



What is modern slavery?

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The term ‘modern slavery’ encompasses both trafficking (the arranging or facilitating of the travel of another, whether into, out of or within the UK, with a view to that person being exploited) and exploitation itself, which can take place both alongside and independently of trafficking.

Exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, domestic servitude and exploitation in criminal activity, such as county lines drug supply, shoplifting and cannabis cultivation. The vast majority of modern slavery offending is motivated by profit. Modern slavery is almost unique in that the repeat exploitation of victims generates ongoing profit for offenders, which can result in substantial financial gain.

Victims are forced, coerced or deceived into exploitation, becoming trapped in a situation they cannot escape. Exploiters may be part of a large criminal organisation, a smaller operation or lone offenders. Usually they are highly organised and adept at disguising their activities.

40.3 million people are estimated to be trapped in some form of modern slavery in the world today.

There are an estimated 136,000 victims in the UK.*

Victims are men, women and children of all ages, ethnicities and nationalities. Those we know about are just the tip of the iceberg - many victims never come forward to the authorities and continue to live miserable lives with no freedom or dignity.

In 2020, 10,613 potential victims were referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM - the Government framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support). Victims from more than 130 countries across the world have been trafficked and exploited in the UK but in the last three years the top country of origin of suspected victims has been the UK.

The real number of victims in the UK could be many times higher - the Global Slavery Index believes there are around 136,000 victims living in slavery in the UK.

Survivors tell stories of being sold a better life. In the case of children drawn into gangs and county lines, they often speak of feeling a sense of belonging and identity. They are often vulnerable, perhaps coming from difficult family backgrounds, poverty or areas where there is little work. They may be offered a job, a chance to get off the streets or to build a new life for themselves and make money. Those who offer these opportunities may even organise their travel to a different country, controlling every aspect of their trip.

The job they are offered turns out to be a lie and instead they are forced to work in difficult and degrading conditions, with little or no pay. The threat of violence, to themselves or their families, hangs over them and traps them in their situation. Even if their trafficker does not physically control them, a mistrust of authority may stop them from going to the police.

**Statistics are taken from the [Global Slavery Index](#) and the Centre for Social Justice, [‘It Still Happens Here’](#).*

This introduction to Modern Slavery is taken from [The Clewer Initiative website](#).