

ICI summary: Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, Forced Labour and Forced Marriage 2021

The 2021 [Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, Forced Labour and Forced Marriage](#), produced by ILO, Walk Free and IOM, provides updated estimates of the total number of adults and children in modern slavery, forced labour and forced marriage worldwide, as well as disaggregated figures by region and by sector of employment.

Key messages of relevance for the cocoa sector

Modern slavery

- 1. An estimated 49.6 million people are in modern slavery.** This includes 27.6 million people in forced labour (3.3 million of them children) and 22 million in forced marriage.
- 2. The covid pandemic has heightened the risk of modern slavery by exacerbating the underlying drivers of all forms of modern slavery.** The *Global Estimates* are based on a five-year reference period from 2017 and 2021. As a result, they only partially account for the covid pandemic, suggesting actual numbers of people in modern slavery, forced labour and forced marriage may be even higher.

Definitions:

In the report, the term *modern slavery* is used to describe people in two categories, **forced labour** and **forced marriage**.

Forced labour can be further broken down into **state-imposed forced labour** and **privately-imposed forced labour** (the latter includes: **forced labour exploitation** and **forced commercial sexual exploitation of adults and children**).

Forced labour:

- 3. Forced labour has increased.** In 2021, there were 2.7 million more people in forced labour than in 2016. The global prevalence of forced labour has increased from 3.4 to 3.5 people in forced labour per thousand people. The 2021 global estimates are the most complete and comprehensive to date. Comparisons of *disaggregated* results from 2016 and 2021 should be made with some caution, due to changes to the methodology.
- 4. The rise in forced labour since 2016 was driven by an increase in *Forced labour exploitation* and *Forced commercial sexual exploitation*.** The number of people in state-imposed forced labour has decreased and the prevalence remains stable.
- 5. Forced labour is present in all regions of the world, but not evenly distributed.** The absolute number of people in forced labour is highest in the Asia and the Pacific region (at 15.1 million). The prevalence of forced labour is highest in the Arab states (5.3 per thousand people).
- 6. An estimated 3.8 million people are in forced labour in Africa** – equivalent to 2.9 per every thousand people in Africa. The prevalence of forced labour in Africa is lower than in any other region.
- 7. While more than half of forced labour takes place in richer countries** (upper-middle or high income), **the prevalence of forced labour is highest in low-income countries**, at 6.3 people per every thousand.

8. **Globally, an estimated 2.1 million people are in forced labour in agriculture**, accounting for 12.3% of all cases of forced labour. Cases of forced labour in agriculture can vary widely, but many cases “involve farming of agricultural commodities at the lowest links of agri-food supply chains”. Forced labour occurs in every sector of the economy, most commonly in the service sector.
9. **Migrant workers are more than three times more likely to be in forced labour than non-migrant adult workers.** Among migrants, 13.8 people per thousand are in forced labour exploitation, compared to 4.1 people per thousand among non-migrants.
10. **The involvement of women and men in forced labour differs, both in the extent and nature of their involvement.** The number of men and boys in forced labour exploitation is nearly double that of women and girls (11.3 million compared to 6 million), with some differences by sector. Agriculture accounts for 13% of cases of forced labour exploitation among males (1.4m men and boys), and 11% among females (0.7m women and girls).
11. **One in five people in situations of forced labour exploitation experience debt bondage.** Debt bondage is especially common in agriculture – reported by 31% of people in forced labour in agriculture, compared to 5% of all people in forced labour. Marginalised communities, ethnic and religious minorities are considered at particular risk.
12. **Of the 3.3 million children in forced labour, half (51%) are in commercial sexual exploitation.** An estimated 1.31 million children (39% of children in forced labour) are in forced labour exploitation, including in agriculture, domestic work, mining, begging and fishing. The remaining 10% are in state-imposed forced labour.

Forced Marriage:

13. **Forced marriage affects an estimated total of 22 million men, women, boys and girls. More than two thirds of those forced to marry are women and girls**, accounting for 14.9 million. This trend is found across all regions, including Africa, where an estimated 3.2 million people are in forced marriage, equivalent to 2.4 people in every thousand.
14. **The number of people living in forced marriage has risen** by 6.6 million between 2016 and 2021. Its prevalence increased from 2.1 to 2.8 cases per thousand people. **The increase is explained by a combination of crises**, including the Covid-19 pandemic, conflicts and climate change, which together, have led to an increase in extreme poverty, lower education, a rise in distress migration and significant increases in reports of gender-based violence, all factors associated with increased vulnerability to forced marriage.

Key priorities for addressing forced labour:

- **Respect workers' right to freedom of association** and collective bargaining, to allow workers to come together to defend their shared interests and improve working conditions. Redressing the lack of effective access to representation in the informal economy, where forced labour abuses are overwhelmingly concentrated, is especially important and can also support the formalisation of informal workplaces.
- **Extend social protection to all workers and their families, including the informal economy.** This is to reduce the socio-economic vulnerability that can lead to forced labour in the first place and ensure basic income security so that workers are able to refuse exploitative work or leave if they need to. Social protection should be adequately financed and extend to migrants and those forcibly displaced.
- **Promote fair and ethical recruitment,** to protect workers from fraudulent behaviour, extortionate fees and deception during the recruitment process. Laws and regulations, as well as efforts to ensure compliance with existing regulation, should ensure that jobseekers, including migrants, are protected from recruitment abuses, often by intermediaries. *Laws obliging employers to report on the recruitment due-diligence steps they take and making them legally liable and subject to sanction for fraudulent or abusive behaviours in their own operations and supply chains... create incentives for employers to use their market power to influence better recruitment practices.* Efforts to engage with workers at the earliest stages of recruitment and empower them about the risks of recruitment abuses are also critical to prevent forced labour.
- **Strengthen public labour inspectorates and extend their reach to the informal economy** so that they can detect and act on labour violations in all areas *before* they become situations of forced labour. Extending formal labour inspectorate to informal entities can also incentivise their formalisation. *New inspection approaches are needed that are adapted to the informal economy. A participatory approach initially developed in West Africa engages informal economy stakeholders (including cooperatives, employers and workers' associations, and local community representatives) to complement and support the public labour inspectorate is considered a straightforward and cost-effective approach.*
- **Combat forced labour and trafficking for forced labour in business operations and supply chains.** Governments have the principal responsibility for addressing the causes of forced labour and trafficking for forced labour in business operations and supply chains more broadly, including through a strong legal framework, adequate enforcement and sound public policies. States must also set out the expectation that businesses in their territory or jurisdiction respect human rights throughout their operations, including through *voluntary and mandatory human rights due diligence laws, which should be expanded in scope and reach, including to the Global South. States should make use of their regulatory authority to ensure businesses conduct due diligence, this includes including human rights due diligence among eligibility criteria for officially-supported export credits and direct lending, as well as the inclusion of human rights conditionality in loan agreements or business or development finance institutions. For businesses, attention should focus on identifying, prioritising, and acting on "hotspots" where the risk of human rights abuses is highest in terms of both severity and scale. Particular attention should be paid to micro- and small-scale enterprises at the lower links of the supply chain in high-risk sectors and locations, where forced labour and other human rights abuses are often the most pronounced.*
- **Ensure protection for those freed from situations of forced labour and trafficking for forced labour.** Effective identification is a critical first step, followed by referral to comprehensive protection services, provision of compensation or other forms of remedy. For comprehensive protection needs to be met and rights to be realised, referral mechanisms need to clearly set out the roles and responsibilities for competent protection actors and services providers, state and non-state, both within and across borders.
- **Ensure access to remedy for those freed from forced labour.** Remedy can provide critical support to recovery and help prevent people's revictimization, yet only a fraction receives remedy or compensation.

Effective mobilisation of actors normally the first point of contact for people freed from forced labour, including NGOs, can be critical in raising awareness of legal channels for remedy. Paralegal support can help people freed from forced labour overcome cost barriers associated with pursuing remedy

- **Address the vulnerability of migrants, especially children, to forced labour.** This includes closing gaps in national policy frameworks to ensure that adequate laws are in place to protect migrants at all stages of the migration process, strengthening protection systems to provide necessary services to migrants in situations of vulnerability and heightened risk of forced labour and trafficking, and supporting migrants in countries of origin and destination to access support, advice and guidance.
- **Addressing children trapped in forced labour.** More data on children trapped in forced labour is urgently needed to inform response. *Administrative data sources, social welfare and support services information, child labour monitoring systems, and labour inspectorate reporting systems can potentially provide valuable real-time data but are rarely exploited. More investment is needed in identification and protection measures for children who have fallen victim to forced labour, including measures for immediate assistance and long-term recovery and rehabilitation. Access to education and family reunification or, when in the best interests of the child, alternative family-based care, are especially important.*