

SUMMARY: ANALYSIS OF CHILD LABOUR IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Edition

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International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC)

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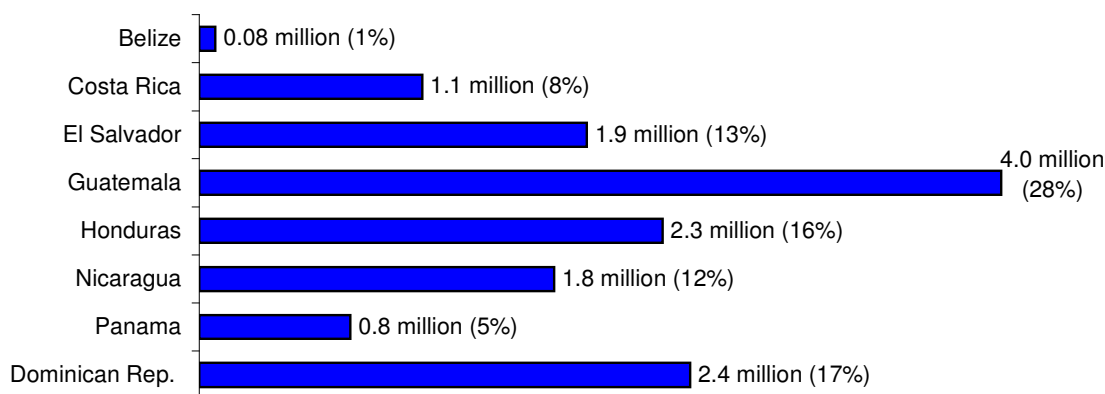
SUMMARY: ANALYSIS OF CHILD LABOUR IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The results presented here come from national household surveys conducted in the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic, with 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)'s, from 2000 to 2002, with the purpose of collecting information on school, domestic, economic and recreational activities of children aged 5 to 17 years.¹

Children in Central America and the Dominican Republic

According to data from the surveys, in the 2000-2002 period Central America and the Dominican Republic had over 14.4 million children in the 5-17-year age bracket, distributed by country as shown in the chart below:

Population between 5 and 17 years and percentage of regional total, by country

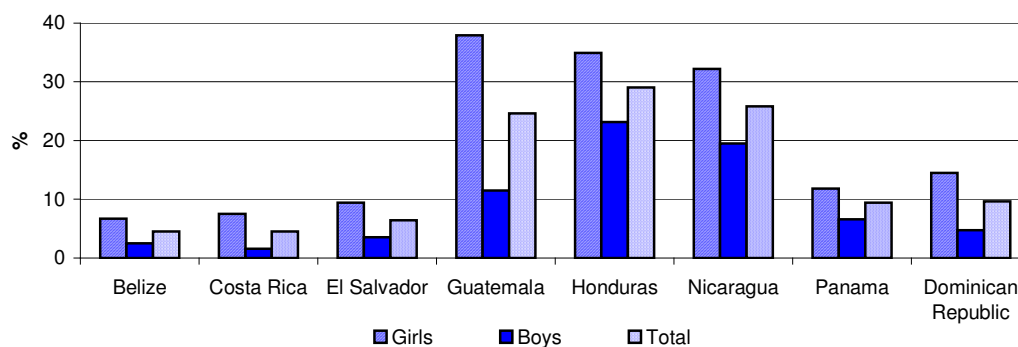


¹ The surveys conducted are the following: Belize: Child Activity Survey (CAS 2001); Costa Rica: child labour module in the Multiple Purpose Household Survey (EHPM 2002); El Salvador: child labour module in the Multiple Purpose Household Survey (EHPM 2001); Guatemala: child labour module in the Living Standard Measurement Study survey (ENCOVI 2000); Honduras: child labour module in the Permanent Multiple Purpose Household Survey (EHPM 2002); Nicaragua: child labour module in the Urban and Rural Employment Measurement Survey (2000); Panama: Child Labour Survey (ETI 2000); Dominican Republic: National Child Labour Survey (ENTI 2000). Although the 8 surveys were conducted at different times during a period of almost two years between 2000 and 2002, their results are aggregated in this analysis to arrive at findings for the region as a whole, and are used to make direct comparisons between countries for illustration purposes only, assuming the population of children and children's activities do not undergo significant variations along such a short period of time.

Housekeeping activities of children in their own homes

A large number of these children spend many hours on housekeeping chores in their own homes, which takes time away from their schooling, recreation, and rest. The following chart shows the percentage of boys and girls aged 5 to 17 years who spend many hours in household chores, defined for the purpose of this report as more than 2 hours a day as an average for children aged 5 to 9 years, more than 3 hours for children in the 10-14 year age bracket, and over 4 hours daily for adolescents aged 15 to 17 years.² Probably as a consequence the roles traditionally assigned to women as part of culture, the percentage of underage girls who spend many hours in housekeeping chores is considerably higher than that for boys in all countries, and this gap between sexes increases with age. Similarly, long housekeeping hours are more common in rural than in urban areas.

Children in housekeeping activities for long hours in their own homes, by country



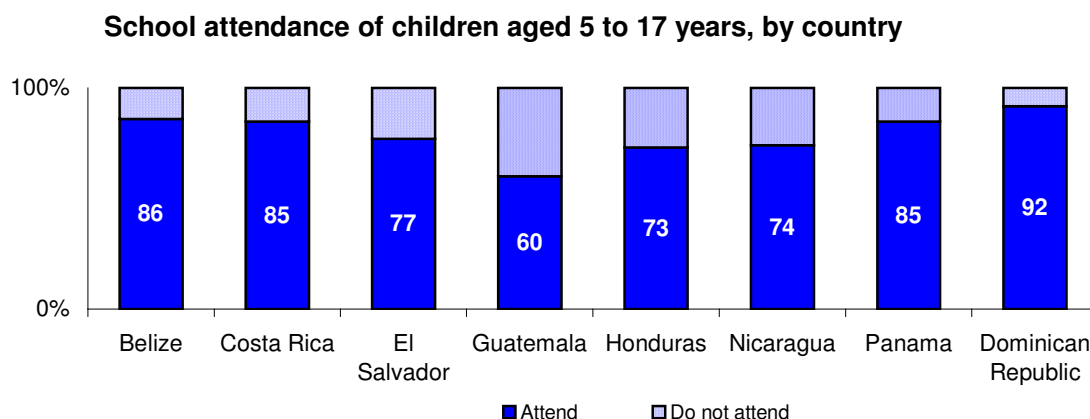
Children in the region spend the following average number of hours per day performing household chores in their own homes: Belize, 4.3; Costa Rica, 4.5; El Salvador, 3.5; Guatemala, 5.9; Honduras, 5.6; Nicaragua, 3.7; Panama, 3.5; and the Dominican Republic, 3.5. For girls and boys not attending school, the daily average is even higher:

² The idea behind these minimum hours is only to illustrate the extent to which many children and adolescents 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 residence areas. These minimums 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, 2003), 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.

5.2 in Belize, 5.5 in Costa Rica, 4.0 in El Salvador, 6.9 in Guatemala, 6.1 in Honduras, 4.4 in Nicaragua, 4.9 in Panama, and 4.8 in the Dominican Republic.

Children's school attendance

About 73% of the region's children aged 5 to 17 years attend school, with urban attendance being significantly higher than rural in all the countries. The Dominican Republic stands out with a school attendance above 90%.

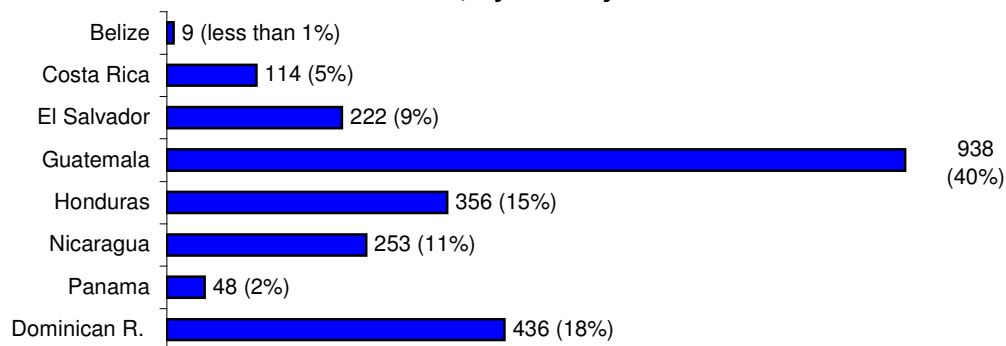


Working children

Number, age, sex, and area of residence

In 2000-2002 there is an estimated 2.4 million girls and boys who are working in the region, of which, close to 40% are in Guatemala.

Working children aged 5 to 17 years (in thousands) and percentage of regional total, by country



This total means that approximately 17% of children aged 5 to 17 years are working in the region. Compared to country population in that age bracket, Guatemala also has

the highest rate, with 23% of 5- to- 17-year-olds in the country working. The next highest work rates are found in the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Belize, and Costa Rica, with Panama having the lowest.

Some 10% of girls from 5 to 17 years of age in the region are working, and only the Guatemalan percentage for females is above this regional average. In the case of boys in the region, 23% of those aged 5 to 17 years are working, and this regional average is surpassed for boys in Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. In all of the countries the work rate for males is considerably higher than for females.

Work rate of children by country, by sex, area of residence and age group

	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama	Dominican Republic	Region
Total	11	10	12	23	15	14	6	18	16
Female	7	6	7	16	8	7	3	9	10
Male	14	14	16	31	22	21	9	26	23
Urban area	7	6	7	18	11	9	3	16	12
Rural area	14	15	16	26	19	20	10	20	21
5-9 years	3	3	1	5	2	3	1	9	4
10-14 years	10	8	13	28	17	18	6	20	19
15-17 years	29	23	28	54	41	32	18	31	37

Whereas 12% of urban residents aged 5-17 years are working, this percentage goes up to 21% for rural area residents in the same age bracket. In all of the countries the rural rate is higher than the urban one, with the smallest differential between both residence areas being found in the Dominican Republic.

The percentage of working persons aged 5-17 years increases steadily with age, being 4% for the 5-9-year age group, increasing to 19% for 10- to 14-year-old children, and going up to 37% for 15-17-year-old adolescents in the region. The same increasing behaviour concerning age is observed in all of the countries.

Average age for working children is low, and is often under the minimum age for admission to employment provided for in national legislation: 13.9 years in Belize (minimum legal age: 14 years), 14.0 in Costa Rica (minimum age: 15 years), 14.1 in El Salvador (minimum age: 14 years), 13.6 in Guatemala (minimum age: 14 years), 14.1 in Honduras (minimum age: 14 years), 13.5 in Nicaragua (minimum age: 14 years), 14.4 in Panama (minimum age: 14 years), and 12.5 in the Dominican Republic (minimum age: 14 years). Only in El Salvador and Panama is working boys' average age below girls', although sex differences in the 8 countries are not very significant. On

the other hand, the average age of rural working children is consistently lower than that of urban dwellers, and only in Panama and El Salvador is rural resident average age above the country's minimum age for admission to employment (14 years).

Most working children are male. The percentage of working children that are girls fluctuates between 23% in Panama and 34% in Guatemala.

**Percent distribution of working children aged 5 to 17 years by country,
by sex, area of residence, and age group**

	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama	Dominican Republic	Region
Male	67.5	73	70	66	74	74	77	74.5	74.5
Female	32.5	27	30	34	26	26	23	25.5	25.5
Urban	25	32	35	27	31	35	31	57	35
Rural	75	68	65	73	69	65	69	43	65
5-9 years	11	11	5	10	5	11	6	21	11
10-14 years	36	32	44	46	43	45	36	44	44
15-17 years	53	57	51	45	52	44	58	35	45
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: The sum of details may not add up exactly to totals due to rounding.

The only country where more than half of working boys and girls are urban residents is the Dominican Republic, where 57% of working persons aged 5 to 17 years reside in urban areas. In the other countries the urban percentage ranges from 25% in Belize to 35% in El Salvador.

Lastly, the 15- to 17-year-old adolescent group accounts for over half of working boys and girls in all of the countries, with the exception of Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic, where they represent 45%, 44%, and 36% of the total, respectively. These are also the countries where working children have the lowest average age. A case in point is the Dominican Republic, where 20% of working girls and boys are younger than 10 years.

Industry

Almost half (48%) of working children in the region are engaged in agriculture, 21% are in trade, 14% in services,³ 11% in manufacturing, and the remaining 6% work in other

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

industries⁴, including intrinsically hazardous sectors, such as mining and quarrying, and construction.

**Percent distribution of working children aged 5 to 17 years by country,
by industry**

Industry	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama	Dominican Republic	Region
Agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing	48	44	49	56	56	56	54	18	48
Manufacturing industries	6	9	16	12	8	11	4	12	11
Trade, restaurants, and hotels	20	27	23	18	24	20	16	21	21
Community, social, and personal services	18	10	7	8	7	9	17	41	14
Others	8	11	5	6	4	4	9	8	6

Note: The sum of details may not add up exactly to totals due to rounding.

Agriculture is the main employer of children in all of the countries, with the exception of Dominican Republic, where services absorbs a higher share (41%).

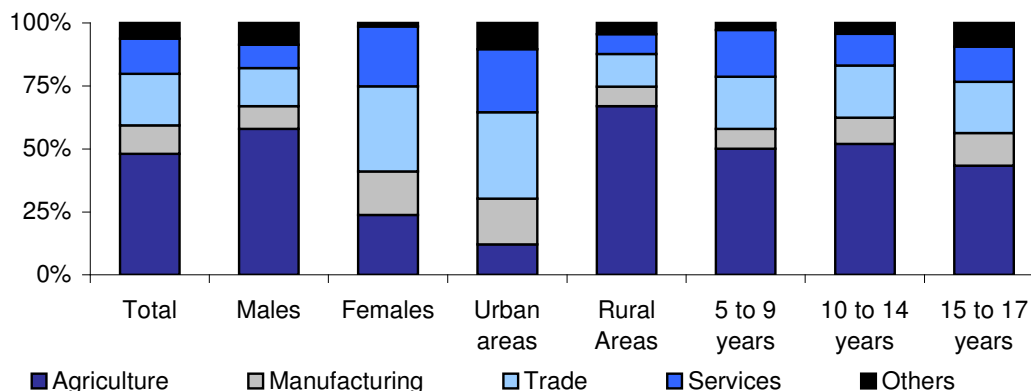
There is a noticeable difference between males and females in their distribution by economic sector in the region. For girls, trade is the main industry, with 34% of girls, followed by agriculture and services, at 24% each, and 17% in manufacturing industries. In the case of males, 58% work in agriculture, 15% in trade, 9% in services, and 9% in manufacturing.

Significant differences are also found between rural and urban areas. In rural areas, whereas 67% of working children are engaged in agriculture, only 13% are in trade, 8% in services, and 8% in manufacturing. In urban areas, however, trade is the main sector, at 34%, followed by services with 25%, manufacturing with 18%, and just 12% in agriculture.

By age group, no major differences or marked trends are seen in the distribution by industry. Agriculture loses some of its relevance as children's age increases, whereas manufacturing and the "other" industries gain relative importance.

⁴ The remaining sectors are: mining and quarrying; electricity, gas, and water supply; construction; transport, storage and communications; financial intermediation; real estate, business, and rental activities; not well specified.

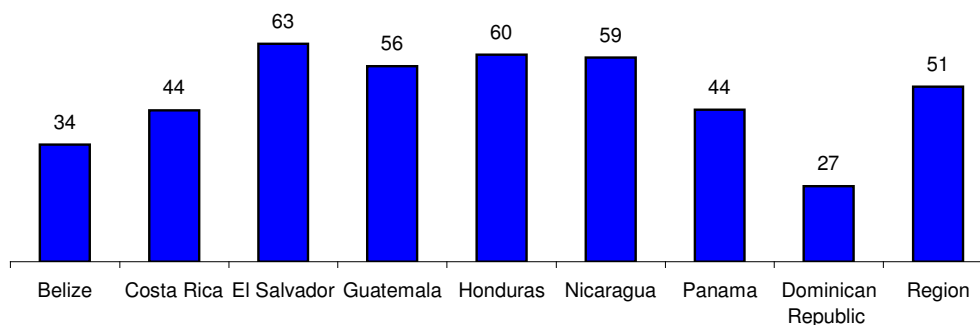
Percent distribution of working children aged 5 to 17 years by industry, by sex, area of residence and age group



Compensation

At the regional level, approximately half of working boys and girls work for their families without getting any compensation for their tasks. In El Salvador over 60% of 5- to 17-year-old working children are unpaid family workers. In comparison, only 26.6% of them work for their families without pay in the Dominican Republic.

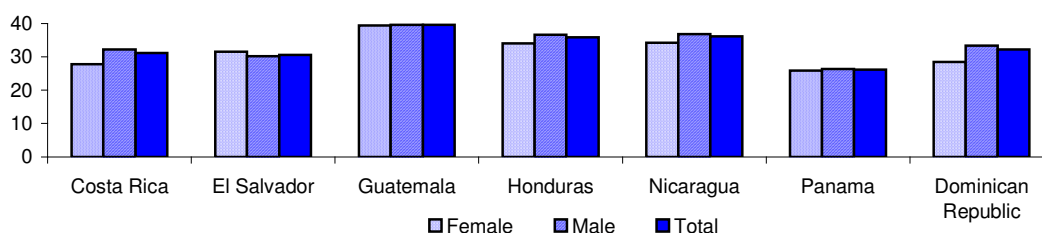
Percentage of children engaged in unpaid family work, by country



Working Hours

Working children in the region devote many hours per week to economic activities: an average of 31.1 in Costa Rica, 30.6 in El Salvador, 39.6 in Guatemala, 35.9 in Honduras, 36.1 in Nicaragua, 26.2 in Panama, and 32.2 in the Dominican Republic. No clear differences or trends are discerned by sex or area of residence.

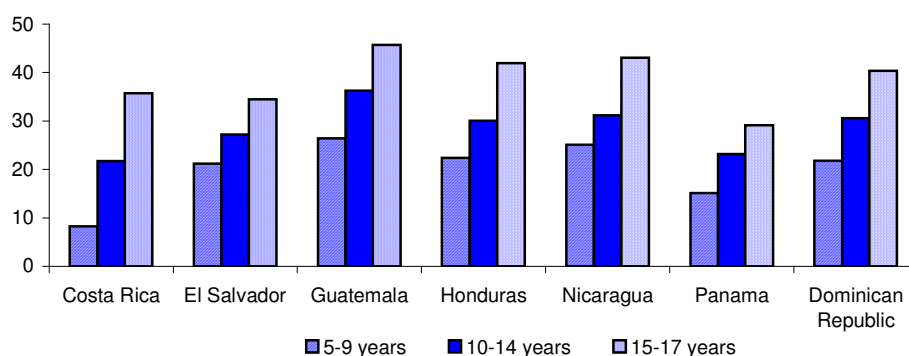
Average hours worked per week by children, by country



Note: Working children in Belize report working an average of 6 hours per workday, and the average is 6 hours for boys and 6.1 for girls. The number of workdays per week is unknown.

A clear growing trend, however, is seen in the average number of hours worked as age increases.

Average hours worked per week by children, by age group, by country



Note: Working children in Belize work an average of 1.9 hours a workday in the age group 5-9 years, 5.1 hours in the age group 10-14 years, and 6.7 hours in the age group 15-17 years.

Child labour

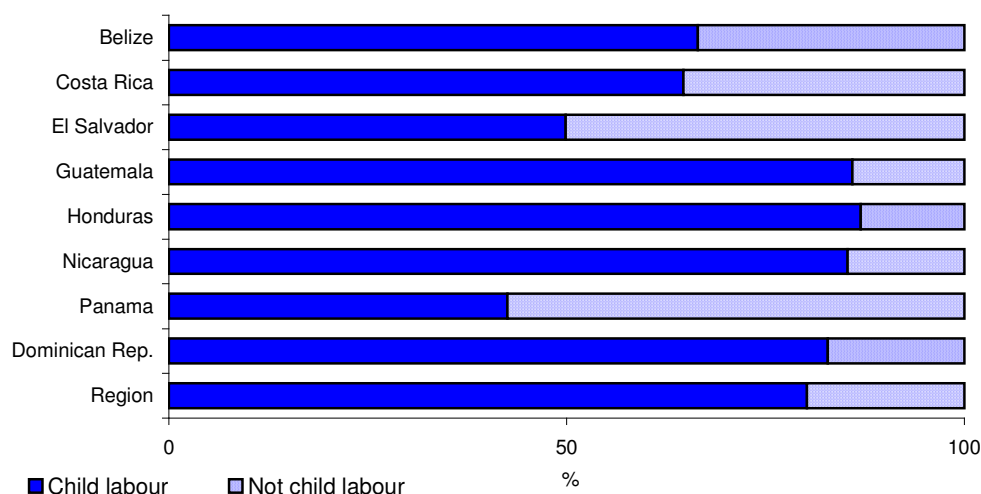
Some children work, and their joining the labour force is not in violation of national legislation and/or relevant international conventions, nor does it jeopardise their schooling, development, physical, moral, or mental health, taking their age into account. These are working girls and boys whose work activities are not considered to be child labour. Nevertheless, there is another group of working boys and girls whose participation in the labour market is prohibited by country legislation and/or international conventions, due to the implied hazards to children. These are considered to be children engaged in child labour.

For the purposes of analysing data from national household surveys, children engaged in child labour are those working boys and girls who, in addition, meet one of the following conditions:⁵

- their age is under the minimum age provided for in the legislation for the particular industry or type of work performed;
- working hours are excessive or longer than the maximum limit established by legislation for their age, industry, or type of work;
- it is one of the worst forms of labour;⁶
- the child is working under hazardous conditions.

According to survey results, the region has an estimated 80% of working girls and boys involved in child labour, and the percentage is even higher in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic.

Percentage of working children engaged in child labour, by country



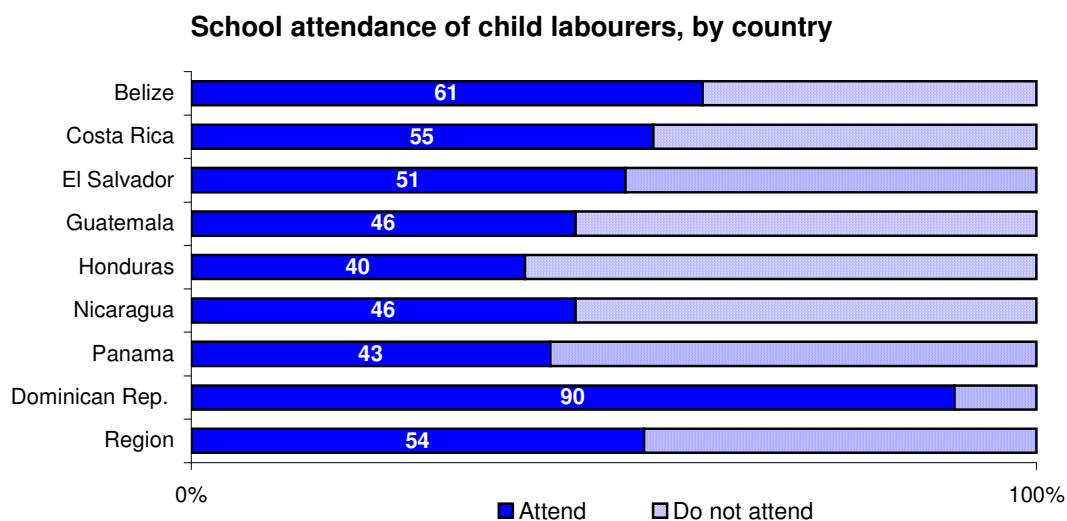
⁵ For more details on the statistical measure used, see *Analysis of child labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic* (ILO, 2004).

⁶ According to the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (Nº 182), the sentence “worst forms of child labour” encompasses:

- 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, and
- any 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, as provided for by the national legislation or the relevant authority.” (*Eliminating the worst forms of child labour*, ILO, 2002, p20).

Of these children involved in child labour, over 70% are boys, close to 66% are rural residents, and less than 40% are older than 14 years. As to distribution by industry, 49% work in agriculture, 20% are in trade, 13% are in services, and 11% work in manufacturing.

About 46% of these children in the region who are engaged in child labour do not attend school, with this percentage being even higher in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. The highest attendance rate for this group is found in the Dominican Republic, at 90%.

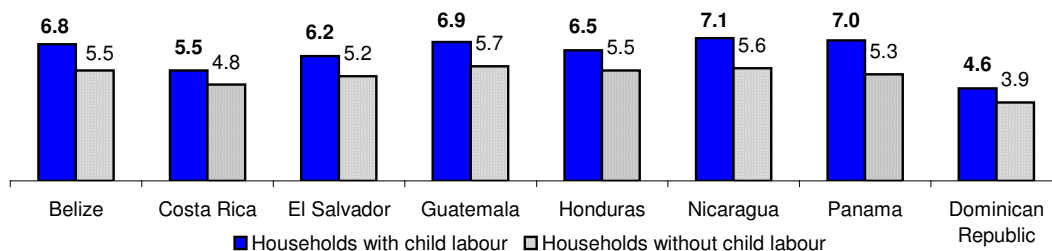


Household characteristics

Households of children engaged in child labour exhibit different characteristics when compared to those where this phenomenon does not exist.⁷ The former’s households are larger in all of the countries, reaching or surpassing 7 members in Nicaragua, and Panama. Most of this gap stems from a higher number of underage persons in these households, as compared to households without child labour.

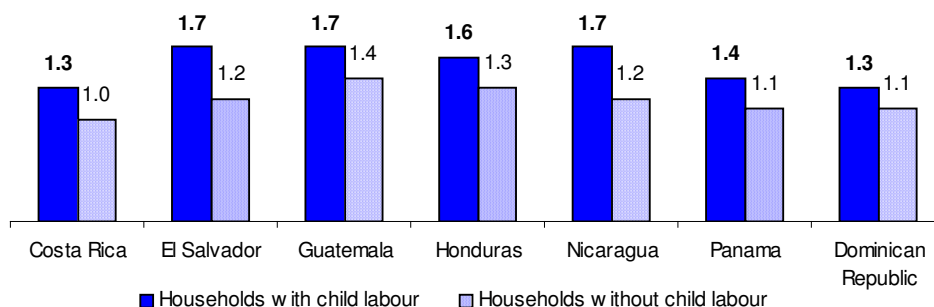
⁷ In this analysis, households with 5- to- 17-year-olds who do not work or, if they do, are not engaged in child labour are known as “households without child labour.”

Average number of persons per household, by country



The higher number of children in households with child labour implies higher demographic dependency ratios in these households, namely, that people of working age (between 18 and 64 years of age in this analysis) have a larger number of dependants (persons younger than 18 years and older than 64 years in this analysis) to keep in their homes. This pattern is found in all the countries in the region.

Household demographic dependency ratio^{a/}, by country

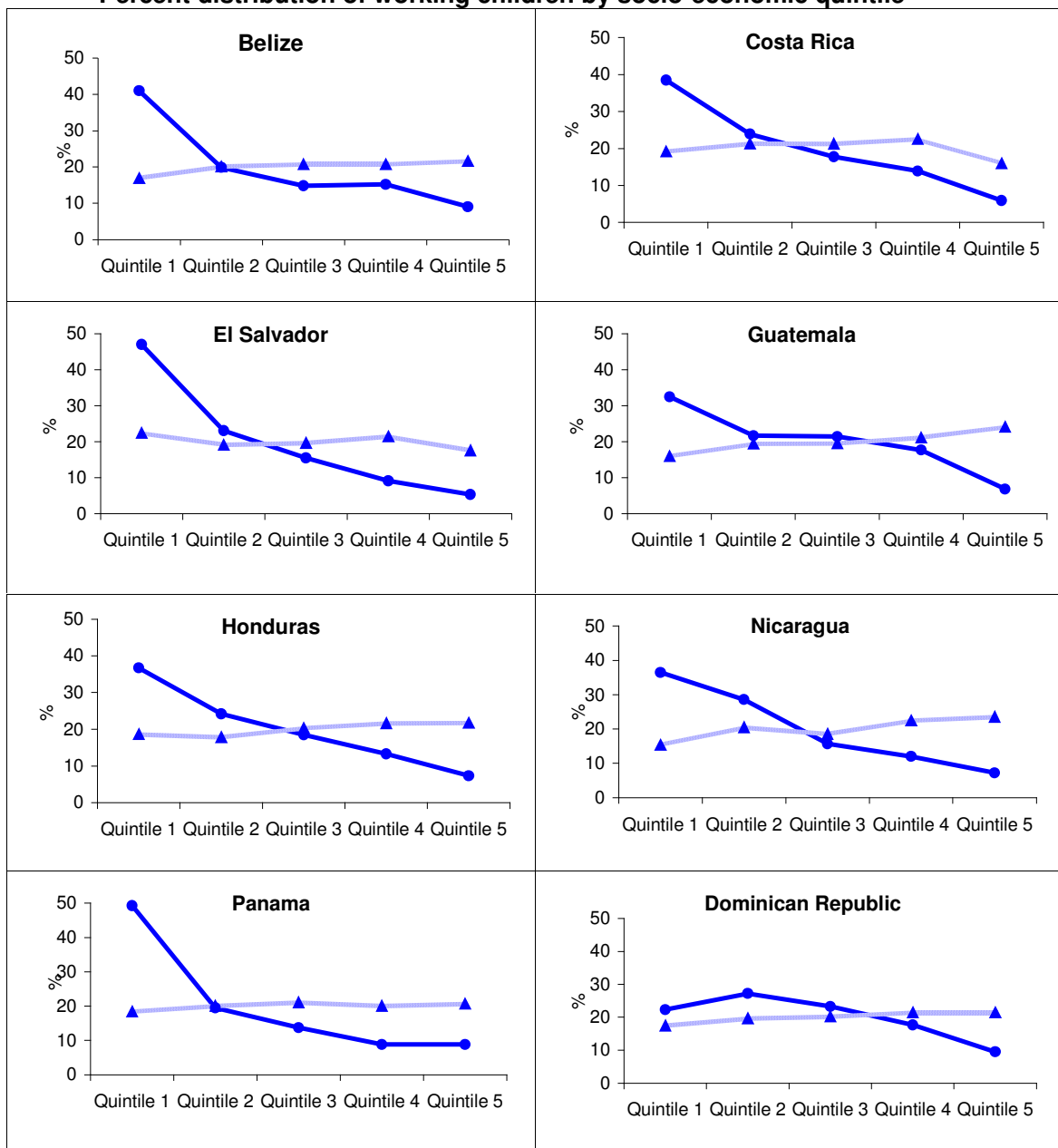


^{a/} In this analysis, the demographic dependency ratio is defined as the number of persons younger than 18 years and older than 64 (dependants) per person aged 18-64 years (people of working age) in the household.

Additionally, the households of children engaged in child labour show more adverse socio-economic conditions than households of other boys and girls. The households of children engaged in child labour have a stronger presence in the lowest socio-economic quintiles, thus reflecting the constrained conditions under which many of these children and adolescents live.⁸

⁸ In this analysis the socio-economic level is measured according to a socio-economic index built with the use of different variables available in each survey, and which can be considered to reflect household social and/or economic level, such as access to services, housing characteristics, and asset ownership. For more details on the construction of said index, see *Analysis of child labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic* (ILO, 2004).

Percent distribution of working children by socio-economic quintile



■ Households with child labour

■ Households without child labour

Conclusions

Survey results reveal that in the 2000-2002 period there are approximately 14.4 million children aged 5-17 years in the Central America and Dominican Republic region, who are involved, in different degrees, in housekeeping tasks at home, school activities, and/or economic activities:

1. Household chores in their own homes amount to a significant burden for many of these children. In addition, a positive correlation is found between longer hours spent in household chores and school non-attendance.
2. School non-attendance is a regional problem, with 3 of 10 boys and girls aged 5 to 17 years in the region not attending school. Similarly, this problem needs to be given more attention in rural areas as compared to urban areas in all of the countries.
3. Economically active underage persons are another problem in the region, where close to 2.4 million children 5 to 17 years of age work. Work prevalence among children shows a predominantly male and rural profile that is positively correlated with age. There are, however, significant percentages of working children who have not reached the minimum age established by each country's legislation, which points to the lack of effectiveness of national laws.
4. Adverse conditions and characteristics of children's work are evidenced in the fact that 8 out of every 10 of these working children are engaged in child labour. These working children face additional problems: almost half of them do not manage to attend an educational centre; their homes exhibit high demographic dependency rates; and their households are more likely to live in adverse socio-economic conditions.

The high prevalence of child labour in the region suggests that law-enacting is not enough to combat this phenomenon, and that a comprehensive approach is needed to take into account the relationship between children's work and schooling, as well as the characteristics of working girls and boys, their jobs, and their households when developing policies and programmes.