

# Demos Africa

Trends Unveiled

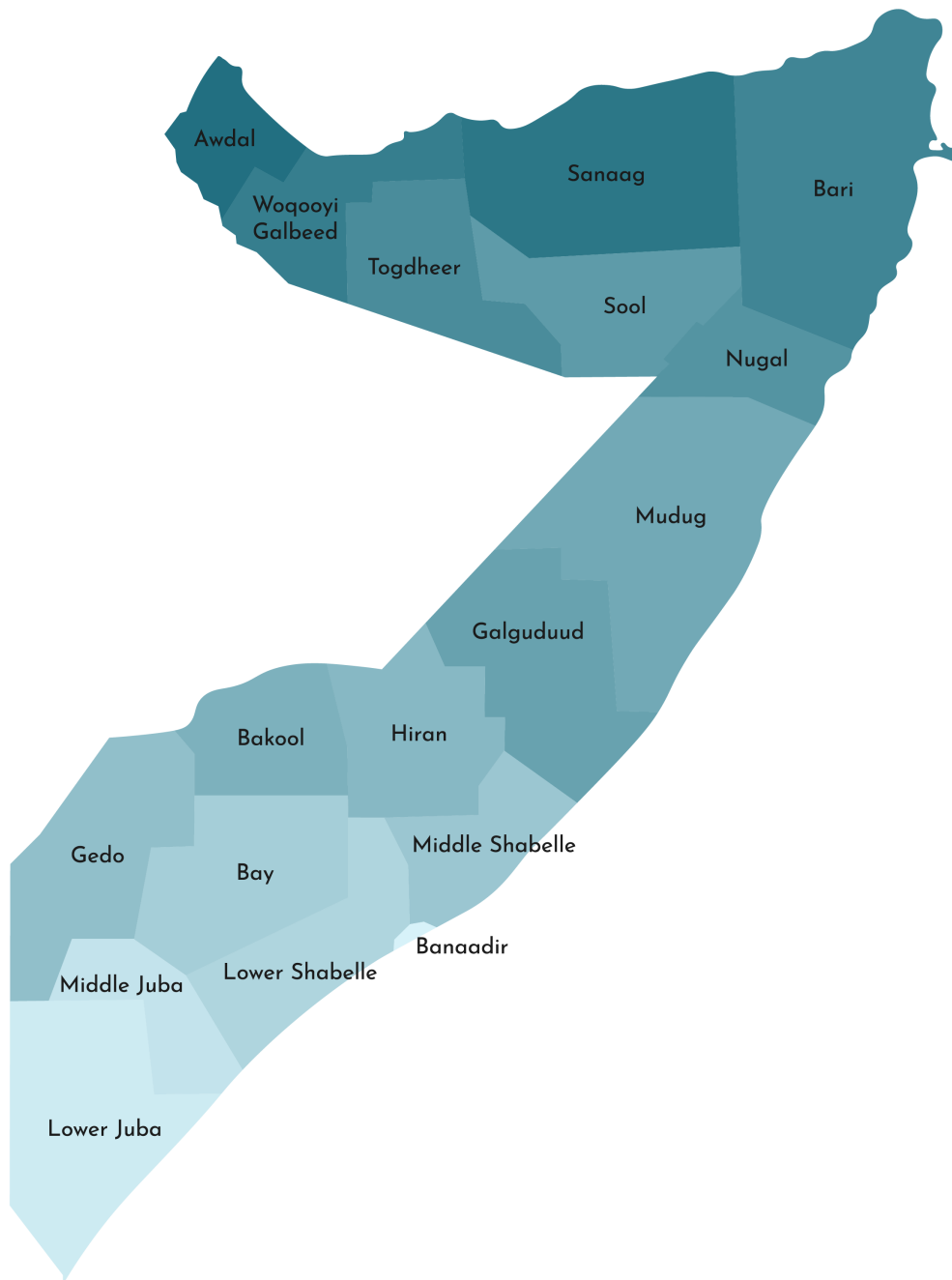
A Polling Center At City University Of Mogadishu



# Education Survey

SOMALIA

February 2022



## About Demos Africa

Demos Africa is a data and analytics polling center based at the City University of Mogadishu, one of the leading higher education institutions in Somalia. Demos Africa conducts opinion polling through quantitative surveys aimed at gauging public attitudes and perceptions on a variety of issues. As a fact tank, we track emerging trends at local, national and regional levels and contextualize them for our partners. Demos Africa works with international experts with decades of experience.

The work of Demos Africa is underpinned by a profound commitment to accuracy, impartiality and ethical approach to data collection. **Demos Africa does not take policy positions**; we only convey the outcomes of our public opinion polling.

Demos Africa strives for the highest quality in its data collection, analysis and publications. We achieve that by using the most rigorous methodology and the best practice in the industry when designing, conducting and analyzing public opinion surveys. Our goal is to present unfiltered facts and figures so that our clients could make sound decisions.

Demos Africa works with both public and private sectors to enable them to make sound decisions based on empirical evidence. We customize polls and surveys to our clients based on their needs.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The survey consisted of 25 questions about the state of education in Somalia. Among other things, we asked about literacy, access to education, affordability and quality of education in the country. The survey confirmed widely held assumptions about the limited role that the government (both federal and state) plays in the education, making education too expensive for a significant proportion of the population. However, the survey found higher-than-expected literacy rates among respondents. Key findings include:

1. Only 57.3% of respondents said they attended formal schooling in their lifetime. The low rates of formal schooling were driven in large part by the unavailability of schools in rural areas and the high cost of education, including public schools. Less than 8% of respondents who attended school said government paid for their school.
2. Over 66% of students attending schools walk to their classrooms, a fact that is correlated with the low rates of formal schooling, especially among families living in rural areas that often don't have a school near them.
3. Despite low formal schooling rates, more than 70% of respondents said they can read and write Somali language, putting literacy significantly higher than estimated.
4. About half of the respondents who attended formal schooling said that the medium of instruction they learned was Somali language. And about 12% studied in English-only schools, while 5% studied in Arabic-only schools, even though Arabic is the second official language of the country.
5. Respondents said that, on average, it costs about \$14 a month to send a boy to school while it costs approximately \$13 a month to send a girl to school. Despite this, fewer girls are in formal schools, a fact that could point to (evolving) societal gender norms.

## GOAL OF THE SURVEY

The goal of the survey was to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges that the Somali people face in accessing education—a key service generally provided by the government. In particular, the survey examined issues of availability, affordability and quality.

## METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted between 3-11 January 2022 using Random Digit Dialing. RDD is an effective method for selecting a representative sample of participants in telephone statistical surveys by dialing phone numbers randomly. Through this method, Demos Africa was able to generate 264,000 numbers out of an estimated 5-6 million active numbers in Somalia. Demos Africa used existing area codes and prefixes to randomly generate and call a representative sample.

Our target population was anyone in Somalia with an active phone number and who is over the age of 15 and is willing to participate in the survey. Trained enumerators called 40,196 active numbers, using a sophisticated computer system. Eventually, 1003 respondents in over 80 districts across the 18 pre-war regions of Somalia have agreed to participate in the survey. Respondents were evenly divided between the two genders: 49.3% were female and 50.7% were male. The enumerators who conducted the telephone interviews were trained, mentored and supervised by pollsters with decades of experience.

Demos Africa pollsters have developed a comprehensive set of questions aimed at gathering basic information about demographics as well as obstacles and opportunities in the healthcare sector. Once the survey was completed, Demos Africa used available government demographics data as a baseline to compare and analyze the information. Specifically, we used the 2014 Population Estimate Survey (PES)<sup>1</sup> and the 2020 Somali Health and Demographic Survey (SHDS), both conducted by the Federal Government of Somalia.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See “Somalia Population Estimate Survey” (2013). Accessed at: <https://www.nbs.gov.so/population-estimation-survey-2014/>

<sup>2</sup> See Somali Health and Demographics Survey (2020). Accessed at: <https://www.nbs.gov.so/somali-health-demographic-survey-2020/>









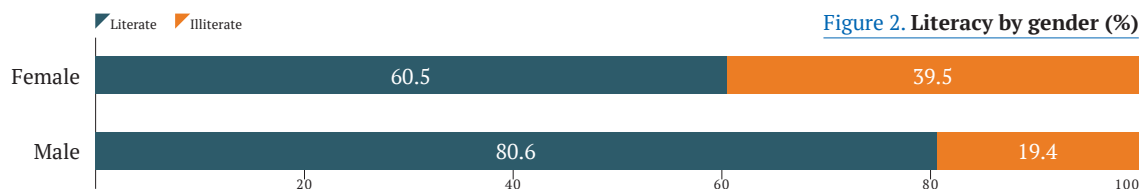
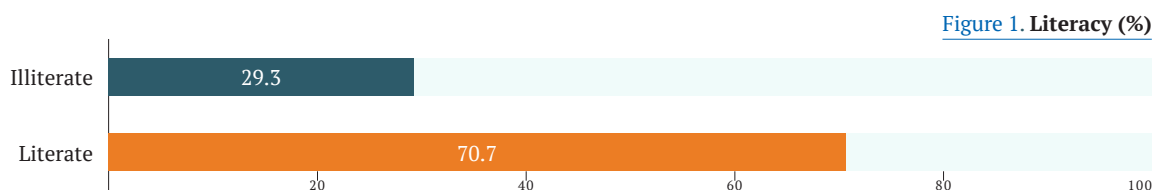


# I. STATE OF EDUCATION

Education is one of the most basic services that any government in the world provides to its citizens. This survey focused on education to understand the importance of the issue for Somali citizens and to gauge the current state of affairs in this sector. The survey consisted of 25 questions about education ranging from literacy to access to basic education as well as cost and challenges facing school-age children.

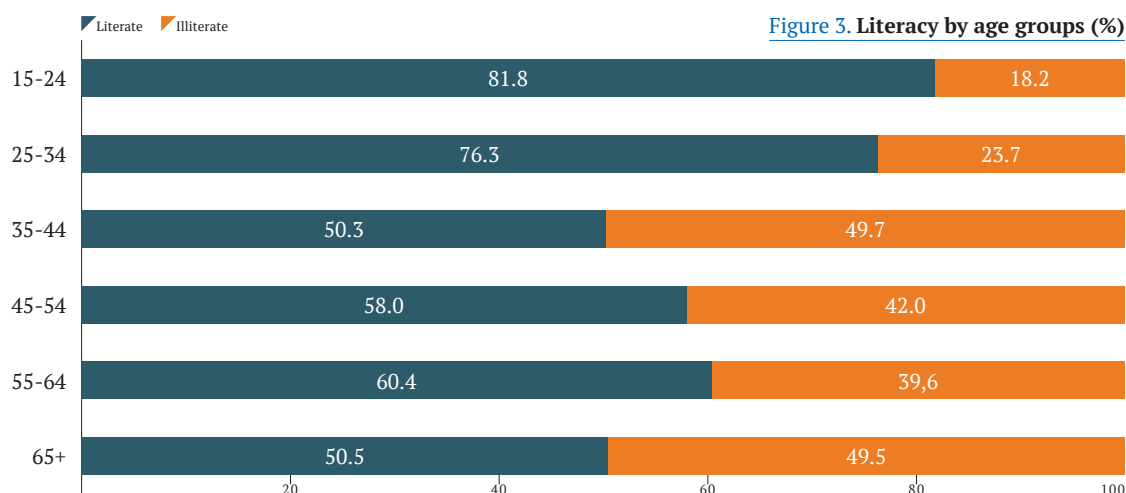
## 1.1 LITERACY

Literacy is a central element of learning and education. For that reason, we started the survey with questions about literacy, which is a cornerstone for educational attainment. When asked if they can read or write the Somali language, 70.7% of the respondents said they could, putting literacy rates significantly higher than the estimates of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS). According to the latest figures from the Somali National Bureau of Statistics (SNBS), only about 40% of Somalis are literate, the third-lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>3</sup> Men were significantly more likely to be literate than women: some 80% of men surveyed said they were able to read and write the Somali language, while only 60% of women said they could read and write. Young people under the age of 35 were substantially more likely to be literate than older generations.



3 See SNBS data on literacy - <https://www.nbs.gov.so/volume-3-educational-characteristics-of-the-somali-people/>





## 1.2 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Despite the relatively high literacy rates, school attendance remains very low among the Somali people we surveyed. Only 57.3% of the respondents said they attended some formal schooling in their lifetime, suggesting that a substantial number of people learn how to read and write outside of the formal school system. Gender disparity was another demonstrable factor in school attendance. Only 48.5% of females have attended formal schools compared to 65.8% of males. However, the average starting age of school for both boys and girls was 10 years old, twice higher than the global average of five years old. In Somalia, the tradition is that children go to Quranic schools before they are enrolled in formal schools, which may have influenced average starting age for children.

Even among those who attended formal schooling, most have reported that they completed only basic education. Of those who had gone to school, 47.4% said they had finished primary school and 28.2% finished high school. Only 9% of respondents have completed bachelors' degrees and 3.7% have completed masters' degrees. In other words, only about half of the schooled population has completed primary education, depriving the vast majority of the population of higher education.

To better understand the socio-economic impediments to school attendance, we asked those who have never attended formal schools to specify the primary challenge they faced. Approximately 77% said they grew up in a rural area that had no formal schools. Cost was the second-highest reason with 7.8% saying schools were too expensive. Another 4.6% said they were working as children and thus were unable to attend schools. Relatedly, 3.9% cited family responsibilities that prohibited them from attending schools. These responsibilities include caring for other children or an elderly relative or working on the family farm. Only 3.2% cited security reasons as a primary reason for not attending a school.

Figure 4. School attendance (%)

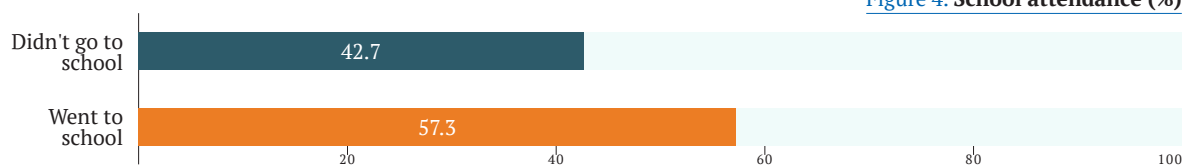


Figure 5. School attendance by gender (%)

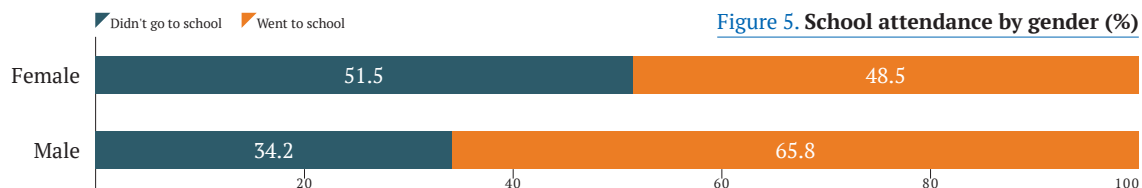


Figure 6. Education Level (%)

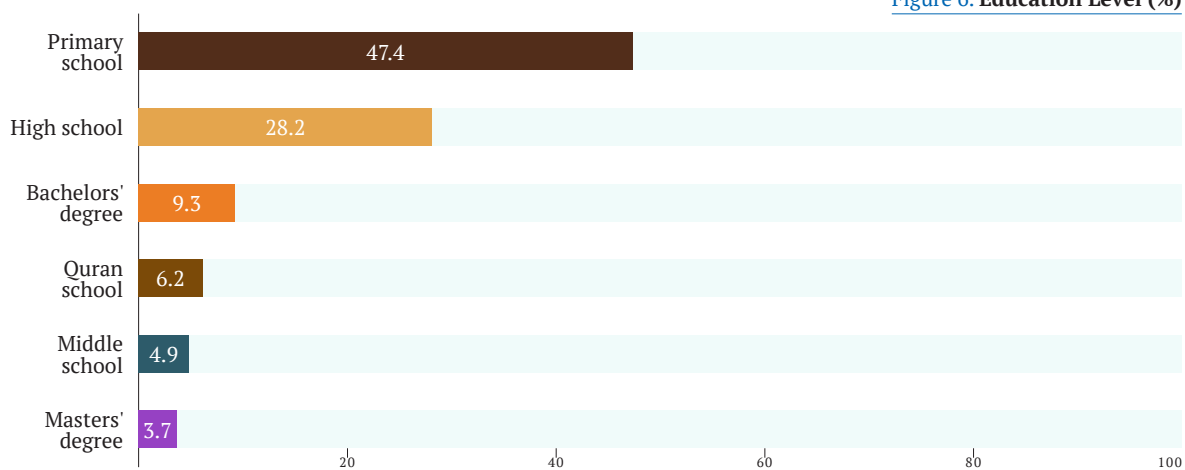
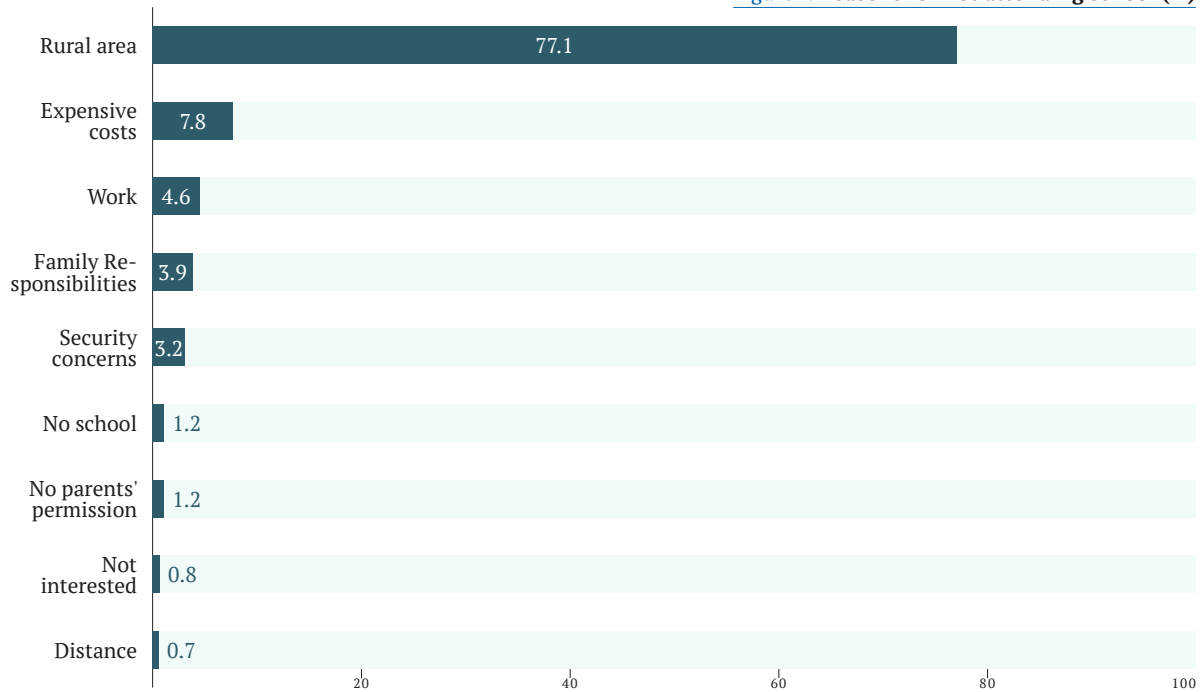




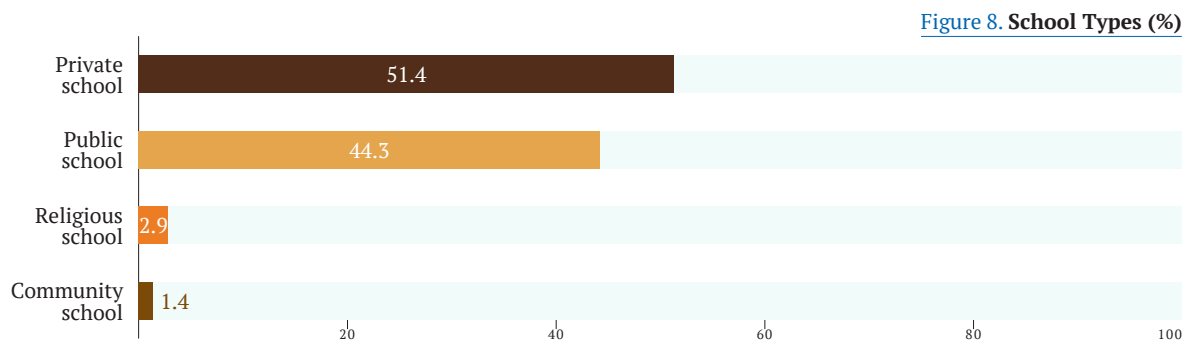
Figure 7. Reasons for not attending school (%)



### 1.3 PUBLIC VS PRIVATE SCHOOLS

As Somalia recovers from decades of conflicts and state collapse, the federal government and state governments are slowly reasserting their authority in different sectors, including education. Still, the private sector remains a dominant player in the education sector. More than half (51.4%) of those who attend formal schools study at for-profit private schools, compared to just 44.3% who attend public schools run by federal, state or local authorities. The dominance of the private education system remains evident, but public education is growing rapidly all across the country.

Almost three percent of those surveyed said they attended (or their children are attending) faith-based schools that are often free of charge. Another 1.4% of respondents said a family member attended schools financed and administered by clan-based community groups.



## 1.4 COST OF EDUCATION

The survey found that cost of education was a significant factor influencing school attendance. On average, respondents said they were spending almost \$14.00 a month on education per child. This includes school fees and other associated costs such as school supplies, transportation and food. Even those attending public schools that do not charge school fees said that the other associated costs were extremely high.

To better understand the correlation between income and cost of education, we asked participants if they had an income. More than 45% said they do not have a source of income and about a third said they survive on \$100 a month or less as a family. This makes the cost of education unbearably high for about two-thirds of respondents.

When asked who was paying for their education, 76.4% of the respondents said their parents (or themselves) were covering the costs. 15% said relatives in the country or in the diaspora were supporting their education. More than 6% were receiving scholarships from private sources and only 2.3% were receiving government scholarships.

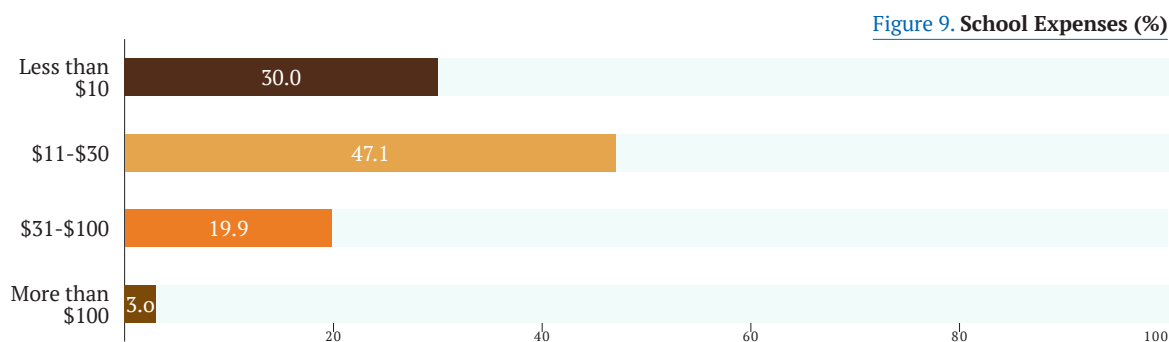
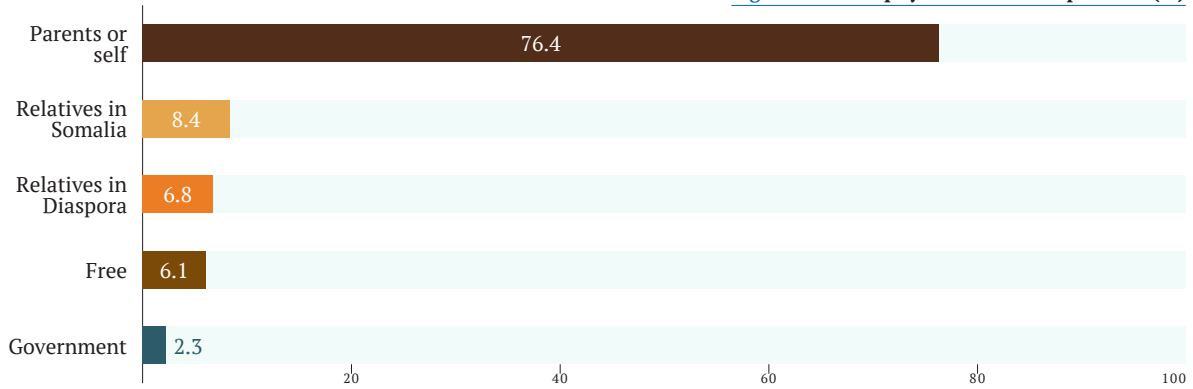






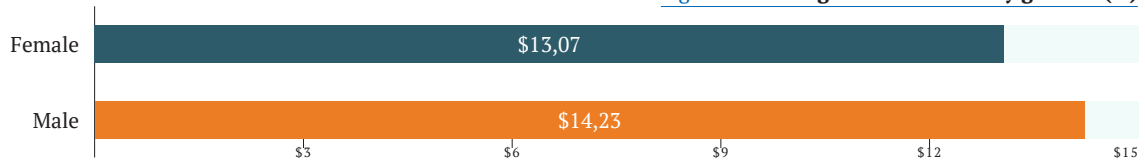
Figure 10. Who pays for school expenses? (%)



#### 1.4.1 SCHOOL COST BY GENDER

Notably, the cost of education is different for boys and girls. On average, it costs \$14.23 a month to educate a boy, compared to \$13.07 a month for girls. That's more than a dollar difference in monthly education costs. Still, there are substantially fewer girls attending schools in Somalia than boys. This finding reinforces the wider social attitudes towards education for girls. Clearly, for the parents who could afford it, the cost is not a major factor inhibiting their decision to send their daughters to school, but societal gender norms could be playing an important factor.

Figure 11. Average cost of school by gender (%)



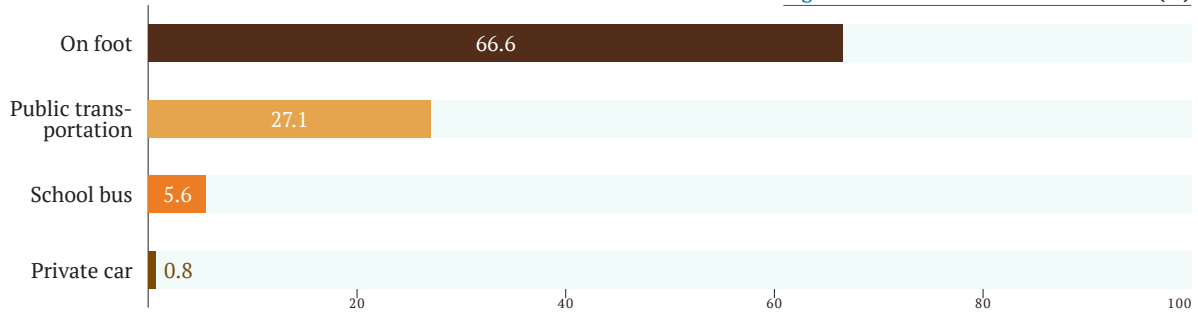
#### 1.5 METHOD OF TRAVEL TO SCHOOL

When asked those who go to school which transportation means they use to travel to school daily, 66.6% of respondents said they walk to school, while 27.1% said they use public transit. Only 5.6% use school buses and less than one percent use private cars to go to school.

Since formal education was introduced in Somalia nearly a century ago, the vast majority of children walked to school given the limited number of schools and the cost associated with transportation. That majority of students are still walking to school is consistent with that tradition and cost could be a contributing factor.



Figure 12. Method of travel to school (%)

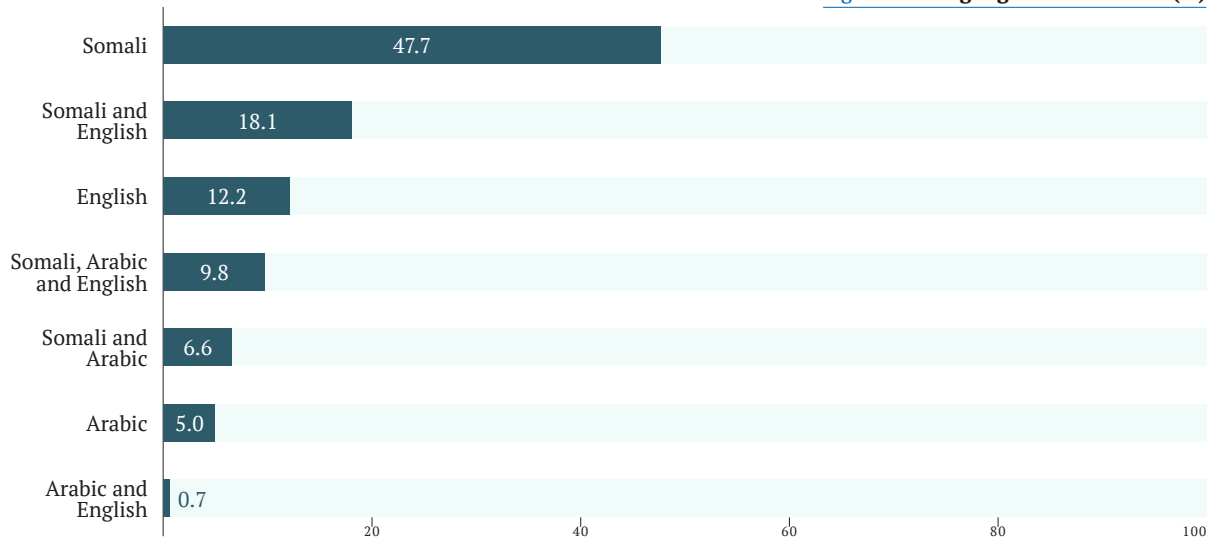


## 1.6 LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Overall, the survey revealed that the Somali language is the main medium of instruction in the country, followed by English and Arabic. Approximately 48% of respondents said they studied in Somali language schools only, while 18.1% said they received their education in Somali and English languages. About 12% said they studied in English-only schools, while only 5% studied in Arabic even though Arabic is the second official language of the country. Some 6.6% said they were studying in Somali and Arabic schools and about 10% of students said they are learning at schools that teach in all three languages.

Notably, female students were learning in English at a higher rate than their male counterparts. While 21% of female students were studying in Somali and English simultaneously, only 15.4% of male students were doing the same. Female students were also learning in English-only schools at a slightly higher rate than their male counterparts.

Figure 13. Language of instruction (%)



## 1.7 SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Despite structural challenges weighing down on the country's education system, a remarkable 79% of those attending schools said they were satisfied with the quality of their education. Only 4.3% of respondents complained about the quality of education. Female students were more likely to be satisfied with the quality of education than their male counterparts.

There could be several factors influencing this perception. First, majority of students are attending private schools which tend to have a better quality than public schools. Second, most students in Somalia would have never experienced a higher quality education outside of the country, or even outside of their community, depriving them of the context to compare and contrast. Third, most people would consider themselves very lucky to have the opportunity to learn something, even if the quality of that education is marginal.

Figure 14. Satisfaction with quality of education (%)

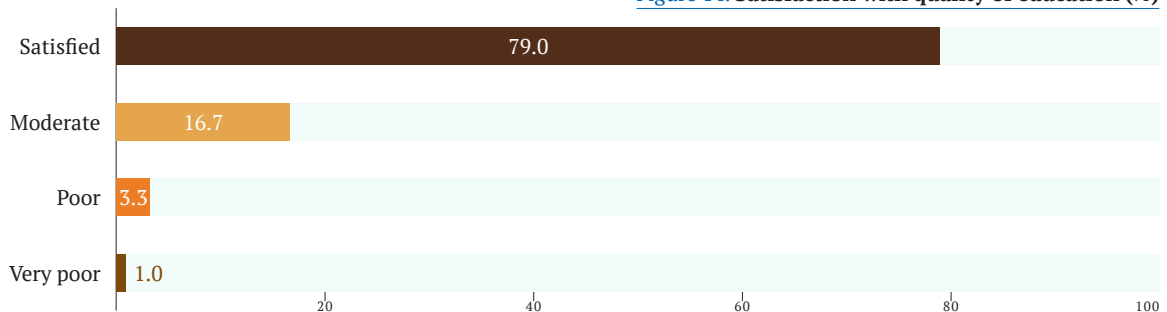
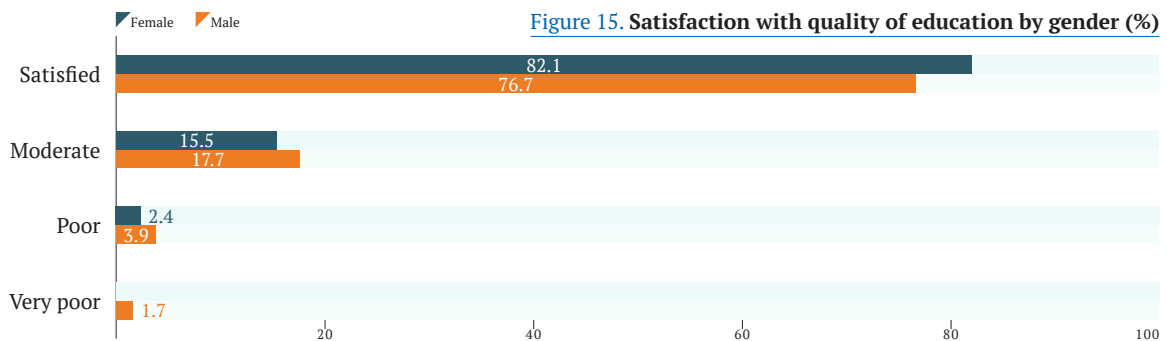


Figure 15. Satisfaction with quality of education by gender (%)









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