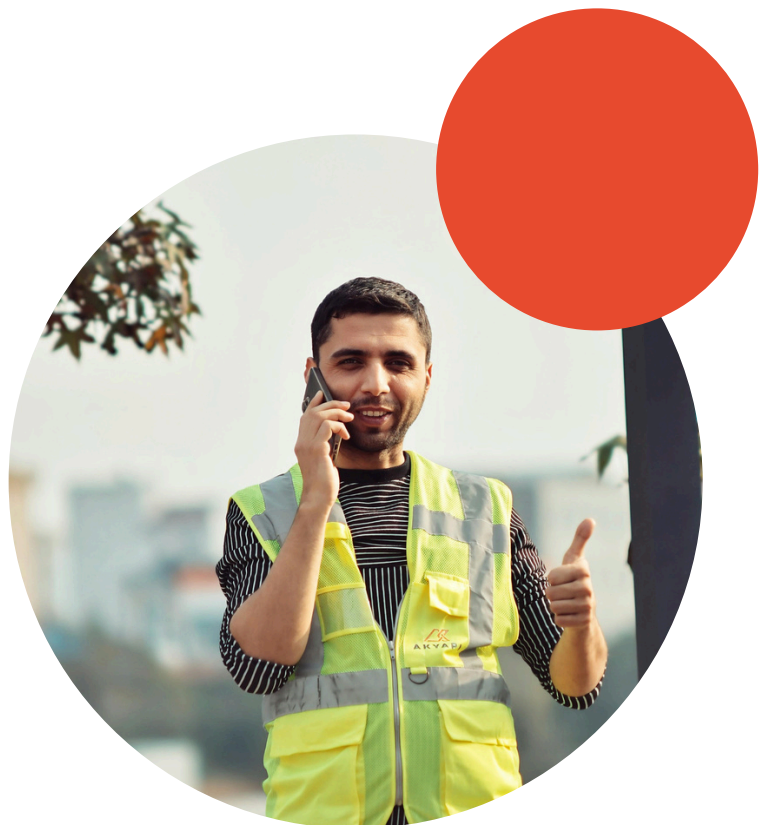


Worker Helpline

INSIGHTS REPORT

Published in 2026





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Introduction

This Worker Helpline Insights report shares and analyses data gathered through the Helpline service in 2025. The ESCP Worker Helpline offers free, confidential counselling and guidance to help employees manage work-related issues impacting both their working and personal lives. It also acts as a confidential grievance mechanism, enabling workers to raise any concerns regarding their employment, workplace safety or well-being for further investigation.

Launched in 2010, it has been available to more than 10 million people. The Helpline serves multiple industries and sectors, including apparel, printing & packaging, construction, footwear, plastics, toys, electronics, stationary, chemicals and paint production facilities. The Helpline is currently deployed in China & Vietnam, serving around 600 facilities; this report shares insights from these facilities in 2025 only.

All-year-round, our team of independent qualified professionals, with legal, HR, and counselling backgrounds, provide expert advice on employment matters – such as hours, wages, labor contracts, dismissal and resignation processes, social health insurance, pension plans, and paid leave – as well as relationships, homesickness, and health and hygiene issues.




1,060
Cases Handled
in 2025



Consolidated Data

The Helpline serves multiple industries and sectors, including apparel, printing & packaging, construction, footwear, plastics, toys, electronics, stationary, chemicals and paint production facilities.

The Helpline is currently deployed in China & Vietnam, serving around 600 facilities; this section shares insights from these facilities in 2025.

In 2025, the Helpline remediated 1,060 cases in total. Cases are investigated, where required, and only closed at the satisfaction of the caller. Of these cases, 42 were emails and 1,018 were phone calls.

In addition, over 50% of calls were made to the Helpline between March and July, in line with peak production periods of many manufacturing sites. Over 62% of workers in ESCP-certified factories are female. Helpline data from 2025 shows 73% male and 27% female callers – showing a much higher proportion of males to females using the service.

Cases Handled

1,060

Calls in Peak Period:
March – July

52%











Minutes Spoken:

5,697

Countries Covered:



Top 10 Reasons for Calling the Helpline in 2025:

1. Exploratory Calls Calls to build trust, before a worker is comfortable enough to confide	 14.9%	6. Wages Calculation Calls to support workers understanding their payslip and hours worked	 6.05%
2. Resignation Calls Calls to understand the resignation process and air grievances experienced during resignation	 13.5%	7. Termination Calls to understand why a contract was terminated, if it was lawful and their rights	 5.21%
3. Helpline Learning Calls to build an understanding of how the Helpline works, what it covers and service scope	 8.65%	8. Leave Arrangements Calls to understand holiday, paternity and other forms of leave, pay and return to work plans	 5.11%
4. Personal Issues Calls to support personal issues including providing company, comfort and advice	 7.92%	9. Bonus/Allowance Calls to understand bonus pay, overtime pay and allowances	 5.01%
5. Factory rules & policies Calls to understand the rules in the workplace and if a grievance was in line with factory policy	 6.15%	10. Working Hours Calls to support workers in understanding legal working hours & requirements	 4.90%



Consolidated Data

The ESCP Worker Helpline is an effective grievance mechanism which provides access to remedy, with clear procedures and protocols to correct, address, and prevent issues.

In 2025, the Helpline managed over 1,060 cases, while over 20% of these cases were trust-building or related to learning more about the service, over 800 of these cases required our support on issues affecting the lives of workers. Out of these 800, 11 were escalated and passed to the technical team for further investigation and remediation.

What triggers escalation?

A case is escalated when our expert team identify a critical issue requiring in-person investigation and remediation by our team. This can include indications of child labor, forced overtime, imprisonment or discrimination & harassment, among other factors.

In 2025, escalated cases related to excessive working hours, delayed payments, injury compensation, audit process concerns and discrimination & harassment. All of these cases were investigated and remediated to the satisfaction of the caller.

Over 20,000 Helpline Cards were distributed to workers during the year; more than 95% of workers shared that the helpline card was the primary way they were first aware of the service.

Since 2010, over 1.8 million helpline cards have been distributed to workers. We require every worker to be given a Helpline Card to ensure they know how to contact us. In addition to Helpline Cards, in 2025, 2% of workers said they became aware of the service through word of mouth, a further 2% through physical posters onsite and <1% through the ESCP website.

The following pages share insights based on location and industry.

Caller Demographics:



Male

73%



Female

27%

Helpline Cards Distributed:

21,500

Factories Covered:

662



**ethical
supply chain
program**
FOUNDED BY ICTI



Worker Helpline:

4001-583580



China domestic long-distance fee exempt

• **Operating hours: 9am – 9pm every day**
(except the 7 days holiday announced by the State Council of the People's Republic of China for Chinese New Year)

• If you call outside of our operating hours you can leave a voicemail and we will call you back

• You can also email the Worker Helpline:
helpline@ethicalsupplychain.org





Insights By Region – China

The Worker Helpline is a confidential service available all-year-round in local language and accessible through multiple channels including telephone call and email.

In 2025, over one third of calls were made to the Helpline between March and May. The Helpline remediated 763 cases in China from 746 calls and 17 emails; 2.2% of Helpline cases were received via email channels indicating a preference for personal connection over the phone.

This section shares Helpline insights from 485 certified factories in China in 2025.

Calls Handled:

746

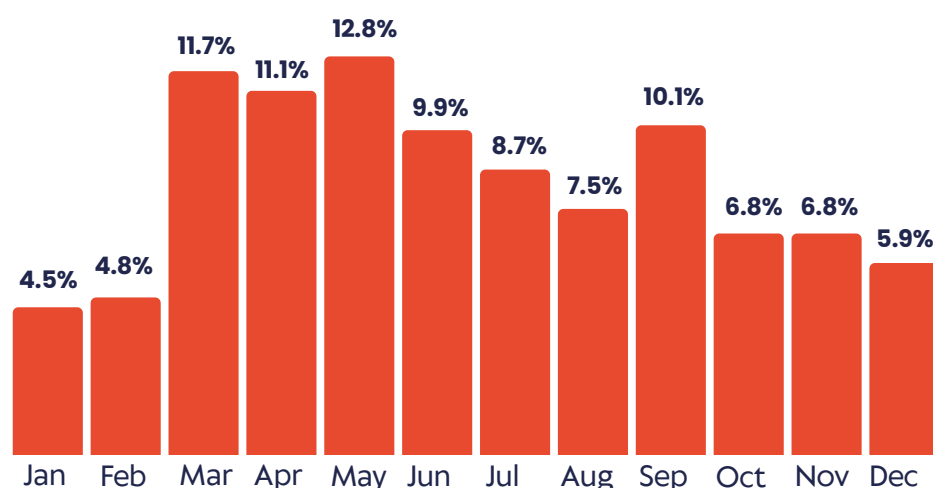
Email Contact:

>2%

Factories Covered:

485

Cases per Month – China:



Cases per Month Insights

Many factories suspend operations over the Lunar New Year Holidays. In 2025, this was late January - mid February

A steady number of calls throughout the year is expected and reflective of an effective, trusted mechanism, spikes can indicate issues in a factory or reflective of peak production periods in factories.

Top 10 Reasons for Contacting the Helpline – China:

1. Resignation Calls Calls to understand the resignation process and air grievances experienced during resignation	16.1%	6. Leave Arrangements Calls to understand holiday, paternity and other forms of leave, pay and return to work plans	6.47%
2. Helpline Learning Calls to build an understanding of how the Helpline works, what it covers and service scope	12.2%	7. Working Hours Calls to understand legal working hours, overtime structure and other related issues	6.47%
3. Factory rules & policies Calls to understand the rules in the workplace and if a grievance was in line with factory policy	7.82%	8. Personal Issues Calls to support personal issues including providing company, comfort and advice	5.26%
4. Exploratory Calls Calls to build trust, before a worker is comfortable enough to confide	7.82%	9. Bonus/Allowance Calls to understand bonus pay, overtime pay and allowances	4.51%
5. Wages Calculation Calls to support workers understanding their payslip and hours worked	7.22%	10. Social Security Calls to support workers with accessing social security, especially migrant workers	4.36%



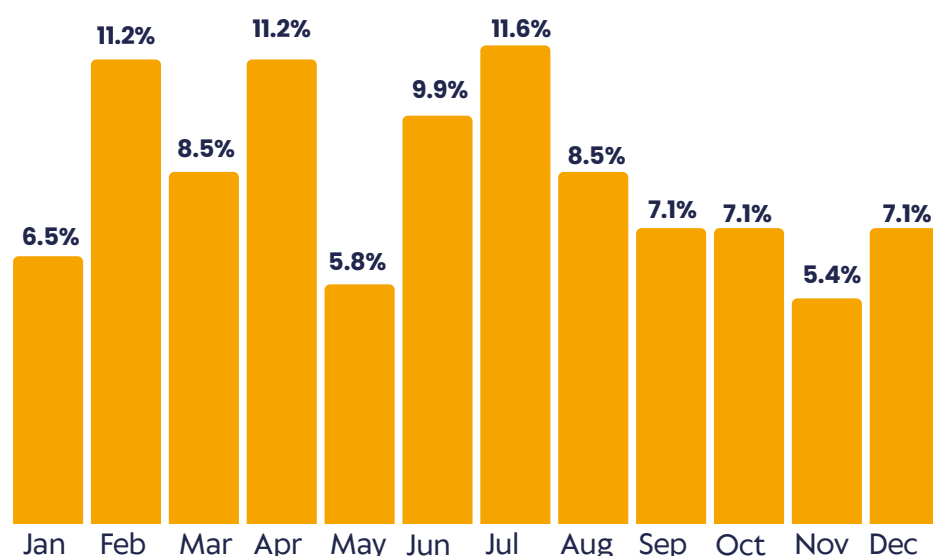
Insights By Region – Vietnam

The Worker Helpline expanded to Vietnam in 2021 to support the growing diversification of supply chains and ensure workers have access to an effective grievance channel in developing markets.

In 2025, over one third of calls were made to the Helpline in February, April & July. The Helpline received 297 cases in Vietnam in 2025, of these cases 272 were received via calls and 25 emails, representing 8.4% of all enquiries; proportionally much higher than our China line. Each enquiry is recorded a case, investigated where required and only closed at the satisfaction of the caller.

This section shares Helpline insights from 59 factories in Vietnam.

Cases per Month – Vietnam:



Calls Handled:

272

Email Contact:

8.4%

Factories Covered:

59

5-Year-Insights: Termination

In 2021, Termination represented only 2.7% of total cases, this has steadily increased and in 2025, represented over 7.4% of cases.

Due to an increasingly unstable business environment, many factories are receiving a decline in orders, and subsequently, may not renew worker contracts. The increasing number of cases, represents workers seeking information on whether their factories have the right not to renew their contracts.

Our team educated all concerned parties—factories and workers—on their rights in respect to Termination.

Top 10 Reasons for Contacting the Helpline – Vietnam:

1. Exploratory Calls Calls to build trust, before a worker is comfortable enough to confide	 30.6%	6. Social Security Calls to support workers with accessing social security, especially migrant workers	 3.70%
2. Personal Issues Calls to support personal issues including providing company, comfort and advice	 14.1%	7. Behaviour of Leaders Calls to understand behaviour of leaders, air grievances around treatment at work	 3.70%
3. Resignation Calls Calls to understand the resignation process and air grievances experienced during resignation	 7.41%	8. Wages Calculation Calls to support workers understanding their payslip and hours worked	 3.37%
4. Termination Calls to understand why a contract was terminated, if it was lawful and their rights	 7.41%	9. Job Reallocation Calls to understand a department move and their rights in relation to reallocation	 3.03%
5. Bonus/Allowance Calls to understand bonus pay, overtime pay and allowances	 6.40%	10. Discrimination/Harassment Calls to understand inappropriate behaviour, air grievances around harassment & discrimination	 2.69%



Insights By Industry

The ESCP Worker Helpline is adopted across a number of different industries including apparel, printing & packaging, construction, footwear, plastics, toys, electronics, stationary, chemicals and paint production facilities.

In addition, the service is available as a standalone service, to non-ESCP certified facilities. In 2025, we launched 5 new helplines across many sectors supporting 94 cases. This section of the report shares insights from our Construction & Apparel industry lines in 2025. In line with the construction timelines, data was only collected from January - August.

Insights from the Apparel Industry:

In 2025, ESCP launched two new helplines for the apparel sector, as well as partnering with the Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP) to launch a co-branded helpline at 20 apparel factories across Southeast Asia.

More than 70% of workers in the apparel sector are female. Consolidated data from these lines identified more concerns about family relationships & children's education than across our helplines in other sectors. Many of these cases represented work-life balance challenges facing many workers; often choosing between career progression and childcare needs.

The Apparel sector helplines identified risks in family relationships, living environments, social security, stress/counselling needs and maternity protection. These risks not only inform program development and training but can represent the root cause of supply chain issues such as worker shortages and retention.

Insights from the Construction Industry:

In 2025, ESCP launched two new helplines for the construction sector. More than 60% of calls related to delayed payment, which is a common, and significant, risk in the sector, due to the high prevalence of sub-contracting.

Consolidated data from the Helpline also identified risks in health & safety. All risks were investigated and included access to toilets, washroom standards, and food hygiene.

Cases Handled:

94

Countries Covered:



Apparel – Top 3 Reasons for Calling in 2025:

- 1. Exploratory Calls**  28%
- 2. Family Relationships**  12%
- 3. Social Security**  10%

Construction – Top Reasons for Calling in 2025:

- 1. Delayed Payment**  60%
- 2. Health & Safety**  40%



Contact us

info@ethicalsupplychain.org

Learn more

workerhelpline.org