The Program on Governance and Local Development

The Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI) in Malawi: Selected Findings on Education

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Executive Summary

Malawi has been unable to achieve its desired goal of universal primary education. It is estimated that over 4.3 million children are currently enrolled in the first two stages of the Malawian education cycle[1]. However, approximately 11 percent of primary school–age children are still outside the school system.[2] Additionally, high dropout rates have an impact on the number of students completing their education. In 2007, the chances of a student completing all eight years of primary education was 32 percent, and students had only a 9 percent chance of completing all 12 years of primary and secondary education.[3] This report draws on data from the Local Government Performance Index (LGPI)—a heavily clustered, multidimensional, experience-based survey implemented in Malawi from March 24 to April 27, 2016—to highlight the challenges Malawians face in education and mechanisms people develop to solve problems regarding their children's education.

Educational Attainment

The majority of Malawi's citizens receive some education, but few are able to complete secondary education or higher. Eighty-six percent of the population aged 18 and over have received at least some basic formal education, but only 32 percent have completed primary school education. Moreover, only 10 percent of citizens 18 and over have been able to complete all 12 years of the formal education cycle. Educational attainment correlates with economic status: citizens who have higher levels of income also have higher education levels.[4]

One important ray of hope is that the younger generation has been able to achieve higher average levels of education than the older generation. Only 6 percent of citizens aged 45 and over are educated above the primary school level, while 24 percent of Malawians between the ages of 18 and 24 have achieved an educational level above primary school. Thirty percent of citizens aged 45 years and over have no formal education at all, whereas only 4 percent of those under 25 years of age have no formal education.

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[1] UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data, https://knoema.com/UNESCOISD2014Aug/unesco-institute-for-statistics-data-august-2014?location=1001230-malawi.

[2] Malawi: National Education Profile 2014. Update, Education Policy and Data Center, 1.

[3] World Bank. 2010. "The Education System in Malawi."

[4] This variable is the categorical version of the MCA1d asset index described in the previous footnote. The population is equally divided into four quantiles; the higher the number of the quantile, the more assets a household possesses.

Education Quality

A key conclusion from the LGPI data is that factors at the village level influence education quality: the quality of the education depends on the village/neighborhood in which one resides. Though the Northern region outperforms the rest of the country, not all districts in the north outperform all districts in the Central and Southern regions. Not surprisingly, wealthier families appear to have better access to private school and higher-quality education. The vast majority (97 percent) of students from the lowest economic quartile attend public schools, compared to 74 percent of students from the top income quartile.

Enrollment, Absenteeism, and Dropouts

Malawi is performing very well with regards to primary-school enrollment. The LGPI shows that, in our sample, 95 percent of children under the age of 18 are currently enrolled in school (notably higher than the government's official figure of 85 percent). Student absenteeism in Malawi is a major problem, with 27 percent of students missing at least one day of school a week. Student health issues appear to be behind absenteeism, with 54 percent of children missing school due to sickness and illness. Younger children are more likely to miss school and more likely to miss due to sickness than older children: 63 percent of absenteeism for children under age 10 is due to sickness or illness, while this reason accounts for only 30 percent of absenteeism for students 18 or over.

Dropouts are also a key challenge in Malawi's education system. We find that 19 percent of students who have dropped out of school did so in the first year of primary school. From the LGPI, we are able to identify the three most important reasons that children drop out of school: 24 percent have dropped out because they refuse to attend school, 23 percent due to financial constraints (inability to pay for uniforms, supplies, school fees, etc.), and 16 percent because the child needs to help with household chores. Girls are twice as likely as boys to drop out of school because they need to help with household work: 22 percent of girls who dropped out did so for this reason, compared to only 11 percent of boys who dropped out. Unsurprisingly, students from wealthier households are less likely to drop out of school throughout the education cycle: 50 percent of dropouts are children from the poorest quartile, compared to only 11 percent from the wealthiest quartile.

Problems and Resolutions

Students in Malawi routinely face problems with their education. Over the course of a year, 31 percent of children experience a school-related problem. Of those students experiencing problems, 44 percent have issues with failing examinations, while a lack of school materials or uniforms accounts for 19 and 20 percent, respectively, of children who are experiencing problems. As a child's household increases in wealth, the probability of facing problems in education is significantly reduced.

Only 17 percent of those who faced problems with their child's education sought help in resolving it. Among those who did seek help, we find that 40 percent of households with school-related problems sought help from their teachers or principals; 22 percent asked friends, family members, or neighbors; 15 percent went to community leaders; and only 9 percent asked government officials for help (formal and traditional). This leaves 14 percent of those with an education problem not turning to anyone for help.

School Fees

Despite free primary education in Malawi, 28 percent of children had to pay school fees in the last year (less than 1 percent refused to answer or did not know). Over 60 percent of children had to pay for books or uniforms during the same period. As we might expect, school-fee payments are much lower in primary school. In primary-school grades, between 19 and 29 percent of students pay schools fees, compared to between 78 and 85 percent in secondary school. What is surprising is that so many students pay fees for primary education, while only 8 percent of those in primary school are enrolled in private schools.

1. Introduction

Using data from the 2016 Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI) survey of Malawi, we are able to gain new and important insights into the successes and challenges of education in Malawi.[5] This report explores issues from enrollment to school quality, absenteeism, dropout rates and reason, and much more. Generally, we find that while primary enrollment is high, school quality, completion of primary education, and enrollment in secondary education are important areas in which Malawi's education system needs drastic improvements. Beyond these larger issues, this report also explores issues that are often ignored, such as problem resolution, bribery, safety in school, and tutoring. Importantly, we explore how each of these issues, among others, varies by location, age, gender, rural residence, and wealth.

This report on education in Malawi proceeds as follows. The next section outlines the general development and educational challenges that Malawi faces. Section 3 describes the political and administrative context, including the administration of education in Malawi. Section 4 introduces the Local Government Performance Index, the survey instrument on which the findings of this report are based. Sections 5 to 16 present LGPI findings on education. More specifically, Section 5 discusses educational attainment in Malawi, and Section 6 analyzes school quality. Section 7 discusses enrollment rates, Section 8 transportation and safety, Section 9 absenteeism and reasons for it, and Section 10 dropout rates and reasons. Section 11 presents the key problems facing children's education in Malawi, as well as how households seek to solve these problems. Sections 12 to 15 deal with additional issues in education: corruption, tutoring, inequality, and paying school fees, respectively. And finally, Section 16 concludes.

[5] All numbers presented in the narrative, figures, and tables are calculated based on survey design and post-stratification weighting, and numbers are weighted percentages and counts. The narrative, figures, and tables in the report may convey percentages that do not add up to 100, because item non-response is included in the calculations and is presented in the Appendix. Where very few respondents have answered a question, the weighted number of respondents is presented, rather than the percentage.

2. Development and Education Challenges

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 173 out of 188 countries and territories in the Human Development Index (a multidimensional measure of human development).[6] Gross national income per capita is just U.S. $747.[7] Nearly 51 percent of the population resides below the national poverty line,[8] and an estimated 12 percent of the population is classified as ultra poor (those suffering from chronic hunger most of the year).[9] Malawi has made progress with respect to a variety of development indicators in the past three decades,[10] but the country's level of development is well below average for sub-Saharan Africa. Malawi's education sector must also contend with a number of extremely challenging factors, including a rapidly expanding population, a severe shortage of human and capital resources, and limited secondary-school availability.

2.1. Population

Malawi has the 12th-fastest-growing population in the world, with an annual growth rate of 3.2 percent.[11] Government initiatives have succeeded in reducing fertility rates from 6.7 births per woman in 1992 to 4.4 in 2015.[12] However, population growth rates are unlikely to slow dramatically, even as birth rates decline, given Malawi's young population. Over 46 percent of the population is below the age of 15,[13] compared to just 16 percent in this age group within the European Union's

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[6] This statistic and others in this paragraph (unless otherwise noted) are from United Nations Development Programme. 2015. "Work for Human Development: Briefing Note for Countries on the 2015 Human Development Report—Malawi." Available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/MWI.pdf.

[7] 2011 U.S. dollars, adjusted for purchasing power parity.

[8] Poverty head count ratio as of 2010 according to World Bank World Development Indicators. Available at http://data.worldbank.org/country/malawi.

[9] Malawi National Statistics Office. 2014. "Integrated Household Panel Survey 2010–2013." Available at http://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/economics/ihs/IHPS 2013/IHPS Report.pdf.

[10] This statistic and others in this paragraph (unless otherwise noted) are from UNDP. 2015. "Work for Human Development: Briefing Note for Countries on the 2015 Human Development Report—Malawi." Available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/MWI.pdfs (for instance, life expectancy at birth has increased from 44.8 years in 1980 to 62.8 in 2014).

[11] World Bank, World Development Indicators. 2012. Available from http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?year_high_desc=true.

[12] The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Program. 2016. "Malawi: Demographic and Health Survey." Available at https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/PR73/PR73.pdf.

[13] Malawi National Statistics Office. 2014. "Integrated Household Panel Survey 2010–2013."

total population.[14] This places enormous demand on the education system, particularly if placement in secondary education is to be a right for all Malawians.

Malawi is densely populated but largely rural. It has 183 inhabitants per square kilometer, significantly higher than the continental average of 42.[15] Only 16 percent (2.8 million people) live in urban areas, primarily in Malawi's four main cities—Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu, and Zomba. The annual net migration of working-age migrants moving to cities and towns from rural areas stands at 14,000. Eighty-four percent of the country's population lives in rural areas.[16] Households in the southern region also tend to be smaller than those in the north; in 2013, the average household size in Malawi was 4.9 persons, with those in the south at 4.7 and in the north at 5.3.[17] (For comparison, the average Swedish household has fewer than two people.[18])

Most of the rural population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Malawi has only 21,200 square kilometers of arable land,[19] the distribution of which is highly skewed. Thirteen percent of the country's total land is held by around 30,000 private estates (producing crops for export), while 69 percent of land is cultivated by smallholder farms (producing for consumption). Subsistence farmers generally have small parcels of land, with 58 percent having less than one hectare for farming, and 11 percent nearly landless.[20] (For more on land ownership, see the LGPI Report on Land.) That is, a high percentage of Malawians eke out a living on small farms, with little expectation for urban migration or advancement and high demands for child labor. It is thus not surprising that, as we discuss below, children—and especially girls—are often removed from school in order to help with household chores.

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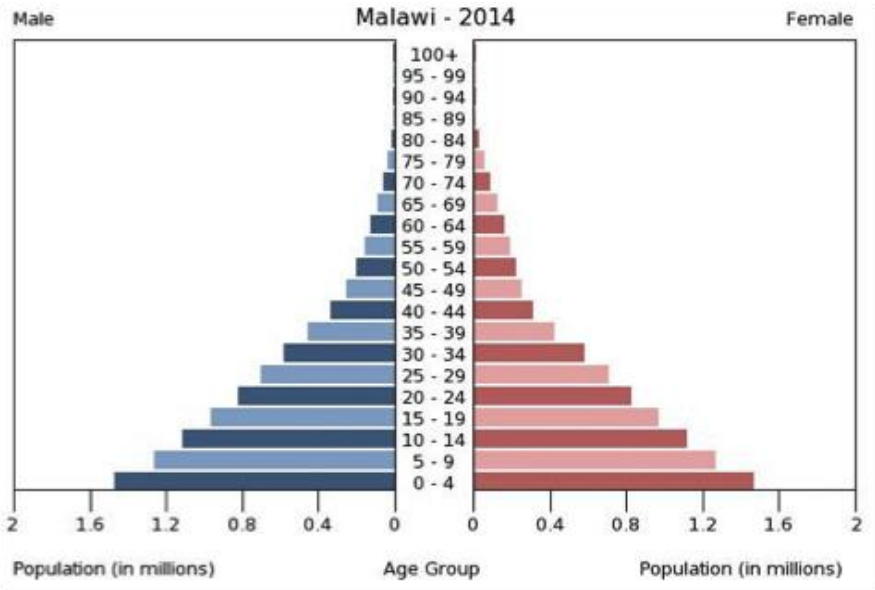
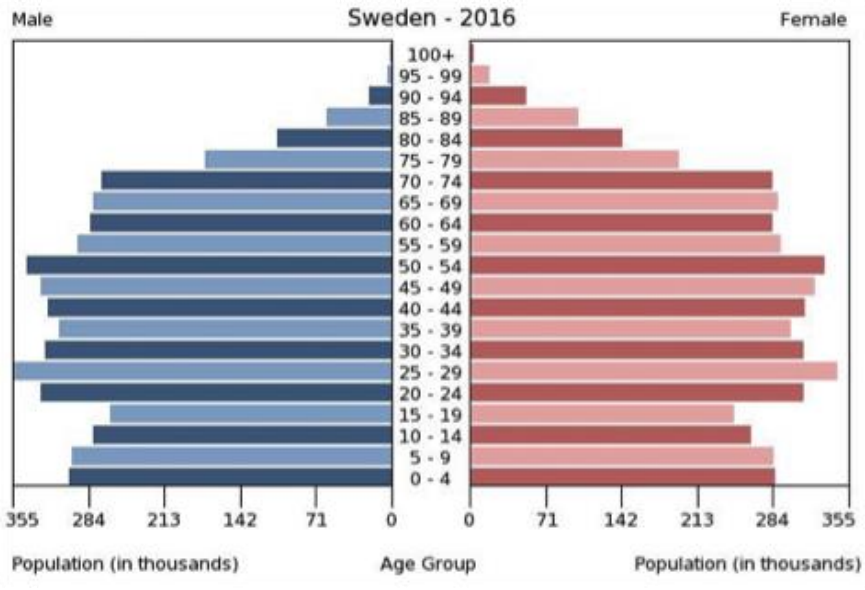
[14] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2016. "Young Population." Available at https://data.oecd.org/pop/young-population.htm - indicator-chart.
[15] World Bank. 2016. "Population Density." Available at http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?year_high_desc=true.
[16] World Bank. 2016. "Malawi Urbanization Review: Leveraging Urbanization for National Growth and Development." Available at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/913881468045241225/pdf/P146675-MalawiUrbanizationReview-Final-withCover.pdf.
[17] Malawi National Statistics Office. 2014. "Integrated Household Panel Survey 2010–2013."
[18] OECD. 2011. "Doing Better for Families." Available at http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/doingbetterforfamilies.htm.
[19] Food and Agriculture Organization. 2013. "Malawi: BEFS Country Brief." Available at http://www.fao.org/energy/36344-02a1af0b958d1fb2c240782302c947837.pdf.
[20] USAID. 2010. "USAID Country Profile, Property Rights and Resource Governance Malawi. Available at http://landwise.resourceequity.org/record/1317

Population Pyramids for Malawi and Sweden[21]





[21] The charts are from the Index Mundi demographics databank. Available at http://www.indexmundi.com/sweden/age_structure.html and http://www.indexmundi.com/malawi/age_structure.html.

2.2 Difficult Living Conditions

Difficulties in daily living conditions also hamper children's abilities to obtain education in Malawi. Almost half (47 percent) of Malawians are food-energy deficient, meaning that their regular diet fails to provide them with the minimum dietary energy requirement per day to lead an active and healthy life.[22] Food insecurity is most pronounced in the south of the country, but it is also prevalent in the central districts of Lilongwe and Mchinji. Reliance on subsistence agriculture traps many Malawian families in a cycle of poverty, since poor households cannot invest in the inputs required to boost yields, and poor farmers typically sell any surplus soon after harvest in order to earn income and repay debts. This exposes farmers to fluctuating market prices and means they cannot benefit from selling when prices rise.[23]

Malawi's infrastructure is also limited. Eighty-seven percent of households now get their drinking water from an improved source, but 47 percent of households still spend over 30 minutes collecting their drinking water each day. Some 46 percent of households now have access to a mobile phone, although less than 6 percent of the population uses the Internet. Nearly 74 percent of the country's population still lives further than two kilometers from an all-season road.[24]

Conditions are made more precarious given that Malawi frequently suffers from floods, drought, and earthquakes. Between 1979 and 2010, natural disasters have directly affected almost 22 million people and resulted in the deaths of nearly 2,600 people.[25] During 2014–2015 alone, heavy rains directly affected an estimated 1.1 million people,[26] displacing 230,000 people and leaving 106 people

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[22] "Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis and Nutrition Assessment." 2012. World Food Programme 4. Available at http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp253658.pdf.

[23] Ibid.

[24] All the statistics listed in this paragraph are from the Malawi National Statistics Office's Integrated Household Panel Survey 2010–2013, the DHS Program's "Malawi: Demographic and Health Survey," and the World Bank's 2011 "Malawi's Infrastructure: A Continental Perspective, 'available at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/151641468089370729/pdf/WPS5598.pdf.

[25] Government of Malawi. 2015. "National Disaster Risk Management Policy." Available at http://www.ifrc.org/docs/IDRL/43755_malawidrmpolicy2015.pdf.

[26] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2015. Humanitarian Bulletin. Available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ocha_rosa_humanitarian_bulletin_issue18_may2015.pdf.

dead.[27] Similarly, a drought in 2005 left more than one-third of the country experiencing food shortages.[28]

Hunger, insecurity, and the need to invest time into basic subsistence (e.g., fetching water, recovering from disasters) hamper education. Families find it difficult to send their children to school when their labor is needed at home. Children who do reach the classroom are disadvantaged in learning when their bellies are empty. And both children and their parents lack incentives to invest in education when the possibilities for advancement appear remote.

3. The Political and Administrative Context

In Malawi, patronage and centralization of power around the president significantly shape the allocation of public resources and the distribution of services. Malawi's history can be divided into four historical periods: the precolonial era (prior to 1891), colonial era, postcolonial one-party era, and the democratic multiparty era from 1994. However, 73 years of authoritarian colonial rule (1891–1961) and 30 years of authoritarian one-party government (1961–1993) dominate Malawi's political history and shape governance in Malawi today.

3.1 Malawi's Democracy

After decolonization, the post-independence period in Malawi witnessed a relentless centralization of power under the country's first president, Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Neither opposition politics nor independent civil-society organizations were allowed. The Malawi Congress Party, the single ruling party, controlled all aspects of political life, and no democratic elections took place between 1961 and 1994.

In a 1993 referendum, Malawians voted for a multiparty political system, and the following year peaceful, transitional elections took place. A new constitution, adopted on May 18, 1995, reflected

[27] Government of Malawi. 2015. "Malawi 2015 Floods Post Disaster Needs Assessment Report." Available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Malawi-2015-Floods-Post-Disaster-Needs-Assessment-Report.pdf.
[28] UNDP. 2007. "Famine in Malawi: Causes and Consequences." Available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/menon_roshni_2007a_malawi.pdf.

liberal democratic norms and included a progressive bill of rights. In terms of political organization, the new constitution established Malawi as a multiparty republic administered by a three-branched government. A president elected by popular vote for a five-year term heads the executive, serving as both head of state and head of the government, and is assisted by cabinet members. The legislative branch consists of the National Assembly, a unicameral body of representatives elected by popular vote to serve for five years. The judicial branch of government consists of a Supreme Court of Appeal and a High Court. Universal suffrage is set at 18 years of age, and between 1994 and 2015, Malawi held five successful parliamentary and presidential elections (1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014), although local government elections were repeatedly postponed and took place only in 2000 and 2014.

The establishment of democracy in Malawi raised hopes of good democratic governance that would translate into effective management of the economy for growth and poverty reduction; however, 22 years down the line, the initial promises and goals of the national democracy project remain elusive. A number of political parties have emerged since democratization, but they remain highly personalized identities, acting as vehicles for the election of their leaders rather than offering something closer to a collective national good. All political parties that have come to power have forged settlements within which the political elites and those well connected to the political establishment have benefited at the expense of national development.[29] This has significantly shaped the ability of public officials to formulate and carry out policies in accordance with the public interest, where "public interest" is heavily constrained by the requirement to service patronage networks of one kind or another.

Alongside the formal democratic system operates a traditional system of hereditary chiefs that is regulated by the Chiefs Act of 1997. Chiefs have remained a core part of the social fabric of Malawi since precolonial times, with each village having a village head, and with tiered levels of traditional authority above this. A group village head presides over a cluster of villages, and traditional authorities bring together groupings of group village heads. The role of traditional leaders remains ambiguous, but chieftainship has been a notable feature of rural areas of Malawi. The absence of

[29] Tenthani, Kizito, and Blessings Chinsinga. 2016. "Political Parties, Political Settlement and Political Development," in Dan Banik and Blessings Chinsinga (eds.). *Political Transition and Inclusive Development in Malawi: The Democratic Dividend*. London: Routledge, 35–56.

locally elected councillors since 2005 and the political and administrative vacuum that ensued increased the importance of the functions that chiefs perform for both their people and the state. In urban and peri-urban areas, hereditary chiefs also exist, and there is some debate as to their role in these jurisdictions.

Over the years other nonhereditary leaders, known as block leaders or town chiefs, have emerged as a result of political and economic circumstances, as townships have grown and people have moved to them to live and work. The local governance vacuum created by the postponement of local elections has also resulted in the increased importance of block leaders, who are selected by communities to address problems arising from rapid and relatively unplanned urbanization.

The historical legacy of strong presidents and chiefdoms shapes politics today. Politics is characterized by patterns of "big man" rule, the distribution of patronage, and divergence of formal and informal rules. Decisions commonly flow from the center outward along vertical, ethno-regional channels, underpinned by the patronage power held locally, often by traditional authorities such as village chiefs. This significantly shapes realities of the allocation of public resources and the distribution of services.

3.2 The Public Administration

The public sector in Malawi is the body of economic and administrative life that deals with the delivery of goods and services by and for the government, often comprising several organizations that rely on hierarchical links and operations. It operates at three levels. The first is the national level. This includes government ministries and departments that oversee public programs at the national level. The second level of operations is the regional one. Administratively, the country is divided into three regions: Northern, Central, and Southern. The majority of government ministries and departments have offices at the regional level that link the national offices and the district government administration.

At the third level of the hierarchy is the district-level public administration. Malawi has 28 districts; only seven have sections that are categorized by government as urban areas. These include Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe, Kasungu, Mangochi, Luchenza, and Mzuzu. The rest are classified as rural areas.

Government services at this level are facilitated by local governments that bring together an administrative arm made up of technocrats and a political arm composed of elected councillors and members of parliament. These, in turn, are supported by various subdistrict structures, which are meant to facilitate grassroots participation in local decision-making. In the rural areas they are known as Area and Village Development Committees, while in the urban areas they are known as Ward and Community Development Committees.

3.3 The Education System

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) is not only responsible for addressing these key issues, it is also charged with implementing policies required for the delivery of a sustainable and functioning school system throughout all stages of the education cycle. Though recent steps have been made to decentralize the education sector, Malawi still operates a highly consolidated system, with MoEST responsible for the formulation of teacher training programs, curriculum development, standards implementation and supervision, budgetary planning, special-needs requirements, vocational planning, and the recruitment of teachers.

Malawi's formal education system is divided into three stages. It officially begins at age 6, though social and administrative circumstances force many children into entering the system at a higher age. The first stage, primary level (Standard 1 to Standard 8), is eight years long and, following the introduction of a fee-free education policy in 1994, is free for all children. The rest of the educational cycle—the second stage, secondary level (Form 1 to Form 4), and the third stage, university level, which are four years each—is fee based.

Schools are owned and operated by both the public sector (a mixture of government facilities and religious agencies) and the private sector. However, the state is still primarily responsible for the provision of educational services; public schools account for 94 percent of primary and secondary schools in the country.[30] This is especially true at the primary level, where 5,225 of the country's 5,395 schools are public.[31]

[30] Japan International Cooperation Agency. "Basic Education Sector Analysis Report." Appendix A9.
[31] Ibid.

The education sector is by far the largest employer in the country, accounting for 60 percent of the total labor force.[32] However, with just under 65,000 teachers at both the primary and secondary levels,[33] schools are still struggling to provide an adequate number of teachers, particularly at the primary level. In 2011, the average number of students per teacher stood at 76.[34] This makes Malawian primary-school classrooms some of the most crowded on the continent. It also places the country far behind the UNESCO Education for All movement's recommended target of 40 students per teacher.

A shortage of funding has always been a hindrance to Malawi's schools. Though the education sector receives financing through a number of sources (including public funding, household financing, and donor financing), budgetary issues prevail. Encouragingly, in 2011 Malawi spent more on education as a percentage of its gross domestic product (5.7 percent) than it did in the two preceding years.[35] However, even though the education budget increased sevenfold between 2001 and 2010, this rise has largely been attributed to a rise in budget support from key financial donors (the Department for International Development, Germany, UNICEF, and the World Bank).[36] Latest figures suggest that Malawi still spends less on education (as a percentage of government expenditure) than many of its neighbors.[37] With 16.4 percent of government revenue allocated to education, Malawi falls short of the 20-percent minimum outlined by UNESCO.[38]

Despite increased government spending, Malawi has been unable to achieve its desired goal of universal primary education. It is estimated that over 4.3 million children are currently enrolled in the first two stages of the Malawian education cycle.[39] However, approximately 11 percent of primary-school-age children are still outside the school system.[40] Additionally, there are high dropout rates. In 2007, the chance of a student surviving all eight years of primary education was 32 percent,

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[32] "Malawi: Effective Delivery of Public Education Services." *Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa* 63.
[33] Japan International Cooperation Agency. "Basic Education Sector Analysis Report." 32.
[34] Japan International Cooperation Agency. "Basic Education Sector Analysis Report." 33.
[35] Japan International Cooperation Agency. "Basic Education Sector Analysis Report." 44.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Japan International Cooperation Agency. "Basic Education Sector Analysis Report." 55.
[38] "Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All." *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*. 16.
[39] UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data. Available at https://knoema.com/UNESCOISD2014Aug/unesco-institute-for-statistics-data-august-2014?location=1001230-malawi.
[40] Education Policy and Data Center. "Malawi: National Education Profile 2014 Update." 1.

and students had only a 9 percent chance of completing all 12 years of primary and secondary education.[41]

4. The Local Governance Performance Index

The Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI)[42] allows us to examine when families seek education for their children, how they attempt to overcome the obstacles that they face, and the quality of the education they receive. The LGPI was implemented in Malawi from March 24 to April 27, 2016. It provides a new approach to the measurement, analysis, and improvement of local governance. The tool aims to help countries collect, assess, and benchmark detailed information concerning issues of local and public-sector performance and service delivery to citizens and businesses. The goal of the LGPI is to provide information to help citizens, policymakers, and the development community pinpoint, diagnose, and foster discussion about areas of need, help formulate policy recommendations, provide a benchmark for assessing policy implementation, and allow us to examine the factors driving good governance and quality service provision.

The LGPI has several distinctive features. First, the core instrument includes batteries on health, education, security, voice, and participation, as well as other metrics of governance and service delivery, permitting us to examine and compare relationships between governance and outcomes across sectors. Second, we focus on behavioral measures. Individuals are asked, for instance, if they have direct experience with health clinics, schools, and other services. The survey further probes experiences of those who accessed these services, asking about the quality of service delivery, whether individuals have experienced problems, and, if they did, from whom they sought help, as well as the outcomes of the process. This data provides a detailed map of citizens' experiences with governance and service delivery, and permits an in-depth assessment of institutional quality and capacity. Third, the LGPI employs a methodology of heavily clustering surveys at the village level. This allows for explicit measures of local variation in governance and outcomes that are

[41] World Bank. 2010. "The Education System in Malawi."

[42] The Local Governance Performance Index in Malawi was made possible by generous support from a number of sources. The Program on Governance and Local Development (GLD) initially designed and piloted the LGPI in Tunisia with generous funding from the Moulay Hicham Foundation and from Yale University.
The survey was revised and fielded in Malawi with support from the Swedish Research Council and the Norwegian Research Council.

undetectable in most surveys, which are usually representative only at the national level. Finally, the LGPI captures satisfaction with and expectations about local services, as well as state and non-state actors, making it possible to compare citizens' experiences with their levels of satisfaction and trust in these actors.

The survey was fielded in 15 of Malawi's 28 districts, spanning all of the country's three administrative regions. Within in each region, traditional authorities (TAs) or local council wards in urban areas were randomly selected for the study. A total of 18 traditional authorities and four urban wards were selected according to the principle of probability proportional to size (PPS) from three regional strata (Table 1).

In each TA, four enumeration areas (EAs)[43] were randomly sampled using PPS sampling. A similar PPS sampling was further used to select four EAs in the local government wards in the four main cities of Malawi. The EA boundaries were carefully plotted and exported to an application that was installed on tablets that were used to collect data in the field. These maps ensured that enumerators collected data only within designated areas and did not stray outside by mistake. In each enumeration area, a team of fieldworkers was given the task of randomly selecting a total of four villages (or blocks in the urban EAs) in which to conduct household interviews. To ensure a sufficient number of interviews, the teams were required to conduct up to 22 interviews per village, yielding an average of 88 interviews per EA and 352 interviews per TA or ward.

[43] Enumeration Areas (EAs) are geographic areas designed for census taking. They have no other administrative role.

Region/Stratum	District	Traditional Authority
Northern	Chitipa	Mwaulambya
	Rumphi	Mwankhunikira
	Mzimba	Chindi Kampingo Sibande Mtwalo
	Nkhata Bay	Kabunduli
	Mzuzu	Viphya ward
Central	Kasungu	Simlemba
	Lilongwe City	Area 25 ward Area 36 ward
	Dedza	Pemba Tambala
	Ntcheu	Kwataine
Southern	Balaka	Kalembo
	Blantyre	Kapeni
	Blantyre City	Namiyango ward
	Chikwawa	Chapananga Ngabu
	Mangochi	Jalasi
	Mulanje	Mabuka
	Nsanje	Mbenje
	Zomba	Mwambo

Table 1: Traditional authorities and local government wards included in the LGPI survey, Malawi 2016.

Fieldwork teams randomly selected households within each village/ward. Upon entry into a village/ward, the field teams were instructed to find out from local leaders the number of households in the village/ward. They then divided the number of households by 22 to determine the walk pattern to identify the nth household for interview. In each household, respondents were chosen randomly from among those over 18 using a Kish selection grid. As part of the survey, we randomly selected two students from each household to ask more detailed information about problems in education. The survey asked about basic enrollment, type of school, age, gender, grade completed, etc., for each child in every household. There are 8,114 complete interviews, approximately 369 in each of the 22 traditional authorities and local government wards. The survey was implemented by the Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR) under the oversight of Dr. Boniface Dulani, IPOR's senior partner and a lecturer at the University of Malawi. Fifty-Five interviewers recruited by IPOR conducted interviews in Chichewa, Chitumbuka, and English. Responses were entered on tablets running SurveyToGo (STG) software.

5. Educational Attainment

Who receives education in Malawi? The LGPI finds that while the majority of Malawi's citizens receive some education, few are able to complete secondary education or higher. In Malawi 86 percent of the population aged 18 years and above have received some form of basic formal education. However, only 32 percent of Malawians have completed primary school. This means that 68 percent of the population has no official educational qualification. Moreover, only 10 percent of citizens aged 18 years and above have been able to complete all 12 years of the formal education cycle.

Our findings are quite similar to those of the Integrated Household Survey (IHS) released by Malawi's National Statistical Office in 2011.[44] (See Table 2.) There is some difference in the number of people not attending school: the IHS reports that 21 percent of the population has never attended school, while the LGPI finds only 14 percent in this category. Additionally, the IHS reports

[44] National Statistics Office of Malawi. 2011. "Integrated Household Survey 2010–2011." Accessed at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLSMS/Resources/3358986-1233781970982/5800988-1271185595871/IHS3_Report.pdf.

that 11 percent of the population has completed primary-school education, which is lower than the 14 percent that the LGPI estimates. Our results may suggest an improvement in access to education and the retention of students within the education system. However an additional explanation of the disparity between the LGPI and IHS results could be found in difference in the samples—the IHS sampled individuals aged 15 and above, while the LGPI sampled individuals 18 and above—or could be due to normal sampling error.

It is important to understand more specifically who attains which levels of education. Economic conditions,[45] age, gender, and urban residence may influence the level of education one is able to attain.[46] The LGPI finds that educational attainment correlates with economic status: citizens who have higher levels of income also have higher education levels.[47] Our data reveals that 63 percent of the poorest Malawians have only some primary schooling, while only 3 percent of citizens in the lowest income quartile have achieved an educational level of secondary school or above. (See Figure 1.) Conversely, only 6 percent of Malawians in the highest income quartile have no formal education, and 42 percent of the Malawians in the top economic quartile having achieved secondary-school education or above. Again our findings are in line with the IHS 2011 survey, which shows a decrease in the percentage of the population without formal education as levels of per-capita consumption increases. It finds that only 10 percent of the population in the highest consumption quintile have no formal education, and that 35 percent of the population in the lowest quintile have never attended school. While we cannot be sure that higher education leads to better economic conditions or that those with better economic conditions can afford to complete secondary and tertiary education, it is clear that better economic and education outcomes are highly correlated.

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[45] We use an asset index to measure economic conditions. The asset index was created by performing a multiple correspondence analysis on four assets a household could possibly possess: motor vehicle, mobile telephone, radio, and bicycle. The higher the value, the more assets a household possesses.

[46] We advise readers to interpret differences between groups presented in the report with caution. Percentages for education indicators across demographic and geographic groups are reported if a Pearson's chi-squared test of their cross-tabulation suggests that the two variables may be associated ($p=<0.10$). Differences between specific subgroups (e.g., a difference between the 18–30 and over-50 age groups) and associated tests of statistical significance of such differences using t-tests or regression analysis are not presented. This largely descriptive report of preliminary findings is intended to draw attention to variation and general trends that may require further investigation.

[47] This variable is the categorical version of the MCA1d asset index described in the previous footnote. The population is equally divided into four quantiles; the higher the number of the quantile, the more assets a household possesses.

Education level	2016 LGPI data	2011 IHS data
No formal education	14 percent	21 percent
Some primary	54 percent	53 percent
Completed primary	14 percent	11 percent
More than primary	18 percent	15 percent
Don't know	<1 percent	
Refuse	<1 percent	

Table 2: Comparing census and LGPI education data.

The LGPI survey finds that the younger generation has been able to achieve higher average levels of education than the older generation. Only 6 percent of citizens aged 45 and above have received education above primary-school level, while 24 percent of Malawians below the age of 24 have achieved educational above primary school. (See Figure 2.) Conversely, 30 percent of citizens aged 45 and above have no formal education at all, whereas only 4 percent of those under 25 have no formal education. These results suggest that government measures taken to improve access to education and increased longevity within the education system have had a positive impact on student retention.

Gender also plays an important role in determining a citizen's level of education. Nineteen percent of women have no formal education, while the same is true for only 8 percent of men. At the other end of the educational spectrum, 24 percent of men have achieved an educational level above primary school, compared to only 12 percent of women. (See Figure 3.)

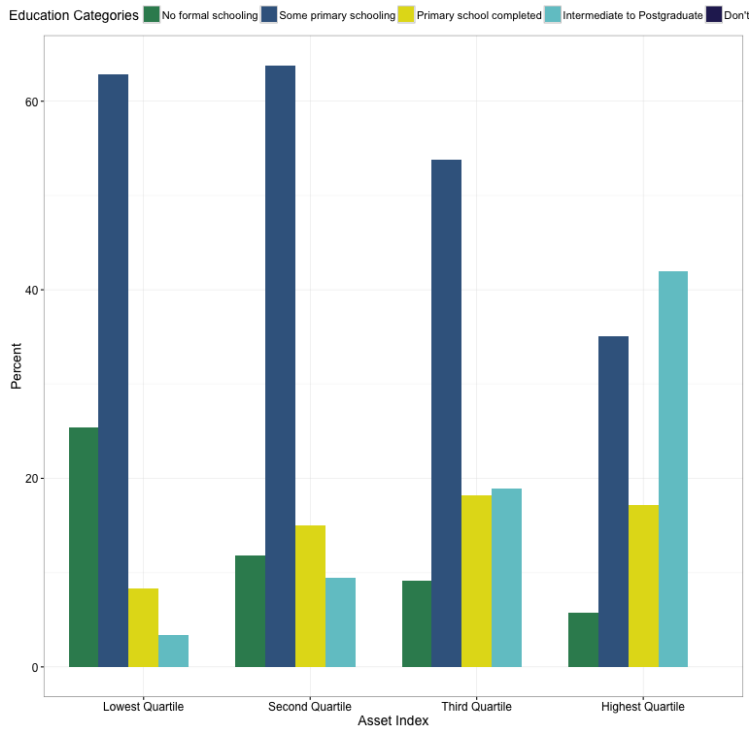


Figure 1: Educational attainment and economic conditions.

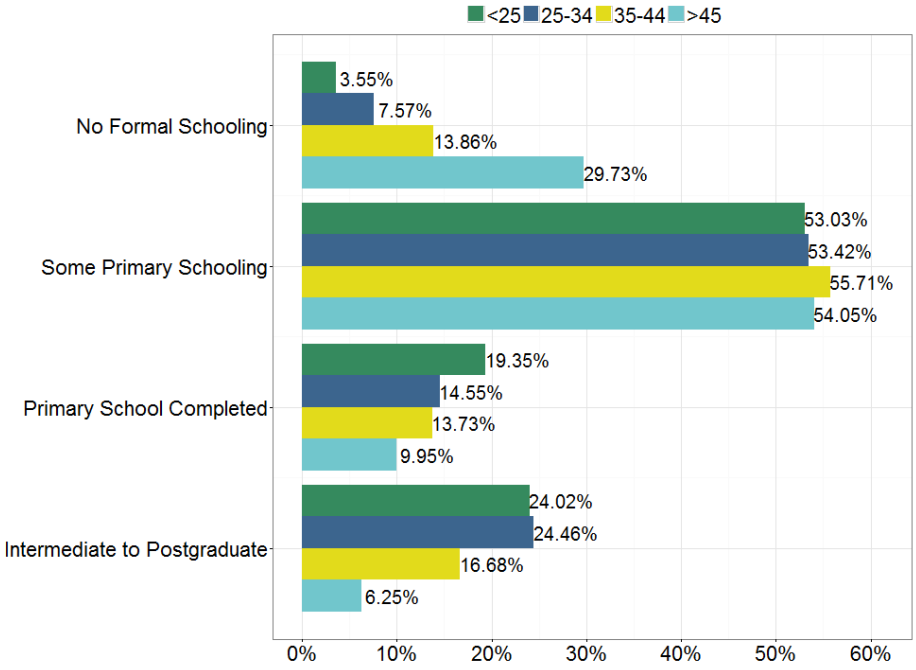


Figure 2: Educational attainment and age.

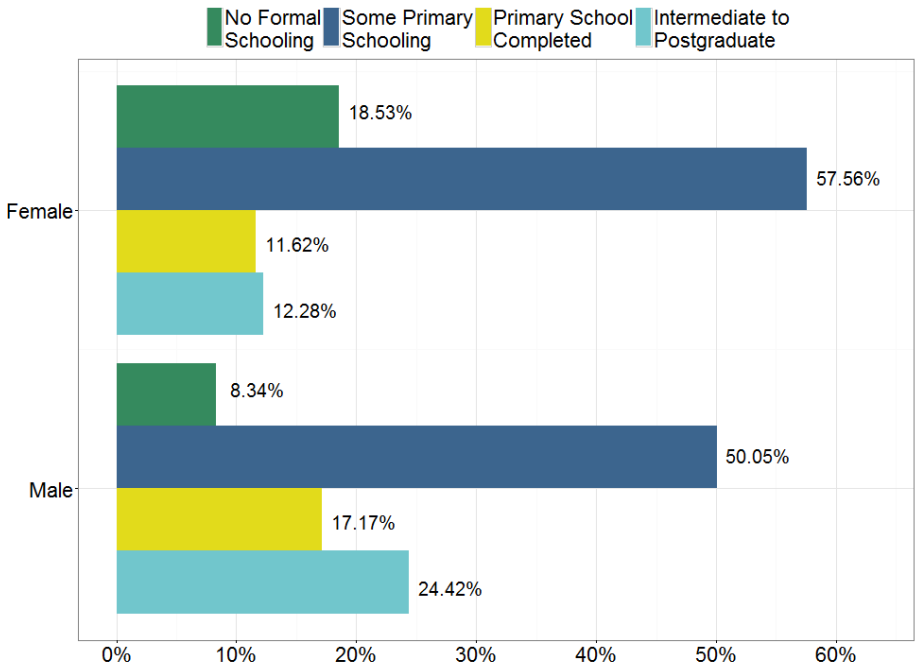


Figure 3: Education attainment and gender.

Our data affirms that urban Malawians are better educated than those from rural areas. Only 3 percent of urban citizens have no formal education, whereas 16 percent of the rural population have not entered the education system. Forty-two percent of the urban population have received an educational level above primary-school level, while only 12 percent of rural citizens obtained a similar level. Further, and in line with common perception, respondents from the north are, on average, better educated: 34 percent of northerners have more than a primary education, compared to only 18 percent in the Central region and 10 percent in the south. The north is also the only region in which the majority of respondents have (at least) completed primary school.

The superior performance of the north can be seen in Figure 4. Each district that was included in the sample is shaded according to average levels of education attained. The darker red the district is, the higher the average level of educational attainment. The averages are calculated using a categorical indicator of educational attainment in which 1 indicates "no formal education," 2 takes the value of "some primary education," 3 is "completed primary school," and 4 is "more than primary school education." The darkest red districts, which are primarily in the north, have a value of 2.75, which is

roughly (rounding up) equivalent to an average level of education that is equal to completed primary school. Mzimba, Rumphi, and Chitipa (Northern region), as well as Lilongwe (Central region), are the best-performing districts. (See Figure 1 in the Appendix, which is a map that indicates the name of each district.) Conversely, Mangochi (Southern region) is the worst-performing district on the LGPI with regards to educational levels.

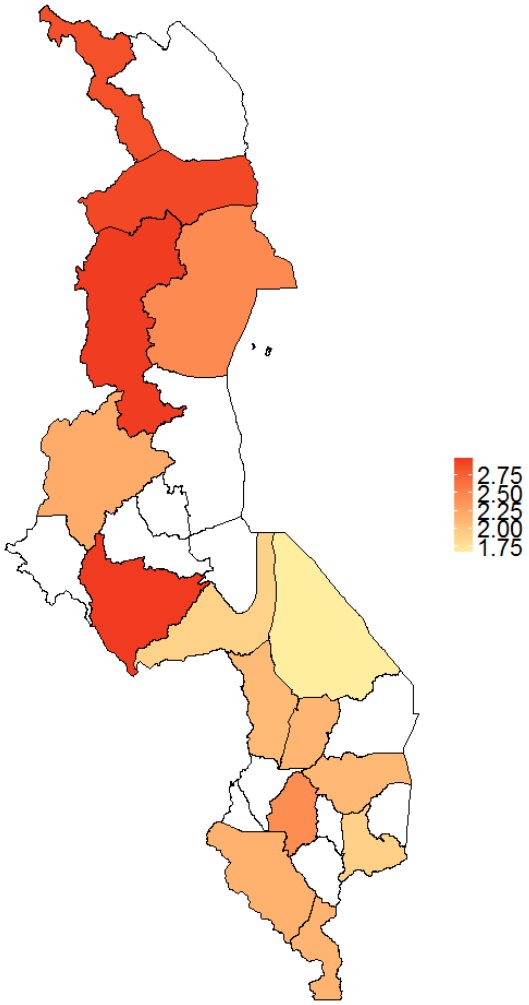


Figure 4: Average level of education by district.

These conclusions are in line with the IHS survey reporting that 45 percent of the Malawian population in urban areas has no qualifications. This figure increases to 80 percent for rural areas. We find that 74 percent of people living in rural areas have no official education qualifications, compared to 39 percent in urban areas. The IHS survey also reports that the Northern region is the best-performing region, with 67 percent of the population having no formal education, compared to 75 percent for both the Central and Southern regions. Further, the IHS reports that Mangochi has the highest proportion of citizens with no qualifications (91 percent), while Rumphi is one of the best-performing districts, with half that figure.

6. School Infrastructure and Quality

6.1 Schools and Satisfaction Levels

In Malawi, there is clearly not much variation in the types of schools that students attend. We find that the vast majority of schools in the country are public, with over 88 percent of students attending these types of schools. (This is identical to what the IHS reports.) Further, almost all students (97 percent) attend schools that are coeducational. Our data also shows that 36 percent of students attend schools described as religious. Urban students are less likely to attend religious schools than rural students, with 27 percent of urban students attending these schools, compared to 38 percent of rural students.

Overall, household perceptions of basic facilities at schools are generally positive. Seventy-eight percent of those with children in school thought the schools were well built, and 58 percent of these were very satisfied with the quality of the school's infrastructure. Additionally, 72 percent described the toilet facilities in schools as clean. Only 12 percent of students attended schools where it was reported that at least one teacher was absent during the course of the past week. Further, 65 percent of households were very satisfied with the quality of the teaching. Our data also shows that 81 percent of students attended schools with parent–teacher organizations. While overall we see generally positive experiences and perceptions of education, there is important variation within the sample.

Though attempts have been made by key domestic and international stakeholders (including the government of Malawi and the World Food Programme) to increase the provision of school meals

throughout the country, the LGPI data reveals that only 36 percent of respondents reported that their child's school provides meals. Among those households whose children's schools have a meal program, 68 percent of households were very satisfied with the food program. Further, 55 percent of students are in classrooms that were reported to be overcrowded. Additionally, only 8 percent of students have access to computer resources at their school. Unsurprisingly, only 5 percent of households were very satisfied with computer resources within the school.

The mean classroom size according to our survey data is 94 students. This is similar to the official pupil to classroom ratio of 105 to 1 as listed in the 2011 school census report. Unfortunately, yet unsurprisingly, classroom sizes are largest in primary school and are especially large (above the 94 student average) in standards 1 - 3. (See Table 3.) From Table 3 we see that secondary schools are less crowded than primary schools but still very crowded. It is likely that the only reason secondary schools are less crowded is because of the high dropout rates, which suggests that Malawi's secondary education system is not equipped to handle all the students it should. Interestingly, rural and poorer students tend to be part of larger classrooms.

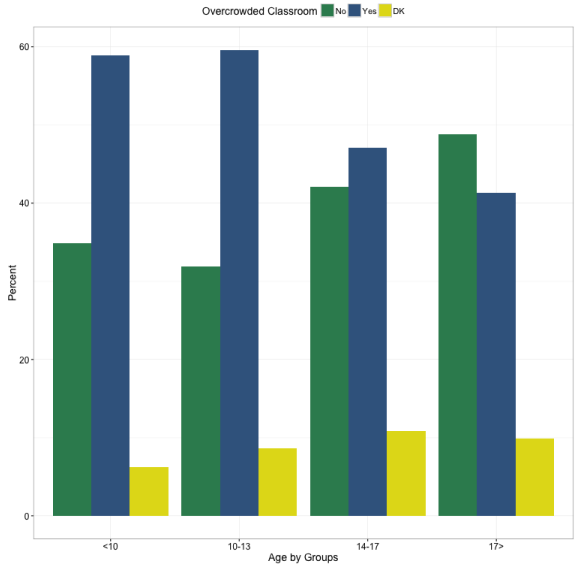
Which students receive higher- or lower-quality education and infrastructure? We find that older students are less likely to be in overcrowded classrooms. Crowding at lower grades appears to be more of a concern, perhaps because, as noted above, relatively few Malawians continue their education beyond primary school. (See Table 3.) Indeed, we find a significant drop in children attending crowded classrooms after the age of 13. Further, older students are more likely to attend schools that do not have a parent–teacher association, that do not have a feeding program, but that do have computer resources. (See Figure 5.)

Grade	Percentage of households citing overcrowded classrooms	Mean class size
Standard 1	60	101
Standard 2	61	95
Standard 3	62	95

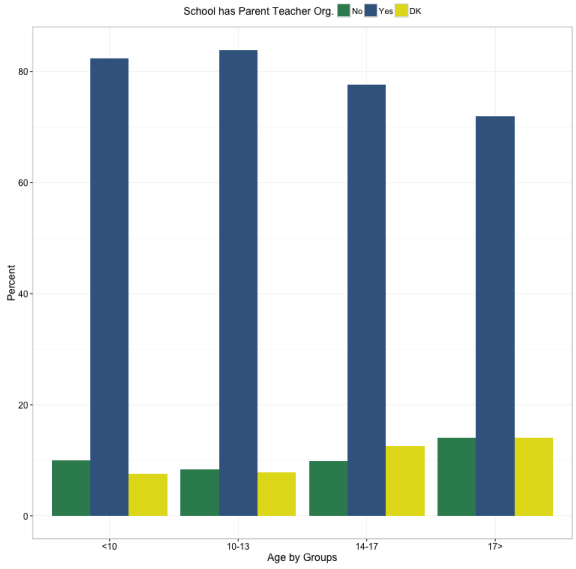
Standard 4	56	92
Standard 5	61	94
Standard 6	47	89
Standard 7	54	91
Standard 8	47	82
Form 1	36	84
Form 2	50	86
Form 3	28	85
Form 4	38	87

Table 3: Overcrowded classrooms by grade level.

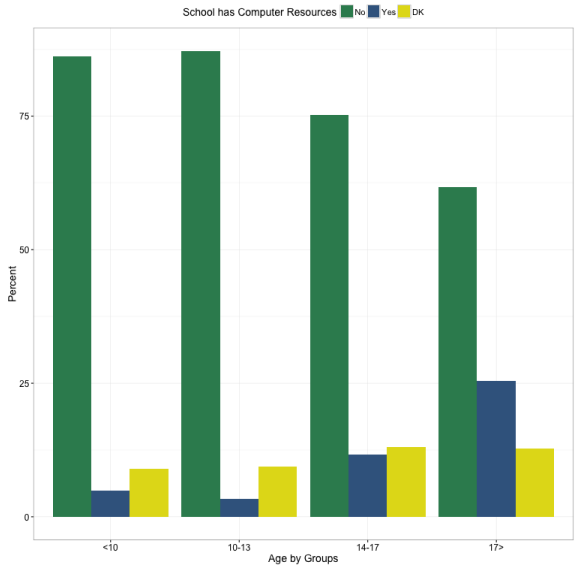
Crowded classroom by age



Schools with PTOs by age



Schools with computer resources by age



Schools with food programs by age

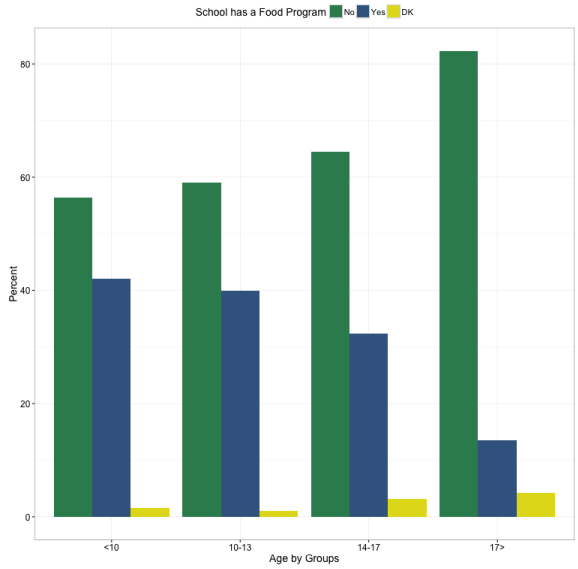


Figure 5: Variation in education quality by age groups.

Second, we investigate the role of socioeconomic conditions on school quality, and, unsurprisingly, wealthier families appear to have better access to private-school education. The vast majority (97 percent) of students from the lowest economic quartile attend public schools, compared to 74 percent of students from the top income quartile. (See Figure 5.) More notably, we find that the urban/rural divide does not appear to influence these outcomes. This runs contrary to the general impression that 1) urban schools are of higher quality, and 2) wealthier students, who can access private education, live in urban areas.

6.2 Education Quality Index

The Education Quality Index (EQI) is a unique feature of the LGPI that enables the comparison of educational standards throughout the country and across a broad range of factors. The EQI is composed of four variables: classroom size, prevalence of teacher favoritism, teacher absenteeism, and school shifts.[48] The LGPI finds that access to the best-quality schools in Malawi is limited. Only 12 percent of households have children attending the top quartile of schools in the country.

[48] More specifically, the EQI is created by performing a principal-component analysis on four different items: whether classrooms are crowded, ethnic favoritism is prevalent, teachers are absent, and the school runs multiple shifts. Higher values indicate a higher level of education quality.

Encouragingly, the second-highest quartile accounts for the largest percentage of households that can access high-quality education, at 34 percent. Importantly, household economic and educational indicators do not predict the quality of schools that the household can access. Nor does urban vs. rural status differentiate the quality of school one is able to access.[49]

Education level	Proportion of sample
Lowest education quality	28 percent
Low education quality	25 percent
High education quality	34 percent
Highest education quality	13 percent

Table 4: Educational quality of sample.[50]

Education quality varies sharply by geographic location. From figures 6 and 7, we see that Nkhata Bay, on average, has the highest quality education. Thus, living in this district should lead to better educational outcomes. (However, it is clear that some villages in Nkhata Bay lag far behind the rest.) Except for Nkhata Bay and the worst performer, Blantyre, the rest of the districts vary only slightly in terms of educational quality.

The variation between villages and districts suggests that good and bad schools are found throughout Malawi (see Figure 6). Our data reveals that the two best performing districts[51] in terms of school quality are Nkhata Bay and Rumphi, both located within the Northern region. However, one of the worst performing districts—Mzimba—is also located within the Northern region, where some of the worst performing schools are located. Generally, the likelihood of a student attending a good school has more to do with the village s/he lives in than the district or region s/he is from, although some districts do clearly outperform others.

[49] These conclusions are drawn from multivariate regression analysis. One of the control variables in this analysis is education level, but because the analysis is made at the household level, we use the respondent's education level as a proxy for the education level of the adults in the household.
[50] The N (3,329) for this table is based on only those households that have children in school.
[51] The districts mentioned in this report are the administrative districts and not educational districts.

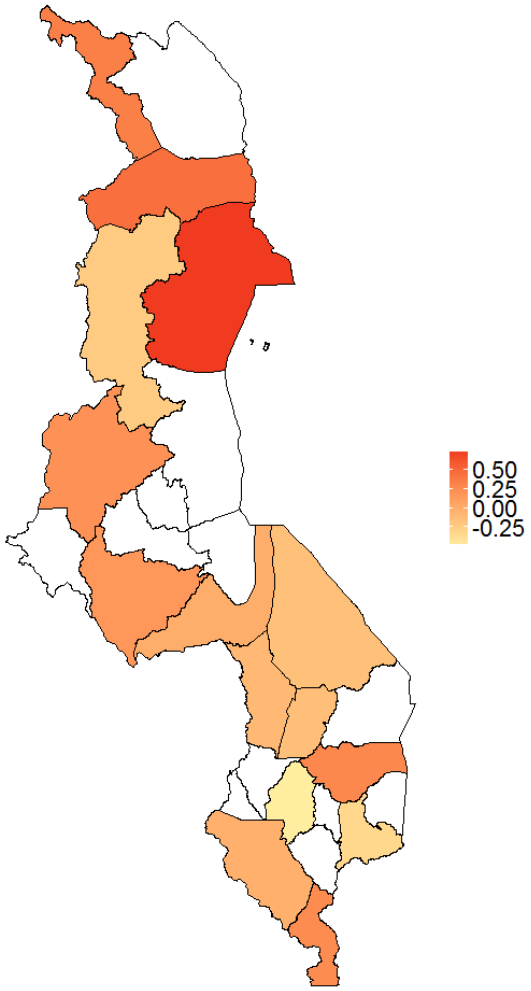
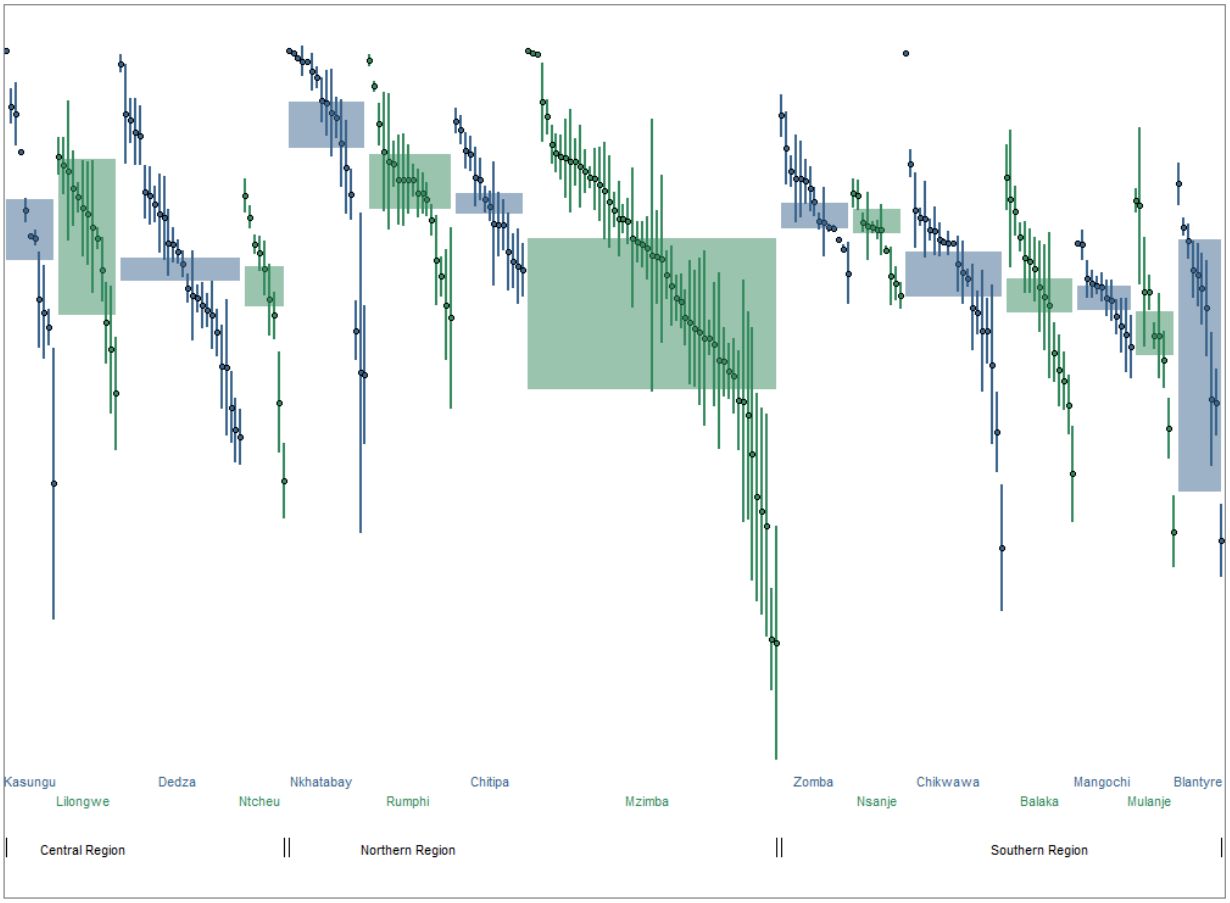


Figure 6: Education Quality Index.



Education Quality Index by Villages, Districts, and Regions

Figure 7

7. Enrollment

Primary-school enrollment is a key determinant of education quality, and we find high levels of enrollment in our sample. The LGPI shows that 95 percent of children under the age of 18 in our sample[52] are currently enrolled in school (notably higher than the government's official figure of 85 percent). However, there is important variation across key demographics in terms of enrollment. As is discussed below, age, economic conditions, and urban or rural residence are important determinants of school enrollment.

[52] Some families have placed even 1-year-olds in preschool or daycare. We include these in our calculation of enrollment because the parents see this as a form of school enrollment. There are only 18 children in our study under the age of 6 who are currently enrolled in some sort of school.

The choice of school is often restricted. Our survey shows that 68 percent of children attend a particular school because of its proximity to their home, and 20 percent of children are sent to a school because it is the only school in the area. Only 24 percent of children attend schools based on the quality of teaching available.

Grade	Percent of households citing teaching quality as factor for school selection
Standard 1	14
Standard 2	25
Standard 3	19
Standard 4	23
Standard 5	26
Standard 6	28
Standard 7	28
Standard 8	37
Form 1	27
Form 2	26
Form 3	32
Form 4	45

Table 5: Quality of school as a choice for enrollment, by grade level.

The type of school that households are able to access varies by a child's age. Younger children are more likely to be sent to a school based on its proximity to their home; 78 percent of children under the age of 10 are sent to a particular school due to its accessibility. On the other hand, only 34 percent of students over the age of 18 chose a school by location. There are a number of possible explanations for this variation.

First, it could be that, because there are fewer secondary schools, parents are forced to send their children far distances, and thus parents do not focus on the nearest school but rather take other things into consideration, such as school quality. Our data supports this first interpretation. Parents are more likely to send their older children to schools with higher quality of teaching. Only 19 percent of children under the age of 10 were sent to schools because of the quality of teaching; however, 31 percent of children over the age of 18 attended their schools because of the teaching standards available.

Second, it could be that parents place more emphasis on the quality of secondary school because they pay for it. Given that so few people obtain secondary education in Malawi, households may seek out better quality schooling for any children who successfully reach the secondary-school level. This is also borne out in Table 5, which shows that a higher percent of households are sending their children to higher quality schools at higher grade levels. Interestingly enough, this suggests that Malawians who send their children to secondary school (importantly, a minority of households) put more emphasis on the quality of secondary and late primary school over the first three to four years of education.[53]

Economic conditions also influence enrollment in Malawi. As we might expect, the wealthiest households are more likely (better able) to send their children to higher quality schools. In Figure 8 it is clear that the highest quartile of the population in terms of assets is much more likely to send their children to a school because it has higher-quality teaching. Only 18 percent of students from the lowest-income quartiles were sent to school based on teaching quality; however, 35 percent of the richest students were sent to schools because of higher-quality teaching.

Also in line with common understandings of education in Malawi, urban students are much more likely to choose schools with higher-quality teaching than rural students. Thirty-eight percent of urban students select their school using these criteria, whereas only 20 percent of students in rural areas pick their schools due to better-quality teaching. Additionally, rural students have fewer schools to pick from. Only 10 percent of urban students select a school because there is no other

[53] However, it could be the case that parents of young children do not choose higher-quality primary school because they simply send their children to the closest school without much thought of other options.

choice available to them; however, 23 percent of rural students attend a school because it is the only one available. Thus, rural residence clearly restricts the education options that children and households have.

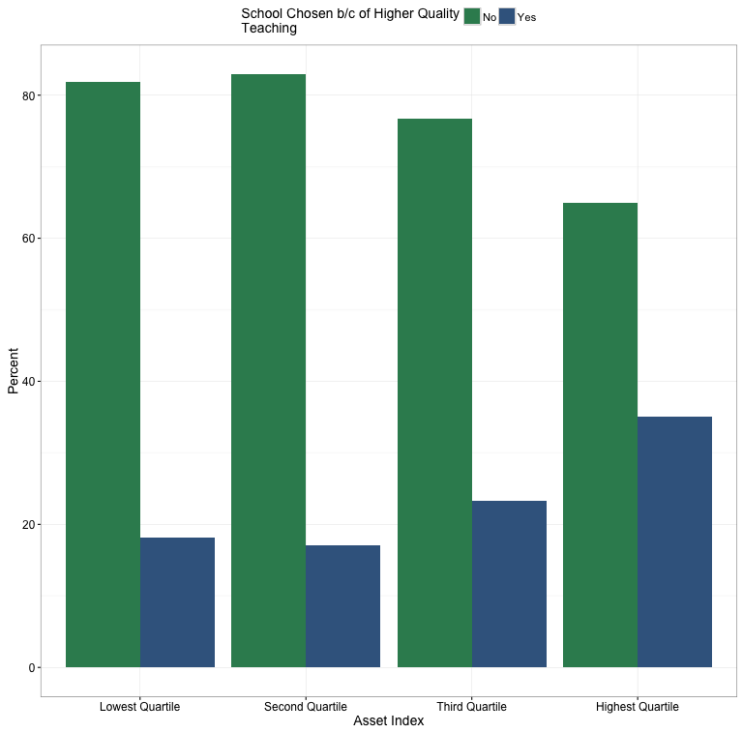


Figure 8: School choice based on quality, by economic conditions.

While the findings regarding age, economic status, and rural residence are unsurprising, we find no substantive differences in enrollment with regard to gender. Despite the clear gender differences within the Malawian education sector that have been illustrated in this report already—and the numerous disparities still to be shown below—our data shows that there are no variations in enrollment results when looking at gender differences. Girls and boys have the same levels of enrollment and select their schools based on the same factors.

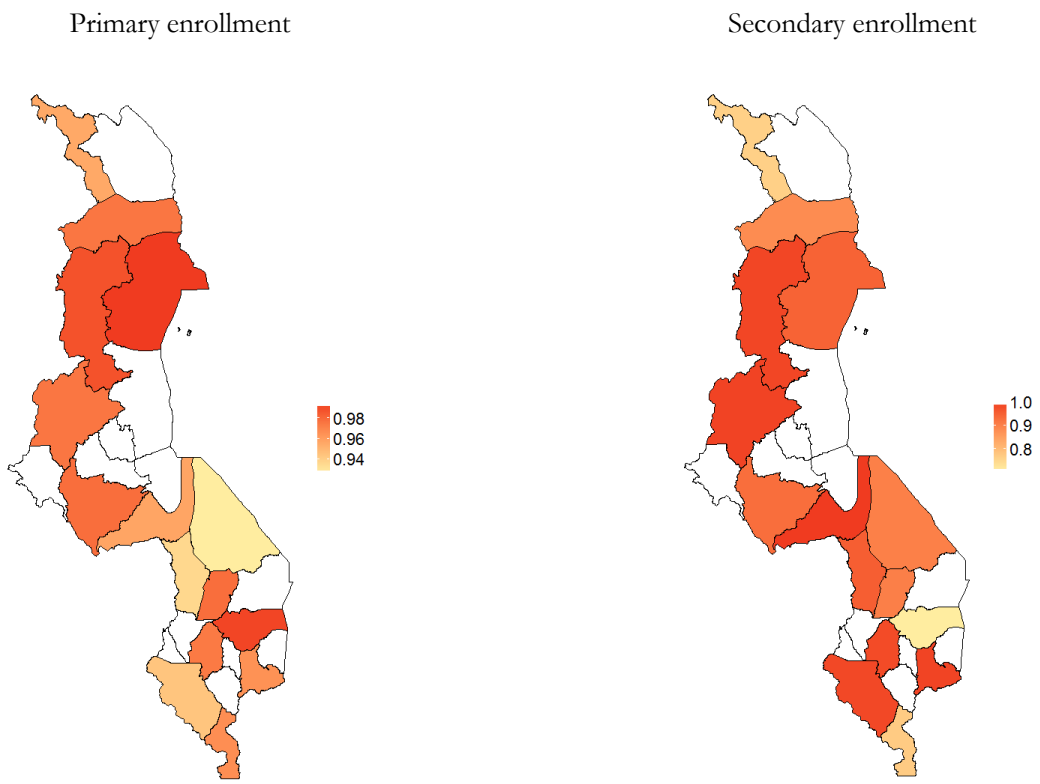


Figure 9: Primary and secondary enrollment.

Although all regions perform well when it comes to getting children into school, our data shows that the Northern region has the best enrollment rates of the country, with the Southern region performing the worst, though only marginally. (See Figure 9.) Both Nkhata Bay and Mzimba in the Northern region are the best-performing districts, whilst Mangochi in the Southern region has the worst enrollment rates across the districts. These findings are again similar to the IHS survey, which shows the Northern region with the highest enrollment rates (95 percent), ahead of both the Central region (86 percent) and the Southern region (83 percent).

Given that enrollment is so high, it is unsurprising that relatively few households reported problems enrolling their children. Only 5 percent of students experienced difficulties with school enrollment. Of that 5 percent, one-fifth sought assistance, which suggests that people tend not to seek help when trying to resolve an enrollment problem (either because the problems do not require assistance or because the problem is too difficult to resolve).

The vast majority, 69 percent (N=21), of those seeking assistance go to teachers or principals for help. Of those teachers sought for help, 28 percent are female, 25 percent are from the same village or neighborhood as the student, 20 percent had a prior relationship with the family of the student, and 97 percent were able to resolve the issue. Thus, teachers and principals seem to be very effective aids in solving problems, which suggests that if people are not seeking help for an enrollment problem that they either do not know the teacher or do not believe the teacher can solve the problem. It seems most likely that those who do not seek assistance don't do so because the problem is seemingly insurmountable. Ninety-three percent of households were very satisfied with the assistance they received from teachers and principals, which is indicative of the ability of teachers and principals to solve problems.

8. Transportation and Safety

Traveling to school is not an easy task for many students in Malawi, especially because walking remains the primary method of getting to school; 96 percent of children walk to school. Only 2 percent of children use public transportation. Bikes and private vehicles are the least-common mode of transportation, each accounting for 1 percent of schoolchildren's transportation. It takes 25 percent of students less than 15 minutes to get to school, and 83 percent of students take under an hour to get to school; however, 17 percent of students travel more than an hour to school. Thus, some students are spending a large amount of their day walking to and from school. This is clearly concerning, as it not only impacts the student's ability to learn both during and outside official school times but may also increase the likelihood of student dropouts and/or absenteeism due to exhaustion and the hassle of getting to school.

Walking is common because the vast majority (62 percent) of students attend schools within their district. However, only 35 percent of children attend schools within their village. Only 3 percent of students attend schools outside their district, but these are almost exclusively boarding schools, in which walking to school is not an issue. It could also be the case that the lack of private transportation (and reliable public transportation) ensures that students attend schools that are reasonably close to home.

Gender and economic circumstances do not significantly influence the mode of transportation or the duration of travel to school, but age and rural residence do. Older students are more likely to travel further to school: 6 percent of students over age 17 travel between 90 and 120 minutes to get to school, while only 2 percent of students under 10 travel for a similar amount of time. Further, 27 percent of students under 10 travel less than 15 minutes to school. In comparison, only 16 percent of students over 17 travel to school in 15 minutes or less. Younger students are also more likely to attend schools in their village or neighborhood, which explains why their travel times are shorter than those of older students. Second, as might be expected, urban students take less time to travel to school: 32 percent of urban students arrive at school within 15 minutes of leaving their home, compared to only 23 percent of rural students in the same time frame. This illustrates the greater difficulty that rural students have in terms of reaching school.

Safety within school and traveling to school does not appear to be a major concern to Malawians. Ninety percent of parents believe it is safe for their child to travel to school (1 percent refused to answer or did not know). Of those 9 percent of households with safety concerns (650 households in our sample), 28 percent have concerns with a lack of parental supervision, and 28 percent were concerned with their child walking through dangerous terrain. Interestingly, those children who are not safe going to school have significantly longer travel times than those who are safe: those who are unsafe on average travel more than 30 minutes to school, while those who are safe travel less than 30 minutes to school, on average.

Our data reveals that 95 percent of parents believe that their child is safe while in school, 3 percent felt their child is not safe, and 2 percent did not know or refused to answer. The major concerns from parents who believe school poses a threat to their child's safety (248 households in our sample) are with student violence (30 percent) and lack of protection in an emergency (28 percent).[54]

9. Absenteeism

Student absenteeism in Malawi is a major problem, with 27 percent of students missing at least one day of school a week. More worryingly, 7 percent of students had missed all five days of school in

[54] Our data shows there are no variations in results when looking at age, urban vs. rural, class, or gender.

the previous week.[55] Student health issues appear to be behind this absenteeism, with 54 percent of children missing school due to illness. Only 7 percent of student absenteeism is due to the child's unwillingness to attend. Perhaps surprisingly, helping with household chores accounts for only 2 percent of child absenteeism. This does not affect girls more than boys, although, as will be discussed below, girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school altogether because they need to help with household chores. (See Figure 10.)

Nevertheless, there are a number of key gender differences. Our data shows that male students are more likely to miss school than female students: 31 percent of boys and 27 percent of girls missed at least one day of school in the previous week (about 4 percent of each gender were unsure of absence in the previous week). Boys are more likely to miss school because they do not like school, with 9 percent of male students missing school due to this reason, while only 5 percent of girls miss school because they don't like attending.

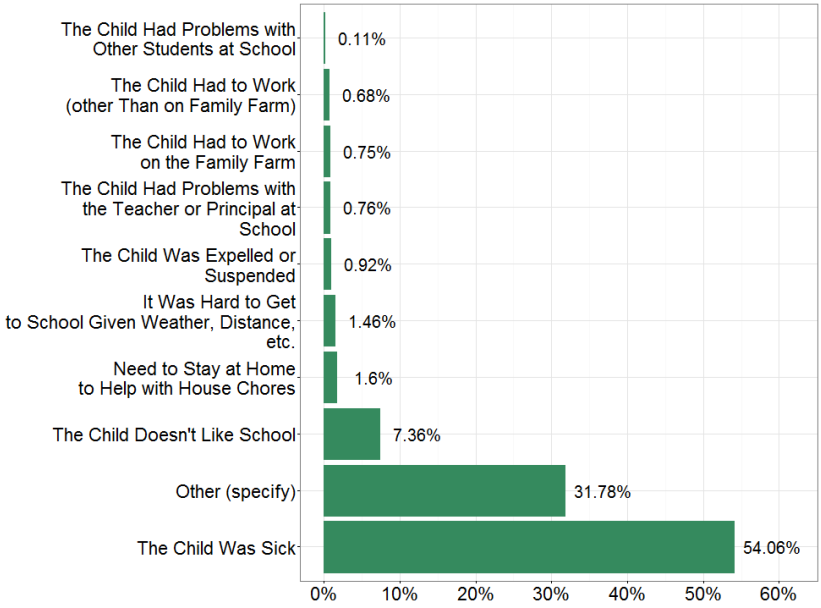


Figure 10: Reasons children were absent from school.

Wealth and age also influence absenteeism, but rural residence does not. The wealthiest students are least likely to have missed any school in the previous week: 22 percent of children from the richest

[55] Our data recorded responses of up to 10 days. All data between six to seven days has been collapsed into the five-day field, as there are only five schools in a week.

income quartile missed at least one day of school in the previous week, compared to 33 percent of children from the poorest income quartile (roughly 3 percent in each class refused to answer or didn't know, with regard to absences). Student absenteeism due to sickness affects students from different economic groups roughly the same. (See Figure 11.) Sickness as a reason for absenteeism ranges from 57 percent of children from the poorest households to 51 and 52 percent of children from the second richest and richest households, respectively (among those who were absent in the previous week). Interestingly, however, children from the richest 25 percent of society are the most likely to miss school because they don't like attending. (See Figure 11.) Among those who have missed school, 12 percent of the richest 25 percent of the sample missed school because they do not like school.

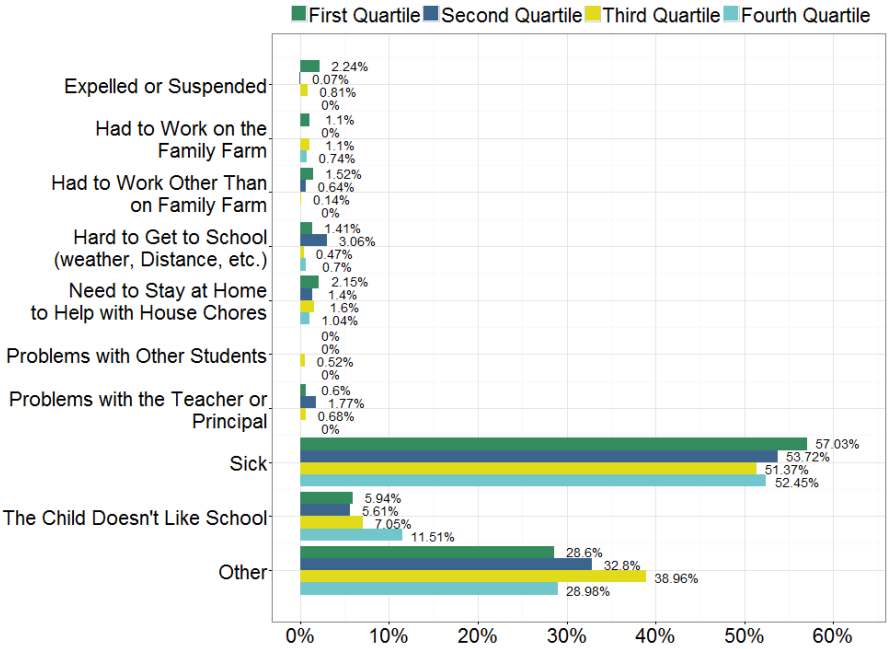


Figure 11: Reasons children were absent, by economic background.

The likelihood of missing at least one day of school is much higher for younger students. Thirty-seven percent of children under the age of 10 missed at least one day of school in the previous week, compared to only 18 percent of children 18 and above. (See Figure 12.) Younger children are also more likely to miss school due to sickness than older children: 63 percent of absenteeism for children under 10 is due to illness, while only 30 percent of absenteeism for children 18 or over is

due to this reason. (See Figure 13.) Thus, it seems that if younger children were in better health, their education would also be much better.

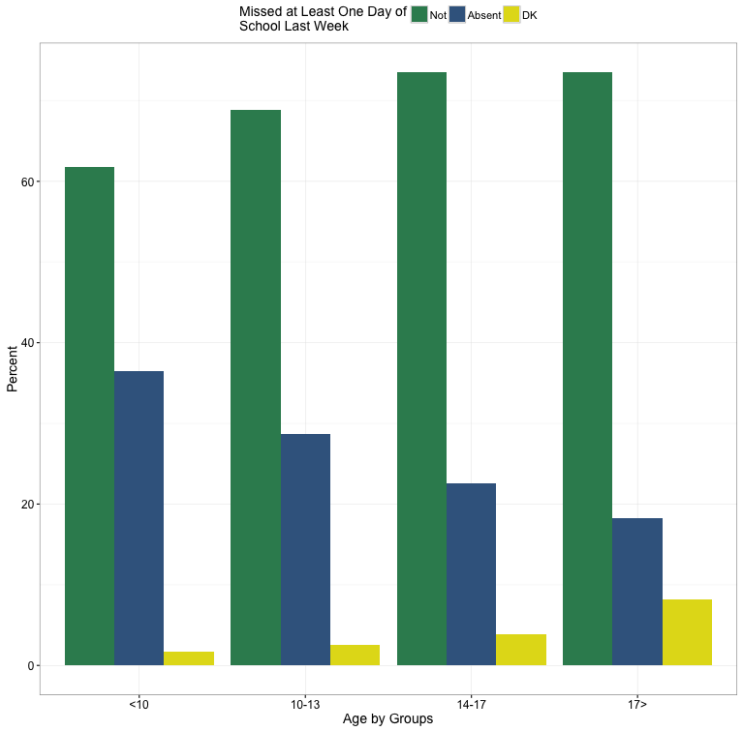


Figure 12: Absent in the previous week by age.

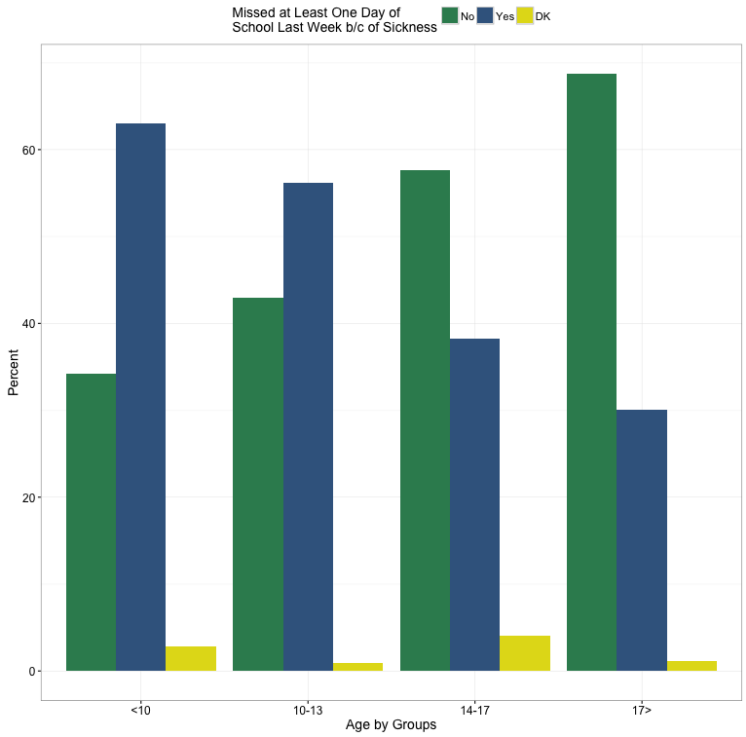


Figure 13: Missing school due to sickness by age.

10. Dropout Rates

Students are much more likely to drop out of primary school than secondary school. We find that 19 percent of students who dropped out of school did so in the first year of primary school, while only 1 percent of students who dropped out left during their first year of secondary education. These low dropout rates in secondary school may be explained by the differing nature of students in the later stages of the education cycle. Most students' families have invested time and resources into education, which suggests that students reaching this level are significantly more committed to their studies.

From the LGPI, we are able to identify the three most important reasons that children drop out of school: 24 percent dropped out because they refused to attend school, 23 percent dropped out due to financial constraints (inability to pay for uniforms, supplies, school fees, etc.), and 16 percent dropped out to help with household chores. (See Figure 14.) We find that 18 percent of students drop out for other reasons, which include issues such as recent moves, failing school, pregnancy, and marriage. Though the IHS survey measures only primary-school students who have dropped out, their findings show some similarities to the LGPI data. They list child refusal (45 percent), financial constraints (26 percent), marriage (8 percent), and household responsibilities (6 percent) as the four main reasons for a child not attending school. Marriage accounts for 6 percent of female dropouts in our sample.

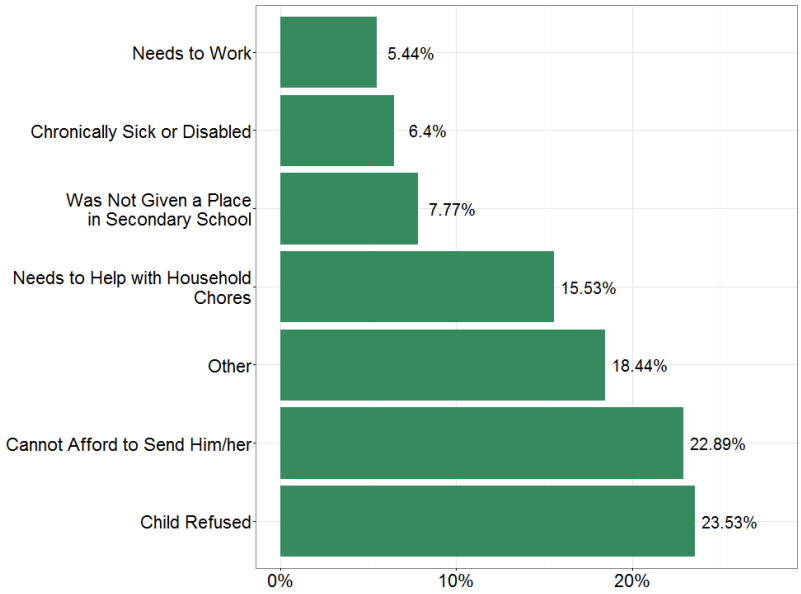


Figure 14: Reasons why children dropped out of school.

The trends in dropping out vary widely by age, gender, economic conditions, rural vs. urban residence, and location. The reasons that children drop out of school are drastically different depending on their age. (See Figure 15.) Children between the ages of 10 and 18 have the highest rate of dropping out due to the child's refusing to attend school. Thirty percent of 10 to 14 year olds who have dropped out of school do so for this reason. Only 12 percent of students 17 or over drop out because they refuse to attend. Younger children are also more likely to drop out of school for financial reasons: 27 percent of children under the age of 10 who have dropped out do so due to financial issues. However, only 18 percent of students 18 and above who have dropped out have done so due to financial issues. Thus, the burden of purchasing uniforms, books, and other supplies clearly causes some children to drop out in the early years of education. It seems that those who are not financially able to send their children to secondary school never even have the opportunity to do so, because the child has left school long before Form 1. Children under the age of 17 are also much more likely to drop out of school due to household responsibility. Finally, and unsurprisingly, older children are more likely to drop out of school due to employment.

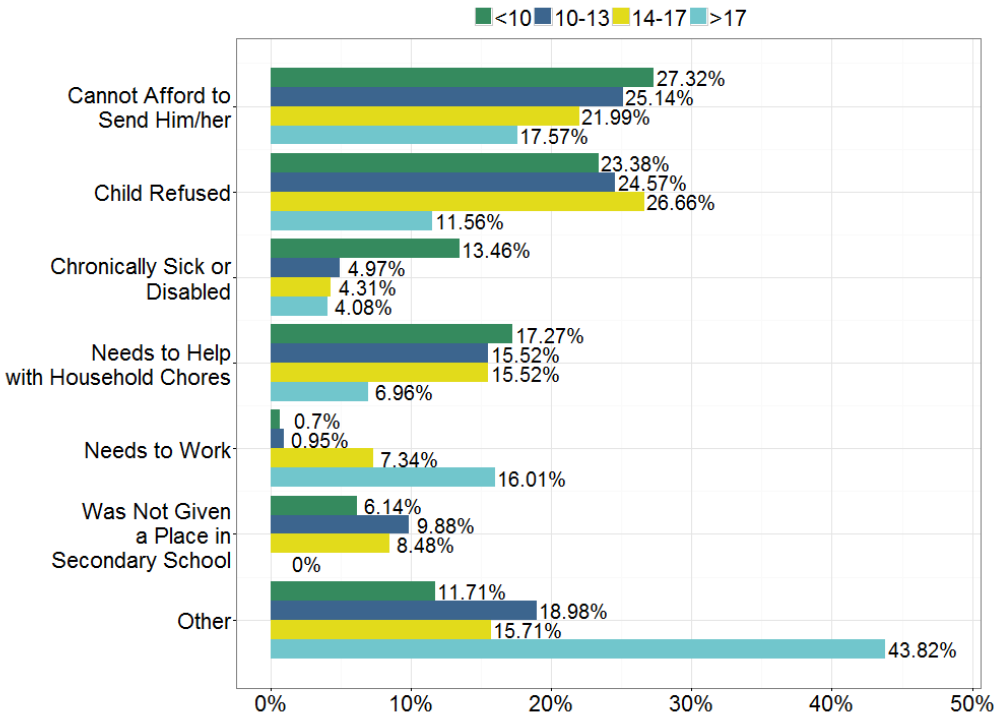


Figure 15: Reasons for dropping out of school, by age groups.

Age has a strong correlation with dropping out, while gender's relationship is much more subtle. Overall, there is no significant difference between girls and boys in terms of dropout rates. However, they differ in terms of the timing of dropping out. During the first four years of primary education, boys have a higher dropout rate than girls. However, in the fifth year of primary school, girls' dropout rates exceed those of boys, with girls accounting for 66 percent of children leaving school at this stage, compared to 34 percent for boys. In terms of reasons for dropping out, male students are more than twice as likely to drop out of school because they don't like going: 31 percent of boys who have dropped out of school are leaving because of this reason, compared to only 13 percent of girls. (See Figure 16.) These findings are consistent with the IHS survey, which shows 52 percent of male students citing this as a reason, compared to 36 percent of girls.

Girls are twice as likely to drop out of school because they need to help with household work: 22 percent of girls who dropped out did so because of household responsibilities, compared to only 11 percent of boys. This is also in line with the IHS survey, which finds that girls are twice as likely to drop out of school compared to boys. It is also important to note that among female dropouts, 14

percent drop out of school either because of marriage or pregnancy. No boys were reported to have dropped out due to marriage or their partner's pregnancy.

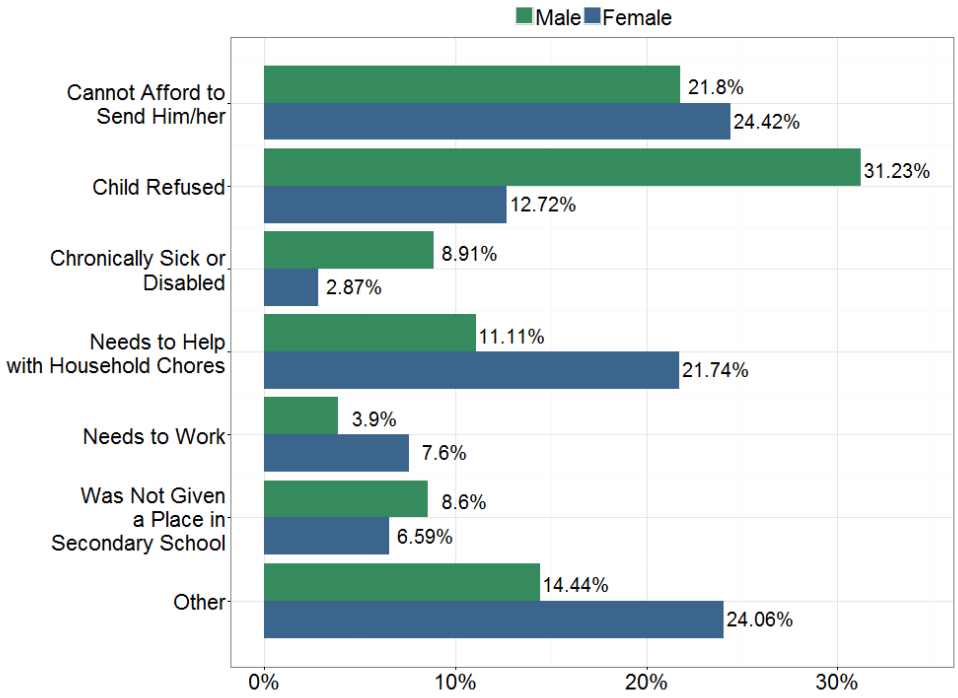


Figure 16: Reasons for dropping out of school, by gender.

There are also economic explanations for dropping out of school. Students from wealthier households are less likely to drop out of school throughout the education cycle: 50 percent of dropouts are children from the poorest quartile, compared to only 11 percent from the wealthiest. Further, students from wealthier households are significantly more likely to drop out at higher levels of education. This is likely due to the fact that poorer students who actually make it to secondary education are highly committed and thus much less likely to drop out. Unsurprisingly, students from wealthier households are less likely to drop out of school due to household responsibilities: between 7 and 10 percent of the richest 50 percent of society drop out for this reason, compared to 19 percent of the poorest 50 percent of society. However, students from both the richest and poorest households have the highest financially induced dropout rates, which is likely the case because poorer households struggle to provide the necessary materials for primary school, while wealthier households struggle to pay school fees for private or secondary school. (See Figure 17.)

The urban/rural divide also clearly distinguished reasons for dropping out of school. Our data reveals that rural students are more likely to drop out of school because of financial difficulties or because they don't like attending. About half of rural students who have dropped out of school did so for one of these reasons (evenly split between the two reasons), compared to only about a quarter of urban students. (See Figure 18.)

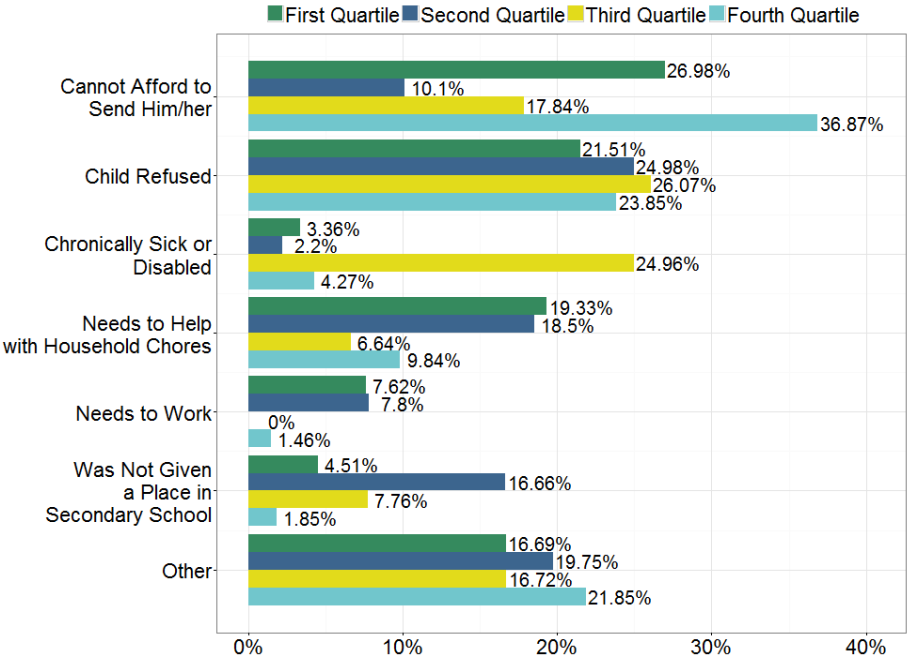


Figure 17: Reasons for dropping out of school, by economic conditions.

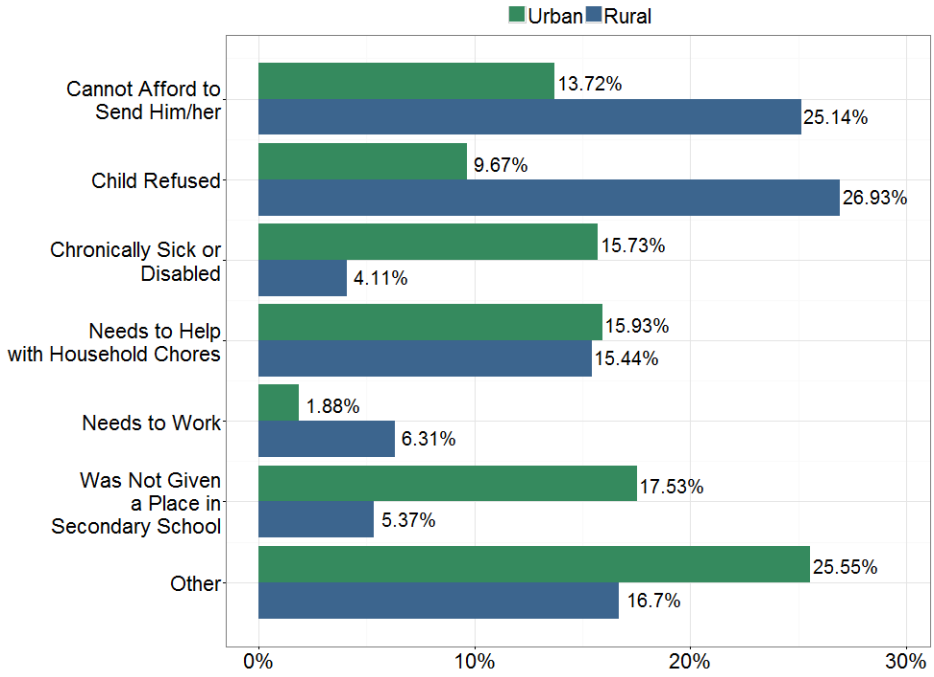


Figure 18: Reasons for dropping out of school, by urban/rural residence.

11. Problems and Resolutions

11.1 Student problems

Students in Malawi routinely face problems with their education. Our survey shows that over the course of a year, 31 percent of children experience a school-related problem (less than 1 percent either refused to answer or did not know the answer to this question), and 10 percent experience more than one problem. Of those students experiencing problems, 44 percent have issues with failing examinations. Both a lack of school materials and a lack of uniforms account for 19 percent and 20 percent respectively of children who are experiencing problems (again less than 1 percent refused to disclose or did not know what the problem was). (See Figure 19.) Age, economic circumstances, and location are important predictors of education problems and solutions to those problems, while gender is not.

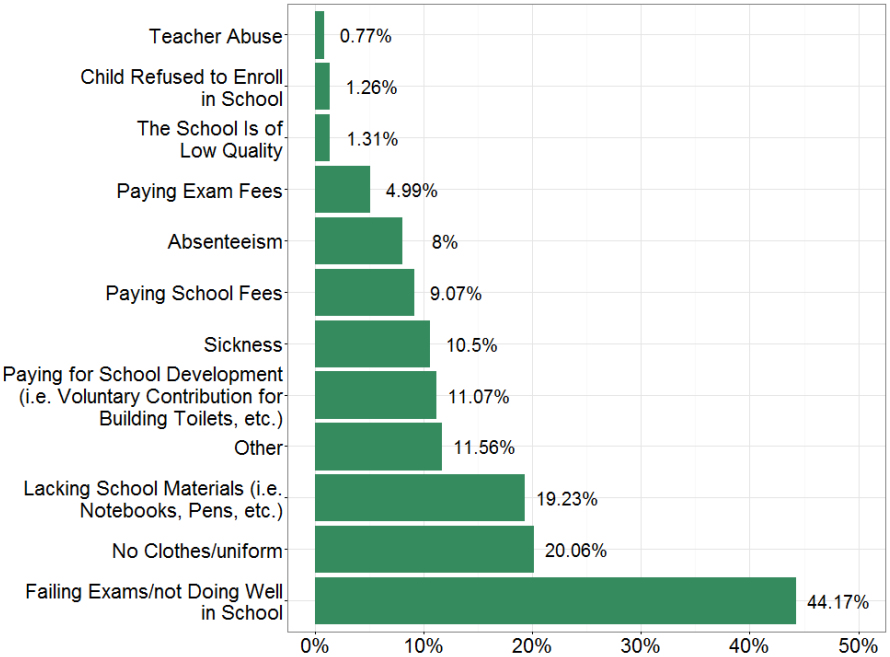


Figure 19: Types of problems.

Children tend to face more problems as they get older. Overall, 48 percent of students over the age 17 experience problems, compared to 39 percent of students under the age of 10. Our data indicates that older children are more prone to experiencing difficulties with paying school fees. For example, only 4 percent of children under the age of 10 who have problems with school are having problems paying fees, whereas 40 percent of children 18 and older experiencing problems are having difficulties with school fees. We would expect to see this, as primary-school education is free and secondary-school education is not. From Table 6, no more than 7 percent of students in primary school have problems paying school fees, while 48 to 53 percent of secondary-school students face problems with school fees. The rate of exam failure is relatively consistent throughout the education cycle. Forty-four percent of children under 10 who experience difficulties with school face problems with failing. Similarly, 37 percent of children 18 and above who have troubles in school are having difficulties with examinations.

Grade	Percent of households having problems with school fees
Standard 1	3
Standard 2	2
Standard 3	2
Standard 4	4
Standard 5	2
Standard 6	4
Standard 7	3
Standard 8	7
Form 1	53
Form 2	48
Form 3	53
Form 4	48

Table 6: Problems with paying school fees, by grade.

Parents of older students are more likely to seek help for their school-related problems. The LGPI finds that 27 percent of parents of students over 17 with problems seek help, compared to only 14 percent of parents of students under 10. This is likely due to the fact that at higher grade levels, one has more engaged parents, given the dropout rates we observe in the data set. Put simply, more parents are seeking help to resolve their older children's education issues, because students with less-engaged parents are more likely to have dropped out earlier. Consequently, we likely have a higher concentration of more-engaged parents at higher education levels.

Turning to the economic determinants of education problem solving, we see that overall, higher household wealth (as measured by our asset index) correlates with a lower probability of facing problems in education. Wealthy students are less likely to face a range of difficulties, including lack

of materials or uniforms. Wealthier students, however, suffer more from problems like exam failure: 53 percent of the richest students have problems with failing exams, compared to only 36% of the poorest. (See Figure 20.)

Overall, there is no real difference in the likelihood of facing education problems in rural and urban areas. However, there are differences in the types of education-related problems that rural and urban children face. Rural children are more likely to face problems relating to buying school clothing and school materials. By contrast, urban children have more problems with paying exam fees and failing exams. Given these results and the findings regarding wealth, it seems that the wealthy and urban face a similar set of problems, while the poor and rural face another set of problems. (See Figure 21.)

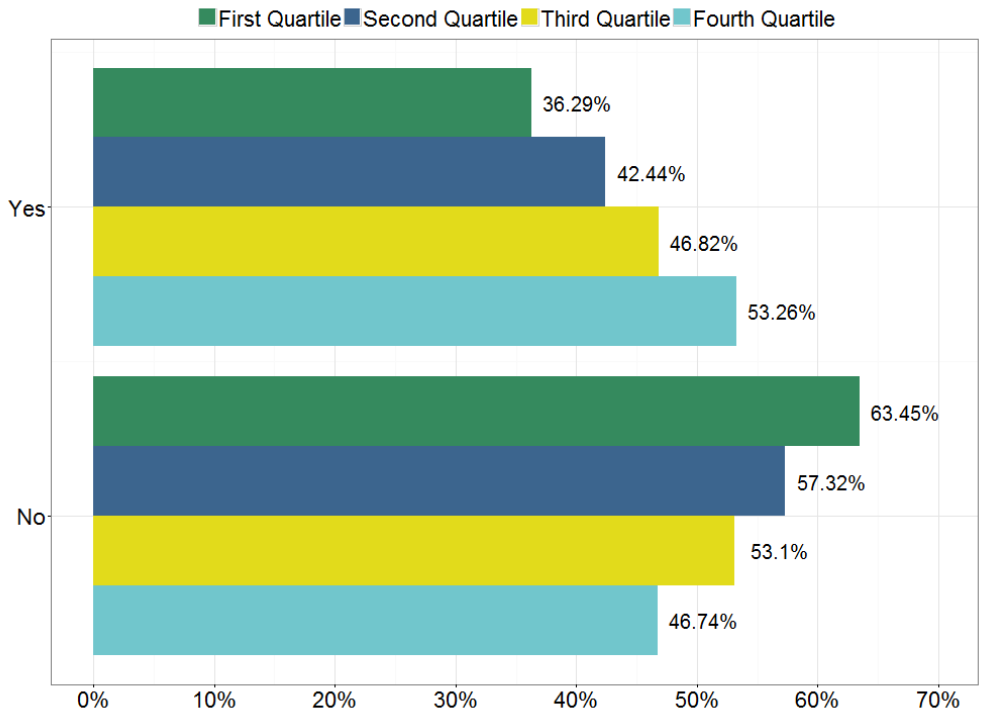


Figure 20: The problem of failing, by economic conditions.

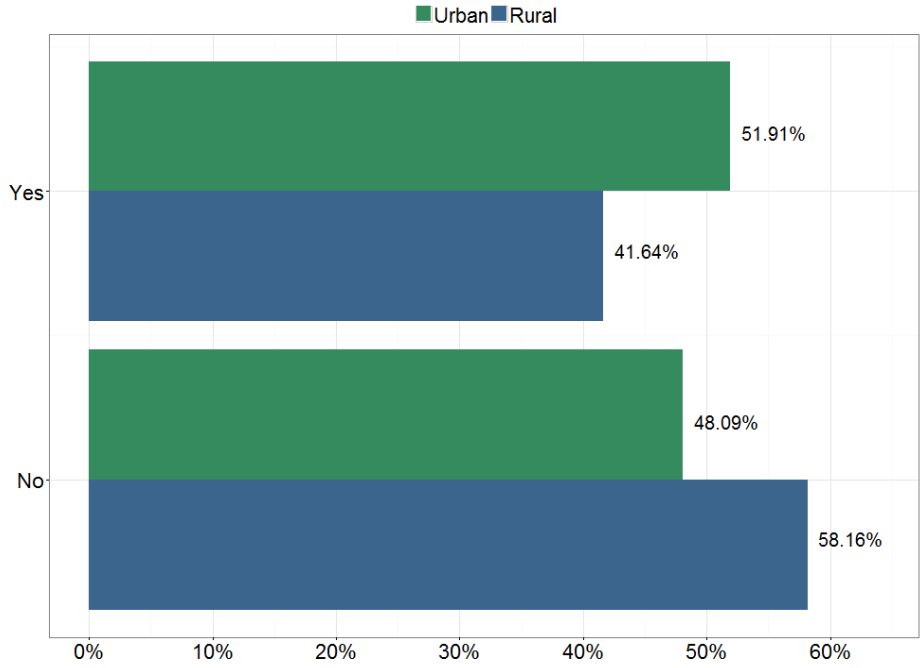
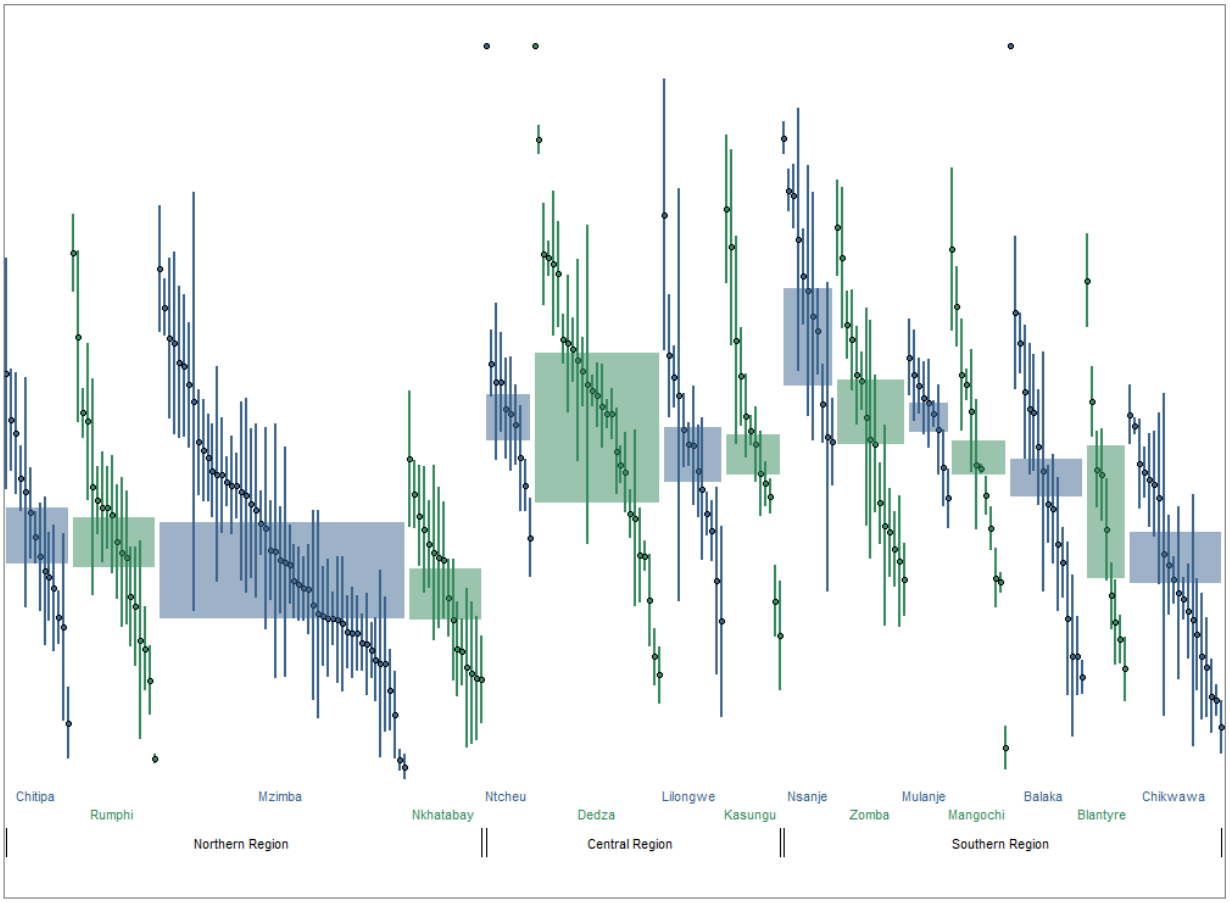


Figure 21: The problem of failing, by urban/rural residence.

Our data shows significant variance by region, district, and village when it comes to students encountering problems. Overall, students in the Northern region encounter fewer school-related problems than students in the country's other two regions; there is such wide variance by village that students seem just as likely to encounter problems in every region and district in the country. However, our data does suggest that students in the Nsanje district in the southern region encounter the most school-related problems of any district in the country. (See Figure 22.)



Having a problem concerncing education by villages, districts, and regions

Figure 22

11.2 Problem Resolution

The LGPI allows us to both identify the types of problems children face in their education and understand how people solve their problems, by looking at whom they turn to for help. We find that only 17 percent of those who faced problems with their child's education sought help in resolving it (there were no refusals or "don't know"s in response to this question). Among those who did seek help, we find that 40 percent of households with school-related problems sought help from their child's teacher or principal; 22 percent asked friends, family members, or neighbors; 15 percent went to community leaders ; and only 9 percent asked government officials for help (formal and traditional). Fourteen percent of those with an education-related problem did not turn to anyone for help. (See Figure 23.) Age, economic conditions, and rural vs. urban residence influence the types of people individuals turn to for help, but gender does not seem to influence this decision.

Our data shows that parents of older children are more likely to turn to community leaders for assistance with school-related problems: more than 29 percent of parents with children over 14 turn to community leaders, while at most 20 percent with children under 14 turn to community leaders. (See Figure 24.) The most common source of help across all age groups, except nontraditional students (over the age of 17), is the teacher or principal.

The richest households in Malawi are more likely to approach teachers for their school-related problems than any other income group: 58 percent of the richest quartile of students facing problems seek help from a teacher or principal. (See Figure 25.)

Urban residents tend to rely more on friends and family to solve problems, while rural residents rely more on community leaders. Urban students are more likely to approach friends, family members, and neighbors for help: 32 percent of urban parents with problems approached this group to assist with their issues, while only 20 percent in rural areas did so. On the other hand, 17 percent of parents of rural students approached community leaders to address their problems.[56] Conversely, only 4 percent of urban students went to community leaders for help. Once again, the most common source of assistance for both rural and urban residents is the teacher or principal. (See Figure 26.)

[56] In our analysis, community leaders include nongovernmental organizations, civil-society organizations, religious organizations, wealthy families, business persons or organizations, traditional healers, and doctors.

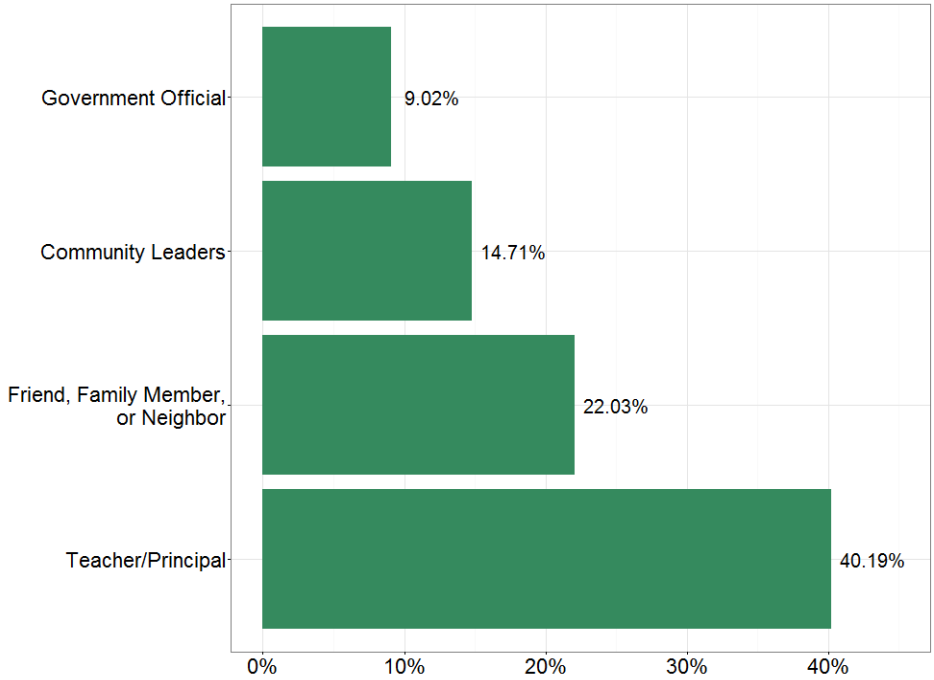


Figure 23: To whom do you turn for help?

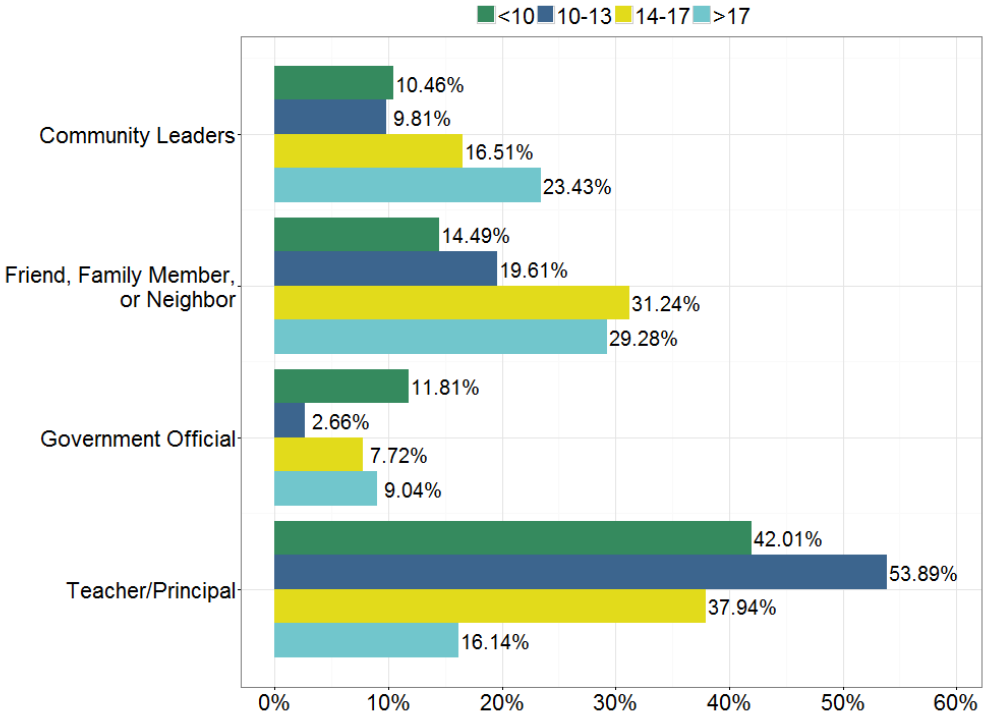


Figure 24: To whom do you turn for help, by age.

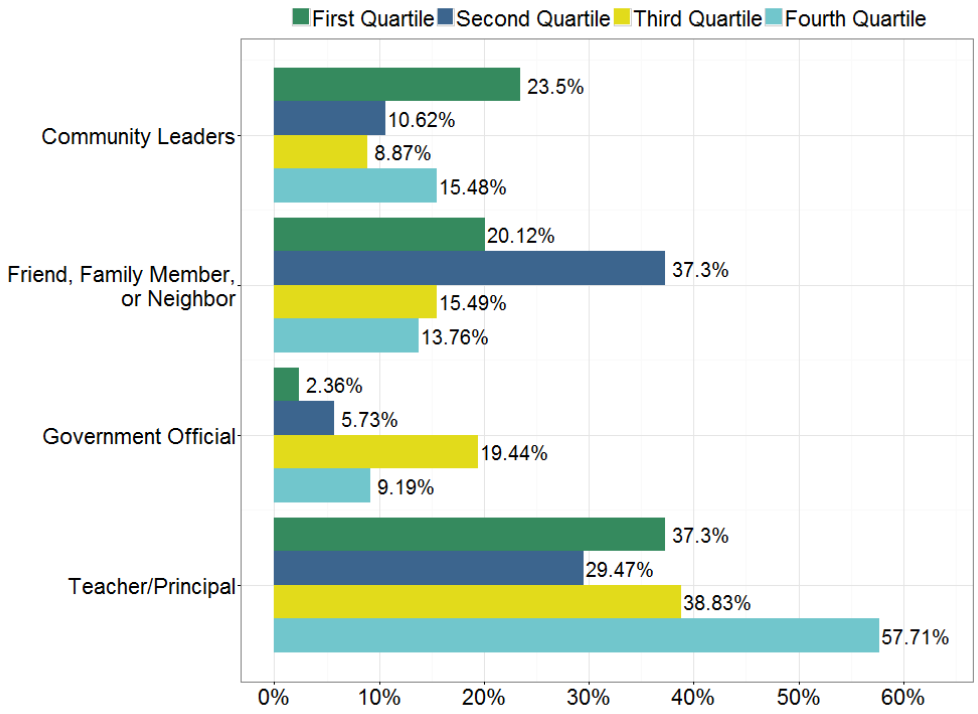


Figure 25: To whom do you turn for help, by economic conditions.

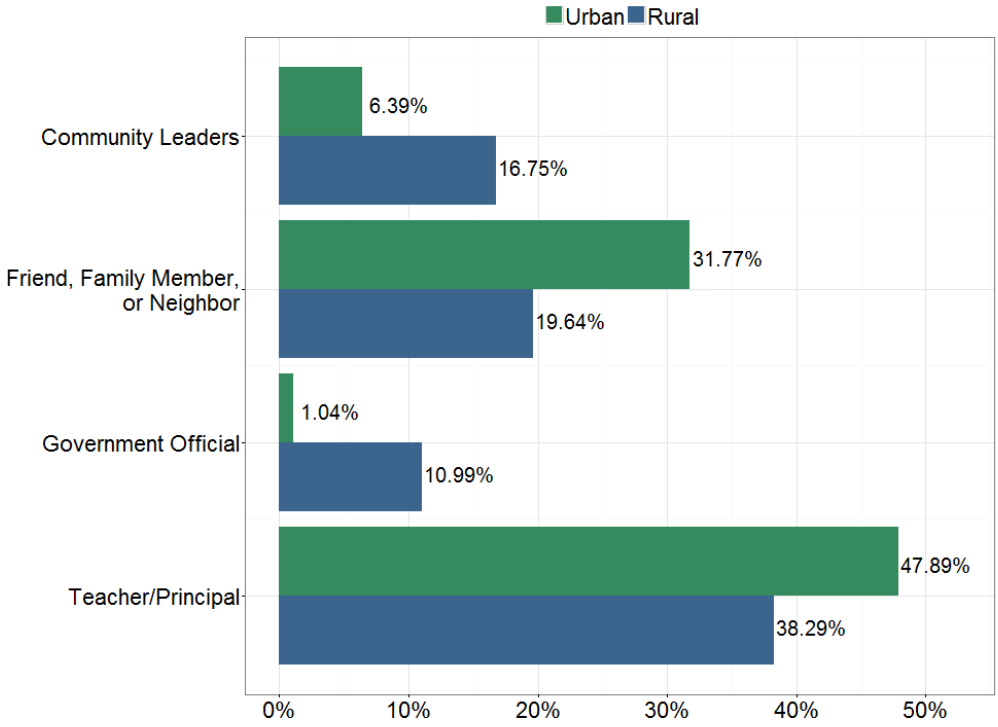


Figure 26: To whom do you turn for help, by urban/rural residence.

12. Corruption

It is not uncommon in many contexts for parents to pay bribes in order to solve problems related to education; therefore, the LGPI asks questions to explore this propensity. In Malawi, we find that only 2 percent of households with school-related problems had to pay a bribe or give a gift in order to resolve a child's problem. Of those making the payment, only 26 percent saw this as a bribe. Additionally, 18 percent of parents paid an extra fee or gave a gift in order to enroll their child in school. Further, of those respondents who had to pay extra to enroll a child in school, 65 percent considered this payment a bribe. It is interesting the there are such different perceptions regarding paying bribes to solve a problem and paying bribes to enroll in school. It seems to be the case that bribery to enter the education system is seen as illicit, whereas having to pay to solve a problem in education is not. This possibly suggests that people view access to education as a right that should not require added resources, while receiving assistance in solving a problem (remember that most people turn to teachers to solve problems) is not necessarily a right and thus requires extra payment.

Once again age, gender, rural vs. urban residence, and economic conditions are important predictors of paying a bribe. First, our data reveals that the oldest age group (17 and older) are the most likely to pay a bribe in order to enroll in school. Forty-two percent of this age group with problems had to pay a bribe to enroll in school. While we cannot say definitively, it is possible that this is a result of two dynamics: 1) there are very few secondary-school positions, and 2) students who are not of the correct age are the least likely to get one of these scarce spots.

Second, parents are more likely to pay bribes for their sons to enroll in school than their daughters: 23 percent of parents of male students with problems paid a bribe, compared to 11 percent for female students. This could be one reason why we see girls dropping out at higher rates at higher grade levels. Interestingly, parents of boys are more likely to consider this payment a bribe (32 percent) than parents of girls (only 18 percent). This suggests that parents are more likely to engage in illicit behavior in order to assist with their sons' education than their daughters', which implies different valuations of male and female education in Malawi. Alternatively, this lower probability of seeing a bribe on behalf of a daughter as illicit might be because such payments are more necessary for girls to gain education.

Third, urban students are more likely to pay a bribe: 31 percent of urban parents with problems paid a bribe in order for their child to attend school, compared to only 14 percent of rural parents. Urban parents are also more likely to think this payment is a bribe, with 72 percent of urban Malawians saying so compared to only 59 percent of those living in rural areas.

Fourth, wealth is highly correlated with bribe payments. Unfortunately, poor students are more likely to pay a bribe in order to enroll in school: 24 percent of the poorest students had to do so, compared to 14 percent of the richest students. The wealthy are no more likely than the poor to use connections in order to enroll a child in school.

13. Tutoring

It is often the case that some students are more in need of and better able to access extra tutoring. However, those students who can access such tutoring are not necessarily those who need it most. We find that poor and rural students are not as well positioned to access private tutoring. Interestingly, gender and age do not have a significant impact on the use of or access to tutors. More generally, our data shows that only 10 percent of schoolchildren receive private tutoring or additional lessons after school, with 77 percent of these children's parents paying for these services. Forty-eight percent of these tutors are already teaching at the students' schools. Further, 31 percent of students using tutors do so because of the poor standard of teaching at their school. More worryingly, 48 percent of households believe that students who are tutored receive better treatment at school than those without private tutoring.

Our data shows that wealthier students are more likely to use private tutors than poorer students and are also more likely to pay for this tutoring. Specifically, 14 percent of the wealthiest students have private tutors, compared to only 7 percent of the poorest students. Thus, it is clearly the case that in Malawi only those who can afford additional lessons actually receive them. Among those who have tutors, 70 percent of the poorest students pay for their tutor compared to 91 percent of the wealthiest students. This suggests that there are some instances in which tutoring is need-based.

Urban students are better able to overcome poor teaching through the use of tutoring, but they are also more likely to pay for this tutoring. We find that 47 percent of urban students using tutors do

so because of the poor standard of teaching at their school, compared to 27 percent of rural students using tutors. Given that school quality does not significantly vary across rural and urban areas, this difference is more likely due to the ability to pay for tutoring among urban students than poorer-quality schools in urban areas. This conclusion is supported by the fact that 94 percent of urban students using tutors are paying for this service, but only 72 percent of rural students are. Thus, ability to pay for added lessons seems to be the best way to overcome poor teaching, and urban students are better positioned to make such payments.

14. Inequality

Are children treated differently due to their ethnicity, gender, income, or other characteristics? We find that parents do not believe inequality to be a major factor in their children's schools, with only 15 percent of households identifying some form of inequality. Only 3 percent of respondents with children in school believed that kids received unequal treatment in the school due the child's gender, and the same percent reported favoritism based on ethnicity. However, 8 percent of children were reported to have received unequal treatment due to their household's wealth. (See Figure 27.)

Interestingly, the data shows that poorer households are not significantly more likely to believe that schools favor wealthier students. However, poorer households do believe that schools favor students based on gender (the substantive difference is small, however, with 4 percent of the poorest households seeing discrimination based on gender compared to only 2 percent of the wealthiest households).[57] (See Figure 28.)

[57] Our data shows that there are no variations in results when looking at age, urban vs. rural, or gender.

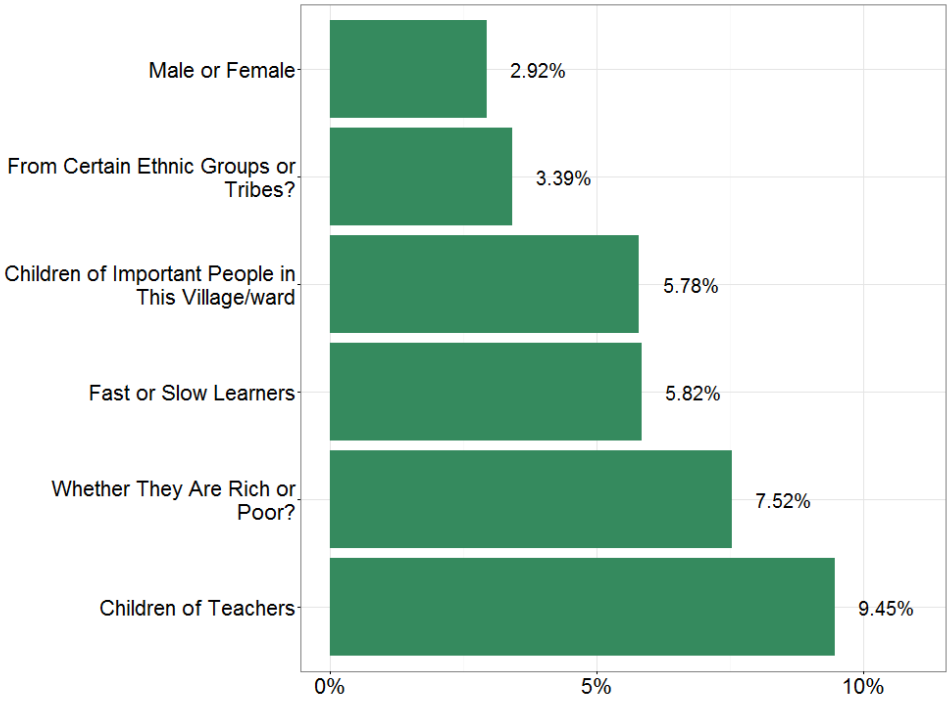


Figure 27: Sources of inequality and differential treatment.

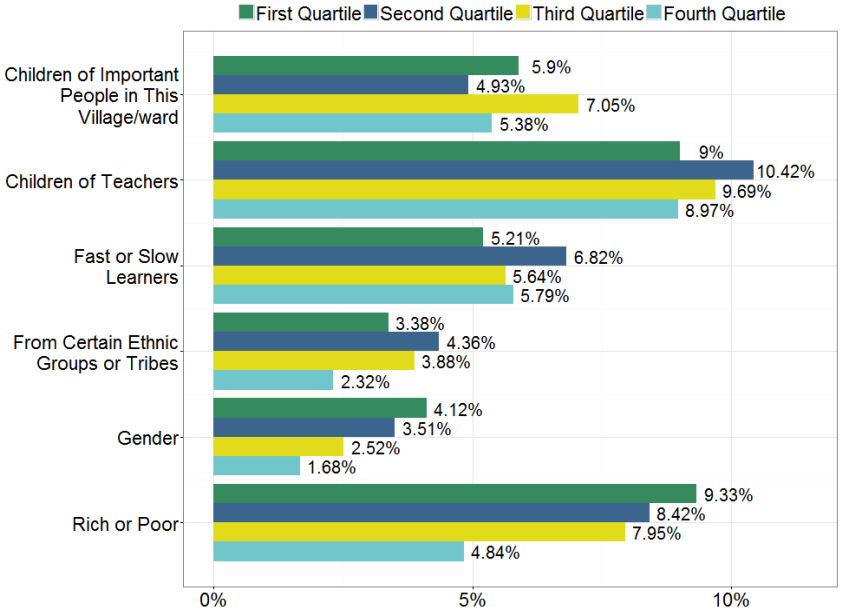


Figure 28: Type of inequality, by economic conditions.

15. School Fees

Despite free primary education in Malawi, 28 percent of children had to pay school fees in the last year (less than 1 percent of respondents refused to answer or did not know). Over 60 percent of children had to pay for books or uniforms during the same period. Additionally, our data reveals that only 7 percent of children who had to pay school fees or buy books received outside help for the payment of school fees, books, and uniforms. Perhaps unsurprisingly, friends, family members, and neighbors were those most often offering assistance, accounting for 67 percent of the people assisting with such payments. As we might expect, the payments of school fees is much lower in primary school. (See Table 7.) In primary school grades, between 19 and 29 percent of students pay schools fees, compared to between 78 and 85 percent in secondary school. What is surprising is that so many students pay fees for primary education, and yet only 8 percent of those in primary school are enrolled in private schools.

The payment of school fees also varies by wealth and rural vs. urban residence. First, the richer the household, the more likely it is that that household would have to pay school fees and buy school materials. (See figures 29 and 30.) Second, with 49 percent of urban households paying school fees, urban students are more likely to pay school fees. Only 21 percent of rural households are currently paying school fees. (See Figure 31.) Urban household are also more likely to pay for school books and uniforms: 77 percent, compared to 54 percent of rural households. (See Figure 32.) The effect of living in an urban area on paying school fees is still significant when controlling for the grade that the student is in, which is important because urban students are more likely to attend secondary school.[58]

[58] Our data shows that there are no variations in results when looking at gender.

Grade	Percent of households paying school fees
Standard 1	19
Standard 2	18
Standard 3	22
Standard 4	20
Standard 5	22
Standard 6	20
Standard 7	23
Standard 8	29
Form 1	81
Form 2	85
Form 3	80
Form 4	78

Table 7: Percent of households paying school fees, by grade level.

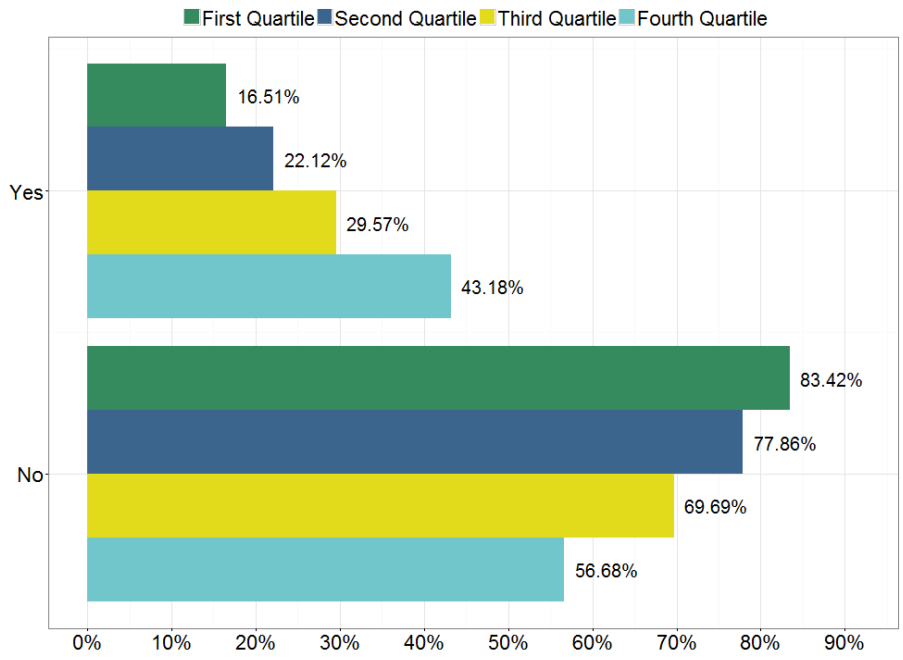


Figure 29: Paying school fees, by economic conditions.

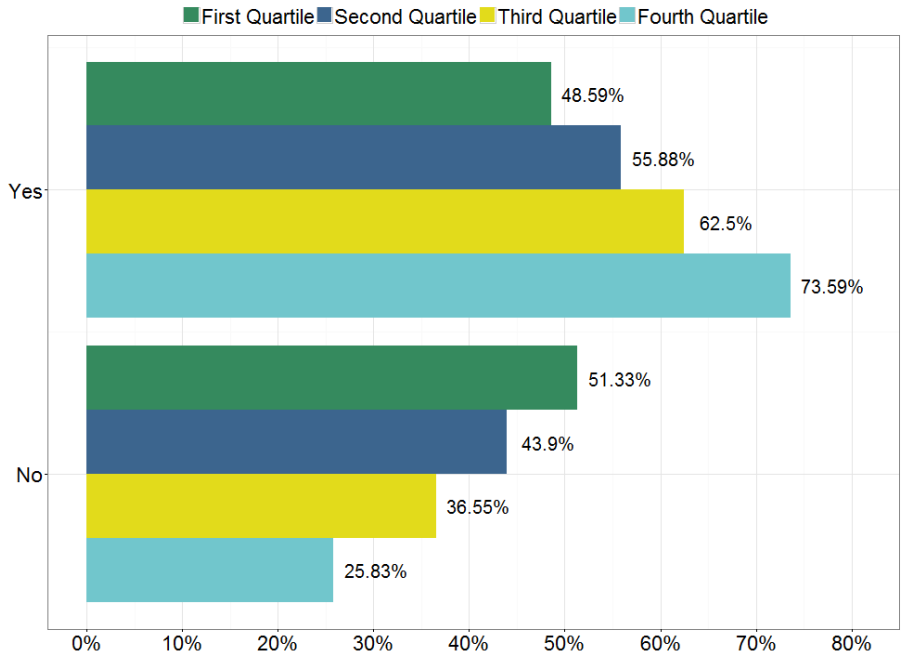


Figure 30: Paying for books and uniforms, by economic conditions.

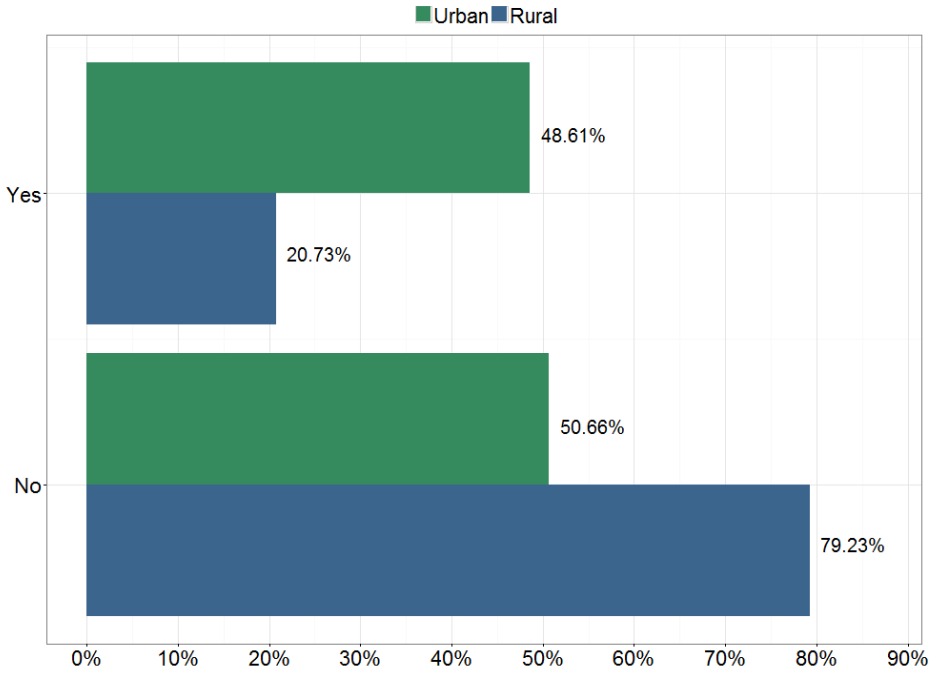


Figure 31: Paying school fees, by urban/rural residence.

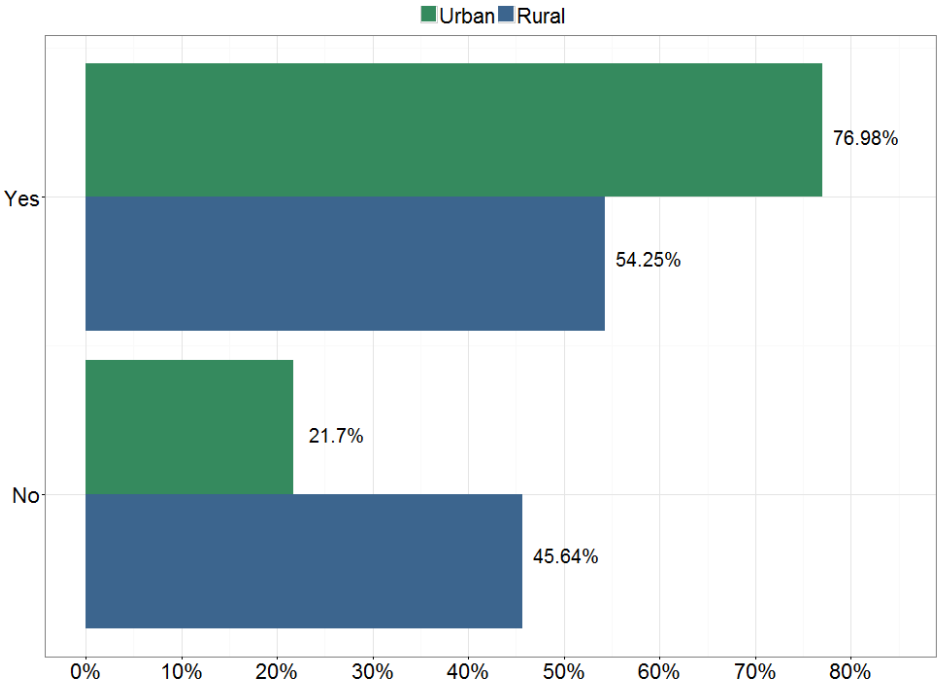


Figure 32: Paying for books and uniforms, by urban/rural residence.

16. Conclusion

This report presents a variety of indicators related to education. The LGPI allows us to dig a bit deeper into various educational challenges, especially those related to problem resolution and school quality at the local level. This report has found that Malawi does well in terms of primary-education enrollment, but our estimates are higher than what others report, so this conclusion should be taken with caution. Importantly, dropouts should be a key concern for Malawi's government: an alarmingly low percentage of the population completes primary education, and an even lower percentage complete secondary education. Further, the education quality one is able to access is highly contingent on location: some districts and villages have very-high-quality education, while others do not. Equalizing access to quality education is key for Malawi's education system moving forward.

This report has also uncovered a number of clear action items for the Malawian government. First, one key contributing factor for students dropping out of school in Malawi is the inability to pay for items such as uniforms, books, and other supplies. An easy solution would be to provide additional funding or subsidies for such items. Second, younger students are more likely to be absent from school than older ones, and the most common reason is illness; therefore, more focus needs to be given to improving the health of children at the earliest stages of school. Third, classroom sizes are far too large to facilitate effective learning; class-size reduction should be a top priority. Fourth, and finally, children are constrained in their ability to access high-quality education simply because of where they live. It would be advisable to provide a way for children to have more choice regarding where they attend school. More importantly, it is of vital importance that school quality is increased and equalized across urban and rural settings and districts.

Malawi exhibits great levels of primary-education enrollment and thus provides an important foundation on which to build. While Malawi has successfully increased enrollment, it is important that it now build on this strength by increasing the quality of education and access to secondary education. Further, the general lack of a gender gap in educational indicators is a surprising and very positive finding regarding education in Malawi.

Appendix

Table numbers correspond to figure numbers.

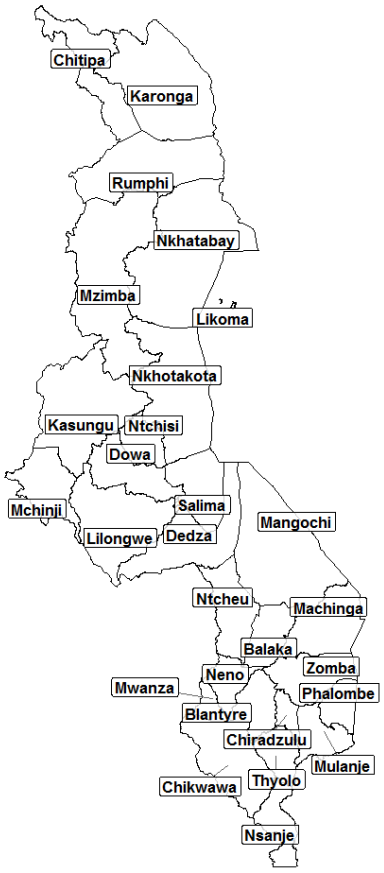


Figure 1: District names.

Figure 2: Educational attainment and age.

	<25	25-34	35-44	>45	Total	N
No formal schooling	3.55	7.57	13.86	29.73	13.61	1078
Some primary schooling	53.03	53.42	55.71	54.05	53.92	4052
Primary school completed	19.35	14.55	13.73	9.95	14.3	1353
Intermediate to postgraduate	24.02	24.46	16.68	6.25	18.15	1167

Don't know/refuse to answer	0.05	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	9

Survey questions:

Age by groups (1) <25; (2) 25-34; (3) 35-44; (4) 44>

Figure 3: Education attainment and gender

	No formal schooling	Some primary schooling	Primary school completed	Intermediate to postgraduate	Don't know/ refuse to answer	Total	N
Male	8.34	50.05	17.17	24.42	0.02	100	2793
Female	18.53	57.56	11.62	12.28	0.02	100	4851

Survey questions:

q37. Gender (1) male; (2) female

Education categorical (1) No formal schooling, (2) Some primary schooling, (3) Primary school completed, (4) Intermediate to Postgraduate, (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 4: Average level of education, by district

	No formal schooling	Some primary schooling	Primary school completed	Intermediate to postgraduate	Don't know/refuse to answer	Total	N
Chitipa	8.18	34.19	22.72	34.91	0	100	349
Nkhata Bay	7.52	53.89	24.66	13.93	0	100	344
Rumphi	3.56	40.55	18.67	37.23	0	100	352
Mzimba	3.07	36.83	22.38	37.69	0.03	100	1392
Kasungu	6.88	73.2	13.16	6.76	0	100	326
Lilongwe	3.29	38.04	18.18	40.47	0.02	100	700
Dedza	27.7	60.66	6.28	5.36	0.01	100	705
Ntcheu	12.97	71.41	10.36	5.26	0	100	352
Mangochi	42.36	50.42	4.72	2.49	0	100	340

Zomba	12.82	69.2	13.87	4.11	0	100	353
Blantyre	9.75	55.62	16.1	18.49	0.04	100	693
Mulanje	18.79	73.7	6.02	1.49	0	100	352
Chikwawa	20.06	54.19	15.9	9.84	0	100	697
Nsanje	22.92	54.67	8.91	13.5	0	100	352
Balaka	14.64	64.13	15.57	5.52	0.13	100	352

Survey questions: Education categorical (1) No formal schooling, (2) Some primary schooling, (3) Primary school completed, (4) Intermediate to Postgraduate, (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 5: Education Quality Index

District	**Mean**	**Std.E**	**CI1**	**CI2**
Chitipa	0.3344716	0.0253147	0.2814872	0.3874559
Nkhata Bay	0.7407267	0.0564792	0.6225144	0.8589391
Rumphi	0.4501649	0.0665466	0.3108813	0.5894485
Mzimba	-0.2313758	0.1868071	-0.6223676	0.159616
Kasungu	0.1998663	0.0746472	0.0436279	0.3561048
Lilongwe	0.1628165	0.1921961	-0.2394547	0.5650876
Dedza	-0.0024617	0.028556	-0.0622302	0.0573068
Ntcheu	-0.0907531	0.0485666	-0.1924042	0.0108979
Mangochi	-0.148381	0.0293837	-0.2098818	-0.0868802
Zomba	0.2738806	0.0310463	0.2089	0.3388612
Blantyre	-0.4982376	0.3106529	-1.148442	0.1519664
Mulanje	-0.3303588	0.0547345	-0.4449193	-0.2157982

Chikwawa	-0.0256684	0.0555129	-0.1418583	0.0905215
Nsanje	0.2454977	0.0310098	0.1805934	0.310402
Balaka	-0.1352759	0.04281	-0.2248782	-0.0456736

Figure 6: Primary and secondary enrollment

Primary enrollment:

District	**Mean**	**Std.E**	**CI1**	**CI2**
Chitipa	0.9556619	0.0166007	0.9209162	0.9904076
Nkhata Bay	0.9948955	0.001465	0.9918291	0.9979618
Rumphi	0.9760813	0.0051945	0.9652091	0.9869534
Mzimba	0.9886586	0.0038453	0.9806102	0.996707
Kasungu	0.976012	0.0056725	0.9641393	0.9878848
Lilongwe	0.979192	0.0080439	0.9623559	0.9960282
Dedza	0.957385	0.0101551	0.9361302	0.9786398
Ntcheu	0.9353487	0.0087325	0.9170715	0.953626
Mangochi	0.9262729	0.0037553	0.918413	0.9341329
Zomba	0.9923384	0.0018846	0.9883939	0.9962828
Blantyre	0.9747524	0.0058942	0.9624157	0.9870891
Mulanje	0.9652618	0.0042597	0.9563461	0.9741774
Chikwawa	0.9434882	0.011814	0.9187613	0.9682151
Nsanje	0.966603	0.0042915	0.9576209	0.9755852
Balaka	0.9791773	0.0031353	0.9726151	0.9857396

Figure 7: Primary and secondary enrollment

Secondary enrollment:

District	Mean	Std.E	CI1	CI2
Chitipa	0.761634	0.0766543	0.6011946	0.9220734
Nkhata Bay	0.9489461	0.016034	0.9153866	0.9825056
Rumphi	0.8833898	0.0298429	0.8209279	0.9458516
Mzimba	0.9877096	0.0037342	0.9798939	0.9955253
Kasungu	0.9914093	0.0048124	0.9813369	1.001482
Lilongwe	0.932703	0.0415232	0.8457939	1.019612
Dedza	1	1	1	1
Ntcheu	0.9571533	0.0175315	0.9204594	0.9938472
Mangochi	0.9040203	0.0520262	0.7951283	1.012912
Zomba	0.7085656	0.0658293	0.5707832	0.846348
Blantyre	0.9821984	0.0070781	0.9673838	0.997013
Mulanje	0.9897061	0.0040822	0.9811621	0.9982502
Chikwawa	0.9860323	0.0135212	0.9577321	1.014333
Nsanje	0.7711778	0.084451	0.5944198	0.9479357
Balaka	0.9060704	0.0333695	0.8362273	0.9759136

Figure 8: Reasons children were absent from school

	No	Yes	Don't know/ refuse to answer	Respondents
Child doesn't like school	90.30	7.36	2.35	1237
It was hard to get to school given weather, distance, etc.	96.19	1.46	2.35	1237
Need to stay at home to help with household chores	96.05	1.60	2.35	1237
Other (specify)	65.87	31.78	2.35	1237
Child had problems with other students at school	97.55	0.11	2.35	1237
Child had problems with the teacher or principal at school	96.89	0.76	2.35	1237
Child was sick	43.59	54.06	2.35	1237
Child was expelled or suspended	96.73	0.92	2.35	1237
Child had to work on the family farm	96.90	0.75	2.35	1237
Child had to work (other than on family farm)	96.97	0.68	2.35	1237

Survey questions:

I_1q357. What are the main reasons [child] missed school last week? (1) The child had to work on the family farm; (2) The child had to work (other than on family farm); (3) It was hard to get to school given weather, distance, etc.; (4) Need to stay at home to help with household chores; (5) The child had problems with the teacher or principal at school; (6) The child had problems with other students at school; (7) The child was sick; (8) The child doesn't like school; (9) The child was expelled or suspended; (10) Other (specify.

Figure 9: Reasons children were absent, by economic background

	First Quartile	Second Quartile	Third Quartile	Fourth Quartile	Total	N
Child doesn't like school	5.94	5.61	7.05	11.51	7.33	105
Hard to get to school (weather, distance, etc.)	1.41	3.06	0.47	0.7	1.46	17
Need to stay at home to help with household chores	2.15	1.4	1.6	1.04	1.61	23
Problems with the teacher or principal	0.6	1.77	0.68	0	0.77	9
Sick	57.03	53.72	51.37	52.45	54.05	640
Expelled or suspended	2.24	0.07	0.81	0	0.92	8
Had to work on the family farm	1.1	0	1.1	0.74	0.75	10
Problems with other students	0	0	0.52	0	0.11	2
Had to work other than on family farm	1.52	0.64	0.14	0	0.68	6
Other	28.6	32.8	38.96	28.98	31.82	420

Survey questions:

q357. What are the main reasons [child] missed school last week? (1) The child had to work on the family farm; (2) The child had to work (other than on family farm); (3) It was hard to get to school given weather, distance, etc.; (4) Needed to stay at home to help with household chores; (5) The child had problems with the teacher or principal at school; (6) The child had problems with other students at school; (7) The child was sick; (8) The child doesn't like school; (9) The child was expelled or suspended; (10) Other (specify); (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 10: Reasons why children dropped out of school

	Percentage (weighted)	Respondents
Child refused to go	23.53	131
Cannot afford to send him/her	22.89	96
Needs to help with household chores	15.53	80
Was not given a place in secondary school	7.77	17
Chronically sick or disabled	6.40	22
Needs to work	5.44	17
Other	18.44	86
Total	100.00	449

Survey questions:

I_1q304. Why is [child] not currently enrolled in school? (1) Needs to work; (2) Needs to help with household chores; (3) Cannot afford to send him/her; (4) Chronically sick or disabled; (5) Was not given a place in secondary school; (6) Other; (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 11: Reasons for dropping out of school, by age group

	<10	10–13	14–17	>17	Total	N
Child refused to go	23.38	29.83	27.54	12.36	25.21	133
Chronically sick or disabled	13.46	4.97	4.31	4.08	6.57	22
Cannot afford to send him/her	27.59	25.14	21.99	18.12	23.39	97
Needs to help with household chores	17.27	15.52	15.52	6.96	14.97	78
Needs to work	0.7	0.95	7.34	19.39	6.09	16
Was not given a place in secondary school	6.14	12.36	8.48	0	7.59	15
Other	11.71	18.98	15.71	43.82	18.46	84

Survey questions:

q304. Why is [child] not currently enrolled in school? (1) Needs to work; (2) Needs to help with household chores; (3) Cannot afford to send him/her; (4) Chronically sick or disabled; (5) Was not given a place in secondary school; (6) Other; (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 12: Reasons for dropping out of school by gender

	Male	Female	Total	N
Child refused to go	31.63	15.46	24.9	139
Chronically sick or disabled	8.91	2.87	6.4	22
Cannot afford to send him/her	21.8	24.69	23	98
Needs to help with household chores	11.11	21.74	15.53	80
Needs to work	4.56	7.6	5.82	18
Was not given a place in secondary school	8.6	7.56	8.17	18
Other	14.44	24.06	18.44	86

Survey questions:

q304. Why is [child] not currently enrolled in school? (1) Needs to work; (2) Needs to help with household chores; (3) Cannot afford to send him/her; (4) Chronically sick or disabled; (5) Was not given a place in secondary school; (6) Other; (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 13: Reasons for dropping out of school by economic conditions

	First quartile	Second quartile	Third quartile	Fourth quartile	Total	N
Child refused to go	23.89	26.14	26.07	24.35	24.9	139
Chronically sick or disabled	3.36	2.2	24.96	4.27	6.4	22
Cannot afford to send him/her	27.12	10.32	17.84	36.87	23	98
Needs to help with household chores	19.33	18.5	6.64	9.84	15.53	80
Needs to work	7.62	7.8	0	3.59	5.82	18
Was not given a place in secondary school	5.5	16.66	7.76	1.85	8.17	18
Other	16.69	19.75	16.72	21.85	18.44	86

Survey questions:

q304. Why is [child] not currently enrolled in school? (1) Needs to work; (2) Needs to help with household chores; (3) Cannot afford to send him/her; (4) Chronically sick or disabled; (5) Was not given a place in secondary school; (6) Other; (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 14: Reasons for dropping out of school by urban/rural residence

	Urban	Rural	Total	N
Child refused to go	9.67	28.64	24.9	139
Chronically sick or disabled	15.73	4.11	6.4	22
Cannot afford to send him/her	13.72	25.28	23	98
Needs to help with household chores	15.93	15.44	15.53	80
Needs to work	1.88	6.79	5.82	18
Was not given a place in secondary school	19.56	5.37	8.17	18
Other	25.55	16.7	18.44	86

Survey questions:

q304. Why is [child] not currently enrolled in school? (1) Needs to work; (2) Needs to help with household chores; (3) Cannot afford to send him/her; (4) Chronically sick or disabled; (5) Was not given a place in secondary school; (6) Other; (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 15: Types of problems

	No	Yes	Don't know/ refuse to answer	Respondents
Absenteeism	91.85	8.00	0.15	3483
Child refused to enroll in school	98.58	1.26	0.15	3483
Failing exams/not doing well in school	55.68	44.17	0.15	3483
The school is of low quality	98.53	1.31	0.15	3483
No clothes/uniform	79.79	20.06	0.15	3483
Paying exam fees	94.86	4.99	0.15	3483
Paying for school development (e.g., voluntary contribution for building toilets, etc.)	88.77	11.07	0.15	3483

Paying school fees	90.77	9.07	0.15	3483
Lacking school materials (e.g., notebooks, pens, etc.)	80.62	19.23	0.15	3483
Teacher abuse	99.08	0.77	0.15	3483
Sickness	89.35	10.50	0.15	3483
Other	88.29	11.56	0.15	3483

Survey questions:

I_1q318. Can you tell me what type of problem [child] has experienced? (1) No clothes/uniform; (2) Absenteeism; (3) Sickness; (4) Lacking school materials (e.g., notebooks, pens, etc.); (5) Failing exams/not doing well in school; (6) Paying school fees; (7) Paying exam fees; (8) Paying for school development (e.g., voluntary contribution for building toilets, etc.); (9) Child refused to enroll in school; (10) Teacher abuse; (11) The school is of low quality; (12) Other; (13) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 16: The problem of failing, by economic conditions

	First quartile	Second quartile	Third quartile	Fourth quartile	Total	N
No	63.45	57.32	53.1	46.74	55.69	1915
Yes	36.29	42.44	46.82	53.26	44.16	1554
Don't know/refuse to answer	0.26	0.24	0.08	0	0.15	4

Survey questions:

q318. Can you tell me what type of problem [child] has experienced? (1) No clothes/uniform; (2) Absenteeism; (3) Sickness; (4) Lacking school materials (e.g., notebooks, pens, etc.); (5) Failing exams/not doing well in school; (6) Paying school fees; (7) Paying exam fees; (8) Paying for school development (e.g., voluntary contribution for building toilets, etc.); (9) Child refused to enroll in school; (10) Teacher abuse; (11) The school is of low quality; (12) Other; (13) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 17: The problem of failing, by urban/rural residence

	Urban	Rural	Total	N
No	48.09	58.16	55.68	1919
Yes	51.91	41.64	44.17	1559
Don't know/refuse to answer	0	0.2	0.15	4

Survey questions:

q318. Can you tell me what type of problem [child] has experienced? (1) No clothes/uniform; (2) Absenteeism; (3) Sickness; (4) Lacking school materials (e.g., notebooks, pens, etc.); (5) Failing exams/not doing well in school; (6) Paying school fees; (7) Paying exam fees; (8) Paying for school development (e.g., voluntary contribution for building toilets, etc.); (9) Child refused to enroll in school; (10) Teacher abuse; (11) The school is of low quality; (12) Other; (13) Don't know/refused to answer.

Figure 18: To whom do you turn for help?

	No	Yes	Respondents
Community leaders	85.29	14.71	601
Friend, family member, or neighbor	77.97	22.03	601
Government official	90.98	9.02	601
Teacher/principal	59.81	40.19	601

Survey questions:

I_1q320. From whom did you seek help in order to help [child]? (1) NGOs/CSOs; (2) Religious organizations; (3) A wealthy/influential family; (4) Teacher/principal; (5) Member of Parliament; (6) Local council member; (7) Village head; (8) Group village headman; (9) Business person or organization; (10) Friend, family member, or neighbor; (11) Ministry of Education; (12) State welfare office; (13) Traditional authority; (14) Went to court; (15) Traditional healer; (16) Doctor; (17) Police; (18) Other government official; (19) Other.

Figure 19: To whom did you turn for help, by age

	<10	10–13	14–17	>17	Total	N
Community leaders	10.46	9.81	16.51	23.43	13.78	92
Friend, family member, or neighbor	14.49	19.61	31.24	29.28	22.56	135
Government official	11.81	2.66	7.72	9.04	7.56	37
Teacher/principal	42.01	53.89	37.94	16.14	40.63	267

Survey questions: q320. From whom did you seek help for [child]? (1) NGOs/CSOs; (2) Religious organizations; (3) A wealthy/influential family; (4) Teacher/principal; (5) Member of Parliament; (6) Local council member; (7) Village head; (8) Group village headman; (9) Business person or organization; (10) Friend, family member, or neighbor; (11) Ministry of Education; (12) State welfare office; (13) Traditional authority; (14) Went to court; (15) Traditional healer; (16) Doctor; (17) Police; (18) Other government official; (19) Other.

Figure 20: To whom did you turn for help, by economic conditions

	First quartile	Second quartile	Third quartile	Fourth quartile	Total	N
Community leaders	23.5	10.62	8.87	15.48	14.71	97
Friend, family member, or neighbor	20.12	37.3	15.49	13.76	22.02	134
Government official	2.36	5.73	19.44	9.19	9.03	39
Teacher/principal	37.3	29.47	38.83	57.71	40.19	274

Survey questions: q320. From whom did you seek help for [child]? (1) NGOs/CSOs; (2) Religious organizations; (3) A wealthy/influential family; (4) Teacher/principal; (5) Member of Parliament; (6) Local council member; (7) Village head; (8) Group village headman; (9) Business person or organization; (10) Friend, family member, or neighbor; (11) Ministry of Education; (12) State welfare office; (13) Traditional authority; (14) Went to court; (15) Traditional healer; (16) Doctor; (17) Police; (18) Other government official; (19) Other

Figure 21: To whom did you turn for help, by urban/rural residence

	Urban	Rural	Total	N
Community leaders	6.39	16.75	14.71	97
Friend, family member, or neighbor	31.77	19.64	22.03	135
Government official	1.04	10.99	9.02	39
Teacher/principal	47.89	38.29	40.19	274

Survey questions: q320. From whom did you seek help for [child]? (1) NGOs/CSOs; (2) Religious organizations; (3) A wealthy/influential family; (4) Teacher/principal; (5) Member of Parliament; (6) Local council member; (7) Village head; (8) Group village headman; (9) Business person or organization; (10) Friend, family member, or neighbor; (11) Ministry of Education; (12) State welfare office; (13) Traditional authority; (14) Went to court; (15) Traditional healer; (16) Doctor; (17) Police; (18) Other government official; (19) Other.

Figure 22: Sources of inequality and differential treatment

	No	Yes	Don't know/refuse	Respondents
Whether they are wealthy or poor?	86.46	7.52	6.02	6045
From certain ethnic groups or tribes?	90.77	3.39	5.83	6045

Male or female	91.37	2.92	5.71	6045
Fast or slow learners	87.78	5.82	6.40	6045
Children of important people in this village/ward	88.46	5.78	5.76	6045
Children of teachers	84.40	9.45	6.15	6045

Survey questions: I_1q364_1. Whether they are wealthy or poor?; I_1q364_2. From certain ethnic groups or tribes?; I_1q364_3. Male or female; I_1q364_4. Fast or slow learners; I_1q364_5. Children of important people in this village/ward; I_1q364_6. Children of teachers (0) No; (1) Yes; (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 23: Type of inequality, by economic conditions

	First quartile	Second quartile	Third quartile	Fourth quartile	Total	N
Wealthy or poor	9.33	8.42	7.95	4.84	7.52	459
From certain ethnic groups or tribes	3.38	4.36	3.88	2.32	3.39	201
Gender	4.12	3.51	2.52	1.68	2.92	202
Fast or slow learners	5.21	6.82	5.64	5.79	5.82	336
Children of important people in This village/ward	5.9	4.93	7.05	5.38	5.78	332
Children of teachers	9	10.42	9.69	8.97	9.45	556

Figure 24: Paying school fees by economic conditions

	First quartile	Second quartile	Third quartile	Fourth quartile	Total	N
No	83.42	77.86	69.69	56.68	71.69	6438
Yes	16.51	22.12	29.57	43.18	28.08	2279
Don't know/refuse to answer	0.07	0.02	0.74	0.14	0.22	10

Survey questions: q352. Did anyone in this household pay school fees for [child]'s education last school year? (0) No; (1) Yes; (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 25: Paying for books and uniforms, by economic conditions

	First quartile	Second quartile	Third quartile	Fourth quartile	Total	N
No	51.33	43.9	36.55	25.83	39.33	3380
Yes	48.59	55.88	62.5	73.59	60.24	5332
Don't know/refuse to answer	0.07	0.22	0.94	0.58	0.43	15

Survey questions: q353. Did anyone in this household pay for books and school uniforms (last school year)? (0) No; (1) Yes; (98) Don't Know/Refuse to Answer.

Figure 26: Paying school fees, by urban/rural residence

	Urban	Rural	Total	N
No	50.66	79.23	71.68	6432
Yes	48.61	20.73	28.09	2283
Don't Know/refuse to answer	0.72	0.04	0.22	10

Survey questions: q352. Did anyone in this household pay school fees for [child's]'s education last school year? (0) No; (1) Yes; (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.

Figure 27: Paying for books and uniforms, by urban/rural residence

	Urban	Rural	Total	N
No	21.7	45.64	39.31	3373
Yes	76.98	54.25	60.25	5337
Don't know/refuse to answer	1.32	0.11	0.43	15

Survey questions: q353. Did anyone in this household pay for books and school uniforms during [the previous school year]? (0) No; (1) Yes; (98) Don't know/refuse to answer.