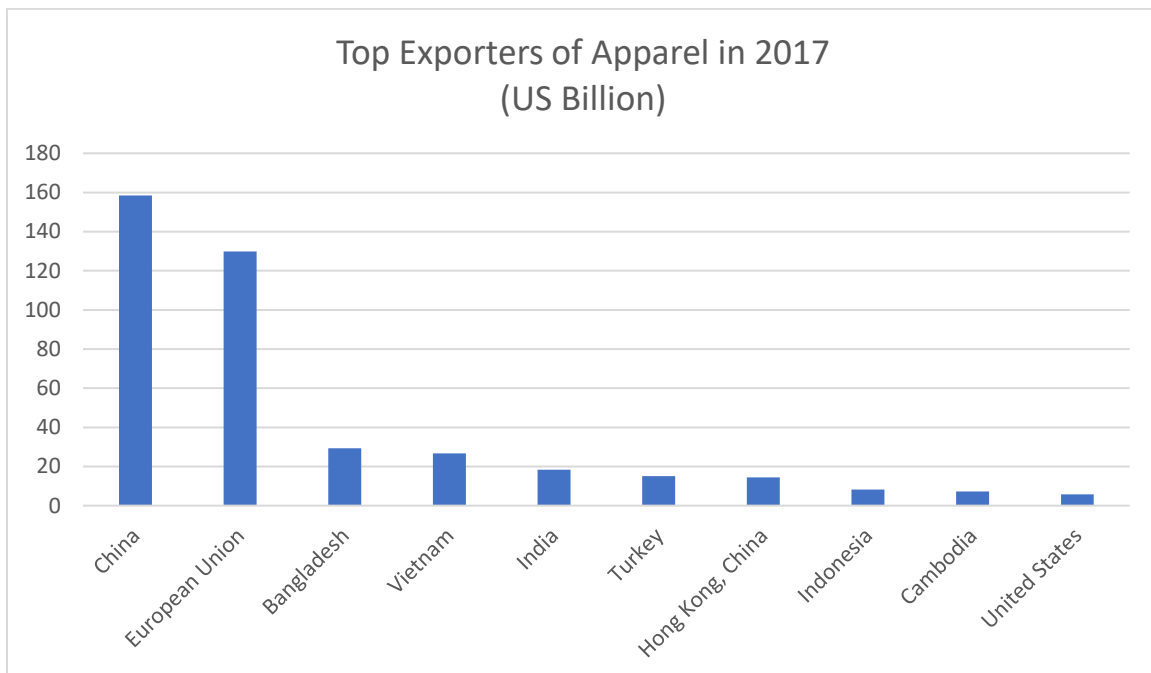


Earning a Day's Wage in the Apparel Industry

The global apparel manufacturing industry is worth over \$785 billion and is expected to grow in the coming years. Globally, there are roughly 60 million people employed in the industry, but not everyone receives the same type of wages. There are limited job opportunities for workers in developing countries (those who are trying to advance economically and socially) so the cost of labor is much cheaper compared to the United States and other advanced countries. In some of the countries, individuals may have a difficult time finding another job if it weren't for the apparel industry. Below are the top exporters of apparel worldwide.



The United States imports most apparel products from China, followed by Vietnam, Bangladesh, and India. Many of these countries significantly increased their apparel production capabilities during the early part of the 21st century. India, Russia, and Mexico are increasing their skilled workforce in the footwear and leather industries.

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International Labour Organization

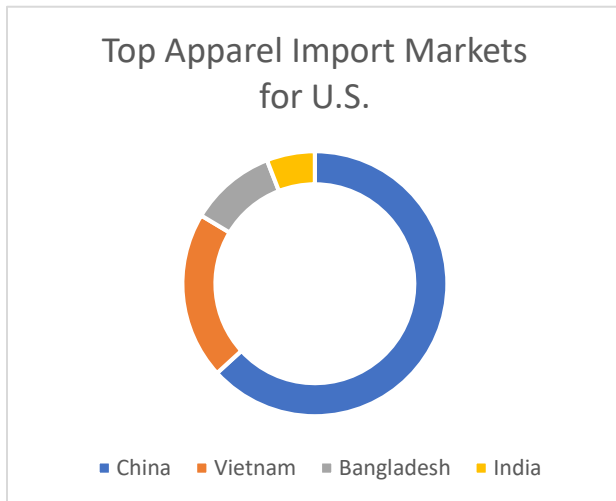
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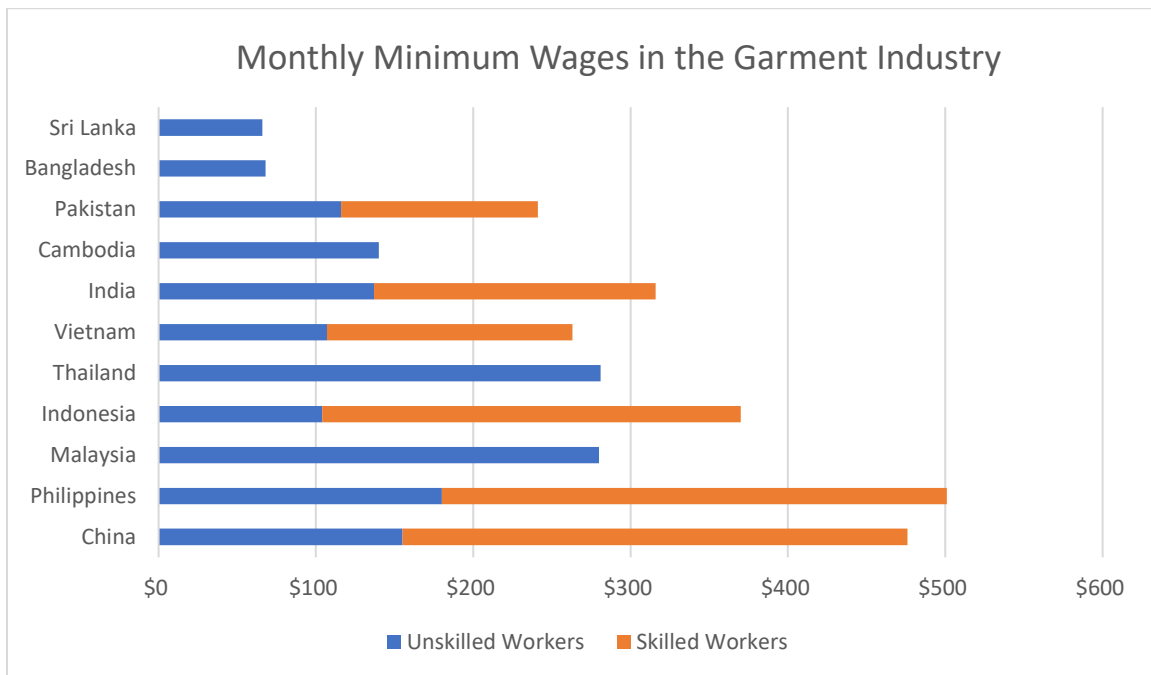
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The United States has a federal minimum wage to ensure workers are not paid less than **\$7.25 per hour**. Some states establish their own minimum wage, but it cannot be lower than the federal mandated amount. Companies can pay workers higher amounts if the job requires higher level skills. However, this is not true for other parts of the world. Bangladesh is the third top exporter globally of apparel products. There are more than 3.5 million people in Bangladesh employed by the apparel industry. Most earn the equivalent of **\$64 per month** in U.S. dollars which is approximately **\$.62 cents per hour**. On average, factory workers

work more than 60 hours per week and 6 days per week.

Even when a country has national minimum wage laws, compliance with the law is often low in the apparel sector. Some companies postpone payments to employees or withhold overtime pay. On average, global wages in the apparel industry are 35% lower than the average manufacturing in other industries or sectors. Below is a chart of monthly minimum wages globally for the garment industry.



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World Trade Organization

Workers in developing countries, such as Bangladesh, have been taking a stand to the long hours and unsafe working conditions. Governments in a few of the countries have increased minimum wages for factory workers, but it is still difficult for workers to live.

Consumers across the world are accustomed to finding a good bargain, especially when it comes to clothing. So as labor costs are increasing, companies are looking for ways to keep their overall costs low. China has started using robots in some of the garment manufacturing businesses to reduce the amount of labor needed and to keep costs lower. Robots have a high cost when they are first purchased but become much cheaper than workers. China is currently the largest user of industrial robots in the world, followed by Japan.

There are no easy answers to solving issues related to the apparel industry. However, it's important to know that there are hidden costs to your garments that go beyond the price tag – that of extremely low wages in developing countries and environmental concerns from the factories.

Business, CNN. "Robots Are Taking over China's Factory Floors." *YouTube*, YouTube, 26 Oct. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSAso-VTqmc%2C.

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