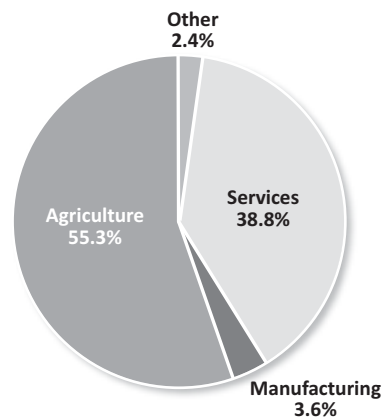


# Belize

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.	6.3
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

Some children in Belize are engaged in the worst forms of child labor,<sup>471</sup> including in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.<sup>472</sup> Recent data on the worst forms of child labor and child labor in general in Belize are anecdotal. The Government of Belize and NGOs report anecdotally that children of migrant workers help their parents during the harvest period to increase family income.<sup>473</sup> Children in rural areas are also reported to work in agriculture after school, on weekends and during vacations.<sup>474</sup> Children reportedly are working in the harvesting of bananas and citrus products.<sup>475</sup> Work in agriculture commonly involves hazardous activities such as using dangerous machinery and tools, carrying heavy loads and applying harmful pesticides.

Children in urban areas are found working on the streets shining shoes and vending food, crafts and other small items.<sup>476</sup> Children working on the streets may be exposed to multiple dangers, including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements. Children in Belize are also involved in commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking.<sup>477</sup> Poverty impedes children's access to basic services, including education.<sup>478</sup> Poor families are known to push their school-aged daughters to provide sexual favors in exchange for gifts and money, which is sometimes used to cover expenses associated with schooling.<sup>479</sup> Children of both sexes are involved in prostitution, including sex tourism—an emerging problem in Belize.<sup>480</sup>

## Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Act of Belize sets the minimum age for work at 14 and children ages 12 to 13 may engage

in non-industrial jobs and other light work. It also specifically prohibits the employment of children under age 15 in maritime jobs.<sup>481</sup> The Families and Children Act prohibits the employment of children under age 18 in hazardous work, and the National Child Labor Policy identifies a list of hazardous occupations prohibited for young workers.<sup>482</sup> However, it is unclear if this list would be enforceable as a law. Education is free and compulsory through age 14.<sup>483</sup>

	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

The Constitution prohibits forced labor.<sup>484</sup> Belizean law also prohibits the voluntary or compulsory recruitment of children under age 18 into military service.<sup>485</sup>

The Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act of 2003 bans the trafficking of all persons, including children.<sup>486</sup> The Criminal Code prohibits sex with a female under age 14, and it prohibits the production or sales of “obscene” publications.<sup>487</sup> The Education Act compels school authorities to ensure that students are not exposed to pornography at school, and the Families and Children Act designates the Minister to make

regulations and assess penalties to prohibit child pornography.<sup>488</sup> 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 that it does not apply to persons considered “a common prostitute or of known immoral character.”<sup>489</sup> 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 extend explicitly the same protections from prostitution to boys.<sup>490</sup>

### Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

Belize’s National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) consists of 15 government and civil society members. The NCLC advocates for legislation and policy action to more fully prohibit the worst forms of child labor and achieve effective prosecution of such acts.<sup>491</sup> During 2010, the NCLC trained committee members on child labor issues, outlined roles and responsibilities and worked to improve coordination among ministries to address child labor issues.<sup>492</sup>

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing child labor laws.<sup>493</sup> In 2010, the Ministry of Labor employed 14 labor inspectors and eight employment officers. These inspectors enforce all labor laws and conduct workplace inspections.<sup>494</sup> In December 2010, the Ministry provided training to all labor inspectors and employment officers on issues relating to the worst forms of child labor and child exploitation.<sup>495</sup>

The Department of Human Services of the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation, the Belize Police Department, and the Immigration Department investigate suspected cases of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation and enforce relevant laws.<sup>496</sup> The Police Department, through the Sexual Offences and the Family Violence units, also investigates reports of other crimes, including the worst forms of child labor.<sup>497</sup>

The Belize Police Department and the Department of Human Services are the agencies primarily responsible for the enforcement related to child trafficking, the commercial sexual exploitation of children, and the use of children in illicit activities.<sup>498</sup> The inter-ministerial committee for Anti-Trafficking in Persons has conducted intervention programs to assist child victims and those at risk of commercial sexual exploitation.<sup>499</sup> In 2010, the Government of Belize and the Ministry of Human Development provided training on trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children to more than 300 government personnel, prosecutors, police officers, customs officers and immigration officials.<sup>500</sup> No convictions related to the commercial exploitation of children were reported in 2010, and several cases were postponed to 2011.<sup>501</sup> Research uncovered no other information on violations or enforcement of laws prohibiting the worst forms of child labor.

The Ministry of Education supports a policy to ensure children stay in school through the Education and Training Act of 2010. This act authorizes School Community Liaison Officers to visit homes and inquire about the school attendance of children who are of the compulsory school age.<sup>502</sup> The officers are also authorized to enforce the provisions within the act and prosecute those in violation.<sup>503</sup> However, it is unclear if the impact of this education policy on child labor has been assessed.

### **Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor**

The NCLC implements the Government's National Child Labor Policy, which provides guidance and direction regarding the elimination of all forms of child labor, especially the worst forms. The policy seeks a multi-sectoral approach to combat exploitative child labor through consultations between governmental agencies, NGOs and other relevant organizations.<sup>504</sup>

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 identifies priority areas, including education and training, awareness raising, victim protection and legislation and enforcement.<sup>505</sup>

Under auspices of the plan, the Government has worked with the tourism industry to advance a code of conduct in an effort to eliminate child sex tourism.<sup>506</sup> Public service announcements in multiple languages and posters have been distributed by the government in a campaign against trafficking.<sup>507</sup>

The Government of Belize also supports local NGOs that contribute to the objectives of the National Plan of Action. It has donated land and the use of building space and has provided funding to organizations that protect victims of child trafficking, sexual exploitation and other worst forms of child labor.<sup>508</sup>

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

The Government of Belize collaborates with local and international NGOs to promote awareness of and reduce demand for the commercial exploitation of children.<sup>509</sup>

The Government of Belize provides subsidies to families in southern Belize conditioned upon children completing primary school, which has resulted in increased school enrollment in those areas.<sup>510</sup> The Government also supports a nationwide program that provides subsidies to families with primary school-aged children conditioned upon their school attendance.<sup>511</sup>

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 LAW AND REGULATIONS:

- Clarify if the list of hazardous occupations prohibited to youth is enforceable as a law.
- Amend existing laws on prostitution to extend protections to all boys and girls.

### IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Ensure that information regarding the enforcement efforts involving the worst forms of child labor, including—the number of complaints, investigations, convictions, and penalties—is publicly available.
- Assess the impact of the education policy requiring school attendance of children up to age 14.

### IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Conduct nation-wide research to better determine the extent and nature of the worst forms of child labor in Belize and assess the need for additional policies and enforcement efforts to combat them.

### IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

- Develop and implement new programs aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and street work.

<sup>471</sup> 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*, 2005-2011. 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.

<sup>472</sup> UNICEF MICS UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, and World Bank Surveys., *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, March 1, 2007. See also ILO, *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize*, San José, 2006, 13; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ipceinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=7186>. See also 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/>.

<sup>473</sup> The Ministry of Labor, UNICEF's office in Belize, and the NGO Youth Enhancement Services all believe due to anecdotal evidence that the prevalence of child labor in Belize is low and that most of the children who work do so

part-time or seasonally. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 9, 2010*. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, November 5, 2010*.

<sup>474</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, January 30, 2009*.

<sup>475</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 9, 2010, 3*. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, January 30, 2009*.

<sup>476</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Belize," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2009*, Washington, DC, March 11, 2010, section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/wha/136101.htm>.

<sup>477</sup> ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Belize (ratification: 2000) Submitted: 2010*, [online] [cited February 18, 2011]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/iloquery.htm>. See also U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Belize."

<sup>478</sup> ILO, *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize*, 53.

<sup>479</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Belize." See also ILO, *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize*, 53. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2009: Belize."

<sup>480</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 19, 2010, 9*. See also ILO, *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize*, 13-14.

<sup>481</sup> Government of Belize, *Labour Act, Revised*, (December 31, 2000), articles 164-170; available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/index2.html>.

<sup>482</sup> Government of Belize, *Families and Children Act, Revised Edition*, (December 31, 2000), chapter 173, article 7; available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/index2.html>. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*. See also U.S. Department of State, “Belize,” in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2010*, Washington, DC, April 8, 2011, section 7d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/wha/154494.htm>.

<sup>483</sup> Government of Belize, *Education Act*, (December 31, 2000); available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/index2.html>. See also UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Net Enrolment Rate. Primary. Total*, accessed June 6, 2011; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/tableView.aspx>. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 9, 2010*.

<sup>484</sup> Government of Belize, *The Constitution of Belize, Revised Edition*, December 31, 2000, chapter 4, part II, article 8(2); available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/index2.html>.

<sup>485</sup> Government of Belize, *Defence Act, Revised Edition*, (December 31, 2000), chapter 135, part IV, article 16(2); available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/index2.html>.

<sup>486</sup> ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Belize (ratification: 2000) Submitted: 2010*. See also U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Belize.”

<sup>487</sup> Government of Belize, *Criminal Code*, (December 31, 2000), chapter 101, articles 47 and 323; available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/index2.html>.

<sup>488</sup> Government of Belize, *Families and Children Act of Belize*, article 154. See also Government of Belize, *Education Act of Belize*, article 26.

<sup>489</sup> Government of Belize, *Criminal Code of Belize*, chapter 101, article 50.

<sup>490</sup> *ibid.*, chapter 101, article 47. See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Belize (ratification: 2000) Submitted: 2010*.

<sup>491</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 9, 2010*.

<sup>492</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.* See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 9, 2010*.

<sup>495</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.* See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 19, 2010*.

<sup>497</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 9, 2010*.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>500</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, June 11, 2011.

<sup>501</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*.

<sup>502</sup> Government of Belize, *Education and Training Act of 2010*, (April 14, 2010), articles 61-65; available from <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Belize/Belize-education-and-training-act-2010.pdf>. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*.

<sup>503</sup> Government of Belize, *Education and Training Act of Belize*, articles 61-65.

<sup>504</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 9, 2010*. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*.

<sup>505</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*.

<sup>506</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 19, 2010*. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*.

<sup>507</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Belize.”

<sup>508</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 9, 2010*.

<sup>509</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, March 19, 2010*. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*. See also U.S. Embassy- Belmopan official.

<sup>510</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting, February 18, 2011*.

<sup>511</sup> U.S. Embassy- Belmopan official.