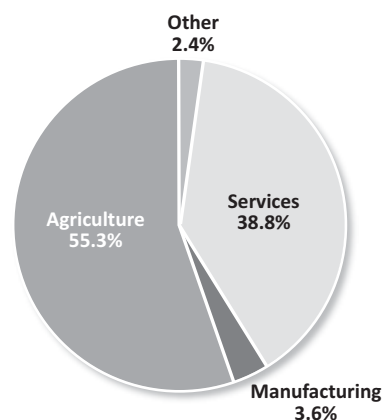


Belize

The Government has implemented programs to address child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. However, children continue to be exploited in prostitution and many children work in risky situations in agriculture. Limited information on the Government's enforcement efforts can be reported.

Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	53.1%
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	93.2%
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	6.2%



Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Belize are exploited in the worst forms of child labor, many of them in the production of agricultural goods.⁴¹⁸ Children working in agriculture may use potentially dangerous tools, carry heavy loads, or be involved in the application of harmful pesticides.⁴¹⁹ Children of migrant workers often help their parents during the harvest period to increase family income.⁴²⁰ Children in rural areas are also reported to work in agriculture after school, on weekends, and during vacations.

Children in urban areas are found working on the streets shining shoes and vending foods, crafts, and other small items.⁴²¹ Children working on the streets may be exposed to severe weather, accidents caused by proximity to vehicles, and criminals. Children in Belize are also involved in commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking.⁴²² Poor families are known to push their school-aged daughters to provide sexual favors in exchange for money and gifts.⁴²³ Children of


both sexes are involved in prostitution, including sex tourism, an emerging problem in Belize.⁴²⁴ There are reports of children from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador that migrated to Belize voluntarily looking for work, but ended up in forced labor or prostitution.⁴²⁵

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Act of Belize sets the minimum age for work at 14 but permits children age 12 to 13 to engage in non-industrial jobs and other light work. It also specifically prohibits the employment of children under age 15 in maritime jobs.⁴²⁶ The Families and Children Act prohibits the employment of child under age 18 in harmful work but does not specifically list the types of work that qualify.

The Constitution prohibits forced labor.⁴²⁷ Belizean law also prohibits the voluntary or compulsory recruitment of children under age 18 into military service.⁴²⁸

The Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act of 2003 bans the trafficking of all persons, including children.⁴²⁹ The Criminal Code prohibits sex with a female under age 14. The Criminal Code also prohibits the procurement or attempted procurement of a female under age 18 for the purpose of sex. However, the prohibition is significantly weakened by the fact it does not apply to “common prostitutes or persons of known immoral character.”⁴³⁰ This exception may be used as a mechanism to deny protection to some females, including girls under 18. In addition, the Criminal Code does not explicitly extend the same protections from prostitution to boys.⁴³¹

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	14
	Free Public Education	Yes

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) advocates for legislation and policy action to more fully prohibit the worst form of child labor and achieve effective prosecution of such acts.⁴³² It is seeking reforms to give greater enforcement powers to labor officers and inspectors, standardize the definition of “child” in all legislation, and review the minimum age for work.⁴³³

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing child labor laws. The Ministry of Labor employs 14 labor inspectors countrywide. These inspectors enforce all labor laws and conduct workplace inspections in

all sectors of the economy.⁴³⁴ In 2009, the Ministry broadened the responsibilities of eight employment officers to include conducting workplace inspections.⁴³⁵ The Ministry has also provided training to labor officers and inspectors on issues relating to the worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children.⁴³⁶

The Department of Human Services of the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation, the Belize Police Department, and the Immigration Department investigate and enforce child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation laws.⁴³⁷ The Police Department, through the Sexual Offences and the Family Violence units, also investigates reports of other child labor crimes. In 2009, it was reported that these units were constrained by insufficient human and financial resources. Police officers were reported to be overloaded, as they often managed broad caseloads, not exclusively comprised of child labor and exploitation cases.⁴³⁸

The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee also investigated worst forms of child labor complaints.⁴³⁹ Reports indicate that in 2009 the Government conducted five anti-trafficking enforcement operations, but there is no information on whether children were involved.⁴⁴⁰ No prosecutions and convictions by Belize authorities against trafficking offenders were reported in 2009.⁴⁴¹

In 2009, the Ministry of Human Development registered 13 new cases of children at risk of becoming victims of sexual exploitation. The children received assistance such as education, counseling, and other services based on individual needs.⁴⁴²

Research uncovered no other information on violations or enforcement of laws prohibiting the worst forms of child labor.

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The NCLC implements the Government’s National Child Labor Policy. Introduced in October 2009, the policy provides guidance and direction regarding the elimination of all forms of child labor, especially the worst forms. It seeks a multi-sectoral approach to combat exploitive child labor through consultations between governmental agencies, NGOs, ILO, and other relevant organizations.⁴⁴³

The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (2004-2015) aims to protect children from trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and other worst forms of child labor. The plan seeks amendment of the Labor Act to better address child labor issues, strengthen enforcement capacity of key ministries, and increase prevention and public awareness efforts.⁴⁴⁴ Under auspices of the plan, the Government worked with the tourism industry to advance a code of conduct in an effort to eliminate child sex tourism. Public service announcements in multiple languages and posters have been distributed by the government in a campaign against trafficking.⁴⁴⁵

The National Commission on Families and Children (NCFC) has received government funds of approximately \$100,000 annually for the implementation of the National Plan of Action.⁴⁴⁶

The Government of Belize also supports local NGO's that contribute to the objectives of the National Plan of Action. It has donated land, the use of building space, and budgetary assistance to organizations that provide programs and protection to victims of child trafficking, sexual exploitation, and other worst forms of child labor.⁴⁴⁷ Despite government and NGO efforts, the country still faces constrained resources with which to implement the National Plan of Action.

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 2009, the Government of Belize maintained partnerships with local and international NGOs to promote awareness of commercial exploitation of children.⁴⁴⁸ The Government has worked with NGOs in Belize City to educate children and parents about the dangers of sexual exploitation.

The Government participates in regional projects to combat the worst forms of child labor, including an ILO-IPEC project that aims to create and strengthen legislative prohibitions, national plans of action, and repatriation protocols to build the capacity of government and civil society organizations to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking.⁴⁴⁹ Limited resources prevent the Government from reaching all children at risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking.⁴⁵⁰

Research has not identified any Government programs specifically designed to address the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and street work.

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the reduction of the worst forms of child labor in Belize:

IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Create and adopt a definition of hazardous work and establish a list of hazardous occupations.
- Amend existing laws on prostitution to ensure protections to all boys and girls.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Ensure that information regarding the worst forms of child labor, including the number of complaints, investigations, convictions, and penalties is publicly available.
- Provide additional resources to police and other law enforcement officers to effectively investigate and prosecute worst forms of child labor cases.

IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Fully implement the Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (2004-2015).

IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

- Consider the adequacy of resources devoted to combating child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.
- Develop and implement new programs aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and street work.

⁴¹⁸ Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are based on UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity, School Attendance, and Combined Working and Studying Rates, 2005-2010*. Data are from 2001. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

⁴¹⁹ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, March 19, 2010.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ U.S. Department of State, "Belize," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2009*, Washington, DC, March 11, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/wha/136101.htm>.

⁴²² U.S. Department of State, "Belize (Tier 2 Watch List)," in *Trafficking in Persons Report - 2010*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/>.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, March 19, 2010.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Government of Belize, *Labour Act (Revised)*, (December 31, 2000); available from http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/projects/cariblex/belize_act5.shtml.

⁴²⁷ Government of Belize, *Constitution of Belize, Revised Edition*, (December 31, 2000); available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/index2.html>.

⁴²⁸ Government of Belize, *Defence Act, Ordinance of 1977*, (1977).

⁴²⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report - 2010: Belize."

⁴³⁰ Government of Belize, *Criminal Code*, (May 31, 2003); available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/index2.html>.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, March 9, 2010.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, March 19, 2010.

⁴³⁸ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, March 9, 2010.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, March 19, 2010.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, March 9, 2010.

⁴⁴⁴ Government of Belize, *The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents in Belize 2004-2015*, Belize City, September 4, 2004; available from <http://www.mohd.gov.bz/NPA.pdf>.

⁴⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Belize (Tier 2 Watch List)," in *Trafficking in Persons- 2009*, Washington, DC, June 16, 2009; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/>.

⁴⁴⁶ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, March 9, 2010.

⁴⁴⁷ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, March 19, 2010.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ ILO-IPEC, "Stop the Exploitation" ("Alto a la explotación") *Contribution to the Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic*, Technical Progress Report, April 30, 2009, 1, 54. See also ILO-IPEC, "Stop the Exploitation" ("Alto a la explotación") *Contribution to the Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic*, Technical Progress Report, September 13, 2006, 32.

⁴⁵⁰ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, March 19, 2010.