

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Prada, Kering Group severely need to reassess forced-labor practices: report

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*Allison Williams in Prada's Past Forward, directed by David O. Russell*

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By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Italian fashion house Prada and French conglomerate Kering Group are among the luxury brands at the bottom rankings of businesses and forced-labor practices.

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A new report from KnowTheChain released rankings of footwear and apparel brands and forced labor related to their businesses based on seven pillars of commitment and governance, traceability and risk assessment, purchasing practices, recruitment, worker voice and monitoring and lastly, remedy. Luxury manufacturers were among the worst compared to fast-fashion brands.

"Despite international and brand attention on worker issues for more than twenty years, many retailers have not addressed the deep seeded causes of worker abuse in their supply chains," said Killian Moote, director of [KnowTheChain](#).

"Hopefully this benchmark will help them recognize that they need to do better by the people making their clothes and shoes," he said.

### Low scores

Adidas, LuLulemon, Gap and H&M received the best scores, all with scores above 60 out of 100. Prada lies very close to the bottom of the rankings with a score of 9 out of 100, closely above Hong Kong-based Belle International Holdings, who had zero and Chinese clothing manufacturer Shenzhou International Group Holdings with a 1.



*Image courtesy of KnowTheChain*

With the average being 45 out of 100, Prada is severely behind. But it is not alone, Hugo Boss, Kering and Ralph Lauren are among the other luxury brands that are falling short.

Earlier this year, global consumer watchdog SumOfUs drafted a petition calling out German fashion label Hugo Boss for unethical labor practices in Turkey.

As of initial press time, the SumOfUs petition had approximately 75,000 signatures, and gaining, as the watchdog group worked to bring attention to what it calls a violation of Turkish labor laws by Hugo Boss. As brands up their transparency efforts in relation to environmental impact, closer attention is likely to be given to its labor practices as well ([see story](#)).

Many variables go into KnowTheChain's rankings. Worker voice is a major miss for many brands, with companies lacking any sort of interaction with lower-level employees on satisfaction and fairness.



*Image courtesy of KnowTheChain*

Another major issue is recruitment. Many companies mismanage recruitment fees and leave employees vulnerable through debt.

The average score across the board is 22 out of 100, meaning the industry as a whole needs to improve. Only six companies lacked fee requirements and only two directly hire employees at supply chains.

Do better

While these issues are not happening directly within these corporations, it is happening at the supply chains that make their products.

As per the garment factory fire in Bangladesh that killed more than 100 people, many brands were unaware that their products were being manufactured there until the incident.

Hospitality group Starwood Hotels & Resorts continued to position itself as a global responsibility leader.

The hotel chain, which merged with Marriott to create the world's largest hotelier, has pledged to conduct business in accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. All businesses, but especially hoteliers, are held to high ethical standards by the modern consumer, but the politics of a global economy often lead to exploitative working conditions, making Starwood's commitment a necessary reassurance ([see more](#)).

"The fast-growing garment sector can create important opportunities for its 60 million workers worldwide many of whom are women," said Annabel Short, deputy director of the [Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](#). "Yet far too many remain exploited, including in situations of forced labor.

"This benchmark highlights urgent steps that the industry must take to eradicate the worst working conditions, such as changing their purchasing practices so that risks are not passed down the supply chain, and ensuring workers have access to effective grievance mechanisms," she said.

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