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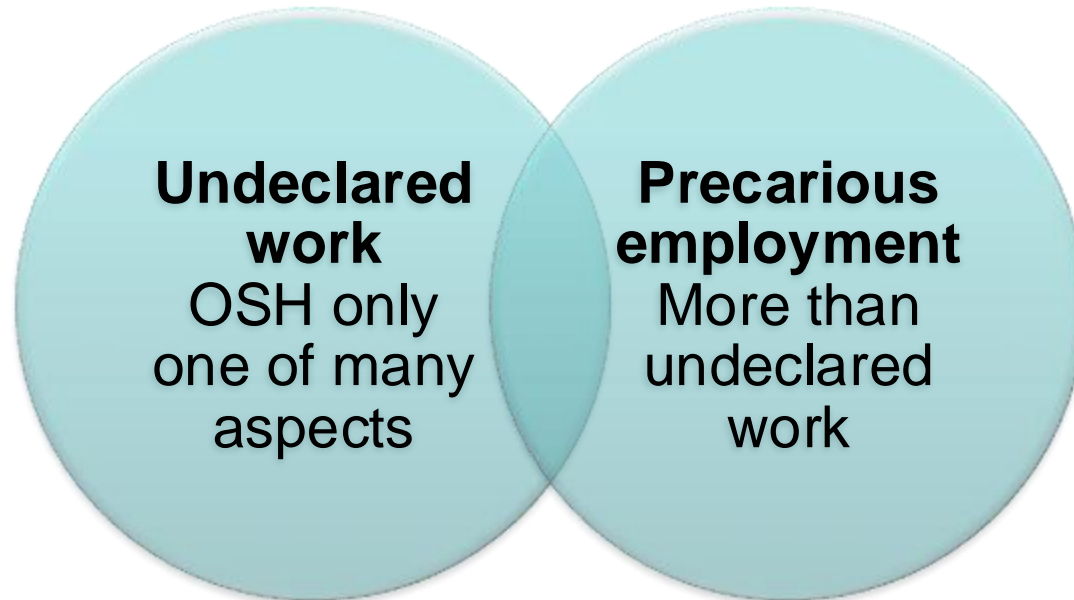
Safety and health among undeclared workers

Carin Håkansta, NIVA 27 jan 2025

Effects of non-standard work arrangements on health, work and families – solutions for the future in Sweden (2019 – 2025)



Lack of research about health and safety aspects of undeclared work



All undeclared work is precarious but not all precarious work is undeclared

- Undeclared work part of complex socio-economic framework of vulnerable and marginalized communities including (often undocumented) foreign-born workers (Dell'Anno, 2022, Williams and Bezeredi, 2018).
- Undocumented status acts as a social determinant of occupational health (Flynn et al., 2015).
- Regulatory loopholes, inadequate enforcement, disparities in legal frameworks create cycles of socioeconomic vulnerability (Williams, 2019).



Undeclared workers...

- often found in **sectors** with high accident and injury risks e.g. agriculture and construction, combined with evasion of OSH regulations and requirements,
- tend to be given more dangerous **job tasks** than standard workers (EFILWC, 2002, Papadopoulos et al., 2010).

Undeclared workers are less likely to...

- get **training/information** about OSH risks and safety precautions due to lack of formal employment agreements,
- ask for the **support** they should be entitled to due to job insecurity
- receive sufficient care or fail to disclose and report **workplace injuries** (Quinlan et al., 2001, Papadopoulos et al., 2010).

Government initiative aimed to strengthen the social partners in the battle against workplace criminality

Interviews with trade unions and employer organizations receiving 11 grants 2018-2021:

- Construction (7)
- Musicians (2)
- Forestry (1)
- Hotels and restaurants (1)



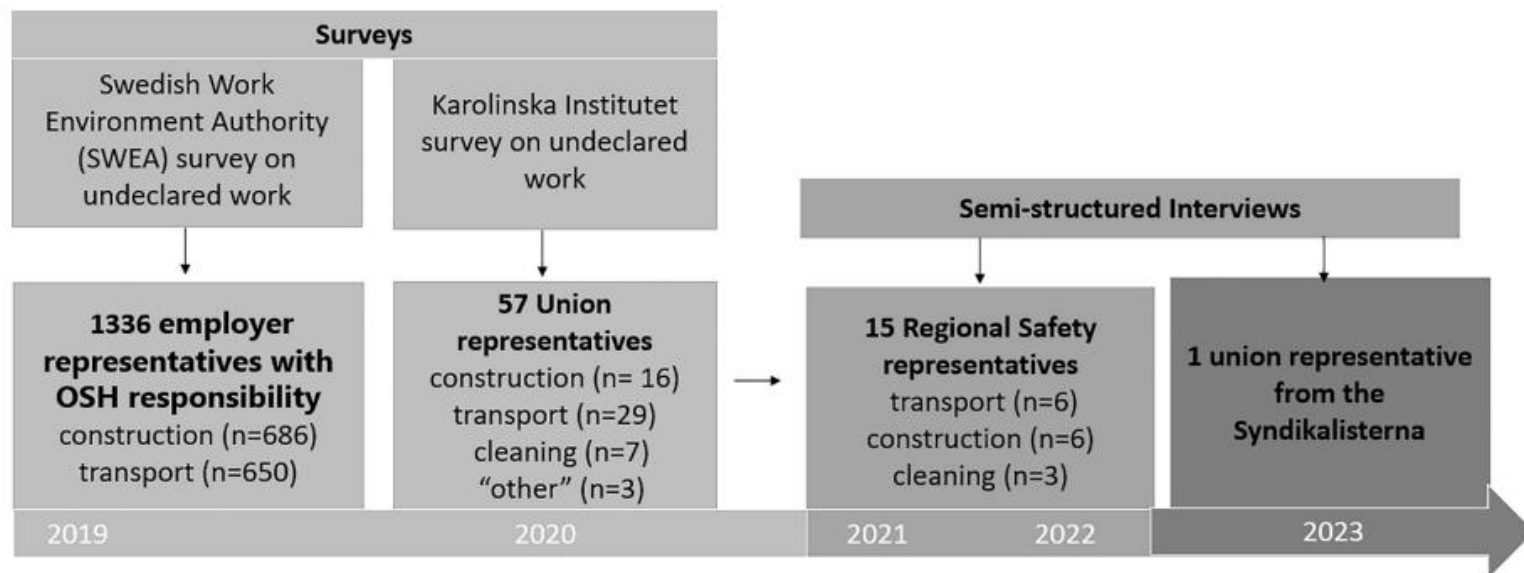
Organisations identified as high-risk industries, including **cleaning**, **car repair shops** and **beauty salons**, did not apply. (Migrationsverket et al, 2021).



SWEA survey to employers, KI survey to trade unions and interviews with unions



Surveys: 1336 employer reps, 57 union reps. Interviews: 16 union reps



Theme I: 'Realities of undeclared workers in construction, transport, and cleaning industries'



All three sectors: fear and culture of silence



Construction: vibrations, insufficient scaffolding, lack of PPE



Transport: negligence of safety precautions and vehicle maintenance



Cleaning: deceptive work schedules, insufficient training, language barriers

Theme II: ‘Cultural and sectoral perceptions and awareness of undeclared work’

- Construction and transport: normalisation and deliberate strategy to exploit people. Undermining fair labour practices and workers’ rights + reinforcing divide between those who have (e.g. formal employees) and those who have not (e.g. undeclared workers).
- Transport: RSRs avoid dealing with undeclared work as it is seen as ”scary”.
- Cleaning: some employers exploit out of ignorance.

Theme III: 'Impact of institutional structures on the role of regional safety representatives'



Construction: subcontracting chains hamper and complicate; unregistered workers make it difficult to identify those in need.



Transport and construction: Collective Agreements used as a facade in tenders.



All: problem that SWEA is under financed; slow process of joint inspections eroding the trust; strained collaboration with SWEA leading to a distancing (Transport: takes sides with the employers)

Theme IV: 'Proactive approaches to address undeclared work among regional safety representatives'



Construction: Break down language barriers with apps, interpreters, multilingual web sites; increased efforts to recruit foreign-born workers (but union members usually prioritised); ID06 ineffective



Transport: more funding to SWEA, abolish employment subsidies due to cheating



Cleaning: advise workers to document transgressions; more SWEA surprise visits; increased OSH training for employers.



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Thank you!

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