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OUR MODEL FOR FREEDOM

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OUR MODEL FOR FREEDOM

## SLAVERY TODAY



It isn't legal anywhere but happens almost everywhere—including Europe and the U.S. Slaves are forced to work, without pay, under the threat of violence. They cannot walk away.

[Photo: Pete Pattison]

## Slavery Is Everywhere

There are tens of millions of people trapped in various forms of slavery throughout the world today. Researchers estimate that 40 million are enslaved worldwide, generating \$150 billion each year in illicit profits for traffickers.

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  - **Labor Slavery.** About 50 percent toil in forced labor slavery in industries where manual labor is needed—such as farming, ranching, logging, mining, fishing, and brick making—and in service industries working as dish washers, janitors, gardeners, and maids.
  - **Sex Slavery.** About 12.5 percent are trapped in forced prostitution sex slavery.
  - **Forced Marriage Slavery.** About 37.5 percent are trapped in forced marriages.
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  - **Child Slavery.** About 25 percent of today's slaves are children.

Slavery today is a hidden crime, making it harder for the public to see and for those in slavery to call out for help.

*Slavery statistics come from the U.N. International Labor Organization, Walk Free and the International Organization for Migration. See our [Trafficking and Slavery Fact Sheet](#) for details.*

## 15 The Rise of Modern Slavery

Slavery has existed for thousands of years, but economic and social forces have enabled its alarming resurgence in the past few decades by increasing people's vulnerability.

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  - **Population:** A population explosion has tripled the number of people in the world, mostly in developing countries. In many places, the population has grown faster than the economy, leaving many people economically vulnerable. A fire, flood, drought, or medical emergency places them in the hands of ruthless moneylenders who enslave them.

- **Migration:** Millions are on the move from impoverished rural areas to cities, and from poorer countries to wealthier ones, in search of work. Traffickers are able to trick them by posing as legitimate labor recruiters. Migrants are especially vulnerable—they are often very far from home, don't speak the local language, have no funds to return home, and have no friends or family to rely on.
- **Corruption:** Global government corruption often allows slavery to go unpunished. Many law enforcement officials aren't even aware that bonded labor, where someone is enslaved to work off a loan, is illegal. In many places, those in slavery have no police protection from predatory traffickers.
- **Discrimination:** Social inequality creates widespread economic and social vulnerability based on factors such as gender, race, tribe, or caste.



## Modern Slaves Are Cheap and Disposable

New slavery has two chief characteristics—it's cheap and it's disposable. Slaves today are cheaper than ever. In 1850, an average slave in the American South cost the equivalent of \$40,000 in today's money. Today a slave costs about \$90 on average worldwide. (Source: *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*. See all [Free the Slaves\\* books](#).)

Modern slaves are not considered investments worth maintaining. In the 19th century it was difficult to capture slaves and transport them to the United States. But today, when someone in slavery gets sick or injured, they are simply dumped or killed.

## You are Connected to Slavery, and You Can Cure It

Slavery flows into our homes, offices, and schools through many of the products we buy. Many food products and raw materials are tainted by slavery—such as tomatoes, tuna, shrimp, cotton, diamonds, iron, sugar, and gold.

There was a time when slavery was legal, and people considered it morally acceptable and economically essential. The battle to build a global consensus that slavery is unjust and unneeded has been won. Now we need to finish the job by freeing those still trapped in bondage.

See our [Take Action](#) section for ideas to mobilize your family, friends, classmates, co-workers, and faith community.

Download our [Free the Slaves Info Kit](#) to see how we fight slavery around the world.

Adapted from an appeal from the Free the Slaves website, [www.freetheslaves.net](http://www.freetheslaves.net) (2017)

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\* *Free the Slaves*: an international non-governmental organization that works in the world's worst human trafficking hot spots to liberate people from slavery and change the conditions that allow slavery to persist