



International
Labour
Organization



Regional Initiative
Latin America and the Caribbean
Free of Child Labour

DO NOT LEAVE GIRLS BEHIND

Child labour and gender in
Latin America and the Caribbean



In 2016

there were

152 million

GIRLS, BOYS AND ADOLESCENTS IN CHILD LABOUR IN THE WORLD, WITH ALMOST HALF OF THEM PERFORMING HAZARDOUS WORK

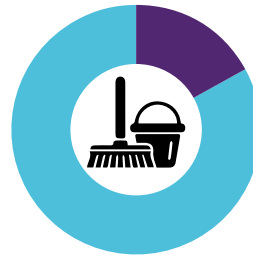
(ILO, 2017)

Agriculture



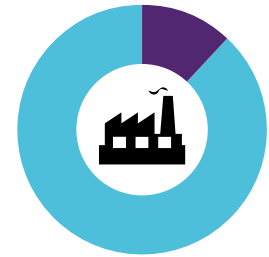
70,9%

Services



17,2%

Industry



11,9%

Despite the progress achieved in the last years, the figures are worrying and indicate that it will be difficult to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target on child labour by 2025

In Latin America and the Caribbean,

10,5 MILLION

girls, boys and adolescents are in child labour

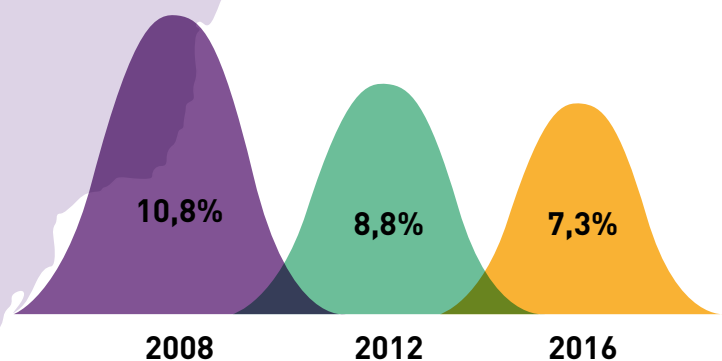
Between 2008 and 2016, the number of girls and boys in child labour fell by 63 million globally

However, this decrease has not been maintained at a sustained rate and the social and economic consequences of a crisis could further slow it down. The reduction between 2014 and 2016 was 16 million, only one third of what was achieved in the previous four-year period (ILO, 2017)

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the reduction of child labour has also slowed down, but gradually

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN GIRLS AND BOYS IN CHILD LABOUR

(ILO, 2017)



Most of them, **6,3 MILLION** perform hazardous work (ILO, 2017)

These figures show the need to undertake actions that increase the impact of initiatives dedicated to the prevention and eradication of child labour and identify those areas in which no results have been achieved yet or where the effects have been minor. It is about analysing if the work done has protected all population equally and about carrying out an exhaustive gender analysis to ensure that we are not leaving girls behind (ILO, 2017).



Making visible the invisible



58%

88 million



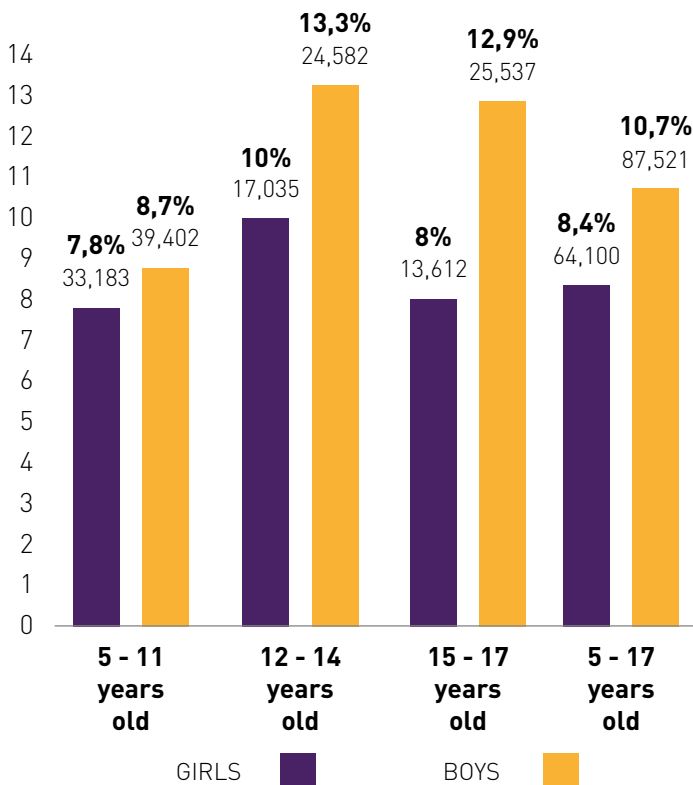
42%

64 million

According to the available figures, there are currently more boys than girls in child labour. It is estimated that boys represent 58% (88 million), while girls represent 42% (64 million). Boys are also a majority among those performing hazardous work: 62% of the total.

The difference between boys and girls is smaller in the younger population group. Between 5 and 11 years-old, 8,7% of boys are in a situation of child labour, compared to 7,8% of girls. The gap is much more significant in the group between 15 and 17 years old, where the difference is almost 5%.

CHILD LABOUR IN THE WORLD ACCORDING TO SEX AND AGE (2016)



Source: compiled by author based on ILO (2017).

Worst forms of child labour



Some studies indicate that, if the category of hazardous work is excluded, girls are the majority among those who perform worst forms of child labour. They face an increased risk of being victims of commercial sexual exploitation, forced labour or bonded labour. The illicit nature of these activities also makes them more difficult to identify and quantify (ILO, 2009).

Some figures help to make visible the girls' vulnerability to those forms of exploitation. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) points out that in the world, girls represent 20% of the total victims of human trafficking. This percentage is significantly higher than that of boys, who represent 8%. Both in the case of girls and in the case of women in general, sexual exploitation is the most frequent purpose of trafficking, along with other such as domestic servitude or forced labour in various sectors (UNODC, 2016).

The figures show that more and more girls are victims of trafficking, considering that in 2004, they represented 10% of those in this situation. This means that in just over a decade the percentage has doubled (UNODC, 2016).

Although there are few studies that explain the reason for this gap, some point out that girls' work tends to be invisible, while boys' work is usually easier to detect and account for. In some cases, not even people close to them or from the community themselves recognise that girls are in a situation of child labour. This is because they frequently carry out, especially, small-scale agricultural work, domestic work in the home of a third party or employer, work in family businesses located in private homes or intensive household chores in their own home (ILO, 2009).

Another factor that could explain the invisibility of girls in the numbers on child labour is the fact that they are at greater risk of performing intensive household chores and/or on a full-time basis. Strictly speaking, household chores are not considered child labour, even if they involve an excessive amount of hours, since they are not counted as an economic activity. However, their negative impact on girls and adolescents can be similar: limited access to education, health risks or limitations for development (ILO, 2017). In addition, even if they are performed in the family home with no remuneration, they can also involve carrying out hazardous activities.

All these elements show that there are yet neither enough studies available nor appropriate tools to properly measure the girls and female adolescent's child labour. This implies that there are important limitations to know its characteristics and dynamics; and, therefore, to be able to design effective actions for its prevention and eradication.

In this sense, given the data available so far, the fact that the work of girls has been reduced at a much slower rate is significant. In fact, between 2012 and 2016 the decrease in child labour for girls was half of that registered for boys. The trend is similar with respect to hazardous work (ILO, 2017).



Girls mostly assume tasks related to the field of care

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 63% OF PEOPLE UNDER 15 YEARS OLD WHO DEDICATE MORE THAN 21 HOURS PER WEEK TO CARE TASKS ARE GIRLS



In addition, two thirds of those who work more than 43 HOURS PER WEEK PERFORMING HOUSEHOLD CHORES WITHOUT PAY ARE GIRLS



Segregation by sex in child labour:

Reflection of gender roles in the labour market

The gender roles still in force largely determine the differentiated characteristics and conditions that child labour acquires for girls and boys. Gender roles are culturally constructed patterns that assign men and women differentiated behaviours. In addition, they tend to give greater value and power to those aspects and activities considered as masculine.

Specifically in the context of work, women are socially assigned the responsibility of assuming unpaid household chores and care work in their own homes. Men, for their part, assume a “role of providers”, inserting themselves in different forms of paid work. Despite the marked division between unpaid household chores and paid employment, as from the second half of the twentieth century women joined the labour market in an increasingly widespread way. However, the conditions of access to this market are still strongly marked by gender roles. This is evidenced, for example, by a horizontal segregation, which implies that women concentrate on activities related to care, which are often carried out under worse conditions, for example, with lower wages, low recognition, and minimum protection guarantees (ILO, 2014).

Translated to child labour, gender roles also push girls and boys to perform different activities that also involve different risks. The available numbers do not allow an adequate analysis at the regional level, since there is only data aggregated by macro-sectors. However, research carried out at national level in various countries shows that girls participate more than boys in domestic work and in household chores in their own home. Even when they work in similar fields, the specific activities that they carry out are different. For example, when they do agricultural work, boys often perform tasks that involve the use of machinery, the use of sharp tools or chemicals. This exposes them to risks such as amputations, cuts, burns or intoxication.

Girls, on the other hand, tend to be responsible for aspects such as water collection or carrying wood - which usually imply on foot displacements of several kilometers - so they are exposed to other types of risks such as muscle or bone injuries, fatigue and even sexual abuse and rape (ILO, 2017).

GIRLS ARE NORMALLY IN CHARGE OF ACTIVITIES SUCH AS FETCHING WATER OR COLLECTING WOOD, WHICH IMPLY ON FOOT DISPLACEMENTS OF SEVERAL KILOMETRES



Girls and domestic work

Understanding the situation of girls in child labour requires a specific analysis of domestic work, since this is a sector in which they are overrepresented.

Child domestic workers, mostly female, constitute a group that is practically invisible in child labour information. On the one hand, they are not taken into consideration by most employment surveys due to the fact that they are below the minimum legal age for admission to employment. Also, in many countries, those who carry out domestic work are not considered as workers (ILO, 2017b). Its singular character, mainly due to the fact that domestic work is carried out in private homes, results in high levels of informality and, therefore, in a lower recognition of rights for those who carry out this activity. Added to this is the low capacity of the States to monitor the conditions in which domestic work is carried out, due to the limitations on carrying out labour inspections in private homes (ILO, 2016). With regard to child domestic work, the situation is even more serious, due to the lack of regulations that guarantee an effective protection of rights (ILO, 2017b).

Paid domestic work has been regulated for a long time by means of exceptional measures that do not recognize or guarantee all rights to these workers, mostly female workers. Consequently, moving towards formalization and decent work has involved the implementation of equally exceptional policies (ILO, 2016). In this sense, the eradication of child labour in domestic work also requires specialized measures that respond to the characteristics that make this activity unique.

Different situations, different solutions

In summary, the numbers show that the characteristics of girls' child labour are particular with respect to that of boys. In practice, this implies that actions and policies without a gender focus have greater positive impacts on boys than on girls.

Gender analysis allows us to identify the situation of girls with greater precision, as well as to indicate the information gaps to be bridged. This is a challenge that must be addressed urgently in order to prevent the girls' exploitation remains invisible.

In addition, the gender approach has to be mainstreamed into the design and implementation of policies. The point is to ensure that the intended actions respond to the girl's child labour specificities, so that no one is left behind.

A significant number of girls, boys and adolescents perform domestic work in the home of a third party or employer

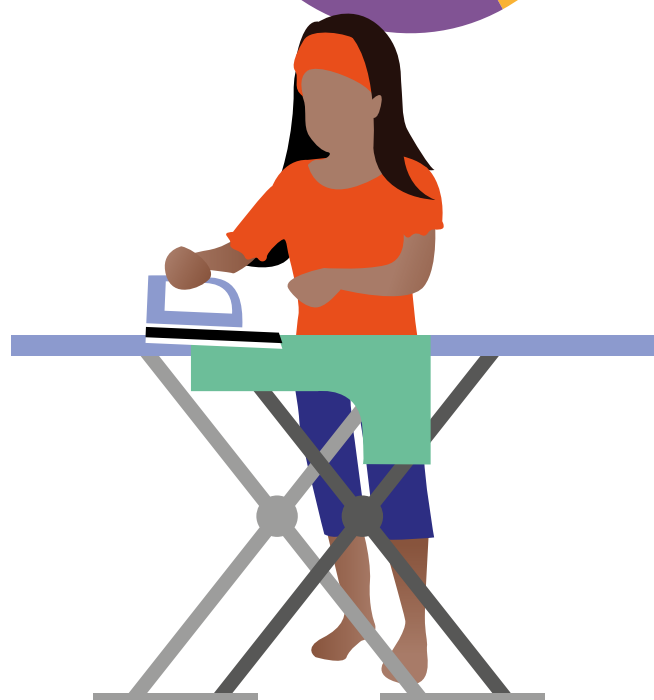
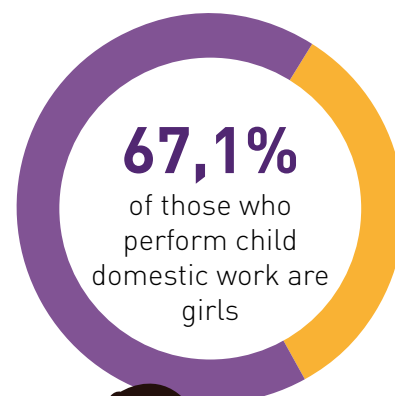
According to the latest available figure, from 2012, at least

17 million

boys, girls and adolescents were performing domestic work

11,5 million

were in a child labour situation, due to the fact that they had not reached the legal minimum age for admission to employment or they were performing hazardous work (ILO, 2017b)



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For more information, please visit:

Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean free of child labour
www.iniciativa2025alc.org
iniciativaregional@ilo.org

International Labour Organization (ILO)
www.ilo.org/childlabour
sirti_oit@ilo.org



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