



# Human Trafficking

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and love your neighbour as yourself.”

LK.10:26

In 2013 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimated that human trafficking enslaved twenty-seven million people. By 2020 the official estimate was up to **40.3 million.**

*Human trafficking is a growing global problem. More people are enslaved today than during the entire 400 year period of the transatlantic slave-trade.*



## SLAVERY EXISTS TODAY

Human trafficking is modern day slavery. It causes unimaginable misery and suffering to those who are dehumanized, become commodities that are bought, sold and abused. The human freedom and dignity that we take as a birthright, which is central to Catholic Social Teaching and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is denied to millions of people.

The presence of victims of trafficking has been documented in over 160 of the world's 197 countries, **including Ireland**. It is driven by greed and the huge profits it generates. It is maintained by an insatiable demand for cheap labour, sexual services, cheap

goods and even for transplant organs. It is sustained by people who turn a blind eye, by those willing to pay for the services of trafficked people and by those willing deny other human beings their God-given dignity.

The 2018 Global Slavery Index tells us that modern slavery is a hidden crime that crosses borders, sectors and jurisdictions. It is found in industries including garment manufacturing, mining, agriculture, prostitution and in many contexts such as private homes, factories, fishing boats, restaurants, farms, car washes and nail-bars.

Many richer countries view modern slavery as a problem that happens elsewhere. They deny all responsibility. However, in these countries, even those with strong anti-slavery laws and structures, human trafficking is present.

One of the most important findings of the 2018 Global Slavery Index is that the prevalence of modern slavery

*“Every human being, man, woman, boy and girl, is made in God’s image. Therefore, modern slavery, in terms of human trafficking, forced labour and prostitution, and organ trafficking, is a crime against humanity.”* Pope Francis, Dec 2014

in high GDP countries (e.g. US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Netherlands and other European countries) is higher than previously understood.

The Report identifies critical gaps in protections for groups such as irregular migrants, the homeless, workers in the shadow economy and certain minorities. These gaps are being exploited by criminals. The report also makes clear that in every country there are enormous differences between the estimated size of modern slavery and the small number of victims that are identified.

Just as important is the fact that high GDP countries can be linked to slavery and human trafficking which happens far from their shores. This can be the direct result of policy decisions allowing the importation goods produced by victims of trafficking. The link may also be indirect, i.e. resulting from a blind-eye being turned to practices that facilitate and profit from the sale of goods made through the forced labour of slaves.

These are everyday products in common use e.g. computers, mobile phones, clothing, fish, cocoa and timber. As long as developed countries continue to allow the importation and sale of the

products of slave labour they fuel and perpetuate the demand for the slaves needed to produce them or to mine the raw materials needed to make them in places like Asia and Africa. In this way richer countries contribute to the conditions that allow slavery to prosper.

All governments have committed to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. One of them, Goal 8.7, is **to eradicate Slavery**. To achieve this, wealthy countries cannot continue doing more of the same – they must act to prioritise prevention, through focusing on discrimination, safe migration, support for victims and the prosecution of traffickers. Rich countries, **including Ireland**, also have an obligation to take serious steps to address the slave labour products they import. They owe this obligation both to consumers in their own countries but more especially to victims along the supply chain, where products are made, packed and shipped.

On an individual and everyday level modern slavery touches us all of us, through the food we consume, the clothes we buy and other goods we purchase. We all have a responsibility to address and eliminate this crime everywhere it occurs and in every way that we can.

*"I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking. How I wish that all of us would hear God's cry, 'Where is your brother?' (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Let us not pretend and look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. This issue involves everyone!"* (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 211)



The choices we make matter, the goods we buy may cost much more than the money we pay in terms of human suffering and the lifelong bondage of people in countries far away.



## MODERN DAY SLAVERY

Human trafficking exists in many places, shapes and forms. It means the **exploitation of people whose humanity is denied and who become objects that are sold, used and abused.** Below is information published on the *Deutsche Welle* website in 2020, examples of different kinds of trafficking from around the world.

Despite the fact that slavery is illegal, modern forms of the sinister practice persist. Millions toil in debt bondage in Asia, forced labour in the Gulf states, as child workers in agriculture in Africa or Latin America and in prostitution throughout the world.

### Sold, threatened, exploited

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime says that Human trafficking is big business. Sectors such as construction or mining exploit almost exclusively men, while victims of forced prostitution and exploitation in private households tend to be women. But something they all have in common: they are

coerced into working through threats, the use of violence, or fraud. Most cases go unreported.

### When children are enslaved

Because of poverty, parents may sell their children as labour. Such is the case in Lake Volta, Ghana, where children are forced to work for fishermen. Parents are told their children will get to do an apprenticeship. But in reality, they're kept as slaves in appalling conditions. According to the ILO there are around 10 million child slaves worldwide.

### Child Brides

UNESCO says that one in five girls are married before they turn 18. Not all of these marriages are forced arrangements. But every year millions of underage girls are forced into marriage before the age of 15. In many cases they're taken out of school and essentially live as unpaid labourers in their spouse's home. Many report physical and sexual abuse in the marriage.

### Locked up

All over the world, girls are exploited as house slaves — by their own family or by strangers. Poverty-stricken families may be promised that their children will get the chance to go to school. But once they're taken, these girls are locked inside the house and forced to work 12-14 hours a



**CRIME THAT SHAMES US ALL**

day. Many also suffer sexual abuse. The number of unreported cases is high, even in industrialized nations.

### **Millions held in debt bondage**

Under this form of slavery, victims are forced to work to pay off a debt. Often the debts continue to pile up, even if the whole family toils for 10 hours a day at the brickworks, or in their owner's quarries, fields or mines. Often the debts are also inherited by children. The ILO estimates there are around 30 million people working as debt slaves, most of them in India and Pakistan.

### **Nowhere to turn**

Illegal migrants are especially vulnerable to exploitation, regardless of where in the world they are. They often have nowhere to claim rights, usually cannot speak the local language, and don't know where they can turn for help. It's not clear how many illegal migrants work in agriculture in Europe alone. But many live in abysmal conditions as they slave away for well below the minimum wage.

### **Born into Slavery**

The descendants of African slaves in Mauritania are called "Haratin." Although slavery is officially banned in the north-western African country, people are still inherited or sold as property. An estimated 600,000 women, men and children in Mauritania are currently exploited as domestic workers or in the agriculture sector. That's one-fifth of the population.

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<https://www.dw.com/en/why-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking-still-exist-world/a-52853992>

## **FACTS ABOUT TRAFFICKING**

Trafficking comes in many forms, including:

- Forcing victims into prostitution
- Subjecting victims to slavery or involuntary servitude
- Compelling victims to commit sex acts for the purpose of creating pornography
- Misleading victims into debt bondage
- It's estimated 80% of trafficking involves sexual exploitation, and 19% involves labour exploitation
- Nearly 70 percent of victims are female and many are children
- After illegal drugs and arms trafficking, Human trafficking is the third most lucrative international crime
- It reportedly generates a profit of \$32 billion every year, 50% of which is made in the developed world
- Trafficked victims come from all age groups; many are female and under 18 years old
- Only 1-2 percent of victims are rescued
- Only 1 in 100,000 Europeans involved in trafficking are convicted
- Approximately 30 million children have lost their childhood through sexual exploitation over the past 30 years.
- Globally, the average cost of a slave is €120.

Source: <https://www.renateurope.net/trafficking-resources/>