

Chapter 1 - Minimum age, child labour and young workers

Key points

- Child labour legislation and international standards.
- Employment conditions of young workers.

*According to the report **Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016** published by Alliance 8.7 there are **151.6 million children aged 5 to 17 in child labour.***

I. Minimum age

Article 7 of Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

1. National laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of persons **13 to 15 years of age** on light work which is--

(a) not likely to be harmful to their health or development; and

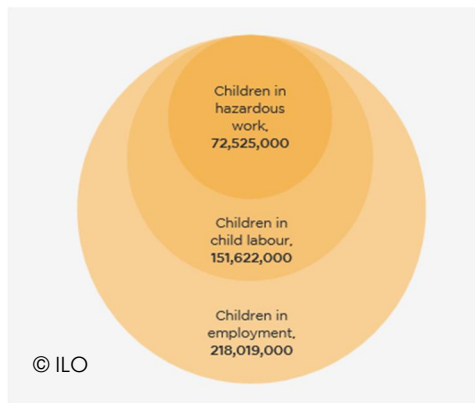
(b) not such as to prejudice **their attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training programs approved** by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received.

2. National laws or regulations may also permit the employment or work of persons who are **at least 15 years** of age but have not yet completed their compulsory schooling on work which meets the

II. Child Labour

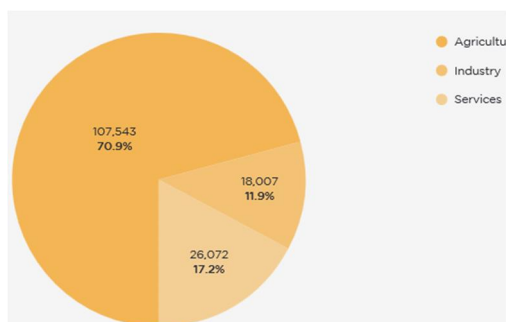
Child labour is defined by ILO as **work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, and interferes with their schooling.** In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets. Not all work done by children is classified as child labour that is to be targeted for elimination. Children's or adolescents' participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling is generally regarded as positive. This includes activities such as helping their parents around the home, 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. 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 national laws of the country. The answer varies from country to country, as well as among sectors within countries.

2016 Global Estimates of children in hazardous work, in child labour, and in employ



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Sectoral composition of child labour :
Percentage distribution of children in child labour by sector employment, 5–17 years age group, 2016(a)



Note: (a) Absolute numbers expressed in thousands.

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ILO Conventions

- **Minimum Age :**
 - [R146 - Minimum Age Recommendation, 1973 \(No. 146\)](#)
 - [C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No. 138\)](#)
- **Child Labour :**
 - [Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 \(No. 182\);](#)
 - [Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 \(No. 190\).](#)
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child: [The Convention on the rights of the Child, 1990.](#)**

III. Young Workers

The minimum age should not be inferior to 15 years old. If however, the local legal minimum age is set at 14 years of age in accordance with ILO Convention 138 developing country exceptions, this lower age may apply - ICS Code of Conduct

For more information:

- [Understanding Children's Work](#)
- [Definition: What is meant by child labour?](#)
- [Child labour ruins Childhood \(Video\)](#)
- [Rights @work for youth – Decent work for young people](#)
- [Ending child labour by 2025: A review of policies and programmes](#)
- [Target 8.7](#)
- [Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016](#)

