



# Education and Learning:

## Preliminary Findings from the 2023–24 Young Lives Survey (Round 7): Ethiopia

### Introduction

For more than 20 years, Young Lives has followed two cohorts, born seven years apart from infancy to early adulthood in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.<sup>1</sup> This factsheet presents preliminary findings from Round 7 of the Young Lives survey, carried out in Ethiopia in 2023–24 when the Younger Cohort was 22 years old and the Older Cohort was 29. It outlines the key educational and learning indicators underlining changes over time, by comparing the Younger Cohort at age 22 with the Older Cohort at the same age in 2016 and documenting the Younger Cohort's progression from age 15 to 22. The factsheet also reflects on the implications of the findings for achieving the Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI) targets and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

### Headlines

- Completion rates for primary (Grade 8) and lower secondary school (Grade 10) have remained the same across the two cohorts.
- The Younger Cohort are progressing faster through the school system than the Older Cohort and upper secondary (Grade 12) completion rate has increased.
- Despite improvements in upper secondary completion, tertiary education enrolment and completion have declined.
- Prolonged school and university closures and disruptions caused by conflict are associated with worsened education outcomes.
- Early life inequalities significantly predict lower grade completion and slower grade progression.
- Cross cohort comparison shows internet usage has increased, while computer usage has remained the same.
- Improvements in grade progression do not necessarily translate into better reading skills during young adulthood.
- Progress in education falls short of the Ethiopian government targets set out in Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI).

<sup>1</sup> Round 7 took place in the Young Lives study sites in Ethiopia, India and Peru. On this occasion, data was not collected in Vietnam due to a change in government procedures for the international transfer of personal data.

## Key Findings

- **Completion for primary (Grade 8) and lower secondary (Grade 10) has remained constant**, with no improvement when comparing 22-year-olds in 2016 and 2023.
- **However, the Younger Cohort is progressing faster through the school system than the Older Cohort at the same age** with more 22-year-olds completing lower secondary (Grade 10) at the intended age of 16–17 in 2023 (37%) than in 2016 (29%), suggesting a better progression through the school system.
- **Not only are more students finishing higher grades at the intended age, they are also advancing further.** The percentage of 22-year-olds completing upper secondary (Grade 12) increased from 19% in 2016 to 26% in 2023, with a higher proportion of women than men.
- **Despite improvements in upper secondary completion (Grade 12), tertiary education enrolment and completion have declined**, potentially reflecting changes in higher education entrance requirements following the country's 2021 education reform.
- **Prolonged school and university closures and disruptions caused by conflict are associated with worsened education outcomes.** Young Lives participants born in Tigray or conflict-affected areas in Amhara are less likely to complete upper secondary education or to enroll in tertiary education.
- **Early life inequalities, such as being born in the poorest households, in rural areas or with caregivers who have lower levels of formal education, significantly predict lower grade completion and slower grade progression.** Having a child by age 19 and being married before the legal age, significantly predict lower years of schooling.
- **Internet usage increased from 33% to 42% when comparing the Older Cohort with the Younger Cohort at 22-year-olds, while computer usage remained the same.** However, disparities in usage by socio-economic background might exacerbate inequalities in skills needed for better job opportunities.
- **Improvements in grade progression do not necessarily translate into better reading skills during young adulthood.** After a small improvement in reading comprehension from age 12 to 15 (2.3 percentage point increase in test scores), a decline in reading comprehension (10.2 percentage point decrease) was observed from age 15 to 22.
- **Transitions to secondary education and enrolment in tertiary education fall short of the Ethiopian government targets set out in Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI).** Therefore, education policies should focus on enhancing learning quality to ensure that those most disadvantaged do not continue advancing without acquiring foundational skills.

## The policy context for education in Ethiopia

In 2021, the Ethiopian government launched a new education roadmap, along with Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI), to enhance education quality and promote equitable access.<sup>2</sup> Over the last decade, primary school net enrolment ratio (NER) (Grades 1–6) has almost met the universal target.<sup>3</sup> However, middle school enrolment (Grades 7 and 8) lagged at just 46.6% in 2023 falling short of the universal enrolment goal. In addition, the primary completion rate in 2022–23 was 61%, lower than the 71% target, and has been decreasing for both genders since 2018–19 (Federal Ministry of Education 2023).<sup>4</sup> Despite increased enrolment in Grades 9 to 12, transitioning to lower and upper secondary education remains challenging, with only one-third of 15–18-year-olds enrolled in 2023, far below the target of 70% (Federal Ministry of Education 2021). Higher enrolment has not translated into better learning outcomes. Only 3.2% of students scored above 50% on the Ethiopia Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination between 2021 and 2023 (Federal Ministry of Education 2023).

By Round 5 of the Young Lives survey, adolescents were already lagging by two to three grades, with no improvement in learning outcomes when comparing the Younger Cohort and the Older Cohort at age 15 (Pankhurst, Araya and Woldehanna 2017). Progress toward achieving ESDP VI targets and SDG 4 (Quality education), especially SDG 4.1<sup>5</sup> and SDG 4.3,<sup>6</sup> has been challenging. This has been further hindered by compounding crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflict in several parts of Ethiopia, severe droughts, extensive flooding, and locust outbreaks (Harris et al. 2021). Learning conditions have been severely affected due to rising poverty, food insecurity, inflation, increased stress, and infrastructure disruptions, among others (Ford and Favara 2023). School and university closures during the pandemic, lasting at least eight months, and longer in conflict-affected areas, have heightened the risk that vulnerable young people may never return to formal education (Favara et al. 2022). For example, enrolment rates for Grades 1–8 fell from 95% in 2019–20 to 86% in 2020–21 and have yet to recover (Federal Ministry of Education 2021).

## Methods

This factsheet uses preliminary data from the Young Lives Round 7 survey. Young Lives participants of the Younger Cohort and Older Cohort have been followed since 2002, when they were one and eight years old, respectively. Data for Round 7 in Ethiopia was collected between October 2023 and April 2024. A total of 2,231 interviews were completed (1,535 from the Younger Cohort and 696 from the Older Cohort) which represents 74.4% of the original sample in Round 1 (Younger Cohort: 76.8%; Older Cohort: 69.6%) (Molina et al. 2025). Most of the interviews were carried out in person, but 8.7% of participants were interviewed using a phone survey due to the ongoing conflict in the Amhara region. Participants from previous rounds who were not interviewed in Round 7 were excluded from the analysis. Participants are classified by area of residence (urban or rural) at the time of the data collection, household wealth (top, middle, or bottom wealth tercile in 2002) (Briones 2017), region of residence during the first visit in 2002, childhood caregiver's formal education level, and whether they had children by the age of 19 or were married before 18.

## Education outcomes

**Primary (Grade 8) and lower secondary (Grade 10) completion rates have remained unchanged when comparing the 22-year-olds from the Older Cohort in 2016 to the Younger Cohort in 2023.**<sup>7</sup> Among the 22-year-olds, 75% had completed primary school (Grade 8), with near-universal primary completion among those from Addis Ababa, urban areas, wealthier households, or with childhood caregivers who have more than eight years of formal education (Annex 1). Over half of the 22-year-olds in 2023 (57%) have completed Grade 10, with women outperforming men (Annex 1). This result is similar to that for the 22-year-olds in 2016 (58%). However, these averages mask significant inequalities: individuals from wealthier households have double the completion rates of those from the worst-off households (Figure 1). Moreover, early motherhood (by age 19) and marriage (by age 18) significantly predict the likelihood of dropping out of school, contributing to lower completion of Grades 8, 10, and 12.

2 In the 2020/21 academic year, the formal education system underwent significant changes with the launch of ESDP VI. Primary education was reduced from eight to six years and a new middle-level education, covering Grades 7 and 8, was introduced. Secondary education continues to span Grades 9 to 12, but the school leaving examination at Grade 10 was eliminated (Federal Ministry of Education 2021). The education categories in this factsheet are based on the education system until 2020/21, as most of the Younger Cohort and all the Older Cohort experienced both primary and secondary education under the old system, as well as to ensure consistency with the Older Cohort until 2016.

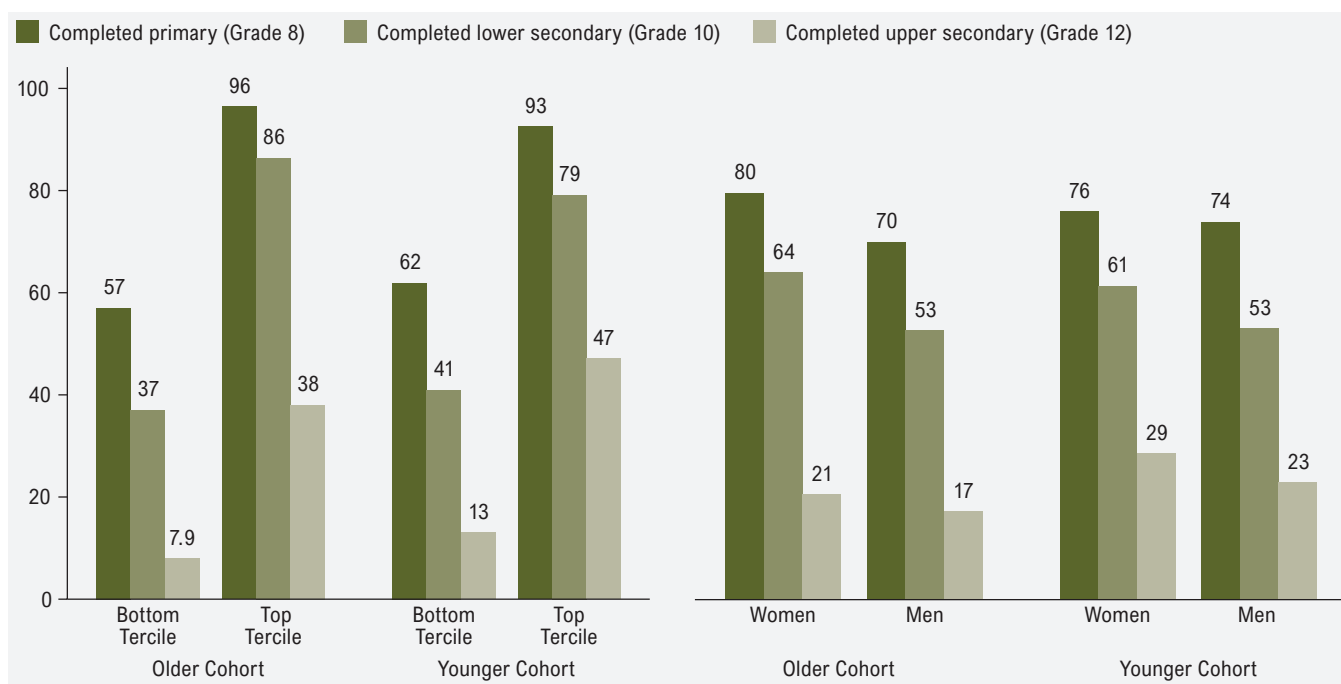
3 NER is a measure of students' enrolment who are in the official age groups for the given level of education (Federal Ministry of Education 2023).

4 The primary completion rate is estimated using the ratio of students who enrol in Grade 8 to the population of the official age for that grade.

5 SDG Target 4.1 states that, by 2030, all girls and boys should complete 'free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes'.

6 SDG Target 4.3. is to, by 2030, 'ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university'.

7 Completion rate refers to whether participants had completed Grade 8, Grade 10, or Grade 12 by the time they were interviewed. Ever enrolled in university/technical refers to those that have ever been enrolled or completed university/technical by the time of the interview.

**Figure 1. Education attainment of 22-year-olds (%)**

Note: Household wealth tertiles were calculated using the 2002 wealth index (Round 1); see Briones (2017) for more details.

**The percentage of 22-year-olds who completed upper secondary increased from 19% in 2016 to 26% in 2023. However, early life inequalities still play a decisive role in school continuation.** In 2023, 47% of those born in the wealthiest households finished Grade 12 compared to only 13% of those born in the poorest households (Figure 1). More generally, students born in wealthier households, living in urban areas, and whose childhood caregivers have more years of formal education are also more likely to advance well and thus finish at the normative age.<sup>8</sup> In 2023, 60% of those born in the wealthiest households completed lower secondary (Grade 10) by age 17, and 31% completed upper secondary (Grade 12) by age 19, compared to just 14% and 3% of those born in the poorest households, respectively (Annex 1).

**Progress in grade completion at the normative age is still limited.** While there has been some improvement in lower secondary completion (Grade 10) by age 17, from 29% in 2016 to 37% in 2023, the rate is still low. Moreover, the percentage completing upper secondary (Grade 12) by age 19 remained unchanged at 14% between 2016 and 2023 (Annex 1).

**Despite progress in secondary school completion, tertiary enrolment (university, vocational and technical) has declined.** In 2023, only 14% of 22-year-olds had ever enrolled in university, down from 18% in 2016 (Annex 1). A similar pattern is seen for vocational and technical education, which decreased from 18% to 15%. Changes in higher education entrance requirements following the 2021 education reform may be one of the factors associated with these declines.

**People born in conflict-affected areas of Tigray and Amhara have experienced a larger decrease in tertiary education enrolment.** Regional disparities are stark: 28% of those from Addis Ababa had enrolled by 2023, compared to just 2% from Tigray, an 11 percentage point decrease from 2016 (Annex 1). Only 8% of the Younger Cohort from Tigray completed Grade 12 in 2023, down from 16% seven years ago. Similarly, participants from Amhara interviewed by phone also experienced a reduction in enrolment in tertiary education, while those interviewed in person did not. This decline in post-secondary education enrolment and secondary school completion in conflict-affected areas may be associated with disruptions caused by the crisis, which occurred when participants were transitioning through the final years of secondary education or beginning tertiary education.

## Access to digital devices

**Internet usage has grown when comparing the Older Cohort (34%) with the Younger Cohort (42%) at age 22, while computer or laptop usage has remained low (~17%)** (Table 1). The increased use of the internet is significant, particularly for the Younger Cohort, as it grew nearly sixfold from 6.2% in 2016. The increase over time for both cohorts, as well as when comparing the Younger Cohort and Older Cohort at 22 years old, underscores the growing impact of digitalisation following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–21.

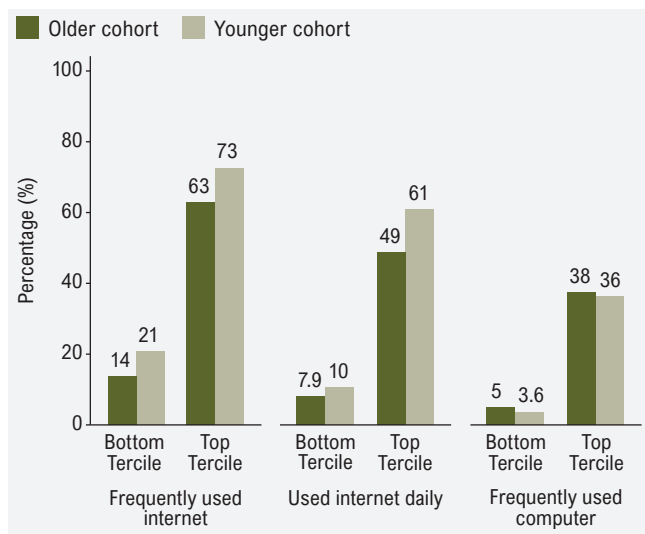
<sup>8</sup> Following SDG Indicator 4.1.5, the intended age for a given grade is the age at which pupils would enter the grade if they had started school at the official primary entrance age, had studied full-time and had progressed without repeating or skipping grades. In Ethiopia, the official theoretical entrance age is 7 years old. By 16–17 years old, students are expected to have completed Grade 10, and by 18–19 they are expected to have completed Grade 12.

**Table 1.** Changes over time in the usage of digital devices

	Older Cohort		Younger Cohort	
	2016 (age 22)	2023 (age 29)	2016 (age 15)	2023 (age 22)
Frequently used internet	34%	46%	6%	42%
Used internet daily	25%	35%	3%	32%
Frequently used computer	17%	23%	7%	16%

Notes: Table 1 displays the percentage of participants who have used internet and the computer frequently over their life (i.e. “many times in their lives”). To be consistent with the Round 7 survey, the responses in Round 5 as to whether participants have ever used the internet or ever used a mobile phone with internet access were combined. As for the daily use of Internet, the survey question refers to “the last 12 months”. The question was only asked to those that ever used internet many times in their life. This section was not administered to participants interviewed in Amhara via the phone survey, and thus their values were also excluded for Round 5.

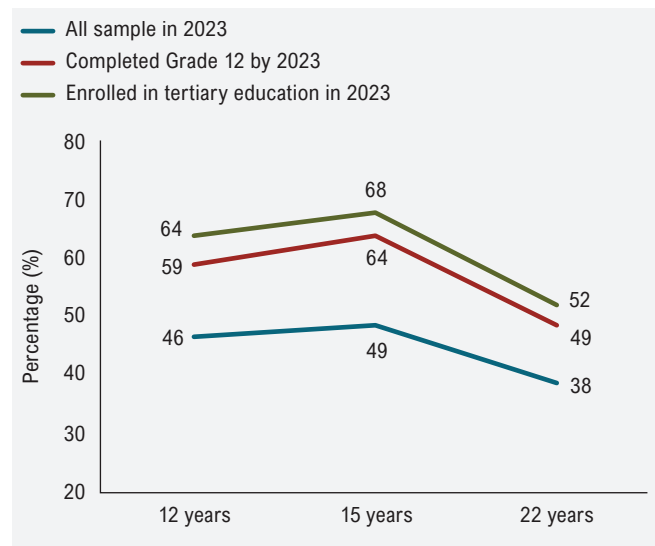
**Despite the rise in digital device usage among 22-year-olds in 2023, substantial disparities persist and need to be addressed.** A large gap in internet usage exists when comparing 22-year-olds from the wealthiest and the poorest households (Figure 2) as well as those living in rural areas compared to those living in urban areas. Although smaller, a gender gap remains, with men reporting higher internet usage than women in 2023. The digital divide underscores how unequal access to distance learning during school closures probably deepened long-term educational inequalities.

**Figure 2.** Digital divide among 22-year-olds (Younger Cohort and Older Cohort)

Notes: See Table 1 note regarding the definition of internet and computer usage. Household wealth tertiles were calculated using the 2002 wealth index (Round 1); see Briones (2017) for more details.

## Learning outcomes

Young Lives has administered a series of cognitive tests over the course of the study with the aim of assessing the learning achievement of study participants.<sup>9</sup> In Round 7, Young Lives administered a simplified version of the reading comprehension test – focused on text comprehension – to the Younger Cohort, which allows us to track the learning progression of this cohort over ten years.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 3.** Results of reading comprehension test over time, Younger Cohort (percentage of correct answers)

Notes: To enhance comparability across rounds, this analysis only includes text-related questions. The reading comprehension test included 18 text questions in Round 4, 24 in Round 5, and 12 in Round 7. There are 12 common items between Rounds 4 and 5, four between Rounds 4 and 7, and four between Rounds 5 and 7. The sample was restricted to participants who were interviewed in all three rounds, excluding illiterate participants (approximately 10% of the Round 7 sample who were interviewed in person).

**Reading skills among the Younger Cohort have not progressed. While we have seen a slight improvement in reading skills between the ages of 15 and 22, participants have not typically acquired more advanced reading skills expected of young adults.** When comparing the percentage of correct answers relating to four reading comprehension questions administered in both Round 5 and Round 7 (“common items”), the Younger Cohort answered an average of 39% of questions correctly at age 15 and 42% at age 22. However, when considering the full set of reading comprehension questions, trends are not encouraging. Between the ages of 12 to 15, the percentage of correct responses among the Younger Cohort increased from 46% to almost 49%; however, by age 22, participants only answered 38% of the reading comprehension questions correctly, reflecting a 10-percentage-point decrease between ages 15 to 22 (Figure 3). This decrease may be partly attributed to the fact that only 17% of

<sup>9</sup> See Espinoza-Revollo and Scott (2022) for an overview of available information on cognitive and achievement competencies tests administered to children at different ages.

<sup>10</sup> In Round 7, the reading comprehension test included two texts with a total of 12 questions. Out of the 12 questions, 8 have been previously asked, while 4 were introduced in Round 7 to improve the difficulty. The test was not administered to participants interviewed in Amhara via the phone survey, and thus values from Round 4 and 5 are excluded for those participants as well. The test was administered in three local languages: Amharic, Oromiffa, and Tigrigna. Although questions varied in difficulty, they tested intermediate to advanced literacy skills. At the intermediate literacy level, participants are able to understand the meaning of a simple written expression. At the advanced literacy level, participants are able to retrieve, interpret and reflect on ideas contained in everyday texts.

participants were enrolled in tertiary education at the time of the interview, while 30% had left education five years earlier. However, even among those who had completed Grade 12 or had ever enrolled in tertiary education, the percentage of correct answers still decreased between ages 15 to 22.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Early life inequalities predict reading skills by age 22.**

There are no significant gender differences in reading skills among Younger Cohort participants at ages 12, 15 and 22. However, at the age of 22 there is a substantial gap between those born in the wealthiest households and those born in the poorest households in the percentage of questions answered correctly (47% vs 31% in 2023), as well as between those currently living in urban versus rural areas (43% vs 31%). Similar differences are also seen when comparing those whose childhood caregivers had more than eight years of education (50%) with those with no formal education (35%). Over the past ten years, the gap in reading skills associated with impoverished conditions in early life has not closed.

## Conclusions and looking forward

#### **Ethiopia continues to face significant challenges in achieving equitable and quality secondary education, and ensuring an affordable transition to post-secondary education, falling behind the targets set out in SDG 4.1 and SDG 4.3.**

This is reflected in the educational attainment of Young Lives participants. For the 22-year-olds (Younger Cohort) affected by the compounding crisis, Grade 8 and Grade 10 completion rates have remained stagnant; Grade 12 attainment increased while the transition to tertiary education declined (compared to the Older Cohort). Women achieve higher educational levels

than men throughout the entire education system (primary, secondary, and post-secondary); however, no gender differences in reading skills are evident. Progress through the system is particularly slow for those born in rural areas, born in the poorest households, or with childhood caregivers who have low levels of education. Despite the improved Grade 12 completion rates, young adults' performance on the full set of reading comprehension questions declined. School and university closures may have increased inequalities in access to quality education, as those most disadvantaged lack access to digital devices or a proper environment for learning at home.

#### **Education policy should focus on ensuring that foundational skills and proper learning are acquired at each school level, providing support to all students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, as they face the biggest challenges to advance through the education system.**

Young people whose educational progression has been affected by the compounding crises are also a priority. Education outcomes have worsened for participants born in conflict-affected areas of Amhara and Tigray, highlighting the impact of educational disruptions due to the ongoing armed conflict. As part of Young Lives' research agenda, we aim to deepen our understanding of internal displacement to better capture the profound impacts of the conflict. Young Lives participants are now young adults and their schooling trajectories will not be substantially altered by the recent conflict; however, students currently enrolled in primary school in conflict-affected areas are at higher risk of not completing any level of basic education. Schools and universities have reopened in Tigray, albeit with inadequate facilities and poor conditions, but many remain closed in parts of Amhara in 2024, leaving around 4 million students – about 35% of all registered students in the region – without access to education in schools.<sup>12</sup>

11 Ever enrolled in tertiary education refers to those who have ever been enrolled or completed tertiary education (university, technical or vocational) by the time of the interview.

12 According to the situation report released on 26 April 2024 by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA 2024).

**Annex 1. Schooling and learning outcomes for the Younger Cohort (YC) and Older Cohort (OC) at 22 years old**

	Completed primary education (Grade 8)		Completed lower secondary (Grade 10)		Complete lower secondary at normative age <sup>a</sup>		Completed upper education (Grade 12)		Complete upper secondary at normative age		Average years of schooling (Grade)		Completed or ever in vocational/technical		Completed or ever in university	
	OC (2016)	YC (2023)	OC (2016)	YC (2023)	OC (2016)	YC (2023)	OC (2016)	YC (2023)	OC (2016)	YC (2023)	OC (2016)	YC (2023)	OC (2016)	YC (2023)	OC (2016)	YC (2023)
<b>Average of full sample</b>	74.6%	74.9%	58.1%	57.1%	29.4%	36.8%	18.9%	25.7%	13.7%	14.0%	8.42	8.68	18.3%	14.8%	17.6%	13.6%
<b>Gender</b>																
Women	79.6%	76.0%	64.1%	61.4%	32.2%	41.7%	20.7%	28.7%	16.0%	16.2%	8.74	8.80	21.4%	20.2%	18.3%	15.2%
Men	70.0%	73.9%	52.7%	53.1%	27.0%	32.3%	17.3%	23.0%	11.6%	11.9%	8.14	8.57	15.5%	9.8%	16.9%	12.2%
Difference (t-test)	-9.6**	-2.1	-11.4***	-8.3**	-5.3	-9.4***	-3.3	-5.8**	-4.4	-4.3	-0.60	-0.23	-6.0	-10.4***	-1.5	-3.0
<b>Area of residence (Round 1)</b>																
Rural	65.0%	66.1%	46.2%	46.5%	17.0%	22.9%	10.3%	16.3%	5.3%	5.0%	7.46	7.71	11.0%	7.5%	9.7%	5.6%
Urban	94.1%	92.9%	82.2%	78.7%	52.3%	61.7%	36.4%	44.9%	28.9%	30.2%	10.18	10.42	33.1%	29.6%	33.5%	29.8%
Difference (t-test)	29.1***	26.8***	35.9***	32.2***	35.2***	38.8***	26.2***	28.5***	23.6***	25.2***	2.72***	2.71***	22.1***	22.2***	23.7***	24.2***
<b>Current area of residence</b>																
Rural	62.9%	63.8%	43.7%	46.3%	13.9%	19.1%	10.0%	15.2%	5.6%	3.5%	7.28	7.62	9.1%	6.0%	10.5%	4.4%
Urban	87.7%	84.5%	74.3%	66.3%	44.9%	51.0%	28.9%	34.7%	21.7%	22.4%	9.58	9.53	28.3%	22.3%	25.5%	21.4%
Difference (t-test)	24.8***	20.7***	30.6***	20.0***	31.1***	31.9***	18.8***	19.5***	16.1***	18.8***	2.30***	1.91***	19.2***	16.3***	14.9***	17.0***
<b>Wealth index (Round 1)<sup>b</sup></b>																
Bottom tercile	57.0%	61.9%	37.0%	40.9%	10.8%	14.2%	7.9%	13.1%	2.1%	3.0%	6.75	7.38	6.4%	4.5%	7.5%	3.7%
Middle tercile	71.8%	72.1%	53.0%	53.2%	23.8%	35.5%	12.8%	18.9%	9.1%	7.0%	8.15	8.24	17.1%	11.8%	11.1%	7.8%
Top tercile	96.4%	92.5%	86.4%	79.2%	53.6%	59.6%	38.0%	47.1%	29.8%	31.2%	10.33	10.36	32.4%	29.0%	36.0%	31.0%
Difference (t-test)	39.4***	30.6***	49.4***	38.2***	42.8***	45.5***	30.1***	34.0***	27.8***	28.2***	3.57***	2.98***	26.0***	24.5***	28.5***	27.3***
<b>Region (Round 1)</b>																
Addis Ababa	92.7%	97.6%	80.7%	87.0%	56.9%	69.2%	43.1%	49.5%	38.5%	36.1%	10.20	10.76	33.9%	40.4%	35.8%	28.4%
Amhara (R1) – in-person survey	76.6%	82.1%	57.7%	66.2%	25.2%	39.3%	18.0%	35.3%	10.8%	17.4%	8.31	9.49	20.7%	19.9%	18.0%	18.9%
Amhara (R1) – phone survey	81.7%	76.0%	60.0%	47.3%			15.0%	23.3%					16.7%	11.6%	18.3%	8.5%
Oromia	61.4%	69.8%	44.0%	47.3%	21.1%	24.0%	11.4%	24.3%	8.4%	9.0%	7.57	8.18	19.3%	11.1%	10.8%	12.0%
SNNP	67.3%	61.9%	49.8%	46.1%	17.1%	17.9%	16.1%	22.9%	8.8%	12.5%	8.01	7.86	11.2%	6.1%	16.1%	14.4%
Tigray	81.0%	76.0%	67.5%	59.0%	38.0%	51.4%	16.0%	8.3%	10.4%	3.5%	8.70	8.25	14.7%	9.7%	13.5%	2.4%
Difference (t-test)	39.4**	30.6**	49.4**	38.2**	42.8**	45.5**	30.1**	34.0**	27.8**	28.2**	3.57**	2.98**	26.0**	24.5**	28.5**	27.3**
<b>Caregiver years of formal education</b>																
None	69.2%	67.8%	50.1%	48.8%	24.6%	30.2%	12.4%	17.3%	7.9%	7.3%	7.83	7.93	14.6%	9.1%	10.4%	6.4%
1 to 4 years	71.7%	74.3%	55.3%	53.8%	25.8%	30.7%	22.5%	23.2%	16.6%	10.8%	8.32	8.58	17.2%	16.7%	19.7%	10.9%
5 to 8 years	89.7%	88.3%	80.4%	75.8%	43.6%	51.1%	27.1%	39.0%	22.8%	23.8%	9.80	9.87	24.3%	24.7%	29.0%	24.7%
More than 8 years	98.2%	95.5%	89.3%	84.1%	52.7%	65.6%	35.7%	60.6%	23.6%	42.7%	10.35	10.94	39.3%	27.3%	39.3%	45.5%
Difference (t-test)	29.0***	27.6***	39.2***	35.3***	28.1***	35.5***	23.3***	43.3***	15.7***	35.5***	2.52***	3.01***	24.6***	18.2***	28.9***	39.1***
<b>Early marriage/parenthood</b>																
No early marriage/parenthood	76.8%	76.1%	61.1%	58.2%	31.2%	37.4%	20.4%	26.5%	14.7%	14.4%	8.65	8.82	19.5%	15.1%	19.0%	14.2%
Early marriage/parenthood	46.7%	50.7%	20.0%	34.2%	7.3%	26.0%	0.0%	9.6%	0.0%	6.8%	5.53	6.13	3.3%	8.2%	0.0%	2.7%
Difference (t-test)	-30.1***	-25.4***	-41.1***	-24.0***	-23.9***	-11.4	-20.4***	-16.9**	-14.7**	-7.6	-3.12***	-2.70***	-16.2**	-6.9	-19.0***	-11.4**
<b>Number of participants</b>	814	1535	814	1535	754	1406	814	1535	754	1406	753	1380	814	1535	814	1535

Notes: a Following SDG Indicator 4.1.5, the intended age for a given grade is the age at which pupils would enter the grade if they had started school at the official primary entrance age, had studied full-time and had progressed without repeating or skipping grade. In Ethiopia, the official theoretical entrance age is 7 years old. By 16–17 years old, students are expected to have completed Grade 10, and by 18–19 they are expected to have completed Grade 12. b The Young Lives wealth index is a composite index that reflects the welfare of household members in terms of the quality of the dwelling and access to basic services (see Briones 2017). Differences are significant at \*\*\*1%, \*\*5% and \*10%. Differences are percentage points. The t-test for household wealth was estimated by comparing bottom with top tercile, while the t-test for caregivers' years of formal education was estimated by comparing no formal education with more than ten years of formal education. Information on caregiver's formal education was taken from 2006 (Round 2). Area of residence refers to the household location in 2002 (Round 1) as well as the current area of residence (either Round 5 or Round 7). Region uses information from 2002 (Round 1). Household wealth terciles were calculated separately for each cohort using the household wealth index of 2002 (Round 1). Early pregnancy or child marriage is defined as either having been pregnant before the age of 20 or having been married or cohabitating by the age of 18. Eight participants have caregivers' education information missing; 23 participants have missing information on the wealth index in Round 1; one Younger Cohort participant has missing information for current residence in Round 7; five Older Cohort participants have information missing for current area of residence.

## References

Briones, K. (2017) 'How Many Rooms Are There in Your House?' *Constructing the Young Lives Wealth Index*, Young Lives Technical Note 43, Oxford: Young Lives. [https://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/YL-TN43\\_0.pdf](https://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/YL-TN43_0.pdf) (accessed 10 December 2024).

Espinoza-Revollo, P., and D. Scott (2022) *Cognitive and Achievement Tests in the Young Lives Study*, Young Lives Technical Note 53, Oxford: Young Lives. [https://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-01/202203\\_TN\\_53\\_CognitiveCompetencies\\_Accessible.pdf](https://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-01/202203_TN_53_CognitiveCompetencies_Accessible.pdf) (accessed 10 December 2024).

Favara, M., R. Freund, C. Porter, A. Sánchez and D. Scott (2022) 'Young Lives, Interrupted: Short-Term Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Adolescents in Low- and Middle-Income Countries', *The Journal of Development Studies* 58.6: 1063–1080.

Federal Ministry of Education (2021) 'Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI) 2020/21 – 2024/25', [https://moe.gov.et/storage/Books/Ethiopian%20Education%20Sector%20Development%20Program%206%20\(ESDP%20VI\).pdf](https://moe.gov.et/storage/Books/Ethiopian%20Education%20Sector%20Development%20Program%206%20(ESDP%20VI).pdf) (accessed 11 October 2024).

Federal Ministry of Education (2023) 'Education Statistics Annual Abstract 2022–2023', <https://moe.gov.et/storage/Books/ESAA%202022-23%20Final.pdf> (accessed 11 October 2024).

Ford, K., and M. Favara (1 August 2023) 'Caught in the Crossfire: Understanding the Impact of Conflict on Young People's Lives in Ethiopia', <https://www.younglives.org.uk/news/caught-crossfire-understanding-impact-conflict-young-peoples-lives-ethiopia> (accessed 11 October 2024).

Harris, D. S. Baird, K. Ford, K. Hirvonen, N. Jones, M. Kassa, C. Meyer, A. Pankhurst, C. Wieser and T. Woldehanna (2021) 'The Impact of COVID-19 in Ethiopia: Policy Brief', Oxford: Oxford Policy Management. <https://www.opml.co.uk/files/Publications/a2422-building-resilience-ethiopia/policy-brief-04-11-21-final.pdf?noredirect=1> (accessed 11 October 2024).

Molina, M.A., M. Favara, A. Sánchez, and A. Woodman Deza (2025) 'Young Lives Attrition Report: Round 7', Young Lives Technical Note 58, Oxford: Young Lives. <https://www.younglives.org.uk/publications/young-lives-attrition-report-round-7> (accessed 18 February 2025).

OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) (2024) 'Ethiopia – Situation Report, 26 Apr 2024', <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-situation-report-26-apr-2024> (accessed 11 October 2024).

Pankhurst, A., M. Araya and T. Woldehanna (2017) 'Education and Learning: Preliminary Findings from the Young Lives Round 5 Survey in Ethiopia', Oxford: Young Lives. [https://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/ETHIOPIA-Education%26Learning-Factsheet-Oct17\\_1.pdf](https://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/ETHIOPIA-Education%26Learning-Factsheet-Oct17_1.pdf) (accessed 11 October 2024).

## Acknowledgements and credits

This factsheet is part of a series giving a preliminary overview of key data from Round 7 of the Young Lives survey, covering education and learning; health, nutrition and well-being; and work and family lives. It was written by Amanda Woodman Deza. Thanks to Marta Favara, Alan Sánchez, Tassew Woldehanna, Alula Pankhurst and Kefyalew Endale for comments and suggestions. We are grateful to Chanie Ejigu for coordinating the survey fieldwork and to our fieldwork teams for their dedication and enthusiasm. We particularly wish to thank the Young Lives respondents and families for generously given us their time and cooperation. Thanks to Adam Houlbrook for copyediting, Garth Stewart for design and Julia Tilford for oversight of the publication of Young Lives' summative reports.

Special thanks to the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) for funding Young Lives at Work and enabling this research.

The views expressed are those of the author(s). They are not necessarily those of, or endorsed by, Young Lives, the University of Oxford, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) or other funders.

Photo credit: © Young Lives / Mulugeta Gebrekidan. The images throughout our publications are of young people living in circumstances and communities similar to the young people within our study sample.

Young Lives is a longitudinal study of poverty and inequality, following the lives of 12,000 children into adulthood in four countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam).

