



ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Why address violence and harassment in the world of work?

Gender-based violence (GBV) and harassment against women, including sexual harassment (SH), is a human rights abuse, to which no country, sector or occupation is immune. GBV, including SH against women, in the world of work is often the result of intersecting circumstances and risk factors that are closely connected to gender inequalities and rooted in gender-based forms of power and control. More than one in five (22.8 per cent or 743 million) persons in employment have experienced at least one form of violence and harassment, either physical, psychological or sexual, at work during their working life.¹ Women are particularly exposed to sexual violence and harassment at work, with 8.2 per cent of women compared to 5.0 per cent of men experiencing this form of violence at work.² Discrimination based on gender, disability status, nationality/ethnicity, skin colour and/or religion exacerbates the risk of violence and harassment at work and nearly five in ten people who have experienced gender-based discrimination have also faced violence and harassment at work. The COVID-19 pandemic led to an intensification of all forms of GBV, including SH³, and there is evidence that SH increased in the workplace as well.⁴

Women and girls experience GBV in different settings, as part of the continuum of violence, and the impacts of violence are also experienced in different settings. For example, intimate partner violence has important impacts in the

workplace. Studies on domestic violence⁵ have shown that it contributes to lost economic output and productivity, increased sick leave, and lost jobs. One study shows that it results in 10 days of absences per year. It can also result in anxiety, depression and feelings of powerlessness, humiliation, and loss of self-esteem, work motivation and performance. The global cost of VAW (public, private and social) is estimated at approximately 2 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), or USD\$1.5 trillion.⁶

The elimination of all forms of gender-based violence and harassment against women, including sexual harassment, in the world of work, is critical for advancing decent work, achieving women's full and effective participation in the labour force, promoting their economic empowerment and contributing to productive and sustainable enterprises. It is estimated that by advancing gender equality across public, private and social spheres, \$12 trillion could be added to global GDP by 2025.⁷ The world of work can be a strategic space for addressing GBV: it can be an entry point for women to get information about available services for victim/survivors of violence, it can be a site where support is provided to survivors, it can provide a space for advancing efforts to prevent GBV, including by challenging harmful norms and stereotypes.

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How can we address violence and harassment against women in the world of work?

The [ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No. 190\)](#) and its accompanying recommendation No. 206 (R206) enshrine in international law the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment and offer a unique opportunity to forge a world of work based on principles of equality, dignity and respect, and freedom from violence and harassment. C190 and R206 are inclusive in scope, covering all workers regardless of their contractual status, including those employed in the informal sector; and wherever they work. The instruments also recognize the impact that intimate partner violence has on the world of work and call for measures to address this persistent problem. Governments that ratify C190 are required to put in place the necessary laws and policy measures to prevent and address violence and harassment in the world of work, including sexual harassment and other forms of GBV. As of September 2023, four years after its adoption [32 countries have ratified C190](#). C190 recognizes the complementary role of governments, employers' and workers' organisations in eradication of GBV including sexual harassment from the world of work. In addition, workers' and employers' organizations, business associations, NGOs and women's organizations play vital roles in preventing and addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work.

Other stakeholders also have a role to play in addressing violence and harassment in the world of work⁸:

- NGOs can partner with employers or government to strengthen their capacities to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and violence and work in partnership with trade unions to end violence and sexual harassment.
- Unions can advocate and engage in collective bargaining for prevention and stronger protection mechanisms and better support to survivors of violence.⁹



- Workers themselves also contribute to transforming harmful social and cultural norms that drive workplace violence against women, including sexual harassment, and can be active bystanders when they witness such violence.
- Governments can develop comprehensive national laws and policies to prevent and respond to violence and harassment against women, including in the world of work and in public spaces and clarify roles and responsibilities for public authorities, workplace actors and other stakeholders, informed by the voices of survivors. They can also ratify and implement ILO C190 and advocate for the ILO C190 in international and regional fora and UN practices and operations.

What can the private sector do to address violence and sexual harassment in the workplace?¹⁰

Private and public sector employers can strive for gender equality within the organization, including through the **recruitment, retention, and promotion of women; ensuring women’s representation in decision-making; and strengthening entity policies on sexual harassment.**

Private and public sector employers can implement comprehensive prevention strategies and activities in the workplace.



For example, providing regular training, guidance and awareness-raising for managers, supervisors and workers and their representatives enable them to build skills to effectively implement workplace policies and procedures, promote gender-responsive actions and contribute to positive and

respectful work environments (e.g. through bystander empowerment), and can contribute to shift institutional cultures, so that human rights, equality, and nondiscrimination are embedded in structures and practice.

Private sector and public sector employers can **develop effective human resource policies** that contribute to **preventing, addressing and ending violence and harassment against women**. They should provide for gender-responsive complaints processes, formal and informal, that are accessible to—and trusted by—all women and accountability measures for perpetrators.

Leaders in the workplace can be vocal about taking a zero-tolerance approach to violence in the workplace and model behavior that fosters an environment of equality and respect to catalyze the culture change needed to eliminate sexual harassment in the world of work and beyond.

Generation Equality collective commitment: Eliminating violence and harassment against women in the world of work

In the context of the [Generation Equality Forum](#), and the vision set by the [Global Acceleration Plan](#) for gender equality, the **Action Coalitions on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Economic Justice and Rights (EJR)** have a collective commitment to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence and harassment against women in the world of work. The collective commitment brings together actors from across stakeholder groups for action and advocacy, including towards ILO C190 and R206.

Through the collective commitment, the Action Coalitions on Gender Based Violence and Economic Justice and Rights commit to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence and harassment against women in all their diversity in the world of work, incorporating an inclusive, integrated and gender-transformative approach that applies to all sectors, whether private or public, both in the formal and informal economy, and in urban or rural areas; through one or more of the following:

- a. **Advocacy for the ratification and implementation** of ILO Convention No.190;
- b. **Ratification of ILO Convention No.190**, and its effective implementation in line with ILO Recommendation No. 206;
- c. **Adoption and implementation of gender transformative work-related policies and programmes** in line with the provisions of ILO C190 and R206;
- d. **Create safe and healthy work environments** that recognize the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment.



Relevant EJR action area and targets from the [blueprint](#): Expand decent work and employment in formal and informal economies.

Create an inclusive and enabling legal and policy environment and engage women to expand decent work in the formal and informal economy to reduce the number of working women living in poverty by 2026 by a recommended 17 million and decrease the gap in labour force participation between prime-age women and men with small children by half, resulting in an additional 84 million women joining the labour force.



Relevant GBV action area and targets from the [blueprint](#): More states and regional actors ratify international and regional conventions and public and private sector institutions strengthen, implement and finance evidence-driven laws, policies and action plans to end gender-based violence against women and girls in all their diversity.

In so doing, 550 million more women and girls will live in countries with laws and policies prohibiting all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls by 2026.

Who can join?

The collective commitment recognizes the power of multi-stakeholder action and encourages all stakeholders—from governments to the private sector to civil society—to join.

To learn more about the Action Coalitions please visit the website [here](#). Please register your interest in making a commitment [here](#).

Collective Commitment Makers

CIVIL SOCIETY

- Acción Ciudadana por la Democracia y el Desarrollo
- African Views Organization
- AmicusLegal Consultancy
- Association Congolaise pour les Droits et la santé
- Association des Femmes de l'Europe Méridionale
- Association pour la Promotion de la Fille Burundaise
- Association pour le Développement et Human Rights
- Badabon Sangho
- Balancetonsport
- Breakthrough
- Bugando hospital
- Busia Women Prison
- Cameroon Digital Rights Coalition
- Canaan Peace, Women & Community Dev. Initiative
- Centre de Recherche Agro-écologique
- Club ohada this
- Comite International Peruano
- Cooperation d'aide Humanitaire DR Congo
- Emerging Women Leaders Tanzania
- Equity Watch Initiative
- Every Woman Treaty
- FEMNET
- Foundation for Male Engagement Uganda
- Hong Maple Foundation
- Humble Unemployment Solutions in Tanzania
- Initiative pour un Développement Durable en Afrique
- International Alliance of Women
- International Human Rights Commission
- International Trade Union Confederation
- Jessy Ojoma Drive for Environmental Development Foundation (JODED-F)
- L'Associacio de Drets Sexuals i Reproductius
- Lady of Peace Community Foundation
- Let's do it! Cameroon
- MY World Mexico
- ONG- Réseau Action, Justice et Paix
- Organisation Paysanne pour le Développement Durable OPDD
- Organization of American States / Inter-American Commission of Women
- PANNCARES
- Phenomenal Women Global
- Repsfeco
- Réseau SOS Équilibre
- Rural Infrastructure and Human Resource Development Organization
- Rise Up
- Rural Women Network
- Sima Community Based Organization
- Smile Action international
- Stellar & Ray
- Stichting Mission Sri Lanka
- United Funding and Development for Underage Mothers
- US Women's Caucus at the UN
- Usikimye Kenya
- Vision Communautaire
- Wagggg
- Women Aspire Network
- Women's Hope Foundation

GOVERNMENTS

- Iceland
- Kenya
- Liberia
- Mozambique
- Nigeria
- Papua New Guinea
- Senegal
- Somalia
- South Africa
- Spain
- United Kingdom
- Uruguay
- Uzbekistan

UN SYSTEM

- International Labour Organization
- UN Women
- World Health Organization

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

- European Commission

PHILANTHROPY & PRIVATE SECTOR

- Ford Foundation
- Kering Foundation
- Laudes Foundation
- The VF Foundation

YOUTH-LED ORGANISATIONS

- Akalka Organization
- Amis Cameroun
- Botswana Youth
- Conseil National de la Jeunesse du Togo (CNJ-Togo)

Endnotes

- 1 ILO, LRF, Gallup (2022). Experiences of Violence and Harassment at Work: A First Global Survey. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/WCMS_863095/lang--en/index.htm
- 2 ILO (2022) Experiences of violence and harassment at work: A global first survey, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_863095.pdf
- 3 UN Women (2021) Measuring the shadow pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19, <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/vaw-rga>
- 4 Lisa Rabasca Roepe, "Why workplace harassment increased during the pandemic", available at: <https://www.fastcompany.com/90655155/why-workplace-harassment-increased-during-the-pandemic>
- 5 See for example: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2003). Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States; Vodafone (2019).
- 6 UN Women (2016) "The economic costs of violence against women", <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/speech-by-lakshmi-puri-on-economic-costs-of-violence-against-women>
- 7 McKinsey Global Institute (2015) The Power of Parity: How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to Global Growth.
- 8 Please find UN Women resources on addressing VAWG in the world of work: https://endvawnow.org/uploads/Violence_against_women_in_workplace_setting_2page_infographic_05_Dec_print_preparation.pdf
- 9 See ITUC #RatifyC190 report: <https://www.ituc-csi.org/Workers-Unite-For-The-Right-Of-Everyone-To-A-World-of-Work-Free-From-Violence-And-Harassment>
- 10 Please find additional information at: UN Women (2016) Ending Violence and Harassment against Women in the World of Work, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2016/Essentials-for-addressing-VAW-at-work-en.pdf>