

SEYCHELLES 2019 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seychelles is a multiparty republic governed by a president, Council of Ministers, and National Assembly. In 2015 voters narrowly re-elected President James Michel of the People's Party (*Parti Lepep* in Creole, later renamed United Seychelles) in an election that international observers criticized for voter intimidation and vote buying. In 2016 President Michel resigned and appointed Vice President Danny Faure as president. Elections are scheduled to take place in 2020. In 2016 the opposition coalition Seychellois Democratic Union (LDS) won a majority of seats in legislative assembly elections that international and domestic observers called fair but not free because they did not consider the electoral commission to be impartial. This was the LDS's first majority in the legislature since the establishment of a multiparty system in 1993 and the first time the ruling party faced an opposition of equal or greater strength.

The Seychelles Police, which includes the unarmed police, the armed paramilitary Police Special Support Wing, the Anti-Narcotics Bureau, and the Marine Police Unit, have primary responsibility for internal security. They report to the minister of home affairs. The Seychelles People's Defense Forces, including infantry, the Special Forces Unit, the Coast Guard, and the Air Force, are responsible for external security and assist police with internal security as needed. These military services report to the president, who acts as minister of defense.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

Significant human rights issues included lack of enforcement of laws against domestic violence against girls and women, including rape, and forced labor.

The government took steps to punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution and law prohibit such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions improved during the year with overcrowding eliminated and violence reduced. Nevertheless, inmate-on-inmate violence and the holding of juvenile pretrial detainees with convicted prisoners continued to be a problem.

Physical Conditions: According to the *World Prison Brief*, the inmate population at the 400-inmate capacity Montagne Posee Prison declined from overcapacity to 392 prisoners. The decline was due to the decriminalization of possession of small amounts of cannabis. A separate holding facility for pretrial male detainees is situated in Victoria. Juvenile pretrial detainees and juvenile convicted prisoners continued to be held together with adult prisoners. Pretrial detainees comprised 21 percent of all prisoners, according to nongovernmental organization (NGO) estimates.

There were media reports that the incidence of inmate violence decreased. There were no reported deaths during the year. On April 11, the newspaper *Seychelles Nation* reported that an inmate stabbed in the neck by another prisoner at Coetivy Island Prison was medically evacuated to the main island of Mahe.

Administration: The ombudsman investigated credible allegations of mistreatment and made recommendations to the National Assembly and to the president regarding improvement of prison conditions. The ombudsman did not have authority to enforce recommendations, however. Ombudsman recommendations included having all prisoners properly informed of the rules for the pardon and work programs and establishment of a system allowing inmates to pay child support with money they earn in prison.

Independent Monitoring: The government generally permitted independent monitoring of prison conditions by local and international human rights groups. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime and local NGOs visited Montagne Posee Prison during the year. Several religious groups also visited the prison and the pretrial facility. Access to Coetivy Island prison, however, remained infrequent due to distance and cost. The government had planned to close Coetivy Prison in during the year and in June transferred all Coetivy prisoners to Montagne Posee, but it has not yet officially closed it.

Improvements: In addition to eliminating overcrowding, the government introduced a methadone program for prisoners addicted to heroin that decreased inmate-on-inmate violence.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court, and the government generally observed these requirements.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires warrants for arrests, except for persons arrested under the Misuse of Drugs Act that allows police to arrest and detain persons suspected of drug possession, use, importation, and trafficking. The law provides for detention without criminal charge for up to 14 days if authorized by court order. Persons arrested must be brought before a magistrate within 24 hours, with allowance made for travel from distant islands. Police generally respected this requirement. Authorities generally notified detainees of the charges against them and generally granted family members prompt access to them. Detainees have the right to legal counsel, and indigents generally received free counsel on all cases, including felony cases. Courts allowed bail in most cases.

Pretrial Detention: The law provides that remand (pretrial) prisoners be released on bail after six months of detention if their cases have not been heard and the government enforced these provisions. In previous years court backlogs due to mismanagement led to lengthy pretrial detention. Court processes for both civil and criminal cases continued to improve. As a result case backlogs and the number of pretrial detainees declined in tandem. In January the chief justice of the Supreme Court stated that the case backlog in the country's courts dropped from

409 to 127 cases due to improved efficiency. The time that detainees stayed in pretrial detention also declined.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality. Authorities generally respected court orders.

Trial Procedures

Both the constitution and law provide for the right to a fair and public trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right.

Defendants are considered innocent until proven guilty, have the right to be present at their trials, and to appeal convictions. Defendants have the right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them, with free interpretation as necessary from the first court appearance through all appeals. The law makes provision for defendants to present evidence and witnesses and to cross-examine witnesses in court. The law provides for defendants to consult with an attorney of choice, to have one provided at public expense in a timely manner if unable to afford one, and to be provided adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense. Defendants may confront prosecution or plaintiff witnesses and present their own witnesses and evidence. They may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt. The law extends these rights to all defendants.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals or organizations may seek civil remedies for human rights violations through domestic courts. A commission established in 2017 to investigate claims of forced land acquisitions since the 1977 military takeover and to settle all claims did not meet during the year and has acted slowly in settling cases (see also section 5, Government Human Rights Bodies).

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and press, and the government generally respected this right.

Freedom of Expression: Since 2015 individuals continued to be more willing to exercise the freedom to criticize the government with less fear of reprisal, such as harassment by police or the loss of jobs or contracts.

Press and Media, Including Online Media: Independent media outlets were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction. The law allows for independent radio and television but prohibits political parties and religious organizations from operating radio stations. The government funded two of the country's four radio stations and one of its two television stations, but no longer controlled content.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: The law allows the minister of information technology to prohibit the broadcast of any material believed to be against the "national interest" or "objectionable." The law also requires telecommunication companies to submit subscriber information to the government. Although authorities did not enforce the law, after more than 40 years of working in a controlled press environment, journalists continued to practice self-censorship. The high cost for requesting documents from the Land Registrar's Office has the effect of limiting journalists' access to information regarding land transactions, which are important documents when investigating existing and past corruption.

Actions to Expand Freedom of Expression, including for the media: In contrast with practice prior to 2018, President Faure's press conferences were open to all media. During the elections of 2015 and 2016, the opposition accused the then state-controlled Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) of biased reporting and coverage. A 2017 amendment to the SBC Act created a larger corporate board and provided for members of the public to apply for the position of CEO and deputy CEO. In 2018 the SBC was transformed from a state broadcaster to a public service broadcaster operating independently of state control.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content and there were no reports that the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution and law provide for freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respected this right.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

The law requires organizers of gatherings of 10 or more persons to inform the police commissioner five working days prior to the date proposed for the planned gathering. The police commissioner may impose conditions or deny the right to assemble on security, morality, and public safety grounds. There were several public demonstrations and marches during the year. Authorities did not restrict the holding of lawful opposition gatherings. During the year the National Assembly rejected a government proposal to restrict demonstrations to a specific area.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

d. Freedom of Movement

The constitution and law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation. The government generally respected these rights.

e. Internally Displaced Persons

Not applicable.

f. Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has not established a system for providing protection to refugees. Nevertheless, the country cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, which monitored and assisted refugees in the country through a memorandum of understanding with the UN Development Program.

g. Stateless Persons

Not applicable.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution provides citizens the ability to choose their government through free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In 2015 President Michel was re-elected to a third term by 193 votes in the country's first-ever presidential runoff election. Neither Michel nor runner-up Wavel Ramkalawan, leader of the opposition LDS alliance, received the required 50 percent plus one vote to win in the first electoral round. International observers from the Southern African Development Community and the African Union considered the elections neither free nor fair because of ruling-party voter intimidation and vote buying.

The opposition petitioned the Constitutional Court to overturn election results based on vote buying and other election irregularities. In 2016 the Constitutional Court ruled that, although there were irregularities, they were not significant enough to overturn the results.

In 2016 President Michel announced his resignation, passing the presidency to Vice President Danny Faure. President Faure opted for a consultative approach with the opposition, the legislature, and the executive, in order to collaborate on the most important national issues. In 2017 the National Assembly amended the constitution and removed a clause that permitted the passing of the presidency to a vice president to serve the remainder of the president's term. The amendment provides for elections to be held three months after the resignation or death of a

president. The next presidential election is scheduled to take place in the second half of 2020.

The country held National Assembly elections in 2016. The LDS, an opposition alliance composed of the Seychelles National Party, the Seychellois Alliance Party, the Seychelles Party for Social Justice and Democracy, and supporters of independent presidential candidate Phillipe Boulle, won 15 seats in the 33-seat assembly, while the People's Party won 10 seats. The remaining seats were allocated on a proportional basis, with the opposition LDS alliance and the People's Party receiving four each of the remaining eight seats. This result created LDS' or any opposition party's first majority in the legislature since the establishment of a multiparty system in 1993, and it was the first time the ruling party faced an opposition of comparable strength. International and domestic observers qualified the election as transparent, fair, and peaceful but refrained from calling it free due to the lack of credibility of the election management body, the Seychelles Electoral Commission. In August 2018 it was replaced by a five-member electoral commission, with a revamped secretariat that introduced a separation of powers between the commission board and operations. New rules for the commission provided more accountability mechanisms.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit participation of women and members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate. Following the 2016 National Assembly elections, women held seven of 33 seats, compared with 14 seats in the previous assembly. Women held five of 12 ministerial positions in the cabinet.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption by officials, but due to the limited powers accorded to the Anti-Corruption Commission under the laws in place in the first part of the year, the government did not implement the law effectively. On August 5, the Anti-Corruption Act was amended to give the commission the same powers, authority, and privileges as that of a law enforcement agency to detect, prevent, investigate, and prosecute cases of corruption outside the purview of the Attorney General's Office.

In 2018 an access to information law came into force. During the year the government appointed a CEO for the Seychelles Information Commission, and also appointed information officers in all ministries and departments. The law makes provisions on how citizens may access government information that is not

classified sensitive for security and defense reasons, how agencies should respond to requests, mandates proactive disclosure and a duty to assist requestors, and defines information that is deemed classified for security and defense.

Corruption: There were no prosecutions during the year. Political wrangling prior to amendment of the Anti-Corruption Act over the commission's powers and a small staff hindered anticorruption investigations. As of November the commission had 72 open cases. The commission received technical assistance from the EU.

Financial Disclosure: Government ministers, members of the National Assembly, and senior public servants and board members of government agencies and parastatals are required to declare their assets. Asset declarations may be made public if the information is needed for a court case or upon request to the ethics commissioner. The law was not always enforced.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

Government officials were generally cooperative and responsive to the views of international and local NGOs. The Office of the Vice President has the responsibility to engage with NGOs. The government consulted NGOs on most issues of national concern and appointments to boards of national organizations and agencies. An umbrella organization grouping various NGOs, Citizens Engagement Platform, is the focal point for all NGO activities and receives funding from the government for projects and general operations, and the government regularly consulted it regarding the introduction of legislation.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The 2018 Seychelles Human Rights Commission Act provided for reform of the Human Rights Commission, allowing it to operate independently of the ombudsman's office, in order to allow for a greater focus on human rights issues. On March 2, the five members of the commission were sworn in, including as chairman retired judge Bernadin Renaud, one of the most respected jurists in the country.

From September 11, the Truth, Reconciliation, and National Unity Commission began hearing cases of alleged human rights abuses. These cases included unlawful killings, disappearances, forced land acquisitions, and victimizations related to the 1977 coup. The commission has three years to conduct hearings on

more than 100 registered cases. The commission may recommend compensation and refer crimes to the attorney general for prosecution.

Authorities rarely used the inquiry board (a police complaint office), but instead established independent inquiry commissions to examine security force abuses. Private attorneys generally filed complaints with police or published them in newspapers such as *Today in Seychelles* or in opposition party newspapers such as *Seychelles Weekly* and *Le Seychellois Hebdo*. Although respect for human rights was included as a core precept in police training, police stated the course was skeletal and did not comprehensively cover human rights.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, spousal rape, and domestic abuse are criminal offenses for which conviction is punishable by up to 20 years' imprisonment. Nevertheless, rape was a problem, and the government generally did not enforce the law effectively. Authorities in general did not prioritize domestic abuse cases and police were undertrained in handling sexual assault cases. Many victims did not report rape due social stigma and a reluctance to enter into lengthy court case.

Domestic violence against women was a widespread problem. There is no specific domestic violence law, although legislation has been under consideration for many years. Officials reported that through September courts heard 356 domestic violence cases, nine more than in the same period in 2018. A gender-based violence survey published in 2018 indicated that 58 percent of women had been assaulted, mainly by their partners, with one of 10 women having been raped. There were four homicides in January, all resulting from domestic disputes. Police rarely responded to domestic disputes, although media continued to draw attention to the problem.

The Family Squad--a special police unit that addresses domestic violence and other family problems--became part of the Criminal Investigation Unit during the year. The Social Affairs Division of the Ministry of Family Affairs as well as NGOs provided counseling services to victims of rape and domestic violence. The ministry's Gender Secretariat conducted anti-gender-based violence outreach campaigns. In November 2018 the first shelter for victims of gender-based violence opened but was rarely used, due to a lack of procedure for admission and a no children policy.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment, but enforcement was rare. The penal code provides no penalty for conviction of sexual harassment, although the court may order a person accused of such conduct to “keep a bond of peace” that allows the court to assess a fine if the harasser fails to cease the harassment. In the workplace, the Employment Act states that an employer may not harass a worker.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization. For additional information, see Appendix C.

Discrimination: Although society is largely matriarchal, the law provides for the same legal status and rights for men as for women, including equal treatment under family, property, nationality, and inheritance laws. While unwed mothers traditionally bear the burden of supporting their children, the law requires fathers to support their children financially. The Employment Act, as amended in 2015, provides fathers with 10 days of paid paternity leave upon the birth of a child.

There was no officially sanctioned economic discrimination against women in employment, access to credit, equal pay for equal work, or owning or managing a business. Women were well represented in both the public and private sectors. Inheritance laws do not discriminate against women.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived by birth in the country or if born abroad from Seychellois parents, and births in the country were generally registered immediately. For additional information, see Appendix C.

Child Abuse: Although the law prohibits physical abuse of children, child abuse was a problem. According to NGOs, physical abuse of children was prevalent. The strongest public advocate for young victims was a semiautonomous agency, the National Council for Children. The law prohibits corporal punishment in schools.

Early and Forced Marriage: On October 22, the National Assembly set the minimum age for marriage at 18 for men and women and rescinded a provision that had permitted girls as young as age 15 to marry with parental consent. The president, however, had not signed the change into law by year’s end. Child marriage was not a significant problem.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The penal code and other laws define a child as a person younger than age 18 and criminalize practices related to child pornography and the commercial sexual exploitation, sale, offering, and procurement for prostitution of children. The law provides for a sentence of up to 20 years' imprisonment for conviction of producing or possessing child pornography, as well as for a first conviction of sexual assault on a child younger than age 15, and a minimum 28 years' imprisonment for a second conviction within 10 years of the first conviction. The law prescribes penalties of up to 25 years' imprisonment and a fine up to 800,000 Seychellois rupees (\$59,000) for conviction of child trafficking. There were no credible reports of commercial sexual exploitation of children or of child pornography during the year.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data/reported-cases.html>.

Anti-Semitism

The Jewish community numbered fewer than 10 persons. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Persons with Disabilities

Although the constitution and law provide for special protections for persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities, including reasonable provisions for improving quality of life, no laws address access to public buildings, transportation, or government services, and the government did not provide such services. Unlike in previous years, employed persons with disabilities were paid their salaries in full. Most children with disabilities were segregated in specialized schools. The National Council for the Disabled, a government agency under the Ministry of Family Affairs, developed work placement programs for persons with disabilities, although few employment opportunities existed.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In 2016 consensual same-sex sexual activity between men was decriminalized. Same-sex sexual activity between women was never criminalized. There were few reports of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, although activists stated discrimination and stigma were common. LGBTI persons stated the government discriminated against them when applying for social housing.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

There were no reports of violence or discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS. Unlike in previous years, foreign citizens marrying a Seychellois were not required to undergo an HIV test. An independent National AIDS Council oversees all laws, policies, and programs related to HIV and AIDS.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law allows all workers, excluding police, military, prison, and firefighting personnel, to form and join independent unions and to bargain collectively. The law confers on the registrar discretionary powers to refuse registration of unions. Strikes are illegal unless arbitration procedures are first exhausted. Legislation requires that two-thirds of union members vote for a strike in a meeting specifically called to discuss the strike, and it provides the government with the right to call for a 60-day cooling-off period before a strike starts. The law provides for the minister responsible for employment to declare a strike unlawful if its continuance would endanger “public order or the national economy.” Anyone found guilty of calling an illegal strike may be fined 5,000 Seychellois rupees (\$370) and imprisoned for up to six months.

Between 15 percent and 20 percent of the workforce was unionized. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination. It does not specifically state the rights of foreign or migrant workers to join a union. The government has the right to review and approve all collective bargaining agreements in the public and private sectors. The law also imposes compulsory arbitration in all cases where negotiating parties do not reach an agreement through collective bargaining. In the Seychelles

International Trade Zone (SITZ), the country's export processing zone, the government did not require adherence to all labor, property, tax, business, or immigration laws. The Seychelles Trade Zone Act supersedes many legal provisions of the labor, property, tax, business, and immigration laws. The Employment Tribunal handles employment disputes for private-sector employees. The Public Services Appeals Board handles employment disputes for public-sector employees, and the Financial Services Agency deals with employment disputes of workers in SITZ. The law authorizes the Ministry of Employment, Immigration, and Civil Status to establish and enforce employment terms, conditions, and benefits, and workers frequently obtained recourse against their employers through the ministry or the employment tribunal.

The government did not effectively enforce applicable laws. Penalties levied came in the form of fines and were often inadequate to deter violations. Cases involving citizens were often subject to lengthy delays and appeals, while foreigners were often deported.

The government effectively enforced the law and respected the right to participate in union activities and collective bargaining. The International Labor Organization continued to report insufficient protection against acts of interference and restrictions on collective bargaining. It urged the government to review provisions of the Industrial Relations Act concerning trade union registration and the right to strike. The law allows employers or their organizations to interfere by promoting the establishment of worker organizations under their control. Collective bargaining rarely occurred.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, but government enforcement was ineffective. Penalties levied for violations were not sufficient to deter violations. Resources, inspections, and remediation were also inadequate. There were credible reports that forced labor occurred in the fishing, agriculture, and construction sectors, where most of the country's nearly 19,000 migrants worked. Two cases of forced labor were prosecuted under the Employment Act and two cases under the 2014 Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons Act. There were several reports by the Association of Rights Information and Democracy concerning cases of forced labor, appalling living conditions, and nonpayment of salaries.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits the worst forms of child labor and states the minimum age for employment is 15, "subject to exceptions for children who are employed part time in light work prescribed by law without harm to their health, morals, or education." The law notes working in a family-owned shop as an example of "light work." The law establishes a minimum age of 15 for hazardous work and defines what constitutes hazardous work. The law, however, does not provide for children performing hazardous work to receive adequate training or protect their health and safety in accordance with international standards.

The Ministry of Employment, Immigration, and Civil Status effectively enforced child labor laws. The penalty for employing a child younger than age 15 was sufficient to deter violations. The ministry handled such cases but did not report any case requiring investigation during the year.

See the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings>.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

Labor laws and regulations prohibit discrimination based on race, age, gender, color, nationality, language, religion, disability, HIV status, sexual orientation, or political or professional association.

The government effectively enforced these laws and regulations. Penalties levied came in the form of fines and were sufficient to deter violations.

Employment discrimination generally did not occur. Women received equal pay for equal work, as well as equal access to credit, business ownership, and management positions.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The government set mandatory minimum wage rates for employees in both the private and public sectors. The minimum wages were above the poverty line.

The legal maximum workweek varied from 45 to 55 hours, depending on the economic sector. Regulations entitled each full-time worker to a one-hour break per day and a minimum of 21 days of paid annual leave, including paid annual holidays. Regulations permitted overtime up to 60 additional hours per month. The law requires premium pay for overtime work.

The Ministry of Health issues comprehensive occupational health and safety regulations that are up-to-date and appropriate for the main industries. The law allows citizen workers to remove themselves from dangerous or unhealthy work situations, to report the employer to the Health and Safety Commission of the Department of Employment, and to seek compensation without jeopardizing their employment. The law provides for the protection of foreign workers.

The government did not effectively enforce the law. Resources, inspections, and remediation were inadequate. Penalties levied were not sufficient to deter violations.

The Ministry of Health and the Department of Employment are responsible for visiting and inspecting worksites and workers' accommodations. There were 13 safety and health inspectors in the country, an insufficient number to enforce compliance with health and safety laws.

Foreign workers, primarily employed in the construction and commercial fishing sectors, did not always enjoy the same legal protections as citizens. Companies in SITZ at times paid foreign workers lower wages, delayed payment of their salaries, forced them to work longer hours, and provided them with inadequate housing, resulting in substandard conditions.

In 2017 there were 84 occupational accidents reported. These accidents occurred most frequently in the accommodation and food services sector, transport, and storage industries.