Gender Disaggregated Data:

Guidance for Suppliers

Ethical Trading Initiative

PST
PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE TEXTILES

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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Understanding Gender Disaggregated Data:

A guide for suppliers

This guidance has been developed to help suppliers create safe, fair, and inclusive working environments where all workers, regardless of their gender, can thrive.

It explains the importance of collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated workforce data to better understand working conditions through a gender lens. This data is essential for designing and implementing effective, targeted measures that address the challenges faced by all workers.

This guidance draws on insights from the GIZ-funded project Building Supplier Capacity on Gender-Disaggregated Supply Chain Data, implemented in Tamil Nadu, India, by the Ethical Trading Initiative (hereinafter referred to as the Gender Data Project). The project aimed to demonstrate a proof of concept in which brands and suppliers in the ready-made garment sector collaborate to collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data to inform human rights due diligence (HRDD). This approach ultimately supports a deeper understanding of gender-related human rights risks in the workplace and promotes actions to prevent and mitigate those risks.

Although this guidance has been developed with a focus on suppliers in the ready-made garments sector, it can be used by suppliers in any manufacturing setting.

Objectives of this Guidance

- Provide suppliers with an understanding of gender-disaggregated data and why it is important for addressing gender-related issues in the workplace;
- Provide an overview of gender data indicators, including what they mean and how the data can be collected;
- Provide insights on how the data can be analysed to understand issues that affect workers differently based on their gender and respond effectively.

The end goal is to provide suppliers with a tool that can be used to identify and prioritise actions that prevent and mitigate gendered risks, improve outcomes for women workers and create gender-transformative workplaces.

Key Takeaways

1 As an employer, you have a responsibility to protect all workers from harm and to promote equal opportunities for everyone. Achieving this in an effective and sustainable way requires accurate and relevant information to identify barriers and implement measures that meaningfully address them.

2 Gender disaggregated data is necessary to identify and prioritise actions that prevent and mitigate risks that affect workers disproportionately based on their gender, improve outcomes for women workers (who are often the more marginalised gender) and create gender-transformative workplaces.

3 Gender disaggregated data highlights the similarities and differences in the situations of women, men, and individuals of diverse gender identities within a given context. While it often involves disaggregating data by sex, it goes beyond this to capture the distinct realities, perceptions, and experiences shaped by one's gender. This type of data is essential for understanding how gender influences outcomes in the workplace and beyond.

4 The are several business case arguments for investing in gender data systems.

a. **Gender disaggregated data is essential for effective decision-making.** Without using gender-disaggregated data to design and implement workplace policies, processes, and programmes, there is a significant risk of perpetuating gender inequalities, ultimately impacting business performance. Operating without this data means making decisions on a gender-blind basis, which can unintentionally cause more harm than good.

b. **To address the root causes of issues that women workers face.** Gender-disaggregated data is crucial for uncovering the root causes of issues faced by women workers, who not only make up the majority of the garment sector workforce but are also often among the more marginalised based on gender.

c. **To reduce operational costs and improve business performance.** Women and men often experience the workplace differently and may face distinct forms of discrimination. These discriminatory practices can lead to low morale, increased absenteeism, and higher turnover rates. Applying a gender lens to worker welfare helps create more equitable and positive working conditions, thereby contributing to improved employee well-being and better financial performance for your business.

d. **To meet the requirements or expectations of your customers.** Having the systems and processes in place to collect this data puts you in a much better position to respond to your customers' requests, which positively impacts your commercial relationships.

Key Takeaways

5 Follow a simple four-step process when embarking your gender data journey.

6 Start with Level 1 data. Use the checklist provided to understand what data you already have and what is missing. Assign responsibility to relevant colleagues who can have oversight for data collection, analysis and action planning. This could be a colleague from compliance, human resources or worker welfare. When you have compiled Level 1 data and conducted some preliminary root cause analysis, decide on what further data you need utilising guidance from Level 2 and 3 indicators. Don't forget to consult with workers and their representatives when deciding what actions to take.

7 Remember, collecting gender-disaggregated data is only valuable if it is properly analysed and used to inform decision-making aimed at achieving positive outcomes for all workers, especially women and other marginalised groups. By using this data to uncover the root causes of gender-based discrimination in your factory, you can move beyond treating symptoms and begin to address systemic issues at their source.

Definitions

Gender

Refers to the attributes, roles and opportunities that are associated with being women and men. These attributes, roles and opportunities are based on how society understands the value of women and men, and the kinds of characteristics and behaviours that are considered appropriate and desirable for them. Gender does not refer simply to women and men but also to the relationship between them. These social definitions are not fixed; they manifest differently in different contexts, and change over time.

For example, in some societies, a female supervisor in the factory may struggle to receive the same level of respect and recognition compared to a male supervisor because society's acceptance of women taking on leadership or decision-making responsibilities is low.

Sex

Refers to the biological and physical differences between women and men. The term 'gender' is often confused with the term 'sex'. But it is important to remember that different societies may have different understandings about gender, but sex holds the same meaning across the globe.

Gender Equality

An internationally recognised human right that refers to women and men having equal and equally respected rights, and equal access to resources and opportunities. It also means that society values women and men equally for their similarities and differences, and the diverse roles they play.

Unfortunately, in many spheres of life including in global supply chains related to garment production, women face greater risks of discrimination, hence why gender equality is often associated with a greater focus on women.

Data

Refers to any observation that is collected as a source of information. For example, observations about the number of garments produced per day by a specific department; number of new workers recruited over a particular time period. As a garment manufacturer, you most likely collect and use a variety of data points for different purposes within your business. It is important to remember that data is only as good as what insights you can derive and what decisions you can make based on it.

Gender Inequality in The Garment Industry

According to the International Labour Organisation, the garment industry employs over 94 million workers globally, 60% of whom are women workers.[iv]

The sector has positively impacted the lives of many women and men by providing them with jobs and incomes to sustain themselves and their families.

At the same time, the industry continues to face systemic issues that lead to discriminatory practices, particularly against women workers and other marginalised groups, resulting in poor and often unsafe working conditions.

For example, due to the 'double burden' of responsibilities to take care of the home whilst working to contribute to the household income, women tend to be employed in the lower tiers of the garment industry workforce often holding informal or home-based employment.

In many factories, women workers are concentrated in lower-paid, lower-skilled roles such as helpers or sewing machine operators, with limited opportunities for advancement into supervisory positions. Even when women do become supervisors, they often face pressure to constantly prove their capabilities. This stems partly from persistent stereotypes that women lack the necessary skills for certain roles, as well as discriminatory recruitment practices. Additionally, women typically have less access to education and upskilling opportunities, further limiting their career progression.

Women workers face a range of challenges that limit their participation and well-being in the workplace. Time constraints due to domestic responsibilities often prevent them from working overtime, while biological factors such as menstruation, pregnancy, and breastfeeding, can expose them to unique health and safety risks at work. Many also lack awareness of their rights as workers, making them more vulnerable to exploitation.

Crucially, women are at greater risk of violence and harassment, both within the factory and during their commute to work. This includes behaviours such as shouting, intimidation, and even physical abuse. Fear of job loss or retaliation discourages them from reporting incidents. Furthermore, many women struggle to access existing grievance mechanisms, such as worker committees or trade unions, which may not be designed with their specific needs in mind.

Given these challenges, it is essential for factory management to understand the specific issues faced by women workers and to address them through appropriate policies and processes. Achieving this requires accurate data that offers meaningful insights into workers' experiences. Gender-disaggregated data is therefore not only vital for supporting women workers, but also for enabling factory management to maintain a healthy workforce and ensure smooth, efficient production.

What Does Gender Disaggregated Data Mean?

This is data that reflects the similarities and differences in the situation of women and men in any given context.

It includes data that is disaggregated primarily by sex but it is not restricted to sex-disaggregated data only. For example:

- Number of workers in the factory disaggregated by sex (male/female);
- Number of workers recruited to work in the factory in the last year disaggregated by sex (male/female).

More importantly, it captures data that reflects the different realities, perceptions and experiences of individuals based on their gender. For example:

- Percentage of workers who are happy with the health services in the factory (disaggregated by gender);
- Percentage of workers who understand what sexual harassment means (disaggregated by gender);
- Percentage of workers who feel confident to speak to their supervisor or management when they have an issue (disaggregated by gender).

As with any type of data, gender disaggregated data can be quantitative or qualitative in nature.

Quantitative data is measurable and based on numbers, often showing how many or how much. E.g. number of male and female workers who are paid by piece rate.

Qualitative data is descriptive and helps to understand why or how things happen. This data is usually captured through interviews, surveys or focus group discussions. E.g. a focus group discussion with randomly selected female workers to understand their experiences with the crèche facility in the factory.

The following section outlines why gender-disaggregated data matters for you as an employer and how you can begin your data journey. The goal is to use this information to better understand gender-related human rights risks in the workplace and, in turn, implement measures that not only improve working conditions but also help build more gender-equal and inclusive workplaces.

Why is Gender Disaggregated Data Important?

There are a number of reasons why gender disaggregated data is important for you as an employer.

1. Gender disaggregated data is essential for effective decision-making.

Just as you rely on data to understand production patterns and profitability, you also need gender-disaggregated, worker-focused data to gain insights into the conditions under which men and women operate at your production sites. Without this data, workplace policies, processes, and programmes risk being ineffective or even harmful, as they may fail to address the real challenges workers face. Operating without a gender lens not only perpetuates inequalities, it can also negatively impact business performance.

2. To reduce operational costs and improve business performance.

Given that women make up a significant portion of the workforce in the ready-made garment industry, it is essential to utilise gender-disaggregated data that helps identify and address the specific barriers they face. For example, understanding why women do not return to work after maternity leave can inform solutions that reduce turnover-related costs while supporting workers with childcare responsibilities. Applying a gender lens to worker welfare not only improves working conditions but also contributes to stronger business performance.

3. To meet the requirements or expectations of your customers.

We operate in a world where customers are under increasing pressure to demonstrate that they are applying a strong gender lens in their human rights due diligence[1] across supply chains. Doing this effectively requires the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data, much of which must come from suppliers. By having the right systems and processes in place to collect this data, you will be better positioned to meet customer expectations and strengthen your commercial relationships. More importantly, you will be empowered to take ownership of your own human rights due diligence, ensuring that all workers, women and men, have access to safe, fair, and decent working conditions.

4. To address the root causes of issues that women workers face.

Gender-disaggregated data is essential for uncovering the root causes of workplace issues that are shaped by gender. For instance, you might assume that women are not applying for supervisory roles due to a lack of skills or confidence. However, the real barrier could be the long working hours associated with the role, which may be difficult for women to manage alongside domestic responsibilities. Alternatively, the financial incentives may not be sufficient to justify the added stress and responsibility. Without gathering the data to understand the challenges and opportunities for getting more women in supervisory roles, you might end up putting efforts into policies or programmes that do not achieve the desired result.

[1] *Human rights due diligence is a framework for protecting workers and communities from harm. It is about businesses identifying, preventing, mitigating and accounting for how they address actual and potential in their own operations, supply chains and other business relationships.*

Learnings from the Gender Data Project

The Gender Data Project aimed to demonstrate a proof of concept in which brands and suppliers in the ready-made garment sector collaborate to collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data that informs human rights due diligence (HRDD). In the first phase of the project, a needs assessment exercise was conducted with the participating factories to better understand current gaps and needs in collection and use of gender disaggregated data.

Limited awareness and understanding of gender disaggregated data among factory management and staff

Many factories perceived data collection as useful for production planning or business forecasting, or merely as a compliance requirement, overlooking its potential to reveal and address gender-specific disparities. The prevailing mindset was to treat all employees equally, which fails to account for the unique challenges faced by women as a result of their gender. When asked whether women received any additional training or professional support, one male HR manager stated, "We don't do that kind of discrimination." In another factory, when asked whether they manage gender-disaggregated data, the compliance officer responded, "No, we don't like to view men and women as separate."

> ***"No, we don't like to view men and women as separate."***

Perceived resource drain

A significant gap identified through the needs assessment is the perception that investing in gender disaggregated data collection and analysis systems is a drain on finances and staff time. Four factories viewed these investments as non-essential, believing they do not contribute to immediate business outcomes and merely treat them as compliance requirements.

These findings reveal the importance of building a strong business case and internal capacity such that relevant colleagues including senior management understand the 'why' behind this journey.

How to Start on your Gender Disaggregated Data Journey

This section offers practical guidance on how to begin your gender disaggregated data journey, including which data indicators to focus on and how to interpret the information to drive meaningful action.

The indicators in this next section are based on two existing guidance documents:

1. The BSR Gender Data and Impact Framework (GDI) and Tool which is a set of indicators that can be used by buyers and suppliers to understand gaps in outcomes for women and men workers, conduct root cause analysis of these in order to take adequate actions, and tracks improvements to ensure meaningful progress is being made.

2. The ETI Gender Data Indicators guidance, which was developed by ETI and its partners including the PST, to provide a starting point and subsequent trajectory for companies who want to make use of gender disaggregated data to inform their human rights due diligence processes. It breaks down the BSR indicators into three levels:

- **Level 1 Indicators:** basic gender disaggregated supply chain data needed to understand the composition of the workforce and might highlight key gendered risk areas to investigate using level two data.
- **Level 2 Indicators:** indicators to support in the investigation of specific risks or thematic areas and better understanding of their gendered impact.
- **Level 3 Indicators:** Indicators for a deeper dive into a specific thematic area or issue, and may involve local partners, working with the local community and collaborative programme work with other partners.

For the purpose of this guidance document, we focus primarily on Level 1 indicators to demonstrate the approach that you can take as a supplier as you embark on this gender data journey.

To learn more about Level 2 and Level 3 indicators please see the guidance developed by the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, Hessnatur Foundation and others, which provides tools for data collection and analysis.

It is recommended that you follow a four step process as shown below:

1 Identify your data needs

Identify what data you already have and what you need to collect based on the Level 1 data indicators.

It is also important at this stage to make sure that you have systems in place to input the data. This means reviewing your worker data management software to make sure it can accommodate any new/additional information you will be collecting. It is also helpful to ensure sure that colleagues in relevant departments such as HR, compliance, welfare, and most importantly senior management understand why the business is embarking on this journey and the benefits that can be realised. In some situations where this is completely new, you might want to consider training relevant staff who will be involved in the collection, analysis and reporting of the data to inform decision-making.

2 Collect the data

Start by collecting the Level 1 data whilst making sure that all worker data is disaggregated by gender.

Detailed guidance on the meaning of each indicator is provided in the next section. As you begin to explore Level 2 and 3 data indicators, it is essential to consult with women workers and their representatives, in order to gain insights on the issues that affect their daily working lives. If you face time or resource constraints, consider adopting a phased approach. Prioritise the thematic areas that require the most attention and focus on gathering as much relevant data as possible in those areas.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE that compiling Level 1 data should not represent a significant additional workload, as you are likely reporting most this data as part of your operations and/or human resource management systems.

3 Analyse the data

Analyse the data you have collected

This is often the most challenging step, as it involves making sense of the data you have collected. It is important to note that Level 1 data alone rarely reveals the root causes of gender gaps. To gain meaningful insights, you will need to complement this with Level 2 and Level 3 indicators, and potentially other data sources, such as grievance records, discussions with trade unions or worker committees, or findings from factory-based programmes or initiatives. This process, known as triangulation, involves using multiple data sources to validate your observations and build a fuller picture. In the next section, we provide examples of how to analyse your data. The goal is to understand the "why" behind the patterns, which is known as root cause analysis. It is crucial to avoid jumping to conclusions and instead approach the analysis thoughtfully and systematically.

4 Develop your action plan

Develop an action plan to address the issues that have been identified from your analysis of the data.

At this stage, try to not tackle everything at once but rather develop an action plan with short-, medium- and long-term goals. Set realistic targets and indicators to help measure your progress. In deciding which actions to take, be it a new policy, procedure or programme, it is important to consult with appropriate worker representatives in particular women.

Understanding Level 1 Gender Disaggregated Data Indicators

Level 1 indicators are divided into 3 categories:
9 workforce profile indicators
2 business performance indicators
2 workplace outcome indicators

The sections on the following pages provide more detail on what each of these indicators mean, how the data can be collected and how you can start to make sense of it.

Workforce Profile

Gender Data Indicators
 # Workers M/F

#1 Workers
#2 Admin Staff
#3 Supervisors
#4 Management Positions
#5 Permanent Employees
#6 Fixed Term Employees
#7 Seasonal Employees
#8 Interim Agency Employees
#9 Migrant Employees

Business Performance

Gender Data Indicators
 # Workers M/F

#10 Turnover Rate
#11 Absenteeism Rate

Workplace Outcomes

Gender Data Indicators
 # Workers M/F

#12 Workers in Trade Union
Workers in Committees

#13 Percentage of employee working overtime

Level 1 indicators

Workforce Profile

Gender Data Indicators
 # Workers M/F

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Business Performance

Gender Data Indicators
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#11 Absenteeism Rate

Workplace Outcomes

Gender Data Indicators
 # Workers M/F

#12 Workers in Trade Union
Workers in Committees
#13 Percentage of employees working overtime

Checklist to determine gender data gaps in your factory

For each Level 1 indicator, ask the following:

1. **Is this data collected? Yes/No**
   a. If yes, who is responsible for keeping this data up-to-date?
   b. Where is the data stored (systems)?
   c. How often is it updated?
   d. Is the data validated through more than one source?
   e. How is this data used to inform any policies, practices, processes?

2. **If no, why is this data not collected?**
   What changes need to made for this to happen on a regular basis?
   Who will be responsible for initiating this?

Learnings from the Gender Data Project
- Senior Management buy-in is essential!

In order to make meaningful progress on your gender data journey, the senior management within your supplier company has to be on board with the agenda. This has been a key learning from the pilot project, where it was observed that factories with senior management who were already sensitised on why it is necessary to understand gendered gaps and issues within their workplaces, were more supportive of the need to use more gender disaggregated data to inform decision making.

Data sources and collection methods

Level 1 data is quantitative in nature and can therefore be easily compiled, provided there is a good understanding of what the data indicators mean and the systems to compile the data are in place. As a supplier, you are often required to complete self-assessment questionnaires or self-declaration documents. This is likely to include some of the Level 1 indicators.

Level 2 and 3 data are qualitative in nature and require different data collection methods. This can be done using tools such as surveys that provide workers with a safe and anonymous means of sharing their thoughts about their working conditions. This is particularly useful when trying to gather inputs from women workers, provided that they are able to use the technology through which the survey is administered e.g. mobile phone surveys.

Alternatively, worker interviews conducted face-to-face with groups of workers or with individuals can help to gather significant detail and insights on their experiences and issues. When using this tool, it is important to ensure that women workers are provided a safe environment during the interview process, preferably without men in the room and with a female interviewer. It is also critical to re-iterate the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Workforce Profile Indicators

Indicator #1
Workers (m/f)

A person employed in the factory that workers directly on production.

There are 2 ways to represent this data, as shown in the tables below:

- Data on the total number of women and men workers in the factory.

	# of women and men workers in the factory		
#1	# women workers	# men workers	Total workers = women + men

- The data may also be represented in percentages i.e. women and men workers as a proportion of the total number of workers.

	% of women and men workers in the factory	
#1	% women workers	% men workers

Indicator #2
Administrative Staff (m/f)

Staff responsible for performing clerical and administrative duties in the office.

Indicator #3
Supervisors (m/f)

Staff responsible for the productivity and actions of a small group of workers. A supervisor can also be known as a 'team leader'. They are responsible for supervising the activities of other workers.

Indicator #4
Management Positions (m/f)

A manager is a leadership position, where they have overall responsibility for the operations of a business or organisational unit. They may be responsible for the management of the production of goods or services provided by the company they work in.

There are 2 ways to represent this data, as shown in the tables below:

- Data on number of women and men in each functional position in the factory: administrative staff, supervisors and management positions.

	Position	# women	# men	# total workers
#2	Administration staff			
#3	Supervisors			
#4	Management positions			

- The same data can also be represented through percentages to show the proportion of women and men in each functional position.

	Position	% women	% men
#2	Administration staff		
#3	Supervisors		
#4	Management positions		

Workforce Profile Indicators

Indicator #5
Permanent Employees (m/f)

An employee or worker that does not have a predetermined end date of employment. They are often eligible to switch job positions within their companies, and they are generally protected from abrupt job termination by severance policies, like advance notice in case of layoffs, or formal disciplinary procedures.

Indicator #6
Fixed Term Employees (m/f)

An employee or worker that has been hired for a specific period of time.

Indicator #7
Seasonal Employees (m/f)

An employee or worker that is contracted for a certain period of time, usually corresponding to a season or production phase.

Indicator #8
Interim Agency Employees (m/f)

Employees or workers supplied by a local agent and brought to a site under the responsibility of a third-party company. Usually, the agencies are paid by the site and the wages of the individual workers are paid by the agency.

There are 2 ways to represent this data, as shown in the tables below:

- Data on number of women and men holding various contracts in the factory. This categorisation identifies employees as permanent employees, fixed term employees, seasonal employees and interim agency employees.

	Contract type	# women	# men	# total workers
#5	Permanent employees			
#6	Fixed term employees			
#7	Seasonal employees			
#8	Interim agency employees			

- The same data could also be represented through percentages to show the proportion of women and men holding each contract type.

	Contract type	% women	% men
#5	Permanent employees		
#6	Fixed term employees		
#7	Seasonal employees		
#8	Interim agency employees		

Workforce Profile Indicators

Indicator #9
Migrant Employees (m/f)

An employee or worker that has migrated from within their home country or to another country of which they are not a national or permanent resident, in pursuit of work. There is usually no intention to stay permanently in the country or region.

There are 2 ways to represent this data, as shown in the tables below:

- Data on the total number of women and men migrant workers in the factory.

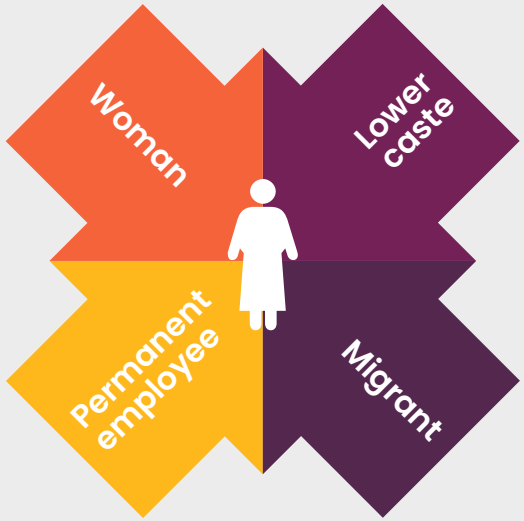
	Number of migrant workers in the factory		
#9	# women migrantworkers	# men migrant workers	Total migrant workers = (women + men)

- The data may also be represented in percentages i.e. women and men migrant workers as a proportion of the total number of workers

	% of migrant workers in the factory	
#9	% women migrant workers	% men migrant workers

There is an increasing trend of migrant workers joining the workforce in many garment producing countries. This data is captured through indicator #9 – number of women and men employees who are migrant to the location of the factory. Migrant employees may hold any of the functional positions described by indicators 1 to 5. They may also hold any one of the contract types described by indicators 6 to 8. Indicator 9 therefore helps to understand intersectional workforce identity, with a focus on migrant workers. Intersectionality is the idea that a worker may have multiple aspects to his or her identity, which can put them at a disadvantage in relation to their working conditions.

In the diagram, we see how four characteristics intersect to form an individual's identity:



Being a woman, a permanent employee and a migrant from a lower caste. Recognising these intersecting dimensions within workforce profiles enables a greater understanding of the issues that workers may face, as well as the opportunities they may or may not have access to. This is particularly important for women workers, who often face additional discrimination because of their intersecting identities.

A permanent woman employee from the region or locality where the factory is located, is likely to face different working conditions compared to a migrant woman worker who moved specifically for the job and is employed on a temporary contract. She may face language or cultural barriers, which can hinder her from accessing opportunities within the factory or simply being able to raise a grievance. This is why it is important for you as an employer to understand the profile of your workforce, specifically workers who have migrated from other areas, and ensure you have the processes in place to support them.

From Data to Analysis

Workforce profile indicators are an important starting point for identifying potential systemic gender-based discrimination in the workplace. They can highlight disparities in areas such as hiring, promotions, and pay between men and women. For instance, if women make up a large portion of the workforce but hold few supervisory roles, this may signal a power imbalance that could contribute to other forms of discrimination, including harassment. Investigating the reasons behind the lack of women in leadership positions would require a review of hiring and promotion policies, as well as employee interviews to better understand workplace perceptions of women in supervisory roles.

It is therefore important to note that collecting data on the workforce profile is not an end in itself, but rather a starting point for understanding the situation better.

Gender disaggregated data	What could it mean?
% women workers	Hiring policies that unintentionally discriminate against women, keeping them in lower paid roles.
% women workers with different contract types	Discrimination in promotions to senior roles.
% women workers among various functional roles	Skills/educational gaps for women to progress into higher paid roles.

CASE STUDY

Driving Data Action

In early 2018, the fashion brand Esprit analysed workforce profile data to better understand the gender distribution of employees and management in factories in India, Bangladesh, and Ukraine. The company found that women were underrepresented at all levels of factory management in all factories that they surveyed.

However, it also discovered that there was significant variation among factories in the same areas. The baseline study revealed that factories in India have 6% female line supervisors, whereas the total female workforce is 31%.

The company set a goal to help their suppliers achieve a percentage of female line supervisors that aligns with its overall percentage of female workers.[v]

Business Performance Indicators

High turnover and absenteeism rates are costly for suppliers as they result in challenges to meet production targets and ensure operational efficiency. From a gender lens, high absenteeism and turnover rates of women workers, who make up a large proportion of the workforce, can signal underlying discrimination and work environment issues that need to be understood and addressed.

Indicator #10
Turnover rate (m/f)

The number of workers leaving over a specified period of time as a percentage of the average total number of workers. This could be voluntary, due to dismissal, retirement or death in service.

How to calculate the turnover rate:

#10	Turnover Rate	
	women	(Number of women workers that have left/ Average number of women workers) x 100
	men	(Number of men workers that have left/ Average number of men workers) x 100

When calculating the turnover rate, it is important to specify the time period, for example, monthly, quarterly or yearly. This data can be disaggregated further across various functional positions to provide additional insight on turnover rates of different worker categories such as helpers, machine operators and supervisors.

Indicator #11
Absenteeism rate (m/f)

Absenteeism is when a worker is away from work and his/her absence is not planned; that is, it is not a vacation day, public holiday, or weekly rest day. The absenteeism rate is the number of absent days during a specified period of time divided by the number of working days over the same time period.

How to calculate the absenteeism rate:

#11	Absenteeism Rate	
	women	(Number of women workers absent from work/ Total number of working days) x 100
	men	(Number of men workers absent from work/ Total number of working days) x 100

When calculating the absenteeism rate, it is important to specify the time period, for example, monthly, quarterly or yearly. This data can be disaggregated further across various functional positions to provide additional insight on absenteeism rates for different worker categories such as helpers, machine operators and so on.

From Data to Analysis

High turnover and absenteeism rates are costly for any business in terms of productivity losses, disruption in meeting targets and potential worker unrest. For example, regular high rates of absenteeism among women of childbearing age could be linked to menstrual hygiene issues if toilets are not considered clean or safe, if women do not have access to sanitary products, or if it is culturally unacceptable for women to come to work when they are menstruating. Similarly, women workers may find it difficult to return to work after maternity leave if the factory does not provide a conducive environment in terms of childcare facilities or flexible working arrangements.

Determining the root cause of high turnover or absenteeism rates requires further investigation using other data collection methods such as interviews with women workers and their representatives.

Gender disaggregated data	What could it mean?
High turnover rate of women workers	Women workers might be struggling to balance work and domestic responsibilities. The work environment may not be conducive for women e.g. Persistent harassment, physical and mental stress as a result of production pressures. Issues related to unequal or inadequate pay. Women workers not returning to work after maternity leave. Women lack the skills to engage effectively.
High absenteeism rate of women workers	

Learnings from the Gender Data Project
- Avoid being data rich and information poor!

The needs assessment findings revealed that participating factories were collecting data on absenteeism rates. For example, **the absenteeism rate for Women at one factory was significantly higher (9.59%) compared to their male counterparts (3%)**. Despite this clear indication that women might be facing specific issues leading to higher absenteeism, there was no indication of the factory management exploring the underlying causes of these rates. It is important to remember that data holds value only when it leads to meaningful insights and drives informed action.

CASE STUDIES

Driving Data Action

1 **The Community-Based Childcare (CBCC) for Garment Factory Workers Project in Cambodia** observed that many women in garment factories were leaving their jobs due to a lack of childcare support, choosing to stay home with their children instead. In response, the project established community-based childcare centres, allowing women to continue working while ensuring their children received quality care.[vi]

2 **A health intervention programme in a garment factory in Egypt** implemented health training programs for 1,150 garment workers and 35 female peer educators, with the aim of educating them on various aspects of health and nutrition.

Over 12 months the initiative saw: [vii]

Absenteeism dropped from 19% to 10.7%

Turnover rate declined from 14.5% to 8.1%

Workplace Outcome Indicators

Level 1 workplace outcomes indicators focus on two crucial aspects of decent work.

Indicator #12

Number of workers in trade unions (m/f)

Number of workers in worker committees (m/f)

A trade union is an organisation of workers and union leaders united to protect and promote their common interests in the workplace.

A worker committee is a committee created and elected by the workers at an enterprise/factory to represent themselves in discussions with management regarding issues that affect them at work.

This data can be represented as shown below:

#12	Trade Union	
1	No. of women members	No. men members
2	Leadership positions occupied by women	Leadership positions occupied by men

#12	Worker Committee	# women	# men	# total workers
1	Worker Committee 1			
2	Worker Committee 2			
3	Worker Committee 3			

From Data to Analysis

This indicator provides information on access to freedom of association, collective bargaining and worker representation, which are enabling rights for all workers. When these enabling rights are not accessible to workers, they are unable to raise issues and grievances with factory management and implement changes that positively affect their working conditions.

The goal is to ensure adequate representation of both genders in trade unions or worker committees within factories. However, women often face barriers to participation. These include time constraints from balancing work and domestic responsibilities, fear of retaliation, limited skills or confidence to engage effectively, and the male-dominated culture of many trade unions, which can discourage or exclude women's involvement.

When women are underrepresented in trade unions and worker committees, their perspectives are often excluded, and issues that specifically affect them may be ignored. If your data reveals low female participation in these structures, it should prompt further investigation through worker consultations to understand why. It is not only essential to ensure gender representation, but also to create opportunities for both women and men to take on leadership and decision-making roles within the trade unions or worker committees.

Gender disaggregated data	What could it mean?
Women workers in trade unions	Lack of awareness or interest on the part of women workers to engage.
Women workers in Committees	Discriminatory barriers to women's active participation in trade unions/worker committees. Women lack the skills.

CASE STUDY

Driving Data Action

The Tamil Nadu Textile and Common Labour Union (TTCU) was initially established in 2012 as a community group to combat child labour and give women a space in which to raise issues of importance to them. Although some women were already members of a trade union, many felt that they were unhelpful, as they were not allowed into the factories and women's issues were constantly overlooked by the mainly male officials. The sexual harassment and rape of women workers galvanised the members of the community organisation to set themselves up as a women-only union in 2013. They felt this was the only way they could ensure women's issues were addressed by factory management and obtain support at the industry level.

Elections are held every three years, with committees in 458 villages and representation at district and state levels. TTCU also trains local committees to address wage and overtime issues, and empowers women as community paralegals.[vii]

Indicator #13
% of Employees regularly working overtime (m/f)

Overtime refers to hours worked beyond the scheduled hours that are stipulated in the employee's contract.

Calculating the % of employees who regularly work overtime hours requires a two-step process.

1) **Tracking the total number of hours worked, including overtime for each individual employee, disaggregated by gender** and over a period of time e.g. monthly or quarterly.
2) **Calculating the % of women and men employees who regularly work overtime based on the above data.** This can be broken down further into specific worker categories that are more likely to be working overtime than others e.g. migrant workers, fixed-term contracts or workers who are paid by piece rate.

From Data to Analysis

This indicator provides insights on overtime hours, which has implications for a number of other human rights risks such as health and safety and pay. For many workers in garment factories, working overtime is often not a choice and dictated by production pressures or the need to make extra money. However, long working hours without sufficient breaks can lead to health problems, lower morale and dissatisfaction with the job, which impacts overall productivity.

For women workers, this has a differential impact. For example, there is an increased risk of experiencing violence and harassment both at work as a result of the pressure to be productive, as well as when commuting home late after the overtime shift. Combining long working hours in the factory with unpaid domestic care work leads to increased physical and mental stress, as women try to juggle the demands on their time.

Therefore, when analysing overtime data trends by gender, it is important to triangulate this with specific worker categories, so as to make informed decisions on how to protect workers from fatigue and burnout. Other issues may also surface when this data is triangulated with pay, revealing a potential gender wage gap, whereby women are working systematically longer hours to compensate for earning less than their male counterparts.

It is also important to keep accurate records of the hours everyone works and what they are paid, using timekeeping and payroll systems. There should be a clear separation between regular and overtime hours, and all workers in particular women, should be aware of this.

Gender disaggregated data

% of Employees regularly working overtime

What could it mean?

High percentage of women may indicate poor pay, which necessitates overtime work.

Knock on effects such as increased risk of fatigue and burnout.

Increased physical and mental stress for women due to juggling care responsibilities.

Increased risk of violence and harassment.

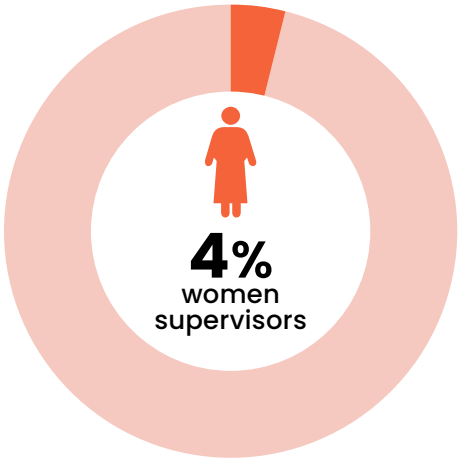
Increased risk of injury.

AN EXAMPLE

From Data to Analysis and Action

1 Identify your data needs

Level 1 data reveals:
only 4% women supervisors compared to men (96%)
and also compared to the high numbers of women in the general worker population



2 Collect the data

What further information is needed to understand the reasons why the number of women supervisors is low (root causes)?

- Do women workers apply for supervisory roles? How many have applied over the last year compared to men?
- Have any women workers been promoted or considered for promotion to supervisor role? What is the proportion compared to men?
- Do women workers have the skills to be supervisors or do they need extra training?
- Are male colleagues supportive of women supervisors?
- Is the general worker population receptive to women supervisors?
- Are women able to put in the extra time needed to perform the role?
- Is the working environment supportive of women trying to balance their unpaid care responsibilities with supervisor role?
- Is the extra income incentive enough for women to apply for supervisor jobs?

The answers to these questions require consultation with workers and their representatives through interviews and surveys. This is where Level 2 and 3 data indicators can be used.

3 Analyse the data

Additional qualitative data reveals the follow as the key root causes to make progress on this data indicator:

1. **Women workers are not considered for promotions despite having the requisite skills and experience.**
2. **Women workers are concerned about the extra hours they have to work as supervisors and how this might affect their unpaid care responsibilities.**
3. **Women workers are also concerned that their male counterpart supervisors and other women workers who they have to supervise, will not accept their new roles.**

AN EXAMPLE

From Data to Analysis and Action

4 Develop your action plan

Develop action plan to address the root causes:

Set baseline and target KPIs

Over the next 2 years, increase the number of women supervisors from 4% to 30%

Define activities to be implemented and assign roles/ responsibilities. For example:

- Advertise supervisor roles more prominently in the factory and among networks of women
- Identify women with the potential skills and experience for supervisory roles and encourage them to apply
- Rollout awareness raising campaigns about equal opportunities for all workers and address unconscious bias
- Implement targeted skills programmes that can upskill and put women workers on the path towards supervisor roles
- Review wage structures to ensure there is no pay gap between men and women supervisors of the same skill level/ experience
- Work with the trade union (if present) or worker committee to identify and support skilled women workers that can ascend to supervisor roles
- Review recruitment policies and process to ensure no discrimination is taking place in hiring processes, wages, bonuses and other benefits
- Develop an equal opportunity policy that guarantees non-discrimination throughout the employment cycle, including related to promotion, through clear and transparent competency frameworks, promotion criteria, and the performance review process
- Offer flexible working opportunities for women supervisors
- Identify women supervisors who can act as role models and encourage other women to take up leadership roles.

Monitor and track progress in implementation of the action plan and progress towards KPIs

Level 2 and Level 3 Gender Data Indicators

Level 2 and Level 3 indicators build on Level 1 indicators to help you go deeper in investigating specific risks for your workers based on their gender.

Level 2 indicators focus primarily on gathering data on worker perceptions with regard to workplace policies, practices and culture.

Level 3 indicators go a step further to also take into consideration the prevailing social norms and how they influence gender relations in the workplace.

A total of seven thematic risk areas have been identified with corresponding indicators to gather data and evidence on how these issues might be affecting women workers compared to men. These are:

1. **Social dialogue**
2. **Violence and harassment**
3. **Health and safety**
4. **Wages**
5. **Recruitment, training and leadership**
6. **Sexual and reproductive health rights and unpaid care**
7. **Remediation**

The key difference is that with Level 2 and 3 data, you can get a better understanding of whether the policies, practices and culture in your workplace provides an enabling environment for all workers, women and men, to thrive. You can do this by focusing on the seven thematic risks areas above. The data collection methods of Level 2 and 3 are primarily qualitative, which means using tools such as worker interviews and surveys. This also means that you would not collect this data as frequently as you would collect Level 1 data.

To access specific tools for Level 2 and Level 3 indicators please refer to this guidance developed by developed by the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, Hessnatur Foundation and others.

End Notes

i UN Women Gender Equality Glossary, accessed 30th April 2025

ii UN Women Gender Equality Glossary, accessed 30th April 2025

iii Asia Pacific Network of Statistical Training, What is Gender Data and how to use it for SDG monitoring accessed 30th April 2025

iv ILO, How to achieve gender equality in global garment supply chains, accessed 30th April 2025

v BSR Gender Data and Impact Framework, page 48, accessed on 30th April 2025

vi Planète Enfants & Développement, CBCC Project Summary, accessed 30th April 2025

vii IDH. (2018). Why a gender approach is good for workers, the business and the sector. Retrieved from IDH Transforming Markets.

viii Ethical Trading Initiative Safe Spaces Report, page 14, accessed 8th May 2025

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ETI is a leading alliance of trade unions, NGOs and businesses, working together with key stake-holders to promote practical solutions to end the abuse of human rights at work.

Our vision is a world of work that protects human rights, ensures dignity for all, provides opportunity and is free of exploitation and abuse.

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