Sindh Child Labour Survey, 2022-2024



# Sindh Child Labour Survey

## 2022-2024

---- Key Findings Report ----









## Table of Contents

ntroduction	3
Executive summary	5
Characteristics of the survey population	8
Children's activities1	0
Schooling1	0
Household chores1	1
Child work1	3
Schooling and work1	3
Child labour1	7
Circumstances and causes of child labour2	2
Consequences of child labour 2	7
Schooling 2	7
Health	0

#### Introduction

The Sindh Child Labour Survey (SCLS) 2023 is the first child labour survey to provide district level results in the province. Earlier in 1996 a National CLS was carried out at provincial/territory level in Pakistan. The 2023 SCLS provides unique information about the living conditions of children in the province as well as their daily activities including schooling, working, household chores and leisure. The survey has a sample of 61,859 households, is representative of children aged 5–17 and covers 29 districts of Sindh for rural and / or urban strata.

The SCLS follows the methodology defined by the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC) for data collection and analysis. The questionnaire was adapted to the local context in Sindh, and relevant questions were included. The SCLS is one of the first SIMPOC Child Labour Surveys that explores mental health among children in child labour, which represents a major step forward in recognising the manifold consequences of child labour. The main objectives of the SCLS were to investigate causes, circumstances, characteristics, and consequences of child labour on education, health, protection of children's rights, as well as to facilitate decision makers in the formulation of cross-sectoral policy in support of protecting children in the province from all forms of economic exploitation.

This report presents a selection of key findings from the SCLS. First, information on the population of children is presented, including characteristics of the children themselves and the households they live in. This is followed by information on the activities of children, with a focus on work and child labour. We then present circumstances in which children in child labour live and potential causes of child labour followed by consequences of child labour, including violence against children at work. Children with disabilities are given special attention at the end of the section on children's activities.

It is important to note that not all work that children carry out is defined as child labour. According to the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS, working children are defined as those "engaged in any activity falling within the general production boundary as defined in the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA)" and "comprises all children below 18 years of age engaged in any activity to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use". Unpaid household services in one's own household, i.e., household chores, are outside the SNA production boundary and not included in child work nor child labour for the purposes of this report. Child labour is generally defined by the International Labour Organization as "work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development". Statistically, it is defined as illustrated in Figure 1 according to a set of age specific thresholds for the number of hours worked and the circumstances under which a child works, i.e., the environment, the tools used, the industry, the occupation, whether working at night and whether exposed to abuse at work.



## **Executive summary**

Sample frame used:	
<ul><li>Population Census 2017</li><li>Sindh MICS 2014</li></ul>	
Listing for CLS	
Survey sample:	
• Sampled: 62,678	Questionnaire:
• Approached: 61,859	Household members; consisted of two parts for household heads and one for children
• Responded: 56,967	
	Fieldwork:
Response rate: 92.0%	2023–2024
Children aged 5–17 years:	
• In household: 128,232	
• Interviewed: 119,965	
Child response rate: 93.6%	

Table 2. Children 5–17 years: population estimates				
Indicator	Number	Percentage		
Total 5–17	15,636,417	100		
Age group				
5–9	7,304,921	46.7		
10–13	4,616,949	26.5		
14–17	3,714,547	23.8		
Sex <sup>1</sup>				
Boys	8,225,054	52.6		
Girls	7,410,765	47.4		
Residence				
Rural	8,439,694	54.0		
Urban	7,196,724	46.0		

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The sum of boys and girls does not equal the total number of children since the table does not include transgender/other.





## Characteristics of the survey population

Table 3 shows the population composition of children 5–17 years in Sindh.

Table 3. Population composition and characteristics					
Indicator	Value		Description		
Sex ratio					
Overall sex ratio 5–17	11	1.0			
Age group					
5–9	10	8.9	Ratio of boys to girls in the		
10–13	11	1.5	population of children 5–17		
14–17	11-	4.5	years by age group and area of residence.		
Residence					
Rural	11	2.0			
Urban	10	9.8			
Birth certificate					
Total 5–17	63.	3%			
Age group					
5–9	61.	2%	Percentage of children 5–17		
10–13	65.	9%	years old that have a birth		
14–17	64.	4%	certificate by age group and sex.		
Sex					
Boys	63.	6%			
Girls	63.	1%			
Ever married	Age 10–14 Age 15–17		Percentage of children 10–17		
Sex			years old that have ever been		
Boys	0.1%	0.8%	married (married, divorced,		
Girls	0.2%	2.3%	Nikah or married but		
			separated) by sex and age		
			group.		

Table 4 shows the most important socio-economic and general characteristics of the households.

Table 4. Households' economic and ger Indicator	Value	Description
Female-headed households	4.9%	Percentage of female-headed households.
Average household size	6.1	Average number of household members per household.
Average number of children per household	3.2	Average number of children 0– 17 years per household.
Households receiving BISP assistance	25.5%	Percentage of households currently receiving BISP assistance.
Main income generating activity		
-Regular wage employment		
-Other causal labour	33.4%	
-Self-employment (non-	21.9%	
agriculture)	16.9%	Percentage of households by
-Seasonal paid employee in		main activity from which
agriculture	15.9%	households derive income.
-Self-employment (agriculture)		
-Other sources	7.9%	
-Not specified	3.9%	
	0.1%	
Type of housing tenure		
-Owner occupied	77.7%	
-On rent	13.1%	Percentage of households by
-Rent-free	8.4%	type of housing tenure.
-Subsidized rent	0.6%	
-Other	0.2%	

## Children's activities

#### Schooling

Table 5 shows both the percentage of children 5–17 years currently attending school and the percentage who never attended school by sex.

Table 5. Households' economic and general characteristics				
Indicator	Percentage	Description		
Attend school	66.9	Percentage of children 5–17		
-Boys	71.5	years currently attending school by sex.		
-Girls	61.8	school by sex.		
Never attended school	27.9	Percentage of children 5–17		
-Boys -Girls	23.6 32.6	years who never attended school by sex.		

Figure 4 presents the percentage of children and adolescents aged 5–17 years currently attending school, by age and sex. School attendance for both boys and girls increases up to age nine (after a slight drop at age 10), peaking at 75 per cent for girls, and 82 per cent for boys. Attendance declines thereafter, reaching approximately 47 per cent for girls and slightly under 60 per cent for boys by age 17. The decline in school attendance for boys can be explained by their increased involvement in work, whereas for girls, the decline in attendance after age 9 may be linked to the increased hours spent on household chores.



#### Household chores

**Error! Reference source not found.** shows the percentage of children that performed household chores d uring the past 7 days by age group and sex. Overall, children's involvement in household chores in Sindh increases with age, rising from 37.5 per cent at ages 5–11 to 72.9 per cent at ages 14–17. As expected, girls are more involved in household chores than boys, with 56.6 per cent compared to 49.9 per cent.



Figure 6 shows that girls are not only more often involved in housekeeping, but they also spend more time on household chores compared to boys across all age groups.



Figure 7 shows the percentage of children performing household chores by type and sex. The figure demonstrates clear differences between boys and girls engaged in household chores and the type of chores they perform. Girls are most likely to carry out cleaning of utensils or the house (tasks restricting them to stay within the household), while boys are most likely to go shopping for the household.



#### Child work

Table 6 presents the number and percentage of children who worked in the past 12 months and in the past 7 days disaggregated by sex and age group.

Table 6. Working children					
Indicator	Last 12 months	Last 7 days	Description		
	Percentage	Percentage			
Both sexes					
Total 5–17	13.3	12.0			
5–9	5.2	4.3			
10–13	14.6	13.2			
14–17	27.7	25.5			
Boys					
Total 5–17	16.6	15.2	Per cent of children 5–17 years		
			that worked in the last 12		
5–9	5.8	4.9	months and the last 7 days by		
10–13	17.9	16.3	sex and age group.		
14–17	35.8	33.6			
Girls					
Total 5–17	9.7	8.4			
5–9	4.5	3.7			
10–13	10.9	9.7			
14–17	18.6	16.3			

#### Schooling and work

Figure 8 illustrates the differences in activities among children aged 5–17 by sex. Boys are more likely to be exclusively studying compared to girls, with 64.5 per cent of boys engaged solely in education, compared to 59.3 per cent of girls. Additionally, a higher percentage of girls (32.3 per cent) are not involved in any activity—neither studying nor working—compared to 20.3 per cent of boys. This disparity highlights a gender gap in educational engagement and participation in structured activities, which may have long-term implications for children's development and future opportunities.



Figure 9 illustrates the activities of children by age. As children grow older, the percentage of those exclusively engaged in studying begins to decline, starting at age 12. At this point, there is a noticeable shift, with more children transitioning to either working only or balancing both school and work. Additionally, in Sindh, 26 per cent of children aged 9 to 17 are neither studying nor working, indicating a significant proportion of children who are not engaged in any formal activities. It is also worth noting that very few children successfully combine school and work (4.9 per cent)



Table 7 presents the proportion of working children who are attending school by work status, as well as the median number of hours worked and devoted to household chores per week by school attendance.

Table 7. School attendance		
Indicator	Value	Description
Working children attending		
school		
Total 5–17	40.6%	
Age group		Percentage of working children
5–9	58.6%	5–17 years attending school by
10–13	45.8%	age group and sex.
14–17	31.3%	
Boys	45.9%	
Girls	30.0%	
Children not working attending		
school		
Total 5–17	70.5%	
Age group		Percentage of not working
5–9	68.8%	children 5–17 years attending
10–13	75.8%	school by age group and sex.
14–17	67.2%	
Boys	76.1%	
Girls	64.8%	

Median number of hours		
worked for children attending		
school		
Total 5–17	18	
		Median number of hours
Age group		worked per week for working
5–9	13	children 5–17 years attending
10–13	15	school.
14–17	24	3011001.
14-17	24	
Pays	20	
Boys		
Girls	14	
Median number of hours		
worked for children not		
attending school		
Total 5–17	30	
		Median number of hours
Age group		worked per week for working
5–9	16	children 5–17 years not
1–13	25	attending school.
14–17	36	
14 17	50	
Davia	41	
Boys	41	
Girls	21	
Median number of hours		
devoted to household chores		
for children attending school		
Total 5–17	4.5	
		Median number of hours
Age group		devoted to household chores
5–9	3.5	per week for children 5–17
10–13	4.5	years attending school.
14–17	7	, 3
Boys	4	
Girls	5.5	
Median number of hours	5.5	
devoted to household chores		
for children not attending		
school		
Total 5–17	7	Median number of hours
		devoted to household chores
Age group		per week for children 5–17
5–9	4	-
10–13	7	years not attending school
14–17	11	
Boys	5	
Girls	10	
61110	10	

### Child labour

Figure 10 provides an overview of the percentage of 5–17-year-olds working, in child labour and in hazardous work. According to The Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2017, all working children aged 5–13 are considered in child labour. Hazardous work for any child is defined as working long hours (exceeding 42 hours per week), being employed in hazardous industries or occupations, using dangerous tools, working under hazardous conditions, working at night, or being exposed to abuse. For adolescents, hazardous work is child labour unless working long hours or at night with family. Child labour also includes working multiple jobs in a day and not having a day off each week (though this is not included under hazardous work).



Figure 11 provides an overview of the percentage of 5–17-year-olds working, in child labour and in hazardous work split by sex.



Table 8 reports the overall child labour prevalence by sex and age. The table further shows the most common industries, occupations, status in employment and work location for children in child labour.

Table 8. Incidence and characteristics of chil	d labour			
Indicator	Percentage			Description
	Both	Boys	Girls	
Child labour prevalence			00	
Total 5–17	10.3	13.7	6.6	
	10.5	13.7	0.0	Percentage of all
- 5–9	4.3	4.9	3.7	children in child
-10–13	13.2	16.3	9.7	labour.
-14-17	18.5	27.2	8.4	
Industry				
-Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	55.1	54.9	55.5	
-Manufacturing	12.4	8.2	22.3	
-Wholesale and retail trade	10.8	14.8	1.4	Percentage of
-Water collection	7.0	3.5	15.1	children 5–17
- Construction	5.5	7.7	0.1	years in child
-Accommodation and food service	2.3	3.1	0.4	labour by
activities				industry.
- Activities of households as employers	1.8	1.2	3.1	
- Other industries	5.2	6.5	2.0	
Occupation				
-Service and sales workers	8.8	12.1	1.3	
-Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery	18.7	20.1	15.4	Percentage of
workers				children 5–17
-Craft and related trades workers	14.6	11.7	21.4	years in child
-Plant and machine operators	2.1	2.8	0.3	labour by
-Elementary occupations	54.9	52.4	60.7	occupation.
-Other occupations	0.9	1.0	0.8	
Status in employment				
-Unpaid family worker	49.6	43.4	63.8	
-Self-employed (non-agriculture)	14.3	17.5	7.0	Percentage of
-Self-employed (agriculture)	8.2	8.4	7.7	children 5–17
-Labourer (agriculture)	8.1	10.0	3.5	years in child
-Labourer (non-agriculture)	9.2	9.1	9.5	labour by status
-Employee	5.0	5.3	4.2	in employment.
-Apprenticeship	2.0	2.8	0.4	
-Other	3.6	3.5	3.9	
Location of work				Percentage of
				children 5–17
-At home	21.7	13.2	41.2	years in child
-Away from home	78.3	86.8	58.8	labour by location
				of work (at home
				or away from
				home).

There are an estimated 252,422 children between the ages 5–17 with disabilities in Sindh as displayed in Table 9.

Table 9. Children with disabilities				
Indicator	Value	Description		
Children with disabilities	252,422			
5–9	105,218	Total number of children 5–17 years		
10–13	72,785	with disabilities and number of		
14–17	74,419	children 5–17 years with disabilities		
		by age group and sex.		
Boys	152,598			
Girls	99,825			

Figure 12 shows the activities performed by children with and without disabilities, including attending school, working, performing household chores, and engaging in child labour. A lower share of children with disabilities work or are in child labour compared to children without disabilities. Children with disabilities are not only less likely to work and engage in child labour, but also less likely to go to school and perform household chores, thus leaving them idle.



Figure 13 contrasts how children with and without disabilities combine work and schooling. Children without disabilities are more likely to only attend school compared to children with disabilities. Children with disabilities, on the other hand, are considerably more likely to engage in neither school nor work.



## Circumstances and causes of child labour

Table 10 shows household characteristics for both children in child labour and children not in child labour. Children in child labour are more likely to have lost at least one parent.

Table 10. Household size and structure				
Indicator	Valu	e		
	Children not in child labour	Children in child labour	Description	
Average household size	6.9	7.2	Average household size for children 5–17 years.	
Average number of children	3.9	4.2	Average number of children 0–17 years in the household for children 5– 17 years.	
Average number of adults	3.0	3.0	Average number of adults in the household for children 5–17 years.	
Living arrangements – living with both father and mother	91.9%	88.3%	Percentage of children 5– 17 years that live with both their father and mother in the household.	
Parental survival – lost at least one parent	4.8%	8.7%	Percentage of children 5– 17 years that have lost at least one parent (either father, mother, or both).	

Table 11 shows the percentage of children in child labour and not in child labour with a household head that never migrated and a household head that has migrated (including both seasonal and other than seasonal migration). Out of all children whose household head migrated, 10.6 per cent are in child labour. The percentage of children in child labour is very similar among those in households where the household head never migrated (10.3 per cent).

Table 11. Migration status of household head			
Indicator	Percent	Description	
	Children not in child	Children in child	
	labour	labour	
Household head never	89.7	10.3	Per cent of children
migrated			5–17 years by
			migration status of
Household head migrated	89.4	10.6	the household
			head.

Table 12 shows the socioeconomic status of the households, displaying the median household income in Sindh of children 5–17 years in child labour and not in child labour and the percentage of children 5–17 years in child labour and not in child labour living in a household that is currently receiving BISP assistance (which acts as a proxy for low wealth). Households of children in child labour are on average poorer.

Table 12. Socio-economic status			
Indicator	Va		
	Children not in child	Children in child	Description
	labour	labour	
Madian bausahald			Median household
Median household income	20,000	00 26,000	income in PKR of children
	30,000		5–17 years in child labour
			and not in child labour.
Receiving BISP assistance			Percentage of children 5– 17 years in child labour and not in child labour
	28.7%	47.1%	living in a household that is currently receiving BISP
			assistance.

Figure 14 shows that 17.8 per cent of households have at least one child in child labour, and the child labour prevalence decreases with the wealth of the household. While 33.7 per cent of households in the poorest wealth index quintile have at least one child in child labour, 3.8 per cent of households in the richest wealth index quintile do. Further, the percentage of households with at least one child in child labour is higher in rural compared to urban areas.



Households where the household head has not completed any education are the most likely to have at least one child in child labour. The percentage of households with at least one child in child labour decreases with the level of education of the household head, as shown in Figure 15.



Figure 16 shows that children in child labour are less likely than children not in child labour to have a birth certificate (50.1 per cent vs. 64.9 per cent).



Table 13 shows the percentage of children 5–17 years in child labour by reported reason of parent/guardian for letting the child work and the percentage of children 5–17 years in child labour that earn an income by contribution to household income.

Table 13. Perceptions and reason why children work			
Indicator	Percentage	Description	
Reasons for letting child work <sup>2</sup>			
-Support household needs <sup>3</sup>	22.0		
-Supplement household	44.3	Dercentage of children E 17	
income		Percentage of children 5–17	
-Help in household enterprise	18.2	years in child labour by	
-Learn skills	17.1	reported reason of	
-Own will/interest	6.6	parent/guardian for letting them work.	
-Cannot afford school fees	3.1	them work.	
-Other educational reasons	6.0		
-Other reasons	5.8		
Children in child labour that			
earn an income <sup>4</sup> by contribution			
to household income⁵			
-Give all/part to			
parents/guardian	66.2		
-Buy things for household		Dercentage of children E 17	
-Buy things for myself	16.4	Percentage of children 5–17 years in child labour that earn	
-Employer gives all/part to	22.4	an income by contribution to	
parents/guardian	15.0	household income.	
-Buy things for school		nousenoid income.	
-Pay my school fees	4.4		
-Save	2.5		
-Travel expenses	3.4		
-Other	0.3		
	0.9		

Figure 17 displays the relationship between different shocks faced by households and child labour for children aged 5–17 years. The figure shows both natural shocks, in the form of falling agricultural prices, and economic shocks, comprising price inflation and business closing due to economic recession. Given that the overall child labour prevalence in Sindh is 10.3 per cent, Figure 17 shows that child labour is more prevalent among children living in households affected by falling agricultural prices or price inflation. Among these, households experiencing price inflation have the highest child labour prevalence.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The percentages do not sum up to 100 as multiple reasons could be stated.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> This category includes fetching water and collecting firewood.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The percentage of children in child labour that earn an income is 16.2 per cent.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The percentages do not sum up to 100 as multiple choices could be selected.



Figure 18 shows the percentage of households with at least one child in child labour by the impact of flooding from the monsoon rains in 2022. The findings indicate that among households that were unaffected by the flooding, 12.1 per cent have at least one child in child labour, lower than all categories for being affected by flooding. Among households that reported being affected, child labour occurred most often in households which were severely affected, 22.3 per cent have at least one child in child labour.



## Consequences of child labour

Figure 19 shows the responses of adults regarding the negative consequences children in their household face as a result of their work. The most common response is that children suffer from extreme fatigue, which is a particularly serious consequence when considering the negative effect on other aspects of life such as limited mental stimulation, lack of concentration, tiredness, stress, and propensity to accidents<sup>6</sup>. Respondents also identify injuries or poor health, long distance travelled and no time for leisure as negative consequences of work.



#### Schooling

Figure 20 displays school attendance by age group and shows that children in child labour are less likely to currently attend school for all age groups. The difference in school attendance rates increases with age and is especially large among 14-17-year-olds, where the school attendance rate is 35.4 percentage points lower for children in child labour.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Admassie, A. (2003). Child labour and schooling in the context of a subsistence rural economy: can they be compatible? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 23(2), 167-185.





Table 14 presents more details on the relationship between schooling and work, which shows that the median number of hours worked differs considerably depending on the school attendance status.

Table 14. Child labour and schooling				
Indicator	Median number of hours worked for children attending school	Median number of hours worked for children currently not attending school	Median number of hours worked for children that never attended school	Description
				Median number of hours worked per week for
Both sexes	17	45	29	children 5–17 years in child
Boys	19	48	36	labour attending school, currently
Girls	14	22	21	not attending school, and never attended school by sex.

Figure 21 looks at the reason for children to not attend school and compares across child labour status. For children both in child labour and not in child labour, the main reason to not attend school is reported as the inability to afford schooling (32.3 per cent for children in child labour and 25.3 percent for not in child labour). As expected, work and job obligations are more often reported as a reason among children in child labour. Being too young for school is higher among children not in child labour, who are also likely considered too young to start work.



#### Health

Table 15 shows the incidence of illnesses or injuries and symptoms of depression among children in child labour and not in child labour.

Table 15. Child labour and health			
	Perce		
Indicator	Children not in child labour	Children in child labour	Description
Injured or ill due to	20.6	43.5	Percentage of children
work			5–17 years in child
			labour and working
			children not in child
			labour who got injured
			or ill due to work.
Symptoms of			Percentage of children
depression			10–17 years in child
			labour and working
-None	89.3	79.9	children not in child
-Mild	8.2	16.0	labour reporting
-Moderate	1.9	3.2	symptoms of
-Moderately severe	0.5	0.8	depression by severity
-Severe	0.1	0.1	level (mild, moderate,
			moderately severe or
			severe form of
			depression).

The most reported hazardous condition is carrying heavy loads (27.1), followed by extreme cold or heat (25.4 per cent), and exposure to dangerous tools (10.8 per cent), as presented in Figure 22.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The percentages do not add up to 100 per cent as children can face several hazardous conditions.

Table 16 shows the percentage of 5–17-year-olds in child labour working in hazardous occupations, hazardous industries and with hazardous tools by sex.

Table 16. Children in child labour working in hazardous occupations, industries and with hazardous tools				
Indicator	Both sexes	Boys	Girls	Description
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Description
Hazardous	10.6	14.6	1.4	Per cent of 5-17-
occupations				year-olds in child
				labour working in
				hazardous
				occupations by
				sex.
Hazardous	5.9	8.3	0.4	Per cent of 5-17-
industries				year-olds in child
				labour working in
				hazardous
				industries by sex.
Hazardous tools	2.2	2.3	1.9	Per cent of 5-17-
				year-olds in child
				labour working
				with hazardous
				tools by sex.

Figure 23 shows the percentage of children in child labour that experienced abuse at work<sup>8</sup>. A similar share of girls and boys has experienced any type of abuse at work. The most common type of abuse for both sexes is psychological abuse, followed by physical and sexual abuse.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Abuse at work comprises: Psychological abuse: being constantly shouted at, repeatedly insulted, discriminated due to gender, religion, and caste. Physical abuse: beaten/physically hurt. Sexual abuse: being touched or done things that you did not want.



Table 17 shows information about abuse against children aged 5–17 in child labour. Children in child labour working away from home are more likely than those working at home to have experienced abuse, and those that have experienced abuse are more likely to report symptoms of depression.

Table 17. Abuse against children 5–17 years in child labour			
Indicator	Percentage	Description	
Abuse against children and location of work -At home -Away from home	24.6 15.6	Percentage of children 5–17 years in child labour that experienced abuse at work by location of work.	
Symptoms of depression among children experiencing and not experiencing abuse		Percentage of children 10–17 years in child labour that experienced or did not experience	
-Experienced abuse -Did not experience abuse	38.2 16.5	abuse at work with a mild or more severe form of depression.	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The categories do not add up to the total of "any abuse" as some children experienced more than one type of abuse.