

# Most hand car wash workers are subject to some form of labour exploitation, says new report

October 18 2018, by Charlotte Anscombe

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Workers in most hand car washes in the UK are subject to some form of labour exploitation—such as excessively long hours or exceptionally low pay, according to a new report out today on Anti-Slavery Day (18

October).

The [report](#) also found that a large number of potential modern slavery cases in the sector are difficult to pursue by law enforcement officials because workers don't always identify themselves as victims or declare their working conditions.

The report is the result of a new collaborative study between experts at the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham and the Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, looking at the true extent of modern slavery and human trafficking in [hand](#) car washes in the UK.

Like most businesses hand car washes have regulations they should adhere to, but recent investigations and reports have unearthed a host of labour, employment and health and safety, and environmental violations. The UK does not currently have a system to register and license these businesses, meaning they have been able to flourish almost without any regulatory overview.

This new report aims to provide a better understanding of the nature and prevalence of labour exploitation in hand car washes and the challenges and approaches to tackling it.

The team used existing research and information along with new information from police authorities and other agencies to compile their report. They analysed data from a range of sources including press reports, parliamentary evidence submitted to the Environmental Audit Committee and research on exploitation and criminal activity relating to labour issues found at car washes.

Surveys were also given to police forces' modern slavery teams. The data collected, along with the current knowledge of labour exploitation in hand car washes, was evaluated to develop a more comprehensive

understanding of workers employed in hand car washes, working conditions and the types of accommodation they are living in.

Interviews with police forces and survey responses were also assessed to better understand the scale of [labour](#) exploitation in hand car washes across the UK and the extent to which exploitation constitute modern slavery, human trafficking or lower level forms of abuse.

Dr. Akilah Jardine from the Rights Lab and one of the lead researchers on the project, said: "Hand car washes are often seen as ideal business ventures because they are easy to establish, conveniently accessible, and offer a cheaper alternative to automated car washes. With the ease of setting up these types of business, come the potential opportunities to exploit people who work within them. We already know there is a problem in the UK, but to be able to solve the problem we needed to really understand the problem."

Other key findings from the report:

- Labour [exploitation](#) in hand car washes does not fit in to one specific category – research suggests that some workers have identified as victims of modern slavery and others who have been subject to lower level forms of abuse
- Not all workers self-identify as victims of modern slavery or lower level forms of abuse
- Hand car wash employees are predominantly males from Eastern Europe with Romanian being the most common nationality
- Conditions of work, accommodation and methods of control vary significantly, with research suggesting that the average wage for a day's work is £40
- Prosecutions are difficult to pursue due to workers failing to self-identify as victims or state their working conditions
- Some workers return to exploitative hand car washes after being

in the National Referral Mechanism

- Stricter enforcement of current regulations is required to ensure hand car washes are adhering to them
- The number of hand car washes in the UK could be a result of an inadequate enforcement of environmental policies

Dr. Jardine added: "We can now look at how we can use this research to tackle this dangerously unregulated part of the UK's economy."

**More information:** The report is available online:

[www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk ... -hand-car-washes.pdf](http://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Hand-Car-Washes.pdf)

Provided by University of Nottingham

Citation: Most hand car wash workers are subject to some form of labour exploitation, says new report (2018, October 18) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-10-car-workers-subject-labour-exploitation.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.