

CHILD LABOUR

What is child labour?

Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour that is to be targeted for elimination. The participation of children or adolescents above the minimum age for admission to employment in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as being something positive. This includes activities such as assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays. These kinds of activities contribute to children's development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life.

The term “**child labour**” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to **work that:**

- **is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children;** and/or
- **interferes with their schooling** by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Whether or not particular forms of “work” can be called “child labour” depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed and the objectives pursued by individual countries. The answer varies from country to country, as well as among sectors within countries.

The worst forms of child labour

The **worst forms of child labour** involve children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities – often at a very early age.

Whilst child labour takes many different forms, a priority is to eliminate without delay the worst forms of child labour as defined by *Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182* :

- **all forms of slavery** or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and **trafficking of children**, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for **prostitution**, for the production of **pornography** or for pornographic performances;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for **illicit activities**, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to **harm the health, safety or morals of children** ("hazardous child labour")

Hazardous child labour, one of the worst forms of child labour

Hazardous child labour or hazardous work is the work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Guidance for governments on some hazardous work activities which should be prohibited is given by *Article 3 of ILO Recommendation No. 190* :

- work which exposes children to **physical, psychological or sexual abuse**;
- work **underground**, under water, at **dangerous heights** or in **confined spaces**;
- work with **dangerous machinery, equipment and tools**, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads;
- work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to **hazardous substances**, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;
- work under particularly difficult conditions such as **work for long hours or during the night** or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer.

What is hazardous child labour or hazardous work?

As it has been said above, **hazardous child labour** is defined by **Article 3 (d) of ILO Convention No. 182** concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999, as:

(d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

More specifically, hazardous child labour is work in dangerous or unhealthy conditions that could result in a child being killed, or injured or made ill as a consequence of poor safety and health standards and working arrangements. It can result in permanent disability, ill health and psychological damage. Often health problems caused by being engaged in child labour may not develop or show up until the child is an adult.

Hazardous child labour is the largest category of the worst forms of child labour with an estimated 79 million children, aged 5-17, working in dangerous conditions in a wide range of sectors, including agriculture, mining, construction, manufacturing, as well as in hotels, bars, restaurants, markets, and domestic service. It is found in both industrialised and developing countries. Girls and boys often start carrying out hazardous work at very early ages.

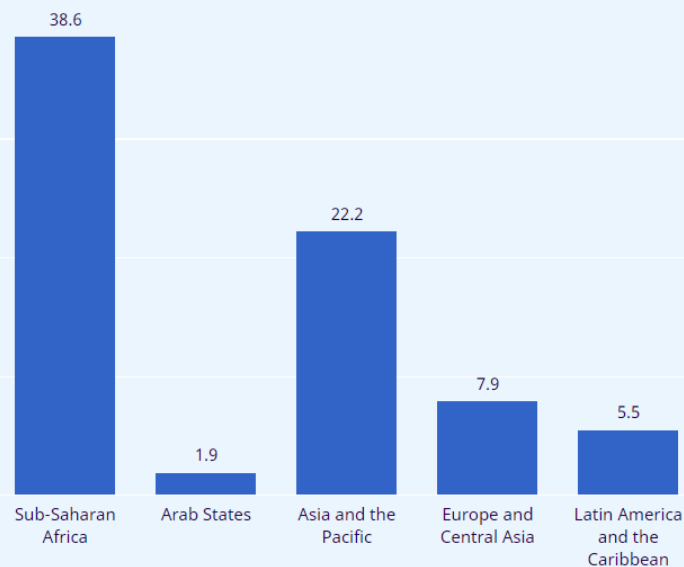
Because their bodies and minds are still developing, children are more vulnerable than adults to workplace hazards, and the consequences of hazardous work are often more devastating and lasting for them.

When speaking of child labour, it is important to go beyond the concepts of work hazard and risk¹ as applied to adult workers and to expand them to include the developmental aspects of childhood. Because children are still growing, they have special characteristics and needs, and in determining workplace hazards and risks their effect on children's physical, cognitive (thought/learning) and behavioural development and emotional growth must be taken into consideration.

¹ "Hazard" and "risk" are two terms that are used frequently in association with this type of child labour. A "hazard" is anything with the potential to do harm. A "risk" is the likelihood of potential harm from that hazard being realized. For example, the hazard associated with power-driven machinery might be getting trapped or entangled by moving parts. The risk will be high if guards are not fitted and workers are in close proximity to the machine. If however, the machine is properly guarded, regularly maintained and repaired by competent staff, the risk will be lower.

► Children in hazardous work

Number of children aged 5 to 17 years in hazardous work, by region (millions).



Source: [ILO and UNICEF: Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward \(New York, 2021\)](#). • [Download image](#)

Sectors and topics

This section provides in-depth information and resources on several sectors and topics of child labour as well as issues that compound the problem.

Child labour in agriculture



In many countries child labour is mainly an agricultural issue. Worldwide 60 percent of all child labourers in the age group 5-17 years old work in agriculture, including farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry, and livestock. This amounts to over 98 million girls and boys. The majority (67.5%) of child labourers are unpaid family members. In agriculture this percentage is higher, and is combined with very early entry into work, sometimes between 5 and 7. Agriculture is one of the three most dangerous sectors in terms of work-related fatalities, non-fatal accidents and occupational diseases. About 59 percent of all children in hazardous work aged 5–17 are in agriculture.

Poverty is the main cause of child labour in agriculture, together with limited access to quality education, inadequate agricultural technology and access to adult labour, high hazards and risks, and traditional attitudes towards children's participation in agricultural activities. Especially in the context of family farming, small-scale fisheries and livestock husbandry, some participation of children in non-hazardous activities can be positive as it contributes to the inter-generational transfer of skills and children's food security. It is important to distinguish between light duties that do no harm to the child and child labour, which is work that interferes with compulsory schooling and damages health and personal development, based on hours and conditions of work, child's age, activities performed and hazards involved.

Child labour and armed conflict



Tens of thousands of girls and boys find themselves fighting adult wars in at least 17 countries in different regions around the world. Some are used as fighters and take direct part in hostilities while others are used in supportive roles (e.g. cooks, porters, messengers, or spies) or for sexual purposes. They are abducted, forcefully recruited or personally decide to enrol (for instance for survival, for protection or for vengeance). However, when personal initiatives are analysed, it becomes clear that they were taken under duress and in ignorance of the consequences.

The use of children in armed conflict is a worst form of child labour, a violation of human rights and a war crime. *ILO Convention No. 182* defines forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict as a worst form of child labour. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict prohibits all recruitment – voluntary or compulsory – of children under 18 by armed forces and groups. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court makes it a war crime, leading to individual prosecution, to conscript or enlist children under the age of 15 years-old or use them to participate actively in hostilities.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children



What is meant by commercial sexual exploitation of children?

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is the exploitation by an adult with respect to a child or an adolescent – female or male – under 18 years old; accompanied by a payment in money or in kind to the child or adolescent (male or female) or to one or more third parties.

The ILO considers commercial sexual exploitation of children an abhorrent violation of the human rights of children and adolescents and a form of economic exploitation similar to slavery and forced labour, which also implies a crime on the part of those who use girls and boys and adolescents in the sex trade.

Commercial sexual exploitation in children includes all of the following:

- The use of girls and boys in sexual activities remunerated in cash or in kind (commonly known as child prostitution) in the streets or indoors, in such places as brothels, discotheques, massage parlours, bars, hotels, restaurants, etc.
- The trafficking of girls and boys and adolescents for the sex trade.
- Child sex tourism.
- The production, promotion and distribution of pornography involving children.
- The use of children in sex shows (public or private.)

Similarly, the Stockholm Declaration adopted at the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (1996) defines the commercial sexual exploitation of children as “a form of coercion and violence against children (that) amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery,” while the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol) defines the term “exploitation” to include “the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” The 2006 Report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children also recognizes that the exploitation of children under 18 in prostitution, child pornography and similar activities constitutes violence.

Child labour in mining and quarrying

- Children go deep underground in tunnels only as wide as their bodies...
- Children haul loads of coal that weigh more than they do...
- Children sit for long hours in the sun, pounding boulders into road gravel...
- Children use their hands to work gold out of rocks using toxic mercury...
- Children squat the whole day in water, sifting through sand for a precious gem...

About one million children work in mines and the number is increasing.

Mining is a form of work that is dangerous to children in every way. It is physically dangerous because of the heavy and awkward loads, the strenuous work, the unstable underground structures, heavy tools and equipment, the toxic and often explosive chemicals, and the exposure to extremes of heat and cold.

It can also be morally and psychologically risky given that mining often takes place in remote areas where law, schools, and social services are unknown, where family and community support may not exist, where "boom or bust" conditions foster alcohol abuse, drugs, and prostitution.

The image of youngsters, blackened by coal dust lugging laden carts up from tunnels deep underground, was one of the factors which stirred the ILO membership to adopt conventions against child labour in the early days of the organization at the start of the twentieth century. Astonishingly, almost a hundred years later, that very image can still be seen in small-scale mines of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and even parts of Europe. Although much reduced, the problem persists.

Why, after all the sensitization and almost universal legislation against it, do children still work in mines and quarries? In part, it is because child labour in mining is one of those forms of work which is particularly closely associated with economic and social disruption. Even if virtually disappearing for a time, it tends to reassert itself when civil wars break out and cut off normal commerce, when drought destroys livelihoods or whenever else times get tough. It usually occurs far from sight: up in the mountains or out in the border areas. And it relocates swiftly, responding to hints and whispers of a gold strike here or jobs there. Under such conditions, neither national nor customary law are able to exert more than feeble control.

Far from the public eye, children in small-scale mining are vulnerable to a panoply of social, psychological, and physical dangers not found in many other forms of work. Mining areas are notorious for violence, prostitution, drug-use (especially of alcohol), and crime, and they attract those unable or unwilling to sustain traditional lifestyles or occupations. Where temporary towns have shot up, there is seldom potable water. Schools are non-existent. Mining is a hazardous occupation and children who work in mines and quarries are at serious risk of injury and illness, some disabilities becoming apparent only years later. An unknown number each year lose their lives. The dangers

are so obvious and extreme that there are no conditions – poverty included – under which child work in mining can be tolerated.

Child labour in mining has not received as much attention as some other forms of child labour, perhaps because the number of children involved is relatively small – estimated roughly at one million – many countries having only a few hundred scattered here and there. Compared with as many as one hundred million in agriculture, mining apparently seems hardly worthy of note. But its extreme danger demands that this form of child exploitation must –and can – be stopped now.

Trafficking in children



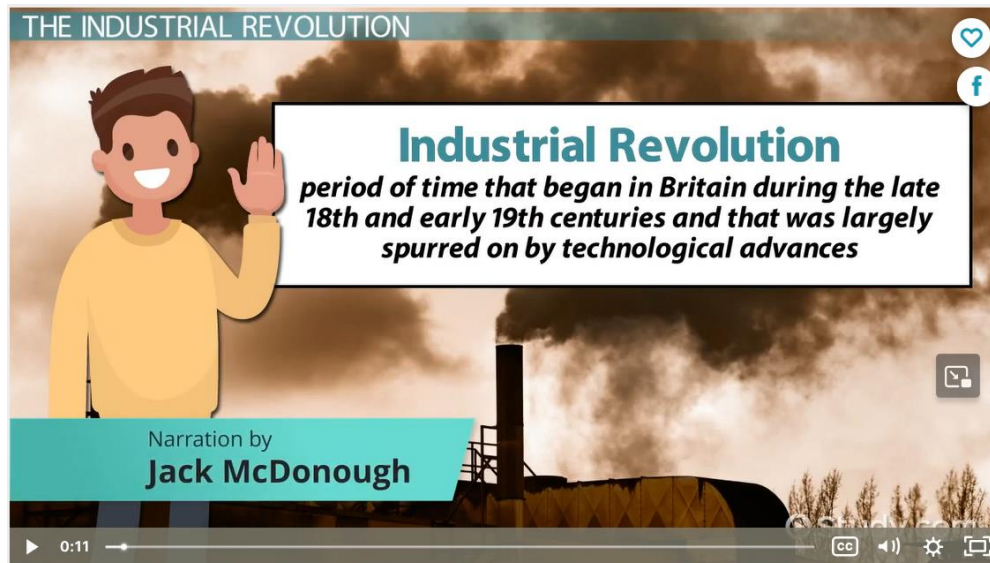
Child trafficking is about taking children out of their protective environment and preying on their vulnerability for the purpose of exploitation. Although no precise figures exist, the ILO (in 2005) estimated that 980,000 to 1,225,000 children - both boys and girls - are in a forced labour situation as a result of trafficking.

ILO Convention No. 182 (1999) on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) classifies trafficking among “forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery” and thereby a WFCL to be eliminated as a matter of urgency, irrespective of the country’s level of development.

The trafficking in children - internally in countries, across national borders and across continents - is closely interlinked with the demand for cheap malleable and docile labour in sectors and among employers where the working conditions and the treatment grossly violates the human rights of the children. These are characterized by environments that are unacceptable (the unconditional worst forms) as well as dangerous to the health and the development of the child (hazardous worst forms). These forms range from bonded labour, camel jockeying, child domestic labour, commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution, drug couriering, and child soldiering to exploitative or slavery-like practices in the informal industrial sector.

Adapted from <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

Victorian Era Child Labour



<https://study.com/academy/lesson/victorian-era-child-labor.html#quiz-course-links>

Quiz & Worksheet - Victorian Era Child Labor

1. Why were children employed as chimney sweeps?

- ☐ It was believed that the work was too easy for adults to do.
- ☐ Queen Victoria stated that hard work would make children tougher and better citizens.
- ☐ Children were small enough to fit into the chimneys to clean them.
- ☐ No tools existed that could allow adults to do this work.

2. What spurred on the 1875 law which banned anyone under the age of 21 from entering into chimneys?

- ☐ A 12 year old boy fell to his death while cleaning a chimney.
- ☐ Older men complained the children were out competing them for work.
- ☐ Older men complained that no one was hiring them because children could be paid less.
- ☐ William Blake's poem inspired the Prime Minister to fight for the law.

3. What did the Cotton Factories Regulation Act of 1819 accomplish?

- ☐ It outlawed children over the age of 9 from working in factories and limited them to a twelve hour day.
- ☐ It outlawed children under the age of 9 from working in factories and limited them to a twelve hour day.
- ☐ It banned all women and children under the age of 18 from working in factories and mills.
- ☐ It limited factory workers to an eight hour day and forced owners to pay the overtime.

The A Team

by Ed Sheeran

[Verse 1]

White lips, pale face
Light's gone, day's end
Burnt lungs, sour taste
Long nights, strange men
Struggling to pay rent
Breathing in snowflakes

[Pre-chorus]

And they say
Stuck in her daydream
She's in the Class A Team
But lately her face seems
Been this way since eighteen
And they scream
Slowly sinking, wasting
Crumbling like pastries
The worst things in life come free to us

[Chorus]

'Cause we're just under the upper hand
And in a pipe she flies to the Motherland
And she don't want to go outside tonight
It's too cold outside
And go mad for a couple grams
Or sells love to another man
For angels to fly
Angels to fly

[Verse 2]

Dry house, wet clothes
Ripped gloves, raincoat
Tried to swim and stay afloat
Weary-eyed, dry throat
Call girl, no phone
Loose change, bank notes

[Pre-chorus]

[Chorus]

[Bridge]

And hoping for a better life
An angel will die
Straight down the line
Closed eye
This time, we'll fade out tonight
Covered in white

[Pre-chorus]

[Chorus]

[Conclusion]

Angels to fly
To fly, fly
For angels to fly, to fly, to fly
For angels to die

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