



State of Labour in Bermuda:
Alignment with International Labour Organization

2026 FLAGSHIP REPORT



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Economy and Labour



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MINISTER'S FORWARD

It is my honor to present this Flagship Report, which stands as a testament to the Government of Bermuda's unwavering commitment to the advancement and protection of our workforce. Our vision is rooted in the ideals of fairness, dignity, and opportunity for all workers, principles that guide every policy and reform we pursue. We understand that the strength of our nation depends on the wellbeing of its people, and we are dedicated to building a labor environment that empowers every individual to thrive.



Guided by the standards of the International Labour Organization, the Government continues to prioritize workers' rights, social protection, and sustainable development. Through ongoing dialogue and targeted legislative action, we have made meaningful progress in ensuring income security, expanding job opportunities, and fostering social stability. Our efforts to modernize Bermuda's labor laws reflect a deep commitment to both legislative alignment and practical implementation, ensuring that our workforce is resilient and our labor framework remains relevant in a rapidly changing world.

We recognize that the journey toward full alignment with international labor standards is ongoing. As we celebrate our achievements, we also acknowledge areas that require further development, and pledge to continue strengthening our legislative and institutional frameworks. The Government remains steadfast in its promise to nurture a fair, inclusive, and secure labor environment - one that respects fundamental rights and sets the foundation for Bermuda's continued prosperity.

The Hon. Jason Hayward JP, MP Minister of Economy and Labour

INTRODUCTION

Bermuda has made significant strides in advancing labor protections and fostering a fair, resilient workforce. Through progressive policies and targeted initiatives, the island continues to strengthen social protection measures, support job creation, and promote inclusive economic growth. By prioritizing workers' rights, social dialogue and sustainable development, Bermuda is building a labor environment marked by security, opportunity and respect for fundamental rights that align the jurisdiction more closely with international labour standards. These standards, largely informed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), provide the foundation for modern labour systems globally and serve as an important benchmark for Bermuda's legislative development.

This report provides a comprehensive assessment of Bermuda's alignment with ILO Fundamental, Governance and Technical Conventions. It considers both formal legal alignment and practical implementation, recognising that Bermuda has achieved substantial compliance through policy and institutional practice, even where conventions have not been formally extended. It also recognises that there are areas which require continued development to further strengthen legislative coherence and institutional effectiveness.



Bermuda's labour framework is underpinned by a commitment to fairness, dignity, job creation, social protection and economic resilience. As a British Overseas Territory, Bermuda is influenced by international labour conventions extended through the United Kingdom and derived from the standards set by the ILO. These standards establish global expectations for worker protection, wage fairness, and employment rights.

In recent years, the Ministry of Economy and Labour (the "Ministry") has prioritised the modernisation of Bermuda's employment and labour laws to ensure they remain relevant in an ever changing global and economic environment. This has involved not only legislative amendments, but the introduction of new frameworks designed to address long standing gaps in wage protection and employment standards.

BERMUDA'S APPROACH TO ALIGNMENT

Rather than implementing broad, sweeping reforms, the Ministry has focused on targeted legislative changes informed by consultation and international best practice.

This approach reflects the need to balance competing priorities. On the one hand, there is a clear imperative to protect workers and ensure fair treatment while on the other, Bermuda must maintain a competitive business environment that supports investment and employment. The result has been a phased reform process, with each legislative change building on the last to strengthen the overall framework.



ADVANCING JOB CREATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION, DECENT WORK AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The ILO's framework for decent work emphasises income security, fair wages and comprehensive social protection systems. Bermuda has made notable progress in these areas through a series of legislative reforms and policy initiatives. These have strengthened worker protections and enhanced labour market resilience.

MINIMUM WAGE

The introduction of a statutory minimum hourly wage rate in 2023 marked a transformative development in Bermuda's labour framework. By establishing a baseline income floor and creating a mechanism for periodic review through the Wage Commission, Bermuda is aligned with the principles underpinning international standards on wage protection and minimum wage setting, as reflected in the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention (No. 131). The subsequent increase in the minimum wage in September 2025 reflects an ongoing commitment to ensuring that wages remain responsive to economic conditions and cost of living pressures.

PROTECTION OF TIPS AND GRATUITIES

Complementing this development are strengthened protections relating to wages more broadly, including legislative measures governing the distribution of gratuities and service charges. Prior to these reforms, gratuities were not clearly defined within the Employment Act 2000, leading to inconsistencies in treatment across sectors. The amended legislation established transparency requirements and ensured that gratuities and service charges are fairly distributed to employees and that tips are not managed by employers. This represents a significant step toward aligning Bermuda with international standards on wage protection and transparency. By prohibiting improper deductions and ensuring equitable distribution, Bermuda has reinforced principles consistent with the Protection of Wages Convention (No. 95) which promotes transparency and fairness in compensation practices.



LABOUR PROTECTIONS

Bermuda has also enhanced protections in relation to termination of employment. Amendments increasing the maximum severance entitlements from 26 to 32 weeks' wages for long serving employees and removing payroll tax on redundancy payments, have significantly improved income security for workers facing job loss. These reforms align closely with the principles of the Termination of Employment Convention (No. 158), which emphasise fairness and protection for workers during periods of job transition.

More broadly, Bermuda's social protection framework, while not codified under a single legislative instrument, reflects many of the elements outlined in the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (No. 102). Provisions relating to sick leave entitlement, employment injury compensation, maternity, paternity and parental leave, and old age pensions collectively contribute to a system that supports workers throughout the life cycle. This reinforces international social protection frameworks and promotes social stability.

Although these protections are delivered through a series of statutes rather than a unified framework, they demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring income security, social stability, and decent work outcomes.

CLOSING SKILLS GAPS

The Employment Policy Convention (No. 122) requires member states to pursue an active policy designed to promote full, productive, and freely chosen employment. With this in mind, the Ministry has undertaken several workforce development initiatives, immigration policy adjustments, and labour market interventions aimed at addressing skills shortages and economic needs.

Structured programmes delivered through the Department of Workforce Development such as Bridge to Work, the Graduate Apprenticeship Programme and On the Job Training have been designed to ease the transition into the workforce. They do so by combining training with real work experience. Additionally, by introducing aligned industry training in areas such as construction, information technology, renewable energy and technical trades, the Ministry has been able to tie workforce development to identified skills shortages and sector demands.

Recognising that the domestic workforce development alone cannot immediately satisfy all of Bermuda's labour demands, the Ministry has implemented targeted and short-term immigration reform interventions to supplement the local workforce where necessary, such as within the hospitality and aviation sectors. At a strategic level, immigration policy is being used as a tactical tool to support labour market equilibrium and economic growth.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES AND RIGHTS AT WORK

Beyond training and immigration, the Ministry has implemented a range of direct labour market interventions to improve efficiency and stabilise employment conditions. The modernisation of the Bermuda Job Connect platform will enable real time tracking of employer demand, job seeker activity, and skills gaps. This represents a move from reactive to proactive labour market management, allowing the Ministry to align training initiatives with actual economic needs. The relocation of workforce development services to the Bermuda College campus reflects an effort to strengthen the transition from school to work and create a more integrated talent pipeline. Furthermore, industry summits, career fairs and employer partnerships are being used to directly connect job seekers with employment opportunities as well as to better understand employer needs.



GOVERNANCE, LABOUR ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN BERMUDA

The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work establishes core labour rights that all jurisdictions are expected to uphold. Bermuda demonstrates strong alignment with these principles, particularly in the areas of freedom of association, collective bargaining, the elimination of forced and child labour, and a safe and healthy working environment.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The enactment of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 2021 represents a significant advancement in Bermuda’s labour relations system. It strengthens union certification processes, protects bargaining rights through successor provisions, and enhances mechanisms to address unfair industrial practices. This Act reflects core ILO principles as embodied in the Freedom of Association Convention (No. 87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98), both of which are applicable to Bermuda.



CHILD LABOUR

Bermuda’s legal framework also provides strong safeguards against forced labour and child labour. Protections embedded within criminal and employment law ensure that coercive labour practices are prohibited and that young persons are protected from exploitation. Employment is structured to support education and well-being.

WORKPLACE BULLYING AND HARRSSMENT

The ILO's Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) represents an emerging global standard for ensuring dignity and safety in the workplace. The Ministry has taken significant steps in this area to promote safe and respectful workplaces. This include the requirement for employers to maintain policies addressing bullying and sexual harassment. These measures align with evolving international standards relating to dignity at work and promote safe work environments.

The effectiveness of any labour framework depends on the strength of its governance structures and institutions. Bermuda has made significant progress in this regard, particularly through the formal establishment of the Department of Labour and the strengthening of mechanisms for social dialogue.

LABOUR ADMINISTRATION

The establishment of the Department of Labour as a formal statutory body represents a major institutional milestone. It provides for a dedicated body responsible for promoting labour standards, ensuring compliance, and supporting dispute resolution. By transitioning from a smaller labour relations section to a dedicated department with defined responsibilities, the Ministry has strengthened its capacity to promote compliance, enforce labour standards, and provide guidance to employers, employees, unions and employers' associations.

The introduction of labour inspectors further enhances this capacity, enabling the Ministry to move beyond purely complaint driven enforcement to supporting proactive workplace inspections, which is key for enforcing labour protections. Labour inspectors strengthen the Ministry's capacity to enforce labour laws, ensure compliance with new policies, and monitor working conditions.

TRIPARTISM

In the ILO's publication entitled Social Dialogue and Labour Relations 2025 - Latin America and the Caribbean, social dialogue and tripartism are described as constituting "...the governance framework of the ILO for promoting social justice, fair and peaceful labour relations and decent work. They are means of achieving social and economic progress and bolster institutional resilience during times of multiple crises." The publication further iterates that "Tripartism is one of the primary forms of social dialogue. It is a founding principle and a core value of the ILO and it lies at the heart of the Organization's work." It goes on to state, "Tripartism brings together and coordinates spaces for autonomous action, while also serving as a form of cooperation that strengthens and promotes relationships aimed at achieving the parties' common and specific objectives. It does not seek to absorb or eliminate any of the parties, as

cooperation is not the same as co-optation.”

Tripartism is a collaborative approach in labour relations and policy-making involving three key parties: employers, workers (trade unions) and the government. Bermuda demonstrates strong alignment with principles of social dialogue through its established practice of tripartite engagement. The Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention (No. 144) emphasises the importance of structured dialogue between government, employers and workers in the development of labour standards. Bermuda’s system reflects this principle through the operation of consultative mechanisms such as the Labour Advisory Council, which holds quarterly tripartite meetings with representatives from the government, employers and workers’ unions and associations to discuss and progress sound labour legislation and policy. The Ministry is currently working on a campaign with the Labour Advisory Council to promote collective bargaining, freedom of association, and strengthen collective negotiation.

Regular consultations between Government, employers and trade unions facilitate collaborative decision-making and contribute to the development of balanced labour policies. These processes have been instrumental in shaping recent reforms, including minimum wage adjustments and legislative amendments. In this respect, Bermuda demonstrates strong substantive alignment with tripartite consultation principles.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, APPRENTICESHIPS AND WORKFORCE ADAPTABILITY IN BERMUDA

In response to global shifts in the nature of work, the ILO emphasises the importance of skills development, lifelong learning and effective employment services. The Ministry has demonstrated notable leadership in this area, particularly through the development of structured apprenticeship programs.

The introduction of the Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Programme in 2024 represents a significant step in addressing skills shortages in key sectors. By providing structured training and practical experience, the programme supports the development of a skilled workforce while creating opportunities for career progression.

The Graduate Apprenticeship Programme further enhances this framework by offering structured pathways for both young people and career entrants to acquire industry relevant skills. These initiatives, recognised as meeting and in some respects exceeding, ILO foundational principles, are supported by the National Certification and Apprenticeship Board, which ensures quality assurance and alignment with industry standards.

The apprenticeship scheme was assessed by the ILO and found to meet and exceed the ILO's foundational principles while the Graduate Apprenticeship Programme, created to give meaningful career ready experience to university and college graduates in areas such as hospitality and healthcare, was also assessed and approved by the ILO.

Efforts in this regard align closely with the objectives of the Employment Services Convention (No. 88), which promotes coordinated systems for job placement, training and workforce development.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

Youth employment is a central component of Bermuda's broader labour and economic policy framework. Recognising the unique challenges faced by young people in entering the workforce, the Ministry has adopted a coordinated approach that integrates training, employment services and labour market initiatives.

Bermuda's Youth Employment Strategy is delivered through a range of programme and institutional mechanisms rather than a single, codified policy instrument. This approach reflects a practical and responsive model, enabling the Ministry to adapt to evolving labour market conditions while maintaining a clear focus on improving outcomes for young people.

A key pillar of this strategy is the emphasis on facilitating the transition from education to employment. Apprenticeship programmes play a key role in this regard, providing young people with opportunities to gain practical experience while developing industry relevant skills. These programmes not only enhance employability but also address critical skills gaps within the economy.

The Department of Workforce Development serves as the primary institutional driver of youth employment initiatives through training, job placement services and career guidance. Using this integrated approach, the Department of Workforce Development helps to bridge the gap between education and employment while ensuring that young people are equipped to enter the workforce with confidence and competence.

This approach aligns closely with ILO principles relating to employment policy, skills development, and decent work. By prioritising youth employment within broader economic and labour strategies, the Ministry recognises the importance of investing in the next generation of workers. At the same time, existing labour protections ensure that young workers benefit from the same rights and safeguards as the wider workforce.

SOCIAL PROTECTION, INCLUSION AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Bermuda's labour policies are closely linked to broader economic and social objectives, reflecting a commitment to inclusive growth and long-term resilience. The Economic Development Strategy (2023–2027) (the “EDS”) emphasises diversification, sustainability and the development of key sectors aligning with ILO principles relating to just transition and sustainable development. The EDS explicitly recognises immigration as a lever for economic growth while simultaneously prioritising the development and retention of the local workforce. This dual approach is consistent with international best practice in small, open economies facing demographic and skills related constraints such as Bermuda.

Workforce development initiatives, including Personal Employment Plans and targeted training programmes, support the integration of individuals into the labour market, particularly those transitioning from financial assistance to employment. At the same time, immigration policies are structured to balance labour market needs with the protection of local employment opportunities, contributing to overall labour market stability and fairness.

The extension of international human rights instruments, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Bermuda, marked a historic step to protect rights and improve accessibility and further reinforces the island's commitment to inclusion and equality.

Together, these measures reflect a holistic approach to labour policy integrating economic, social and human rights considerations.



COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF ILO CONVENTION ALIGNMENT

Bermuda demonstrates varying levels of alignment with ILO conventions, reflecting a combination of formal extension and domestic implementation. In areas such as freedom of association, collective bargaining, wage protection, and child labour, alignment is strong and well established. In other areas, including labour inspection and employment policy, alignment is achieved in practice but remains less fully codified.

This underscores the importance of continued legislative review and development to consolidate existing practices within a coherent statutory framework.

The following table provides a consolidated overview of Bermuda’s alignment with key ILO conventions, distinguishing between those that are formally applicable and those reflected through domestic legislation.

ILO Convention	Status	Bermuda Legislative Alignment	Level of Alignment
C87 Freedom of Association	Applicable	Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 2021	High
C98 Collective Bargaining	Applicable	Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 2021	High
C29 Forced Labour	Applicable	Criminal and employment law protections	High
C105 Abolition of Forced Labour	Applicable	Criminal and labour protections	High
C100 Equal Remuneration	Not applicable	Human Rights Act 1981	Moderate
C111 Discrimination	Reflected	Human Rights Act 1981	Moderate
C81 Labour Inspection	Not applicable	Department of Labour framework	Moderate
C122 Employment Policy	Not applicable	Economic Development Strategy	Moderate
C131 Minimum Wage	Reflected	Employment (Minimum Hourly Wage Entitlement) Act 2022	High
C95 Protection of Wages	Not applicable	Employment Act 2000	High
C158 Termination of Employment	Reflected	Employment Act 2000	Moderate – High
C88 Employment Services	Not applicable	Workforce Development initiatives	Moderate – High

CLOSING

Bermuda's labour framework reflects a jurisdiction that has made substantial and measurable progress in aligning with ILO standards. Through a combination of legislative reform, institutional strengthening, and policy innovation, Bermuda has established a system that promotes fairness, protects workers' rights and supports economic resilience while maintaining a high level of functional compliance with many ILO conventions.

While certain gaps remain, these are largely the result of evolving legislative structures rather than systemic deficiencies. With targeted reforms in key areas, Bermuda is well positioned to achieve full alignment.





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