

Trinidad and Tobago

In 2011, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government established the National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor and passed the Trafficking in Persons Act. However, the Government has not carried out a planned child labor study, there is no clear minimum age for hazardous labor and there are gaps in the enforcement system. Child labor is not a large problem in the country, but reports indicate that children may be engaged in the worst forms of child labor.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	3.0 (5,975)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	97.8
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	3.3
Primary Completion Rate		91.0

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

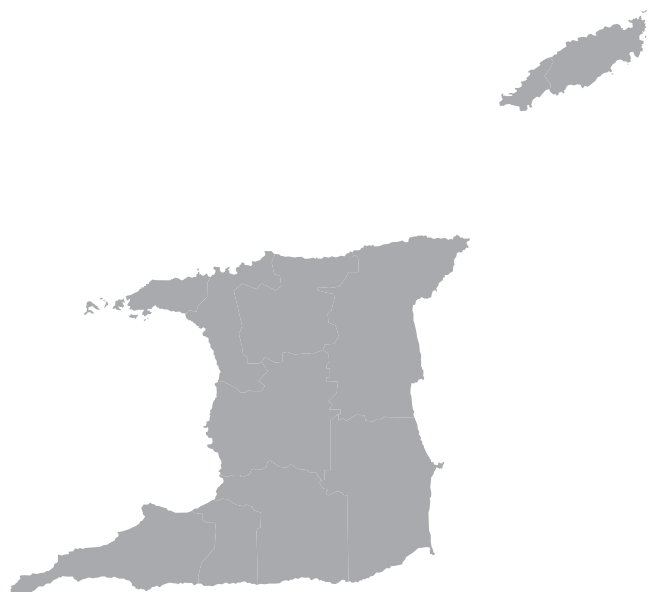
All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2006.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Available information indicates that the worst forms of child labor are not a large problem in Trinidad and Tobago. However, some children may engage in the worst forms of child labor, primarily in dangerous activities in the agricultural sector.(3) Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads and apply harmful pesticides.(4) Although evidence is limited, children may also be engaged in prostitution.(3, 5)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Trinidad and Tobago's Miscellaneous Provisions (Minimum Age for Admission to Employment) Act 2007 sets the minimum age for employment at 16.(6) It also prohibits children younger than age 18 from working between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., except in family enterprises.(5, 7) No current law establishes a clear minimum age for hazardous work, nor is there a list of hazardous occupations, even though the Government has been developing one since 2004.(8)



	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	No
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

Education is free and compulsory but only until age 12.(9) This standard makes children ages 12 through 15 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor as they are not required to be in school but are not legally permitted to work.

The Constitution prohibits forced or compulsory labor of children.(10) The Sexual Offences Act, the Children Act, and the new Trafficking in Persons Act of 2011 prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children, including

prostitution and pornography.(7, 11, 12) The Trafficking in Persons Act also prohibits trafficking in children, including for the purposes of exploitation or use in illicit activities.(12)

Trinidad and Tobago has no compulsory military service, and the minimum age for recruitment to the armed forces is 18. However, children between ages 16 and 18 willing to join the armed forces may do so with written approval from a parent or guardian.(13)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Government established the National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in July of 2011, which is responsible for coordinating efforts to combat child labor and is currently drafting a new National Plan of Action Against Child Labor.(14) The last National Plan of Action ended in 2010.(15) The multi-agency National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons, established in 2011 by the new Trafficking in Persons Act, is responsible for coordinating efforts to combat trafficking in persons, and for preventing child trafficking, providing assistance to trafficking victims, and prosecuting traffickers.(12)

The Children's Authority is responsible for ensuring the well-being of children but is not currently operational.(16) Until the Children's Authority is active, the Government's Child Protection Task Force is tasked with protecting children and educating communities about child abuse, including child labor.(3, 17) Research did not identify how the National Steering Committee, the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons, and the Child Protection Task Force interact and coordinate.

The Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro-Enterprise (MLSME), the Ministry of the People and Social Development (MPSD), and the police are responsible for monitoring and enforcing child labor laws. The Labor Inspectorate Unit (LIU) of MLSME investigates child labor violations in the workplace.(3) It enforces hazardous labor laws through the Occupational Safety and Health Authority and forced child labor laws together with the MPSD. In 2011, LIU employed 16 inspectors. According to government officials, this number is insufficient, so LIU requested funding for 40 additional inspectors for 2011.(3, 7) LIU conducted 1,177 labor

inspections and identified no cases of child labor.(3) However, labor inspectors do not appear to have the authority to enter workplaces freely and without previous notice to the employer where they have reason to believe children are working illegally.(18)

The police services handle crimes, such as trafficking of children for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and selling drugs. No investigations or prosecutions were carried out for any such crimes during the reporting period.(3, 7)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The MPSD's 4-year National Plan of Action for Children ended in 2010.(7, 15) The newly established National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor is drafting a new plan, but research did not indicate when this would be completed and implemented.(14)

Although the Government had planned to conduct a National Youth Activity Survey in 2006, research found no evidence of efforts to collect data on the nature and incidence of the worst forms of child labor, particularly in agriculture or sexual exploitation, which could be used to guide policy and inform programs.(19)

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

The Government has several programs designed to encourage children to remain in school, including a school meal program providing breakfast and lunch to children from low-income families, a book grant program, and a School Support Services Program to aid high-risk students with homework, counseling and other services.(3)

Labor inspectors also traveled to rural areas of the country to increase awareness of the worst forms of child labor during the reporting period.(3)

It is not clear whether additional programs to address child labor in agriculture and prostitution are needed, given the lack of information on these problems.

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Trinidad and Tobago:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Clearly specify in the law a minimum age for hazardous employment and establish a list of hazardous occupations.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Establish a list of hazardous occupations prohibited to children under age 18.	2011
	Raise the age of compulsory education to 16, the established minimum age for work.	2009, 2010, 2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Establish systems to coordinate the efforts of the National Steering Committee, the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons, and the Child Protection Task Force.	2011
	Grant labor inspectors the authority to enter workplaces freely and without previous notice to conduct child labor inspections.	2011
Policies	Complete and implement the new National Plan of Action Against Child Labor.	2011
	Conduct the planned National Youth Activity Survey to assess how best to address the worst forms of child labor in Trinidad and Tobago, especially in agriculture and prostitution.	2011
Social Programs	Assess the need to implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and prostitution.	2011

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Trinidad and Tobago

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