



GLOBAL GARMENT AND TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

Workers, Rights and Working Conditions

(Updated April 2023)

THE INDUSTRY IN NUMBERS

- Approximately [430 million people](#)—or 12.6 percent of the world's working population—work in fashion, clothing and textile production. Most labor without employment contracts, fixed schedules, benefit of labor law protections [or year-round employment](#).
- The value of the global fashion industry is equivalent to [\\$2 trillion](#); exports by the top 10 textile and apparel manufacturers in 2021 totaled [almost \\$8 billion](#).
- Asia—where the structure of employment is [increasingly organized](#) around global supply chains—accounted for approximately [55 percent](#) of global textile and clothing exports in 2019.

MOST GARMENT WORKERS ARE WOMEN

- Women make only [77 cents](#) for every dollar earned by men worldwide, and the wage gap is larger for women with children.
- The Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association reported garment exports of \$4.7 billion in 2022. Worker salaries were just [5.3 percent](#) of that revenue.
- In some countries, garment workers toil [up to 99-hour weeks](#) with only one day off per month.
- [Sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence](#) are rampant in the garment industry, [exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic](#), and tolerated, ignored or perpetuated by managers.

FORCED LABOR AND CHILD LABOR

- [Forced and child labor exist in the garment and textile industries](#) of [Bangladesh](#), [Ghana](#), India and [Pakistan](#).
- [Students in some countries are lured into forced labor](#) in garment factories, often in jobs disguised as opportunities for training and schooling.

DANGEROUS WORK ENVIRONMENTS

- Three of the four deadliest garment factory disasters in history happened in the last decade: [in 2012 \(Ali Enterprises, Karachi, Pakistan; Tazreen Fashion, Bangladesh\) and 2013 \(Rana Plaza, Bangladesh\)](#).
- Garment industry production has [doubled](#) from 2004–2019, with many factories housed in repurposed buildings that [may be unsafe](#).

COLLECTIVE AND PROTECTIVE SOLUTIONS

- When workers are free to form unions, they have a collective voice to demand safe workplaces and better wages and ensure employers comply with laws and labor standards.
- In many countries, governments do not punish employers that illegally fire, threaten or otherwise harm workers for joining a union and seeking to exercise their rights at work.
- Worker rights and human rights advocates are urging multinational fashion brands to commit to a binding successor agreement on worker safety that will continue the pathbreaking work of the [Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh](#) and now also in Pakistan.



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A SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY?

- More than [100 billion](#) apparel items are created by the industry each year—more than double the amount produced in 2000.
- The fashion industry is the [second most polluting industry](#), contributing 8 percent of all carbon emissions and 20 percent of all global wastewater.
- More than [15,000](#) chemicals, some toxic, are associated with fabric [dyeing](#) and garment production.
- Producing a single pair of jeans consumes around [2,000 gallons](#) of water, from growing raw cotton to finished product.
- The Solidarity Center helped [document](#) the impact of climate change on Cambodian garment workers, finding the majority of garment workers had experienced at least one environmental impact within their factory in the last 12 months, with the most common one being air pollution, followed by extreme heat, flooding, fires, pests and water pollution.

SOLIDARITY CENTER AT WORK

- The Solidarity Center over the past decade has partnered with dozens of unions, federations and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to improving working conditions in the fashion industry, and works with some 537,000 women garment workers worldwide.
- In Bangladesh, the Solidarity Center works with 36 union leaders representing thousands of workers, helping to resolve legal issues and conducting fire and building safety training, among other programs.
- The Solidarity Center is partnering with unions—including in [Cambodia](#)—that are highlighting the global garment supply chain's role in fueling climate change and documenting its contribution to environmental degradation impacting local waterways and communities.
- Thousands of garment workers [in Lesotho](#) who produce jeans and knitwear for the global market are standing up to gender-based violence and harassment by participating in a pathbreaking, worker-centered program negotiated in part by the Solidarity Center that includes training and an enforceable code of conduct and access to a complaint and investigation process that is independent of their employer.
- In Thailand, Solidarity Center legal support and worker advocacy helped win the largest [financial settlement](#) for workers in the global garment sector to date—more than [\\$8 million for more than 1,250 laid-off Thai workers](#) who sewed bras for global brands and were denied legally required severance pay.
- In [Honduras](#)—where the Solidarity Center partners with [maquiladora](#) unions representing more than [45,000](#) garment workers—women leaders led organizing drives and negotiations that resulted in 21 employment contracts covering 50,625 workers.
- In Kyrgyzstan, the Solidarity Center partners with a textile union that represents almost 20,000 workers, the majority women. The union is working to improve legal protections of garment workers and improve garment worker safety.