

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 05:01 BST, THURSDAY 19<sup>th</sup> JULY**

**MORE THAN 136,000 PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN MODERN SLAVERY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

- *The UK imports £18bn of goods at-risk of being produced through forced labour annually*
- *UK government's response to modern slavery has been praised internationally, and the UK is the third most proactive country globally in tackling the issue*

**19 July 2018** – The scale of modern slavery within the UK is much higher than previously estimated, a new report launched today has found. The 2018 Global Slavery Index, the most comprehensive ever study on the issue, estimates that there are 136,000 people living in modern slavery in the UK today, equating to 2.1 victims for every 1,000 people in the country.

Previous estimates from the Home Office in 2014 had suggested a figure of up to 13,000 victims in the UK. However, the National Crime Agency has since commented that this was just the “tip of the iceberg”, which is confirmed by today’s landmark report.

**Mr Andrew Forrest, Founder of the Walk Free Foundation**, said: “The responsibility that developed countries have for modern slavery, revealed by this new data, is a huge wake-up call. The pressure to respond to this appalling human crime must shift from poorer countries to richer nations that have the resources and institutions to do much better. It is flourishing right under our noses.”

“It’s widely accepted that most crimes go unreported and unrecorded, because the victims are marginalised and vulnerable, and the black economy thrives where accountability is absent. This report demonstrates, straight from the mouths of some of the 40.3 million victims of modern slavery, that these are deplorable crimes continue to happen out of sight, and at a tragic scale.”

“We cannot sit back while millions of women, girls, men and boys around the world are having their lives destroyed and their potential extinguished by criminals seeking a quick profit.”

Globally, of the governments that have taken the most action to combat modern slavery, the 2018 GSI ranks the UK as third behind The Netherlands (1) and the United States (2). The UK government’s attempts to combat modern slavery and provide transparency shows international leadership on the issue.

Walk Free also commends the UK government for being the first globally to release a national estimate of modern slavery. The UK’s 2015 Modern Slavery Act is a flagship policy which is beginning to hold the country’s private sector accountable for forced labour in its operations.

The 2018 GSI found that forced labour in the UK is prevalent in various sectors including car washes, nail bars, driveway and block paving, construction, agriculture, and food processing. Some of the data within the study is based on the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the system through which victims can make the National Crime Agency aware of their situation.

The types of exploitation accounted for within the report include domestic servitude, labour exploitation, and sexual exploitation. In the UK, the top five nationalities of potential victims of

modern slavery recorded through the NRM in 2017 were UK nationals, Albanian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Nigerian.

**Kevin Bales, CMG, Professor of Contemporary Slavery and Research Director, the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham**, said: “I’m proud to point to the leadership of the UK government in the fight against global slavery, its Modern Slavery Act isn’t perfect, but it stands as an example to other countries. The UK is in stark contrast to those countries that turn a blind eye to slavery, or worse, practice state-sponsored enslavement. While North Korea is the most serious example of a nation enslaving its own citizens, there are others that use the excuse of ethnicity or religion to remove rights and exploit those within their borders - all in violation of international law.”

“Equally important is the good news this edition of the Global Slavery Index further reveals how all governments are responding to slavery, giving companies a guide to where to invest. The GSI also clarifies the risk slavery brings to all of us, through the products we buy, and points to specific actions to be taken to reduce that risk. Finally, the Walk Free research team continues to push forward the boundaries of how we can measure this hidden and slippery crime.”

From an international perspective, the UK is also a major importer of at-risk goods likely to have been produced through forced labour. Cumulatively the UK imports over \$18bn worth of these products annually, ranking fourth within the G20 behind only the United States (\$144bn), Japan (\$47bn) and Germany (\$30bn).

The five largest product imports into the UK by volume that are at-risk of being produced through modern slavery, are garments (\$9.2bn), electronics (\$8bn), fish (\$480m), cocoa (\$285m) and rice (\$177m). Many of these products are imported from countries with comparatively high levels of forced labour including China, India, Myanmar, and Côte d’Ivoire.

In addition to the data itself, the report also makes recommendations to the UK government, as to how it can enhance its efforts to combat modern slavery across several key areas of society and business. This includes the strengthening of existing legislation, improving victim support, addressing vulnerabilities within the job market, and working to eradicate forced labour from the national economy.

Further stories and breakdown of key findings from the Global Slavery Index 2018 from the Walk Free Foundation include:

**G20 countries are importing \$354bn of at-risk goods annually, fuelling demand for slave labour, with the majority still not acting against these practices:**

- The US was by far the largest importer of at risk products (\$144bn), comprising 40% of the total, with Japan (\$47bn), Germany (\$30bn), the UK (\$18bn) and France (\$16bn) comprising the top five
- The list of at-risk products was comprised by creating a shortlist of the 15 products that appeared most frequently in the 2016 US Department of Labor list of goods produced by forced labour
  - Product types varied significantly from electronics (laptops, computers, mobile phones), to natural resources (timber, coal), food items (cocoa, fish, brazil nuts and rice) and natural resources (gold and diamonds)

- Last year G20 leaders committed to fostering human rights due diligence in corporate operations and supply chains in line with internationally recognised standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)
  - More than half are yet to formally enact laws, policies or practices aimed at stopping business and government sourcing goods and services produced by forced labour
  - Just seven G20 countries – Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom and the United States are taking steps in this regard, with Australia due to introduce supply chain transparency laws in the second half of 2018

**The US has an issue with modern slavery both at home and importing goods at-risk of being produced through forced labour from overseas:**

- 403,000 people (1 in every 800) are currently working under forced labour conditions in the US
- The US is the world's largest importer of at-risk goods:
  - The US imports \$144bn of at-risk goods each year
  - The US imports 40% of total at-risk goods imported by G20 countries
- Electronics (laptops, computers, mobile phones), garments, timber, fish and cocoa are the US' most imported items at risk of being produced through slave labour
- The US is importing three times the at-risk goods of the second largest G20 importer, Japan (\$47bn), and nearly ten times more than its neighbour Canada (\$15bn)
- China was by far the largest source of at-risk goods, with the US importing \$122n of electronics and clothing from the country (85% of the US' total)
  - Vietnam was the second largest source (\$11.2bn), with India (\$3.8bn) third.
  - Smaller values of goods were also sourced from Malaysia, Thailand, Brazil, Argentina, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Russia, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Peru
- The US was also revealed to have the second highest Government Response Index score (behind The Netherlands) in tackling the issue, having implemented key components to responding to some forms of modern slavery, with victim support services, a strong criminal justice response and evidence of a coordinated collaboration and protections in place for vulnerable populations

**North Korea has the highest prevalence of modern slavery globally, with one in ten of the population victims of modern slavery:**

- 2.6 million people are victims of modern slavery - the vast majority being forced to work for the state
- A 73 per cent vulnerability to modern slavery, third globally behind Pakistan and Afghanistan – *calculated using a weighted score measuring governance issues, lack of basic needs, inequality, disenfranchised groups, effects of conflict*
- The main at-risk exports are coal (98 per cent / \$1bn to China annually), timber, and gold
- North Korea has the weakest response to modern slavery globally due to the state's role in forced labour both within North Korea and of North Koreans abroad
- In 2017, the Walk Free Foundation partnered with researchers at Leiden Asia Centre and the Database Centre for North Korean Human Rights – undertaking 50 interviews with defectors now living in South Korea
  - All but one described working in forced labour conditions

**More than a third of victims of modern slavery are victims of forced marriage:**

- 15.4 million individuals globally are victims of forced marriage

- The issue disproportionately affects women and girls - 84% of people in forced marriages are female
- Forced marriage happens in both developed and developing countries:
  - Most prevalent in areas such as Africa and Asia Pacific, where there are 4.8 and 2 victims for every 1,000 people respectively
  - However, the report also found victims of forced marriage in developed countries such as the US, UK and Australia
- Overall, the cultural practice of forced marriage places women at greater risk of exploitation, and the potential subjection to a life of servitude, financial bondage, and sexual exploitation that comes with modern slavery

The Global Slavery Index report can be found at [www.globalsslaveryindex.org](http://www.globalsslaveryindex.org)

**ENDS**

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