



Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Punjab Health and Population Survey (PHPS) 2024–25

School Attendance



PRESS RELEASE

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In Rajanpur, 51% of Girls Aged 5–9 Are Out of School — While in Jhelum, the Figure Is 5%

Islamabad, August 10th, 2026

Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan mandates free and compulsory education for all children aged 5 to 16. The data from Punjab suggests this mandate is being fulfilled very differently depending on where a child lives — and whether that child is a girl. Data from the Punjab Health and Population Survey (PHPS) 2024–25 Baseline Survey Report, covering 24,540 households across 36 districts, shows that 22.8% of rural girls aged 5–9 and 28.3% of rural girls aged 10–14 are currently out of school. In 21 of Punjab's 36 districts, girls are more likely to be out of school than boys. And the disparity is not evenly spread: southern Punjab's districts record out-of-school rates for girls aged 5–9 that average 30.8%, compared to 11.3% in the north — a gap that maps precisely onto the same geographic divide seen throughout this survey series.

What is the Big Data Analysis Series by Gallup?

Gallup Pakistan's Big Data series was initiated by Bilal I. Gilani, Executive Director of Gallup Pakistan. As he explains: *“Pakistan does not suffer from a lack of data, but from limited accessibility and weak translation of numbers into understanding. Gallup Pakistan bridges this gap by analyzing large, often under-used datasets — from PSLM and Labour Force Surveys to Economic Surveys and National Census data — so these statistics can meaningfully inform policy and public discourse.”*

What data points this current edition covers:

This analysis is based on Table 2.11: Percentage of Children Aged 5–9 and 10–14 Years by Status of School Attendance and Sex, and Figure 2.8: Percentage of Out-of-School Children Aged 5–9 Years by District and Sex — both drawn from Chapter 2 of the Punjab Health and Population Survey (PHPS) 2024–25 Baseline Survey Report. The data covers children in 24,540 households across 36 districts of Punjab, surveyed between November 2024 and February 2025, disaggregated by sex and rural/urban residence. Districts are additionally grouped into four geographic regions — North (GT Belt), Central (Lahore-Faisalabad), West of Indus (Thal belt), and South (Seraiki belt) — to enable regional comparison.

In Rajanpur, 51% of Girls Aged 5–9 Are Out of School — While in Jhelum, the Figure Is 5%

Ever Attended School

20.4% of rural girls aged 5–9 have never attended school, compared to **19.7%** of rural boys — but both figures represent a failure of constitutional mandate at scale.

RURAL GIRLS



20.4%

of girls have never attended school.

RURAL BOYS



19.7%

of boys have never attended school.

Never Attended School (5-9)

In urban areas, the gender gap on school non-attendance nearly disappears for 5–9 year olds: **12.4%** of boys and **12.3%** of girls have never attended

URBAN GIRLS



12.3%

of girls have never attended school.

URBAN BOYS



12.4%

of boys have never attended school.

Out of School age 10-14

27.5% of rural boys and **28.3%** of rural girls in this age group are currently not attending school, rising from **21.6%** and **22.8%** respectively in the 5–9 group

RURAL GIRLS



28.3%

of girls are currently not attending school.

RURAL BOYS



27.5%

of boys are currently not attending school.

Southern Punjab (Seraiki belt) averages 30.8% out-of-school girls aged 5–9 — nearly three times the North's average of 11.3% and well above Central Punjab (18.5%) and West of Indus (18.8%).

SOUTHERN
PUNJAB



30.8%

of girls in the Seraiki belt are out-of-school.
(Nearly 3x the North's average)

CENTRAL
PUNJAB



18.5%

of girls are out-of-school.

WEST OF
INDUS



18.8%

of girls are out-of-school.

NORTH
PUNJAB



11.3%

of girls in the North are out-of-school.
(Lowest regional average)

Key Findings:

1. 20.4% of rural girls aged 5–9 have never attended school, compared to 19.7% of rural boys — but both figures represent a failure of constitutional mandate at scale, with approximately one in five rural children in this age group never having entered a classroom.
2. In urban areas, the gender gap on school non-attendance nearly disappears for 5–9 year olds: 12.4% of boys and 12.3% of girls have never attended — but the urban-rural gap is stark, with rural rates nearly double urban rates for both sexes.
3. For 10–14 year olds, out-of-school rates increase rather than decrease: 27.5% of rural boys and 28.3% of rural girls in this age group are currently not attending school, rising from 21.6% and 22.8% respectively in the 5–9 group — suggesting significant dropout between the two age cohorts.
4. In 21 of Punjab's 36 districts, girls aged 5–9 are more likely to be out of school than boys — with Rajanpur (51% girls vs. 47% boys), Rahim Yar Khan (34% vs. 28%), and Sahiwal (31% vs. 26%) showing the largest female disadvantage.
5. Three districts — Narowal, Khushab, and Gujranwala — show the reverse trend, with boys more likely to be out of school than girls.
6. Southern Punjab (Seraiki belt) averages 30.8% out-of-school girls aged 5–9 — nearly three times the North's average of 11.3% and well above Central Punjab (18.5%) and West of Indus (18.8%).
7. Rajanpur (51%) and Dera Ghazi Khan (45%) record the highest out-of-school rates for girls aged 5–9 of any districts in Punjab, both in the southern lagging district cluster.
8. Jhelum (5%) and Narowal (7%) record the lowest out-of-school rates for girls aged 5–9 — both in the northern GT Belt region — representing a 46-percentage-point gap with Rajanpur within a single province.

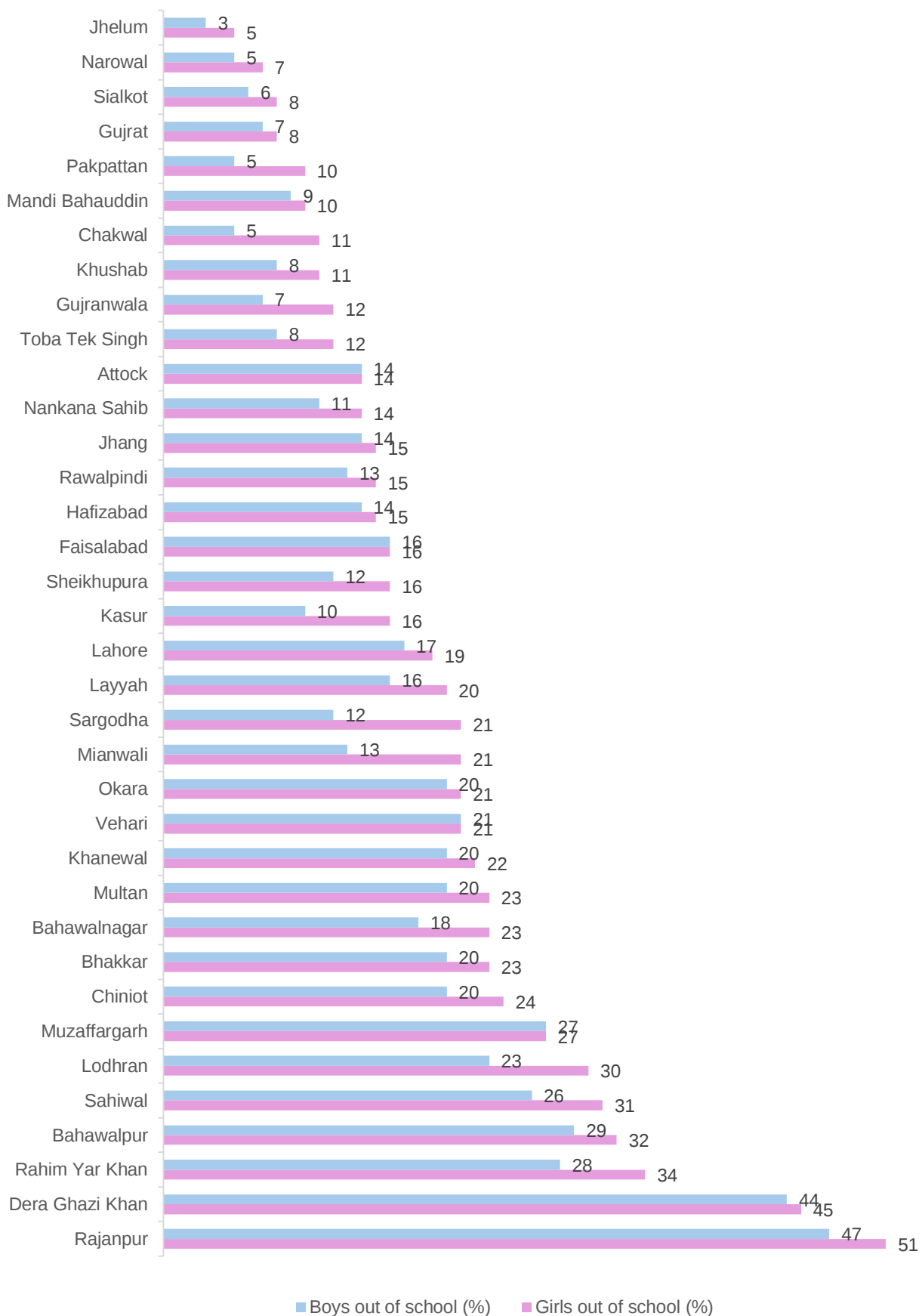
1. Rajanpur's 51% vs Jhelum's 5%: The North-South Schooling Chasm for Young Girls

The constitutional guarantee of free and compulsory education to all children aged 5–16 establishes a baseline against which the PHPS data must be read. By that baseline, a rural girl aged 5–9 in Punjab has a one-in-five chance of having never attended school at all. Nationally, 20.4% of rural girls in this age group have never attended school, compared to 19.7% of rural boys — a small gender gap, but one that sits atop an already large absolute deficit. In urban areas, 12.3% of girls and 12.4% of boys have never attended, meaning the urban-rural gap (nearly double for both sexes) dwarfs the gender gap within either geography.

At the district level, the range of out-of-school rates for girls aged 5–9 spans 46 percentage points — from 51% in Rajanpur to 5% in Jhelum. This is not a spectrum; it is a fracture. Rajanpur and Dera Ghazi Khan (45%) represent a category of failure so severe — more than half of girls in their primary school years are not in school — that they require a different policy response from a district like Jhelum or Narowal (7%) where near-universal enrollment has already been achieved. Between these poles sits the majority of Punjab's districts, where out-of-school rates for girls cluster in the 10–25% range, pointing to a structural enrollment gap rather than total system failure.

The gender dimension at the district level adds a further layer. In 21 of Punjab's 36 districts, girls aged 5–9 are more likely to be out of school than boys. The largest female disadvantage appears in Rajanpur (51% girls vs. 47% boys — a 4-point gap), Rahim Yar Khan (34% vs. 28% — a 6-point gap), and Sahiwal (31% vs. 26% — a 5-point gap). Three districts — Narowal, Khushab, and Gujranwala — show the reverse: boys are marginally more likely to be out of school, suggesting that in these districts female enrollment has reached or surpassed male enrollment at the primary level.

Girls vs boys out of school aged 5–9 by district (%)



Source: Punjab Health and Population Survey (PHPS) 2024–25 Baseline Survey Report, Bureau of Statistics Punjab.

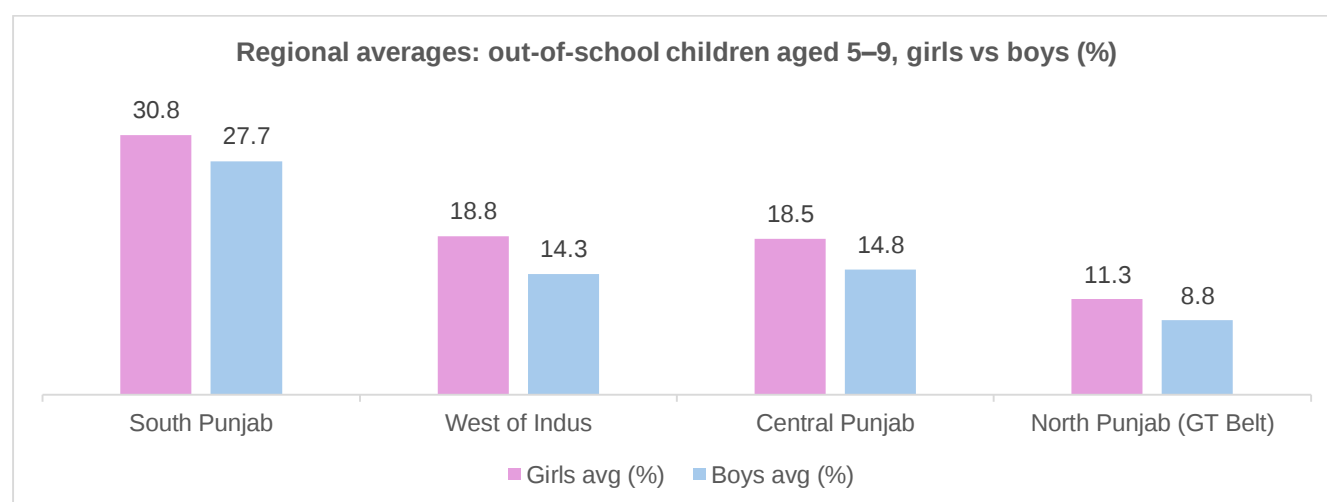
2. A Tale of Four Punjabs: Regional Schooling Divides for Girls Aged 5–9

Classifying Punjab's 36 districts into four geographic regions — North (GT Belt: 12 districts), Central (Lahore-Faisalabad: 10 districts), West of Indus (Thal belt: 4 districts), and South (Seraiki belt: 10 districts) — reveals that the out-of-school crisis for girls is not a province-wide phenomenon but a southern one. Southern Punjab records an average out-of-school rate of 30.8% for girls aged 5–9 — driven by Rajanpur (51%), Dera Ghazi Khan (45%), Rahim Yar Khan (34%), Bahawalpur (32%), and Lodhran (30%). All five of these districts are in the southern region, and three — Rajanpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Muzaffargarh — are also designated lagging districts. For boys, the southern average is 27.7%, marginally lower but equally alarming. The south is the only region where district-level out-of-school rates for girls consistently exceed 20%, and the only region with multiple districts above 30%.

The North — comprising the GT Belt and Pothohar-Gujranwala division — averages 11.3% out-of-school girls aged 5–9 and 8.8% for boys. This is the best-performing region on both measures. Jhelum (5% girls, 3% boys), Narowal (7% girls, 5% boys), Sialkot (8% girls, 6% boys), and Gujrat (8% girls, 7% boys) all sit in this regional cluster. The North's performance reflects the cumulative advantage of higher literacy rates, longer-established schooling infrastructure, stronger labour market returns to education, and lower rates of poverty and hardship documented elsewhere in this survey.

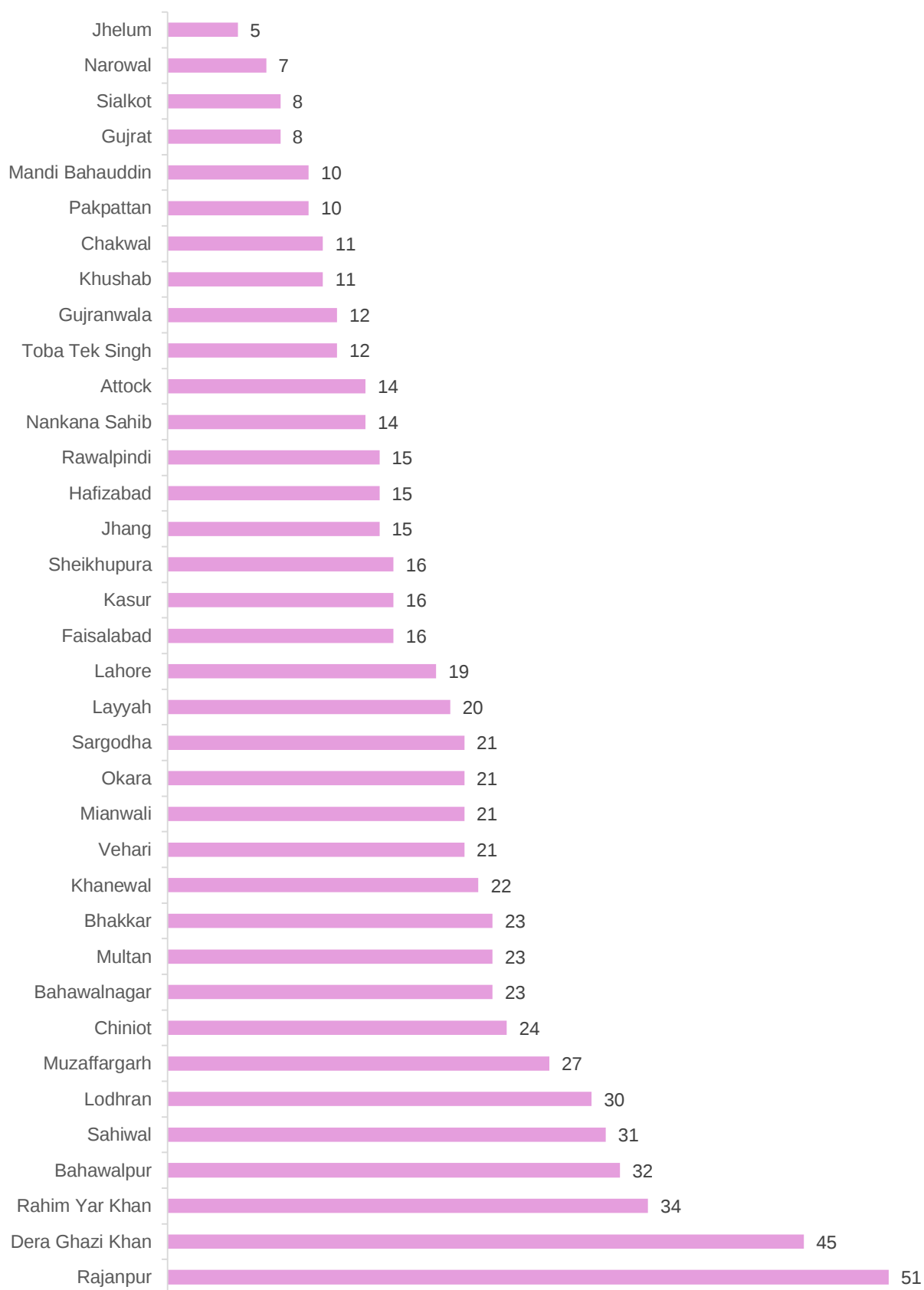
Central Punjab — encompassing Lahore, Faisalabad, and surrounding districts — averages 18.5% out-of-school girls and 14.8% for boys, sitting between the North and South. This average, however, conceals significant internal variation. Sahiwal (31% girls, 26% boys) and Okara (21% girls, 20% boys) perform closer to southern Punjab than to the Lahore-Faisalabad core, while Pakpattan (10% girls, 5% boys) and Toba Tek Singh (12% girls, 8% boys) perform closer to the north. Central Punjab is therefore not a uniform region — it is a gradient from near-northern performance in its western and northern edges to near-southern performance in its south-eastern districts.

The West of Indus cluster — Khushab, Mianwali, Bhakkar, and Layyah — averages 18.8% out-of-school girls and 14.3% for boys, comparable to Central Punjab in aggregate but with notable variation: Bhakkar (23% girls, 20% boys) and Mianwali (21% girls, 13% boys) perform worse than Khushab (11% girls, 8% boys), which approaches northern district performance. This region's geographic isolation west of the Indus River and its predominantly rural, agricultural character are consistent with moderate-to-high out-of-school rates.



Source: Punjab Health and Population Survey (PHPS) 2024–25 Baseline Survey Report, Bureau of Statistics Punjab.

District out-of-school rates within each region, girls aged 5–9 (%)



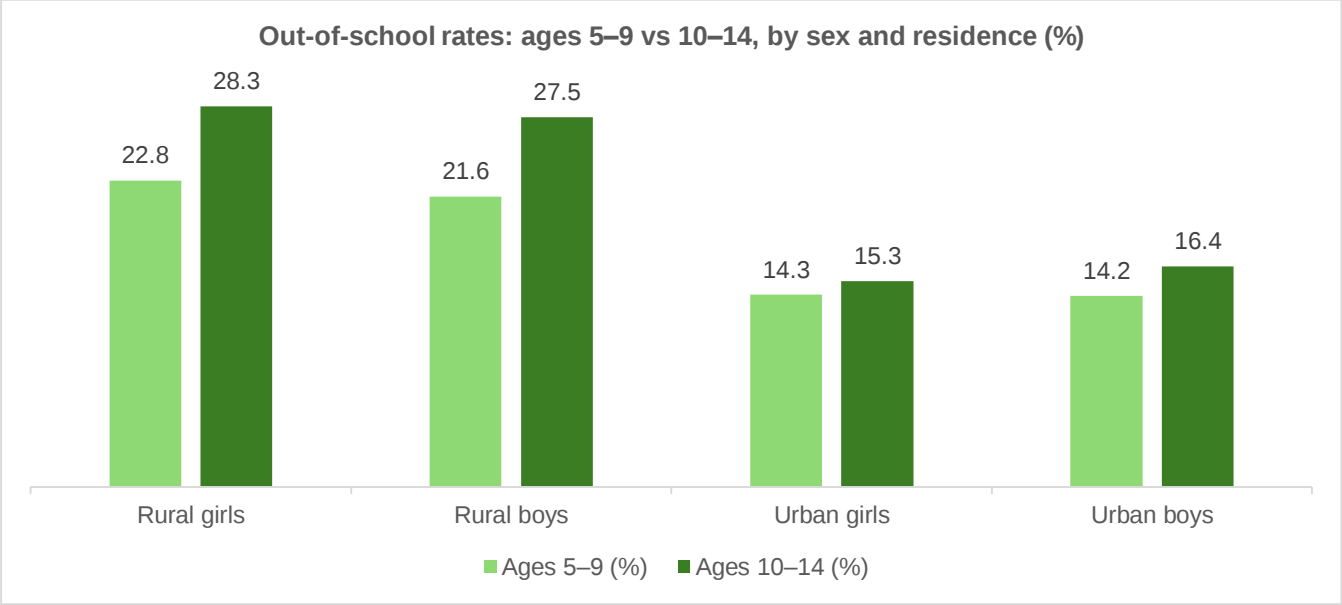
Source: Punjab Health and Population Survey (PHPS) 2024–25 Baseline Survey Report, Bureau of Statistics Punjab.

3. Dropout Between 5–9 and 10–14: The System Is Losing Children It Already Had

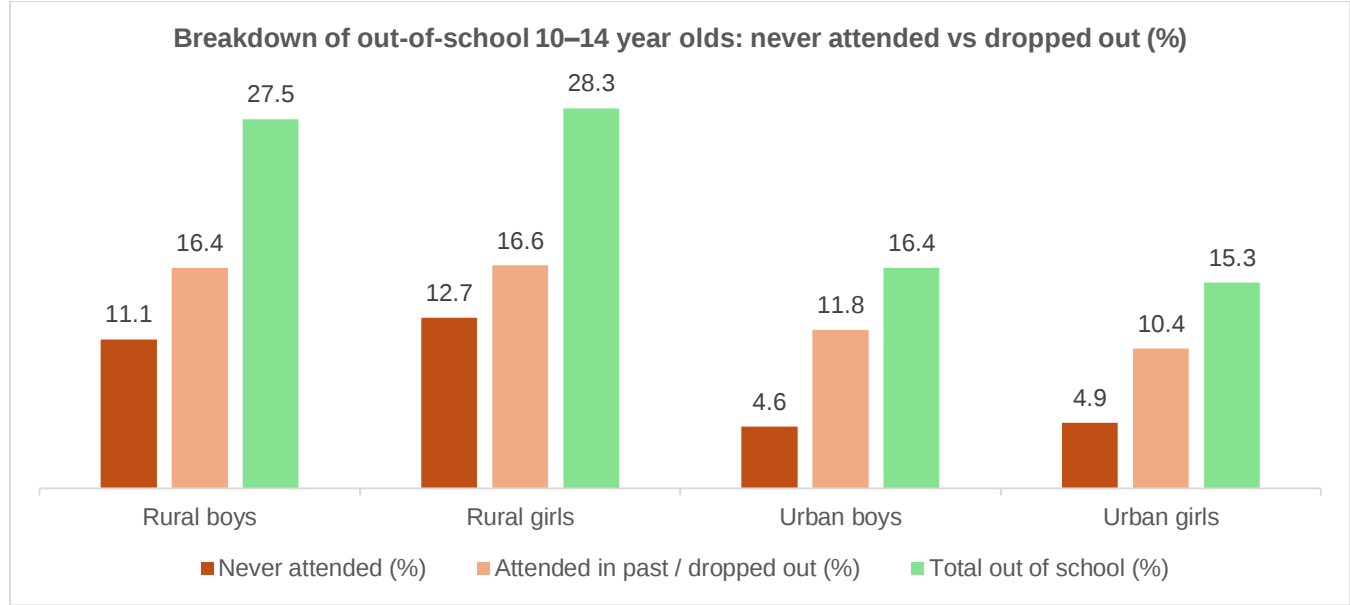
The comparison between out-of-school rates for 5–9 year olds and 10–14 year olds reveals a pattern that is arguably more troubling than primary non-enrollment: children who enter the school system are leaving it before completing their early secondary years. Among rural boys, the out-of-school rate rises from 21.6% at ages 5–9 to 27.5% at ages 10–14 — an increase of 5.9 percentage points. Among rural girls, it rises from 22.8% to 28.3% — an increase of 5.5 percentage points. These increases are not explained by children who never attended school: for the 10–14 cohort, 11.1% of rural boys and 12.7% of rural girls have never attended, while 16.4% of rural boys and 16.6% of rural girls attended in the past but are no longer in school. The "attended in past" category is the dropout signal, and it is substantially larger in the 10–14 group than the 5–9 group for both sexes.

The urban picture is different but not reassuring. Urban boys aged 10–14 have an out-of-school rate of 16.4% against 14.2% for the 5–9 group — a 2.2-point increase. Urban girls are 15.3% out of school at 10–14 versus 14.3% at 5–9 — a 1.0-point increase. The dropout gradient is less steep in urban areas, consistent with the greater availability of secondary schooling, higher average household incomes, and stronger female enrollment traditions in cities. But the fact that even urban households see rising out-of-school rates between the two age groups indicates that dropout is not exclusively a rural phenomenon.

What the 10–14 data signals, specifically for rural Punjab, is that the education system is failing to retain a significant share of the children it initially enrolled. The "attended in past" figure of 16.4% for rural boys and 16.6% for rural girls in the 10–14 group represents children who were in the system and left — a distinct policy problem from the non-enrollment of the 5–9 group. Preventing dropout requires different interventions from achieving initial enrollment: conditional transfers tied to attendance, secondary school availability within reasonable distance, and economic support for families whose older children contribute labour income. The PHPS data does not specify at what age or grade dropout occurs, but the aggregate gap between the two cohorts establishes that it is substantial, rural-concentrated, and gender-symmetric — affecting boys and girls in roughly equal measure.



Source: Punjab Health and Population Survey (PHPS) 2024–25 Baseline Survey Report, Bureau of Statistics Punjab.



Source: Punjab Health and Population Survey (PHPS) 2024–25 Baseline Survey Report, Bureau of Statistics Punjab.



Wish to Contribute to Gallup Big Data Analysis?

Gallup Pakistan is looking for collaboration with researchers to expand the Big Data Analysis project. If you have any ideas, please write to Bilal I Gilani, Project Director, Big Data Analysis at Gallup Pakistan.

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Contact Details:

Islamabad : +92 51 2655630

Email: isb@gallup.com.pk

www.gallup-international.com