



MOLDOVA

SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Moldova made significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government continued to implement a series of reforms to the State Labor Inspectorate, improving its authority to perform on-site and unannounced inspections, as well as increasing staffing and updating the inspectorate's technical equipment. In November 2023, the State Labor Inspectorate launched a nationwide inspection campaign to identify informal work, which resulted in 200 cases identified over the course of 2 months, including 14 cases involving children. In March 2024, the Parliament approved revisions to the Labor Code and Contraventions Code to provide penalties for employing children below the minimum age for work either with or without a contract. Additionally, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection announced a comprehensive reform of its social assistance programs designed to increase access to such programs and reduce poverty, especially among children. Finally, the government adopted a new statistical framework to measure child labor and signed a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF to carry out poverty reduction programs. However, despite these efforts, there is insufficient cooperation among social protection, health, and law enforcement entities with regard to providing appropriate services and reintegration assistance to child survivors of labor exploitation and trafficking in persons. Social programs to support child survivors of exploitation are also inadequate.

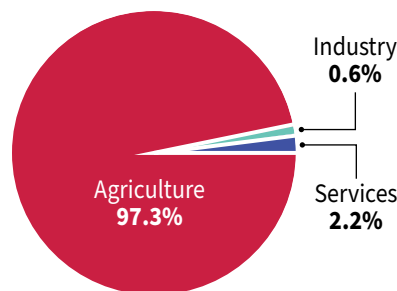


PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	24.3% (102,105)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	92.1%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	29.0%

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Children in Moldova are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture.

Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Working in agriculture,[†] including growing and harvesting crops, picking fruits, raising farm animals, forestry, including transporting heavy loads, and fishing, including feeding fish.



Industry

Construction,[†] including carrying heavy loads, manufacturing, working in the garment sector, and sanitation and waste management.



Services

Street work, including portering, begging, and washing cars, domestic work, working in hospitality, confectionary, retail, wholesale trade, restaurants, amusement parks, and transportation.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor[‡]

Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, forced begging, and use in illicit activities, including the trafficking of drugs.

[†] Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

[‡] 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 Moldova's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Ensure that the law's light work provisions in the new law or in its implementation regulations specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken to prevent children from involvement in child labor.

Enforcement

Ensure that judicial authorities, prosecutors and investigators, including public lawyers, receive training on laws and maintaining a victim-centered approach to criminal justice, especially related to child trafficking.

Pursue prosecution of child labor crimes under appropriate statutes and maintain protection under the law for victims who commit crimes as a result of their exploitation.

Coordination

Improve cooperation among social protection, health, and law enforcement entities with regard to providing appropriate services and reintegration assistance to child survivors of labor exploitation and trafficking in persons.

Government Policies

Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Program for Child Protection and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.

Social Programs

Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs, including for the separatist region of Transnistria.

Provide adequate resources for schools in rural and poorer communities, as well as those serving children with disabilities.

Implement oversight of state residential children's institutions to prevent exploitation of children by management.

Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education by removing informal fees for school supplies, including textbooks.

Institute targeted support programs that eliminate discrimination and violence against Roma children and promote equal access to education.

Ensure sufficient social, psychological, and financial support for child survivors of trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and abuse, and children working in agriculture.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Trafficking of children from rural or poor families continues to be a concern in Moldova, including in the separatist region of Transnistria, which is outside of the de facto control of the Moldovan government. Children abandoned by parents who have migrated abroad, children living on the street, or those who are refugees from Ukraine remain particularly vulnerable, and observers expressed concern that management in some state residential institutions, like orphanages, use children in domestic service or on farms. Online commercial sexual exploitation of children has increased in recent years. Children from Roma communities, especially girls and refugees from Ukraine, are also vulnerable due to discrimination, a low level of formal education, and conservative gender roles.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Children in Moldova are guaranteed free transportation to school, and no fees are required for schooling through grade 9. However, students in grades 10 through 12 are often charged fees to rent textbooks. Children from Roma communities also continue to be less likely to enroll in school and are at higher risk of dropping out due in part to discrimination by school officials and distrust of public institutions by Roma families. Refugee children, including Roma children, may have had their schooling interrupted and require additional interventions before they can successfully integrate into mainstream schools. Schools in rural areas often lack a sufficient number of teachers, and public schools lack adequate resources to address the needs of children with disabilities.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Moldova has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. In addition, Moldova's laws are in line with relevant international standards.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 16 Years		Article 46 of the Labor Code; Article 55 ¹ (2) of the Contraventions Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Article 255 of the Labor Code; Article 3 of the Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Government Decision No. 541; Articles 2 and 3 of the Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Articles 103, 105, 255, and 256 of the Labor Code
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Article 44 of the Constitution; Articles 168(b) and 206 of the Criminal Code; Article 7 of the Labor Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Articles 2 and 25–30 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; Article 206 of the Criminal Code
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Articles 175, 206, 208, 208.1 and 208.2 of the Criminal Code; Article 6 of the Law on the Rights of the Child
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Articles 208 and 217 of the Criminal Code; Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years		Article 12 of Law No. 162-XVI on the Status of Military Servicemembers
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		Article 28 of Law No. 1245-XV on the Preparation of Citizens for Homeland Defense
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		Article 26 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Article 206(d) of the Criminal Code
Compulsory Education Age, 16 Years		Article 13 of the Education Code of 2014
Free Public Education		Article 35 of the Constitution; Article 9 of the Education Code of 2014

In March 2024, Moldova’s Parliament approved revisions to the Labor Code and the Contraventions Code, which specifically penalize the employment of a minor without the use of an employment contract. Additional revisions are in process which will address Moldova’s light work framework for children who are 15 years of age, but at present, the law does not specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Moldova took actions to address child labor. However, judicial authorities and investigators may not receive adequate training on handling cases involving children, particularly children who are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection’s (MHLSP) State Labor Inspectorate (SLI): Enforces child labor laws through inspections of labor relations of enterprises, institutions, and organizations. Publishes an annual report on the previous year’s activities. Also operates a dedicated children’s hotline that refers child survivors of trafficking for specialized legal, psychological, and social services under the National Referral System. In 2023, the government undertook several actions to implement and strengthen reforms of the labor inspectorate, beginning with passing a new law into effect in January that granted the labor inspectorate the authority to perform on-site, unannounced inspections beginning in March. As of July, inspectors gained the ability to issue civil penalties without receiving permission from a court. MHLSP also ran a recruitment campaign for labor inspectors, calling on interested applicants to “activate their superpowers.”

Ministry of Internal Affairs: Oversees law enforcement agencies such as the National Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP), which leads criminal investigations against perpetrators of human trafficking crimes, including the trafficking of children for labor or commercial sexual exploitation. CCTIP also cooperates with the Border Police Inspectorate, National Anti-Corruption Center, and Customs Service, and provides partial funding for the operation of a 24/7 trafficking in persons hotline. Also contains the Center for Combating Cybercrime, which investigates cybercrime, including online commercial sexual exploitation of children, and is the unit with primary responsibility for investigating these crimes at the National Inspectorate for Investigations of the General Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

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	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes

In 2023, **58** labor inspectors conducted **1,895** worksite inspections, finding **18** child labor violations. The government also conducted **25** investigations into suspected worst forms of child labor crimes, initiated **63** prosecutions, and convicted **31** perpetrators.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>Moldova established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, there remains a lack of effective coordination among bodies responsible for identifying children in child labor and providing services for their rehabilitation.</p>	<p>National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons: Coordinates efforts to prevent and eliminate child trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Members include SLI, the Security and Intelligence Service, the Agency for Public Services, and other government departments. In April 2023, published a report on the previous year's activities.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Moldova established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor.</p> <p><i>‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.</i></p>	<p>National Program for Child Protection (2022–2026): Sets the objectives and priority actions to strengthen children's social protection. Includes an Action Plan containing 72 actions to address child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, including through online means. In 2023, the government signed a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF to provide technical assistance to reduce child poverty as part of this program.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Moldova funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs lack sufficient services for resocialization and reintegration of child survivors of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.</p> <p><i>‡ Program is funded by the Government of Moldova.</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>RESTART Social Assistance Reform Program:[‡] A series of reforms initiated in 2023 to government social assistance programs designed to improve access and reduce poverty, particularly among children. Through this reform, MHLSP plans to establish 9 territorial social assistance agencies, increase marginalized groups' access to social services by 35 percent annually, and ensure that social services meet minimum quality standards.</p> <p>Decent Work Country Program (2021–2024): ILO program that aims to gather statistics on the prevalence of child labor, build the capacity of the labor inspectorate, and eliminate labor exploitation in the construction and agriculture sectors. As part of this program, in 2023, ILO and the Government of Moldova launched a project that will run through 2024 to increase disadvantaged groups' access to employment, particularly among rural and youth populations, as well as decrease informal employment.</p> <p>Center for Protection and Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking:[‡] Government-funded shelter for survivors of human trafficking from Moldova that offers accommodations, rehabilitation, and reintegration services, and which contains a special wing for child survivors. These shelters remained active during the reporting period.</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