



It takes a world
to end violence against children

World Vision



Child Soldiers:

A global recruitment index

OVERVIEW

Every year, almost unbelievably, **violence steals the childhoods of 1.7 billion children around the world.** It happens in every country, city and community. **They are forced to fight in adult wars, make decisions and witness things no child should see.**

Ending violence against children is an urgent issue, and through World Vision's global campaign, *It takes a world to end violence against children*, we relentlessly advocate for another way.

Our faith drives us to prevent violence, wherever it occurs, so no child has to experience it. We work to shift people's understanding and attitudes towards violence against children, challenging the way we look at these issues. That is why we have produced and published this global index of government recruitment policies. We have a clear message to governments and those in power: focus on stopping this problem before it starts by investing in education, peacebuilding and opportunities for children. Show them another way is possible.



For tens, maybe hundreds, of thousands of children, there is no real choice when it comes to joining armed groups. It's kill or be killed. They are promised education, protection, a future. Once they are involved, escaping is difficult and fraught with danger. These children grow up invisible and ignored. But, it doesn't need to be this way. An end to the use of child soldiers is possible, but it will take all of us to make it happen.

Acknowledgements




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Design: Fernando Otarola

Country			Age they recruit	Worst offenders
1 Afghanistan	●		18 in law	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
2 Albania	●		18 (legal minimum age in case of compulsory mobilisation) 19 (legal minimum age for voluntary enlistment)	
3 Algeria		●	17 (minimum voluntary enlistment age) 19 (minimum conscription age)	
4 Andorra	●		No national army	
5 Angola	●		18 (mandatory registration for all males) 20 - 45 compulsory male military service 18 - 45 for voluntary male military service 20 - 45 for voluntary female service	
6 Antigua and Barbuda	●		18 (voluntary military service)	
7 Argentina	●		18 - 24 (voluntary military service) 18 - 21 requires parental consent	
8 Armenia		●	17 year olds are eligible to become cadets, and as such are classified as military personnel 18 - 27 (voluntary or compulsory military service with a two-year conscript obligation)	
9 Australia		●	16.5 years for selection process 17 years to serve (with parental consent) 18 years to deploy on operations	
10 Austria		●	Registration requirement at 17 17 (minimum voluntary enlistment age) 18 (minimum conscription age)	
11 Azerbaijan		●	17 (voluntary service) 17 (eligible for cadet training, considered active military service) 18 - 35 for compulsory military service (12-18 mnths)	
12 Bahamas	●		18 (voluntary male and female service)	
13 Bahrain		●	15 (NCOs, technicians and cadets) 18 (voluntary military service)	
14 Bangladesh		●	16 - 21 (voluntary military service)	



 Recruiting U18s (law)





















Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
15 Barbados		Below 18 with parental consent 18 (voluntary military service)	
16 Belarus		17 (eligible for cadet force, classified as military personnel) 18 - 27 (compulsory military training/ alternative service)	
17 Belgium		18 (male and female voluntary military service)	
18 Belize		18 (voluntary military service)	
19 Benin		18 - 35 (selective compulsory and voluntary military service for males and females)	
20 Bhutan		18 (voluntary military service)	
21 Bolivia		14 (conscription of boys when voluntary quota is too low) 15 - 19 (voluntary premilitary service) 16 - 49 (voluntary male and female military service) 18 (min age of combat)	
Bosnia and Herzegovina		18 (voluntary military service)	
23 Botswana		18 (voluntary military service)	
24 Brazil		16 (enlistment to military schools) 17 - 45 (voluntary service) 18 (compulsory military service 10-12 month)	
25 Brunei Darussalam		17 (voluntary military service)	
26 Bulgaria		18 - 27 (voluntary military service) Conscription ended	
27 Burkina Faso		18 (voluntary military service)	
28 Burundi		16 (voluntary recruitment age) 18 (govt claim for voluntary military service)	
29 Cabo Verde		17 (voluntary service with parental consent) 18 - 35 (selective compulsory military service for males and females)	
30 Cambodia		18 (voluntary and compulsory military service)	
31 Cameroon		18 - 23 (male and female voluntary military service)	
32 Canada		16 (primary reserves with parental consent and only if enroled as a full-time student) 17 (voluntary service with parental consent)	










Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
33 Central African Republic	●	18 (voluntary military service)	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
34 Chad	●	No minimum age for volunteers with parental consent 18 (voluntary military service) 20 (voluntary military service)	
35 Chile	●	17 on request 18 (minimum conscription age)	
36 China	●	17 (eligible to enlist if high school graduate) 18 (eligible for recruitment)	
37 Colombia	●	18 - 24 (compulsory and voluntary military service)	Reported and verified incidents by non-state actors.
38 Comoros	●	18 (voluntary male and female service)	
39 Congo	●	18 (voluntary male and female service)	
40 Costa Rica	●	No national army	
41 Cote D'Ivoire	●	Voluntary recruitment of former rebels is restricted to those aged 22-29	
42 Croatia	●	18 - 27 (voluntary military service)	
43 Cuba	●	17 - 28 (compulsory military service)	
44 Cyprus	●	17 (voluntary service) 18 - 50 (compulsory military service for all Greek Cypriot males for 14-month service obligation)	
45 Czech Republic	●	18 - 28 (voluntary service, males and females)	
46 Democratic People's Republic of Korea	●	15 (Young Red Guard) 17 (minimum voluntary enlistment age and minimum conscription age)	
47 Democratic Republic of Congo	●	18 - 45 (voluntary and compulsory military service)	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
48 Denmark	●	18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)	



Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
49 Djibouti		16 - 25 (voluntary military training) 18 (voluntary military service)	
50 Dominica		No national army	
51 Dominican Republic		16 (eligibility and conditions unclear) 17 - 21 (voluntary military service)	
52 Ecuador		18 (selective and voluntary military service)	
53 Egypt		15 (voluntary enlistment) 16 (minimum voluntary age) 18 - 30 (male conscription military service)	
54 El Salvador		16 - 22 (voluntary male or female service) 18 (selective compulsory military service)	
55 Equatorial Guinea		18 (selective compulsory military service)	
56 Eritrea		18 - 40 (voluntary and compulsory military service for males and females)	
57 Estonia		18 - 27 (compulsory military or govt service)	
58 Eswatini (Swaziland)		18 - 30 (voluntary military service for males and females)	
59 Ethiopia		18 (voluntary military service)	
60 Fiji		18 (voluntary military service)	
61 Finland		18 (compulsory military service for all men) Obligation to remain in military reserve until 60)	
62 France		17.5 18 - 25 (voluntary military service)	
63 Gabon		20 (voluntary military service)	
64 Gambia		18 (voluntary male and female service)	
65 Georgia		18 - 27 (voluntary or compulsory military service with a 1 year conscript obligation) 17 year olds are eligible to become cadets, and as such are classified as military personnel	
66 Germany		17 with parental consent	
67 Ghana		18 - 26 (voluntary military service)	
68 Greece		18 (voluntary military service) 19 - 45 (compulsory military service)	
69 Grenada		No national army	



Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
70 Guatemala		17 - 21 (eligible for conscription, rarely used) 18 - 50 (eligible for military service)	
71 Guinea		No compulsory military service	
72 Guinea Bissau		16 (voluntary military service with parental consent) 18 - 25 (compulsory military service)	
73 Guyana		16	
74 Haiti		No national army	
75 Honduras		18 (voluntary military service)	
76 Hungary		18 - 25 (voluntary military service)	
77 Iceland		No national army	
78 India		16 - 18 (Voluntary military service a: 16.5 - Navy 17 - Airforce 17.5 - Army)	Reported and verified incidents by non-state actors.
79 Indonesia		18 - 45 (voluntary military service)	
80 Iran		15 (Popular Mobilisation Army) 16 (Volunteers) 17 (Law Enforcement Forces) 18 (Compulsory military service - 18 months)	
81 Iraq		18 - 40 (voluntary military service)	Reported incidents by state and non-state actors.
82 Ireland		18 - 25 (voluntary military service)	
83 Israel		17 (voluntary military service) 18 (compulsory military service for both sexes)	
84 Italy		18 - 25 (voluntary military service)	
85 Jamaica		17.5 (voluntary military service)	
86 Japan		18 (voluntary military service)	
87 Jordan		18 (voluntary male military service)	
88 Kazakhstan		15 - 17 (intermediate cadets - military personnel) 17 - 21 (higher cadets - military personnel) 18 (compulsory military service, but conscription being phased out)	
89 Kenya		U 18 with parental consent 18 - 26 (voluntary military service for males and females)	



Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
90 Kiribati	●	No national army	
91 Kuwait	●	17 - 21 (voluntary military service) (2012)	
92 Kyrgyzstan	●	16 - 17 (military cadets, can't take part in military operations) 18 - 27 (compulsory or voluntary military service for males)	
93 Lao PDR	●	18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)	
94 Latvia	●	18 (voluntary male and female service)	
95 Lebanon	●	17 - 30 (voluntary military service) 18 - 24 (age for officer eligibility)	Reported and verified incidents by non-state actors.
96 Lesotho	●	17 - 30 (voluntary military service) 18 - 24 (age for officer eligibility)	
97 Liberia	●	18 (voluntary military service)	
98 Libya	●	18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)	Reported incidents.
99 Liechtenstein	●	No national army	
100 Lithuania	●	18 (military service, with 9 month obligation)	
101 Luxembourg	●	18 - 24 (voluntary military service for males and females)	
102 Madagascar	●	18 - 25 (voluntary military service for males)	
103 Malawi	●	18 (voluntary military service)	
104 Malaysia	●	Under 17 with parental consent and proof of age 17.5 (voluntary military service)	
105 Maldives	●	18 - 28 (voluntary service)	
106 Mali	●	18 (selective compulsory and voluntary military service)	Reported and verified incidents by non-state actors.
107 Malta	●	18 (voluntary military service)	
108 Marshall Islands	●	No national army	

Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
109 Mauritania		16 (with parental consent and at Minister's discretion) 18 (voluntary military service)	
110 Mauritius		18 (condition of recruitment unclear)	
111 Mexico		15 (cadets enrolled, considered members of armed forces) 16 (voluntary, with parental consent) 18 (compulsory)	
112 Micronesia		No national army	
113 Monaco		21 (Prince's Guard and Fire Brigade) No national army	
114 Mongolia		18 - 27 (compulsory and voluntary military service)	
115 Montenegro		18 (voluntary military service)	
116 Morocco		20 (voluntary military service)	
117 Mozambique		18 (mandatory registration for all males and females) 18 - 35 (selective compulsory military service)	
118 Myanmar		18 in law	Reported and verified incidents by non-state actors.
119 Namibia		18 (voluntary military service)	
120 Nauru		No national army	
121 Nepal		18 (voluntary military service)	
122 Netherlands		17 (parental consent needed)	
123 New Zealand		17 (minimum voluntary enlistment age, with parental consent unless married)	
124 Nicaragua		18 - 30 (voluntary military service)	
125 Niger		Legal age unclear, not specified in law Cited as 18 (compulsory or voluntary military service)	
126 Nigeria		18 (voluntary military service)	Reported incidents by non-state actors.

Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
I27 Norway		16 (during wartime) 17 (male volunteers) 18 (female volunteers)	
I28 Oman		18 - 30 (voluntary military service)	
I29 Pakistan		16 - 23 (voluntary service)	Reported incidents by non-state actors.
I30 Palau		No national army	
I31 Panama		No national army	
I32 Papua New Guinea		16 (minimum voluntary age with parental consent)	
I33 Paraguay		14 (eligible for military training school) 18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)	
I34 Peru		18 - 50 (voluntary service for males) 18 - 45 (voluntary service for females)	
I35 Philippines		17 - 23 (voluntary military service) 20 - 24 (eligibility for officer role)	Reported incidents by non-state actors.
I36 Poland		18 - 28 (voluntary service for males and females)	
I37 Portugal		18 - 30 (voluntary military service)	
I38 Qatar		18 - 35 (conscription for males with three-four month obligation)	
I39 Republic of Korea		18 - 35 (compulsory military service) 18 - 26 (voluntary military service)	
Republic of Moldova		18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)	
I41 Romania		18 (voluntary male and female service)	
I42 Russian Federation		16 (enrolment in military schools, cadets classified as armed personnel) 17 (males registered for draft)	
I43 Rwanda		18 (voluntary military service)	
I44 Saint Kitts and Nevis		18 (voluntary military service)	
I45 Saint Lucia		18 (voluntary security service) No national army	

Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
146 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	●	No national army	
147 Samoa	●	No national army	
148 San Marino	●	16 (Government authority to call up all citizens from 16-60) 18 (voluntary military service)	
149 Sao Tome and Principe	●	17 (voluntary military service) 18 (min age for compulsory military service)	
150 Saudia Arabia	●	17 (voluntary military enlistment)	
151 Senegal	●	18 (voluntary male and female service) 20 (selective conscript service, two-year obligation)	
152 Serbia	●	18 (voluntary military service)	
153 Seychelles	●	Under 18 with parental consent 18 (voluntary military services)	
154 Sierra Leone	●	Under 18 with parental consent 18 (voluntary military services)	
155 Singapore	●	16.5 (volunteers) 18-21 (compulsory male military service with two-year obligation)	
156 Slovakia	●	18 - 30 (voluntary military service for males and females)	
157 Slovenia	●	18 - 25 (voluntary military service)	
158 Solomon Islands	●	No national army	
159 Somalia	●	18 (compulsory and voluntary service)	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
160 South Africa	●	18 (voluntary male and female service)	
161 South Sudan	●	18 in law	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
162 Spain	●	18 - 26 (voluntary military service)	
163 Sri Lanka	●	18 - 22 (voluntary military service)	

Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
164 Sudan	●	18 (compulsory and voluntary male and female service)	Reported and verified incidents.
165 Suriname	●	18 (voluntary military service)	
166 Sweden	●	18 - 47 (voluntary male and female service)	
167 Switzerland	●	18 (voluntary male and female service) 19 - 26 (compulsory male military service with 260-day obligation)	
168 Syria	●	18 (compulsory and voluntary military service)	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
169 Tajikistan	●	15 (military school enrolment for males) 16 - 55 (compulsory military training)	
170 Thailand	●	18 (voluntary military service) 21 (compulsory military service)	
171 The Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	●	18 (voluntary military service)	
172 Timor-Leste	●	18 (voluntary military service)	
173 Togo	●	18 (voluntary military service)	
174 Tonga	●	16 (voluntary service with parental consent)	
175 Trinidad and Tobago	●	18 - 25 (compulsory military service)	
176 Tunisia	●	18 - 23 (voluntary military service) 20 - 23 (compulsory military service)	
177 Turkey	●	18 (voluntary military service) 21 - 41 (compulsory military service for males)	
178 Turkmenistan	●	15 (male enrollment in military school) 18 - 27 (compulsory male military service)	
179 Tuvalu	●	No national army	
180 Uganda	●	18 - 26 (voluntary military duty) 18 - 30 (military professionals)	
181 United Arab Emirates	●	17 (voluntary for males, with parental consent) 18 (compulsory service for males)	

Country	 	Age they recruit	Worst offenders
182 UK	●	16 (voluntary service with parental consent) 17 - 28 (eligible for officers) 17.5 (voluntary service by Nepalese citizens in the Gurkhas) 16 - 34 (voluntary military service by Papua New Guinean citizens)	
184 Ukraine	●	17 (minimum enlistment age for cadets, classified as members of the armed forces) 18 (minimum conscription age)	
185 United Republic of Tanzania	●	No minimum age in law, 18 in practice	
186 USA	●	17 (voluntary service with parental consent, unless married) 18 (male and female voluntary service)	
186 Uruguay	●	18 - 30 (voluntary service for males and females) 18 - 22 (voluntary service for Navy) Govt authority to conscript in emergencies	
187 Uzbekistan	●	18 (compulsory military service with one-month minimum obligation for males)	
188 Vanuatu	●	No national army	
189 Venezuela	●	18 - 60 (all citizens required to register for military service, although no compulsory recruitment)	
190 Vietnam	●	17 (eligible to enrol in military schools) 18 - 25 (male voluntary and compulsory service)	
191 Yemen	●	18 (voluntary military service)	Reported and verified incidents by state and non-state actors.
192 Zambia	●	16 (national registration required) 16 (voluntary service with parental consent) 18 - 25 (male and female voluntary service)	
193 Zimbabwe	●	18 - 24 (voluntary military service)	

Sources with hyperlinks for sources

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CIA Factbook

Child Soldiers
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Louder than words: An agenda for action to end state use of child soldiers, 2012

Child Soldiers
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Why 18 Matters: A Rights-based Analysis of Child Recruitment, 2018

CRIN Conflict Updates

Country Conflict Updates, with a focus on the impact of conflict on children's rights

UN CRC OPAC List of
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Annual Report of the
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<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>

CRIN policy position on
voluntary or compulsory
recruitment of children.