

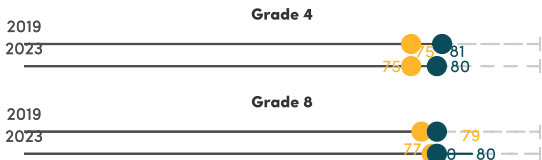
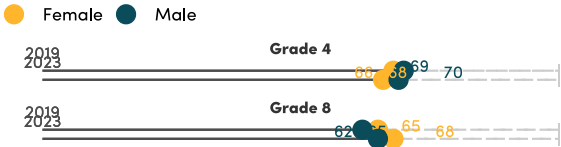
# Violence against children in and around schools in South Africa

Violence against children is preventable, and the education sector can play a critical role in driving change through schools and school systems. This note summarizes the state of school related violence in South Africa, and highlights key data gaps.

## Bullying

**Physical bullying** refers to a pattern of repetitive aggressive behaviours involving hitting, kicking, pushing, and stealing or destroying personal belongings. 68% of 4th graders and 66% of 8th graders reported experiencing **physical bullying during the school year**.<sup>1</sup>

**Emotional bullying** includes any form of isolating, rejecting, excluding from a group, or any other non-physical form of hostile treatment. 77% of 4th graders and 79% of 8th graders reported experiencing **emotional bullying during the school year**.<sup>1</sup>



## Sexual Violence

**Sexual violence** takes different forms, and includes non-consensual completed or attempted sexual contact or acts of a sexual nature that do not involve physical contact, and any form of coercion into sexual situations. Available data indicates that 2% of females aged 15 to 19 **experienced sexual violence in their lifetime**.<sup>2</sup> Data on the location of the incident and the type of perpetrator are not available; therefore, it is not possible to determine whether sexual violence incidents occurred in schools. Additionally, data for boys is not available.



## Corporal Punishment

**Corporal punishment** refers to any form of punishment involving physical force intended to cause pain or discomfort.

Students who experienced corporal punishment from teachers (%)<sup>2</sup>

No Data

Caretakers who agree with using corporal punishment (%)

No Data

Children who experienced corporal punishment from caretakers (%)

No Data

## Is corporal punishment banned in these settings...<sup>3</sup>

Day Care

Yes

Some

No

Schools

Yes

Some

No

Home

Yes

Some

No

Alternative Care

Yes

Some

No

## Data Gaps

**PIRLS 2021 and TIMSS 2023** provide information about physical and emotional bullying from peers. Data cannot be broken down by disability or LGBTQ+ status.<sup>4</sup> The table below denotes where data is available.

Type of Violence	Aged 6 to 12	Aged 13 to 22	2008 - 2012	2013 - 2018	2019 or after
Physical (Peers)		✓		PIRLS, TIMSS	PIRLS, TIMSS
Emotional (Peers)	✓	✓		PIRLS, TIMSS	PIRLS, TIMSS
Sexual (Peers)					
Sexual (Teachers)					
Corporal Punishment (Teachers)	✓	✓		DHS <sup>2*</sup>	
Corporal Punishment (Caretakers)					

## South Africa Compared to Other Countries



The graphs below include only countries with data from the same international survey, which means the data were collected from children of similar ages using the same questions. **Below are country averages.**



## Physical Bullying is...

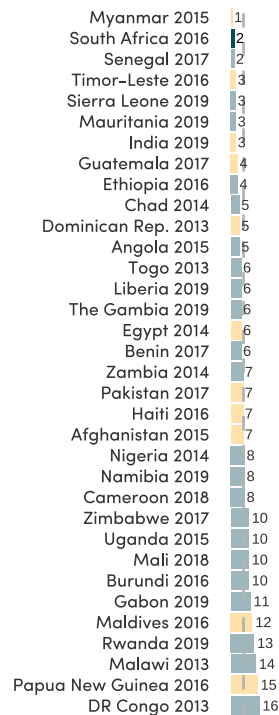
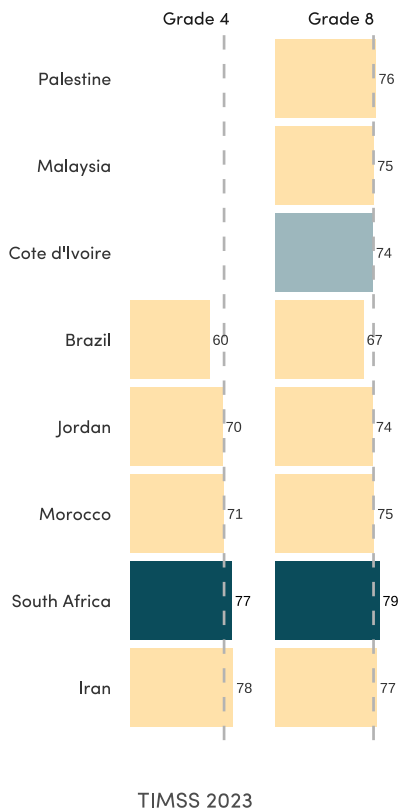
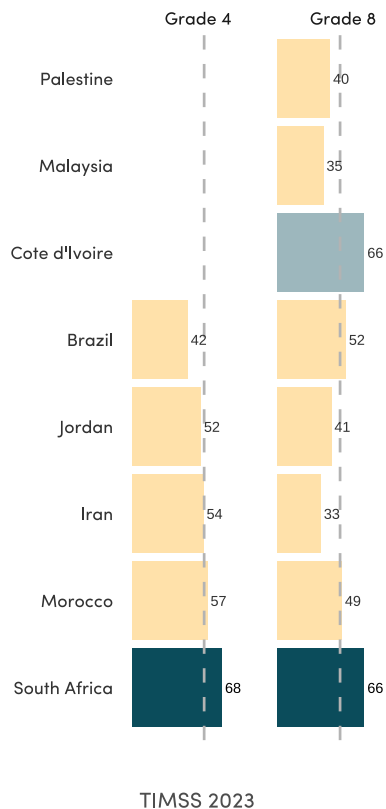
13 percentage points higher than the average for middle-income countries for 4th graders with data, and 18 percentage points higher for 8th graders.

## Emotional Bullying is...

6 percentage points higher than the average for middle-income countries for 4th graders with data, and 4 percentage points higher for 8th graders.

## Sexual Violence is...

6 percentage points lower than the Sub-Saharan Africa average, and 5 percentage points lower than the average for low- and middle-income countries with data.



DHS 2016 (+/-) 3 years

### Corporal Punishment (Teachers)

-----No Data-----

### Corporal Punishment (Caretakers)

-----No Data-----

## Notes

- International surveys cover different forms of violence and do not use a standard definition of violence.
- This brief covers international survey data. We recommend complementing it with national surveys (e.g., household surveys) when available.
- The violence figures included in this brief are likely an underestimate, as many victims do not disclose their experiences of violence.<sup>5</sup>
- Country comparisons created with DHS, VACS, and GSHS data, include low- and middle-income countries within +/- 3 years of South Africa's survey round. Graphs created with MICS, TIMSS, PIRLS, PISA, PISA-D, and ERCE, include low- and middle-income countries with data on the same survey round.
- South Africa participated in a benchmarking exercise with [Safe to Learn](#), which establishes a baseline to monitor progress in ending violence against children in and around schools. Results are forthcoming.

## Sources

1. Calculations using TIMSS 2023.
2. Calculations using DHS 2016. Surveys women aged 15 - 19. While DHS asks about teacher perpetrators of physical violence, we exclude from our analysis as the age range does not reflect the period when children are most likely to experience corporal punishment. If the focus is on physical violence against women by teachers starting at age 15, DHS data can provide relevant insights.
3. [End Corporal Punishment of Children](#), data accessed 2024. Note: "Some" represents cases where prohibition is stated for specific provisions (eg., [forms of corporal punishment or school levels](#)). Alternative Care refers to cases where a child's primary caregiver is not their parents (eg. foster care).
4. [Evans, Hares, Smarrelli, and Wu](#). CGD 2023.
5. [Smarrelli, Wu, Baago-Rasmussen, Hares, and Naker](#). CGD 2024.