

# SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE CHILD AND ADOLESCENT LABOUR SURVEY IN COSTA RICA

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## **SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE CHILD AND ADOLESCENT LABOUR SURVEY IN COSTA RICA**

The results presented here come from the child and adolescent labour module included in the Multiple Purpose Household Survey (EHPM) carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) of Costa Rica in July-August 2002, with support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MTSS) and the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC) of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of the International Labour Office (ILO).<sup>1</sup> The child and adolescent labour survey was carried out to collect information on school, household, economic, and recreational activities of the population aged 5-17 years in the country.

### **Children aged 5-17 years and their households**

According to survey findings, in the year 2002 there are 1,113,987 persons aged 5-17 years in the country, accounting for 27.9% of total population in Costa Rica. Of these, 51.7% are male, 48.3% are female, 36.9% are in the 5-9 year age group, 38.5% are 10-14 years, and 24.6% are adolescents from 15 to 17 years. By residence area, 45.1% of these children live in rural areas, with a similar breakdown of male and female populations. Children aged 5-14 years are relatively more numerous in rural (76.8% of the age group) than in urban areas (74.3%).

The survey reveals more adverse living conditions for children in rural areas with respect to urban environments. For instance, 5.2% and 0.6% of persons aged 5-17 years in rural and urban areas, respectively, live in homes with no access to pipe water (inside the house, lot, or building). In the case of access to electric lighting (whether from a utility company or from a private plant), while urban coverage is universal for this age group, 3.5% of persons aged 5-17 years lack of it in rural environments. Similarly, toilet facilities in their homes consist of an outhouse or latrine for 1.4% and 14.4% of 5-17-year-olds living in urban and rural areas, respectively.

### **Household chores in their own homes**

Of total children aged 5 to 17 years, 48.8% said they had to perform some household chores in their homes, such as looking after younger siblings, cooking, laundering, or cleaning the house. Domestic tasks are more frequent among females than among males, since they are performed by 58.3% and 39.7% of them, respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed presentation and analysis of the child and adolescent labour survey results in Costa Rica, refer to *National report on the results of the child and adolescent labour survey in Costa Rica* (ILO, 2004), *In-depth study of child labour and education in Costa Rica* (ILO, 2004), and *Analysis of child labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic* (ILO, 2004).

Assuming for the analysis a minimum average of 2, 3, and 4 hours per day spent on household chores for age groups 5-9, 10-14, and 15-17 years, respectively, it is found that 4.5% of children in Costa Rica devote at least this minimum time to chores<sup>2</sup>. The percentage increases to 7.5% for females, and it is just 1.6% for males. Of the total group, 80.9% are female, although female percentage of the total increases consistently with children's age, reaching 90.6% of adolescents aged 15-17 years.

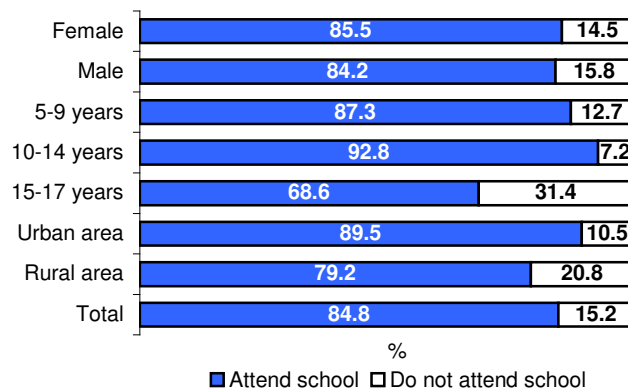
Assuming the same number of minimum hours by age bracket, there is an increasing share of children and adolescents performing household chores in their homes –from 2.2% to 3.9% to 9.0%– when moving from the 5-9 to the 10-14 to the 15-17 year age groups, respectively. On the other hand, the percentage devoted to these long hours in housekeeping chores is markedly higher in rural areas (5.6%) than in urban settings (3.8%).

School attendance for this group is a mere 55.5%. Those who manage to attend school spend an average of 3.8 hours a day doing household chores, while this average goes up to 5.5 hours per day among those who do not attend school. The daily hour average for females is 4.8, and 3.6 for males. Similarly, the average in rural areas is 4.6 hours per day, and 4.4 in urban areas.

### Children's schooling

About 84.8% of children aged 5 to 17 years in the country attend a school centre. Non-attendance is a more serious problem for boys than for girls, in rural areas more so than in urban settings, and particularly for adolescents aged 15 to 17 years, whose school attendance rate is just 68.6%.

**School attendance by sex, age group, and area of residence**

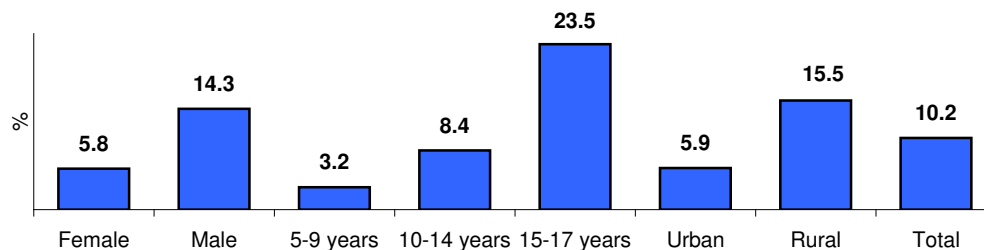


<sup>2</sup> The idea behind these minimum hours is only to illustrate the extent to which many children bear the burden of domestic chores at home, which could be considered excessive for their age, and also to set forth the differences between sexes, age groups, and areas of residence. These minima are not meant to become a standard for future studies, but are based on previous research. See, for example, *Understanding Children's Work in El Salvador* (ILO, 2004), and *Understanding Children's Work in Guatemala* (ILO, 2003), where a minimum average of 4 hours a day (28 average hours per week) is used in the analysis, and *Estudio analítico e interpretación de los resultados de la encuesta sobre caracterización de la población entre 5 y 17 años en Colombia* (ILO, 2003), where the analysis is based on a minimum of 15 hours per week devoted to household chores.

## Working children

Based on survey results, an estimated total of 113,523 boys and girls aged 5-17 years are working in Costa Rica in the year 2002, accounting for 10.2% of total children in this age group. Children's work rate is higher for boys than for girls (14.3% and 5.8%, respectively), increases significantly with age, and its prevalence is almost 3 times higher in rural than in urban residents (15.5% and 5.9%, respectively).

**Children's work rate by sex, age group, and area of residence**



Of total working children, 27.3% are girls and 72.7% are boys. Over half of them (56.6%) are 15- to 17-year-old adolescents, 31.8% are in the 10-14 year age bracket, and only 11.5% are between 5 and 9 years of age. Most of them, 68.4%, are rural residents.

Survey results show the country has 49,229 persons under age 15 working, that is to say, they are below the minimum legal age required to join the labour market under certain conditions. This figure accounts for 43.4% of total working children. On the other hand, the average age for working boys and girls is merely 14.0 years, with average age for males being 14.1 and just 13.8 for females. Similarly, working children's average age in urban areas is 14.6 years, whereas in rural settings it is 13.7 years.

**Percent distribution of working children by age at which started to work, sex and area of residence**

Sex and area of residence	Age at which started to work (in years)			Total
	Before 10	10 to 14	15 to 17	
Male	19.2	49.1	31.6	100.0
Female	16.6	41.9	41.5	100.0
Urban area	15.8	37.4	46.8	100.0
Rural area	19.8	51.9	28.3	100.0
Total	18.5	47.2	34.3	100.0

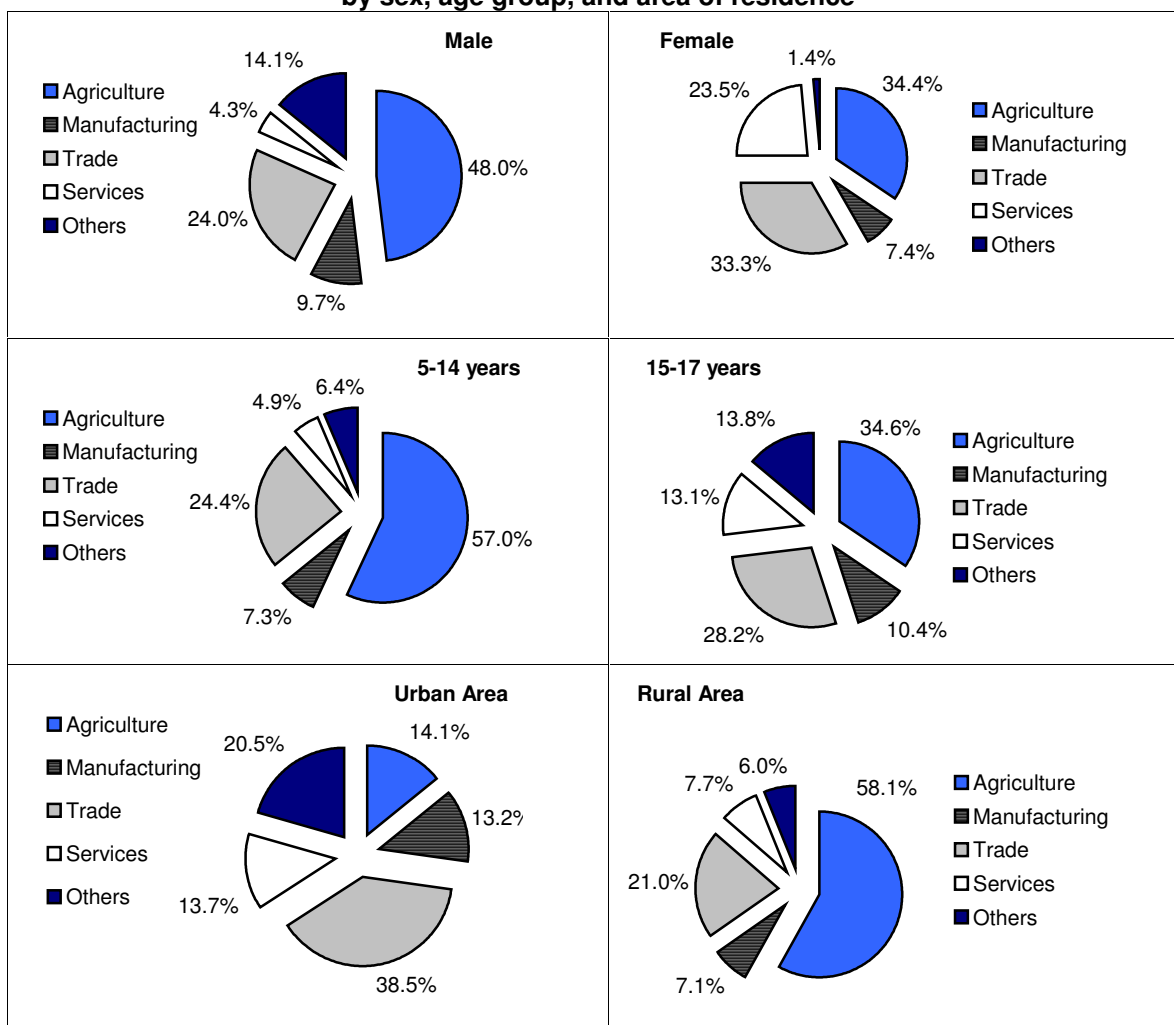
*Note:* Items may not add up exactly to total due to rounding.

It is worth noticing that 65.7% of working children claimed they began working before they turned 15 years of age. The percentage of working children who began working before 10

and between 10 and 14 years of age is higher for males than for females, and significantly higher in the case of rural residents, compared to urban dwellers.

The main industries where these working children are found include agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing (44.2%); trade, hotels, and restaurants (26.6%); manufacturing industry (9.0%); and community, social, and personal services<sup>3</sup> (9.6%). Some 10.6% of working girls and boys are engaged in the remaining industries.<sup>4</sup>

**Percent distribution of working children by industry, by sex, age group, and area of residence**



Note: Items may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

The trade and services sectors are relatively more important for working girls than for boys. Similarly, the relative importance of agriculture decreases with age, while the remaining industries become more relevant. On the other hand, the distribution by industry is more equitable in urban than in rural areas, where agriculture has a strong predominance.

<sup>3</sup> According to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), the services industry includes: public administration and defense, compulsory social security; education; health and social work; other community, social, and personal service activities; and private households with employed persons.

<sup>4</sup> The remaining sectors are: mining and quarrying; electricity, gas, and water supply; construction; transport, storage and communications; financial intermediation; real estate, business, and rental activities; not well specified.

The most common category in employment for all working children is unpaid family worker. However, salaried employment is more common for boys, adolescents aged 15-17 years, and in urban areas. Own account work has a higher relative prevalence among working girls than among working boys, in urban more so than in rural areas, and its importance increases with age.

**Percent distribution of working children by sex, age group, and area of residence, by category in employment**

Category in employment	Male	Female	5 to14	15 to 17	Urban	Rural	Total
Unpaid family worker	40.3	52.7	68.1	24.7	30.2	49.9	43.7
Salaried worker	47.5	20.5	19.5	55.9	47.8	36.6	40.2
Own account worker	10.6	12.4	9.6	12.2	17.4	8.1	11.1
Other	1.6	14.4	2.9	7.2	4.6	5.3	5.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Items may not add up exactly to totals due to rounding.

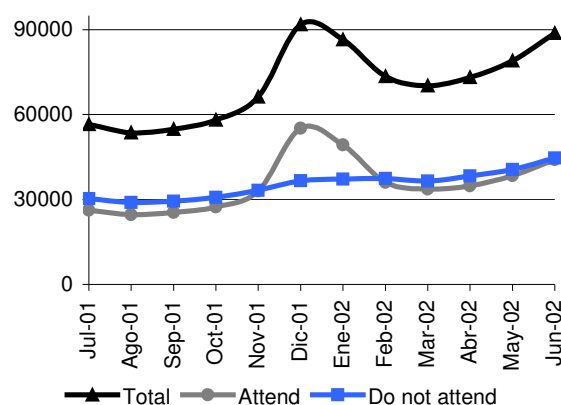
**Percent distribution of working children by work shift, by sex, age group, and area of residence**

Sex, age group, and area of residence	Work Shift	
	Day	Mixed/Night
Female	94.8	5.2
Male	95.5	4.5
5 to 14 years	95.9	4.1
15 to 17 years	93.4	6.6
Rural area	98.8	1.2
Urban area	86.7	13.3
Total	95.2	4.8

The vast majority of working children work on day shifts. Nevertheless, the relative prevalence of mixed or night shifts is higher in working girls than in working boys, in adolescents, and mainly in urban areas.

Working children spend an average of 31.1 hours per week on economic activities. The average is higher for boys (32.2) than for girls (27.8), is higher in urban areas (31.7) than in rural environments (30.8), and clearly increases with age (from 8.2 to 21.7 to 35.8 average hours per week for the 5-9, 10-14, and 15-17 year age groups, respectively).

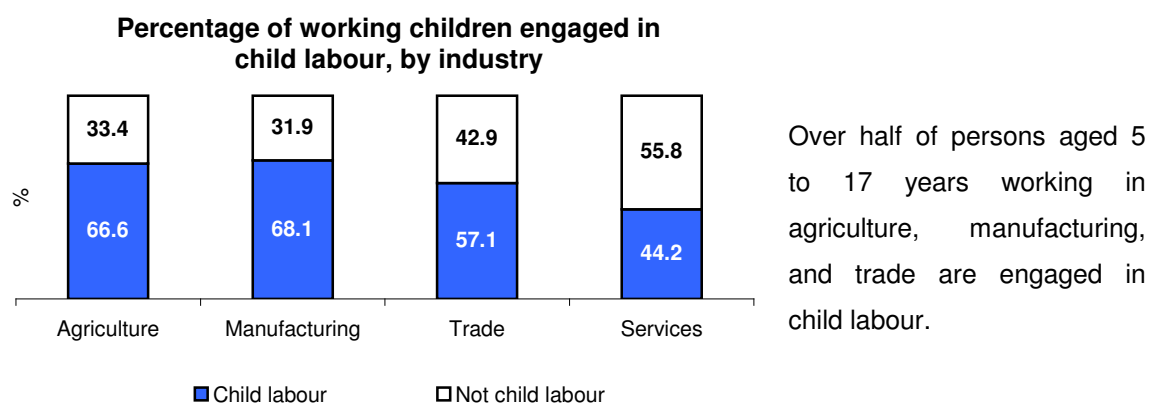
**Children who worked in the 12 months prior to the survey**



Concerning children's annual work performance, there is a marked increase in the number of 5- to 17-year-olds found in the labour market during the months of December and January, which are school vacation months and the ones with the busiest activities in harvesting coffee, a major agricultural commodity in the country. This increase comes mostly from school children joining the labour market during their school vacations.

## Child labour

The child labour population consists of working boys and girls whose involvement in economic activities violates national legislation and/or international agreements, because it is physically, mentally, socially, or morally harmful or detrimental to children, or because it somehow interferes with their schooling<sup>5</sup>. Based on survey results, an estimated 65% of working children in Costa Rica are engaged in child labour. About 30.2% of them are girls and 69.8% are boys; 32.3% are urban residents and 67.7% live in rural areas; 19.7% are aged 5-9 years, 33.2% are 10-14 years old, and 47.1% are adolescents in the 15-17 year bracket.



Child labour is closely related to school non-attendance. Only 54.7% of children engaged in child labour manage to attend an educational centre.

## Households of children engaged in child labour

According to survey results, 21.7% of heads in the households of boys and girls engaged in child labour are women, compared to 23.8% of household heads in the case of 5- to 17-year-olds who do not work, or who work but not in child labour.

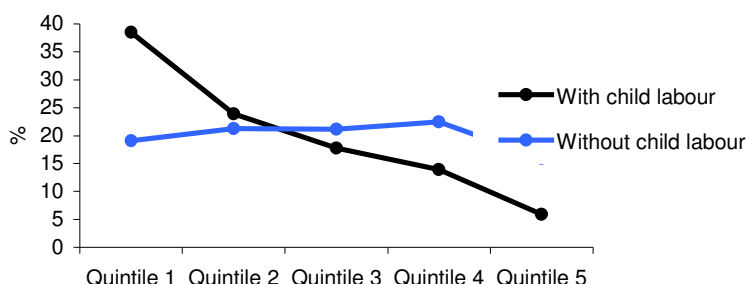
On the other hand, the households of children engaged in child labour have an average of 5.5 members, above the average of the other households, which is 4.8 members. This difference arises from the higher average number of family members under 18 years of age in households of children engaged in child labour –3.0, compared to 2.2 in the other homes. This means there is a higher demographic dependency rate in households where child labour exists. While in the homes of persons aged 5-17 years who are not involved in child labour there is exactly one

<sup>5</sup> Pursuant to national legislation, relevant international conventions, and previous studies, in analysing data from the Costa Rican child and adolescent labour survey the following groups were defined as child labour: 5- to 17-year-olds working in mining and quarrying; construction; electricity, gas, and water supply; transport, storage, and communications; 5- to 17-year-olds working on day/night or night shifts; working children under 13 years of age; 13- to 14-year-olds working over 30 hours per week; 15- to 17-year-olds working over 36 hours per week. These parameters are used for illustration purposes only, and are not to be construed as a proposal for legislation.

dependant for every person of productive age, this rate increases to 1.3 in households where children are engaged in child labour<sup>6</sup>.

**Percent distribution of households with and without child labour, by socio-economic quintile**

On the other hand, households of children engaged in child labour find themselves in the lowest socio-economic quintiles.<sup>7</sup>



### Conclusions

- About 4.5% of children aged 5 to 17 years, mainly girls, spend many hours in housekeeping work in their own home (as per the minimum hours used in this analysis). This group shows a low school attendance level (55.5%).
- School non-attendance problems are evident in children (15.2% at the national level), but mostly among rural residents and adolescents, who exhibit non-attendance rates of 20.8%, and 31.4%, respectively.
- The survey identified 113,523 persons aged 5-17 years working in Costa Rica, accounting for 10.2% of population in this age bracket. Male rates are higher than female's (14.3% and 5.8%, respectively), the rate increases with age (3.2, 8.4, and 23.5% for 5-9, 10-14, and 15-17 year age groups, respectively), and is higher in rural than in urban areas (15.5 and 5.9%, respectively).
- A total of 49,229 persons under the minimum legal age (15 years) are working, and 65.7% of all working children began working before they turned 15 years of age.
- Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing make up the main industry for working girls and boys, absorbing 44.2% of them. Services, however, emerges as the main sector for urban areas with 38.5% of urban workers.
- Around 95.2% of working children work on day shifts, and the average of working hours per week is 31.1.

<sup>6</sup> In estimating the rate of dependency in this case, dependant population was defined as consisting of people younger than 18 years and older than 64 years, leaving the population of productive age to be those between 18 and 64 years.

<sup>7</sup> The socio-economic level was measured through an index that summarises information about housing (prevailing wall materials, average number of persons per bedroom), water sources, type of lighting and cooking fuel, type of toilet facilities, and asset ownership (TV set, telephone, automobile, etc.). For more details on the construction of said index, refer to *Analysis of child labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic* (ILO, 2004).

- The number of working children goes up during school vacation months (December and January), with an increase in the number of school-attending children that work.
- Close to 65% of working children are engaged in child labour. The sector with the highest percentage of children in child labour is manufacturing (68.1%), followed by agriculture (66.6%), trade (57.1%), and services (44.2%).
- A high 45.3% school non-attendance rate is seen among children engaged in child labour.
- The households of children engaged in child labour are larger (5.5 members), on average, than the homes of persons aged 5-17 years who are not in that situation (4.8 members), and they additionally face harder socio-economic situations.