

Girls Leaving School Prematurely



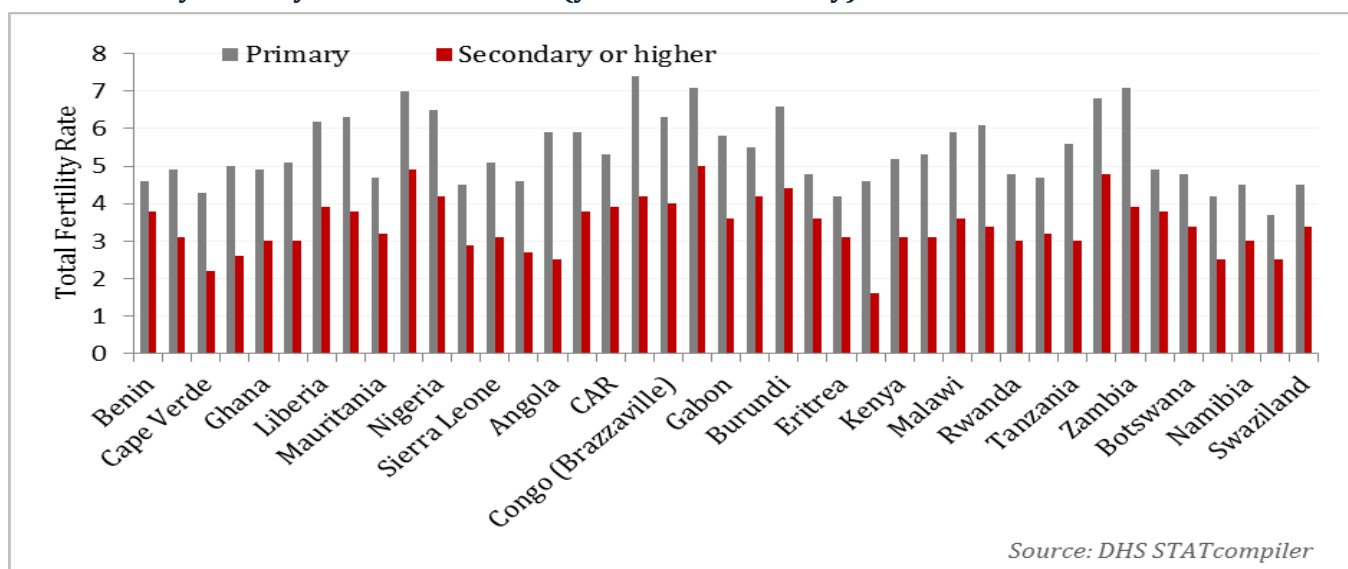
Population Horizons Factsheet No.4

Summer 2014

The near universal associations between higher levels of education and lower levels of fertility underscore not just the importance of increased access to formal education but also of staying on in

school to complete secondary education and higher. Total fertility rates are lower among women who have attained secondary education compared to those with just primary education (Shapiro, 2012).

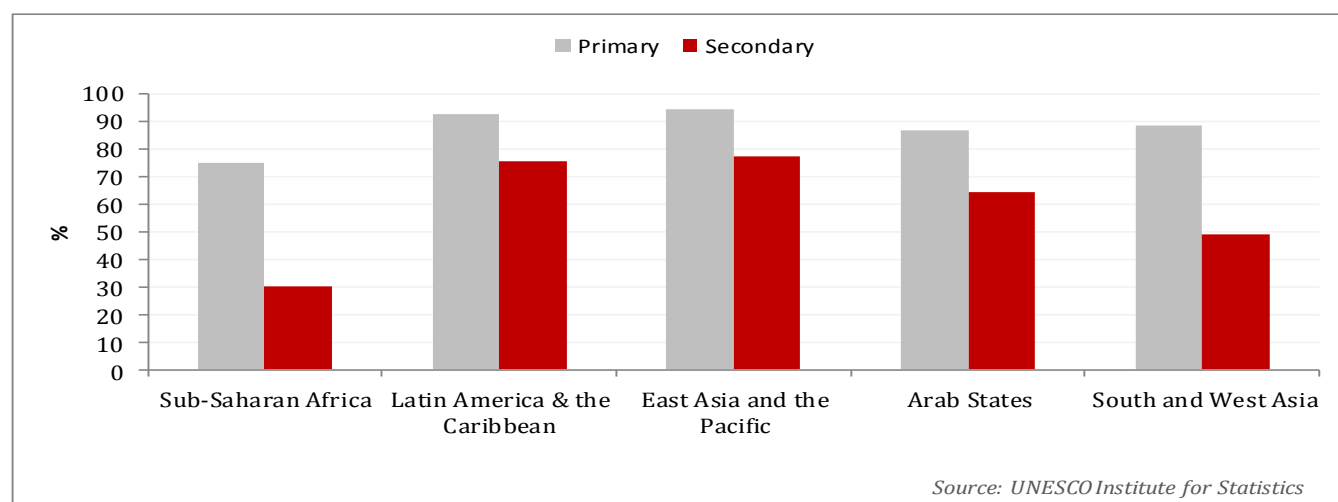
Total fertility rates by level of Education (year of latest survey)



Despite improvements in getting girls in school during the last decade, 54% of the 57 million children globally out of school are girls. The three regions with the highest proportions of girls out of school are: the Arab States (65%); Sub Saharan Africa (64%) and South and West Asia (55%) (UNESCO, 2014). UNESCO counts children as 'out of school' if they are expected never to enrol; or if they have

dropped out; or if they are expected to enrol later. Data on net enrolments in primary and secondary education in most regions show that for females they are lower in secondary than in primary education. Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest net enrolments for females in both primary and secondary education.

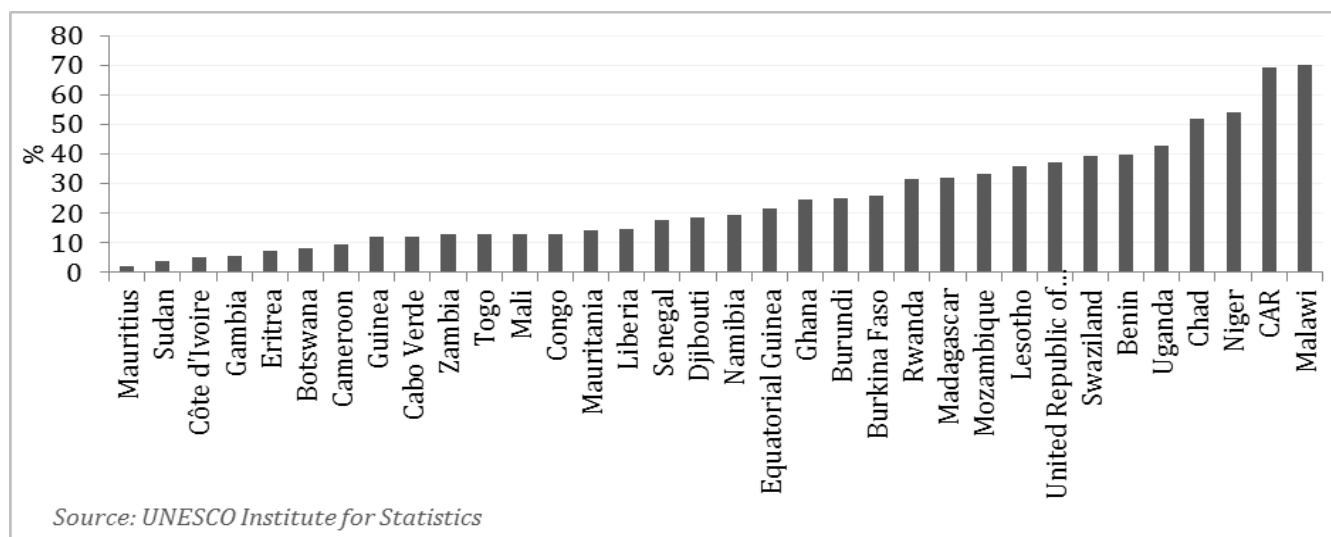
Female net enrolment rates by level of Education (latest available year)



The differences between the net enrolment rates for females in primary and secondary education are indicative of high female drop-out rates during primary education. Not only did Sub-Saharan Africa have the highest female drop-out rate in primary education of all world regions in 2012, but the drop-

out rate had increased from 40 percent in 1999 to 42 percent. South and West Asia had the second highest rate of 34 percent, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean at 21 percent. In East Asia and the Pacific the female drop-out rate was 6.7 percent (UNESCO, 2012)

Female cumulative drop-out rate to the last grade of lower secondary general education, (latest available year)



High drop-out rates among girls in Sub Saharan Africa are found not just in primary education, but continue through secondary education. There is considerable variation though in the cumulative drop-out rates between countries. Malawi, Central Africa Republic and Niger have the highest, and Mauritius, Sudan and Ivory Coast have the lowest. These differences are not straightforwardly indicative of success in keeping girls in schools. A low drop-out in the early years of secondary school *may* be correlated with low levels of enrolment (i.e. in some countries most girls drop out of education at

the transition between primary and secondary, and those who make the transition tend to complete the course). There is a handful of countries where more than two in five girls who start secondary education do not complete the last grade of secondary education. Girls who leave school prematurely without completing secondary education have a narrower range of opportunities in life. This matters not only for their own lives (and those of their children) but also for the development potential of their societies.

References

UNESCO (2012) *Opportunities Lost: The Impact of Grade Repetition and Early School Leaving, Global Education Digest*. Paris: UNESCO

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Shapiro, D. (2012). Women's education and fertility transition in sub-Saharan Africa. *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research*, 9-30.