Foreword

In the past decades Mongolia has made a successful transition into a multi-party democracy and a rapidly growing, if not highly diversified, market economy. The Mongolian economy is increasingly integrated into global markets, in particular through trade and investment liberalization schemes with major trading partners including the European Union and the United States. The planned economy era has however left a legacy of certain practices that still raise concerns among international and national human rights bodies and Mongolia’s trade partners alike. One such practice is involving military conscripts in non-military work and economic development.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) permits compulsory military service, but allows mobilization of military conscripts only for work of a purely military character. Furthermore, the ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) prohibits mobilizing and using forced or compulsory labour, including labour of military conscripts, for purposes of economic development. Mongolia has ratified both Conventions.

The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) requested the Mongolian Government to provide information on the number of conscripts assigned to participate in non-military work and on the conditions under which career members of the armed forces may leave the service, in time of peace.

In this context, the National Statistics Office of Mongolia, with support from the ILO, piloted a module in the Mongolian Labour Force Survey 2022 to assess forced labour. The module, which was the first of its kind to be implemented in Mongolia, aimed to measure forced labour among the adult population (individuals ages 18 or older) in the private economy and among men who have recently completed their compulsory military service. Mongolia was one of the first countries to implement a module on forced labour in the private economy in a national survey and the first country to include a section on conscript labour.

The results indicate the presence of forced labour among Mongolian adults and conscripts; however, due to the limitations of the survey, they should be read as lower-bound estimates. Additional ILO research on the topic complements these results.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the National Statistics Office of Mongolia for their pioneering efforts in advancing the understanding of forced labour within the private economy. As one of the first countries to implement a module on forced labour national labour force survey, their work has set a remarkable precedent for data collection and analysis in this field. Furthermore, by being the first to include a dedicated section on conscript labour, the National Statistics Office of Mongolia has significantly contributed to improving the understanding of forced labour. Its commitment to uncovering and addressing the complexities of forced labour serves as an invaluable example for other countries and reinforces the importance of robust statistical frameworks in combating these pervasive challenges.
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the National Statistics Office of Mongolia for their pioneering efforts in advancing the understanding of privately- and state-imposed forced labour. As one of the first countries to implement a module on forced labour in a national labour force survey, their work has set a remarkable precedent for data collection and analysis in this field.

The findings of the forced labour module were published as a chapter in the *Mongolian Labour Force and Forced Labour Survey 2022*. The following sections of this brochure reproduce the content of this chapter.

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Concepts and definitions

Forced labour is defined by the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), Article 2, as all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered themselves voluntarily.

For statistical purposes, forced labour can be divided into two broad categories: state-imposed forced labour and privately-imposed forced labour.

In terms of state-imposed forced labour, Convention No. 29 also provides for exceptions to the definition of forced labour by specifically referring to five situations in which compulsory labour may be imposed by state authorities. These situations include: work of a purely military character exacted in virtue of compulsory military service; normal civic obligations of citizens; work or service under supervision and control of public authorities as a consequence of a conviction in a court of law; work or service in cases of emergency, such as wars or natural calamities; minor communal services in the direct interest of the community involved.

It should be noted that the ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), Article 1, supplements Convention No. 29 by delineating cases in which States are prohibited from making use of forced labour. These cases include recurring compulsory labour as a means of political coercion or education or as a punishment for holding or expressing views ideologically opposed to the established political, social or economic system; as a method of mobilizing labour for economic development purposes; as a means of labour discipline; as a means of racial, social, national or religious discrimination; and as a sanction for participating in strikes.

Within this framework and in line with the Guidelines concerning the measurement of forced labour of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) 2018, for the purpose of this survey a person is classified as being in forced labour in the private economy if they are, during a specific reference period, in any activity to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use that is both involuntary and under penalty or menace of a penalty. The reference period for this survey is defined as the three years prior to the survey. This means that the results presented here show the prevalence of forced labour as the proportion of individuals who were in a situation of forced labour at any point during the three years prior to the survey.

As mentioned previously, a novelty of this survey is that it included a section to assess the prevalence of forced labour among those who were conscripts in the last three years in Mongolia. A conscript is considered as being in forced labour if during their military service they are engaged in activities that are not of a military nature and these activities are not related to the specialization of that individual’s military unit, an emergency situation or a vocational training with the same characteristics of a general technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programme (voluntary and for which the individual receives a certificate). Examples of activities not of a military nature include construction or maintenance of private buildings, working as a driver for private companies, mining sector work or harvesting crops when these activities are not linked with any kind of emergency.
Regrettably, the survey tool utilized in the 2022 Labour Force Survey (LFS) limits the accurate measurement of forced labour among conscripts due to lack of data on the specialization of an individual’s military unit and conscripts’ involvement in optional vocational training.

Due to these limitations and using the current data, it can only be determined with certainty that a conscript was in forced labour if they were involved in work that was not of a military nature and which was related to compulsory training.

**Important considerations**

Before presenting the results, it should be noted that forced labour is a rare phenomenon. The survey adopted a modular approach and the sampling planned for the original LFS was not modified. Moreover, the 2022 LFS was administered to Mongolian citizens only and did not capture individuals not residing within a household such as workers living in their place of work or in institutional housing or migrants, who are more vulnerable to being trapped in forced labour. This is a serious limitation, and consequently the results should be read as a lower-bound estimation, covering only nationals in Mongolia. As a result, out of the 152,000 individuals 18 or older who participated in the survey there were only 3,575 identified cases of privately imposed forced labour during the three-year reference period.

All estimates presented in the following sections should be seen as a lower-bound and should be interpreted cautiously, refraining from further extrapolation.
Forced labour in the private economy

The survey indicates that approximately 3,575 people aged 18 and above were in a situation of privately imposed forced labour in Mongolia at some point during the reference period. That is, approximately two out of every 1,000 adults experienced privately imposed forced labour at some moment during the past three years. Figure 1 shows the prevalence of privately imposed forced labour in different segments of the population. It is important to stress again that this figure shows lower-bound estimates.

As seen in figure 1, forced labour has an important gender dimension. Males are significantly more likely to be in forced labour than females: 3/1,000 adult males experienced privately imposed forced labour in the reference period compared to 2/1,000 adult females.

Significant variations in the prevalence of forced labour can also be observed across different age groups. Younger adults aged 18–34 exhibit a higher likelihood of being engaged in forced labour, while the percentage of individuals involved in forced labour tends to decline with increasing age. While 3/1,000 individuals aged 18–34 were involved in forced labour at some point during the reference period, only 1/1000 individuals aged 35 or older experienced forced labour during this period.

Unlike the other categories, there is relatively little disparity in the prevalence of forced labour between urban and rural populations.

Another characteristic of forced labour in Mongolia that is important to understand is the average amount of time a person spends in a situation of forced labour. This survey reveals that, on average, individuals engaged in forced labour spent approximately 1.3 years of the three-year reference period in such conditions. This statistic indicates that spells of forced labour tend to be of relatively long duration.

As seen in figure 2, the overwhelming majority (68.5 per cent) of those in forced labour were threatened with withholding payments or benefits. When considering the aspect of involuntariness, the most prevalent situation reported was being unable to terminate their work contracts with their employers, affecting 71.8 per cent of those experiencing forced labour.

Figure 1. Forced labour estimates (per 1,000 individuals), individuals ages 18 and above, by sex, residence, and age group

![Figure 1: Forced labour estimates](image)

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of victims of forced labour, by situations of coercion and involuntariness

![Figure 2: Percentage distribution](image)
Forced labour amongst conscripts

Results from the survey indicate that 7.3 per cent of those performing their military service during the reference period (last three years) were involved in non-military work during their conscription and none of them was performing this work as a response as an emergency (880 conscripts). Of those performing non-military work, 29.8 per cent (or 262 individuals) were in compulsory training and can therefore be classified as in forced labour (table 1).

Table 1. Non-military work among conscripts

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<tr>
<th>Number of observations / weighted</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of conscripts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involved in non-military work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involved in non-military work NOT related to an emergency</td>
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<tr>
<td>In forced labour (non-military work related to compulsory training)</td>
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