



ALLIANCE

Regional brief for the Americas

**2017 GLOBAL ESTIMATES OF
MODERN SLAVERY AND CHILD LABOUR**

Introduction

In 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 17 interrelated goals and 169 associated targets to guide global development. SDG Target 8.7 calls on governments to:

Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

The 2016 Global Estimates of Child Labour¹ and the 2016 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery² chart how far we must still travel to honour these commitments. This brief summarises key results from the global estimates for the Americas region, which includes the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), USA and Canada. It also addresses the main regional policy priorities on the road to the 2025 date for ending child labour and the 2030 date for eradicating modern slavery.

Child labour: main facts and challenges

Table 1

Key statistics: child labour

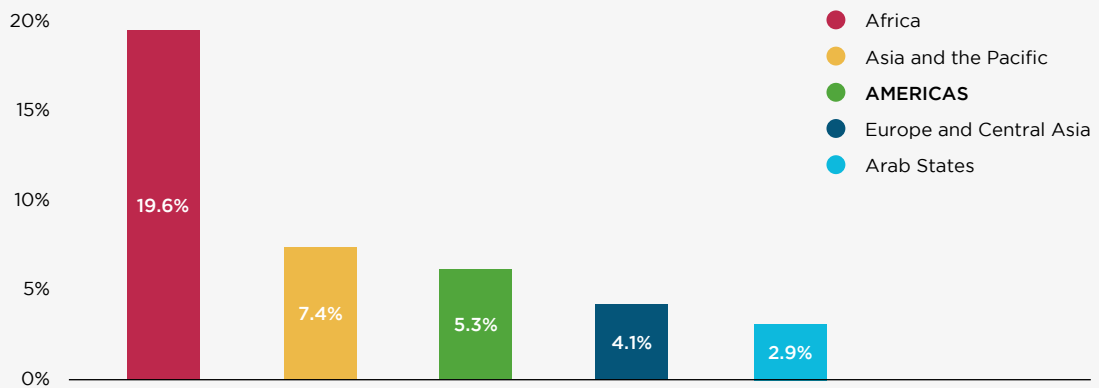
Number (000s) and percentage of children in child labour and hazardous work, by age range, Americas region, 2016

	Children in child labour		Children in hazardous work		
	Number (000s)	%	Number (000s)	%	
World	151 622	9.6	72 525	4.6	
Americas, total	10 735	5.3	6 553	3.2	
Americas, age	5-11	3 950	3.7	1 084	1.0
	12-14	3 016	6.4	1 699	3.6
	15-17	3 770	8.0	3 770	8.0

The global estimates for 2016 indicate that one in twenty of all children in the Americas region are involved in child labour, a proportion higher than in Europe and Central Asia and in Arab States (Fig. 1). About 3% of children in the region are in hazardous work. In absolute terms, 10.7 million Americas children are in child labour and 6.5 million are in hazardous work.

Figure 1

Percentage of children in child labour, 5-17 years age group, by region, 2016

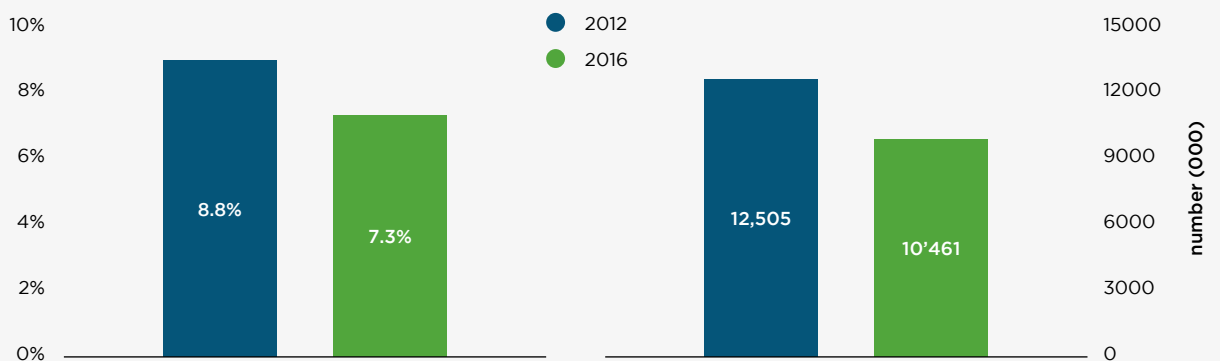


The estimates also highlight that:

Progress against child labour was significant in Latin America and the Caribbean. Child labour went down in Latin America and the Caribbean (the regional grouping for which there are comparable estimates for 2012)³ over 2012 to 2016 period (Fig. 2), particularly due to targeted policies implemented by governments in the region to combat child labour. One of the most important advances in this regard has been the reduction of child labour in hazardous activities. It is likely that the advances were also driven in important part by broader economic and demographic forces acting in line with governmental efforts, although this is a matter requiring further research.

Figure 2

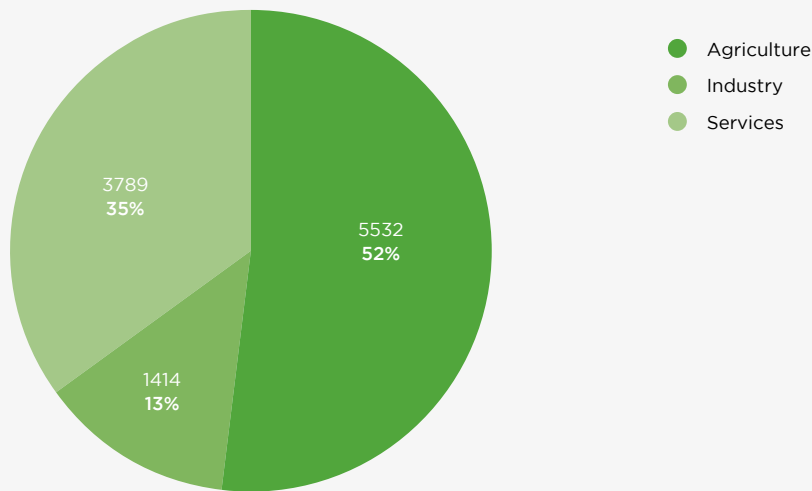
Percentage and number of children in child labour, 5-17 years age group, Latin America and Caribbean region, 2012 and 2016



Agriculture predominates. Agriculture accounts for 52 per cent of all child labour and for 5.5 million children in absolute terms. Child labour in agriculture relates primarily to subsistence and commercial farming and livestock herding; most is unpaid and takes place within the family unit. Of the remaining children in child labour, 3.8 million (35 per cent) are found in the services sector and 1.4 million (13 per cent) are found in industry.

Figure 3

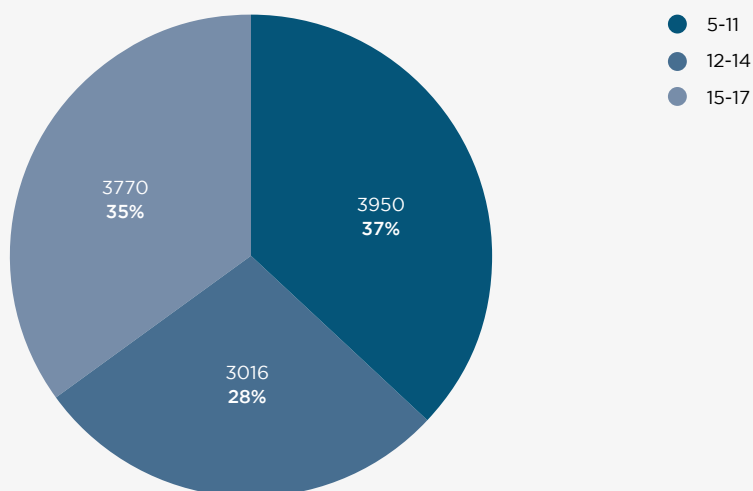
Percentage distribution and number (000s) of children in child labour, by branch of economic activity, Americas, 2016



Young children form the largest group of those in child labour. The age breakdown of children in child labour indicate that 37 per cent of all those in child labour are in the 5-11 years age bracket, 28 per cent are aged 12-14 years and 35 per cent fall into the 15-17 years age range. This age profile of child labour in the Americas is older than elsewhere. Worldwide, for example, 5-11 year-olds constitute 48 per cent of all those in child labour. Hazardous work is more prevalent in the 15-17 age group (8.0 per cent of children in the relevant age cohort). This is the age group with higher participation in industry of children in child labour (20.7 per cent).

Figure 4

Percentage distribution and number (000s) of children in child labour, by age group, Americas, 2016



Modern slavery: main facts and challenges

Table 2

Key statistics: modern slavery

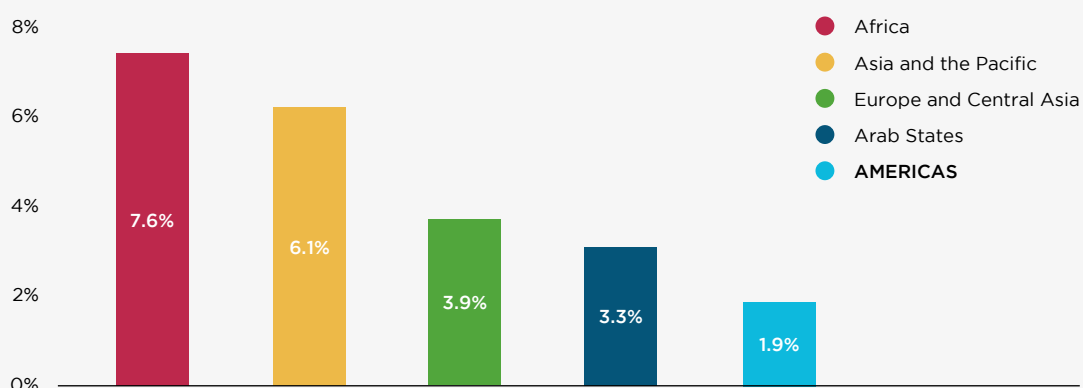
Number (000s) and prevalence (per 1,000) of persons in modern slavery, by age, sex and category, Americas region, 2016

		(a) Forced labour	(b) Forced marriage	(a&b) MODERN SLAVERY	
World	No. (000s)	24 851	15 442	40 293	
	Prev. (‰)	3.4	2.1	5.4	
Americas, total	No. (000s)	1 280	670	1 950	
	Prev. (‰)	1.3	0.7	1.9	
Americas, age	Children	No. (000s)	208	209	417
		Prev. (‰)	0.8	0.8	1.5
	Adults	No. (000s)	1 073	458	1 531
		Prev. (‰)	1.5	0.6	2.1
Americas, sex	Male	No. (000s)	686	39	725
		Prev. (‰)	1.4	0.1	1.5
	Female	No. (000s)	592	627	1 219
		Prev. (‰)	1.2	1.2	2.4

The global estimates indicate that there were a total of over 1.9 million victims of modern slavery⁴ in the Americas on any given day in 2016. This translates into a prevalence of 1.9 per 1,000 persons, lowest of any region in the world (Figure 5), but still a considerable number. And, due to limitations of the methodology and data,⁵ these estimates are considered to be conservative.

Figure 5

Prevalence of modern slavery, by region, 2016

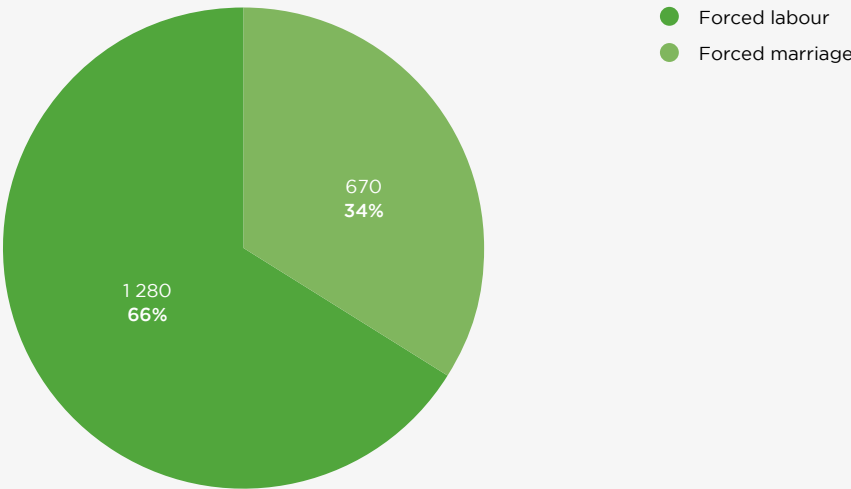


The estimates also show:

The largest share of those in modern slavery were victims of forced labour. About two-thirds (66 per cent) of the total were victims of forced labour⁶ and 34 per cent were victims of forced marriage (Figure 6). The prevalence of forced marriage was the second lowest of all the world’s regions, after Europe and Central Asia. Forced labour, in turn, for the purposes of the estimates covered three areas: forced labour imposed by private actors; forced sexual exploitation; and State-imposed forced labour.

Figure 6

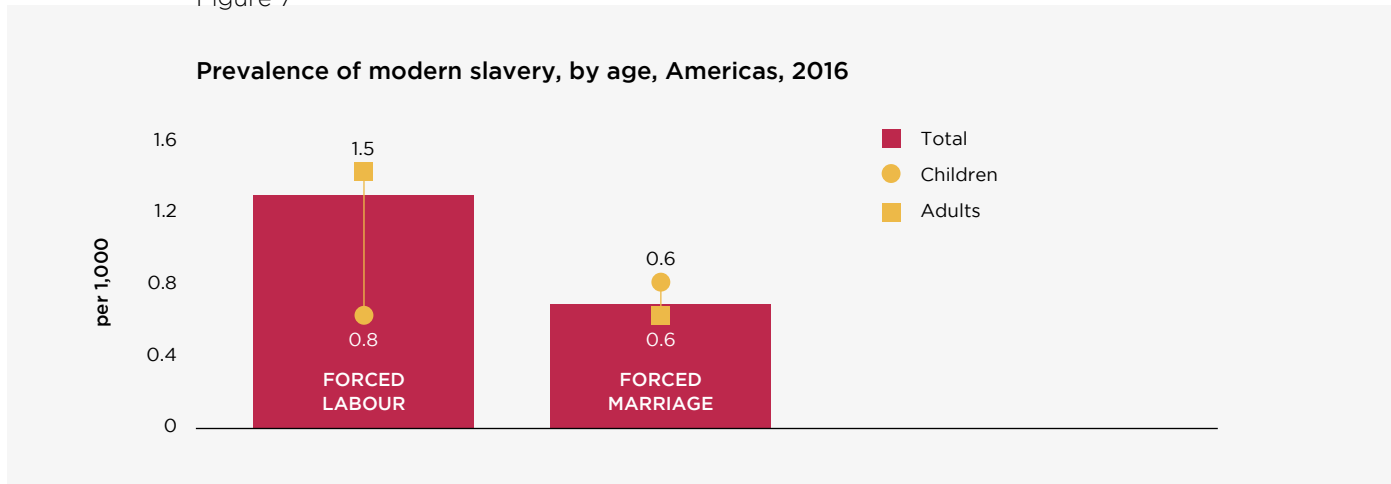
Percentage share and number (000s) in forced labour and forced marriage, Americas, 2016



Many forced labour victims were in situations of debt bondage. Debt bondage is defined for the estimates as being forced to work to repay a debt and not being able to leave, or being forced to work and not being able to leave because of a debt. About one-third (36 per cent) of all victims of forced labour imposed by private actors in the Americas region were in debt bondage. The share was especially high among those forced to work in agriculture, domestic work, or manufacturing. It is likely that these figures reflect a mix of cases of both traditional forms of bonded labour and newer forms of debt bondage where recruitment fees and agency charges become the debt that binds.

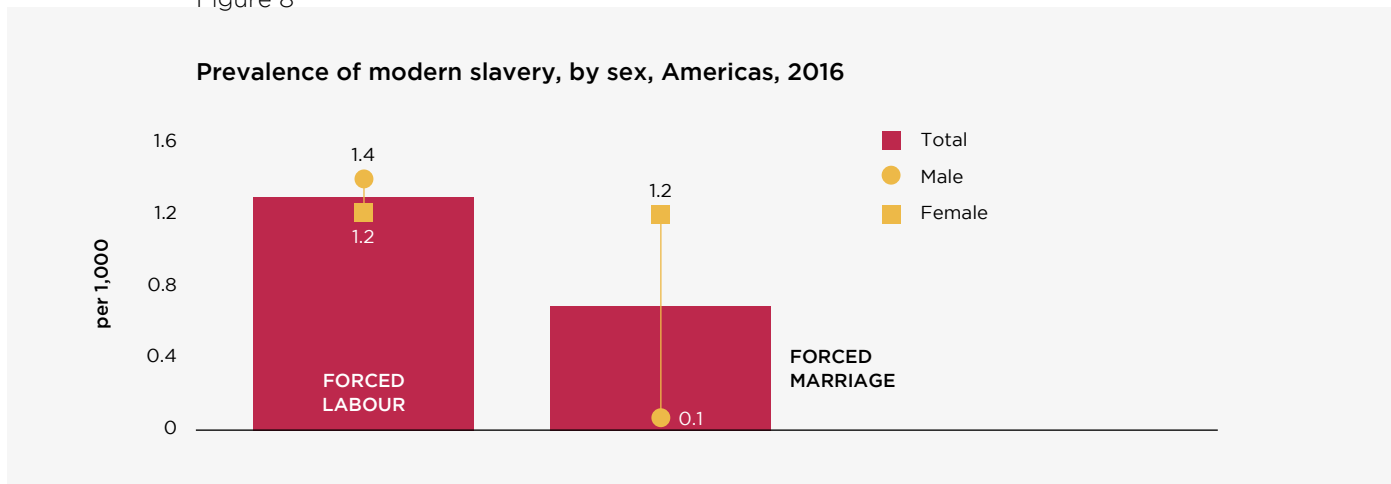
Modern slavery affected children as well as adults. One of the most alarming findings of the modern slavery estimates was the extent to which this crime affected children. About 417 thousand of the victims in the Americas region were children below the age of 18 years. Children were especially likely to be victims of forced marriage; a total of 209 thousand children were living in a situation of forced marriage in 2016, translating into a prevalence rate of 0.8 per 1,000 children (Fig. 7). And, owing to the way children’s forced marriage was measured, this figure understated its total extent.⁷ Forced labour affected an additional 208 thousand children, a figure that included children in commercial sexual exploitation.

Figure 7



The prevalence of modern slavery was much higher for females. There were 2.4 female victims per 1,000 compared to 1.5 male victims per 1,000. This overall gender gap masked an even larger gap between males and females in forced marriage (Fig. 8); female were twelve times more likely to be in a forced marriage. The prevalence of forced labour, by contrast, was slightly higher among males. There were also large gender-based differences in the means of coercion in forced labour; sexual violence, for example, was limited almost exclusively to female victims.

Figure 8



Policy priorities on the road to 2025 and 2030

Ending child labour and modern slavery will require a multi-faceted response that addresses the array of forces – economic, social, cultural and legal – that contribute to vulnerability and enable abuses. There can be no one-size-fits-all solutions; responses need to be adapted to the very diverse environments in which child labour and modern slavery still occurs. It is nonetheless possible to identify some overarching regional policy priorities emerging from the global estimates and a growing body of research and practical experience.

Integration of child labour issues in macro policy. Such a recognition would ensure funding for prevention and eradication of child labour. It would also lead to an adoption of a prevention approach to ensure that more children, especially those from the most marginalised communities, have access to social protection programmes that prevent them from entering the labour market prematurely.

Protection programs for young people of working or learning age. In Latin America and the Caribbean, a significant proportion of young people in child labour situations are above the minimum age for admission to employment, but they are working in the informal economy, in unacceptable forms of work or in precarious work. Thus, the policies for learning and for the protection of young workers are fundamental for the prevention of child and forced labour. In some LAC countries there are policies of learning quotas in companies, which have proved effective for the productive inclusion of young people of legal working age. On the other hand, youth work protection policies are capable of preventing human trafficking and forced labour. Special attention is needed for the issues of girls. A large part are in domestic work and/or are being sexually exploited; two areas that make it more difficult to control and incorporate in the world of work.

Extension of Labour Inspection. Labour inspection policies are essential for guaranteeing the application of labour legislation, especially in the fight against child labour and forced labour that have increasingly acquired importance in recent years in the region. Some challenges remain, such as the decline in the numbers of inspectors; the difficulty of supervising domestic and sexual work; and the high number of people in informality in LAC countries. On the other hand, there has been an increase in the number of co-operation actions between countries, and a strengthening in the fight against child and forced labour. In order to strengthen the control mechanisms at work, it is necessary to adapt the legislation of some countries and the functions of the inspectors, as well as to create mobile groups, such as those in countries such as Brazil, which include different professionals for joint action. On the other hand, programs of data collection and geo-referencing of information are important to give more efficiency to inspection actions.

Strengthening and implementation of regional, national and local plans for the elimination of child labour and forced labour. The region has a history of developing and implementing plans for the prevention and eradication of forced and child labour, as well as decent work agendas, with specific targets and objectives. These programmes have been instrumental in strengthening and integrating public policies for the prevention and eradication of child and forced labour, since they are commitments signed by the State, often elaborated in a tripartite manner and often involving civil society. Further, strengthening these mechanisms can be a strategy to ensure that policy priorities of the countries are addressed.

Social programs, rescue and insertion in decent work, including migrants. Increased migration in the region has created situations of exploitation and extreme vulnerability to child labour and forced labour. On the other hand, programs for the hiring and insertion of workers have been fundamental for guaranteeing decent work and preventing forced labour and trafficking in persons. One challenge is to maintain existing structures and to increase the number of rescues and vocational integration programs, especially for the most vulnerable groups, such as women, migrants, indigenous people, afro-descendants, LGBT people and people with disabilities. With a complex political and economic picture, the region is at risk of regression of some positive results in recent years, and people in situations of vulnerability are also the most prone to informal, precarious, forced and child labour. For this reason, it is fundamental to maintain the programs of income transfer, professional insertion, learning and protected work for adolescents and young people. The compliance of host governments with international conventions governing the rights of migrants generally, and child migrants in particular, is necessary for protecting migrants at their destination. For children, ensuring their right to education is especially important, as many child migrants do not have the choice between work and education because the latter is unavailable. Children migrating alone, independently of parents or adult guardians, one of the most vulnerable groups of children, require a special set of policies, owing to the unique set of circumstances that surround them.

Building the evidence base. While the regional estimates for the Americas are major step forward, our information on modern slavery in the region is far from complete. The regional-level information provided by the global estimates needs to be augmented by further research and data collection efforts on all dimensions of modern slavery at the *country level* to generate the country-specific evidence necessary for informed national policy responses. In the areas of both child labour modern slavery, there is also an ongoing need for information about the impact of policies and interventions in order to guide policy choices.

End notes

1. *Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016*. International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva, 2017.
2. *Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage*. International Labour Organization (ILO) and Walk Free Foundation, Geneva, 2017.
3. This report makes use of the new regional classification system developed by ILO-STAT. However, as we do not have historical estimates for the Americas region, we revert to the previous regional grouping – Latin America and the Caribbean – for the purpose of assessing trends.
4. In the context of this report, modern slavery covers a set of specific legal concepts including forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, slavery and slavery like practices, and human trafficking. Although modern slavery is not defined in law, it is used an umbrella term that focuses attention on commonalities across these legal concepts. Essentially, it refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power. In order to make this set of complex legal concepts measurable, the Global Estimates focus on two key forms of modern slavery: forced labour and forced marriage.
5. For a detailed discussion of this point, see *Methodology of the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage*, International Labour Organization (ILO) and Walk Free Foundation, Geneva, 2017.
6. Forced labour is defined by ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) as “all work or service that is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.” The global estimates of forced labour is based on three main categories of forced labour defined as follows: forced labour imposed by private agents for labour exploitation, including bonded labour, forced domestic work, and work imposed in the context of slavery or vestiges of slavery; forced sexual exploitation of adults, imposed by private agents for commercial sexual exploitation, and all forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children; and State-imposed forced labour, including work exacted by the public authorities, military or paramilitary, compulsory participation in public works, and forced prison labour.
7. All child marriage is generally considered to be forced marriage, given that one and/or both parties by definition has not expressed full, free and informed consent. However, it is important to be clear that for the purposes of these estimates, the measurement of forced marriage is limited to what was captured by the surveys. That is, forced marriage in the estimates includes all marriages of both adults and children that were reported by the survey respondent to have been forced and without consent, regardless of the age of the respondent. Accordingly, the estimates do not include every instance of child marriage, as child marriage is not currently measured adequately at the scale or specificity required for a global estimate.





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