this life activity [the worker] sells to another person in order to secure the necessary means of life.... he works that he may keep alive.”

Karl Marx, Wage Labour and Capital (1847)

IS WORK A NECESSARY EVIL – OUR BURDEN AND OUR BIRTHRIGHT? WITHOUT LABOUR STANDARDS AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS, ANY FORM OF WORK CAN FEEL LIKE A CURSE. SOME JOBS, LIKE NURSING AIDES AND SANITATION WORKERS, ARE PARTICULARLY STIGMATIZED, DESPITE PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SERVICES THAT ARE BENEFICIAL TO SOCIETY.

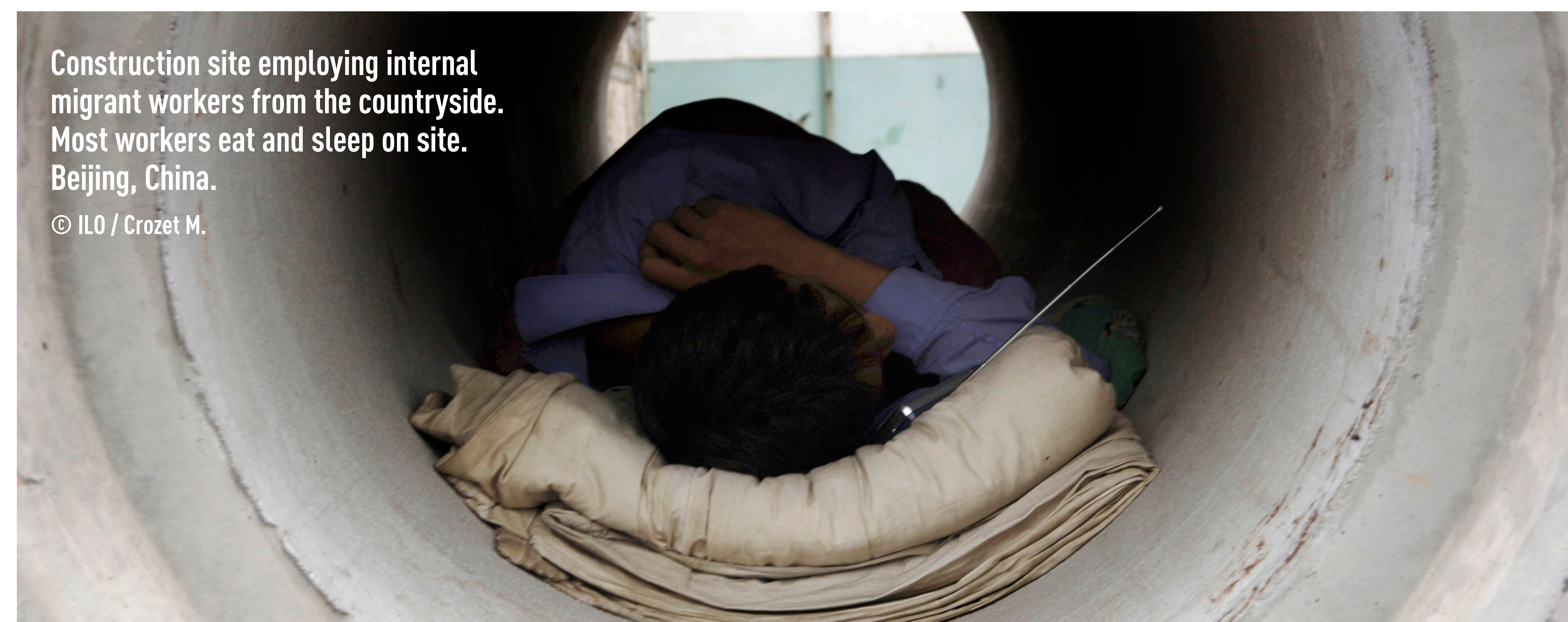


Deliveroo cyclist, Glasgow, UK. Photo by Ross Sneddon

The **gig economy's** promise of flexible hours and “being your own boss” is not the reality for many workers who take on short-term jobs and contracts, and freelancing work. Traditional employment laws do not apply, so workers are not protected if they get fired and may never receive health/dental benefits, pensions, or a stable wage.

Construction site employing internal migrant workers from the countryside. Most workers eat and sleep on site. Beijing, China.

© ILO / Crozet M.



Forced labour arises when an employer takes advantage of a worker's vulnerable position by way of coercion, the imposition of dangerous working conditions, and/or the denial of their freedom.

The three main categories are:
 1. Forced labour exploitation
 2. Forced sexual exploitation
 3. State-imposed forced labour

CIRHR CENTRE FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND HUMAN RESOURCES

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO WOODSWORTH COLLEGE

1 in 3 Canadians experience income insecurity and live paycheque to paycheque



7.6% of Canadians between 18 and 64 years of age are classified as “**working poor**” – employed but still struggling to make ends meet

The Working Poor Proportion:



2.0 x higher among those who are recent immigrants than those who are non-immigrants



1.5 x higher among East Asian and Southeast Asian Canadians

Compared to White Canadians:



1.5 x higher among Arab, South Asian, and West Asian Canadians



2.2 x higher among Black Canadians



2.1 x higher proportion of working poor than non-Indigenous people

First Nations people, both on and off reserve: