



The Antislavery in Domestic Legislation database

Briefing and recommendations for use

The Antislavery in Domestic Legislation database is an important new resource in the global antislavery evidence base. It presents the domestic legislative provisions related to modern slavery and human trafficking, analysing the domestic legislation in place in all States and making antislavery laws accessible to all.

The Antislavery in Domestic Legislation platform is freely accessible at antislaverylaw.ac.uk

Context

The claim that “slavery is illegal in every country in the world” is a pervasive myth in the antislavery field. This popular misconception stems from the fact that all States have now abolished laws which *permit* slavery. However, it is not enough for countries simply to abolish laws allowing slavery; to meet their international obligations, States must proactively *prohibit* these practices through criminal law.

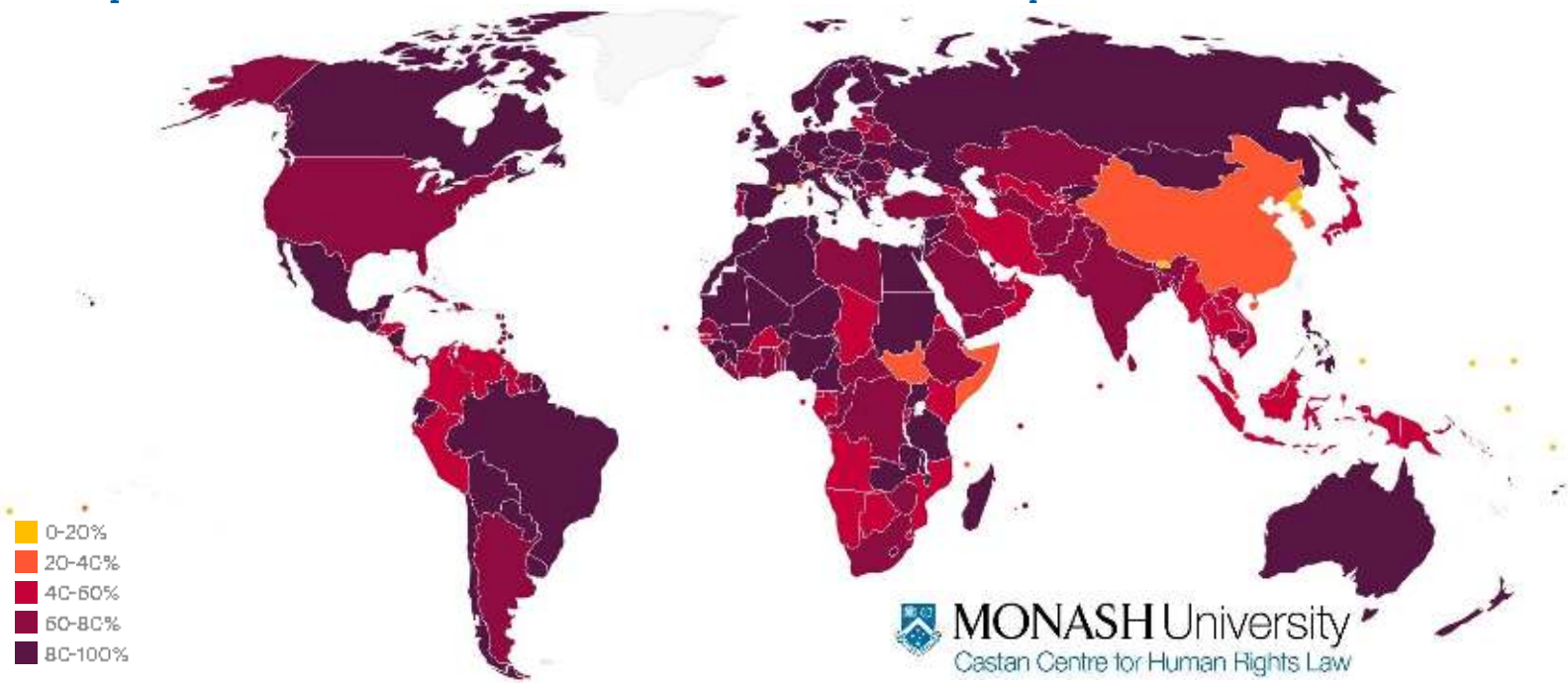
About the database

The Antislavery in Domestic Legislation database maps all 193 UN Member States’ domestic legislation against their international obligations related to modern slavery. From over 700 domestic statutes, more than 4,000 individual provisions have been extracted and analysed to assess the extent to which States have fulfilled their international commitments with regard to: slavery, servitude, institutions and practices similar to slavery, forced labour, and human trafficking.

States’ international commitments

Globally, almost all UN Member States have ratified at least one of the core international instruments addressing human exploitation. Overall, only 3 States do not have specific treaty obligations to prohibit any one of these practices, while 113 States (59%) have undertaken to prohibit all five. It is also noteworthy that all States have obligations to prohibit slavery as a result of customary international law.

Proportion of relevant international instruments ratified by States

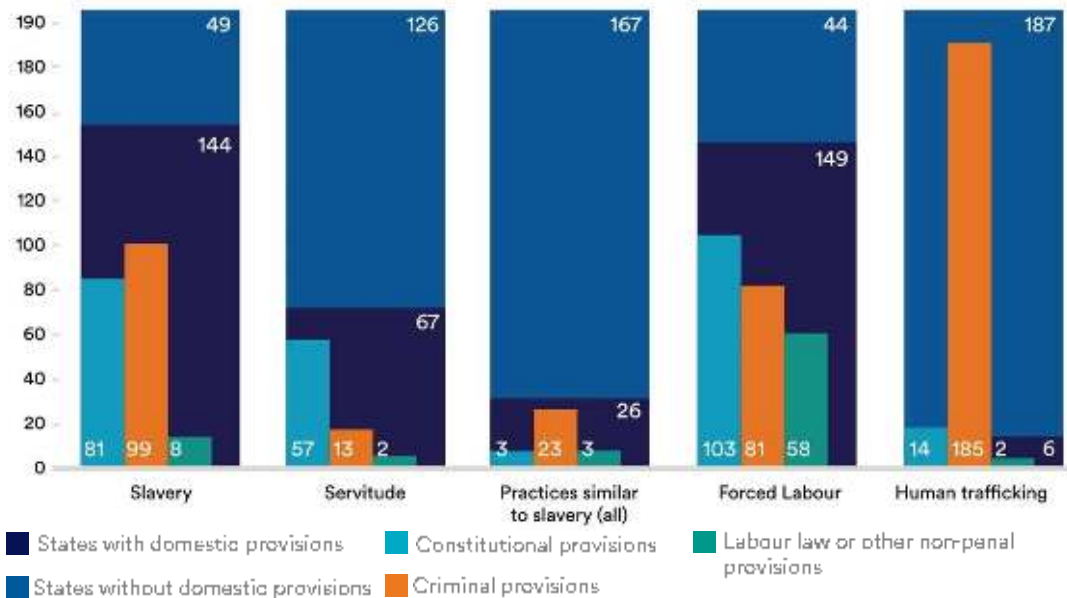




Domestic legislation

Each of the international instruments considered in the database entails specific obligations to *criminalise* the exploitative practices in question. Yet, despite near universal commitment to the norms, the prohibitions against human exploitation have not yet been translated into the penal law of a large number of States. Where States have enacted laws, the database calls attention to the terms of these provisions to identify different approaches, trends, and gaps in implementation.

States' domestic legislation prohibiting human exploitation



It appears that only 24 States have provisions in place addressing all five exploitative practices, and only 2 have criminal laws in place for every one of the exploitative practices considered in the database.

Recommendations

By examining existing legislation, and gaps in implementation, the Antislavery in Domestic Legislation database sheds new light on the current state of antislavery. It highlights different approaches, key trends, successes, and gaps in implementation globally. This makes the database a valuable new tool for supporting evidence-based antislavery action globally.

The database will be of practical use to a wide range of antislavery actors in carrying out their activities. The following are examples of the variety of ways in which different actors can benefit from the database in their work. In presenting the current state of antislavery laws, critical gaps, and best practice, the database could be useful for:

- **States** assessing compliance with international commitments (including SDG 8.7), and in enacting and reforming legislation.
- **Development agencies** targeting resources, designing programming, and assessing risk.

- **Inter-governmental actors** (including treaty monitoring bodies and international offices with relevant mandates) designing strategy and implementing mandates—for example, informing country visits and shaping recommendations for national action.
- **Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder countries** taking stock and designing strategy in national strategic planning workshops, and assessing progress.
- **Civil Society & Survivor Support Organisations** developing and refining antislavery advocacy strategies, political engagement, programming, and activism.
- **Businesses and procurement professionals** in risk assessment procedures and the management of global supply chains and overseas operations.

The United Nations Secretary-General could also consider the database as a foundation for once again fulfilling their mandate to collate and collect domestic antislavery legislation under the 1926 and 1956 slavery conventions.

The Antislavery Legislation Database is an ongoing project. We invite States and other stakeholders to submit legislation not yet considered in the analysis through our website, to help us provide the most accurate and up-to-date information possible for the use of stakeholders globally.