

# Tens of thousands of women unsafe in men's safety equipment



Ten of thousands of women across the UK feel unsafe, embarrassed and scared at work because they are forced to wear Personal Protective Equipment designed for men's bodies.

A survey of hundreds of GMB members shows more than 70 per cent suffer from ill-fitting PPE:

- 24 per cent said they felt unsafe to work
- 18 per cent said they couldn't carry out their job



- 58 per cent said they were uncomfortable
- 22 per cent said they felt embarrassed
- 4 per cent said they felt scared.

One woman custody officer said her 'low rise pants that don't work for a lot of women's body shapes' led to 'prisoners making sexual comments about being able to see my underwear'.

Another woman textile workers said 'the problem is not just discomfort; it is a safety violation that increases risk. Oversized gloves create an entanglement hazard with machinery, and respirators that don't seal properly expose me to hazardous wood dust and chemicals, threatening my long-term health'.

GMB is urging Ministers to update health and safety laws to ensure all workers are issued properly fitting PPE.

Meanwhile the union encourages all bosses to adopt the [groundbreaking new British Standard on inclusive protective equipment](#) [1].

**Vanessa Roberts, British Gas Worker, said:**

"For years PPE for women has been men's clothing, shrunk and died pink, they call it 'shrink and pink', which is frankly ridiculous.

"We need PPE that is truly inclusive, no matter your size, shape, gender, disability.

"With GMB's campaign and the new British Standard, hopefully we can have PPE that keeps us safe and make people feel like they matter in their workplace.

**Martina Vrajitoru, Hinkley Point worker, said:**

"I've seen first hand how poorly fitting PPE can affect safety, confidence and even how valued people feel at work.

"Inclusive protective gear isn't just about equipment — it's about recognising every worker's worth.

"I hope the new BSI guidelines will finally bring the change so many of us have been waiting for."



## Press office

07958 156846

[press.office@gmb.org.uk](mailto:press.office@gmb.org.uk)

## Member requiring help?

Click to contact your local GMB Region

[info@gmb.org.uk](mailto:info@gmb.org.uk)

