

In 2022, Guyana made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government funded a training program for 1,661 officials and civil society representatives on human trafficking issues and increased funding from \$100 to \$125 for vouchers to purchase school uniforms, shoes, and backpacks. However, children in Guyana are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. Guyana does not meet the international standard for hazardous work for children because it allows children ages 16 to 17 to conduct night work in industrial activities. Guyanese law does not sufficiently prohibit all commercial sexual exploitation of children because it does not prohibit the use of children for prostitution, although it prohibits other forms of sexual exploitation of children. In addition, law enforcement agencies have insufficient resources to conduct inspections in remote areas, including a lack of transportation and accommodation, and struggle to prosecute cases even with abundant evidence. The government did not publicly release information on its labor law enforcement or criminal law enforcement efforts.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Guyana. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	10.1 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	96.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	18.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019–20. (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	Farming, <sup>†</sup> including the production of cabbage, cherries, limes, rice, squash, sugarcane, and charcoal (3-6)
	Forestry, including logging <sup>†</sup> and work in sawmills <sup>†</sup> (3,7)
	Fishing, <sup>†</sup> activities unknown (3,8)
Industry	Construction, <sup>†</sup> activities unknown (3,8)
	Mining, <sup>†</sup> including gold mining and bauxite mining (3,7)
Services	Domestic work (3)
	Welding <sup>†</sup> (3)
	Working in stores, bars, and restaurants (3)
	Street work, including selling fruit, washing cars, and begging (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor <sup>‡</sup>	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,8-10)

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

<sup>‡</sup> Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.







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Children in Guyana are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Georgetown and in the country's interior. There are also reports of young girls in mining communities being subjected to commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking. (10,11) In addition, children are engaged in informal, small-scale mining in which they wash gold, operate dangerous machinery, and are exposed to hazardous chemicals. (4,12) Children in Guyana's interior and rural areas have limited access to education due to poor infrastructure, long distances to schools, transportation costs, and a shortage of qualified teachers. (3,12)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Guyana 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 Guyana's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of prohibitions for child prostitution.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Sections 2 and 3, and Part 2, Article 2 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17–22 of the Education Act (13,14)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	18	Part 1, Article 2, and Part 2, Article 3 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17, 41, 46, and 75 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (14,15)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		List of Hazardous Occupations and Processes in Guyana; Part 1, Article 2 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17, 41, and 75 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (14-16)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2, 3, and 8 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 140 of the Constitution (17,18)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 3 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 2(e) and 3(2) of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 50(3) of the Protection of Children Act (17,19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 50(1) of the Protection of Children Act (19)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 18 of the Defense Act and Defense Amendment Act (20,21)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 38E of the Constitution; Articles 13 and 22 of the Education Act (13,18)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 27 and 149H of the Constitution (18)

\* Country has no conscription (22)

Guyana's hazardous work prohibitions for children do not meet international standards because children ages 16 to 17 are permitted to perform night work in industrial activities. (14) Moreover, although Article 50(1) of the Protection of Children Act and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act both prohibit selling or giving drugs to children, the law does not specifically prohibit the use, procuring, or offering of a child for the production and trafficking of drugs. (10,19,23,24) In addition, Guyanese law does not sufficiently prohibit all commercial sexual exploitation of children because it does not prohibit the use of children for prostitution. (17) Moreover, Guyanese law does not criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.

### 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 enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor	Investigates reports of child labor; conducts routine labor inspections, and refers children identified during labor inspections to the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security's (MHSSS) Countering Trafficking in Persons Unit (C-TIP) and the Childcare and Protection Agency. (12,25) Inspectors are permitted to conduct unannounced inspections in all sectors, but they are not authorized by law to assess penalties for labor law violations. When general labor violations are found, the employer is informed of the labor violation(s) and is given a period to rectify the violation. (3) If inspectors find child labor violations, they may report the employer to the Chief Labor Officer or police for investigation. (3,14) The Chief Labor Officer can file a case against an offending employer with a magistrate judge, who may impose a civil penalty. The welfare and social service officers of MHSSS have the right to access private premises if there is a child labor investigation. (3) C-TIP, under the supervision of the Director of Public Prosecutions, prosecutes trafficking in persons cases. (12) In 2022, held an event with public stakeholders and agencies for World Day Against Child Labor. (26)
MHSSS	Monitors and enforces child labor laws in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Forestry Commission, Geology and Mines Commission, National Insurance Scheme, and Guyana Police Force. The Chief Labor Officer handles special investigations stemming from child labor complaints and oversees routine labor inspections. (4) Includes a Trafficking in Persons Unit (staffed by five personnel) and the Childcare and Protection Agency, to which children identified during labor inspections are referred. (4,27)
Guyana Police Force (GPF)	Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. Works in consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), MHSSS, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, depending on the circumstances of each case. (4) GPF's Trafficking in Persons Unit also investigates reports of human trafficking. (28)

#### **Labor Law Enforcement**

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Guyana took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient resources to conduct inspections in some areas.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	22 (3)	Unknown
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (14)	Yes (14)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	860 (3)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (3)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown

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**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (29)	Yes (29)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (3)

Labor officers conducted impromptu visits to work sites in the mining sector, logging districts, and capital to investigate labor practices and possible violations. (28) However, the government has acknowledged challenges enforcing Articles 41 (relating to child labor in factories) and 46 (relating to employer duties) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which aim to protect children from hazardous work. (30) The government also did not provide information on the funding for the labor inspectorate, the number of labor inspections conducted, the number of labor inspectors, the status of training for inspectors, and the number of child labor violations found. Research indicates that inspectors need additional resources, including transportation and accommodation, to conduct inspections in remote regions and that the government struggles to prosecute cases even with abundant evidence. (3,12,31)

### **Criminal Law Enforcement**

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Guyana took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including lack of data on criminal prosecutions and convictions.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (3)	Unknown
Number of Investigations	8 (3)	6 (28)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	2 (28)
Number of Convictions	0 (3)	0 (28)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (3)	0 (28)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (28)

In 2022, only data on child trafficking was reported by the government, and information about the number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties imposed for other worst forms of child labor is not known. During the reporting period, there were six investigations into forced labor and one ongoing prosecution, involving two non-Guyanese adult workers. Additionally, one individual was prosecuted for forced labor involving a female child while another individual was prosecuted in a case of sex trafficking involving a female child. (28) The government and NGOs reported that shelter accommodations, work permits and employment opportunities for non-Guyanese victims, counseling, medical checkups, and support for court appearances are available to human trafficking survivors. (28)

The MHSSS Countering Trafficking in Persons Unit (C-TIP) reported that during the reporting period it trained 1,661 government officials and civil society representatives using its own funds, and trained an additional 400 persons using funds from the Ministerial Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons and the Guyana Police Force. Information regarding training related to children was not specified, but topics included an overview of the Trafficking in Persons Act 2005, victim identification, the roles of various actors, and training for new and current officers on the general indicators of human trafficking. (28)

#### 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 adequately address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Ministerial Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons	Reports on human trafficking in Guyana and documents the government's response. Also addresses the worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children and use of children in illicit activities, and acts as the management body for child labor referrals. (3,32) Divided into a ministerial arm and a technical arm, with six subcommittees co-chaired by MOHA and MHSS. (3,11,33) In 2022, the committee met monthly and held several awareness-raising sessions for indigenous communities in the interior. In addition, the Taskforce compiled trafficking in persons awareness pamphlets in Indigenous languages and started research on the primary causes of human trafficking in the country. (28)

Guyana's Commission on the Rights of the Child, which protects and promotes children's rights, including by addressing the worst forms of child labor, is not represented on the Ministerial Taskforce on Combating Trafficking in Persons. (3,12,34,35) Although Guyana has a Ministerial Taskforce on Combating Trafficking in Persons to coordinate efforts to address trafficking in persons, it does not have coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor.

#### 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 implementation of the National Child Labor Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description & Activities
National Child Labor Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor (2019–2025)	Aims to prevent and eliminate child labor in all its forms by 2025 by reconciling gaps and inconsistencies between existing national policies and ratified international conventions. Establishes a national framework to coordinate, enforce, monitor, and evaluate efforts to address child labor. (12,36,37) However, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the plan during the reporting period.
Ministerial Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Persons Action Plan (2021–2025)	Seeks to prevent and raise awareness about human trafficking, provide direct assistance to survivors, improve law enforcement's capacity to identify and respond to human trafficking, and strengthen inter-agency coordination and referral mechanisms. (9,38) With a budget of \$329,944, the plan also provides for the review and amendment of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act. (27,39) To implement the plan, the government conducted several raids in the mining regions and recruited additional staff to work as interpreters, investigators, and monitoring and evaluation officers. (28) The government also conducted anti-human trafficking awareness campaigns that were tailored to hotel owners, community leaders, maritime and port officials, parents, teachers, and private security firms. (28)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (40)

#### 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 adequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

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**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description & Activities
Shelter for Domestic Violence Victims†	Two government-funded, NGO-run shelters. Together in Peace Home caters exclusively to child survivors of human trafficking and accommodates 15 persons. Help & Shelter provides services to women and children who are survivors of human trafficking and other crimes. (28)
Government-Funded School Programs‡	Government-funded school programs aim to deter early school dropouts by providing job skills to at-risk youth who may not otherwise be able to complete their formal education. (4) All students in public and private schools from, nursery to secondary school, were eligible to receive government vouchers to purchase school uniforms, shoes, and backpacks. (3,27,41) In 2022, cash vouchers were increased from \$100 to \$125. (31,42) The government also has programs to improve access to education that provide hot meals to 16,000 students at schools in the interior, transportation for students in several remote areas, and books for school children. (9,12,27,41,43,44)
Child Advocacy Centers	Funded by private sector donations and UNICEF, and implemented by MHSSS, the UN Population Fund, and NGOs to provide services for abused children. (45) The MHSSS Childcare and Protection Agency oversees the 12 centers and makes referrals. (45-47) Child Advocacy Centers received a modest increase in budgetary allocations in 2022. (31)

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 Guyana.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (3)

The government operates three 24/7 hotlines to report human trafficking, two for English speakers and the third for Spanish speakers. (28) While Guyana is a part of the Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period. (48) Moreover, the scope of government programs targeting the worst forms of child labor is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including child labor in the mining industry and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (6)

## 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 Guyana.

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits all commercial sexual exploitation of children by prohibiting the use of children in prostitution.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits the use of children for illicit activities by prohibiting the use, procuring, or offering of a child for the production or trafficking of drugs.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits children ages 16 to 17 from engaging in hazardous work that may jeopardize their health, safety, or morals.	2021 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on labor law enforcement, including inspectorate funding, number of inspectors, number and type of inspections conducted, and child labor violations found.	2015 – 2022
	Publish information about the training system for labor inspectors.	2022
	Remove barriers to enforcement and prosecution by strengthening the judicial system.	2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives sufficient resources to monitor the interior, where child labor is most prevalent, and other remote areas.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure the appropriate application of Articles 41 and 46 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act to protect children from work that may harm their physical health or emotional development.	2015 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal labor enforcement for all worst forms of child labor, including training for investigators, the number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, number of convictions, and number of imposed penalties.	2022
Coordination	Permit the Commission on the Rights of the Child to join and participate in the Ministerial Taskforce on Combating Trafficking in Persons.	2021 – 2022



**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies, including the National Child Labor Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that children are not prevented from attending school because of transportation costs and lack of infrastructure, and increase the number of qualified teachers, particularly in rural and interior areas.	2015 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including in fishing and construction, to inform policies and programs.	2020 – 2022
	Develop new initiatives and expand existing programs to reach all children involved in the worst forms of child labor, including programs addressing child labor in the mining industry and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2010 – 2022

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