

# SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE CHILD LABOUR SURVEY IN HONDURAS

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## **Edition**

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## **SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE CHILD LABOUR SURVEY IN HONDURAS**

The results contained herein are a product of the child labour module included in the Permanent Multiple Purpose Household Survey (EPHPM) carried out by Honduras' National Statistics Institute (INE) between May and June of 2002, with the support of the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), as part of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Office (ILO)<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of the survey on child labour was to collect information on the educational, domestic, economic and recreational activities of the population aged 5 to 17 in Honduras.

### **Boys and girls aged 5 to 17 years**

According to survey results, as of 2002 there were 2,315,886 persons between the ages of 5 and 17 in the country. This represents close to one third of the total population of Honduras. Fifty point seven percent of persons aged 5 to 17 are men, 49.3% are women, 41.3% are between the ages of 5 and 9, 39.0% are between the ages of 10 and 14 and 19.7% are adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17. The survey found that 57.2% live in rural areas. Of those, 58.0% are boys and 56.5% are girls. Rural areas are also home to a larger relative proportion of boys and girls aged 5 to 14 (81.9% of the total population between the ages of 5 and 17) than urban areas (78.0%).

The difficult living situation of many boys and girls is one of the more troubling results of the survey. For example, 22.5% (32.9% in rural areas) live in dwellings that lack plumbing, 76.4% (96.9% in rural areas) live in dwellings that lack a toilet connected to a sewage system, and 34.2% (50.6% in rural areas) live in houses with dirt floors. Moreover, the heads of households of boys and girls have low levels of schooling; 24.3% have no formal education, 55.4% have completed only a primary school grade, 15.3% have completed only a high school grade, and only 5.0% have some form of higher education.

### **Household chores by boys and girls in their own homes**

Eighty point seven percent of working boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 17 stated that they perform housework in their own homes. Housework is more frequent among females than among males, with 85.6% of girls and 75.8% of boys engaging in that activity.

Using 2, 3 and 4-hour minima as a yardstick for analysing household chores for the 5-to-9, 10-to-14 and 15-to-17 age groups, respectively, the survey found that 29.0% of boys and girls in

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<sup>1</sup> See *National report of the results of the child labour survey in Honduras* (ILO, 2004), *In-depth study of child labour and poverty in Honduras* (ILO, 2004) 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 child labour survey in Honduras.

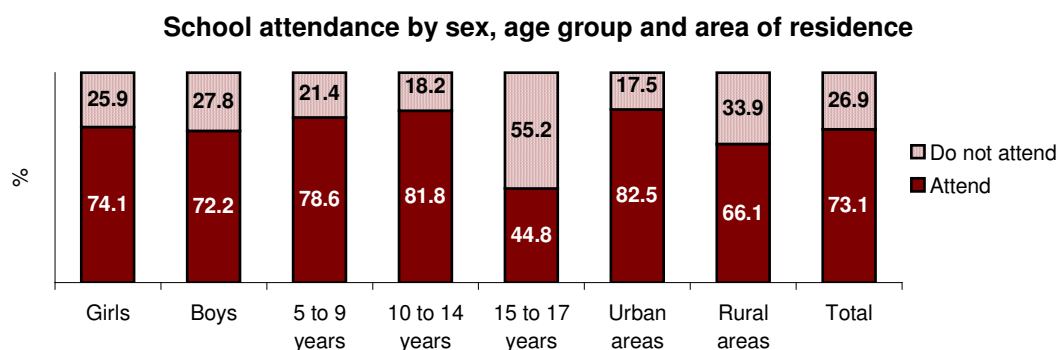
Honduras perform household chores in excess of those minima<sup>2</sup>. Among girls, that percentage is 34.9%; among boys, it is 23.1%. Females account for 59.5% of the age groups mentioned above as a whole, but the percentage of females in the group increases consistently in proportion to the age of children.

Using the same minima, the percentage of children performing household chores in their own homes rises from 29.9% in the 5-to-9 age group to 30.5% in the 10-to-14 group, dropping to 24.0% among adolescents aged 15 to 17. The percentage of children and adolescents performing household chores for at least these minima is considerably higher in rural areas (32.5%) than it is in urban areas (24.2%).

School attendance in this group is 74.6%. Those who are able to attend school spend an average of 5.4 hours a day performing household chores, compared to 6.1 hours for those who do not attend school. Females dedicate an average of 5.7 hours to household chores, compared to 5.4 for males. In rural areas the average is 5.7 hours, compared to 5.3 in urban areas.

### Child school attendance

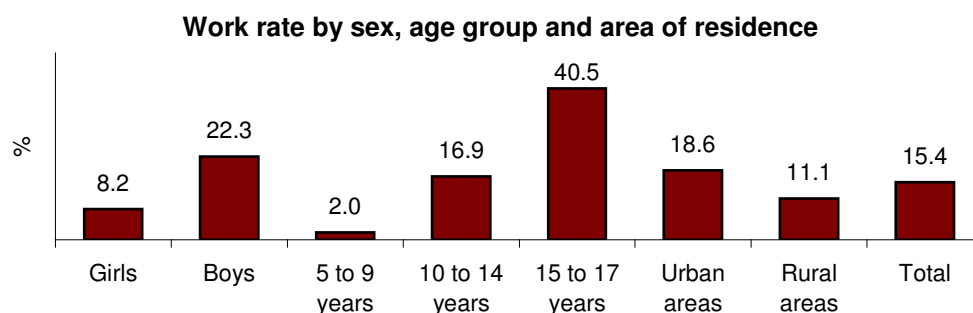
Seventy-three point one percent of boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 17 attend school. Non-attendance is a graver issue among boys than among girls, and is also more severe in rural areas than urban areas – especially among adolescents aged 15 to 17. Only 44.8% of the latter attend school.



<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.

### Boys and girls engaged in economic activities

Based on survey results, a total of 356,241 boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 17 are estimated to work in economic activities in Honduras as of 2002. This is equivalent to 15.4% of the overall population in that age group. The percentage of children and adolescents engaged in economic activities is greater among males (22.3%) than among females (8.2%) and increases considerably with age. It is also higher in rural areas (18.6%) than it is in urban areas (11.1%).



Twenty-four point six of working children and adolescents are girls, and 73.6% are boys. Most working children – 69.2% – live in rural areas. Over half (52.0%) are adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17, and 42.7% are between the ages of 10 and 14. Only 5.3% are between the ages of 5 and 9. An estimated 123,195 working children (34.6% of the total) are under the age of 14 – the minimum age established by law for admission to economic activity subject to certain restrictions. The overall average age of working children is 14.1. For girls, it is 14.0; for boys, it is 14.1. In urban areas, it is 14.4, and in rural areas it is only 13.9.

Working children are occupied mainly in agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing (56.2%), trade, hotels and restaurants (24.4%), manufacturing (8.2%) and community, social and personal services<sup>3</sup> (6.6%). The remaining industries<sup>4</sup> account for only 4.4% of working children. Females are more evenly distributed throughout these activities than males. The former are occupied mainly in trade, followed by services, agriculture and manufacturing.

The relative importance of trade declines with age, while services and “other” industries become more important as children grow older. Agriculture is predominant in rural areas, with trade a distant second. Activities are more evenly matched in urban areas, where trade is the dominant activity, followed by manufacturing.

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

<sup>4</sup> The remaining activities are as follows: mining and quarrying; electricity, gas and water supply; construction; transport, storage and communications; financial intermediation, except insurance and pension funding; real estate, renting and business activities; not well specified.

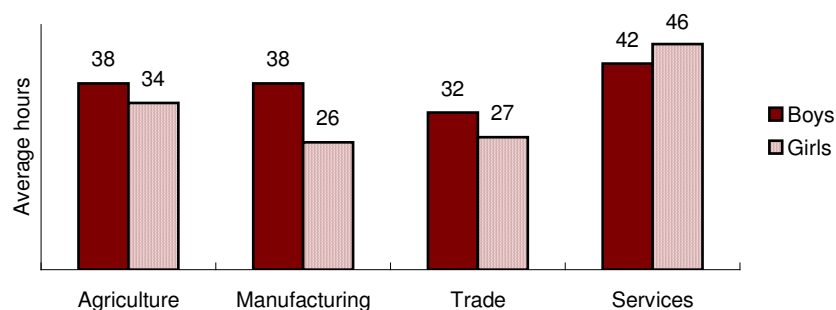
**Percent distribution of working boys and girls by sex, age group,  
and area of residence, by industry**

Industry	Males	Females	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 17	Urban	Rural	Total
Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	70.7	15.8	54.3	59.8	53.5	12.1	75.9	56.2
Manufacturing	5.6	15.6	8.5	6.9	9.3	15.3	5.1	8.2
Trade, hotels and restaurants	16.8	45.9	35.5	27.3	21.0	49.2	13.4	24.4
Community, social and personal services	1.0	22.3	0.0	3.9	9.5	14.2	3.2	6.6
Other	5.9	0.5	1.8	2.1	6.7	9.2	2.3	4.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

The average number of hours that working boys and girls dedicate to economic activities per week is high (35.9), particularly in the service sector. In that sector, girls work up to 46 hours a week, on average – more than their male counterparts, who work an average of 42 hours. In other industries, the average number of hours worked is higher for boys.

**Weekly average number of hours dedicated to economic activities by industry, by sex**



**Average number of hours dedicated to work in economic activities by sex and  
area of residence, by age group**

Age group	Sex		Area of residence	
	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
5 to 9	15	16	16	15
10 to 14	31	26	26	31
15 to 17	44	39	42	43

Generally speaking, boys work longer shifts than girls – 37 hours, compared to 34 hours. In the 5-to-9 age group, however, the average is higher for girls (16 hours) than for boys (15 hours). No significant differences are observed by area of residence for working children as a whole, but slight differences are found by age groups. The average number of hours dedicated to work is higher in urban areas for boys and girls aged 5 to 9, but lower for children over 9.

The main occupation among persons aged 5 to 17 is agriculture, livestock and farm worker, which accounts for 55.5% of that age group, and 70.1% of boys. Trade and sales worker is a

distant second; this activity accounts for 20.0% of the overall group and 12.5% of working boys. Trade and sales worker is the dominant occupation among females, at 41.1%, followed by occupations in the service sector, which account for 25.1%.

Most of these working children (61.2%) are unremunerated for their work, and usually work for their families. This percentage is particularly high among boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 9. The percentage of boys and girls working in the public or private sectors, as remunerated domestic workers, or as own-account workers, is also found to increase with age. Moreover, the relative importance of unremunerated work decreases as children grow older. By sex, the public or private employee and own-account categories are relatively more prevalent among boys than among girls, while the domestic worker category is more prevalent among females.

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

Status in employment	Male <sup>a/</sup>	Female	5 to 9 <sup>a/</sup>	10 to 14	15 to 17	Urban	Rural <sup>a/</sup>	Total
Public or private employee	30.8	19.4	11.8	16.5	38.7	36.3	24.1	27.9
Domestic worker (paid)	0.3	15.3	0.0	2.1	6.5	10.3	1.6	4.3
Own-account worker	7.6	4.3	0.8	2.9	10.5	6.0	7.1	6.8
Unpaid worker	61.2	61.0	87.4	78.4	44.3	47.3	67.3	61.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

a/ Results must be interpreted with caution due to the small number of observations in certain categories

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

It is estimated that over 18 thousand persons between the ages of 5 and 17 – most of them females – are child domestic workers.<sup>5</sup>

**Perceptions of work in economic activities by boys and girls**

It should be noted that, according to the survey responses of parents/guardians of working boys and girls, the main reasons for allowing household members who are children to work in economic activities are not economic in nature. The foremost reason cited is the duty of children to participate in family activities. This shows the importance of family work. The second most common reason cited is the role of work in building character in children, and instilling in them an honest work ethic. Thirty-five point four percent of parents/guardians stated that they allow boys and girls to work because it keeps them off the street and away from vices.

<sup>5</sup> Includes the following occupations in private households with employed persons: washing and ironing clothes, washing dishes, cooking and serving food, housecleaning (sweeping, cleaning, dusting), caring for boys, girls, handicapped adults or animals, cleaning windows, yard work, maintaining or guarding the house, running errands.

**Percent distribution of reasons cited by parents/guardians and working children for engaging in economic activities**

<b>Reasons for working</b>	<b>Parents/guardians</b>	<b>Children</b>
Must participate in family activities	53.5	51.4
Work builds character and instils an honest work ethic in children	47.2	38.3
Must help with household expenses	41.0	42.3
Work keeps children off the street and away from vices	35.4	28.8
Every member of the household has worked from an early age	12.4	13.9
Must help pay for his/her education	7.2	8.5
To help pay off a loan or debt	4.5	3.9
There is no school nearby	2.5	2.2
Other	6.5	6.4

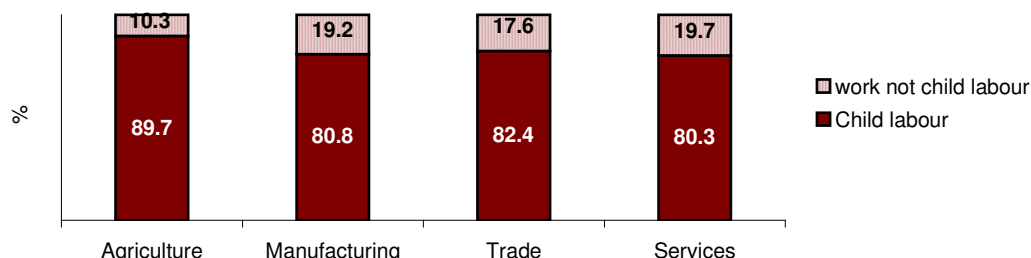
*Note:* The percentage is the number of responses in each reason divided by the total number of respondents. Interviewees were allowed to provide more than one answer.

Working boys and girls, like their parents/guardians, believe that the primary reason they must work is to participate in their families' activities. Helping to cover household expenses is of secondary importance.

### **Child labour**

The child labourer population is made up of those children 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 schooling<sup>6</sup>. Based on survey results, it is estimated that 87.0% of working children in Honduras are engaged in this type of work. Of those, 24.2% are girls and 75.8% are boys; 29.5% live in urban areas and 70.5% live in rural areas; 6.1% are between the ages of 5 and 9, 46.4% are between the ages of 10 and 14, and 47.5% are adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17.

**Percent of working children in child labour by main industry**



<sup>6</sup> When analysing the results of the child labour survey in Honduras, 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 quarrying, construction, electricity, gas and water supply, transport, storage and communication; children aged 5 to 17 working night or mixed shifts; working children under the age of 14 years; working children between the ages of 14 and 15 who work more than 28 hours a week; working adolescents between the ages of 16 and 17 who work more than 42 hours a week. These guidelines are illustrative in nature, and are not intended as a legislative proposal.

Agriculture is not only the main source of employment for persons between the ages of 5 and 17; 89.7% of children and adolescents working in the agricultural sector are engaged in child labour, followed by 82.4% in trade.

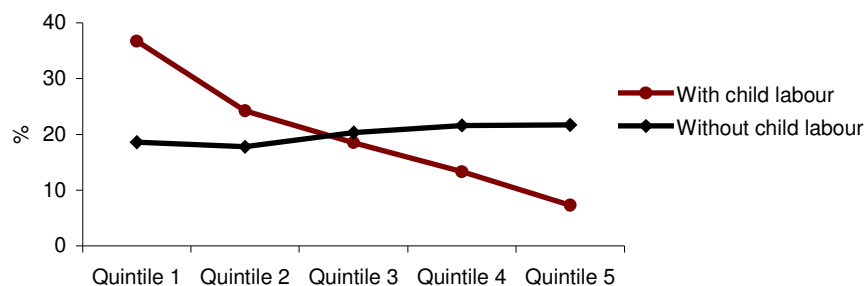
Only 39.5% of child labourers attend school.

### Composition of households of children engaged in child labour

Survey results show that 24.3% of heads of households of child labourers are women, compared to 26.0% for households where persons between the ages of 5 and 17 do not work, or are not engaged in work that is not considered child labour. Households of child labourers are also larger than those of other persons aged 5 to 17, with an average of 6.5 members – one more than the average for other households. This difference stems from the larger average number of members under 18 years in households of child labourers – 3.9, compared to 2.9 for other households. This suggests a higher demographic dependency rate, equivalent to 1.6 dependent members for every person of working age, whereas the dependency rate in households of child labourers is 1.3<sup>7</sup>.

Households of child labourers are also in the lowest socio-economic quintiles<sup>8</sup>.

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



### Conclusions

- Twenty-nine percent of persons between the ages of 5 and 17 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). The highest percentages in this regard are found among females (34.9%), children aged 10 to 14 (30.5%) and residents of rural areas (32.5%).

<sup>7</sup> In this case, the 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.

<sup>8</sup> Socio-economic status was measured using an index which summarises dwelling characteristics (main material of which a dwelling is built, average number of persons to each room), water supply, type of toilet and lighting, and asset ownership (television set, telephone, etc.). For further details on the development of this index, see *Analysis of child labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic* (ILO, 2004).



- Twenty-six point nine percent of boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 17 do not attend school. School attendance among this group in rural areas is only 66.1%. Only 44.8% of adolescents aged 15 to 17 attend school.
- Three hundred and fifty-six thousand, two hundred and forty-one boys and girls in Honduras between the ages of 5 and 17 work in economic activities. This is equivalent to 15.4% of all persons in this age group. For boys, the percentage is 22.3%, compared to 8.2% for girls. Thirty-four point six percent of these workers are below the minimum age for admission to employment (14).
- Fifty-six point two percent of working children are employed in the fields of agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing. Girls and urban residents work primarily in the trade sector, which accounts for 45.9% and 49.2% of those two categories, respectively.
- Working boys and girls work an average of 35.9 hours per week. Females in the services sector work an average of 46 hours per week.
- A total of 61.2% of working children and adolescents are unremunerated family workers.
- The main reason children engage in economic activities, according to the responses of both their parents/guardians (53.5%) and the children themselves (51.4%), is the duty to participate in family activities.
- It is estimated that 87.0% of workers between the ages of 5 and 17 are engaged in child labour. Of these, 60.5% are unable to attend school. The highest percentage of children engaged in child labour (89.7%) is found in agriculture.
- Households where boys and girls are engaged in child labour are larger (6.5 members, on average) than those that do not include children in that situation (5.5 members). The socio-economic status of the former is also lower.