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Global Slavery Index 2023 — Modern Slavery

27 March 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED

SOCIAL ISSUES

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ISSUING BODY	FREQUENCY	INDIA'S RANK	TOP PERFORMER
Walk Free Foundation	Irregular	34 / 160	Switzerland (lowest prevalence: 0.5 per 1,000)

KEY FINDINGS

- India has 11 million people in modern slavery — highest absolute number globally
- India's prevalence: 8 per 1,000 people; ranks 34th globally on prevalence
- Globally, 50 million people live in modern slavery — up 10 million since 2016
- North Korea has the highest prevalence (104.6 per 1,000), followed by Eritrea (90.3)
- Switzerland has the lowest prevalence (0.5 per 1,000), followed by Norway (0.5)
- 160 countries assessed across three dimensions: prevalence, vulnerability, and government response

ABOUT THE INDEX

The Global Slavery Index is published by the **Walk Free Foundation**, an Australian-based international human rights organisation. The 2023 edition is the fourth report (previous editions: 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018). It provides a country-by-country assessment of modern slavery, which encompasses forced labour, forced marriage, debt bondage, human trafficking, and state-imposed forced labour.

The GSI assesses 160 countries across three dimensions:

- **Prevalence** — estimated number and proportion of people living in modern slavery per 1,000 population
- **Vulnerability** — factors that increase a population's susceptibility to modern slavery (governance gaps, inequality, conflict, discrimination)
- **Government Response** — how effectively governments are addressing modern slavery through legislation, enforcement, victim support, and international cooperation

The 2023 data is based on the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery produced by the ILO, Walk Free, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2022, using data from 2021.

INDIA'S PERFORMANCE

India has the **largest absolute number of people in modern slavery** globally — an estimated **11 million** on any given day in 2021. This translates to a prevalence of **8 per 1,000 people**, placing India **34th globally** on the prevalence ranking and **6th within Asia and the Pacific**.

Modern slavery in India is driven by:

- **Bonded/debt labour** — especially in brick kilns, agriculture, textiles, and construction
- **Forced marriage** — affecting women and girls disproportionately
- **Child labour** — despite legal prohibitions
- **Trafficking** — for domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, and organ harvesting

India's government response has been rated as moderate, with recognition of strong legislative frameworks (Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976, Prevention of Human Trafficking Bill) but weak enforcement.

Prevalence Comparison (Selected Countries)

COUNTRY	PREVALENCE (PER 1,000)	ABSOLUTE NUMBER
North Korea	104.6	2.6 million
Eritrea	90.3	320,000
Mauritania	32.0	149,000
India	8.0	11 million
China	3.0	4.4 million
USA	1.9	643,000
Switzerland	0.5	4,600

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF LATEST EDITION

- 50 million people globally live in modern slavery — 28 million in forced labour and 22 million in forced marriage
- Modern slavery increased by 10 million people since the last global estimate in 2016
- G20 countries collectively have 8.8 million people living in modern slavery and import \$468 billion worth of at-risk products annually
- Forced commercial sexual exploitation increased by 30% since 2016
- 86 countries have not criminalised forced marriage

- Switzerland, Norway, and Germany have the lowest prevalence rates globally

UPSC RELEVANCE

*GSI publisher (Walk Free), India's prevalence rank (34th) and absolute numbers (11 million), three assessment dimensions, total countries (160), highest prevalence country (North Korea) **Mains GS-2: Bonded Labour Act 1976, anti-trafficking legislation, child labour, forced marriage, ILO conventions, human rights governance, vulnerable sections** **Interview:** "India has strong anti-slavery laws on paper but 11 million people remain in modern slavery. Where does the system fail?"*

RELATED TERMS

[Bonded Labour](#)[Human Trafficking](#)



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