

Child labor? Don't fall for it!

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What is child labor?

Any form of work, paid or unpaid, performed by children and adolescents who are under the minimum legal age allowed to enter the labor market, according to each national legislation, is child labor. In Brazil, as general rule, it is prohibited for anyone under 16 years of age to work, except as an apprentice if they are 14 years old or older. However, any night, hazardous and insalubrious work is prohibited for all people under 18 years of age.



Watch the **Meia infância - O trabalho infantil no Brasil** (Half childhood - Child labor in Brazil today) video and download the booklet (with the same title) at escravonempensar.org.br/meiainfancia.

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Where can I report child labor?

- Ministry of Economy: visit denuncia.sit.trabalho.gov.br
- Labor Public Prosecutor's Office: visit bit.ly/mptdenuncia or download the MPT Pardal app
- Cras/Creas (Social assistance unit) in your municipality.
In the city of São Paulo, visit: bit.ly/assistenciaSP or dial 156
- Guardianship Council in your municipality.
In the city of São Paulo, visit: bit.ly/ctutelarSP
- Dial 100



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What do some people say about **child labor**?

‘ Work dignifies human beings and shapes their characters, therefore, it is beneficial for children and adolescents ’

Don't fall for it! Children and teenagers of school age are already under conditions that favor character formation, such as carrying out the school day, being punctual, engaging in recreational activities and studying.

A supportive division of simple chores at home also contributes to cultivating notions of conviviality and sociability. In order to fully develop, children cannot spend much of the day working or having unreasonable responsibilities for their age. They need time to play, study and rest.



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What do some people say about **child labor**?

‘ It is better to work than to be on the streets, doing nothing, begging, using drugs or committing crimes ’

Don't fall for it! Child labor does not prevent crimes. In fact, research shows that the majority of the prison population did work during their childhood and that many adolescents who are under socio-educational measures (Brazil's juvenile justice system) had already carried out or were carrying out work activities at the time they committed a crime. It may seem that work will confer dignity for anyone who undertakes it – regardless of age. However, child labor actually makes it easier to push children and adolescents into illegal activities, such as organized crime, drug and human trafficking, sexual exploitation and slave labor, since they are in a position of vulnerability, exploitation and violation and, therefore, unprotected from being wangled into these situations.

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What do some people say about **child labor**?

‘ Poor children need to work to help support their families ’

Don't fall for it! Children from low-income families who start working at an early age have their learning impaired, which later not only makes it harder for them to complete their studies, but also hinders their professional qualification. This leads them, as adults, to the worst kinds of jobs, usually meaning informal and precarious work. Meanwhile, children from the upper classes have the opportunity to grow and develop with more time for school, courses and other activities, thus improving their professional qualifications and the possibilities to compete for good positions and formal jobs in the labor market. Therefore, this type of discourse reinforces social inequalities because it differentiates between who should access certain opportunities and have certain privileges and who should not. Everyone must have access to formal education during childhood and adolescence.

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What do some people say about **child labor**?

‘ He/she worked as a child and turned into a successful person thanks to that ’

Don't fall for it! People who have worked at an early age and ended up being successful are the exception, not the rule. Child labor interferes with schooling and learning achievements because children that work have less time to dedicate to school activities, taking longer to complete their studies – this impairs their professional qualifications and makes them officially enter the labor market later in life. The disadvantage increases when a child interrupts his or her education, which impacts both professional qualification and access to better jobs. We cannot forget that even those who have managed to overcome past labor exploitation took longer to complete their studies. So, what we can say is that some people have done well in life despite child labor and not because of it.

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What do some people say about **child labor**?

‘ Families that host poor girls who perform domestic service in exchange for housing and food are doing them a favor ’

Don't fall for it! Domestic child labor involves a multitude of elements that puts the child's physical and mental health at risk due to intense physical efforts, social isolation (and even false imprisonment), physical, psychological and sexual abuse, long working hours, night work, exposure to fire, repetitive movements and overexertion. Away from family life, often for years on end, these girls are prevented from studying and playing, in addition to being deprived of rest, freedom, and social and emotional ties. Despite carrying out work activities, they do not earn wages even when they reach adulthood. For all these reasons, domestic work is considered one of the worst forms of child labor, thus being prohibited for anyone under 18 years of age.



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What do some people say about **child labor**?

‘ Teenagers who perform sex work have common sense and are responsible for their own actions, so they are not exploited. They are sex workers with autonomy and freedom of choice ’

Don't fall for it! Sexual exploitation is considered one of the worst forms of child labor as it exposes children and adolescents to all kinds of trauma and damage (including physical, moral, psychological and sexual ones) for the rest of their lives. In Brazil, prostitution is allowed for people over the age of 18; but sex work is always considered an exploitation when involving any person younger than that, making it unacceptable for children and adolescents. Therefore, we should never refer to this situation as ‘child prostitution’, but as ‘child sexual exploitation’. Children and adolescents are still developing both physically and psychologically and, therefore, are still under the tutelage of the family, the State and society and must be protected against this violation. And yet young people continue to perform this activity in order to address their and their family's needs to survive. The condition of socioeconomic and psychological vulnerability makes children more susceptible to the beguilement of adults who force or inveigle them to do this kind of work. These adults then profit from the children's sexual exploitation.