



World Day Against CHILD LABOUR

12 JUNE 2015



International
Labour
Organization

COVID-19: Protect children from child labour, now more than ever

What is child labour?

Defining child labour

Not all work done by children should be 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 being something 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. 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** involves 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](#):

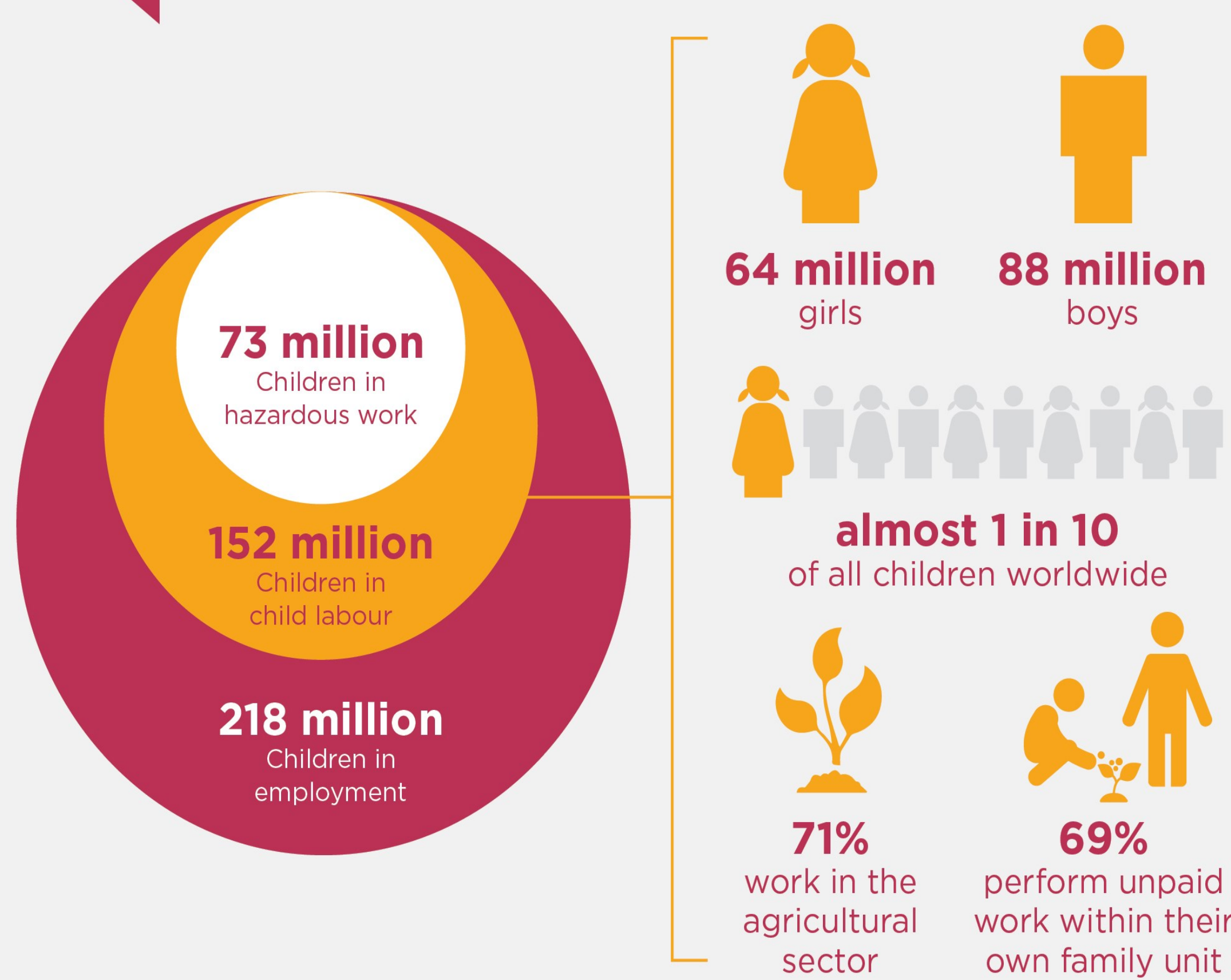
- **all forms of slavery** or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and **trafficking of children**, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for **prostitution**, 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 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.

There are more than 150 million children in child labour in the world, half of whom are in hazardous work.



Absolute number of children in employment, child labour and hazardous work

International Labour Organization

Background

The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the World Day Against Child Labour in 2002 to focus attention on the global extent of child labour and the action and efforts needed to eliminate it. Each year on 12 June, the World Day brings together governments, employers and workers organizations, civil society, as well as millions of people from around the world to highlight the plight of child labourers and what can be done to help them.

The [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), adopted by world leaders in 2015, include a renewed global commitment to ending child labour. Specifically, [target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals](#) calls on the global community to: "Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms."

The Issue of Child Labour

Today, throughout the world, around 218 million children work, many full-time. They do not go to school and have little or no time to play. Many do not receive proper nutrition or care. They are denied the chance to be children. More than half of them are exposed to the worst forms of child labour such as work in hazardous environments, slavery, or other forms of forced labour, illicit activities including drug trafficking and prostitution, as well as involvement in armed conflict.

Guided by the principles enshrined in ILO's [Minimum Age Convention No. 138](#) and the [Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182](#), the [ILO Programme on Child Labour \(IPEC\)](#) works to achieve the effective abolition of child labour.

Prevalence of Child Labour

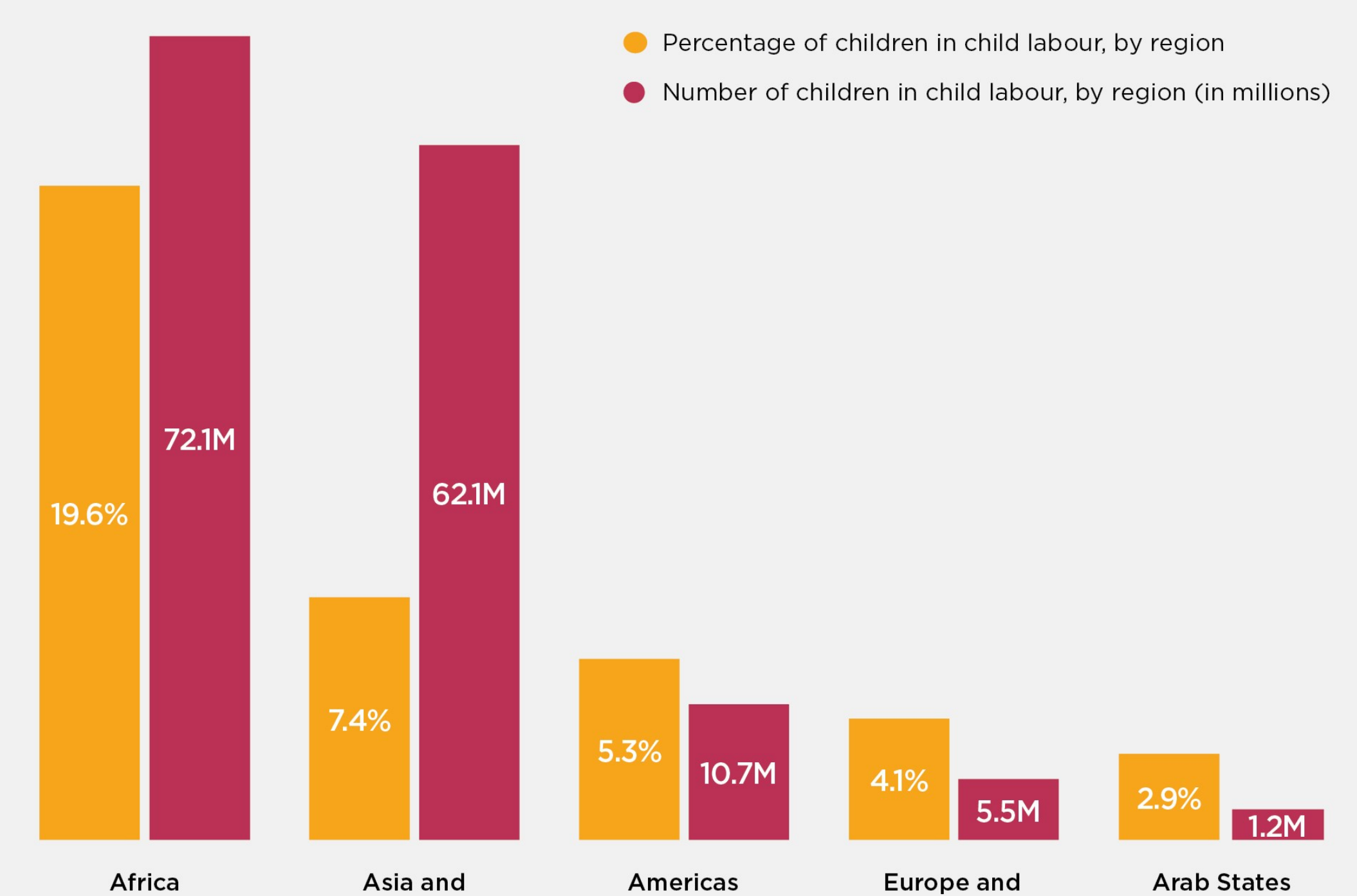
Children around the world are routinely engaged in paid and unpaid forms of work that are not harmful to them. However, they are classified as child labourers when they are either too young to work, or are involved in hazardous activities that may compromise their physical, mental, social or educational development. In the least developed countries, slightly more than one in four children (ages 5 to 17) are engaged in labour that is considered detrimental to their health and development.

Africa ranks highest among regions both in the percentage of children in child labour — one-fifth — and the absolute number of children in child labour — 72 million. Asia and the Pacific ranks second highest in both these measures — 7% of all children and 62 million in absolute terms are in child labour in this region.

The Africa and the Asia and the Pacific regions together account for almost nine out of every ten children in child labour worldwide. The remaining child labour population is divided among the Americas (11 million), Europe and Central Asia (6 million), and the Arab States (1 million). In terms of incidence, 5% of children are in child labour in the Americas, 4% in Europe and Central Asia, and 3% in the Arab States.

While the percentage of children in child labour is highest in low-income countries, their numbers are actually greater in middle-income countries. 9% all children in lower-middle-income countries, and 7% of all children in upper-middle-income countries, are in child labour. Statistics on the absolute number of children in child labour in each national income grouping indicate that 84 million children in child labour, accounting for 56% of all those in child labour, actually live in middle-income countries, and an additional 2 million live in high-income countries.

Among regions, Africa has the highest number of child labourers and the highest percentage of its children in child labour. Asia and the Pacific is close behind in terms of absolute numbers of child labourers.



Percentage and number of children (in millions) in child labour by region

International Labour Organization

*Child Is Meant To Learn,
Not To Earn*

STOP CHILD LABOUR !

— The Fresh Quotes —

Source: What is child labour (IPEC). (n.d.). Retrieved May 25, 2021, from <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

World Day Against Child Labour - Background. (n.d.). Retrieved May 25, 2021, from <https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-day-against-child-labour/background>