

2.4.2. Access to education

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In 2024, more than 18 million children of primary and secondary school age were out of school. Significant regional disparities exist, as literacy rates reach 87 % in Lagos State but only 9.5 % in the North-West.460 Girls begin dropping out of school by the age of 14 at higher rates than boys and are less likely to enter the workforce.461 Child marriage, poverty, and gender bias remain major barriers to girls' education, particularly in northern Nigeria, where cultural norms and perceptions of low-quality schooling often lead families to prioritise early marriage over continued education.462 Nigeria has over 24 million underage brides.463 For more information see Child and forced marriage.

Access to education in Nigeria is further hindered by child labour, as children engaged in work have lower school attendance rates compared to those not involved in labour. According to the Nigeria Child Labour Survey 2022 released in April 2024 by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), four in ten Nigerian children (39.2 %) aged 5 to 17 are involved in child labour. The issue is most severe in rural areas (44.8 %). Most affected children work in own-use production, with over half exposed to workplace hazards.464

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