

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE CHILD LABOUR SURVEY IN EL SALVADOR

Edition

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The results contained herein are a product of the child labour module included in the Multiple Purpose Household Survey (EHPM) carried out by the General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses (DIGESTYC) of El Salvador between July and December 2001, with the support of the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC) of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Office (ILO)¹. The purpose of the survey on child labour was to collect information on the academic, domestic, economic and recreational activities of the population aged 5 to 17 in El Salvador.

Boys and girls aged 5 to 17

According to the survey results, as of 2001 there were 1,936,987 persons between the ages of 5 and 17 in the country. This represents 30.1% of the total population of El Salvador. Of these, 50.2% are males, 49.8% are females, 40.2% are between the ages of 5 and 9, 38.6% are between the ages of 10 and 14 and 21.2% are adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17. Fifty-two point seven percent of these boys and girls live in rural areas. The female child population is more urban than its male counterpart – 53.5% of girls live in urban areas, compared to 51.9% of boys. The rural population is slightly younger – 79.8% of rural boys and girls are between the ages of 5 and 14, compared to 77.9% in urban areas.

The survey results show that living conditions are worse for boys and girls in rural areas than they are for their urban counterparts. For example, while 74.8% of persons between the ages of 5 and 17 in urban areas live in dwellings that obtain their water supply from pipes within the dwelling or on the property, only 33.8% of rural children have access to that type of water supply. Moreover, while 96.6% of persons aged 5 to 17 in urban areas live in dwellings that have access to electric lighting, only 68.8% of rural children enjoy such access. As for toilet facilities, 68.5% of boys and girls in urban areas live in dwellings with access to a toilet (private or shared), 28.9% have access only to a latrine and 2.6% live in dwellings with no toilet of any kind. In rural areas, only 6.0% live in dwellings equipped with a toilet, 77.2% use latrines, and 16.7% have no access to any kind of toilet in their dwelling.

Household chores by boys and girls in their own homes

Sixty-four point nine percent of all boys and girls surveyed stated that they perform some household chores in their own homes. Housework is more frequent among girls – 72.6% of them

¹ See *Understanding Children's Work in El Salvador* (ILO, 2003) and *Analysis of child labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic* (ILO, 2004) for a more thorough description and analysis of the results of the survey on children's work in El Salvador.

perform household chores, compared to 53.7% of boys. Sixty-six point seven percent of rural children perform housework in their own homes, compared to 63.2% in urban areas.

Using 2, 3 and 4-hour minima as a yardstick for analysing household chores in the 5-to-9, 10-to-14 and 15-to-17 age groups, respectively, the survey found that 6.4% of boys and girls in El Salvador spend at least those minimum numbers of hours performing housework². Among girls, that percentage is 9.4%, compared to 3.5% for boys. Girls account for 72.5% of the group as a whole, but the percentage of females who perform household chores for at least the minima mentioned increases consistently with age, reaching 98.1% among adolescents aged 15 to 17.

Responsibility for household tasks falls most heavily upon children between the ages of 10 and 14. Using the same minima, the percentage of children performing household chores in their own homes increases from 4.8% in the 5-to-9 age group to 7.8% in the 10-to-14 group. Seven point one percent of adolescents aged 15 to 17 dedicate at least the minimum number of hours specified above to housework. The percentage of children performing housework is considerably higher in rural areas (8.3%) than it is in urban areas (4.8%).

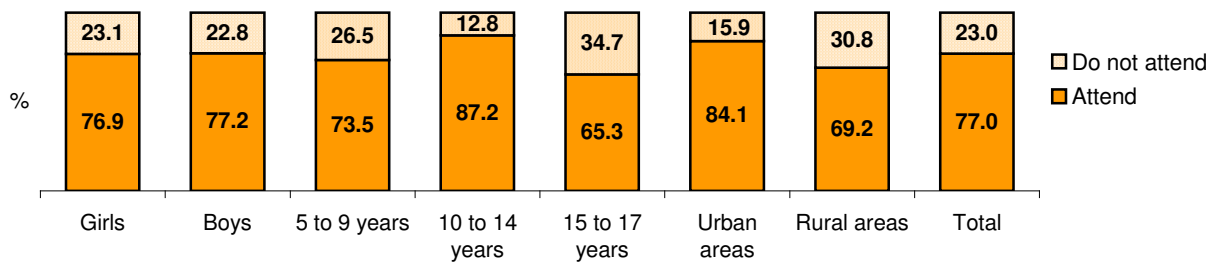
School attendance in this group is only 68.3%. Those who are able to attend school spend an average of 3.2 hours performing housework, compared to 4.0 hours for those who do not attend school. Girls spend an average of 3.6 hours a day on household chores, compared to 3.1 for males. The average for rural areas and urban areas is the same: 3.5 hours a day.

Child school enrolment

Seventy-seven percent of boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 17 attend school. Non-attendance is a more serious issue among females than among males, and is also more severe in rural areas than urban areas – especially among adolescents aged 15 to 17. Only 34.7% of the latter attend school.

² 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.

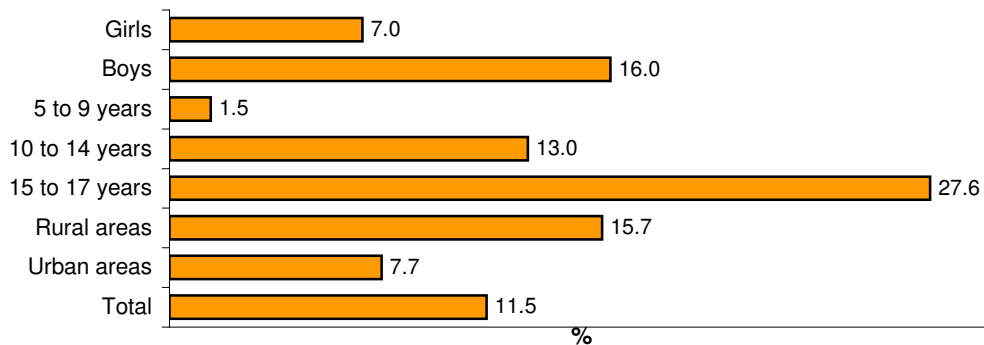
School attendance of boys and girls by sex, age group and area of residence



Working boys and girls

Based on the survey results, the total number of working boys and girls in El Salvador is estimated to be 222,479 as of 2001. This is equivalent to 11.5% of the overall population in that age group. Early insertion into the labour market is more frequent among boys (16.0%) than girls (7.0%), and more common in rural areas (15.7%) than urban areas (7.7%). It also increases with age.

Child work rate by sex, age group and area of residence



Thirty point two percent of working children are female, and 69.8% are male. Over half (51.0%) are adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17, and 43.7% are between the ages of 10 and 14. Only 5.2% are between the ages of 5 and 9. Most working children – 64.7% – live in rural areas.

According to the survey, an estimated 75,586 of the country's workers are under the age of 14 – the minimum age established by law for admission to economic activity subject to certain restrictions. This figure is equivalent to 34.0% of all working children. The average age of working children overall is 14.1. For males it is also 14.1; for females it is 14.3; in urban areas it is 14.3, and in rural areas it is 14.1.

It should be noted that 85.0% of working children stated that they began working before the age of 15. This percentage is higher among boys than among girls, and it is especially high in rural areas (89.5%).

Percent distribution of working boys and girls by age at which they began working, by sex and area of residence

Sex and area of residence	Age at which began working (in years)			
	Before 10	10 to 14	15 to 17	Total
Boys	26.4	60.5	13.1	100.0
Girls	18.6	62.3	19.0	100.0
Urban areas	17.8	59.4	22.9	100.0
Rural areas	27.5	62.0	10.5	100.0
Total	23.9	61.1	14.9	100.0

Note: The sum of the items shown may not be exactly equal to the total due to rounding.

Working children are occupied mainly in agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing (49.1%), trade, hotels and restaurants (23.0%), manufacturing (16.0%) and community, social and personal services³ (7.1%). “Other” industries⁴ account for the remaining 4.9% of working girls and boys.

Percent distribution of working boys and girls by industry, by sex, age group and area of residence

Sex, age group and area of residence	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Trade	Services	Other	Total
Girls	14.2	40.8	25.5	19.2	0.3	100.0
Boys	64.2	11.9	15.2	1.8	6.9	100.0
5 to 9 years	55.7	16.5	23.4	4.5	0.0	100.0
10 to 14 years	52.9	14.9	26.0	4.3	1.9	100.0
15 to 17 years	45.1	16.9	20.3	9.7	8.0	100.0
Urban areas	11.6	28.9	42.5	8.8	8.2	100.0
Rural areas	69.5	9.0	12.3	6.1	3.1	100.0
Total	49.1	16.0	23.0	7.1	4.9	100.0

Note: The sum of the items shown may not be exactly equal to the total due to rounding.

The relative importance of manufacturing, trade and services is higher among girls than among boys. Agriculture loses some of its relative weight as age increases, but remains the main industry for all age groups. Trade, manufacturing, services and “other” industries are relatively more prevalent in urban areas than in rural areas.

“Unpaid family worker” is the most common category in employment among working boys and girls, followed by “wage-earner”.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

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

Category in employment	Boys	Girls	5 to 14 years	15 to 17 years	Urban areas	Rural areas	Total
Unpaid family worker	62.8	63.5	78.1	48.5	55.6	67.1	63.0
Wage-earner ^{a/}	31.3	16.8	15.0	38.4	32.9	23.7	26.9
Own-account worker	2.6	4.0	2.2	3.8	2.5	3.3	3.0
Other ^{b/}	3.2	15.7	4.6	9.2	9.0	5.9	7.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

a/ Includes both permanent and temporary wage-earners.

b/ Includes employers, apprentices, domestic workers and others.

Note: The sum of the items shown may not be equal to the total due to rounding.

It is estimated that over 14 thousand persons between the ages of 5 and 17 are domestic workers in households other than their own⁵. Of those, over 95% are girls.

A large majority of working children work day shifts – morning only, afternoon only, or morning and afternoon. Shifts that include night hours are relatively more common, however, among girls, young children aged 5 to 9 and adolescents, and in urban areas.

**Percent distribution of working boys and girls by shift,
by sex, age group and area of residence**

Sex, age group and area of residence	Shift				Total
	Morning only	Afternoon only	Morning and afternoon	Night ^{a/}	
Girls	29.2	24.2	41.6	5.0	100.0
Boys	39.7	14.4	43.8	2.1	100.0
5 to 9	41.7	31.8	23.0	3.5	100.0
10 to 14	41.5	22.1	34.0	2.4	100.0
15 to 17	31.8	11.8	53.0	3.5	100.0
Rural areas	42.0	14.3	42.2	1.6	100.0
Urban areas	26.6	22.9	44.8	5.7	100.0
Total	36.5	17.4	43.1	3.5	100.0

a/ Includes the following shifts: Night, morning and night, afternoon and night.

Note: The sum of the items shown may not be exactly equal to the total due to rounding.

On average, working children work 30.6 hours a week. Females and urban residents work even longer shifts – 31.5 and 31.2 hours, respectively – whereas males and residents of rural areas work 30.2 and 30.3 hours a week, on average. This average increases with age: 21.2 for boys and girls aged 5 to 9, 27.2 for those aged 10 to 14 and 34.5 for adolescents aged 15 to 17.

Perceptions of parents or guardians

The main reasons cited by parents or guardians of working children for allowing them to work involve family economic needs (the need to supplement the family income and help with the

⁵ Includes the following occupations in private households with employed persons: washing, ironing, hanging out and folding clothes, washing dishes, cooking and serving food, housecleaning (sweeping, cleaning, dusting), caring for boys, girls or old/handicapped adults, gardening (caring for gardens, cutting grass) and cleaning and washing cars.

family business). Boys are required to work to cover their own expenses more often, in relative terms, than girls. The importance of this requirement increases with age, and is stronger in urban areas than in rural areas.

Main reasons cited by parents or guardians for allowing children and adolescents to work, by sex, age group and area of residence

Sex, age group and area of residence	Reason for allowing children to work				Total
	To supplement family income	To help operate the family business	Personal expenses	Other ^{a/}	
Girls	37.0	47.9	8.6	6.5	100.0
Boys	40.1	42.6	9.5	7.8	100.0
5 to 9 years	18.1	71.7	3.9	6.3	100.0
10 to 14 years	33.2	51.1	7.9	8.0	100.0
15 to 17 years	46.8	35.1	11.1	7.0	100.0
Rural areas	42.3	43.0	8.0	6.8	100.0
Urban areas	33.4	46.6	11.6	8.4	100.0
Total	39.2	44.2	9.3	7.4	100.0

a/ Includes the following reasons: Need to be self-supporting, save money for education, lack of money for education.

Note: The sum of the items shown may not be equal to the total due to rounding.

According to the parents or guardians surveyed, the main effect of a child's withdrawal from work would be a decline in the family's standard of living. This belief is notably stronger in rural areas, and increases with the age of the child. The belief that withdrawal from work would have the most dire consequences – namely, the demise of the household – figures prominently where children aged 5 to 9 are concerned. In relative terms, family businesses that depend on children's work rely more heavily on girls, younger children and urban residents. The fear that children will spend the day on the street if they do not work tends to focus more on boys and younger children.

Percent distribution of effects of child withdrawing from work, by sex, age group and area of residence

Sex, age group and area of residence	Decline in family's standard of living	Household cannot survive	Family business incomplete	Child would spend the day on the street	Child's character would not be built	Other	Total
Girls	45.2	8.6	20.1	8.5	10.6	6.9	100.0
Boys	44.9	8.8	11.7	14.2	14.4	6.0	100.0
5 to 9 years	28.6	11.0	19.9	16.2	10.8	13.5	100.0
10 to 14 years	42.2	6.8	15.5	13.2	16.2	6.2	100.0
15 to 17 years	49.3	10.2	12.7	11.3	10.8	5.6	100.0
Rural area	47.9	9.4	11.5	12.3	13.2	5.7	100.0
Urban area	39.6	7.5	19.4	12.6	13.3	7.5	100.0
Total	45.0	8.8	14.3	12.4	13.2	6.3	100.0

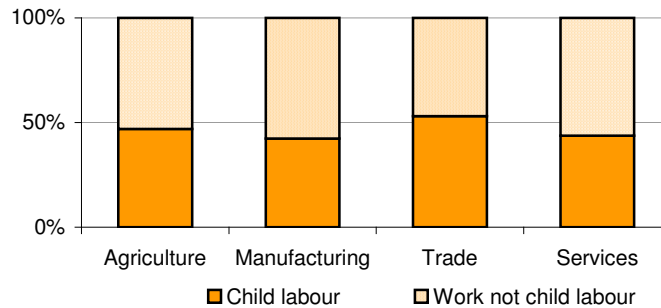
Note: The sum of the items shown may not be exactly equal to the total due to rounding.

Child labour

The child population engaged in child labour is made up of girl and boys who work, and whose participation in economic activities violates national law and/or international conventions because

it causes them physical, mental, social or moral harm, or interferes in some way with their schooling⁶. Based on the survey results, it is estimated that close to half of all working children in El Salvador are engaged in this type of work. Of those, 26.2% are girls and 73.8% are boys; 37.7% live in urban areas and 62.3% live in rural areas; 10.5% are between the ages of 5 and 9, 56.6% are between the ages of 10 and 14, and 32.9% are adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17.

Percentage of working children engaged in child labour by industry



Over half of all persons between the ages of 5 and 17 who work in the trade sector are engaged in child labour.

A strong link exists between child labour and non-attendance at school. Only 51.4% of boy and girl labourers attend school.

Households of child labourers

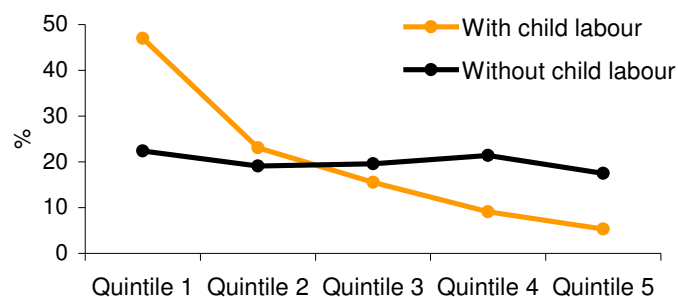
Survey results show that 33.3% of heads of households of child labourers are women, compared to 31.8% for households of persons between the ages of 5 and 17 who do not work, or who work but are not engaged in child labour.

Households of children who are engaged in child labour are also larger than those of other persons aged 5 to 17, with an average of 6.2 members – one more than the average for other households. This difference stems from the larger average number of household members under 18 years in households of child labourers – 3.6, compared to 2.6 for other households. This

⁶ When analysing the results of the survey on child labour in El Salvador, the following groups were considered to be engaged in child labour, in accordance with national legislation, relevant international conventions and prior studies: boys and girls aged 5 to 17 working in mining and stone quarrying, construction, electricity, gas and water supply, transport, storage and communications; workers aged 5 to 17 working night, morning and night, or afternoon and night shifts; workers under the age of 12; workers aged 12 to 13 who work more than 22 hours a week; workers aged 14 to 15 who work more than 34 hours a week; workers between the ages of 15 and 17 who operate any type of tool, equipment or machinery that puts them at risk; workers between the ages of 5 and 17 who face any of the following problems at their workplace: little or no ventilation, insufficient light, lack of bathrooms, insufficient access to bathrooms, lack of access to a telephone, lack of first-aid kit or clinic, lack of protection against sun rays, bad odours. These guidelines are illustrative in nature, and are not intended as a legislative proposal.

suggests a higher demographic dependency rate in households of child labourers. The number of dependent members in households that do not include boys and girls engaged in child labour is 1.2, compared to 1.7 for households that do include such workers.⁷

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



Households where boys and girls are engaged in child labour are also in the lowest socio-economic quintiles⁸.

Conclusions

- Six point four percent of boys and girls, especially females, spend a substantial number of hours performing household chores in their own homes (using the minima established in this report as a point of reference). School attendance in this group is very low, at 68.3%.
- School attendance nationwide is low (77.0%), but it is lower still in rural areas (69.2%) and among adolescents (65.3%).
- The survey identified two hundred and twenty-two thousand, four hundred and seventy-nine working boys and girls in El Salvador between the ages of 5 and 17. Children's work is more prevalent among boys (16.0%) than among girls (7.0%), more common in rural areas (15.7%) than urban areas (7.7%) and increases with age.
- 34.0% of working children are below the minimum age for admission to employment (14 years), and 85.0% began working before the age of 15.

⁷ In this case, the demographic dependency rate was calculated based on the premise that the population under 18 and over 64 is the dependent population, whereas the population aged 18 to 64 is of working age.

⁸ Socio-economic status was measured using an index which summarises dwelling characteristics (main materials used in walls, average number of persons to each room), source of water supply, type of lighting and power, source used for cooking, type of toilet and asset ownership (television set, telephone, automobile, etc.). For further details on the development of this index, see *Analysis of child labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic* (ILO, 2004).

- Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing constitute the main source of employment for working children (49.1%). Trade, however, is the main activity in urban areas (42.5%), and manufacturing is the primary source of employment for girls (40.8%).
- Close to half of all working boys and girls are engaged in child labour. The highest percentage of working children engaged in this type of work – close to 53% – is found in the trade sector.
- 48.6% of persons engaged in child labour do not attend school.
- Households where boys and girls are engaged in child labour are larger (6.2 members, on average) and display a higher demographic dependency rate (1.7) than those that do not include children in that situation (5.5 members on average and a demographic dependency rate of 1.2). The socio-economic status of the former is also lower.