

The Impact of Work-related Crime on the Work Environment

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Foreword

Work-related crime has been an escalating problem for Swedish society over recent years, presenting challenges on many levels. One associated problem is the deterioration of the work environment for those who work in affected industries. The consequences can be severe, including work-related injury, mental illness and even death. There is, therefore, a need for more comprehensive and in-depth knowledge about work-related crime and its effects on the work environment.

To this end and based on the fourth priority area of the Swedish Government's Work Environment Strategy 2021–2025 – a labour market free from crime and cheating – the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise has initiated a project that resulted in two reports. The first report, published in January 2024, included interviews with experts and relevant stakeholders to capture the labour market's perceptions of work-related crime and its impact on the work environment.

This, the second and final report on the project, compiles existing knowledge from academic studies, reports and analyses to stress how work-related crime affects the work environment from an employee perspective.

Monica Kaltenbrunner, PhD, analyst at the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise, was the report's author and prepared it on behalf of the agency. Professor Emeritus Jerzy Sarnecki, Stockholm University, has provided expert advice. Associate Professor Carin Håkansta of Karolinska Institute and Professor Sofia Wikman of the University of Gävle have quality assured the report on assignment from the agency. The Delegation Against Work-related Crime has read and expressed views on a draft version of the report.

Prior to Monica Kaltenbrunner, Sanny Shamoun was the project's initial analyst. Julia Engström has been the project's communication officer. The report's author has autonomously chosen her theoretical and methodological approach and is responsible for the results and conclusions presented in the report.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to all those involved in preparing this systematic literature review.

Gävle, July 2024



Nader Ahmadi, Director General

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Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise.

Why we use the term work-related crime

This report addresses fraud and intentional irregularity in the labour market.

Terms often associated with fraud and irregularity in the labour market are work-related crime, undeclared work, and workplace crime. However, these terms have different shortcomings.

In this report, we will use the term *work-related crime*. What we mean by work-related crime can include work that is declared but where qualified violations of the regulatory framework, fraud, and irregularity in the labor market occur. Therefore, we consider the term undeclared work unsuitable for this report.

This report's data collection is based on the Swedish "Delegation Against Work-Related Crime" definition of work-related crime.

The Delegation's proposed definition, in short, is:

Work-related crime is qualified activities

- that contravene the provisions of laws, regulations, administrative provisions or agreements, and
- are work-related

In establishing whether an activity is qualified, particular attention is to be paid to whether it

- exploits workers,
- distorts competition,
- is organised or systematic, or
- is of a serious or extensive nature.

Summary

Work-related crime has severe consequences for individual employees and society, and the problem has received widespread attention both within and outside the Nordic region. For those who work where this type of criminality occurs, it can deteriorate the work environment. The Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise has, therefore, initiated this systematic literature review.

The purpose of the systematic literature review is to collate and enhance knowledge about work-related crime and its consequences for the work environment, primarily from an employee perspective. Our questions is:

- How does work-related crime affect the work environment for employees in different industries?

Method

The systematic literature review is based on data compiled from research and grey literature on work-related crime and the work environment from an employee perspective. The data is limited to publications relating to the EU, Norway and Canada between 2013 and 2024. Norway and Canada have been included because they are broadly similar to Sweden in many respects.

The compilation includes 39 publications, of which 33 are scientific studies. Of these, 31 are qualitative studies, and one is quantitative. Two of the studies contain both qualitative and quantitative data. The other six publications are grey literature. The term grey literature covers publications such as conference papers, working papers, government reports, and other material published by government agencies, institutions, or organisations outside the scope of traditional research. Most of the scientific studies were conducted in Europe. Six were conducted in the United Kingdom, five in Italy, three in Sweden and five in Canada. Of the grey literature, two publications are from Norway, one from Sweden and one from Finland, while one is international. All of the publications are considered to deal with work-related crime as defined by the Delegation against Work-related Crime.

The industries represented in the compilation are:

- land-based industry
- hotel and restaurant
- health and welfare/domestic work
- construction
- vehicles and transport
- cleaning

Land-based industries include agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry. In the included literature, men and women between the ages of 18 and 68 participated, most of them came originally from Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and South America.

Results

This systematic literature review is one of few that focuses on the employee perspective on the work environment in workplaces where work-related crime occurs and collates existing research within the field. The results demonstrate that, regardless of their sex or the industry in which they work, workers are exploited in various ways, and there are many deficiencies in their work environments.

Many workers do not speak the language of the country in which they are working, and they report feeling exploited. It was common for employers to pay less than the agreed wage in several industries and sometimes to refuse to pay overtime. Workers were sometimes paid late and occasionally not at all. Nor was it uncommon for employees to sign employment contracts that, due to a lack of language skills, they did not fully understand, leading to much longer or significantly fewer working hours than they thought they agreed upon. It was also not uncommon for employees to believe that they were formally employed when, in fact, this was not the case. This, in turn, meant they were not eligible for social security benefits. There was also a reluctance, given their position of dependency, to complain about wages or work environments for fear of losing their jobs.

While it is more common to find descriptions of deficiencies in the psychosocial work environment than the *physical work environment*, those working in land-based industries and cleaning report working in extreme temperatures. In addition, they have few or very limited opportunities to cool down and recover. Other deficiencies in the physical work environment described by employees include unpleasant odours, poor light, dust and safety issues. There were various reasons for safety deficiencies. A couple of these were related to employees either having a negative attitude toward complying with safety regulations or lacking the language skills to understand instructions or safety regulations. Another contributory cause was employers passing on the cost of training and PPE to employees and that, ultimately, employers were accepting of safety flaws.

Regarding the *psychosocial work environment*, various forms of high demands were also placed on migrant workers in several industries. They were often assigned the most physically demanding tasks and were forced to work at a high pace and with a heavy workload. It also emerges that employees often work long shifts – sometimes longer than permitted – with few or no breaks, opportunities for recovery or days off. As a result of these high demands, it was not unusual for employees to become socially isolated and feel excluded.

In addition to these excessive demands, several of the studies describe employees with little control or influence over their work and workplace. Many describe a lack of support and being exploited by their employer and find themselves in a position of dependency. Several describe a work environment where employees are discriminated against based on their appearance, country of origin or migration status. For example, employees from countries other than the host country are expected to work harder than local workers and for a lower wage. Many employees report threats and harassment, and many are dissatisfied with their working conditions or work environment but are afraid to complain to the employer.

Risks are described in the work environment in male- and female-dominated occupations that can have consequences of varying severity. In transport and construction, deficiencies in the work environment may prove fatal should an accident occur in the workplace. This is primarily due to safety risks arising from long shifts and/or extended periods without time off to recover, as well as language deficiencies. In female-dominated occupations – such as health and welfare/domestic work and hotel and restaurant – risks described in the studies often relate to sexual harassment, which may have fatal consequences for the individual employee.

That said, there were aspects of the work environment that employees found satisfactory. Despite exploitation, some employees describe a work environment in which they feel well-supported by the employer, in which they can exercise influence and feel job satisfaction and a sense of purpose. This is a vital aspect to consider, given that it can create a sense of loyalty to the employer despite the fact that, fundamentally, the job is based on the employee being exploited. Improving the work environment for exploited workers presents a challenge, especially when in many cases both the employer and employee benefit from the arrangement, but also because employees lack the courage or will to initiate improvement.

This systematic literature review makes a significant contribution to the field. Its value is that it gives us a better understanding of the nature of the work environment for different individuals in different situations, although the results are context-dependent and thus not generalisable.

A number of gaps in knowledge have been identified. There is a lack of studies that:

- describe organisations in a manner that makes it clear that what is being dealt with is work-related crime with a focus on the work environment;
- describe current challenges within the area;
- describe and compare different groups based on, for example, sex, industry, or migrant contra native workforce; or
- follow developments over time.

It is also apparent that certain industries that the Swedish Economic Crime Authority consider to be high risk are not represented in the studies. The industries or operations that are not represented in the systematic literature review are waste management and laundries, as well as beauty salons. Meanwhile, it is also necessary to conduct more studies of other high-risk industries such as construction, transport, cleaning, restaurants, health and welfare and land-based industries.

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Introduction

Work-related crime is described as a well-known and acknowledged problem, not only in Sweden (1) but throughout the European Union (2), and various measures have been implemented to prevent its spread (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). Relatively recent initiatives against work-related crime in Sweden include the Government's appointment of the Delegation Against Work-related Crime in 2021 (7). Subsequently, in February 2022, several government agencies were given the specific assignment of combatting work-related crime. This was followed by the establishment of seven regional centres for preventing work-related crime (8). The Swedish Government has also adopted a Work Environment Strategy for the period 2021–2025, which describes the basis and direction of the work of the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise and the Swedish Work Environment Authority, one priority area of which is “a labour market free from crime and cheating” (9), thus underlining the importance of preventing the spread of work-related crime.

Definitions and the spread of work-related crime

Work-related crime are termed in various ways in Sweden. In the past, the Swedish Work Environment Authority and the Government used the term *grey economy*. This later became *unsound competition*. Both the Swedish Work Environment Authority and the Swedish Delegation Against Work-related Crime define work-related crime as when businesses or other organisations deliberately break rules or agreements in a work-related context (1, 10). This may involve breaking work environment regulations, claiming benefits they are not entitled to, engaging in false accounting to avoid paying taxes and statutory charges, employing people who do not have the right to work in Sweden or using undeclared labour (1, 10). There are various ways to cheat the system, depending on the type and scope of the business. For example, the proprietor of a business may not report all employees, they may manipulate cash registers or fail to report all hours worked and all income (1).

The Swedish Delegation Against Work-related Crime's definition is widely accepted (11). According to the delegation, work-related crime refers to deliberate activities where a proprietor of a business, themselves or jointly with others, breaks rules or agreements in a work-related context at the expense of the workers, other companies or the State (1). There are, however, critics of this definition (11, 12). In a report published in February 2023, for example, the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise argues that the term *labour market criminality* is more apt (12).

For the purposes of this systematic literature review, we use the definition (1) proposed by the Delegation Against Work-related Crime (hereafter referred to as the “Delegation”).

The Delegation's proposed definition is:

Work-related crime is qualified activities

- *that contravene the provisions of laws, regulations, administrative provisions or agreements, and*
- *are work-related*

In establishing whether an activity is qualified, particular attention is to be paid to whether it

- *exploits workers,*
- *distorts competition,*
- *is organised or systematic, or*
- *is of a serious or extensive nature (1).*

According to the Delegation, employees can be exploited in various ways, including breaking agreements on wages and other terms of employment, or contravening regulations on the work environment, working hours and paid leave. In its most serious form, it may even involve offences such as human trafficking and exploitation (1).

Work-related crime occurs in various industries, both male and female dominated. The Swedish Economic Crime Authority has identified several industries in Sweden that are particularly at risk: construction, vehicle workshops, transport, waste management, cleaning, laundries, restaurants, health and welfare and land-based industries (13). The Swedish Migration Agency (14) concurs that construction, vehicle workshops, transport, cleaning, restaurants and beauty salons are high-risk industries.

The most likely victims of work-related crime are foreign workers who do not speak the language, have only a brief education, live in poverty in their homelands and do not have a work permit (15). Sweden is only one of many countries needing foreign labour, thus creating job opportunities for workers from abroad. One way to work in another country, such as Sweden, is to be employed in one country and posted to work temporarily in another, while still covered by the social security system in the land where one is employed. These employees are called posted workers. Most of those posted to Sweden come from Poland (20%), followed by Lithuania, Germany, Latvia, India, Slovenia and Estonia. The construction industry employs most posted workers (57%), followed by manufacturing (15). While foreign labour is common, it is not necessarily synonymous with work-related crime.

The consequences of work-related crime

Clearly, the consequences of work-related crime are often serious and are visible in various areas and at different levels. Proceedings related to work-related crime may involve benefit fraud, tax evasion, economic crime, breach of contract, breaches of work environment legislation, offences against the Aliens Act, and human trafficking and exploitation (1, 16, 17). Those who suffer the consequences include the State, investors, customers and employees (1, 3, 18), but also those who are legally employed, who may lose their jobs to cheaper, illegal foreign labour (19). Other consequences are visible in statistics on accidents in the workplace, of which there were 36,000 reported in Sweden in 2021. The Delegation estimates that anywhere between 1,815 and 2,770 of these accidents were connected to work-related crime (15).

However, the focus of this systematic literature review is the relationship between work-related crime and serious deterioration of the work environment. While not all work-related crime contravenes the Work Environment Act, when it does, it can lead to deficiencies in the work environment, such as long working days of physically demanding and repetitive labour, potentially leading to musculoskeletal disorders or vibration injuries (20). Employees may also work unreasonable hours, either with excessively long working days or only a few hours of work each week (21). Other deficiencies may include few opportunities for employees to recover, with few or no breaks or days off, limited or no access to personal protective equipment (PPE) in the workplace, and a significant risk that the employee will not qualify for social security benefits (21). Even businesses that are not involved in work-related crime may suffer a deterioration in the work environment, as they find it hard to compete with unscrupulous companies whose employees uncomplainingly work longer hours for lower wages (19). This, in turn, may lead to law-abiding businesses winning fewer contracts and being forced to lay off staff (19). Another effect of work-related crime on the work environment is an increased risk of serious accidents in the workplace, as Håkansta et al. (20) found in their study of undeclared work in companies in land-based industry whose activities borders on or can be classified as work-related crime.

The physical and psychosocial work environment

There are various ways to define the term *work environment* and understand its meaning. This systematic literature review presents results related to the physical work environment and to the psychosocial work environment. The *physical work environment* includes safety, noise, air quality, lighting, chemicals, temperature, climate, ergonomics and heavy lifting, as well as machinery, equipment, tools and PPE (22, 23). The *psychosocial work environment* refers to, for example, governance and management, communication, employee participation and decision-making latitude, job specifications and the division of labour, the division of responsibilities and resources. In addition it also refers to the conditions and terms on which people interact in the workplace (24).

Another way to view the work environment is using the Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model (25–30). *Demand* includes workload, work pace, the expectations of others, the complexity of tasks and the availability of resources (29). *Control* is a matter of, for example, decision-making latitude and influence over one's work situation. *Support* can be obtained from management and colleagues, but it is also a matter of feeling a sense of community and receiving feedback on one's efforts. A work environment characterised by low control, high demands and a lack of resources can increase stress and lead to ill health. In contrast, a work environment characterised by good support from management and colleagues can reduce stress (29). We will discuss the results based on the JDCS model in the "Discussion" section.

Challenges

Work-related crime entails a number of disadvantages for the State, the employee, and others who may be involved. It may lead to serious deficiencies in the individual's work environment. Reports and studies in the field demonstrate the challenges involved; many highlight the exploitation of workers (4, 5, 10, 21, 31), while others stress the working conditions of migrants (31) or the role of trade unions (20).

Although work-related crime can lead to disadvantages in so many ways and on so many levels, it is difficult to counter because one person's disadvantage is another's advantage. Advantages may differ depending on the work being performed. A study in the construction industry (19) demonstrated the benefits to owners, contractors, and clients of work-related crime in the form of, for instance, projects completed more quickly and at a lower cost. Employees, too, may benefit from the arrangement as it increases their job opportunities and gives them a higher wage than in their homeland (19). Despite greater interest in understanding work-related crime, there is little research in the field (3) describing the work environment based on data from those who suffer the consequences (20, 32).

Purpose

The purpose of this systematic literature review is to bring together and enhance knowledge about work-related crime and its consequences for the work environment, primarily from an employee perspective. Our questions is:

- How does work-related crime affect the work environment for employees in different industries?

Method

Searches, scientific studies

Literature searches were performed in scientific databases to identify relevant studies to answer our research question. The search terms and search strings on which the literature searches were based were created in collaboration with Jerzy Sarnecki, professor of criminology, and librarians at Mid Sweden University. The final search of scientific databases was performed in January 2024. A search of grey literature was conducted in spring 2024. Below, we first describe our approach to searching for scientific studies. Thereafter, the search strategy for grey literature is described.

Selection

Searches for scientific studies were limited to studies published:

- between 2013 and 2024; and
- in the EU, Norway and Canada.

The EU Member States included in the searches were Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Croatia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Latvia, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Germany, Czechia and Hungary. Norway and Canada were included in the searches as these countries have similarities to Sweden, such as democratic principles, level of education and welfare system.

Searches were conducted in the databases PsycInfo, Scopus and Sociological Abstracts & Social Service Abstracts. Based on the search results, we revised our search strings to make them more relevant to our purpose and research question. Prior to performing the searches, we were guided by the Population, Exposure, Outcome (PEO) model, which uses these three parameters to create a search string (Table 1). The model involves, based on the research question, deciding which population, exposure and outcome one is interested in. We then created a search string. We performed the final search in January 2024. The searches are presented in detail in Appendix 3.

Table 1 Example search words used based on PEO model.

PEO model	Who, what?	Example search words
Population (P)	Workplaces, managers or workers in Sweden, Europe, Norway or Canada.	Employers and employees
Exposure (E)	Work-related crime	Corruption, crime, undocumented immigrants
Outcome (O)	Work environment	Working conditions, workload, job satisfaction

The **inclusion criteria** were that:

- descriptions of the organisation, work environment or working conditions in the articles could be linked to the Delegations definition of work-related crime;
- the work environment was described;
- the study was based on empirical data, such as interviews, observations or questionnaires;
- the work environment was largely described by employees; and
- the study was conducted in a high-risk industry, i.e., construction, vehicle workshops, transport, waste management, cleaning, laundries, restaurants, health and welfare, and land-based industry (13).

The **exclusion criteria** were that:

- the study had not been peer-reviewed; or
- the focus of the study was human trafficking, prostitution and/or child labour.

The Delegation's proposed definition of work-related crime was used to assess whether or not the studies deal with work-related crime.

The searches yielded 5,938 academic papers. After excluding duplicates, reviewing titles, abstracts and, in several cases, the full paper, 33 studies were included in the systematic literature review. Jerzy Sarnecki reviewed the papers together with the author. An overview of the studies included in the systematic literature review can be found in Appendix 1 and an overview of excluded studies in Appendix 2. The most common reasons for exclusion were that the study described the work environment only vaguely or not at all, that the participants were not employees, or that the results were not based on empirical data.

The online tool Rayyan was used to organise and manage the studies identified in our searches. While reviewing the studies, it became apparent that the exploitation aspect of the Delegation's definition of work-related crime emerged most clearly from the included studies. It was not possible to assess whether qualified undertakings took place that distorted competition, nor whether they were organised, systematic, serious, or extensive, although this can be recognised to some extent when assessing the studies.

It was also, to some extent, possible to assess whether described activities contravened laws or agreements, though from a Swedish viewpoint, as work-related crime differs between countries (3). This placed the focus firmly on that part of the definition dealing with the exploitation of workers when deciding what studies to include, as this could be assessed. The results of the included studies have been categorised and analysed based on the predetermined themes of the *physical work environment* and the *psychosocial work environment*.

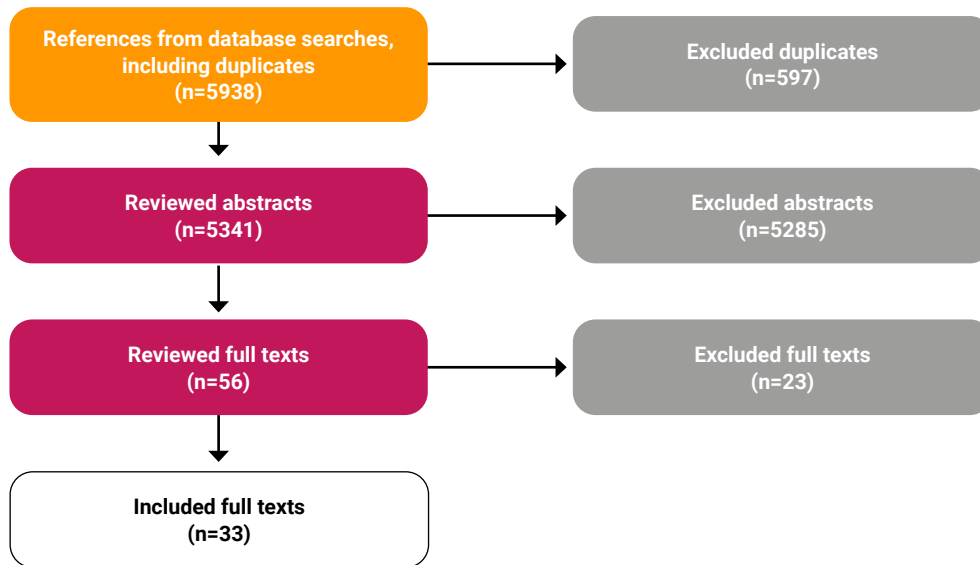


Figure 1. Flowchart of searches, exclusions and inclusions of academic papers in the systematic literature review.

The papers we have included in the systematic literature review have been quality assured using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (33). Each paper was appraised and scored based on five yes/no questions. The more yeses, the higher the scientific quality was deemed to be. So, zero yeses equalled low scientific quality, while five yeses equalled high scientific quality. This review is covered in detail in Appendix 4.

Searches, grey literature

Searches for grey literature were conducted on various websites. Grey literature covers publications such as research reports, conference papers, working papers, government reports, and other material published by government agencies, institutions, or individual researchers. Such documents can be valuable when it comes to finding specialised knowledge that may not appear in scientific journals and books.

The search words used for Swedish websites were *arbetslivskriminalitet* and *odeklarerat arbete*. The search words for Norwegian websites were *arbeidslivskriminalitet* and *a-krim*. For other websites, the search words were *undeclared work* and *illegal work*. The limitations and inclusion criteria for grey literature were that the document:

- was published between 2013 and 2024;
- was written in English, Swedish, Norwegian or Danish and;
- deals with work-related crime.

Searches of grey literature were conducted on the websites of the following organisations:

- Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority
- Eurofound
- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)
- European Commission
- European Trade Union Confederation (ETCU)
- European Labour Authority (ELA)
- European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations (HEUNI)
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- European Trade Union Institute (ETUI).

Hand searches were also conducted on the following websites:

- Swedish Work Environment Authority
- Bygghälsöversynskommisionen
- Swedish Economic Crime Authority
- Swedish Trade Union Confederation
- Swedish Police Authority
- Norwegian Tax Administration
- Swedish Tax Agency.

Searches for grey literature resulted in a total of 1,128 hits once duplicates were excluded. However, it was not possible to compile an exact number of hits as the websites of some organisations do not compile total search hits. The first step was to review the titles of the reports found. After that, if there was uncertainty as to whether or not the report should be included, the summary was reviewed in its entirety. The final searches were conducted in June 2024. The list of organisations is by no means comprehensive.

When finalising the assessment of grey literature, six reports were selected for inclusion in the systematic literature review. In Appendix 2, the excluded grey literature is described more comprehensively. The main reasons for exclusion were that the work environment was not described from the employees' perspective or that links to the work environment were weak.

Results

The results are presented as follows: first, a brief description of the included scientific studies and grey literature in the systematic literature review is given. Next, the research question is answered based on the scientific studies based on our predetermined themes: the physical work environment and the psychosocial work environment. Results from grey literature are then presented by industry. The results are summarised at the end of the result section. Certain aspects of the work environment are described to a small extent or not at all, for example, the physical work environment, reflecting the results presented in the included studies and reports.

The exploitation aspect of the Delegation's definition is central in this systematic literature review as, aside from being work-related, it proved to be the aspect that could be assessed in most of the included scientific studies. Some studies report that employees were working illegally; however, the other aspects of the Delegation's definition were never explicitly addressed.

In the 33 scientific studies, descriptions of the work environment are solely or, to a large extent, based on employees' descriptions of their work environment. The studies are predominantly qualitative, although two are quantitative, and two use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The scientific studies were conducted in 16 countries. The majority were conducted in the United Kingdom, Canada, Italy (5 each) and Sweden (3), while 4 were conducted in multiple countries (see Table 1). The number of respondents in the studies varied from 8 to 684 and included both women and men ranging in age from 18 to 68 years. Most were migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa or South America.

The quality of the studies was appraised on a scale of 0–5 using MMAT (33), with 0 points being low quality and 5 high quality. The appraisal showed that the vast majority of the studies maintained a high level of quality, with 28

Table 2 Countries in which scientific studies were conducted.

United Kingdom	5 studies
Canada	5 studies
Italy	5 studies
Sweden	3 studies
Germany	2 studies
Finland	2 studies
Netherlands	2 studies
Greece, Spain, Norway, Ireland, and Portugal	1 study each
Studies conducted in multiple countries	
Spain and Sweden	1 study
Italy, Spain and United Kingdom	1 study
Italy and Greece	1 study
Denmark, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Belgium and Austria	1 study

out of 33 studies scoring 4 or 5 points. For further information on the quality appraisal, please refer to Appendix 4.

Six reports classified as grey literature are included. These are presented by industry after the scientific studies. They illustrate the implications of working in organisations linked to work-related crime. The requirement for the work environment to be described by employees has not been applied to these reports. Two reports are from Norway and relate to transport and vehicle workshops. These are based on data from inspections and investigations by government agencies. One report comes from Sweden, where 1,011 employees working in various industries responded to a survey (for further information on the reports, please refer to Appendix 1).

The industries represented in the results from both scientific studies and grey literature are:

- land-based industry (8 studies, 1 grey literature);
- hotel and restaurant (3 studies, 1 grey literature);
- health and welfare/domestic work (5 studies, 1 grey literature);
- construction (2 studies);
- transport/vehicle workshops (1 study, 2 grey literature);
- cleaning (1 study); and
- mixed industries (13 studies, 1 grey literature).

Land-based industry includes agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, and similar occupations. The mixed industries are studies that included different industries, however, participants work largely in the industries focused on in this systematic literature review. Appendix 1 contains more information on the included scientific studies and grey literature.

Scientific studies of work-related crime and the work environment

The physical work environment

Physical factors

The scientific studies describe the physical work environment only briefly. However, it emerges that there are deficiencies within the land-based industry (35–38), cleaning (34) and construction (39). There were various deficiencies, but one that recurred was high temperatures. Reported deficiencies include:

- high temperatures in cleaning (34) and land-based industry (35–37);
- cold (38);
- unpleasant odours (36);
- inadequate light (36);
- dust (34); and
- physically demanding tasks (39).

Two studies conducted in the land-based industry reported employees being expected to work in high temperatures (35, 37), which resulted in physical impacts on the workers (37). This was especially stressful, as the workers had limited opportunities to take breaks to cool down (37). This was sometimes intensified as workers were prevented from drinking water during the working day (35). Other issues reported in the work environment in the land-based industry included inadequate lighting, unpleasant odours (36) and cold (38).

Health and safety

Various kinds of exploitation were reported in construction, including wages not equating to hours worked and deficiencies in the health and safety culture and behaviour (39). The study shows that employees were often cheap labour from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa with little experience in construction. A negative attitude to health and safety was also prevalent among these workers, who were not used to wearing PPE and did not prioritise safety, which they associated with showing weakness. Another contributory factor to health and safety deficiencies was that employees did not understand how to act in certain situations as, due to language problems, they were unaware of safety regulations or instructions. The employer also contributed to this poor health and safety culture by prioritising high work pace over safety, often leading to employees ignoring safety regulations in order to save time. Other ways the employer used were by delaying employees from attending essential training and passing on the cost of PPE or the necessary training to perform certain tasks or use machines to the employees themselves (39).

Other issues that emerged in studies of the *construction* industry (39) and *land-based industry* (35) were that:

- the most hazardous work tasks were often given to low-wage migrant workers (39); and
- PPE to reduce the spread of infection during the COVID-19 pandemic was not provided in land-based industry (35).

The psychosocial work environment

Working conditions

Employees describe feeling exploited by their employer in many of the studies, including in *construction* (40), *health and welfare/domestic work* (41) and studies of *mixed industries* (39, 42, 52, 54, 62). For example, employees describe being offered overtime without prior agreement on how much they will be paid (40), sometimes they were not being paid extra at all (45, 55–57, 59). Other studies describe the exploitation of workers, even if the workers themselves did not explicitly state that they felt exploited. For example, almost all (91%) drivers in a study of the *transport* sector by Lee et al. (43) state that on some occasions, their employer refused to pay the agreed wage. Other means of exploitation included employers ceasing operations without warning, leaving workers unpaid and unemployed (35).

However, most workers avoided confronting employers about wages, working hours or anything else for fear of losing their jobs (34, 36, 40, 42, 43–46).

Employees often entered employment contracts that did not specify how many or how few hours they would work, a practice that occurred in *cleaning* (34, 47), *land-based industries* (48, 49), and *construction* (46). It was also common that, due to language deficiencies, workers in *cleaning* (34), *land-based industry* (36, 48, 49), *construction* (39), *transport* (43) and *hotel and restaurant* (50) entered employment contracts the implications of which they did not understand. In practice, entering an employment contract with no minimum or maximum working hours meant that employees had no work at all on some days or only two or three hours, and that they were sometimes given longer contracts stretching over several months (34, 46, 47). Entering an employment contract that they were unable to understand could also result in working many more hours than expected in order to fulfil their contractual obligations (48, 49).

Sometimes employees were unaware of their type of employment. Some believed they were formally employed, but their employer paid no tax or social security contributions on their behalf (42, 46), meaning they were not entitled to social security benefits.

Another widely reported issue was wage-related, such as the employer:

- refusing to pay the agreed wage (35, 36, 38, 39, 42, 43, 45, 48, 50–54);
- refusing to pay overtime (35, 36, 40, 42, 43, 45, 54–59);
- withholding, falsifying or delaying important information to the authorities concerning the employee, preventing the employee from accessing social security benefits (35, 36, 45, and 46 from *mixed industries and construction* 54, 60);
- underreporting working hours (35, 36, 43, 45 *health and welfare/domestic work and construction* 47, 61); and
- paying cash-in-hand (35, 40, 42, 46 *mixed industries*, 55, 61–64).

This was reported in multiple industries in several studies: *construction* (39, 40, 45, 46, 52, 61), *mixed industries* (35, 42, 45, 46, 51, 54, 63), *land-based industry* (35, 36, 38, 44, 45, 48, 53, 64), *health and welfare/domestic work* (41, 45, 55, 57, 59), *hotel and restaurant* (50–52, 58, 60, 62) *transport* (43) and *cleaning* (47).

Another deficiency in the work environment that emerged in *land-based industry* was the inability to meet sanitary needs, partly due to a lack of access to toilets during the working day (48, 49). Several studies of various industries also described a situation in which employees had no idea who their employer (36) or colleagues (34) were, and that employment was terminated without explanation (42, 43, 46, 55). When employers were informed of a planned inspection, measures were taken to rectify issues in the work environment prior to the visit, a work environment that usually had major deficiencies (44).

According to Dimitriadis (40), despite the many deficiencies in the work environment on building sites, workers saw their employer as a friend who could help them circumvent regulations, such as by paying cash-in-hand so that they could continue to claim benefits, and formalising their employment once their benefits had run out (40). Similar actions occurred in health and welfare/ domestic work (45).

Demands

Several industries placed various high demands on employees. These industries were *land-based industry* (35, 37, 38, 48, 53, 64, 66), *mixed industries* (42, 45, 54, 63), *health and welfare/domestic work* (42, 55–57), *hotel and restaurant* (50, 60, 62, 65), *cleaning* (34, 47), *construction* (39, 45) and *transport* (43). It emerges that employee's work environment is comprised of demands such as:

- high workloads and high work pace (34, 37–39, 47, 48, 50, 54–57, 60, 63, 65, 66);
- long shifts, sometimes longer than permitted (34, 35, 37, 42, 43, 45, 50, 53–57, 60, 62–66);
- few or no opportunities for recovery during the working day (37, 42, 45, 55–57, 60, 66);
- high emotional demands related to caring for seriously ill persons (45, 57);
- physically demanding tasks (35, 39);
- demands to undertake hazardous tasks associated with a high accident rate (39); and
- demands to perform tasks against their will (59).

The work environment in *health and welfare/domestic work* (45, 55–57, 59) was more demanding for employees living with their employer/client than for those living separately. They were given tasks over and above those they were contracted for, requiring them to work overtime. This, in turn, meant less leisure time and fewer opportunities for recovery. In addition, often they were usually not paid for overtime (45, 55–57, 59).

Support, control, satisfaction and meaning

In several studies of *land-based industry* (37, 44, 66), *health and welfare/domestic work* (56, 57) and *mixed industries* (63), it emerges that, despite being exploited, employees felt both job satisfaction and that they had the support of their employers. The studies state that:

- employees felt that they received support and help from their employer (37, 63, 66);
- employees felt significant and that the work gave them a context, was meaningful and satisfying (56, 57);
- employees felt that they could exercise influence and autonomy in the work situation (57);
- employees tried to meet their employer's needs (44, 63); and
- their work gave them opportunities to learn new things (57).

In a study including participants mainly from the *land-based industry, health and welfare/domestic work and construction* conducted by Fernández García et al. (45), 7 out of 29 respondents stated that they were satisfied with their present work situation. Other studies (37, 66) also describe employees who enjoy their work and are satisfied with their situation. In a study of migrant workers in the *land-based industry*, Urzi et al. (37) state that 3 out of 26 respondents enjoyed a good relationship with their employer, which they also lived with. The workers living on the farm describe an employer helping them to run errands and shop. They felt respected and able to exert influence over their work situation. They could negotiate working conditions, with one respondent successfully negotiating paid holiday and another their wages (37). Another study of *land-based industry* (44) describes how employers attempt to meet the needs of their employees, including by providing information in different languages and important telephone numbers that employees might need.

Despite the high demands that they faced, many employees in *health and welfare/domestic work* (56, 57) expressed job satisfaction. Their work gave them a context and made them feel important, something they considered more valuable than a high wage or better working conditions (56). They felt genuine concern for those they cared for and considered their work to be meaningful, and they felt that they had influence and autonomy (57). Both Jiang et al. (56) and Kriegmann-Rabes et al. (57) find that many employees enjoy a good relationship with the families they work for, perceiving these relationships to be built on mutual respect. However, on the other hand, live-in workers also describe that employers control their free time, as well as having no opportunity to exert influence (56, 57).

In contrast, many employees felt that they received little support from their employer. Many felt exploited by and dependent on their employer and were afraid of losing their jobs or being allocated fewer working hours if they complained about their situation, asked for a pay rise or made other demands. This was testified to by many employees in studies of *land-based industry* (36, 37, 44, 66), *mixed industries* (42, 45, 54, 63), *construction* (40, 46, 52), cleaning (34, 47), *health and welfare/domestic work* (56, 57), *transport* (43) and hotel and restaurant (52). Other things to emerge are that:

- employers were unwilling to assist employees with healthcare
- (35, 36, 63); and
- employees felt isolated and socially excluded (42, 56, 57).

Discrimination and offensive behaviour

Signs of discrimination are described in various industries. It emerged occurrence of:

- bullying, discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, violence and/or racism in studies of *health and welfare/domestic work* (45, 51, 57, 59), *hotel and restaurant* (50, 67) and *mixed industries* (52, 58); and
- threatening and aggressive employers/employer representatives in studies of *mixed industries* (42, 63), *construction* (52, 61), *hotel and restaurant* (52, 67), *cleaning* (34), *land-based industry* (53) and *health and welfare/domestic work* (59).

It was common for employees to be treated unequally in many industries. In cleaning, employers prefer to employ women, as they are considered more likely to do a good job (47), while in *health and welfare/domestic work*, studies suggest that employees are often recruited based on their appearance (55).

Restaurants (60, 65) also discriminate, although, in this case, it was based on labour market/migration status. A study of the restaurant industry in Sweden by Axelsson et al. (60) reports that employers prefer to hire undocumented workers, as they are considered to work harder. These workers were also considered to tolerate inferior working conditions compared to those with permanent residence permits (60, 65). Employees with a permanent residence permit often had better working conditions, stating that they were able to negotiate time off, were treated with greater respect and had higher wages than those with temporary work permits (60). On the other hand, it also shows that permanent status may present an increased risk of losing one's job to a new migrant worker willing to work for less (60). There was also a difference in how migrant workers were treated compared to those working in their own country. Migrants reported having higher workloads and fewer opportunities to recover than native workers (50 *hotel and restaurant*, 37 *land-based industry*). One study that compares native and migrant domestic workers shows that coming from another country to work is a risk factor for being exposed to offensive behaviour (59 *health and welfare/domestic work*).

Work and private life

Employees describe their work as impinging significantly on their private lives and leisure time in several studies. This was seen in cleaning (34), *land based industry* (35, 36, 45, 53, 64), *construction* (40, 45), *health and welfare/domestic work* (41, 42, 45, 55–57) and *transport* (43). Employees mention:

- having little time off and few opportunities for leisure (34, 35, 40, 42, 43, 45, 53, 55–57);
- working during what should have been time off and having minimal time for recovery (35, 40, 42, 45, 55–57);
- having their nighttime sleep disturbed by their employer (42, 56, 57);
- working on their only scheduled day off during the week (35, 40, 42); and
- employers controlling their living arrangements and activities outside working hours (36, 41, 42, 59, 53, 64).

There were multiple reasons why employees were given limited opportunities to recover and for the intrusion of work into their private lives and leisure time. In *health and welfare/domestic work* (55, 56, 57) and *transport* (43), employers expected or demanded that employees be available around the clock seven days a week (42, 55–57). Being constantly on-call resulted in sleep disturbance, as employers could be woken in the middle of the night if, for example, their employer/client needed to go to the toilet or wanted a glass of water (42, 56, 57). Employees were also sometimes required to work longer periods than permitted; one study reports an employee in the *transport* sector forcing a driver to remain on the road for 17 straight weeks (43). For many employees, the consequences of not being available or willing to work overtime were so severe, including losing their job and not being paid in full, that they had no choice but to work additional hours (43, 55).

In construction (40) and *land-based industry* (35), however, it was the employees themselves who initiated working on days off, regularly working seven days a week to boost their pay packets. Working overtime was very common in different industries (43, 55–57), however, in *health and welfare/domestic work*, this was often unpaid (56, 57). Nevertheless, not all employees considered them to be exploited; those paid for overtime did not see it that way, as they were glad of the opportunity to earn extra money (35).

Grey literature on work-related crime and the work environment

Transport and vehicle workshops

A report from the Work-related Crime Centre in Oslo (68) compiles data collected by various Norwegian government agencies in 2019 from inspections of 37 vehicle maintenance businesses. The report reveals that 68 per cent of the companies' shareholders and executives have criminal convictions, mostly related to work-related crime but also violent offences. Employees were often foreign-born from poor and/or conflict-affected countries, and there were a number of indications that many companies were exploiting their workers (68).

Almost half (43 per cent) of the inspected companies were found to be contravening the Norwegian Working Environment Act and, in several cases, the breaches were serious and repeated. For employees, the consequences of working for these companies included not being paid for overtime and not receiving the requisite training or necessary PPE. Inspectors noted that employees were monitored when speaking to inspectors, or that the company demanded to be allowed to interpret for employees, behaviour the government agencies consider to be indicative of the employees being exploited. Many of the employees encountered by inspectors were deemed to be dependent on their employers, making them vulnerable to exploitation (68).

The Norwegian Police, Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration and Norwegian Tax Administration have compiled a report on crime in the transport sector (69). The report is partly based on material from investigations and inspections of businesses offering services with light goods vehicles. The report states that employers often pay cash-in-hand and that employees are prepared to accept very low wages, as they come from countries with much lower wages than Norway. Employees often don't know their rights, making them vulnerable to exploitation. Due to language deficiencies, some workers who think they are signing an employment contract are tricked by employers into registering as self-employed, thus transferring responsibility for the work environment, paying preliminary tax and other obligations to the worker (69).

Health and welfare/domestic work

The International Labour Organization (ILO) promotes social justice and internationally recognised human and labour rights. An ILO report published in 2021 (70) evaluates the progress and prospects of the organisation's Domestic Workers Convention, which was adopted in 2011 with the aim of promoting decent working conditions and the rights of domestic workers worldwide. National sources used in the report include surveys conducted in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland (70).

The report notes that domestic workers are commonly exposed to chemical, ergonomic, physical, psychosocial and biological hazards and are especially vulnerable to violence and harassment (70).

The report shows that a larger percentage of women than men are employed as domestic workers and that the wages are very low. Informal employment is also common, meaning that workers lack the rights usually associated with employment. Informal workers in the sector often work irregular, sometimes long and sometime very short hours, making it difficult to plan either their working life or leisure time. Those who live with their employers often have very long working days and are not always paid for all the hours they work (70).

Restaurants

In a report on migrant workers, Ollus et al. (71) interviewed migrants working in restaurants in Finland. Workers reported being forced to pay part of the wages paid into their bank account back to their employer in cash. If they questioned this practice, they risked losing their job. Their lack of language skills made them dependent on their employer to deal with their bank accounts and banking errands and to translate for them when necessary (71).

Land-based industry

A report on the outcomes of a seminar¹ organised by the European Platform tackling undeclared work on undeclared work among seasonal workers in land-based industry notes that employers often fail to deduct preliminary tax and social security contributions and that they pay very low wages (72). The authors also note that employers also make improper deductions from wages for food, transport or accommodation. Workers lack the rights associated with formal employment and face a heightened risk of precarious living and working conditions, including limited or no access to sanitary and hygiene facilities (72).

Mixed industries

In a report commissioned by the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (73) in 2022, 1,011 employees (58 per cent response rate) in construction, hotel and restaurant, transport (taxi/delivery/HGV drivers) and health and welfare (personal assistants/home help) were asked to complete a questionnaire on work-related crime in their workplace.

Over 25 per cent of participants in the report stated that, over the last year, in the course of their job they had encountered someone who they knew was being exploited. Approximately 33 per cent believed that it was common for companies to knowingly breach work environment regulations. Participants believed that the consequences for workers exploited in a likely criminal enterprise included low wages paid cash-in-hand, and being ordered to work more overtime than permitted (73).

Employees in the health and welfare sector reported irregular workers being recruited overseas. During the six months they were in Sweden, they worked cash-in-hand for long hours with heavy workloads, often without time off. They were also subjected to threats (73).

The report also found that construction workers could be forced to remove asbestos without adequate PPE. Employees could be dismissed without grounds to be replaced by other low-wage migrant labour. In the transport sector, workers were paid cash-in-hand to work long days in contravention of permitted driving and rest times. It was also found that it was common for vehicles to be overloaded (73). The authors of the report note, however, that the results should be interpreted with caution due to flaws in how the data was collected (73).

¹ The seminar, which was held online 16 March 2021, brought together 52 participants from 23 countries, representing labour inspectorates and other enforcement authorities, ministries of labour, as well as European and national level social partners, representatives from Eurofound, the European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health (EU OSHA), the European Commission and the European Labour Authority (ELA).

Discussion

The purpose of the present systematic literature review is to collate and enhance knowledge about work-related crime and its consequences for the work environment, primarily from an employee perspective.

This systematic literature review is one of few to focus from an employee perspective on the work environment in workplaces where work-related crime occurs, and to collate existing research within the field.

The physical work environment

Employees only describe the physical work environment to a limited extent in these results. Among the problems that do emerge are work environments characterised by high temperatures, unpleasant chemical odours and dust. Deficiencies in the physical work environment can have negative consequences for both health and productivity. For example, one literature review on outdoor labourers from various countries demonstrates that high temperatures affect workers' body temperature, heart rate, metabolism and hydration (74). Another study also shows that working in high temperatures increases the risk of illness and death, deteriorating mental health (75) and a decline in physical capacity and productivity (74, 75).

Measures to improve the work environment for these workers include finding shade, drinking plenty of liquids and increasing air circulation (76, 77). These may seem like simple measures but are difficult to implement when employers or supervisors prevent workers from taking a break to cool down and rehydrate. It is difficult for the individual employee to push for a better work environment in a business that is or borders on criminal. They are often dependent on their employer and dare not complain. Nevertheless, from a Swedish perspective, the employer is responsible for the work environment (24). However, as this compilation demonstrates, the employer generally does not prioritize a good work environment.

The psychosocial work environment

In line with previous studies, the results in this systematic literature review also reveal that, in many industries, the work environment for women and men alike is characterised by high demands in the form of long working hours with limited opportunities for recovery, a situation described in both reports (11, 78) and scientific studies (20, 34, 35, 37, 39, 43, 45, 47, 48, 50, 55–57, 60, 62, 65, 66). That the work environment can be affected has also been described in a recently published report from the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (11) where representatives of trade unions, government agencies

and employer organisations were interviewed. The interviewees state that they believe that work-related crime can lead to deficiencies in the work environment that have a negative impact on both women and men. Their perceptions are based on personal experience rather than research (11). However, given the nature of an arrangement that often benefits employers, employees and customers alike, conducting this kind of research presents challenges (40, 56, 58, 79).

Other results indicate that employees have low control or influence over their work and receive little support from their employers. They are denied influence, they often do not understand the language and are tricked out of their wages and duped into signing unfavourable employment contracts, they are forced to work longer hours than permitted, subjected to threats and violence and, being in a position of dependence, do not dare to speak out about being exploited by their employers. The major deficiencies in the work environment revealed in the results of this systematic literature review can be damaging to the individual and to society.

In the Job Demand-Control-Support model, Karasek and Theorell (29) describe how a work environment characterised by a lack of control, high demands and limited resources can lead to stress. A literature review covering studies of various industries and occupations reports a correlation between work environment factors, job demands and job control, and occupational burnout (80). Steptoe et al. (81) also report a relationship between work environment and health in their study of a cohort of civil servants of various grades. The participants were asked to wear an ambulatory blood pressure monitor at work and during leisure activities and to answer questions about job demands and job control. The study revealed that those who felt they had a low level of job control experienced greater stress during the working day and had higher blood pressure than those who reported a high level of control (81).

According to a systematic literature review focusing on the construction industry published by the Swedish Work Environment Authority (82), stress, tiredness, and other symptoms of burnout impair workplace performance and increase the risk of work-related accidents.

In addition, two systematic literature reviews covering various occupations (80, 83) also demonstrate that factors in the work environment can have a negative impact on the individual employee, other people and the surrounding community. They report, for instance, that high demands, in terms of heavy workloads, increase the risk of burnout (80, 83). Another study of employees working in various industries shows that high demands, such as long working hours with limited opportunities for recovery, increase the risk of developing symptoms of depression (84). It has also been shown that, in healthcare, heavy workloads and burnout put the quality of care and patient safety at risk (85, 86). In land-based industry, it is reported that heavy workloads can lead to fatigue and back problems (87) in what is generally a risk-prone industry in which employees' risk serious injury (20).

Health-promoting factors that contribute to a better work environment are being involved, perceiving good leadership, having opportunities for learning and development and good communication (88). Having support, including from one's boss can also help to reduce stress (29). However, these factors are not mentioned often in the included studies. Contrary, many studies in the systematic literature review report a number of deficiencies related to communication and leadership, given that so many migrant workers are dependent on their employer due to poor language skills (see, for example, 34, 36, 39, 43, 48, 49), something that makes them particularly vulnerable to exploitation (38). In many cases, employers make sure that migrant workers are given the toughest, dirtiest work (39), working long days without a break and with no day off to recover (see, for example, 34, 35, 37, 43, 45, 50, 55–57, 60, 65, 66). Workers describe being threatened by employers and are therefore reluctant to complain for fear of losing their jobs (see, for example, 34, 36, 39, 43, 48, 49).

That said, there are employees who perceive at least parts of their *psychosocial work environment* as good. Workers in the health and welfare sector and land-based industry describe being able to exert influence, being treated with respect and feeling supported by their managers or employers. They feel seen and that their employer recognises their needs and is willing to help them (56, 57). These can be seen as protective factors (80) and they may help to retain workers for longer, even if they are being exploited. One could almost characterise these cases of employees who, despite being exploited, feel that they have a good relationship with their employer as a form of Stockholm syndrome (89). When this type of relationship is formed, it may present additional challenges to detecting work-related crime and a dysfunctional work environment.

Work-related risks to men and women

One generalised picture that emerges from these results is that women and men are exposed to different risks. Some serious risks reported in the male-dominated industries construction and transport but not in female-dominated industries were related to safety (39, 43). It was common to find workers with little competence in and experience of the occupation, and with a negative attitude to safety regulations and a poor grasp of the language (39). The fact that men in male-dominated occupations are exposed to a high level of risk is nothing new and has been described in previous research (90). One relatively recent systematic literature review describes the correlation between factors such as lack of communication, risk-taking, negative attitudes and lack of knowledge and increased risk of injury and death in the European construction industry (91). Another reason for safety culture and behaviour deficiencies may be that workers in male-dominated occupations accept and normalise the risks (39, 90, 92). The culture of masculinity in male-dominated workplaces (39, 90), as well as the health and safety culture in the homelands of migrant workers (39,93), may also contribute to deficiencies in the safety culture.

However, it needs to be highlighted that the attitudes of employers are also clearly a contributory factor to health and safety shortcomings. This is exemplified by employers who pressure drivers into working more than the permitted number of consecutive days (43), who fail to provide adequate training and necessary PPE in the construction industry (39), or who place unreasonably high workloads on employees (39). Statistics on work-related injuries compiled by the Swedish Work Environment Authority (94) reveal that construction and transport are high-risk industries and that most of those injured are men. These industries also top the list of deaths in work-related accidents.

Serious risks in female-dominated industries that do not emerge in the results for male-dominated industries include exposure to sexual harassment, which is described in health and welfare/domestic work and the hotel and restaurant industry (51, 50, 57). It has previously been reported that women experience sexual harassment to a far greater extent than men, so these results are hardly surprising. According to a report by the Swedish Work Environment Authority (95) based on statistics collected from employees in various industries, around 3 per cent of women have been subjected to sexual harassment by a manager or colleague. The corresponding figure for men is around 1 per cent. Previous studies (96, 97) show that women in land-based industry and health and welfare/domestic work are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, especially if they live with their employer (96). Being subjected to sexual harassment can cause headaches, exhaustion, sleep problems, gastric problems, and musculoskeletal pain (97), as well as symptoms of depression (96).

The limitations of the systematic literature review

One strength of this systematic literature review is that it compiles results from both scientific studies and grey literature on the links between work-related crime and the work environment, something few earlier studies have done. Another strength is that the results are mainly based on information from employees working in organisations where work-related crimes are committed.

We have used the Delegation Against Work-related Crime's definition of work-related crime to determine whether results relate to this particular phenomenon. The exploitation aspect of the Delegation's definition has been the most prominent aspect when judging which literature to include in the systematic literature review. The results from the 33 scientific studies included clearly demonstrate that, by Swedish standards, workers are being exploited. The other components of the definition – that the activities contravene the provisions of laws, regulations, administrative provisions or agreements, distort competition, are organised or systematic, or of a serious or extensive nature – have not emerged from the results, or have only been discernible indirectly in as much as almost all of the studies report on workers with low wages, heavy workloads and long working days, which in turn distorts competition and probably contravenes agreements and regulations from a Swedish perspective.

It should however be noted that, even if work-related crime is described by most workers in the studies included here, our results may still include descriptions of individual respondent's work environments in which work-related crime does not occur.

Several scientific studies included here lack clear descriptions and reflections on methodological choices. For example, participants were usually recruited through convenience or snowball sampling rather than being randomly selected. The weakness of these sampling methods is that those who choose to participate may have an axe to grind against their employer. Or conversely, an angry or discontented employee may refrain from taking part while someone with a positive attitude to their employer may choose to do so.

Other aspects that need to be considered when interpreting the results are that most of the data in the included literature were qualitative and collected through interviews, although they also used observations and field notes, while one was based on a survey. Most of the papers do not describe and report survey/interview questions, how these were developed or which areas the questions focused on. In several studies, there was no information concerning how the data was analysed. It should also be noted that relatively few studies have been included in this systematic literature review.

Conclusions

This study confirms that workers of both sexes and in various industries are exploited and, by Swedish standards, have a poor work environment in Sweden, Norway, Finland and other European countries, and in Canada. The work environments of exploited workers can have very grave deficiencies, including threatening and coercing workers into taking on high workloads and maintaining a very high work pace, sometimes without commensurate pay. Deficiencies have also been reported regarding health and safety, especially in the construction and transport industries. As well as reports concerning harassment in health and welfare/domestic work and hotel and restaurants. These shortcomings can have serious consequences for both the individual in question and others. One conclusion is therefore that, for those working in industries where there is a high risk of exploitation, there are significant work environment issues that can be addressed by combating work-related crime.

Improving the work environment for exploited workers is a challenge given that, for various reasons, neither employers nor employees are keen to initiate change. Migrant workers are often dependent on their employers. They usually come from economically weak countries where their earning potential is significantly lower than in the country they currently work in. They often have limited knowledge of the language and live in fear of losing their job. Many employers are well-aware of this and do not hesitate to exploit the vulnerability of employees who know they can be easily replaced if they, for example, take issue with their wages or working conditions. It is also problematic when workers develop good relationships with their employer, as this increases the risk that they will defend their employer despite being exploited.

All in all, this creates a situation in which employees are easily exploited and, as this arrangement generally benefits all concerned – not only workers and employees, but also customers – improving the work environment presents challenges.

While the results of this systematic literature review are context-dependent and thus not generalisable, it is nonetheless valuable in that it gives us a better understanding of the nature of the work environment for different individuals in different situations.

Knowledge gaps

A number of gaps in knowledge have been identified. There is a lack of studies that:

- describe organisations in a manner that makes it clear that what is being dealt with is work-related crime with a focus on the work environment;
- describe current challenges within the area;
- describe and compare different groups based on, for example, sex, industry, or migrant contra native workforce; or
- follow developments over time.

It is also apparent that certain industries that the Swedish Economic Crime Authority considers to be high risk are not represented in the studies. The high-risk industries or activities not represented in the systematic literature review are waste management, laundries and beauty salons. Meanwhile, it is also necessary to conduct more studies of other high-risk industries such as construction, transport, cleaning, restaurant, health and welfare and land-based industry.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Overview of included academic papers and grey literature

Appendix 2 Overview of excluded academic papers and grey literature

Appendix 3 List of search strings

Appendix 4 Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT)

Appendix 1 Overview of included academic papers and grey literature

General information about included academic papers (in alphabetical order). If information is lacking it is because it was not stated in the original paper.

Author (reference) Industry MMAT	Country/data collection	Purpose	Participants	Age	Participants' country of origin
Axelsson et al., 2017 (34) Hotel and restaurant 4.	Sweden. Interviews.	Investigating precarious working conditions in Chinese restaurants in Sweden.	12 Chinese cooks, all men.	28–46 years	China.
Bloch, 2013 (62). Mixed industries 4	England. Interviews.	The article focuses on employment experiences and labour market strategies for undocumented migrants living in England.	75 undocumented migrants.	18–31 years	Brazil, China, Zimbabwe, Turkey and Ukraine.
Cedillo et al., 2019 (63) Mixed industries 5	Canada. Interviews.	The paper focuses on investigat- ing work environment challenges and health and safety for migrant workers in both low-skilled and skilled occupations in Canada.	22 temporary migrant workers in meat processing (8), construction (3), fast food (6) and hospitality (4).	-	Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Philippines, Honduras, Indonesia, China, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Spain, Ukraine.
da Conceição Figueiredo et al., 2018 (59) Health and welfare/ domestic work 4	Portugal Questionnaire (data was col- lected through interviews based on a questionnaire with yes/no answers).	Investigating various types of abuse and harassment and attempting to reveal factors affecting the likelihood of becoming a victim.	684 (3 men) of which 67% were from Portugal.	-	African, Brazilian, Eastern European and Portuguese.
Davies, (2019). Mixed industries (38) 4	United Kingdom Interviews	Arguing the importance of focusing on routine, simple and everyday labour exploitation, which tends to be embed- ded and normalised within a legitimate business and in approaches to supply chains.	14 migrants	26–46 years	Iraq, Iran, Lithuania, Nigeria, China, Poland, Romania, Somalia and Syria.
Dimitriadis, 2023 (36) Construction 5	Italy and Greece. Interviews.	The study is part of a larger project on Albanian migrant construction workers and their experiences in Italy and Greece, as well as how they deal with the economic crisis.	89 participants of which 61 were migrants (29 in Italy, 32 in Greece), 5 domestic construction work- ers (2 Italians and 3 Greeks), 17 trade union representatives (13 in Italy and 4 in Greece) and 6 workplace inspectors (2 in Italy and 4 in Greece).	42 of the 61 migrants were under 45 years of age.	Albania.
Fernández García et al., 2023 (37) Mixed industries 5	Spain. Focus groups and interviews.	The main focus of the study was on giving voice to migrants in four sectors: land-based industry, construction, domestic work, and hotel and restau- rant.	29 participants in land-based industry, health and welfare/ domestic work, construction, and the service industry.	-	Romania, Marocco, Venezuela, Iran, Mali, Ecuador, Columbia, Chile, Bolivia, Ukraine, Guinea-Bissau, Philippines, Peru, Paraguay, Cameroun, Senegal, Burundi and Guinea.
Gheasi et al., 2014 (41) Health and welfare/ domestic work 4	Netherlands. Interviews and questionnaire.	The purpose of the study was to survey the socioeconomic situation of undocu- mented migrant workers and to attempt to identify factors that strengthen their position on the labour market in terms of job opportunities and wages.	10 undocumented migrants were interviewed. 113 undocumented migrants and 464 employers responded to the questionnaire.	22–56 years	Mostly from the Philippines and Indonesia.
Guidi & Berti, 2023 (38) Land-based industry 5	Italy. Interviews.	An analysis of the exploitation of vul- nerable migrants in land-based industry in Tuscany.	60 migrants (54 men) 40 interested parties.	Average age 29 years.	Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Author (reference) Industry MMAT	Country/data collection	Purpose	Participants	Age	Participants' country of origin
Hande et al., 2020 (39) Mixed industries 4	Canada. Interviews.	To trace how workers thought about possible actions they could take and how and why they consulted with other people to navigate and ameliorate the negative conditions at their workplaces, particularly conditions that violate the law.	31 workers (17 women). Administration (6), construction (5), warehouse (4), retail (4), food service (4), call centre (2), healthcare (2), childcare (1), cleaning/maintenance (1), manufacturing (1), transportation (1).	-	From, inter alia, China, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Ethiopian, Ukraine and Ecuador.
Hiah & Staring, 2016 (40) Hotel and restaurant 4	Netherlands. Interviews.	To describe work-related relationships between Chinese employers and their (undeclared) employees in a society in which criminal, administrative and migration legislation increasingly overlaps.	14 previous and current employees (5 men). 12 restaurant owners (9 men).	The employees: 19–38 years Owners: 41–65 years (one was 24)	China, Malaysia and Singapore.
Hobson & Bede, 2015 (41) Health and welfare/ domestic work 2	Spain and Sweden. Interviews.	To analyse the impact of precarious working conditions and examine the similarities and differences in two cases relating to the wellbeing and quality of life of migrants working in the sector and their alternatives for making changes.	90	-	Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Paraguay, Venezuela, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Rumania, Marocco, Eritrea, Nigeria, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand. The majority of participants were from Romania.
Howard & Forin, 2019 (42) Land-based industry 0	Italy. Inter- views, obser- vations and unstructured conversations.	To study which phenomena or issues are described within Italian tomato production, by whom and for what reason.	40 of which 25 were migrants.	-	Bulgaria, Romania and countries in West Africa.
Jiang & Korczynski, 2016 (43) Health and welfare/ domestic work 2	United Kingdom. Interviews, observations and fieldnotes.	The aim of the research project was to study various forms of self-organisation among migrant workers.	24	24–54 years	Mostly from the Philippines, India and Indonesia.
Kriegsmann-Rabe et al., 2023 (44) Health and welfare/ domestic work 5	Germany. Interviews.	To describe stressors and factors that promote the wellbeing and psychological resilience of migrant home-care workers.	15 migrants (1 man) 2 managers of job agencies.	36–68 years, average age roughly 55 years.	Poland.
Lee et al., 2022 (45) Transport 3	Germany. Questionnaire.	To create an understanding of key challenges and opportunities linked to the risk of modern slavery among subcontractors.	80	-	Ukraine and Belarus.
Marconi, 2022 (53) Land-based industry 2	Italy. Interviews.	The study focuses on the exploitation of migrant workers in Tuscany and how this type of exploitation is trivialised by organisations that combat human trafficking.	8 migrant workers, all men.		Senegal, Romania, Bangladesh, Cameroun, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire.
Markova et al., 2019 (46) Mixed industries 4	Denmark, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Belgium and Austria. Interviews.	To study the consequences of regulated migrant status in Europe, with particular consideration for migrants' working conditions and opportunities.	211, mostly women. 68 were undocumented while 125 had legal migrant status (112 men) working in hotel and restaurant, cleaning, sales, construction, journalism, industry.	25–49 years	Marocco, Turkey and African countries.
Maroukis, 2016 (47) Mixed industries 4	Greece. Interviews and observations.	To highlight the precarious or even illicit nature of agency employment in a context in which labour outsourcing and flexible employment are promoted by policymakers.	57 19 participants working in healthcare (registered nurses), 9 mixed occupation, 6 representatives of employment agencies and 23 labour end-users, including hospital directors and hotel HR managers.	-	The migrants came from Poland, Ukraine and other countries.
Maury, 2020 (48) Mixed industries 4	Finland. Interviews.	To explore the experiences of students from countries outside the EU/EEA in precarious employment relationships on the Finnish labour market.	33 migrant students (18 men) working in cleaning, healthcare, newspaper distribution, food delivery and warehouses.	20–35 years	North and South America (3), Eastern Europe (7), Southeast Asia (12), South-West Asia (5), North Asia (3) and Africa (3).

Author (reference) Industry MMAT	Country/data collection	Purpose	Participants	Age	Participants' country of origin
Mešić & Wikström, 2021 (49) Land-based industry 4	Sweden. Interviews and observations.	To study the visualisation of the berry pickers' situation of socio-economic precarity and their need for substantive rights.	32	-	Roma from Bulgaria.
Mešić & Woolfson, 2015 (50) Land-based industry 4	Sweden. Interviews.	To analyse the processes driving this migration and how poor labour conditions in this situation are dealt with by the workers themselves, as well as the authorities, trade unions, the industry and engaged civil society actors.	32	-	Roma from Bulgaria.
Murphy et al., 2023 (42) Mixed industries 4	Ireland. Interviews.	This paper examines how migrant workers who subjected to severe and routine exploitation perceive the Irish labour law system in practice.	23, of which 17 women employed as domestic workers, 2 men working in the service sector and 4 in the fishing industry.	19–55 years	Egypt, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa and the Philippines.
Ollus, 2016 (51) Cleaning 5	Finland. Interviews.	Giving voice to migrant workers and analysing their perceptions of their work and position in working life.	10 migrants (2 men), 4 employers, 7 trade union representatives, 1 employment agent.	-	Estonia, Russia and African countries.
Perry et al., 2020 (52) Mixed industries 5	Canada. Interviews and notes.	To examine experiences of harassment within the context of precarious work, which in Canada is shaped by subnational legislative frameworks.	72 workers employed in industries including transport, restaurant, retail and construction. 52 employment standards officers.	-	-
Potter & Hamilton, 2014 (53) Land-based industry 4	Northern Ireland. Interviews.	To explore precarious employment conditions in the mushroom industry in Northern Ireland.	17 migrants.	-	Bulgaria and Romania.
Reiners et al., 2016 (64) Land-based industry 0	Italy. Visual ethnographic exhibition.	The goal of the visual ethnographic exhibition is to show the widely ignored working and living conditions of African migrants in southern Italy to a broad public all over Europe, and to give people who are ostracised and forced to live at the margins of European society a possibility to present themselves and give them a possibility to gain public attention.	-	-	Africa.
Rydzik & Anitha, 2020 (54) Hotel and restaurant 4	United Kingdom. Interviews.	To examine migrant women tourism workers' understandings of, and diverse responses to, exploitative working conditions by taking account of the constraints posed by oppressive contexts and ideologies.	11 migrants (all women).	21–36 years	Poland, Hungary and Latvia.
Shepherd et al., 2021 (55) Construction 5	Italy, Spain and United Kingdom. Interviews and focus groups.	To examine the challenges influencing the safety of migrant workers in the construction industry in Italy, Spain and the UK.	88, of which 30 were construction workers. The others were site managers and the like. 1 woman. 19 of the construction workers were migrants, the rest from the country in question.	19–64 years. The majority were over 40 years of age.	Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Albania, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Estonia, India, Ireland, Kosovo, Lithuania, Moldova, Morocco, Portugal, Romania, Tunisia and Turkey.
Schweyher, 2023 (56) Mixed industries 4	Norway. Interviews, observations and fieldnotes.	To investigate why certain EU migrants are excluded from the welfare system despite having been active in the labour market in the host country	12 migrants, all men, working in industries such as construction and car washes.	40–50 years	Poland.
Thomas et al., 2020 (54) Mixed industries 4	Canada. Interviews and administrative data.	To examine the dynamics of working time regulation in Canada, with a specific focus on the regulation of excess and overtime hours.	77, of which 41 were men. Quantitative analysis of 600 randomly selected applications, of which 347 and 253 related to excess hours or overtime in manufacturing and construction (145), hotel and restaurant (68), retail and service (63), health and welfare (50).	-	-
Urzi & Williams, 2017 (57) Land-based industry 4	Italy. Interviews and observations.	To compare the experiences of two groups of migrants to reveal how national immigration policies remain influential and determine the employment and living conditions of migrants.	12 migrants from Romania (6 men). 14 migrants from Tunisia (12 men).	-	Tunisia and Romania.
Villegas, 2019 (67) Mixed industries 2	Kanada. Intervjuer.	To investigate sexual harassment in the workplace in relation to women with precarious immigration status.	21 migrants.	-	Mexico.

General information about included grey literature.

Reference	Country	Industry	Data
Work-related Crime Centre in Oslo, Norway, 2019 (58).	Norway	Transport and vehicle workshops	Data from government agency inspections
HEUNI Publication Series, Ollus, N., & Jokinen, A., 2013 (71)	Finland	Restaurants	Interviews with migrants
ILO, 2021 (60)	Global, including Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland.	Health and welfare/domestic work	Questionnaire
Magro, L. Swedish Trade Union Confederation, 2022 (63)	Sweden	Mixed industries (construction)	Survey of employees, 1,011 respondents
The European Commission, 2021 (62).	EU	Land-based industry	Outcomes of a seminar attended by 52 delegates from 23 countries.
Interagency project group for the prevention of crime in the transport services industry Oslo Police District, 2022 (59).	Norway	Transport and vehicle workshops	Data from government agency inspections and investigations.

Appendix 2 Overview of excluded academic papers and grey literature

Excluded academic papers	Reason
Been, W., & de Beer, P. (2022). Combatting exploitation of migrant temporary agency workers through sectoral self-regulation in the UK and the Netherlands. <i>European Journal of Industrial Relations</i> , 28(2), 175–191.	The participants in the study were not workers.
Bittle, S. (2013). Cracking down on corporate crime? The disappearance of corporate criminal liability legislation in Canada. <i>Policy and Practice in Health and Safety</i> , 11:2, 45–62.	The participants in the study were not workers.
Blauberger, M., & Schmidt, S. K. (2023). Negative integration is what states make of it? Tackling labour exploitation in the German meat sector. <i>JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies</i> , 61(4), 917–934.	Wrong industry/occupation.
Bäumlisberger, D. (2021). A Nozickian Case for Compulsory Employment Injury Insurance: The Example of Sweatshops. <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i> , 173(1), 13–27.	Does not contain any self-collected data on the work environment as described by employees.
Christ, K. L., Burritt, R. L. & Schaltegger, S. (2020). Accounting for work conditions from modern slavery to decent work. <i>Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal</i> , 33(7), 1481–1504.	Does not contain any self-collected data on the work environment as described by employees.
Colindres, C., Cohen, A., & Caxaj, C. S. (2021). Migrant agricultural workers' health, safety and access to protections: A descriptive survey identifying structural gaps and vulnerabilities in the interior of British Columbia, Canada. <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i> , 18(7), 3696.	Vague/no connection to work-related crime.
Davies, J. (2020). Corporate harm and embedded labour exploitation in agri-food supply networks. <i>European Journal of Criminology</i> , 17(1), 70–85.	Contains no information on the work environment from participants in a relevant industry.
Devinatz, V. G. (2015). Introduction to "Slave-like conditions": Abuse of foreign workers in Canada. <i>Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal</i> , 27, 231–232.	Does not contain any self-collected data on the work environment as described by employees.
Franić, J. (2019). Explaining workers' role in illegitimate wage underreporting practice: Evidence from the European Union. <i>The Economic and Labour Relations Review</i> , 30(3), 366–381.	Wrong industry/occupation.
Harris, L. C., & Pressey, A. (2021). Dirty work or working dirty? Deceiving cruise tourists. <i>Annals of Tourism Research</i> , 88, 103183.	Wrong industry/occupation.
Håkansta, C., Albin, M., Kreshpaj, B., Gunn, V., Hogstedt, C., Matilla-Santander, N. & Bodin, T. (2022). Power resources and the battle against precarious employment: Trade union activities within a tripartite initiative tackling undeclared work in Sweden. <i>Economic and Industrial Democracy</i> , 0143831X221131835.	The participants in the study were not workers.
Lloyd, A. (2020). Working for free illegal employment practices; off the books' work and the continuum of legality within the service economy. <i>Trends in Organized Crime</i> , 23(1), 77–93.	Wrong industry/occupation.
Lugosi, P., Janta, H. & Wilczek, B. Work(ing) dynamics of migrant networking among Poles employed in hospitality and food production. <i>Sociological Review</i> 2016 Vol. 64 Issue 4 Pages 894–911	Vague/no connection to work-related crime.
Mensah, A., Toivanen, S., Diwald, M., Hassan, M. U. & Nyberg, A. (2022). Workplace gender harassment, illegitimate tasks, and poor mental health: Hypothesized associations in a Swedish cohort. <i>Social Science & Medicine</i> , 315, 115520.	Industry/occupation not stated.
O'Reilly, K. & Scott, S. (2023). Class, Migration And Bordering at Work. <i>Nordic Journal of Migration Research</i> , 13(2), 1–17.	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment.
Schaper, S. & Pollach, I. (2021). Modern slavery statements: From regulation to substantive supply chain reporting. <i>Journal of Cleaner Production</i> , 313, 127872.	Wrong industry/occupation.
Scheidler, S. & Edinger-Schons, L. M. (2020). Partners in crime? The impact of consumers' culpability for corporate social irresponsibility on their boycott attitude. <i>Journal of business research</i> , 109, 607–620.	Industry/occupation not stated.
Strauss, Kendra & Siobhán McGrath. "Temporary Migration, Precarious Employment and Unfree Labour Relations: Exploring the 'continuum of Exploitation' in Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program." <i>Geoforum</i> 78 (2017): 199–208.	Does not contain any self-collected data on the work environment as described by employees. Industry/occupation not stated.
Thörnquist, A. (2019). Truck drivers in the grey area between employment and self-employment: Swedish experiences. <i>Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies</i> , 9.	Does not contain any self-collected data on the work environment as described by employees.
Cedillo, L., Lippel, K., & Nakache, D. (2019). Factors influencing the health and safety of temporary foreign workers in skilled and low-skilled occupations in Canada. <i>New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy</i> , 29(3), 422-458.	Vague/no connection to work-related crime.
Arezzo, M. F., Horodnic, I. A., Williams, C. C., & Guagnano, G. (2024). Measuring participation in undeclared work in Europe using survey data: A method for resolving social desirability bias. <i>Socio-Economic Planning Sciences</i> , 91, 101779.	Industry/occupation not stated.
Shantz, J. (2015). "Slave-like conditions": Abuse of foreign workers in Canada. <i>Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal</i> , 27, 233–239.	Does not contain any self-collected data on the work environment as described by employees.
Reid-Musson, E. (2017). Grown close to home™: Migrant farmworker (Im) mobilities and unfreedom on Canadian family farms. <i>Annals of the American Association of Geographers</i> , 107(3), 716-730.	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment.

Excluded grey literature	Reason
European parliament. (2017). Temporary contracts, precarious employment, employees' fundamental rights and EU employment law.	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.
European Parliament. (2020). Precarious work from a gender and intersectionality perspective, and ways to combat it.	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.
European Parliament. (2016). Precarious employment in Europe: Patterns, trends and policy strategies. <i>European Platform Undeclared Work, Brussels.</i>	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.
European Commission. (2017). Member State Factsheets. <i>European Platform Undeclared Work, Brussels.</i>	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.
European Labour Authority. (2017). The Nacka Project (Nackaprojektet) against undeclared work and economic criminality in public procurement.	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.
European Commission. (2017). New developments and trends in undeclared work within the sharing/collaborative economy. <i>European Platform Undeclared Work, Brussels.</i>	Wrong industry
European Commission. (2018). Tackling Undeclared Work in the Road Transport Industry. <i>European Platform Undeclared Work, Brussels.</i>	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.
European Commission. (2018). Tackling undeclared work in the agricultural sector. <i>European Platform Undeclared Work.</i>	The report is based partly on the same data as one of the academic papers included in the systematic literature review (57). Does not contain any self-collected data on the work environment as described by employees.
European Labour Authority. (2022). Tackling undeclared work in the care and personal and household services sector -Learning resource paper from the Platform seminar.	Wrong industry
European Labour Authority. (2023). Peer learning dialogue: Challenges and solutions in preventing, detecting and proving undeclared work in new forms of work	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.
Eurofound. (2015). Undeclared work: Individual employment relations - Q3 2014, EurWORK topical update.	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.
European Commission. (2019). Tackling undeclared work in the agricultural sector: a learning resource. <i>European Platform Undeclared Work, Brussels.</i>	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.
International organization for migration (IOM). (2022). Mapping risks to migrant workers in supply chains across Europe: Case studies and best practices from the agriculture, food-processing, manufacturing and hospitality sectors. <i>IOM, Geneva.</i>	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.
HEUNI Publication Series. Ollus, N., & Jokinen, A. (2013). We've got People Lined Up Behind the Door": Placing the Trafficking and Exploitation of Migrant Workers in Context in the Restaurant and Cleaning Sectors in Finland. <i>Exploitation of Migrant Workers in Finland, Sweden, Estonia and Lithuania: Uncovering the links between recruitment, irregular employment practices and labour trafficking. HEUNI Publication Series, (75), 31-170.</i>	The report is based partly on the same data as one of the academic papers included in the systematic literature review (34).
Swedish Police Authority (2022). Människohandel för sexuella och andra ändamål: Lägesrapport 24. Swedish Police Authority report for 2022	Vague or no descriptions of the work environment by employees.

Appendix 3 List of search strings

The tables below show the search strings and results from our initial searches in June 2023. They do not include the papers identified in our final search in January 2024. Although the search word “undeclared” was included in many searches, where it has returned no results, the search term has not been used.

Search word and hits from the database PsycInfo via ProQuest, 14 June 2023

Search terms	Items found	
Population: Employers and employees		
Exposure: Workplace crime		
1.	MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Cybercrime") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Criminal Offenders") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Slavery") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT.EXPLODE("Human Trafficking") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Perpetrators") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Business Ethics") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Retaliation") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Corruption") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT.EXPLODE("Bullying") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Criminal Behavior") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Crime") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Informants") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Nepotism") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Undocumented Immigration") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Harassment") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Offenses")	67.472
2.	noft(breach* OR bullies OR bully* OR "business ethic*" OR corrupt* OR crime* OR criminal* OR cyberbull* OR "cybercrim*" OR exploit* OR fraud* OR nepotism* OR offen?* OR perpetrat* OR retaliat* OR slave* OR sweatshop* OR trafficking OR violation* OR whistleblow* OR "whistle blow*" OR "work* violen*" OR "undocumented immigrant*")	263.439
3.	1 OR 2	264.556
Outcome: Occupational health		
4.	MAINSUBJECT.EXACT.EXPLODE("Occupational Health") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT.EXPLODE("Working Conditions") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Organizational Climate") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Occupational Exposure") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Job Satisfaction") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Work Load") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Occupational Stress") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Labor Unions") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Work Related Illnesses")	93.564
5.	noft("burnout* profession*" OR "condition* of employ*" OR "employ* condition*" OR "employ* well being*" OR ergonomic* OR "job relat*" OR "job satisfaction*" OR "job stress*" OR "labo* condition*" OR "labo* relat*" OR "labo* union*" OR "occupation* accident*" OR "occupation* disease*" OR "occupation* exposure*" OR "occupation* health*" OR "occupation* injur*" OR "occupation* risk*" OR "occupation* safet*" OR "occupation* stress*" OR "organization* climate*" OR "personnel* management*" OR "precarious employ*" OR "precarious labo*" OR "precarious work*" OR "safet* culture*" OR "trade* union*" OR "work* climate*" OR "work* condition*" OR "work* environment*" OR "work* health*" OR "work* load*" OR "work* relat*" OR "work* safet*" OR "work* stress*" OR workload*)	183.008
6.	4 OR 5	184.954
Context: Geographic		
7.	title(denmark OR danish OR dane* OR "faroe island*" OR faroese* OR finland OR finnish OR finns OR greenland* OR iceland* OR norway OR norwegian* OR swed* OR åland* OR german* OR netherlands* OR dutch* OR scot* OR wales OR welsh* OR "northern ireland*" OR "northern irish*" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar* OR british OR briton* OR britain OR england* OR english* OR "nordic countr*" OR scandinavia*)	86.478
8.	summary(denmark OR danish OR dane* OR "faroe island*" OR faroese* OR finland OR finnish OR finns OR greenland* OR iceland* OR norway OR norwegian* OR swed* OR åland* OR german* OR netherlands* OR dutch* OR scot* OR wales OR welsh* OR "northern ireland*" OR "northern irish*" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar* OR british OR briton* OR britain OR england* OR english* OR "nordic countr*" OR scandinavia*)	383.015
9.	subject(denmark OR danish OR dane* OR "faroe island*" OR faroese* OR finland OR finnish OR finns OR greenland* OR iceland* OR norway OR norwegian* OR swed* OR åland* OR german* OR netherlands* OR dutch* OR scot* OR wales OR welsh* OR "northern ireland*" OR "northern irish*" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar* OR british OR briton* OR britain OR england* OR english* OR "nordic countr*" OR scandinavia*)	404.596
10	af(denmark OR "faroe island" OR finland OR greenland OR iceland OR norway OR sweden OR åland OR germany OR netherlands OR scotland OR wales OR "northern ireland" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar OR britain OR england OR "nordic countr" OR scandinavia)	327.734
11	lo(denmark OR "faroe island" OR finland OR greenland OR iceland OR norway OR sweden OR åland OR germany OR netherlands OR scotland OR wales OR "northern ireland" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar OR britain OR england OR "nordic countr" OR scandinavia)	289.768
12	7 OR 8 OR 9 OR 10 OR 11	796.944

Search terms		Items found
Combined sets		
13.	3 AND 6 AND 12	1.634
Limits		
14.	Publication year: 2013/01/01 -	927
15.	Language: Danish, English, Norwegian, Swedish	914
Final result		
16.	13 AND 14 AND 15	914

[MAINSUBJECT.EXACT] = Term from the PsycInfo thesaurus

[MAINSUBJECT.EXACT.EXPLODE] = Includes terms found below this term in the PsycInfo thesaurus

[noft] = Anywhere except full text

[title] = Document title

[summary] = All abstract & summary text

[subject] = all subjects & indexing

[af] = Author affiliation

[lo] = Location

[" "] = Citation Marks, searches for an exact phrase

[*] = Truncation

[?] = Wildcard, represents any single character

Search word and hits from the database Scopus, 14 June 2023

Sökterm		Items found
Population: Employers and employees		
Exposure: Workplace crime		
13.	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("black labo*" OR "black market*" OR "break* rule*" OR "break* agreement*" OR "break* a contract*" OR breach* OR bribe* OR bullies OR bully* OR "business ethic*" OR cartel* OR "cash-in-hand*" OR corrupt* OR counterfeit* OR crime* OR criminal* OR cyberbull* OR "cybercrim*" OR "cyber crim*" OR "distort* compet*" OR "unfair compet*" OR extort* OR exploit* OR embezzle* OR felon* OR "forced labo*" OR fraud* OR "illegal activit*" OR "illegal labo*" OR "illegal work*" OR "illegal* employ*" OR misdemeanor* OR "money launder*" OR nepotism* OR offen?* OR perpetr* OR retaliat* OR "shadow econom*" OR slave* OR smuggl* OR sweat-shop* OR "tax* eva*" OR trafficked OR trafficking OR "unfair competition*" OR "undeclar* work*" OR "unofficial econom*" OR violation* OR "wage theft" OR whistleblow* OR "whistle blow*" OR "work* violen*" OR "illegal immigrant*" OR "undocumented immigrant*" OR "unfree labo*")	1.693.677
Outcome: Occupational health		
14.	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("burnout* profession*" OR "condition* for work*" OR "condition* of employ*" OR "employ* condition*" OR "employ* well being*" OR "employ* wellbeing*" OR "employee* health*" OR "employee* motivation*" OR "employee* safet*" OR "employee* stress*" OR ergonomic* OR "indust* safet*" OR "job condition*" OR "job exposure*" OR "job motivation*" OR "job relat*" OR "job satisfaction*" OR "job stress*" OR "labo* condition*" OR "labo* inspect*" OR "labo* relat*" OR "labo* union*" OR "occupation* accident*" OR "occupation* disease*" OR "occupation* exposure*" OR "occupation* health*" OR "occupation* illness*" OR "occupation* injur*" OR "occupation* risk*" OR "occupation* safet*" OR "occupation* stress*" OR ohs OR "organi?ation* climate*" OR osh OR "personnel* management*" OR "precarious employ*" OR "precarious labo*" OR "precarious work*" OR "profession* burnout*" OR "quality of work* li?e*" OR "safet* culture*" OR "safety officer*" OR "safety representative*" OR "staff* health*" OR "trade* union*" OR "work* accident*" OR "work* atmosphere*" OR "work* climate*" OR "work* condition*" OR "work* environment*" OR "work* exposure*" OR "work* health*" OR "work* motivation*" OR "work* load*" OR "work* relat*" OR "work* safet*" OR "work* satisfaction*" OR "work* stress*" OR workload*)	923.836
Context: Geographic		
15.	TITLE-ABS-KEY (denmark OR danish OR dane* OR "faroe island*" OR faroese* OR finland OR finnish OR finns OR greenland* OR iceland* OR norway OR norwegian* OR swed* OR åland* OR german* OR netherland* OR dutch* OR scot* OR wales OR welsh* OR "northern ireland*" OR "northern irish*" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar* OR british OR briton* OR britain OR england* OR english* OR "nordic countr*" OR scandinavia*)	4.592.637
4.	AFFILCOUNTRY (denmark OR "faroe island" OR finland OR greenland OR iceland OR norway OR sweden OR åland OR germany OR netherland OR scotland OR wales OR "northern ireland" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar OR britain OR england OR "nordic countr*" OR scandinavia)	13.520.533
5.	3 OR 4	16.287.499
Combined sets		
6.	1 AND 2 AND 5	5.543
Limits		
7.	Publication year: 2013/01/01 -	3.366
8.	Language: Danish, English, Norwegian, Swedish	3.241
Final result		
9.	6 AND 7 AND 8	3.241

[TITLE-ABS-KEY] = Combined field that searches document titles, abstracts and keywords

[AFFILCOUNTRY] = Affiliation Country, from the author affiliation fields

[" "] = Citation Marks, searches for an exact phrase

[*] = Truncation

[?] = Wildcard, represents any single character

Search words and hits from the database Sociological Abstracts & Social Services Abstract via ProQuest, 14 June 2023

Söktermer	Items found	
Population: Employers and employees		
Exposure: Workplace crime		
16.	MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Crime") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Organizational Crime") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("White Collar Crime") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Corruption") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Organized Crime") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Criminality") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT(EXPLODE("Fraud")) OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Slavery") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Offenses") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Harassment") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Exploitation") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Smuggling") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Undocumented Immigrants") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Workplace Violence")	50.351
17.	noft(breach* OR bullies OR bully* OR "business ethic*" OR corrupt* OR crime* OR criminal* OR cyberbull* OR "cybercrim*" OR exploit* OR fraud* OR nepotism* OR offen?* OR perpetr* OR retaliat* OR slave* OR sweatshop* OR trafficking OR violation* OR whistleblow* OR "whistle blow*" OR "work* violen*" OR "undocumented immigrant*")	217.632
18.	1 OR 2	218.734
Outcome: Occupational health		
19.	MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Occupational Safety and Health") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Work Environment") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Job Satisfaction") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Occupational Stress") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Labor Relations") OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT("Personnel Management")	28.313
20.	noft("burnout* profession*" OR "condition* of employ*" OR "employ* condition*" OR "employ* well being*" OR ergonomic* OR "job relat*" OR "job satisfaction*" OR "job stress*" OR "labo* condition*" OR "labo* relat*" OR "labo* union*" OR "occupation* accident*" OR "occupation* disease*" OR "occupation* exposure*" OR "occupation* health*" OR "occupation* injur*" OR "occupation* risk*" OR "occupation* safet*" OR "occupation* stress*" OR "organization* climate*" OR "personnel* management*" OR "precarious employ*" OR "precarious labo*" OR "precarious work*" OR "safet* culture*" OR "trade* union*" OR "work* climate*" OR "work* condition*" OR "work* environment*" OR "work* health*" OR "work* load*" OR "work* relat*" OR "work* safet*" OR "work* stress*" OR workload*)	69.243
21.	4 OR 5	69.243
Context: Geographic		
22.	title(denmark OR danish OR dane* OR "faroe island*" OR faroese* OR finland OR finnish OR finns OR greenland* OR iceland* OR norway OR norwegian* OR swed* OR åland* OR german* OR netherlands* OR dutch* OR scot* OR wales OR welsh* OR "northern ireland*" OR "northern irish*" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar* OR british OR briton* OR britain OR england* OR english* OR "nordic countr*" OR scandinavia*)	96.890
23.	summary(denmark OR danish OR dane* OR "faroe island*" OR faroese* OR finland OR finnish OR finns OR greenland* OR iceland* OR norway OR norwegian* OR swed* OR åland* OR german* OR netherlands* OR dutch* OR scot* OR wales OR welsh* OR "northern ireland*" OR "northern irish*" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar* OR british OR briton* OR britain OR england* OR english* OR "nordic countr*" OR scandinavia*)	217.757
24.	subject(denmark OR danish OR dane* OR "faroe island*" OR faroese* OR finland OR finnish OR finns OR greenland* OR iceland* OR norway OR norwegian* OR swed* OR åland* OR german* OR netherlands* OR dutch* OR scot* OR wales OR welsh* OR "northern ireland*" OR "northern irish*" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar* OR british OR briton* OR britain OR england* OR english* OR "nordic countr*" OR scandinavia*)	164.987
25.	af(denmark OR "faroe island" OR finland OR greenland OR iceland OR norway OR sweden OR åland OR germany OR netherlands OR scotland OR wales OR "northern ireland" OR "united kingdom" OR uk OR gibraltar OR britain OR england OR "nordic countr*" OR scandinavia)	199.275
26.	7 OR 8 OR 9 OR 10	391.328
Combined sets		
12.	3 AND 6 AND 11	980
Limits		
13.	Publication year: 2013/01/01 -	441
14.	Language: Danish, English, Norwegian, Swedish	428
Final result		
15.	12 AND 13 AND 14	428

[MAINSUBJECT.EXACT] = Term from the PsycInfo thesaurus

[MAINSUBJECT.EXACT.EXPLODE] = Includes terms found below this term in the PsycInfo thesaurus

[noft] = Anywhere except full text

[title] = Document title

[summary] = All abstract & summary text

[subject] = all subjects & indexing (location included)

[af] = Author affiliation

[" "] = Citation Marks, searches for an exact phrase

[*] = Truncation

[?] = Wildcard, represents any single character

Appendix 4 Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT)

Overview of quality assurance of qualitative studies using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT).
0 points equals low scientific quality and 5 points high quality.

Author, year	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	Total points
Axelsson, L., Malmberg, B., m.fl. 2017 (60)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Bloch, A. 2013. (62)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Cedillo, L., Lippel, K., m.fl. 2019 (5)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5
Davies, J. 2019 (38)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Dimitriadis, I. 2023 (40)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5
Fernández García, M., & Molinero-Gerbeau, Y. 2023 (45)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5
Guidi, C. F., & Berti, F. 2023 (35)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5
Hande, M. J. 2020 (61)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Hiah, J., & Staring, R. 2016 (65)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Hobson, B., & Bede, L. 2015 (55)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	No.	No.	2
Howard, N., & Forin, R. 2019 (66)	Can't tell	Can't tell	Can't tell	Can't tell	Can't tell	0
Jiang, Z., & Korczynski, M. 2016 (56)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	No.	No.	2
Kriegsmann-Rabe, M., Maus, K., m.fl. 2023 (57)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5
Marconi, V. 2022 (53).	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	In part	In part	2
Markova, E., Paraskevopoulou, A. P., m.fl. 2019 (58)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Maroukis, T. 2016 (51)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Maury, O. 2020 (47)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Mešić, N., & Wikström, E. 2021 (48)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Mešić, N., & Woolfson, C. 2015 (49)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Murphy, C., Doyle, D. M., m.fl. 2023 (42).	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Ollus, N. 2016 (34)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Perry, J. A., Berlingieri, A., m.fl. 2020 (52)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5
Potter, M. & Hamilton, J. 2014 (36)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Reiners, D., Reckinger, C., m.fl. 2016 (64).	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	0
Rydzik, A., & Anitha, S. 2020 (50)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4

Author, year	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	Total points
Shepherd, R., Lorente, L., et al. 2021 (39)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5
Schweyher, M. 2023 (46)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Thomas, M. P., Condratto, S., et al. 2020 (54)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Urzi, D., & Williams, C. 2017 (37)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	4
Villegas, P. E. 2019 (67)	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	In part	No.	2

Overview of quality assurance of quantitative studies using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). 0 points equals low scientific quality and 5 points high quality.

Author, year	Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Is the sample representative of the target population?	Are the measurements appropriate?	Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Total points
da Conceição Figueiredo, M., Suleman, F., et al. 2018 (59)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No.	Yes	4
Lee, K. H., Groschopf, W., et al. 2022 (43)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No.	Can't tell	3
Thomas, M. P., Condratto, S., et al. 2020 (54)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	In part	4

Overview of quality assurance of mixed-method studies using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). 0 points equals low scientific quality and 5 points high quality.

Author, year	Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	Total points
Gheasi, M., Nijkamp, P., et al. 2014 (41)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	In part	4
Thomas, M. P., Condratto, S., et al. 2020 (54)	Yes	In part	Yes	Yes	Yes	4



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