

Data on Out-of-school Children in Uganda

Sustainable development goal 4 aims at “inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all”. This implies that no child of school going age should be left out and therefore all efforts have to be mobilised to have all children in school. Sub-Saharan Africa hosts more than half of all out-of-school children. While Uganda implemented Universal Primary Education in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education in 2007, a sizable proportion of children of primary and secondary-school-age are not in school. But results differ according to data sources. What statistics on out of school children do we have for Uganda in the past two decades?

What to remember:

- For primary school going ages, there is a general decrease in the proportion of out of school children until the mid-2000s, when improvement in school attendance stalled
- Discrepancies between data sources hamper meaningful interpretation of results
- There is need to harmonize definitions and modes of evaluation

Various data sources are available ...

Uganda regularly produces many sources of data, population censuses, National Household Surveys and demographic and Health Surveys, that provide information on school attendance.

... but provide out of school data on a different basis...

Information on school attendance is declarative, collected from the household head or a third party in the UNHS, the UDHS and the population census. However, from one source of data to another, assessment methods of out of school children vary.

- Questions differ, leading to a more precise assessment of the year of drop out in the recent Population Censuses and the UDHS, compared to the 1991 census and the UNHS.
- The results on dropout during the current year vary depending on the month of data collection
- The use of « formal » in one source but not the others gives a different interpretation about the schools considered. However, only children in formal primary or secondary education are taken into account in all the surveys/censuses. All others are considered out of school.

National Population and Housing Census

1991, 2002 and 2014

Did [NAME] attend school in (2014), leave before (2014) or never been to school?

Uganda Demographic and Health Surveys

2001-2, 2006, 2011 and 2016

Has (NAME) ever attended school?

Did (NAME) attend school at any time during the (2016) school year?

Uganda National Household Surveys

2005-6, 2009-10 and 2012-13

Has [NAME] ever attended any formal school?

Out of school children, what results?

The official age of schooling in Uganda is 6-12 years for primary education and 13-18 for secondary education. In this policy brief, we choose to focus on ages 9 to 11 years, because at 9, children who are not in school are unlikely to enrol later. After 11, school dropouts are more frequent. Although between 9 and 11 we find the highest school attendance rates, they still fall below the targets according to EFA goals.

National data sources provide estimates and trends that sometimes differ. The proportion of out of school children has greatly reduced in the past 25 years and the gender gap has disappeared according to the population census: in 2014, about 9% of children 9 to 11 were out of school. However, the trend according to UDHS seems to be worsening since 2001, and gives a higher rate: about 11% of all children as being out of school in 2016. The UNHS rates are lower than all other sources, except for 2009-2010 when they peak above those for UDHS and the NPHC.

Challenges with indicators

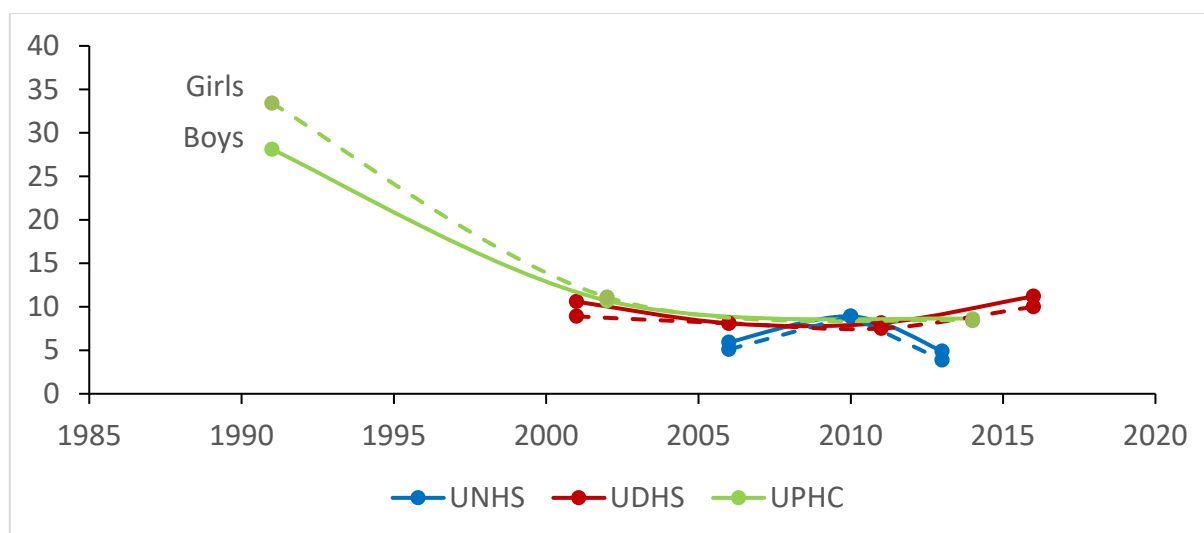
Although all sources confirm that there are still many children out of the education system, there are challenges in providing consistent measures for this issue.

- Indicators are multiplied by 2 or 3 when using one data source instead of another.
- In the case of the UNHS, there seems to be inconsistency over time.
- National censuses and surveys do not collect education data in institutions which may include orphanages, hospitals and prisons.

The need for standardized data collection

We need more consistent indicators to inform policy better. Differences in definitions and questions asked during data collection to capture school attendance hamper result interpretation. A **single education roster**, common to all data collection operations, using **similar definitions**, **target populations**, and **response categories**, with **similar instructions to enumerators**, would ensure the production of comparable statistics on out of school children.

Proportion of out of school children (9-11 years old) by sex and data source



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