

Educating Girls Is a Smart Investment for a Brighter Global Future

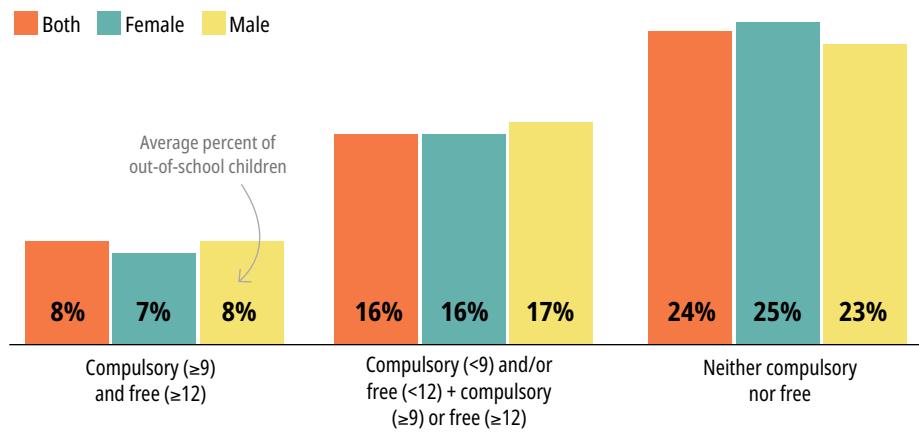
Education is essential to a lifetime of opportunity and the foundation for empowering girls, allowing them to build self-confidence, and to make choices about their futures. For families and communities, educating girls means stronger economies, healthier households, and more resilient societies.

The benefits to girls' education extend far beyond personal achievement. The world loses between \$15 trillion and 30 trillion in potential lifetime earnings when girls are denied education. In fact, if every girl across emerging economies were to complete secondary school, national GDP in those countries could grow by an average of 10 percent by 2030. When girls learn, economies grow, and communities become more resilient, breaking the cycle of poverty.



Compulsory, Free Education Cuts Dropout Rates

Girls stay in school when education is free and legally required.



Education transforms lives, but barriers are difficult to overcome

Despite decades of progress, millions of girls remain excluded from learning. As of 2024, two-thirds of countries have reached gender parity in primary school enrollment. However, 34 million girls of primary school age and 87 million of secondary school age are out of school globally. In rural and conflict-affected areas, girls are 2.5 times more likely than boys to be out of school. Many who do enroll face high dropout rates due to poverty, early marriage, and safety concerns on the journey to school. The cost of school supplies, uniforms, and transportation remains a major barrier in many communities. In areas where families struggle to afford education for all their children, sons are often prioritized.

Schools are sometimes not equipped with necessary sanitation services, including handwashing facilities with soap and water. In the world's least-developed countries, 68 percent of schools lacked these facilities, compounding difficulties faced by girls like the inability to acquire adequate menstrual products. Without access to affordable supplies or safe, private facilities at school, girls often miss classes each month, and the cumulative effect leads many to fall behind or leave school entirely.

Early marriage also derails education. Each year, nearly 12 million girls are forced to marry before they turn 18 years old, four million of them under the age of 15, ending childhoods prematurely. Nearly 650 million girls and women worldwide today were married before the age of 18. Child marriage reduces opportunities, such as finishing secondary school, and puts girls at higher risk of violence.

The returns on educating girls are measurable and profound. Each additional year of schooling can raise a girl's future income by 10 to 20 percent. These gains benefit entire families, not just individuals. Women reinvest up to 90 percent of their earnings into their households, compared to just 30 to 40 percent for men, creating better access to nutrition, healthcare, and education for the next generation. Education also improves health outcomes. Educated mothers are more likely to delay marriage and childbirth, seek prenatal care, and ensure their children receive vaccinations and adequate nutrition.

These ripple effects strengthen communities and countries. Higher rates of female education are linked to lower poverty, greater political stability, and more diverse and competitive workforces. When half of the population is equipped to participate fully, societies are better prepared to innovate, adapt, and grow.

LOOKING AHEAD

Empowering girls through education access

Removing the obstacles to girls' education requires both immediate, practical solutions and long-term systemic change.

Providing safe transportation, free sanitary products, and adequate school facilities could increase attendance and reduce dropout rates. Flexible scheduling can accommodate girls who have household responsibilities. Teacher training on gender sensitivity can help create more welcoming and supportive classrooms.

On a structural level, national policies need to guarantee free, compulsory education and protect girls from child marriage. Investment in secondary education is particularly important, as the jump from primary to secondary is when dropout rates spike. Building more schools in underserved areas, improving sanitation infrastructure, and incorporating health and life skills into the curriculum also play important roles in keeping girls enrolled and engaged.



Education empowers girls to reach their full potential, strengthens families, and fuels economic growth. These extraordinary returns cannot be achieved without widespread societal change to see girls' education as equally valuable and important as it is for boys. By working together, we can open the doors of the classroom to every girl around the world.