

Work in the climate change challenge

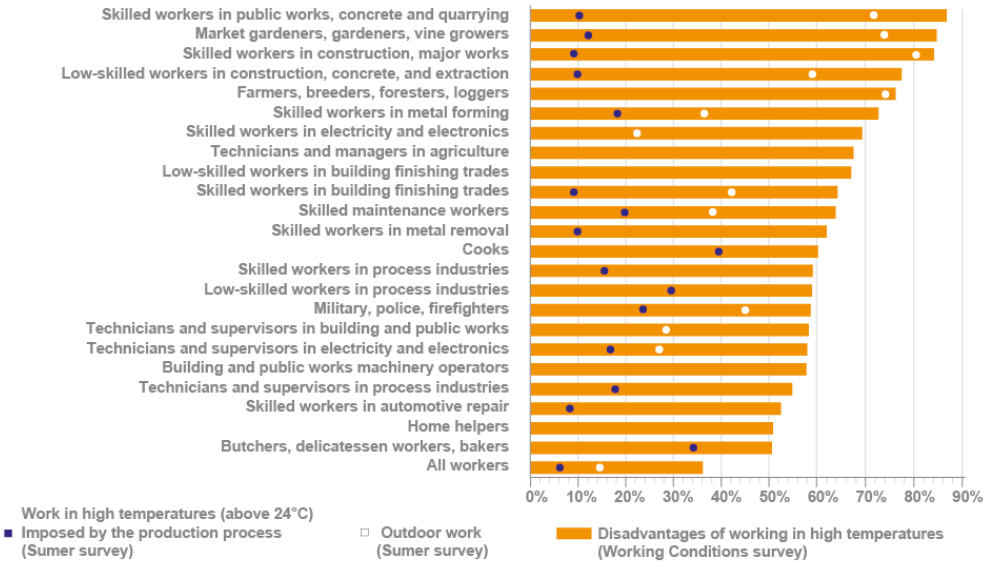
The effects of climate change are now visible and recognized, both on biodiversity and human health. However, the impacts on workers remain under-analyzed and under-discussed, even though certain professions could be on the front line. What are the occupational risks associated with increasing heat? Which workers and territories are most exposed? Are the regulatory and preventive measures sufficient?

Climate change affects all workers to differing degrees. High temperatures impair their physical and cognitive abilities, sometimes endangering their health and safety, especially in the presence of aggravating factors such as strenuous work tasks, fragile physical condition, or grueling home-work commutes. Occupational risks related to heat can ultimately reduce work productivity and hinder economic growth.

The proportion of workers exposed to heat is not well-known today. In France, it is estimated to range from 14% to 36% according to various sources. Those most affected often work in agriculture or construction-related occupations. Over the next three decades, it will depend on the location of these workers. However, with few exceptions, there is no overlap between employment areas expected to experience a significant increase in extremely hot weather days and those characterized by an overrepresentation of heat-exposed professions.

Existing regulatory measures are nevertheless insufficient as they are based on handling exceptional events, at the expense of a more structural and systemic approach. Although several national plans such as the Workplace Health Plan (*PST – Plan Santé au travail*), the French national climate change adaptation plan (*PNACC - Plan national d'adaptation au changement climatique*), and the National Health and Environment Plan (*PNSE – Plan national Santé - Environnement*) already address the issue. They lack coordination and overall interministerial guidance. Public authorities and the world of work must address these challenges to further structure national and local public action.

The twenty-three occupations most exposed to high temperatures



Field: France (excluding Mayotte), employed individuals.

Reading: In 2019, 84% of market gardeners, gardeners, and vine growers reported that their work (or workplace) is inconvenient because of high temperatures. In the 2017 Sumer survey, 73% of them reported "working outdoors" and 12% reported "working in hot conditions, above 24°C, imposed by the production process."

Sources: France Stratégie based on the Working Conditions survey 2019 (Dares); Sumer survey 2017 (Dares)