



Webinar: The Lives of Garment Workers During COVID-19

May 19, 2022



GARMENT
WORKER DIARIES



The Garment Worker Diaries (GWD)

GWD is a **TRUSTED, INDEPENDENT**, and **DIRECT** channel of communication between garment workers and the world.

This public channel is open every week, 52 weeks a year, through interviews with workers conducted by phone by the project's local field team.

UNIQUENESS

1. Data is collected **outside of the factory setting**.
2. Weekly communication helps to **build trust** with the workers.
3. We are **independent**, our only goal is to ensure a wide range of stakeholders have access to the channel to gain insights that can lead to action.

GWD PUBLIC CHANNEL

1. Interviews a representative sample of women workers in the RMG sector.
2. The core (weekly) survey covers basic topics such as work hours, factory payments, health, digital payments, and food security.
3. "Special questions surveys" added by any stakeholders on *any* topic ("special questions surveys").



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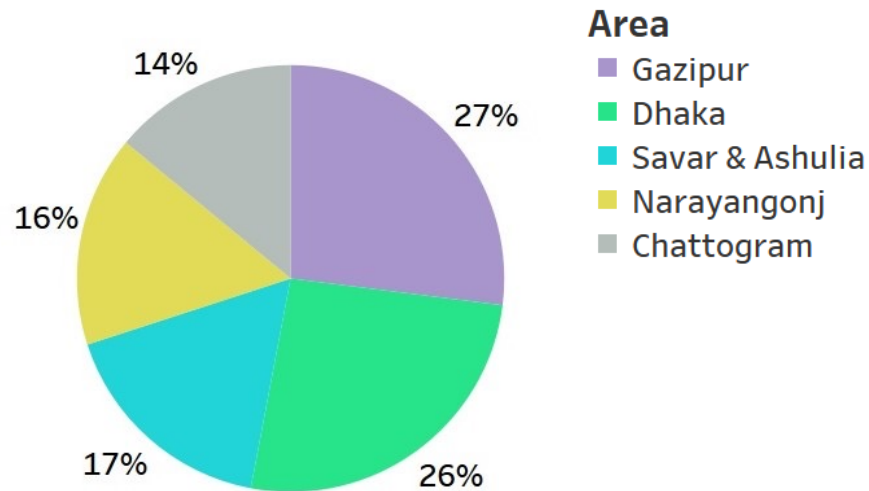
SANEM
RESEARCH | KNOWLEDGE | DEVELOPMENT



Data Collection

SAMPLE

- ✓ Respondents: 1,300 workers, 76% women
- ✓ Field Team Structure: 43 enumerators and 9 supervisors
- ✓ 5 Zones: Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Savar & Ashulia, Chattogram



Area	Number of Groups	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Dhaka	11	333	26
Gazipur	36	360	27
Narayanganj	21	210	16
Savar & Ashulia	21	217	17
Chattogram	18	180	14

Data Collection

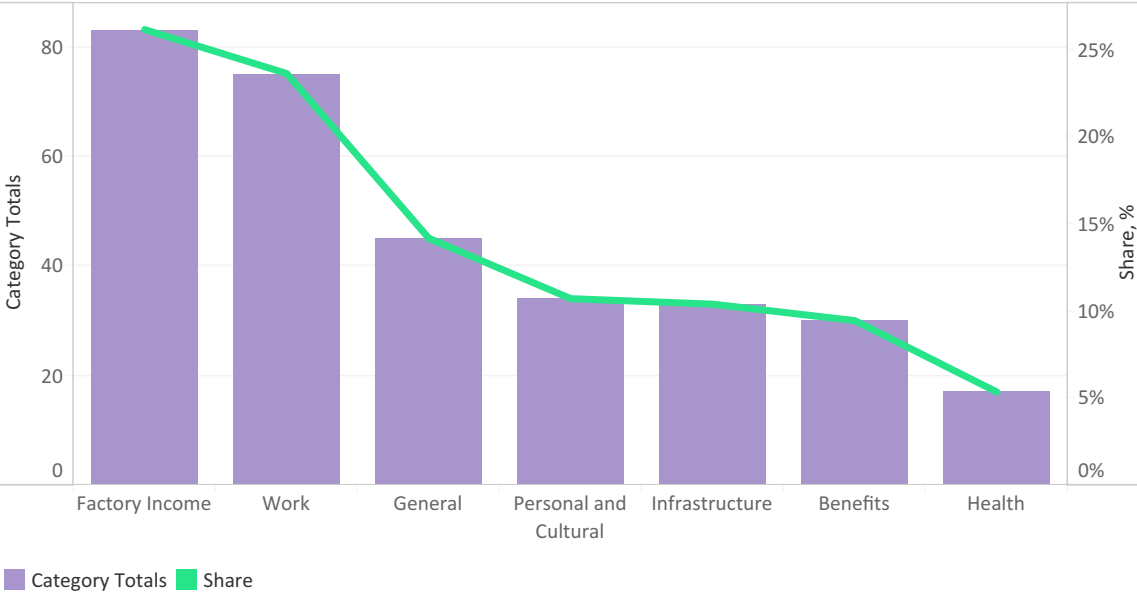
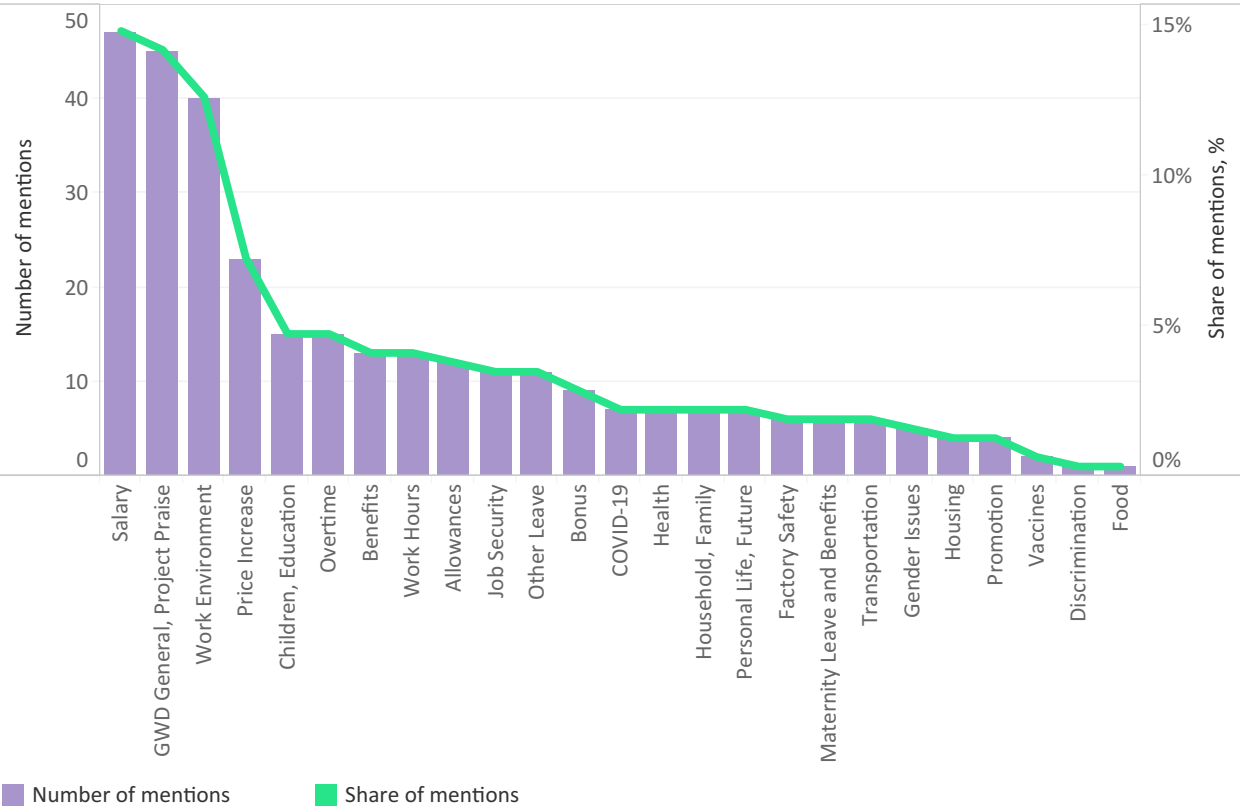
SURVEYS AND PHASES

- ✓ **Phase 2:** July 2018 – January 2020
 - Weekly in-person group visits. Workers had diaries/notebooks, data transferred through ODK Collect App
 - Data focused on income, expenses, financial transactions and work hours
- ✓ **Current Phase:** April 2020 - Present
 - Remote data collection, individual calls with each worker, data collected and transferred through ODK Collect App.
 - Core questions: same every week (income, expenses, financial transactions, work hours, digital payments, food security)
 - Additional questions based on stakeholders' needs



Workers' Concerns

“Are there any topics or questions that you would want us to ask you about?”



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Video Diaries

[The Lives of Garment Workers During COVID-19](#)

Watch all our videos with Garment Workers [here](#).



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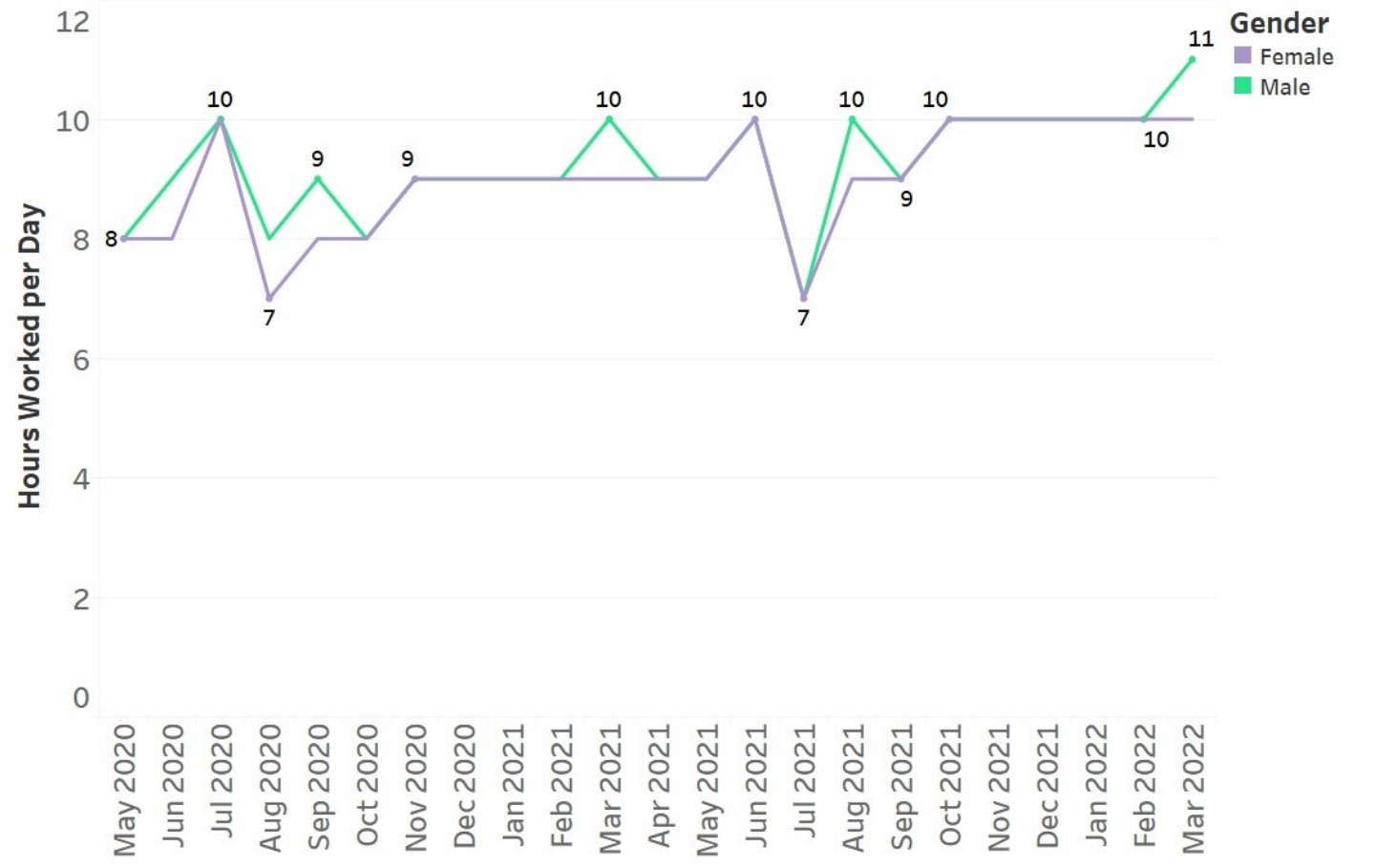
Work, Salary and Prices



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Median Hours Worked per Day

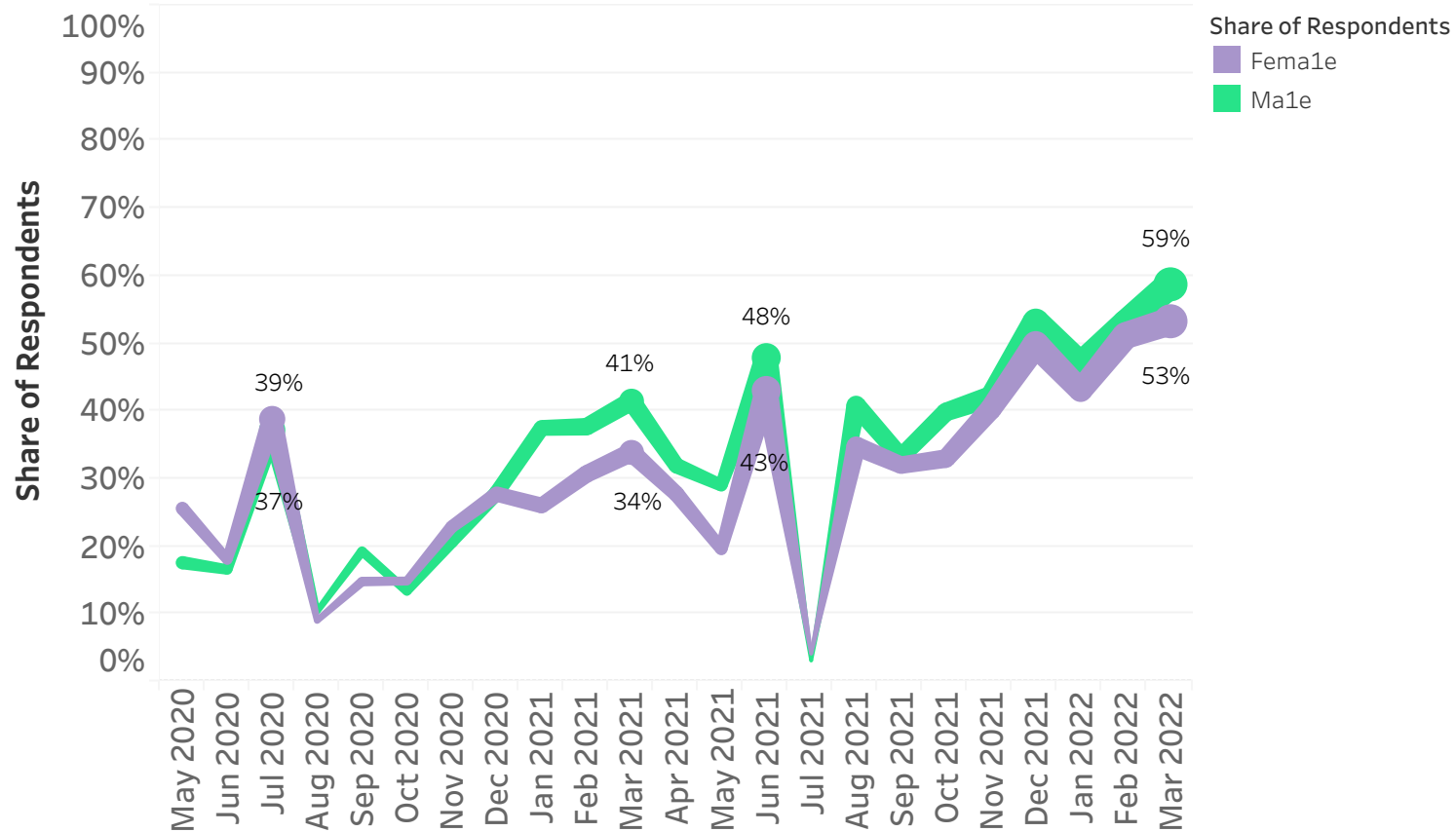


Taking into account the number of work days in a month, holidays, and subtracting out the one hour break that workers are supposed to get each day, we calculated the typical number of hours workers worked each day.

The graph shows the median work hours in a day—the number of hours a typical worker worked in a day.

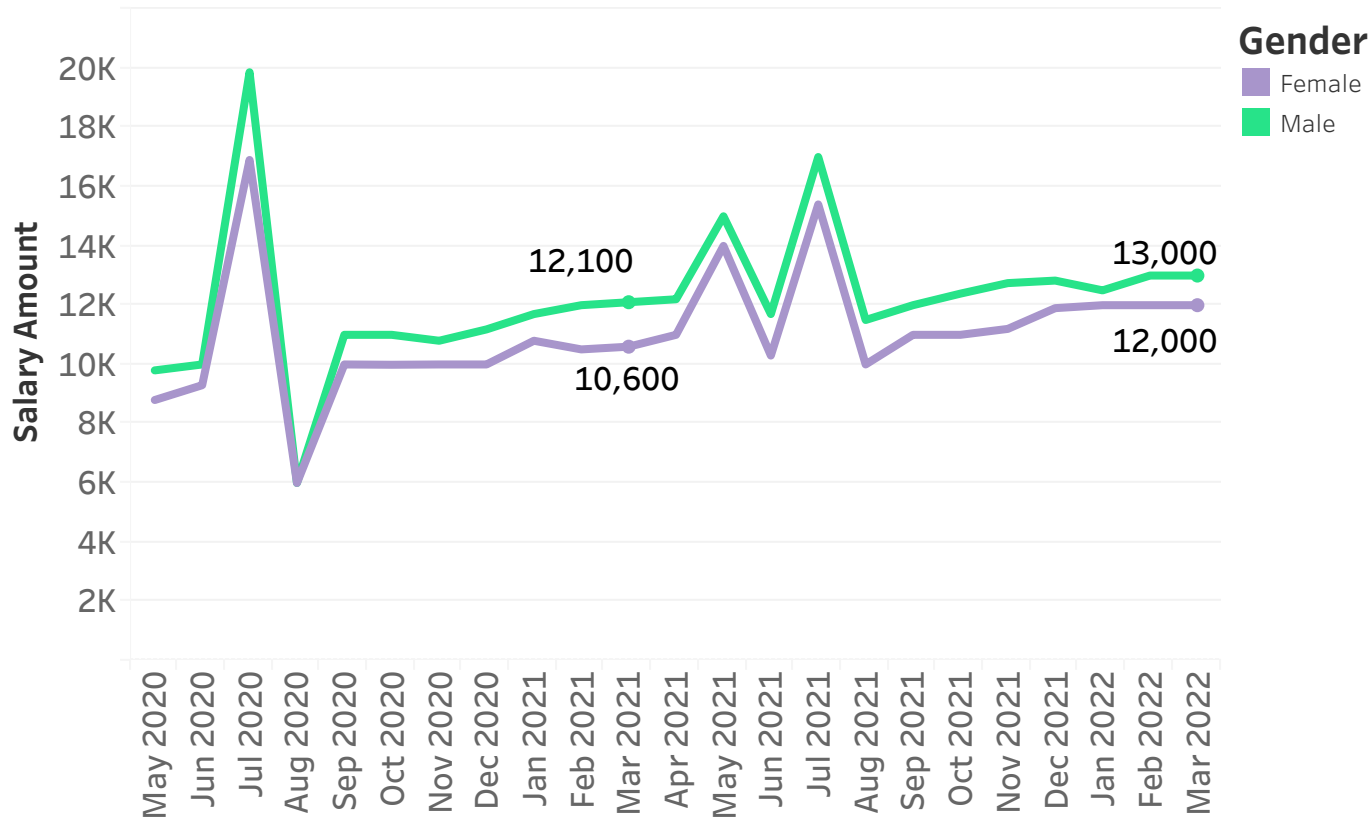
Workers were back to work quickly after the pandemic lockdown in April 2020. The number of hours they have been working has increased ever since. In addition, they worked especially long hours in the run up to Eid al-Adha in July 2020 and again in June 2021.

Excess Work Hours



The long days translated into many workers working **excess hours**, which are any hours worked during the day that exceed the legal limit of 10 hours a day. Since the pandemic lockdown in April 2020 there has been a steady increase in the share of workers working over 10 hours a day. Again, there were peaks in the month before Eid al-Adha in July 2020 and June 2021.

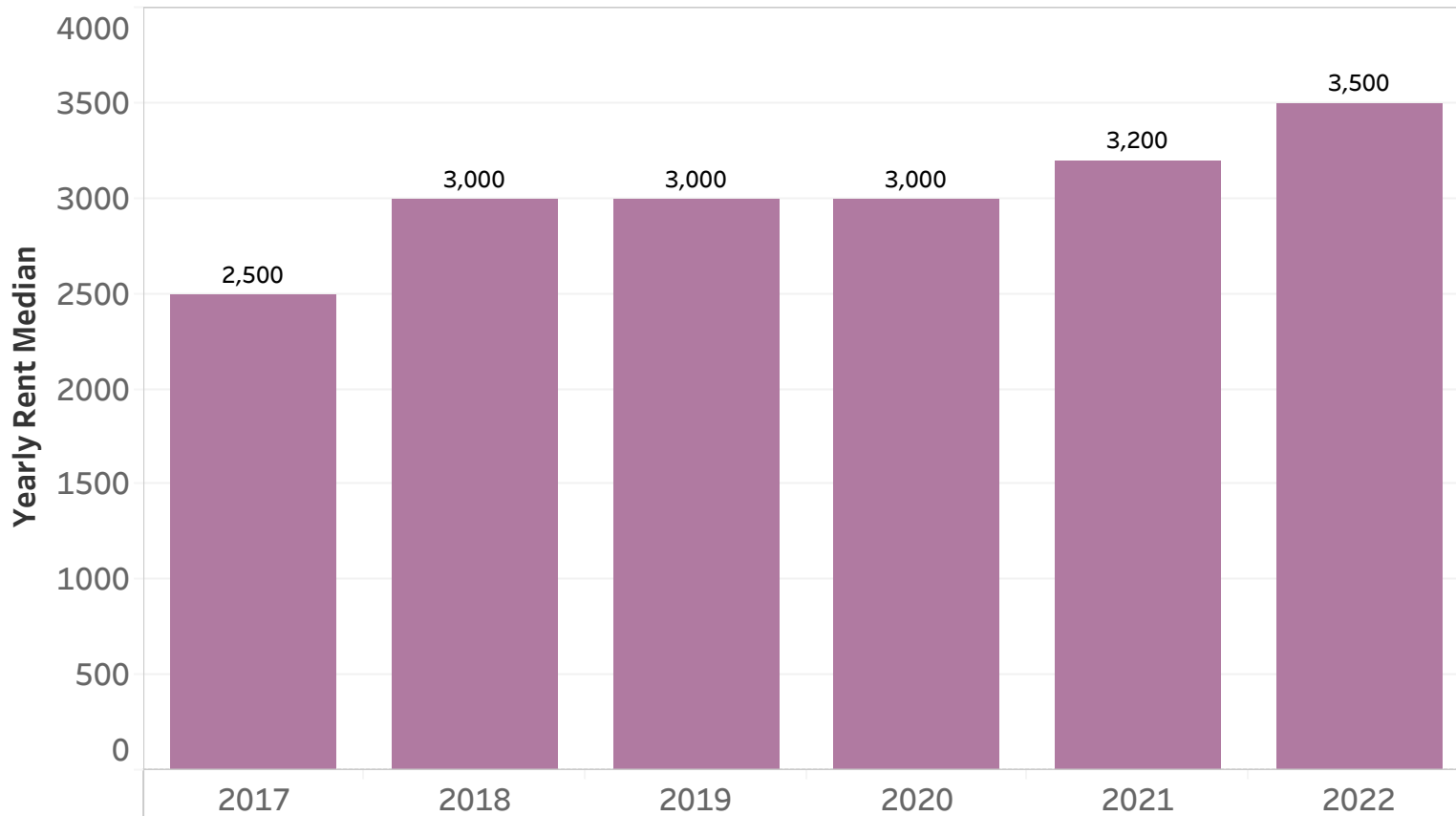
Median Salary per Month



Salaries (including overtime but NOT bonuses) have increased since the pandemic lockdown in April 2020, but this is largely due to the increase in the number of hours worked each month.

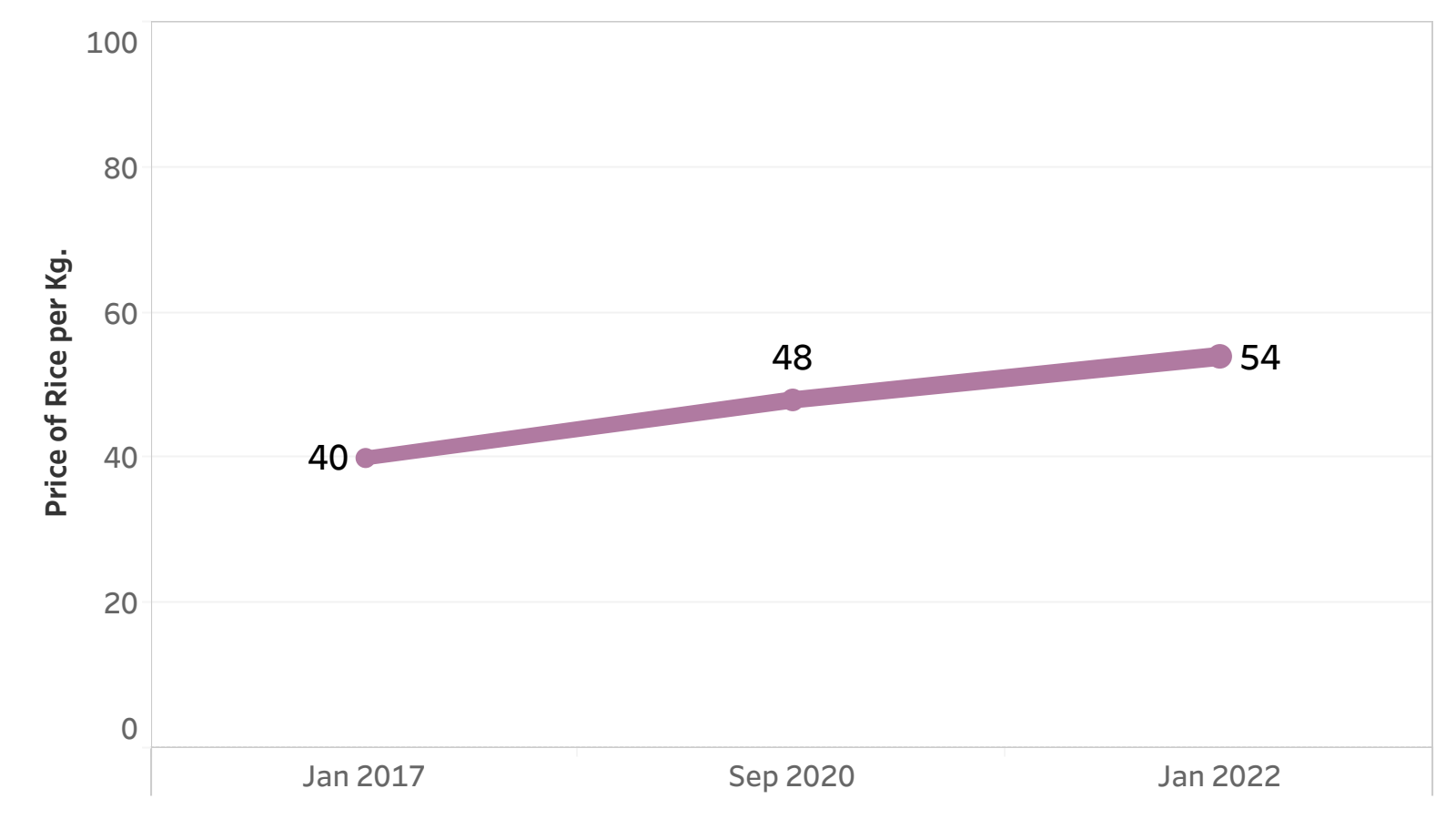
The spike in salaries in July 2020 is due to the fact that Eid al-Adha fell at the end of the month that year and workers were given a salary advance for work in August that month. That also explains the low salary in August 2020. There were smaller spikes in May and July 2021 for Eids in those months, with fewer workers asking for cash advances in July 2021 because Eid fell in the middle of the month that year.

Median Rent per Year



Rent payments remained steady at Tk. 3,000 from April 2020 until November 2020. In December 2020 the typical rent payment increased to Tk. 3,100 and has been generally on the rise ever since. As of March 2022, the typical monthly rent payment made by a garment worker was Tk. 3,500, representing a 17% increase over a period of two years.

Rice Price per kg.



Periodically, we ask workers about their spending on food. We have data from 2017, 2020, and 2022 on workers' rice purchases—what they paid and what quantity. That allowed us to calculate the price of rice per kg. Between September 2020 and January 2022, rice increased in price by 12.5%.

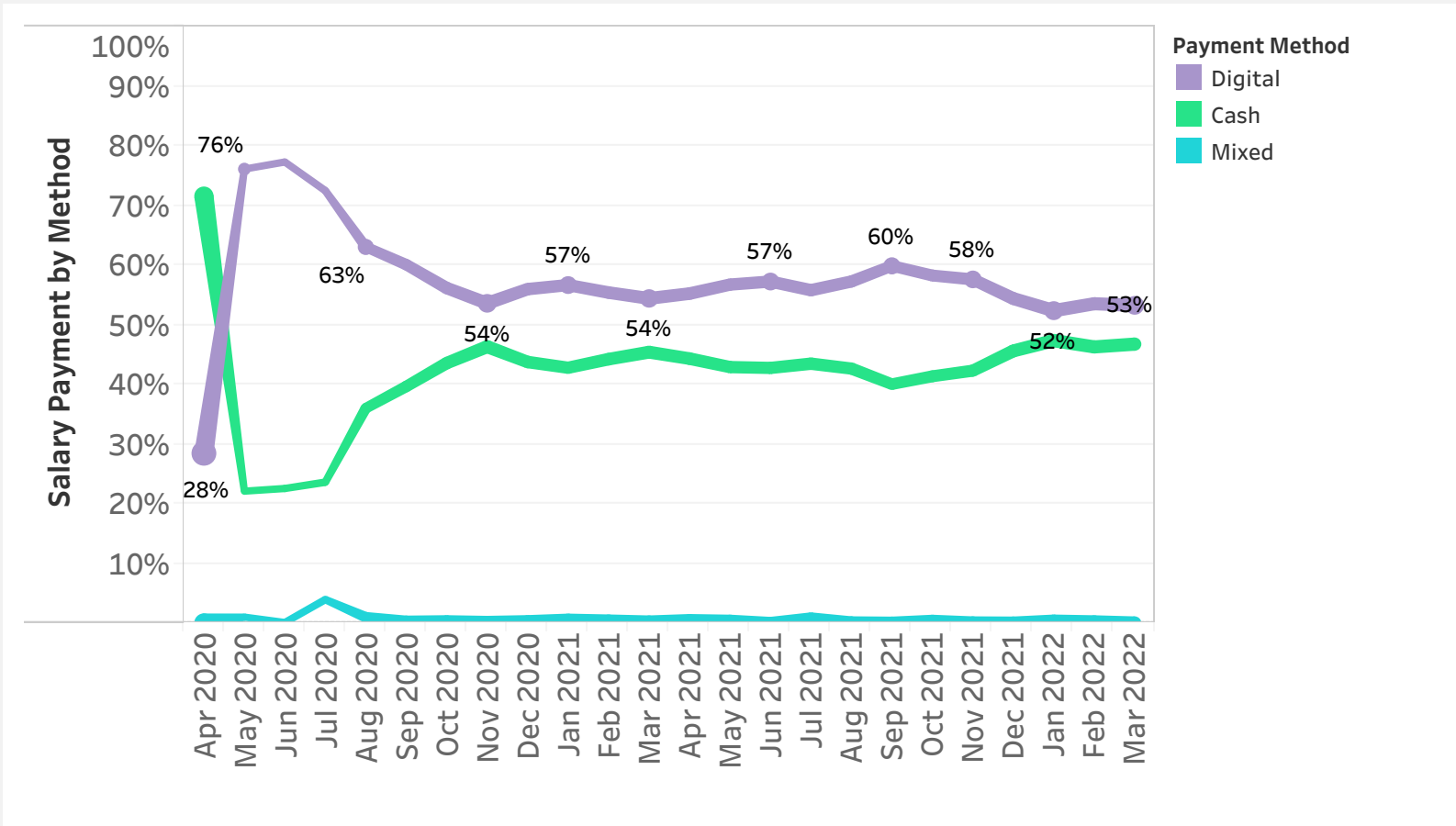
Government Programs



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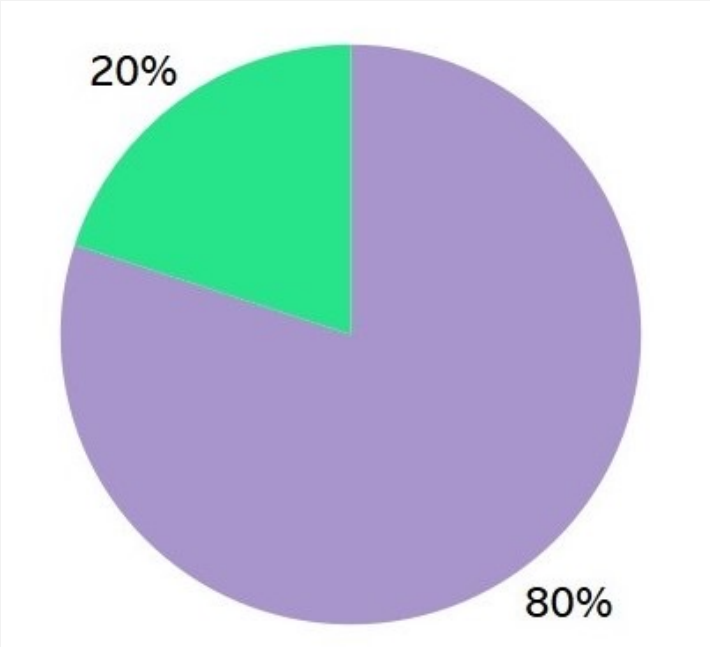
Digitization of Salaries



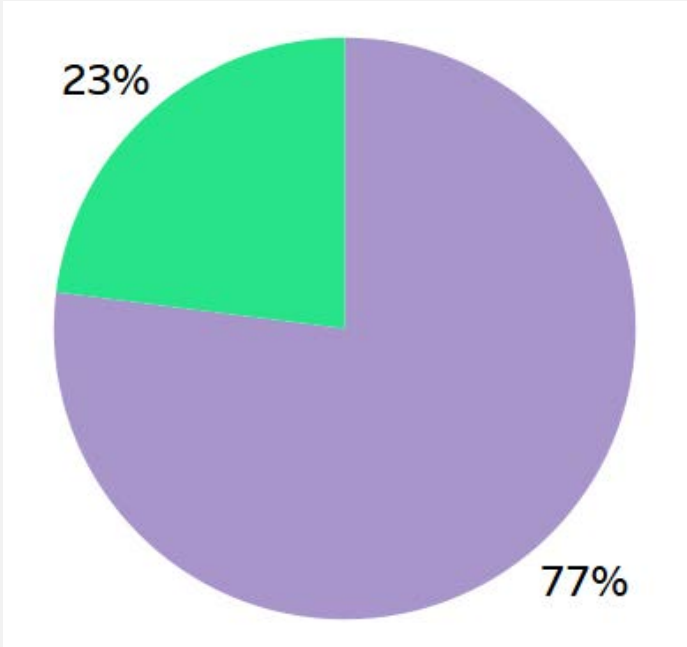
In April 2020 the Government introduced a wage support program for the RMG sector to cover a portion of the monthly wages of workers. To be eligible for this support program, a factory had to open bank or mobile money accounts for all its workers and make the list of workers and account information available to the government, which then initiated deposits directly into the workers' accounts. The program ran for 3 months and stimulated a massive digitization of wages in the RMG sector—about 2 million accounts were opened. Since the end of the program many factories have reverted to paying their workers in cash

COVID-19 Vaccination Rates

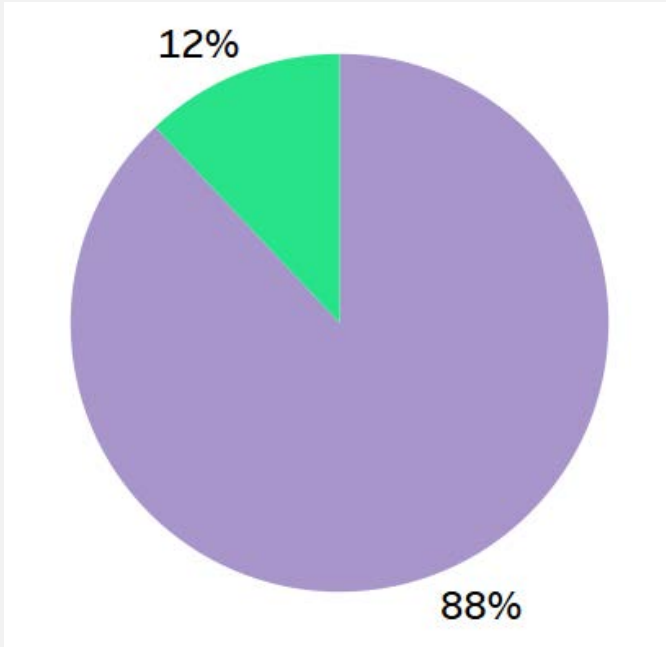
TOTAL WORKERS



FEMALE WORKERS



MALE WORKERS

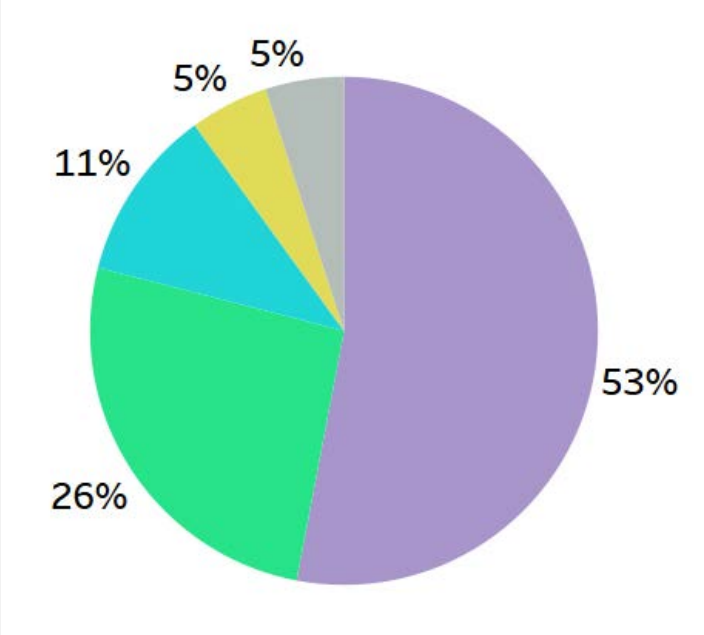


COVID Vaccine
■ Yes
■ No

80% of the respondents have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, the share of female respondents who have received at least one dose of the vaccine is 77% while the share of the male respondents is 88%.

Education During COVID-19

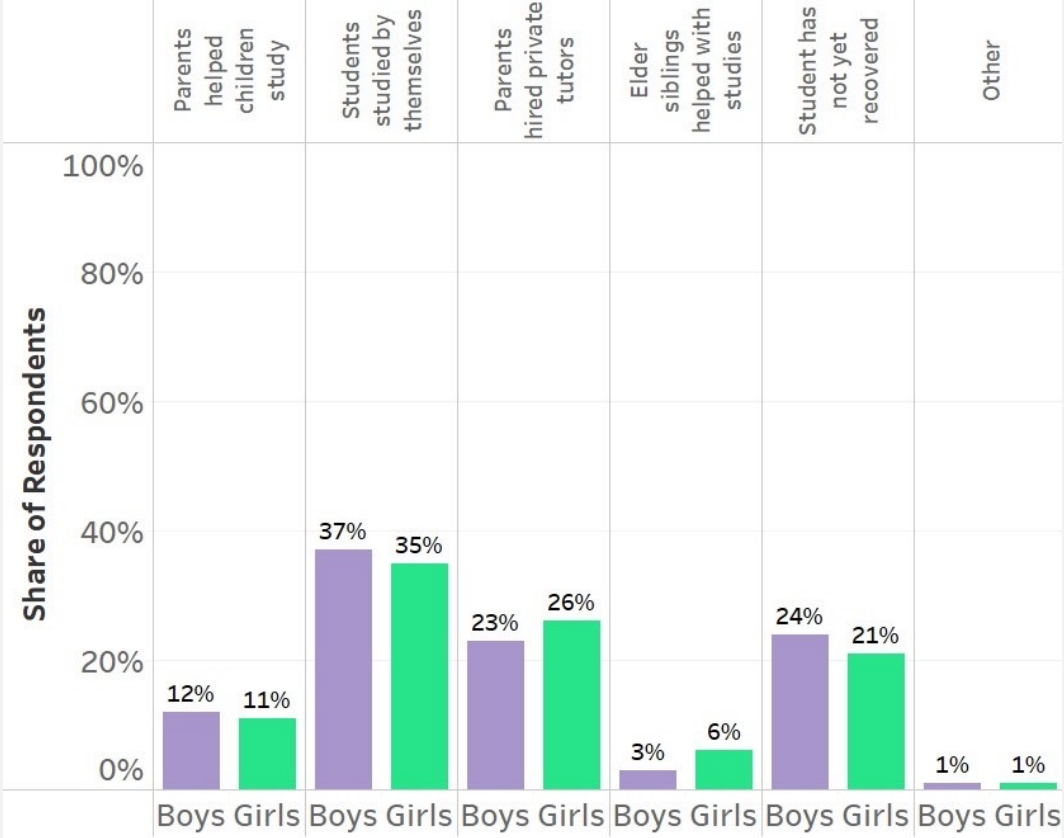
ONLINE EDUCATION



Handling Online Education

- No Online Classes Offered at all
- Online Classes Offered but not frequently
- Online Classes Offered
- Don't Know
- Not Applicable

RECOVERY FROM LEARNING SETBACKS



Major Takeaways

- Satisfactory progress with vaccination (first dose), but not enough data to assess the status of the second dose.
- Education of children suffered during COVID-19 due to lack of access to the infrastructure supporting online education.
 - Loss of learning needs careful planning and additional efforts by schools/relevant authority - BGMEA may coordinate this effort.
- Decline in the expansion of digital payment is a concern. This reversing trend contradicts the GOB stance on digitization.
 - We are taking a deeper look at this
- With rising cost of living - even with higher income (supported with the extra normal work) - the purchasing power (PP) of RGM workers are declining.
 - What support can government and the private sector provide?
- Expansion of the supply capacity to meet additional demands has been compelling the existing workers to work extra hours. This is not sustainable.
 - What actions is BGMEA taking?
- Recent research in Vietnam and Indonesia suggest that provision of social security programmes for workers increases labour productivity and firm profits.
 - We believe this issue needs careful attention, planning and implementation.

CONTACT US

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SOCIAL MEDIA

-  Microfinance Opportunities
-  @mfo_workerdiaries
-  @mfopps

WORKER VOICES

Meet Shila: A Garment Worker Diaries Interview

