



**CHILD LABOUR IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**  
WHAT THE DATA TELL US AND WHAT MUST CHANGE

*Virtual side event to the Sixth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour*

# Welcome and objectives

**Nankali Maksud**

*Senior Adviser, Child Protection  
and Migration, Africa*

*UNICEF Global Programme  
Division*



# Opening remarks

**Alison Parker**

*Deputy Regional Director*

*UNICEF Regional Office Eastern  
and Southern Africa*



# Regional data and key trends

**Claudia Cappa**

*Senior Adviser, Statistics and  
and Monitoring*

*UNICEF Office of Strategy and  
Evidence – Innocenti*



# Data sources and coverage

# Technical notes

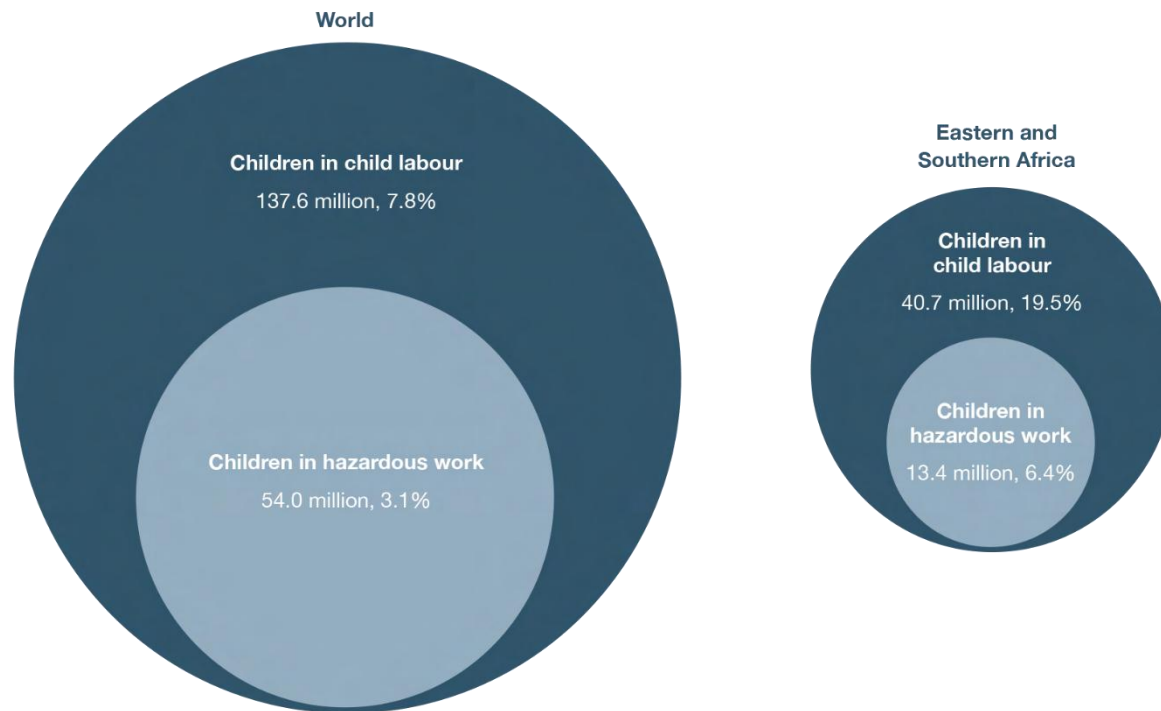
- Regional adaptation of the ILO and UNICEF 2024 global and regional estimates released in June 2025
- Estimates for the region are based on a subset of 17 countries with data between 2020 and 2024, representing 76 per cent of the regional population of children aged 5 to 17 years
- Data sources for the 17 countries primarily include national multi-topic household surveys like the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and national labour force surveys
- Applies UNICEF's regional classification which includes 25 countries



# Current levels and trends

# One in five children in Eastern and Southern Africa (or around 41 million) are involved in child labour; the region accounts for nearly one third of the global total of children in child labour

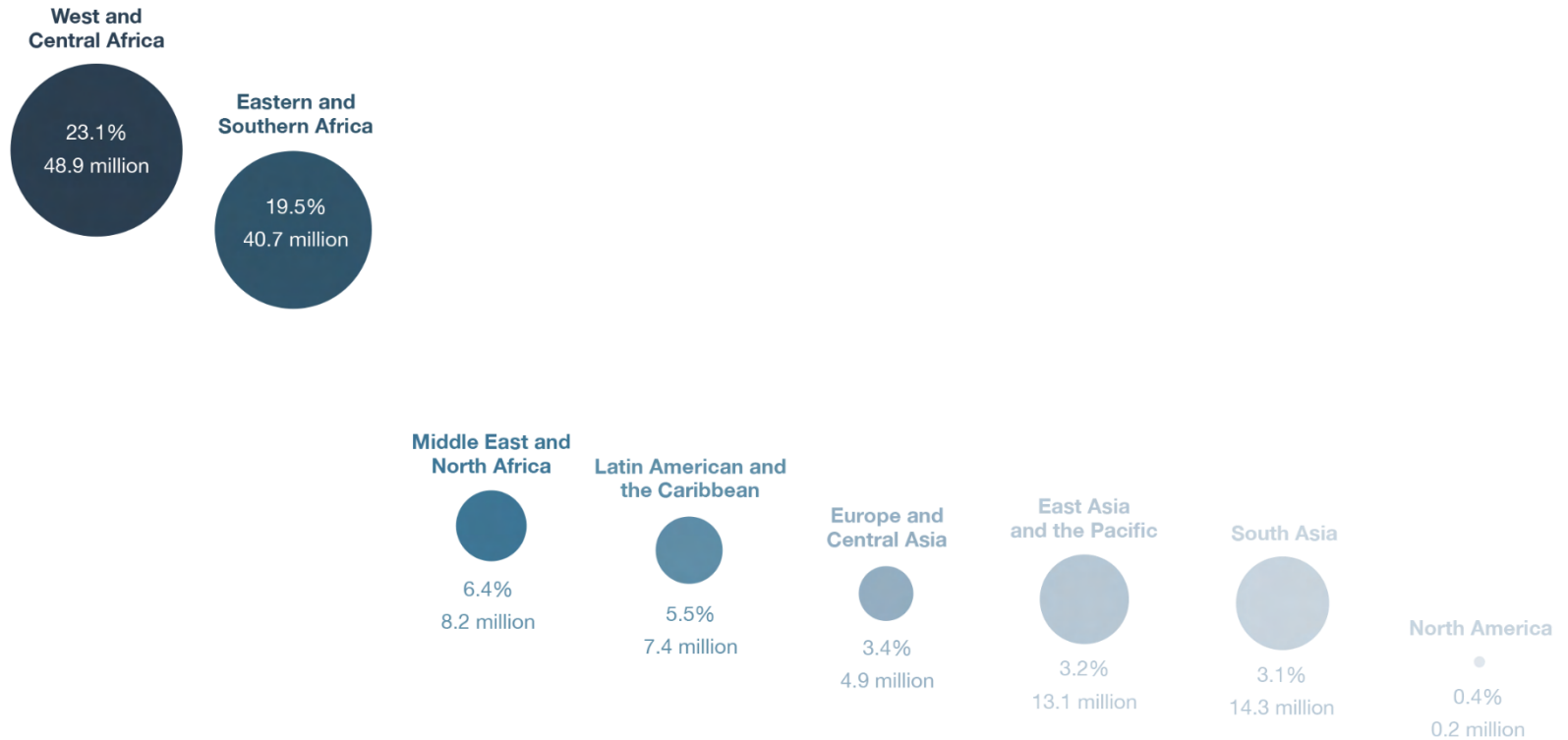
Fig 1. Number and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour and hazardous work



Note: For statistical measurement, hazardous work includes work in designated hazardous industries and/or hazardous occupations and/or work performed for 43 or more hours per week.

# Eastern and Southern Africa is the region with the second largest number and second highest prevalence of child labour

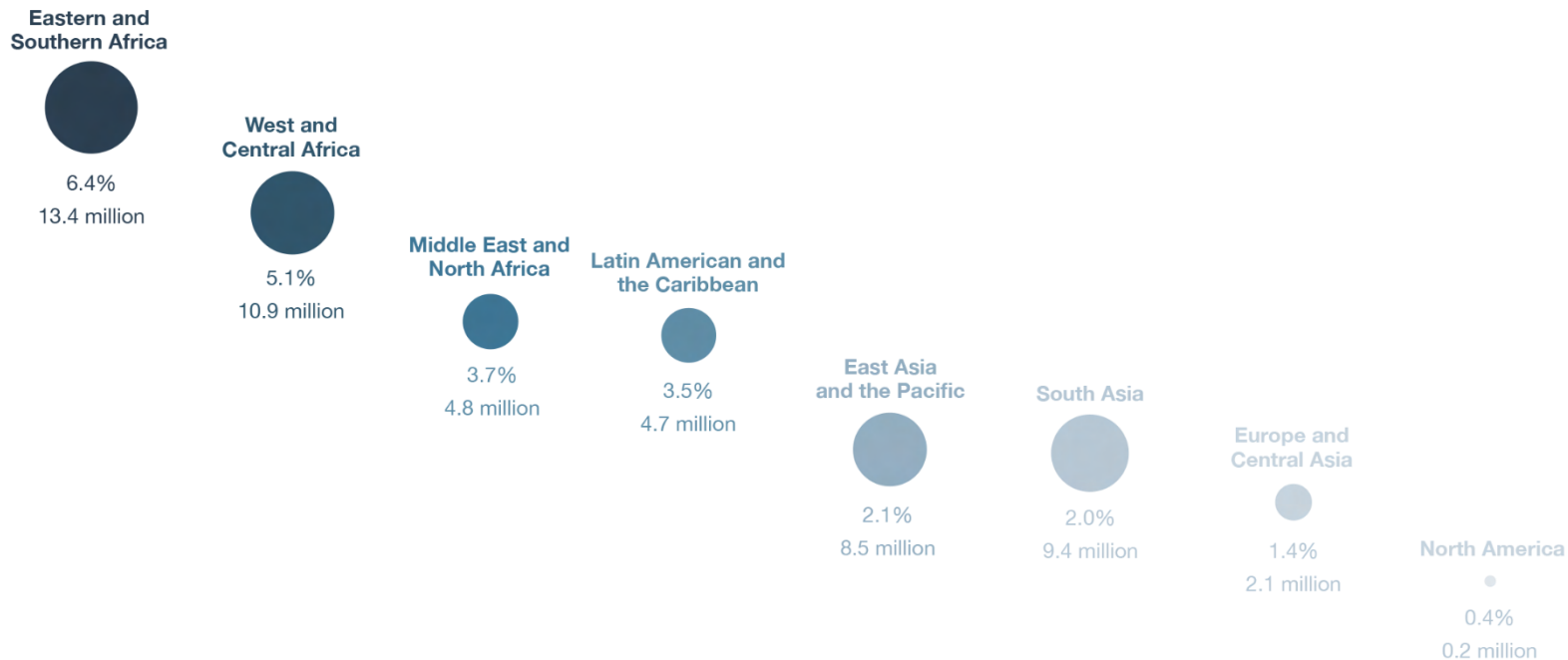
Fig 2. Number and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by UNICEF region



Notes: This figure shows regional groupings according to UNICEF's regional classification. See Technical notes for details.

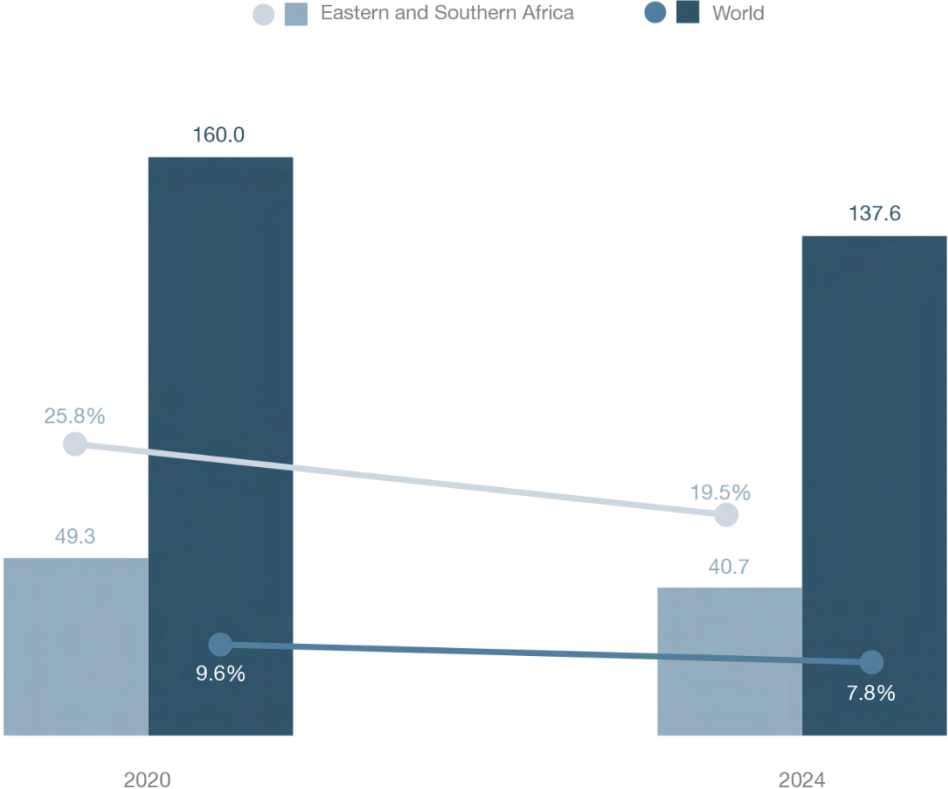
## The region has the largest number and highest prevalence of children engaged in hazardous work

Fig 3. Number and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in hazardous work, by UNICEF region



# Eastern and Southern Africa has seen some progress against child labour over the last four years with prevalence declining from 26 per cent in 2020 to 20 per cent in 2024

Fig 4. Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour in Eastern and Southern Africa and the world

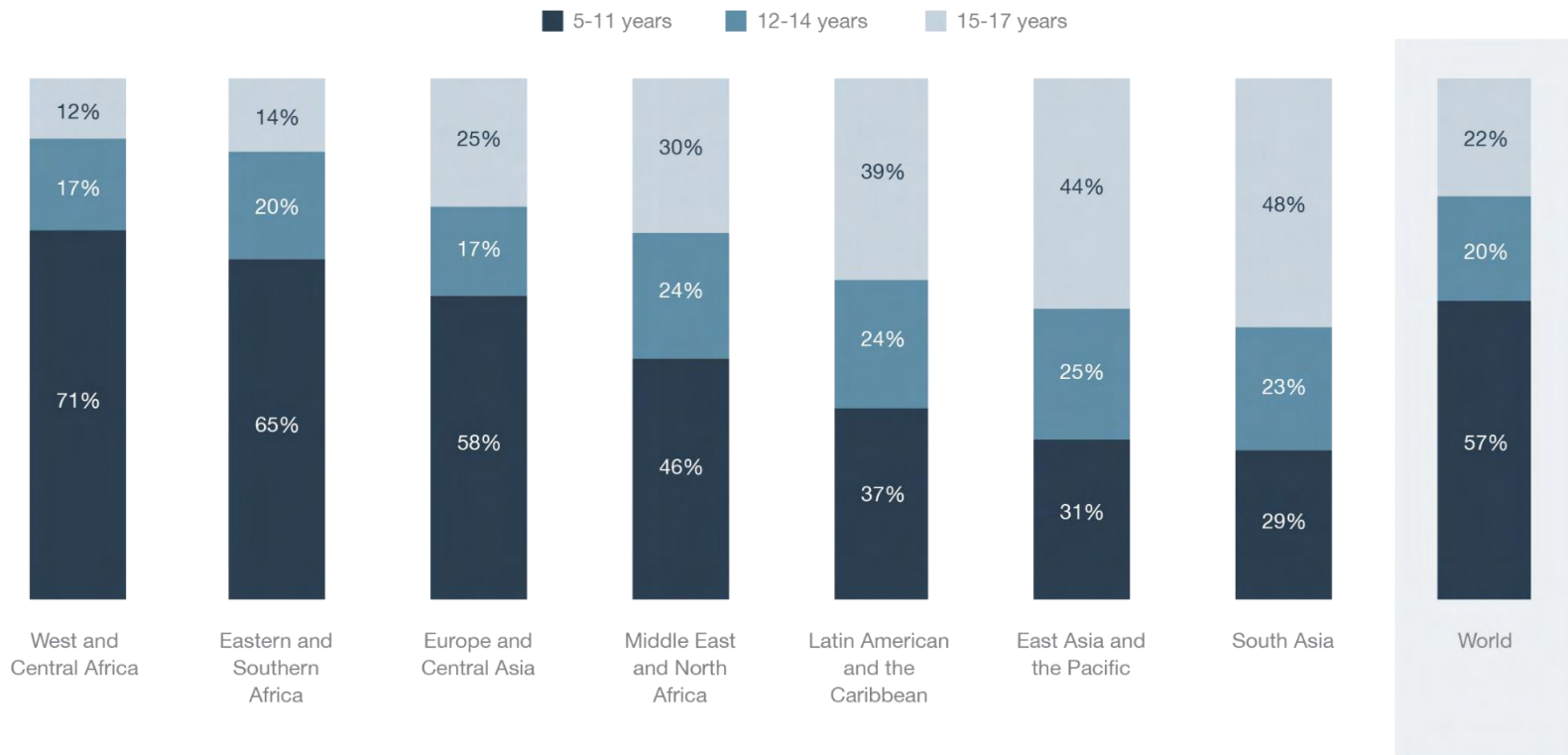


A group of children are posed in a dark, narrow, and rocky mine tunnel. The children are dressed in simple, worn clothing. Several of the children are wearing headlamps, which are turned on, illuminating their faces and the surrounding rock walls. The children are standing on uneven, rocky ground. The overall atmosphere is dim and somber, highlighting the hazardous and dark environment of child labor.

# Profile of children in child labour and hazardous work

## In Eastern and Southern Africa, two thirds of children in child labour are under age 12; this age profile differs from what is seen in other regions outside of Africa

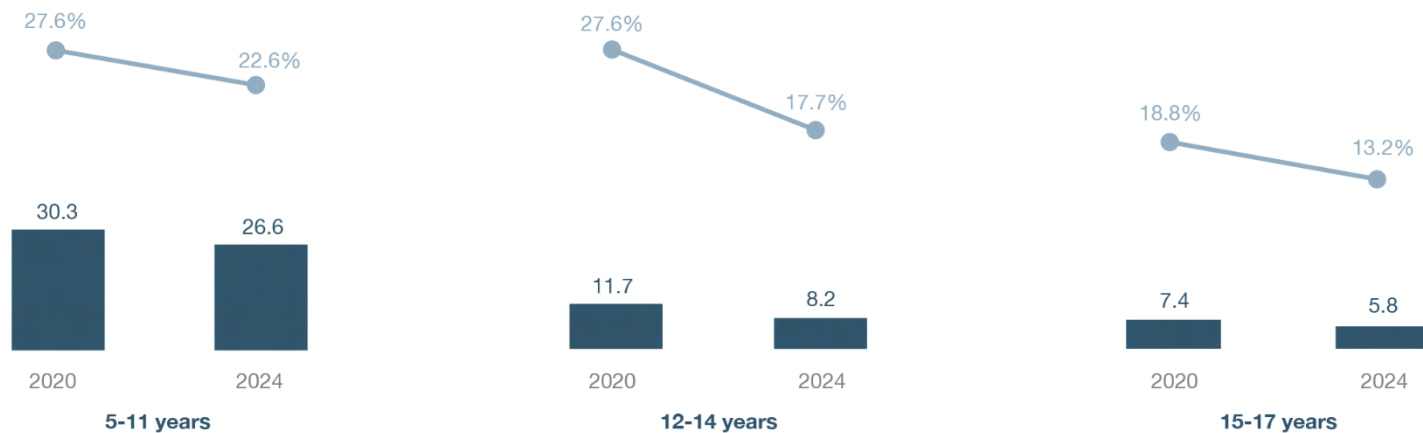
Fig 6. Percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by age and UNICEF region



Notes: Some totals do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding. The region of North America is not included due to low data coverage for certain age groups.

## Progress against child labour in the region has been slower among younger children

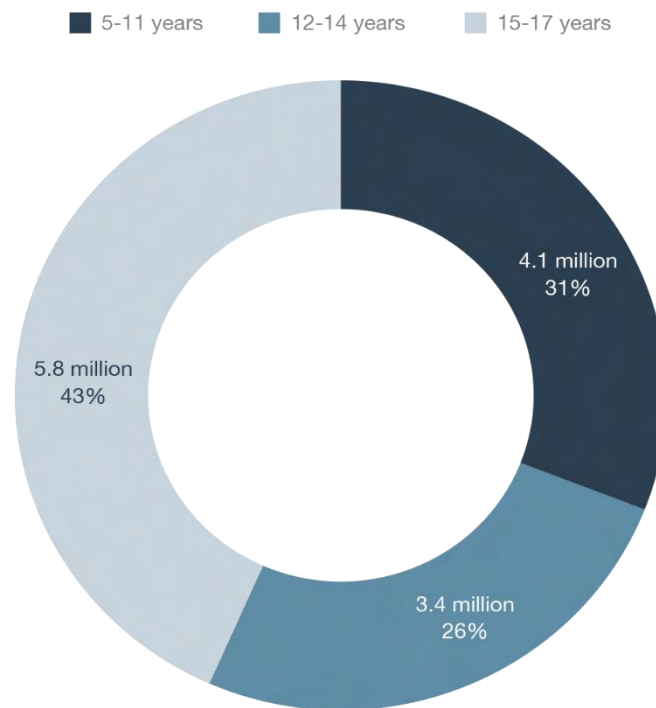
Fig 7. Number (in millions) and percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour in Eastern and Southern Africa, by age



Note: The number of children in child labour by age in 2020 and 2024 does not add up to the regional totals due to rounding.

## Children of all ages in the region are engaged in hazardous work, but the greatest burden is among older adolescents

Fig 8. Number and percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in hazardous work in Eastern and Southern Africa, by age



Note: The number of children in hazardous work by age does not add up to the regional total due to rounding.

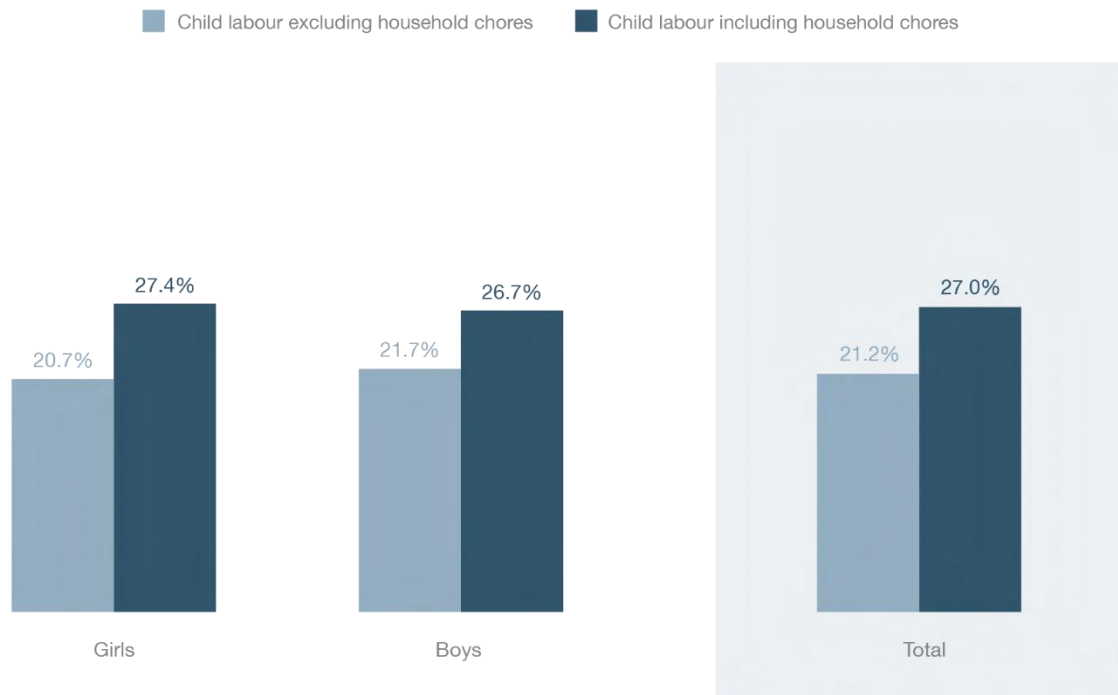
## With age, child labour becomes slightly more common among boys than girls in Eastern and Southern Africa

Fig 9. Percentage of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour in Eastern and Southern Africa, by age and sex



## Factoring in household chores raises overall prevalence of child labour in the region from 21 to 27 per cent, with no significant difference by sex

**Fig 11.** Percentage of children aged 5 to 14 years in child labour (including and excluding household chores performed for 21 or more hours per week) in Eastern and Southern Africa, by sex

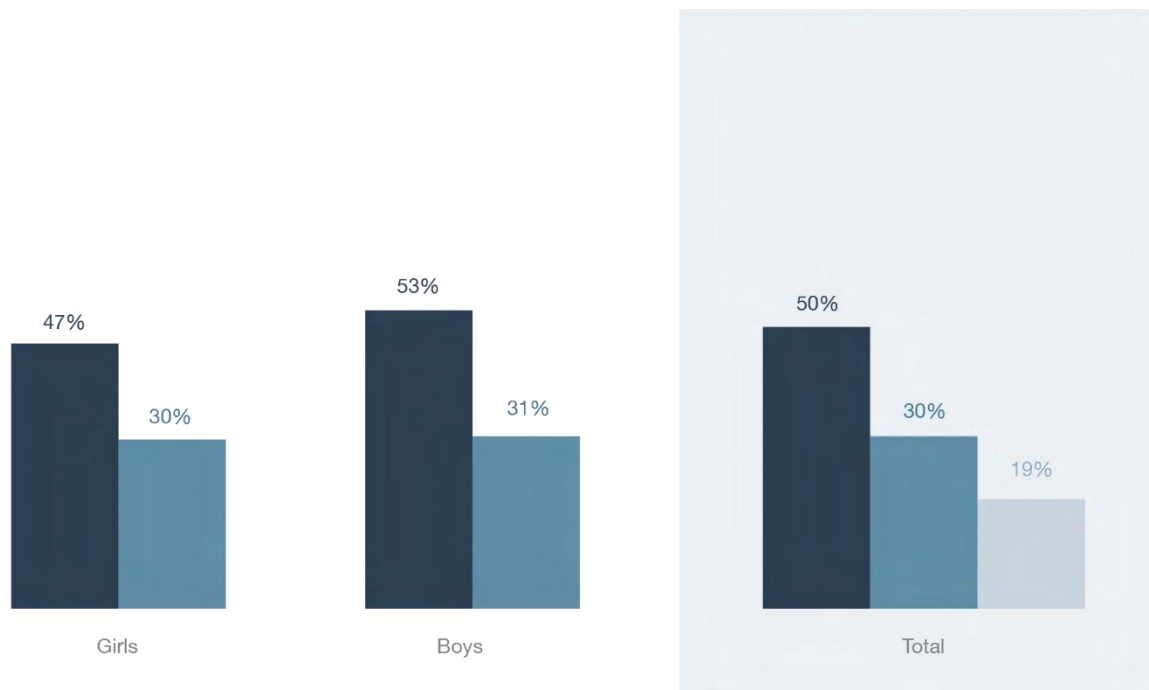


Note: Household chores refer to services performed for and within one's own household, such as caring for siblings or household members who are sick, are elderly or have disabilities; cleaning and carrying out minor household repairs; cooking and serving meals; washing and ironing clothes; and transporting or accompanying family members to and from work and school.

## Children in child labour, and particularly hazardous work, are less likely to go to school

Fig 12. Percentage of children aged 5 to 14 years not attending school in Eastern and Southern Africa, by sex

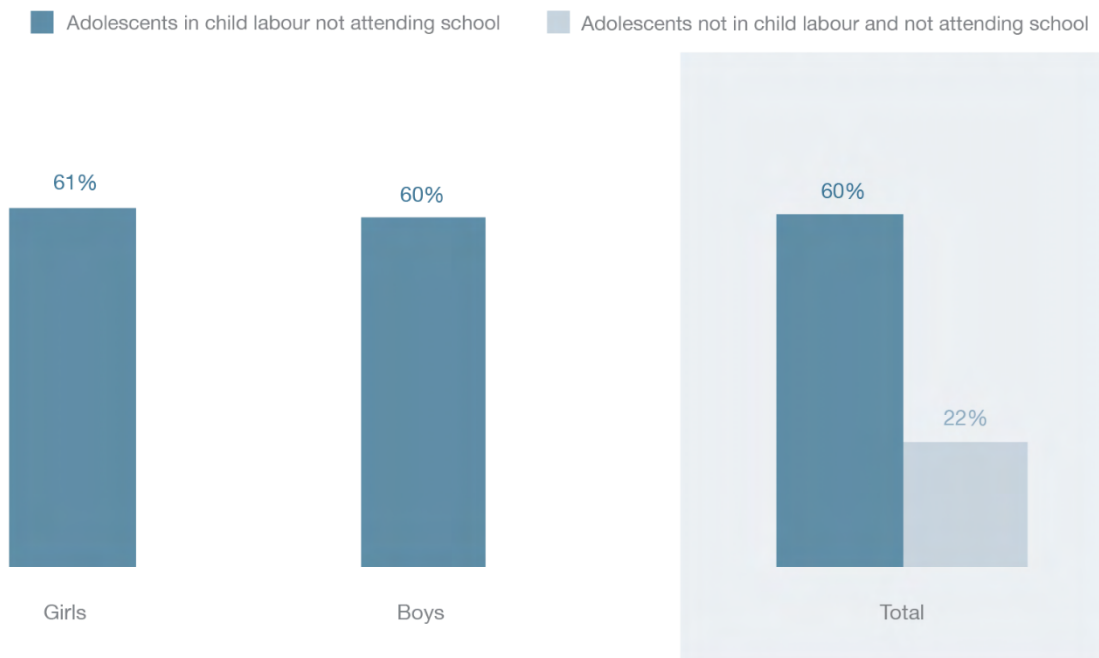
■ Children in hazardous work not attending school   ■ Children in child labour not attending school   ■ Children not in child labour and not attending school



Note: The percentage of children not in child labour and not attending school could not be calculated by sex.

## The toll of child labour on education is even steeper among adolescents in the region: 6 in 10 adolescents in child labour are not attending school compared with 2 in 10 of their peers who are not in child labour

Fig 13. Percentage of adolescents aged 15 to 17 years not attending school in Eastern and Southern Africa, by sex



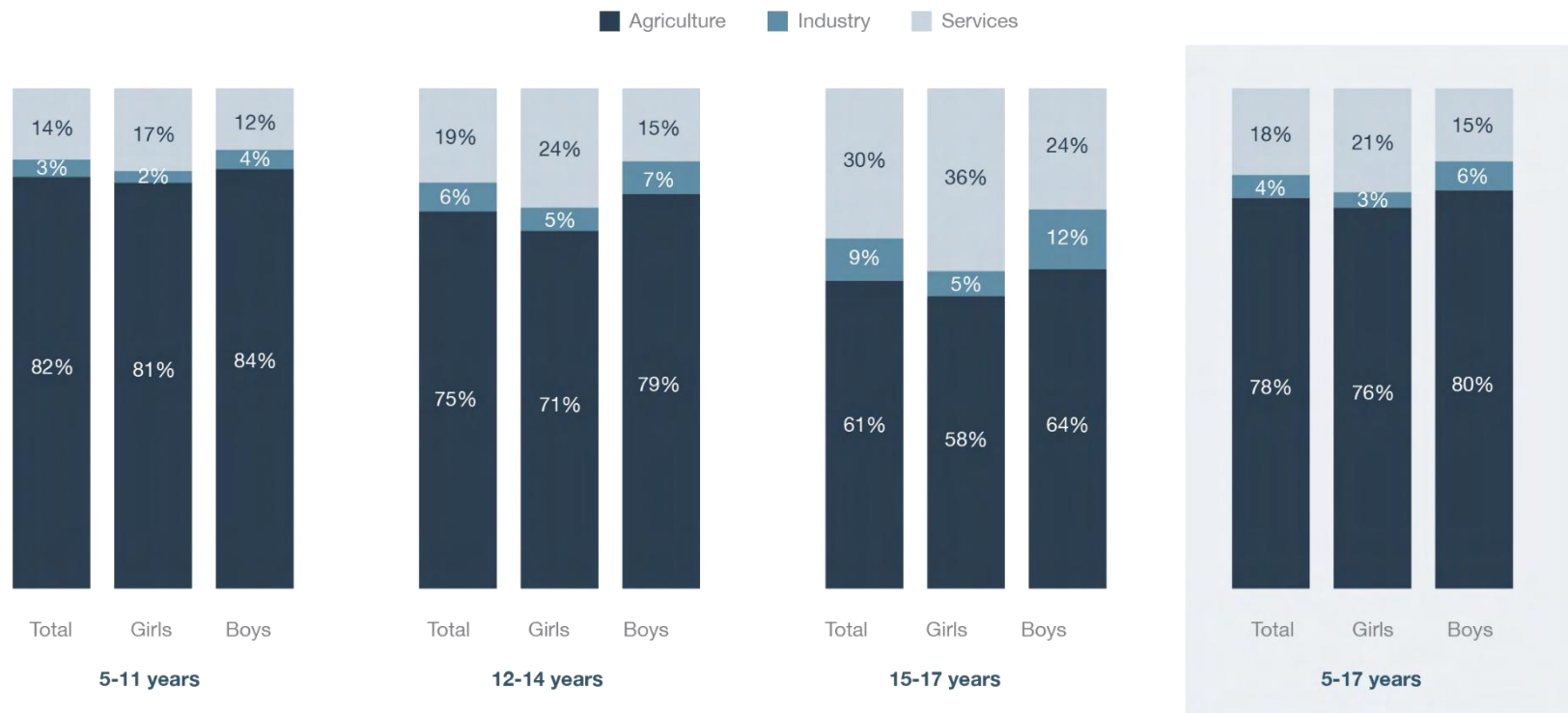
Note: The percentage of adolescents not in child labour and not attending school could not be calculated by sex.

A young girl wearing a yellow headscarf is shown in profile, sitting on the ground and using a long wooden pestle to pound contents within a dark mortar. The scene is dimly lit, with a strong blue light source from the right, creating a somber and focused atmosphere. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Characteristics of child labour and hazardous work

## In Eastern and Southern Africa, most child labour is in agriculture, although the relative share diminishes as children get older

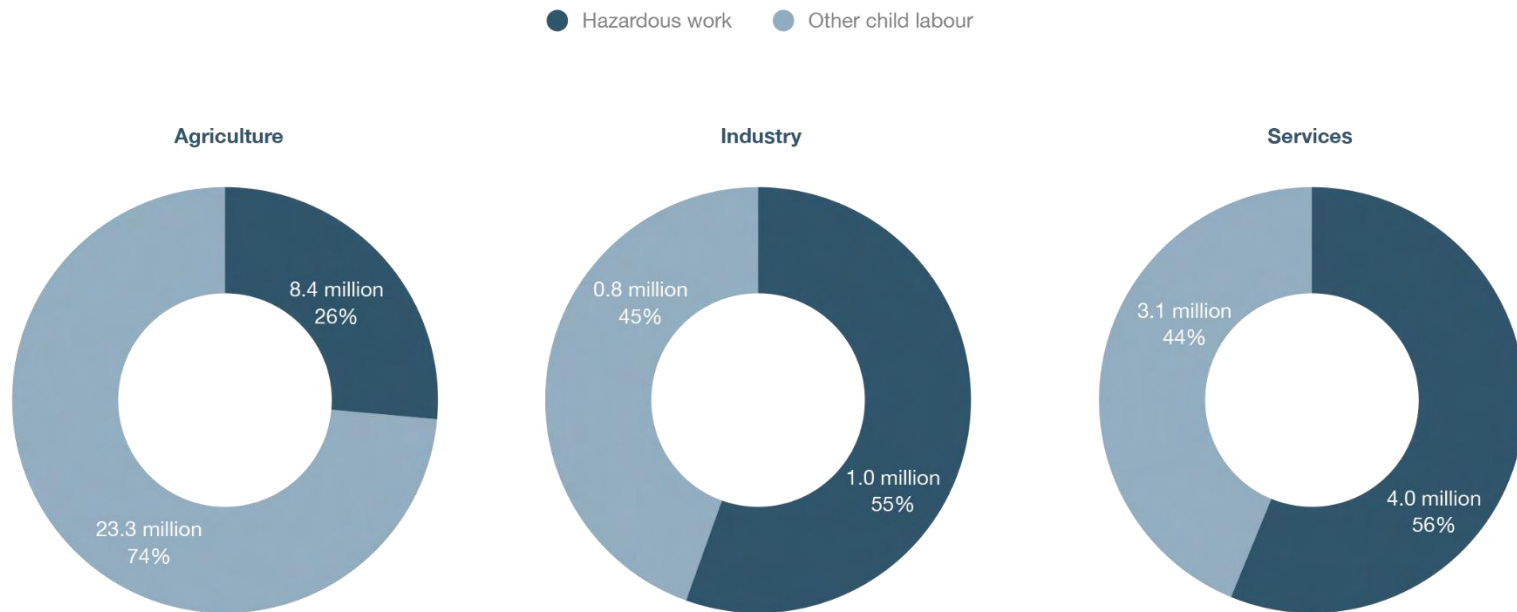
**Fig 14.** Percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour in Eastern and Southern Africa, by sector of economic activity, age and sex



Notes: Industry encompasses construction, manufacturing and mining. Services include domestic work in third-party households, small-scale commerce and other informal service work. Some totals do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

## While hazardous child labour is not confined to any single sector in the region, it poses the greatest concern in industry and services, where more than half of all child labour is hazardous

Fig 15. Percentage distribution of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour in Eastern and Southern Africa, by hazardous work and sector of economic activity



**Q&A**

# Translating data into policy and system action

## Ranto Rasolonjanahar

*Director of Labour and the Promotion  
of Fundamental Rights  
Ministry of Labour, Madagascar*



## Martha Irankunda

*Acting Head of the Child Labour Unit,  
Acting Head of the Prosecution Unit,  
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social  
Development, Uganda*



# Translating data into policy and system action

**Shimelis Tsegaye Tesemma**

*Director of Programmes*

*African Child Policy Forum*



**Q&A**

# Strategic takeaways and next steps

**Soledad Sánchez-Cañamares**

*Corporate Alliances Specialist*

*UNICEF Regional Office Eastern  
and Southern Africa*



# THANK YOU

<https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-labour-data-eastern-southern-africa-2026>