

The situation of adolescents in Ghana

SUMMARY REPORT

Analysis of data from the MICS 2017/18 and
other recent surveys

The document summarises a report prepared by
hera - right to health and development
under direction of the UNICEF Ghana Country Office



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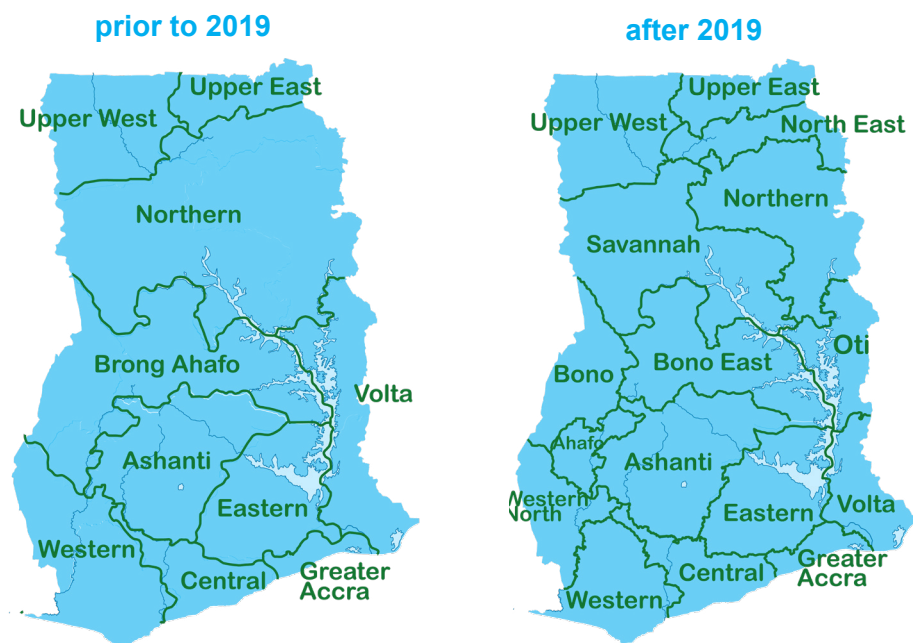
Introduction

This document summarises data describing the situation of adolescents in Ghana that were collected for the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017/18 (MICS6). Additional sources of data include the Maternal Health Surveys (MHS) 2007 and 2017, the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2014, the 2016 Survey of Domestic Violence, and the Ghana Living Standards Survey 2016-2017.

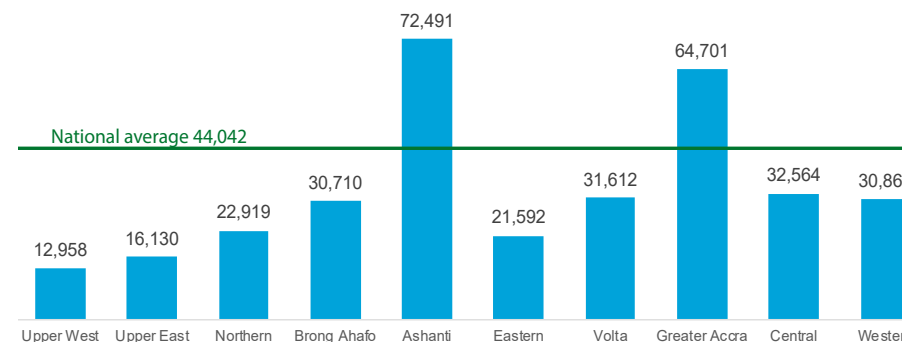
Until 2019 Ghana was politically divided into ten administrative regions. In 2019, four of the original regions were divided, increasing the total number of regions to 16. All available surveys still present data disaggregated according to the previous regional divisions.

Wealth is not distributed equally across the ten regions as documented in data on the average annual per capita income in Ghana Cedis reported in the 2016/17 Ghana Living Standards Survey.

Ghana's administrative regions



Average household income in Ghana Cedis by region



Source: Ghana Living Standards Survey 2016/17

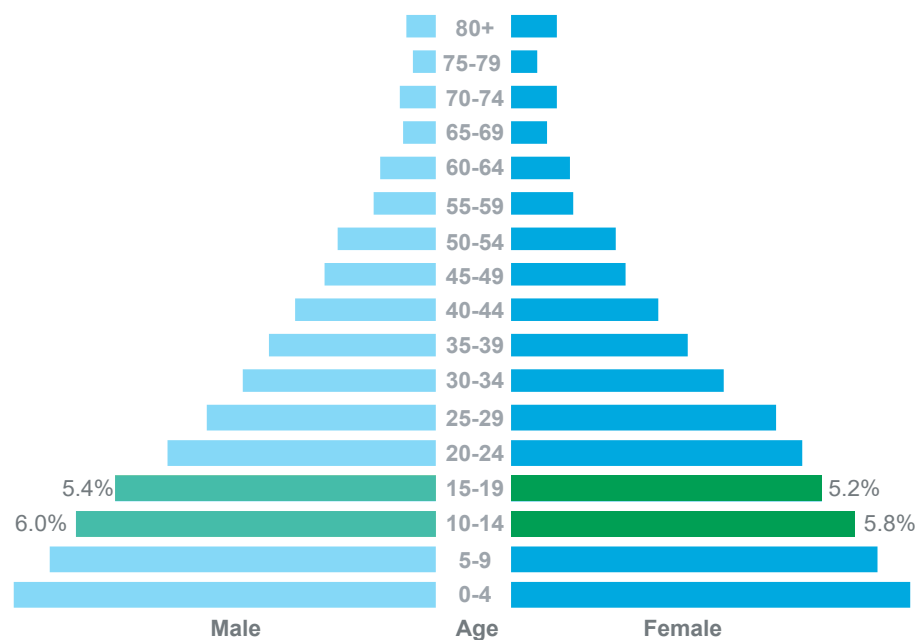


Adolescents in Ghana

Adolescence, defined by the age of 10 to 19, is a distinct period in a person's life, forming a bridge between childhood and early adulthood. It is a critical life stage for developments in cognition, attitudes, behaviours, and resilience that will affect each person's future health and wellbeing, and thereby also the future of society.

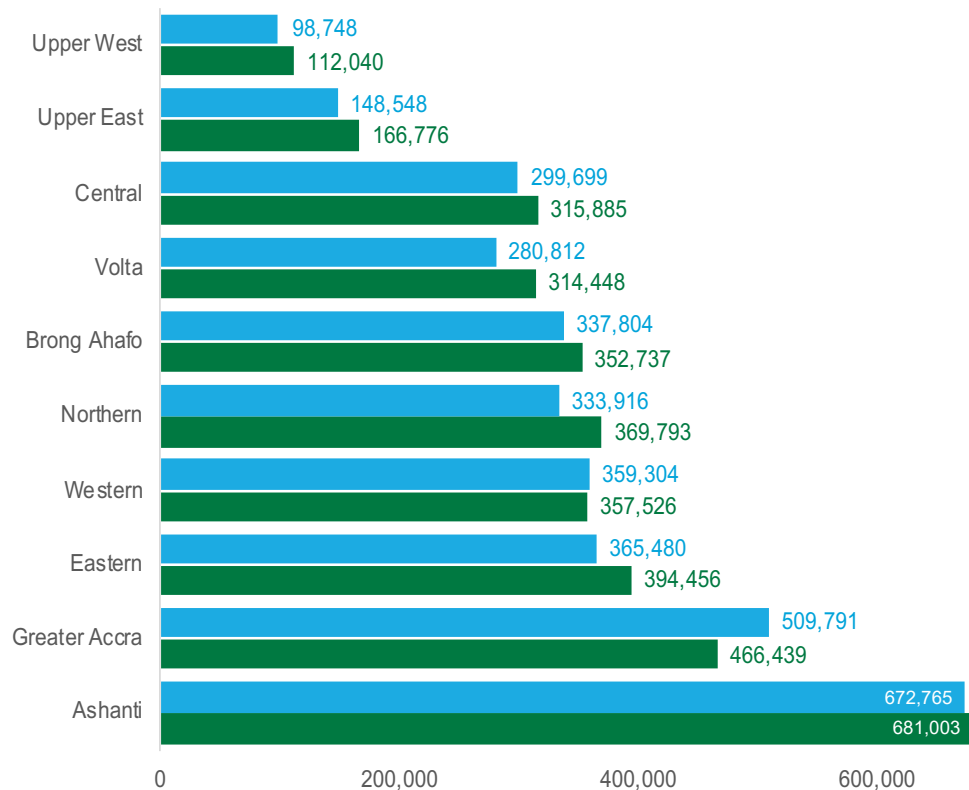
Ghana has a young population. About 6.9 million Ghanaians are adolescents, about 22% of the total population of nearly 31 million.

Ghana population profile

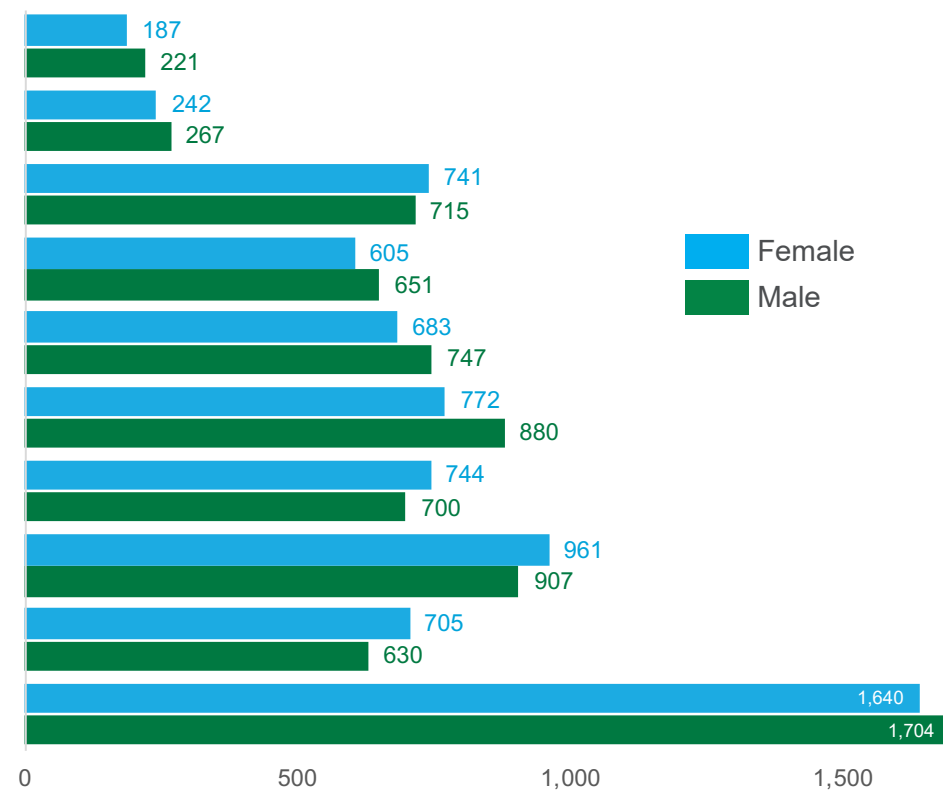


Adolescents in Ghana

Ghana's adolescent population by region



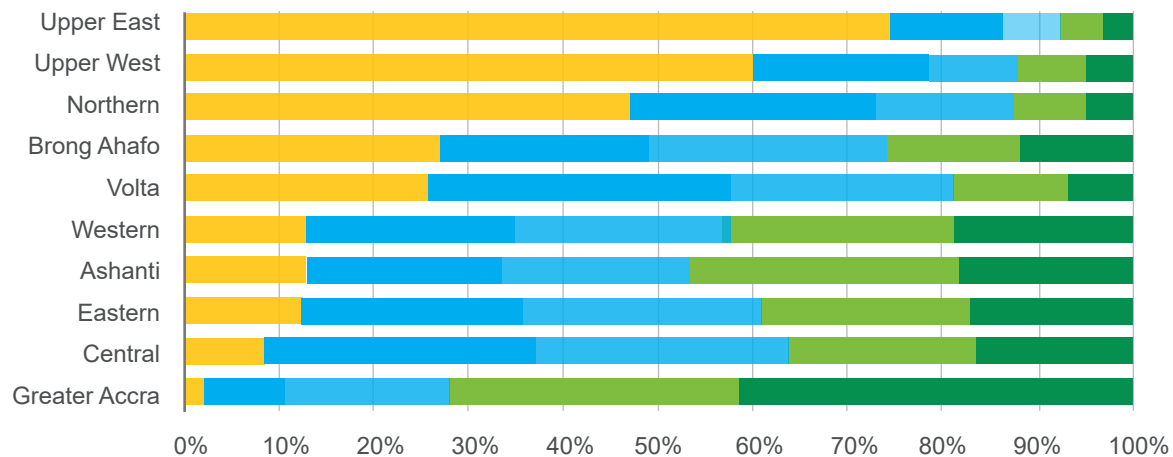
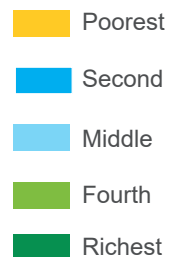
Adolescents sampled in MICS 2017/18 household survey



Percentage distribution of sampled adolescents 10-19 in household by wealth quintile

Source: Ghana Statistical Service. Population Projections 2020

For the MICS household survey, 14,702 adolescents were sampled to collect information about their lives.

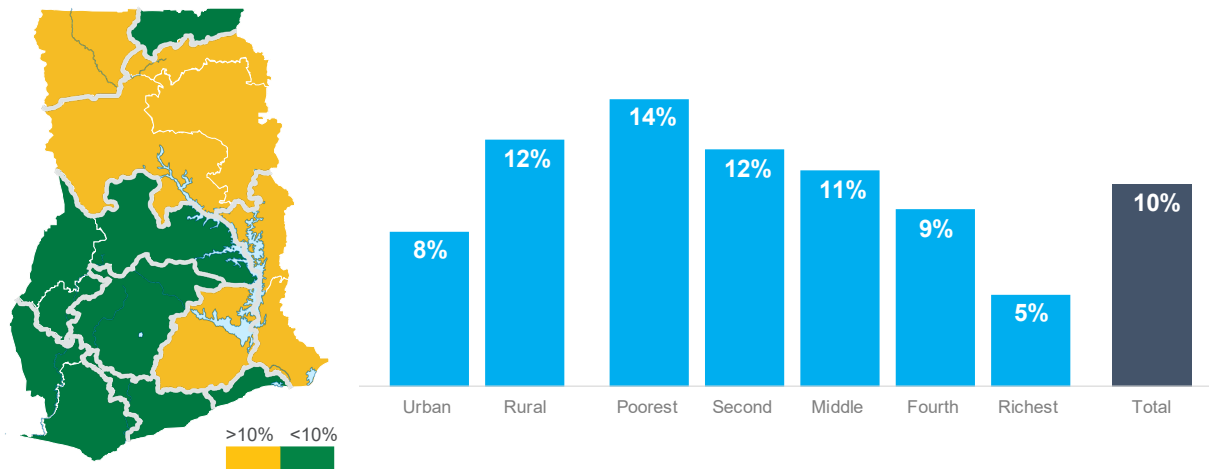


EVERY ADOLESCENT SURVIVES AND THRIVES

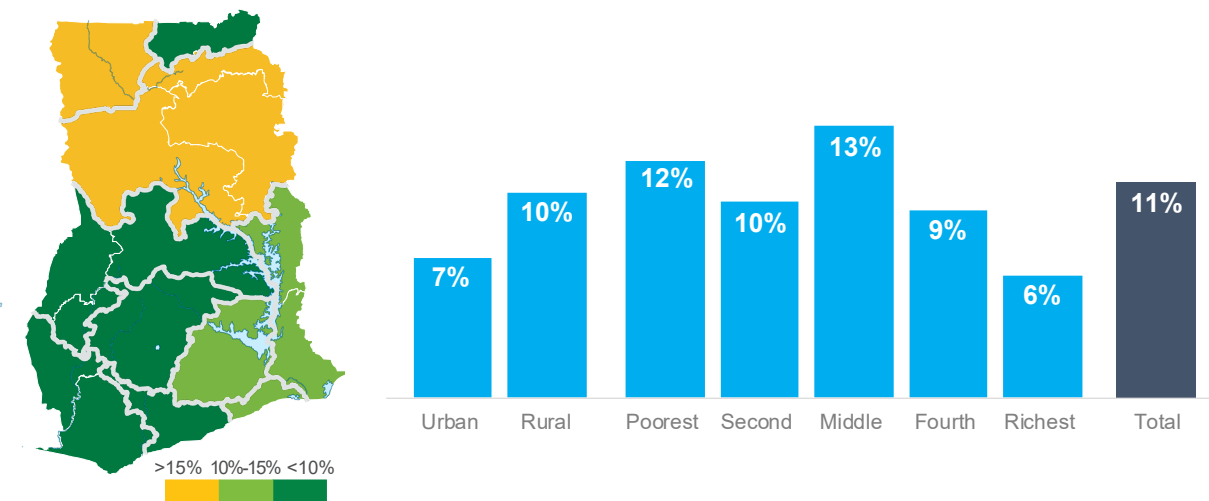


Sexual debut and intergenerational sex

Percentage of adolescent girls who had sex before age 15

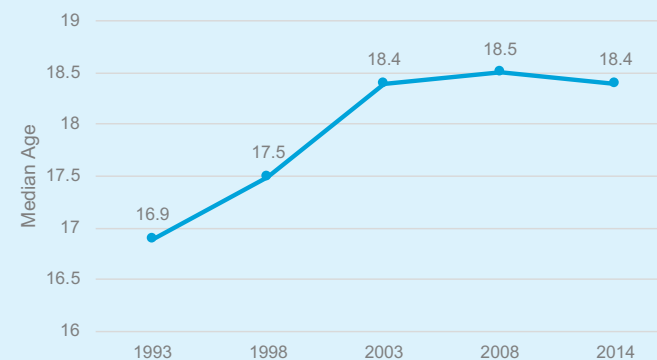


Percentage of adolescent girls who had sex in the past 12 months with a partner who was at least 10 years older



The median age of first sexual intercourse reported by young women aged 20 to 24 increased during the 1990s from 17 to 18.4 years but has not changed since 2003. About 10% of adolescent girls and 7% of adolescent boys reported that they had sexual intercourse before the age of 15. About 11% of adolescent girls had sex with a partner who was at least 10 years older.

Median age of first sexual intercourse (women aged 20-24)



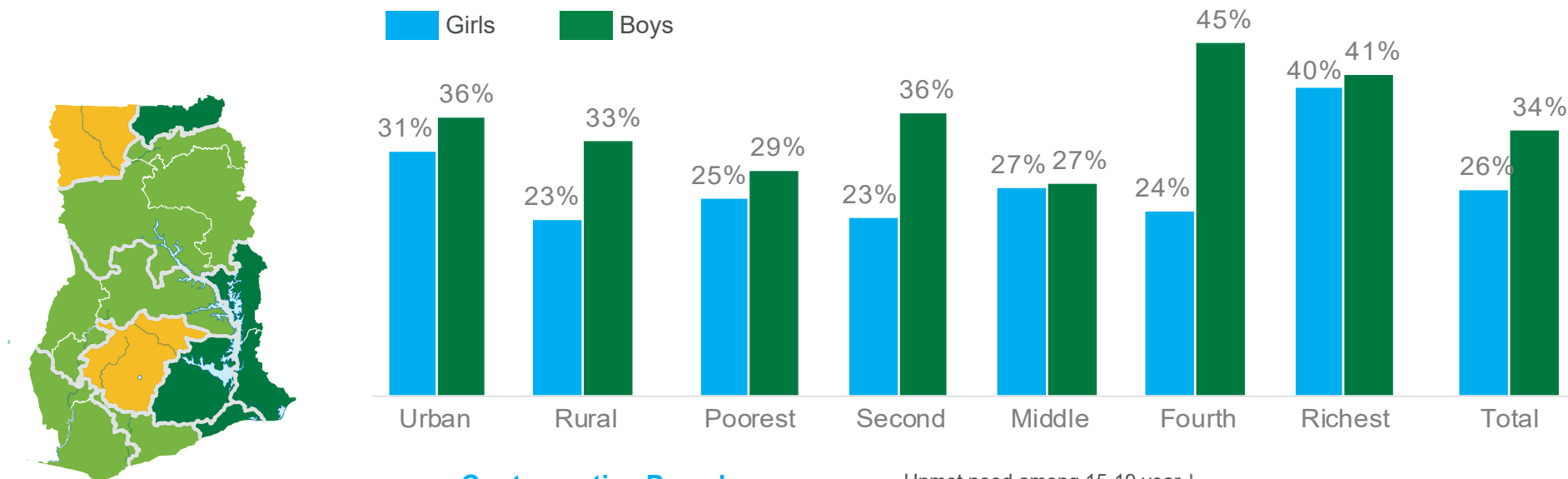
Source: UNFPA (2016). Situational analysis of adolescent girls and young women in Ghana

Condom use and contraception

Most adolescents do not use condoms during intercourse with a non-marital or non-cohabiting partner. Boys report condoms use more often than girls.

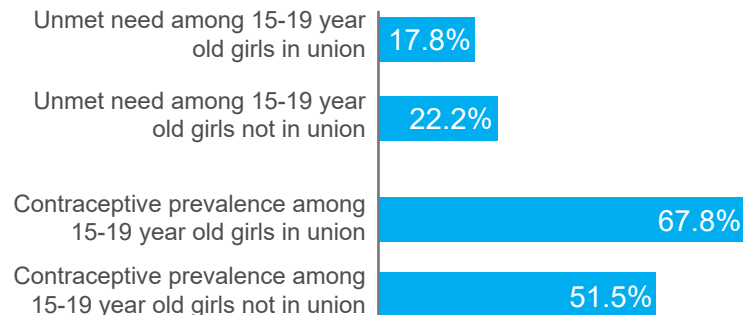
Less than one quarter of sexually active unmarried girls use a modern method of contraception, and two out of three who report that they want to stop or delay childbearing are not using any contraception.

Percentage of adolescent girls and boys who used a condom during last intercourse with a non-marital, non-cohabiting partner in the past 12 months



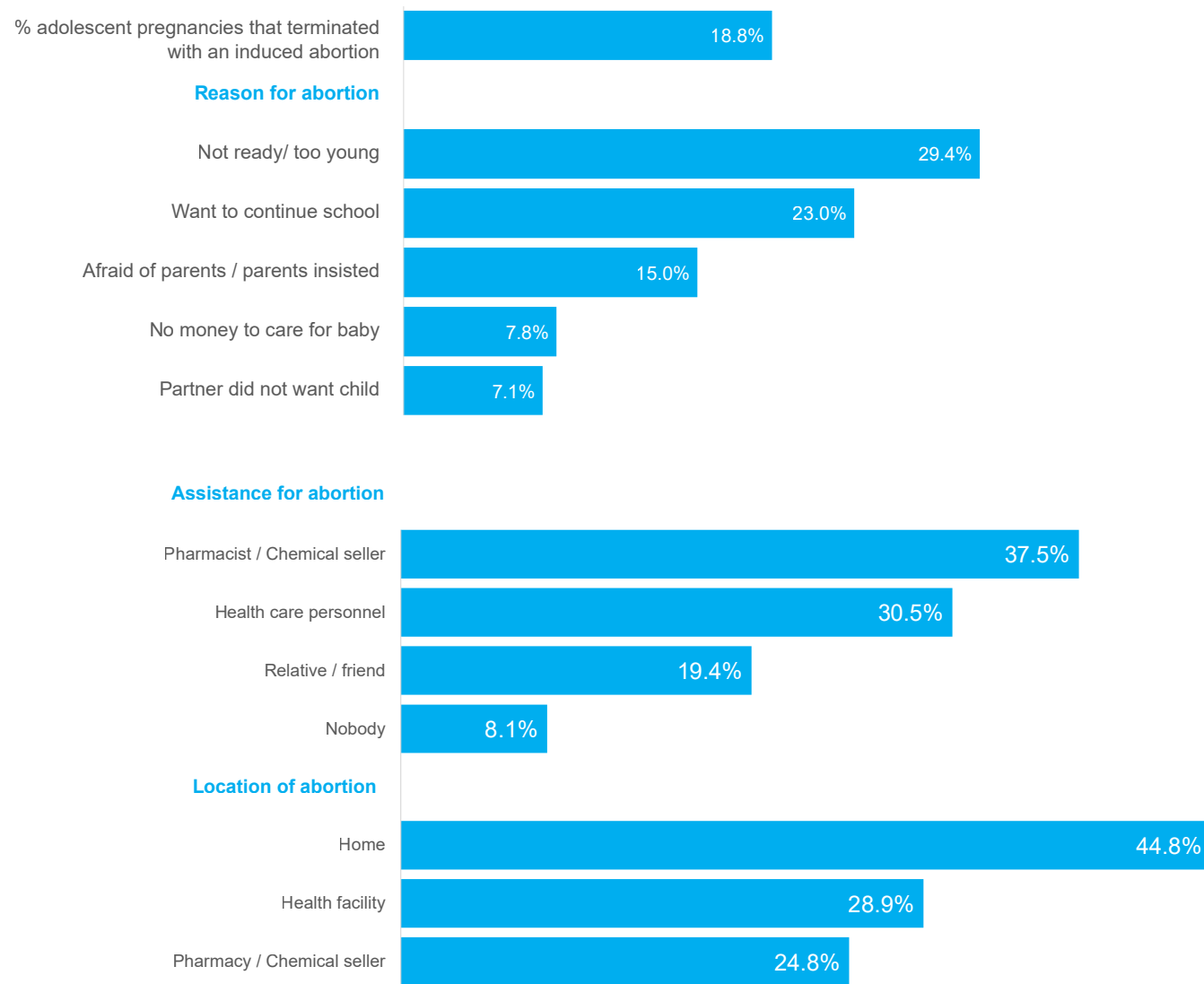
Contraceptive Prevalence and Unmet Need

Source: UNFPA (2016). Situational analysis of adolescent girls and young women in Ghana



Unsafe abortion

Surveys conducted between 1998 and 2017 have estimated that about 3% of adolescent girls had undergone an induced abortion, although there may be considerable underreporting because of the associated stigma. Almost one in five adolescent pregnancies terminated in an induced abortion and almost 30% were performed using an unsafe method.



Source: Maternal Health Survey 2017

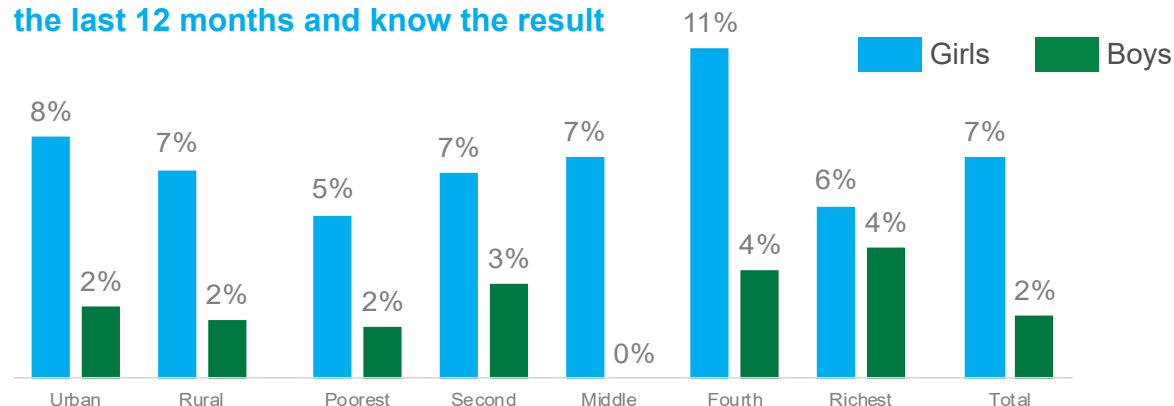
HIV knowledge, attitudes and testing

Only 7% of adolescent girls and 2% of adolescent boys have been tested for HIV within the past 12 months and know their results. Few adolescents are knowledgeable about HIV prevention. Girls with low educational achievements are particularly unlikely to access relevant information about HIV. Discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV are widespread among adolescent boys and girls.

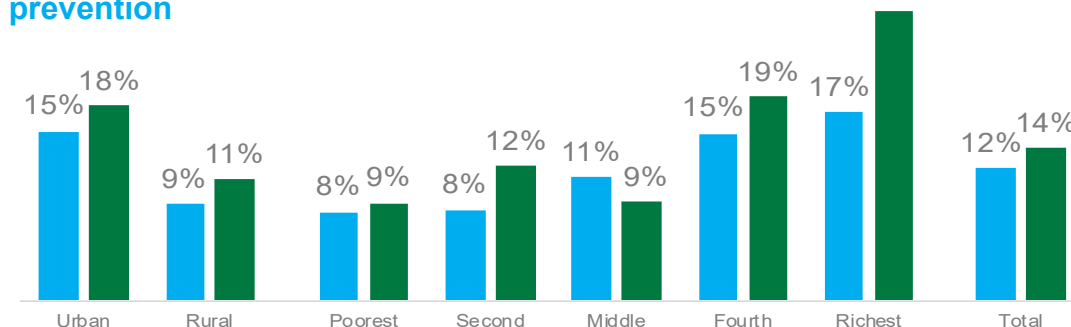
Adolescent girls tested for HIV by region



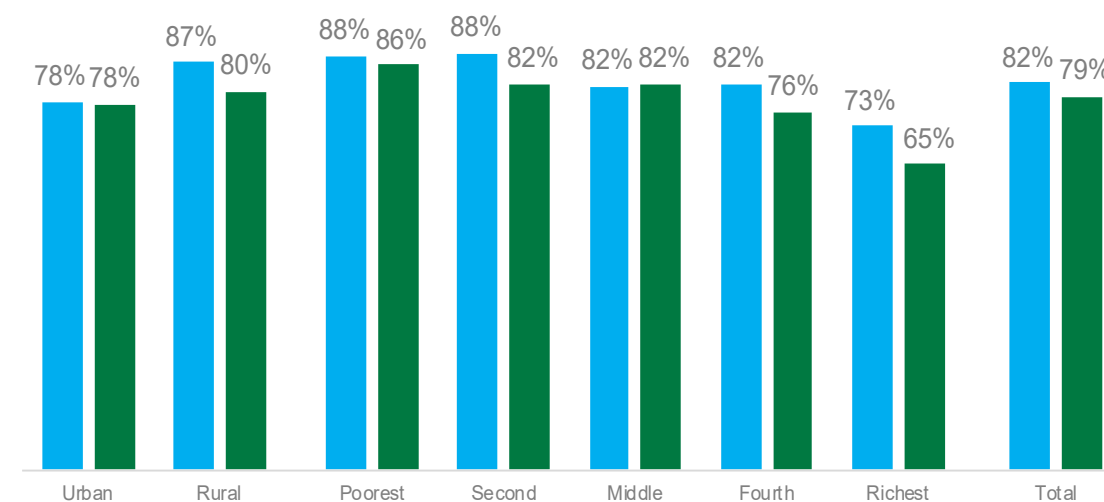
Percentage of sexually active adolescents who have been tested for HIV in the last 12 months and know the result



Percentage of adolescents who have comprehensive knowledge about HIV prevention

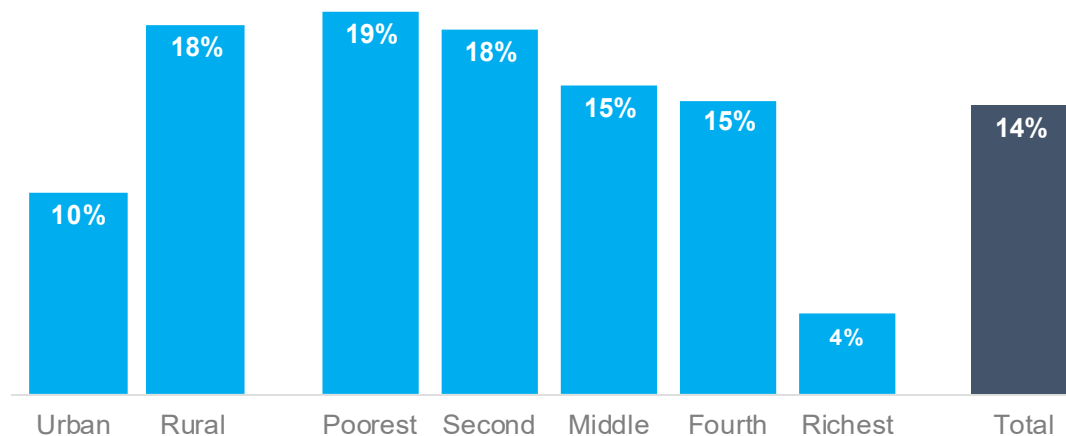


Percentage of adolescents who expressed discriminatory attitudes about people living with HIV

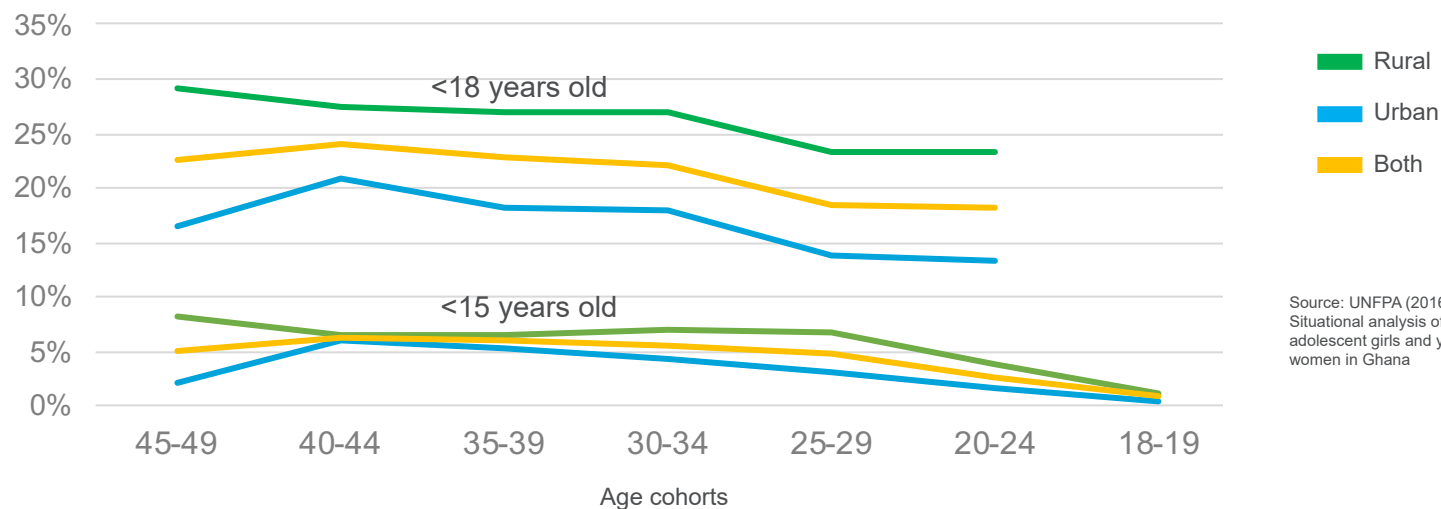


Pregnancy and delivery

Percentage of adolescent girls who have had a live birth or are pregnant with their first child



Percentage of women who gave birth before age 18 and before age 15 by age cohort



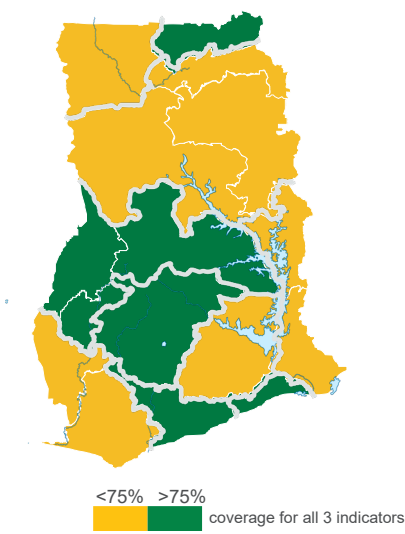
There has been a slow decrease in adolescent childbearing as shown by the percentage of women in each age cohort who gave birth before age 18 and age 15. Among adolescent girls, 14% have had a live birth or are currently pregnant with their first child. Girls in the poorest wealth quintile are five times more likely to be pregnant or to have already given birth than those in the richest.

Source: UNFPA (2016). Situational analysis of adolescent girls and young women in Ghana

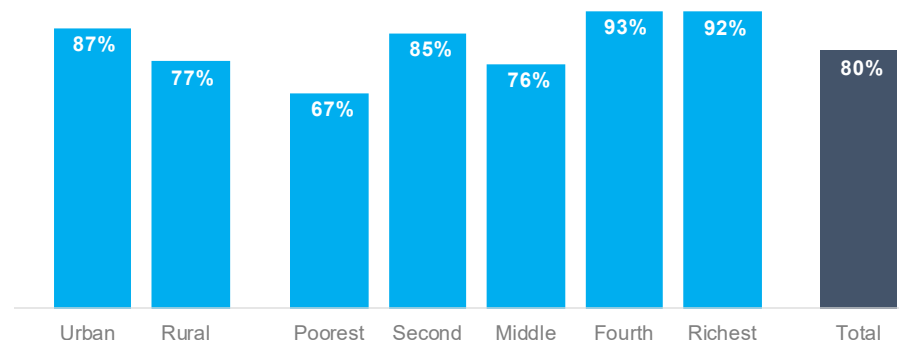
Pregnancy and delivery

Most adolescent girls access care for a safe pregnancy and delivery, although there are regional differences, differences between girls in rural and urban areas, and differences according to wealth.

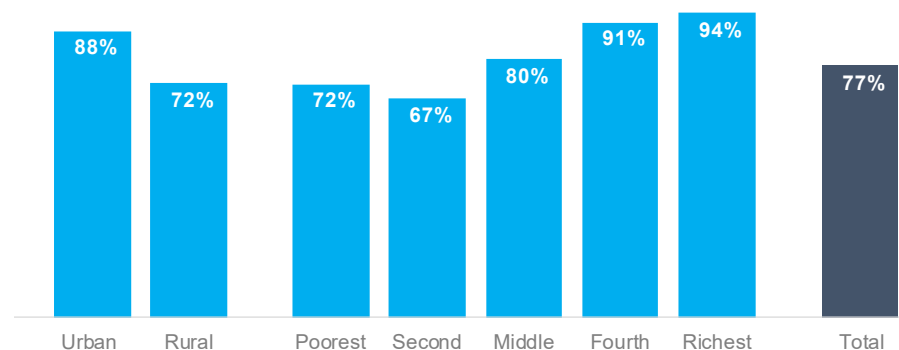
Regional coverage for all 3 indicators of pregnancy and delivery care



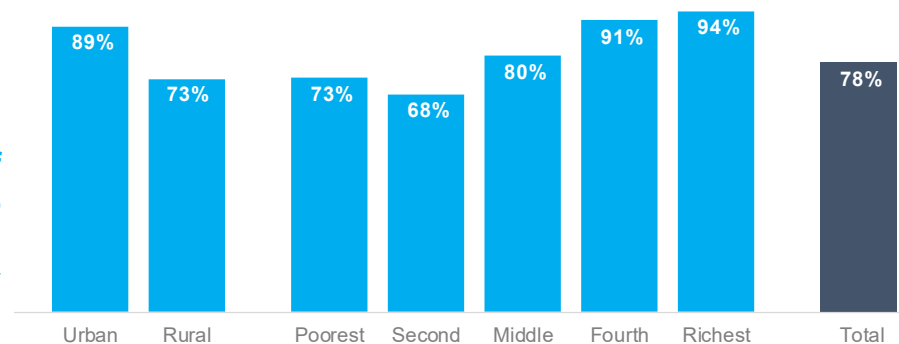
Percentage of adolescent girls who attended four or more antenatal visits during pregnancy



Percentage of adolescent girls who gave birth in attendance of a skilled provider



Percentage of adolescent girls who delivered in a health facility

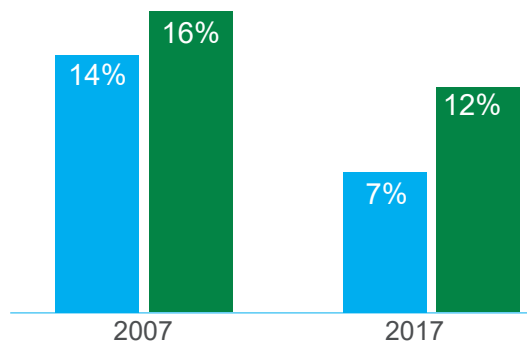


Pregnancy-related mortality

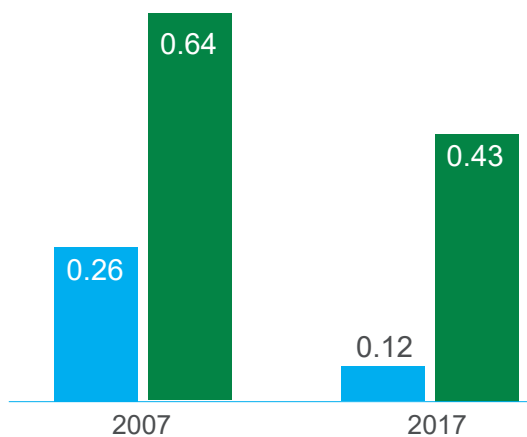
The mortality from pregnancy-related causes among adolescents is decreasing and is generally lower than among all women of reproductive age.



Percentage of deaths due to pregnancy-related causes

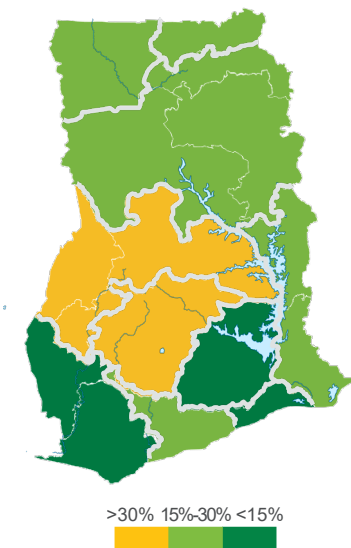


Pregnancy-related mortality per 1,000

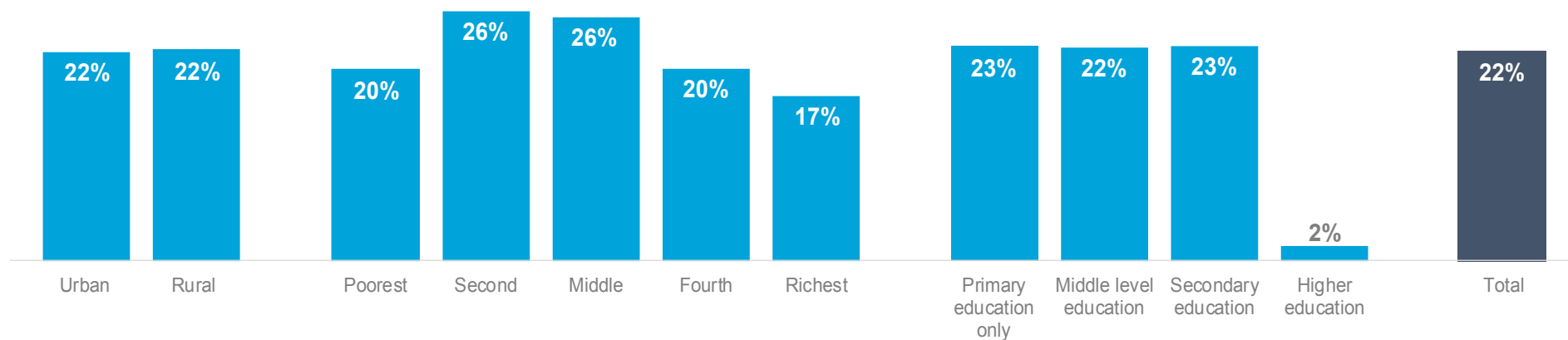


Menstrual hygiene

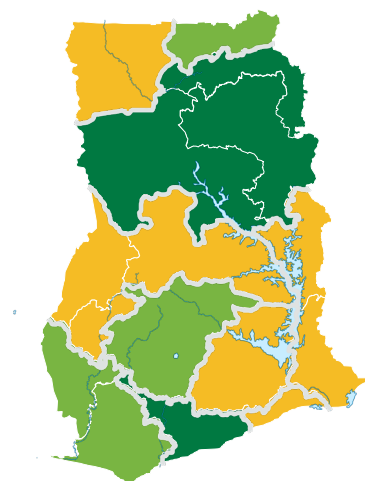
Percentage of adolescent girls who did not participate in social activities, school or work during their last menstruation



Access to appropriate menstrual hygiene materials is high (over 90%). That notwithstanding, two out of ten girls did not participate in social activities, school, or work during their last menstruation.



Substance use

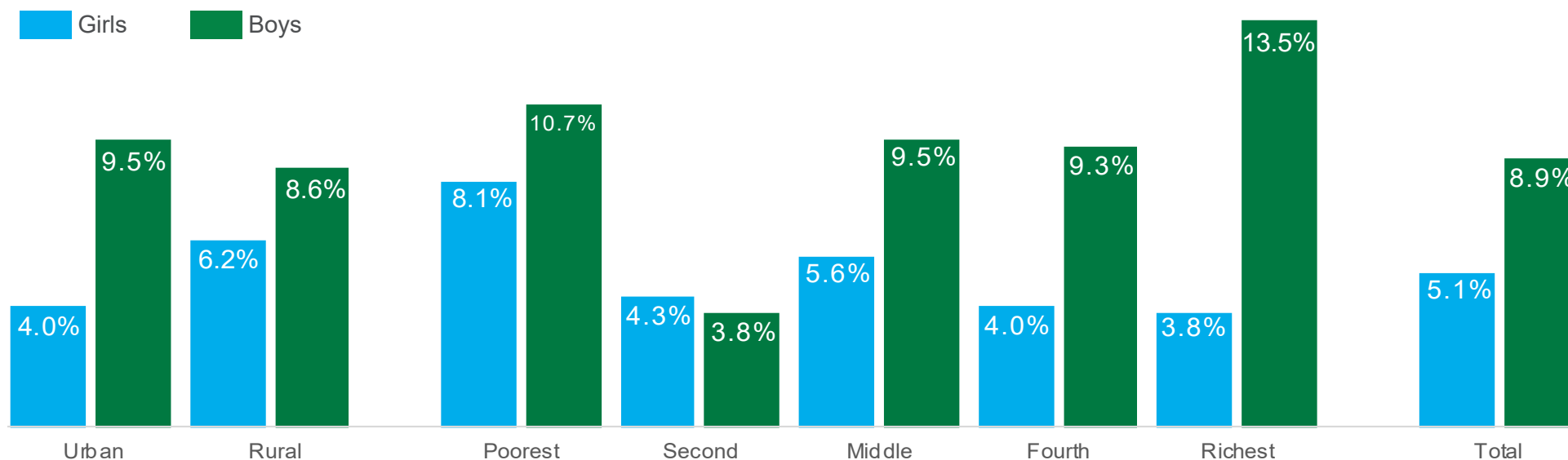


Self-reported alcohol use by adolescent boys



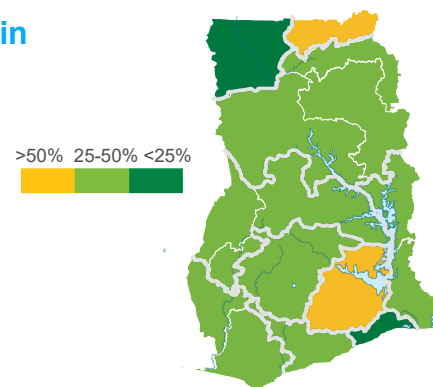
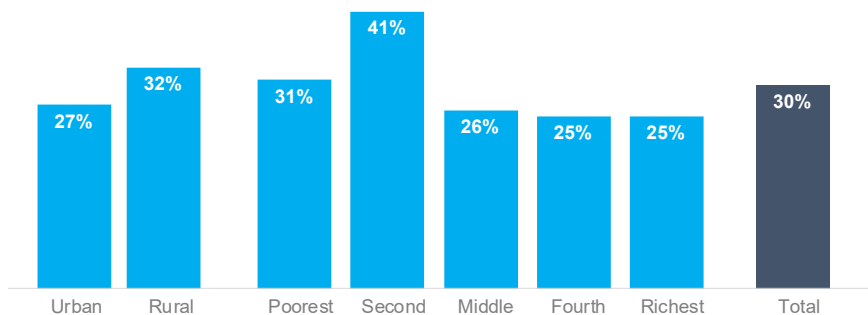
Less than 0.5% of adolescents report the use of tobacco. Self-reported alcohol use within the past month is more common among adolescent boys and girls.

Percentage of adolescents who reported that they had at least one alcoholic drink within the past month

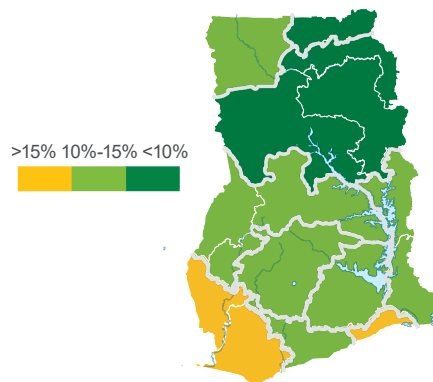
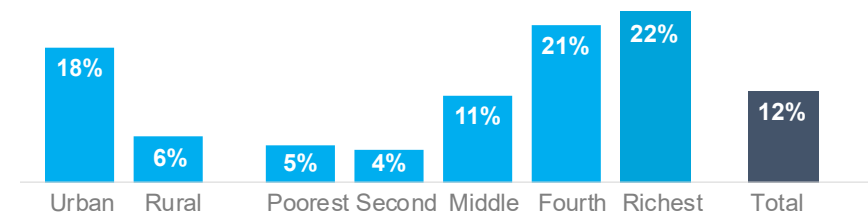


Nutrition

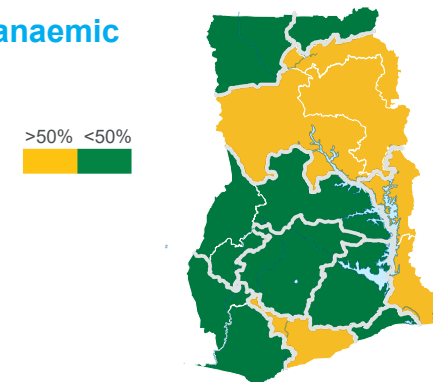
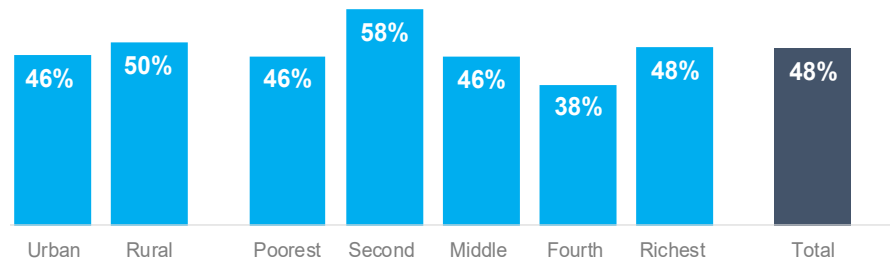
Percentage of adolescent boys who are thin or moderately thin



Percentage of adolescent girls who are overweight or obese



Percentage of adolescent girls who are anaemic or severely anaemic



Ghana Statistical Service. Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2014

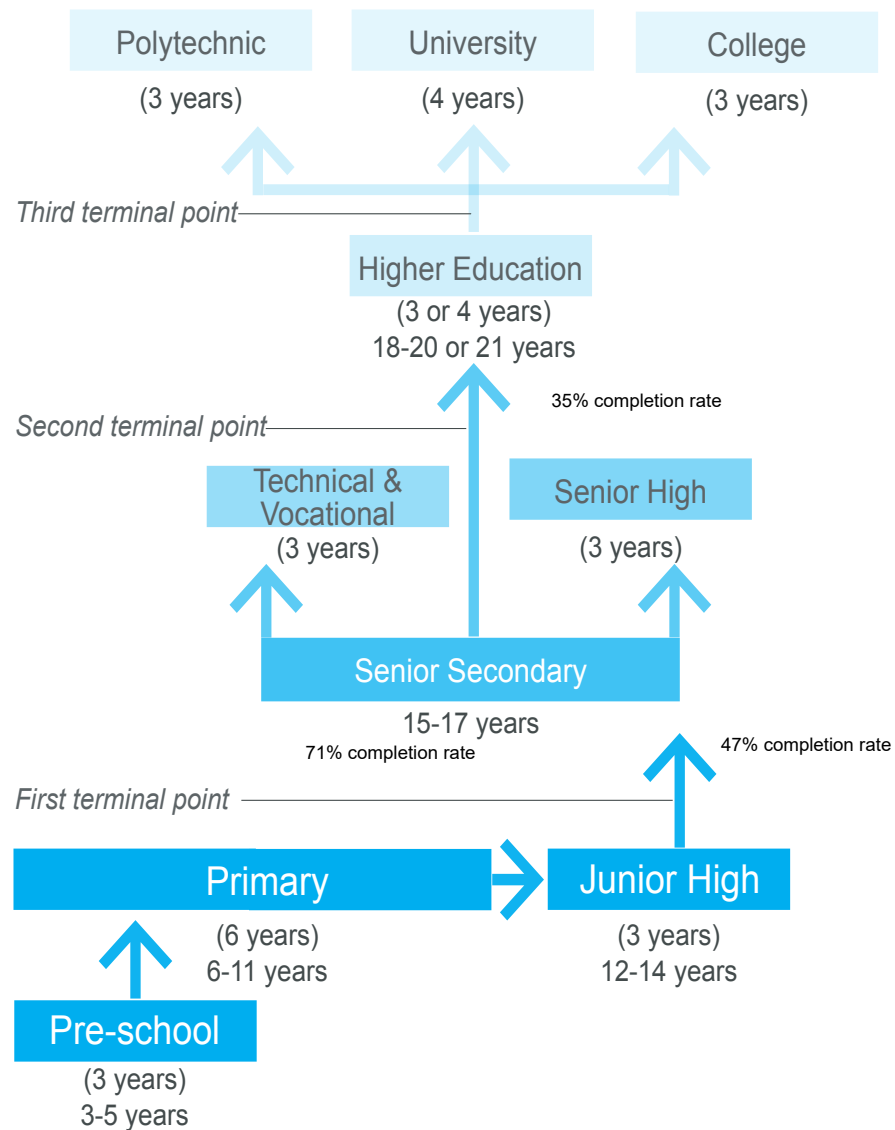
The nutritional status of adolescents was not surveyed in MICS 2017/18. Data are therefore presented from the 2014 Demographic and Health Survey. Most adolescent girls and boys have a healthy body weight. However, undernutrition is common among rural adolescent boys and overnutrition affects a considerable number of urban adolescent girls, especially in Greater Accra and those in the highest wealth quintile. Almost half of all adolescent girls are anaemic.

Over- and under-nutrition are defined by a body mass index for age that is more than one standard deviation above or below the median in this population of adolescents. Anaemia among women is defined by a haemoglobin level below 12.0 g/dl (11.9 g/dl if pregnant).

EVERY ADOLESCENT LEARNS



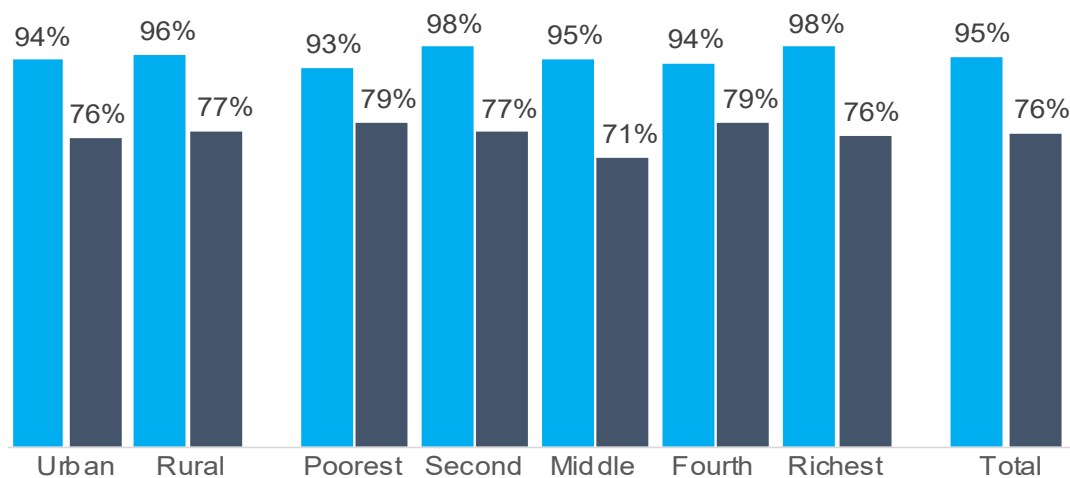
Ghana's education system



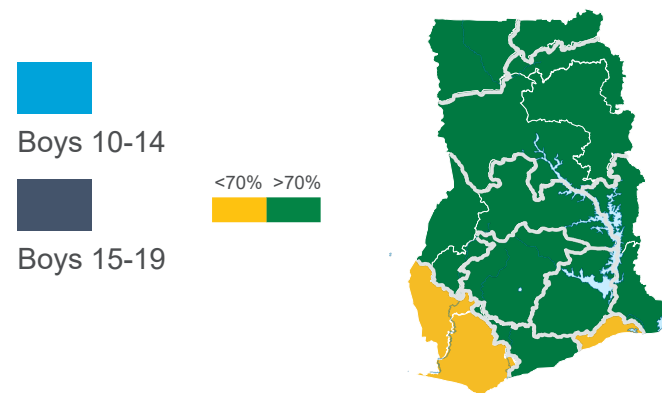
School attendance and completion

Between the ages of 10 and 14 years, most adolescent girls are in school, but between 15 and 19 years, the school attendance rate drops to less than three quarters.

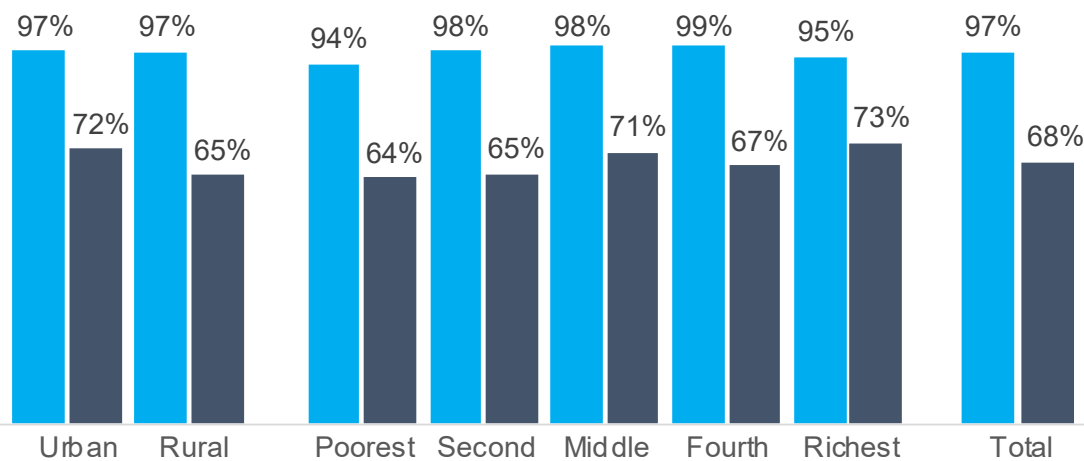
Percentage of adolescent boys attending school (including technical/vocational training)



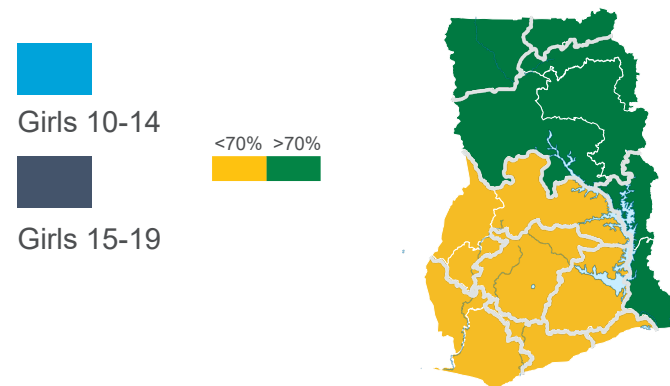
Percentage of adolescent boys 15-19 attending school (including technical/vocational training)



Percentage of adolescent girls attending school (including technical/vocational training)

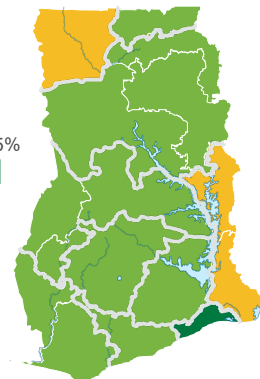
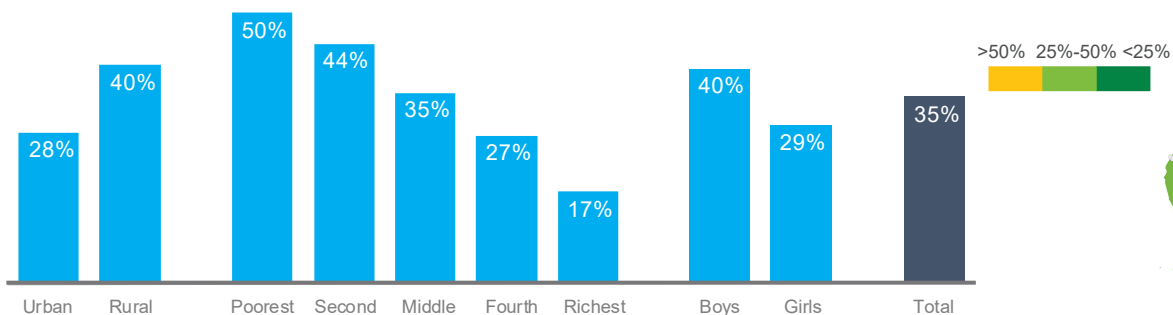


Percentage of adolescent girls 15-19 attending school (including technical/vocational training)

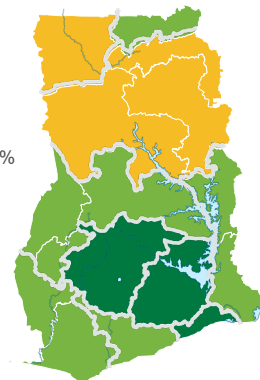
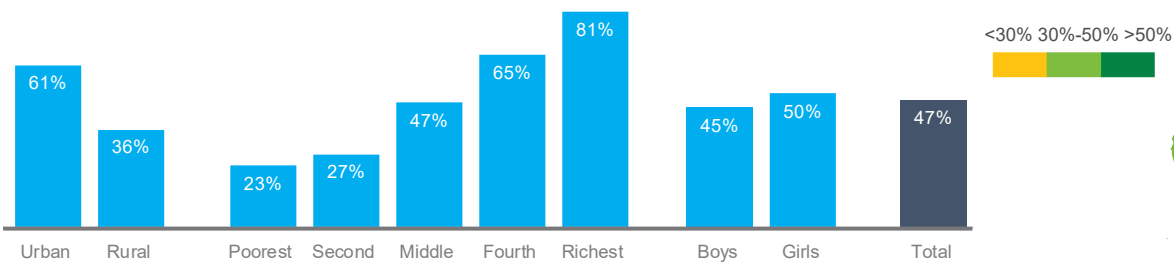


School attendance and completion

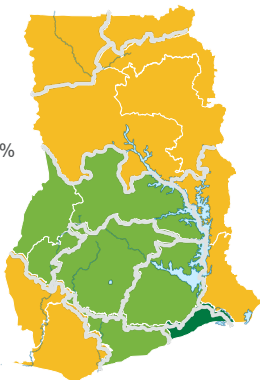
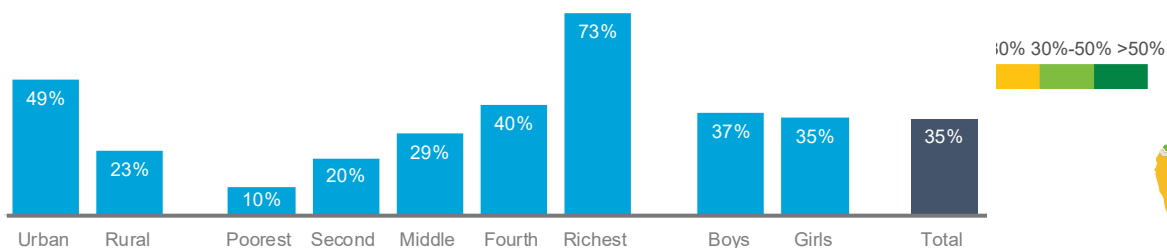
Percentage of Junior High School students who are more than two years over age for their grade



Basic education completion rate (Junior High School)



Secondary education completion rate (Senior High School)

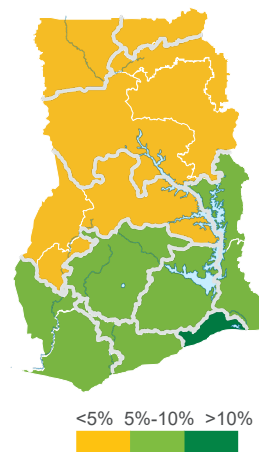
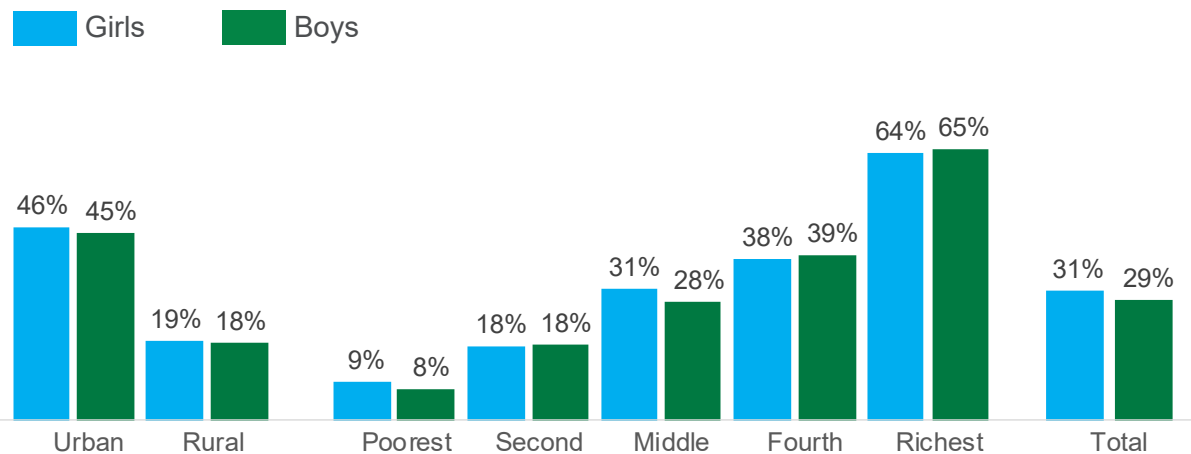


Due to delays in starting schooling and because of repetitions, many adolescents attend grades that are lower than those designed for their age. This is more common among boys than among girls.

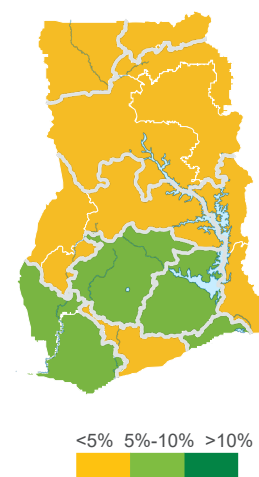
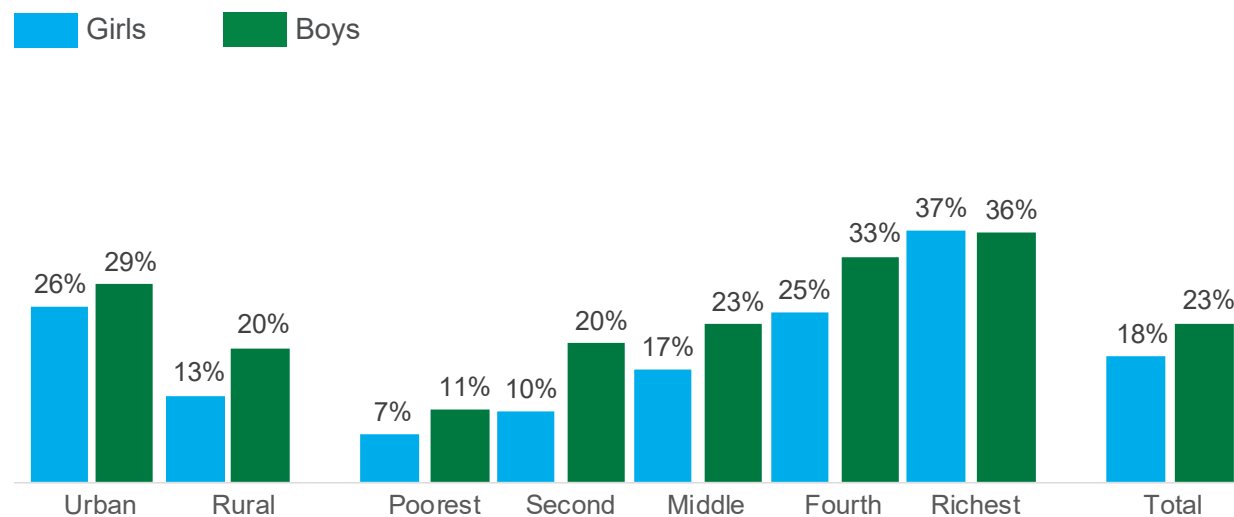
Less than half of adolescents, more girls than boys, complete basic education (up to grade nine). Only about a third complete secondary education (up to grade 12) with little difference between boys and girls. There are large differences in education completion rates by wealth quintile, urban and rural residence, and among regions.

Learning skills

Adolescents aged 10-14 who have primary school grade 3 level reading skills



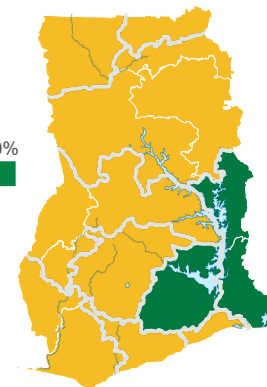
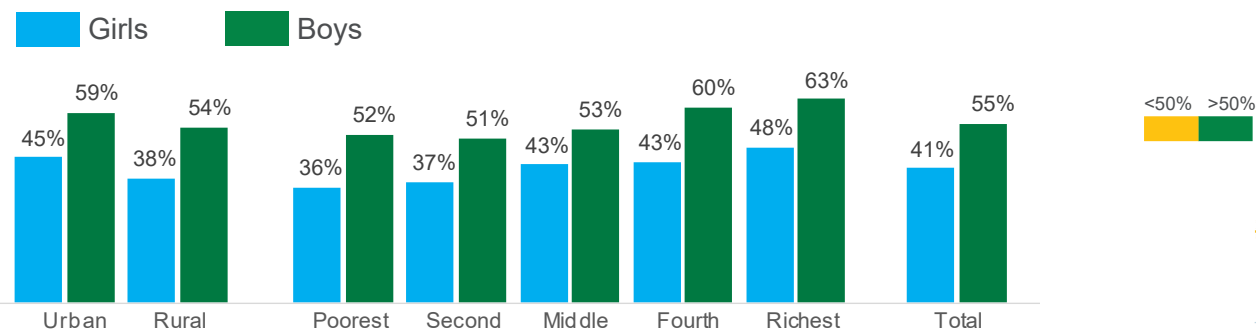
Adolescents aged 10-14 who have primary school grade 3 level numeracy skills



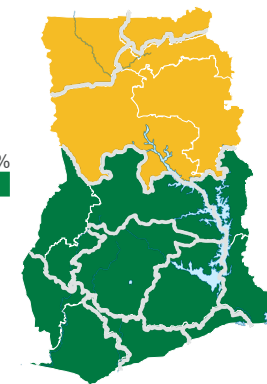
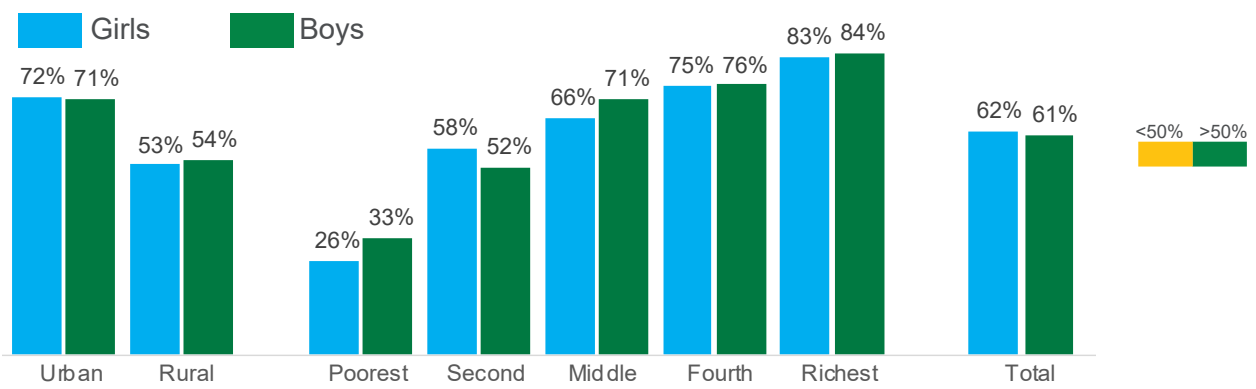
Among adolescents aged 10 to 14, only 30% have primary school grade 3 level reading skills and only 21% have grade 3 level numeracy skills. More girls than boys have reading skills while more boys have numeracy skills. There are large differences in skills development by wealth quintile, urban and rural residence, and among regions.

Use of media and mobile phones

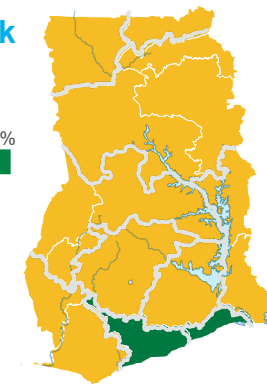
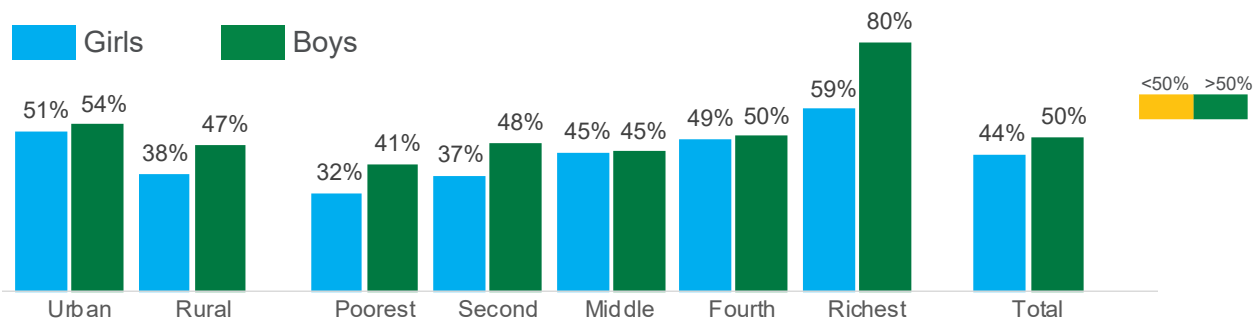
Percentage of adolescents 15-19 who listen to the radio at least once per week



Percentage of adolescents 15-19 who watch television at least once per week



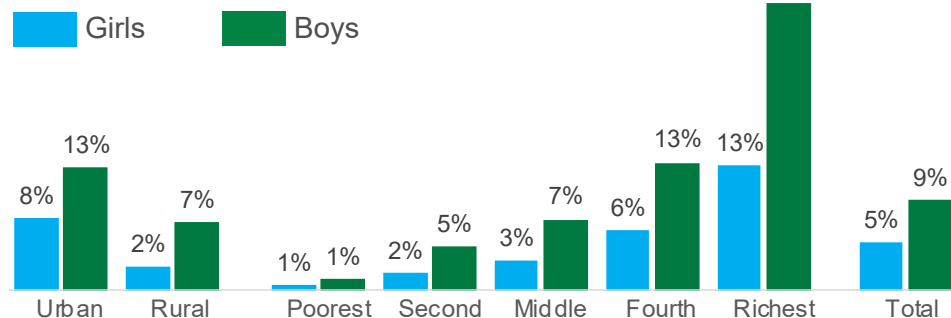
Percentage of adolescents 15-19 who used a mobile phone at least once per week



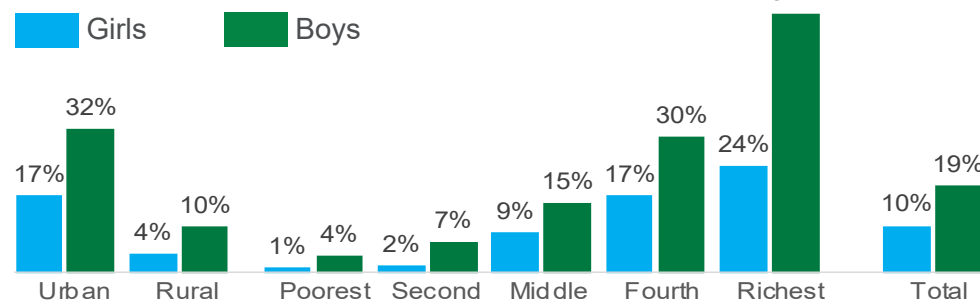
About half of Ghanaian adolescents regularly listen to the radio and watch television. More boys than girls listen to the radio, while more girls watch television. There is at least one mobile phone in almost all households in Ghana, however less than half of adolescents aged 15 to 19 use it regularly. More boys than girls have access to a mobile phone.

Computer and internet use

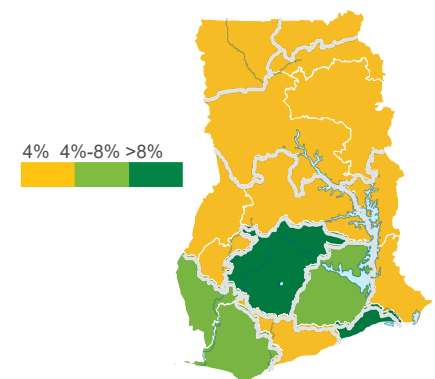
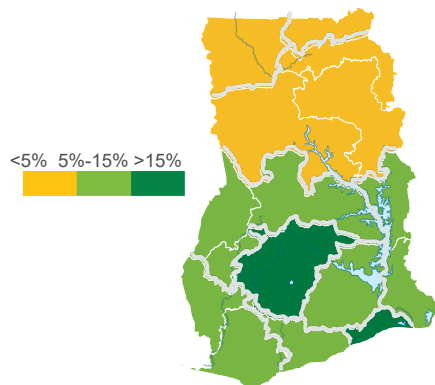
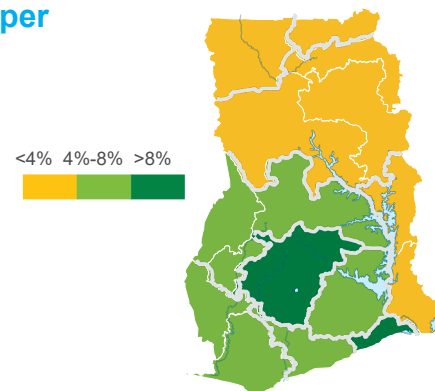
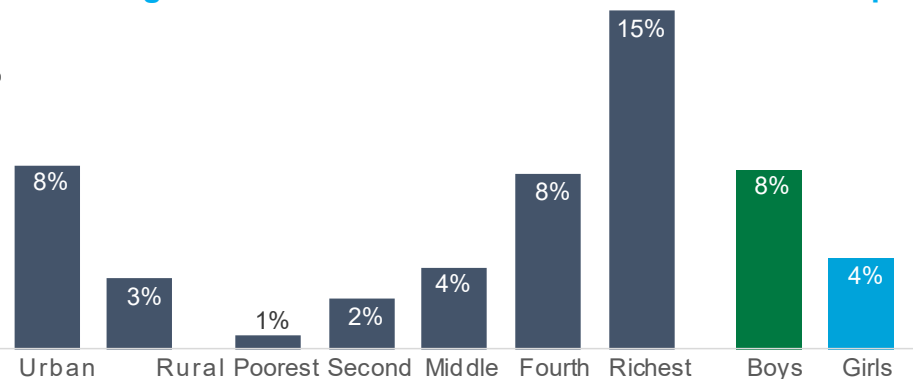
Percentage of adolescents 15-19 who used a computer at least once per week in the past 3 months



Percentage of adolescents 15-19 who accessed the internet at least once in the past 3 months



Percentage of adolescents 15-19 who have effective computer skills



Few adolescents in Ghana, more boys than girls, regularly use a computer. Internet access at least once in three months is twice as common as regular computer use but it is still low. The same wealth and gender gaps in internet access are observed as for computer use. Skills among regular computer users are about equal, but when use is taken into consideration, boys have about twice the skill level as girls and there are large differences in skill levels between regions, urban and rural residents and among wealth quintiles.

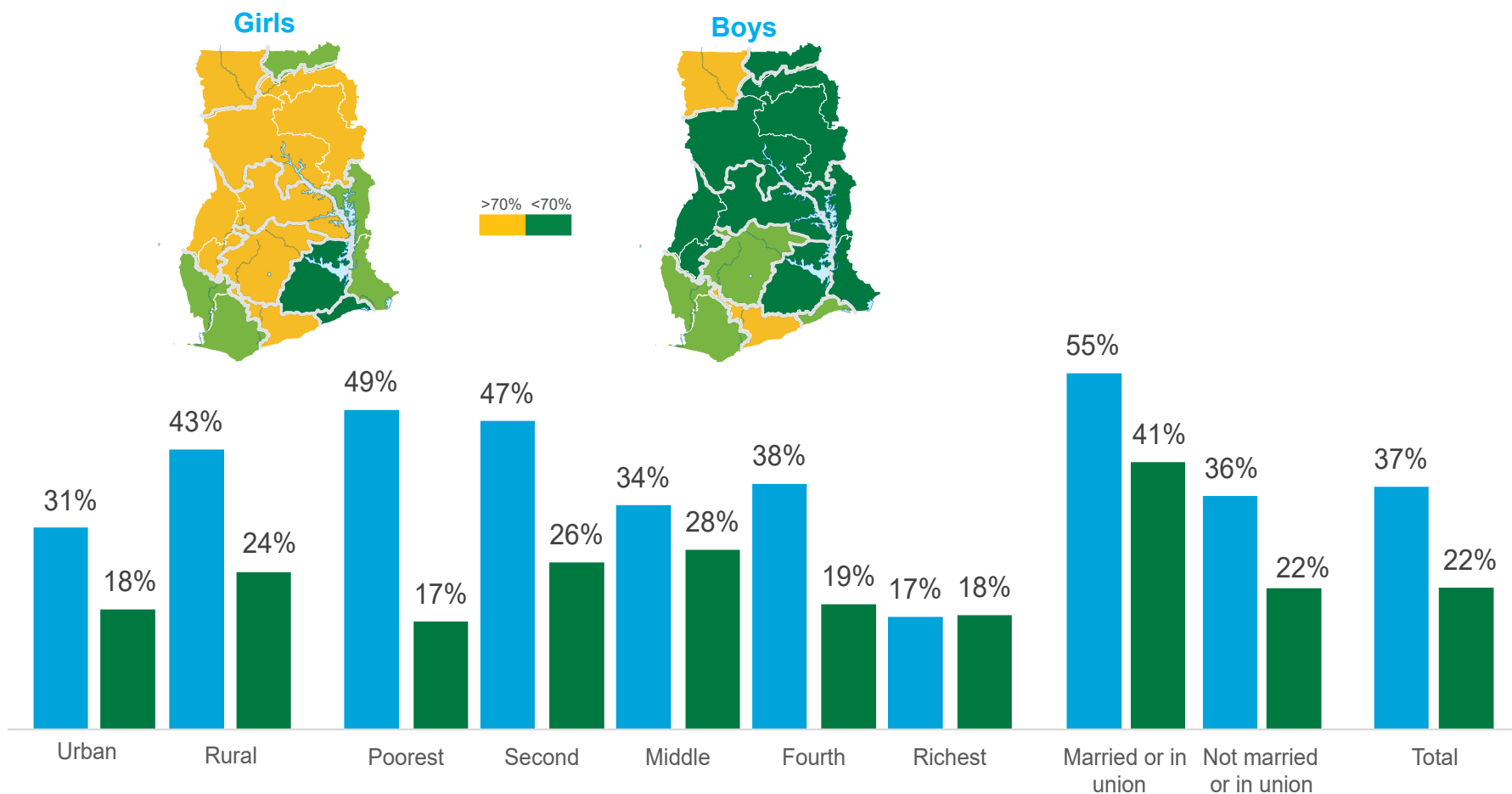


**EVERY ADOLESCENT IS PROTECTED
FROM VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION**

Attitudes towards domestic violence

Women and girls who have experienced physical abuse or who live in environments where domestic violence is common are more likely to normalise it and express acceptance of the right of a husband to beat his wife. More than one third of adolescent girls and more than one fifth of boys agree with at least one justification for wife beating. Acceptance of wife beating is higher among adolescents than among adults.

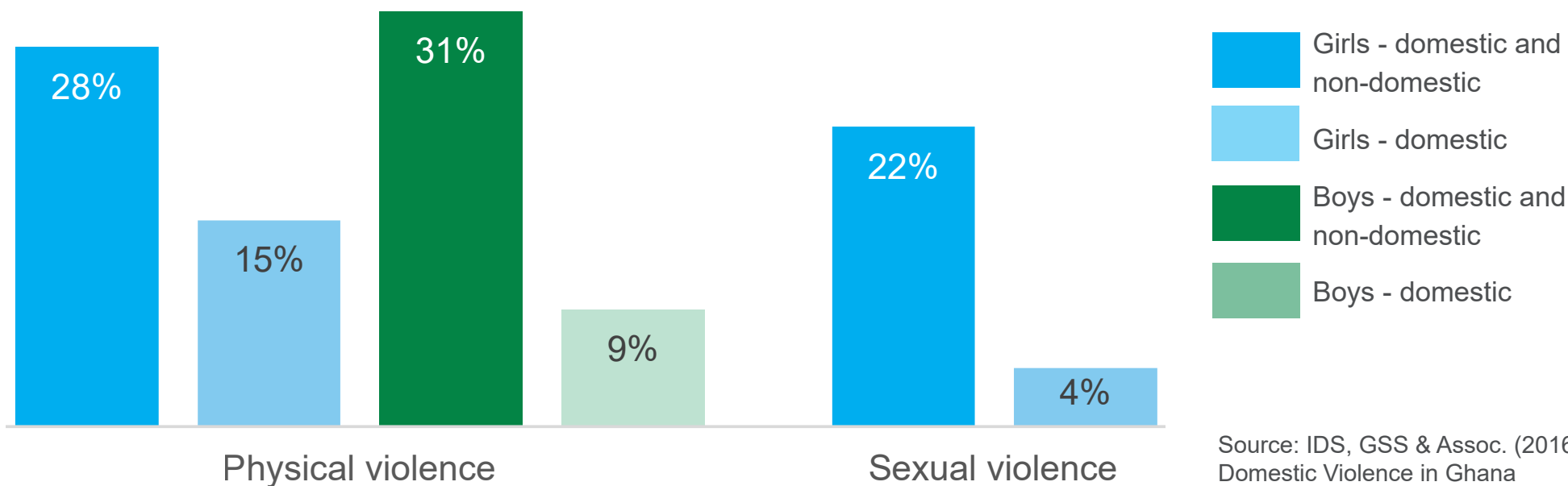
% adolescents aged 15 to 19 who agree that a husband can beat his wife



Experience of physical and sexual violence

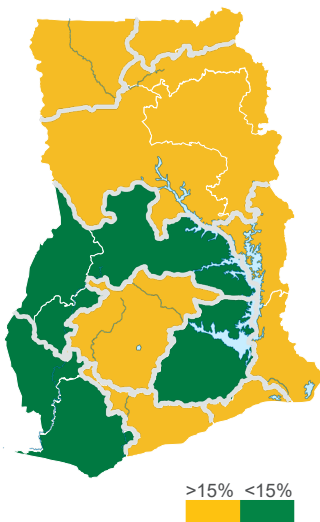
Boys report the experience of physical violence more often than girls, however in the domestic environment girls experience physical violence nearly twice as often as boys. One in five girls reported that she experienced sexual violence within the past 12 months, including rape and sexual coercion. While sexual violence in the domestic environment is less common, it almost always involved rape or sexual coercion.

% adolescents aged 15 to 19 who experienced physical or sexual violence in the past 12 months

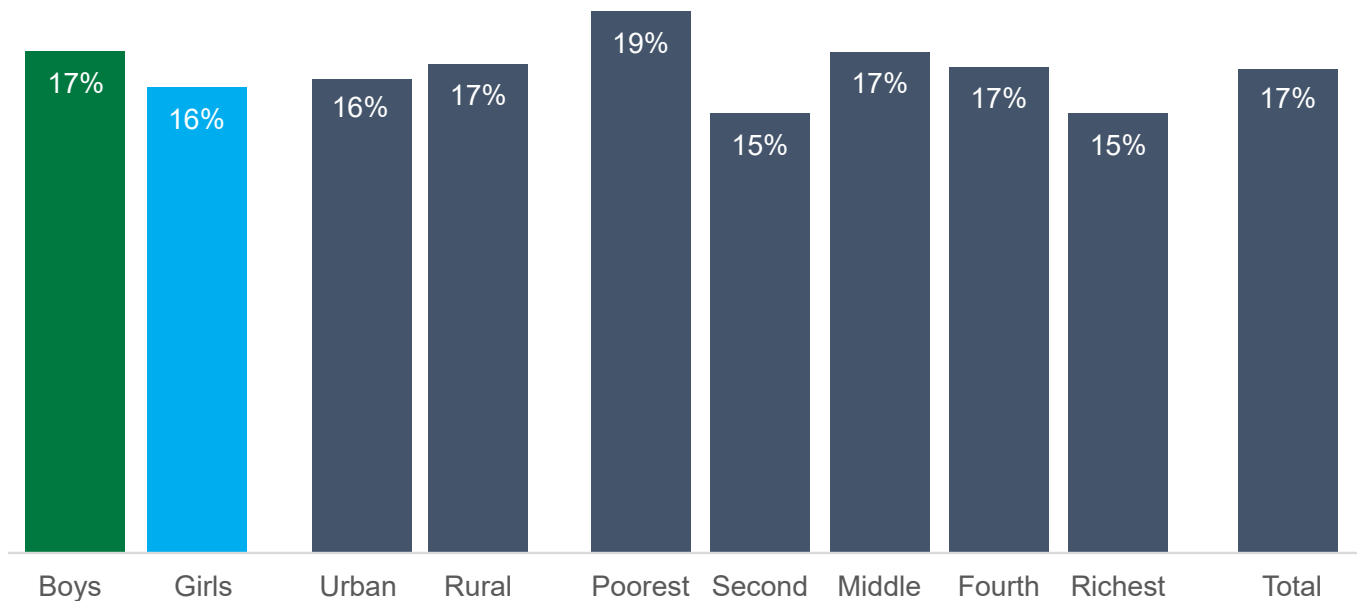


Violent discipline

Percentage of children under 14 years who experienced severe physical punishment within the past month



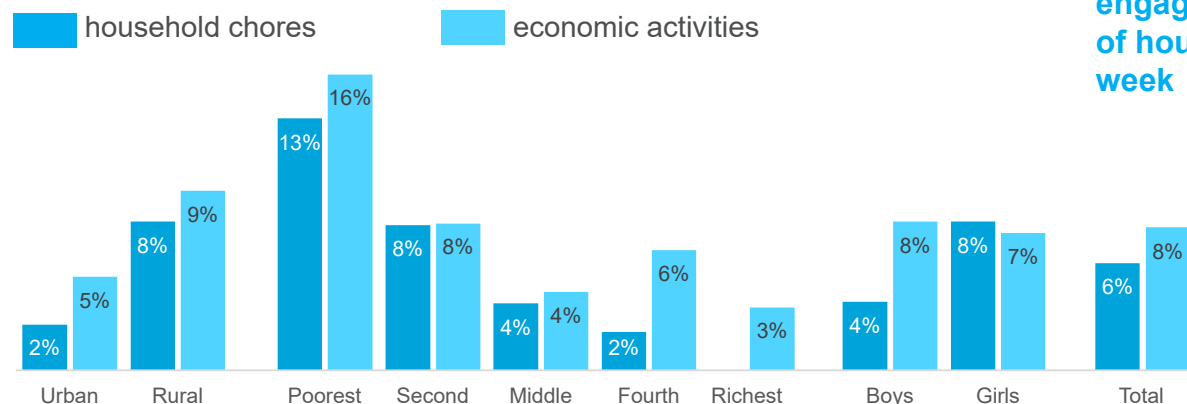
Psychological and physical punishment to discipline children is practiced nearly universally in Ghanaian households. From the age of three years, physical punishment is a common experience for boys and girls. Severe physical punishment within the past month was reported by one in six mothers of children under 14 years of age, slightly more frequently for boys but without major differences according to wealth or residence.



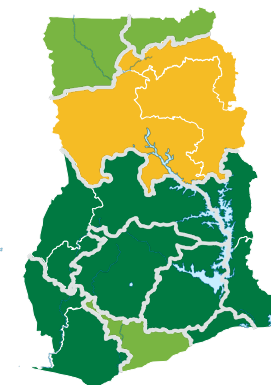
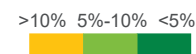
Child labour

About 13% of young adolescents in Ghana are working in the home or in the economy above the threshold that defines child labour. Child labour is less common among older adolescents. In both age groups, girls are much more likely to work in the household above the threshold defined as child labour.

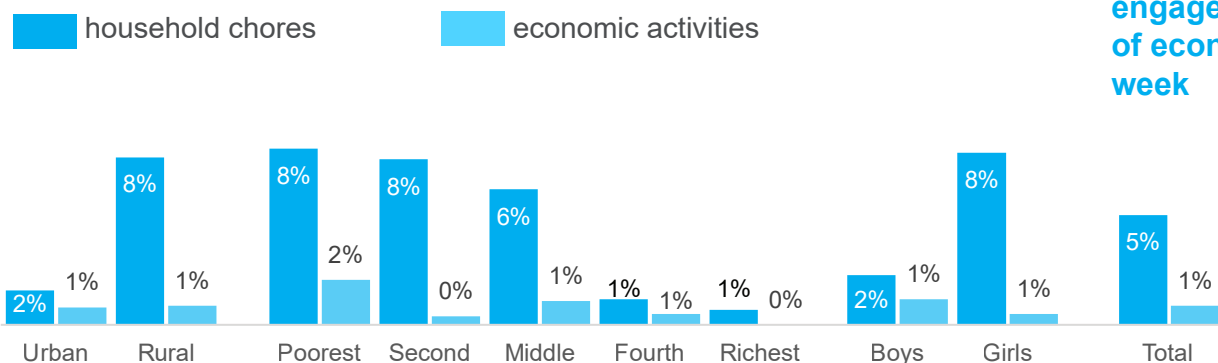
Percentage of adolescents aged 12-14 engaged in child labour



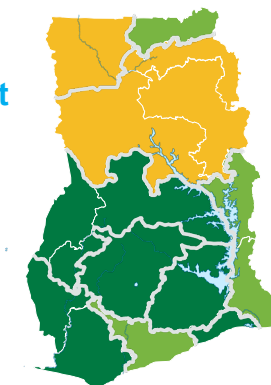
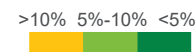
Young adolescents (12-14) engaged in more than 28 hours of household chores in the past week



Percentage of adolescents 15-17 engaged in child labour



Young adolescents (12-14) engaged in more than 14 hours of economic activities in the past week

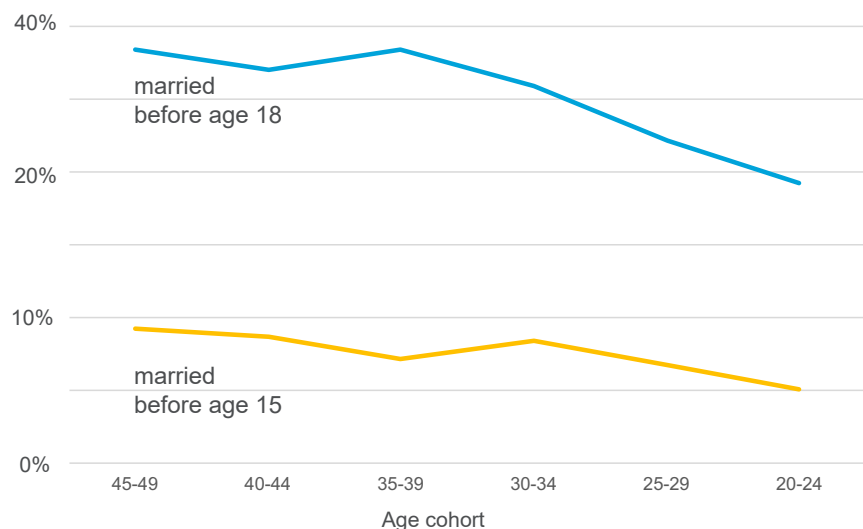


For adolescents aged 12 to 14 child labour is defined as 14 hours or more per week of paid or unpaid engagement in economic activities such as agriculture, fishing, manufacture or sales, and 28 hours or more of performing household chores including cooking, childcare, cleaning and collecting water or firewood. For older adolescents aged 15 to 17, the thresholds for both types of activities are 43 hours per week.

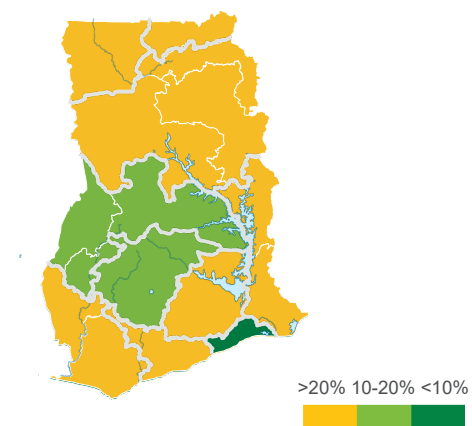
Child marriage

Marriage before the age of 18 is a violation of the right to ‘free and full’ consent to marriage as recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The incidence of child marriage has been declining in Ghana but it is still common in all regions apart from the Greater Accra Region. It is twice as common in rural compared to urban areas and highest among girls in the poorest households.

Percentage of women who were married before age 15 and age 18 by age cohort

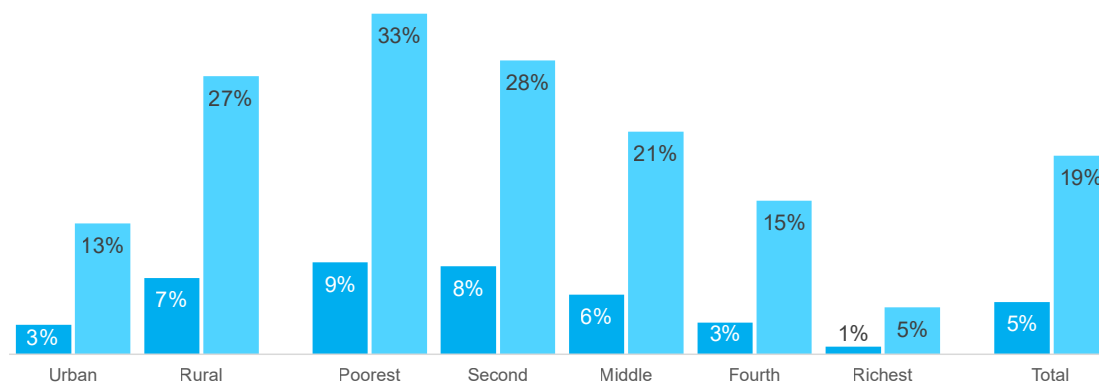


Regional prevalence of child marriage



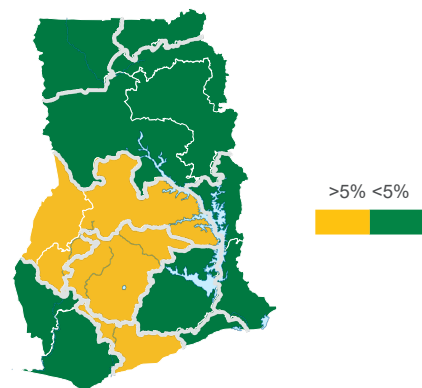
Percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married before age 15 and age 18

- % of women age 20-24 who were married before 15
- % of women age 20-24 who were married before 18

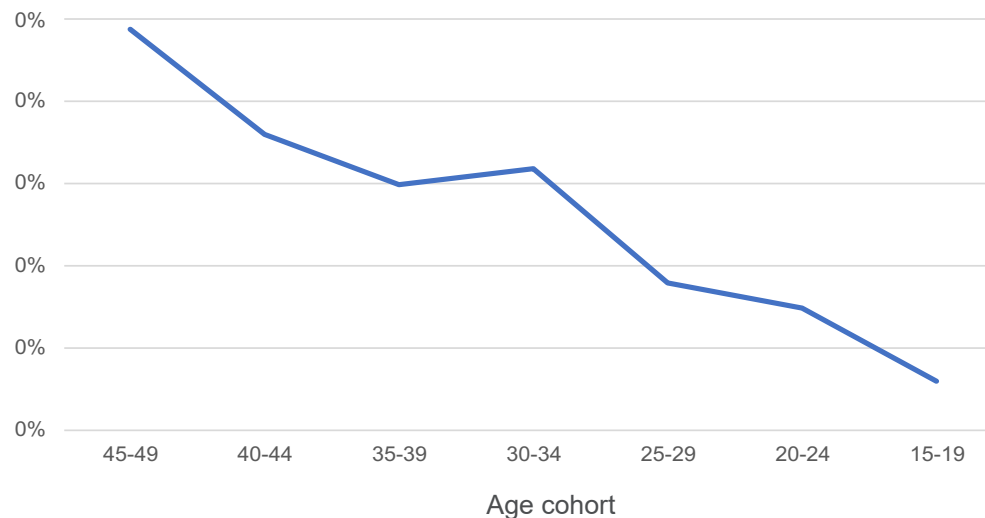


Female genital mutilation/cutting

Adolescent girls who stated that FGM/C should continue to be practiced



Percentage of women who have undergone any form of FGM/C by age cohort



Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is a serious violation of girls' rights. It is illegal in Ghana but still practiced in some minority communities, almost exclusively in the Upper West Region. The practice has been declining steadily and less than one in 1,000 girls under 14 have undergone any form of genital cutting. However, more than one in 20 girls in some regions of Ghana expressed the opinion that the practice should continue.

**EVERY ADOLESCENT LIVES
IN A SAFE AND CLEAN
ENVIRONMENT**



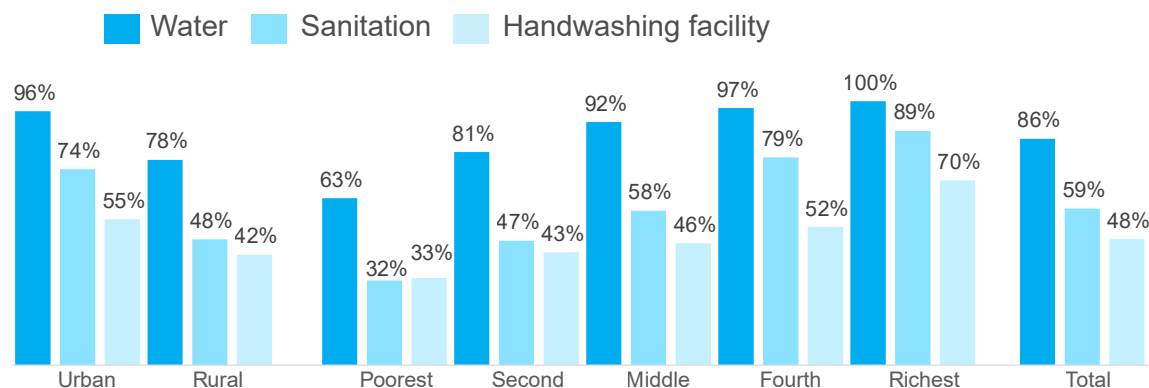
Water, sanitation and hygiene

More than 85% of adolescents in Ghana have access to water from an improved source, although this often involves buying drinking water in small sachets. In most cases, water must be collected from a public source that may be more than three hours away. This task is most often allocated to adolescent girls.

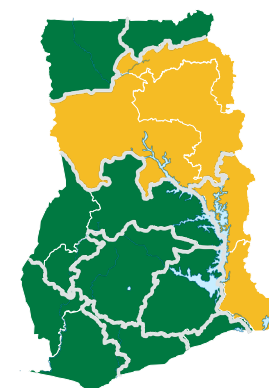
Less than 60% of adolescents in Ghana have access to improved sanitation with large regional differences. Household wealth is an important determinant of access, as well as residence in rural or urban areas.

About half of adolescents in Ghana have access to a hand washing facility in their home where water and soap are available.

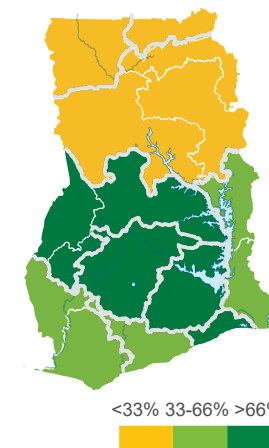
Percentage of adolescents with access to drinking water, improved sanitation and handwashing facilities with water and soap



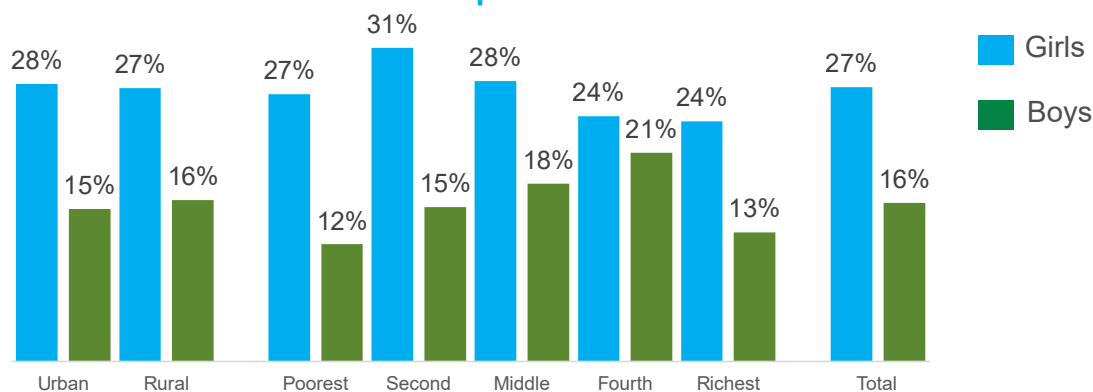
Access to water from an improved source



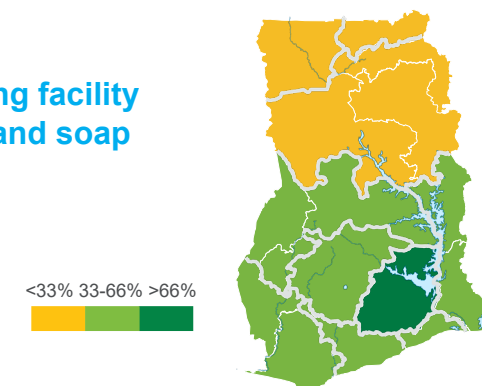
Access to improved sanitation



Percentage of adolescent girls and boys who collect water when it is not available on the premises



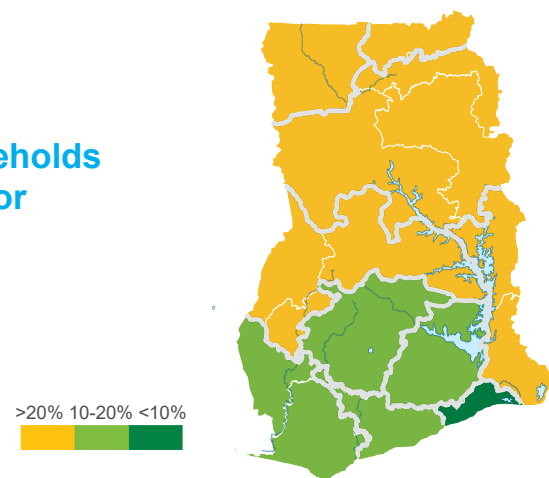
Access to handwashing facility with water and soap



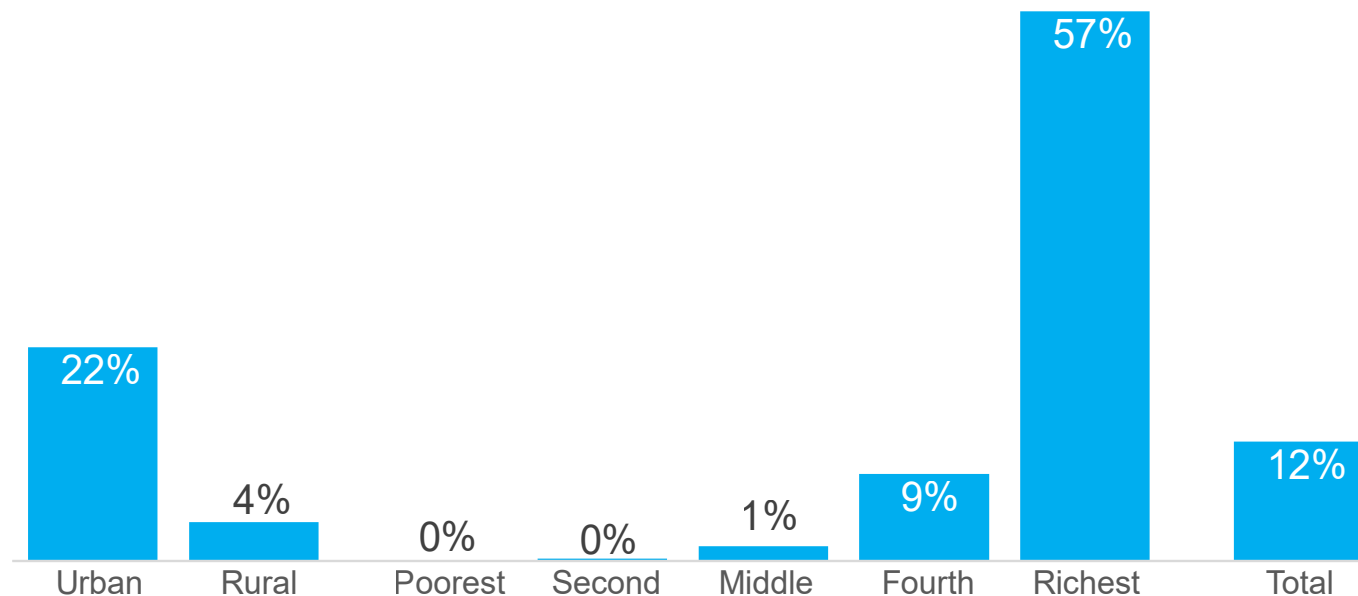
Indoor air pollution from cooking with solid fuels

Most households use wood, charcoal or other solid fuel for cooking. Nine out of ten adolescent girls are potentially exposed to indoor air pollution that risks damaging their future health.

Percentage of households that use clean fuel for cooking



Use of clean fuel for cooking

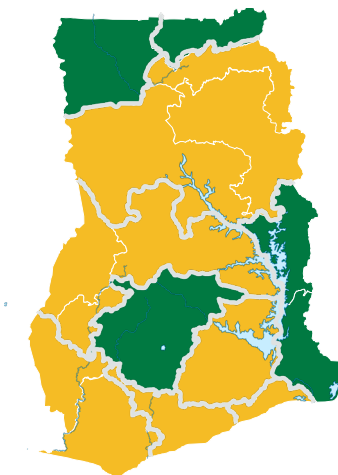


Protection from malaria

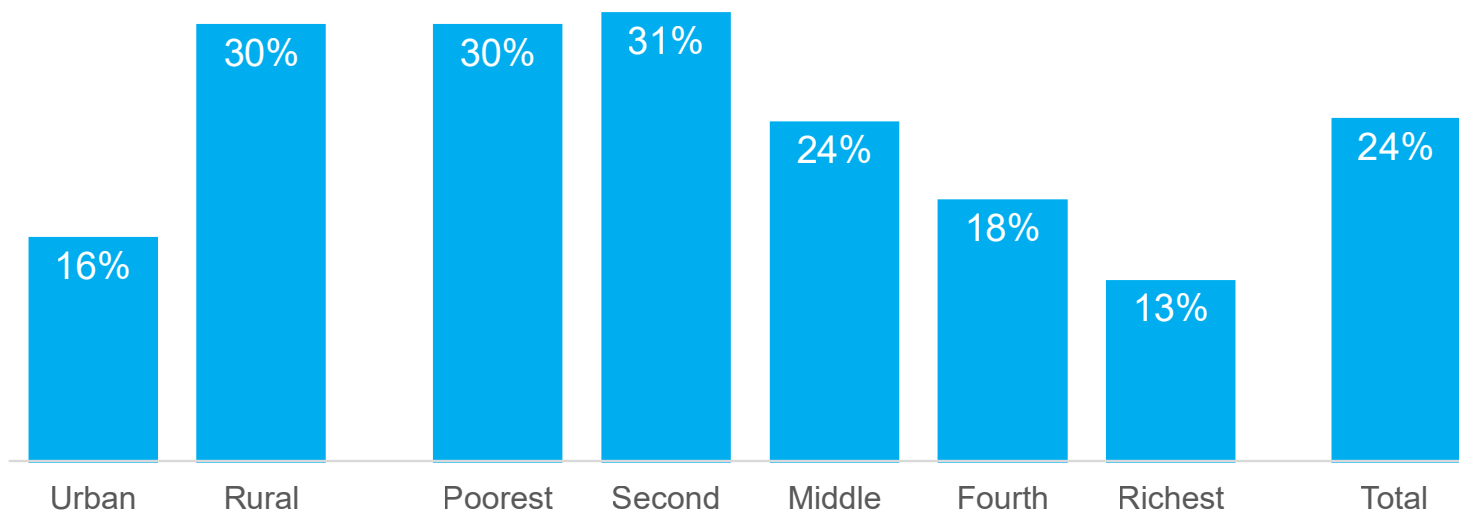
Malaria infection is a major environmental hazard in Ghana that can be effectively mitigated by sleeping under a bed net treated with insecticides. About a quarter of adolescents slept under an insecticide treated net (ITN) in the night preceding the survey; about an equal proportion of boys and girls.

Insecticide treated net (ITN) use by region

<25% >25%



Percentage of adolescents who slept under an ITN in the night preceding the survey

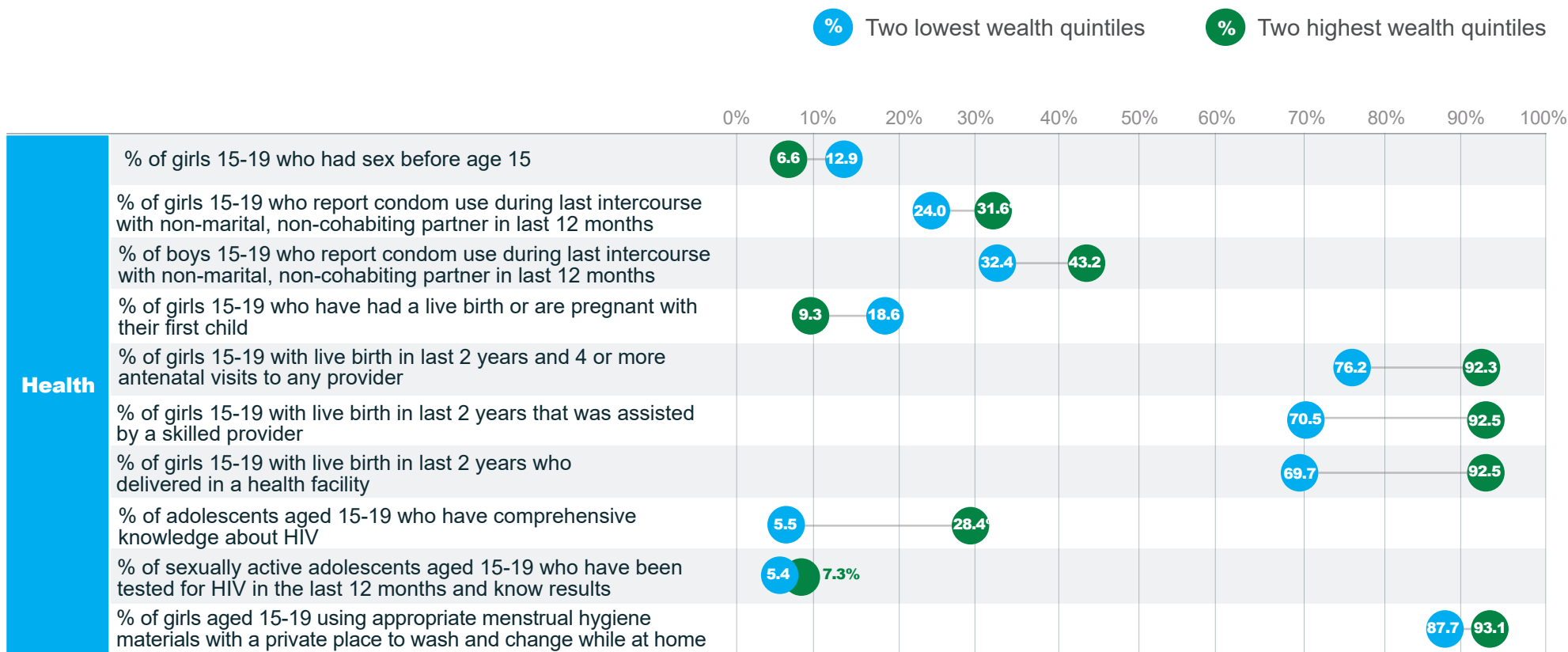




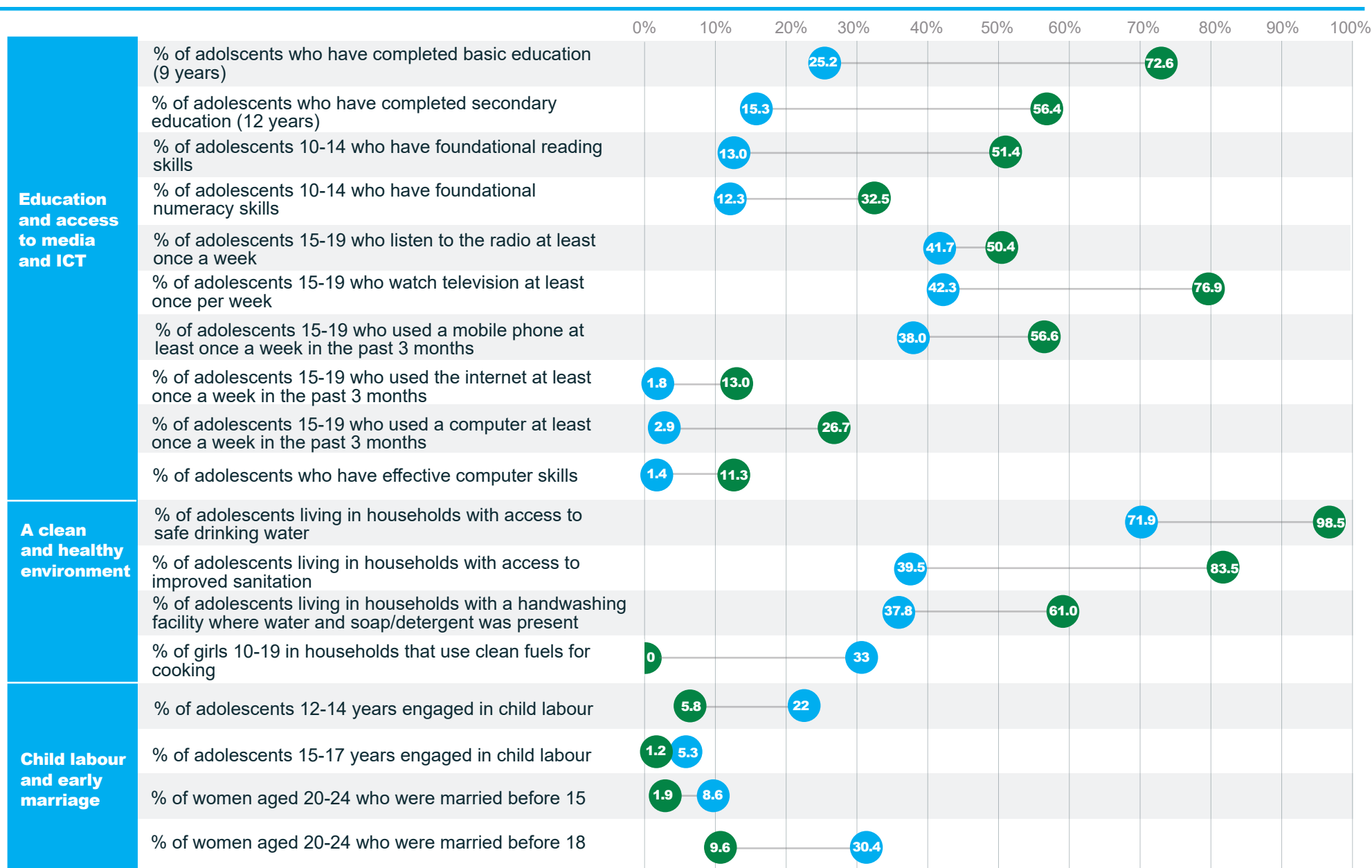
**EVERY ADOLESCENT HAS AN
EQUITABLE CHANCE IN LIFE**

Wealth gap

Social inequalities in Ghana are the main barriers for adolescents to the achievement of equitable opportunities for realising their potential. The inequalities exist across geographic regions and between rural and urban residents. They are clearly demonstrated by the gaps in almost all indicators of adolescent health and well-being between those who live in wealthier and those in less wealthy households.

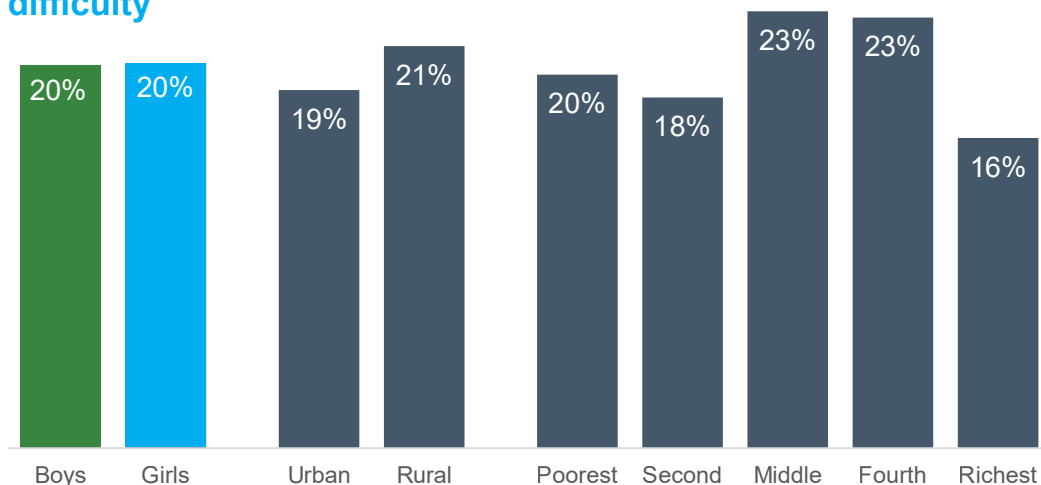


Wealth gap



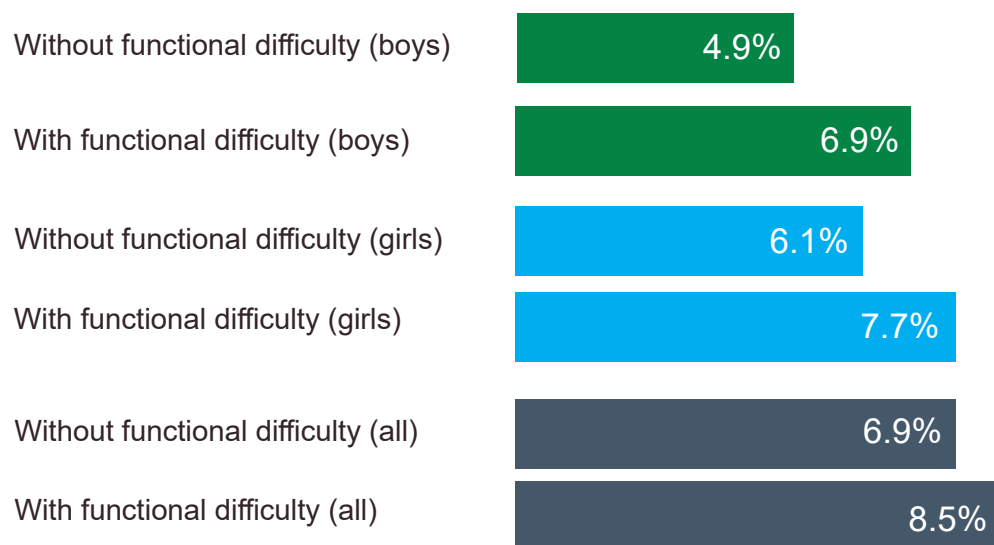
Inclusion

Percentage of adolescents aged 10-17 with at least one functional difficulty



About one in five adolescents in Ghana has at least one functional difficulty in any of nine physical, mental, emotional, or behavioural domains. They are more likely to be out of school and are also disadvantaged in other areas. The differences to their peers who are without functional difficulty are small. However, when the nine domains are disaggregated, greater gaps in inclusion may become evident among those who live with difficulties in any specific domain such as blindness, hearing loss or emotional stability.

Percentage of adolescents aged 10-17 who are out of school



Gender gap

For adolescent girls, the main barrier to an equitable chance in life are multiple violations of their sexual and reproductive rights ranging from sexual coercion and violence to early pregnancy and child marriage. More girls than boys complete the nine years of basic education, but after age 15, more of them are out of school. Nevertheless, secondary school completion rates among girls are only slightly lower than among boys. Girls are only half as likely as boys to access computers and develop ICT skills. They are also much more likely to be engaged in household chores that meet the definition of child labour.

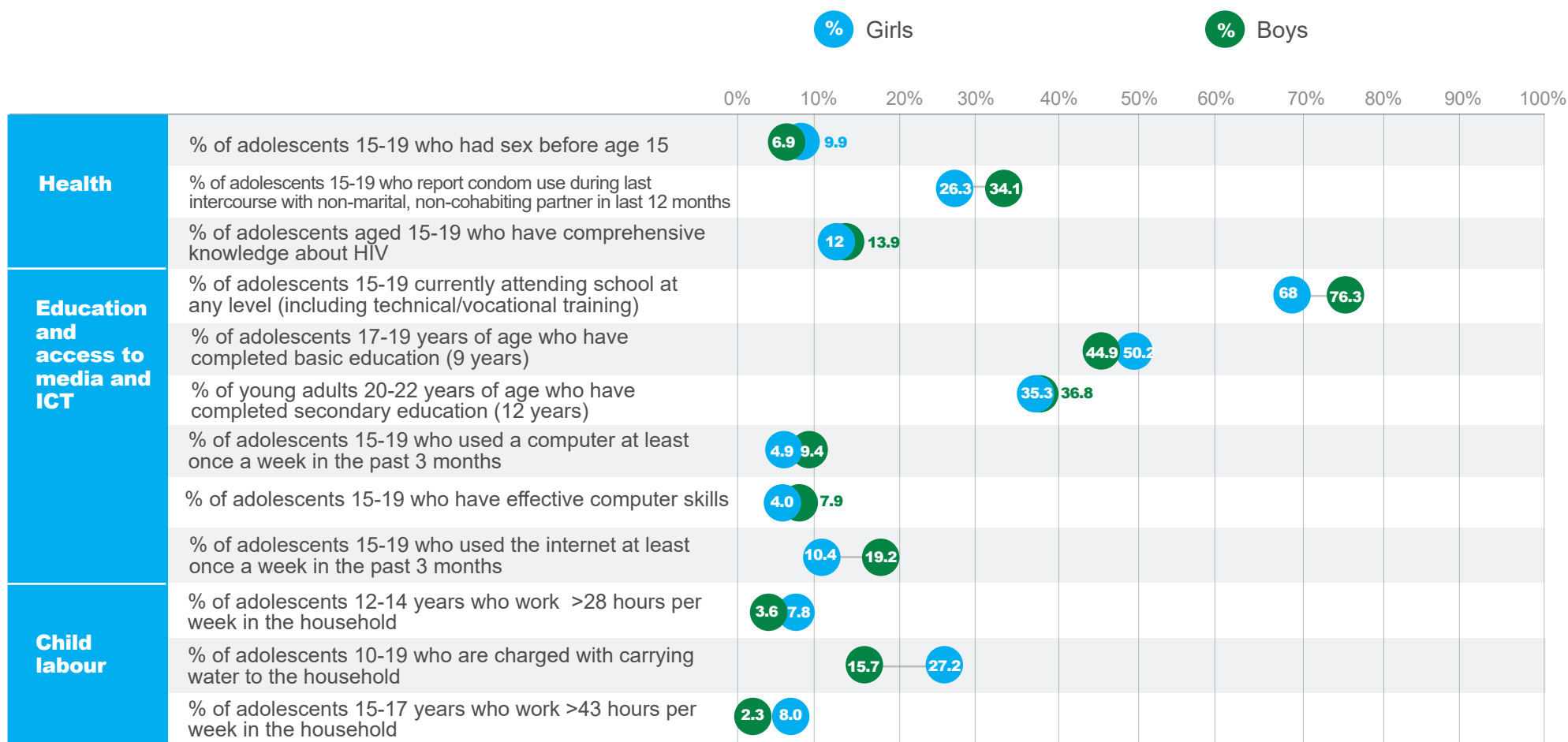


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