

**Magnitude and Characteristics of Working
Children in Syria**

**A Report to UNICEF, Syria
Based on a National Household Survey**

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Preface

This report has been written following an initiative by UNICEF, Syria, to document children's relationship to employment. As it will show, there are today a great number of employed children in Syria. They tend to work long hours for little pay, and the vast majority of them are not enrolled in school. It is our hope that by portraying the child workers in some detail, this report will support UNICEF and the Syrian government's efforts to improve the lives, development prospects and life-chances of many young ones.

The report comes at a time when the Syrian government has approved new laws regulating both school attendance and children's entrance into work life. From the scholastic year 2002/2003 education is made compulsory through preparatory school (year nine), up from elementary school (year six) in 2001/2002. The report may, therefore, also serve as a baseline on which to evaluate the effects of the recent law amendments when it comes to school enrolment and child labour.

The authors would like to express our thanks to Jon Pedersen, Research Director at Fafo, for constructive comments to an early draft of the report. Furthermore, we are grateful for feedback from Tomas Bergenholtz and Siham Dillo at UNICEF, Syria.

The authors,

Amman and Damascus, June 2002

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Summary

Based on the 2000 Internal Migration Survey, interviewing more than 20,000 households, this report presents data on employed children aged 10-17 in Syria: their numbers and characteristics. The report applies a standard ILO definition of work. Main findings are listed below:

- For the age group 10-11 the labour force participation rate stands at 3.1 percent, corresponding to approximately 26,500 children. For the age group 12-14 and 15-17 the rates and absolute numbers are 12.8 percent and about 171,500, and 32.9 percent and about 423,000 respectively.
- The employment rate is about 2.5 times higher among boys than girls. In the age group 10-14 there are almost 70,000 working girls and about 130,000 working boys. The figures for the age group 10-17 are some 171,000 girls and 450,000 boys.
- Almost two-thirds of the employed children reside in rural districts, whereas one-third live in cities and towns. The urban-rural differential is mainly caused by the higher workforce participation rate of girls in rural areas as compared to girls in urban areas.
- There is considerable variation in child labour rates across the *mohafazats*, where predominantly rural governorates such as Der Elzor and Hasakeh have more than two times as high a rate as Damascus City.
- The majority of working children (65 percent in the 10-14 age group) are employed in agriculture. Girls are employed almost exclusively (over 90 percent) in this sector. Manufacturing, trade/hotels/restaurants and construction are the second to fourth most important industries for children.
- About half of all employed children are unpaid workers in family businesses (most often in agriculture). In the age group 10-14, 54.6 percent corresponding to 108,000 children work here. In the age group 10-17, children working without pay in family business constitute 44.1 percent and almost 274,000 individuals.
- Whereas many boys move from unpaid to paid employment when they grow older, the vast majority of girls remain in unpaid employment.
- On average, children have almost as long working weeks as adults: 10-11 year-olds work 36 hours, 12-14 year-olds 46 hours and 15-17 year-olds work 47 hours per week. Almost 80,000 children aged 10-14 work 50 hours or more per week. Boys tend to work slightly longer hours than girls, and city dwellers work longer hours than children on the countryside.
- Enrolment in basic schooling is higher among boys than girls, and higher in urban as compared to rural areas. Enrolment increases with the educational attainment of parents, is higher among children with parents employed in certain sectors (health/education, public sector) than others (agriculture, manufacturing, construction), and is higher in affluent households.
- School children are generally not economically active. In the age group 10-17 only two percent, or 48,000 children, have term-time work. 13,500 children aged 10-11 and 19,500 children aged 12-14 combine schooling and employment. They tend to work shorter hours than employed children who do not attend school. However, if a

normal school week is counted as “work”, school children have greater commitments than employed but non-enrolled children (house chores put aside).

- Eight percent of all employed children 10-17 years of age attend school. In the age group 10-11, 52.5 percent of the employed children go to school. The figures for the 12-14 and 15-17 age groups are 11.5 and 3.5 percent respectively.
- Children of well-educated parents and children living in well-to-do households work less often than children with poorly educated parents and children living in less fortunate households.
- The table below sums up the main activities of children aged 10-14 and 10-17 in some detail -- giving priority to school activities. It provides the actual number of children (in thousands) per activity.

	10-14	10-17
School only	1,757	2,247
Combine work and school	29	39
Unpaid family business worker	79	230
In (paid) labour force	84	336
Housekeeper, caretaker	88	276
Other outside labour force	161	341
Total # of persons	2,198	3,469

1. Introduction

This report sheds light on the magnitude of children's participation in the labour force in Syria. Furthermore, it describes the relationship between children's work and a number of background factors, such as age, gender, education, economic status and place of residence. The analysis is based on data from the 2000 Syria Internal Migration Survey (SIMS), conducted by the University of Damascus and Syria's Central Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with Fafo Center for Applied International Studies, based in Oslo, Norway.

The content

This section of the report gives a brief background of the study. First, Syrian laws and regulations relevant for the study of working children are mentioned, as this has bearing on the definitions used in the report and therefore its content.

Second, we present the survey and data set on which the analysis is based. There are some obvious limitations in the data, as the SIMS was not specifically designed to capture children's participation in the labour force. However, the survey collected labour data on children down to the age of 10, adopting a version of the ILO standards. One of the strengths of the SIMS is the big sample size of more than 20,000 households, which permits reporting on the governorate or *mohafazat* level - for many indicators and for most *mohafazats*. A second asset is the wide variety of background variables in the data, which opens up for explorative analysis of the relative importance of various factors in accounting for child labour in Syria.

Third, core definitions of work and labour force participation are given.

Section 2 presents data on the scale of child labour in Syria, at the national level as well as for each of the 14 *mohafazats*. It furthermore shows how the magnitude of child labour varies by age, sex, and urban rural status. The following section gives information about where children are working, i.e. sectors (industries) of employment, and their occupations. Moreover, it takes a closer look at certain aspects of children's employment, such as working hours and income.

Section 4 deals with the association between education and work, and answers questions like: To what extent are child labourers enrolled in school? Does parents' educational level impact on children's workforce participation? Section 5 explores the relationship between parents' employment and the likelihood that their children work. It also examines the effect that a family's economic and material conditions may have on children's propensity to work. Simply stated, is child labour more common among the poorest segments of Syrian society?

Finally, section 6 briefly sums up some of the key findings and concludes the report, point at knowledge gaps in the issue of child labour and propose how (some of) these knowledge gaps can be filled.

The main objective of the study is to present the most recent statistics on working children for later use by policy makers in Syria. Hence, this report is very rich on data, guided by the comments of the authors and displayed – we think – in a very comprehensible manner.

Background

The population under scrutiny in this study is Syrian children aged 10-17; although we sometimes report on older individuals, and for the sake of comparison on occasion also include figures for the adult population.

The report is being prepared at a time when Syria is at a crossroads when it comes to regulating children's participation in the labour force. In the recent past, Syria allowed very young children to engage in economic activities. According to an ILO report from 1999, in Syria "the minimum age for entry to employment is 12 for all types of work, 13 for agricultural works and 15 for productive works" (Dibo 1999). That law was still valid at the time when the data on which this report builds were collected.

Recent amendments to the Syrian Labour Law have increased the minimum age. Article 124 of the law now states that, as a general rule, the minimum age for entry into the labour force is 15.¹ The law also maintains that children under the age of 16 are prohibited from working in a number of industries mentioned in a resolution by the Minister of Social Affairs (Article 124). Furthermore, the Minister of Social Affairs has the right to prohibit children below the age of 18 to work in certain industries (Article 124). Nevertheless, after obtaining a special permission from the Minister of Social Affairs children down to the age of 13 can hold "light jobs" that do not affect their health or development (Article 124). Moreover, provided that children have a labour card that proves their healthy ability to perform the required work, children under 16 may hold jobs mentioned in the resolution by the Minister of Social Affairs referred to above (Article 126).

At present, the age of compulsory education is 6-11 years, i.e. the age group attending Elementary school (grade/year 1-6). However, the Syrian government has recently decided to extend compulsory education to cover children aged up to 14, and make children's participation in the preparatory stage of schooling (grade/year 7-9) mandatory from the scholastic year 2002/2003. When implemented, the laws regulating the admission into the labour market and school attendance would become more in harmony. Minimum employment age will become the same as the minimum school leaving age.

Given the new labour laws and school reforms, it makes good sense to focus on children under the age of 18 in this report. For the most part we present figures for the age group 10-14, corresponding to the children under the (new) minimum age for employment and who are supposed to attend school after the new school reform, or the age group 10-17, which in addition includes children who are prohibited from entrance to certain industries and occupations. Although we sometimes present results by exact age, the age groups 10-11, 12-14, and 15-17 are widely used in the report. The former age group obviously contains children who are not supposed to work whatsoever, but rather are expected to attend compulsory schooling.

The survey

Comprehensive statistics on children's relationship to the workforce in Syria has never been presented before. No government agency has to date conducted a national survey designed to collect statistics on child labour as such, but there exist studies that

¹ Translation of the Labour Law from Arabic to English by UNICEF, Damascus.

present some data on the issue. One such study is the 1998 *Child labour study*, published by the CBS and the Ministry of Social Affairs (in Arabic), presenting figures based on the 1994 Demographic Survey. Here, child labour was defined as work carried out by children aged 6-17 if they were not enrolled in the formal educational system. The overall level of child labour was estimated by this study to be at 6.6 percent, i.e. 6.6 percent of all children in the age group 6-17 were employed.² A second study is *The National Report on Child Labour in Syria* (Ministry of Labour, 1998), which estimated the labour force participation among children 10-14 to be 9.8 percent in 1995, up from 5.9 percent four years earlier.³ However, according to the Syrian Statistical Abstract for the year 2000, with reference to the 1999 Multiple Purpose Survey, only three percent of children aged 10-14 are working (CBS 2001: Table 6/3).⁴

The significantly different estimates presumably reflect one or more of the following factors: different sources of information, different (working) definitions of “child” and “work”, different methods used to collect the data, and seasonal variation in children’s workforce participation. However, it is outside the scope of this report to sum up earlier results and compare the findings of the various studies with one another, or with this one, or to seek explanations for the seemingly inconsistent results. Instead the objective of this report is to give a picture of children’s workforce participation in Syria with data from a national household survey that did not aim specifically at gathering data on child labour, but which nevertheless contains data that enable this exercise.

The Syria Internal Migration Survey (SIMS) is a joint project between the Faculty of Economics at the University of Damascus, the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies (Fafo). The CBS carried out the survey during the months of April, May and June 2000, and was responsible for data processing. Research teams from the University and the CBS were responsible for data analysis, with assistance from Fafo. Fafo, in collaboration with the University and CBS, developed the survey instruments and provided technical feedback during all stages of the project.

The sample is based on a multi-stage stratified design, using a sampling frame constructed from the 1994 population census and household listings updated of all the selected clusters. Interviews with 20,409 households (consisting of 120,247 persons) and 20,330 adults aged 15 years and over were successfully completed, together with about 15,854 ever-married women aged 15-49. Since the survey had other objectives, it did not call for interviewing children. See Khawaja (2002) for more details about the survey, including the sample.

ILO-like labour force framework

The measurement of employment and other aspects of labour utilisation used in the survey are essentially in line with the framework of the International Labour

² Broken down by age groups and sex, the figures are as follows: ages 6-11: 0.34 percent (boys 0.54 and girls 0.11); ages 12-14: 7.3 percent (boys 11.7 and girls 2.1); and ages 15-17: 18.9 percent (boys 32.8 and girls 3.4).

³ As reported by Dibo (1999); the National report is in Arabic.

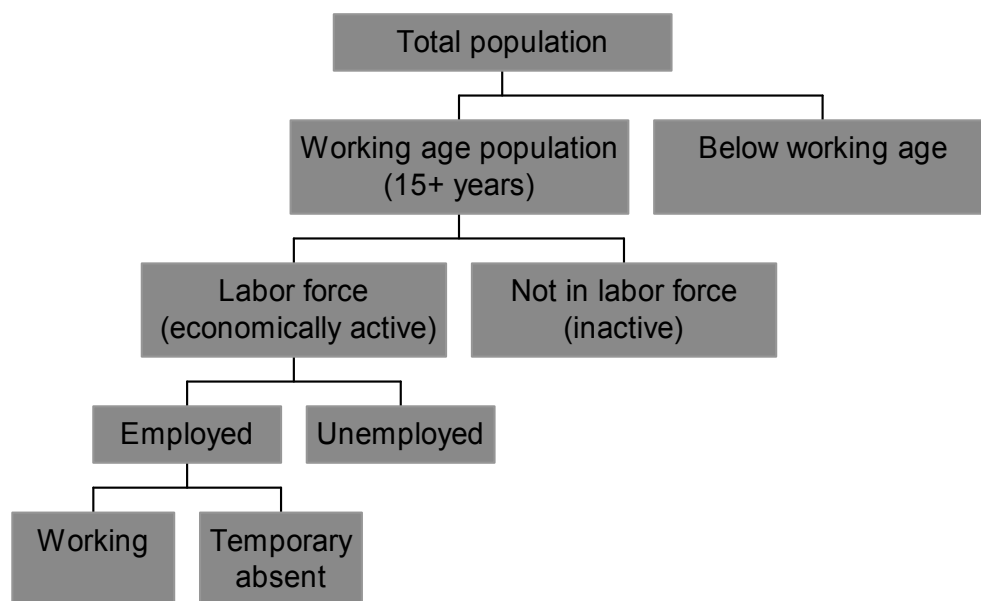
⁴ Broken down by place of residence and gender, the results are: 7.9 percent in rural and 3.5 percent in urban areas; and 7.3 percent of boys as compared to 4.4 percent of girls.

Organization (ILO). There is often confusion about the standard measurement of employment and unemployment, largely due to the lack of awareness regarding the distinction between unemployment and economic inactivity. According to the ILO criteria, unemployment is not synonymous with joblessness -- individuals without work must actively seek a job if they are to be counted as unemployed. The jobless who want a job, but who do not search for work are classified as “out of the labour force”.

Figure 1.1 displays the ILO framework for the measurement of labour force activity through household surveys. In principle the framework concerns adults only, usually those aged 15 years or over. However, since the topic of this report is *children’s* relationship to the workforce, we present data on individuals aged down to 10 years instead of the conventional 15 years. Individuals are sorted into the economically active population (the labour force) or economically inactive population (out of the labour force) based essentially on responses to a series of questions about “productive” activities during the previous week. This reference week is defined as the seven days preceding the day of the interview (and not including the day of the interview).

The labour force consists of those working (employed) or seeking work (unemployed). Employment is defined by work for pay or profit (including in kind benefits) for at least one hour during the previous week. The employment category also includes persons working for an enterprise or farm belonging to the household or one of its members (even if not paid), and those who were temporary absent from work during the reference week. Work furthermore includes certain types of production for the household’s own use, even if it is not sold on the market. Examples are home production such as sewing, embroidery and handicraft, and activities to feed the family such as growing vegetables, fruits or herbs, and raising poultry or livestock. Normal, everyday domestic chores, like cooking and making humus for the family, cleaning the house, looking after children etc. is *not* work. Unless a person is doing these things for pay (like domestic servant) he or she is not employed.

Figure 1.1 ILO framework for the measurement of labour force activity



To conclude, in this report all persons aged 10 and above are classified into the system outlined by the Figure. The classification is done by the data analyst based on the responses from the household head or, in his or her absence, other responsible adult(s) on a range of detailed questions regarding labour force activities. Hence, this approach is different from surveys using self-classification, whereby the respondent chooses whether a household member “belongs to” this or that employment category, and consequently would yield different results.

It is common knowledge that the above ILO-like framework, or more exactly its implementation, underestimates labour force participation, and in particular the participation of women (Elder and Johnson 1999, Mata-Greenwood 1999). In a Middle Eastern setting, several studies on the situation in Egypt have reached the conclusion that women are undercounted (Anker and Anker 1995, Butler 1998, Larson 1998). There are several reasons for the underestimation of female labour force participation. The main explanation is that, compared to men, women to a larger extent tend to engage in home based activities, often combining gainful employment with house chores, and employment in the informal sector, i.e. economic activities that are “atypical” and do not lie at the “core” of the ILO definitions, information which it is hard even for the best trained fieldworker to collect.

Statistics on working children are basically not different from any labour force measure. Therefore, they will experience the difficulties inherent in all measures of workforce participation and workforce characteristics. “Most notably, they suffer from the omission of children engaged in unpaid domestic activities” (Mata-Greenwood 1999: 26). It has even been argued that the under-reporting of the child labour force may be greater than the under-reporting of the female labour force (Anker 2000a). Also, and as we shall see below, since girls more often are found working in the home, it is likely that we undercount the employment of girls more than we undercount that of boys.

Many studies seek to differentiate between economic activities that are harmful to the child and those that are not. Factors which threatens the present welfare of the child, such as working too long hours, nightshift and without breaks, being denied access to sufficient water and food at the workplace, life and health threatening working conditions, and physical and psychological mistreatment from employers or fellow employees are included when measures of harmful work is constructed. Factors that may hamper a child’s normal development and jeopardize its future or long-term welfare, for instance being denied proper schooling because of work, are also considered. Some studies label such harmful economic activities as “labour”, while other activities – assumed to contribute in a positive way to a healthy growth and development of the child – are simply labelled “work”.⁵ Most certainly, some work is more exploitative and harmful than other work. Nevertheless, we do not make any distinction between “labour” and “work” here, but shall use the two terms interchangeably throughout the report.

⁵ UNICEF (2001: 45) also makes this distinction.

2. The magnitude of children's participation in the workforce

This section plots the extent of child labour in Syria. It provides answers to questions such as: How many children are employed? Are there differences between boys and girls? And, does it matter where the children reside?

It has been found that carefully designed, specialized child labour surveys result in a higher rate of economic activity in children than the rate obtained through regular labour force and other surveys (Ashagrie 1997). As a consequence, and as a result of the arguments presented above, one should consider the results presented below as conservative estimates of children's, and in particular girls' employment.

However, children's work force participation is known to vary over the year almost everywhere. The SIMS collected some 20 percent of the data during June, where the schools are in recess. This has undoubtedly led to a minor inflation of the overall rates, and it is debatable whether the rates presented in the report, therefore, are representative for the full year. Yet, as you will see towards the end of this section, we devote some space to a discussion of this aspect, and argue that the data indeed *do* give a fair picture of the situation.

Over 600,000 working children

On the whole, just about 18 percent of children aged 10-17 are members of the labour force. This makes up a total number of about 620,000 working children in Syria (Table 2.1). As displayed in the Table, only three percent, or some 26,000 children, aged 10-11 are employed, but the employment rate is 10 percentage points higher among children aged 12-14 and increases a further 20 percentage points to reach 33 percent for the age group 15-17. Among these older children, more than 400,000 are working. Over 170,000 children aged 12-14 are employed.

Table 2.1 Proportion and actual number of working children aged 10-17 by age groups (n = 25,762); the two right columns present the lower and upper limits for the estimate at a 95 percent confidence interval

	Percent	# of persons	Lower limit	Upper limit
10-11	3.1	26 439	23 925	28 953
12-14	12.8	171 659	164 465	178 853
15-17	32.9	422 856	411 330	434 382
Total	17.8	620 954	603 036	638 872

The SIMS furthermore shows that children make up 12.2 percent of the entire Syria workforce (aged 10 and above). The youngest children (aged 10-11) comprise 0.5 percent; the 12-14-year-olds comprise 3.4 percent, while the oldest children (aged 15-17) comprise 8.3 percent of the labour force.

Two and one-half times as many boys as girls are economically active

About two times as many boys as girls aged 12-14 and three times as many boys as girls aged 15-17 are economically active. As is shown in Table 2.2, the labour force participation rates are a great deal higher among older children, youth and young adults, especially for males. There are some 450,000 boys and 171,000 girls aged 10-

17 working in Syria overall (Table 2.3). These numbers correspond to a 25 percent workforce participation rate for boys and 10 percent for girls. For children in the age group 10-14 the figures are 11 and 6 percent, corresponding to almost 130,000 employed boys and 70,000 employed girls (Table 2.4).

Table 2.2 Labour force participation rates by gender and age groups (n = 42,799)

	10-11	12-14	15-17	18-19	20-24
Male	2.8	17.0	48.8	61.7	74.6
Female	3.3	8.4	16.3	17.4	23.4
All	3.1	12.8	32.9	40.4	49.7

Table 2.3 Proportion and actual number of working children aged 10-17 by gender (n = 25,762); the two right columns present the lower and upper limits for the estimate at a 95 percent confidence interval

	Percent	# of persons	Lower limit	Upper limit
Girls	10.0	170 996	161 986	180 006
Boys	25.2	449 957	437 367	462 547
Total	17.8	620 954	603 036	638 872

Table 2.4 Proportion and actual number of working children aged 10-14 by gender (n = 16,276)

	Percent	# of persons
Girls	6.4	68 469
Boys	11.5	129 629
Total	9.0	198 098

Of those in the labour force, a negligible number of children are unemployed, in the age group 15-17 less than two percent. While few both boys and girls are economically active at the age of 10-11, the boys start moving ahead from the age of 12 (Figure 2.1, Table 2.5). At age 14, 28 percent of the boys and 12 percent of the girls are members of the labour force. At age 16 more than half of the boys are working, while more than four fifths of the girls stay economically inactive until they reach their twenties.

Figure 2.1 Male and female labour force participation rates by age, persons aged 10-24 (n = 42,799)

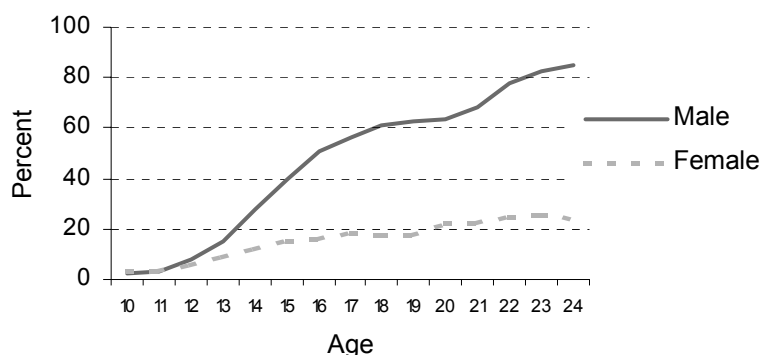


Table 2.5 Male and female labour force participation rates by age, persons aged 10-24 (n = 42,799)

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Male	2.2	3.5	7.7	15.2	28.0	39.8	51.1	56.4
Female	3.3	3.2	5.2	8.5	11.7	15.3	16.0	17.9
All	2.8	3.4	6.5	11.8	20.4	27.6	33.9	38.0
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Male	60.9	62.6	63.2	68.5	78.1	82.5	84.8	
Female	17.3	17.5	21.9	22.3	24.3	25.2	24.1	
All	40.1	40.8	41.8	47.5	52.6	55.2	54.7	

360,000 children have care taking and domestic chores as their main activity

We have divided the economically inactive children and young people into three groups: students, housewives/caretakers, and those who are outside of the workforce for other reasons, e.g. due to ill health, hindered by social restrictions, or they have given up finding a job (the so-called discouraged). A small number of the latter have worked before, that is prior to the reference week of the survey. Only 0.2 percent of all children 10-17, or some 2.5 percent of the children outside the workforce for “other” reasons, were not employed at the time of the interview, but had worked in the past.

The distribution over the four groups by age is given separately for males and females in Figure 2.2 and Table 2.6, and Figure 2.3 and Table 2.7 respectively. For boys, employment increases steadily from less than three percent among the 10-year-olds to some 56 percent among those aged 17. The majority of the boys outside the labour force attend school, while very few do house chores and take care of younger siblings or other family members. The number of students drops consistently from around 90 percent among the 10-year-olds to 31 percent among those seven years older. Here it

is important to remember not to interpret the figures given for “students” as school enrolment rates, because some of the economically active, although not many, are enrolled in school. We shall return to the issue of schooling and employment in section 4.

This pattern contrasts the one found for girls. While the curve in Figure 2.3 depicting female students has a shape similar to the one for boys, girls do not enter the workforce as rapidly as boys. Instead girls tend to do housework and care for their immediate - or extended - family, and at the age of 17 over one third of them, i.e. a higher proportion than enrolled in school and two times as many as in the labour force, have their main activity here. Altogether, approximately 360,000 children aged 10-17 have care taking and domestic chores as their main activity. About 155,000 children aged 10-14 belong to this group.

On a special note about girls aged 15-17, 6.3 percent of them are married. Of those, 91 percent are (full-time) housewives and housekeepers, and six percent report being employed. Amongst the un-married girls, 27 percent have housekeeping and care taking as their main activity, 17 percent are employed, while 41 percent are students. In both groups, some individuals are outside the labour force for health or other reasons.

Figure 2.2 Male (aged 10-24) labour force status by age (n = 21,982)

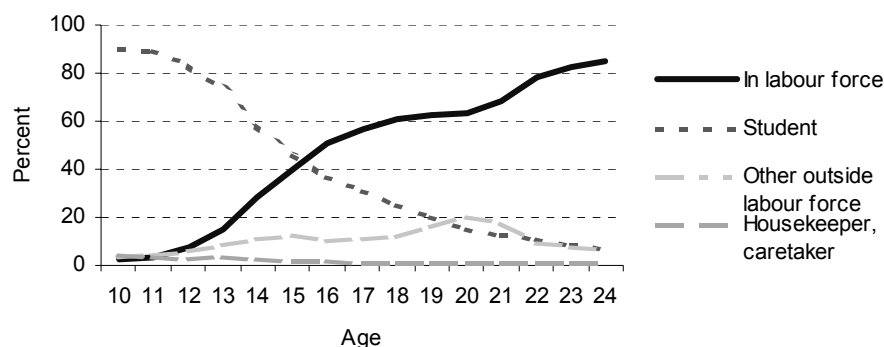


Table 2.6 Male (aged 10-24) labour force status by age (n = 21,982)

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
In labour force	2.5	3.6	7.7	15.2	28.0	39.8	51.1	56.4
Housekeeper, caretaker	3.8	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.2	1.3	1.4	1.2
Student	90.3	89.5	83.7	73.2	58.4	45.7	36.7	31.2
Other outside labour force	3.3	3.9	5.5	8.6	11.1	12.7	10.0	10.5
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
In labour force	60.9	62.6	63.2	68.5	78.2	82.6	84.8	
Housekeeper, caretaker	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.8	
Student	25.1	20.4	14.8	12.5	10.6	8.1	7.0	
Other outside labour force	12.1	15.5	19.9	17.5	9.5	7.2	6.1	

Figure 2.3 Female (aged 10-24) labour force status by age (n = 20,832)

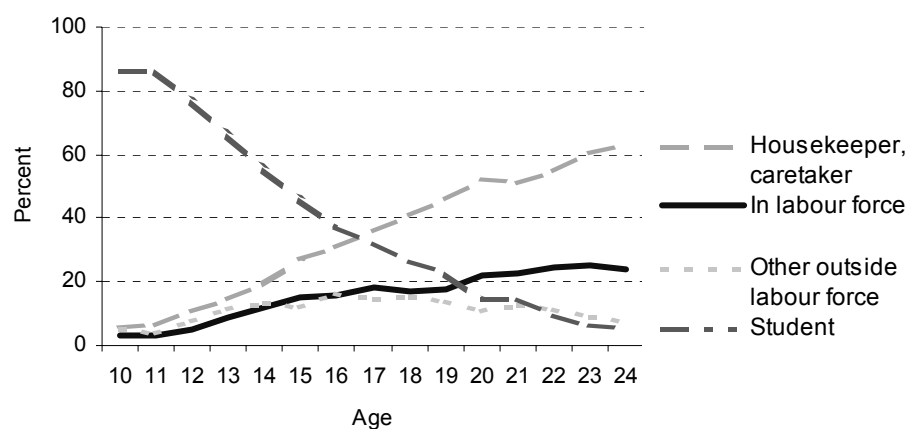


Table 2.7 Female (aged 10-24) labour force status by age (n = 20,832)

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
In labour force	3.4	3.3	5.2	8.5	11.8	15.4	16.0	18.0
Housekeeper, caretaker	5.7	6.5	10.4	14.5	19.7	26.9	30.8	35.8
Student	86.1	86.2	77.0	65.7	55.4	45.9	36.8	31.8
Other outside labour force	4.7	4.0	7.3	11.2	13.1	11.8	16.4	14.3
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
In labour force	17.3	17.6	21.9	22.4	24.3	25.2	24.2	
Housekeeper, caretaker	41.1	45.9	52.4	50.8	54.6	60.1	62.9	
Student	26.5	22.5	14.6	14.5	9.5	6.2	5.4	
Other outside labour force	14.8	13.9	10.8	12.3	11.2	8.6	7.3	

Undoubtedly, a specialized child labour survey would have re-coded a sizeable number of the “housekeepers” as domestic workers and therefore as economically active, since they perform activities that lie within the ILO definition of “work” (sewing for family use, assisting parents in family enterprises, etc.). The vast majority, 88.2 percent, of child housekeepers (aged 10-17) are girls. Thus, the labour force participation rate of girls, in particular, would have been inflated.⁶ In addition to the ILO type of work in the home, it is likely that many of the children (girls) who are coded as (full-time) housekeepers in our survey perform housework that free adult household members for economic activity elsewhere. These would all have been interesting topics to explore and figures to present. However, the SIMS data set does not allow us to cover them. As a consequence, the remaining part of the report is

⁶ Based on evidence from developing countries, it has been claimed that if full-time housework were included in the labour force rate, “there would be little or no variation between the sexes in the total size of working children, and the number of girls could even exceed that of boys” (Ashagrie 1997).

solely confined to data on the economically active population and do not follow up on the issue of the housekeepers.⁷

More child labour in rural areas, especially among girls

A considerably higher proportion of children work in rural areas compared to urban areas. An urban area is here defined in accordance with the standard classification of the Central Bureau of Statistics as a place of living with more than 20,000 inhabitants. For the age group 10-17 as a whole, 22.5 percent are employed in the rural districts of Syria, while 13.0 percent are employed in the urban areas. This means that in this age band almost 400,000 children in rural areas and more than 220,000 children in the towns and cities are employed (Table 2.8). Urban centres have roughly 60,000 economically active children aged 10-14, and in the more sparsely populated areas there are almost 140,000 employed children in the same age cohort (Table 2.9).

Table 2.8 Proportion and actual number of working children aged 10-17 by urban rural status (n = 25,762); the two right columns present the lower and upper limits for the estimate at a 95 percent confidence interval

	Percent	# of persons	Lower limit	Upper limit
Urban	13.0	222 559	212 985	232 133
Rural	22.5	398 394	383 131	413 657
Total	17.8	620 954	603 036	638 872

Table 2.9 Proportion and actual number of working children aged 10-14 by urban rural status (n = 16,276)

	Percent	# of persons
Urban	6.4	59 607
Rural	11.5	138 491
Total	9.0	198 098

There is no significant variation between governorate (or *mohafazat*) centres on the one hand, and other cities and towns, on the other (not shown). The urban-rural disparity in participation exists for all ages, and even does not close in early adulthood. Seemingly, one explanation for this situation is the higher educational attendance in urban areas for all ages 10-24 (Table 2.10).

⁷ In an anthropological study from rural Syria, the author writes: "In Um Abdalla's house, the two older girls threw down their schoolbooks, changed out of their uniforms, and immediately set to work without being told to prepare the food, and the boys went off to turn on hoses to fill the water carts they would later take to the chicken. [...] After lunch the adults relaxed over tea while the girls cleaned the dishes and the boys took the water carts up the road to the chicken houses." (Rugh 1997: 22-23). First of all, this passage accurately describes the traditional distribution of work between boys and girls on the Syrian countryside. Next, it illustrates our definition of "work" and the intrinsic challenges in household surveys when it comes to collecting data on child labour. What the girls did were house chores, indisputably falling outside of the ILO definition of work. The activities of the boys (assisting their father raising chickens), on the other hand, as clearly lie within the definition. Despite this fact, unless carefully designed and meticulously implemented, a survey would easily overlook this information and as a consequence undercount children's (here boys') workforce participation.

Table 2.10 Employment status of persons aged 10-24 by age groups and urban rural status (n = 42,814)

	10-11 years		12-14 years		15-17 years		18-19 years		20-24 years	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
In labour force	0.8	5.4	8.6	16.9	25.7	39.9	32.2	49.1	43.9	56.0
Housekeeper	4.5	5.0	8.3	8.8	16.3	15.3	22.6	20.0	29.4	25.4
Student	91.2	85.0	73.9	64.4	44.2	32.6	30.1	17.0	13.9	7.2
Other, outside labour force	3.5	4.5	9.2	9.8	13.7	12.2	15.1	13.9	12.7	11.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The urban-rural differential is first and foremost caused by the higher workforce participation of girls in rural areas as compared to girls in urban areas, whilst the employment of boys in the rural localities of Syria is just above that of boys in urban localities. For example, for the age group 10-14, nearly 12 percent of the rural girls are economically active, whereas merely one percent of the girls in towns and cities are the same. The difference between rural and urban boys, on the other hand, is no more than three percentage points (Table 2.11).

Table 2.11 Employment status by gender and urban rural status; children 10-14 (n = 16,225) and 10-17 (n = 25,762)

	10-14 years				10-17 years			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
In labour force	10.0	13.0	0.9	11.7	23.7	26.7	1.7	18.0
Housekeeper	3.1	2.8	10.6	12.0	2.4	2.3	18.6	18.5
Student	80.4	77.3	81.0	67.6	65.6	62.2	69.0	53.5
Other, outside labour force	6.5	6.8	7.4	8.7	8.3	8.9	10.7	9.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The considerable disparity in the employment of females between rural and urban districts increases further after counting in the older children, as, for the age group 10-17, less than two percent of the girls are employed in the urban centres contrasted with 18 percent in the rural areas. In contrast, the difference in labour force participation of boys in the two types of living areas remains at the same level even after expanding the population covered to capture those 15-17 also (Table 2.11).

Variation across *mohafazats*

There is substantial variation in the child labour force participation rates across the 14 *mohafazats* or governorates (Table 2.12). Der Elzor tops the list with almost 28 percent of children aged 10-17 being employed. Hasakeh, Edleb and Rakka also have a workforce participation rate for children in the excess of 20 percent. At the bottom end of the list we find Dara, Tartos and Sweda with approximately 10 percent employed children. Aleppo stands out as the governorate with the highest number of child labourers aged 10-17 at 168,000. Taken together, Damascus - the Capital, plus Damascus other (or "rural", as it is often called), has 94,000 employed children aged 10-17.

However, the results across *mohafazats* may not be completely comparable, as the SIMS did not interview an equal share of households at the same time in the various governorates (for details, see data and discussion towards the end of this section). We consider the estimates for Latakia, Edleb, Rakka, Der Elzor and Aleppo to be a bit exaggerated, while the estimates for rural Damascus, Sweda, Qunitra and Homs most likely are somewhat on the low side. The implication of this is that the disparity in child employment rates across *mohafazats* is in fact slightly lower than presented here.

Table 2.12 Proportion and actual number of working children aged 10-17 by governorate (n = 25,762); the two right columns present the lower and upper limits for the estimate at a 95 percent confidence interval

	Percent	# of children	Lower limit	Upper limit
Der Elzor	28.0	54 978	49 952	60 004
Hasakeh	23.4	64 599	58 715	70 483
Edleb	23.0	54 823	49 847	59 799
Rakka	22.0	32 313	28 421	36 205
Aleppo	21.7	167 306	157 497	177 115
Qunitra	17.0	2 011	1 228	2 794
Hama	16.9	47 121	41 671	52 571
Latakia	16.9	27 969	23 896	32 042
Homs	14.2	43 577	37 160	49 994
Damascus other	13.2	59 667	55 662	63 672
Damascus city	11.0	33 375	30 096	36 654
Dara	10.4	16 374	14 570	18 178
Tartos	10.2	12 259	9 852	14 666
Sweda	7.3	4 581	3 521	5 641
Total	17.8	620 953	603 035	638 871

Table 2.13 Proportion and actual number of working children aged 10-14 by governorate (n = 16,276)

	Percent	# of children
Der Elzor	17.3	21 780
Hasakeh	13.2	22 568
Edleb	13.6	20 673
Rakka	11.3	10 694
Aleppo	12.0	60 190
Qunitra	12.1	983
Hama	6.6	11 376
Latakia	8.3	8 030
Homs	6.3	12 081
Damascus other	5.1	15 123
Damascus city	3.5	6 566
Dara	4.2	4 364
Tartos	3.9	2 706
Sweda	2.7	964
Total	9.0	198 098

Table 2.13 provides the employment rates by *mohafazat* also, but for children aged 10-14 only. In Table 2.12 the *mohafazats* were ranked according to the proportion of working children. Here, we have listed the governorates in the same order. As is

evident from a comparison of the two tables, the ranking of the labour force participation rate would have been approximately the same for the 10-14 year-olds as for the 10-17 year olds. On the whole, nine percent of children between 10 and 14 years of age are employed.

Seven percent of non-employed children have worked before

As we explained earlier, the data presented above – and elsewhere in this report – are based on an ILO definition of work that uses “past week” or “past seven days” as the reference period. As a consequence, when we state that almost 18 percent of the children aged 10-17 are members of the workforce, we mean that they worked (at least one hour), or were temporarily absent, the week preceding the day of the interview. In addition to these economically active children, the SIMS suggests that about seven percent of the non-working children have been employed in the past, either during the year preceding the reference week (2.6 percent) or prior to that (4.1 percent). As shown in Table 2.14, the percentage of children outside the labour force at the time of the interview but who have ever worked increases by age and is higher among boys than girls.

Table 2.14 Percentage of children aged 10-17 not currently employed having worked before by period of employment, age and sex (n = 20,503)

	10-11			12-14		
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
Worked past 12 months, not past week	2.1	1.4	1.8	2.8	1.9	2.3
Worked before, not past 12 months, not past week	2.6	2.4	2.5	4.5	3.7	4.1
Never worked	95.4	96.1	95.8	92.7	94.5	93.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	15-17			All	All	All
	Boys	Girls	All	boys	girls	10-17
Worked past 12 months, not past week	4.9	2.9	3.7	3.1	2.1	2.6
Worked before, not past 12 months, not past week	7.5	4.6	5.7	4.6	3.6	4.1
Never worked	87.6	92.5	90.6	92.3	94.2	93.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Seasonal fluctuations in child labour rates

Employment rates in a country tend to change over the year due to seasonality in labour demand (especially in agriculture) and instability in economic performance. This section looks at fluctuations in the labour force participation rates of children by comparing the findings for the months of April (13.7 percent of all interviews), May (66.4 percent of interviews) and June (19.9 percent of interviews).

Children’s scale of participation in the workforce may change over the year for at least two reasons. First, a higher number of children work when the school is in recess, primarily during the summer months of June, July and August. Second, more children work when the demand for labour is high. In agriculture, this would again

mean the summer season. As way of example, we know that in Egypt over one million children between the ages of seven and twelve are hired by the agricultural cooperatives to take part in cotton pest management during the summer holidays (Human Rights Watch 2001).

In the SIMS survey, and for the reasons just mentioned, we would expect to see higher employment rates for children in June as compared to the two other months. And indeed, the labour force participation rate of children aged 10-14 is two times as high in June as compared to April, increasing from six to 12 percent (Table 2.15). The rate for May stands in the middle at nine percent.

For children aged 10-17 there is an eight percentage-points difference between the rates of April and June. Comparison across three age groups, presented at the bottom of the Table, shows that in relative terms the seasonal variation is greatest for the youngest children: Compared to April, the participation rate is almost four times as high in June for the 10-11 year-olds, it is double for the 12-14 year-olds, while the rate has only increased by some 50 percent (but 13 percentage points) from April to June for children aged 15-17. Nevertheless, there are a higher number of older children (a larger percentage-point increase) as compared to younger children who join the workforce in June.

Table 2.15 Labour force participation rates for children aged 10-17 by time of interview, sex and age of child, place of residence and school enrolment status (n = 16,276)

		April	May	June
Age 10-14	Boys	8.8	11.7	12.6
	Girls	2.2	5.6	11.3
	Urban	5.2	5.9	4.3
	Rural	5.9	11.8	16.7
	Enrolled	0.7	1.8	2.7
	Not enrolled	36.6	39.1	43.1
	Total	5.6	8.7	12.0
Age 10-17	Boys	22.6	25.2	27.0
	Girls	4.7	8.9	17.1
	Urban	11.8	13.4	12.2
	Rural	15.6	21.5	28.5
	Enrolled	1.0	2.0	3.2
	Not enrolled	44.3	46.9	53.5
	Total	13.7	17.3	22.1
Age groups	10-11	1.2	3.0	4.4
	12-14	8.4	12.4	16.9
	15-17	27.5	31.8	40.2
	Total	13.7	17.3	22.1

Table 2.15 furthermore shows no significant change in employment rates for urban areas, and indicates that the entire increase in child labour rates at the national level during the warmer seasons is due to changes in the rural districts. This pattern is explained for the most part by the increased need of manpower in agriculture.

The Table also shows that the labour force participation rate for boys does not increase very much from one month to the next, especially not from May to June, but that girls witness a formidable increase in their economic activity during summer. In

fact we are talking about a five times increase in the workforce participation rate of girls aged 10-14 from April to June.

Finally, Table 2.15 demonstrates that the labour force participation rate of enrolled children aged 10-14 increases four-fold from April to June, when school is in recess. However, this is only a two percentage-points increase, and we conclude that rather few enrolled children work during the school holidays. Instead, a larger proportion of children not enrolled in school respond to increased labour demand by taking work during the summer.

To sum up, the investigation of seasonal variation in children's employment through the use of the SIMS data set indicates that children's workforce participation rates are higher during the summer than during other periods of the year. Given the information presented above, we suggest that this trend is mainly brought about by the increased participation of non-enrolled girls (housekeepers/caretakers) in farm work in the rural districts of Syria.

Furthermore, since fieldwork was not implemented at exactly the same time in each *mohafazat* (Table 2.16), the workforce participation rates of children are probably not completely comparable across *mohafazats*. The Table shows that the majority (55 percent) of interviews in Latakia were carried out in June, which is much higher than in other governorates. Also Edleb, Rakka and Der Elzor saw a relatively high share of interviews in June. In Aleppo an above-average proportion of interviews were conducted in May, which compared to April also has higher employment rates. Based on this, we consider the estimates for Latakia, Edleb, Rakka and Der Elzor, and to a lesser extent Aleppo, to be a bit exaggerated.

For four *mohafazats*, the proportion of interviews carried out in June is zero or very low. For one of them, rural Damascus, the share of interviews conducted in April is especially high (49 percent). Thus, the estimates for particularly rural Damascus, but also for Sweda and Qunitra, and to a lesser extent Homs, most likely are somewhat understated.

Table 2.16 Percentage distribution of interviewed households by month of interview and governorate (n = 21,230)

	April	May	June	Total	# of households
Damascus city	3.9	77.6	18.6	100.0	2406
Damascus rural	49.1	44.7	6.3	100.0	2805
Homs	28.1	67.3	4.6	100.0	1780
Hama	16.6	67.1	16.3	100.0	1520
Tartos	14.9	70.8	14.3	100.0	926
Latakia	0.1	45.3	54.7	100.0	1169
Edleb	0.2	62.5	37.3	100.0	1289
Aleppo	0.1	82.0	17.9	100.0	4491
Rakka	20.1	44.2	35.7	100.0	703
Der Elzor	2.3	61.9	35.9	100.0	839
Hasakeh	9.4	67.9	22.7	100.0	1145
Sweda	24.0	76.0	0.0	100.0	438
Dara	14.6	68.2	17.2	100.0	829
Qunitra	20.3	79.7	0.0	100.0	69
All	14.1	66.5	19.4	100.0	20409

The big question is, of course, what implications, if any, should these findings have for the interpretation of the data on child labour presented in this report? Since we have information for three out of 12 months only, there is no way to calculate (average) annual rates, nor can we, therefore, say anything about how our findings relate to such annual rates. Yet, it is likely that since one in five interviews was conducted in June, the child employment rates presented here are somewhat higher than they would have been had the entire fieldwork taken place early in the year, or in the autumn. It is also unfortunate that the CBS does not have data showing the fluctuations in labour force participation in agriculture over the year, as such knowledge would have helped us in interpreting the seasonal variation found in the SIMS data.

To conclude, the employment rates for girls and rural areas, and less so for the enrolled, might be slightly exaggerated (as compared to a “real” annual rate) due to fieldwork partly taking place in June. Yet, the lion’s share of this added manpower consists of non-enrolled girls in the countryside whose main activity is classified as housekeeping/care taking. As argued earlier in this report, many of these girls almost certainly perform tasks in the house or its vicinity, which under different circumstances, e.g. with a specialized child labour survey, would have been classified as (ILO) “work” and hence they would have been counted in as part of the labour force. Therefore, despite the fact that one in five interviews were carried out during school recess in the summer, we believe the estimates of the study to be fair and reasonable.

3. Job characteristics

This section gives some additional information about economically active children and the jobs they hold. It presents data on the economic sectors in which they are employed, and the type of work they perform. We also document children's working hours and earnings.

Few children hold more than one job

To begin with we describe the sectors in which children are employed. For children who hold more than one job, we concentrate on their main job, defined as the job where the person worked the most hours during the week preceding the interview. Indeed, the vast majority of working children have only one job. In fact only one percent are employed in multiple jobs. This is different from adult workers where for instance among the middle-aged as many as nine percent have two or more jobs (Table 3.1)

Table 3.1 Proportion of labour force participants aged 10 and above having multiple jobs, by age groups (n = 36,835)

10-17	18-19	20-24	25-39	40-49	50-59	60+	All
1.0	1.6	1.7	6.0	9.4	8.5	3.5	5.1

It is more common to hold multiple jobs in rural areas than in urban areas. Furthermore, the survey suggests that male workers are three times more likely to have two or more jobs than female workers (Table 3.2). As shown in the Table, among children aged 10-17 there is variation by urban rural status in compliance with the finding for all employed taken together, but there is no statistically significant gender difference among the youngest workforce participants.

Table 3.2 Proportion of all labour force participants 10+ (n = 36,835) and working children 10-17 having multiple jobs, by urban rural status and gender

	Urban	Rural	Male	Female
All employed 10+	3.1	6.9	5.9	1.8
Employed 10-17	0.4	1.3	1.0	1.2

Agriculture the dominant sector of employment

Almost two in three (65 percent) working children aged 10-14 are employed in agriculture (or forestry, fishing), whereas 15 percent work in the manufacturing industry and 11.5 percent are employed in the service sector (trade/hotels/restaurants). Some children (four percent) are earning money in the construction sector. Relatively fewer of the older children (aged 15-17) work in agriculture, while more of them are employed in construction, manufacturing and trade. Thus employed children are concentrated in a few economic sectors (Table 3.3). Adult labour force participants, on the other hand, are employed in a higher number of sectors than the children. While the agriculture, manufacturing and trade/hotel/restaurant sectors also play a crucial role for working adults, they absorb no more than half of them. Other

prominent economic sectors for adults are building and construction, public administration (including the police and the armed forces), and health and educational services.

Table 3.3 Sector of employment (industry) for working children aged 10-14 (n = 1,402), 15-17 (n = 3,028), 10-17 (n = 4,430) and working adults 18+ (n = 32,491)

	10-14 years	15-17 years	10-17 years	18+ years
Agriculture/forestry/fishing	65.5	51.0	55.6	30.2
Manufacturing	15.4	18.9	17.8	12.1
Trade/hotel/restaurants	11.6	14.9	13.9	14.4
Construction/infrastructure	4.4	10.3	8.4	12.5
Other service activities	1.5	2.1	1.9	2.0
Transport/communications	1.0	1.4	1.3	5.6
Public administration and police	0.2	1.1	0.7	13.2
Health and education services	0.3	0.2	0.2	8.2
Finance/insurance/realestate/development/export/import	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.0
Mining	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.4
Domestic/household work	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Industry missing	-	-	-	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

A look at some of the details behind the crude categories applied in Table 3.3, tells us, first, that children’s employment in the primary sector almost entirely is confined to farming. Second, for those in the manufacturing sector, the following areas of production are the most important: clothes (five percent of employed children), minerals (three percent), furniture (three percent), leather (two percent), food and beverages (two percent) and clothes (one percent). The vast majority of children employed here reside in urban areas. Third, eight percent of the children are employed in construction, but there are differences between urban and rural living areas: 12 percent in urban districts compared to six percent in rural districts work in the building business (Table 3.4). Fourth, most children employed under the heading “trade/hotels/restaurants” are found in trade: seven percent of working children are employed in some retail trade, while six percent work with vehicle maintenance (and sales). For both of these sectors the figures are high for urban participation at 15 and 14 percent, respectively, compared to rural at three and two percent.

Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 display the breakdown on industry by place of residence and gender. They show that young girls almost exclusively are employed in farming. In fact, 98 percent of working girls in rural districts are employed in agriculture. Moreover, agriculture noticeably dominates rural boys’ employment also. In urban settings, boys’ employment is primarily confined to the manufacturing and trade sectors. There are too few working girls aged 10-14 in urban areas to conclude about their distribution on economic sector or industry, but if we include the older children, we see from Table 3.4 that agriculture and manufacturing dominates the picture for girls aged 10-17.

Table 3.4 Sector of employment (industry) for working children aged 10-17 by urban rural status and gender (n = 4,430)

Economic sector	Urban			Rural			All
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Agriculture/forestry/fishing	6.8	43.6	8.8	70.3	97.6	81.1	55.6
Manufacturing	39.6	36.4	39.5	9.0	1.2	6.0	17.8
Trade/hotel/restaurants	32.1	3.8	30.6	7.9	0.1	4.8	13.9
Construction and infrastructure	13.1	3.2	12.6	10.0	0.4	6.2	8.4
Other service activities	4.5	9.1	4.7	0.6	0.1	0.4	1.9
Transport and communications	2.5	0.0	2.4	1.1	0.1	0.7	1.3
Public administration and police	0.8	2.7	0.9	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.7
Health and education services	0.3	1.2	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
Finance/insurance/realestate/devel/exp/imp	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1
Mining	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Domestic/household work	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3.5 Sector of employment (industry) for working children aged 10-14 by urban rural status and gender (n = 4,430)

Economic sector	Urban			Rural			All
	Boys	Girls *	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Agriculture/forestry/fishing	7.6	56.0	10.6	79.0	98.5	88.0	65.5
Manufacturing	42.8	29.9	41.9	7.8	0.6	4.4	15.4
Trade/hotel/restaurants	34.4	3.1	32.4	5.7	0.0	3.0	11.6
Construction and infrastructure	7.5	0.0	7.0	5.7	0.5	3.3	4.4
Other service activities	4.0	7.4	4.2	0.6	0.2	0.4	1.5
Transport and communications	2.1	0.0	2.0	1.1	0.1	0.6	1.0
Health and education services	0.9	3.7	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
Public administration and police	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.2
Finance/insurance/realestate/devel/exp/imp	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Only 26 observations

Table 3.6 shows the proportion of employed children working in agriculture (with urban and rural areas collapsed), and presents the information broken down by gender and age groups. Evidently, agriculture dominates the employment of girls and stays a key sector for them even in their early twenties, while boys obtain work in other parts of the labour market. As can be seen in the Table, whereas two thirds of young women are still employed in farming, only one fourth of young men are. Figure 3.1 and Table 3.7 provide essentially the same information, albeit in some more detail since employment in agriculture is shown for each age.

Table 3.6 Proportion of employed persons aged 10-24 employed in agriculture by gender and age groups (n = 12,126)

	10-11 years	12-14 years	15-17 years	18-19 years	20-24 years
Male	82.9	45.1	37.9	32.6	26.6
Female	93.6	96.0	92.1	83.1	66.5
Total	88.6	61.4	50.9	42.6	35.2

Figure 3.1 Proportion of persons aged 10-24 employed in agriculture by gender and age (n = 12,126)

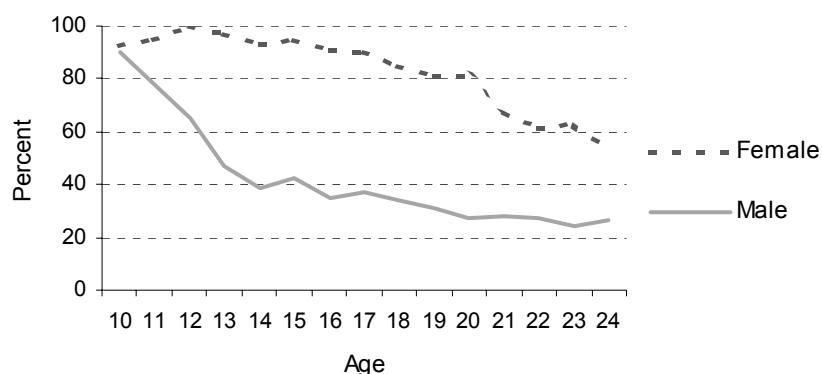


Table 3.7 Proportion of persons aged 10-24 employed in agriculture by gender and age (n = 12,126)

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Male	89.8	78.0	65.4	47.2	38.6	42.6	34.9	36.9
Female	92.3	95.0	100.0	96.9	93.3	94.8	91.0	90.5
Total	91.3	86.3	79.0	65.0	53.5	57.1	47.8	48.7
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Male	33.8	31.2	27.1	28.3	27.1	24.4	26.7	
Female	84.9	81.1	81.2	67.5	61.3	63.1	53.5	
Total	43.8	41.2	41.0	36.2	34.1	32.4	32.1	

Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3 add to our insight about where boys and girls are employed. The latter graph confirms the information given above that agriculture is the predominant economic sector for girls. Yet at least some older girls obtain work in the manufacturing industry. Among boys too, agriculture is the biggest sector, but it is supplemented with other sectors, especially from the age of 12 (Figure 3.2). Thus approximately one in five boys works in either manufacturing or the trade and hotel/restaurant business. The relative importance of the building sector gradually increases, and at the age of 17 close to one out of five employed boys is working here.

Figure 3.2 Most important industries (of main job) for males aged 10-24 (n = 9,296)

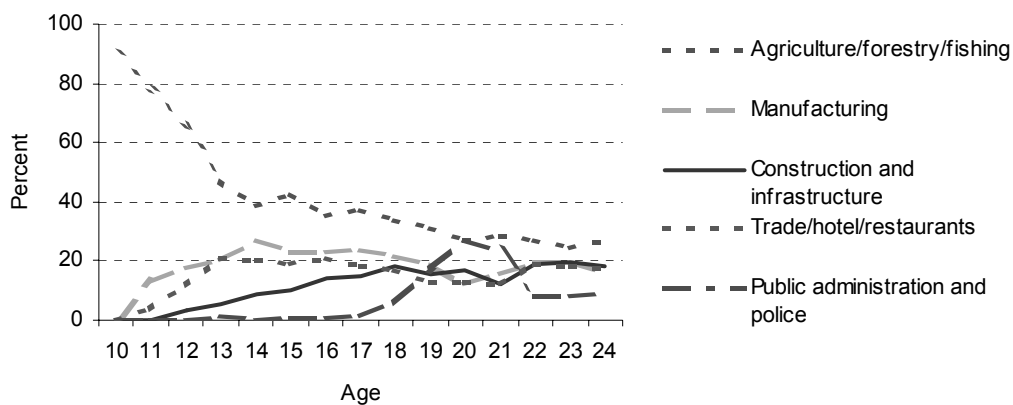
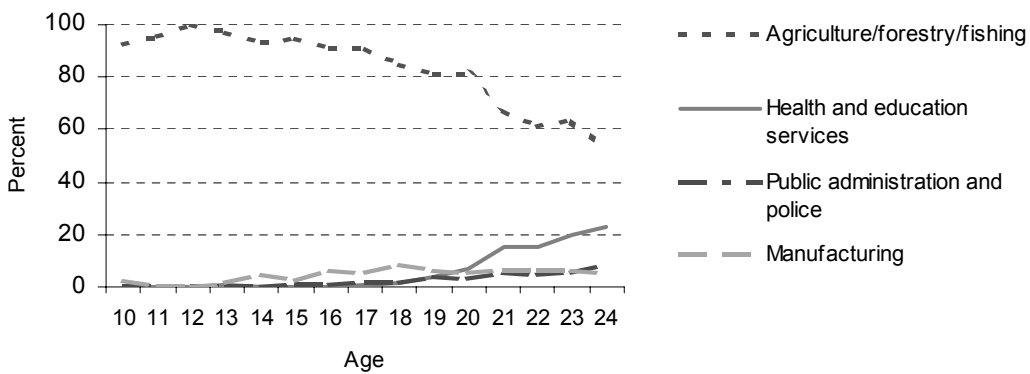


Figure 3.3 Most important industries (of main job) for females aged 10-24 (n = 2,830)



Majority of children in low-skilled occupations

The jobs or occupations children have typically reflect the economic sectors (industries) in which they work and the fact that the bulk of them have attained little or no (formal) training in their work careers. Consequently, children tend to perform menial and unskilled labour where limited training is needed. Simple, repetitive tasks carried out in manufacturing businesses would be one example. Easy sales jobs and helping out in coffee shops and restaurants are other positions filled by children. Uncomplicated duties in farming, but which most certainly are heavy and may imply physical exhaustion, constitute a fourth set of jobs that many children occupy. Table 3.8 displays the distribution of children aged 10-14 and 15-17 on broad groups of occupations, and compare this distribution with the jobs that adult workers hold. We notice that in contrast to adults, and quite naturally, few children are employed in highly skilled jobs as professionals, clerks and managers.

Table 3.8 Occupation (main job) of working children 10-14 (n = 1,402), 15-17 (3,028), 10-17 (4,430) and working adults 18+ (n = 32,490)

	10-14 years	15-17 years	10-17 years	18+ years
Agricultural workers	65.0	51.0	55.6	30.0
Manufacturing/technical workers	19.1	24.8	23.0	20.9
Sales and service personnel	10.4	13.3	12.4	16.1
Construction workers	3.9	9.6	7.8	10.1
Professionals	0.5	0.3	0.4	10.9
Clerks	0.1	0.2	0.2	7.8
Managers	0.0	0.1	0.1	1.3
Other, not classified	1.0	0.7	0.6	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

As with industry, there is differentiation between the jobs children do in rural and urban areas, and between the occupations filled by boys and girls. As shown in Table 3.9, almost nine in ten 10-14-year-olds in rural districts are employed as agricultural workers, while only one in ten in urban districts is the same. Instead one-half of all employed city and town children are working as industry workers and one-fourth are holding jobs as sales and service personnel. The Table furthermore shows that a higher proportion of girls than boys are employed as farm workers, while sales and service jobs and work in manufacturing industries are comparatively more important for boys.

Table 3.9 Occupation of working children 10-14 by urban-rural status and by gender (n = 1,402)

	Urban	Rural	Boys	Girls	All
Agricultural workers	10.4	87.6	48.7	68.7	65.0
Manufacturing/technical workers	52.9	5.2	27.9	16.3	19.1
Sales and service personnel	27.3	3.4	15.8	9.2	10.4
Construction workers	5.5	3.2	5.8	4.4	3.9
Professionals	1.7	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.5
Clerks	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1
Other, not classified	2.0	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3.10 Occupation of working children 10-17 by urban-rural status and by gender (n = 4,430)

	Urban	Rural	Boys	Girls	All
Agricultural workers	25.9	83.9	38.6	71.2	55.6
Manufacturing/technical workers	44.5	6.7	31.8	19.4	23.0
Sales and service personnel	16.8	3.8	17.7	2.9	12.4
Construction workers	7.9	5.0	10.5	2.4	7.8
Professionals	2.1	0.2	0.4	1.8	0.4
Clerks	1.0	0.1	0.2	0.9	0.2
Other, not classified	1.8	0.3	0.8	1.4	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3.10 is identical to Table 3.9 except that it covers children 15-17 in addition to children 10-14. Overall, the points made in the previous paragraph concerning variation by gender and place of residence for children aged 10-14 is equally valid for the age group 10-17, although the figures are altered.

The youngest are largely found in unpaid family businesses

More than half the employed children aged 10-14 work in some sort of family business, which could be both agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises. The great majority of them – over 100,000 individuals - work without pay while a few are paid for the work they carry out. Most other children are paid employees elsewhere, whereas some are self-employed and a few hold positions as unpaid trainees. For the age group 10-17 as a whole, there are approximately the same proportion of children reporting unpaid work in family business as there are paid employees. (Table 3.11). The proportion of employers is negligible. It is hard to imagine any child actually employing other persons, but some of the children may look after or supervise younger siblings. We cannot rule out the possibility of fieldwork or data entry errors here, which due to the limited number of observations for the youngest may cause considerable distortions of the results. Instead, we think that the figures for paid employees and especially, perhaps, self-employed should be slightly higher.

Table 3.11 Employment status of workers aged 10-17 by age groups (n = 4,430)⁸

	10-11		12-14		15-17	
	Percent	Persons	Percent	Persons	Percent	Persons
Employee: paid worker	17.6	4 640	40.2	68 999	51.3	216 868
Unpaid family business worker	76.0	20 098	51.3	88 091	39.3	165 993
Own account worker/self-employed	2.0	526	4.0	6 843	6.0	25 500
Paid family business worker	0.5	142	1.5	2 617	2.2	9 203
Employer	3.9	1 032	1.5	2 657	0.8	3 302
Unpaid trainee	0.0	0	1.4	2 452	0.5	1 990
Total	100.0	26 439	100.0	171 659	100.0	422 856
	10-14		10-17			
	Percent	Persons	Percent	Persons		
Employee: paid worker	37.2	73 639	46.8	290 840		
Unpaid family business worker	54.6	108 189	44.1	273 818		
Own account worker/self-employed	3.7	7 369	5.3	32 912		
Paid family business worker	1.4	2 759	1.9	11 979		
Employer	1.9	3 690	1.1	6 961		
Unpaid trainee	1.2	2 452	0.7	4 443		
Total	100.0	198 098	100.0	620 954		

The general trend is that with age, children move from unpaid employment in family enterprises to paid work for non-family employers, and new entrants obtain work outside of the family-run enterprises. Consequently, the relative importance of family business decreases. What is more, as they grow older children tend to become self-employed. This development is shown in Table 3.12 and Figure 3.4, which include employed individuals up to the age of 24.

⁸ There is reason to believe that the proportion of employers reported is unrealistic.

Table 3.12 Employment status of workers aged 10-24 by age (n = 12,104)

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Employee: paid worker	12.1	22.2	28.3	38.5	45.1	47.1	52.6	53.6
Unpaid family business worker	79.7	72.9	64.3	52.7	46.3	43.1	38.0	37.2
Own account worker/self-employed	3.0	1.2	3.1	4.8	3.8	6.6	5.6	5.9
Paid family business worker	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.2
Employer	5.3	2.7	2.3	1.1	1.6	0.7	1.0	0.7
Unpaid trainee	0.0	0.0	0.9	1.7	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	All
Employee: paid worker	54.0	57.7	57.0	60.7	61.7	60.2	59.4	54.3
Unpaid family business worker	35.4	31.9	32.7	27.6	24.1	21.3	20.3	33.7
Own account worker/self-employed	6.9	7.4	6.4	8.4	10.7	14.0	16.2	8.2
Paid family business worker	1.9	1.8	2.2	1.7	1.8	2.4	2.1	2.0
Employer	1.5	0.9	1.7	1.3	1.6	2.1	2.0	1.4
Unpaid trainee	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 3.4 Employment status of workers aged 10-24 by age (n = 12,104)



Nevertheless, the fact remains that the majority of the youngest working children are employed in family businesses, often unpaid. However, family businesses are more prevalent in some industries than others. Table 3.13 displays the employment status of working children in the three largest economic sectors for child labourers. As can be seen, while unpaid work in family enterprise predominates in agriculture, the situation is very different in the manufacturing and trade/hotel/restaurant industries. Here, paid work is most common and reported for 86 and 68 percent respectively.

Given that a big proportion of family-run businesses are farm enterprises it is not surprising to find variation in the employment status of child workers according to place of residence. In the age group 10-17, almost five times as many persons are unpaid workers in family enterprises in rural areas compared to urban areas, at 61 *versus* 13 percent. Conversely, more than two times as many persons in the same age group living in urban districts compared to persons residing in rural districts are paid employees, at 76 percent *versus* 31 percent (Table 3.14).

Table 3.13 Employment status of working children (aged 10-17) by three most important industries (for child labour): agriculture (n = 2,471), manufacturing (n = 774) and trade (n = 608)

	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Trade
Employee: paid worker	20.9	86.1	68.2
Unpaid family business worker	71.8	6.2	14.9
Own account worker/self-employed	3.9	4.0	11.4
Paid family business worker	1.8	1.1	3.5
Employer	1.5	1.0	0.2
Unpaid trainee	0.1	1.6	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3.14 Employment status of child workers (aged 10-17) by urban rural status and by gender (n = 4,430)

	Urban	Rural	Boys	Girls	Total
Employee: paid worker	75.8	31.1	56.2	22.0	46.8
Unpaid family business worker	12.9	61.1	33.7	71.6	44.1
Own account worker/self-employed	7.1	4.3	5.8	3.9	5.3
Paid family business worker	2.1	1.8	2.3	1.0	1.9
Employer	0.5	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.1
Unpaid trainee	1.6	0.3	0.9	0.2	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

We have previously concluded that girls are predominantly employed in agriculture, while boys work in a wider range of economic sectors. We should, therefore, expect to find girls as unpaid workers in family enterprises more often than boys. This is indeed the case (Table 3.14). More than seven in ten girls aged 10-17 work in unpaid family businesses, contrasted with one in three boys. In the same age group more than half the boys have paid employment outside the household compared to less than one quarter of the girls. Boys also more often are paid workers in family enterprises and obtain income from self-employment activities.

Figure 3.5 and Table 3.15 display the proportion of employed persons aged 10-24 engaged as paid employees and unpaid family business workers, by sex and age. The gender difference is blatant. While among boys there is a higher proportion being paid workers than unpaid family labourers from the age 13 on, unpaid work in family enterprises completely dominates girls' employment at all ages, and it is not until the age of 22 that we find a higher proportion of paid employees than unpaid family workers among the females.

Figure 3.5 Employment status of workers aged 10-24 by sex and age (n = 12,104)

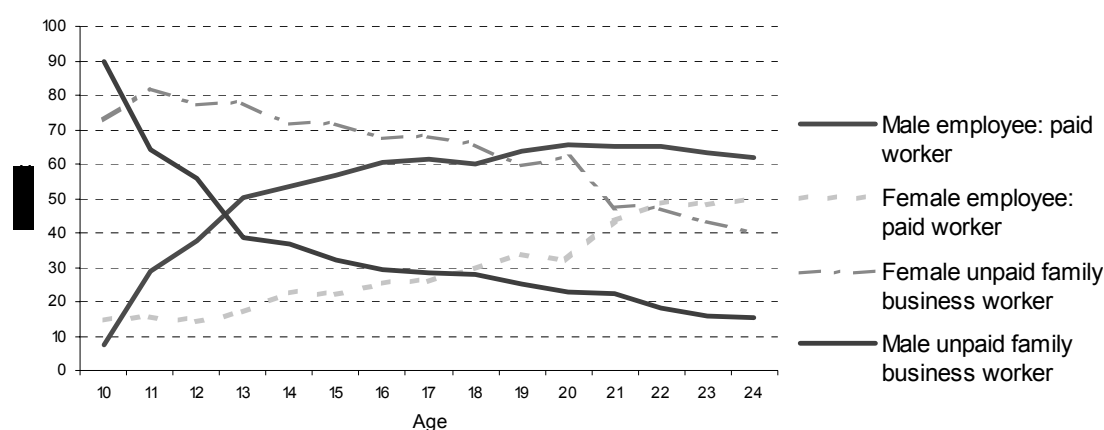


Table 3.15 Employment status of child workers (aged 10-24) by age and sex (n = 12,104)

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Male employee: paid worker	7.7	28.6	37.5	50.4	53.4	56.6	60.6	61.4
Female employee: paid worker	15.0	15.6	14.4	17.3	22.6	22.2	25.7	25.9
Male unpaid family business worker	89.7	64.4	56.0	38.7	36.8	32.2	29.3	28.5
Female unpaid family business worker	73.1	81.7	77.0	77.7	71.7	71.8	67.2	68.0
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Male employee: paid worker	59.8	63.6	65.6	65.0	64.9	63.2	61.8	
Female employee: paid worker	30.0	34.0	31.9	43.6	49.0	48.3	50.0	
Male unpaid family business worker	28.1	25.0	22.6	22.6	18.2	15.6	15.3	
Female unpaid family business worker	65.4	59.6	61.7	47.4	46.8	43.4	39.9	

Children work as long hours as adults

What constitutes a “normal” or “full” working day may be debated. In the subsequent analysis, we have taken as a point of departure that Syrian public employees usually work 6 hours 6 days a week. Hence, what could be considered a 100-percent or full working week is 36 hours of work. We further report on hours worked at *all* jobs, i.e. main job plus all additional jobs, regular hours *and* overtime.

However, a 36-hour working week is hardly the norm. As a matter of fact only 16 percent of all employed persons aged 18 and above work 36 hours or less per week, while 42 percent work 37-49 hours and the rest, also 42 percent, work 50 hours or more per week (Table 3.16). The mean⁹ and median¹⁰ hours of work for all economically active adults are 48.2 and 48 hours respectively. There is only moderate variation across the various age groups, while men systematically work longer hours than women. For instance, more than two times as many men as women work 50

⁹ The *mean*, what is often called the *average*, is calculated by adding the values of all observations together and dividing the sum by the number of observations.

¹⁰ The *median* is the outcome that divides a distribution of observations ordered from lowest value to highest value exactly into two halves.

hours or more weekly (Table 3.16). With this as a backdrop, do working children spend as many hours at their jobs as employed adults do?

Table 3.16 Weekly working hours at all jobs by age and sex and by urban rural status, all employed persons 18+ (n = 32,475)

Work hours	18-19		20-24		25-39		40-49	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1-19	2.8	6.4	2.1	6.7	2.0	4.3	1.2	6.5
20-36	12.0	31.3	11.2	28.4	7.5	25.8	7.5	28.2
37-49	37.0	38.0	41.3	43.9	41.1	52.9	41.4	48.7
50-69	32.5	19.3	31.4	15.9	33.3	13.8	32.5	13.8
70+	15.8	5.0	14.0	5.1	16.1	3.1	17.4	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Work hours	50-59		60+		Place of living		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Urban	Rural		
1-19	2.1	7.3	5.7	16.3	2.1	3.8	2.9	
20-36	10.5	36.1	22.1	41.5	6.9	20.0	13.4	
37-49	42.9	38.9	35.8	28.0	45.5	38.3	41.9	
50-69	29.9	13.2	25.8	10.8	31.3	25.8	28.5	
70+	14.6	4.5	10.5	3.5	14.2	12.1	13.2	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Indeed, employed children by and large spend many hours at their workplaces (Table 3.17). The mean and median hours are 46.4 and 48 hours respectively, just slightly lower than the figures for employed adults reported above. A higher proportion work 36 hours or less as compared to adult labour force participants and fewer work 36-49 hours, but as many economically active children (aged 10-17) as adults spend 50 hours or more at their jobs each week (Table 3.18). The fact that 30 percent of the children work 50-69 hours translates into some 190,000 children working that much every week; 12.5 percent staying more than 70 hours at their jobs renders 78,000 Syrian children working two times as much as we have considered a “normal” working week. Nearly 80,000 children aged 10-14 work as a minimum 50 hours per week.

Table 3.17 Weekly working hours at all jobs by age and sex, children 10-17 (n = 4,430)

	Age groups			
	10-11	12-14	15-17	All (10-17)
Mean	37.6	45.8	47.1	46.4
Median	36	48	48	48

Table 3.18 Weekly working hours at all jobs by age and sex, children 10-17 (n = 4,430)

Work hours	10-11			12-14			15-17			All
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
1-19	14.8	14.7	14.8	3.7	5.4	4.2	2.1	9.0	3.8	4.4
20-36	37.4	29.0	32.8	19.0	29.6	22.4	13.6	30.8	17.7	19.6
37-49	21.4	29.1	25.5	30.0	34.3	31.4	34.7	32.7	34.2	33.1
50-69	17.8	15.7	16.7	32.8	22.3	29.5	35.0	20.8	31.6	30.4
70+	8.6	11.5	10.2	14.4	8.4	12.5	14.6	6.7	12.7	12.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3.18 shows that the youngest children work somewhat less than the older ones, but a comparison of the 12-14 and 15-17 age groups reveals no significant difference in the number of hours worked. The Table further suggests that boys tend to work longer hours than girls. For example, while about one in two boys aged 15-17 work 50 hours or more, just above one in four girls do the same. Data analysis reveals other figures illustrating the same point: While for boys aged 10-17 the mean and median hours worked at all jobs are 48.7 and 48 hours respectively, they are 40.2 and 40 hours for girls in the same age band.¹¹

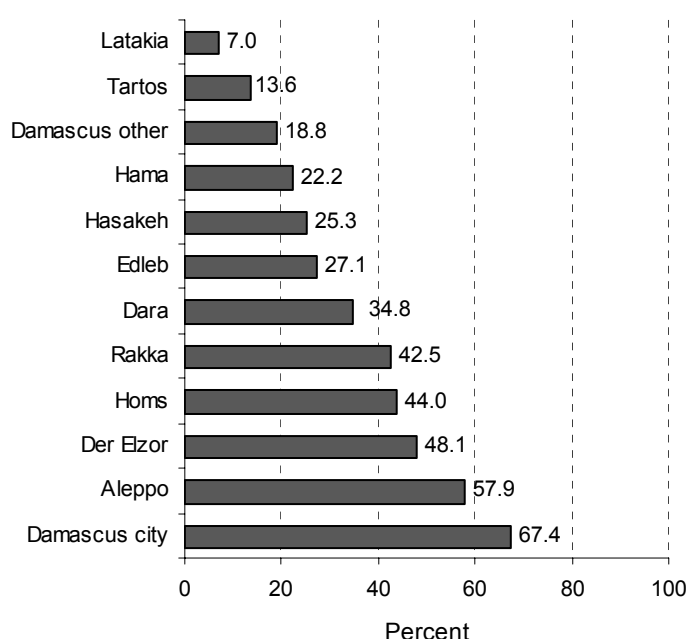
Place of living has an impact on the number of hours children work. Table 3.19 clearly shows that children residing in urban centres work longer hours than children living in rural surroundings. While 59 percent of employed children in cities and towns work 50 hours or more per week, “only” some 34 percent of children in the countryside work that much. In fact, it appears that girls in urban areas work almost as long hours as boys in rural settings (although we should be somewhat cautious here since the number of observations of working girls in urban areas are fairly low – 84). There is also variation across *mohafazats* (Figure 3.6). Note for example that two out of three working children in the Capital spend no less than 50 hours at their jobs every week.

Table 3.19 Weekly working hours at all jobs by urban rural status and gender, children 10-17 (n = 4,428)

Work hours	Urban			Rural			All
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
1-19	1.5	4.5	1.6	4.1	8.5	5.8	4.4
20-36	6.1	10.9	6.3	23.8	31.7	26.9	19.7
37-49	32.5	48.9	33.4	33.7	31.8	32.9	33.1
50-69	42.3	16.9	40.9	27.0	21.2	24.7	30.4
70+	17.7	18.7	17.7	11.5	6.9	9.6	12.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

¹¹ However, given the division of work in the Middle Eastern context, it is likely that girls, including those engaged in ILO type of economic activities, “compensate” for a lower workload outside of the home with spending a higher number of hours on house chores, and hence do not work less than boys in this broader sense of the term.

Figure 3.6 Children (10-17) working minimum 50 hours per week, by governorate (Sweda and Qunitra are not included due to low number of observations)



The observed differentiation in children’s working hours between urban and rural areas is a reflection of the economic sectors where they hold jobs (Table 3.20) and the occupations they have (Table 3.21). Whereas 37.5 percent of child workers in farming spend less than 37 hours a week at work, the percentage of children working so few hours range from five to 12 percent for other industries and occupations. The relative number of children working a minimum of 50 hours weekly is two times higher among children working in sales and service, and in manufacturing, as compared to children employed as agricultural workers.

Table 3.20 Weekly working hours (+ mean and median) at all jobs by main sectors of employment, children 10-17

Work hrs	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Construction	Trade/restaurants
1-19	6.7	1.4	0.7	0.9
20-36	30.8	3.9	10.8	4.7
37-49	32.0	33.7	38.4	32.2
50-69	21.4	42.3	40.8	42.5
70+	9.0	18.7	9.3	19.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	41.0	53.9	50.3	54.1
Median	40.0	56.0	50.0	55.0

Table 3.21 Weekly working hours at all jobs by main occupations, children 10-17

Work hours	Agricultural workers	Manufacturing/ technical workers	Construction workers	Sales and service personnel
1-19	6.8	1.6	0.7	1.0
20-36	30.7	3.3	12.0	6.5
37-49	32.1	33.3	38.1	31.9
50-69	21.4	42.5	41.0	41.7
70+	9.0	19.3	8.1	18.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Unpaid work widespread

We have already presented data demonstrating that very many children work in family enterprises without pay. Unpaid labour in family business is more often found in rural than urban areas (because to a large extent this type of work is found in farming) and is more common among girls than boys (because girls often are employed in agriculture) (Table 3.14). Below we take a closer look at the income situation of child workers.

The first observation is that almost one in two children work without receiving any pay. Although the majority of these children are employed in family enterprises, there are children working for nothing in other sectors also, for instance as unpaid trainees. About one in five get paid, but less than 3,000 Syrian pounds (SP) a month; nearly one in four receive 3,000-4,990 SP; while one in ten employed children are paid 5,000 SP or more for their work (Table 3.22).¹²

Table 3.22 Monthly income (in 1,000 SP) from all jobs by age and gender, children aged 10-17 (n = 4,399)

Monthly income	10-11			12-14			15-17			All
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
0	79.9	85.7	83.1	46.2	79.8	56.9	33.8	73.5	43.4	48.7
1-2	12.3	7.1	9.4	24.4	12.5	20.6	18.8	13.5	17.5	18.0
3-4	6.5	5.4	5.9	23.0	5.6	17.5	32.6	10.5	27.3	23.7
5+	1.3	1.9	1.7	6.4	2.1	5.0	14.8	2.5	11.8	9.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

As could be expected, when they get older children tend to earn more money (Figure 3.7, Table 3.23). Nevertheless, the income situation of children is obviously quite different from that of adults (Table 3.24). If we compare the age group 10-17 with the age group 25-39, for example, the percentage of individuals not getting paid at all is 49 *versus* 11 percent, and 10 *versus* 57 percent gain no less than 5,000 SP. While the mean and median income (from all jobs) for children aged 10-17 stands at 1,900 and 1,000 SP respectively, it is 5,800 and 5,000 SP for adults (aged 18 and above). If we exclude those economically active individuals who do not get paid (e.g. because they work in a family enterprise or are apprentices), the situation is such: The mean and

¹² 50 Syrian Pounds (SP) = 1 USD. It follows that 1,000 SP = 20 USD.

median incomes for adults are 6,800 and 6,000 SP as compared with 3,700 and 3,000 SP for children. As is apparent, the income gap has been reduced, reflecting the relatively higher number of individuals working without any pay among children than among adults.

Figure 3.7 Monthly income from all jobs by age, children 10-17 (n = 4,399)

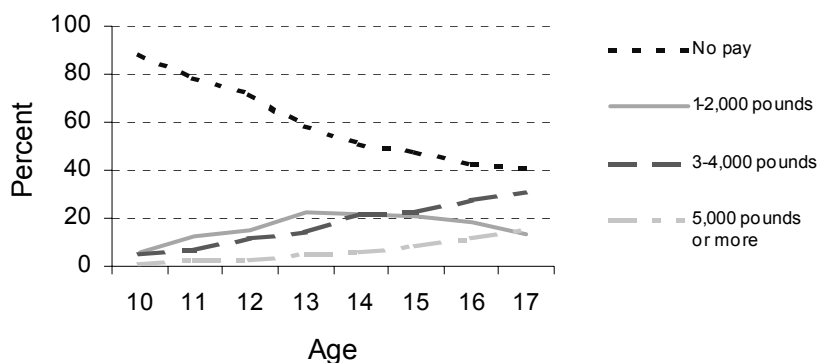


Table 3.23 Monthly income (in 1,000 SP) from all jobs by age, children 10-17 (n = 4,399)

Income	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	All
0	88.3	78.6	71.4	58.5	51.2	47.4	42.3	41.0	48.7
1-2	5.5	12.8	14.6	22.6	21.4	21.2	18.5	13.5	18.0
3-4	5.0	6.6	11.3	13.9	21.6	22.9	27.8	30.5	23.7
5+	1.1	2.1	2.7	5.0	5.8	8.5	11.4	15.1	9.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3.24 Monthly income (in 1,000 SP) from all jobs by age groups, all employed 10+ (n = 36,542)

Income	10-17	18-19	20-24	25-39	40-49	50-59	60+	All
0	48.7	37.9	28.6	11.2	8.3	9.2	9.0	19.1
1-2	18.0	17.8	14.2	3.7	2.4	2.9	7.1	7.8
3-4	23.7	28.6	30.3	28.7	17.8	17.9	21.1	25.2
5+	9.5	15.7	26.9	56.5	71.5	70.0	62.8	47.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In line with expectations boys have higher incomes than girls. And, whereas boys move from unpaid to paid employment when they grow older, the majority of girls remain in unpaid employment (Figure 3.8, see also Figure 3.5). While 80 percent of the employed boys aged 10-11 earn nothing and one percent receive 5,000 SP or more a month, only 34 percent of the older boys (aged 15-17) are without income, and the percentage making 5,000 SP and above has risen to 15. As a contrast, 74 percent of the oldest girls work without payment and just above two percent earn as a minimum 5,000 SP monthly (Table 3.22).

Figure 3.8 Proportion of children 10 to 17 earning nothing or less than 1,000 SP a month (n = 4,399)

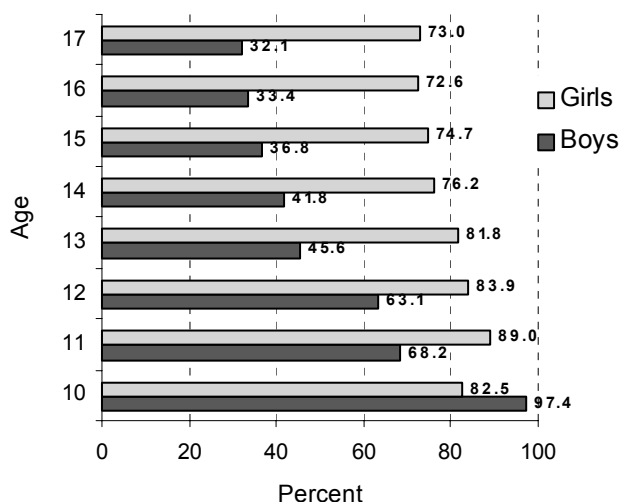


Table 3.25 displays children’s income according to the major economic sectors in which they work. Clearly, individual income from agriculture is the lowest, while children fare better in manufacturing, construction and trade. The construction sector yields the highest returns, whereas children employed in the manufacturing industries tend to be paid more than children working in trades. Since girls fill few jobs in the three latter sectors, we cannot compare by gender here. However, we are able to contrast the situation of boys and girls in farming. Apparently, the income conditions of girls and boys are not very different, but the disparity is to the advantage of the boys: 81 percent of the girls and 75 percent of the boys earn nothing, while 8 and 16 percent of the girls and boys make a profit of at least 3,000 pounds every month.

Table 3.25 Monthly income (in 1,000 SP) from all jobs by major industries and gender (for agriculture only), children 10-17 (n = 4,211)

Monthly income	Agriculture			Manufacturing	Construction	Trade/hotels
	Boys	Girls	All			
0	74.7	80.6	77.4	9.0	9.2	20.3
1-2	8.9	11.5	10.1	28.8	18.0	32.9
3-4	11.6	6.6	9.3	46.8	45.8	31.7
5+	4.7	1.3	3.1	15.4	27.1	15.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Working children do not report more acute illness

One might hypothesize that economically active children are exposed to various factors that increase their risk of obtaining various illnesses and the chances that their health is negatively affected by accidents and injuries. Pesticides in agriculture, heat and dangerous machinery in car repair shops and the industry are examples that spring to mind. Although the SIMS did not dig deep into this issue, it asked if people had been acutely ill (including caused by accidents and injuries) during the month (30 days) preceding the interview. Evidence does not support the assumption that

employed children are more likely than other children to fall ill. In fact, they report less acute illness than other children (Table 3.26). However, the reported difference in prevalence between the economically active, the housekeepers and the students is low and not statistically significant. The higher prevalence of acute illness in the fourth group of the Table (“Outside the labour force for other reasons”) is in line with expectations, since many of these children suffer from chronic health failure that may predispose them for acute illness.

Table 3.26 Incidence of acute illness among children 10-17 the month before the interview by employment status (n = 25,735)

In labour force	Housekeeper	Student	Other, outside labour force	Total
0.5	0.9	0.6	1.9	0.7

4. Education and children's work

The relationship between education and work is important for most investigations of child labour. It is useful to see the relationship between schooling and children's work in the context of the general educational level in the country. To begin with, therefore, this section presents some basic data on schooling, such as highest level of education completed in the adult population and children's school attendance. It then moves on to investigate the relationship between children's education and their labour force participation.

However, before we commence our reporting, a methodological note is required. Contrary to what is the case with our labour force classification, here the interviewee(s) assigned a category for each household member as a response to a question about "highest level of education completed". Therefore, persons who have completed mandatory elementary school but still have difficulties reading and writing, or are otherwise what is often called "functionally illiterate", may have been coded in accordance with the stage of schooling they have completed. As a consequence, the literacy rates reported here are most likely too high (and, conversely, the illiteracy rates too low).

Considerable illiteracy in the adult population

According to the SIMS, almost 30 percent of adults 25+, and who have left the educational system, cannot read and write; about one third never completed elementary school; seven in ten did not finish preparatory; and only 11 percent have taken a degree at the tertiary (post-secondary) level (Table 4.1). The gender difference is significant. For example, 42 percent of adult women are illiterate compared to 15 percent of men; and while 14 percent of the women have completed no less than academic secondary, 20 percent of the men have reached the same level of education.

Table 4.1 Educational attainment among persons 25+ and not enrolled in school, by gender (n = 43,993)

	Male	Female	All
Illiterate	15.1	42.0	28.3
Read and write	16.5	12.1	14.3
Elementary	32.3	22.6	27.6
Preparatory	12.3	8.4	10.4
Vocational	1.5	0.7	1.1
Academic secondary	8.3	5.5	6.9
Intermediate	5.8	5.1	5.5
University	8.2	3.6	5.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

If we include individuals aged 15-24 (of which many are still enrolled) the figures change somewhat, in that the percentage of illiterate persons and those who know how to read and write without having completed any level of formal schooling decreases. Nonetheless, the gender disparity remains distinct (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Educational attainment of persons 15+ by gender (n = 70,698)

	Male	Female	All
Illiterate	10.8	29.6	20.0
Read and write	13.4	11.0	12.3
Elementary	41.3	32.7	37.1
Preparatory	15.3	12.7	14.0
Vocational	1.6	1.1	1.3
Academic secondary	8.1	6.3	7.2
Intermediate	4.2	4.1	4.2
University	5.2	2.4	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The educational attainment of Syria's population has improved considerably over time. Take for instance the illiteracy level, which has dropped from over 60 percent for persons older than 70 to less than 10 percent for those under the age of 30 (Figure 4.1, Table 4.3).

Figure 4.1 Proportion of illiterate persons aged 15+ by age groups (n = 70,698)

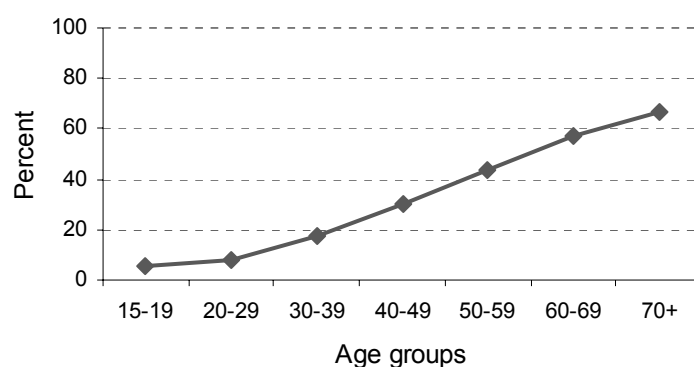


Table 4.3 Proportion of illiterate persons aged 15+ by gender and age groups (n = 70,698)

	Age groups							Total
	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	
Male	4.1	3.9	7.1	10.8	22.3	37.8	54.1	10.8
Female	7.9	12.5	27.6	49.8	66.5	78.7	84.7	29.6
All	5.9	8.1	17.3	29.9	43.8	57.2	66.9	20.0

The development has been equally impressive for women and men, but illiteracy among women aged 25-39 is still as widespread as among men aged 50-59 (Table 4.4). Furthermore, in the youngest age cohort shown in Table 4.4, a significantly higher proportion of men have secondary and tertiary education compared to women, at 26 *versus* 20 percent.

Table 4.4 Educational attainment among persons 25+ and not enrolled in school, by age groups and sex (n = 43,993)

	25-39			40-49			All persons
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	
Illiterate	6.1	22.8	14.5	10.8	49.8	29.9	
Read and write	9.6	11.6	10.6	16.7	14.4	15.6	
Elementary	40.7	32.4	36.5	32.7	16.8	24.9	
Preparatory	15.9	12.4	14.2	12.0	6.1	9.1	
Vocational	1.9	0.9	1.4	1.8	0.6	1.2	
Academic secondary	10.1	7.8	8.9	9.3	4.5	7.0	
Intermediate	7.6	7.4	7.5	6.8	4.3	5.6	
University	8.3	4.6	6.4	10.0	3.5	6.8	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
	50-59			60+			All persons
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	
Illiterate	22.3	66.5	43.8	44.3	80.8	60.9	28.3
Read and write	26.0	13.0	19.6	30.8	9.4	21.1	14.3
Elementary	23.2	10.0	16.8	12.1	5.9	9.3	27.6
Preparatory	8.1	3.4	5.8	4.5	1.4	3.1	10.4
Vocational	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.2	1.1
Academic secondary	6.7	2.7	4.8	2.6	1.0	1.9	6.9
Intermediate	3.3	1.8	2.5	1.0	0.8	0.9	5.5
University	9.6	2.3	6.0	4.5	0.8	2.8	5.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Illiteracy (amongst persons aged 15 and above) is two times more prevalent in Syria's rural districts than in its cities and towns, at 27 *versus* 14 percent (Table 4.5). Similarly, two times as many women aged 25 and above in the same age band in rural compared to urban areas are prevented from reading and writing (40 *versus* 20 percent). The situation is no different for men, since 14 percent in rural districts contrasted with 7.5 percent in urban districts cannot read and write. The other side of the coin is that 20 percent of adults aged 15 and above residing in urban centres have completed at least secondary education, contrasted with 9.5 percent in the rural districts. Table 4.5 suggests that rural women are particularly poor off with regard to higher education as only three percent have a post-secondary degree.

Table 4.5 Educational attainment among persons 15+, by urban rural status and sex (n = 70,698)

	Urban			Rural			All persons
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	
Illiterate	7.5	20.4	13.8	14.7	40.1	27.2	20.0
Read and write	11.6	10.9	11.3	15.5	11.2	13.4	12.3
Elementary	40.6	33.2	37.0	42.1	32.1	37.2	37.1
Preparatory	16.8	15.5	16.2	13.6	9.4	11.6	14.0
Vocational	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	0.7	1.1	1.3
Academic secondary	9.7	8.9	9.3	6.2	3.4	4.8	7.2
Intermediate	4.7	5.7	5.2	3.7	2.3	3.0	4.2
University	7.5	3.9	5.7	2.6	0.7	1.7	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Educational levels have improved over time both in urban and rural living areas, but the gap between the rural and urban populations has not been closed (Table 4.6). In the age group 20-29, 12 percent of rural persons are illiterate whereas the figure is only 4.5 percent in urban areas. Furthermore, while 25 percent of urbanites in this age group have completed at least secondary education, only 14 percent of the adults in peasant communities have reached the same level.

Table 4.6 Educational attainment among persons 15+, by urban rural status and age groups (n = 43,993)

	Urban								All
	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	All	
Illiterate	3.3	4.5	10.0	20.1	30.8	45.9	56.9	13.8	
Read and write	7.4	6.8	10.7	14.8	19.5	20.6	25.8	11.3	
Elementary	54.7	43.7	34.2	27.7	20.6	15.3	9.5	37.0	
Preparatory	28.3	17.6	14.3	10.7	8.4	6.1	2.6	16.2	
Vocational	1.4	2.4	1.5	1.3	0.8	0.3	0.2	1.5	
Academic secondary	4.6	14.3	10.7	9.2	6.8	3.4	2.7	9.3	
Intermediate	0.1	7.0	8.8	6.5	3.6	2.0	0.7	5.2	
University	0.1	3.8	9.9	9.7	9.5	6.4	1.7	5.7	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
	Rural								All persons
	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	All	
Illiterate	8.6	12.2	26.8	43.0	59.7	70.3	76.7	27.2	20.0
Read and write	10.5	10.6	13.3	16.6	19.8	20.1	18.7	13.4	12.3
Elementary	58.6	47.5	32.0	21.2	12.2	6.2	3.1	37.2	37.1
Preparatory	19.5	13.8	10.4	6.9	2.7	1.4	0.7	11.6	14.0
Vocational	1.0	1.9	1.0	1.0	0.4	0.1	0.0	1.1	1.3
Academic secondary	1.8	8.5	6.5	4.1	2.3	0.6	0.4	4.8	7.2
Intermediate	0.0	4.3	6.0	4.3	1.2	0.3	0.0	3.0	4.2
University	0.0	1.2	4.0	3.0	1.8	1.0	0.3	1.7	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

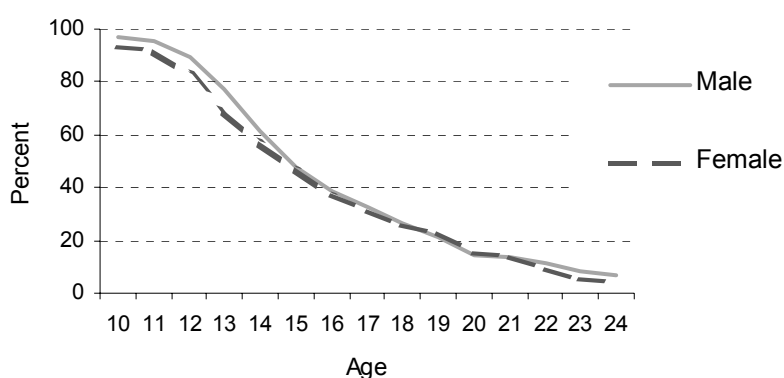
Lower female enrolment in basic cycle; higher in urban areas

The vast majority of children seem to complete compulsory, elementary education. Only 6.5 percent of children 11 years of age have left school (and some of them never started in the first place). Except for some repeaters attending lower classes, these children are enrolled in year six, the last mandatory school year. There are more boys than girls enrolled in the elementary and preparatory stages (from two to four percentage point difference for ages 10-14), but from age 15 the enrolment rate of girls and young women match that of boys and young men (Table 4.7, Figure 4.2).

Table 4.7 School enrolment rates for persons aged 10-24, by age (n = 42,792)

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Male	97.2	95.1	89.0	77.1	61.1	47.8	38.8	32.4
Female	92.9	91.9	82.5	69.2	56.6	47.2	37.0	31.2
All	95.1	93.5	85.8	73.1	59.0	47.5	37.9	31.8
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Male	26.6	20.8	14.7	13.5	11.0	8.1	6.9	
Female	26.1	22.6	14.9	13.3	9.0	5.4	4.6	
All	26.3	21.7	14.8	13.4	10.0	6.8	5.8	

Figure 4.2 School enrolment rates for persons aged 10-24, by age (n = 42,792)



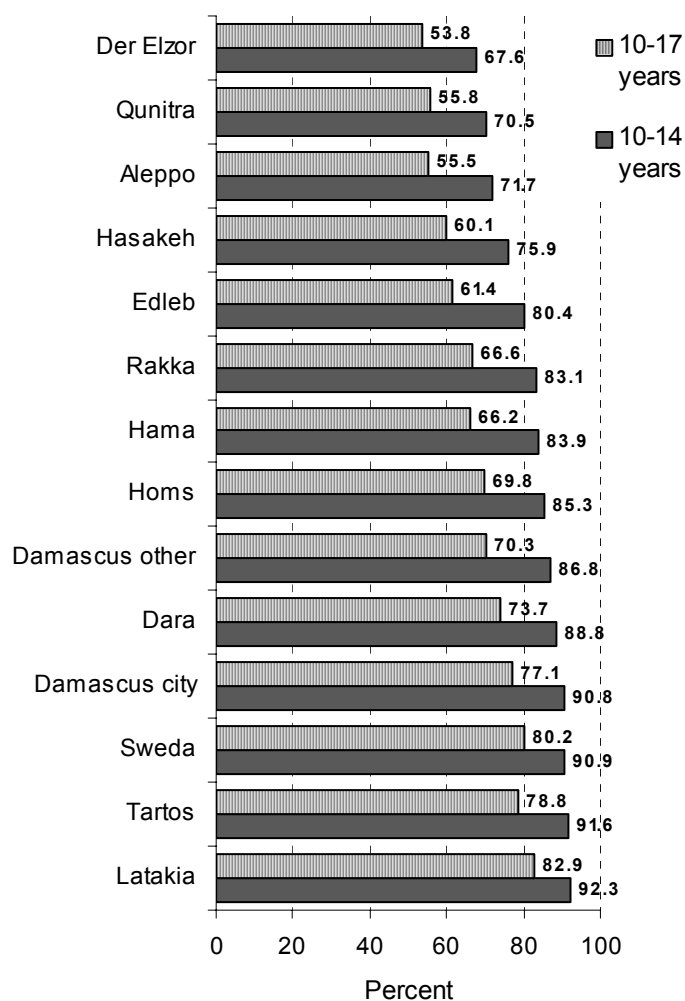
There is also considerable variation in school enrolment according to place of residence. First, among children aged 10-17 and residing in urban living areas the school enrolment rate is eight percentage points higher than among children residing in rural areas (Table 4.8). Second, the sex differential described above, whereby fewer girls attend elementary and preparatory schooling, seems to hold for rural areas only – but here the sex differential is substantial for all ages. The Table actually suggests that in Syrian cities and towns a higher proportion of girls than boys go to school.

Table 4.8 School enrolment rates among children 10-17 by age groups, urban rural status and gender (n = 25,796)

	Urban			Rural			All
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
10-11	97.5	95.7	96.6	95.0	89.2	92.2	94.3
12-14	75.5	78.5	77.0	75.9	61.4	68.8	72.8
15-17	41.8	48.6	45.1	38.0	29.6	33.9	39.4
10-14	84.0	85.4	84.7	83.4	72.3	78.0	81.3
10-17	68.4	71.9	70.1	66.9	56.6	61.9	65.9

Third, the enrolment rates in the age groups under scrutiny in this report vary a great deal across *mohafazats*: for the 10-14 year olds, four governorates have enrolment rates in the excess of 90 percent, while four governorates have rates below 80 percent (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 School enrolment rates for children 10-14 (n = 16,318) and 10-17 (n = 25,796) by governorate



School attendance vary with parents' educational level

As can be seen from Table 4.9, children's school enrolment varies considerably according to the educational achievement of their parents. In the age group 10-14 years there is a 25 percentage-points difference in attendance between children with parents not having completed any level and those with parents having a university degree, and in the age group 10-17 years there is a difference of about 40 percentage points.

Table 4.9 School enrolment rates of children 10-14 (n = 16,292) and 10-17 (n = 25,752) by educational attainment of parents

Age group	Parent	Less than elementary	Elementary	Preparatory	Secondary	Diploma	University
10-14	Father	72.6	82.7	90.4	93.9	92.0	97.4
	Mother	75.1	88.9	95.5	98.0	98.2	99.1
10-17	Father	54.2	65.7	78.6	85.9	85.8	93.9
	Mother	57.9	74.3	86.3	93.4	96.5	97.0

Table 4.10, displaying the enrolment rates by parents' education for three different age groups of children, confirms this. For each age group the enrolment rate increases with the educational achievement of the child's father and mother. But, the increase is largest for the oldest children. Put another way: The difference in enrolment rates between low (not completed elementary schooling) and high (at least secondary schooling) parent education is lowest for the youngest age group, at approximately eight percentage points. The disparity is highest for the older children aged 15-17. Here, there is some 52 percentage-points difference in enrolment between lowest and highest value (at least secondary schooling) of father's education and 58 percentage-points difference between lowest and highest value of mother's education. These results suggest that parents' education is an important factor in determining children's enrolment. The higher the education of the parents the longer children stay in school.

Table 4.10 School enrolment rates of children 10-17 by age groups and educational attainment of parents (n = 25,752)

		Less than elementary	Elementary	Preparatory	Secondary and above
Father's education	10-11	89.7	96.9	98.5	98.1
	12-14	61.3	74.1	84.4	92.0
	15-17	23.7	36.2	60.2	76.3
Mother's education	10-11	91.6	98.1	98.2	99.6
	12-14	65.3	82.4	93.1	97.2
	15-17	30.2	46.4	69.0	88.5

However, the effect of parents' education on children's school enrolment is not the same for boys and girls, as the enrolment of girls having parents in the lowest education category is significantly lower than that of boys, while the enrolment of other boys and girls is more or less the same within each parent education-group (Table 4.11 and Table 4.12)

Table 4.11 School enrolment of children 10-14 by sex and parents' education (n = 16,292)

		Less than elementary	Elementary	Preparatory	Secondary and above
Father's education	Boys	77.3	84.0	91.2	94.2
	Girls	67.5	81.3	89.6	94.8
Mother's education	Boys	79.0	88.7	93.8	98.1
	Girls	71.0	89.1	97.4	98.4

Table 4.12 School enrolment of children 10-17 by sex and parents' education (n = 25,752)

		Less than elementary	Elementary	Preparatory	Secondary and above
Father's education	Boys	57.7	66.0	79.7	89.0
	Girls	50.5	65.4	77.6	87.8
Mother's education	Boys	60.8	74.4	85.4	93.9
	Girls	55.0	74.2	87.1	96.5

Over 400,000 children aged 10-14 out of school

For policy purposes, perhaps the most important figure is the number of children who are *not* enrolled. Among the 10-11 year-olds, the age group covering mandatory schooling according to the present educational law, the proportions presented earlier correspond to more than 49,000 children being outside of school in Syria as a whole. For the age group 12-14 the figure is almost 363,000. As a consequence, if dropout is not reduced and these figures not altered some 412,000 children in compulsory school age shall not receive basic education and training in the scholastic year 2002/2003. According to the SIMS, close to 1.2 million Syrian children aged 10-17 are not enrolled in school.

Lack of interest in school most common reason for leaving

Household surveys enquiring about reasons for non-enrolment and dropout often conclude that children's lack of interest in studies and, as a consequence thereof, repeated failure, top the list. This is also the case here. Nearly one half of children aged 10-17 have left school (or never enrolled) due to a lack of interest, while an additional eight percent quit because of "repeated failure", i.e. they could not proceed from one educational level or stage to the next (Table 4.13). Furthermore, more than 20 percent give lack of interest from the family, a category that also captures more general "social restrictions", as the main reason. Only 10 percent have left school for economic reasons. However, it is likely that the "lack of interest" answers to a certain extent conceal other reasons, such as to work in a family business or to do housework. To capture these more "true" causes of school non-enrolment would have required additional and carefully designed questions, which the SIMS questionnaire did not contain. Nevertheless, and despite the limitations to the data on this particular aspect, we will briefly comment on variation in answers according to the background variables included in Table 4.13.

First, the parents (or other household members) decided to end the schooling (or not to enrol them in the first place) of more than two times as many girls as boys "family not interested"). Moreover, three times as many boys as girls in the age group 10-17 are not attending school for the sake of working or helping their household in other ways (care taking freeing other household member for employment, housework – "to help family economically"). Second, as children grow older they tend to leave school because they so wish themselves ("not interested"), or due to "repeated failure", more often. In addition, compared to the younger children a higher proportion of the older children have left school for economic reasons. Third, non-availability of school is basically a determining factor of enrolment rates in the rural districts only.

Table 4.13 Non-enrolled children aged 10-17 by main reason for never enrolling or leaving school (n = 8,630)

	Sex		Age groups			Place of living		All
	Boys	Girls	10-11	12-14	15-17	Urban	Rural	
Not interested	53.5	44.3	30.2	46.7	50.9	50.4	47.6	48.8
Family not interested	13.8	30.8	43.1	25.6	19.8	22.2	22.8	22.5
To help family economically	15.8	5.3	5.6	9.7	11.1	11.1	9.9	10.4
Repeated failure	8.9	7.4	4.9	6.7	9.0	9.2	7.3	8.1
School not available nearby	3.6	5.2	6.7	5.3	3.9	0.5	7.5	4.5
Disability/health reason	2.2	1.4	6.5	2.5	1.1	2.0	1.6	1.8
Bad treatment at school	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2
Completed education	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.1
Other reason	1.7	5.4	2.9	3.1	3.8	4.2	3.1	3.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Enrolment somewhat lower in female headed households

Table 4.14, presenting enrolment rates by gender of household head, also indicates that at least some children leave school due to the family's need for income generating activities or helping in the house. We have two comments to the Table: The first is that the overall school enrolment rate in households with female heads is lower, although only slightly lower when the results are restricted to children aged 10-14. The second point is that female headship affects the enrolment rates of boys (with a six percentage-points difference in the age group 10-17, four percentage points in the age group 10-14), and not that of girls. This may suggest that women-headed households more often require the work input of their male children than households headed by men, and cannot afford the more long-term investment it is allowing them to go to school.

Table 4.14 School enrolment rates by age and sex of child and sex of household head (n = 25,796)

Age group	Male head			Female head		
	Boys	Girls	All children	Boys	Girls	All children
10-14	83.9	78.8	81.4	80.1	78.2	79.2
10-17	68.0	64.2	66.1	61.8	63.0	62.4

Variation in enrolment by industry and occupation of main provider

Further evidence of the connection between economic status and children's enrolment is found when looking at the work of the household's main provider (Table 4.15). Here, the main provider is defined as the household's main income earner, i.e. the person reporting the highest income. Clearly the lowest enrolment rate is found where the household's income stem from agriculture – often yielding low household income, varying across seasons and from one year to the next depending on the rainfall.¹³ In

¹³ Irrigated land account for only 26.6 percent of the cultivated area in Syria (CBS 2001: Table 6/4).

contrast the highest enrolment rates are found where the main provider is employed in the government and local bureaucracies as well as the health and education service sectors – where income is comparatively higher and steady. Above all it is the enrolment of girls that is adversely affected by relying heavily on income from farming.

Table 4.15 School enrolment rates of children aged 10-17 (n = 25,796) by sex of child and sector of employment (industry) of main provider

	Agri- culture	Manu- facturing	Con- struction	Other services	Trade/hotel/ restaurants	Transport/ comm.	Public admin.	Health/ education
Boys	60.9	62.0	63.5	72.0	66.7	67.1	78.5	87.1
Girls	46.8	64.5	63.4	66.0	71.1	71.1	74.9	83.1
All	54.1	63.2	63.5	69.0	68.9	69.1	76.8	85.1

Household wealth with bearing on enrolment

The relationship between economic standing and enrolment will finally be investigated through the use of an indicator of household wealth. The indicator is based on the households' access, i.e. ownership, to a list of 15 household durables or goods, such as telephone, TV, computer, car, and refrigerator. Our simple assumption is that the higher number of items the household possesses, the better off it is. For a closer description of this wealth index, see section 5.

As is evident from Table 4.16, the higher the number of durable goods the higher the enrolment rate. Comparison across age groups suggests that the older the children are, the stronger is the effect of wealth. Or, as children grow older, with increasing wealth (as a proxy for general economic standing or income) the likelihood of staying in school is enhanced. Conversely, the poorer the household the greater is the risk of dropping out of school, and engaging in employment (as defined by the ILO) or domestic work. Our interpretation is that shortage of economic resources compels parents to take children out of school, especially after mandatory school age, and drives them into work. However, the effect of parents' education remains substantial for households in similar economic circumstances (Table 4.17). But the Table can also be read differently, and we could conclude that wealth has an effect on children's enrolment within each parent (father) education group.

Table 4.16 School enrolment rates by age and household wealth, children aged 10-17 (n = 25,796)

Age	0-3 items	4-5 items	6-8 items	9-15 items
10-11	85.0	93.3	96.3	98.8
12-14	54.7	66.9	77.3	88.5
15-17	22.2	29.3	43.7	62.9
10-14	67.1	77.5	84.6	92.6
10-17	51.8	60.0	69.4	81.2

Table 4.17 School enrolment rates by wealth and education of father (n = 25,751)

	Not completed elementary	Elementary	Preparatory	Secondary and above
Low wealth (0-4 items)	47.2	61.1	73.6	81.0
Medium wealth (5-8 items)	57.0	66.0	78.4	86.8
High wealth (9-15 items)	67.2	73.4	83.9	93.5

Term-time work uncommon

In most Western European countries and the USA children for the most part hold jobs on top of their schoolwork. And it is indeed very common to have such term-time work. For instance have studies of children in Great Britain revealed that about one in five school children have part-time work, while roughly one in two are employed at least part of the school year (Leonard 1999: 180-182). Do we find many Syrian children in such out-of-school employment?

As shown by Figure 4.4 and Table 4.18 school children are generally not economically active. In the age group 10-17 only about two percent have term-time work. They make up 47,936 children. On the other hand, a considerable proportion of children who have dropped out of school, or who never enrolled in the first place, tend to be employed. About one-quarter of the non-enrolled 10-11 year-olds are employed (as defined by the ILO), as are half of the non-enrolled 15-17 year-olds (Table 4.19). The workforce participation rate of non-enrolled youth and young adults remains at this level. In addition to the economically active, some 20 percent of children aged 10-17 and not enrolled in school are “professional” housekeepers and caretakers.

Figure 4.4 Labour force participation rates of persons aged 10-24 by age and school enrolment (n = 42,671)

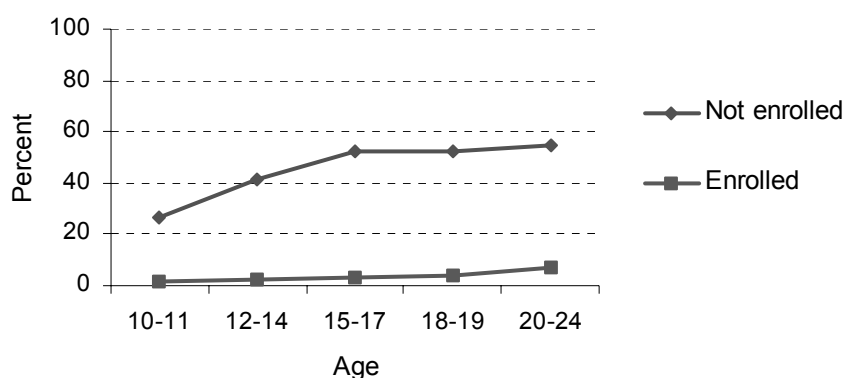


Table 4.18 Proportion and actual number of working children aged 10-17 by age groups and school enrolment (n = 25,723)

	10-11		12-14		15-17	
	Percent	# of persons	Percent	# of persons	Percent	# of persons
Enrolled	1.7	13 505	2.0	19 635	2.9	14 751
Not enrolled	26.3	12 934	41.7	152 024	52.4	408 105

	10-14		10-17	
	Percent	# of persons	Percent	# of persons
Enrolled	1.9	33 168	2.1	47 936
Not enrolled	40.0	164 930	48.2	573 018

Table 4.19 Proportion of persons aged 10-24 being economically active and housekeepers/-wives by age and school enrolment (n = 42,671)

	10-11 years		12-14 years		15-17 years	
	Enrol	Not enrol	Enrol	Not enrol	Enrol	Not enrol
In labour force	1.7	26.3	2.0	41.7	2.9	52.4
Housekeeper	3.9	18.4	3.5	21.9	2.9	24.2

	18-19 years		20-24 years	
	Enrol	Not enrol	Enrol	Not enrol
In labour force	3.5	52.2	7.2	54.7
Housekeeper	2.8	27.2	2.9	30.4

There are a higher number of boys than girls having term-time work (2.5 *versus* 1.6 percent, corresponding to 30,268 boys and 17,509 girls all over Syria), but then again enrolled girls more often have domestic duties than boys (4.1 *versus* 3.0 percent equalling 44,781 girls and 36,383 boys at the national level) (Table 4.20). Table 4.21 displays variation according to place of residence. It shows that term-time work (as employment in general) is more common among children in rural areas than in urban areas, but that the proportion of children combining schooling and domestic duties is at the same level.

Table 4.20 Proportion of children aged 10-17 being economically active and housekeepers/-wives by gender and school enrolment (n = 25,723)

	Boys		Girls		All
	Enrolled	Not enrolled	Enrolled	Not enrolled	
In labour force	2.5	72.4	1.6	25.1	17.8
Housekeeper	3.0	1.0	4.1	44.3	10.3

Table 4.21 Proportion of children 10-17 being economically active and housekeepers/-wives by urban rural status and school enrolment (n = 25,723)

	Urban		Rural		All
	Enrolled	Not enrolled	Enrolled	Not enrolled	
In labour force	0.7	41.8	3.6	52.8	17.8
Housekeeper	3.6	25.8	3.4	21.3	10.3

Child labourers usually not enrolled in school

We have found that very few enrolled children are employed while many children who have dropped out of school or who never attended are employed. Now, turning the question “upside down”, how frequently are working children enrolled? Table 4.22 shows that amongst the youngest children half of them are enrolled, but the pattern seems to be that working children do not combine school and work -- they are full-time workers. Indeed, since employed children aged 10-11 are relatively few, the overall enrolment rate for employed children 10-17 is only 7.9 percent. Figure 4.5, and the corresponding Table 4.23, largely provides the same information as Table 4.22, but displays the enrolment rate of employed children, as well as young adults, by exact age.

Table 4.22 School enrolment rates of employed children aged 10-24 by age groups (n = 12,484)

	10-11	12-14	15-17	18-19	20-24
Enrolled	52,5	11,5	3,5	2,1	1,5
Not enrolled	47,5	88,5	96,5	97,9	98,5
	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Figure 4.5 School enrolment rates of employed children aged 10-24, by age (12,484)

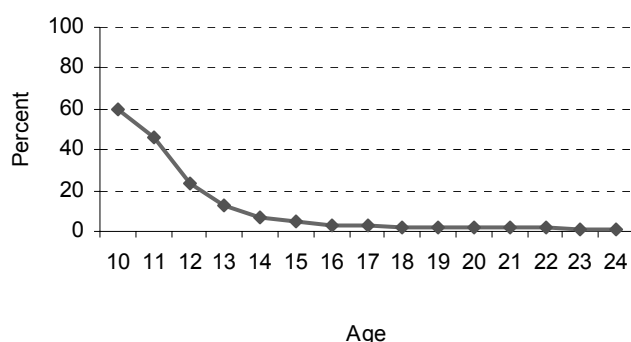


Table 4.23 School enrolment rates of employed children aged 10-24, by age (12,484)

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
59,9	45,7	23,4	12,9	6,7	4,6	3,4	2,6	2,3	2,0	1,7	1,8	2,0	1,1	1,1

School children work shorter hours, but ...

We have concluded that most children do not combine school and work. But, those who do (almost 48,000 children aged 10-17), how long hours do they work each week, and do they work shorter hours than children who are not attending school? Table 4.24 shows that employed school children unmistakably work less than other children. Among not attending children, 75 percent work longer hours than what is considered a normal working week in the public sector, namely 36 hours (6 hours

times 6 days). Among the enrolled, on the other hand, only 32 percent work that much.

Children in public schools spend 4.5-5 hours per day, six days a week at school. There is no significant difference between the years/grades 1-9. Consequently, a typical school week for children in the basic cycle may range from 27-30 hours. In addition to that, children, at least in the highest elementary classes and in preparatory school, have homework. For school children, we have added 27 school hours to the number of hours spent on gainful employment as defined by the ILO, resulting, we think, in a rather moderate estimate of the total number of hours they work -- in this broadened sense of the word. If work is thus defined, the majority of school children also have greater commitments than what is considered full-time employment. In fact economically active school children work (in this wider, non-ILO understanding of the term) longer hours than (ILO) employed non-enrolled children (Table 4.24).

Table 4.24 Weekly working hours (in main job) of employed children aged 10-17 who are enrolled (n = 332) and not enrolled (n = 4,082)

Working hours	Enrolled		Not enrolled
	ILO work	ILO + school work	
1-19	19.1	0.0	3.2
20-36	48.3	4.0	22.1
37-49	15.4	25.2	29.7
50-69	13.2	48.6	31.8
70+	4.0	22.2	13.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Summing up the school - labour force nexus

Together, Table 4.25 and Table 4.26 constitute an attempt to sum up the main activities of children aged 10-17 in some detail -- and giving priority to school activities. Remember that in Section 2 we also provided information about the activities of all children, but there labour force participation took precedence and employed children were categorised as “in the labour force” even if they were enrolled in school. Here we present separate figures for those who go to school only and those who combine schooling with work – as classified by ILO. Furthermore, we sort working children not attending school into two groups: those who are employed in a family enterprise (most often farming) without receiving any payment and those who are employed elsewhere (most often paid employees, but also a few unpaid apprentices). Note that the categorization of the employed applied here is not directly comparable to the one applied in Section 3, mainly due to different coding. Children who are not enrolled or economically active according to the ILO classification system are divided into those who carry out house chores, and those who do not have such responsibilities.¹⁴

¹⁴ Some of the children assigned the code “school only” may also have a substantial amount of domestic duties. However, we do not present data on those who combine care taking and house chores with schooling here.

The grand majority, 80 percent or 1.75 million children aged 10-14, are full-time students without term-time jobs. There are more boys than girls enrolled in school at the ages 10 through 14, while the enrolment rate of boys and girls is pretty much the same amongst the 15-17 year-olds. Hence, the relative decline in enrolment rates is higher for boys than for girls. One percent, or close to 28,000 children in the 10-14 age band both work and attend school. There are slightly more boys than girls who combine school and employment, some 17,000 *versus* 11,000 in the 10-14 age group. There are fewer children combining education and work in the 15-17 age group compared to the 12-14 age group. The grand majority (97 percent) of children combining schooling and work are employed in family enterprises.

The two tables allow repetition of some key findings regarding children's work. Here are a few observations: First, there are a higher number of employed boys than girls. Second, a large share of the (ILO) child labour force is employed in family businesses without pay. But, overall there are a higher number of children aged 10-17 employed elsewhere. Third, there is a significant gender difference when it comes to type of (ILO) work. Here, this is demonstrated by the fact that two-thirds of boys are employed outside the home (most often paid), while two-thirds of the girls work in a (mostly unpaid) family enterprise. Finally, the tables show that a much higher number of girls have household responsibilities than boys, for the age group 10-14 approximately 85,500 compared to 3,000.

Table 4.25 Activity status (school, work, domestic duties and idling) of children aged 10-17 by sex and age; percent (n = 25,619)

	Boys					Girls				
	10-11	12-14	15-17	10-14	10-17	10-11	12-14	15-17	10-14	10-17
School only	94.5	74.1	38.8	82.1	66.3	91.1	68.8	38.3	77.7	63.1
Combine work and school	1.6	1.5	1.0	1.5	1.4	1.2	0.9	0.7	1.0	0.9
In (paid) labour force	0.6	9.8	33.8	6.2	16.2	0.7	2.1	4.9	1.5	2.6
Unpaid family business worker	0.6	5.3	13.3	3.5	7.1	1.4	5.3	10.4	3.7	6.2
Housekeeper, caretaker	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	2.1	11.9	29.7	8.0	15.9
Other outside labour force	2.7	8.9	12.5	6.5	8.7	3.6	11.0	16.0	8.1	11.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	All									
	10-11	12-14	15-17	10-14	10-17					
School only	92.9	71.6	38.4	79.9	64.8					
Combine work and school	1.4	1.2	0.9	1.3	1.1					
In (paid) labour force	0.6	5.9	19.4	3.8	9.7					
Unpaid family business worker	1.0	5.3	12.0	3.6	6.6					
Housekeeper, caretaker	1.0	6.0	14.8	4.0	8.0					
Other outside labour force	3.1	10.1	14.5	7.3	9.8					
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0					

Table 4.26 Activity status (school, work, domestic duties and idling) of children aged 10-17 by sex and age; actual number of persons in each category (n = 25,619)

	Boys				
	10-11	12-14	15-17	10-14	10-17
School only	415,414	506,949	251,521	922,363	1,174,299
Combine work and school	6,862	9,939	6,684	16,801	24,244
In (paid) labour force	2,770	67,172	219,073	69,942	286,870
Unpaid family business worker	2,575	36,238	86,452	38,813	125,963
Housekeeper, caretaker	282	2,636	2,811	2,918	5,824
Other outside labour force	11,817	60,872	81,135	72,689	154,000
Total # of persons	439,720	683,807	647,674	1,123,526	1,771,200
	Girls				
	10-11	12-14	15-17	10-14	10-17
School only	388,252	446,238	238,601	834,490	1,070,259
Combine work and school	5,060	5,758	4,534	10,818	15,564
In (paid) labour force	2,963	13,308	30,436	16,271	44,526
Unpaid family business worker	5,795	34,486	64,769	40,281	105,294
Housekeeper, caretaker	8,739	76,904	184,833	85,643	270,542
Other outside labour force	15,325	71,476	99,940	86,801	191,234
Total # of persons	426,134	648,170	623,113	1,074,304	1,697,419
	All				
	10-11	12-14	15-17	10-14	10-17
School only	804,017	953,152	487,796	1,756,911	2,246,976
Combine work and school	12,576	16,235	11,099	28,709	38,838
In (paid) labour force	5,424	78,742	247,011	84,230	335,721
Unpaid family business worker	8,408	70,489	152,267	78,949	230,315
Housekeeper, caretaker	8,543	79,418	188,405	88,022	276,206
Other outside labour force	26,986	133,942	184,209	161,012	340,564
Total # of persons	865,954	1,331,978	1,270,787	2,197,833	3,468,620

5. Socio-economic status and child labour

In this section we will briefly present statistics on the relationship between various socio-economic factors and children's work. The three indicators of socio-economic status we will use are: education of parents, work characteristics of main provider and economic standing.

Children of well-educated parents work less often

We have already found that the higher the parents' education, the higher is the chance that the child remains in school beyond compulsory elementary cycle. Implicitly, this implies that increased education of parents reduces the likelihood of being a child labourer (or caretaker, domestic worker), since – it seems - very few children dropping out of school stay idle.

Table 5.1 confirms this effect of parents' education. For example, in the youngest age band, almost 17 percent of boys and over 11 percent of girls with a father lacking formal education are employed. This compares with about three percent of boys and one percent of girls with a father who has completed secondary or tertiary education. One feature that is noteworthy is that parents' education has a much "swifter" effect on girls than boys, in the sense that the workforce participation of girls falls drastically if they have a parent with elementary schooling or more, while the reduction in boys' employment is more gradual as one move up from one educational category to the next.

Table 5.1 Labour force participation rates of children aged 10-14 (n = 16,250) and 10-17 (n = 25,718) by parents' education

			Boys	Girls	All
Children aged 10-14	Education of father	Not any level	16.8	11.5	14.2
		Elementary	10.4	3.9	7.2
		Preparatory	6.8	2.1	4.5
		Secondary and above	3.5	1.1	2.3
	Education of mother	Not any level	15.1	9.3	12.2
		Elementary	7.5	1.5	4.7
		Preparatory	3.0	0.4	1.7
		Secondary and above	0.8	0.5	0.7
Children aged 10-17	Education of father	Not any level	33.6	17.5	25.8
		Elementary	25.4	6.6	16.3
		Preparatory	16.7	3.6	10.0
		Secondary and above	8.3	1.7	5.1
	Education of mother	Not any level	30.8	14.2	22.7
		Elementary	19.4	3.3	11.6
		Preparatory	10.3	1.2	5.9
		Secondary and above	5.0	0.4	2.8

Sector and occupation of main provider affect child employment

The labour force participation rates differ according to the industry where the main provider of the households works, and the job he or she holds. The main provider is defined as the household's main income earner, i.e. the person having the highest income, and is most often one of the child's parents. Not surprisingly, we find that there are more children working in households where the main provider works in agriculture (primary sector). The manufacturing, construction and services sectors follow next, while in households where the main provider is a wage earner in the public sector, or work in the health or education sectors, child employment rates are the lowest (Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.1 Labour force participation rates of children aged 10-14 (n = 16,276) and 10-17 (n = 25,762) by economic sector (industry) of main provider

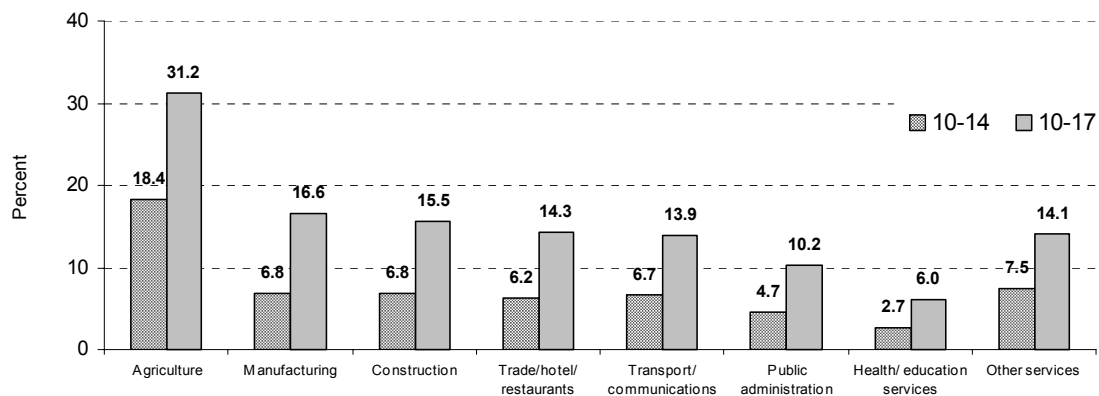
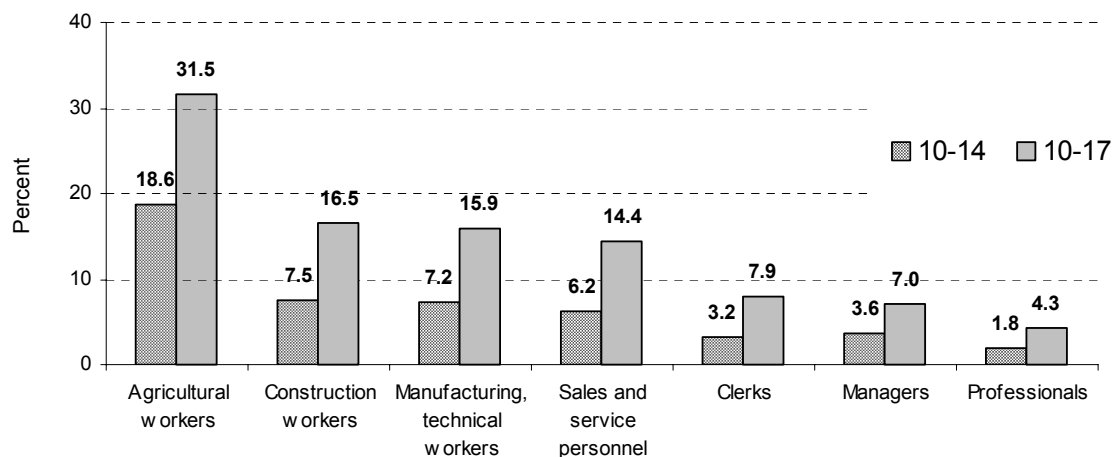


Figure 5.2 Labour force participation rates of children aged 10-14 (n = 16,276) and 10-17 (n = 25,762) by occupation of main provider



Let us contemplate the reasons for this result a bit. Quite obviously, part of the explanation that agriculture comes up high is the greater demand for extra – and low-skilled - manpower there, the parents' need for help. A second contributing factor is most likely the overall low (cash) incomes from farming, which oblige a higher

number of household members to contribute. A third reason for the relatively high child labour force participation rate in agriculture is probably the closeness of the worksite to the child. “Closeness” here may at least refer to two different factors: (a) geographic proximity, with a total lack of commuting time for children working in family farms, makes the work easily accessible; and (b) psychological nearness in the sense that it is morally unproblematic for a girl to work with her kin and/or in the immediate surroundings of the home, whereas many other jobs would have challenged the honour and respectability of the girl, and hence her family. A fourth reason that farm work attracts many children – and especially girls – is perhaps the ease by which this kind of work can be combined with domestic (non-ILO) work – again because of its immediacy. Although some of these arguments apply equally to other situations whereby children join up with their household members in family business activities, they seem particularly valid in the case of farming.

Quite naturally, if a child should want to work or the household’s need for additional income (not necessarily in cash) should arise, parents or main providers who are public employees or work in the health and education sectors have by far a much harder job finding something for their children to do. But perhaps more importantly, households with main providers in these industries more rarely find themselves in such hardship that children are forced to (leave school and) work. Furthermore, as expected and in line with this reasoning, children residing in households with clerks, managers and especially professionals are the less likely to be employed.

The wealth index

Income is the third and last socio-economic status variable we will use in this report. Low family income is often assumed to be a prime cause of children’s participation in the workforce. We have already touched the issue above, as we – for the most part implicitly – have assumed that school dropout often results in (ILO) workforce participation, although at lower levels for girls than boys (because many girls become instead housekeepers and care takers).

In the analysis of this hypothesis here, we shall rely primarily on a proxy variable. We have constructed a simple additive index based on the ownership of certain durable goods. The 15 goods included in the index are: private (family) car, radio/cassette player, TV, video player, satellite dish, refrigerator, freezer, automatic washing machine, air conditioning system, personal computer, telephone, sewing machine, cooking stove, microwave oven, and electric fan.¹⁵ Figure 5.3 shows the proportion of households owning the various items in the index.

¹⁵ Cronbach’s alpha = 0.7682.

Figure 5.3 Percentage of households owning various durable goods (n = 20,409)

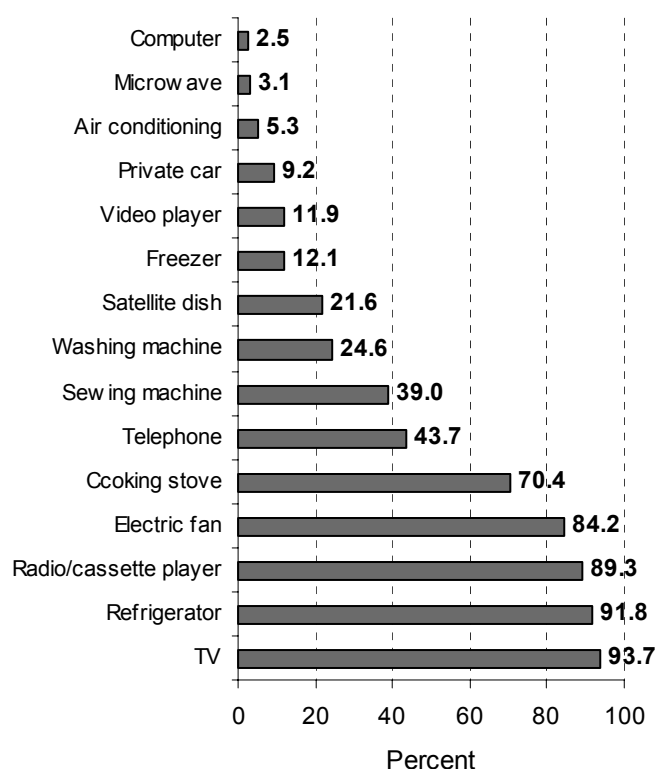


Figure 5.4 displays the distribution of Syrian households according to the number of durable goods (included in our wealth index) they possess. For all households the mean and median number of household goods is six (Table 5.2). However, as suggested by the Table there is a distinctive disparity in economic welfare of the rural *versus* the urban population – the mean and median number of goods are significantly greater in the towns and cities of Syria. Furthermore, and partly related to this fact, is the different wealth between the *mohafazats*, where the households of the Capital stand out as the most well-to-do, contrasted with a considerably more modest economic situation in mainly agrarian governorates such as Der Elzor and Qunitra. The disparity is also evident from the fact that the proportion of households with 0-3 items (i.e. half or less than half the median number of items in the index) is almost three times as high in rural as compared to urban areas (Table 5.2) This latter indicator of the distribution of economic welfare also suggests considerable variation across governorate boundaries. For example, in Qunitra the number of households owning less than four items is several times higher than in Damascus City.

Figure 5.4 Percentage distribution of households by the total number of durable goods (listed in Figure 5.3) they possess (n = 20,409)

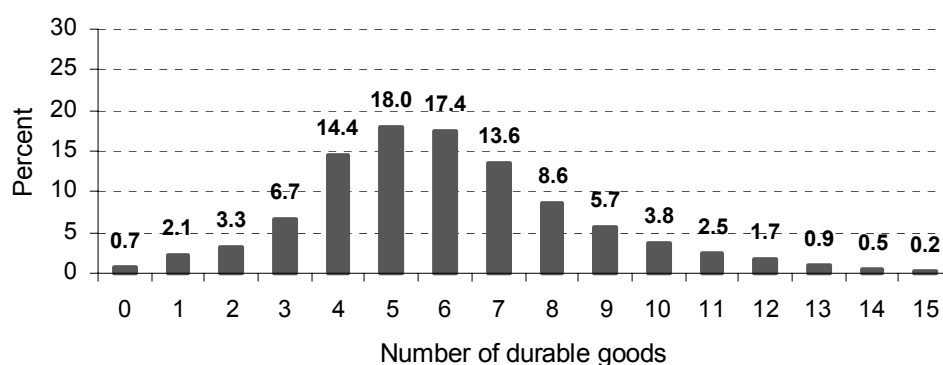


Table 5.2 Mean and median score on the wealth index, and the proportion of households having less than 4 durable goods (half the median); by governorate and by urban rural status (n = 20,409)

	% households		
	Mean	Median	with 0-3 items
Damascus City	7.8	8	3.8
Damascus Rural	6.1	6	8.8
Homs	5.8	6	16.0
Hama	5.7	6	11.0
Tartos	5.4	5	18.6
Latakia	5.9	6	12.0
Edleb	5.3	5	13.7
Aleppo	6.1	6	15.2
Rakka	5.8	6	12.6
Der Elzor	5.1	4	19.6
Hasakeh	5.5	5	15.7
Sweda	5.7	6	15.1
Dara	5.5	5	15.3
Qunitra	4.6	5	27.3
Urban	6.9	7	6.7
Rural	5.0	5	20.4
Total	6.0	6	12.8

Below we shall divide all households into three or four groups of wealth. When the households are grouped into four, the percentage distribution is as follows: 0-3 items 12.8 percent, 4-5 items 32.4 percent, 6-8 items 39.6 percent, and 9-15 items 15.3 percent. When sorted into 3 groups, we use these groups and percentage distributions of the households: 0-4 items 27.2 percent, 5-8 items 57.5 percent, and 9-15 items 15.3 percent.

Less child labour among the economically better off households

We have earlier seen that the economic standing of the household of a child had effect on the propensity of his or her school enrolment. The more affluent the household the higher is the chance that the child attends school. When looking at the relationship between the economic situation of the household and the child's link to the labour force we get a picture that "matches" this situation. The wealthier the household the lower is the likelihood that a child is working (in the ILO sense of the word) (Table 5.3). As the Table shows, in all age groups a considerably higher proportion of children work in the less fortunate households than in the more affluent households. In fact the proportion of working children in the poorest households in the age group 10-11 is higher than among the most privileged in the next age group. Similarly, the workforce participation rate is higher among the less fortunate 12-14 year-olds than among the wealthiest 15-17 year-olds.

Table 5.3 Labour force participation rates of children aged 10-17 by household wealth and age (n = 25,762)

Age	0-3 items	4-5 items	6-8 items	9-15 items
10-11	5.9	3.9	2.3	0.6
12-14	20.8	16.1	10.6	5.1
15-17	47.1	39.1	29.2	19.4
10-14	14.7	11.2	7.4	3.3
10-17	25.8	21.4	15.6	9.5

The effect of economic standing on children's employment is evident even after controlling for place of residence – there is a steady decline in children's workforce participation rate as one moves from low to high value on the wealth variable both in rural and urban districts (Table 5.4). This trend is also observed in the various *mohafazats*, although not as consistent everywhere (Table 5.5).

Table 5.4 Labour force participation rates of children aged 10-14 (n = 16,276) and 10-17 (n = 25,762) by urban rural status and household wealth

		0-3 items	4-5 items	6-8 items	9-15 items
10-14	Urban	9.5	7.0	5.3	3.1
	Rural	16.2	13.8	10.0	4.1
10-17	Urban	18.2	15.2	13.2	8.8
	Rural	28.1	25.2	18.4	12.9

Table 5.5 Labour force participation rates of children aged 10-17 by household wealth and governorate (n = 25,762)

	0-4 items	5-8 items	9-15 items
Damascus city	15.0	11.1	10.1
Damascus other	16.6	12.9	10.1
Homs	20.6	13.0	3.6
Hama	21.5	16.3	10.3
Tartos	12.6	8.9	8.7
Latakia	19.7	17.1	9.2
Edleb	23.4	23.5	14.3
Aleppo	27.6	21.8	10.7
Rakka	33.2	21.5	4.3
Der Elzor	39.7	20.1	13.0
Hasakeh	33.5	19.7	8.4
Sweda	8.4	7.4	0.0
Dara	15.4	9.9	3.9
Qunitra	8.2	20.5	-

Sweda: only 25 households owning 9-15 items

Qunitra: only 26 households owning 0-4 items

Qunitra: no households owning 9-15 items

6. Conclusion

This study has documented the presence of a substantial number of employed children in Syria. Here we will reiterate some principal findings. In doing so, we shall concentrate on children aged 10-14 here, since they are the ones primarily covered and protected by existing education and labour laws. Furthermore, we shall identify some of the knowledge gaps uncovered by the study and suggest steps that can be taken to fill them.

Key characteristics of working children

The SIMS data show that nine percent of Syrian children between 10 and 14 years of age are employed. This equals almost 200,000 child workers in that age band. About two thirds are boys while one third are girls. Out of these, less than 30,000 are 10-11 year-olds.

Although this is not a uniform conclusion, statistics from the SIMS have revealed that the highest child labour rates are found in *mohafazats* that are predominantly rural in character. Der Elzor, Hasakeh, and Edleb top the list, having from 13 to 17 percent child workers in the 10-14 age group, and more than 20,000 working children each. The explanation for this pattern rests with the fact that agriculture is the number one sector of employment for children. This is particularly true for girls, but holds for boys as well. Among the latter, 13 percent are employed in rural areas as compared to 10 percent in urban areas. Only one percent of girls aged 10-14 and residing in cities and towns work, while almost 12 percent in the countryside do. Close to 140,000 children (70 percent) are employed in rural districts, while 60,000 (30 percent) work in the urban centres of Syria.

The majority of child workers are *not* enrolled in the formal school system. In the spring and early summer of 2001, 3.1 percent of the 10-11 year olds were working, corresponding to about 26,500 children. Almost half of them (approximately 13,000 children) were not enrolled in school during the scholastic year 2000/2001. Since education that school year was compulsory through year/grade 6, these children should have been at school.

Among children 12-14 years of age 12.8 percent or some 171,500 children were employed. Of those, around 19,500 (about 11 percent) were enrolled. The rest, around 152,000 children had dropped out of school, or never started. When the educational reform is implemented, all these children shall have to attend school.

The bulk of employed children tend to be full-time but poorly paid workers. Working in the excess of 50 hours per week is not uncommon (found among 27 percent of the 10-11 year-olds and 42 percent of the 12-14 year-olds). When children have home chores in addition to their employment, which especially many girls have in line with local customs and tradition, there is limited room for recreation, to play with friends, and to participate in sports, clubs and other activities. The survey shows that school children with term-time work tend to have longer working days than employed children who have dropped out of school, if the school day (but not home school work) is calculated in as work. It is likely that a considerable proportion of these children combining work and education suffer low achievements and struggle with

school, and as a consequence thereof may drop out and perhaps never become functionally literate.

In accordance with studies elsewhere the SIMS data indicate that child labour is a phenomenon associated with socio-economic status. We find that the prevalence of child work is highest in families where the parents/household heads have poor education, are employed in low status and low-income jobs, and have little wealth.

What we know -- and don't know -- about child labour in Syria

As we just summarized above, the bulk of working children have left school. And, the incidence of child labour is higher in the poorest segments of the population. Yet few children claim to have left school due to poverty. Instead they have quit because they failed or did not want to continue – they chose to leave. However, we have argued that there might be weaknesses in the data gathering here and that we should not take these results at face value. Hence, based on the survey findings we cannot assert if the children have left school because they must work out of poverty and need, or if they work because they have dropped out of school. The latter line of reasoning may point towards imperfections in the educational system, such as lack of schools in scarcely populated areas, or inadequate and poor quality of teaching. It may also indicate that it is culturally important to avoid idleness; that parents believe it to be improper for children to do nothing (see Delap 2001). The study suggests that economic factors are important on decisions regarding children's work. But, it says nothing about how economic factors are mediated by cultural values and practices.

Furthermore, the study documents that employed children tend to work very long hours. This, many would agree, is of concern if it jeopardizes the “normal” development of the child and leads to fatigue that can endanger the child's health. Yet we do not know if children have regular breaks and time to rest, and we cannot tell if and how often they work evening and night shifts. Because of children's extremely low pay some would call for the term “exploitation”. Then again others would argue that because most children work with their immediate family, they are as a rule well treated and not subject to abuse in any form. Nevertheless, the SIMS does not allow us to say anything about his, or other aspects of the working environments of the children for that matter.

To conclude, this report has presented policy-makers with a solid picture of the phenomenon of child labour in Syria, especially its magnitude. We have shown variation in its incidence by sex, age, place of residence and socio-economic status variables, and have also portrayed the working children according to sectors of employment, occupations, working hours and income. In doing all this, we have hinted at explanations, but have not taken up the question “Why do children work?” in-depth. This is of course a key question demanding answers if adequate policies on child labour are to be formulated. Here one should look into the relationship between economic factors on the one side and cultural attitudes and norms on the other. The link between schooling and employment is also highly relevant and needs additional analysis. Other questions that beg for further study in the Syrian context are: “Under what conditions do children work?”, and “To what extent does children's employment deprive them of the right to safe and healthy upbringing and ‘normal’ development?”.

Such questions could be dealt with in one or more studies applying a qualitative approach. Techniques derived from Rapid Appraisal Methods and social

anthropology seems appropriate to fill some of the knowledge gaps identified above, and would - we think – prove very useful in policy formulation.

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