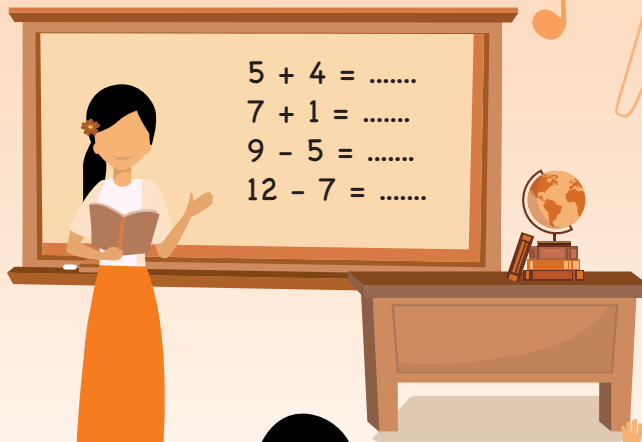



Educational Access and Learning Outcomes in Myanmar





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Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data
CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interview
CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement
CSO	Central Statistical Organization
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRT	Item Response Theory
KG	Kindergarten
MLCS	Myanmar Living Conditions Survey
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoRAC	Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture
MSPS	Myanmar Subnational Phone Survey
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
RAPID	Reach, Access, Prioritize, Increase, Develop
SEA-PLM	Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Executive Summary

Myanmar's education system stands at a critical juncture, shaped by overlapping crises and significant resilience. Following years of conflict, political instability, and economic stress, recent data reveal both progress and persistent vulnerabilities. Primary school enrollment has largely rebounded to levels observed before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the political crisis—particularly when compared to 2016/17 baseline estimates—but participation in middle and high school remains severely constrained. This recovery trajectory underscores a stark divide: while younger children are increasingly returning to school, older adolescents—especially those ages 15 to 17—face steep and often irreversible barriers to continuing their education. In fact, nearly 60 percent of all out-of-school children (OOSC) are in this older age group, and in some of the most conflict-affected states, high school net enrollment rates (NERs) remain as low as 5 percent in some states/regions. These patterns signal that the most urgent bottleneck to education access is no longer entry into the system, but keeping adolescents in school and offering meaningful second-chance pathways for those who have already left.

This crisis in access is mirrored by a parallel crisis in learning. Based on two rounds of nationally representative phone-based assessments, foundational literacy and numeracy skills have declined between 2022/23 and 2024/25. Socioeconomic disparities in learning remain large, with children from poorer households, those out of school, and those with less-educated parents performing significantly worse. While older children tend to score higher on average, the overall level of foundational proficiency is worryingly low, and the risk of long-term learning loss is high. Given Myanmar's already high baseline of learning poverty—estimated at nearly 90 percent in 2019—these findings reinforce the need to urgently prioritize foundational skill recovery and tailor support to children who are the furthest behind.

As public systems struggle to function in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas, non-public education providers have become increasingly central to sustaining basic service delivery. Community schools, ethnic education networks, and monastic institutions have expanded their reach, particularly in states and regions where public sector access has deteriorated. In many such areas, these providers are no longer peripheral actors—they are, in practice, the de facto education system on the ground. The Myanmar Subnational Phone Survey (MSPS) data show a clear rise in non-public enrollment, and qualitative interviews confirm both their relevance and the challenges they face, including weak coordination, limited resources, and lack of formal recognition or transferability. Strengthening these systems is critical to ensuring that children in marginalized areas are not left behind.

Disparities in access and learning are closely linked to wealth, geography, gender, disability, and language. High school net enrollment among children from the richest quintile is approximately three times greater than among those from the poorest quintile, highlighting deepening wealth disparities at higher education levels. Girls now lag boys in high school enrollment, even as they lead in middle school. Children with disabilities and those in rural or high-conflict areas continue to face the greatest obstacles. These gaps are widening as education providers struggle to serve populations exposed to insecurity, displacement, and deepening poverty. At the same time, some traditionally disadvantaged groups—including non-Myanmar speakers—have seen a partial narrowing of disparities, suggesting the potential for recovery when services are adapted to local needs.

Multivariate regression analysis reinforces these findings, showing that household wealth, gender, and rural residence are significantly associated with school enrollment—particularly at the secondary level. Notably, conflict exposure does not emerge as a significant predictor across specifications. This does not imply that conflict is inconsequential, but rather that its impact may be indirect—operating through displacement, income shocks, or localized service disruptions. These mechanisms require policy attention even if not directly captured in the quantitative models.

It is important to interpret these findings in light of key data limitations. The MSPS is a phone-based household survey, which means that households without phone access or residing in certain conflict-affected townships are not covered. While the MSPS rounds are comparable over time, they are not perfectly aligned with earlier face-to-face surveys such as the Myanmar Living Conditions Survey (MLCS) 2016/17. Similarly, the foundational learning assessments used in this report are based on phone-adapted versions of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) tools. These are appropriate for tracking basic skills over time, but are not directly comparable to large-scale, school-based assessments such as Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) or the 2017/18 EGRA. These limitations should be kept in mind to avoid over-interpreting trend comparisons or benchmarking results against prior studies.

Amid the challenges, several promising developments point to areas where recovery is possible and can be accelerated. Notable gains include the rapid rebound in primary enrollment in many regions; a systemwide decline in out-of-school rates across all age groups compared to 2022/23; the narrowing of historical disparities for non-Myanmar language-speaking children; and the emergence of robust, community-driven non-public education systems in conflict-affected areas. Additionally, rural children and traditionally disadvantaged ethnic groups have shown stronger-than-expected enrollment recoveries in some states. These green shoots suggest that when services are adapted to local needs and supported by community engagement, progress can be made even in fragile settings. Identifying and investing in these areas of resilience offers a concrete path forward for scaling up successful approaches and reinforcing system-level recovery (see Section 4 for further details on non-public providers and local education initiatives).

The evidence points to three immediate priorities. First, is the need to prioritize the reengagement of older adolescents—through flexible learning pathways, accelerated programs, and second-chance options—to stem long-term dropout and lost human capital. Second, the growing role of non-public providers must be recognized and supported through inclusive planning, quality investments, and integration strategies that respect diversity and expand access. Third, foundational learning recovery must be at the heart of education service strengthening efforts. Proven approaches such as structured pedagogy, teaching at the right level, and targeted instruction offer cost-effective solutions, even in fragile settings. These must be coupled with attention to teacher well-being, student safety, and nutritional support to address the broader conditions that shape learning.

Sustaining educational progress in Myanmar will ultimately depend on rebuilding trust, systems, and institutional capacity across the range of service providers, which in the current environment remains challenging. But even amid crisis, data reveal islands of progress—and opportunities to build back better. The path forward must be informed by granular evidence, locally grounded partnerships, and a renewed focus on the children most at risk of being left behind.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Myanmar’s education sector had been making notable strides in improving access and equity. Between 2010 and 2017, school enrollment expanded significantly—particularly at the secondary level—reflecting a period of sustained progress (Bhatta and Katwal 2022b; CSO, UNDP, and World Bank 2018). School completion rates also rose steadily across all education levels from 2000 to 2016, underscoring broader gains in educational attainment.¹ Furthermore, by 2017, Myanmar had achieved gender parity in net enrollment rates (NERs) for both primary and middle school education, marking a major milestone in closing gender gaps. When compared to countries of similar income levels and regional peers, Myanmar performed relatively well in both overall school enrollment and gender equity, signaling a decade of meaningful progress in expanding educational opportunities (Bhatta and Katwal 2022b).

While access to education improved steadily, the quality of education in Myanmar remained a major concern even before the pandemic. In 2019, learning poverty²—defined as the share of 10-year-olds unable to read and understand a simple text³—was estimated at 89.5 percent, placing Myanmar among the countries with the highest learning poverty rates globally (World Bank et al. 2022b). However, this challenge is not unique to Myanmar; several regional peers in Southeast Asia, including the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Cambodia, and the Philippines, also face comparably high levels of learning poverty. Results from the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) show that Grade 5 students in Myanmar performed below the regional average in both reading and mathematics (UNICEF and SEAMEO 2020). Furthermore, large disparities persist across socioeconomic groups and geographic locations, with children from poorer households and those in remote areas consistently lagging their peers.

The progress Myanmar had made in expanding education access and improving equity was severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the military takeover in early 2021. The pandemic triggered widespread socioeconomic shocks across all sectors, which were further compounded by political instability and conflict. The economy contracted sharply; trade routes were disrupted; and inflationary pressures—including rising transportation and commodity prices—deepened household vulnerabilities. Amid growing displacement and insecurity, the education sector was particularly affected by prolonged nationwide school closures and a decline in public education spending. The dismissal of thousands of teachers participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) further weakened the capacity of the public education system. As of the 2022/23 school year, 28 percent of children were out of school, signaling a significant setback in educational access (Bhatta et al. 2023). Both short- and long-term impacts of these disruptions are expected to be severe. Learning poverty is projected to increase, and learning-adjusted years of schooling are anticipated to decline for an entire cohort of children (Bhatta and Katwal 2022a). Recent World Bank analysis further quantifies the magnitude of these learning losses. The World Bank report estimates that proficiency levels in both literacy and numeracy have continued to decline, costing Myanmar’s children the equivalent of up to 1.5 years of schooling and an estimated 7–15 percent reduction in future lifetime earnings (Sinha Roy et al. 2025). In the long run, these disruptions risk eroding human capital, lowering future earnings, deepening poverty

¹ Based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data. The completion rate indicates how many persons in a given age group have completed the relevant level of education. By choosing an age group that is slightly older than the theoretical age group for completing each level of education, the indicator measures how many children and adolescents enter school more or less on time and progress through the education system without excessive delays.

² The World Bank defines learning poverty rate as “the percentage of 10-year-olds who cannot read and understand a short passage of age-appropriate material—in other words, those who are below a ‘minimum proficiency’ threshold for reading.” (Azevedo et al. 2021, 5)

³ Azevedo 2020.

and inequality, and hindering inclusive economic growth (Schady et al. 2023).

Data from the 2024/25 school year show that overall school enrollment has increased since 2022/23, suggesting a partial recovery in access. Compared to 2022/23, enrollment improved significantly—driven largely by substantial gains at the primary level and modest improvement at the high school level (Fukao et al. 2024a).⁴ Despite these trends, significant disparities in access persist: children from poor households and children with disabilities continue to face markedly lower enrollment rates. Additionally, evidence suggests that geographic disparities across states and regions have widened, and gender gaps are beginning to reemerge at the secondary level, reversing earlier progress toward equity (Fukao et al. 2024a, b).

Myanmar’s economy remains extremely fragile, shaped by compounding shocks from conflict, natural disasters, and restrictive policy measures. According to the World Bank’s Myanmar Economic Monitor report (December 2025), the outlook for the current fiscal year (FY2025/26) is bleak, with real gross domestic product (GDP) projected to contract by 2 percent and remain 13 percent below pre-pandemic levels (World Bank 2025a). The 7.7 magnitude earthquake that struck central Myanmar in March 2025 is expected to reduce annual GDP by approximately 4 percent. At the same time, conflict remains widespread, displacing an estimated 3.5 million people as of May 2025 and severely disrupting trade routes, logistics, and business operations. Recovery prospects are further constrained by import restrictions; exchange rate distortions; and declining activity in manufacturing, construction, and services. Inflation has accelerated, and poverty has increased markedly, particularly among conflict-affected and displaced populations. These overlapping crises have placed the economy on a significantly lower trajectory, with limited prospects for near-term recovery and growing risks to long-term development (World Bank 2025a).

Recent evidence indicates that poverty in Myanmar has risen sharply in recent years. National estimates show that the poverty rate increased from 25 percent in 2017 to about 32 percent in 2024/25, erasing nearly a decade of progress and leaving roughly 17 million people living below the poverty line (Sinha Roy et al. 2025). While rural areas continue to account for the majority of the poor, poverty has also deepened in urban centers, underscoring the widespread and persistent economic distress affecting households across both rural and urban Myanmar.

Education spending in Myanmar has continued to decline in both relative and real terms. The budget of the Ministry of Education (MoE) fell from 2.1 percent of GDP in FY2019/20 to around 1.6 percent in FY2024/25. At the same time, its share of total government spending dropped to just 6 percent—the lowest level since FY2020/21—underscoring the sector’s diminishing priority within the national budget (World Bank 2025b). Although nominal allocations have remained relatively stable, persistent inflation has eroded their value, with inflation-adjusted education spending declining by an estimated 35 percent between FY2019/20 and FY2024/25 (World Bank 2025b). External contributions to the MoE’s budget seem to have diminished significantly, though the extent is unclear, as these figures are no longer being published.

Against the backdrop of economic and social disruptions and declining education spending, Myanmar’s education system has also undergone significant changes. The education landscape has become increasingly diverse and fragmented, as traditional systems of delivery have come under strain. In areas where access to public education has been limited or disrupted, ethnic and monastic education providers, civil society groups, and local communities have expanded their role, helping sustain learning for children in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas (Rinehart et al. 2024). These parallel systems—often based on local curriculum, languages, and community-led approaches—offer contextually relevant models of schooling, but continue to face challenges related to security, financing, and formal recognition (South et al. 2024). While significant constraints remain, these developments also present an opportunity to strengthen locally grounded education delivery systems that reflect Myanmar’s social and linguistic diversity.

⁴ Net enrollment at the middle school level actually declined between the 2022/23 and 2023/24 school years.

The remainder of the report is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the data sources and methodology used in the analysis, including both quantitative and qualitative components. Section 3 presents findings on the current state, trends, and disparities in school enrollment across different education levels and population groups. Section 4 explores shifts in household schooling preferences, with a focus on the growing role of non-public education providers. Section 5 examines trends and inequalities in learning outcomes among children ages 7 to 16. Finally, Section 6 concludes with a summary of key findings and implications for education programming in Myanmar.

This report aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the current state, trends, and disparities in education access and learning outcomes in Myanmar. It examines enrollment rates⁵ across education levels and how these have evolved over time, with particular attention to differences by demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic characteristics. The analysis also explores whether families have shifted toward non-public forms of education in the current context of crisis and disruption. In addition to access, the report investigates learning outcomes among children ages 7 to 16, focusing on disparities by gender, age group, household wealth, enrollment status, and parental education. The analysis of access also examines the situation of out-of-school children (OOSC), highlighting profiles of OOSC and offering insights into the reasons behind their exclusion from schooling. The report also provides an overview of the condition and reach of various types of non-public education services and systems—including monastic, community-based, and ethnic education systems—and presents qualitative findings from key informant interviews to shed light on teaching and learning experiences within these alternative education settings. Together, these analyses aim to inform recommendations by highlighting emerging patterns in access, equity, and quality within Myanmar’s evolving education landscape.

This report assesses foundational literacy and numeracy skills among children ages 7 to 16, drawing on two rounds of phone-based learning assessments conducted in 2022/23 and 2024/25.⁶ These assessments, administered alongside a nationally implemented phone-based household survey, provide critical insights into trends in learning outcomes and disparities across individual, household, and geographic characteristics. The MSPS learning assessments are administered as a subsample of a nationally representative household survey. This design enables robust linkage of learning outcomes with children’s schooling status, parental education, household wealth, and other socioeconomic characteristics—providing a richer basis for analyzing educational inequalities.

While the literacy and numeracy scores from these phone-based surveys are not directly comparable to results from previous large-scale, face-to-face assessments such as SEA-PLM or EGRA/EGMA, they nonetheless offer a valuable opportunity to track changes in foundational learning over time. Importantly, the differences extend beyond the mode of delivery. SEA-PLM and Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)/Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) are school-based, paper- or tablet-administered assessments that include only in-school children and focus on a broader set of competencies. In contrast, the MSPS assessments are administered by phone and include both enrolled and out-of-school children, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of learning outcomes across the full population. These differences—particularly in sampling frame, delivery mode, and population coverage—limit direct comparability but highlight the unique strengths of the MSPS in capturing learning outcomes among the most vulnerable.

⁵ The estimation of enrollment and out-of-school rates in the MSPS relies on household-reported data using a question that asks whether the child is currently enrolled in any school, college, university, or training institution during the ongoing school year. This wording is closely aligned with the approach used in the 2017 MLCS face-to-face survey, which similarly asked about enrollment in the current academic year. This consistency in question framing supports comparability of NER and OOSC estimates across survey rounds, despite the shift to phone-based data collection in the MSPS.

⁶ The 2023/24 learning assessment round was skipped due to a lack of funding and operational constraints.

Phone-based assessments are a relatively new method for measuring student learning, but they have gained traction globally, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, when traditional in-person data collection became impractical. These tools have been used in several low- and middle-income countries to gather timely information on student learning.⁷ While phone-based assessments are not suitable for evaluating more complex cognitive skills and may be subject to some risk of external assistance during testing, emerging evidence suggests they can reliably capture basic numeracy and literacy skills (Angrist et al. 2020a). Recent studies from India and Côte d’Ivoire, for example, find comparable results between phone-based and in-person literacy assessments for primary school students (Ahluwalia et al. 2023; Sobers et al. 2021). In the Myanmar context, these tools represent a critical and adaptive approach to monitoring learning outcomes amid ongoing educational disruptions.

Sampling

The MSPS 2024/25 round surveyed 8,491 households across 282 of Myanmar’s 330 townships, covering all 14 states and regions as well as Nay Pyi Taw, and representing approximately 85.5 percent of the national population. The survey employed a stratified random sampling approach based on a frame of roughly 150,000 households from 321 accessible townships. The sampling frame was first stratified by township. Within each township, households were divided into two strata: (a) those with heads who were illiterate, had no education, or had completed only primary education and (b) all other households. From each township, up to 32 households were randomly selected, with two-thirds drawn from the first group to ensure representation of more disadvantaged populations. To address conflict-related access constraints, the survey was conducted by phone, with sampling and operational measures in place to mitigate potential biases inherent in remote data collection. States such as Shan and Rakhine were deliberately oversampled due to their higher rates of poverty, remoteness, and exposure to conflict, thereby enhancing the ability to generate reliable subnational estimates. Full details of the sampling design, including sample replacement strategies for non-response and the calculation of sampling weights, are available in the technical notes.⁸

The 2024/25 round of phone-based learning assessment included 2,330 children (1,143 males and 1,187 females) from 1,764 MSPS households. These households were first screened during the main MSPS interview to identify whether they had children ages 7–18 and were willing to participate in the assessment. Those who consented—or indicated willingness to confirm after speaking with their children—were recontacted to schedule a time for the assessment. For the analysis presented in this report, the focus is restricted to children ages 7–16 years, as the sample size for older adolescents (ages 17–18) was too small for disaggregated analysis. The final analytical sample consists of 2,286 children—1,128 males (49 percent) and 1,158 females (51 percent)—providing a robust basis for examining learning outcomes and disparities by age, gender, and other characteristics.

Data Sources

The analysis of education access in this report draws on four primary data sources: three rounds of the MSPS—conducted in 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25—and the 2016/17 Myanmar Living Conditions Survey (MLCS), which serves as a pre-pandemic baseline. MSPSs are nationally representative phone-based household surveys, implemented between November and March each year, that capture a broad set of indicators related to education, demographics, and household characteristics. For example, the 2024/25 round was conducted between November 2024 and March 2025. These surveys are designed to generate estimates at the subnational level, allowing for disaggregated analysis by state and region. The MLCS 2016/17, a nationally

⁷ Angrist et al. 2020a, b; Crawford et al. 2021; Radhakrishnan et al. 2021, 2022.

⁸ <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099070124012035856>.

representative face-to-face household survey, provides a critical reference point for understanding pre-crisis patterns in education access and household well-being. Together, these datasets enable a robust examination of trends over time, cross-sectional disparities, and comparisons with the pre-pandemic and pre-military takeover period. Additionally, conflict data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project are incorporated to contextualize education access patterns in relation to the evolving security situation.

Learning Assessment Instruments

The instruments used for the literacy and numeracy assessments in this study are primarily adapted from the EGRA and EGMA previously implemented in Myanmar in 2016/17 and 2017/18. These instruments were originally designed to assess foundational literacy and numeracy skills of early grade students through nine EGRA and eight EGMA subtasks administered face to face, one on one, in school settings. Given the differing administration mode in the current study—a phone-based household survey targeting a broader age range (7–16 years)—not all EGRA/EGMA subtasks were suitable. To address this, the instruments were adapted accordingly, with simplified or inappropriate items removed, and skip patterns built in to ensure age-appropriate administration for older children. All assessments were conducted in the Myanmar language, consistent with the language of instruction in most primary schools.

The literacy assessment covers six of the nine EGRA subtasks: (a) letter name knowledge, (b) familiar word reading, (c) invented word reading, (d) listening comprehension, (e) oral reading fluency, and (f) reading comprehension. These items are either identical to or closely aligned with those used in the 2017/18 EGRA for Myanmar. Children were assessed based on age level, with easier items skipped for older children. Older children (ages 15–18) were presented with additional, more complex questions to better reflect their expected skill level. The numeracy assessment draws from all eight core EGMA subtasks for younger children ages 7–11: (a) number identification, (b) simple addition, (c) simple subtraction, (d) word problems involving basic operations, (e) complex subtraction, (f) decimal sums, (g) place value, and (h) word problems involving multiplication and division. For children ages 12–18, additional subtasks were included to assess more advanced numeracy competencies.

Given that the base instruments were designed for younger students, older children in the sample—especially those in higher grades—may have found many of the items relatively easy. This is reflected in higher performance among older age groups, as discussed in Section 5. Nonetheless, the adapted questions are comparable in difficulty to those used in similar studies. For instance, the literacy items administered in this study are no easier than those used by Radhakrishnan et al. (2022) to assess children in Grades 4 and 5 in Nepal, and the numeracy tasks are more complex than those employed in earlier phone-based assessments such as Crawford et al. (2021). This reinforces the relevance and appropriateness of the instruments for assessing basic skills across a wide age range in a remote data collection context.

Implementation of Learning Assessments

The phone-based learning assessment was implemented in three key stages: (a) instrument development, (b) training and piloting, and (c) assessment administration with quality assurance. Instrument development drew on international experience with phone-based assessments and adapted relevant EGRA/EGMA items from Myanmar's earlier surveys to suit a remote format. For older students, additional questions were drawn from the MoE's curriculum for Grades 4 and 5 (literacy), and from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) Grade 4 assessment framework (numeracy), ensuring age-appropriate and context-relevant content. The adaptation and development of assessment items were led by the World Bank team in close consultation with a subject matter expert and assessment consultant.

Enumerators underwent a three-day face-to-face training, followed by two rounds of pilot testing using computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPIs) version of the instrument. Each assessment was audio-recorded and reviewed to provide detailed feedback and ensure consistency. Special attention was paid to technical usability, including the readability of Myanmar script on basic phones. Final adjustments to the instruments were made based on pilot feedback.

Assessments were scheduled at convenient times for households, with advance appointments set by a separate coordination team to minimize disruptions and maximize children's engagement. Each child completed both literacy and numeracy modules in a single session, averaging 38 minutes. Dedicated quality control measures—including audio reviews and regular feedback—helped maintain high fidelity during field implementation. Box 1 summarizes the quality assurance measures used during implementation.

BOX 1

Quality Assurance During Assessment Implementation

To ensure the reliability of results, a set of quality assurance measures was implemented to address two broad categories of risks: (a) risks related to the child's testing environment and (b) risks stemming from enumerator performance during the assessment.

Child's Testing Environment:

Three main concerns were identified: survey fatigue, peer influence among children from the same household, and external assistance from household members. To mitigate fatigue effects, the order of literacy and numeracy tests was randomized across respondents. To reduce the likelihood of children overhearing responses from siblings or peers, different versions of the test—drawn from a pool of three—were administered within the same household. No statistically significant differences in performance were found by test order or version, suggesting that these measures were effective. Enumerators were also instructed to clarify to households that the assessment was not a class test and to request that adults refrain from helping. They remained alert to possible interference during the call and reminded adults not to assist when such behavior was detected. For more complex numeracy items, children were asked to explain their answers, and responses were only accepted if the explanation was satisfactory.

Enumerator Performance

To monitor fidelity in implementation, all interviews were audio-recorded. A total of 20 percent of the recordings were reviewed—10 percent by the World Bank consultant team and 10 percent by the survey firm. Errors were systematically documented using a data correction matrix and shared with the survey firm during review meetings. Enumerators received both individual and group feedback based on the findings. The majority of detected errors— 80 percent—were related to literacy items. All data issues were resolved before to analysis, and the overall low frequency of errors provided strong assurance about the quality of the data collected.

Analytical Approach

The analysis of education access in this report relies mainly on descriptive statistics to assess levels, trends, and disparities in enrollment. The primary indicator used to measure access is the NER, with a focus on children ages 6 to 17, covering both primary and secondary school-age populations. To highlight age-specific dynamics, the analysis disaggregates results by three school-age groups: primary (6–10 years), middle (11–14 years), and high school (15–17 years). Using household survey data from 2016/17 (MLCS) and three rounds of the MSPS (2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25), the report compares access before the COVID-19 pandemic and political transition with the period after the military takeover. In addition to national trends, the analysis explores disparities across a wide range of individual, household, and geographic characteristics, including gender, disability status, wealth quintiles, home language and ethnicity, urban-rural location, and state or region.

The report includes a dedicated focus on OOSC, examining levels and trends in OOSC rates across the four survey years, disaggregated by key dimensions such as gender and geographic location. Beyond quantifying the share of children who are out of school, the analysis also profiles these children to understand their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and examines the main reasons why they are not attending school, including economic, conflict-related, and other barriers. Shifts in schooling choices are assessed by tracking changes in the share of students enrolled in non-public schools over time, complemented by an analysis of geographic variation in non-public enrollment across states and regions. To deepen the understanding of these patterns, qualitative follow-ups were conducted with key informants from various types of non-public education providers—including ethnic education schools, monastic schools, and community-based schools. These interviews offer important insights into the current state and reach of non-public providers, the nature of teaching and learning in these settings, and the operational challenges they face in the current environment.

For learning outcomes, the report draws on two rounds of phone-based literacy and numeracy assessments conducted in 2022/23 and 2024/25. These allow us to examine both changes in learning over time and disparities in performance across key dimensions such as age, gender, socioeconomic background, and geographic location. To measure learning, we compute Item Response Theory (IRT)-based scaled scores in both language and mathematics, enabling meaningful comparisons across age groups and survey rounds. As a result, the observation that older children performed better may not be attributed to easier items, but rather to other factors such as learning recovery or grade repetition. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and item-rest correlations, while predictive validity was tested by examining whether lower-order skills predicted performance on higher-order tasks. Results indicate strong internal consistency and logical skill progression. A detailed summary of IRT parameters, reliability statistics, and model fit is provided in Annex 2.

Finally, to complement the descriptive analysis, the report employs regression models to examine the determinants of both schooling access and learning outcomes in 2024/25. Additional regressions are used to analyze the correlates of schooling preferences (public versus non-public), participation in online education, and parental engagement in children's learning. Together, these multivariate analyses provide deeper insights into the factors associated with educational inequality and help inform targeted policy responses.

Data Limitations

While MSPS and phone-based learning assessments offer valuable insights, they have several limitations. First, as phone surveys, they exclude households without phone access and may underrepresent remote or conflict-affected populations. Second, some townships are not covered due to accessibility constraints, and the sample frame varies slightly across rounds. Third, learning assessments are adapted from EGRA/EGMA tools and administered by phone, which limits their comparability with face-to-face assessments such as SEA-PLM or the 2017/18 EGRA. These limitations may affect the generalizability and interpretation of certain findings, especially across years or survey instruments. The analysis presented in this report has been informed by multiple rounds of stakeholder consultations—during instrument design, data collection, and preliminary analysis—and has been validated through triangulation with secondary data sources and qualitative follow-ups. This process has helped strengthen the credibility and contextual relevance of the findings.

Education Access: Levels, changes, and disparities

This section examines recent trends in school enrollment alongside patterns of exclusion, overage enrollment, and disparities across population groups and regions. While primary school enrollment has recovered to near-universal levels in most states and regions, access to middle and high schools remains far more constrained. The share of OOSC has declined since 2022/23, signaling partial recovery, but millions remain excluded—especially at the secondary level. Many children continue to enroll at older-than-expected ages, reflecting widespread delays in school entry and progression. Disparities are particularly stark for poorer children, children with disabilities, and those living in high-conflict areas. These trends highlight deepening inequality in access and underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to reach the most marginalized.

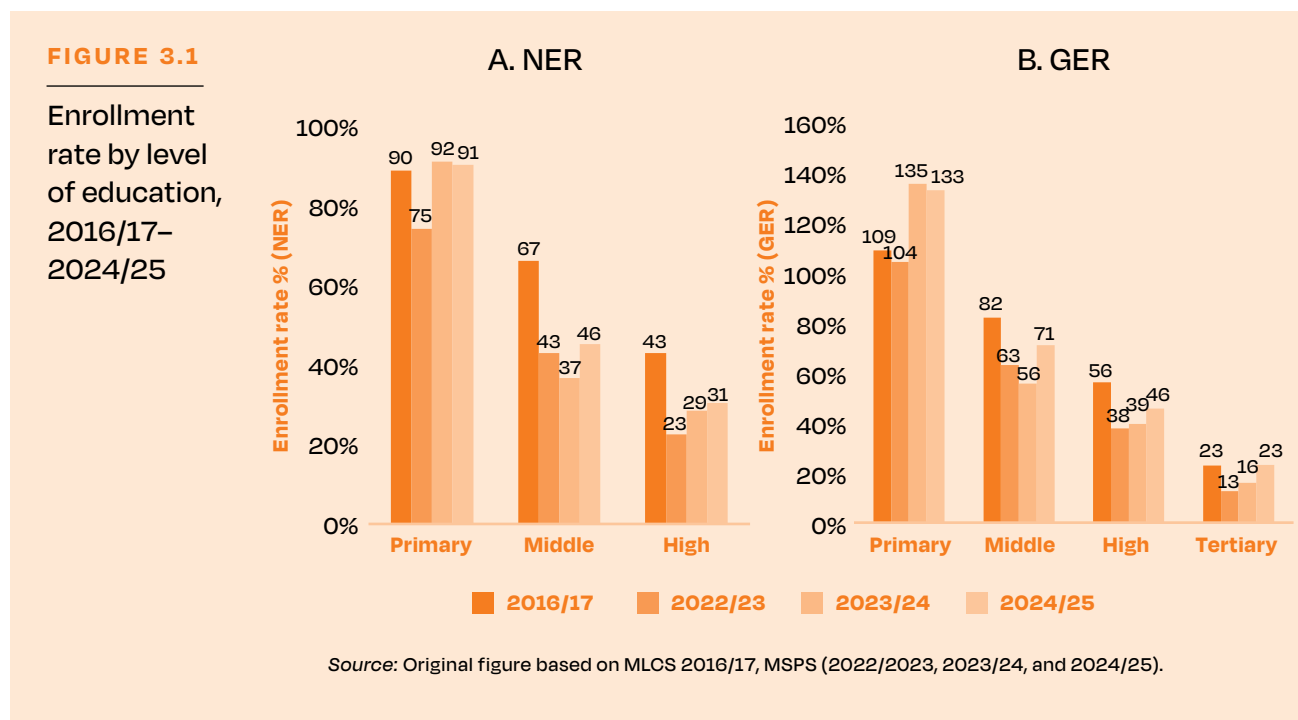
3.1 Trends in education access

Enrollment indicators in Myanmar show sharp fluctuations over the past decade, reflecting the combined impact of political instability, conflict, and systemic disruptions alongside efforts at recovery. At the primary level, the NER remained relatively high, though not immune to shocks. After reaching nearly 90 percent in 2016/17, primary NER declined significantly to 75 percent in 2022/23, during the peak of overlapping crises (Figure 3.1). A strong rebound followed in 2023/24, with NER climbing to 92 percent, before stabilizing slightly lower at 91 percent in 2024/25. This rebound suggests that once schools reopened and accessibility improved, younger children returned to schooling relatively quickly. However, the recovery remains incomplete—not only due to its vulnerability to future shocks, but also because of persistent challenges such as widespread overage enrollment and lower NERs at the secondary level compared to pre-pandemic levels.

At the middle and high school levels, patterns were more volatile and recovery weaker, underscoring the fragility of secondary education under crisis conditions. Middle school NER fell sharply from 67 percent in 2016/17 to 43 percent in 2022/23, reflecting acute vulnerability during the crisis period. Although there has been some improvement since, with middle school NER rising to 46 percent in 2024/25, it remains far below precrisis levels. High school NER paints a similar picture: from 43 percent in 2016/17, it collapsed to just 23 percent in 2022/23, before recovering partially to 31 percent in 2024/25. These trends highlight that older adolescents are much more likely to be permanently lost from the system once schooling is disrupted, whether due to economic pressures, safety concerns, or labor market entry.

The gross enrollment rate (GER) patterns reinforce this story of uneven resilience across education levels. At the primary level, GER remained above 100 percent in all periods, reflecting continued late entry and grade repetition. After dipping slightly in 2022/23, primary GER surged to 135 percent in 2023/24, before moderating to 133 percent in 2024/25. This surge indicates a catch-up effect, with many overage children reentering or remaining in the primary cycle during the reopening phase. By contrast, secondary GER shows persistent weakness. Middle school GER dropped from 82 percent in 2016/17 to 63 percent in 2022/23 and, despite some recovery to 71 percent by 2024/25, it has yet to regain earlier levels. High school GER fell even more sharply, from 56 percent in 2016/17 to 38 percent in 2022/23, with only a modest rebound to 46 percent by 2024/25.

Taken together, these data reveal a clear divergence between primary and secondary education. Primary enrollment has proven more resilient and responsive to system recovery, supported by strong household demand for foundational schooling. In contrast, middle and high school enrollment remain far below pre-crisis levels, pointing to heightened vulnerability of older children to dropout and disengagement in times of crisis. This pattern underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions at the secondary level, addressing both supply-side barriers—such as school closures and teacher shortages—and demand-side pressures, including household economic hardship and adolescent labor force participation.



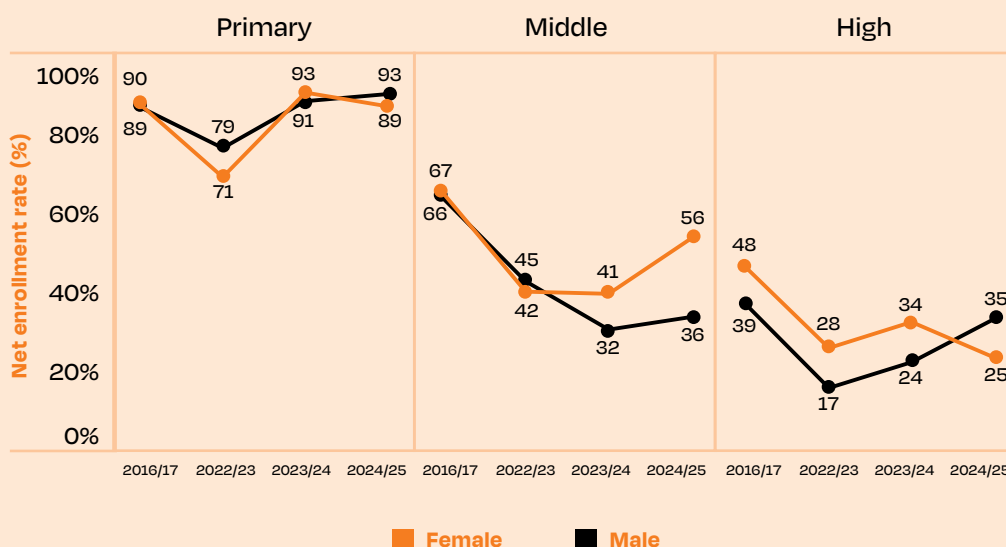
3.2 Disparities in access

Educational participation patterns reveal a complex gender dynamic that shifts dramatically across school levels, with girls initially lagging boys in primary education but surpassing them at the middle school level before losing ground again in high school. At the primary level, the gender gap remains relatively modest, with boys maintaining a slight advantage in NERs of 93 percent compared to 89 percent for girls in 2024/25 (Figure 3.2). However, participation patterns diverge significantly at post-primary levels. At the middle school level, parity was observed in both 2016/17 and 2022/23, but by 2024/25 girls had pulled ahead, with an NER of about 56 percent compared to 36 percent for boys—a gap of nearly 20 percentage points. This shift represents a sharp recovery for both sexes after the 2022/23 slump, but it leaves girls with a clear enrollment advantage at this stage. At high school, however, the pattern reverses: boys’ enrollment rises to around 35 percent compared to 25 percent for girls in 2024/25, despite girls having maintained higher enrollment in earlier years.

These evolving dynamics underscore the importance of tailored strategies to address the distinct challenges faced by boys at middle school and by girls at high school. Further analysis suggests that the sharp drop in high school NER among girls reflects not only a greater likelihood of being out of school, but also a higher probability of being enrolled in lower levels—such as middle or even primary school—compared to boys of the same age. This implies that both dropout and age-grade mismatch contribute to the observed gender gap at the high school level.

FIGURE 3.2

Primary, middle, and high school NER by gender, 2016/17–2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MLCS 2016/17, MSPS (2022/2023, 2023/24, and 2024/25).

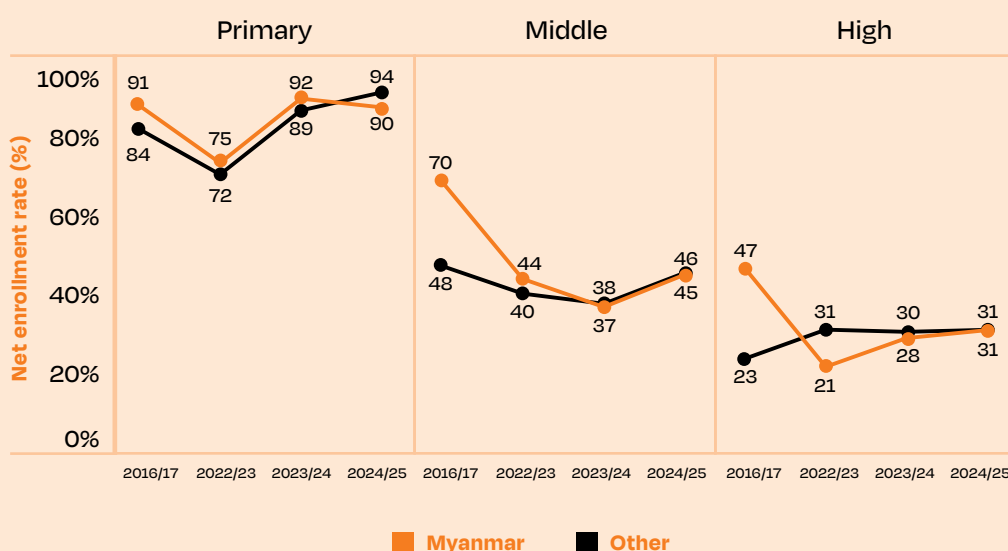
Language-related disparities in school enrollment have narrowed following pandemic-related and political disruptions, with Myanmar-speaking children now experiencing significantly lower secondary school enrollment compared to pre-pandemic levels. At the primary level, children from Myanmar-speaking households historically achieved higher enrollment, but this pattern reversed in 2024/25: NERs stood at around 90 percent for non-Myanmar speakers compared to 94 percent for Myanmar speakers, leaving a modest 4-percentage-point gap (Figure 3.3).

At the post-primary level, the dynamics shifted more sharply. At middle school, Myanmar-speaking children previously enjoyed a clear advantage, yet the steep decline in 2022/23 disproportionately affected them, significantly narrowing the gap. Both groups subsequently improved, converging at about 45 percent by 2024/25. At the high school level, the reversal is even more pronounced: while Myanmar speakers were ahead before the pandemic, non-Myanmar speakers briefly overtook them in 2022/23, before both groups converged again around 31 percent in 2024/25. Overall, these data suggest that the disruptions to the education sector not only narrowed but also reversed earlier language-based disparities, leaving Myanmar-speaking children with markedly lower secondary enrollment than before the pandemic.

These patterns may partly reflect differences in school type preferences, as a slightly larger share of non-Myanmar speakers attends non-public schools—22 percent compared to 18 percent among Myanmar speakers. This disparity occurs against a broader backdrop of rising non-public school enrollment in recent years (see Section 4). The relatively greater reliance on non-public providers may have enabled greater continuity in schooling among non-Myanmar-speaking households, particularly during periods when public schools faced prolonged disruptions.

FIGURE 3.3

Primary, middle, and high school NER by language spoken at home, 2016/17–2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MLCS 2016/17, MSPS (2022/2023, 2023/24, and 2024/25).

Furthermore, enrollment patterns by ethnicity show broadly similar trends across groups. At the primary level, enrollment remains high for both majority and minority ethnic children, with little difference between the two groups. At the middle school level, both groups experienced a sharp increase in enrollment in 2024/25 compared to the previous year. High school enrollment also improved for both groups, though gains were more modest at this level and small gaps persist. Detailed trends by ethnicity are presented in Figure A1.1.

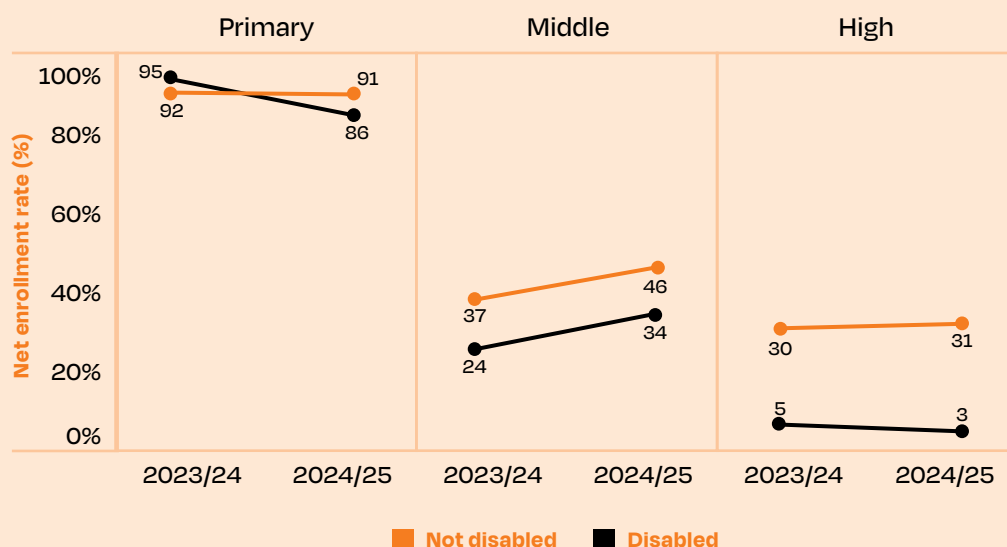
Children with disabilities⁹ face increasingly pronounced barriers to educational participation as they advance through the school system, with enrollment disparities widening dramatically at higher educational levels. At the primary level, NERs remain relatively high for both groups, with children without disabilities maintaining 91 percent enrollment in 2024/25 compared to 86 percent for children with disabilities—a 5-percentage-point gap (Figure 3.4). However, this masks an important shift: between 2023/24 and 2024/25, the NER for children with disabilities declined sharply by 9 percentage points, while enrollment for children without disabilities remained stable. Disparities become more pronounced at the post-primary level, where structural and contextual barriers appear to intensify, further limiting access for children with disabilities.

The middle school level demonstrates both progress and persistent challenges, with both groups experiencing notable enrollment gains between the two academic years. Children without disabilities achieved 46 percent NER (a 9-percentage-point increase) compared to 34 percent for children with disabilities (a 10-percentage-point increase) in 2024/25, indicating that while both groups benefited from improved access, the 12-percentage-point gap persists. The most striking disparity emerges at the high school level, where enrollment patterns reveal a stark divide: children without disabilities reach 31 percent NER, while children with disabilities achieve only 3 percent—a 28-percentage-point gap that underscores the compounding barriers faced by students with special needs in accessing upper secondary education.

⁹ Disability includes physical disabilities (that is, mobility- or movement-related impairments) and sensory disabilities, such as difficulty hearing, speaking, or seeing.

FIGURE 3.4

Primary, middle, and high school NER by disability status, 2023/24–2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MSPS (2023/24 and 2024/25).

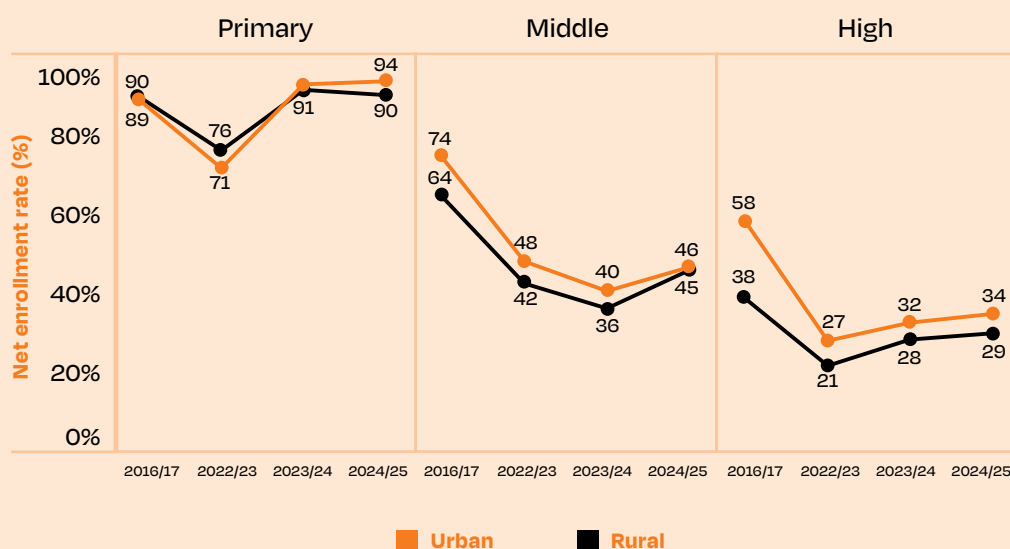
Enrollment disparities by wealth remain limited at the primary level but widen sharply in post-primary education. By 2024/25, the richest-to-poorest gap in primary NER had narrowed to just 5 percentage points—suggesting broad access for young children regardless of household wealth. However, this equity erodes at higher levels: the middle school enrollment gap reaches 14 points, and at high school the richest children are more than three times as likely to be enrolled as the poorest. These trends reflect rising costs and opportunity barriers for disadvantaged households. Despite some temporary narrowing in the aftermath of the 2022/23 contraction, wealth-based inequality in access has remained a persistent challenge. Detailed patterns are shown in Figure A1.2.

Urban-rural differences in enrollment are relatively small at the primary level and have remained fairly stable over time. In 2024/25, the gap is about 4 percentage points (94 percent in urban areas versus 90 percent in rural areas) (Figure 3.5). At the middle school level, the disparity has narrowed considerably—from roughly 10 percentage points in 2016/17 to near parity by 2024/25 (46 percent urban versus 45 percent rural). This convergence reflects the different pace of educational recovery between urban and rural populations, with rural children experiencing a more robust rebound in middle school enrollment during the current academic year. While both urban and rural children experienced enrollment declines of similar magnitude in previous years, rural students have demonstrated a sharper recovery trajectory in 2024/25, narrowing the traditional urban-rural gap at the middle school level. However, it is important to note that despite these recent gains, enrollment rates for both groups remain below the 2016/17 baseline levels, indicating that the education system has yet to fully recover from earlier disruptions.

At the high school level, urban students maintain a persistent enrollment advantage, though this disparity has narrowed considerably from historical levels. In 2024/25, urban children achieved a 34 percent NER compared to 29 percent for rural children—a 5-percentage-point gap that represents a 17 percent relative difference. This advantage likely reflects the continued impact of barriers such as safety concerns, direct and indirect costs, and limited school availability that disproportionately affect rural adolescents seeking high school education. However, the disparity is now modest compared to 2016/17, when the gap was 20 percentage points—a 53 percent relative difference. This narrowing largely reflects that the COVID-19- and military takeover-related decline was much sharper in urban areas than in rural ones, but in recent years both groups have shown a similar pace of recovery.

FIGURE 3.5

Primary, middle, and high school NER by location (urban and rural areas), 2016/17–2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MLOS 2016/17, MSPS (2022/2023, 2023/24, and 2024/25).
 Note: The MSPS designates village tracts as rural areas and wards as urban areas.

Subnational disparities in educational access reveal a stark divide between high- and low-performing states and regions, with the gap widening dramatically at higher educational levels. The best-performing states¹⁰ and regions demonstrate near-universal primary enrollment that remains consistently stable at approximately 100 percent across both 2023/24 and 2024/25 (Figure 3.6). At the middle school level, these top-performing areas experienced a temporary decline in 2023/24 before recovering to approximately 70 percent NER in 2024/25. High school participation in these regions, while exhibiting some volatility, maintains comparatively robust levels throughout the period.

In contrast, the worst-performing areas face severe and persistent educational challenges across all levels. Primary enrollment in these regions collapsed to the mid-30s in 2022/23, showed signs of recovery in 2023/24, but declined again to the low-60s by 2024/25—indicating ongoing instability in basic educational access. The situation becomes even more dire at the high school level, where NERs approached zero in 2022/23 and managed only a marginal recovery to approximately 5 percent by 2024/25. These pronounced regional variations point to deeply entrenched, localized constraints affecting school operations and educational access, suggesting that underlying structural barriers continue to impede educational progress in the most vulnerable areas.

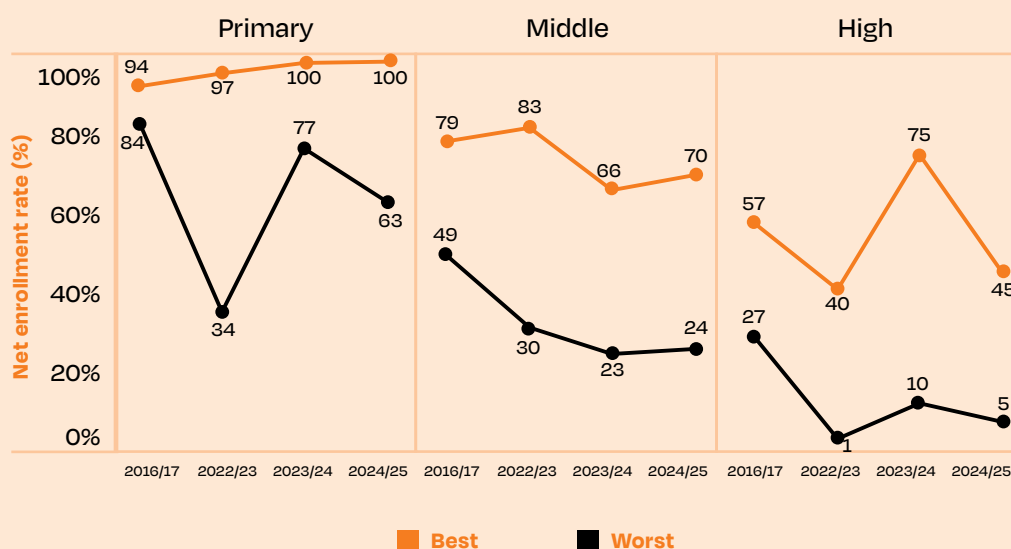
NERs demonstrate relatively consistent performance across states and regions at the primary level, but reveal sharp regional variations at secondary education levels that reflect underlying conflict and capacity constraints. Primary education demonstrates near-universal access across most states and regions, with enrollment rates clustering between 90 and 100 percent (Figure 3.7). The strongest performers include Rakhine (100 percent);¹¹ Kayah and Tanintharyi (99 percent each); and a cluster of states and regions

¹⁰ 'Best' refers to the state or region with the highest NER, while 'worst' refers to the state or region with the lowest NER. For this analysis, the 'best-performing' and 'worst-performing' groups are identified based on their NERs in each given year—that is, the classification is updated annually to reflect the most recent data.

¹¹ Results for Chin and Rakhine States should be interpreted with caution due to limited geographic coverage within these states. The Chin State sample is concentrated in only two townships—Mindat (50 percent of observations) and Hakha (20 percent)—while the Rakhine State sample similarly draws from two townships: Sittwe (48 percent) and Kyaukpyu (26 percent). This geographic concentration may limit the generalizability of findings to the broader state populations and could introduce sampling bias if the selected townships are not representative of statewide conditions.

FIGURE 3.6

Primary, middle, and high school NER by best/worst-performing states, 2016/17–2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MLCS 2016/17, MSPS (2022/2023, 2023/24, and 2024/25).

achieving 95–96 percent, including Ayeyarwadi, Bago, Mandalay, Magway, and Mon. Yangon (94 percent) and Kayin (94 percent) also maintain robust primary participation. However, a few areas exhibit concerning gaps: Nay Pyi Taw (87 percent), Chin (92 percent), and particularly Sagaing (63 percent) and Shan North (74 percent), with Sagaing and Shan North’s markedly depressed rates reflecting serious underlying barriers to primary education participation.

However, these headline figures obscure a more complex reality: a substantial share of children enrolled in primary school are significantly older than the expected age for their grade. Nationally, 27 percent of primary school students are overage, reflecting widespread delays in school entry or slow progression through grades. The issue is especially acute in certain regions—such as Tanintharyi, where 55 percent of primary school students are overage, and Shan, where the figure is 34 percent.

Middle school enrollment reveals marked regional divergence and significant attrition from primary levels. NERs span from the low-to-mid 40s across multiple states and regions—including Ayeyarwady (48 percent); Bago, Mandalay, and Rakhine (45 percent each); Yangon (47 percent); and Sagaing and Tanintharyi (42 percent each)—to higher levels in Kayin (70 percent) and Shan (53 percent).¹² Two high conflict states, Kayah and Kachin, register particularly low middle school participation at 27 percent and 28 percent, respectively, suggesting steep attrition at the critical transition from primary to secondary education. Notably, Mon—which has relatively lower levels of recent conflict exposure compared to many other states and regions—has the lowest middle school enrollment at 24 percent, suggesting that factors beyond conflict intensity may be driving educational exclusion.

High school participation remains uniformly low across all states and regions, highlighting systemwide challenges in upper secondary retention. Only a few states approach the mid-40s, including Bago (45 percent), Magway (45 percent), and Rakhine (44 percent). Most states fall into the teens or low 30s—Ayeyarwady (34 percent), Mandalay and Kachin (30 percent each), Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw (36 percent each), Chin (20 percent), Sagaing (14 percent), Mon and Tanintharyi (12 percent each), with Kayah and Shan North representing an extreme outlier at just 5 percent and 6 percent, respectively. The enrollment drop from

¹² Average of Shan East, Shan North, and Shan South.

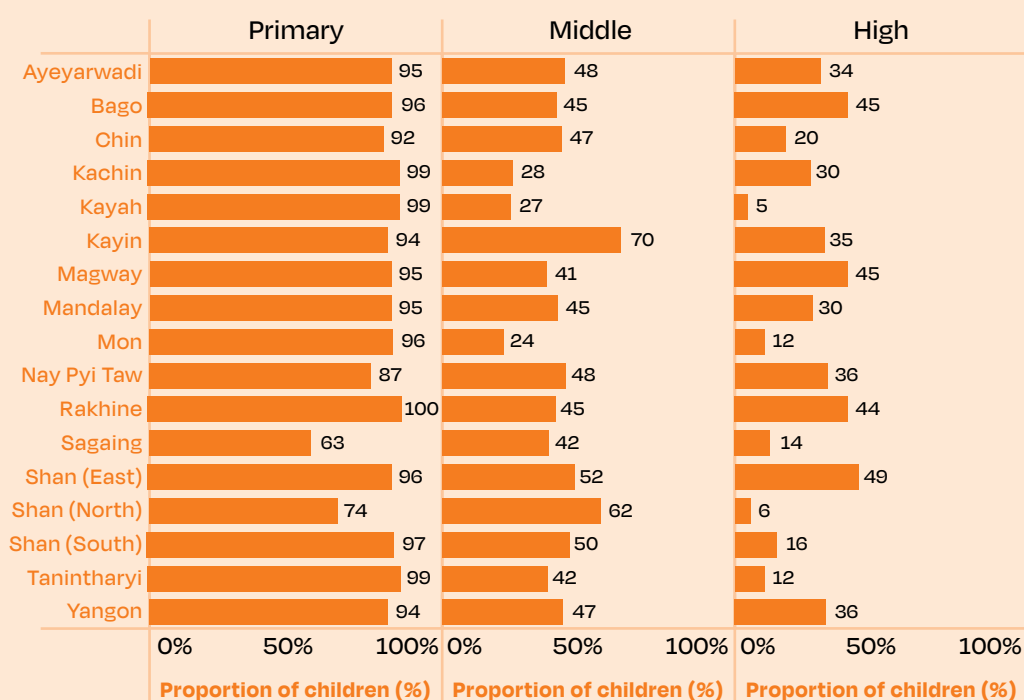
primary to high school exceeds 50 percentage points in nearly every state and proves particularly acute where middle school rates are already depressed.

These patterns reveal three critical systemic features. First, primary access is largely secured across most of the country, with Sagaing representing a notable exception and Nay Pyi Taw showing moderate challenges. Second, transition and retention emerge as the binding constraints, with many states losing half or more of each cohort between primary and middle school, and experiencing similar attrition between the middle and high school levels. Third, geographic disparities widen progressively with each educational level: states with modest middle school enrollment rarely recover at the upper secondary level, while even those with stronger middle school participation experience substantial falloffs by high school.

These findings point to the clear need to focus on strengthening educational transitions and retention. With primary enrollment largely established, efforts must concentrate on raising survival and completion rates through lower and upper secondary education. Priority interventions include targeted retention and reentry programs at the primary-to-middle school transition in the lowest-performing areas (Sagaing, Kayah, Mon, and Kachin), incorporating flexible scheduling and bridging classes. Cost-relief measures such as stipends, fee waivers, and transport support, combined with expanded school supply—particularly safe access to Grades 6–10—are essential in rural and conflict-affected areas. Additionally, diversified upper secondary pathways, including general and technical education equivalency programs and modular learning options, must accommodate adolescents’ work and mobility constraints. Strengthening teacher deployment and safety protocols, while sustaining multimodal delivery systems including low-bandwidth educational options, will be a prerequisite for addressing conflict and displacement-related disruptions to schooling continuity.

FIGURE 3.7

Primary, middle, and high school NER, by state/region, 2024/25

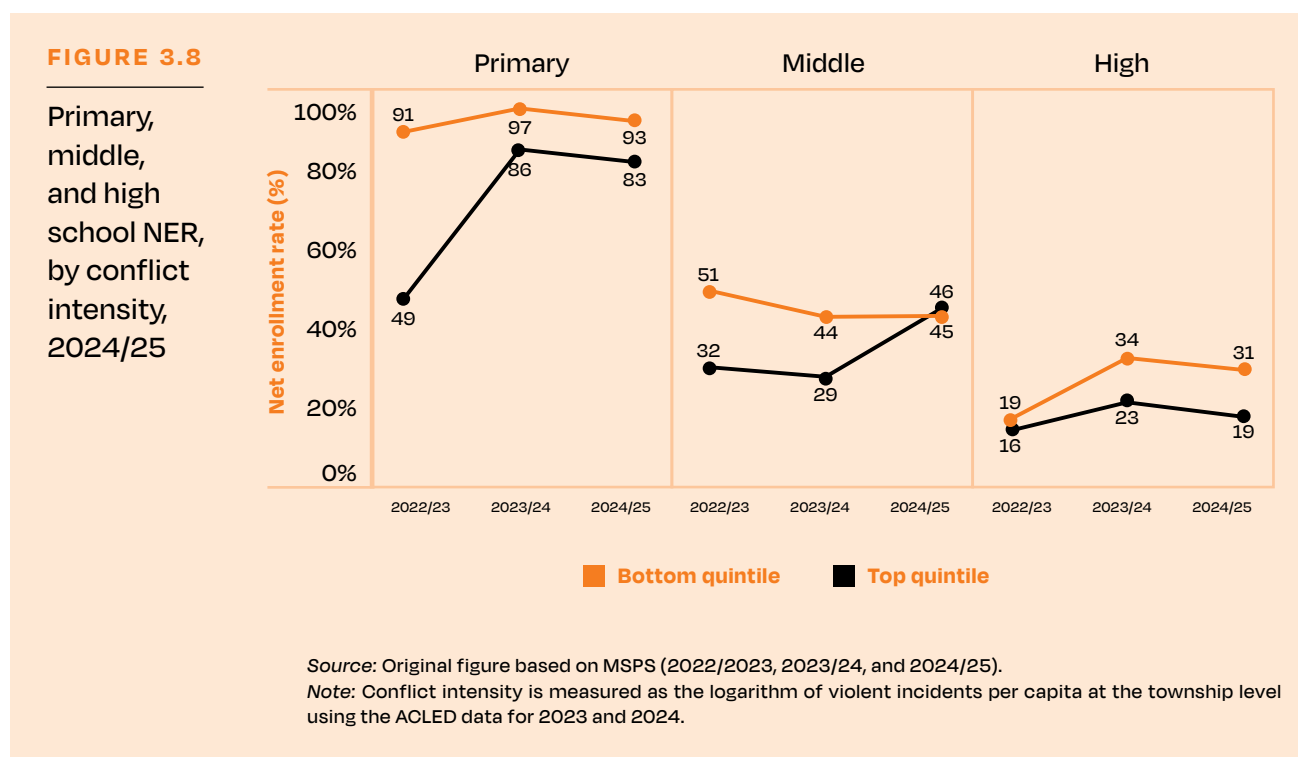


Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.

Note: Results for Chin and Rakhine States should be interpreted with caution due to limited geographic coverage within these states. The Chin State sample is concentrated in only two townships—Mindat (50 percent of observations) and Hakha (20 percent)—while the Rakhine State sample similarly draws from two townships: Sittwe (48 percent) and Kyaukpyu (26 percent). This geographic concentration may limit the generalizability of findings to the broader state populations and could introduce sampling bias if the selected townships are not representative of statewide conditions. Figure A1.3, Figure A1.4, and Figure A1.5 present scatterplots showing trends in NERs across states and regions between 2016/17 and 2024/25.

The relationship between conflict intensity and educational access demonstrates a pattern of recovery at lower levels but persistent challenges in high school education. At the primary level, areas with the highest conflict intensity have achieved remarkable progress, with the enrollment gap between the least- and most-affected quartiles narrowing dramatically from approximately 42 percentage points in 2022/23 (91 percent versus 49 percent) to just 10 percentage points in 2024/25 (93 percent versus 83 percent) (Figure 3.8). This convergence indicates strong educational recovery and catch-up efforts in high-conflict areas at the foundational level.

Middle school enrollment patterns reinforce this positive trajectory, with NER achieving near-parity between top and bottom conflict quartiles by 2024/25, reaching approximately 46 percent in the least-affected areas compared to 45 percent in the most-affected regions. However, the impact of insecurity becomes more pronounced at the high school level, where a substantial 12-percentage-point gap persists in 2024/25—with NERs reaching approximately 31 percent in the least-affected quartile versus 19 percent in the most-affected areas. This enduring disparity signals that ongoing security concerns continue to suppress high school participation, suggesting that conflict-related barriers compound other challenges faced by adolescents seeking to complete their education.



Disaggregating enrollment by displacement status reveals further patterns of exclusion, especially among older students. Children from households where at least one member was forced to flee since 2020 are significantly less likely to be enrolled than their peers from non-displaced households, with the sharpest disparities observed in upper secondary education. NERs average around 33 percent among non-displaced households, but drop to just 6 percent for displaced households at the high school level. While the gaps at the primary and middle school levels are narrower, they remain substantial. Although this analysis is descriptive rather than causal, the stark patterns underscore how displacement exacerbates exclusion, particularly where insecurity and economic strain intersect.

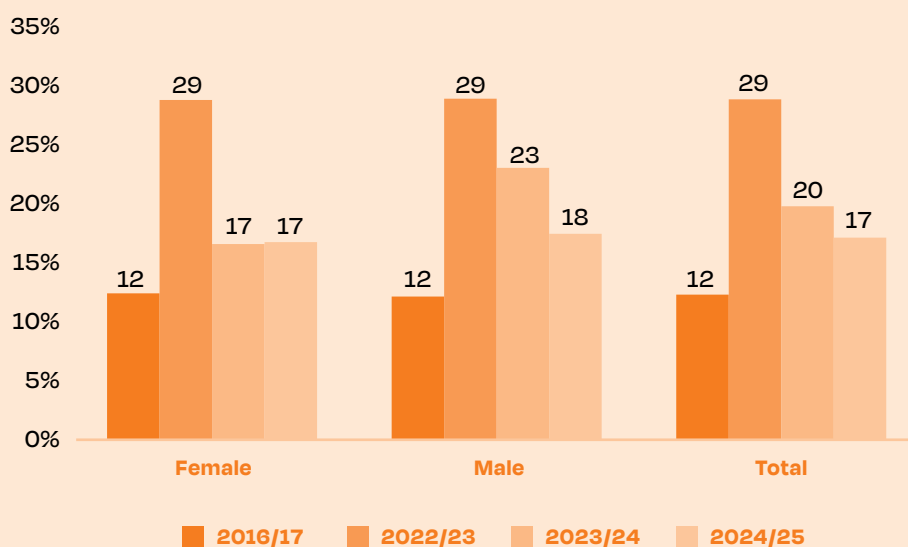
3.3 State of Out-of-school children (OOSC)

Myanmar’s education system has demonstrated resilience in recovering from crisis-induced disruptions, with out-of-school rates nearly returning to pre-crisis levels by 2024/25, though significant vulnerabilities persist. In 2016/17, approximately 12 percent of children were out of school (Figure 3.9). This figure increased sharply to 29 percent in 2022/23, reflecting the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the political crisis, which severely disrupted education service delivery. Encouragingly, enrollment has since shown signs of recovery, with the share of OOSC declining to 20 percent in 2023/24 and further to 17 percent in 2024/25.¹³ Despite this recovery, enrollment rates remain fragile and highly vulnerable to ongoing conflict and economic pressures.

Gender patterns in educational exclusion reveal broadly similar crisis impacts but divergent recovery trajectories. At baseline in 2016/17, out-of-school rates were comparable for boys (12 percent) and girls (12 percent). Both groups experienced sharp increases by 2022/23, reaching 29 percent for each gender, suggesting that the crisis affected children across genders in broadly similar ways. However, the pace of recovery has differed somewhat. By 2023/24, female out-of-school rates had fallen more rapidly to 17 percent compared with male rates of 23 percent, although both groups converged at roughly 18 percent by 2024/25.

FIGURE 3.9

Share of children (ages 6–17) not enrolled in school by gender, 2016/17–2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MLCS (2017), MSPS (2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25)

¹³ The enrollment estimates presented in this report differ slightly from those presented in Sinha Roy et al. (2025), due to methodological differences in the treatment of illiterate children. This report excludes illiterate children from enrollment calculations, while the Sinha Roy et al. (2025) estimates classify them as OOSC, resulting in marginally lower enrollment rates in the present analysis.

Rural-urban disparities in educational access represent a more pronounced and persistent challenge than gender differences. In 2016/17, 13 percent of rural children were out of school compared to 10 percent in urban areas—a 3-percentage-point gap (Figure A1.6). Both groups experienced steep increases by 2022/23, with out-of-school rates rising to 31 percent in rural areas and 23 percent in urban areas, widening the disparity to 8 percentage points. Both groups have experienced recovery since then—by 2024/25, the share of OOSC stood at 18 percent in rural areas and 14 percent in urban areas, maintaining a 4-percentage-point gap that underscores persistent rural disadvantage. This enduring disparity reflects the disproportionate impact of conflict, poverty, and geographic remoteness on educational access in rural communities.

The distribution of children’s schooling status reveals stark differences across age groups, pointing to both progress and persistent challenges in educational participation, though recent improvements are evident across all age cohorts. Primary school-age children (6–10 years) demonstrate near-universal enrollment, with 91 percent attending primary school and only 6 percent out of school (Figure 3.10). A very small share is enrolled in preprimary education, underscoring strong participation at the entry levels while highlighting the need to ensure early retention so that all children transition smoothly to the next educational stage.

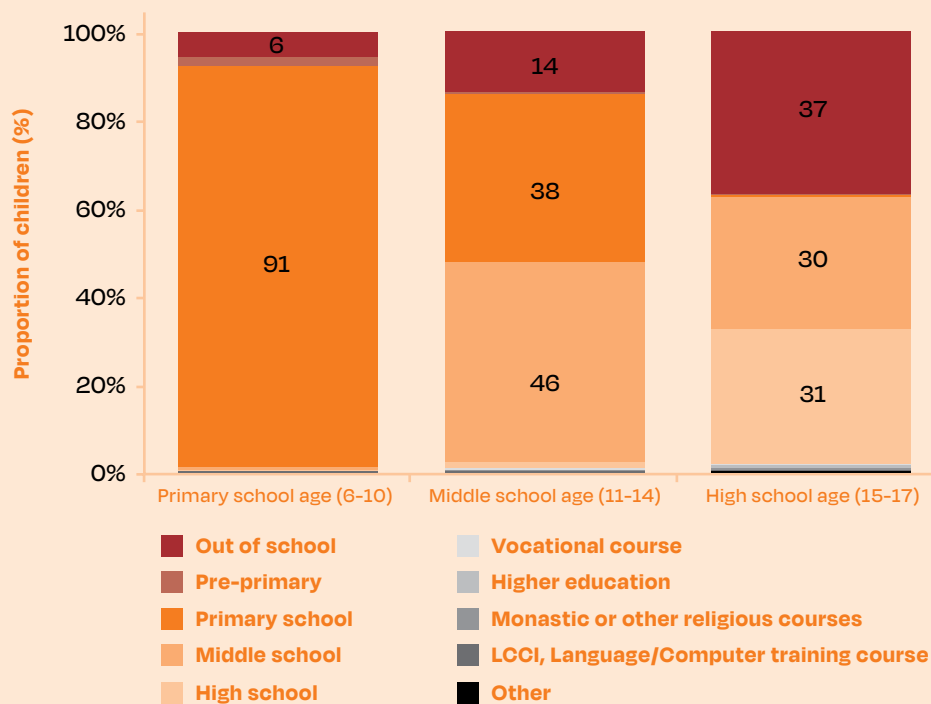
Middle school-age patterns (11–14 years) reveal significant diversification in schooling status and critical transition challenges. While 46 percent are enrolled in middle school as expected for their age, a substantial 38 percent remain in primary school, suggesting delays in grade progression or repetition issues. An additional 14 percent are out of school. These patterns indicate critical bottlenecks in the transition from primary to middle school, creating risks of both delayed progression and early dropout.

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These patterns highlight an education system that achieves near-universal entry into primary education but struggles with timely progression, retention, and completion. The high share of children remaining in lower levels of schooling at older ages reflects both grade repetition and mounting dropout pressures. Strengthening transition support, addressing barriers to continued enrollment at post-primary levels, and expanding alternative learning pathways will be essential to preventing further educational exclusion, particularly for adolescents. It should be noted, however, that in each age group the share of children out of school is significantly lower compared to the 2022/23 academic year, indicating positive momentum in educational recovery (Figure A1.7 and Figure A1.8).

FIGURE 3.10

Schooling status of children, by age group (2024/25 academic year)



Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.

Note: LCCI = London Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

OOSC are overwhelmingly concentrated among older adolescents, with nearly three in five (59 percent) being of high school age (15–17), compared with 28 percent of middle school age (11–14) and 12 percent of primary school age (6–10). This distribution contrasts sharply with the age composition of all children, among whom high school-age youth account for only 28 percent (Table 3.1). The profile therefore reinforces retention and reengagement at the high school stage as the central policy challenge.

Gender patterns among OOSC vary markedly by age, revealing distinct barriers across different stages of the educational lifecycle. Among primary-age OOSC, girls predominate (62 percent), while among middle school-age OOSC, boys account for nearly two-thirds (65 percent). By high school age, the distribution approaches parity (52 percent male, 48 percent female). These age-specific variations underscore the need for tailored, age- and gender-responsive strategies.

Socioeconomic disadvantage is evident across all age groups, with poverty serving as a consistent predictor of educational exclusion. OOSC are more likely to come from poorer households: 27 percent are in the poorest wealth quintile compared with 22 percent of all children. Conversely, very few OOSC belong to the richest quintile—just 8 percent overall, with similarly low shares at the primary, middle, and high school levels. This stark imbalance highlights that children from wealthier households are far less likely to be out of school, underscoring that non-enrollment is strongly linked to poverty across all educational levels.

Conflict intensity represents another major axis of educational inequality, with OOSC disproportionately concentrated in higher-conflict areas. Overall, 24 percent of OOSC live in the top quartile of conflict intensity and 29 percent in the third quartile, compared with 18 percent and 26 percent, respectively, among all children. This concentration is especially pronounced at the primary and middle levels, where 32 percent and 29 percent of OOSC, respectively, live in the highest-conflict quartile. These patterns suggest that younger children in conflict-affected settings face particularly acute barriers to entry and continuation in schooling.

Geographic disadvantage compounds these challenges, with OOSC overwhelmingly living in rural areas. Nearly 77 percent of OOSC live in rural areas, with particularly high concentrations among younger age groups (88 percent of primary-age and 79 percent of middle school-age OOSC). This compares to 73 percent among all children, indicating that the overlap of rural location, poverty, and conflict exposure intensifies disadvantages for many of the youngest children.

These patterns point to several priorities. First, given that nearly 60 percent of OOSC are ages 15–17, second-chance and accelerated learning options, flexible pathways, and recognition of prior learning are likely to have the largest impact. Second, the distinct gender patterns by age suggest different barriers and hence different outreach models across the schooling cycle. Third, the heavy concentration of younger OOSC

TABLE 3.1

Profiles of children (6–17-year-olds) who are out of school and who are in school, 2024/25 academic year (%)

	OOSC				In school Children	All children			
	Primary school age	Middle school age	High school age	All		Primary school age	Middle school age	High school age	All
Gender									
Male	38	65	52	54	53	54	50	55	53
Female	62	35	48	46	47	46	50	45	47
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Age group									
Primary school age (6–10)	100	0	0	12	43	100	0	0	38
Middle school age (11–14)	0	100	0	28	36	0	100	0	35
High school age (15–17)	0	0	100	59	21	0	0	100	28
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Wealth Quintile									
Poorest quintile	33	21	30	27	20	23	20	22	22
2nd quintile	20	20	23	22	24	20	23	27	23
3rd quintile	20	18	23	21	20	19	21	20	20
4th quintile	22	34	16	22	18	19	19	16	18
Richest quintile	5	7	9	8	19	19	17	16	17
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Location									
Rural	88	79	74	77	72	74	72	72	72
Urban	12	21	26	23	28	26	28	28	28
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Conflict intensity									
Bottom quartile	12	23	31	26	29	27	28	31	28
2nd quartile	10	15	26	21	29	27	27	29	28
3rd quartile	46	33	24	29	25	27	24	26	26
Top quartile	32	29	19	24	17	19	21	14	18
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.

Note: Figures in the table are composition shares (that is, the distribution of children across characteristics within each group) rather than enrollment rates. For example, the higher share of OOSC from poorer quintiles indicates a concentration among poorer households, not the absolute rate of non-enrollment in those quintiles.

in high-conflict areas calls for tailored interventions such as community-based schooling and safe learning spaces. Finally, the consistently low representation of OOSC from the richest quintile highlights that targeted financial support through stipends, scholarships, or in-kind transfers remains critical to expand access for poorer households.

Out-of-school rates in Myanmar remain low at the primary level but show early warning signs of regional disparities. Across Myanmar, the proportion of primary school-age children who are out of school is generally low in most states and regions. In many areas—including Kachin, Kayin, Mon, Nay Pyi Taw, Shan South, and Rakhine—virtually all primary school-age children are enrolled in school, with reported out-of-school rates at or near zero (Figure 3.11). However, Sagaing Region stands out as a significant exception, with approximately 34 percent of primary school-age children not attending school—more than eight times higher than the next highest region. Moderate rates of exclusion are also observed in Shan North (10 percent), Chin (8 percent), Mandalay (4 percent), and Yangon (4 percent). These findings highlight the importance of targeted interventions even at the primary level in areas like Sagaing, where educational access may be disrupted by conflict or other localized constraints.

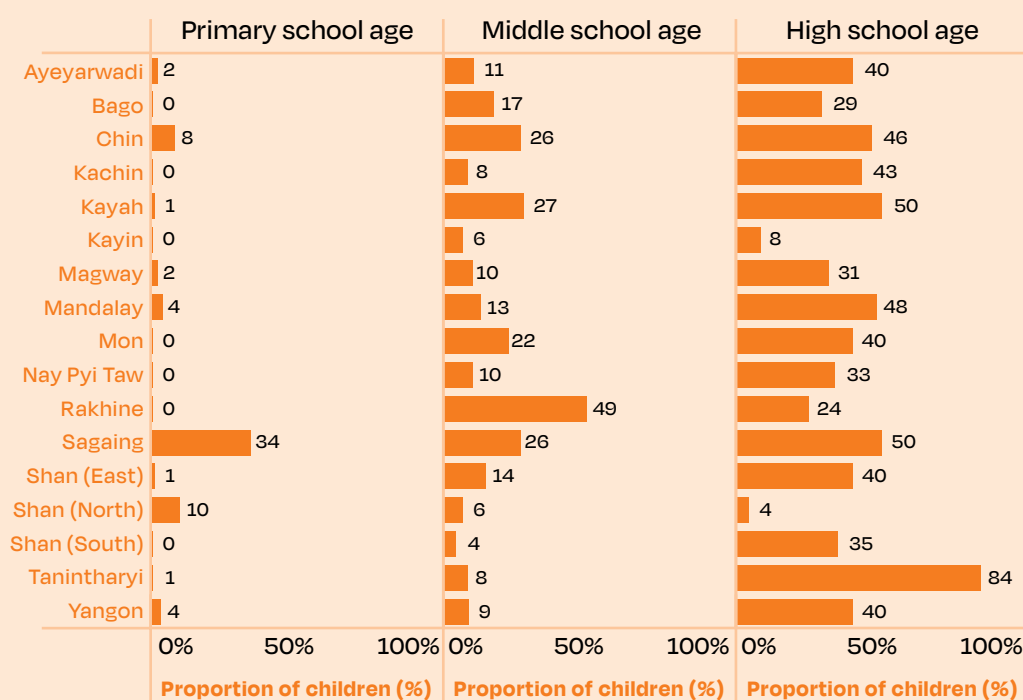
Out-of-school rates rise sharply by middle school age, with regional inequities becoming more pronounced. By middle school age, out-of-school rates increase substantially across nearly all states and regions, reflecting growing barriers to continued education beyond the primary level. Rakhine State exhibits the highest exclusion at 49 percent, followed by Kayah (27 percent), Sagaing (26 percent), and Chin (26 percent). These figures suggest that nearly one in two children of middle school age in Rakhine and one in four in the other three are not continuing their education after primary school. Even relatively better-performing regions such as Mandalay (13 percent) and Yangon (9 percent) report rising exclusion. This transition-related dropout highlights the need for responses that ease the progression from primary to secondary school, including addressing affordability, distance, and security concerns.

Access to education deteriorates dramatically at the high school level, underscoring urgent challenges in secondary education. At the high school level, out-of-school rates escalate dramatically, indicating systemic barriers to upper secondary education. In Tanintharyi Region, an overwhelming 84 percent of high school-age children are out of school, the highest among all states and regions. Similarly, exclusion rates exceed 40 percent in Sagaing, Kayah, Mandalay, Chin, and Kachin. Even in Yangon, which generally reports better access at the primary and middle school age groups, 40 percent of high school-age children are not in school. The lowest exclusion is observed in Shan North (4 percent)¹⁴ followed by Kayin (8 percent), but this is an exception rather than the norm. These patterns point to a serious attrition problem in upper secondary education, calling for sustained investment in school availability, financial support, and tailored strategies to retain adolescents.

¹⁴ The OOSC rate among high school-age children in Shan North is very low—only 4 percent—even though the high school NER is just 6 percent (see Figure 3.7). This apparent discrepancy is explained by the fact that a large majority (81 percent) of high school-age children in Shan North are still enrolled in middle school.

FIGURE 3.11

OOSC rate, by state and region



Source: Original figure based on MSPS (2024/25).

Note: Results for Chin and Rakhine States should be interpreted with caution due to limited geographic coverage within these states. The Chin State sample is concentrated in only two townships—Mindat (50 percent of observations) and Hakha (20 percent)—while the Rakhine State sample similarly draws from two townships: Sittwe (48 percent) and Kyaukpyu (26 percent). This geographic concentration may limit the generalizability of findings to the broader state populations and could introduce sampling bias if the selected townships are not representative of statewide conditions.

The overall sample of children ages 6–17 years has a mean age of 11.78 years. As expected, average ages vary systematically across educational levels: 7.98 years for primary school-age children, 12.59 years for middle school-age children, and 15.97 years for high school-age children (Table 3.2). The gender distribution shows a slight male skew, with females comprising 47 percent of the overall sample. This proportion ranges from 45 to 50 percent across age groups, achieving perfect gender balance (50 percent female) at the middle school level (Table 3.2). Language composition remains stable across subsamples, with three-quarters of children (75 percent) speaking Myanmar as their primary language.

Household characteristics display considerable consistency across subsamples. The distribution across wealth quintiles is relatively balanced, though some variation emerges by educational level. High school-age children exhibit a slightly higher concentration in lower-income households, with 49 percent belonging to the bottom two quintiles compared to 45 percent in the overall sample and 43 percent among younger age groups. Female-headed households account for 13 percent of the sample, while household heads average 5.7 years of education with minimal variation by age group. The mean household size is 2.42 children, remaining stable across all subsamples. Urban residence represents 28 percent of the sample, again showing little variation by age group. Conflict exposure, measured as the logarithm of violent incidents per capita, ranges narrowly from 2.82 to 3.02 across all subsamples and the overall sample.

TABLE 3.2

Descriptive statistics (sample mean) for primary and secondary school-age children, 2024/25

	All children (6–17)	Primary school-age children (6–10)	Middle school-age children (11–14)	High school-age children (15–17)
Female	0.47	0.46	0.50	0.45
Age	11.78	7.96	12.59	15.97
Myanmar language speakers	0.75	0.76	0.76	0.75
Wealth index (Bottom quintile)	0.22	0.23	0.20	0.22
Wealth index (2nd quintile)	0.23	0.20	0.23	0.27
Wealth index (3rd quintile)	0.20	0.19	0.21	0.20
Wealth index (4th quintile)	0.18	0.19	0.19	0.16
Wealth index (Top quintile)	0.17	0.19	0.17	0.16
Female headed household	0.13	0.14	0.11	0.14
Household head's years of education	5.70	5.79	5.50	5.84
Number of children in household	2.42	2.44	2.51	2.27
Urban	0.28	0.26	0.28	0.28
Conflict intensity (log of violent incidents per capita)	2.95	3.02	2.97	2.82

Source: Original calculations based on MSPS 2024/25.

Probit models are used to estimate the likelihood of children being out of school across four samples: all school-age children (6–17 years) and three educational level subgroups—primary (6–10 years), middle (11–14 years), and high school (15–17 years). The models incorporate child-level characteristics (gender, age, and primary language spoken at home), household socioeconomic and demographic factors (wealth quintile, female household headship, household head's educational attainment, and number of children), geographic variables (urban residence), and conflict exposure indicators.

A clear socioeconomic gradient emerges across all models, with children from wealthier households consistently demonstrating lower out-of-school probabilities. This gradient intensifies markedly at the high school level (ages 15–17), where financial barriers to educational persistence become most pronounced. In the high school-age model, children from the second and fourth wealth quintiles show significantly lower out-of-school likelihood, while those in the top quintile exhibit the largest protective effect (coefficient ≈ -0.30 , significant at the 1 percent level) (Table 3.3). The wealth gradient manifests early, with significant effects observed in the second and top quintiles among primary-age children. Notably, wealth effects are relatively small and lack statistical significance at the middle school level, suggesting that financial constraints become particularly binding during the transition to and progression through upper secondary education.

Parental education emerges as a robust protective factor across all educational levels. Each additional year of household head schooling is associated with significantly lower out-of-school probability, with effects particularly pronounced in the pooled sample and among high school-age children. This finding underscores the importance of intergenerational human capital transmission and highlights the role of parental educational aspirations, information access, and supportive home learning environments in sustaining children's educational participation.

Household composition significantly influences educational outcomes, with larger family size consistently associated with elevated out-of-school risk across all models. The effect is most pronounced in the pooled sample and among primary-age children, reflecting resource dilution and competing caregiving demands that intensify household constraints as the number of dependent children increases.

Gender coefficients vary substantially across age groups rather than showing uniform patterns. While the pooled sample reveals no significant overall gender differential, disaggregated analysis uncovers important heterogeneity. Girls ages 11–14 years demonstrate significantly lower out-of-school rates compared to boys at the middle school level. However, gender gaps are statistically indistinguishable from zero at both the primary and high school levels, indicating that gender-related educational risks concentrate around specific developmental and educational transition points.

The association between age and out-of-school status aligns with expected educational progression patterns. In the pooled specification, increasing age correlates with higher out-of-school probability, consistent with cumulative dropout risk as cohorts advance through the education system. Within age groups, age effects demonstrate intuitive patterns: among primary school-age children (6–10 years), older age within the band is associated with lower out-of-school risk, likely reflecting late enrollment catch-up effects. Conversely, among high school-age adolescents (15–17 years), older age within the band correlates with higher dropout risk, consistent with accumulated departure from formal education by the conclusion of basic schooling.

After accounting for household characteristics, several contextual factors show weaker direct associations with schooling status than anticipated. Urban residence, while negatively associated with out-of-school status, lacks statistical significance across all age bands. Similarly, conflict exposure indicators fail to achieve significance in any specification, suggesting that direct conflict effects may be mediated through household-level mechanisms such as displacement, livelihood disruption, or local service degradation that are only partially captured in the current specification. The Myanmar language indicator generally lacks significance except among 15–17-year-olds, where it shows a positive association with out-of-school status at the 10 percent significance level. This finding warrants further investigation, potentially reflecting correlations with internal migration patterns, early labor market entry, or regional educational infrastructure variations affecting upper secondary participation.

These data reveal that economic hardship is the most frequently cited driver of school dropout. Insufficient household income accounts for nearly one-third (27 percent) of all cases, underscoring how poverty remains a fundamental barrier to sustained schooling (Figure 3.12).¹⁵

Institutional disruptions also play a critical role. About one in four children (25 percent) reported leaving school because their school had closed. This points to systemic vulnerabilities in the provision of education services and underscores the importance of ensuring continuity of schooling even during crises.

Beyond economic and institutional constraints, a smaller but notable share of children exit the system due to disengagement from learning (11 percent). This points to quality-related factors, such as ineffective instruction, lack of relevance, or limited psychosocial support, which undermine student motivation and persistence. Safety concerns (6 percent) and structural barriers such as grade repetition (4 percent) also contribute, though at lower levels. Relatively few children attribute dropout to disability (2.0 percent), distance to school (1.0 percent), stigmatization (0.3 percent), or teacher absenteeism (0.3 percent), though these remain critical issues for equity and inclusion.

¹⁵ Other reasons include family- or health-related challenges, as well as a lack of interest among children in continuing their education.

TABLE 3.3

Determinants of schooling status (being out of school) among 6–17-year-old children

	Model 1 All	Model 2 primary school age	Model 3 middle school age	Model 4 high school age
<i>Child characteristics</i>				
Child is female	-0.0128 (0.0224)	0.0029 (0.0207)	-0.0627** (0.0316)	0.0262 (0.0456)
Age of child	0.0313*** (0.0032)	-0.0138* (0.0074)	0.0069 (0.0161)	0.0506* (0.0293)
Primary language at home is Myanmar	0.0406 (0.0370)	-0.0057 (0.0326)	0.0103 (0.0588)	0.1634* (0.0841)
<i>Household socioeconomic and demographic characteristics</i>				
<i>Wealth quintile (reference: Bottom quintile)</i>				
2nd wealth quintile	-0.0730* (0.0374)	-0.0694 ** (0.0315)	-0.0196 (0.0426)	-0.1546* (0.0859)
3rd Wealth quintile	-0.0280 (0.0375)	-0.0177 (0.0366)	-0.0112 (0.0438)	-0.0924 (0.0792)
4th wealth quintile	0.0026 (0.0530)	-0.0182 (0.0426)	0.0563 (0.0536)	-0.1423 * (0.0842)
Top wealth quintile	-0.1191 *** (0.0369)	-0.0586* (0.0351)	-0.0559 (0.0472)	-0.2962 *** (0.0785)
Is a female-headed household	0.0714 ** (0.0332)	0.0474 * (0.0243)	0.0168 (0.0393)	0.1349 (0.0919)
Household head's years of education	-0.0123 *** (0.0031)	-0.0033 (0.0024)	-0.0095** (0.0043)	-0.0262 *** (0.0057)
Number of children in household	0.0368*** (0.0097)	0.0248*** (0.0083)	0.0394*** (0.0121)	0.0430** (0.0180)
<i>Location</i>				
Urban	-0.0242 (0.0228)	0.0016 (0.0195)	-0.0138 (0.0343)	-0.0342 (0.0497)
Conflict intensity ^a	0.0099 (0.0087)	0.0096 (0.0095)	-0.0067 (0.0124)	0.0240 (0.0197)
Number of obs.	6,166	2,531	2,057	1,495
Pseudo R-squared	0.17	0.26	0.14	0.15

Source: Original calculations based on MSPS 2024.

Note: ***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1

Robust standard errors are presented in parentheses.

The regression model used is probit (reported results are marginal effects); the sample is restricted to 6–17-year-old children.

The dependent variable is schooling status (1 if out-of-school and 0 otherwise); coefficients represent marginal effects.

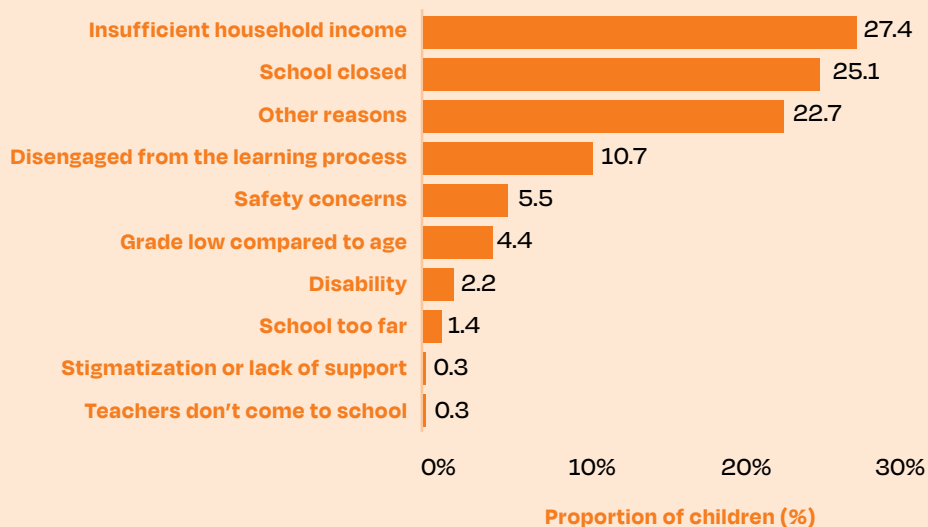
Standard errors are in parentheses.

a. Conflict intensity is measured as the log of per capita conflict incidents at the township level.

Overall, the findings highlight a complex interplay of economic, institutional, and pedagogical factors driving school dropout. While poverty alleviation measures are essential, they must be complemented by efforts to stabilize education provision, improve school quality, and strengthen support systems that keep children engaged in learning. Without such multipronged strategies, progress toward universal education will remain fragile.

FIGURE 3.12

Reasons for dropping out of school (6–17-year-old children)



Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.

Note: The analysis shown in this figure is restricted to children who dropped out in 2020 or later, to better capture the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent political crisis. Among children who are currently out of school, nearly 70 percent last attended school in 2020 or later—suggesting that most dropout occurred after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent political crisis.

The reasons driving children to leave school have undergone a fundamental transformation across different cohorts of school leavers, reflecting the evolution of Myanmar’s educational and political landscape. Among children who left school in 2018 or earlier, dropout was predominantly attributed to insufficient household income (44 percent), with access barriers also prominent—particularly schools being too far (15 percent)—and disengagement from learning (12 percent) (Figure 3.13). This pattern represents the traditional challenges facing Myanmar’s education system before the recent crises.

The onset of multiple crises beginning in 2020 fundamentally altered dropout patterns. By 2019/20, the profile had changed significantly: school closure emerged as a major factor (24 percent), alongside persistent economic reasons (27 percent), while learning-related pressures, including disengagement and being overage for grade, jointly accounted for approximately 23 percent of dropouts.

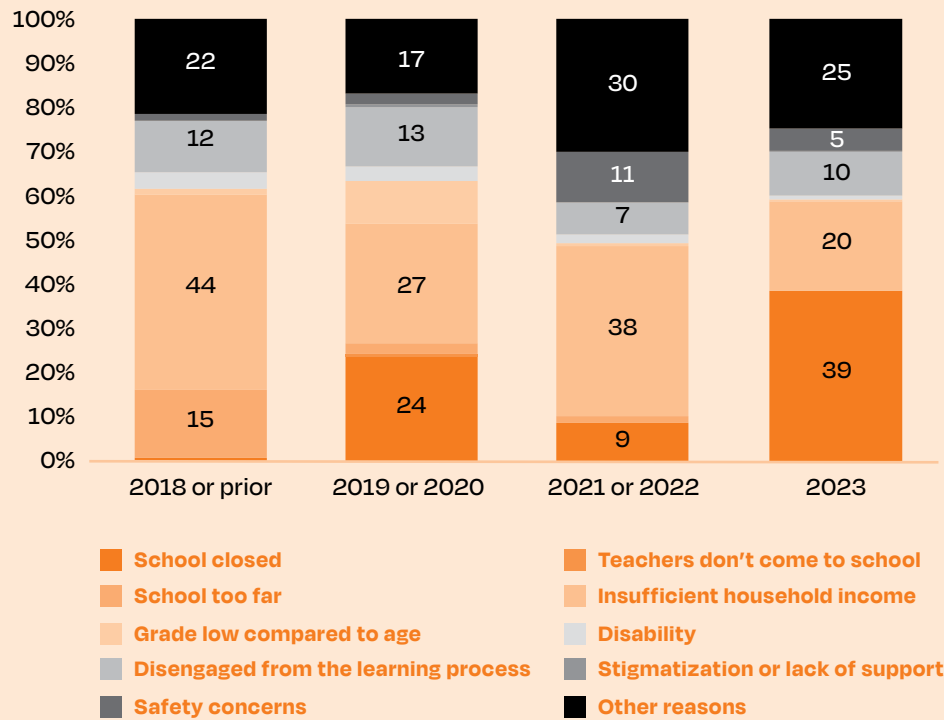
The compounding effects of political instability and economic disruption became increasingly evident in subsequent years. In 2021/22, economic hardship again became the leading reason for dropout (38 percent), ‘other reasons’ remained elevated (30 percent), and safety concerns rose to 11 percent, while closures were less frequently cited (9 percent). By 2023, however, school closure had become the dominant reason for dropout (39 percent), overtaking household income constraints (20 percent), with disengagement (10 percent) and safety concerns (5 percent) playing smaller, though still meaningful, roles.

A structural analysis of these trends reveals a dramatic shift from demand-side to supply-side constraints. Supply-side disruptions, primarily school closures and teacher non-attendance, rose from just 1 percent of reported dropouts in 2018 or earlier to 39 percent in 2023. Conversely, access barriers such as distance and disability-related challenges fell from 19 percent to 1 percent over the same period. Economic constraints remained consistently important but varied with external shocks—44 percent in 2018 or earlier, 27 percent in 2019/20, 38 percent in 2021/22, and 20 percent in 2023. Learning-related factors peaked during the early crisis period in 2019/20 (23 percent) before moderating to 10 percent in 2023. Teacher absenteeism and stigmatization were rarely cited (each less than 1 percent in most periods), while ‘other reasons’ remained substantial throughout (17–30 percent), suggesting the need for further analytical disaggregation.

These findings have important implications for educational recovery and resilience. The evidence points to a fundamental pivot from demand-side and access-side constraints before 2019 toward supply-side disruptions in 2023, with economic pressures spiking during acute crisis periods. Interventions should therefore prioritize restoring and maintaining school operations and predictable access to schooling, while sustaining targeted household support where economic vulnerability remains a risk to educational persistence. Additionally, monitoring and addressing safety concerns and reducing learning disengagement through remedial and reengagement programs are important. Continued tracking of dropout patterns—and unpacking the substantial ‘other reasons’ category—will be essential to fine-tune interventions and ensure they address the evolving nature of educational exclusion.

FIGURE 3.13

Reasons for dropping out of school (6–17-year-old children), by the year of dropout



Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.

Coping with disruptions in schooling

04

This section examines how households and communities are adapting to ongoing disruptions in the education system. It explores three key dimensions of coping: the rising reliance on non-public providers, differential access to online education and at-home learning support, and qualitative insights from follow-up interviews. Survey data show a significant shift toward non-state schools—including monastic, ethnic, and private institutions—particularly in areas where public provision has weakened. Access to online education remains limited overall, with sharp inequalities by income and geography. Qualitative follow-ups underscore the diverse coping strategies families are employing and reinforce the critical role of non-public actors in sustaining educational continuity in conflict-affected settings.

4.1 Shift toward non-public schooling

The composition of basic education enrollment in Myanmar has undergone a fundamental transformation since 2016/17, reflecting a significant shift toward non-public education provision. Public schools' share of total enrollment declined substantially from 95 percent in 2016/17 to 81 percent in 2024/25—a decrease of 14 percentage points (Figure 4.1). Conversely, enrollment in non-public provision nearly quadrupled, rising from 5 percent to 19 percent¹⁶ over the same period.

This expansion of non-public education has been driven by diverse provider types, with particularly notable growth in alternative educational arrangements. The most significant growth occurred among 'other non-public'¹⁷ providers, which increased from 1 percent to 9 percent of total enrollment, followed by private schools, which expanded from 1 percent to 7 percent. Monastic schools experienced more modest growth, rising from 2 percent to 3 percent of enrollment.

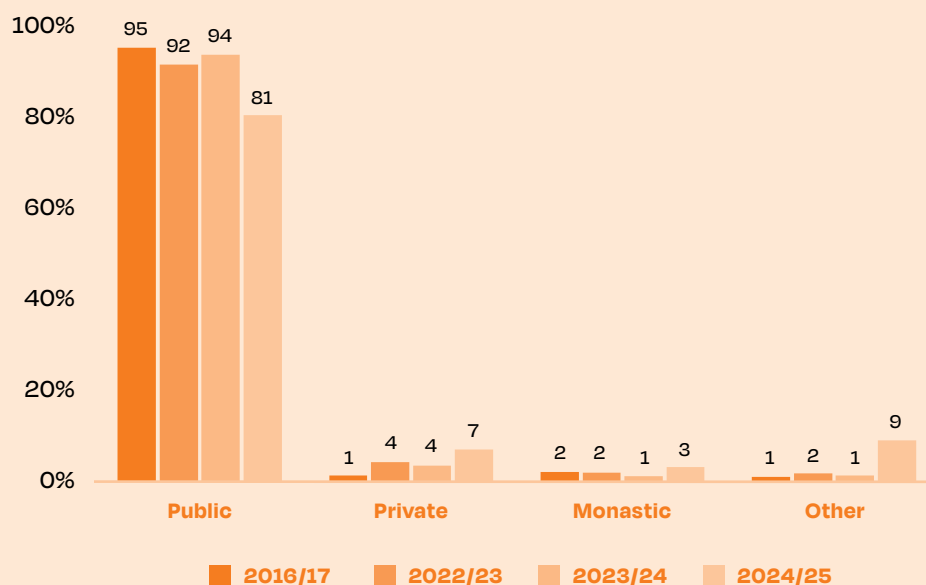
These compositional shifts indicate a substantially more diversified education landscape in 2024/25 compared to the pre-crisis baseline, reflecting families' adaptive responses to ongoing disruptions in formal education provision. The dramatic expansion of non-public providers likely represents households' efforts to maintain educational continuity for their children amid widespread public school disruptions, security concerns, and institutional instability. While this diversification demonstrates remarkable resilience within communities, it also raises concerns about educational equity, quality consistency, and long-term system coherence. The rise of alternative providers—especially the rapid growth of "other non-public" arrangements—indicates an expansion of diverse, parallel systems that may use different curricula, teacher qualifications, and resource allocation practices (Rinehart et al. 2024). Understanding the nature, quality, and sustainability of these diverse educational arrangements will be crucial for future efforts to rebuild and strengthen Myanmar's education system when conditions permit.

¹⁶ The estimate of the share of non-public school enrollment this year is substantially larger compared to last year's MSPS data. This difference may be largely attributable to a change in the survey protocol, whereby respondents were provided with prompts for different types of schools, leading to more accurate reporting.

¹⁷ The 'other non-public' category includes ethnic schools, community schools, other religious schools, nongovernmental organization (NGO)-run schools, non-formal education (NFE) classes, and homeschooling.

FIGURE 4.1

Distribution of enrolled children (ages 6–17), by school type, 2016/17 and 2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MLCS 2016/17 and MSPS (2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25).
 Note: The public school category includes seven types of SSPC¹⁸-MoE schools: basic education primary school, branch primary school, basic education post-primary school, basic education middle school, branch middle school, basic education high school, and branch high school. The 'Other' category includes ethnic schools, community schools, religious schools, NGO-run schools, NFE classes, and homeschooling.

Between the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years, total school enrollment in Myanmar shows notable shifts across public and non-public institutions, alongside a modest decline in the number of OOSC. Public school enrollment fell from approximately 7.9 million students in 2023/24 to 7.2 million in 2024/25, representing a 9 percent decrease (Figure 4.2). In contrast, enrollment in non-public schools more than tripled, increasing from about 0.5 million to 1.7 million students. The share of students in public schools dropped from 75 percent to 67 percent, while the share in non-public schools rose sharply from 5 percent to 16 percent of total school-age children.

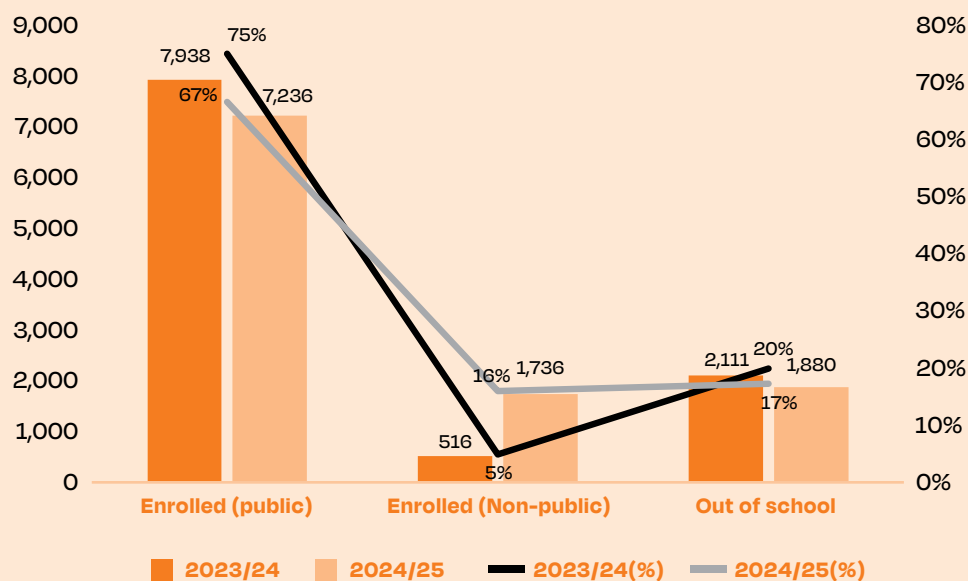
The observed rise in non-public enrollment between survey rounds likely reflects a combination of improved classification in the 2024/25 instrument and a genuine increase in alternative schooling options. Unlike in 2023/24, the most recent questionnaire explicitly prompted respondents to identify different types of non-public schools—including community, ethnic, and faith-based institutions. As a result, some of the apparent shift from public to non-public enrollment may stem from more accurate reporting rather than behavioral or systemic change. However, complementary data sources¹⁹ and qualitative insights suggest that this trend may also reflect a real expansion in non-public options—such as catch-up and night school programs—particularly in areas where access to public schools remains constrained. The MSPS data may therefore be capturing both improvements in survey design and an underlying diversification in service provision.

¹⁸ SSPC: State Security and Peace Commission

¹⁹ Myanmar Multi-sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) data also show a significant increase in attendance at non state schools between 2024 and 2025, suggesting that the upward trend observed in MSPS may reflect a real shift in schooling patterns in addition to improved classification. According to secondary sources, student enrollment in ethnic schools in the 2024/25 school year is estimated to be between 450,000 and 650,000. Please note that these figures do not represent the total number of ethnic students enrolled in diverse education services across all states and regions of Myanmar.

FIGURE 4.2

Enrollment status of school-age children, 2023/24 and 2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2023/24 and 2024/25.

While the shift from public to non-public enrollment has been broadly consistent across demographic groups, the magnitude of this transformation varies considerably, with certain populations and regions experiencing particularly pronounced changes. This shift demonstrates remarkable consistency across gender lines: for boys, non-public enrollment increased from 5 percent to 20 percent, and for girls from 5 percent to 19 percent, leaving no meaningful gender gap in 2024/25 (Table 4.1). However, beneath this overall pattern lie significant variations in the scale of change across socioeconomic status, geographic location, and conflict exposure that reveal the differentiated influence of Myanmar’s ongoing crisis on educational access and choice.

The expansion of non-public enrollment spans all educational levels, with particularly pronounced growth among primary-age children. Among primary school-age children (6–10), the non-public share rose from 4 percent to 21 percent (an 18-percentage-point increase); at middle school (11–14), from 4 percent to 15 percent (11 percentage points); and at high school age (15–17), from 8 percent to 23 percent (15 percentage points) (Table 4.1). As of 2024/25, roughly one in five primary school-age students and nearly one in four high school-age students are enrolled in non-public institutions.

Socioeconomic patterns reveal a striking bifurcation in non-public enrollment that diverges from traditional private education models. In 2016/17, non-public enrollment was highest among wealthier households, following conventional patterns. By 2024/25, however, non-public enrollment is elevated at both ends of the income distribution. The poorest quintile’s non-public share surged from 4 percent to 27 percent (a 23-percentage-point increase), comparable to the richest quintile’s rise from 8 percent to 27 percent (19 percentage points). In contrast, the fourth quintile experienced only modest growth from 7 percent to 10 percent. This pattern suggests that non-public providers now serve both low-income communities—likely where public provision is constrained—and affluent households, while remaining least prevalent among near-wealthy families.

Geographic patterns have undergone a complete reversal, with rural areas now exceeding urban areas in non-public enrollment. In 2016/17, non-public enrollment was more common in urban areas (8 percent) than rural areas (3 percent). By 2024/25, rural non-public enrollment (20 percent) slightly exceeds urban

enrollment (18 percent), driven by a substantially larger increase in rural areas (16 percentage points versus 9 percentage points in urban areas).

The most striking pattern emerges in the relationship between conflict exposure and non-public enrollment. In 2024/25, non-public enrollment accounts for just 9 percent of students in the least conflict-affected quartile of townships, rising progressively to 16 percent in the second quartile, 21 percent in the third quartile, and reaching 44 percent in the most conflict-affected quartile, representing nearly half of all enrolled children in high-conflict areas.

These findings reveal a pronounced and systemwide pivot toward non-public provision since 2016/17. This pattern suggests that families are actively seeking proximate and functioning schooling options where public services are disrupted or inaccessible. While interpretation must account for potential classification challenges in fluid governance contexts and recognize the diversity within the broad ‘non-public’ category, the observed magnitudes—particularly the steep conflict gradient and the surge among poorer and rural households—underscore the critical importance of engaging non-public providers in comprehensive strategies to sustain educational access, safeguard quality standards, and ensure equitable learning opportunities across Myanmar’s evolving educational landscape.

TABLE 4.1

Distribution of enrolled children (6–17 years) across public and non-public schools, 2016/17 and 2024/25 (%)

	2016/17			2024/25		
	Public	Non-public	Total	Public	Non-public	Total
All	95	5	100	81	19	100
Gender						
Male	95	5	100	80	20	100
Female	95	5	100	81	19	100
Age group						
Primary school (6–10)	96	4	100	79	21	100
Middle school (11–14)	96	4	100	85	15	100
High school (15–17)	92	8	100	77	23	100
Wealth Quintile						
Poorest quintile	96	4	100	73	27	100
2nd quintile	96	4	100	85	15	100
3rd quintile	97	3	100	83	17	100
4th quintile	92	8	100	90	10	100
Richest quintile	90	10	100	73	27	100
Location						
Rural	96	4	100	80	20	100
Urban	91	9	100	82	18	100
Conflict (violent incidents)						
Bottom quartile	—	—	—	91	9	100
2nd quartile	—	—	—	84	16	100
3rd quartile	—	—	—	79	21	100
Top quartile	—	—	—	56	44	100

Source: Original figure based on MLCS 2016/17 and MSPS 2024/25.

Significant differences in schooling patterns emerge when comparing urban and rural areas in Myanmar, reflecting distinct education landscapes and provider ecosystems. In rural areas, approximately 80 percent of students are enrolled in public schools, with around 5 percent attending non-public schools and 3 percent enrolled in monastic institutions (Figure A1.9). Notably, about 12 percent of students in rural areas attend community, ethnic, or other non-traditional schools, highlighting the role of localized education providers in filling service delivery gaps.

In urban settings, while the share of students enrolled in private schools is substantially higher than in rural areas (13 percent versus 5 percent), the proportion attending monastic schools remains similar across both contexts at around 3 percent. However, the share of students enrolled in community, ethnic, or other non-traditional schools is considerably lower in urban areas (2 percent) compared to rural areas (12 percent). This contrast suggests that although urban areas benefit from greater access to private schooling, rural communities may depend more heavily on alternative education providers.

Public school enrollment demonstrates wide variation across states and regions, ranging from approximately 24 percent in Chin State to 97 percent in Ayeyarwady Region—a span of 73 percentage points. States and regions with the highest public school dominance include Ayeyarwady (97 percent), Mon (93 percent), Bago (93 percent), Nay Pyi Taw (92 percent), and Shan (89 percent)²⁰ (Figure 4.3). These areas appear to have maintained relatively stable formal education systems despite ongoing disruptions.

Alternative non-public providers have emerged as dominant educational actors in several conflict-affected and remote areas. The most striking reliance on ‘other non-public’ provision is found in Chin State (62 percent), followed by Kayah (37 percent), Sagaing (34 percent), Rakhine (33 percent), and Kachin (20 percent). These figures signal a substantial role for community-based, ethnic,²¹ non-formal, or other alternative schooling arrangements that have likely emerged to fill gaps left by disrupted public services.

Private school enrollment is concentrated in more urbanized and economically connected regions. The highest private enrollment shares are found in Yangon (18 percent), Kachin (12 percent), Tanintharyi (10 percent), Mandalay (9 percent), and Nay Pyi Taw (7 percent), reflecting both economic capacity and urban accessibility to private education options.

Monastic education maintains a traditional presence in specific regions, particularly in central Myanmar. Monastic schooling is most visible in Sagaing (14 percent) and Mandalay (9 percent), with more modest shares in other areas, reflecting historical and cultural patterns of Buddhist educational provision.

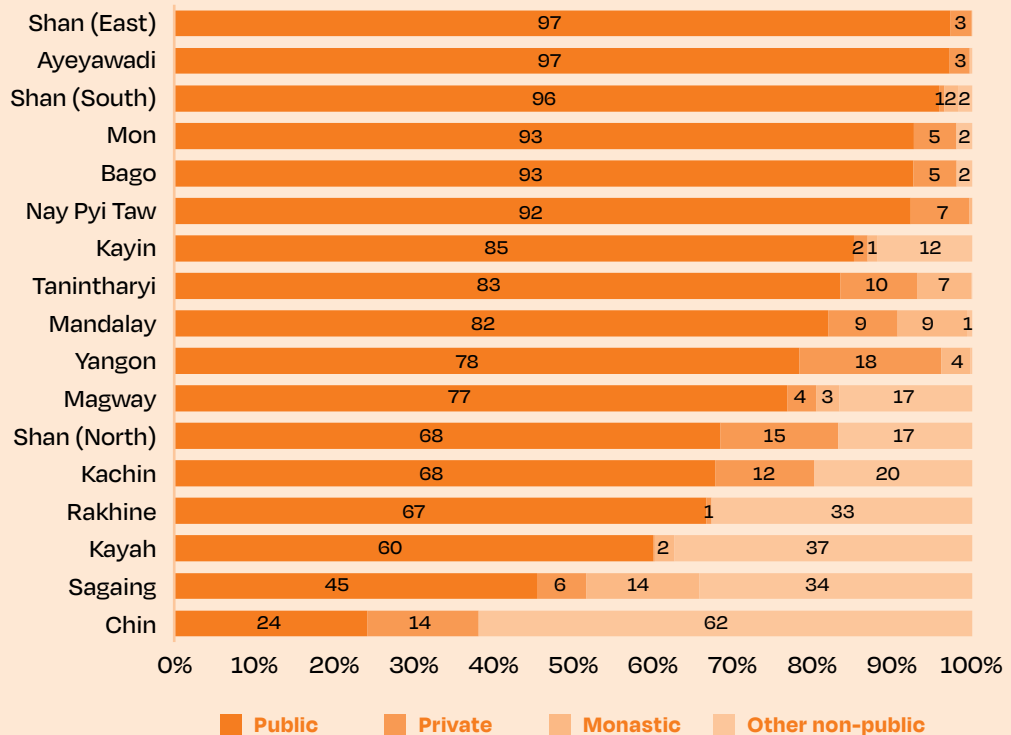
These patterns reveal a profoundly heterogeneous educational landscape, in which some states and regions remain overwhelmingly dependent on public provision, while others have developed pluralistic systems with non-public providers serving one-third to well over half of enrolled students. This diversity reflects varying local conditions, including conflict intensity, state capacity, community resources, and cultural preferences. The emergence of such varied educational arrangements, while demonstrating remarkable adaptability, poses significant challenges for ensuring educational quality, equity, and system coherence across Myanmar’s fragmented landscape (Rinehart et al. 2024).

²⁰ Results vary considerably across Shan State, with Shan South at 96 percent, Shan North at 68 percent, and Shan East at 97 percent.

²¹ In the 2024/25 academic year, 427,530 children were enrolled across 4,410 schools and learning spaces under ethnic education administrations (ERICC 2025).

FIGURE 4.3

Distribution of enrolled students (ages 6–17), by school type across states and regions, 2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.
Note: Results for Chin and Rakhine States should be interpreted with caution due to limited geographic coverage within these states. The Chin State sample is concentrated in only two townships—Mindat (50 percent of observations) and Hakha (20 percent)—while the Rakhine State sample similarly draws from two townships: Sittwe (48 percent) and Kyaukpyu (26 percent). This geographic concentration may limit the generalizability of findings to the broader state populations and could introduce sampling bias if the selected townships are not representative of statewide conditions.

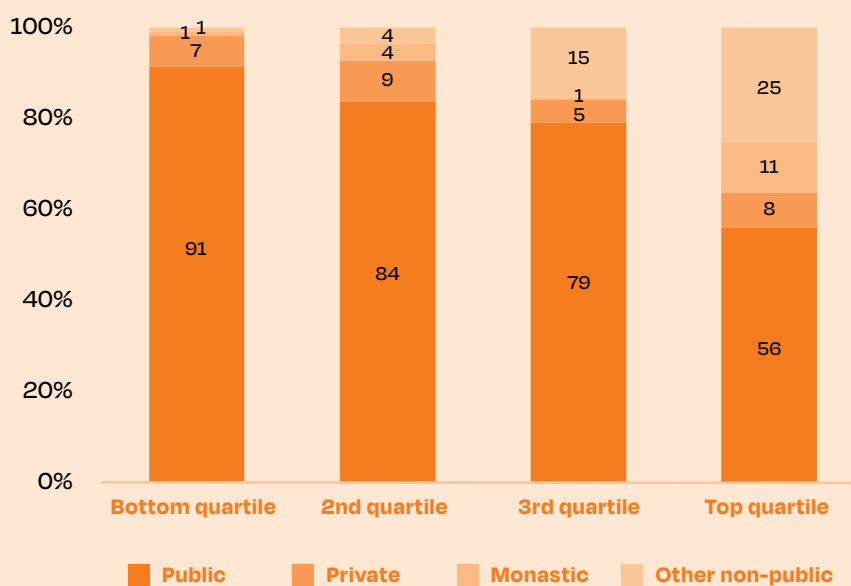
Analysis of school distribution across conflict quartiles reveals clear differences in the types of schools operating in areas with varying levels of conflict intensity. In the bottom conflict quartile—representing areas with the least exposure to violence—public schools dominate overwhelmingly, accounting for about 91 percent of all schools. Non-state schools, including private (7 percent), monastic (1 percent), and other non-public schools (1 percent), constitute only a small share (Figure 4.4).

As conflict intensity increases, the composition of schools shifts noticeably. The share of public schools declines steadily from 84 percent in the second quartile to 79 percent in the third quartile, and further down to 56 percent in the top conflict quartile. In contrast, non-public providers—including ethnic and community schools—become progressively more common. Ethnic schools expand their presence from 4 percent in moderately affected areas to 15–25 percent in high-conflict areas. These trends indicate that as state presence weakens in conflict-affected townships, non-state actors increasingly assume the role of education providers. Ethnic and community schools thus play a crucial role in sustaining access to learning in regions where public systems are unable to function effectively. This substitution underscores the need to recognize and support diverse education providers within conflict-sensitive education strategies.

The demographic composition of students in public and non-public schools reveals systematic differences across multiple dimensions, with notable convergence patterns emerging in 2024/25 that reflect the evolving educational landscape. Gender composition shows a consistent male skew in non-public schools that has gradually diminished over time. Non-public schools consistently enroll a higher

FIGURE 4.4

Distribution of enrolled students (ages 6–17), by school type across conflict intensity, 2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.

share of boys than public schools: 54 percent versus 48 percent in 2022/23, and 56 percent versus 47 percent in 2023/24 (Table 4.2). However, this gap narrows substantially in 2024/25 (54 percent versus 53 percent), suggesting convergence in gender composition as non-public provision has expanded.

Age-group distributions reveal that non-public enrollments are concentrated at the extremes of the basic education cycle. Relative to public schools, non-public enrollments are more concentrated at the primary and high school levels while maintaining lower representation at the middle school level. In 2022/23, 29 percent of non-public students were in high school compared to 18 percent in public schools, while only 26 percent were in middle school versus 39 percent in public schools. This pattern persists in 2024/25, where high school representation remains higher in non-public schools (25 percent versus 20 percent), middle school representation remains lower (28 percent versus 39 percent), and primary enrollment is somewhat elevated (47 percent versus 41 percent). This distribution suggests that non-public provision plays a particularly important role at the entry and exit points of basic education.

Socioeconomic composition has undergone a dramatic transformation, shifting from serving predominantly wealthy households to more inclusive patterns. Non-public schools were markedly concentrated among affluent households in 2022/23 and 2023/24, with the top two wealth quintiles accounting for 66 percent of non-public enrollments in 2022/23 (versus 36 percent in public schools). The pattern is similar in 2023/24 (66 percent versus 35 percent), with the richest quintile alone at 42 percent in non-public compared to 17 percent in public schools. However, 2024/25 witnessed a striking convergence, with the top two quintiles representing 36 percent of non-public and 37 percent of public enrollments. This shift was driven by a notable increase in the poorest quintile’s representation within non-public schools, rising from 8 percent in 2023/24 to 28 percent in 2024/25.

Geographic patterns have undergone a complete reversal between 2023/24 and 2024/25. In 2022/23 and 2023/24, non-public enrollments were predominantly urban-oriented (urban shares of 52–54 percent), while public enrollments remained largely rural (urban shares of 26–27 percent). However, 2024/25 witnessed a dramatic spatial shift, with non-public schools becoming predominantly rural (73 percent rural versus 27 percent urban), while public schools maintained their stable rural majority (urban share of 29 percent).

Conflict exposure patterns reveal an increasingly pronounced concentration of non-public provision in high-conflict areas. Non-public enrollments have become progressively concentrated in higher-conflict areas, with the share from the highest conflict quartile rising from 21 percent in 2022/23 to 29 percent in 2023/24 and 37 percent in 2024/25. Conversely, public enrollments remain more heavily weighted toward lower-conflict areas, with the lowest conflict quartile accounting for 26–33 percent of public enrollments versus only 12–17 percent of non-public enrollments across the three years.

These patterns reveal both persistent structural differences and significant recent shifts in the composition of public versus non-public school populations. The 2024/25 convergence in wealth distributions and the dramatic rural shift among non-public enrollments are particularly significant, potentially reflecting the expansion of lower-cost non-public options in rural areas or changes in the provider landscape. Regardless of the drivers, these developments have important implications for equity and service delivery strategies: targeting mechanisms, financing approaches, and outreach programs must adapt to reflect the non-public sector’s growing role in rural and conflict-affected areas, as well as its continued concentration at the primary and high school levels. Understanding and supporting this evolving landscape will be crucial for ensuring equitable access to quality education across Myanmar’s increasingly diverse educational ecosystem.

TABLE 4.2

Profile of students enrolled in public versus non-public schools, 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25 (%)

	2022/23			2023/24			2024/25		
	Public	Non-public	Total	Public	Non-public	Total	Public	Non-public	Total
Gender									
Male	48	54	49	47	56	48	53	54	53
Female	52	46	51	53	44	52	47	46	47
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Education level									
Primary school (6–10)	44	44	45	46	47	46	41	47	43
Middle school (11–14)	39	26	37	36	29	36	39	28	36
High school (15–17)	17	29	18	17	24	18	20	25	21
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Wealth Quintile									
Poorest quintile	21	10	20	23	8	22	18	28	20
2nd quintile	22	9	21	21	13	21	25	19	24
3rd quintile	21	14	21	22	14	21	20	17	20
4th quintile	23	39	24	18	24	19	19	9	18
Richest quintile	13	27	14	17	42	18	18	27	19
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Location									
Rural	74	48	72	73	46	71	71	73	72
Urban	26	52	28	27	54	29	29	27	28
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Conflict/non-conflict									
Bottom quartile	26	17	25	30	12	29	33	12	29
2nd quartile	33	22	32	29	22	28	30	24	29
3rd quartile	24	40	26	21	38	23	25	27	25
Top quartile	16	21	16	20	29	21	12	37	17
Total	100	100	100%	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Original figure based on MLCS (2016/17), MSPS (2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25).

4.2 Access to online education and parental support

Online education usage among Myanmar’s school-age children remains limited but has shown notable growth in 2024/25, with persistent digital divides across multiple dimensions reflecting broader patterns of inequality in educational access. The share of children reporting online education use remained stable at approximately 4 percent in 2022/23 and 2023/24 before rising to 6 percent in 2024/25—representing a 1.8 percentage point (45 percent) year-on-year increase (Table 4.3). Critically, online learning serves primarily as a complement to schooling rather than an alternative for OOSC: among enrolled children, usage increased from 5 percent to 7 percent between 2023/24 and 2024/25, while declining to less than 1 percent among OOSC. This pattern underscores that online modalities rarely provide alternative pathways for children excluded from formal education.

The distribution across school types shows convergence as public schools increase adoption while non-public usage moderates. Online uptake in non-public schools declined from 14 percent in 2022/23 to 8 percent in 2024/25, while public school usage increased from 3 percent to 5 percent over the same period. Consequently, the gap between non-public and public schools narrowed from 10 percentage points in 2022/23 to 3 percentage points in 2024/25, suggesting either catch-up efforts within the public system or reduced emphasis on digital tools among non-public providers.

Demographic patterns reveal emerging gender disparities and clear age-related preferences. A gender gap emerged in 2024/25, with boys reporting 7 percent usage compared to 5 percent for girls (a 2-percentage-point difference), reversing the slight female advantage observed in 2023/24. Age patterns demonstrate the strongest adoption among high school-age students (15–17), where usage jumped from 4 percent to 9 percent in 2024/25, followed by middle school-age students (11–14) at 5 percent. Primary school-age children (6–10) showed minimal engagement, remaining at 4 percent. This profile suggests that online learning gains traction where curricula complexity and examination requirements make supplementary digital resources more valuable.

Socioeconomic and geographic disparities reveal profound digital divides that mirror broader inequality patterns. In 2024/25, reported usage reached 14 percent among the richest quintile compared to less than 1 percent among the poorest—a twenty-fold difference. The second wealth quintile also demonstrated significant growth to 7 percent, while middle quintiles remained in the 3–5 percent range. Geographic disparities persist, with urban children accessing online education at twice the rate of rural peers (9 percent versus 5 percent in 2024/25), though both groups showed increases relative to 2023/24.

Conflict exposure creates additional barriers to digital learning access. Online usage in 2024/25 demonstrates an inverse relationship with conflict intensity: 10 percent in the second-lowest conflict quartile and 7 percent in the lowest-conflict areas, compared to just 2–3 percent in higher-conflict quartiles. Children in the most peaceful areas are approximately 2.5 times more likely to access online learning than those in high-conflict zones, reflecting constraints in connectivity, device availability, and stable school operations in conflict-affected regions.

These patterns highlight both the potential and limitations of digital learning in Myanmar’s current context. Despite recent gains, online education remains concentrated among enrolled, older, urban, and affluent students, with persistent disadvantages for rural, poorer, and conflict-affected populations. While the narrowing gap between public and non-public schools suggests growing integration of digital modalities in the public system, the pronounced wealth, geographic, and conflict-related gradients indicate that targeted investments in last-mile connectivity, device access for disadvantaged households, low-bandwidth educational content, and teacher training will be essential to prevent digital learning from exacerbating existing educational inequalities as these technologies continue to scale.

TABLE 4.3

Distribution of children (ages 6–17) who used online education in the past 12 months, 2022/23–2024/25 (%)

	Used online education (past 12 months)		
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
All	4.1	4.0	5.8
Enrollment status			
Not enrolled	2.3	1.5	0.8
Enrolled	4.7	4.5	6.7
School type			
Public	3.3	3.5	5.3
Non-public	13.7	10.7	8.1
Gender			
Male	4.7	3.7	6.8
Female	3.5	4.2	4.6
Age group			
Primary school age (6–10)	3.9	3.8	3.7
Middle school age (11–14)	2.9	4.4	5.4
High school age (15–17)	5.8	3.6	8.9
Wealth Quintile			
Poorest quintile	1.5	2.5	0.6
2nd quintile	1.6	3.3	7.2
3rd quintile	2.9	2.9	3.5
4th quintile	6.3	4.4	4.5
Richest quintile	10.4	7.8	13.8
Location			
Rural	2.7	2.8	4.5
Urban	8.0	7.0	9.0
Conflict intensity			
Bottom quartile	3.7	3.9	6.9
2nd quartile	3.8	4.5	10.4
3rd quartile	4.7	4.5	2.1
Top quartile	3.9	3.6	2.7

Source: Original figure based on MSPS (2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25).

Three probit models examine the correlates of educational provision and support mechanisms for the 2024/25 school year: school type choice (non-public versus public), participation in online education, and receipt of learning support from guardians (Table 4.4). Each model incorporates child-level characteristics (gender, age, primary language spoken at home), household socioeconomic and demographic factors (wealth quintiles, female household headship, household head's educational attainment, number of children), geographic variables (urban residence), and conflict exposure measured as the logarithm of violent incidents per capita. The online education and guardian support models additionally control for current enrollment status and school type.

Conflict exposure demonstrates a strong positive association with non-public school attendance, with children in higher-conflict areas being significantly more likely to enroll in non-public institutions. This pattern reflects the operational reality that non-public providers—including monastic, community, and ethnic education systems—often maintain accessibility when public provision faces disruption.

The relationship between household wealth and school type deviates from conventional private school patterns observed in other contexts. Relative to the poorest quintile, middle wealth quintiles show significantly lower probabilities of non-public attendance, while the top quintile exhibits no statistically significant difference from the poorest households. This non-linear pattern reflects Myanmar's heterogeneous non-public education sector, which encompasses both low-fee monastic and community schools serving disadvantaged populations and fee-charging private institutions.

Parental education shows a positive and significant association with non-public attendance, suggesting that better-educated households demonstrate greater engagement in school choice decisions and may actively seek alternative educational options when available. Language, gender, age, urban residence, and female household headship do not emerge as statistically robust predictors once other covariates are controlled for.

A pronounced socioeconomic gradient characterizes online education access. Children from all higher wealth quintiles, particularly the top quintile, demonstrate significantly higher participation rates compared to the bottom quintile. Household head education also shows a strong positive association, reinforcing the importance of household capability, information access, and digital readiness in facilitating online learning engagement.

Current enrollment status emerges as a critical factor, with enrolled children showing substantially higher online education participation rates. This finding suggests that schools serve as important channels for distributing online content and establishing participation expectations. Household composition constraints also influence participation, as larger families show significantly lower online education engagement, likely reflecting device sharing limitations, bandwidth constraints, and competing demands on time and attention.

Demographic patterns reveal additional disparities. Older children demonstrate higher online participation rates, while girls show significantly lower engagement compared to boys, indicating a gendered digital divide that persists even after controlling for wealth and enrollment status. Urban residence and minority language status lack statistical significance once household characteristics are accounted for, and conflict intensity shows minimal direct association with online participation.

Age emerges as a strong predictor of guardian assistance, with older children significantly less likely to receive learning support. This pattern likely reflects the increasing complexity of academic content, the growth of adolescent autonomy, and potential reallocation of time toward work or caregiving responsibilities as children age.

Household capabilities and constraints shape support provision in expected directions. Higher educational attainment among household heads correlates positively with guardian assistance, while larger households show significantly reduced support provision, reflecting both knowledge constraints and time allocation pressures across multiple children.

Language and conflict contexts influence support patterns in notable ways. Minority-language households demonstrate significantly higher rates of guardian assistance, potentially representing compensatory support when school instruction occurs in a different language than that spoken at home. Guardian support also increases significantly in conflict-affected areas, suggesting adaptive responses to educational disruption through enhanced home-based learning activities. Current enrollment shows a positive association with guardian support, while school type, gender, urban residence, and wealth quintiles do not achieve statistical significance in this specification.

TABLE 4.4

Determinants of enrollment in state versus non-state schools, access to online education, and family support (probit models)

	Model 1 Non-public/ Public	Model 2 Online Education	Model 3 Guardian help
<i>Child characteristics</i>			
Child is female	0.0088 (0.0249)	-0.0243* (0.0142)	0.0313 (0.0285)
Age of child	-0.0046 (0.0038)	0.0070*** (0.0023)	-0.0381*** (0.0037)
Primary language at home is not Myanmar	0.0495 (0.0423)	0.0427 (0.0273)	0.1209** (0.0477)
Child is enrolled in school	—	0.0928*** (0.0236)	0.0963* (0.0540)
Child is enrolled in non-state school	—	0.0132 (0.0107)	-0.0109 (0.0399)
<i>Household socioeconomic and demographic characteristics</i>			
Wealth quintiles (reference: Bottom quintile)			
2nd wealth quintile	-0.0951** (0.0454)	0.0562** (0.0258)	-0.0563 (0.0486)
3rd wealth quintile	-0.0892** (0.0430)	0.0280** (0.0116)	-0.0240 (0.0460)
4th wealth quintile	-0.1339*** (0.0477)	0.0397*** (0.0140)	-0.0487 (0.0535)
Top wealth quintile	-0.0056 (0.0491)	0.0841*** (0.0170)	0.0359 (0.0519)
Is a female-headed household	0.0379 (0.0329)	0.0023 (0.0176)	0.0645 (0.0507)
Household head's years of education	0.0099*** (0.0025)	0.0050*** (0.0013)	0.0096*** (0.0032)
Number of children in household	0.0045 (0.0085)	-0.0138*** (0.0051)	-0.0308** (0.0125)
<i>Household location</i>			
Urban	-0.0346 (0.0218)	0.0023 (0.0121)	0.0222 (0.0282)
Conflict intensity ^a	0.0463*** (0.0102)	-0.0053 (0.0044)	0.0258** (0.0112)
Number of observations	5,998	5,998	5,998
Pseudo R-squared	0.17	0.22	0.15

Source: Original calculations based on MSPS 2024/25.

Note: ***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1

Dependent variables in the models are as follows: Model 1: school type = 1 if non-state school and 0 otherwise; Model 2: online education = 1 if child used online education in the past 12 months and 0 otherwise; Model 3: family support = 1 if average daily minutes of parental guidance are greater than the median and 0 otherwise.

a. Conflict intensity is the logarithm of per capita conflict incidents at the township level. Robust standard errors in are presented in parentheses. All three models account for state-/region-level fixed effects.

Several cross-cutting patterns emerge from these analyses. Household head education consistently serves as a protective factor, positively correlating with non-public school choice, online education participation, and learning support provision. This underscores the central role of adult human capital in navigating educational options and sustaining learning continuity across different modalities. Resource constraints in larger families systematically reduce both online education participation and guardian support, highlighting the importance of household composition in educational access and quality. Conflict exposure reshapes educational strategies, pushing families toward non-state provision while increasing reliance on home-based learning support, demonstrating household adaptation mechanisms when formal education systems face instability. Furthermore, the analysis reveals pronounced digital inequalities, with online education participation exhibiting clear wealth gradients and gender disparities that disadvantage girls.

4.3 Qualitative follow-up on non-public education service providers

Objective, scope, and limitations

The qualitative follow-up was designed to provide insights into non-public schooling provision from both service providers' perspectives and household/community perspectives. To capture providers' perspectives, discussions were held with ethnic and monastic education service providers. All information reflects self-reported data shared during the discussions and was not triangulated or independently validated across multiple sources.

To understand experiences at the household and community level, 72 semi-structured interviews were conducted across 12 states and regions. These interviews included 37.5 percent teachers, 34.7 percent parents, and 27.8 percent students, representing private (38.9 percent), monastic (30.6 percent), community (19.4 percent), other alternative (6.9 percent), ethnic (2.8 percent), and online (1.4 percent) schools. Respondents were predominantly female (65.3 percent) and came from both urban (54.2 percent) and rural (45.8 percent) settings. Levels of self-reported conflict exposure varied, with 38.9 percent reporting none, 33.3 percent low exposure, and 27.8 percent high exposure. Interviews followed a flexible semi-structured approach and were purposively selected. They were not designed to achieve statistical representativeness, and findings should not be generalized to all schools within each category. For this reason, the results are presented as illustrative case studies (vignettes) that highlight specific examples rather than systemwide conclusions.

The following section reflects self-reported information shared by service providers. The figures and descriptions have not been independently validated or triangulated and should be interpreted as contextual insights rather than verified system-level estimates.

Ethnic education: service provider perspective

In the face of escalating conflict and widespread disruption to public schooling, ethnic education providers across Myanmar have continued to operate and expand learning spaces for children who would otherwise be left out. Discussions with these providers reveal a diverse landscape of community-led education systems that adapt to local conditions and maintain access despite insecurity.

In Kayah, the closure of many public schools has driven a rapid rise in Kayah community schools, which now operate through broad networks of teachers and learning centers. In Mon State, the long-standing National Education Committee continues to provide essential services, particularly to displaced families who rely on these schools for continuity. In Chin and Kachin, various local groups manage significant numbers of community or ethnic schools that reach large student populations. In Kayin, networks have continued to expand, supported by ethnic education organizations that oversee teacher development and schooling initiatives. Service providers shared several pressing barriers: insecurity including airstrikes near schools, forcing frequent closures, relocation, or irregular school days; economic pressures on households, driven by displacement and loss of income, reducing the ability to prioritize schooling; and language barriers, especially for children moving between ethnic schools and public schools where instruction in the mother tongue is limited.

Many ethnic and community teachers relocate alongside displaced families, helping sustain learning even when communities are uprooted. Providers described using temporary learning spaces, home-based learning, and small-group instruction when formal school buildings could not operate. Several providers also observed shifts in household preferences toward non-public schooling in rural and conflict-affected areas. Some anticipate higher enrollment in the coming academic year, though these figures are based solely on self-reported expectations from providers. Providers additionally highlighted that children ages 10–17 from displaced households are particularly vulnerable to exclusion, as many are drawn into household labor or livelihood activities and fall out of school.

Several innovations were highlighted. Teacher professional development has increasingly moved online, with virtual training delivered via Zoom and supported in some remote locations through satellite internet. These efforts help maintain teacher support despite limited mobility and security risks. Home-based learning modalities are also widely used when schools are unable to operate physically.

While providers continue to operate under challenging conditions, they noted that sustained support will be important to maintain and strengthen their education services. They highlighted the need for more predictable financial and technical assistance, as well as clearer accreditation pathways for students transitioning between systems. Finally, providers suggested that future national surveys include questions on parental attitudes toward different school types, to better understand levels of trust and confidence in non-public schooling.

Monastic education: service provider perspective

Monastic schools continue to serve as an essential part of Myanmar’s education landscape, especially for children from low-income and displaced households. Insights shared by monastic education actors point to a sharp rise in enrollment during the 2024/25 academic year. According to the Monastic Education Development Group’s survey of 525 monastic schools (approximately 68 percent of operational schools), enrollment increased by 58 percent in primary, 31 percent in middle, and 80 percent in high schools.

Despite their importance, monastic schools operate with distinct constraints. Registered monastic schools receive teacher stipends from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture (MoRAC) and school grants and textbooks from the MoE, but many operational needs remain community driven. School committees, typically led by monks and local representatives, manage infrastructure, furniture, learning materials, and water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, often relying on donations. Importantly, their status allows for inter-transferability between monastic and MoE schools, enabling monastic school students who complete Grade 12 to progress into tertiary education. At the same time, monastic schools retain autonomy over their management, reinforcing their role as independent community institutions.

Service providers highlighted several barriers affecting children's access to education. Economic hardship remains the most significant factor, especially for displaced and conflict-affected families. In many hard-to-reach or conflict-affected areas where public schools are not operating or are difficult for families to access, monastic schools often serve as the most accessible option. The number of functioning monastic schools has decreased from 1,526 in 2019/20 to 1,370 in recent years, largely due to conflict-related disruptions and administrative challenges. Yet the schools that remain open serve more students than before, reflecting strong community trust and the high demand for stable, affordable schooling during periods of uncertainty.

Household and community perspective: case studies

The following case studies are illustrative vignettes that reflect the experiences of individual schools and communities. They are not intended to represent all schools within each system type, nor should they be generalized across education systems. Conditions, capacities, and support structures vary significantly across states, regions, and providers.

Case 1: Private schools - teaching and learning experiences

Urban private school in Yangon: A well-established private school in downtown Yangon has seen enrollment grow from 800 students last year to over 1,000 this year. Admission is straightforward, requiring a registration fee and placement by grade. Fees range from MMK 130,000 per month in primary school to MMK 200,000–230,000 per month in high school, with additional costs for uniforms and books, plus a one-time registration fee of MMK 200,000. The school employs a mix of experienced educators and new graduates, with in-house training conducted before each academic year to address classroom practice gaps. Its curriculum combines the national curriculum with additional subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT), music, physical activities, and the English Four Skills program (listening, speaking, reading, writing) taught from kindergarten (KG) through Grade 9. Students undergo quarterly assessments alongside continuous daily evaluations. Communication with families is strong, reinforced through regular meetings and updates. Challenges include space constraints in the crowded downtown locations and uneven teaching quality due to differences in staff experience.

Rural private school near Nay Pyi Taw Territory: This private school has experienced rapid expansion, with enrollment increasing from 200 to 300 students within a single year. Admission is straightforward, with no enrollment fee and flexible monthly payment options. Fees are modest compared to urban private schools. Recruiting qualified teachers is a challenge, though the school hires B.Ed. graduates with 'Green Cards' and supports newcomers through co-teaching and external training opportunities. The school follows the national curriculum, enriched with weekend programs. Yet it struggles with basic facilities, limited classrooms, shortage of desks, and inadequate toilets. A heavy workload of daily quizzes and weekly tests can overwhelm late-joining students, while teacher shortages reduce individual support. In March 2025, an earthquake damaged the walls and science lab (with no injuries reported). Despite constraints, the school is a trusted, affordable, and disciplined option for rural families.

Urban private school in Ayeyarwady: Located in the regional capital, this school charges higher fees but is widely trusted for its safety, care, and consistent quality, making it a preferred choice for many families in a large regional city. Enrollment is straightforward, with a one-time payment of MMK 250,000 for stationery and materials. The school also offers flexible fee plans, allowing parents to pay in three to five installments per year, easing the financial burden. The school follows the national curriculum, supplemented with enrichment subjects such as science and additional English language learning. Students are assessed through regular classwork and tests, and families often provide their own devices for at-home computer use to complement

school-based learning. A spacious, clean campus and a school-run ferry support safe travel. Higher costs limit access to better-resourced families, and some parents note occasional gaps between expectations and delivery—though concerns are generally minor.

Case 2: Monastic schools - teaching-learning experiences

Monastic school in rural Ayeyarwady: The school serves 325 children from KG to Grade 8. Enrollment is straightforward and open to all, with no fees charged and no uniforms required. Most students come from nearby villages, often from families struggling to make ends meet. Because the school is rooted in the community and supported by donations, even the poorest households can access education without barriers. Textbooks are supplied by the MoE, while writing materials and basic stationery are provided by the school itself. Families do not need to pay for desks, benches, or other essential items, as these are covered by donations. The school employs six teachers responsible for both primary and middle school levels. While most have university degrees or some training, there are no formal training opportunities provided regularly by the MoE, so teachers rely on their own initiative. The school follows the national curriculum, with classes running five days a week, from 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Assessments include formal term exams four times a year and informal classroom quizzes to track progress. Children go home for lunch, easing food costs. Parents remain closely engaged through daily informal exchanges and community ties to the monastery. The school also welcomes volunteer teachers and external supporters, particularly for English lessons, which enrich students' learning. Challenges remain significant. Persistent shortages of teaching aids, especially in arts and sciences, and the lack of structured professional development for teachers continue to limit capacity. As one teacher reflected: *“Although resources are limited, my pupils remain motivated and perform steadily.”*

Monastic school in Bago: The school currently educates 570 students from KG to Grade 8. Enrollment is simple and inclusive, with no fees charged and no uniform requirements. The school has operated for more than 15 years and is widely recognized in the community for its openness and support. The teaching team consists of one head monk, two male teachers, and 12 female teachers, including several retired teachers who volunteer their time. Many parents choose the school because of the trusted reputation of these experienced educators. Salaries for regular staff are funded through a communal religious fund (Ngwe Padaythar Pin), with additional assistance from the head monk and donors when needed. Classes run from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., with seven periods per day. The school follows the national curriculum and supplements instruction with additional guidance from volunteer teachers. Assessments are regular (classroom checks and monthly tests in July, October, December, and February). Despite its strong community base, the school faces challenges. Infrastructure is modest, and financial stability depends heavily on donations and the religious fund. Sustaining the supply of qualified teachers into the future may be difficult without more formal recruitment and training mechanisms.

Monastic (Nunnery) school in rural Magway: The school provides education from KG to Grade 8 for 370 children. Enrollment follows typical procedures, and the school welcomes children from working-class backgrounds, including those affected by conflict and displacement. No tuition fees are charged, and the school is widely recognized for offering a safe and reliable learning environment to underprivileged families. The teaching team is composed of four *thilashin* (nuns) and seven lay teachers. While most are qualified, some continue to work toward full certification. The school relies on the MoRAC for partial salary support, supplemented by contributions from the principal nun's *nawakamma* (donation fund) and occasional external donors. Salaries remain very low, between MMK 50,000 and 61,500 per month for most teachers, with several *thilashin* serving voluntarily. Recruitment is community-based, often drawing on individuals motivated by a personal connection to the school's mission. Classes are structured around the national curriculum, with seven periods each day and four formal examinations per year, alongside regular classroom assessments. Teachers also integrate moral education and Buddhist values, reinforcing discipline and compassion alongside

literacy and numeracy. However, challenges remain. Salaries are insufficient to retain teachers long term, and teaching aids and sports equipment are limited. As a nun-teacher said, *“If we had better resources, we could give them not just knowledge, but joy in learning.”*

Case 3: Ethnic schools - teaching-learning experiences

Ethnic school in Northern Shan: The ethnic school was founded in 2015 to provide educational opportunities for children from low-income farming families in northern Shan. It operates two branches: a primary school in one village (KG–Grade 4) and a high school in a nearby village (Grades 5–10). The school offers both day and boarding options, serving more than 100 students with six local teachers. Enrollment is open to children from surrounding villages, though capacity remains limited. Most students come from economically challenged households, and around 80 reside in the hostel. One parent noted that this school has become increasingly attractive compared to nearby public schools. While many children have dropped out or stopped attending due to the current situation in Myanmar, enrollment in this school continues to rise. She highlighted that students are able to communicate more openly with teachers and school staff, creating a more supportive and transparent learning environment than in public schools. The school provides a structured and caring environment, offering a curriculum that includes core subjects, ethnic language instruction, and basic computer classes for upper grades. It provides a sense of stability and discipline for rural families seeking affordable education amid economic hardship. All teachers are local, earning modest salaries and receiving periodic professional development support from ethnic education networks. Despite resource constraints, parents value the school’s nurturing atmosphere and its commitment to ensuring continued learning for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Ethnic school in Kayah: Located in a displacement site deep within the forests, the school provides learning opportunities for children from Grades 1 to 8. It was established and is managed by a local ethnic women’s organization, which oversees both education and community livelihood activities for displaced families. Enrollment is open to all displaced children, regardless of documentation status, reflecting the school’s inclusive mission to serve families affected by conflict. Most students live in nearby shelters, and admission is simple; parents register their children directly with the community committee. There are no official school fees; teachers receive modest stipends of around MMK 100,000 per month, supported through local donations and contributions from diaspora networks. The school’s teaching staff consists mainly of volunteer educators, with occasional training and material support provided by the organizing groups and ethnic education networks. Classes are conducted daily when conditions permit, using temporary bamboo structures within the internally displaced person (IDP) camp. Many older children do not attend regularly, instead helping parents with farming or survival tasks. Despite limited resources and occasional disruptions due to security concerns, the school remains a vital learning space for children who would otherwise have no access to education. Teachers and community members demonstrate strong commitment, ensuring continuity of learning and emotional support for children living in challenging circumstances.

Case 4: Community schools - teaching-learning experiences

Community school in Chin: The school serves displaced children from surrounding IDP camps. Enrollment is simple, usually handled by parents directly with the volunteer committee. No formal documentation is required beyond a child’s name and grade level, making it accessible for families who have fled without papers. At present, the school hosts children from Grades 4 to 10, including many siblings enrolled together. Although tuition is officially free, parents contribute to teacher stipends. Each child requires about MMK 70,000 per year, and with four children enrolled, a parent pays roughly MMK 200,000 annually. Teachers receive about MMK 300,000 per year. Parents often borrow money or rely on seasonal farming work to meet these costs. The school is staffed by volunteer teachers, many of whom are displaced themselves. While dedicated, they have uneven training backgrounds, and frequent insecurity interrupts consistency. Teachers

focus on keeping lessons simple and ensuring children remain engaged, but quality varies widely across grades. The school follows a modified version of the national curriculum, but due to frequent disruptions, there is no fixed academic calendar. Classes are held when possible, and exams are irregular, often depending on the security situation.

Community school in Kayin: The school was established by a former public school teacher who decided to continue serving children in displacement. The school currently supports more than 300 displaced students with the help of 16 teachers, many of whom are volunteers without formal training. Originally set up in a temporary site, it has become a vital education hub for families who have lost access to education. Enrollment is open and flexible, welcoming children from all displaced families regardless of documentation. Parents are asked to contribute modest fees, around MMK 60,000 per child annually—to cover basic needs, while teacher salaries (approximately MMK 130,000 per month) are pieced together from community contributions and occasional donor support. For primary grades, no fees are charged. The school follows a condensed timetable. Younger grades (KG–Grade 2) attend in the mornings, while older children (Grades 3–6) attend in the afternoons, reflecting the shortage of teachers and classroom space. The learning environment is fragile. Parents and teachers describe classrooms as temporary and unsafe, especially at night. Lessons often stop when planes fly overhead or gunfire erupts nearby, and children are sent home for safety. The school faces constant disruptions from insecurity, with closures whenever conflict flares.

Case 5: Other schools - teaching-learning experiences

Community school in rural Sagaing: The school serves 180 students from KG to Grade 12. Enrollment is straightforward and open to children from farming and fishing families, many of whom are displaced by conflict. Compared to last year, attendance has declined, especially among older students, and economic pressures push many to drop out or seek work. Fees are modest—ranging from MMK 5,000 per month for KG to MMK 13,000 for upper secondary—but even so, the school struggles with limited funds. Teacher salaries are low (about MMK 180,000 per year), and many staff are volunteers. Classes run six days a week, with seven one-hour periods daily, facilities are minimal; during dry months, lessons are held under trees, while in the rainy season, teachers scramble to find safe spaces. Parents continue to support the school, appreciating that it keeps children learning and connected. Still, teachers describe insecurity, lack of teaching aids, and the psychological strain of interrupted schooling as major obstacles. One teacher reflected, *“If students had a clear pathway for their future education, they would stay. Now, many lose hope.”*

Online school - connection through screens: This school, part of the broader virtual classroom network, emerged as a lifeline when the pandemic and conflict forced widespread school closures. Thousands of students across Myanmar turned to this program, which combines live Zoom or Google Meet sessions with supplementary videos on Telegram and Google Classroom. Each school day begins at 9:00 a.m., with three- to four-hour live sessions covering one or two subjects. After a short break, students complete assignments and prepare for the following day, devoting an average of five to six hours daily. The school also introduces modules on civic education and critical thinking, broadening horizons beyond traditional academics. Challenges, however, remain significant. Frequent power outages and weak connectivity force students to ration mobile data, replay recorded sessions, or miss entire lessons during conflict-related disruptions. Many must balance household duties with coursework, creating constant trade-offs between family responsibilities and study time. Parents note that while tuition is low compared to private schools, hidden costs such as mobile data, devices, and backup electricity (solar panels or batteries) can still strain fragile household budgets. Mental health support is minimal, though many teachers provide informal encouragement. Students themselves express a desire for more interactive activities, group discussions, and structured counselling to help them cope with stress.

Case 6: Story of inclusion - a child with disability in rural southern Shan

This vignette reflects a single household's experience and is included in illustrating an individual case rather than representing broader patterns of inclusion.

Hpone Thant, a 13-year-old Grade 4 student in rural southern Shan, lives with both a physical and mild intellectual disability. He lost his mother shortly after birth and is now cared for by his stepmother, who ensures he attends school regularly. Despite limited mobility and slower learning progress, he enjoys school and feels happy when he can join his friends. During music class, he cannot stand for long periods and sometimes sits while others sing. His teacher shows patience and kindness, giving him extra time to learn and providing exercise books and pencils. Although he struggles to memorize lessons and write for long, he continues to progress at his own pace. He receives monthly nutritional injections to support his health and his friends often share their lunch with him. He says he feels happiest both at home and at school.

Trends and disparities in learning outcomes

This section examines recent trends and disparities in foundational learning outcomes, drawing on phone-based literacy and numeracy assessments. It highlights two key findings: first, learning levels remain low overall, with significant decline since the 2022/23 round; second, learning outcomes vary sharply by children's backgrounds. Children currently enrolled in school perform significantly better than those who are not, and large gaps are observed by gender, wealth, and parental education. These disparities likely reflect a combination of unequal learning environments, ongoing teacher shortages, and differential access to learning support.

5.1 Trends in learning outcomes

Data from phone-based learning assessments reveal concerning declines in foundational academic skills between the 2022/23 and 2024/25 academic years. Student literacy performance demonstrated a statistically significant decline over the two-year period. Average scaled scores decreased from 103 in 2022/23 to 98 in 2024/25, representing a 5-point reduction equivalent to approximately 0.5 standard deviations below the baseline mean (Figure 5.1).²² Mathematics achievement followed a parallel trajectory, with scaled scores falling from 104 in 2022/23 to 98 in 2024/25.²³ This 6-point decline represents about 0.7 standard deviations, indicating substantial deterioration in foundational numeracy skills.

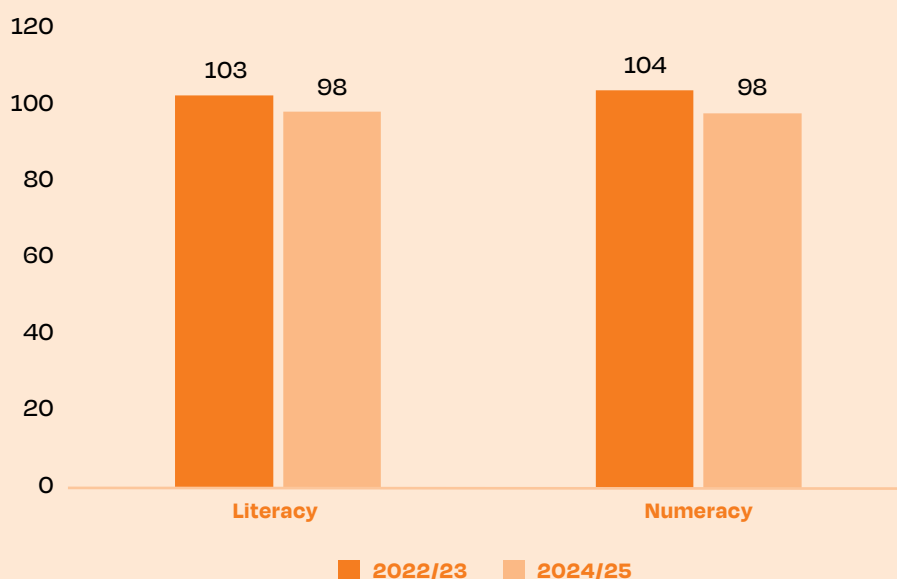
The magnitude of these declines extends well beyond typical year-to-year variation in educational outcomes. Both literacy and numeracy losses represent meaningful educational setbacks that warrant immediate attention from policy makers and education stakeholders. The consistency of decline across both domains—language and mathematics—suggests systemic factors affecting student learning, rather than subject-specific challenges. While the decline in foundational literacy and numeracy scores likely reflects prolonged disruptions and reduced instructional time, it may also signal broader deterioration in the quality of education. Possible contributing factors include increased teacher shortages, limited school resources, and shifts in classroom environments—especially in high-conflict or remote areas. These supply-side constraints may have further compounded the challenges faced by students and educators alike.

²² The assessments employed standardized scaled scores with a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 10, providing a robust statistical framework for measuring changes in student performance over time.

²³ Both literacy and numeracy scaled scores have a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 10.

FIGURE 5.1

Scaled scores in language and math (2022/23 and 2024/25)



Source: Original calculations based on MSPS learning assessment (2022/23 and 2024/25).

Both enrolled and non-enrolled children experienced significant declines in literacy and numeracy performance between 2022/23 and 2024/25. However, there are some variations in the magnitude of learning loss and performance differentials across enrollment groups, highlighting the protective effects of continued school participation.

In 2022/23, enrolled children demonstrated modest advantages over their non-enrolled counterparts across both academic domains. Enrolled students achieved scaled scores of 105 in literacy and numeracy, while non-enrolled children scored 103 in both subjects (Figure 5.2). This enrollment-related performance advantage represented a 2-point differential (equivalent to 0.2 standard deviations²⁴) in each domain, indicating that school participation provided measurable benefits for foundational learning outcomes.

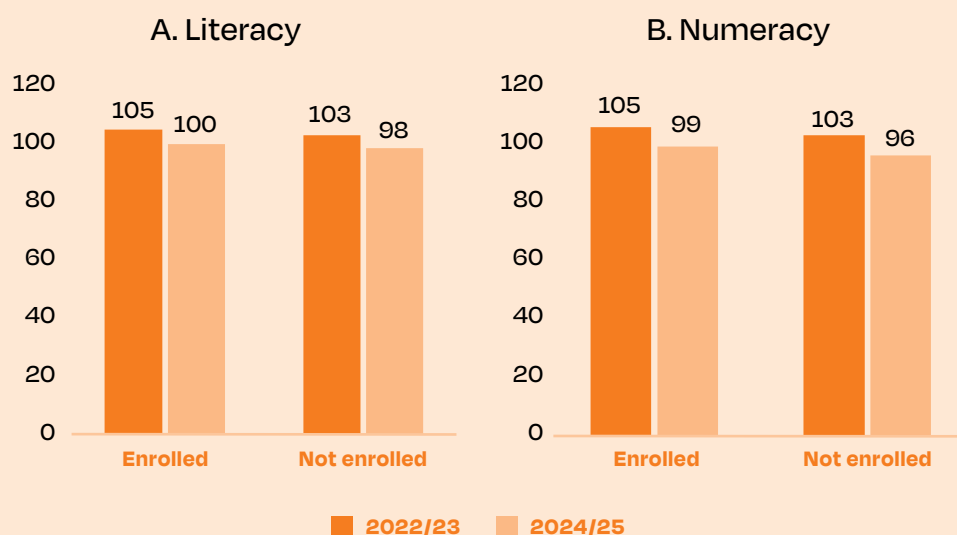
By 2024/25, academic performance had deteriorated across both enrollment groups, though the patterns of decline revealed concerning disparities. Enrolled children's scores decreased to 100 in literacy and 99 in numeracy, representing declines of 5 and 6 points respectively. Non-enrolled children experienced similar losses, with literacy scores falling to 98 and numeracy scores dropping to 96, constituting declines of 5 and 7 points, respectively.

The enrollment advantage persisted in literacy, maintaining the 2-point gap (0.2 standard deviations) observed in the baseline period. However, numeracy results revealed a widening disparity, with the performance gap expanding to 3 points (0.3 standard deviations) by 2024/25. This divergence suggests that numeracy skills among non-enrolled children deteriorated slightly more sharply than among their enrolled peers.

²⁴ 0.2 SD difference represents approximately 0.2 to 0.4 years of schooling.

FIGURE 5.2

Scaled scores by enrollment status (2022/23 and 2024/25)



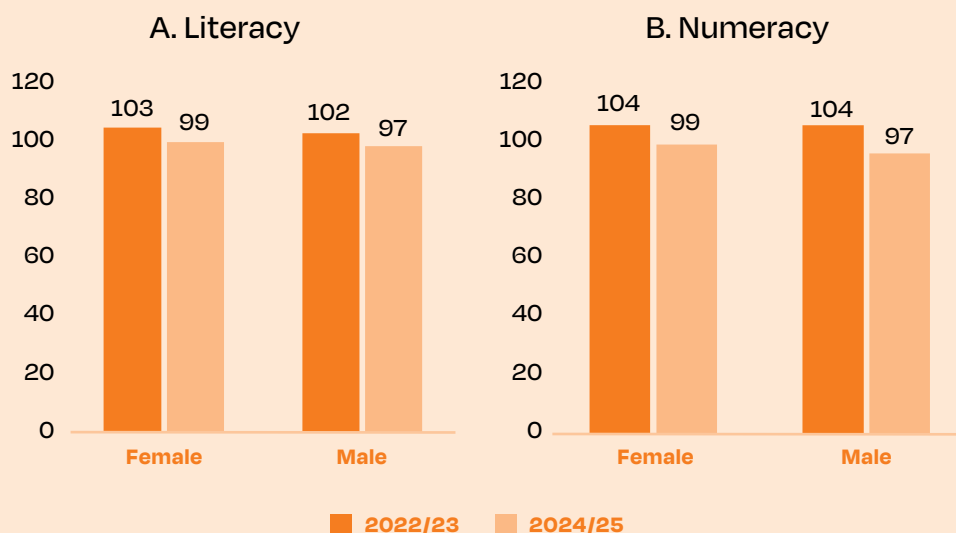
Source: Original calculations based on MSPS learning assessment (2022/23 and 2024/25).

Student achievement in literacy deteriorated substantially across both genders during the assessment period from 2022/23 to 2024/25. In literacy assessment, female students experienced a decline from 103 points in 2022/23 to 99 points in 2024/25, representing a decrease of 4 points or 0.4 standard deviations (Figure 5.3). Male students demonstrated a more pronounced decline over the same period, with scores falling from 102 points to 97 points, a decrease of 5 points or 0.5 standard deviations. While both genders experienced significant performance deterioration, the gender gap in literacy shifted slightly over this period. In 2022/23, females maintained a modest advantage of 1 point (0.1 standard deviations) over their male counterparts. By 2024/25, this female advantage had increased to 2 points (0.2 standard deviations), primarily due to the more severe decline experienced by male students.

The numeracy results followed the same declining trend with males experiencing larger decline. Female students' numeracy scores decreased from 104 points in 2022/23 to 99 points in 2024/25, representing a decline of 5 points or 0.6 standard deviations. Male students experienced a more substantial decrease, with scores falling from 104 points to 97 points over the same period, constituting a decline of 7 points or 0.8 standard deviations. The gender dynamics in numeracy were particularly noteworthy, as complete parity existed in 2022/23 with both male and female students achieving identical scores of 104 points. However, by 2024/25, a clear gender gap had emerged favoring females, who outperformed males by 2 points or 0.2 standard deviations. This pattern—where girls outperform boys in both literacy and numeracy—is consistent with other recent evidence from Myanmar (SCI, UNESCO, and UNICEF 2025).

FIGURE 5.3

Scaled scores in language and math by gender (2022/23 and 2024/25)



Source: Original calculations based on MSPS learning assessment (2022/23 and 2024/25).

5.2 Disparities in learning outcomes²⁵

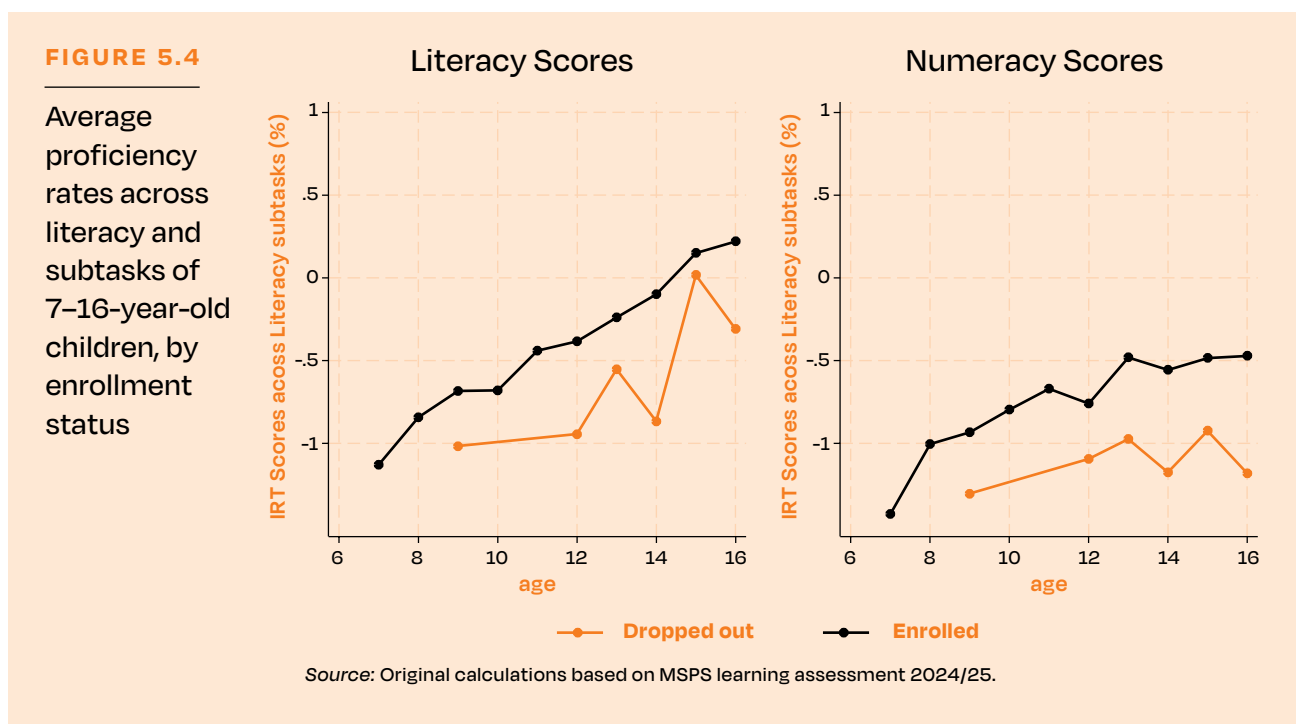
The analysis of scaled test scores reveals a persistent and substantial gap in learning outcomes between children who remain enrolled in school and those who have dropped out. This disparity emerges at an early age and widens progressively as children grow older. Students who continue their education consistently achieve higher scores in both language and mathematics, with their learning trajectories reflecting steady improvement over time—underscoring the cumulative benefits of sustained engagement in formal schooling. For instance, literacy scores among 14-year-old enrolled children are, on average, 0.6 standard deviations higher than those of 10-year-olds (Figure 5.4). While numeracy scores among enrolled children also increase with age, the rate of improvement is more modest: 14-year-olds score only 0.2 standard deviations higher than their 10-year-old peers. These findings highlight the critical role of continued school enrollment in fostering academic growth across key domains.

Among children who have dropped out, the patterns in language and mathematics achievement diverge notably. Numeracy scores remain largely stagnant across age groups, with only a minimal increase observed: the difference between 9- and 14-year-old children is just 0.13 standard deviations, indicating limited progression in mathematical skills after leaving school. In contrast, literacy scores exhibit a more volatile trajectory, marked by sharp dips and erratic fluctuations rather than a steady trend. While the difference in literacy scores between 9- and 14-year-olds is modest—only 0.15 standard deviations—the scores for 15- and 16-year-olds rise substantially above those of younger children, suggesting that literacy development among dropouts is not flat but rather characterized by periods of abrupt change. These contrasting patterns underscore the distinct challenges faced in supporting continued learning among OOSC, particularly in fostering consistent progress in both language and mathematics domains.

²⁵ The details of the Learning Assessment Methodology can be found in Annex 2.

While the gap in literacy scores between enrolled and dropped-out children does not exhibit a consistent pattern across age levels, the disparity in numeracy achievement becomes increasingly pronounced as children grow older. At age 9, the numeracy score gap between the two groups stands at 0.33 standard deviations, but this difference widens substantially with age—reaching 0.54 among 14-year-olds and 0.62 among 16-year-olds. This trend suggests that the cumulative effects of continued school enrollment are particularly significant for mathematical learning, with OOSC falling progressively further behind their peers in numeracy as they age.

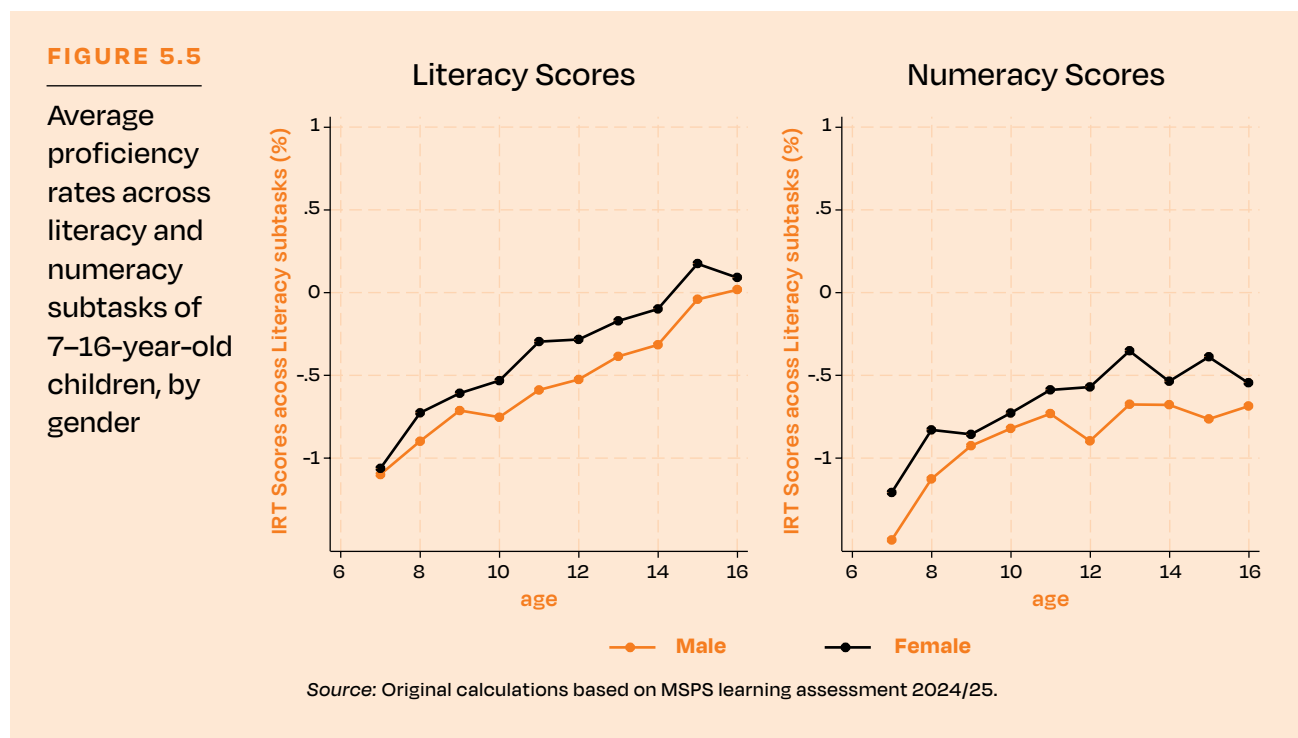
These findings underscore the urgent need to focus on retention and dropout prevention, particularly for students who show early signs of learning lag. Interventions such as conditional cash transfers, school feeding programs, and targeted remedial support can help keep at-risk children engaged and progressing in school. For those who have already left the education system, the data points to the necessity of robust second-chance education programs that create effective pathways for OOSC, including accelerated learning initiatives and vocational training that integrates foundational literacy and numeracy. Without such interventions, out-of-school youth are at high risk of being permanently left behind, with significant implications for their future employment prospects and social participation.



Girls demonstrate a clear and sustained advantage in literacy achievement. The gap in literacy scores between girls and boys is apparent from the youngest ages and somewhat widens as children grow older. Both groups show improvement in literacy as they age, and the rate of progress seems similar. By early adolescence (ages 11–15), the divergence in literacy scores becomes most pronounced, indicating that boys fall increasingly behind their female counterparts in reading and language skills as they advance through school.

In mathematics, the gender gap also favors female students, though the pattern is more variable. In contrast to the relatively consistent gaps across age levels observed in literacy, the difference in numeracy achievement between boys and girls varies by age, suggesting that the factors influencing mathematical learning may differ from those affecting literacy. However, the gender gaps in numeracy scores among older children (12 years and above) are generally larger than those among younger children, indicating that gender disparities in numeracy tend to become more pronounced as children grow older.

These findings highlight the critical need to address gender-specific challenges in foundational learning. The pronounced and widening literacy gap calls for targeted interventions, such as accelerated learning classes or remedial classes to support boys, particularly as they approach adolescence, ensuring that they do not fall irreversibly behind in reading and language skills. The persistent, though more erratic, gap in numeracy achievement suggests that instructional approaches and support mechanisms may need to be tailored to address the distinct learning needs of boys in mathematics as well.



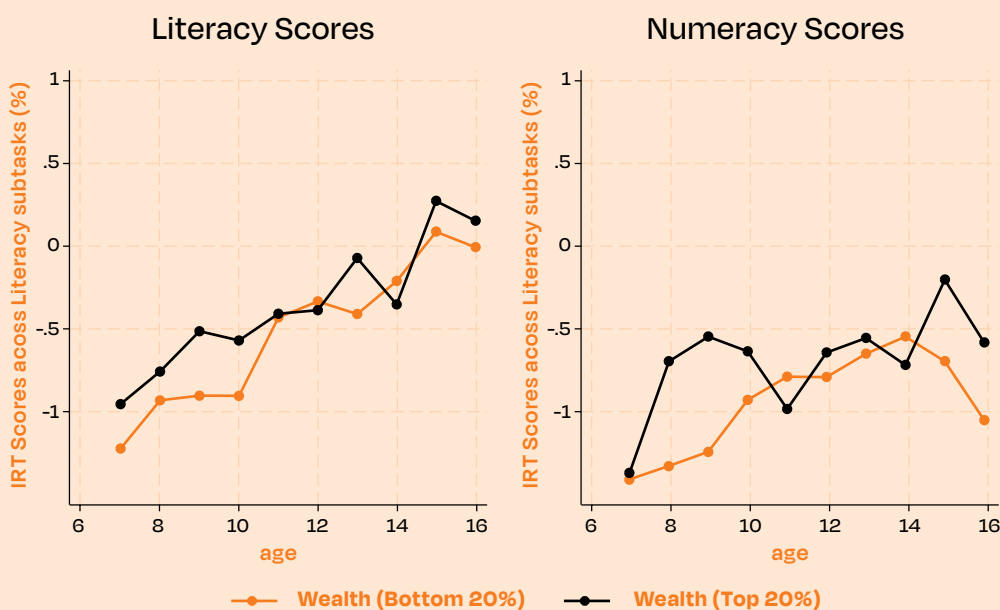
While children from the wealthiest households generally outperform those from the poorest households in foundational learning outcomes, this advantage is not consistent across age levels. Analysis of literacy and numeracy scores shows that wealthier children have a significant advantage over poorer children in the early and later years of schooling; however, this gap is not evident among middle school age children.

In literacy, a clear advantage for wealthier children is observed only among primary and high school age groups. At ages 7 and 8, children from the top wealth quintile already have higher average literacy scores—0.28 standard deviations above those from the poorest households (Figure 5.6). This gap widens as children progress through primary school, reaching 0.35 standard deviations by ages 9 and 10. The difference is not clear or consistent among middle school age children, but it becomes significant again for high school age children, with a gap of 0.29 standard deviations among 15- and 16-year-olds, which is similar to the gap seen in younger children. This pattern indicates that socioeconomic disparities in literacy are most pronounced at the start and end of schooling, but less evident during the middle school years.

Numeracy outcomes display a pattern similar to literacy, with disparities favoring wealthier children and even larger gaps at certain ages. At ages 7 and 8, the difference in numeracy scores between the richest and poorest children is 0.33 standard deviations. However, the gap becomes substantial among older primary school children (ages 9–10), reaching 0.41 standard deviations in favor of the richest. As with literacy, there is no clear or consistent pattern among middle school age children. Yet, a significant gap reemerges among high school age children, with a difference of 0.43 standard deviations between the top and bottom wealth quintiles at ages 15 and 16. These findings highlight that socioeconomic inequalities in numeracy are most pronounced during the later years of primary school and again in high school.

FIGURE 5.6

Average proficiency rates across literacy and numeracy subtasks of 7–16-year-old children, by household wealth



Source: Original calculations based on MSPS learning assessment 2024/25.

The educational attainment of the household head has a strong correlation with children’s foundational learning outcomes, with disparities surfacing early and intensifying as children grow older. Children from households where the head has attained tertiary education consistently demonstrate higher proficiency in both literacy and numeracy compared to peers whose household heads have only secondary education or less. This advantage is not only present from a young age but also widens over time, indicating that the benefits of a more educated home environment compound as children progress through their schooling years.

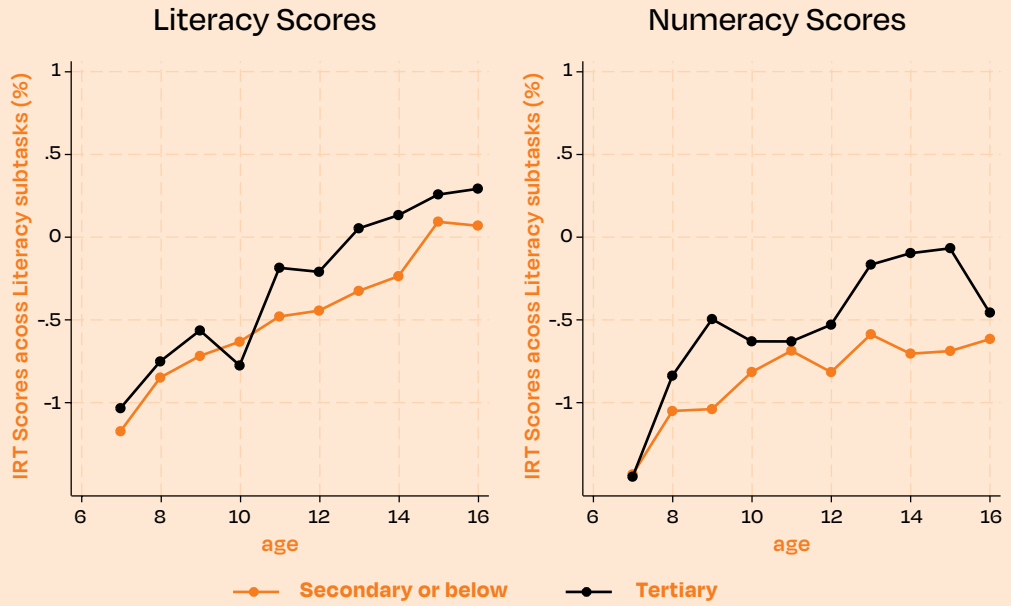
In literacy, the gap between the two groups is persistent and substantial. While all children show some improvement in literacy skills as they age, those from tertiary-educated households maintain a clear and growing lead. By late adolescence, the difference in literacy achievement is marked, suggesting that children from less-educated households face increasing challenges in mastering more complex literacy tasks as academic demands rise.

Numeracy skills reveal an even more pronounced disparity, particularly as children enter their teenage years. The initial gap in numeracy scores is similar to that observed in literacy, measuring 0.14 standard deviations among 8–10-year-olds, but it expands dramatically after age 12, reaching 0.54 standard deviations for children ages 14–15 (Figure 5.7). Children from households with tertiary-educated heads experience a strong acceleration in numeracy abilities during early adolescence, while those from less-educated households show minimal improvement over the same period. This divergence points to significant barriers faced by children from less-educated households in acquiring advanced mathematical concepts, resulting in a severe learning deficit by the end of secondary school.

There is no clear or consistent pattern in learning outcomes between children from high- and low-conflict areas. As shown in Figure 5.8 at certain ages, children in low-conflict zones score higher, while at other ages, those in high-conflict areas outperform their peers. This variability is evident in both literacy and numeracy scores, indicating that the impact of conflict exposure on foundational learning is not uniform across age groups. Instead, the relationship appears to be complex and influenced by additional factors that may vary over time or by context. These findings suggest that interventions aimed at improving learning outcomes in conflict-affected settings should be tailored to specific age groups and local circumstances, rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all approach.

FIGURE 5.7

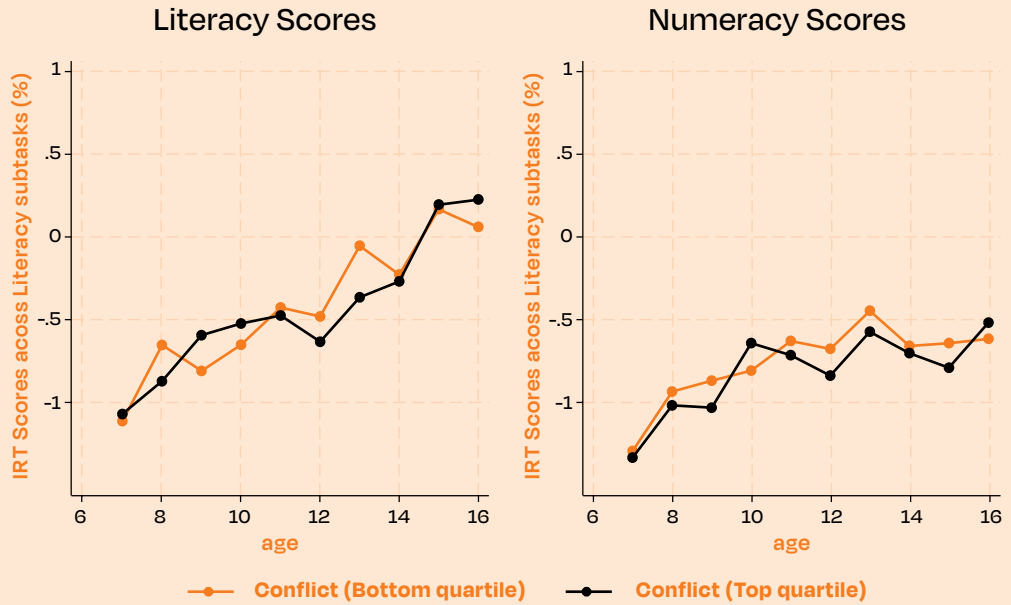
Average proficiency rates across literacy and numeracy subtasks of 7–16-year-old children, by household head's education level



Source: Original calculations based on MSPS learning assessment 2024/25.

FIGURE 5.8

Average proficiency rates across literacy and numeracy subtasks of 7–16-year-old children, by conflict intensity



Source: Original calculations based on MSPS learning assessment 2024/25.

School enrollment, parental education, and gender of the child emerge as the strongest predictors of learning achievement across both literacy and numeracy domains. Table 5.1 presents findings from multivariate regressions examining the determinants of children's learning levels, controlling individual characteristics (gender, language, enrollment status, grade attainment, age-for-grade alignment, school type), socioeconomic background (household head gender, household head education, wealth index, and number of children in household), and geographical location (urban/rural residence).

Children who have dropped out of school demonstrate substantially lower achievement levels than their enrolled peers across both subject areas, even after accounting for demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic differences. This dropout penalty proves both statistically significant and educationally meaningful, with particularly pronounced effects in mathematics compared to literacy. The magnitude of this association underscores how formal schooling provides irreplaceable learning opportunities that cannot be easily compensated through alternative pathways. Interestingly, while age-for-grade alignment shows positive associations with literacy achievement, this relationship does not extend to numeracy performance, suggesting that mathematical skill development may be less dependent on chronological age alignment than on sustained instructional exposure.

Gender patterns reveal consistent advantages for girls across both academic domains, with these gender gaps widening over time. Female students significantly outperform their male counterparts in both language and mathematics, with effect sizes that have grown more pronounced over the study period. This trend aligns with global patterns observed in many developing countries, where girls increasingly demonstrate superior academic performance despite historical disadvantages in educational access (UNICEF and SEAMEO 2020). The persistence and growth of this gender gap warrant further investigation to understand the underlying mechanisms driving differential achievement patterns.

School type effects present a more complex picture that varies by subject and time period. Non-public schools—encompassing monastic, ethnic/community, and private institutions—demonstrate positive associations with mathematics performance in the 2024/25 academic year, suggesting potential advantages in numeracy instruction within alternative educational providers. However, this relationship does not extend consistently to literacy achievement, where non-public school attendance showed negative associations in 2022/23 but no significant effects in 2024/25. Given the heterogeneous nature of Myanmar’s non-state educational sector, these mixed findings require cautious interpretation and point to the need for more granular analysis of specific institutional types and their pedagogical approaches.

Household socioeconomic characteristics exhibit the expected positive associations with learning outcomes, though with notable variations in strength and consistency. Parental education, proxied by household head educational attainment, demonstrates robust and stable positive relationships with children’s achievement in both subjects across time periods. This consistent pattern reflects the enduring importance of human capital transmission within families and the multiple pathways through which educated parents support their children’s learning—including direct academic assistance, educational expectations, and navigation of school systems (Chevalier and Marie 2017; Davis-Kean 2005; Dubow et al. 2009).

The relationship between household wealth and learning achievement presents a more nuanced pattern that has evolved over the study period. While wealth demonstrated positive associations with both literacy and numeracy performance in 2022/23, this relationship appears to have weakened by 2024/25, suggesting potential shifts in how economic resources translate into educational advantages. This diminishing wealth effect may reflect improvements in educational equity, changes in school resource allocation, or broader economic transformations that have altered the mechanisms linking family resources to academic outcomes.

Family composition effects reveal subject-specific patterns consistent with resource allocation theories. Larger family sizes show negative associations with mathematics achievement, particularly in 2022/23, likely reflecting the increased demands for parental attention and household resources as families expand. The absence of robust effects in literacy and the temporal inconsistency of these relationships suggest that resource constraints may be most binding for subjects requiring intensive support—such as mathematics in upper grades—where coursework demands exceed what parents with limited educational backgrounds can provide.

The gender of the household head shows mixed and inconsistent effects across subjects and time periods. While no statistically significant relationship emerges between household head gender and literacy performance, mathematics outcomes show temporal variation—children from female-headed households demonstrate lower scores in 2022/23, though this association disappears entirely by 2024/25, suggesting these effects lack robustness over time. These findings highlight the intersection between demographic pressures and educational achievement, particularly in contexts where formal educational support systems may be insufficient to compensate for household resource limitations.

TABLE 5.1

Determinants of literacy and numeracy test scores for 7–16-year-old children

	2023	2025	2023	2025
Variables	Standardized IRT Score: Literacy		Standardized IRT Score: Numeracy	
<i>Child characteristics</i>				
Child is a school dropout	-0.12	-0.25**	-0.19	-0.34**
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.16)
Difference between a child's actual age and expected age for current grade (age gap)	0.07**	0.03*	0.00	-0.04
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Child is a school dropout* Age gap	-0.07	0.04	-0.00	0.02
	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Child is female	0.13***	0.20***	0.01	0.23***
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Speaks non-Myanmar language at home	-0.04	-0.02	0.05	-0.11
	(0.10)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Attends non-public school	-0.20**	-0.00	-0.12	0.13**
	(0.09)	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.07)
<i>Household characteristics</i>				
Is a female-headed household	-0.08	0.02	-0.14*	0.02
	(0.08)	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.07)
Household head's years of education	0.02***	0.01**	0.02***	0.02***
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Number of children in household	-0.01	-0.00	-0.09***	-0.01
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Wealth index	0.03*	0.00	0.06***	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Location: Child resides in urban area	-0.02	0.02	0.05	-0.16***
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Observations	1,233	2,209	1,233	2,209
Adjusted R-squared	0.24	0.20	0.17	0.11
Subject	Language	Language	Math	Math
Scaled Score	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: MSPS learning assessment 2022/23 and 2024/25.

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

All models account for state/region fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses.

This report has documented the current state, evolving trends, and widening disparities in educational access and learning outcomes in Myanmar, drawing on recent rounds of household surveys and phone-based learning assessment. The findings presented here reveal a mixed picture of modest recovery in some areas of access—particularly in primary education—but continued challenges in secondary schooling, significant disparities across geographic, socioeconomic, and demographic groups, and a concerning stagnation or decline in foundational learning outcomes.

Recovery in primary enrollment, but persistent challenges at the secondary level

Recent data indicate that school enrollment has increased at all levels since 2022/23, with the most substantial improvements observed at the primary and high school levels. NERs for primary age children (ages 6–10) are now nearing pre-crisis levels in many parts of the country. However, the recovery remains incomplete, and progress has stalled for older age groups. Enrollment rates for middle (ages 11–14) and high school (ages 15–17) children remain significantly lower than before the COVID-19 pandemic and political transition. Compared to the 2016/17 baseline, secondary-age children—especially those from poor households and certain states and regions—are now substantially less likely to be enrolled.

The analysis also reveals a larger share of OOSC compared to the pre-pandemic baseline, particularly among older adolescents. The OOSC rate increases sharply with age, and the most frequently reported reasons for dropout include economic hardship, school closures, and disengagement from the learning process. Encouragingly, however, the share of OOSC has declined across all age groups since 2022/23, indicating early signs of recovery. Yet, those who remain out of school continue to face distinct and compounding vulnerabilities—they are disproportionately older and tend to come from poorer and larger households, and from families where the household head has lower levels of education. These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted reengagement strategies, especially for adolescents who have disengaged from formal education.

Widening disparities across groups and locations

Access to education has become increasingly unequal across gender, socioeconomic status, and disability status. Evidence indicates that a gender gap is reemerging at the middle school level, with boys showing significantly lower enrollment rates than girls. Children with disabilities continue to face particularly stark barriers to school participation. Enrollment among children from the poorest quintiles remains significantly lower than among their wealthier peers, especially at the secondary level.

Geographic disparities in education access remain pronounced, particularly at the middle and high school levels, with some states and regions substantially lagging others. Conflict-affected areas continue to face more severe access constraints due to displacement, school closures, and the deterioration of local education systems. These spatial disparities are compounded by governance fragmentation and uneven provision of public education across administrative zones. While conflict exposure does not appear as a statistically significant predictor in the regression models for out-of-school status, this does not diminish its

relevance. Rather, the effects of conflict are likely mediated through indirect channels such as displacement, livelihoods, or service disruption. These mechanisms warrant close attention even if not directly captured in the quantitative analysis.

Myanmar's education system now faces a dual challenge: responding to the immediate needs of learners and educators while laying the groundwork for long-term reform. In the short term, flexible, community-based options will be critical for reaching excluded children, but over time, these must be anchored within a broader strategy to rebuild a more resilient and responsive system.

Shifting schooling preferences and the rise of non-public education

In response to the prolonged crisis in formal public education provision, families have increasingly turned to alternative providers. The analysis documents a marked shift toward non-public schooling options, including ethnic education service providers, monastic schools, and community schools. These non-public providers have expanded their footprint, particularly in areas where public school systems have been weakened or disrupted.

Enrollment patterns suggest that the share of students in 'other non-public' schools has grown significantly since 2016/17, although the scale and nature of this shift vary across states and regions. Qualitative interviews with key stakeholders from monastic, community, and ethnic education systems reveal both the strengths and constraints of these providers. While they offer a vital continuity of education for many children, they often face challenges related to teacher shortages, curriculum alignment, resource constraints, and limited institutional support.

These findings suggest that Myanmar's education landscape has become increasingly pluralistic, but also more fragmented—posing new challenges for equity, quality assurance, and system coherence. Going forward, any national education recovery strategy will need to recognize and support the role of these non-public actors while working toward a more harmonized and inclusive system.

Foundational learning outcomes on the decline

Two rounds of phone-based learning assessments conducted in 2022/23 and 2024/25 reveal a declining trend in basic literacy and numeracy among children ages 7–16. The learning crisis appears to be deepening for the most marginalized children, those who are out of school, from poorer households, and whose parents are less educated.

Disaggregated analysis shows wide disparities in test scores by gender, wealth, age group, disability status, and enrollment status. Children who are enrolled in school consistently outperform their out-of-school peers, reaffirming the protective role of formal schooling in sustaining learning. However, even among enrolled children, the overall proficiency levels are low, suggesting that being in school is not necessarily sufficient for meaningful learning to occur. This highlights the importance of improving not just access, but also the quality of instruction and learning environments. Box 2 highlights the global best practices on recovery and resilience in education.

BOX 2

Global Lessons on Recovery and Resilience in Education

International experience highlights that restoring school participation following major disruptions—such as pandemics or political crises—requires a coordinated approach that addresses both supply and demand-side barriers. On the supply side, reopening schools safely and ensuring operational continuity in underserved and insecure areas are critical first steps. On the demand side, successful strategies often include community-based enrollment campaigns, proactive identification of children at risk of dropping out, and targeted financial and social support to vulnerable households.

To guide these efforts, global frameworks such as the RAPID approach (World Bank et al. 2022) provide structured guidance. RAPID emphasizes ensuring that every child returns to school and stays enrolled, regularly assessing learning levels, and focusing on foundational skills. It also promotes cost-effective pedagogical responses—such as catch-up learning, structured pedagogy, and tailored instruction—alongside measures that safeguard learners' physical and emotional well-being.

Given resource constraints in many contexts, countries have prioritized evidence-based interventions with high returns. The *Smart Buys* literature (Angrist et al. 2025; Banerjee et al. 2023) identifies several such interventions, including structured pedagogy programs, “Teaching at the Right Level” (TaRL), and community-based tutoring—each shown to deliver significant learning gains at low cost, particularly for the most disadvantaged.

Finally, recent literature emphasizes that education systems in conflict-affected settings need to adopt locally grounded and flexible approaches that respond to shifting political realities and institutional fragmentation (Rinehart et al. 2024; South et al. 2024).

Methodological contributions and implications for monitoring

This report also demonstrates the value of phone-based survey methodologies in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. While such approaches have limitations—such as limited coverage in areas without mobile access, self-selection biases, and constraints in measuring complex skills, they provide a feasible and timely way to monitor trends in access and learning under difficult conditions. The careful sampling, stratification, and oversampling strategies used in the MSPS series enable disaggregated insights across key population groups and subnational regions. The learning assessments, while limited to basic skills, offer a rare window into educational outcomes in a context where face-to-face school surveys remain difficult.

Given the volatility of the operating environment, maintaining regular, reliable, and representative data collection will be essential for informing policy and programming. Investments in innovative, mixed method monitoring systems can support real-time decision-making and adaptive programming.

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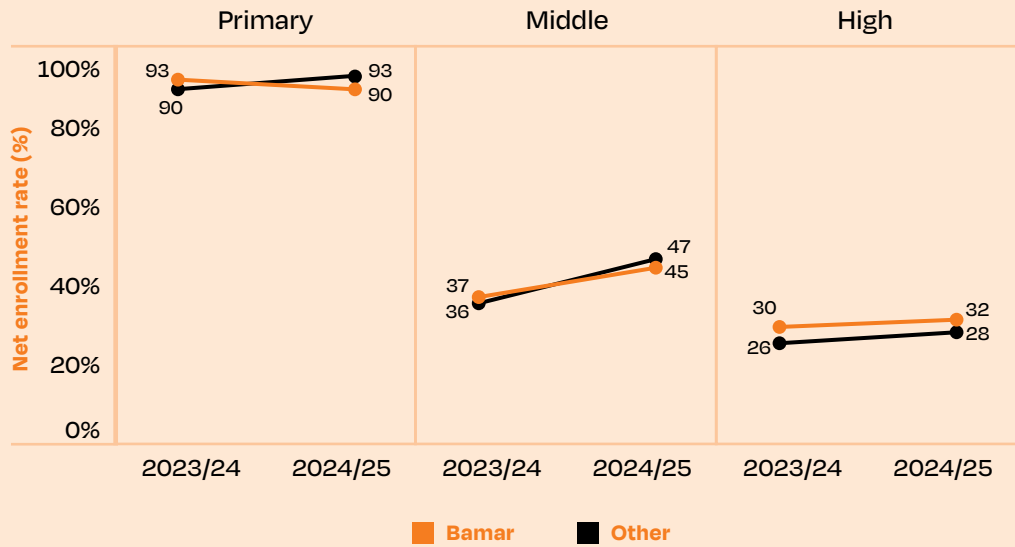
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Annexes

Annex 1:

FIGURE A1.1

Primary, middle, and high school NER, by ethnicity, 2023/24–2024/25

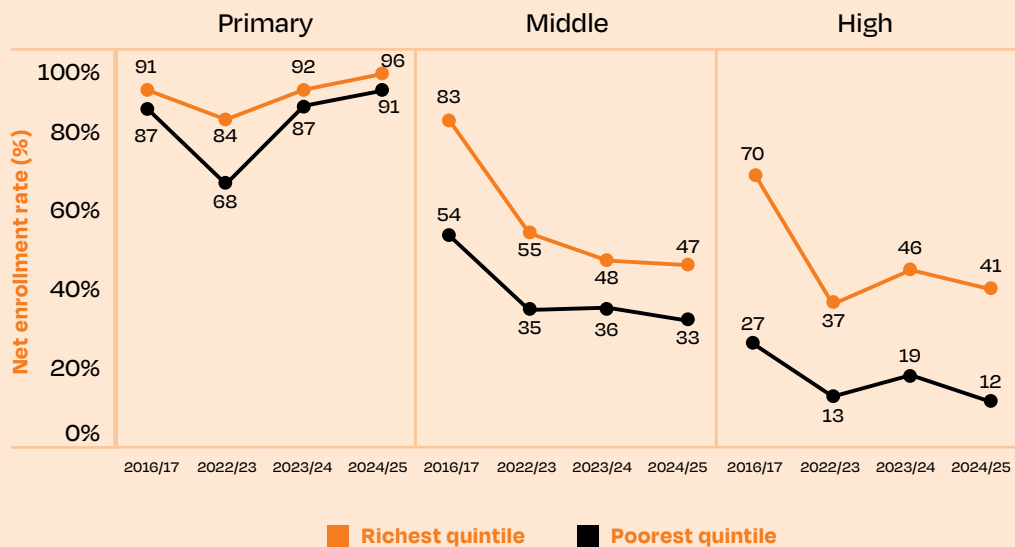


Source: Original figure based on MSPS (2023/24 and 2024/25).

Note: The 'Other' non-Bamar group includes all the ethnic groups (Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan) and other minority groups (Chinese, Indian, Arabic, Punjabi, and Others).

FIGURE A1.2

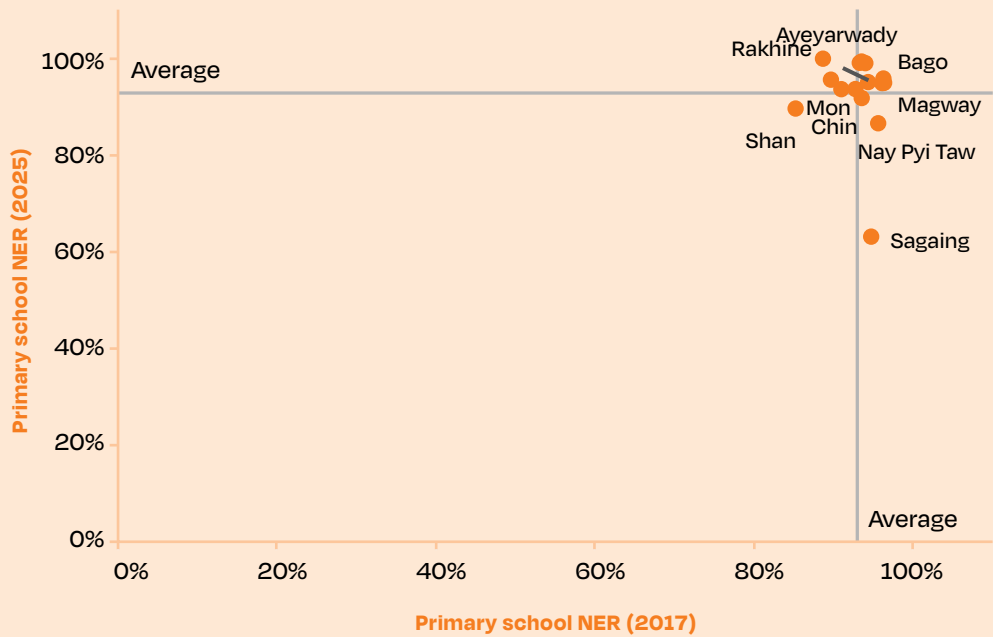
Primary, middle, and high school NER, by wealth group, 2016/17–2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MLCS 2016/17, MSPS (2022/2023, 2023/24, and 2024/25).

FIGURE A1.3

Primary school NER, by state/region, 2016/17 and 2024/25

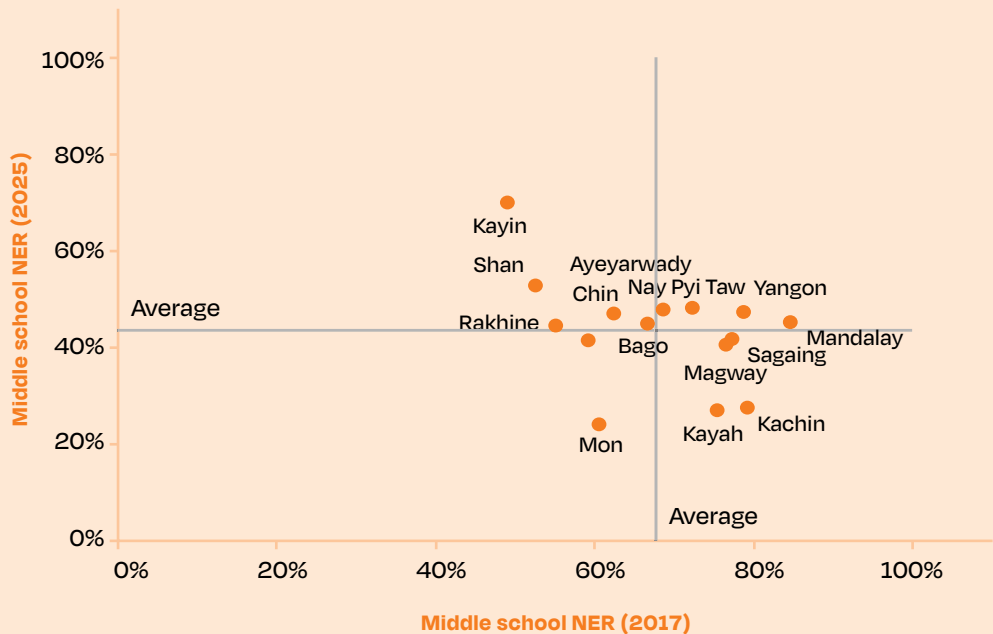


Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.

Note: Results for Chin and Rakhine States should be interpreted with caution due to limited geographic coverage within these states. The Chin State sample is concentrated in only two townships—Mindat (50 percent of observations) and Hakha (20 percent)—while the Rakhine State sample similarly draws from two townships: Sittwe (48 percent) and Kyaukpyu (26 percent). This geographic concentration may limit the generalizability of findings to the broader state populations and could introduce sampling bias if the selected townships are not representative of statewide conditions.

FIGURE A1.4

Middle school NER, by state/region, 2016/17 and 2024/25

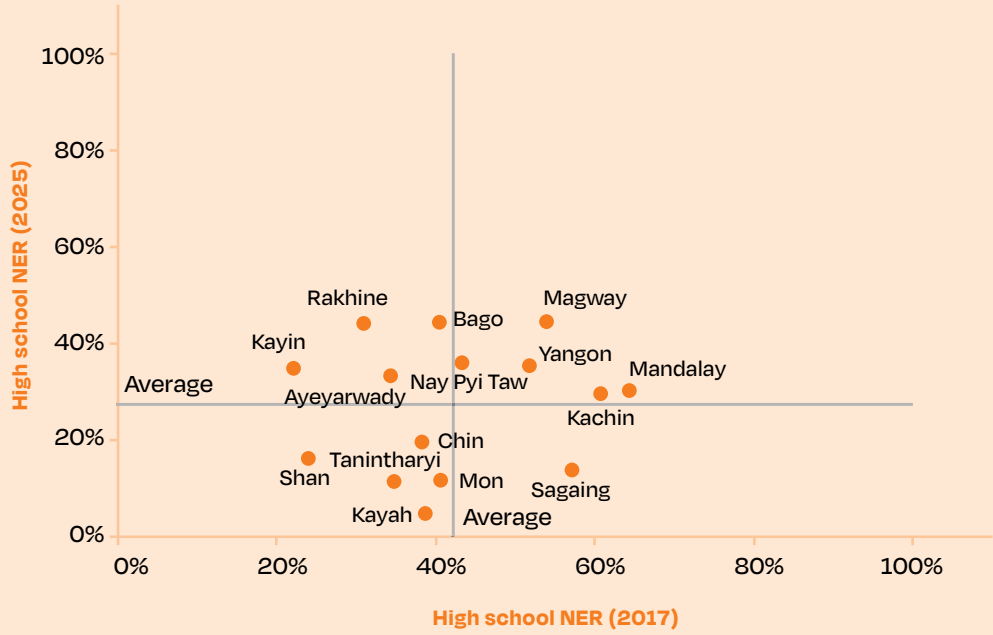


Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.

Note: Results for Chin and Rakhine States should be interpreted with caution due to limited geographic coverage within these states. The Chin State sample is concentrated in only two townships—Mindat (50 percent of observations) and Hakha (20 percent)—while the Rakhine State sample similarly draws from two townships: Sittwe (48 percent) and Kyaukpyu (26 percent). This geographic concentration may limit the generalizability of findings to the broader state populations and could introduce sampling bias if the selected townships are not representative of statewide conditions.

FIGURE A1.5

Primary, middle, and high school NER, by state/region, 2016/17 and 2024/25

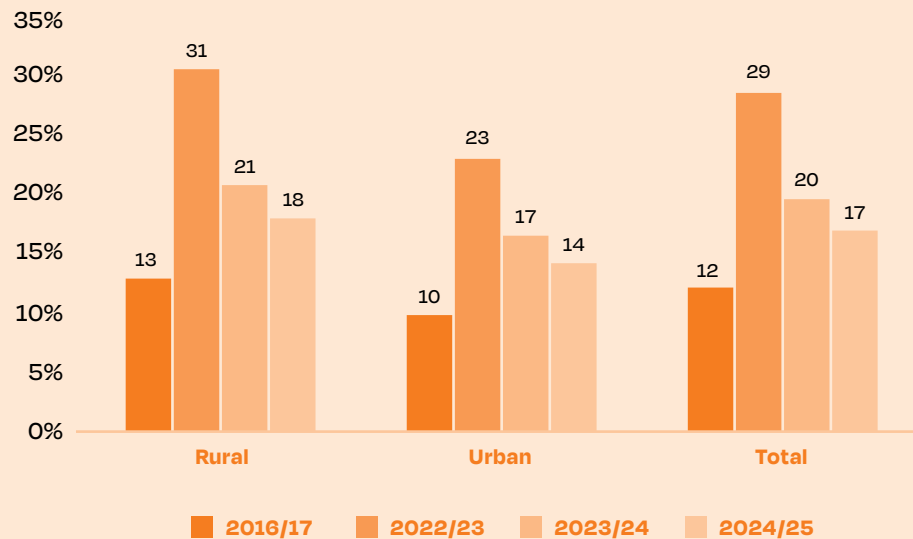


Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.

Note: Results for Chin and Rakhine States should be interpreted with caution due to limited geographic coverage within these states. The Chin State sample is concentrated in only two townships—Mindat (50 percent of observations) and Hakha (20 percent)—while the Rakhine State sample similarly draws from two townships: Sittwe (48 percent) and Kyaukpyu (26 percent). This geographic concentration may limit the generalizability of findings to the broader state populations and could introduce sampling bias if the selected townships are not representative of statewide conditions.

FIGURE A1.6

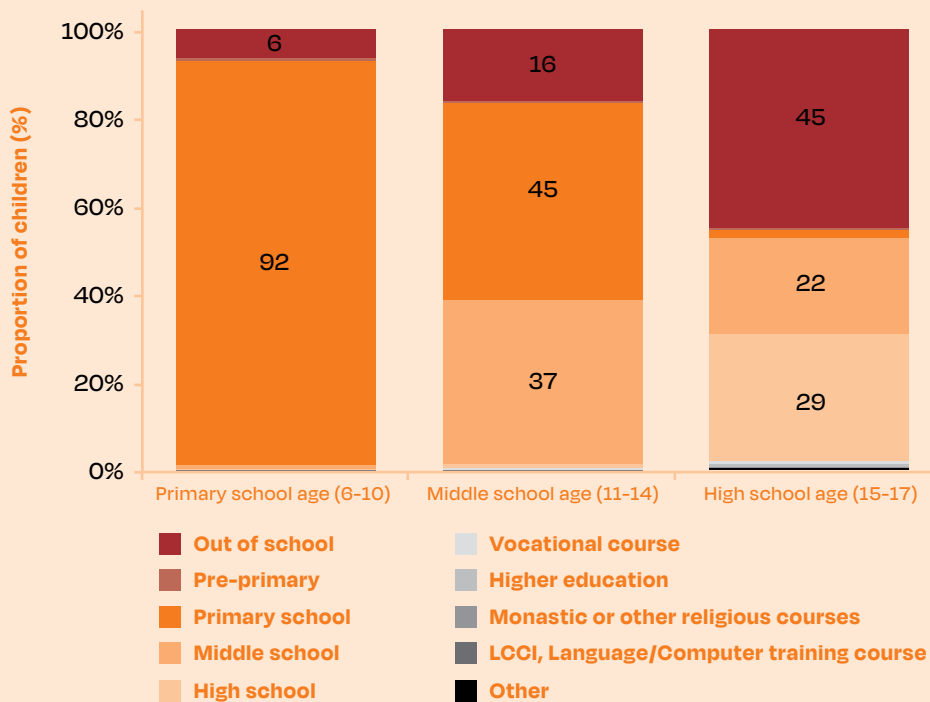
Share of children (ages 6–17) not enrolled in school, by location, 2017–2025



Source: Original figure based on MLCS 2016/17, MSPS (2022/2023, 2023/24, and 2024/25).

FIGURE A1.7

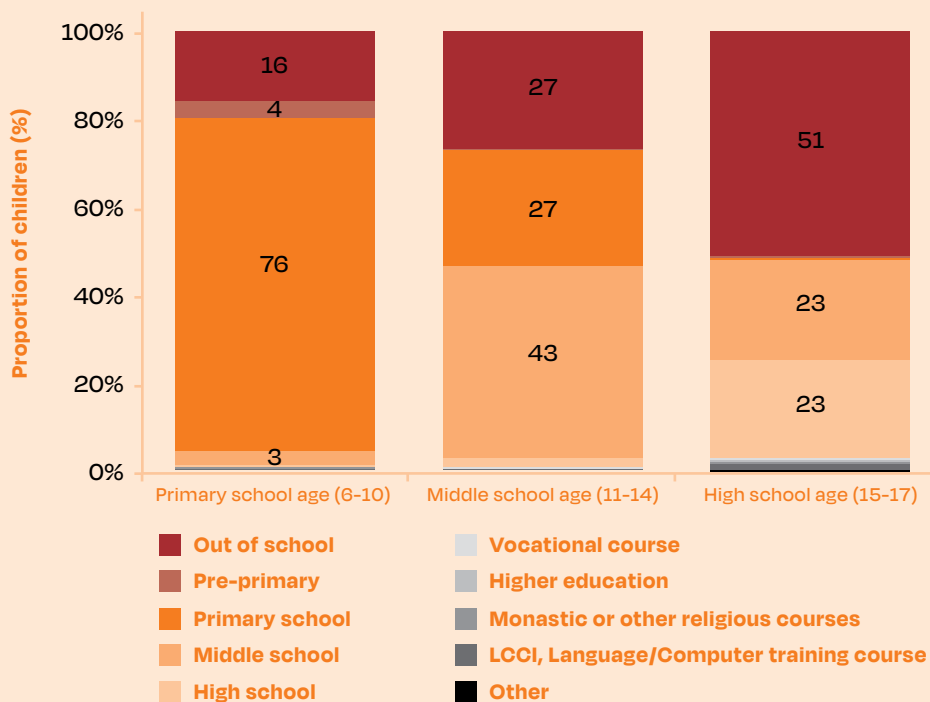
Schooling status of children, by age group (2023/24)



Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.
 Note: LCCI = London Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

FIGURE A1.8

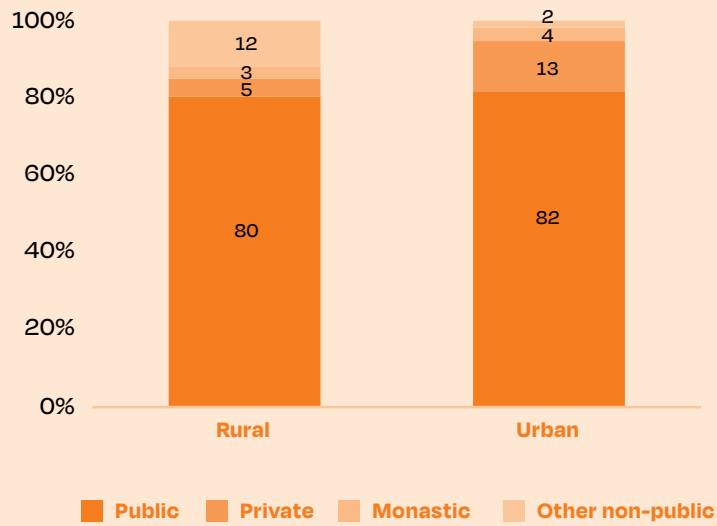
Schooling status of children, by age group (2022/23)



Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.
 Note: LCCI = London Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

FIGURE A1.9

Distribution of enrolled students (ages 6–17), by school type across location (urban and rural), 2024/25



Source: Original figure based on MSPS 2024/25.

Annex 2:

Overview of Learning Assessment Methodology

Learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy are measured through average proficiency rates across a range of relevant subtasks. For literacy, the assessment includes six subtasks: letter name knowledge, familiar word reading, invented word reading, listening comprehension, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Numeracy proficiency is assessed across eight subtasks: number identification, simple addition, simple subtraction, word problems involving simple operations, complex subtraction with borrowing, decimal addition, place value, multiplication and division word problems, and simple fractions. This approach is consistent with the 2022 assessment methodology, enabling comparability of results over time.

Assessment instruments were designed to align with students' age or grade level. In Round 1 (2022), younger students were those in grades 1–3, while older students were grouped into grades 4–6 and grades 7+. In Round 2 (2024), younger students were defined as those ages 7–11, and older students as those ages 12–18. All literacy questions were retained across both rounds, while numeracy instruments were expanded in 2024 to include more complex items to better assess older children.

To measure the language and mathematics learning outcomes, IRT is employed to derive scaled scores that account for differences in question difficulty and better reflect true learning levels. IRT enables the construction of a common scale across different sets of questions, using shared 'anchor' items to link assessments across grades and years. This allows for meaningful comparisons even when students take assessments with different content, and offers a robust way to estimate learning gains across survey rounds. IRT is particularly advantageous in contexts where assessments must be adapted for remote administration and students answer different subsets of items.

Why are scores scaled?

Because students received different sets of questions—based on grade level in 2022 and age group in 2024—direct comparisons using percentage correct scores would be misleading. Younger students were given easier questions, while older students received more challenging ones. Simply comparing raw scores across these groups would exaggerate differences in learning levels and mask true progress.

IRT provides a more rigorous alternative by estimating student ability based on their overall pattern of correct and incorrect responses, while accounting for each question's difficulty and discrimination properties. Rather than assuming all items are equally informative, IRT weights questions based on how well they distinguish between students of differing abilities and how difficult they are to answer. This allows the model to generate an ability score (theta) that reflects a student's true learning level, regardless of which test form they received.

Because both the 2022 and 2024 assessments include a significant number of common items, IRT makes it possible to place all students on a shared learning scale. This results in scaled scores that are directly comparable across both rounds and among students of different ages. By doing so, the study ensures consistent, fair, and policy-relevant insights into learning progress in Myanmar during a period of crisis and recovery.

Technical treatment of IRT

IRT is a psychometric framework that models the probability of a correct response to a test item based on the interaction between a student's latent ability and the properties of the item. Unlike traditional scoring methods that treat all items equally, IRT explicitly accounts for variation in item characteristics.

Each item in an IRT model is described by three parameters. The difficulty parameter (b) indicates the ability level needed to have a 50 percent chance of answering the item correctly. The discrimination parameter (a) reflects how well an item differentiates between students with different ability levels—higher discrimination values mean the item is more sensitive to changes in ability. The guessing parameter (c) captures the likelihood of a correct answer due to chance, particularly relevant for multiple-choice formats.

A comprehensive IRT model for binary (correct/incorrect) items is the **3-Parameter Logistic (3PL) model**, which is often employed for analyzing multiple-choice assessments like TIMSS. The probability of student i answering item g correctly ($X_{ig}=1$) given their ability θ is defined as

$$P_g[X_{ig} = 1 | \theta] = c_g + \frac{1 - c_g}{1 + \exp[-1.7 \times a_g \times (\theta - b_g)]}$$

where

- a_g represents the discrimination parameter of item g ,
- b_g represents the difficulty parameter of item g , and
- c_g represents the guessing parameter of item g .

Each item on a test typically has its own unique set of parameters. In practice, the guessing parameter (c_g) is sometimes set to zero, as done in this analysis, resulting in the 2-Parameter Logistic (2PL) model.

It's crucial to understand that the ability parameter (θ) represents a student's proficiency in the measured skill at a given time and is not an immutable 'innate ability'. Education and learning are intended to improve a student's θ . By including a range of items with varying difficulty and discrimination, tests can effectively estimate the ability levels of diverse student populations. Estimates of latent student ability θ are standardized such that the empirical distribution of θ across students has mean zero and unit standard deviation.

Instrument reliability and validity

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency in the results produced by an assessment instrument. A reliable tool yields stable and dependable outcomes across repeated administrations or under varying conditions, minimizing measurement error. In the context of phone-based assessments, this implies that student responses should remain consistent when assessed at different times or by different enumerators, assuming no substantive change in the underlying skill level.

Validity, on the other hand, concerns the extent to which an instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure. It assesses whether the tool captures the specific learning constructs it aims to evaluate, rather than unrelated attributes or artifacts of the mode of delivery. For phone-based assessments, this involves ensuring that the questions and format are appropriately adapted to the audio-only context, and that the results reflect true learning outcomes rather than test-taking conditions or communication barriers.

Reliability

To assess the internal consistency of the phone-based learning assessment instruments, we employed Cronbach's alpha—the most widely used metric for evaluating test score reliability (RTI International 2016). Cronbach's alpha measures the degree to which items within an instrument are correlated, providing an indication of whether the items consistently reflect the same underlying construct. Higher values denote stronger internal consistency.

According to established benchmarks, a Cronbach's alpha value below 0.6 suggests insufficient internal consistency across subtasks (World Bank and MoE 2021), while values of 0.7 or higher are generally considered acceptable (RTI International 2016). In this study, the literacy instrument demonstrated very high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.96. This suggests that the literacy subtasks are highly correlated, and the instrument performs reliably. The numeracy instrument also showed strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86—well above the acceptable threshold and indicative of solid internal coherence among the numeracy items.

Validity

To assess the validity of the instruments, we examine their predictive validity—a widely used approach to evaluate whether an instrument accurately captures the constructs it intends to measure. Specifically, this method tests whether performance on lower-order skills can meaningfully predict performance on higher-order skills within the same domain. The underlying rationale is that proficiency in foundational tasks is necessary for success in more complex cognitive operations.

In the context of literacy, for example, reading comprehension—a higher-order skill—requires a base level of competency in lower-order subtasks such as word recognition and oral reading fluency. Similarly, in numeracy, the ability to perform addition depends on a child's understanding of number discrimination. If these foundational skills reliably predict performance on higher-level tasks, the instrument can be considered valid.

Following the methodology applied in World Bank and MoE (2021), we conducted simple regression analyses in which each higher-order subtask score (dependent variable) was regressed individually on the corresponding lower-order subtask scores, controlling for household wealth status. This approach allows us to isolate the predictive contribution of each lower-order skill while accounting for socioeconomic differences.

As presented in Tables A2.1 and A2.2, the results reveal strong and statistically significant associations between lower- and higher-order skills. For literacy, the coefficients range from 0.21 to 0.89, while for numeracy they range from 0.17 to 0.50. These findings provide robust evidence that the assessment instruments possess predictive validity and are effectively capturing the intended learning constructs.

TABLE A2.1

Predicting higher-order literacy subtasks with lower-order literacy subtasks

Subtask	Predictors	Coefficient
Oral reading fluency	Familiar words	0.89***
	Invented words	0.37***
Reading comprehension	Familiar words	0.72***
	Invented words	0.61***
	Oral reading fluency	0.21***

Source: Authors' calculations based on MSPS learning assessment (2024/25).

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

TABLE A2.2

Predicting higher-order numeracy subtasks with lower-order numeracy subtasks

Subtask	Predictors	Coefficient
Addition	Number discrimination	0.43***
Subtraction	Number discrimination	0.41***
	Addition	0.62***
Complex subtraction	Addition/subtraction word problems	0.17***
Multiplication/division word problems	Addition/subtraction word problems	0.5***
	Complex subtraction	0.6***

Source: Authors' calculations based on MSPS learning assessment (2024/25).

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.



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