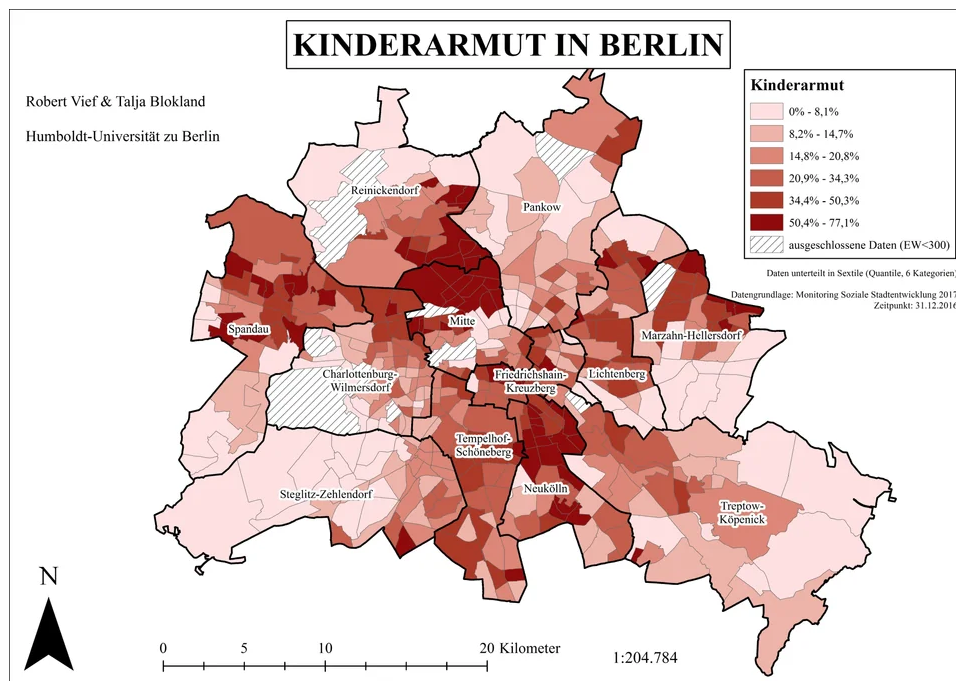




No Poverty

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Youth Poverty in Berlin



Every third child in Berlin depends on social welfare—and the number is set to increase. Youth poverty is described by UNICEF as children who mature in surroundings where they do not have adequate access to the resources needed for them to survive and thrive. Disadvantages due to child poverty manifest themselves in almost all aspects of life including education, economic opportunities, social and cultural inclusion, political participation and health. For instance, the German Statistisches Bundesamt (Federal Statistical Office) found a direct correlation between the levels of education attained by parents and those prospected by their children. In 2017, 65% of pupils attending grammar school had parents with a higher education entrance qualification, whereas only 9% of children came from a familial background where their parents had only a secondary

general school qualification or no qualification. The inequalities in education are further exacerbated by the lack of teaching staff in Berlin and nationwide. The German education system will likely be lacking around 80,000 teachers by 2030. This means that children are not provided with the intensive attention and learning support needed to ensure their future economic success and hence the cycle of youth poverty persists.

On a larger scale, over 2 million German children are at risk of poverty. This once again highlights the fact that (youth) poverty is not constrained to low-income countries (LICs). The German national and regional governments clearly have a responsibility to address the prominent issue of youth poverty in their politics. The current government has committed to tackling the issue and have announced the introduction of a revised and extended version of the current “Kindergeld”: the “Kindergrundsicherung” (basic child security) should be received by families from 2025 onwards. This framework is a financial incentive designed to support families facilitate a quality education for their children based on their age. As an immediate measure, children threatened by poverty are due to receive immediate financial aid of 20 euros per month. [This article](#) also outlines six key measures to alleviate youth poverty which shifts the focus away from supporting children per se and towards improving the human resource capabilities of their parents. These measures would align with the findings of the Federal Statistical Office above, as they address the disparities in educational opportunities as a consequence of the education level of their parents.

A further cause for optimism regarding the social aspect of child poverty is provided by initiatives such as the socially inclusive ‘Cabuwazi’ circus which operates in various districts in Berlin and offers circus workshops to children of all backgrounds.

Modern Slavery

With the dawn of the 21st century and the advances of globalization, modern forms of slavery have come to the forefront of human rights issues. In general, modern slavery refers to situations where people are exploited for labor through force, fraud, or coercion. This can take many forms, including human trafficking, forced labor, debt bondage, and even child labor; the International Labor Organization (ILO) reported that 50M people were living in modern slavery last year, of which approximately 28M people were trafficked¹.

Modern forms of slavery exist in every corner of the globe, from industrialized countries to rural and developing areas where vulnerable populations are more easily exploited. In

¹ [Modern slavery: 50 million people worldwide in modern slavery \(ilo.org\)](#)

many cases, victims are tricked or coerced with promises of high paying jobs and a better life. Unfortunately, what they experience is often the complete opposite. Major factors contributing to this global epidemic are poverty, lack of education, and gender inequality.

THE GULF: KAFALA SYSTEM

In several countries, including Gulf states like Qatar, modern slavery is an especially troubling problem due to the lack of legal protection for vulnerable populations, such as migrant workers; these issues are largely a result of a system known as 'Kafala'.

The Kafala system is an immigration system in which the legal residency of foreign workers, primarily manual laborers, is tied to a local sponsor. This sponsor is usually the employer of the worker, and the employer is responsible for all aspects of the worker's immigration and visa status.²

In most cases, victims are tricked or coerced with promises of high paying jobs and a better life. Unfortunately, what they experience is often the complete opposite. Moreover, the Kafala system often leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation by their employers and severely restricts the rights of the foreign laborers. The system has been widely criticized by the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, among numerous other human rights organizations, due to its lack of protection for vulnerable workers. In recent years, some Gulf states have been taking steps to reform the Kafala system, but significant progress remains to be made to ensure the protection and safety of foreign laborers throughout the region.

Qatar introduced legislation in 2020 which aimed to reform the Kafala system in some ways³, such as by:

- Introducing an increased minimum monthly wage of 1,000 riyals, up from 750 riyals
- Allowing workers to change jobs without their employer's permission if they give a one month written notice if they have worked for the employer for under two years, or two months if they have worked for more than two years.⁴

However, these reforms have not been without their criticisms. Amnesty International stated that the reforms were a 'step in the right direction', but stated that several issues remain, including the ability of employers to file 'criminal absconding charges', and that employers will still control their employees' residence permits.³

² [Kafala System – A Gateway to Slavery \(humantraffickingsearch.org\)](https://www.humantraffickingsearch.org/kafala-system-a-gateway-to-slavery)

³ [New labour law ends Qatar's exploitative kafala system | Qatar | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/29/new-labour-law-ends-qatar-exploitative-kafala-system)

⁴ [Qatar: New laws to protect migrant workers are a step in the right direction \(amnesty.org\)](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/qatar-new-laws-to-protect-migrant-workers-are-a-step-in-the-right-direction/)

Moreover, whether these laws will be enforced is another story altogether; while Qatar has long had legislation preventing certain exploitative practices, such as employers seizing their employees' passports to prevent them from leaving the country, these laws have not been enforced in practice. Additionally, workers in Qatar may still continue to be exploited, even with these laws in place, as many may be not aware of the protections that have been put in place, or there are language barriers may prevent them from understanding the legislation.⁵

REGULATIONS

Several countries have passed regulations which outlaw forms of modern slavery.

For example, the UK Modern Slavery Act of 2015 is a law aimed at preventing modern slavery and human trafficking in the UK. It requires organizations with an annual turnover of £36 million or more to publish an annual statement outlining the steps they have taken to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in their supply chains. The act also increases the maximum sentence for these offenses from 14 years to life imprisonment and strengthens law enforcement powers. Additionally, the act establishes a new independent anti-slavery commissioner to lead the UK's response to modern slavery and a new national referral mechanism for potential victims of trafficking. The aim of the act is to tackle the root causes of slavery and trafficking and increase the number of successful prosecutions for these crimes.⁶

Other countries have similar legislation aimed at preventing modern slavery and human trafficking. For example:

- **The United States** has the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, which provides tools for law enforcement to prosecute traffickers and protect victims.
- **Australia** has the Modern Slavery Act 2018, which requires companies with a revenue of more than \$100M to report annually on the risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains, and the actions they have taken to address those risks

These laws reflect a growing global trend to hold businesses accountable for the social and environmental impacts of their operations and supply chains.

Eliminating modern slavery is a daunting task, but campaigning against exploitative practices and lax regulations, both domestically and globally, will go a long way in protecting the millions of people who are still victims of this form of exploitation. We must

⁵ [New labour law ends Qatar's exploitative kafala system | Qatar | The Guardian](#)

⁶ [Modern Slavery Act 2015 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

continue to take steps to ensure that all people have the same rights and freedoms, and that no one is forced into a life of servitude and exploitation.

Child Poverty Across Eastern Europe & Central Asia as a Result of the War in Ukraine

Although children make up 25% of the population of the 22 ECA (Europe & Central Asia) countries, they account for as much as 40% of the additional 10.4 million people experiencing poverty in 2022-2023. In Ukraine alone, approx. 500,000 children are currently living in poverty, which goes far beyond financial distress. Ever since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24th 2022, the country's economy has been failing, and many other countries around the world have been experiencing an inflation. Due to the rise in the costs of living, the poorest children have been even less likely to access essential products such as food, water, fuel and have been more at risk of being victims of violence, abuse, child marriage etc.

UNICEF has worked on expanding social assistance benefits for all families with children in need, especially refugees, introducing price regulations on basic food items in all ECA countries, as well as providing health, nutrition, and social care services for pregnant women, infants, and preschoolers. Nevertheless, more support and social protection systems are needed in high- and middle-income countries across all ECA countries to help combat child poverty and assist Ukraine in winning the war.

Source: [The impact of the war in Ukraine and subsequent economic downturn on child poverty in eastern Europe | UNICEF Europe and Central Asia](#)