

# Unfair Working Conditions versus Modern Slavery



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People often confuse unfair working conditions with situations of modern slavery. There may be times when they overlap, and unfair working conditions deteriorate into situations of modern slavery. While working under unfair or exploitative conditions can be unlawful, it does not always mean a person is a victim of modern slavery. There is a clear distinction, and understanding the difference is crucial for addressing both issues effectively.

## Unfair Working Conditions

Unfair working conditions are situations where workers are subjected to poor or unjust treatment, such as the underpayment of wages, excessive working hours, unsafe work practices, and limitations of workplace rights. These conditions, while exploitative, do not meet the legal definition of modern slavery in the Australian *Modern Slavery Act 2018*. They are situations governed by Australian employment laws and regulations including the [Fair Work Act 2009](#) and [Fair Work Regulations 2009](#) which set standards and provide a safety net of minimum entitlements; enable flexible working arrangements; provide fairness at work; and prohibit unlawful discrimination in the workplace.

## Modern Slavery

Modern slavery, on the other hand, is a serious violation of an individual's dignity and human rights and involves severe exploitation where individuals are forced to work against their will, under the threat of punishment. Exploitative practices, including human trafficking, slavery, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage, deceptive recruitment for labour or services, forced marriage, and the worst forms of child labour are all considered modern slavery, and are serious crimes under the Australian [Modern Slavery Act 2018](#).

The following table provides examples of each situation.

Unfair Working Conditions	Modern Slavery
Wage discrimination	Confiscation of identity documents
Unequal opportunities for advancement	Labour or services are provided as security to repay a debt
Harassment and bullying in the workplace	Threatened or mistreated with physical and/or sexual violence
Unreasonable workloads	Movements are controlled, restricted, or monitored
Inadequate training	Unable to end employment at any time

If you are concerned about a situation and are unsure whether someone could be at risk of modern slavery, please refer to UniSQ's Modern Slavery web page for further support:

<https://www.unisq.edu.au/about-unisq/contributing-to-communities/modern-slavery>