
1-2024

Understanding the education profiles of seven East and Southern African countries

GIRL Center

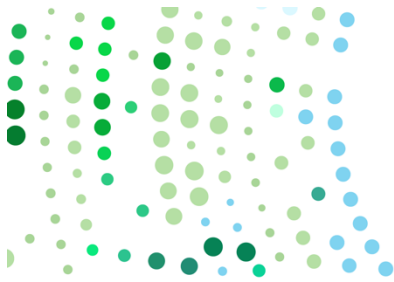
Follow this and additional works at: https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/focus_adolescents

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Recommended Citation

GIRL Center. 2024. "Understanding the education profiles of seven East and Southern African countries," GIRL Center Research Brief no. 14. New York: Population Council.

This Brief is brought to you for free and open access by the Population Council.



UNDERSTANDING THE EDUCATION PROFILES OF SEVEN EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

The GIRL Center

Background

Despite significant progress in improving primary enrollment and attainment for girls in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in recent years, gender disparities in education persist and hinder opportunities for girls. Educational attainment for girls has plateaued in numerous countries, with only a few making significant strides in narrowing the gender gap in attainment. Moreover, attainment alone does not always translate to improved learning.¹ Gender-related barriers such as school environments that are not conducive to learning and the experience of violence, early and forced marriage, and early childbearing, as well as a lack of support for girls' education impede attainment and learning.

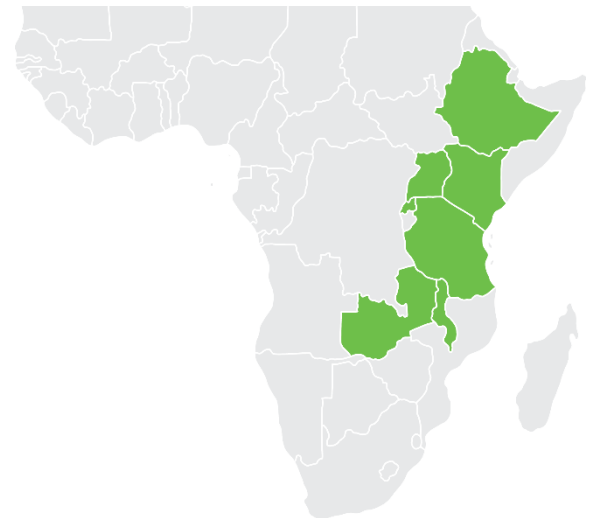
The Population Council's GIRL Center was commissioned by a private grantmaking foundation to conduct a scoping review and analysis to identify investment opportunities in East and Southern Africa and Latin America. The donor aimed to identify countries with both a need to advance girls' education and skills and existing traction with potential for significant systemic progress in a 5-year period. Multiple rounds of research and discussion helped the foundation determine specific countries of future investment. This brief contains profiles of 7 East and Southern African countries (Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia²) with the aim to summarize insights on key education indicators, school environment, gender-related barriers to education, and policies related to education.

Data was aggregated from June to December 2022 from the following sources:

- The Adolescent Atlas for Action (A3) - <https://a3.popcouncil.org/>
- The Evidence for Gender and Education Resource - <https://egeresource.org/power-in-numbers/>
- UNESCO Institute of Statistics - <https://tcg.uis.unesco.org/>
- UNICEF Data Warehouse - https://data.unicef.org/resources/data_explorer/unicef_f/
- Freedom in the World - <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

Most of these sources collected data in one point in time (usually from 2014 to 2018), available data is sometimes older and sometimes unavailable, and therefore does not reflect the rapidly changing political, economic, and social contexts in some regions.

Across these 7 countries, there are over 168 million children between the ages of 0 to 18 years old and 83 million who are adolescents between the ages of 10 to 19 years old. The brief presents important national statistics; however, these often overshadow the nuanced realities at subnational and local levels.



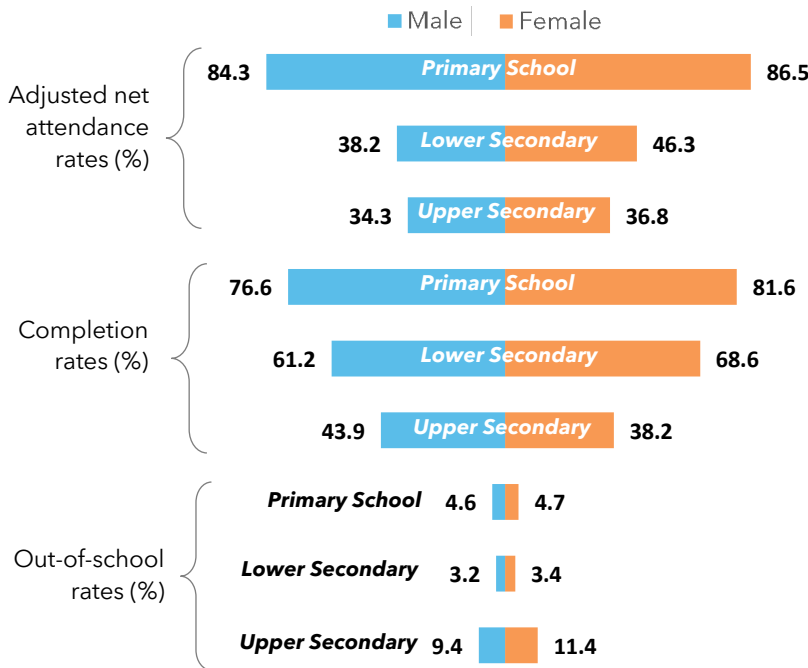
¹ Psaki, Stephanie, Nicole Haberland, Barbara Mensch, Lauren Woyczynski, and Erica Chuang. 2022. "Policies and interventions to remove gender-related barriers to girls' school participation and learning in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review of the evidence," *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 18(1): e1207.

² The brief on Latin America can be accessed here: <https://doi.org/10.31899/sbsr2024.1001>

Kenya

As host to many regional initiatives, Kenya is a hub of innovation and often considered the “pacesetter” in East Africa, exporting resources and ideas throughout the region. This position of regional leader is evident through Kenya’s higher literacy rates and performance on national-level education and school-level indicators, especially at the secondary school level, for both male and female students. Kenya has relatively low rates of violence and instability and is considered a politically and economically stable country. The Kenyan government spends roughly 19% of government expenditure on education and guarantees 12 years of free primary and secondary education. School environments are also conducive for learning given the relatively adequate pupil-to-teacher ratio and high access to electricity. Despite the progress, gender-related barriers in education exist and include early marriage, early childbearing, child labor, female genital mutilation, and traditional practices such as preference for educating boys over girls and gendered division of labor. There are also extreme variations in education outcomes between counties and especially in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands areas, where gender gaps are particularly noticeable.

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS



NATIONAL EDUCATION-RELATED POLICIES

That exist:

- ✓ Primary education is compulsory.
- ✓ Primary education is tuition free.
- ✓ Beginning lower secondary education is tuition free.
- ✓ Education policy specifically includes a commitment to students with disabilities.
- ✓ Corporal punishment in schools is not legal.
- ✓ Sex/Sexuality education is mandated.
- ✓ Comprehensive sexuality education is the national standard.
- ✓ There is a policy commitment to support menstrual hygiene management in schools.
- ✓ There are no policies banning pregnant adolescents and teenage mothers in schools.

That do not exist:

- Lower secondary education is compulsory.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Estimated Pupil-Teacher Ratio

- Primary - 32:1
- Secondary - 22:1

Percent of female teachers by teaching level

- Primary - 50.2%
- Secondary - 42.2%



Schools without sanitation facilities: 0.03%

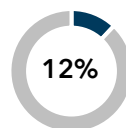


Schools without drinking water: 25%

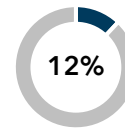


Primary schools with access to electricity: 83%

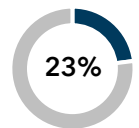
GENDER-RELATED BARRIERS



Percent of women who ever experienced sexual violence



Percent of women who ever experienced physical violence



Percent aged 20-24 years who had a first birth before age 18

Percent aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18



Percentage of children (aged 5-17 years) engaged in child labor

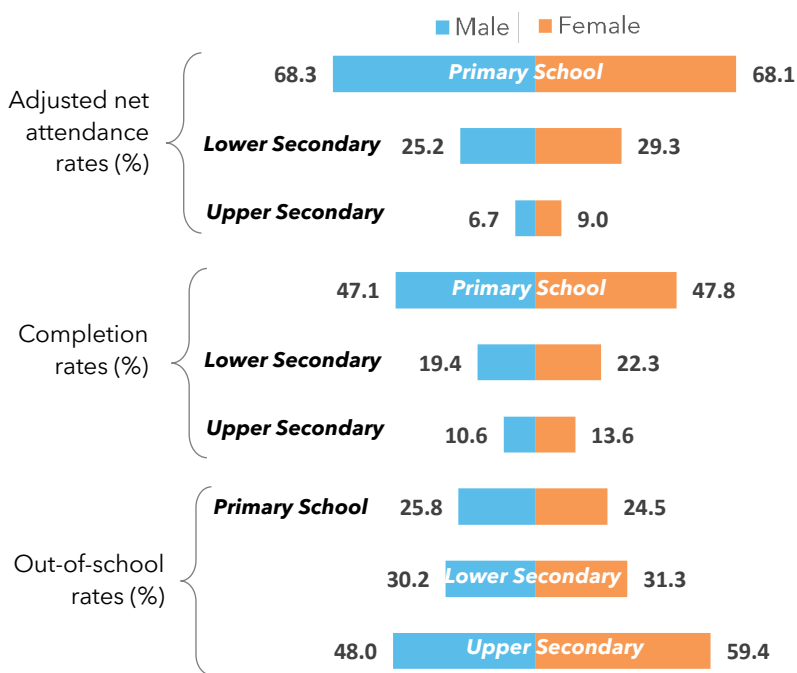


Female | Male

ETHIOPIA

Armed conflict, displacement, drought, food insecurity, and gender-based violence have all impacted schooling and education outcomes in Ethiopia. Although many children enroll in primary school, attendance and completion rates drastically decline afterwards. School environments are not conducive to learning as primary classrooms are often overcrowded and sanitation facilities, drinking water, and access to electricity are often lacking. Barriers to girls' education in Ethiopia are caused by a range of institutional, socio-economic and cultural factors, including harmful traditional practices; long distances to school; gender-based violence in school committed by both peers and teachers; child marriage; low parental aspiration for girls' education; preference for investing in boy's education; lack of gender-sensitive facilities; and lack of gender sensitive teacher training. Although 24% of government expenditure is spent on education in Ethiopia and 8 years of free primary and secondary education is guaranteed in legal frameworks, the country has not implemented several key education-related policies.

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS



NATIONAL EDUCATION-RELATED POLICIES

That exist:

- ✓ Primary education is compulsory.
- ✓ Primary education is tuition free.
- ✓ Education policy specifically includes a commitment to students with disabilities.
- ✓ Sex/Sexuality education is mandated.
- ✓ Comprehensive sexuality education is the national standard.
- ✓ There is a policy commitment to support menstrual hygiene management in schools.
- ✓ There are no policies banning pregnant adolescents and teenage mothers in schools.

That do not exist:

- Lower secondary education is compulsory.
- Beginning lower secondary education is tuition free.
- There is guaranteed support and integration of students with disabilities through completion of primary and secondary education.
- Corporal punishment in schools is not legal.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Estimated Pupil-Teacher Ratio

- Primary - 68:1
- Secondary - 45:1

Percent of female teachers by teaching level

- Primary - 41.1%
- Secondary - 19.6%



Schools with sanitation facilities: 40.5%

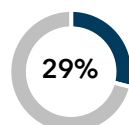


Schools with drinking water: 15.5%

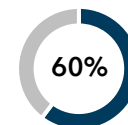


Schools with access to electricity:
Primary = 26.9%
Lower & Upper Secondary = 70.4%

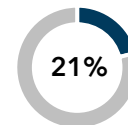
GENDER-RELATED BARRIERS



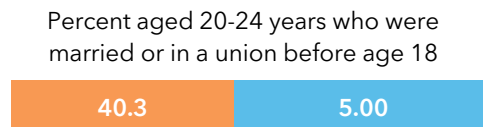
Percent of women who ever experienced physical violence



Percent of 15-19 year olds (female) who agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife



Percent aged 20-24 years who had a first birth before age 18



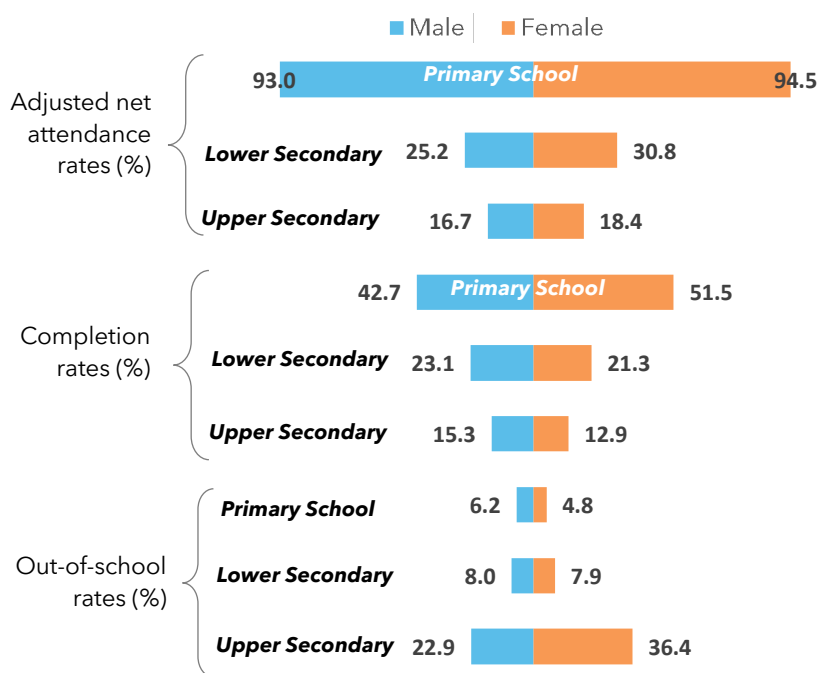
Percentage of children (aged 5-17 years) engaged in child labor



Malawi

A relatively politically stable country, Malawi spends 11% of government expenditure on education and legal frameworks guarantee 8 years of free primary and secondary education. Despite high attendance rates in primary school and low out-of-school rates in primary and lower secondary schools, educational outcomes considerably decline as children progress through the system. While many schools have adequate WASH infrastructure, they are often extremely overcrowded and there is a lack of access to electricity among many primary schools. Most secondary education teachers are male, so there are few female role models. There are major problems in recruitment, training, incentives, and retention of teachers, especially qualified and female teachers. Violence against children is a serious problem in Malawi as violent discipline is very commonly practiced. Malawi also has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. Other gender-related barriers to girls' education include the burden of household chores and negative attitudes toward girls' education.

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS



NATIONAL EDUCATION-RELATED POLICIES

That exist:

- ✓ Primary education is tuition free.
- ✓ There is guaranteed support and integration of students with disabilities through completion of primary and secondary education.
- ✓ Education policy specifically includes a commitment to students with disabilities.
- ✓ Sex/Sexuality education is mandated.
- ✓ Comprehensive sexuality education is the national standard.
- ✓ There are no policies banning pregnant adolescents and teenage mothers in schools.

That do not exist:

- Primary education is compulsory.
- Lower secondary education is compulsory.
- Beginning lower secondary education is tuition free.
- Corporal punishment in schools is not legal.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Estimated Pupil-Teacher Ratio

- Primary - 61:1
- Secondary - 71:1

Percent of female teachers by teaching level

- Primary - 45.0%
- Secondary - 23.9%



Percent of schools with sanitation facilities: 65.9%

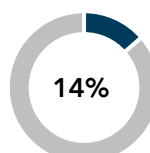


Percent of schools with drinking water: 77.7%

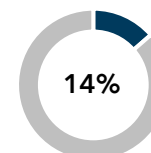


Schools with access to electricity:
Primary = 27.3%
Lower & Upper Secondary = 68.9%

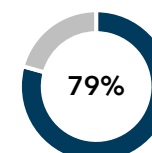
GENDER-RELATED BARRIERS



Percent of women who ever experienced sexual violence



Percent of women who ever experienced physical violence



Percentage of females aged 10-14 who experienced any violent discipline in the past month

Percent aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18



Percentage of children (aged 5-17 years) engaged in child labor

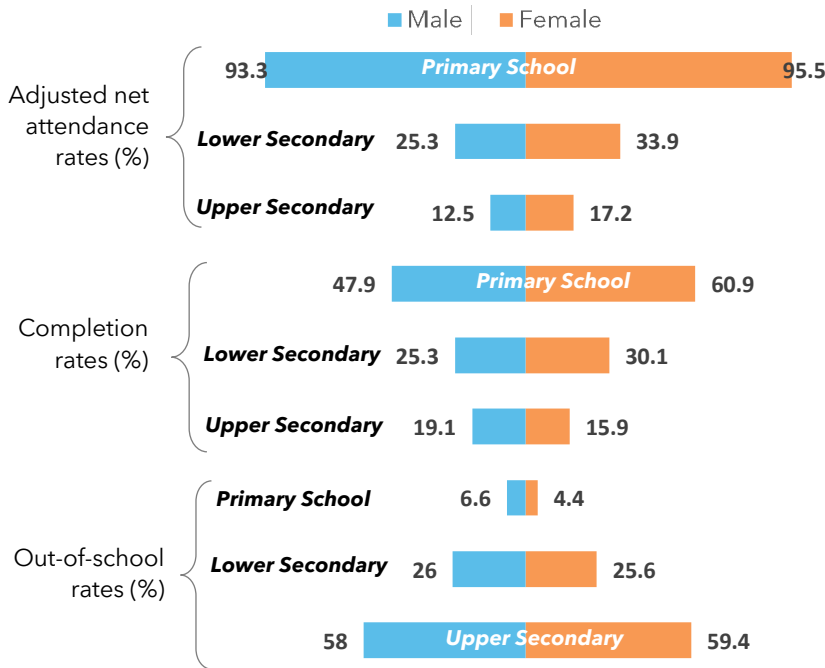


Female Male

Rwanda

A relatively politically stable country, Rwanda spends 11% of government expenditure on education and legal frameworks guarantee 9 years of free primary and secondary education. Despite high attendance rates in primary school, educational outcomes considerably decline as children progress through the system and out-of-school rates considerably increase. Many children are overage in primary schools due to enrolling in school late and repeating grades. Although girls are less likely to repeat than boys, therefore proceed through the system faster, they do lose some of their advantage in lower secondary school, where they perform at a slightly lower level than boys. While school infrastructure is generally conducive to learning and there are more female teachers in primary schools than male teachers, primary schools are extremely overcrowded. Violence, early marriage, and child labor are not noteworthy obstacles to education. Many key national policies related to education have not been enacted.

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS



SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Estimated Pupil-Teacher Ratio

- Primary - 60:1
- Secondary - 23:1

Percent of female teachers by teaching level

- Primary - 55.5%
- Secondary - 31.5%



Percent of schools without sanitation facilities: 68.2%



Percent of schools without drinking water: 63.8%



Schools with access to electricity:
 Primary = 60.8%
 Lower Secondary = 74.3%
 Upper Secondary = 78.0%

NATIONAL EDUCATION-RELATED POLICIES

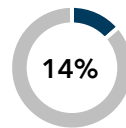
That exist:

- ✓ Primary education is tuition free.
- ✓ Corporal punishment in schools is not legal.
- ✓ Sex/Sexuality education is mandated.
- ✓ There is a policy commitment to support menstrual hygiene management in schools.

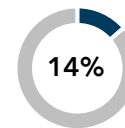
That do not exist:

- Primary education is compulsory.
- Lower secondary education is compulsory.
- Beginning lower secondary education is tuition free.
- There is guaranteed support and integration of students with disabilities through completion of primary and secondary education.
- Education policy specifically includes a commitment to students with disabilities.
- Comprehensive sexuality education is the national standard.

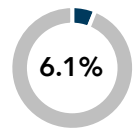
GENDER-RELATED BARRIERS



Percent of women who ever experienced sexual violence



Percent of women who ever experienced physical violence



Percent aged 20-24 years who had a first birth before age 18

Percent aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18



Percentage of children (aged 5-17 years) engaged in child labor

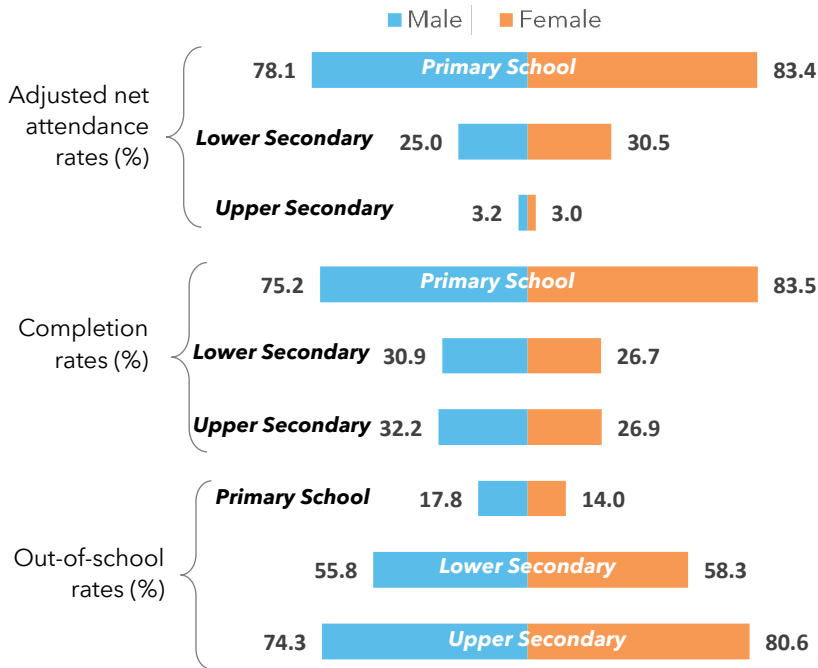


Female Male

Tanzania

Tanzania spends 20% of government expenditure on education and legal frameworks guarantee 7 years of free primary and secondary education. Despite high attendance and completion rates in primary school, educational outcomes considerably decline as children progress through the system and out-of-school rates significantly increase. In both the primary and lower secondary, boys tend to drop out of school due to the value placed on their economic contribution to their families (e.g. as livestock herders). More girls tend to leave school during the transition from primary to secondary. Nearly half of schools have adequate WASH infrastructure and secondary schools are much more likely to have access to electricity than primary schools. Violence is one of the most common gender-related barriers given the high rates of sexual and physical violence and high acceptability of violence. Early marriage is more common among girls than boys.

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS



NATIONAL EDUCATION-RELATED POLICIES

That exist:

- ✓ Primary education is compulsory.
- ✓ Primary education is tuition free.
- ✓ Lower secondary education is compulsory.
- ✓ There is guaranteed support and integration of students with disabilities through completion of primary and secondary education.
- ✓ Education policy specifically includes a commitment to students with disabilities.
- ✓ Comprehensive sexuality education is the national standard.

That do not exist:

- Beginning lower secondary education is tuition free.
- Corporal punishment in schools is not legal.
- Sex/Sexuality education is mandated.

GENDER-RELATED BARRIERS

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Estimated Pupil-Teacher Ratio

- Primary - 54:1
- Secondary - 22:1

Percent of female teachers by teaching level

- Primary - 49.2%
- Secondary - 33.0%



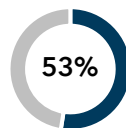
Percent of schools with sanitation facilities: 44.4%



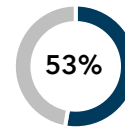
Percent of schools with drinking water: 56.1%



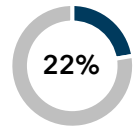
Schools with access to electricity:
 Primary = 43.5%
 Lower Secondary = 69.8%
 Upper Secondary = 100%



Percent of women who ever experienced sexual violence



Percent of women who ever experienced physical violence



Percent aged 20-24 years who had a first birth before age 18

Percent aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18



Percentage of children (aged 5-17 years) engaged in child labor

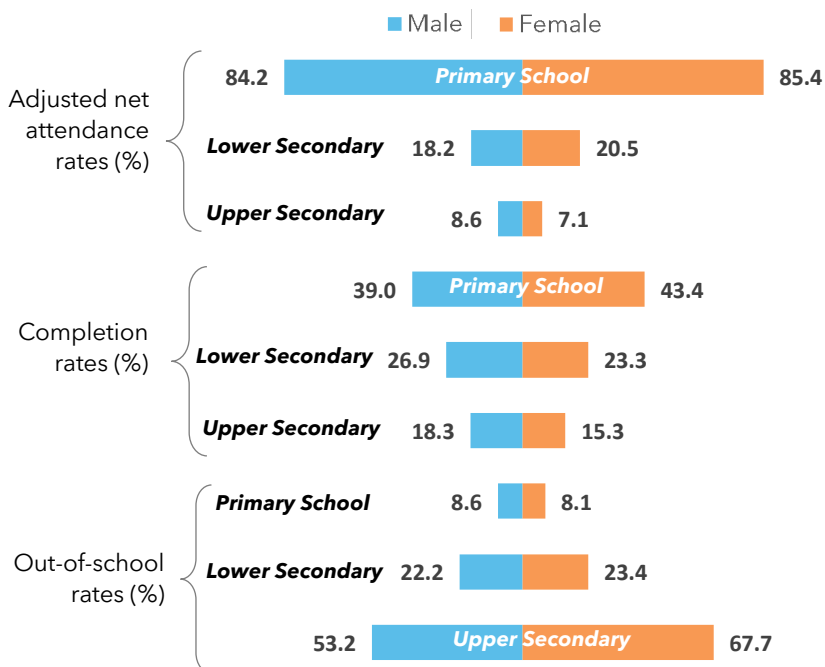


Female Male

Uganda

Despite high attendance rates in primary school, educational outcomes considerably decline as children progress through the system and out-of-school rates significantly increase. The transition rate from primary to secondary school is especially low for girls, due to factors like child marriage, early pregnancy, poverty and inability to pay school fees, lack of female teachers, and social, cultural and religious barriers in the community that do not allow girls to participate in education. Violence and the acceptability of violence are also prevalent. Schools have adequate WASH facilities but are overcrowded. The shortage of female teachers in the school system presents serious challenges to the retention of girls due to the absence of role models. Uganda has enacted many key education-related policies, indicating a policy environment that is relatively conducive to reducing girls' barriers to education.

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS



NATIONAL EDUCATION-RELATED POLICIES

That exist:

- ✓ Primary education is compulsory.
- ✓ Primary education is tuition free.
- ✓ There is guaranteed support and integration of students with disabilities through completion of primary and secondary education.
- ✓ Education policy specifically includes a commitment to students with disabilities.
- ✓ Corporal punishment in schools is not legal.
- ✓ Sex/Sexuality education is mandated.
- ✓ Comprehensive sexuality education is the national standard.
- ✓ There is a policy commitment to support menstrual hygiene management in schools.

That do not exist:

- Lower secondary education is compulsory.
- Beginning lower secondary education is tuition free.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Estimated Pupil-Teacher Ratio

- Primary - 47:1
- Secondary - 26:1

Percent of female teachers by teaching level

- Primary - 43.1%
- Secondary - 24.6%

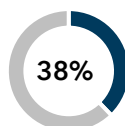


Percent of schools with sanitation facilities: 75%

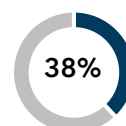


Percent of schools with drinking water: 73%

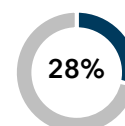
GENDER-RELATED BARRIERS



Percent of women who ever experienced sexual violence



Percent of women who ever experienced physical violence



Percent aged 20-24 years who had a first birth before age 18

Percent aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18



Percentage of children (aged 5-17 years) engaged in child labor

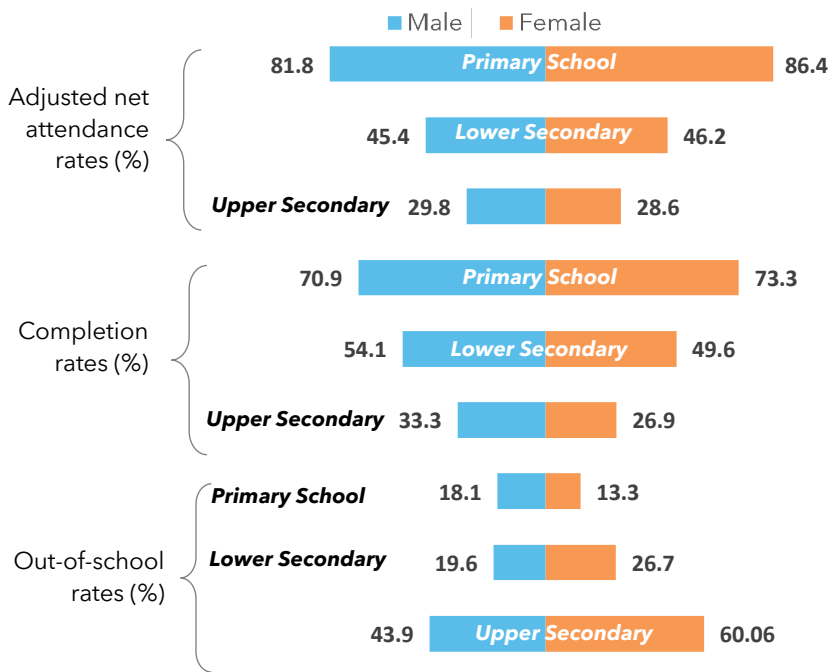


Female Male

Zambia

A relatively politically stable country, Zambia spends 11% of government expenditure on education and legal frameworks guarantee 7 years of free primary and secondary education. Despite high attendance rates in primary school, educational outcomes considerably decline as children progress through the system and out-of-school rates significantly increase. Transition rates for girls tend to be lower than those for boys. The most pressing challenge for the transition from lower to upper secondary – affecting both boys and girls – is the limited school infrastructure. Many schools already apply a double-shift policy. Nevertheless, half of teachers at both primary and secondary schools are female and access to WASH infrastructure is adequate although only half of secondary schools have access to electricity. Violence is one of the most common gender-related barriers given the high rates of sexual and physical violence and high acceptability of violence. The rate of adolescent childbearing is also of concern and an obstacle to retention despite the re-entry policies.

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS



NATIONAL EDUCATION-RELATED POLICIES

That exist:

- ✓ Lower secondary education is compulsory.
- ✓ There is guaranteed support and integration of students with disabilities through completion of primary and secondary education.
- ✓ Comprehensive sexuality education is the national standard.
- ✓ There is a policy commitment to support menstrual hygiene management in schools.
- ✓ There are no policies banning pregnant adolescents and teenage mothers in schools.

That do not exist:

- Primary education is compulsory.
- Primary education is tuition free.
- Beginning lower secondary education is tuition free.
- Education policy specifically includes a commitment to students with disabilities.
- Corporal punishment in schools is not legal.
- Sex/Sexuality education is mandated.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Estimated Pupil-Teacher Ratio

- Primary - 45:1
- Secondary - 21:1

Percent of female teachers by teaching level

- Primary - 50.5%
- Secondary - 53.1%



Percent of schools with sanitation facilities: 66%

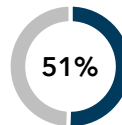


Percent of schools with drinking water: 79%

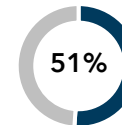


Schools with access to electricity:
Primary = 36.4%
Upper Secondary = 50.5%

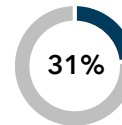
GENDER-RELATED BARRIERS



Percent of women who ever experienced sexual violence



Percent of women who ever experienced physical violence



Percent aged 20-24 years who had a first birth before age 18

Percent aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18



Percentage of children (aged 5-17 years) engaged in child labor



Female Male