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Safety and Health in Textile Supply Chains

Human Threads: Addressing the Social Matter

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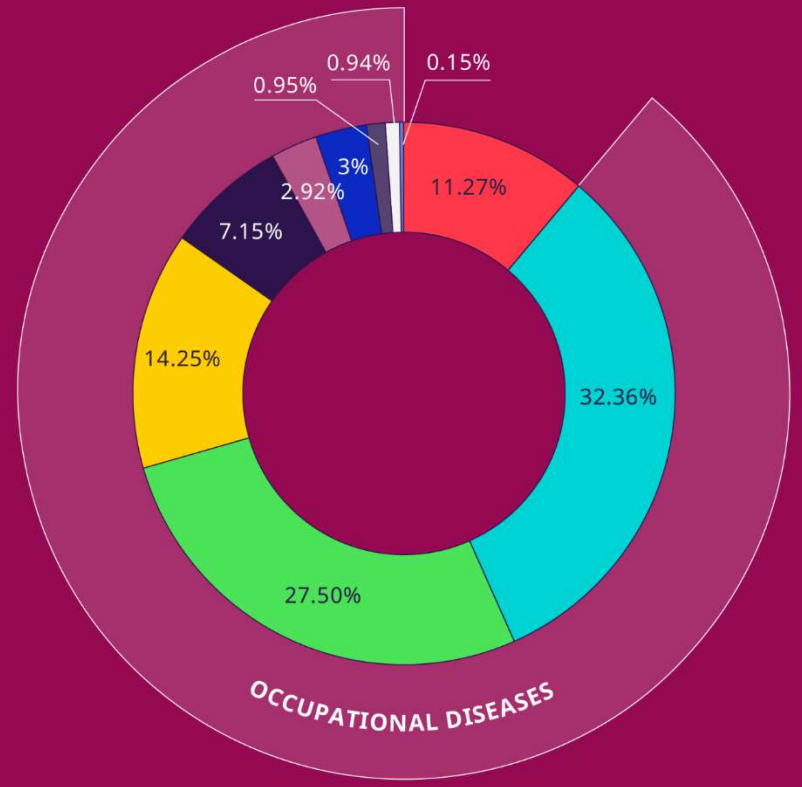
International Labour Organization

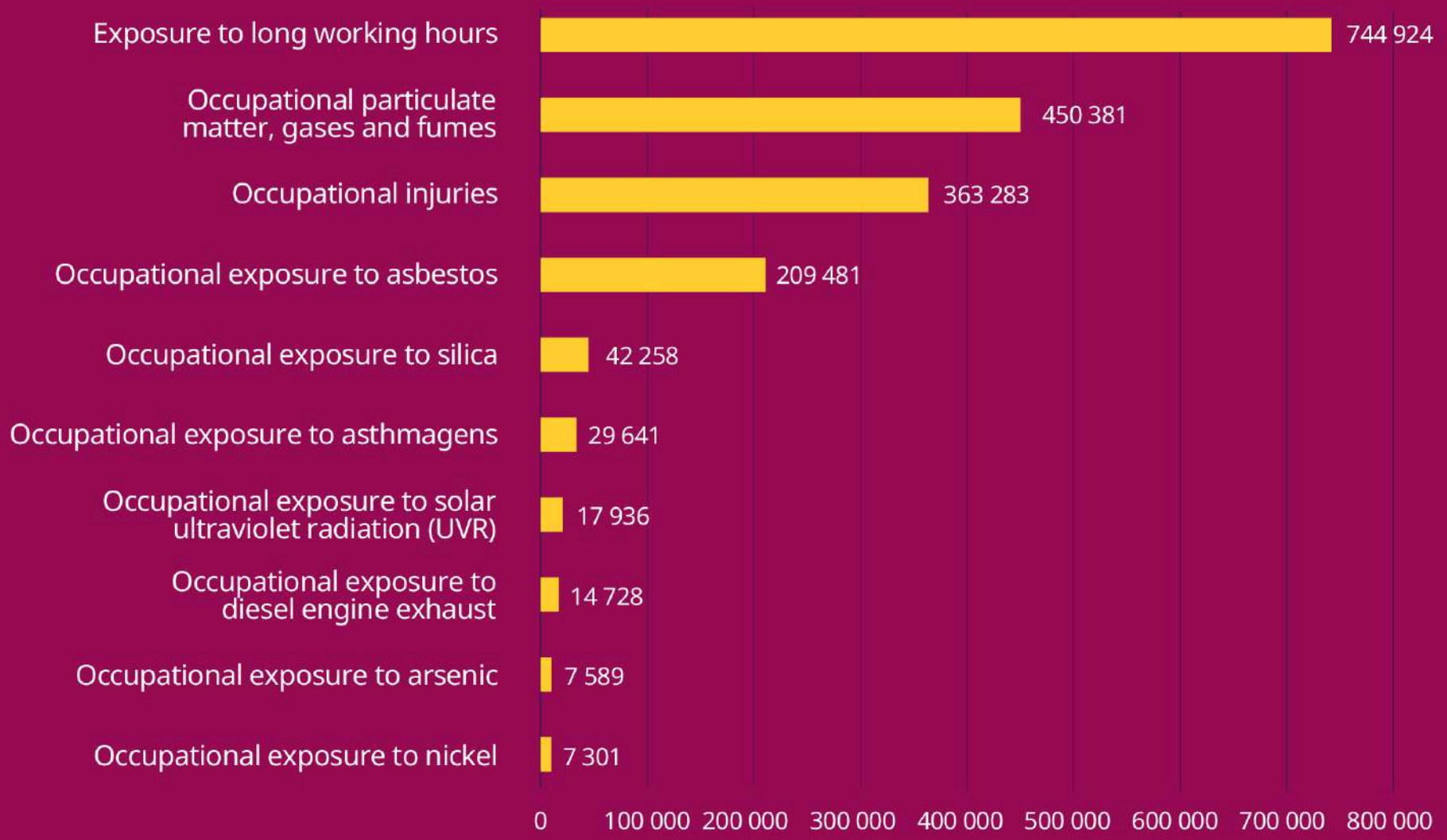
According to the **new global estimates released by the ILO in November 2023***

- over **395 million** workers sustained a non-fatal work injury
- around **2.93 million** workers died as a result of work-related factors
  - **2.6 million** due to work-related diseases (88.73%)
- **6.71%** of all global deaths were caused by work

*Data from 2019



Top 10 occupational **risk factors** for work-related **deaths**



Source: WHO/ILO Joint Estimates of the Work-related Burden of Disease and Injury, 2000-2016

Hazardous substances and chemicals in textile supply chains

- Numerous chemicals in their **solid**, **liquid vapour** and **gas stages** are used in each stage of textiles, clothing, leather and footwear manufacturing.
- Including, but not limited to, biocides, surfactants, bleaches, acids and bases, dyes and pigments, softeners, PFC-based water repellents, fire retardants, formaldehyde, plasticizers, solvents, adhesives and other auxiliary agents in processes such as curing, washing, bleaching, tanning, dipping, dyeing, screen printing, cementing, assembling and finishing.
- Many of the chemicals currently used in textiles, clothing, leather and footwear manufacturing are **included in national, regional and global lists of chemicals or substances of potential and high concern**.
- Other hazardous substances include **fibres**, notably but not limited to **asbestos fibres**, and **organic and inorganic dusts**, including **silica dust**.

E. Tuyay / ILO

Common health impacts of hazardous substances

Hazardous substances can produce both acute and chronic health effects

- **Local effects**: occur at the point of contact, as is the case with skin and eye irritation
- **Systemic effects**: require absorption and distribution from the entry point to other parts of the body

Long term health effects of hazardous substances may take years or decades to appear

- Organ damage
- Weakening of the immune system
- Development of allergies or asthma
- Reproductive problems and birth defects
- Cancers

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Excessive heat and heat stress

- Maintaining a core body temperature of around 37°C is essential for continued normal body function.

- Heat-related risks for workers are influenced by:
  1. **Excessive heat** - the combined interaction of increased air temperature/humidity, limited air flow and radiant heat sources (for example, heat-emitting sources and machinery).
  2. **Thermal insulation** - the impact of clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE).
  3. **Physical activity** - metabolic heat is generated when performing physical tasks.

- Workplace heat stress is a state in which excess heat is stored in a worker's body, which, if not released to the environment, will raise core body temperature, leading to potential health risks and reduced productivity.

Every year

2.41 billion workers are exposed

22.85 million occupational injuries

18,970 work-related deaths

2.09 million DALYS

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How excessive heat impacts the safety and health of workers

Mild effects

- Heat fatigue
- Heat cramp
- Heat rash
- Heat oedema
- Heat syncope

Serious effects

- Heat exhaustion
- Heatstroke
- Fluid/electrolyte disorders
- Acute/chronic kidney injury
- Cardiovascular/respiratory diseases

An increase in risks due to additional hazards

- Other climate change hazards (UV radiation, air pollution etc)
- Chemicals in the workplace

Mental health effects

- Psychological distress
- Anxiety
- Irritation & anger
- Reduced focus & concentration

Accidents and injuries

- Altered emotional states
- Hot surfaces and ill-functioning equipment
- Unsafe use of PPE

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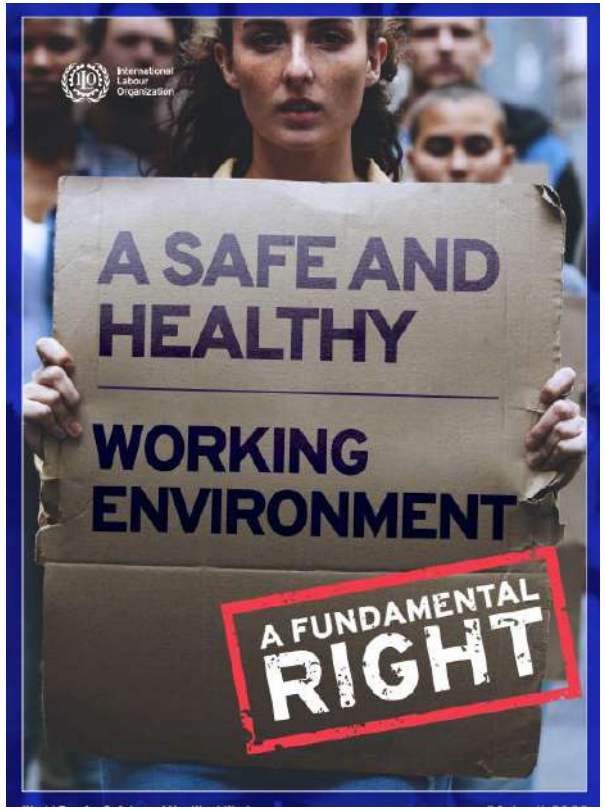
Examples of legislation regarding maximum work temperatures

Austria	Air temperature of the work premises should be between 19 and 25°C for work involving low physical stress and between 18 and 24°C for work involving normal physical effort.
China	Outdoor work must cease when air temperature exceeds 40°C.
India	WBGT should not exceed 30°C in **factory workrooms**.
Singapore	The temperature in any working chamber, man-lock or medical lock in a worksite shall not exceed 29°C.
Spain	In **enclosed workspaces** the temperature must be between 17 and 27°C for sedentary work and 14 and 25°C for light work.
Thailand	Work must be stopped when WBGT raises beyond 34.0°C for low intensity work, 32.0°C for moderate intensity work and 30.0°C for very high intensity work.
Vietnam	**Indoor workplace temperatures** should not exceed 34°C, 32°C and 30°C for light, medium and heavy work, respectively.

A safe and healthy working environment: a fundamental principle and right at work

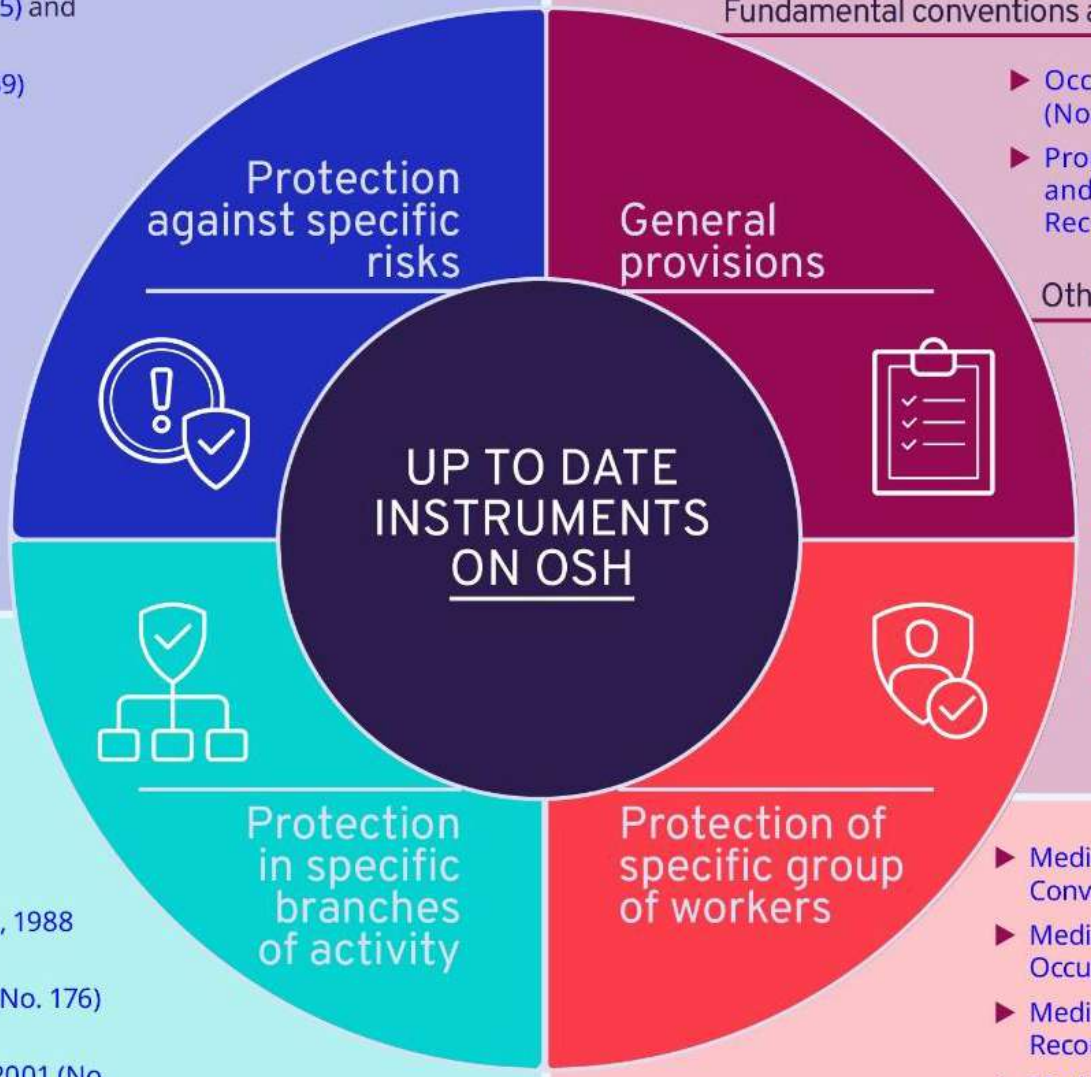
In 2022, Governments, Employers and Workers came together at the International Labour Conference to amend the 1998 Declaration

- **A safe and healthy working environment** (adopted by the ILC in 2022).
- Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.
- The elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour
- The effective abolition of child labour
- The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation



Fundamental Conventions

- **Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981** (No. 155)
- **Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006** (No. 187)



- Radiation Protection Convention, 1960 (No. 115) and Recommendation (No. 114)
- Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139) and Recommendation (No. 147)
- Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 (No. 148) and Recommendation (No. 156)
- Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162) and Recommendation (No. 172)
- Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170) and Recommendation (No. 177)
- Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174) and Recommendation (No. 181)
- Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and Recommendation (No. 206)

Fundamental conventions and their accompanying recommendations

- Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164)
- Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) and Recommendation (No. 197)

Other instruments

- Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161) and Recommendation (No. 171)
- Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981
- Protection of Workers' Health Recommendation, 1953 (No. 97)
- Welfare Facilities Recommendation, 1956 (No. 102)
- List of Occupational Diseases Recommendation, 2002 (No. 194)

- Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1964 (No. 120) and Recommendation (No. 120)
- Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work) Convention, 1979 (No. 152) and Recommendation (No. 160)
- Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167) and Recommendation (No. 175)
- Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176) and Recommendation (No. 183)
- Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184) and Recommendation (No. 192)
- Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) and Recommendation (No. 199)

- Medical Examination of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1946 (No. 77)
- Medical Examination of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946 (No. 78)
- Medical Examination of Young Persons Recommendation, 1946 (No. 79)
- Medical Examination of Young Persons (Underground Work) Convention, 1965 (No. 124)
- Conditions of Employment of Young Persons (Underground Work) Recommendation, 1965 (No. 125)

Just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies

- Climate change and environmental degradation are already **disrupting millions of jobs and livelihoods**.
- In 2015 a tripartite meeting of experts developed the ***Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*** (ILO)
- A just transition in the textile supply chains, related to occupational safety and health (OSH), ensures that **as the industry shifts toward more sustainable and ethical practices, workers' safety is prioritized**.
- This involves **integrating OSH measures** into the restructuring process, protecting workers from hazards while **promoting greener technologies and fair working conditions**.
- It also includes **upskilling workers** and improving working environments to align with both environmental goals and the **fundamental right to a safe and healthy working environment**.

What is an ILO Code of Practice?

A reference tool for guiding industry practices:

- Focuses on the main risks identified in the TCLF sector
- Reflects the main provisions of ILO's **international labour standards** (78 conventions, recommendations, protocols, codes of practice and other tools)
- Based on ILO **good practices** in the sector (e.g., BW, VZF, SCORE and other country programmes)
- Inspired by **other instruments and good practices** (national legislation, private codes of conduct, other standards etc.)
- **Not legally binding**

English version:
https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/safety-and-health-textiles-clothing-leather-and-footwear| International Labour Organization (ilo.org)

Content of the Code: Chapter 9. Hazardous substances

Hazard description

Risk assessment

Control strategies

- General provisions
- Elimination or substitution
- Engineering and administrative controls
- Information, instruction and training
- Personal protection (PPE, clothing and respiratory equipment)

Transport, storage and disposal of hazardous substances

Monitoring for hazardous substance in the workplace

Health surveillance

Specific hazards (silica, other dusts, asbestos)

How the Code can help in addressing chemicals risks

- **Raising awareness** on the importance of safety and health and on the need to adopt a preventive culture (campaigns, events, etc)
- Better understanding **obligations, responsibilities, duties and rights** of all parties set out in the Code
- Identifying the **main risks** to safety and health of workers in textiles mills
- Providing guidance for the **development and negotiation of control measures** to address these risks
- Assisting in designing and implementation of **OSH plans of action at the workplace**
- Informing the establishment and operation of **OSH bipartite or tripartite workplace committees**
- Providing inputs for drafting or reviewing of **national and provincial OSH legislation and regulations**
- Designing **capacity building workshops**
- **Monitoring progress and compliance** with international labour standards and national and provincial legislation

ILO Projects – Better Work

- Better Work – a collaboration between the United Nations' **International Labour Organization (ILO)** and the **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**, a member of the World Bank Group – is a comprehensive programme bringing together all levels of the garment industry to improve working conditions, respect of workers' labour rights and boost the competitiveness of apparel and footwear businesses.
- Present in **13 countries across three continents**, Better Work brings together governments, employers' and workers' organizations, global brands, factory owners and workers to improve working conditions in the garment industry and make the sector more competitive.

Better Work OSH Action Plan

- Establish and strengthen OSH management systems and a culture of safety and health in the factory and beyond
- Apply robust technical interventions for salient risks by establishing a network of OSH experts within Better Work and the ILO and externally
- Bolster and support national OSH systems and action plans
- Convene industry stakeholders around data and evidence

ILO Projects at the National Level

Reducing uses and releases of chemicals of concern, including POPs in the textile sector (2023 – 2025)

- In collaboration with UNEP, the project aims to achieve significant reductions in the use, release, and exposures to Chemicals of Concern (COCs) and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in the textile sector in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and Viet Nam.
- ILO activities in Pakistan support risk reduction measures, focusing on improving occupational safety and health in textiles facilities.
- Supports the adoption of new policies, regulations and guidelines on chemicals in line with ILO Convention and Recommendations, in particular the ILO Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170).
- Supports the sharing of knowledge and good practices in particular regarding the promotion of gender equality in the sector.

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Thank you!

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