



The Costs of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment in the World of Work

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Gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) imposes high cost workers—and also on employers, including lost productivity by perpetrators who commit abuses, survivors and witnesses; lower workplace morale; increased turnover; health care costs; legal fees; and reputational damage. Most studies that attempt to quantify the cost of GBVH in the world of work only address some forms of GBVH, usually sexual harassment.

Efforts to quantify the overall costs of GBVH on economies and societies usually do not disaggregate GBVH in the world of work in part because it is not fully understood. Efforts to determine the costs of GBVH more often focus on domestic violence at home and/or sexual violence in the community, and often only focus on violence committed against women. Some studies include sexual harassment, which is one of the most prevalent form of GBVH in the world of work, and a few include the impact of domestic and/or sexual violence on workplace productivity. However, these studies often ignore wider impacts on the world of work, such as the use of GBVH as a tool to create a climate of fear among co-workers that suppresses wages and inhibits organizing, and the long-term impact on access to equal economic opportunities, particularly for marginalized workers, and the cost to employers of continuing to employ perpetrators of GBVH in the world of work. While data on the specific impact of GBVH in the world of work is not extensive, some of its true costs are becoming more clear:

- High rates of GBVH have been directly linked to the [instability of democracies](#).¹
- A 2017 study conducted by CARE [estimates](#) that the productivity cost of sexual harassment in the Cambodian garment industry is \$89 million annually. South Africa lost an [estimated 1.3 percent](#) of the country's GDP in 2014 due to gender-based violence.
- Losses from the impacts of sexual harassment in the workplace alone are [estimated at between 1 percent to 3.5 percent](#) of national gross domestic product (GDP).
- Gender-based violence against women and men was [estimated](#) to cost the EU more than 32.5 billion euros.
- One [study](#) from Pakistan posits that GDP declines due to GBV compound over time, as “the cost of persistent inaction widens inequality,” and the difference

¹ See also:

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/fp_20170905_democracy_gender_security.pdf



between the potential GDP and the actual GDP widens when governments fail to act. The study estimated that the costs of not addressing GBV over a 10-year period approached 4 percent of the country's GDP.