Findings Report For The Baseline Assessment of the

Education & Life Skills Development Program

Prepared by

divergent
INFORMED DECISIONS

Chalan Foundation
Lighting Hope

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Chalan Foundation
Lighting Hope

Chalan Foundation is a Kenyan nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering vulnerable children and youth through a holistic, multi-pillar approach that combines education, life skills development, wellbeing support, and community empowerment. Its programs include Life Skills and Leadership Development, which equips learners with personal, social, and leadership competencies; Scholarships and Educational Access, which supports vulnerable students to remain in school through financial assistance and mentorship; STEAM in Public Day Schools, which promotes science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics learning to prepare learners for the future economy; Community Health and Psychosocial Support, which addresses mental health, hygiene, and overall wellbeing; Economic Empowerment and Community Strengthening, which supports families through livelihoods training and financial literacy to create stable home environments for learners; and the NextGen360 Program, which provides mentorship, academic support, leadership training, and post-secondary transition support for young people. Through these integrated programs, Chalan Foundation works to break intergenerational cycles of poverty and create sustainable pathways for education, leadership, and community transformation.

Our vision

A generation empowered through education, equity, and innovation to transform communities and shape a sustainable future

Our Philosopy

Education is not just academic success, but preparation for life, leadership, and legacy.

Our Mission

To break intergenerational cycles of poverty by delivering transformative education, fostering economic empowerment, and promoting inclusive, innovative, and sustainable community development.

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What We Do

Life skills & Leadership Development

Prepare Children for Life's Test, Not Just School Exams/Assessments

Economic Empowerment and Community Strengthening

Building Strong Families because we recognize that a child's ability to stay in school is directly tied to their household.

Scholarships & Educational Access

Making Education a Right not a Privileged. We believe education should never be a luxury for the privileged but a fundamental right for every child.

Chalan Foundation
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Community Health and Psychosocial Support

Supporting the Whole Child for Sustainable Learning. We believe that a supported child is a sustainable learner.

NextGen360° Program

Chalan's flagship post-secondary transition initiative designed to empower high school boys and girls from vulnerable communities

Transforming Communities through STEAM

Championing trans-formative approach to STEAM education, aligned with Kenya's Competency-Based Education and Senior-School pathways.

Table of Contents

Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress in every society, in every family.

KOFI ANNAN

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a baseline assessment for the Education and Life Skills Development Programme in ten counties Kenya. They include Kajiado, Baringo, West Pokot, Turkana, Samburu, Kitui, Bomet, Nandi, Bungoma, and Homabay. The assessment established benchmark indicators for education access, attendance, retention, learning environments, and life skills development among vulnerable learners in public day secondary schools.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study surveyed 612 learners, 51 school administrators, and 209 parents and guardians across 51 schools in the ten target counties. These quantitative efforts were complemented by 52 key informant interviews and 20 focus group discussions with teachers, education officials, community leaders, and parents. The evidence generated will guide programme targeting, implementation, and monitoring. To enhance clarity, findings have been organized around five core programme pillars as detailed in the next sections of the report.

Pillar 1: Access and Retention

The findings reveal high learner motivation alongside fragile educational participation. While 99% of learners arrive punctually when they attend, consistent attendance is undermined by poverty-related factors. Forty-eight percent are rarely present for full school weeks, and 43% missed one to two full weeks in the previous term. Absenteeism is driven primarily by lack of school fees (58%), illness (51%), food insecurity, and household responsibilities rather than lack of interest.

Cross-county analysis reveals distinct patterns requiring tailored responses. Episodic multi-week absences dominate in Homa Bay (88%) and Turkana (72%), suggesting vulnerability to seasonal shocks. Persistent short-term absences prevail in Samburu (84%), Kajiado (74%), and Baringo (65%), pointing to chronic daily barriers.

Household vulnerability strongly determines outcomes. Forty-five percent of learners live in non-intact households single-parent, guardian-led, relative-led, or child-headed. Twenty percent are single or double orphans. These learners experience weaker academic supervision, greater emotional strain, and reduced access to consistent adult support. While 59% report always receiving parental encouragement, practical support is uneven. Twenty-two percent say homework is rarely checked, and 45% report that sensitive topics like sexuality are rarely discussed at home.

Pillar 2: Learning Environment

Learning environments are under significant strain. Twenty-eight percent of learners attend classes exceeding 60 students, with proportions reaching 59% in Bungoma and 51% in Homa Bay. Only 26% have all required textbooks, and many rely on shared or library-based resources.

A critical gap exists between infrastructure availability and functionality. While 86% of schools have science laboratories, 80% are inadequately equipped. While 45% have computer labs, 53% are non-functional. This distinction between existence and usability is crucial for programme design.

Although most learners perceive classroom infrastructure as generally adequate, overcrowding and material shortages constrain instructional quality. Teachers struggle to provide individualised academic and psychosocial support, particularly in large classes.

Pillar 3: Psychosocial Well-being and Life Skills

Psychosocial well-being is a critical concern. Many learners report frequent stress, sadness, worry, and loneliness, especially those from fragile household contexts. Although 87% report their schools have guidance and counselling services, qualitative findings reveal these are often under-resourced. Teachers who perform counseling services juggle multiple roles, limiting their effectiveness. juggle multiple roles, limiting their effectiveness.

612 LEARNERS

209 PARENTS/GUARDIANS

10 COUNTIES

51 SCHOOLS

52 Key informant interviews

20 Focus group discussions with teachers, education officials, community leaders, and

Access to trusted mentors is uneven. Thirteen percent have no mentor at all rising to 25% in West Pokot and 23% in Kajiado. A dedicated life skills assessment measured five domains, creating a composite index with a mean baseline score of 3.2 out of 5. Teamwork is a relative strength at 3.8, while emotional regulation and stress management are clear weaknesses at 2.7.

A significant gap exists between perceived confidence and practical application. Thirty-eight percent of learners could not solve a recent problem they faced, despite reporting confidence in related skills.

Pillar 4: Safety and Protection

Gender-specific barriers persist. Nearly one-third of girls miss school due to menstruation, driven by inconsistent pad provision and inadequate facilities. Only 21% report regular school provision of sanitary pads, and over 50% have no access to basic Menstrual Health Management (MHM) facilities. This challenge is most acute in West Pokot, where 90% of girls report no pad provision and 97% have no special MHM facilities.

School-related misconduct remains widespread. Fifty-seven percent report theft, 26% verbal bullying, 15% physical bullying, and 16% corporal punishment despite its prohibition. While teachers (80%) and parents (48%) are the most trusted reporting channels, awareness of formal mechanisms is limited. Only 5% would report to counsellors and 2% to child helplines. A small but critical group of 2% would not report abuse at all, disproportionately from vulnerable households.

Pillar 5: Digital Readiness and Future Pathways

A pronounced aspiration-opportunity gap exists. While 93% of learners express strong interest in improving their digital skills, proficiency remains low across most competencies. Thirty-three percent cannot type at all, 37% cannot use email, and 38% cannot use word processing software.

SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.

County-level disparities are evident with West Pokot, 73% cannot type and 70% cannot use email, compared to Kitui where only 12% cannot type and 13% cannot use email. Over 52% have never participated in any STEAM activity, and only 4% have accessed coding or robotics opportunities. Many schools lack Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, connectivity, and trained teachers, leaving learners inadequately prepared for further education or employment in a digital economy. Post-school transition pathways are weak, especially for those not progressing to tertiary education.

Conclusions

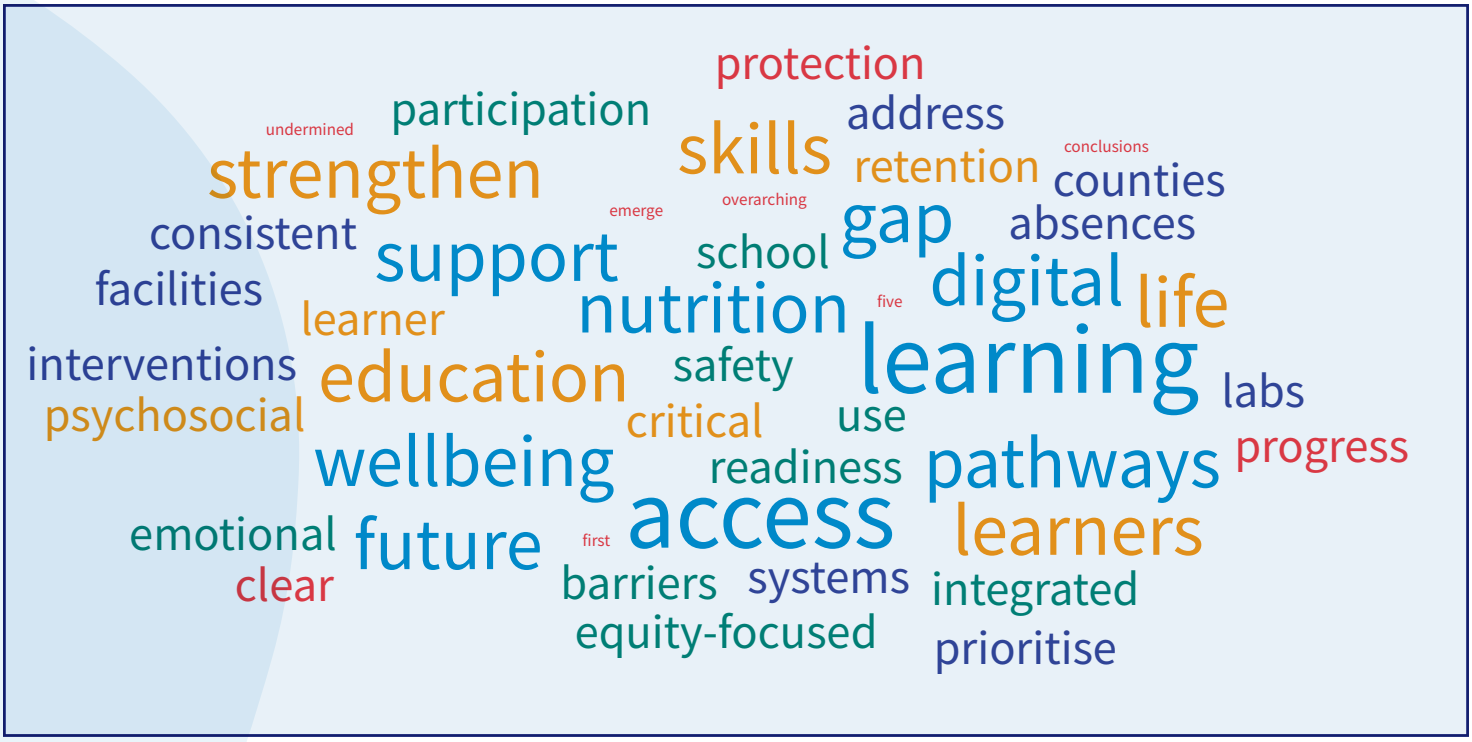
Five overarching conclusions emerge. First, access and retention are undermined by structural poverty, not lack of motivation. Second, learning environments are under strain, with a critical gap between infrastructure availability and functionality. Third, psychosocial well-being is a critical but under-resourced dimension of learner success. Fourth, gender-specific and protection-related barriers persist despite policy frameworks. Fifth, a pronounced aspiration-opportunity gap exists in digital readiness and future pathways.

Educational participation is shaped by more than school access. Household stability, nutrition, emotional well-being, safety, and future opportunities all matter. These findings underscore the need for an integrated, equity-focused approach.

Recommendations

For access and retention, reduce irregular attendance through household-sensitive support tailored to absenteeism patterns. Use shock-responsive interventions for episodic absences and consistent daily support for chronic absences. Establish early warning systems for at-risk learners.

For learning environment and nutrition, treat nutrition as a foundational intervention. Strengthen school feeding and address morning hunger. Prioritise making existing facilities functional equipping science labs and repairing computer labs especially in arid and semi-arid (ASAL) counties.



A word-cloud representation of some insights from the report

For psychosocial well-being and life skills, institutionalise mentorship ensuring every learner has access to trusted adults. Transform life skills education from awareness to experiential learning with focus on emotional regulation and problem-solving. Use the composite index as a benchmark for progress.

For safety and protection, implement comprehensive menstrual health support with consistent product provision and private facilities. Strengthen child protection systems with clear reporting mechanisms. Engage communities to address travel-related risks.

For digital readiness and future pathways, bridge the digital skills gap through phased investment in low-cost ICT solutions and teacher training. Prioritise counties with lowest proficiency. Expand STEAM activities through school-based clubs. Strengthen post-school transition pathways linking education to livelihoods.

When these interconnected barriers are addressed, the programme can translate learners' strong aspirations into sustained participation, meaningful learning, and improved life outcomes, particularly for learners facing the greatest disadvantages. The baseline indicators provide a robust foundation for measuring progress and adapting interventions to each county's specific needs. The evidence is clear; learners are motivated, schools are committed, and caregivers value education. What is needed now is an integrated, equity-focused response.

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Figures (Cont...)

List of Figures (Cont...)

List of Abbreviations

ABBREVIATION	FULL MEANING
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
BECF	Basic Education Curriculum Framework
CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing
CBC	Competency-Based Curriculum
CDE	County Director of Education
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPE	Free Primary Education
FDSE	Free Day Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDI	In-Depth Interview
KII	Key Informant Interview
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MoE	Ministry of Education
NACONEK	National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RBM	Results-Based Management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics
ToC	Theory of Change
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Education remains one of the most powerful tools for poverty reduction, human capital development, and sustainable growth globally. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Global Education Monitoring Report (2023)[1], education contributes significantly to improved health outcomes, civic participation, gender equality, and economic productivity. Globally, however, challenges persist, an estimated 250 million children and learners remain out of school, while millions more attend school without acquiring foundational literacy, numeracy, and life skills necessary for meaningful participation in the 21st-century economy.

To address this global learning crisis, the international community, under the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)[2], has committed to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. SDG 4 emphasizes not only access but also quality, equity, and relevance including the integration of life skills and digital competencies in education systems to prepare learners for life and work in rapidly changing social and economic contexts. The UNICEF Global Framework for Life Skills Education (2022)[3] further underscores that developing cognitive, emotional, and social competencies among learners is essential for resilience, employability, and global citizenship.

> Education contributes significantly to improved health outcomes, civic participation, gender equality, and economic productivity
>
> UNESCO'S GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT (2023)

The National Perspective

Kenya has made considerable progress in education expansion and reform over the last two decades. Following the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in 2008, enrolment levels have significantly improved. The Kenya Economic Survey (2024)[4] by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) indicates that gross enrolment rates in primary education stood at 106.1% in 2023, while secondary enrolment rates reached 79% nationally. Transition from primary to secondary school increased to 78%, demonstrating a strong commitment toward universal education.

Further, the Competency Based Education (CBE), introduced in 2017, emphasizes competency acquisition, creativity, values, and practical life skills as essential components of basic education. It aligns closely with the Ministry of Education's Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF)[5], which outlines the need to equip learners with communication, critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, and citizenship competencies. These reforms aim to ensure that learners are not only academically proficient but also socially and emotionally prepared for productive life and responsible citizenship.

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*1. **UNESCO** (2023). Global Education Monitoring Report: Technology in Education – A Tool on Whose Terms? Paris: UNESCO.*

*2. **United Nations** (2015). Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York: United Nations.*

*3. **UNICEF** (2022). Global Framework on Transferable and Life Skills Education. New York: UNICEF*

*4. **Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS)** (2024). Economic Survey 2024. Nairobi: Government of Kenya.*

Despite these gains, disparities remain substantial across counties and population groups. The Ministry of Education's Education Sector Report (2023/24 - 2026/27)6 highlights persistent challenges that hinder equitable access and learning outcomes, particularly in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) and marginalized regions. Counties such as Turkana, West Pokot, Samburu, Baringo, Kitui, Homa Bay, Bomet, Bungoma, Nandi, and Kajiado consistently register lower education performance indicators compared to national averages. These counties are characterized by;

While over 80% of schools report having life skills instruction sessions, most lack adequate training materials, structured curricula, or trained facilitators to deliver them comprehensively.

UNICEF & MOE, 2023

- High poverty levels affecting school attendance and completion;
- Low transition rates from primary to secondary school;
- Gender disparities, especially among leaner girls;
- Inadequate infrastructure such as classrooms, sanitation facilities, and digital technologies;
- Teacher shortages and weak pupil-teacher ratios;
- Cultural barriers such as early marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM), domestic responsibilities, and child labour;
- Vulnerability to food insecurity and displacement due to droughts, floods, or conflict.

According to UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring data (2023)[7], approximately one in five Kenyan learners in marginalized regions drops out before completing secondary school. School absenteeism is particularly pronounced among girls, often linked to menstrual hygiene management challenges, early pregnancy, and domestic obligations. The Ministry of Education's National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK)[8] has highlighted similar patterns, confirming that children in fragile and pastoralist zones face compounded disadvantages related to mobility, economic instability, and gender norms.

The Role of Life Skills Development

In today's rapidly evolving world, cognitive and academic proficiency alone are insufficient to prepare young people for success. The integration of life skills education including self-awareness, communication, problem-solving, resilience, leadership, and digital literacy is increasingly recognized as essential to equip learners for personal growth, social participation, and employability. The UNICEF Global Framework on Transferable and Life Skills (2022) and the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2025)9 both emphasize building soft and transferable skills to address youth unemployment, social exclusion, and civic disengagement.

*5. **Ministry of Education (MoE)** (2017). Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF). Nairobi: Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development.*

*6. **Ministry of Education (MoE)** (2023). Education Sector Report 2023/24–2026/27. Nairobi: Government of Kenya.*

*7. **UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)** (2023). Education Data for Kenya and Marginalised Regions. Montreal: UNESCO-UIS.*

In Kenya, the Ministry of Education has integrated life skills into the CBE and the Guidance and Counselling policy, but effective implementation remains uneven, especially in under-resourced schools. Recent studies (UNICEF & MoE, 2023)[10] show that while over 80% of schools report having life skills instruction sessions, most lack adequate training materials, structured curricula, or trained facilitators to deliver them comprehensively. Moreover, psychological and social support services in many public day secondary schools remain limited, leaving learners, especially those from vulnerable groups, with insufficient guidance on mental health, digital safety, reproductive health, and personal development.

Chalan Foundation's Response

Recognizing the multidimensional nature of education vulnerability, Chalan Foundation designed the Education & Life Skills Development Program as an integrated initiative aimed at transforming learning environments and strengthening learner resilience in the ten targeted counties. The program seeks to;

- Improve access and retention through evidence-driven interventions that address absenteeism, dropout, and socio-economic barriers;
- Enhance learning outcomes by promoting quality instructional practices, inclusive pedagogy, and learner support systems;
- Build teacher and school leadership capacity for improved management, mentorship, and safeguarding of learners;
- Integrate life skills, psychosocial support, and digital learning into the school ecosystem to prepare learners for holistic development; and
- Engage communities and parents to create enabling environments supportive of education and youth empowerment.

> The findings are intended to be used to refine the programme's Theory of Change, prioritise interventions, allocate resources effectively, and establish a performance monitoring framework

To establish a credible evidence base for program planning and monitoring, Chalan Foundation commissioned Divergent Group Limited to carry out a baseline assessment across the ten counties including Samburu, Turkana, Kitui, Kajiado, West Pokot, Bomet, Bungoma, Nandi, Baringo, and Homa Bay.. The baseline assesses the status of education access, retention, transition, learning environments, school governance, digital readiness, and life skills acquisition among learners and teachers in public day secondary schools.

Through this study, the Foundation aims to identify gaps, establish measurable benchmarks, and generate actionable insights that will inform adaptive programming, strengthen partnerships with the Ministry of Education, and ultimately empower vulnerable learners to thrive both academically and in life.

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*8. **National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK)** (2022). Education Access and Retention in ASAL and Nomadic Communities . Nairobi: Government of Kenya.*

*9. **African Union Commission** (2016). Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016–2025) . Addis Ababa: African Union.*

*10. **UNICEF & Ministry of Education (Kenya)** (2023). Life Skills Education and Psychosocial Support in Kenyan Secondary Schools: Implementation Review . Nairobi: UNICEF Kenya*

1.2 Purpose of the Baseline Assessment

The overall purpose of the baseline assessment is to generate robust, context-specific, and actionable evidence to guide the design, implementation, and measurement of Chalan Foundation's Education & Life Skills Development Program. Specifically, the baseline sought to understand why learners face barriers to sustained participation and equitable outcomes, and how structural, household, school, and psychosocial factors interact to shape education access, well-being, and transition pathways.

The baseline serves as the first point in the program's monitoring and evaluation continuum and provides benchmark indicators against which progress and impact will be measured during midline and endline evaluations. The findings are intended to be used to refine the programme's Theory of Change, prioritise interventions, allocate resources effectively, and establish a performance monitoring framework.

Globally, baseline studies are an integral part of evidence-driven programming under the Results-Based Management (RBM) framework promoted by the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). They ensure that interventions are anchored in measurable realities and that future improvements can be credibly attributed to program activities. In alignment with these global standards, this baseline for Chalan Foundation aims to strengthen accountability for educational outcomes, inclusivity, and value for investment within Kenya's education ecosystem.

Link to Global and National Education Frameworks

The baseline directly supports the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" particularly its focus on quality, equity, and lifelong learning. It also aligns with;

Embedding these frameworks in this study ensures that the baseline assessment contributes to localized improvements and Kenya's broader commitments to global education and skills development agendas

UNICEF's Global Framework on Life Skills and Citizenship Education (2022) which emphasizes developing transferable skills for employability, personal well-being, and positive civic participation.

The African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2025) which positions education as the foundation for Africa's prosperity and calls for empowering youth with relevant life competencies.

Kenya's Vision 2030 which identifies education and digital readiness as pillars for inclusive development and labourmarket competitiveness.

The Ministry of Education's Education Sector Strategic Plan (2023/24-2026/27) which prioritizes equitable access, improved learning outcomes, teacher professionalization, and mainstreaming of life skills education within the Competency Based Education (CBE)framework.

Therefore, embedding these frameworks in this study ensures that the baseline assessment for Chalan Foundation's program contributes not only to localized improvements but also to Kenya's broader commitments to global education and skills development agendas.

Strategic Objectives of the Baseline Assessment

Establish Benchmarks: Quantify the existing status of key education and life-skills indicators across ten target counties and 51 public day secondary schools.

- **Diagnose Barriers:** Identify socioeconomic, institutional, cultural, and systemic constraints affecting learners' access, attendance, retention, and performance—particularly among vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- **Assess School Readiness:** Examine the capacity of sampled schools and county education systems to deliver quality, inclusive, and skills-based education (teacher competence, infrastructure, digital access, safeguarding, and governance).
- **Inform Program Design:** Generate insights to refine Chalan Foundation's intervention mix ensuring that planned activities, budgets, and resources correspond to real needs on the ground.
- **Support Monitoring and Learning:** Provide baseline values for establishing a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework that allows evidence-based adjustments and tracking of long-term outcomes.
- **Contribute to Policy Dialogue**: Supply data that can complement the Ministry of Education's and County Government's planning processes, fostering policy coherence and interstakeholder collaboration on inclusive education and life-skills training.

Alignment to Chalan Foundation's Theory of Change

Chalan Foundation's Theory of Change (ToC) is anchored in the belief that if vulnerable learners are provided with safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments, skilled teachers and mentors, and opportunities to build life and digital skills, then they will demonstrate improved learning outcomes, psychosocial well-being, and transition success ultimately leading to resilient, empowered young citizens capable of transforming their communities.

The baseline operationalizes this logic by measuring the preintervention status of the core pillars summarized below:

Table 1: Education and life skills pillars

Theoretical Pillar	Outcome Pathway	Baseline Role
Access & Retention	Increased enrolment, reduced dropout, smoother transition	Measures enrolment, attendance, dropout rates, gender and vulnerability disaggregation
Learning Environment	Enhanced safety, infrastructure, and resource adequacy	Assesses school facilities, sanitation, ICT access, and safeguarding mechanisms
Teacher & School Leadership Capacity	Improved pedagogical and management competence	Evaluates training gaps, support systems, supervision, and motivation
Life skills & Well-being	Assesses learner socio-emotional competencies across core resilience domains	Captures learners' self-efficacy, and decision-making, digital literacy communication, and emotional regulation, alongside access to psychosocial support.
Community Engagement	Supportive parental and community involvement	Examines parental attitudes, community-school linkages, and socio-cultural influences

Mapping these dimensions in the baseline enables Chalan Foundation to refine its inputs and ensure that future outcomes including increased retention, enhanced academic performance, and improved psychosocial health are verifiable and attributable to program interventions.

Intended Use of Baseline Findings

The results of the baseline will inform multiple layers of decision-making and accountability including;

- **Programmatic:** Adjust intervention design, targeting, and resource allocation.
- **Strategic**: Guide Chalan Foundation's partnerships with the Ministry of Education, County Governments, development partners and donor agencies.
- **Policy and Advocacy:** Provide empirical evidence for shaping life-skills education policy, inclusion frameworks, and leaner protection strategies.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish baseline metrics for outcome and impact measurement across the program's implementation cycle.

Ultimately, the baseline is not an end in itself but a critical starting point, a reference framework that enables Chalan Foundation and its partners to track progress toward equitable, high-quality, and life-ready education for all learners in Kenya's underserved regions.

1.3 Objectives of the Assessment

Overall Objective

To establish baseline values for key indicators related to access, retention, learning environment, and life skills development in the 10 target counties.

Specific Objectives:

1. To determine current enrolment, attendance, retention, and transition rates in the targeted day secondary schools.
2. To identify key risks, barriers, and vulnerabilities influencing learner participation, academic performance, and well-being.
3. To assess the capacity of schools to deliver skills-based, digital, and inclusive education.
4. To evaluate the readiness of county and school systems to support the Education & Life Skills Development Program.
5. To establish benchmark indicators for future monitoring and evaluation.

1.4 Scope of the Assessment

The baseline covered ten counties; Samburu, Turkana, Kitui, Kajiado, West Pokot, Bomet, Bungoma, Nandi, Baringo, and Homa Bay. These counties were selected based on their levels of educational vulnerability and socio-economic constraints. Within each county, five public day secondary schools were sampled from a list of ten identified by Chalan Foundation with the help of Ministry of Education through the respective County Directors of Education (CDE), resulting in a total of 51 schools participating in the assessment.

The study focused on three main respondent clusters as detailed below.

- Learners (Grades 9-10 and Forms 3-4) - Providing first-hand insights on access, attendance, learning environment, and psychosocial well-being.
- Parents and Community Representatives - Offering perspectives on household and socio-cultural factors affecting education.
- School Administrators and Officials - Sharing institutional-level insights on governance, infrastructure, staffing, and support systems.


Our 10 Target Counties
Areas of Focus for Chalan Foundation
Turkana
West Pokot
Kajiado
Samburu
Nandi
Homa Bay
Bomet
Bungoma
Baringo
Kitui
Turkana • Samburu • Nandi • West Pokot • Kajiado • Homa Bay • Bungoma • Bomet • Baringo • Kitui

In addition, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with county education officials, teachers, and community representatives to obtain qualitative perspectives that enrich the quantitative findings as detailed in methodology section of this report.

1.5 Significance of the Baseline

The baseline assessment represents a crucial milestone for Chalan Foundation's Education & Life Skills Development Program. Its findings provide an essential empirical foundation upon which program planning, design, and decision making will be anchored.Establishing clear benchmarks on the status of access, retention, learning environments, and life skills development across the ten target counties through the baseline enables the Foundation to plan and allocate resources based on concrete evidence rather than assumptions.

The data gathered through this study will guide Chalan Foundation in refining its interventions to reflect the distinct educational realities and priorities within each county. This ensures that program components remain responsive to local contexts, resource capacities, and learner needs, ultimately enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of implementation. In addition, the baseline sets a measurable reference point against which the Foundation can track changes and evaluate progress during subsequent midline and endline assessments.

Beyond informing Chalan Foundation's internal planning, the baseline findings also hold broader significance for the education sector in Kenya. The insights generated will contribute to national and county level dialogue on inclusive and equitable education, offering policymakers, development partners, and educators a deeper understanding of the barriers and opportunities that shape learning outcomes in marginalized regions. In this way, the baseline not only supports program improvement but also strengthens the evidence base for wider education policy and practice aimed at ensuring that every learner regardless of background has the opportunity to access, remain in, and thrive within safe and supportive learning environments.

1.6 Organization of the Report

THE REPORT IS STRUCTURED AS FOLLOWS:

1. **Executive summary.**
2. **Chapter One: Introduction, background, and objectives of the study.**
3. **Chapter Two: Methodology, including study design, sampling, data collection, and analysis.**
4. **Chapter Three: Key findings; organised by the programme's core pillars (Access & Retention, Learning Environment, Psychosocial Well-being & Life Skills, Safety & Protection, and Digital Readiness & Future Pathways)**
5. **Chapter Four: Discussion and triangulation of results.**
6. **Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations.**

CHAPTER 2
METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The baseline assessment adopted a mixed methods research design that combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to generate a rich, multidimensional understanding of the education landscape across the ten target counties. The decision to use a mixed approach was guided by the nature of the study objectives, which required the quantification of key education indicators while also exploring the nuanced social, cultural, and institutional factors influencing learner outcomes. The use of mixed methods enabled triangulation of findings, allowing quantitative trends to be interpreted alongside lived experiences, perceptions, and contextual explanations provided by learners, caregivers, and education stakeholders. This integration of methods allowed for the triangulation of evidence, strengthening the reliability, depth, and interpretability of findings.

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design to establish the prevalence and status of key indicators at a single point in time. This design is appropriate for the baseline's primary purpose: to provide a comprehensive 'snapshot' of current conditions. While it identifies correlations and associations between variables (for example, the link between household structure and absenteeism), it is not designed to establish causal relationships.

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design to establish the prevalence and status of key indicators at a single point in time.

The analysis of causality will be the focus of future midline and end-line evaluations, which will measure change over time and allow for attribution of impact to the programme's interventions.The quantitative component consisted of structured, Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) surveys administered to learners and parents. These instruments captured standardized data on school attendance, retention and transition rates, learning environments, digital readiness, and psychosocial well-being indicators. Using CAPI technology (implemented through the KoboToolbox platform) minimized data entry errors, enabled built-in validation checks, and allowed for real-time monitoring of field team performance.

Complementing the numerical data, the qualitative component explored stakeholders' lived experiences, attitudes, and perceptions to illuminate the contextual dynamics underlying observed trends. This was achieved through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with education officials, headteachers, and community leaders, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with learners, teachers, and parents. The qualitative exercises aimed to uncover drivers of school participation and barriers to life skills acquisition that are often not captured in surveys.

In addition, a comprehensive desk review of secondary information was undertaken to situate primary findings within the broader sectoral context. Sources included the Ministry of Education's Education Sector Report (2023/24–2026/27), Education Management Information System (EMIS) data, school performance records, county education plans, and relevant literature from institutions such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank.

Overall, this methodological configuration ensured that the baseline produced both statistically valid measurements and deep contextual interpretations, reflecting the real-world conditions that shape learning, retention, and life-skills development in public day secondary schools across the ten counties.

2.2 Sampling Design and Protocol

To ensure that the findings accurately represented the diverse contexts of Chalan Foundation's intervention areas, a multi-stage sampling strategy was adopted. The approach balanced methodological rigor with operational practicality, taking into account logistical constraints, population sizes, and the program's focus on vulnerable learners in public day secondary schools.

2.2.1 Sample Selection

Stage 1: County Selection

All ten counties targeted by Chalan Foundation Samburu, Turkana, Kitui, Kajiado, West Pokot, Bomet, Bungoma, Baringo, Nandi, and Homa Bay were purposively included in the study. This purposive selection was justified by the fact that these counties constitute the official geographic scope of the Education & Life Skills Development Program. Each of the selected counties is characterized by unique educational and socioeconomic challenges, including high poverty incidence, low school retention, and earlymarriage prevalence. Including all ten ensured a comprehensive baseline reflective of the program's full operational landscape.

Stage 2: School Selection

Within each county, Chalan Foundation, in partnership with the County Directors of Education, initially identified ten eligible public day secondary schools that met predefined inclusion criteria of enrolment size between 300 and 800 students, representation of vulnerable populations, and demonstrated need indicated by low performance, high absenteeism, or other vulnerability markers.

From these ten schools per county, five schools were selected for participation in the baseline using purposive stratification to ensure variation in location (rural, periurban, and urban), school size, and gender composition. This process yielded a total of fifty (50) sampled schools nationwide. An additional one school was added in Nandi County giving a total sample of 51 schools interviewed in the baseline assessment.

Each of the selected counties is characterized by unique educational and socioeconomic challenges

The rationale for selecting half of the eligible schools per county was twofold:

1. Representativeness with efficiency capturing adequate diversity of school types within logistical and budgetary limits; and
2. Comparative analysis allowing Chalan Foundation to compare conditions across counties while maintaining reasonable depth within each local context.

Stage 3: Respondent Selection within Schools

At the school level, respondents were drawn from the primary program target groups who included learners and parents while additional institutional and community voices were captured through interviews and focus groups.

1. Learners

In each sampled school, twelve (12) learners were selected through systematic random sampling from official class registers across Grades 9 – 10 and Forms 3 - 4. Selection alternated between male and female students to maintain gender balance. The inclusion of learners from different class levels provided a vertical perspective across the entire secondary cycle, enabling the study to identify variations in dropout risk, participation, and exposure to life-skills education.

2. Parents

Four (4) parents per school were identified using a semirandom selection from active Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) attendance lists or through meetings convened during datacollection visits. This approach ensured inclusion of both male and female guardians while focusing on parents actively engaged in school affairs, as they could provide informed insights on household-level barriers to education.

3. School Administrators

Headteachers, deputy principals, and heads of departments from each sampled school were interviewed purposively due to their leadership roles and operational oversight. These respondents provided essential information on school resources, governance, safeguarding, infrastructure, and curriculum delivery.

The combination of random and purposive selection techniques maintained both statistical validity and contextual richness.

Stage 4: Key Informants and Community Stakeholders

At the county and national levels, ten (10) County Directors of Education (CDEs), two (2) officials from the Ministry of Education (MoE) headquarters, and eight (8) community leaders including chiefs, assistant chiefs, church leaders, or representatives of local education-support organizations were engaged. These participants were purposively sampled based on their expertise and influence in the education sector. Their perspectives contextualized school-level data within broader governance and policy frameworks.

2.2.2 Sample Size Determination

I. Sampling Justification for the Learner Sample Size Determination

(a) Base Sample Size for Estimating Proportions

Sample size formula:

$$n_0 = (Z^2 \times p(1 - p)) / d^2$$

Where:

Z = Z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level (95% = 1.96)

p = expected population proportion; when unknown, 0.5 is used as it produces the maximum required sample size

d = acceptable margin of error (commonly 0.05 for ±5%)

Using conservative assumptions:

$$n_0 = (1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times (1 - 0.5)) / 0.05^2$$

$$= (3.8416 \times 0.25) / 0.0025$$

$$= 384.16 \approx 385$$

Thus, a minimum sample of approximately 385 learners is required under a simple random sampling assumption to estimate proportions with a precision of ±5% at the 95% confidence level.

(b) Adjustment for Clustered Sampling (Design Effect)

Because learners were sampled within schools (clusters), responses tend to be more similar within the same school compared to across schools. To account for this clustering effect, the initial sample size is adjusted using a Design Effect (DEFF).

Adjusted sample formula:

$$n_1 = n_0 \times DEFF$$

A common planning expression for Design Effect is:

$$DEFF = 1 + (m - 1)\rho$$

Where:

m = average number of learners sampled per school (m = 12)

ρ (rho) = intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC). In education and KAP type indicators, values often range between 0.02 and 0.10 depending on outcome similarity within schools.

Example using moderate clustering assumption (ρ = 0.05):

$$DEFF = 1 + (12 - 1) \times 0.05$$

$$= 1 + 0.55$$

$$= 1.55$$

Applying the design effect to the base sample:

$$n_1 = 385 \times 1.55$$

$$= 596.75 \approx 597$$

The achieved learner sample was:

$$n = 51 \text{ schools} \times 12 \text{ learners per school}$$

$$= 612 \text{ learners}$$

Therefore, the achieved sample of 612 learners exceeds the minimum required sample size after adjusting for clustered sampling, confirming that the learner sample is statistically adequate under realistic clustering assumptions.

II. Sample Size Justification for Parents/Guardians

The parents/guardian's component of the study was designed primarily to provide household context and triangulation for learner-level findings rather than to produce highly precise population estimates. Nevertheless, the achieved sample size satisfies acceptable statistical requirements for descriptive analysis.

Sample size for estimating proportions can be approximated using the standard formula:

$$n_0 = (Z^2 \times p(1 - p)) / d^2$$

Where:

Z = Z-score for desired confidence level (95% = 1.96)

p = expected proportion (0.5 used when unknown to provide maximum sample requirement)

d = acceptable margin of error

For contextual household indicators, a margin of error of ±7% is typically acceptable. Applying this assumption:

$$n_0 = (1.96^2 \times 0.25) / 0.07^2$$

$$= 0.9604 / 0.0049$$

= 196 respondents (approx.)

The study achieved parent interviews in sampled schools as follows:

n = 4 parents × 51 schools = 204 parents/guardians

Therefore, the achieved parent sample of 209 respondents meets and slightly exceeds the minimum requirement for descriptive estimation under simple random sampling assumptions. While clustering at school level may slightly reduce precision, the sample remains sufficient for contextual analysis and triangulation with learner and institutional findings.

III. Sample Composition Summary

In aggregate, the quantitative component comprised 800 respondents; 612 learners (12 per school × 51 schools) and 209 parents (4 per school × 50 schools). Complementary qualitative data were derived from 20 Focus Group Discussions (two per county) and 50 Key Informant Interviews conducted at school, county, and national levels.

IV. Rationale for the Sampling Approach

This multilevel sampling methodology was intentionally designed to balance representativeness, operational feasibility, and depth of analysis. The purposive inclusion of all program counties ensured coverage of Kenya's diverse ecological and socioeconomic contexts, from arid and pastoralist regions to agricultural and periurban zones. Sampling schools that serve vulnerable learners allowed the baseline to capture conditions aligned with Chalan Foundation's mission, focusing on the populations most in need of educational and psychosocial interventions.

The combination of probability sampling for learners and purposive sampling for administrative and policy stakeholders created a complementary quantitative dataset enabling statistical generalization within the

program's scope, and qualitative insights deepening the interpretation of those statistics. This rationalized design not only provides credible benchmark indicators for future comparison but also ensures that the evidence generated is relevant, actionable, and directly translatable into program improvement and policymaking.

2.3 Data Collection and Fieldwork Procedures

The baseline fieldwork was carried out between 10 and 28 January 2026 across ten counties in collaboration with Chalan Foundation and the respective County Directors of Education. The process was designed to ensure consistency and rigor in all data collection activities while adapting flexibly to the logistical, linguistic, and cultural realities of each study location. It followed an organized sequence beginning with tool development and pilot testing, followed by enumerator training, field deployment, continuous supervision, and structured quality control.

A. Tool Development and Customization

Data collection instruments were jointly developed by Divergent Group Limited and Chalan team, using the program's theory of change and indicator framework as the guiding reference. Four sets of tools were prepared;

1. Structured Questionnaires for learners and parents to gather quantitative data on enrolment, attendance, retention, learning environment, well-being, and exposure to life skills education.
2. School Assessment Checklist for headteachers and deputies to assess institutional capacity, governance, infrastructure, digital readiness, safety, and teacher deployment.

All tools were reviewed and validated by the Chalan Foundation team, the Ministry of Education and The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI)

3. Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide for education officers and community leaders to explore system-level challenges, coordination mechanisms, policy priorities, and emerging opportunities.
4. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guides for learners, parents, and teachers, designed to elicit attitudes, experiences, and recommendations relating to education quality, safety, and life skills development.

The tools were first developed in English and then reviewed for clarity, language simplicity, and cultural relevance. Key sections were translated into Kiswahili where appropriate. The questionnaires were scripted on the KoboToolbox CAPI platform, incorporating skip logic, validation checks, and automatic time and location stamps to strengthen data authenticity and reliability.

All tools were reviewed and validated by the Chalan Foundation team, the Ministry of Education and The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) to ensure they aligned with national education frameworks and were appropriate for the target age group. The life skills module was designed to measure specific domains, including decision-making, communication, emotional regulation, and teamwork, drawing on established frameworks such as UNICEF's Life Skills Education.

B. Pilot Testing and Pre-field Validation

Before field deployment, all tools were piloted in two non-sampled public day secondary schools in Kajiado County. The pilot tested flow, comprehension, translation accuracy, device functionality, and interview duration. Feedback from enumerators and participants was carefully reviewed to identify ambiguous or redundant questions and to determine whether response options captured the full range of participant experiences. Adjustments were then made to question wording, skip patterns, and logic structures. The pilot results confirmed that the tools were understandable, contextually sound, and capable of producing the required indicators within the expected time limits.

C. Enumerator Recruitment and Training

A total of 30 enumerators, 7 supervisors, and 5 qualitative moderators with note takers were recruited. Selection criteria included previous experience in education-sector research, proficiency in English and Kiswahili, and familiarity with local languages and community contexts within the respective counties.

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Enumerators and supervisors participated in a two-day intensive virtual training facilitated by Divergent's project team. Chalan team also joined the training and they provided the organization's overview on education and life skills and the goal and objectives of the baseline assessment. The training covered research objectives, indicator definitions, use of the CAPI system, ethical and safeguarding standards, and detailed field protocols. Role play sessions and mock interviews were conducted to ensure enumerators understood question intent, skip logic, and respondent management.

Supervisors received additional briefings on coordination, daily reporting, back-checking procedures, and problem resolution. All training participants were trained to observe confidentiality, child protection, and gender sensitivity throughout data collection. The training concluded with a half-day field simulation exercise that tested team coordination and equipment functionality.

D. Field Data Collection

Field activities were implemented sequentially in each county according to a schedule agreed upon with county education authorities. Each team included one supervisor, four enumerators, and at least one moderator assigned to qualitative sessions. Data collection focused on public day secondary schools selected under the sampling plan, with support from school heads and County Education Offices.

Quantitative surveys were conducted face-to-face with learners, school administrators and parents within school compounds or other convenient venues. Enumerators obtained assent from learners and verbal consent from headteachers or parents before beginning each interview. Efforts were made to ensure privacy so that participants could respond freely.

Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were held in neutral settings such as school halls or local administration offices. Each FGD had between 8 and 12 participants and was facilitated by trained moderators who encouraged balanced participation through discussion prompts. Interviews were guided by topic outlines but allowed flexibility for probing and clarification using the discussion guides.

Field teams synchronized completed surveys daily to the cloud server whenever network connectivity was available. Supervisors and central coordinators remotely monitored synchronization logs to verify progress and identify incomplete submissions in real time.

E. Supervision and Quality Assurance

Quality assurance was emphasized throughout the field phase. Supervisors accompanied enumerators on the first day of interviews to observe their techniques and provide on-the-spot feedback. Daily debriefing meetings were held each evening to review progress, discuss emerging challenges, and resolve inconsistencies. Divergent's technical team in Nairobi monitored uploaded data through real-time dashboards that flagged missing values or logical errors for immediate correction.

At least 20 % of interviews were back-checked by supervisors to verify the accuracy and completeness of recorded responses. Random spot checks were also conducted by the field coordinators

At least 20 % of interviews were back-checked by supervisors to verify the accuracy and completeness of recorded responses. Random spot-checks were also conducted by the field coordinator to ensure adherence to sampling guidelines and ethical standards. Qualitative sessions were audio-recorded with permission, and moderators submitted detailed field notes to support subsequent transcription and analysis.

F. Data Security and Storage

After each day of data collection, validated datasets were uploaded to Divergent's secure encrypted cloud server. Access was restricted to authorized personnel only. All quantitative records were stored under anonymous identification numbers without names or personal identifiers. For qualitative data, recordings and transcripts were saved in password-protected folders and backed up in multiple locations for redundancy. Data will be archived securely for the duration of the study cycle and destroyed after the final evaluation, consistent with Chalan Foundation's and Divergent's data protection policies, and in compliance with Kenya's Data Protection Act (2021).

G. Ethical and Safeguarding Protocols

The baseline study involved minors and therefore adhered strictly to ethical and safeguarding standards in accordance with Kenyan regulations and UNICEF child research guidelines. Consent procedures were explained verbally in a language familiar to respondents. Participation was voluntary, and respondents had the right to decline or withdraw at any time. No personal or identifying information was collected from learners.

Enumerators were trained to recognize signs of discomfort, distress, or potential safeguarding issues. In such

cases, respondents were given the option to pause or terminate the interview, and referrals to guidance and counselling teachers were provided where necessary. Gender, inclusion, and disability sensitivity were observed throughout the process to ensure equitable participation.

H. Rationale for the Field Approach

The field methodology was designed to produce high-quality, representative, and ethically sound data within the time and resource constraints of a multi-county study. The use of digital data-capture tools enhanced accuracy and speed, while intensive supervision and iterative feedback ensured uniform adherence to protocols across counties. The combination of quantitative interviews, qualitative discussions, and administrative data review allowed the research team to capture both breadth and depth, providing a robust foundation for evidence-based decision-making and program planning.

2.4 Data Management and Analysis

Rigorous data management and analytical procedures were adopted to ensure reliability, internal consistency, and validity of the findings. Divergent Group Limited established a systematic workflow covering data verification, cleaning, coding, analysis, interpretation, and triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative datasets.

After cleaning, a codebook was created to document all variables, formats, and value labels for transparency and replicability.

A. Data Verification and Cleaning

After all fieldwork was completed at the end of January 2026, quantitative datasets were exported from the KoboToolbox server into Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The first step involved confirming that all sampled schools and respondents were represented. Data quality checks were conducted to identify and correct incomplete entries, inconsistent codes, and outliers. Logical cross-referencing compared entries such as enrolment numbers and attendance rates to ensure internal validity.

Range and skip validations embedded in the CAPI system significantly reduced manual errors. After cleaning, a codebook was created to document all variables, formats, and value labels for transparency and replicability.

B.Quantitative Analysis

Data analysis was guided by the baseline objectives and Chalan Foundation's results framework.

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to summarize demographic and educational variables, including learner enrolment, attendance, resource availability, and participation in life skills sessions.
- **Cross-tabulations and Comparative Analysis:** Comparative statistics were applied to examine differences across gender, county, and school-level characteristics. Cross-county comparisons were performed to identify geographic disparities in key indicators such as attendance patterns, learning

conditions, and life skills proficiency. Tests of association, including chi-square and independent t-tests, were used where appropriate.

To identify predictors of key outcomes like absenteeism, multivariate regression analysis was conducted, controlling for factors such as household structure, poverty, and gender. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of the drivers of vulnerability.

- **Computation of Baseline Indicators:** Program indicators were computed precisely as defined in the Foundation's MEAL indicator reference sheet. These metrics provide the benchmark values that will serve as reference points for measuring change during subsequent evaluations.
- **Data Visualization:** Results were presented using charts, tables, and dashboards created in SPSS, allowing clear communication of patterns and trends for decision-makers.

C. Qualitative Data Processing and Analysis

Audio recordings from KIIs and FGDs were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for completeness. Each transcript was imported into NVivo for coding and thematic analysis. The analytical process combined deductive coding, guided by the research objectives and theory of change, with inductive coding to identify emerging themes not captured within the original framework.

The responses were categorized around major themes such as access, retention, governance, psychosocial well-being, gender inclusion, and digital readiness. Codes were refined iteratively until thematic saturation was reached. Direct quotations were included to illustrate key perspectives. To enhance reliability, two team members coded each transcript, and discrepancies were reconciled through joint review sessions.

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D. Integration and Triangulation of Findings

Quantitative and qualitative datasets were analyzed together to provide a holistic understanding of the education environment. The research team applied three forms of triangulation:

- **Data Source Triangulation:** Cross-validation of findings obtained from different respondent groups, such as learners, teachers, and county officials.
- **Methodological Triangulation:** Integration of survey data, interviews, and focus groups to verify consistency of results across methods.
- **Thematic Triangulation:** Comparison of emerging issues across counties and demographic subgroups to identify shared challenges and unique contextual features.

This approach strengthened internal validity and ensured that conclusions were supported by multiple lines of evidence.

E. Reliability and Validity Checks

Instrument reliability was ensured through thorough tool pretesting, standardized enumerator training, and real-time supervision. Content and construct validity were confirmed by aligning indicators with existing frameworks from the Ministry of Education and international bodies such as UNICEF and UNESCO. The triangulation of data from multiple sources further enhanced the validity of the findings.

F. Data Interpretation and Utilization

After analysis, findings were synthesized into key insights organized around the baseline objectives and intended outcomes of the Education & Life Skills Development Program. The findings were structured to directly address the programme's core pillars and to inform the development of a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) framework.

Preliminary results were presented during internal validation and reflection sessions with Chalan Foundation staff in February 2026. Feedback from these sessions informed the writing of the baseline report and the design of action plans for program implementation and continuous learning.

Ensuring the integrity, reliability, and ethical soundness of the baseline process was central to Divergent's approach.

G. Rationale for Analytical Approach

The analytical strategy was designed to ensure transparency, methodological robustness, and relevance to policy and practice. The integration of quantitative precision with qualitative depth generated a balanced evidence base that speaks simultaneously to program implementation realities and education-sector policy needs. Through this structured process, Chalan Foundation now possesses reliable benchmark data capable of supporting midline and endline comparisons, informing stakeholder decisions, and reinforcing accountability for measurable educational improvement.

2.5 Quality Assurance and Ethical Considerations

Ensuring the integrity, reliability, and ethical soundness of the baseline process was central to Divergent's approach. Quality assurance covered every stage of the study lifecycle from design to analysis while ethical safeguards protected the welfare and dignity of all participants, particularly minors.

A. Quality Assurance Procedures

A comprehensive quality assurance (QA) framework was implemented to maintain methodological and operational consistency throughout the assessment. The QA process comprised planning, real-time supervision, monitoring, and post-field verification.

1. Pre-field Phase: Prior to data collection, Divergent drafted a detailed field protocol outlining roles, timelines, and reporting structures. The technical team reviewed and tested all data-collection instruments to ensure accuracy and usability before final deployment. Enumerator and supervisor training included dedicated sessions on data-quality principles, error detection, and correction techniques.

2. During Fieldwork: Supervisors conducted daily field reviews to cross-check completed questionnaires on enumerator devices before synchronization with the cloud server. Real-time dashboards allowed technical staff to monitor response numbers, missing data, and outliers. Any irregularities or deviations from sampling guidelines were immediately communicated to the field teams.
3. Post-field Quality Review: After each county exercise, supervisors submitted progress reports detailing team performance, logistical challenges, and mitigation measures. Once data collection ended, Divergent's central office conducted back-checks on at least 20 % of recorded interviews to confirm factual accuracy and enumerator adherence to protocols.
4. Technical Oversight: A senior researcher served as quality controller, coordinating daily briefings between field supervisors and data managers. This ensured that all queries, clarifications, and corrections were resolved before final analysis.

The study also adhered to the Data Protection Act (2021) and drew on international ethical standards, such as UNICEF's procedures for research involving children

All findings and datasets were reviewed internally by Divergent's Quality Assurance team prior to submission to Chalan Foundation. This additional layer of oversight validated the coherence between methodology, data integrity, and reported findings.

B. Ethical Considerations

Because the study involved learners and other vulnerable groups, it was guided by strong ethical principles especially transparency, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. We made sure to follow Kenya's national research guidelines, which included obtaining formal approval from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The study also adhered to the Data Protection Act (2021) and drew on international ethical standards, such as UNICEF's procedures for research involving children, to ensure the rights and well-being of all participants were protected throughout the process as detailed below.

- Informed Consent and Assent: All potential respondents received a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and use of information. Written or verbal consent was sought from adult respondents, while assent was obtained from learners alongside permission from headteachers and parents or guardians. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any point without penalty.
- Confidentiality and Data Protection: No identifying personal information was recorded. Respondents were assigned unique codes, and all datasets were stored on encrypted servers with password protection. Access to raw data was limited strictly to authorized members of the Divergent research team.
- Minimizing Harm and Discomfort: Enumerators were trained to recognize signs of emotional distress and terminate interviews or refer respondents to school counsellors if necessary. Sensitive questions on well-being and safety were presented in a non-judgmental manner to foster honest responses.

- Gender, Inclusion, and Disability Sensitivity: The study ensured balanced representation of boys and girls, and made necessary adjustments to include learners with disabilities where present. Enumerators were explicitly briefed on equitable engagement and non-discrimination.

Ethical clearance was also sought from county education authorities, and letters of support were issued to facilitate data collection in schools. All field activities were reviewed periodically to ensure adherence to these ethical guidelines.

2.6 Limitations of the Study

While the baseline assessment was designed to achieve the highest possible accuracy within available time and resources, several constraints were encountered that may have affected the process or interpretation of results.

1. The ten target counties covered extensive and sometimes remote areas. Travel time between schools was long, occasionally limiting the number of interviews achievable in a single day. This challenge was mitigated through careful scheduling and by deploying additional field teams to high-travel regions.
2. The study drew heavily on self-reported data regarding education participation, learning environments, and life skills acquisition, which reflected respondents' perceptions, experiences, and feelings. These responses may have been influenced by personal bias, social desirability, or differing interpretations of education and life skills outcomes, and as such, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Additionally, administrator self-reporting bias is also a potential limitation. School officials may have over-reported the adequacy of facilities or the existence of functioning policies to avoid scrutiny. To mitigate this, the study triangulated administrator reports with learner and parent perspectives, and with direct observation where possible.
3. Data collection coincided with school opening weeks, a period characterized by registration activities and staff meetings. As a result, some planned interviews required rescheduling to accommodate school routines. Cooperative planning with headteachers minimized delays.

Despite these challenges, the study team successfully achieved 100 % of the targeted interviews and all key informant discussions.

4. The topics of discussion such as early pregnancy, absenteeism, or family poverty required careful handling. Some respondents were initially hesitant to discuss such subjects. Enumerators used trust-building techniques and reassured participants about confidentiality to encourage honest engagement.
5. Although enumerators were from the data collection locations and spoke the local languages, some idiomatic expressions and contextual meanings required further clarification during translation and transcription, and all translations were verified by reviewers to maintain accuracy.
6. In remote arid and semi-arids (ASALs) regions, intermittent mobile connectivity affected real-time data upload. Supervisors mitigated this by synchronizing data in batches from towns with stronger network coverage.

Despite these challenges, the study team successfully achieved 100% of the targeted interviews and all key informant discussions. The limitations noted above were managed in ways that preserved the integrity of the research design and did not materially affect the quality of the dataset.

2.7 Rationale for the Methodological Approach

The overall methodology was deliberately designed to deliver credible, context-sensitive, and actionable evidence capable of guiding Chalan Foundation's program strategy and performance measurement framework. Several specific rationales informed the methodological choices used in this baseline.

1. Alignment with Program Objectives: The mixed-methods approach directly supported Chalan Foundation's aim of generating both quantitative benchmarks and qualitative insights. Whereas surveys established objective measures of enrolment, retention, and learning conditions, qualitative interviews helped explain why these patterns occurred within county-specific contexts.
2. Representativeness and Feasibility: The multi-stage sampling strategy balanced statistical representation with logistical feasibility. Including all ten counties provided geographic breadth, while the selection of fifty schools ensured diversity in vulnerability profiles and management capacity. The use of both random and purposive selection methods allowed the study to capture key perspectives efficiently.
3. Evidence for Accountability and Learning: By establishing verifiable baseline values for key indicators, the methodology contributes to Chalan Foundation's Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system. It enables future comparisons during midline and end-line studies, supporting transparent reporting to donors, partners, and government stakeholders.
4. Ethical Compliance and Safeguards: The approach integrated internationally recognized ethical standards into every phase of the assessment, ensuring participant safety and data privacy while maintaining research credibility.
5. Quality and Timeliness: Digital data collection through CAPI enhanced accuracy, shortened entry-to-analysis timelines, and allowed for immediate identification of inconsistencies. Daily supervision and real-time monitoring ensured that errors were promptly corrected.
6. Applicability to Policy and Practice: The baseline results are positioned not only to inform Chalan Foundation's internal program design but also to contribute to broader policy discussions within Kenya's education sector. The chosen tools and indicators align with national standards and international frameworks such as the SDG 4 targets and the Competency-Based Curriculum reforms, thus ensuring relevance to both practice and policy.

The chosen methodology therefore provided a practical yet rigorous structure that balanced scientific reliability with ethical integrity and operational realism. It ensured that the evidence generated would effectively guide program decision-making, serve as an accountability instrument, and contribute meaningfully to national and local efforts to enhance equitable access and life-skills development for all learners.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

Overview

This chapter presents integrated findings from the baseline assessment for the Education and Life Skills Development Programme implemented by Chalan Foundation across ten programme counties: Samburu, Turkana, Kitui, Kajiado, West Pokot, Baringo, Bomet, Bungoma, Nandi and Homa Bay. The analysis draws on both quantitative and qualitative evidence to provide a comprehensive understanding of the education and life skills environment within the targeted counties and to explain not only what is happening in schools, but why these patterns persist across diverse contexts.

To ensure clarity and direct alignment with the programme's goals, the findings are organised according to the programme's core pillars: Access & Retention, Learning Environment, Psychosocial Well-being & Life Skills, Safety & Protection, and Digital Readiness & Future Pathways. Cross-county comparisons are integrated throughout to highlight geographic disparities and inform targeted interventions.

Quantitative data were collected through structured CAPI surveys administered to 812 respondents, comprising 612 learners and 209 parents and guardians. This component establishes baseline indicators related to learner demographics and vulnerability, school participation and progression, household support systems, and disability inclusion. The quantitative findings are complemented by qualitative data generated through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with learners, parents, teachers, school leaders, county and sub-county education officials, community elders, and religious leaders. In addition, In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) provided nuanced perspectives on institutional capacity, community norms, and protection risks affecting leaner learners. Secondary data from Ministry of Education reports and EMIS records were reviewed to triangulate findings and situate the results within the broader national education policy and reform context.

Across all data sources, a consistent picture emerges. Learner aspiration and commitment to education remain high, and schools demonstrate strong dedication to supporting vulnerable learners. However, sustained participation and effective learning are constrained by interrelated structural and systemic barriers, including poverty and livelihood insecurity, fragile and unstable household environments, overcrowded classrooms, limited access to learning resources, insufficient psychosocial and mentorship support, and weak life skills development and post-school transition pathways.

This chapter synthesizes multiple evidence sources to evaluate not only educational access but also how effectively learners are supported to build resilience, psychosocial well-being, and the life skills required to transition successfully beyond secondary school. The analysis reveals pronounced equity gaps for learners affected by poverty, disability, gender-related risks, and household instability. Findings are structured around thematic areas aligned with programme objectives and child-well-being frameworks, including learner profiles and vulnerability patterns, progression and retention risks, household and community support systems, disability inclusion, psychosocial well-being, life-skills development, and inter-county disparities.

3.1.1 Learners Findings

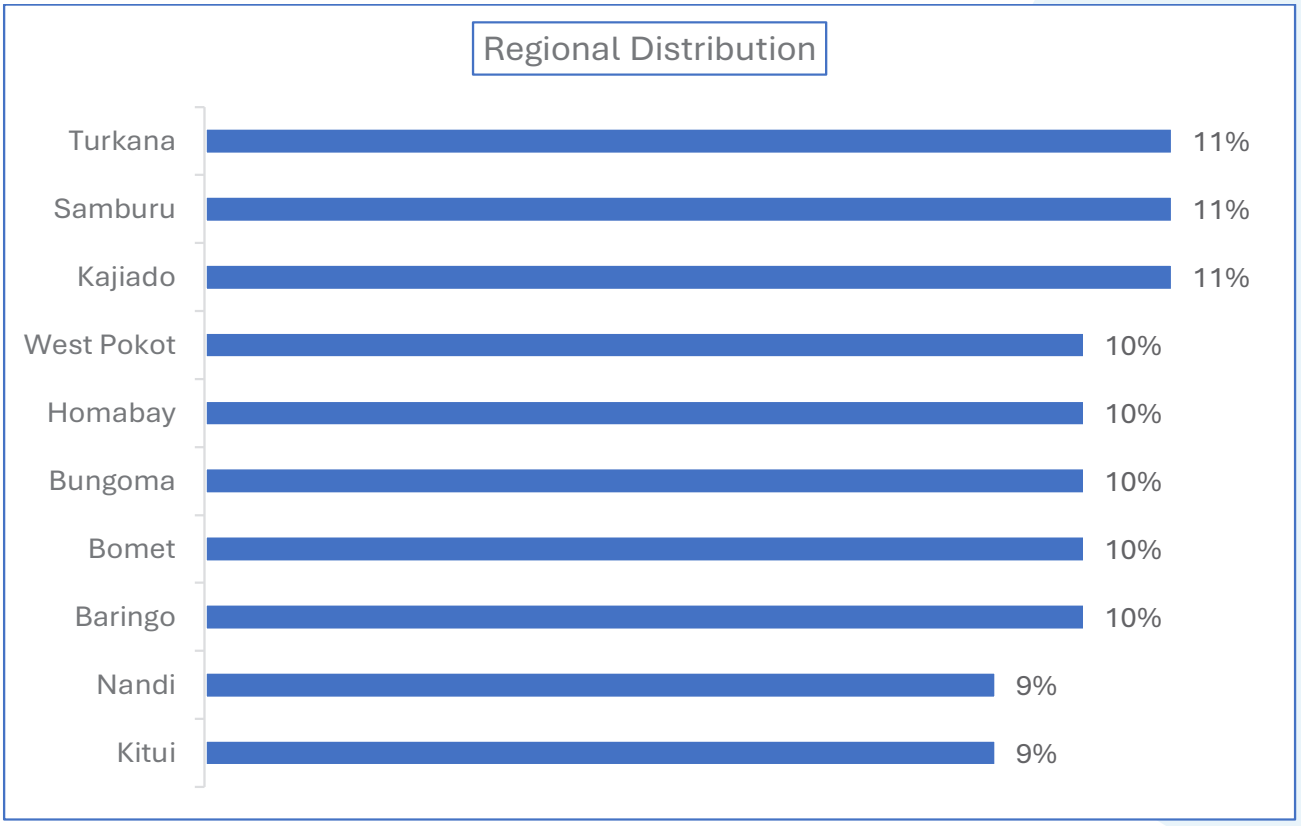
Profile of Respondents and Study Context

Understanding learner characteristics and contextual realities is essential for interpreting programme effectiveness and identifying groups that face heightened risk of educational exclusion. This section presents demographic and socio-economic characteristics of study participants and highlights vulnerability factors that influence access, retention, and life skills development outcomes.

Age Distribution

The baseline survey reached 612 secondary school learners across ten counties, with a mean age of 16.8 years. This broadly aligns with the expected age range for senior secondary education in Kenya (Forms 2–4 / Grades 10–12). Age patterns, however, are not uniform across locations. Learners in Turkana (mean age 17.85), Bungoma (17.21) and Homabay (17.03) are, on average, older than the overall mean, while those in Kitui (16.43), Samburu (16.31) and Kajiado (16.42) tend to be slightly younger. By grade, the data shows the anticipated progression, with younger learners concentrated in lower forms and older learners in upper forms. Nonetheless, the relatively high average ages in some counties and grades point to a notable presence of over-age learners, likely linked to late entry, repetition, or disrupted schooling associated with poverty, seasonal migration or family responsibilities. From a programming perspective, this indicates that a proportion of learners are following non-linear school trajectories and may be at increased risk of disengagement and dropout. Life skills and retention-focused interventions will need to be sensitive to the realities of over-age learners who may already feel they are "behind" their peers.

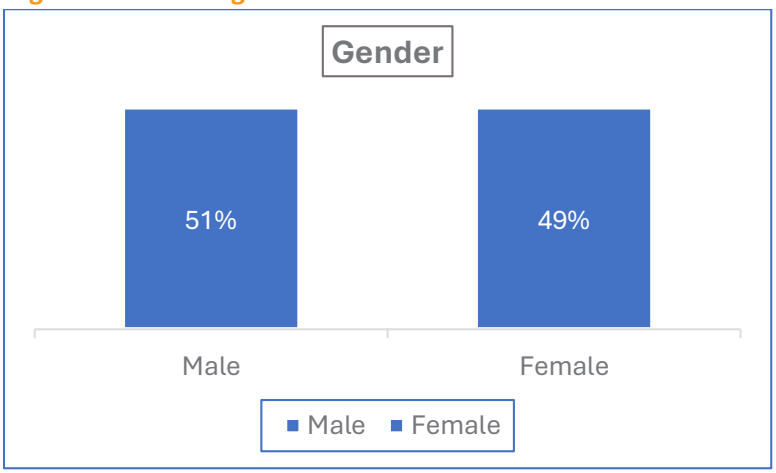
Figure 1: Learner regional distribution



Gender of Learners

The sample is almost evenly split by gender, with 51% male (313 learners) and 49% female (299 learners). This balance is largely maintained across counties and grades, with only minor deviations, and provides a solid foundation for gender-responsive analysis and programming. It ensures that both boys' and girls' perspectives and experiences are meaningfully represented in the baseline. At the same time, numerical parity does not equate to parity in experience. Subsequent sections of the dataset (for example, on absenteeism, safety, risk behaviours and life skills) will be critical to unpack how gender shapes vulnerability and opportunity in and around school, including issues such as early pregnancy, school-related gender-based violence, differential household expectations, and access to support.

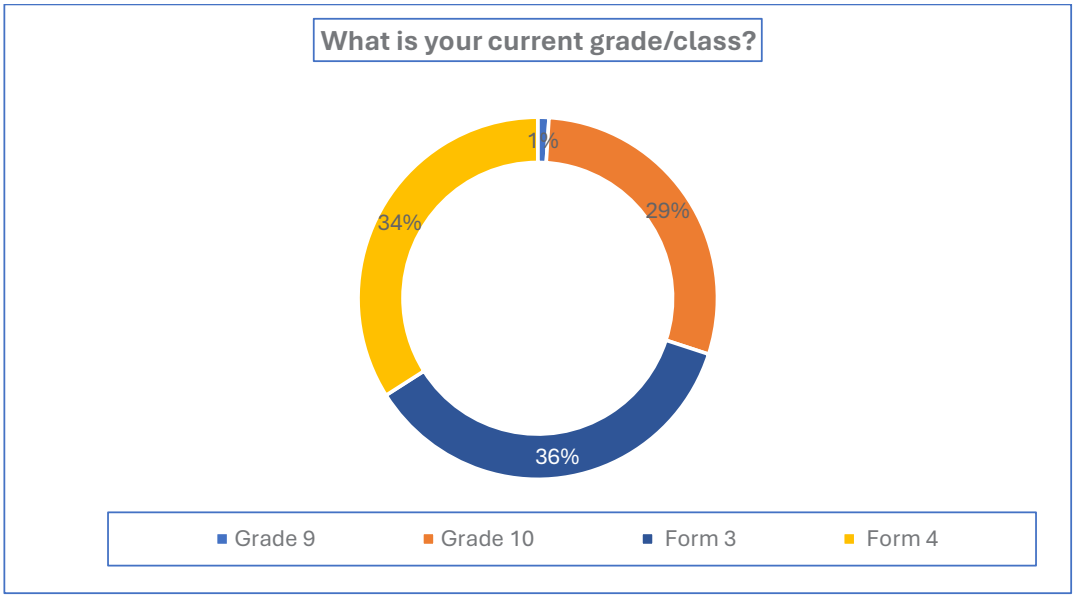
Figure 2: Learners' gender distribution



Grade / Class Distribution

In terms of grade distribution, the baseline is heavily weighted towards learners in upper secondary. Only 1% of respondents are in Grade 9, compared to 29% in Grade 10, 36% in Form 3 and 34% in Form 4. This skew provides rich insights into the experiences of older learners who are approaching high-stakes examinations/assessments and key transition points such as moving into tertiary education, vocational training or the labour market but offers relatively limited visibility of those at the entry point to secondary school. For the Chalan Foundation, this means the baseline is particularly well suited to understanding the needs and aspirations of older learners and those facing imminent transition decisions. Future assessments could usefully strengthen representation from lower forms to capture the full secondary school journey and to identify risks and protective factors earlier.

Figure 3: Current Grade/class



FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

LEARNERS

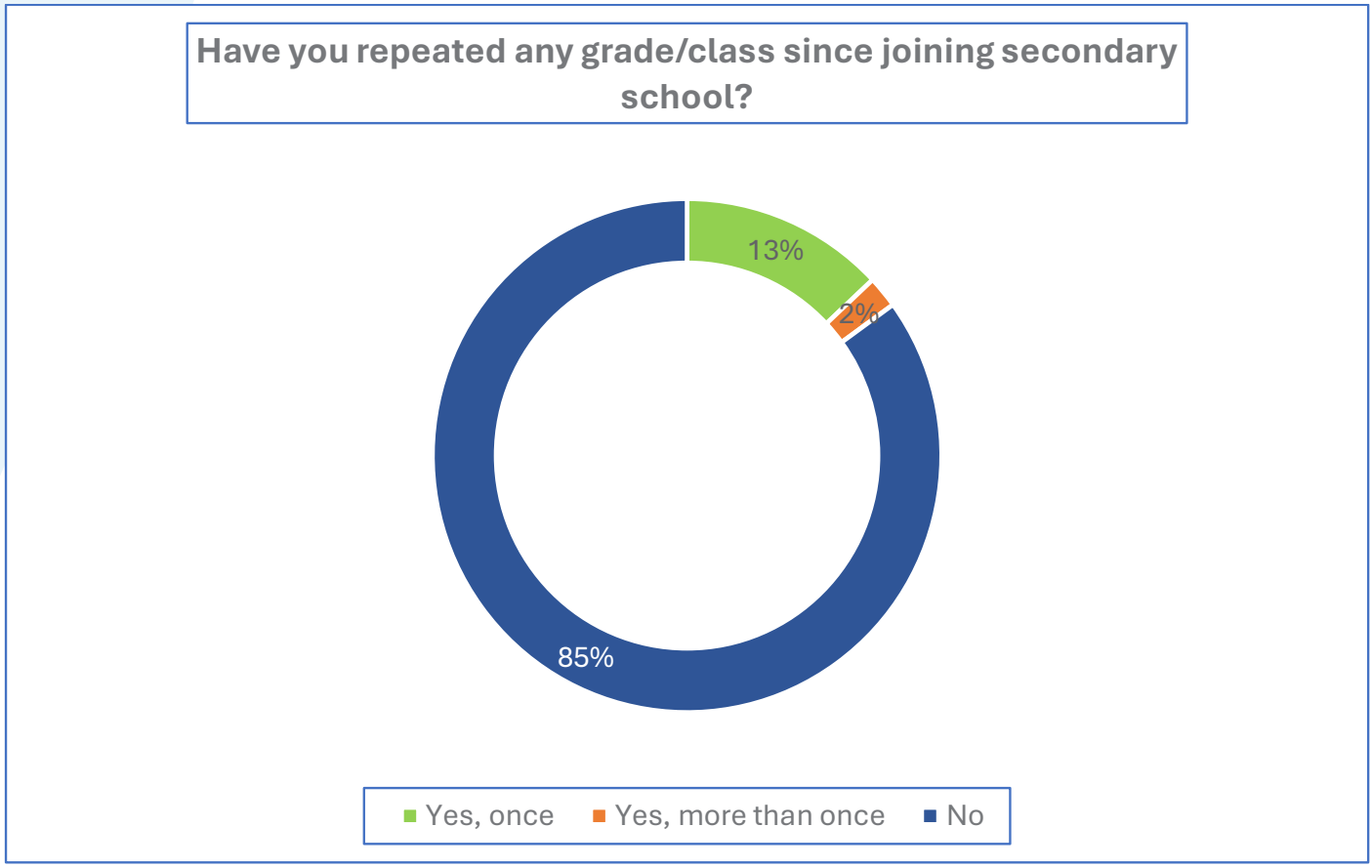
PILLAR 1

ACCESS AND RETENTION

Grade Repetition and Progression

Grade repetition is not the dominant pattern but is nonetheless a meaningful feature of many learners' trajectories. Overall, 85% of learners reported never having repeated a class in secondary school, 13% had repeated once, and 2% had repeated more than once. This experience is unevenly distributed. Repetition rates ("yes, once") are higher in counties such as Turkana (18%), Bungoma (17%), Bomet (22%) and West Pokot (17%), while counties like Kitui (7%), Samburu (5%) and Kajiado (5%) report comparatively lower levels and almost no cases of multiple repetitions. Boys and girls report broadly similar repetition patterns, though boys are somewhat more represented in the "repeated once" category in some sub-groups. Learners in more precarious living situations,particularly tho se in child-headed households, or living with relatives or non-parent guardians, tend to report higher repetition, though these groups are small and the findings should be interpreted cautiously. Overall, repetition appears both as a symptom of underlying disadvantage (including unstable caregiving, poverty or health problems) and as a driver of further disengagement, affecting self-esteem and increasing dropout risk. Programmatic responses on remedial support, mentoring and psychosocial care should therefore prioritise counties and sub-groups where repetition is more prevalent.

Figure 4: Class/Grade repetition

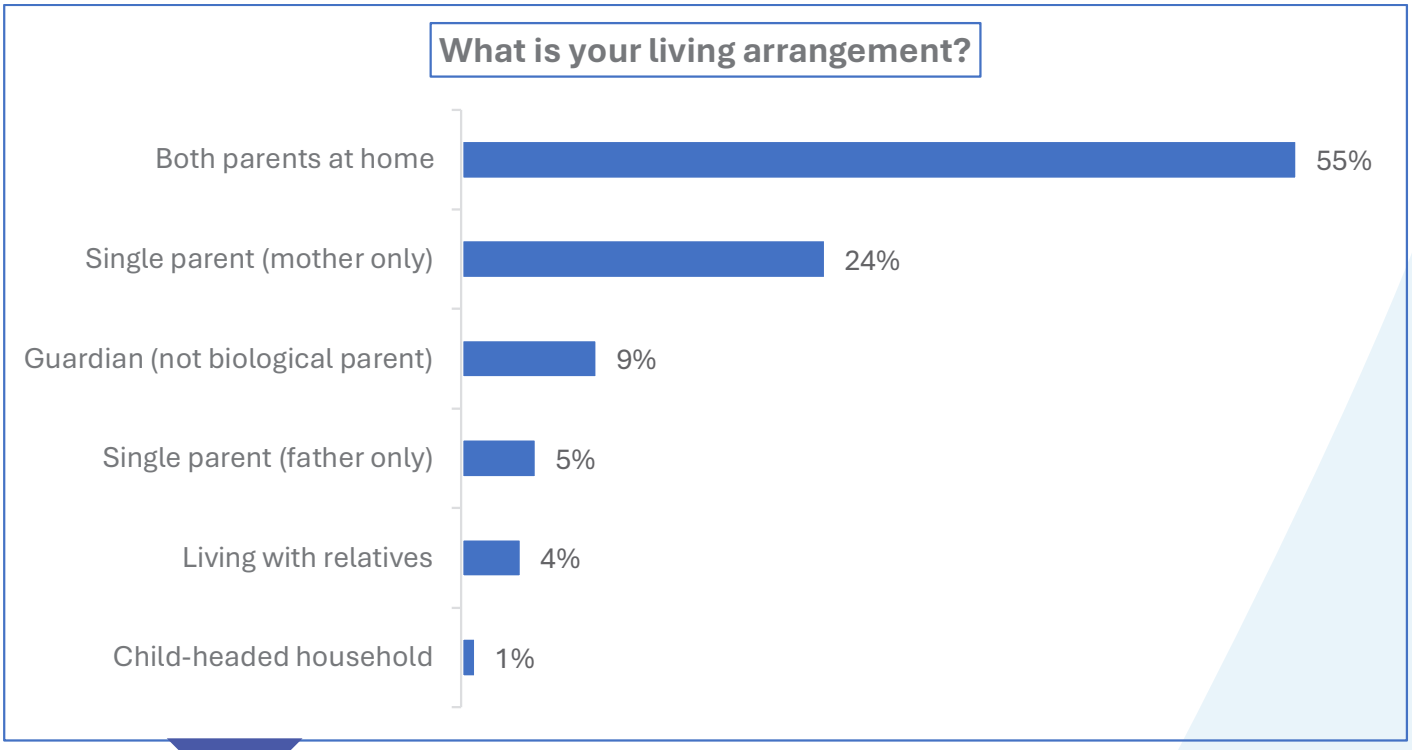


Household Structure, Care Arrangements, and Learner Vulnerability

Household structure and caregiving arrangements emerge as a central dimension of learner vulnerability across the programme counties. Quantitative findings indicate that just over half of learners (55%) live with both parents, while a substantial proportion grow up in alternative or non-intact family arrangements. Nearly one quarter (24%) live with a single mother and 5% with a single father, reflecting patterns of widowhood, separation,

divorce, and entrenched gender norms around caregiving. In addition, 9% of learners live with a guardian who is not a biological parent, 4% live with other relatives, and approximately 1% reside in child-headed households. Overall, 45% of learners are growing up outside a two-parent household, signalling heightened vulnerability in relation to economic security, adult supervision, and emotional support.

Figure 5: Learner's living arrangement



"When a child is living with a grandmother or a guardian, school comes after survival. If there is no food, school waits."

COMMUNITY LEADER

These patterns vary considerably by county, reflecting contextual differences in livelihoods, mobility, and social structures. In counties such as Kitui and West Pokot, between 70% and 90% of learners report living with both parents, suggesting relatively more stable nuclear family arrangements within the sampled population. In contrast, Turkana, Bungoma, Nandi, and several ASAL counties record a higher proportion of learners living with single parents, guardians, or relatives, alongside a greater incidence of child-headed households. When examined alongside repetition and absenteeism data, these county-level differences point to overlapping disadvantages for learners in less stable care environments, who are more likely to shoulder household responsibilities and experience inconsistent emotional and academic support. These dynamics have direct implications for attendance, learning outcomes, and mental well-being.

Qualitative evidence provides deeper insight into how alternative caregiving arrangements translate into educational disadvantage. Learners living with guardians or elderly relatives frequently assume domestic duties such as caregiving, household chores, or income-generating activities, which reduce the time and energy available for schooling. In many cases, caregivers themselves face significant economic

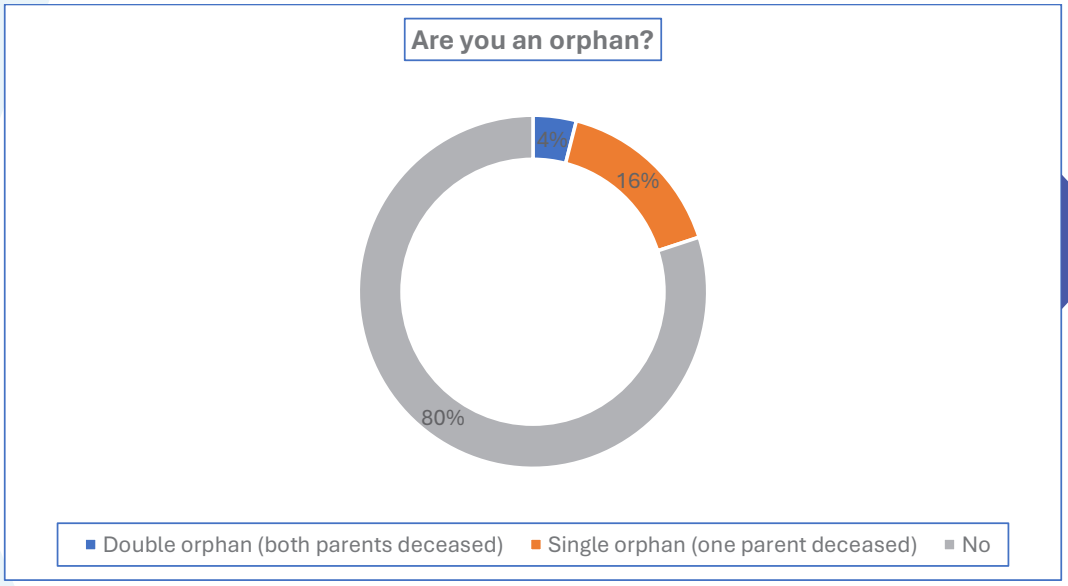
hardship or declining health, limiting their ability to provide consistent supervision, school materials, or emotional support. As one community leader explained, *"When a child is living with a grandmother or a guardian, school comes after survival. If there is no food, school waits."* This observation illustrates how education, though highly valued, is often deprioritised when households are struggling to meet basic needs.

Teachers consistently described orphaned and guardian-led learners as less visible within the classroom environment. These learners are often quieter, more withdrawn, and hesitant to ask questions or seek clarification, even when they are struggling academically. One teacher reflected, *"Some learners never ask questions. Later you realise they are orphans and carrying too much alone."* Such patterns contribute to silent learning gaps that may remain undetected until academic performance declines or disengagement becomes entrenched.

Learners themselves articulated the emotional and psychosocial consequences of household instability. Many described feelings of isolation, stress, and premature self-reliance, often completing schoolwork without guidance or encouragement from adults at home. A learner participating in a focus group discussion shared, *"At home there is no one to ask if I have homework. I just try on my own."* This absence of consistent emotional and academic support affects not only homework completion and exam/assessment preparation, but also learners' confidence, motivation, and sense of belonging within the school community.

Orphanhood further deepens this picture of vulnerability. One in five learners (20%) has lost one or both parents, including 4% who are double orphans and 16% who are single orphans. Double orphanhood is particularly pronounced in counties such as Turkana (12%), Bungoma (7%), and Homa Bay (8%), while single orphanhood is more widespread but clustered in specific locations. Orphan status strongly intersects with non-parental care arrangements: a substantial proportion of learners in child-headed households are double orphans, and many learners living with guardians or relatives also fall into the orphan categories. These learners often face compounded emotional strain and increased caregiving or income-earning responsibilities, further constraining their ability to focus on schooling.

Figure 6: Orphanhood status

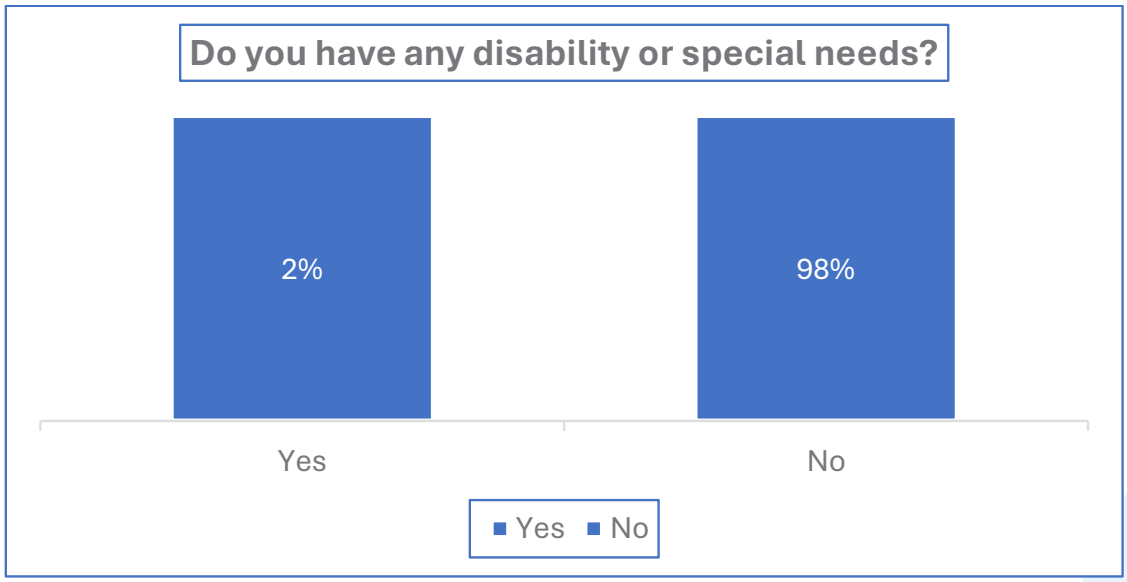


"At home there is no one to ask if I have homework. I just try on my own."

LEARNER

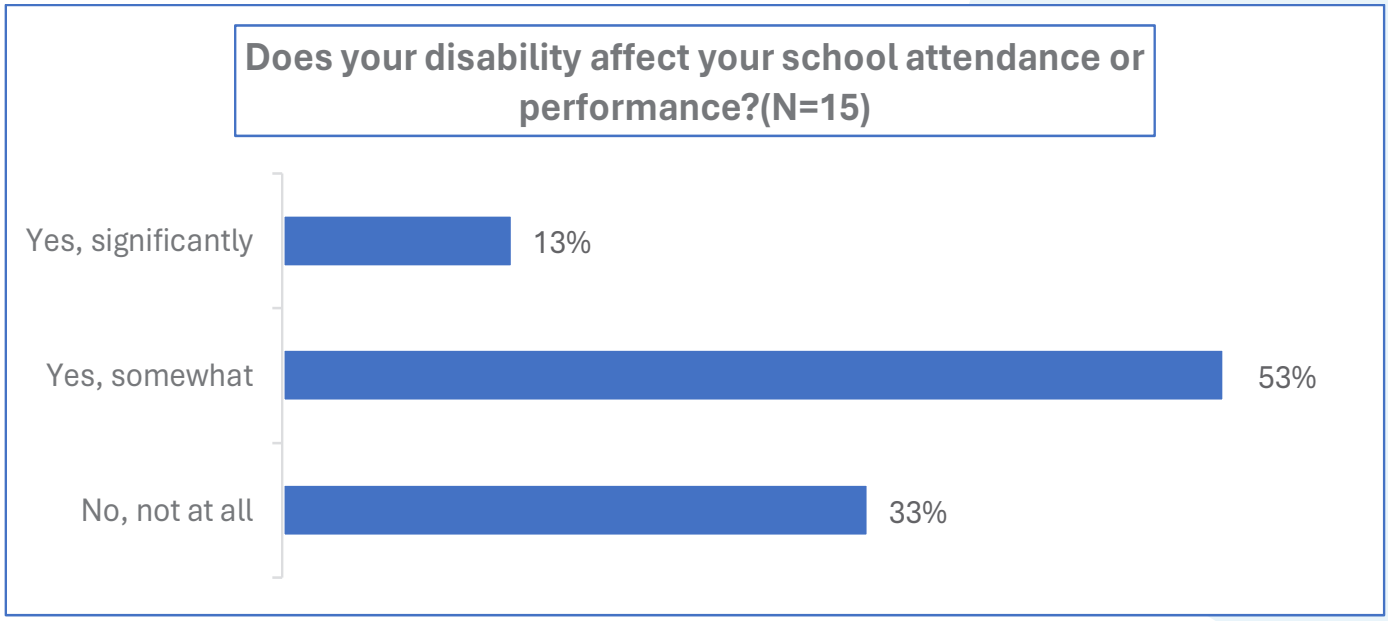
Disability, though reported by a relatively small proportion of learners, represents another important layer of vulnerability. Only 2% of learners (15 out of 612) self-identified as having a disability or special need, a figure that should be interpreted with caution given the likelihood of under-reporting due to stigma, limited diagnostic capacity, and low awareness of non-visible disabilities. Among those who reported a disability, 60% identified visual impairments, 13% hearing impairments, and 13% physical or mobility impairments, while smaller proportions reported learning or intellectual disabilities. This distribution suggests that visible disabilities are more readily recognised, while learning difficulties and psychosocial impairments may remain largely hidden.

Figure 7: Disability status



Importantly, two-thirds of learners with disabilities reported that their condition affects their attendance or academic performance either significantly or to some extent. Learners with visual and mobility impairments were particularly likely to report negative impacts, although small sample sizes limit disaggregation by gender or county. These findings highlight the need for an inclusive education lens that ensures learning environments, materials, and life skills content are accessible, and that teachers and mentors are equipped to recognise and respond to diverse forms of disability, including learning and psychosocial needs.

Figure 8: Effect of disability on school attendance or performance



Across all these dimensions household structure, orphanhood, disability, and repetition the data point clearly to overlapping and compounding vulnerabilities. Orphaned learners are more likely to live in non-parental care arrangements; many of these learners also experience repetition and irregular attendance. Learners with disabilities, though few in number, are concentrated in particular counties and often report negative effects on participation and performance. The evidence underscores that household structure is not merely a background characteristic, but a key determinant of learner well-being, engagement, and educational continuity, shaping how learners experience school on a daily basis.

For the Education and Life Skills Development Programme, these findings call for an approach that is explicitly equity-focused and household-sensitive. Interventions must deliberately identify and support learners facing multiple, intersecting risks; engage caregivers beyond biological parents, recognising the diversity of caregiving arrangements; adopt inclusive and disability-sensitive strategies to avoid inadvertent exclusion; and tailor responses to county-specific contexts where orphanhood, repetition, and fragile caregiving environments are most pronounced.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

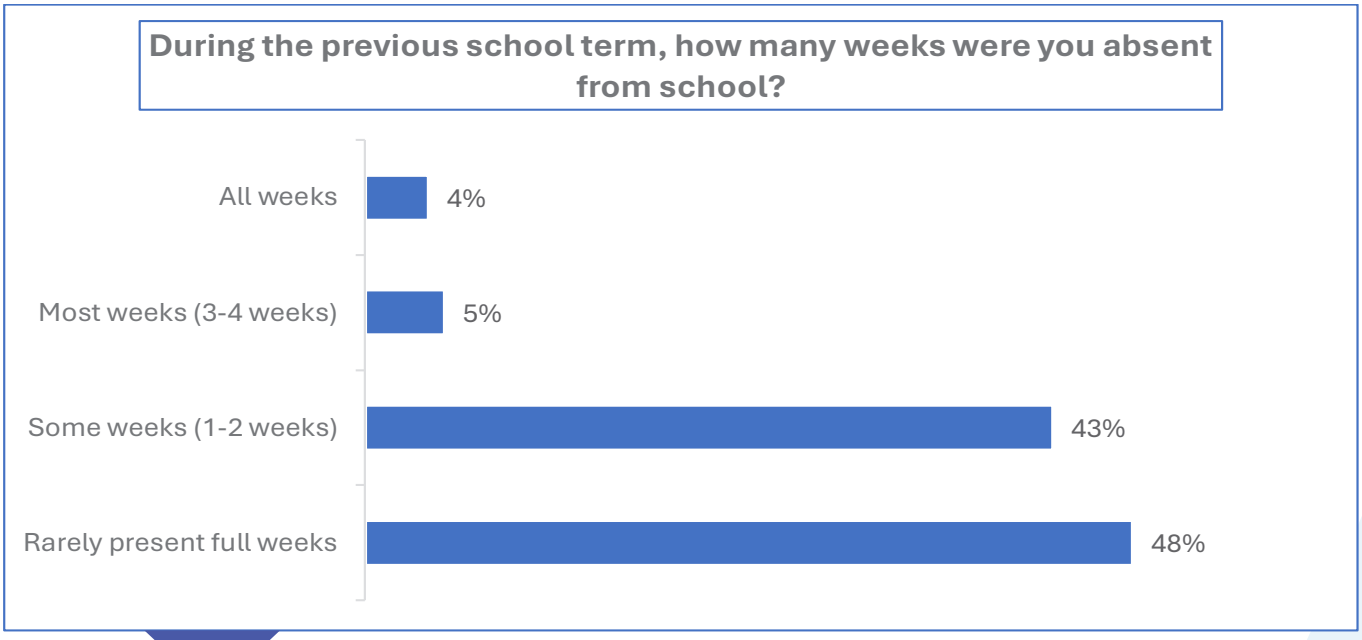
Household structure and caregiving arrangements are central drivers of learner vulnerability across the programme counties. Nearly half of learners grow up in non-intact households, and one in five has experienced parental loss, often in combination with poverty, disability, and unstable caregiving environments. These intersecting vulnerabilities significantly shape attendance, engagement, psychosocial well-being, and learning continuity.

Learners living with guardians, relatives, or in child-headed households are particularly at risk of silent disengagement, irregular attendance, and cumulative learning gaps. For the Education and Life Skills Development Programme, this underscores the need for equity-focused, household-sensitive interventions that go beyond access to address psychosocial support, mentorship, inclusive education, and sustained engagement of all caregivers, with targeted responses in counties where fragile caregiving arrangements are most prevalent.

School Attendance Patterns and Absenteeism

The findings indicate that while most learners remain enrolled in school, consistent full-term attendance is a significant challenge across the programme counties. Only a small minority of learners reported being absent for the entire term; however, very few attend school continuously without interruption. Overall, 4% of learners reported being absent for all weeks of the previous term, while a further 5% missed most weeks (three to four weeks). The dominant pattern is one of irregular attendance, with 43% of learners missing one to two full weeks and 48% reporting that they are rarely present for complete school weeks due to frequent single-day absences. This pattern points to sustained disruption of learning rather than permanent withdrawal from education.

Figure 9: During the previous school term, how many weeks were you absent from school



"Attendance looks good on paper, but in reality learners come and go depending on fees."

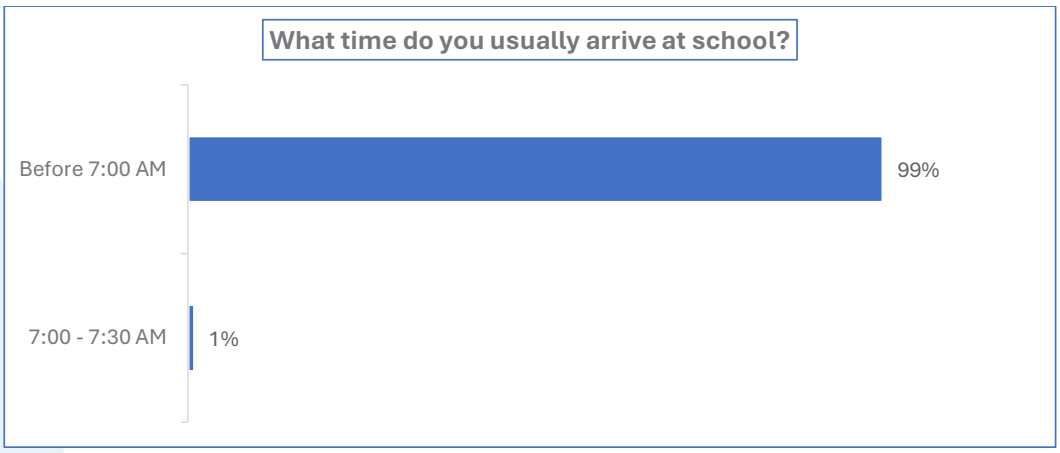
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Attendance patterns vary markedly by county, reflecting distinct local contexts. In Homa Bay and Turkana, a very high proportion of learners reported being absent for "some weeks" (88% and 72%, respectively), suggesting concentrated absences over short periods. In contrast, the majority of learners in Samburu (84%), Kajiado (74%), Baringo (65%), and Bomet (59%) reported being rarely present for full weeks, indicating recurrent short-term absenteeism that steadily erodes cumulative instructional time. These differences suggest that while absenteeism is widespread, its expression differs by context ranging from occasional multi-week absences to persistent day-to-day disruptions. This distinction is critical for programming: counties with episodic multi-week absences may require interventions that address specific shocks (e.g., seasonal migration, fee collection periods), while those with chronic short-term absences need strategies that tackle persistent, day-to-day barriers.

Gender differences in absenteeism are modest, with boys and girls reporting broadly similar patterns. However, boys are slightly more represented in the most severe categories, including absence for all weeks and rarely attending full weeks. Differences by living arrangement are more pronounced. Learners living with guardians, relatives, or in child-headed households are disproportionately represented among those with severe absenteeism, reinforcing the link between fragile caregiving environments and weakened school participation.

Despite these challenges, learner commitment to schooling is clearly demonstrated through punctuality. An overwhelming 99% of learners reported arriving at school before 7:00 a.m. on days they attend, with this pattern consistent across counties, genders, grades, and household arrangements. This finding indicates that the primary attendance challenge is not lateness, but the ability to attend school at all. As one school administrator noted, *"Attendance looks good on paper, but in reality learners come and go depending on fees."* This highlights the disconnect between administrative enrolment records and the lived reality of fluctuating classroom presence.

Figure 10: What time do you usually arrive at school?

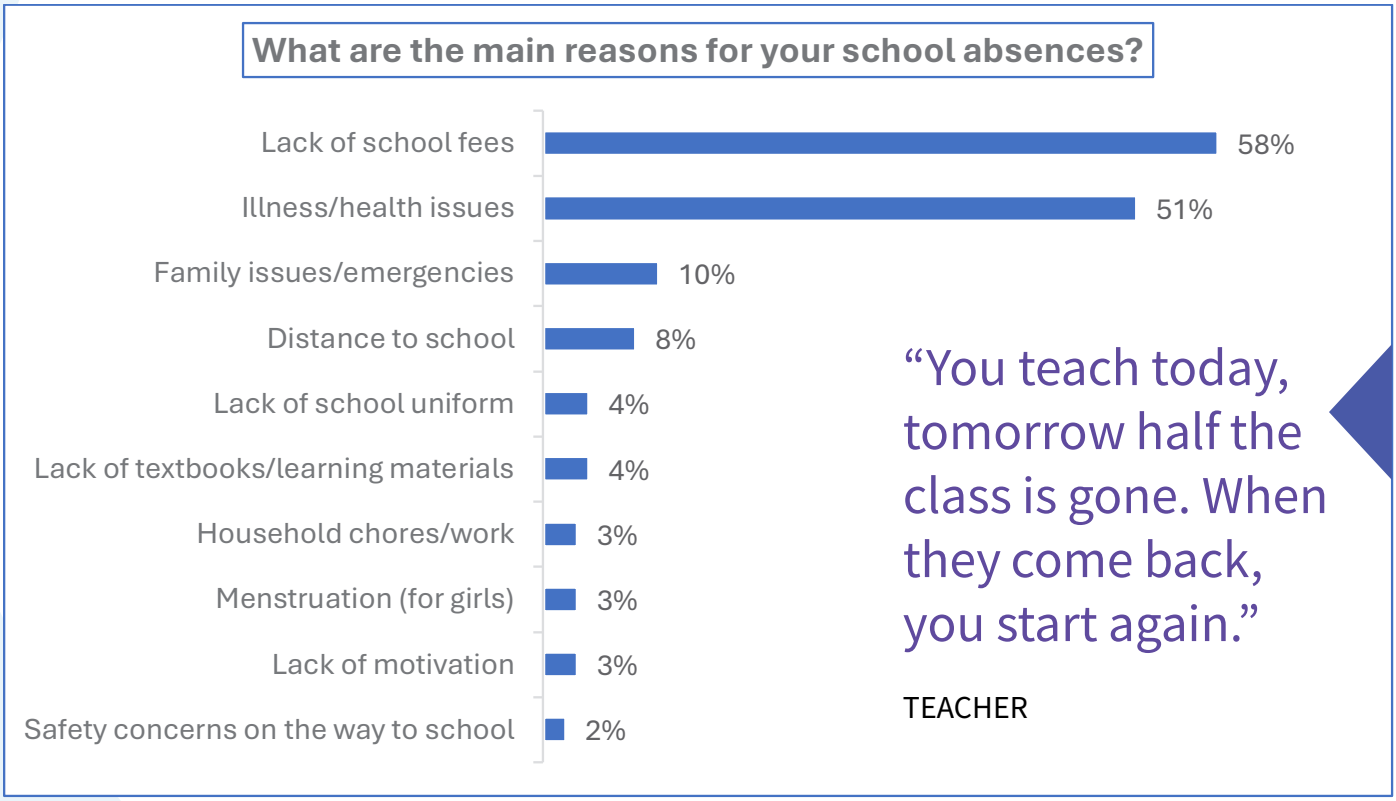


Drivers of Absenteeism

When asked about the reasons for missing school, learners identified a combination of economic, health-related, and household-level constraints, often selecting more than one factor. At the aggregate level, the most commonly cited reasons were lack of school fees (58%) and illness or health-related challenges (51%). Fee-related absenteeism is particularly pronounced in counties such as Homa Bay, Bungoma, Bomet, and Turkana, where between 70% and 80% of learners cited inability to pay fees as a key reason for absence. Health-related absenteeism was especially high in Bungoma (78%), Homa Bay (69%), Kitui (63%), and Baringo (74%), reflecting the intersection between health vulnerability and school participation.

Regression analysis confirms that poverty-related factors (lack of fees, food insecurity) are the strongest predictors of absenteeism, followed by household structure (orphanhood, guardian-led households). These findings underscore the need for interventions that address economic barriers while also supporting the specific vulnerabilities of learners in non-intact households.

Figure 11: What are the main reasons for your school absences?



> "You teach today, tomorrow half the class is gone. When they come back, you start again."
>
> TEACHER

Teachers and learners consistently described the cumulative effect of being sent home repeatedly for fees. One teacher explained, *"You teach today, tomorrow half the class is gone. When they come back, you start again."* Learners echoed the frustration this creates, with one noting, *"I want to be in school every day, but when there is no money, I stay home."* These accounts illustrate how fee-related exclusion disrupts learning continuity and gradually undermines confidence and motivation.

Geographical access also contributes to absenteeism in specific contexts. Although only 8% of learners cited distance to school overall, this challenge is highly localised. In Nandi, for example, 41% of learners identified distance as a major barrier. Distance-related challenges were also more prevalent among learners in child-headed households and some single-parent households, where 12–15% reported that travel distance affected their attendance. These findings suggest that physical access to schools continues to matter, particularly for learners already facing household-level vulnerability.

Family-related challenges further shape attendance patterns. Overall, 10% of learners reported family issues or emergencies as reasons for missing school, with higher prevalence in Kitui (23%), Homa Bay (17%), and Bomet (15%). These disruptions often reflect caregiving responsibilities, domestic instability, or sudden household shocks. Household chores and income-generating activities were reported by 3% of learners overall, but this burden was substantially higher among Grade 9 learners, where 17% indicated that domestic or economic responsibilities interfered with schooling. These responsibilities were most common among learners in child-headed households or those living with relatives, highlighting how younger learners in vulnerable settings often shoulder disproportionate unpaid labour.

Overall, the integrated evidence indicates that absenteeism across the programme counties is structurally driven rather than attitudinal

Material-related barriers, while reported less frequently, also contribute to absenteeism. Some learners cited lack of uniforms, textbooks, or other basic learning materials, while girls in particular identified menstruation-related challenges as affecting attendance, especially in economically disadvantaged households. In addition, 17% of learners selected "other" reasons for absenteeism, a proportion that rises sharply in Samburu (47%) and Kajiado (66%). These responses suggest the presence of context-specific factors such as seasonal migration, cultural obligations, insecurity, or environmental conditions that are not fully captured in standard survey categories and warrant further qualitative exploration.

Overall, the integrated evidence indicates that absenteeism across the programme counties is structurally driven rather than attitudinal. Learners demonstrate strong commitment to schooling through high punctuality and expressed desire to attend regularly, yet systemic barriers particularly poverty, health challenges, household instability, and fee-related exclusion undermine consistent participation. This pattern of irregular attendance has serious implications for learning continuity, academic performance, and retention, underscoring the need for early, household-sensitive, and context-responsive interventions that address the root causes limiting learners' ability to remain in school consistently.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

High learner punctuality conceals substantial attendance disruption, as many learners who are motivated to attend school do so irregularly due to poverty, household pressures, and school fee-related exclusions. This pattern of intermittent attendance constitutes a form of hidden exclusion, in which learners remain officially enrolled but steadily fall behind academically, often unnoticed in routine administrative data.

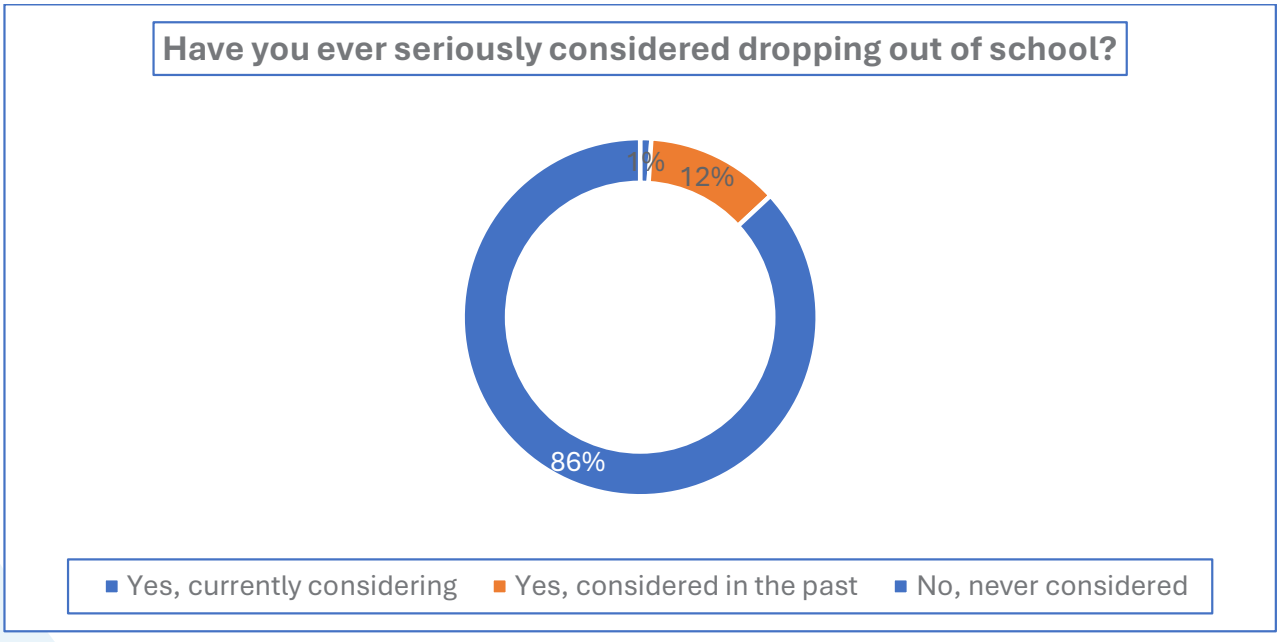
Repeated absence not only creates learning gaps and anxiety for affected learners, but also disrupts classroom instruction by slowing syllabus coverage and frustrating both teachers and regularly attending students. These dynamics highlight the need for early, household-sensitive interventions that combine financial support, flexible school responses, and systematic follow-up of learners with recurring short-term absences to prevent cumulative learning loss and eventual dropout.

Dropout Risk and Learner Perceptions

Despite the high levels of absenteeism and financial stress, most learners remain committed to staying in school. When asked if they had ever seriously considered dropping out, 86% reported never considering leaving school, 12% had considered dropping out in the past while another 1% were currently considering dropping out.

However, these averages mask substantial variation. In Nandi, nearly a third (31%) have considered dropping out, as have 23% of learners from child-headed households and 33% of those living with relatives. Learners from single-parent and guardianled households also report higher levels of past consideration compared to those living with both parents. This suggests that economic and caregiving vulnerabilities translate into heightened dropout risk, even if most learners remain in school at the time of the survey.

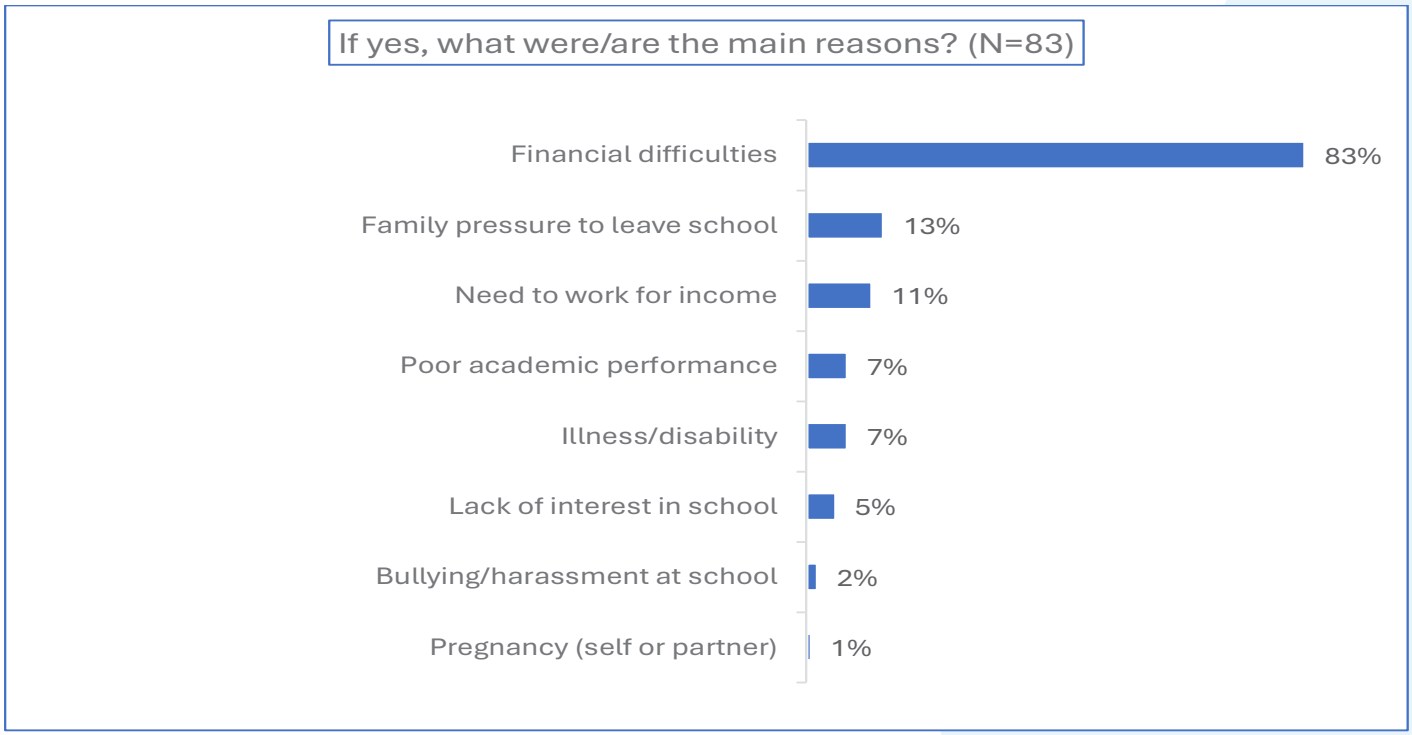
Figure 12: Have you ever seriously considered dropping out of school?



Among the 83 learners who reported that they had ever seriously considered dropping out of school, financial constraints emerged as the dominant factor influencing this decision. Across the sample, 83% of these learners cited financial difficulties as a primary driver, highlighting the strong relationship between household economic vulnerability and the risk of school discontinuation. These findings suggest that direct and indirect education costs, including school fees, learning materials, and basic subsistence needs, remain significant barriers to sustained school participation.

Although financial challenges were the most frequently cited reason, several additional factors also contributed to dropout considerations. About 11% of learners reported the need to engage in income generating activities to support themselves or their households. This pressure was particularly evident among learners in Turkana and Nandi and was more commonly reported among younger learners in Grade 9, suggesting that early secondary school learners may be especially vulnerable to economic pressures that compete with education. Health related challenges were also identified as a contributing factor, with 7% of learners reporting that illness or disability had influenced their consideration of dropping out. This finding reflects the importance of strengthening inclusive education support systems and ensuring that learners facing health related barriers receive adequate academic and psychosocial support to remain engaged in school.

Figure 13: If yes, what were/are the main reasons?

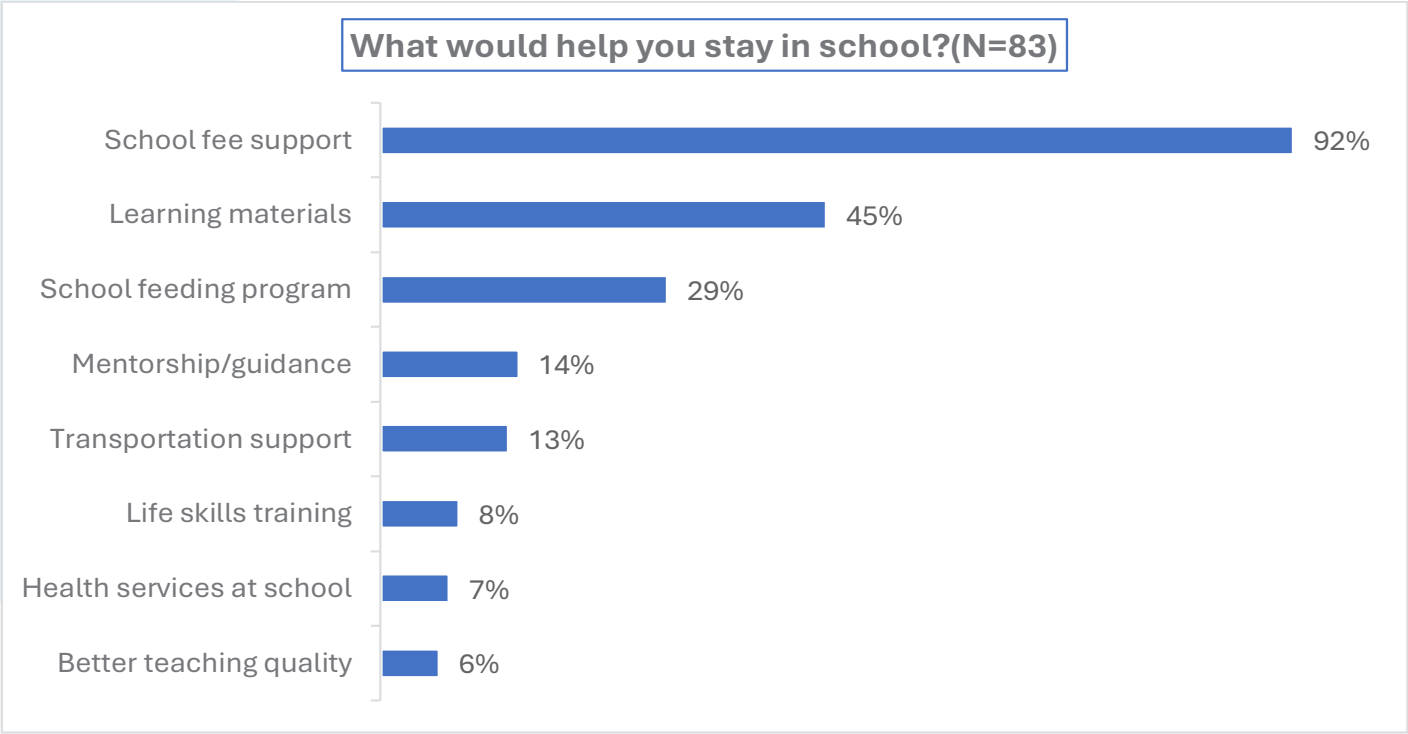


Family related pressure to leave school was reported by 13% of learners and was notably higher in counties such as Kitui, where 33% of affected learners cited this reason, and Baringo, where 21% reported similar experiences. Family pressure was also more frequently reported among learners living with relatives or in single parent households, suggesting that household decision making dynamics and economic constraints may influence learners' ability to remain in school. A smaller proportion of learners cited lack of interest in school, poor academic performance, and experiences of bullying or harassment as reasons for considering dropout. Although each of these factors was reported by fewer than 10% of learners overall, qualitative insights suggest that these challenges may have strong localized influence in specific counties and school contexts.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that while financial hardship remains the primary driver of dropout risk, multiple interrelated social, academic, and psychosocial factors also contribute to learners' decisions about continuing their education. Gender-wise, both boys and girls identify financial constraints as the dominant factor, but pregnancy (self or partner) appears only among a small number of learners, almost entirely on the female side, signalling a latent but serious risk for girls in particular contexts.

The 83 learners who reported being at risk of dropping out were further asked to identify the types of support that would help them remain in school. Their responses strongly point to economic assistance as the most critical intervention. The vast majority, representing 92% of these learners, identified school fees support as the most important form of assistance, with demand reaching 100% in several counties including Turkana, Homabay, Kitui, Bomet, and West Pokot, as well as among learners living in more vulnerable household arrangements. In addition, 45% of learners indicated that provision of learning materials would significantly support their continued schooling, with particularly high demand observed in Turkana, Bungoma, and among learners in Grade 9, suggesting that early secondary learners face heightened resource constraints.

Figure 14: What would help you stay in school?



School feeding programmes were identified by 29% of learners overall as a key factor that would support retention, although this need was substantially higher in counties such as Bungoma and Nandi, and among some learners from single parent households, reflecting the role of school meals in supporting attendance where household food security is uncertain. Learners also highlighted the importance of complementary support services, including transportation assistance, mentorship and guidance, life skills training, access to school-based health services, and improvements in teaching quality. Although these were reported by smaller proportions of learners, they were particularly emphasized by those living in complex care arrangements such as child headed or guardian led households, indicating the need for integrated support approaches that address both economic and psychosocial barriers to education continuity.

Overall, these responses reinforce that while psychosocial and pedagogical support is important, financial barriers remain the primary threat to continued schooling, and learners are acutely aware of this.

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

LEARNERS

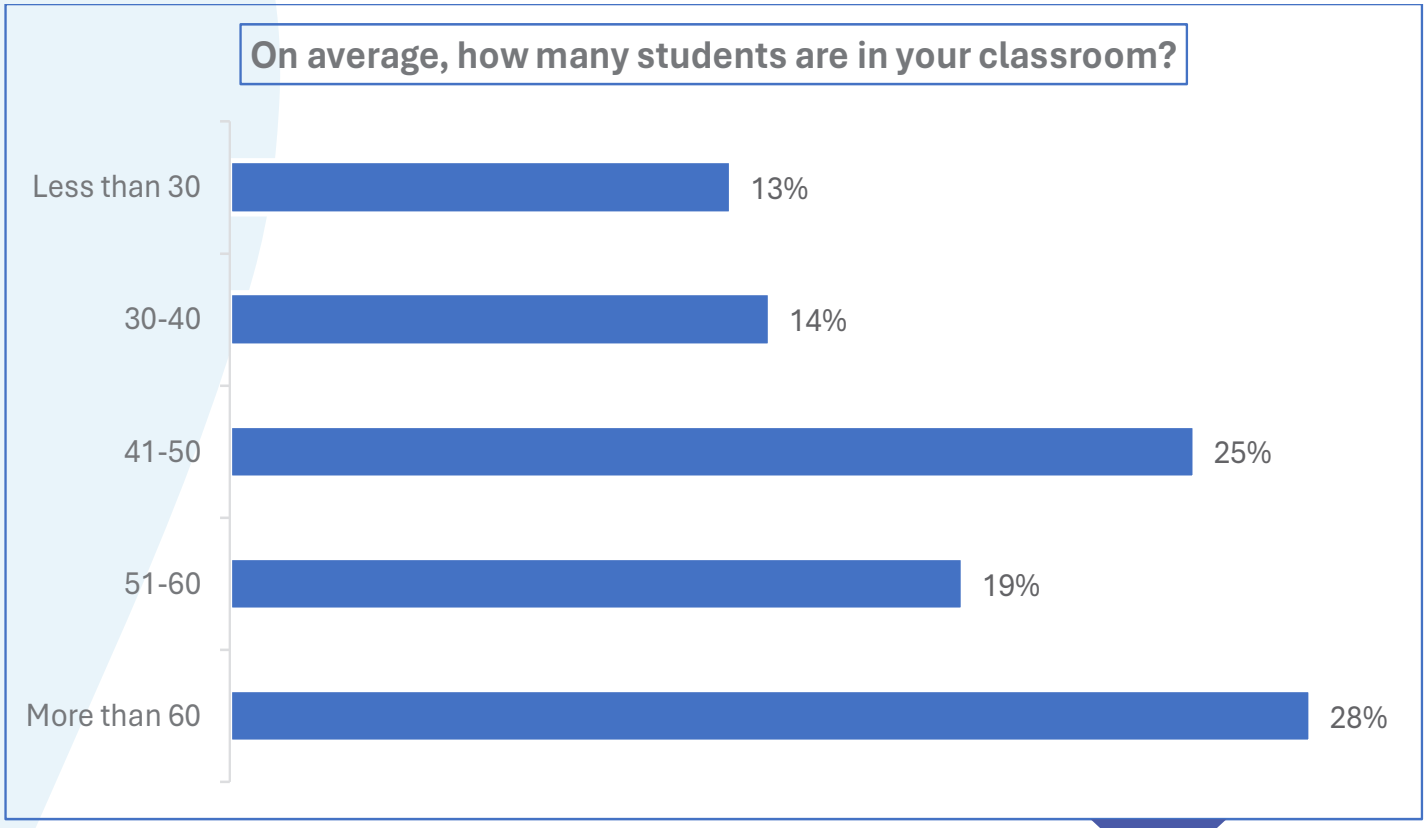
PILLAR 2

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND TEACHING CONDITIONS

Learning Environment and Teaching Conditions

The learning environment in the sampled schools is characterised by large and, in many cases, overcrowded classrooms, with important implications for instructional quality, learner engagement, and teachers' ability to provide individualised academic and psychosocial support. Quantitative findings show that only 13% of learners reported being in classes with fewer than 30 students. In contrast, approximately 25% reported class sizes of between 41 and 50 learners, 19% reported classes of 51 to 60 learners, and a further 28% indicated that they learn in classrooms with more than 60 learners.

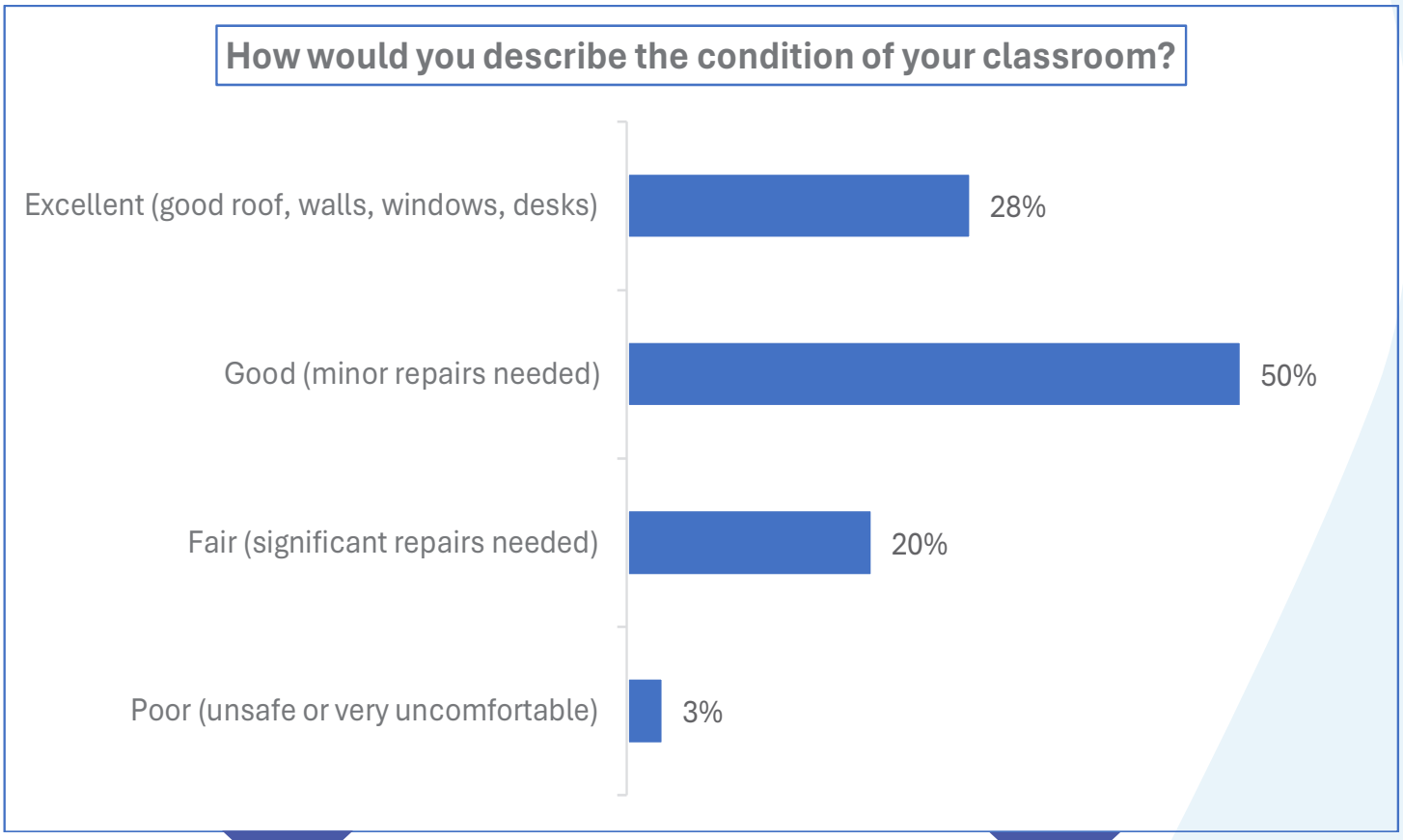
Figure 15: On average, how many students are in your classroom?



While the Ministry of Education recommended classroom size is 40–45 students per room, the findings indicate that overcrowding is one of the major challenges in the surveyed counties.. In Bungoma and Homa Bay, 59% and 51% of learners respectively reported class sizes exceeding 60 learners, making these counties among the most congested learning environments in the sample. Elevated congestion was also reported in parts of Turkana and Baringo, particularly in lower secondary grades and in schools serving large catchment areas. By contrast, learners in Kitui and Kajiado were relatively more likely to report moderate class sizes, although overcrowding remains a concern even in these settings. A county education official noted that *"Enrolment has increased faster than classrooms and teachers. The pressure is felt most in public day schools."*

> "Enrolment has increased faster than classrooms and teachers. The pressure is felt most in public day schools."
>
> COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICIAL

Figure 16: How would you describe the condition of your classroom?



"You spend most of the lesson managing the class instead of supporting learners who are struggling."

TEACHER

"Sometimes you want to ask, but the class is too big and there is no time."

STUDENT

Teachers consistently described overcrowding as one of the most significant barriers to effective teaching. Large class sizes limit opportunities for learner participation, continuous assessment, and follow-up for struggling students, forcing teachers to rely on generalised, lecture-style instruction. One teacher explained, *"With seventy learners, you teach generally. Individual attention is impossible."* Another added, *"You spend most of the lesson managing the class instead of supporting learners who are struggling."* These constraints are particularly challenging for learners who already face academic difficulties or psychosocial stress.

Learners themselves linked overcrowding to disengagement and difficulty seeking clarification during lessons. Many reported that fast-paced teaching in large classes leaves little room for questions or personalised explanation. As one learner shared during a focus group discussion, "If you don't understand, the teacher has already moved on." Another learner noted, *"Sometimes you want to ask, but the class is too big and there is no time."* Such experiences contribute to passive learning and widening learning gaps, especially for quieter or less confident students.

School leaders emphasised that overcrowding persists despite strong teacher commitment and leadership efforts, underscoring that the issue is structural rather than motivational. As one school administrator stated, *"The problem is not effort. It is numbers."* Another headteacher highlighted the cumulative impact on learning, noting that "Even the best teacher struggles when the class is too large."

Despite these space constraints, most learners perceived their physical classroom infrastructure as generally adequate. Across the sample, 28% rated their classroom conditions as excellent, citing sound roofs, walls, windows, desks, and chairs. A further 50% rated classrooms as good but in need of minor repairs, while 20% described conditions as fair and requiring significant improvement. Only 3% rated classrooms as poor or unsafe. County-level variation is evident, with learners in Kitui and Kajiado more likely to report excellent conditions, while higher proportions of learners in Bungoma and Homa Bay reported fair or poor infrastructure. A parent participating in an FGD observed, "The buildings are there, but they are overcrowded. Children squeeze into rooms that were not meant for so many."

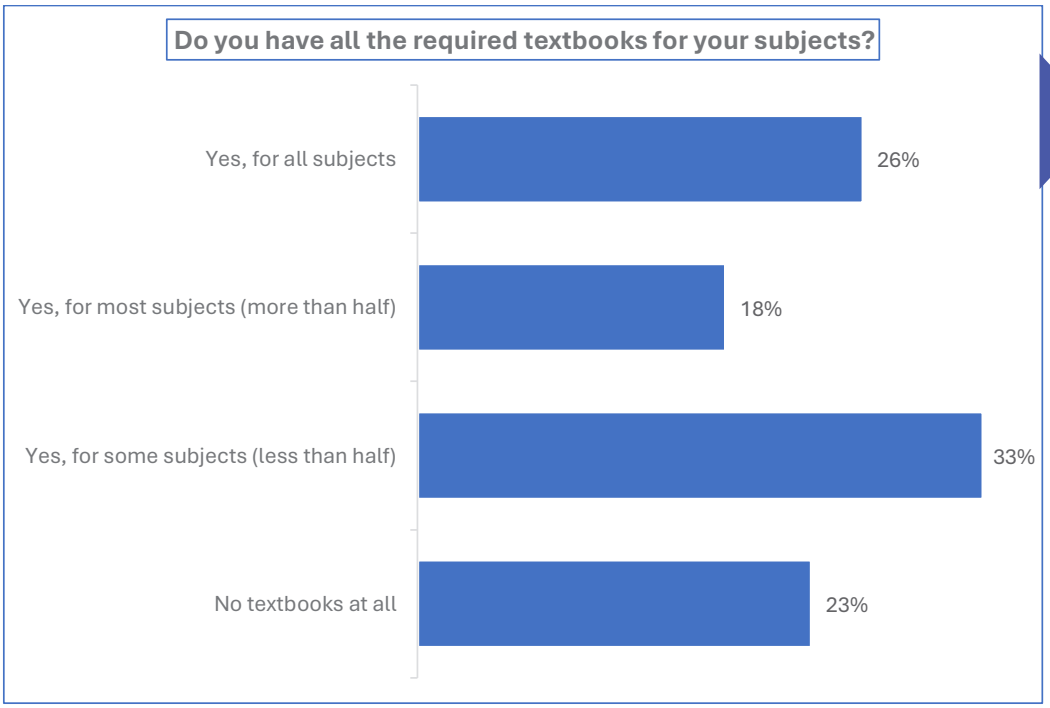
Access to textbooks and core learning materials remains a major constraint on effective learning, particularly in overcrowded classrooms. Only 26% of learners reported having all the required textbooks, while 18% had textbooks for most subject

Access to classroom furniture appears to be a relative strength. A substantial majority (90%) of learners reported having their own desk and chair, while 9% shared with peers, and only a negligible number reported sitting on the floor. This suggests that basic furniture provision has been prioritised across most schools, even where class sizes are large.

Access to Textbooks and Learning Materials

Access to textbooks and core learning materials remains a major constraint on effective learning, particularly in overcrowded classrooms. Only 26% of learners reported having all the required textbooks, while 18% had textbooks for most subjects. A large proportion experience partial or no access: 33% reported having textbooks for only some subjects, and 23% reported having none at all. Shortages are most pronounced in Turkana and Bungoma, where more than half of learners reported lacking textbooks entirely. A teacher from one of these counties explained, "You find five learners sharing one textbook. Homework becomes very difficult."

Figure 17: Do you have all the required textbooks for your subjects?



> "Those without books are usually the same learners who are struggling at home"
>
> GUIDANCE TEACHER

To cope with these shortages, learners rely heavily on school libraries, with 64% reporting regular access through library facilities. This reliance is particularly high in Kitui, Homa Bay, Baringo, and Bomet, underscoring the importance of institutional learning resources where household-level ownership is low. However, personal ownership of textbooks remains limited at 17%, with strong variation by county and household economic status. A learner noted, *"When you don't have a book, you just copy and hope to understand later."*

Textbook sharing is widespread (37%), while 12% of learners rely primarily on photocopies or teacher notes. A small but particularly vulnerable group (5%) reported that they do not regularly access textbooks at all. This group is disproportionately composed of Grade 9 learners and those living in child-headed or relative-led households, highlighting compounded disadvantage at early secondary levels. A guidance teacher remarked, *"Those without books are usually the same learners who are struggling at home."*

Access to basic learning materials such as exercise books and pens is comparatively strong (96%), but gaps remain in specialised materials. Only 55% of learners reported owning mathematical sets, with much lower access in Turkana, Bungoma, and Kajiado, limiting participation in mathematics and science subjects. Calculator ownership is also low (44%), reflecting clear economic gradients. A school administrator noted, *"Some learners cannot practice fully because they lack basic tools like calculators."*

Overall, the integrated findings show that overcrowded classrooms, uneven infrastructure quality, and persistent shortages of learning materials interact to constrain teaching effectiveness and learner engagement, particularly for learners facing household-level vulnerability. While schools demonstrate commitment and basic classroom furniture is largely in place, structural constraints limit the ability of teachers to deliver inclusive, learner-centred instruction. These findings underscore the need for programme interventions that strengthen access to learning materials, provide targeted academic support in overcrowded classrooms, and prioritise counties where congestion and material deprivation are most pronounced.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Learning conditions across the programme counties are constrained by severe classroom overcrowding and uneven access to learning materials, despite generally adequate physical infrastructure and strong teacher commitment. Large class sizes particularly in counties such as Bungoma, Homa Bay, Turkana, and Baringo limit instructional quality, learner participation, and teachers' ability to provide individual academic and psychosocial support, with the greatest impact on learners from vulnerable household arrangements.

Persistent shortages of textbooks and specialised learning materials further compound these challenges, especially in overcrowded classrooms. All these factors highlight the need for targeted, equity-focused interventions that complement classroom teaching by reducing learning material gaps, supporting learners in high-density classrooms, and prioritising counties and learner groups facing the most severe structural constraints.

School Facilities and WASH Infrastructure

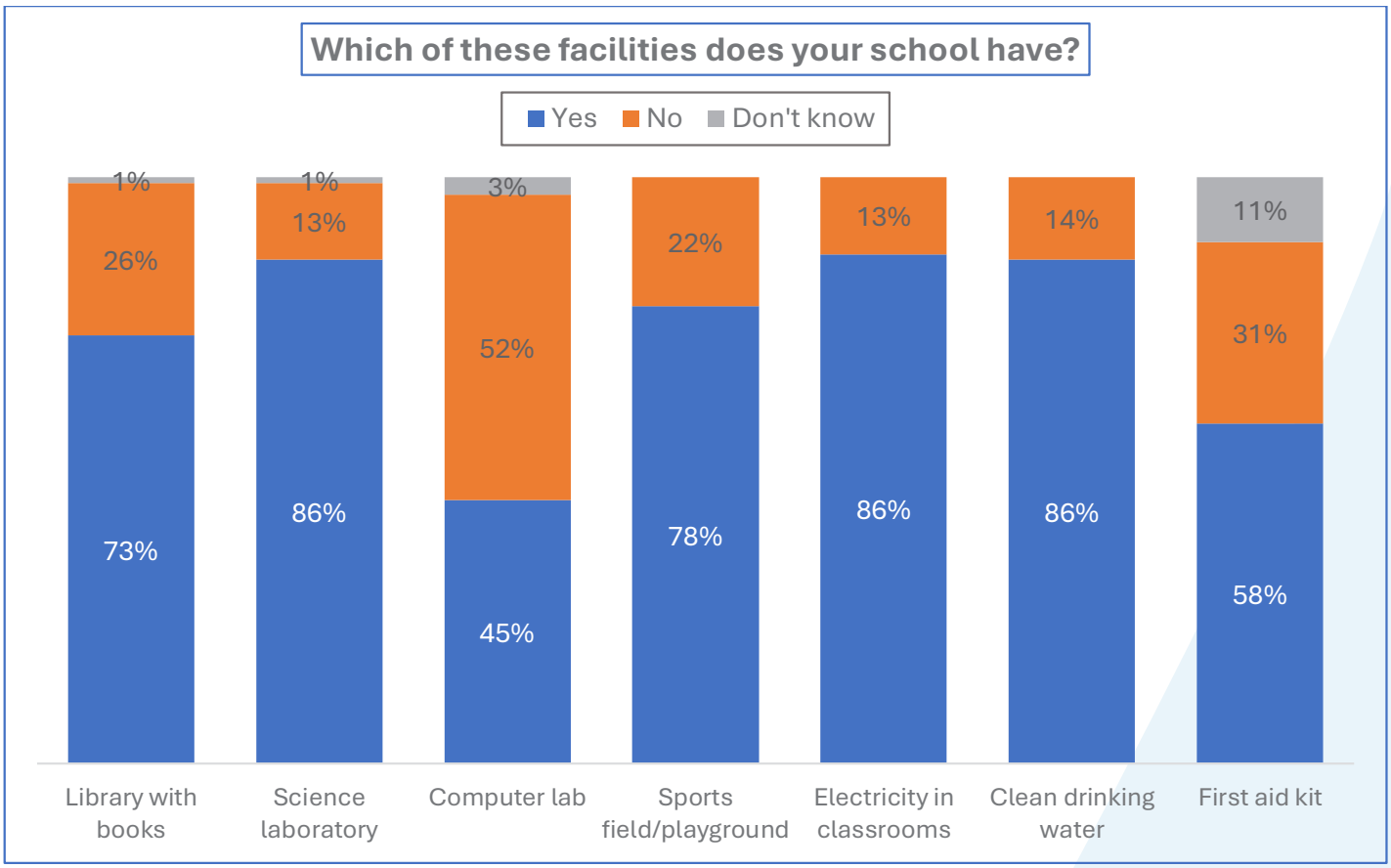
Learners generally reported relatively good access to essential school facilities, although substantial disparities were evident across counties and school contexts. Overall, 73% of learners indicated that their school had a functional library with books, with availability exceeding 90% in counties such as Kitui and Homabay. However, access was lower in several ASAL counties and in schools serving more vulnerable populations, where library facilities were reported by fewer than 60% of learners.

Access to science laboratories was reported by 86% of learners, with nearly universal availability in Homabay and Kitui, but lower coverage in Turkana and some rural counties. Administrator data reveals a critical gap: while 86% of schools have a science laboratory, only 20% have adequate equipment to conduct all required experiments. This distinction between availability and functionality is key to understanding the true state of the learning environment. Access to computer laboratories was considerably limited, with only 45% of learners reporting availability, and extremely low access in counties such as Kajiado where only 5% of learners reported the presence of computer labs. This indicates persistent gaps in ICT infrastructure despite its growing importance in supporting digital literacy and modern learning competencies.

Sports infrastructure was relatively widespread, with 78% of learners reporting access to sports fields or playgrounds, although availability was significantly lower in Turkana and Bungoma, where only 39% and 59% of learners respectively reported such facilities. Access to electricity in classrooms was high overall, with 86% of learners reporting availability, but disparities remained evident. Only 48% of learners in Turkana and 50% in Kajiado reported classroom electricity compared to near universal access in counties such as Bomet and West

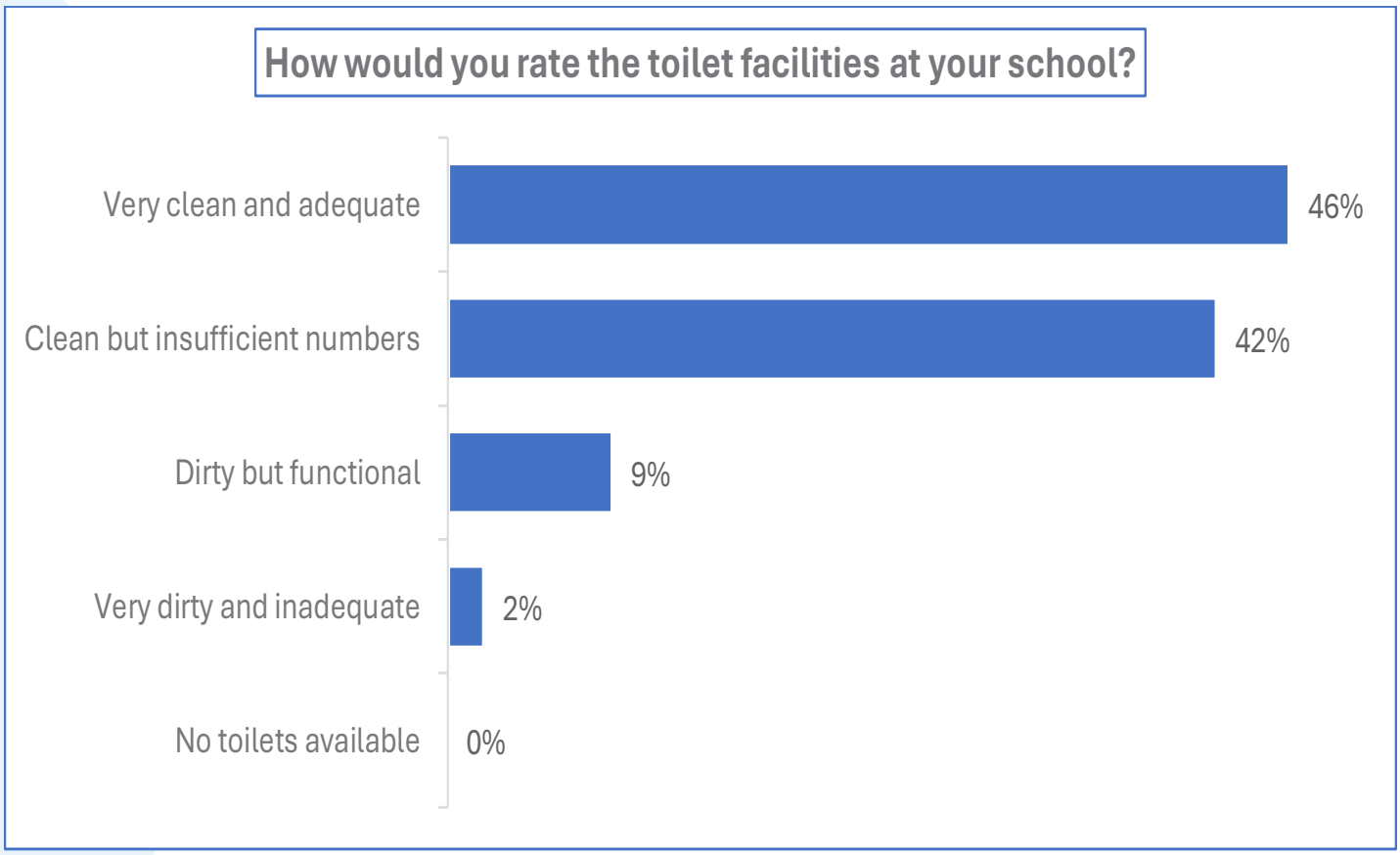
Pokot. Similarly, 86% of learners reported access to clean drinking water in their schools, although approximately one third of learners in counties such as Bungoma and Kajiado reported that their schools lacked reliable access to safe water, which has important implications for learner health, attendance, and overall school well-being.

Figure 18: Which of these facilities does your school have?



Awareness and availability of first aid kits appeared more limited, with 58% of learners reporting that their schools had first aid kits, 31% reporting absence of such facilities, and 11% indicating that they were unaware of their availability. Lack of first aid facilities and uncertainty regarding their presence were particularly pronounced in Bomet and several ASAL counties, where a majority of learners reported either absence or lack of awareness. Learners' perceptions of sanitation facilities were generally positive but showed significant variation. Overall, 46% of learners described school toilets as very clean and adequate, while 42% indicated that facilities were clean but insufficient in number. Approximately 9% reported toilets as dirty but functional, and 2% described them as very dirty and inadequate, although almost no learners reported complete absence of toilet facilities. Notable county level disparities were observed, with higher levels of dissatisfaction reported in Bungoma and Nandi, where large proportions of learners described toilets as dirty or poorly maintained. Conversely, learners in Kitui, Kajiado, and West Pokot generally reported more satisfactory sanitation conditions. Learners from child headed households and some single parent arrangements were slightly more likely to report poor sanitation conditions, suggesting potential intersections between household vulnerability, dignity concerns, and menstrual hygiene management challenges, particularly for girls.

Figure 19: How would you rate the toilet facilities at your school?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

In summary, these findings suggest that learners demonstrate strong motivation and commitment to their education when they are able to attend school. However, attendance and sustained participation are frequently disrupted by systemic barriers, particularly economic hardship, health related challenges, long travel distances, and family responsibilities. While many schools provide basic infrastructure and furniture, overcrowded classrooms remain common, and access to textbooks, learning materials, ICT infrastructure, and WASH services is uneven across counties and schools, with some areas experiencing significant resource limitations. These disparities highlight the complex and interconnected factors that influence learner participation, well-being, and academic progression.

For the programme, the findings underscore the need for a comprehensive and equity focused response that addresses both structural and individual level barriers. Priority interventions include strengthening economic support mechanisms such as scholarships, school fee assistance, and school feeding programmes, particularly in counties with high levels of fee related absenteeism and among learners from orphaned, single parent, and child headed households. Strengthening school health and WASH services is also critical, including improving access to school health support, first aid services, safe drinking water, and adequate and dignified sanitation facilities, particularly in schools where learners reported poor infrastructure. Increased investment in learning materials and textbook access is necessary, building on the strong utilization of school libraries while prioritizing counties and household groups reporting the most severe shortages.

Addressing classroom overcrowding through strengthening teacher capacity, improving classroom management, and providing remedial and individualized academic support will be essential in supporting learners facing academic difficulties. Additionally, targeted psychosocial support and mentorship programmes should be expanded to support learners who have expressed risk of dropping out, ensuring that economic, academic, and emotional factors influencing school retention are addressed holistically. Continuous programme monitoring using disaggregated data by county, gender, grade level, and living arrangement will be critical in tracking progress and ensuring that interventions effectively reach the most vulnerable learners within programme areas.

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

LEARNERS

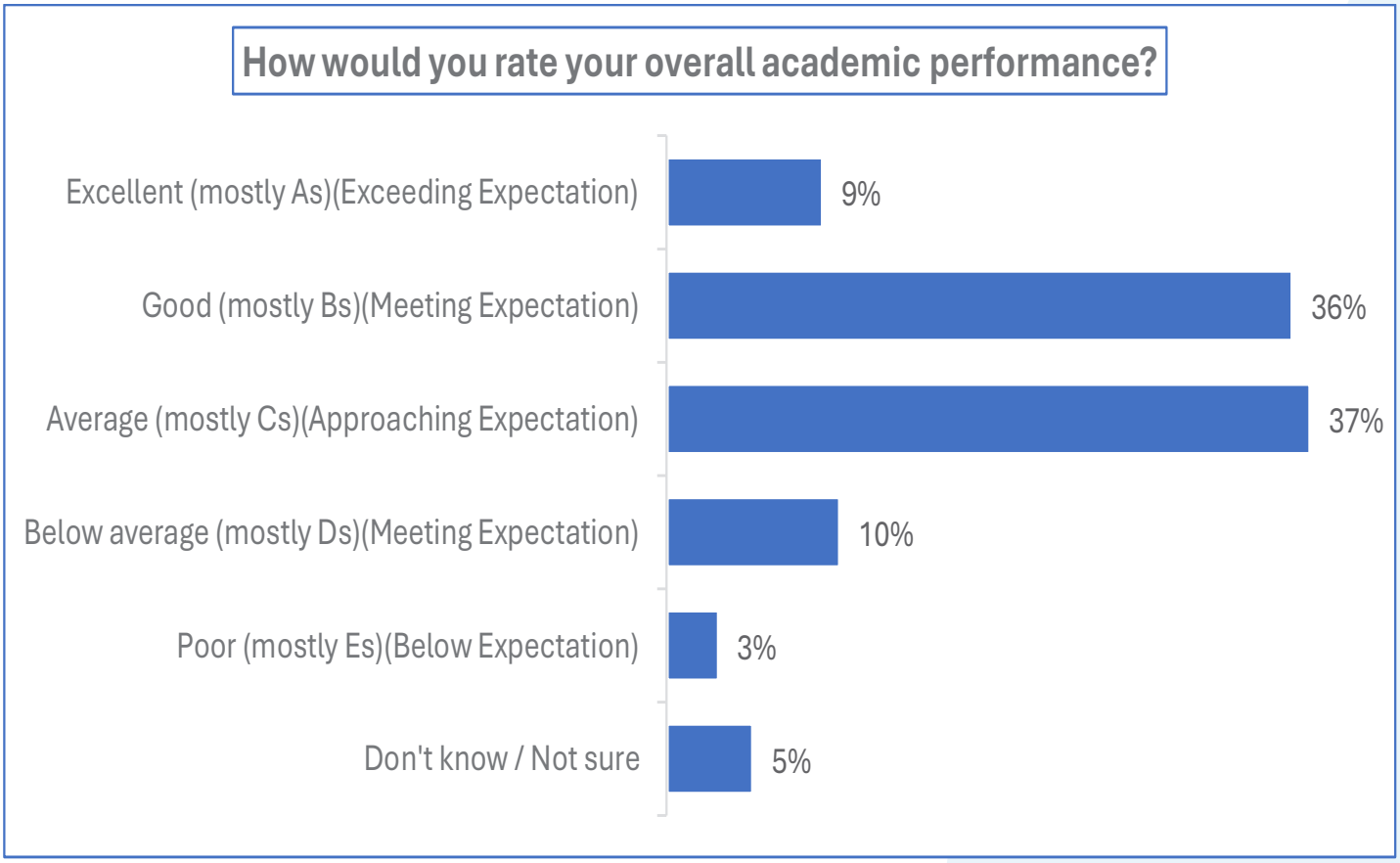
PILLAR 3

PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING AND LIFE SKILLS

Academic Self-Perception and Study Conditions

Learners' own assessments of their academic performance are moderately positive but uneven. Across the sample, 9% rate themselves as excellent, 36% as good and 37% as average. A total of 10% consider themselves below average and 3% say their performance is poor, while about 5% are unsure how to rate themselves. This means that almost half of the learners see themselves as doing well, while roughly 1 in 7 feels they are struggling academically. There are marked differences by county. In counties such as Kitui, Samburu and Homabay, higher proportions of learners place themselves in the excellent or good categories. In others such as Bungoma and West Pokot, more learners see themselves as below average or poor. Learners in guardian or relative led households are more likely to rate themselves at the lower end, which suggests that family context and home support influence academic confidence.

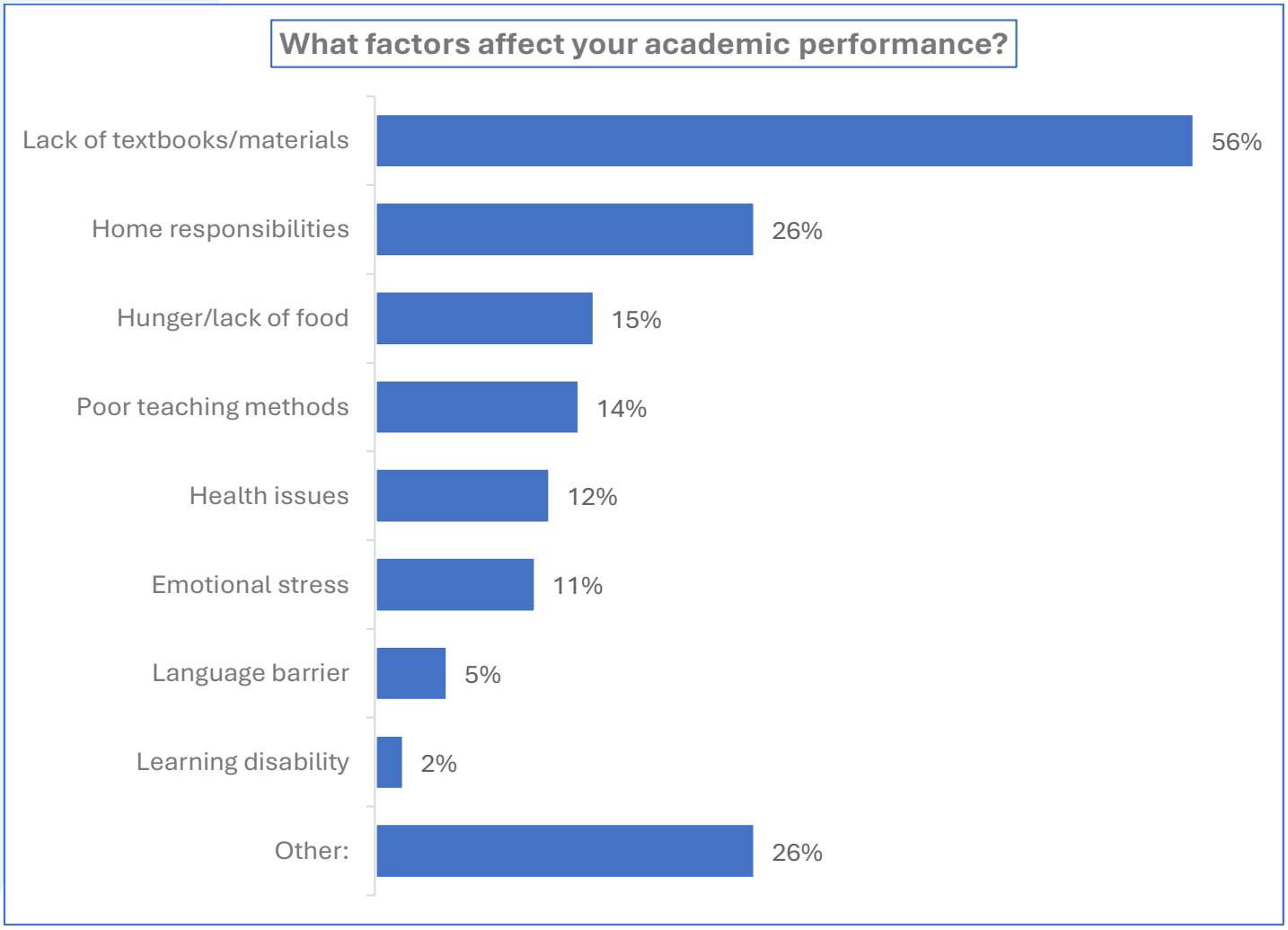
Figure 20: How would you rate your overall academic performance?



When asked what affects their academic performance, learners identified a combination of resource constraints, household pressures and health or emotional factors. The most frequently cited issue is lack of textbooks and learning materials, mentioned by 56% of respondents and by more than 80% in Turkana. Home responsibilities are also significant. A total of 26% report that domestic chores or income generating activities affect their studies, with higher rates in Turkana, Bungoma, Samburu and among single parent, child headed and relative led households. Hunger and lack of food are reported by 15% overall but rise sharply in some food insecure counties such as Bungoma. Around 12% of learners mention health issues, and a similar share point to emotional stress.

A total of 14% highlight poor teaching methods. Smaller but important groups mention language barriers (5%) and learning disabilities (2%). A large share select other reasons, especially in Samburu, Kajiado, Baringo and West Pokot, which suggests that localised factors such as school climate, security or cultural expectations also influence learning. Overall, learners experience their academic challenges as arising both from conditions in school and from pressures at home and in the community.

Figure 21: What factors affect your academic performance?

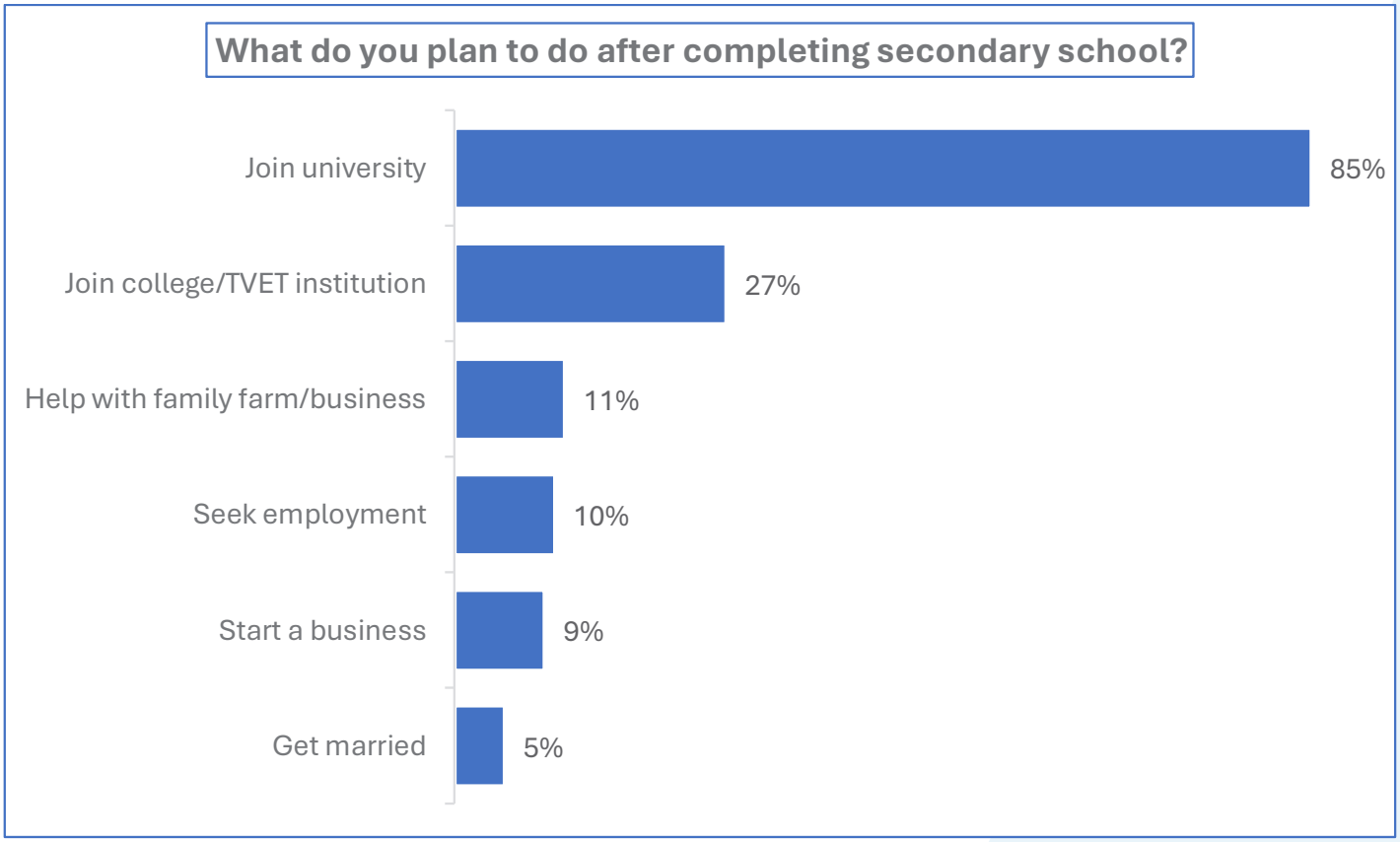


Study habits and the home learning environment mirror these constraints. Most learners report doing homework or revision each day, but usually for modest periods. Just over half, 53%, study between 1 and 2 hours daily and about 27% between 2 and 3 hours. A total of 12% report less than 1 hour per day and 6% more than 3 hours. Only 2% say they do not do homework regularly. Learners in child headed and relative led households are more likely to fall into the lower study time categories, reflecting competing responsibilities or a lack of space and support. When asked about conditions at home, 44% say they always have a conducive environment for study, 33% say they sometimes do, while 12% rarely and 12% never have such conditions. County level differences are large.

In Turkana and Bungoma very few learners feel they always have a good environment, while in Samburu almost 88% do. Learners in single parent, guardian led and child headed households are much less likely to have a consistently supportive study environment and more likely to report that conditions are rarely or never conducive. These findings, combined with limited electricity and overcrowding in some schools and communities, show that many learners are expected to learn at home under significant physical and social constraints.

Despite these barriers, educational aspirations are very high. A total of 96% of learners state that they definitely plan to complete secondary school and a further 3% say they probably will. Very few are unsure or inclined not to finish. Looking ahead, 85% plan to join university after secondary school and 27% express an interest in college or TVET, often in addition rather than as an alternative. Smaller proportions intend to start a business (9%), seek employment (10%) or help with family farming or business (11%). Only 5% mention getting married as their main plan, though this share is higher in a few counties where early marriage pressures remain strong. Boys and girls express similar aspirations, suggesting that at least at the level of hopes and plans, both genders see further education as central to their future.

Figure 22: What do you plan to do after completing secondary school?



Life Skills

The following section presents a dedicated analysis of life skills, structured around core domains measured in the assessment. This includes emotional regulation, decision-making, communication, teamwork, and empathy. A composite baseline index for overall life skills proficiency is also provided.

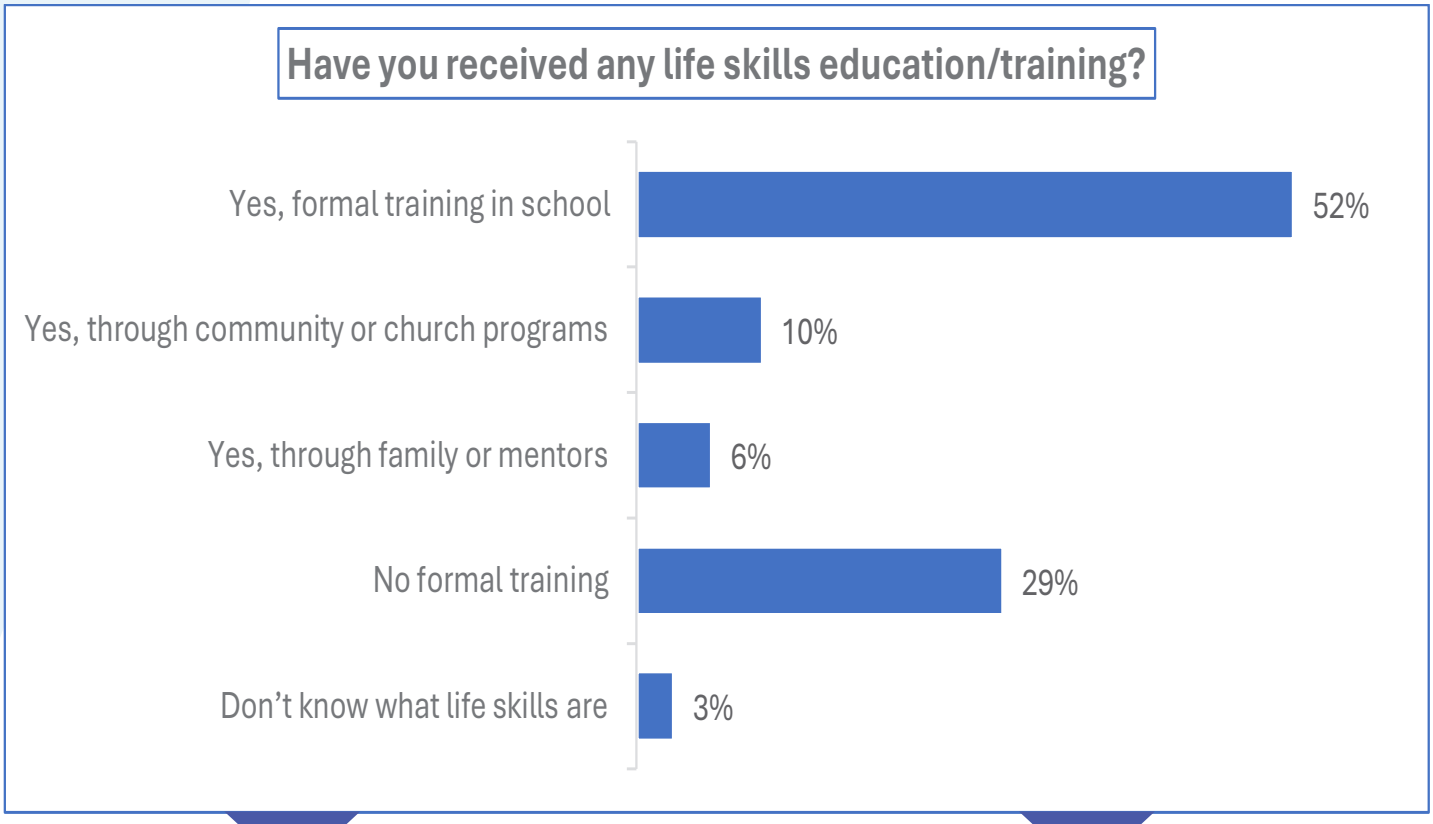
Life Skills Exposure and Proficiency

Learners demonstrate strong awareness of the importance of life skills and hold clear views about how these skills should be developed. Quantitative findings show that 56% of learners believe teachers should play the primary role in life skills education, while 50% emphasise parents and family as key contributors. Nearly a quarter (23%) explicitly prefer a combined approach involving teachers, parents, community figures, and specialised trainers. Only small minorities view community or religious leaders alone (7%) or specialist trainers alone (7%) as sufficient. These preferences indicate that learners perceive life skills as relational and contextual, something learned across home, school, and community rather than confined to a single space.

Qualitative data strongly reinforce this perspective. Learners repeatedly described life skills as something that must be shown, practised, and supported rather than taught abstractly. As one learner explained, *"You cannot just be told about life skills. You learn them when someone walks with you."* A teacher echoed this view, noting, *"Life skills are caught more than taught. Learners copy what they see from adults."* Parents similarly emphasised modelling, with one caregiver stating, *"Children learn how to behave from how we handle problems at home."*

Despite high perceived importance, exposure to formal life skills education remains uneven. Slightly over half of learners (52%) reported receiving life skills training at school, with higher coverage in Homa Bay, Kitui, and Samburu, and lower coverage in Turkana, Kajiado, and Baringo. A further 10% accessed life skills through community or church programmes, and 6% through family members or mentors. However, nearly one-third of learners (29%) reported having no formal life skills training, and 3% indicated they did not know what life skills are at all. These gaps are most pronounced in marginalised counties and among learners in guardian-led, relative-led, and child-headed households.

Figure 23: Have you received any life skills education/training?



"The syllabus pushes academics first. Life skills come in when there is time."

HEADTEACHER

"Sometimes life skills are taught only when there is a problem."

TEACHER

Teachers acknowledged that life skills education is often informal, inconsistent, and dependent on individual initiative. One teacher explained, *"We try to integrate life skills, but there is no clear time or structure."* Another added, *"Sometimes life skills are taught only when there is a problem."* School leaders similarly noted that life skills are often overshadowed by examination/assessment pressures. As one headteacher observed, *"The syllabus pushes academics first. Life skills come in when there is time."*

The assessment measured life skills across five core domains: Decision-Making & Problem-Solving, Communication & Interpersonal Skills, Emotional Regulation & Stress Management, Teamwork & Collaboration, and Empathy & Perspective-Taking. Across most domains, learners report high confidence in their life skills, particularly in decision making, problem solving, communication, goal setting, teamwork, empathy, and conflict resolution, as shown in the graph below.

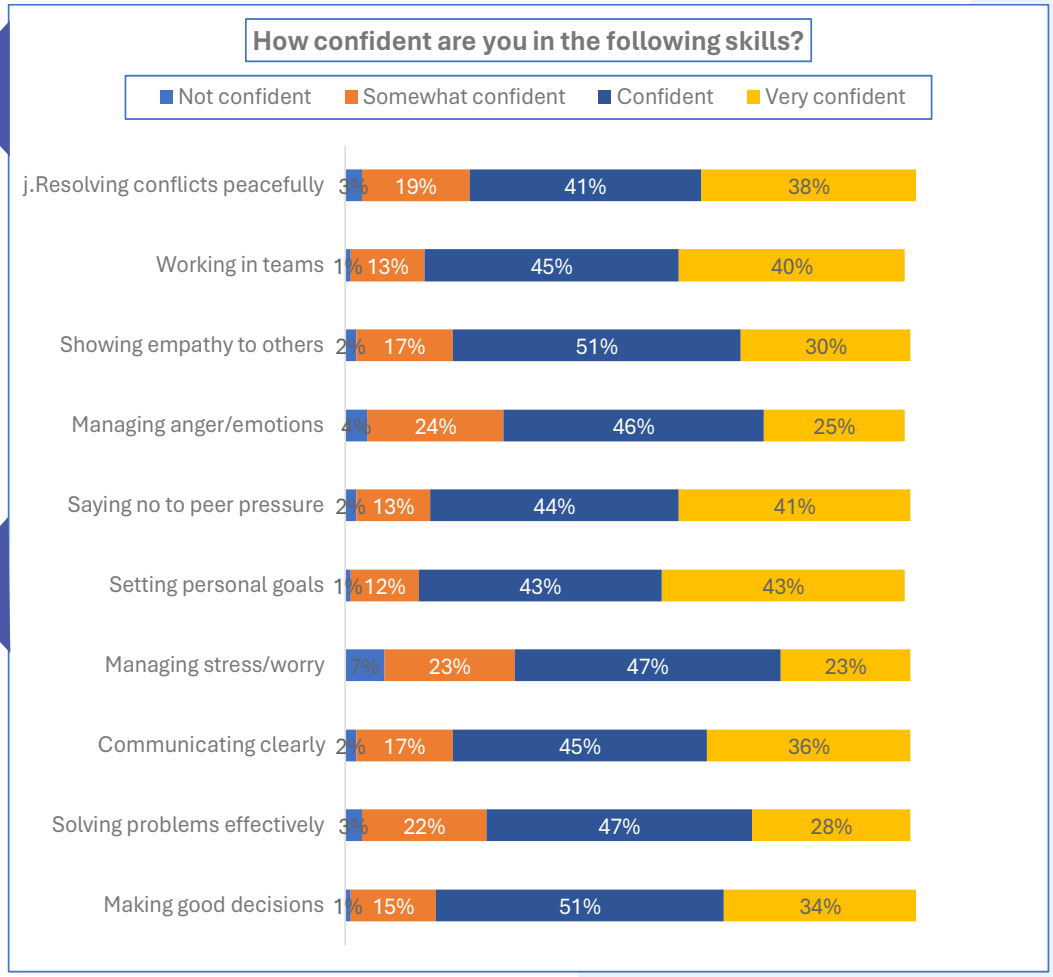
"Even if things are hard, I believe I can make good choices."

LEARNER

"These children have dreams. Poverty has not killed their ambition."

TEACHER

Figure 24: How confident are you in the following skills?



Domain 1: Decision-Making & Problem-Solving

Across most of the life skills assessed, learners report relatively high levels of confidence, although there are important differences between specific skills and between subgroups. For setting personal goals, only 1% of learners say they are not confident. A further 12% feel somewhat confident, while 43% describe themselves as confident and another 43% as very confident. Confidence is especially high in Turkana, Kitui, and Kajiado, where more than half of learners report being very confident in goal setting. Learners from single-parent and relative-led households are as likely, and sometimes more likely, to rate themselves as confident or very confident, suggesting that many young people in difficult circumstances still see themselves as able to set personal ambitions.

When it comes to saying no to peer pressure, 2% of learners feel not confident and 13% somewhat confident. The majority again feel strong, with 44% reporting that they are confident and 41% very confident in resisting pressure from peers. Confidence is particularly high in Kitui, Homa Bay, and Samburu, while it is slightly lower, and "somewhat confident" more common, in Bomet and Nandi. Learners in child-headed households show a mixed picture, with some very confident and others not confident, which may reflect both resilience and exposure to risk in their environments.

Qualitative narratives reveal strong aspiration and self-belief. One learner stated, *"I know what I want in life and I plan for it."* Another shared, *"Even if things are hard, I believe I can make good choices."* Teachers often described learners as ambitious and motivated. As one teacher noted, *"These children have dreams. Poverty has not killed their ambition."*

Domain 2: Emotional Regulation & Stress Management

Among the life skills assessed, emotional regulation emerges as a consistent area of vulnerability, particularly in learners' ability to manage stress, worry, and strong emotions. While a majority of learners report feeling confident in this domain, a substantial 30% fall into the "not confident" or "somewhat confident" categories for managing stress. Lower confidence is concentrated in high-poverty counties and among learners from child-headed, guardian-led, and single-parent households, where learners are more likely to face persistent anxiety, caregiving responsibilities, and economic uncertainty. This pattern mirrors earlier findings on household instability and psychosocial strain, suggesting that emotional regulation is shaped as much by context as by individual skill.

> "You feel pressure from home and school at the same time."
>
> LEARNER

Qualitative evidence provides critical insight into how these pressures are experienced in daily life. Learners frequently described feeling mentally overloaded, preoccupied, or emotionally drained, with stress interfering directly with concentration and participation in class. As one learner explained, *"Sometimes you think too much and cannot concentrate."* Another learner linked emotional strain to competing demands, stating, *"You feel pressure from home and school at the same time."* These accounts highlight how academic expectations intersect with household stress to overwhelm learners' coping capacity.

> "Many learners are carrying adult problems in young bodies."
>
> COUNSELLOR

Teachers and guidance counsellors described emotional distress as widespread but often invisible, particularly among learners who are quiet, compliant, or academically average. A counsellor observed, *"Many learners are carrying adult problems in young bodies."* Another teacher noted, *"The ones who don't disturb are the ones you worry about the most."* These observations suggest that emotional struggles are frequently internalised, reducing the likelihood that learners will seek help or be identified through disciplinary or academic monitoring.

The emotional consequences of unresolved problems are substantial.

When reflecting on a recent challenge, more than half of learners (52%) reported feeling sad, 31% reported worry, 20% confusion, and 17% anger. Only 8% reported feeling happy or relieved, typically when the problem had been resolved successfully. These emotional responses indicate that many learners experience prolonged distress when faced with difficulties, rather than short-term frustration that is quickly resolved. One learner captured this experience poignantly*: "When you fail to solve a problem, it stays in your heart."*

These findings underscore a critical gap between perceived competence in life skills and actual emotional coping under pressure. While learners may understand appropriate responses in theory, many lack the tools, support, or safe spaces needed to regulate emotions when confronted with real-world stressors. This gap is particularly acute for learners in fragile household contexts, where stress is chronic rather than episodic. Strengthening emotional regulation therefore represents a priority area for life skills programming, requiring intentional focus on stress management, emotional literacy, and access to trusted adults who can support learners to process challenges before they escalate into disengagement, poor academic performance, or psychosocial harm.

"My friends are the ones who help me when things are hard."

LEARNER

Domain 3: Teamwork & Collaboration

In contrast to emotional regulation, working in teams emerges as a relative strength among learners across the programme counties. Quantitative findings show that 85% of learners rate themselves as confident or very confident in working with others, with only 14% reporting that they are somewhat confident and just 1% indicating low confidence. High levels of teamwork confidence are especially evident in Kitui, Samburu, and Kajiado, where collaborative learning and peer support are more commonly reported.

Qualitative evidence reinforces these findings, with learners frequently describing teamwork as a source of support, motivation, and shared problem solving. One learner explained, *"When we work in groups, you understand better because others help you."* Another added, *"If you don't know something, your friend explains."* These accounts suggest that peer collaboration plays a compensatory role in environments where teacher attention and learning materials are limited.

"Learners who struggle alone improve when paired with others."

TEACHER

Teachers also highlighted teamwork as an effective strategy for managing large classes and supporting inclusion. A teacher noted, *"Group work helps quiet learners to speak."* Another observed, *"Learners who struggle alone improve when paired with others."* In overcrowded classrooms, collaborative learning was described as one of the few practical ways to ensure participation and peer learning.

Importantly, teamwork appears to function as a protective psychosocial factor, particularly for learners from vulnerable household arrangements. Learners living in single-parent, guardian-led, or child-headed households often reported equal or higher confidence in teamwork compared to those living with both parents, suggesting that reliance on peers may help compensate for limited adult support at home. As one learner from a guardian-led household shared*, "My friends are the ones who help me when things are hard."*

However, qualitative findings also point to uneven participation within teams. Some learners, particularly those experiencing high stress or low self-confidence, tend to remain passive during group activities. A teacher explained, “In groups, some learners still keep quiet unless guided.” This indicates that while teamwork is generally strong, it does not automatically ensure inclusion without intentional facilitation.

Overall, the evidence suggests that learners possess solid foundational teamwork skills and value peer collaboration, making group-based approaches a promising entry point for both academic support and life skills development. To maximise impact, programme interventions should build on this strength by promoting structured group work, peer mentoring, and cooperative problem-solving activities, while ensuring that quieter or more vulnerable learners are actively supported to participate and benefit fully from team-based learning.

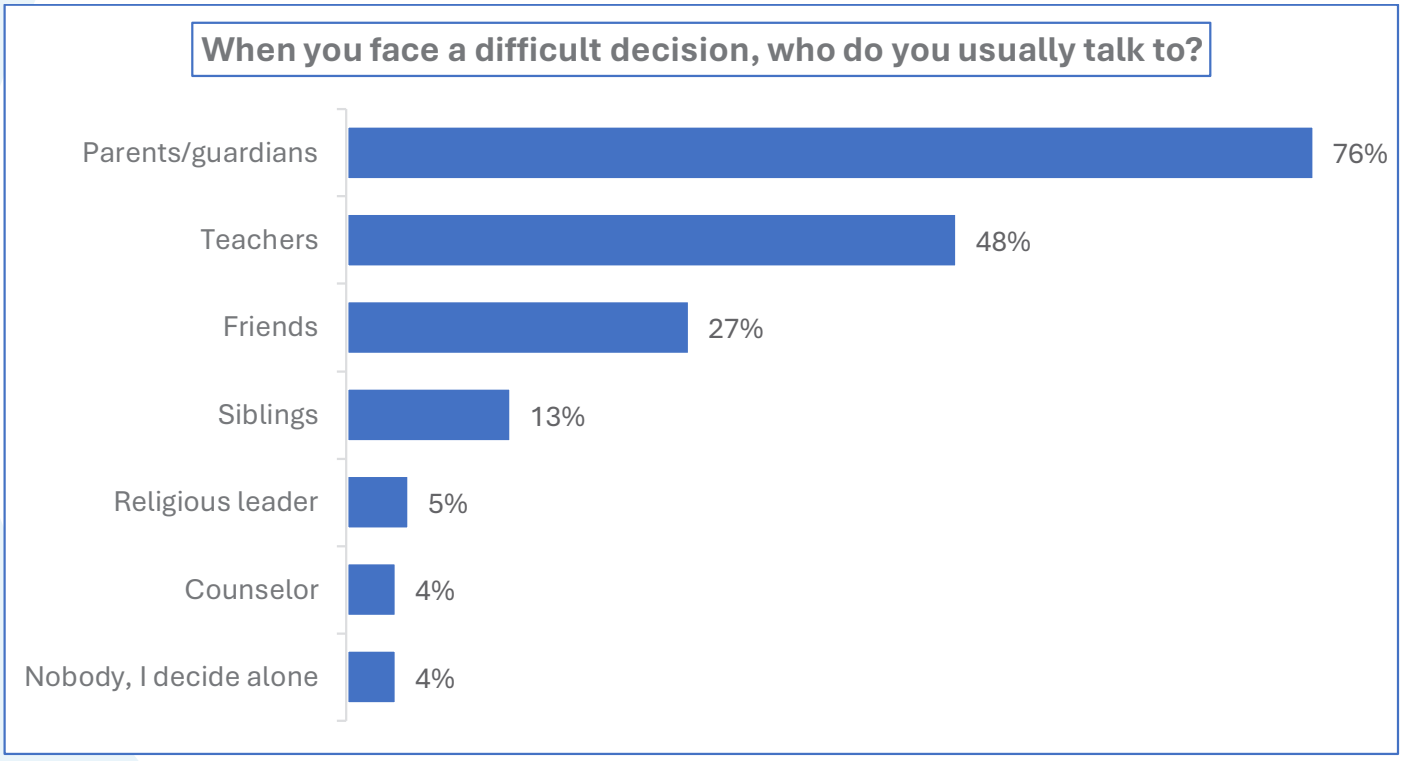
Domain 4: Communication & Interpersonal Skills

Help Seeking and Support Networks for Decision Making

Help-seeking behaviours and access to trusted adults play a central role in how learners navigate risk, stress, and decision making. Quantitative findings indicate that most learners do not face difficult decisions alone, with 76% reporting that they usually turn to parents or guardians for guidance. This reliance on caregivers is particularly strong in Kitui, Homa Bay, and Bomet, where more than four in five learners seek advice at home, reflecting relatively stronger or more accessible family support structures in these counties.

Teachers are the second most important source of support, consulted by 48% of learners overall. This pattern is especially evident in counties where learners reported closer relationships with teachers and more active guidance and counselling structures. Teachers are often perceived as approachable and knowledgeable, particularly by younger learners and those in lower secondary grades. One learner explained, *“When I talk to my teacher, I understand things better because they know school life.”* However, teachers’ ability to consistently provide mentorship is constrained by heavy workloads, large class sizes, and the absence of protected time for counselling.

Figure 25: When you face a difficult decision, who do you usually talk to?



Peers also play a significant role, with 27% of learners reporting that they talk to friends when facing difficult decisions. Peer support is particularly prominent in Homa Bay, Nandi and Kajiado, where learners often rely on friendships to share concerns they may not feel comfortable raising with adults. A learner shared, *"Sometimes it is easier to tell a friend first."* While peer networks provide important emotional support, they may not always offer accurate guidance, especially on complex issues such as family conflict, mental health, or future planning.

Reliance on formal psychosocial services remains extremely limited. Only 4% of learners reported turning to counsellors, reflecting both the scarcity of trained counselling staff and low awareness of these services within schools. In many cases, guidance and counselling roles are assigned to teachers without specialised training or visibility, reducing learners' willingness to seek them out. One teacher acknowledged, *"Learners don't come to counselling unless there is a crisis."*

"Sometimes it is easier to tell a friend first."

LEARNER

A small but critical group of learners (4%) reported that they talk to no one when making difficult decisions. This proportion is higher among learners in child-headed households and some guardian-led arrangements, where consistent adult support is often absent. A learner from a child-headed household explained starkly, *"I decide things alone because there is no one."* Teachers expressed serious concern about this isolation, with one noting, *"Some learners have no adult to lean on, and they carry everything themselves."* These learners are particularly vulnerable to poor decision making, emotional distress, and disengagement from school.

When asked more broadly about access to trusted adults, most learners (92%) reported having at least one adult they trust, though these adults are predominantly located at home. Overall, 64% identified a trusted adult at home, 24% at school, and only 4% in the community. However, 8% reported having no trusted adult at all, a figure that rises among learners from single-father and guardian-led households, where caregiving may be inconsistent or overstretched.

"Some learners have no adult to lean on, and they carry everything themselves."

TEACHER

Qualitative interviews highlight the protective value of trusted relationships. One learner shared, *"When I talk to my mother, I feel guided."* Religious and community leaders emphasised the broader implications of these findings. As one religious leader cautioned, *"A child without a trusted adult is very vulnerable."* Another community elder added, *"Even one caring adult can change the direction of a child's life."*

Overall, the findings indicate that while family and teachers form the backbone of learners' support networks, access to consistent, trained mentorship and counselling remains limited particularly for learners in fragile household arrangements. The existence of a small but significant group of learners with no trusted adult underscores the urgency of strengthening school-based mentorship systems, increasing the visibility and capacity of counselling services, and deliberately identifying and supporting learners who lack stable adult guidance at home or in the community.

Problem Solving Experiences and Emotional Impact

Learners were also asked whether they were able to solve a recent problem they had faced. Responses indicate that many learners need support to move from problem recognition to resolution. Only 17% say they solved the problem on their own. A further 45% report that they solved it with help from someone else, while 38% say they could not solve it at all. The proportion unable to resolve their problem is particularly high in Bomet, Nandi and several ASAL counties, and among child headed and some single parent households. In contrast, learners in Kajiado and Baringo report higher levels of independent problem solving.

Among the 112 learners who described how they addressed their problem, 44% say they fixed it by themselves and 35% talked to a parent or guardian. 19% talked to a friend, 13% to a teacher and 4% asked someone else for help. A small proportion, 3%, chose to ignore the issue and wait for it to pass. 9% selected “other” responses, which in some counties include seeking help from extended family or community elders. These responses confirm that parents and guardians, followed by peers and teachers, are central in helping learners to manage challenges, and that some young people are developing strong self reliance in problem solving.

The emotional impact of these problems is considerable. When asked how the problem made them feel, 52% of learners report feeling sad and 31% worried. 17% felt angry, 12% scared and 20% confused. Only 8% felt happy or relieved, usually when the problem was resolved successfully. Feelings of sadness are particularly high in Turkana, Bungoma and Kajiado, whereas confusion and worry are more pronounced in Kitui, Baringo and some vulnerable household categories. Learners from child headed and relative led households are especially likely to report sadness, worry and confusion.

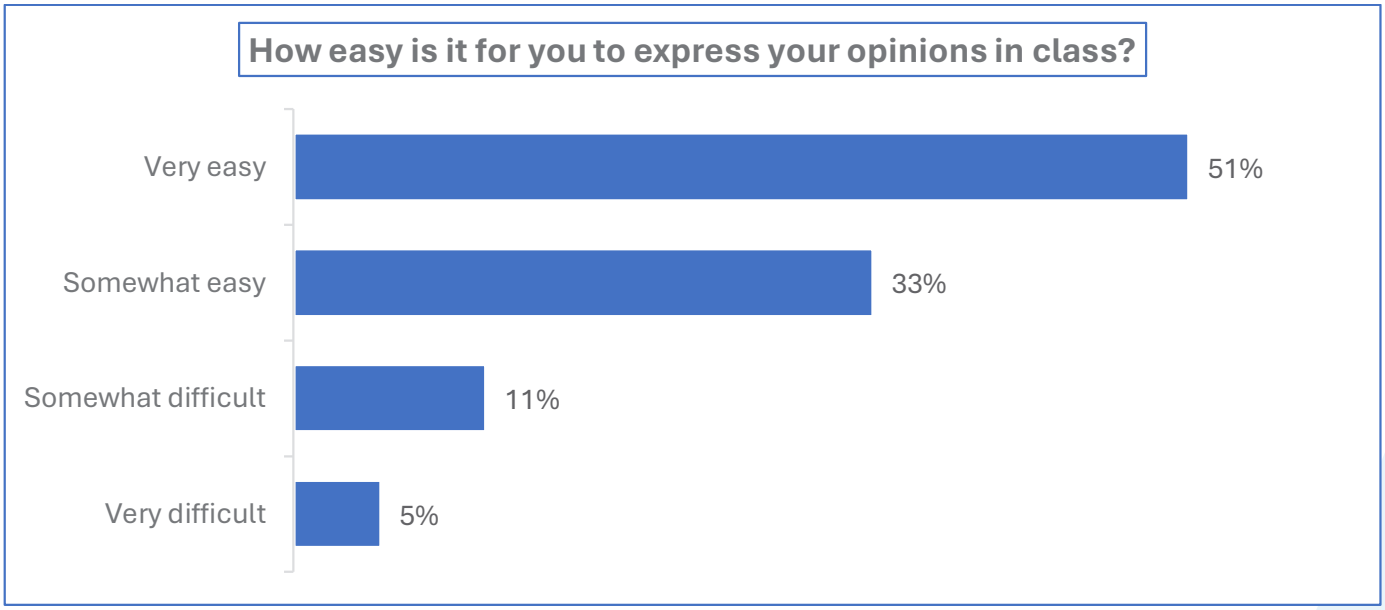
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

These findings therefore, show that while many learners rate themselves as confident in key life skills, a substantial number still struggle to apply these skills when faced with real problems, and often experience strong negative emotions as a result. This underscores the importance of life skills education that goes beyond awareness and self rating, and gives learners practical tools, safe spaces and supportive adults to help them practise goal setting, assertiveness, emotional regulation and conflict resolution in the situations that matter most to them.

Expressing Opinions and Access to Trusted Adults

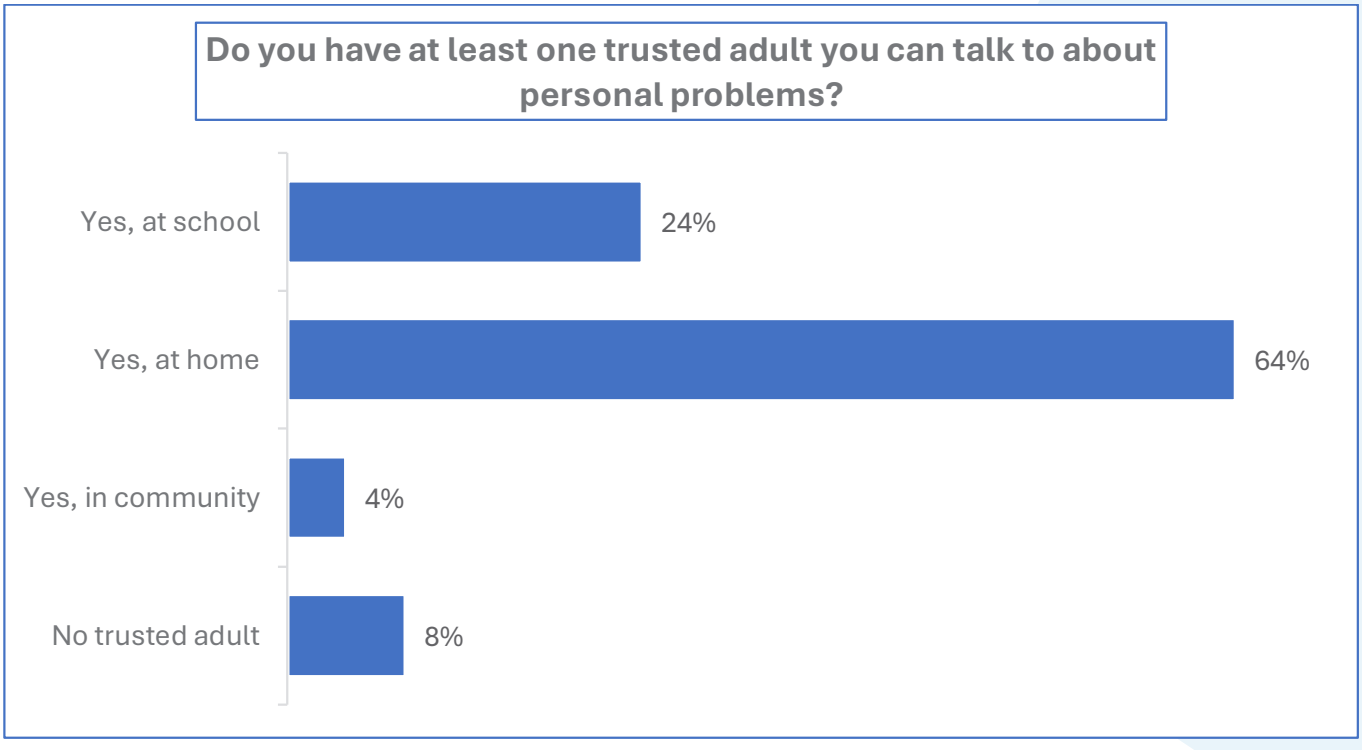
Most learners feel that they are able to speak up in class. Overall, 51% say it is “very easy” to express their opinions and 33% say it is “somewhat easy”. Only 11% find it “somewhat difficult” and 5% “very difficult”. Confidence is particularly high in Kitui (73% “very easy”), Samburu (69%) and West Pokot (55%), while learners in Homabay and Baringo are more likely to report only “somewhat easy”. Boys are slightly more likely than girls to say it is “very easy” (66% vs 54%), although both genders report broadly similar levels of ease. Learners from child headed households and those living with relatives show a higher share in the “somewhat difficult” and “very difficult” categories, which suggests that more vulnerable living arrangements may translate into lower confidence about speaking in front of others.

Figure 26: How easy is it for you to express your opinions in class?



Most learners also report having an adult they can turn to when facing personal problems. A total of 64% say they have a trusted adult at home, 24% have one at school and 4% in the community. Only 8% report having no trusted adult at all. Reliance on home-based support is especially high in Turkana (87%) and Homabay (76%), while school-based support is more prominent in some counties where guidance and counselling structures are stronger. Learners in Baringo and Bomet report higher access to trusted adults at school, while those in child headed households are more likely to have a trusted adult at home (86%) than at school. The share with no trusted adult rises among single father households and some guardian led arrangements, which are also the groups at higher risk of emotional distress.

Figure 27: Do you have at least one trusted adult you can talk to about personal problems?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

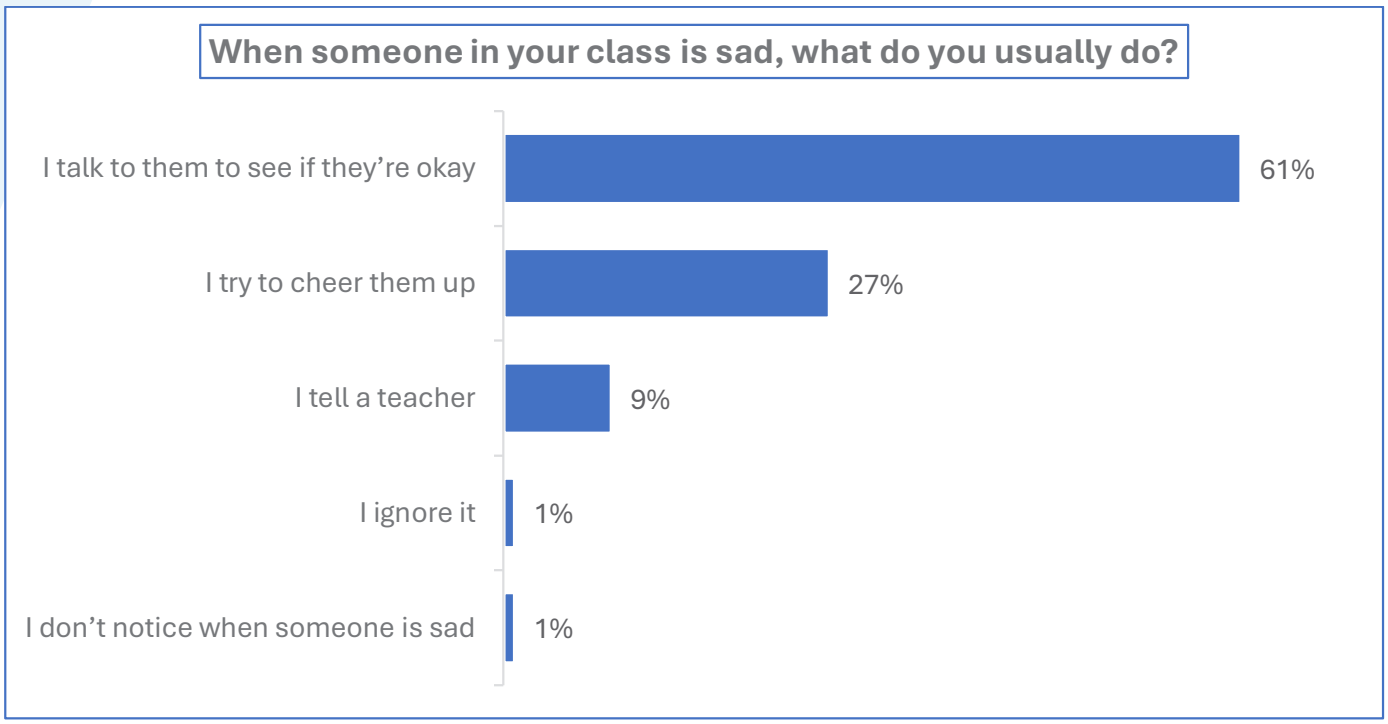
Around 84% of learners find it easy to express their opinions in class, but a small group, especially those in fragile living arrangements, are still struggling to speak up. Additionally, trusted adults are mainly located at home, with two thirds of learners relying on family. However, about 1 in 12 learners has no trusted adult, highlighting the need for deliberate mentoring and pastoral care in schools and communities.

Domain 5: Empathy & Perspective-Taking

Empathy and Responses to Peers' Emotions

In understanding their empathy and response to peer's emotions, learners' responses suggest a strong culture of peer support when classmates are visibly distressed. When someone in their class is sad, 61% say they talk to them to check if they are okay and 27% try to cheer them up. Only 9% would primarily tell a teacher, and just 1% would ignore it. Another 1% say they usually do not notice when someone is sad. Talking directly to the learner is particularly common in Kajiado (82%) and Kitui (67%), while trying to cheer up is more frequent in Bungoma and Bomet. Ignoring sadness or failing to notice it is rare, although it appears more often among learners in child headed or guardian led households, which may reflect their own emotional overload or social isolation.

Figure 28: When someone in your class is sad, what do you usually do?



Qualitative evidence reinforces this pattern, with learners consistently describing a culture of mutual care and attentiveness among peers. As one learner explained, *"We check on each other."* Another added, *"If someone is quiet, you ask why."* These accounts suggest that many learners are emotionally attuned to changes in their peers' behaviour and feel a sense of responsibility to respond when someone appears troubled.

Teachers and school leaders also noted a generally supportive classroom climate, particularly compared to previous years. One teacher observed, *"Learners are kinder to each other than before."* Another remarked that *"Students now help each other instead of laughing when someone is struggling."* Such observations point to the presence of positive peer norms that discourage ridicule and promote empathy, even in contexts marked by overcrowding and resource constraints.

Learners also report that it is relatively easy to detect when a friend is upset. A total of 40% say it is "very easy" and 32% "easy", while 20% find it "sometimes easy". Only 5% find it "hard" and 3% "very hard". Boys and girls report similar levels of sensitivity, though boys are slightly more likely to say it is "very easy". In some counties, such as Bungoma and Nandi, more learners cluster in the "easy" rather than "very easy" category, which may reflect larger class sizes or less intimate peer networks. Learners from child headed and single father households are more represented in the "hard" and "very hard" groups, which suggests that stress and responsibility may limit their emotional bandwidth to notice others' feelings.

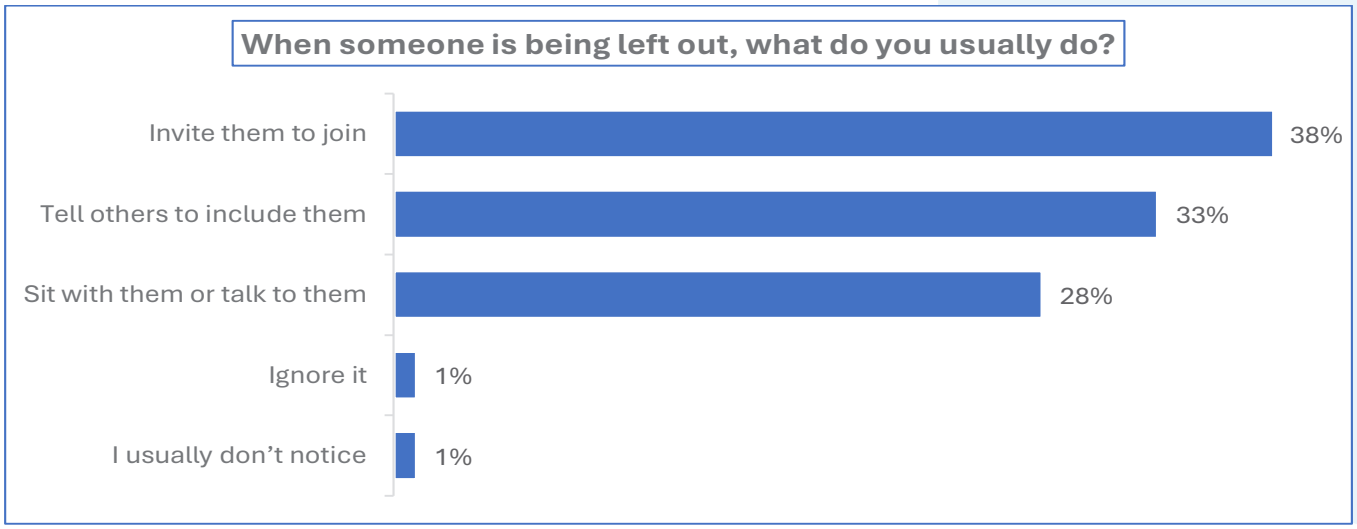
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Most learners actively respond when they see a classmate who is sad, primarily by talking to them or trying to cheer them up, which is a strong foundation for peer support. Around 72% find it easy or very easy to tell when a friend is upset, but a small subset, particularly those under higher stress at home, struggle to read others' emotions and may need support to strengthen empathic skills.

Inclusion, Helping Behaviour and Problem Support

When someone is being left out, learners mainly choose inclusive responses. A total of 38% say they invite the person to join, 33% tell others to include them and 28% choose to sit with the person or talk to them. Only 1% say they ignore the situation and 1% say they usually do not notice. Inviting the person is most common in Kitui and Baringo, while telling others to include them is more prevalent in Bungoma, Samburu and Baringo. Sitting with the excluded person is especially common in Homabay and Kajiado. Learners from child headed and relative led households are somewhat more likely to tell others to include the person or sit with them, suggesting that those who have experienced exclusion themselves may be more attuned to others' isolation.

Figure 29: When someone in your class is sad, what do you usually do?



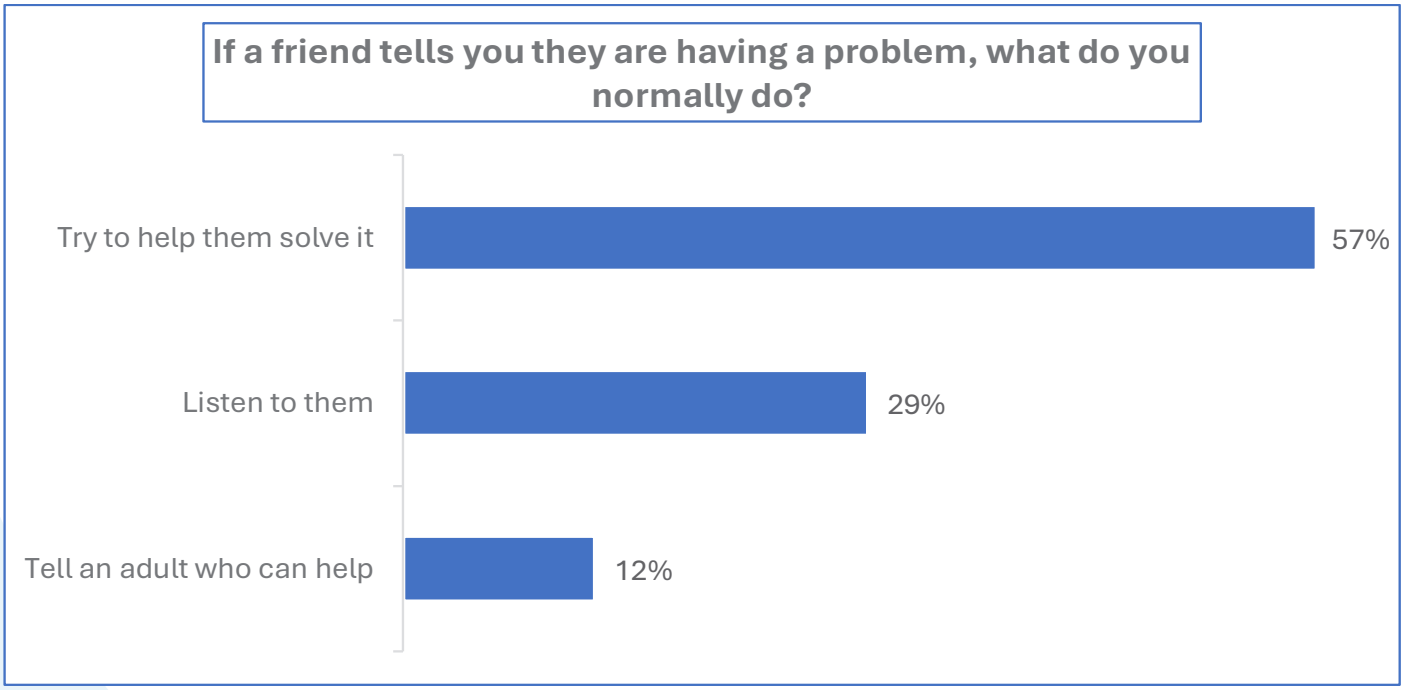
Responses to social exclusion and classroom mistakes further illustrate this supportive environment. Most learners reported choosing inclusive actions when they notice a peer being left out, such as inviting the learner to join an activity, sitting with them, or encouraging others to include them. Similarly, when a classmate makes a mistake during lessons, the majority indicated that they try to help the learner understand or recognise that mistakes are a normal part of learning. A learner shared, *"When someone makes a mistake, we explain instead of laughing."* Another noted, *"It can happen to anyone, so you help."* These behaviours help create a psychologically safe learning environment where learners are more willing to participate and take academic risks.

However, the data also highlight important pockets of vulnerability. Small minorities of learners reported ignoring distress, exclusion, or mistakes, and these learners are disproportionately drawn from highly stressed household contexts, including child-headed, guardian-led, and some single-parent households. Teachers suggested that these learners may be emotionally overwhelmed or socially withdrawn due to challenges outside school. As one teacher explained*, "Some learners are so burdened at home that they don't notice what others are going through."* This suggests that limited empathy or responsiveness may reflect emotional overload rather than lack of concern.

Overall, the findings indicate that peer support and empathy are significant strengths within the school climate and provide an important buffer against stress, isolation, and disengagement. Positive peer norms around inclusion, helping behaviour, and emotional responsiveness create opportunities to strengthen life skills programming through peer-led and group-based approaches. At the same time, the presence of small but vulnerable groups who struggle to engage empathically underscores the need for targeted social-emotional learning and psychosocial support, particularly for learners experiencing high levels of stress outside school.

When a friend shares a problem, 57% of learners say they try to help solve it and 29% say they primarily listen. 12% say they tell an adult who can help, and very few minimise the issue or change the topic. Problem solving on behalf of friends is especially common in Homabay, Samburu and Kajiado, and among older learners. Listening as the main response is more frequent in Baringo and among boys, while telling an adult is more common among learners from single father or guardian led households, who may feel less able to handle issues alone. Almost no learners report not knowing what to do, which suggests that most learners feel equipped to offer some form of support, even if it is not always effective.

Figure 30: If a friend tells you they are having a problem, what do you normally do?



Overall, these patterns portray a peer culture that is largely inclusive and caring. However, the small but consistent proportions of learners who ignore exclusion, fail to notice others' distress or feel they have no trusted adult underscore the need to strengthen social emotional learning, ensure that every learner has at least one supportive adult connection, and pay particular attention to those in the most fragile family situations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

The majority of learners react constructively when someone is left out or in difficulty, either by including them, sitting with them or helping them work through problems. Formal life skills and school climate initiatives can build on these existing strengths, while specifically targeting the minority who report ignoring others' distress, lack of trusted adults or difficulty recognising when someone is upset.

Composite Life Skills Index (CSLI)

To provide a single, measurable indicator of learners' overall life skills proficiency, a Composite Life Skills Index was developed by aggregating learner scores across five assessed life skills domains. Each domain was measured using standardized Likert-scale items scored on a scale of 1 to 5, where higher values indicate stronger proficiency. Domain-level scores were averaged for each learner, and the composite index was calculated as the unweighted mean of the five domains, ensuring equal contribution of each competency area to the overall score.

At baseline, the Composite Life Skills Index recorded a mean score of 3.2 out of 5, indicating a moderate overall level of life skills development among learners in the target schools. Performance across domains was uneven, reflecting both strengths and gaps in learners' competencies. Learners demonstrated relatively stronger skills in teamwork and collaboration (mean score: 3.8) and communication (mean score: 3.5), suggesting generally positive peer engagement and the ability to express ideas and interact effectively. In contrast, lower scores were observed in emotional regulation and coping (mean score: 2.7), indicating challenges in managing stress, worry, and emotional responses, particularly within contexts of household vulnerability and psychosocial pressure identified elsewhere in the findings.

Table 2: Composite Life Skills Index - Baseline Scores by Domain

Life Skills Domain	Mean Score (1–5)	Interpretation
Teamwork and Collaboration	3.8	Relatively strong peer interaction and cooperation
Communication Skills	3.5	Moderate ability to express ideas and interact effectively
Decision-making and Problem-solving	3.1	Moderate capacity to make informed choices
Self-confidence and Goal Orientation	2.9	Emerging confidence and future orientation
Emotional Regulation and Coping	2.7	Lower capacity to manage stress and emotions
Composite Life Skills Index	3.2	Moderate overall life skills proficiency

To enhance transparency and replicability, Box X outlines the construction of the Composite Life Skills Index.

Composite Life Skills Index - Construction Formula

The Composite Life Skills Index (CLSI) is calculated as the unweighted average of learner scores across five life skills domains, each measured on a 1–5 Likert scale.

Where:

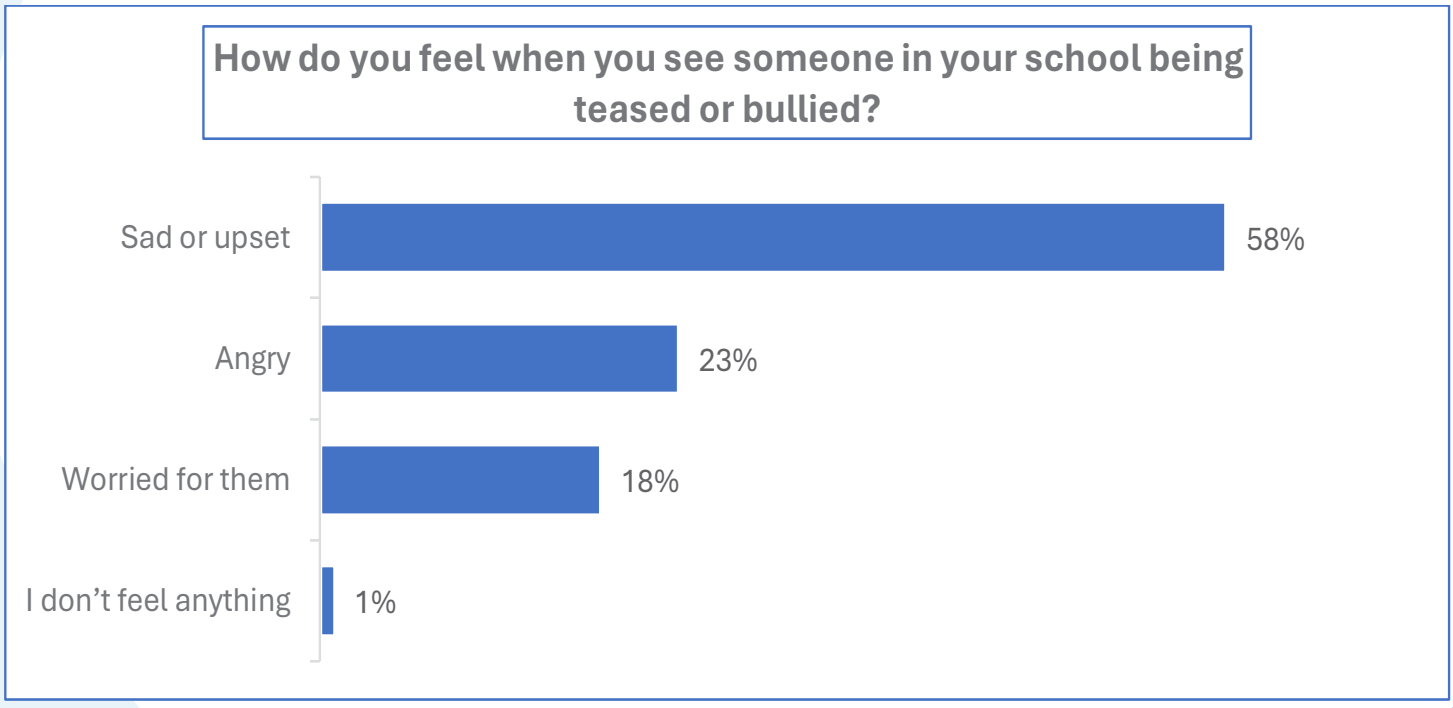
- D_1 = Communication skills
- D_2 = Teamwork and collaboration
- D_3 = Decision-making and problem-solving
- D_4 = Self-confidence and goal orientation
- D_5 = Emotional regulation and coping

The index is normalized on a 1–5 scale, with higher scores indicating stronger overall life skills proficiency. Overall, the CLSI highlights that while learners possess foundational interpersonal skills, intrapersonal competencies particularly emotional regulation and coping are comparatively underdeveloped. The index therefore provides a clear and practical baseline benchmark for tracking programme impact on life skills development over time and will be used at midline and endline to assess both overall progress and domain-specific improvements.

Reactions to Bullying and Everyday Mistakes

Learners' reactions to bullying and everyday mistakes reveal a largely empathetic and supportive school climate, with strong emotional responses to peer harm and a general willingness to assist classmates who struggle. Quantitative findings indicate that when learners witness bullying, 99% report an emotional reaction, most commonly sadness, anger, or worry, suggesting that indifference to bullying is extremely rare. Feelings of sadness or being upset were reported by 58% of learners, 23% expressed anger, and 18% reported feeling worried for the learner being targeted. Only 1% indicated that they felt indifferent.

Figure 31: How do you feel when you see someone in your school being teased or bullied

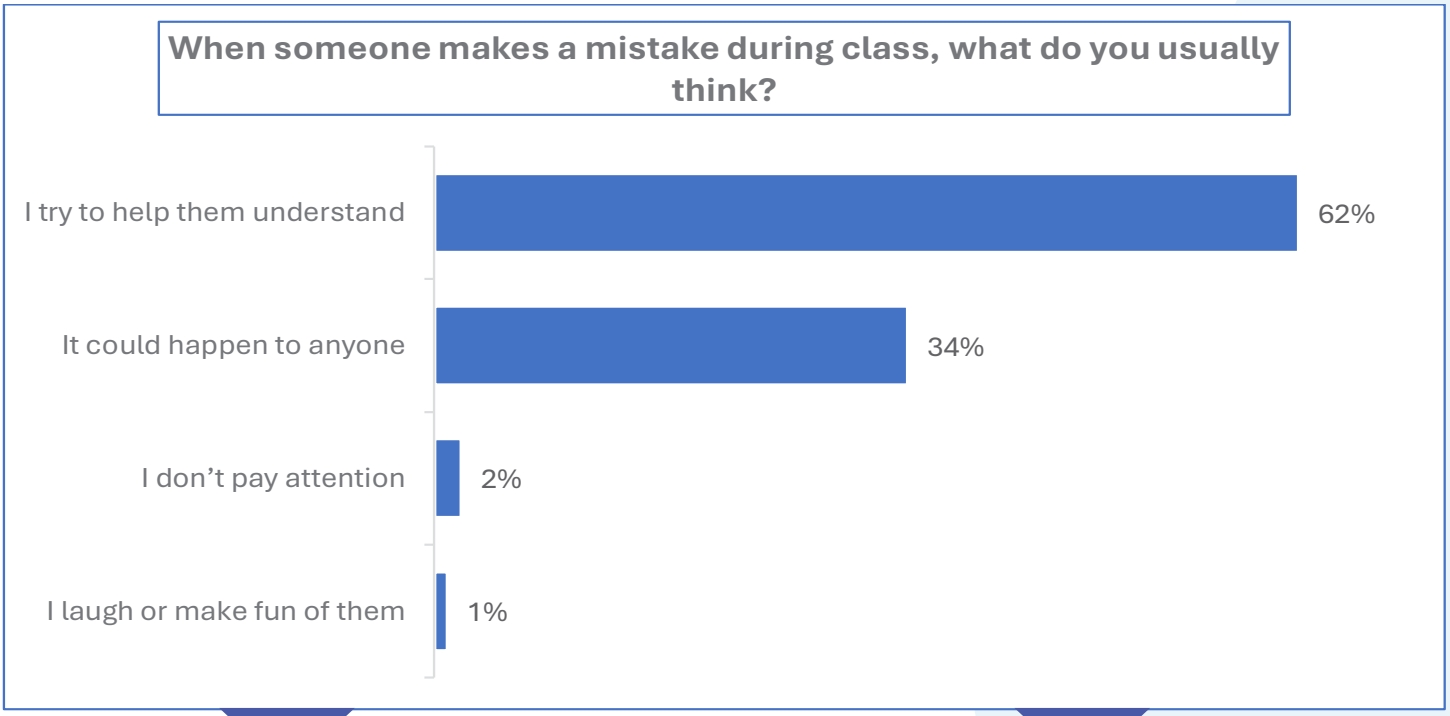


County-level variations in emotional responses suggest differences in how bullying is perceived and experienced. Feelings of sadness were particularly high in Turkana and Kajiado, where learners may view bullying as especially harmful or frequent, while anger was more pronounced in Samburu and Bomet, possibly reflecting stronger norms around defending peers. Worry was notably higher in Nandi and West Pokot, which may indicate concern about potential escalation or repercussions. Learners from child-headed and relative-led households were more likely to report worry and anger, reflecting heightened sensitivity to harm and injustice, potentially shaped by their own experiences of vulnerability.

Qualitative accounts confirm that bullying elicits strong emotional responses and concern among learners. One learner shared, *"When someone is bullied, it makes you feel bad because it can happen to anyone."* Another noted, *"You feel angry because it is not fair."* Teachers observed that learners are increasingly willing to speak up or intervene. As one teacher explained, *"Students don't like seeing others being bullied. They report or comfort the learner."*

Reactions to everyday mistakes in the classroom further illustrate a supportive learning environment. When a peer makes a mistake during lessons, 62% of learners reported that they try to help the learner understand, while 34% indicated that they view mistakes as normal and believe that "it could happen to anyone." Only a very small minority (1%) admitted to laughing or mocking, and 2% reported not paying attention. These responses suggest that ridicule is uncommon and that most learners view mistakes as part of the learning process.

Figure 32: When someone makes a mistake during class, what do you usually think?



"Some learners are too stressed to even notice when others are being bullied.""

TEACHER

"When someone gets it wrong, others explain instead of mocking."

TEACHER

Teachers reinforced this finding, describing a shift toward more collaborative and respectful classroom interactions. One teacher remarked, *"Learners are not laughing at each other the way they used to."* Another added, *"When someone gets it wrong, others explain instead of mocking."* Such dynamics create psychological safety, encouraging participation and reducing fear of failure an important condition for effective learning, particularly in large and overcrowded classrooms.

Despite these positive patterns, qualitative evidence highlights that supportive reactions are not universal. A small subset of learners often those experiencing high stress at home or limited emotional support may disengage, remain silent, or struggle to respond empathically. One teacher noted, "Some learners are too stressed to even notice when others are being bullied." This suggests that emotional overload can reduce learners' capacity to respond constructively, rather than reflecting apathy or cruelty.

The findings therefore indicate that learners generally demonstrate strong empathy and concern in response to bullying and mistakes, providing a solid foundation for anti-bullying initiatives and positive school climate interventions. However, sustaining and deepening these strengths requires deliberate reinforcement through life skills education, clear school policies, and adult modelling of respectful behaviour, while ensuring that learners who are emotionally overburdened receive the psychosocial support needed to fully engage in a caring and inclusive school environment.

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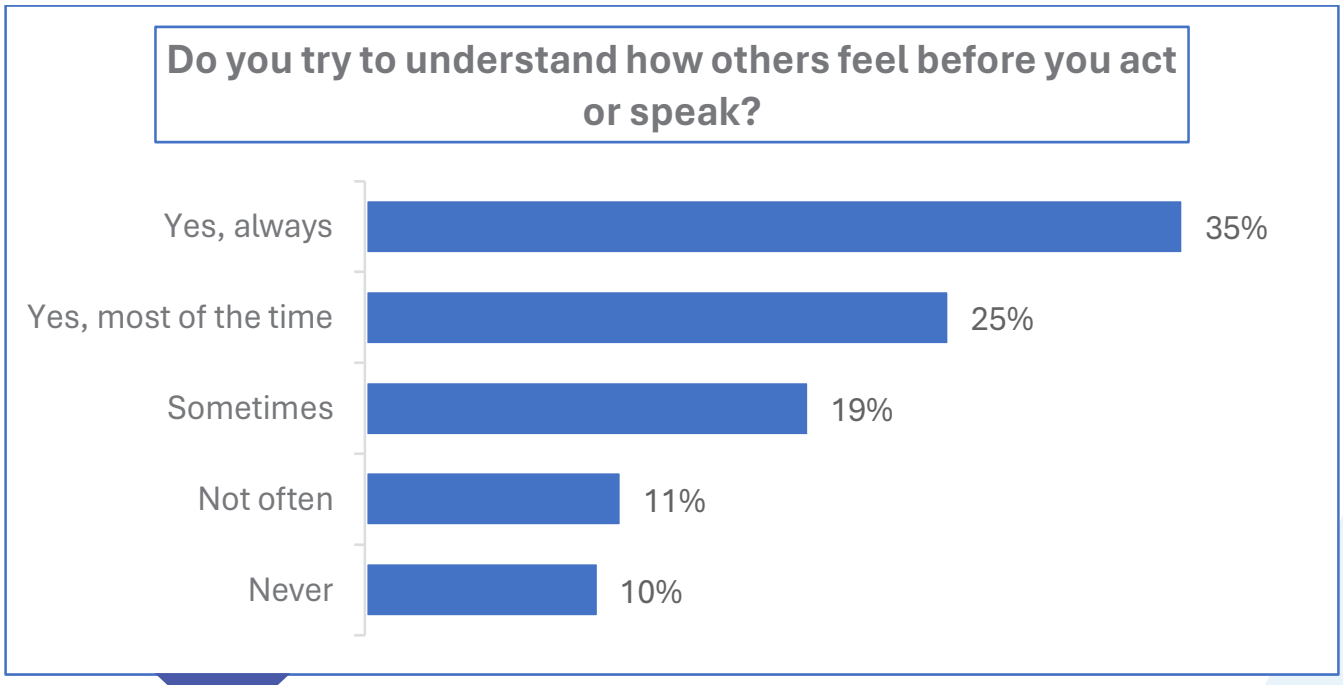
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

The overwhelming majority of learners (99%) respond to bullying with concern (sadness, anger, or worry), indicating a strong foundation for antibullying initiatives. Similarly, most learners offer support or understanding when peers make mistakes in class. However, a small minority (<5%) still exhibit ridicule or disengagement, highlighting the need for targeted messaging and modelling to reinforce positive peer support and empathy across all learners..

Perspective-Taking and Emotional Well-being king and Emotional Well-being

Learners' ability to consider others' feelings before acting or speaking presents a mixed but informative picture of social-emotional development. Quantitative findings show that a majority of learners (60%) report practising perspective-taking consistently, either always (35%) or most of the time (25%), indicating that many learners demonstrate empathy and social awareness that support positive peer relationships and constructive conflict management. Higher levels of consistent perspective-taking are evident in Turkana (45% "always") and Kitui (42% "always"), counties where learners and teachers also described stronger peer cohesion and mutual support.

Figure 33: Do you try to understand how others feel before you act or speak?



"When a learner is overwhelmed by their own problems, it is hard for them to think about others."

GUIDANCE TEACHER

"Sometimes you are just thinking how to survive, not about feelings."

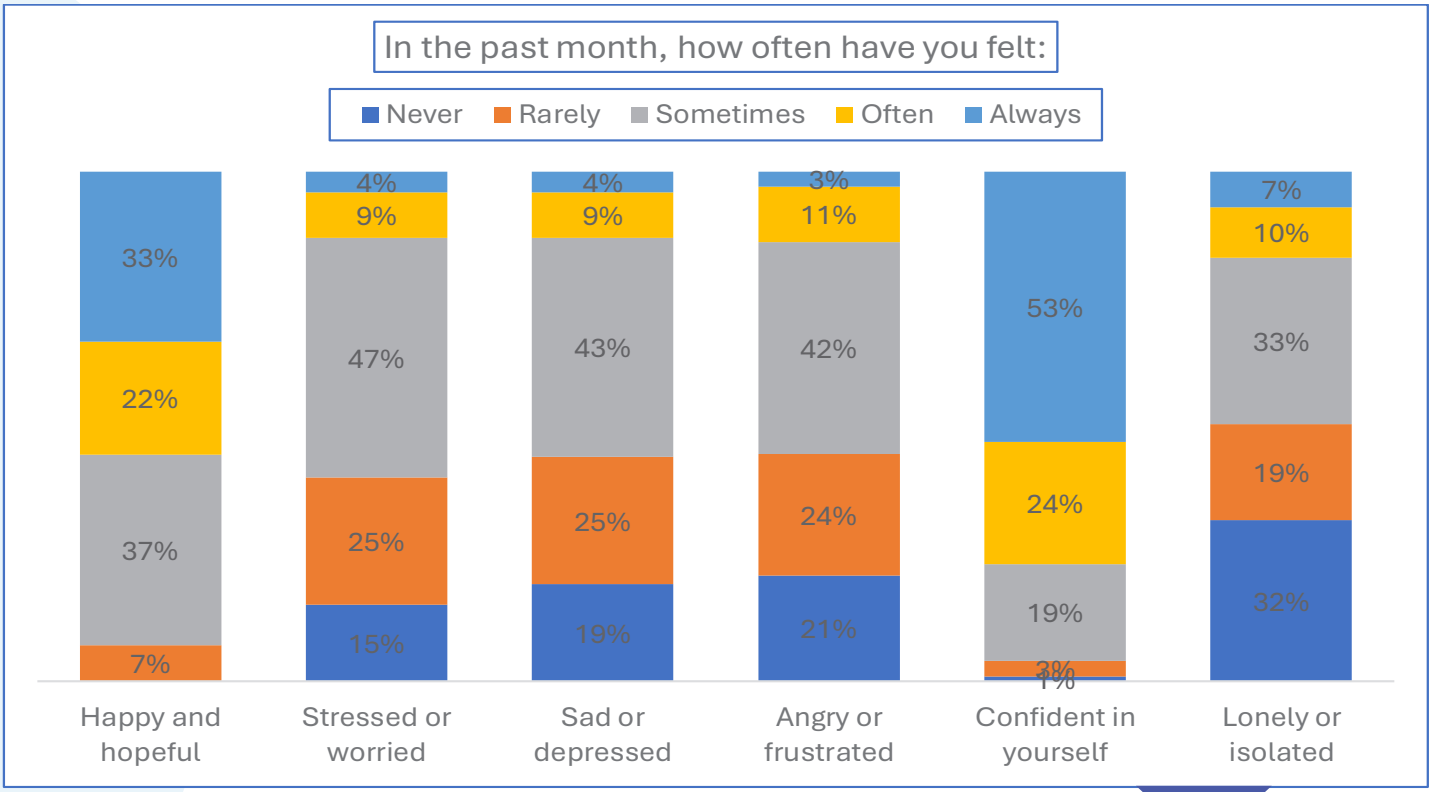
LEARNER

Learners in these contexts described empathy as an everyday practice rather than an abstract concept. One learner explained, *"Before I talk, I think how the other person will feel."* Another noted, *"You cannot just speak without understanding what someone is going through."* Teachers similarly observed growing reflectiveness among learners, with one stating, *"Some learners now stop and think before reacting."*

At the same time, a substantial minority of learners (21%) reported that they rarely or never consider others' perspectives (11% "not often" and 10% "never"). This pattern is particularly pronounced in Nandi, where 36% reported never engaging in perspective-taking, and among learners from child-headed and single-father households, where up to one quarter fall into the "never" category. Qualitative evidence suggests that this is closely linked to emotional strain and competing responsibilities rather than a lack of concern for others. A guidance teacher explained, *"When a learner is overwhelmed by their own problems, it is hard for them to think about others."* A learner from a child-headed household echoed this sentiment, saying, *"Sometimes you are just thinking how to survive, not about feelings."*

Patterns of emotional well-being further illustrate the complexity of learners' experiences. On the positive side, feelings of being happy and hopeful are common, with 33% reporting these emotions "always" and 22% "often." Many learners expressed optimism and belief in their future despite adversity. One learner shared, *"Even with problems, I believe my future will be better."* Another added, *"School gives me hope."*

Figure 34: In the past month, how often have you felt:



However, negative emotions are frequent and persistent for a large proportion of learners. Nearly half (47%) reported feeling stressed or worried sometimes, while 13% experience stress often or always. Stress is particularly pronounced in Bungoma, Nandi and Kitui, and among learners from single-parent households, where more than half report frequent stress. Learners linked this pressure to academic demands, household responsibilities, and uncertainty about the future. As one learner explained, "You worry about school, but also about home problems." Teachers reinforced this, with one noting, *"Many learners are under pressure from both sides, school and family."*

"Many learners are under pressure from both sides, school and family."

TEACHER

Feelings of sadness or low mood follow a similar pattern, with 43% reporting sadness sometimes and 13% often or always. Anger and frustration are also common, affecting 42% sometimes and 14% often or always. Teachers and counsellors described emotional volatility among learners facing instability at home, observing that unresolved stress can amplify emotional reactions. One counsellor remarked, *"Small issues can trigger strong emotions because learners are already stressed."*

"Even when you are with others, you can feel alone."

LEARNER

In contrast, self-confidence remains high for most learners. A strong majority (77%) reported feeling confident often or always, with especially high confidence in Turkana (76% "always") and Kitui (73% "always"). Learners frequently expressed belief in their abilities and aspirations. One stated, *"I know I can do something with my life."* This confidence often coexists with stress, suggesting that learners may feel capable while still experiencing significant emotional strain.

Loneliness and isolation, however, affect a meaningful minority. While many learners feel socially connected, 33% reported feeling lonely sometimes, 10% often, and 7% always. Loneliness is most pronounced in Nandi, Kajiado, and Baringo, and among learners in single-parent, guardian-led, and child-headed households. A learner reflected quietly, *"Even when you are with others, you can feel alone."* Teachers expressed concern about this hidden isolation, with one explaining, *"Some learners are surrounded by people but still feel alone."*

These findings point to emotional well-being that is uneven but not fragile. Many learners demonstrate empathy, confidence, and hope, yet simultaneously experience stress, sadness, and loneliness. Reduced perspective-taking among learners in fragile household contexts appears closely linked to emotional overload rather than weak social values. These patterns highlight the importance of targeted psychosocial and life skills interventions that strengthen emotional regulation, empathy, and reflective capacity particularly for learners facing chronic stress while building on the strong foundations of confidence and aspiration already present.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Most learners actively respond when they see a classmate who is sad, primarily by talking to them or trying to cheer them up, which is a strong foundation for peer support. Around 72% find it easy or very easy to tell when a friend is upset, but a small subset, particularly those under higher stress at home, struggle to read others' emotions and may need support to strengthen empathic skills.

Key takeaways: While a majority of learners (60%) report consistent efforts to understand others' feelings, a notable 21% admit to rarely or never doing so, which has implications for nuanced peer relationships and conflict resolution. Emotional well-being is mixed; although broadly confident (77% "often" or "always" confident in self), over half of learners frequently experience negative emotions like stress, sadness, or frustration, and 17% often or always feel lonely. These challenges are more pronounced in fragile family situations, underscoring the need for targeted psychosocial support and life skill development in emotional regulation.

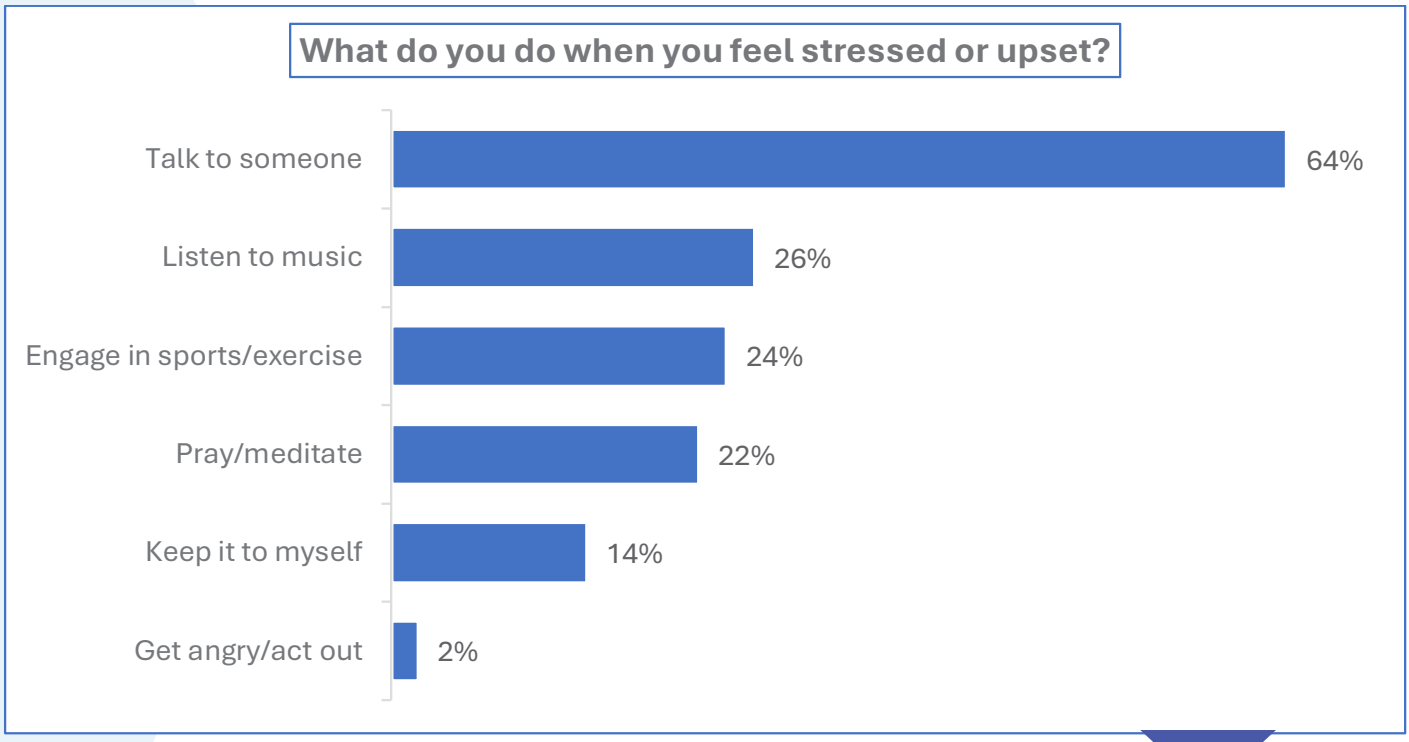
Coping with Stress and Help-Seeking Behaviours

Learners report using a diverse mix of coping strategies when they experience stress, worry, or emotional distress, reflecting both existing resilience and important gaps in psychosocial support. Quantitative findings show that the most common response is seeking social support, with 64% of learners reporting that they talk to someone when they feel stressed or upset. This reliance on interpersonal coping is consistent with earlier findings on peer and family support networks and suggests that many learners recognise the value of sharing concerns rather than coping in isolation.

In addition to talking to others, learners reported using a range of active and reflective coping strategies. Approximately 26% listen to music, 24% engage in sports or physical exercise, and 22% pray or meditate. These approaches are generally associated with stress relief and emotional regulation and indicate that many learners have access to constructive outlets for managing distress. Participation in sports and exercise was particularly emphasised by learners in counties where recreational opportunities are more accessible.

One learner explained, “When I play football, I forget my problems.” Another shared, “Sports help me release stress.” Such accounts highlight the role of physical activity as both a psychosocial support mechanism and a protective factor for well-being.

Figure 35: What do you do when you feel stressed or upset?



However, the data also reveal concerning patterns of internalized stress. A notable 14% of learners reported that they keep stress to themselves rather than seeking support. This tendency is more pronounced in Baringo and Bomet, and among Grade 9 learners and those from child-headed households, groups that also report higher levels of emotional distress and limited access to trusted adults. A learner articulated this coping style candidly, stating, “I keep things to myself because I don’t want to burden others.” While self-reliance can be adaptive in some contexts, prolonged internalization of stress increases the risk of anxiety, disengagement, and emotional burnout.

> “Quiet learners worry me the most”
>
> COUNSELLOR

Teachers and guidance counsellors expressed concern about learners who cope silently, noting that internalized stress often goes unnoticed until it manifests in academic decline, behavioural withdrawal, or health complaints. One counsellor observed, “Quiet learners worry me the most.” Another teacher added, “By the time they speak up, the problem is already big.” These perspectives underscore the limitations of reactive support systems that rely on visible distress rather than proactive identification.

Therefore, the coping patterns observed suggest a mixed resilience profile. Many learners are already using positive coping mechanisms, including seeking social support, engaging in physical activity, and drawing on spiritual practices. These strengths provide a solid foundation for life skills and psychosocial programming. At the same time, the persistence of internalized coping among a significant minority particularly those in vulnerable household contexts highlights the need for targeted interventions that normalise help-seeking, strengthen emotional literacy, and ensure that learners have safe, trusted spaces to express and manage stress before it escalates into more serious psychosocial challenges.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

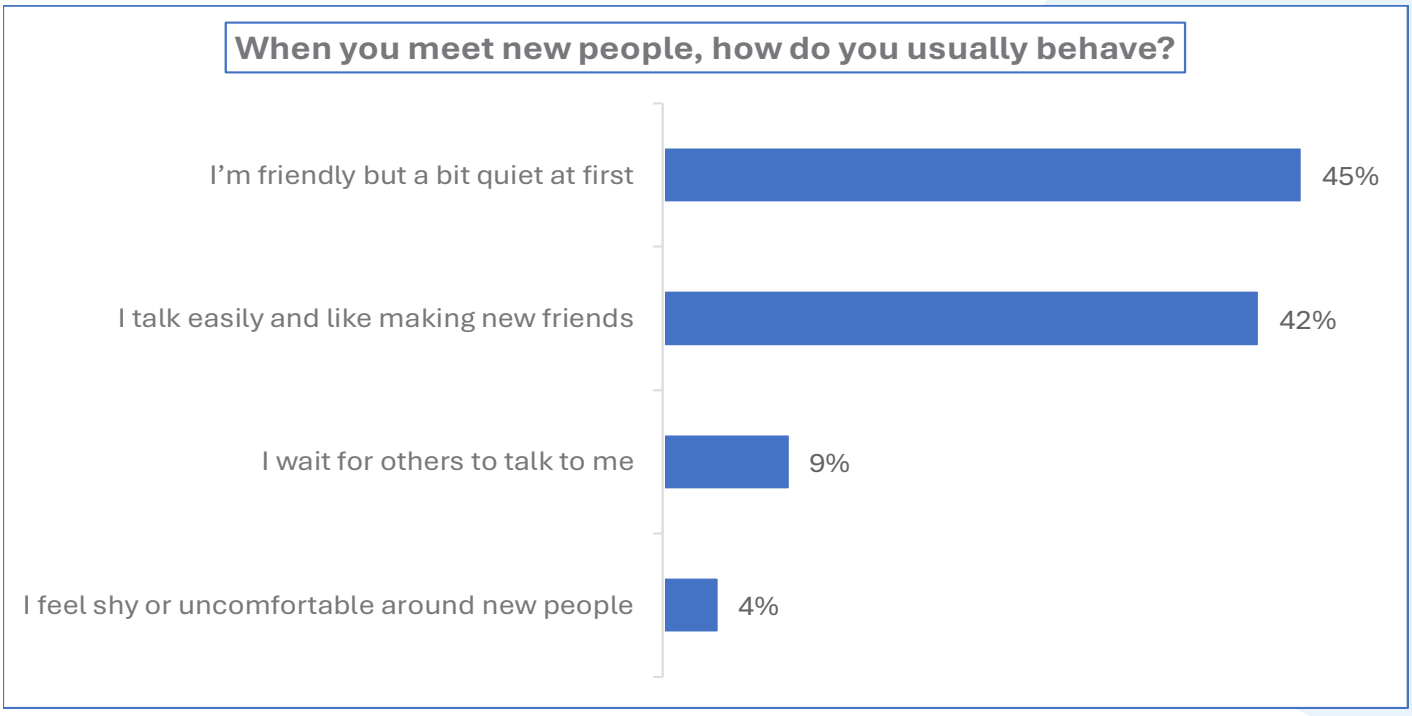
Learners demonstrate notable resilience through the use of positive coping strategies such as seeking social support, engaging in sports, listening to music, and drawing on spiritual practices, with nearly two-thirds actively talking to someone when they feel stressed. However, a significant minority particularly learners in vulnerable contexts such as child-headed households, lower grades, and high-stress counties cope by internalizing stress, placing them at heightened risk of anxiety, disengagement, and emotional burnout.

These findings highlight the importance of strengthening psychosocial support systems that build on existing resilience while proactively identifying and supporting learners who struggle silently, through targeted life skills programming, emotional literacy, and accessible, trusted support spaces within schools.

Social Confidence and Interaction Style

Learners generally demonstrate strong social confidence and positive interaction styles, suggesting that most learners possess the interpersonal skills needed to participate actively in classroom and peer-based learning environments. Quantitative findings indicate that 42% of learners report that they talk easily and like making new friends, while a further 45% describe themselves as friendly but a bit quiet at first. Together, these figures indicate that approximately 87% of learners feel at least moderately comfortable engaging with others, forming relationships, and navigating social situations at school.

Figure 36: When you meet new people, how do you usually behave?



Gender and household context shape these interaction styles. Boys are more likely than girls to describe themselves as talking easily and confidently, while girls are more frequently represented in the "friendly but quiet at first" category, suggesting differences in social expression rather than social withdrawal. Learners from single-parent, guardian-led, and child-headed households are more likely to report being shy, uncomfortable around new people, or waiting for others to initiate interaction. This pattern suggests that exposure to stress, limited adult support, or reduced opportunities for social engagement outside school may influence learners' confidence in unfamiliar social settings.

Qualitative evidence supports these patterns. Many learners described themselves as socially comfortable, particularly within familiar peer groups. One learner explained, *"Once you know people, it is easy to talk."* Another shared, "I am quiet at first, but when I get used to the class, I join." Teachers similarly observed that most learners are socially engaged, even if some take time to warm up. As one teacher noted, *"Many learners are confident, but some need encouragement to speak."*

> "Many learners are confident, but some need encouragement to speak."
>
> TEACHER

In collaborative settings, learners overwhelmingly view themselves as effective team participants. A total of 66% reported that they work well with others and enjoy teamwork, while 27% indicated that they like taking the lead and helping others. Only 6% prefer working quietly on their own, and just 1% reported finding it difficult to stay focused or motivated in group activities. These findings point to a strong foundation for participatory learning, peer mentoring, and group-based life skills programming.

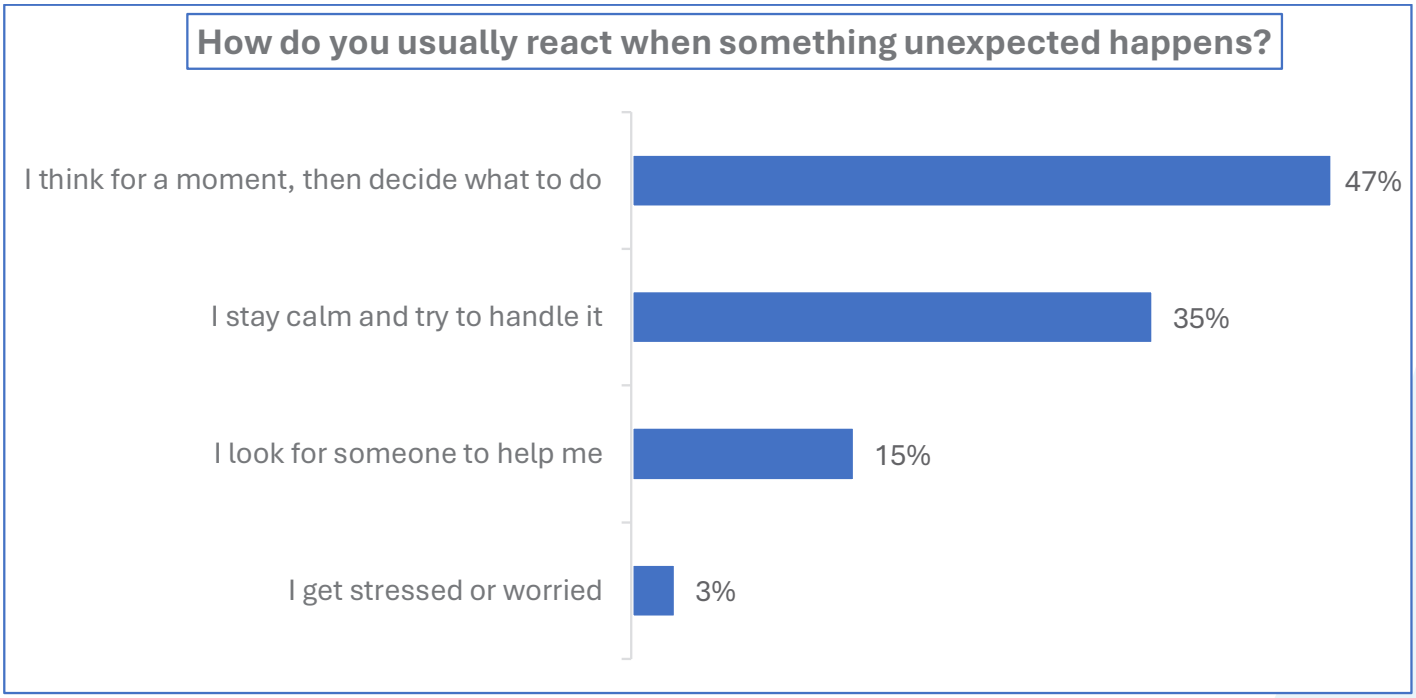
> "Group work helps learners support each other.".
>
> TEACHER

Teachers highlighted teamwork as a practical and effective strategy in large and diverse classrooms. One teacher explained, *"Group work helps learners support each other."* Another added, *"Quiet learners often speak more in small groups."* Learners echoed this sentiment, with one noting, *"In groups, you are not afraid to talk."* These dynamics suggest that collaborative learning environments can reduce anxiety and promote inclusion, particularly for less outspoken learners.

> "Once you know people, it is easy to talk."
>
> LEARNER

When faced with unexpected situations, most learners described themselves as reflective and composed. Nearly half (47%) reported that they think for a moment and then decide what to do, while 35% stated that they stay calm and try to handle the situation. Only 15% primarily look for someone else to help them, and 3% reported becoming stressed or worried immediately. These responses indicate a baseline level of resilience and problem-solving confidence among most learners. However, learners from more fragile household arrangements are more likely to rely on others for support, reflecting the interplay between social confidence and external vulnerability.

Figure 37: How do you usually react when something unexpected happens?



Across the data, the findings suggest that social confidence and interaction skills are a significant strength among learners across the programme counties. Most learners are comfortable engaging with peers, collaborating in groups, and navigating social situations with confidence. However, a minority often those from vulnerable household contexts experience lower social confidence and may withdraw or hesitate in group settings. These learners will benefit from intentional encouragement, structured group activities, and supportive facilitation to ensure inclusive participation. Building on existing strengths in social confidence while addressing these gaps provides a strong foundation for effective life skills and psychosocial programming.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Learners generally possess strong social skills, with 87% comfortable meeting new people either easily or with slight initial quietness, which is a significant asset for participatory and peerbased interventions. However, the 13% who are more socially anxious or passive, often from more vulnerable households, will need deliberate encouragement and supportive structures to foster their confident participation. Overall, learners demonstrate promising levels of resilience (82%) when facing the unexpected, but the 15% who depend more on others for support should be prioritised for confidence building and problemsolving support.

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

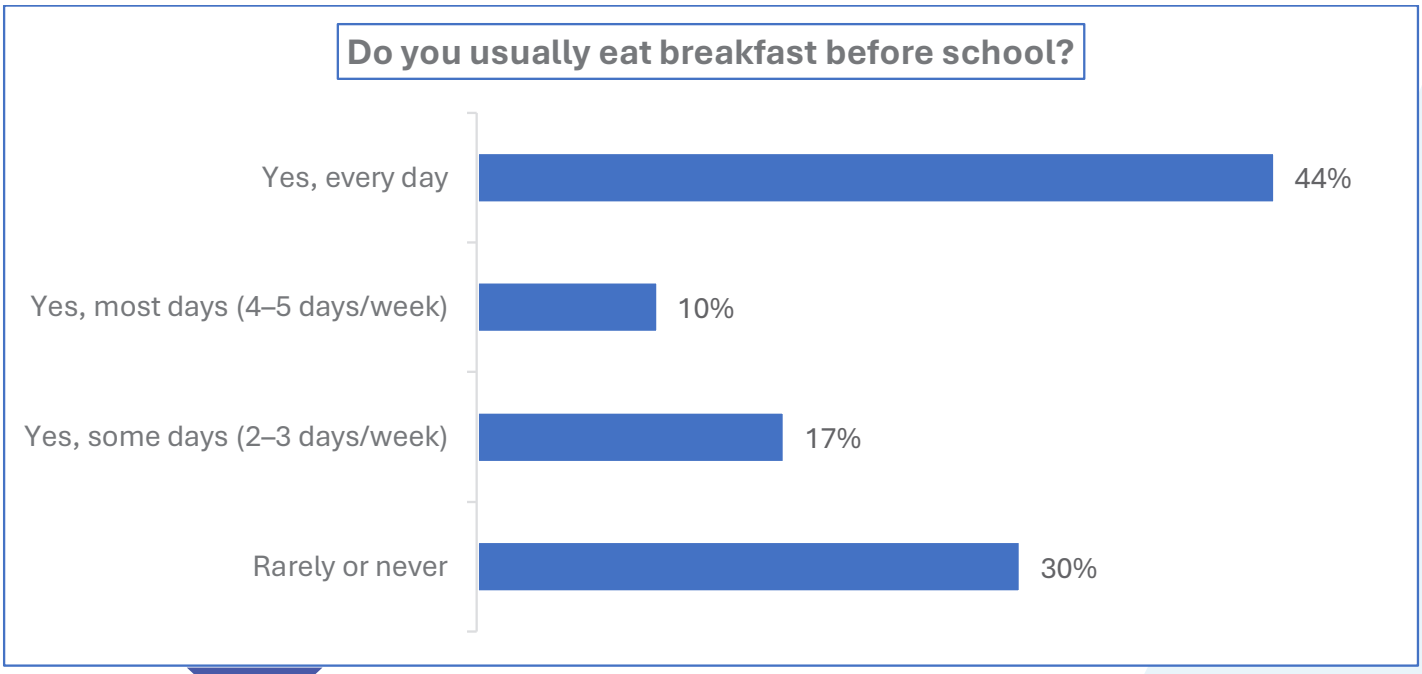
LEARNERS

PILLAR 4
SAFETY AND PROTECTION

Nutrition, School Feeding and Learning Readiness

Nutrition emerged as a critical determinant of learners' readiness to engage in school, shaping attendance, concentration, and overall learning outcomes. Quantitative findings on breakfast consumption reveal both areas of relative strength and significant nutritional vulnerability. Overall, 44% of learners reported that they usually eat breakfast every day before school, while an additional 10% do so on most days (four to five days per week). However, a substantial proportion of learners begin the school day without adequate nutrition: 17% eat breakfast only on some days (two to three days per week), and 30% reported that they rarely or never eat breakfast

Figure 38: Do you usually eat breakfast before school?



"Some learners come to school having eaten nothing since yesterday."

TEACHER

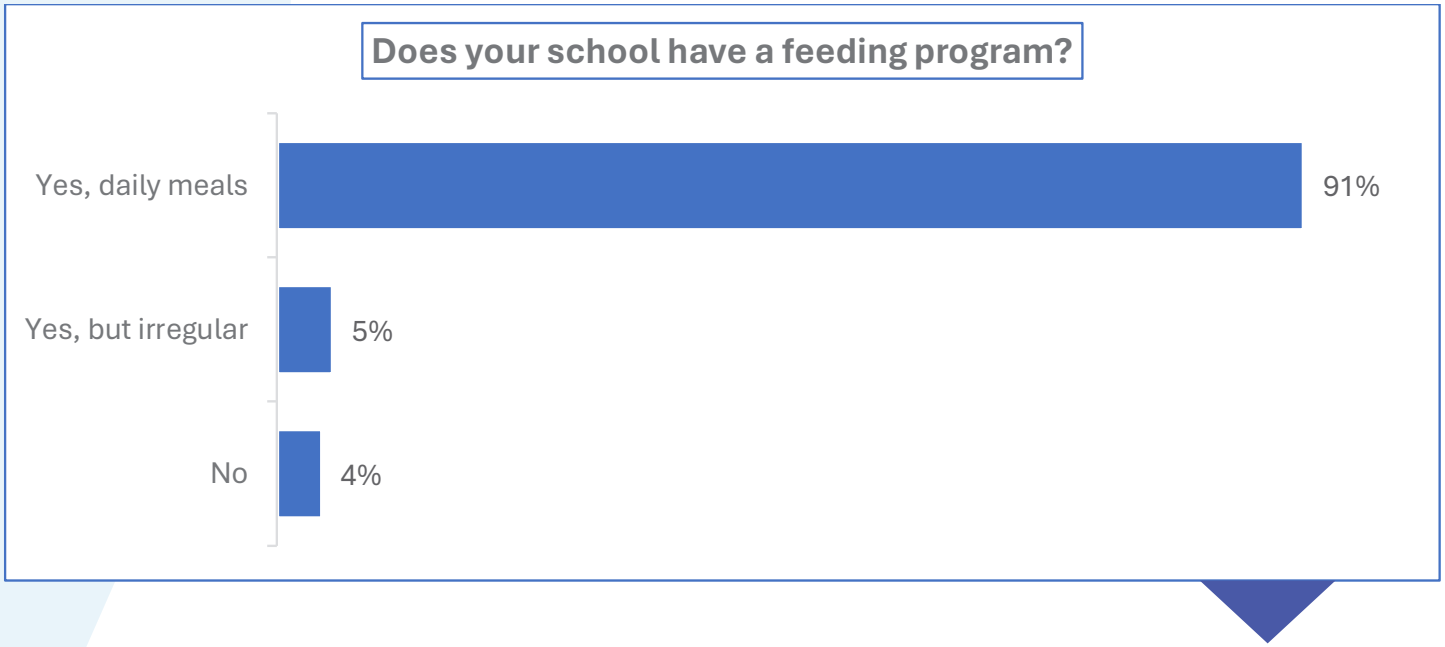
Marked county-level disparities are evident. Daily breakfast consumption is high in Bomet (77%) and West Pokot (77%), suggesting relatively better household food security or caregiving support in these contexts. In contrast, daily breakfast consumption is very low in Turkana (9%), Bungoma (14%), and Kitui (25%), indicating that large numbers of learners in these counties start the school day hungry. Household structure further intensifies this vulnerability: learners from single-parent households and especially child-headed households are far more likely to fall into the "rarely or never" breakfast category, with as many as 83% of learners in child-headed households reporting that they begin the school day without breakfast. These patterns suggest that morning hunger is closely linked to poverty, caregiving instability, and limited adult support.

Qualitative accounts vividly illustrate how these nutritional gaps affect learners' daily school experience. Teachers repeatedly described hunger as a routine and visible challenge in classrooms. As one teacher noted, *"Some learners come to school having eaten nothing since yesterday."* Another teacher added, "By mid-morning you can see it heads on desks, no energy, no focus." These observations highlight how hunger directly undermines attention, participation, and cognitive functioning, particularly during morning lessons.

Learners themselves were explicit about the impact of hunger on their ability to learn. A learner participating in a focus group discussion explained, *"You sit in class but your mind is not there because of hunger."* Another shared, *"When I don't eat in the morning, the first lessons are very hard to follow."* Such accounts demonstrate that hunger affects not only physical well-being but also confidence, motivation, and engagement with instruction.

School feeding programmes play a major protective role in this context. An overwhelming 91% of learners reported that their schools provide daily meals, while 5% indicated that meals are irregular and 4% reported no access to a feeding programme. Daily feeding coverage is nearly universal in Homa Bay and Kitui, and remains high in most other counties. However, coverage is lower in Turkana (73%) and Samburu (90%), where a larger proportion of learners experience irregular feeding or lack a programme altogether.

Figure 39: Does your school have a feeding program?



School leaders consistently described a strong link between feeding and attendance. One headteacher observed, *"When food is there, the class is full. When it stops, you see empty desks."* Community leaders echoed this view, with one noting, *"Food keeps children in school more than any rule."* These perspectives underscore the role of school feeding not only as a nutrition intervention, but also as a powerful incentive for attendance and retention, particularly in food-insecure settings.

"Sometimes school is the only place the child eats well."

PARENT

Parents and caregivers similarly emphasised the importance of school meals in supporting household coping strategies. In contexts of chronic poverty, school feeding reduces pressure on families struggling to meet basic needs. As one parent explained, *"Sometimes school is the only place the child eats well."* In some schools, teachers and administrators reported offering informal support such as sharing food or allowing learners to remain in school despite fee arrears to prevent hungry learners from leaving early. While these practices reflect strong commitment, they are uneven and unsustainable without structured programmes. As one administrator cautioned, *"We try to help where we can, but teachers cannot replace a feeding programme."* Importantly, the coexistence of high rates of breakfast skipping (30%) alongside near-universal access to school meals (91% daily feeding) suggests that many learners still

experience several hours of instruction on an empty stomach before receiving their first meal of the day. This gap has important implications for learning readiness, as morning lessons are often delivered when learners' concentration is lowest due to hunger.

Overall, the integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence highlights nutrition and school feeding as foundational to effective learning. School feeding programmes perform a vital protective function, particularly in food-insecure counties and among learners from vulnerable household arrangements. However, they do not fully compensate for the nutritional deficits experienced by learners who routinely miss breakfast. These findings point to the need for programme responses that address morning hunger as both an educational and child protection concern, including exploring low-cost morning snack options, strengthening targeting of feeding schemes to the most vulnerable learners, and reinforcing caregiver awareness of the importance of even a small breakfast for learning readiness.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

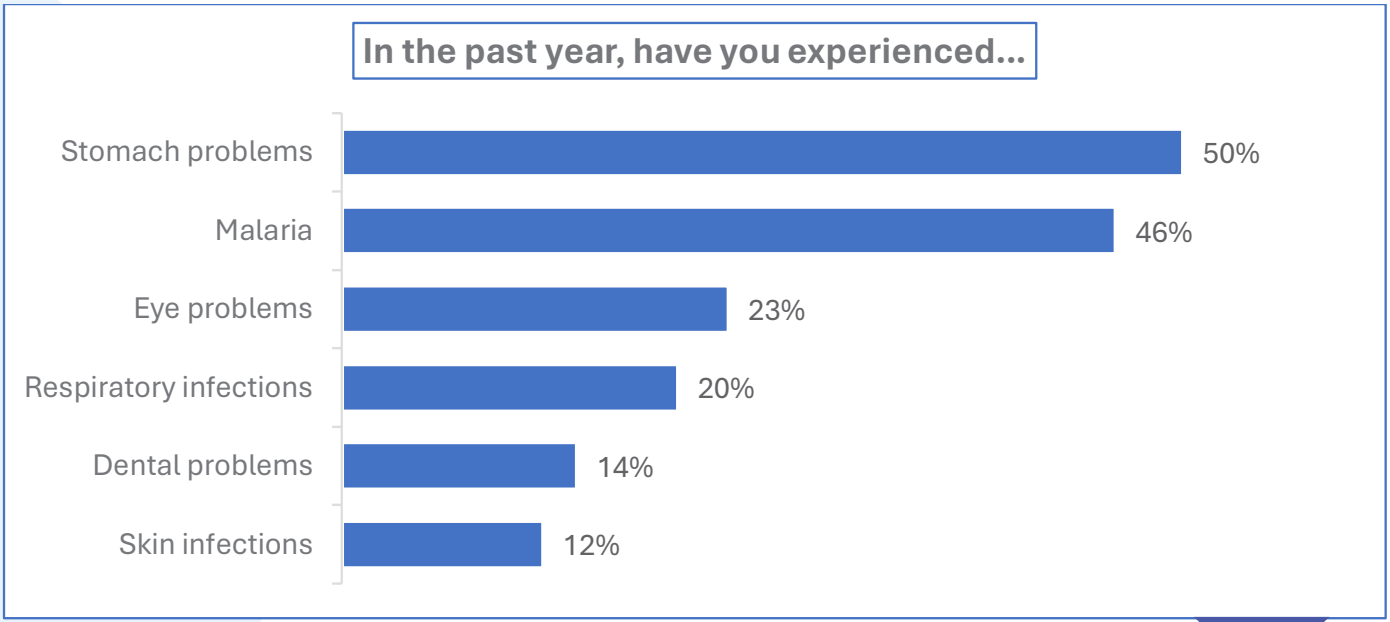
Morning hunger remains a significant and unevenly distributed barrier to learning, with nearly one-third of learners rarely or never eating breakfast particularly in Turkana, Bungoma, and Kitui, and among those in single-parent and child-headed households undermining readiness to learn from the start of the school day. Although school feeding programmes play a vital protective role, reaching 91% of learners and improving attendance, they do not fully offset early-morning hunger, leaving many learners struggling to concentrate during initial lessons.

Teachers' and learners' experiences consistently link hunger to fatigue, reduced focus, and disengagement, underscoring the close relationship between nutrition and learning outcomes. These disparities call for context-specific responses in food-insecure and ASAL areas, with programme approaches that complement school feeding by addressing morning hunger, prioritising the most vulnerable learners, and engaging caregivers on the importance of basic nutrition for learning readiness and well-being.

Health Burden and Its Implications for Schooling

Health-related challenges emerge as a significant and persistent constraint on learners' attendance, concentration, and academic progression across the programme counties. Quantitative findings indicate that illness is one of the leading drivers of absenteeism, second only to school fees, with over half of learners (51%) reporting that they had missed school due to sickness during the previous term. Health-related absence is particularly pronounced in Bungoma, Homa Bay, Kitui, and Baringo, where more than two-thirds of learners cited illness as a reason for missing school. These patterns suggest that poor health is not an isolated or episodic issue, but a recurring barrier to consistent participation in schooling.

Figure 40: In the past year, have you experienced the following:



Qualitative evidence provides deeper insight into the nature of these health burdens. Teachers and school administrators described frequent cases of malaria, respiratory infections, stomach illnesses, and untreated chronic conditions that keep learners out of school for days or weeks at a time. One teacher explained, *"Some learners are absent not because they don't want school, but because they are genuinely sick and have no access to treatment."* Another noted, *"By the time they come back, they have missed too much and struggle to catch up."* These accounts illustrate how health-related absences contribute to cumulative learning gaps, even when learners remain enrolled.

Health challenges are closely intertwined with poverty, nutrition, and household conditions. Learners from low-income, single-parent, guardian-led, and child-headed households are more likely to miss school due to illness, often because minor conditions escalate in the absence of early treatment or adequate nutrition. A community leader observed, *"When there is no money for food or medicine, sickness becomes a big problem."* Learners themselves linked illness to hunger and fatigue. One learner shared, *"When you don't eat well, you get sick easily and miss school."*

Girls face additional health-related challenges that affect attendance and participation, particularly around menstrual health management. Although not always reported openly in surveys, qualitative discussions revealed that some girls miss school due to menstrual pain, lack of sanitary products, or fear of embarrassment. A female learner explained, *"Sometimes you stay home because you are not comfortable and there is nothing to use."* Teachers acknowledged that menstrual health remains an under-addressed barrier, especially in schools with limited water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities.

Teachers also highlighted the hidden burden of untreated or poorly managed chronic conditions, including asthma, epilepsy, visual impairment, and

> "Some learners are absent not because they don't want school, but because they are genuinely sick and have no access to treatment."
>
> TEACHER

mental health concerns. These conditions often affect concentration and classroom participation even when learners are physically present. As one teacher noted, *"Some learners are in class, but they are not well enough to follow the lesson."* Guidance counsellors added that frequent illness can undermine learners' confidence and motivation, particularly when repeated absences lead to poor performance or stigma. One counsellor explained, *"When a learner is always sick, they start feeling different and left behind."*

Health burdens place additional strain on schools and teachers, who are often required to manage sick learners without adequate training or resources. School administrators reported that teachers frequently act as first responders, despite limited access to school health services. One headteacher remarked, *"We do what we can, but schools are not clinics."* In rural and ASAL areas, long distances to health facilities further compound the problem, delaying treatment and prolonging absence. A teacher in a remote area noted, *"By the time a child reaches a health centre, the sickness is already serious."*

The interaction between health, attendance, and learning outcomes is evident across the data. Learners who report frequent illness are more likely to miss multiple weeks of school, struggle academically upon return, and experience stress or anxiety related to falling behind. A learner captured this cycle succinctly: *"When you are sick, you miss school. When you come back, everything is hard."* These experiences highlight how health shocks can trigger broader disengagement from learning if not adequately addressed.

The evidence indicates that health burdens are a structural barrier to sustained schooling, particularly for learners living in poverty and fragile household environments. Addressing these challenges requires more than individual-level responses. Strengthening school–health linkages, promoting preventive health and hygiene practices, improving access to basic health services, and integrating health awareness into life skills and psychosocial programming are critical for reducing illness-related absenteeism and supporting learners' ability to participate consistently and meaningfully in school.

Disaggregated data suggest that learners in child headed, guardian led, and some single parent households tend to report slightly higher levels of multiple health problems. This is consistent with potential constraints in healthcare access, hygiene practices, and nutrition within these vulnerable groups. This overall pattern indicates a pervasive "hidden" health burden that runs in parallel with schooling, affecting a broad base of learners whose consistent engagement is periodically undermined by illness and untreated conditions.

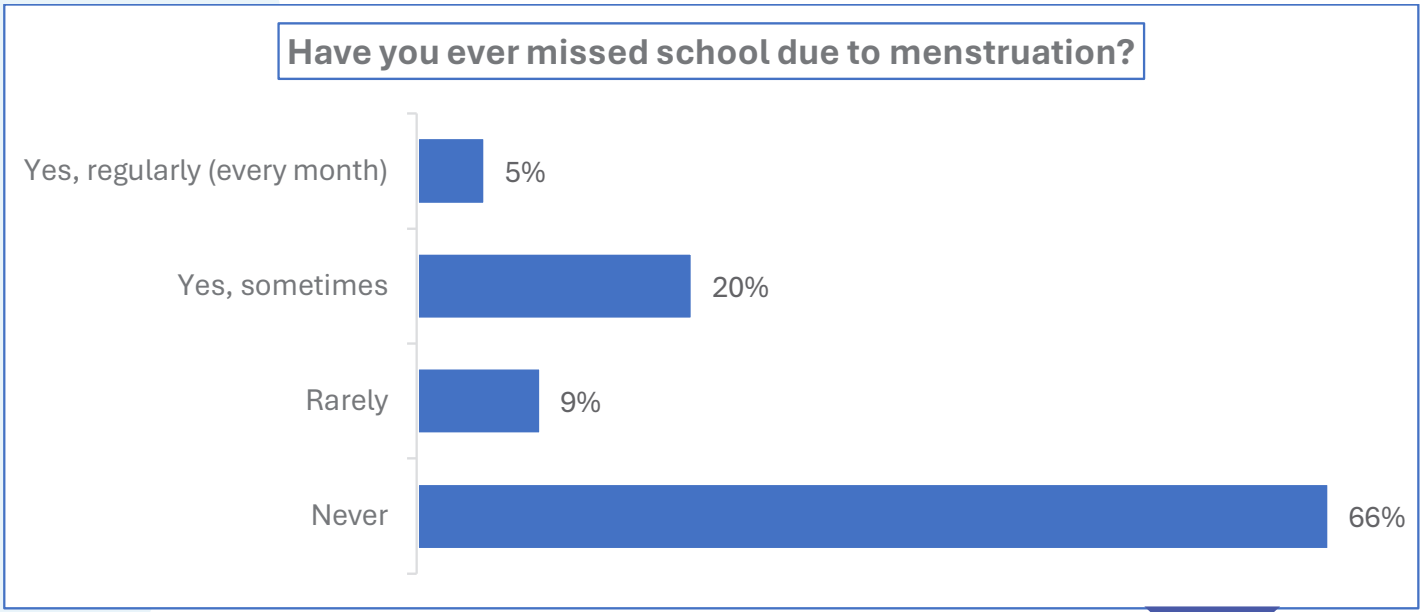
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Health challenges are not isolated incidents but a consistent part of many learners' lives, particularly in high malaria and inadequate WASH contexts, quietly eroding learning time and quality. The programme must integrate health support with academic and life skills interventions, establishing stronger links to school health services, promoting malaria prevention, and facilitating basic screening for common conditions like vision and dental issues. Prioritising learners from the most vulnerable households is crucial, as they face both higher health risks and fewer resources to manage them. By positioning health as an integral component of learning, interventions can enhance both well-being and educational outcomes.

Menstrual Health and School Attendance

Menstrual health emerges as a persistent and gender-specific barrier to regular school attendance and full participation for leaner girls across the programme counties. Quantitative findings indicate that 5% of female learners miss school regularly every month due to menstruation, while a further 20% miss school sometimes. Although 66% report never missing school for this reason, these figures show that almost one in three girls experiences menstrual-related absenteeism, often through short, recurring absences that accumulate into meaningful learning loss over time.

Figure 41: Have you ever missed school due to menstruation?



Qualitative findings help explain why these absences persist. Girls consistently described menstruation as a period marked by discomfort, anxiety, and fear of embarrassment, particularly when sanitary products or private facilities are unavailable. One learner explained, "When you don't have pads, you cannot come to school because everyone will notice." Another shared, *"Sometimes the pain is too much, and you stay at home."* These accounts illustrate how menstrual-related absence is frequently a protective response to discomfort and stigma rather than a lack of motivation.

> "Sometimes the pain is too much, and you stay at home."
>
> LEARNER

County-level quantitative disparities are strongly echoed in qualitative narratives. Regular monthly absenteeism is highest in Nandi (13%) and Baringo (16%), while girls in Kitui and Samburu are far more likely to report never missing school due to menstruation (86–87%). FGDs suggest that these differences reflect variation in school-level support and community norms. A teacher in Baringo noted, *"Girls here miss class during their periods because the school has nothing to support them."* In contrast, a school administrator in Kitui observed, *"Because we sometimes help with pads, girls try to stay in school."*

> "Some girls suffer silently because there is no woman to guide them."
>
> COMMUNITY LEADER

Household vulnerability further compounds menstrual-related challenges. Quantitative data show higher absenteeism among girls from single-parent and guardian-led households, including 29% of girls from

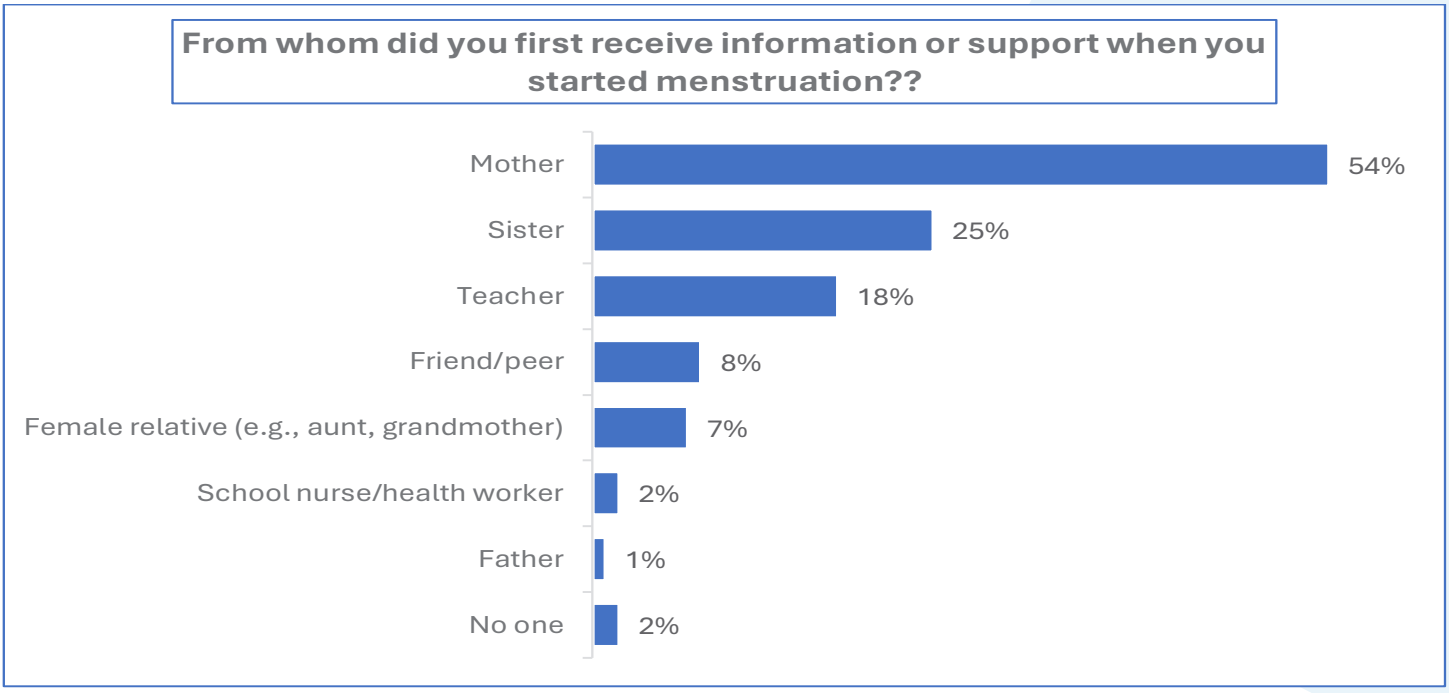
single-father households who miss school sometimes due to menstruation. Qualitative evidence reveals that economic constraints and discomfort discussing menstruation at home exacerbate these risks. One girl explained, *"At home I cannot ask my father for pads, so I just stay home."* A community leader added, *"Some girls suffer silently because there is no woman to guide them."*

School-based menstrual health support is uneven and largely inadequate, reinforcing patterns of absenteeism. Only 21% of girls report regular school provision of sanitary pads, while 29% report irregular provision and 42% report no provision at all. FGDs revealed that even where pads are available, access is often informal or dependent on individual teachers. A guidance teacher explained, *"We help when we can, but there is no system."* Another teacher added, *"Sometimes the pads are finished, and girls go home."* In West Pokot, where 90% of girls report no pad provision, a teacher noted bluntly, "*Girls disappear for days because there is nothing for them here*."

Infrastructure gaps further intensify menstrual-related absenteeism. Quantitative findings show that only 22% of girls have access to a private changing area, 14% to disposal bins, and just 6% to water for washing. More than half (52%) report having no special MHM facilities at school. Girls repeatedly described the stress of managing menstruation without privacy. One learner shared, *"There is nowhere to change, so you fear standing up."* Another explained, *"If there is no water, you cannot manage yourself the whole day."* A headteacher acknowledged, *"Our toilets are not designed for girls on their periods."*

Information and emotional support around menstruation are primarily provided at home, with 54% of girls citing their mother and 25% their sister as their first source of information. Teachers play a role for 18%, but qualitative findings suggest that many girls are uncomfortable seeking help at school, particularly from male staff. A learner explained, *"You cannot tell a male teacher about periods."* A female teacher added, *"Girls come to me secretly because they are ashamed."* The 2% of girls who reported receiving no information or support were also reflected in qualitative accounts of confusion and fear at menarche. One girl recalled, *"I thought something was wrong with me because no one explained."* Across interviews, stakeholders consistently framed menstrual health as an issue of dignity, protection, and educational equity. A religious leader observed, *"If a girl cannot manage her period with dignity, she will not stay in school."* A school administrator added, *"This is not about discipline; it is about support."*

Figure 42: From whom did you first receive information or support when you started menstruation?



The convergence of quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrates that menstrual health is a structural barrier to girls' education, shaped by gaps in school provision, infrastructure, household support, and social norms. Addressing menstrual-related absenteeism requires a comprehensive response that ensures consistent access to sanitary products, investment in private and functional MHM facilities, clear school-level systems for support, and strengthened communication with families. Without these measures, menstrual health challenges will continue to undermine girls' attendance, participation, and learning outcomes across the programme counties.

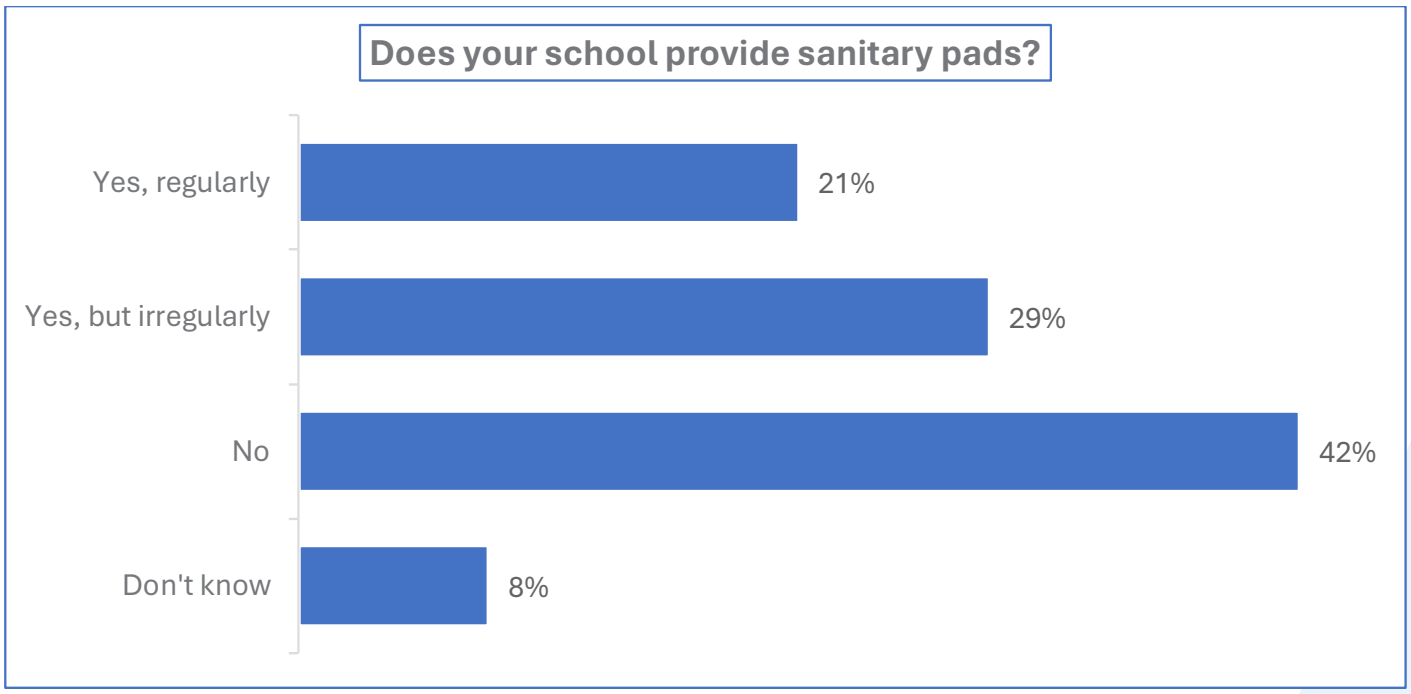
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Menstrual-related absenteeism affects approximately one-third of female learners, necessitating comprehensive MHM support. This challenge is exacerbated by inadequate school provision of sanitary pads (only 21% regularly provided) and a severe lack of MHM facilities, with over half of schools having no special provisions. While mothers (54%) and sisters (25%) are crucial initial sources of information, teachers also play a significant role (18%). Addressing menstrual-related barriers requires a multi-faceted approach, including consistent provision of MHM products and private, functional facilities in schools, alongside sensitizing both family members and school personnel to provide accurate and supportive information to girls.

Key takeaways: Menstrual-related absenteeism affects approximately one-third of female learners, necessitating comprehensive MHM support. This challenge is exacerbated by inadequate school provision of sanitary pads (only 21% regularly provided) and a severe lack of MHM facilities, with over half of schools having no special provisions. While mothers (54%) and sisters (25%) are crucial initial sources of information, teachers also play a significant role (18%). Addressing menstrual-related barriers requires a multi-faceted approach, including consistent provision of MHM products and private, functional facilities in schools, alongside sensitizing both family members and school personnel to provide accurate and supportive information to girls.

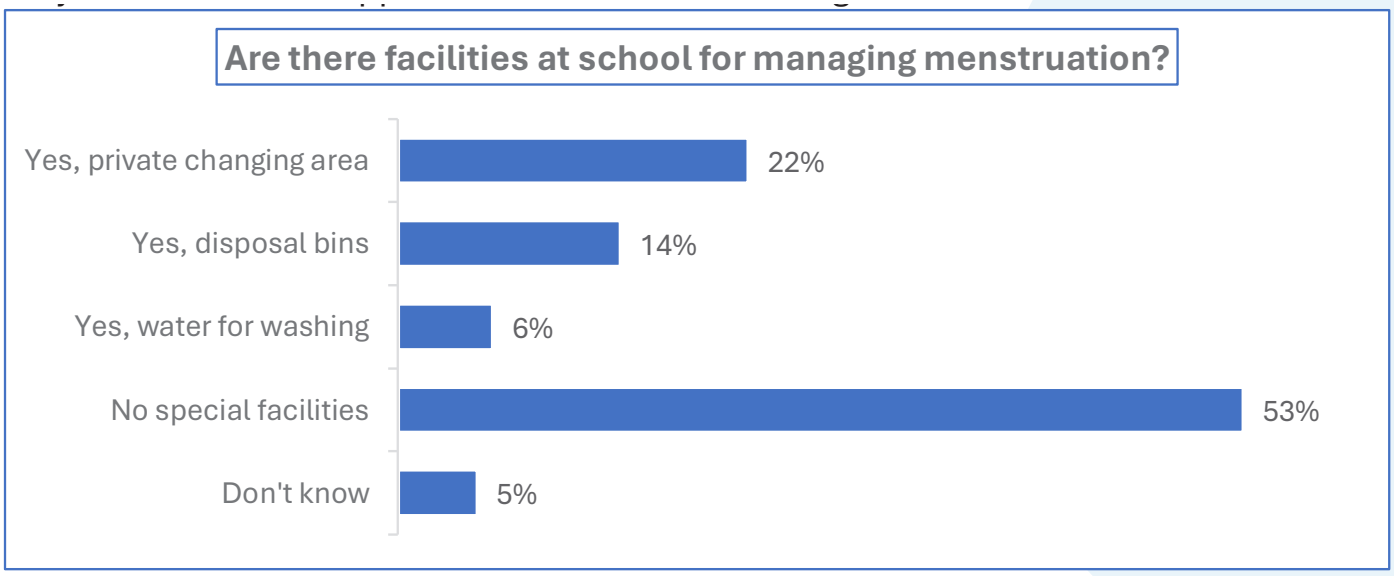
The provision of sanitary pads by schools is inconsistent, and infrastructure for MHM is largely insufficient, further contributing to menstrual-related absenteeism. Only 21% of girls report that their school provides sanitary pads regularly. A further 29% report irregular provision, while a significant 42% state their school does not provide pads at all. An additional 8% are unaware of any provision. There are considerable county variations here: regular pad provision is highest in Baringo (44%) and Kajiado (32%), but very low in Turkana (3%), Kitui (7%), and West Pokot (7%). Irregular provision is particularly high in Nandi (61%) and Homabay (48%). West Pokot stands out with 90% of girls reporting no pad provision, highlighting a major unmet need.

Figure 43: Does your school provide sanitary pads?



Access to basic MHM infrastructure is alarmingly low. Only 22% of girls have access to a private changing area. 14% have disposal bins, and a mere 6% have water for washing in menstruation facilities. The majority, 52%, report having no special facilities for MHM at school. Availability of private changing areas is highest in Kajiado (55%) and Nandi (50%), but completely absent in West Pokot (0%). Disposal bins are most available in Homabay (39%) and Baringo (25%). Notably, 97% of girls in West Pokot report no special MHM facilities. The severe lack of adequate MHM facilities disproportionately impacts girls from single-father households, child-headed households, and those living with relatives, who may have less support at home to manage their menstruation effectively.

Figure 44: Are there facilities at school for managing menstruation?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

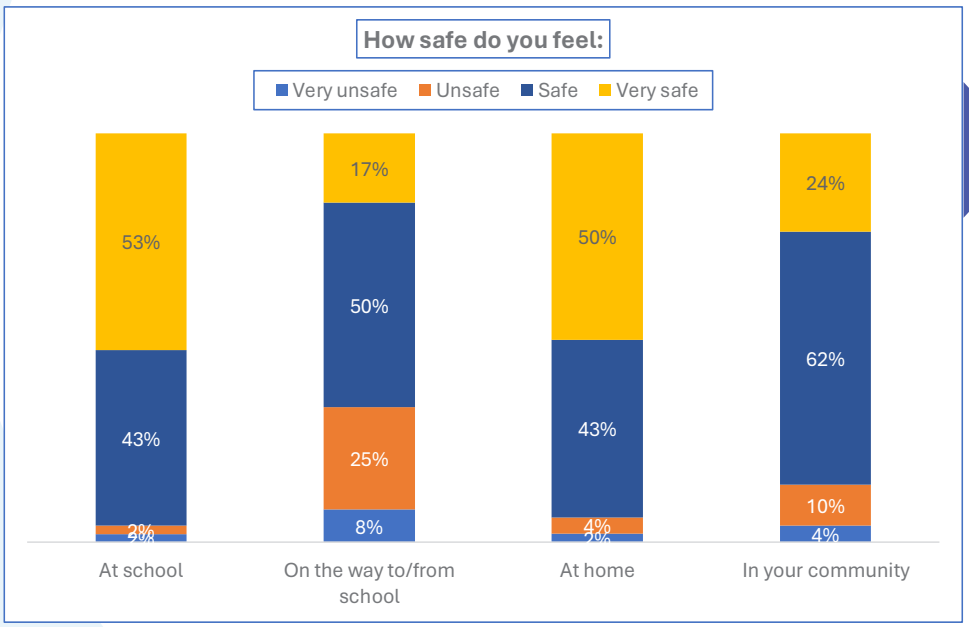
School-based MHM support is largely inadequate, with only 21% of girls receiving regular sanitary pad provision. Furthermore, over half of schools lack basic MHM facilities like private changing areas (22%), disposal bins (14%), and water for washing (6%). This widespread lack of support is a critical barrier to girls' comfort, dignity, and attendance, especially in specific counties like West Pokot where provision is almost non-existent. Addressing this requires consistent provision of pads and investment in appropriate, private, and functional MHM facilities within schools to ensure all girls can manage their menstruation with confidence and attend school without interruption.

Perceptions of Safety in School and Community

Learners generally report high levels of perceived safety within school environments, indicating that schools function as important protective spaces for learners. Quantitative findings show that 96% of learners feel either safe (43%) or very safe (53%) while at school, with only 4% reporting feeling unsafe or very unsafe. Perceptions of safety are particularly strong in Kitui (70% very safe) and Kajiado (73% very safe), reflecting relatively stable school environments and stronger supervision. However, pockets of insecurity persist, especially in Turkana and Nandi, where higher proportions of learners report feeling unsafe or very unsafe, suggesting uneven protection across counties.

Qualitative findings help explain why schools are largely perceived as safe spaces. Learners frequently described school as a place of structure, predictability, and adult supervision. One learner explained, *"In school there are teachers, so you feel protected."* Another added, *"At school I don't fear like outside."* Teachers echoed this perception, noting that school routines and authority figures reduce exposure to risk. As one teacher observed, *"Once learners are inside the school compound, they are mostly safe."*

Figure 45: How safe do you feel in the following places



"Safety is not only about the school gate; it is about what surrounds the child."

COMMUNITY LEADER

In contrast, the journey to and from school emerges as a major source of insecurity. Only 67% of learners feel safe (50%) or very safe (17%) while commuting, while a substantial 33% report feeling unsafe (25%) or very unsafe (8%). Safety concerns during the commute are especially pronounced in Turkana, where 28% feel very unsafe and 40% feel unsafe, as well as in Nandi (38% unsafe) and Kajiado (26% unsafe). These figures indicate that for a significant share of learners, daily travel exposes them to fear, harassment, or violence.

Learners described multiple risks along the route to school, including long distances, isolated paths, harassment, and fear of crime or insecurity. One learner shared, "The road is long and sometimes you meet bad people." Another explained, "You are scared when you walk alone early in the morning." Teachers confirmed that commuting risks affect attendance and punctuality, particularly for younger learners and girls. A school administrator noted, "Some learners miss school because they fear the way, not the school." Perceptions of safety at home are generally high, with 93% of learners reporting that they feel safe (43%) or very safe (50%). However, small but significant proportions 6% combined report feeling unsafe or very unsafe at home. These feelings are concentrated among learners from vulnerable household arrangements, particularly child-headed households, where 19% report feeling unsafe, and single-father households, where 6% feel very unsafe. These figures signal that for some learners, the home environment is not consistently protective. Qualitative evidence reveals that insecurity at home is often linked to economic stress, conflict, neglect, or lack of adult supervision. One learner from a child-headed household explained, *"When there is no adult, you don't feel secure."* Another shared, *"At home there is fighting, so you don't feel peaceful."* Community leaders expressed concern for learners without stable caregivers. As one elder stated, *"A child without protection at home is exposed to many dangers."*

"At home there is fighting, so you don't feel peaceful."

LEARNER

"A child without protection at home is exposed to many dangers."

ELDER

At the community level, 86% of learners report feeling safe (62%) or very safe (24%), yet 14% feel unsafe or very unsafe, indicating notable insecurity outside both school and home. Community safety concerns are particularly acute in Kajiado, where 19% feel very unsafe and 26% unsafe. Learners cited crime, substance abuse, violence, and unfamiliar people as sources of fear. One learner remarked, *"In the community, you don't know who to trust."* Another added, "There are places you avoid because it is not safe." Stakeholders highlighted that community-level insecurity often spills over into schooling. A teacher noted, *"When the community is not safe, learners come to school stressed."* A religious leader added, *"Safety is not only about the school gate; it is about what surrounds the child."*

It is therefore evident that schools serve as important safe havens, but protection weakens beyond school boundaries, particularly during the commute and within some home and community environments. Learners from fragile household arrangements and specific counties face heightened safety risks, which can affect attendance, concentration, and psychosocial well-being. Addressing these safety gaps requires context-specific interventions, including safe-school travel initiatives, stronger school–community partnerships, engagement with local authorities, and targeted support for learners from vulnerable households to ensure that safety is not confined to the classroom but extends across learners' daily lives.

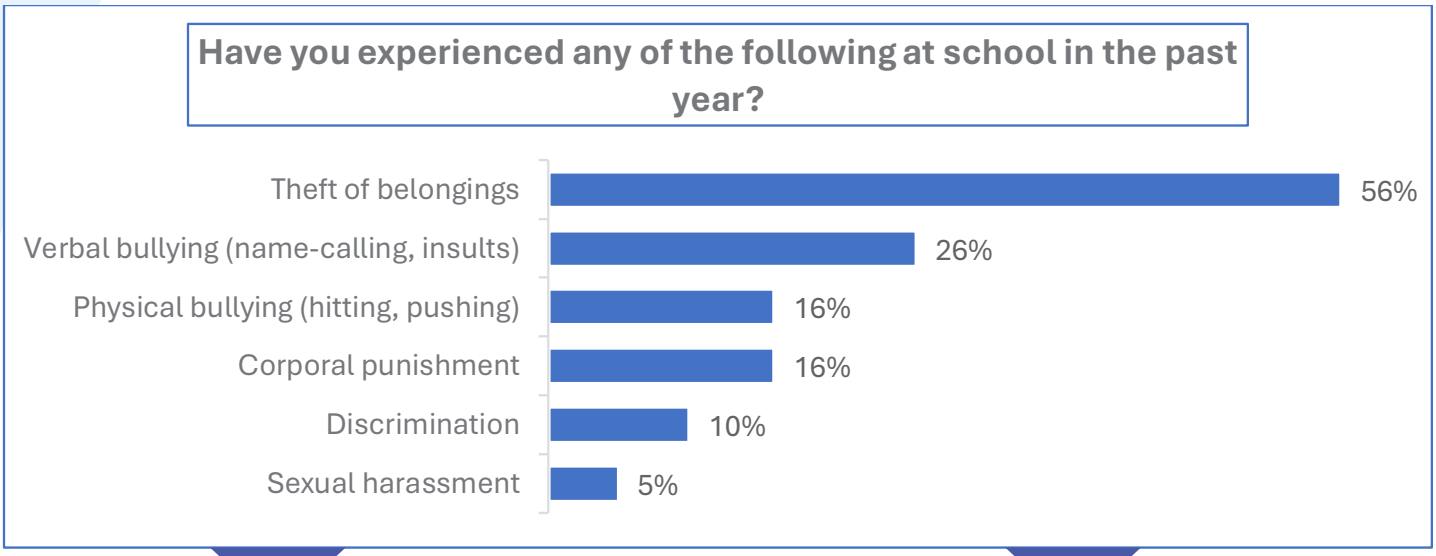
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

While the vast majority of learners feel safe within school (96%) and at home (93%), significant safety concerns persist for a notable portion of the population. Over one-third (33%) feel unsafe or very unsafe on their commute to and from school, and 14% feel unsafe or very unsafe in the wider community. These concerns are more pronounced in specific counties and particularly for learners in vulnerable household arrangements. Programmes need to consider specific safety interventions tailored to the local context, working collaboratively with schools, law enforcement, and communities to enhance security, especially for the journey to and from school.

Incidences of Bullying, Harassment and Theft

Learners report substantial exposure to different forms of school-based violence and misconduct, with wide variation by county, household vulnerability, and type of incident. Quantitative findings show that 16% of learners experienced physical bullying in the past year, with markedly higher prevalence in Bomet (38%) and Homabay (22%). Verbal bullying is more widespread, affecting 26% of learners, and is particularly high in Turkana (46%) and Bomet (43%). While sexual harassment is reported by a smaller proportion (5%), its presence is concerning, especially in Baringo (10%), Nandi (9%), and Homabay (7%).

Figure 46: Have you experienced any of the following at school in the past year?



"Some students are bullied every day, especially the quiet ones."

LEARNER

"Some teachers still believe beating works."

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Qualitative evidence illustrates how these experiences affect learners' sense of safety and well-being. Learners described bullying as persistent rather than isolated. One learner shared, *"Some students are bullied every day, especially the quiet ones."* Teachers confirmed that verbal bullying is often normalised. As one teacher noted, "Name-calling is common and learners think it is just joking." In relation to sexual harassment, learners especially girls described fear and silence. One girl explained, *"You don't report because people will talk about you."*

Discrimination affects 10% of learners, with particularly high reporting in Kitui (26%) and Bomet (31%). Discrimination was described as being linked to poverty, disability, ethnicity, or academic performance. A learner explained, *"If you are poor or repeating a class, they treat you differently."* A guidance teacher added, "Some learners are isolated because of how they look or where they come from." Theft of personal belongings is the most prevalent form of misconduct, reported by 57% of learners, with extremely high rates in Turkana (85%), Kitui (83%), and Homabay (76%). Learners described theft as routine and distressing. One learner stated, *"You can lose your books or shoes and no one helps."* Teachers noted that theft often escalates conflict. *"Fights start because someone's things are stolen,"* one teacher explained.

Despite legal prohibitions, 16% of learners report experiencing corporal punishment, with higher prevalence in Nandi (36%), Baringo (26%), and Bomet (26%). Qualitative interviews suggest that some forms of physical punishment persist under the guise of discipline. A learner remarked, *"They say it is correction, but it hurts."* A school administrator acknowledged, *"Some teachers still believe beating works."*

Exposure to all forms of misconduct is consistently higher among learners in child-headed households and those living with relatives, indicating how household vulnerability amplifies school-based risks.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Learners face a significant burden of school-based misconduct, particularly theft (57%), verbal bullying (26%), and physical bullying (15%). While sexual harassment (5%) and discrimination (10%) are less common overall, they pose serious protection concerns in specific counties. The continued reporting of corporal punishment (16%) signals gaps in child safeguarding enforcement. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive school safety interventions, including anti-bullying programmes, safe reporting systems, and strict enforcement of child protection policies.

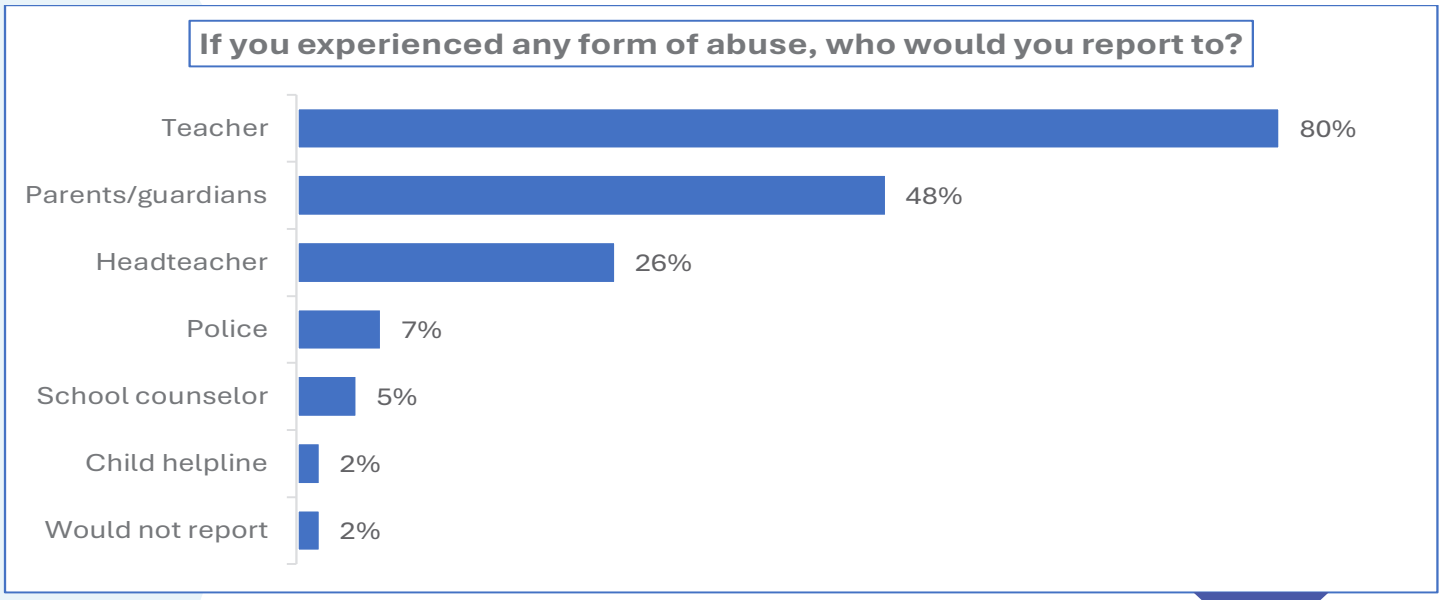
Reporting Mechanisms for Abuse

When faced with abuse or safety concerns, learners primarily rely on immediate and familiar support networks. Quantitative data show that 80% of learners would report abuse to a teacher, 48% to a parent or guardian, and 26% to a headteacher, highlighting the central role of schools and families in child protection.

Qualitative findings reinforce the trust placed in teachers. One learner explained, *"Teachers are the ones we see every day."* Another said, *"If something happens in school, you go to a teacher first."* Teachers themselves acknowledged this responsibility. As one noted, "Learners trust us, but sometimes we are not trained enough."

Use of formal and external reporting channels remains limited. Only 7% would report to police, 5% to a school counsellor, and 2% to child helplines. Qualitative interviews suggest that learners are often unaware of these options or fear consequences. A learner stated, *"Police is scary."* A counsellor added, *"Many learners don't know the helpline exists."*

Figure 47: If you experienced any form of abuse, who would you report to?



A small but critical 2% of learners would not report abuse to anyone. These learners are disproportionately from child-headed and guardian-led households. One teacher observed, *"Some learners keep quiet because they think nothing will change."* Although this represents a small proportion, it is a critical finding, as it points to potential fear, lack of trust, or concern about repercussions that may prevent some learners from seeking help. These patterns underscore the importance of strengthening awareness of child protection reporting pathways, building trust in formal safeguarding mechanisms, and ensuring that school-based reporting systems are accessible, confidential, and responsive to learners' needs. The small but critical group (2%) who would not report at all are often learners from vulnerable living arrangements, who may lack trust in available channels or fear repercussions. County variation is notable. Reporting to parents is much higher in Homabay (66%) and Kitui (67%), while reliance on parents is lower in Turkana (25%) and Samburu (34%). Reporting to police is relatively higher in Kitui (28%) and Kajiado (17%), reflecting local norms and access.

> "Some learners keep quiet because they think nothing will change."
>
> TEACHER

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

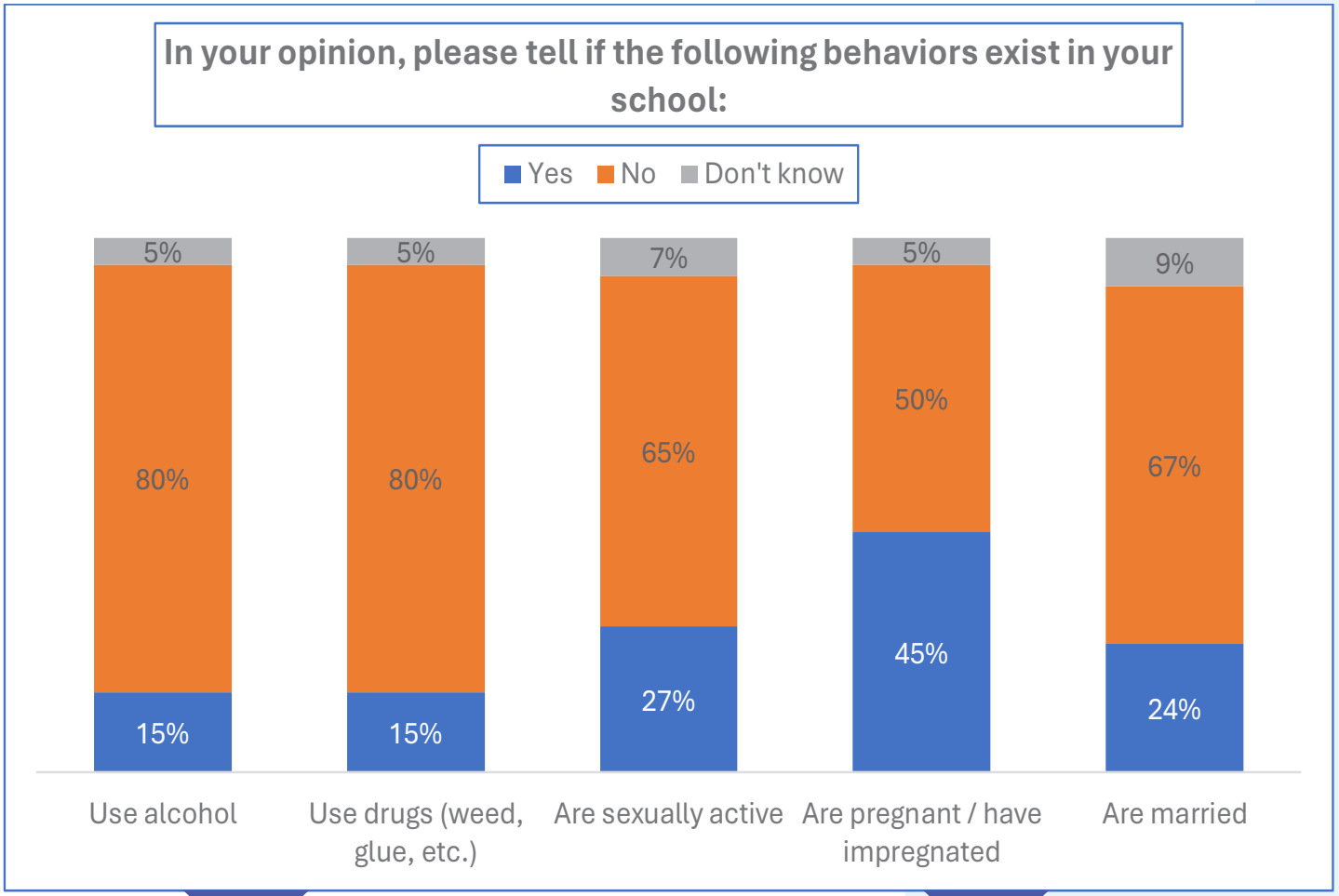
Teachers (80%) and parents/guardians (48%) are the primary and most trusted reporting channels. Awareness and use of formal mechanisms such as counsellors, police, and helplines remain very low. The small group that would not report abuse at all represents a high-risk population, underscoring the need to strengthen confidential, trusted, and well-communicated reporting systems, particularly for learners from vulnerable households.

Perceived Prevalence of Risky Behaviours in School

Learners' perceptions of risky behaviours within their school environments provide important insight into peer influence, safety concerns, and social pressures that may affect leaners well-being and educational continuity. Overall, 15% of learners reported that alcohol use exists among students in their schools. Perceived alcohol use was reported at higher levels in counties such as Turkana, where 22% of learners noted its presence, Baringo at 25%, and Nandi at 18%. Similarly, 15% of learners believed that drug use occurs among students, with notably higher perceived prevalence in Homabay at 29%, Baringo at 34%, and Nandi at 18%. These findings suggest that substance use is a visible concern within some school environments and may influence peer behaviour and learner safety.

The learners described these behaviours as influencing peer pressure and school safety. One learner shared, *"Some students drink and disturb others."* A teacher added, *"Substance use affects discipline and learning."*

Figure 48: In your opinion, please tell if the following behaviors exist in your school



"Substance use affects discipline and learning."

TEACHER

"Some girls leave school because of pregnancy."

LEARNER

Perceptions of sexual risk behaviours were also reported among learners. About 15% indicated that students in their schools are sexually active, with higher levels of perceived prevalence in Homabay and Baringo, both reporting 29% and 34% respectively. In addition, 12% of learners believed that there were students who were pregnant or had impregnated peers, with higher perceptions reported in Homabay at 20%, Nandi at 17%, and Baringo at 22%. A further 11% of learners indicated that some students in their schools were married, with Homabay and Baringo again reporting relatively higher perceived prevalence. These patterns suggest that early sexual activity, teenage pregnancy, and early marriage remain visible concerns in certain school contexts and highlight the need for strengthened life skills education, reproductive health awareness, and leaner protection interventions to support safe and informed decision making among learners. A learner in an FGD stated, *"Some girls leave school because of pregnancy."*

Across these categories, there are clear county-level variations, with Homabay, Nandi, and Baringo learners consistently perceiving higher levels of risky behaviours. Boys tend to perceive slightly higher prevalence of these behaviours compared to girls. Learners from single parent, child-headed, and guardian-led households also often report higher perceptions of risk, possibly due to more direct exposure to such issues or a heightened awareness of challenges.

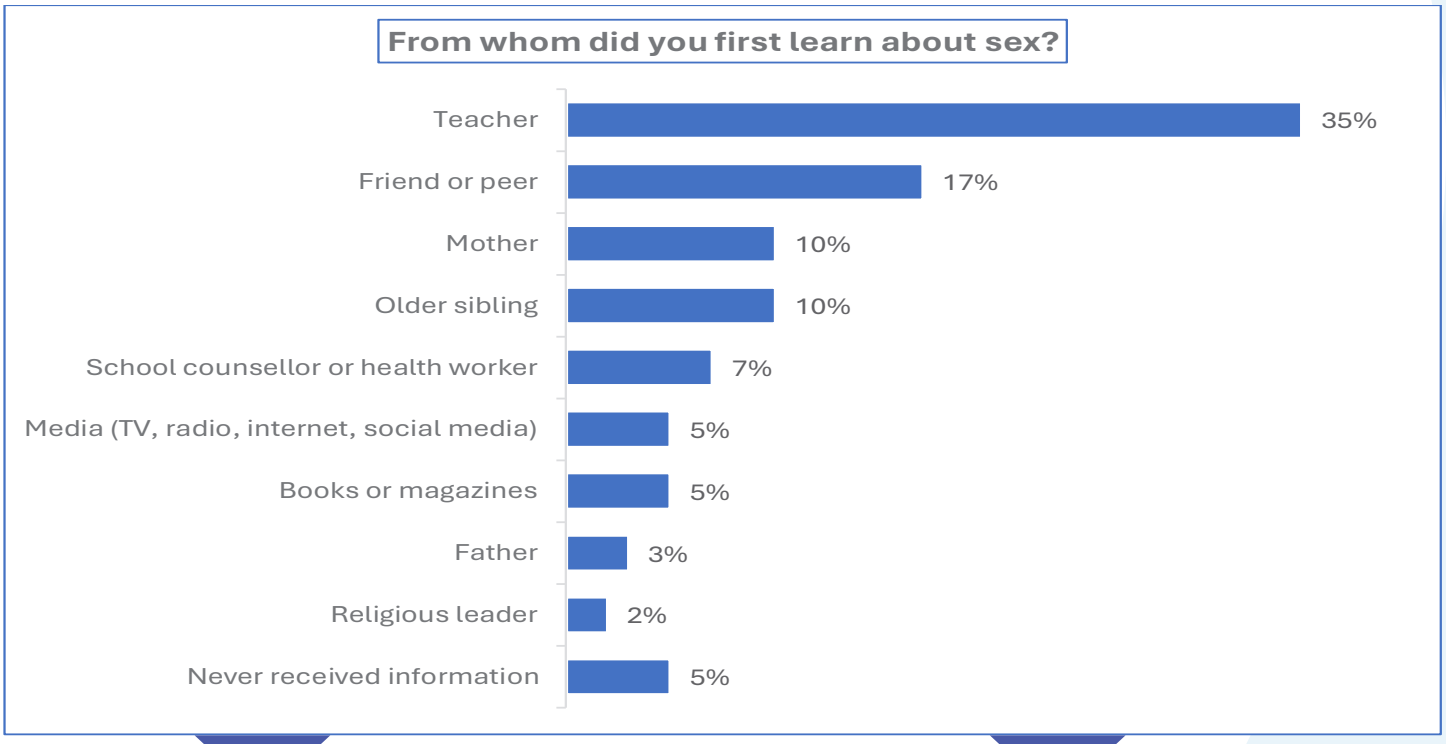
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Approximately 1 in 7 learners perceive the existence of concerning risky behaviours in their schools, including alcohol use (15%), drug use (15%), and sexual activity (15%). Furthermore, 12% perceive instances of pregnancy/impregnation, and 11% observe married peers. These figures, with notable variations across counties (especially Homabay, Nandi, and Baringo), highlight the urgent need for comprehensive life skills education integrated with harm reduction strategies, substance abuse prevention, and sexual and reproductive health interventions within schools.

Sources of Sexual Health Information

Learners' data indicate that they acquired their first information about sex from diverse sources, highlighting the importance of multi-channel approaches for delivering comprehensive sexual health education. Teachers are the primary source of information for 35% of learners, indicating their crucial role. Friends or peers serve as the second most cited source at 17%, reflecting the strong influence of peer networks. Mothers are a source for 10%, and older siblings for another 10%, pointing to the continued importance of family-based discussions. School counsellors or health workers contribute 7%, and media (TV, radio, internet, social media) accounts for 5%. Fathers (3%), religious leaders (2%), and books/magazines (5%) play smaller, but still present, roles. Alarmingly, 5% of learners report having never received any information about sex, highlighting critical gaps in basic education in certain regions. Qualitative data show that teacher-led sessions are uneven. One learner explained, *"Some teachers talk about it, others avoid it."* Another said, *"We mostly learn from friends."*

Figure 49: From whom did you first learn about sex?



"We mostly learn from friends."

LEARNER

"Some teachers talk about it, others avoid it."

LEARNER

There are significant county-level variations. Teacher-led education is particularly strong in Kajiado (52%), Kitui (38%), and Samburu (38%). Friends as a source are more prevalent in Turkana (28%) and Nandi (26%). Mothers are a more common source in Kitui (18%) and Homabay (14%). Gender disparities are also evident, with boys more likely to learn from older siblings (39%) and girls more from teachers (33%).

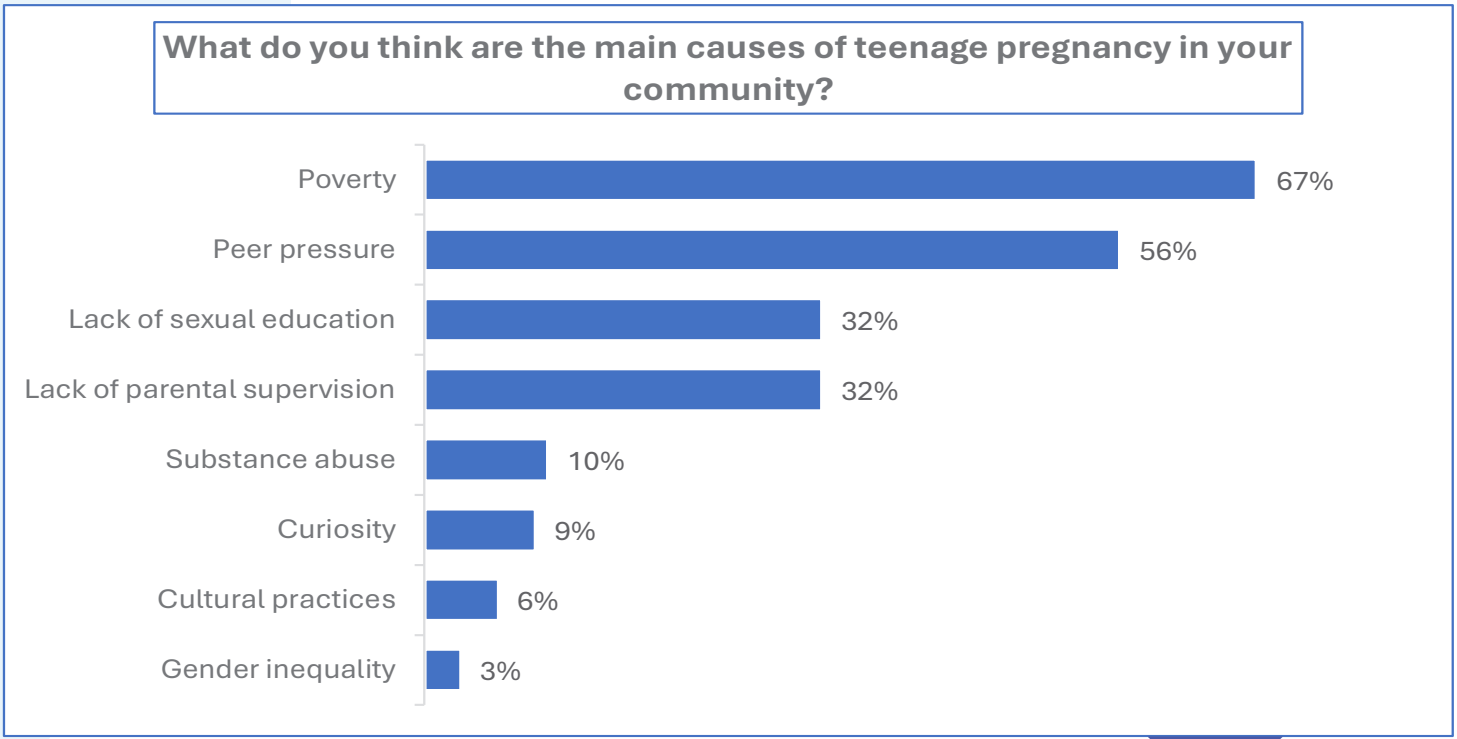
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Teachers are the most common primary source of sexual health information for over one-third of learners, followed closely by friends and peers. However, a significant proportion (5%) report never having received any information, and county disparities in information access are pronounced. This underscores the critical role of schools in delivering comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education. Efforts should also focus on empowering family members and leveraging peer leadership, while ensuring that all learners, especially in underserved regions, receive foundational information.

Perceived Causes of Teenage Pregnancy

Learners identify a complex interplay of socioeconomic and behavioural factors contributing to teenage pregnancy in their communities, often selecting multiple reasons. The top three perceived causes are: Poverty, identified by 67% of learners; Peer Pressure, identified by 56%; and Lack of Parental Supervision, identified by 33%. Other significant factors include Lack of sexual education (32%), Curiosity (9%), Substance abuse (10%), Cultural practices (6%), and Gender inequality (3%). Perceptions vary by county. Poverty is especially highlighted in Turkana (81%), Homabay (79%), and Kitui (79%). Peer pressure is notably high in Nandi (67%), Kitui (81%), and Bomet (79%). Lack of parental supervision is a strong concern in West Pokot (70%) and Kajiado (46%). These differences underscore the localized nature of the challenges and the need for context-specific interventions.

Figure 50: What do you think are the main causes of teenage pregnancy in your community?



Qualitative accounts reinforce these perceptions by illustrating how economic hardship and limited adult supervision interact to heighten learners' vulnerability to early pregnancy. Learners frequently linked poverty to dependence on peers or older individuals for basic needs, which in turn increases exposure to coercion and risky relationships. As one learner explained, *"When there is no money, girls are easily influenced because they need help."* Another learner added, *"Some accept things because there is no support at home."* Teachers echoed these concerns, noting that weak parental presence often leaves learners without guidance during critical developmental stages. One teacher observed, "Lack of guidance at home exposes learners to bad decisions." Another added, *"When parents are not involved, peers become the main influence."* Community stakeholders further emphasised that economic stress and absent supervision combine to reduce learners' ability to resist pressure, creating conditions in which early pregnancy becomes more likely rather than exceptional.

> "When parents are not involved, peers become the main influence."
>
> TEACHER

KEY TAKEAWAYS: **Learners primarily attribute teenage pregnancy to a confluence of socioeconomic vulnerability and social influences, with over two-thirds citing poverty, more than half identifying peer pressure, and one-third pointing to a lack of parental supervision. Lack of sexual education is also a major concern for nearly one-third of learners. These findings suggest that effective interventions must be multi-pronged, addressing not only information gaps and peer dynamics but also the underlying socioeconomic conditions and the need for stronger parental guidance and community support to empower learners against early pregnancy.**

Parent/Guardian Engagement

"My parents encourage me, but they don't know how to help with homework."

LEARNER

Parental and guardian engagement plays a critical role in shaping learners' academic motivation, school participation, and long-term aspirations. Quantitative findings indicate that most learners experience consistent emotional encouragement related to education. A majority (59%) reported that their parents or guardians always encourage them to focus on their education, while a further proportion indicated that such encouragement occurs often. Similarly, 50% of learners reported that their parents or guardians always ask about their school day or academic performance, suggesting regular communication around schooling for many households. These patterns point to a generally supportive home environment in which education is valued and reinforced.

"Some learners have no adult to ask if homework is done."

ELDER

However, academic supervision at home is considerably less consistent. Only about one-third of learners report that their parents or guardians regularly check their homework, while 22% indicated that homework is rarely or never checked. Qualitative findings suggest that this gap is driven not by lack of concern, but by competing demands, limited educational capacity, and time constraints faced by caregivers. One learner explained, "My parents encourage me, but they don't know how to help with homework." Another shared, *"They ask if I went to school, but they don't check my books."* Teachers echoed this observation, noting that many caregivers value education but feel ill-equipped to support academic tasks. As one teacher stated, *"Parents want their children to do well, but many don't know how to follow up on schoolwork."*

Levels of engagement vary significantly by household structure. Learners from single-parent, guardian-led, and child-headed households consistently reported lower levels of supervision and academic follow-up. In these contexts, caregivers often juggle multiple responsibilities or, in the case of child-headed households, are absent altogether. One learner from a child-

headed household stated plainly, *"No one checks my work at home."* A teacher added, *"Some learners have no adult to ask if homework is done."* These learners are more likely to manage schoolwork independently, increasing the risk of falling behind academically, particularly when combined with other vulnerabilities such as poverty or absenteeism.

Engagement around future education and career planning also appears uneven. While many caregivers encourage schooling in general terms, fewer engage in structured conversations about post-school pathways, subject choices, or long-term goals. Learners described uncertainty about what comes after secondary school and limited guidance from home. One learner noted, *"At home they just say 'study hard,' but we don't talk about what I will do after school."* This lack of forward-looking dialogue may limit learners' ability to make informed decisions about their education and future livelihoods.

The qualitative findings points out that parental engagement is strongest at the level of emotional support and encouragement, but weaker in areas that require time, resources, or specific knowledge, such as homework supervision and future planning. For learners in vulnerable household arrangements, these gaps are more pronounced and often compounded by the absence of a consistent adult presence.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Parental and guardian encouragement of education is generally strong, with most learners receiving regular motivation and interest in their schooling. However, academic supervision and guidance on future pathways are less consistent, particularly for learners in single-parent, guardian-led, and child-headed households. Strengthening caregiver engagement strategies through practical tools for supporting homework, guidance on leaner development, and structured support for future planning is critical to improving learning outcomes and reducing educational inequities among vulnerable learners.

Sensitive Discussions and Social/Emotional Support

Communication between learners and their parents or guardians on sensitive and social–emotional topics remains uneven and selective, with notable gaps around sexuality, relationships, and leaner development. Quantitative findings indicate that 45% of learners report that discussions about sex and sexuality rarely or never occur at home, highlighting a substantial silence around issues that are central to leaner well-being and risk. Conversations about friendships and relationships are similarly inconsistent, with a significant minority of learners reporting limited or no dialogue on these topics.

In contrast, parental engagement is stronger in areas perceived as less sensitive or more culturally acceptable. Learners report relatively high levels of communication around values, discipline, hygiene, and general emotional support, suggesting that caregivers are actively involved in moral guidance and day-to-day well-being. Many learners described parents and guardians as caring and protective, particularly when it comes to behaviour, health, and respect. One learner explained, "At home they always tell us to behave well and respect others." Another shared, *"My parents check if I am okay and if I am clean."*

Qualitative findings help explain why conversations about sexuality and relationships are limited. Learners frequently described discomfort, fear, and cultural taboos that discourage open discussion. One learner stated plainly, *"We don't talk about those things at home."* Another added, *"If you ask, they think you are misbehaving."* In some cases, learners reported that attempts to raise such topics were met with silence, warnings, or punishment, reinforcing avoidance rather than dialogue. A learner noted, *"They just say 'don't do it' but they don't explain."*

> "Parents want to protect their children, but they don't know how to talk about these issues."
>
> TEACHER

Teachers and community stakeholders confirmed that many caregivers feel ill-equipped or embarrassed to discuss sexuality with learners. One teacher observed, *"Parents want to protect their children, but they don't know how to talk about these issues."* A community leader added, *"Some parents believe talking about sex will encourage it, so they avoid the topic."* This reluctance leaves learners to seek information from peers or informal sources, which may be inaccurate or risky.

Gaps in sensitive communication are most pronounced among learners from vulnerable household arrangements, including child-headed, guardian-led, and some single-parent households. In these contexts, the absence of a consistent or trusted adult further limits opportunities for guidance. A learner from a child-headed household shared, *"There is no one to talk to about such things."* These learners are more likely to navigate adolescence without reliable adult support on relationships, sexuality, and emotional challenges.

At the same time, qualitative evidence shows that when caregivers do engage in open conversations, learners experience greater confidence and emotional security. One learner reflected, *"When my mother talks to me, I feel free and protected."* This highlights the protective role of open, age-appropriate dialogue in supporting learners to make informed and safe decisions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Caregivers generally provide strong moral guidance, health supervision, and emotional support, but communication on sexuality and relationships remains limited, with nearly half of learners reporting rare or no discussion at home. These gaps are especially pronounced in vulnerable household contexts and contribute to reliance on peers or informal sources for sensitive information. Strengthening caregiver capacity to engage in open, age-appropriate, and supportive dialogue on leaner development, relationships, and sexual health is critical for enhancing learner protection, well-being, and informed decision-making.

Household Chores and Study Time Impact

Household chores represent a significant barrier to academic engagement among learners, with 58% reporting that domestic responsibilities encroach on their study time to varying degrees. Specifically, 14% bear a heavy load of "many chores" exceeding 3 hours per day, while 25% manage "some chores" requiring 1-3 hours daily; 19% handle "few chores" under 1 hour, leaving only 42% unaffected by chores altogether. Geographic disparities amplify this challenge. High-burden counties include Turkana (58% affected: 16% many, 42% some), Nandi (57% affected: 17% many, 40% some), and Kajiado (63% affected: 15% many, 48% some). Conversely, Samburu (81% no chores) and Bomet (70% no chores) experience notably lighter impacts.

Gender and household vulnerabilities exacerbate the issue. Girls face a disproportionate burden, with 25% reporting many chores compared to 12% of boys. Learners in precarious living situations are hit hardest: child-headed households see 90% affected (23% many, 67% some), alongside elevated rates in single-parent (mother-only: 55% affected; father-only: 60%) and guardian-led homes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Household chores significantly impede the study time of over half (58%) of learners, with 14% dedicating over 3 hours/day and 25% spending 1-3 hours/day on chores. These patterns reveal how it especially undermines study time for girls and those in unstable households potentially hindering educational outcomes and life skills development. Program interventions should prioritize gender-equitable chore distribution, after-school study hubs/groups, and community advocacy to lighten domestic loads, enabling fuller participation in learning.

School Support Systems

The findings indicate that most schools have established a range of formal and informal support systems intended to promote learner well-being, protection, and holistic development. Quantitative evidence suggests relatively high availability of academic, psychosocial, and social support services across schools, although the strength, consistency, and functionality of these systems vary considerably by county and policy domain. Where they function well, these support systems play a critical role in creating safe learning environments, strengthening learner resilience, and enabling learners to address academic, emotional, and social challenges that may otherwise undermine attendance, engagement, and performance.

Guidance and counselling services emerge as the most widely available school-based support mechanism, with 87% of learners reporting that their schools provide structured counselling support. This reflects broad institutional recognition of the importance of addressing learners' psychosocial and emotional needs alongside academic development. Counselling services are commonly described as entry points for addressing academic stress, family challenges, peer conflict, and emotional distress.

Qualitative findings, however, highlight variation in how these services are delivered and experienced. In many schools, counselling responsibilities are assigned to teachers who already carry heavy teaching and administrative workloads. As one guidance teacher explained, *"We are counsellors, teachers, and disciplinarians at the same time."* Another noted, *"The structure is there, but time is the biggest challenge."*

Learners also reported mixed experiences, with some describing counselling as helpful and others perceiving it as irregular or reactive. One learner shared, *"When you get a chance to talk, it helps, but it doesn't happen often."*

Concerns around confidentiality also emerged in qualitative discussions. Some learners expressed hesitation to seek counselling due to fear that sensitive information might not remain private. A learner explained, *"You are not sure who will know your story."* These findings suggest that while counselling structures are widely present, their effectiveness depends heavily on staffing capacity, confidentiality practices, and the availability of dedicated time and safe spaces.

Peer counselling is another relatively common support structure, with 68% of learners reporting the presence of peer counselling programmes in their schools. Learners and teachers described peer counsellors as approachable and relatable, particularly for discussing sensitive or personal issues. One learner noted, *"It is easier to talk to someone your age."* Another added, *"Peer counsellors understand what we go through."*

> "We are counsellors, teachers, and disciplinarians at the same time."
>
> TEACHER

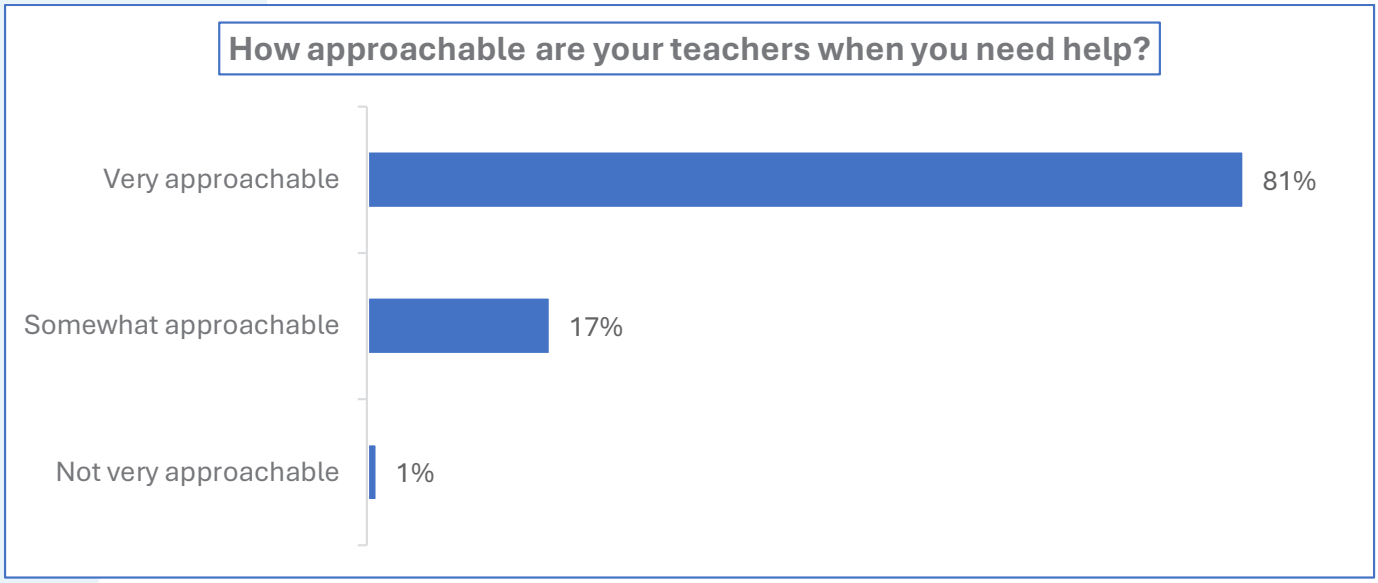
Teachers highlighted that peer counselling contributes to leadership development and early identification of challenges. As one teacher explained, *"Peer counsellors help us notice problems early."* However, qualitative evidence also points to uneven training and supervision of peer counsellors. In some schools, peer counsellors receive structured training and ongoing support, while in others the role is informal. A school administrator observed, *"Some peer counsellors are trained, others are just selected."* This inconsistency suggests the need for more standardised training frameworks and closer adult supervision to maximise the protective potential of peer support systems.

Health promotion initiatives show comparatively lower and uneven coverage. Only 44% of learners report the presence of Health Clubs in their schools. County-level disparities are pronounced, with much higher coverage in Nandi (83%) and Kitui (78%), and very limited access in West Pokot (8%) and Kajiado (29%). Where Health Clubs exist, they play an important role in promoting hygiene, reproductive health awareness, nutrition, and disease prevention. Qualitative findings indicate that learners value these clubs when available. One learner shared, *"Health Club taught us about hygiene and growing up."* Teachers echoed this sentiment, noting that Health Clubs provide a safe space for discussing sensitive health topics. A teacher remarked, *"Health Clubs help learners ask questions they fear asking in class."* In schools without such structures, both learners and teachers described missed opportunities for preventive education. As one headteacher noted, *"We deal with problems after they happen because we don't have preventive programmes."*

Preventive and protective policy frameworks are less consistently established and understood across schools. Only 47% of learners report that their school has an anti-bullying policy, and 56% are aware of a child protection policy. These figures suggest that while safeguarding policies may exist on paper in some schools, awareness among learners is uneven, potentially limiting their effectiveness. Qualitative evidence suggests that limited awareness contributes to underreporting of bullying, harassment, and abuse. A learner explained, "You don't know where to report because no one explains the policy." Teachers acknowledged gaps in sensitisation. One teacher stated, *"The policy exists, but learners don't know it well."* In some schools, enforcement is also inconsistent. A school administrator noted, *"Policies are there, but implementation depends on the headteacher."* These findings point to the need not only for policy adoption, but for active communication, training, and enforcement.

Despite structural gaps, learners consistently report high levels of teacher approachability, which emerges as a major strength of school support systems. A combined 98% of learners describe teachers as very approachable (81%) or somewhat approachable (17%). Learners frequently described teachers as their first point of contact when facing academic or personal challenges. One learner explained, "If something is wrong, you go to a teacher." Another added, *"Some teachers really care."* Teachers themselves recognise this role, often providing support beyond formal responsibilities. One teacher remarked, *"Sometimes we act like parents."* Community leaders also highlighted the protective role of schools, noting that for many learners especially those from fragile households teachers may be the most stable adult figures in their lives. As one community elder stated, *"For some children, the teacher is the only adult who listens."*

Figure 51: How approachable are your teachers when you need help?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

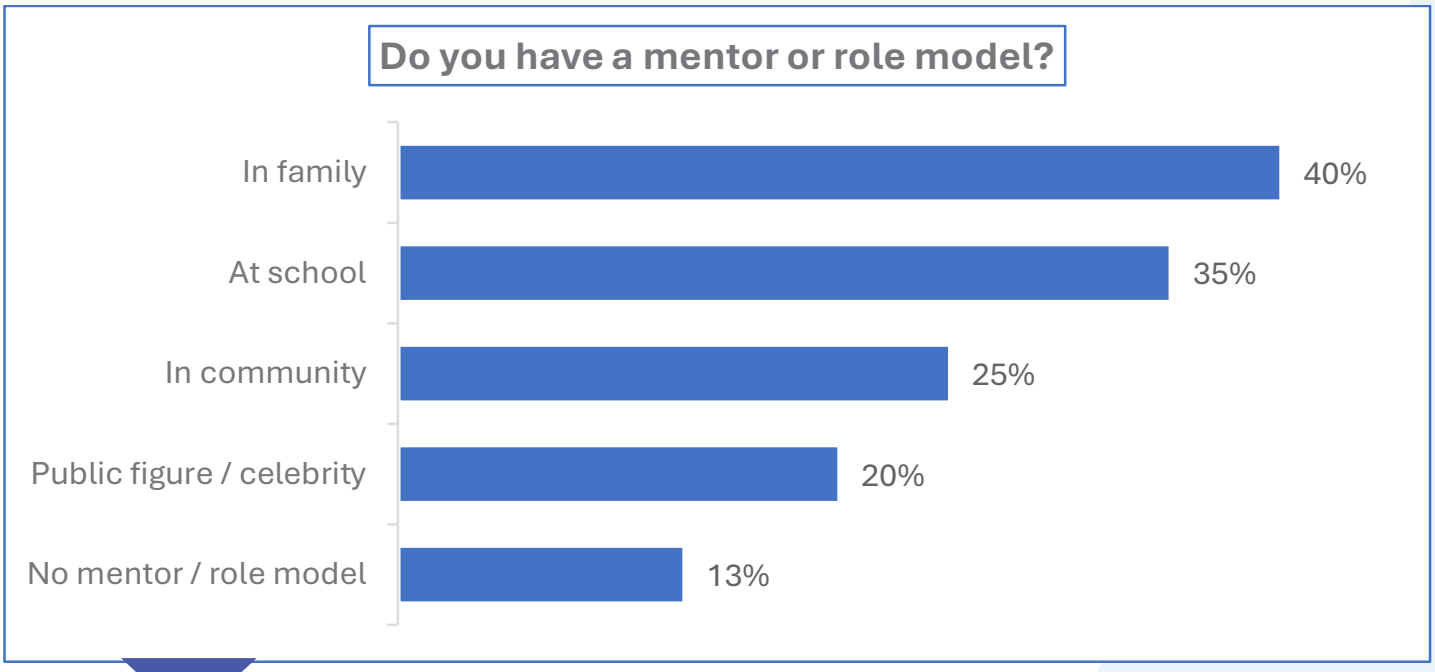
The findings suggest that Schools provide several core support services that contribute positively to learner well-being and protection. The widespread availability of guidance and counselling services (87%), high teacher approachability (98%), and relatively strong presence of peer counselling programmes (68%) demonstrate important institutional strengths. However, significant gaps remain in preventive health programming and formal safeguarding frameworks. Limited availability of Health Clubs (44%), low awareness of anti-bullying policies (47%), and partial implementation of child protection policies (56%) indicate areas requiring targeted strengthening.

Enhancing school support systems will require expanding preventive programmes, institutionalising and actively communicating safeguarding policies, and investing in capacity building for teachers, peer counsellors, and school leadership. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensure that all learners particularly those in vulnerable contexts have equitable access to safe, responsive, and supportive learning environments that promote both academic success and psychosocial well-being.

Access to Mentors and Role Models

Learners' access to mentors and positive role models varies considerably across different spheres of their lives, with schools emerging as the most consistent source of guidance, while families and communities play a more uneven role. Quantitative findings indicate that approximately two-thirds of learners (65%) report having a mentor or role model at school, underscoring the central role that teachers, guidance staff, and school-based programmes play in shaping learners' aspirations, behaviour, and decision-making. For many learners, especially those from vulnerable household arrangements, schools provide the most reliable exposure to supportive adults and positive examples.

Figure 52: Do you have a mentor or role model?



"You want to mentor, but with many learners, it is not easy to follow up closely."

TEACHER

Qualitative evidence reinforces the importance of school-based mentorship. Learners frequently described teachers as figures who motivate them, encourage discipline, and help them think about their future. One learner explained, "My teacher tells me to focus and not give up, even when things are hard." Another shared, *"At school there is someone who believes in me."* Teachers themselves recognised this responsibility. As one teacher noted, *"Sometimes we are the only role models they see every day."* However, teachers also acknowledged constraints, particularly large class sizes and limited time, which make sustained mentorship difficult. A guidance teacher observed, *"You want to mentor, but with many learners, it is not easy to follow up closely."*

Beyond school, 40% of learners identify a mentor or role model within their family, most commonly a parent, older sibling, or extended family member. Learners who reported strong family mentorship often described it as a source of motivation, moral guidance, and emotional stability. One learner stated, *"My mother advises me when I am confused."* Another said, *"My older brother shows me how to behave."* At the same time, qualitative data highlight that family-based mentorship is not equally available to all learners. Learners from single-parent, guardian-led, and child-headed households often reported limited access to consistent adult guidance at home. A learner from a guardian-led household shared, *"At home everyone is busy surviving, there is no one to guide you."*

Community-based mentorship is notably weaker. Only 25% of learners report having a mentor or role model within their broader community, indicating limited structured or informal mentorship beyond the school and household. This gap was particularly evident in counties where economic hardship, mobility, or social fragmentation reduce opportunities for sustained adult-youth engagement. Community leaders and religious figures acknowledged this limitation. One community leader explained, *"Young people don't have many adults to look up to anymore."* A religious leader added, *"We try to guide them, but we reach only a few."* The limited reach of community mentorship suggests missed opportunities to reinforce positive values, life skills, and aspirations outside the classroom.

Public figures or celebrities serve as role models for 20% of learners, reflecting the influence of media and popular culture. While some learners described being inspired by successful athletes, musicians, or professionals, qualitative discussions suggest that these figures often feel distant and abstract. A learner remarked, *"You see them on TV, but they don't know your life."* Teachers expressed concern that celebrity role models may not always provide realistic or constructive guidance. One teacher noted, *"They admire famous people, but they don't see the hard work behind success."*

Of particular concern is the 13% of learners who report having no mentor or role model at all. This gap is most pronounced in West Pokot (25%) and Kajiado (23%), and among boys (32%), suggesting gendered and geographic disparities in access to guidance. Qualitative accounts from these learners reveal feelings of isolation and self-reliance. One learner stated, *"I just decide things on my own."* Teachers expressed concern about this group, noting higher vulnerability to disengagement and risky behaviour. As one teacher observed, *"Learners without role models are easy to lose."*

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Most learners benefit from at least one mentor or role model, primarily through schools (65%) and, to a lesser extent, families (40%), highlighting the critical protective role of educational environments. However, mentorship access remains uneven, with limited community-based support (25%) and a significant minority of learners (13%) lacking any mentor at all particularly boys and learners in specific counties such as West Pokot and Kajiado.

These gaps leave some learners navigating academic, social, and life decisions without consistent guidance. Strengthening mentorship opportunities both formal and informal across schools, families, and communities is essential. Programmes should prioritise structured school-based mentoring, expand community mentorship initiatives, and deliberately target learners in contexts where access is weakest, ensuring that all learners have supportive role models to build resilience, confidence, life skills, and realistic pathways for the future.

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

LEARNERS

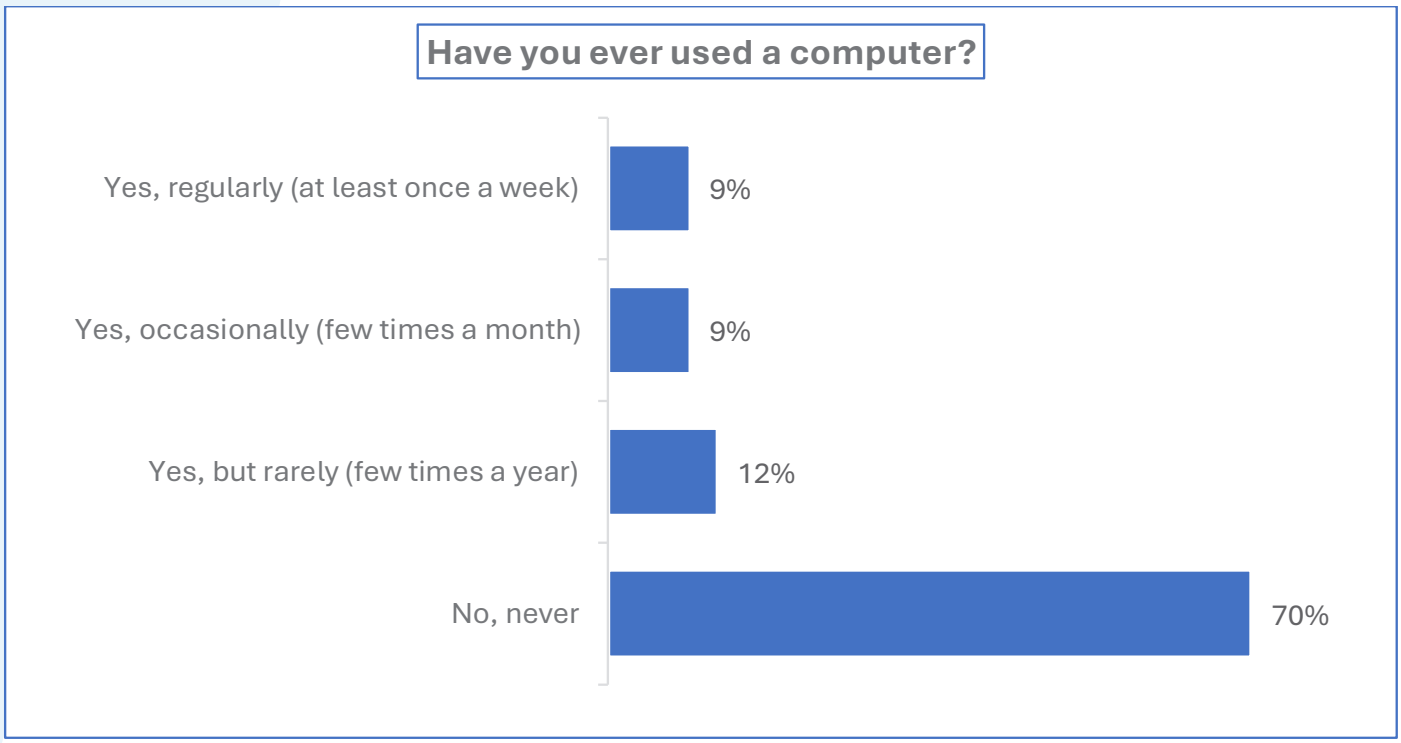
PILLAR 5

DIGITAL READINESS AND FUTURE PATHWAYS

Digital Access

The survey findings point to very limited exposure to digital tools among learners. A total of 70% of respondents report that they have never used a computer. Only a small minority use a computer with any regularity where 9% say they use a computer at least once a week and another 9% use one a few times a month. A further 12% have only rare contact with computers a few times a year. This means that fewer than 1 in 5 learners has anything close to regular computer experience. There are strong variations between counties. Regular computer use is somewhat more common in Samburu, Homabay and Kitui, but remains extremely low in Turkana, Bungoma, Bomet and West Pokot where large majorities have never used a computer at all. Boys are slightly more likely than girls to report regular use, reflecting gendered patterns in access to ICT, though the gap is not large. Learners living in child headed or relative led households are among the least likely to have used a computer, which adds a digital dimension to their broader vulnerability.

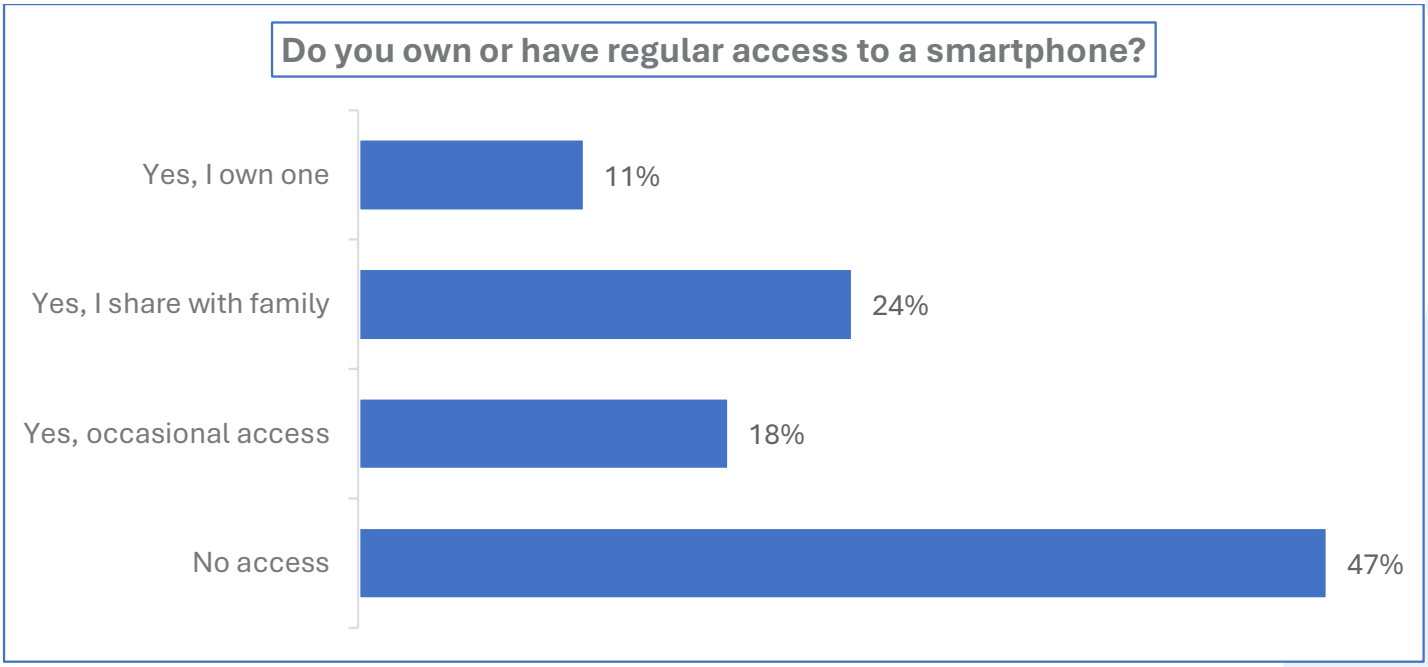
Figure 53: Have you ever used a computer?



Among the 192 learners who have ever used a computer, most access is school based. A total of 59% report using a computer in a school computer lab, with smaller shares using devices belonging to friends or relatives or accessing machines in cyber cafés. Very few mention using their own smartphone for computing tasks, and community centres and libraries play only a minor role. This indicates that computer use is intermittent, depends heavily on whether the school has facilities, and is rarely integrated into everyday learning or home life.

Smartphone access is somewhat more widespread but still far from universal. A total of 11% of learners own a smartphone, 24% share one within the family and 18% have only occasional access. Almost half, 47%, report no access at all. Ownership and regular access are higher in Kajiado, Baringo, Samburu and Kitui, and much lower in Nandi, Bomet and West Pokot. Learners from single parent, child headed and guardian led households are particularly likely to have no access. These patterns suggest that most learners in the sampled schools are entering adulthood with minimal practical experience of computers and only limited access to internet enabled phones, which constrains their readiness for digital learning and participation in a modern labour market.

Figure 54: Do you own or have regular access to a smartphone?

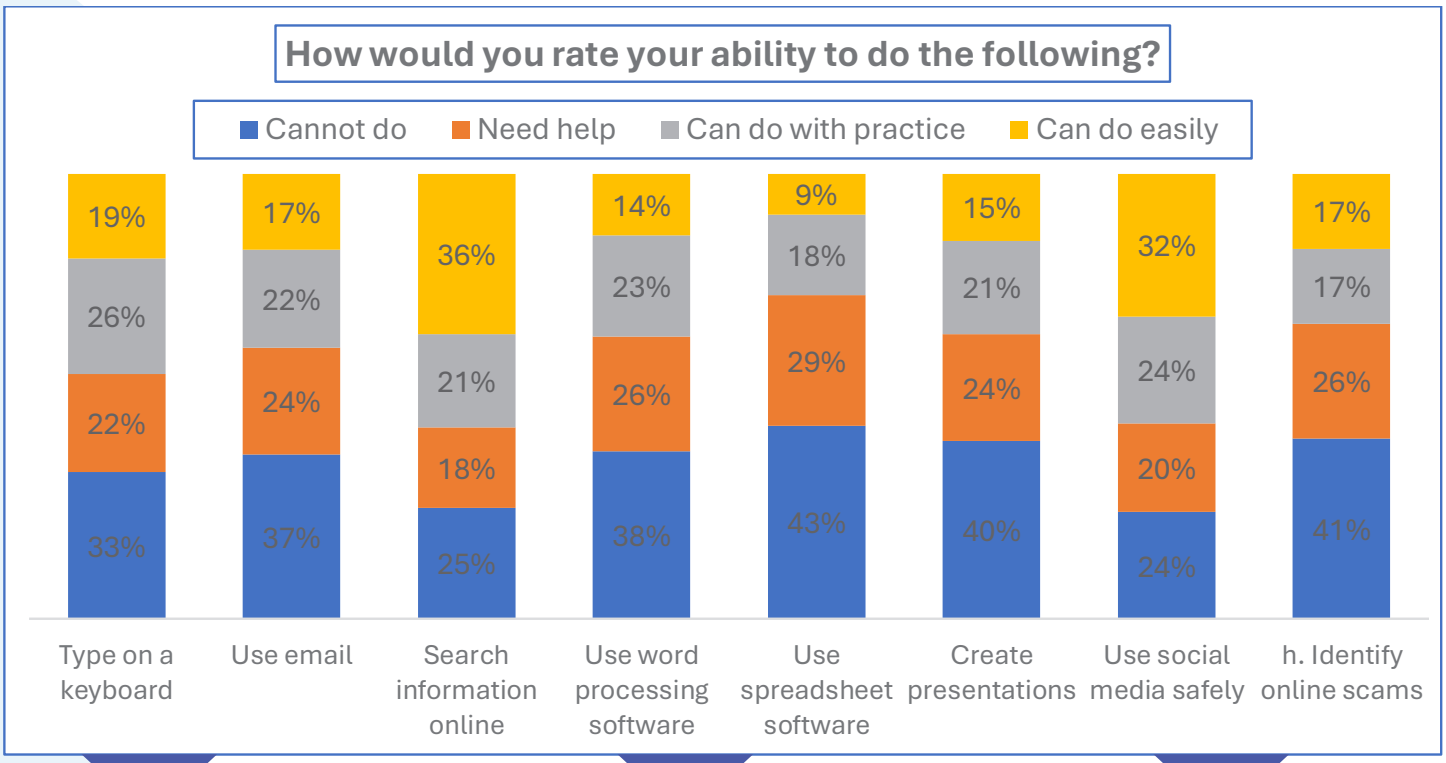


Digital Skills Proficiency and Learning Preferences Among Learners

The assessment reveals substantial gaps in learners' digital skills, with proficiency remaining low across most core competencies required for academic progression and future employability. Although learners express strong interest in digital learning and modern careers, their actual exposure to and practice of digital skills is limited, uneven, and strongly shaped by county context, household vulnerability, and school infrastructure.

Foundational skills such as typing and email use are particularly weak. One-third of learners (33%) report that they cannot type at all, while only 19% indicate that they can type easily. County-level disparities are stark. In West Pokot (73%), Homabay (46%), and Nandi (45%), nearly half or more of learners are unable to type, compared to much lower levels of inability in Kitui (12%) and Samburu (17%), suggesting better access to digital exposure in those counties. Email use follows a similar pattern. Thirty-seven per cent of learners cannot use email, and only 17% report being able to use it easily. The highest levels of inability are reported in West Pokot (70%), Nandi (57%), and Kajiado (45%), while Kitui (13%) again stands out with relatively stronger skills. Learners in higher grades, particularly Grade 12, show slightly better confidence, reflecting limited but cumulative exposure rather than systematic instruction.

Figure 55: Do you own or have regular access to a smartphone?



"They hear about email, but many have never opened one."

TEACHER

"I want to learn computers, but our school has none."

LEARNER

"Digital safety is not taught, yet phones are everywhere."

COUNTY OFFICIAL

Qualitative data illustrate how unfamiliar these basic tools remain for many learners. A teacher explained, *"They hear about email, but many have never opened one."* A learner echoed this gap, saying, *"We are told to submit work online, but we don't know how."* Learners from child-headed households and guardian-led homes consistently reported lower confidence, reflecting both limited access to devices and lack of adult guidance at home. Searching for information online emerges as a relatively stronger skill compared to others. 36% of learners report being able to search for information online easily, although one-quarter still struggle, with the greatest challenges reported in West Pokot (60%) and Nandi (40%). Learners often associate this skill with mobile phone use rather than formal computer training. One learner explained, *"I can search things on a phone, but not on a computer."* Teachers noted that this form of digital exposure is informal and uneven. As one teacher observed, *"They know Google by name, but not how to use it properly for learning."*

More advanced productivity skills are notably weak across the sample. Thirty-eight per cent of learners cannot use word processing software, and only 14% can use it easily. The highest levels of inability are again concentrated in West Pokot (77%) and Nandi (57%). Spreadsheet skills are even more limited, with 43% unable to use spreadsheets and only 9% able to do so easily, particularly low in West Pokot (75%), Nandi (57%), and Homabay (58%). Creating presentations shows a similar pattern. Forty per cent of learners report that they cannot create a presentation, while just 15% can do so easily. Counties such as West Pokot (75%) and Homabay (58%) record the widest gaps, whereas Kitui (8% unable) and Samburu (41% able) demonstrate comparatively higher exposure.

"If you know computers, you can get a job."

LEARNER

Teachers linked these gaps directly to the absence of computer laboratories and trained ICT teachers. One school administrator stated, *"We talk about PowerPoint, but there is no power or computers."* Another teacher added, *"Digital skills are examined in theory, not in practice."* Learners themselves expressed frustration. A learner noted, *"I want to learn computers, but our school has none."* Learners demonstrate relatively better awareness in safe use of social media, with 32% reporting that they can use social media safely, although 24% still cannot, particularly in West Pokot (48%) and Nandi (38%). Girls report slightly higher confidence than boys, suggesting greater caution or awareness in online spaces.

"We talk about PowerPoint, but there is no power or computers."

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Identifying online scams and digital risks remains a major weakness. Forty-one per cent of learners are unable to recognise online scams, with the highest gaps in West Pokot (52%), Kajiado (52%), and Bomet (59%). Qualitative accounts suggest that learners are exposed to online risks without adequate guidance. A teacher warned, *"They are online, but they don't know how to protect themselves."* A county official similarly noted, *"Digital safety is not taught, yet phones are everywhere."* Despite limited proficiency, learners consistently express strong interest in acquiring digital skills and view them as essential for future education and employment. FGDs revealed that learners associate digital skills with opportunity, modernity, and independence. One learner shared, "*If you know computers, you can get a job."* Another said, "Digital skills mean you are not left behind." This aspiration contrasts sharply with the reality of limited access, reinforcing a growing skills gap between learners' ambitions and their actual preparedness.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

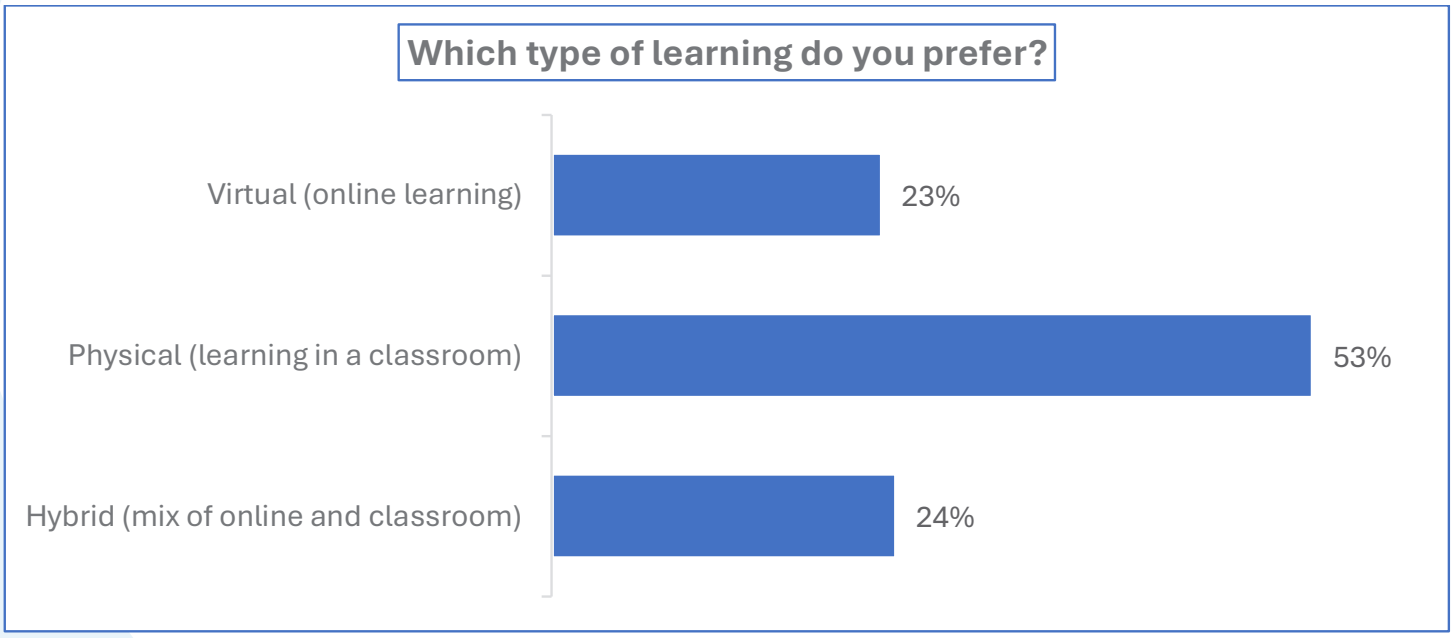
Learners' digital skills remain low and highly uneven, with rural and marginalised counties particularly West Pokot, Nandi, and Homabay consistently reporting the highest levels of inability across most competencies. Household vulnerability further compounds these gaps, as learners from child-headed and guardian-led households are significantly less proficient. While learners show relatively stronger skills in online searching and basic social media use, foundational ICT competencies including typing, email, word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, and online safety are weak.

Qualitative evidence confirms that these gaps are driven by limited infrastructure, lack of trained teachers, and minimal hands-on exposure, rather than low motivation. Addressing these challenges will require deliberate investment in school-based digital infrastructure, practical ICT instruction, and targeted support for marginalised counties and vulnerable learners, ensuring that learners are meaningfully prepared for further education, employment, and participation in a digital economy.

Learning Preferences and Interest in Science and Technology

The survey explored learners' preferred modes of learning and their interest in subjects such as science (biology, chemistry, physics) and technology/computer studies. Overall, most learners (53%) prefer physical classroom learning, while 24% prefer a hybrid approach combining online and in-person learning, and 23% favor fully virtual learning. County-level variations are notable: learners in Bungoma (69%) and Nandi (62%) strongly prefer classroom learning, whereas in Kitui (73%) and Samburu (48%), hybrid and virtual modes are more popular. Boys and girls show similar preferences, though boys slightly favor virtual learning (32% vs 23% of girls). Higher-grade learners (Grade 12) tend to be more open to hybrid learning, while lower grades (Grade 9) lean toward classroom-based instruction.

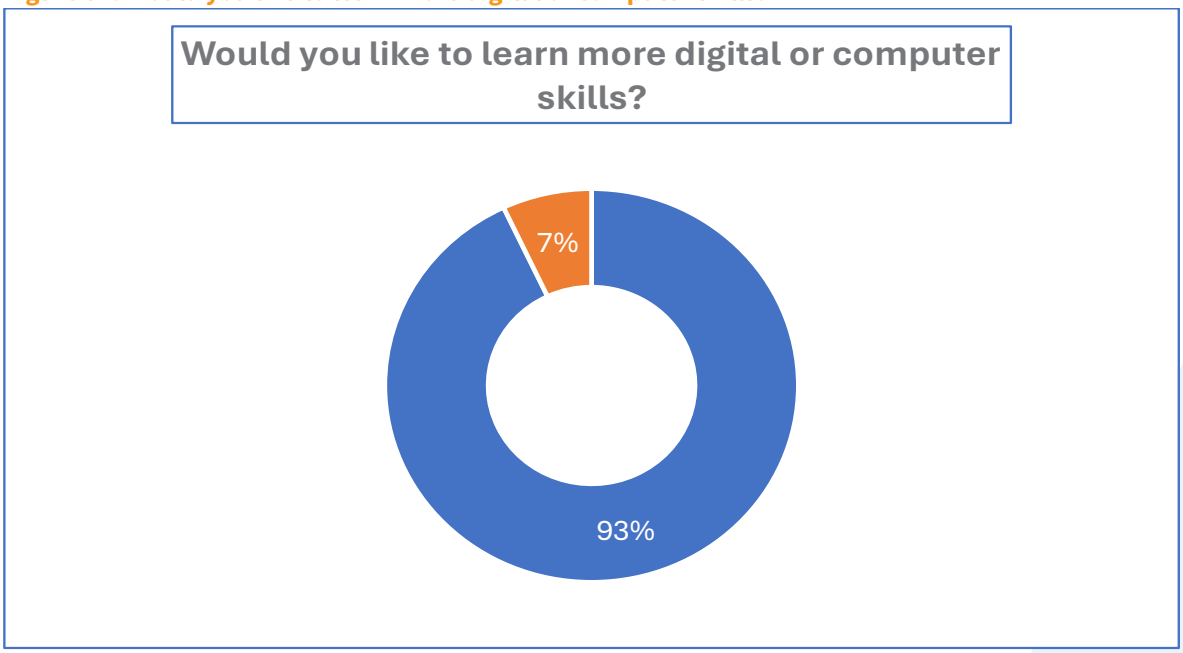
Figure 56: Which type of learning do you prefer?



Regarding interest in science subjects, learners demonstrate generally high engagement. Across all counties, 38% report being interested in science, while 35% are very interested. County differences are apparent: Nandi (67%) and Samburu (47%) show the highest interest in science, while Bomet (18%) and Kajiado (17%) report lower levels. Boys and girls show similar interest overall, with slightly more girls expressing "very interested" responses. Grade-level differences are minor, though Grade 12 learners show slightly higher engagement in science subjects, reflecting exposure and curriculum progression.

Interest in technology and computer studies is also substantial, though the report indicates gaps in actual digital skills. Many learners express enthusiasm for learning digital skills, with 93% indicating a desire to improve their digital literacy. This high interest cuts across counties, gender, and household types, though Kitui (83%) shows slightly lower demand. Boys and girls alike demonstrate strong motivation, highlighting a willingness to engage in ICT learning if opportunities are provided.

Figure 57: Would you like to learn more digital or computer skills?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

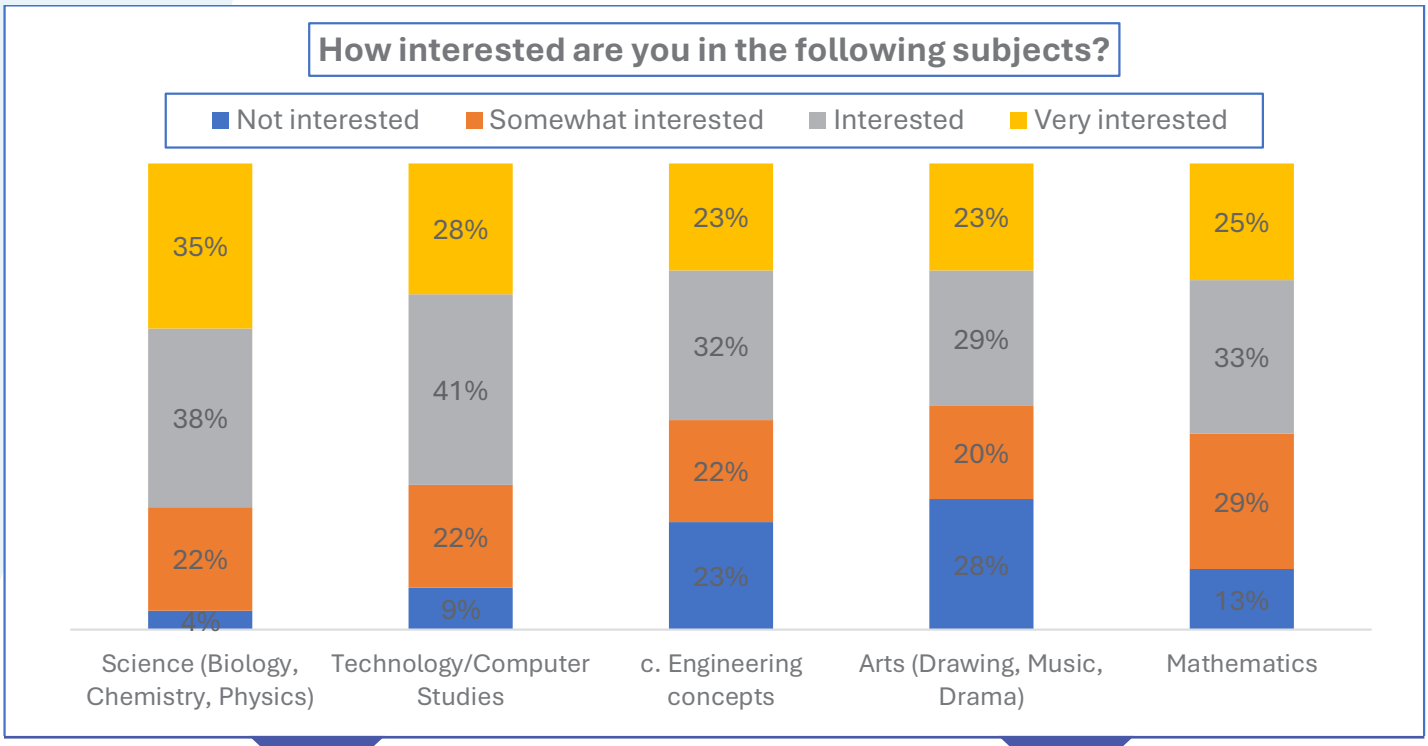
Learners demonstrate a strong preference for traditional classroom learning, though there is a growing openness to hybrid and virtual approaches, especially in counties with better ICT infrastructure. Interest in science and technology subjects is high, indicating motivation to engage in STEM learning, but this contrasts with the low digital skills proficiency observed in other areas, suggesting a skills-practice gap. Programs aiming to enhance digital literacy should therefore combine ICT skills training with innovative teaching approaches that align with learners' preferred learning modes. Particular attention should be given to counties with lower access to digital infrastructure and learners in vulnerable household situations to ensure equitable learning opportunities.

Learners' Interest in Technology, STEM, and Arts

The assessment explored learners' preferred modes of learning alongside their interest in science subjects (biology, chemistry, physics) and technology/computer studies. The findings reveal a learner population that is highly motivated and curious about science and technology, but whose preferences and opportunities are shaped by infrastructure constraints, exposure, and confidence levels.

Most learners continue to favour face-to-face classroom learning, with 53% indicating this as their preferred mode. This preference reflects familiarity, perceived structure, and access to direct teacher support. Classroom learning is particularly favoured in Bungoma (69%) and Nandi (62%), counties where limited access to digital devices and connectivity makes virtual learning less practical. At the same time, there is a growing openness to more flexible learning models. Nearly one quarter of learners (24%) prefer a hybrid approach, combining in-person and online learning, while 23% favour fully virtual learning. This openness is especially pronounced in Kitui (73%) and Samburu (48%), suggesting that learners in these counties are either more exposed to digital platforms or more optimistic about the opportunities that technology-enabled learning could offer.

Figure 58: How interested are you in the following subjects?



"If you do science, you have many options after school."

LEARNER

"Learners still need the teacher, but they are curious about learning beyond the classroom."

TEACHER

Qualitative findings help explain these preferences. Learners value physical classrooms for interaction and clarity but see technology as expanding learning possibilities. One learner explained, *"In class you can ask questions immediately, but online you can learn more things."* A teacher echoed this balance, noting, *"Learners still need the teacher, but they are curious about learning beyond the classroom."*

Gender differences in learning preferences are modest, though boys are slightly more inclined toward virtual learning (32% of boys compared to 23% of girls). This may reflect higher confidence among boys in navigating digital platforms rather than greater access. Grade-level differences is also evident with Grade 12 learners showing greater openness to hybrid learning, likely due to increased academic maturity and exposure to independent study, while Grade 9 learners tend to prefer classroom-based instruction, where structure and supervision are stronger. Interest in science subjects is generally high across the programme counties. 38% of learners report being interested in science, while an additional 35% describe themselves as very interested, indicating that nearly three-quarters of learners are positively inclined toward science learning. Counties such as Nandi (67%) and Samburu (47%) show particularly strong engagement, whereas Bomet (18%) and Kajiado (17%) report comparatively lower levels of interest.

"The interest is there, but experiments are few."

TEACHER

Learners associate science subjects with future opportunities, problem solving, and practical relevance. One learner shared, *"Science helps us understand life and how things work."* Another added, *"If you do science, you have many options after school."* Teachers also noted that curiosity is often present even when performance is constrained by limited resources. As one teacher observed, *"The interest is there, but experiments are few."* Gender differences are minimal, with boys and girls expressing similar levels of interest overall. Slightly more girls fall into the "very interested" category, challenging common assumptions about gendered engagement in science. Grade-level variation is also limited, although Grade 12 learners show slightly higher interest, reflecting increased subject specialization and clearer links between science subjects and post-school pathways.

"They want to learn computers, but we don't have the facilities."

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Interest in technology and computer studies is particularly strong. An overwhelming 93% of learners express a desire to improve their digital skills, underscoring widespread recognition of the importance of ICT for future education and employment. This enthusiasm cuts across counties, genders, grades, and household arrangements, although slightly lower demand is reported in Kitui (83%), possibly reflecting relatively better existing exposure compared to other counties. Qualitative data reinforce this strong motivation. Learners repeatedly linked technology skills to independence and employability. One learner stated, *"If you know computers, you are not limited."* Another said, *"Technology is the future, even for jobs."* Teachers and school leaders similarly noted that learner interest often exceeds what schools are able to offer. A school administrator explained, *"They want to learn computers, but we don't have the facilities."*

This enthusiasm stands in sharp contrast to the low levels of actual digital proficiency documented elsewhere in the assessment. The findings point to a clear aspiration-capacity gap, where learners are eager to engage with technology but lack the infrastructure, instructional support, and practical exposure needed to translate interest into competence.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Learners demonstrate a strong preference for traditional classroom learning, reflecting the continued importance of direct teacher engagement, while also showing growing openness to hybrid and virtual approaches, particularly in counties with relatively better digital exposure and among older learners. Interest in science subjects is high across most counties, with minimal gender disparities, indicating strong potential for STEM engagement. Enthusiasm for technology and digital skills is near-universal (93%), cutting across all learner groups, yet this motivation contrasts sharply with limited access and low digital proficiency.

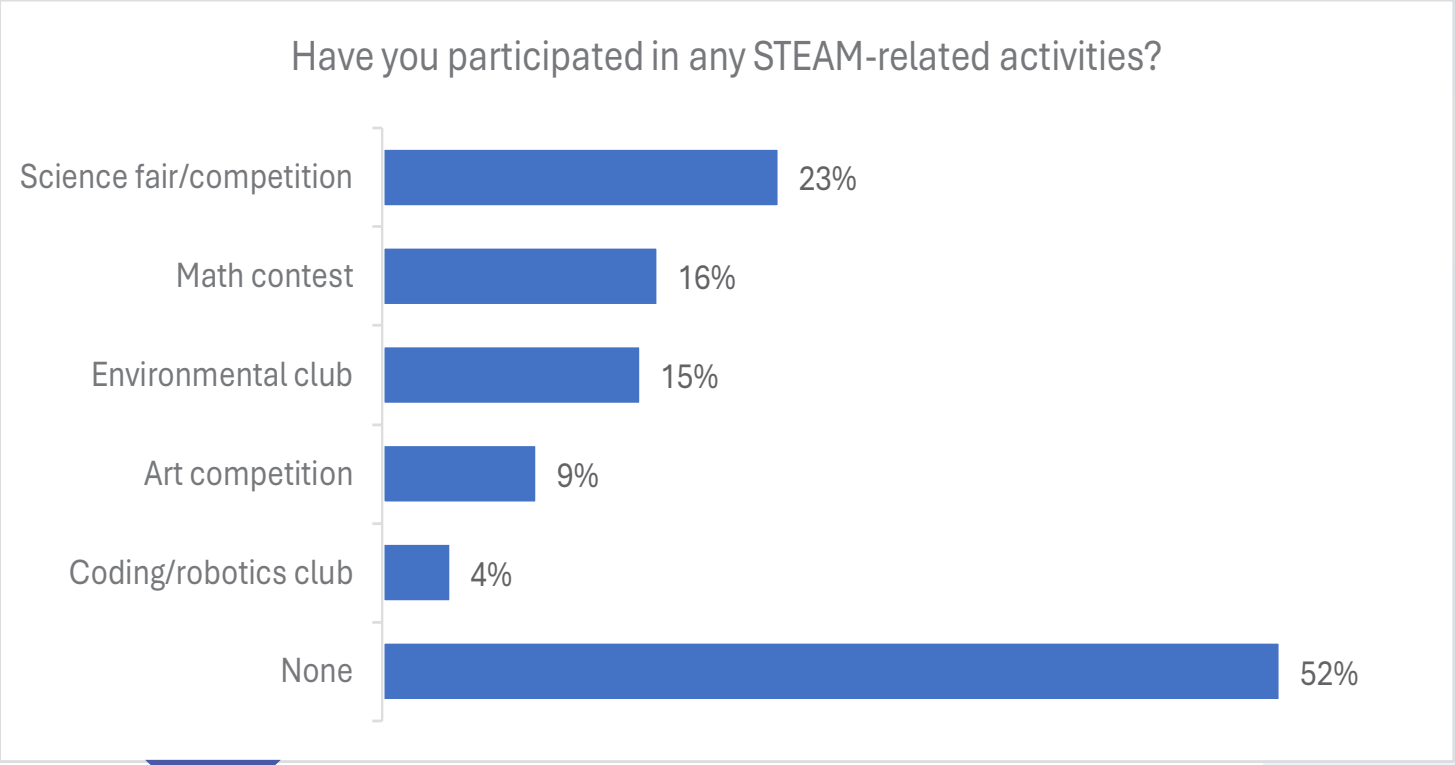
These findings highlight the importance of aligning teaching approaches with learner preferences, while simultaneously investing in practical science resources and ICT infrastructure. Programmes seeking to strengthen science and digital learning should blend classroom-based instruction with gradual, supported integration of technology, paying particular attention to counties with weaker infrastructure and learners from vulnerable household contexts to ensure equitable and meaningful learning opportunities.

Participation in STEAM Activities

Despite high levels of interest in science, technology, and mathematics, actual participation in structured STEAM activities remains low across the programme counties. Quantitative findings indicate that more than half of learners (52%) have not participated in any STEAM-related activity, pointing to a substantial gap between learner interest and available opportunities. Among learners who have engaged in STEAM activities, participation is concentrated in a small number of relatively accessible formats. Science fairs are the most common activity (23%), followed by mathematics contests (16%) and environmental clubs (15%). Participation in art-related competitions (9%) suggests modest engagement with the arts component of STEAM. However, exposure to more technically demanding or resource-intensive activities is extremely limited. Only 4% of learners report participating in coding or robotics clubs, reflecting widespread constraints related to equipment, trained facilitators, and institutional support.

County-level patterns reveal marked disparities in access to STEAM opportunities. Homabay stands out with comparatively high participation in science fairs (53%), while Kitui shows stronger engagement in environmental clubs (43%), possibly reflecting active school or community initiatives in these areas. In contrast, Samburu (81%) and Bomet (77%) report extremely high proportions of learners with no STEAM participation at all, indicating near-total absence of extracurricular science and technology opportunities in many schools. These disparities highlight how local infrastructure, school leadership priorities, and external partnerships strongly shape learner exposure.

Figure 59: Have you participated in any STEAM-related activities?



"Some learners want to join clubs, but they have to go home early to help."

TEACHER

"If there were clubs, many of us would join."

LEARNER

Household circumstances further influence participation. Learners from two-parent households are significantly more likely to engage in STEAM activities, while those from child-headed or guardian-led households show consistently lower participation. This pattern reflects both economic constraints such as inability to afford participation costs or materials and reduced adult support to encourage involvement in extracurricular learning. Teachers noted that learners from more vulnerable households often prioritise household responsibilities or income-generating activities over clubs and competitions. As one teacher observed, *"Some learners want to join clubs, but they have to go home early to help."*

Qualitative insights suggest that low participation is driven less by lack of interest and more by lack of opportunity. Learners frequently expressed curiosity about science experiments, technology, and innovation but described limited exposure beyond the regular curriculum. One learner shared, *"We hear about robotics, but we have never seen it."* Another added, *"If there were clubs, many of us would join."* School administrators similarly pointed to resource limitations. A headteacher explained, *"STEAM activities need equipment and trained teachers, which most schools don't have."*

The low uptake of STEAM activities, particularly in coding and robotics, has implications for learners' preparedness for future education and employment pathways. Without practical, hands-on exposure, learners are less able to translate theoretical interest into skills, confidence, and career aspirations in science and technology fields.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Participation in STEAM activities is limited and uneven, with over half of learners (52%) reporting no involvement at all. Engagement is largely confined to science fairs, mathematics contests, and environmental clubs, while coding and robotics remain largely inaccessible (4%), underscoring major gaps in extracurricular provision. County-level disparities are pronounced, with Samburu and Bomet showing particularly low participation, while Homabay and Kitui demonstrate pockets of stronger engagement.

Household vulnerability further constrains participation, as learners from child-headed and guardian-led households are less likely to access STEAM opportunities. These findings point to the need for targeted, localised interventions that expand practical STEAM exposure especially in under-served counties through school-based clubs, partnerships, and low-cost, hands-on learning models that ensure equitable access for all learners, regardless of household circumstance.

3.1.2 Parents/Guardians Findings

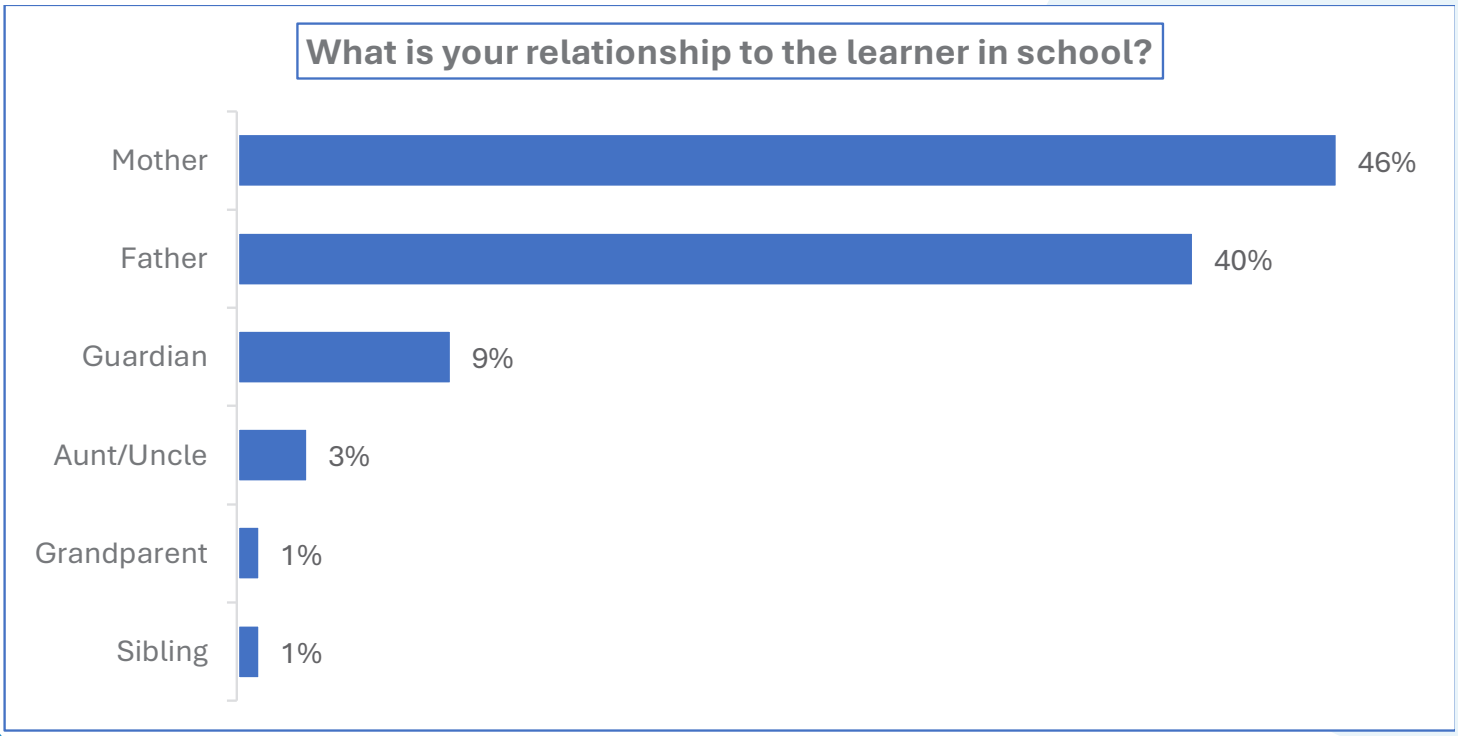
Overview

The parents and guardians component of the baseline assessment provides critical insight into the household contexts shaping learners' educational participation, well-being, and life skills development. Parents and guardians play a central role in influencing attendance, retention, academic support, psychosocial well-being, and future aspirations. Understanding their demographic characteristics, caregiving responsibilities, and engagement patterns is therefore essential for interpreting learner outcomes and identifying areas where programme interventions can strengthen family–school linkages. This section draws on quantitative data collected from 209 parents and guardians across the ten programme counties. The analysis highlights the diversity of caregiving arrangements, socioeconomic conditions, and educational backgrounds among parents and guardians, and situates these factors within the broader patterns of learner vulnerability and school participation observed in the assessment.

Respondent Demographics

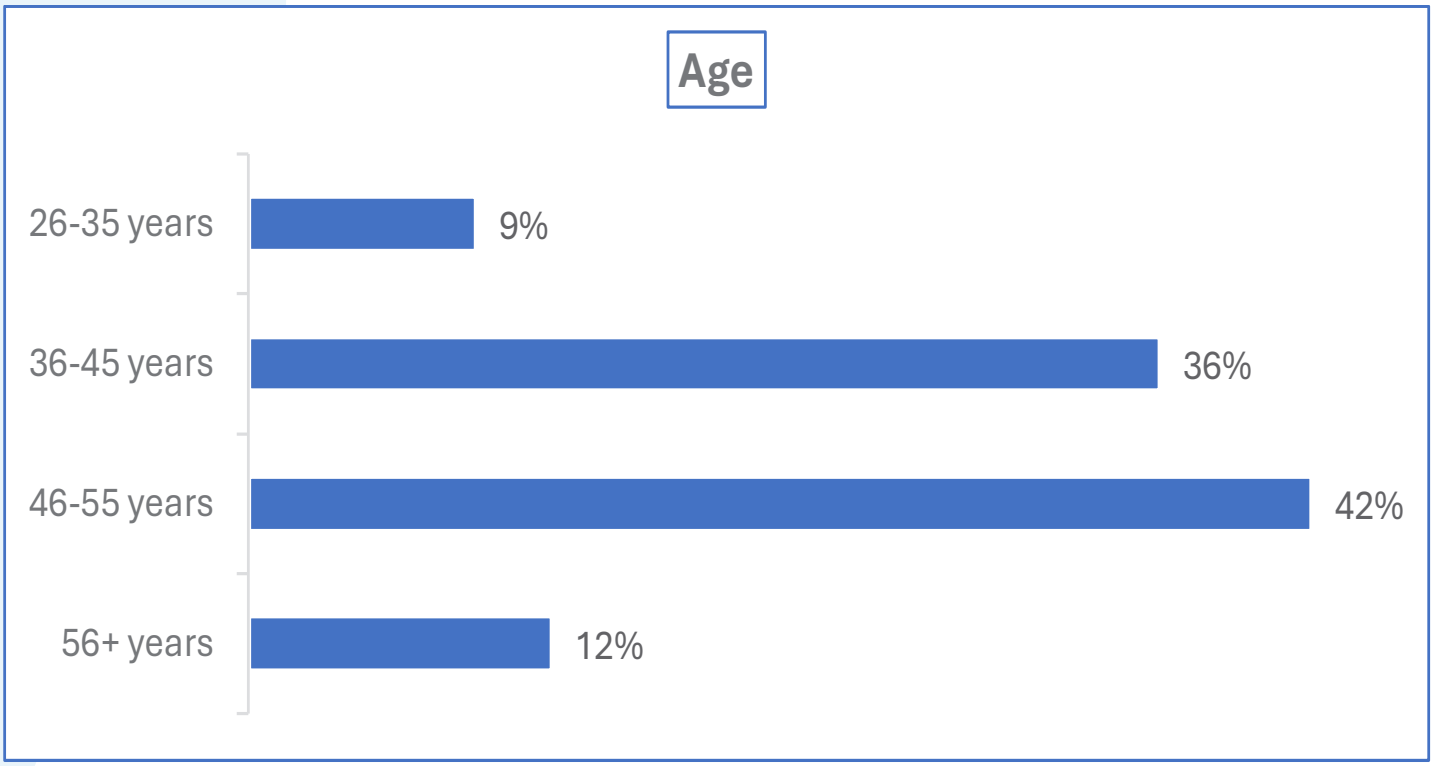
The survey captured information on the caregivers of learners in school, revealing that the majority are parents, with mothers representing 46% and fathers 40% of respondents. Guardians accounted for 9%, while extended family members such as aunts, uncles, grandparents, and siblings made up smaller proportions. County-level differences are notable: maternal involvement is particularly high in Bungoma (59%) and Bomet (55%), while paternal participation is strongest in Kitui (53%) and Bomet (52%). Guardians play a more significant role in counties such as Samburu (25%) and Nandi (16%), indicating that non-parental caregivers are more common in these areas.

Figure 60: What is your relationship to the learner in school?



Respondents' age distribution shows that most are middle-aged, with 78% between 36 and 55 years. The 46–55 age group constitutes the largest share at 42%, while younger caregivers aged 26–35 years represent only 9% of the sample. Samburu has a higher proportion of younger respondents (21% aged 26–35), whereas Kitui has a greater share of respondents aged 46–55 (67%). Most respondents are married or living with a partner (69%), with 13% separated or divorced, 8% widowed, and 10% never married. Counties such as Samburu (71%) and Kitui (95%) report high proportions of married respondents, whereas Bungoma shows the highest incidence of separation or divorce (36%). Single caregivers are most common in Samburu (25%), suggesting variability in household structures across regions.

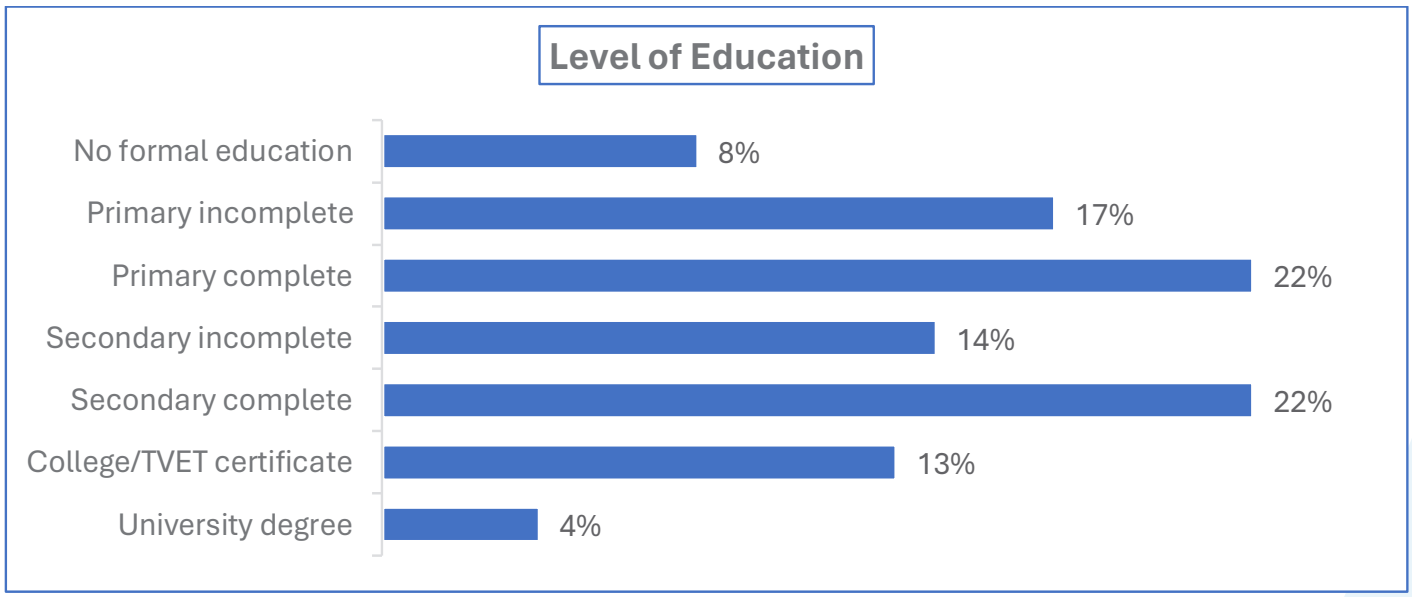
Figure 61: Parents' sample ages



Educational attainment among respondents varies considerably. Overall, 8% have no formal education, with the highest proportions in Baringo (27%) and West Pokot (21%). Seventeen percent have incomplete primary education, while 22% completed primary school. Secondary school completion is reported by 22% of respondents, with Nandi (42%) and Bomet (40%) showing higher levels. College or TVET certificates are held by 13% of respondents, particularly in Samburu (25%), and only 4% hold university degrees, with Nandi having the highest proportion at 18%. These differences reflect disparities in access to formal education across counties.

Household sizes average 6.15 members but vary across counties, with Samburu having the largest households (7.75 members) and Kitui the smallest (4.86). Households typically include 0.75 children under five years, 1.23 children aged 6 -12 years, 1.58 children aged 13 -18 years, 2.39 adults aged 19–59 years, and 0.21 elderly members aged 60 and above. Samburu households are relatively larger, with more young children and learners compared to other counties.

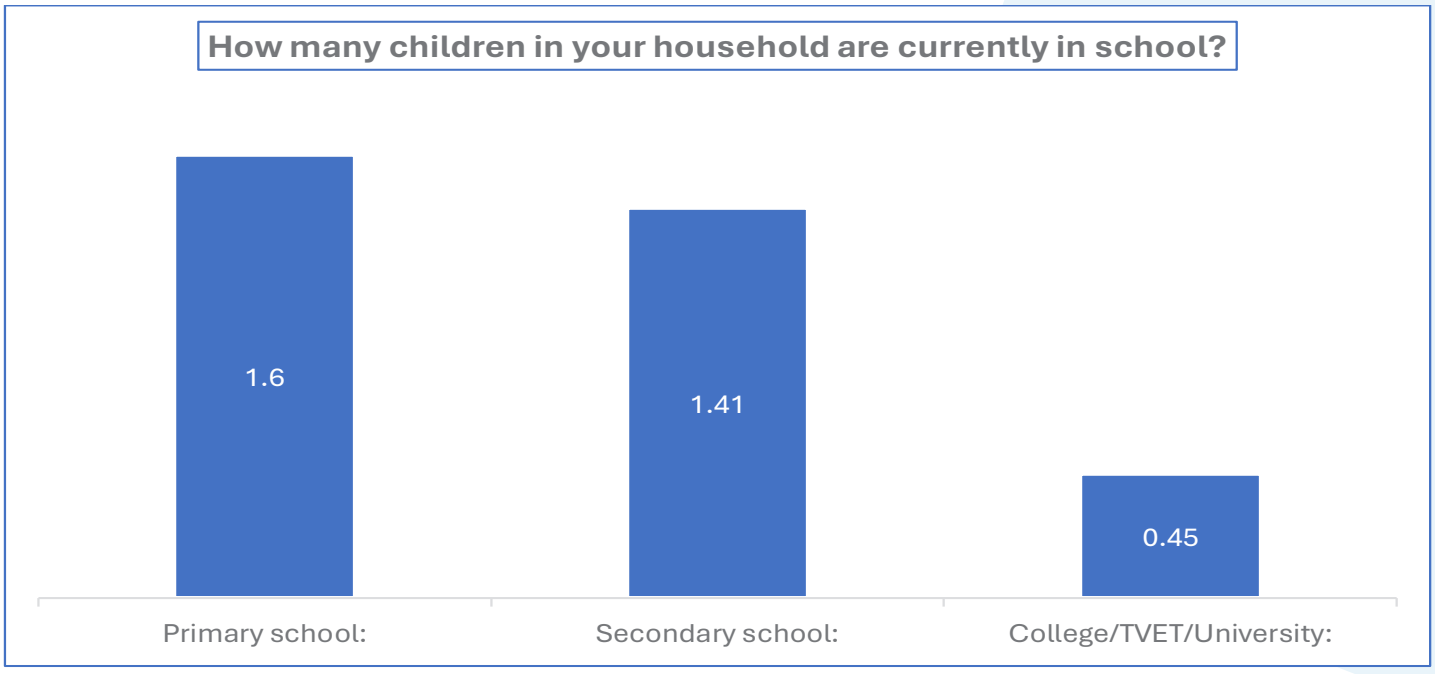
Figure 62: Parents' level of education



School Enrollment

Regarding school enrollment, households have an average of 1.6 children in primary school, 1.41 in secondary school, and 0.45 in tertiary education (college, TVET, or university). Samburu has the highest average of primary school children (2.75), whereas Kitui has fewer (1.29). Secondary school participation is notably lower in Samburu (0.89) and higher in Baringo (1.91). The survey also examined the presence of vulnerable household members. Orphans are present in 19% of households, with the highest prevalence in Turkana (41%), Bungoma (32%), and Homabay (37%), while Samburu and West Pokot report none. Children with disabilities are found in 5% of households, most commonly in Bungoma and Nandi (9%). Elderly dependents aged 60 and above are present in 14% of households, particularly in West Pokot (32%) and Bomet (21%). Chronically ill members are found in 11% of households, with the highest proportions in Nandi (21%), Homabay (19%), and Bomet (14%). These figures indicate that certain counties face higher burdens of household vulnerability, highlighting the need for targeted support for families with orphans, elderly dependents, and members with disabilities or chronic illnesses.

Figure 63: How many children in your household are currently in school?



Overall, the data show that caregivers are predominantly middle-aged parents with varying educational backgrounds, managing moderately large households. County-level differences in household composition, caregiver characteristics, and the presence of vulnerable members suggest that interventions and support programs should be tailored to local contexts to address disparities and ensure equitable support for learners.

Household Characteristics and Living Conditions

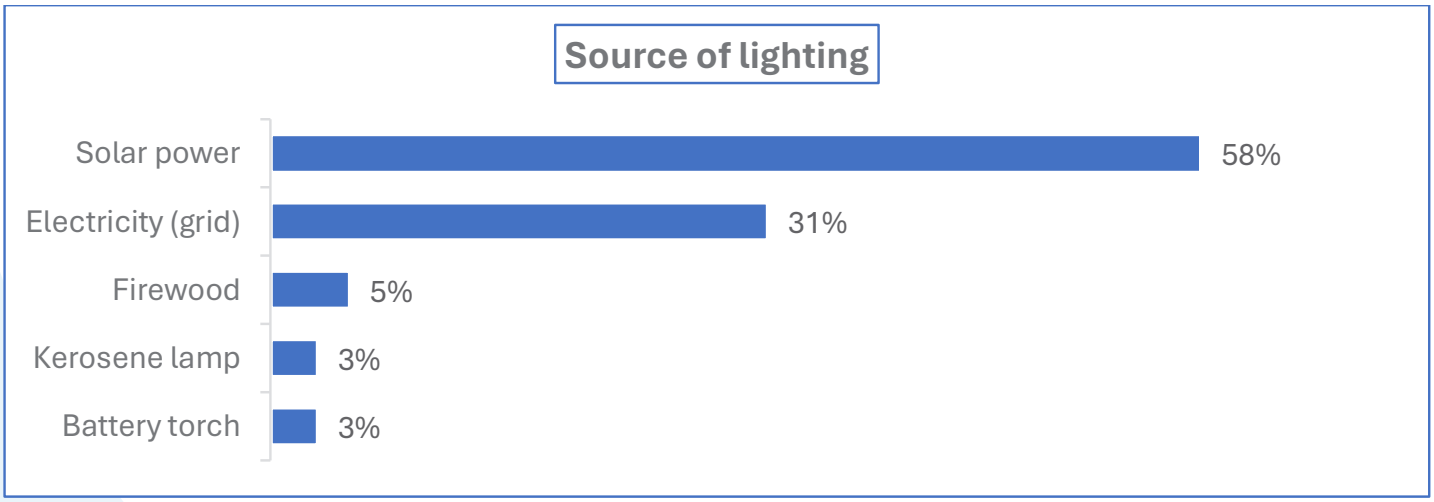
The survey captured data from 209 parents or guardians across 10 counties, revealing diverse housing, energy, and asset profiles. Regarding house wall materials, about one-third (33%) of households live in houses made of mud or earth with cement, while 28% live in mud/earth without cement. Stone or brick with cement walls were reported in 21% of households, and wood/timber and iron sheets constituted 8% and 10%, respectively. County-level variation is notable: Kitui and Bungoma have higher proportions of cement-stabilized mud walls (42% and 48%), while Turkana and Nandi show significant reliance on mud walls without cement (55% and 50%). Samburu has the highest proportion of stone/brick walls (42%), reflecting regional differences in construction resources and practices. Roofing materials are overwhelmingly dominated by iron sheets (88%), with grass/thatch at 11% and concrete at 1%. Counties such as Bungoma, Nandi, Homabay, Kitui, and Samburu report 100% use of iron sheet roofing, while Turkana and Kajiado display more variation, including grass/thatch (36% and 29%, respectively).

In terms of household assets, radios (75%) and basic phones (83%) are the most common, while smartphones are owned by 52% of households. Television ownership is moderate at 36%, and bicycles, motorcycles, and cars/trucks remain less common. Land for farming is widespread (66%), and livestock ownership is reported by 57% of households, highlighting the continued reliance on subsistence and pastoral livelihoods.

Energy, Water, and Sanitation

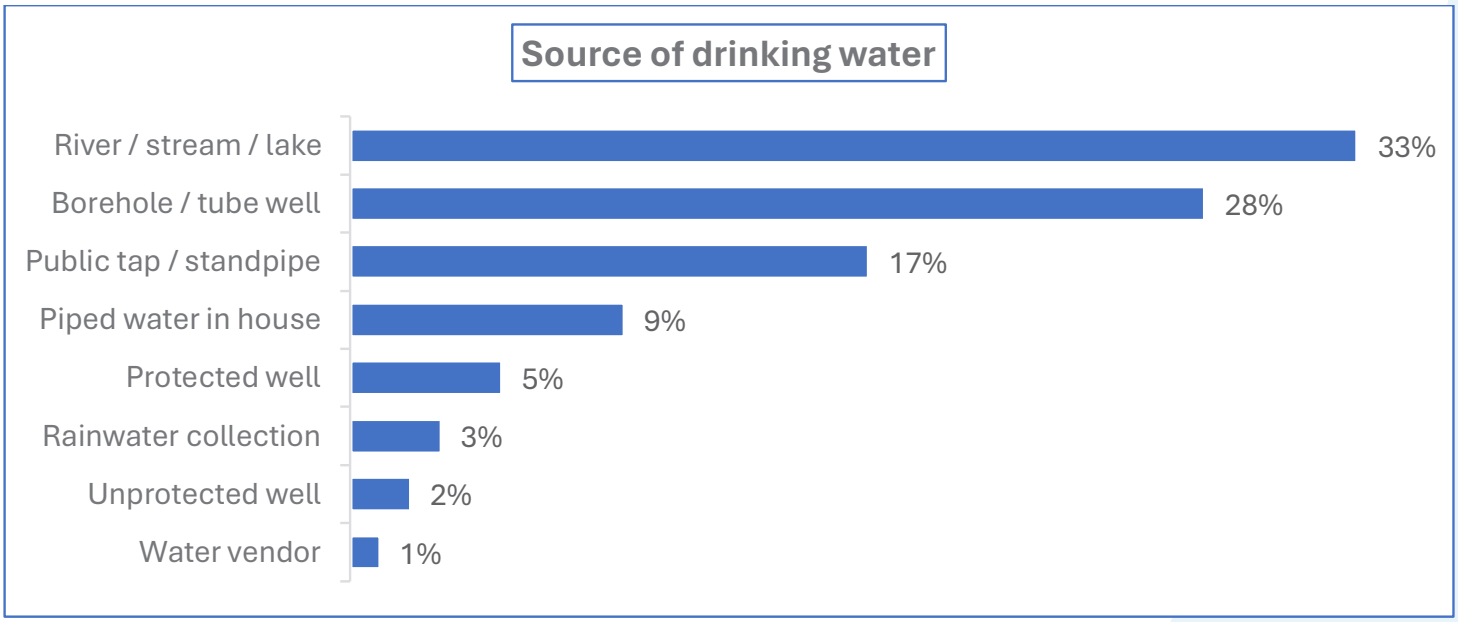
Lighting sources indicate a heavy reliance on solar power (58%), with grid electricity used by 31% of households. County-level differences are pronounced with Homabay and Samburu showing 100% solar usage, while Bomet (55%) and West Pokot (53%) lean more on electricity. Kerosene lamps, battery torches, and firewood are minimal. Cooking fuel is predominantly firewood (72%), followed by charcoal (22%) and LPG/electricity (<5%). Counties such as West Pokot (95%) and Samburu (79%) heavily depend on firewood, reflecting energy access challenges and environmental pressures.

Figure 64: Household source of lighting



Access to drinking water varies significantly. Rivers, streams, or lakes serve as the primary source for 33% of households, boreholes/tube wells for 28%, and public taps/standpipes for 17%. Piped water in the house is available to only 9% of households. The time taken to fetch water highlights the daily burden where 44% spend less than 30 minutes, while 4% spend more than two hours, and only 21% have water on premises. Sanitation facilities remain limited, with pit latrines with slabs (46%) and without slabs (44%) dominating. Only 1% of households have flush toilets, and 6% rely on open defecation or bush/field access, indicating gaps in hygiene infrastructure.

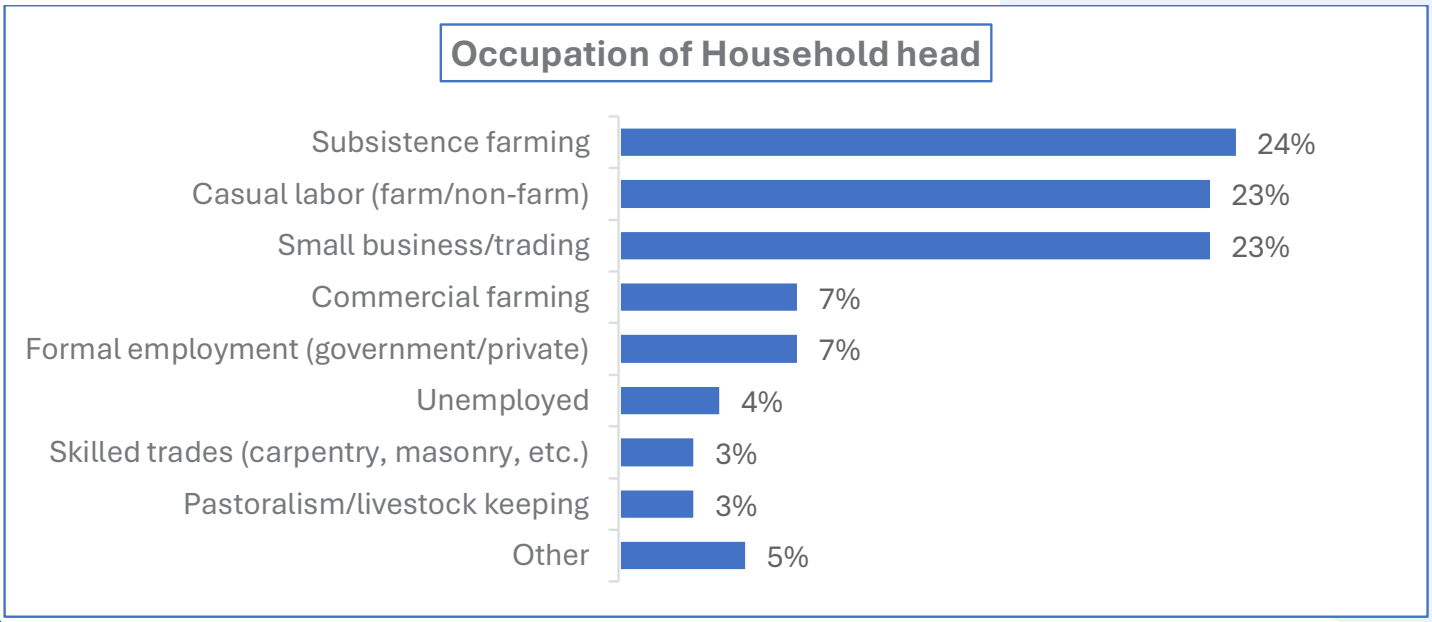
Figure 65: Source of drinking water



Household Economy

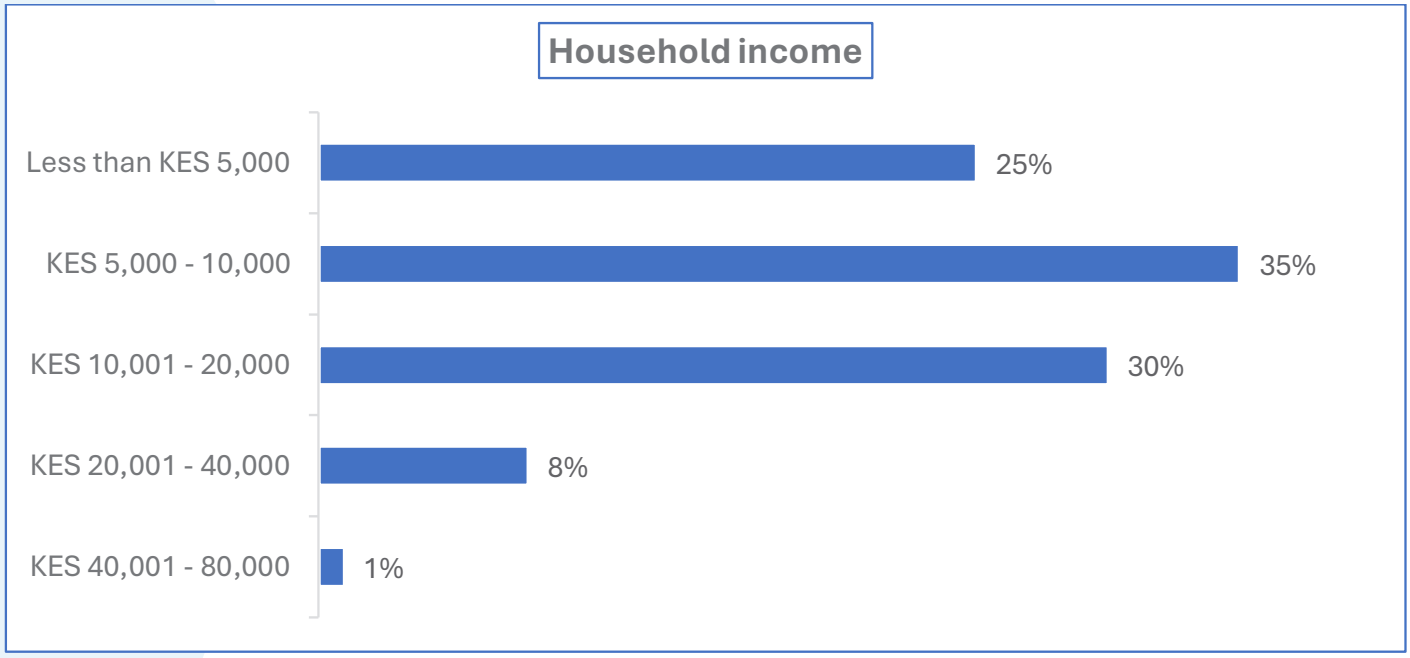
The main occupations of household heads are diverse and they included subsistence farming (24%), casual labor (23%), and small business/trading (23%) dominate, while formal employment is limited (7%). County differences are clear, with Bomet (52%) and West Pokot (42%) largely engaged in subsistence farming, Samburu relies more on casual labor (37%), and Bungoma leans toward small business (45%).

Figure 66: Occupation of Household head



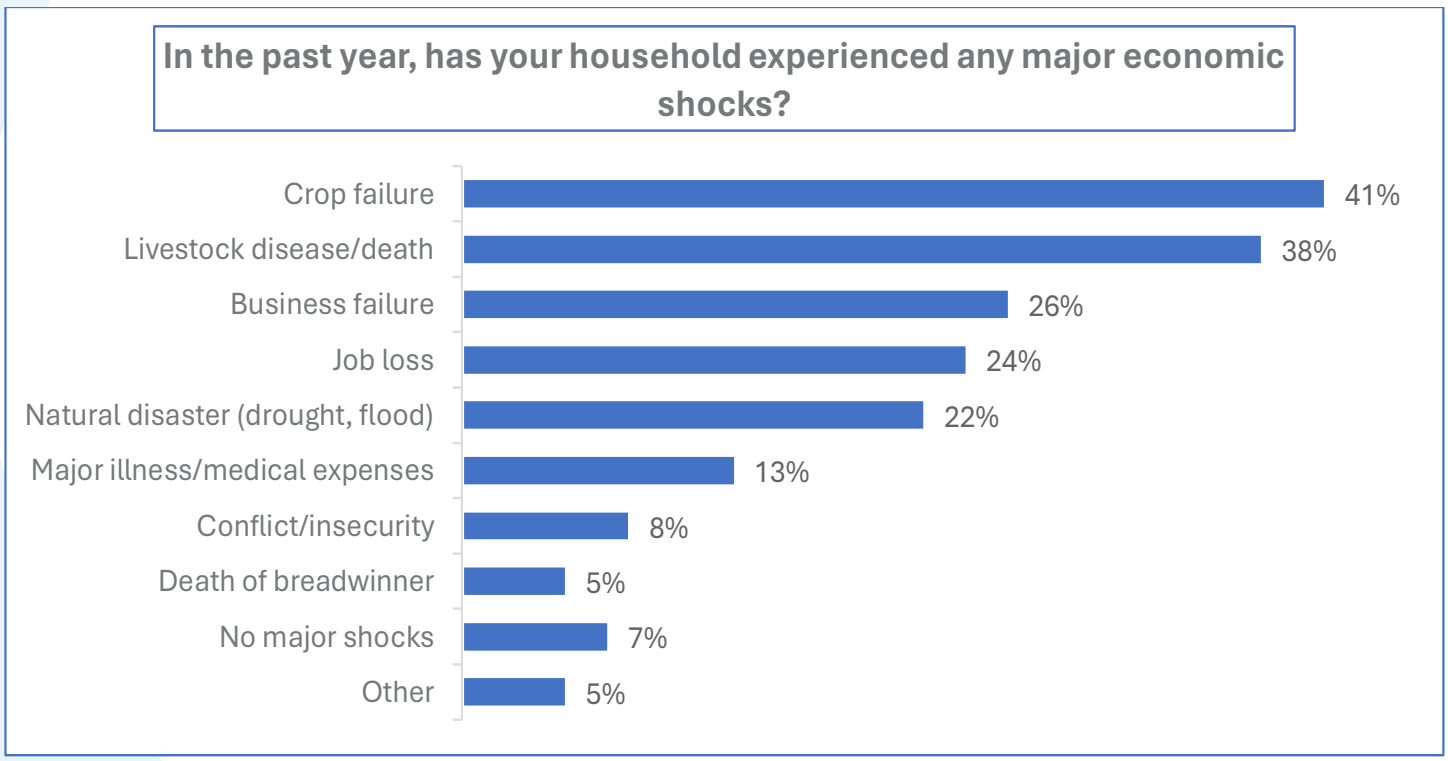
Average monthly household income remains low, with 25% earning less than KES 5,000 and 35% earning between KES 5,000-10,000. Only 8% earn KES 20,001-40,000, and very few households surpass KES 40,000.

Figure 67: Household income



Economic shocks are widespread. Crop failure (41%), livestock disease/death (38%), and job loss (24%) are the most commonly reported, affecting households' resilience. Counties such as Bungoma, Samburu, and West Pokot report high incidences of crop failure and livestock loss. Respondents reported that some of their coping strategies include reducing food consumption (49%), borrowing money (48%), seeking casual work (38%), and selling assets (24%). Children stopping school occurs in 11% of households as a last resort. Support from social networks is reported by 20%, while government or NGO assistance is minimal (7%).

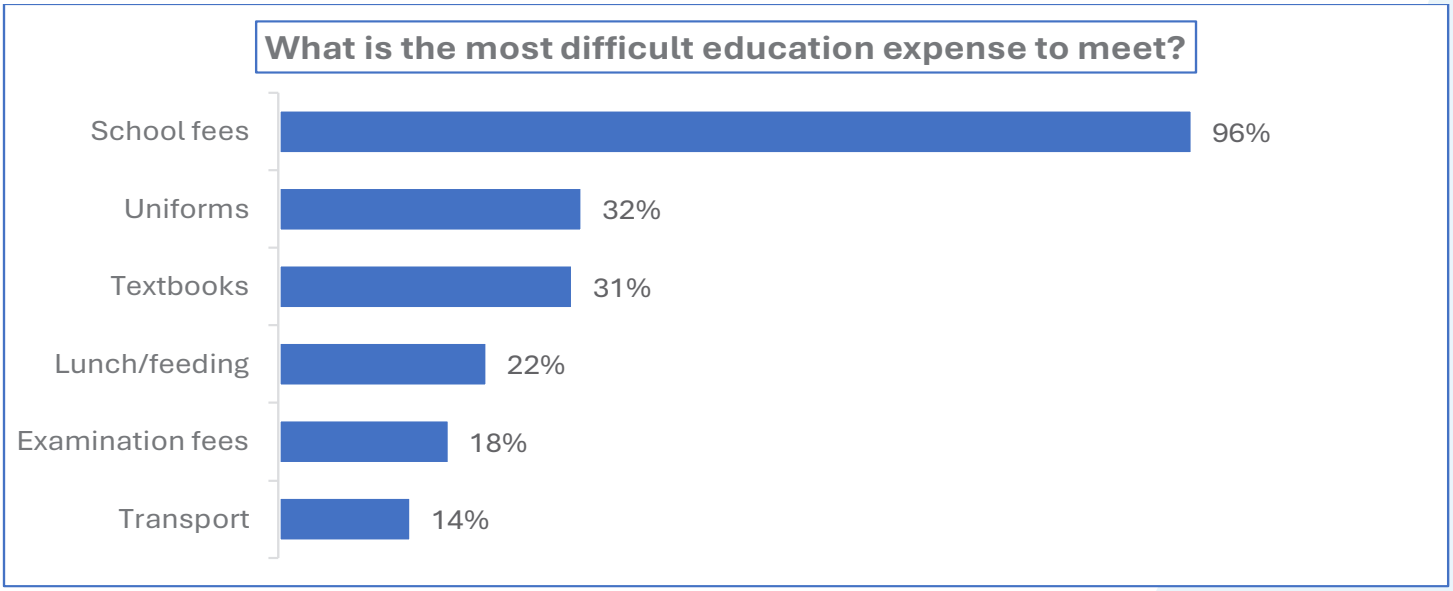
Figure 68: In the past year, has your household experienced any major economic shocks?



Education Financing and Expenditure

Annual school fees average KES 24,314, with the highest costs in Bomet (KES 49,971) and Baringo (KES 38,570), while the lowest are in Homabay (KES 11,508). Monthly education-related expenses, including transport, lunch, and materials, average KES 7,147, with Kajiado (KES 12,825) and West Pokot (KES 10,764) spending more, reflecting disparities in cost of education and living. The most challenging educational expense is overwhelmingly school fees (96%), followed by uniforms (32%) and textbooks (31%). Households finance education primarily through regular household income (50%), seasonal income (35%), borrowing from family/friends (34%), and scholarships or bursaries (36%). Only a minority (12%) save consistently for education, though 29% save when possible. Participation in savings groups is moderate (39%), with education expenses being the primary purpose for 58% of members.

Figure 69: What is the most difficult education expense to meet?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

The baseline findings reveal pronounced disparities in living conditions, access to essential services, household income, and education financing across the surveyed Kenyan counties. Housing predominantly features mud or earth walls paired with iron sheet roofs, though patterns vary notably by location. Energy access shows mixed progress, with solar solutions increasingly filling gaps left by limited grid electricity. Cooking relies heavily on firewood and charcoal, while clean water and sanitation remain constrained for many households. Livelihoods center on informal activities amid low-income levels, with frequent economic shocks compounding vulnerabilities. Education imposes a heavy financial strain, as school fees emerge as the most challenging expense, often met through coping strategies that undermine overall household well-being. These patterns emphasize the urgency of targeted interventions to enhance energy access, strengthen water and sanitation infrastructure, promote livelihood diversification, and ease education financing burdens.

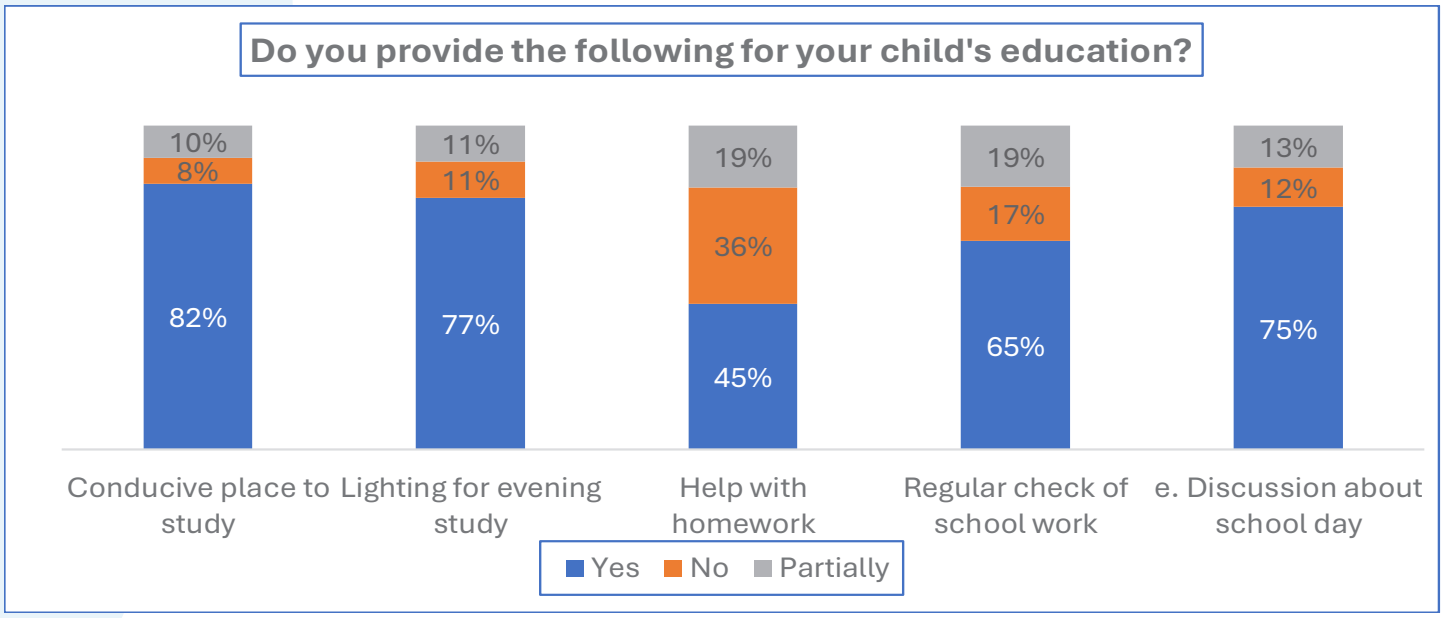
Parental Involvement in Children's Education

The survey explored parental involvement in children's education, focusing on the provision of learning support, communication with teachers, challenges faced, and perceptions of school facilities across ten counties.A majority of parents (82%) reported providing a conducive place for their children to study, though this varied across counties, with West Pokot and Kitui showing the highest support (90-100%) and Samburu the lowest at

68%. Adequate lighting for evening study was provided by 77% of parents overall, but there was notable variation: only 36% in Turkana reported providing lighting, compared to 95% in West Pokot.

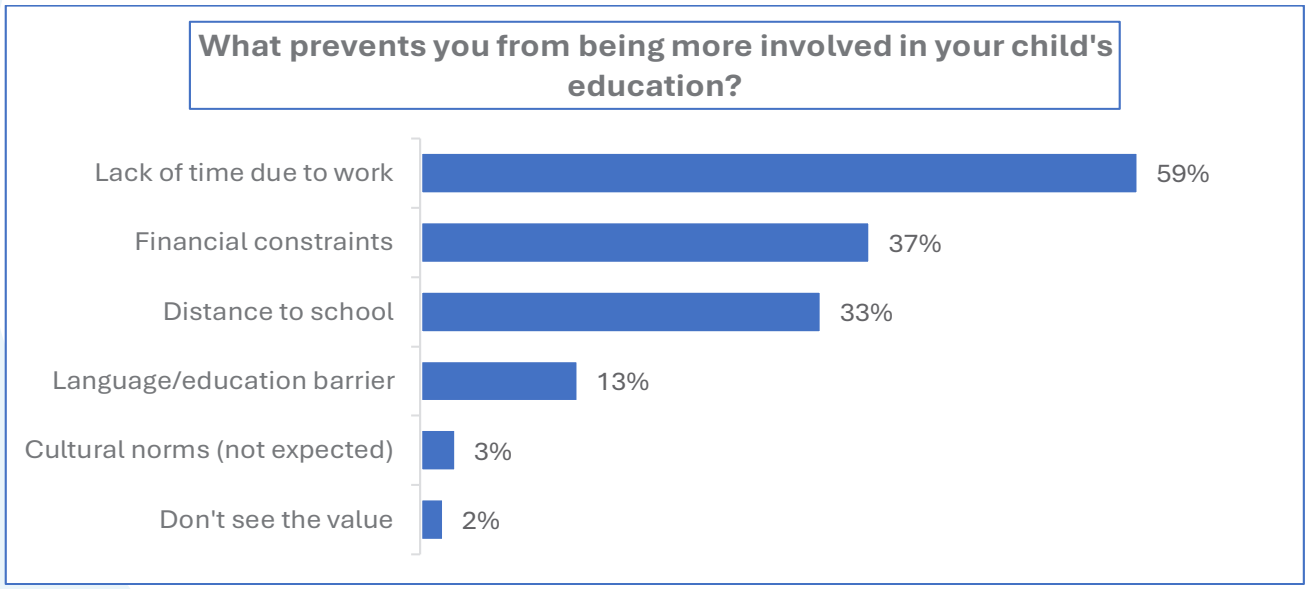
Assistance with homework was less consistently provided, with only 45% of parents reporting regular help. Counties such as Samburu (79%) and Kajiado (54%) reported higher support, whereas Bungoma (18%) and Bomet (23%) were much lower. Regular checking of schoolwork was reported by 65% of parents, with Homabay exceptionally high at 95%, and Nandi lower at 36%. Discussion about the child's school day was more common, with 75% of parents engaging in this practice, particularly high in Samburu (95%) and low in Nandi (55%). Communication patterns varied considerably. Overall, 44% of parents reported regular communication with teachers (monthly or more), while 37% communicated occasionally, and 17% only when there were problems. Notably, West Pokot had the highest rate of regular communication (95%), while Turkana and Bungoma were low at 14%.

Figure 70: Do you provide the following for your child's education?



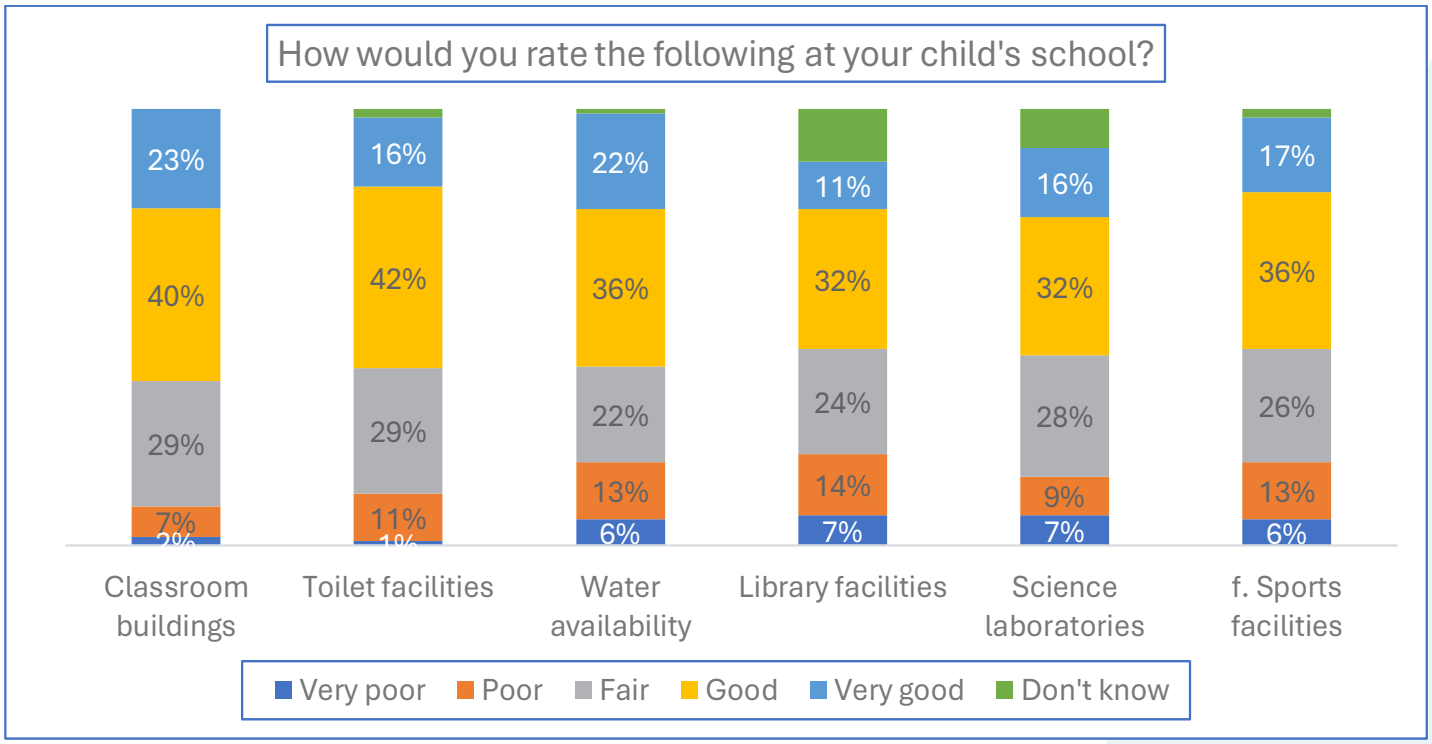
Parents reported multiple barriers to engagement. Lack of time due to work was the most frequently cited challenge (59% overall), followed by distance to school (33%) and financial constraints (37%). Language or education barriers were reported by 13% of parents, and cultural norms limiting involvement were less significant (3%). County-specific differences were evident; for instance, distance to school was a significant barrier in West Pokot (63%) and Homabay (59%), while financial constraints were highest in Kitui (71%).

Figure 71: What prevents you from being more involved in your child's education?



were generally rated positively, with 63% rating them as good or very good, though Turkana and Nandi had higher proportions reporting "fair" conditions. Toilet facilities were rated good or very good by 58%, but disparities existed: Samburu and Nandi reported poorer conditions. Water availability was more uneven, with 36% rating it as good and 22% as very good, but 19% rated it poor or very poor. Library and science laboratory facilities received lower ratings overall, with only 43% of parents rating libraries as good or very good and 48% rating science laboratories as good or very good. Sports facilities were perceived as moderate, with 53% rating them fair or good and wide variations across counties.

Figure 72: How would you rate the following at your child's school?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Overall, the findings suggest that while most parents are actively involved in providing a conducive learning environment and engaging with their children's education, significant gaps exist in homework support, regular schoolwork monitoring, and equitable access to resources such as lighting and school facilities. Barriers such as work commitments, distance, and financial constraints continue to limit parental engagement in some counties.

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

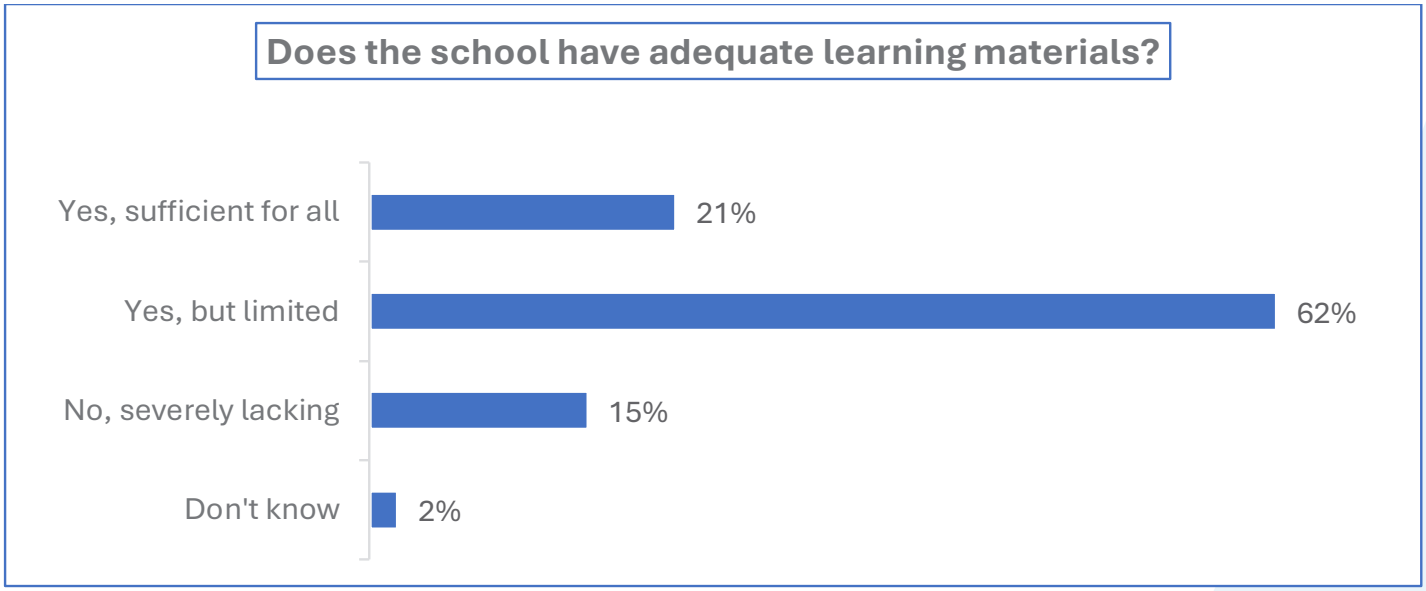
PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

PILLAR 1
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

School Resources, Teaching Quality, Safety, and Parent Perceptions

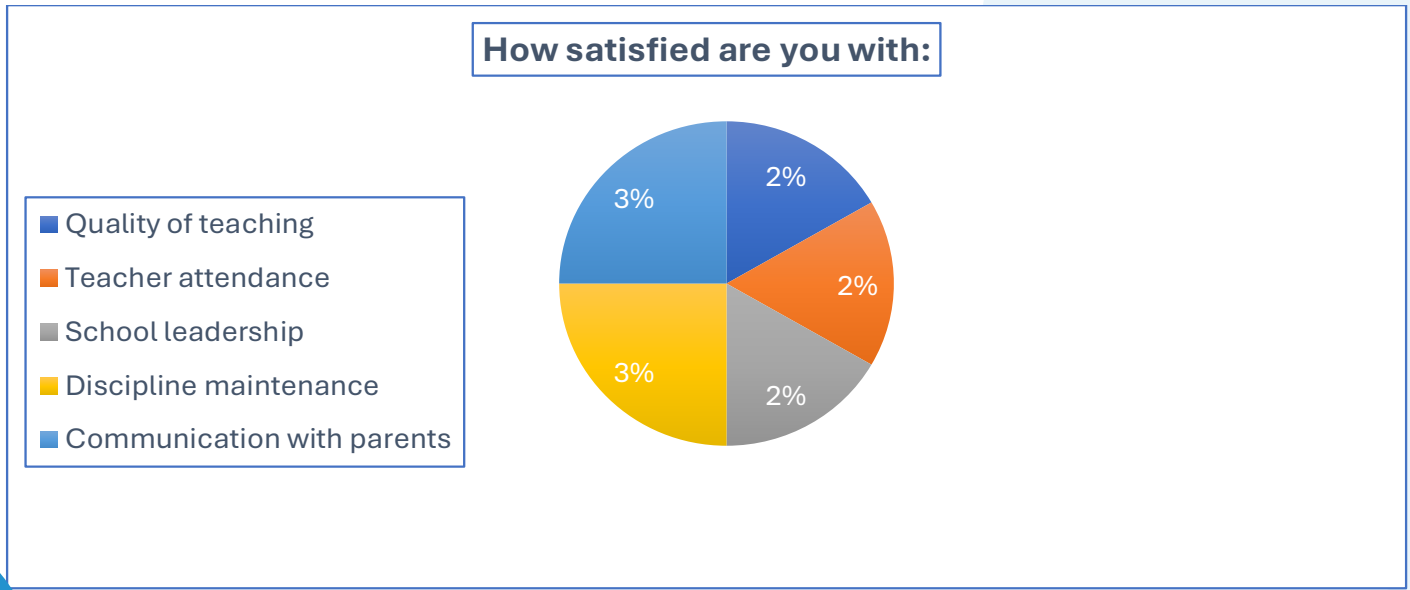
The majority of parents (62%) indicated that their schools have learning materials, though they are limited, while only 21% reported that materials are sufficient for all students. County-level variations were pronounced: West Pokot (74%), Kajiado (42%), and Baringo (27%) reported higher sufficiency, whereas Homabay, Kitui, and Nandi indicated either no or severely lacking materials. Notably, 15% of parents overall felt learning materials were severely inadequate, highlighting persistent gaps that may affect learning outcomes.

Figure 73: Does the school have adequate learning materials?



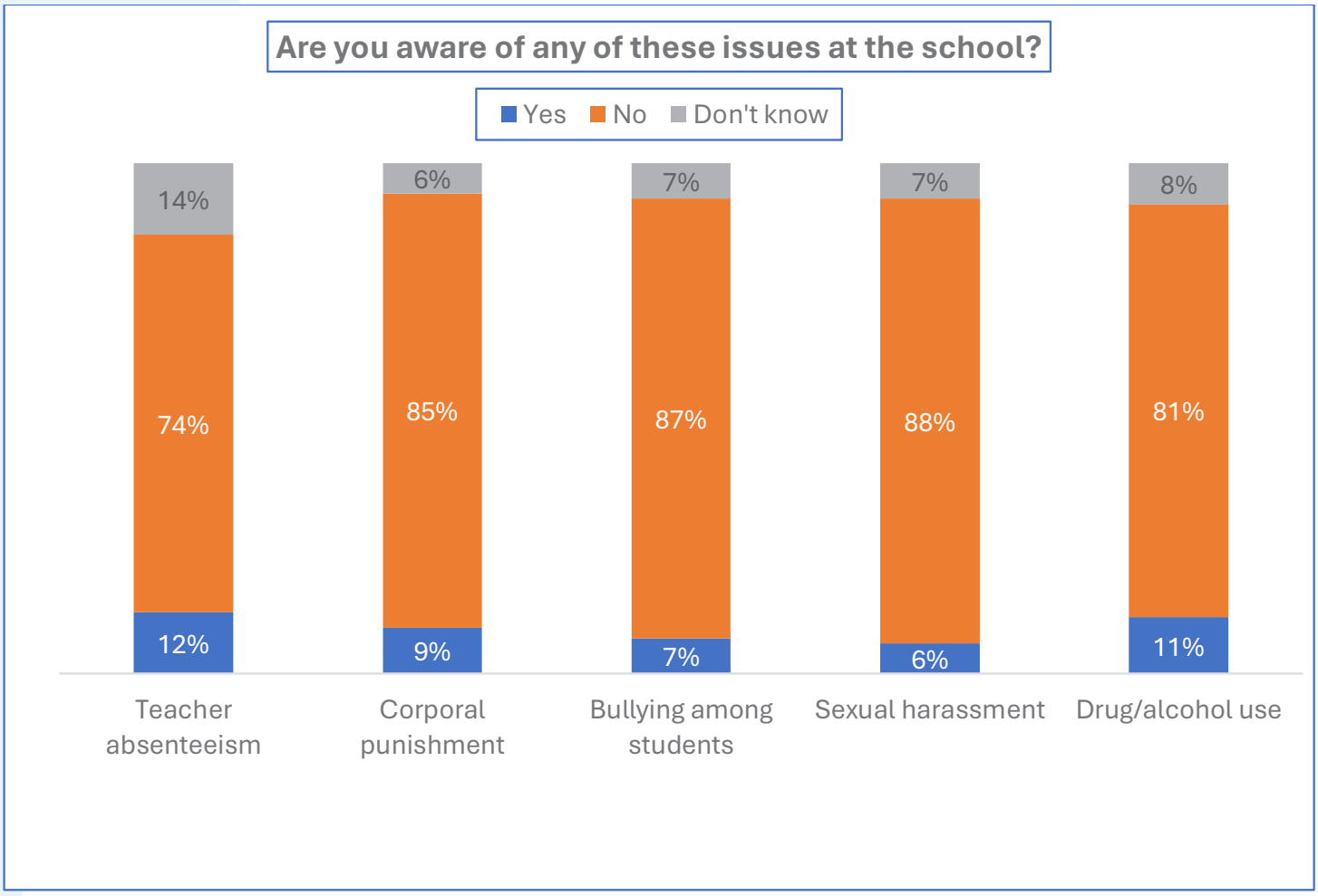
Overall, parental satisfaction with teaching quality was moderate to high. Forty-six percent were satisfied and 32% very satisfied, though 19% remained neutral. Counties like Turkana, Homabay, and Kitui reported higher satisfaction levels, whereas Kajiado and Bomet had more neutral responses, indicating room for improvement. Teacher attendance elicited similar trends, with 49% satisfied and 32% very satisfied overall, though absenteeism remained a concern in some counties, especially Samburu (10% very dissatisfied). School leadership was viewed positively by 48% (satisfied) and 34% (very satisfied) of parents, though dissatisfaction was notable in Samburu (19% very dissatisfied) and some counties reported higher neutrality, suggesting inconsistent perceptions of leadership effectiveness. Discipline maintenance received generally high satisfaction, with 45% of parents very satisfied and 37% satisfied, while communication with parents was rated highly by 41% very satisfied and 40% satisfied, though Turkana and Nandi indicated areas for improvement.

Figure 74: How satisfied are you with the following



Teacher absenteeism, corporal punishment, bullying, sexual harassment, and substance use were reported by relatively few parents. For instance, only 12% were aware of teacher absenteeism, 9% of corporal punishment, 7% of bullying, 6% of sexual harassment, and 11% of drug/alcohol use. Most parents responded "No" to these issues, though county-level variations exist. Homabay, Kitui, and Baringo reported slightly higher awareness of corporal punishment and bullying, indicating localized concerns.

Figure 75: Are you aware of any of these issues at the school?



On child safety, parents generally felt their children were safe at school, during school activities, and while going to and from school. Overall, 63% reported their children were very safe at school, 34% safe during activities, and 46% safe commuting. However, safety perceptions varied by county: in Turkana and Nandi, fewer parents reported their children as very safe, while Samburu, Kajiado, and Bomet consistently reported higher safety levels. Safety concerns identified by parents included peer pressure and negative influence (54%), road accidents (32%), physical assault (27%), sexual harassment (21%), wild animals (10%), and kidnapping/abduction (7%). Peer pressure and negative influence were consistently reported as the highest risk across nearly all counties, highlighting the social dimension of student vulnerability.

In terms of systems for reporting abuse or safety concerns, just over a third of parents (36%) reported that their school has a reporting system and they know how to use it, while 25% indicated a system exists but they do not know how to use it. Twenty-one percent reported no reporting system, and 18% did not know whether a system existed. Counties such as Samburu (74%) and Kajiado (62%) had higher awareness of functional systems, whereas Homabay (62% reporting no or unknown system) indicated gaps in reporting mechanisms, pointing to uneven protection measures across counties.

Figure 76: How safe do you feel your child is in the following places

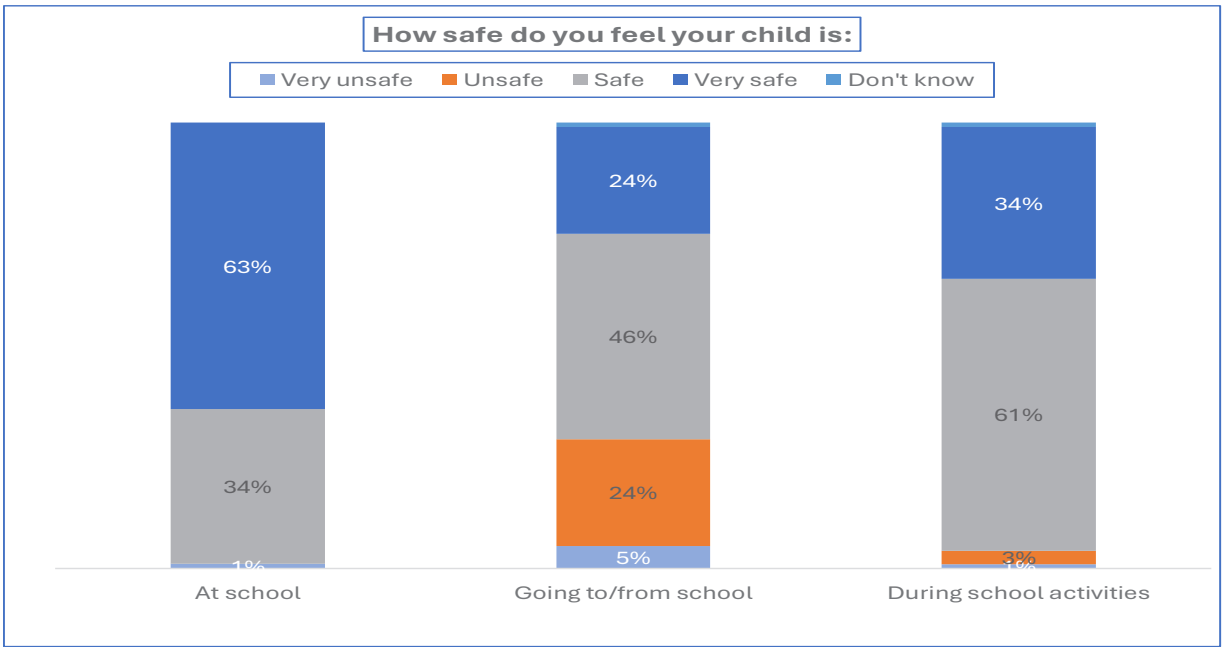
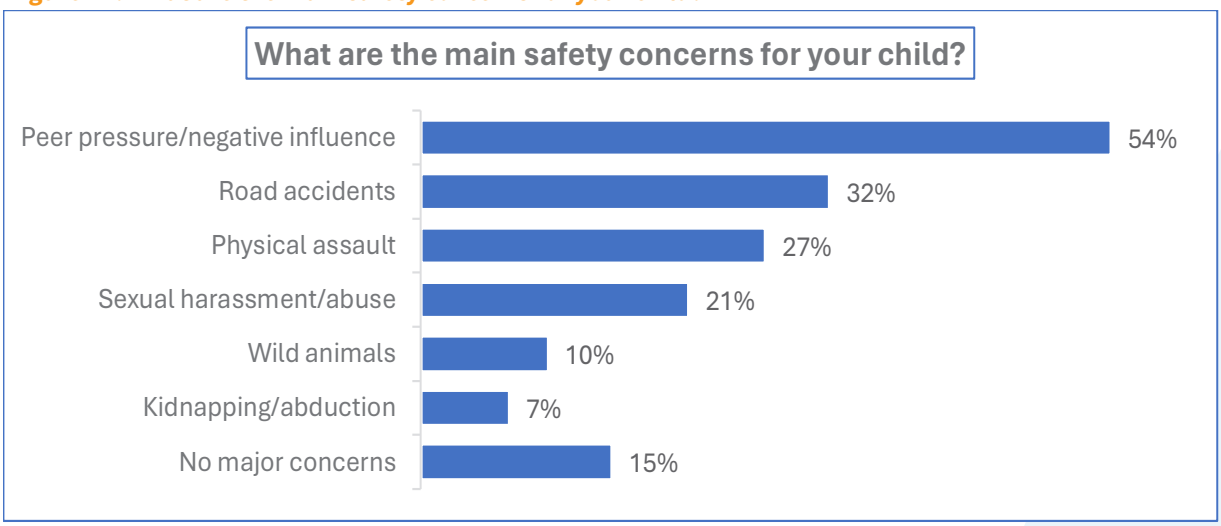


Figure 77: What are the main safety concerns for your child?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

The findings highlight that while most schools have some learning materials, resources are often limited, and perceptions of teaching quality and school leadership are mixed. Parents generally feel their children are safe at school, but peer pressure, road accidents, and social risks remain key concerns. Awareness of school issues such as absenteeism, corporal punishment, and bullying is relatively low, suggesting limited parental engagement or communication on these matters. Systems for reporting safety concerns exist in some schools but are inconsistently known or used. These results underscore the need for strengthening school resources, enhancing teacher and leadership effectiveness, improving safety measures, and building parent-school communication mechanisms to support child well-being and learning outcomes.

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

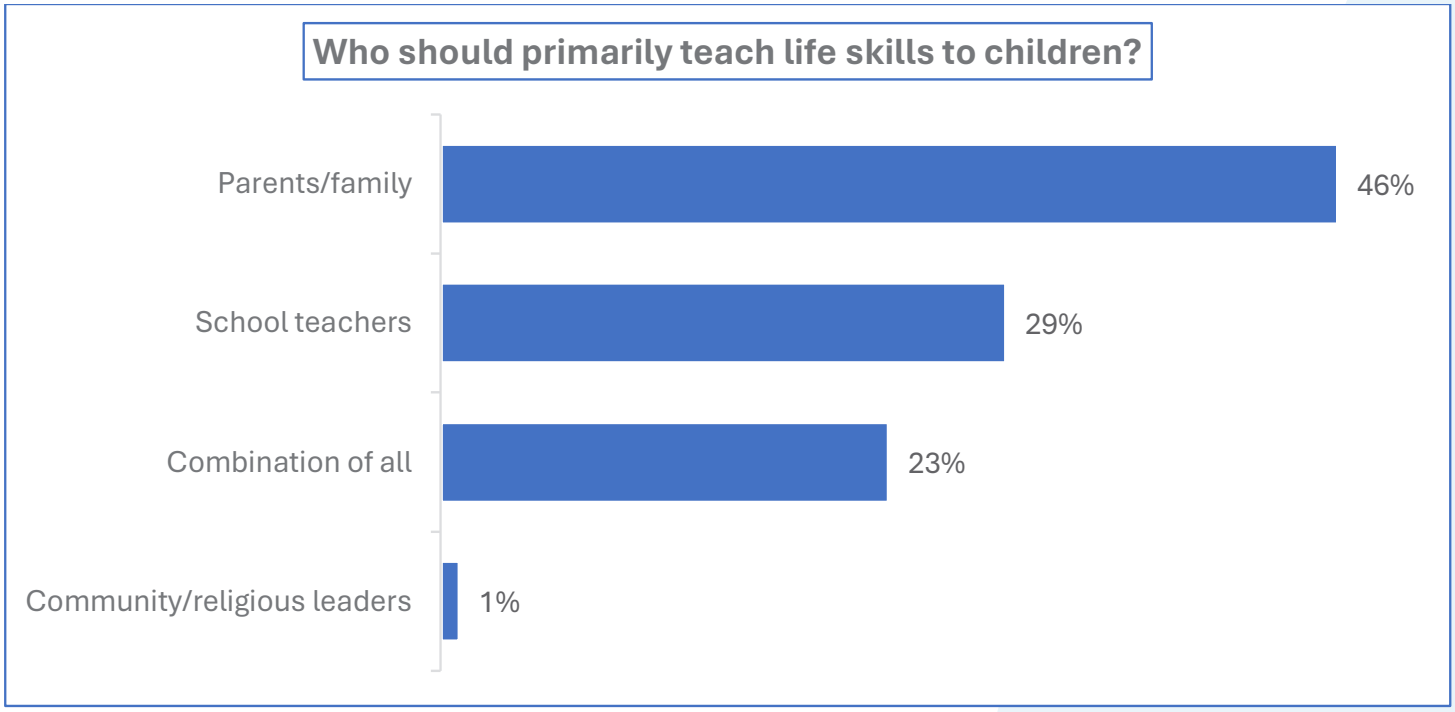
PILLAR 2

PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING AND LIFE SKILLS

Parents across the surveyed counties demonstrate strong recognition of the importance of life skills in shaping their children's future. Overall, academic knowledge, critical thinking, communication, and emotional management are highly valued, with more than half of respondents rating these skills as "very important." For example, 52% of parents considered academic knowledge very important, while 58% prioritized communication skills and 44% valued critical thinking. Financial literacy and digital skills were also deemed essential, though slightly less universally, with 45% and 51% of parents, respectively, rating them as very important. Skills related to entrepreneurship, leadership, conflict resolution, and cultural values showed considerable variation across counties, reflecting differences in local priorities and socio-cultural contexts.

Parents believe that the primary responsibility for teaching life skills should rest with the family (46%), while schools (29%) and a combination of family, school, and community actors (23%) also play key roles. County-level differences highlight that in some areas, such as Turkana and Bungoma, schools are considered more central, whereas in Kitui and West Pokot, families are seen as the main instructors.

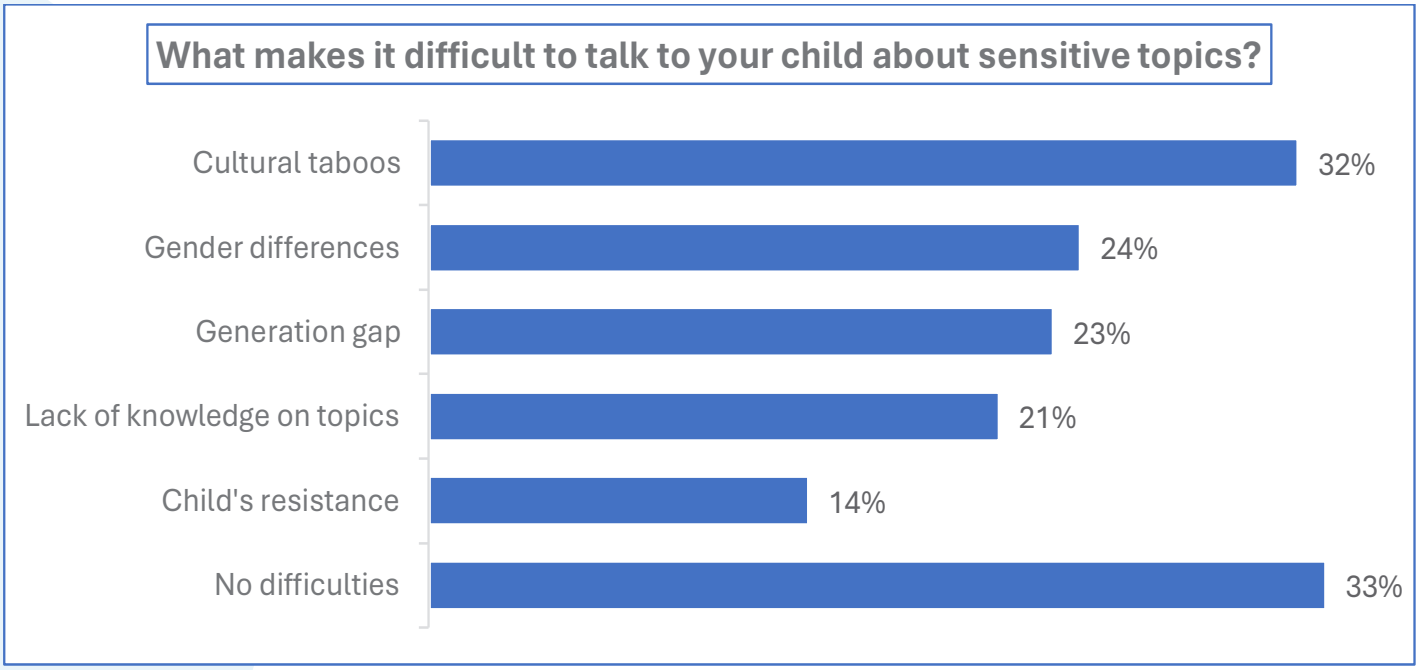
Figure 78: Who should primarily teach life skills to children?



When it comes to children's daily experiences and well-being, parents report that challenges are common, with 41% of children facing difficulties very often and 31% often. In Turkana, 77% of children very often encounter challenges, while in counties like Kajiado and Samburu, frequent challenges affect over half of children. Discussions about sex and sexuality remain sensitive, constrained by cultural taboos (32%) and generational gaps (23%). Despite these barriers, 30% of parents sometimes discuss sexuality, and 25% do so very often, though some counties such as West Pokot continue to show high sensitivity.

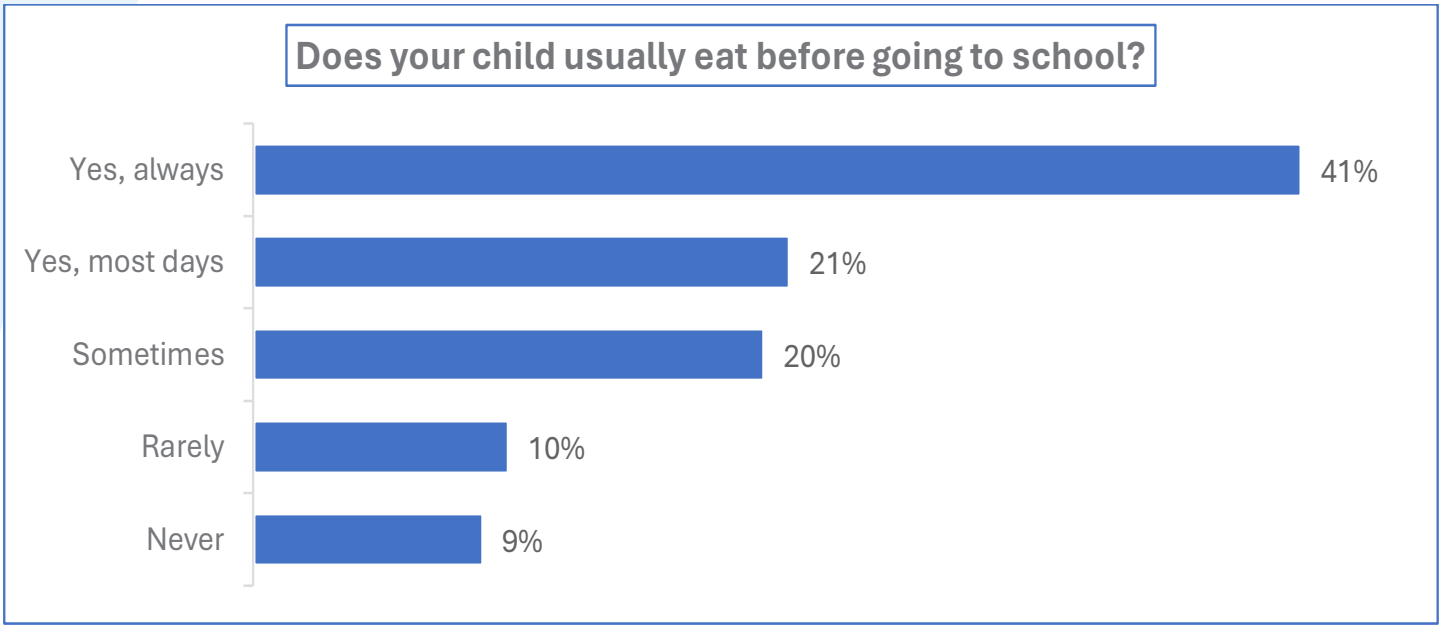
Parental involvement in family decision-making is moderately high, with 37% of children actively consulted and 44% somewhat involved. Limited or no involvement is reported for 19% of children, with counties like Bomet and Baringo showing high levels of active participation, while Homabay reports lower engagement. Parents generally support age-appropriate autonomy, expecting children to choose friends and clothing around age 16, manage money by 18, decide career paths by 16–17, and choose marriage partners by their early twenties.

Figure 79: What makes it difficult to talk to your child about sensitive topics?



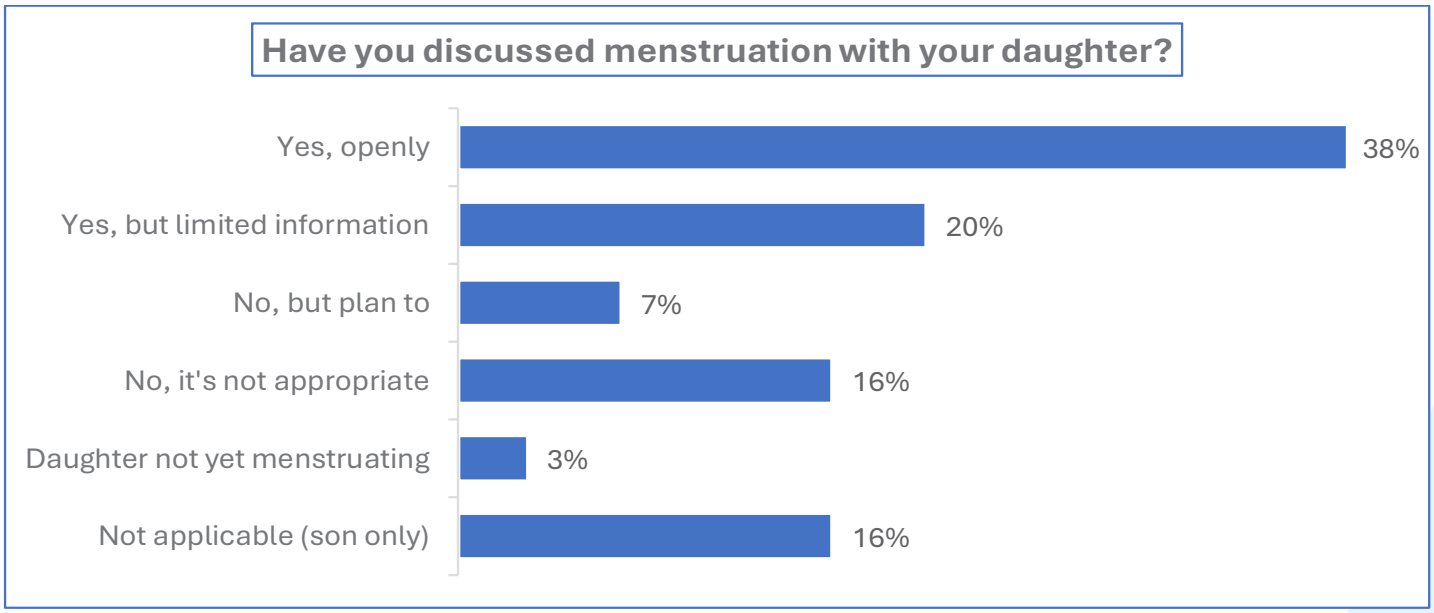
Child health and nutrition are generally positive, with 87% of children reported in good or excellent health. A small proportion (4%) have chronic conditions, more common in Samburu and West Pokot. Nutrition patterns indicate that 52% of children consume three meals a day, while 33% have only two. Most children (62%) eat before school regularly, though gaps exist in counties like Turkana and Homabay, indicating areas for targeted interventions.

Figure 80: Does your child usually eat before going to school?



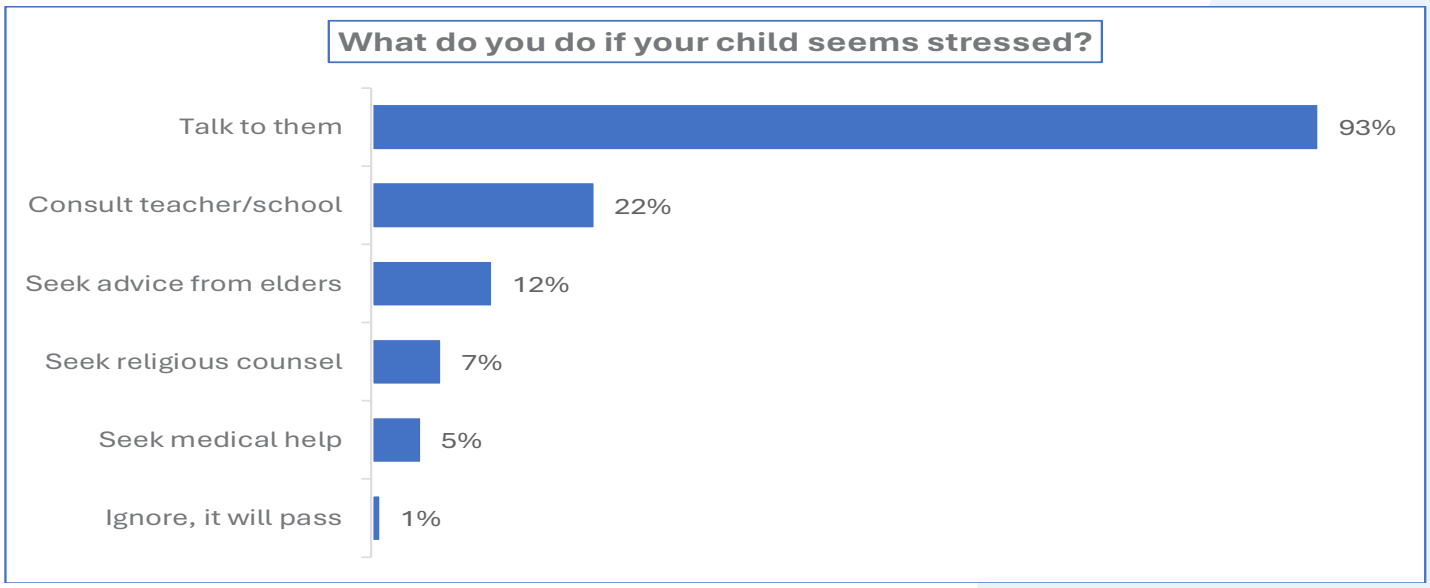
Menstrual health management shows progress, with 38% of parents openly discussing menstruation and 56% providing commercial pads. Attendance during menstruation remains high, with 66% of girls always attending school, although 22% attend depending on how they feel. Counties such as Bomet and West Pokot demonstrate higher consistent attendance, while Turkana and Homabay face more challenges due to restrictions or cultural discomfort.

Figure 81: Have you discussed menstruation with your daughter?



Regarding emotional well-being, only 12% of parents observed concerning behavioral changes, and the majority actively support children experiencing stress by talking to them (93%). Other support avenues include consulting teachers (22%), elders (12%), religious counsel (7%), or medical professionals (5%). This reflects strong parental engagement in providing both practical and emotional support, though access to professional guidance is limited.

Figure 82: What do you do if your child seems stressed?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Overall, the findings underscore the critical role of parents and families in promoting life skills, supporting health and well-being, and fostering autonomy. While parents value education and essential skills highly, children face challenges shaped by cultural, social, and regional factors. Targeted interventions that enhance life skills instruction, improve communication on sensitive topics, and strengthen nutrition and emotional support systems could further empower children to navigate adolescence successfully and prepare for their future.

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

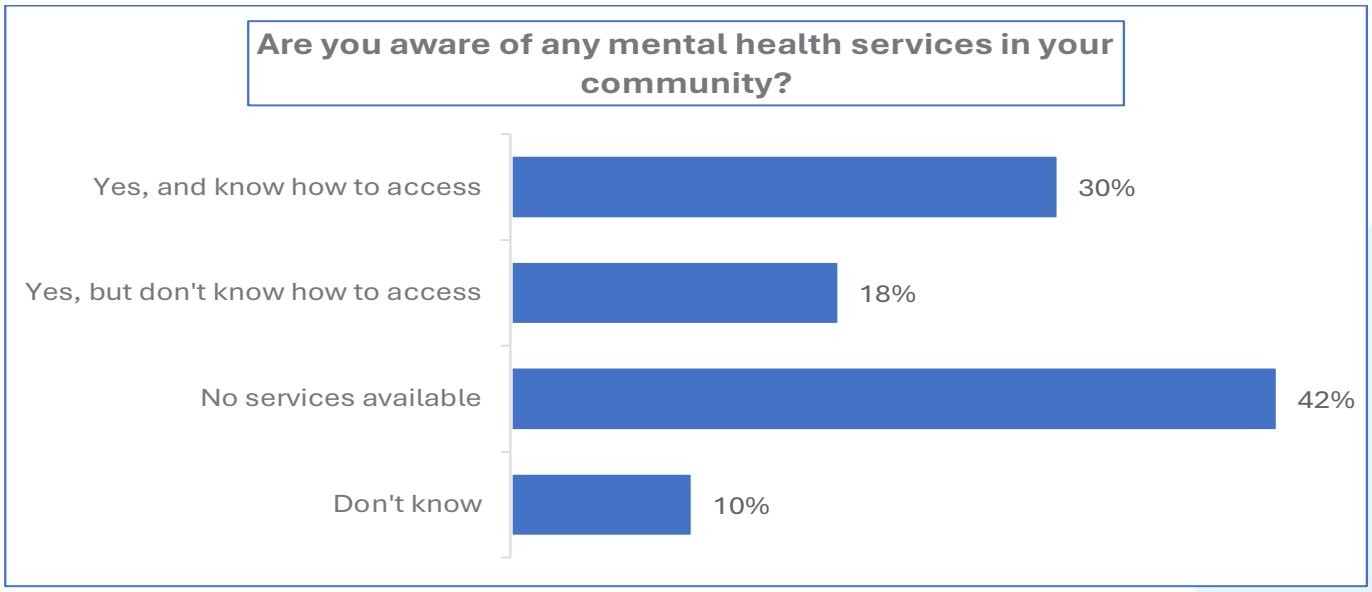
PILLAR 3

SAFETY AND PROTECTION

Awareness and Access to Mental Health Services

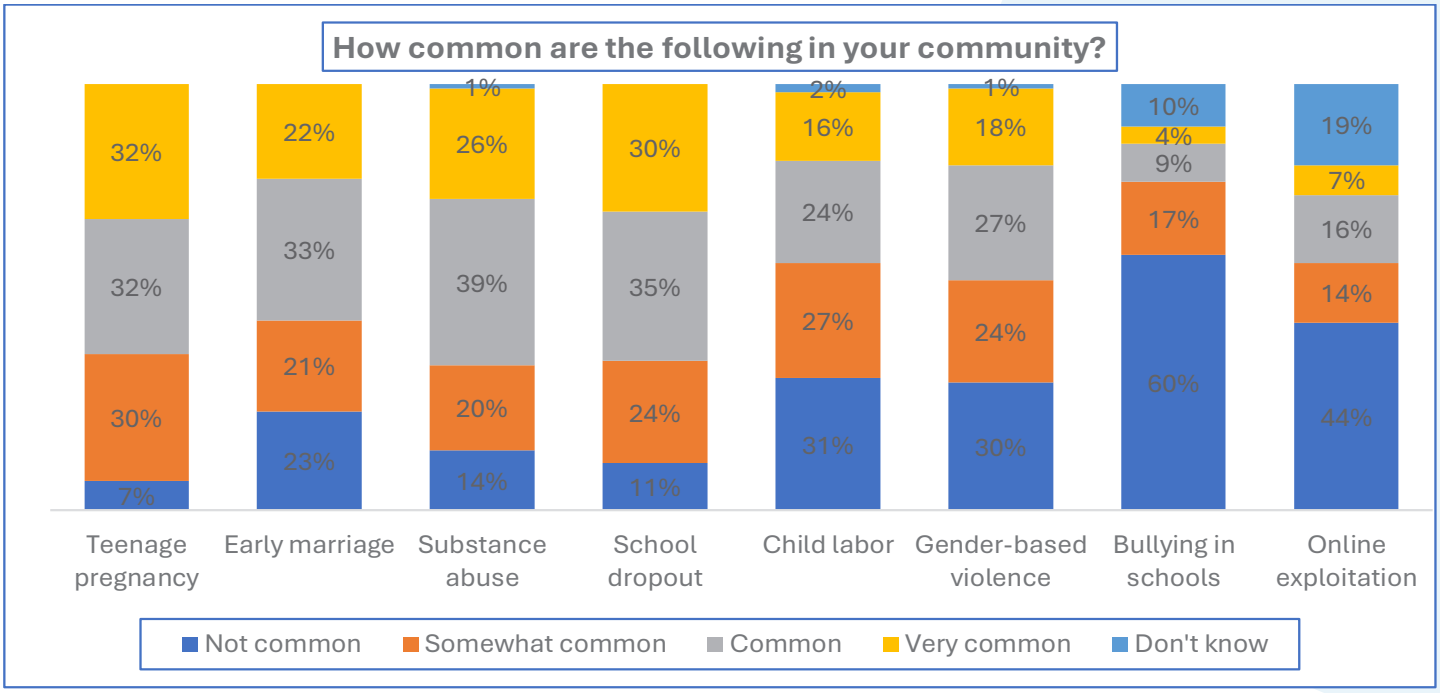
Awareness of mental health services remains limited across communities, with only 30% of parents knowing about available services and how to access them, while 18% are aware but uncertain of access pathways. A substantial 42% report no services exist locally, and 10% are unaware of their presence. County variations are observed with Samburu (68%) and Bomet (60%) showing stronger access knowledge, contrasting sharply with Turkana (0%) and Homa Bay (9%), signaling critical gaps in mental health infrastructure, especially in marginalized areas.

Figure 83: Are you aware of any mental health services in your community?



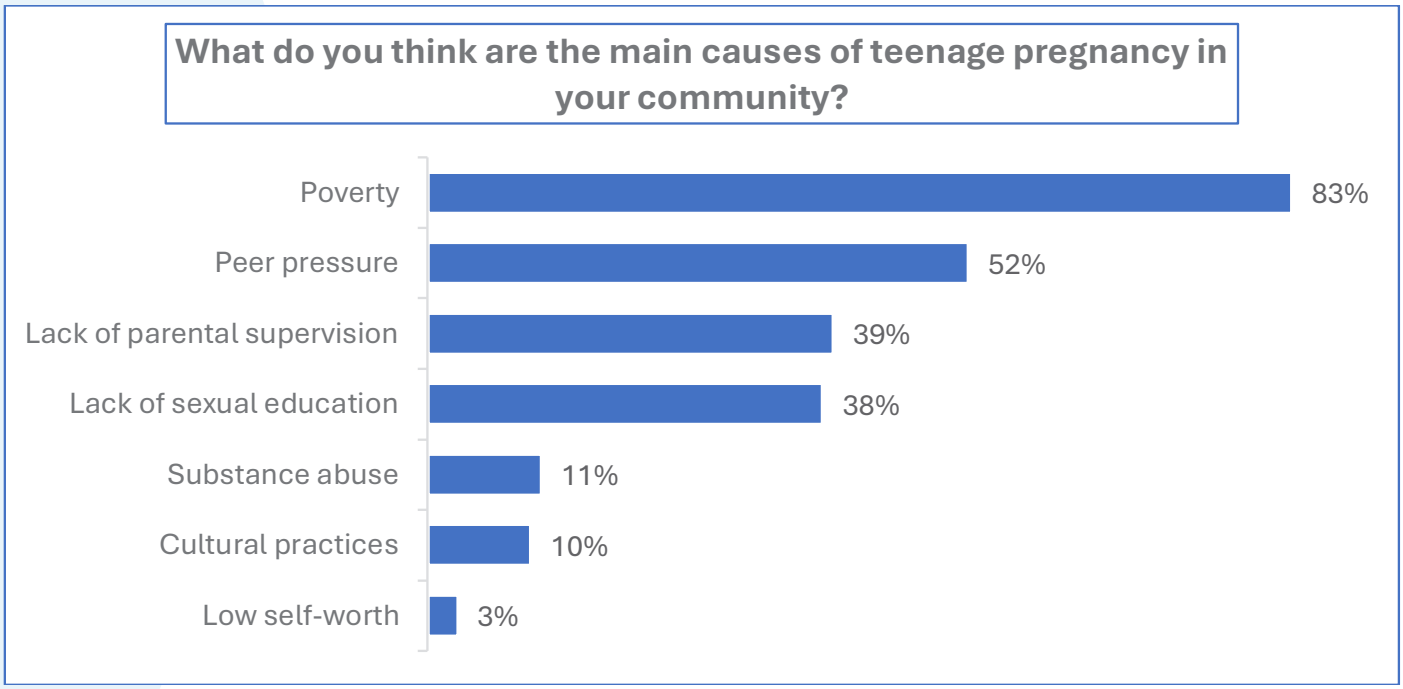
Parents identify several pressing social challenges in their communities. Teenage pregnancy ranks high, perceived as common or very common by 64%, closely followed by early marriage (55%), substance abuse (65%), and school dropout (65%). Child labor (40%) and gender-based violence (45%) also concern many, while school bullying and online exploitation appear less prevalent though 19% lack visibility into online risks, indicating awareness deficits.

Figure 84: How common are the following in your community?



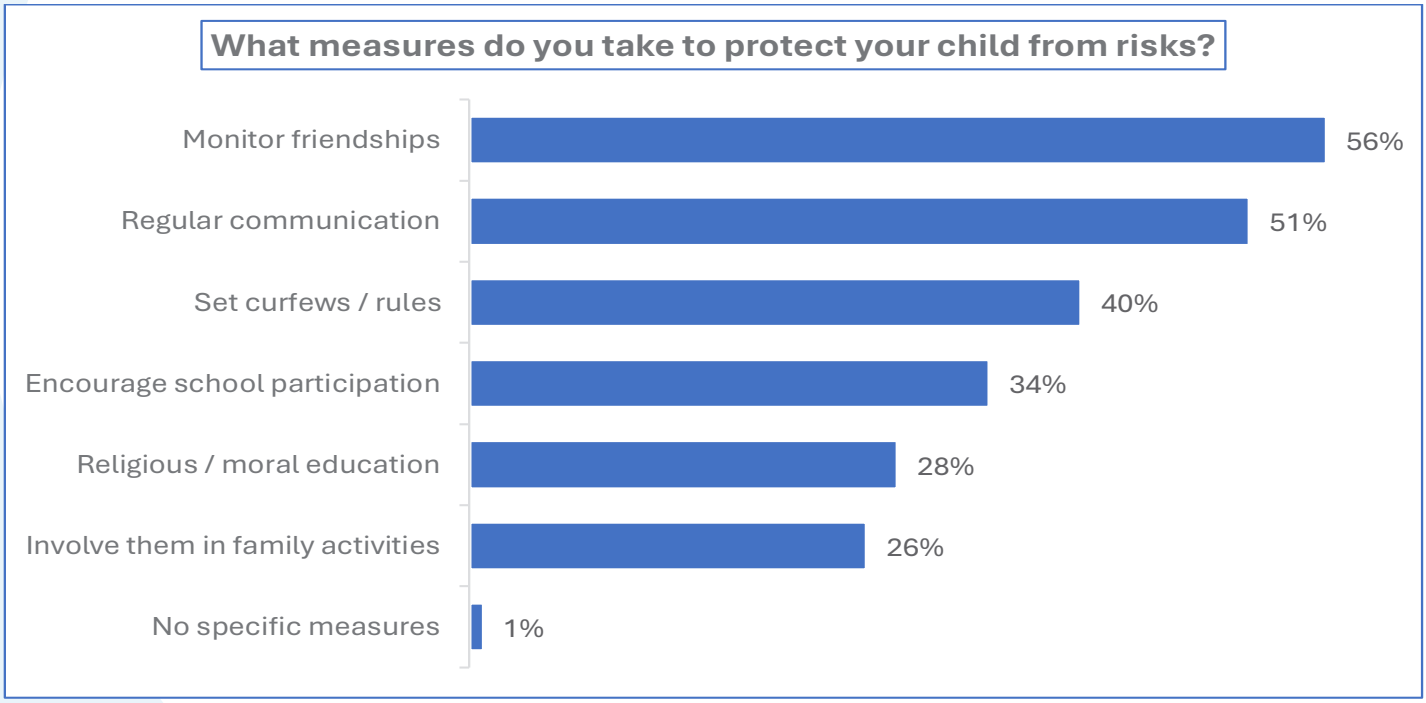
Poverty stands out as the primary driver of teenage pregnancy, noted by 83% of parents, followed by peer pressure (52%), inadequate parental supervision (39%), and limited sexual education (38%). Cultural practices (10%) and substance abuse (11%) receive less emphasis, and gender inequality is overlooked (0%). Localized patterns emerge, such as elevated peer pressure in Homa Bay (79%) and Kitui (71%), and intensified poverty concerns in West Pokot (95%).

Figure 85: What do you think are the main causes of teenage pregnancy in your community?



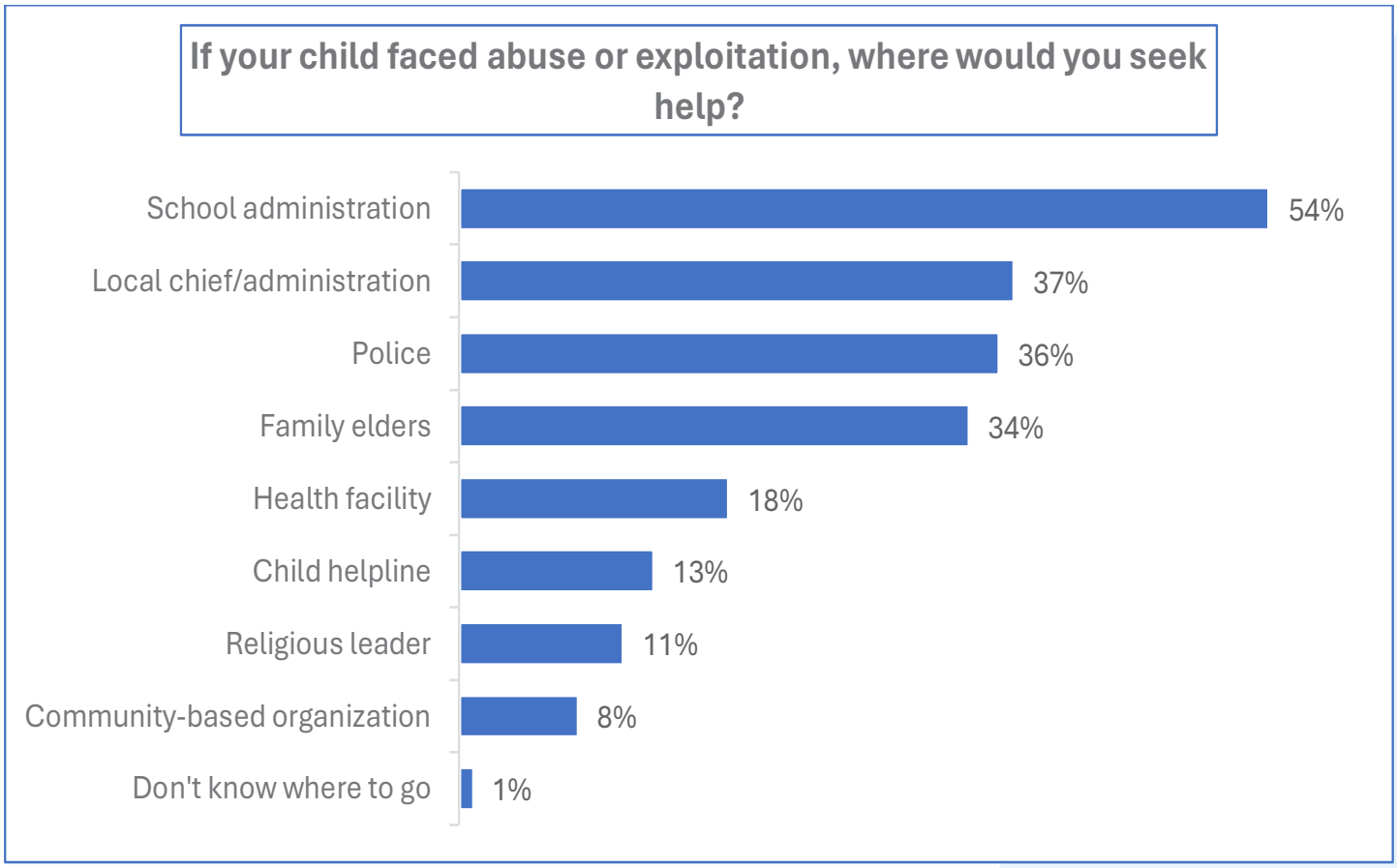
Parents adopt proactive strategies to safeguard their children, prioritizing monitoring friendships (56%) and maintaining regular communication (51%). Other common approaches include setting curfews or rules (40%) and promoting school engagement (34%), alongside religious or moral guidance (28%) and family involvement (26%). Just 1% take no measures, reflecting broad commitment though Turkana (68%) and Kitui (79%) favor curfews, while Bomet (85%) and West Pokot (71%) stress friendship oversight.

Figure 86: What measures do you take to protect your child from risks?



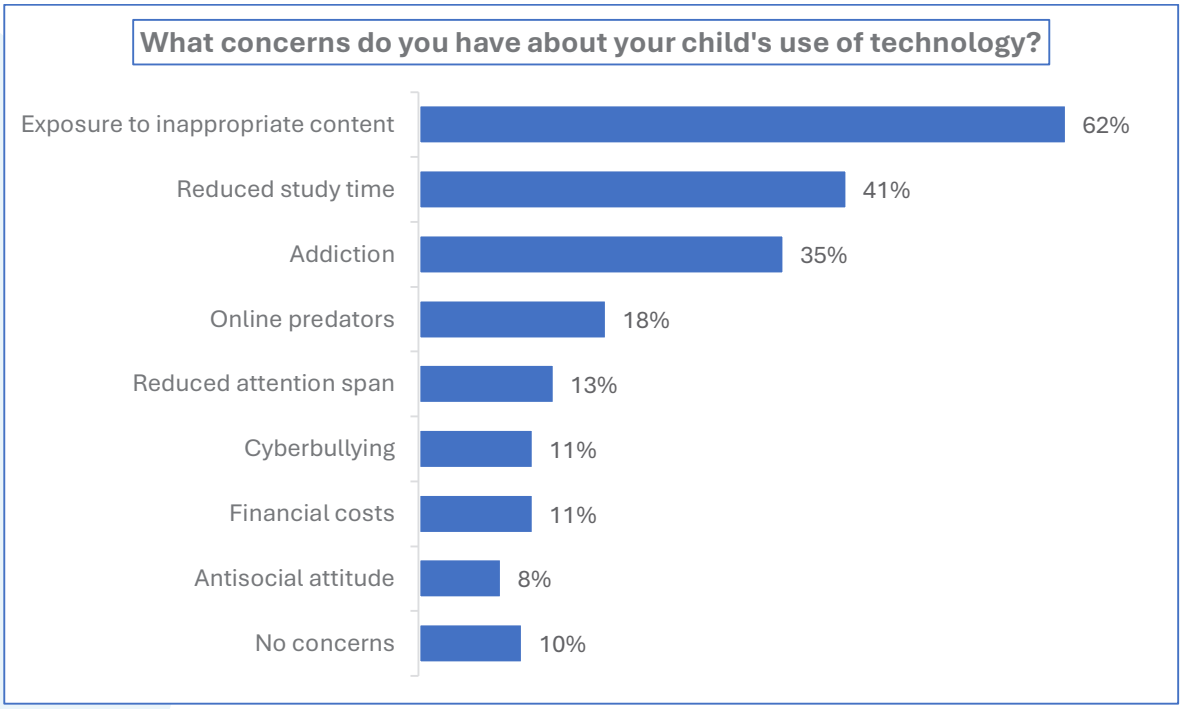
When facing child abuse or exploitation, parents turn first to school administration (54%), family elders (34%), local chiefs (37%), and police (36%). Health facilities, religious leaders, community groups, and child helplines serve as secondary options, underscoring reliance on familiar institutions amid limited specialized child protection channels. Nearly 38% of parents feel well-informed about child protection laws, with 36% holding basic knowledge; however, 22% lack awareness entirely, and 4% are unsure. Higher familiarity appears in Samburu (63%) and Nandi (62%), versus lower levels in Bomet (14%) and Homa Bay (18%), pointing to inconsistent information dissemination.

Figure 87: If your child faced abuse or exploitation, where would you seek help?



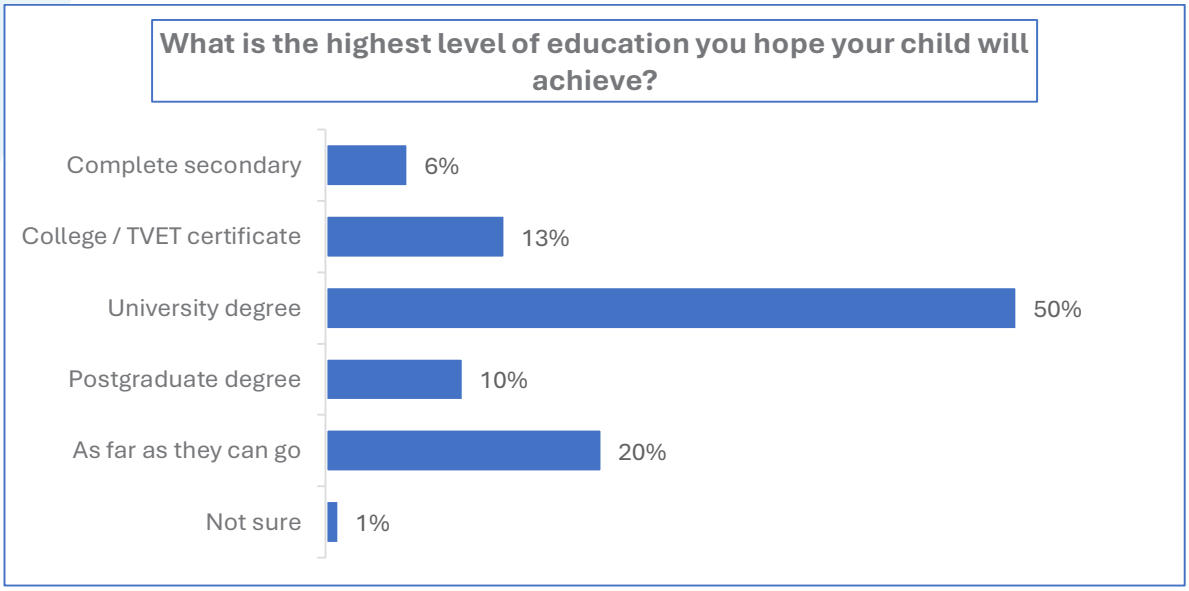
Radio (80%) and basic phones (83%) prevail in households, but computers or laptops (10%) and internet (27%) remain scarce. Daily smartphone use affects only 7% of learners, with 47% never using them higher in Samburu (16%) and Baringo (18%). Primary digital activities involve school research (44%) and communication (29%), trailed by entertainment (25%) and social media or gaming (21%). Parents worry most about inappropriate content exposure (62%), addiction (35%), and study time loss (41%), prompting 44% to enforce strict rules and 27% partial oversight.

Figure 88: What concerns do you have about your child's use of technology?



Parents hold ambitious goals, with 50% aspiring to university degrees for their children and 10% targeting postgraduate levels. Preferred careers emphasize professionals like doctors, lawyers, and engineers (51%), followed by teaching (23%). Community involvement stands at 60% participation rate, mainly in religious (53%) and savings groups (44%), while 35% view community education support as very positive and 33% as supportive.

Figure 89: What is the highest level of education you hope your child will achieve?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

These findings paint a nuanced landscape: parents actively shield learners and champion education, yet persistent hurdles in mental health access, youth risks, digital safety, and child protection knowledge demand action. County differences call for tailored efforts to boost mental health awareness, digital literacy, legal education, and community support structures.

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

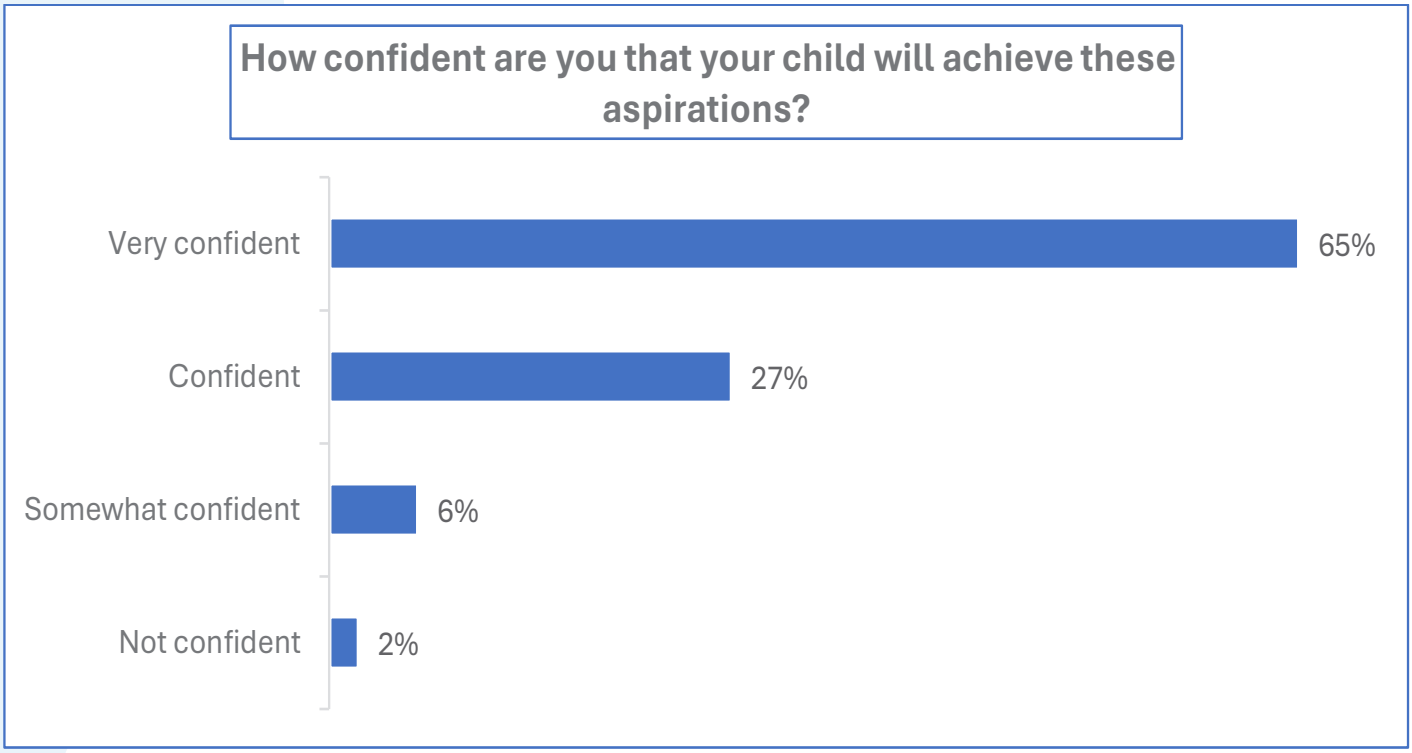
PILLAR 4

DIGITAL READINESS & FUTURE PATHWAYS

Parental Confidence in Children's Aspirations

Parents in the surveyed counties generally express high confidence that their children will achieve their educational and career aspirations. Overall, 65% of parents reported being very confident, while an additional 27% described themselves as confident. Only a small proportion of parents expressed low confidence or worry regarding their children's future. Confidence levels vary across counties, with parents in Nandi (82%) and Kajiado (79%) reporting the highest confidence, while those in Homabay (50%) and Kitui (58%) expressed comparatively lower confidence, indicating regional differences in perceived opportunities or ability to support children effectively.

Figure 90: How confident are you that your child will achieve these aspirations?



When asked about the obstacles to their children's success, parents overwhelmingly cited financial constraints as the primary barrier, with 89% identifying this challenge. In counties such as Kitui, Baringo, and Samburu, nearly all parents (95-100%) highlighted economic limitations as a concern. Other challenges reported include peer pressure, particularly in Homabay (55%) and Kitui (43%), as well as quality of education, which was a significant concern in Bungoma (32%) and Bomet (35%). Distance to schools and colleges, early marriage or pregnancy, family responsibilities, harmful cultural practices, and technology-related issues were also mentioned, though less frequently. These findings suggest that while economic barriers are the most pressing concern, social and cultural factors also influence children's ability to succeed in specific contexts.

Parents identified several forms of support that would most help their children succeed. Scholarships and financial aid were the most commonly cited, with 87% of parents expressing this need. In particular, parents in Baringo (100%) and Samburu (95%) emphasized the importance of financial support. Other forms of assistance highlighted include better school facilities (33%), especially in Bungoma (64%) and Bomet (50%), life skills training (27%), with higher demand in Kitui (42%) and Bomet (45%), career guidance (26%), notably in Samburu (52%) and Kitui (47%), and mentorship programs (24%), particularly in Bungoma (50%) and Homabay (41%). Family economic empowerment was also mentioned by some parents, especially in Samburu (33%) and Bomet (25%), while other supports such as health services or broader community interventions were less frequently cited.

Figure 91: What obstacles will hinder your child's success?

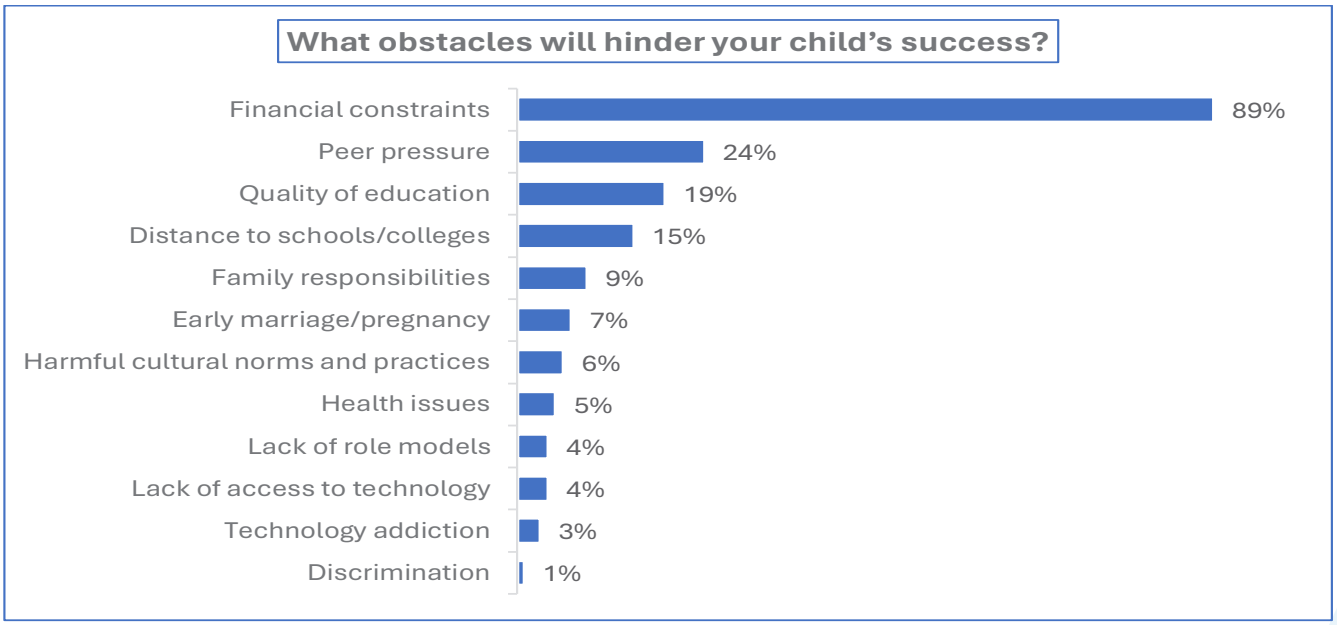
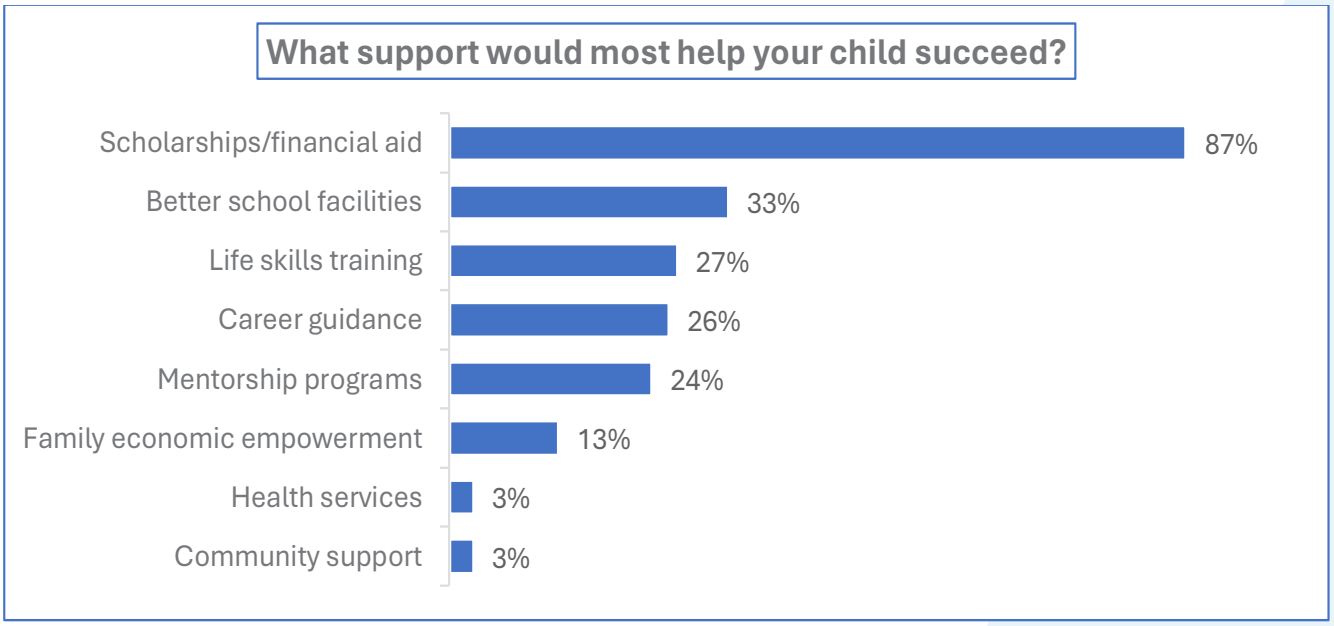


Figure 92: What support would most help your child succeed?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Parents demonstrate optimism regarding their children's future, but financial constraints remain the key barrier to success, often compounded by peer pressure, early pregnancy, and uneven quality of education in certain counties. Parents prioritize support that is both economic and developmental, including scholarships, improved school infrastructure, life skills and mentorship programs, and career guidance. These findings highlight the need for interventions that address both material access and the social and developmental dimensions of children's growth.

3.1.3 School Administrator Findings

Overview

The findings are drawn from 51 public day secondary school administrators across ten counties in Kenya: Turkana (5 schools), Bungoma (5), Nandi (6), Homabay (5), Kitui (5), Samburu (5), Kajiado (5), Baringo (5), Bomet (5), and West Pokot (5). All participating institutions are public day secondary schools, providing comprehensive insights into administrative experience, school characteristics, enrolment patterns, learner vulnerabilities, academic performance, infrastructure, WASH facilities, utilities, sports programmes, security, and staffing levels. County-level comparisons reveal notable disparities, with Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) counties, including Turkana, Samburu, Kajiado, Baringo, and West Pokot, experiencing greater challenges related to resource availability, infrastructure adequacy, and learner vulnerabilities compared to highland counties such as Bungoma, Nandi, and Homabay. Despite being classified as an ASAL county, Kajiado demonstrates relatively strong performance across several indicators, including security measures, sports participation, Competency-Based Education (CBE) implementation, and water reliability.

The findings show an average daily attendance rate of 82%, reflecting relatively consistent learner engagement in most schools.

Table 3: Surveyed schools - school administrator survey

County	Schools Surveyed	ASAL Status	Notable Observations
Turkana	5	ASAL	Resource challenges, infrastructure gaps
Bungoma	5	Highland	Relatively well-resourced
Nandi	6	Highland	Moderate infrastructure
Homabay	5	Highland	Moderate functional infrastructure
Kitui	5	ASAL	Infrastructure and resources limited
Samburu	5	ASAL	High administrative tenure, limited resources
Kajiado	5	ASAL	Strong performance in CBC, security, sports
Baringo	5	ASAL	Infrastructure gaps, social challenges
Bomet	5	Highland	Moderate resources
West Pokot	5	ASAL	Strong CBC adoption, social vulnerabilities

On average, school administrators have served in their current roles for 6.45 years (N=51), indicating moderate institutional continuity. Samburu records the highest average tenure at 13.8 years, followed by West Pokot (7.5 years) and Bomet (7 years), reflecting relatively stable leadership structures in these counties. In contrast, Turkana (4.88 years) and Baringo (4.14 years) report shorter tenures, suggesting higher administrative turnover. Kajiado falls within the mid-range, with an average tenure of 6 years, indicating moderate administrative stability.

The majority of schools were established after the year 2000, with notable establishment peaks in 2011 (12%), 2012 (12%), and 2010 (10%), while only 2% of schools date back to 1955. In terms of ownership, 90% of the surveyed schools are government-owned, although Turkana records a lower proportion at 50%, while Kajiado, Kitui, Nandi, Homabay, Bomet, and West Pokot report 100% government ownership. Regarding curriculum reforms, 71% of schools have fully implemented the Competency-Based Education (CBE), 27% have partially implemented it, and 2% are currently transitioning. County-level performance shows West Pokot achieving 100% full implementation, followed by Kajiado at 80%, whereas Bomet reports relatively slower progress, with 80% of schools still at partial implementation.

These findings suggest that while overall academic participation remains relatively strong, socio-cultural and economic factors continue to influence learner retention and well-being in certain counties

School performance indicators demonstrate generally strong learner participation and progression across the surveyed counties. The findings show an average daily attendance rate of 82%, reflecting relatively consistent learner engagement in most schools. Similarly, the transition rate to the next grade level stands at 90%, indicating positive learner retention and progression outcomes. Kajiado County records above-average performance in both indicators, with attendance at 94% and a transition rate of 93%, highlighting comparatively strong learner continuity within the county.

Table 4: School performance indicators

Performance Indicator	Overall Mean	Highest County	Notes
Daily Attendance (%)	82	Kajiado 94%	Learner engagement generally strong
Transition Rate (%)	90	Kajiado 93%	Retention positive
Pregnancy Cases per School	7	Baringo 10	Social vulnerability
Early Marriage Cases per School	4	West Pokot / Baringo – cases are elevated	Socio-cultural challenge

Notwithstanding these positive performance trends, notable social challenges persist. Schools reported an average of seven pregnancy cases per school, with Baringo recording the highest prevalence at approximately ten cases per school. Additionally, early marriage cases average four per school, with elevated incidences observed in West Pokot and Baringo. These findings suggest that while overall academic participation remains relatively strong, socio-cultural and economic factors continue to influence learner retention and well-being in certain counties.

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

PILLAR 1

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Learning Environment

All surveyed schools report having key infrastructure, including libraries, science laboratories, and computer labs, with 100% coverage across the sample. However, functionality remains a significant challenge, as 47% of libraries and 53% of computer labs are reported as non-functional, limiting their utility for teaching and learning. Agricultural plots are relatively common, present in 73% of schools, with Kajiado achieving full coverage (100%), supporting practical agricultural learning.

Regarding water infrastructure, boreholes are the most common source (33%), followed by piped water (24%). Daily water availability varies, with only 53% of schools reporting consistent daily access. Among counties, West Pokot leads with 80% daily availability, Kajiado reports 60%, while Baringo has 43% of schools without daily access, highlighting disparities in water reliability across regions.

Table 5: Water availability

Water Availability	Total	High	Low
Daily	53%	West Pokot (80%)	Turkana (38%)
4-5 days/week	16%	Homabay (60%)	
2-3 days/week	12%	Baringo (40%)	
Rarely	14%	Bungoma (50%)	
Not available	6%	Baringo (43%)	

The surveyed schools report an average of 10 toilets each for boys and girls (10.24 for boys; 10.31 for girls) and four for teachers, with Kajiado recording 12 for boys, 10 for girls, and four for teachers. Overall, the condition of these facilities is predominantly good to fair, with 43% of boys' and 49% of girls' toilets rated good, and 49% of boys' and 45% of girls' toilets rated fair. Handwashing facilities are limited, with only 22% of schools providing them at all toilets, while 39% of schools have no handwashing stations. Kajiado performs relatively well, with 80% of its schools having some or all toilets equipped with handwashing facilities. Regarding menstrual hygiene management, 53% of schools lack dedicated facilities; in Kajiado, this is lower at 40%, with 60% of schools providing changing rooms for girls.

Teacher qualifications are generally high, averaging 17 staff with bachelor's degrees per school

Among the surveyed schools, 59% have football fields (with Kajiado at 60%) and 41% have netball courts, where Kajiado stands out at 100%. School security is notably strong in Kajiado, with 80% of schools fenced and all schools equipped with guards, fire extinguishers, and emergency exits. On average, schools employ 22 teachers (12 male, 10 female), with Kajiado employing 17 teachers, reflecting a pupil-to-teacher ratio of 1:23 compared to the overall average of 1:22. Teacher qualifications are generally high, averaging 17 staff with bachelor's degrees per school, while Kajiado maintains 14. Learner attendance averages 94%, with Kajiado slightly higher at 96%. Competency-Based Education (CBE) training for staff averages 10 teachers per school, with Kajiado reporting 12 trained staff.

Table 6: Teaching staff qualifications

Qualifications (Mean per School)	Total	High County
Diploma holders	2.6	Homabay (10.5)
Bachelor's degree	17	West Pokot (26)
Master's degree	0.8	Bomet (1.75)

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) counties, exemplified by Kajiado, maintain moderate enrollment levels (average 392 learners) and manage vulnerabilities, including 50 identified orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), while demonstrating notable strengths in school security, sports participation, and academic performance. Although Kajiado outperforms peer ASAL counties such as Turkana, it remains below highland counties in overall scale and resource availability. Targeted interventions, particularly in WASH infrastructure and related support services, could enhance equity and learning conditions across all counties.

Textbook Availability

Textbook availability across the surveyed counties remains below recommended standards, with textbook-to-student ratios ranging between 1.2 and 1.8 books per learner on average. Science subjects consistently record the lowest ratios, indicating persistent resource constraints in areas that require strong instructional support. Turkana presents comparatively higher ratios in certain science subjects, reporting 4.5 books per student in Chemistry and 2.75 in Biology, although these results are influenced by the specific sample distribution within the county. Homabay and Kitui also demonstrate relatively stronger availability, each recording ratios of approximately 1.8 books per student in core subjects such as Mathematics and English.

Conversely, arid and semi-arid counties, particularly Kajiado and Samburu, frequently report ratios close to or below one textbook per student. For instance, Kajiado recorded approximately 0.86 books per student in both Biology and Chemistry, reflecting significant shortages. Overall, the findings highlight widespread inadequacies in learning materials, with the most pronounced deficits observed in northern and arid regions. Despite some county-level variations, textbook availability across all counties remains below optimal levels required to effectively support teaching and learning.

Overall, the findings highlight widespread inadequacies in learning materials

Table 7: Textbooks availability

Subject	Total Mean	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Mathematics	1.25	1	1	1.25	1.8	1.8	1	1	1.75	1	1
English	1.22	1	1.25	1.4	1.8	1	1	1.5	1	1	
Kiswahili	1.16	1	1	1.2	1.8	1	1	1.75	1	1	
Biology	1.35	2.75	1.5	1.4	1.8	0.86	1	1.5	1	1	
Chemistry	1.61	4.5	1.5	1.4	1.8	0.86	2.6	1.25	1	1	
Physics	1.57	4	1.25	1.8	1.8	2	1	1.25	1	1	
Geography	1.82	4.5	2	1.8	2	2.57	1.2	1.75	1	1	
History	1.25	1	1	1.4	1.8	1.57	1	1.5	1	1	

Science Lab Equipment

The availability of science laboratory equipment remains limited across the surveyed schools. Only 20% of schools reported having adequate laboratory equipment to conduct all required experiments, while 35% indicated that they are able to perform only basic experiments. West Pokot stands out as the only county where all surveyed schools (100%) reported having fully equipped laboratories, demonstrating strong capacity for practical science instruction.

While foundational subjects are consistently delivered across all counties, the availability of additional and enrichment subjects varies significantly by location

In contrast, several counties including Kajiado, Baringo, Bomet, Homabay, and Kitui reported no schools with fully equipped laboratory facilities, highlighting significant resource gaps. In Turkana, laboratory equipment is often insufficient for full practical lessons, with 50% of schools relying primarily on demonstrations rather than hands-on student experiments. Baringo also shows notable constraints, with a large proportion of schools reporting very limited laboratory resources.

Overall, these findings indicate that schools located in rural and arid or semi-arid areas experience the greatest shortages of laboratory equipment, limiting opportunities for experiential and practical science learning.

Table 8: Science lab equipment availability

Category	Total	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Adequate for all	20%	13%		25%	0%	40%				25%	100%
Adequate for basic	35%	13%	25%	50%	40%	60%	43%	40%	50%		
Limited for demos	27%	50%	25%		40%		29%	60%	25%		
Very limited	12%	13%	25%	25%	20%		29%				
None	6%	13%						25%			

Subjects Offered

All surveyed schools offer core curriculum subjects, with Mathematics, English, Kiswahili, Biology, Geography, Agriculture, and Business Studies reported in 100% of schools, indicating strong adherence to national curriculum requirements. Chemistry, Physics, and History are also widely offered, with overall availability at 98%; however, provision slightly declines in West Pokot, where coverage drops to approximately 80%, suggesting some limitations in subject delivery capacity.

The availability of Computer Studies is more varied, with the subject offered in 63% of schools overall. Provision is particularly strong in West Pokot (100%) and Turkana (88%), demonstrating notable investment in digital education in these counties. In contrast, Kajiado reports the lowest availability, with only 29% of schools offering computer studies, highlighting disparities in access to technology-related learning.

French is the least commonly offered subject, reported in only 8% of schools, indicating limited uptake of foreign language instruction beyond the core curriculum. Overall, while foundational subjects are consistently delivered across all counties, the availability of additional and enrichment subjects varies significantly by location, reflecting differences in resource availability, staffing, and institutional capacity.

Table 9: Core curriculum subjects offered

Subject	Total (%)	Turkana (%)	Bungoma (%)	Nandi (%)	Homabay (%)	Kitui (%)	Samburu (%)	Kajiado (%)	Baringo (%)	Bomet (%)	West Pokot (%)
Mathematics	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	10
English	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Kiswahili	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Biology	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Chemistry	98	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	80
Physics	98	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	80
Geography	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
History	98	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	80
Computer	63	88	50	75	60	60	29	60	50	100	
Agriculture	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Business Studies	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
French	8	13		25		20		20			

Cocurricular Activities

Co-curricular activities are widely implemented across schools, providing learners with opportunities for holistic development, although participation varies by activity type and county. Sports activities are the most widely available, offered in 98% of schools, with near-universal coverage across counties. The only notable gap is in Bungoma, where participation is relatively lower at 75%.

Music and performing arts activities are available in 76% of schools, with particularly strong participation in Baringo, Bomet, and Kitui, where all schools report offering music-related programs. However, participation is significantly lower in Nandi, where only 25% of schools provide music activities. Drama activities are available in 65% of schools, with full implementation in Kitui, Kajiado, and Samburu, while Nandi and Baringo report limited availability at 25%. Debate and public speaking activities are offered in 73% of schools, with Kitui demonstrating full coverage, while Nandi reports no structured debate programs. Clubs and societies are present in 51% of schools, and community service activities are implemented in 43% of schools, with both forms of engagement particularly strong in Samburu and Kitui.

Overall, the findings indicate that after-school and co-curricular programs are commonly provided and contribute significantly to learner development. However, some rural and underserved schools experience limited diversity in activity offerings, suggesting the need for targeted support to broaden co-curricular opportunities and ensure equitable access across all counties.

Table 10: Co-curricular activities Implemented by the schools

Activity	Total	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Sports	98%	100%	75%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Music	76%	75%	25%	75%	80%	100%	71%	100%	75%	100%	
Drama	65%	75%	25%	25%	80%	100%	57%	100%	25%	80%	
Debate	73%	88%	0%	75%	100%	80%	43%	80%	100%	75%	80%
Clubs	51%	25%	0%	50%	60%	100%	57%	100%	50%	40%	
Community service	43%	25%	25%	50%	40%	100%	43%	60%	50%	25%	20%

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

PILLAR 2

PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING AND LIFE SKILLS

Life Skills Integration

Life skills education is widely integrated across schools through multiple delivery approaches. Overall, 43% of schools teach life skills as a stand-alone subject, while another 43% integrate life skills into other subjects, demonstrating balanced use of formal and cross-curricular approaches. In addition, 49% of schools deliver life skills through counseling services, highlighting the role of guidance and psychosocial support in strengthening learners' personal and social competencies. County-level variations show strong examples of good practice. Kitui records the highest proportion of schools offering life skills as a separate subject (80%). Baringo and Bomet demonstrate full integration of life skills through counseling services, with 100% coverage. Bomet also shows strong cross-curricular integration, with 75% of schools embedding life skills within other subjects, while Kajiado effectively uses co-curricular platforms, with all schools (100%) delivering life skills through clubs and extracurricular activities.

Only 6% of schools reported not offering structured life skills programming, indicating that life skills education is generally well established across most schools, albeit delivered through varied methods. These findings suggest that schools are actively adopting diverse and complementary approaches to strengthen learners' social, emotional, and practical competencies.

These findings suggest that schools are actively adopting diverse and complementary approaches to strengthen learners' social, emotional, and practical competencies

Table 11: Life Skills Integration

Method	Total	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Stand-alone subject	43%	13%	25%	50%	80%	20%	43%	20%	50%	100%	
Integrated across subjects	43%	38%	25%		60%	60%	43%	80%	75%	40%	
Guidance and counseling	49%	63%	75%	50%	20%	20%	29%	100%	100%	25%	20%
Through clubs/ activities	22%	13%	25%				43%	100%	25%		
Not systematically included	6%	13%					14%		0%	25%	

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

PILLAR 3

DIGITAL READINESS & FUTURE PATHWAYS

Career Guidance Services

Career guidance services are available in a majority of schools, although their distribution and intensity vary across counties. Overall, 69% of schools conduct regular career talks, with full coverage reported in Kitui, Homabay, and West Pokot, demonstrating strong institutional commitment to career awareness in these areas. Career days are implemented in 43% of schools, with Nandi reporting universal implementation, indicating a particularly strong focus on structured career exposure events. Educational and career-related visits are conducted in 29% of schools, with notably high participation in Kajiado and West Pokot, where approximately 80% of schools facilitate such exposure opportunities. Additionally, 47% of schools provide career counseling services, with particularly strong provision in Baringo and Kajiado, both reporting full coverage.

Despite these positive developments, 12% of schools report limited or no career guidance services, with the most significant gaps observed in Turkana, where 38% of schools have minimal career support structures. Overall, the findings suggest that while career guidance services are generally well established, access remains uneven across counties, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to ensure equitable provision of career development support in underserved regions.

Overall, the findings suggest that while career guidance services are generally well established, access remains uneven

Table 12: Career Guidance Services

Service	Total	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Regular career talks	69%	50%	25%	75%	100%		43%	80%	75%	50%	100%
Career day events	43%	38%	100%	25%	40%	20%	57%	60%	0%	25%	60%
	29%			25%	40%		29%	80%	50%		80%
Individual	47%	38%	50%	50%	60%		57%	100%	75%	25%	20%
Limited/ no services	12%	38%					14%		25%		

Management and Planning

All surveyed schools demonstrate strong governance and plahnning structures, with 100% reporting the existence of school management committees, school improvement plans, development plans, and annual work plans. This indicates that institutional planning frameworks are well establisshed across the target counties. In terms of implementation and oversight, committee meetings are most commonly held on a termly basis (67%), followed by monthly meetings (20%), while 8% of schools conduct meetings weekly and 6% hold meetings irregularly. Termly meetings remain the predominant practice across counties, although West Pokot shows relatively higher engagement through weekly meetings in some schools. Overall, the findings suggest that schools have strong governance and planning mechanisms in place, providing a solid foundation for effective school management and program implementation.

Table 13: School governance and planning structures

Item	Total
School management committee	100%
School improvement plan	100%
School development plan	100%
Annual work plan	100%
Meeting Frequency	Total
Weekly	8%
Monthly	20%
Termly	67%
Irregularly	6%

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Majortiy of schools face significant shortages of learning resources, with most institutions reporting a student-to-book ratio of fewer than two books per learner. Additionally, approximately 80% of schools have science laboratories that are inadequately equipped, with the greatest resource gaps observed in Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) counties. Priority should therefore be given to counties such as Turkana, Samburu, and Kajiado for the provision of additional textbooks and laboratory equipment.

These findings suggest that schools already have foundational structures that can be leveraged to strengthen holistic learner development.

Despite these challenges, nearly all school demonstrate the presence of structured school improvement plans, and 98% offer sports and co-curricular activities, while 69% conduct career talks. These findings suggest that schools already have foundational structures that can be leveraged to strengthen holistic learner development. Counties such as Bomet and Baringo, which show strong engagemennt in co-curricular and development-oriented activities, provide examples of good practice that can be replicated in other regions. However, life skills programming remains limited in approximately 6% of schools, and career guidance activities are still inadequate in about 12% of institutions, highlighting areas requiring targeted improvement.

To address these gaps, it is recommended that education stakeholders prioritize the distribution of textboolks and laboratory equipment to underserved ASAL counties, strengthen teacher capacity to deliver life skills education, and expand career guidance and exposure opportunities for learners across all schools.

School Financial Management

All 51 public day secondary schools surveyed across ten counties have developed school budgets and maintain proper financial records, reflecting full compliance with recommended financial planning and accountability standards. This uniformity demonstrates that school administrators understand the critical role of structured financial management in ensuring efficient resource allocation, smooth operational management, and overall school development. Internal audits are conducted in the majority of schools (92%), providing an additional layer of oversight and accountability. However, certain counties, notably Kitui and Samburu, report gaps in compliance, with 20% of schools not conducting internal audits, highlighting the need for ongoing monitoring and capacity-building to strengthen internal financial controls.

External audits are conducted in 96% of schools, with minor shortfalls observed in Turkana (88%) and Bungoma (75%), indicating a generally strong culture of transparency and accountability. Policies supporting vulnerable students through fee remission exist in approximately 65% of schools, with full adoption in Samburu and Baringo (100%) but lower uptake in Kitui (20%) and Homabay (25%). While these policies reflect a commitment to equity, their uneven distribution suggests that some learners in specific counties may face barriers to access.

Table 14: School Financial Management

Indicator	Total (%)	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Budget Developed	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Financial Records Maintained	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Internal Audit Conducted	92%	100%	100%	100%	80%	80%	86%	100%	75%	100%	100%
External Audit Conducted	96%	88%	75%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Fee Remission Policy for Vulnerable	65%	63%	50%	25%	20%	100%	57%	100%	75%	75%	80%

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

The findings suggest a strong foundation in financial governance with near-universal budget preparation and record maintenance. Internal and external audits provide oversight, but gaps exist in ASAL and select highland counties. Fee remission policies indicate a focus on vulnerable learners, yet targeted interventions are needed to expand coverage in counties with lower adoption.

School Governance and Participation

Active school governance structures are well established across the surveyed schools. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of schools report having active Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), with full participation in highland counties such as Bungoma, Homabay, Bomet, and Baringo, while West Pokot records comparatively lower activity at 60%. PTA membership varies across counties, with most schools engaging between 4-12 parent members per association, though some counties, particularly West Pokot, show limited parental involvement. These findings highlight both the widespread presence of PTAs and areas where parent engagement could be strengthened to support school decision-making and learner outcomes.

Partnerships with external organizations are active in the majority of schools.

Student governance is similarly robust, with 94% of schools having functional student councils or student government structures. Counties including Kajiado, Nandi, Homabay, Kitui, Bomet, and Baringo report full coverage, while West Pokot shows slightly lower participation at 80%. The existence of student councils fosters leadership skills, democratic participation, and peer accountability among learners. Furthermore, all schools (100%) maintain functional Boards of Management (BOMs), indicating a standardized governance framework that aligns with national education policies and reinforces institutional accountability.

Table 15: School Governance Structures by County

Governance Indicator	Total (%)	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Active PTA	88%	75%	100%	100%	80%	80%	100%	100%	100%	100%	60%
PTA Membership (avg parents)	45 schools	6	4	4	4	4	7	5	4	4	3
Student Council / Government	94%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	71%	100%	100%	80%
Board of Management (BOM)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Governance structures are well established across most counties. PTAs are highly active in highland areas but require encouragement in some ASAL counties. Student councils and BOMs provide consistent leadership oversight. Efforts to enhance parental engagement, especially in West Pokot and Turkana, could strengthen community involvement in school management.

Community Engagement and External Partnerships

Community involvement in schools is moderate, with 20–27% of schools conducting activities such as regular community meetings, school open days, and parent-teacher conferences. Engagement is highest in Kajiado (60% regular meetings) and Bomet (75% parent-teacher conferences). Limited engagement is reported in 24% of schools, particularly in Turkana (50%), Kajiado (57%), and Bomet (25%). Community engagement is critical for resource mobilization, learner support, and promoting accountability.

Partnerships with external organizations are active in the majority of schools. Government agencies collaborate with 75% of schools, NGOs/CBOs with 55%, religious organizations with 63%, private sector partners with 31%, and alumni associations with 18%. Notably, highland counties such as Baringo, Bungoma, and Homabay have strong government and religious partnerships, while ASAL counties rely more on NGOs/CBOs. A small proportion (4%) of schools report no external partnerships.

Table 16: Community Engagement Activities

Activity	Total (%)	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Regular community meetings	20%	13%	0%	0%	20%	60%	14%	0%	25%	25%	40%
School open days	20%	0%	50%	0%	20%	20%	14%	20%	0%	50%	40%
Community service projects	10%	0%	25%	0%	20%	0%	0%	40%	0%	0%	20%
Parent-teacher conferences	27%	38%	0%	100%	20%	20%	14%	20%	75%	0%	0%
Limited	24%	50%	25%	0%	20%	0%	57%	20%	0%	25%	0%

FINDINGS AND KEY RESULTS

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

PILLAR 4

SAFETY AND PROTECTION

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Community engagement is uneven across counties, with highland areas demonstrating stronger participation. Partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and religious institutions are significant enablers of school development and support for learners. ASAL counties may benefit from targeted engagement strategies to strengthen local community involvement and external collaborations.

Guidance, Health, and Support Services

The survey indicates that guidance and counseling services are available in all schools, though the mode and intensity vary. Only 25% of schools have full-time counselors, with Samburu reporting the highest proportion (80%) and counties such as Homabay and West Pokot showing no full-time coverage. Teacher-counselors are more common, present in 88% of schools, while peer counseling programs and external counselor visits are reported in 33% of schools. Health services, including school-based health clubs (24%), first aid-trained staff (31%), regular health screenings (20%), and referral systems to health facilities (53%), are implemented to varying extents, leaving some gaps particularly in Turkana, Nandi, Kitui, and Kajiado. School feeding programs complement these services, predominantly supported by parents (78%) and government sponsorship (25%), although NGO support is limited (10%), highlighting opportunities to strengthen nutrition programs for learners.

Reported cases suggest that implementation of protection policies may require closer monitoring in high-risk areas.

Early pregnancy remains a significant concern, with all schools reporting at least one case in the past year. On average, schools experienced seven cases annually, with West Pokot (14.6) and Kajiado (9.3) showing higher incidences. Schools employ a range of responses, including counseling (86%), parental notification (78%), referral to health services (39%), and awareness campaigns (55%).

Child protection measures are widely implemented: all schools report the existence of policies, committees, reporting mechanisms, anti-bullying guidelines, gender-based violence prevention, and prohibition of corporal punishment. Despite this, reported cases of bullying, sexual harassment, physical abuse, substance abuse, pregnancy, and early marriage vary across counties, suggesting that implementation of protection policies may require closer monitoring in high-risk areas.

Table 17: Guidance and Counseling Services (%)

Service Type	Total	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Full-time counselor	25	13	0	25	40	80	14	20	25	0	40
Teacher counselor(s)	88	88	100	75	100	60	86	100	100	100	80
External counselor visits	33	38	0	25	40	20	43	60	25	0	60
Peer counseling program	33	38	0	25	60	0	43	80	75	0	0

Table 18: Health and Feeding Services (%)

Service Type	Total	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
School-based health club	24	25	25	0	40	0	14	60	0	0	60
First aid-trained staff	31	13	0	0	60	20	43	80	25	25	40
Regular health screenings	20	0	0	20	20	14	20	25	25	25	80
Referral system to health facilities	53	25	50	100	20	60	43	100	75	75	20
Government-sponsored feeding program	25	25	0	50	20	20	29	40	0	0	60
Parent-supported feeding program	78	63	100	50	80	100	57	100	75	100	80

These findings suggest that schools already have foundational structures that can be leveraged to strengthen holistic learner development.

Gender Inclusion and Academic Performance

Support for vulnerable and marginalized students shows mixed implementation. Fee waivers are provided in 45% of schools, learning materials in 47%, psychosocial support in 45%, and uniforms in 29%. County-level coverage varies widely; for example, Kajiado reports 80% fee waiver provision, while Kitui offers only 20%. Measures for students with disabilities are implemented in 59% of schools for physical accessibility, 29% for teacher training on inclusion, and 10–14% for special learning materials or adapted assessments, leaving 31% of schools with no specific interventions. Gender equity interventions are relatively strong: 86% of schools have separate toilets, 61% offer mentorship programs, and 61% integrate gender-sensitive teaching, though sanitary pad provision is inconsistent (35%).

Academic performance indicators reflect variable outcomes. The mean score in the last national examination/ assessment across counties was 6.29/12, with Kajiado achieving the highest mean (11.48) and Bomet among the lowest (4.58). Pass rates averaged 48.5%, with Kitui highest (65%) and Bomet lowest (28.5%). TVET/college qualification rates are higher (50.5%) compared to university qualification rates (20.5%), suggesting stronger uptake of technical and vocational education pathways. Continuous assessment is conducted weekly in 22% of schools, monthly in 57%, and termly in 22%, while remedial teaching is provided in 88% of schools, and academic tracking systems are implemented in 96%, demonstrating strong efforts to monitor and support student learning outcomes.

Table 19: Support for Vulnerable and Marginalized Learners (%)

Support Type	Total	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Fee waivers	45	13	75	25	40	80	43	40	75	25	60
Uniform provision	29	13	25	50	60	40	14	20	25	0	60
Learning materials support	47	38	100	50	80	20	29	20	75	0	80
Psychosocial support	45	13	25	75	80	20	43	60	100	50	20

Table 20: Academic Performance Indicators

Indicator	Total Mean	Turkana	Bungoma	Nandi	Homabay	Kitui	Samburu	Kajiado	Baringo	Bomet	West Pokot
Mean national examination/ assessment score	6.29	9.52	3.63	5.23	5.55	4.25	11.48	3.35	4.58	3.74	5.96
Pass rate (%)	48.55	57.41	50	49.5	65.24	55.32	45.86	44.6	28.5	24.75	51.76
University qualification rate (%)	20.52	20.19	14.1	24.2	42.96	11.85	16.86	10.14	21.25	14.8	29
TVET/college qualification rate (%)	50.53	50.47									

Quality Assurance and Teacher Performance

The majority of schools demonstrate strong internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. Lesson observation systems are in place in 96% of schools, with near-universal coverage in Nandi, Homabay, Kitui, Samburu, Baringo, Bomet, and West Pokot. Teacher performance appraisal is fully implemented across all schools (100%), reflecting systematic monitoring

These results demonstrate a strong culture of accountability and continuous improvement in school management and teacher performance.

of instructional quality. School self-assessment exercises are conducted in 94% of schools, supporting internal reflection and improvement, while external quality assurance visits occur in 96% of institutions, providing oversight from education authorities. Additionally, 98% of schools report that action plans are developed following assessments, highlighting a proactive approach to translating findings into corrective interventions. These results demonstrate a strong culture of accountability and continuous improvement in school management and teacher performance.

Key Challenges Affecting School Operations

Despite robust quality assurance, schools face multiple operational challenges that affect teaching and learning. Inadequate infrastructure is the most frequently cited concern, affecting 35% of schools overall and peaking at 75% in Bomet. Teacher shortages affect 20% of schools, with the highest incidence in West Pokot (60%) and Nandi (38%). Financial constraints are reported by 22% of schools, particularly in Kajiado (43%) and Bomet (50%), while lack of learning materials is highlighted in 10% of schools. Other issues include low academic performance, student discipline, poor attendance, community or parental apathy, and security concerns, which vary significantly across counties. Notably, security concerns are most pronounced in Kitui (60%) and Kajiado (29%), while student discipline issues are a concern in West Pokot (50%). These findings suggest that while procedural and policy measures are largely in place, resource gaps, human resource challenges, and environmental factors continue to undermine optimal school functioning.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

The administrator findings depict schools that are operational and committed but structurally constrained. Key takeaways include persistent financial strain linked to household poverty, overcrowded classrooms and heavy teacher workloads, gaps between the existence and adequacy of learning resources, under-resourced psychosocial and life-skills support systems, and limited readiness for digital education. Administrators clearly recognise learner vulnerability and inequity but lack the resources and capacity to respond comprehensively. These insights reinforce the need for integrated interventions that strengthen school-level capacity while simultaneously addressing household-level economic barriers and learner psychosocial needs, ensuring that institutional efforts translate into tangible improvements in learner experience and outcomes.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION & TRIANGULATION OF RESULTS

Overview of the Data Triangulation Approach

This section presents a triangulated analysis of findings from the baseline assessment for the Education and Life Skills Development Programme, drawing together evidence from learners, parents and guardians, and school administrators, complemented by qualitative insights from key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and a review of relevant secondary data. The purpose of triangulation is to strengthen the validity, depth, and interpretive power of the findings by examining areas of convergence, divergence, and complementarity across multiple respondent groups and data sources.

The triangulation process also serves to distinguish between the reported availability of services and their effective functionality

The integration of perspectives from learners, households, and school leadership enables a more holistic understanding of the education ecosystem within the ten programme counties. Learners provide first-hand accounts of access, attendance, learning conditions, and psychosocial well-being; parents and guardians offer insight into household-level economic, social, and cultural factors shaping participation in education; and school administrators contribute institutional perspectives on governance, resources, staffing, and service delivery. Comparing these viewpoints allows the analysis to move beyond single-source reporting to identify systemic patterns, underlying drivers of vulnerability, and gaps between policy intent, institutional provision, and lived learner experience.

The triangulation process also serves to distinguish between the reported availability of services and their effective functionality, particularly in areas such as learning materials, guidance and counselling, life skills delivery, and digital readiness. Where findings align across respondent groups, confidence in the robustness of the evidence is strengthened. Where discrepancies emerge, these are treated as analytically valuable signals of misalignment between stakeholder perceptions, capacity constraints, or unmet needs.

To enhance coherence and directly inform programme design, the triangulated findings are organized around the five core programme pillars of Access & Retention, Learning Environment, Psychosocial Well-being & Life Skills, Safety & Protection, and Digital Readiness & Future Pathways. This structure ensures that evidence from all respondent groups is synthesized in a way that speaks directly to the programme's theory of change and intended outcomes.

4.2 TRIANGULATED FINDINGS

Pillar 1: Access and Retention

Convergent Evidence on Attendance Barriers

Quantitative findings from learners show that while enrolment remains relatively high, sustained attendance is fragile. Frequent short-term absences, rather than complete withdrawal, emerge as the dominant pattern, with 48% of learners rarely present for full school weeks and 43% missing one to two full weeks in the previous term. This is strongly corroborated by qualitative accounts from parents, teachers, and community leaders, who describe schooling as continuously negotiated against household shocks, health challenges, and income instability.

Parents and guardians consistently cited school fees, transport costs, food insecurity, and illness as the main reasons learners miss school. These explanations align closely with learner-reported reasons for absenteeism 58% citing lack of school fees and 51% citing illness and with administrators' accounts of chronic fee arrears and irregular attendance. The convergence across respondent groups confirms that absenteeism is less about lack of motivation and more about structural vulnerability.

All three data sources converge on the finding that household structure is a central determinant of attendance and retention

Cross-analysis reveals distinct county-level patterns that require tailored responses. In Homa Bay and Turkana, where 88% and 72% of learners respectively report occasional multi-week absences, the primary drivers appear to be seasonal economic shocks and concentrated fee collection periods. In contrast, in Samburu (84%), Kajiado (74%), and Baringo (65%), where chronic short-term absences dominate, the barriers are more persistent; daily hunger, long travel distances, and recurring household responsibilities.

Household Vulnerability as a Cross-Cutting Determinant

All three data sources converge on the finding that household structure is a central determinant of attendance and retention. Learner data show that 45% live in non-intact households single-parent, guardian-led, relative-led, or child-headed and that these learners face significantly higher absenteeism and dropout risk. Parent data confirm the prevalence of vulnerable household arrangements, with 19% of households containing orphans and significant proportions caring for elderly or chronically ill members. School administrators consistently identify learners from these backgrounds as those most likely to miss school, fall behind academically, and require additional support.

Qualitative insights from teachers and community leaders explain why household vulnerability translates into educational disadvantage. Learners from orphaned, guardian-led, and child-headed households frequently assume domestic and income-generating responsibilities that compete with schooling. As one teacher explained, “Some learners have no adult to ask if homework is done.” A community leader added, “When a child is living with a grandmother or a guardian, school comes after survival.”

[The triangulated evidence confirms that retention risks are driven by cumulative pressures rather than single events. Learners who have considered dropping out (14% of the sample) cite multiple, intersecting factors: poverty (83%), family pressure (13%), health challenges (7%), and the need to work (11%). This convergence underscores the need for integrated interventions that address the compounding nature of vulnerability.

Pillar 2: Learning Environment

Gaps Between Infrastructure Availability and Functionality

School-level data indicate that most institutions are operational and comply with core governance and quality assurance requirements. However, triangulation reveals a critical gap between the existence of facilities and their functionality. While 100% of schools report having libraries, science laboratories, and computer labs, administrator data show that 47% of libraries and 53% of computer labs are non-functional. Learner perceptions of science laboratory access (86% reporting availability) mask the reality that only 20% of schools have adequately equipped laboratories to conduct all required experiments.

Overcrowding and material shortages interact to constrain instructional quality, limit individualized support, and disproportionately affect vulnerable learners

Parents’ assessments of school facilities align with this picture of uneven quality. While 63% rate classroom buildings as good or very good, only 43% rate libraries positively, and 48% rate science laboratories positively. A parent observed, *“The buildings are there, but they are overcrowded. Children squeeze into rooms that were not meant for so many.”*

This triangulation highlights a critical programmatic insight; improving the learning environment requires not only constructing new facilities but also ensuring that existing infrastructure is adequately equipped, maintained, and staffed to support effective teaching and learning.

Textbook Shortages and Classroom Overcrowding

Learner reports of limited textbook access only 26% having all required textbooks are strongly supported by administrator data showing textbook-to-student ratios consistently below two books per learner across most subjects, with science subjects particularly affected in ASAL counties like Kajiado (0.86 books per student in Biology and Chemistry). Teachers described the practical consequences: “You find five learners sharing one textbook. Homework becomes very difficult.”

Classroom overcrowding emerges as a consistent theme across all data sources. Learner data show 28% in classes exceeding 60 students, with peaks in Bungoma (59%) and Homa Bay (51%). Teachers describe overcrowding as a fundamental barrier to effective instruction: "With seventy learners, you teach generally. Individual attention is impossible." School administrators acknowledge the structural nature of this challenge: "The problem is not effort. It is numbers."

The convergence of evidence across respondent groups confirms that overcrowding and material shortages interact to constrain instructional quality, limit individualized support, and disproportionately affect vulnerable learners who most need additional academic attention.

Pillar 3: Psychosocial Well-being and Life Skills

Emotional Burden and Support Gaps

Learner self-reports point to widespread experiences of stress, sadness, worry, and emotional fatigue, with 47% experiencing stress sometimes and 13% often or always. Qualitative data from all respondent groups strongly reinforce this pattern. Teachers, counsellors, and community leaders consistently described learners as *"carrying adult problems in young bodies,"* highlighting emotional overload linked to poverty, caregiving responsibilities, and uncertainty about the future.

While families provide primary emotional support, they lack access to specialized services, and school-based counselling structures are under-resourced

Parents corroborate these findings, with 72% reporting that their children face challenges often or very often. In Turkana, 77% of parents report that children very frequently encounter difficulties. However, while 93% of parents report talking to their children when they are stressed, access to professional mental health support remains extremely limited—only 30% of parents know about available services and how to access them.

The triangulation reveals a critical disconnect: while families provide primary emotional support, they lack access to specialized services, and school-based counselling structures are under-resourced. Only 25% of schools have full-time counsellors, and where counselling exists, it is often assigned to teachers with heavy workloads. As one counsellor explained*, "We are counsellors, teachers, and disciplinarians at the same time."*

Life Skills: Confidence vs. Application

Survey data show high self-reported confidence in decision-making, communication, teamwork, and goal-setting among learners. However, a dedicated life skills assessment reveals important variations across domains. A composite life skills index shows a mean baseline score of 3.2/5, with teamwork emerging as a strength (3.8) and emotional regulation as a clear weakness (2.7).

Qualitative findings help explain this apparent contradiction. Learners articulate strong aspirations and a sense of personal agency, but FGDs reveal that many struggle to apply these skills when faced with real-world challenges. Only 17% of learners solved a recent problem entirely on their own, while 38% could not solve it at all. Teachers noted that life skills are often taught theoretically, with limited opportunities for guided practice. One teacher explained, “They know what to say in class, but when stress comes, they freeze.”

The convergence across data sources indicates that while foundational attitudes and motivation exist, life skills programming needs to shift from awareness-based approaches toward experiential learning, with particular focus on emotional regulation, stress management, and real-world problem-solving.

While foundational attitudes and motivation exist, life skills programming needs to shift from awareness-based approaches toward experiential learning

Mentorship and Trusted Adults

Learner data show that 8% have no trusted adult at all, a figure that rises among those in single-father and guardian-led households. While 65% of learners have a mentor at school, only 24% identify a trusted adult specifically at school, suggesting that mentorship relationships are often informal and inconsistent. Parents confirm that teachers play a significant role in supporting children experiencing stress (22% consult teachers), but administrators acknowledge capacity constraints. A teacher observed, “You want to mentor, but with many learners, it is not easy to follow up closely.”

The triangulated evidence underscores that strengthening mentorship requires deliberate, structured programmes rather than relying on informal relationships that may not reach the most vulnerable learners.

Pillar 4: Safety and Protection

Convergent Evidence on Gender-Specific Barriers

Menstrual health emerges as a persistent barrier to girls’ attendance and participation across all data sources. Learner data show that nearly one-third of girls miss school due to menstruation, with regular monthly absenteeism highest in Nandi (13%) and Baringo (16%). Only 21% of girls report regular school provision of sanitary pads, and over 50% report no access to basic MHM facilities. In West Pokot, 90% of girls report no pad provision whatsoever.

Parent data confirm that menstrual health management remains challenging. While 56% of parents provide commercial pads and 38% openly discuss menstruation, significant gaps remain, particularly in counties where cultural discomfort persists. School administrator data reveal that 53% of schools lack dedicated MHM facilities, and where facilities exist, they are often inadequate only 22% of girls have access to private changing areas, 14% to disposal bins, and just 6% to water for washing.

The convergence across all three respondent groups is striking; girls' attendance is compromised by a combination of inadequate school provision, poor infrastructure, and limited household support. As one headteacher acknowledged, *"Our toilets are not designed for girls on their periods."*

School Safety and Reporting Mechanisms

Learners generally report feeling safe at school (96%), but this contrasts with high rates of reported misconduct where 57% report theft, 26% verbal bullying, 16% corporal punishment, and 15% physical bullying. Teachers acknowledge that some forms of misconduct are normalized: *"Name-calling is common and learners think it is just joking."*

Parents' awareness of school safety issues is notably lower only 7-12% report awareness of bullying, corporal punishment, or harassment suggesting limited communication between schools and families about protection concerns. However, parents identify significant safety risks in the broader environment, including peer pressure (54%), road accidents (32%), and physical assault (27%).

Reporting mechanisms show consistent gaps across all data sources. While 80% of learners would report abuse to a teacher, awareness of formal channels is minimal: only 5% would report to a counsellor and 2% to child helplines. Parents similarly rely on familiar institutions school administration (54%), local chiefs (37%), and police (36%) with limited awareness of specialized child protection mechanisms. Only 36% of parents know how to use existing school reporting systems.

Girls' attendance is compromised by a combination of inadequate school provision, poor infrastructure, and limited household support.

Risky Behaviours and Information Sources

Learner perceptions of risky behaviours in schools include alcohol use (15%), drug use (15%), sexual activity (15%) are corroborated by administrator reports of pregnancy cases (averaging seven per school annually) and early marriage (averaging four cases per school). Parents identify teenage pregnancy (64%), substance abuse (65%), and school dropout (65%) as common or very common in their communities.

Information sources on sexual health show convergence; teachers are the primary source for 35% of learners, followed by friends (17%) and mothers (10%). Parents confirm that discussions about sex and sexuality remain constrained by cultural taboos (32%) and generational gaps (23%), with 30% discussing sometimes and 25% often.

Pillar 5: Digital Readiness and Future Pathways

The Aspiration-Opportunity Gap

Learner data reveal a pronounced disconnect between high aspirations and actual preparedness. While 93% of learners express strong interest in improving their digital skills, actual proficiency remains low across most competencies. Foundational skills are particularly weak where 33% cannot type at all, 37% cannot use email, and 38% cannot use word processing software.

Learners are motivated and aspire to modern careers, but schools lack the infrastructure and trained personnel to translate interest into competence

County-level disparities are evident. In West Pokot, 73% of learners cannot type at all, 70% cannot use email, and 77% cannot use word processing software compared to Kitui, where only 12% cannot type and 13% cannot use email. These disparities reflect underlying differences in school infrastructure, connectivity, and exposure.

School administrator data explain these gaps that while 63% of schools offer Computer Studies, only 45% of learners report access to computer laboratories, and administrators acknowledge that 53% of computer labs are non-functional. A teacher explained, *"Digital skills are examined in theory, not in practice."*

STEAM Participation and Career Pathways

Participation in STEAM activities remains extremely limited, with 52% of learners never having participated in any STEAM-related activity. While science fairs (23%) and mathematics contests (16%) are relatively more common, exposure to coding or robotics is almost nonexistent (4%). County-level disparities are pronounced with Samburu (81%) and Bomet (77%) reporting extremely high proportions with no STEAM participation.

Parents hold ambitious aspirations for their children 50% aspire to university degrees and 10% to postgraduate levels and prefer professional careers such as doctor, lawyer, or engineer (51%). However, they identify significant obstacles: financial constraints (89%), peer pressure, and quality of education. The support that parents prioritize reflects both economic and developmental needs; scholarships (87%), better school facilities (33%), life skills training (27%), career guidance (26%), and mentorship (24%).

The triangulated evidence reveals a systemic disconnect between education, skills development, and livelihood pathways. Learners are motivated and aspire to modern careers, but schools lack the infrastructure and trained personnel to translate interest into competence. Post-school transition support is weak, leaving many young people especially those not progressing to tertiary education without clear options.

4.3 SYNTHESIS OF TRIANGULATED INSIGHTS

Across all five pillars, the triangulated evidence presents a coherent picture of motivated learners navigating education within contexts of economic hardship, emotional strain, and uneven institutional capacity. Several cross-cutting themes emerge:

Structural vulnerability as the underlying driver - Poverty, household instability, and orphanhood consistently emerge as the strongest predictors of poor educational outcomes. These factors intersect and compound, creating cumulative disadvantage that single interventions cannot adequately address.

The gap between availability and functionality - Across learning environments, psychosocial support, and digital infrastructure, a consistent pattern emerges: facilities and services exist on paper but are often non-functional, under-resourced, or inaccessible. This distinction between existence and usability is critical for programme design.

The centrality of relationships - Trusted adults parents, teachers, mentors play an indispensable role in supporting learners' academic progress, psychosocial well-being, and decision-making. Yet these relationships are under strain, and a significant minority of learners lack any consistent adult support.

County-level heterogeneity - While common patterns exist, county-level disparities are pronounced across all pillars. ASAL counties consistently face greater challenges in infrastructure, resources, and learner vulnerabilities, while highland counties show relatively stronger performance. Within ASAL counties, Kajiado demonstrates that targeted investments can yield better outcomes even in resource-constrained contexts.

The aspiration-capacity gap - Learners and parents hold high aspirations for education and future careers, but systemic constraints poverty, inadequate infrastructure, weak life skills provision, limited digital access prevent these aspirations from being realized.

The interaction of these factors explains why aspirations remain high while outcomes are uneven

Schools remain central anchors of support, yet are constrained by resources, staffing, and expanding social expectations. Households provide encouragement but often lack the means or confidence to offer sustained academic and psychosocial guidance. The interaction of these factors explains why aspirations remain high while outcomes are uneven. Addressing these challenges requires integrated interventions that simultaneously strengthen school systems, expand life skills and psychosocial support, enhance digital readiness, and engage households as active partners in learner development.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The baseline assessment demonstrates that learners across the ten programme counties remain highly motivated to learn and aspire to positive futures, despite navigating persistent structural, household, and school-level constraints. Learners value education, arrive punctually when able to attend, and express strong interest in science, technology, and life skills. Schools, teachers, and caregivers are broadly committed to supporting learners, and many core institutional structures such as enrolment systems, guidance and counselling, and teacher supervision are in place.

However, the findings also reveal that educational participation and learning continuity are fragile rather than guaranteed. Several overarching conclusions emerge from the triangulated evidence:

Access and retention are undermined by structural poverty, not lack of motivation - Irregular attendance driven by poverty, food insecurity, illness, and school fee practices results in substantial loss of instructional time, even among enrolled learners. Household vulnerability particularly orphanhood, single-parent, guardian-led, and child-headed arrangements emerges as a central determinant of absenteeism, psychosocial distress, and reduced academic support at home. The pattern of absenteeism varies by county, requiring differentiated responses: episodic multi-week absences in some areas, chronic short-term absences in others.

Learning environments are under strain, with a critical gap between infrastructure availability and functionality - Overcrowded classrooms, limited textbooks, and inadequate laboratory equipment constrain instructional quality and individual learner support. While most schools have libraries, science labs, and computer labs on paper, high proportions are non-functional or inadequately equipped. This distinction between existence and usability is critical: learners may have access to a laboratory building, but if it lacks equipment, they cannot conduct experiments. High learner-teacher ratios and material shortages undermine effective learning, particularly for those already struggling academically or emotionally.

The findings also reveal that educational participation and learning continuity are fragile rather than guaranteed.

Psychosocial well-being is a critical but under-resourced dimension of learner success - High levels of stress, sadness, loneliness, and emotional overload are reported, especially among learners in vulnerable households. Although guidance and counselling structures exist in most schools, access to trusted mentors and functional psychosocial support remains uneven. Counsellors are often teachers with heavy workloads, limiting time, privacy, and follow-up. A dedicated assessment of life skills reveals a clear gap between learners' high confidence in interpersonal skills and their weaker ability to regulate emotions and apply these skills in real-world situations. The composite life skills index (3.2/5) provides a baseline for measuring progress, with teamwork as a strength (3.8) and emotional regulation as a clear weakness (2.7).

Gender-specific and protection-related barriers persist despite policy frameworks - Menstrual health challenges affect nearly one-third of girls, compounded by inconsistent sanitary towels provision and inadequate school facilities. The convergence of evidence across learners, parents, and administrators confirms that this is

not an isolated issue but a systemic barrier requiring comprehensive response. Experiences of bullying, theft, corporal punishment, and harassment remain present, and while most learners know where to report abuse to teachers and parents, awareness of formal safeguarding mechanisms is limited. The small but critical group of learners (2%) who would not report abuse at all disproportionately from vulnerable households represents a high-risk population requiring targeted attention.

A pronounced aspiration-opportunity gap exists in digital readiness and future pathways - Learners express strong interest in digital skills, STEAM subjects, and modern careers with 93% desiring to improve digital skills yet digital proficiency is low and participation in STEAM activities minimal. County-level disparities are observed, with learners in West Pokot, Nandi, and Homabay consistently reporting the highest levels of digital inability. Schools lack the infrastructure, equipment, and trained personnel required to translate interest into practical skills. Post-school transition pathways are weak, leaving many young people especially those not progressing to tertiary education without clear livelihood options. Parents' high aspirations for their children's futures contrast sharply with the limited pathways available.

While foundational attitudes and motivation exist, life skills programming needs to shift from awareness-based approaches toward experiential learning

County-level heterogeneity requires differentiated, context-specific responses - While common patterns exist across the programme counties, significant disparities in attendance patterns, infrastructure quality, digital access, and learner vulnerabilities demand tailored interventions. ASAL counties consistently face greater challenges, but within this category, Kajiado demonstrates that targeted investments can yield better outcomes. Highland counties show relative strengths but are not immune to challenges such as overcrowding and material shortages.

In summary, the findings point to a system where motivation and institutional intent exist, but structural vulnerability, uneven capacity, and limited integration of academic, psychosocial, and life skills support undermine equitable outcomes. Addressing these gaps requires an integrated, equity-focused approach that strengthens learners, schools, families, and communities simultaneously, with interventions tailored to the specific needs and contexts of each county.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the baseline findings and triangulated analysis, the following recommendations are proposed to guide programme design, implementation, and stakeholder engagement. The recommendations are aligned with the programme's five core pillars to ensure coherence, targeted action, and measurable progress against the baseline indicators established in this report.

Pillar 1: Access and Retention

Recommendation 1.1
Implement Differentiated, Household-Sensitive Support to Reduce Irregular Attendance

The programme should prioritise reducing irregular attendance by addressing the household-level constraints that repeatedly interrupt learning. Evidence shows that most absenteeism is short-term but cumulative, driven by poverty, food insecurity, illness, and school fee practices rather than lack of motivation. Interventions should be tailored to the type of absenteeism observed in each county;

- For episodic, multi-week absences in counties like Homa Bay and Turkana, implement shock-responsive support mechanisms such as emergency bursaries, flexible fee payment plans, and rapid re-entry protocols following absences.
- For chronic, short-term absences in counties like Samburu, Kajiado, and Baringo, focus on consistent, day-to-day support including school feeding, mentorship programmes, and addressing persistent barriers like travel distance and household responsibilities.

Recommendation 1.2
Establish Early Warning Systems and Targeted Support for High-Risk Learners

Early identification of learners with frequent absences, coupled with targeted material or financial support, will be critical to preventing gradual disengagement. Schools should be supported to develop and implement early warning systems that track attendance patterns and flag learners showing signs of disengagement. These systems should be linked to structured follow-up protocols involving teachers, counsellors, and where possible, community health workers or social workers.

Recommendation 1.3
Strengthen Caregiver Engagement, Particularly in Vulnerable Households

Schools should be supported to work more closely with caregivers, particularly in orphaned, guardian-led, and child-headed households, to monitor attendance patterns and respond quickly to emerging risks before they escalate into dropout. This includes training teachers and counsellors in household-sensitive engagement strategies, establishing regular communication mechanisms between schools and caregivers, and where feasible, linking vulnerable households to social protection programmes.

Pillar 2: Learning Environment and Nutrition

Recommendation 2.1
Treat Nutrition as a Foundational Learning Intervention

Nutrition should be treated as a core learning enabler rather than a complementary intervention. Although school feeding programmes play a vital protective role, reaching 91% of learners, a substantial proportion (30%) continue to experience morning hunger, which undermines concentration and participation during early lessons. The programme should;

- Support the continuation and strengthening of school feeding, particularly in food-insecure and ASAL counties
- Explore feasible options to mitigate morning hunger, such as low-cost snacks or community-supported feeding initiatives
- Strengthen caregiver engagement on basic nutrition to reinforce the link between food, learning readiness, and psychosocial well-being

Recommendation 2.2
Prioritise Functionality Over Availability in Infrastructure Investment

A critical finding is the gap between infrastructure availability and functionality. While 86% of schools have science laboratories, only 20% have adequate equipment to conduct all required experiments. Similarly, 53% of computer labs are non-functional. Investment should prioritise making existing facilities functional over constructing new infrastructure.

- Equip science laboratories in ASAL counties where the gap between availability and usability is most pronounced, with priority to Kajiado, Turkana, and Samburu where textbook ratios are below one per student in key science subjects
- Repair and equip computer labs, particularly in counties where digital skills are weakest (West Pokot, Nandi, Homabay), ensuring that technology is accessible and integrated into teaching and learning
- Invest in laboratory equipment, textbooks, and learning materials before expanding physical infrastructure

Recommendation 2.3
Address Classroom Overcrowding Through Pedagogical Support

While structural solutions to overcrowding require long-term investment, the programme can support schools to manage large classes more effectively through;

- Training teachers in learner-centred and differentiated teaching approaches that work in large class settings
- Promoting peer-supported learning and structured group work, building on learners' demonstrated strength in teamwork (3.8 on the life skills index)
- Strengthening access to core learning materials to compensate for limited individual attention
- Supporting remedial and catch-up programmes for learners who miss school intermittently

Pillar 3: Psychosocial Well-being and Life Skills

Recommendation 3.1
Institutionalise Psychosocial Support Systems

Psychosocial well-being should be positioned as a central pillar of the programme. While guidance and counselling structures exist in many schools, their effectiveness is uneven due to limited staffing, time, and confidentiality. The programme should support schools to;

- Strengthen counselling systems through trained personnel, with dedicated time for counselling rather than adding it to full teaching workloads
- Establish protected, confidential spaces for counselling
- Implement regular structured engagement with learners, moving from reactive crisis intervention to proactive well-being support
- Develop referral pathways to community-based mental health services, addressing the current gap where only 30% of parents know how to access mental health support

Recommendation 3.2
Ensure Every Learner Has Access to a Trusted Adult Mentor

Structured mentorship models should be introduced to ensure that every learner has access to at least one consistent, trusted adult. The finding that 8% of learners have no trusted adult at all rising among those in vulnerable households represents a critical protection gap. Mentorship interventions should;

- Prioritise learners from orphaned, guardian-led, and child-headed households who are least likely to have adult support at home
- Train teachers and community volunteers in mentorship skills, recognising that effective mentoring requires specific competencies beyond subject teaching
- Establish clear frameworks for mentor-learner engagement, including frequency, duration, and boundaries
- Monitor mentorship relationships to ensure they are reaching the most vulnerable learners

Recommendation 3.3
Transform Life Skills Education from Awareness to Experiential Learning

The assessment reveals a clear gap between learners' perceived confidence in life skills and their ability to apply these skills in real-world situations. Life skills programming must shift from awareness-based teaching to practical, experiential learning, with particular focus on the weakest domain: emotional regulation (2.7 on the life skills index). Key actions include;

- Integrate life skills into co-curricular activities, peer-led initiatives, sports, arts, and community engagement, providing safe spaces for practice and reflection
- Develop structured, age-appropriate modules on emotional regulation, stress management, and problem-solving, using the baseline index (3.2/5) as a benchmark for measuring progress

- Train teachers in experiential facilitation methods that move beyond lectures to guided practice and reflection
- Establish peer mentoring and peer counselling programmes, building on learners' demonstrated strength in teamwork and empathy
- Ensure life skills education reaches the 29% of learners who currently have no formal exposure, with targeted outreach to marginalised counties and vulnerable household groups

Pillar 4: Safety and Protection

Recommendation 4.1

Implement Comprehensive Menstrual Health Support

Addressing menstrual health barriers is essential to improving girls' attendance and participation. The convergence of evidence across learners, parents, and administrators confirms that menstrual health challenges continue to cause school absenteeism due to inconsistent pad provision and inadequate facilities. A comprehensive response should include;

- Ensure reliable, consistent access to menstrual hygiene products, moving from irregular provision (currently only 21% regular) to systematic supply chains, with priority to counties where provision is lowest (West Pokot 90% no provision, Turkana 3% regular
- Invest in private, safe, and functional MHM infrastructure, including private changing areas (currently only 22% access), disposal bins (14%), and water for washing (6%)
- Develop clear school-level systems for MHM support, moving from informal, teacher-dependent arrangements to structured programmes
- Strengthen communication with families, addressing the discomfort that prevents girls from seeking support at home, particularly in single-father and guardian-led households

Recommendation 4.2

Strengthen Child Protection Systems and Reporting Mechanisms

Child protection systems should be strengthened through operationalisation of anti-bullying and safeguarding policies, clear reporting mechanisms, and learner sensitisation. Key actions include;

- Ensure every school has a functional, well-communicated child protection policy currently only 56% of learners are aware of such policies
- Establish confidential, accessible reporting mechanisms that go beyond teachers to include counsellors, helplines, and community-based reporters
- Train all school staff in child protection, including recognition of abuse, reporting protocols, and appropriate response
- Conduct regular learner sensitisation on reporting mechanisms, addressing the current low awareness of formal channels (only 5% would report to counsellors, 2% to helplines)

- Strengthen school-community partnerships to address safety risks during travel, particularly for girls and learners in high-risk locations

Recommendation 4.3
Address Community-Level Safety Risks

Community engagement will be important in addressing safety risks beyond the school gate. The finding that 33% of learners feel unsafe during the commute, and 14% feel unsafe in the community, requires interventions that extend beyond the school compound. Actions should include;

- Establish safe-school travel initiatives, including walking groups, community patrols, and engagement with local transport providers
- Strengthen school-community partnerships with local authorities, chiefs, and community leaders to address security concerns
- Conduct community dialogue sessions on child protection, engaging parents, elders, and religious leaders in creating safer environments for learners
- Develop referral pathways between schools and community-based protection mechanisms

Pillar 5: Digital Readiness and Future Pathways

Recommendation 5.1
Bridge the Digital Skills Gap Through Phased, Equity-Focused Investment

The programme should address the pronounced gap between learners' strong interest in digital skills (93%) and their limited access to practical learning opportunities. Building foundational digital competencies requires phased investment that prioritises equity and practicality. Key actions include;

- Invest in basic ICT infrastructure with a focus on low-cost, shared solutions: school-based ICT hubs, mobile computer labs, and blended digital learning models that maximise reach while minimising costs
- Prioritise counties with the lowest digital proficiency: West Pokot (73% cannot type), Nandi (57% cannot use email), and Homabay (46% cannot type)
- Ensure infrastructure investment is accompanied by teacher training in digital pedagogy, so that available technology is meaningfully integrated into instruction rather than remaining underutilised
- Develop foundational digital literacy curricula that start with basic competencies typing, email, word processing before advancing to more complex skills
- Include digital safety and online risk awareness in all digital literacy programmes, addressing the finding that 41% of learners cannot recognise online scams

Recommendation 5.2

Expand Access to Practical STEAM Learning

The extremely low participation in STEAM activities (52% never participated, only 4% in coding/robotics) requires deliberate intervention to provide hands-on exposure and stimulate applied learning. Actions include;

- Establish school-based STEAM clubs, with priority to under-served counties (Samburu 81% no participation, Bomet 77% no participation)
- Develop low-cost, hands-on learning models that do not require expensive equipment using locally available materials for science experiments, basic coding on mobile devices, environmental projects
- Forge partnerships with organisations that can provide expertise, materials, or virtual exposure to STEAM fields
- Ensure deliberate targeting of girls and learners from vulnerable households to prevent reinforcement of existing digital divides

Recommendation 5.3

Strengthen Post-School Transition Pathways

To ensure that education leads to meaningful outcomes, the programme should strengthen post-school transition support, introduced earlier in secondary education. Key actions include;

- Integrate career guidance throughout secondary education, not just in final years currently, 12% of schools have limited or no career guidance services
- Provide exposure to diverse pathways, including TVET options, entrepreneurship, and local economic opportunities, addressing the current narrow focus on university education
- Develop practical skills and mentorship for learners who do not progress to tertiary education, linking them to livelihood pathways
- Strengthen school-enterprise linkages to create internship, apprenticeship, and employment opportunities
- Engage parents in future planning discussions, addressing the finding that while parents hold high aspirations, they often lack guidance on how to support children's career development

Recommendation 5.4

Strengthen Caregiver Capacity for Digital Guidance

Parents express significant concern about digital risks inappropriate content (62%), addiction (35%), loss of study time (41%) yet many lack the knowledge to provide effective guidance. The programme should;

- Provide parent education on digital safety, age-appropriate technology use, and strategies for monitoring without alienating learners
- Establish school-parent partnerships on digital citizenship, creating shared norms and expectations
- Develop simple, accessible resources for parents on supporting children's digital learning and managing online risks

6. Cross-Cutting Recommendation: Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

Recommendation 6.1:
Establish a Comprehensive MEAL Framework Aligned with Programme Pillars

The baseline indicators established through this study should be systematically integrated into the programme's Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) framework. This ensures that progress can be tracked, adaptations can be evidence-based, and impact can be credibly attributed to programme interventions. Key elements should include;

- Integrate the composite life skills index (baseline 3.2/5) as a key outcome indicator, with disaggregation by domain (teamwork 3.8, emotional regulation 2.7) to track progress in specific areas
- Establish county-specific benchmarks for all five pillars, recognising the significant heterogeneity in baseline conditions across counties
- Track functionality of facilities alongside availability, measuring not just whether laboratories exist but whether they are equipped and used
- Monitor attendance patterns with disaggregation by type (episodic vs. chronic) to ensure interventions are appropriately targeted
- Establish clear indicators for each recommendation, with baseline values, targets, and data sources specified
- Implement regular data collection (at least annually) to track progress, with findings used for adaptive management
- Ensure all data is disaggregated by gender, county, grade, and living arrangement to identify emerging disparities and ensure equity

The Education and Life Skills Development Programme can address these interconnected barriers in a coordinated manner by strengthening school systems, expanding life skills and psychosocial support, enhancing digital readiness, and engaging households as active partners. Through these combined actions, the programme can translate learners' strong aspirations into sustained participation, meaningful learning, and improved life outcomes. The baseline indicators established in this report provide a robust foundation for measuring progress, ensuring accountability, and adapting interventions to the specific needs of each county and the most vulnerable learners within them.

It is evident that learners are motivated, schools are committed, and caregivers value education. What is therefore needed is an integrated, equity-focused response that addresses the structural, institutional, and household-level barriers currently preventing these positive forces from translating into equitable outcomes for all.

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“Education is not a way to escape poverty, it is a way of fighting it.
MWALIMU JULIUS NYERERE

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