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Conscious Consumerism and You

Demanding an End to Child Labor and Trafficking

Pick one item of clothing. Is it made of ethically-sourced materials? Were the individuals that created this item treated fairly? Were they paid enough to feed their family? Were the raw materials harvested by child? As is the case with most of the products we buy, answering these questions is difficult, if not impossible. Even with research, lack of transparency as well as complex supply chains make it hard to know who made our products and under what conditions. When there are an estimated 152 million children in child labor around the world, chances are good that at least one thing you own was made by the hands of a child.

Child Labor in the Supply Chain

Many young people around the world work. Whether they are working to earn money for their families or themselves, there are millions of young people who are earning fair wages in safe conditions. Unfortunately, this is not the case for everyone.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that nearly half of all child laborers — approximately



Syrian refugee Mohamad, 11, picks crops to support his family instead of attending school. He works on a field in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon.

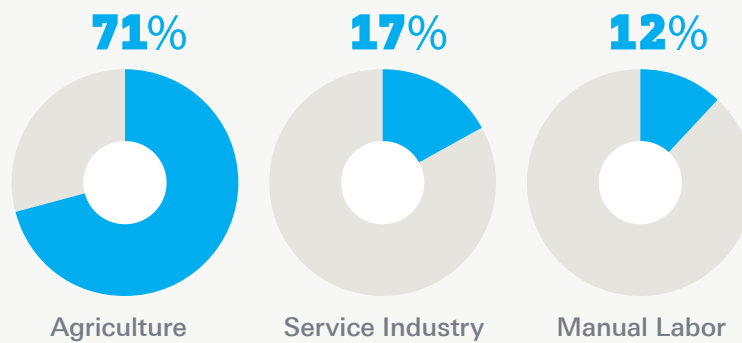
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73 million children worldwide — are subjected to hazardous working conditions. Approximately 3 million children are subjected to forced labor and labor trafficking. These practices may disrupt a child's schooling and compromise their health, safety and basic human rights.

While child labor is most commonly found in the agricultural industry, child labor and child labor trafficking are present within numerous industries and sectors. Child labor has been reported in the production of bricks, carpets, cotton, and electronics, amongst many others.

Child Labor by Industry

Child laborers are often unpaid and engage in hazardous work.



The products we buy and use every day are often made by child laborers.

Demanding a Change

As consumers, we have a powerful role to play to end child labor. By using our voices and wallets, we can shape markets, influence brands and take a stand against exploitative labor practices. Want to engage in conscious consumerism? Here are some ideas to get started:



Reduce. Before buying something ask yourself: do I really need this? If you do need something new, do some research into a company's labor standards and consider investing in products that are ethically made, locally sourced or secondhand. There are even companies whose goods are produced by survivors of trafficking!



Reuse. Investing in well-made products that you will be able to use over and over again is essential, but what happens when your items start to wear or you get tired of wearing the same piece? Rather than throwing them away, find creative ways to update, upgrade, and alter old or damaged items. Engage in the 10x10 challenge to come up with new ways to style the items you already own.



Recycle. Send lightly used items to recycling and consignment centers rather than landfills. Host a swap to exchange items with friends and family. Look into local anti-trafficking centers to see if they are accepting donations for survivors in your local area.



Research. If you're unsure where an item comes from or what steps a company has in place to prevent labor exploitation, reach out and ask. Express to brands and lawmakers that human dignity in the supply chain matters to you. Encourage your family, school, workplace and government to make socially responsible investment decisions. Get active in your own community by working with local stores to sell ethically-made products, launching a divestment campaign, or hosting a fashion swap.

UNICEF's Work to Address Child Labor

UNICEF works in over 190 countries and territories around the world. UNICEF's Child Protection work includes:

- Reaching the world's most vulnerable children, such as: orphans, children living on the streets, children on the move, and children with disabilities.
- Facilitating community educational activities to change social norms, attitudes and behaviors that make children vulnerable to exploitation.
- Supporting comprehensive services for children and their families, including access to healthcare, social protection and welfare services, psychosocial support, and legal assistance.
- Working with companies, governments, academia and civil society to better understand the root causes of child labor, pilot test interventions and advocate with industry for changes in policy and practice (Learn more about UNICEF's work around child rights in business here: [unicefusa.org/supporters/organizations/companies/childrens-rights-and-business](https://www.unicefusa.org/supporters/organizations/companies/childrens-rights-and-business))

Other Resources

- Take action with UNICEF UNITE: [unicefunite.org](https://www.unicefunite.org)
- UNICEF's Child Rights and Business Atlas: [childrensrighsatlas.org](https://www.childrensrighsatlas.org)
- Department of Labor *Sweat and Toil* app: [dol.gov/general/apps/ilab](https://www.dol.gov/general/apps/ilab)
- Slavery Footprint Quiz: [slaveryfootprint.org](https://www.slaveryfootprint.org)