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Statistical Methods Prove Key to Quantifying, Addressing and Eradicating Modern Slavery Across Diverse Cultures, Economies

CHICAGO (August 1, 2016) – Modern slavery is a silent, pervasive threat that governments in many developed nations have dedicated little attention, financial resources or manpower to research, investigate and eliminate. In the United Kingdom, however, modern slavery is being confronted with a [comprehensive strategy and statistically driven methodology](#). Bernard Silverman, chief scientific adviser to the U.K.'s Home Office, addresses some of the common statistical challenges in quantifying modern slavery and shares a new data-driven approach in the British government's Modern Slavery Strategy August 1 at the 2016 Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM 2016) in Chicago.

JSM 2016 is the largest gathering of statisticians and data scientists in the world.

“Even the most advanced economies and progressive countries are no strangers to the profound dilemma of abolishing modern slavery, because calculating the scope of victims in a statistically accurate manner is complex. The data is often hidden and incomplete,” said Silverman.

In passing the Modern Slavery Act in 2015, the United Kingdom became the first country in Europe—and one of the first in the world—to specifically address slavery and human trafficking this century, particularly in global supply chains. Good policy requires good metrics, and one of the first steps in creating the Modern Slavery Strategy was to more accurately capture the scale of modern slavery and build on data-collection techniques used by the U.K.'s National Crime Agency to develop a more accurate statistical framework.

Silverman estimates there were likely 10,000–13,000 potential victims of modern slavery in the U.K. from 2010–2013. According to the 2016 Global Slavery Index, around 45 million men, women and children across the globe are in some type of slavery. The United States Department of Justice estimates that around 17,500 victims enter the U.S. each year, and though the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama last year, analysts at the U.S. Government Accountability Office note it's been difficult to fully implement and enforce as identified victims often fear retribution for working with authorities.

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, forced and compulsory labor and forced commercial sexual exploitation. It is the act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing or obtaining a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud or coercion.

Even though slavery has been abolished by law in most countries, it continues to affect people of all ages, genders and races in every corner of the world.

Media can attend JSM 2016 for free, but must register in advance by contacting Jill Talley, ASA public relations manager, at (703) 302-1865 or jill@amstat.org.

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About JSM 2016

Occurring annually since 1974, JSM is a joint effort of the American Statistical Association, International Biometric Society (ENAR and WNAR), Institute of Mathematical Statistics, Statistical Society of Canada, International Chinese Statistical Association, International Indian Statistical Association, Korean International Statistical Society, International Society for Bayesian Analysis, Royal Statistical Society, and International Statistical Institute. JSM activities include oral presentations, panel sessions, poster presentations, professional development courses, an exhibit hall, a career service, society and section business meetings, committee meetings, social activities and networking opportunities.

About the American Statistical Association

The ASA is the world's largest community of statisticians and the oldest continuously operating professional science society in the United States. Its members serve in industry, government and academia in more than 90 countries, advancing research and promoting sound statistical practice to inform public policy and improve human welfare. For additional information, please visit the ASA website at www.amstat.org.

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