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Silent Slavery

For the International Day for Abolition of Slavery, Zeenet blogs on modern-day definitions of slavery and the worrying worldwide statistics.

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” Nelson Mandela

Today is the International Day for Abolition of Slavery. The focus of the day is on eradicating modern slavery. Modern slavery occurs in almost every country in the world, cutting across ethnic, cultural and religious lines.

You may well be thinking how decades and generations later, living in the 21st Century, an age of opportunity, liberty and human rights we are still talking about abolishing slavery. You and I may not see it, but many experience and live it daily.

Modern slavery is not defined in law, it is used as an umbrella term covering practices such as forced labour, including the worst forms of child labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, and human trafficking. Essentially, it refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power.

According to [a report by the International Labour Organisation, Walk Free and the International Organization for Migration](#) estimates in 2021 indicated that 50 million people are in situations of modern slavery, forced to work against their will or in a forced marriage. This number translates to nearly one in every 150 people in the world. The 2022 figures show an increase in the number of children in slavery, from around 10 million to over 12 million. Women and children remain disproportionately vulnerable worldwide.

More than half (52%) of all forced labour and a quarter of all forced marriages can be found in upper-middle income or high-income countries such as the UK. In 2021, criminal exploitation was the most common form of slavery in the UK, followed by forced labour. From April to June 2022 there were 1,125 cases recorded, the highest number since these records began in 2015. These cases include forced labour and sexual exploitation. Modern slavery goes against social

justice and sustainable development.

PCS is affiliated to worldwide organisations that campaign against slavery. Find more details on our [International campaigns page](#).