



## The Issue of Human Trafficking for Slave Labour in the Shadow Economy

The shadow economy includes “not only illegal activities but also unreported income from the production of legal goods and services, either from monetary or barter transactions”. Indeed, the business of human trafficking can be incredibly profitable; in 2018, according to a FATF report, these proceeds reached around \$150 billion. Globally, human traffickers are profiting from the slavery and dehumanisation of desperate and powerless individuals.

A report from Unseen estimates that there are approximately 40.3 million people in modern slavery worldwide, a figure which includes 24.9 million in forced labour. This is a shocking figure in a world that considers itself to have moved on from such awful crimes. In the UK alone, over 10,000 potential victims of modern slavery were identified in 2020 according to statistics presented by GOV.UK. We cannot continue to ignore a problem that remains hidden from the public view. This is a problem that permeates across all continents.

It is also important to consider those who are most commonly targeted. The National Criminal Justice Reference Service puts the number of people trafficked across international borders each year at between 600,000 and 800,000, 70% of whom are female and 50% of whom are children. Those who are most vulnerable are being exploited and it is a figure which continues to increase year upon year.

Modern slavery itself takes on many forms. This could be: human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage/bonded labour, descent-based slavery, slavery of children or forced and early marriage: all of which are defined on the anti-slavery website linked below.

Throughout the Mekong region of Asia, there is a growing issue of trafficking in terms of child beggars. Many of these children come from countries such as Cambodia, where many have been sold or given up by their parents. They are often intentionally disfigured by traffickers to improve their levels of earnings. Once again, this is an issue which continues to be ignored and so continues to grow. This is a cycle which cannot be escaped, with many of these children going on to become involved in the trafficking process themselves.

Human trafficking and slavery are issues that the modern world continues to ignore. This is a cycle that needs to be broken and represents heinous criminal behaviour that should not be allowed to continue.

### Points to consider

- How can potential victims of trafficking and slavery be identified?
- Are there ways to support those most at risk of being trafficked?
- Is it possible to prevent those being trafficked from being brought across borders?
- Would educating people on their rights as citizens and workers help to decrease vulnerability?



### Useful links

- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12295011/>
- <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/human-trafficking.html>
- <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/modern-slavery/>