

Slavery did not end with abolition in the 19th century. Instead, it changed its forms and continues to harm people in every country in the world.

Whether they are men forced to work in agriculture or construction, children in sweatshops or girls forced to marry older men, their lives are controlled by their exploiters, they no longer have a free choice and they have to do as they're told. They are in slavery.

Today slavery is less about people literally owning other people – although that still exists – but more about being exploited and completely controlled by someone else, without being able to leave.

Someone is in slavery if they are:

- forced to work – through coercion, or mental or physical threat;
- trapped and controlled by an 'employer', through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse;
- dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property';
- physically constrained or have restrictions placed on their freedom of movement.



Forms of modern slavery

- **Forced labour** – any work or services which people are forced to do against their will under the threat of some form of punishment.
- **Debt bondage** or **bonded labour** – the world's most widespread form of slavery, when people borrow money they cannot repay and are required to work to pay off the debt, then losing control over the conditions of both their employment and the debt.
- **Human trafficking**– involves transporting, recruiting or harbouring people for the purpose of exploitation, using violence, threats or coercion.
- **Descent-based slavery** – where people are born into slavery because their ancestors were captured and enslaved; they remain in slavery by descent.
- **Child slavery** – many people often confuse child slavery with child labour, but it is much worse. Whilst child labour is harmful for children and hinders their education and development, child slavery occurs when a child is exploited for someone else's gain. It can include child trafficking, child soldiers, child marriage and child domestic slavery.
- **Forced and early marriage** – when someone is married against their will and cannot leave the marriage. Most child marriages can be considered slavery.

How does slavery happen?

Modern slavery can affect people of any age, gender or race. However, most commonly, slavery affects people and communities who are vulnerable to being taken advantage of.

It can be someone living in poverty and having no real prospects for a decent job. That person may accept an offer of a job abroad which turns out something different to what was promised.

It can be someone from a community heavily discriminated against, such as Dalits in India, who will have to borrow money for a medical treatment from a wealthy farmer, and will fall into [debt bondage for decades](#) with no hope of help from corrupted authorities.

Or it might be a young girl who happens to live in a society where early marriage is completely acceptable, who will have no choice over marrying an older man.

Modern slavery in numbers

- 40.3 million people are in modern slavery across the world
- 10 million children are in slavery across the world
- 30.4 million people are in slavery in the Asia-Pacific region, mostly in bonded labour
- 9.1 million people are in slavery in Africa
- 2.1 million people are in slavery in The Americas
- 1.5 million people are in slavery in developed economies
- 16 million slavery victims are exploited in economic activities
- 4.8 million people are in forced into sexual exploitation (often young women sold as wives to much older men – who are sometimes already married).
- 4.1 million people in slavery are exploited by governments
- US\$ 150 billion – illegal profits forced labour in the private economy generates per year