



THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA

Modern Slavery Overview

The Issue

Modern Slavery is a global challenge that persists in various forms, affecting millions of individuals around the world, including in Australia. There are approximately 50 million people globally living in modern slavery, and on any given day, there are an estimated 41,000 individuals living in modern slavery in Australia.¹ It is an umbrella term which refers to relationships which are based on exploitation and coercion, including forced labour or marriage, human trafficking, debt bondage, child labour and deceptive recruiting for labour or services.²

In Australia, modern slavery-like practices are more common in industries such as agriculture, construction, hospitality, domestic work and the sex industry, and among certain groups of people, including migrant workers, refugees and other marginalised groups.³ They include, but are not limited to, underpayment, unsafe working conditions, violence and the confiscation of passports as a means of control.

Economic pressures, globalisation and a demand for cheap labour all contribute to the prevalence of modern slavery in Australia. As businesses and consumers, we play a part in these cycles of exploitation when we engage with exploitative suppliers or organisations and contribute to a demand for low-cost goods. Australia has taken steps to address modern slavery through legislation, though it is still challenging to detect, prevent and respond, because of complex supply chains and weaknesses in regulation and enforcement.

¹ Walk Free. (2023). The Global Slavery Index 2023. [Link](#).

² Australian Human Rights Institute. (n.d.). What is modern slavery? [Link](#).

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). Modern slavery. [Link](#).



How can I get involved?

- Be aware of what we are buying and [make informed purchasing decisions](#) to support companies that prioritise ethical, sustainable practices and supply chains, or that are dedicated to combating modern slavery.
- If we are involved in businesses or community groups, we can [use our consumer power](#) to encourage suppliers to adopt ethical labour practices. This is sometimes called having 'transparent supply chain practices' and means conducting due diligence to identify and address potential risks of modern slavery.
- [Support](#) groups or organisations that aim to raise awareness of modern slavery, to help others become more aware of the issue and what it looks like.
- [Call on our government representatives](#) to continuously review and strengthen anti-slavery legislation to address emerging challenges, and ensure effective and accessible enforcement mechanisms. This will need to include better provision of specialised, trauma-informed training for law enforcement, public officials and community leaders, to identify and respond to cases of modern slavery.
- Make an intentional effort to [learn](#) about modern slavery, and in doing so, become more aware of what it may look like when we come across it or its effects.

For more information...

- [Australian Government - Modern Slavery in Australia](#)
- [The Salvation Army Australia's Social Justice Stocktake](#)