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**Malawi
DHS EdData Survey
2002**

Preliminary Report

**National Statistical Office
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**ORC Macro
Calverton, Maryland, USA**

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This report summarises the education data from the 2002 Malawi DHS EdData Survey (MDES) carried out by the National Statistical Office (NSO) of Malawi, with support and assistance from the Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOES&T). Technical assistance for the MDES was provided by ORC Macro. Three organizations provided funding for the MDES: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Malawi; the Department for International Development (DfID)/Malawi; and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)/Malawi. Funding for the overall DHS EdData Activity, including the development of the model survey instruments, was provided by USAID's Office of Education in the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade.

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Additional information about the 2002 MDES and the DHS EdData Activity may be obtained by writing to: DHS EdData, ORC Macro, 11785 Beltsville Drive, Suite 300, Calverton, MD 20705 (Telephone: 301-572-0200; Fax: 301-572-0983; E-mail: reports@macroint.com; Internet: <http://www.dhseddta.com>).

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I. INTRODUCTION

The 2002 Malawi DHS EdData Survey (MDES) was carried out by the National Statistical Office (NSO) of Malawi from 13 May to 19 July, 2002, with assistance from the Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOES&T). Three organizations provided funding for the MDES: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Malawi; the Department for International Development (DfID)/Malawi; and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)/Malawi. Funding for the overall DHS EdData Activity, including the development of the model survey instruments, was provided by USAID's Office of Education in the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade.

This report provides preliminary data from the 2002 MDES. A final report providing comprehensive analysis of the MDES will be published early in 2003. While considered provisional, the survey results presented here are not expected to differ significantly from those presented in the final report.

The 2002 MDES provides information about the decisions households make about schooling. DHS EdData investigates this decision-making process, focusing on major factors that influence the demand for schooling: the costs of schooling (monetary and non-monetary), and the perceived benefits of schooling. The MDES also provides information about rates of school participation among youth age 5-24.

A scientifically-selected set of households was included in the 2002 MDES, and within those households, parents/guardians were interviewed about the education of their primary school-age children. These parent/guardian respondents answered questions about their own background, the reasons for their school-age children never having attended school or having dropped out of school, household expenditures on schooling and other contributions to schooling, parent/guardians' perceptions of the benefits of schooling and of school quality, distances and travel times to schools, the frequency of and reasons for pupil absenteeism, and other information that will be helpful to education policymakers and administrators.

II. SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

A. Questionnaires

Three questionnaires were used for the 2002 MDES: the Household Questionnaire, the Parent/Guardian Questionnaire, and the Eligible Child Questionnaire.

Model survey instruments were modified by the NSO in consultation with technical institutions and local organizations so as to reflect relevant issues in education in Malawi. A series of questionnaire design meetings was organized. The NSO, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOES&T), the Department for International Development (DFID), USAID, and ORC Macro were represented in these meetings. The questionnaires were translated from English into Chichewa and Chitumbuka.

The household questionnaire listed all of the people who were either members of the household or visitors at the time the household was surveyed. The three purposes of the MDES Household Questionnaire were to: 1) list all household members and visitors; 2) identify which children were eligible (qualified) to be covered by the Eligible Child Questionnaire and collect background information on these children's parents; and 3) identify a parent or guardian as the respondent for each eligible child. Children age 6-14 were eligible to be covered by the Eligible Child Questionnaire.

The Parent/Guardian Questionnaire collected background information on each parent/guardian respondent and on general education issues. Information was collected on the parent/guardian's age, education, literacy, and religion. Questions were also asked about the walking time and distance to the nearest primary and secondary schools and household participation in school activities. Information was also collected on each primary school attended by the children for whom the parent/guardian responded, including the school type and location, the reason for selection of that school, and perceived school quality.

The Eligible Child Questionnaire collected different kinds of information about each eligible child, depending on the child's schooling status. While the subject of the Eligible Child Questionnaire was the eligible child and his/her schooling, the respondent for the questionnaire was the child's parent/guardian, as the purpose of the questionnaire was to collect information on issues from the parent/guardian's perspective. Data were collected on the following topics, according to a child's schooling status:

- Schooling background and participation during the current school year (attended school during the 2002 school year, dropped out of school, or never attended school)
- Frequency of and reasons for pupil absenteeism, household expenditures on schooling, other costs of schooling (for children who attended school during the 2001 school year)
- Reasons for dropping out of school (for children who have dropped out of school)
- Reasons for not attending school during the 2002 school year (for children who have never attended school)
- Children's eating patterns

B. Pretest

Pretest training and fieldwork took place from 8-19 April 2002. For this exercise, nine interviewers were trained. The questionnaires were tested in and around Zomba in Chichewa. The pretest fieldwork was conducted over several days (13-16 April). A total of 108 households were interviewed and 120 Parent/Guardian Questionnaires and 367 Eligible Child Questionnaires were completed. Based on the results of the pretest, minor changes in the pretest survey questionnaires were made before the main survey fieldwork was conducted.

C. Training

From 13 to 24 May, 2002, training was undertaken for the 2002 MDES. A total of 46 persons participated in the main survey training for interviewers, including the 6 supervisors. A two-week training was conducted using the DHS EdData Survey training procedures, including class presentations, mock interviews, and tests. Supervisors were trained during a one-day session.

D. Fieldwork

Six interviewing teams carried out data collection for the 2002 MDES. Each team was composed of one supervisor, six interviewers, and one driver. Staff from NSO coordinated and supervised fieldwork activities, with the assistance of MOES&T staff. ORC Macro staff also participated in field supervision. In the field, local guides assisted interviewing teams in locating selected households for interviews. Data were collected over a two month period, from 27 May through 19 July, 2002.

E. Data Processing

All questionnaires for the MDES were returned to the NSO office in Zomba for data processing. Data processing consisted of office editing, the coding of open-ended questions, data entry, verification, and editing of the computer-identified errors. A team of four data entry clerks, data editors, and a data entry supervisor processed the data. Data entry and editing started in early June, using the computer package ISSA (Integrated System for Survey Analysis), which was specifically designed to process data from large-scale household surveys of this type.

F. Sample Design and Implementation

The sampling frame for this survey is the list of enumeration areas (EAs) developed for the 1998 Malawi Census of Population and Housing. A total of 129 clusters were selected, including 18 clusters in urban areas and 111 clusters in rural areas. In the MDES sampling frame, the number of EAs selected in each district was not proportional to total population; rather, urban areas were over-sampled in order to generate unbiased urban estimates. Under the 2000 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS), a complete household listing and mapping exercise was undertaken in each EA from April through May 2000. This exercise provided a basis for second-stage sampling for the 2000 MDHS—and later, for the 2002 MDES.

The 2002 MDES sample was designed to provide reliable estimates of important household and individual characteristics for Malawi as a whole, urban and rural areas, and each of the three regions in Malawi (Northern, Central, and Southern).

III. RESULTS

A. Response Rates

Table 1 shows response rates for the 2002 MDES. A total of 3,866 households were selected, of which 3,325 were occupied. Of the 3,325 occupied households, 3,290 were interviewed successfully, yielding a household response rate of 99 percent.¹

In the interviewed households, 2,073 parents/guardians were identified to be interviewed and completed interviews were conducted with 2,070 of these parents/guardians, yielding a response rate of nearly 100 percent.²

Number of households, number of interviews and response rates, according to residence, Malawi DES 2002			
Result	Urban	Rural	Total
Household Interviews			
Households sampled	531	3335	3866
Household occupied	466	2859	3325
Completed	460	2830	3290
No household member at home	2	16	18
Entire household absent	8	40	48
Refused	2	3	5
Dwelling vacant	29	216	245
Dwelling destroyed	28	220	248
Dwelling not found	2	10	12
Household response rate	98.7	99.0	98.9
Parent/Guardian Interviews			
Eligible parents/guardians	283	1790	2073
Completed	282	1788	2070
Parent/guardian response rate	99.6	99.9	99.9
Children's Questionnaires			
Eligible children found	540	3239	3779
Children's questionnaires completed	539	3237	3776
Children response rate	99.8	99.9	99.9
Overall children response rate	98.2	98.8	98.7

Since the parents/guardians responded to the questions for their children and the children for whom they are responsible, the eligible child questionnaire response rate reflects the percentage of

¹ Occupied households exclude the following categories: entire household absent, dwelling vacant, dwelling destroyed, and household moved. The household response rate is calculated from those households expected to have been interviewed. The categories constituting 'occupied' and hence the denominator for the calculation of the response rate include: completed, no household member at home, refused, and dwelling not found. The numerator for the calculation of the household response rate is 'completed.'

² Of the 3,290 households that were successfully interviewed, 2,051 households had members in the eligible child age range of 6-14, including 280 households in urban and 1,771 households in rural areas. A total of 2,070 parent/guardian respondents were interviewed in these 2,051 households, for an average of 1.01 parent/guardian respondents per household.

eligible children for whom data were collected. A total of 3,779 eligible children were identified and data were collected on 3,776 of these children, yielding a response rate of nearly 100 percent. The overall children response rate, which is about 99 percent, is the product of the household response rate, the parent/guardian response rate, and the eligible child response rate.

B. School Attendance Rates

The MDES collected information about school attendance in the 2002 and 2001 school years among youth age 5-24. This information is used below to calculate the net and gross attendance ratios (NAR and GAR), and the dropout and repetition rates (which are addressed in section C of this chapter).

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 present primary school and secondary school net and gross attendance ratios and the gender parity index by household residence and region. The net attendance ratio (NAR) indicates participation in schooling among those of official school age, which is age 6-13 for primary and 14-17 for secondary. The gross attendance ratio (GAR) indicates school attendance among youth of any age, from age 5-24, and is expressed as a percentage of the school-age population for that level of schooling. The GAR is nearly always higher than the NAR for the same level, because the GAR includes participation by youth who are older or younger than the official age range for that level. A NAR of 100 percent would indicate that all of the children in the official age range for the level are attending that level. The GAR can exceed 100 if there is significant overage or underage participation at that level of schooling.

The gender parity index (GPI) measures sex-related differences in school attendance ratios: It is calculated by dividing the gross attendance ratio for females by the gross attendance ratio for males. If the primary school GAR for females and males were the same, say 70, then the GPI would be 70/70, or 1, showing parity or equality between the rates of participation among female and male children. However, if males participate at a higher rate than do females, the GPI would be below 1. The closer the GPI is to 0, the greater is the gender disparity in favor of males. A GPI greater than 1 indicates a gender disparity in favor of females, meaning that a higher proportion of females than males attends that level of schooling.

Primary school attendance rates

As illustrated in Table 2.1, most primary-school-age children (81 percent of children age 6-13) attend primary school. There is no difference in the net attendance ratio (NAR) by sex, but urban-rural and regional differences remain: 90 percent of children in urban areas and 80 percent in rural areas attend primary school.

Regional differences are substantial. In the Southern region, about 76 percent of the children age 6-13 attend primary school, compared with 84 percent in the Central and 93 percent in the Northern region. Within regions, the differences in school attendance rates by sex are minimal (see Figure 1).

The most striking differences in NAR at the primary level are by wealth.³ Among children age 6-13 in the wealthiest quintile, 91 percent attend primary school, compared with only 73 percent in the poorest quintile (see Figure 2).

³ The asset index measures socioeconomic status in terms of assets or wealth, rather than in terms of income or consumption. The assets used to form this index include: ownership of radio, television, paraffin lamp, bicycle, motorcycle/scooter, car/truck; lighting, water and fuel sources; sanitation facilities; and floor material. Each household asset used for the index was assigned a weight generated through principal components analysis, which calculated the importance of each element of the index. These asset scores were standardized in relation to a standard normal distribution and then used to create the break points that define the wealth quintiles.

In Malawi, a sizeable proportion of primary school pupils is outside the official age range for primary schooling: whereas the primary school NAR is 81, the GAR at that level is 115, indicating that for every 81 pupils age 6-13, there are 34 pupils who are either younger than age 6 or older than age 13. While the NAR is 81 for both male and female youth, the male GAR exceeds the female GAR, indicating that male pupils are more likely than female pupils to be outside the official age range. The gender parity index at the primary level is .9, suggesting that there is not a large gender gap in primary school attendance among male and female youth.

Background characteristic	Net attendance ratio (NAR) ¹			Gross attendance ratio (GAR) ²			Gender parity index ³
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Residence							
Urban	90.0	90.1	90.1	131.2	123.2	127.0	0.9
Rural	79.9	79.7	79.8	116.3	109.9	113.1	0.9
Region							
Northern	91.8	94.1	93.0	134.4	123.5	128.8	0.9
Central	82.3	85.2	83.8	118.1	119.2	118.7	1.0
Southern	77.7	74.1	75.9	114.4	101.8	108.1	0.9
Wealth quintile							
Poorest	71.8	74.4	73.1	109.8	102.8	106.2	0.9
Second	75.6	72.6	74.0	112.0	101.4	106.4	0.9
Third	78.8	82.7	80.6	114.1	117.6	115.8	1.0
Fourth	87.4	83.1	85.4	122.4	114.0	118.5	0.9
Wealthiest	91.6	90.9	91.2	132.0	120.8	125.9	0.9
Total	81.0	80.8	80.9	117.9	111.4	114.6	0.9

¹Percentage of the primary-school age (6-13 years) population that is attending primary school. By definition the NAR cannot exceed 100%.

²Total number of primary school students, expressed as a percentage of the official primary-school-age population. If there are significant numbers of over-age and under-age students at a given level of schooling, the GAR can exceed 100.

³Ratio of the primary school GAR for females to the GAR for males.

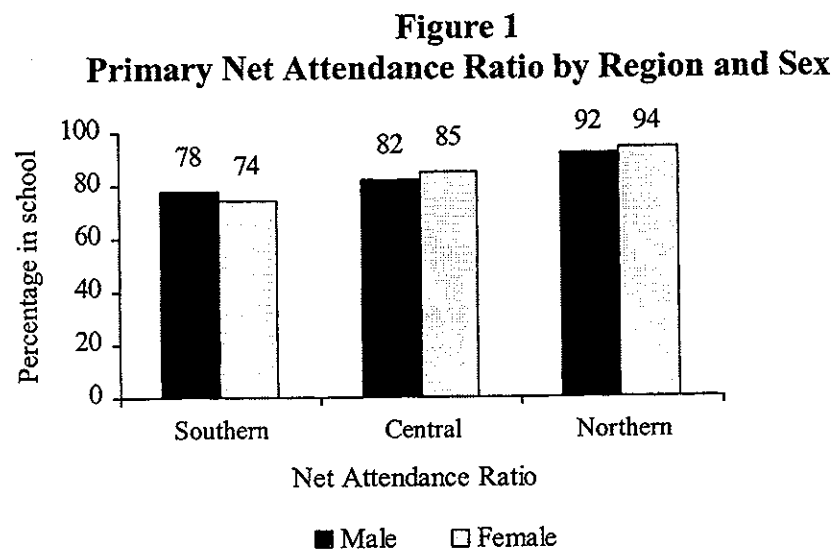
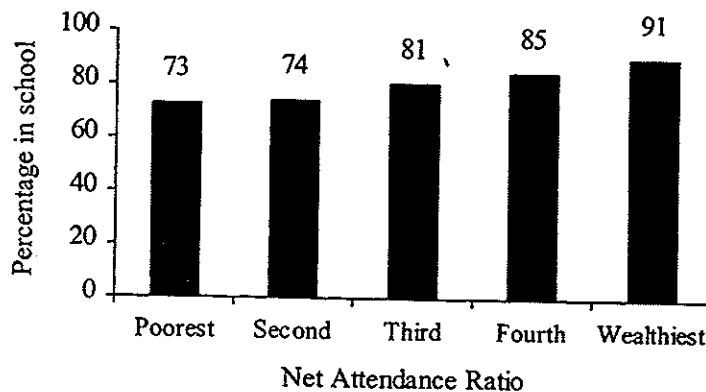


Figure 2
Primary Net Attendance Ratio by Wealth Quintile



Secondary school attendance rates

At the secondary level, a far lower proportion of school-age children attends school than is the case at the primary level: Only 9 percent of youth age 14-17 attend secondary school (see Table 2.2). Urban youth age 14-17 are three times as likely to attend secondary school as their peers in rural areas (21 versus 7 percent). It should be noted, however, that these differences in rates of participation partly reflect the supply of secondary schooling. Since the majority of secondary schools are located in urban rather than rural areas, youth in rural areas may move to live with relatives or non-relatives in urban areas in order to attend secondary school. In the MDES, youth who have moved to live in households in urban areas are counted as urban residents. However, if secondary school students from rural areas live in boarding schools located in urban areas, they are counted as residents of rural areas because they remain members of those households. In summary, the overall effect of secondary student migration from rural to urban areas is likely to add to the urban-rural disparity in attendance ratios.

While there is a minimal gender difference at the national level (8 percent of female and 10 percent of male youth age 14-17 attend secondary school), there are striking gender differences in the NAR by region (see Figure 3). In the Southern region, 6 percent of both male and female youth age 14-17 attend secondary school. In the Northern region, however, while 21 percent of female youth age 14-17 attend secondary school, only 12 percent of male youth in the same age range attend secondary school. The opposite relationship obtains in the Central region, with 8 percent of female and 13 percent of male youth of secondary school age attending secondary school.

Regional differences in the secondary NAR are considerable, and follow a pattern similar to that at the primary level: 16 percent of youth age 14-17 attend secondary school in the Northern region, compared with 10 and 6 percent in the Central and Southern regions, respectively. These regional differences may reflect the student migration pattern discussed above.

Table 2.2 Secondary school attendance ratios							
Secondary net attendance ratios (NAR), gross attendance ratios (GAR), and the gender parity index (GPI) for the de jure household population age 5-24, by sex, according to background characteristics, Malawi DES 2002							
Background characteristic	Net attendance ratio (NAR) ¹			Gross attendance ratio (GAR) ²			Gender parity index ³
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Residence							
Urban	18.2	23.4	20.8	57.3	57.7	57.5	1.0
Rural	8.3	5.7	7.1	29.2	14.2	22.0	0.5
Region							
Northern	12.0	20.5	16.1	52.7	46.9	49.9	0.9
Central	13.0	7.5	10.3	34.3	20.4	27.5	0.6
Southern	6.1	6.3	6.2	27.9	14.7	21.5	0.5
Wealth quintile							
Poorest	3.0	2.0	2.5	15.7	5.4	10.8	0.3
Second	8.1	3.5	5.8	22.6	13.0	17.8	0.6
Third	3.0	4.2	3.6	18.0	9.4	14.0	0.5
Fourth	6.6	8.2	7.3	31.8	13.8	23.3	0.4
Wealthiest	26.1	19.9	23.0	72.0	52.0	62.1	0.7
Total	9.6	8.0	8.8	32.7	19.8	26.5	0.6

¹Percentage of the secondary-school age (14-17 years) population that is attending secondary school. By definition the NAR cannot exceed 100%.

²Total number of secondary school students, expressed as a percentage of the official secondary-school-age population. If there are significant numbers of over-age and under-age students at a given level of schooling, the GAR can exceed 100.

³Ratio of the secondary school GAR for females to the GAR for males.

Figure 3
Secondary Net Attendance Ratio by Region and Sex

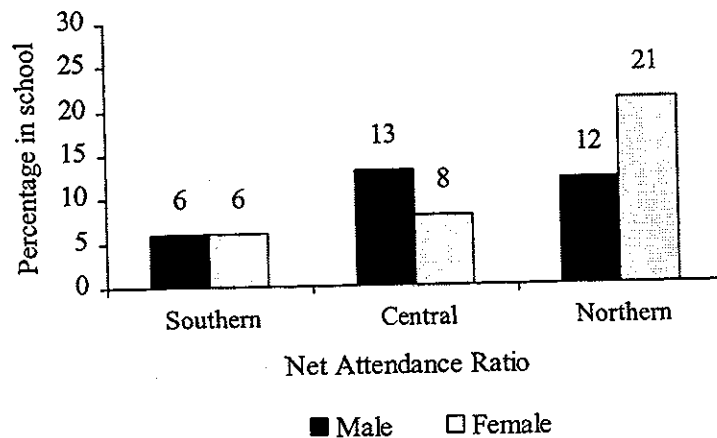
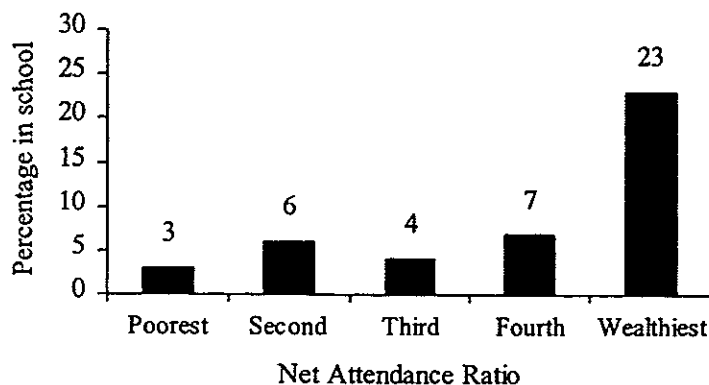


Figure 4
Secondary Net Attendance Ratio by Wealth Quintile



Differences in the NAR by wealth at the secondary level are far more dramatic than wealth differences in the NAR at the primary level (see Figure 4). While nearly 1 in 4 of the wealthiest youth age 14-17 attends secondary school, only about 1 in 33 of the poorest youth attends secondary school.

At the secondary level, 2 in 3 students are outside the official age range. The total GAR is 27, compared with the NAR of 9, so that for every 9 students age 14-17, there are 18 who are outside the official age range (see Table 2.2). Male youth are far more likely than female youth to attend secondary school—the GAR among males is 33, compared with just 20 among females—as reflected in the GPI of .6.

C. Primary School Pupil Flow Rates

Repetition and dropout rates describe the flow of pupils through the system. The repetition rates produced using the MDES education data indicate the percentage of pupils who attended a particular standard in 2001, who then attended that same standard in the 2002 school year. The dropout rates show the percentage of pupils in a standard in 2001 who no longer attended school in the 2002 school year. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 present repetition and dropout rates, by primary school standard, according to pupils’ background characteristics.

Repetition rates

The repetition rates produced using the MDHS data do not distinguish between children who completed a school year and then repeated the same standard in the following year, and children who interrupted their schooling during one school year and returned to the same standard in the following school year. The latter phenomenon may be quite common, particularly in standard 1. Children starting school may have difficulty adjusting to the school environment, and school staff or children’s families may decide that it is best for some children—especially the youngest—to stop attending standard 1 that year, and to return to school the following year when they are more mature and better prepared for schooling. Other children may remain in standard 1 throughout the entire school year, and yet not be prepared to continue to standard 2 the following year, so they repeat standard 1 in the following school year. In some schools, particularly where preprimary school is not offered, children may attend standard 1 for two years or longer, with the first year of standard 1 being treated as preprimary school.

The repetition rate is highest in standard 1, with 41 percent of pupils repeating the standard. About 1 in 4 pupils repeats standards 2 and 3, and 1 in 5 repeats standard 4. Repetition rates are lower

(from 10 to 12 percent) in standards 5 through 7, but rise again in standard 8. About 1 in 5 pupils repeats the final standard of primary school, suggesting that as children near the end of primary, they are slightly more likely to repeat a standard—perhaps in order to improve their chances of finding places in secondary school.

Background characteristic	Primary school standard							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Sex								
Male	41.3	27.0	29.0	20.8	13.3	10.8	9.6	22.1
Female	40.0	21.6	26.1	17.5	7.2	8.6	14.9	14.2
Residence								
Urban	47.6	12.7	27.3	28.2	9.0	8.2	12.3	(11.9)
Rural	40.0	25.5	27.7	17.8	10.5	10.1	12.2	20.9
Region								
Northern	47.1	17.4	13.9	22.6	4.0	12.5	(22.3)	28.7
Central	38.7	24.1	29.4	17.9	8.6	7.7	10.4	10.8
Southern	41.0	25.8	28.9	19.3	13.3	11.2	10.9	24.7
Total	40.6	24.2	27.7	19.1	10.3	9.8	12.2	19.5

Notes: The repetition rate, by standard, is the percentage of pupils in a standard in a given school year who attend that same standard in the following school year. An asterisk indicates that a figure has been suppressed because it is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases. Parentheses indicate that a figure is based on fewer than 50 unweighted cases.

In most of the primary standards, male pupils are more likely to repeat standards than are female pupils. Most notably, male pupils are more likely than female pupils to repeat standard 8 (22 versus 14 percent).

Dropout rates

About 9 percent of standard 1 pupils dropped out of school during or after standard 1. Dropout rates decline through the remaining lower standards, ranging from 5 to 6 percent in standards 2 through 4. Rates rise in standards 5 through 7, to between 10 and 12 percent, and spike at 20 percent at standard 8. It should be noted that 'dropout' is perhaps not the most accurate term for school leaving at the end of the primary school cycle, as some pupils leaving school likely would stay in school if offered a place at secondary school. Dropout that occurs because of a shortage in the supply of schooling is often referred to as 'push-out' instead.

Table 3.2 Dropout rates by primary school standard								
Dropout rates for the de jure household population age 5-24 years by primary school standard, according to background characteristics, Malawi DES 2002								
Background characteristic	Primary school standard							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Sex								
Male	7.7	3.9	5.8	3.9	10.7	12.0	8.3	19.8
Female	9.4	7.6	3.8	8.8	9.8	11.6	11.5	20.7
Residence								
Urban	0.0	3.8	3.6	1.5	2.4	2.9	4.0	(12.1)
Rural	9.3	6.1	5.0	7.0	11.6	13.7	10.9	21.5
Region								
Northern	0.0	0.3	0.5	2.4	7.5	13.9	(4.9)	12.0
Central	5.4	3.7	4.1	3.7	10.7	8.2	9.4	17.5
Southern	12.8	9.2	6.5	9.5	10.5	14.8	12.5	26.0
Total	8.5	5.9	4.8	6.3	10.3	11.8	9.9	20.1

Notes: The dropout rate, by standard, is the percentage of pupils in a standard in a given school year who do not attend school in the following school year. An asterisk indicates that a figure has been suppressed because it is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases. Parentheses indicate that a figure is based on fewer than 50 unweighted cases.

D. Factors Affecting Children's School Attendance

Reasons for never having attended school

Table 4.1 presents information about why children age 6-14 who have never attended primary school did not attend primary school during the 2002 school year.⁴ This table shows the percentages, by sex, for whom each factor partly explains why the child did not attend primary school during the 2002 school year. For each child, more than one factor may be involved in explaining why the child did not attend school. Factors are grouped under four headings: cost-related factors, child factors, school factors, and other.

The most commonly-cited reason for children not attending school was the child being disinterested in attending school (28 percent). This reason was cited more often for older (age 8-14) than younger (age 6-7) school-age children (38 and 21 percent, respectively). Interestingly, only about 1 percent of children did not attend school partly because the parent/guardian considers school not to be important or because what is taught in school is not seen to be useful in a child's life.

About 1 in 4 children who had never attended school did not attend because the school was too far from the household. The distance to the nearest primary school was less a factor among children age 8-14 than among children age 6-7 (15 versus 31 percent). Another factor related to age and maturity, the perception that children are too young or not ready to attend school, was listed as a reason for children not attending school for 25 percent of children age 6-7, and was much less common among older children.

The monetary and non-monetary costs of schooling were cited infrequently as factors in children not attending primary school. About 14 percent of children who have never attended school did not attend in 2002 partly because of the monetary costs of schooling. Monetary costs were cited

⁴ The survey inquired into reasons for children not attending school now because if a child is 12 years old and has never attended school, there may have been various reasons at different points in time. Perhaps at age 6, the child was considered not able to walk the distance to school, while at age 10, the child was needed to do work to support the household.

more often as reasons for not attending among male (17 percent) than among female children (12 percent), and were mentioned far more frequently for older than younger children (22 percent among children age 8-14, and 9 percent among children age 6-7). Only 4 percent of children who have never attended school did not attend because their labor was needed to support the household.

About 9 percent of children who have never attended school did not attend during the 2002 school year because they have been very ill for three months or longer, and 8 percent because of a physical or mental disability that renders them unable to attend.

Poor school quality was rarely cited as a contributing factor to non-attendance.⁵ None of the parent/guardian respondents said that a shortage of secondary school places or a shortage of jobs for school graduates were reasons for children not currently attending school.

Reasons for dropping out of primary school

Table 4.2 presents information about why children age 6-14 who dropped out of primary school left school, either during the cycle or at the end of primary school. For 1 in 3 children age 6-14 who have left school, the perception that the child had completed enough schooling or no longer wanted to attend, was a factor in school leaving.

For 1 in 5 children age 6-14 who have left school, parents/guardians cited the monetary cost of schooling as a factor in children's school leaving. The need for children to do work in support of the household was a factor in school leaving for 1 in 4 of these youth, with this factor being more common for female than male youth (31 versus 19 percent).

By comparison, other factors were relatively uncommon. About 11 percent of the children who have dropped out of school left because they were very ill for three months or longer, and 5 percent because of a disability.

About 11 percent of school-leavers left school because they failed examinations or had to repeat classes. Poor school quality was cited as a reason for dropping out of school for 7 percent of school-leavers, while the distance to the nearest school with the required standard/form was a factor in dropping out of school for 8 percent of school-leavers. Less than 1 percent of children who have dropped out of school left partly because there were no secondary school places. Only 2 percent of children age 6-14 stopped attending school partly because of the perception that school graduates cannot find jobs.

⁵ Poor school quality includes one or more of the following factors: Teachers not performing well, lack of pupil safety at school, school buildings and/or facilities being in poor condition, and classrooms being overcrowded.

Table 4.1 Factors in children never having attended school

Percentage of children age 6-14 who have never attended school by reasons for not attending, according to background characteristics, Malawi DES 2002

Background characteristic	Cost-related factors			Child-related factors				School-related factors							Number of children
	Monetary cost	Labor needed	No interest	Disabled	Lengthy illness	Too old to start	Too young to start	Travel to school unsafe	School too far	Poor school quality	School not relevant	Schooling not important	Other reasons	No reason given	
Male	16.8	2.3	30.0	7.5	7.7	1.6	18.6	9.9	21.2	3.8	0.6	0.7	16.3	0.9	214
Female	11.7	5.0	25.3	8.7	10.8	1.7	16.5	11.1	28.0	3.1	1.3	0.0	15.7	0.5	200
Age															
6-7	9.2	2.3	21.1	7.2	8.6	0.0	24.8	14.1	31.0	4.8	1.0	0.3	18.2	1.2	248
8-14	22.0	5.5	37.6	9.3	10.1	4.2	6.8	5.1	14.8	1.4	0.8	0.5	12.8	0.0	166
Residence															
Urban	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	17
Rural	14.3	3.7	28.3	8.4	8.5	1.8	17.8	9.7	23.8	3.6	1.0	0.4	16.0	0.8	397
Region															
Northern	(11.5)	(0.0)	(6.7)	(23.4)	(8.4)	(0.0)	(11.8)	(21.2)	(5.2)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(25.3)	(1.8)	(1.5)	18
Central	20.5	6.2	27.4	10.7	8.6	2.7	15.1	15.4	24.1	4.2	1.7	0.0	12.5	0.0	150
Southern	10.7	2.3	29.4	5.4	9.6	1.2	18.6	7.4	24.9	2.9	0.5	0.6	19.2	1.1	246
Total	14.3	3.6	27.7	8.1	9.2	1.7	17.6	10.5	24.5	3.5	0.9	0.4	16.0	0.7	414

Note: More than one response is possible. An asterisk indicates that a figure has been suppressed because it is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases. Parentheses indicate that a figure is based on fewer than 50 unweighted cases.

Table 4.2 Factors in primary school pupil dropout

Percentage of children age 6-14 who have dropped out of primary school, by reasons for leaving and mean age of dropout, according to background characteristics, Malawi DES 2002

Background characteristic	Cost-related factors		Child-related factors				School factors						Number of children	Mean age of dropout	
	Monetary cost	Labor needed	Failed exams/had to repeat	Had enough school	Dis-abled	Illness	Too far to school	Travel to school unsafe	Poor school quality	No secondary school places	No jobs	Other reasons			No reason given
Sex															
Male	18.8	18.9	13.9	39.9	6.0	11.4	5.6	2.7	7.3	1.0	3.5	10.2	0.5	135	9.2
Female	21.4	31.3	8.4	34.7	4.8	10.7	10.3	3.1	6.9	0.9	1.4	4.4	0.5	149	8.9
Age															
6-7	(13.4)	(23.5)	(0.0)	(39.6)	(4.5)	(8.0)	(15.1)	(5.7)	(9.6)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(11.2)	(0.0)	47	(5.8)
8-14	21.5	25.8	13.2	36.7	5.5	11.7	6.6	2.4	6.6	1.1	2.9	6.3	0.6	236	9.7
Residence															
Urban	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	21	*
Rural	18.3	23.8	10.4	37.9	5.4	11.2	8.7	3.2	7.7	0.8	2.6	7.7	0.6	262	9.0
Region															
Northern	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	4	*
Central	15.1	22.7	16.2	39.5	8.6	22.4	8.3	1.4	6.4	1.7	5.6	3.9	0.0	91	8.6
Southern	22.5	26.9	8.6	36.5	3.6	5.7	8.1	3.7	7.0	0.6	0.9	8.7	0.8	189	9.2
Total	20.2	25.4	11.0	37.2	5.4	11.1	8.0	2.9	7.1	0.9	2.4	7.1	0.5	284	9.0

Note: More than one response is possible. An asterisk indicates that a figure has been suppressed because it is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases. Parentheses indicate that a figure is based on fewer than 50 unweighted cases.

E. Household Expenditures on Primary Schooling

Although Free Primary Education (FPE) has reduced the monetary costs of primary schooling to households, the question remains as to what households spend on children who attend school. The 2002 MDES collected information about whether households spent money on each pupil's schooling during the 2001 school year, and if so, how much was spent on which items. Questions were asked specifically about each possible cost, including: tuition, the building/development fund, school reports, examination fees, boarding fees, uniforms and shoes and school-related clothing, books and supplies, transportation, food, private teaching, and other types of expenditures. Table 5 presents information about the percentage of pupils whose households spent money on each item.

The vast majority of primary school pupils' households spent money on schooling in the 2001 school year, regardless of the type of school attended, the pupil's sex, residence, or region. About 97 percent of primary school pupils attending public schools and 99 percent of pupils attending non-public schools spent money on one or more types of school costs.

Whereas 29 percent of non-public school pupils spent money on tuition, only 1 percent of public school pupils spent money on tuition. Pupils in non-public schools were also more likely than pupils in public schools to pay for private teaching (9 versus 3 percent) and to spend money on food (47 versus 34 percent) in the 2001 school year. The majority of pupils in both types of schools spent money on books and supplies (91 percent of non-public and 84 percent of public school pupils), and about three-quarters of pupils spent money on uniforms and/or clothing and shoes bought primarily for the child to wear to school.

In terms of incidence of expenditure, gender differences are minor. Male pupils in non-public schools, though, are more likely to have had money paid for private tutoring than are female pupils.

The incidence of expenditures on various items is higher in urban than in rural areas: For pupils attending both types of schools, households in urban areas are substantially more likely to have paid for private teaching and food. Other patterns differ by school type. For instance, public school pupils in urban areas are more likely than those in rural areas to have spent money on the building/development fund, while the opposite relationship obtains among pupils in non-public schools.

Table 5 Incidence of household expenditures on primary schooling

Percentage of primary school pupils whose households spent money on various costs of schooling in the 2001 school year, by type of school attended, according to background characteristics, Malawi DES 2002

Background characteristic	Expenditures on primary schooling (%)											One or more types of expenditure	Number of primary school pupils
	Tuition	Development fund	School Reports	Exam fees	Boarding fees	Uniforms and clothing	Books and supplies	Transport	Food	Private Teaching	Other		
PUBLIC SCHOOL PUPILS													
Sex													
Male	1.2	60.5	15.8	3.4	0.5	70.3	82.5	0.7	34.1	4.0	2.4	96.8	1234
Female	1.2	56.3	15.7	3.5	0.0	73.7	84.4	0.5	34.3	2.7	1.6	97.2	1285
Residence													
Urban	2.5	76.6	54.0	19.1	0.0	67.5	94.6	0.9	59.1	15.1	1.8	99.7	285
Rural	1.0	56.1	10.9	1.4	0.3	72.6	82.1	0.6	31.0	1.8	2.0	96.7	2233
Region													
Northern	3.5	37.4	8.9	3.1	0.8	76.6	78.5	1.0	18.5	1.4	3.7	94.8	287
Central	0.9	49.5	9.8	3.5	0.4	70.5	86.5	0.6	28.3	4.8	0.9	96.8	1098
Southern	0.9	72.4	23.2	3.5	0.0	72.4	81.8	0.5	43.9	2.4	2.6	97.8	1133
Wealth quintile													
Poorest	1.7	57.4	11.4	1.9	0.1	63.9	78.8	1.4	25.9	0.6	1.8	95.1	446
Second	1.3	54.8	8.9	1.8	1.1	69.0	78.4	0.5	29.6	0.5	2.1	96.9	441
Third	0.5	57.5	11.4	0.4	0.0	74.3	83.6	0.5	33.7	0.5	2.1	95.7	518
Fourth	0.5	63.1	15.4	3.6	0.0	72.5	82.3	0.3	35.8	0.9	2.3	97.6	533
Wealthiest	2.0	58.3	28.4	8.4	0.2	78.2	91.9	0.4	43.1	12.4	1.6	99.2	580
Total	1.2	58.4	15.8	3.4	0.2	72.1	83.5	0.6	34.2	3.3	2.0	97.0	2518
NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL PUPILS													
Sex													
Male	26.6	50.4	15.4	6.5	3.9	80.1	93.0	2.5	43.1	10.7	3.4	97.8	71
Female	31.5	51.4	8.3	3.5	4.3	80.0	88.7	1.7	51.5	6.7	2.5	99.6	65
Residence													
Urban	70.5	31.4	13.6	1.5	0.0	92.9	100.0	2.9	74.7	25.0	4.9	100.0	43
Rural	9.5	60.0	11.3	6.7	6.0	74.0	86.8	1.8	34.2	1.2	2.0	98.0	92
Region													
Northern	16.4	41.3	11.7	0.0	0.0	84.2	92.2	2.0	34.4	3.3	6.5	98.2	29
Central	(57.3)	(42.1)	(11.9)	(7.5)	(18.0)	(77.8)	(78.3)	(6.4)	(53.3)	(32.4)	(6.8)	(100.0)	31
Southern	22.3	58.3	12.2	6.0	0.0	79.3	95.7	0.4	49.6	1.3	0.0	98.3	75
Wealth quintile													
Poorest	(9.9)	(60.4)	(9.9)	(9.9)	(9.9)	(67.2)	(92.7)	(1.2)	(24.4)	(0.0)	(5.0)	(100.0)	23
Second	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	15
Third	(0.0)	(75.3)	(15.3)	(7.6)	(0.0)	(92.8)	(95.0)	(0.0)	(48.2)	(0.0)	(1.1)	(95.0)	25
Fourth	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	18
Wealthiest	68.4	34.8	16.6	4.8	6.0	89.4	99.5	4.8	74.7	22.1	4.8	99.5	54
Total	29.0	50.9	12.0	5.0	4.1	80.0	91.0	2.1	47.1	8.8	3.0	98.7	136
Total	2.6	58.0	15.6	3.5	0.4	72.5	83.9	0.7	34.8	3.6	2.0	97.1	2654

Note: An asterisk indicates that a figure has been suppressed because it is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases. Parentheses indicate that a figure is based on fewer than 50 unweighted cases.

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F. Pupil Absenteeism

Table 6 presents data on the extent of absenteeism among primary school pupils in the 2001 school year and on reasons for those absences.⁶ Pupils who are absent frequently or for long periods of time are likely to have difficulty mastering the material presented in class, making absenteeism a critical education issue. Nearly all pupils (97 percent) were absent one or more days during the 2001 school year, and on average, pupils missed 16 days of school. On average, children in urban areas missed 11 days of school and those in rural areas 17 days of school during the year.

The most commonly-cited reason for absenteeism was pupil illness, with 86 percent of children missing school for this reason. In addition, 61 percent of pupils missed one or more days of school to attend a funeral. Pupils in rural areas were more likely than those in urban areas to be absent because of a funeral (63 versus 46 percent). Less than 2 percent of pupils missed school to attend an initiation ceremony.

Nearly 39 percent of pupils missed school because they did not want to go. One in 3 pupils was absent from school because his/her clothing or uniform was dirty, and more than 1 in 4 pupils missed school because of hunger.

About 13 percent of primary school pupils missed school to do some type of work (domestic, or on the family farm or business) in support of the household. Eleven percent of pupils missed some school in order to do domestic work such as caring for younger children or elderly or sick relatives, cooking or cleaning, fetching water or wood, and so on. Children age 8-14 were more likely than younger children to have been absent for this reason (11 versus 6 percent). By comparison, a considerably smaller percentage of pupils missed school to work on the family farm or in the family business, or to go to market (4 percent).

⁶ Absenteeism is defined as missing one or more complete days of school.

Table 6 Reasons for primary school pupil absenteeism in the 2001 school year

Percentage of primary school pupils who missed school in the 2001 school year, by reasons for absenteeism and mean total number of days missed, according to background characteristics, Malawi DES 2002

Background characteristic	Reason pupil missed school											Percent missing 1 or more days	Number of pupils	Mean total number of days missed	
	Work related reasons			No money for fees	Did not want to go	Funeral	Initiation ceremony	Illness	Too hungry to attend	Clothing dirty	Other				
	Domestic work	Work on family farm/business	One or more kinds of work												
Age															
6-7	6.3	2.4	7.4	8.1	45.9	52.0	1.0	86.8	26.7	27.4	3.0	96.2	377	15.6	
8-14	11.2	3.9	13.5	10.4	37.6	62.5	1.8	85.3	28.1	35.0	2.4	96.5	2292	16.2	
Sex															
Male	8.8	4.8	11.8	10.4	42.9	60.7	1.7	83.7	29.0	34.5	2.7	96.1	1310	16.3	
Female	12.1	2.6	13.5	9.8	34.8	61.4	1.6	87.3	26.8	33.4	2.3	96.8	1358	15.9	
Residence															
Urban	8.9	0.3	9.1	13.5	32.3	46.4	0.9	84.0	17.4	25.1	1.0	93.9	330	11.3	
Rural	10.7	4.2	13.2	9.6	39.7	63.1	1.8	85.8	29.3	35.2	2.7	96.8	2339	16.8	
Region															
Northern	12.3	6.3	16.5	7.1	30.8	61.2	0.1	83.8	17.9	34.4	5.2	94.8	319	14.6	
Central	8.8	3.2	10.9	5.8	33.8	56.6	0.9	85.7	31.1	35.3	1.9	96.0	1133	17.1	
Southern	11.6	3.5	13.3	14.9	45.5	65.2	2.8	85.9	27.5	32.6	2.4	97.3	1217	15.6	
Total	10.5	3.7	12.7	10.1	38.8	61.1	1.7	85.5	27.9	34.0	2.5	96.5	2669	16.1	