



[A New U.N. International Labour Organization Report Details a Troubling Rise in Forms of Modern Slavery Around the World](#)

A new report published by the United Nations' International Labour Organization (ILO) on Monday has detailed the substantial and alarming rise in forms of modern slavery around the world. Over the past five years, this number has soared to a now estimated 50 million people – an approximately 20% increase during this period of time. A multitude of factors have exacerbated the crisis and caused what the ILO outlined as an "unprecedented disruption to employment and education," including the COVID-19 pandemic, an array of longstanding global armed conflicts, and climate change. Additionally troubling is the fact that the ILO stated that no region in the world is immune to forms of modern slavery, and it is not, as some might wrongfully assume, only a problem found in the developing world. ILO officials pointed out that it is present in nearly every country, and that more than half of forced labor cases and a quarter of forced marriage ones are found in upper-middle-income or high-income countries.

Of the estimated 50 million people worldwide trapped in forms of modern slavery, 28 million have been subjected to forced labor and 22 million to forced marriages. Women and children are the primary victims of these grotesque acts, as these groups are seen as the most vulnerable to them. Furthermore, 86% of forced labor is found in the private sector, with sexual exploitation accounting for 23% of all forced labor slavery. The estimated 22 million people living in forced marriages as of 2021 does not include unreported and uncaptured instances of it. Overall, the increase between 2016 and 2021 is a significant number of 6.6 million. The ILO and their partners found particular rises in forced and child marriages in countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Uganda, and Yemen.

The Arab states have the highest levels of forced marriages in the world with around 4.8 of every 1,000 people, while two-thirds of the total worldwide forced marriages are found in Asia and the Pacific region. Family and societal pressures are some of the key factors that drive forced marriages, as families can utilize this to gain a higher status, economic security, and ensure adherence to conservative gender roles. When it comes to forced labor, migrant workers are more than three times as likely to face this than non-migrant workers. Migrants are particularly vulnerable because of irregular and poorly-governed migration or unfair and unethical recruitment practices.

Forms of modern slavery are man-made problems stemming from the history of the slave trade and persistent inequality throughout the world. The ILO Director-General has urged for an all-hands-on-deck approach to aid in alleviating the crisis, compelling a variety of groups from trade unions to ordinary citizens to play a role. The U.S. State Department has also opened a program aimed at tackling the issues of modern slavery and human trafficking. The program's primary goal is to measurably reduce trafficking within specific countries and industries, and it operates in places like Brazil, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, India, Kenya, Morocco, Pakistan, the Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, and Vietnam. Some of the proposed ways to make progress in addressing the crisis include improving and enforcing laws and labor inspections, ending state-imposed forced labor, imposing stronger measures to combat forced labor and trafficking in business and supply chains, extending social protections, and strengthening legal protections such as raising the legal age of marriage to 18 without exception.