When COVID-19 hit in 2020, many garment brands cancelled orders or refused to pay in full. Factory owners were therefore unable to pay workers their full wages during lockdowns and sick leave and millions of garment workers were paid less than their already poverty-level wages. Many who lost their jobs were left without the money owed to them, including bonuses and severance pay that they were legally entitled to.

**CLEAN CLOTHES CAMPAIGN ESTIMATES THAT:**

For the first three months of the pandemic alone, garment workers are owed between US$3.19 and $5.78 billion in wages (also known as the wage gap). We estimate that garment workers worldwide are owed a massive $11.85 billion for the period March 2020-March 2021.

**Wage gap estimates for March-May 2020**

- **IN BANGLADESH:** US $501 million
- **IN CAMBODIA:** US $123.59 million
- **IN INDIA:** US $259.72 million
- **IN INDONESIA:** US $405.36 million
- **IN SRI LANKA:** US $24.05 million

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8. Still Un(der)Paid research report by Clean Clothes Campaign (July 2021)
9. Un(der)paid in the pandemic research report by Clean Clothes Campaign (August 2020)
In terms of severance theft, Worker Rights Consortium estimates that total severance theft across the supply chains of global brands and retailers is between $500 to $850 million for the first year of the pandemic alone.\(^{10}\)

The behaviour of brands and their business decisions plays a central role in creating this devastating situation for garment workers.

A survey in March 2020 among Bangladeshi factory owners showed that 98.1% of brands refused to contribute to the cost of paying partial wages\(^{11}\) (as required by law) to furloughed workers, and 97.3% of brands refused to contribute to the severance pay expenses of dismissed workers. Many brands have returned to making large profits, while garment workers are still in desperate situations, owed wages, bonuses or severance pay.