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Time to Teach

Teacher attendance and time on task in West and Central Africa

Ximena Játiva, Despina Karamperidou, Michelle Mills, Stefania Vindrola, Hanna Wedajo, Andrea Dsouza and Jessica Bergmann

June 2022

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Foreword

Teachers are a critical component to children's learning and wellbeing. If children are to develop the necessary skills to break out of poverty, lead productive lives, and reach their full potential, understanding better teachers' working and living conditions and improving teacher attendance need to be priorities.

The importance of the role of teachers has never been more apparent than during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 closure of schools disrupted learning for 128 million school children across western and Central Africa, requiring teachers to seek out new modalities to reach and teach their students, while they themselves were greatly impacted by the crisis as well. The emerging challenges were significant, especially given the pre-exisiting obstacles to education in the region. But the aftermath of the pandemic presents a unique window of opportunity for governments to reimagine how they can work across sectors to make lasting systematic change.

As schools reopen, there needs to be greater efforts from Governments to support teachers. To achieve aims set out by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and UNICEF's education strategy 'Every Child Learns', governments and development partners need to utilize research to inform policies and practices to improve teacher attendance.

The Time to Teach study contributes to a body of evidence that can help to pinpoint where policymakers, schools and communities can take action to support primary school teachers' attendance and, in turn, improve learning outcomes for children. As a successor to the research conducted in eastern and southern Africa, this report utilizes quantitative and qualitative research methods to identify the contextual, working conditions and policy factors that impede teacher attendance in West and Central Africa. The study also highlights differences among countries within the region, considering how school and teacher characteristics may contribute to the findings. Time to Teach reaffirms that teachers are committed to their work but education systems need to be strengthened. With renewed insight into the multiple challenges that teachers face, it is hoped that leaders will use these findings can help inform leaders/policy makers, so that learning opportunities for every child can be fully realized.

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a learning crisis. On average, 87 per cent of primary school-age children in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) were unable to read and understand a simple text by the age of 10.[1] The West and Central Africa (WCA) region accounts for one-third of the global total of primary school-age children who face adversities such as humanitarian emergencies, gender inequality in access to schooling, and lack of quality education.[2]

The COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated these challenges, as school closures and learning disruptions affected millions of children. Efforts were made to preserve learning during this period through multiple learning channels;[3] however, many teachers had to quickly adapt and use new modes of delivering instruction with limited additional training.

Teachers are the most important drivers of students' academic achievement and they are at the heart of learning recovery efforts. Finding out the bottlenecks and necessary conditions for ensuring teachers' presence at school and in the classroom is essential. Time to Teach is a mixed methods research initiative that aims to find out the contextual, working conditions and policy factors impeding primary school teacher attendance in 11 West and Central African countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, The Gambia, and Togo.

The study considers teacher attendance as multi-dimensional, in four distinct forms. Teachers were asked to about their attendance in relation to: (1) being school; (2) being punctual (arriving and leaving on time); (3) being the classroom; and (4) spending sufficient time on task[4]. Evidence is drawn from national, system-wide qualitative data collection and school observations, and a quantitative survey of 1,673 teachers working in 234 purposively selected primary schools. While primary data were collected prior to the COVID-19 school closures (in the 2018/2019 school year), the study provides important insights on how the pandemic has exacerbated chronic challenges of education systems that impact teacher attendance and is therefore informative for policy, both in the current COVID-19 era and beyond.

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1   World Bank, Ending Learning Poverty: What will it take? World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2019.

2   UNICEF (n.d.), Education | UNICEF West and Central Africa, accessed 12 September 2021.

3   Dreesen, T., et al., 'Promising Practices for Equitable Remote Learning: Emerging lessons from COVID-19 education responses in 127 countries', Innocenti Research Brief 2020-10, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2020. Retrieved from: https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/IRB%202020-10%20CL.pdf

4   For this study, "time on task" was captured by the teachers' answer to the following question "Since the start of the school year, how often have you faced difficulties that prevented you from spending the time you have planned on teaching while in the classroom (on average)?" *(see Annex 4)*

Key findings and recommendations

As many as 14.7 per cent of surveyed teachers reported being absent from school on a regular basis (i.e., at least once a week); 17 per cent of surveyed teachers reported arriving to school late or leaving school early; 14.5 per cent of surveyed teachers reported missing lessons while at school, and reduced time on task (while in the classroom) was reported by 15.3 per cent of surveyed teachers. These averages only tell part of the regional story, as differences between the 11 participating countries are significant, showing the importance of understanding structural and contextual factors.

Despite high levels of teacher absenteeism, the study shows that teachers are generally committed and that what is needed is **education system strengthening**. Areas that should be prioritized include:

Teacher monitoring

- **Strengthen the management skills of school leadership.** Teachers who perceive their head teacher as a competent manager who effectively encourages attendance are two times less likely to reduce their time on task than teachers who do not share this view. School heads need leadership and management training. With the necessary soft skills, effective head teachers can hold teachers accountable, but also encourage and inspire them.

- **Recruiting more women to head teacher roles**. Teachers in female-led schools are more likely to report that the head teacher actively discourages absenteeism and that parents actively encourage student attendance. Recruiting more women as head teachers may lead to more conducive learning environments and improve attendance.

- **Increase the frequency and consistency of school visits, especially in rural and remote areas**. Teachers in schools that are infrequently visited by school inspectors and academic advisors are two times more likely to be absent from the classroom than their counterparts in frequently visited schools. It is therefore critical to allocate budget to hire field officers and provide sufficient transportation, based on the number of schools to service, distance, availability of public transportation, climatic conditions, and other contextual factors. Using alternative forms of accountability, such as peer-to-peer monitoring, can also be considered when allocating or reallocating funding is not possible.

- **Encourage parental engagement**. Teachers who believe parents are engaged in school affairs are more likely to see pupils as motivated to learn, which can translate to a positive effect on teachers' motivation and attendance. When teachers see parents encouraging their children's attendance, they are 3 times less likely to be absent from school and 1.5 times less likely to be unpunctual. Using parental and community engagement to increase students' and teachers' attendance in schools can be achieved by providing training workshops on how to monitor, and by institutionalizing this role through associations or committees. However, the roles and responsibilities of parents and community members must be clear and accepted by teachers who may otherwise feel that their authority as decision-makers in education matters is undermined.

Teacher training

- **Strengthen pre- and in-service training**. When confident about their knowledge and skills, teachers are 2.6 times less likely to be absent from the classroom. At the same time, teachers who report having access to in-service training are 2.6 times more likely to be absent from the classroom. There is a clear need to strengthen the content of teacher training, but also to improve training modalities and timings. Depending on the specific needs, training should aim to support teachers in staying on task; this study revealed that training goals could range from supporting multi-grade, multi-subject, and multi-lingual classrooms as well as offering suggestions on addressing student behaviour. If training sessions are scheduled during teaching hours, classroom-based in-service initiatives could be considered, where the teachers get support for supervisors or their colleagues during lessons. School-based training sessions that pull teachers from classrooms are another option, but substitute teachers are needed to cover those teachers in training, which is not always possible where there are teacher shortages.

Teacher remuneration

- **Ensure that salary payments are made reliably, without obstacles, and on time**. Facing challenges in receiving salaries more than doubles the likelihood of teachers arriving to school late or leaving school early. Removing obstacles to receiving pay and ensuring the timely delivery of teacher salaries could be achieved by providing payments directly at school, especially in remote areas where teachers often travel for days to collect their salary. In areas with adequate internet access, alternatives such as mobile banking can also be considered.

Teacher allocation and workload

- **Make teacher allocation more equitable to reduce teacher workloads**. Teachers who report an excessive administrative workload are 2.3 times more likely to be absent from the classroom than teachers who are not overburdened by these activities. Teachers are also inequitably distributed within schools (across grades), wherein lower grade classes have fewer teachers and bigger class sizes, increasing workload on teachers in early grade classes. Similarly, having too many classroom preparation tasks is associated with a 1.8 times increase in the likelihood of educators reducing instruction time. Excessive workloads are especially prevalent in rural areas, where teachers experience higher pupil–teacher ratios due to the overall lack of teachers and of equity in teacher distribution across schools. Using data-driven systems (that utilize data on enrollment, teachers, and facilities) can assist in the deployment of teachers based on need. Developing incentive strategies to attract candidates to the field of teaching, to retain qualified teachers, and to make postings in remote areas more attractive can also support the placement of teachers in understaffed schools.

Cross-sectoral collaboration

- **Strengthen inter-sectoral collaboration to address factors beyond the education system that affect teacher attendance, especially in relation to health and school access**. Teacher attendance is complex and factors affecting it extend beyond education systems. Coordinated, intersectoral action is necessary to address persistent challenges that impact teacher attendance. In particular, it is important to:

  - **Ensure teachers' health and safety**. Even before COVID-19, teachers reporting health issues were 2.2 times more likely to be absent from school and 1.9 times more likely to be unpunctual. COVID-19 has exposed teachers to additional risks. Now more than ever, teachers need priority access to quality healthcare facilities (especially in rural areas), assessments of their exposure to adverse school-based sanitary conditions, and effective, practical tools to improve their physical and mental wellbeing and the wellbeing of their students. Cross-sectoral initiatives such as school-based psychosocial support could be especially beneficial to teachers and students alike, especially in conflict-affected settings.

  - **Facilitate teacher-school access**. Teachers who report facing transportation challenges and reside far from school are 1.7 to 3.1 times more likely to be absent from school than their peers who do not experience these issues. Collaborating with local governments and other line ministries to provide secure housing options for teachers near schools or reliable transportation assistance or subsidies is critical. Providing bicycles, in partnerships with local NGOs, to reduce commutes has also been found to reduce travel time and to increase school attendance and punctuality in some contexts.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context and rationale

The world is facing a learning crisis: more than 50 per cent of children in low- and middle-income countries are unable to read and understand a simple text by the age of 10 (World Bank, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to further amplify the learning crisis. Even before schools shut down, the share of primary school-age students who had not achieved minimum reading proficiency in sub-Saharan Africa was estimated at 87 per cent and this may subsequently rise to 91 per cent (Azevedo et al., 2020). In the face of these challenges, there is a need, more than ever, for teachers to be in attendance to reduce this alarming statistic and reach Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.

However, studies from across the developing world have found that national averages of teacher absenteeism range from 3 per cent to 27 per cent (Guerrero et al., 2013). Research in India evidenced 23.6 per cent of teacher absenteeism during unannounced school visits and estimated a resulting annual wastage of USD $1.5 billion (Muralidharan et al., 2017).[5] Data from the World Bank estimate that teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean spend 9 per cent of their time, on average, on non-teaching activities that are not part of their professional duties (Bruns and Luque, 2015). The same study highlights the existence of large differences in the prevalence of teacher absenteeism between top- and low-performing schools.

Recent studies have found that teacher absenteeism is particularly prevalent in certain parts of Africa. The World Bank Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) study estimates that between 15 and 45 per cent of all primary school teachers in sub-Saharan Africa[6] are absent from school and between 23 and 57 per cent are absent from class on any given day (Bold et al., 2017). These rates often conceal even higher rates within countries. On average across the seven SDI countries, the loss of teaching hours due to absenteeism corresponds to a waste of approximately 46 cents for every dollar invested in education, which is equivalent to an annual wastage of between 1 to 3 per cent of GDP *(see Annex 2)*.

The Time to Teach study is a research initiative that aims to address knowledge gaps relating to the factors (contextual, policy related, working conditions) impeding primary school teacher attendance in 11 countries in West and Central Africa (WCA): Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, The Gambia, and Togo. SDI estimates for some of these countries suggest high rates of teacher absenteeism from school (e.g., 18 per cent in Togo and 14 per cent in Nigeria) and from the classroom (e.g., 34 per cent in Togo and 22 per cent in Nigeria). Other studies also indicate high rates of teaching time reduction measured in terms of the percentage of scheduled time that teachers are on task[7], ranging between 33 per cent in Nigeria and 61 per cent in Ghana (World Bank, 2018).

While some West and Central Africa countries have not administered or taken part in regional or international efforts to systematically monitor and assess teacher attendance, the issue is noted in their national Education Sector Plans,[8] which include aims to strengthen controls on absenteeism and provide teachers with support in areas of critical importance (e.g., remuneration, training, housing in remote areas, teaching and learning materials, etc.). The Time to Teach study seeks to fill this important knowledge gap and support Ministries of Education (MOEs) in their efforts to support teachers.

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5   According to another study, in Indonesia, Nepal and Tajikistan, more than 50 per cent of teachers believe classroom absence is acceptable if students are left with work to do, if the curriculum is completed, or if the teachers are doing something useful for the local community (Sabarwal and Abu-Jawdeh, 2018).

6   Seven sub-Saharan countries participated in the SDI study: Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania. See Annex 1 for country level results.

7   For the TTT study, "time on task" was captured by the teachers' answer to the following question "Since the start of the school year, how often have you faced difficulties that prevented you from spending the time you have planned on teaching while in the classroom (on average)?". It does not include other tasks such as lesson preparation, assessment or remediation which are important tasks that also require time. *See annex 4.*

8   Among the countries participating in the TTT study, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, and Nigeria (at the state level) have noted the issue of teacher absenteeism in their national Education Sector Plans.

Participating countries

1. Guinea
2. Guinea Bissau
3. Liberia
4. Nigeria
5. The Gambia
6. Niger
7. Gabon
8. Mauritania
9. Ghana
10. Cote d'Ivoire
11. Togo

Source: Map by FreeVectorMaps.com

Note: The designations employed in this publication and the presentation of the material do not imply on the part of UNICEF the expression of any opinion whatsoever concerning the legal status of any country or territory, or of its authorities or the delimitations of its frontiers

1.2   Objectives

The key objectives of the study are to:

- Identify factors, both within and outside the education system, that affect primary school teacher attendance and time on task in the 11 countries covered.
- Examine variations and commonalities in the determinants of teacher attendance in different national settings, as well as in different types of schools (e.g., public/private) and locations (e.g., rural/urban) within countries.
- Identify promising policies and practices in improving teacher motivation, attendance, and time on task, and encourage cross-country learning and policy transfer within the West and Central Africa region.

1.3   Design and methods

For learning to occur, a set of minimum conditions relating to the role of teachers in the learning process must be fulfilled. Teachers need to: (1) be in school; (2) be punctual (i.e., not arrive late/leave early); (3) be in the classroom (while in school); and (4) spend sufficient time on task (while in the classroom). Based on this assumption, the Time to Teach study moves beyond the conventional definition of teacher attendance, which focuses mainly on presence at school, and instead introduces a multi-dimensional concept of teacher absenteeism that recognizes four distinct forms of teacher absence, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Teacher absenteeism as a multi-dimensional concept
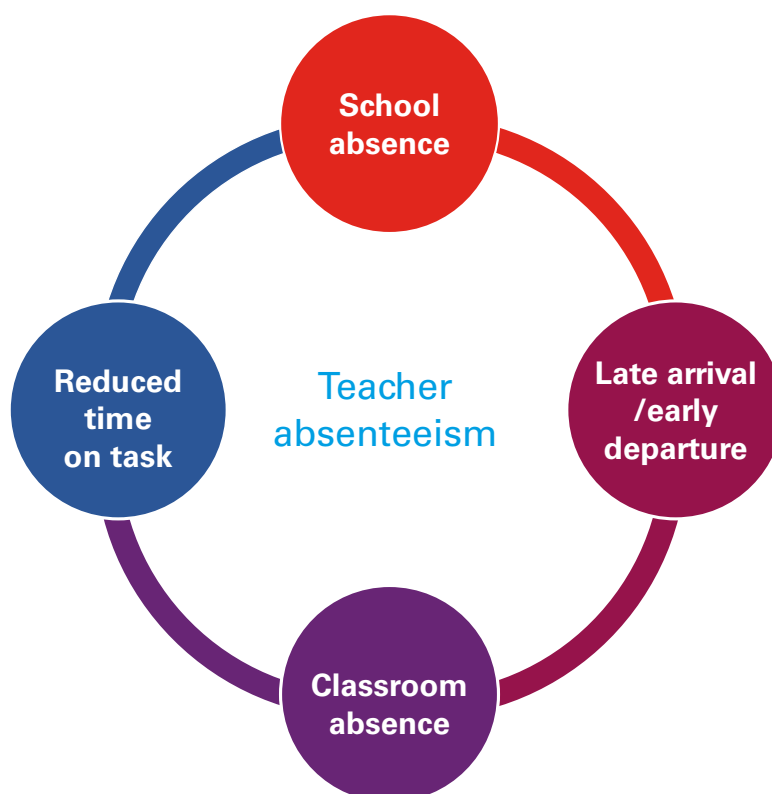
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Furthermore, Time to Teach takes a systems approach toward explaining teacher attendance and therefore, examines the relevance of factors at all levels of the education system, including the national, sub-national, community, school, and teacher levels *(see detailed exploratory framework in Annex 3)*. The study also evaluates whether factors outside of the education system may have an important role to play in determining teacher attendance, and if so, what that role is.[9]

A total of 234 primary schools[10] were purposively selected across the West and Central Africa region (20 schools per participating country, except for Nigeria where 36 schools where selected) based on the following criteria: location (region/district), community setting (rural, urban/peri-urban) and type of school (public, private, community).

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9   From the outset of the study, the research team adopted a rigorous development and consultation approach that involved actors at different levels of the education system to maximize evidence uptake and use. This process included representatives from the Ministries of Education, teachers' unions, academia, UNICEF country and regional offices, and UNICEF Innocenti. The study's methodological approach, conceptualization of attendance, data collection instruments, and findings were validated by all those actors.

10   In Ghana, primary data were collected for all levels of pre-tertiary education. This includes data from 20 pre-primary schools, 20 primary schools, 20 junior high schools and 20 senior high schools. For the purpose of this report, only data from the 20 primary schools are included in the analysis.

To collect a unique set of primary data, in each country the research team conducted in-depth interviews with head teachers, teachers,[11] community representatives, national and local level officials, teacher union representatives, and focus group discussions with students.[12] A pen-and-paper survey was also administered to all teachers who were present in the selected schools on the date of the school visit and an observation tool was used to record enumerators' observations on teacher absences, teacher-student interactions, and teacher working relations during visits to selected schools. Overall, 3,566 individuals participated in the study (*see Table 1*).[13]

Table 1. Number of study participants (by level of analysis and data collection method)

Respondent type	Data collection method	Number of participants
National level		
National Ministry of Education officials, national teacher union representatives	In-depth interviews	35 Ministry of Education officials and 16 teacher union representatives
Sub-national level		
Regional/district education officers (including school inspectors, quality assurance officers, and curriculum advisors)	In-depth interviews	254
Community level		
Community representatives and school council/PTA members	In-depth interviews	228
School level		
Head teachers	In-depth interviews	213
Teachers	Survey	1,673 (702 were also interviewed through in-depth interviews)
Students	Focus group discussions	1,142
Total number of respondents		**3,566**

Data collection, storage and management were in line with international best practices and the UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis.[14]

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11 At each school, in-depth interviews were carried out with three teachers. Age, gender, years of experience, and level of education were the selection criteria for interviewed teachers.

12 At each school, seven students (aged 10–13) participated in the focus group discussions. The sample was gender balanced and students were identified via a lottery process to rule out selection bias and convenience sampling.

13 Like all studies relying on self-reported data, Time to Teach is not free of methodological limitations. Response bias may have occurred, as absenteeism is generally a taboo subject and it is unclear how truthfully teachers responded to questions around the nature and frequency of their absences, even though the principles of anonymity and confidentiality were highlighted during data collection. Selection bias may also have been an issue, as the teacher survey was administered only to teachers who were present at school on the day of the school visit. This means that some of the frequently absent teachers may not have been surveyed. To pre-empt this problem, all school visits were announced, and teachers were informed about them well in advance. Finally, the research team recognizes the small size of the survey sample. For this reason, all findings reported here have been thoroughly triangulated through qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with key education stakeholders in all countries.

14 The UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti applied for ethical clearance for the Time to Teach study to the Health Media Lab (HML). Ethical clearance was granted in July 2018. In all countries, study implementation was preceded by extensive consultation with national governments and key education stakeholders on research tool design, sampling, and instrument administration. All contracted partners were extensively trained in research ethics and abided by the UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis.

Mathematics
Addition of 3 digit number

2. 8 3 5   3. 6 2 0
+ 1 3 6   + 3 8 4
9 7 1   0 4

(5) 5 9 3
4 2
1 0 1

2. Findings

2.1 How frequently teachers report being absent?

In the Time to Teach survey, schoolteachers were queried on the average frequency with which they had been absent in various ways since the start of the 2018/19 school year[15] and were asked to select one option from among the following five responses: never; a few times (less than three times); less than once a week; once a week; and more than once a week *(see all survey questions in Annex 4)*.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of teachers who reported being absent at least once a week,[16] on average, by form of absence and country.

Figure 2. Percentage of teachers who reported being absent frequently (i.e., at least once a week), by form of absence, country, and regional average
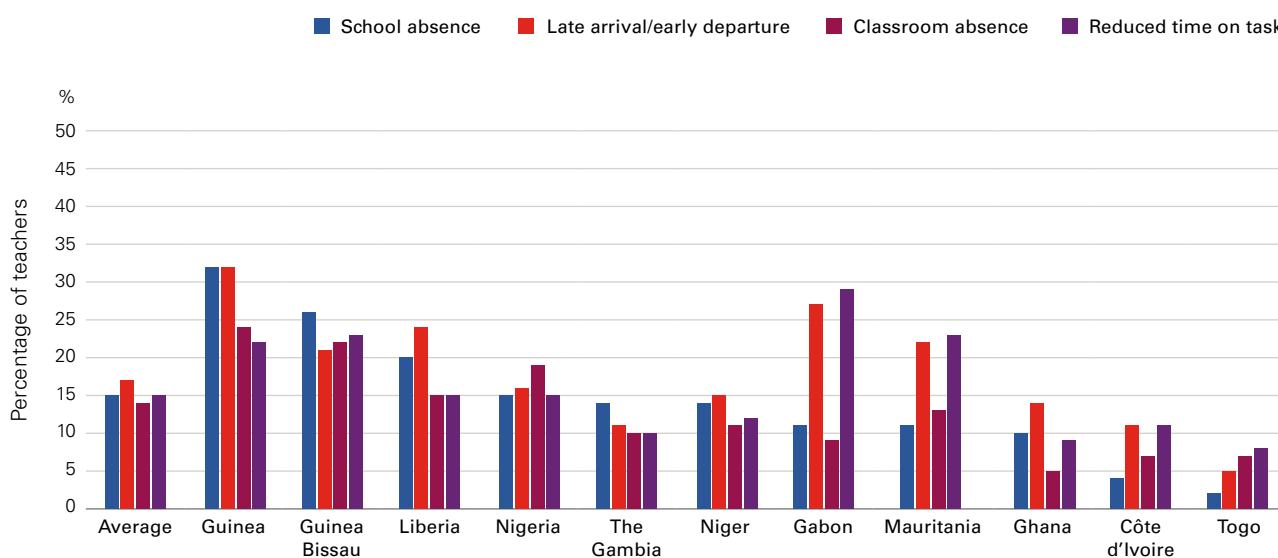
Note: Percentages indicate the proportion teachers in each country who self-report being absent in various forms at least once a week or more. The number of observations for absence from school is: Total=1,298; Côte d'Ivoire=83; Gabon=64; The Gambia=56; Ghana=91; Guinea=60; Guinea Bissau=131; Liberia=127; Mauritania=83; Niger=144; Nigeria=371; Togo=88. For the other forms of absence, the number of observations varies slightly.

As many as 14.7 per cent of surveyed teachers reported being **absent from school** (including absence for unavoidable reasons such as being unwell and in-service training) on a regular basis (i.e., at least once a week). Among participating countries, the highest rates of absence from school were reported in Guinea (31.7 per cent) and Guinea Bissau (26 per cent) and the lowest in Togo (2.3 per cent) and Côte d'Ivoire (3.6 per cent).

Approximately 17 per cent of surveyed teachers reported **arriving to school late or leaving school early** at least once a week. The highest national rates of unpunctuality were reported in Guinea (32.2 per cent) and Gabon (26.8 per cent) and the lowest in Togo (4.5 per cent), The Gambia (10.5 per cent) and Côte d'Ivoire (10.7 per cent).

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15 In all countries, survey data were collected from March to June 2019 – and at least seven months into the 2018/19 school year.

16 "At least once a week" is the summary of two teacher responses – "once a week" and "more than once a week". The percentage of teachers who reported having been absent "less than once a week" and "never" since the start of the school year can be seen in Annex 5.

Across the region 14.5 per cent of surveyed teachers reported missing lessons while at school, at least once a week. Teachers in Guinea (23.9 per cent) and Guinea Bissau (22 per cent) reported the highest rates of classroom absenteeism and teachers in Ghana (5.1 per cent), Togo (6.7 per cent) and Côte d'Ivoire (6.8 per cent) the lowest rates.

Reduced time on task while in the classroom was reported by 15.3 per cent of surveyed teachers as occurring at least once a week. At the country-level, the highest percentages of teachers spending less time teaching than originally planned were in Gabon (28.6 per cent), Guinea Bissau (23.3 per cent), and Mauritania (22.9 per cent) and the lowest in Togo (7.9 per cent), Ghana (9.2 per cent) and The Gambia (9.5 per cent).

2.2   Why are teachers absent?

The main reasons for absenteeism reported by surveyed teachers are presented in Figure 3. Ill health is the most frequent answer given for absence from the school, late arrival/early departure and reduced time on task, and the second most frequent answer given for absence from the classroom, after administrative tasks (e.g., office work, teachers' meetings). Family reasons[17] – in particular for school absenteeism and late arrival/ early departure – and weather were also frequently mentioned. Overall, reasons reported by teachers in the 11 countries were very similar to each other *(See Annex 6 for results by country and form of absenteeism).*

Figure 3. Primary reasons for absenteeism in the 11 countries, by form of absenteeism[18]
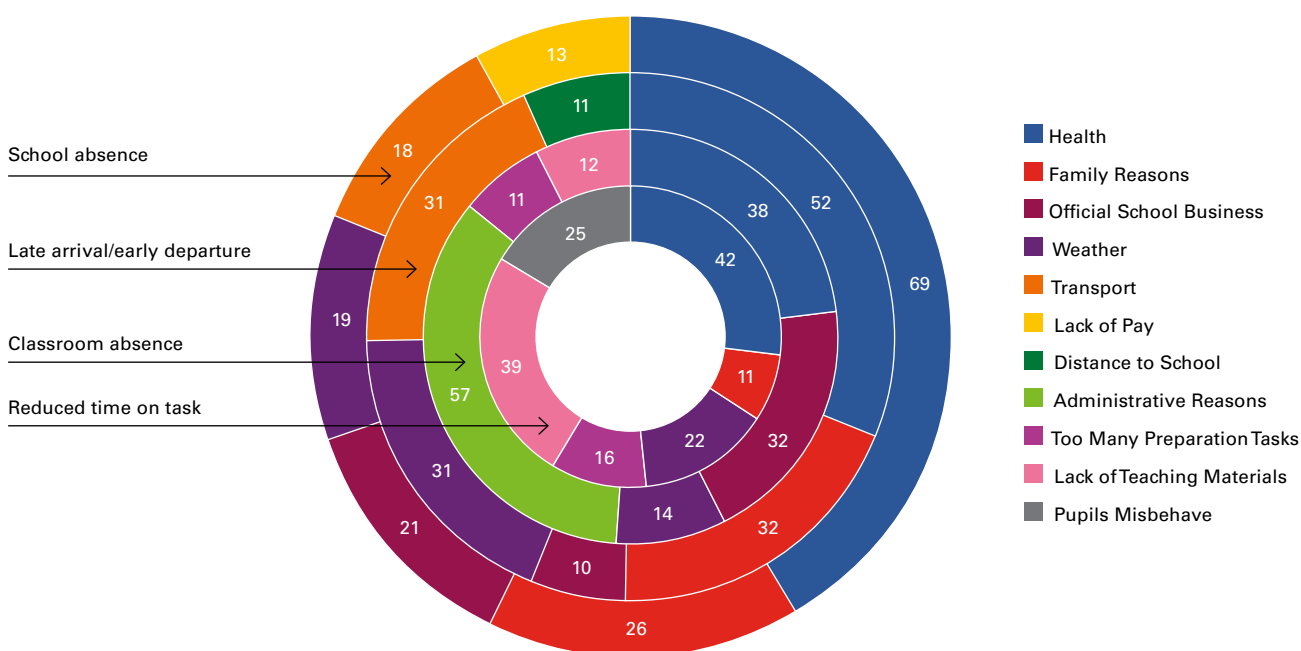
Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who reported each statement as a reason for different forms of absenteeism. The outer circumference represents the responses of all teachers for absence from school (n=1,571), followed by lack of punctuality (n=1,550), absence from the classroom (n=1,467), and reduced time on task (n=1,400).

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17 'Family obligations' is a broad category that captures caring for family members (e.g., when a child or other family member falls ill) and attending familial events such as weddings and funerals.

18 See survey questions in Annex 4 (Section I - Questions 22, 25, 28 and 31).

Analyses of the statistical associations between the reasons teachers gave for being absent and the self-reported absences provide additional empirical evidence on the factors that impact teacher attendance.

Overall, health, distance to school, transportation challenges, and not having enough pupils present are the reasons the most associated with reporting being absent from school. Family reasons are highly associated with reporting a lack of punctuality, and administrative tasks and strikes are the reasons the most associated with reporting being absent from class. Finally, the high volume of preparation tasks is the reason the most associated with reporting a reduction of time on task. There are also other reasons *(see Table 3 in Annex 7).*

Surveyed teachers were also asked to give their personal views and opinions, by indicating to what extent they agreed or disagreed with more than 30 statements about different subjects such as job satisfaction, training opportunities, school and work environment, the work of the head teacher and school inspectors, and parents' perceptions about school and about teacher absenteeism *(see full list in Annex 4 – Section II).* Assessing the associations between (self-reported) absenteeism and personal views/opinions helped strengthen the analysis of key drivers of absenteeism. Overall, the associations between absenteeism and opinions that significantly affect different forms of teacher attendance are: (1) the role of the head teacher and school inspectors; (2) parental engagement; (3) teacher training; (4) teacher remuneration; and (5) job satisfaction and work environment *(see Table 3 in Annex 7).*

Analysis of the survey data reveals differences also within countries and across school types, as well as teacher characteristics. Findings summarized in Box 1 are those for which the differences are statistically significant.[19]

Box 1. School and teacher characteristics associated with increased absenteeism

School ownership: Across West and Central Africa teacher absenteeism is higher in public than in private schools (16 per cent vs. 13 per cent). This is particularly true for unpunctuality; 18 per cent of teachers in public schools report arriving to school late or leaving early on a recurring basis compared with 12 per cent at private schools.

Age: Across the 11 participating countries, younger teachers (i.e., those whose age is below the median in their respective country) have higher school absenteeism rates (16 per cent vs. 12 per cent) and are more likely to be unpunctual (20 per cent vs. 14 per cent) and to reduce time on task (17 per cent vs. 14 per cent) on a recurring basis.

Work experience: In all countries teachers with less than six years of experience report higher rates of school (17 per cent vs. 12 per cent) and classroom absenteeism (17 per cent vs. 11 per cent), and lack of punctuality (20 per cent vs. 15 per cent) compared to more experienced teachers. The only exception is Guinea, where more experienced teachers report higher rates of unpunctuality (46 per cent vs. 10 per cent).

2.3   Education system factors affecting teacher attendance

The analysis of survey data provides a useful snapshot of the multitude of interacting factors that influence teacher attendance in West and Central Africa. Interviews and focus group discussions with teachers, head teachers, students, community representatives, parents, government officials and sub-national education officers complement these data by providing a contextual understanding of teacher absences. In the following sections, key factors affecting teacher attendance – factors both internal and external to education systems – are further discussed using combined analysis of survey and qualitative data from the field.

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19   Findings are significant at the 10 per cent level. Reported p-values are from OLS regressions estimated separately for each characteristic *(see Table 4 in Annex 8).* Further tests suggest that teachers' age and work experience are strongly correlated (as indicated by Pearson's correlation coefficient (0.56). Findings for work experience remain significant after controlling for teachers' age in the case of unpunctuality and classroom absence.

2.3.1   Teacher monitoring

The role of head teachers

Teachers appreciate close engagement and monitoring from head teachers and perceive it as effective in preventing absenteeism. Most school leaders in the region are regularly present at school and have an active monitoring role, irrespective of school location and type. Head teachers' presence and engagement impacts their staff; teachers who believe the head teacher is not always present at school are 2.11 times more likely to be absent and 2.43 times more likely to reduce time on task *(see Table 3 in Annex 7).*

Overall, 85 per cent of surveyed teachers report that the head teacher consistently records absences. Head teachers monitor attendance in formal and informal ways, including mandating teachers to sign attendance sheets, organizing early-morning assemblies, and observing classrooms and teachers' lesson plans. Some head teachers use punitive measures, such as publicly posting teachers' school absences and giving verbal warnings before taking disciplinary actions. However, school leaders focus primarily on monitoring school absences and late arrivals, and dedicate considerably less time to supervising classroom absences and time on task.

Regionally, 77 per cent of teachers claim that their head teacher actively discourages absenteeism *(see Figure 4)* and teachers who perceive their supervisor as actively encouraging their attendance are two times less likely to reduce instruction time *(see Table 3 in Annex 7)*. Similarly, teachers who are satisfied with their head teacher's feedback are 1.93 times less likely to be absent from the classroom. Most surveyed teachers are satisfied with their head teacher's feedback and feel their supervisor supports teachers' involvement in school decision-making. This is more evident for teachers in rural areas and in public schools *(see Table 5 in Annex 9).*

Figure 4. Teachers' opinions on the monitoring capacity of head teachers
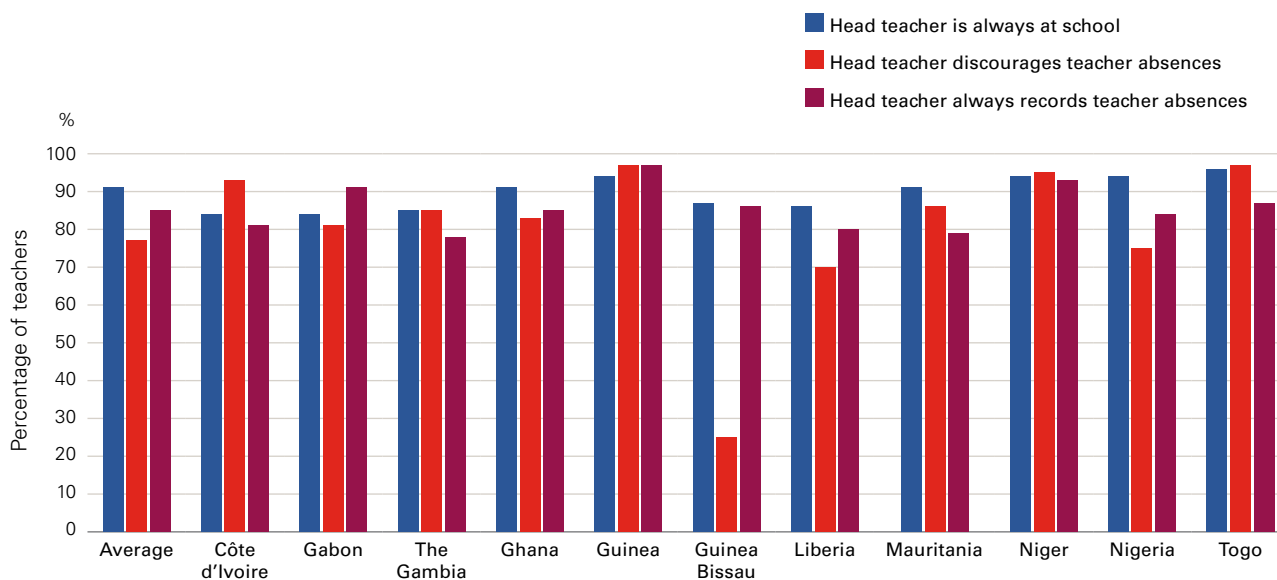
Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who agree or strongly agree with each statement. The number of observations is: Total=1,621; Côte d'Ivoire=117; Gabon=90; The Gambia=59; Ghana=105; Guinea=88; Guinea Bissau=171; Liberia=134; Mauritania=100; Niger=161; Nigeria=507; Togo=89.

Interestingly, teachers in female-led schools are more likely to report that their head teacher actively discourages absenteeism compared to teachers in male-led schools (83 per cent vs. 76 per cent).[20] Female head teachers use a variety of practices that create a supportive environment for teachers, which seems to contribute to higher rates of attendance *(see Box 2)*. These results are in line with previous evidence suggesting that

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20   This difference remains statistically significant when controlling for location and type of school.

female head teachers tend to adopt a variety of effective management practices to create a positive teaching and learning environment, and increase teacher engagement with students (UNICEF Innocenti, 2021; OECD, 2018). Yet women are often not equally represented in school leadership roles. Although 50 per cent of the teachers in the Time to Teach study were female, only 20 per cent of head teachers were women. These rates conceal important variations between countries; in Nigeria, nearly half of surveyed schools were female-led, yet in Mauritania all schools were male-led. Female school leadership is also more likely in urban areas (27 per cent vs. 12 per cent in rural schools) and in private schools (27 per cent vs. 17 per cent in public schools).

Box 2. Preferred monitoring practices of female head teachers

Beyond traditional strategies such as attendance registers, warning letters, and monetary sanctions, female head teachers tend to use sensitization strategies to make teachers aware of how their absence impacts student outcomes, more often than male head teachers do:

"The way we discourage teacher absenteeism is by talking about its negative effects during regular meetings. As teachers, we are supposed to try and meet the contact hours...If we are always absent, it would be difficult to implement the curriculum. We discuss about these things, and we make sure that absenteeism is not tolerated" – Female head teacher, urban public school, Banjul and KMC, The Gambia.

Also, interviewed teachers from female-led schools, more often than teachers from male-led schools, value the supportive role of head teachers, who regularly provide pedagogical feedback and review lesson plans:

"She makes sure that before you go to class to teach, you have prepared a lesson plan that will guide you on what to teach. She makes sure that all teachers develop such a plan and submit it every Friday before dismissal. But apart from that, when lessons are going on, she always goes round to see what the teachers are doing in their classes. At times she'll even come inside the class and stay there, watch what you're teaching, make sure you are using the proper instructional materials to make your teaching effective and carry everybody along" – Teacher, rural private school, Enugu-Udenu, Nigeria.

The role of sub-national education officers

Teachers are 1.91 times less likely to be absent from the classroom when they receive frequent visits from sub-national education officers, who play a role in motivating teachers. Overall, 76 per cent of teachers affirm that sub-national education officers regularly visit their school, but teachers in rural areas are less likely to receive regular visits *(see Table 5 in Annex 9)*. Despite receiving fewer visits, the share of teachers reporting that school inspectors frequently sanction absenteeism is higher in rural areas than urban areas.

Interviews suggest that fear of sanctions by sub-national education officers is one of the reasons teachers arrive to school on time. In Guinea, Gabon, Togo and Niger, 8 out of 10 teachers report that sub-national education officers frequently sanction absenteeism, while only 22 per cent of their counterparts in The Gambia, 31 per cent in Guinea Bissau, and 48 per cent in Mauritania hold the same opinion (see Figure 5). In Nigeria and Ghana, school inspectors conduct 'surprise visits' and provide teachers with verbal warnings, in some cases deducting their pay if they are late. When these sanctioning measures are taken quickly, they effectively deter other teachers from being absent. However, like head teachers, school inspectors also emphasize measuring and sanctioning school absences and often overlook classroom absences and reduced instruction time.

A close relationship between the head teacher and sub-national education officers is key to strengthening accountability for teacher attendance. Teachers who indicate that sub-national education officers regularly visit their school are more likely to indicate that head teachers discourage absenteeism and always record teacher absences.

Figure 5. Teachers' opinions on the monitoring capacity of subnational education officers
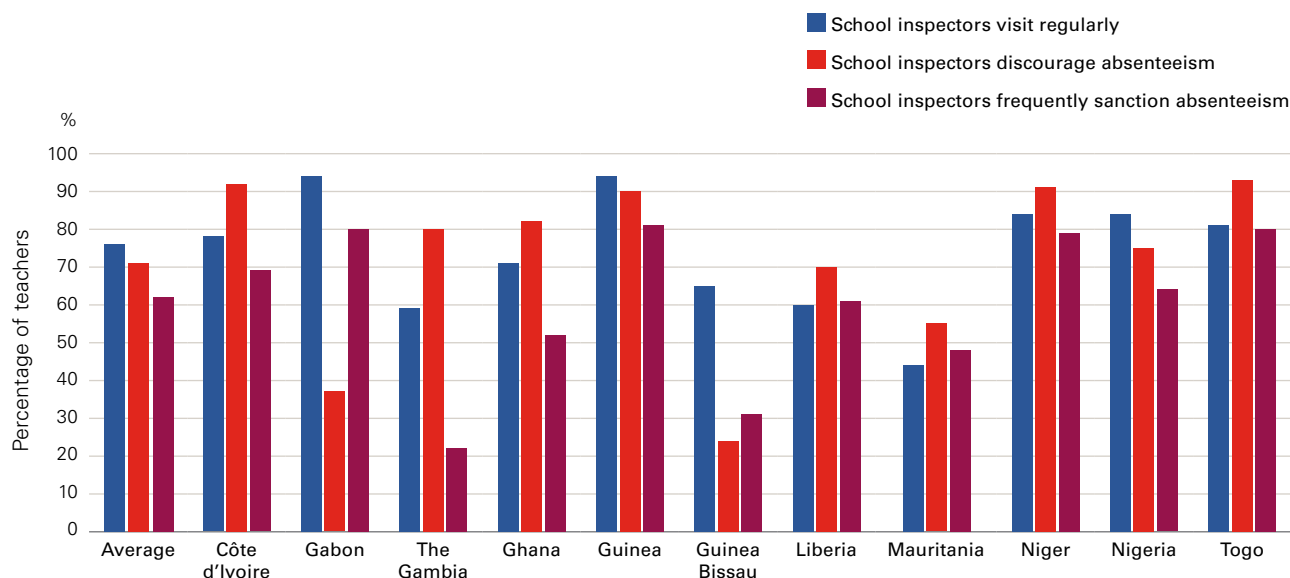
Legend:
- ■ School inspectors visit regularly
- ■ School inspectors discourage absenteeism
- ■ School inspectors frequently sanction absenteeism

Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who agree or strongly agree with each statement. The number of observations is: Total=1,603; Côte d'Ivoire=117; Gabon=87; The Gambia=58; Ghana=102; Guinea=89; Guinea Bissau=170; Liberia=135; Mauritania=104; Niger=158; Nigeria=494; Togo=89.

Limited financial resources and staff shortages across the region, especially in rural areas, make it hard for decentralized education officers to effectively monitor teacher attendance. In many countries, local inspectors and regional education officers underscore that their limited presence and/or communication with head teachers can be an obstacle to effective monitoring and is especially difficult during rainy seasons.

"Some of the monitors have a motorcycle but these are not always functional. Communication is a problem, especially during the rainy seasons as roads are not accessible by a motorcycle, therefore making it difficult to reach schools. If they are not in the schools, anything can happen"

– Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education official, The Gambia.

The role of parents and local communities

The data from the teachers show an association between their satisfaction with their job and reporting that parents are actively engaged in school matters. In some countries, sub-national education officers also mentioned parent–teacher associations (PTAs) as important allies that support effective implementation of their decisions. Yet only 55 per cent of surveyed teachers perceive parents as being actively involved in school matters *(see Figure 6)*. Teachers in private schools report higher rates of parental involvement than their peers in public schools *(see Table 5 in Annex 9)*.

Teachers who believe parents are engaged in school affairs are more likely to see pupils as motivated to learn, which can translate to a positive effect on teachers' motivation and attendance. When teachers see parents encouraging their children's attendance, they are less likely to be unpunctual and to reduce time on task. In Mauritania and Côte d'Ivoire, lower motivation of students and limited parental involvement are associated with students' misbehaviour, which teachers cite as one of the leading factors reducing time on task. Interviewed students mentioned instructors' lack of motivation as a factor that discourages them and increases their likelihood of misbehaviour, highlighting that teacher and student motivation can be mutually reinforcing and influenced by parental engagement.

The gender of the head teacher plays a role in parental involvement, as female-led schools tend to have parents who more actively encourage student attendance. Interview data imply it is attributed to female head teachers' encouragement of teachers to invite their students' parents to school to discuss students' behaviour, academic performance, or anything related. This close collaboration between parents, teachers and the school principal inspires parents to encourage their children's school attendance.

Figure 6. Teachers' opinions of monitoring capacity of parents and local communities
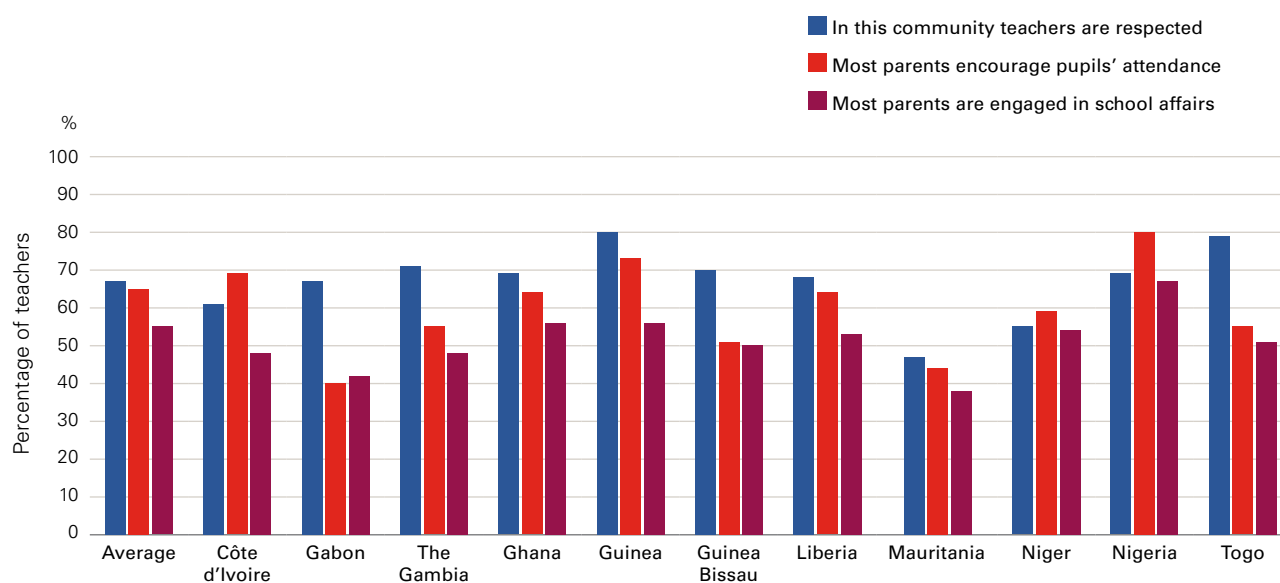
Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who agree or strongly agree with each statement. The number of observations is: Total=1,595; Côte d'Ivoire=114; Gabon=76; The Gambia=60; Ghana=101; Guinea=88; Guinea Bissau=173; Liberia=137; Mauritania=102; Niger=159; Nigeria=496; Togo=89.

While parental involvement can influence teachers' attitudes and actions, involvement of the wider community also plays a role. Teachers in Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Liberia who feel respected by the community are two times less likely to be absent compared to those who do not share this opinion. Regionally, 67 per cent of teachers feel they are respected in the community where they work; teachers in rural and private schools are more likely to feel this way compared to teachers in urban and public schools *(see Table 5 in Annex 9).* In some countries, like Côte d'Ivoire and Niger, respondents argue that parents frequently question what is being taught by teachers who are outsiders to their community and are skeptical of the value of formal education in securing a better future for their children *(see Box 3).*

In humanitarian contexts, the relationships between teachers, parents, and the wider community may be strained as a result of non-state armed groups and active violence. In Niger, for example, both teachers and parents who enroll their children in school receive threats from armed groups, which results in temporary school closures (L'Orient-Le Jour, 2018).

Box 3. Parental mistrust towards formal education

Remote and marginalized communities often question the relevance of formal schooling, which is one reason for lack of parental involvement in schools. In remote areas of Côte d'Ivoire, some parents do not believe in the importance of formal education because their children do not learn religious subjects at school. Caregivers also doubt teachers – who do not belong to the community – and the values they pass on. Parents who question the role of formal schooling engage less with teachers, which affects teacher motivation and attendance and reinforces the societal mistrust towards formal education.

The value of formal education is also questioned when there is no clear economic return on investment. A community leader in rural Niger explained:

"When you go to sensitize parents, they say that there are girls who have gone as far as CEG (Collège d'Enseignement Général – general junior secondary school) and upper secondary school, but none of them have found a job."

Students indicated that parents often ask their children to work in the fields, do household chores, or engage in income-generating activities, which are perceived to have a more direct benefit to the household. These activities prevent students from attending school and may help explain why teachers who cite "insufficient number of students" are 3.7 times more likely to be absent from school *(see Table 3 in Annex 7)*.

System incoherence

Beyond national policies and practices, most schools in the region have formal guidelines and informal norms to curb teacher absenteeism but suffer from a lack of coherence when it comes to monitoring. Inadequate training and limited sanctioning authority of local education officers are major barriers to monitoring teachers. In many countries, school inspectors prefer not to initiate sanctions because they often do not result in action.

In many schools, interviewed teachers mentioned that they are not clear on the role of school inspectors and regional education authorities to monitor and sanction absenteeism. In Gabon and Mauritania, for instance, there is a perception that regulatory guidelines, procedures, and sanctions for absenteeism are ambiguous, calling into question the reliability and objectivity of school inspectors. This could explain why Gabon has a stark difference between the share of teachers reporting frequent school visits by inspectors and the share who agree that the actions of inspectors discourage absenteeism.[21] In some cases, such as in The Gambia, if head teachers do not have information about teachers' absenteeism or they choose not to report it, no action will be taken as school inspectors rely on head teachers for this information. Personal friendships between teachers and head teachers and/or school inspectors also make it difficult to fairly apply sanctions as school leaders aim to avoid creating an unfavorable environment in their schools.

> "Inspectors continue to complain that sanctions stop at a certain level by an intervention or mediation. Sometimes they even prefer not to take sanctions for fear that it will cause them trouble... It is necessary to establish an effective sanctioning mechanism, free of interventions and distinctions. Only then will teachers take inspectors seriously"
>
> – Education officer, Dakhlet Nouadhibou, Mauritania.

2.3.2 Teacher training and qualifications

Most surveyed teachers have a university degree (58 per cent) or have completed vocational or professional training (10 per cent). Approximately 31 per cent have completed secondary education and less than one per cent have completed only primary school. Despite different levels of qualifications, at the regional level there are

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21 On average, 94 per cent of teachers reported frequent school visits by inspectors, yet only 37 per cent agreed that the actions of inspectors discouraged absenteeism.

no significant differences in teacher attendance between educators who hold a university degree and those who hold a vocational or secondary degree *(see Table 4 in Annex 8)*. At the country level however, university graduates report a significantly lower rate of classroom absenteeism in The Gambia and Guinea. In Gabon, while school absence is higher among teachers with a university degree, classroom absence is higher among those with a lower level of education. This could be explained by the job opportunities that teachers with higher qualifications have, which could be detrimental to their teaching responsibilities, including their school attendance.

The study reveals that when teachers feel confident about their knowledge and skills, they are 2.6 times less likely to be absent from the classroom *(see Table 3 in Annex 7)*. Irrespective of their level of education, most teachers are confident that they have the knowledge and skills required for effective teaching but rate their peers' knowledge lower *(see Figure 7)*.[22] Teachers who believe their colleagues have the knowledge and skills to teach well are less likely to be unpunctual and to be absent from the classroom. As interview data reveal, when teachers believe they do not have the knowledge and skills, they try to overcome the challenge by seeking support from their peers or learning on their own, making them more confident and increasing their presence in the classroom.

Despite their confidence, teachers indicate that inadequate knowledge hinders their time on task and presence in the classroom, highlighting the need to strengthen the practical component of pre-service training and to provide further training on subject knowledge and lesson planning. In some rural and remote areas facing acute shortages, teachers take short-term, pre-service courses to enter the profession. However, some education administrators do not always view pre-service training as necessary, especially for contract teachers who are 'transient'. This could be a reason why contract teachers do not always benefit from pre-service training.

Regionally, in-service training opportunities have increased but remain limited in some countries, in spite of their importance for teacher professional development. Only 48 per cent of teachers indicate they have access to in-service training, with teachers in private schools reporting higher access than their peers in public schools *(see Table 5 in Annex 9)*. Teachers with higher access to training self reported more absence from the classroom and lower time on task, which could be a result of in-service programmes taking place during school hours at on-site or off-site locations.

Figure 7. Teachers' opinions of their knowledge and access to training
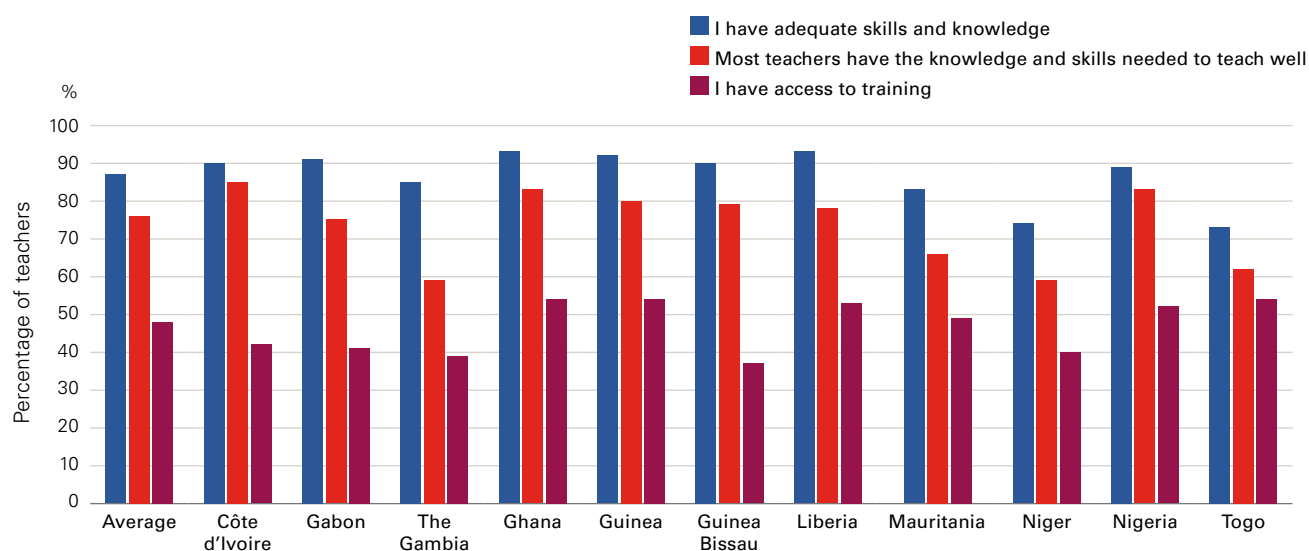
Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who agree or strongly agree with each statement. The number of observations is: Total=1,621; Côte d'Ivoire=118; Gabon=88; The Gambia=60; Ghana=103; Guinea=89; Guinea Bissau=173; Liberia=135; Mauritania=103; Niger=160; Nigeria=503; Togo=89.

22 Like all measures that rely on self-reported data, teachers' assessment of their own or their peers' knowledge can be influenced by unconscious biases or attitudes. Previous studies have found that self-ratings may be influenced by issues of social desirability bias while peer evaluations may be biased based on the gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, native language, or group affiliation of the peers being evaluated (Pauls and Stemmler, 2003; AlFallay, 2004; Stonewall et al., 2018).

Lack of language knowledge and training, especially in countries with a bilingual education system, often makes it difficult for teachers to communicate with their students and creates another barrier to teachers remaining on task *(see Box 5)*. More than half of educators in the region identify language issues, as the main reason pupils struggle in class, because for many students, home and school languages differ. In Mauritania, a shortage of bilingual teacher candidates who speak both languages of instruction (Arabic and French) creates communication challenges in the classroom. Teachers from The Gambia also mentioned that language was a key driver decreasing their time on task as they need to repeat what they have said or explain it again in local languages to help students understand. Teachers who cannot speak local languages expressed concerns about language barriers and recognized they may decrease students' motivation to come to class and therefore hinder learning outcomes.

"In my classroom, 40 per cent of the learners are Fula speakers, which I cannot speak. With the others, I try to use less English, especially those in Grade 2, and I also spend time elaborating so that they understand. I can say that 60 per cent of the pupils speak Mandinka, but these 40 per cent who only speak Fula, they are the pupils who are usually absent most frequently"

– Teacher, rural public school, The Gambia.

Box 5. Bilingual education policies in Sub-Saharan Africa

When students are taught in a language they can speak and understand well, they are more likely to learn more, stay in school and experience a learning environment reflective of their local culture (World Bank, 2021). In The Gambia, teachers recognized the positive effect of bilingual education on student learning. A teacher from Basse explained:

"Sometimes if I speak continuously in English, this limits the learners' understanding. It is only when I blend English with the local languages, like Mandinka, that the learners understand."

More countries in Africa have introduced bilingual education policies. In Ethiopia, the Education and Training Policy mandates the use of national languages in primary education, followed by a transition to English in secondary and tertiary education. Similarly, the National Policy on Education in Nigeria (2014) states that the medium of instruction in primary school shall be the language of immediate environment for the first three years and English shall be taught as a subject. From Grade 4 onwards, English should be used for instruction and the language of immediate environment, French and Arabic, should be taught as subjects. In Burkina Faso and Mali, bilingual schools have been introduced to reinforce bilingual pedagogy. Students from these schools are taught in their mother-tongue until Grade 5, followed by a progressive transition to French in Grade 6 (Ouane and Glanz, 2011).

There are recurring implementation gaps between these policies and practice. The lack of language knowledge and training as well as of learning materials in local languages are acute challenges faced by teachers that limit their time on task and affect quality interaction with students.

2.2.3 Job satisfaction and work environment

Intrinsic motivation is one reason for teachers' job satisfaction, as they consider teaching a noble profession that advances society and are motivated by the growth of their students. Yet, in cases when teachers are not satisfied with their job, they are 2.4 times more likely to be unpunctual and 1.8 times more likely to be absent from the classroom *(see Table 3 in Annex 7)*. Across the region, 74 per cent of teachers state that they are satisfied with their job, yet only 53 per cent believe their peers are satisfied with theirs. While there are no significant differences in job satisfaction between teachers working in rural and urban areas, teachers in public schools report higher satisfaction than their peers in private schools *(see Table 5 in Annex 9)*. Female teachers are also more likely to be satisfied with their job than male teachers.

> "My profession is my greatest satisfaction and pride. When you take a child at the beginning of the year who really couldn't read and write and at the end of the year, the child can speak, the child can read, the child goes to the next class and you see that the child is fine, it's very exciting. Even if the parents don't say thank you, I'm always glad to see that I've helped someone"
>
> – Teacher, urban private school, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Another key factor influencing teachers' job satisfaction is work environment. Teachers who believe the school is a good workplace are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs (79 per cent vs. 61 per cent) and when they disagree, they are 1.9 times more likely to be absent from school *(see Table 3 in Annex 7)*. On average, 69 per cent of surveyed teachers believe their work environment is good *(see Figure 8)*, although teachers in urban areas and in private schools are more likely to hold this opinion than their peers in rural and public schools *(see Table 5 in Annex 9)*.

Figure 8. Teachers' opinions of job satisfaction and work environment
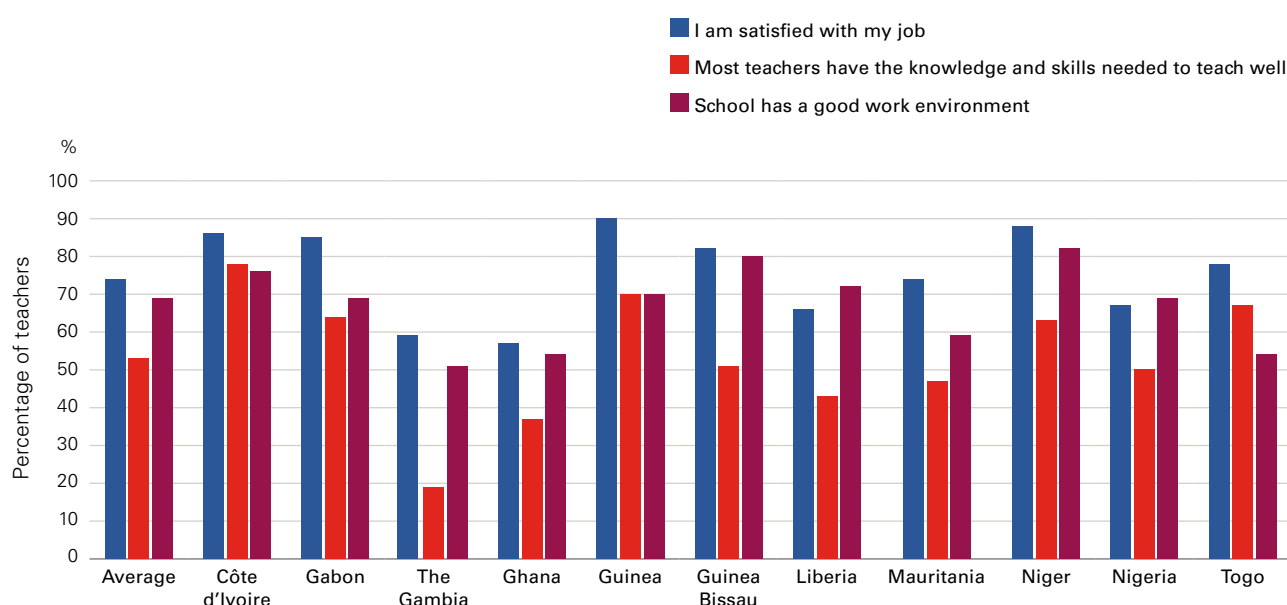
Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who agree or strongly agree with each statement. The number of observations is: Total=1,596; Côte d'Ivoire=118; Gabon=85; The Gambia=56; Ghana=101; Guinea=89; Guinea Bissau=163; Liberia=132; Mauritania=106; Niger=161; Nigeria=496; Togo=9.

2.2.4 Remuneration

The average self-reported salary of surveyed teachers is $439 per month *(see Figure 9)*. Irrespective of their base salary and benefits however, only 25 per cent of teachers are satisfied with their pay and only 6 per cent consider it sufficient to cover monthly household expenses *(see Figure 10)*. Even the highest rates of salary satisfaction remained at just 40 per cent of teachers in Niger and 30 per cent of teachers in Nigeria.

At the regional level there are no statistically significant differences in absenteeism rates between teachers with higher salaries (i.e., those who earn more than the median salary in their respective countries) and those with lower salaries. Nonetheless, teachers with lower salaries report higher rates of school absenteeism in Côte d'Ivoire; classroom absenteeism in Nigeria; and reduced time on task in Guinea. Interviews suggest that low salaries affect teacher motivation and consequently their attendance and time on task. On the contrary, in Gabon teachers with higher salaries are more likely to be absent from the school and to be unpunctual than their peers with lower salaries. A possible explanation implied in interviews with teachers relates to salary dissatisfaction. First, salaries have not been increased, despite seniority and training considerations. Second, salaries received are insufficient considering the cost of living. So, the interview data implied that even those with relatively higher salaries might indulge in moonlighting, which increases their absence from school. Studies also confirm that it is not uncommon to find teachers who have several jobs in the country (Wolhuter (ed.), 2014).

Figure 9. Average monthly salary reported by surveyed teachers (measured at the 2019 purchasing power parity (PPP) exchange rate), by country[23]
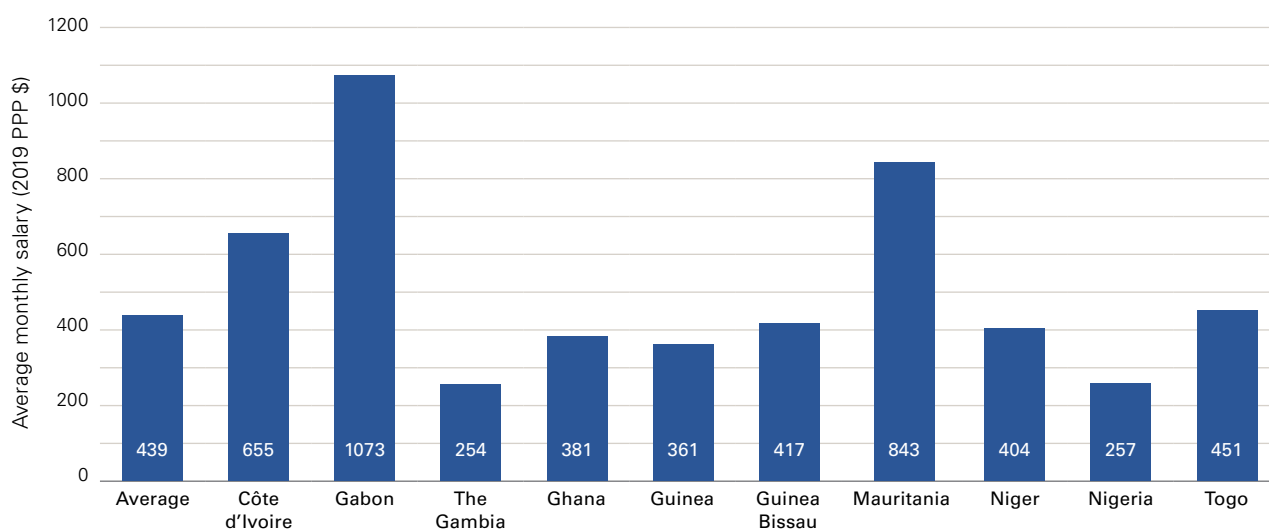
Challenges in receiving payments due to delays, errors in pay slips, or access to banks during non-teaching times can also result in teachers being late and/or absent from school or their classrooms. Only 6 out of 10 surveyed teachers report that they receive their salary on time and that it is easy to collect *(see Figure 10)*. Across the region, urban and private school teachers are more likely than rural and public school teachers to state that they receive their salary on time and judge it easy to collect *(see Table 5 in Annex 9)*.

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23 The 2019 PPP exchange rate was used for currency conversion. Due to data limitations in self-reported salary estimates, Liberia is excluded from this figure.

Figure 10. Teachers' opinions on remuneration
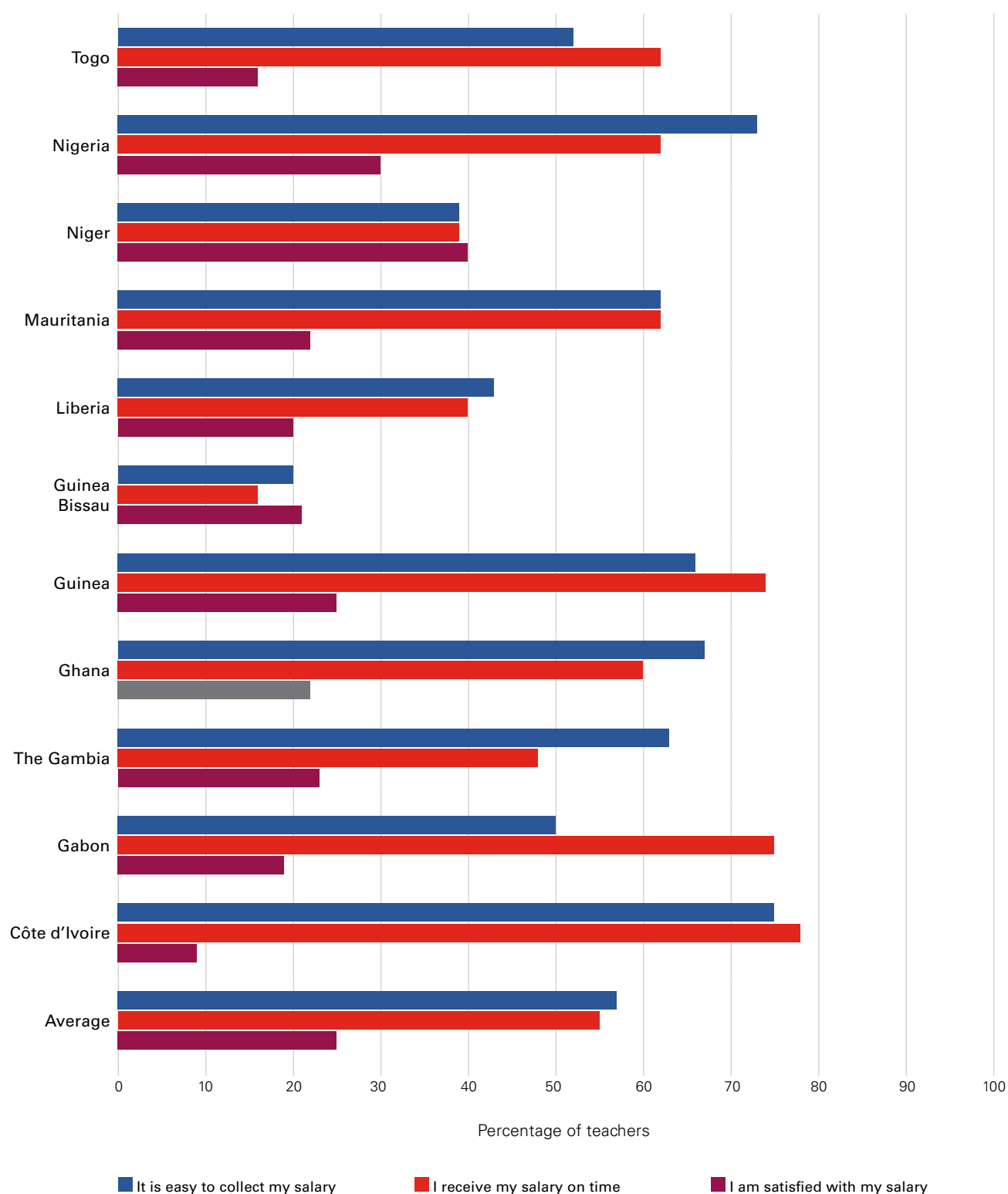
Percentage of teachers

- It is easy to collect my salary
- I receive my salary on time
- I am satisfied with my salary

Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who agree or strongly agree with each statement. The number of observations is: Total=1,613; Côte d'Ivoire=110; Gabon=86; The Gambia=60; Ghana=101; Guinea=89; Guinea Bissau=173; Liberia=134; Mauritania=106; Niger=159; Nigeria=506; Togo=89.

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The timing and ease with which teachers receive their pay has more impact on absenteeism than the pay amount they receive. Teachers who receive their salary on time are less likely to be absent from school and the classroom. Likewise, teachers who find it easy to collect their salary are less likely to arrive to school late or leave early. An interesting example comes from Guinea Bissau, where private school teachers are more likely to be satisfied with their salary than their peers in public schools, despite receiving lower monthly payments. This can be explained by the fact that private school teachers in Guinea Bissau typically receive their payment on time and without major inconvenience, while their public school peers can face month-long delays.

Interviewed teachers explained that they often engaged in alternative income-generating activities because their salaries were not sufficient to cover their and their families' basic needs. Across the region, 16 per cent of surveyed teachers reported earning money from activities beyond teaching, with the highest rate in Liberia (27 per cent). Teachers working more than one job are almost five times more likely to be absent from school *(see Table 3 in Annex 7)*. They are also more likely to report, during interviews, increased tiredness leading to reduced time on task and lower quality work for classroom tasks.

Payment delays, poor working conditions, and a lack of clarity around the career ladder are common reasons for strikes. In Nigeria and Guinea-Bissau, 3 out of 10 teachers report being absent from school because of strikes. **Teachers may feel that striking is the most effective way to have their voices heard on these matters**. So, while participating in strikes can increase short-term teacher absenteeism *(see Figure 11)*, improved conditions can have a potential long-term positive effect on teacher motivation and attendance.

Figure 11. Teachers indicating strikes as a reason for absenteeism, by form of absenteeism
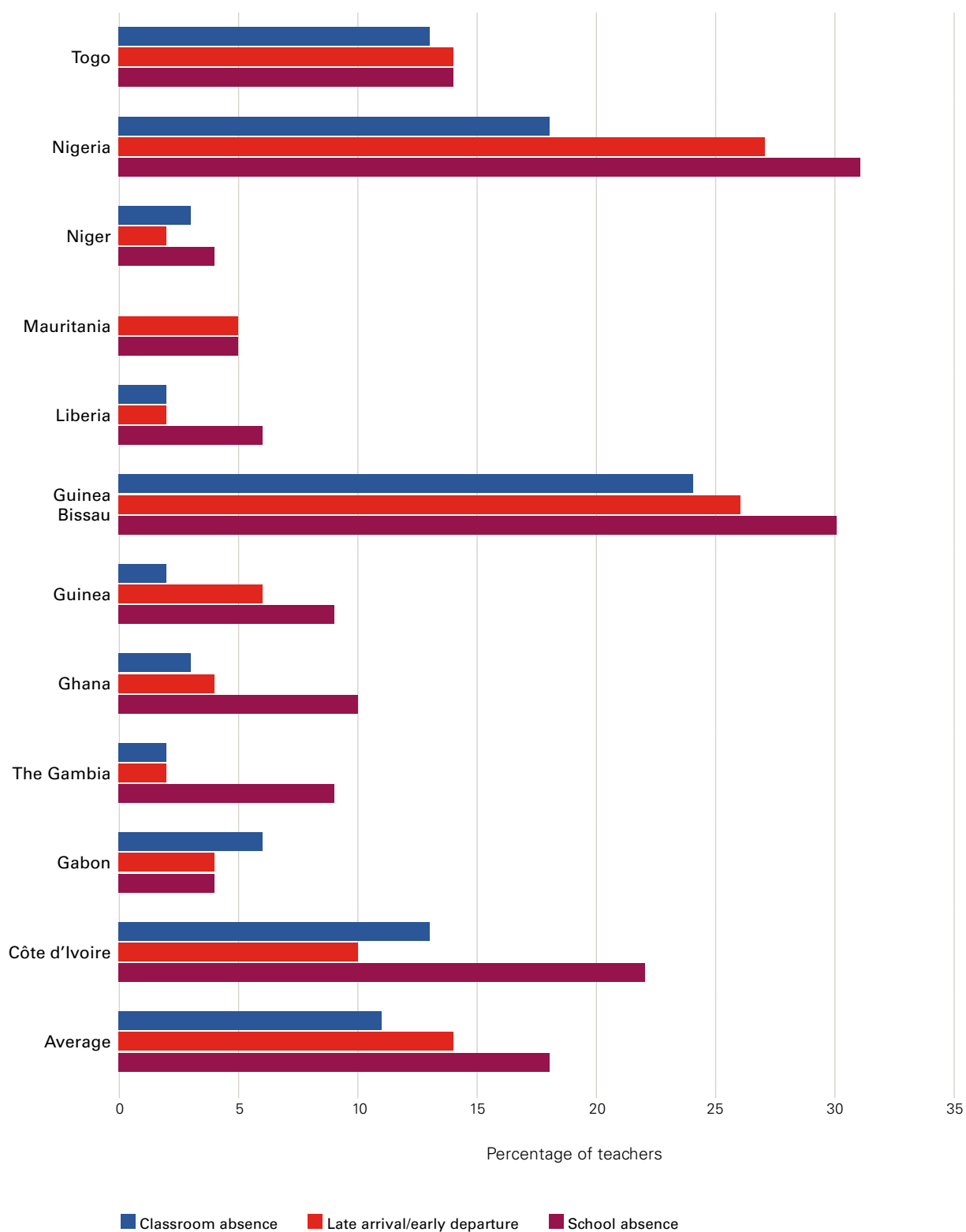
Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who selected strikes as a reason for different forms of absenteeism. The number of observations is: Total=1,571; Côte d'Ivoire=112; Gabon=93; The Gambia=58; Ghana=104; Guinea=86; Guinea Bissau=172; Liberia=126; Mauritania=81; Niger=158; Nigeria=497; Togo=84.

2.4.5 School resources and infrastructure

Governments in the region have invested heavily in improving school infrastructure and the provision of school resources. While tremendous progress has been observed over the past two decades, important challenges remain. Many schools still have an overwhelming need for additional classrooms and crucial infrastructure such as laboratories, libraries and dormitories, as well as books, teacher guides and teaching aids. Interviewed teachers highlight that lesson preparation, assessment and managing student behaviour are difficult in overcrowded classrooms, reducing instructional time.

Inadequate access to teaching and learning materials (TLMs) is associated with reduced time on task and is a prevalent issue in the region, especially among rural and public schools *(see Table 5 in Annex 9).* Only 4 out of 10 teachers believe they have the TLMs they need to teach *(see Figure 12).* Even in the best cases, only 58 per cent of teachers in Nigeria and

> "During science period we have to do practical [work]; we have to get a laboratory so that whatever the master will teach, we will do [as] a practical so that we will be able to understand, but here we don't have any science laboratory. The master will just draw on the board [to describe] acid, and I have never seen acid before"
>
> – Student, rural private school, Ghana.

> "Everyone needs a reading book. If everyone had a reading book, we would all know how to read"
>
> – Student, urban, public school, Togo.

48 per cent of teachers in Guinea affirm that they have sufficient TLMs. Teachers explained that they revised and sometimes shortened their lessons because of the lack of TLMs. Further, they sometimes reported not feeling confident teaching and struggling keeping students interested when they lacked these resources. Adequate TLMs is also a challenge in humanitarian contexts like Niger, where national authorities indicate schools struggle to provide sufficient TLMs to displaced and refugee students, which decreases teachers' motivation to spend time on task and their ability to teach effectively.

Teachers, students, and community members in several countries indicated that the lack or shortage of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities is one of the major challenges faced by their schools. Teachers across the region explained that they are forced to go to the nearby families' houses because of lack of potable water and toilets in their schools, contributing to absenteeism and reduced interaction time with students.

## Figure 12. Teachers' perceptions of school resources
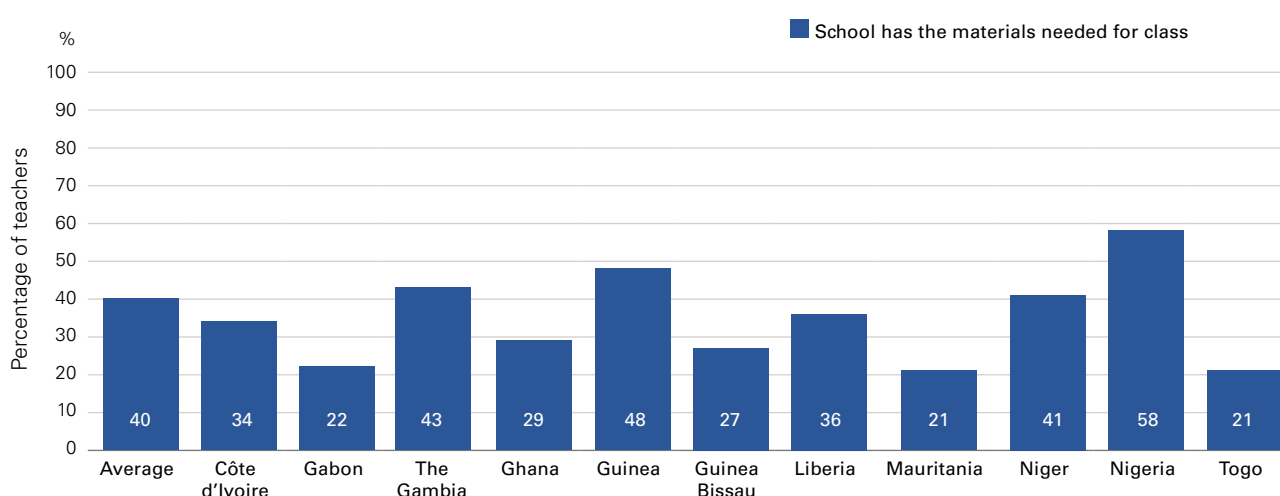
Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who agree or strongly agree with the statement. The number of observations is: Total=1,625; Côte d'Ivoire=116; Gabon=89; The Gambia=60; Ghana=102; Guinea=89; Guinea Bissau=168; Liberia=133; Mauritania=107; Niger=162; Nigeria=510; Togo=89.

2.4.6 Teacher recruitment, allocation and workload

Recruiting qualified teachers, who meet the minimum requirements to enter the profession, is one means of ensuring quality teaching, reducing monitoring pressure and improving attendance as stakeholders' interviews show a clear recognition of teachers' qualification on their self-esteem and classroom attendance. However, interviewed school leaders indicated that in order to address teacher shortages, they often recruit contract and volunteer teachers, which creates quality issues. In Gabon for example, teachers recruited through the teacher training colleges (ENI) are trained for two years after receiving their baccalaureate degree and recognized by national and sub-national officials for their excellence. Teachers directly recruited by schools do not receive these two years of training, which may result in limited content knowledge.

Teacher allocation policies and practices can also influence attendance by directly impacting teacher workloads. While some countries have lower teacher shortages (average student–teacher ratios) than others, in most countries teachers are inequitably distributed **across schools** *(see Figure 13 and Box 6).* More and better qualified teachers are allocated to urban schools, which translates into significant disparities in class size and schooling conditions, generally to the detriment of the teachers and students in rural schools.[24] Teachers are also inequitably distributed **within schools** and across grades. Upper grade classes tend to be prioritized, resulting in early grade classes having fewer and less qualified teachers and bigger class sizes *(see Figure 14).* Such teacher allocation practices are counterproductive in terms of equity, as learning gaps that develop in early grade classes tend to grow over time meaning that students who lag behind during the early grades are less likely to catch up in later grades (Crouch, 2014).[25]

Figure 13. Degree of randomness in teacher allocation across public primary schools

Nigeria *(2018)	73
Ghana (2009)	49
Côte d'Ivoire (2016)	49
Togo (2018)	42
Niger (2017)	27
Mauritania (2014)	25
Guinea Bissau (2013)	24
Gabon (2008)	23
Guinea (2014)	19
The Gambia (2018)	9
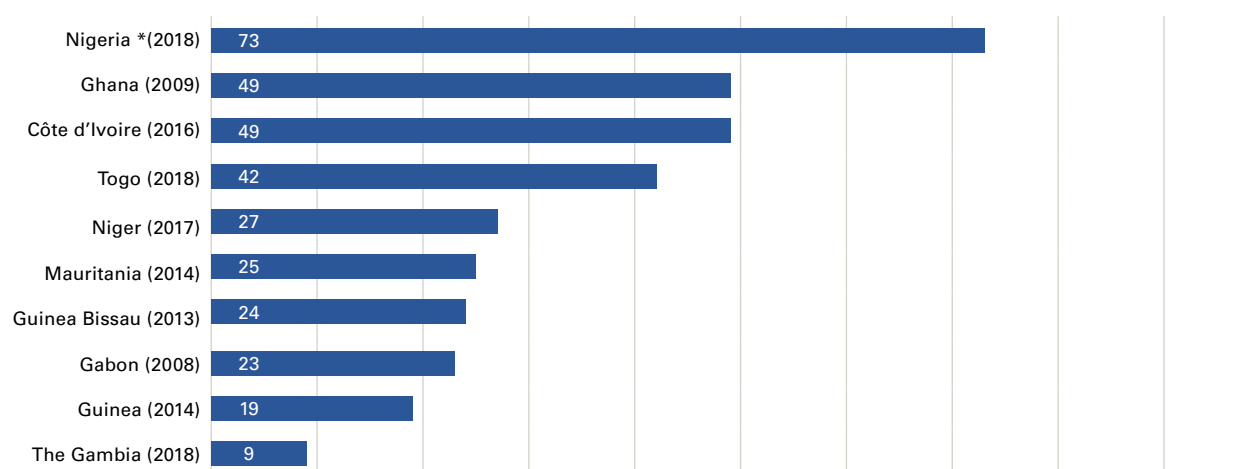
Source: Data from national education management information systems and the International Institute for Educational Planning-Pôle de Dakar (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]) in Caro, D., and F. Ndem, 'Is Education Not Supposed to Help Reduce Inequalities: An analysis of equity and efficiency in teachers' allocation', Unpublished UNICEF Working Paper, New York, 2019; and World Bank, 'Policy Note: Teacher quality reform in Nigeria', World Bank,Washington, D.C., 2020.

Note: The degree of randomness is an indicator capturing the disparities in teacher allocation across schools. It is calculated as $1-R^2$, where R^2 is the coefficient of determination (level of association) between the number of teachers and the number of pupils per school. The closer the degree of randomness (which ranges from 0 to 100 per cent) is to 0, the more equitable teacher allocation across schools is from the standpoint to provide similar number of teachers to schools with similar number of students.[26]

24 Inequity in teacher allocation is also gendered, with fewer female teachers serving in rural areas, which fuels disparities – in access and completion – against girls. Interviewed female teachers underscored the importance of housing facilities. In countries like Liberia, they also highlighted that travelling long distances alone is often unsafe and culturally unacceptable for women, while public transportation is both difficult and costly.

25 This is known as the 'Matthew effect', a term coined by Keith Stanovich that describes processes whereby inequality is created or maintained. In learning terms, students at the end of Grade 1 with advanced reading and numeracy abilities begin a pattern of outperforming learners who cannot read or count well. With time, this gap widens. (Source: Crouch, L., presentation given at the UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Education Network meeting, 2014).

26 For more details, see Global Partnership for Education, Results Framework Indicators: Methodological briefs, June 2017. Available at: https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2019-10-gpe-results-framework_technical-guidelines.pdf, accessed 17 August 2021.

Figure 14. Average class size (number of students) in first and last grade of primary cycle[27]
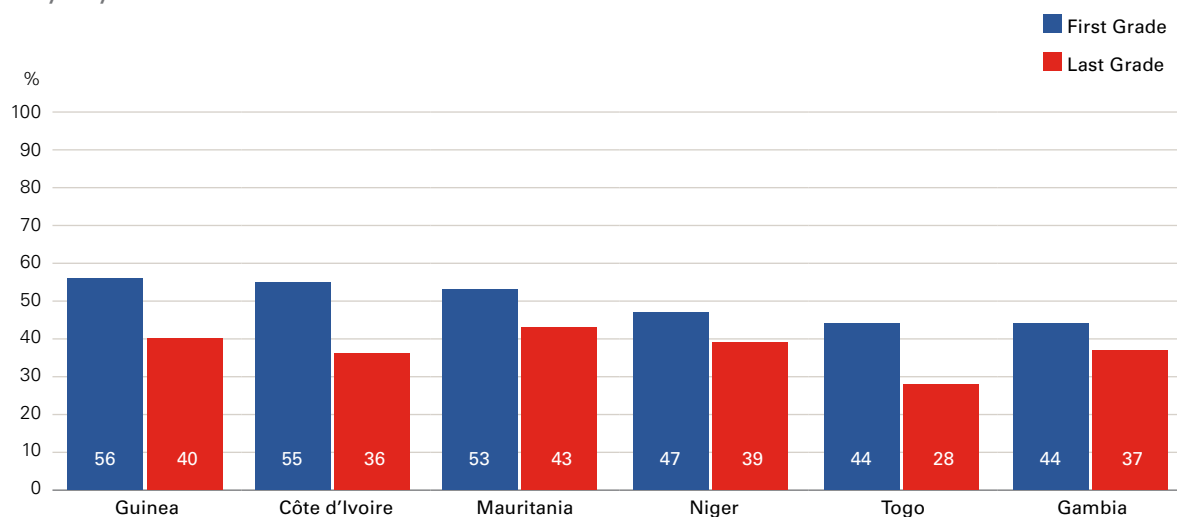
Source: Caro, D., and F. Ndem, 'Is Education Not Supposed to Help Reduce Inequalities: An analysis of equity and efficiency in teachers' allocation', Unpublished UNICEF Working Paper, New York, 2019.

Inequitable teacher allocation across and within schools can contribute to increased workloads for teachers, encouraging absenteeism from the classroom and reduced time on task. Beyond teaching lessons, teachers are often responsible for lesson planning, grading, exam preparation and a variety of administrative tasks. Administrative tasks (e.g., office work, teachers' meetings) and official school business (e.g., planning, training and seminars) are among the most frequently stated reasons for teachers' absence from their classroom *(See Figure 3)*. Teachers who cite administrative reasons are 2.3 times more likely to be absent from the classroom, and those who cite too many preparation tasks are 1.8 times more likely to reduce time on task *(see Table 3 in Annex 7)*.

> "Sometimes I miss my lesson because there is a request from the Ministry to select pupils for a function; maybe a debate, a quiz, or a cultural event. These requests are usually impromptu, and we must make special arrangements for them"
>
> –Teacher, Nigeria.

Box 6. National experiences with addressing inequity in teacher allocation

In Nigeria, the distribution of teachers across schools depends on the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB) which have the autonomy for teacher appointment decisions, while teacher deployment is the responsibility of local government education authorities. Coordination challenges between different levels of government to allocate teachers where they are most needed may be one reason for the high degree of randomness in teacher allocation in this country. In The Gambia, on the other hand, the introduction of a hardship allowance policy that offers benefits to attract and retain teachers serving in remote areas *(see also Box 12)* has had a positive effect on student-to- qualified teacher ratio (Pugatch and Schroeder, 2013) and may explain the relatively low degree of randomness in teacher allocation in this national context.

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27   Only countries for which data were available are included in the graph.

Other countries in the region facing teacher shortages have experimented with school clustering, with mixed results. An example comes from Mauritania, where there are major disparities in the number of teachers allocated across sub regions (wilayas), with overstaffed schools in urban areas and understaffed schools in rural areas. What is more, 65 per cent of schools in the country do not offer the full primary cycle (Grades 1 to 6), resulting in a low number of students (Islamic Republic of Mauritania, 2011).

In 2011, the government introduced a 'school clustering' policy to allocate teaching staff nationally by grouping together schools that do not offer all primary grades but are located close to each other. This system was designed to allow students to access the full primary education cycle in one school and to distribute teachers more efficiently (Islamic Republic of Mauritania, 2011). While this clustering process is widely perceived as having been effective in reducing teacher absenteeism in recent years, it is not free of limitations. Clustered schools are sometimes far away from the students' homes, making it difficult for families in rural areas to move with their children and leave their farms. Moreover, there is resistance from political actors at the community level to implement 'clustering' as they believe it could negatively affect their electoral base by promoting family mobility.

2.5 Factors outside of the education system affecting teacher attendance

2.5.1 Health

Even before COVID-19, health was most frequently cited by teachers as posing challenges to their school attendance, punctuality and time on task. It was also the second most frequent reason for absence from the classroom after administrative tasks *(see Annex 6 for frequencies by country)*. Teachers citing health issues are 2.2 times more likely to be absent from school and 1.9 times more likely to be unpunctual *(see Table 3 in Annex 7)*.

Absences for health reasons are often viewed as legitimate, unplanned and involuntary, which may explain teachers' willingness to report them. Rural teachers are more likely to report absenteeism due to health reasons as they often have to travel long distances to access adequate healthcare because of a lack of health facilities in their location.

> "There is no public or private health center in the village. So, in case of illness, teachers are forced to travel to the prefectural hospital in the nearest town"
>
> – Parent, rural school, Togo.

Health-induced school and classroom absences also appear to be higher for female teachers. Interview data from Nigeria suggests pregnancy may drive this result as female teachers attend regular pre-natal check-ups and even after birth, female teachers may be absent from school to care for their newborn. In some schools, head teachers attempt to mitigate health-related teacher absences by arranging substitute teachers or make-up lessons on Sundays and holidays. Yet there is no evidence that institutional mechanisms are consistently in place so that these absences do not affect instructional time for students.

Even when unwell teachers come to school, they often miss class time or do not provide adequate instruction to their students. In Ghana, teachers reported coming to school sick to avoid being penalized; similarly, in Nigeria, teachers too ill to teach showed up to avoid pay deductions for being absent. In Togo, where 7 out of 10 teachers report that ill health is linked to classroom absences or reduced time on task, principals stated that unwell teachers may arrive to school but were not present in the classroom. When ill teachers enter the classroom, they often indicate resting or providing activities for students that do not require interaction.

COVID-19 has exacerbated health challenges for many teachers, schools and their broader communities which need to be addressed as teachers and their students return to the classroom *(see Box 7)*.

Box 7. Addressing health concerns at schools after COVID-19 shutdowns

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive disruptions to already overburdened health systems for many communities. Adequate healthcare for teachers and their families may be less attainable than before, potentially resulting in more school absences. This period has also led to an alarming increase of food insecurity (WHO, 2020); therefore, it is likely that even more teachers and students will be affected by hunger and their engagement in class.

As schools reopen, proper health and hygiene measures (mask wearing, social distancing, handwashing, etc.) are needed to keep teachers and students safe. Investments should be prioritized for schools where WASH services are lacking. Vaccinating teachers should also be a priority to reduce the spread of the virus. Côte d'Ivoire prioritized teachers in the first vaccination group and Mauritania reached an 80 per cent coverage of teachers fully vaccinated on September 2021 (UNESCO, 2021). Yet, delivering COVID-19 vaccines to teachers (and subsequently, children) is a significant challenge in a region with the world's lowest childhood vaccination coverage (UNICEF, n.d.) and poses one of the most complex environments in which to deliver vaccines (UNICEF, 2021).

Beyond physical health measures, addressing the mental health of teachers is also needed to ensure teachers are motivated to return to in-person teaching. This includes providing psychosocial support for stress and fears around the spread of the virus to addressing the burden of increased workloads that occurred during the pandemic.

Beyond their own health, teachers flagged that their attendance was influenced by the health of their students; educators in Mauritania, Niger, and Nigeria reported that fatigue and hunger among both teachers and students significantly reduces instruction time. In some countries, like Liberia, inadequate school feeding programs result in students and teachers leaving school early to take meals at home.

2.5.2 Familial and community obligations

Teachers in all countries cite family reasons such as caring for family members, social engagements (e.g., weddings and funerals), and attending community events as contributing to school absence and lack of punctuality *(see Annex 6 for frequencies by country)*. One out of 10 teachers in the region reduces the time they spend teaching in the classroom because they are distracted by family and personal problems. In Nigeria and The Gambia, surveyed and interviewed teachers pointed to stress caused by the pressures of looking after their families as a factor preventing them from concentrating on their lessons or completing their lessons within the allocated time.

> "Sometimes I stop my lesson because the pupil is not feeling well. Usually this happens towards the end of the day as they are hungry and thinking of going home to eat. So at that time, teaching becomes very hard; sometimes I give them a writing or reading activity"
>
> – Teacher, urban public school, Bauchi state, Nigeria.

> "I received a call from my parents while I was teaching [telling me] that they needed me to buy food. I became very worried because I did not have the financial means to, so I became very stressed and disturbed in the class"
>
> –Teacher, urban school, The Gambia.

In rural areas where access to healthcare or transportation can be limited, family and social responsibilities can significantly affect teachers' school attendance. In Guinea Bissau, teachers specifically raised the challenge of traveling to care for or visit family members in different regions. Distance also plays a role in Mauritania, where teachers explained that absences from school often occur before or after vacations, when teachers visit family who live far from their post.

Participating in social engagements and community events also affects attendance, particularly for male teachers and teachers in rural areas. Teachers in rural public schools across the region described feeling a sense of obligation to attend social engagements such as weddings, funerals, or naming ceremonies. Yet,

sub-national education officers and national-level respondents often believe that social events can be planned outside of teaching hours and should not result in absenteeism.

Stress surrounding familial commitments and community engagements may have increased for teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many teachers experienced financial uncertainty and increased responsibilities at home, especially those with children at home because of school closures.

2.5.3 Transportation and weather

Teachers are 3.1 times more likely to be absent from school and 1.9 times more likely to arrive late or leave early when they cite distance to school as a reason for their absence *(see Table 3 in Annex 7)*. Transportation could support teachers to overcome barriers with distance; however, transport-related challenges such as traffic, congestion and road quality also influence teachers' attendance and punctuality. Teachers serving in urban areas are more likely than teachers in rural areas to cite late arrival because of transport-related difficulties, which may be attributed to the fact that rural teachers are more likely to walk to school *(see Figure 15)*. Salary delays also influence teachers' financial means to cover transportation costs; teachers living farther away are more likely to be absent than those living closer to the school when their salaries are delayed.

Figure 15. Means of transport used by teachers
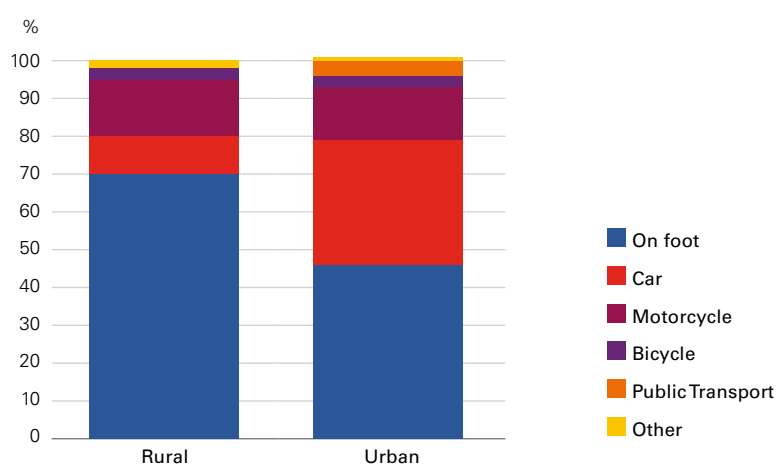
The amount of time teachers spend traveling to school is another factor affecting their attendance. Urban teachers are more likely to spend more than 30 minutes daily getting to work and on average, teachers traveling by car and public transport spend 9 to 10 minutes longer than average traveling time. For both urban and rural teachers, the time to travel to school is higher in the rainy season due to the reduction of available public transportation and the poor quality of roads.

In fact, adverse weather, including heavy rains and excessive heat, is a common factor leading to frequent school and classroom absences, late arrival or early departure, and reduced time on task *(see Annex 6)*. Teachers in rural areas are more likely to mention weather as a reason for absenteeism due to inadequate infrastructure in the community and at the school. Classrooms around the region commonly suffer from poor ventilation, lack of lighting, and

> "When it rains, the wind blows everything and what is written on the board is erased with the water. In addition, when it is dark, we do not see anything"
>
> – Head teacher, rural public school, Ogooue Maritime, Gabon.

weak and/or non-soundproofed roofs, making it difficult to protect teachers and their students from heavy winds, rain, and high temperatures. Teachers also explained that storms create noise too loud to speak over and their classroom is too dark to see. As climate change may affect these challenging weather conditions, effective and preventive policy actions should be taken to lessen its impact to disrupt the learning process in the short term and compromise children's wellbeing in the long term.

3. Promising practices and policy recommendations

Results from what teachers reported in the Time to Teach study indicate that low teacher attendance is a complex, multi-faceted issue, driven by multiple systemic and non-systemic factors. Isolated interventions will likely not produce large enough benefits that reach all teachers and subsequently, students. To drive system-wide improvements in teacher performance, accountability and student learning, and to make them sustainable over the long term, what is needed is **systemic reform**. This requires political commitment to help systems motivate the education workforce and escape low learning traps.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that governments cannot do everything at once, and reforms need to be sequenced and prioritized. While each country is different, more rigorous evaluations are needed to generate robust evidence on the impact and cost effectiveness of individual interventions in each national context. This section is organized by the main challenges faced by teachers in the West and Central African region,[28] and the corresponding **policy recommendations**. Insights from the field on **promising practices** – i.e., interventions by governments and development partners that may have the potential to bring about positive change and sustainably improve teacher attendance and time on task – are also discussed.

3.1 Monitoring

In most countries, a framework exists for reporting, monitoring and sanctioning teacher absenteeism, especially absence from school, but its implementation is often problematic due to lack of capacity and resources. To encourage consistent enforcement of teacher monitoring and management mechanisms, it is important to:

- **Strengthen head teachers' supervision and management skills through improved leadership training.** This recommendation is twofold: (1) provide soft skill strategies on how to lead by example to cultivate teachers' motivation and accountability to be in attendance; (2) outline specific attendance monitoring protocols such as appropriate and objective indicators, recording measures and response actions. Head teacher training initiatives with promising results have been implemented in The Gambia and Ghana *(see Box 8)*.

- **Clearly define criteria for teachers' promotion and evaluate progression in the career ladder.** For teachers who aim to become school leaders, a clear set of requirements creates transparency in moving from teaching to leadership positions. Togo, for example, has established clear requirements for school principalship: candidates are not only required to have the academic qualifications to be good teachers but also the skills to be good managers, leaders, and positive role models. Similarly, Ghana implemented a new teacher deployment policy in 2012 that replaced "promotion based on years of experience" with "evidence-based promotion" and created a set of competencies for each level of the career ladder, establishing specific skills that a candidate should demonstrate (ILO, 2016).

> ## Box 8. School leadership training in The Gambia and Ghana
>
> Head teachers in The Gambia emphasized the importance of participating in training organized by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education. Other studies have captured the impact of The Gambia's 'Whole School Development' programme, which aimed to build effective school leadership capacity. Management manuals were distributed to school leaders and training workshops were implemented in 273 schools across different regions, focusing on six aspects of school functioning: school leadership and management, curriculum management, community participation, teacher professional development, school environment and TLMs. Schools that received the school-based management training evidenced a 23 per cent reduction in teacher absenteeism (Blimpo et al., 2015).

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28 Reforms that need to be prioritized are those orbiting around factors that seem to have the largest impact on teacher attendance as shown in Table 3 in Annex 7.

In Ghana, the 'Strengthening Teacher Accountability to Reach All Students' (STARS) initiative provided management training for head teachers and circuit supervisors (mid-level management personnel responsible for a group of schools in a specific district). Trainees also received a manual on how to perform mentoring support activities with teaching staff, as well as SMS text messages with tips to be a better mentor and perform effective classroom visits. In schools where the training was implemented, teachers reported being visited more frequently in their classroom by both head teachers and circuit supervisors. Furthermore, teachers mentioned that head teachers were more likely to give them feedback after a classroom observation. Although school attendance among teachers was not significantly affected, teachers were more likely to be present in the classroom (Beg et al., 2020).

- **Increase the frequency and consistency of school visits, especially in rural and remote areas.** If possible, allocate a budget to hire field officers and provide sufficient transportation based on the number of schools to service, the distance, the availability of public transportation, climatic conditions and other contextual factors. This was achieved in Côte d'Ivoire, where school inspector visits became more frequent after the purchase of vehicles for schools in rural provinces. Similarly, Ghana's MOE distributed 365 automobiles and 493 motorbikes in 2020 to local education officers facing transportation challenges (Ferdinand, 2020; Prince, 2020). These vehicles may improve monitoring but additional funding towards maintenance and fuel costs is also necessary for interventions to be effective. When allocating or reallocating funding is not possible, utilizing alternative forms of accountability such as peer-to-peer monitoring may also be useful.

- **Utilize parental and community engagement to increase teachers' attendance in schools and provide clear guidance on how this can be achieved in consultations with teachers.** Studies show that when the school management and teachers agree to involve parents in the monitoring process, training workshops on how to monitor can improve teacher attendance (Duflo et al., 2015). Institutionalizing this role through associations or committees holds potential. For example, the Nigeria Time to Teach study showed school-based management committees (SBMC) had been effective in supporting teacher attendance after receiving training from the MOE; as a result, teacher punctuality has been enhanced. On the other hand, caution should be taken as there could be unintended consequences. For example, in Niger teacher attendance decreased after a community engagement/school management programme was introduced. Studies indicate that teachers believed it undermined their authority as decision-makers in education matters (Beasley and Huillery, 2017). Therefore, the roles and responsibilities of parents and community members must be clear and accepted by teachers.

- **Ensure that the roles and mandates of actors at different levels of authority are clearly defined to improve system coherence**. Adequate capacity development training can improve how school inspectors and supervisors carry out their duties to monitor and sanction teachers' absences. Consider supplementing training with guidelines so that there is a common reference of the core roles and responsibilities for all levels of authority engaged in teacher monitoring. The evidence from this study can raise awareness about the importance of teacher attendance to increase accountability and decrease the influence of personal relationships as a barrier to applying sanctions.

3.2 Training

Although access to training opportunities in the region is improving, most primary school teachers – especially in rural and public schools – have not received sufficient training. Pre-service and in-service professional development plays a vital role in improving classroom attendance and increasing time on task. To ensure that teachers have subject-matter and pedagogical knowledge, it is necessary to:

- **Strengthen pre-service teachers' training in both theory and practice.** While initial training programmes aim to prepare new recruits to the field of teaching, they should also consider that some teachers are recruited without training or are volunteers, especially in remote areas with staff shortages. Some countries in the region have tailored programmes to support these teachers *(see Box 9)*, which can influence the amount of time they spend on task. When in-person training is difficult, digital alternatives could be offered. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Gambian Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (2017) developed a distance education programme for pre-service teaching candidates in regions with a lower supply of teacher training institutions.

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Box 9. Remedial training increases capacity of teachers already in the field in Togo and Ghana

Lack of training for supporting teachers was a predominant problem in the Togolese education system. Implementing the Initial Remedial Training (IRT) programme for preschool and primary school teachers, who were recruited without initial professional training, improved the skills of cohorts over two school years (2007/2008 and 2010/2011). According to a UNESCO study, the programme resulted in a 59.9 per cent reduction in the shortfall in trained public-school teachers by the start of the 2012/2013 school year (UNESCO, 2014). In 2014, Togo was one of the countries where many teachers had at least a secondary education (PASEC, 2016). The Time to Teach survey data also confirm that in Togo, teachers who participated in the study had at least a secondary diploma (58 percent had a secondary diploma, and 27 percent had a university degree).

Similarly, Ghana implemented the 'Untrained Teachers' Diploma on Basic Education' (UTDBE) programme to train teachers already working in the field but who had not received pre-service training. Teachers who are part of this distance education programme achieved similar scores in lesson planning, teaching methodology, and classroom management and organization as those who took the national pre-service programme (Casely-Hayford et al., 2016; Namit, 2017).

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- **Provide continuous in-service training opportunities on pedagogy, effective teaching techniques, classroom management and lesson planning.** Depending on the specific needs, training should aim to support teachers in staying on task; this study revealed that could range from supporting multi-grade, multi-subject and multi-lingual classrooms, as well as offering suggestions on addressing student behaviour. Governments can use international organizations, NGOs, and non-profit organizations for support in these efforts. Other approaches, such as Zambia's peer-to-peer collaborative learning, give space for teachers to share their knowledge and experiences and find solutions to common pedagogical problems (Jung et al., 2016).

- **Organize in-service training in an efficient way.** If training sessions are scheduled during teaching hours, consider classroom-based in-service initiatives, where the teachers get support from supervisors or their colleagues during lessons. School-based training that pulls teachers from classrooms is another option, but substitute teachers are needed to cover teachers in training, which is not always possible where there are teacher shortages. Ministries can also take advantage of the attention given to distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic to promote remote training initiatives. For example, in addition to the government-run 'Mobile Learning Côte d'Ivoire' (2015–2017), the MOE also partnered with UNESCO for the CFIT virtual learning project for teachers (2012–2018) (Global Partnership for Education, n.d.). It is important to note that although these programmes were implemented prior to the onset of COVID-19, these types of initiatives hold a lot of potential post-pandemic: they can be cost-effective, self-paced, do not interrupt teaching hours, and can reach more teachers. These kinds of training could

help teachers gain new technology-based pedagogical skills or specialized training to support students during school closures *(see Box 10).*

> ## Box 10. Teacher training during COVID-19 to support distance learning
>
> Throughout WCA, governments implemented a series of teacher training measures specifically to support them in the implementation of distance education initiatives and to mitigate potential learning losses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples include:
>
> ■ In Ghana and Liberia, governments provided professional development activities to teachers (online workshops and webinars) on the effective use of technology-based pedagogy (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, OECD, 2021).
>
> ■ In Liberia and Nigeria, teachers received assistance to assess students using technology (UNICEF, 2020f; UNICEF, 2020h).
>
> ■ In Niger, teachers were trained in strategies to include COVID-19-related topics in their lesson plans (UNICEF, 2020g).
>
> ■ In Mauritania, the MOE developed an online platform with TLMs for distance education (UNICEF, 2021a).

3.3   Remuneration and strikes

Time to Teach findings reveal that the timing and modality of teachers' payment affects school attendance and punctuality; in some cases, it also causes strikes. Thus, it is important to:

■ **Provide teachers with a living wage, ensure timely salary payments, and remove hassles in receiving pay.** Salaries need to be consistently indexed to the cost of living and comparable to those of professionals working in similar sectors to reduce pressure on teachers to seek supplementary work. In some countries, community schools have taken matters into their own hands to ensure teachers are paid adequately *(see Box 11).* Other salary-related challenges, such as delays in pay, pay slip errors, lack of bank access, and inability to access banks during non-teaching hours could potentially be addressed by providing payments directly at school, as in The Gambia, or through mobile payments, as in Liberia (USAID, 2016). Mobile banking has also been implemented for teachers in Rwanda, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). However, these countries have all faced similar obstacles such as insufficient mobile network infrastructure, reluctance to stop using cash and low shares of teachers with a bank account, which should be considered when implementing initiatives of this kind (Trucano, 2014).

> ## Box 11. Self-managed schools in Guinea Bissau help to prevent teacher strikes
>
> In Guinea Bissau, some public schools have transitioned to self-managed schools where local communities have raised money (e.g., through fees, contributions, etc.) to supplement teachers' salaries and provide financial incentives (Marshall et al., 2018). These contributions strengthen the community's involvement in monitoring teachers' attendance, and teachers in self-managed schools are less likely to report all forms of absenteeism. Community engagement also contributes to preventing teacher strikes:
>
> "Since the school went into self-management, in addition to receiving their salary, the community has established links with teachers and is increasingly involved in school-related matters" – Community representative, self-managed school, Cacheu region, Guinea Bissau.

> Although this approach to school management has led to positive outcomes, there may be downsides as self-managed schools may increase the risk of perpetuating socio-economic inequality because low-income communities may not be able to pay the same school contributions as wealthier communities.

3.4   Recruitment, allocation and workload

Teachers reported excessive workloads as a main reason for classroom absence and reduced time on task. The issue is especially prevalent in rural areas, where teachers experience higher pupil–teacher ratios and heavier workloads due to ineffective teacher recruitment and inequitable teacher allocation.

- **Use data-driven allocation systems to inform planning and decision-making in education.** In Togo and The Gambia, the Education Management Information System (EMIS) data are used to improve allocation of human and financial resource management processes (Gomez and Bah, 2020; Global Partnership for Education, 2019). Systems such as these can assist in the deployment of teachers based on need *(see Box 12)* or linguistic familiarity to minimize language barriers between school and home, which reduces time on task. It can also lessen the administrative workload of teachers as it improves student–teacher ratios. In Guinea Bissau, reducing teachers' administrative workload was mentioned as a good school leadership practice that kept teachers in the classroom.

> ## Box 12. Ghana's National Youth Employment Program (NYEP) reduces pupil–teacher ratios
>
> To improve teacher workloads, Ghana's NYEP deployed untrained teachers and teaching assistants to support understaffed schools and reduce pupil–teacher ratios. A recent study (Duflo et al., 2021) demonstrates that the initiative showed positive short-term impacts on student learning outcomes, but a year after the intervention ended, no statistically significant effects were found. This may imply that the assistance may support teachers' workload, but if the personnel are not trained, there will not be a measurable impact on education quality (Darvas and Balwanz, 2013).

- **Develop incentive strategies to attract candidates to the field of teaching, retain qualified teachers, and make postings in remote areas more attractive.** This can include offering a scholarship to selected candidates and providing monetary and non-monetary incentives for teachers deployed to rural or disadvantaged areas *(see Box 13)*. Around the region, other examples are noted: Guinea and Guinea Bissau (ILO, 2016) document that monetary bonuses are given to teachers in remote or isolated areas, while Malawi, Lesotho, and Mozambique worked in collaboration with NGOs to provide housing for teachers serving in rural areas (ILO, 2016). Gabon takes another approach where the State provides incentive measures to improve living conditions for all civil servants working in rural areas. To increase the number of teachers in rural areas, Nigeria's 'Female Teachers' Trainee Scholarship Scheme' aims to increase gender balance in the profession and boost girls' education by creating role models. While incentivizing teachers to improve allocation can seem promising, studies (e.g., Humphreys et al., 2021; Pugatch and Schroeder, 2018) imply that pairing monetary incentives with practical professional development opportunities is important to influence student outcomes.

> ## Box 13. Hardship allowance in The Gambia increases qualified teachers to remote areas
>
> The Gambia introduced a policy to attract qualified primary teachers to schools in remote areas by offering a hardship allowance. Teachers serving in these schools receive an additional 30 to 40 per cent of their salary depending on the distance to work. The hardship allowance increased the percentage of qualified teachers in remote areas by 10 per cent on average and had a positive effect on pupil to qualified teacher ratio (Pugatch and Schroeder, 2013). In a 2007 survey, 65 per cent of pre-training teachers from The Gambia College reported that they would accept the offer if posted at a hardship school (Mulkeen, 2016).
>
> "In recent years, there have been some improvements. The payment of the allowance plus the establishment of staff quarters to improve teacher accommodation, are actually helping to improve teacher punctuality as well as attendance" – Sub-national representative, The Gambia.

3.5   Teaching and learning materials (TLMs)

Lack of TLMs and conducive teaching environments are among the key factors that influence teachers' time on task and motivation, especially for those who serve in rural and public schools. As such, it is potentially useful to:

- **Provide adequate TLMs, such as student textbooks accompanied by guidance materials for teachers.** For instance, the Primary Math and Reading Initiative (PRIMR) in Kenya included teachers' professional development and the distribution of student textbooks for Kiswahili, English, and Math and partially scripted lesson plans for teachers that matched the student textbooks (Piper et al., 2018). Although this study did not address teacher absenteeism directly, it showed that schools that received the full intervention scored the highest learning outcomes, which demonstrates the need to supplement professional development with provision of sufficient TLMs and implies that these efforts can support teachers' time on task. Similarly, the distribution of fourth- and fifth-grade student textbooks in Sierra Leone resulted in increased instructional time and the likelihood of teachers having lesson plans (Sabarwal et al., 2014).

- **Develop an online platform to provide teaching and learning resources, which can be critical during school closures.** As part of its response to COVID-19, the MoE of Mauritania developed an online platform that provides teaching and learning materials to promote distance education (UNICEF, 2021a). Online resources, along with distance learning pedagogy training was provided to teachers so they could properly utilize the available resources. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 'Secondary School Improvement Project' (SEIP) of Ghana, developed an online repository of resources for core subjects (though these materials mainly focus on learning resources rather than teaching).

3.6   Health and safety of teachers and their families

National ministries, development partners, non-governmental organizations, communities, school staff and parents must work together to address factors outside of the education system affecting teachers' attendance. Thus, it is important to:

■ **Collaborate across sectors to ensure teachers' health and safety.** Teachers need to have access to health care facilities in local communities and assessments of their exposure to adverse school-based sanitary conditions. COVID-19 has increased workloads and created new caregiver responsibilities (including the responsibility of other family members' health) at home, so it is also a critical time to pay attention to teachers' mental health. The pandemic also revealed an opportunity for MOEs and Ministries of Health (MoHs) to work closer together to ensure teachers' physical health, safety, and mental wellbeing *(see Box 14).*

■ **Ensure schools are safe places for teachers and students, especially in countries affected by conflict.** In Niger, Time to Teach participants mentioned the option of opening a hotline that allowed teachers and parents to report threats or attacks on schools. When it is not possible to attend school, radio education programmes can reach many students. In Niger and Cameroon these programmes have supported the continuing of education of 200,000 children in areas affected by the conflict with the Boko Haram armed group (UNICEF, 2017).

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Box 14. Ministries of Health and Education across the region work together for a safe return to school after COVID-19

■ **Distribution of hygiene kits and installation of handwashing facilities in schools:** In Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Niger and Togo, COVID-19 kits were provided to schools and included certified masks for teachers, soap, hydro-alcoholic gel, infrared thermometers, and cleaning equipment. Handwashing devices were also installed in most schools before re-opening (UNICEF, 2020c, d, g and i).

■ **Training in infection prevention and control and Safe Schools protocols:** In Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, teachers participated in workshops to prepare for the re-opening of schools (UNICEF 2020d, e). Manuals were also distributed to guide them in the prevention of virus transmission. In Côte d'Ivoire, a 'train the trainers' workshop on COVID-19 safe schools protocols was organized by the MOE; participating trainers then cascaded the information to teachers in target schools (UNICEF, 2020a).

■ **Mental health and psychosocial support:**

   • The guidance and counselling service of the Ghana Education Service (GES) has developed key messages on mental health and psychosocial support targeting teachers, students, parents, and education administrators to ensure safe learning environments when re-opening schools (UNICEF, 2020b).

   • The governments of The Gambia and Niger have also reported providing psychosocial and emotional support to teachers during the pandemic (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, OECD, 2021; UNICEF, 2020g).

   • In Guinea, Mauritania and Niger, teachers received special training on how to provide psychosocial support to students during health crisis conditions (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, OECD, 2021).

Although these initiatives started in the context of COVID-19, they can be continued to assist teachers working in challenging learning environments or remote schools in post-pandemic times.

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3.7   Weather, transport, and infrastructure

Cross-sectoral collaboration is also needed to address attendance challenges exacerbated by poor weather conditions. Weather can affect both absenteeism and time on task, therefore policymakers should consider the following:

- **Adapt school calendars to more localized climatic conditions and ensure school infrastructure is of good quality, especially in rural areas** to reduce weather-related absenteeism and reduction of time on task. In various regions across The Gambia where flooding is a major natural hazard, the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) has trained teachers on preventive measures to mitigate the impact of flooding on instructional time and students' safety (Sillah, 2021).

- **Provide secure housing options for teachers near schools, or reliable transportation assistance or subsidies.** Having a residence close to work can be especially critical for those with long commutes who serve in remote areas or live in areas of conflict *(see Box 15)*. If providing housing is not financially feasible, the recruitment and training of local teachers can provide a community-based staff that may not need to be relocated. Some countries focus on providing bicycles to reduce commutes. For example, in partnership with local NGOs, the governments of Ghana and Nigeria distribute bikes to students and teachers in rural schools, reducing travel time and increasing school attendance and punctuality (Pedals for Progress, 2019). Additionally, other small-scale programmes in Kenya and Rwanda suggest the provision of bicycles can make school commutes safer (Wheels 4 Life, 2019; World Bicycle Relief, 2019).

Box 15. Housing provisions reduce teachers' absenteeism in Guinea and Liberia

Long commutes to school are one of the main causes for teacher absenteeism – especially in adverse weather conditions – affecting overall motivation. Housing for teachers near schools can decrease commute times and increase school attendance and punctuality. Teachers' attendance can also be influenced if their supervisors live near schools. In Guinea, rural schools have housing for head teachers. The Time to Teach survey found that teachers from these schools perceived the continuous presence of the head teacher at school and were therefore absent less.

A teacher from Liberia (Grand Bassa) explained:

"All of our schools' head teachers live very close to the schools. They live in a camp and it's just minutes' walk so we don't experience lateness. Unlike other areas, people have to commute by foot to school and the school is not close to the place. For instance, if it rains the whole night and in the morning there's a little creek between you and the school and it gets flooded, you may not even go because you won't be able to cross there."

Annexes

Annex 1. Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey findings, by country

Figure 16. Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey findings, by country
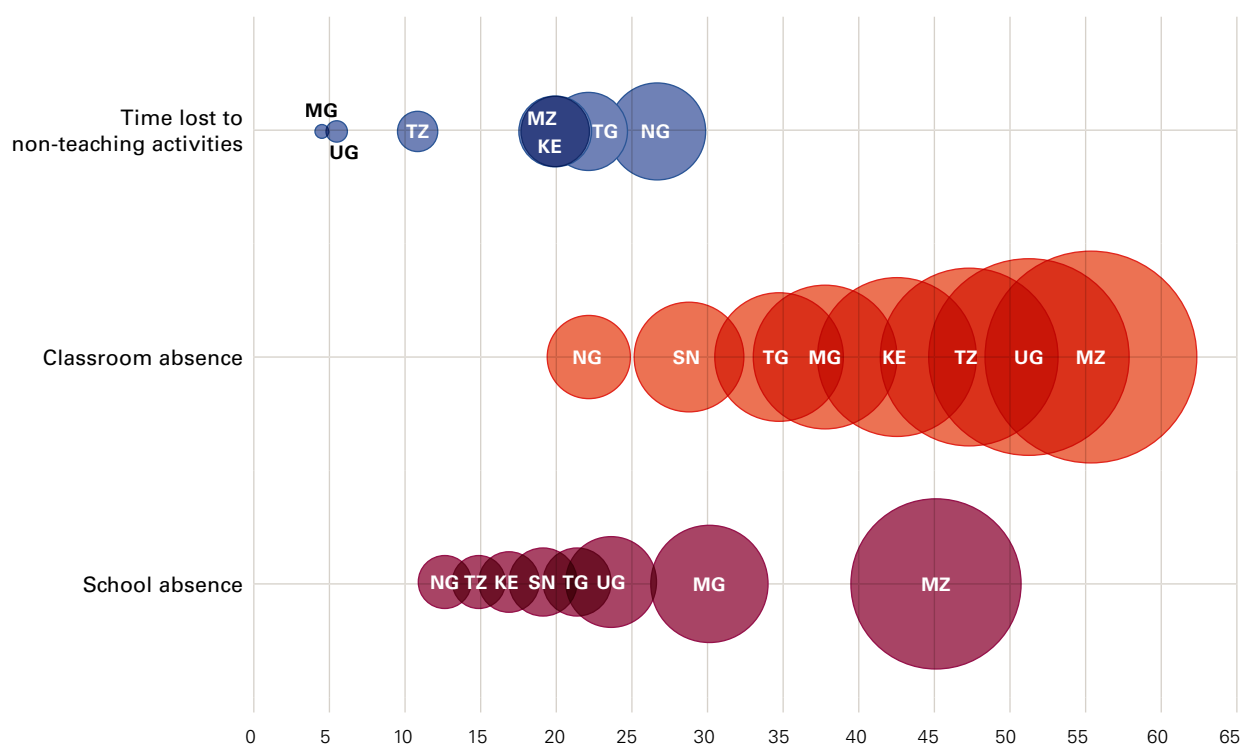
Country	Code
Nigeria	NG
Tanzania	TZ
Kenya	KE
Senegal	SN
Togo	TG
Uganda	UG
Madagascar	MG
Mozambique	**MZ**

■ Time lost to non-teaching activities
■ Classroom absence
■ School absence

Source: World Bank, Data Catalog, 'Service Delivery Indicators', accessed September 2021.

Note: Each data point represents school and classroom absence rates and the share of time lost to non-teaching activities for all teachers in each participating country during data collection: Kenya – 2012 (KE); Madagascar – 2016 (MG); Nigeria – 2013 (NG); Senegal – 2010 (SN); Tanzania – 2014 (TZ); Togo – 2013 (TG); Uganda – 2013 (UG).

Annex 2. The cost of teacher absenteeism

Teacher absenteeism undermines the investments made to improve student learning. Estimates from the Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey suggest that – after accounting for school, classroom, and lost instruction time – teachers in participating countries were, on average, teaching for just under 3 hours out of a contracted 5.5 hours per day, i.e. 46 per cent of the time (Filmer, 2015).

Table 2 gives an estimate of the costs of lost teaching time in reference to the annual education budgets of five African countries. Consider Togo, a country with a GDP of approximately US$3 billion per year, which allocates 4.4 per cent of its annual GDP, or US$132 million per year, to education. An estimated 46 per cent of loss of teaching time is equivalent to US$61.2 million, or 2 per cent of national GDP.

While these estimates do not take into account the benefits that children may gain from having access to school resources outside of scheduled teaching time, nor account the cost factors associated with economies of scale, they point to the importance of supporting teachers better for improving teacher attendance.

Table 2. The cost of teacher absenteeism in selected African countries, circa 2013

Country	GDP in billions (USD PPP)	Education budget as a proportion of GDP	Education budget in millions (USD PPP)	Estimated loss in millions (USD PPP)	Estimated loss as a proportion of GDP
Mozambique	12.0	6.6	792.0	367.2	3.1
Senegal	11.7	5.6	655.2	303.8	2.6
Tanzania	29.0	3.5	1,015.0	470.6	1.6
Togo	3.0	4.4	132.0	61.2	2.0
Uganda	16.4	2.2	360.8	167.3	1.0

Source: Filmer, D., and World Development Indicators, World Bank, Washington, D.C. , 2015 (reported GDP figures from the WDI dataset have been rounded).

Annex 3. Exploratory framework

The Time to Teach study has adopted a comprehensive exploratory framework, following the work of Guerrero et al. (2013), according to which three sets of factors (both within and outside the education system) affect teacher attendance: (1) teacher-level factors; (2) school-level factors; and (3) community-level factors. Expanding this framework, the Time to Teach study also looks at national and sub-national level factors affecting different types of teacher absenteeism, as illustrated below.

National level
- National teacher management policies
- Policy implementation and teacher monitoring capacity

Subnational level
- Policy implementation and teacher monitoring capacity

Community level
- Rurality/remoteness
- Socio-economic development
- Community infrastructure
- Climatic conditions
- Conflict/insecurity
- School-community partnership
- Parental engagement and monitoring capacity

School level
- School infrastructure
- Availability of teaching and learning materials
- School management
- Head teacher's leadership style and monitoring capacity
- Work environment and norms
- Pupil behaviour/absenteeism

Teacher level
- Age, gender, level of education and training, years of experience, employment status
- Intrinsic motivation, work ethic and professionalism, health, family/personal issues, social/community obligations, alternative employment

Teacher absenteeism
- School absence
- Late arrival /early departure
- Classroom absence
- Reduced time on task

Source: Adaptation of the work of Guerrero, G., et al., 'Getting Teachers Back to the Classroom: A systematic review on what works to improve teacher attendance in developing countries', Journal of Development Effectiveness, vol. 5, no. 4, 2013, pp. 466-488.

Annex 4. Time to Teach Teacher Survey

SECTION I. Personal characteristics and information

Please use the dotted area to provide your responses. Where alternative responses are offered please *tick only ONE box, UNLESS otherwise specified*.

1. Name: ....

2. Sex: ☐ Female ☐ Male

3. Age:..

4. Marital status: ☐ Married ☐ Single

5. Number of children: ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5+

6. Work experience:

   ☐ <1 year ☐ 1-5 years ☐ 6-15 years ☐ 16-25 years ☐ 26+ years

7. Highest level of education completed:

   ☐ None ☐ Primary ☐ Middle ☐ Secondary

   ☐ Vocational ☐ Tertiary ☐ Graduate

8. Highest teaching / training qualification obtained: ....

9. Which grade(s) / subject(s) do you teach? ....

10. How many years have you been teaching at this school? ....

11. On average, how many pupils are there in your class(es)? ....

12. Do you teach at this school only? ....

    If not, where else do you teach? ....

    Please specify school name and location ....

13. Are you studying or in training right now?

    ☐ No ☐ Yes *(please specify)* ....

14. How long does it take you to get to work every day? *Please provide an answer by type of season and specify means of transport.*

    Dry season: Time *(in hours and minutes)* ....

    Transport *(e.g., car, on foot, other)* ....

    Rainy season: Time *(in hours and minutes)* ....

    Transport *(e.g., car, on foot, other)* ....

15. How many people live in your home? ....

16. Are you the only earner in your household? ....

17. What is your monthly salary as a teacher? ....

    As a teacher, do you receive **cash** benefits *(on top of your monthly salary)* for:

    Please tick up as many boxes as required

    ☐ Transportation

    ☐ Housing

    ☐ Other, please specify ....

18. As a teacher, do you receive any **non-cash** benefits for:

    ☐ Food

    ☐ Accommodation

    ☐ Cattle

    ☐ Other, please specify ....

19. Are your total earnings **as a teacher** enough to cover your monthly household expenditures?

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

20. Do you earn money from activities **other than teaching**?

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

    If yes, please specify what these activities are and how much you earn from them every month

    Activities: ....

    Monthly earnings: ....

21. What are the main reasons that may sometimes **keep you away from school**?

    Please tick up to three boxes:

    ☐ Transportation   ☐ Social/Community obligations   ☐ Not enough pupils present

    ☐ Weather   ☐ Strikes or other forms of protest ☐ Family reasons

    ☐ Lack of pay   ☐ Receiving your pay   ☐ Lack of security

    ☐ Health problems

    ☐ Distance to school

    ☐ Official school business (e.g. training, seminar)

    ☐ Other income-generating activity

    ☐ Other reason(s), please specify ....

    ☐ I'm never away from school (in this case, go straight to Q. 25)

22. Since the start of the school year how often have you missed school (on average)?

☐ A few times (less than three)

☐ Less than once a week

☐ Once a week

☐ More than once a week

23. How many days were you absent from school?

In the past week (Do not count official holidays) ....

In the past month (Do not count official holidays) ....

24. What are the main reasons that may sometimes **cause you to arrive at school late or leave school early?**

    *Please **tick up to three boxes**:*

☐ Transportation   ☐ Social/Community obligations   ☐ Not enough pupils present

☐ Weather   ☐ Strikes or other forms of protest   ☐ Family reasons

☐ Lack of pay   ☐ Receiving your pay   ☐ Lack of security

☐ Health problems

☐ Distance to school

☐ Official school business (e.g. training, seminar)

☐ Other income-generating activity

☐ Other reason(s), please specify ....

☐ I never arrive late/leave early (in this case go straight to Q. 28)

25. Since the start of the school year, how often have you arrived at school late or had to leave early?

☐ A few times (less than three)

☐ Less than once a week

☐ Once a week

☐ More than once a week

26. How many times did you arrive at school late or left school early?

☐ In the past week...

☐ In the past month...

27. What are the main reasons that may sometimes **keep you outside of the classroom, even though you are physically present at school?**

    *Please **tick up to three boxes:***

☐ Administrative reasons (e.g., office work, teachers' meeting)

☐ Official school business (e.g., planning, training, seminar)

☐ Too many class preparation tasks (e.g., planning lessons, correcting homework, etc.)

☐ Not enough pupils present

☐ Lack of teaching materials/aids required to teach a class

☐ Health problems (yours or the pupils')

☐ Weather

☐ Lack of security

☐ Strikes or other forms of protest

☐ Other reason(s), please specify ....

☐ This has never happened to me (in this case go straight to Q. 31)

28. Since the start of the school year, how often have you missed a scheduled class while at school (on average)?

☐ A few times (less than three)

☐ Less than once a week

☐ Once a week

☐ More than once a week

29. How many times did you miss a scheduled class, even though you were at school?

☐ In the past week ....

☐ In the past month ....

30. What are the main reasons that may sometimes **limit the time you spend on teaching, while in the classroom?**

*Please **tick up to three boxes:***

☐ The pupils are misbehaving

☐ Lack of teaching materials required to teach a class

☐ Too many class preparation tasks (planning lessons, correcting homework, etc.)

☐ Weather (too cold/hot)

☐ Health problems (yours or the pupils')

☐ I don't have the training required to deliver some lessons

☐ The pupils have trouble following the class

☐ Not enough pupils present

☐ I am distracted by family/personal problems

☐ Other reasons(s), please specify ....

☐ I always spend the time I've planned on teaching (in this case go straight to Q. 34)

31. Since the start of the school year, how often have you faced difficulties that prevented you from spending the time you have planned on teaching while in the classroom (on average)?

☐ A few times (less than three)

☐ Less than once a week

☐ Once a week

☐ More than once a week

32. How many times did you have to reduce your in-class teaching time?

☐ In the past week ....

☐ In the past month ....

33. When your pupils struggle to follow the class, what do you think are the main reasons?

    Please **tick up to three boxes:**

☐ The language of instruction is different from the one pupils speak at home

☐ The pupils are sick

☐ The pupils are hungry

☐ The pupils are not obedient

☐ The pupils or their parents do not take school seriously

☐ I lack the materials required to teach some subjects

☐ I need more training on class management or lesson organization

☐ I need more content knowledge to deliver some lessons well

☐ Other reason(s), please specify ....

34. Since the start of the school year, how often have you observed that many of your pupils had a hard time following the class (on average)?

☐ Never

☐ A few times (less than three)

☐ Less than once a week

☐ Once a week

☐ More than once a week

35. When in the classroom and teaching, how often did you observe that many of the pupils had trouble understanding the lesson?

☐ In the past week ....

☐ In the past month ....

SECTION II. Personal views and opinions

Please *CIRCLE* only *ONE* response to each statement. Higher numbers indicate a higher level of agreement with the statement.

(1= Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

1. I am satisfied with my job.

    1   2   3   4   5

2. Most of my colleagues in this school are satisfied with their jobs.

    1   2   3   4   5

3. I am happy with my salary as a teacher.

    1   2   3   4   5

4. I receive my salary on time.

    1   2   3   4   5

5. It is easy to receive my salary.

    1   2   3   4   5

6. I have access to training opportunities.

    1   2   3   4   5

7. I have the knowledge and skills needed to teach well.

    1   2   3   4   5

8. Most teachers at this school have the knowledge and skills needed to teach well.

    1   2   3   4   5

9. Most teachers at this school have the teaching materials they need to teach.

    1   2   3   4   5

10. The working environment in this school is good.

    1   2   3   4   5

11. Most teachers in this school work well with one another.

    1   2   3   4   5

12. Most teachers in this school are always present.

    1   2   3   4   5

13. I feel upset when I am absent from school or unable to teach.

    1   2   3   4   5

14. Most of my colleagues feel upset when absent from school or unable to teach.

    1   2   3   4   5

15. Most teachers in this school often come late and/or leave early.

    1   2   3   4   5

16. When in school, teachers always attend classes.

    1   2   3   4   5

17. The head teacher is always at school.

    1   2   3   4   5

18. I'm happy with the feedback I receive from the head teacher on my work.

    1   2   3   4   5

19. The head teacher encourages teacher training.

    1   2   3   4   5

20. The head teacher supports teachers' involvement in school's decision-making.

    1   2   3   4   5

21. The head teacher discourages teacher absences.

    1   2   3   4   5

22. The head teacher always records teacher absences.

    1   2   3   4   5

23. The head teacher manages the school and the teachers well.

    1   2   3   4   5

24. School inspectors and academic advisors visit this school regularly.

    1   2   3   4   5

25. School inspectors and academic advisors motivate and inspire school staff.

    1   2   3   4   5

26. School inspectors and academic advisors prioritize infrastructural issues over teaching methods and practices.

    1   2   3   4   5

27. School inspectors and academic advisors discourage teacher absenteeism.

    1   2   3   4   5

28. School inspectors and academic advisors frequently sanction teacher absenteeism.

    1   2   3   4   5

29. In this community teachers are respected and their work is recognized.

    1   2   3   4   5

30. Most parents appreciate the value of education and encourage pupils' attendance.

    1   2   3   4   5

31. Most parents are actively engaged in school matters.

    1   2   3   4   5

32. Most parents view teacher absences as a problem.

    1   2   3   4   5

33. Most pupils are well-motivated to study.

    1   2   3   4   5

Annex 5. Frequency of teacher absenteeism (self-reported), by form of absence

Figure 17. Frequency of teacher absenteeism in the 11 countries, by form of absenteeism
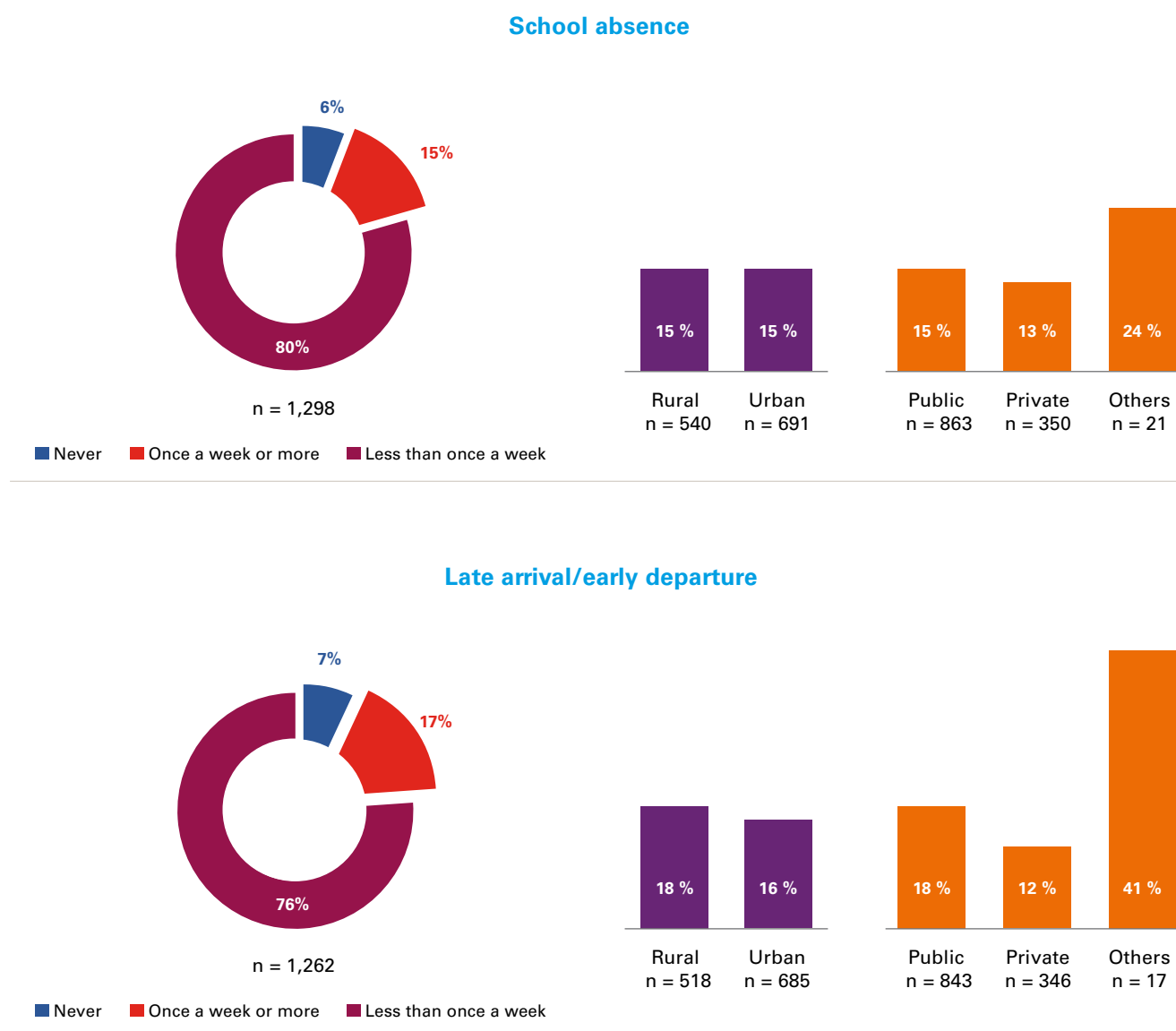
School absence

n = 1,298

■ Never   ■ Once a week or more   ■ Less than once a week

	Rural n = 540	Urban n = 691		Public n = 863	Private n = 350	Others n = 21
	15 %	15 %		15 %	13 %	24 %

Late arrival/early departure

n = 1,262

■ Never   ■ Once a week or more   ■ Less than once a week

	Rural n = 518	Urban n = 685		Public n = 843	Private n = 346	Others n = 17
	18 %	16 %		18 %	12 %	41 %

Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who report never being absent, being absent less than once a week, and being absent at least once a week since the beginning of the 2018/2019 school year. The pie charts represent the responses of all surveyed teachers in the region. On the right, the bar graphs represent the percentage of teachers who claim to be absent at least once a week by sub-groups: rural-urban and type of school (public, private and others [others include community and faith-based schools]).

Classroom absence
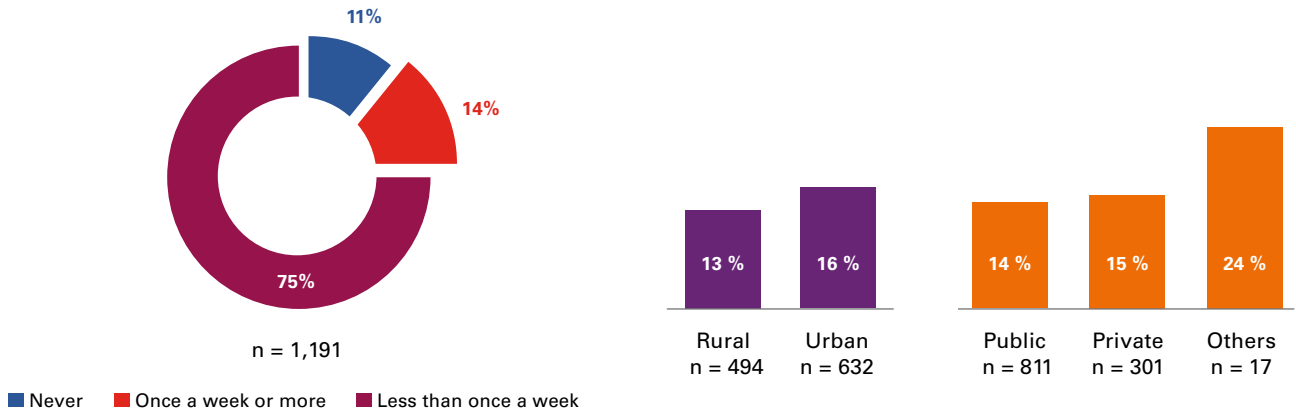
11%

14%

75%

n = 1,191

■ Never   ■ Once a week or more   ■ Less than once a week

Rural 13 %	Urban 16 %	Public 14 %	Private 15 %	Others 24 %
Rural n = 494	Urban n = 632	Public n = 811	Private n = 301	Others n = 17

Reduced time on task

11%

15%

74%

n = 1,170

■ Never   ■ Once a week or more   ■ Less than once a week

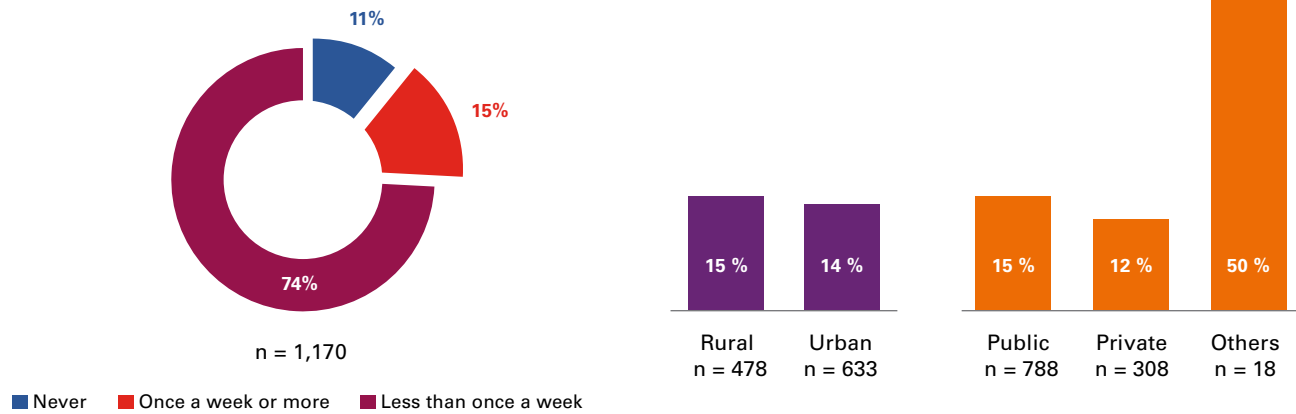|				
Rural 15 %	Urban 14 %	Public 15 %	Private 12 %	Others 50 %
Rural n = 478	Urban n = 633	Public n = 788	Private n = 308	Others n = 18

Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who report never being absent, being absent less than once a week, and being absent at least once a week since the beginning of the 2018/2019 school year. The pie charts represent the responses of all surveyed teachers in the region. On the right, the bar graphs represent the percentage of teachers who claim to be absent at least once a week by sub-groups: rural-urban and type of school (public, private and others [others include community and faith-based schools]).

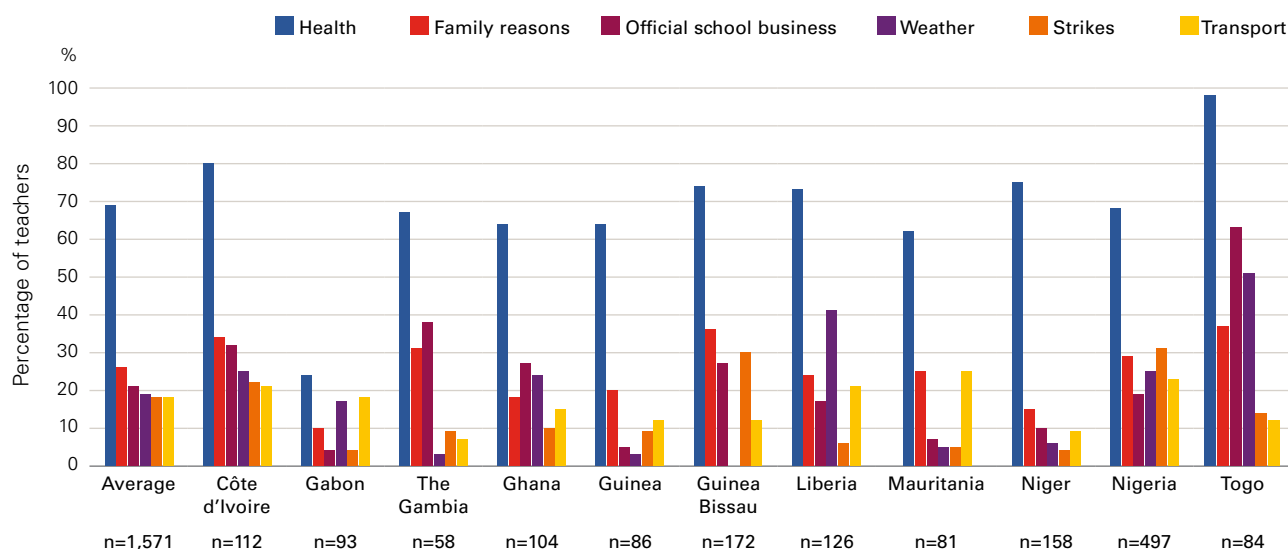# Annex 6. Reasons of teacher absences, by form of absence

Figure 18. Primary reasons for school absence, by country

Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who selected each of the statements as the main reason for absenteeism *(see the survey questionnaire in Annex 4).*

Figure 19. Primary reasons for late arrival and early departure, by country
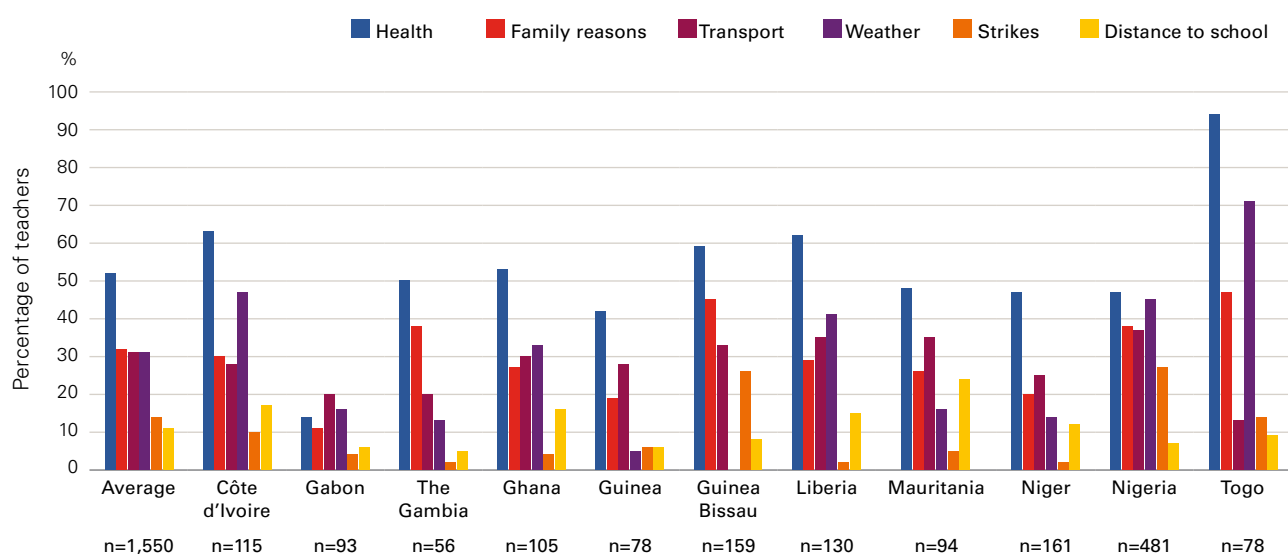
Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who selected each of the statements as the main reason for absenteeism *(see the survey questionnaire in Annex 4).*

Figure 20. Primary reasons for classroom absence (while at school), by country

Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who selected each of the statements as the main reason for absenteeism *(see the survey questionnaire in Annex 4).*

Figure 21. Primary reasons for reduced time on task (while in the classroom), by country

Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who selected each of the statements as the main reason for absenteeism *(see the survey questionnaire in Annex 4).*
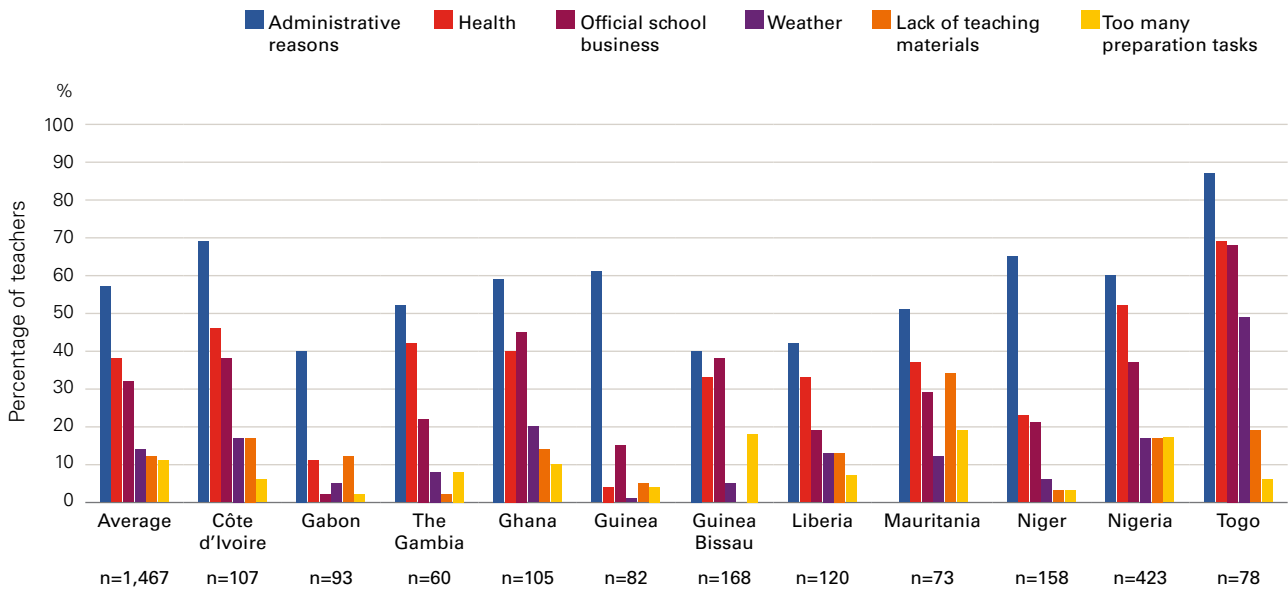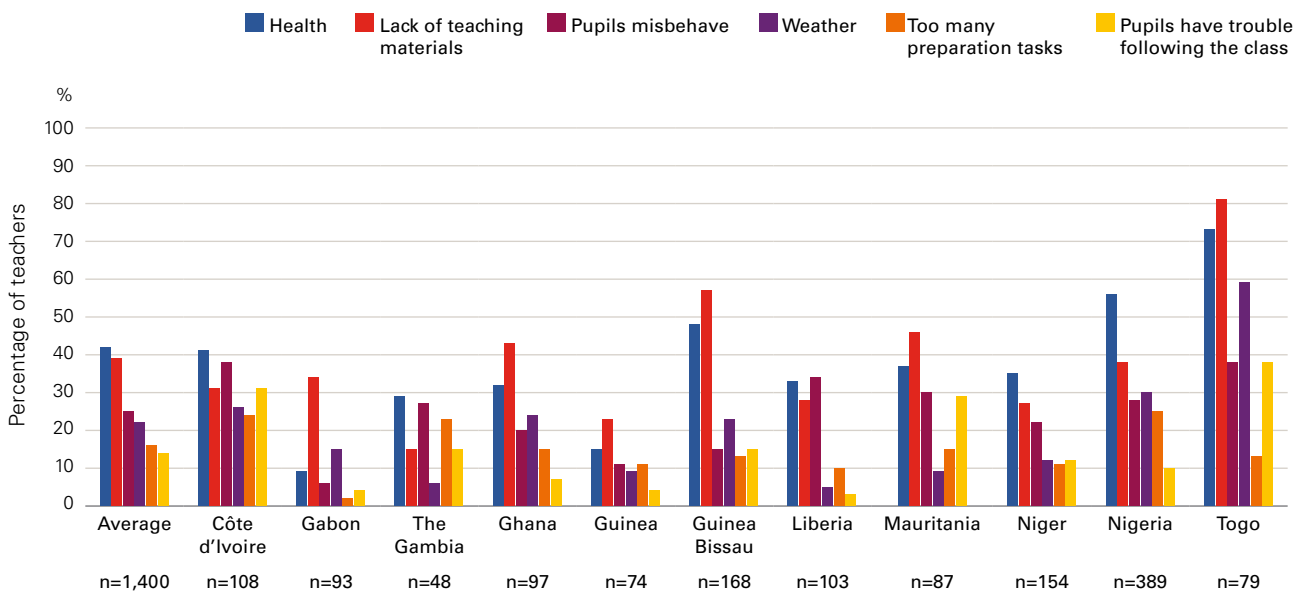
Annex 7. Factors associated with the different forms of teacher absenteeism

Table 3. Factors associated with the different forms of teacher

Area	Factor	Absence from school (TA1)	Late arrival/ early departure (TA2)	Absence from the classroom (TA3)	Reduced time on task (TA4)
		Odds ratio			
Monitoring	"School inspectors do not visit regularly"			1.91*	
	"Head teacher is not always at school"	2.11*			2.43**
	"Head teacher does not discourage teacher absences"				1.93**
	"Head teacher does not manage well the school and teachers"				1.82*
Parental and student engagement	Not enough pupils present	3.71**			
	"Most parents do not encourage pupils' attendance"		1.59*		
Training	"I have access to training"			1.69**	1.60*
	"I do not have adequate skills and knowledge"			2.61***	
Remuneration	"It is not easy to collect my salary"		2.06**		
	Lack of pay		2.59***		
	Other income-generating activities	4.56**			
Workload	Administrative reasons			2.27***	
	Too many preparation tasks				1.81**
Job satisfaction and work environment	"I am not satisfied with my job"		2.37****	1.84**	
	"School does not have a good work environment"	1.89**			
Non system factors	Health	2.22***	1.86***		
	Family reasons		1.71**		
	Transport	1.69*			
	Distance to school	3.10***	1.91**		
	Strikes			1.81*	
	Others		4.93*		3.17**

Note: To read this table, consider the example of 'health'. The odds ratio of 2.22 for the 'health' reason in reference to absence from school (TA1) means that, on average, a teacher who answered 'health' as a reason was 2.22 times more likely to have reported being frequently absent from school (more than a few times since the beginning of the school year) than a teacher who did not answer 'health', other things being equal. The reported coefficients are the result of a logistic regression model, controlling for type of school, urban or rural location and country of residence. The number of asterisks (*) gives a measure of the strength of the evidence of the associations between the determinant and the likeliness of reporting absenteeism (p-value): *$p<0.1$, **$p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$, ****$p<0.001$

Annex 8. Recurrent absenteeism and selected teacher characteristics

Table 4. Recurrent absenteeism and selected teacher characteristics

Teacher characteristics		Absence from school (TA1)	Late arrival/ early departure (TA2)	Absence from the classroom (TA3)	Reduced time on task (TA4)	Absenteeism (TA1-TA4)
School location	Urban	14%	16%	16%	14%	15%
	Rural	15%	18%	11%	15%	15%
	Diff	**0**	**-2**	**4****	**-1**	**0**
	p-value	**0.81**	**0.41**	**0.04**	**0.62**	**0.90**
School governance+	Public	15%	18%	13%	15%	15%
	Private	13%	12%	15%	12%	12%
	Diff private-public	**-1**	**-6****	**1**	**-2**	**-3***
	p-value	**0.56**	**0.02**	**0.54**	**0.31**	**0.07**
Gender	Female	14%	16%	14%	15%	15%
	Male	14%	17%	13%	16%	15%
	Diff	**0**	**-1**	**1**	**-1**	**0**
	p-value	**0.97**	**0.69**	**0.49**	**0.80**	**0.84**
Age	Above median	12%	14%	12%	14%	13%
	Below median	16%	20%	14%	17%	16%
	Diff	**-4****	**-6*****	**-2**	**-4***	**-3****
	p-value	**0.03**	**0.01**	**0.26**	**0.09**	**0.03**
Education level	Primary/secondary	13%	16%	13%	15%	14%
	Vocational	14%	20%	14%	17%	18%
	Diff vocational-secondary	**1**	**4**	**1**	**3**	**4**
	p-value	**0.76**	**0.29**	**0.70**	**0.50**	**0.15**
	University	12%	16%	12%	13%	13%
	Diff university-secondary	**-1**	**1**	**-1**	**-2**	**-1**
	p-value	**0.82**	**0.82**	**0.57**	**0.46**	**0.56**
Work experience	More than 6 years	12%	15%	11%	14%	13%
	Less than 6 years	17%	20%	17%	17%	17%
	Diff	**-5****	**-5****	**-6*****	**-3**	**-3****
	p-value	**0.02**	**0.02**	**0.00**	**0.18**	**0.02**

Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who report recurrent absences (i.e., once a week or more) based on selected characteristics. Differences express differences in percentage points. Stars indicate the *10 per cent, **5 per cent, and ***1 per cent confidence level, and p-values represent the probability that the difference between the two groups is zero. The reported p-values are from an OLS regression model estimated separately for each variable.

+Only comparisons between public and private schools are presented. As 'other' categories such as 'government-aided' and 'faith-based' are only available for Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

Annex 9. Selected teacher views and opinions, by locality and type of school

Table 5. Selected teacher views and opinions by locality and type of school

	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Diff	p-value	Public (%)	Private (%)	Diff private-public	p-value
Teacher monitoring								
Head teacher								
Head teacher is always at school	90	92	-2	0.19	91	92	1	0.63
Satisfied with head teacher's feedback	86	89	-3*	0.09	89	83	-6***	0.00
Head teacher supports teacher involvement	82	86	-4**	0.04	84	80	-5**	0.02
Head teacher discourages teacher absences	77	78	-1	0.51	76	80	4	0.14
Head teacher always records teacher absences	85	85	0	0.89	84	87	3	0.20
Head teacher manages well the school and teachers	87	88	-1	0.49	89	84	-5**	0.01
Sub-national officials								
School inspectors visit regularly	77	72	6***	0.01	76	74	-1	0.55
School inspectors motivate staff	68	67	1	0.73	70	64	-5**	0.04
School inspectors discourage absenteeism	72	74	-2	0.30	74	70	-4	0.10
School inspectors frequently sanction absenteeism	58	65	-7***	0.01	64	52	-12***	0.00
Parents and local communities								
In this community teachers are respected	65	70	-6**	0.02	64	75	11***	0.00
Most parents encourage pupils' attendance	68	62	6**	0.01	59	80	21***	0.00
Most parents are engaged in school affairs	57	54	3	0.23	49	73	24***	0.00
Most students are motivated to learn	78	79	-1	0.52	75	87	12***	0.00
Training and skills								
I have access to training	46	50	-4	0.14	45	55	11***	0.00
I have adequate skills and knowledge	87	87	0	0.89	85	92	7***	0.00

	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Diff	p-value	Public (%)	Private (%)	Diff private-public	p-value
Job satisfaction and work environment								
I am satisfied with my job	73	75	-3	0.26	76	69	-7***	0.01
School has a good work environment	74	62	12***	0.00	63	85	23***	0.00
Remuneration								
I am satisfied with my salary	23	27	-4	0.10	25	25	0	0.93
I receive my salary on time	57	48	9***	0.00	42	78	35***	0.00
It is easy to collect my salary	62	52	10***	0.00	47	81	34***	0.00
School resources and infrastructure								
School has the materials needed for class	44	38	6**	0.02	33	61	28***	0.00

Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of teachers who agree with each statement based within each subgroup. Differences express differences in percentage points. Stars indicate the *10 per cent, **5 per cent, and ***1 per cent confidence level, and p-values represent the probability that the difference between the two groups is zero. The reported p-values are from an OLS regression model estimated separately for each variable.

for every child, answers

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