The Sustainable Development Goals Extended Report 2026

Inputs and information provided as of 30 April 2026

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Note: This unedited 'Extended Report' includes all indicator storyline contents as provided by the SDG indicator custodian agencies as of 30 April 2026. For instances where the custodian agency has not submitted a storyline for an indicator, please see the custodian agency focal point information for further information. The 'Extended Report' aims to provide the public with additional information regarding the SDG indicators and is compiled by the Statistics Division (UNSD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Storylines presented in this document may slightly differ from figures cited in the SDG Report 2026 text due to the timing of the submission and the subsequent updates received upon finalizing the Report.

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Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Indicator 4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex

Globally, 58% of students achieved at least the minimum proficiency level in reading at the end of primary education in 2019, based on the latest available global estimate

According to results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, nearly 700,000 students from 81 OECD member and partner economies, representing about 29 million 15-year-olds, participated in the assessment. Between 2018 and 2022, mean performance across OECD countries declined by 15 points in mathematics and 10 points in reading. Reading performance had already shown a gradual downward trend over the previous decade, while mathematics performance had remained broadly stable until 2018, indicating that recent declines occurred on top of pre-existing challenges in learning outcomes.

New results from the 2024 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) and 2023 data from Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (LaNA) have further expanded reporting under SDG indicator 4.1.1.

SDG indicator 4.1.1 continues to be reported using cross-national learning assessments, both international (PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS, LaNA) and regional (PILNA, SEA-PLM, PASEC, LLECE, SACMEQ), which apply common instruments across participating countries to ensure comparability.

However, the production of internationally comparable learning outcomes remains uneven. Coverage is substantially higher at the end of primary and lower secondary education than in early primary grades, and important disparities persist across income groups, with higher-income countries far more likely to participate regularly in comparable learning assessments.

The minimum proficiency level has been defined as a competency concept independent of specific assessment frameworks, test items, or instruments. In parallel, methodological guidelines for SDG reporting continue to be strengthened, including eligibility criteria that specify the technical conditions under which assessment results can be used for SDG indicator 4.1.1.

Additional resources, press releases, data blog/stories, etc. with links:

- UIS data browser: https://databrowser.uis.unesco.org/
- SDG 4 scorecard progress report on national benchmarks - focus on the out-of school rate : https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000393833
- Resources: https://www.uis.unesco.org/en/gaml?hub=183

Storyline author(s)/contributor(s): UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS

Indicator 4.1.2 Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)

Completion rates increase, as out-of-school rates stagnate

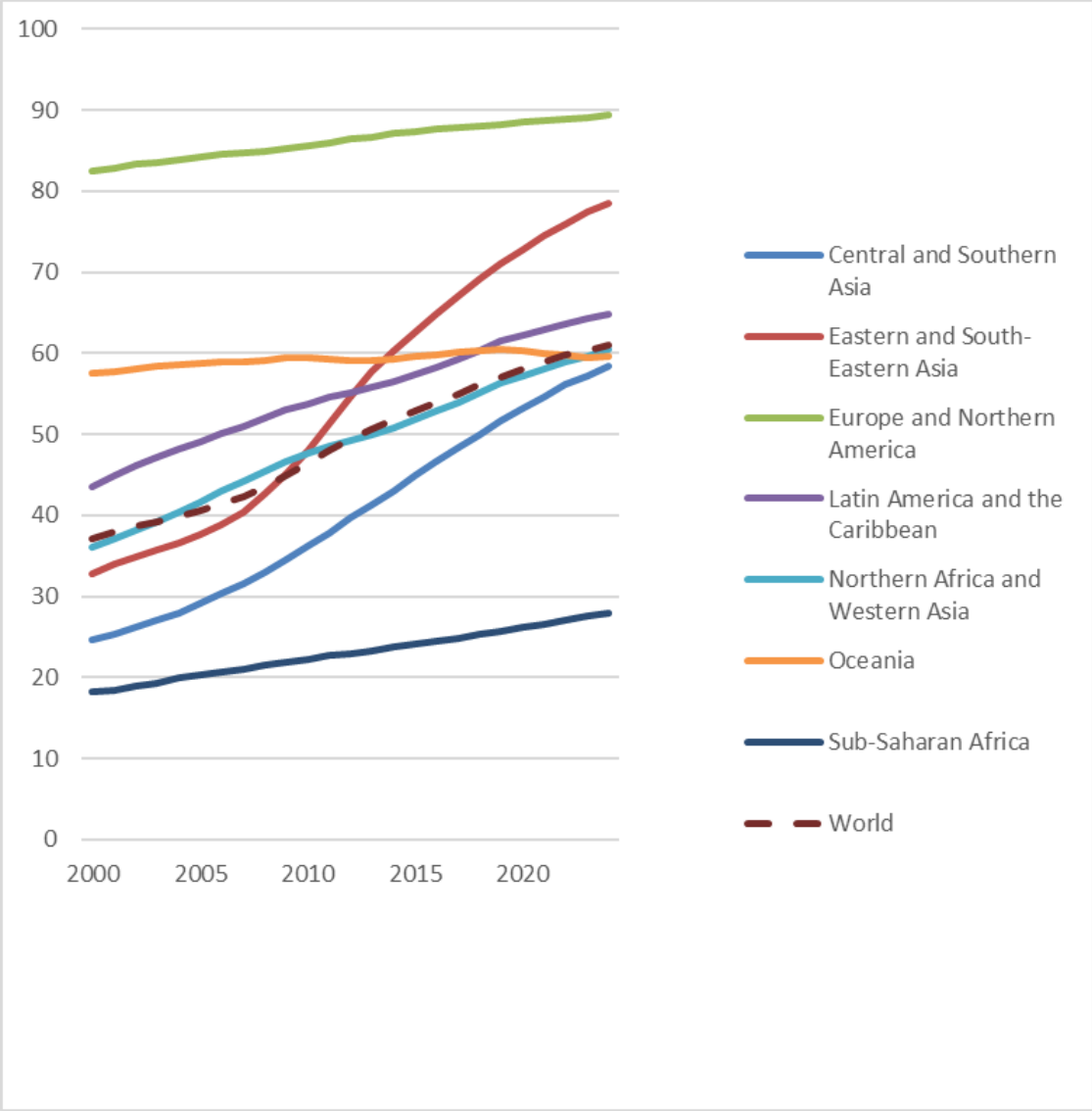
The flagship education indicator during the Millennium Development Goals period from 2000 to 2015, was the out-of-school population. In 2024, it is estimated that there were 273 million children, adolescents and youth out of school. This number had fallen by 127 million between 2000 and 2015, or by 33%, but has since increased by 9 million, or by 3%; in fact, it has been increasing for seven years in a row. In low-income countries, the out-of-school population has increased by 29% since 2015, while it has remained flat in the rest of the world.

Across all age groups, sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia jointly account for three quarters of the global out-of-school population. The increasing out-of-school population reflects the demographic growth in low- and lower-middle-income countries. The out-of-school rate across the entire primary and secondary school age population fell from 27.2% in 2000 to 17.4% in 2015 but has remained constant ever since and was estimated at 16.8% in 2024. Globally, about 10% of primary school age children, 15% of lower secondary school age adolescents and 31% of upper secondary school age youth are out of school.

Unlike the out-of-school rate, which has been stagnating, the completion rate – a flagship indicator in the Sustainable Development Goals – has been increasing. Defined as the proportion of those who reached the last grade of an education level within three to five years from the official graduation age, the primary completion rate increased from 77% in 2000 to 84.5% in 2015 and reached 88% in 2024. The lower secondary completion rate increased from 60% to 73% and 78% and the upper secondary completion rate increased from 37% to 53% and 61%. Although it has slowed down a little in primary and lower secondary education, it has increased at almost the same pace in upper secondary education between 2000 and 2024.

In order to explain this apparent paradox, it is important to recall that, as enrolment surged in low- and middle-income countries in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the capacity of many education systems to accommodate these additional students came under severe strain. Quality declined in many countries, pushing repetition rates up and halting students' progress. However, systems gradually adjusted. In primary education, among 118 countries with observations in 2000 and 2024, repetition rates fell in practically every country, on average by about two thirds. In lower secondary education, repetition rates fell on average by about 40%. In other words, while student numbers may no longer appear to increase as fast, as there are fewer repeaters, more of those students in the education system have continued to progress, reaching the end of each cycle.

Upper secondary school completion rate, 2000–2024 (percentage)



Additional resources, press releases, data blog/stories, etc. with links:

- https://www.unesco.org/en/education/view?hub=216920
- https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000397618_eng

Storyline author(s)/contributor(s): Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO; UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS

Target 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

Indicator 4.2.1 Proportion of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex

Custodian agency(ies): UNICEF

Indicator 4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex

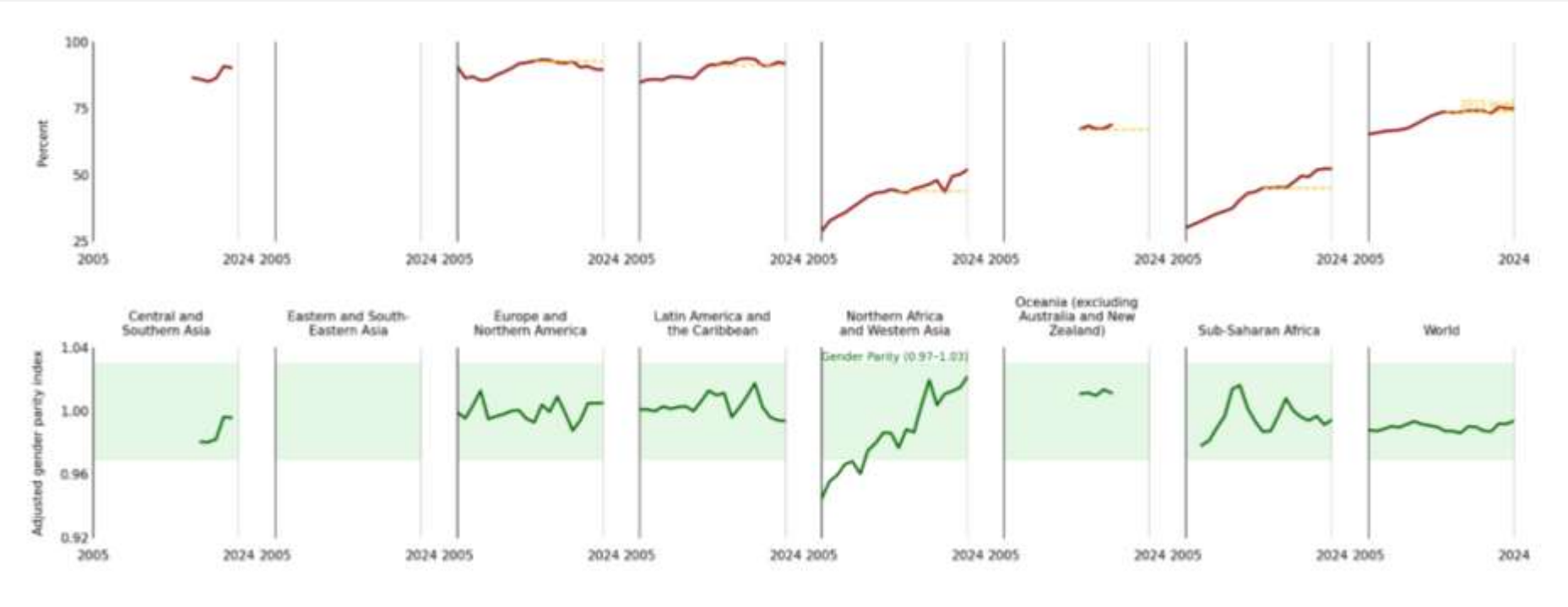
Early childhood education must be enshrined in national legal frameworks

Participation in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age has shown moderate global progress since the adoption of the SDGs, increasing from 74% in 2015 to 75% in 2024. However, progress has been uneven across regions. High participation levels remain stable in regions such as Europe and Northern America and Latin America and the Caribbean, where rates are consistently above 90%, indicating that early childhood education is already widely institutionalized within education systems. At the global level, however, the pace of progress remains relatively slow, suggesting that expanding equitable access to early childhood education continues to be a challenge in several parts of the world.

The most significant constraints remain in Sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Africa and Western Asia, where participation rates have increased from roughly 45% in 2015 to around 52% in 2024, but still remain far below global averages. These patterns point to systemic structural challenges, including limited availability of organized early childhood education programmes, shortages of trained early childhood educators, insufficient infrastructure, and constrained public financing for pre-primary education. In many contexts, early learning opportunities remain heavily dependent on household resources or private provision, which can exacerbate inequalities in access, particularly for children from disadvantaged or rural backgrounds.

Despite these disparities in access, the Adjusted Gender Parity Index indicates that participation rates for girls and boys are broadly balanced at the global level, suggesting that gender gaps are not the primary driver of inequality in early childhood participation. Addressing the remaining gaps will therefore require sustained policy attention and investment in early childhood education systems, particularly in regions where participation remains low. Expanding access to affordable and publicly supported pre-primary programmes, strengthening the early childhood education workforce, and improving infrastructure and service quality will be essential to ensure that children enter primary school with strong foundations for learning and to accelerate progress toward SDG Target 4.2.

Progression of participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age) and related adjusted gender parity index by SDG regions, 2015 to 2024



Storyline author(s)/contributor(s): Contributors

Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS

Target 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

Indicator 4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS

Target 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

Indicator 4.4.1 Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill

Great disparities in Internet users' skillsets; strongest skills are in communication

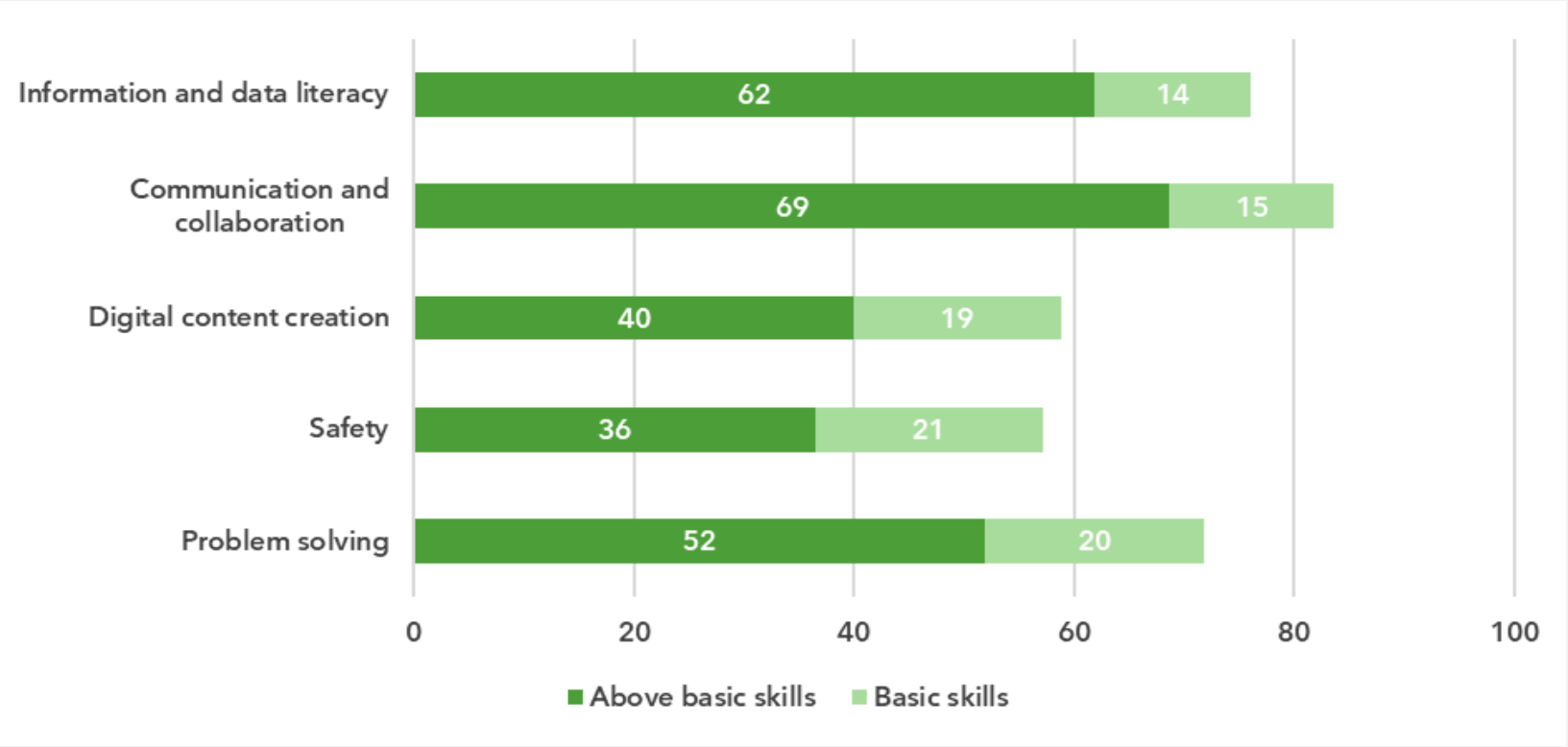
Because self-reporting of individuals' ICT skills may be subjective, ICT skills are measured based on whether an individual has recently performed certain activities that presuppose a degree of proficiency in the relevant skills. These are grouped into five areas: information and data literacy; communication and collaboration; digital content creation; safety; and problem solving.

While the importance of digital skills in leveraging ICTs for economic prosperity and social well-being is well-documented, data remain very scant. Only about 100 countries have submitted data since 2020, and rarely for all skill areas. Even fewer – just 50 countries – provide comparable data on ICT skill levels (see here for details on the methodology for calculating ICT skill levels).

Despite these gaps, certain trends in ICT skills are emerging. Communication and collaboration skills are the most prevalent, with 84% of Internet users reporting at least basic skills in this area. Information and data literacy is the second most prevalent skill area (76% of Internet users with at least basic skills), followed by problem solving (72%), digital content creation (59%) and safety (57%).

The relatively low level of skills in countries providing data contrasts with their high median share of overall Internet use, 92%. This gap between individuals using the Internet and those with digital skills demonstrates that many may be using the Internet without being able to fully benefit from it or avoid its dangers.

Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill, 2025 or latest year available



Additional resources, press releases, data blog/stories, etc. with links:

- ITU (2025): Measuring digital development: Facts and Figures 2025, https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/facts-figures-2025/
- ITU (2025): Methodology for measuring ICT skills, ICT skills (February 2025 revision)

Storyline author(s)/contributor(s): Martin Schaaper, ITU

Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS, ITU

Target 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

Indicator 4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated

Inequalities in educational access and outcomes persist, particularly at higher levels of education

Education disparities in indicator 4.5.1 are measured by the ratio between population subgroups, adjusted to be symmetrical around 1.00, with a ratio between 0.97 and 1.03 indicating parity. Since parity ratios can vary above or below 1, their average can mask inequalities in countries. For example, the global parity ratio for indicator 4.2.2 – the participation rate in organized learning (one year before the primary entrance age) – was 0.99 in 2024, meaning 99 girls were attending organized learning for every 100 boys. However, among the 167 countries with recent data, almost 40% had not reached gender parity.

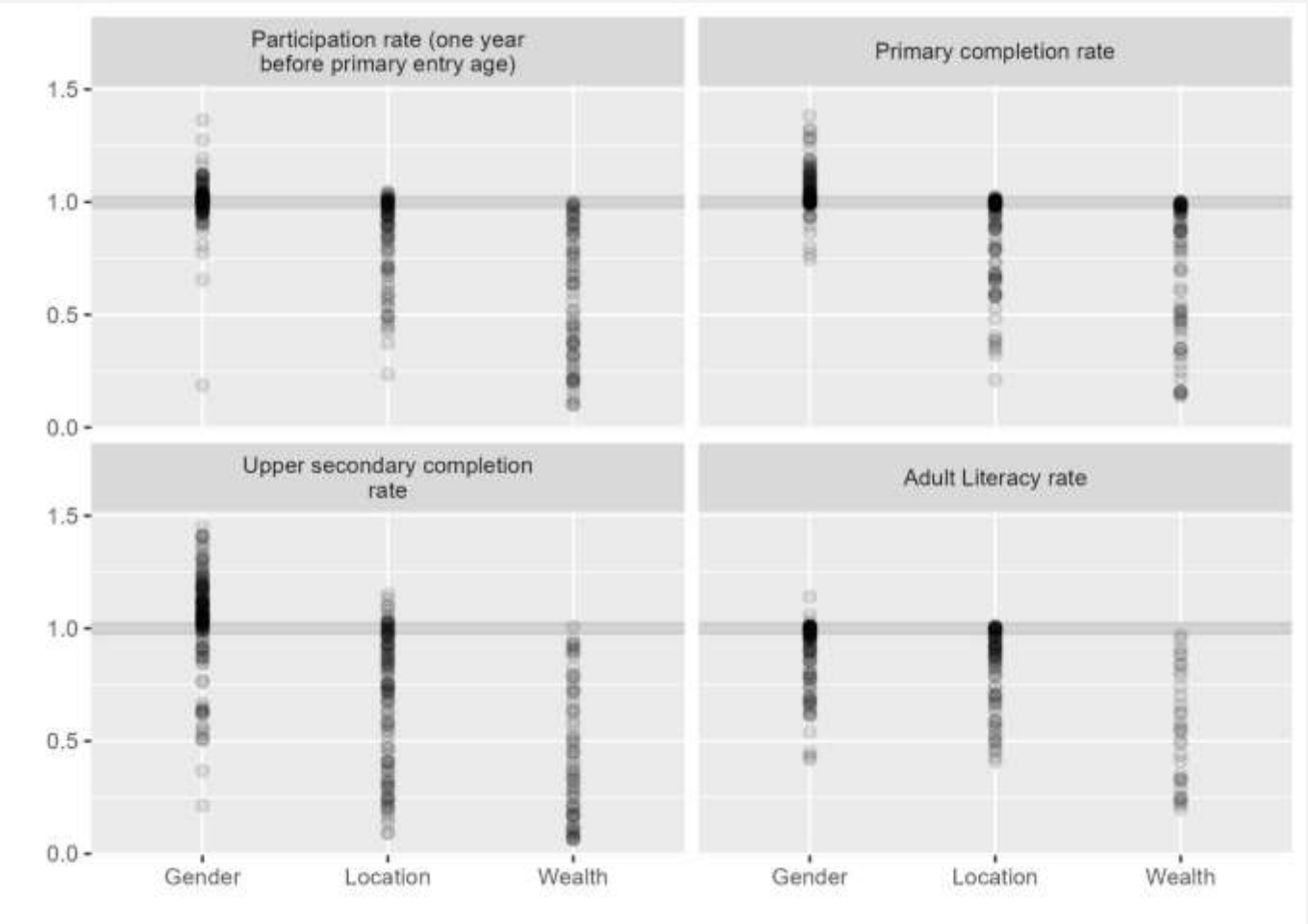
Close to four in ten countries with data do not meet gender parity in primary completion rates (indicator 4.1.2). This proportion increases at higher levels of education, with half of countries showing disparities at lower secondary age groups, and almost five in six countries showing disparities for upper secondary education. Globally, parity ratios in completion rates were close to equality in 2015, increasing slowly but steadily until 2025, and reaching as high as 1.05 for upper secondary education. At the country level, boys are at a disadvantage in roughly two-thirds of countries with data across all three age groups. However, large disparities to the disadvantage of girls persist in a number of sub-Saharan African countries.

Patterns in gender disparities for learning outcomes are more varied. In reading proficiency at the end of primary, one third of countries with data reach gender parity, falling to just a handful of countries at the lower secondary level. In nearly all these countries boys perform more poorly than girls. In mathematics, and at both primary and lower secondary levels, two-thirds of countries are not at parity. Disparities are to the disadvantage of girls in three-quarters of these countries at the primary level, falling to approximately half of countries at lower secondary.

Regarding adult populations aged 15 and above, there are significant gender disparities to the disadvantage of women in basic literacy, with only 93 literate females for every 100 literate males globally, falling to 84 for every 100 in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia. Among countries with observed data, half do not achieve gender parity globally, and in nearly all cases these disparities are to the disadvantage of women.

Disparities based individual and household characteristics such as urban/rural location and household wealth are often significant. For example, for lower secondary completion rates, over six in ten countries with data do not have parity between children from rural and urban households. Inequalities between children from rich and poor households are larger, with more than 90% of countries with data showing disparities. Moreover, parity ratios tend to widen at higher levels of education. The proportion of countries meeting parity in completion rates decreasing progressively from the primary to upper secondary levels. For wealth disparities, only a single country with data achieved parity at the upper secondary level, compared to nearly a third for the primary school age group.

Adjusted gender, location and wealth parity indices for selected SDG 4 indicators



Storyline author(s)/contributor(s): Alasdair McWilliam

Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS

Target 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

Indicator 4.6.1 Youth/adult literacy rate

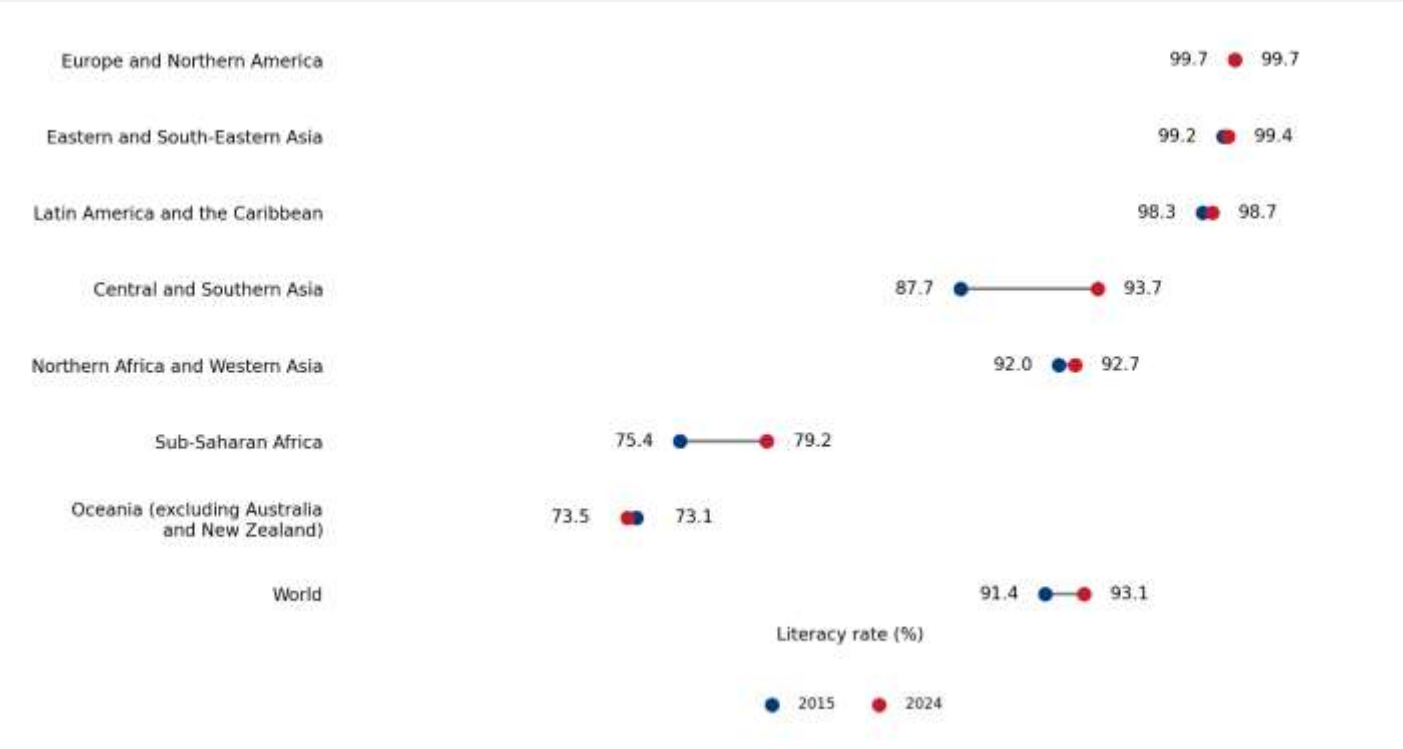
Steady progress in global literacy, but regional disparities persist

Global progress in basic literacy has been gradual since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. Between 2015 and 2024, the global literacy rate for adults aged 15 and above increased from 86% to 88%, while literacy among youth aged 15-24 rose from 91% to 93%. These improvements suggest that younger generations are benefiting from expanded access to education. Nevertheless, progress remains uneven across regions. High literacy levels above 95% are sustained in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Northern America and Europe, whereas significantly lower levels persist in Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

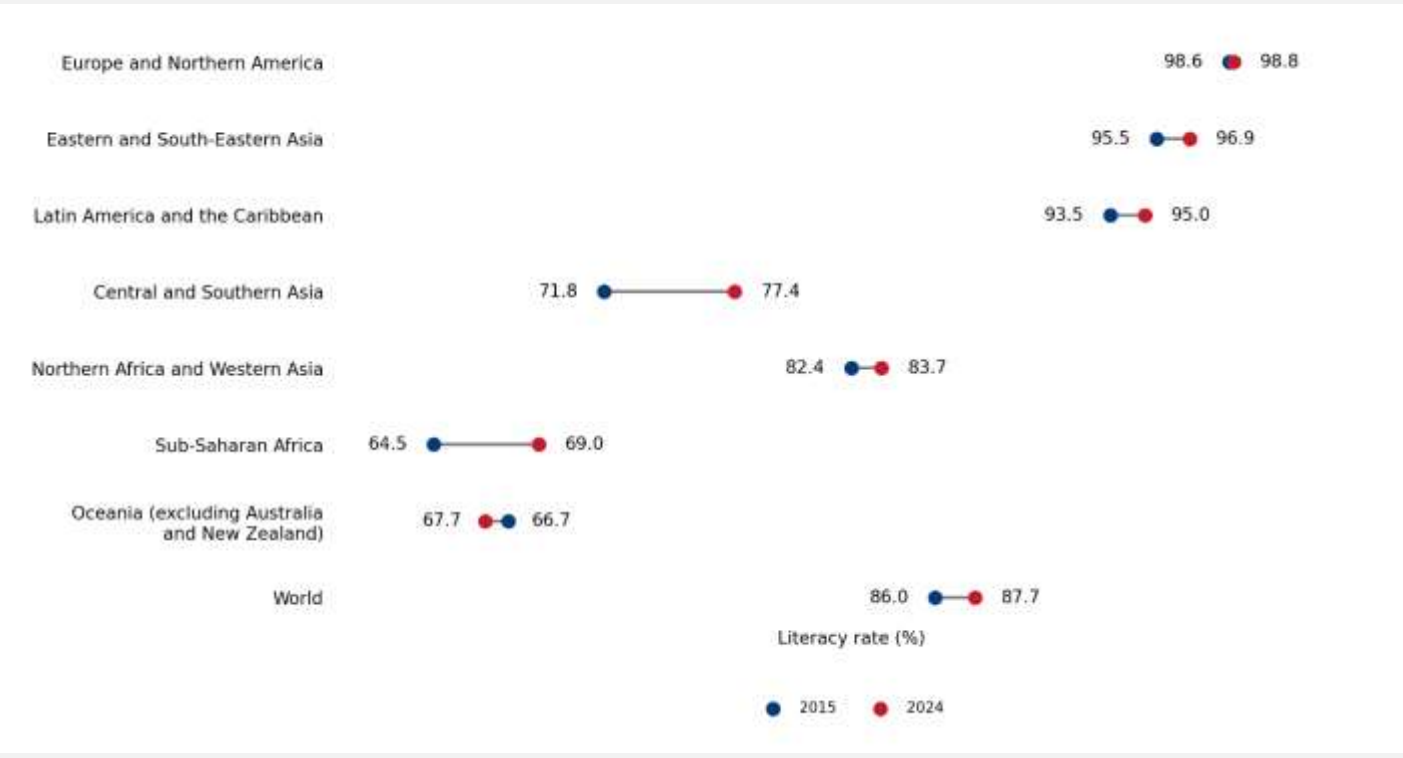
The most critical challenges are observed in Sub-Saharan Africa, where adult literacy increased from 64% in 2015 to 69% in 2024, and youth literacy from 75% to 79%, indicating progress but at a pace insufficient to close global gaps. Persistent barriers include limited access to quality basic education, high rates of early school leaving, shortages of trained teachers, and insufficient adult learning and literacy programmes. In several countries, poverty, conflict, linguistic diversity, and weak education infrastructure further constrain the expansion of effective literacy initiatives. These structural challenges highlight the need for strengthened investments in foundational learning, improved access to inclusive education systems, and expanded second-chance literacy opportunities for youth and adults who missed formal schooling.

Gender disparities in literacy have narrowed but remain significant in several regions. Globally, the Adjusted Gender Parity Index (GPIA) improved from 0.91 to 0.93 for adults and from 0.97 to 0.98 for youth, indicating gradual progress toward gender parity. However, substantial gender gaps persist in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia, where women remain less likely than men to possess basic literacy skills. Achieving SDG Target 4.6, which calls for all youth and a substantial proportion of adults to achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030, will require targeted policies that expand girls' access to education, strengthen adult literacy programmes, particularly for women, and integrate literacy development within broader lifelong learning systems. Strengthening teacher training, improving education financing, and promoting community-based learning initiatives will be essential to accelerate progress and ensure inclusive literacy outcomes.

Youth literacy - Progression of youth literacy rates by SDG regions, 2015 to 2024



Adult literacy - Progression of adult literacy rates by SDG regions, 2015 to 2024



Storyline author(s)/contributor(s): Olivier Labe, UNESCO-UIS

Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS

Target 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

Indicator 4.7.1/12.8.1/13.3.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment

Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO

Target 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

Indicator 4.a.1 Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service

Although progress has been made on school electrification and ICT, basic school infrastructure remains uneven worldwide

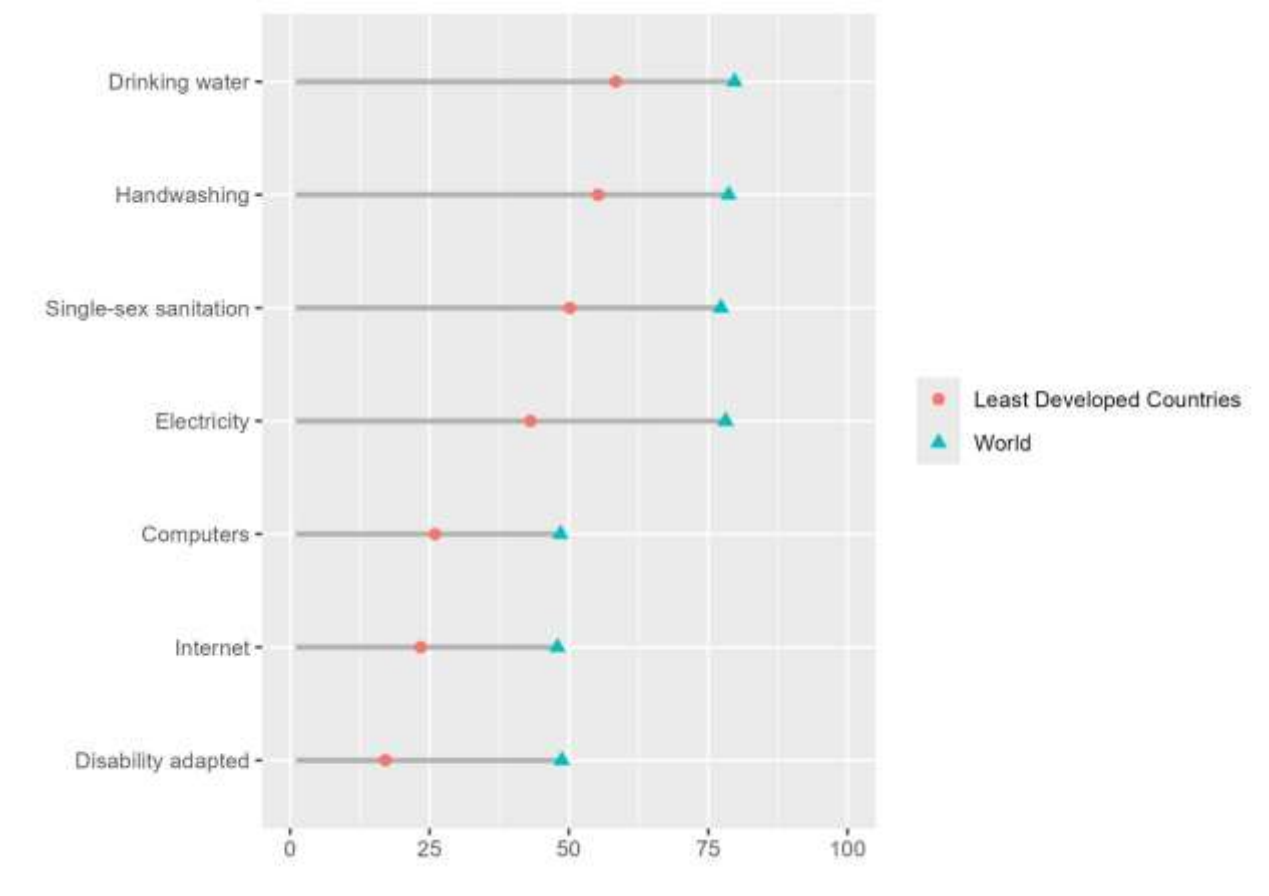
Adequate school facilities are fundamental for ensuring that children can attend school safely and benefit from a supportive learning environment. Yet access to essential infrastructure is far from universal. More than one-fifth of primary schools globally still lack access to basic services such as electricity, safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Access to computers and Internet for educational purposes, as well as disability-adapted infrastructure, is even more limited, with fewer than half of primary schools globally equipped with these resources. Lower-secondary and upper-secondary schools tend to have somewhat better access to these facilities, reflecting factors such as economies of scale and higher levels of urbanization.

Disparities are particularly pronounced in poorer countries, especially in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). In these countries, between 40 and 50 per cent of primary schools lack basic sanitation services, including drinking water, handwashing facilities and single-sex toilets. Limited access to electricity remains common, with more than half of schools in LDCs still without power. Access to digital tools is even more constrained: around three-quarters of schools lack computers and Internet connectivity for educational purposes. Infrastructure adapted for students with disabilities is especially scarce, available in fewer than one in five primary schools in LDCs, compared with about half globally.

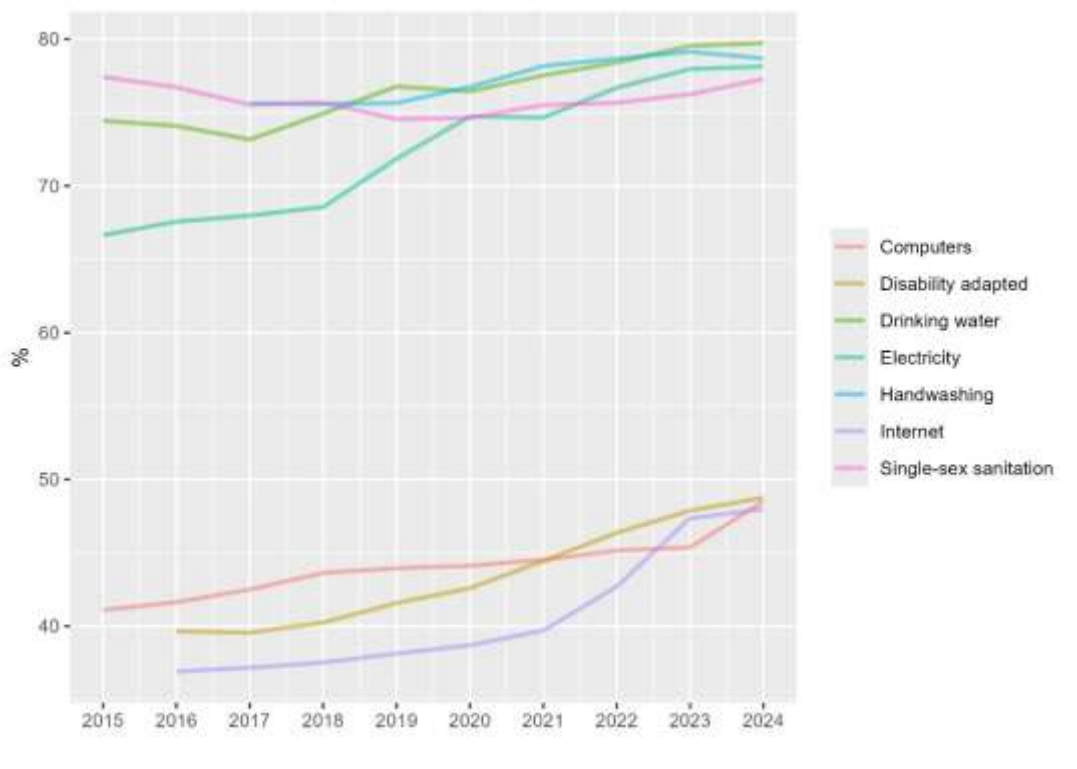
Despite these challenges, progress has been made in expanding basic infrastructure. Since 2015, global access to electricity in primary schools has increased by around 10 percentage points. Much of this improvement has been driven by rapid progress in Central and Southern Asia, where electricity coverage has expanded by more than 30 percentage points to exceed 80 per cent. Access to Internet in schools has also accelerated, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, with strong gains in Central and Southern Asia, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia.

Although global coverage of basic sanitation started from a higher baseline, progress toward universal access has been limited since 2015. Nevertheless, Sub-Saharan Africa has made notable improvements in expanding access to drinking water in schools, increasing coverage by around 10 percentage points since 2016.

Access to basic school infrastructure in primary schools



Access to basic school infrastructure in primary schools over time



Additional resources, press releases, data blog/stories, etc. with links:

Storyline author(s)/contributor(s): Alasdair McWilliam

Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS

Target 4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

Indicator 4.b.1 Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships

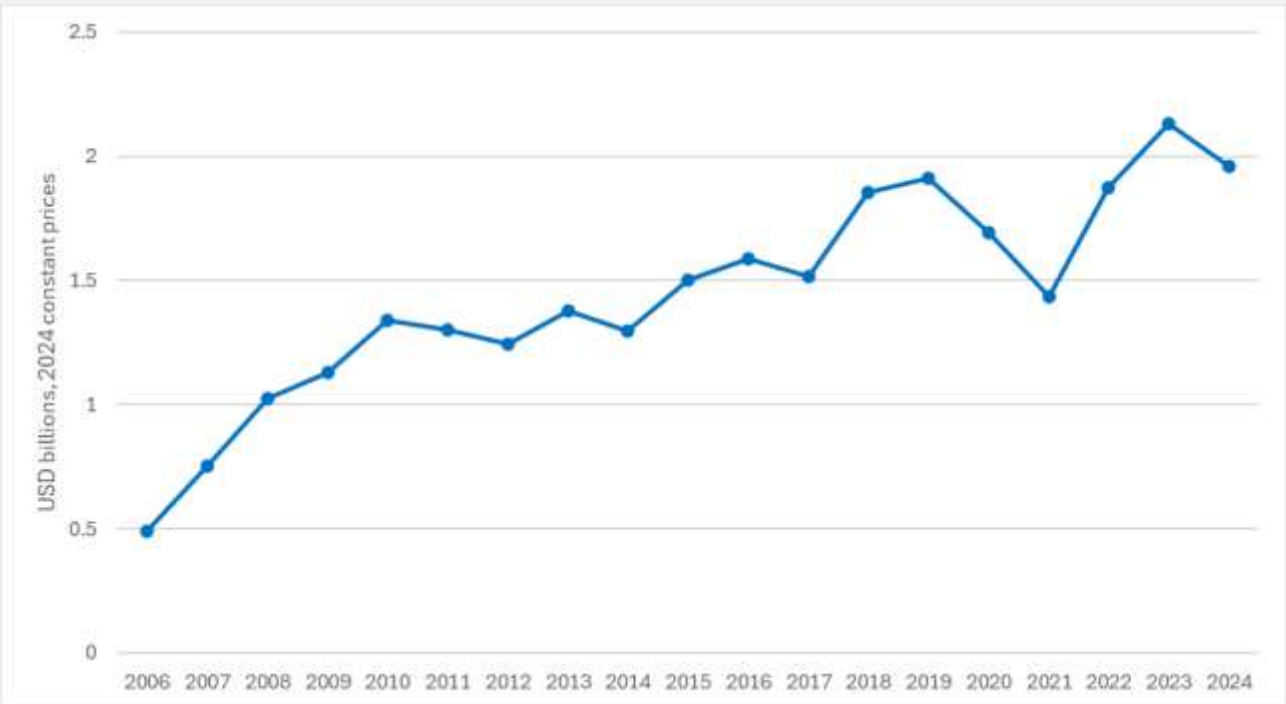
Official development assistance flows for scholarships declined in 2024, but remain higher than pre-COVID levels

Official development assistance for scholarships totalled USD 1.96 billion in 2024, an decrease of 8.1% from 2023. Funding for scholarships increased steadily from 2006 to 2019 before dropping substantially in 2020 and 2021, likely due to travel restrictions and school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. As normality returned after these disruptions, ODA for scholarships recovered significantly in 2022 and then in 2023 surpassed the pre-COVID peak by 12%. Despite the decrease in 2024, the volume of aid for scholarships remains 2.4% higher than in 2019, and 30.6% higher than at the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015. Scholarships accounted for 0.57% of total ODA in 2024, down from 0.59% in 2023 and notably lower than the 2019 peak of 0.7%.

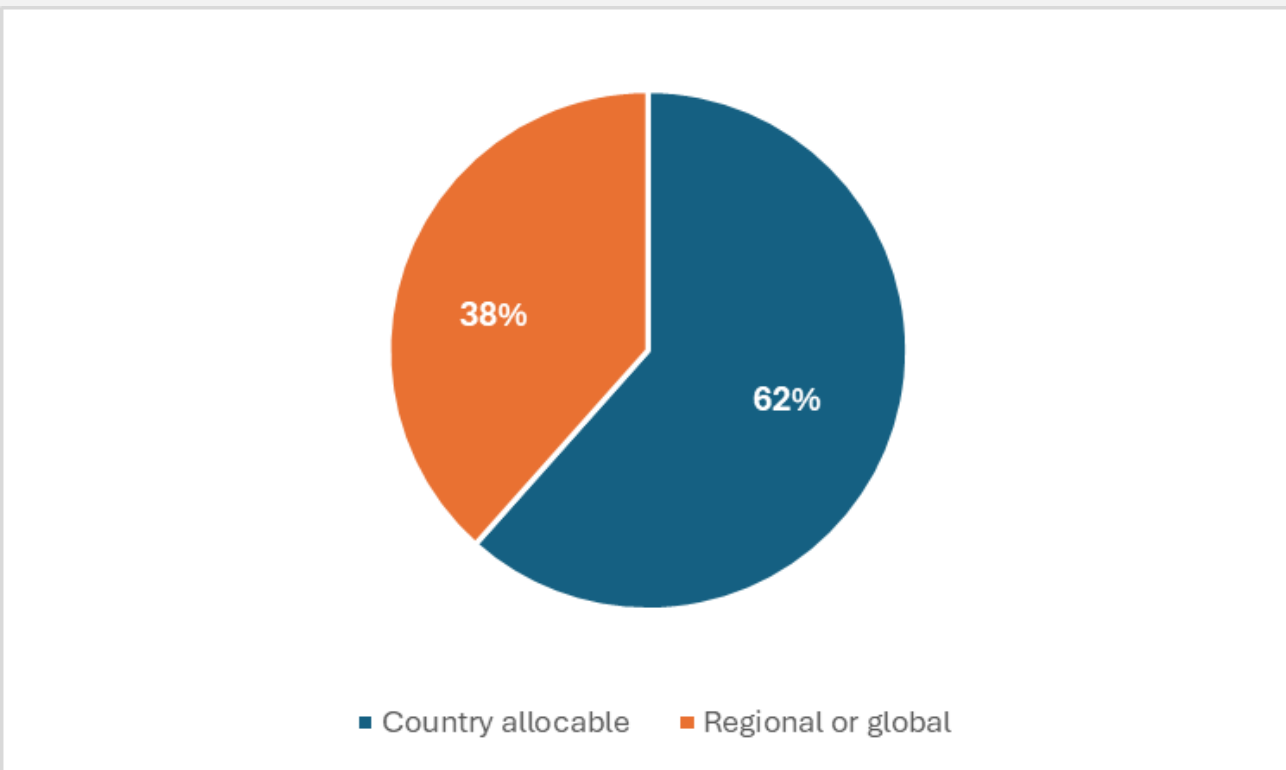
The top provider of ODA for scholarships in 2024 was by the EU Institutions with USD 312 million, followed by France (USD 209 million), Türkiye (USD 174 million), Japan (USD 141 million) and Saudi Arabia (USD 124 million). The largest recipient regions remained Asia and Africa. Over one third of ODA for scholarships was allocated to regional or global recipients, but of the 62% that was allocated to specific beneficiary countries, the largest recipients were Moldova (USD 63 million), India (USD 58 million), Indonesia (USD 52 million), Ukraine (USD 52 million) and Pakistan (USD 33 million).

While the majority (88%) of ODA flows for scholarships were classified under the education sector, the remaining flows fell under 18 other sectors including agriculture, government & civil society, health, energy and other multisector. Scholarships made up 10.4% of all ODA classified in the education sector in 2024, slightly higher than the 5-year average share of 9.9%.

ODA for scholarships from all official donors, 2006-2024



ODA for scholarships by recipient type, 2024



Storyline author(s)/contributor(s): Madeleine Lessard, OECD; Elena Bernaldo de Quiros, OECD; Yasmin Ahmad, OECD

Custodian agency(ies): OECD

Target 4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

Indicator 4.c.1 Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level

Global progress and gaps in teachers' qualification according to their country's minimum standards

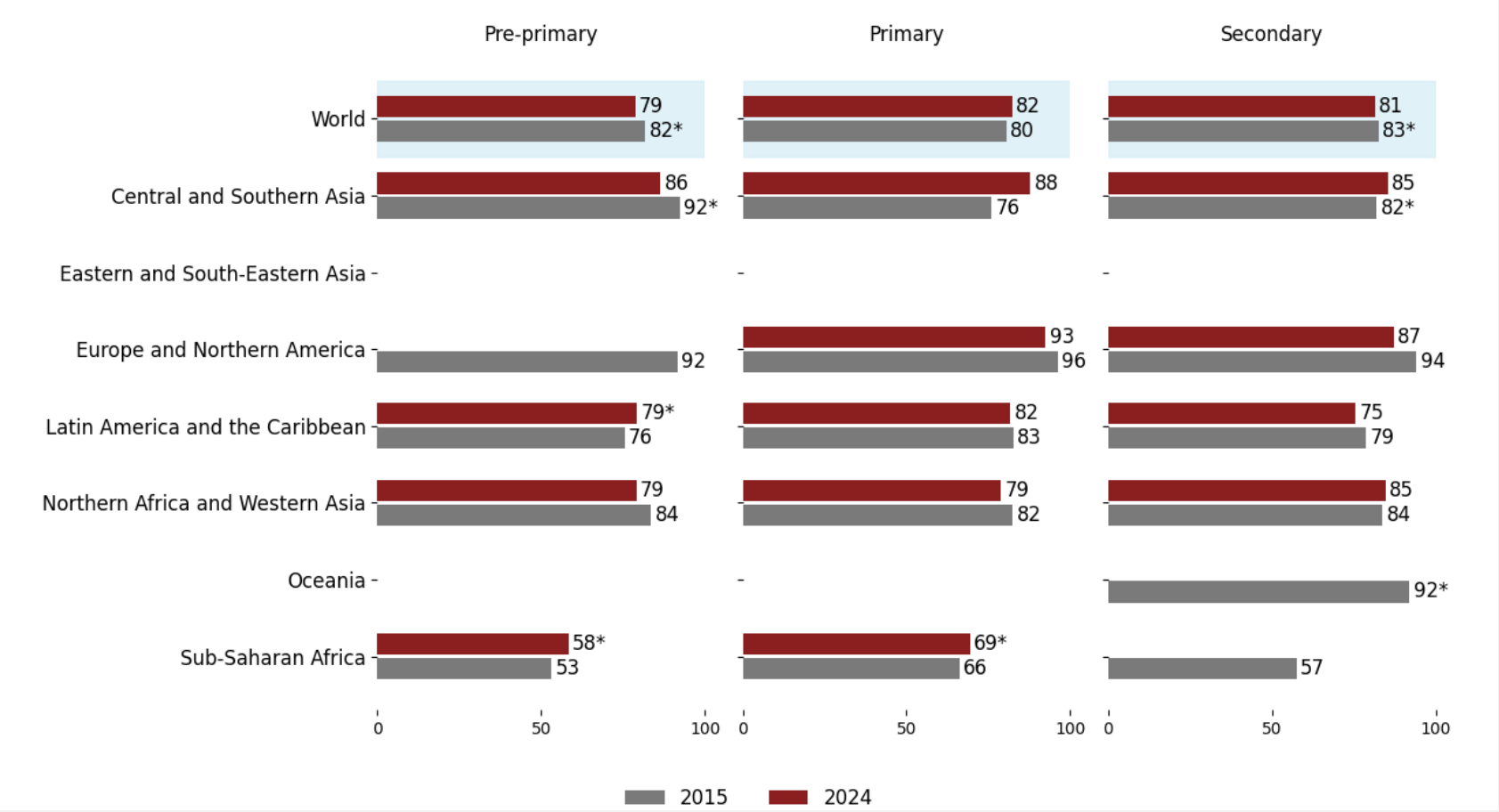
Quality education depends on qualified teachers. Teachers are the most important school-based factor influencing student learning, yet progress in strengthening teacher qualifications has been limited. Since the start of the Sustainable Development Agenda, the share of teachers meeting minimum national qualification standards has changed little, with about 20% of teachers globally not meeting these requirements.

Recent data confirm that gaps persist. In 2024, around 18-21% of teachers worldwide did not meet national minimum qualification standards, with only modest improvement in primary education and little progress at secondary level. Because the indicator reflects national standards rather than a harmonized global benchmark, results should be interpreted as compliance with domestic requirements rather than direct comparisons across countries.

Regional disparities remain significant. Europe and Northern America report the highest qualification levels, while Sub-Saharan Africa faces the largest gaps. These gaps reflect systemic challenges, including rapid enrolment growth, limited capacity of teacher education institutions, shortages of qualified candidates, difficult working conditions, and constrained public financing for teacher recruitment and training. Pre-primary education remains the most affected globally, further highlighting structural shortages in the early childhood workforce.

Addressing these challenges will require comprehensive policy responses, including expanding teacher education capacity, strengthening recruitment and retention incentives, improving working conditions, and investing in continuous professional development. Strengthening data systems and monitoring will also be essential to guide evidence-based policies and accelerate progress toward SDG Target 4.c.

Progression of the proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications by education level and by SDG regions, 2015 to 2024



Storyline author(s)/contributor(s): Olivier Labe, UIS

Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS