

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Target 8.7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms

[Indicator 8.7.1: Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age](#)

Institutional information

Organization(s):

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
International Labour Organization (ILO)

Concepts and definitions

Definition:

The number of children engaged in child labour corresponds to the number of children reported to be in child labour during the reference period (usually the week prior to the survey). The proportion of children in child labour is calculated as the number of children in child labour divided by the total number of children in the population. For the purposes of this indicator, children include all persons aged 5 to 17. This indicator is disaggregated by sex and age group (age bands 5-14 and 15-17)

Rationale:

Far too many children in the world remain trapped in child labour, compromising their individual future. According to the latest ILO global estimates, about 168 million children worldwide are child labourers, accounting for almost 11 percent of the child population. These stark figures underscore the need for accelerated progress against child labour in the lead up to the 2025 target date, and the accompanying need for child labour statistics to monitor and guide efforts in this regard. Reliable, comprehensive and timely data on the nature and extent of child labour provide a basis for determining priorities for national global action against child labour. Statistical information on child labour, and more broadly on all working children, also provide a basis for increasing public awareness of the situation of working children and for the development of appropriate regulatory frameworks and policies.

Concepts:

The term **child labour** refers to the subset of children's activities that is injurious, negative or undesirable to children and that should be targeted for elimination. Child labour is a legal concept rather than a statistical one, and the international legal standards that define it are therefore the necessary frame of reference for child labour statistics. The three principal international conventions on child labour – ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age) (C138), ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms) (C182), and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), together set the legal boundaries for child labour, and provide the legal basis for national and international actions against it.

In December 2008, the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adopted the Resolution concerning statistics of child labour. This Resolution helps in translating the legal standards governing child labour into statistical terms. In particular, the Resolution is designed to set standards for the collection, compilation and analysis of national child labour statistics, and to guide countries in updating their existing statistical system in this field.

In accordance with the Resolution, and on the basis of the production boundary set by the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA), child labour is defined for measurement purposes to include all persons aged 5 to 17 years who are engaged in one or more of the following activities during a specified time period:

- hazardous work (18th ICLS, paragraphs 21 to 32);
- worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work (18th ICLS, paragraphs 33 to 34); and
- employment below the minimum working age, excluding, where applicable, “light work”, performed by children aged not less than 12 or 13 years (18th ICLS, paragraphs 35 to 37).

If, depending upon national policies and circumstances, the general production boundary rather than the SNA production boundary is used for measuring productive activities by children, child labour will include, in addition to these three categories, hazardous unpaid household services. For the sake of clarity, child labour estimated on this basis should be called “child labour (general production boundary basis)”.

The measurement methodology used by the ILO in its global estimates on child labour,¹ building on the ICLS statistical definition, classifies child labour on the basis of the following criteria:

- Ages 5 to 11: at least 1 hour of economic activity per week;
- Ages 12 to 14: at least 14 hour of economic activity per week in all forms of economic activity *except* permissible “light” work, where light work is operationally defined as economic activity that (i) does not exceed 14 hours per week and that (ii) is not hazardous in nature; and
- Ages 15 to 17: work in designated hazardous industries, or in designated hazardous occupations, or for long hours. Long hours are defined as 43 or more hours during the reference week.

Comments and limitations:

Child labour estimates based on the statistical standards set out in the ICLS resolution represent useful benchmarks for international comparative purposes but are not necessarily consistent with estimates based on national child labour legislation. ILO Convention No. 138 contains a number of flexibility clauses left to the discretion of the competent national authority in consultation (where relevant) with workers’ and employers’ organizations (e.g., minimum ages, scope of application).² This means that there is no single legal definition of child labour across countries, and thus, no single statistical measure of child labour consistent with national legislation across countries.

¹ ILO-IPEC. Marking progress against child labour - Global estimates and trends 2000-2012 / International Labour Office, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) - Geneva: ILO, 2013.

² Principal areas of flexibility in the Convention include: (a) *minimum ages*: Members whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may specify a lower general minimum age of 14 years (Art. 2.4) and a lower age range for light work of 12 to 14 years (Art 7.4); and (b) *scope of application*: Members may exclude from the application of the Convention limited (non-hazardous) categories of employment or work in respect of which special and substantial problems of application arise (Art. 4.1). Members whose economy and administrative facilities are insufficiently developed may also initially limit the scope of application of the Convention (Art. 5.1) beyond a core group of economic activities or undertakings (Art. 5.3).

Methodology

Computation Method:

Children aged 5-17: Number of children aged 5-17 reported in child labour during the week prior to the survey divided by the total number of children aged 5-17 in the population, multiplied by 100.

Children aged 5-14: Number of children aged 5-14 reported in child labour during the week prior to the survey divided by the total number of children aged 5-14 in the population, multiplied by 100.

Children aged 15-17: Number of children aged 15-17 reported child labour during the week prior to the survey divided by the total number of children aged 15-17 in the population, multiplied by 100.

Disaggregation:

Sex and age.

Data Sources

Description:

Household surveys such as National Labour Force Surveys, National Multipurpose Household Surveys, UNICEF-supported Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), ILO-supported Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), and World Bank Living Standard Measurement surveys (LSMS) are among the most important instruments for generating information on child labour in developing countries. Estimates of child labour incidence generated by these survey instruments are increasingly relied on by countries to monitor progress towards national and global child labour elimination targets. Many countries also produce national labour estimates and reports that often include data on child labour and/or employment among children.

Data Availability

Nationally representative and comparable data are currently available for 102 low-and middle-income countries.

Calendar

NA

Data providers

National Statistical Offices (for the most part) and line ministries/other government agencies and International agencies that have conducted labour force surveys or other household surveys through which data on child labour were collected.

Data compilers

UNICEF and ILO

References

URL:

data.unicef.org

<http://www.ilo.org/ipec/ChildlabourstatisticsSIMPOC/Questionnairesurveysandreports/lang--en/index.htm>

www.ucw-project.org

References:

<http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/child-labour.html>

<http://www.ilo.org/ipec/ChildlabourstatisticsSIMPOC/lang--en/index.htm>

www.ucw-project.org