Uganda's pre-primary and primary education through a gender equity lens

June, 2023

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The importance of gender equality in education

- Gender equality is a cornerstone of thriving communities.
- Education plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth and facilitating social mobility.
- It is essential to ensure that educational systems deliver similar outcomes to both boys and girls.
- Gender gaps in education can have a significant impact on individual and societal well-being.

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The situation in Uganda in short…

- The 2021 Uwezo data shows that **Ugandan girls of pre-primary and primary school age have higher literacy and numeracy competences than boys**.
- This gap exists in the midst of a **significant learning crisis for both boys and girls.**
- Learning outcomes must be improved, and **policies that have improved pedagogy have been effective at raising girls' learning outcomes.**
- Despite better enrollment and learning outcomes than their male counterparts, **girls in the country are still facing other challenges to engage in education.**

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This presentation

1. National trends in gender gaps in Uganda over the past decades
2. Differences in learning outcomes by gender in the Uwezo data
3. Looking ahead

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Gender inequities in Ugandan education have deep roots

- Historically, access to education in Uganda has heavily favoured males.
- This imbalance has had a significant impact on the educational achievement of the current adult population.

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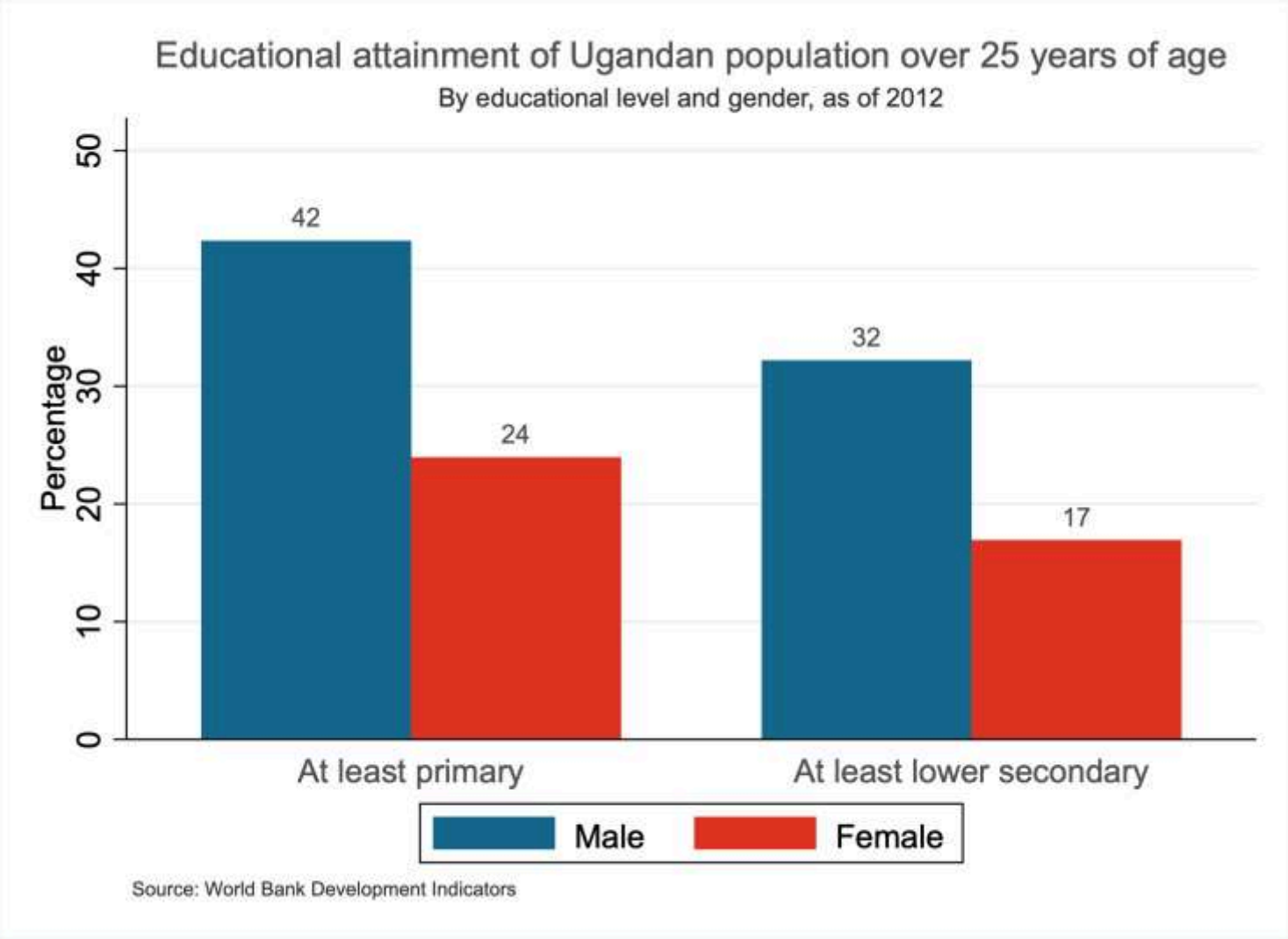
Female adults have lower attainment rates



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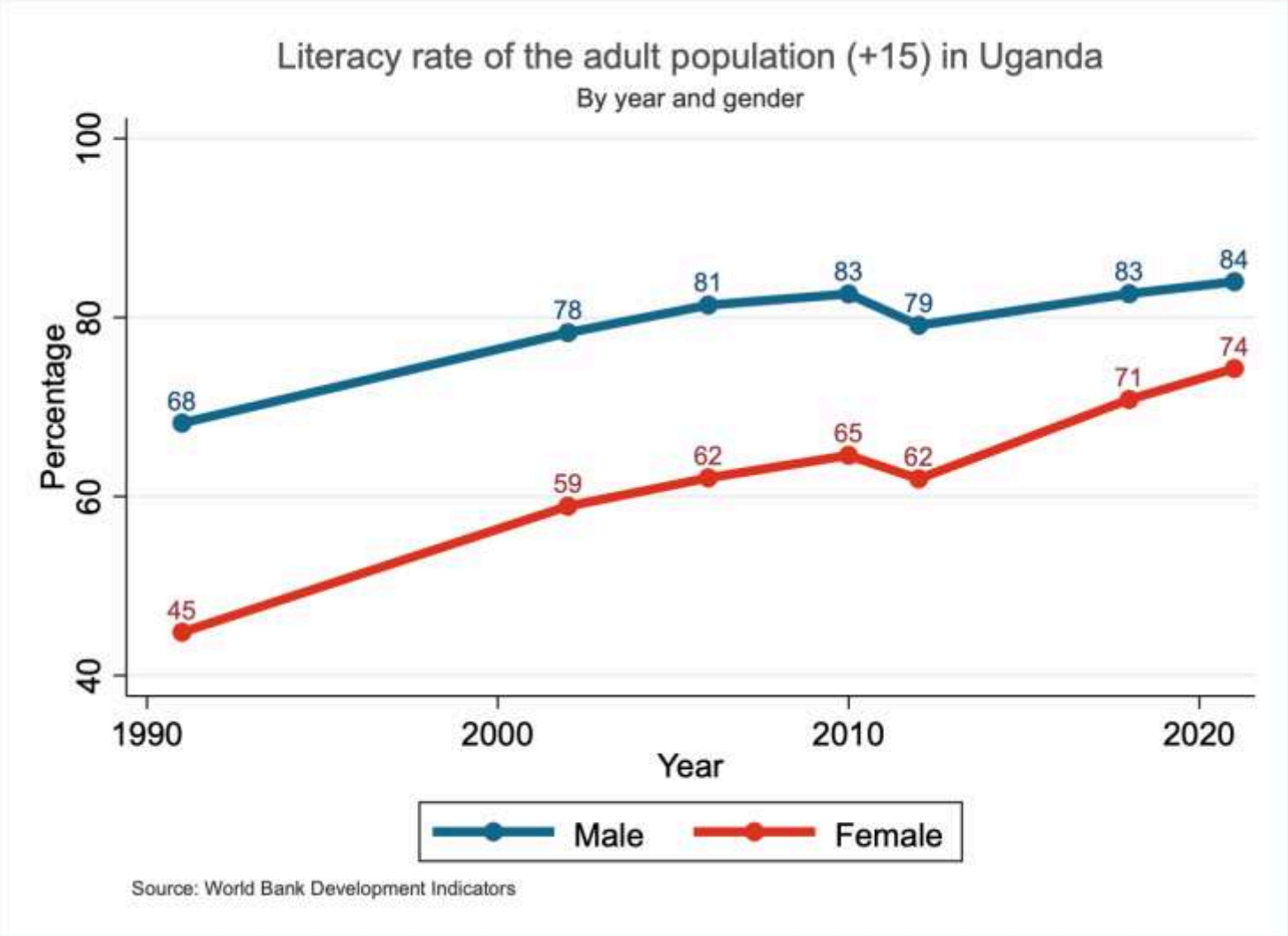
Although adult literacy rates have been rising steadily for all, there is still a significant gap between adult males and adult females



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Gender inequities in Ugandan education have deep roots

- Historically, access to education in Uganda has heavily favoured males.
- This imbalance has had a significant impact on the educational achievement of the current adult population.
- There is still a significant gap in educational attainment between men and women in Uganda.
- Gender inequality in education has lasting impacts on adult women's lives.

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Yet, significant progress advancing gender equity has been achieved over the past two decades

- Uganda has made significant progress towards achieving greater gender equity in the education system over the past two decades.
- The gross enrollment rate of girls in primary school has recently achieved full parity with, and even exceeded, that of boys.
- The gross enrollment rate of girls in secondary school has not yet achieved full parity, but it has been steadily increasing over the past five decades.

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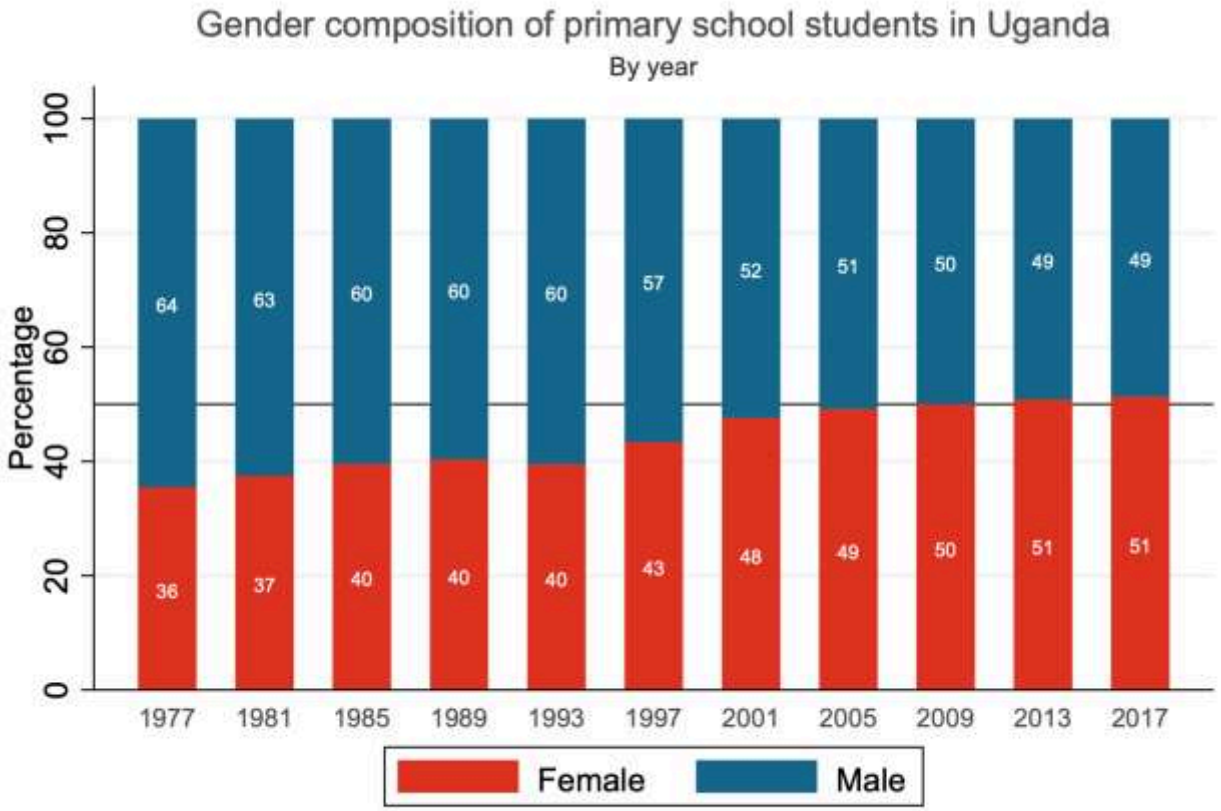
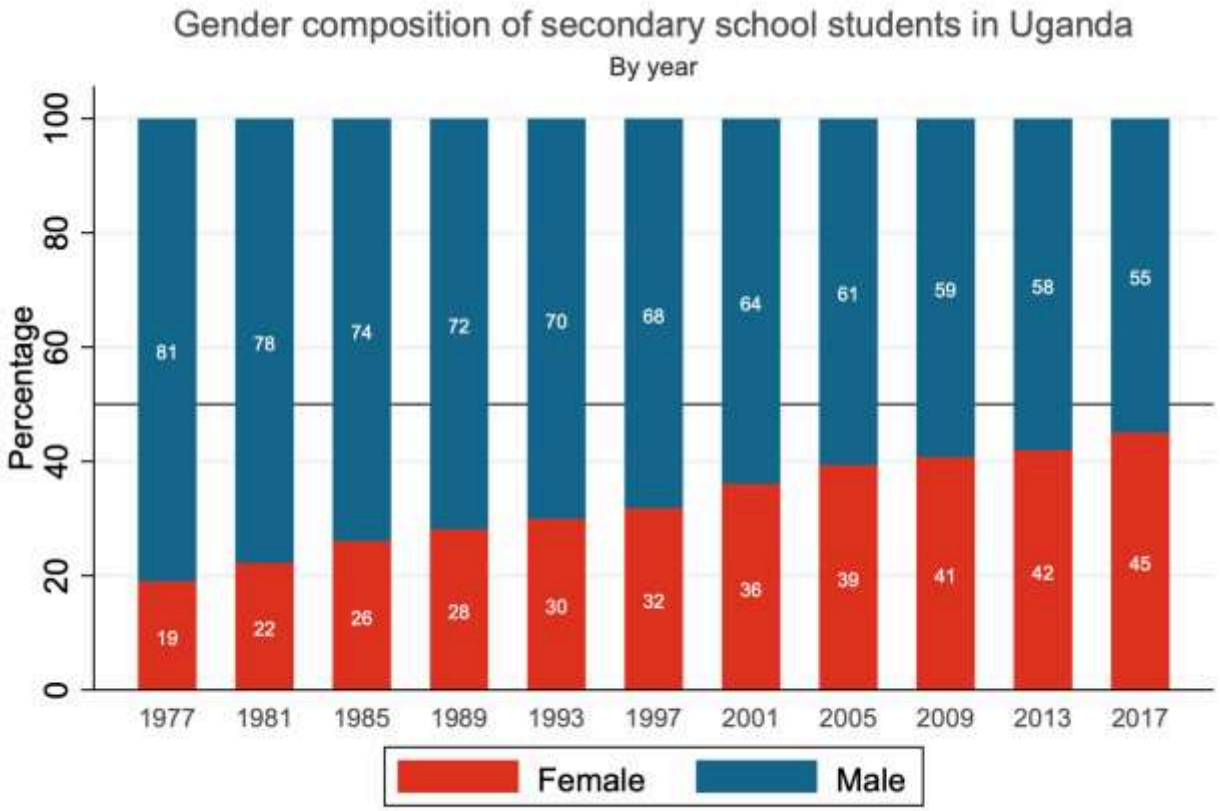
More and more girls have enrolled in school in the past 5 decades



Note: values estimated from the gender parity index on gross enrollment for the respective year and educational level, according to the World Bank Development Indicators



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Yet, significant progress advancing gender equity has been achieved over the past two decades

- Girls are also completing primary school at higher rates than boys.
- The primary completion rate for males has decreased significantly over the past two decades, while for girls, it has decreased only marginally.
- The decline in primary completion rates for males may be due to a combination of factors, including a decline in educational quality and an increase in the number of primary school pupils.
- The progress made in increasing female participation in primary education is encouraging, but it is important to ensure that learning outcomes for girls have also been at pace with those of their male counterparts.

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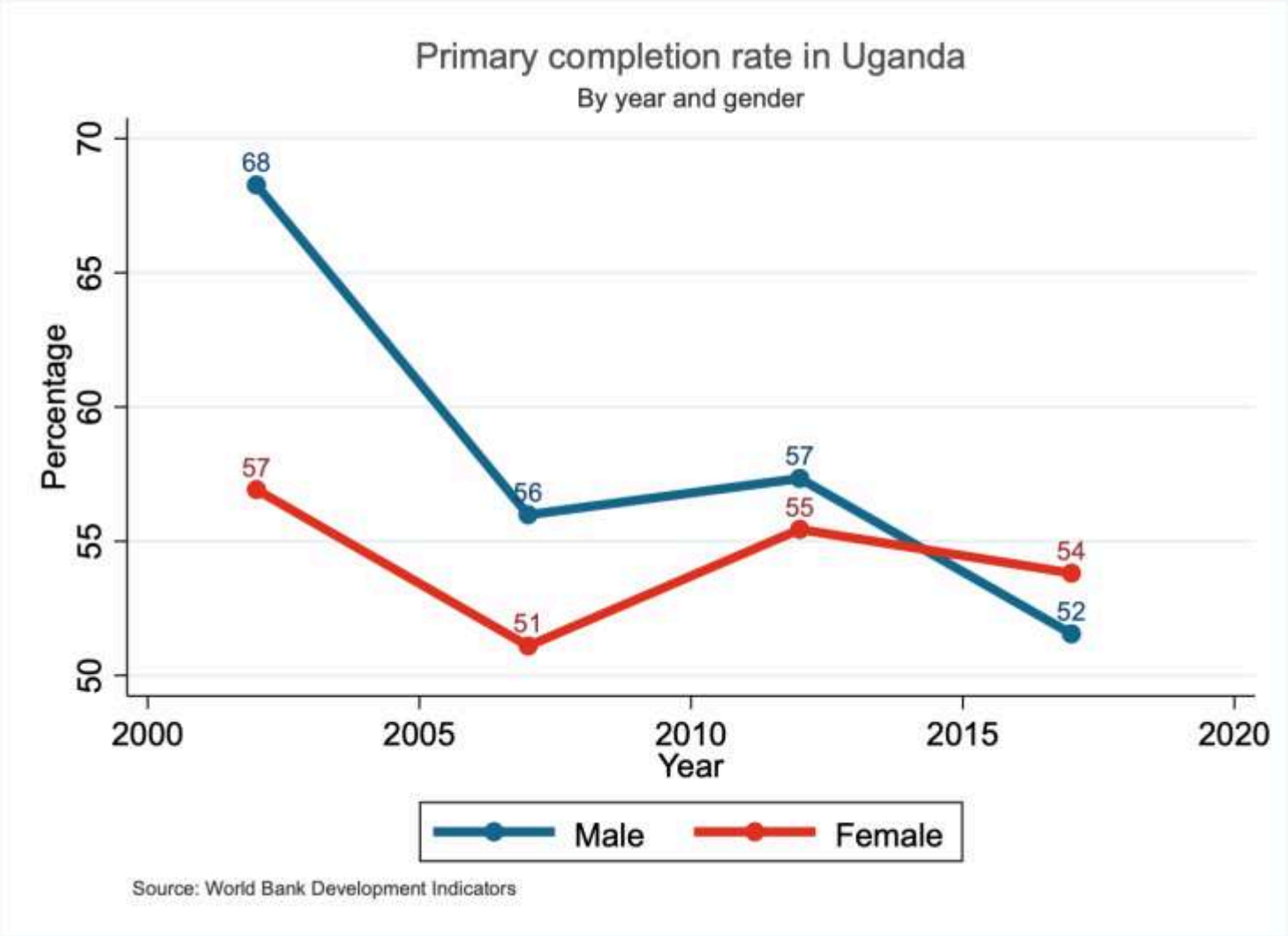

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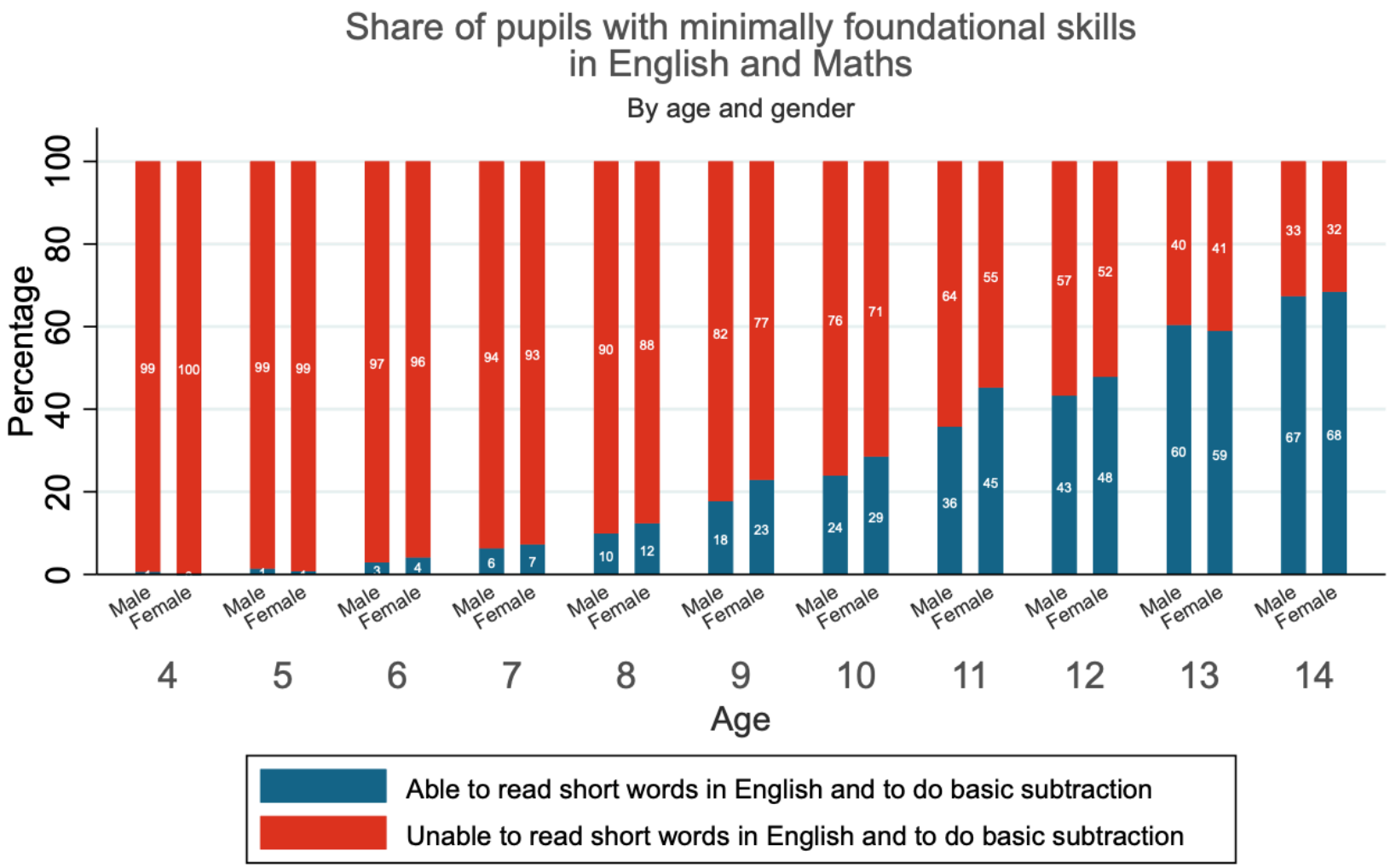
Consistently, girls' learning outcomes are equal or even outperform those of their male counterparts



Notes: following the methodology outlined in the Uwezo 2021 report, averages use weights at the sub-region level

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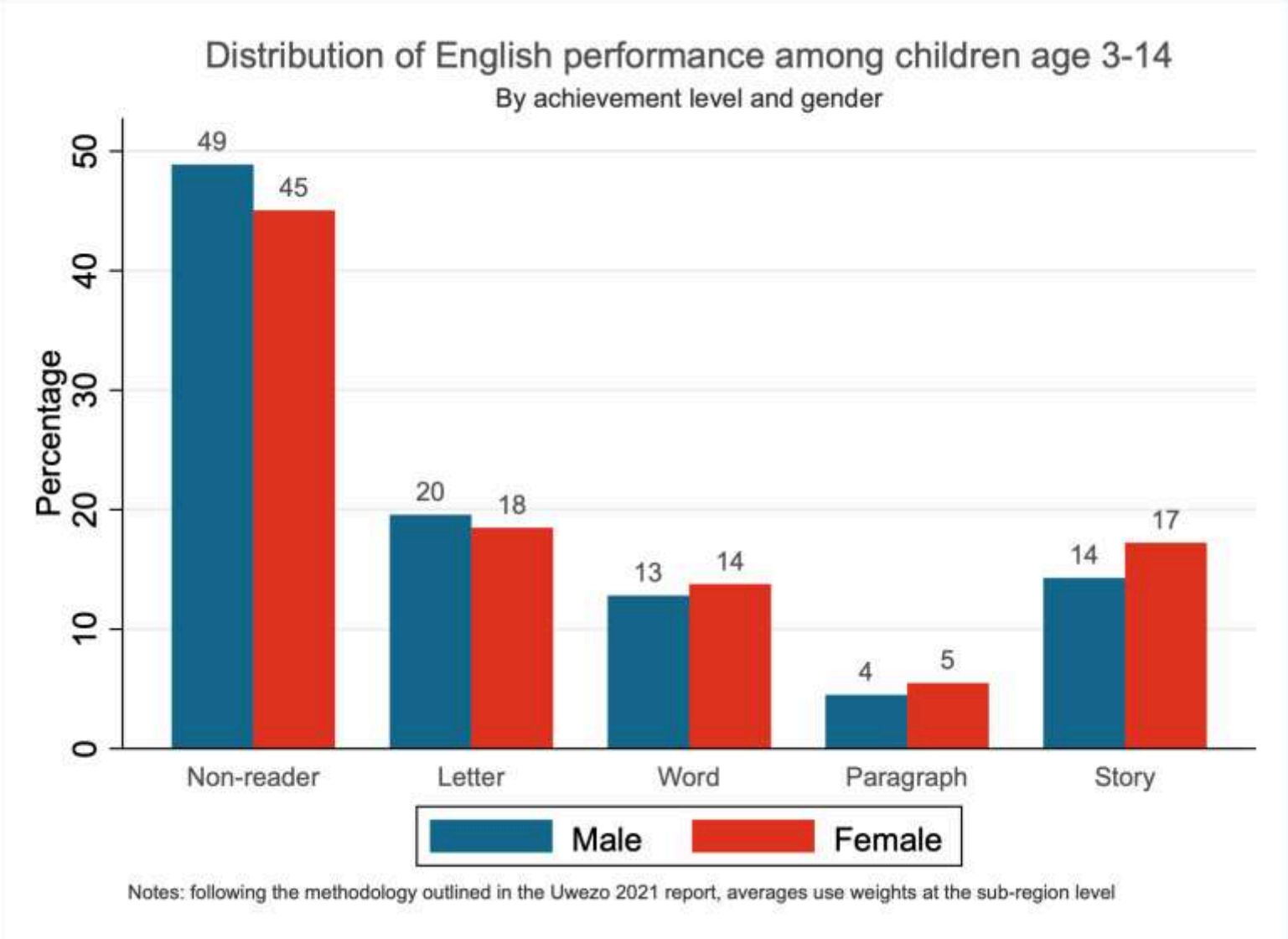
The largest differences between girls and boys are on both ends of the spectrum: more boys who do not reach the most basic skill, and more girls reaching the highest skill



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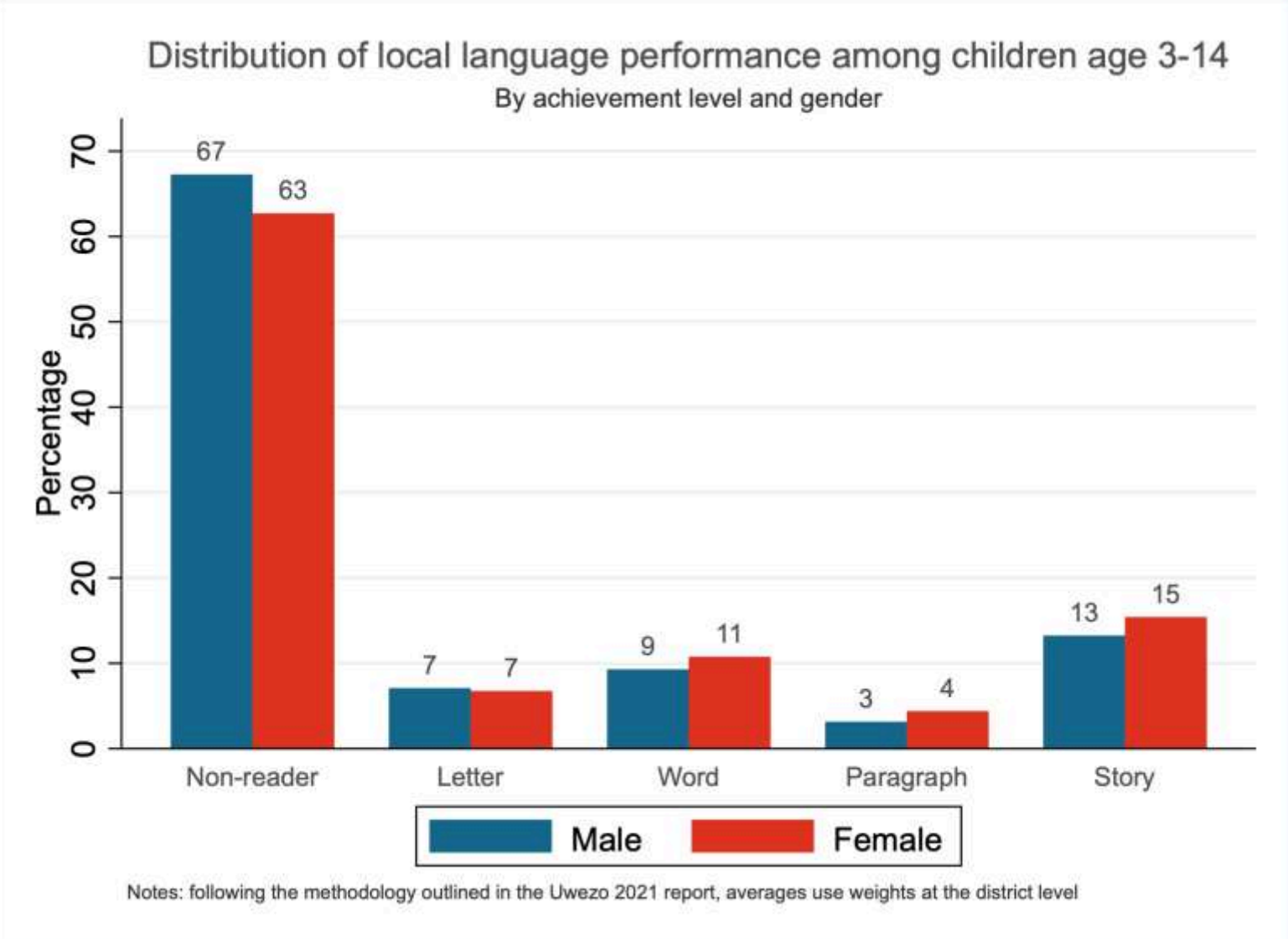

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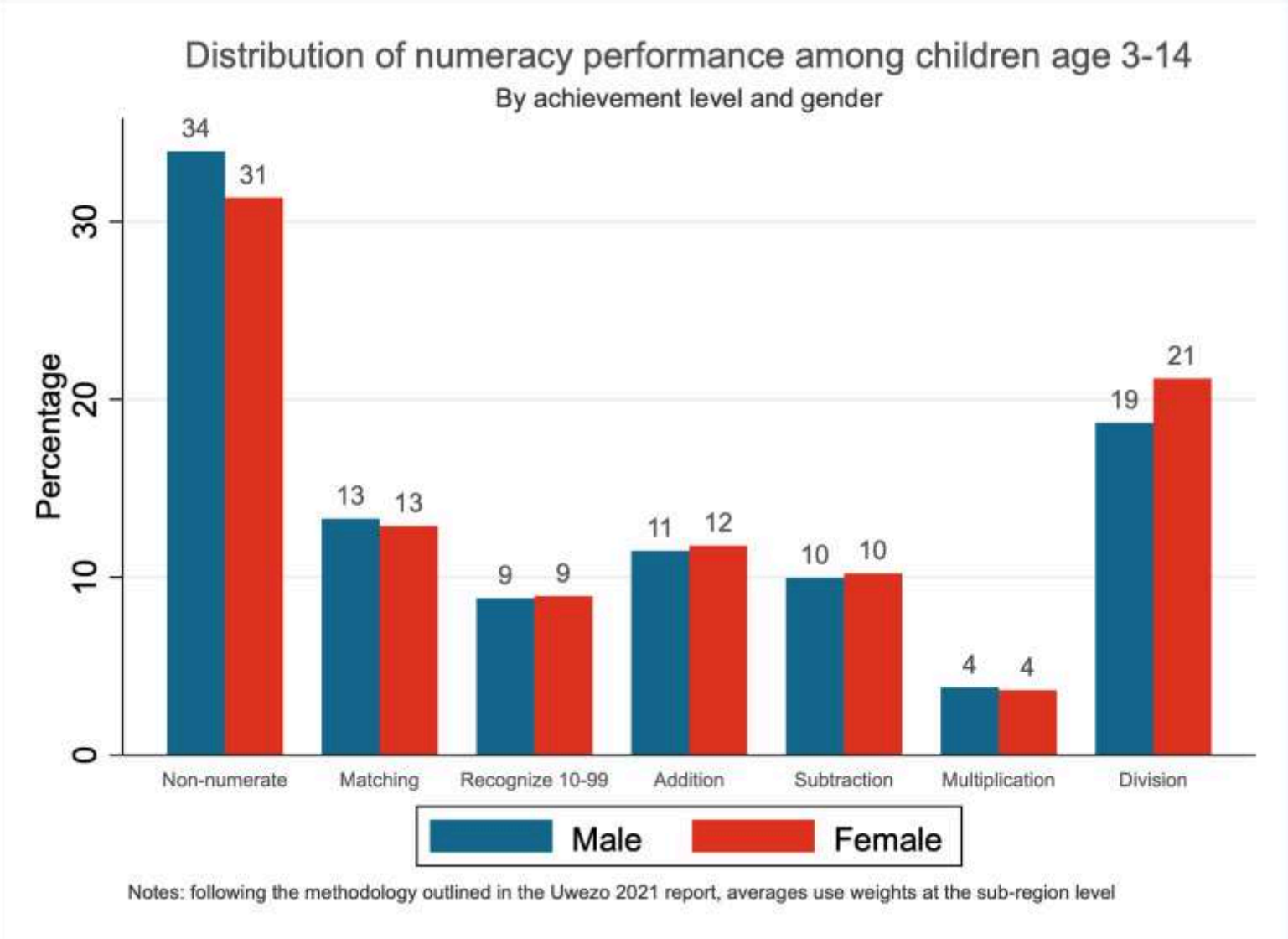

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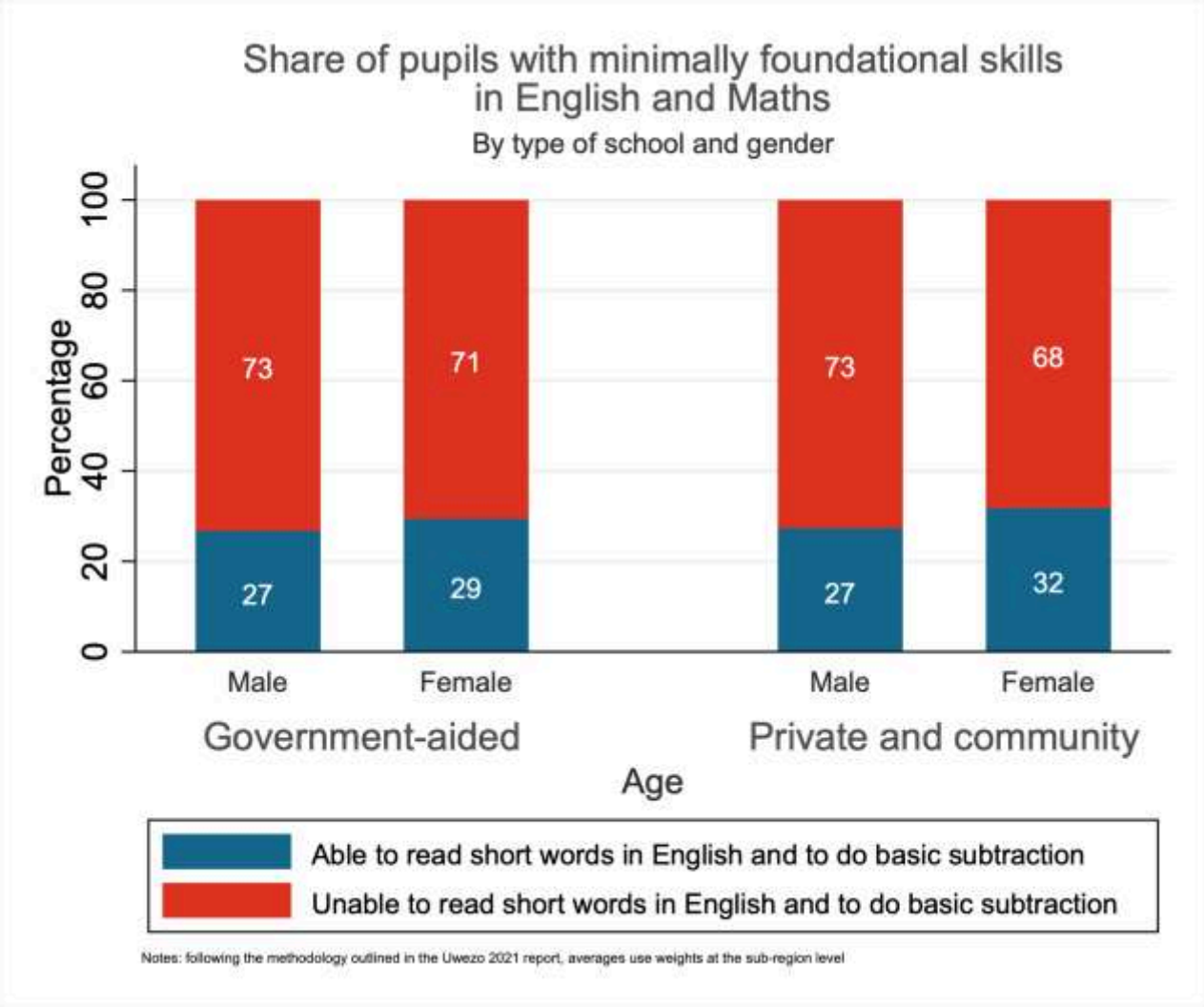
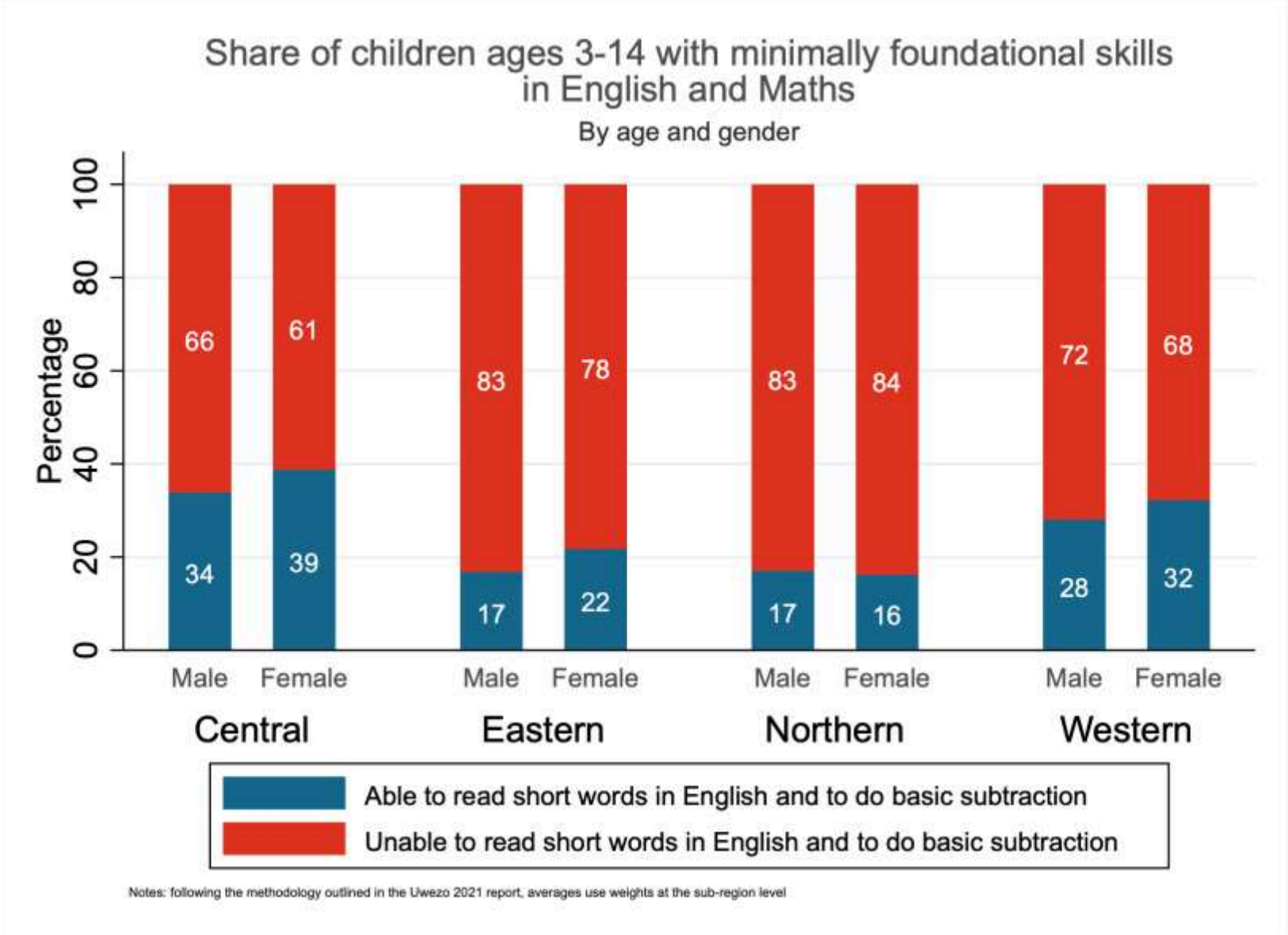
Although girls do enroll in private schools at a higher rate than boys, this difference in performance between boys and girls is observed in public and private schools



The Northern region is lagging behind in terms of gender equity on learning outcomes



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Beyond learning, girls in Uganda still face challenges not shared by their male peers

- Uwezo data reveals that **girls in Uganda do as well as boys in terms of learning outcomes**.
- This is a **significant achievement**, given the barriers to education that previous generations of women in Uganda faced.
- However, **girls still face many challenges in school, including school-related gender-based violence, child marriage, and adolescent pregnancy**.
- The gains made in girls' education in Uganda **should not be taken as the end of the journey**, but rather as an encouraging starting point to keep working towards greater gender equality.

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Learning outcomes are low for both boys and girls, and there is a need to develop policy that turns the situation around

- Even though girls in Uganda have higher learning outcomes than boys on average, their **learning outcomes are still weak.**
- One in three 10-year-old Ugandan girls is a non-reader in English, and over two in five cannot perform basic addition.
- This indicates that a **substantial proportion of pupils have been in the public education system for many years but still struggle to solve basic exercises by the time they reach upper primary**.
- This is a concerning situation that highlights a **significant misalignment between pupils' competencies and the expected levels for their respective grades.**

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Improving pedagogy for all might be the key to elevate learning outcomes for girls

- A review of evidence found that general **interventions that improve the quality of education, such as providing better teacher training and resources, can have a positive impact on girls' learning outcomes.**
- Interventions that lower the cost of education, such as the elimination of school fees, can make it easier for girls to attend school and stay in school.
- The review concluded that there might not be a need for governments to implement separate programs specifically for girls, as **effective general interventions can also improve girls' learning outcomes.**

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Thank you!

Contact Us!

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