



263 million children and youth are out of school from primary to upper secondary

About 263 million children and youth are out of school, according to [new data](#) from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). This is equivalent to about a quarter of the population of Europe. The total includes 61 million children of primary school age (6-11 years), 60 million of lower secondary school age (12-14 years), and the first ever estimate of those of upper secondary school age (15-17 years) at 142 million. These findings are presented in a [new paper](#) released jointly by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report.

“Countries have promised to provide every child with a primary and secondary education by 2030. These new findings show the hard work ahead if we are to reach this goal,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova. “Our focus must be on inclusion from the earliest age and right through the learning cycle, on policies that address the barriers at every stage, with special attention to girls who still face the greatest disadvantage.” ”

Of all regions, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of exclusion. Over a fifth of children between the ages of 6 and 11 are out of school, followed by a third of youth between the ages of 12 and 14. According to UIS data, almost 60% of youth between the ages of 15 and 17 are not in school. A key obstacle to achieve the target is persistent disparities in education participation linked to sex, location and wealth.

Armed conflict poses another major barrier to education. Globally, 35% or 22 million of all out-of-school children of primary age, 25% of all adolescents of lower secondary age (15 million), and 18% or 26 million of all out-of-school youth of upper secondary age live in conflict-affected areas.

In general, older youth aged 15-17 year old are four times as likely to not be in school as children between the ages of 6 and 11. This is explained partly because primary and lower secondary education are compulsory in nearly every country, while upper secondary school is not. At the same time, these youth are often of legal working age. Many have no choice but to work while others try to combine going to school with employment.

Girls are more likely than boys to never set foot in a classroom, despite all the efforts and progress made over the past two decades. According to UIS data, 15 million girls of primary school age will never get the chance to learn to read or write in primary school compared to about 10 million boys. Over half of these girls - 9 million - live in sub-Saharan Africa.

Poverty creates an additional barrier for girls. In Northern Africa and Western Asia, according to GEM Report analysis, among the poorest in the region, gaps are far wider: only 85 girls for every 100 boys of lower secondary school age attend school. Among those of upper secondary school age, only 77 of the poorest girls for every 100 of the poorest boys attend.

- ENDS –

[Download the full paper](#)

For more information, please contact –

Kate Redman on 0033 671786234 k.redman@unesco.org

Amy Otchet, +1 514 402 7836 a.otchet@unesco.org

Join in the conversation online @GEMReport @UNESCOStat/ #263million

- [The UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#) (UIS) is the official source of data used to monitor SDG 4 and Education 2030 goals.
More about out-of-school children: the UNESCO eAtlas on Out-of-School Children has a series of interactive maps with global and national data:
English: <http://tellmaps.com/uis/oosc/> French: <http://tellmaps.com/uis/oosc/?lang=fr>
- [The Global Education Monitoring Report](#) (GEM Report) is developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO. It replaces UNESCO's EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR). [World Education Blog](#) / [Educación Mundial Blog](#)