



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

frameworks into operational definitions for measurement purposes has been a subject of considerable debate and disagreement. However, in December 2008, the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adopted the resolution concerning the measurement of working time, which confirmed UNICEF's long-standing view that household chores, along with other types of work undertaken by children, should be included in the measurement of child labour. The resolution sets standards for the collection and analysis of data on child labour and calls upon all countries to develop a system of child labour statistics. The resolution also confirms that any type of work undertaken by children should be considered in the measurement of child labour, in addition to economic activities. The resolution covers children aged 5-17 who, during a specified time period, were engaged in any of the following: worst forms of child labour, employment below the minimum age or unpaid household services. It provided an important foundation for future statistical work in this area and offers the promise of easier comparability of national data.

Target overview

SDG monitoring

SDG Target 8.7 is tracked by the following indicator:

- 8.7.1: Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age

Broader monitoring context

Reliable, comprehensive and timely data on the nature and extent of child labour provide a basis for determining priorities for national and global action against child labour.

The international legal standards that define child labour serve as the necessary frame of reference for child labour statistics. Three principal international conventions on child labour together set the legal boundaries, and provide the legal basis for national and international actions against it: 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).

While these legal standards and conventions have defined the issue of child labour and its underlying concepts, the translation of these

UNICEF role in monitoring

Child labour is not included as an indicator in UNICEF's Strategic Plan for 2018-2021.

UNICEF, together with ILO, is co-custodian for SDG indicator 8.7.1. UNICEF, through the MICS survey programme, has also advanced standardized measurement of children engaged both in economic activities and in household chores. MICS has strengthened the evidence base both through methodological innovations, as well as supporting countries to collect and analyze these data.

General information and resources

- UNICEF data: <https://data.unicef.org/>
- UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS): <http://mics.unicef.org>
- SDG indicators: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>

For further information, please contact the Child Protection and Development focal point at the Data & Analytics Section at UNICEF HQ via: data@unicef.org



INDICATOR 8.7.1

Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age

Description

Definition and key terms

The proportion of children aged 5-17 years in child labour is calculated as the number of children in child labour divided by the total number of children in the population.

The definition of child labour is based on the number of hours spent working and includes engagement in both economic activities and household chores.¹ Specifically, the used by UNICEF and the ILO, building on the ICLS statistical definition, classifies child labour on the basis of the following criteria:

- Ages 5-11: at least 1 hour of economic activity per week or at least 21 hours of household chores;
- Ages 12-14: at least 14 hours 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 does not exceed 14 hours per week or at least 21 hours of household chores;
- Ages 15-17: at least 43 hours 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 does not exceed 43 hours per week

The normative definition of child labour also includes working in activities that are hazardous in nature. However, to ensure comparability of estimates, it has been decided by UNICEF and ILO to exclude engagement in hazardous occupations or under hazardous working conditions from the estimates of child labour for the purpose of reporting on SDG indicator 8.7.1. Further methodological work will be needed to validate questions aimed at identifying children engaged in hazardous activities.

Numerator: Number of children aged 5-17 years reported to be in child labour during the reference period (usually the week prior to the survey)

Denominator: Total number of children aged 5-17 years in the population

Key terms:

- *Economic activity* includes all types of establishments or businesses in which persons are engaged in the production and/or distribution of goods and services.
- *Household chores* refer to services rendered by and for household members without pay. These include activities such as cooking, ironing, housecleaning, shopping, looking after children, small repairs, fetching water or firewood, etc.

National data sources

The main sources of data on child labour are household surveys such as MICS, DHS and International Labour Organization (ILO)-supported Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC) surveys, as well as national labour force and employment surveys.

The MICS module covers children 5-17 years old and includes questions on the type of work performed and the number of hours he or she is engaged in it. Data are collected on both economic activities (paid or unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household, work for a family farm or business) and domestic work (household chores such as cooking, cleaning or caring for children). The MICS child labour module also collects information on hazardous working conditions.

In some DHS surveys the module on child labour was included and data on child labour have been collected.

SIMPOC questionnaires have been developed for use in a variety of data collection methods, including in stand-alone, household-based, child labour surveys and as a separate module in other household-based surveys. No specific operational definition of child labour is used in SIMPOC surveys across countries, but estimates are calculated on the basis of the definition used in the national legislation of individual countries. As a result, the definition of child labour that is used to calculate child labour estimates differs markedly among countries, as do the resulting estimates.

Data collection innovation

UNICEF and the ILO have started background work to identify methodologies that can be used in diverse conflict settings to produce estimates of the number of children recruited and used by armed forces and groups.

¹ UNICEF and ILO are currently exploring the feasibility of separately reporting on i) economic activities only; and ii) economic activities plus household chores



Using the indicator

Interpretation

Children around the world are routinely engaged in various forms of paid and unpaid work that are not harmful to them. However, they are considered child labourers when they are either too young to work or are carrying out activities that could compromise their physical, mental, social and/ or educational development.

As per the 2008 resolution concerning statistics of child labour, the definition of child labour is based on the number of hours spent working and working conditions and includes engagement in both economic activities and household chores. From both a programmatic and policy perspective, it is important to “unpack” the indicator by examining both components (economic activity and household chores) to identify whether child labour prevalence varies according to certain background characteristics of the child and the household.

For all countries, the recommended target for child labour is elimination (0%). National estimates that might be considered low can potentially mask pockets of child labour within certain sub-populations.

Disaggregation

As a minimum, this indicator should be disaggregated by sex and age group (age bands 5-11, 12-14 and 15-17). Additionally, survey data often allow for disaggregation by other standard sociodemographic factors and outcome indicators such as household wealth, place of residence, geographic location, and school attendance. In addition to these standard levels of disaggregation, this indicator can be usefully disaggregated in some surveys by mother’s level of education, ethnicity, religion, child functional difficulty and mother’s functional difficulties.

Common pitfalls

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). 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.

Despite the availability of national data on child labour for a large number of low- and middle-income countries, the worst forms of child labour have still not been captured in measurement efforts. These include all forms of slavery or similar practices such as trafficking and the recruitment and use of child soldiers, the use or procurement of children for prostitution or other illicit activities, and other work that is likely to harm children’s health, safety or well-being.

Regarding data collection pitfalls, the timing of the survey may affect the levels of child labour observed in a country. This is particularly true in places with substantial seasonal work, such as agriculture. Additionally, there may sometimes be discrepancies in values reported such as when the number of hours children are reported to be working exceeds the total number of hours in a week, for example.

Monitoring and reporting

National

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.

Global

Agencies: UNICEF and ILO

Process: UNICEF maintains the global database on child labour that is used for SDG and other official reporting. UNICEF HQ updates the database annually in collaboration with ILO and with Country Offices through the CRING process.

Before the inclusion of any data point in the database, it is reviewed by sector specialists at UNICEF headquarters to check for consistency and overall data quality. This review is based on a set of objective criteria to ensure that only the most recent and reliable information is included in the databases. UNICEF HQ also updates the database on a rolling basis throughout the year by searching for additional sources of data that are vetted by the COs before they are included in the global database.

Timing: New country level data, together with global and regional averages, are released annually both as part of State of the World’s Children and on UNICEF’s dedicated website for statistics (data.unicef.org). The Secretary-General’s report on the SDGs, which includes latest available country, regional and global estimates on 8.7.1, is typically released every year in May/June.

Discrepancies with national estimates: The estimates compiled and presented at global level are re-analyzed by UNICEF HQ if the nationally produced data are inconsistent with the standard definition of child labour.



Key resources

Indicator information and cross-country comparable estimates:

- UNICEF Data: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-labour/>
- SDG metadata: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-08-07-01.pdf>

Tools and measurement guidance:

- MICS module on child labour: <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/MICS6-Child-labour-module.pdf>
- ILO SIMPOC guidance: <http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/ChildlabourstatisticsSIMPOC/lang--en/index.htm>

Research:

- The Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Programme is an inter-agency research cooperation initiative involving the International Labour Organisation, UNICEF and the World Bank: <http://www.ucw-project.org/>
- Impact of Unpaid Household Services on the Measurement of Child Labour, MICS Methodological Papers, No. 2, Statistics and Monitoring Section, Division of Policy and Strategy, United Nations Children's Fund, New York, 2013: <https://tinyurl.com/y7vafzvj>
- How sensitive are estimates of working children and child labour to definitions? A comparative analysis, MICS Methodological Papers, No. 1, Statistics and Monitoring Section, Division of Policy and Strategy, UNICEF, New York, 2012: <https://tinyurl.com/yc5gr6yx>