

Are our Children Learning?

Illuminating the Covid-19 learning losses and gains in Uganda

Uwezo National Learning Assessment Report, 2021

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

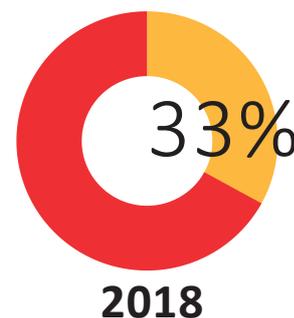
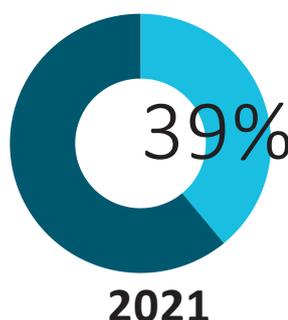
The key findings are presented under four broad categories: participation in basic education, learning outcomes; continued learning during school closure; and resources in primary schools. To access the full report, visit:

<https://uwezouganda.org/uwezo-report-final-version/>

1. Participation in Basic Education

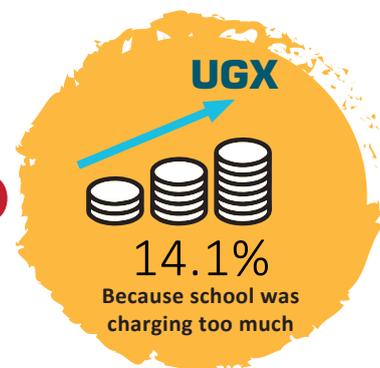
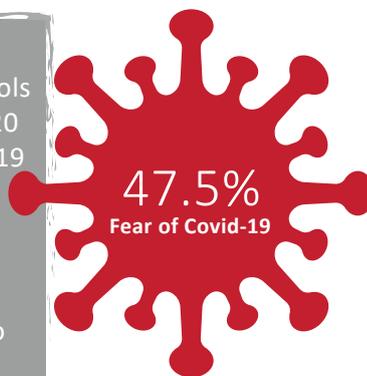


1.1. The pandemic aggravated an overage problem that was already considerable. For example, 39% of P1 children surveyed in August 2021 were aged 8 years old, compared to 33% in 2018. The right age for P1 is 6-7 years.



Percentage of children aged 8 years in P1

1.2. The reasons most frequently given for children not going back to schools when schools were temporarily reopened in September 2020 to June 2021 were, fear of contracting Covid-19 and financial considerations. Of the surveyed 867 children, whose schools/classes had reopened but did not return to school, 47.5% related it to the fear of Covid-19 and 14.1% indicated that their schools were charging too much.



5.8%

Children who reported to have dropped out had vision difficulties

VS

Children in the general population with vision difficulty.

3.8%

1.3. Children with disability: Among 4-16 year old children who had dropped out of school, those with vision, walking and memory difficulties were a larger proportion compared to those in the general population. For example, 5.8% of 4-16 year children who reported to have dropped out had vision difficulties compared to 3.8% of children with vision difficulty in the general population. This indicates that such children need educational and health interventions to enable them to participate in and complete their basic education.



2. Learning outcomes

2.1. The rate of full reading competence (ability to read and comprehend a P2 level English story) for the whole set of grades P3-7 has risen from 32.5% in 2018 to 39.5% in 2021. But the overall proportions of children who are still at the 'non-reader' stage doubled from 6.2% in 2018 to 11.6% in 2021. For P3, the proportion of non-readers increased from 12.7% in 2018 to 25.1% in 2021.



Overall proportions of P3-7 children who are still at the 'non-reader' stage



rate of numeracy competence

2.2. The overall rate of numeracy competence (ability to complete P2 level division tasks) of P3-7 children rose from 45.4% to 48.8% but for P3 children the rate of competence slightly decreased from 22.8% to 20.7%.

2.3. Children with combined competence i.e. those who could read and comprehend a P2 English story and do P2 division for the whole set of grades (P3-7) increased from 26% to 32% but the rate in P3 remains the same at 7%.

26% 2018

32% 2021

P3-7 Combined competence



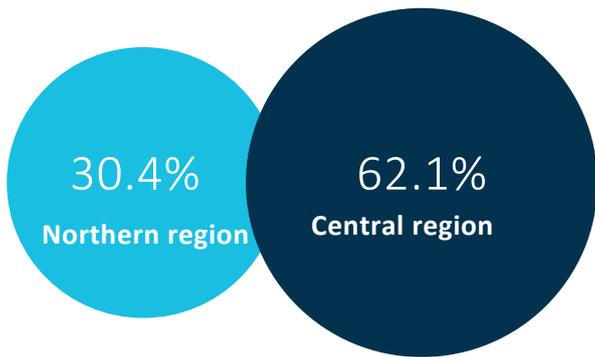
The percentage of non-readers in P3

2.4. Reading in local languages: The percentage of non-readers (inability to read or sound out letters of the alphabet) in P3, increased from 40.5% in 2018 to 54.5% in 2021. Nonetheless, there was a general improvement over that of 2018, especially in P7 where the percentage fully competent [able to read and comprehend a P2 level local language story] increased from 57.3% to 68.0%.

2.5. Competence in English reading and numeracy by age: In general, the 2021 findings suggest that the learning by younger children has been delayed more by the pandemic and school closures than that of older children. This pattern applies both to reading in English and to numeracy. For example, the estimated percentage of children aged 8 who were non-readers increased from 32.8% in 2018 to 50.7% in 2021 and the percentage of those who were non-numerate increased from 22.4% in 2018 to 31.3% in 2021.



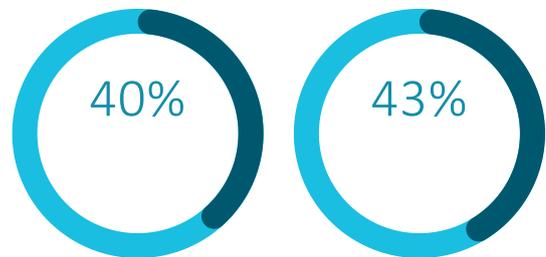
Children aged 8 who were non-readers



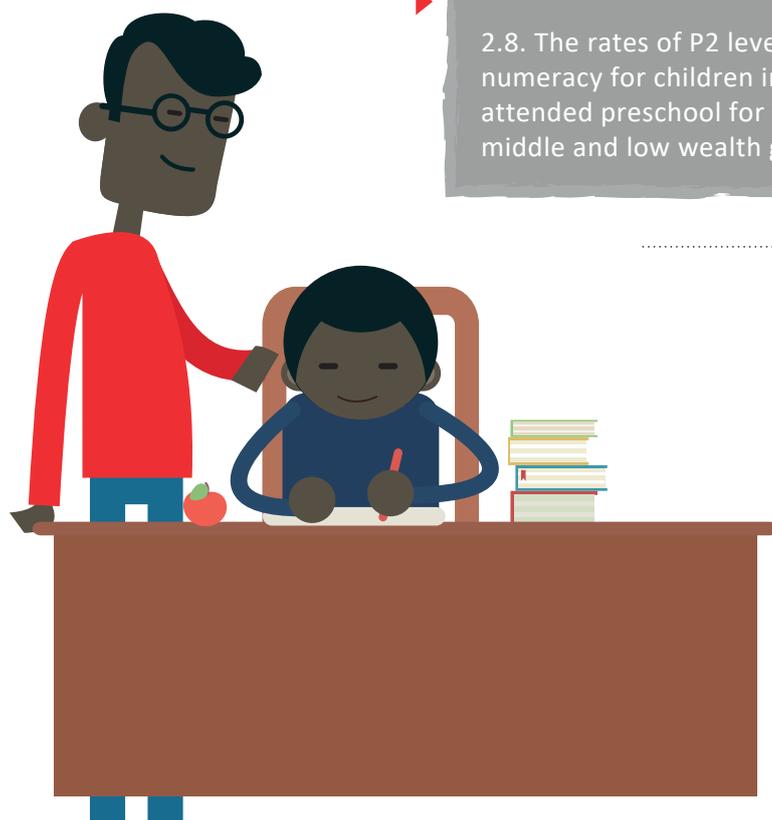
Girls aged 4-16 who were able to read words in English

▶ 2.6. Regional variations in learning outcomes: Both for reading in English and for numeracy, there are consistent differences between the regions, with the Central Region far in the lead, the Western Region in a middle position and the Eastern and Northern Regions having similar, lower outcomes. For example, while 62.1% of girls aged 4-16 in the Central Region were able to read words in English, only 30.4% girls of the same age in the Northern region were able to do so.

▶ 2.7. Disability and learning outcomes: Children who experienced different kinds of disability, compared to other children, were either more or equally likely to have reached the levels of skill, except that those with a memory difficulty were less likely to be able to read words i.e. 40% of those with memory difficulty could read words versus 43% without memory difficulty who could read words.



40% with memory difficulty could read words versus 43% without memory difficulty who could read words.

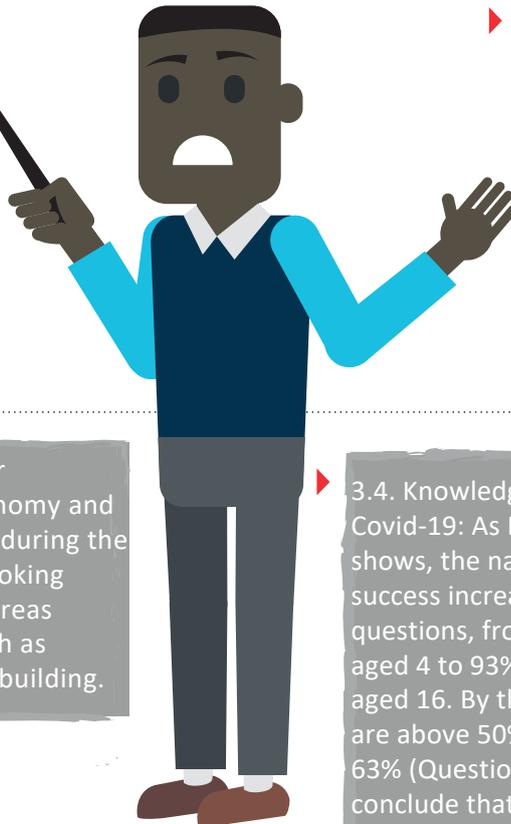


▶ 2.8. The rates of P2 level competence in English reading and in numeracy for children in P3-P7 are higher for those who have attended preschool for two years or more. This applies within high, middle and low wealth groups.

▶ 2.9. Children in P3-P7 who continued studying during the first closure of schools (in 2020) presented much higher rates of P2 level competence in English reading and numeracy than those who did not. For example, of the surveyed P3-P7 children who reported to have continued studying during the lockdown, 54% were able to read and comprehend a P2 level English story compared to only 28% of their counterparts who did not continue studying during the lockdown who could do so.

3. Continued learning during school closure

3.1. The higher the grade, the more likely the child was involved in home-based learning. The increase is consistent except that being in a 'candidate class' (P7 or S4) seemed to have an influence.



3.2. The most frequently used resources were radio programmes and printed self-study materials from the government and the adults most often teaching were private tutors and mothers.

3.3. Most children increased their involvement in the domestic economy and reported having learnt new skills during the school closure. Gardening and cooking were the most learnt/improved areas followed by a few other skills such as charcoal making, bricklaying and building.

3.4. Knowledge of precautions against Covid-19: As Figure 9 in the full report shows, the national estimates of rates of success increase steadily with age for both questions, from 23% and 22% for children aged 4 to 93% on both questions for children aged 16. By the age of 8 the rates of success are above 50% and the general averages are 63% (Question 1) and 65% (Question 2). We conclude that the public health messages on Covid-19 prevention have been moderately effective but will need reinforcement by schools.

4. Resources in primary schools



4.1. Between 2018 and 2020 pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs) became larger in all types of primary school, both government-aided and other. We estimate the average PTR in government-aided schools to have been 65:1 in 2020 compared to 52:1 in 2018.

4.2. In the Eastern and Northern Regions primary pupil-classroom ratios have become larger since 2015 and, in practical terms, represent a serious classroom shortage. [refer to Table 13 in the full report]

3.3. Of the primary schools that were partially re-opened in 2020-21, 93% confirmed that they had a hand-washing and sanitising facility. Details of the materials available in these facilities were obtained from 240 schools and are reported in Table 16 in the full report. It is reassuring that 85% of them are reported to have had water and soap and 54% to have had sanitiser.