

Oman

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under age 15 in Oman are unavailable.³⁵¹¹ However, children are known to work in the informal and family-based subsistence agriculture and fishery sectors of the economy.³⁵¹² Bedouin children participated in camel racing for their families as part of their cultural heritage, however, there were no substantiated recent reports of trafficking of foreign children to work as camel jockeys.³⁵¹³ UNICEF and the Government of Oman agree that foreign children were not trafficked and employed as camel jockeys. The ILO does not consider the use of child camel jockeys, as practiced in Oman, to be a significant problem.³⁵¹⁴

Education is free for all children ages 6 to 18 years³⁵¹⁵, but is not compulsory by law.³⁵¹⁶ In order to achieve the goal of education for all, the government provides free transportation to and from school and free textbooks and learning materials to every student.³⁵¹⁷ Additionally, the government and private sector provide assistance, such as support for the purchase of school uniforms, to low income families.³⁵¹⁸ In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 81 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 72 percent.³⁵¹⁹ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Primary school attendance statistics are not available for Oman.³⁵²⁰ As of 2001, 98 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade five.³⁵²¹

³⁵¹¹ This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section for information about sources used. 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, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the section in the front of the report titled "Data Sources and Definitions."

³⁵¹² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Oman*, Washington, D.C., February 28, 2005, Sections 5 and 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41729.htm>.

³⁵¹³ U.S. Embassy- Muscat, reporting, February 26, 2006. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2005: Oman*, Washington, D.C., March 8, 2006, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61696.htm>

³⁵¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Oman*. Section 5. See also U.S. Embassy- Muscat, reporting, August 21, 2005.

³⁵¹⁵ UNESCO, *Education for All 2000 Assessment: Country Reports- Oman*, prepared by Ministry of Education, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 52/84, 1999; available from <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/oman/contents.html>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Oman*.

³⁵¹⁶ U.S. Embassy- Muscat official, email communication to USDOL official, March 1, 2004. See also U.S. Embassy- Muscat official, email communication to USDOL official, January 7, 2006. Employers typically ask for documentation that young people have completed their basic education through grade 10 before hiring them. See also U.S. Embassy- Muscat, reporting, August 23, 2004.

³⁵¹⁷ UNESCO, *EFA Country Report: Oman*, Section II.3.2.1.

³⁵¹⁸ Ministry of Education Sultanate of Oman, *National Report on Quality Education in Oman*, Muscat, 2004, 41.

³⁵¹⁹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportID=51> (*Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, Primary*; accessed December 2005).

³⁵²⁰ This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section for information about sources used.

³⁵²¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportID=55> (*School life expectancy, %of repeaters, survival rates*; accessed December 2005).

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Oman Labor Law, updated in 2003, establishes a minimum age of 15 years for employment, while minors ages 15 to 18 years are permitted to work only between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Minors are prohibited from working overtime or in certain hazardous occupations.³⁵²² Employers are prohibited from requiring minors to work on official days of rest or holidays or more than 6 hours per day.³⁵²³ Workplaces that employ minors are required to post certain items for display, including: a copy of the provisions of the law regulating the employment of children; an updated log with the names of minors employed in the workplace with their ages and dates of employment; and a work schedule showing work hours, rest periods, and weekly holidays.³⁵²⁴

The worst forms of child labor may be prosecuted under different statutes in Oman. Forced or compulsory labor by children is specifically prohibited by law.³⁵²⁵ In August 2005, the Ministry of Sport issued a decree to raise the minimum legal age of camel jockeys annually by one year until it reaches 18 in 2009. The current minimum age is set at 14 and rises annually by one year until achieving the 18-year minimum by the 2009 camel racing season.³⁵²⁶ Under Article 220 of the Penal Code, the enticement of a minor into an act of prostitution is a crime punishable by not less than five years of imprisonment.³⁵²⁷ There is no specific legal provision prohibiting trafficking in persons,³⁵²⁸ however, Article 260 of the Penal Code imposes prison sentences of between five and fifteen years to anyone who enslaves a person or places a person in a situation similar to servitude.³⁵²⁹ The minimum age for voluntary military recruitment is 18.³⁵³⁰

The Ministry of Manpower is responsible for the enforcement of child labor laws. In practice, most employers will ask prospective employees for a certificate indicating that he or she has completed basic education through grade 10. Considering that children usually begin their basic education at age 6, this means that workers, in most cases, will be age 16 when they begin work.³⁵³¹ Registration with the Omani Camel Racing Federation and submission of a passport, photograph, and birth certificate confirming compliance with minimum age laws is required of all persons seeking work as camel jockeys.³⁵³² While restrictions on the employment of youth are generally followed, enforcement does not always extend to small family businesses, especially those engaged in agriculture and fishing.³⁵³³

³⁵²² *Oman Labour Law*, Royal Decree no. 35/2003, (April 26, 2003), Article 77.

³⁵²³ *Oman Labour Law*, Articles 76-77. See also U.S. Embassy- Muscat, *reporting*, August 23, 2004, and U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Oman*, Section 5.

³⁵²⁴ *Oman Labour Law*, Article 78.

³⁵²⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Oman*.

³⁵²⁶ U.S. Embassy- Muscat, *reporting*, August 21, 2005.

³⁵²⁷ *Article 220 of the Penal Code*; available from

<http://www.interpol.int/public/Children/SexualAbuse/NationalLaws/csaOman.asp>.

³⁵²⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Oman*, Section 5.

³⁵²⁹ U.S. Embassy- Muscat, *email communication to USDOL official*, August 15, 2006.

³⁵³⁰ Coalition to End the Use of Child Soldiers, *Global Report 2004 - Oman*, London, November 17, 2004; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=949.

³⁵³¹ U.S. Embassy Muscat, *reporting*, August 23, 2004.

³⁵³² U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Washington, DC, June 5, 2006; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65989.htm>

³⁵³³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Oman*, Section 6 d.

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government has entered into a Country Program of Cooperation with UNICEF for the years 2004-2006. This program features a joint strategy that focuses on improving the well-being of children and families, promoting quality education, child protection, and the development of life-skills and healthy lifestyles among adolescents.³⁵³⁴

The Government of Oman, through the Ministry of Education, is working to increase net enrollment among children and improve the education curriculum. The Basic Education initiative aims to replace the existing three-level General Education system with a unified, child-centered system that covers the first 10 years of schooling. This initiative involves curriculum reform in math, science, and life skills for grades 1 through 10 and will provide teacher training to support the process.³⁵³⁵ This program expanded from 17 public schools in 1998 to 352 for the 2003-2004 school year.³⁵³⁶ The Government plans to expand the program by about 40 schools per year until all of the country's approximately 1020 public schools are covered.³⁵³⁷

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	7/21/2005	✓
Ratified Convention 182	6/11/2001	✓
ILO-IPEC Associated Member		
National Plan for Children		
National Child Labor action Plan		
Sector Action Plan		

³⁵³⁴ U.S. Embassy- Muscat, *reporting*, August 21, 2005.

³⁵³⁵ Sultanate of Oman, *National Report*, 25-28.

³⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁵³⁷ U.S. Embassy- Muscat official, email communication, March 1, 2004.