

ARMENIA

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – *Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement*

In 2023, Armenia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government adopted an amended Labor Code to include child labor provisions that now fully covers and protects all children, including those working in the informal sector, and aligns the minimum age for work law with international standards. Further, enforcement agencies, such as the National Police, Investigative Committee, and Prosecutor General’s Office, adopted and started implementing a set of guidelines on ensuring trauma awareness and victim-centric approaches in working with all victims of human trafficking or exploitation, including children. In addition, the government adopted the 2023–2025 Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons, which includes a chapter on preventing child trafficking and child exploitation. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Armenia is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because labor inspectors lack full legal authority to conduct unannounced inspections, which may leave potential violations of child labor laws and other labor abuses undetected in workplaces. In addition, as the minimum age for work at age 16 is lower than the compulsory education age of 18, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. The government also does not routinely collect or maintain official data on the prevalence of child labor. Furthermore, the government does not have coordinating mechanisms and policies to address all worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture, services, and other forms of informal work.

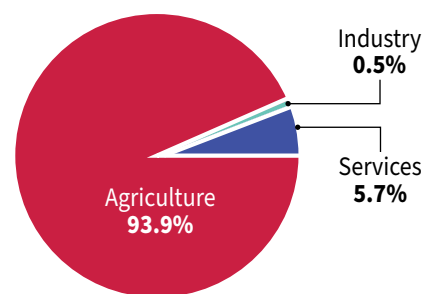


PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	7.0% (24,602)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	95.4%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	8.6%

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Children in Armenia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, as well as forced begging and forced labor in agriculture and in stores.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Farming, raising livestock, forestry, and fishing.



Industry

Construction.



Services

Vehicle maintenance. Street work, including vending; gathering scrap metal; selling food, flowers, napkins, and icons; and begging. Working in shops, cafés, and supermarkets.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor[‡]

Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Forced begging and forced labor in stores. Forced labor in agriculture.

[‡] Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.



SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Armenia’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Raise the minimum age for work from 16 to 18 to align with the compulsory education age.

Ensure that Armenian law specifies the types of light work acceptable for children ages 14 to 15.

Enforcement

Strengthen the inspection system by permitting unannounced inspections.

Give labor inspectors the authority to conduct worksite inspections, including full access to worksites after working hours and when the business director or acting director is not present.

Protect children by providing law enforcement officials with specialized training on interviewing survivors of child trafficking.

Implement existing witness protection mechanisms to protect victims and survivors of child trafficking who cooperate with law enforcement.

Ensure that law enforcement officials understand their mandated duties and that the Investigative Committee is adequately trained on trafficking victim identification and investigations.

Coordination

Establish coordinating mechanisms to prevent and eliminate all worst forms of child labor in all sectors, including in street work, services, and agriculture.

Government Policies

Adopt policies to address all relevant worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture, services, and other forms of informal work.

Social Programs

Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including in agriculture and construction, to inform policies and programs.

Ensure that all children, including girls, children in remote areas, those from low-income families and from families that travel for seasonal labor, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have equal access to education.

Continue existing efforts to ensure ongoing access to all social protection systems to refugee children from Nagorno-Karabakh to mitigate their vulnerability to human trafficking and labor exploitation.

Ensure that there are a sufficient number of qualified teachers of minority languages that can address the educational needs of all children from ethnic minority groups.

Ensure that mainstream education is accessible to children with special education needs and children with disabilities by improving the accessibility of the physical infrastructure and increasing the availability of special education teachers and other specialists for students with mental disabilities.

Strengthen measures in the educational system to identify, track, and prevent truant children from leaving school, and enforce mandatory school attendance requirements to ensure that children are not engaged in child labor.

Ensure the availability of out-of-care services for deinstitutionalized children and continue with prevention efforts and increased support for the children currently residing in government institutions so they are not engaged in child labor.

Institute programs to address child labor in street work and in agriculture.

Allocate sufficient personnel and resources to publicize and provide social services throughout the country, offer sufficient training to services providers, and assign reasonable caseloads.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Children who live in remote rural areas and children of families who travel for seasonal labor are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including forced child labor in agriculture. Authorities note that less-educated, socially vulnerable girls are at higher risk of being

trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, while children living in economic hardship or children deinstitutionalized from orphanages are more likely to be coerced into forced begging, farm work, and forced labor in the service sector. Furthermore, children staying in childcare institutions are vulnerable to exploitation in child labor and are at a higher risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. In addition, some refugee children who entered Armenia in 2023 from Nagorno-Karabakh may be vulnerable to trafficking and labor exploitation.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

The government has made progress in improving access to education in remote communities and implemented a program to provide supplemental stipends for students from national minorities. However, children of families that travel for seasonal labor and children from ethnic minority and low-income families, including those in remote areas, continue to have education access issues. In addition, there is an insufficient number of teachers who speak minority languages, which impedes access to education for children from ethnic minority groups. Reports also indicate that in some rural areas, girls' education is not prioritized due to traditional cultural norms. Furthermore, the Law on Education requires all schools to be inclusive for children with disabilities by 2025. However, children with disabilities—including hearing, visual, and mental disabilities—face difficulties with education access due to non-accessible school buildings, a lack of accessible learning materials, and a shortage of special education teachers and other specialists. While addressing school dropouts is a government priority, there is no enforcement of the mandatory school attendance requirement, nor are there programs to identify, assess, and address the reasons for truancy or dropping out.





LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Armenia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, gaps remain in Armenia's legal framework, including the minimum age for work at age 16 is lower than the compulsory education age of 18, and children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 16 Years	✓	Articles 15, 17, 18, and 102 of the Labor Code; Article 57 of the Constitution; Article 41.6 of the Administrative Violations Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years	✓	Articles 17.1 and 257 of the Labor Code; Article 41.6 of the Administrative Violations Code
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	✓	Decree on Approval of the List of Occupations and Work That Are Likely to be Heavy and Hazardous for Persons Under the Age of 18 Years, Pregnant Women, and Women Taking Care of a Child Under the Age of 1 Year; Articles 140, 144(3), 148, 149, 153, 155, 209, 249, and 257 of the Labor Code
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor	✓	Article 57 of the Constitution; Articles 3 and 3.2 of the Labor Code; Articles 188 and 189 of the Criminal Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	✓	Articles 188 and 189 of the Criminal Code
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	✓	Articles 188–190, 239, and 298–300 of the Criminal Code
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	✓	Articles 71, 238, 393, and 394 of the Criminal Code
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 16 Years †	✓	Article 29 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Law on Military Service and Status of the Military Servant; Government Decree No. 525-N of April 26, 2012
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	✓	Article 19 of the Law on Military Service and the Status of the Military Servant
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	✓	Article 29 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Articles 137, 147, 238, and 320 of the Criminal Code

Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Compulsory Education Age, 18 Years		Article 18 of the Law on Education
Free Public Education		Article 38 of the Constitution; Article 6 of the Law on Education

‡ Age calculated based on available information

During the reporting period, the government adopted an amended Labor Code to include child labor provisions that now fully covers and protects all children, including those working in the informal sector, and aligns the minimum age for work law with international standards.

As the minimum age for work at age 16 is lower than the compulsory education age of 18, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. In addition, the Labor Code allows children ages 14 and 15 to work restricted hours with the permission of a parent or guardian but does not identify specific activities that constitute light work.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Armenia took actions to address child labor. However, the lack of full authority to conduct unannounced inspections in Armenia hindered enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Health and Labor Inspection Body (HLIB): Ensures compliance with legal requirements in the fields of healthcare and labor law. Carries out on-site inspections based on a pre-determined list of companies compiled based on risk assessment methodology, and an annual work plan, as well as in response to complaints, including child labor complaints, and administrative proceedings. Authorized to issue penalties for any administrative violations uncovered and to refer cases to criminal law enforcement when appropriate. In 2023, HLIB did not receive any complaints related to child labor through its labor rights violations complaint hotline or through the government’s online platform for submitting complaints.

Prosecutor General’s Office: Through the Department for Combating Crimes against Humans within the Prosecutor General’s Office, oversees the legality of Police operations and Investigative Committee investigations, and prosecutes criminal cases involving child trafficking. Prosecutors receive regular training on human trafficking and other worst forms of child labor.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes

In 2023, **51** labor inspectors conducted **446** worksite inspections, finding **2** child labor violations. The government also conducted **4** investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor and convicted **2** perpetrators.

However, HLIB lacks legal mechanisms to fully enforce compliance with labor legislation, including conducting unannounced inspections. HLIB can carry out unannounced inspections only when detecting unregistered employment cases. Even for routine inspections, HLIB must inform employers of an upcoming inspection 3 business days in advance. HLIB has broader authority when responding to a complaint, in which case HLIB may issue notification to the employer via e-mail and immediately conduct a site visit; however, if the business director or acting director is not present and does not receive the notification, inspectors are not allowed to start. In addition, HLIB does not have authority to conduct inspections after working hours.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>Armenia established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, there is a lack of coordinating mechanism with sufficient scope to address all forms of child labor, including in agriculture, services, and other forms of informal work, sectors in which child labor is known to occur.</p>	<p>Interagency Working Group Against Trafficking in Persons: Operates under the Ministerial Council to Combat Human Trafficking and ensures operational coordination. Multidisciplinary group of government representatives and national and international NGOs, chaired by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA). MoLSA also chairs the Trafficking Victims Identification Commission comprising representatives from MoLSA, the Prosecutor’s Office, the Police, and two NGOs, tasked with identifying individuals as victims of trafficking and referring them for required assistance and support. The group met twice during the reporting period.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Armenia established policies related to child labor. However, these policies do not cover all forms of child labor, including in agriculture, services, and other forms of informal work, sectors in which child labor is known to occur.</p>	<p>National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2023–2025): Revised and renewed during the reporting period, supports the development of policy and the implementation of activities to address human trafficking and includes a chapter on the prevention of child trafficking and child exploitation. Commits the government to continue to train specialists in multiple spheres, including law enforcement, the courts, educators, and the media. This plan, compared to the previous one, has a more targeted approach, measurable activities, clear outcomes, and mechanisms for accountability. Supports MoLSA in establishing standard trafficking in persons data collection tools for use by NGO implementers and a reporting format for state agencies that share data with MoLSA. In 2023, the government conducted a 5-month anti-trafficking awareness-raising campaign in six regions of Armenia and conducted numerous trainings on trafficking victims’ identification, referral mechanisms, and services provided by the state to various government entities.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Armenia funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the problem in all sectors where child labor has been identified, including in street work and agriculture.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Armenia.</i></p> <p><i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p>	<p>Family Benefits Program:† Seeks to mitigate poverty for families with children by giving families a monthly payment based on their financial situation, the number of children in the family, and the geographical location of their home. The program was active throughout the reporting period, and as of mid-2023, 48,344 families with children were recipients of benefits under this program.</p> <p>UNICEF Country Program (2021–2025): Improves child protection systems, including through expanding programs for children in extreme poverty, improving social integration of children with disabilities, and developing a victim witness protection system. In 2023, continued to support the government’s child protection systems and services through humanitarian and technical assistance, operationalization of policies, and strengthening of systems at central and local levels to ensure more integrated delivery of services for children and families in various social sectors.</p> <p>Shelter for Victims of Human Trafficking:‡ Operates in partnership with NGOs to provide medical, psychological, social, and legal services to victims of human trafficking and access to education for children. In 2023, provided services to victims and survivors throughout the year.</p>

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit dol.gov/ILABprojects
 For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports