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CHILD LABOUR

GLOBAL ESTIMATES 2024, TRENDS AND THE ROAD FORWARD

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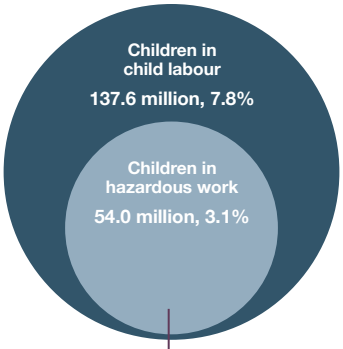

Hazardous work occurs among children of all ages

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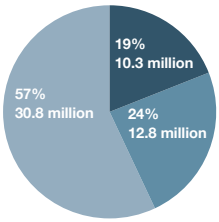
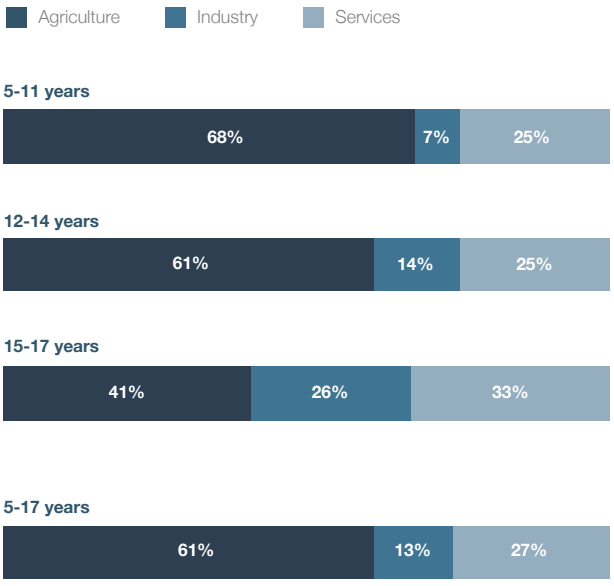


- 5-11 years
- 12-14 years
- 15-17 years

Notes: For statistical measurement, hazardous work includes work in designated hazardous industries and/or hazardous occupations and/or work performed for 43 or more hours per week. Due to rounding, the number of children in hazardous work by age does not add up to the global total.

Most child labour is in agriculture, although the relative share diminishes as children grow older

Percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by age and branch of economic activity



Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not add up to 100 per cent.

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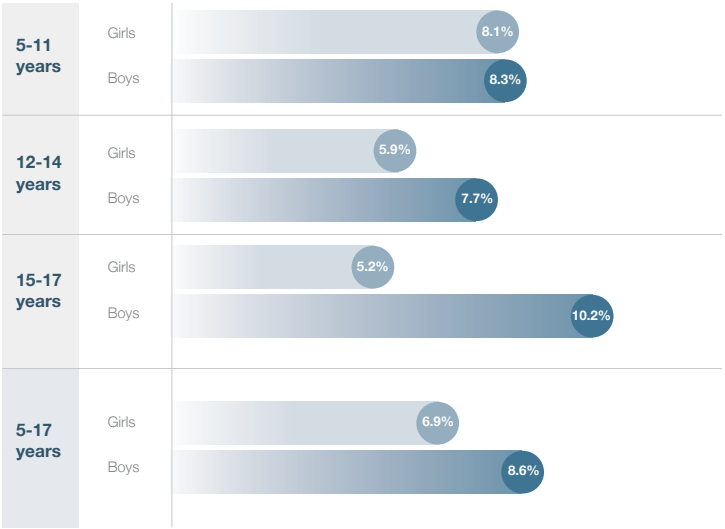

Factoring in household chores results in a slightly larger share of girls than boys in child labour

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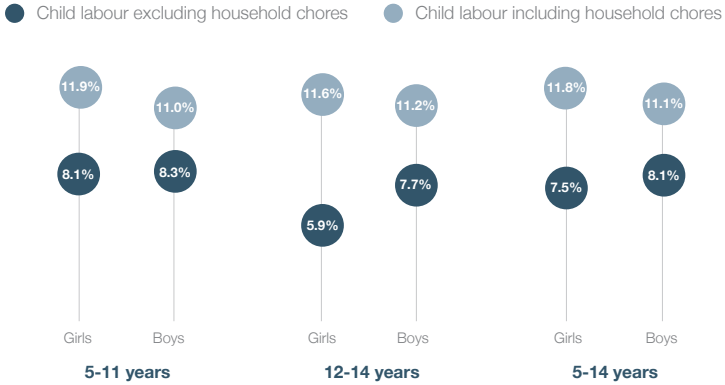

Child labour dramatically increases the likelihood that a child will be denied the chance to go to school

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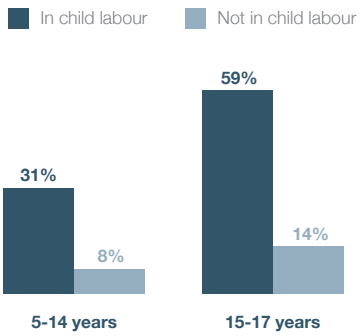
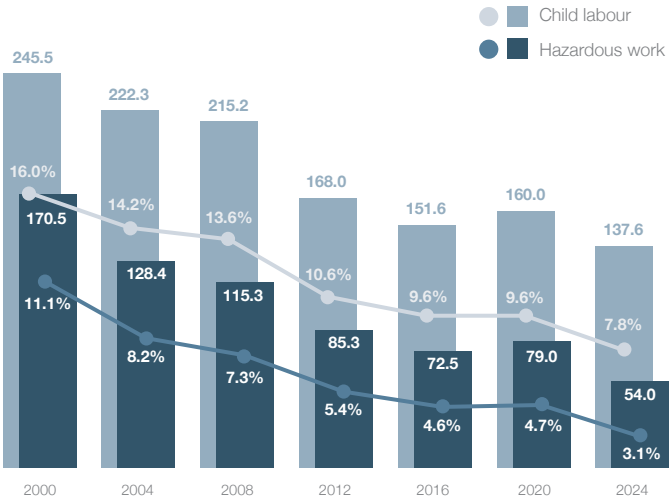


Trends and projections

Over the last four years, the world has returned to a path of progress to end child labour

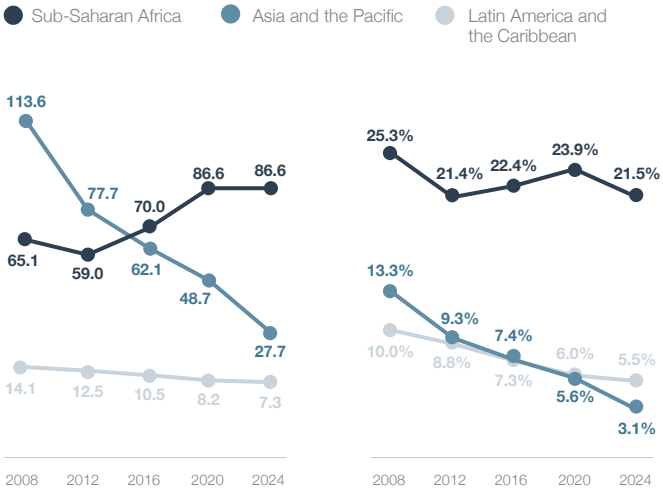
Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour and hazardous work



Note: For statistical measurement, hazardous work includes work in designated hazardous industries and/or hazardous occupations and/or work performed for 43 or more hours per week.

All regions have seen some progress against child labour since 2020

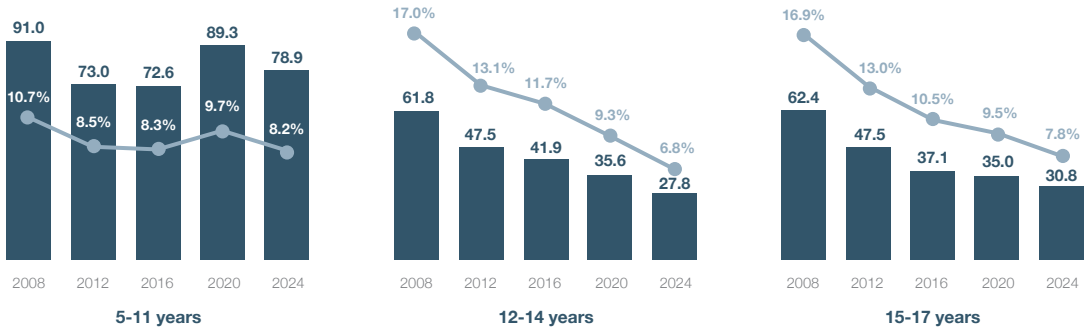
Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by ILO region



Notes: These figures show regional groupings used for ILO reporting. Comparable historical data prior to 2016 were not available for other regions.

Progress against child labour has been slower and more uneven among younger children

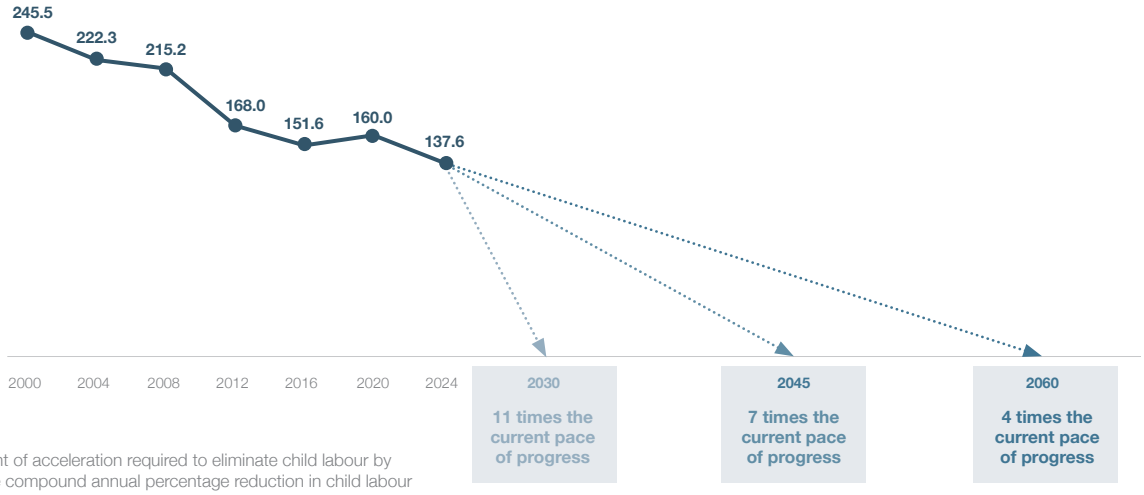
Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by age



Note: Due to rounding, the number of children in child labour by age in 2024 does not add up to the global total.

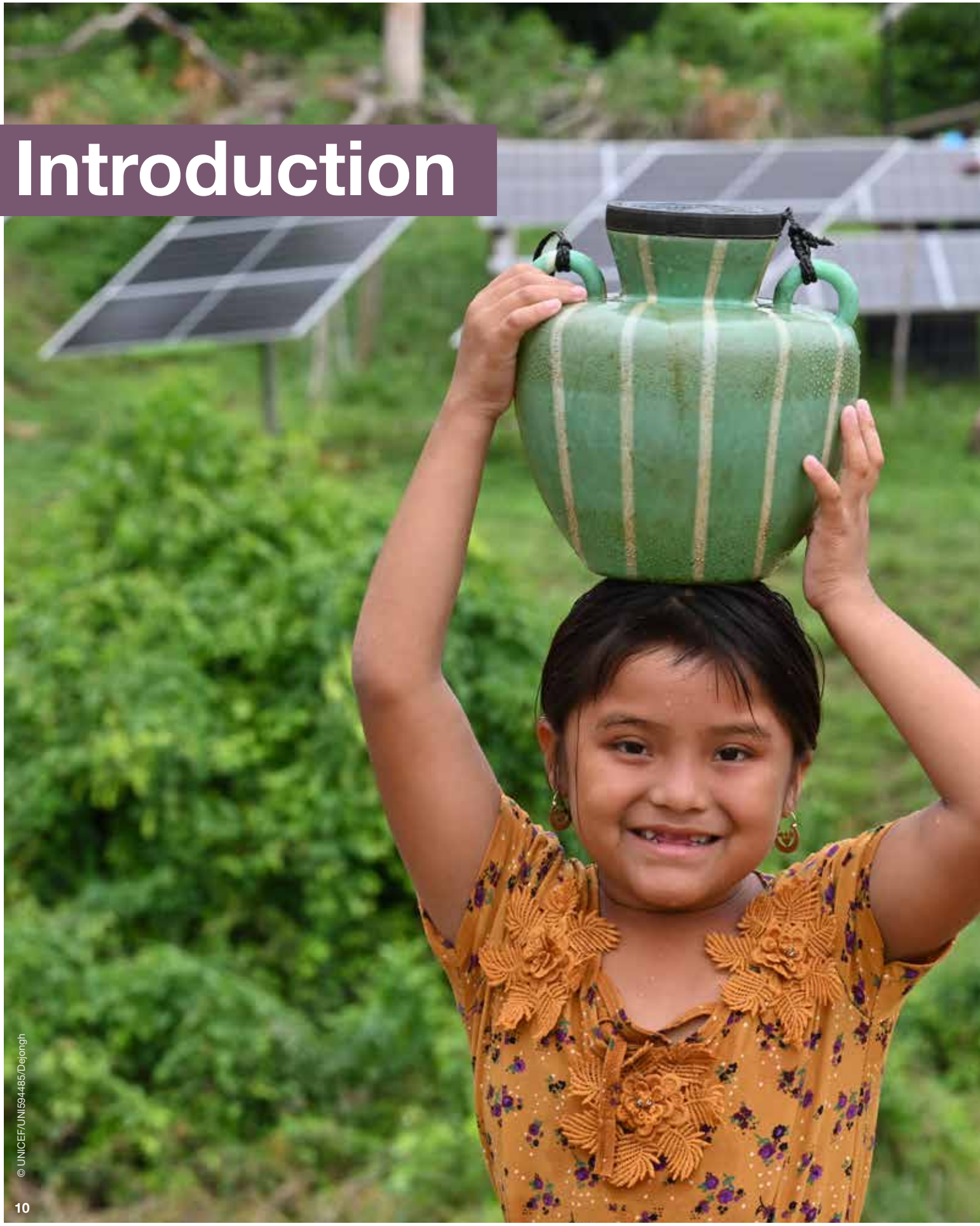
Despite recent gains, the fight against child labour will continue for decades into the future without rapidly accelerating progress

Number (in millions) of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour and amount of acceleration required to eliminate child labour by different years



Note: These scenarios depict the amount of acceleration required to eliminate child labour by different years in the future based on the compound annual percentage reduction in child labour implied by the difference between prevalence levels in 2020 and 2024.

Introduction



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Freedom from child labour is a fundamental human right. It is enshrined in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), the ILO fundamental Conventions[1] and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Together, these legal instruments embody a global consensus: No child should be engaged in work that harms his or her health, development or future prospects. Realizing this fundamental right is both a legal imperative and a foundation for more just, inclusive societies, beginning with their youngest, most vulnerable members.

In 2015, the world made a promise to end child labour by 2025 in Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). That timeline has now come to an end. But child labour has not. Today, nearly 138 million children remain in child labour worldwide.

While the elimination of child labour remains an unfinished task, there is some welcome news. After a concerning rise in child labour captured by the global estimates for 2020, a feared further deterioration in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has not materialized, and the world has succeeded in returning to a path of progress. Today, there are more than 20 million fewer children in child labour than in 2020. And there are over 100 million fewer children in child labour today than in 2000, even as the child population increased by 230 million over the same period.[2]

Yet, a closer look at the current situation and trends over time points to a number of particular concerns. Hazardous work continues to constitute a substantial share of child labour, even among children below the legal working age. The last four years saw an encouraging drop in child labour among the youngest children. But this has not undone past setbacks, and the overall number of those aged 5 to 11 years in child labour remains higher than in 2012. Sub-Saharan Africa has made laudable strides in reducing the prevalence of child labour, but given its rapidly growing child population, the number of children in child labour has not decreased. In the mounting number of countries affected by crisis and fragility, the rate of child labour is more than double the global average.

This publication provides an overview of these child labour patterns and trends. It also describes the evolving profile of children in child labour, outlines the nature of child labour and where it is concentrated and explores the impact of child labour on schooling. The report concludes with a discussion of the road ahead.[3]

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Statistical definitions

Three main international human and labour rights standards – the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the ILO Minimum Age for Admission to Employment Convention (No. 138) and the universally ratified ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) – set legal boundaries for child labour and provide grounds for national and international actions to end it. In 2008, the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) approved a resolution on child labour statistics that translates these legal standards into statistical terms for measurement purposes.[4] The statistical concepts and definitions underpinning the 2024 estimates are consistent with this resolution.

Child labour comprises work that children are too young to perform and/or work that, by its nature or circumstances, is likely to harm children's health, safety or morals. In more technical terms, child labour encompasses work performed by children in any type of employment, with two important exceptions: permitted light work for children within the age range specified for light work; and work that is not classified as among the worst forms of child labour, particularly as hazardous work, for children above the general minimum working age. A broader statistical definition includes hazardous unpaid household services, commonly referred to as hazardous household chores.

Employment encompasses any form of market production and certain types of non-market production (principally of goods such as agricultural produce for own use). Employment includes work in both the formal and informal economy, inside and outside family settings, for pay or profit (cash or in-kind, part-time or full-time) and domestic work outside the child's own household for an employer (paid or unpaid).

The concept of **permitted light work** stems from Article 7 of ILO Convention No. 138, which states that national laws or regulations may permit the

employment or work of persons from 13 years of age (or 12 years in countries that have specified the general minimum working age as 14 years) in light work that is not likely to harm their health or development. It should also not limit school attendance, participation in vocational orientation or training programmes, or the capacity to benefit from instruction. For statistical measurement, light work in this report includes employment in non-hazardous work for less than 14 hours a week performed by children aged 12 to 14 years.

The **worst forms of child labour** comprise categories set out in Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182. These entail all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; child commercial sexual exploitation; the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties; and work that, by its nature or circumstances, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Hazardous work refers to work that, by its nature or circumstances, is likely to harm children's health, safety or morals. When a country ratifies ILO Convention No. 138 and ILO Convention No. 182, it commits to determining its own hazardous work list. While the list is decided by individual countries after consultation with organizations of employers and workers, the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190), supplementing ILO Convention No. 182, urges consideration of work that exposes children to physical, emotional or sexual abuse; work underground, underwater, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or that involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads; work in an unhealthy environment that may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels or vibrations damaging to their health; and work under particularly difficult conditions, such as for long hours or during the night, or that does not allow returning home each day. For statistical measurement, in this report, hazardous work includes that in designated hazardous industries and/or hazardous occupations and/or that entails 43 hours or more per week.

Hazardous work by children is often treated as a proxy category for the worst forms of child labour for two reasons. First, reliable national data on the worst forms of child labour, other than hazardous work, are still difficult to find. Second, children in hazardous work account for the overwhelming majority of those in the worst forms of child labour.

Unpaid household services or household chores refer to services that children provide without pay for their own households. These activities include caring for household members, cleaning and minor household repairs, cooking and serving meals, washing and ironing clothes, and transporting or accompanying family members to and from work and school. In more technical terms, these tasks constitute a 'non-economic' form of production and are excluded from consideration in the United Nations System of National Accounts, the internationally agreed-upon guidelines for measuring national economic activity.

Hazardous unpaid household services refer to services children provide without pay for their own households, involving long hours, an unhealthy environment, unsafe equipment or heavy loads and/or dangerous locations. For statistical measurement, where household chores are included in the calculation of child labour in this report, hazardous household chores refer to those performed by children below the general minimum working age (below 15) for 21 hours or more per week.[5] This broader definition is only used in discussing differences in child labour by sex.

Current levels and trends

GLOBAL LEVELS AND TRENDS

Nearly 138 million children – 59 million girls and 78 million boys[6] – are in child labour, accounting for almost 8 per cent of all children globally.[7] Fifty-four million children, or around 4 in 10 of those in child labour, are in hazardous work likely to harm their health, safety or morals.

The global fight against child labour is far from over. With the adoption of the SDGs, the international community committed to ending child labour by 2025. It is now clear that the world has fallen short of this ambitious target. And we know that the persistence of child labour also threatens progress on multiple other SDGs set by the international community. Child labour keeps children out of school (SDG 4), fuelling intergenerational cycles of poverty (SDG 1) and inequality (SDG 10). It weakens economic growth (SDG 8) by limiting workforce productivity and innovation. It harms health and well-being (SDG 3), both in childhood and later life. In supply chains, child labour undermines efforts towards ethical and sustainable production (SDG 12), posing challenges for businesses and consumers alike. Tackling child labour is not just a legal and ethical imperative – it is essential for achieving sustainable development and unlocking long-term economic prosperity.

Yet a return to global progress in ending child labour is also evident. The overall number of children in child labour declined by more than 20 million, and the number in hazardous work by even more – 25 million – from 2020 to 2024. Child labour prevalence fell by nearly 2 percentage points over the same period. This progress is very welcome news, especially in light of the rise in the number of children in child labour in the prior four-year period, from 2016 to 2020. The recent progress comes in the wake of concerns that the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting socio-economic crisis would lead to further deterioration. Another encouraging sign is that recent progress has been widespread, although children in some parts of the world still face greater risks of being in child labour (*see Box 1*).

The fall in child labour over the last four years brings the total reduction in the number of children in child labour to over 100 million since 2000. The decrease occurred amid an overall increase in the global population of children aged 5 to 17 years during the same period.

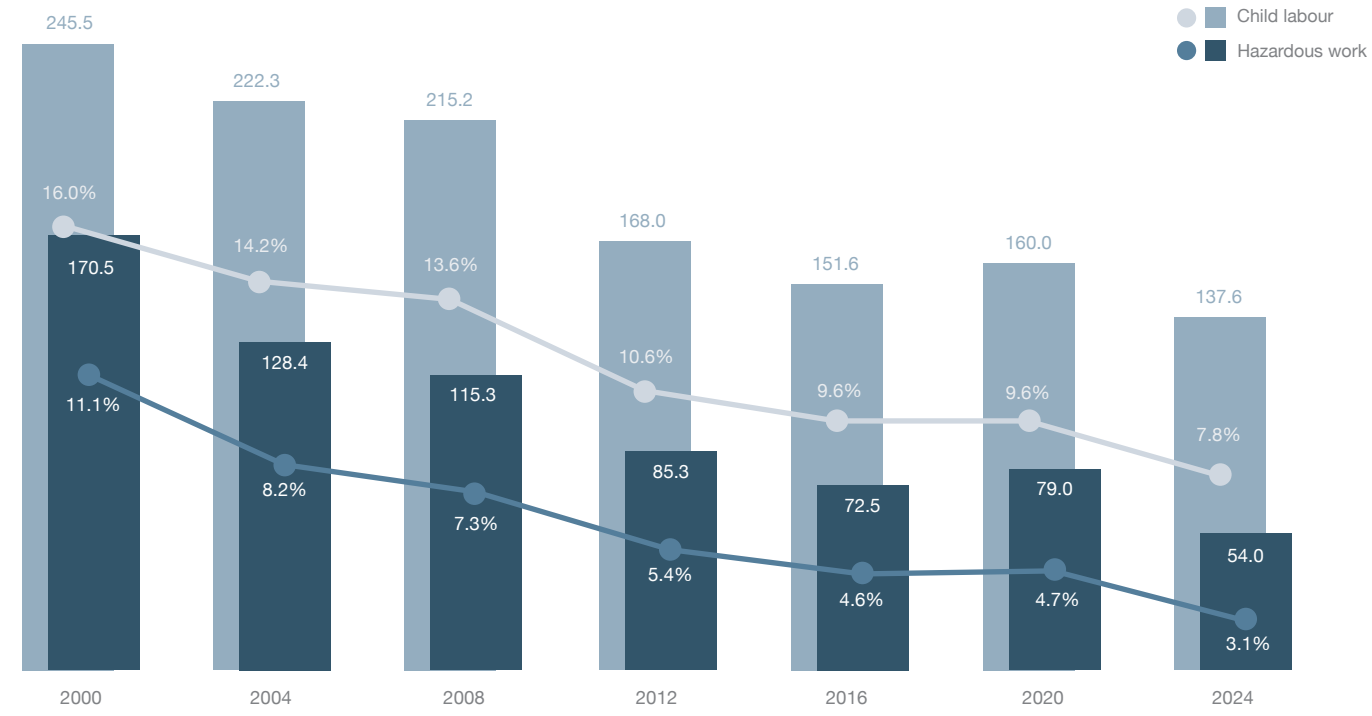
The unfolding progress is encouraging but still far too slow. Meeting SDG Target 8.7 by 2030, the endpoint for the SDGs, would require a pace of change that is 11 times faster than it has been in the last four years. To meet the target by 2045, the pace must accelerate seven times. Even pushing the endpoint to 2060 would still require quadrupling the current pace. The message is stark: Only a massive increase in the speed and scale of action will bring the elimination of child labour within reach.

Child labour still affects nearly 138 million children worldwide; 54 million of whom are engaged in hazardous work

Fig 1. Number and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour and hazardous work

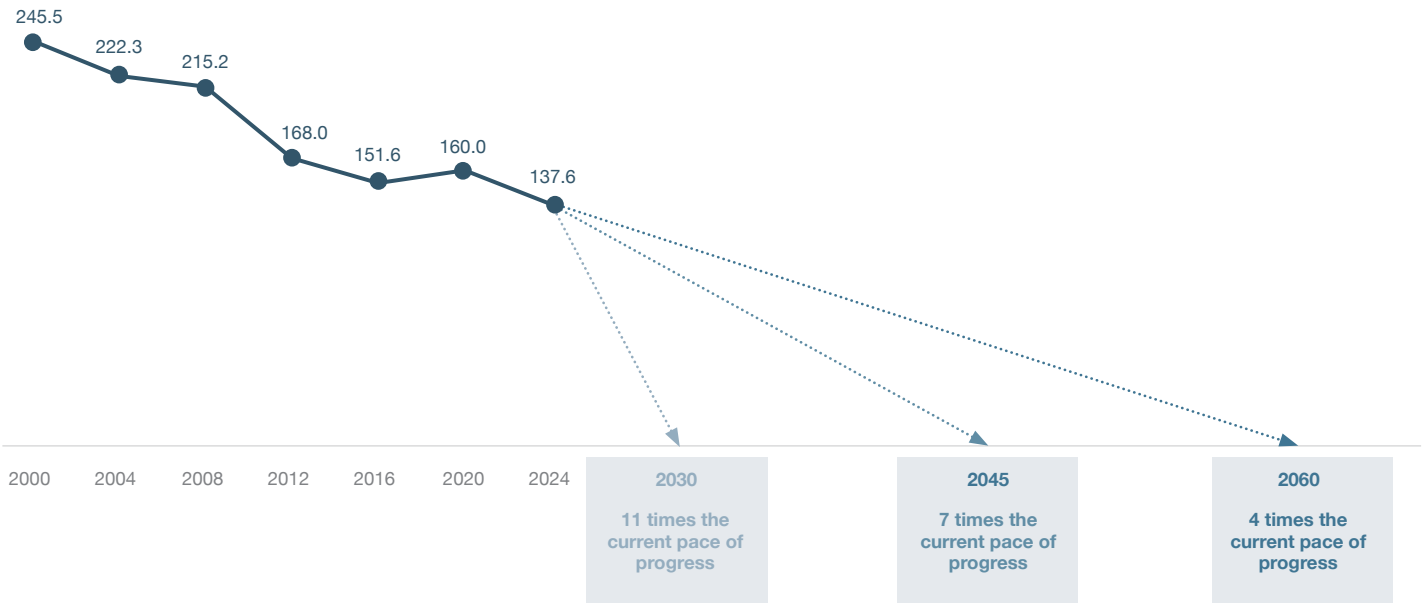
Over the last four years, the world has returned to a path of progress to end child labour

Fig 2. Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour and hazardous work



Despite recent gains, the fight against child labour will continue for decades into the future without rapidly accelerating progress

Fig 3. Number (in millions) of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour and amount of acceleration required to eliminate child labour by different years



Note: See the Annex for details on projection methods.

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Box 1 Where is child labour most common?

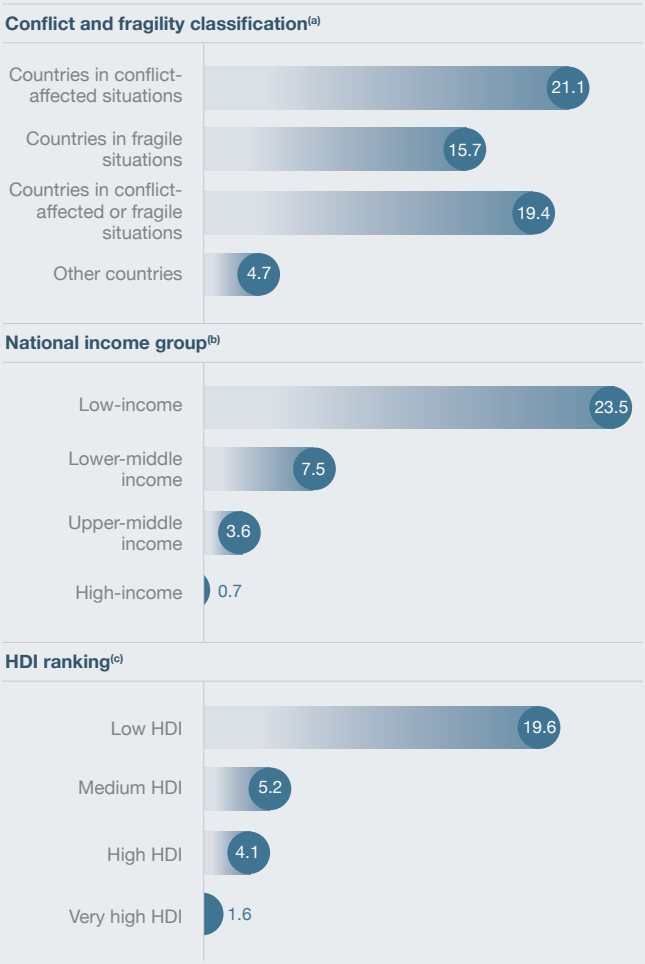
In conflict zones, child labour prevalence reaches 21 per cent, more than four times higher than in countries that are not conflict-affected or in fragile situations (5 per cent). Even in countries without active conflicts but characterized by weak governance or other sources of institutional or social fragility, child labour remains elevated at 16 per cent.

Economic conditions further shape child labour patterns. As national income rises, child labour sharply declines. Nearly one fourth of all children in low-income countries are in child labour, compared to less than 1 per cent in high-income countries – a more than 30-fold difference. However, this does not mean that most child labour occurs in low-income countries. On the contrary, due to the larger underlying population, many more children are in child labour in lower-middle- and upper-middle-income countries (78.4 million) than in low-income countries (57.7 million).

Lower human development corresponds to higher levels of child labour. In countries with low scores on the Human Development Index (HDI), a composite measure indicating social and economic development, child labour prevalence reaches 20 per cent. In nations with very high scores on the index, child labour prevalence is just 2 per cent.

While these patterns provide valuable insights, correlation does not imply causation. Child labour is strongly associated with conflict, fragility, poverty and low human development. But relationships among these factors are complex and often shaped by additional underlying causes. Even so, the evidence points to how child labour consistently declines as countries grow more stable, prosperous and equitable.

Fig 4. Percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by conflict and fragility classification, national income group and HDI ranking



Notes: (a) According to the Revised Classification of Fragility and Conflict Situations for World Bank Group Engagement, fragile countries are defined as those with one or more of the following: i) the weakest institutional and policy environments (as measured using 16 criteria grouped into four clusters: economic management, structural policies, policies for social inclusion and equity, and public sector management and institutions); ii) the presence of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, since this reflects a decision by the international community that a significant investment is needed to maintain peace and stability; or iii) the flight across borders of 2,000 or more people per 100,000, who are internationally regarded as refugees in need of international protection, as this signals a major political or security crisis. Countries satisfying these criteria and also engaged in medium- or high-intensity conflicts are not considered, since they have gone beyond fragility. (b) Low-income economies are defined as those with a GNI per capita of $1,145 or less in 2023; lower-middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between $1,146 and $4,515; upper-middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between $4,516 and $14,005; high-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of more than $14,005. Calculations use the World Bank Atlas method. (c) Countries are grouped into four categories according to the 2022 HDI, which links measures of education, health and income. The ranges are: very high (0.800 or greater), high (0.700 to 0.799), medium (0.550 to 0.699) and low (less than 0.550).

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REGIONAL LEVELS AND TRENDS[8]

Large regional variations persist in the numbers and shares of children in child labour. Sub-Saharan Africa has by far the largest number of children in child labour – 87 million, or nearly two thirds of the global total. Central and Southern Asia ranks second, at 17 million. Sub-Saharan Africa also continues to have the highest child labour prevalence at 22 per cent, followed by Northern Africa and Western Asia at a distant second with 8 per cent.

The recent progress against child labour was broad-based. All regions benefited. Progress was greatest in Asia and the Pacific, which nearly halved child labour prevalence since 2020 while the number of children in child labour fell by 43 per cent. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there was an 8 per cent relative decline in prevalence and an 11 per cent drop in absolute numbers. After eight years in which child labour prevalence trended slightly upwards, sub-Saharan Africa reversed course, with prevalence falling by 10 per cent since 2020, reaching the rate recorded in 2012. Given population growth in the region, however, the total number of children in child labour has remained unchanged over the last four years.

Most regions could see the near or total elimination of child labour in the coming decades, leaving the burden of child labour almost entirely in sub-Saharan Africa. If prevalence levels remain as they are today, the number of children in child labour in sub-Saharan Africa could continue to grow, surpassing 100 million after 2030, stemming from projected population growth. Due to shrinking child populations, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean could see fewer numbers of children in child labour, even with steady prevalence levels. If sub-Saharan Africa can continue diminishing prevalence at the current pace, it could nearly halve the number of children in child labour by 2060.

Replicating its fastest historical progress, it could see 59 million fewer children in child labour by 2060. If the recent significant pace of progress in Asia and the Pacific continues, it could result in the total elimination of child labour by 2050. The relatively slower progress in Latin America and the Caribbean suggests that the region will need to greatly accelerate progress to come close to elimination by 2060.

Starkly different demographic trajectories underlie regional child labour trends. In sub-Saharan Africa, recent progress in reducing child labour prevalence took place even as the population of children continued to grow. This demographic dynamic strains services – especially for education and social protection – that are critical to combating child labour. For example, an estimated 80 million additional school places will be needed between 2024 and 2050 to keep pace with the rising number of primary school-aged children.[9] Having more dependent children also amplifies economic pressure on families, raising the risk of child labour, especially when household incomes are low and unstable. Looking ahead, as fertility rates begin to decline in sub-Saharan Africa and the region advances in its demographic transition, the adult workforce will become a growing share of the population. If harnessed through investments in education and decent work opportunities, this shift could boost economic growth, creating room for a demographic dividend and reducing child labour pressures over time.

In Asia and the Pacific and in Latin America and the Caribbean, the recent absolute decline in child labour mirrors a downward trend in the child population. A sharp drop in fertility and associated demographic transitions have already reduced needs for education and other services, making it easier to extend coverage and support efforts to eliminate child labour.

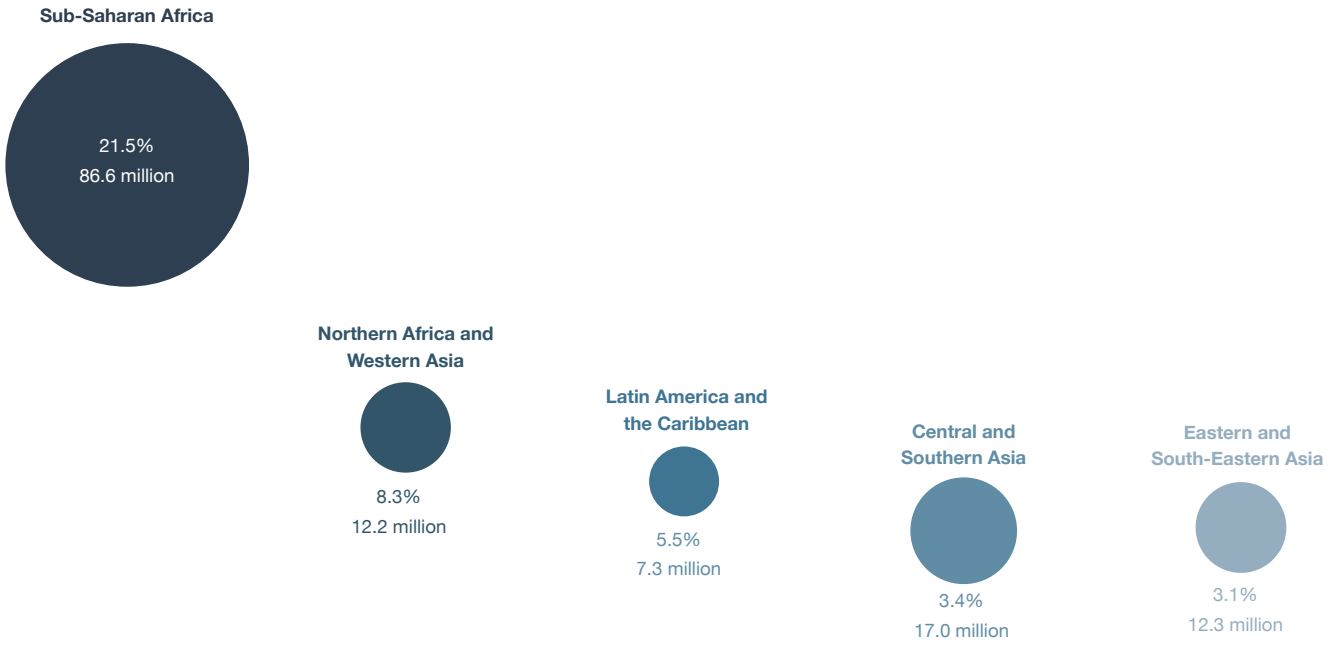
Regional differences in economic performance since 2000 have influenced child labour trends. In Asia and the Pacific, rapidly declining child labour occurred as a number of economies surged ahead. Regional gross domestic product (GDP) per capita nearly tripled, from about $6,200 in 2000 to nearly $17,000 by 2024. Latin America and the Caribbean experienced more modest growth but from a considerably higher starting point, reaching a GDP per capita of nearly $20,000 by 2024. This put the region in the World Bank's high-income category.[10] Sub-Saharan Africa also experienced important income gains but from a much lower starting point and at a slower pace, leading to a widening income gap relative to the other regions.

Economic growth helped drive major progress in poverty reduction across all three regions. The trend was most pronounced in Asia and the Pacific, with an over 80 per cent drop in poverty rates from 2008 to 2024. Sub-Saharan Africa saw a smaller but nonetheless significant 20 per cent decline in poverty rates over the same period. It started from a much higher baseline, leaving its poverty rate still substantially above those of the other regions.

Schooling and social protection are two of the most effective defences against child labour; all three regions have made strides in both. Primary school completion rates, which reflect school access and retention, have climbed steadily. Yet stark regional gaps remain. By 2024, fewer than 6 per cent of children failed to complete primary school in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Asia and the Pacific, compared to roughly 30 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. Social protection coverage for children – strongly linked to reductions in child labour[11] – has also improved, although progress has been uneven, and no region is close to universal coverage. In Latin America and the Caribbean, longstanding investments have raised coverage from 33 per cent in 2009 to 44 per cent in 2023. Asia and the Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa roughly doubled their coverage rates over the same period but from much lower starting points. They remain even further from universal coverage.

Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest prevalence and largest number of children in child labour

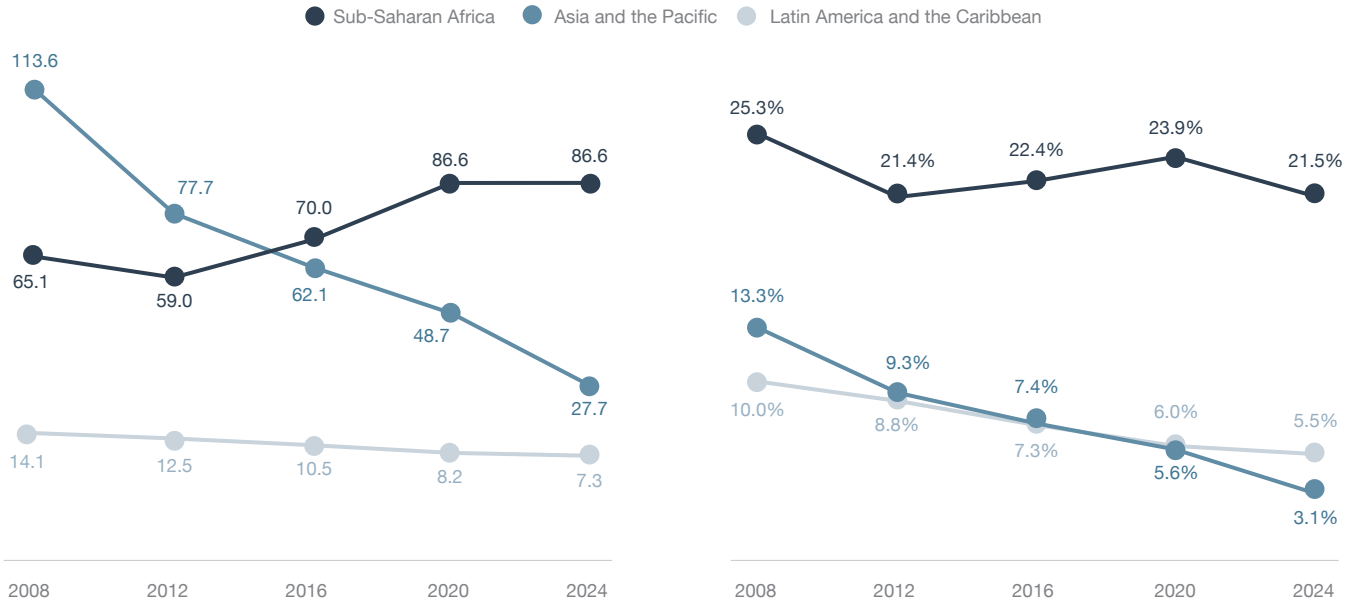
Fig 5. Percentage and number (in millions) of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by SDG region



Notes: This figure shows regional groupings used for SDG reporting. Oceania is omitted due to low data coverage. For this reason, region-specific numbers do not add up to the global total.

All regions have seen some progress against child labour since 2020

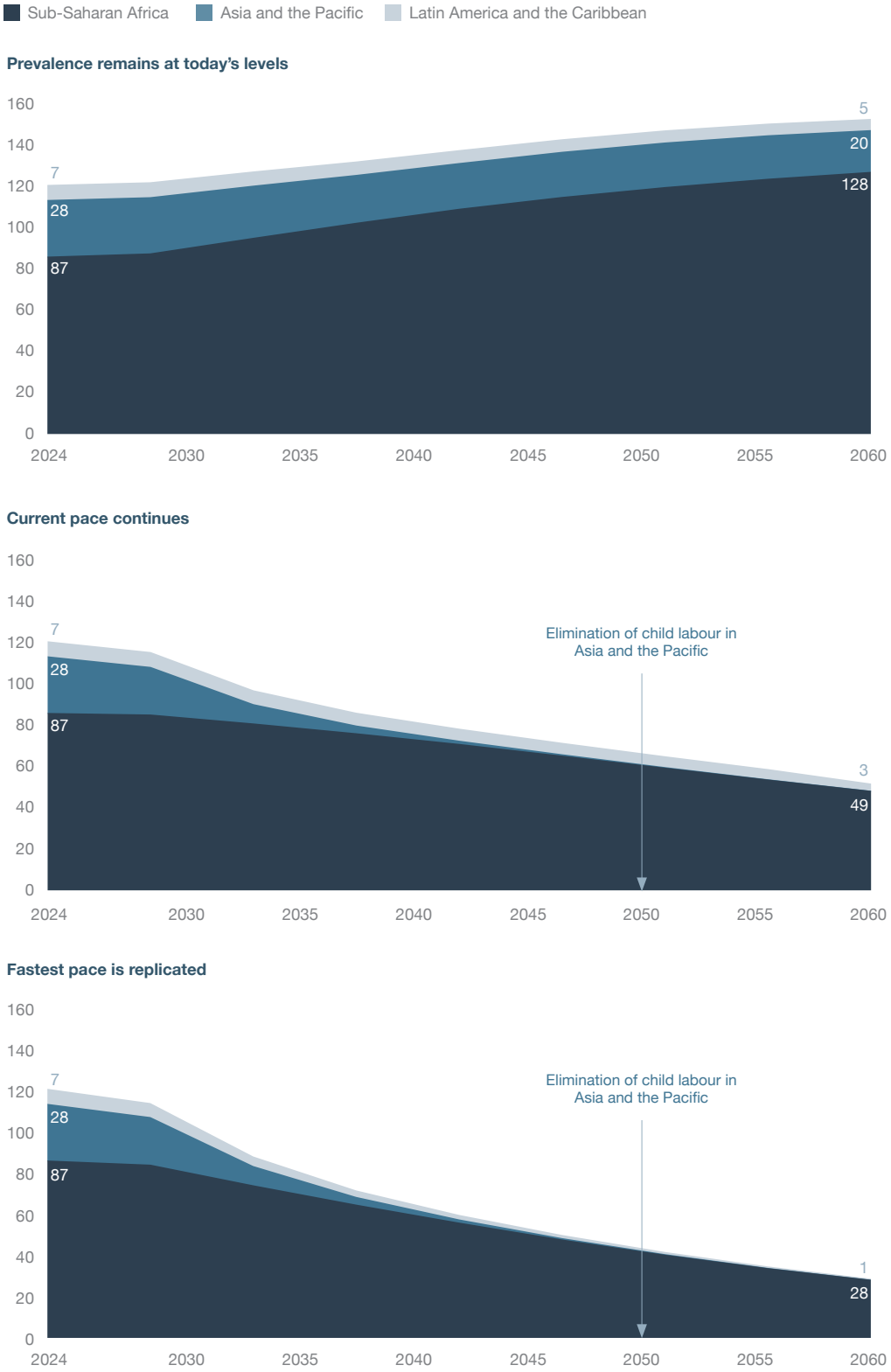
Fig 6. Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 in child labour, by ILO region



Notes: These figures show regional groupings used for ILO reporting. Comparable historical data prior to 2016 were not available for other regions.

Child labour could become even more heavily concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa in the coming decades

Fig 7. Number (in millions) of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, observed and projected, by ILO region



How to interpret the regional projections

Regional projection scenarios build on existing trends. They show the expected numbers of children in child labour in the future if different conditions are met.

Prevalence remains at today's levels:
This scenario shows what could happen if regional prevalence remains as it is today (i.e., at the same level as in 2024). It illustrates the impact of demographic trends with no further progress in reducing child labour prevalence.

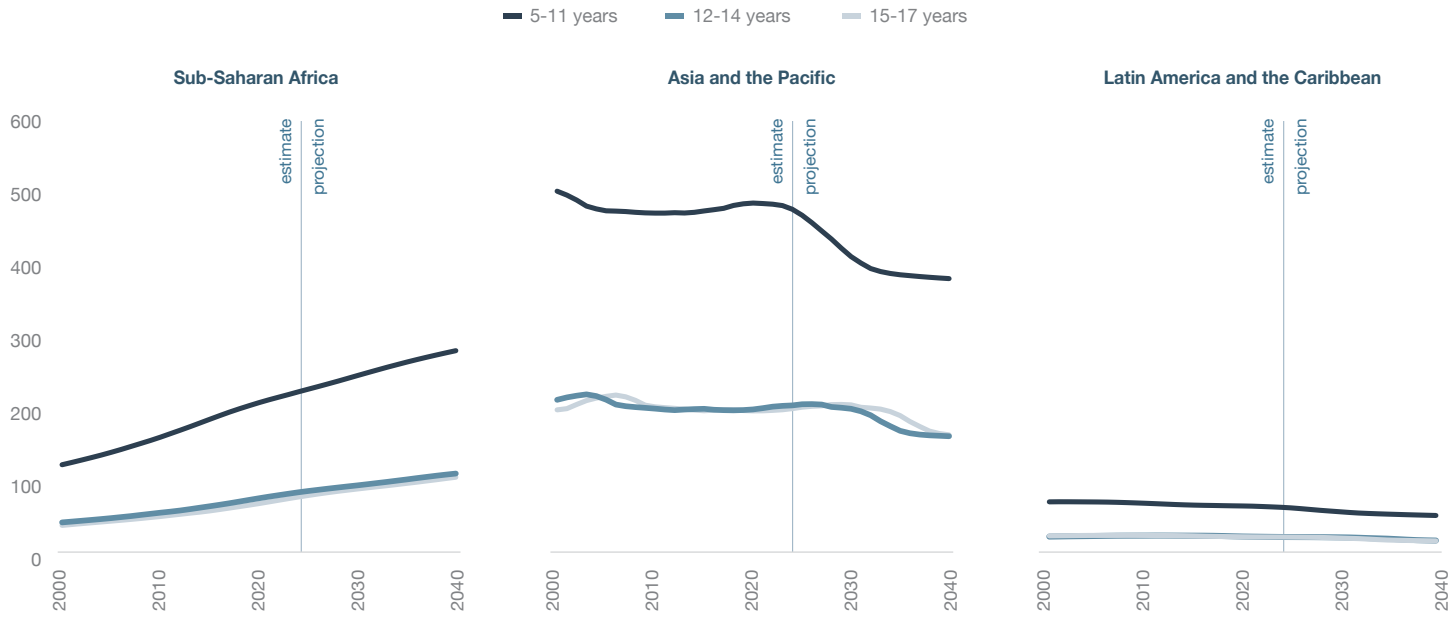
The current pace continues:
This scenario points to what could happen if the region continues to reduce child labour at the same pace observed from 2020 to 2024.

The fastest pace is replicated:
This scenario indicates what could happen if the region replicates the fastest historical pace of child labour reduction achieved in that region in any previous four-year period since 2008.

Notes: The regional numbers do not add up to the global total because they are calculated on the basis of each region's pace of change, which differs by region. For Asia and the Pacific, the scenarios depicting 'current pace continues' and 'fastest pace is replicated' are the same because the current pace is the fastest historical pace for the region.

Demographic patterns diverge sharply across regions

Fig 8. Number (in millions) of children aged 5 to 17 years, by ILO region



Notes: These figures show regional groupings used for ILO reporting. Based on data from the United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2024.*

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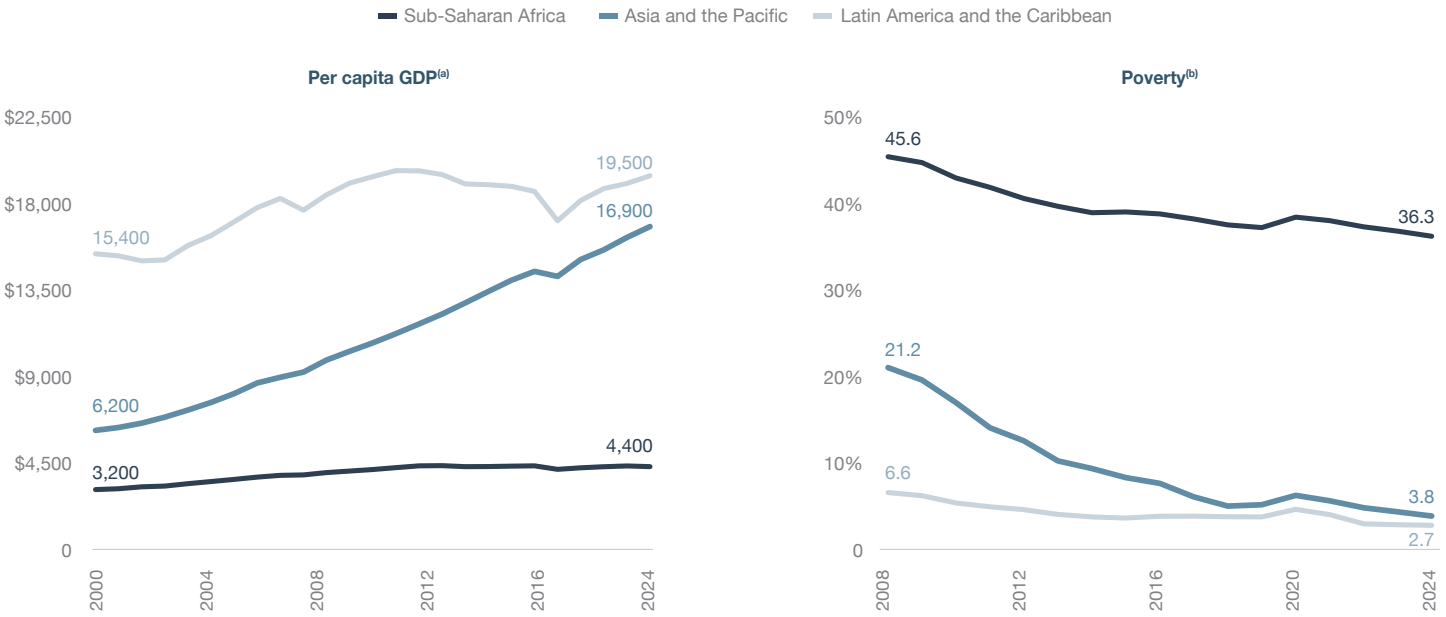
Income is growing and poverty is falling in all regions, but at different rates

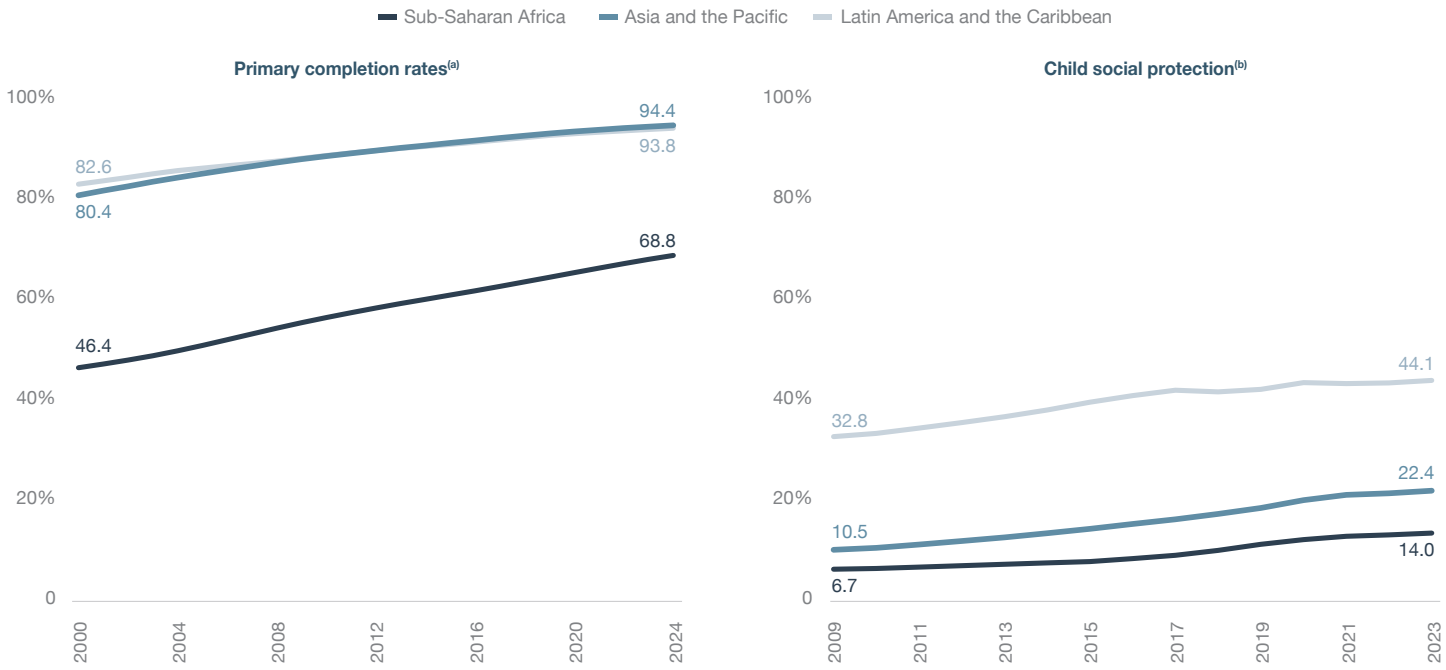
Fig 9. Trends in economic performance indicators, by ILO region



Notes: These figures show regional groupings used for ILO reporting. (a) Based on the World Bank's World Development Indicators. (b) Based on the World Bank's Poverty and Inequality Platform, 2025. Poverty here is defined as the percentage of individuals living below the $2.15-a-day poverty line.

There have been significant strides in expanding schooling and child social protection, but coverage gaps remain

Fig 10. Trends in primary completion rates and child social protection, by ILO region



Notes: These figures show regional groupings used for ILO reporting. (a) Based on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, UIS.Stat Bulk Data Download Service. The primary completion rate is the percentage of children who have completed the last grade of primary school, measured as a percentage of children who are 3 to 5 years older than the intended completion age. (b) Based on the International Labour Organization, ILO Modelled Estimates (ILOEST database). Child social protection is calculated as the percentage of children covered by social protection programmes.

Profile of children in child labour

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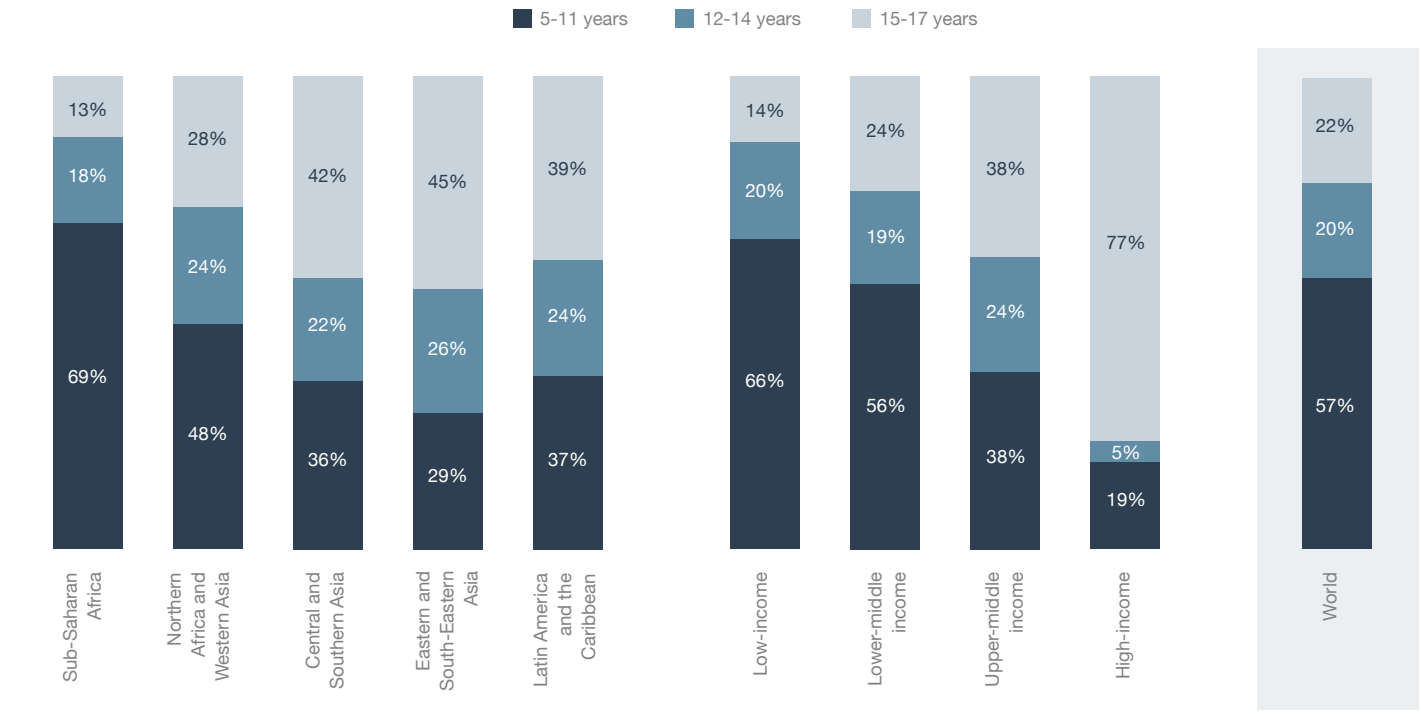
PROFILE BY AGE

Young children account for the largest share of children in child labour. Of nearly 138 million children in child labour worldwide, 79 million (57 per cent) are just 5 to 11 years old. The rest are split almost evenly between those aged 12 to 14 years and 15 to 17 years. Regional variations in the age profile are significant. In sub-Saharan Africa, more than two thirds of children in child labour are under age 12. This pattern stands in stark contrast to Central and Southern Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, where children above the minimum working age make up the bulk of those in child labour.

Child labour prevalence fell among all ages from 2020 to 2024. Progress among children aged 5 to 11 years is especially noteworthy, after a worrying rise from 2016 to 2020. Still, recent progress is not enough to fully reverse the previous setback. The number of young children in child labour remains higher today than in 2012 and 2016. Progress among younger children has clearly been slower and more uneven than for older children, leading to an increasing concentration of child labour among the youngest. In 2008, 5- to 11-year-olds made up 42 per cent of children in child labour; by 2024, their share had climbed to 57 per cent.

The age composition of child labour varies considerably across regions and national income groups

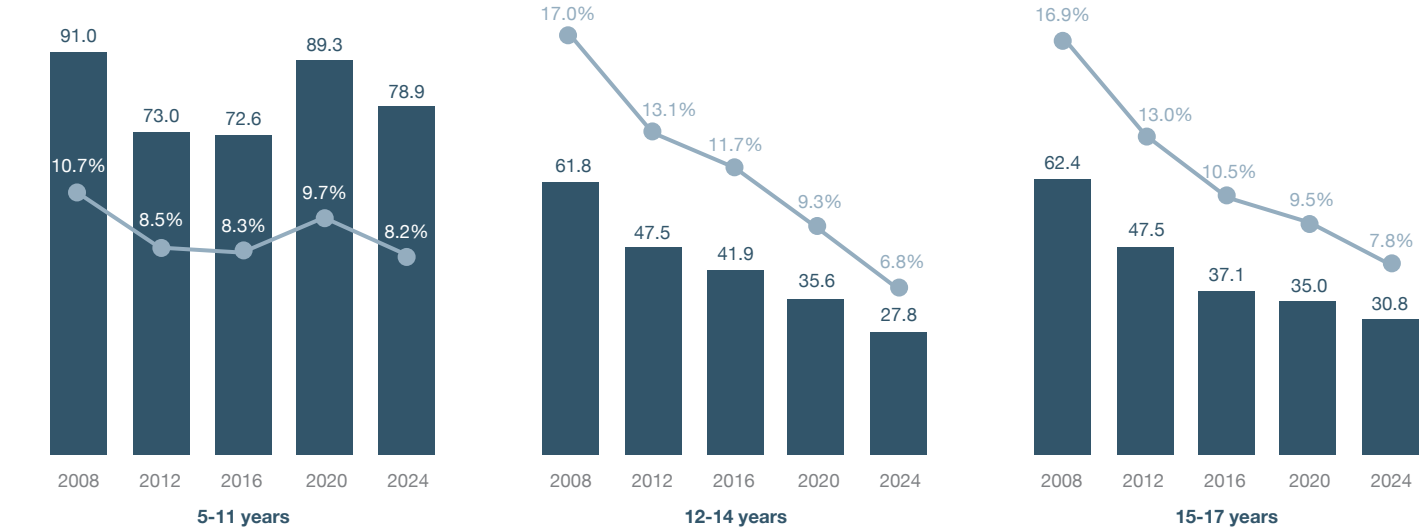
Fig 11. Percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by age, SDG region and national income group



Notes: These figures show regional groupings used for ILO reporting. Some totals do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Progress against child labour has been slower and more uneven among younger children

Fig 12. Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 in child labour, by age



Note: The number of children in child labour by age in 2024 does not add up to the global total due to rounding.

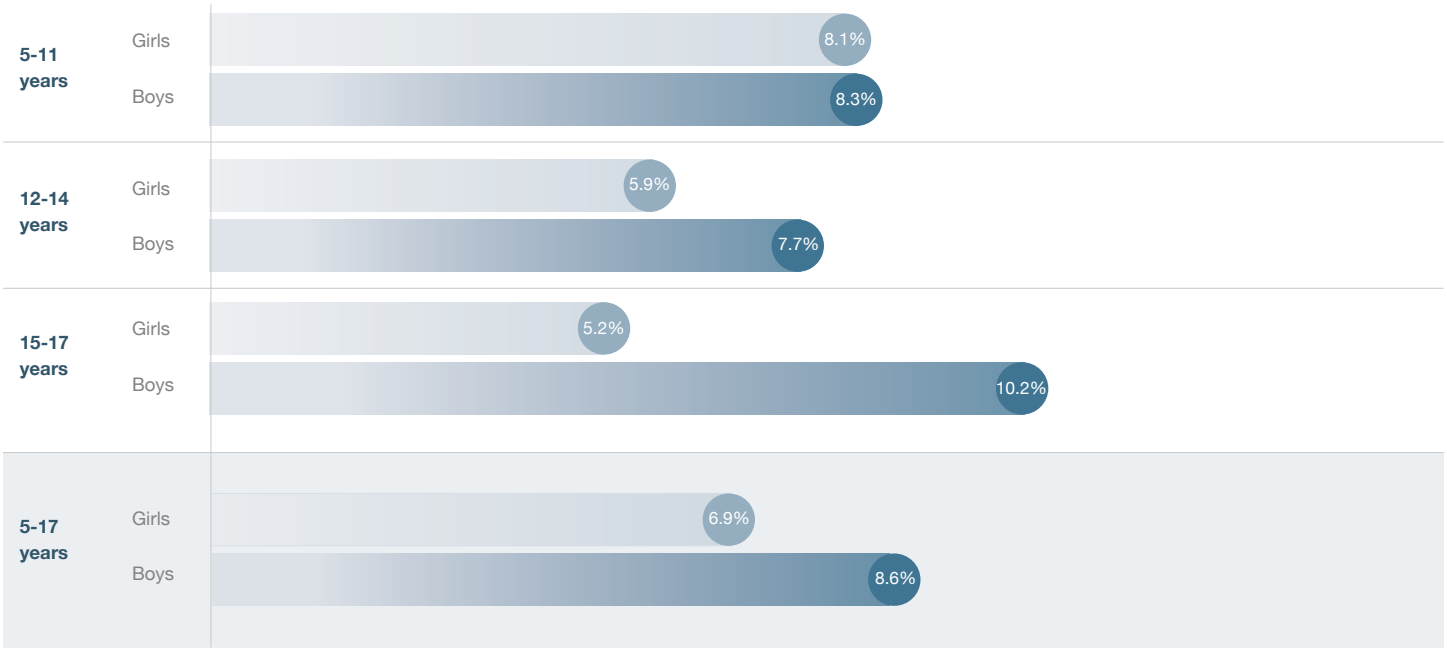
PROFILE BY SEX

Boys are overrepresented in child labour at every age. Among 5- to 17-year-olds, 9 per cent of boys are in child labour, compared to 7 per cent of girls. This gap widens with age. While child labour has declined for both sexes since 2000, the downward trajectory has been steadier and more consistent for girls. The previous period, from 2016 to 2020, saw a slight uptick in child labour prevalence among boys, a trend that has now reversed. The relative involvement of girls and boys in child labour comes with an important caveat. The child labour definition underlying it does not consider involvement in household chores in children's own homes.

The gender difference in child labour closes when household chores are considered. Household chores refer to services performed for and within one's own household, such as caring for siblings or household members who are sick, are elderly or have disabilities; cleaning and carrying out minor household repairs; cooking and serving meals; washing and ironing clothes; and transporting or accompanying family members to and from work and school.[12] When performance of these activities for 21 or more hours per week[13] is considered in measuring child labour for children aged 5 to 14 years,[14] overall prevalence rises by nearly half, from 8 to 11 per cent. Further, when household chores are considered, the prevalence of child labour among girls actually slightly exceeds that for boys. This result underscores the fact that girls bear a disproportionate burden of household chores.

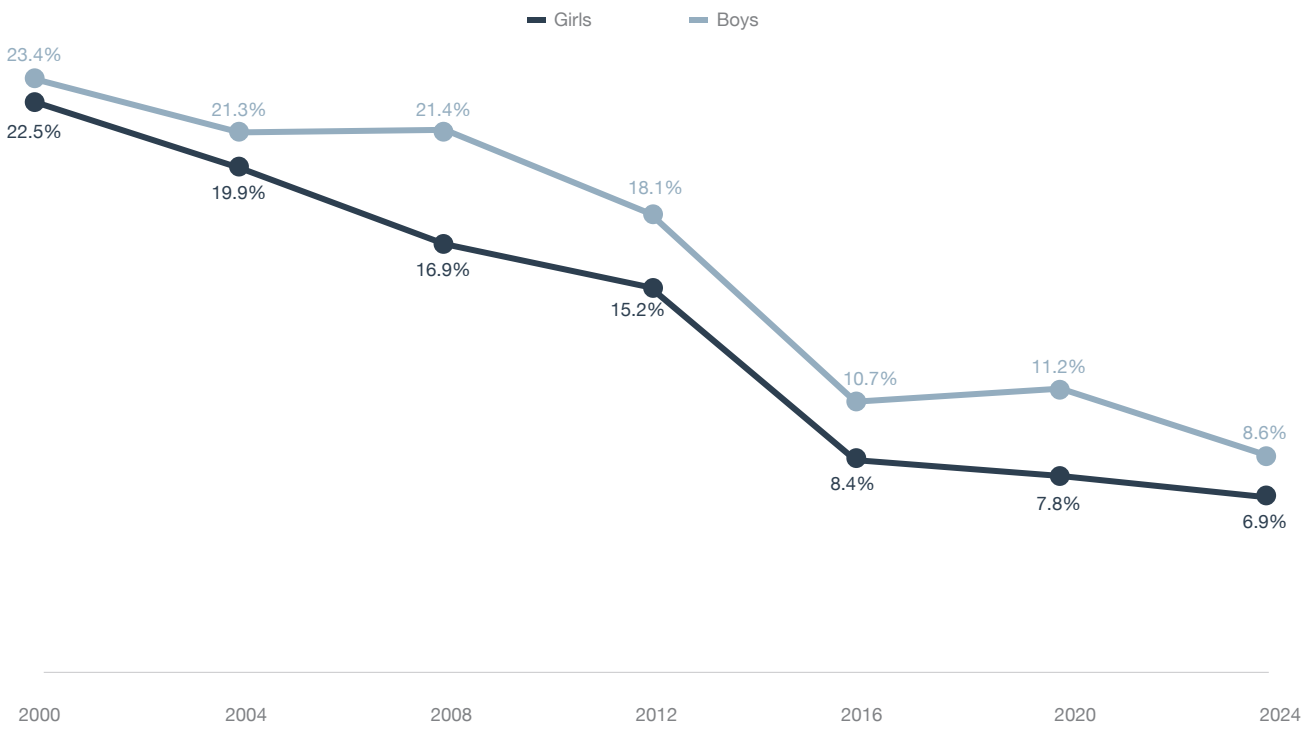
With age, child labour becomes progressively more common among boys than girls

Fig 13. Percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by age and sex



The share of girls in child labour has declined at a steadier rate

Fig 14. Percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by sex



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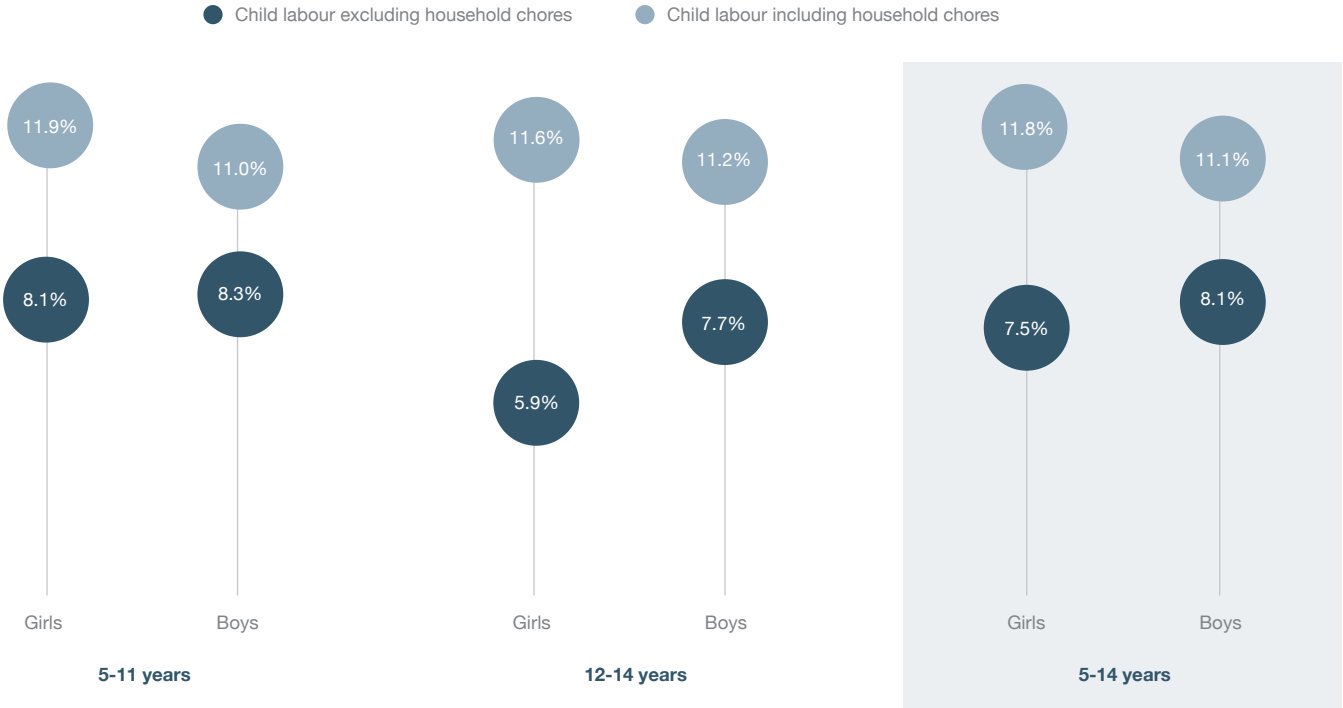
Factoring in household chores results in a slightly larger share of girls than boys in child labour

Fig 15. Percentage of children aged 5 to 14 years in child labour (including and excluding household chores performed for 21 or more hours per week), by sex and age



Characteristics of child labour

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SECTORS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

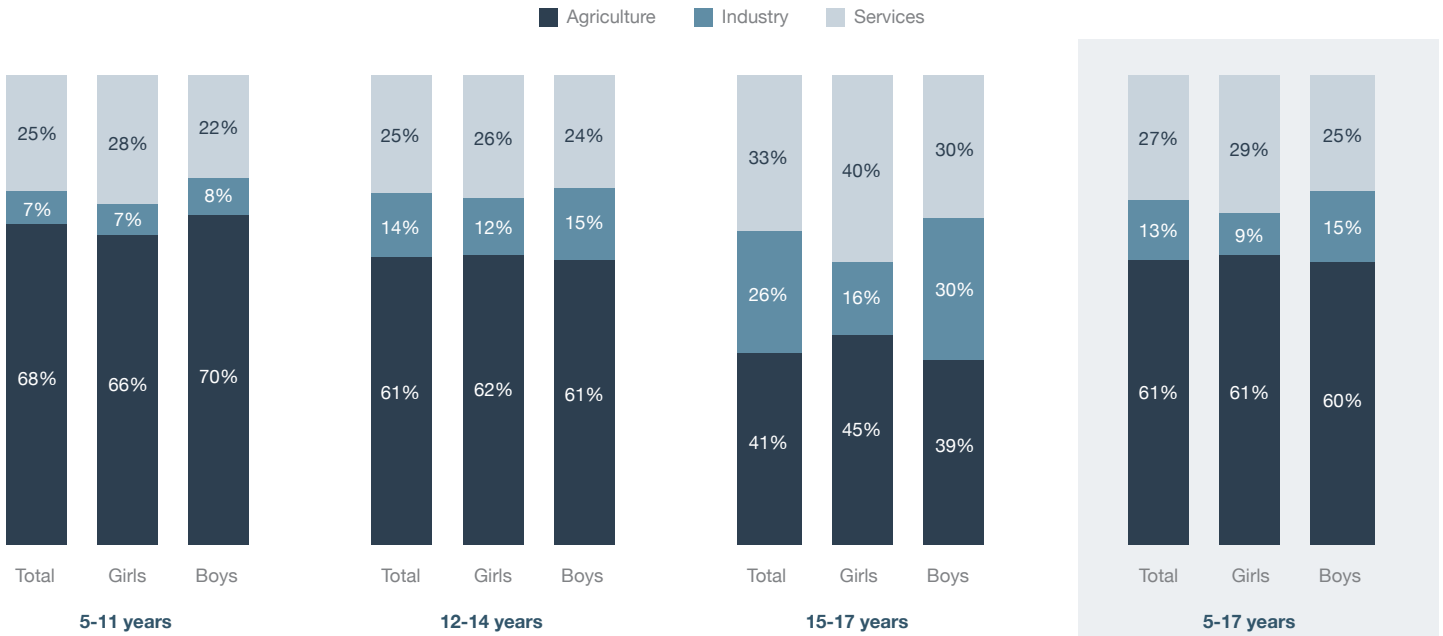
Understanding where child labour occurs in the economy is critical for addressing it. Agriculture accounts for the largest share of children in child labour, at 61 per cent globally. Most of this labour takes place as part of family subsistence and on smallholder farms. Services, including domestic work in third-party households, small-scale commerce and other informal service work, comprise 27 per cent of all child labour. Industry, encompassing construction, manufacturing and mining, makes up the remaining 13 per cent. The intersection of age and sex shapes the composition of child labour. Younger children in child labour, both boys and girls, are overwhelmingly found in agriculture. As children grow older, child labour diverges along gender lines. Boys are increasingly found in industry, while girls are more likely to be in services. This differentiation becomes even more pronounced in adolescence, reflecting labour market structures and prevailing social norms.

The role of child labour in the economy differs across regions. In sub-Saharan Africa, child labour remains overwhelmingly agricultural, with 7 out of every 10 children in child labour engaged in farming. Elsewhere, the picture changes considerably. Agricultural work accounts for less than half of child labour in all other regions, while services and industry play relatively greater roles. In Northern Africa and Western Asia, children are as likely to be found selling goods, cleaning homes or performing other activities in the service sector as they are working on farms. Services are also more predominant in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, accounting for over one third of child labour. In Central and Southern Asia, slightly more than one in four children in child labour is in industry, which is twice the global average, with a similar share in services.

The composition of child labour does not mirror employment among the working-age population. Most working children – 61 per cent – are found in agriculture, compared to just 28 per cent of working adults. The industry sector employs around a quarter of working adults but only 13 per cent of working children. Services make up nearly half of all adult jobs but only around a quarter of child labour. These divergences reflect more than just age; they point to the more informal and family-based nature of much of child labour (*see Box 2*).

Most child labour is in agriculture, although the relative share diminishes as children grow older

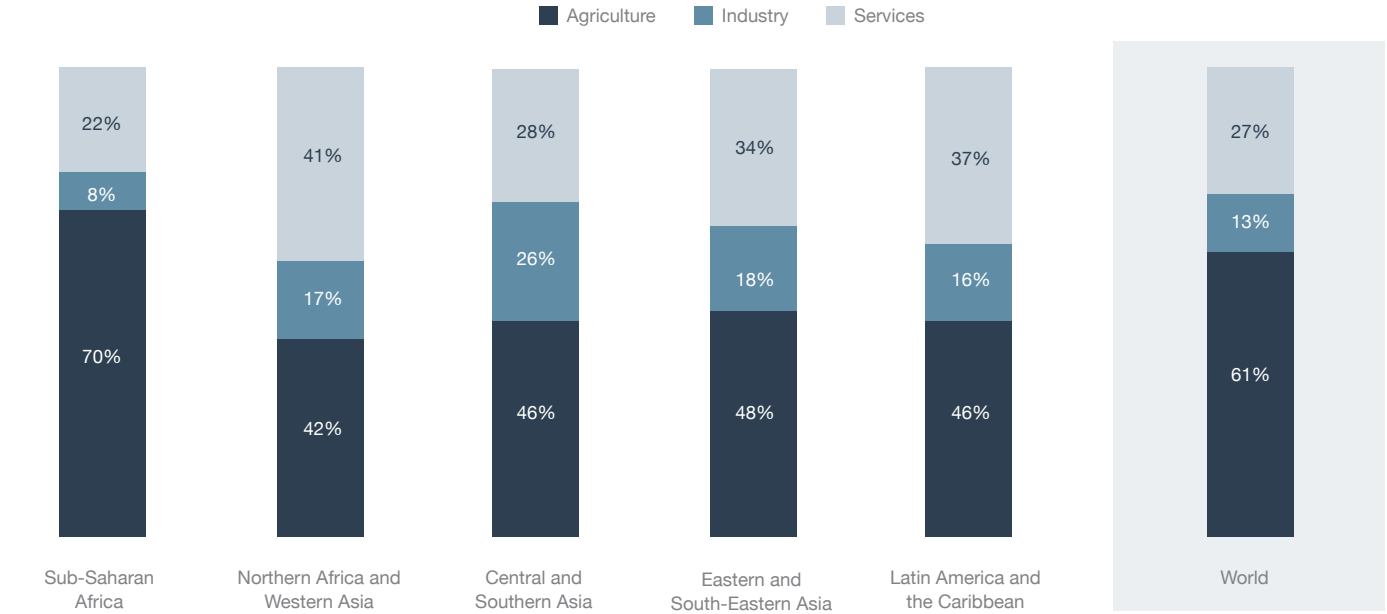
Fig 16. Percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by sector of economic activity, age and sex



Note: Some totals do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

While child labour is overwhelmingly agricultural in sub-Saharan Africa, it commonly occurs outside farming in other regions

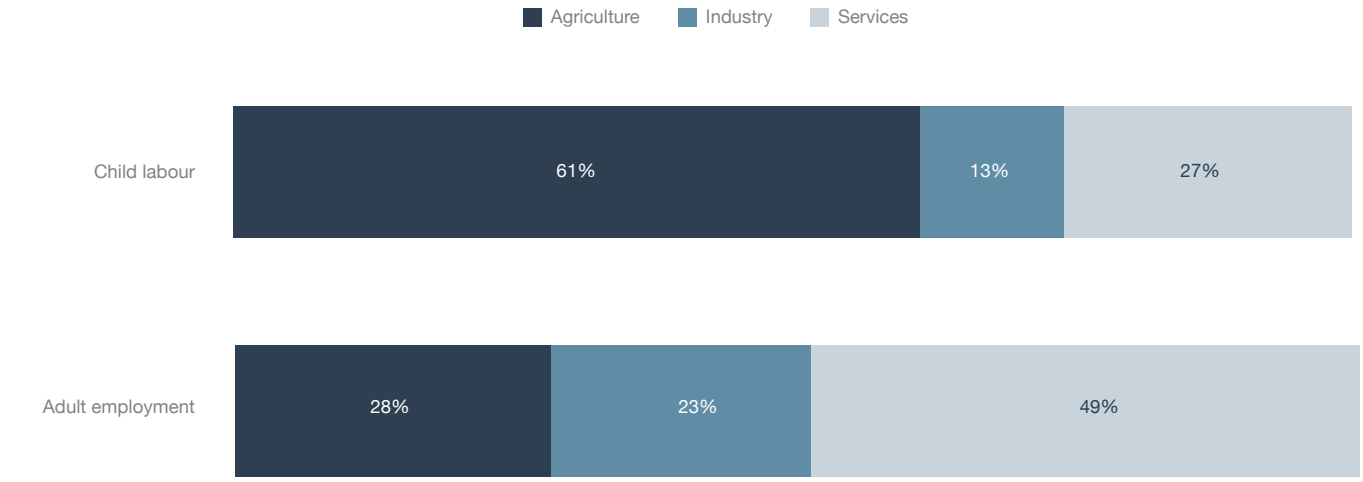
Fig 17. Percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by sector of economic activity and SDG region



Notes: This figure shows regional groupings used for ILO reporting. Some totals do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Child labour is not simply a mirror of employment among the working-age population

Fig 18. Percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour and percentage distribution of the working-age population aged 15 to 64 years, by sector of economic activity



Note: Some totals do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

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Box 2 Why do forms of work matter in addressing child labour?

Understanding child labour goes beyond determining whether children are working. It requires knowing how they work, for whom and for what purposes. This is the value of the framework on forms of work adopted by the ICLS in 2018 in the resolution concerning statistics on child labour. It provides a comprehensive basis for classifying the different types of work children do and for identifying child labour within each form of work based on age, activity and working conditions.

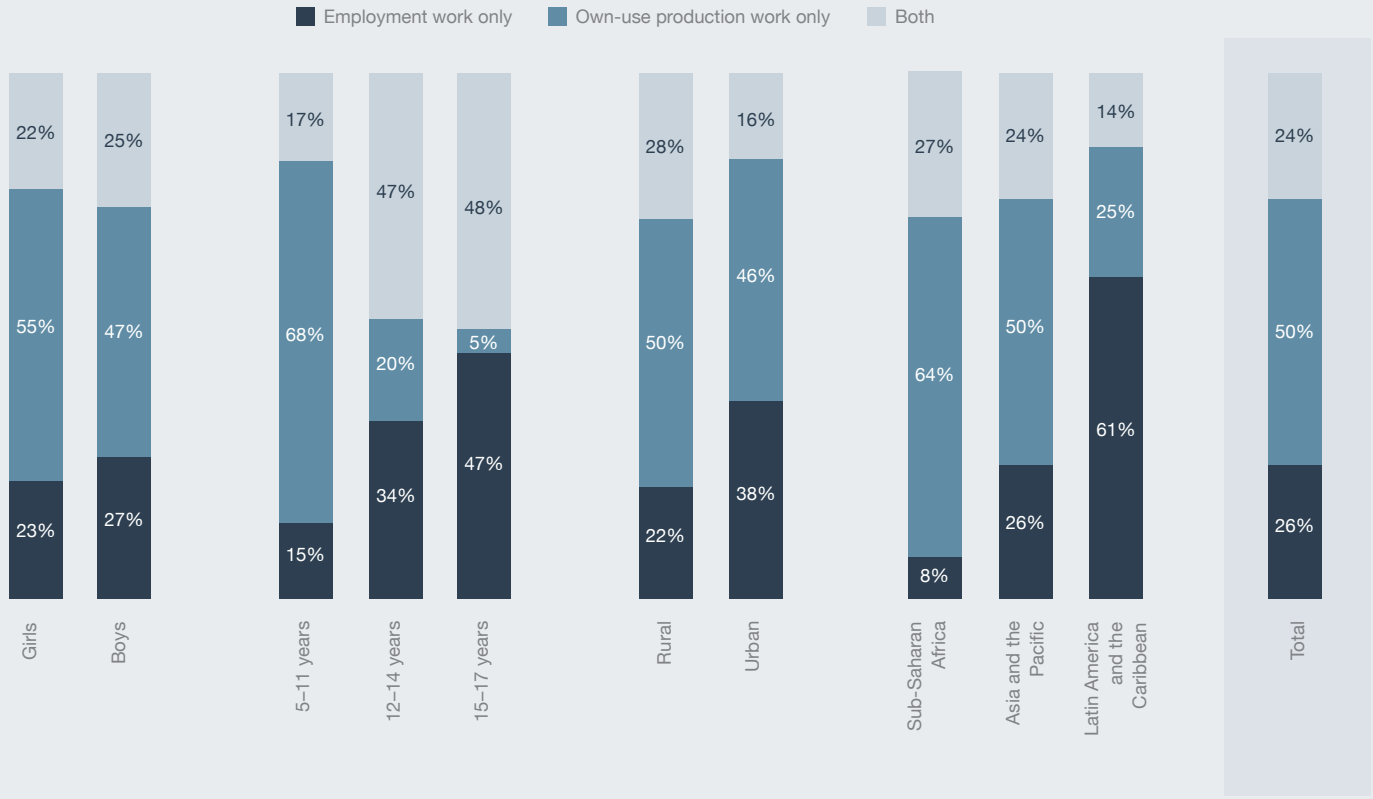
The framework distinguishes several forms of work, including employment, own-use production, unpaid trainee work, volunteer work and others. This classification helps uncover the true diversity of children's work, the intersections among its different forms and the total workload many children face. It provides a foundation for targeted policy responses adapted to different contexts.

Data from 16 countries that implemented this framework from 2020 to 2024 illustrate the insights it can generate:

- Half of the children in child labour are engaged in own-use production work, such as subsistence farming, collecting firewood and fetching water.
- Younger children are disproportionately involved in own-use production, while employment work becomes more common as children grow older.
- Children living in rural areas are much more likely to be working in own-use production, reflecting household reliance on subsistence activities.
- Many children, especially girls, are engaged in multiple types of own-use production work, increasing their total time burden and exposure to risks.

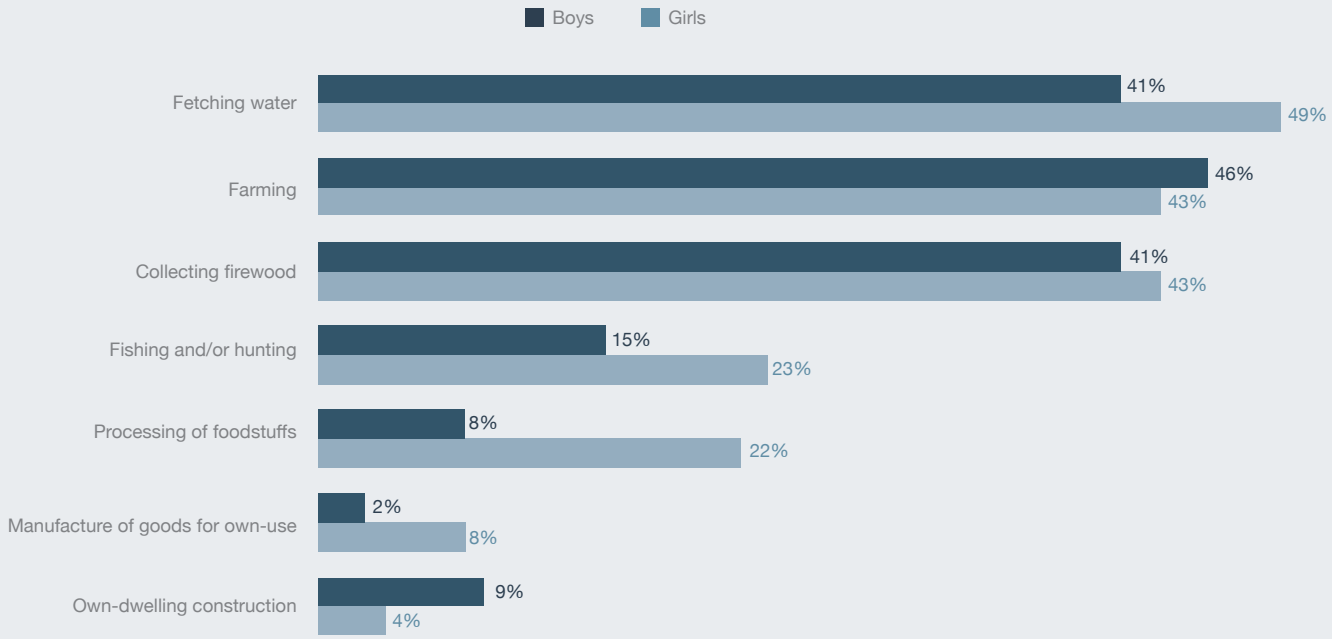
As more countries incorporate these standards into data collection, it will become possible to generate regional and global estimates disaggregated by forms of work, providing a more nuanced picture of child labour worldwide.

Fig 19. Percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by form of work and by sex, age, area of residence and ILO region



Notes: Some totals do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding. These unweighted averages are based on national household surveys in 16 countries representing 14 per cent of the global population of children aged 5 to 17 years.

Fig 20. Percentage of children aged 5 to 14 years in own-use production work, by type of activity and sex



Notes: These unweighted averages are based on national household surveys in 16 countries representing 14 per cent of the global population of children aged 5 to 17 years. Categories are not mutually exclusive.

HAZARDOUS WORK

Among all children in child labour, two in five (54 million) perform hazardous work. Of these 54 million children, close to half are under age 15, and nearly one in five is younger than age 12. While children of all ages must be protected from hazardous work, its persistence among younger children is especially worrying. Their physical and psychological immaturity amplifies the risk that hazardous work may result in serious injury or illness with potentially lifelong consequences (*see Box 3*). Beyond the human toll, significant economic costs on societies may arise through lost human capabilities and increased health-care and social protection burdens.

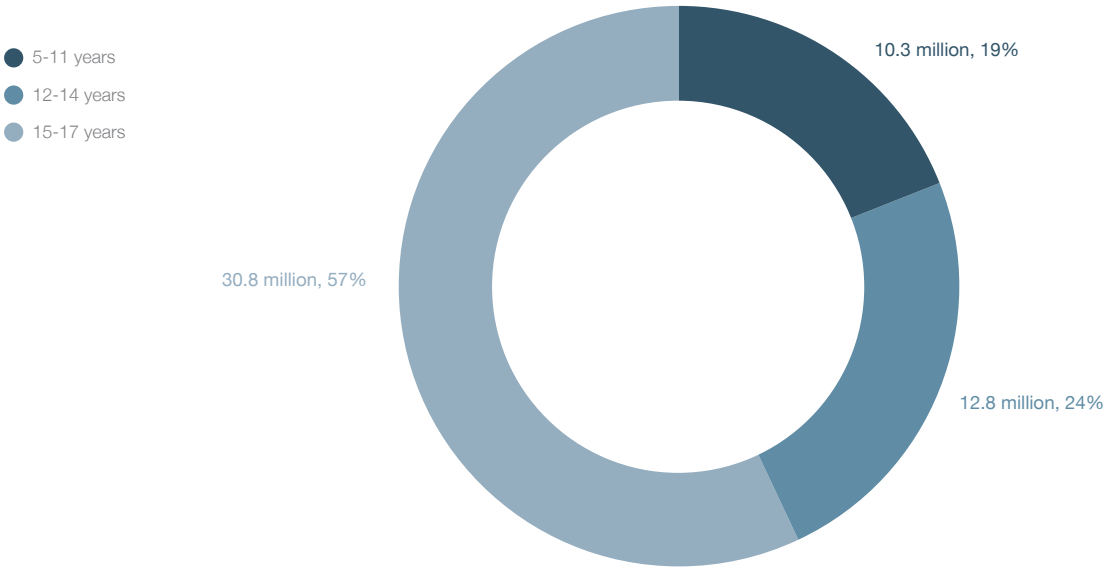
Hazardous child labour exists in all sectors. It poses the greatest concern in industry, where more than 60 per cent of all child labour is hazardous. In services, hazardous work accounts for nearly half of all child labour, and in agriculture for around one third. These differences reflect both the nature of tasks performed and the range of environments in which children work – from handling dangerous machinery in factories to carrying heavy loads in markets to exposure to agrochemicals in fields.

Besides hazardous work, other types of the worst forms of child labour persist in many places. These include child trafficking, forced labour, the recruitment of children into armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation and involvement in illicit activities. Due to their sensitive and often hidden nature, these forms of child labour are frequently underreported or entirely missed in household surveys. This is particularly the case when children who are involved live outside traditional household settings. As a result, they are likely undercounted in global calculations. Yet these worst forms of child labour represent egregious violations of children's rights and must not be overlooked. Strengthening the evidence base is essential to uncover and eliminate them.

In 2020, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) made history as the first universally ratified ILO convention. The persistence of hazardous work underlines the urgency of acting on this legal obligation to eliminate it across all sectors and for children of all ages.

Hazardous work occurs among children of all ages

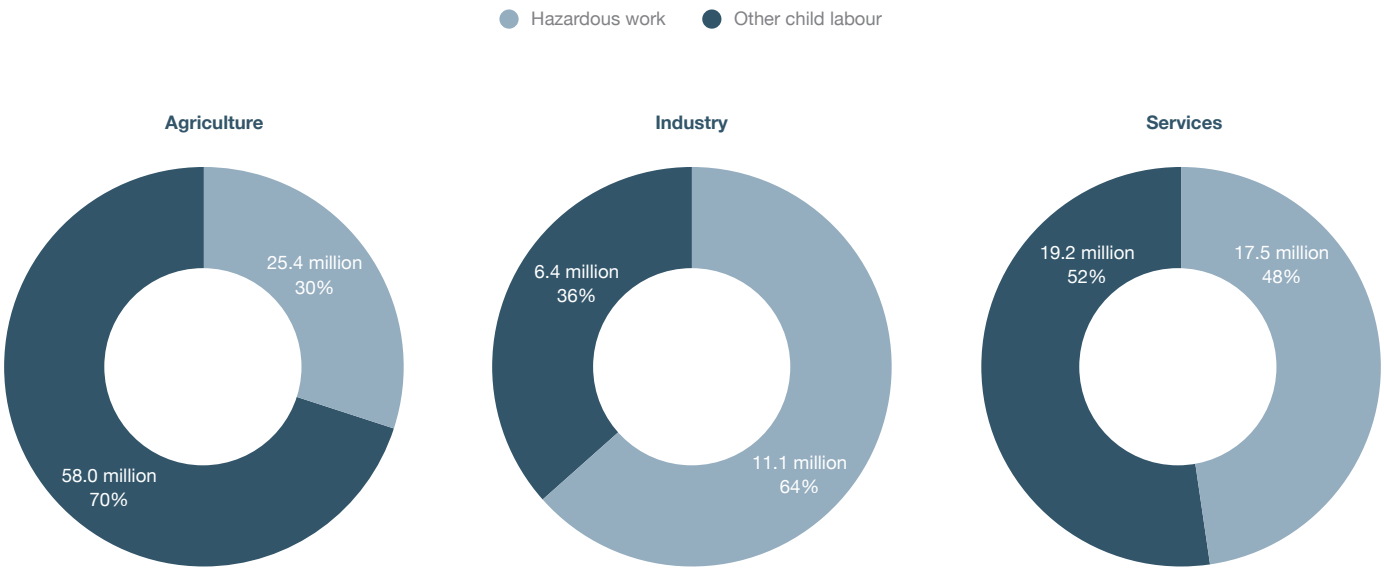
Fig 21. Number and percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in hazardous work, by age



Note: The number of children in hazardous work by age does not add up to the global total due to rounding.

Hazardous child labour is not confined to any single sector

Fig 22. Percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by hazardous work and sector of economic activity



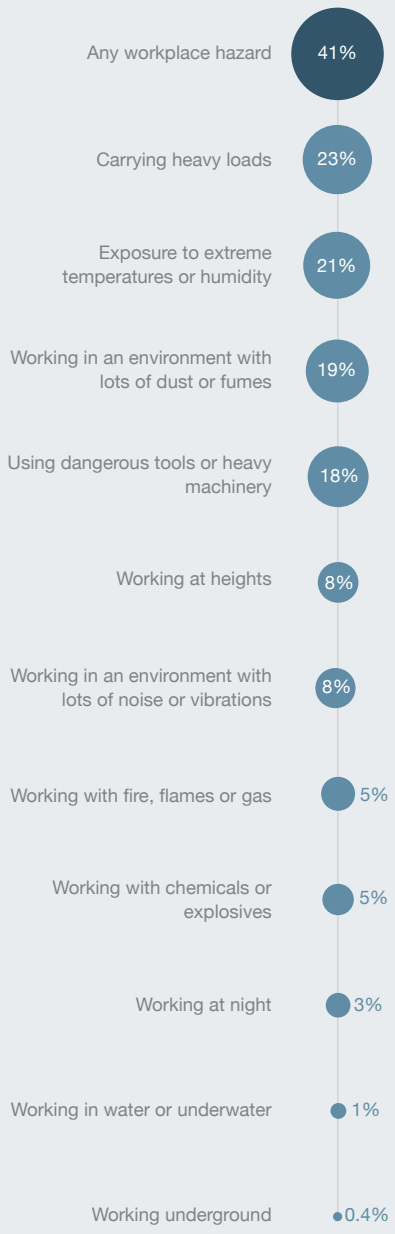
Box 3 What types of workplace hazards are children exposed to?

Hazardous work is one of the worst forms of child labour established in ILO Convention No. 182. For the global estimates, hazardous work is defined using three non-mutually exclusive categories: children working in hazardous occupations, in hazardous industries or for 43 or more hours a week.[15]

While this definition offers broad insight into the types of hazardous work, it does not illuminate children's actual exposures to workplace hazards or the impacts on children's physical and psychosocial well-being. To address these information gaps, an ILO survey module specifically asks children about exposures to workplace hazards and any adverse consequences.

Available data from 33 countries that have implemented the module in national child labour surveys reveal high levels of hazardous exposures. Among working children aged 5 to 14 years, around 4 in 10 reported having experienced at least one workplace hazard. The most commonly reported hazards include carrying heavy loads, exposure to extreme temperatures or humidity, working amid dust or fumes, and the use of dangerous tools or heavy machinery.

Fig 23. Percentage of working children aged 5 to 14 years exposed to workplace hazards, by type of hazard



Note: These unweighted averages are based on national household surveys in 33 countries representing 19 per cent of the global population of children aged 5 to 14 years.

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Child labour and schooling

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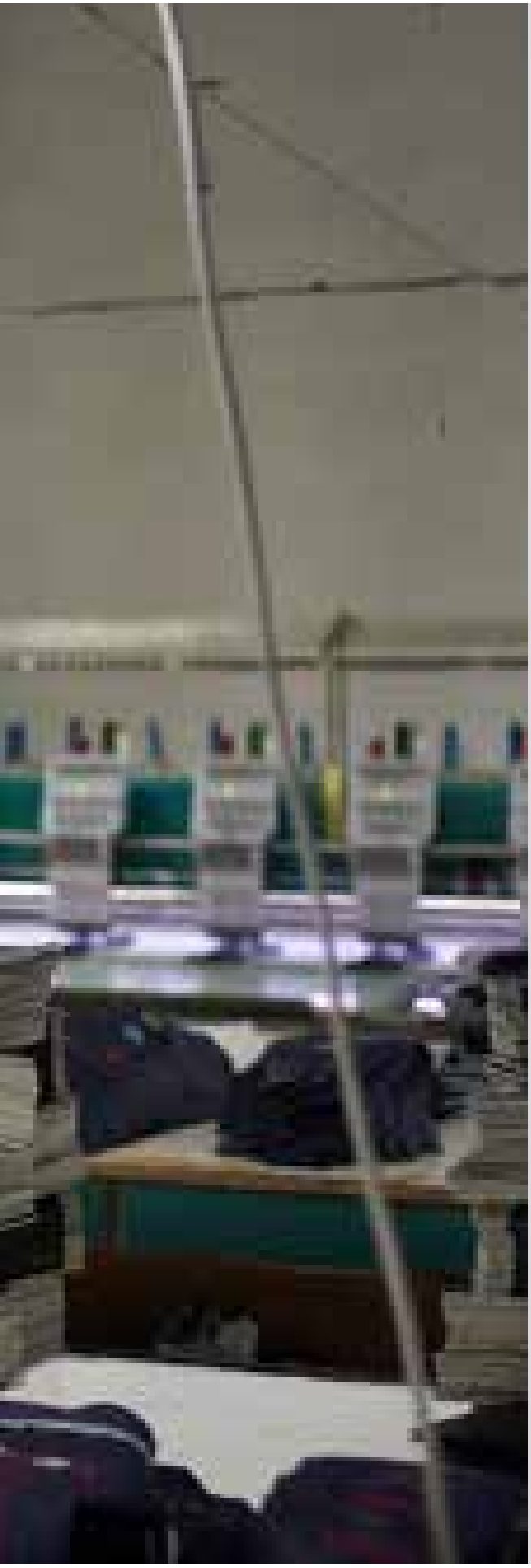


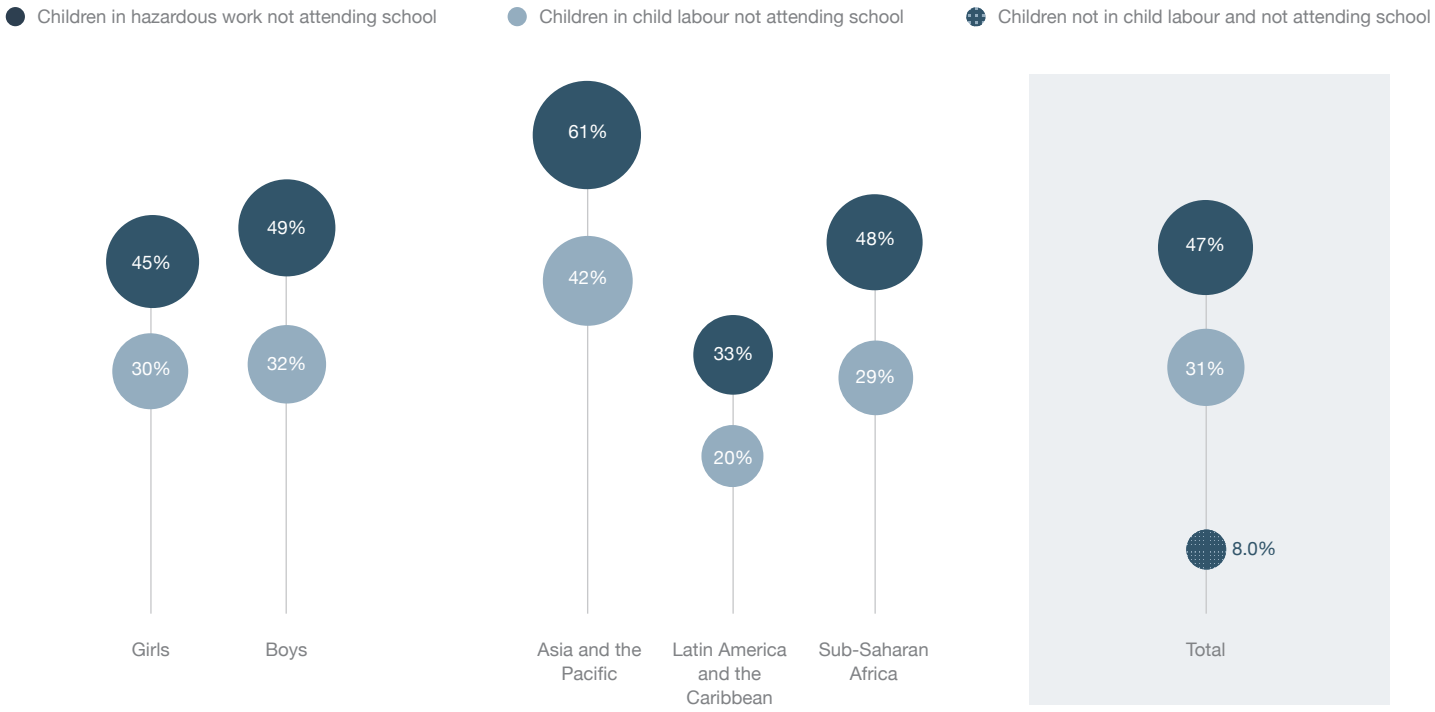
Child labour often blocks the path to a better future that begins with schooling. Globally, nearly one third of children of compulsory schooling age who are in child labour are missing from class. This compares to just 8 per cent of children of the same age who are not in child labour. For children in hazardous work, the educational toll is even steeper: Nearly half are out of school. This finding is perhaps unsurprising, given the stress such jobs place on children's time, energy and health. Regional patterns reveal that barriers to school attendance are highest in Asia and the Pacific, where 42 per cent of children in child labour and 61 per cent in hazardous work are out of school.

For adolescents aged 15 to 17, the incompatibility of child labour and schooling is even more pronounced. Nearly 60 per cent of adolescents in child labour globally are not in school compared to just 14 per cent of their peers who are not in child labour. In Asia and the Pacific, non-attendance among adolescents in child labour jumps to 71 per cent. Adolescent boys in child labour are slightly more likely than adolescent girls in child labour to be out of school. While not legally compulsory in many schooling systems, secondary education is nonetheless increasingly essential for obtaining decent work and economic mobility. Especially in regions where labour markets are saturated and largely informal, adolescents without formal schooling face a potentially bleak future of low wages, precarious jobs and limited prospects to thrive.

Despite the obstacles, over two thirds of children of compulsory school age who are in child labour still manage to attend school. This highlights an additional but overlooked challenge, however. Attendance alone does not guarantee meaningful learning. Evidence from countries that have collected data on both child labour and children's learning outcomes suggests that children in child labour lag in foundational learning skills.[16] Data from 34 countries show that children in child labour are over 30 per cent less likely to demonstrate basic reading and numeracy skills compared to peers of the same age who are not engaged in child labour. At the same time, it is important to note that a global learning crisis weighs on learning outcomes in most countries with data, regardless of whether or not children are involved in child labour.[17]

Child labour dramatically increases the likelihood that a child will be denied the chance to go to school

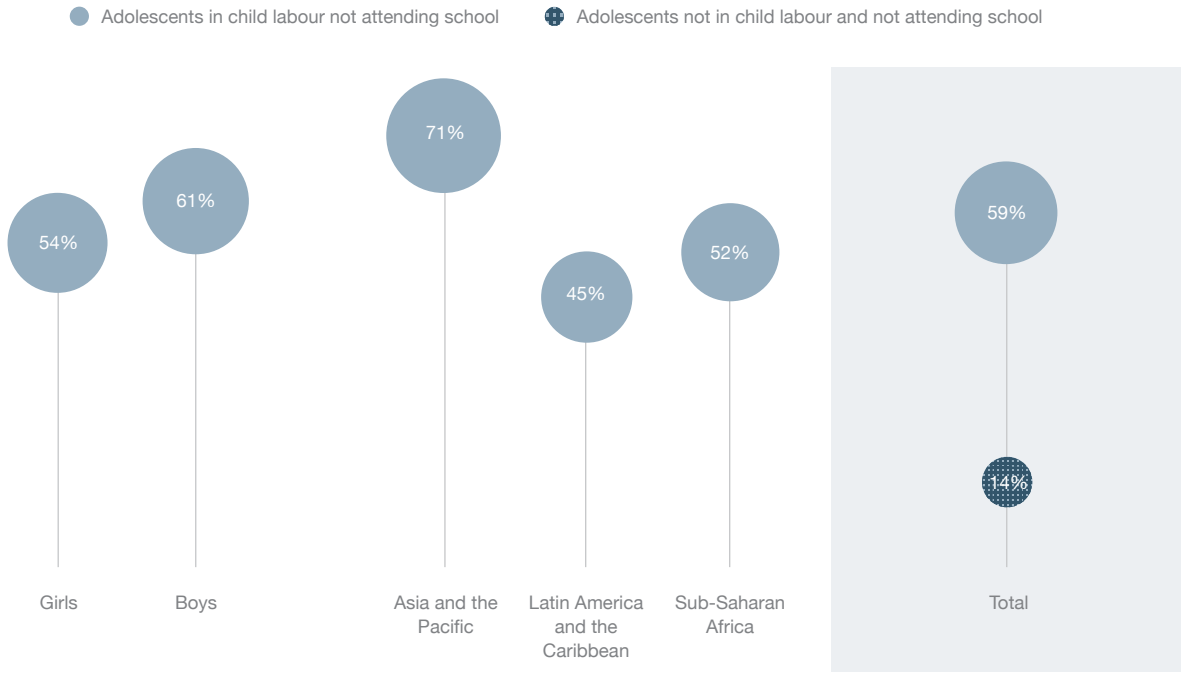
Fig 24. Percentage of children aged 5 to 14 years not attending school, by sex and ILO region



Notes: This figure shows regional groupings used for ILO reporting. The percentage of children not in child labour and not attending school could not be calculated by sex or by region.

Child labour also makes it much less likely that older adolescents continue in school

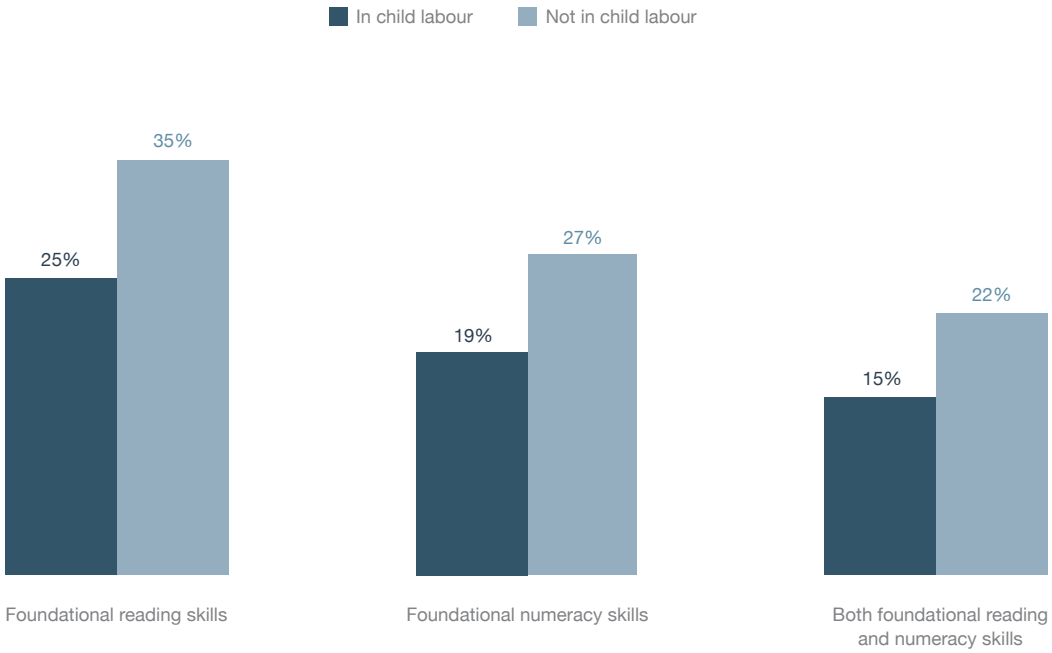
Fig 25. Percentage of adolescents aged 15 to 17 years not attending school, by sex and ILO region



Notes: This figure shows regional groupings used for ILO reporting. The percentage of adolescents not in child labour and not attending school could not be calculated by sex or by region.

Children in child labour are less likely to demonstrate foundational learning skills

Fig 26. Percentage of children aged 7 to 14 years with foundational reading and/or numeracy skills, by child labour status



Note: These estimates are weighted averages based on 34 countries with data collected between 2017 and 2023 and representing 15 per cent of the global population of children aged 7 to 14 years.

The road forward

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The 2024 global estimates confirm that measures against child labour are making a difference. But progress needs to move faster and reach further. The fact that nearly 138 million children are still in child labour worldwide is simply unacceptable. And even the gains made recently remain fragile given the risks of climate change (*see Box 4*), conflict, State fragility, economic instability and other global challenges.

What is needed now is a dramatic scaling up of action to turn the global commitment to end child labour into a lasting reality. The basic policy imperatives to end child labour are well-known, backed by evidence from decades of research and experience.[18] These include:

- Ensuring free, high-quality schooling until at least the age of compulsory schooling, offering a worthwhile alternative to child labour and establishing a solid foundation for decent work in adulthood.

- Strengthening legal protections against child labour, aligned with international standards and starting with universal birth registration, to lay the groundwork for effective prevention and enforcement.

- Equipping education systems to support the school-to-work transition, particularly for older adolescents who face heightened occupational safety and health risks in the labour market.

- Universalizing social protection to offset the socio-economic vulnerability underpinning child labour, and to build resilience against future shocks and crises that could drive children into work.

- Expanding access to basic services, including safe water and reliable electricity, to reduce the need for children to carry out arduous tasks and free up their time for school, play and rest.

- Combating child labour in business operations and supply chains, paying particular attention to informal micro- and small enterprises operating on the lower tiers, where child labour risks are often most pronounced.

Box 4 Child labour and climate change

Climate change increasingly impacts human lives, affecting all sectors of the economy but especially agriculture. Intensifying shocks have stripped whole communities of income and livelihoods, worsened food insecurity and malnutrition, and diminished labour productivity. Marginalized and vulnerable people and families are most affected.

Climate change has both direct and indirect effects on child labour. It is pushing many households deeper into poverty; the World Bank estimates that by 2030, between 32 million and 132 million people could fall into extreme poverty due to climate impacts. This makes it more likely that children will be obliged to work, as their families will depend on their income or productive labour.

Climate change also strongly influences agricultural productivity. Changing rainfall patterns, for example, are pushing farmers in some affected areas to increasingly shift to crops for which child labour may be more intensive. Where significantly less rain depresses agricultural productivity, economic pressures may result in children being sent to work in other sectors, such as mining or manufacturing.

Exposure to climate-related weather shocks is another pathway through which climate change is impacting family dependence on child labour. Lasting damage to crops, reduced harvests, the loss of livestock, the destruction of storage facilities and damaged farm machinery can leave families more likely to fall into persistent poverty and thus be more reliant on child labour.

By diminishing basic resources such as water and fertile lands, climate change is also associated with changes in migration and violent conflict. Both can put children at greater risk of child labour – including its worst forms – and loss of schooling.

For children in child labour, climate change can also worsen working conditions. Children in agricultural work, for example, are exposed to increased heat stress, insect-borne diseases, dust, wildfires and higher reliance on pesticides, all of which impact their health, development and well-being.

Climate action must be designed carefully to avoid unintentionally increasing the risk of child labour. Closing coal mines without providing alternative livelihoods, for instance, can leave families struggling and more likely to rely on children's work. Government support for green products such as electric vehicles and solar panels should include safeguards against child labour in supply chains, especially in mining. Similarly, recycling policies must steer informal e-waste sectors away from hazardous child labour. Climate-resilient farming or public works programmes should also aim to help reduce household reliance on child labour. National laws and regulations that bring together environmental and human rights standards can help guide progress on both.

Note: Based on International Labour Organization, *Issue Paper on Child Labour and Climate Change*, Geneva, ILO, 2023.


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Across all areas, there is a need to prioritize initiatives to address child labour, and especially hazardous work, among the youngest children, as their physical and psychological immaturity amplifies the risk that exposure to harmful conditions may result in serious injury or illness with potentially lifelong consequences.

Targeted policies to end child labour are crucial in their own right. At the same time, broader development strategies should accompany them, as progress on child labour depends on shifts across economies and societies. To be fully effective, child labour concerns must be systematically mainstreamed into economic and social policy planning – from macroeconomic frameworks to labour market reforms and sectoral strategies. For example, formalizing economic activities and providing decent work with a fair income to all adult workers lessens reliance on child labour and makes investments in children's education more worthwhile to families. Advancing workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively empowers them to influence working conditions, productivity and incomes, a foundation for achieving and sustaining decent work. Tackling discrimination, which limits education and employment opportunities for some people, is critical as well.

Economic diversification, fairer trade and rural development are also fundamental to more inclusive growth that sustains progress against child labour and provides greater fiscal space to invest in children. Redressing unfavourable terms of trade and inadequate technology transfer would remove barriers in many low-income countries still reliant on low-productivity, commodity-dependent and labour-intensive sectors where child labour is widespread. Diversifying rural economies would help break the dependence on children's labour in agriculture, particularly on smallholder farms. Structural changes to boost rural productivity and incomes, combined with investments in rural infrastructure and services and access to finance, could all generate conditions for decent livelihoods to rise – and child labour to fall.

Tailoring responses to achieve a common goal

While overarching policy directions to address child labour are broadly shared, no single, one-size-fits-all path is sufficient given the complexity of the issue.

Strategic responses must be tailored to a wide range of situations, including those shaped by crisis, conflict or the growing impacts of climate change. Robust evidence on child labour is critical for identifying local needs and informing policy and spending decisions. Social dialogue among governments and employers' and workers' organizations, as well as broader stakeholder consultation, are also essential for ensuring child labour actions reflect local priorities and are grounded in societal consensus.

Mobilizing resources despite constraints

While public budgets globally are currently under severe strain, reducing child labour must remain a spending priority to sustain gains and accelerate progress. Domestic resource mobilization could expand fiscal space by improving tax collection, tackling illicit financial flows and prioritizing children in public spending. Broader efforts to formalize the economy could enlarge the tax base.

Innovative public-private partnerships could inject new investments into child-focused programmes, while increased official development assistance could help catalyse national efforts against child labour. For heavily indebted countries, debt relief and restructuring could mitigate the risk that debt servicing will cut spending on children. Mechanisms that alleviate debt in exchange for investments in children's rights (such as 'debt swaps' for education or social protection) hold promise.

Building a robust evidence base

Closing data and knowledge gaps leads to better responses to child labour, directed where they are needed most. While major strides have been made – the current global estimates draw on national data covering 60 per cent of the world's child population – too few countries systematically integrate child labour into national statistical systems. This limits their ability to track trends and steer impactful action. Many countries require more granular, subnational data to identify specific locations, sectors and groups of children who are most at risk. Tools such as small-area estimation can enhance household surveys and provide more precise insights to target interventions and design policies.

Equally important is building a stronger evidence base on what works to address child labour. Only a few interventions are rigorously evaluated, leaving gaps in understanding impact, cost-effectiveness and scalability. More evidence is particularly imperative to stem the worst forms of child labour, beyond hazardous work, as these remain hidden and difficult to measure through standard household surveys. Successful responses to climate change need to draw on a better understanding of links to child labour, especially in places dependent on agriculture, where child labour is most common and climate impacts are already acute.

Working together

No country can tackle child labour alone, a recognition embedded in the commitment to partnership and collaboration in the Call to Action of the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour in 2022.[19] The 6th Global Conference in 2026 offers an opportunity to revisit and update this shared promise in light of the latest global estimates and an evolving global outlook.

Other collaborative frameworks must also be leveraged to quicken progress, including the Global Coalition on Social Justice, connecting governments, employers' and workers' organizations, international institutions, enterprises, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions around the SDGs. The Alliance 8.7 brings together more than 400 partners from inside and outside governments, complemented by 37 Pathfinder Countries and Pathfinder Candidate Countries, to share experiences and promote joint action on ending child labour, forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking.

Co-chaired by the International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation, the Child Labour Platform brings businesses together to tackle child labour in supply chains. The Global Partnership for Universal Social

Protection and the Global Partnership for Education mobilize resources, foster policy reforms and support capacity-building to expand access to social protection and quality education, respectively.

The children behind the numbers

Behind the numbers and statistics are real children – 138 million lives impacted by hardship, toil and lost opportunities. They labour under the hot sun on farms, tending crops when they should be in school. They scrub floors behind closed doors, invisible and vulnerable to exploitation. They haul heavy loads in mines, breathing in fumes that damage their health. They are working in factories, assembling products for national and global markets, often exposed to toxins and dangerous machinery.

The faces and futures of these children must remain at the forefront of the global drive against child labour. The challenge is great, as the global estimates confirm. But they also point to progress, and in doing so, affirm the possibilities. We know the blueprint for success – the right policies, adequate resources and unwavering commitment. Now is the time to act to free future generations from child labour.

Annex

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STATISTICAL TABLES

CHILD LABOUR

Percentage and number (in thousands) of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour

		Total							
		5–11 years		12–14 years		15–17 years		5–17 years	
		%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
World total		8.2	78,900	6.8	27,838	7.8	30,824	7.8	137,562
ILO regions	Africa	23.3	63,416	16.9	17,926	13.4	13,187	19.8	94,529
	Sub-Saharan Africa	25.9	59,777	17.8	16,008	13.0	10,831	21.5	86,616
	Arab States	6.0	1,693	5.3	614	5.1	553	5.6	2,861
	Asia and the Pacific	1.7	8,205	3.2	6,689	6.2	12,762	3.1	27,656
	Americas	2.7	2,717	3.9	1,779	6.6	3,074	3.9	7,570
	Latin America and the Caribbean	3.8	2,717	5.7	1,779	9.1	2,853	5.5	7,349
	Europe and Central Asia	3.6	2,869	2.4	830	3.7	1,247	3.3	4,945
SDG regions	Sub-Saharan Africa	25.9	59,777	17.8	16,008	13.0	10,832	21.5	86,617
	Central and Southern Asia	2.3	6,111	3.1	3,688	6.2	7,235	3.4	17,035
	Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	1.7	3,579	3.4	3,190	6.1	5,529	3.1	12,298
	Northern Africa and Western Asia	7.1	5,843	8.9	2,977	10.8	3,387	8.3	12,208
	Latin America and the Caribbean	3.8	2,717	5.7	1,779	9.1	2,852	5.5	7,348
	Europe and Northern America	0.5	421	0.3	104	2.0	772	0.8	1,297
	Oceania	7.4	452	3.5	91	8.4	216	6.7	759
UNICEF regions	East Asia and Pacific	1.8	4,032	3.4	3,281	6.1	5,742	3.2	13,055
	Europe and Central Asia	3.7	2,869	2.4	830	3.7	1,216	3.4	4,915
	Latin America and Caribbean	3.8	2,717	5.7	1,779	9.1	2,855	5.5	7,351
	Middle East and North Africa	5.3	3,779	6.7	1,959	8.9	2,420	6.4	8,159
	North America	0.0	-	0.0	-	1.5	221	0.4	221
	South Asia	1.7	4,134	3.1	3,360	6.3	6,837	3.1	14,331
	Sub-Saharan Africa	25.6	61,370	17.8	16,630	13.3	11,531	21.3	89,531
Children in child labour who are not attending school	Total	27.6	21,810	40.6	11,305	58.6	18,052	37.2	51,168
Children in child labour by sector of economic activity	Agriculture	68.1	53,755	61.2	17,029	41.1	12,654	60.7	83,438
	Industry	7.3	5,743	13.7	3,812	25.5	7,870	12.7	17,425
	Services	24.6	19,403	25.1	6,997	33.4	10,299	26.7	36,700

	Boys								Girls							
	5–11 years		12–14 years		15–17 years		5–17 years		5–11 years		12–14 years		15–17 years		5–17 years	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
	8.3	41,109	7.7	16,182	10.2	20,924	8.6	78,215	8.1	37,791	5.9	11,656	5.2	9,900	6.9	59,347
	23.6	32,483	18.2	9,798	15.8	7,890	20.8	50,172	23.0	30,933	15.5	8,128	10.9	5,297	18.8	44,358
	26.1	30,380	19.1	8,642	14.5	6,115	22.1	45,136	25.8	29,396	16.6	7,367	11.4	4,717	20.8	41,480
	6.4	920	8.0	477	8.1	453	7.2	1,851	5.6	773	2.4	137	1.9	100	4.1	1,010
	1.8	4,571	3.8	4,144	8.7	9,366	3.9	18,081	1.6	3,634	2.5	2,545	3.5	3,396	2.2	9,575
	3.0	1,560	5.0	1,167	9.7	2,305	5.1	5,032	2.3	1,156	2.8	612	3.4	769	2.7	2,538
	4.3	1,560	7.3	1,167	13.4	2,145	7.2	4,873	3.3	1,156	4.0	612	4.6	707	3.8	2,476
	3.9	1,574	3.4	596	5.3	909	4.1	3,079	3.3	1,295	1.4	234	2.1	338	2.6	1,866
	26.1	30,380	19.1	8,642	14.5	6,115	22.1	45,137	25.8	29,396	16.6	7,367	11.4	4,717	20.8	41,480
	2.4	3,332	4.0	2,434	10.0	6,059	4.5	11,826	2.1	2,779	2.2	1,254	2.1	1,176	2.1	5,209
	1.8	2,014	3.7	1,854	7.0	3,344	3.4	7,213	1.5	1,565	3.0	1,336	5.1	2,185	2.7	5,086
	8.1	3,375	11.5	1,968	16.3	2,596	10.6	7,939	6.2	2,468	6.2	1,009	5.2	791	6.0	4,268
	4.3	1,560	7.3	1,167	13.5	2,145	7.2	4,872	3.3	1,156	4.0	612	4.6	707	3.8	2,476
	0.5	212	0.3	69	2.7	548	1.0	829	0.5	209	0.2	36	1.2	225	0.6	469
	7.4	234	3.6	49	8.8	117	6.9	400	7.4	218	3.4	42	8.1	100	6.6	360
	1.9	2,249	3.7	1,903	7.0	3,459	3.5	7,611	1.7	1,783	3.0	1,378	5.2	2,283	2.8	5,444
	3.9	1,574	3.4	596	5.2	891	4.1	3,061	3.4	1,295	1.4	234	2.0	326	2.6	1,854
	4.3	1,560	7.3	1,167	13.4	2,146	7.1	4,874	3.3	1,156	4.0	612	4.6	709	3.8	2,477
	6.2	2,296	9.0	1,345	14.7	2,041	8.7	5,682	4.2	1,483	4.3	614	2.9	380	4.0	2,477
	0.0	-	0.0	-	2.1	159	0.5	159	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.9	62	0.2	62
	1.8	2,289	3.9	2,198	10.2	5,739	4.2	10,226	1.6	1,845	2.2	1,162	2.1	1,098	1.8	4,105
	25.7	31,141	19.0	8,973	14.8	6,488	22.0	46,603	25.5	30,229	16.6	7,656	11.7	5,043	20.7	42,928
	27.9	11,475	40.9	6,613	60.8	12,729	39.4	30,818	27.3	10,335	40.3	4,692	53.8	5,323	34.3	20,350
	70.3	28,888	60.7	9,831	39.4	8,238	60.0	46,956	65.8	24,867	61.8	7,198	44.6	4,416	61.5	36,481
	7.9	3,252	14.9	2,417	30.2	6,328	15.3	11,997	6.6	2,490	12.0	1,395	15.6	1,542	9.1	5,428
	21.8	8,969	24.3	3,935	30.4	6,358	24.6	19,262	27.6	10,434	26.3	3,063	39.8	3,942	29.4	17,438

HAZARDOUS WORK

Percentage and number (in thousands) of children aged 5 to 17 years in hazardous work

		Total							
		5–11 years		12–14 years		15–17 years		5–17 years	
		%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
World total		1.1	10,343	3.1	12,808	7.8	30,824	3.1	53,975
ILO regions	Africa	2.6	7,086	7.0	7,405	13.4	13,187	5.8	27,677
	Sub-Saharan Africa	2.7	6,223	6.9	6,197	13.0	10,831	5.8	23,252
	Arab States	1.0	293	2.4	278	5.1	553	2.2	1,124
	Asia and the Pacific	0.4	1,787	1.7	3,588	6.2	12,762	2.0	18,137
	Americas	0.8	800	2.3	1,047	6.6	3,074	2.5	4,921
	Latin America and the Caribbean	1.1	800	3.3	1,047	9.1	2,853	3.5	4,699
	Europe and Central Asia	0.5	377	1.4	491	3.7	1,247	1.4	2,115
SDG regions	Sub-Saharan Africa	2.7	6,223	6.9	6,197	13.0	10,832	5.8	23,252
	Central and Southern Asia	0.4	1,035	1.7	2,001	6.2	7,235	2.0	10,272
	Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	0.4	878	1.8	1,697	6.1	5,529	2.0	8,103
	Northern Africa and Western Asia	1.5	1,247	5.3	1,760	10.8	3,387	4.4	6,394
	Latin America and the Caribbean	1.1	800	3.4	1,047	9.1	2,852	3.5	4,699
	Europe and Northern America	0.1	68	0.2	63	2.0	772	0.5	903
	Oceania	1.5	91	1.7	44	8.4	216	3.1	352
UNICEF regions	East Asia and Pacific	0.4	969	1.8	1,741	6.1	5,742	2.1	8,452
	Europe and Central Asia	0.5	377	1.4	491	3.7	1,216	1.4	2,085
	Latin America and Caribbean	1.1	800	3.3	1,047	9.1	2,855	3.5	4,701
	Middle East and North Africa	1.5	1,046	4.6	1,334	8.9	2,420	3.7	4,801
	North America	0.0	-	0.0	-	1.5	221	0.4	221
	South Asia	0.3	802	1.7	1,808	6.3	6,837	2.0	9,447
	Sub-Saharan Africa	2.6	6,348	6.8	6,387	13.3	11,531	5.8	24,267
Children in child labour who are not attending school	Total	45.4	4,700	49.0	6,279	58.6	18,052	53.8	29,031
Children in child labour by sector of economic activity	Agriculture	56.5	5,847	53.8	6,887	41.1	12,654	47.0	25,389
	Industry	9.3	959	17.5	2,236	25.5	7,870	20.5	11,065
	Services	34.2	3,536	28.8	3,685	33.4	10,299	32.5	17,520

	Boys								Girls							
	5–11 years		12–14 years		15–17 years		5–17 years		5–11 years		12–14 years		15–17 years		5–17 years	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
	1.2	6,167	3.7	7,735	10.2	20,924	3.8	34,825	0.9	4,176	2.6	5,073	5.2	9,900	2.2	19,149
	3.0	4,141	7.6	4,102	15.8	7,890	6.7	16,134	2.2	2,944	6.3	3,302	10.9	5,297	4.9	11,543
	3.1	3,575	7.4	3,347	14.5	6,115	6.4	13,037	2.3	2,648	6.4	2,850	11.4	4,717	5.1	10,215
	1.2	175	3.7	219	8.1	453	3.3	848	0.9	117	1.0	59	1.9	100	1.1	277
	0.4	1,112	2.1	2,308	8.7	9,366	2.7	12,787	0.3	675	1.3	1,279	3.5	3,396	1.3	5,350
	1.0	531	3.2	754	9.7	2,305	3.6	3,590	0.5	269	1.3	293	3.4	769	1.4	1,331
	1.5	531	4.7	754	13.4	2,145	5.0	3,430	0.8	269	1.9	293	4.6	707	1.9	1,269
	0.5	207	2.0	351	5.3	909	1.9	1,467	0.4	170	0.8	140	2.1	338	0.9	648
	3.1	3,575	7.4	3,347	14.5	6,115	6.4	13,037	2.3	2,648	6.4	2,850	11.4	4,717	5.1	10,215
	0.5	630	2.2	1,357	10.0	6,059	3.1	8,047	0.3	405	1.1	644	2.1	1,176	0.9	2,225
	0.5	538	2.1	1,033	7.0	3,344	2.3	4,915	0.3	340	1.5	664	5.1	2,185	1.7	3,189
	1.9	803	6.9	1,180	16.3	2,596	6.1	4,579	1.1	444	3.5	581	5.2	791	2.5	1,815
	1.5	531	4.7	754	13.5	2,145	5.0	3,430	0.8	269	1.9	293	4.6	707	1.9	1,269
	0.1	35	0.2	40	2.7	548	0.7	623	0.1	33	0.1	22	1.2	225	0.3	280
	1.7	54	1.9	25	8.8	117	3.4	195	1.3	37	1.5	19	8.1	100	2.9	156
	0.5	592	2.1	1,058	7.0	3,459	2.4	5,109	0.4	377	1.5	683	5.2	2,283	1.7	3,343
	0.5	207	2.0	351	5.2	891	1.9	1,449	0.4	170	0.8	140	2.0	326	0.9	636
	1.5	531	4.7	754	13.4	2,146	5.0	3,431	0.8	269	1.9	293	4.6	709	1.9	1,270
	1.9	691	5.8	875	14.7	2,041	5.5	3,607	1.0	355	3.2	459	2.9	380	1.9	1,194
	0.0	-	0.0	-	2.1	159	0.5	159	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.9	62	0.2	62
	0.4	505	2.1	1,216	10.2	5,739	3.1	7,460	0.2	297	1.1	593	2.1	1,098	0.9	1,987
	3.0	3,641	7.4	3,482	14.8	6,488	6.4	13,611	2.3	2,708	6.3	2,906	11.7	5,043	5.1	10,656
	46.7	2,879	50.4	3,901	60.8	12,729	56.0	19,509	43.6	1,820	46.9	2,379	53.8	5,323	49.7	9,522
	61.2	3,776	53.3	4,121	39.4	8,238	46.3	16,135	49.6	2,071	54.5	2,766	44.6	4,416	48.3	9,253
	9.6	592	19.8	1,529	30.2	6,328	24.3	8,448	8.8	367	14.0	708	15.6	1,542	13.7	2,617
	29.2	1,799	27.0	2,086	30.4	6,358	29.4	10,242	41.6	1,738	31.5	1,599	39.8	3,942	38.0	7,279

Trends

		Number (in thousands) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, 2016 to 2024						Number (in thousands) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in hazardous work, 2016 to 2024					
		2016		2020		2024		2016		2020		2024	
		%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
World total		9.6	151,600	9.6	160,000	7.8	137,562	4.6	72,500	4.7	79,000	3.1	53,975
Sex	Girls	8.4	64,100	7.8	62,900	6.9	59,347	3.6	27,800	3.6	28,800	2.2	19,149
	Boys	10.7	87,500	11.2	97,000	8.6	78,215	5.5	44,800	5.8	50,200	3.8	34,825
Age	5-11 years	8.3	72,600	9.7	89,300	8.2	78,900	2.2	19,000	2.8	25,900	1.1	10,343
	12-14 years	11.7	41,900	9.3	35,600	6.8	27,838	4.6	16,400	4.8	18,100	3.1	12,808
	15-17 years	10.5	37,100	9.5	35,000	7.8	30,824	10.5	37,100	9.5	35,000	7.8	30,824
ILO regions	Africa	19.6	72,100	21.6	92,200	19.8	94,529	8.6	31,500	9.7	41,400	5.8	27,677
	Sub-Saharan Africa	22.4	70,000	23.9	86,600	21.5	86,616	9.8	30,500	10.7	38,600	5.8	23,252
	Arab States	2.9	1,200	5.8	2,400	5.6	2,861	1.5	600	4.5	1,900	2.2	1,124
	Asia and the Pacific	7.4	62,100	5.6	48,700	3.1	27,656	3.4	28,500	2.6	22,200	2.0	18,137
	Americas	5.3	10,700	4.3	8,300	3.9	7,570	3.2	6,600	2.9	5,700	2.5	4,921
	Latin America and the Caribbean	7.3	10,500	6.0	8,200	5.5	7,349	4.4	6,300	4.0	5,500	3.5	4,699
	Europe and Central Asia	4.1	5,500	5.7	8,300	3.3	4,945	4.0	5,300	5.5	7,900	1.4	2,115
SDG regions	Sub-Saharan Africa	-	-	23.9	86,600	21.5	86,617	-	-	10.7	38,600	5.8	23,252
	Central and Southern Asia	-	-	5.5	26,300	3.4	17,035	-	-	2.9	14,000	2.0	10,272
	Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	-	-	6.2	24,300	3.1	12,298	-	-	2.6	10,400	2.0	8,103
	Northern Africa and Western Asia	-	-	7.8	10,100	8.3	12,208	-	-	5.1	6,500	4.4	6,394
	Latin America and the Caribbean	-	-	6.0	8,200	5.5	7,348	-	-	4.0	5,500	3.5	4,699
	Europe and Northern America	-	-	2.3	3,800	0.8	1,297	-	-	2.2	3,700	0.5	903
	Oceania	-	-	-	-	6.7	759	-	-	-	-	3.1	352
UNICEF regions	East Asia and Pacific	-	-	6.2	25,100	3.2	13,055	-	-	2.7	10,700	2.1	8,452
	Europe and Central Asia	-	-	5.8	8,300	3.4	4,915	-	-	5.5	7,900	1.4	2,085
	Latin America and Caribbean	-	-	6.0	8,200	5.5	7,351	-	-	4.0	5,500	3.5	4,701
	Middle East and North Africa	-	-	6.5	7,200	6.4	8,159	-	-	3.8	4,200	3.7	4,801
	North America	-	-	0.3	200	0.4	221	-	-	0.3	200	0.4	221
	South Asia	-	-	4.9	21,800	3.1	14,331	-	-	2.4	10,800	2.0	9,447
	Sub-Saharan Africa	-	-	23.7	89,200	21.3	89,531	-	-	10.6	39,800	5.8	24,267
National income grouping	Low-income	19.4	65,200	26.2	65,000	23.5	57,706	8.8	29,700	11.6	28,700	7.1	17,370
	Lower-middle income	8.5	58,200	9.0	69,700	7.5	59,691	4.9	33,500	4.3	33,600	3.1	24,356
	Upper-middle income	6.6	26,200	4.9	23,700	3.6	18,708	2.0	7,800	3.2	15,300	2.1	11,040
	High-income	1.2	2,000	0.9	1,600	0.7	1,457	1.0	1,600	0.8	1,500	0.6	1,209

Notes: Numbers have been rounded and do not always add up to total values. Trend data for 2016 are not available for SDG and UNICEF regions.

OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

Definitions

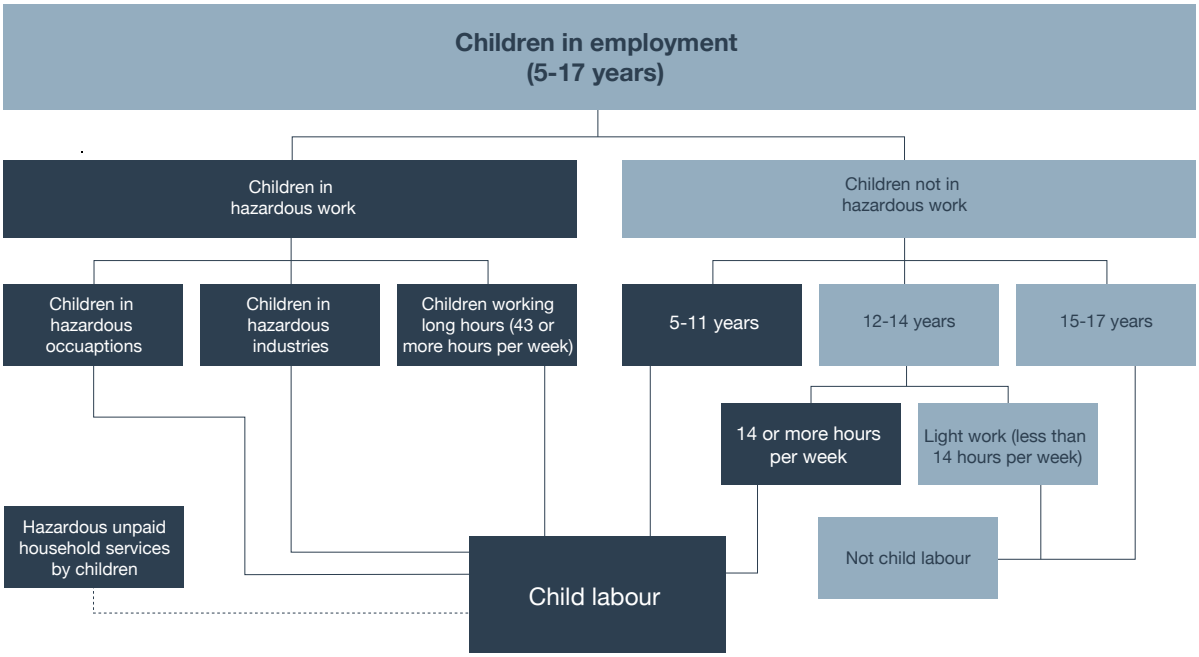
The measurement framework used to produce the 2024 global estimates of child labour aligns with the resolution on child labour statistics adopted by the 18th ICLS. This framework has been applied to produce previous global estimates. The 20th ICLS in 2018 adopted a new resolution to update the measurement framework on child labour. While many countries have now aligned data collection with the new statistical standards, the old framework was used for the 2024 global estimates to maintain comparability with previously published estimates. As more countries adopt the new measurement framework, the feasibility of adopting it for future global estimates will be evaluated.

The starting point for calculating estimates of child labour is to determine the number of children aged 5 to 17 years in employment. Among employed children, those working in designated hazardous occupations, hazardous industries and/or for long hours are considered as being in child labour. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Designated hazardous industries are mining, quarrying and construction, while an ILO task force has determined 41 hazardous occupations for children.[20] Working long hours is defined as 43 or more hours per week. This figure approximately corresponds to the normal hours of work for adults stipulated by national legislation, mostly from 40 to 44 hours. The number of children in designated hazardous industries, in hazardous occupations and/or working long hours constitutes the overall number of children in hazardous work.

Obtaining a final estimate of child labour involves adding two more categories to the calculation: children aged 5 to 11 years engaged in any form of employment and children aged 12 to 14 years working 14 hours or more per week (*see Fig A1*). For those aged 12 to 14 years, the 14-hour threshold distinguishes between permissible light work and other work. The same threshold was used in previous estimates. It corresponds to two hours of work per day over a calendar week, covering both school days and weekends.

The child labour statistical framework of the ICLS offers a separate measurement of hazardous unpaid household services performed by children. The indicator captures the performance of household chores by children aged 5 to 14 years for 21 or more hours per week. There is no hourly threshold for children aged 15 to 17 years.

Fig A1. **Measurement framework for the global estimation of child labour**



Note: The dotted lines refer to the measurement of hazardous unpaid household services being optional based on the 2008 resolution on child labour statistics.

Data sources

The 2024 estimates are based on a wide range of nationally representative household surveys that fully or partially cover children aged 5 to 17 years. The estimates use available data from 107 countries covering 60 per cent of the global population of children aged 5 to 17 years. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest data coverage, with 83 per cent of children covered by available data.

Data come from a variety of sources. For 19 countries, data are from national Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys implemented with UNICEF support. For 37 countries, data are from either national child labour surveys conducted with ILO assistance or national labour force surveys that collected data on children aged 5 years and older. For two countries, data are from Demographic and Health Surveys. Data for the remaining 49 countries are from national labour force surveys or other household surveys that cover part of the population group aged 5 to 17 years.

Nearly 90 per cent of surveys were conducted within the reference period of 2020 to 2024. Data from 13 surveys in 2019 were exceptionally included to increase coverage.

Modelling

For countries where data were not available or only available for a portion of the population of children, an explicit imputation procedure was used. This helped account for the non-randomness of missing data by using the relationship between socio-demographic covariates and child labour (or other variables of interest) to impute missing values.

The modelling procedure involved the sequential creation of models for six indicators. Four models impute values for variables that correspond to rates, including children in employment, child labour, children in hazardous work and children in child labour in the general production boundary. The remaining two models impute values that correspond to disaggregated distributions of populations of children in employment, child labour and hazardous work. These two models impute distribution by sector of economic activity and school attendance. Each of the six models is imputed by sex (male, female and total) and age bands (5 to 11 years, 12 to 14 years, 15 to 17 years and 5 to 17 years). This generates 12 observations within each country, although the 12 categories are not independent, as the total for the categories must equal the sum of the components.

The construction of the six models involved a multi-step procedure that resulted in a full set of data for each country. First, a dimension reduction procedure and cross-validation technique were executed to test various model specifications. This helped to identify the specification that predicted the values of the dependent variable with the highest accuracy. After the best-performing model was selected, the relationship between the dependent variable and exogenous variables was established for countries with available data, using a linear regression model. Next, the model predicted the values of the dependent variable for countries with missing data, using data on the exogenous variables and the relationship established in the previous steps. Finally, a system of checks was carried out to ensure consistency in the estimates. A full description of the methodology is presented in an accompanying publication: *Methodology of the 2024 Global Estimates of Child Labour*.

Methods for global projections

The current pace of progress was calculated as the compound annual percentage reduction in child labour implied by the difference between the prevalence of child labour in 2020 and 2024. An underlying assumption is that the decrease in child labour was constant in every year of this four-year period. Projected prevalence levels of child labour were then calculated by applying the annual percentage reduction. Finally, the projected number of children in child labour was calculated based on projected prevalence levels and projected population figures.

ENDNOTES

1. Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.
2. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2024 revision*, Online edition. Custom data were acquired from the website. This figure is based on the population of children aged 5 to 17 years.
3. International Labour Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Labour: Methodology of the global estimates and trends, 2020-2024*, ILO and UNICEF, Geneva, forthcoming.
4. See resolution II concerning statistics on child labour in: International Labour Organization, 'Report of the Conference: 18th international conference of labour statisticians, Geneva, 24 November–5 December 2008', ICLS/18/2008/IV/FINAL, ILO, Geneva, 2009. Although there is a more recent resolution concerning statistics on child labour (20th ICLS, 2018), most countries still use the previous statistical framework (18th ICLS, 2008). The ILO is actively supporting countries' efforts to transition to the most recent statistical standards. Once a critical mass of household surveys uses the new statistical standards, it will be possible to produce global and regional estimates based on them.
5. Two formulations of SDG indicator 8.7.1 are used for global monitoring and reporting on SDG Target 8.7. The first is based on the production boundary of the United Nations System of National Accounts and the second on the general production boundary. The indicator based on the System of National Accounts production boundary accounts for children engaged in economic activities at or above age-specific hourly thresholds per week, as in child labour. The indicator based on the general production boundary additionally accounts for children aged 5 to 14 years performing unpaid household services at or above 21 hours per week, as also in child labour. For further details, see the United Nations, Statistical Division, SDG indicator metadata, indicator 8.7.1, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-08-07-01.pdf>.
6. Figures do not sum to 138 million due to rounding.
7. Some caveats apply in the interpretation of the 2024 global estimates. Over time, the measurement of child labour has improved, meaning that current estimates capture child labour cases that would not have been represented in previous global estimates. The reference period for the 2024 estimates – from 2020 to 2024 – includes the years in which the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. Child labour temporarily spiked in many parts of the world as schools closed and children were sent to work to help families struggling to cope with adverse socio-economic repercussions. At the same time, as with previous global estimates, the lack of reliable national data on the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work, including child trafficking, forced labour, children recruited for involvement in armed conflict, child commercial sexual exploitation and child involvement in illicit activities, means that the 2024 estimates underreport and underrepresent these forms of child labour.
8. This report applies different geographical classifications to present regional figures. The regional classification system of the SDGs is used to present the 2024 estimates of child labour. For regional trends, however, the report reverts to ILO regional groupings due to the lack of historical data before 2016 for regions in the SDG classification system and the fact that the SDG regional classification only came into effect in 2015 when the SDGs were adopted.
9. *World Population Prospects: The 2024 revision.*
10. The World Bank currently defines high-income economies as those with GDP per capita of $13,846 or more.
11. See, for example, International Labour Organization and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, *The Role of Social Protection in the Elimination of Child Labour: Evidence review and policy implications*, ILO and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Geneva and Florence, 2022, <www.ilo.org/publications/role-social-protection-elimination-child-labour-evidence-review-and-policy>.
12. Understanding Children's Work Programme, *Unpaid Household Services and Child Labour*, UCW, Rome, 2013, <www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_221638.pdf>.
13. The threshold of 21 or more hours per week of unpaid household services among children aged 5 to 14 years is reflected in SDG indicator 8.7.1, based on the general production boundary.
14. The exclusion of household chores performed by children aged 15 to 17 years is also reflected in SDG indicator 8.7.1, based on the general production boundary. More methodological work is needed to determine the possible impact of performing household chores among older adolescents and to establish an hourly threshold beyond which household chores would constitute child labour among this population group.
15. Industries and occupations deemed hazardous for the purposes of the global estimates are based on ILO Recommendation No. 190, which outlines types of activities to consider in national legislation on work that is hazardous for children. Examples of occupations and industries defined as hazardous in the measurement of the global estimates are mining and construction.
16. These data were collected through a dedicated module on foundational learning skills introduced during the sixth round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. The module measures the acquisition of foundational reading and numeracy among children aged 7 to 14 years through a direct assessment of children's skills and knowledge.
17. For a more detailed analysis of foundational learning outcomes among children, see: United Nations Children's Fund, *Are Children Really Learning? Exploring foundational skills in the midst of a learning crisis*, UNICEF, New York, 2022, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/are-children-really-learning-foundational-skills-report/>.
18. See, for example: International Labour Organization, *Meta-analysis of the Effects of Interventions on Child Labour*, ILO, Geneva, 2023; International Labour Organization, Research for Policy Guidance tool; International Labour Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward*, ILO and UNICEF, New York, 2021, pp. 60–71; and International Labour Organization, *Ending Child Labour by 2025: A review of policies and programmes*, ILO, Geneva, 2018.
19. The conference brought together representatives from governments, employers' organizations, workers' organizations, United Nations entities, civil society groups, businesses, academic institutions and children themselves to reaffirm their commitment to ending child labour and their shared responsibility in achieving this goal.
20. International Labour Organization, 'International Standard Classification of Occupations', ILO, Geneva, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/methods/concepts-and-definitions/classification-occupation/>.

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