

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL CHILD AND ADOLESCENT LABOUR SURVEY IN NICARAGUA

Edition

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The results presented here come from the child labour module included in the Urban and Rural Employment Measurement Household Survey conducted in 2000, and known as National Child and Adolescents Labour Survey (ENTIA 2000). The survey was carried out by the Ministry of Labour of Nicaragua and had support from 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).¹ The purpose of ENTIA was to collect information on the school, household, economic, and recreational activities of children aged 5-17 years in the country.

Population of persons 5 to 17 years old and their households

ENTIA identified a total of 1,772,614 persons aged 5 to 17 years in the country in the year 2000. Of these, 50.7% are male and 49.3% are female. A relatively high presence of younger children is seen in this age group: 44.6% are 5-9 years old, 35.9% are in the 10-14 year age group, and 19.5% are adolescents aged 15 to 17 years. Over half of them (54.3%) are urban residents.

Some 30.4% of households with persons aged 5-17 years identify a woman as head of the household. Also, children's households have an average of 6 members, of which, 3.3 are younger than 18 years, thus revealing the high demographic dependency levels typical of these households.

On the other hand, many of these underage persons endure difficult living conditions. In urban areas, 88.3% of them live in a house with no access to pipe water (inside or outside the house), but in rural areas only 37.8% enjoy this service. A similar situation is found in the case of electric lighting, which is accessed by 93.2% of children in urban areas, but only by 49.5% of rural area residents in the same age group. Similarly, there is a high concentration of rural households in the lowest socio-economic levels.

Household chores in their own homes

Using for this analysis a minimum average of 2, 3, and 4 hours per day spent on household chores for the age groups 5-9, 10-14, and 15-17 years, respectively,² an estimated 25.8% of

¹ For a more detailed presentation and analysis of ENTIA results, please refer to *Report of the results of the National Child and Adolescent Labour Survey in Nicaragua* (ILO, 2004), *In-depth analysis of child labour and household characteristics in Nicaragua* (ILO, 2004), y *Analysis of child labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic* (ILO, 2004).

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

people aged 5 to 17 years devote at least this minimum time to chores in their own home. Probably as a consequence of traditional cultural patterns, the percentage of female children in housekeeping tasks is considerably higher than that for males. An interesting result is the absence of a clear trend with age. Likewise, the percentage of children involved in household chores for long hours is higher in rural than in urban areas.

Children involved in household chores in their own homes, and average daily hours by sex, age group and area of residence

	Sex		Age group			Area of residence		Total
	Female	Male	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-17 years	Urban	Rural	
Percentage of persons ^{a/}	32.2	19.5	24.6	28.9	22.8	21.4	31.0	25.8
Average daily hours ^{b/}	3.9	3.4	*	*	*	3.6	3.8	3.7

a/ It refers to the number of persons aged 5-17 years who spend at least the minimum hours specified on housekeeping tasks in their own homes, as a percentage of total population in that age group.

b/ Measures average daily hours spent on housekeeping chores at home for the analysed group.

* Values are not estimated because the analysis group is truncated by age.

Average daily hours in these household tasks are also higher for females than for males, as well as for rural residents with respect to urban residents.

An extremely worrisome finding is that 27.1% of children engaged in housekeeping chores at home for long hours do not manage to attend school. For the group that does, average daily hours on domestic chores is 3.5, while children not attending school have a higher, 4.4, daily hour average.

Children's schooling

Of the total population aged 5-17 years in the country, 74.2% attend an educational centre. Attendance is considerably higher for girls (76.5%) than for boys (71.9%), and a significant gap is observed between residence areas – 82.2% in urban areas and 64.6% in rural areas. The highest attendance is found in the 10-14 year age group (83.0%), followed by the 5-9 year age bracket (74.1%). The adolescent attendance rate reflects a schooling problem for persons aged 15-17 years, since only 58.0% of them manage to attend school.

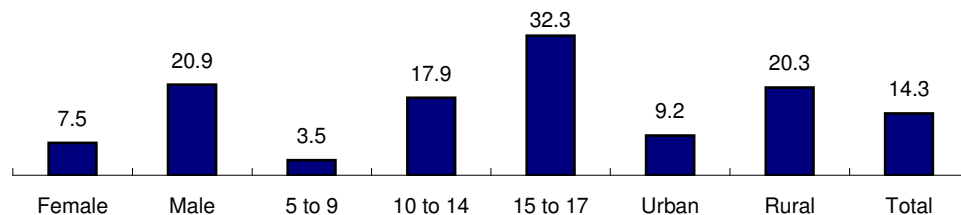
Persons aged 10-17 years have an estimated illiteracy rate approaching 20%, being 22.2% for boys, 16.3% for girls, 8.1% among urban residents and 27.8% among rural residents, showing the disadvantage of males and rural areas in regards to literacy.

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

ENTIA estimates that in 2000 there are 253,057 persons aged 5-17 years working, accounting for 14.3% of population in this age group³. Children's work rate is higher for males, in rural areas, and increases with age.

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



Most of working children are male – 74.1% vs. 25.9% female. Similarly, 65.2% are rural residents and only 34.8% live in urban environments.

On the other hand, children aged 5 to 9 years are just 10.9% of this group, while youngsters from 10 to 14 years are 45.1% of the group, and adolescents 44.0%. This results in an average working children's age of 13.5 years, which is under the minimum age established by national legislation, namely, 14 years. Average age is similar for males and females (13.4 and 13.5, respectively), and is higher in urban areas (13.8) than in rural settings (13.3). In total, an estimated 112,540 children under 14 years of age are working in the year 2000, that is to say, 44.4% of total working children are under the legal age.

The agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing sector is the biggest employer of children – 55.5% of them work in this industry – followed by trade (20.3%), the manufacturing industry (11.1%), services⁴ (8.6%), and the remaining industries⁵ at 4.5%.

Percent distribution by industry varies significantly with children's characteristics. Whereas boys are mostly employed in agriculture, far ahead of trade, girls exhibit a more equitable distribution among the different sectors, with trade being the most important, followed by agriculture. The relative importance of agriculture and trade decreases with age, while manufacturing and services become more relevant. Finally, agriculture dominates in rural areas, whereas trade is the main industry in urban areas, followed by the manufacturing industry.

³ According to survey data, 290,481 children aged 5-17 years worked at some point in the 12-month period prior to the survey, and 314,012 children in this age group claim to have worked at some point in their life.

⁴ According to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), the services industry includes: public administration and defense, compulsory affiliation social security plans; education; social and health services; other community, social, and personal service activities; and private households with employed persons.

⁵ The remaining sectors are: mining and quarrying; electricity, gas, and water supply; construction; transport, storage and communications; financial intermediation, except financing insurance and pension plans; real estate, business, and rental activities; not well specified.

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

Industry	Sex		Age group			Area of residence		Total
	Female	Male	5 to 9 years	10 to 14 years	15 to 17 years	Urban	Rural	
Agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing	27.5	65.3	60.5	58.3	51.4	14.9	77.2	55.5
Manufacturing industry	17.5	8.8	8.4	9.7	13.1	20.5	6.1	11.1
Trade, hotels and restaurants	35.7	15.0	24.7	23.0	16.5	40.5	9.6	20.3
Community, social, and personal services	19.2	4.9	4.2	7.0	11.4	15.8	4.8	8.6
Others	0.1	6.0	2.1	2.0	7.5	8.3	2.4	4.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

Occupations of working children also vary considerably with personal characteristics. Close to 65% of working girls and boys are unskilled workers; however, only 34.4% of working girls aged 5-17 and 34.3% of urban residents in this age group are in this occupation. On the other hand, 29.6% of total workers in the 5-17 year age group work in services, but this percentage is significantly higher for girls (59.3%) and in urban areas (56.1%). It is estimated that over 11 thousand children, mostly girls, are child domestic workers.⁶

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

Occupational group	Sex		Age group			Area of residence		Total
	Female	Male	5-9 ^{a/}	10-14 ^{a/}	15-17	Urban	Rural ^{a/}	
Unskilled workers	34.4	75.5	66.9	65.9	63.3	34.3	81.2	64.9
Service workers	59.3	19.2	33.1	31.9	26.3	56.1	15.4	29.6
Others ^{b/}	6.3	5.3	0.0	2.1	10.5	9.6	3.4	5.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0 ^{a/}

a/ Results for this group should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of cases in some categories.

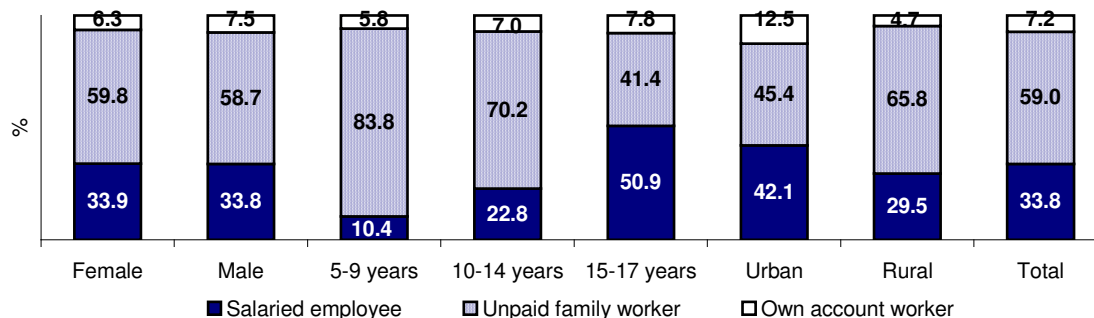
b/ Includes: skilled workers, administrators and technicians, higher technicians and professionals, and managers.

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

Of total working children, 59.0% work for their own family without getting any kind of pay. This percentage is slightly higher among females, decreases markedly with age, and is higher in rural areas.

⁶ Includes the following occupations in private households with employed persons: laundering, cooking and serving food, housekeeping (sweeping, cleaning, dusting), taking care of children, old people, disabled adults, and pets, gardening (caring for the garden, mowing the lawn), running errands.

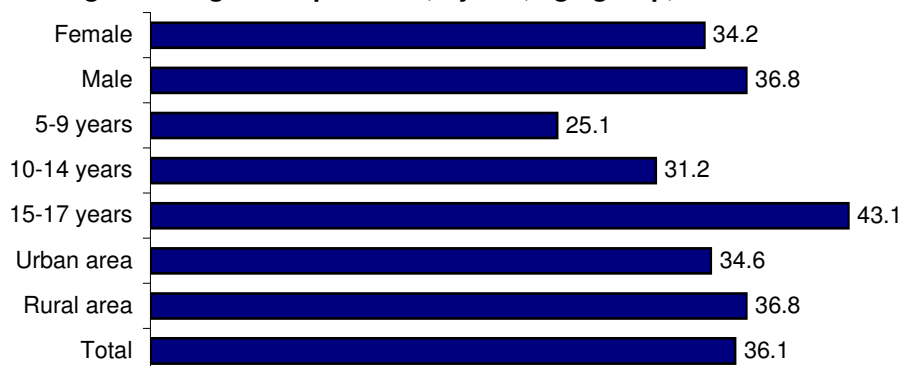
Percent distribution of working children by category in employment, by sex, age group and area of residence



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

Working children spend an average of 36.1 hours per week at work. Boys spend a little longer at work than girls, the same as rural residents with respect to urban dwellers. Average working hours increase visibly with age, reaching 43.1 hours per week for adolescents aged 15-17 years.

Average working hours per week, by sex, age group, and area of residence

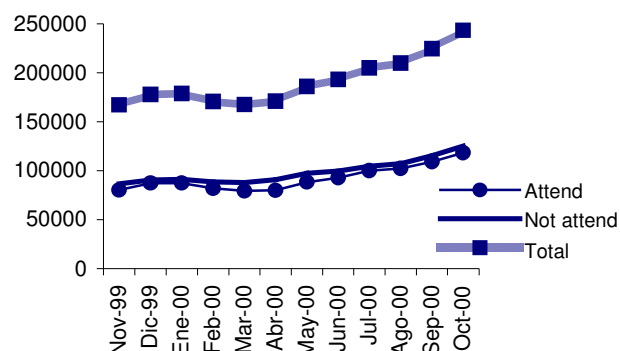


A worrisome survey finding is that 14,135 children, accounting for 5.6% of total working boys and girls, work at night, including 5.3% of working boys, 6.3% of working girls, 5.9% of working urban residents, 5.6% of working rural residents, 3.1% of children aged 5-9 years, 5.2% of those in the 10-14 year group, and 6.6% of adolescents aged 15-17 years.

In the 12 months prior to the survey there is a clear growing trend in the number of boys and girls who are working.⁷ However, between January and February, month when the school year starts in the country, there is a decrease in the number of working children, mostly due to a decrease in the number of school attendees that work after January.

⁷ In part, this trend could be caused by a better recall of activities performed on days closer to the date of the survey.

**Working children during the year prior to the survey
by month, by school attendance**



Parent or guardian perceptions

According to parents or guardians, the main reasons for allowing children in the household to work are related to economic needs.

**Main reasons given by parents or guardians for letting children work
by sex, age group, and area of residence**

Reason	Sex		Age group			Area of residence		Total
	Female	Male	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 17	Urban	Rural	
Supplementing family income	52.6	50.4	33.1	44.6	61.7	49.2	51.9	51.0
Helping in family business	35.2	33.5	51.1	39.4	24.3	30.5	35.7	33.9
Others ^{a/}	12.2	16.1	15.8	16.0	14.0	20.2	12.5	15.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

a/ The other reasons are: paying off outstanding debts, the educational programme is inadequate, school is too far away, and others.

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

Almost half of parents or guardians claimed the household standard of living would go down if working children in the household were removed from work. Some (7.2%) even stated their household would not be able to survive. This dependence on children's work is higher in the case of working adolescents and in rural areas.

**Consequences of children's removal from work reported by parents or guardians
by sex, age group, and area of residence**

Consequence	Sex		Age group			Area of residence		Total
	Female	Male	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 17	Urban	Rural	
Standard of living would decrease	46.1	47.3	30.8	41.9	55.9	45.4	47.8	47.0
Household could not survive	7.4	7.1	6.4	5.3	9.3	5.0	8.3	7.2
Family business could not operate	28.3	27.3	38.7	31.7	20.7	22.8	29.9	27.6
Others	18.1	18.3	24.1	21.0	14.1	26.8	14.0	18.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

Child labour

The child labourer population consists of working boys and girls whose involvement in economic activities goes against 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.⁸ According to this definition, in Nicaragua about 90% of working children are in child labour. Of these, 75.2% are male, 12.2% are in the 5-9 year age bracket, 46.7% are 10- to 14-year-old children, 41.1% are 15-17 years of age, and 71.4% are rural residents. In agriculture, 91.7% of working children are engaged in child labour, while this figure becomes 86.9 in trade, 85.1 in manufacturing, and 83.7 in services. School attendance of these children engaged in child labour is just 45.5%.

Household characteristics

Female-heads are slightly more common in the households of children aged 5-17 years who do not work, or if they do, are not engaged in child labour (30.5%), compared to those where child labour exists (29.8%).

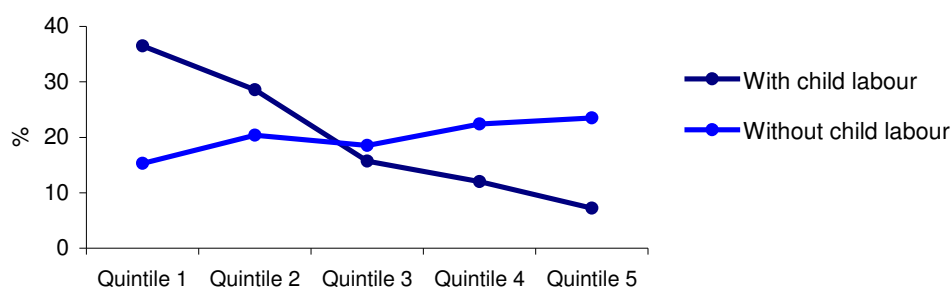
On the other hand, households of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour have an average of 7.1 members, while the other households have an average size of 5.6 members. Much of this gap comes from differences in the average number of underage members: 4.3 in the former and 2.9 in the latter. This means higher levels of demographic dependency in households with child labour than in other households. In the former, for every person of working age (from 18 to 64 years in this analysis) there is an average of 1.7 dependants (persons under 18 years and above 64), whereas in households without child labour the number of dependants per person of working age goes down to 1.2.

In addition to this higher dependency level in households with child labour, these households are concentrated in the lowest socio-economic quintiles.⁹

⁸ Pursuant to national legislation, relevant international conventions, and previous studies, in analysing data from ENTIA the group defined as child labourer consists of working children who, additionally, meet one of the following conditions: 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 in night shifts; working children under 14 years of age; 14- to 17-year-olds working over 30 hours per week; 5- to 17-year-old workers who have to operate any machine, equipment, or tool in performing their work or occupation. These parameters are used for illustration purposes only, and are not to be construed as a proposal for legislation.

⁹ The socio-economic level was measured through an index that summarises information about dwelling characteristics (prevailing wall and floor materials, average number of persons per bedroom), water sources, lighting and cooking fuel, and asset ownership (TV set, radio, 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).

Distribution of households with and without child labour, by socio-economic quintile



Conclusions

- Household chores lay heavy work loads on at least 25.8% of children aged 5-17 years in the country (as per the minimum hours used in this analysis). The relatively high proportion of girls and rural residents in housekeeping tasks is outstanding (32.2 and 31.0%, respectively), as well as the high number of average hours spent by the same groups in these chores (3.9 and 3.8 hours a day, respectively).
- School non-attendance problems are evident in all regions of the country, with a 25.8% national non-attendance rate, but mostly in rural areas where non-attendance reaches 35.4%. Adolescents exhibit a particularly serious non-attendance problem, with a 42.0% rate.
- The survey identified 253,057 persons aged 5-17 years working in Nicaragua, equivalent to 14.3% of children in this age group. Children' work prevalence seems to affect boys (20.9%) more than girls (7.5%), rural residents (20.3%) more than urban dwellers (9.2%), and increases with age (3.5, 17.9, and 32.3%, respectively, for age groups 5-9, 10-14, and 15-17 years).
- A total of 44.4% of them do not have the legal age to work (14 years), amounting to 112,540 children. Even the average age (13.5 years) is below minimum age.
- Agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing is the main sector engaging working children (55.5%). Trade, however, is the main industry for girls (35.7%) and urban residents (40.5%).
- 59.0% of working children work for their families without getting any compensation.

- The average of working hours per week is 36.1, reaching 43.1 for adolescents. Some 5.6% of working children work at night.
- The main reasons expressed by parents or guardians for letting their children work are related to household economic needs. Likewise, they think maintaining household well-being is related to their children's work continuity.
- Nearly 90% of working children are engaged in child labour. The sector with the highest percentage of working children engaged in child labour is agriculture (91.7%), followed by trade (86.9%), manufacturing (85.1%), and services (83.7%).
- Households with children engaged in child labour are not only larger (7.1 members as an average) and have higher dependency levels (1.7 dependency rate) than households of persons aged 5-17 years who are not in this situation (an average of 5.6 members and a 1.2 dependency rate), but also face more precarious socio-economic conditions.