

2017 INSIGHT SERIES

2. Using surveys to measure modern slavery

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*Photo credit: Gallup
Interviewer for Gallup World Polls conducting an interview in Nepal*

It is widely acknowledged that measuring modern slavery is complex but we have learned a great deal from the measurement of other crimes where official statistics were poor or non-existent. Random sample population surveys are now widely used to measure crimes that were widely unreported, such as sexual and domestic violence.

In 2014, Walk Free Foundation began using surveys as the core element of our methodology to estimate the prevalence of modern slavery. This began with a trial in a small number of countries and has since expanded to cover 48 countries. These surveys form the central component of the [Global Estimates of Modern Slavery](#). This paper summarises the development of the survey instrument, country coverage and remaining challenges.

The Gallup World Poll

The Gallup World Poll was selected as the survey vehicle because of its global coverage, methodology and consistency of quality survey delivery. Used by large international organizations such as the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the International Labour Organization, the World Poll continually surveys in more than 150 countries, representing more than 99% of the world's adult population. The target population is the entire civilian, non-institutionalised population, aged 15 and older. Samples are probability based and nationally representative, with the only exception of areas which are scarcely populated or present a threat to the safety of interviewers. The questionnaire is translated into the major languages of each country, and interviews are conducted by highly trained enumerators from each country. All face-to-face interviews take place at a person's home, which can be defined as any dwelling with a cooking facility.

You can view a detailed description of the World Poll Methodology [here](#).

The survey questions

An initial set of questions designed to capture a range of scenarios that could be classified as modern slavery were developed in 2014. To partly address the limitations of a household-based sample when the target population is largely hidden, respondents are asked about their own experiences, and those of their immediate family members.

Due to the limited time available for each interview, the questions were direct and were designed to identify cases that fell into two broad categories: unfree labour and forced marriage. These questions were tested in a small number of countries to make sure they measured what they were intended to measure. The results of cognitive testing were positive; respondents generally understood the questions, recalled the information being sought, wanted to provide the information, and could respond in the format required. However, the testing highlighted that some questions needed to be made clearer and these changes were made before the survey was run. Since then, a few other refinements have been made, including in 2015, to ask respondents to explain the experience in their own words, and in 2016, to better capture the children who may be forced to work.



*Photo credit: Gallup
Interviewer for Gallup World Polls conducting an interview in Pakistan*

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SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS ASKED

1. Have you or has anyone in your immediate family... ever been **forced to work** by an employer?
2. Have you or has anyone in your immediate family ever been forced to work by an employer **to repay a debt** with that employer?
3. Have you or has anyone in your immediate family ever been offered one kind of work, but then were **forced to do something else and not allowed to leave**?
4. Have you or has anyone in your immediate family, including *children*, ever **had to work in order to help another family member who was forced to work** by an employer?
5. Have you or has anyone in your immediate family, including *children*, ever **been forced to work for an employer so that another person would receive a job, land, money or other resources**?
6. Have you or has anyone in your immediate family ever been **forced to marry**?

An additional screening question was added in Mauritania to ensure traditional forms of slavery were also captured – *Have you or has anyone in your immediate family ever been forced to work for a master as a slave?*

When a respondent answers ‘yes’ to any of these questions, they are then asked a series of questions to learn more about the experience, including when and where it occurred, the ways in which the victims were kept from leaving that work, the type of work the victims were forced to do, and in the case of forced marriage, whether they consented to the marriage.

WHAT HAVE WE FOUND?

Since 2014, over 71,000 people have been interviewed through a total of 54 surveys conducted in 48 countries. The countries surveyed to date represent over half of the world’s population and form the most extensive survey program on modern slavery ever undertaken.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS, WALK FREE FOUNDATION SURVEYS

‘I was locked up and punished, sometimes I spent a whole day without eating’ – 54 year old Female, Mauritania

‘Withheld of my papers and my passport. Then they forced me to sell the drugs to repay the debts of my brother who was in the Italian prison at that time’ – 27 year old Male, Tunisia

‘He was not paid on time, there were delays of 3 or 4 months and he was told that if he left the job he would not get paid’ – 65 year-old Male, Bolivia

‘I was working in mill where fabric is made. The owner forced me to work two months, I was sick, I wanted to go home, he forced me to work 12 hours instead of 8. He did not even let me quit and that’s why I lost one of my kidney’ – 25 year old Male, Pakistan.

‘This is an old disease in the village that If you are not able to pay off your debts you will have to work as a bonded labourer in the field of a powerful person. My husband was employed far from the village so he can’t run away’ – 54 year old Female, India

‘Brought to islands and up to forrest to work as lumberjack, but employer didn’t supply food and pay wage, so I had to escape back’ – 40 year old Male, Vietnam

Surveys are only conducted in countries where the World Poll survey is delivered through face to face interviews as the sensitive nature of the questions means that interviewers need to read non-verbal cues, to observe where clarification may be needed and to build rapport with respondents.

Approximately 1,000 people were interviewed across each country with the exception of Russia (2,000), Haiti (504), and some countries where multiple surveys were implemented with samples of 2,000 (or 17,000 in the case of India). Cases of modern slavery were identified in every country surveyed. ***Given there was no effort in the sampling to target hot spots or vulnerable populations, the fact that we found cases of modern slavery in every country surveyed is quite extraordinary.*** In addition to improving efforts to estimate modern slavery, the interviews with victims provide vivid accounts of their experiences.

It's important to acknowledge that random sample surveys are not the best method to apply in countries

where the suspected number of people in modern slavery is very small, or individuals too hidden, so other methods are required. This also suggests that in countries where surveying is possible, our estimates are likely to be conservative.

These surveys involve asking people sensitive questions about traumatic, and sometimes taboo subjects, so it is very likely there are experiences (for example, forced sexual exploitation) that people are not comfortable disclosing. Further, the amount of information obtained about the extent of slavery among children is limited as they are not surveyed directly.

Although the methodology continues to be refined, early indications are that this approach holds great promise for measuring what had been thought to be unmeasurable.

For a more comprehensive understanding of this topic please click [here](#).



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