

This information was compiled by Ton Dietz, Nel de Vink and Wilfried Admiraal.

Sources: UNICEF, UN

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Primary education was one of the key targets of the Millennium Development Goals between 2000 and 2015. The situation in 1990 was taken as a point of departure and the target (as MDG2A) was to: “Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling”, measured by net enrolment ratio in primary education, and the proportion of pupils that start in grade 1 and who reach the last grade of primary school. (<https://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm>). ‘Net enrolment’ is the “[n]umber of children attending primary or secondary school who are of primary school age, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children of primary school age. Because of the inclusion of primary-school-aged children attending secondary school, this indicator can also be referred to as a primary adjusted net attendance ratio. Calculation follows International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)” (data.unicef.org).

In 1990, ten African countries had failed to even reach 50% net enrolment for primary education for male pupils, and 21 countries had not reached this figure for female pupils. In 1990, only seven African countries had reached near universal primary education for both sexes. Around 2012 (UNESCO data do not yet include 2015 data), many more children went to school, both in absolute

and in relative terms. However, universal primary education was far from being achieved. Only 20 African countries had reached near universal coverage for both boys and girls. Seven African countries were lagging significantly behind and were below 50% coverage for girls, with the worst performance in Eritrea, South Sudan and Liberia (and no data anymore for countries like Somalia). Liberia (and a few others) even had a lower net enrolment rate than two decades earlier. One of the reasons for low net enrolment is the low ‘survival rates’ in some countries: the percentage of children who start primary education and who succeed in getting to the end of the primary education system. The worst performers are Uganda, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone and even Rwanda, with less than 40% of starters also finishing primary school. Moreover, these figures do not include an assessment of the quality of education: what did the ‘surviving children’ learn after six or seven years of primary education? Goal 4 of the new Sustainable Development Goals reads: “Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning”. This sounds even more challenging than the previous MDGs. In most of Africa, the quantitative goal (universal primary education) had not been reached in 2015.



The current attendance figures for secondary education are much lower than for primary education, and they show major differences between African countries. We turn again to the net enrolment rates, defined as the “[n]umber of children attending secondary or tertiary school who are of secondary school age, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children of secondary school age. Because of the inclusion of secondary-school-aged children attending tertiary school, this indicator can also be referred to as a secondary adjusted net attendance ratio. Calculation follows International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)” (data.unicef.org).

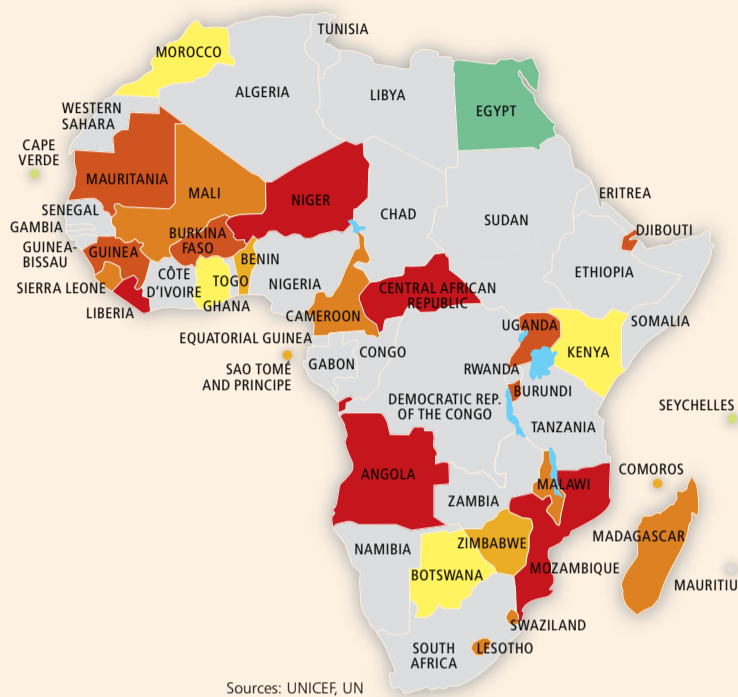
Here we see that, currently, Egypt is the best performer, with between 80-90% of all boys and girls of secondary school age attending secondary schools. But, for many parts of Africa it is much lower (less than 30% in ten African countries around 2012). Social demographers suggest that the demographic transition to less children per woman will only really succeed if most girls between 12 and 16 years old attend secondary education. Africa is a long way from this situation in the majority of the countries for which data exist.

Finally, tests about the ability to read and write simple texts (the ‘adult literacy rate’) reveal a dismal situation, with (much) less than half of adult females having this skill in at least a third of all African countries. Full literacy is rare, and where the adult literacy rate is above 90% (in South Africa, the Seychelles or Equatorial Guinea), figures for the current primary school attendance seem to be lower and predict a future in which the adult literacy rates will be lower than today. Clearly, Africa still has a long way to go. Tertiary education in Africa has been growing rapidly during the last few decades, and because many students are beyond the ‘normal’ student age, the gross enrolment data can be used here: “Gross enrollment ratio is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown”.

<http://databank.worldbank.org/data>.

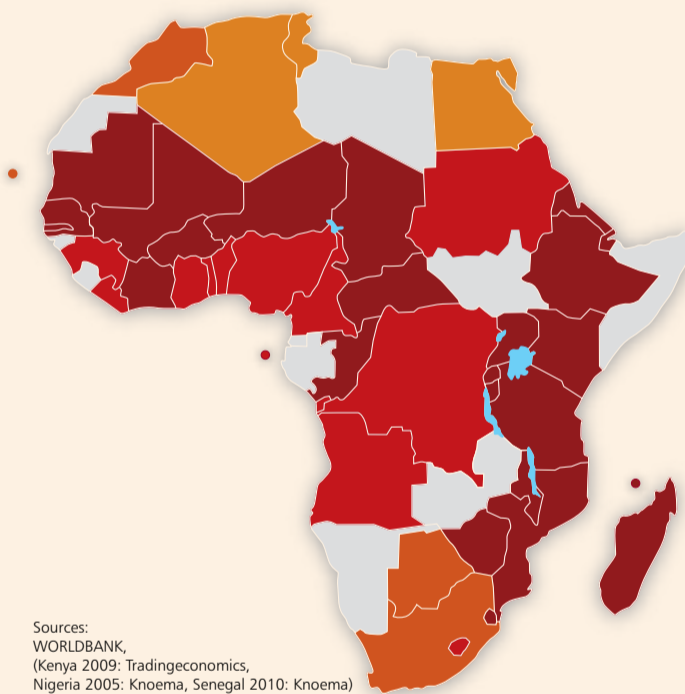
Recent tertiary enrolment figures for Africa show that in the majority of the countries all tertiary students together are less than 10% of the tertiary age group (c18-c25). Only in Mauritius, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia the figures are above 30%.

Secondary net enrolment rate ca 2012

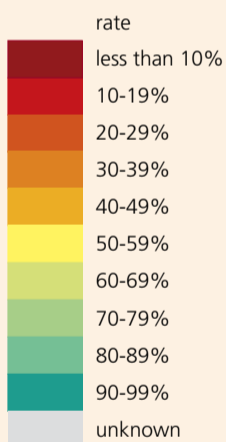


Sources: UNICEF, UN

Tertiary gross enrolment rate 2011-2015



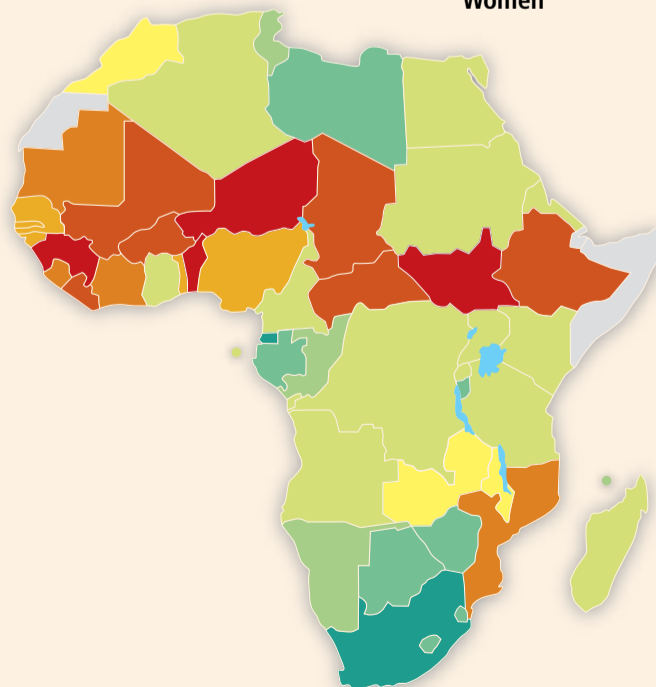
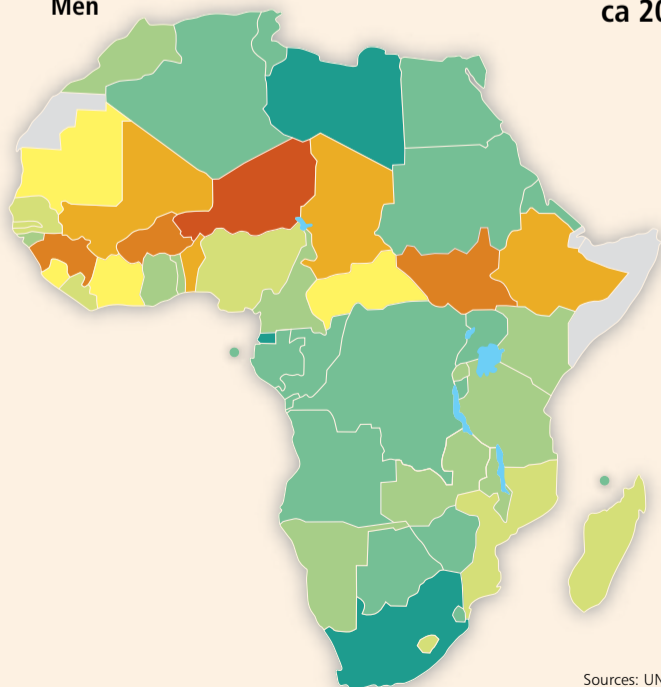
Sources: WORLD BANK, (Kenya 2009: Tradingeconomics, Nigeria 2005: Knoema, Senegal 2010: Knoema)



Adult literacy rate ca 2012

Men

Women



Sources: UNICEF, UN

The African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL)

The African Studies Centre Leiden, founded in 1947, is the only knowledge institute in the Netherlands devoted entirely to the study of Africa. It undertakes research and is involved in teaching about Africa and aims to promote a better understanding of African societies. The Centre is part of Leiden University and participates in the LeidenGlobal network. The ASCL's work is not only of importance to researchers but also to policymakers, journalists, NGOs, businesses and other organizations.

Research The ASCL's research programme lasts for a period of five years. Projects are multidisciplinary, empirical in nature and are carried out in cooperation with African colleagues and institutions by the Centre's researchers and PhD and Research Masters students.

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www.ascleiden.nl/content/library

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LeidenASA The Leiden African Studies Assembly, founded in December 2015, is a network of Leiden based Africanists aiming to set up a general Leiden University Africa policy. For education studies ASCL works together with ICLON.

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