

What is child labour?

Different cultures can have different ideas about childhood and at what age a person is considered to be a child. In international treaties a child is anyone under the age of 18 years old. When talking about child labour, typically this also refers to anyone who is under 18 years old.

Child labour

Child labour is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity. It is:

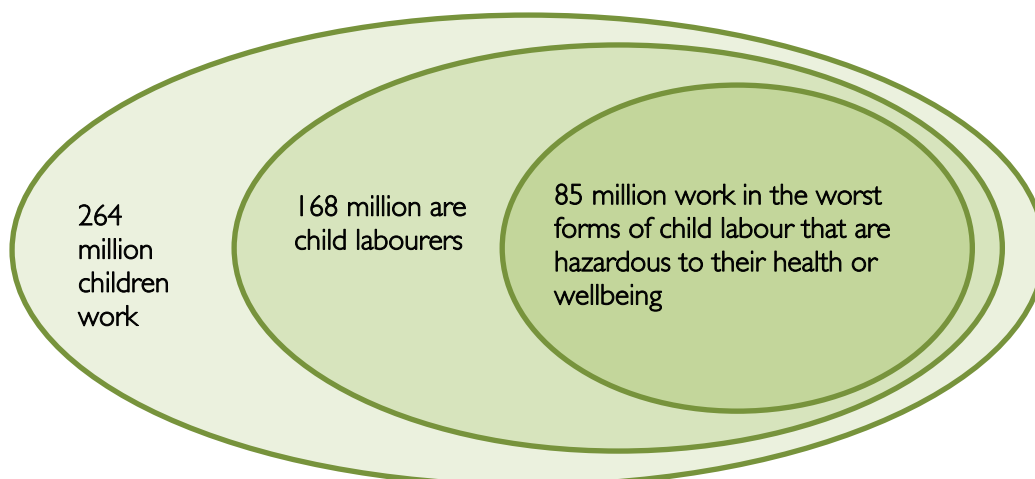
- Work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children.
- Work that is longer than an appropriate number of hours given the age of the child and/or the type of work.
- Work that interferes with the child's ability to go to school.

Child work

Not all children who work are in a child labour situation. There can be many benefits for children who work. Under the right employment conditions, part-time or casual work or assisting in a family business can help develop life skills such as responsibility, managing money, balancing work with other activities, learning on-the-job skills, and preparation for work as an adult.

What are the numbers?

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is a United Nations' agency concerned with promoting decent work and social justice around the world. The ILO investigates child labour, and supports efforts by countries to end child labour. The ILO estimates that globally, out of all children aged 5 to 17 years old¹:



Of all child labourers, 73 million (nearly 44 percent) are aged 5 to 11 years old.

Did you know?

Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states children have the right “to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”²

For you to do

1. Complete the lists outlining some of the benefits for children who work in appropriate employment conditions, and some of the risks to the wellbeing of children who work in a child labour situation.

Benefits of child work include:

Can help develop responsibility

Risks of child labour to wellbeing include:

Can be mentally harmful

2. The table below outlines the estimated total number of child labourers in four regions around the world. It also lists the percentage of child labourers in each region as a proportion of all children aged 5 to 17 years-old living in that region³.

Region	Total number of child labourers	% of all children who are child labourers
Asia and the Pacific	77.7 million	9.3%
Latin America and the Caribbean	12.5 million	8.8%
Sub Saharan Africa	59.0 million	21.4%
Middle East and North Africa	9.2 million	8.4%

- (a) Create two graphs, one for each column of numbers in the table, to display the information visually.
 - (b) What does the information suggest about the spatial distribution of child labour?
3. With a partner, compare Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with the definition of child labour. Look up the Convention and brainstorm which other of a child's rights you think might be affected by child labour.

You can find a simplified version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child here:

www.unicef.org.au/Upload/UNICEF/Media/Our%20work/childfriendlycrc.pdf

4. The Fair Work Ombudsman helps Australians understand their rights and responsibilities at work and encourages compliance with Australia's workplace laws, including child work. For example, in Australia, children have to be of the minimum school leaving age before they are allowed to work during school times. On the web-page 'What age can I start work?' compare the conditions under which children around Australia can work.

www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/young-workers-and-students/what-age-can-i-start-work

¹ ILO, *Marking progress against child labour – global estimates and trends 2000-2012*, 2013, p. 3 and 16

² UN, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

³ ILO, *Marking progress against child labour – global estimates and trends 2000-2012*, 2013, p. 4