

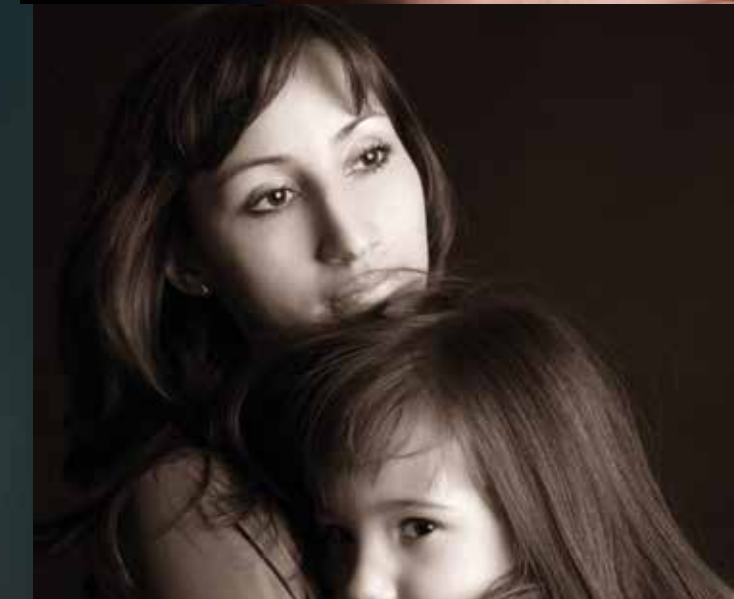


Photograph: Pete Pattison

What is modern slavery?

Modern slavery is extremely complicated. There is not always a clear line between who is enslaved and who isn't. Ultimately it comes down to whether an exploited person has the ability to leave the situation they are in or not.

Even though it is complicated, we can still do something about it.



Who is likely to be trapped in modern slavery?

Because modern slavery is about power and exploiting vulnerability, it knows no boundaries. Anyone anywhere can find themselves enslaved.



Why does modern slavery exist?

Like any crime, modern slavery flourishes where weak laws and gaps in governance and enforcement exist. After 40 years of world-wide neoliberal labour market deregulation, the underfunding of inspectorates and anti-trade union practices, the number of people in forced labour in the private sector was 24.9 million in 2016.



Why have a UK Modern Slavery Act?

Modern slavery is everywhere in the UK and globally; it can be found in all supply chains including food, construction, electronics, clothing and products associated with sporting events. The Act requires private companies with £36+ million to report their actions to ensure they are not complicit in or contributing to modern slavery.



Why include public services in the Modern Slavery Act?

Some of the surgical instruments used in NHS operating theatres could have been made by children in unregulated workshops in countries such as Pakistan.



Photograph: Electronics Watch

Electronic supply chains charging modern slavery

Exhausted night shift workers at their workstations, in an electronics factory owned by MSI (Kunshan), a Taiwanese company in China. There are claims of 12 hour days with 1 – 2 days rest per month in peak season, no sick or maternity pay, no toilet breaks and abusive management.



Using collective buying power

The global electronics industry has recently become one of the largest in the global economy. There are an estimated 18 million electronics workers who generate 25% of global trade in manufactured goods. But the scale of human rights abuses is just as big. Electronics Watch helps public service organisations use collective buying power to protect the labour rights of workers in their electronic supply chains.



Do you know where your work uniform comes from?

Globally, the garment industry is infamous for its severe labour exploitation. In the wake of the collapse of the Bangladesh Rana Plaza factory, 1,314 workers, mostly women, died when the factory collapsed due to weak health and safety laws and inspectorates, plus hostile attitudes to unions. The Bangladeshi Revolutionary Garment Workers Federation took to the streets to protest. Little did we know the tragedy would lead to the first ever legally binding industry agreement and a little more space for union organising.



Photograph: Building and Woodworkers International

Modern slavery in global sporting events

Migrant workers constructing the stadia for the 22 World cup in Qatar talk about their working and living conditions to an international union delegation. Qatar's Kafala system makes migrant workers extremely vulnerable to forced labour. Their passports are often taken away and replaced with unsuitable identity papers, pay is often late not withheld and they live in squalid working conditions.



Eliminating modern slavery in global sporting events

Persistent campaigning at international and national levels worldwide has led to the Qatari Government changing laws and cooperating with trade unions globally. But there is much more work to be done to ensure they fulfill their promises.



UNISON

Walking Our Talk

As a commercial operation with a turnover of more than £36 million, as well as out of moral duty, UNISON was the first UK union to publish a Transparency in Supply Chains Modern Slavery Statement. We are also planning special projects similar to those we advocate employers sign up to.

How you can play your part in eliminating modern slavery

Photo: Michael Hyton/Anti-Slavery International



Get your branch to affiliate to Anti-Slavery International (ASI) and to sign the ASI Charter

Find out if your workplace has a procurement policy that fits UNISON's guidance

If the policy doesn't include the right to Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining, ask your employer to amend it – slavery will not end for good unless workers are able to self-organise and collectively negotiate with their employers

Contact i.relations@UNISON.co.uk to let us know what you are doing in your workplace or if you have any ideas you want to take forward or requests for support.



How can I identify that someone is in slavery and what should I do?

If you suspect someone may be living in slavery, contact your UNISON branch. Ask them to contact the local council or MP and migrant community organisations. They can also contact the Modern Slavery Helpline on 0800 0121 700, the local police or Crime Stoppers. Ask them to track what happens and to identify the relevant union the person/people could join and facilitate their introduction. Do not try to intervene on your own as it can make the situation of that person worse.