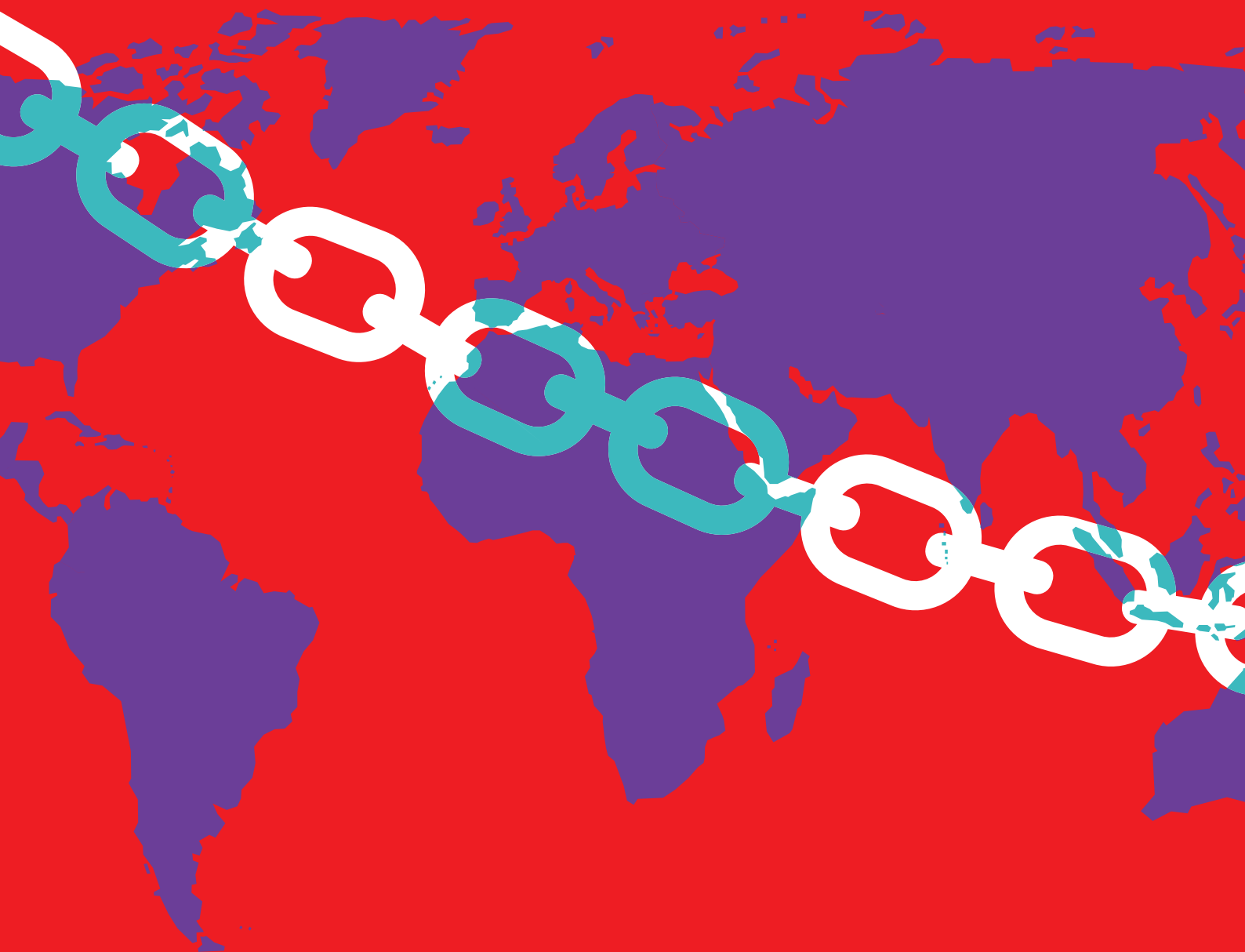


# ATLAS OF ENSLAVEMENT

Facts and figures about  
forced labour and exploitation



**ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG**

# IMPRINT

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2021

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# INTRODUCTION

## WE CAN PUT A STOP TO MODERN SLAVERY, AND CAN HINDER IT IN THE FUTURE

**T**he word “slavery” conjures up images of people in chains being forced onto ships in Africa and transported across the globe. We rarely think of slavery as having anything to do with the modern world and its living and working conditions. Slavery has indeed been abolished as a legal form of labour worldwide. Article 4 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.”

But it would be wrong to assume that slavery no longer exists today. Indeed, in absolute numbers, more people are enslaved now than at any time in history. The International Labour Organization of the United Nations speaks of “modern slavery” and estimates that at least 40 million people are currently subject to it.

This atlas aims to raise awareness of this widely ignored phenomenon. We show that the persistence of this inhumane practice is a global problem. The 2020 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*

by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) concludes that people in no country in the world are immune from the crime of slavery. Based on the data collected for this Global Report, UNODC was able to document a total of 534 different routes used for human trafficking. More than 120 countries reported having detected trafficked persons from over 140 different countries of origin. In addition, national authorities probably do not recognize some routes, in part because many people are already enslaved while they are in their home countries.

**C**riminals who traffic in human beings exploit their victims in various ways, and also influence the legal global economy. Slavery exists in many sectors: It crops up in the production of our mobile phones, the palm oil in our cosmetics and shampoos, and the seafood we buy in the supermarket. It is woven into our clothing and is widespread in the global sex industry and in domestic service. It is especially important to present these connections now, during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because the victims of enslavement are currently under particular pressure from the threat of deportation, and the economic recession that accompanies the pandemic can be expected to put yet more people at risk of trafficking and slavery. The Atlas of Enslavement shows that

modern slavery has many faces. It ranges from child slavery for paramilitary groups or on the cacao plantations for the chocolate industry, to people toiling in debt bondage in the fishing sector, to forced prostitution in Europe and state-organized forced labour in North Korea. The routes for human trafficking often coincide with those used by refugees and international migrants. This is because conflicts make those who are forced to flee more vulnerable – and traffickers exploit such vulnerability. Because slavery has a long history – it began thousands of years before the colonial period – we also look back to draw lessons from the past about modern forms of slavery.

**T**he good news is that we know quite a bit about how slavery happens – and by extension, how we can loosen the chains that bind today's slaves. By no means does the practice exist only in illegal enterprises, but also in the intersection between legal economic activities and informal work. It accompanies social exclusion, loss of income, illiteracy, state instability, political conflicts, corruption, or insecure immigrant status. It is a form of extreme inequality supported by various interest groups that profit from it. The question as to how to fight modern slavery has many possible answers. But we can put a stop to it, and can hinder it in the future,

by regulating the economy better, improving access to social rights, and enabling legal forms of migration.

We must not forget one thing: people subject to slavery have never been merely victims. They have resisted slavery in many ways, and they continue to do so. They have fled their enslavement, committed sabotage, got rid of their tormentors, and much more. From the slave revolt led by Spartacus in ancient Rome, to the slave uprising in Saint-Domingue, later Haiti, to the rebellion led by Nat Turner in Virginia in the United States, the victims of slavery have always collectively resisted their enslavement. But they have had little support from the state. Each year, only 0.2 percent of global cases of slavery are investigated and prosecuted. While forced labour, a form of slavery, generates 150 billion dollars in profits a year, the OECD countries spend only 0.08 percent of this sum each year on combating slavery.

**T**he Atlas of Enslavement aims to move this issue higher up the political agenda. We need a global framework for collective action in order to achieve the abolition of slavery worldwide.

**Dr. Dagmar Enkelmann**  
Chair of the Executive Board, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung

## 12 SHORT LESSONS

# THE WORLD OF SLAVERY

**1** Modern slavery describes various forms of **EXPLOITATION** from which someone **CANNOT ESCAPE** because of threats, force, coercion, deception or abuse of power.

**2** The concept of modern slavery is not precisely defined. Rather, it is a **COLLECTIVE TERM** for violations of **HUMAN RIGHTS**, including forced labour, debt bondage, forced prostitution, forced marriage, human trafficking and enslavement by descent.

**3** **FORCED LABOUR** can be found in many **GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS** across a range of industries: in farming, construction, fishing, and the production of electronics, garments, jewellery, footwear and many other items.

**4** **FORCED PROSTITUTION** is an ancient form of slavery that compels individuals to perform **SEXUAL ACTS OF ANY KIND** through force, fraud or coercion.

**5** **DEBT BONDAGE** occurs when someone is forced to work in order to pay off a debt. Most or all of the money they earn goes to pay off the **INTEREST AND CAPITAL** of their loan. Such debts may be passed down **FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT**.

**6** **FORCED MARRIAGE** may be associated with other forms of slavery. **CHILDREN** who are trafficked as sex objects may be sold into a marriage. **ADULTS** who have been forcibly married may be compelled to **WORK** or may be trafficked for **SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**.



**7** **HUMAN TRAFFICKING** involves luring, deceiving or forcing people into a **TRAP** and **EXPLOITING** them. This may include sexual exploitation, low-paid or hazardous work, begging, drug trafficking, domestic servitude, marriage or organ removal.



**8** **SLAVERY BY DESCENT** is experienced by people whose ancestors already lived in bondage.



**9** **MODERN SLAVERY** uses modern means to shackle its victims. It withholds **DOCUMENTS**, stirs up **FEAR OF DISCOVERY**, or threatens with **DEPORTATION**.



**10** It is often difficult for **FORMER SLAVES** to lead an independent life. Many of them are **STIGMATIZED** and **DISCRIMINATED** against even after they are released from bondage.



**11** Governments must ban slavery and actively combat it. Companies must be required to eliminate these forms of exploitation from their supply chains. **EFFECTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT** is necessary. One thing is clear: **SLAVERY CAN AND MUST BE STOPPED.**



**12** Victims of slavery have often put up **RESISTANCE** in various ways, through both individual actions and collective **OPPOSITION** such as slave revolts. Today, they must be able to take their **GRIEVANCES TO COURT.**

## DEFINITIONS

# A MANY-HEADED BEAST TAKES ON NEW GUISES

Slavery can take many forms – some severe, others less so. There is little consensus on what constitutes slavery, and the boundaries between slavery and other forms of exploitation and injustice are blurred. Slavery must be seen in the context in which it arises, for only then will the fight against it be effective.

**W**hat is modern slavery? There are highly differing viewpoints on this. They all have certain criteria in common: a lack of consent, the use or threat of force, and an element of exploitation. A lack of realistic alternatives due to structural violence and poverty can also lead people into slavery with their eyes open. Modern slavery occurs when working conditions are classified as illegal or if they exceed a threshold of acceptability. Institutions such as the International Labour Organization and non-governmental organizations such as Anti-Slavery International, Walk Free Foundation and Free The Slaves emphasize slightly different aspects.

*Debt bondage* and *contract slavery* constrain victims through debt via loans and so-called advances, and partly also through force and the confiscation of passports. Work contracts may be seasonal; the debts may be impossible to repay, and may be inheritable.

Migrant women are often forced to do *domestic work*

*in private homes*. They may be disenfranchised, and subjected to violence and working conditions from which it is extremely difficult to escape. Such arrangements occur in almost all countries worldwide.

In *chattel slavery* and *origin-based slavery*, individuals are born, kidnapped or sold into slavery. Many belong to ethnic groups, classes or castes at the bottom of the social hierarchy. They are employed mainly in domestic work, farming or herding.

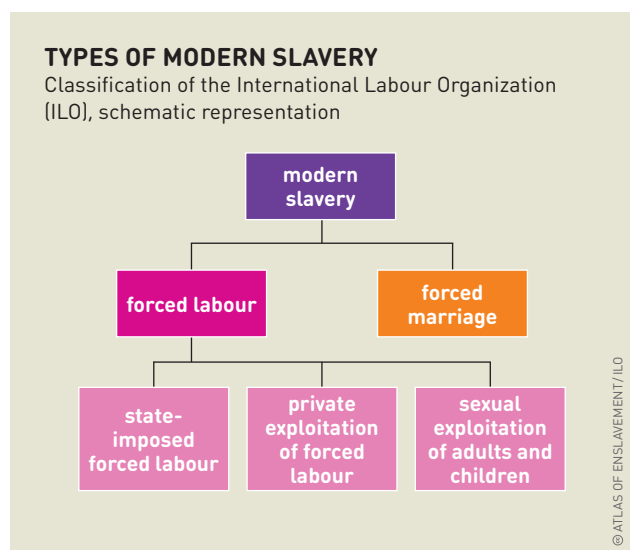
In *ritual slavery*, girls are given to priests to work in their houses or fields, and to serve them sexually, until they become pregnant or get older, when they are replaced by other girls. This practice is banned under the law but may be recognized under local, religious or customary rules in West Africa and India.

*Forced labour* refers to work that is performed against the will of the person concerned under the use or threat of violence. It is practised by individuals, states, military groups or companies, particularly in domestic, agricultural, construction, factory and sex work.

*Human trafficking*, on the other hand, involves moving people for the purpose of exploitation to another location against their will, under the threat or use of violence or with false promises. The boundary with (voluntary) people-smuggling can be blurred if part of the migration process takes place under duress or if a migration that started voluntarily ends up in a forced labour relationship.

*Child labour* exists worldwide too, in children's own families and elsewhere, in companies, domestic work, through forced marriage, and in numerous branches of industry and agriculture. The classification of child labour as slavery is controversial, especially in relation to the difference between labour that is self-determined and determined by others, between legal and illegal forms, and in terms of the definition of childhood. Under international law, someone under the age of 18 is classified as a child, but both this age limit and the claim to a protected childhood is criticized by some as a Western concept. Depending on the perspective, forced marriages, genital mutilation and organ trafficking are also described as modern slavery.

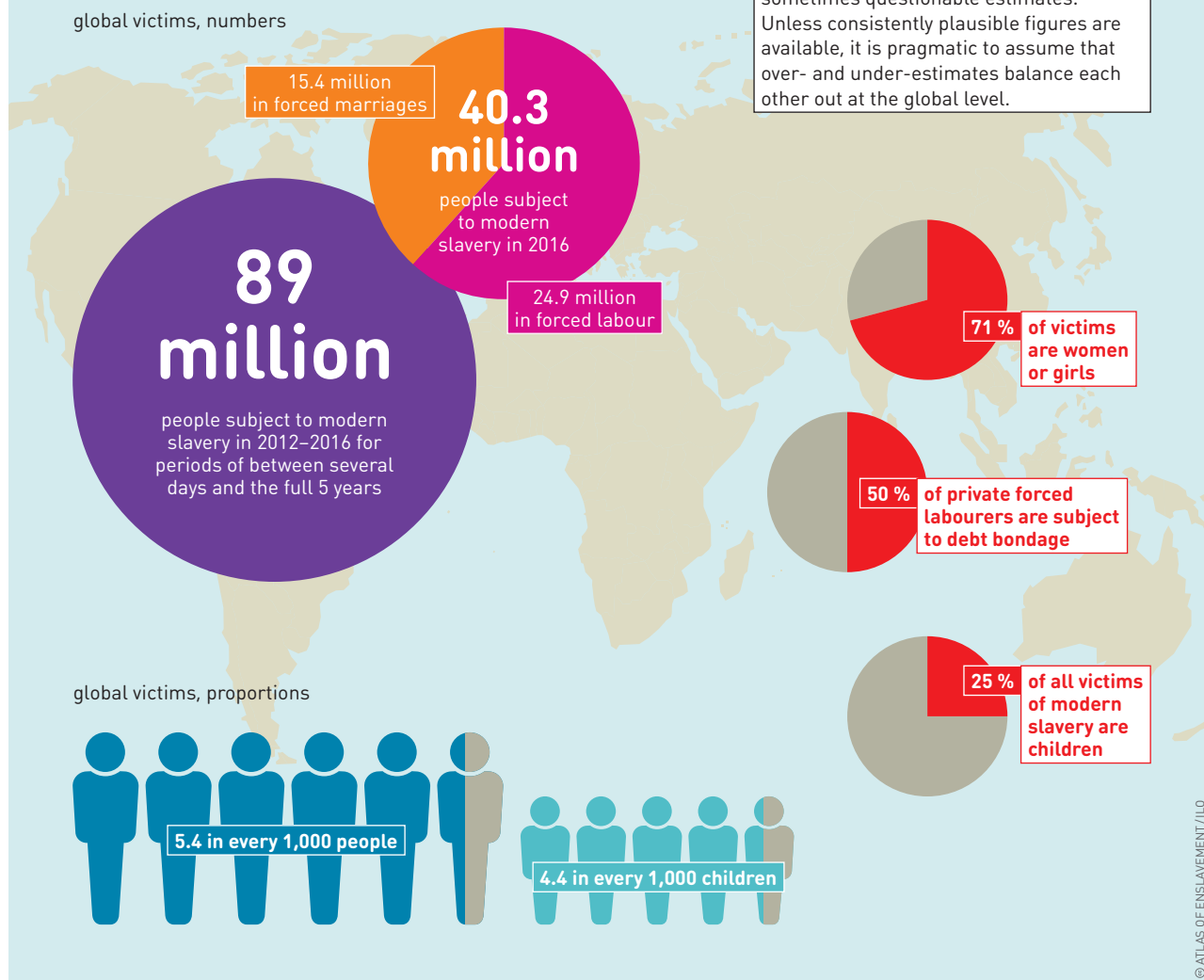
Critical voices doubt that a core definition with fixed



*The classification of slavery developed by ILO can be applied globally, though the choice of words and some definitions may vary*

## MODERN SLAVERY IN FIGURES

Estimates by the International Labour Organization (ILO), 2017



criteria will help rid the world of modern slavery and slavery-like conditions. The forms of slavery are just too varied. Instead of a definition, one proposed approach is a spectrum that places modern slavery somewhere between chattel slavery, as the most extreme form of bondage, and freedom. Critical slavery studies reject the concept of modern slavery altogether as it ignores other forms of exploitation, coercion and bondage, or indirectly even legitimizes the latter by distinguishing them from illegitimate modern slavery. The approach that governments use to deal with modern slavery also raises doubts. The measures they take to combat slavery or sex work can further weaken and marginalize those affected and push them further into the realm of illegality. However, the demand to waive any definition of slavery would not change the conditions which enable slavery – and it would hamper judicial mechanisms against the practice.

At the same time, plain definitions do bear the risk of separating modern slavery from its political, economic

*Many million people live in situations from which they cannot escape because of threats, force, deception and abuse of power*

and social context – especially where the focus is on individuals only, either victims or perpetrators. It is therefore important to consider the situation not only during enslavement, but beforehand and afterwards, as only long-term measures embedded with encompassing human rights politics can avoid the risk of people becoming enslaved, maybe even again.

Taken together, these views give a varied picture of modern slavery that cannot be reduced to a single definition. It is crucial to view modern slavery, bondage and exploitation in the contexts within which they occur. Doing so reveals the social, political, cultural and economic inequalities, especially in terms of gender, class, caste, ethnicity, family status, age or nationality, that are pre-conditions for enslaving people. —

# SHADOWS OF THE PAST

**The word “slave” is a very negative one: it has connotations of hard toil, compulsion, punishment and exploitation. In the past, warring peoples would capture their opponents and force them to work. The word for the captured opponents came to mean “slave”. The English word “slave” itself is one example.**

**A** linguistic consequence of colonialism is that slavery has very similar names in much of the world. In the four major languages of the Americas, it is *slavery* in English, *esclavitud* in Spanish, *escravidão* in Portuguese, and *esclavage* in French. The same words are used in many parts of Africa, South Asia and Oceania where the colonial language has become the lingua franca.

Even more so in Europe. On this continent, the Latin terms for men and women who are property of other people – *sclavus*, *sclava* – have seeped into many languages. But specialists in historical linguistics do not agree on the details of the word’s migration. Even the origin of the word is controversial. Does “slave” really come from “Slav”?

Most specialists agree that it does. It started in the Balkans. From about the year 500 onwards, Slavic tribes were making their presence increasingly known in the Danube provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire. They spoke a still rather uniform form of Proto-Slavic, a precursor of Old Church Slavonic, from which in turn a whole family of languages would develop. In 551, the scholar Jordanes, who was himself a native of the Balkans and who lived in the imperial capital of Constantinople (today’s Istanbul), made the first mention in a work written in Latin of the *sclaveni* on the Byzantine borders. A Byzantine-Greek form *sklabos* has survived from 580. These terms were based on a self-appellation – the word the Slavs used for themselves. In Old Church Slavonic, which was written down later, they called themselves *sloveninu*, or “Slavs”. The interpolated k has Greek origins.

That has nothing to do with enslavement. Nor is it free of conceit. Linguistic research, mainly from Slavic countries, traced *sloveninu* back to the word *slava*, which means “glory”. Later researchers came to regard the word *slovo*, “word, speech” in the sense of “those who speak intelligibly”, as the origin. But why should migrating Slavic tribes mark themselves out thusly from their neighbours or people who had already settled in the area? In recent decades, the linguistic discussion has gone back to the

old *slava*, but now to a previous form of the word. It could come from a reconstructed – unattested, so marked with an asterisk – Proto-Slavic root *\*sluti*, *\*slaviti*, meaning “to be known, to be famous”. This element still occurs in the second parts of names such as Rastislav (“whose fame is increasing”) or Stanislav (“who achieves glory”). But the debate continues.

Whether they were the “famous” or those who “speak intelligibly”, large number of Slavs are said to have been captured in battles with armies from the Eastern Roman Empire and taken away as slaves. From the 9th century on, the name of the people and the legal status became mixed. The name of the Slavs may have been given to slaves as a result of the long-distance slave trade. According to this theory, this trade increased significantly in the early Middle Ages, when large numbers of Slavs were “on the market”. The ethnic meaning of *slavus*, *slava* gradually disappeared from the words *sclavus*, *sclava*. The Arabic loan word *saqaliba*, which still meant “Slavic slave” in the Levant, came to mean simply “foreign slave” in the Caliphate of Cordoba in what is now Spain.

In the High Middle Ages, the word *sclavus* had become established in large parts of Europe. *Servus*, the previously common word for slave or retainer, gave up the severest part of its meaning to *sclavus*, and shifted to softer meanings: servant, serve, and *servus* (“at your service” and “goodbye” in southern Germany and Austria). The word “serf” still retains some of the original meaning of *servus*.

It is not surprising that the new word did not spread in the Slavic parts of Europe, even though slavery also existed there. Here, the people concerned were mostly referred to with the Old Slavic term *rabu* or similar, and their hard work, servitude or bondage was called *rabota*. The word “robot” is related to this. The root *\*rab-* or *\*rob-* alludes to the origin of child labour. This is because the underlying Indo-European root *\*orbh* originally meant “orphaned, orphan, forced by necessity to work hard”. Indeed, the word “orphan” comes from this root. The first syllable of the German word *Arbeit*, which originally meant “toil, plague, effort”, is also based on *\*orbh*.

The transformation of an ethnic description into a word for “slave” may not be unique in Europe. In the Balto-Finnic languages, which include Finnish, Estonian and Karelian, *orjus*, *orjuus* and similar words carry the meaning of “slave, servant, beggar”. The word, most specialists agree, comes from the Indo-Aryan *\*áryas*, meaning Aryan. Around 4,000 years ago, the linguistic area of the Indo-Aryan groups stretched across the Central Asia steppes between the Caspian Sea and the





## SUPPLY CHAINS

# FORCED LABOUR IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Consumers snap up cheap food and clothes, but few consider how such items can be sold at knockdown prices. The answer lies in the exploitative nature of global supply chains. Powerful retailers demand that their suppliers cut costs; the suppliers in turn put pressure on the producers. The least powerful actors in the chain are the workers, who are forced to toil for a pittance. Such supply chains are a reason that forced labour remains an endemic feature of the global capitalist economy.

**A**lthough reliable research is scarce, there is mounting evidence that forced labour is widespread in global supply chains. This includes those that produce commodities such as agricultural products, seafood, garments, footwear, electronics and jewellery, as well as services such as construction and domestic labour. While

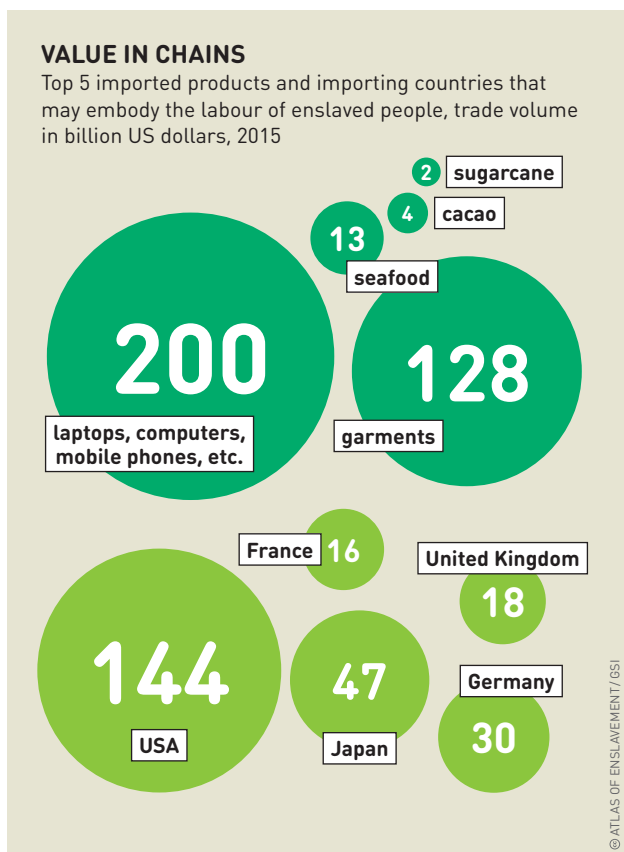
early studies and policy often portrayed forced labour as a hidden crime, more recent research has established that it is indeed possible to pinpoint and predict where forced labour is most likely to occur in supply chains by analyzing its root causes.

The factors that create a supply of workers who become vulnerable to forced labour in the global economy include poverty, restrictive border policies, limited labour and social protections, and discrimination along lines of gender, sexuality, race, caste and ethnicity, citizenship and immigration status, and other markers of social difference. Various factors create a stable and predictable demand for forced labour among businesses that exploit it in supply chains. These include concentrations of corporate power and ownership at the top of supply chains, irresponsible sourcing practices, and excessive outsourcing.

Where these supply and demand factors come together in supply chains, forced labour is likely to occur. However, forced labour is a porous and fluid category, rather than a stable or bounded one. In other words, workers often move in and out of situations of forced labour and more minor forms of labour exploitation in relatively short periods of time. Forced labour can be very hard to isolate. It often takes place in contexts where unfair treatment and low wages for workers are widespread, and abusive practices like sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and unlawful wage deductions are commonplace.

Governments and the private sector bear responsibility for forced labour in the global economy, and both have key roles to play in eradicating it. Governments' key responsibilities lie in addressing the supply-side dynamics that create vulnerability to forced labour. They should put stronger social protections in place, enforce wage standards more effectively, and pass and enforce laws to ensure minimum and living wages, and regulate business activities to put a stop to their ability to use forced labour with virtual impunity.

Corporations at the top of supply chains can help abolish forced labour by ensuring that their commercial practices do not contribute to pressures to use forced labour further down the supply chain. For instance, a common



*Surveys reveal in which countries and economic sectors forced labour exists. Trade statistics show where items produced through forced labour are consumed*

## THE GLOBAL MARKET AS A DRIVER OF SLAVERY

Economic significance of forced labour and child labour for exports by world region, estimates, 2015

exports as proportion of total production, percent

▶ labour

▶ value added

labour input as proportion of exported products, percent

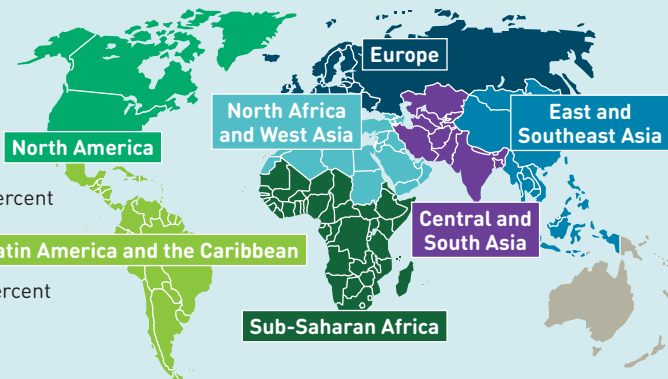
■ indirect labour\*

■ direct export production

value added as proportion of exported products, percent

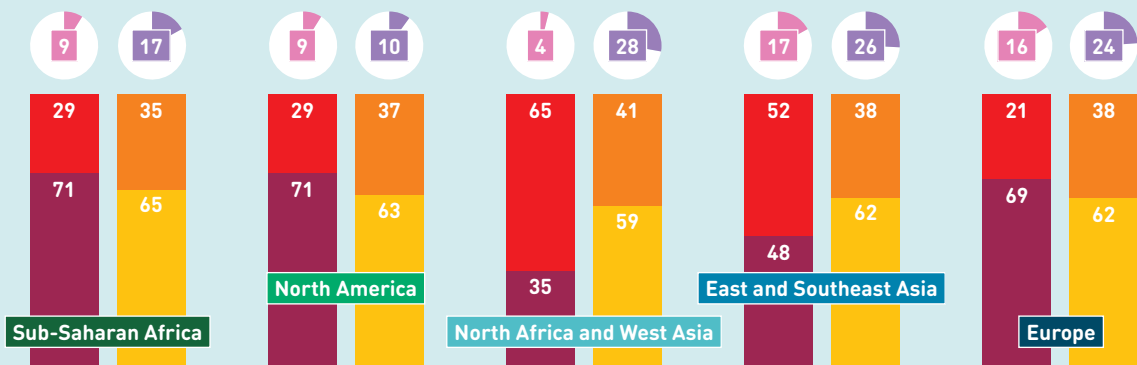
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■ direct export production

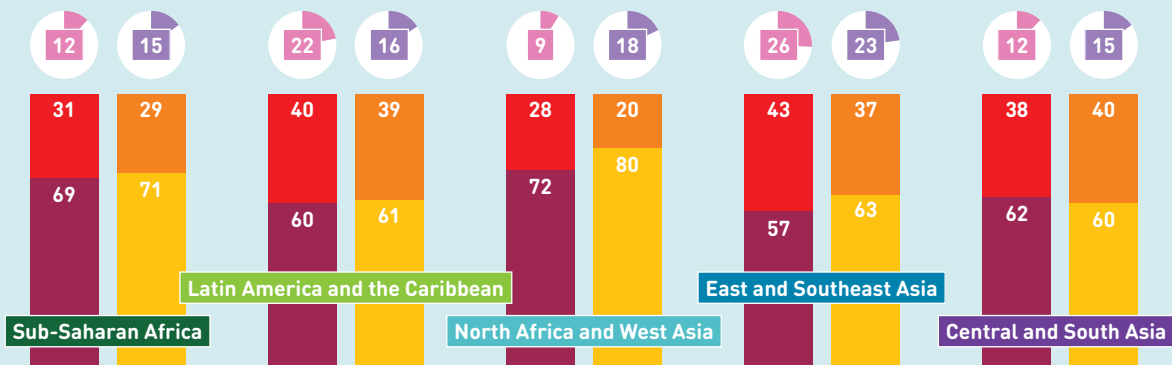


Oceania: no data

### forced labour



### child labour



\*e.g., for precursor products and services required

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problem is that corporations source goods from suppliers at far below the cost of producing them. That forces suppliers to cut corners, often in relation to labour standards and practices. Implementing responsible sourcing practices that ensure suppliers are paid enough to meet the relevant labour laws and standards would go a long way towards curtailing the demand for forced labour.

Initiatives by governments and businesses to address forced labour should include a central role for workers, unions, and worker advocacy organizations. After all, it is workers who are most aware of the specific vulnerabilities

*Slavery is profitable for export industries. In many places, above-average amounts of value can be created through forced labour and child labour*

faced at their workplaces. Through collective bargaining, unions can negotiate wages and working conditions that protect workers against forced labour conditions and give them meaningful pathways to remediation where problems do occur. Without empowering workers to play a central role in supply chain governance, forced labour in the global economy will persist. —

## TRAFFICKING

# ACTION NEEDED

**Modern slavery is not defined in international law. But in recent years it has gained popularity as an umbrella term for legally defined concepts such as forced labour, human trafficking, slavery, slavery-like institutions and practices, and servitude.**

**T**here is no internationally agreed definition of modern slavery that is central to existing legal instruments. So to understand the international policy framework around the issue, it is necessary to look at how exactly lawmakers seek to address forms of coercion and severe exploitation.

Despite the lack of a legal definition, many efforts have been made over the last two decades to address the problem of modern slavery. One international instrument that has resulted in a large amount of national and regional legislation is the Trafficking Protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, or UNTOC, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000. This is an example of the international community's efforts to update its understanding of severe exploitation and to develop strategies to combat it.

The Trafficking Protocol, formally known as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, is the first comprehensive international criminal justice instrument against human trafficking. It aims to protect and assist victims of trafficking in human beings. It directs states to criminalize a range of offences committed by natural or legal

persons, such as participation in an organized criminal group, corruption in the public sector, laundering of the proceeds of crime, and obstruction of justice.

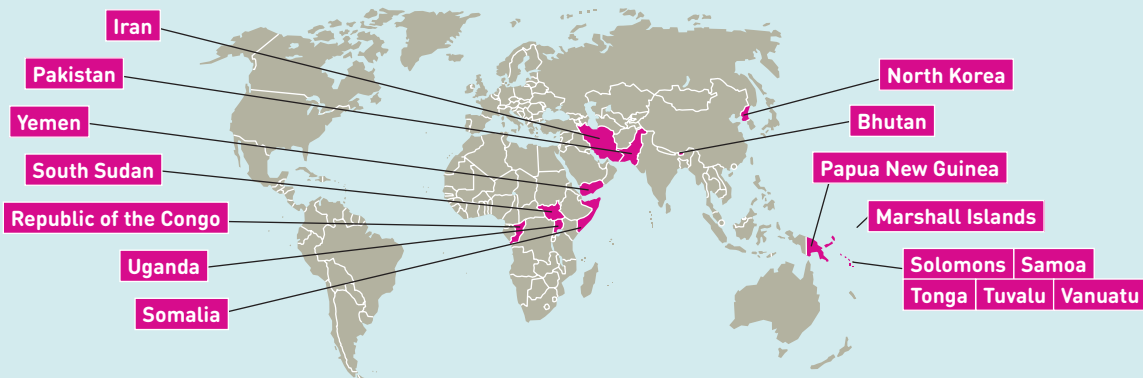
Article 3 of the Protocol outlines three interrelated elements of trafficking. The first is an action: the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons. The second is a means: the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consented-to control of one person over another. The third is a purpose: exploitation. Although it does not attempt to define the term, the Trafficking Protocol clearly states that it should include, at a minimum, the exploitation of prostitution, other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.

The Trafficking Protocol is one of the most widely ratified UN instruments. Since its adoption in 2000, almost every State Party has developed new anti-trafficking laws or amended old laws in accordance with it. As a crimefighting tool, it is weak in terms of human rights obligations towards the victims of trafficking. However, the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking, issued by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2002, fill this gap and

*The “Trafficking Protocol” is relatively weak, but it serves mainly as a much-needed basis for the development of national legislation*

### MISSING IN ACTION

Sixteen UN member states where the 2000 “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children” has not been ratified so does not apply



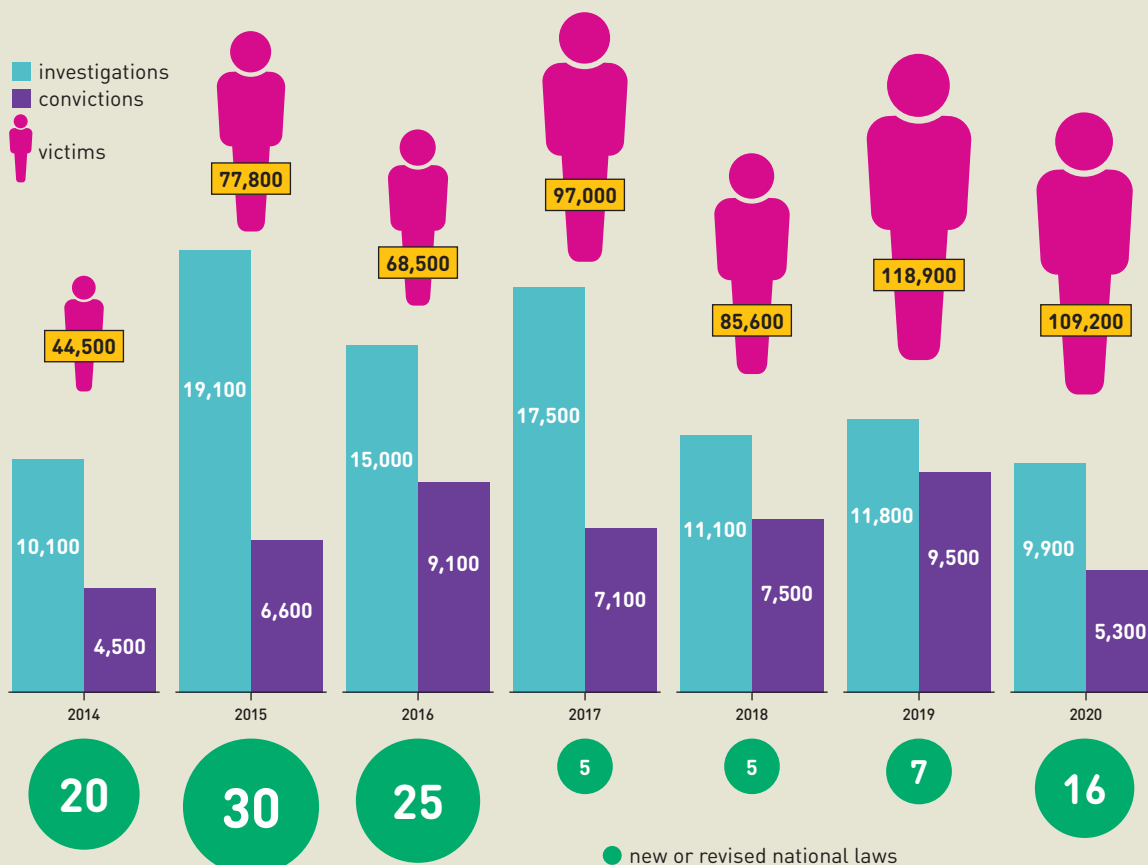
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## PROCEDURES, VICTIMS AND NEW RULES

The legal side of the fight against human trafficking



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provide comprehensive guidance in this regard. Regional anti-trafficking instruments in Europe and the ASEAN region, which are in synergy with the Trafficking Protocol, also have strong victim protection mechanisms.

In the first few years after the adoption of the UN Convention, the focus was on the trafficking of women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This slowly changed, and states began to focus on labour trafficking. In 2014, this prompted the International Labour Organization to update Convention 29 on Forced Labour of 1930, and issue a set of supplementary recommendations on how the updated Convention should be implemented. These two instruments build on the Trafficking Protocol but have clear measures to support victims, including compensation.

As the Trafficking Protocol does not have a built-in monitoring mechanism, the Conference of Parties to UNTOC adopted a Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of UNTOC in 2020. This is a peer-review process designed to assist States Parties in the effective implementation of instruments and to help them identify and justify specific technical assistance needs. With regard to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Group of Experts on Action

*The numbers of investigations and convictions have been stagnating. The number of victims is rising fast, while the legislative momentum has waned*

against Trafficking in Human Beings, known as GRETA, is responsible for monitoring implementation.

The world today lacks neither dedicated policies nor initiatives to combat modern slavery. But two decades of intensive engagement have made it clear that dedicated policies, even if well implemented, will not be able to solve the problem. The reality in the world of work today contradicts the basic assumption that forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery are outliers and can therefore be eradicated through criminal justice measures.

Instead, exploitative practices are embedded in today's economic paradigm of growth and development, which places profit above people. An international instrument against exploitation is not enough. To address exploitation, it is necessary to address the policies that create or exacerbate vulnerabilities for large numbers of people. Time and energy must be invested in large-scale mobilization and education of workers, especially those in precarious work. And advocacy is necessary for policies that put people's rights and welfare at the centre. —

## CHILD SOLDIERS

# BRAINWASHED, DRUGGED AND RAPED

The use of children in armed combat is a form of modern slavery and human trafficking. It is as serious and as lucrative an international crime as weapon or drug trafficking. Children in dozens of countries are forced to fight or otherwise exploited by governments and rebels alike – as frontline soldiers, camp workers or sex slaves.

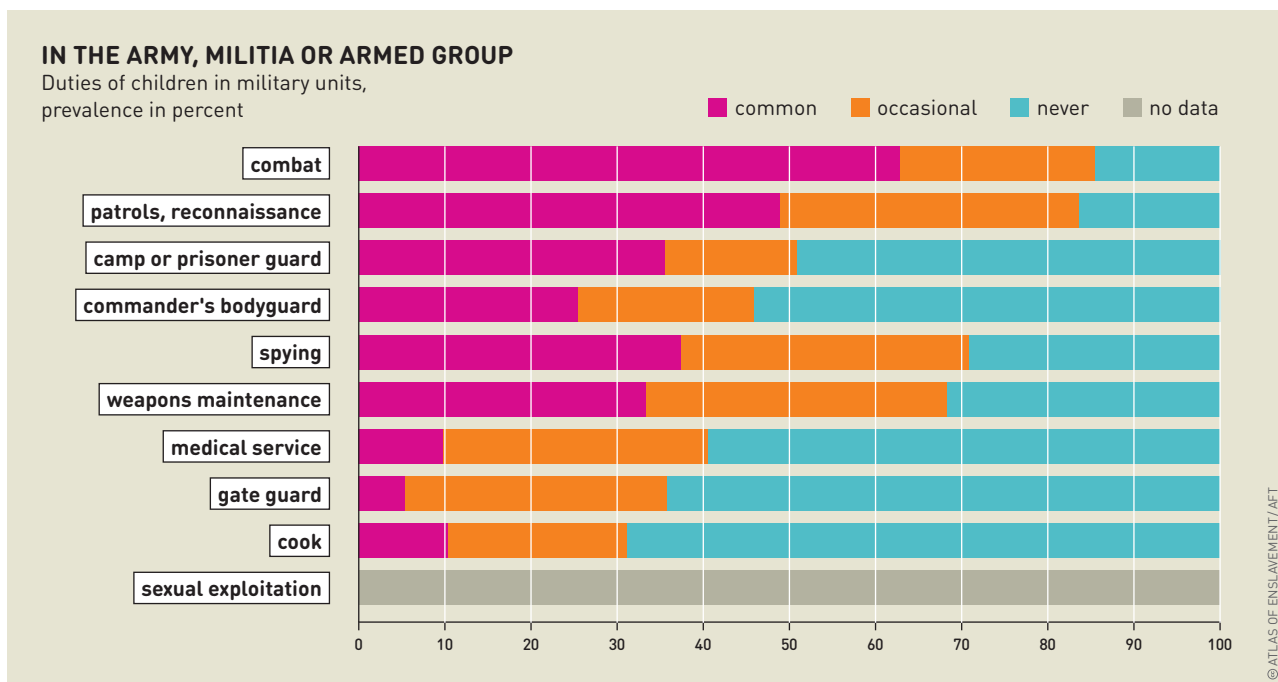
The international definition of the trafficking of child soldiers involves three necessary elements: consent, exploitation, and movement within a country or across a border. A child soldier is “trafficked” when there is forced recruitment or no genuine voluntary recruitment; when the recruitment is done without the informed consent of the person’s parent or legal guardians; and when the person in question was not fully informed of the duties involved in the military service. Child soldiering is a form of modern slavery because the acts required of a child soldier are dangerous enough to interfere with a child’s fundamental human right to education, health and development.

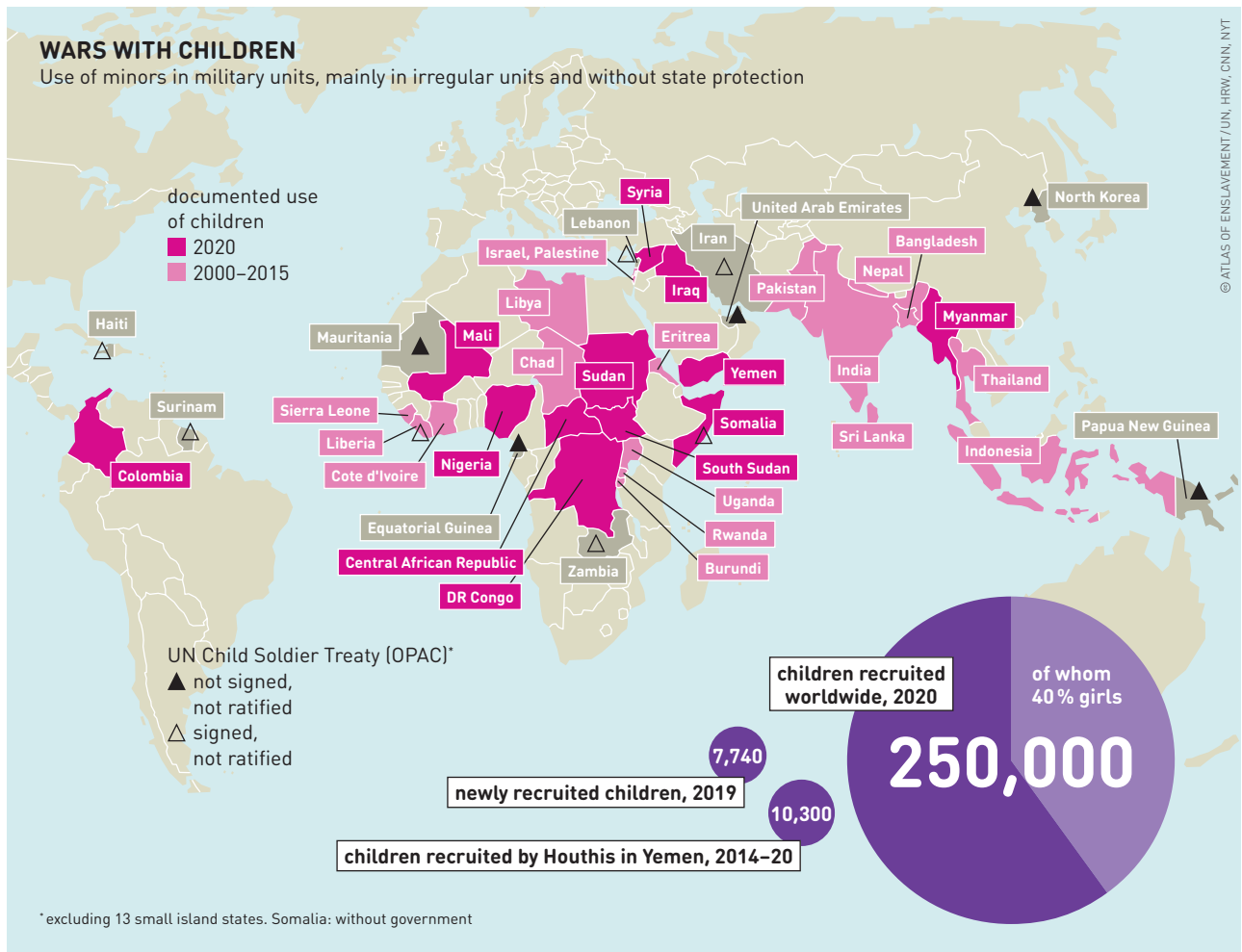
Child soldiering is listed as “one of the worst forms of child labour” in the Worst Forms of Child Labour Conven-

tion, adopted by the International Labour Organization in 1999. The trafficking of child soldiers is directly connected to sexual violence and exploitation by adult superiors. Very often, children are abducted from one place to another (from their home to a camp, where they are trained, and then to a field of combat). But children do not have to actually cross a border to be trafficked. If they are moved within their own country and forced to engage in exploitative labour like dangerous armed combat, this constitutes child trafficking. Child soldiering is particularly prevalent in those developing countries where political, economic, and social instability are common and where around half the population is not yet of legal age.

Children who are displaced and impoverished by war or civil unrest are particularly at risk. At the end of 2019, nearly 33 million children had been forcibly displaced worldwide. During the civil war that lasted 17 years in Sierra Leone, more than one million children were displaced, and 25,000 (some as young as six years old) were abducted and forced to become members of armed groups. The

*For the most part, commanders order child soldiers under their command to perform life-threatening missions*





UN estimates that 10,000 were used as child soldiers. The recruitment of children into armed conflict has claimed the lives of more than 2 million children, left more than 6 million maimed or permanently disabled, orphaned 1 million, afflicted 10 million with serious psychological trauma, and made 12 million refugees.

Child soldiers are subjected daily to dehumanizing atrocities. They are often abducted from their own homes, tortured, indoctrinated with brutality, forced to become intoxicated with mind-altering drugs, threatened with death and or dismemberment if they do not fight, forced to return to their own village to witness or participate in the death or disfigurement of their own family members, required to kill friends who do not obey the commanders, and made to watch the punishment of other child soldiers who attempt to escape.

Child soldiers are brainwashed thoroughly and brutally until their ethics and moral values become so distorted that they believe doing evil is good. Brainwashing is accomplished by desensitizing them to the sight and commission of atrocities. Some who try to escape are reportedly boiled alive, and other child soldiers are then forced to eat the human flesh. Their commanders keep the children obedient through frequent beatings and threats of death or retaliation against their family members.

*The most effective way to prevent the use of children in military-led conflicts is to put the conflict under civilian control – in some cases, a feasible solution*

Young girls are abducted as well and make up 40 percent of the ranks of armed groups in some countries. In El Salvador, Ethiopia, and Uganda, almost one-third of the child soldiers are young girls, who are enslaved, given to military commanders as “wives” or domestic servants, and subjected to sexual violence on a daily basis. Female child soldiers are often used as domestic servants and sex slaves during conflict. Those who become infected with HIV are usually not treated, and those who become pregnant are often forced to give birth. During the 1990s, over 800 children were born to the Lord’s Resistance Army “wives” who were concentrated at Jabelein camp in southern Sudan.

Children who are trained to be fearless, or who are pumped up on drugs, become dangerous killing machines. Powerless and abandoned children are empowered with small, light weapons and indoctrinated with brutality into the virtues of committing atrocities. These children are victims of inhumane brainwashing and merciless combat training that make them robotically obey orders to kill innocent victims – just to stay alive. —

# REWRITING THE INTERNATIONAL RULEBOOK

Changing international law is an important way to fight slavery and forced labour. But convincing governments to do so takes a long, long time. And changing the rules does not itself eliminate the problem. A century after the first International Labour Organization convention against forced labour, millions of people around the world are still affected.

Since the 1920s, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has addressed the issue of modern slavery as part of its efforts against forced labour. Convention 29 defines forced or compulsory labour as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily”. This defini-

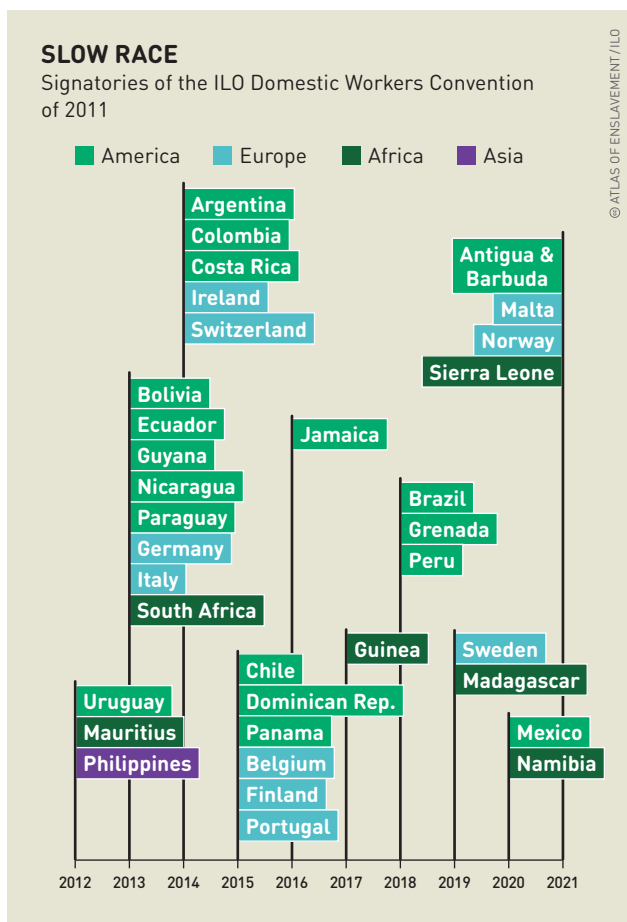
tion is widely used but unsatisfactory in that the word “voluntarily” is ambiguous, both in legal terms and in the eyes of workers and employers. Nearly a century later, the preamble to the Protocol to this Convention, adopted in 2014, mentions “growing international concern”, reflecting the persistence of modern slavery in ever-changing forms.

The question of “modern slavery” first arose in the context of colonialism. In 1926, the League of Nations adopted a convention to abolish slavery, but the issue of forced labour, which affected the economic interests of the imperial powers, was passed on to the ILO. After long and controversial discussions the ILO adopted Convention 29, which aimed to abolish the use of forced labour, or rather to regulate native labour. The experts who drew up the text – most of whom were colonial officers – saw the abolition of forced labour as a component of the efforts to modernize the economy and society of their colonies.

Convention 29 promotes a vision of wage labour in which a work contract signed by an employee and an employer in the context of a labour market would constitute the condition of free labour. But since the 19th century, various liberal and socialist reformers had emphasized that true worker freedom depended on the guarantee of collective social rights, and that it was trade union rights that enabled employees to achieve a more balanced power relationship with employers when signing a labour contract.

The international conventions drawn up and promoted by the ILO (Convention 29, followed by Conventions 64 and 65 on the employment of indigenous workers, both abrogated only in 2018) served to liberate work by providing a framework for it. The tension between the affirmation of the individual freedom of the worker and the collective framework which alone can ensure this freedom is the stumbling block in the issue of forced labour as debated at the ILO.

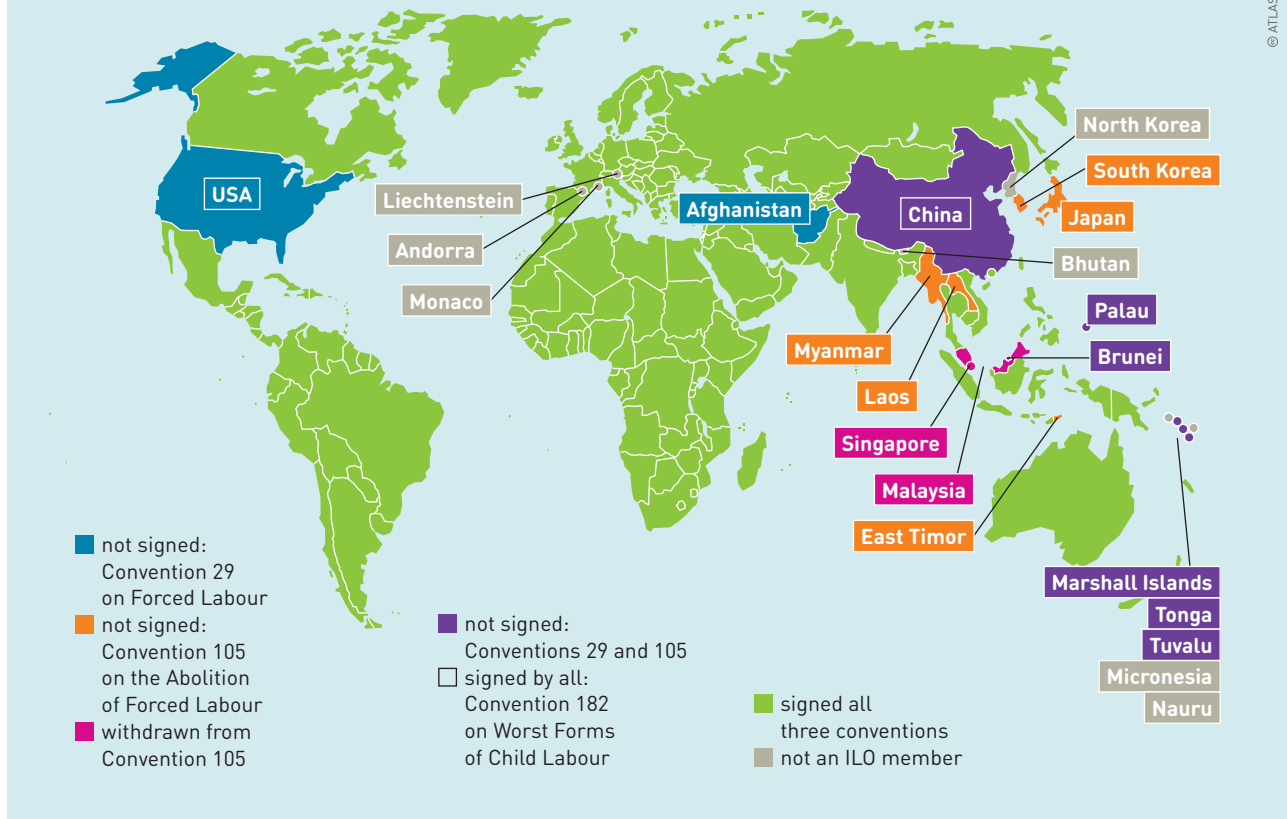
The debate on “free labour” was followed by that on forced labour in the second half of the 1940s. At the Nuremberg trials, the Nazi leader Fritz Sauckel was sentenced to death for having organized the massive use of



*Parliament members who themselves employ household help are reluctant to vote for more protection and rights for domestic servants*

## SITTING ON THEIR HANDS

Non-signatories to three fundamental conventions against human trafficking and forced labour, members of the International Labour Organization (ILO)



slave labour. Political or state coercion was then posited as the necessary, if not the only, source of forced labour. The labour camps of communist regimes, and the use of forced labour in general as an instrument of political repression, became the focus of debate. During the Cold War, the issue of forced labour became a political weapon which was used mainly to condemn the serious infringements to freedoms by communist governments in Eastern Europe and China.

However, the discussions on Convention 105 on the abolition of forced labour, adopted in 1957, allowed the issue to be viewed more broadly than just in the labour camps to which US actor wished to confine it. Advocates for oppressed groups in colonial or postcolonial societies, along with representatives of workers from the South of the United States, emphasized that even if public authorities did not resort to forced labour, this did not guarantee freedom for workers. They pointed out that some population groups subject to social domination could not in fact decide freely on how to use their labour. This is still the case for many informal workers in Asia, or specific groups such as people who are indentured by indebtedness, common in Latin America. At the request of labour unions and representatives of socialist governments, Convention 105 of 1957 finally covered, albeit in

*Some countries have not even signed the most important ILO conventions against slavery – they are unwilling to “submit” to international norms*

a limited way, certain types of forced labour imposed by private employers.

The two conventions discussed here are among the eight fundamental conventions adopted by the ILO. Yet in 2017, the organization still counted 25 million forced laborers: 5 million victims of sexual slavery, 4 million people subjected to repressive public policies and 16 million people exploited by private employers. More than half – 58 percent – of these slave workers were women or children who, by virtue of being most deprived of their rights, are still as vulnerable as ever to exploitation.

Adopted in 2011, Convention 189 on domestic workers is a partial response to a specific form of modern slavery affecting women in particular. It aims to regulate the activities of these isolated workers, often migrants, who are frequently subjected to degrading working conditions and treatment. But nothing guarantees that states will ratify the convention – in 2021, just 35 had done so – or that they will in fact put it into effect. It is mainly the mobilization of domestic workers themselves that will turn Convention 189 into a tool in the fight against modern slavery. —



# FIGHTING FOR WHAT IS RIGHT

From ancient times, slavery has been an accepted part of life. That began to change only in the 18th century, when a few ethical thinkers realized that it was neither pre-ordained nor just. The human rights movement that they pioneered has caused societies around the world to shift from regarding slavery as normal to seeing it as an affront to universal freedoms.

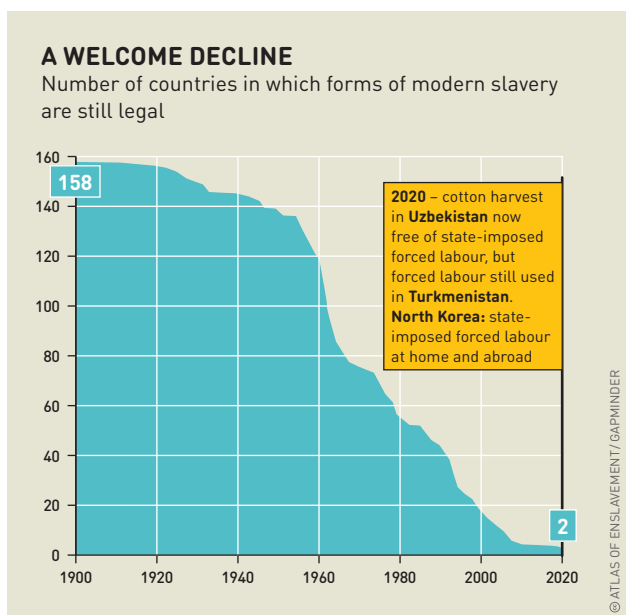
Slavery can be traced back to many of the world’s oldest civilizations, from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome to the Aztec and Mayan empires. But public efforts to end slavery in all its forms were far slower to develop. For millennia, societies tacitly or outrightly approved of slavery, and a number of philosophers, among them Aristotle and Plato, justified its existence by contending that “from the very hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule”. By the early 1700s, a new moral mindset was starting to take hold, particularly in the West, where many Christians were adopting an ideological shift from accepting slavery as a consequence of sin, to seeing it as an immoral and inhumane practice that needed to end. This would turn out to have a profound effect on the future of slavery around the world.

In the United States and Great Britain, as testimonies of the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade began to sur-

face, a number of Quakers mounted an opposition to slavery. This moralist movement, which began in the late 17th century in Pennsylvania, could be credited as the first real civil society action to end the institution. Largely defined as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity, civil society is led by the people, not business or state actors, and its impact on politics can be significant. After 1783, when the Quakers issued the first anti-slavery petition to the British Parliament, the fate of millions of slaves around the world was slowly rewritten. By 1807, thanks to consistent lobbying and political pressure by the Quakers, Britain had abolished the slave trade within its colonies, a move which created a domino effect across Latin America, South Asia, Africa, and of course, the USA. The creation of the United Nations in 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 proclaimed, worldwide, the illegality and immorality of slavery – a notion that became widely accepted and formulated into national laws.

Why slavery still exists and why it affects so many people today are the driving questions behind civil society’s continued struggle to end it for good. At its core, slavery flourishes in places where the rule of law is weak and corruption goes unchecked, says Jasmine O’Connor, chief executive of Anti-Slavery International, the world’s oldest human rights organization, which was founded by British Quakers in the 19th century to abolish the slave trade.

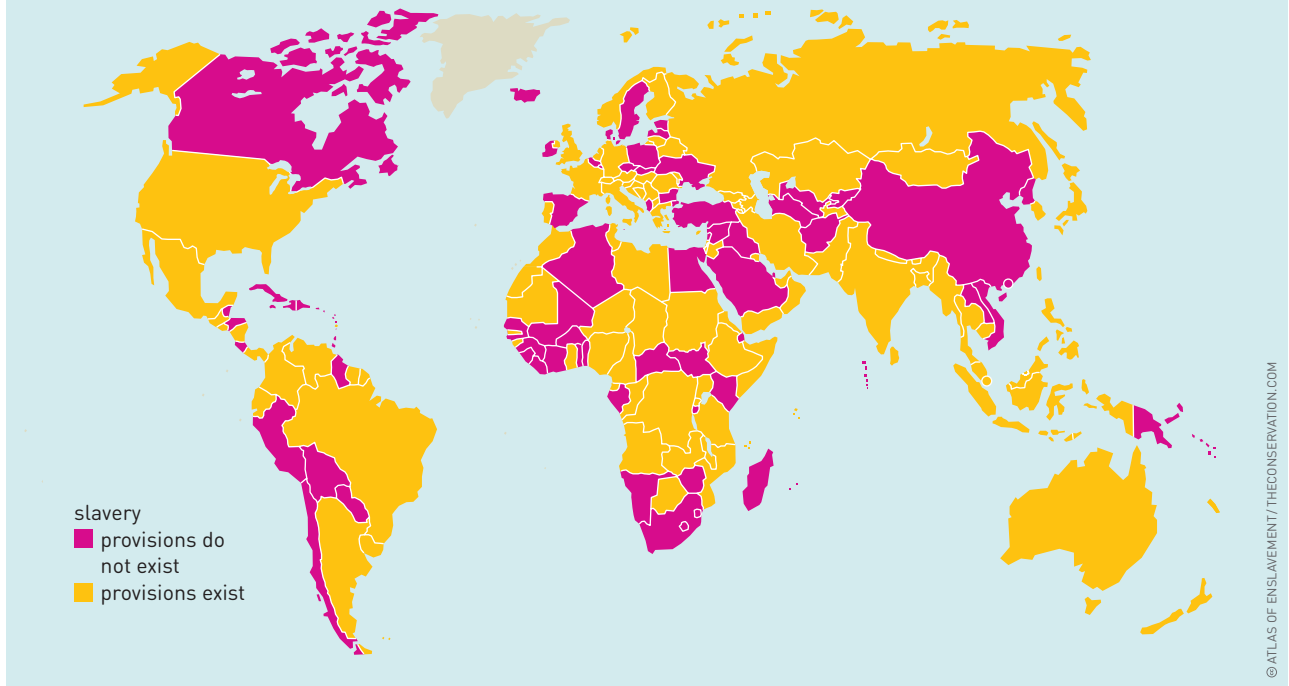
Today, the civil society actors fighting against slavery comprise more than just religion-based groups. Whether non-governmental organizations, labour unions, women’s rights collectives or survivors of slavery themselves, all play a pivotal role in holding governments and businesses to account, on both national and international levels. Civil society has been hugely instrumental in creating positive change, from boycotting goods produced through slavery to writing anti-slavery policies, and from lobbying governments to criminalize and eradicate slavery to providing services to help rehabilitate survivors. In Nepal, civil society has helped communities of agricultural bonded labourers gain access to redistributed land and subsistence grants. In Niger, the practice of women being forced into sexual slavery as a “fifth wife” was outlawed after NGOs supported a victim. In Mauritania, thanks to civil society assistance, two brothers who were born into



*Making slavery illegal is a good thing. But laws alone are not enough: human-rights organizations need to be active to eliminate slavery*

## BANNED, BUT NOT A CRIME

Countries in which the ownership of humans is not a separate offence, 2020



slavery escaped from and then successfully sued their slave master, the first-ever prosecution of its kind in the African nation.

Just as was the case in ancient Rome, slavery today is big business; the difference now, O'Connor says, is that thanks to continuous lobbying by civil society, a growing number of start-ups are reimagining their business models to do "social good" rather than turn a profit at any cost. The most significant change has occurred within supply chains, where slavery can persist unchecked. Some governments, such as the UK, now require larger businesses to prove that they are taking steps to prevent slavery in their supply chains. Smaller companies in the fashion industry have been known to crowd-source funding in order to produce environmentally friendly, slavery-free clothes. Ultimately, O'Connor says, civil society's role is to know when to effectively challenge governments and businesses to do more to fight against slavery, and when to collaborate to help them be as effective as possible.

Achieving that balance is not always easy. Partnerships among civil society groups are often lacking, with insufficient funding, inadequate resources and poor coordination diluting their overall effectiveness, says slavery expert Siddharth Kara of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. As civil society actors compete with each other for a shallow pool of donor resources, they fail to

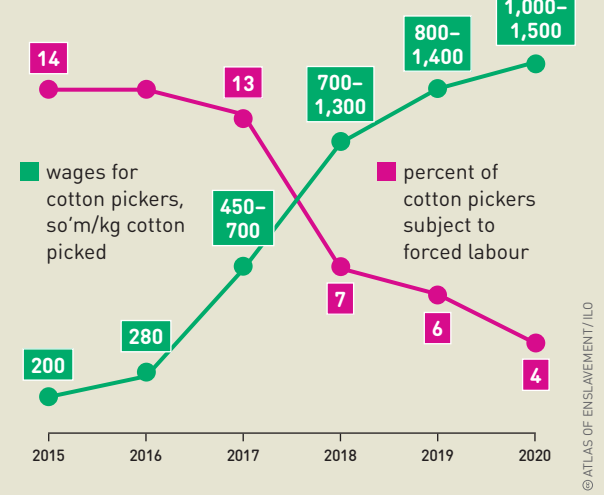
*Boycott as a weapon – pressure from activist organizations on cotton buyers and textile firms helped end the use of forced labour in Uzbekistan*

*In many parts of the world, slavery is not a crime in itself. Perpetrators can be prosecuted only for breaking other laws*

provide adequate survivor protection or empowerment, affecting the leadership of the anti-slavery movement as a whole, says Kara. He concludes that governments, charitable foundations and businesses must invest more in the anti-slavery movement, as well as fund research on where the money is needed most, if the practice is to ever be eradicated for good. —

### WAGES, NOT WHIPS

Decline in forced labour in the state cotton harvest, Uzbekistan



## MAURITANIA

# LAWS ON PAPER ONLY

Slavery has deep roots in Mauritanian society. Born into slavery and indoctrinated from an early age, many in the system do not even realize that another life is possible. The Mauritanian government has outlawed slavery on paper but does little to fight it in practice.

**M**auritania is home to one of the largest systems of slavery in the world. Although it was officially abolished in 1981 and criminalized in 2007, the practice still continues. Today, enslaved Mauritanians, who are mainly Black, are victims of abuse, psychological manipulation, sexual violence, forced starvation and torture.

The roots of today's system of slavery can be traced to the arrival of the light-skinned Berbers and Arab Moors in the 8th and 11th centuries respectively. Their conquest of the region created a hierarchical caste system that enslaved dark-skinned native Haratines and other Afro-Mauritanian groups. Currently, Mauritania has the world's sixth highest prevalence of slavery, with 21.4 victims per 1000 people, according to the Global Slavery Index. Some 90,000 Mauritanians are said to be enslaved, although the true number is likely much higher.

The system is lineage-based, or "chattel" slavery, meaning that the slave status is passed down through generations. Unlike in historical Western slavery, Mauritanian victims are not sold or traded. Instead, they are given as gifts by their masters at ceremonial occasions,

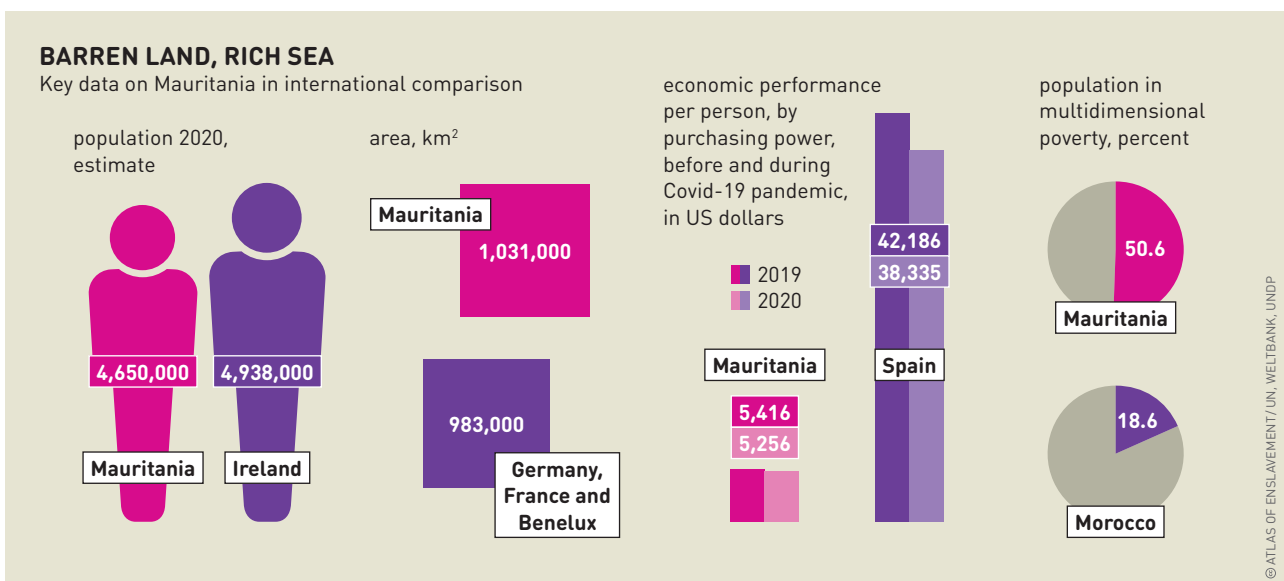
destined to perform domestic and manual labour for the recipient.

Some enslaved people live on their own in what are known as adwaba villages. Here they work the land for their masters, who visit only to pick up the harvest. Life in these villages is marked by starvation and poverty; a secret CNN investigation in 2012 found that children were eating sand off the ground due to hunger.

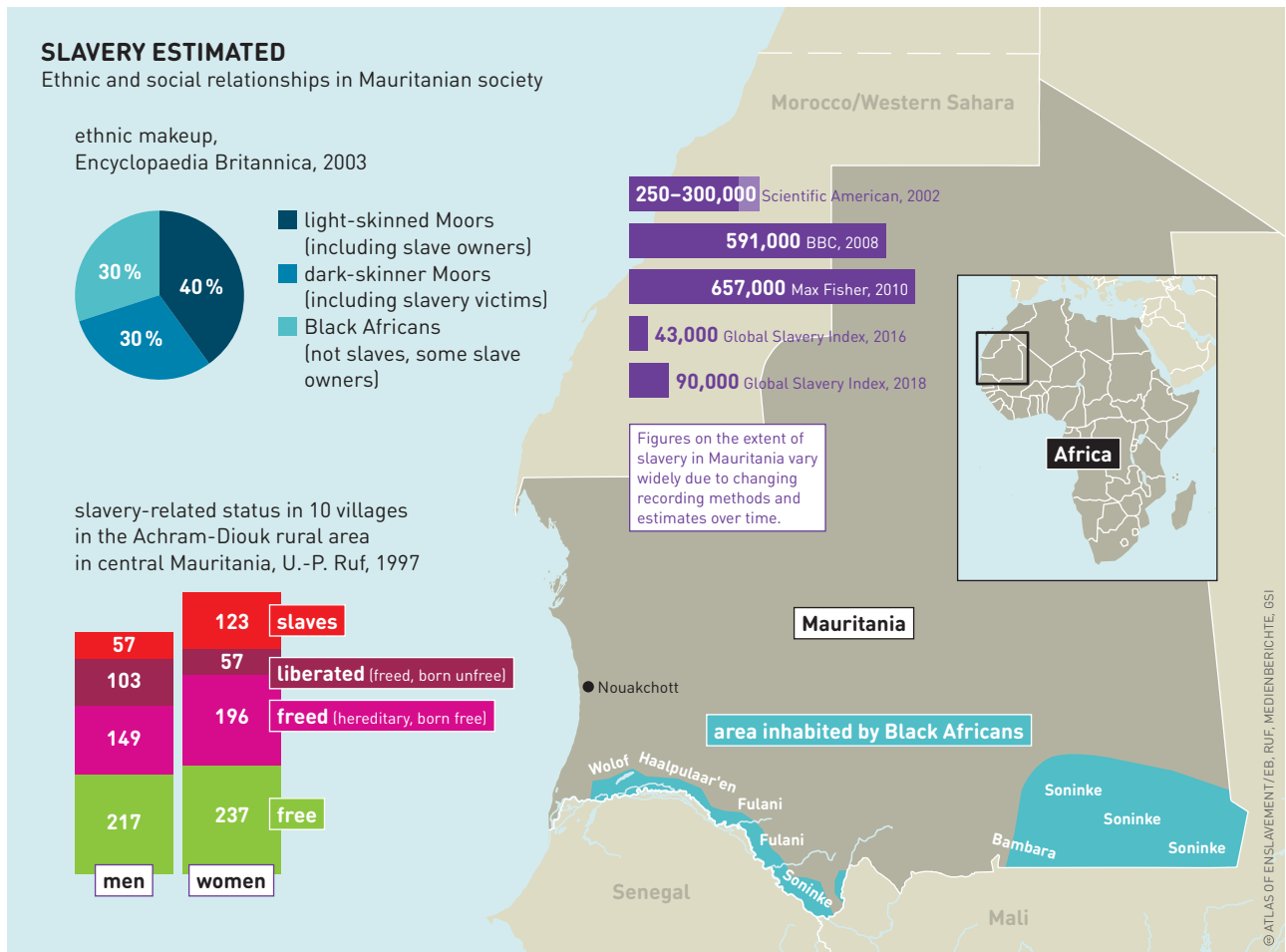
Arab-Berber masters, who regard enslavement as normal, repeatedly mistreat their slaves. Rape, forced pregnancy and abortion, dismemberment and child murder are commonplace. Many enslaved Mauritanians are born as a result of the rape of women by their masters. Despite these traumatic experiences, the masters do not erect physical barriers to prevent victims from running away; religious manipulation means that attempts to escape are rare.

Enslaved Mauritanians usually cannot comprehend their potential freedom due to the deeply rooted values of religion-based casteism. They are raised into Islam from birth and taught that their paradise is tied to their master – a narrative supported by many religious leaders. Most contemporary international Islamic scholars, on the other hand, agree that Islam condemns the enslavement of other Muslims. Under the pretence of Islam, victims are brainwashed and coerced into accept-

*Only iron ore mining and intensive coastal fishing bring in much-needed foreign currency to Mauritania*







ing their own oppression. Enslaved individuals work in a culturally and geographically isolated environment without access to education. Therefore, they lack information on human rights or other interpretations of their religion.

The social and religious hierarchy goes beyond explicit slavery, placing all dark-skinned Mauritians in a slave caste. Delegated to the “dirty” jobs, free Haratines and Afro-Mauritians have limited access to food, clean water, education, healthcare, and income. This creates an impoverished environment that many regard as worse than enslavement.

The government actively perpetuates this system. The Global Slavery Index gives it a “C” grade – one of the worst in terms of its response to slavery. Government officials refute any claims that slavery still exists and praise themselves for eradicating it. However, most human rights organizations and international news sources suggest that the number of victims of slavery in the country is severely underestimated. International journalists are prevented from writing about slavery, and often need to enter Mauritania under false pretences to conduct secret investigations. Journalists who are caught are immediately arrested or expelled.

The government continues to crack down on anti-slavery activists. Since the 2007 criminalization law, more ac-

*The high proportion of female slaves was the result of the end of slave markets. New slaves could only be obtained by their bearing children*

tivists have been arrested than slave owners. Only one individual was found guilty of enslavement between 2007 and 2015: a slave owner who was sentenced to 6 months in prison. Three activists received the same sentence after drawing attention to the case.

In 2015, Mauritania passed a law declaring slavery a crime against humanity. It mandated sentences of 10–20 years and allowed third parties to sue on behalf of the victims. Nevertheless, national activist groups such as SOS Esclave and the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA) report that the police and judicial systems have not implemented these new mandates. Prominent activists continue to be arrested. In 2016, 13 IRA members were sentenced to up to 15 years in prison for taking part in a protest – a charge they deny.

The little progress that has occurred has been due to consistent activism and international pressure. Activists seek media attention, hold protests, help victims of slavery escape, and go to court. But real change must come from a fundamental shift in the political, legal, and religious fabric of Mauritania. Until then, Black Mauritians will continue to suffer. —

## MALI

# NO LAW AT ALL

**In parts of Mali, some citizens' fates are decided before they are born. Babies born to slave mothers are destined themselves to become slaves. Society is stratified into castes, with slaves at the bottom.**

**A**ddressing the question of slavery in today's Mali must start by identifying situations where people are exploited without the chance of opposing their situation or escaping from it. Naffet Keita, a researcher at the University of Bamako, gives a figure of 300,000 full-fledged slaves in Mali, but says the number is 850,000 if their descendants and emancipated slaves are included.

Slavery has a centuries-long history in Mali. At its peak in the 14th century, the Mali Empire covered not just a large part of modern Mali but also all or part of The Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania and Senegal. Its founder, the emperor Soundiata Keita (1190–1255) tried in the 13th century to regulate the issue of slavery through the charter of Kouroukan Fougá. This reflects the long-standing nature of the practice in West Africa.

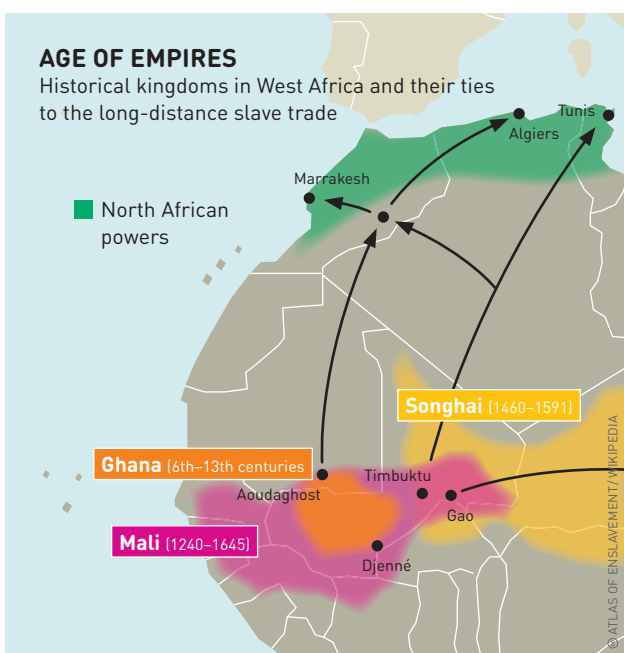
Slavery arose in several parts of what is now Mali. The ethnologist Yaya Sy has analysed the case of “internal” slavery in the west, in the area inhabited by the Soninké people. He believes that slavery in the area predates the first contacts between West Africa and the Arab-Muslim world in the 7th to 11th centuries. In the centre-east, the anthropologist Gilles Holder describes a “slave society”

among the Saman that settled in the Dogon region of central Mali between the 15th and 18th centuries. The anthropologist Jean Bazin identified the existence of two categories of slaves in the kingdom of Segou, established in the 18th century in part of present-day Mali: those belonging to the community (known as forobajon) who joined the army, and those assigned to do domestic work.

The growth of the triangular trade of slaves, manufactured goods and sugar across the Atlantic, which lasted until the 19th century, helped maintain a measure of legitimacy for slavery as an institution. It was only with the decree by the colonial administration on 12 December 1905 that slavery was officially abolished in French West Africa. The Malian constitution now states that “the human person is sacred and inviolable” and that “every individual has the right to life, liberty, security and personal integrity” (Article 1). This text adds that “all Malians are born and remain free and equal in rights and duties” (Article 2). Nonetheless, numerous experts and United Nations Special Rapporteurs, academics and civil society organizations denounce the descent-based slavery that persists to this day.

Despite the principle of equality among citizens laid down by the constitution, slavery continues in Mali among certain ethnic groups because society is divided into hierarchical categories that are regarded as homogenous. The groups that practise this social stratification include the Soninké, Malinké and Peul, which are divided into nobles, artisans, griots and slaves. The words used to identify slaves vary between groups. Among the Touareg, for example, the slave class is called “Bellas”, while among the Bambara it is the “Dyons”. The Soninké call slaves “komo”. This social group itself is subdivided according to the assignment of the individuals and the master to whom they are attached.

This form of slavery, organized today within ethnic groups, is essentially based on descent. Naffet Keita explains that servile status is transmitted from mother to child. Yaya Sy and Claude Meillassoux talk about this “mother's foot” rule that each slave is subject to after birth. In practice, slaves are assigned to menial tasks, such as service during wedding or baptism ceremonies. They are not permitted to marry nobles or their descendants. They are not allowed to run for political office, and they may not lead prayers. Moreover, in some ethnic

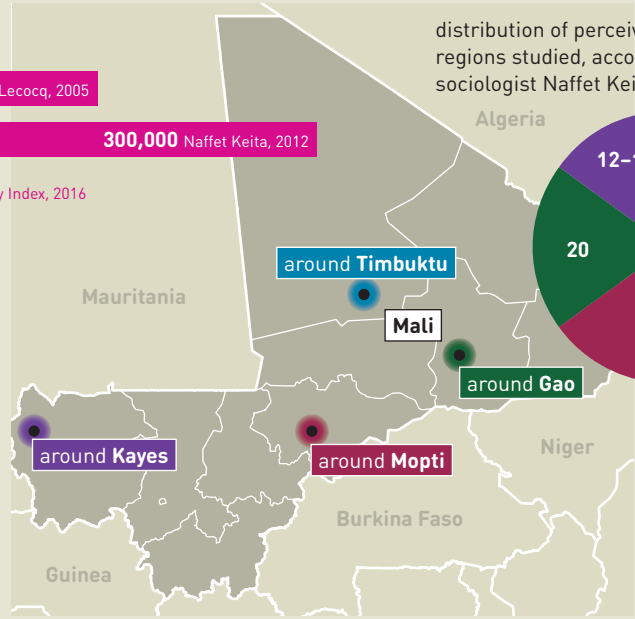


*After the Songhai Empire, the Alawid Sultans of what is now Morocco extended their rule to Gao, Timbuktu und Djenné*

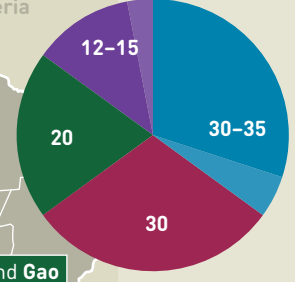
## HIDDEN, BUT EVERYWHERE

Ethnic breakdown and estimates of the extent of slavery in Mali

slaves, estimates



distribution of perceived slavery in four regions studied, according to the sociologist Naffet Keita, 2015, percent



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groups, those who try to contest their status may be bullied into submission, sometimes to death.

In 2018, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights pointed out that discrimination against certain ethnic groups or social categories still persisted in Mali, especially in certain Touareg communities. Touareg society is made up of clans that are structured along rigid hierarchical lines, with the darker-skinned Bellas at

*With its gold production, Mali might be less poor – but the resource is in international hands and is not oriented to the country's development*

*According to media reports, local rulers in Mali took advantage of Islamist raids in recent years to again enslave some of those who had been freed*

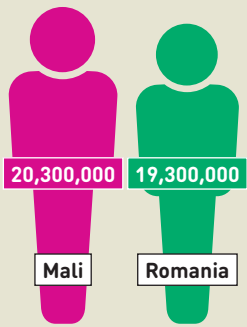
the bottom of the social scale. They are denied the dignity and rights accorded to them as human beings.

Unlike the neighbouring countries of Mauritania and Niger, Mali has not passed a specific law to fight slavery. An attempt to draft such a law was made between 2013 and 2017, but it was not successful. The degree of resistance to this attempt might be explained by the concerns that it raised among the country's various ethnic groups. —

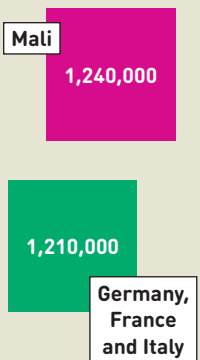
## IN THE LAND OF GOLD

Key data on Mali in international comparison

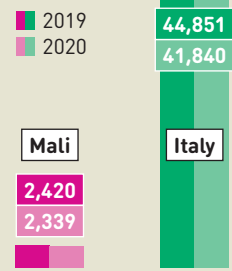
population 2020, estimate



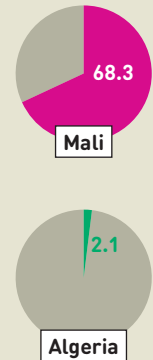
area, km<sup>2</sup>



economic performance per person, by purchasing power, before and during Covid-19 pandemic, in US dollars



population in multidimensional poverty, percent



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# BITTER CHOCOLATE

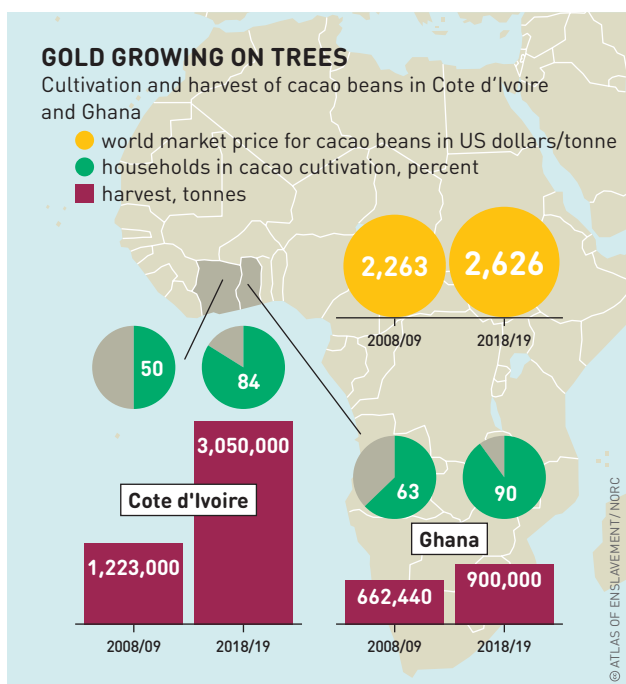
What the Western world or the international community regards as unacceptable may be seen as normal and even desirable by some. Child labour is an example. It has been largely eliminated in the developed world. But for many families in developing countries, it is a vital source of income and a way to teach children skills they will need later in life.

In the early 2000s, a series of documentaries and media reports asserted that hazardous child labour, child bondage, child trafficking and other child rights violations were widespread in cocoa farming in West Africa. These accounts gained huge public and policy interest for two reasons. First, more than 50 percent of the cocoa beans used to make chocolate originate from West Africa. Consumers, many of whom are becoming increasingly concerned about the source of their purchases, were appalled that their favourite chocolate bars, drinks and other delicacies might have bitter origins. Second, the reports coincided with a renewal of efforts to abolish international child labour and child trafficking. Notable among these were the adoption of ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 1999 and the 2000 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Research and media reports on the cocoa sector assert that many children work long hours and are exposed to hazardous pesticides and agrochemicals, and that injuries from tools such as cutlasses and chainsaws are common. In February 2021, six young adults claiming to have been used as slave labourers sued the world’s biggest chocolate companies – Nestlé, Cargill, Barry Callebaut, Mars, Olam, Hershey and Mondelez. They accused them of being complicit in their enslavement and that of other children on Ivorian cocoa farms. The US Supreme Court dismissed the cases against Nestlé and Cargill because US law does not apply in such instances. Such cases are part of the claims that child trafficking, child slavery, forced labour and other exploitative conditions are widespread in the sector.

In response to such concerns, a number of measures were taken to combat child labour and modern slavery in West African cocoa farming, beginning with the adoption of the Harkin-Engel Protocol – a 2001 international agreement to end the worst forms of child labour and forced labour in cocoa production. But the results have been less than convincing. An assessment by NORC, a research organization at the University of Chicago, in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire, the two main cocoa-producing countries, found no reduction in the prevalence of child labour between 2008/9 and 2018/19. On the contrary, it recorded a 10–14 percent rise in the number of children working in the sector. This came after more than a decade and over 300 million US dollars invested by governments, international cocoa trading and chocolate companies, civil society and others to fulfil a pledge to reduce the worst forms of child labour in West African cocoa farming by 70 percent by 2020.

It is argued that the findings represent a remarkable failure by leading chocolate companies to eradicate the practice from their supply chains. But it also reflects the complexity of children’s work in this sector. The assumption is that human trafficking, forced labour and modern slavery are widespread, but in fact, most children’s work in West African cocoa farming takes place in a family context. According to the International Cocoa Initiative, about 98 percent of the estimated 1.5 million children involved in the Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire cocoa industries work on family farms. NORC found that 81 percent of children working in the sector do so with their parents, and

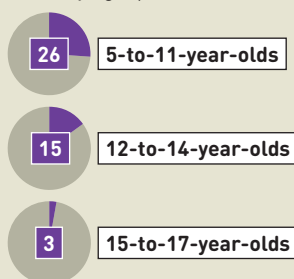


*Cacao cultivation is economically attractive. Its rapid spread has largely destroyed the natural forest in this part of West Africa*

## POISONOUS CHEMICALS AND SNAKEBITES

Extent of child labour, working conditions and school attendance in cacao production in Cote d'Ivoire und Ghana

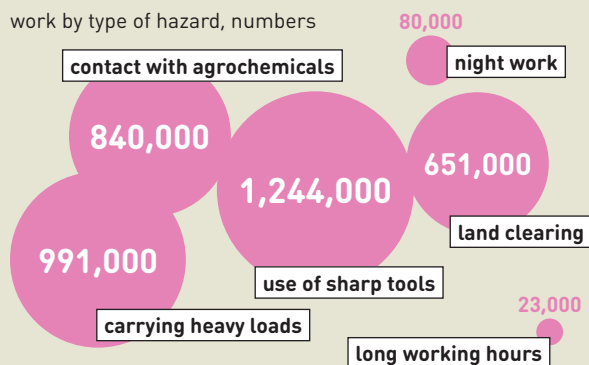
hours of illegal overtime work, by age, percent



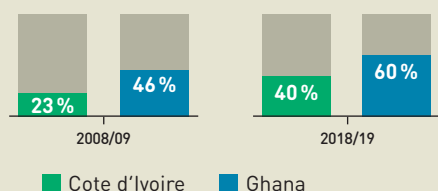
children in cacao cultivation with longer working hours than permitted or in hazardous work, numbers



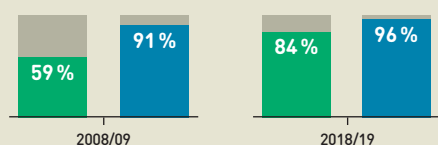
work by type of hazard, numbers



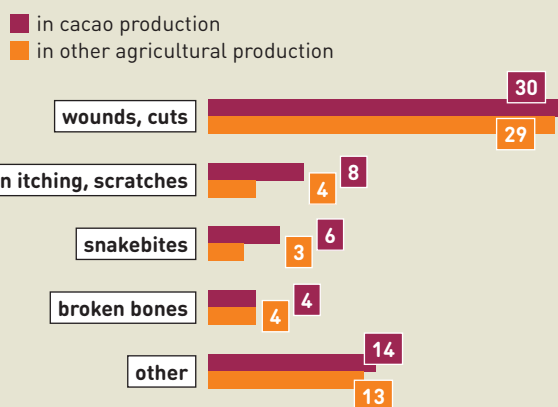
proportion of children who worked in the previous 12 months in cacao production



school attendance by children who had worked in cacao production in the previous 12 months



injured children, by type of injury, percent



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94 percent with either their parents or other relatives.

The “tall tales” on which some of the initial claims about the sector were based raise questions about the existence of widespread child slavery, servitude and human trafficking associated with the sector. Of course, exploitation, harm or abuse can occur even when children work with their families. But there are fundamental disagreements about normative notions on childhood, harm, exploitation and “bondage” that apply in cocoa-growing communities and those promoted by prevailing international, regional and national conventions, legal frameworks, policies and discourses. Many West African cocoa farmers see the involvement of children as a vital and virtuous aspect of their education, development and socialization. Instead of child abuse, exploitation or “enslavement”, the families see the children’s participation as an education or a means to teach them knowledge and skills that will benefit them as future cocoa farmers. Agriculture is seen as the most accessible and reliable source of income or livelihood, regardless of the risks.

So what needs to be done to respond to violence, exploitation or other harms that children are exposed to?

*Child labour has increased in both of the major cacao-growing countries. Despite this, school attendance has also gone up*

First, there is the need for greater circumspection, contextualization and a sound understanding of the dynamics of children’s work and the risks involved. Characterizing virtually any form of risk to which a child is exposed as trafficking, bondage, modern slavery or the like may attract attention, but it limits understanding and the success of interventions. Secondly, the multiple dangers and insecurities faced by children in the West African cocoa industry cannot necessarily be considered in isolation from the broader global political economy in which cocoa production, sale and consumption are situated. Better remuneration of farmers and their families for their produce can help build the resilience of households and economies, eventually making child labour unnecessary or undesirable. Such measures have also helped wealthy industrialized countries to eradicate hazardous child labour and provide state-supported welfare opportunities for their citizens. —



## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

# CONQUEST AND SUBJUGATION

The European colonization of the Americas was a disaster both for the indigenous population and for many Africans. The indigenous people were forced to work in mines and plantations, where huge numbers died from overwork and imported diseases. The colonialists replaced them with slaves captured in Africa. Despite repression, those who were exploited continued to resist.

Slavery – or conditions similar to it – existed in Latin America and the Caribbean before the arrival of the first Europeans. The Aztecs practised it, as did the Incas and several Caribbean peoples. Nonetheless, the conditions under which these slaves lived differed markedly from those of the Black Africans that the Europeans later brought to the Caribbean and the Latin American continent. Among the Aztecs, slaves who were mistreated had to be set free. Those who worked well were often released or could buy their freedom. In the Inca empire, unfree people known as Yanacuna were similar to migrant workers who did not belong to a particular village community, so had to serve as serfs without the community's protection. In the Caribbean islands, slaves were regarded

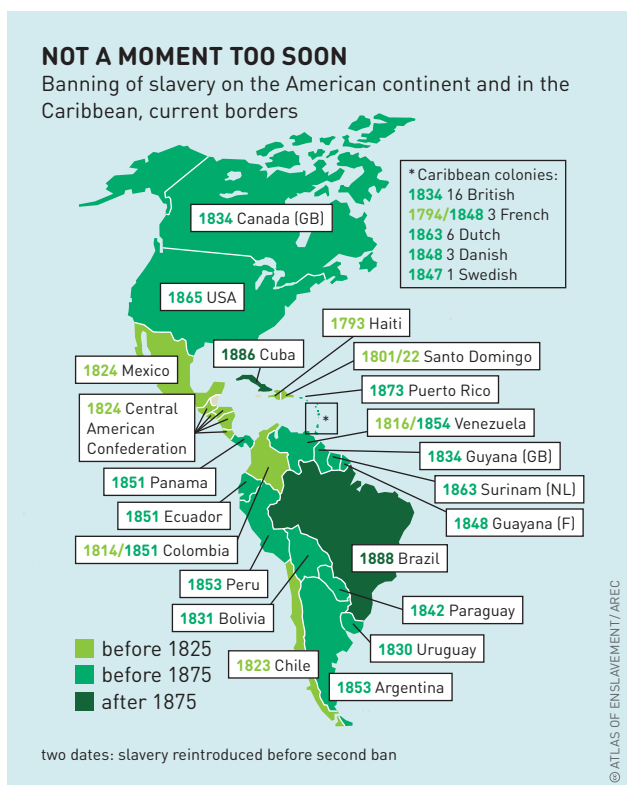
as personal servants to their masters; they were often released after a few years. Their numbers were small.

The mass enslavement of people in these regions started with the arrival of the Spanish. The conquistador Hernán Cortés, who arrived in what is now Mexico in 1519, enslaved tens of thousands of indigenous people within a decade. They died en masse, either from hard labour in the mines or through imported diseases. From 1526 on, the colonialists therefore imported over half a million slaves from today's Honduras and Nicaragua. In the former Inca Empire, too, indigenous slaves were maltreated to death. The Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano estimates that eight million forced labourers there died in gold and silver mines. The indigenous Taino population of Hispaniola, the island today divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, was once estimated at between 500,000 and a million people. Only 50 years after the arrival of Columbus in 1492, it had shrunk to just a few hundred as a result of forced labour and imported diseases.

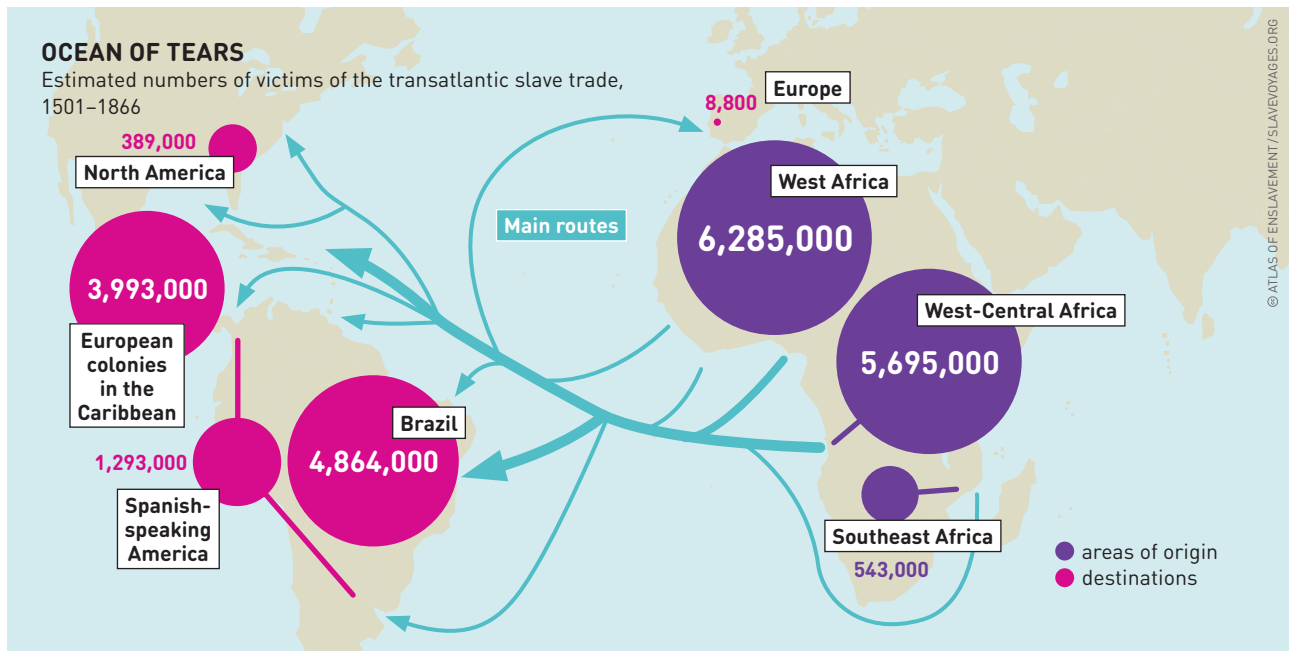
Because of the shortage of labour that resulted from these deaths, the Spanish began the mass import of Black slaves from Africa in 1580. Four years previously, Portugal had founded Luanda, in what is now Angola, the first big port for exporting slaves. Over the next three centuries, almost six million Africans were trafficked to the Americas – nearly half the continent's total of 12.5 million people. The biggest slave traders were Portugal (5.85 million abducted), Great Britain (3.25 million), France (1.4 million) and Spain (just over 1 million). The largest number of slaves came from Angola, the Congo basin and West Africa, plus over half a million from what is now Mozambique and Madagascar. The main destinations were Brazil (4.8 million), Jamaica (1 million) and Cuba (779,000).

One example: 774,000 slaves were transported to the French colony of Saint-Domingue, in the territory of what is now Haiti. At the end of the 18th century, there were 15 black slaves for every white settler in Saint-Domingue. They survived an average of just seven years. Their numbers, calculated from historical registers, must be regarded as an underestimate. Because the import of slaves was subject to tax, the official imports were accompanied by a difficult-to-estimate number of smuggled people.

The slaves were put to work in mines, on plantations growing sugarcane, coffee, cotton and indigo, as artisans,



*The slow move from legal to illegal: nearly 100 years passed after the abolition of slavery in Haiti before Brazil finally made it illegal*



or as domestic servants. The slightest transgressions were punished harshly. The most common punishment was a public whipping. Slaves were branded, mutilated, and slowly tortured to death. Despite all this, many resisted their circumstances.

The most common form of resistance was the refusal to work. The workers acted stupid, ate soil to make themselves ill, reopened old wounds, or mutilated themselves. From the start, individuals or whole groups escaped, settled in inaccessible areas and established settlements. Many of these escapees attacked plantations and freed further slaves. They were known as Cimarrones, the Spanish word for feral domestic animals, or, in English, “maroons”.

In the jungles of northeastern Brazil, escaped slaves founded the state of Palmares, covering about 6,000 square kilometres, in which tens of thousands of escapees lived. It resisted attacks by colonial armies for a hundred years until it was destroyed in 1694. After a long period of war, Great Britain was forced to conclude peace treaties with two large groups of maroons in Jamaica, granting them autonomous territories that have persisted to this day.

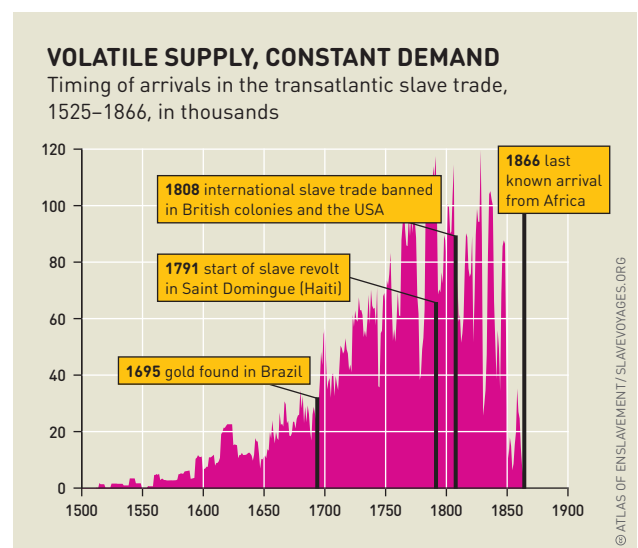
Right from the start, there were large and small slave revolts. The only one that was successful was that in Saint-Domingue. From 1794 to 1804, the enslaved Black people there fought a bloody war against France, resulting in their independence as the Republic of Haiti. The fact that slavery was abolished throughout Latin America and the Caribbean in the following decades was due less to humanitarian concerns than to the realization that free workers were now cheaper than the purchase and maintenance

*The growth in the slave trade was at first interrupted only by wars, which were fought at sea and posed a risk for business*

*According to detailed estimates, over 10 million people were transported to the Americas, almost half of them to Brazil*

nance of slaves. The last country to free its slaves was Brazil, which emancipated nearly a million people in 1888.

When slavery was abolished, the slave owners were usually compensated. France, for example, used the threat of war to extort independent Haiti of 90 million gold francs – worth more than 20 billion euros today. The slaves, on the other hand, were not compensated anywhere. Demands to do so were not made until the start of the 21st century. CARICOM, for example, adopted a programme in 2014 demanding comprehensive compensation for the descendants of slaves by the slaveholding nations, and the cancellation of international debts for countries that had suffered under slavery and colonialism. —



# CHILD LABOUR AMONG THE POOREST OF THE POOR

Haiti is rightly proud of the fact that it is the only nation to be founded after a successful slave rebellion. But slavery of another type is still prevalent throughout the country. Poverty makes rural families send their children to work in urban households.

The Caribbean nation of Haiti was founded in 1804 when it declared independence after overthrowing slavery through a rebellion led by the enslaved. Despite the legacy of this victory and the central place of freedom and humanity in Haitian culture, there now exists a widespread system of child domestic slavery, known as *restavèk*. This practice can be traced as far back as the early 1900s. In it, children as young as five are made to perform arduous and dangerous household tasks in the homes of strangers or extended family members. While placing children in people’s homes is not unique to Haiti, what defines the *restavèk* system is the exploitative nature of the work and the violence and abuse associated with it.

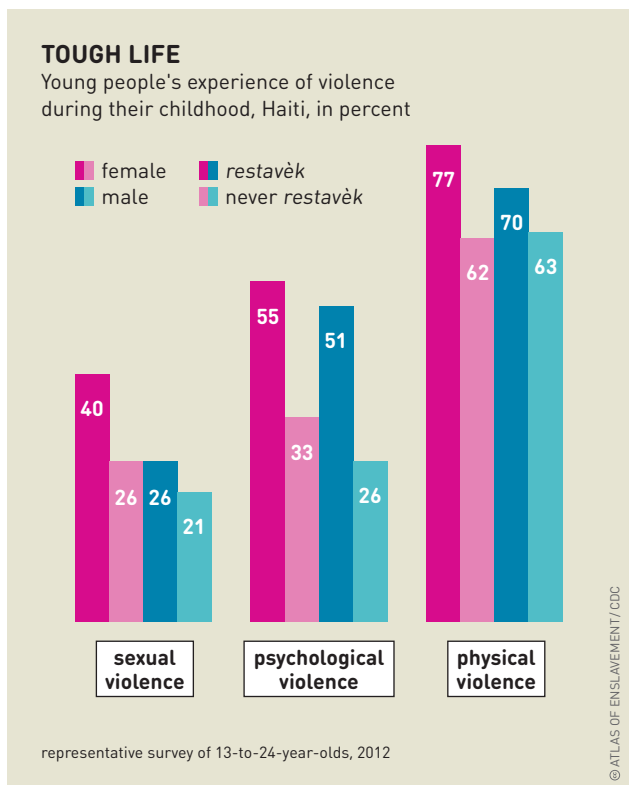
Extreme poverty is at the root of the system. Most

*restavèk* children come from families in rural areas where people have little or no access to employment, education and health care. Mountain communities are isolated and lack infrastructure. Many parents choose to send their children to urban areas where they can stay with a family and perform household work in exchange for food and, in some cases, schooling. Many parents are not aware of the severity of the situation they are sending their children into – and those who understand the risks weigh them against their children’s chances if they stay home, where food is scarce and education unattainable.

Although not all children in such arrangements experience abusive and violent treatment, the Creole word *restavèk* (translated as “lives with”) is used as a derogatory term for those in situations comparable to child slavery. Approximately two-thirds of children in the *restavèk* system are girls, and this is reflected in the gendered labour they perform, with tasks including fetching water, cooking, cleaning, shopping, and looking after other children in the household. For the most part, *restavèk* children themselves do not get to attend school as this would interfere with their work. Most schools in Haiti also charge fees, so this would be an added expense for the household.

The households that take in *restavèk* children may only be in marginally better financial positions than the rural homes the children come from. It is poverty that creates the household’s need for an unpaid worker. The tasks a *restavèk* child performs tend to be those for which women are typically responsible. But women in poor, urban households often need to spend most of the day outside the home in order to earn money – in markets or factories, or as street vendors. A *restavèk* child is taken in to assume these women’s household responsibilities, which often include arduous and dangerous work such as carrying heavy loads or cooking on open fires.

The element of violence in the *restavèk* system is one of its defining features. The children are typically exposed to physical, sexual and emotional abuse. As well as being subjected to long working days and heavy workloads, *restavèk* children tend to be treated with contempt by the members of the household they serve. Excluded from



*Both girls and boys who are restavèks experience significantly more violence than children who do not become restavèks*

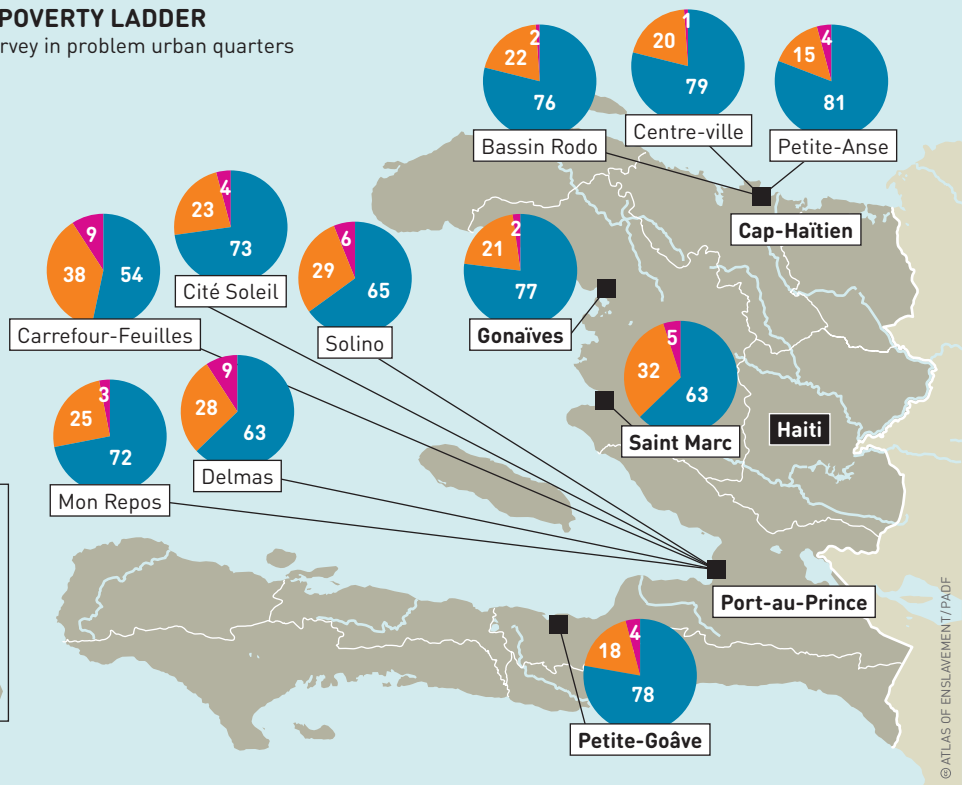


### AT THE BOTTOM OF THE POVERTY LADDER

Households with *restavèks*, survey in problem urban quarters and cities in Haiti, in percent

■ no *restavèks*  
■ one *restavèk*  
■ two or more *restavèks*

The survey of 1,458 households resulted in an estimated 225,000 *restavèks* in urban areas for 2007/08. The number is currently estimated at 300,000 for the whole of Haiti.



meals, dressed in frayed clothing, and with no care given to their hair or physical appearance, they survive on the household's discarded items and leftovers.

*Restavèk* children also serve as outlets for anger and frustration. They may have to endure physical beatings and punishments with whips, boiling oil or a hot iron. Their vulnerability and lack of value in much of society's eyes expose them to sexual abuse, including rape, which may lead to pregnancies and enforced and risky abortion attempts.

The number of *restavèk* children in Haiti is unknown, but estimates are upwards of 300,000. The introduction in 2014 of an anti-trafficking law and a national action plan has seen an increase in the state's efforts to address the issue. While some convictions have been made, the numbers remain extremely low, and the government has been criticized for doing too little. Moreover, the state lacks the resources to tackle this issue, which is just one of many social and economic challenges facing Haiti. Most of the interventions that do exist focus on removing children from the worst situations. However, family reunification is not always possible, nor does it address the factors which led to the trafficking in the first instance.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and women are especially affected. The intersection of

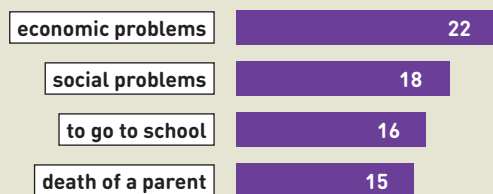
*Need is the most common reason for restavèks to leave their own families. They can improve their situation only if they go to school*

*Even in Haiti's poor urban areas, one-quarter of households had one restavèk. Five percent of households had two or more*

poverty and gender is central to the *restavèk* practice. In a worsening political and economic climate, addressing the root causes of this practice seems almost impossible. While efforts continue to scale up the application of the anti-trafficking law, children will still be vulnerable to the *restavèk* system as long as poverty, gender discrimination and access to education remain major issues. —

### REASONS TO GIVE UP HOME

Why *restavèks* leave their families, in percent



economic situation of the household of origin, numbers



survey: 761 cases, 2013/14

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## BRAZIL

# EXCELLENT FOR EXPLOITATION

**Poverty and huge income disparities make people desperate. Tempted by the promise of a better life, many in Brazil are tricked by unscrupulous agents and employers, and find themselves trapped as slaves. Lax enforcement makes it easy for the perpetrators.**

**F**ormally abolished by law in 1888, slavery – in its modern forms – still exists in Brazil. In 1995, the Brazilian state officially recognized this and has since taken a variety of legislative and institutional measures to combat slave labour on its territory. Nonetheless, translating measures into change on the ground remains a challenge.

The case of *Trabalhadores Fazenda Brasil Verde* in Brazil was the first case by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to address the issue of contemporary forms of slavery. The decision deals with the practices of forced labour and debt bondage on a cattle ranch in the municipality of Sapucaia, in Pará in northern Brazil. Recruitment agents brought the victims to the farm with the promise of attractive wages. Upon arrival, they were confronted with extremely low or no wages, an insurmountable debt they were said to owe the rancher, a ban on leaving the ranch under threat of death, and a lack of decent food, shelter or sanitary conditions.

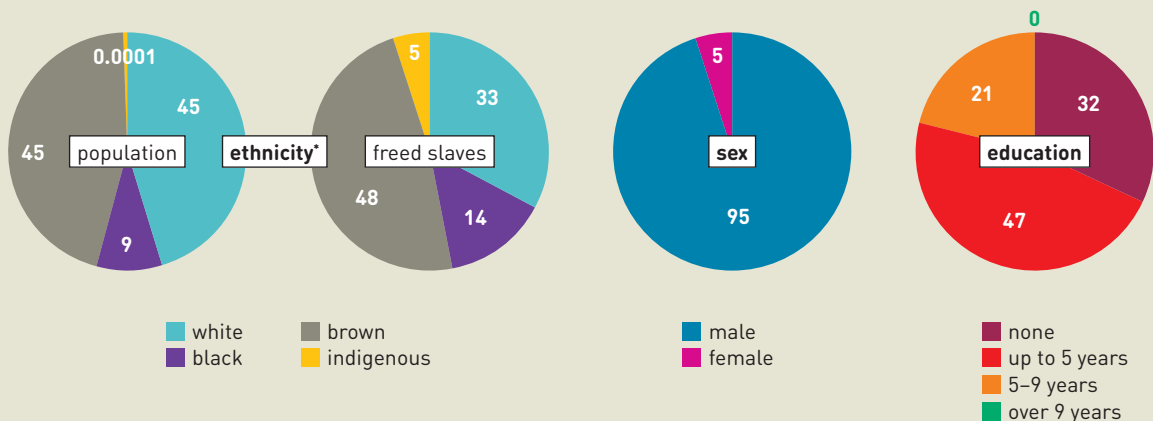
After a series of complaints about slave labour, labour inspectors and other state authorities inspected the ranch in 1989, 1993 and 1996, but without major consequences for the owner. In 1997, an inspection following a complaint by two workers who had escaped led to criminal proceedings against the recruitment agent, manager and ranch owner. The case against the owner was dropped after a financial contribution was made to a charitable cause. The cases against the others accused were time-barred, having been pending in court for almost 10 years. Three years later, another inspection, again after workers escaped, led to the rescue of more than 80 workers and civil and criminal charges against the owner. While the civil law case was settled by a judicial agreement, the criminal charges were not pursued after the records of the criminal proceedings disappeared.

The Inter-American Court found that the Brazilian state had violated the workers' right not to be subjected to slavery, forced labour or human trafficking, among several other rights, and ordered a number of reparations. These included the payment of compensation to 128 victims, the reopening of the criminal investigations and proceedings in relation to the incidents of 2000, and the obligation to

*Heavy manual farm labour by men is more likely to trigger an official intervention than the – often sexual – enslavement of women*

### BLACK, INDIGENOUS, MALE AND UNEDUCATED

Specific risks of enslavement by skin colour and social profile in Brazil, 24,835 freed slaves, 2003 to 2017, in percent



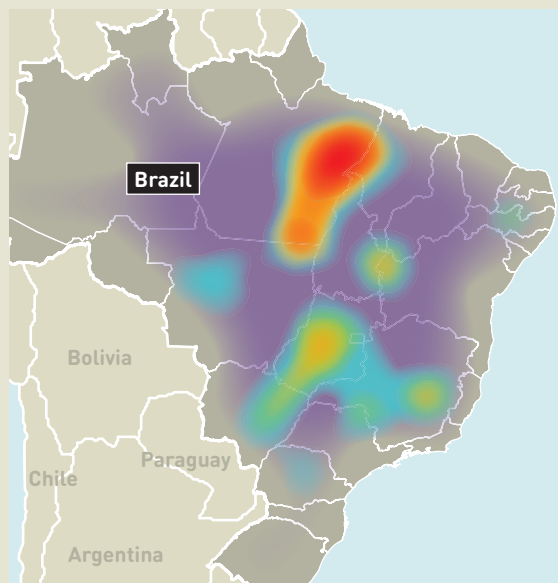
\*self-designation in a range of categories, official compilation

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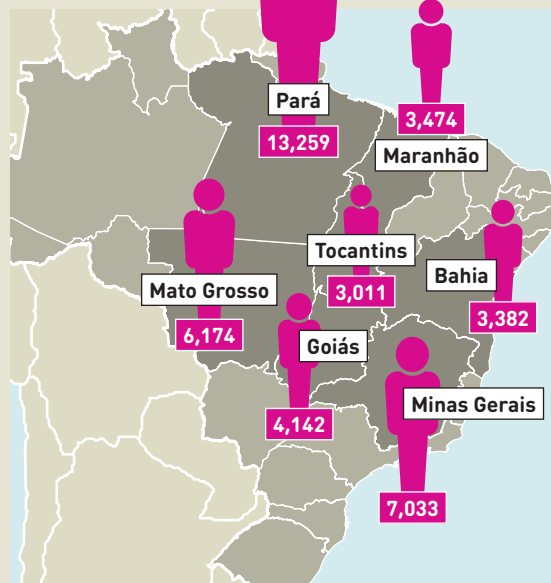
## FOR CATTLE AND COMMODITIES

Major geographical areas of people rescued from slavery in Brazil, 56,021 individuals, 1995–2021

frequency by district



cases by state



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exclude crimes of slavery and analogous forms from the statute of limitations by amending the relevant criminal law provisions.

This case is not unique. Thousands of workers across Brazil are subjected to slave labour, and mechanisms to prevent such practices and hold perpetrators to account are ineffective. In the last 25 years, more than 55,000 workers have been rescued throughout Brazil. Until 2013, slave labour was employed mainly in rural sectors, such as ranching, coal mining and the cultivation of sugarcane, soybeans and cotton. Since then, instances of modern slavery have also occurred in urban areas, especially in the construction and garment industries.

The victims of slave labour in Brazil are mostly men of African descent who come from regions with high poverty and illiteracy rates. They are predominantly internal migrants who leave their homes for agricultural expansion areas or large cities in search of new prospects, or are lured by false promises from recruiting agents. They often do not identify themselves as being in a slavery-like situation, even though they are subjected to degrading conditions, compelled to work exhaustingly long hours, forced into debt bondage, or deprived of their documents. If they are released, they often return to a situation of social and economic vulnerability, so may again take up work that throws them back into the cycle of forced labour. Indeed, between 2003 and 2017, nearly 2 percent of the workers that were rescued from conditions akin to

*The most slaves were discovered in the state of Pará. Land clearance and gold mines are major threats to the rainforest*

slavery found themselves in such conditions at least one more time. This is aggravated by the fact that except for 3 months of unemployment insurance, policies are lacking to provide social protection to the victims or to interrupt the slavery cycle.

While the Brazilian state has made legislative and institutional progress in the fight against slavery over the past 20 years, including the Special Mobile Inspection Group and the National Slave Labour Eradication Plans of 2003 and 2008, strengthening the responsible agencies is more necessary than ever. Since the Court decision, key public authorities have suffered severe budget cuts, including the Federal Public Ministry, one of the bodies responsible for prosecuting cases against perpetrators, and the Special Mobile Inspection Group. In fact, the budget for combating slave labour in Brazil was reportedly reduced by 41 percent in 2020, making it lower than at any other point in the past 10 years.

Almost 5 years after the Court's decision in the case of *Fazenda Brasil Verde vs. Brazil*, the Brazilian state is still far from implementing the decision and stopping such exploitation. Pressure from domestic and international civil society is still vital to eliminate modern forms of slavery in Brazil. —

## AUSTRALIA

# KIDNAPPED TO RANCHES AND CANEFIELDS

Was Australia home to slavery in the 19th century? Historians disagree on the subject. What is clear: tens of thousands of Pacific Islanders came to work on plantations and livestock farms in Queensland between 1863 and 1906. Some came willingly, while others, especially early on, were kidnapped or brought to Australia against their will. All endured harsh conditions.

**T**he issue of slavery in Australian history is a contentious one. Historians disagree on whether the practice of transporting Pacific Island labourers into Australia in the latter part of the nineteenth century was a form of slavery. This labour trade is sometimes known as “blackbirding” – a practice whereby Pacific islanders were kidnapped and brought to Australia for agricultural and pastoral work. Historians’ debates focus on the recruitment of the large majority of labourers, on their treatment when they arrived, and whether this constituted slavery or indentured labour.

The Pacific Island labour trade involved the transportation of Pacific Islanders by European settlers for

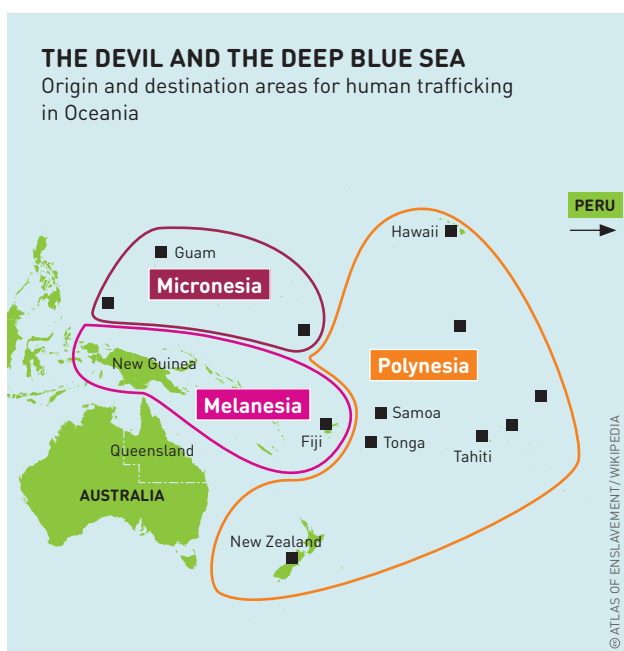
agricultural and pastoral work in Queensland, Fiji, New Caledonia, the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), German New Guinea, Samoa and Hawaii. By far the biggest destination was the Australian colony of Queensland. This trade operated from 1863 until 1906 and imported an estimated 62,475 Pacific Islanders into Australia. This figure is based on labour contracts, so the actual number of individual recruits would have been less as many returned more than once.

In the early days, some ship captains took advantage of the Pacific Islanders, resulting in highly-publicized scandals. In 1867, for example, a Brisbane-based ship kidnapped 282 labourers in the New Hebrides and the Loyalty Islands, using intimidation and violence such as burning local islanders’ houses and crops.

Missionaries complained about the kidnappings and made accusations of a slave trade being conducted in the Pacific. This led to uproar in Britain and the Australian colonies. Britain applied pressure on the Queensland government to regulate the labour trade. In 1870, ships were legally required to have government agents on board. Further complaints resulted in strengthening the regulations these agents had to follow, such as informing recruits about the conditions of their service. In 1872, the British Parliament passed the Pacific Islanders Protection Act, which introduced the licensing of labour trade ships and extended British legal jurisdiction over the Pacific Islands.

After the British annexation of Fiji, a second Pacific Islanders Protection Act of 1875 gave Queen Victoria the same power over her subjects in non-annexed islands. This reduced the number of kidnappings. The islanders became better acquainted with the trade and acquired firearms, making them better able to negotiate their labour terms rather than having to succumb to force.

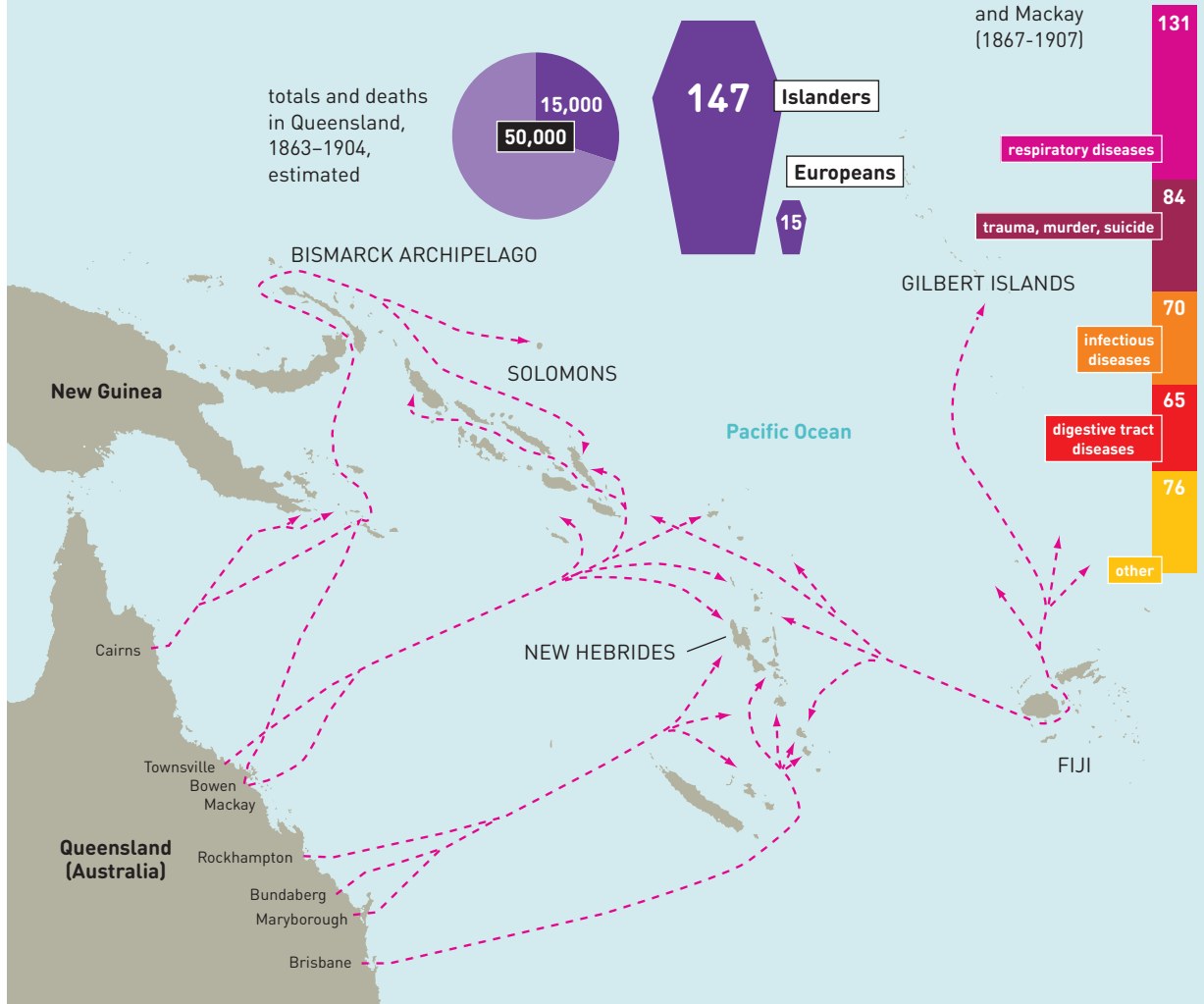
These changes led some historians to revise the traditional interpretation that the Queensland labour trade involved a continuous period of kidnappings. There is little dispute that kidnapping was common in the early years. But this changed later with the new laws and the islanders’ experience with the traders. Indeed, many islanders had a long history of experience with Europeans, going



*To fetch labourers for Queensland, ships’ captains headed mainly to Melanesia and Micronesia. For Hawaii and South America, they sought victims in Polynesia*

## DEATH DUTIES

Destinations of over 800 voyages in Melanesia for the forced recruitment of workers, mainly to work on farms in Queensland and Fiji, 1860 until 1910s



back to the start of the sandalwood trade in the 1830s. They had reasons for offering their services, such as the money they earned. But kidnappings continued. Queensland ships were involved in another kidnapping scandal in 1883–84 when the islands off eastern New Guinea were opened for recruiting.

Research suggests that a large majority of islanders in the Queensland labour trade may not have been coerced into service against their will, or at least against the will of their communities, But there is also debate about their treatment once they arrived in Australia. Different accounts reflect different time periods. Conditions were harsh in the early years of plantation work in the 1870s and 1880s, but they improved over time. They were reportedly better for workers in Queensland than for those on the German plantations in Samoa or in the French nickel mines of New Caledonia, or for indentured Indian labourers in Fiji. But the wage paid to islanders of £6 per year was well below that paid to white workers, and the

*More than one-quarter of the recruits died on the farms of northeastern Australia – often of infections, hypothermia, unhygienic conditions and exhaustion*

islanders were tied to their employers for a period of three years. The death rate among the islanders in 1879–1886 was 82 per 1,000. This fell to 35 per 1,000 in the period 1893–1906.

The labour trade ended when the six Australian colonies – New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania – united to establish the Commonwealth of Australia. In 1901 the new Commonwealth Parliament introduced the Immigration Restriction Act, which began what became known as the White Australia Policy. A related law was the Pacific Island Labourers Act, which banned the import of island labour from 1904. Except for a few thousand longer-term residents, all Pacific Islanders in Australia were deported in 1906. —



## FISHING

# CAUGHT IN THE NET

On land, it is hard enough for even the most diligent, well-organized authorities to fight modern slavery. It is that much harder when the forced labour happens out at sea – far from inspections and in international waters.

**M**odern slavery in the commercial fishing sector takes the form of forced labour and debt bondage. These sit at the extreme end of the spectrum of labour exploitation. While the scale of modern slavery at sea is difficult to quantify due to its hidden nature, evidence suggests that it is pervasive. The expansion of the industry to meet the growing global demand for seafood, combined with a general lack of regulation, has led to overfishing and the depletion of fish stocks. The need to earn profits despite the higher costs associated with fishing at greater distances increases the risk of exploitation. Forced labour, debt bondage and other forms of exploitation are used to cut the labour costs that comprise up to half of total vessel expenses.

In 2015, a series of exposés on the exploitation of migrant workers aboard Thai fishing vessels brought modern slavery in the sector to the fore. Subsequently, the European Commission threatened trade sanctions against the Thai government, and international scrutiny intensi-

fied. But modern slavery is not confined to one country or region's fisheries, and national fleets are not uniformly at risk. Most high-risk fisheries are in Asia, home to more than two-thirds of the world's fishing fleets and 85 percent of all workers employed in the global fishing industry.

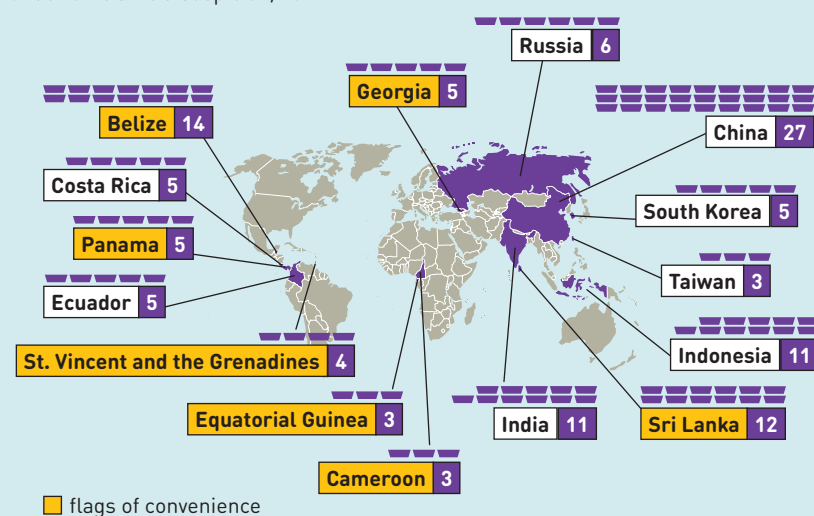
Many of the migrant workers who report exploitation aboard fishing vessels are from Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Myanmar. They describe excessive working hours, unsafe practices and squalid living conditions. They also report the neglect of health conditions, starvation and restriction of water, psychological, physical and sexual abuse, and physical confinement. Some have witnessed murder and crew members being thrown overboard. Vessel operators use threats, deception, violence and the withholding of pay and identity documents to maintain constant control over the workers. They confiscate the workers' documents and control their wages, so that even when the boats are docked, the workers risk deportation or destitution if they escape.

The fishing sector employs large numbers of migrants, who are particularly vulnerable to debt bondage because they have to repay "debts" accrued during their recruit-

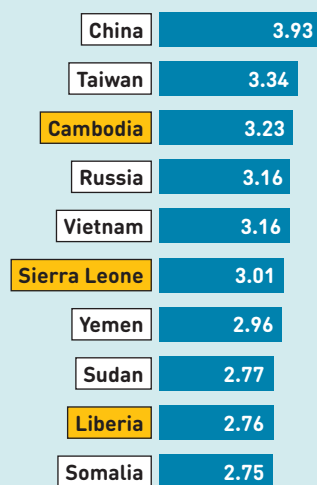
*IUU vessels are sought because they cause serious ecological damage. They are also suspected of being the locations of forced labour*

### "ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, UNREGULATED" – THE IUU FISHING FLEET

Top 15 flags used by vessels and numbers of cases in the international list of 325 vessels under official IUU suspicion, 2021

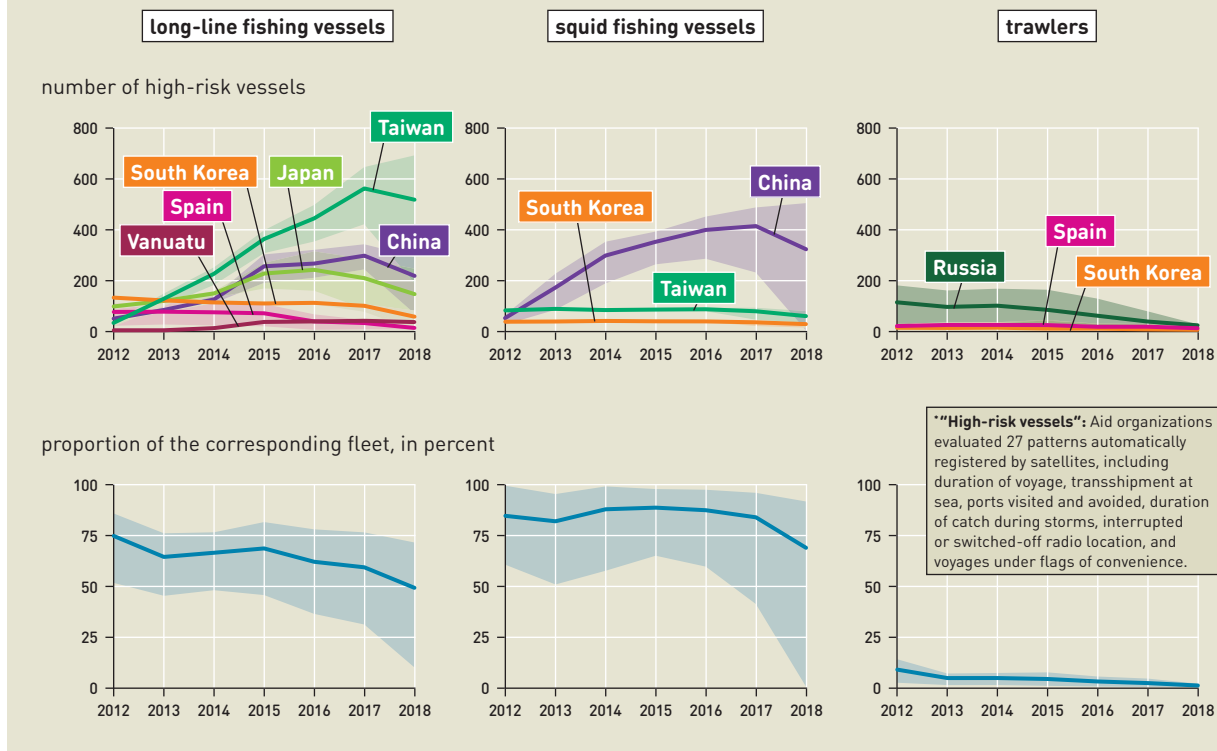


the 10 lowest-ranking countries in the IUU Fishing Index of 40 indicators, 2019



## SATELLITES AGAINST FORCED LABOUR

Fishing vessels with movement patterns that indicate possible modern slavery (“high-risk vessels”), of 16,261 industrial fishing vessels observed globally



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ment. While many willingly accept work aboard fishing vessels, some are deceived with promises of better pay. Excessive sums may be deducted from their wages to cover transport, daily living costs and emergency expenses, leaving them with little real income.

In many jurisdictions including Brunei, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, India, Lithuania, Norway, Singapore and Taiwan, national labour laws do not extend to migrants in the fishing industry, leaving them without legal protections. In Thailand, for example, migrant workers are legally barred from forming their own unions – though strong trade union representation is linked to lower levels of forced labour. Many migrants are undocumented, so cannot benefit from labour laws where they do exist. Many do not understand their rights due to language barriers. They may not report on or identify their abusers, and they may be reluctant to escape because they fear being deported or prosecuted.

Modern slavery touches many economic sectors. But fishing is especially difficult due to the remote nature of the work, which makes oversight and enforcement costly and logistically difficult. The lack of adequate fishery management is compounded by the need for coordination among several governments and authorities – the coastal state, vessel registration state, port state, and the migrant workers’ countries of origin. Oversight is further reduced for those aboard vessels on the high seas and outside any national jurisdiction. Restrictions imposed to

*Between 57,000 and 100,000 people could be employed on high-risk vessels – mainly in Asia*

stem the spread of Covid-19 have further reduced protections for workers and increased the risk of exploitation. For example, vessels may not be permitted to dock; workers may not be allowed to leave a docked vessel, they may not be able to return home, and there may be fewer labour inspections.

Modern slavery aboard vessels is often masked by the practice of transshipment. This involves transferring the catch, crew and supplies between vessels at sea; it is done to reduce the need for fishing vessels to visit port. This also enables vessels to evade inspection and allows the prolonged isolation of workers, who may remain at sea for months or even years on end.

Flags of convenience are another problem. All vessels must be registered under a “flag state”, which is responsible for enforcing international law and working standards on registered vessels. But using a flag of convenience allows operators to bypass labour regulations by registering vessels under the flag of a foreign nation with lax rules. As awareness of the risks posed by these practices grows and fishing nations face growing international pressure to protect the safety of workers in the industry, some governments have taken action to ban or regulate transshipment and flags of convenience. —

## CAMBODIA

# BUILDING BLOCKS BUT DESTROYING LIVES

It is all too easy for farmers to fall into a cycle of debt from which they have little hope of escape. One bad harvest, and they must give up their land and seek work elsewhere. Without education or formal skills, unscrupulous employers take advantage.

**D**ebt bondage, the most common form of modern slavery globally, is prevalent in brickworks across Asia. In Cambodia, some 10,000 men, women and children work in 450 brick kilns that feed the country's construction boom. Construction, funded both locally and by foreigners, has been at the core of Cambodia's economic success over the past two decades, and the construction industry is now the second most important growth driver in the country, after the garment sector. While modern slavery has been highly publicized in construction for major sporting events from Qatar to Brazil, labour exploitation is a much broader problem. It is integral to significant portions of the construction industry worldwide.

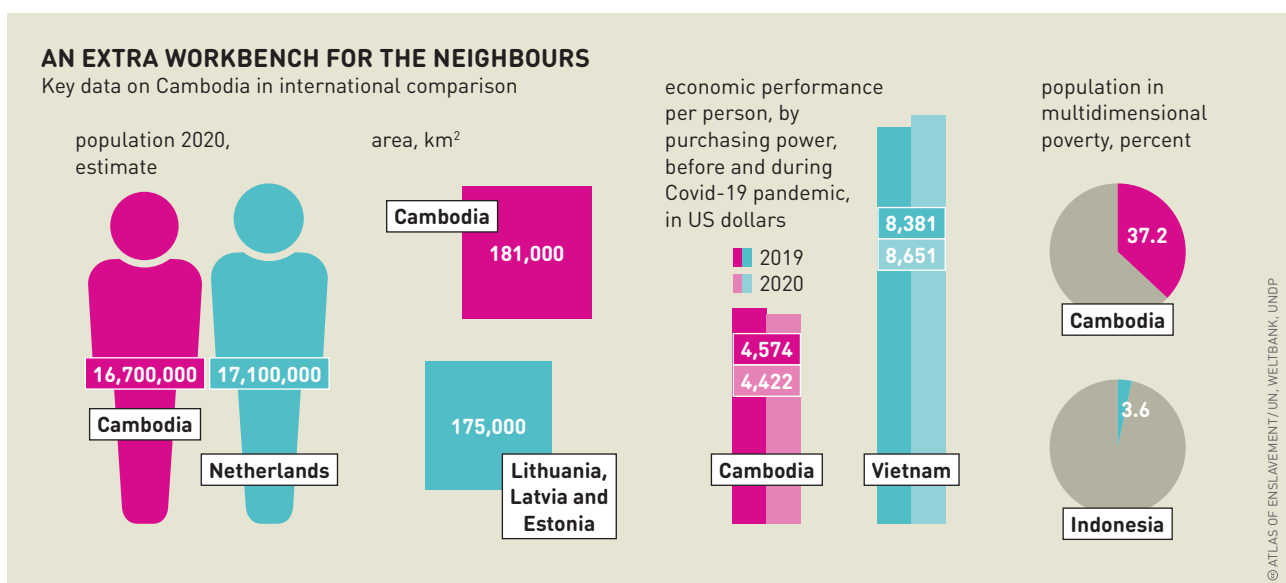
Like most industrial workers in Cambodia, brick workers are mainly internal migrants. They begin their journey to the kiln as farmers and labourers from across rural Cambodia. They fall into debt after borrowing from micro-finance schemes to deal with flooding, drought or illness. Lenders charge high interest rates and demand payment

regardless of whether a harvest has failed. Unable to service their loans, borrowers have little choice but to accept a loan from a brick factory.

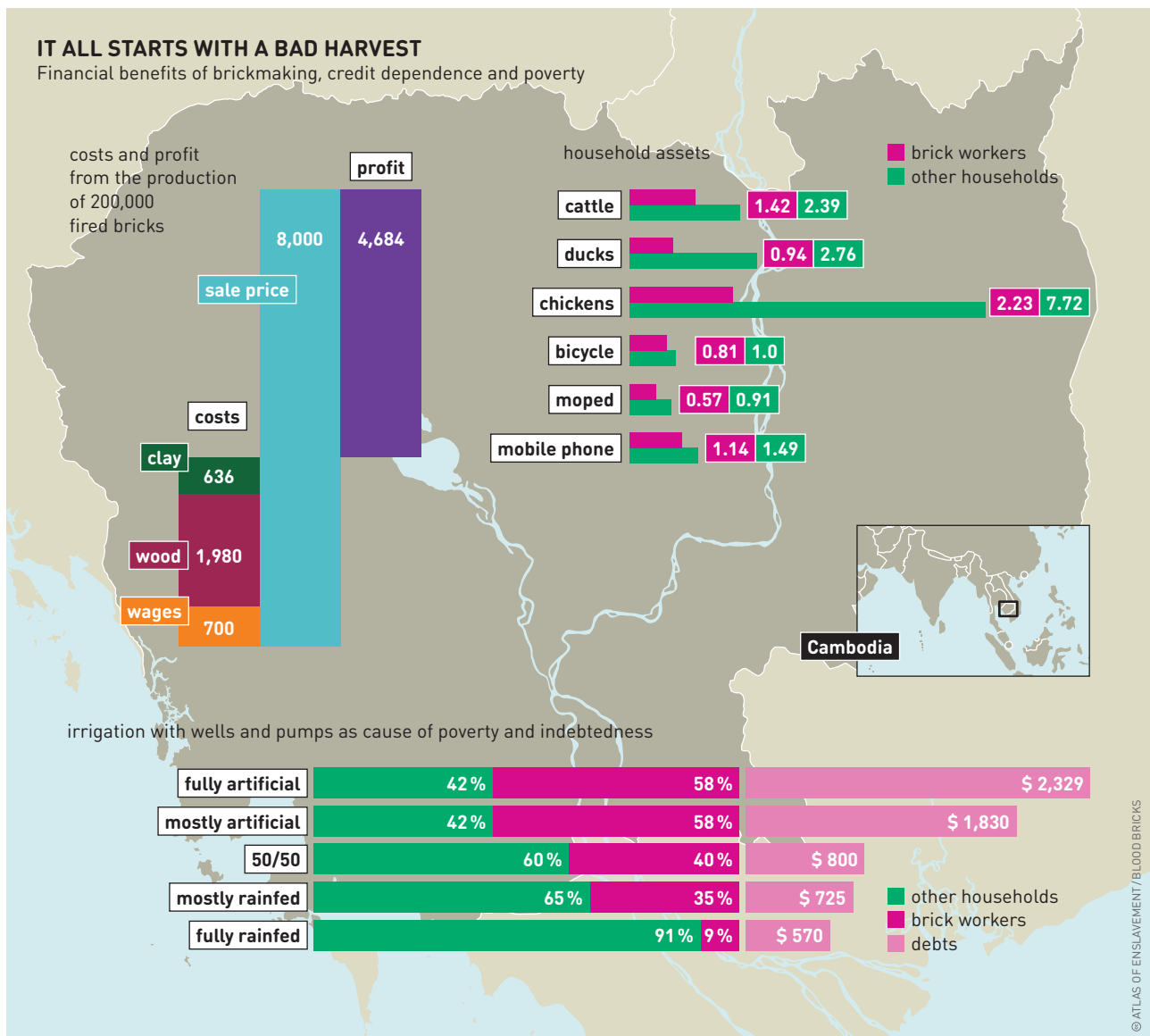
In this way, whole families are forced to move to brickworks and to toil for very low wages to repay their debt to the brickworks owner, over years and even generations. Children as young as 12 have to make bricks. The workers are commonly prevented from leaving, and are arrested and brought back if they try to escape. Such debt bondage is a violation of national laws and international human rights treaties to which Cambodia is a signatory.

At the brickworks, adults and children use hoes to break up large clumps of wet clay, and clean it by removing dirt and stones with their hands. The clay is then carried and fed by hand into automated moulding machines – though the level of mechanization varies from one brickworks to another. The workers push the wet clay into a rotating metal mould. They then carry the wet, moulded bricks out and stack them to dry. The bricks are loaded into the kilns, and after firing, they are carried out of the kiln to cool. Workers use wheelbarrows to take the bricks to the buyers' trucks, which transport them to building sites in Phnom Penh.

*Textile companies from Thailand and Vietnam are big investors in Cambodia. The attraction: lower wages than at home*







Many of the kilns are fuelled by wood brought from northern Cambodia. Some of this wood is the product of illegal logging, and the workers must unload it at night to evade detection. The kilns also burn garment waste sourced from Cambodia's main export industry, which supplies European fast-fashion retailers. The workers stoking the fires are not provided with masks; they use cloths to protect their mouths and eyes. But the cloths, like the waste that is burned, often contain toxic chemicals such as bleach, formaldehyde and ammonia. Heavy metals, PVC and resins are also commonly involved in textile dyeing and printing. Burning this material, often for several weeks at a time, harms the respiratory health of the workers who live on site. The workers suffer injuries and long-term health problems from labouring in these conditions and from living in shacks made of corrugated metal just metres from the kilns. Unsafe machinery, extreme temperatures, brick dust, toxic smoke, and overwork contribute to their ill health.

Despite their low wages and poor treatment, some

*Elsewhere, artificial irrigation is a sign of high profitability. In Cambodia it is often an indicator of poor land*

brick workers are able to make money during the dry season. Yet the rainy season brings a different set of conditions. Brickworks are typically unroofed, and workers have to cover the unbaked bricks to keep them dry. Rain can stop production altogether. Forbidden from leaving the kiln site to earn money elsewhere, the workers sometimes need to again borrow from the kiln owner to cover their daily expenses.

The brickmakers have little choice to work in the brickworks. They have no other way to earn money, given the unemployment and poverty in their rural areas of origin. Of the many jobs that these migrants do both in Cambodia and abroad, brickmaking is seen as one of the least desirable. It is an industry renowned for low pay, the indebtedness of the workforce, and its dangerous and difficult working conditions. —

## NORTH KOREA

# STATE-SPONSORED TRAFFICKING

Most countries around the world have banned slavery and forced labour. North Korea, however, actively engages in these practices, both at home and by sending workers abroad to work long hours for next to no wages. The government in Pyongyang pockets the profits and ruthlessly punishes anyone who protests.

The number of North Koreans who work abroad has risen greatly over the last few decades: estimates range from 50,000 to 150,000–200,000. The UN sanctions that took effect in December 2019 formally ended this, although it is clear that the countries to which most North Korean workers are sent – China, Russia and the Gulf states – have not been enforcing these sanctions, or enforce them only partially, and continue to work with North Korea as a partner.

It is no coincidence that North Korean workers often end up in the countries that traditionally have close ties with the government in Pyongyang. North Korean workers have worked, or still work, in more than 40 countries, especially China, Russia, a number of African and Middle Eastern states, the EU, and Mongolia.

A crucial element of North Korean labour abroad is that it is state-controlled from beginning (selection, training, deployment) to end (employment, payment, repatriation). The work practices strongly resemble human trafficking. Even when selected workers have gone abroad voluntarily, they have been fraudulently informed about

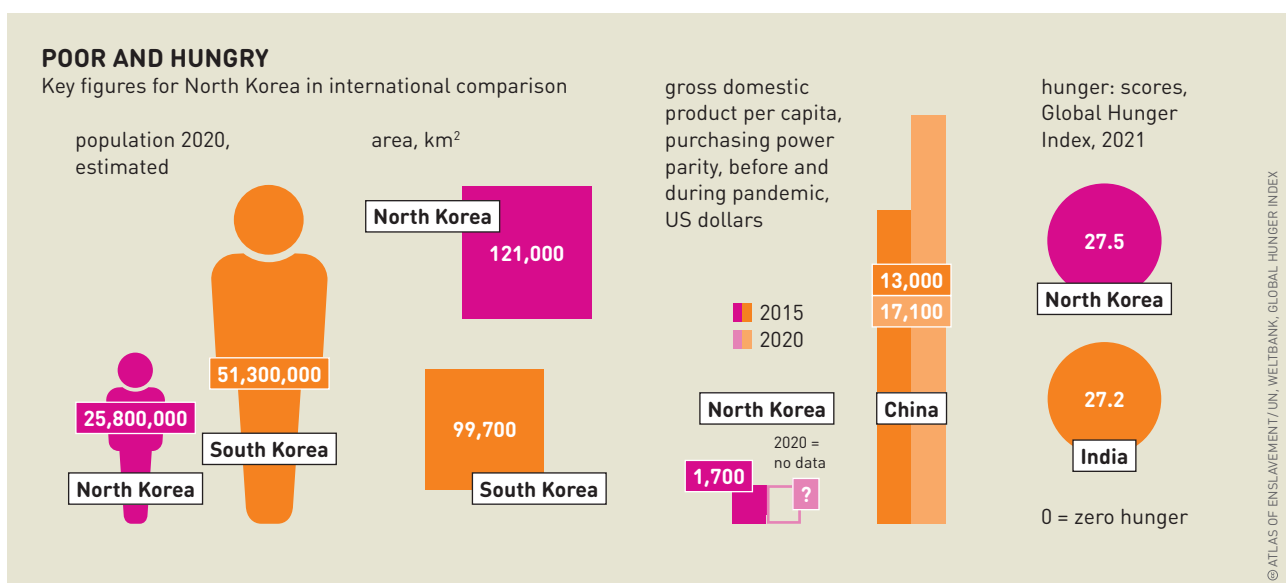
what is expected of them, how much they will earn, or what rights they have in the host country.

Once they arrive, they cannot say no to work or to any other demands made on them. Disobedience – or worse, attempting to leave – leads to punishment on the spot and later at home, where their families also face danger. Passports are immediately taken by the managers on arrival and kept in the North Korean embassy or a similar place. In the EU, workers receive neither an individual employment contract nor an individual bank account, although both are required by law.

Depending on the place of deployment, regional differences can be seen in the treatment and working conditions of North Korean workers. But the same structure underlies all work assignments – whether in Malta, Berlin, Dandong or Dakar – and there are recurring elements. The main reason for hiring North Korean workers is that they work for prices far below the market level. In Poland, shipbuilding companies deliberately exploit this by employing North Korean welders.

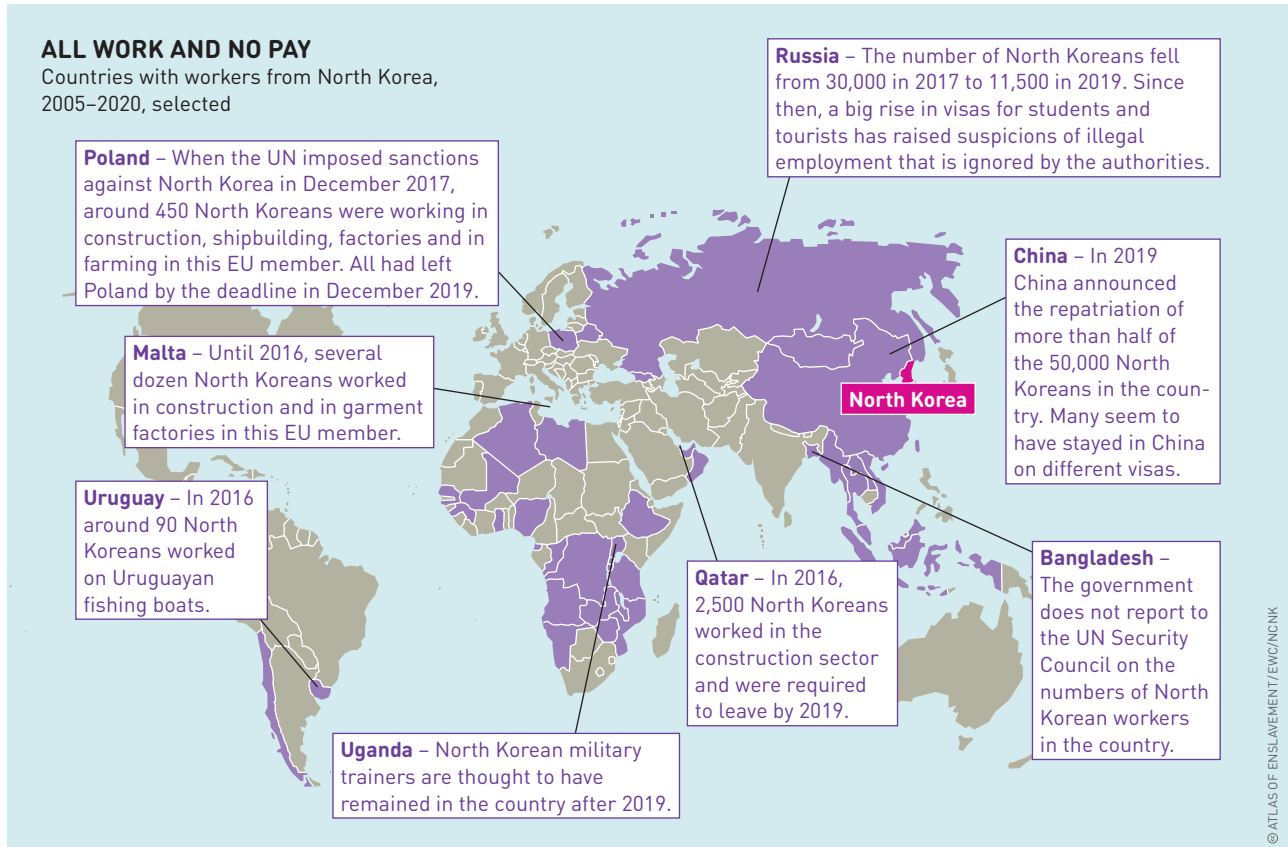
Moreover, the agreed wage is never what the workers themselves receive. Up to 90 percent of wages are withheld – or even 100 percent, as in Kuwait, where in 2016 this caused so much unrest among the workers that they were hastily taken back to North Korea. The percentage withheld varies from place to place. Some of the mon-

*UN sanctions further isolate the already closed society of North Korea. Its true economic situation is difficult to discern*



## ALL WORK AND NO PAY

Countries with workers from North Korea, 2005–2020, selected



ey is sent directly to the North Korean state, and some is pocketed – without state sanction – by managers on the ground. Interviews with former workers show how dire their financial situation was. They often could not save any money at all to go home, and their livelihoods were precarious.

Another reason employers find expatriate North Korean workers attractive is that they routinely work extremely long hours. This seems to be the case everywhere. A working day of 12 hours is normal and often extends to 15–16 hours. There are cases of people working around the clock to meet deadlines. Overtime is often not paid separately to workers.

The low costs associated with hiring workers from North Korea extend to their tools, working conditions and protective clothing. Both in Russia (during the construction of the Zenith Stadium in St Petersburg, for example) and in the shipyards in Poland, workers have worked without safety shoes and hard hats. It has become common knowledge among North Koreans back home that working abroad can mean returning in a coffin. This changed somewhat after 2014, after a UN Commission of Inquiry issued a report on human rights violations in North Korea. But even after this, many North Korean workers, such as those in Polish shipyards, continued to lack the necessary safety equipment, which led to one employee burning to death.

The structure of global posting and hiring of North Korean workers uses a system of subcontracting, whereby

*North Koreans were, and sometimes still are, put to work in construction and agriculture, as well as in information technology and in hospitals*

joint ventures between representatives of the Pyongyang government and local businessmen aim at maximum returns in terms of labour from an absolute minimum investment in wages, accommodation and food. The lowest possible wages, the squeezing of additional costs and maximum exploitation of the workers through unpaid overtime are crucial elements of this structure. The North Korean state and the local employer share a common interest in paying the workers as little as possible.

This structure has local variations around the world, but these core elements are present everywhere. Without them, North Korean workers would lose their appeal abroad. In most cases it is not their expertise (with the exception of, for example, building large bronze monuments), but the fact that they are much cheaper than other workers and are unable to say no, that makes them desirable.

The role of the state is worth noting. Although the management of labour abroad is supervised by various North Korean enterprises, departments and military units, the imperative to send labour abroad comes from the government. So do the administrative preparations, maintaining contacts with host countries, selecting the workers, setting the parameters, and receiving the money they have earned. —

## AFGHANISTAN

# GIRLS UNDER PRESSURE

Large numbers of young people around the world – many of them underage – are compelled to marry against their will. There are many reasons this might happen: their parents may want to settle debts, make peace, or reduce the costs of marriage. Girls in particular can be forced to spend their lives with a husband who may be much older than they are. A range of such practices are found in Afghanistan.

In 1980, Afghanistan signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which calls for men and women to have the same right to enter into marriage and to freely choose a spouse. It ratified the Convention in 2003. Another two decades have passed, and despite consistent efforts by NGOs and other actors, forced marriages continue to occur. Cultural reasons are often given as an explanation, but a closer look reveals the complex nature of decision-making around forced marriage and the range of factors that contribute to it.

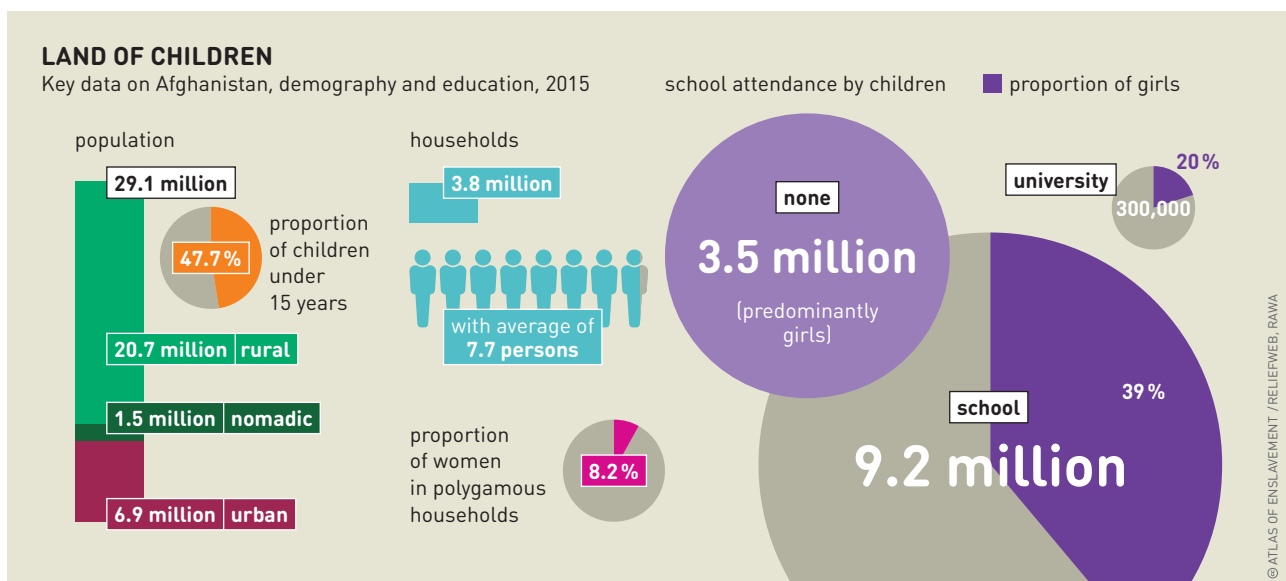
Forced marriage is any marriage in which at least one of the parties has not themselves expressed their “full and free consent”. In Afghanistan, some estimate that the proportion of forced marriages may be as high as 60–80 percent. This includes those involving children, who, under international law, cannot consent to marriage. The 2016–17 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey found that 28.3 percent of 20–24-year-olds were married before the

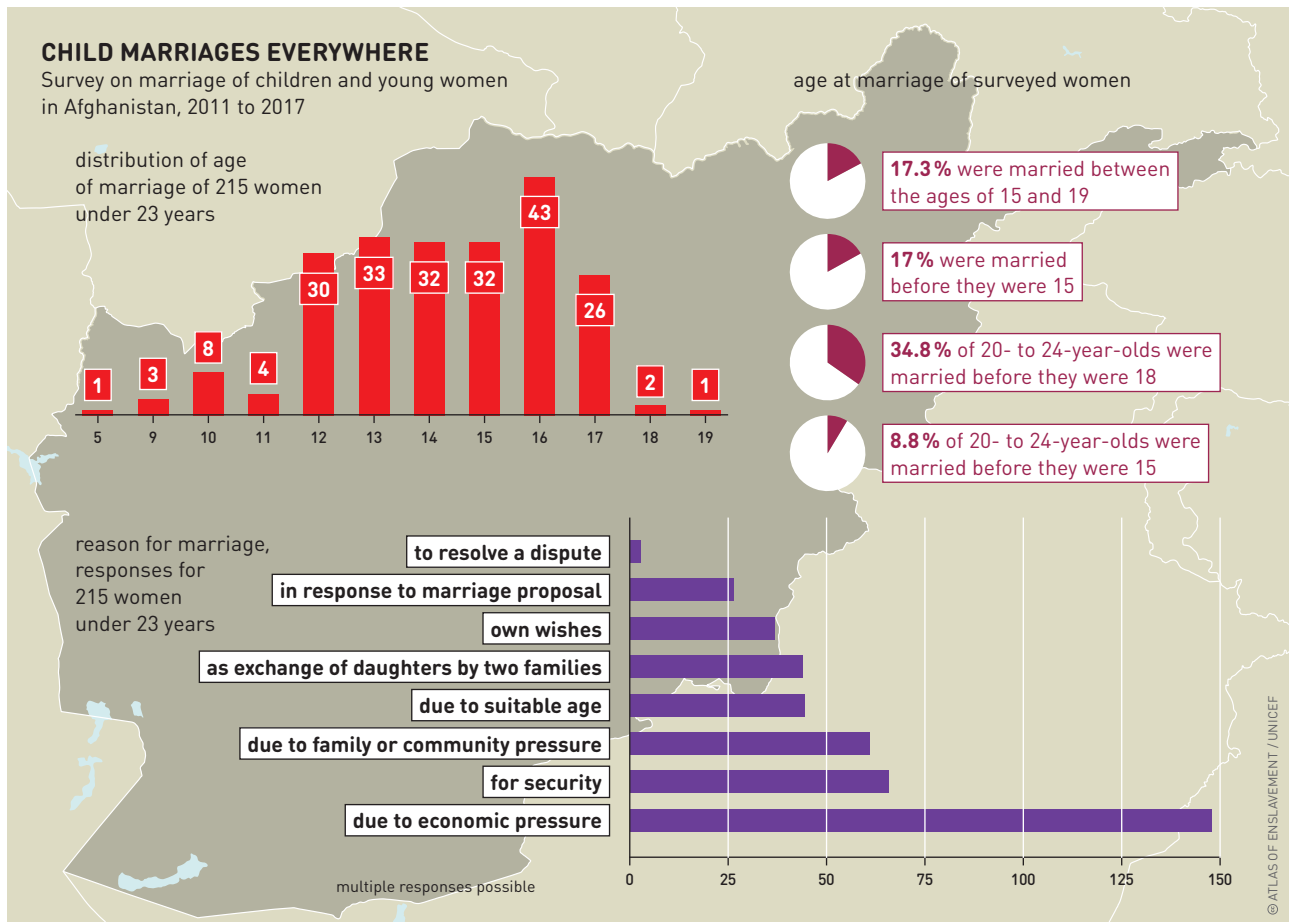
age of 18, and 4.2 percent were married before the age of 15. Although the incidence of child marriage has been decreasing, but these reported rates remain high.

Several traditional practices contribute to the occurrence of forced marriage. Many cases of marriage for debt repayment, conflict resolution (*baad*) and bride exchange to reduce the costs associated with marriage (*baadal*) can be classified as coercion. Even if the participants are nominally willing, the financial or social implications may constitute an element of coercion. In a *baad* marriage, for example, a daughter is married into another family after a relative of hers commits a serious crime against that family – putting her in a situation where she can be held responsible for the crime and is at the mercy of her in-laws. More prosaically, an arranged match supported by the families and which does not fall under the above categories may also constitute a forced marriage.

Such marriages can be portrayed as the result of a patriarchal society, imposed by a single decision maker. Research in 2018 found that in the case of child marriage, almost 80 percent of respondents who had been married off before the age of 18 cited their father as the main person responsible. However, the same study found that male relatives were the loudest voices against child marriage, showing that they cannot be pigeonholed as consistent supporters of the practice. The process of decision-mak-

*Around half the population of Afghanistan are children, mostly in large households and with limited access to education*





ing around child marriage has been found to be more complex than unilateral, and may involve other family members and the child(ren) concerned themselves.

Reported drivers of forced marriage range from traditional social and cultural norms to security and financial reasons. For child marriage specifically, economic pressure – both perceived and real – is the most common reason given by household members, followed by safety, and community pressure. Child marriage is broadly more common among rural and poorer households, but rates do not correlate directly to levels of income and debt, meaning that economics alone cannot explain its prevalence. Individual stories of forced marriage underline the role external pressure can play, with stories of abuse of power, threats of giving addresses to armed opposition groups, and even simply threats from (potential) in-laws.

The lack of a strong judicial system to respond to cases of forced marriage leaves many women without clear options for support, especially when their families have enthusiastically promoted the marriage. The legal age for marriage in Afghanistan for women is 16, which legitimizes certain child marriages. *Zina* laws to punish moral crimes have been used to prosecute some women who have fled forced marriages, in particular when tied to cases of sexual exploitation. At the same time, the laws that do exist against forced marriage are not fully implemented. *Baad*, for example, has been criminalized since

*Marriage registrations are rare in Afghanistan. Surveys of respondents produce more precise statistical results*

the Afghan Penal Code of 1976.

The Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women of 2009 condemns child marriage and forced marriage, among other crimes against women, marking a significant positive legal evolution. But this controversial law, passed by presidential decree, has not been fully assimilated into the legal code nor practice. UN monitoring of crimes of violence against women and girls in 2018–20 found that only half of the cases reported made it to court. The system places a significant onus on the women concerned, meaning that most cases are likely to go unreported.

UNICEF and others have underlined the risk of child marriages increasing worldwide as the Covid-19 crisis worsens financial situations. The pandemic has exacerbated Afghanistan’s existing vulnerabilities, with immediate and long-term impact for girls. Furthermore, the Taliban took over the country’s government in August 2021. Given the history of forced marriage in Afghanistan, this raises real concerns around the phenomenon worsening again. Women and girls’ access to both employment and education has already been severely limited. Credible accounts report forced marriages to Taliban fighters already occurring across different parts of the country. —



# DOMESTIC POLICY

**Lebanon’s restrictive and exploitative kafala (sponsorship) system traps tens of thousands of migrant domestic workers in highly abusive conditions amounting, at worst, to modern slavery. The law fails to protect the workers, and the establishment has no interest in changing the current system.**

Lebanon’s Labour Ministry estimates that the country hosts 250,000 migrant domestic workers, the majority of them women from Africa and Asia. Article 7 of the Labour Law specifically excludes migrant domestic workers, denying them protections that other workers are entitled to, including a minimum wage, limits on working hours, a weekly rest day, overtime pay, and freedom of association.

Instead, their status in Lebanon is regulated by the kafala system, a restrictive regime of laws, regulations and customary practices that ties migrant workers’ legal residency to their employers. Workers cannot leave or change jobs without their employers’ consent. Those who leave their employers without permission risk losing their legal residency and face detention and deportation.

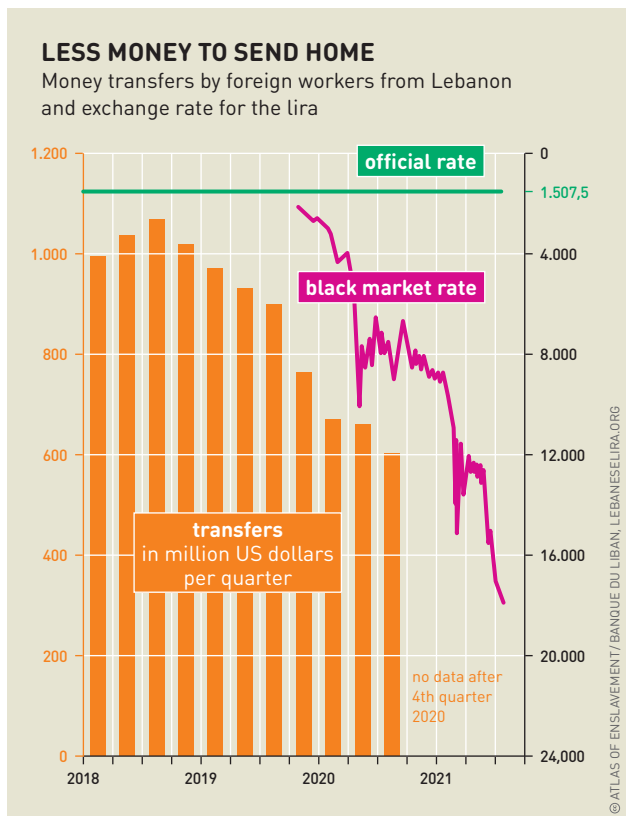
The high degree of control over workers’ lives under the kafala system has led to cases of human trafficking, forced labour, exploitation and more. Human Rights Watch and local organizations frequently document the non-payment of wages, forced confinement, withholding of identity documents, excessive working hours, and verbal, physical and sexual abuse. Amidst Lebanon’s economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, incidents of such abuse against migrant domestic workers have increased. The International Labour Organization has warned that migrant workers now face conditions that “greatly increase their risk of entering forced or bonded labour”.

With entire families at home and children out of school, domestic workers have been forced to work longer hours, often even on rest days. Such overwork has been known to result in exhaustion, illness, depression and even suicide. As the national currency depreciated and inflation increased, many employers shifted the economic burden onto their workers and slashed their salaries – if they paid them at all.

Employers have abandoned hundreds of workers outside consulates or embassies, often without money, passports, their belongings, or tickets for the flight back to their home countries. One employer posted a Nigerian domestic worker “for sale” on a Facebook page used for trading second-hand items such as furniture and clothing. After media reports and following outrage in Nigeria and calls from the Nigerian authorities, the Lebanese authorities arrested the employer for violating the country’s human trafficking laws.

The exploitation and abuse under the kafala system has led many workers to commit suicide or die while trying to escape their employers. A 2008 Human Rights Watch investigation found that one domestic worker dies every week from unnatural causes, with suicide and attempted escapes being the most common. Though it has not been possible to replicate this research more recently due to a lack of accurate statistics, the media continue to report deaths of domestic workers in similar circumstances.

The Lebanese judiciary fails to protect migrant domestic workers or hold employers accountable when they violate the workers’ basic rights. The lack of accessible complaint mechanisms, as well as restrictive visa policies, dissuade many workers from filing or pursuing

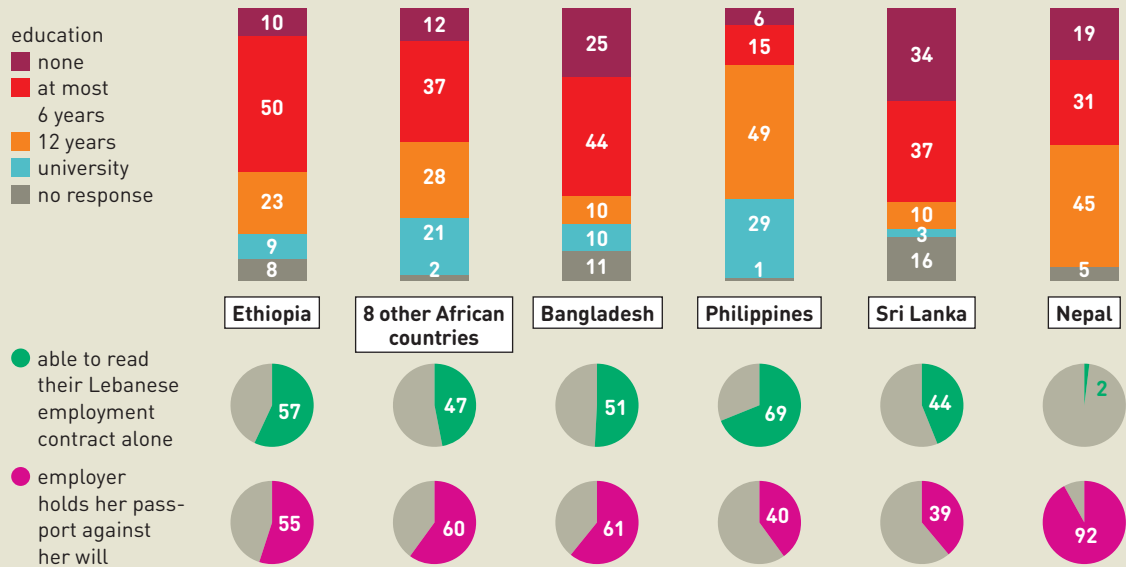


*Workers who are paid wages at the official lira exchange rate have little left over to send back to their families*



## AN EASY GAME WITH UNEDUCATED WOMEN

Results of a survey of 1,541 domestic servants in Beirut and the Lebanon mountains, by nationality, 2014\*



\*interviews held without the employer present at locations such as churches, markets and money-changers

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complaints against their employers. Even when they do file complaints, the police and judicial authorities fail to treat certain abuses against domestic workers as crimes.

Despite years of campaigning by migrant domestic worker groups and rights organizations to abolish the kafala system, authorities have failed to do so. One of the main reasons is that it is a lucrative business for many involved: one study found that the kafala system generates more than 100 million US dollars annually. Recruitment agencies, many of which have been accused of subjecting workers to abuse, forced labour and human trafficking, generate 575 million US dollars a year in revenue, according to the same study.

These recruitment agencies successfully blocked a new standard unified contract for migrant domestic workers that would have included vital safeguards against forced labour. The top administrative court failed to examine it in line with Lebanon's obligations under international law, and instead ruled that the contract would cause "severe damage" to the agencies' interests. Women coming to Lebanon today may find themselves in an even more precarious situation. The Anti-Racism Movement in Lebanon, a grassroots collective that fights discrimination, has found that recruitment agencies are still bringing women from countries like Sri Lanka and

*It is not just the exploitation of domestic maids: child marriages are human rights abuses that the government ignores*

*Even though this study is several years old, it still indicates the lack of protection of domestic workers and major differences according to country of origin*

Cameroon without informing them about the real situation in the country.

The kafala system and the exclusion of domestic workers from the provisions of the labour law violate human rights treaties and labour conventions that Lebanon has signed, including those abolishing forced labour. They also violate the principle of non-discrimination, and the right to just and favourable work conditions. —



# POVERTY AND PROMISES

**In the mind of most Europeans, slavery is something that happened long ago and far away. But it still exists today in Europe, hidden from view. Not millions, but still tens of thousands of people work in forced prostitution, debt bondage and livestock raising.**

**T**he vast majority of forced prostitutes in Europe come from eastern and southeastern Europe. One country – Moldova – has stood out in the last 25 years. The involuntary prostitutes are almost all young women, including some underage girls. Many come from rural areas of Moldova, often from poor, neglected backgrounds or dysfunctional families, and most have spent only a few years at school. They are lured abroad with promises of a well-paid job as a babysitter, waitress or care worker. The destination countries include Germany, Italy, Spain and Turkey. Once they arrive, they are forced into prostitution and are kept under permanent surveillance. Their identity cards are taken away to prevent them from fleeing.

Around the year 2000, thousands of cases of forced prostitution were reported in Moldova. Public awareness campaigns and hefty punishments for traffickers and pimps have cut the numbers significantly in recent years. But in 2019, the police still recorded 52 cases of forced prostitution; in 2020 the figure was 24. The number of unreported cases could be much higher, say officials.

In the Czech Republic, it is not poverty but rising prosperity that is leading to the spread of slavery-like living and working conditions. A severe labour shortage has arisen in the low-wage sector. Workers from poorer EU member states such as Romania and Bulgaria, who otherwise might fill these positions, are drawn instead to the higher wages offered in wealthier western European countries. The Czech government therefore supports the recruitment of temporary workers from non-EU countries such as Ukraine, Mongolia and Vietnam. In the past 10 years, around 20,000 Vietnamese workers have officially come to the Czech Republic.

In Vietnam, work visas and temporary employment contracts are practically available only via local agents who are often members of criminal networks. The job seekers each pay them between 10,000 and 20,000 US dollars for arranging work and a visa. Their contracts in Czech firms are generally valid for one or two years. Because the workers usually only receive minimum wage, minus the costs of board and lodging, they cannot repay

their loans on time. After the end of their contracts, many stay on in the Czech Republic illegally.

Without alternatives, many work under slavery-like conditions to produce drugs. The Czech Republic has long been one of the biggest producers of the illegal synthetic drug methamphetamine, or crystal meth, a business largely controlled by Vietnamese criminal organizations. The indebted migrant workers work in illegal meth labs or indoor cannabis plantations. Some are trafficked to other countries in Europe, including Germany, where Berlin is a major centre of organized Vietnamese criminality. The victims almost never try to resist their tormentors due to the threat of reprisals against their families back home, or the theft of their property. In addition, Vietnamese migrant workers face great social pressure from their home country to find success overseas.

A brutal form of modern slavery exists in several countries in southeastern Europe, particularly Romania. In remote pastures, thousands of livestock are tended by shepherds who live in tiny huts, with minimal food and often without pay. Except for a few hours' sleep, they must work round the clock, herding and milking sheep and goats, producing cheese, and mucking out enclosures.

Sheep keeping in Europe has experienced an exceptional boom in the last decade, stimulated by the strong demand for live animals and meat from the Middle East. Romania has around 12 million sheep and goats; among EU member states, only Spain has more. The work of shepherds is unattractive because it is extremely difficult and poorly paid, so many livestock owners recruit workers from among the poorest villagers, including minors and even children. In previous years, a series of cases were documented where adults and children were mistreated, chained at night, and half-starved. Despite this, the authorities still rarely check the working conditions in livestock farms.

Europe, and especially the European Union, has better laws against modern slavery than any other continent. The fight against slavery is part of today's European values. But economic interests and a lack of political will still lead to states tolerating slavery-like exploitation, and to authorities not adequately controlling working conditions. Europe is still a long way from solving the problem of modern slavery. —

*Every year, the US government produces hundreds of pages of analysis for countries around the world. But some experts question the validity of the classification into tiers*

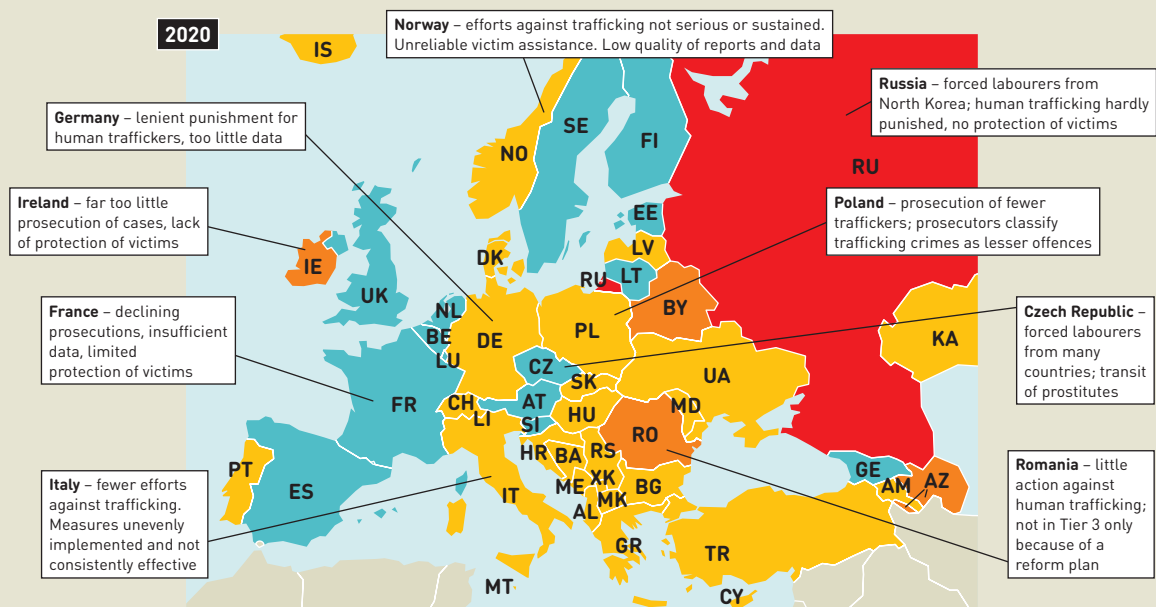
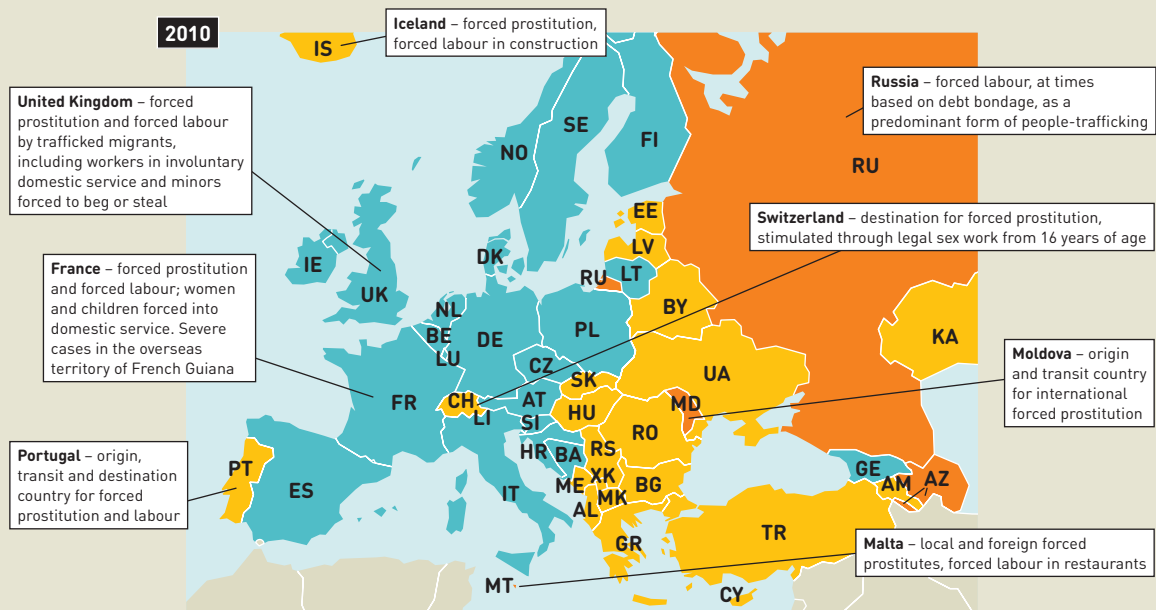
## LOOK TO THE WEST

Reporting on human trafficking in Europe by the US government

Every year, the US government publishes a report on the global fight against human trafficking, the Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP). This also covers countries in Europe. The criteria for the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) are:

- Severe forms of human trafficking are prohibited and punished.
- Every type of human trafficking for forced prostitution is equivalent to grave crimes such as forcible sexual assault.
- The punishment is sufficiently stringent to deter the crime and adequately reflects the nature of the offence.
- The government makes serious and sustained efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons.

- Tier 1: The TVPA minimum standards are fully met.
- Tier 2: The government does not fully meet the standards, but they are making efforts to do so.
- Tier 2, watch list: As Tier 2, but with many cases of human trafficking and failure to take proportional actions, or lack of proof of suitable measures by the government.
- Tier 3: The TVPA minimum standards are not met, and the government is not making significant efforts to do so.



AL: Albania, AM: Armenia, AT: Austria, AZ: Azerbaijan, BA: Bosnia and Herzegovina, BE: Belgium, BG: Bulgaria, BY: Belarus, CH: Switzerland, CY: Cyprus, CZ: Czech Republic, DE: Germany, DK: Denmark, EE: Estonia, ES: Spain, FI: Finland, FR: France, GE: Georgia, GR: Greece, HR: Croatia, HU: Hungary, IE: Ireland, IS: Iceland, IT: Italy, KA: Kazakhstan, LI: Liechtenstein, LT: Lithuania, LU: Luxembourg, LV: Latvia, ME: Montenegro, MD: Moldova, MK: North Macedonia, MT: Malta, NL: Netherlands, NO: Norway, PL: Poland, PT: Portugal, RO: Romania, RS: Serbia, RU: Russia, SE: Sweden, SI: Slovenia, SK: Slovakia, TR: Turkey, UA: Ukraine, UK: United Kingdom, XK: Kosovo

## MIGRATION

# WITHOUT RIGHTS, HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Europe prides itself on its model of social justice, its welfare state, and its ability to ensure that its citizens can lead a decent life. But below the surface, hundreds of thousands of people – many of them migrants – are being exploited.

**F**orced labour in Europe? Many people hardly believe that it exists. But the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that in 2012, 880,000 people in the continent were exploited under some form of coercion. Some 270,000, or 30 percent, were victims of forced prostitution, while the other 70 percent, or 610,000, were forced into other kinds of labour. Since then, the number of unreported cases has risen further. Contrary to these estimates, the official figures – the

number of cases of forced exploitation and forced labour recorded by the authorities – are vanishingly small. In 2018, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) identified only 5,500 victims of human trafficking in southern and western Europe, of whom 66 percent were subject to sexual exploitation and 27 percent to forced labour. A breakdown of the ILO figures shows 100,000 victims of forced labour in Germany alone. But a situation report by Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office in 2019 listed just 287 criminal cases on sexual exploitation and only 14 on forced labour.

The public awareness of forced labour is generally much lower than that of forced prostitution – which also gets much more attention from law enforcement agencies. Both male and female victims of forced labour are not generally regarded as victims, nor do they necessarily see themselves as such. The experiences of counselling centres and trade unions repeatedly confirm how vulnerable migrant workers in Europe are. People who flee poverty and a lack of prospects in order to seek a better life elsewhere often do not know their rights, are not organized into unions, and lack social support and networks.

People in Europe who are exploited often live isolated lives. Their residence status may be unclear; they may work extremely long hours for low wages. Their employers often control them closely, for example by restricting their social contacts. They may live in locations far from other people, or directly adjacent to their place of work. They may lack language ability and not know where or how to get help and support. Their dependence on their employers is indirectly perpetuated by poverty and a lack of documents or work permits. Migrant workers may be put under pressure by being forced to repay their travel costs or other debts, by threats of deportation or even force – directed towards them personally or towards their family members.

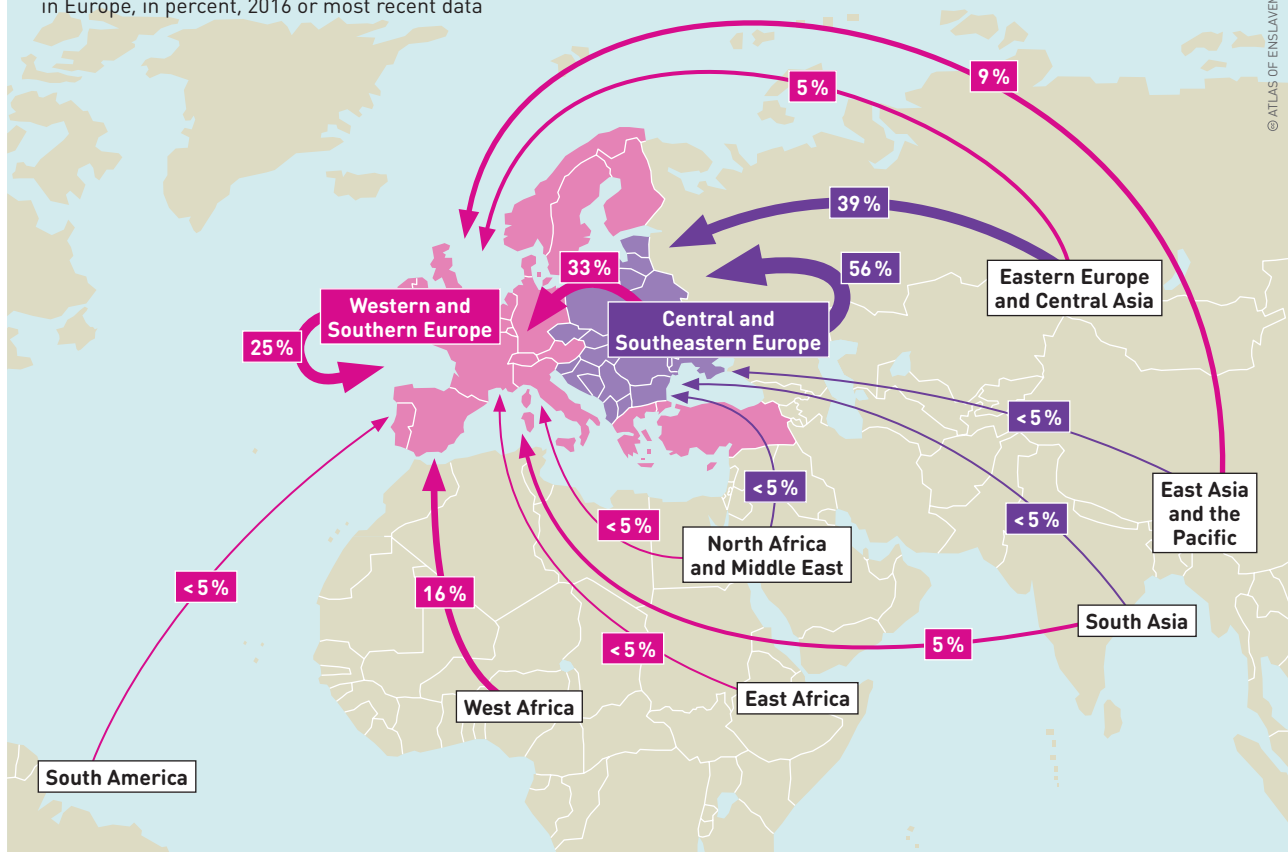
Exploitation may occur in almost any economic sector. The potential profits for the employers are enormous. In 2014, ILO estimated that the annual profits from forced labour in the European Union and other developed countries in the Global North amounted to at least 47 billion US dollars. Globally, they exceeded 150 billion dollars. In



*Girls make up a high proportion of those officially recorded as being trafficked to Europe for forced prostitution – perhaps more than one quarter*

## DEMAND ATTRACTS SUPPLY

Origins of victims of human trafficking detected in Europe, in percent, 2016 or most recent data



© ATLAS OF ENSLAVEMENT/UNODC

2016 in Italy alone, the Italian research institute Eurispes put the profits from the forced exploitation of migrant agricultural workers by mafia-like organizations at 21 billion euros. According to the trade union FLAI-CGIL, over 430,000 people are involved in mafia structures in Italian agriculture. That figure includes 100,000 people living in degrading conditions in illegal slums, far from any town, without sewerage, water or infrastructure. Around Caserta, north of Naples, women from eastern Europe pick strawberries. Africans are hired to harvest oranges. Apples, grapes, melons, tomatoes and countless other fruits and vegetables are gathered under such conditions. The work may last 14 hours a day, from four in the morning until six in the evening. Every year, some workers collapse in the fields and die.

For migrants, the risks of exploitation are high in low-wage jobs such as in the meat industry, catering, construction, care, or seasonal agriculture. This is especially true for workers who lack documents and residence permits. A similar situation occurs in sectors that are organized through subcontractors, such as logistics and cleaning services. For the perpetrators, the risk of punishment is generally close to zero.

Workers in exploitative jobs who are discovered by the police or customs authorities are generally not informed of their rights, nor are they seen or treated as po-

*Europe is a destination for human traffickers throughout the world. But the most victims come from Europe itself*

tential victims. In the best case, they are deported without being given the opportunity to claim any wages they are owed. In the worst case, they incur criminal charges for working without a labour or residence permit. This means that most victims of forced labour and labour exploitation do not appear in the official statistics. This in turn leads to a lack of understanding on the part of law enforcement agencies when counselling centres and trade unions call for a more consistent implementation of victims' rights and protection against and prevention of forced labour.

The extent of labour exploitation and forced labour must be recognized by society as a whole, in politics and in the statistics for all European countries. Injustices must be prosecuted through the law. People continue to be ruthlessly exploited in many economic sectors and industries, without any consequences for the perpetrators, and without the victims being able to claim their rights. Some countries have taken small steps against labour exploitation in individual sectors, such as the Labour Protection Control Act in the meat industry in Germany. That is a start, but it is not enough. —



## DATA

# SERIOUS SUBJECT, DUBIOUS DATA

How common is slavery around the world? Depicting its extent is important in order to focus political attention on this affront against human rights. But some of the numbers in the *Global Slavery Index* come together in unconventional – and sometimes obscure – ways. A trip into the fine print.

A professional organization with an office in Berlin promotes its fundraising like this: “Imagine if almost the whole of Potsdam were enslaved.” The reference to Berlin’s neighbouring city gives life to the figure of 167,000 people who “live in slavery in Germany today”. In France, the city of Aix-en-Provence could stand for the 129,000 slaves in that country. Half the city of Southampton might represent the figure in Britain.

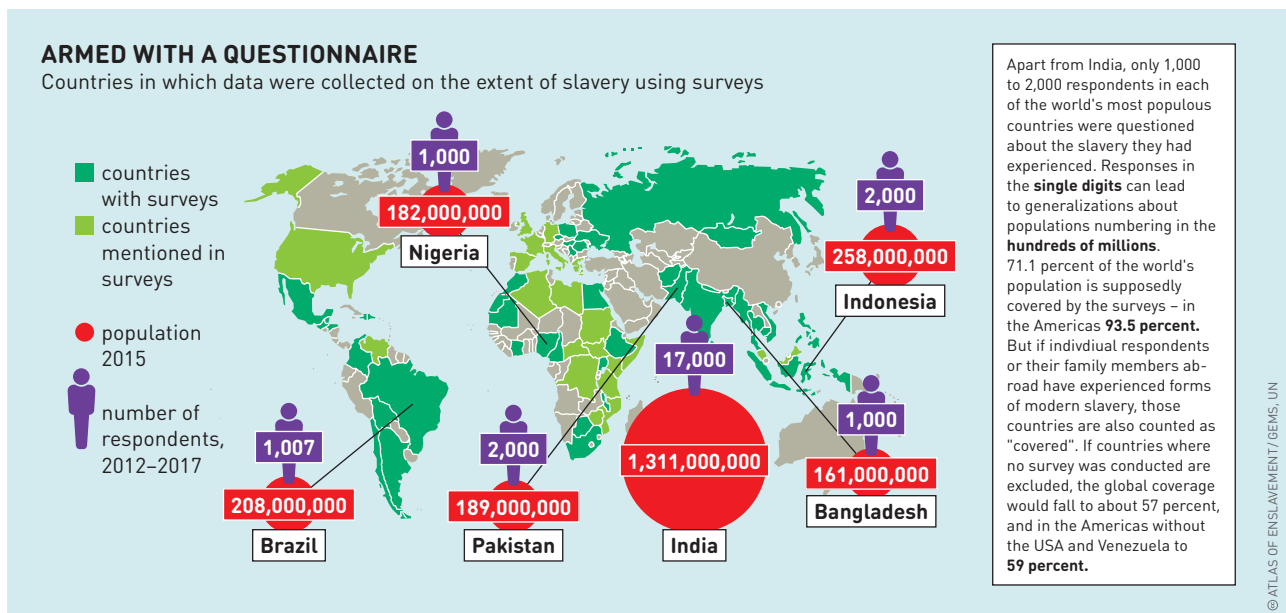
The organization does not take responsibility for the figures it uses. These come from the Global Slavery Index, or GSI, published by the Australian initiative Walk Free. It, in turn, is financed by a foundation funded by Andrew Forrest, Australia’s second-richest man in 2021. Whether it is data on forced labour, forced prostitution or forced marriage, anyone examining slavery worldwide cannot avoid the GSI. Its figures are widely used in civil society publications. They have also found their way into official documents since Walk Free started collaborating with the International Labour Organization (ILO), and are even cited in scientific reports, albeit more as an illustration than as a basis for argument.

The Global Slavery Index currently has data on over 167 countries. The world media take notice when a new index appears. After editions in 2013, 2014 and 2016, the most recent version is now from 2018; the next one is due out in 2022. The findings are hard to compare because the bases for the data and the calculations change with each edition. But the principle stays the same: the available data are extrapolated to fill in the missing information, thereby plugging the gaps in this understudied topic.

An estimated 167,000 slaves in Germany – that is an astonishingly high number. The data on which the indices for the GSI’s four existing editions are based are from 2012 to 2016. According to the GSI website, in 2016 the German authorities identified 536 victims of human trafficking, 488 victims of forced prostitution and 48 of forced labour. An older study from 2008 reports that around 3,400 women and girls sought assistance from counselling centres because of actual or threatened forced marriages. The true extent of forced labour, trafficking, forced prostitution and forced marriages cannot be deduced from these numbers. But should the GSI’s figure really be over 310 times higher than the number of cases that were officially recorded?

To answer these and other questions, it is necessary to take a trip through the fine print. And there is a lot of

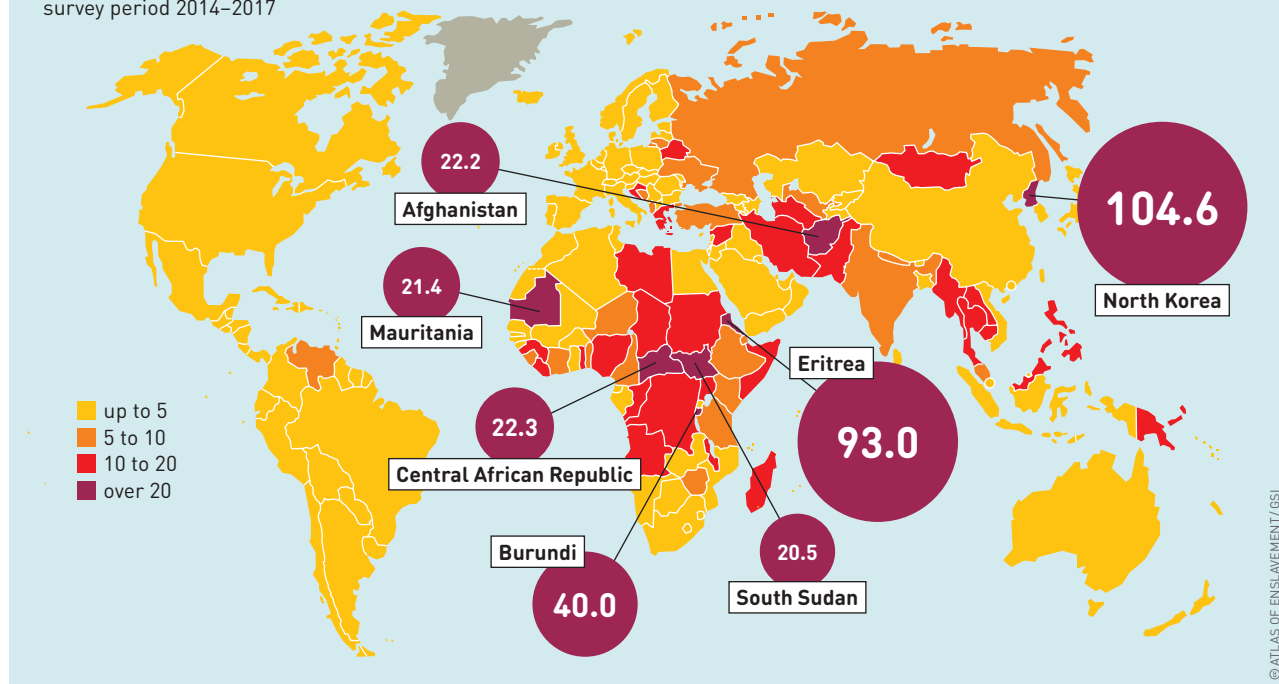
*The publications of the Global Slavery Index do not contain any tables showing the results of the surveys in each country*





## GLOBAL PREVALENCE OF MODERN SLAVERY

Estimated numbers of victims per thousand inhabitants in the *Global Slavery Index*, survey period 2014–2017



it. Through methodological sections, appendices, footnotes, supplements and online material it is possible to reconstruct some, but not all, of the steps that led the four editions of the GSI to the figures it has published. The key number in the GSI is the approximate prevalence of victims of modern slavery per 1,000 inhabitants. This estimated prevalence is, according to the most recent GSI, around 2.0 per thousand for both Germany and France. For the United Kingdom the figure is 2.1, while for the Netherlands it is 1.8.

The first index in 2013 had completely different numbers. For Germany, a figure of 10,646 slaves was calculated, only 6 percent of the 167,000 slaves of 2018. The 2013 logic was this: estimates were available for the United Kingdom and the USA. The mean of these was used as the lower limit for western Europe, said the GSI publication without offering an explanation. The upper limit was the mean value for estimates for the eastern and southeastern European countries of Belarus, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova. That gave an average for Germany of 0.13 per thousand. Multiplying that by a population of 81.9 million gives 10,646 slaves. This is accompanied by a note saying this is a best possible estimate, not the real number. But this figure is repeated in subsequent tables for Germany.

For the 2014 index, the GSI team divided the countries of the globe into seven categories according to socio-economic criteria such as population size, density and poverty. There followed further extrapolations. Here is an example: Cambodia, for which no data were available, landed in a group with “similar” states such as Niger and

*The global prevalence of slavery is the most important indicator produced by the Global Slavery Index. But exactly how a value is calculated is impossible to tell*

Haiti, for which the team estimated a slavery prevalence of 15 per thousand inhabitants. Then it was noticed that Cambodia’s somewhat closer neighbour Indonesia, which was assigned to a different category, had a prevalence of only 3 per thousand. The solution: introducing a criterion of “regional similarity”, so giving Cambodia a prevalence of 40 percent of the value for Indonesia plus 60 percent of the mean of Niger and Haiti. That yielded a prevalence of 10.3 per thousand. Multiply that by the population, and we end up with 155,800 slaves in Cambodia.

The next GSI from 2016 was based on 25 country surveys, three studies taken from other sources, and 139 extrapolations for countries for which no data were available. The table for the 167 countries was calculated in the following way. Based on the political, economic and social data from 24 international indicators to profile the risk of slavery in a country, the team placed each of the 167 countries in one of 12 categories. The prevalences of the 28 countries for which survey data were available were transferred to the various categories. Exactly how this was done is a mystery.

The 2016 GSI does not list the 139 countries in each of the 12 categories, but only gives the number of countries in each category. For example, survey data from Bolivia and Vietnam were used to estimate the prevalence of slavery in 17 undetermined countries. Cambodia, where a study had meanwhile been conducted, alone determined

the prevalence figure used in 12 other countries. For 17 countries in two categories, no suitable comparable country was available, so they were allocated the prevalence figures from less similar countries. Finally, the team made “adjustments” to the figures for 40 countries. That step meant that many of the assignments to the 12 categories that appeared to be inappropriate were changed retroactively. Previously, the team had already plugged the inevitable gaps in the 24 international source indicators using values that were themselves based on those of similar countries. For the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, however, completely different numbers were chosen. These were based on a new method of evaluating individual cases from various lists of victims. This led to the number of slaves in the United Kingdom to rise from 8,300 to 11,700, and that in the Netherlands from 2,200 to 17,500. Why the same methods yielded such different results is not explained. For Germany the number of enslaved rose to 14,500, presumably because it belonged to the group of countries for which the United Kingdom served as the reference.

In 2018, the fourth and newest edition of the GSI appeared. The number of enslaved people in the Netherlands, which was presented as very accurate two years previously, rose by another 60 percent, to 30,000. For the United Kingdom, calculated in 2016 with the same new method, shot up 11 times to 126,000. Similar jumps occurred in Germany and France, with 167,000 and 129,000 enslaved people respectively – hence the references to Potsdam and Aix-en-Provence. The methodology in 2018 was again new. For the first time – and usefully – the var-

ious forms of modern slavery were separated out: into state and private forced labour (including forced prostitution) plus forced marriages; into adults and children; and into men and women. This time, the GSI team took the prevalence figures for 167 countries and the world as a whole from three types of sources: 48 country surveys conducted for the GSI, a collection of officially registered cases, and – for state forced labour – expert opinions.

In 2012, a study by the ILO estimated that there were 21 million forced labourers worldwide. In 2017, the Walk Free Foundation teamed up with ILO to calculate the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery. It produced an estimate of 25 million. These global estimates, which were incorporated into the GSI in the following year, are also astonishing.

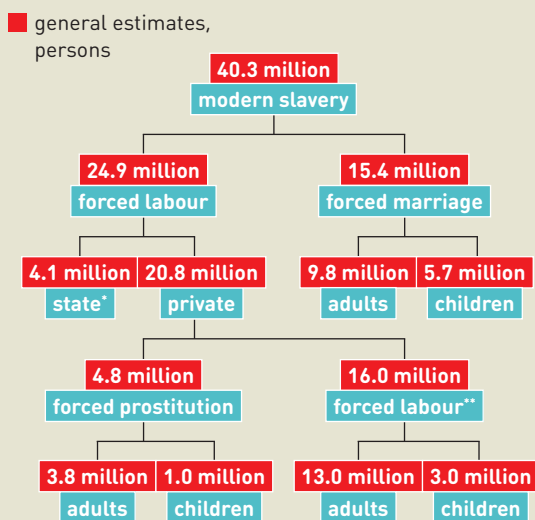
The US polling organization Gallup, which operates worldwide and conducted the surveys, states that the 48 country surveys were representative. The GSI team argues that 71,000 people were questioned around the world. They also testified on behalf of their families, so a total of 575,000 people are claimed to be covered.

But even in many countries with over 100 million people, just 1,000 or 2,000 people took part in the survey. How rough are the findings for a country like Brazil, with 206 million inhabitants, when 1,007 respondents are questioned about their experience with slavery? Accord-

*Almost 9,000 individual cases – including 3,000 from the Global Slavery Index surveys – are extrapolated to the estimate of 40.3 million enslaved people worldwide*

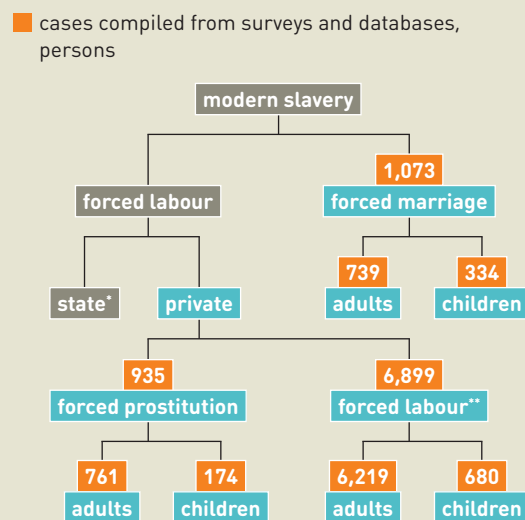
## NUMBERS CRUNCHED

Generalizations and underlying case numbers used to present the extent of modern slavery, 2017



\*only estimates by specialists, no individual cases \*\*excluding forced prostitution

From the numerous surveys made for the Global Slavery Index, only the 1,073 cases of forced marriage and 1,987 cases of forced labour were included. The remainder are based on 5,847 cases recorded by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).



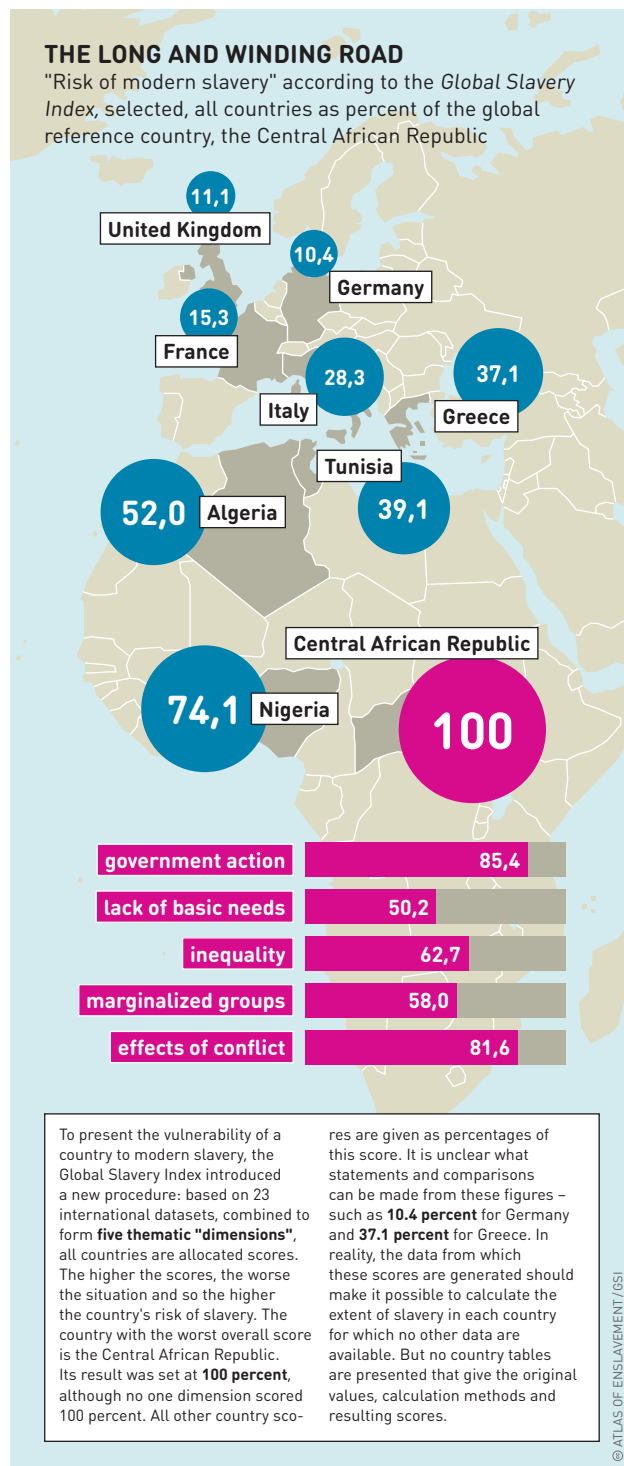
ing to the GSI, Brazil has a slavery prevalence of 1.8 per thousand. So just two of the Brazilian respondents must have given corresponding responses to the survey. On the basis of their evidence, 369,000 people in Brazil are enslaved, says the GSI.

The results of the individual country surveys are not published in the GSI, nor are they available elsewhere. In reality, the 48 surveys must have produced much less information. In a methodological supplement to the *Global Estimates* that gives the number of cases used worldwide, only about 3,000 records of forced labour and forced marriages were derived from the surveys, which supposedly covered 5.5 billion people, or 71.1 percent of the global population. Some 5,850 records of forced labour or forced prostitution were drawn from the second type of source, the collection of officially registered cases maintained by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Altogether, that makes precisely 8,907 cases. The third source is of a completely different nature, so is not included in the individual cases. The figures for forced labour by states were compiled for every country in the world by specialists associated with ILO and from publications. The state sector accounts for 4 million forced labourers in 20 countries. It is not possible to determine its influence on the prevalence figures: a table with the number of cases in each country has not been published.

Both the survey findings and the calculated values pose questions. The “vulnerability to modern slavery” is derived from 24 collected datasets in five “dimensions”. Alongside the usual socioeconomic indicators, the list of datasets includes components such as “weapons access” and “impact of terrorism”, whose relevance to slavery is not directly apparent. One of the datasets, expressed in terms of points, is the response of governments to the Global Slavery Index itself – arguably self-referential. It stands to reason that internally displaced people are included, but refugees were removed because they do not fit into the “five dimensions”. That leaves only 23 variables to measure the susceptibility of a country to slavery. But not all 23 datasets are available for every country. The sometimes-massive gaps are filled in by estimates based on similar countries in the region.

Quantifying slavery in order to build political pressure is a thoroughly worthy project. The publication of a new global index usually stimulates discussions among specialists about the plausibility of assumptions and the informative value of lists of countries. Not so with the GSI. After the publication of the first edition in 2013, four scientists from George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia, in the USA, drew attention to “significant and critical weaknesses”, “improper methods” and “biased estimates”, and demanded more transparency in the methodology.

Forrester dismissed his critics as “academics”. His team members, who have been working on the GSI for over 10 years, also dodge them. The team has published



*The significance of a score for “slavery risk as a percentage of that in the Central African Republic” is questionable*

a series of papers, but has not presented its methods for discussion in a scientific publication. This would have required publishing data and calculation methods. The Walk Free Foundation has published a number of country reports, but they also do not explain how the figures featured in the GSI are arrived at. And they cannot be comprehended even with the help of a “dataset” offered on

the GSI website. The Excel spreadsheets cannot simply be downloaded from the website but are sent on request, and they do not contain the details needed to calculate the estimated prevalence. The numbers of enslaved emerge as if out of the fog. The situation is not made any clearer by the publications that – quite rightly – repeatedly draw attention to the estimates and their limited informative value.

Not everything that the Walk Free Foundation publishes is questionable. It has compiled and structured an enormous amount of material about individual countries and the world as a whole. As long as the reports are not based on quantitative hocus-pocus but on qualitative developments, their credibility immediately rises. But this appears as a sideshow, while the foundation is mainly concerned with rankings, bold calculations and spectacular media reports.

The Australian migration expert Anne T. Gallagher noted “the lack of any serious critical interrogation of

the GSI” and “an apparent conspiracy of silence”. She criticizes “philanthrocapitalism” in which certain multi-billionaire businesspeople, like Forrester, compete to fund ideas that will result in a glorious, numbers-based improvement of the world. This started with Microsoft founder Bill Gates, who became the world’s most important funder of health projects.

Such initiatives are helpful if they are transparent. But that is not so in the case of the Walk Free Foundation and its index. Gallagher further points out that the Foundation is well-funded, and could underline its sincerity through collaborative projects with notoriously underfunded institutions such as the ILO, and with specialists who are attached to such projects in an advisory capacity. The fifth Global Slavery Index is due to appear in 2022. The bar is high. Maybe it will show that Germany has fewer slaves than Potsdam has residents. In any case, the more credible the GSI is, the more useful it will be. —

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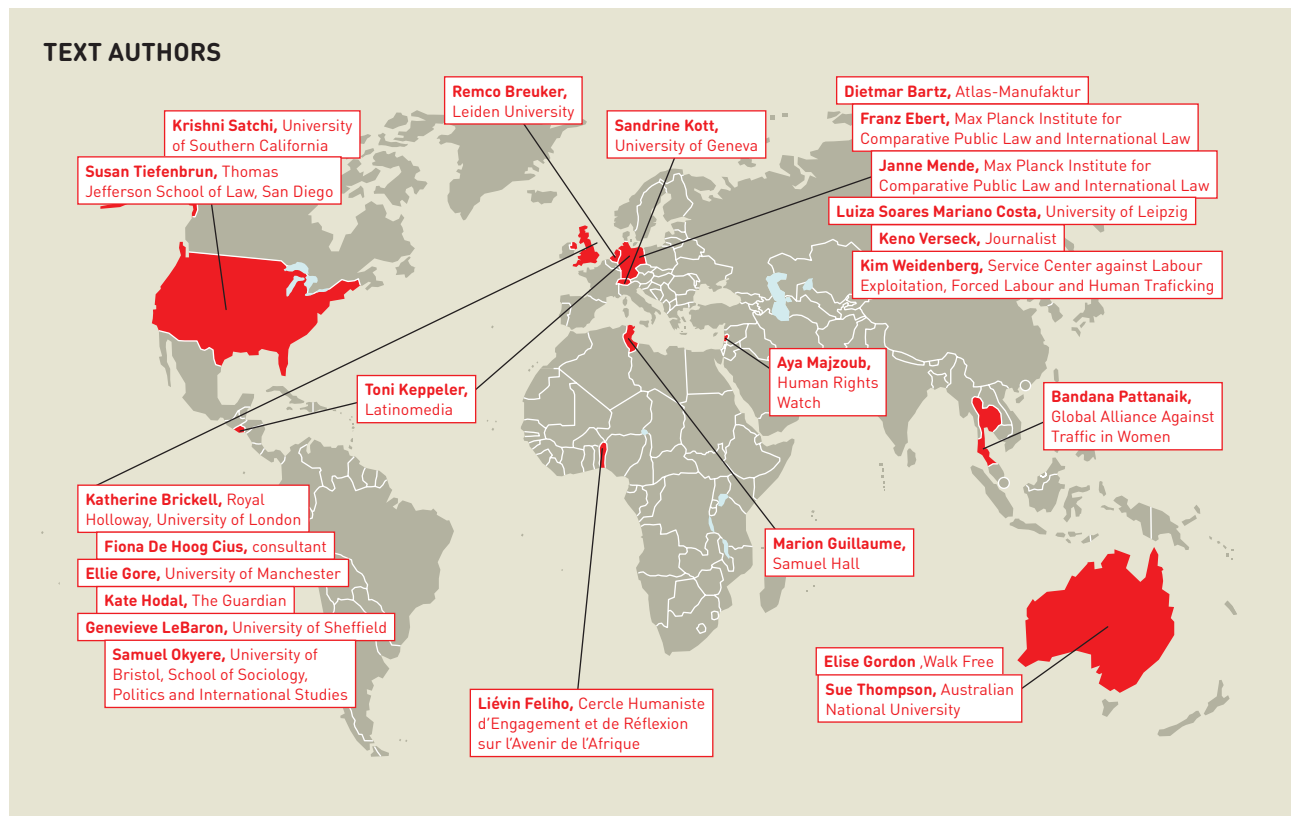
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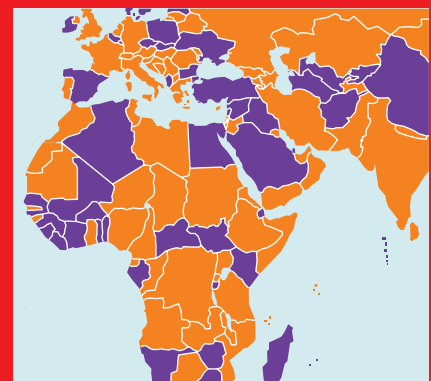
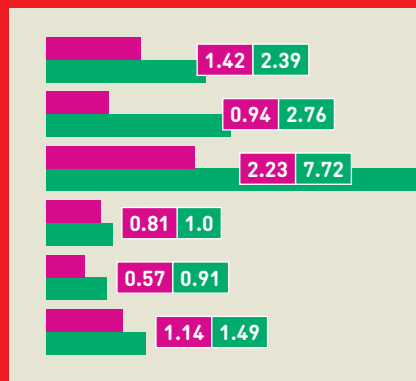
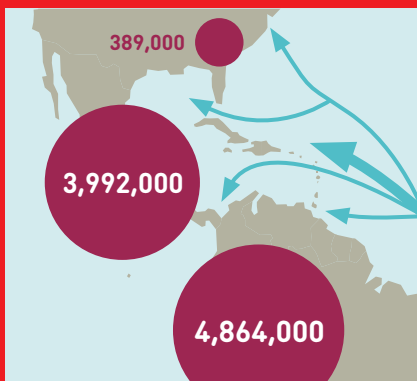
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