Modern slavery in Sri Lanka
Global Slavery Index 2023
Country Snapshot

According to the 2023 Global Slavery Index, an estimated 6.5 in every thousand people were in modern slavery in Sri Lanka at any point in 2021. In other words, 139,000 people experienced forced labour or forced marriage in Sri Lanka in 2021. In terms of prevalence of modern slavery, Sri Lanka ranks 68th globally and 11th within Asia and the Pacific.

KEY STATS
Population (2021) 21,413,250
GDP per capita, PPP (Current intl $) $13,227

6.5
PREVALENCE OF MODERN SLAVERY per 1,000 people

139,000
NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING IN MODERN SLAVERY

56/100
VULNERABILITY TO MODERN SLAVERY

49/100
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO MODERN SLAVERY

The scale of modern slavery

Figure 1. Prevalence of modern slavery across Asia and the Pacific

Figure 2. Estimated number of people in modern slavery across Asia and the Pacific
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Vulnerability to modern slavery
How vulnerable a country’s people are to modern slavery is dependent on a range of factors which reflect the strength of governance, access to basic needs, inequality, disenfranchised groups, and effects of conflict. On a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 being the highest vulnerability to modern slavery, Sri Lanka is rated as 56 and has above average vulnerability for the region. Vulnerability is highest in terms of disenfranchised groups.

Figure 3. Vulnerability of Sri Lanka to modern slavery by dimension, compared to the regional average

Government response to modern slavery
The government of Sri Lanka scored 49 out of 100 in their response to modern slavery. This places the government’s response above the average regional response. Of the five areas of response assessed (milestones), the government has taken most action on effective criminal justice mechanisms and least action on addressing risk in government and business supply chains.

Figure 4. Government of Sri Lanka’s responses to modern slavery by milestone, compared with the regional average

Priority Recommendations for the government of Sri Lanka

1. Increase the legal age of marriage for males and females to 18 years without exceptions.

2. Ensure support services are available for all victims of modern slavery, regardless of gender, age, nationality, or sexuality.

3. Enact legislation recognising that victims should not be treated as criminals for conduct that occurred while under control of their exploiter and ensure the law is enforced.

For more information on modern slavery, visit the Global Slavery Index 2023 website.