

Summary of the *Child Labour Global Estimates 2024: trends and the road forward*

On June 11, 2025, ahead of World Day Against Child Labour, the ILO and UNICEF released the report [Child Labour Global Estimates 2024, trends and the road forward](#), which provides updated estimates of child labour at global and regional levels. This summary provides an overview of key trends.

The data used to prepare the report comes from national surveys. As of 2024, these surveys were representative of 60% of the global population of children and 82% of children in Africa. More data from such surveys was available compared to previous years, strengthening the reliability of these results.

Current levels and trends

- Since 2020, the total number of children in child labour has fallen by more than 20 million, in contrast to the increase in the world's population. At the same time, the number of children engaged in hazardous work has fallen by 25 million. However, progress remains uneven and insufficient to meet the global target of eliminating child labour by 2025.

In 2024, an estimated 137.6 million children were in child labour, including 54 million in hazardous work.

- **The overall decrease is due to a reduction in the prevalence of child labour in Asia and Latin America.**
- Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest prevalence of child labour and the largest number of working children, at 86.6 million. Since 2020, the prevalence of child labour in sub-Saharan Africa has remained more than three times higher than in all other regions. The number of children in child labour has stagnated over the past five years, but the prevalence of child labour in the region has decreased from 23.9% in 2020 to 21.5% in 2024.
- **Half of all children in child labour live in rural areas**, where children are much more likely to work as part of family subsistence and on smallholder farms.
- **Children of all ages are involved in child labour and hazardous work.** Globally, 19% of children in hazardous child labour are aged between 5 and 11, 24% between 12 and 14, and 57% between 15 and 18.
- **Progress against child labour has been slower and more uneven among young children:**
 - The prevalence of child labour has fallen for young children aged 5-11, from 89.3 million in 2020 to 78.9 million in 2024, but remains twice as high as for older age groups.
 - The number of children in the 12-14 age bracket fell by around 8 million between 2020 and 2024, reaching 27.8 million in 2024.
 - The number of children in the 15-17 age group has fallen by around 5 million, to 30.8 million by 2024. The overall trend is strongly influenced by the situation in sub-Saharan Africa, where some 58 million children aged 5-11 work in agriculture.

Agriculture:

- **Agriculture remains by far in the sector most affected by child labour**, absorbing 61% of children in child labour, and up to 70% in sub-Saharan Africa, even though it accounts for only 28% of adult employment.
- Most of this work is done to support the family and on smallholder farms. 27% of all child labour is in services, such as domestic work for third parties, petty trading and other informal services.

Regional disparities and demographic dynamics

- **Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most affected by child labour, with 86.6 million children in child labour.** This figure is 10% lower than in 2020, which means that it has returned to 2012 levels.
- Strong demographic growth in the region has cancelled the impact of this reduction on the absolute number of children concerned. Population growth is placing strain on services (particularly education and social protection) that are essential in the fight against child labour. For example, it is estimated that 80 million additional school places will be needed between 2024 and 2050 to cope with the increase in the number of primary school students. When it comes to social protection, despite significant efforts to invest in social safety nets in several African countries, overall coverage remains lower in Africa than in other regions.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, child labour particularly affects younger children. Children aged 5-11 make up 69% of children in child labour in Africa and 57% of children in child labour worldwide.

Changes in child labour by sex

- **The prevalence of child labour has fallen among both boys and girls:** among children aged 5 to 17, 8.6% of boys were in child labour in 2024 (compared with 11.2% in 2020), and 6.9% of girls were working (compared with 7.8% in 2020).
- **When excessive domestic chores (21 hours or more per week) are included, child labour is more common among girls than boys:** 11.8% of girls aged 5 to 14 are in child labour, compared with 11.1% of boys.
- This difference reflects a gender distribution of tasks: boys are more involved in economic activities (agriculture), while girls bear a greater share of unpaid domestic tasks, which are often invisible.

Child labour and access to education

- **Children continue to combine work and school:** 71% of children in child labour attend school.
- However, the link between child labour and non-attendance at school remains strong:
 - 29% of all children in child labour do not attend school; among adolescents (aged 15-17), this rate rises to 52%.
 - In sub-Saharan Africa, 48% of children in hazardous work are not in school.

Other risk factors: climate change and poverty

- **Climate change has a direct and indirect influence on child labour.** According to the World Bank, between 32 and 132 million more people could fall into extreme poverty by 2030 because of climate change, which could increase children's vulnerability to child labour.
- Climatic hazards (droughts, floods, crop failures) undermine the livelihoods of rural households. In response, some families resort to child labour to compensate for economic losses.

- **A significant proportion of child labour in agriculture is classified as hazardous** (57%, or 30.8 million children). **Climate change intensifies these risks**, particularly through rising temperatures, increased use of pesticides, and long working hours.

Outlook

- **Child labour could become even more concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa over the coming decades.**
- **If prevalence levels remain as they are today, the number of working children in sub-Saharan Africa could continue to rise**, exceeding 100 million after 2030, due to projected demographic growth. However, if sub-Saharan Africa can continue to reduce prevalence at the current rate, it could almost halve the number of working children by 2060.

To achieve the goal of eliminating child labour by 2030, the current rate would have to be multiplied by 11.

Read the original report: [Child Labour: Global estimates 2024, trends and the road forward](#)

Read the executive summary: [Child Labour global estimates 2024, trends and the road forward](#)