

In 2022, Argentina made significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government reported completing an additional 25 actions from the "100 Actions Against Trafficking" list outlined in its National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking. It also published the National Plan for the Regularization of Labor, which includes an allocation of funding for the labor inspectorate, and greatly increased the number of worksite inspections compared to pandemic years. Furthermore, the government published operating rules under the Mica Ortega Law that created an Observatory, an Interministerial Administrative Coordination Unit, and a Committee of Advisors to address sexual grooming and cybersafety of children. However, children in Argentina are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in illicit activities, such as the transport, sale, and distribution of drugs. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in agriculture. The government does not publish complete information about its labor law enforcement efforts and the labor inspectorate remains understaffed to adequately address child labor issues in the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Argentina.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	5.3 (371,771)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	98.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's Analysis of Statistics from Encuesta de actividades de niñas, niños y adolescentes (EANNA), 2016–2017. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting† blueberries, cotton, garlic, grapes, olives, onions, strawberries, and tomatoes (3-7)
	Harvesting† yerba mate (stimulant plant) and tobacco (3,5,8,9)
	Garlic shelling and potato slicing (10)
	Fishing and sale of bait (10)
Industry	Production of textiles (10,11)
	Production of bricks (3,12,13)
	Construction,† activities unknown (3,14)
Services	Street begging† and handing out flyers or promotional materials (3,5)
	Refuse collection, recycling, and garbage scavenging† (3,15)
	Caregiving,† including caring for other children, the elderly, or infirm people (3)
	Working and cooking in food service (3)
	Domestic work, including cleaning, doing laundry, and ironing (3,16)
	Yard work, including cutting lawns and pruning trees (3)
	Selling produce in grocery stores (5)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (10,17,18)
	Forced labor in agriculture and in the production of garments, charcoal, and bricks (5,11,13,17,19,20)
	Use in illicit activities, including transporting, selling, and distributing drugs (10,18,21,22)
	Forced labor in domestic work and street vending (17,19)

† 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.

Argentinian children perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including harvesting, caring for animals, fishing, and selling bait. (10) Misiones—producer of 87 percent of Argentina’s yerba mate—is one of the provinces most affected by child labor. Children as young as age 5 help their parents harvest yerba mate, sometimes carrying heavy loads. (23,24) In Salta and Jujuy provinces, children harvest tobacco. (8,25) Children from primarily the northern provinces, Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru, and other countries are also used in forced labor in numerous sectors, including garment production, agriculture, street vending, charcoal and brick production, domestic work, and in small businesses. (20,26,27) In addition, research found that children are used in illicit activities, including drug trafficking in the outskirts of Buenos Aires and Rosario where they serve as vigilantes, distributors, and producers. (10,22,28-30) Although the extent of the problem is unknown, reports indicate that girls from Argentina’s northern provinces are victimized by sex trafficking. (12,26) Furthermore, Paraguayan children are victims of sex trafficking in Argentina and reports indicate that traffickers exploit children participating in domestic youth sports clubs. (20,27)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Argentina has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Argentina’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a gap between the minimum age for work and the compulsory education age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 2, 7, and 17 of the Prohibition of Child Labor and Protection of Adolescent Work Law; Article 9 of the Special Code on Contracting Domestic Workers; Article 25 of the Child and Adolescent Rights Protection Law; Articles 54 and 55 of the Law on Agrarian Work; Article 189 of the Employment Contract Law (31-35)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 10 of the Prohibition of Child Labor and Protection of Adolescent Work Law; Articles 176, 189, and 191 of the Law on Labor Contracts; Article 62 of the Law on Agrarian Work (33-35)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of Executive Decree 1117/2016 on Dangerous Work (36)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 15 of the Constitution; Articles 1 and 24–26 of the Modifications to the Prevention of and Sanction Against Trafficking in Persons and Assistance to Victims Law; Article 9 of the Child and Adolescent Rights Protection Law (31,37,38)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 1, 25, and 26 of the Modifications to the Prevention of and Sanction Against Trafficking in Persons and Assistance to Victims Law; Article 9 of the Child and Adolescent Rights Protection Law (31,38)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 1 and 21–23 of the Modifications to the Prevention of and Sanction Against Trafficking in Persons and Assistance to Victims Law; Article 6 of the Crimes Against Sexual Integrity Law; Article 128 of the Penal Code (38-40)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 11 of the Possession and Trafficking of Drugs Law (41)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 8 of the Voluntary Military Service Law (42)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 19 of the Voluntary Military Service Law (42)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 10 of Law No. 26.200 (43)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Articles 16 and 29 of the National Education Law; Article 2 of the Law on Early Education (44,45)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 15 and 16 of the Child and Adolescent Rights Protection Law (31)

* Country has no conscription (46,47)

To further advance the National Program for the Prevention and Awareness of Grooming and Cyber-harassment Against Children, the government published operating rules under the Mica Ortega Law in July 2022 that created an Observatory, an Interministerial Administrative Coordination Unit, and a Committee of Advisors on the use of Information and Communications Technology. (48,49) However, as Argentina’s minimum age for work of 16 years is lower than the compulsory education age of 18 years, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (31-35)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MTEySS)	Conducts labor law enforcement efforts in cooperation with labor officials and authorities at the provincial level in each province and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. (10,50) In part through its Inspection Directorate of Child Labor, the Protection of Adolescent Work, and Indicators of Labor Exploitation (DITIAEIEL), it enforces child labor laws and collaborates with the National Registry of Rural Workers and Employers (RENATRE) to enforce child labor laws in the agricultural sector. (10) Further, it operates a national hotline to receive reports of labor violations and leads the Network of Businesses Against Child Labor (<i>Red de Empresas contra el Trabajo Infantil</i>), which includes companies promoting best practices in the private sector to address child labor. Labor inspectors play a key role in enforcing laws related to child labor as part of MTEySS' broader enforcement strategy, the National Plan for the Regularization of Labor (<i>Plan Nacional de Regularización del Trabajo</i> [PNRT]). (10) As part of the plan's standard operating procedure for inspections, PNRT aims to detect and eradicate child labor and irregular adolescent work. (10)
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights	Delivers emergency legal and other assistance to survivors of labor and sex trafficking, including children. (10,51) Its regional offices provide legal and social services to human trafficking survivors in the provinces of Chaco, Chubut, La Pampa, La Rioja, Mendoza, Rio Negro, and Santa Fe. (10) In collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and the Institute of Public Policies for the Prevention of Grooming, the NGO Mom Online (<i>Mama en Línea</i>) and Twitter launched the initiative #HayAyuda meant to facilitate access to the hotline, Line 137, to anyone experiencing (or having knowledge of a situation of) child sexual exploitation, grooming, and/or domestic and sexual violence. (52)
Public Prosecutor's Office	Detects, investigates, and prosecutes cases of human trafficking and labor exploitation through its Special Prosecutor's Office for Human Trafficking and Exploitation (PROTEX). (10,53) Receives public reports of suspected human trafficking cases through an anonymous national hotline, Line 145. (10,53) During the reporting year, it identified 61 child trafficking victims and referred them to government services. (18) In 2022, PROTEX strengthened the capacities of criminal investigators through numerous trainings, including one on reparations and compensation to survivors of child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking under the Paraguayan legislation. (10)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Argentina took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MTEySS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (54)	Unknown (10,55)
Number of Labor Inspectors	357 (54)	385 (10)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (56)	Yes (56)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	8,731 (54)	122,313 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	11 (54)	18 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	11 (54)	Unknown (10)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (54)	Unknown (10)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (56)	Yes (56)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (54)	Yes (10)

MTEySS employed 385 labor inspectors and 312 labor inspection assistants while provincial governments also employ their own local labor inspectors, though the total number for the latter is unknown. (10) Nonetheless, research indicates that Argentina does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors. (57) Additionally, NGOs continue to report that the number of provincial inspectors is not adequate. (10) In 2022, MTEySS trained national and provincial inspectors from Santa Cruz, Tucuman, and Salta, including 67 inspectors on procedures to follow after a case of child labor has been identified. An additional 85 inspectors received training on verifying

administrative records for child labor and forced labor cases. (10) MTEySS also provided new tablets to its labor inspectors to use in conducting inspections. (10) MTEySS requires inspectors to refer victims of child labor to the Provincial Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor for social services assistance and its inspection protocol mandates that federal labor inspectors notify the relevant provincial child protection authorities after detecting a child labor violation. (26,58) Labor inspectors are also required to file a criminal complaint with the provincial courts of the relevant jurisdiction for any child labor violation detected. (3,26,58) MTEySS reported that its labor inspectors cooperated with law enforcement authorities in criminal matters resulting from the criminal complaints that inspectors filed after identifying child labor violations. (10,26) However, the government did not publish labor enforcement data on the total number of child labor penalties imposed or collected. (10) In addition to resources for labor inspections, the National Plan for the Regularization of Labor (*Plan Nacional de Regularización del Trabajo [PNRT]*) funding of approximately \$342,000 included a nationwide awareness raising campaign during the reporting period. (55)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Argentina took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including allocating insufficient financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Number of Investigations	16 (54)	9 (10)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	11 (54)	13 (10,55)
Number of Convictions	6 (54)	12 (10)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (54)	Yes (10)

During the reporting period, 16 defendants were prosecuted for child labor crimes in 5 cases involving 5 children. Argentine courts also convicted 12 individuals of using children for prostitution, pornography, and labor trafficking in the textile industry, imposing sentences ranging from 6 to 25 years' imprisonment; one individual received a 3-year conditional sentence and did not serve time in prison. (10) In addition, as part of international operation "Protected Childhood 9 and 10," enforcement officials detained and indicted 33 individuals for the production and distribution of child pornography. (59) Furthermore, in November 2022, a Federal Network Alert Operation in Buenos Aires and 14 provinces led to the detention of 21 individuals for suspected child pornography-related crimes. (60) In the past, Argentine law enforcement authorities have reported receiving insufficient funding and other resources to carry out their mandates. (20)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of interagency cooperation.

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Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor (CONAETI)	Coordinates federal efforts to prevent and eradicate child labor and implements the Third National Action Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Adolescent Work (2018-2022). Led by MTEySS and includes representatives from the Executive Power, industry associations, and labor unions, in addition to benefitting from the advice of the ILO and UNICEF. (61,62) During the reporting year, it began the second phase of the Federal Program for the Eradication of Child Labor and launched the 2022 Action Plan of the Network of Companies Against Child Labor. It also developed the "Childhoods Free of Child Labor" program. (10) CONAETI held four plenary meetings throughout 2022. (10) At the December 2022 meeting, it presented the 2023 National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of Adolescent Labor. (63) There are also 24 Provincial Committees for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor (<i>Comisiones Provinciales para la Prevencion y Erradicacion del Trabajo Infantil [COPRETI]</i>), which coordinate activities at the provincial level between government, business, unions, and civil society stakeholders. (54,64)

There continues to be a need to strengthen cooperation between national- and provincial-level governments to address child labor. (65,66)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of publicly available information on activities taken under each policy during the reporting period.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Third National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Regulation of Adolescent Work (2018–2022)†	Aims to prevent and eliminate child labor, including its worst forms, and to regulate adolescent work. (61) Promotes the dissemination of information on child labor, efforts to strengthen the labor inspectorate, civil society engagement on child labor issues, inclusive education, and institutional and legislative reform. (3,10,61,67) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period.
Federal Strengthening Program for the Eradication of Child Labor	Supports leaders at the sub-national level to improve strategies to prevent and detect child labor and irregular adolescent work. (54,68,69) Aims to coordinate efforts among COPRETI, civil society organizations, labor unions, and companies in common geographic areas and sectors that show high risks of child labor. (54) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period.
National Plan Against Human Trafficking and Exploitation, and for Protection and Assistance of Victims (TIP Action Plan 2020–2022)	Managed by the Federal Council to Fight Human Trafficking and to Protect and Assist Victims, focuses on the prevention and prosecution of human trafficking crimes and the creation of a database to track cases and the provision of services to human trafficking survivors. (70-72) In 2022, the government implemented 25 actions out of the "100 Actions Against Trafficking" listed in the plan, including by supporting the survivors' compensation assistance fund, establishing a hotline for survivors, and creating new partnerships with prosecutors' offices from nine South American countries. (10,17,48,54)

† The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (73)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Universal Child Allowance Program (<i>Asignación Universal</i>)†	Government program funded in part by the World Bank that provides a conditional cash transfer to unemployed parents and workers in the informal economy, contingent upon parents' fulfillment of health and education requirements for their children. (3,74) During the reporting period, the government increased the payment to beneficiaries by 8 percent in comparison to the prior year. (10,18,75,76)

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description & Activities
National Registry of Rural Workers and Employers (RENATRE) Awareness-Raising Campaigns†	Campaigns that raise awareness of child labor in agriculture. (77) During the reporting period, RENATRE identified 36 children subjected to conditions of child labor. It also accompanied approximately 540 children through its RENATRE Center for Childcare and Rural Education (<i>Centro RENATRE de Cuidado y Educación Rural</i>) within the provinces of Tucuman, Salta, Misiones, and Jujuy. (55,78)
Good Harvest Program	Provides childcare facilities and services for migrant and rural families involved in seasonal harvests. (79,80) In 2022, the program created 104 childcare facilities to serve more than 6,600 children of rural workers. (10,81)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Argentina.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (83,84)

As a result of the coordination between the National Ministry of Public Works and the National Ministry of Social Development, 30 child development centers operated in the provinces of Chaco, Buenos Aires, San Luis, Entre Rios, Formosa, and Jujuy. (10) In May 2022, the first child development center in the country for children of yerba mate pickers opened its doors in Comandante Andresito, Misiones on land donated by the municipal government. With an initial capacity for 60 children, the center is funded by the national government and supported by relevant unions. (85,86) Under the National Campaign Against Child Labor in Brickmaking, the government also ensured that 98 percent of children from brickmaking families attended school during the reporting period. (10) However, funding for shelters and assistance to girl survivors of sex trafficking remains lacking. (58) Research also found no evidence of social programs that specifically target children engaged in street begging and performing, windshield washing, and guarding parked cars, despite the prevalence of these activities that are designated as hazardous for children.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Argentina (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 16 to 18 years to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 385 to about 1,406 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 21.1 million people.	2015 – 2022
	Publish information on the labor inspectorate budget.	2015 – 2022
	Enhance coordination and information-sharing with provincial governments in order to publish information on the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure law enforcement bodies have adequate funding and resources to carry out their operations.	2021 – 2022
	Strengthen the capacity of Argentina's police and judiciary to investigate and prosecute cases of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Improve government coordination, particularly between national and local government entities, in the reporting of data and the provision of services to survivors of child labor.	2017 – 2022
Government Policies	Publish information on the activities undertaken to implement the Third National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Regulation of Adolescent Work (2018-2022) and the Federal Strengthening Program for the Eradication of Child Labor.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Develop programs to address sectors in which child labor is prevalent, including street begging.	2018 – 2022
	Increase funding for shelters and assistance to girl survivors of sex trafficking.	2020 – 2022

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