

Azerbaijan

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Azerbaijan made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population undertook an initiative to reunite 653 children living in institutions with their families. These children, who are at higher risk of child labor, were also provided with ongoing social and financial support. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population also opened 15 new social rehabilitation centers for children throughout the country and engaged in an awareness-raising campaign on labor rights. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Azerbaijan is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it failed to remedy a law that imposes a moratorium on all worksite labor inspections. While inspectors can conduct desk reviews in response to complaints, the lack of proactive or onsite inspections may leave violations of child labor laws undetected in workplaces. In addition, the government’s imposition of production targets on the goods it designates as priority crops may create a risk that farmers and local officials may turn to exploitative labor practices, including child labor, as regional and local government officials are held responsible for mobilizing a sufficient labor force. Further, limited evidence suggests that in some instances, police treat cases of children forced to beg or engage in street work strictly as a family matter, resulting in incidents of child labor not being properly referred for criminal investigation and prosecution. The Government of Azerbaijan did not respond to requests to provide information for inclusion in this report.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and Population
Working	5 to 14	9.2%
Boys		12.2%
Girls		5.5%
Urban		5.3%
Rural		15.4%
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	0.9%
Boys		1.4%
Girls		0.4%
Urban		0.5%
Rural		1.6%
Attending School	6 to 14	94.3%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	14.4%

Children in Azerbaijan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in harvesting and production of cotton.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity	
Agriculture	Working in farming, including harvesting and production of cotton.
Services	Street work, including begging and vending. Washing and repairing cars. Working in catering, in tea houses, and wedding facilities.
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Isolated occurrences of forced begging.

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

SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Azerbaijan’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Criminally prohibit the use of children for commercial sex and the use and offering of children for the production of pornography and pornographic performances.
	Ensure that laws providing free basic education include all children in Azerbaijan, including non-citizens.
Enforcement	Ensure that children are not used in production of priority crops and that local government officials are not engaged in child recruitment to assist with priority crop production.
	Resume routine, targeted, onsite, and unannounced labor inspections, including in response to complaints, to ensure that child labor laws are enforced.
	Employ at least 265 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 5.3 million people.
	Publish information on the labor inspectorate’s operations, including funding levels.
	Pursue investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of individuals involved in the worst forms of child labor.
	Ensure that all children identified by law enforcement as engaged in child labor, including children engaged in forced begging, are referred to social service centers or other services, as appropriate, so that they do not return to child labor.
	Increase law enforcement investigations related to child labor outside Baku.
	Screen for forced labor indicators in child begging situations, including in cases referred by NGOs, and, as appropriate, investigate and prosecute child forced begging as a criminal offense.
	Ensure consistent use of human trafficking indicators by law enforcement, immigration, and social services when identifying potential victims of human trafficking, including children.
Coordination	Increase the coordination and referral of potential child labor crimes between the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population and the Ministry of Interior Affairs.
	Ensure that all regulative and coordinating bodies, including the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs and the national and local Commissions on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors’ Rights, have the capacity to carry out their intended mandates, including across different agencies and levels of government.
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, including hazardous work in agriculture.
	Revise policies on priority crops that mandate production targets to help prevent child labor in agriculture.
Social Programs	Ensure that children with disabilities have access to education by increasing the availability and training of special education teachers, improving school infrastructure, and providing teaching materials adapted to the needs of the children with disabilities.
	Ensure that all children, including children in rural areas and Roma children, have access to education.
	Provide all children with identity documents so they are able to access education.
	Ensure that the government provides sufficient and consistent funding to NGO-run shelters for survivors of human trafficking to enable shelters to provide adequate services to victims.

CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Children who live and work in the streets, children in childcare institutions, displaced children, and children from Roma communities are vulnerable to labor exploitation and human trafficking within Azerbaijan. Children in rural regions may be at higher risk of child labor in agriculture due to the government’s policies regarding production targets for priority crops, which condition agricultural

subsidies, services, and access to public resources, such as irrigation water, on whether farmers produce one or more crops that the government has designated as high priority.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Although Article 5 of the Education Law guarantees free universal education for Azerbaijani citizens, children without identification documents and children with disabilities face difficulty accessing education. The legal proceedings required to secure identification documents can take 2 years or more, during which time children without identification documents are ineligible to enroll and attend school or to access health services. Children with disabilities may face barriers to education caused by inaccessible infrastructure, a lack of specialized training for teachers, and discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Some rural villages lack schools beyond the elementary level, requiring children to travel to neighboring villages if they wish to continue their education. In addition, children from the Roma ethnic community have low rates of school attendance, in part due to social stigma. In 2024, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population opened 15 new social rehabilitation centers for children throughout the country. These centers provided socio-psychological assistance, family support, and educational services to more than 36,000 children during the reporting period.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Azerbaijan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Azerbaijan's laws do not meet international standards on the commercial sexual exploitation of children because no law criminalizes the users (clients) of commercial sex involving children or the use or offering of a child for the production of pornography or pornographic performances.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	15	✓	Articles 42 and 249 of the Labor Code; Article 192 of the Code of Administrative Offenses
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Article 250 of the Labor Code; Article 192 of the Code of Administrative Offenses
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		✓	Articles 98, 250–252, and 254 of the Labor Code; Decree 58 of the Cabinet of Ministers in 2000; Article 9 of the Law on the Rights of the Child
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		✓	Article 35 of the Constitution; Articles 106, 144-1, and 144-2 of the Criminal Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		✓	Articles 1 and 30 of the Law on Trafficking in Persons; Article 144-1 of the Criminal Code
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		✗	Articles 1 and 30 of the Law on Trafficking in Persons; Articles 144-1 and 171 of the Criminal Code
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		✓	Article 28 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Article 170 of the Criminal Code
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	19	✓	Article 36 of the Law on Military Obligation and Military Service
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		✓	Articles 2, 3, and 12 of the Law on Military Obligation and Military Service
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		✓	Article 116 of the Criminal Code

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Compulsory Education Age	15‡	✓	Article 19 of the Law on Education; Article 13 of the Law on General Education
Free Public Education		✗	Articles 5 and 19 of the Law on Education; Article 13 of the Law on General Education; Article 22 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Article 42 of the Constitution

‡ Age calculated based on available information

The laws criminalizing commercial sexual exploitation of children are insufficient because they do not criminalize the purchase of commercial sex involving children. Similarly, the criminalization of involvement of a child in “immoral actions” does not clearly criminalize the use, procuring, and offering of a child for pornographic performances. In addition, the laws providing for free basic education do not meet international standards because they do not extend to all children, particularly non-citizens.

ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2024, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Azerbaijan took actions to address child labor. However, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in Azerbaijan hindered enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement
<p>Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population (MLSP): Enforces labor laws related to the worst forms of child labor through the State Labor Inspection Service (SLIS). Due to the ongoing moratorium on all worksite labor inspections, passed in 2015, SLIS is only able to receive and respond to complaints through desk reviews. Based on information received, inspectors are empowered to identify violations and impose appropriate penalties. Although SLIS can impose penalties directly against individuals, it must refer cases to the courts to levy penalties against corporate entities. In addition, SLIS does not maintain confidentiality for individuals who file complaints, which could expose workers who file complaints about the worst forms of child labor to retaliation by their employers. SLIS is able to identify potential minimum age violations by monitoring an electronic database of labor contracts and has the authority to impose penalties for violations. MLSP also oversees the Social Services Agency, which provides assistance to certain high-risk groups, including survivors and potential victims of human trafficking. As of July 2024, the Social Services Agency provided rehabilitation services to at least 24 survivors and potential victims of human trafficking.</p>
<p>Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA): Central executive agency responsible for public security and the prevention of criminal offenses, including child trafficking and begging. Through the Anti-Trafficking Department, enforces human trafficking laws; investigates human trafficking violations, including child trafficking; and enforces criminal laws related to the use of children in illicit activities. Refers children who are victims of human trafficking to social services for assistance and also operates a 24-hour hotline for the public to report suspected child trafficking cases and instances of child begging.</p>

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts	
Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No
Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Unknown
Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

The Government of Azerbaijan did not respond to requests to provide information on labor inspections or criminal investigations of child labor violations. Therefore, in 2024, it is **unknown** how many labor inspectors were employed by the labor inspectorate, nor how many inspections they conducted or child labor violations they found. It is **unknown** how many investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, how many prosecutions were initiated, or how many perpetrators were convicted.

The government suspended all routine and unannounced labor inspections in 2015 in an effort to revamp the inspection process, stimulate business growth, and address a broader anti-corruption drive. Since 2015, the government has extended the moratorium on a yearly basis and the ongoing suspension will remain effective until January 1, 2026. In addition, there are no indications as to whether the government anticipates a resumption of onsite inspections. Although SLIS is still able to receive and respond to complaints related to child labor and impose penalties in cases of violations, inspectors are limited to conducting desk reviews and may not conduct onsite inspections as part of their complaint response. In December 2024, MLSPP signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation with the labor inspectorate of the Russian Federation on the planning and implementation of governmental supervision of employment laws between the two institutions, including the use of electronic information systems for electronic audits, the application of risk-based approaches to inspections, and the training of labor inspectors.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Azerbaijan has established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, there is a lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Commissions for the Protection of Children’s Rights: Coordinate policies at the national level to protect children from the worst forms of child labor. Located within the Cabinet of Ministers, act as a national-level version of district-level Commissions on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors’ Rights, which are located in individual district Executive Commissions. Although Commissions on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors’ Rights exist at both the national and local levels, research was unable to determine the relationship between these respective national and local coordinating bodies.

Azerbaijan has established policies related to child labor. However, these policies do not cover all worst forms of child labor, including hazardous work in agriculture and other sectors in which child labor is known to occur.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor

National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2020–2024): Aimed to address human trafficking through enhanced coordination between relevant government agencies and improved protection for human trafficking victims, including child victims or potential child victims of trafficking. Included action items to improve services for child trafficking victims, address forced child begging, and research and monitor forced labor and child trafficking risks. A working group under the authority of MoIA’s Trafficking in Persons National Coordinator coordinated and oversaw the implementation of the National Action Plan. During the reporting period, the MoIA Main Department on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings held several trainings and awareness-raising events, including for students and teachers.

Strategy on Children of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2020–2030): Aims to improve child protection mechanisms and legislation. Through the associated National Action Plan, includes action items on implementing international commitments under ILO Convention 182 and enhancing coordination to detect and prevent child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. The National Early Childhood Development program was launched as part of the Strategy. Jointly organized by the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs, the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan, the Regional Development Public Union, and UNICEF Azerbaijan, the program aims, in part, to increase the capacity of children’s services professionals and raise awareness around the health and education of children in four target regions—Ganja, Shirvan, Aghjabadi, and Absheron.

State Program for the Development of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities (2018–2024): Aimed to create inclusive education for children with disabilities. In 2024, MLSPP opened 15 new social rehabilitation centers for children all around the country. These centers provide socio-psychological assistance, family support, and educational services to more than 36,000 children with disabilities during the reporting period.

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

Azerbaijan funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, gaps exist in these social programs, including insufficient funding.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor
Government-run Assistance Centers: ‡ Includes the Social Shelter and Rehabilitation Center for Minors, an MLSPF-run shelter in Baku for vulnerable children, including street children. Children are able to stay in these shelters until they turn 18. Additionally, Victims Assistance Centers, funded by MLSPF, and the MoIA-run Shelter for Temporary Residence for Victims of Human Trafficking, provide direct social services and social service referrals, education on administrative and legal procedures, and medical assistance to survivors of human trafficking, including children. Children can stay in these facilities for 60 days, and after this period, asylum can be extended upon assessment and request of the police, guardianship authority, or the Commission on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors’ Rights. In 2024, more than 800 children received assistance through the institutions of the Social Services Agency under MLSPF.
Targeted Social Assistance Program: ‡ Ongoing MLSPF-run program that provides cash transfers to vulnerable families, including families with children with disabilities and low-income families. Research was unable to determine whether this program remained active during the reporting period.
MoIA Identification Document Program: ‡ Provides identification documents to undocumented minors who may be street children or victims of human trafficking. Research was unable to determine whether this program remained active during the reporting period.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Azerbaijan.
† The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports