



SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE in the Global Garment and Textile Industry

Garment Workers Especially Vulnerable to Gender-Based Violence and Harassment

- Gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) at work is violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, directed at workers because of their sex or gender, or disproportionately affecting people of a particular sex or gender.
- Although anyone may be a target of GBVH, women experience the highest rates of GBVH because of social and economic power inequalities based on gender that make women, LGBTQI and other workers more vulnerable to these forms of abuse.
- GBVH silences workers who are targeted and those who might speak up against it, repressing worker voice and freedom of association, and making true democracy—which is inclusive and reflective of the needs and experiences of all people—impossible.
- While sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence may happen at any workplace, [GBVH is rampant in the global garment and textile industry](#). Tolerated, ignored or perpetuated by managers, it is one of the most effective tools of abuse to silence women workers' voices.
- Garment workers experience conditions that the International Labor Organization has identified as creating risk factors [often leading to GBVH](#):
 - Disproportionate concentration of women in low-wage jobs, especially in the distant tiers of supply chains
 - Imbalanced power relationships, including due to gender, race, ethnicity, social origin, education, poverty, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, migrant status and age
 - Interacting forms of discrimination, such as migratory status, race, ethnicity, disability, gender and poverty
 - Insecure working arrangements, including no contract or short-term contracts and informal work
 - High unemployment
- Globally, some [85 percent of garment workers are women](#). They are especially vulnerable to abuse and violence at work because occupational segregation relegates women to the lowest paying and most insecure jobs.
- The persistent global gender gap in pay—women on average earn [between 60 percent and 75 percent](#) of men's wages—is reflected in high poverty levels for women in garment jobs and is linked to the high rates of GBVH in the garment sector.



- In some countries, garment workers work [between 10 and 16 hours a day, six days a week](#), leaving them little time for their families and increasing their vulnerability to abuse such as gender-based violence.

Gender-Based Violence and Harassment Is Widespread

- Garment workers in Cambodia report that [nearly one in three women experienced sexual harassment at work](#) over a three-month period.
- In a 2014 survey of more than 400 garment workers in Swaziland, where women make up 90 percent of the garment sector, [more than 70 percent of respondents reported witnessing verbal and physical abuse in their workplace by supervisors](#).
- Among garment workers in Bangladesh, [80 percent report they have experienced some form of violence and harassment](#) in the world of work.
- A 2018 study by garment workers among their co-workers at several factories in Indonesia found [71 percent experienced GBVH](#), including verbal, sexual, psychological and physical abuse.
- Cambodia garment workers who conducted a 2018 study of GBVH in the garment sector found that [28 percent of women workers stated that someone at work had forced them to sleep with them to extend a contract, fix their sewing machine or to grant a bonus](#).

International Treaty a Big Step to Ending GBVH at Work

- Decent work for all, gender equality, women's economic empowerment and women's full participation in society cannot be achieved while GBVH is prevalent.
- The [first-ever binding global treaty to prevent and address violence and harassment at work](#), including gender-based violence and harassment, was approved by employers, governments and workers in June 2019.
 - It recognizes the need to address the **root causes** of gender-based violence, including gender stereotypes and norms.
 - It is broader than sexual harassment and emphasizes that it is not about sex, it's about **power**.
- Ratifying countries must adopt an **inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach** to prevent and eliminate violence and harassment including **access to remedy**.
- A [landmark agreement](#) negotiated in August 2019 among unions, women's rights groups, NGOs, Levi Strauss, The Children's Place and Kontoor Brands covering more than 10,000 Lesotho garment workers is the first-ever binding agreement to incorporate the new global treaty barring violence and harassment at work.