



About us

The Understanding Children's Work (UCW) programme is an inter-agency research cooperation initiative involving the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank.

UCW is guided by the Roadmap adopted at The Hague Global Child Labour Conference 2010. The Roadmap calls for effective partnership across the UN system to address child labour, and for mainstreaming child labour into policy and development frameworks. The Roadmap also calls for improved knowledge sharing and for developing further methodologies and capacity to conduct research on child labour.

UCW research activities are designed to inform policies that impact upon the lives of child labourers in countries where they are prominent. Research efforts help provide a common understanding of child labour, and a common basis for action against it. For further information, see the Programme website at www.ucw-project.org.

Featured research

Special feature: Trends in children's employment and child labour in the Latin America and Caribbean region. This edition of the newsletter looks in detail at a recent UCW research report on trends in child labour in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. The report represents part of a broader effort to improve understanding of how child labour is changing over time in the region, and to ensure that policies relating to child labour adequately reflect these changes. The report draws on an accompanying set of UCW country briefs on child labour developed for 15 countries in the LAC region.

ILO global estimates have highlighted the LAC region as a particular success story in fighting child labour. In the period from 2000 to 2008, the ILO estimates that children in employment in the region fell from 16 to nine percent, and by almost seven million children in absolute terms.

The UCW report, based on more recent data, suggests that the sub-regional-level picture behind these regional estimates is more mixed:

- In the Southern Cone sub-region, the percentage of children in employment fell in two of the three countries. Brazil, by far the most populous LAC country, saw a steady decline in children's employment from 1992 to 2008. Children's employment in Argentina fell also from 21 to 17 percent during 1997-2004. Paraguay was the only one of the three countries in the sub-region to experience a slippage in terms of children's employment, but this was not at the expense of school attendance, which continued to rise.
- In the Andean sub-region, children's employment fell in three countries but rose in two others. The largest gains were made in Colombia, where children's employment fell by about eight percentage points; gains in Bolivia and Ecuador were smaller. Peru saw a sharp rise in children's employment during 1994-2007 from 18 to 42 percent. In Venezuela, periods of progress were outstripped by periods of reversal leading to net rises in children's employment over the reference period.

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Featured research

Trends in children's employment and child labour in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

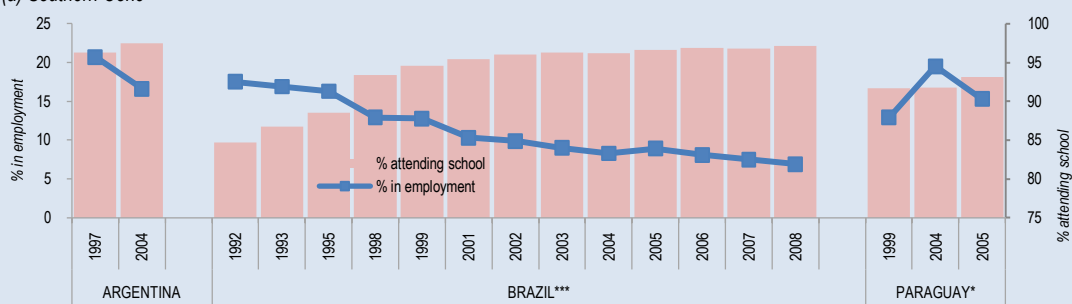
Project news

Recently posted

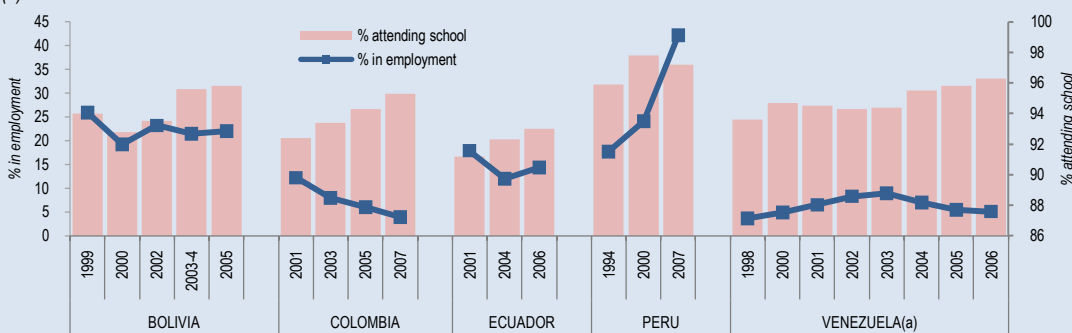
References

Changes in children's involvement in employment and school attendance, 7-14 years age group, by country^(a)

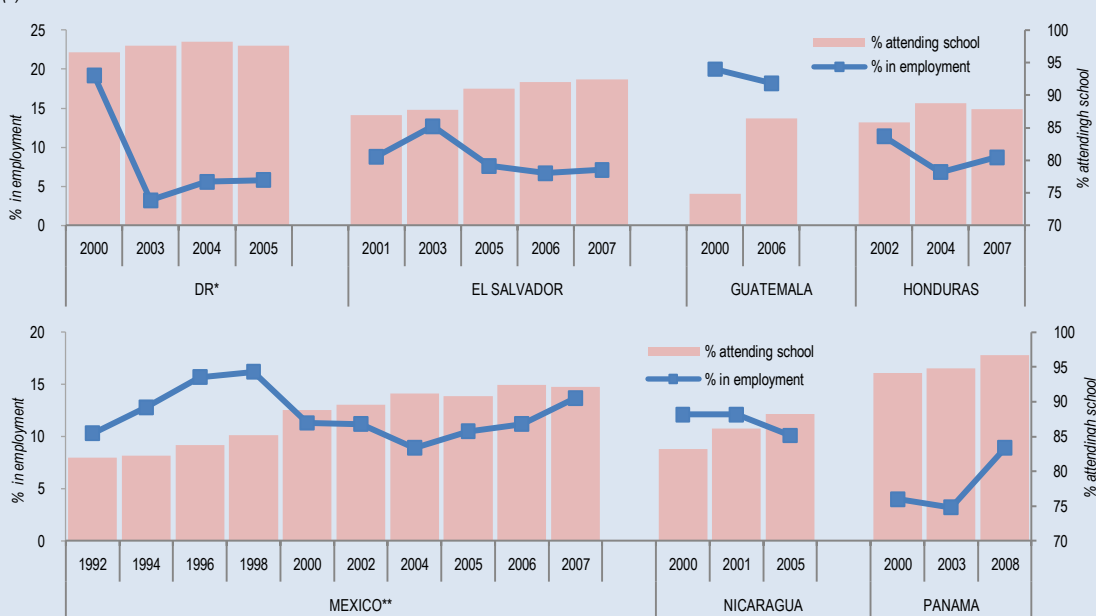
(a) Southern Cone



(b) Andean countries



(c) Mesoamerica



Notes: (a) Cross country comparisons based on graphs should be interpreted with caution, as the scaling of the graphs differs for expositional purposes; (*) Refers to the 10-14 years age group; (**) Refers to the 12-14 years age group; (***) Refers to 7-15 years age group.
Source: UCW calculations based on LAC household survey datasets

- Like in other sub-regions, progress in the Meso America sub-region appears mixed. At one end, in countries such as Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, children's employment was reduced. At the other end, Mexico and Panama fluctuations over the 1992-2007 period led to net reversal in progress against children's employment.

Getting children out of employment is of course closely linked to efforts to get them into school. Has progress against child labour translated into similar progress in expanding schooling? Estimates presented in the report indicate that progress in terms of raising school attendance rates has been steadier and broader based across the 15 LAC countries. Guatemala,

the furthest behind in 2000, made the most progress, helping to close the attendance gap with the other countries in the region. In only one of the countries – Venezuela – was there a significant reversal in progress in raising attendance rates. This occurred in 2003 and coincided with the severe economic crisis in the country at that time.

Of particular note is the fact that children's schooling was safeguarded or even extended in the countries where children's employment rate rose (i.e., Paraguay, Peru, Mexico and Panama) indicating that more children combined work and schooling in these locations, and did not have to forego school in order to work. However, it is worth mentioning that for some LAC countries (such as, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala) reaching universal primary enrolment remains a significant challenge.

Many of the accompanying country briefs showed that changes in children's employment were closely correlated with macro-economic conditions. Returning to the case of Venezuela, for example, the rise in children's employment in 2003 coincided with the economic crisis in the country.

This raises the question of the possible effects of the global economic crisis which broke out in 2008 (after the surveys upon which the above estimates were based). Although it is too soon to assess the impact of the crisis on children's employment and schooling, theory and past experience suggest that it could threaten progress in a number of ways. A reduction in living standards, greater difficulties in obtaining loans and reduced remittances from family members abroad together are likely to force more vulnerable households to send their children to work in order to help make ends meet during the crisis period. Reduced public spending and cut-backs in international aid flows are likely to limit social safety nets and threaten public education expenditure, also increasing families' dependence on children in employment for household survival.

Download the [Regional overview](#)

Download the [Country reports](#)

Programme news and events

1. *Conference on Poverty and Social Inclusion in the Western Balkans* (Brussels, December 2010). The international conference, convened by the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development, focused on poverty and social inclusion broadly defined. It offered an opportunity to discuss policy options for addressing issues including measurement of poverty and social inclusion, impact of the global financial crisis, labour markets, migration, social protection, and vulnerable groups.

2. *Summit on the Global Agenda* (Dubai, December 2010). Over 700 participants engaged in interactive workshops and sessions aimed at identifying innovative solutions to address the world's development challenges. UCW participation in this global event focused on ways to build the human capital of young people, and, in this context, on ways to ensure children remain in school instead of joining the labour force prematurely.

3. *Expanding opportunities for the marginalized through skills development. Meeting of experts for the 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring report* (Bonn, November 2010). The meeting, hosted by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, was intended primarily to provide guidance to the Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report team. UCW input focused in particular on the field of skills development.

4. *Capacity building* (Rome, September 2010). Representatives from the Senegalese Ministry of Youth and national statistical office visited the

UCW office in Rome as part of the research cooperation on internal migration, child labour and youth employment in West Africa. The one week visit was aimed primarily at helping build capacity in the national statistical office to monitor migration and its linkages with child labour and youth employment.

5. *Upcoming event: Child Labour in Developing Countries – 3rd IZA Workshop* (Mexico City, June 2011). For the third research workshop, IZA-CLN seeks applied papers related to child labour, child time allocation, participation in education, and youth employment in low income economies.

Recently posted

1. Trends in children's employment and child labour in the Latin America and Caribbean region: Regional overview (UCW, 2010). The report represents part of a broader effort to improve understanding of how child labour is changing over time in the region, and to ensure that policies relating to child labour adequately reflect these changes.

2. Trends in children's employment and child labour in the Latin America and Caribbean region: Country reports (UCW, 2010). The country reports look at the trends in children's employment in 15 LAC countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela.

3. Child labour: trends, challenges and policy responses. Joining forces against child labour (UCW, 2010). As reported in Newsletter No. 11, the Inter-Agency Report makes use of advances in research achieved through UCW and other efforts to take stock of the global child labour situation, assess key remaining obstacles to the elimination of child labour and identify strategies for addressing them. The Inter-agency report is also available in French (*Travail des enfants: tendances, défis et réponses. Tous unis dans la lutte contre le travail des enfants*) and in Spanish (*Trabajo infantil: tendencias, desafíos y respuestas. Unidos en la lucha contra el trabajo infantil*).

4. Towards consistency in child labour measurement: Assessing the comparability of estimates generated by different survey instruments (Guarcello et al, 2010). The study addresses the comparability of child labour estimates produced by different common household survey instruments.

References

UCW, *Trends in children's employment in the Latin America and Caribbean region: Regional overview*. UCW, Rome, 2010

UCW, *Trends in children's employment in the Latin America and Caribbean region: Country reports*. UCW, Rome, 2010