



International  
Labour  
Organization

unicef   
for every child



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# CHILD LABOUR

GLOBAL ESTIMATES 2024, TRENDS AND THE ROAD FORWARD

## **In 2015, the world made a promise to end child labour by 2025. That timeline has now come to an end. But child labour has not.**

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, nearly 138 million children are in child labour worldwide, down from 160 million four years ago. 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.

This success can be attributed to some well-known policy imperatives that, if sustained and scaled-up, could bring about an end to child labour. These include:

- Ensuring free and high-quality schooling to provide a worthwhile alternative to child labour and help ensure successful transitions from school to decent work.
- 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.
- Strengthening legal protections against child labour, aligned with international standards to lay the groundwork for effective prevention and enforcement.
- 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 to reduce the need for children to undertake 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.
- Prioritizing 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 must go hand in hand with broader development strategies. And 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.

The latest estimates underscore the magnitude of the challenge of ending child labour. They also point to progress, and in doing so, affirm the possibilities. We have 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.

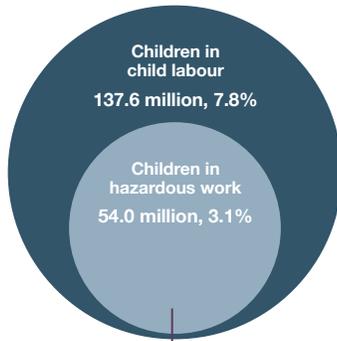




# Current situation

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

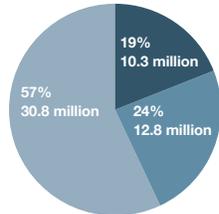
Number and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour and hazardous work



## Hazardous work occurs among children of all ages

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

- 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

- Agriculture
- Industry
- Services

### 5-11 years



### 12-14 years



### 15-17 years



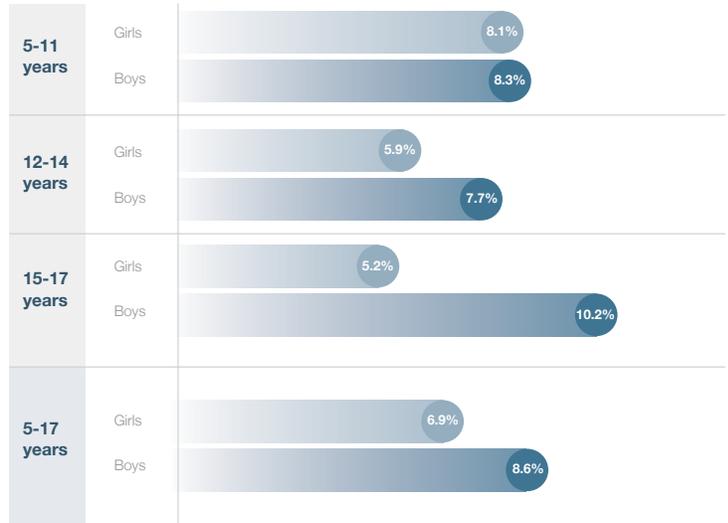
### 5-17 years



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

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

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



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

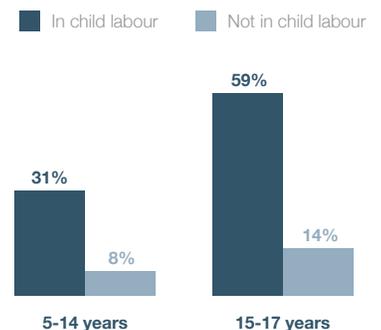
Percentage of children aged 5 to 14 years in child labour (including and excluding household chores performed for 21 or more hours per week), by age and sex

- Child labour excluding household chores
- Child labour including household chores



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

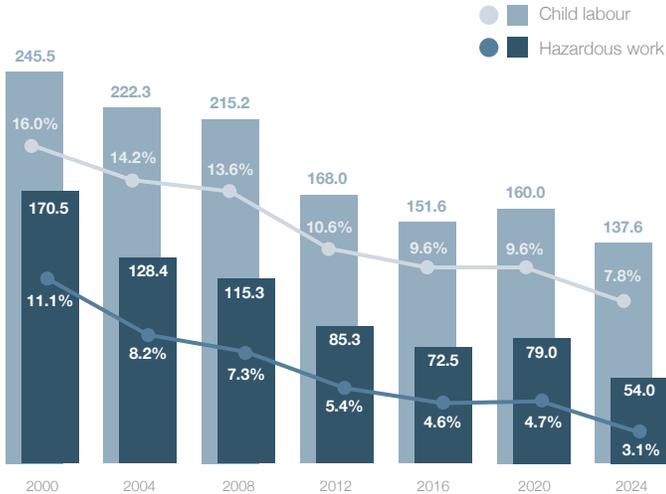
Percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years not attending school, by age and child labour status



# Trends and projections

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

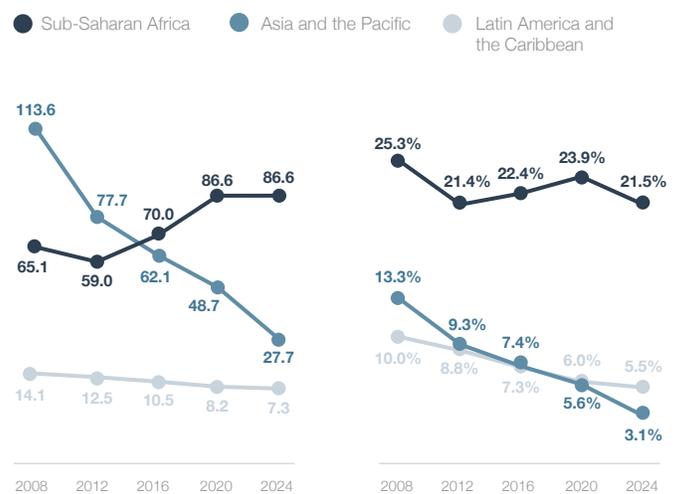
Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour and hazardous work



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

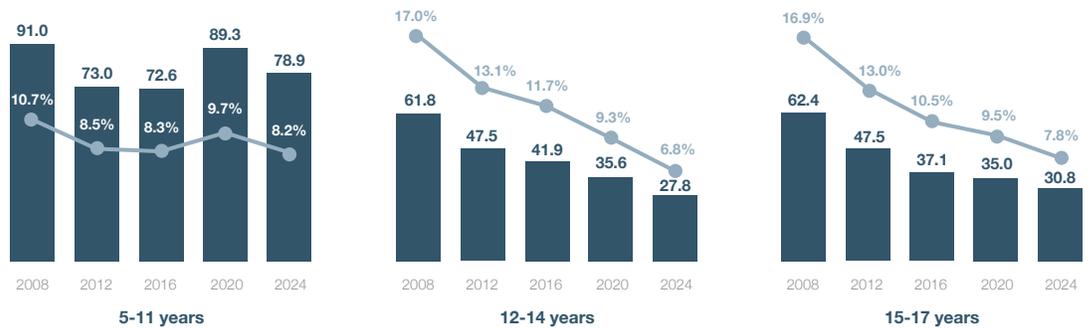
Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by ILO region



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

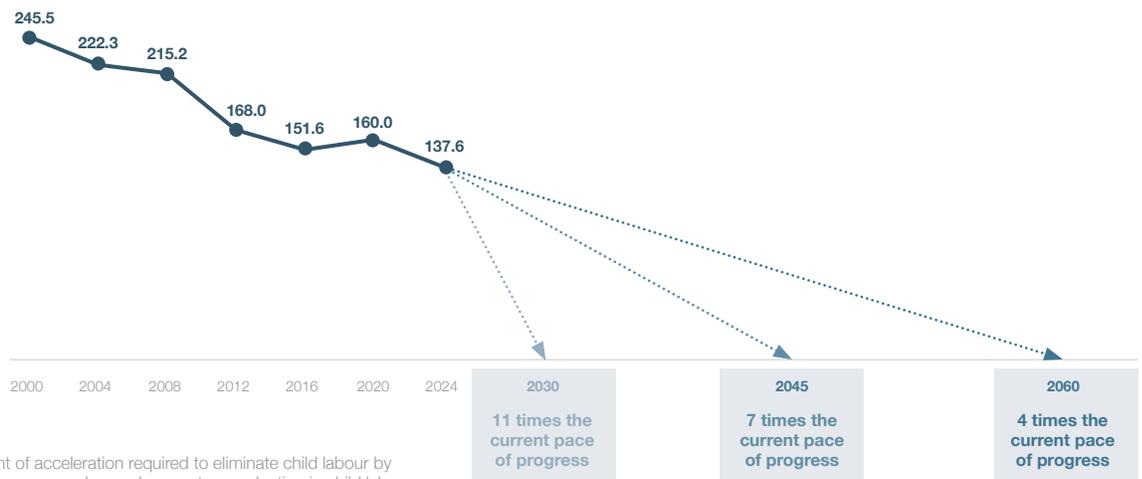
Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by age



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.





Copyright © International Labour Organization and United Nations Children's Fund 2025

This is an open access work distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Users can reuse, share, adapt and build upon the original work, as detailed in the License. The International Labour Office (ILO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) must be clearly credited as the owners of the original work. The use of the emblems or logos of the ILO and UNICEF is not permitted in connection with users' work.

#### **Suggested citation**

International Labour Office and United Nations Children's Fund, *Executive Summary. Child Labour: Global estimates 2024, trends and the road forward*, ILO and UNICEF, New York, 2025. License: CC BY 4.0.

#### **Acknowledgements**

This brochure has been jointly prepared by the ILO and UNICEF. Members of the core team included Federico Blanco (ILO), Claudia Cappa (UNICEF), Lorenzo Guarcello (ILO), Munkhbadar Jugder (UNICEF), Scott Lyon (ILO), Nicole Petrowski (UNICEF) and Elizabeth Weathersby (ILO). This publication includes content from the global report *Child Labour: Global estimates 2024, trends and the road forward*, which was prepared with inputs from several additional colleagues from the ILO and UNICEF. For a complete list of contributors, please consult that publication.

The brochure was edited and copyedited by Gretchen Luchsinger, Lois Jensen and Alice Fogliata Cresswell (independent consultants) and designed by Era Porth (independent consultant).

#### **Cover photo credit**

© UNICEF/UNI701344/Rasnat



International  
Labour  
Organization

unicef   
for every child