



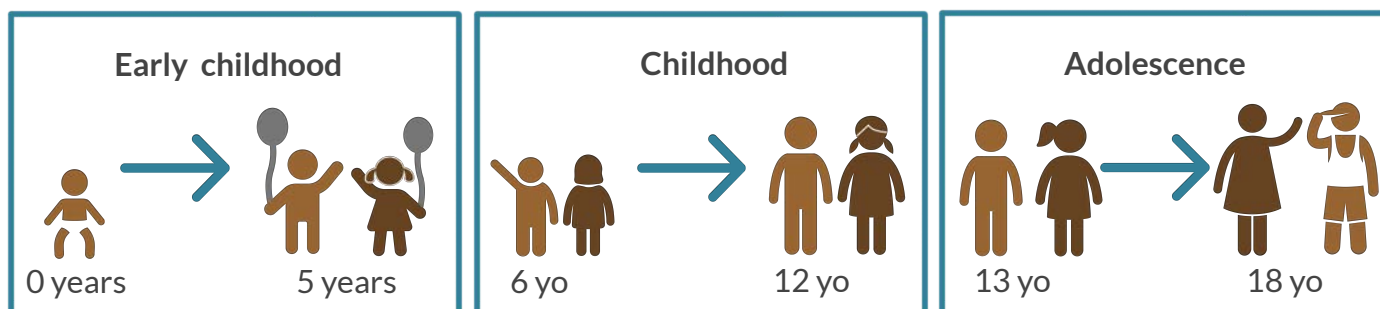
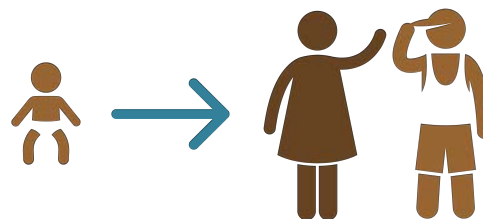
UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

Introduction to inequalities affecting children and adolescents

Childhood is defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child as any person under the age of 18.

This period is subdivided in **three stages**:

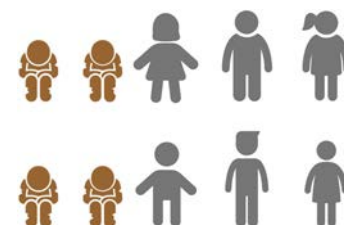


By 2020, three out of every 10 inhabitants of Latin America and the Caribbean were under 18, representing around 200 million children and adolescents in the region.

Childhood and poverty

Children are more likely to be poorer than people in any other age group in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Four out of every 10 children under 15 are poor, a reality that jeopardizes the personal development prospects of such girls and boys and thus the future development of these countries and the region.





UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC



Child and adolescent poverty and inequality lead to other unfulfilled needs with lasting effects throughout their life cycle. In addition to lower incomes, such children have less access to social protection, education, health, housing and basic services.

Child labour

In 2016, 10.5 million children and adolescents were engaged in such work, including 4.4% that performed hazardous jobs.

Aside from representing a grave violation of their human rights, child labour leads to long-term effects that are passed on from one generation to the next such as the intergenerational reproduction of poverty and the persistence of inequality.



Education

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has reported that approximately 2.8 million children in Latin America do not attend school.

Although school attendance is relatively high at the primary and lower secondary level, it declines thereafter.

Quality education for all is a goal that has yet to be realized in America Latin America and the Caribbean.

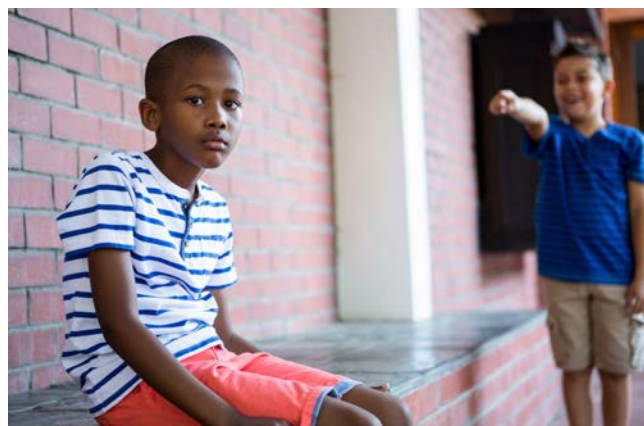


Bullying

Another situation children in the region confront is bullying.

Among Central American students 26% of men and 24.3% of women experienced bullying in 2019, according to UNESCO.

UNICEF reports that most victims of school violence are members of specific vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, overweight, who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, transgender or intersex people, or people of indigenous or African descent.



Childhood health

Mortality remains a major health issue among those in early childhood

Between 2015 and 2020 the mortality rate for children in Latin America and the Caribbean under the age of five was 20.8 for every 1,000 live births.

The chances of a child dying are greater in rural zones than in urban areas and among Afro-descendent and indigenous children.



Children and adolescents living in low-income households or whose mothers lacked access to a formal education are at much greater risk of dying before their fifth birthday.



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

Moreover, children in the poorest income strata are three times more likely to suffer from chronic undernutrition than the rest of the child population. UNICEF notes that birthweights are higher among newborns whose mothers completed a secondary or higher education.

The lack of access to, and poor quality of water and sanitation services bear a direct relationship to infant mortality, morbidity and undernutrition, especially in rural areas with less coverage.



Childhood violence

Domestic violence is another issue that demands analysis. Evidence suggests that infants and toddlers are at risk of violence at the hands of their caregivers or other family members.

UNICEF has noted that children who are not cared for properly, particularly during the first year of life are more sensitive to the effects of stress and exhibit more behaviour problems than children who have been well cared for.

Adolescence health

Adolescents also face significant health issues



The WHO estimates that one out of every five adolescents worldwide is suffering from a mental disorder in any given year. Self-harm is the third-most common cause of death among adolescents with depression being one of the main causes of disability and, in some cases, it leads to suicide.



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

Information suggests that mental health problems may be concentrated among adolescents who belong to lower-income groups, indigenous or other minority ethnic groups, groups with low levels of education and people who live in areas where there is a great deal of violence and in areas or settings where there are few job opportunities.

Teen pregnancies

Latin America has the **second highest rate of pregnancies** among adolescent women between 15 and 19 years of age.

A teenage girl who did not attend school or who has no more than a primary education is as much as four times more likely to become pregnant and the same is true of those in the lowest-income quintile.



The chances of an early pregnancy in some countries are also above average for indigenous adolescents and particularly those who live in rural areas.

This document contributes to the activities of the project “Leaving no one behind in Latin America and the Caribbean: strengthening institutions and social policy coherence and integration at the country level to foster equality and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”, financed by the eleventh tranche of the United Nations Development Account, and its implementation was coordinated by Simone Cecchini, Senior Social Affairs Officer of the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Raúl Holz, Consultant of the same Division, and Humberto Soto de la Rosa, Social Affairs Officer of ECLAC's subregional headquarters in Mexico. More information on the project, including other relevant materials, can be found at: igualdad.cepal.org/en

Based on the text: S. Cecchini, R. Holz and H. Soto de la Rosa (coords.), A toolkit for promoting equality: the contribution of social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/TS.2021/55), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2021.

ECLAC staff members Humberto Soto, Elsa Gutiérrez and Mustafa Al Gamal, with the support of consultants Susan Skinner, Gabriela Ibarra and Ericka Arambarri, participated in the preparation of the document. The support of the Documents and Publications Division for their guidance is gratefully acknowledged. Icons from "The Noun Project" platform and photographs from the Adobe Stock platform were used in the preparation of the contents, with the proper authorizations. Photographs from the United Nations have also been used.

The opinions expressed in this document, which has not been subjected to editorial review, are the sole responsibility of the authors and may not coincide with those of the Organization.

Copyright © United Nations, 2021
All rights reserved

Permission to reproduce all or part of this document should be requested from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Documents and Publications Division, publicaciones.cepal@un.org. Member States of the United Nations and their governmental institutions may reproduce this work without prior authorization. They are only requested to mention the source and inform ECLAC of such reproduction.