



NATIONAL STUDY ON THE MAGNITUDE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN ETHIOPIA

2020 REPORT SYNTHESIS



Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

The Ethiopian education system has faced many challenges in achieving access to quality education for all. As a result of efforts made over the last two and a half decades, remarkable improvements have been made. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought further challenges, as school closures have increased the number of out-of-school children (OOSC). Unless extra efforts are made, the country may not achieve its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), to which Ethiopia is a signatory. It is a critical time to meet the needs of OOSC throughout the country, through the design of evidence-based education modalities.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) of Ethiopia, with financial support from the Luminos Fund, has conducted a study on the status of OOSC. The study has been conducted in two phases. The first phase provides a quantitative analysis of the evidence on OOSC before the COVID-19 pandemic. The second phase analyzes qualitative evidence on the effect of COVID-19 on OOSC throughout the country. Phase 1's quantitative analysis is based on the Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) model methodological framework, developed under the Global Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI)¹.

Phase 1 of the quantitative study has been further broken into two-parts: Part 1, which was supported financially by the Luminos Fund, focuses on the first three dimensions of exclusion according to the 5DE framework, including analysis of qualitative evidence on the effect of COVID-19 on OOSC. Part 2, which was supported by UNICEF, focuses on the last two dimensions of exclusion, including a costed analysis on the necessary resources to bring all OOSC in Ethiopia back to school. **This 2020 Report Synthesis focuses on Part 1 of Phase 1, exploring the first three dimensions of exclusion within Ethiopia;** UNICEF will report on the last two dimensions of exclusion within Ethiopia.

THE STATUS OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN ETHIOPIA: A STUDY

Phase 1:

Quantitative analysis on OOSC before the COVID-19 pandemic

Phase 2:

Qualitative analysis on OOSC during the COVID-19 pandemic

Key aims:

- Using the Five Dimensions of Exclusion framework, outline the number and profiles of OOSC in Ethiopia before the COVID-19 pandemic and suggested strategies to achieve Education For All and SDG 4.
- Outline the number and profiles of OOSC in Ethiopia during the COVID-19 pandemic, and compare to the situation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to estimate the number of OOSC due to the pandemic.
- Identify COVID-19 related barriers to education.
- Recommend strategies to strengthen institutional capacity and resilience, and provide equitable access to equal education for all during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Focus of this 2020 Report Synthesis

Part 1

Supported by the Luminos Fund



Dimension One: Children of pre-primary-school age (4-6 years old) who do not attend institution-based pre-primary education ('O' class or kindergarten).



Dimension Two: Children of primary-school age (7-14 years old) who do not attend formal primary or lower-secondary school, or Alternative Basic Education Centers (ABECs).



Dimension Three: Children of lower-secondary-school age (15-16 years old) who do not attend formal secondary school.

Part 2

Supported by UNICEF



Dimension Four: Children who are in primary school but are at risk of leaving school.






Dimension Five: Children who are in lower-secondary school but are at risk of leaving school.

¹ The OOSCI was launched by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 2015 with the aim of reducing the number of OOSC globally. The OOSC Operational Manual 2015 was developed to support nations to achieve this.

This study uses MoE EMIS School Administrative Data 2019/20; UNDP population projection data 2019/20; Central Statistics Agency population projection data 2019/20, and Ethiopia's Education Annual Abstract 2019/20. In order to calculate the number of OOSC, the study uses UNESCO/UIS advised formulae and Adjusted Net Enrollment Rate (ANER) calculations.

This study found a significant number of OOSC in every age group. The highest numbers of OOSC can be found in Oromia, Amhara, SNNPR, and Tigray regions. At each level, the highest percentages of OOSC can be found in Afar and Somali regions – these contain a smaller number of OOSC than the aforementioned regions, due to smaller populations in Afar and Somali.

Table 1: Key indicators on at-risk and out-of-school children in Ethiopia

Grade and age	Number of children	Number of OOSC or at-risk children	Percentage of OOSC or at-risk children	Net Enrollment Rate (NER)
Out-of-school children				
 Dimension One: Pre-primary school (4-6 years old)	9,519,629	6,042,868	63%	36%
 Dimension Two: Primary school (7-14 years old)	22,815,802	4,542,627	20%	82%
 Dimension Three: Lower-secondary school (15-16 years old)	5,299,013	2,741,611	52%	48%

While remarkable progress has been made in Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) and Net Enrollment Rate (NER) over the last two decades, the situation of OOSC is still a significant challenge to the education system and the government's commitment to achieving Education for All (EFA) and SDG 4. This report recommends developing contextualized evidence-based educational modalities at all levels, in addition to traditional education delivery modalities, that are adapted to the varying needs of OOSC throughout the country.

Education in Ethiopia

The formal education system in Ethiopia includes pre-primary, primary, and secondary education. Primary education, for children aged approximately 7-14 years old, is comprised of two cycles: Grades 1-4 in lower primary, and Grades 5-8 in upper primary. Secondary education, for children aged approximately 15-18, is similarly comprised of two cycles: Grades 9-10 in lower secondary, and Grades 11-12 in upper secondary (this being what exists, the Ethiopian MoE is revising the primary and secondary education structure). Pre-primary education, for children aged 4-6, is provided through three modalities. A three-year kindergarten program is delivered by NGOs, communities, private institutions, and faith-based organizations, primarily in urban areas. A one-year 'O' class is offered in many government primary schools for 6-year-old children to attend before starting formal schooling. A one-year non-institutional modality called 'Child to Child' is also available, whereby older children play with younger children, under the supervision of qualified teachers, supporting children to learn basic skills. 2019/20 EMIS data shows that of those attending institutional pre-primary education, 60% attend 'O' class and 40% attend kindergarten. Generally, children who attend the three-year kindergarten program are better prepared for formal school than those who attend the one-year reception program.

The Ministry of Education has achieved remarkable progress in recent years, due to the government's increased allocation to the sector. **Enrollment has increased at all levels of schooling, expanding from 10 million learners a decade ago to more than 26 million learners in 40,000 primary and secondary schools, and a narrowing of the gender divide (UNICEF, 2019).** In response, and to meet commitments to the Global Education For All (EFA) Declaration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, the Government of Ethiopia has introduced consecutive Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP-1 to ESDP-VI) and interventions such as the General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQUIP) and the School Improvement Program (SIP). Education management is decentralized; duties and responsibilities are shared between federal, regional, and district governments. At the federal level, the MoE is responsible for policy and leadership, with regional and district governments implementing policies and initiatives.

Despite such progress, the education sector still faces several challenges including low access, poor quality, inequity, and inefficient systems. The ESDP-V (2016-2020) aimed to expand equitable access to quality education (MoE, 2020). While some progress was made, many indicators and targets were not achieved. For example, in 2019/20, the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for pre-primary education was 45%, falling short of the 80% target². The GER was lower in the two predominantly pastoralist areas, Afar (18%) and the Somali region (7%), suggesting that interventions were not sufficiently adapted to the needs of the pastoralist communities³. Nationally, there are still significant numbers of OOSC, low primary to secondary transition, a large over-age school population, high dropout rates at all primary levels, a lack of sufficient secondary schools, and regional disparities (UNICEF, 2019). Just over half of all students who enter Grade 1 complete a full primary education cycle (MoE, 2019/20).

Building on these successes, and to reduce existing inequalities, the government has introduced the Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018-30) to transform the education and training system. It aims to achieve system aspirations, such as quality, relevance, and equity, and will create major changes in the structure of the education system, curriculum framework, and teacher training (MoE, 2018). This will be supported by the ESDP-VI (2020/21 – 2025/26), which aims to improve systematic efficiency and equitable access from pre-primary to secondary levels, enabling all children and youth to participate in quality and inclusive education (MoE, 2020). Mechanisms to identify out-of-school children will be locally adapted, and alternative primary school modalities will be provided.

The Research

Purpose

This study aims to provide current profiles of out-of-school children, to inform the MoE and partners' planning and interventions, to meet policy goals.

Methodological Framework

The methodological framework for this study is based on the Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) model, developed under the Global Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI). The 5DE model is the core model for analyzing the situation of OOSC and children at risk of dropping out, by compiling data on excluded children

² MoE EMIS data (2019/20) and CSA 2020 Population Projection

³ MoE EMIS data (2019/20)

from pre-primary to lower-secondary-school age, across multiple layers of disparity and education exposure (UNICEF & UIS, 2015). This study focuses on the first three dimensions of exclusion within Ethiopia:



Dimension One: Children of pre-primary-school age (4-6 years old) who do not attend institution-based pre-primary education ('O' class or kindergarten).



Dimension Two: Children of primary-school age (7-14 years old) who do not attend formal primary or lower-secondary school, or Alternative Basic Education Centers (ABECs).



Dimension Three: Children of lower-secondary-school age (15-16 years old) who do not attend formal secondary school.

A study conducted by UNICEF will focus on Dimensions Four and Five, complementing this study.

Data Sources

This study analyses data from four data sources:

- **EMIS School Administrative Data 2019/20** – the Government of Ethiopia's Education Management Information System collects comprehensive annual school administrative data on children, teachers, school infrastructure, and budgets. School-level data disaggregated by age, location, gender, and administrative location was obtained from the Ministry of Education.
- **Central Statistics Agency (CSA) Population Projection 2019/20** – the Government of Ethiopia data aggregated by age, administrative location, and region, used to calculate the regional disaggregated age-specific data for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) projections.
- **UNDP Population Projection 2019/20**
- **Education Annual Abstract 2019/20**

Further data sources were reviewed, including MoE National Annual Education Abstracts, reports, studies, strategy and policy documents, and studies on OOSC in various countries. An inventory was maintained recording quality assessment of data sources.

Data Analysis

The desk review and data analysis were carried out in November – December 2020. MoE focal points were consulted to validate each phase of the study. EMIS School Administrative Data 2019/20 were extracted using Microsoft Excel. CSA Population Projection 2019/20 and UNDP Population Projection 2019/20 data were downloaded with CSV. Geographical and regional data was supplied by the CSA, MoE EMIS, and SIP directorate. Data smoothing was used to determine the UNDP population projections for each region. Data cleaning was conducted to further validate the data. Key data tables outlined in the Global OOSCI Operational Manual (2015) were used to analyze the data. Tableau software was used for data analysis and visualization.

Adjusted Net Enrollment Rate (ANER) was used to calculate the number of OOSC in the three dimensions of exclusion. ANER enabled a comparison between population projection data and EMIS data. School-aged children identified in the population data that do not appear in the EMIS data were determined as being OOSC.

Limitations

The last census in Ethiopia was conducted in 2007. This study could not use the national population projection data (2019/20) issued by the CSA, as it is a projection based on decades-old data and does not take into account internal displacement, refugees, and rural-urban migration. The official CSA total population projection for 2019/20 is 98 million, which generated results that are not theoretically sound, such as a Net Enrollment Rate exceeding 100%, or there being a negative number of OOSC in several regions. This study used UNDP Population Projection 2019/20 data, which estimates the total population to be 114 million. This estimate is supported by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019) and the World Bank (2020). However, UNDP Population Projection 2019/20 data is not aggregated by region and age. To overcome this, the percentage proportion of national data of single age groups was extracted from CSA data and multiplied by UNDP Population Projections for regional and single age populations. The new region, Sidama, has not been included in this study as it did not feature in CSA and EMIS data. EMIS data sources showed signs of age heaping, as the age of children is largely dependent on parental judgment rather than the accurate age of the child, leading to overage and underage reporting. Furthermore, EMIS data on OOSC lacks disaggregation by ethnic groups, livelihood styles, rural/urban context, family status, wealth quintiles, and parent literacy levels. The situation of OOSC is not analyzed in terms of wealth quintiles due to the unavailability of recent Demographic and Health Survey data.

Out-of-School Children in Ethiopia

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ethiopia was among the top 10 countries with the highest proportion of OOSC (UNICEF, 2020). In 2012, there were over 4.8 million OOSC in Ethiopia, who had either never enrolled or had dropped out of primary (3,075,862) or lower-secondary (1,802,523) school (UNICEF, 2012). There were a further 2.2 million out-of-school children at the pre-primary level. Dropout rates vary by grade, sex, and region. Dropout rates are high in primary Grade 1, declining until Grades 5 and 8. The dropout rate is slightly higher for girls than for boys. The highest percentage of regional dropout is found in the Somali region (UNICEF, 2012). Recent years have seen some improvements, as EMIS data estimate that there were 2.6 million primary-aged OOSC in 2014/15. In 2018, UNICEF estimated that there were 3 million OOSC, primarily in pastoralist and semi-pastoralist communities (UNICEF, 2018).

The situation is likely to be negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent data shows that between March and October 2020, around 26 million children in Ethiopia were unable to attend school due to the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF, 2020). School closures are likely to exacerbate existing inequalities in access to quality education, widening the disparity between children in urban and rural localities and those with different levels of socioeconomic status (UNICEF, 2020).



Dimension 1: OOSC of pre-primary-school age

Pre-primary enrollment has been increasing each year, although high levels of out-of-school pre-primary-school-aged children remain a challenge (MoE, 2019). The ESDP-V (2015/16 – 2019/2020) aimed to increase the number of pre-school children who have access to pre-primary education in all regions, prioritizing the most disadvantaged groups. However, initiatives to scale up the one-year 'O' class to a three-year program were not implemented, and sufficient numbers of early childhood teachers were not trained.

Dimension 1 analyzes the situation of OOSC of pre-primary-school age. Following the 5DE framework, the percentage of pre-primary-school-aged children in education has been calculated by dividing the number of pre-primary-school-aged children in education by the number of children of pre-primary-school age (UNICEF & UIS, 2015). This section includes children aged 4–6, as institution-based pre-primary education is available to 4–6 year-olds through kindergarten and 'O' class. Children who attend other modalities such as 'Child to Child', faith-based, or

community pre-primary schools, are not included in this study as they are likely not included in EMIS administrative data. The enrollment rate of 4-6-year-olds and the number of OOSC of pre-primary-school age were calculated using UNDP Population Projection 2019/20 data and EMIS School Administrative Data 2019/20.

Table 2: 6-year-old OOSC and enrolled children, by region and sex

Region	Population of 6-Year-Olds	Attending Pre-Primary	% Attending Pre-Primary	Attending Primary	% Attending Primary	Not Attending (OOSC)	% Not Attending (OOSC)
Addis Ababa	81,023	55,880	69.0%	11,659	14.4%	13,484	16.6%
Afar	53,604	10,505	19.6%	1,862	3.5%	41,237	76.9%
Amhara	671,609	247,916	36.9%	851	0.1%	422,842	63.0%
Benishangul-Gumuz	35,378	14,179	40.1%	344	1.0%	20,855	58.9%
Dire Dawa	11,262	6,544	58.1%	851	7.6%	3,867	34.3%
Gambella	12,759	8,140	63.8%	907	7.1%	3,712	29.1%
Harari	6,500	4,633	71.3%	587	9.0%	1,280	19.7%
Oromia	1,233,187	380,964	30.9%	10,196	0.8%	842,027	68.3%
SNNPR	640,282	456,742	71.3%	10,510	1.6%	173,030	27.0%
Somali	208,335	20,276	9.7%	37,001	17.8%	151,058	72.5%
Tigray	156,331	94,500	60.4%	1,310	0.8%	60,521	38.7%
Total	3,110,270	1,300,279	41.8%	76,078	2.4%	1,733,913	55.7%

Sex							
Male	1,576,497	619,085	39.3%	34,994	2.2%	922,418	58.5%
Female	1,533,773	681,194	44.4%	41,084	2.7%	811,495	52.9%
Total	3,110,270	1,300,279	41.8%	76,078	2.4%	1,733,913	55.7%

Source: UNDP Population Projection 2020 data, EMIS database (2019/20)

As demonstrated in Table 2, 55.7% of 6-year-olds in Ethiopia are OOSC, or 1,733,913 children. This is significant as it negatively affects their school readiness, should they go on to enroll in primary school. Only 44.2% of 6-year-olds attend institution-based education. **For this age cohort, 58.5% of males are OOSC, while 52.9% of females are OOSC; 6-year-old boys are more likely to be out of school.**

There are significant regional disparities. Afar (76.9%) and Somali (72.5%) are the two regions with the highest proportion of 6-year-old OOSC and are the two main transhumant pastoralist areas of the country. These are followed by Oromia (68.3%), Amhara (63.0%), and Benishangul-Gumuz (58.9%). Addis Ababa (16.6%) has the lowest proportion of 6-year-old OOSC, followed by Harari (19.7%). This may be attributed to the availability of different pre-primary education modalities in these two urban areas. Gambella (29.1%) also has a relatively low proportion of 6-year-old OOSC, which may be attributed to the high numbers of immigrants and refugees in the region leading to increased school enrollment. However, as the CSA data does not include refugees and immigrants, it is likely that the denominator has been underestimated, resulting in an artificially high rate of enrollment and a low proportion of OOSC.

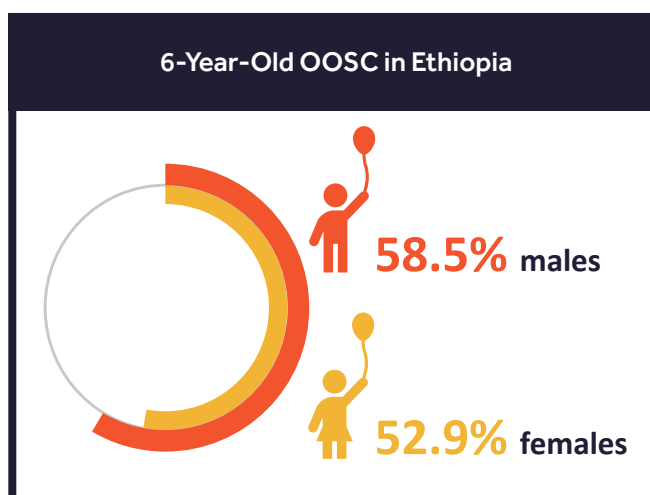


Table 3: Pre-primary-school-aged OOSC and enrolled children (4-6 years), by region and sex

Region	Population of 4-6-Year-Olds	Attending Pre-Primary	% Attending Pre-Primary	Attending Primary	% Attending Primary	Not Attending (OOSC)	% Not Attending (OOSC)
Addis Ababa	253,309	222,504	87.8%	11,659	4.6%	19,146	7.6%
Afar	163,762	24,407	14.9%	1,862	1.1%	137,493	84.0%
Amhara	2,007,046	701,423	34.9%	851	0.0%	1,304,772	65.0%
Benishangul-Gumuz	108,704	26,969	24.8%	344	0.3%	81,391	74.9%
Dire Dawa	34,726	15,319	44.1%	851	2.5%	18,556	53.4%
Gambella	39,189	21,071	53.8%	907	2.3%	17,211	43.9%
Harari	19,837	14,045	70.8%	587	3.0%	5,205	26.2%
Oromia	3,792,005	1,015,743	26.8%	10,196	0.3%	2,766,066	72.9%
SNNPR	1,976,939	1,188,034	60.1%	10,510	0.5%	778,395	39.4%
Somali	643,374	38,580	6.0%	37,001	5.8%	567,793	88.3%
Tigray	480,738	132,588	27.6%	1,310	0.3%	346,840	72.1%
Total	9,519,629	3,400,683	35.7%	76,078	0.8%	6,042,868	63.5%

Sex	Population of 4-6-Year-Olds	Attending Pre-Primary	% Attending Pre-Primary	Attending Primary	% Attending Primary	Not Attending (OOSC)	% Not Attending (OOSC)
Male	4,829,373	1,771,418	36.7%	41,084	0.9%	3,016,871	62.5%
Female	4,690,256	1,629,265	34.7%	34,994	0.7%	3,025,997	64.5%
Total	9,519,629	3,400,683	35.7%	76,078	0.8%	6,042,868	63.5%

Source: UNDP Population projection (2020), EMIS Database (2019/20)

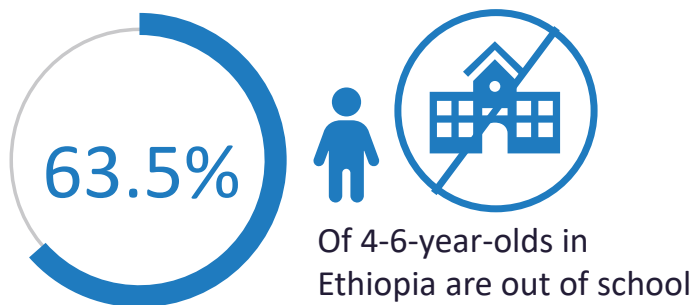
Using data from the UNDP Population projection (2020), 63.5% of 4-6-year-olds in Ethiopia are OOSC, or 6,024,868 children. The challenge posed by absorbing over 6 million children into the pre-primary education system is great, and has a negative effect on student learning outcomes and future employment opportunities.

This falls short of the ESDP-V's national target to reach 80% GER in pre-primary education by 2019/20. The two

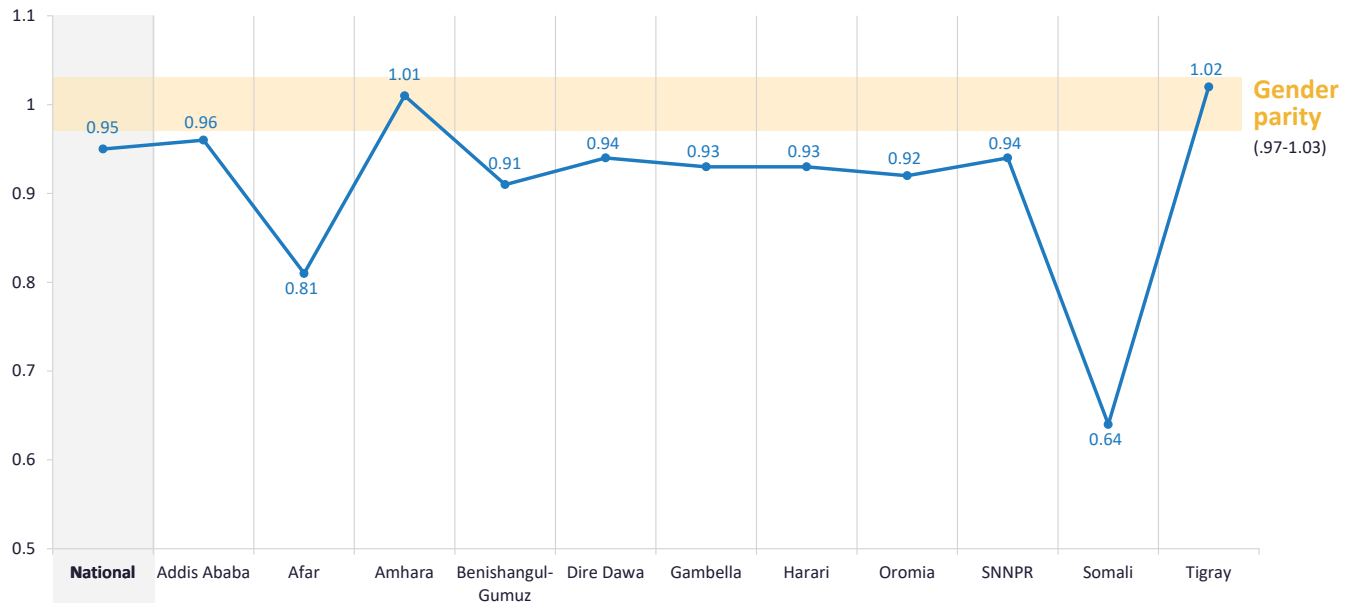
pastoralist regions, Somali (88.3%) and Afar (84.0%) are the two regions with the highest proportion of 4-6-year-old OOSC. These are followed by Benishangul-Gumuz (74.9%), Oromia (72.9%), Tigray (72.1%), and Dire Dawa (53.4%). In terms of raw data, Oromia (2,766,066), Amhara (1,304,772), and SNNPR (778,395) have the highest number of OOSC.

These differences can be attributed to the fact that Somali and Afar are much smaller regions and less populated than Oromia, Amhara, and

SNNPR, so while Somali and Afar may have a high proportion of OOSC, the highest actual number of OOSC can be found in Oromia, Amhara, and SNNPR. Addis Ababa (7.6%) has the lowest proportion of 4-6-year-old OOSC, followed by Harari (26.2%). This may be attributed to the availability of different pre-primary modalities in these two urban areas. In contrast to the data for the 6-year-old age cohort outlined above, in the 4-6-year-old age cohort, the proportion of females OOSC (64.5%) is higher than for males (62.5%).



Gender Parity Index: Pre-primary-school-aged children by region (2019/20)



Source: EMIS Database (2019/20)

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) refers to the ratio of the number of female students enrolled at the primary level of education to the number of male students, using GER (WHO, 2022). A GPI of 0.97-1.03 indicates gender parity. A GPI below 0.97 indicates that the number of males in school is higher than that of females. A GPI above 1.03 indicates that the number of females in school is higher than that of males (UNESCO IIEP, 2022). Ethiopia's national GPI of 0.95 indicates a disparity in favor of male 4-6-year-olds. There is a lack of uniformity across regions. According to the EMIS database (2019/20), Amhara and Tigray are the only regions to have achieved gender parity in the enrollment of 4-6-year-olds. In all other regions, the GPI shows that more female 4-6-year-olds are out of school than their male counterparts. Somali (0.64) and Afar (0.81), the two pastoralist regions, have the widest gender gap, with the largest proportion of 4-6-year-old female OOSC.



Dimension 2: OOSC of primary-school age

This section analyzes the situation of OOSC of primary-school age (7-14 years old). These children are included in Dimension 2 of the 5DE framework. The profiles of OOSC at this age are analyzed by sex and region, using the EMIS administrative data (2019/20). The following indicators are used: Gross Enrollment Rate (GER), dropout rates, and Adjusted Net Enrollment Rate (ANER). Net Enrollment Rate (NER) has been omitted as the available data generated a NER of over 100%, which is not theoretically sound. This is due to the national census data being outdated, leading to the comparison of an outdated population denominator with a current nominator (enrolled children).

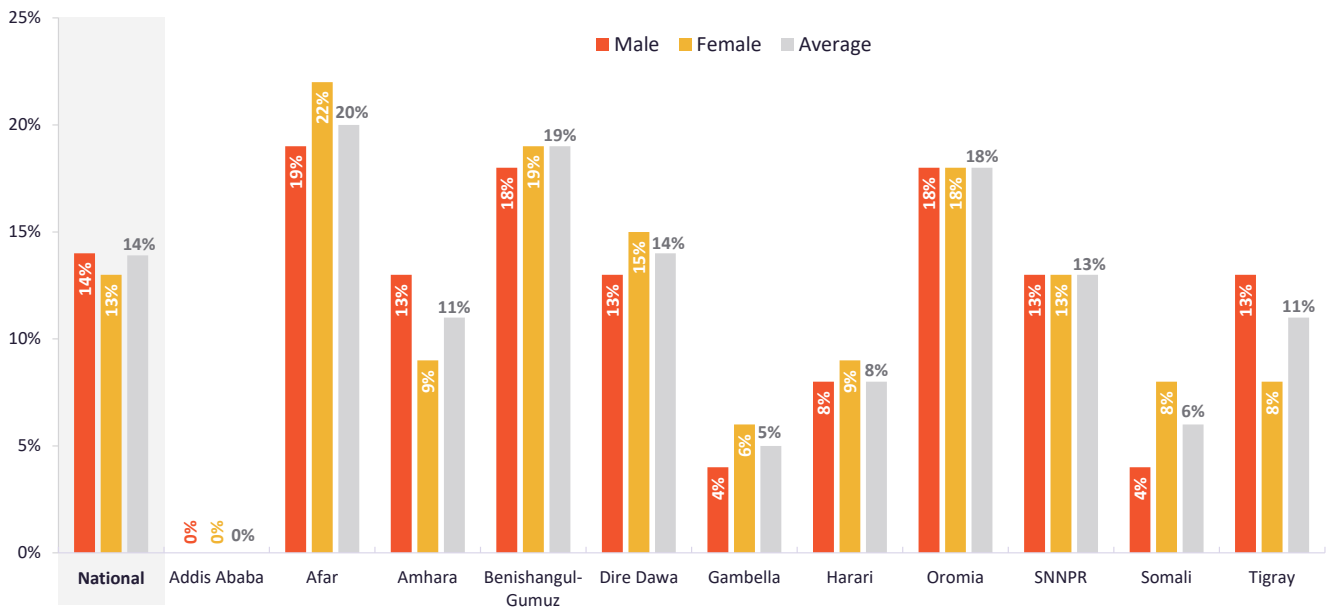
Primary Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) 2000/01 - 2019/20



Source: EMIS Database (2019/20)

Ethiopia's National GER has increased for both cycles of primary education over the last two decades. GER for the first cycle of primary education consistently increased until 2015/16; since then, it has been gradually declining. GER for the second cycle of primary education has relatively consistently increased since 2000. This highlights the issue of children repeating first cycle grades, or dropping out of school altogether, indicating low levels of transition from the first to second cycles of primary education.

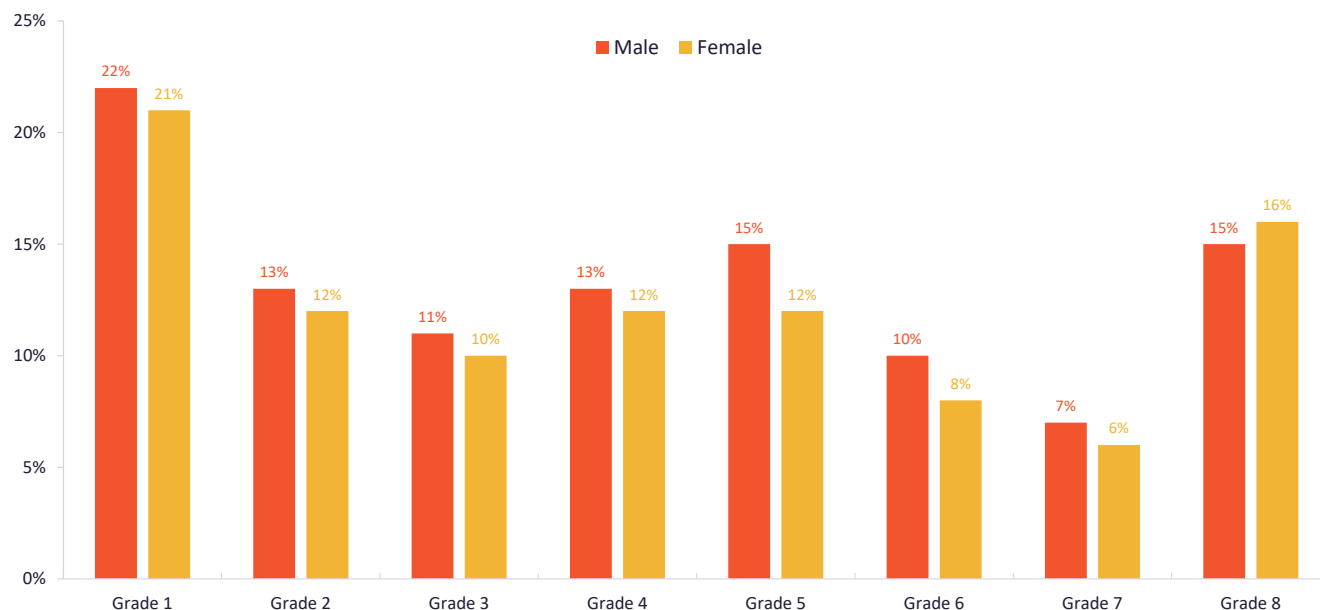
Dropout rates for grades 1-8 by region and sex (2019/20)



Source: EMIS Database (2019/20)

Afar (20%) has the highest total dropout rate, followed by Benishangul-Gumuz (19%) and Oromia (18%), which are all above the national average (14%). Addis Ababa has 0% dropout. In terms of sex, Afar has the highest percentage of female student dropouts from primary education.

National dropout rates by grade (2019/20)



Source: EMIS Database (2019/20)

Nationally, Grade 1 (22%) has the highest dropout rate, falling short of the EDSP-V target of 5% in 2019/20. This means that many children join Grade 1 and exit the education system within the year. This demonstrates low progress made since the ESDP-V baseline (2013/14), which found a 23% dropout rate for Grade 1 females, and 21% for males. The dropout rate is also high in Grades 5 and 8, suggesting low transition rates from the first to the second cycle of primary, and from primary to lower secondary, respectively. Likely causes of dropout have been identified as socio-economic and cultural barriers in both urban and rural settings, poor school infrastructure, poor preparation at the pre-primary level, and lack of school feeding in some areas (MoE 2019, EDT 2019).

Table 4: ANER of primary-school-aged children (7-14 years), by age and sex

Age	Population Total	Attending Primary	Attending Secondary	Not Attending (OOSC)	% Not Attending (OOSC)	% ANER
7	3,047,993	2,583,057	0	464,936	15.3%	84.7%
8	2,986,934	2,698,057	0	288,877	9.7%	90.3%
9	2,927,676	2,514,387	0	413,289	14.1%	85.9%
10	2,868,832	2,438,616	0	430,216	15.0%	85.0%
11	2,809,015	2,206,242	0	602,773	21.5%	78.5%
12	2,758,645	2,104,458	0	654,187	23.7%	76.3%
13	2,722,238	1,935,133	7,120	779,985	28.7%	71.3%
14	2,694,469	1,719,344	66,761	908,364	33.7%	66.3%
Total	22,815,802	18,199,294	73,881	4,542,627	19.9%	80.1%

Sex	Population Total	Attending Primary	Attending Secondary	Not Attending (OOSC)	% Not Attending (OOSC)	% ANER
Male	11,543,409	9,576,428	36,760	1,930,221	16.7%	83.3%
Female	11,272,393	8,622,866	37,121	2,612,406	23.2%	76.8%
Total	22,815,802	18,199,294	73,881	4,542,627	19.9%	80.1%

Source: Population Projection from UNDP, Enrollment Data from MoE Database (2019/20)

Adjusted Net Enrollment Rate (ANER) measures the number of pupils of primary-school age who are enrolled in either primary or secondary education, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. **There are over 4.5 million (19.9%) children of primary-school age (7-14-years-old) out of school in Ethiopia.** Among those, over 2.6 million (23.2%) are female and over 1.9 million (16.7%) are male. School exclusion is a significant problem for primary-school-aged children of both sexes, despite the increase in GER seen in recent years. The situation is worse for female children.



4.5 Million

Primary-school-aged children are out of school in Ethiopia

There are significant numbers of under-age children, 73,881, enrolled in lower-secondary schools. Children who start school earlier than the official age of entry often benefit less from educational activities. They may have lower levels of school readiness, resulting in poor academic performance and an increased risk of dropping out.

The proportion of OOSC increases steadily with age; older children are more likely to be out of school. This is consistent with research conducted by the University of Sussex (2018, p. 25), which found that "being overage increases the chances of dropout quite significantly (OR = 1.3) – for each additional increase in age, the chances of dropping out increases by about 30%". Identifying the causes of this goes beyond the scope of this study and warrants further research. One potential factor may be due to the provision of ABECs, which offer education until Grade 4. The fact that ABECs do not go beyond this level may be a contributing factor to the increase in OOSC aged 11 and older. The proportion of OOSC peaks at age 14 (33.7%), which corresponds to longitudinal data that reveal the likelihood of dropout increases with grade progression and age (University of Sussex, 2018).

Table 5: Primary-school-aged OOSC and enrolled children (7-14) by region and sex

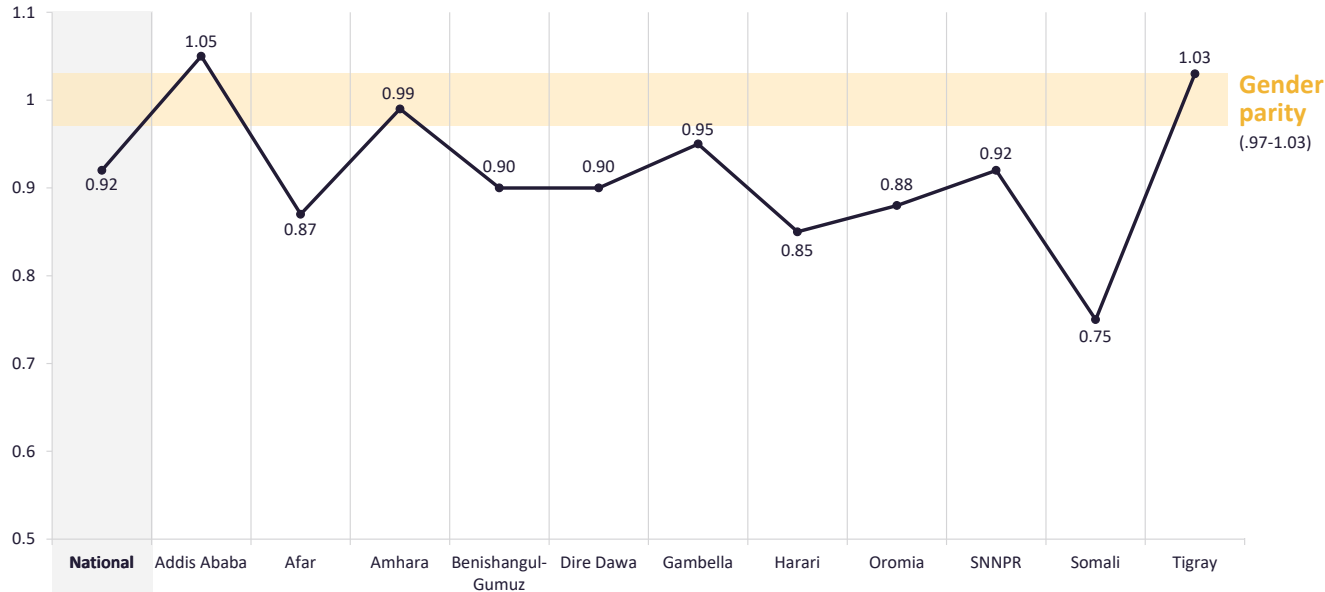
Region	Population	Attending Primary	Attending Secondary	% Attending Primary or Secondary	Not Attending (OOSC)	% Not Attending (OOSC)
Addis Ababa	520,730	469,270	11,926	92.4%	39,534	7.6%
Afar	392,029	130,832	806	33.6%	260,391	66.4%
Amhara	5,011,935	3,676,509	13,414	73.6%	1,322,012	26.4%
Benishangul-Gumuz	262,883	204,959	335	78.1%	57,589	21.9%
Dire Dawa	85,940	70,813	444	82.9%	14,683	17.1%
Gambella	95,890	76,514	417	80.2%	18,959	19.8%
Harari	50,165	47,461	129	94.9%	2,575	5.1%
Oromia	9,084,859	7,635,455	12,969	84.2%	1,436,435	15.8%
SNNPR	4,748,691	4,175,053	16,212	88.3%	557,426	11.7%
Somali	1,381,226	632,004	10,386	46.5%	738,836	53.5%
Tigray	1,181,454	1,080,424	6,843	92.0%	94,187	8.0%
Total	22,815,802	18,199,294	73,881	80.1%	4,542,627	19.9%

Sex						
Male	11,543,409	9,576,428	36,760	83.8%	1,930,221	16.7%
Female	11,272,393	8,622,866	37,121	76.8%	2,612,406	23.2%
Total	22,815,802	18,199,294	73,881	80.1%	4,542,627	19.9%

Source: Population Projection from UNDP, EMIS Database and authors calculation-2019/20

The predominantly pastoralist regions of the country, Afar (66.4%) and Somali (53.5%), have the highest proportion of OOSC. Education access for pastoralist children remains a significant challenge for Ethiopia’s education system. Pastoralist children who are in the education system experience high dropout rates, especially in the second cycle of primary education. This may reflect the difficulty in providing education for mobile and transhumant pastoralist children, and children who live in remote desert areas. In terms of raw data, Oromia (1,436,435), Amhara (1,322,012), and SNNPR (557,426) have high numbers of OOSC. As for Dimension 1, these differences can be attributed to the fact that Somali and Afar are much less populated than Oromia, Amhara, and SNNPR, so while Somali and Afar may have the highest proportion of OOSC, the highest actual number of OOSC can be found in Oromia, Amhara, and SNNPR. Hariri (5.1%) has the lowest proportion of OOSC of primary-school age, followed by Addis Ababa (7.6%). This may be due to the expansion of government and non-governmental primary schools. Other agriculturalist regional states have high proportions of OOSC: Amhara (26.4%), Benishangul-Gumuz (21.9%), and Dire Dawa (17.1%). 23.2% of females of primary-school age are OOSC, which is higher than for their male counterparts (16.7%). This demonstrates that there are still more out-of-school girls across the country.

Gender Parity Index: Primary-school-aged children by region (2019/20)



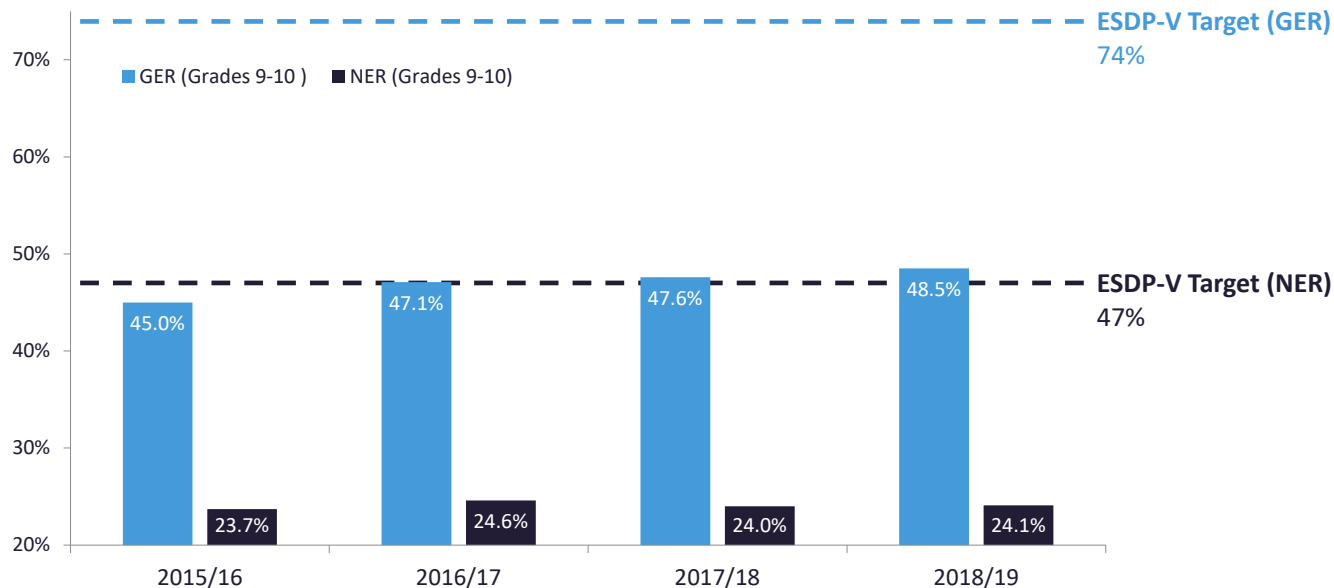
Source: Population Projection from UNDP, EMIS Database (2019/20)

National GPI (0.92) for primary-school-aged children shows that there are still fewer girls in the education system than boys. This falls short of the EDSP-V target of 1.00 in 2019/20. At the regional level, Amhara (0.99) and Tigray (1.03) have achieved gender parity for primary-school-aged children. With the exception of Addis Ababa, the GPI for all other regions indicates a disparity in favor of males; there are more female OOSC of primary-school age. Somali (0.75) and Afar (0.87) have the lowest GPI, indicating the largest proportion of female OOSC at the primary-school age.

Dimension 3: OOSC of lower-secondary-school age

This section analyzes the situation of OOSC of lower-secondary-school age (15-16 years old), which are Grades 9-10 in the Ethiopian context. These children are included in Dimension 3 of the 5DE framework. The profiles of OOSC at this age are analyzed by sex and region, using the EMIS administrative data (2019/20). GER, NER, and ANER as used to measure education access.

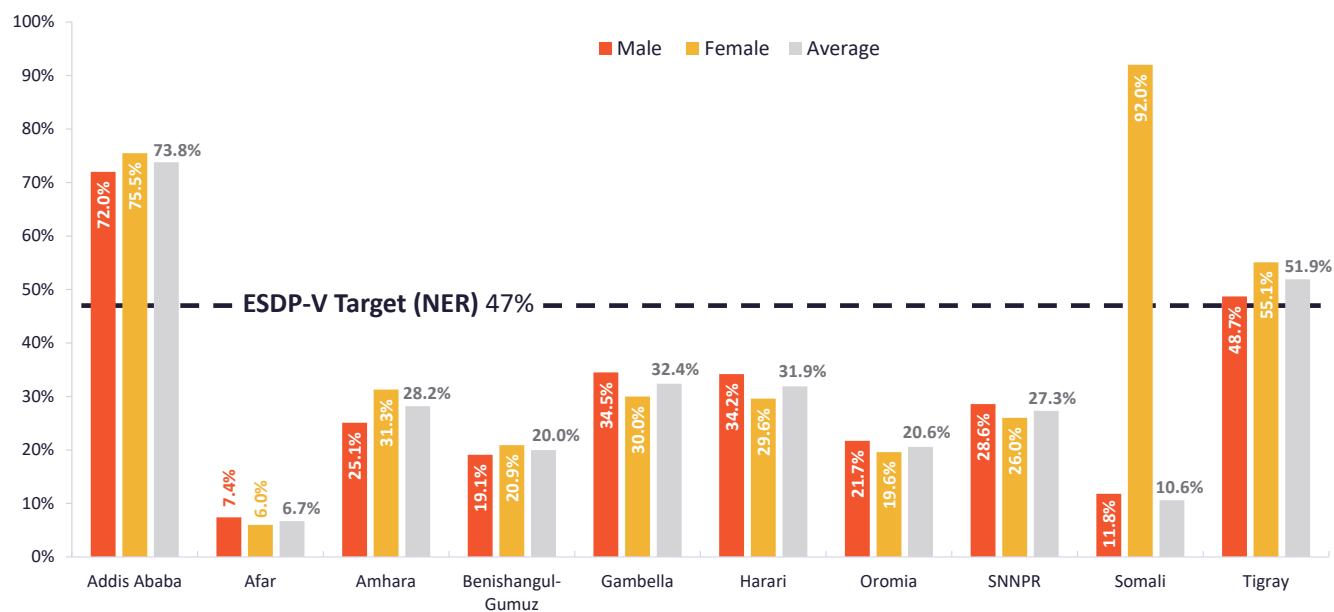
Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) and Net Enrollment Rate (NER) for grades 9-10 (2015/16 - 2019/20)



Source: Population Projection from UNDP, EMIS Database (2019/20)

There has been a slight improvement in NER over the same time period, although NER still lags below the ESDP-V target of 47% by 2019/20 by 22.9 percentage points.

Net Enrollment Rate (NER) for grades 9-10 by region



Source: EMIS Database (2019/20)

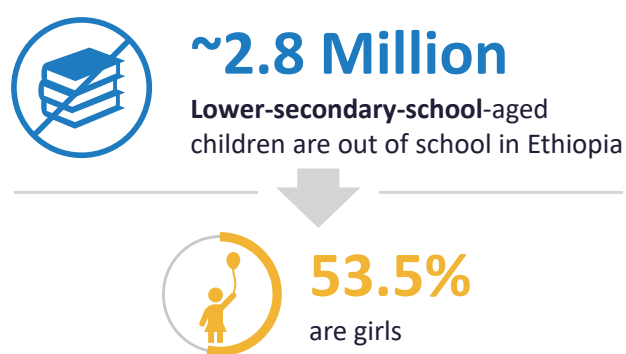
While the ESDP-V target for NER in Grades 9-10 was not met nationally, Addis Ababa achieved above the target NER, with a NER of 73.8%. Afar (6.7%) and Somali (10.6%) had the lowest NER for Grades 9-10, suggesting that they are the two regions with the highest proportion of OOSC of lower-secondary age.

Table 6: ANER of lower-secondary-school-aged children (15-16 years), by age and sex

Age	Population	Attending Primary	Attending Secondary	Not Attending (OOSC)	% Not Attending (OOSC)	% ANER
15 years	2,664,743	890,871	478,605	1,295,267	48.6%	51.4%
16 years	2,634,270	450,761	737,165	1,446,344	54.9%	45.1%
Total	5,299,013	1,341,632	1,215,770	2,741,611	51.7%	48.3%

Sex	Population	Attending Primary	Attending Secondary	Not Attending (OOSC)	% Not Attending (OOSC)	% ANER
Male	2,679,726	730,066	610,615	1,339,045	50.0%	50.0%
Female	2,619,287	611,566	605,155	1,402,566	53.5%	46.5%
Total	5,299,013	1,341,632	1,215,770	2,741,611	51.7%	48.3%

Source: Population Projection from UNDP, EMIS Database (2019/20)



Nearly 1.3 million (48.6%) of 15-year-olds are out-of-school. While there is a significant number of 15-year-olds in secondary education, there is a larger proportion in primary school, meaning that they are overage learners. Almost 1.5 million (54.9%) of 16-year-olds are out-of-school. Similarly, a large proportion of 16-year-olds are enrolled in primary school as overage learners. **Overall, nearly 2.8 million (51.7%) of children of lower-secondary-school age are OOSC, 53.5% of which are girls.**

Table 7: ANER of lower-secondary-school-aged children (15-16 years) by region

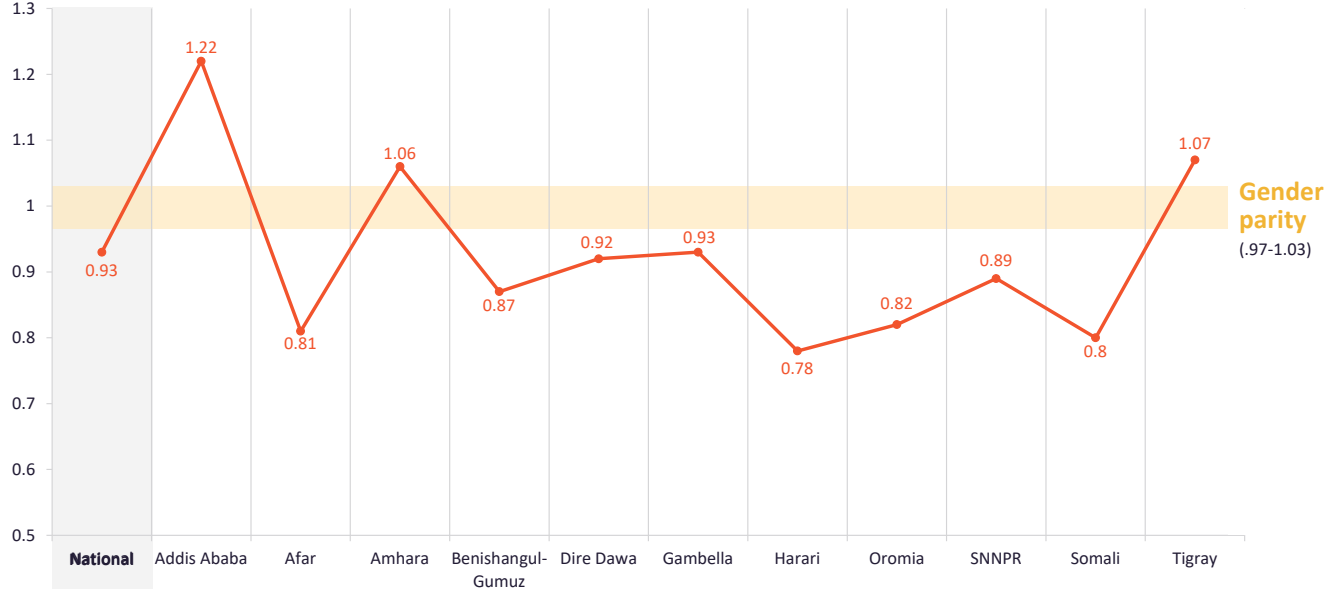
Region	Population	Enrolled Primary	Enrolled Secondary	Not Attending (OOSC)	% Not Attending (OOSC)	% ANER
Addis Ababa	153,859	53,716	73,457	26,686	17.3%	82.7%
Afar	81,789	13,889	5,302	62,598	76.5%	23.5%
Amhara	1,057,466	355,785	274,697	426,984	40.4%	59.6%
Benishangul-Gumuz	62,681	27,435	11,114	24,132	38.5%	61.5%
Dire Dawa	22,398	7,319	4,404	10,675	47.7%	52.3%
Gambella	103,428	31,713	6,558	65,157	63.0%	37.0%
Harari	12,398	5,831	3,538	3,029	24.4%	75.6%
Oromia	2,129,513	491,403	392,865	1,245,245	58.5%	41.5%
SNNPR	1,149,296	241,779	285,631	621,886	54.1%	45.9%
Somali	234,556	67,067	25,875	141,614	60.4%	39.6%
Tigray	291,629	45,695	132,329	113,605	39.0%	61.0%
Total	5,299,013	1,341,632	1,215,770	2,741,611	51.7%	48.3%

Source: Population Projection from UNDP, EMIS Database (2019/20)

The largest proportion of OOSC of lower-secondary-school age are found in Afar (76.5%), Gambella (63.0%), and Somali (60.4%). There is a clear trend emerging: the pastoralist regions have a high proportion of OOSC at pre-primary, primary, and lower-secondary school-aged groups. In terms of actual numbers, the highest number of

OOSC are in Oromia (1,245,245), SNNPR (621,886), and Amhara (426,984). Addis Ababa (17.3%) has the lowest proportion of OOSC at the lower-secondary-school age, followed by Hariri (24.4%).

Gender Parity Index: Lower-secondary-school-aged children by region (2019/20)



Source: Population Projection from UNDP, EMIS Database (2019/20)

The national GPI for lower-secondary school is 0.93, indicating that there are more female than male OOSC in this age group. Addis Ababa (1.22), Amhara (1.06), and Tigray (1.07) all have more male OOSC than female. Harari (0.78) and the two pastoralist regions, Afar (0.81) and Somali (0.80), have the lowest GPI scores, indicating that girls are severely disadvantaged in education systems in those regions at the lower-secondary-school level.

Summary and Recommendations

This section summarizes the profiles of excluded children in terms of three dimensions of exclusion. The data analysis revealed the continued presence of large numbers of OOSC across the country.



The analysis of Dimension One data revealed that over 6 million children of pre-primary age (4-6 years old) are out of school. While the national pre-primary GER has increased in recent years, many regions still have high percentages of pre-primary-aged OOSC. These are significantly higher in the two pastoralist regions, Afar and Somali. This sub-sector of the education system should therefore be prioritized; pre-primary education is the first step towards meeting EFA goals. Quality pre-primary education also offers a cost-effective method of improving children's readiness for learning foundational skills. This reduces the investment needed in later years. Stakeholders should enforce the implementation of the existing ECCE policy framework. Stronger advocacy is needed, as well as effective partnerships and clear monitoring mechanisms, to boost enrollment and attendance, and to reduce the percentage of pre-primary OOSC.



The analysis of Dimension Two data revealed that the GER for both primary school cycles has increased over the last two decades. There are variations in trends between the two cycles, highlighting the issue of children repeating first cycle grades, or dropping out completely. Low transition rates between the two primary cycles have also been evidenced. Just over 4.5 million (19.9%) of primary-school-aged children (7-14 years old) are OOSC. ANER analysis demonstrated that the number of female OOSC is relatively higher than the number of male OOSC of primary-school age. Regional disaggregation shows that the highest percentages of OOSC of primary-school age are found in the Afar and Somali regions, which are predominantly transhumant pastoralist areas. This is likely due to persistent challenges in providing education access for mobile and transhumant pastoralist communities, as well as children living in remote, desert areas. Significant percentages of OOSC of primary-school age were also found in non-pastoralist and agriculturalist regional states of the country. As such, education interventions should be adapted to meet the needs of different communities and their ways of living.



The Dimension Three data analysis found that nearly 2.8 million children (51.7%) of lower-secondary-school age are OOSC. The largest percentage of OOSC of lower-secondary-school age are found in the pastoralist areas of the country. The Gambella, Oromia, Amhara, and SNNPR regions also have significant percentages of OOSC in the lower-secondary-school age group.

Overall, there are approximately 13.3 million children out-of-school across the country, from ages 4 to 16 years old (6,042,868 pre-primary OOSC, 4,542,627 primary OOSC, and 2,741,611 lower secondary OOSC). This is a significant increase from the UNICEF 2012 National OOSC Study results, although there is a parallel increase in overall population numbers. The 2012 National OOSC Study found approximately 7 million OOSC from ages 6 to 16 years old. While remarkable progress has been made in GER and NER over the last two decades, the situation of OOSC continues to pose a challenge to Ethiopia's education system, and the government's commitment to achieving EFA and the SDGs.

This study recommends building an effective information and monitoring system to track OOSC at the local level. Existing EMIS administrative data should incorporate data on OOSC as an integral part of the EMIS data system, to enable regular and accurate monitoring of the situation of OOSC. It is also imperative to engage other partners – donors, civil society, and community members – to engage with the education sector on delivering alternative modalities, advocacy, and dialogue on the issue of OOSC. Sector-wide, integrated, and innovative approaches are necessary to provide the OOSC of Ethiopia with opportunities to access quality education.

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