In 2021, Bolivia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government passed a decree giving migrants the ability to normalize their status without paying fines, helping enroll more children in school. However, children in Bolivia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and mining. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including in the production and harvesting of Brazil nuts. Although Bolivian law requires that apprentices attend school, it does not set a minimum age for participation in apprenticeships. In addition, Article 1 of Supreme Decree No. 1875 sets the minimum age for compulsory military service at 17, which does not comply with international standards. The government also did not publicly release information on its criminal law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Bolivia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and mining. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture including in the production and harvesting of Brazil nuts. (I) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Bolivia.

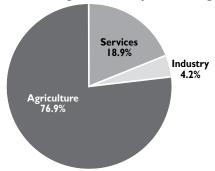
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	7 to 14	15.4 (286,890)
Attending School (%)	7 to 14	97.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	14.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		91.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (2)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta de Hogares (EH), 2020. (3)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 7-14



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	Planting and harvesting corn and peanuts (4)
	Harvesting and processing of Brazil nuts/chestnuts† and sugarcane† (1,4)
	Ranching and raising cattle† and plucking chickens (5-8)
Industry	Mining† of gold, silver, tin, and zinc (1,6,9,10)
	Construction,† including heavy lifting and shoveling (1)
	Production of bricks† (I)
Services	Street vending, juggling, shoe shining, and assisting transportation operators (6,7,11,12)
	Cleaning cemeteries (grave sites) (9,11-13)
	Domestic work (I)

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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‡	Forced labor in domestic work, mining, ranching, and in the production and harvesting of Brazil nuts and sugarcane (14,15)
	Forced begging (1,15)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,15)
	Use in illicit activities, including robbery and producing or transporting drugs (1,15)

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

Indigenous children are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (14) The cultural practice known as *padrinazgo*, which involves rural families sending their children to urban areas to live with individuals for better access to education, social services, and food, often leads to forced labor, including in domestic work and third-party businesses. (14) Girls, on average age 14, were found to be engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, in El Alto. (1) Research indicates that the commercial sexual exploitation of Bolivian children thrives due to the strength of the legal sex industry in Bolivia, the persistence of poverty, cultural norms that contribute to the denigration of women and girls, and the demand for child sex tourism. (1,6) Bolivian children are also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, and forced labor both within the country and abroad. (1,15) Research found that young women and girls ages 13 to 17 were increasingly being targeted for human trafficking through cyber recruitment. (16)

Attendance rates for secondary education remain low in rural areas. (7) Following the 2020 complete closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, classes resumed in February 2021 on a hybrid schedule of in-person classes, blended learning classes, and distance learning facilitated with tele-education, radio education, and the use of digital platforms. The Ministry of Education gradually shifted to nearly full-time in-person attendance following continuous health evaluations of each region. (1) In 2021, civil society reported a steady rise in the number of Venezuelan migrants electing to stay in Bolivia, most of whom lacked legal status. The children of these families often struggled to obtain the proper paperwork to enroll in the public school system. (1)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Bolivia 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 Bolivia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including compulsory recruitment by State military.

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

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Articles 8 and 58 of the General Labor Law; Article 129 of the Child and Adolescent Code; Sentence 0025/2017 of the Plurinational Constitutional Tribunal; Article 3 of Law No. 1139 (17-20)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 58–59 of the General Labor Law; Articles 5 and 136 of the Child and Adolescent Code (17,18)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 136 of the Child and Adolescent Code (18)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 15, 46, and 61 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Article 34 of the Comprehensive Law against Human Trafficking and Smuggling (21-23)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Article 15 of the Constitution; Articles 6, 34, and 35 of the Comprehensive Law against Human Trafficking and Smuggling (21,23)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 34 and 35 of the Comprehensive Law against Human Trafficking and Smuggling; Articles 281 bis, 32, 321 bis, 322, and 323 bis of the Penal Code (23,24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 47, 48, and 56 of the Law on Coca and Controlled Substances (25)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16*	Article 2 of the General Directive of Pre-Military Recruitment; Articles 2 and 7 of the Law of National Military Service (26,27)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	No		Articles 108 and 249 of the Constitution; Article 1 of Supreme Decree No. 1875; Article 1 of Supreme Decree No. 21479 (21,28,29)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17‡	Article 81 of the Constitution; Articles 1, 8–9, and 11–14 of the Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez Education Law (21,30)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 17 and 81 of the Constitution; Article 1 of the Avelino Siñani- Elizardo Pérez Education Law; Article 115 of the Child and Adolescent Code (18,21,30)

^{*}The minimum age for combat is 18 per Article 36 of the Law of National Military Service. (26)

In August 2021, the government passed a decree providing migrants with the ability to normalize their status without paying fines following delays due to the pandemic. (31) Civil society reported that this helped migrants to obtain legal residency documents and enroll their children in schools. (1)

Although legislation was passed in 2018 to clarify the minimum age for work in Bolivia at age 14, because the minimum age for work is still lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (18,20) Furthermore, although Bolivian law specifies that education is compulsory through secondary school, it does not specify a start or end age. (21,30) In addition, prohibitions against child trafficking are insufficient because they require the use of threats, force, or coercion to be established for the crime. (21,23)

Although Bolivian law requires employers to grant apprentices the time necessary to attend school, it does not set a minimum age for participation in apprenticeships. (17) Articles 108 and 249 of the Constitution require Bolivian males to perform compulsory military service in accordance with national law. (21) Article 1 of Supreme Decree No. 1875, passed in 2014, lowered the minimum age at which compulsory military service may begin from age 18, as previously established, to age 17, which does not comply with international standards. (28,29)

[‡] Age calculated based on available information. (21,30)

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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 child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Enforces child labor laws and addresses forced labor of indigenous peoples. (6) Refers cases to the Labor Courts for adjudication of penalties and unpaid wages. (6) Engages municipal Offices of the Child Advocate to ensure the protection of children's rights. (5) Assists in the implementation of the Child and Adolescent Code. (5,18)
Municipal Offices of the Child Advocate	Authorize children from the age of 14 to engage in work and register them in the government's Child and Adolescent Information System (SINNA), pursuant to the 2018 amendment to the Child and Adolescent Code. (1,5,20) Protect the rights and welfare of children, including by accompanying child labor inspectors and referring criminal child labor cases to prosecutors and for social services. (5,18) SINNA is administered by the Ministry of Justice and Transparency. (18,20)
Prosecutor's Office	Enforces criminal laws against forced labor, trafficking of children, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities at the departmental level in coordination with the Attorney General. (5,32) The Attorney General's Office oversees investigations and prosecutions at the national level. The Attorney General's Office National Coordinator's Office oversees regional prosecutors who, in conjunction with the Bolivian National Police, pursue cases of human trafficking and maintain a database of these cases. (32)
Bolivian National Police	Maintain the Special Force in the Fight Against Crime, which runs the Trafficking in Persons Division, comprising 15 investigative human trafficking units and the Police Unit for Migratory Control and Assistance, which patrols national borders. (33)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies took actions to address child labor. Gaps also exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of capacity of the offices that protect working children.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

2020	2021
Unknown (6)	Unknown (1)
71 (6)	72 (34)
Yes (35)	Yes (I)
Yes (6)	Yes (I)
N/A	N/A (36)
No (6)	No (I)
Unknown (6)	Unknown (I)
Unknown (6)	Unknown (I)
Unknown (6)	Unknown (I)
Unknown (6)	Unknown (I)
Unknown (6)	Unknown (I)
Yes (6)	Unknown (I)
Yes (6)	Unknown (I)
Yes (6)	Yes (I)
Yes (6)	Yes (34)
Yes (6)	Yes (34)
Yes (6)	Yes (34)
	Unknown (6) 71 (6) Yes (35) Yes (6) N/A No (6) Unknown (6) Unknown (6) Unknown (6) Unknown (6) Yes (6) Yes (6) Yes (6) Yes (6) Yes (6) Yes (6)

While the government provided some information on its labor law enforcement efforts, figures regarding inspectorate funding were not available for inclusion in this report. (I) The pandemic and subsequent budget cuts severely limited inspection operations beginning in 2020 following government restrictions on movement and a

reduction in the number of inspectors. (6) In previous reporting periods, the MOL reported that its budget was insufficient to conduct labor inspections. (1,6)

The Bolivian government has approximately 72 labor inspectors, 12 of whom focus specifically on areas in which child labor and forced labor are known problems. (34,36) However, the number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Bolivia's workforce, which includes approximately 5.9 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, Bolivia would need to employ about 394 labor inspectors. (37,38)

The government does not have a system in place to track data on forced child labor, commercial sexual exploitation of children, or engagement of children in illicit activities. (7) The MOL, Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Justice do not have a consolidated database or systematized records of the number of violations found related to child labor. (1,5,7)

While the Municipal Offices of the Child Advocate are charged with registering children ages 14 and older with work permits, reports indicate that up to 15 percent of municipalities in Bolivia lack a local office. Many more are reported to lack sufficient resources and the capacity to perform their mandate and raise awareness of children's rights and their parents' obligations under the Child and Adolescent Code. (5,6,14) In a 2021 interview, the Ombudsman's Office admitted that the registration of adolescent workers by these Offices was lacking and that low numbers of registration reported to MOL headquarters do not reflect the reality of child labor in Bolivia, even though these numbers are not publicly available. (39)

In La Paz and Santa Cruz, Child Advocate Offices reported additional barriers to implementation of the registration section of the Code, including a lack of cooperation from parents to register their working children and prohibitive financial obstacles to obtain the proper paperwork required for registration. (14) While municipalities are required to allot a certain percentage of their budget to the Offices of the Child Advocate, this percentage has decreased over the last few years. (5,6)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Bolivia took actions to address child labor. Gaps also exist within the operations of the criminal law enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (6)	Unknown (1)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (6)	Unknown (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (6)	Unknown (1)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (6)	Unknown (1)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (6)	Unknown (1)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (6)	Unknown (1)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	Unknown (1)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (6)	No (I)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (I)

Authorities registered 200 criminal complaints involving human trafficking and smuggling between January and June of 2021. More than 75 percent of these cases involved human trafficking and smuggling for the purposes of sexual or labor exploitation, while the remaining cases involved pornography, child pornography, child abduction, and kidnapping. (1) Though the authorities did not report how many of these cases in 2021 involved minors, a study by the Ministry of Government's Citizen Security Observatory analyzed the 368 complaints of trafficking

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in smuggling registered in 2015 and found 69 percent involved women and girls and 50 percent involved persons under age 17. (1)

In January 2022, officials from the Ministry of Justice and Public Ministry participated in a virtual training on trafficking in persons held by the U.S. State Department's International Law Enforcement Academy. (34,36) However, the Government of Bolivia did not provide evidence of any meaningful efforts to impose legal penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor, nor did it take active measures to investigate, prosecute, convict, or sentence perpetrators of these crimes. (I) In addition, the government does not maintain disaggregated information on criminal cases.

Research has shown that children rescued from the worst forms of child labor are often not referred to social services providers because some cities lack shelters and other social services for children. (14,40-42) Shelters maintained by departmental governments are underfunded and child survivors are often cast out of shelters on the basis of fixed timelines—after spending the maximum number of days allowed—rather than an assessment of need. (40) The government did not report the number of children referred to receive social services. While children can report workforce abuse to the Child Advocate's Office, they rarely do. (14)

Low rates of dedicated training on human trafficking also hampered law enforcement efforts. The high rate of rotation among police, prosecutors, and judges—a standard practice to help prevent corruption—leads to insufficient knowledge, lack of experience on human trafficking, and a judicial backlog for these types of cases. (41)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms 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 efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Commission for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labor	Coordinates national enforcement efforts on child labor issues. Led by MOL, and includes the ministries of Justice, Education, and Planning, and several NGOs. (5) Requests for information from MOL were unable to determine whether the coordinating body was active during the reporting period. (36)
Plurinational System for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents	Coordinates national efforts to manage and implement the Plurinational Plan for Children and Adolescents, the Coordinating Council for Children and Adolescents, and the Congress on Children's Rights. Evaluates and advises on national plans, public policies, reports, and budget allocation relating to children's and adolescents' rights. (18) In coordination with the National Institute of Statistics, monitors and updates SINNA. Led by the Ministry of Justice. (18) Research was unable to determine whether the coordinating body was active during the reporting period. (1)
Plurinational Council against Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons	Coordinates anti-trafficking efforts and implements national laws and policies on human trafficking and smuggling. (5,23,43) Chaired by the Minister of Justice and comprising eight ministries, the Public Advocate, and NGOs. (44) In 2021, the council met three times. (34)
Department-Level Councils against Human Trafficking and Smuggling	Coordinate efforts of the Plurinational Council against Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons in Bolivia's nine departments. Comprising officials from the Special Force in the Fight Against Crime, MOL, the ministries of Migration and Education, the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, and NGO representatives. (23,43) Research was unable to determine whether the coordinating body was active during the reporting period. (1)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government has established policies to address child labor.

Research could not determine any activities undertaken in 2021 to implement previously existing key policies related to child labor. Furthermore, Bolivia's national policy for addressing child labor, the National Plan for the

Progressive Eradication of Child Labor (2000–2010), expired in 2010 and research did not uncover any efforts by the government to replace or update the plan. (45) While the plan remains expired, since 2010, the government has addressed child labor by conducting several child labor surveys on the following issues: domestic workers, child labor in mining, child labor in the sugarcane industry, and child labor in La Paz and El Alto, as well as the regions of Beni and Pando. (34,36)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 9). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including efficacy in achieving programmatic goals.

Table 9. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Juancito Pinto Subsidy Program†	Government program that provides a conditional cash transfer to all primary and some secondary school students to increase school attendance and reduce the dropout rate. (46) The government continued to support this program during the reporting period. (1)
Safe Terminal Program†	A child sex tourism prevention campaign launched by the Bolivian government in 2018, which includes training, awareness-raising activities, and informational workshops for officials of transport and accommodation companies in the city of La Paz. In the Department of Tarija, the campaign focuses on the development and implementation of codes of ethics and conduct to promote children's rights in private sector companies' corporate social responsibility programs. (40) The government continued to support this program during the reporting period. (1)
Human Rights of Children Working in Sugarcane, Brazil Nuts, and Mining†	Human Rights Ombudsman's Office program that promotes the elimination of the worst forms of child labor and advocates for social and labor protections for working adolescents ages 14 to 17. (47)
Bolivian Foreign Trade Institute's Triple Seal Initiative	Initiative of the Department of Santa Cruz's Ministry of Labor. Collaborative effort with the Bolivian Institute of Standardization and Quality, UNICEF, and ILO to develop a voluntary certification program that recognizes companies that comply with Bolivian law and ILO conventions on child labor, forced labor, and worker discrimination in the production of their goods. (48,49) This initiative and the increasing mechanization of the industry have led to a reported near elimination of child labor in sugarcane, as reported through inspections. (34,36,50)

[†] Program is funded by the Government of Bolivia.

In 2021, UNICEF Bolivia supported the expansion of the "Friendly Markets for Children and Adolescents" initiative from Santa Cruz to Cobija and El Alto. (I) This program trains volunteers from local universities and market union members to offer alternatives to parents at risk of encouraging child labor, such as tutoring, supervised childcare, and support in enrolling their children in school. (I) The 2020 *Juancito Pinto* program provided \$73 million (504 million Bolivianos) directly to the more than 2.3 million participating students to encourage school retention in primary and secondary schools; information for this reporting period was unavailable. (I) In 2015, the government issued the "Patriotic Agenda" law which provides a plan to decrease poverty by 2025, and thereby reduces the risk of child labor due to poverty and the need for familiar work. (34,36)

Although the Government of Bolivia continued to support the above social programs to address child labor in 2021, research could not determine specific activities undertaken. (1,51)

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 Bolivia (Table 10).

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Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2021
Framework	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits child trafficking.	2021
	Ensure that the law prohibits children under the age of 14 from participating in apprenticeships.	2010 – 2021
	Ensure that the law establishes 18 as the minimum age for compulsory recruitment by the state military and criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2015 – 2021
Enforcement	Publish information on child labor law enforcement, including labor inspectorate funding, the number of inspectors and how many inspections were conducted including at worksites, the number of child labor violations as a result of inspections, penalties imposed and collected, and whether routine and unannounced inspections were conducted.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that inspectors receive refresher course trainings each year.	2020 – 2021
	Increase the number of labor inspectors responsible for enforcing laws on child labor to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2013 – 2021
	Provide sufficient funding to increase the Ministry of Labor's capacity to ensure the adequate enforcement of child labor laws.	2013 – 2021
	Ensure that there are systematized records or a consolidated database on the number of violations found related to child labor.	2019 – 2021
	Establish and maintain an Office of the Child Advocate in every municipality, allocating sufficient resources from municipal-level budgets to ensure that legal protections are extended to all children who are permitted to work, that parents are assisted in registering their children for work.	2014 – 2021
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement, including training for criminal investigators; whether investigators receive training on the worst forms of child labor and refresher training; and disaggregated numbers on child labor investigations, violations found, prosecutions initiated, and convictions.	2011 – 2021
	Ensure that active measures are taken to investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence perpetrators of crimes related to the worst forms of child labor.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that there are sufficient shelters for survivors of the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking throughout the country and that survivors are not cast out of shelters.	2018 – 2021
	Provide sufficient training, including training on human trafficking, to criminal law enforcement agencies to ensure adequate enforcement of laws related to the worst forms of child labor. Address issues of high rotation among police, prosecutors, and judges as well as judicial backlog to ensure adequate prosecution.	2015 – 2021
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2020 – 2021
Government Policies	Establish and implement a new national policy or national action plan to address child labor, including its worst forms.	2010 – 2021
Social Programs	Ensure that all children, regardless of migratory status, can access education and expand national programs in rural areas to increase secondary school attendance.	2010 – 2021
	Ensure that all social programs funded by the government that address the worst forms of child labor are active and publish information on activities each reporting period.	2019 – 2021

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