

Child Series Volume I

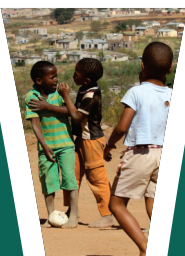
Children exposed to maltreatment, 2021



STOP
PHYSICAL
ABUSE



STOP
VERBAL
ABUSE



stop
bullying

STOP
CORPORAL
PUNISHMENT



Report No. 92-02-01

IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH DATA ECOSYSTEMS



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Child Series Volume I

Children exposed to maltreatment, 2021

Statistics South Africa

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Statistician-General

Report No. 92-02-01

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CJCP	Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
GHS	General Household Survey
GPSJS	Governance, Public safety and Justice Survey
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAPS	South African Police Services
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
U5MR	Under-Five Mortality Rate
VOCS	Victims of Crime Survey
WHO	World Health Organisation
WC	Western Cape
EC	Eastern Cape
NC	Northern Cape
FS	Free State
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NW	North West
GP	Gauteng
MP	Mpumalanga
LP	Limpopo
RSA	Republic of South Africa

Foreword

Maltreatment at school includes corporal punishment or physical violence by teachers, physical abuse by other learners or verbal abuse by either the teachers or other learners. In South Africa, in 2009, close to one in five children (18,6%) aged 5–17 years experienced some sort of violence at school which included corporal punishment or verbal abuse. This reduced to 8,2% in 2019, with just over one million out of 13 million school-going children aged 5–17 years reporting that they had experienced some form of violence. Of those who experienced some form of violence, the majority (71%) were primary school children, with only 29,2% of secondary school learners reporting that they had experienced some form of violence. The majority of these children were aged 8–10 years, and most attending public schools. Violence at schools seems to have a geographical component as nearly half (47,6%) of the children who experienced the violence were residents of Eastern Cape, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and North West; and most were located in rural areas. About six in ten children who experienced corporal punishment by teachers at school in 2019 lived in rural areas. However, seven in ten children who experienced physical violence by teachers in 2019 were residents of urban areas.

Certain groups of children remain particularly vulnerable to this violence, as black Africans children were three times more likely than their white counterparts to report having experienced some form of violence. In 2019, five out of six (84%) children who indicated that they had experienced violence at school were subjected to corporal punishment by a teacher, while close to 14% were subjected to verbal abuse by a teacher. Furthermore, abuse by teachers at school was more common than abuse by other learners. Close to 53% of the children who experienced corporal punishment at school in 2019 were female. Furthermore, nearly 61% of children who experienced physical violence by teachers in 2019 were females.

Prevention of violence against children needs a shift in acceptable forms of discipline within society. In South Africa, in 2020, two out of five households with children aged 5–17 years (38,6%) admit to believing that it is necessary to physically punish a learner who was caught drinking at school. Similarly, close to 31% of households with children aged 5-17 had the perception that it is necessary to physically punish a child who argues or talks back to a parent or a caregiver.

South Africa adopted legislations that fully prohibit the use of corporal punishment both at school and home. However, the lack of knowledge of these laws among citizens is a clear sign that violent discipline remains practiced. At national level, in 2019/2020, close to 10% of households with children aged 5–17 years were unaware that corporal punishment was illegal in South Africa. However, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape had the largest percentage of households reporting their lack of awareness of legislations prohibiting corporal punishment.

Children maltreatment can also reflect in their lack of access to educational institutions. In 2002, close to 1,4 million children aged 5–17 years were permanently absent from educational institutions, and this number reduced by half to close to 600 000 children in 2021. Children with low socio-economic status had the highest risk of not attending school. In 2021, close to 45% of children in the lower household income quintiles (quintiles one and two) did not attend school. For all the years presented in the report, the majority of children who did not attend school were out-of-school because they were either too old or too young to attend school. However, the percentage of out-of-school children due to this reason reduced by half in almost two decades from 65,2%

in 2002 to 35,4% in 2021. Similarly, another major fall was in the percentage of out-of-school children due to lack of money which reduced from 17,5% in 2002 to 7,2% in 2021. However, vulnerabilities such as illness and disability kept close to 10% of children away from school in 2021. Furthermore, close to 11% of children stayed out of school in 2021 due to poor performance at school or not having been able to secure a place at a school.

Violence against children can result in injuries. In 2019, close to 4% of children aged 5–17 years were intentionally poisoned while 3,4% suffered injuries due to assault, beating or crime-related injury, while 5,5% were victims of severe trauma due to violence.

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Chapter 1: Maltreatment of children in South Africa

1.1 Background

Violence against children, neglect and poor parenting have a long-term effect on children, families and society at a large. According to the definition of the World Health Organisation (WHO) child maltreatment refers to “the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power”.

Child maltreatment involves various kinds of violence both physical and emotional which are mostly inflicted by people close to them such as parents, relatives or family members, teachers and friends. Violence against children includes child maltreatment or abuse, neglect, exploitation such as through child pornography or sex trafficking, bullying (including cyberbullying) and violence that occurs to children under 18 years of age. Children can be victims of violence at school and home and may suffer from the long-term effect of these abuses, which affects the survival of the child, their health, their cognitive ability and their social behaviour.

Among all the types of violence, sexual abuse of children is the most difficult one to measure due to the sensitivity of the matter and the careful considerations that need to be made in measuring the full extent of this form of maltreatment. This may require the consent of the child’s caregiver who could also be the perpetrator of the abuse. Similarly, it is also hard to quantify neglect as it could be isolated incidents that may result in negative outcomes. Neglect occurs when the child is denied access to his/her basic physical or emotional needs or when caregivers fail to protect them from danger.

1.2 Child maltreatment at school

The violence at school is often carried out by other children or adults (teachers), or caregivers. The major types of violence experienced at school include:

- Physical punishment at the hand of teachers/caregivers (corporal punishment),
- Psychological violence/emotional abuse at the hand of teachers/caregivers,
- Sexual abuse by teachers or other children (peers), and
- Bullying, including cyberbullying.

1.3 Child maltreatment at home

Parents, other family members or caregivers often carry out the violence at home. The types of violence experienced at home are similar to the violence experienced at school and include all forms of abuse, such as sexual, physical and emotional abuse as well as neglect. These also include violent discipline, verbal abuse and exposure to domestic violence. Younger children are more likely to be victimised by parents or family members because of their dependency on them for care.

Children in South Africa live in non-standard family structures with mostly one of their biological parents. In 2021, there were twice as many children who had co-resident mothers compared to those who had co-resident fathers (77% compared to 38%) (Stats SA, 2022). Research has shown that the living arrangement can make these children vulnerable to crime and abuse, one fact being the lack of nurturing fathers.

1.4 Child maltreatment in the community

Communities or neighbourhoods (especially where there is rampant poverty) may also be unsafe for children. In such areas, some children may be victims of violence in places like streets or parks. Older children are more likely to be victimised by people outside their homes. The Victims of Crime Survey (VOCS) 2020/2021 estimated that 1,4 million households with children experienced crime in 2020/2021. Nationally, most (971 956) of these households experienced housebreaking/burglary, followed by home robbery (163 319). Home robberies are typically violent and inherently put victims' lives at risk. Furthermore, households with children in Gauteng experienced the highest number of crimes (1 230 837) followed by KwaZulu-Natal (847 472), (Stats SA, 2018).

1.5 Why it is important not to ignore child maltreatment

Child maltreatment has long-term consequences, such as lifelong physical and mental health problems as well as poor educational, social and employment outcomes. Regardless of how severe the abuses are on the child, it causes pain and harm and hinders the development of the child. Child maltreatment may also have an effect on child mortality. Child maltreatment may also have an intergenerational effect as abused children may more likely become abusers themselves. The cycle of violence has to be broken by addressing the problem from the root.

1.6 Corporal punishment in South Africa

Corporal punishment is the most common form of violence against children, although many families would associate this with disciplinary action rather than violence. South Africa has prohibited corporal punishment on children both at home and school by use of at least four national instruments (The Bill of Rights, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996; The Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005; Abolishing of Corporal Punishment Act, No. 33 of 1997; and the South African School Act, No. 84 of 1996).

The Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 defines corporal punishment as "any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child, and includes:

- (a) assaulting a child or inflicting any other form of deliberate injury to a child;
- (b) sexually abusing a child or allowing a child to be sexually abused;
- (c) bullying by another child;
- (d) a labour practice that exploits a child; or
- (e) exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may harm the child psychologically or emotionally.

Table 1.1: Number of crimes committed against children aged 0–17, 2016–2021

Financial year	Number of reported crimes	Percentage change
2016/2017	43 842	
2017/2018	43 540	0,7
2018/2019	45 229	-3,9
2019/2020	42 348	6,4
2020/2021	39 878	5,8

Source: SAPS

Although corporal punishment at schools has been reduced in the country by 11 percentage points from 2009 to 2018, nearly 6 per cent of children regularly suffered physical punishment at the hand of their educators in 2018 (GHS 2009, 2018).

1.7 Effects of maltreatment

Child maltreatment causes suffering to children and families and can have long-term consequences. Stress resulting from maltreatment can impair the development of children, with consequences on future social-emotional skills. Some of the future consequences as adults include:

- Being a perpetrator or a victim of violence
- Mental health, self-harm as well as severe depression that could lead to suicide
- Smoking, alcohol abuse or drug addiction
- Obesity, including eating disorders
- Dropping out of school
- High-risk sexual behaviours and early sexual debut
- Unintended pregnancy.

Beyond the health, social and educational consequences of child maltreatment, there is an economic impact, including costs of hospitalization, mental health treatment, child welfare, and longer-term health costs. Children who have health issues, including mental health, often drop out of school. According to the GHS 2021 data, the highest percentage of children aged 7–18 who dropout from school was due to illness or injury (22,7%), and 13,4% among females' dropout were due to family commitments which include marriage, minding children and pregnancy. Some of the victims of sexual abuse end up being teenage mothers. In 2020, 2 665 births were attributed to children aged 10–14 while 10% of the total births occurred to mothers aged 15–19. The highest number of births (3 440) among adolescents aged 10–14 occurred in 2019. These births mostly occurred in KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape.

1.8 Existing protection under international human rights law include

Preventing violence against children requires the action of government and shifts in community practices on children discipline. According to the Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey (GPSJS) 2019/20, nearly 91% of individuals aged 16 years and older were aware that corporal punishment is illegal in South Africa. Yet, close to 26% believed that it was acceptable for a parent or caregiver to physically punish their child if the child argues or talks back to them. The main reason for violence against children remains under reported is due to many children not disclosing the abuse. South Africa has developed laws prohibiting violence against children at home, school and in the community. In addition to these laws, the country subscribes to instruments of global commitments to address violence against children. These include:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by South Africa in 1995.
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child ratified by South Africa in 2000.
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child prostitution and Child Pornography ratified by South Africa in 2003.

Other international framework used to report on violence against children are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Goals 5 and 16 are used to monitor violence against children and access to justice with six explicit indicators.

- 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.
- 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.
- 16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100 000 population by sex and age.
- 16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100 000 population by sex age and cause.
- 16.2.1 Proportion of children aged one to 17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month.
- 16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18 to 29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18.

The SDGs call for an end to all forms of violence against children, including abuse, exploitation, trafficking and torture by 2030.

1.9 Objective of the report

South Africa has a high rate of child maltreatment and abuse. This maltreatment occurs in homes, schools or neighbourhoods. Perpetrators could be caregivers, parents and educators or other children. Violence against children is a threat to development-related issues in South Africa, including education, health, safety and security. Government has the responsibility to prevent violence and crime against children and to guarantee the rights for all children to have a safe space to grow and live their lives. Protecting children against violence will ultimately lead to a more peaceful and inclusive society. The purpose of this report is to identify the extent of the problem in South Africa. However, due to the lack of data, only physical violence and emotional abuse will be considered in this report.

Data sources used for the report include the General Household Survey data 2002–2021 and Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey data 2019/2020. The report is divided into five sections. The first chapter provides background and presents some of the legal instruments in place to address the issue of violence against children. The second chapter looks at the demographic trends of children in South Africa over two decades. The third chapter discusses the violence and maltreatment experienced by children aged 5–17 years. The chapter also presents the injuries suffered by the children. Chapter four presents negative life outcomes for children aged 5–17 years which include temporary and permanent absence from school and some of the health outcomes that are experienced by children. Chapter five concludes.

Chapter 2: Demographic characteristics of children aged 0–17 years

2.1 Introduction

Statistics South Africa estimated South Africa's population to be 60,5 million in 2021. This was close to a 32% increase from 2002. The population of children was estimated at 20,7 million in 2021, constituting close to one-third of the total population (34,2%). The child population increased by 14% from 2002 to 2021. Six out of ten children (62,5%) were ten years old or under, while nine out of ten (90,0%) children were 15 years old or under. South Africa has the largest percentage of children under 15 years old compared to OECD countries. Overall improvement in health services had a significant impact on child mortality in South Africa. The under-five mortality rate (U5MR) declined from 74,7 child deaths per 1 000 live births to 30,7 child deaths per 1 000 live births between 2002 and 2022. The overall population growth rate was estimated to be 1,06% in the period 2021–2022 with the rate of growth in the age categories 0–14 reflecting an overall decline since 2013–2014 (Mid-year population estimates, 2022).

2.2 Demographic features of children in South Africa

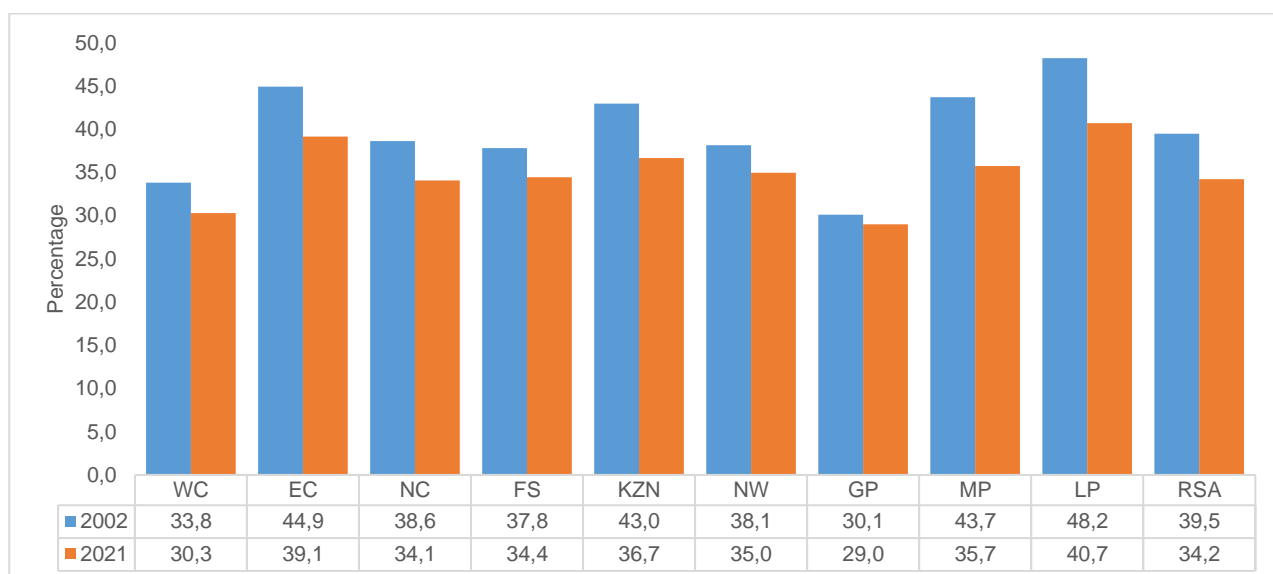
The land size in South Africa has an inverse relationship with population size. The two most populous provinces are among the smallest provinces. Gauteng ranked first with both its total and child population sizes, while KwaZulu-Natal ranked second for both. However, Western Cape, which had the third highest total population ranked fifth in terms of its child population size. Furthermore, Eastern Cape, which ranked fourth in terms of its total population size ranked third with respect to its child population size.

Table 2.1: Population of children aged 0–17 years by province (thousands), 2002–2021

	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	RSA
2002	1 609	2 928	398	1 000	4 149	1 165	2 939	1 520	2 421	18 129
2003	1 617	2 859	391	1 002	4 068	1 161	2 976	1 509	2 384	17 966
2004	1 652	2 800	387	974	4 062	1 167	3 003	1 501	2 353	17 899
2005	1 655	2 806	404	999	4 039	1 184	3 059	1 496	2 316	17 958
2006	1 674	2 783	403	977	4 065	1 181	3 101	1 525	2 347	18 056
2007	1 679	2 763	403	974	4 109	1 191	3 170	1 518	2 338	18 145
2008	1 693	2 706	399	957	4 056	1 194	3 270	1 524	2 311	18 110
2009	1 711	2 666	400	953	4 060	1 205	3 321	1 528	2 320	18 163
2010	1 725	2 599	399	959	4 067	1 220	3 419	1 529	2 293	18 210
2011	1 787	2 616	407	958	4 031	1 248	3 484	1 558	2 307	18 396
2012	1 820	2 609	408	959	4 015	1 262	3 587	1 539	2 303	18 502
2013	1 837	2 585	410	970	4 041	1 287	3 691	1 548	2 313	18 683
2014	1 866	2 570	408	980	4 062	1 293	3 743	1 564	2 310	18 795
2015	1 904	2 557	413	973	4 059	1 322	3 875	1 608	2 335	19 047
2016	1 940	2 558	415	993	4 098	1 330	3 971	1 605	2 356	19 266
2017	1 954	2 534	432	1 007	4 159	1 348	4 108	1 662	2 374	19 579
2018	1 971	2 514	436	1 021	4 184	1 382	4 186	1 673	2 374	19 741
2019	2 006	2 561	430	1 014	4 205	1 422	4 330	1 682	2 425	20 075
2020	2 097	2 556	442	1 056	4 232	1 441	4 397	1 717	2 458	20 395
2021	2 148	2 561	436	1 024	4 284	1 450	4 606	1 707	2 485	20 702

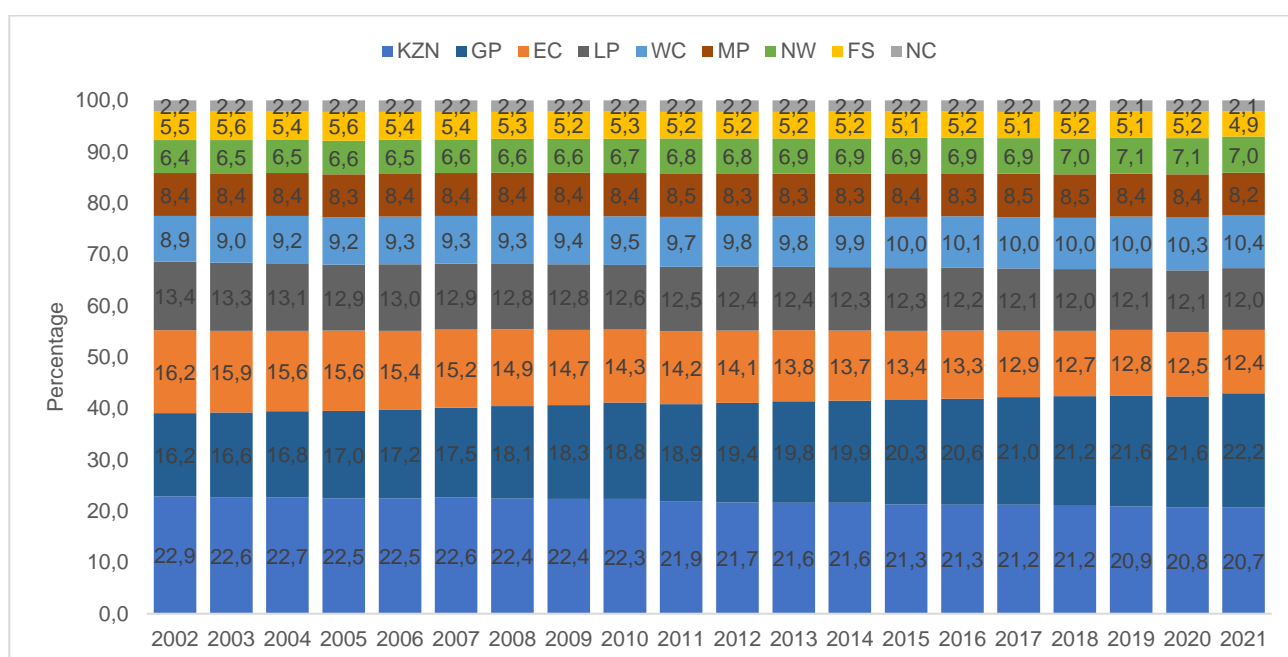
Source: Mid-year population estimates: 2002–2021

In South Africa, children lived mostly in four provinces: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Limpopo and Eastern Cape (13,9 million in 2021). In 2021, Gauteng was home to the largest number of the child population with close to 5 million children living in the province followed by KwaZulu-Natal with 4,3 million children and Eastern Cape and Limpopo with 2,5 million children each.

Figure 2.1: Population of children aged 0–17 as a percentage of the total population by province, 2002–2021

Source: Mid-year population estimates: 2002–2021

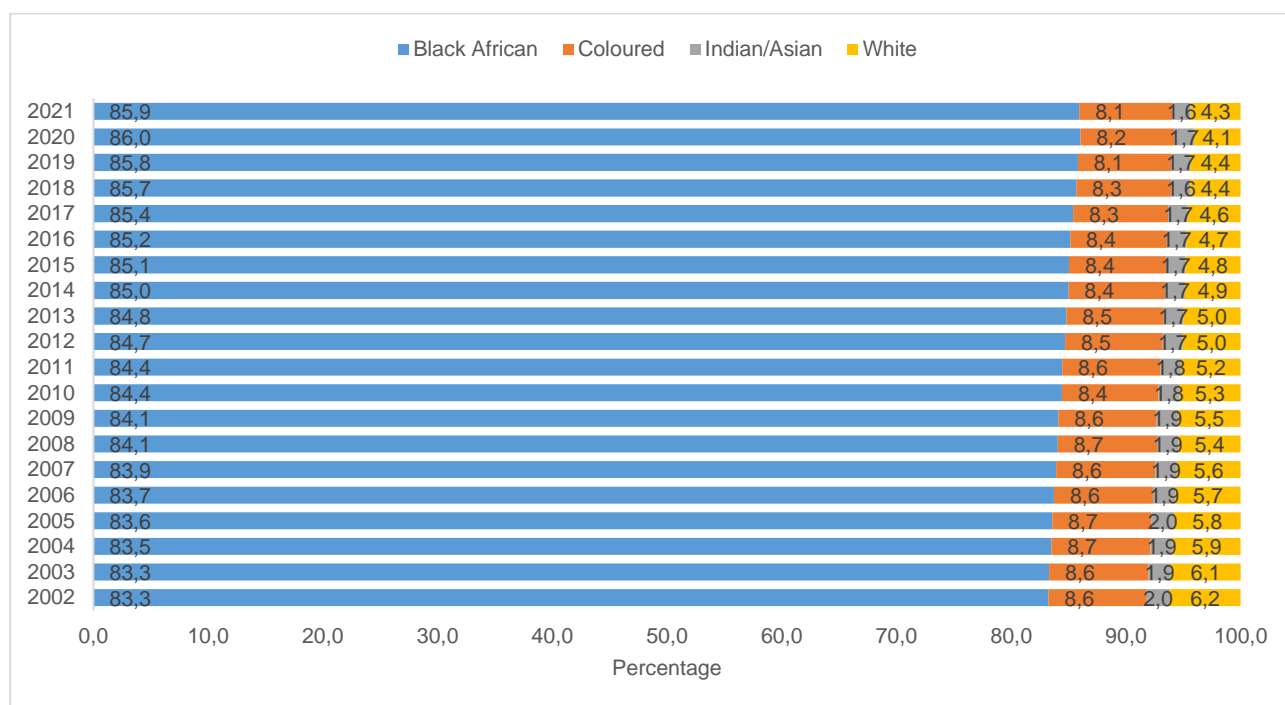
Figure 2.1 presents the child population as a percentage of the total population in South Africa. In 2002, the child population represented 39,5% of the total population in South Africa. This ratio reduced to 34,2% in 2021. In 2002, almost half of the population of Limpopo constituted children (48,2%); this will be reduced to 40,7% in 2021. In 2002, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape had a higher percentage of children compared to the national average of 39,5%. In 2002, three out of ten (30,1%) of the population in Gauteng was made up of children; this ratio reduced to 29% in 2021, making Gauteng the province with the lowest ratio of child population to the total population. In Western Cape, close to one-third (33,8%) of the population were children in 2002 and declined to 30,3% in 2021. The largest decline in the ratio of children to the total population was observed in Mpumalanga and Limpopo (8 and 7,5 percentage points) while Gauteng had the lowest decrease (1,1 percentage points).

Figure 2.2: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–17 by province, 2002–2021

Source: Mid-year population estimates: 2002–2021

The regional distribution of children changed over time. KwaZulu-Natal continued to have the largest share of the child population in the country followed by Gauteng, while Free State and Northern Cape had the lowest share. Gauteng's share of the child population continued to rise over time, with an increase of six percentage points from 16,2% in 2002 to 22,2% in 2021. Other provinces that showed increases in the percentage of children over time were Western Cape and North West. Eastern Cape was the province that showed the highest decline in the percentage of children (3,5 percentage points) from 16,2% in 2002 to 12,4% in 2021.

Figure 2.3: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–17 years by population group, 2002–2021

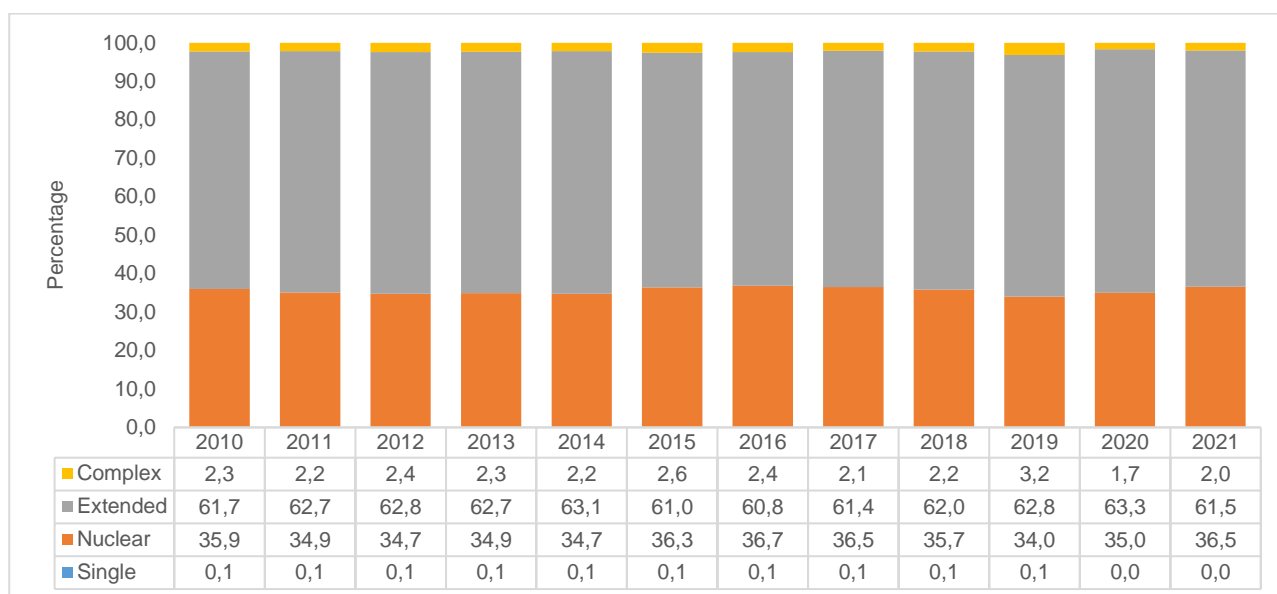


Source: Mid-year population estimates: 2002–2021

Figure 2.3 presents the distribution of children by population group. In 2021, close to 86% of children in South Africa were black African which increased from 83,3% in 2002. The percentage of white children shrank by close to two percentage points in the last two decades.

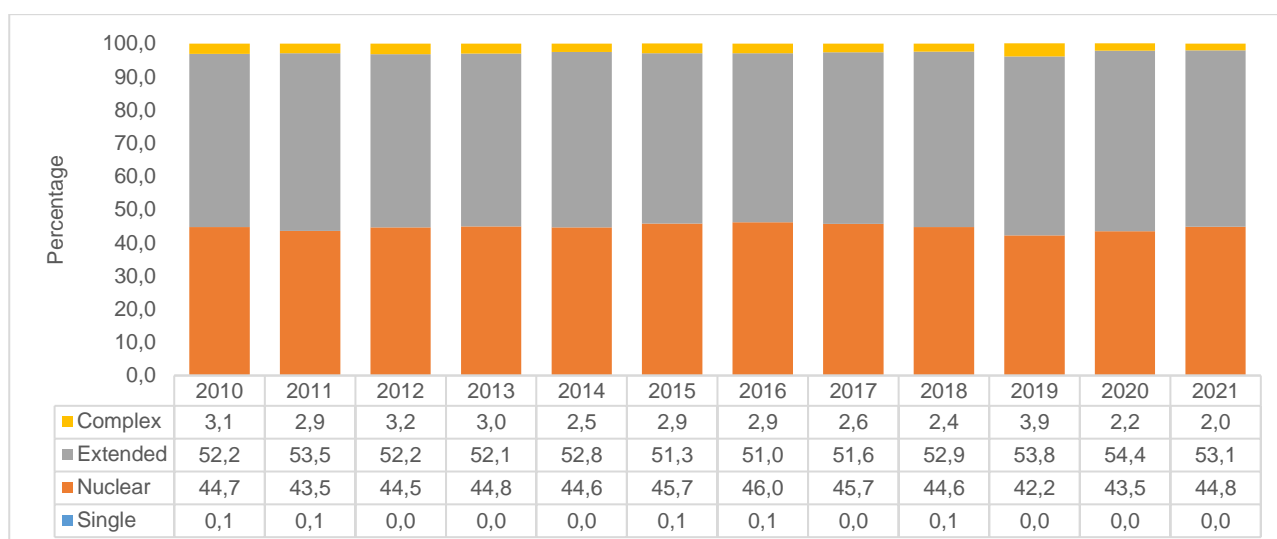
2.3 Household composition

Household composition is the classification of households according to the relationships between the members. It is determined according to the relationship with the head of the household. The composition of the household determines the household size and indicates the household structure. In this section, a single household structure indicates a household with only one child staying alone, while a nuclear household comprises a married couple, or a couple—or a single parent—together with their children. Extended household composition will include other family members in the nuclear structure, while complex household structures include at least one non-related member. The GHS measure use the four-by-four rule to determine household membership. Hence temporary absence, which refers to circumstances where one or more household members are absent from a household they share with others, would exclude absent members from being part of the household. The absent members may or may not be residing in a different province. Temporary absence primarily affects household composition, which determines living arrangements and has socioeconomic consequences for children.

Figure 2.4: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–17 years by household composition, 2010–2021

Source: GHS 2010–2021

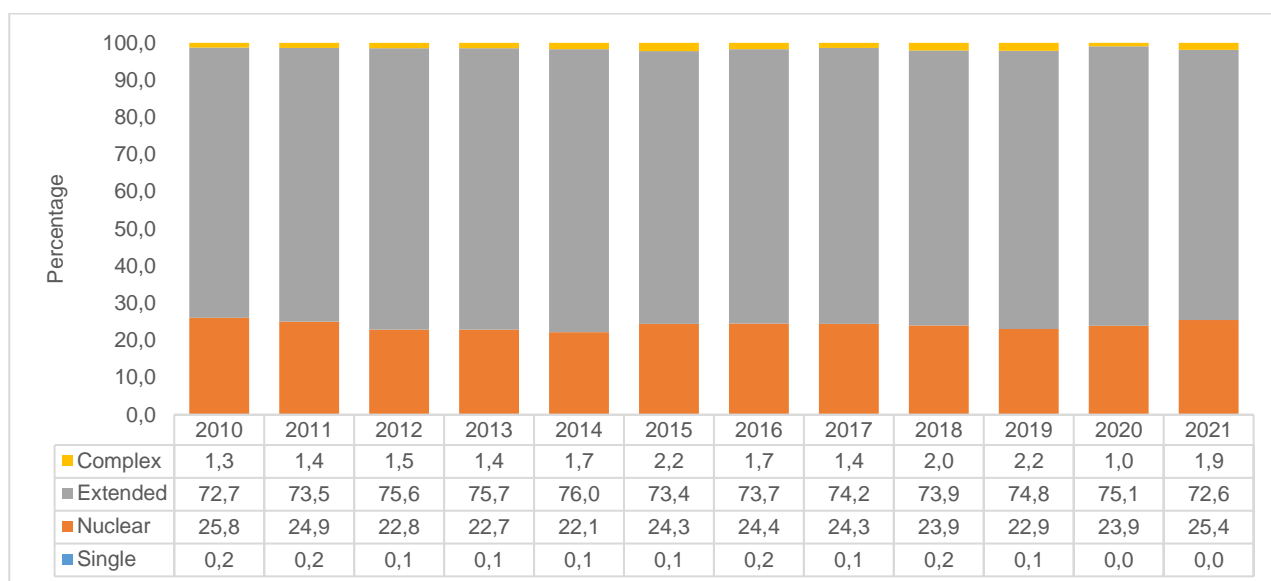
The composition of households with children in South Africa is different from the general household structure as it includes, in most cases, a single nuclear family together with relatives. Significant changes in household composition have not taken place across the years. In 2010, close to 62% of children lived in extended household structures. This percentage remained stable until 2021. In contrast, the percentage of children who lived in nuclear households was close to 36%, with little variation across the years presented in the graph. The percentage of children who lived in complex households, defined as those with one nuclear family plus other relatives but had non-relatives present was considerably smaller throughout the years.

Figure 2.5: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–17 years by household composition in urban areas, 2010–2021

Source: GHS 2010–2021

The trends in urban household composition are similar to the trends in overall household composition. The percentage of children living in nuclear households was considerably higher in urban areas than the national average. Furthermore, a lower percentage of urban households were characterised by the extended household composition set-up compared to the national average. However, more than half of urban households with children lived in such arrangements. Children living in complex household situations would more likely occur in urban areas compared to rural areas.

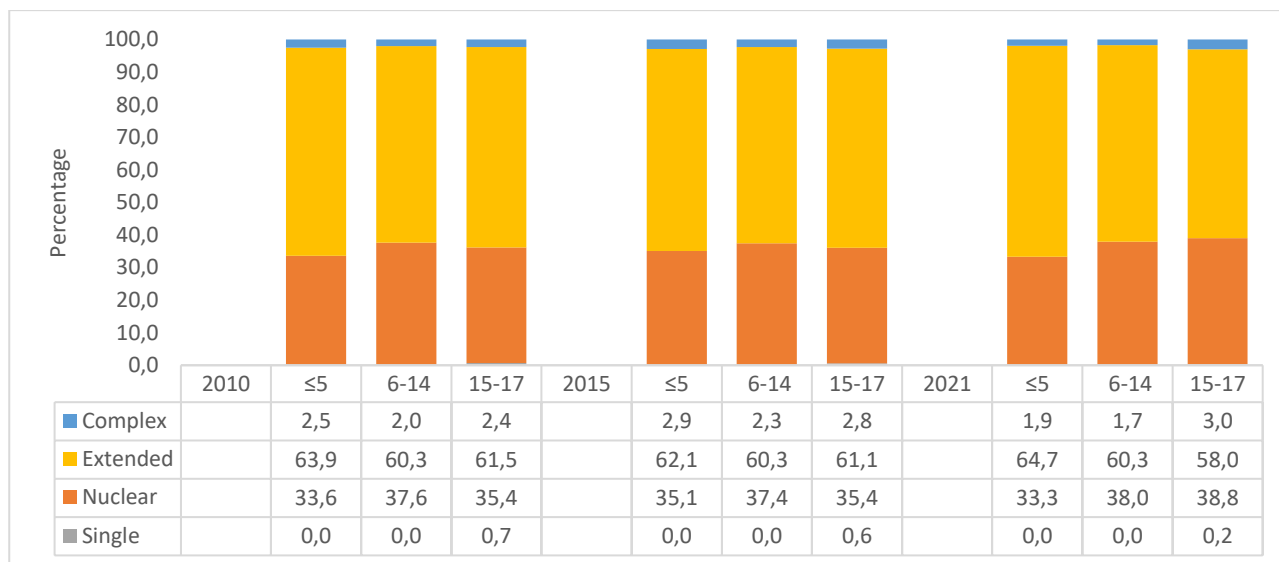
Figure 2.6: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–17 years by household composition in rural areas, 2010–2021



Source: GHS 2010–2021

Children living in rural areas were almost three times more likely to live in extended household set ups compared to those staying in nuclear households.

Figure 2.7: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–17 years by household composition and age, 2010–2021



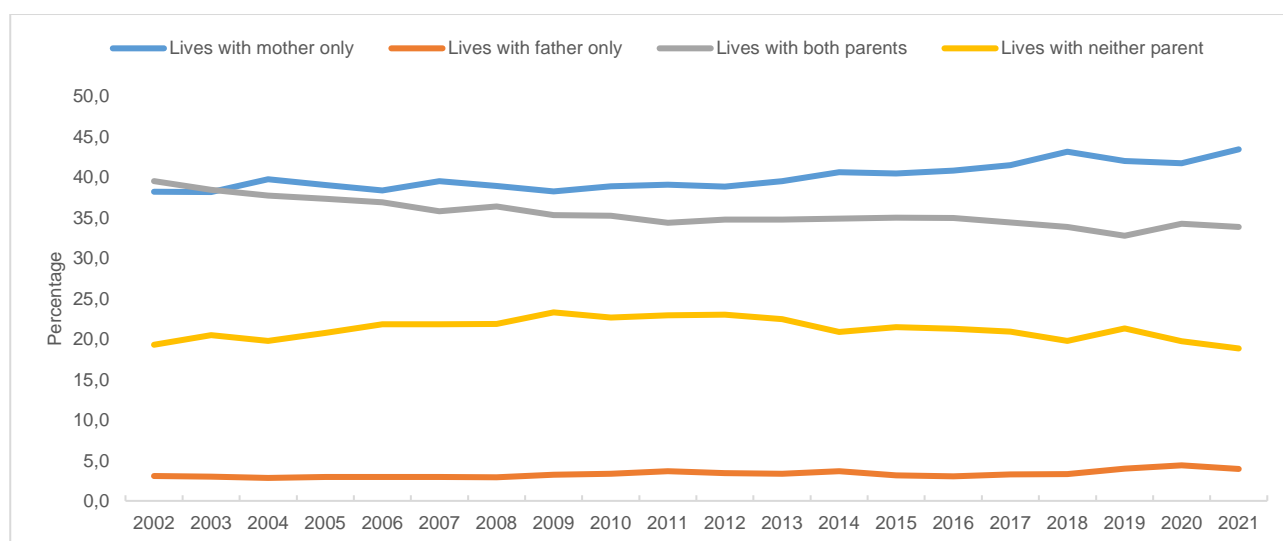
Source: GHS 2010–2021

Children aged five and younger were more likely to reside in extended household structures (64% in 2010 and 65% in 2021.) These children were more likely to say with their mothers and other family members. Children aged 15–17 living in complex family structures rose from 2,5% in to 3% in 2021.

2.4 Living arrangements

In this section, data on care and living arrangements are presented as well as orphans and type of orphanhood in South Africa. Living arrangements can potentially shed light on residential patterns of children. Childhood care and living arrangements can potentially be major risk factors for neglect and abuse of children. Furthermore, the death of a parent during childhood, especially the death of a mother, has a potentially higher negative impact on the child care and wellbeing. The consequences for double orphans are also more severe compared to the other types of orphanhood. In South Africa, children who were deprived of parental care did not necessarily end up being separated from other family members or get institutionalized. Young children need care and nurturing and must receive the required social, emotional and intellectual stimulation, which contributes to the healthy development of a child's brain. Their living arrangement must guarantee that they are protected from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.

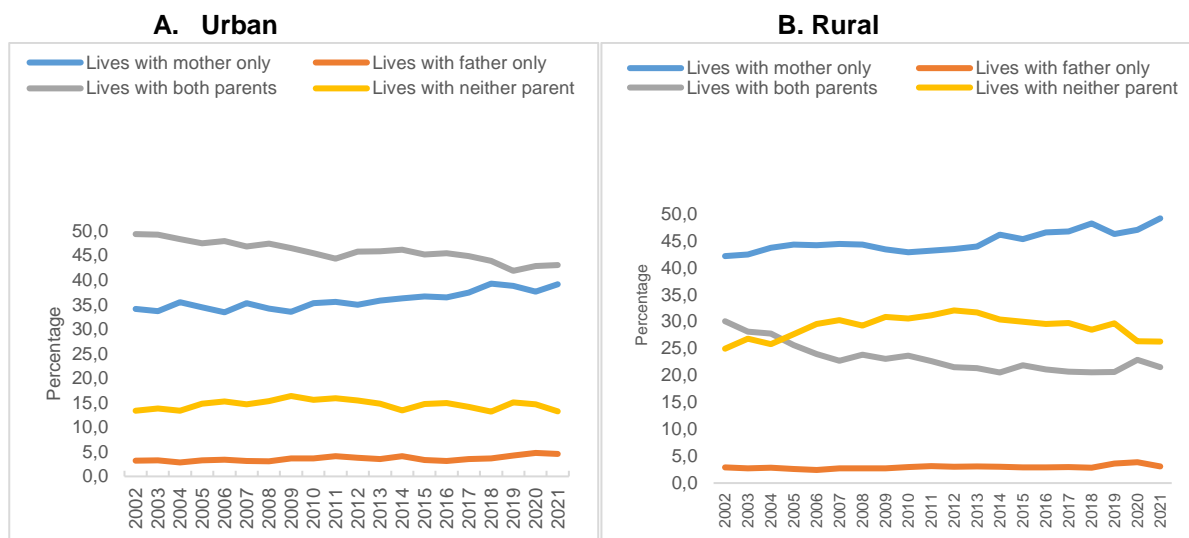
Figure 2.8: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years by living arrangement, South Africa 2002–2021



Source: GHS 2002–2021

In South Africa, there is a large percentage of children with non-parental care, although there may be partial parental involvement in the care of these children. To a large extent, South African families experience work-family conflict, and their need for non-parental child care is high. In 2021, close to 3.9 million children (18.8%) lived in homes with no parents. The percentage of children living in non-parental families was 19.3% in 2002; it rose steadily to around 23% in 2009, remained stable until 2012 and then declined progressively. However, a large percentage of children lived with their mothers only or lived with both parents. The gap between children who received parental care by both parents and those only receiving the mother's care increased to close to 10% in 2021.

Figure 2.9: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years living arrangement in urban area 2002–2021



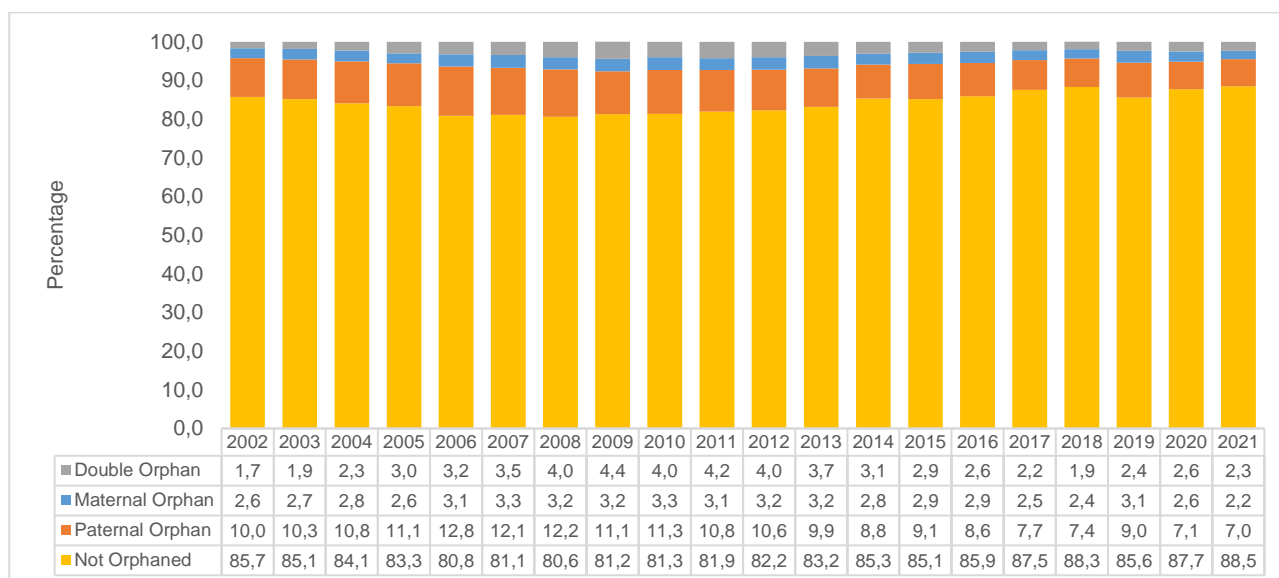
Source: GHS 2002–2021

Children in non-parental care were found mostly in rural areas. In 2021, among children living in rural areas, 26,3% lived with neither of their parents compared to only 13,3% in urban areas. In urban areas, there was a decline in the percentage of children in the parental care of both parents from 49,4% in 2002 to 43% in 2021. This resulted in a slight increase in the percentage of children in the care of their mothers only. However, children in urban areas were still mostly in the care of both parents. By contrast, children in rural areas were mostly in the care of their mothers only. Furthermore, in rural areas, children in both parents' care declined overtime from 30% in 2002 to 21,5% in 2021. In urban areas, the gap between children receiving parental care by their mothers only versus those receiving parental care by both parents had narrowed while it widened in rural areas.

2.5 Orphanhood

In 2021, there were 2,3 million children who had lost one or both parents. The average orphanhood rate across the 20 years between 2002 to 2021 was 15,8%. Although most of these orphans were living in households, they were still at risk of being subjected to abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

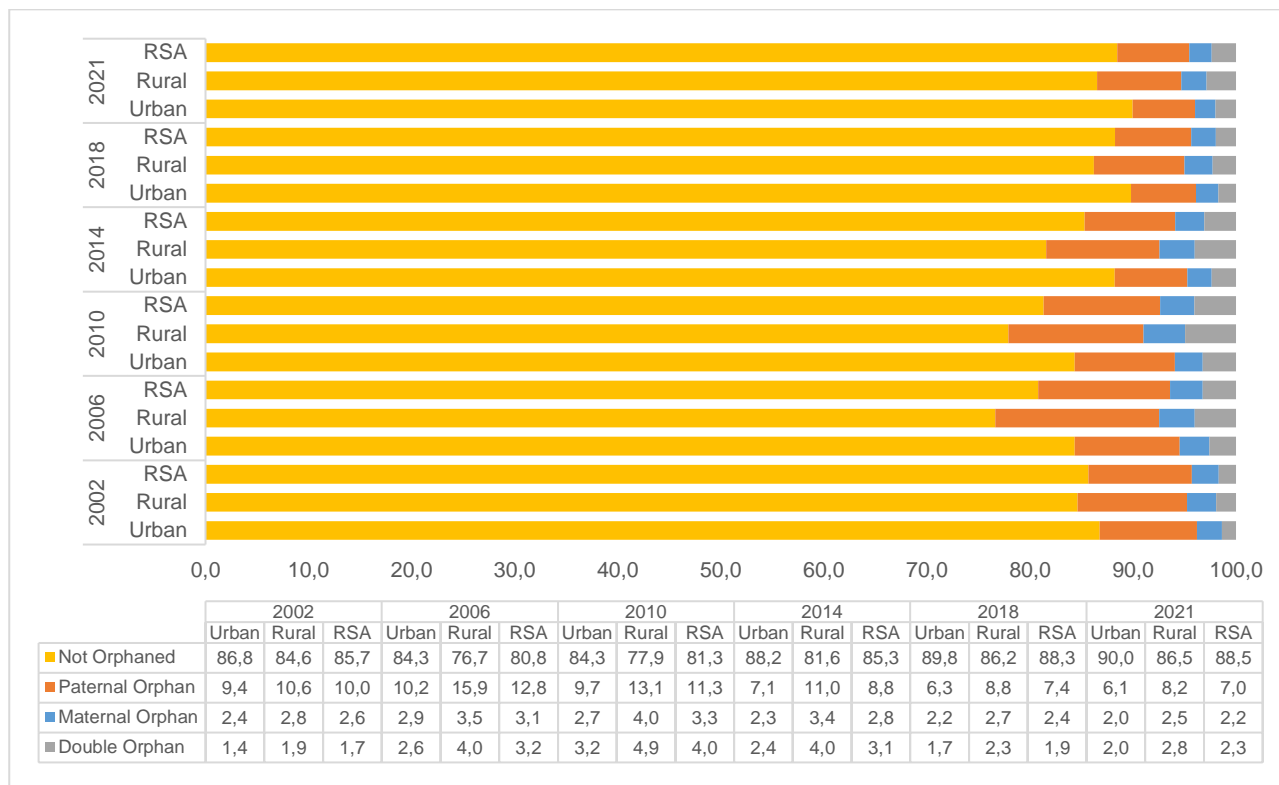
Figure 2.10: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–17 years who are orphans, 2002–2021



Source: GHS 2002–2021

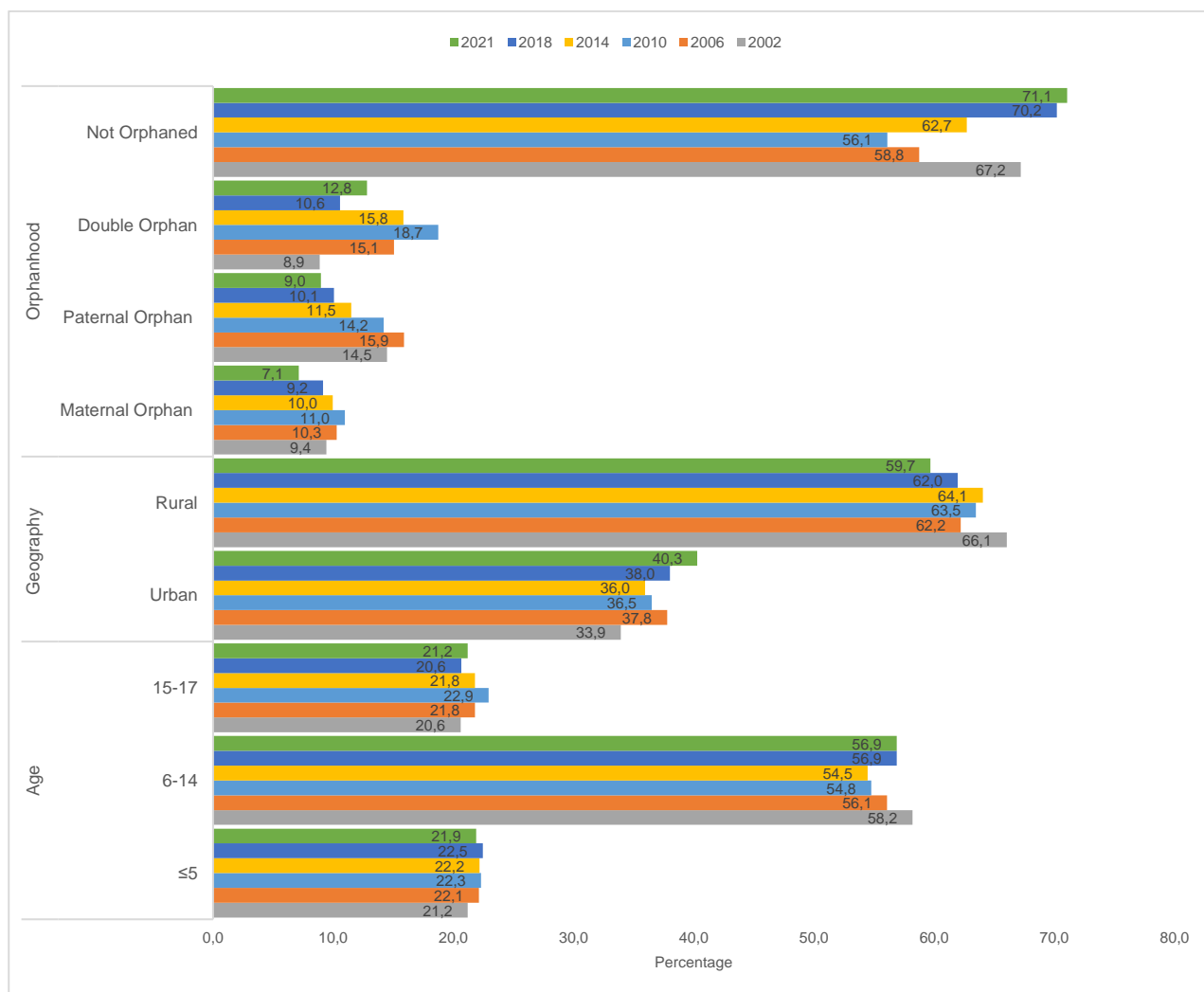
The percentage of children for whom one or both parents had died jumped from 14,3% in 2002 to 19,2% in 2006 within four years. This trend remained high and stable until 2013, followed by a decline to 14,7% in 2014. During the period 2006-2013, double and maternal orphanhood also increased.

Figure 2.11: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–17 years who are orphans by geographical area, 2002–2021



Source: GHS 2002–2021

The percentage of children for whom one or both parents had died was the highest in rural areas compared to urban areas. Orphanhood in rural areas peaked to 23,4% in 2006, followed by a decline to 13,5% in 2021. The urban-rural disparities in orphanhood was the highest in 2006 (close to 8 percentage points) and remained high until 2014. Paternal orphanhood was the highest type of orphanhood in both urban and rural areas for all the years and peaked in rural areas to 15,9% in 2006 with the rise of all types of orphanhood during that year. The percentage of double orphanhood increased by two-fold from 1,9% in 2002 to 4% in 2006 in rural areas, while it rose to 4,9% in 2010. There were 2,3 million children who had lost their fathers in 2006; more than half (1,3 million) were living in rural areas.

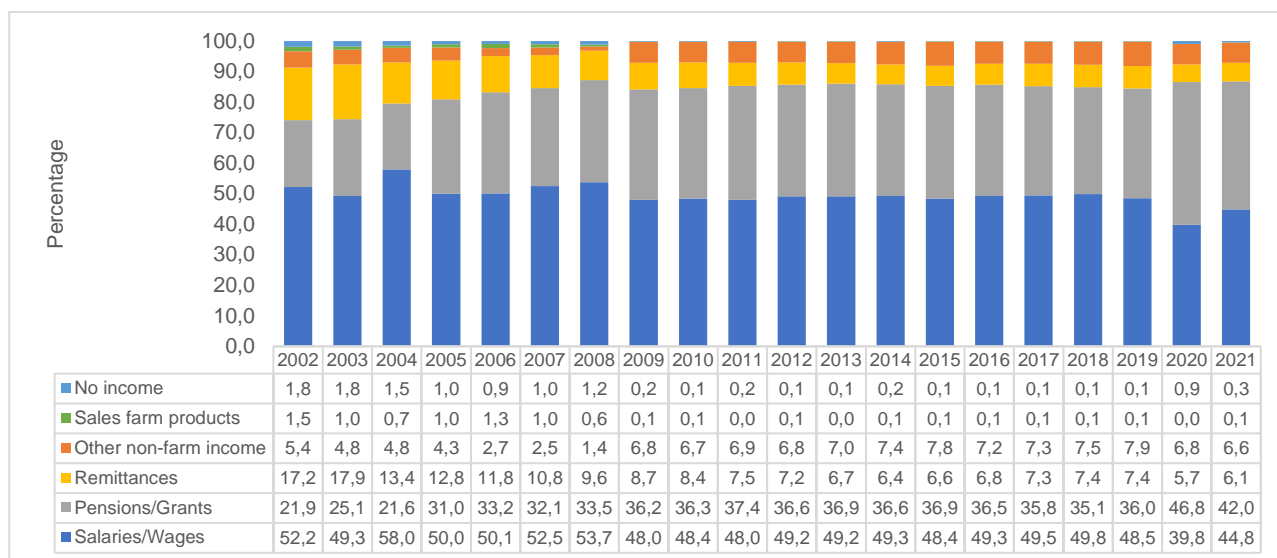
Figure 2.12: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years who lived with neither of their parents, 2002–2021

Source: GHS 2002–2021

In South Africa, children who lived with neither of their parents were mostly not orphaned. In 2002, two out of three (67,2%) of children who lived with neither of their parents were not orphaned. Although a clear pattern was not noted across the years presented above in 2018, this percentage increased to 70,2%. Most of these children were placed in the care of grandparents and extended families, most likely in rural areas. A large percentage of these children were found in rural areas, with close to 66% rural resident children found in 2002, which later declined to 59,7% in 2021. Children who lived with neither of their parents were mostly aged 6–14 years. In 2002, 58,2% were 6–14 year-olds which subsequently declined to close to 57% in 2018. However, across the years 2002 to 2021, one in five children in non-parental care were five years and younger.

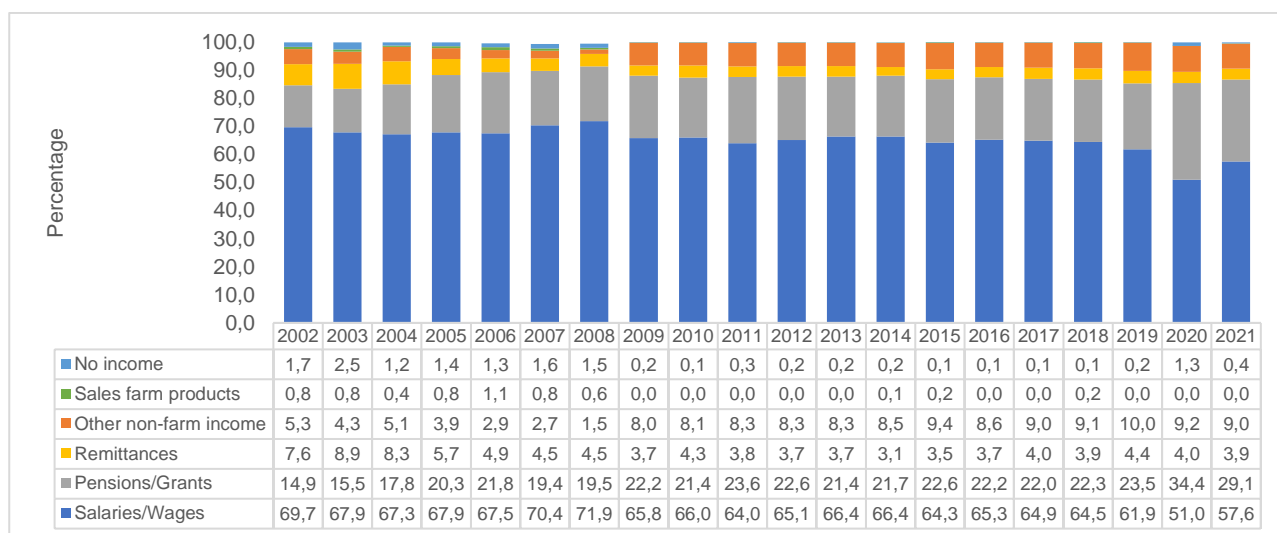
2.6 Household income

Households in South Africa have a variety of income sources. These include salaries, wages, rent, interest, profit for those having members involved in the labour market or running businesses. However, those without factors of production receive transfer payments from the government or other family members. Households may have different combinations of income sources, thus the analysis in the next section is based on the main household income. Children living in poverty are at greater risk for negative outcomes such as maltreatment and neglect; behavioral, social and emotional problems. They can also experience physical health problems and developmental delays.

Figure 2.13: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years by household source of income, 2002–2021

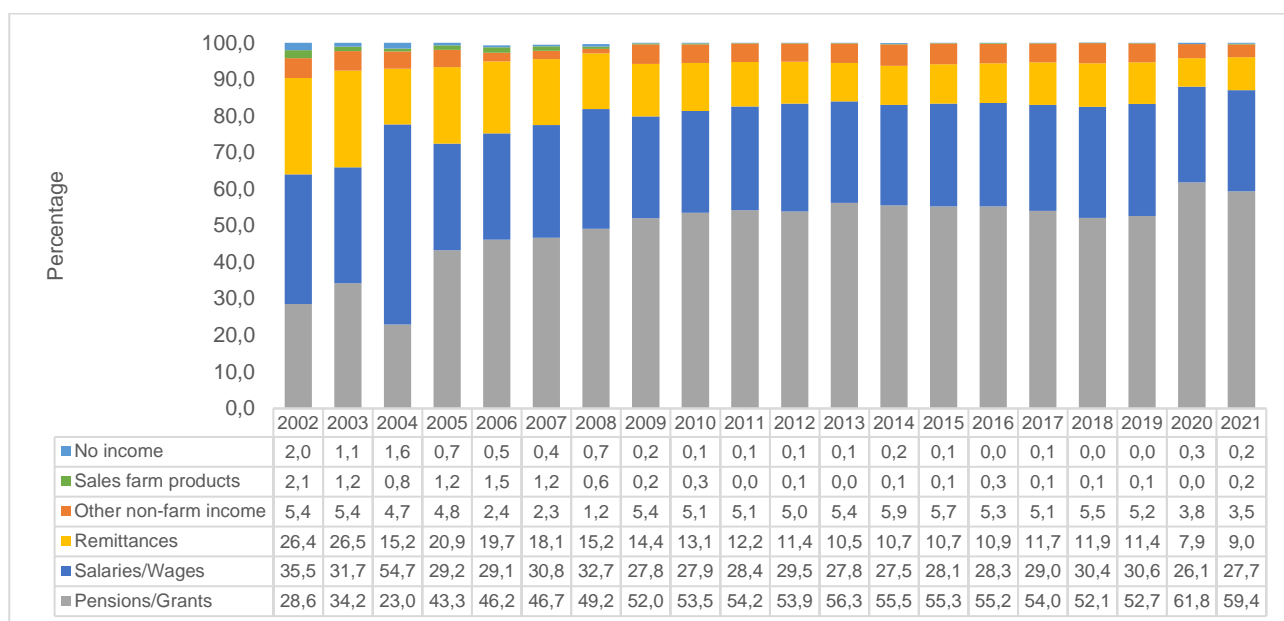
Source: GHS 2002–2021

The above graph presents the main source of income for households with children aged 0–17 years. Households main source of income had varied across the 20 years presented in the graph. Salaries and wages remained the predominant source of income for households with children except for the Covid-19 period in 2020 and 2021. The second most important sources of household income were pensions and grants. The rising trend of pensions and grants as household income had peaked during the Covid-19 period of 2020 and 2021, with 46,8% reporting it as their main in 2020. Furthermore, during the 20-year period, remittances declined rapidly, by almost three-folds from 17,9% in 2003 to 6,1% in 2021. Other non-farm income also increased, even though the increase was modest. It is, however, re-assuring to see that households with children without any income had become negligible in 2021 from close to 2% in 2002.

Figure 2.14: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years by household source of income in urban areas, 2002–2021

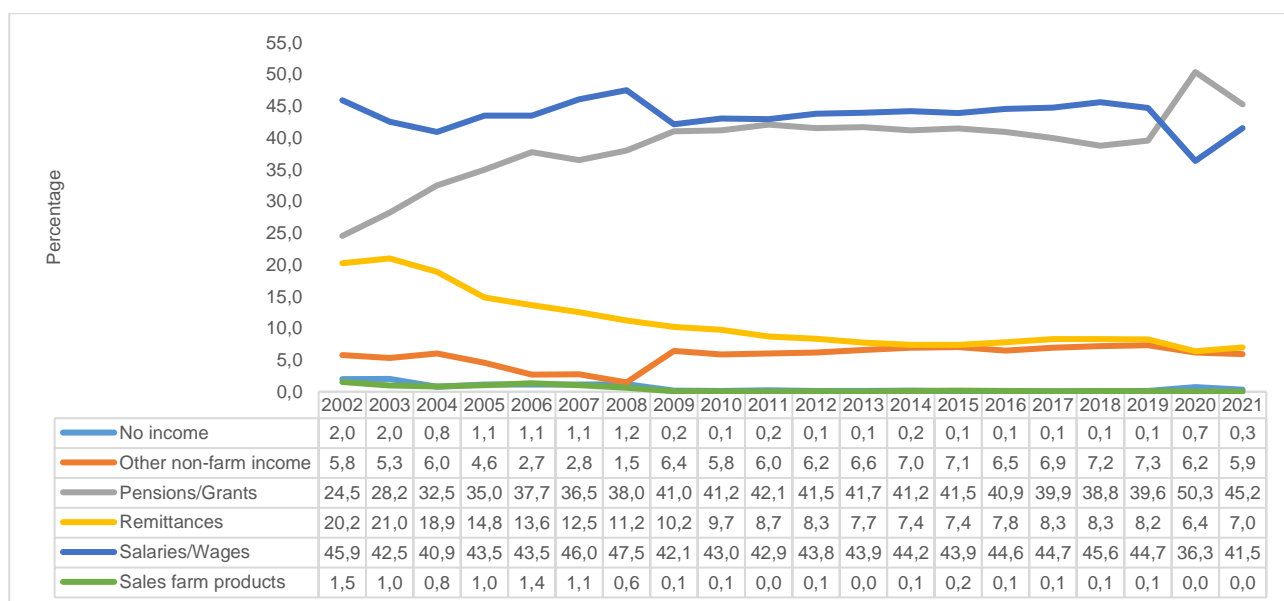
Source: GHS 2002–2021

The majority of households in urban areas relied on salaries and wages to sustain their households followed by pensions and grants. Households reliance on remittances as their main source of income was reduced by almost half over time from 7,6% in 2002 to 3,9% in 2021. However, the reverse was noted on the percentage of households that relied on other non-farm income as reliance by households on this source of income almost tripled in recent years, from 2,9% in 2006 to 9,0% in 2021.

Figure 2.15: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years by household source of income in rural areas, 2002–2021

Source: GHS 2002–2021

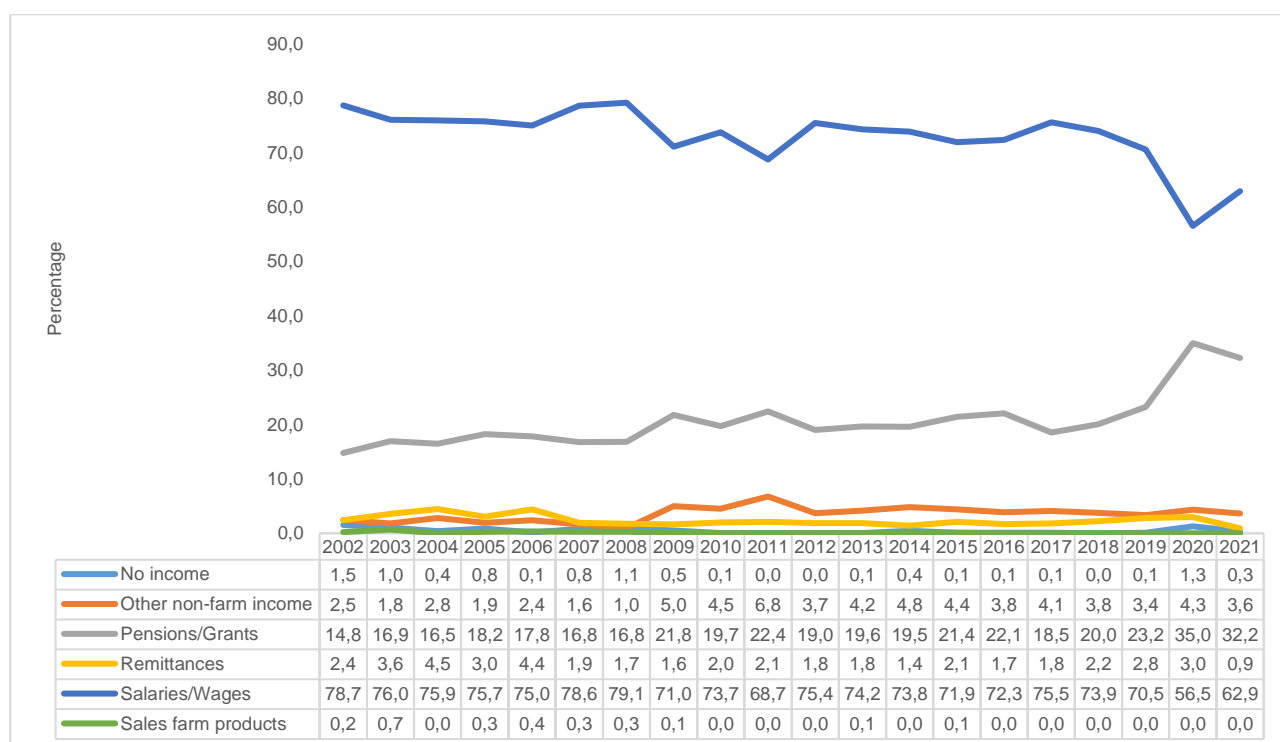
The number of rural households with children relying on pensions and grants was larger than urban households, and it was their principal source of income. The percentage of rural households that used pensions or grants as their main sources of household income almost doubled from 28,6% in 2002 to 61,8% in 2020. Salaries and wages were the second most important source of household income with on average nearly 30% of households in rural areas depending on it to sustain their livelihood. Remittances, which used to be quite a substantial source of household income in the past, with more than a quarter (26,4%) of households relying on it in 2002 reduced to a mere 9% in 2021. Rural households' reliance on sales of farm products was minimal, especially in recent years.

Figure 2.16: Percentage of black African children aged 0–17 years by household source of income, 2002–2021

Source: GHS 2002–2021

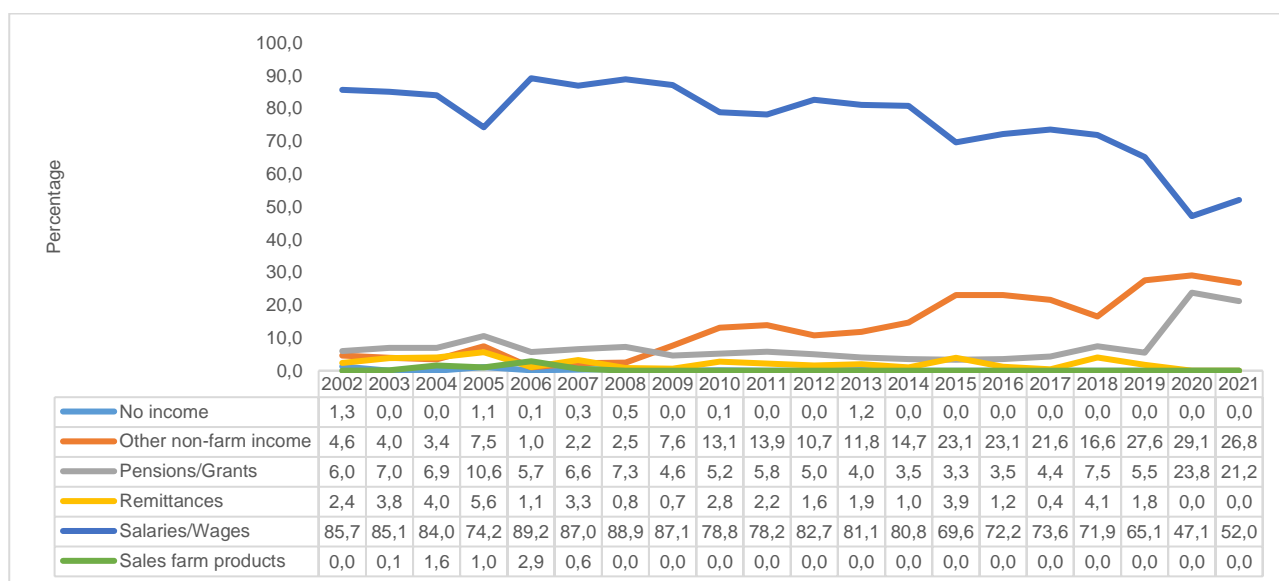
Households with black African children mostly relied on salaries, wages, pensions and grants as a source of household income (41,5% in 2021). Even though these income sources started from a different base in 2002, both showed growth in the percentage of households that utilise these as their main source of income until 2008. After 2008, the increase in the percentage of households relying on salaries and wages slowed down, and the gap between the two sources of income narrowed. Salaries and wages remained the primary source of income for households with black African children up until the Covid-19 years where the percentage of households with pensions or grants surpassed salaries and wages. The rise in the percentages of pensions and grants as a source of income resulted in the decline in remittances (24,5% in 2002 to 45,2% in 2021). The decline in remittances also made space for the rise of other non-farm income. Income from sales of farm products was negligible among households with black African children.

Figure 2.17: Percentage of coloured children aged 0–17 years by household source of income, 2002–2021



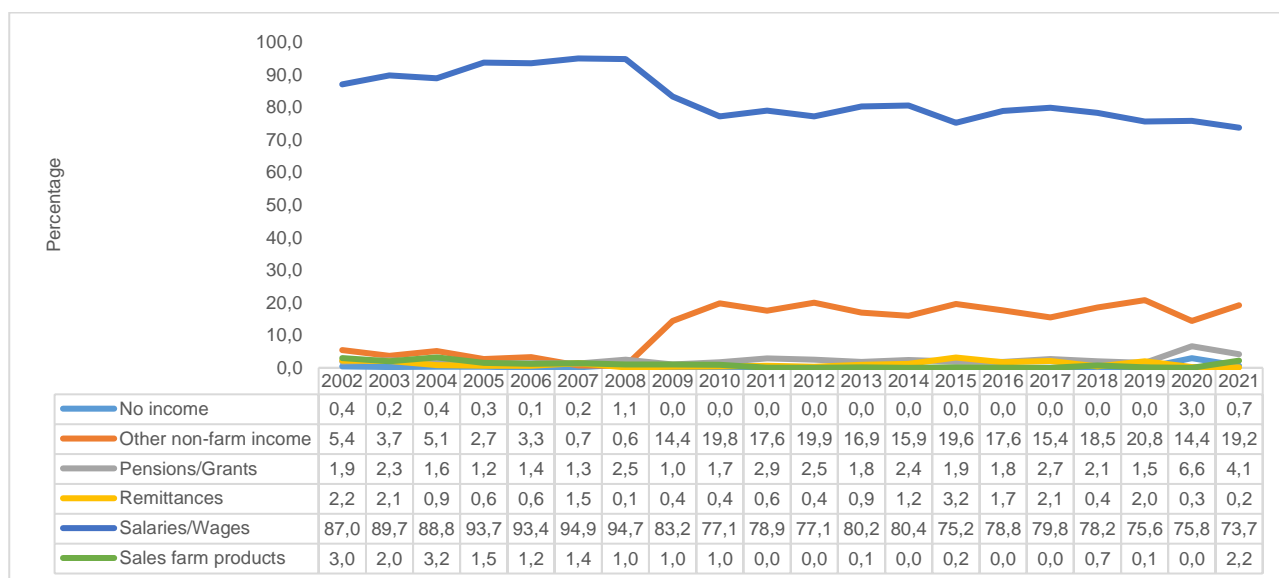
Source: GHS 2002–2021

Households with coloured children mostly relied on salaries and wages, with nearly 70% of households depending on it to survive. The Covid-19 years showed a sharp decline in the percentage of households that used salaries or wages as a source of income with only 56,5% of households in 2020 and 62,9% in 2021 using it as their main source of income. By far, less households with coloured children used pensions or grants as their source of household income compared to those with black African children. However, pensions and grants were increasing steadily from a low base of 14,8% in 2002 to a peak of 38% in 2020 and 32,2% in 2021. Other non-farm income was on the rise with close to 4% of households relying on it as a source of income in 2021. However, the percentage of households which depended on remittances were small.

Figure 2.18: Percentage of Asian/Indian children aged 0–17 years by household source of income, 2002–2021

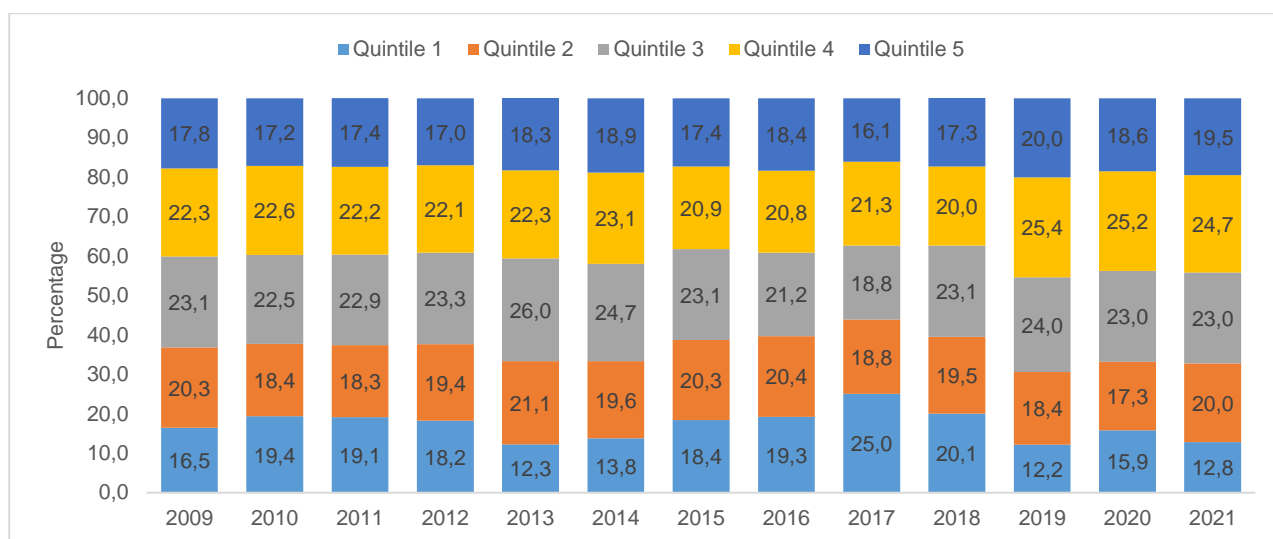
Source: GHS 2002–2021

Households with Asian/Indian children aged 0–17 years were mostly dependent on salaries and wages to survive. However, there was a decline over time in the percentage of households depending on such sources of income and a rise in the percentage of households benefiting from other non-farm income. In 20 years, the percentage of households depending on other non-farm income increased by five folds from 4,6% in 2002 to 26,8% in 2021. Unlike households with black African or coloured children, there was a smaller percentage of households with Asian/Indian children who relied on pensions or grants as their main sources of income.

Figure 2.19: Percentage of white children aged 0–17 years by household source of income, 2002–2021

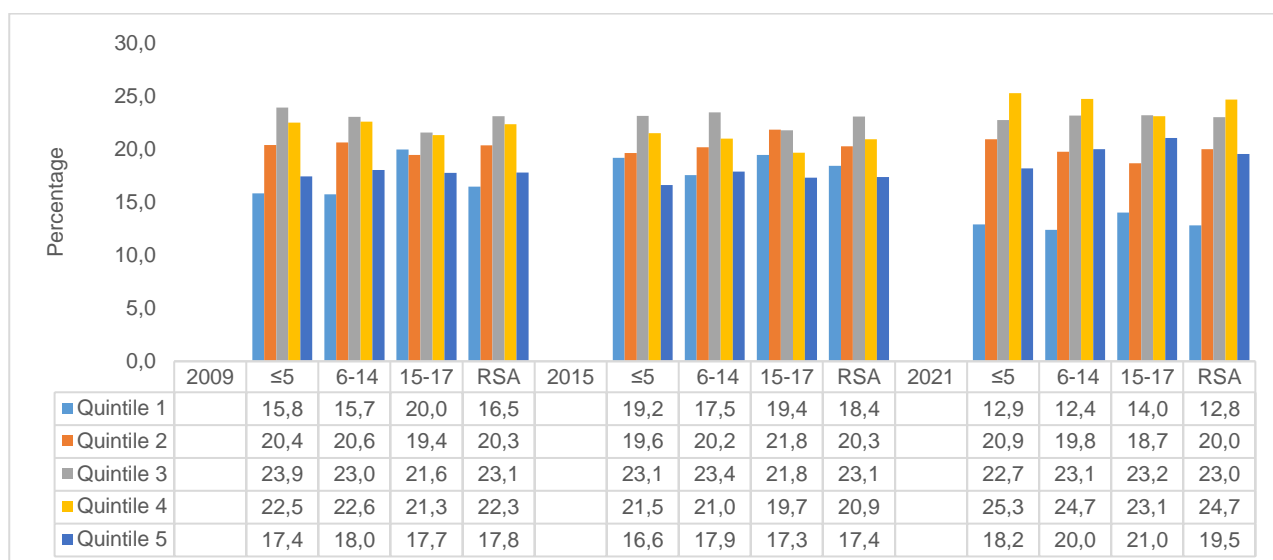
Source: GHS 2002–2021

Income for households with white children followed a similar structure to those households with Asian/Indian children. There was a great reliance on salaries and wages followed by other non-farm income. Even though the percentage of households that relied on salaries and wages dipped during the Covid-19 period, the decline was smaller compared to the other population groups. The percentage of households with other non-farm income started picking up rapidly from 2009 onwards, from a small base of 0,6% in 2008 to a peak of 20,8% in 2019, and declined during the Covid-19 period.

Figure 2.20: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years by household income quintiles, 2009–2021

Source: GHS 2009–2021

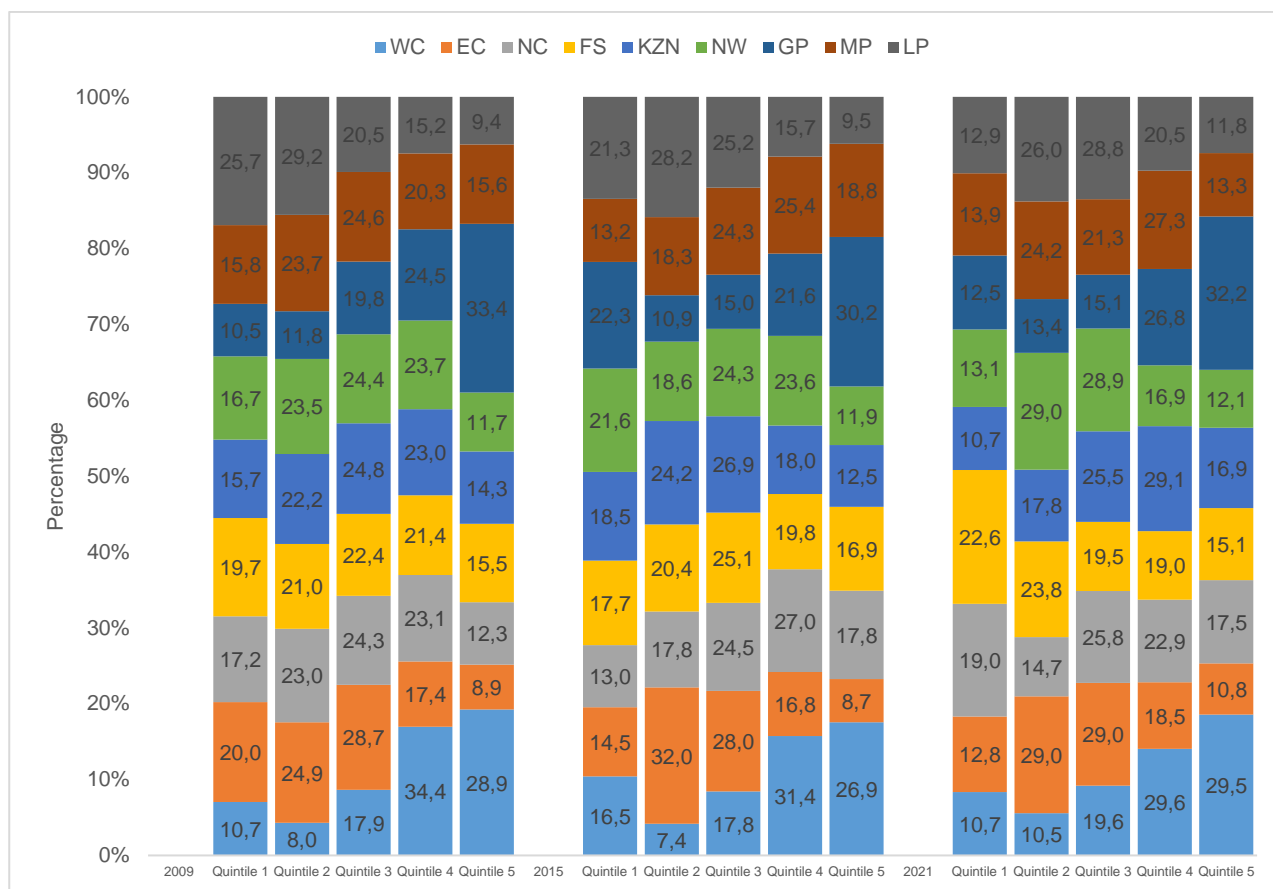
The percentage of households with children in low-income was large, remained consistently high for all the years until it reached its peak in 2016–2018, where more households were in poverty (39,7% of households were in quintiles one and two in 2016, 43,9% in 2017 and 39,5% in 2018). During this peak period, the percentage of households with children that were in deep poverty increased to 25% in 2017. Over time, the percentage of low-income households had fallen to 12,8% in 2021. Conversely, almost four out of ten households with children were well-off across all the years presented in the graph reaching 45,4% in 2019, 43,8% in 2020 and 44,2% in 2021.

Figure 2.21: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years by household income quintiles and by age, 2009–2021

Source: GHS 2009–2021

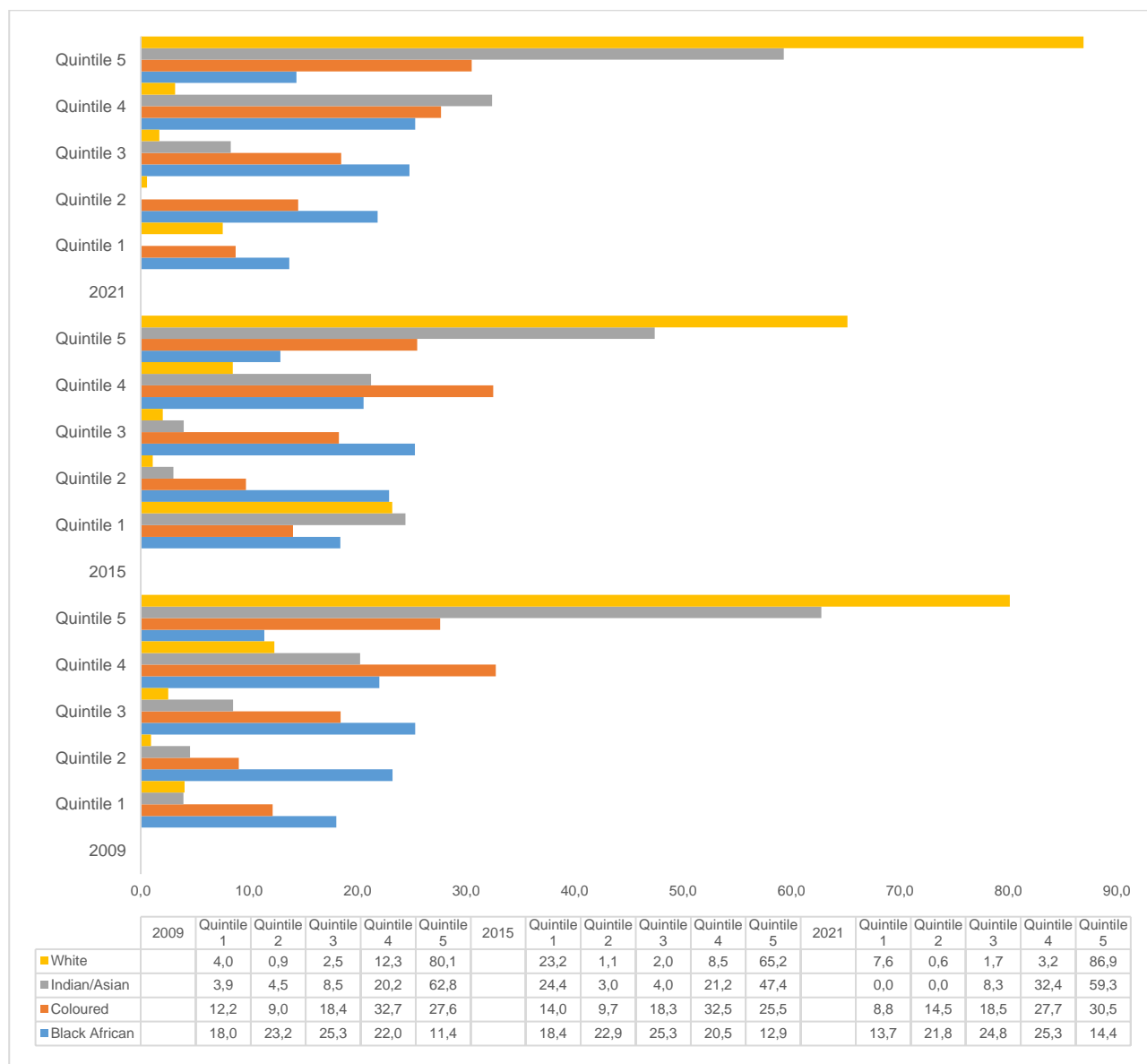
Overall household poverty levels decreased slightly over time. Household poverty levels also differ by the age group of the children. In 2015, the percentage of households with children aged five and younger in the poorest household income quintile increased to 19,2% from 15,8% in 2009. In contrast, the percentage of well-off households with children under five and younger (quintiles four and five) increased slightly from close to 40% in 2009 to 43,4% in 2021. Furthermore, households with older children (aged 15–17) had more poverty rates in 2009 (20% in quintile one) compared to 2021 (14% in quintile one).

Figure 2.22: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years old by household income quintiles and province, 2009–2021



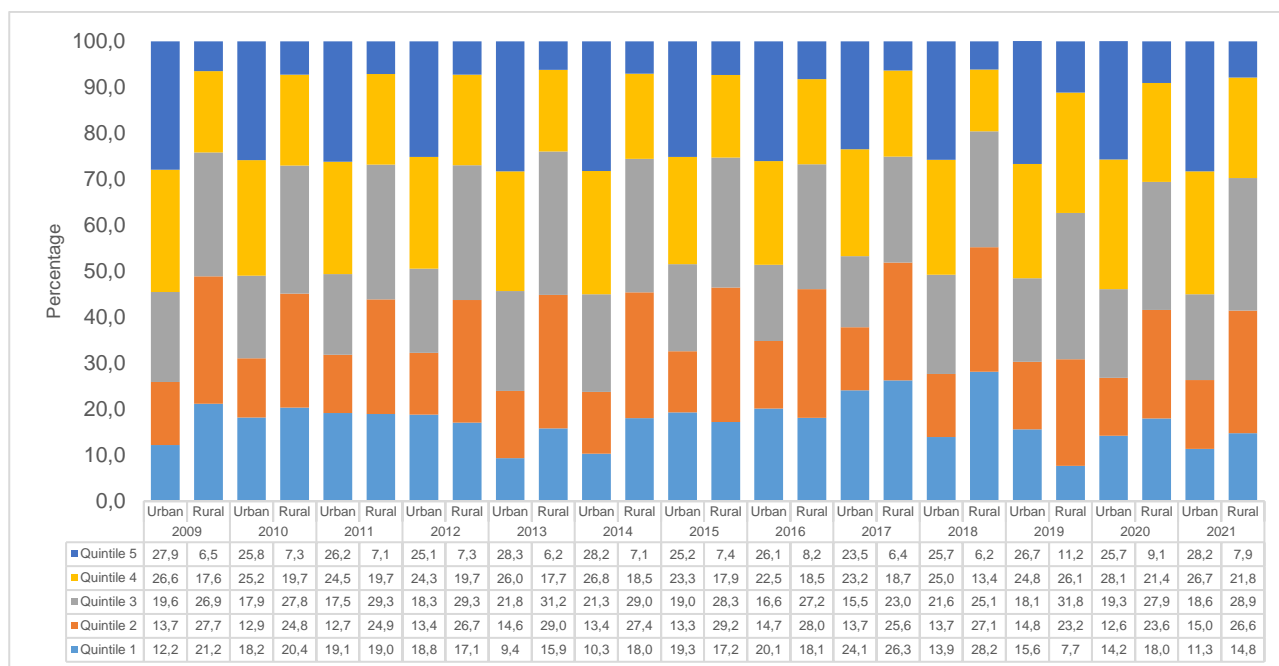
Source: GHS 2009–2021

In South Africa, children living in poverty were clustered in certain regions, and townships rather than being spread evenly across the country. The highest rates of poverty among children are in rural areas of the three province: Eastern Cape, Free State and Limpopo, as well as the historically poor regions of KwaZulu-Natal and North West. Across all years, Gauteng and Western Cape have the smallest percentages of households with children in lower income quintiles and the highest percentage of children in the highest income quintile. In 2009, close to 58% of households with children in Gauteng were in the higher income groups (quintiles four and five) whereas 63,3% of households with children had similar income categories in Western Cape. This percentage declined to 59,1% in 2021 for Western Cape.

Figure 2.23: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years by household income quintiles and population groups, 2009–2021

Source: GHS 2009–2021

In South Africa, the risk of poverty is greater for black African children than for any other population group. Across all the years presented above, poverty among households with black African children has been consistently higher than poverty in other population groups. In 2009, only one-third (33,4%) of households with black African children were found in the richest income quintiles (quintiles four and five) compared to 60,4% among coloureds. By this measure, household income levels among black African households followed similar patterns over the past ten years, only rising after 2017 to 39,7% of households with black African children having income levels within the highest quintiles in 2021.

Figure 2.24: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years old by household income quintiles and geographical area, 2009–2021

Source: GHS 2009–2021

The above graph shows the levels of relative rural and urban poverty over time based on household income quintiles. The percentage of children living in households in deep poverty defined as households in the lowest income quintiles (quintiles one and two) is higher in rural areas. In fact, households with children have also experienced increased rates of deep poverty over the last decade, especially in rural areas. According to the above graph, in 2009, about 49% of people children living in rural areas were poor, while 26% living in urban areas were poor. However, 2018 was the year that depicts the highest gap in urban-rural child poverty (55% and 28% respectively). Poverty is often influenced by economic and social factors in the community, including high unemployment rates and lack of access to educational opportunities. Furthermore, average household incomes are lower in rural areas. Moreover, rural areas have slightly larger household sizes compared to urban areas, with fewer potential earners and a greater number of children and other dependents.

2.7 Summary

In South Africa, the majority of children reside in the most populous provinces Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. In 2021, children constituted 34,2% of the total population in the country which was a decline from 39,5% in 2002. In 2021, 61,5% of children lived in extended family households compared to 36,5% who lived in nuclear family households. Furthermore, the percentage of children aged 0–17 years who lived with their mothers increased from 38,2% in 2002 to 43,4% in 2021. However, the percentage of those who lived with both parents declined from 39,5% in 2002 to 33,8% in 2021.

Families serve often as the first line of protection and care for children. However, due to various circumstances including labour market migration, poverty, disability, domestic violence or death of parents, children may lack this care and protection. Many children in South Africa continue to grow up deprived of parental care but still benefit from being cared for by family members and relatives.

While the overall rate of poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, the difference between urban-rural poverty rates varies significantly across regions. Households with children in rural areas with a high incidence of poverty were mainly concentrated in Eastern Cape, Free State, and Limpopo. Pockets of high poverty were also increasingly found in other regions, such as non-urban areas of KwaZulu-Natal and North West.

Chapter 3: Maltreatment of children

3.1 Introduction

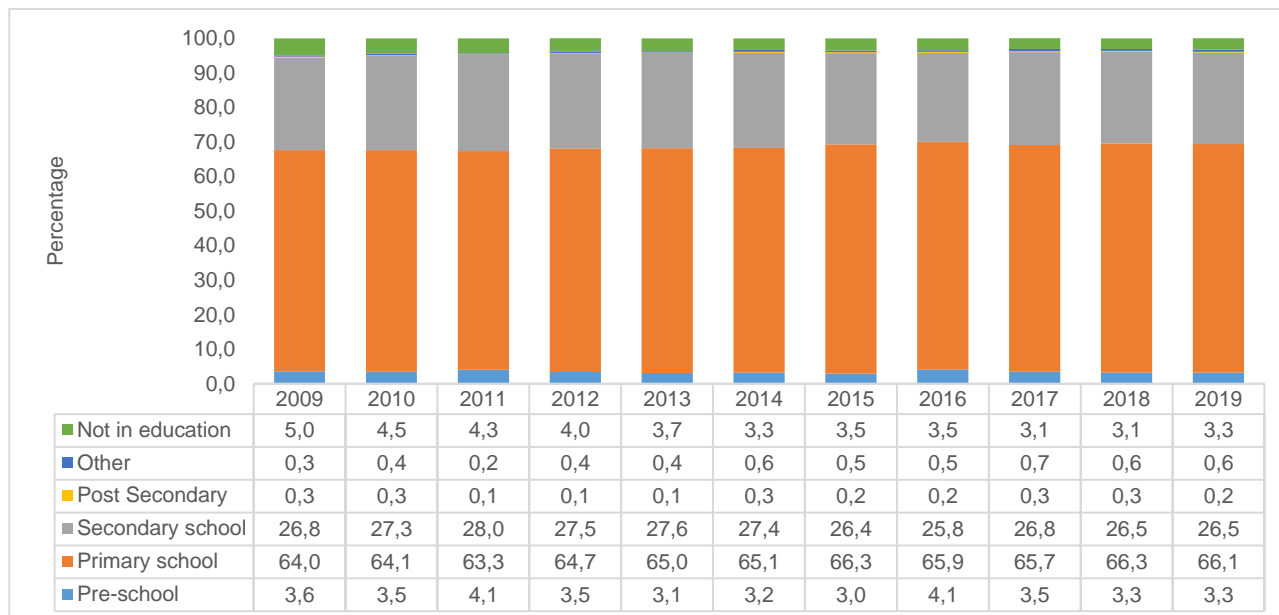
School violence is typically defined as any acts of violence that takes place inside an educational institution, when travelling to and from school, or at a school-related event. Violence in South African schools includes threats of violence, psychological abuse, robbery, physical assaults, gang violence, corporal punishment, sexual violence, and bullying. The surge of violence is on the rise both in primary and secondary educational institutions. Additional forms of violence include attacks on teachers by students.

In 2016, the National School Safety Framework, developed by the Department of Basic Education, the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP), and other key-governmental stakeholders, focused on a “whole of school approach” to violence prevention and safety promotion in schools (CJCP, 2016). The framework identifies the essential role of all school stakeholders in ensuring a comprehensive approach to safety in the school environment. The purpose of this framework is “to create a safe, violence- and threat-free, supportive learning environment for learners, educators, principals, school governing bodies and administration” (CJCP, 2016, p.10).

3.2 Children aged 5–17 years maltreatment at school

The majority of perpetrators of violent school crimes are recognised by their victims. This suggests that most offenders are fellow students and teachers, not intruders from the outside community. Parents and other relatives of students could form a special category of intruders and could be responsible for some assaults on teachers and other staff members.

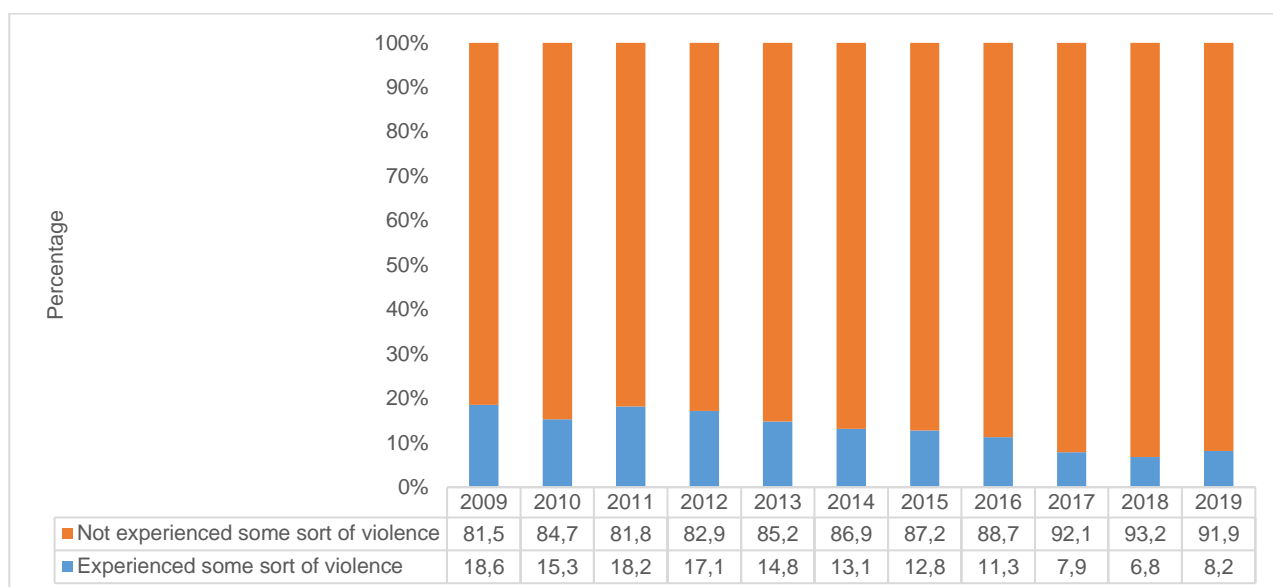
Figure 3.1: Percentage distribution of children aged 5–17 years school attendance, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Figure 3.1 shows that the percentage of children aged 0–17 years who attended primary school increased from 64,0% in 2009 to 66,1% in 2019. This is a small but significant increase from 2009 to 2019. Data also shows that the proportion of persons aged five to 17 years who attended secondary educational institutions remained relatively stable between 2009 to 2019. The figure also highlights a decline in the percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were not attending any educational institutions from 2009 to 2019.

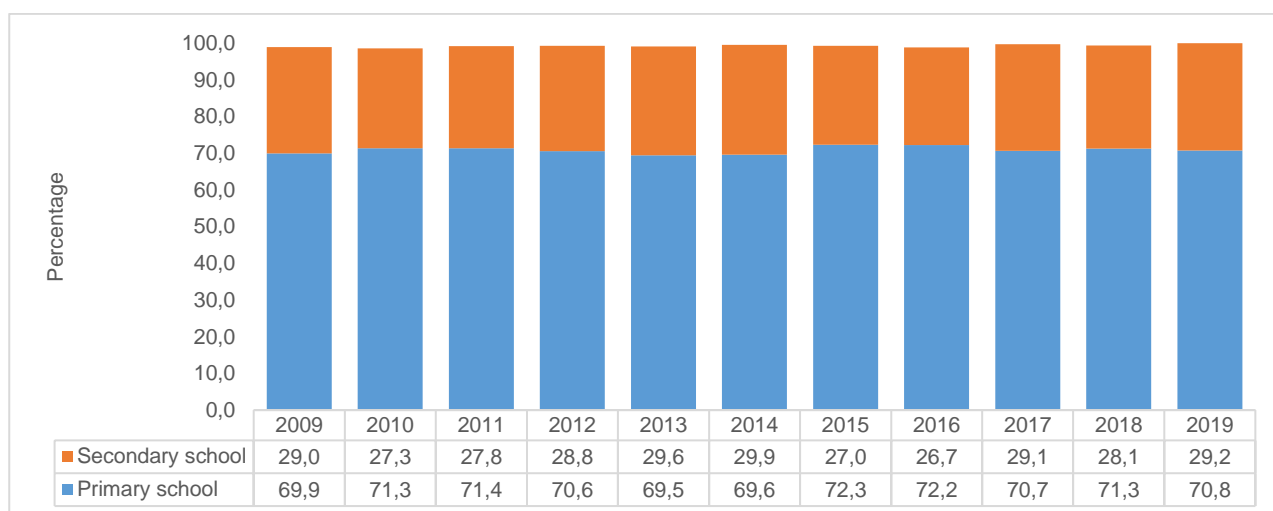
Figure 3.2: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some sort of violence at school, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Between 2009 and 2019, the average percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some form of violence, corporal punishment or verbal abuse at school from a school official or other learners had reduced by half from 18,6% in 2009 to 8,2% in 2019.

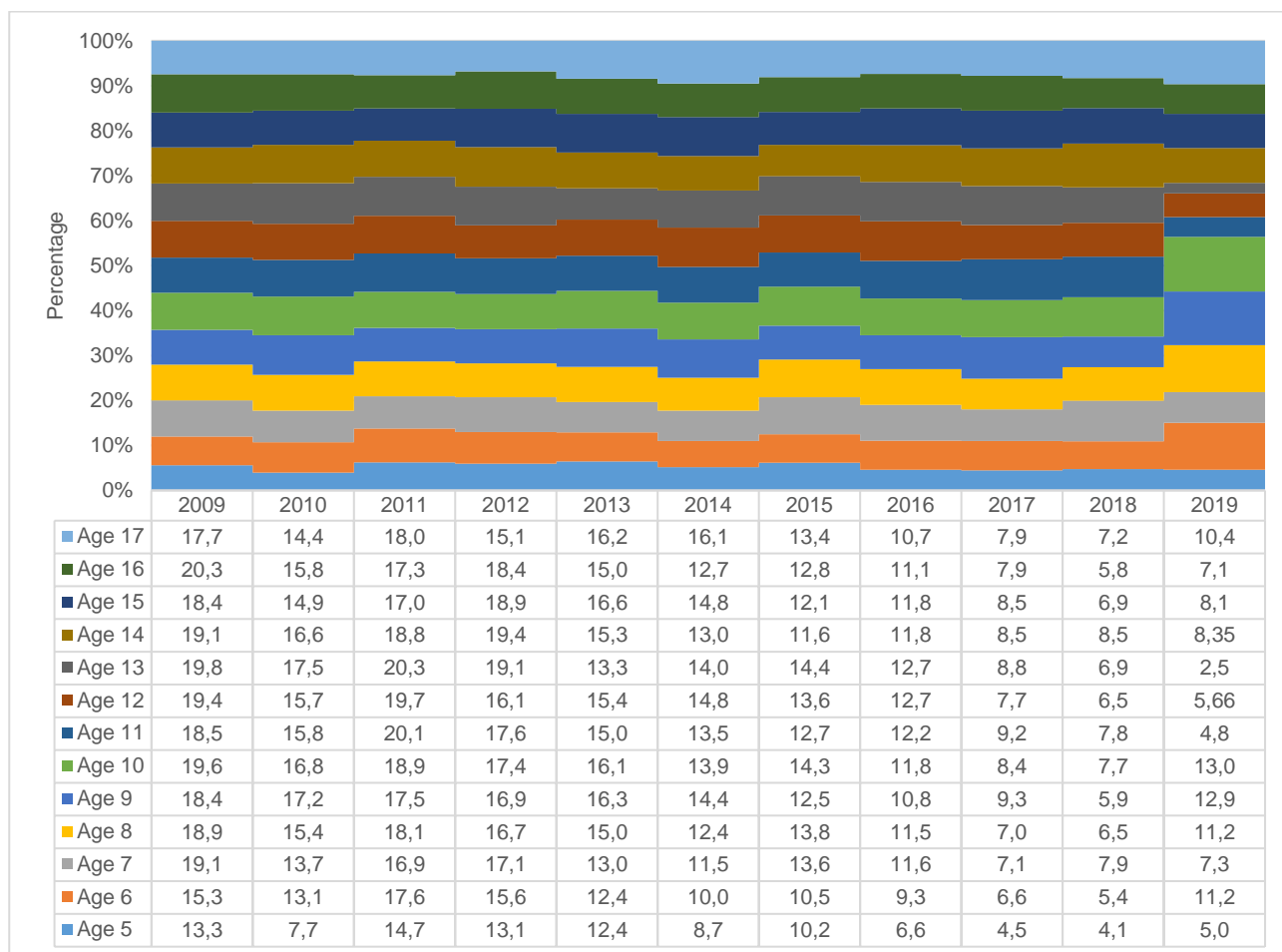
Figure 3.3: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some sort of violence by school phase, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Violence in schools is a global phenomenon, with South Africa being no exception. Since most children aged 5–17 years attend primary education, they would proportionally more likely be exposed to school violence. In 2019, 70,8% of children who experienced violence at school attended primary education, while 29,2% attended secondary education. This translates to just over a million children (1 073 913) across the country having experienced violence at school in 2019.

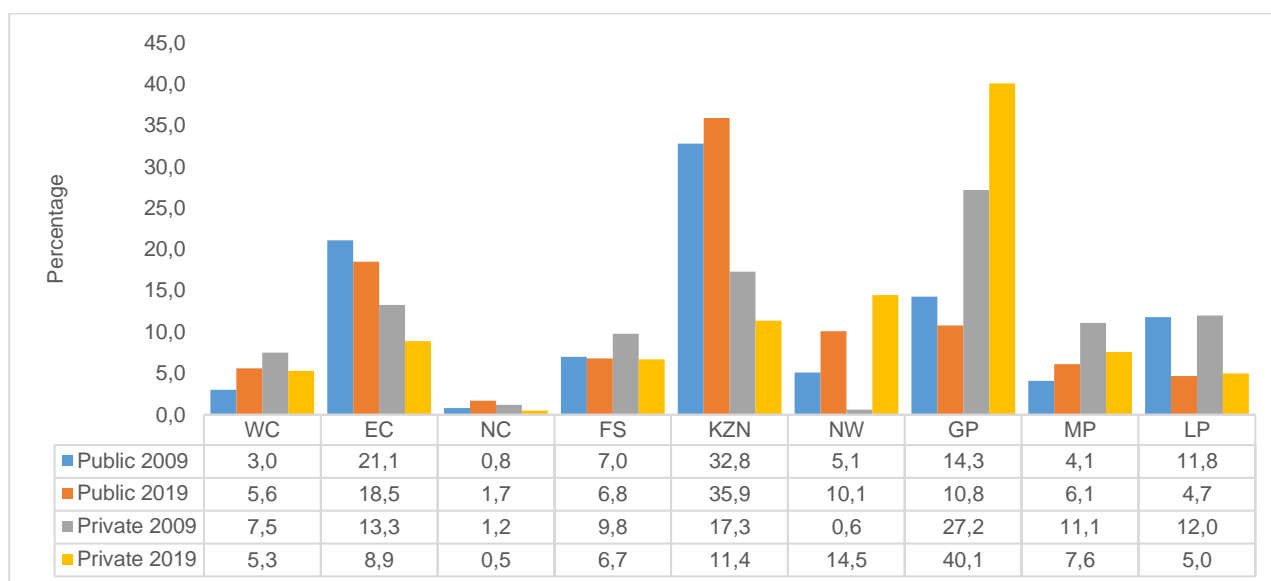
Figure 3.4: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some sort of violence at school by age, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Primary education is typically designed for children six to 11 years of age. Legally, children can be enrolled at primary school from the age of five years in grade R and upwards and must have started their formal education by the age of six years. This figure shows that across all age groups, children whom experienced any violence while attending school were higher between 2009 and 2016 and started to decline slightly from 2017 to 2019. However, children aged 8–10 years were particularly prone to be victims of violence across all the years presented above.

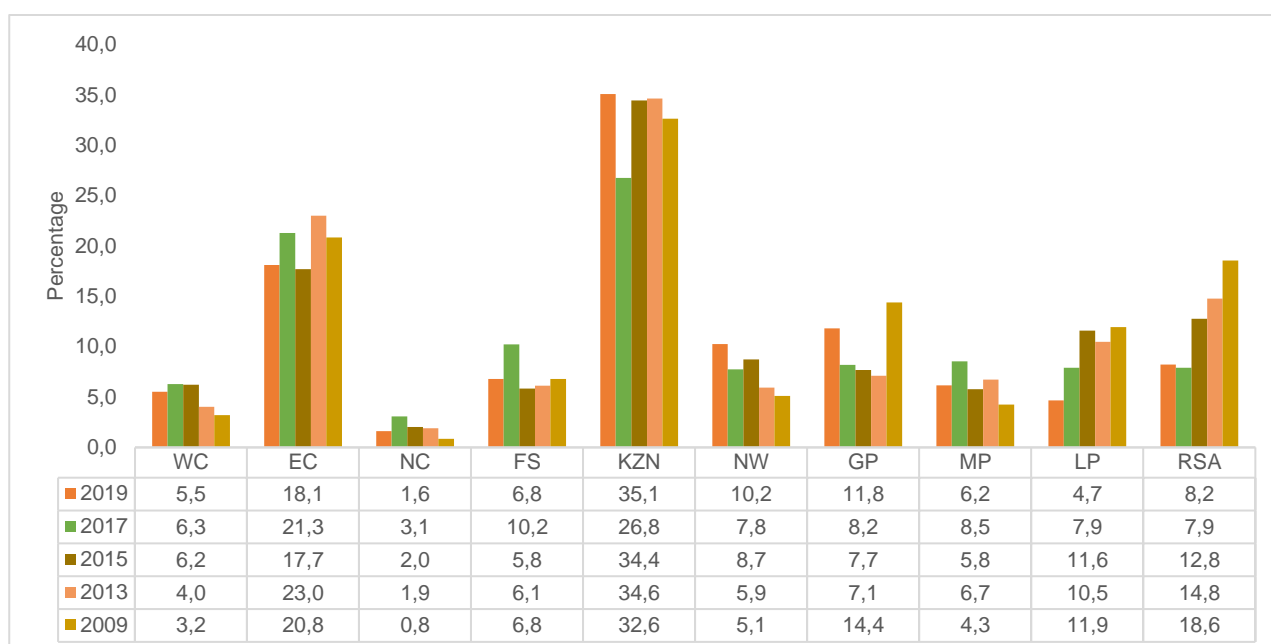
Figure 3.5: Type of school attended by children aged 5–17 who experienced some sort of violence at school by province, 2009 and 2019



Source: GHS 2009 and 2019

Figure 3.5 presents children aged 5–17 years attending public or private education institutions who experienced violence at school in 2009 and 2019. Out of all children aged 5–17 years who experienced any form of violence in 2019, around 96,4% attended public education institutions, whilst 3,6% attended private education institutions. In 2019, KwaZulu-Natal had the highest percentage of children in public education institutions who experienced violence at school (35,9%), followed by Eastern Cape (18,5%). Gauteng (40,1%) had the highest percentage of children in private education institutions who experienced violence at school in 2019 followed by North West (14,6%).

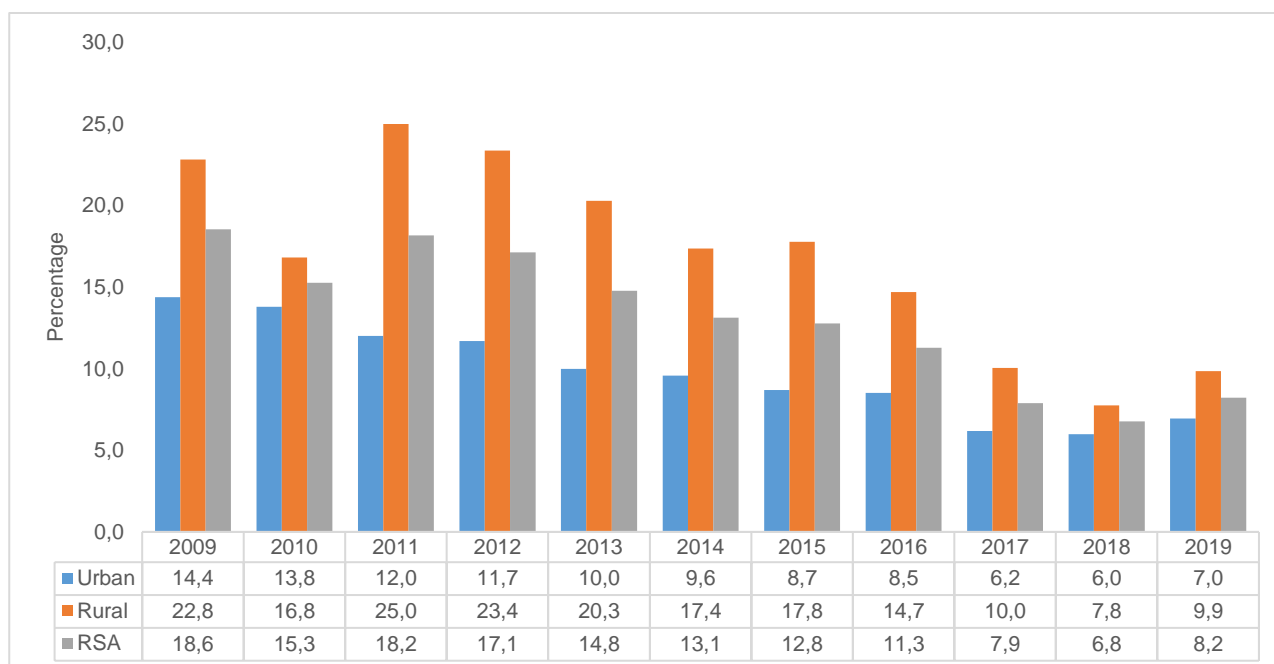
Figure 3.6: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some sort of violence at school by province, 2009 and 2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

KwaZulu-Natal recorded the highest percentage of children who experienced violence at school for all the years displayed, followed by Eastern Cape. Nationally, the percentage of learners who reportedly experienced any form of violence at school dropped by 10,4 percentage points, from 18,6% in 2009 to 8,2% in 2019. While the overall trend showed a decline, very few provinces showed a clear drop in patterns of violence. In Eastern Cape, the percentage of children who experienced violence reduced by 2,7 percentage points from 20,8% in 2009 to 18,1% in 2019. The largest decrease was observed in Limpopo (7,2 percentage points), followed by Eastern Cape (2,7 percentage points) and Gauteng (2,6 percentage points). Interestingly, KwaZulu-Natal experienced a sharp decline between 2009 to 2017, decreasing by (5,8 percentage points), before it increased from 2017 to 2019 by 8,1 percentage points.

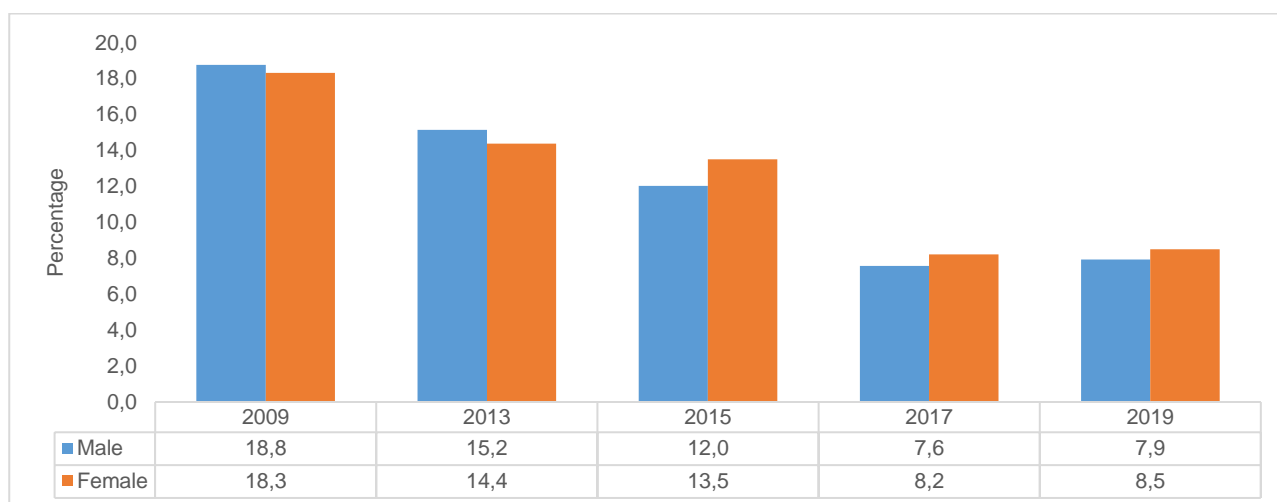
Figure 3.7: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some sort of violence at school by geographical area, 2009 and 2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

The above graph presents data on the percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some form of violence at school by geographical location. Though the percentage of children who reportedly experienced violence at school dropped between 2009 and 2019, the graph above shows that children in rural areas were more at risk of violence than their counterparts residing in urban areas. In 2011-2013 the percentage of children experiencing corporal punishment in rural areas was almost double than the percentage of children in urban areas. Approximately one-tenth (9,9%) of children residing in rural areas still experienced some form of violence, corporal punishment or verbal abuse at school from a school official or other learners, slightly less than those residing in urban areas (7,0%) in 2019.

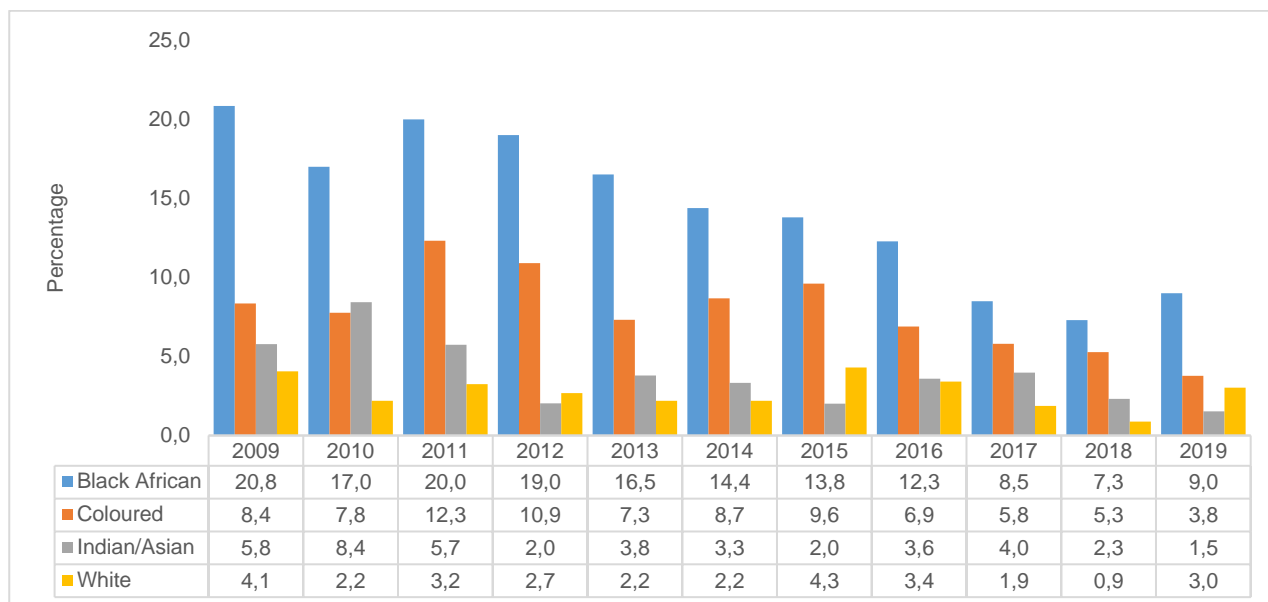
Figure 3.8: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some sort of violence at school by gender, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Figure 3.8 shows that in 2015–2019 girls were more likely to experience some form of violence, corporal punishment or verbal abuse at school from a school official or other learners relative to boys. This was not the case in 2009, where boys were equally likely to experience any form of violence, corporal punishment or verbal abuse at school from a school official or other learners relative to girls (18,3%). Despite this pattern, there is a notable decrease recorded in both sexes in experiences of violence in 2019.

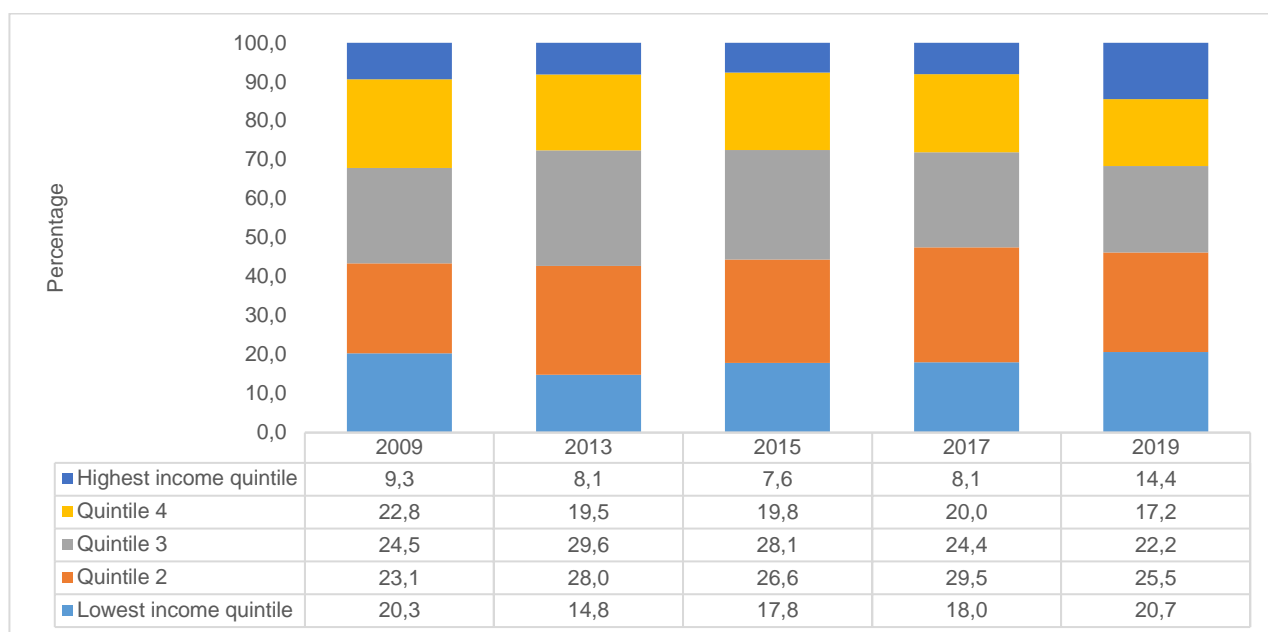
Figure 3.9: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some sort of violence at school by population group, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

The above graph shows the percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some form of violence at educational institutions decreased for all the population groups. Violence experienced at educational institutions was most common among black Africans (20,8%) and coloured (8,4%), while only 5,8% of the Whites and 4,1% Indian/Asians population groups experienced any form of violence in 2009. Similarly, in 2019, the percentage of children who experienced violence at educational institutions was reduced among black Africans to 9,0%, to 3,8% among coloureds while only 3% of the Whites and 1,5% Indian/Asians population groups experienced any form of violence.

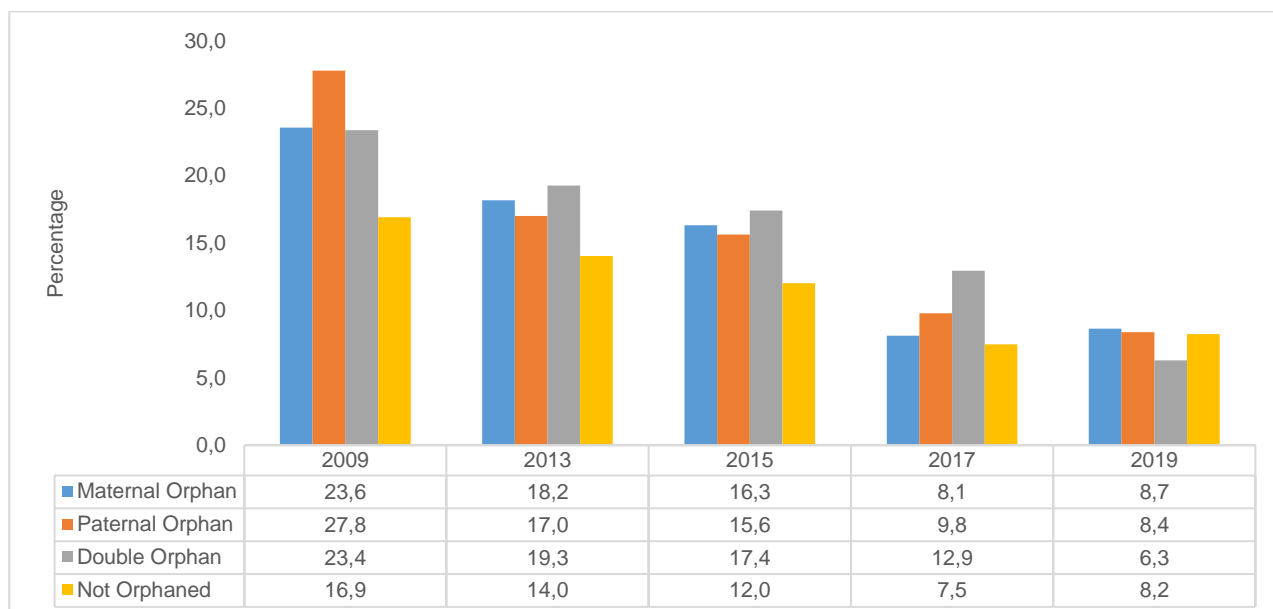
Figure 3.10: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some sort of violence at school by household income quintiles, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Children in lower household income quintiles were most likely to experience some form of violence, corporal punishment or verbal abuse at school from a school official or other learners. Those in the highest income quintiles were less likely to experience any form of violence. In 2009, 43,4% of children who experienced violence at school were from a low-income group (quintiles one and two). This percentage increased to 46,2% in 2019. However, the percentage of children from the highest income group who experienced violence at school increased from 9,3% in 2009 to 14,4% in 2019.

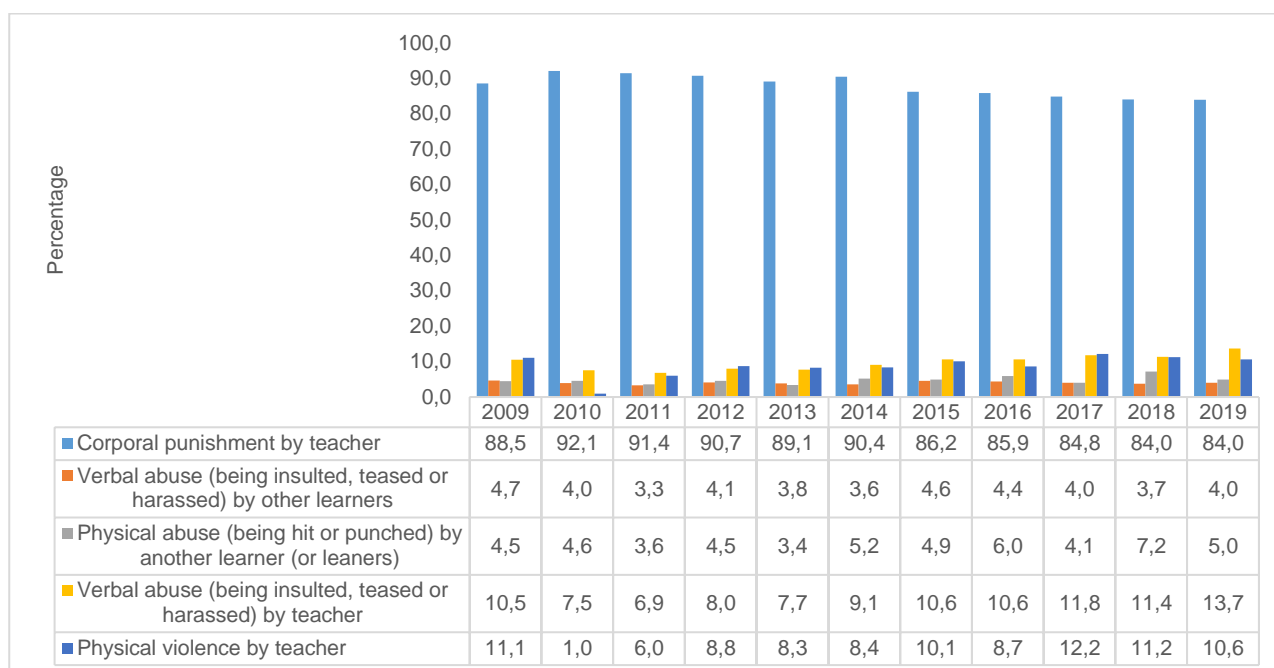
Figure 3.11: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some sort of violence at school by orphanhood status, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Children who lost at least one parent were more likely to have experienced some sort of violence at school. The percentage of paternal orphan children who experienced some form of violence was the highest in 2009 at 27,8%, and decreased by 19,4 percentage points in 2019. Across all the years, there was a significant drop in the percentage of children who experienced any form of violence by orphanhood status.

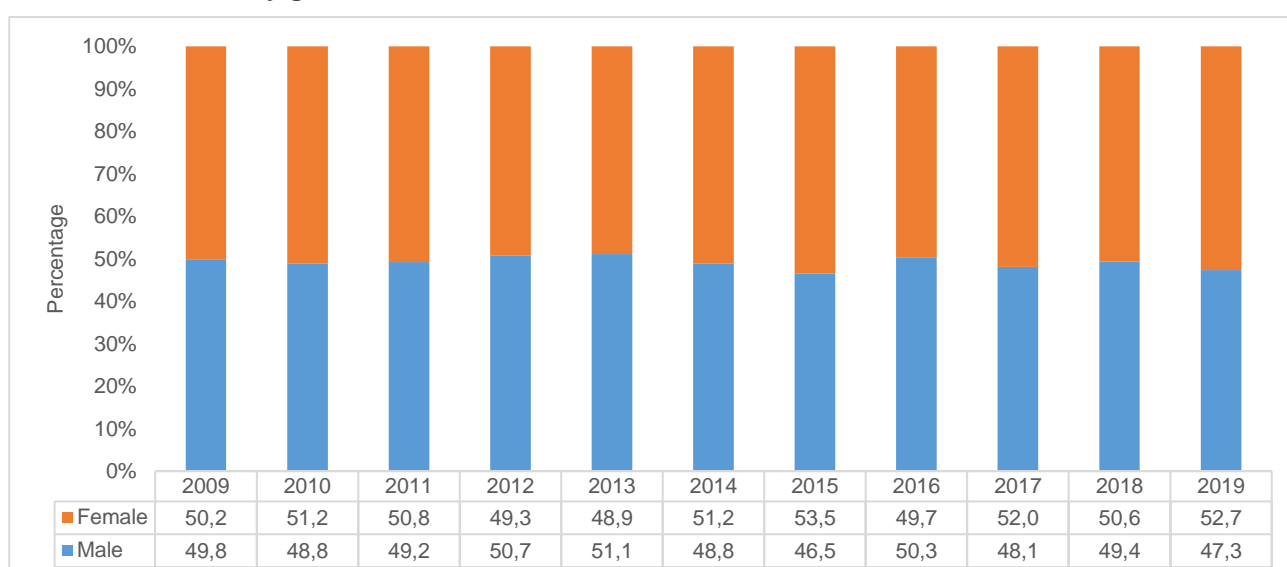
Figure 3.12: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced some sort of violence at school, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Differences were observed between the kinds of violence children experience at school from a school official or other children. Specifically, a higher percentage of children reported being the subject of corporal punishment by a teacher in all the years. The second most common violence experienced by learners was verbal abuse by teachers, which could take the form of insults, teasing and harassment by teachers. This type of violence increased from 10,5% in 2009 to 13,7% in 2019. The third most common violence suffered by learners was physical violence by teachers. This type of violence was experienced by close to 11% of learners in 2019. Physical abuse by other learners was slightly more prominent compared to verbal abuse by other learners (close to 5% and 4%, respectively, in 2019).

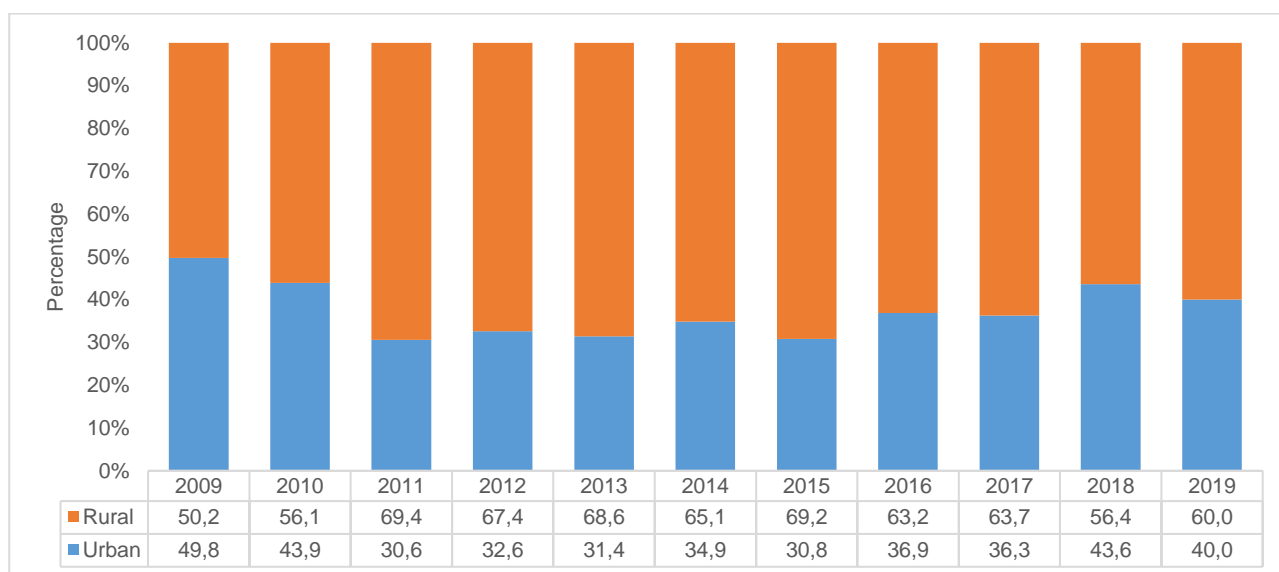
Figure 3.13: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced corporal punishment by teachers at school by gender, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

School corporal punishment is the deliberate infliction of physical pain as a response to undesired behaviour by students. Overall, it was most likely that female children would experience corporal punishment by teachers at school than male children.

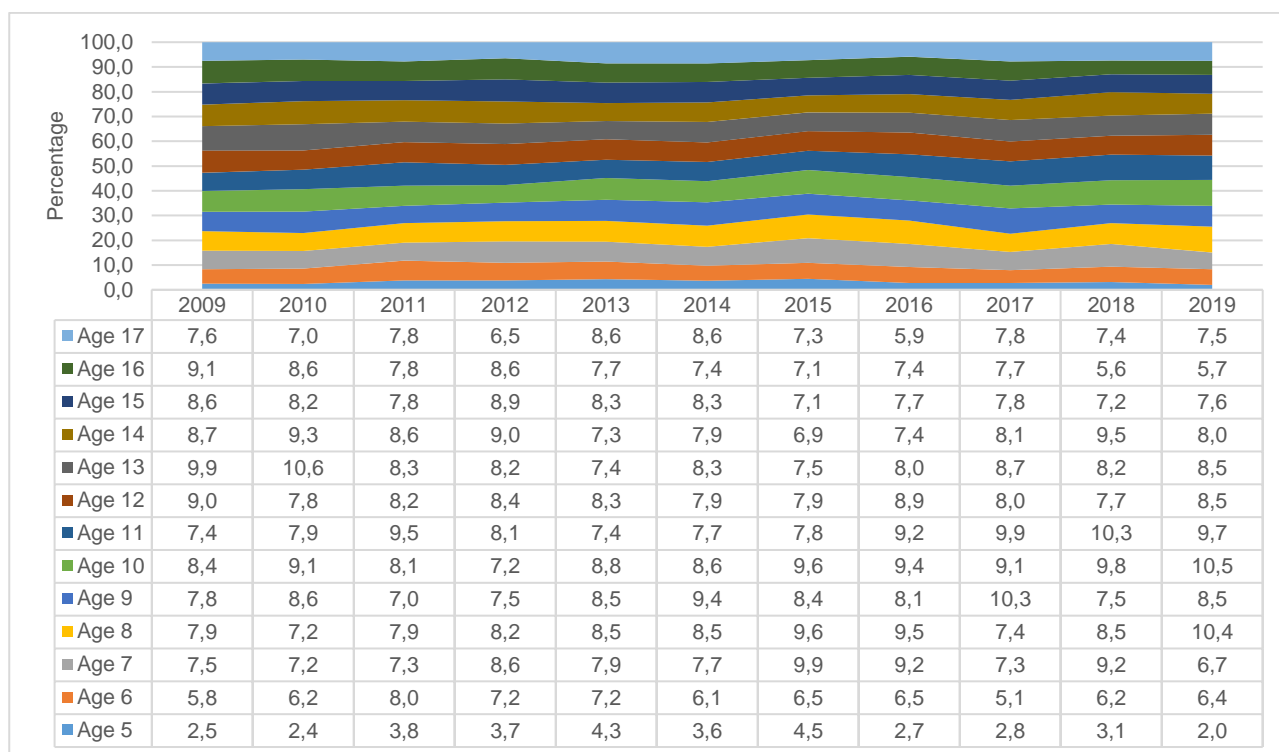
Figure 3.14: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced corporal punishment by teachers at school by geographical area, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Figure 3.14 shows the percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced corporal punishment by a teacher at school by geographical location. The majority of children aged 5–17 years who experienced corporal punishment by teachers at school resided in rural areas. However, the rural-urban gap has been gradually widening since 2010.

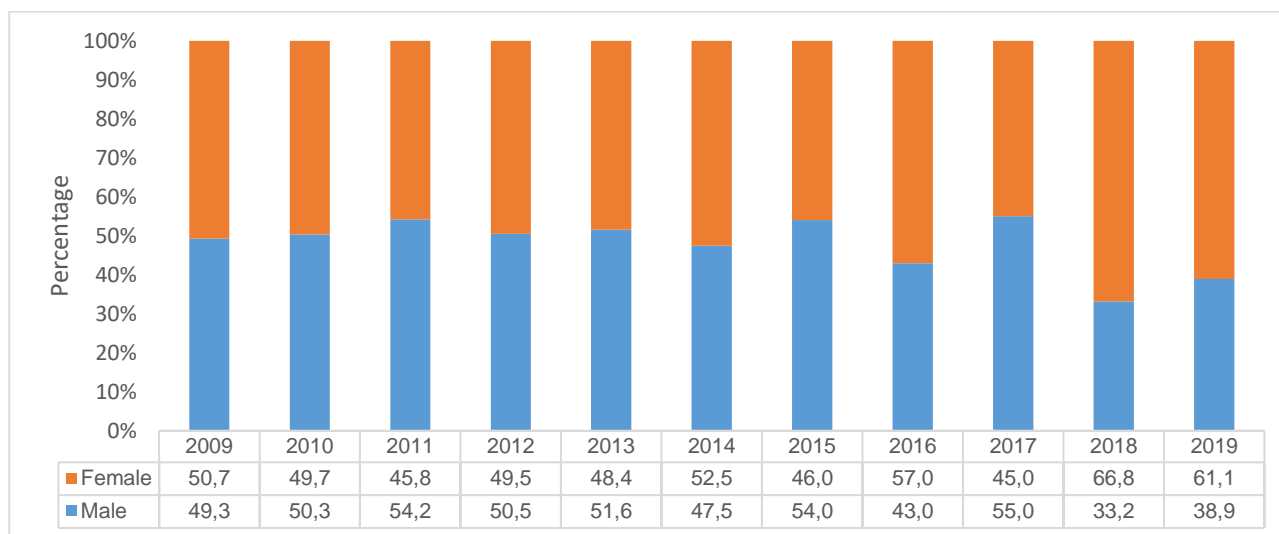
Figure 3.15: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced corporal punishment by teachers at school by age, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Figure 3.15 shows the percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced corporal punishment by a teacher at school by age. Overall, between 2009 to 2019, corporal punishment by a teacher at school increased as age increased. The practice was mostly applied to pre-teenagers and teenagers.

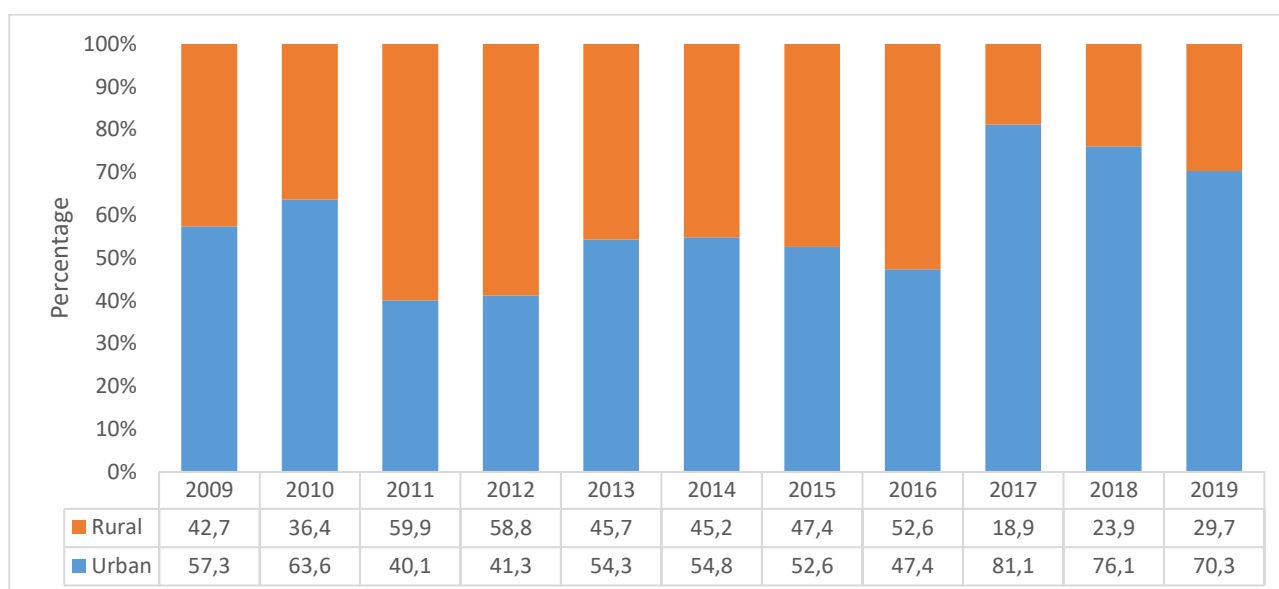
Figure 3.16: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced physical abuse by teachers at school by gender, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Overall, it is most likely that female children would experience physical abuse by teachers than male children. In 2018, almost two-thirds (66,8%) of those who experienced physical violence were girls compared to 33,2% of boys. Although the data shows some fluctuations over the years, the percentage of female children who experienced physical violence by teachers increased from 50,7% in 2009 to 61,1% in 2019.

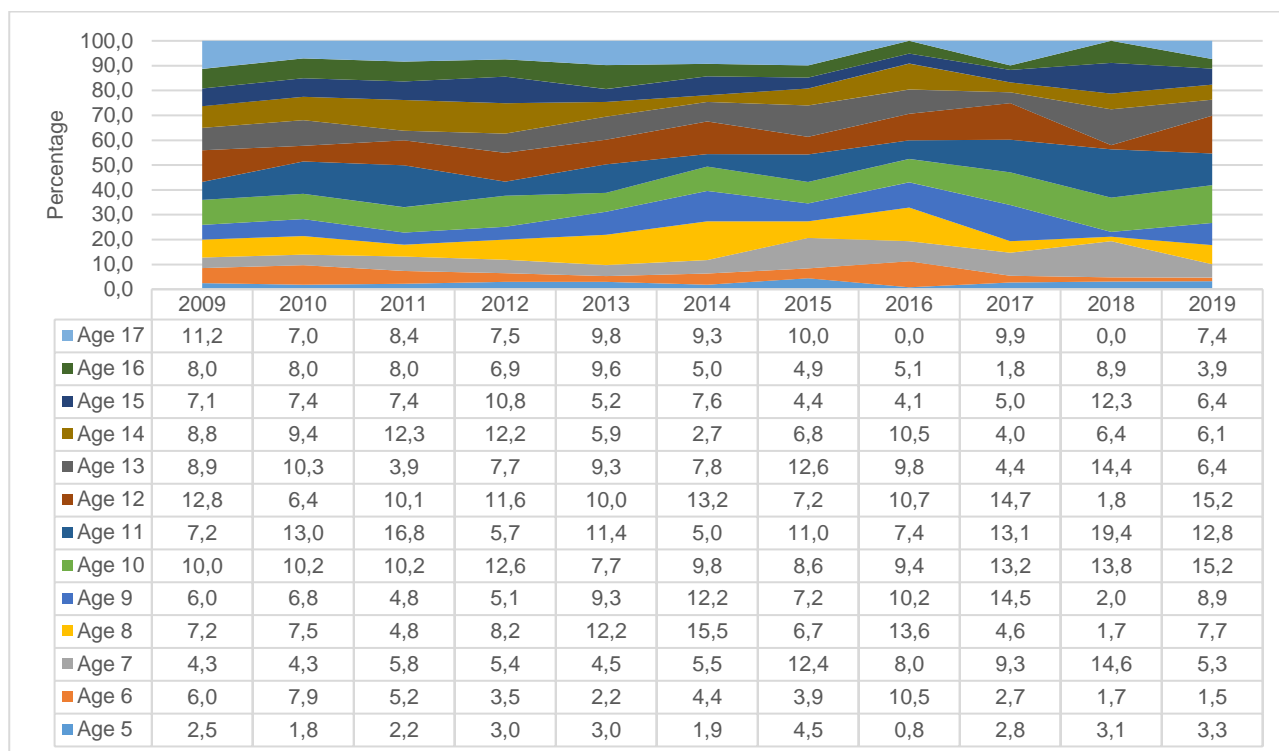
Figure 3.17: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced physical abuse by teachers at school by geographical area, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

The majority of children aged 5–17 years who experienced physical violence by teachers at school were found in urban areas. The occurrence of physical violence by teachers spiked in urban schools in 2017 with close to 81% of learners experiencing such violence.

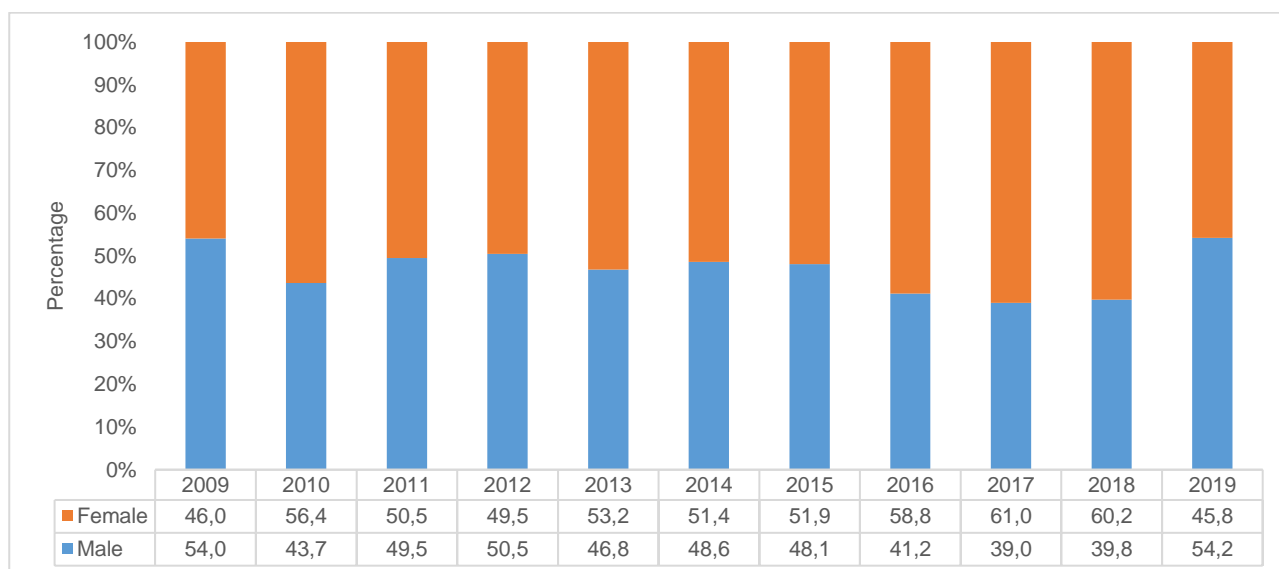
Figure 3.18: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced physical abuse by teachers at school by age, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Children who suffered the most from physical violence by teachers were in the age group 8–17 years. Furthermore, four out of ten children (43,2%) who suffered from physical violence in 2019 were ten to 12-year-olds.

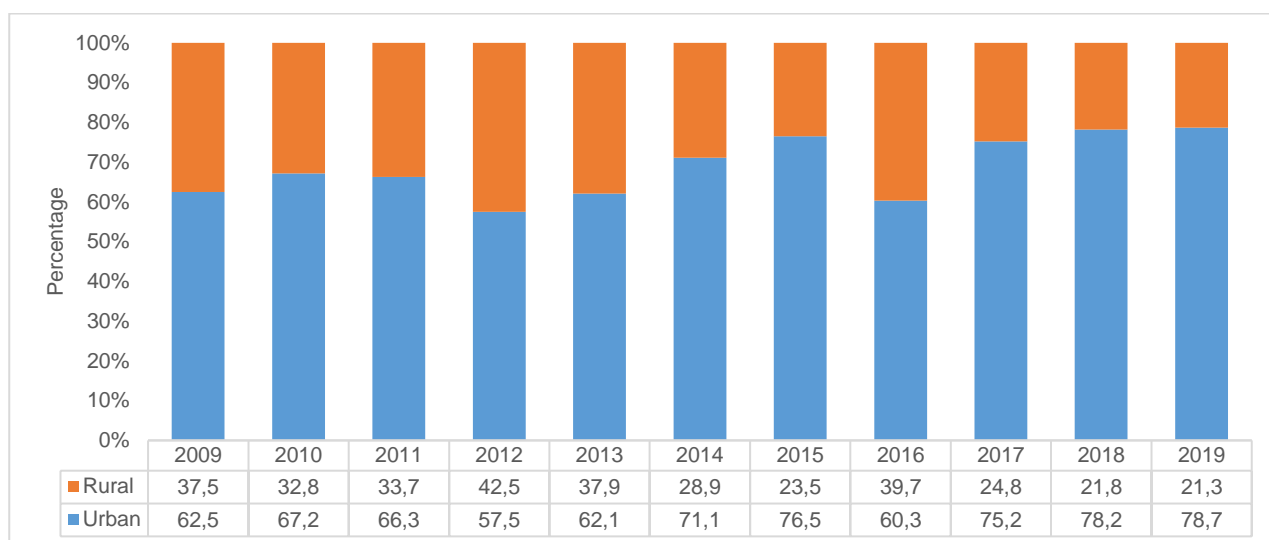
Figure 3.19: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced verbal abuse (being insulted, teased or harassed) by teachers at school by gender, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

The figure above presents the trend over time in the percentage of learners aged 5–17 years who experienced verbal abuse (being insulted, teased or harassed) by a teacher at school by gender. Female learners aged 5–17 years were overall the subject of verbal abuse by teachers, including being insulted, teased and harassed compared to their male counterparts.

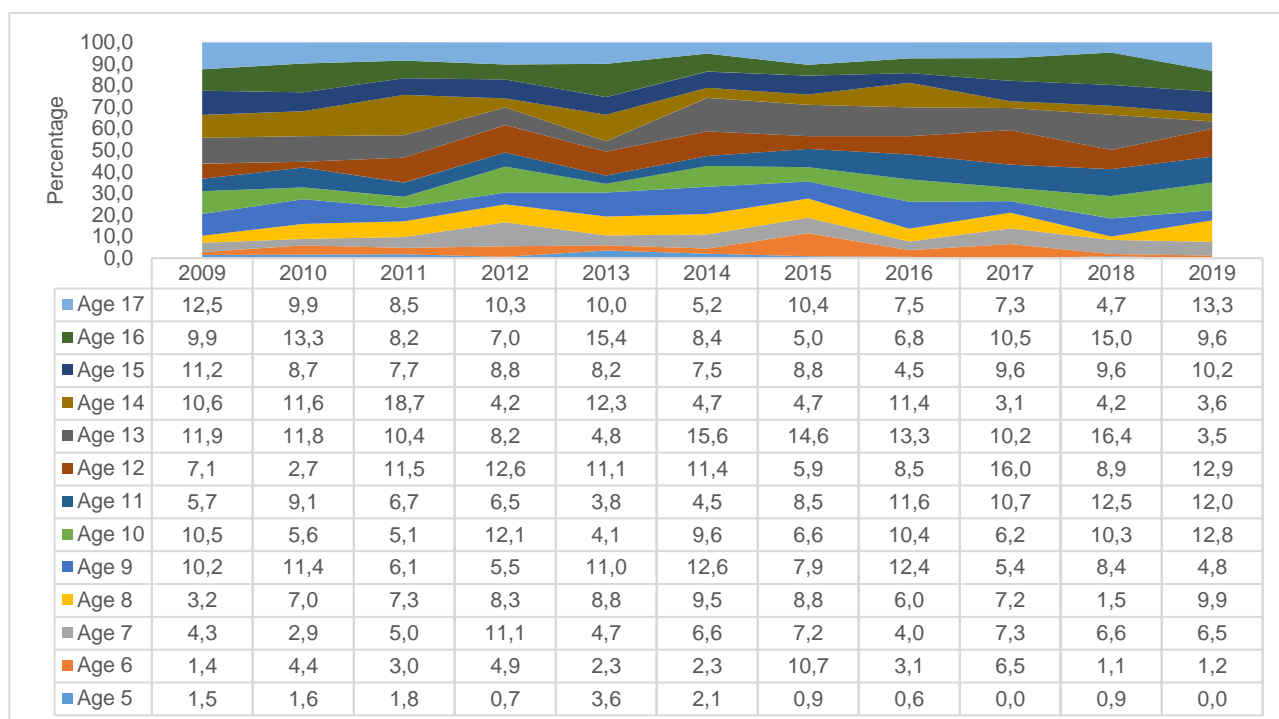
Figure 3.20: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced verbal abuse (being insulted, teased or harassed) by teachers at school by geographical area, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Verbal abuse by teachers seems to be mainly experienced by learners in urban areas. In 2019, close to 79% of learners who reported being verbally abused by teachers were residents of urban areas.

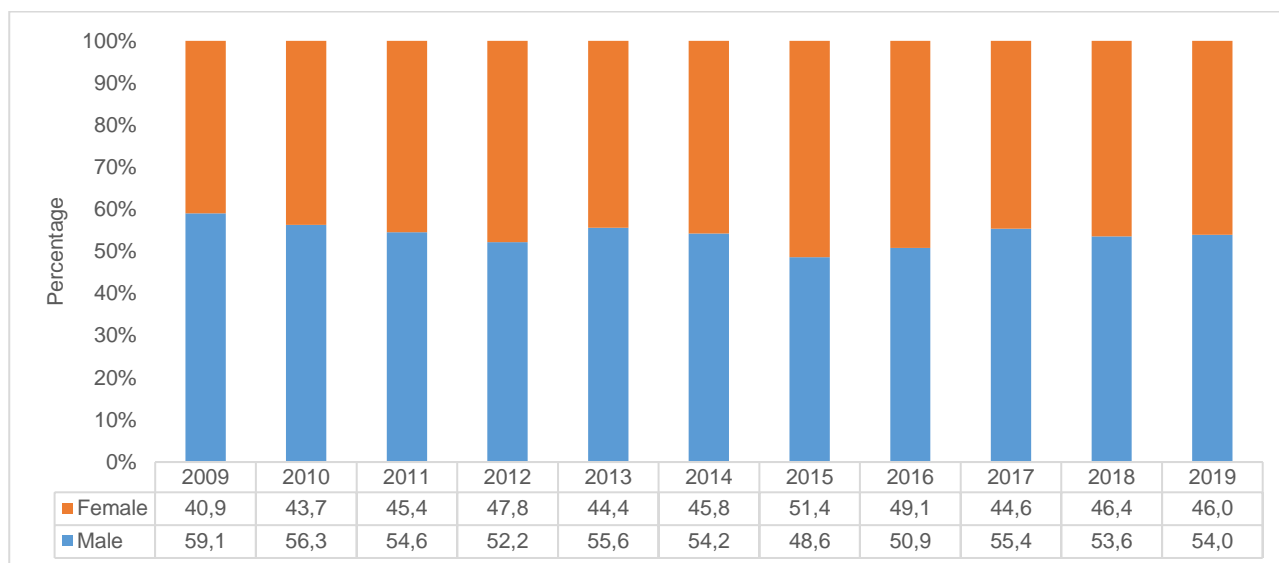
Figure 3.21: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced verbal abuse (being insulted, teased or harassed) by teachers at school by age, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Verbal abuse, such as being insulted, teased or harassed by teachers was mostly experienced by pre-teens and teenagers. Among ten to 12-year-olds, close to 38% experienced verbal abuse by teachers, which increased from 23,3% in 2009. The overall increase of those who experienced verbal abuse by teachers at school doubled in most higher age groups (from age nine years to 17 years) compared to lower ages groups (age five years to eight years). In 2019, close to 23% of 16 and 17-year-olds experienced verbal abuse by teachers.

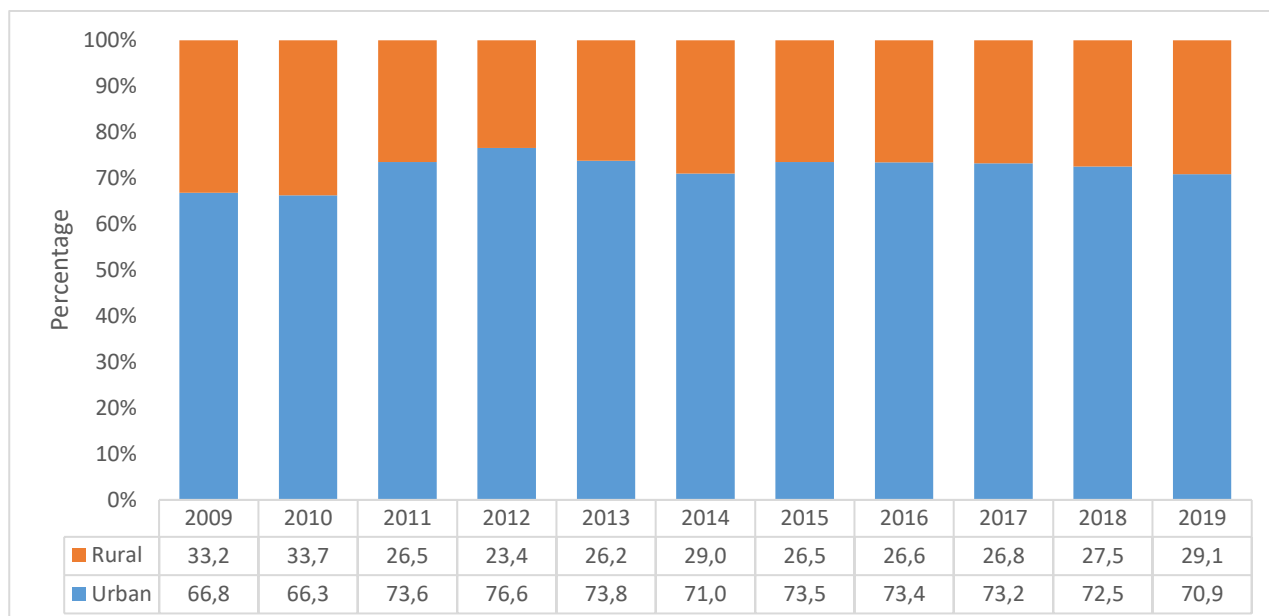
Figure 3.22: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced physical abuse (being hit or punched) by another learner at school by gender, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Male learners mostly experienced physical abuse by fellow learners, which includes being hit or punched by another learner.

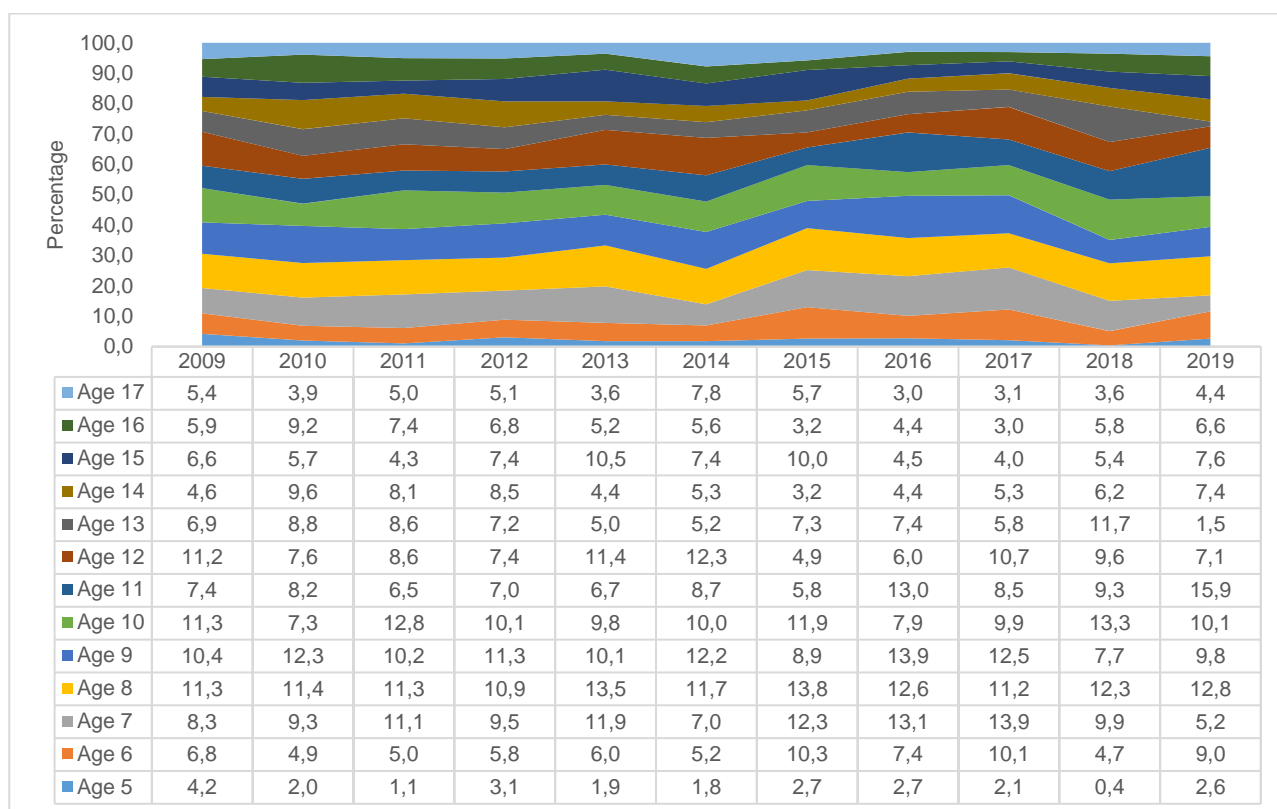
Figure 3.23: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced physical abuse (being hit or punched) by another learner at school by geographical area, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Physical abuse by another learner at school was prevalent in urban areas in South Africa.

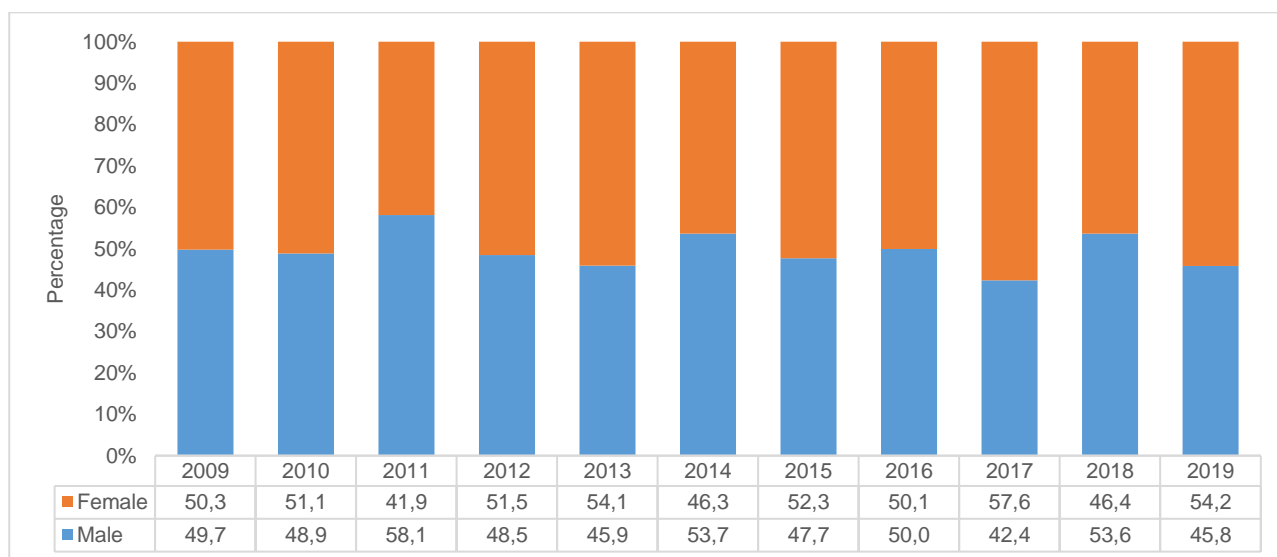
Figure 3.24: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced physical abuse (being hit or punched) by another learner at school or outside school by age, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

The above graph shows the percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced physical abuse by another learner at school or outside school by age. Pre-teen children aged 8–12 experienced higher levels of physical abuse by their peers than older children.

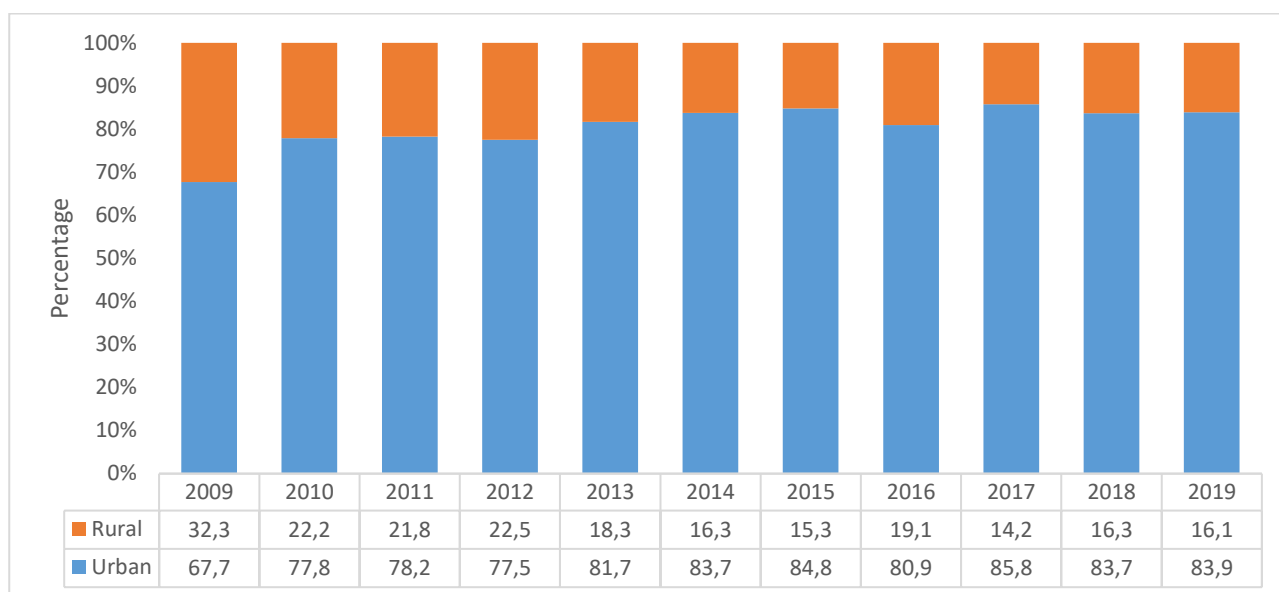
Figure 3.25: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced verbal abuse (being insulted, teased, harassed or bullying) by other children at school by gender, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Verbal abuse by other learners occurred almost equally in both sexes. The graph shows that female learners may suffer slightly more from this type of violence. However, the gender gap was minimal.

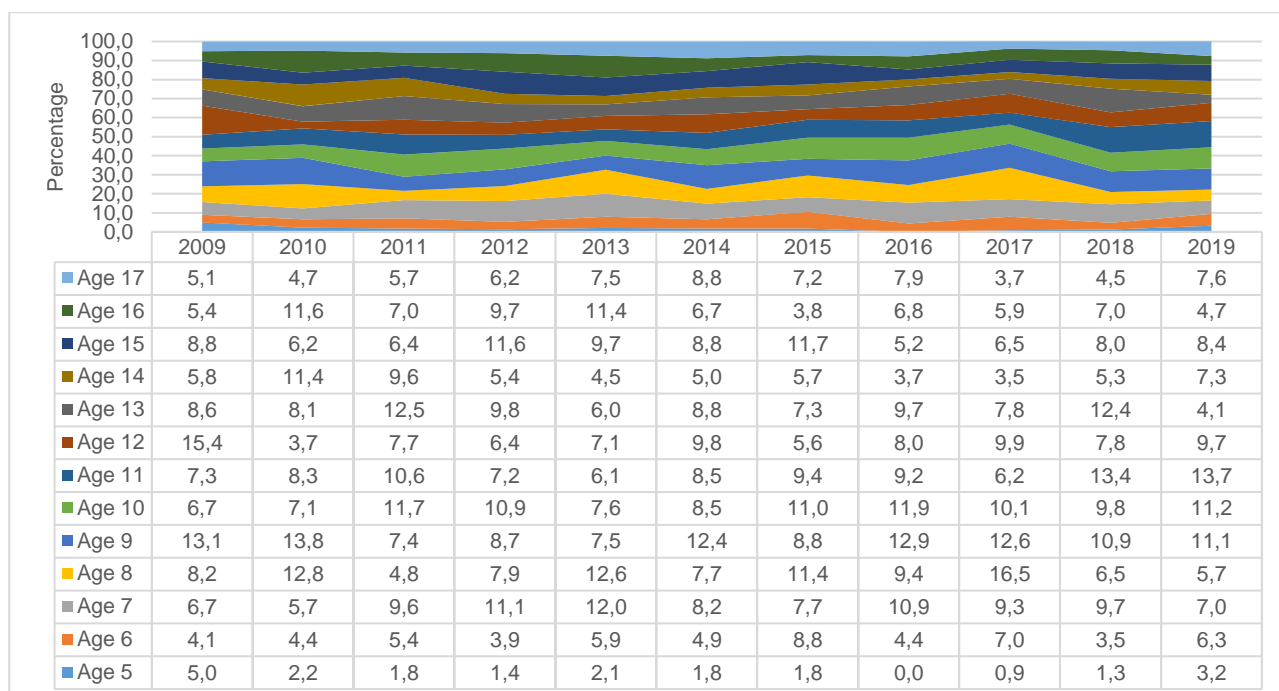
Figure 3.26: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced verbal abuse (being insulted, teased, harassed or bullied) by other learners at school by geographical area, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

The above graph presents the percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced verbal abuse by other learners inside or outside school by gender. The data shows that this type of abuse predominantly occurred in urban areas with the urban-rural gap widening overtime. Whether the bullying is direct or indirect, the key component of bullying is that the physical or psychological intimidation repeatedly occurs over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse. This could also take place directly or through social media.

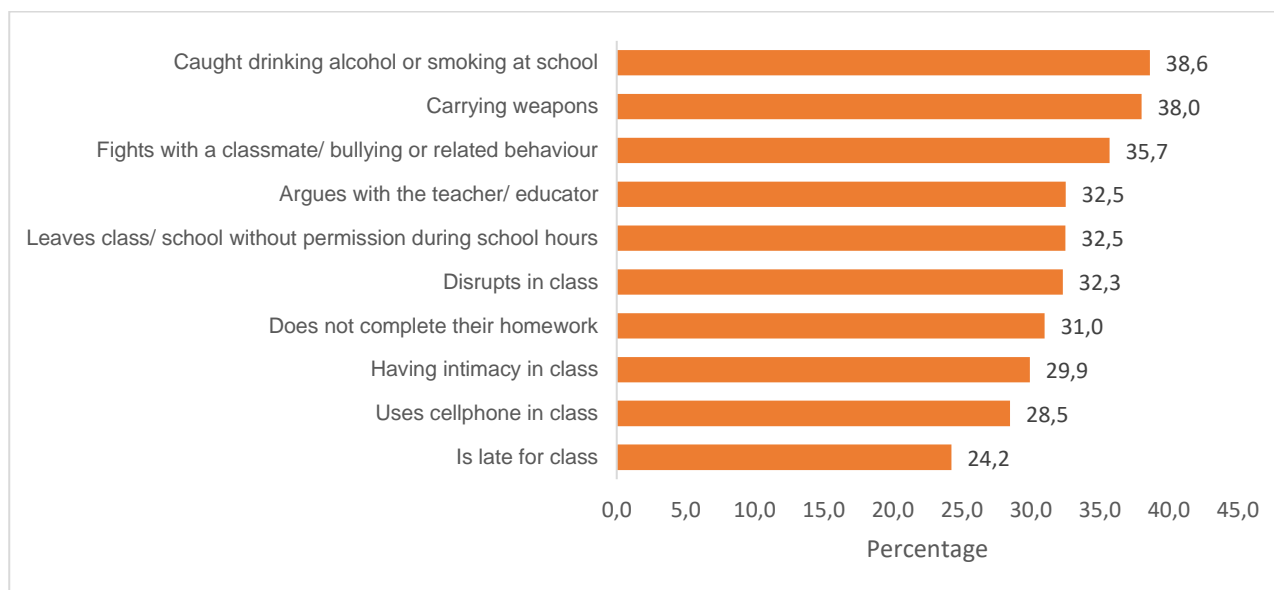
Figure 3.27: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced verbal abuse (being insulted, teased, harassed or bullied) by other learners at school by age, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

The above graph shows the percentage of children aged 5–17 years who experienced verbal abuse by other learners at school by age. Similarly to the other types of abuse, verbal abuse by other learners at school was targeted to mostly eight to 12-year-olds. Though anti-bullying laws form part of the code of conduct for learners at schools, bullying in South African schools was still rising from 2009 to 2019.

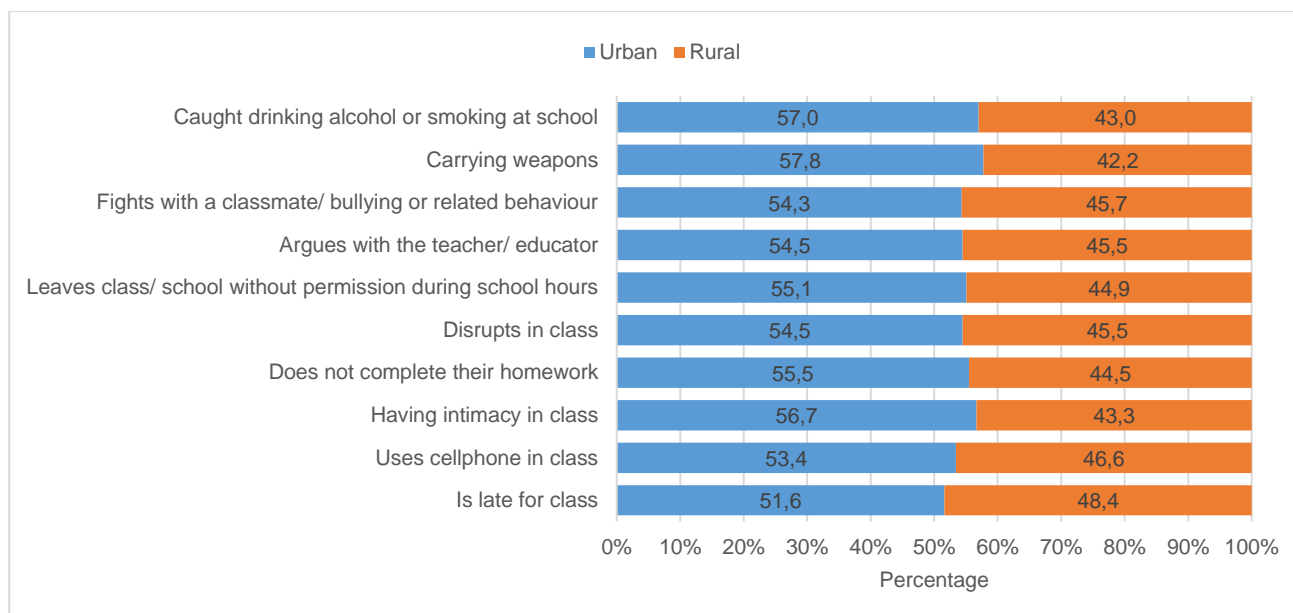
Figure 3.28: Perceptions of households with children aged 5–17 years on acceptability for a teacher/educator to physically punish a child in their class/school by type of fault, 2019/2020



Source: GPSJS 2019/2020

The above graph shows the percentage of households with children aged 5–17 years who thought it was acceptable for a teacher/educator to physically punish a child in their class/school. A large percentage of respondents believed it was acceptable for children to be physically punished at schools if caught drinking alcohol or smoking at school or found carrying a weapon (38,6% and 38%, respectively). Furthermore, close to 36% of respondents thought it was acceptable for a teacher/educator to physically punish children at school if they fought with a classmate, bullied other learners, or displayed similar behaviour.

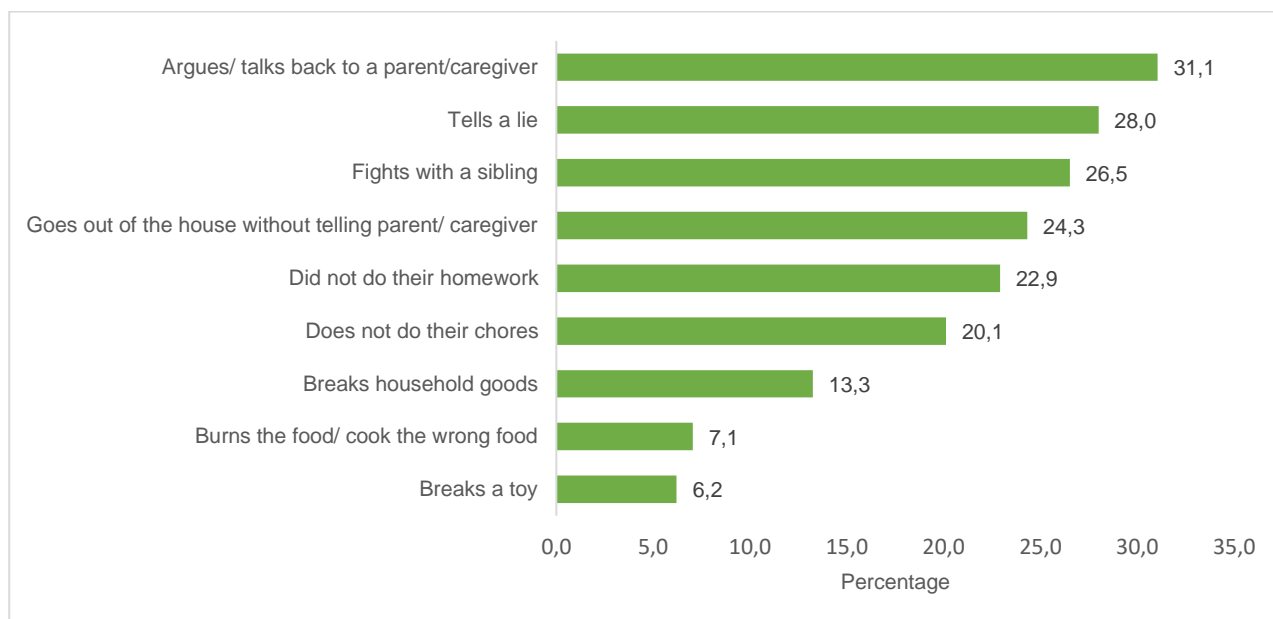
Figure 3.29: Perceptions of households with children aged 5–17 years on acceptability for a teacher/educator to physically punish a child in their class/school by type of fault and geographical area, 2019/2020



Source: GPSJS 2019/2020

The percentage of households who thought it was acceptable for a teacher/educator to physically punish a child in their class/school for any fault displayed was higher in urban areas than rural areas.

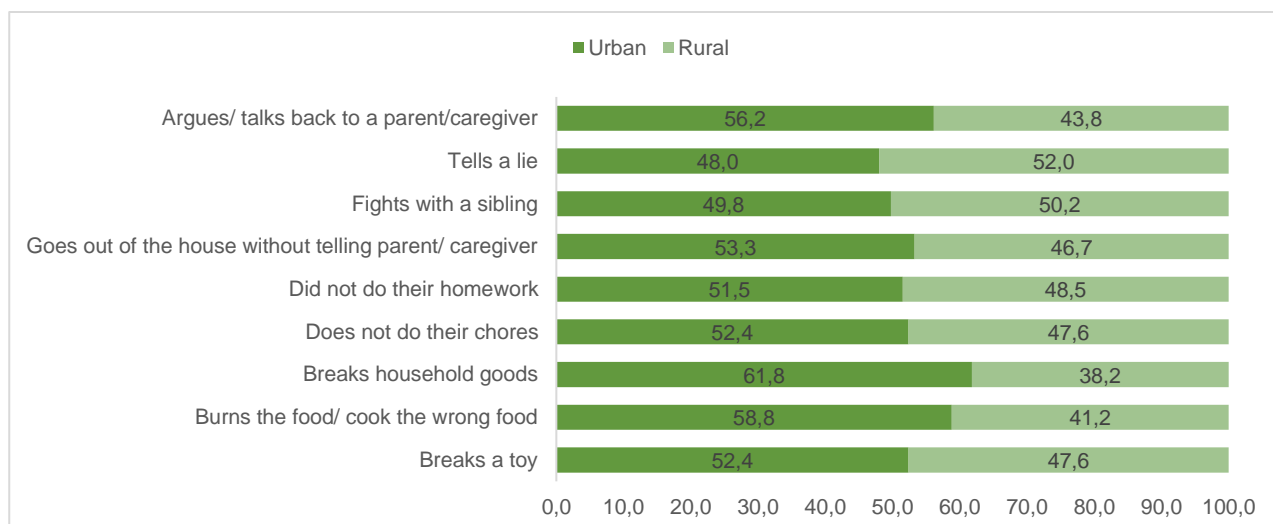
Figure 3.30: Perceptions of households with children aged 5–17 years old on acceptability of corporal punishment at home by type of fault, 2019/2020



Source: GPSJS 2019/2020

The figure above depicts the percentage of households with children aged 5–17 years by type of perception on child corporal punishment at home. Three in ten (31,1%) of the households believed that it was justifiable to physically punish children if they argue or talk back to their parents or caregivers. Similarly, 28,0% of households believed that it was justifiable to punish children physically if they told a lie. Furthermore, 24,3% believed it was acceptable to punish children if they went out of the house without telling the parent/caregiver; close to 23% believed children must be punished physically if they did not do their homework. Furthermore, 20,1% believed it was acceptable to punish children physically if they did not do their chores while 13,3% said they would punish a child if they broke household goods.

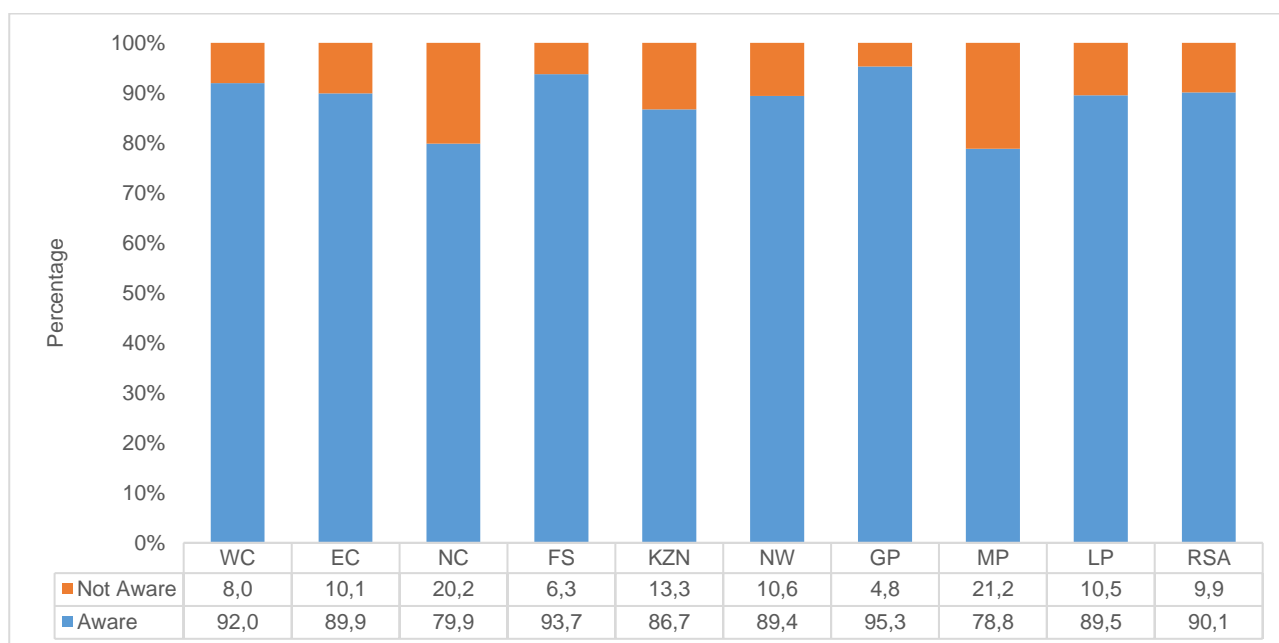
Figure 3.31: Perceptions of households with children aged 5–17 years on acceptability of corporal punishment at home by type of fault and geographical area, 2019/2020



Source: GPSJS 2019/2020

The above graph depicts the percentage of households with children aged 5–17 who believed that it was acceptable to physically punish children at home by geographical location. The data show that more households in urban areas than rural areas believed that it was justifiable for a parents to discipline and punish children in their care if they do not adhere to the set rules which include when the children did not do their chores (61,8%), fought with a sibling (58,8%) and when they told a lie (56,2%).

Figure 3.32: Percentage of households with children aged 5–17 years awareness on the illegality of corporal punishment of children by province, 2019/2020

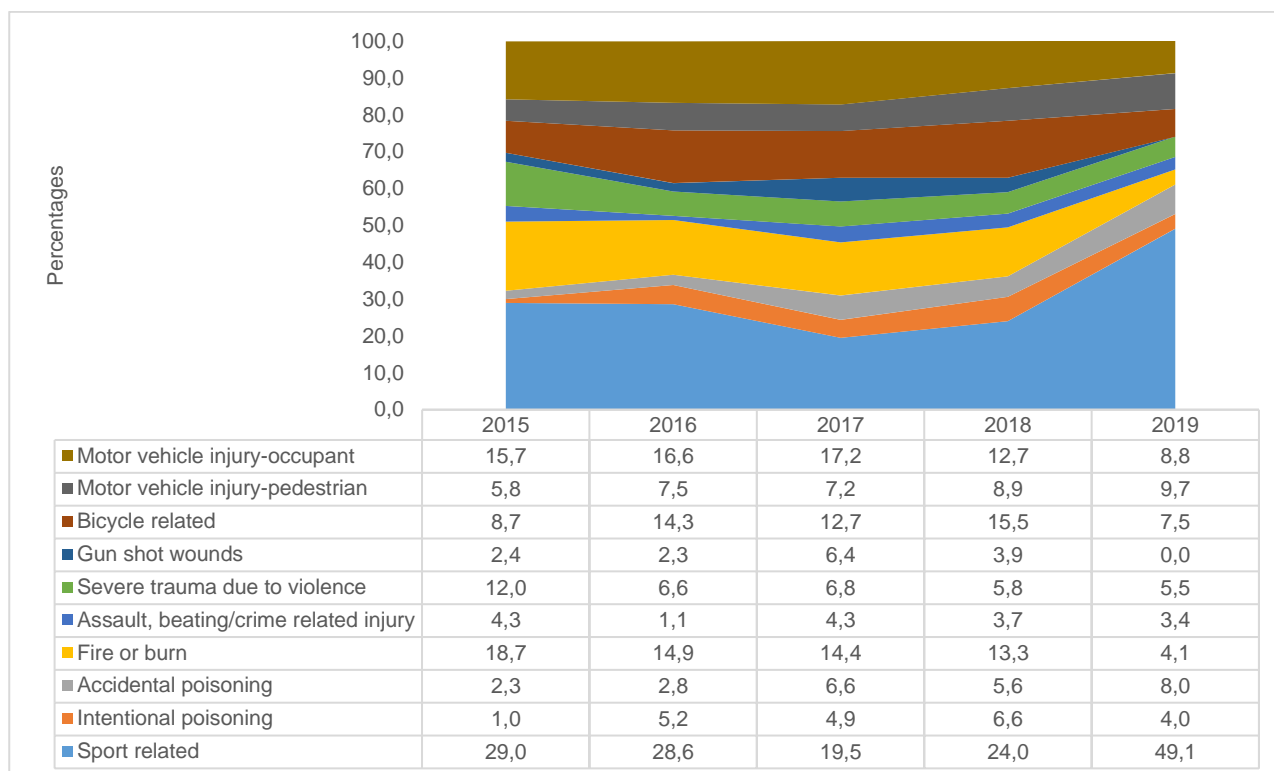


Source: GPSJS 2019/2020

Figure 3.32 above depicts the percentage of households with children aged 5–17 years by awareness of the illegality of corporal punishment in South Africa. In 2019/2020 over 90% of households with children aged 5–17 were aware that corporal punishment is illegal in South Africa. Provincially, the largest percentage of households with children aged 5–17 years who were not aware that corporal punishment was illegal were found in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape (21,2% and 20,2%, respectively) and the lowest percentage of households were found in Gauteng and Free State (4,8% and 6,3% respectively).

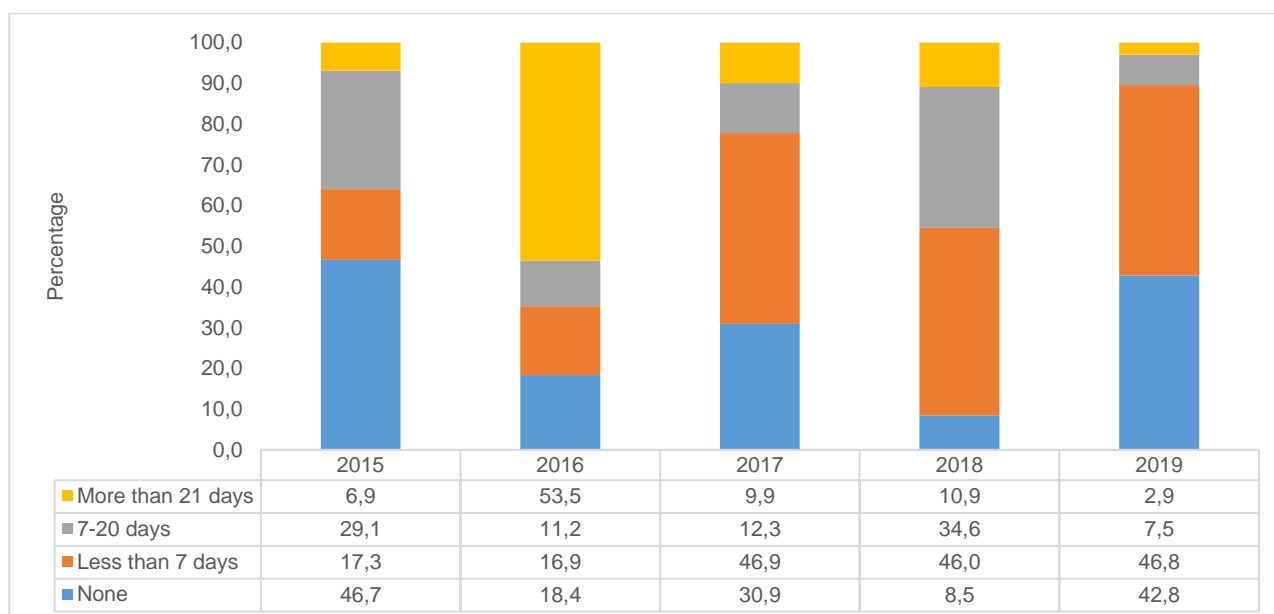
3.3 Injuries suffered by children

Children could be hurt as a result of unintentional injuries, such as road traffic accidents, drowning, falls, burns and scalds and poisonings. Injuries at school occur in sports or other playgrounds. However, children could suffer as a result of violence inside and outside the classroom, around schools, and on the way to and from school. Children could hurt each other or be hurt by an adult at school. Bullying can result in psychological trauma, which could lead to learners' absenteeism, fear of attending school, low self-esteem or suicide.

Figure 3.33: Types of injuries suffered by children aged 5–17 years, 2015–2019

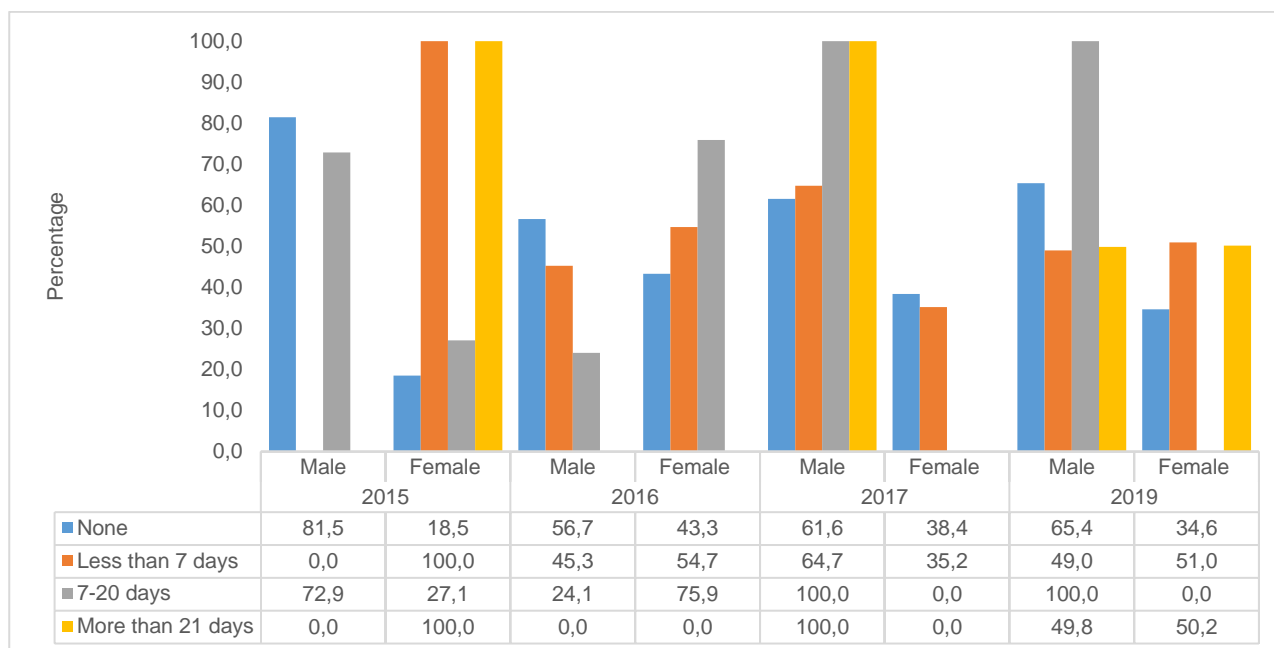
Source: GHS 2019

The above figure shows different types of injuries children aged 5–17 years suffered between 2015 and 2019. This finding reveals that major contributors to severe trauma amongst children aged 5–17 years between 2015 and 2019 were sports-related injuries, followed by motor vehicles (occupant) related injuries and fires or burns.

Figure 3.34: Number of days children aged 5–17 years missed school due to injuries, 2015–2019

Source: GHS 2015–2019

Figure 3.34 summarises the percentage of children aged 5–17 years who missed school due to injuries between 2015 and 2019. Overall, higher percentages of children aged 5–17 years indicated that they missed school due to injuries for less than 7 days prior to the survey between 2015 and 2019.

Figure 3.35: Number of days children aged 5–17 years missed school due to injuries by gender, 2019

Source: GHS 2015–2019

Boys were more prone than girls to suffer many of the most common sports-related injuries. But over recent years, injury rates have been found to be higher in females than males. This increase in rate can be attributed to extrinsic factors such as the type of sport. Recently both males and females are participating in almost similar sports.

3.4 Summary

Out of 1 073 226 children aged 5–17 years who experienced any form of violence, around 1 034 974 individuals aged 5–17 years attended public education institutions, whilst 38 247 attended private education institutions in 2019. The majority of these children attended primary education (70,3%), while close to one-third (29,7%) attended secondary education. Furthermore, the percentage of children who experienced some sort of violence reduced by half (8,2%) in the decade from 2009 to 2019. Children who suffered from corporal punishment or physical violence at the hands of their teachers or other abuses from their peers were mostly pre-teens or teenagers. Girls suffered abuse from teachers more than boys, while boys suffered from abuse by their fellow learners more than girls.

Although a high percentage of households were aware of the illegality of corporal punishment, close to 39% admitted it was acceptable for a teacher to physically punish a child at school if the child was caught drinking alcohol or smoking at school. Furthermore, close to one-third of households agreed it was acceptable to physically punish a child who argued or talked back to a parent or caregiver.

Chapter 4: Negative life outcomes for children

Early childhood development and school attendance plays a critical role in the life of children and could determine a positive or negative life outcomes for children. Children who are permanently out of school or show no interest in staying in school tend to find it hard to have meaningful life outcomes and they face more socio-economic challenges than those who stay the course. This could, in turn, be a burden to the community they are living in; it could affect their adulthood, and could contribute negatively to the country's economic development.

Health could be one of the many problems that affects children's lives negatively. Children who experienced childhood abuse or trauma may turn to be less engaged in social activities and face a difficult adulthood. These negative outcomes could create an environment of dependency if not addressed earlier in life.

4.1 Permanent absence from school

Children today face many challenges and dropping out of school or permanently being absent from school could become one of the options they are left with. There are many reasons why children are permanently absent from school. Illness, poverty, child labour, teenage pregnancy, distance to school, teachers' attitude, and violence at school are the major causes of dropout. Even though government has put in place programmes to assist and ensure that every child has an equal chance of education, many are still out of school. Household composition and living arrangement are some of the challenges that can impact the number of dropouts.

Table 4.1: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who did not attend any educational institution by main reasons, 2002–2021

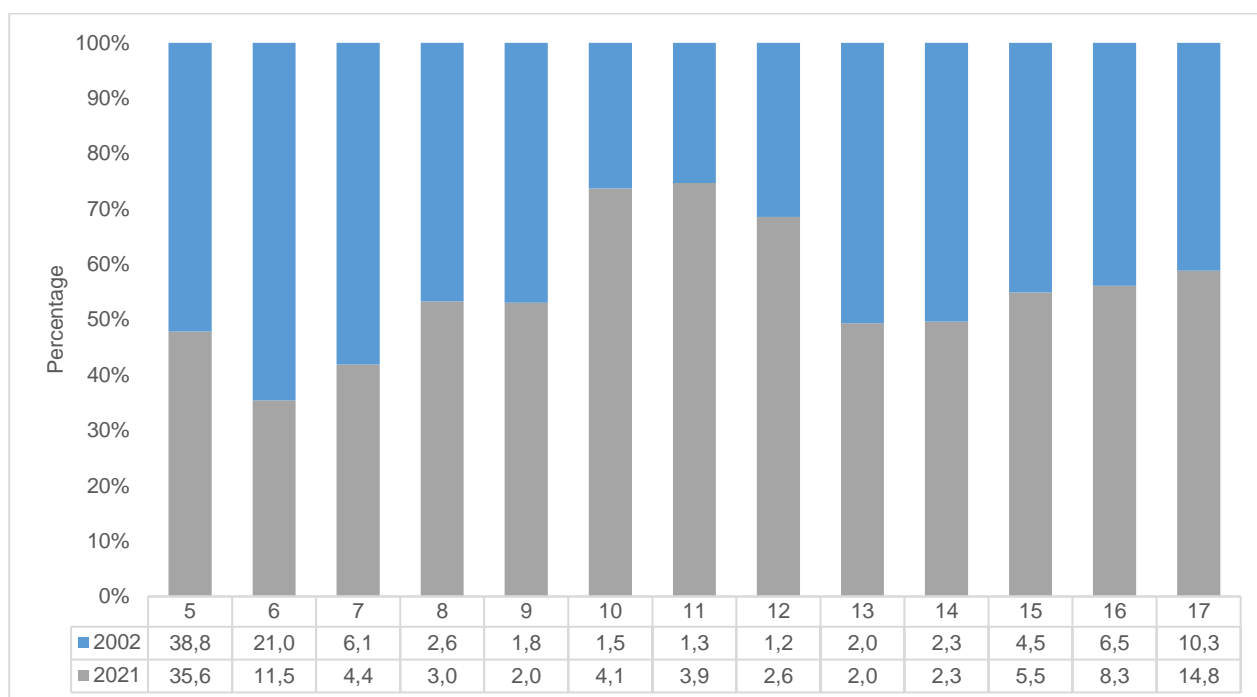
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
Too old/young	65,2	62,7	47,6	56,2	54,7	56,7	57,8	31,3	31,0	30,1	32,1	35,6	34,2	29,7	27,7	30,3	36,3	26,1	35,4
Has completed education/Satisfied with my level of education/Do not want to study	0,6	0,9	0,8	0,6	1,2	0,9	1,3	2,5	3,0	1,9	3,3	2,4	3,6	5,4	6,6	7,1	3,8	5,5	1,4
No money for fees	17,5	18,0	20,9	17,4	17,4	14,1	12,6	19,0	21,5	15,1	16,4	12,2	10,7	11,2	9,8	10,0	11,0	12,1	7,2
He/she is working/Do not have time/Too busy	1,3	1,5	2,1	1,9	2,5	2,7	3,3	3,6	4,3	4,0	2,0	2,4	3,9	3,5	2,8	2,9	1,4	3,2	1,0
Education is useless or uninteresting	5,4	3,8	6,4	6,8	7,9	8,0	6,5	10,0	8,0	9,5	7,3	9,2	6,2	7,2	5,5	5,2	6,0	5,8	1,1
Illness	4,2	5,0	8,4	6,1	6,2	6,5	7,3	5,1	3,7	4,8	4,8	4,4	3,3	2,9	2,5	3,5	3,4	4,8	3,0
Pregnancy/Got married/Family commitment	3,5	4,5	7,0	5,7	6,6	6,2	5,2	7,9	7,6	9,1	9,7	6,9	6,8	6,8	6,9	6,3	3,8	4,8	3,0
Failed exam	0,7	1,3	2,1	2,9	2,4	1,8	3,4	1,9	1,9	2,2	2,1	2,6	1,8	3,5	4,7	3,4	3,0	2,4	2,6
Disability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,4	4,8	4,9	5,8	6,6	7,2	8,6	8,3	11,1	9,4	9,2	6,7
Unable to perform at school	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,0	4,5	6,8	4,8	4,2	5,4	4,9	5,9	5,1	5,2	6,3	3,5
Not accepted for enrolment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,3	2,4	2,4	2,9	2,8	5,3	4,2	4,5	2,9	5,0	4,9	4,5
Covid-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15,5
Other	1,7	2,4	4,7	2,4	1,2	3,0	2,5	5,9	7,2	9,4	8,7	10,3	11,7	12,1	14,9	12,0	12,0	14,8	15,1
	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Total (thousands)	1 431	1 199	847	923	955	824	825	597	532	511	480	462	417	449	446	402	406	468	592

Source: GHS 2002–2021

Note: GHS 2020 did not include this information; School/education institution is too far/difficulties to get to school/violence in school were not included due to small number of observations.

The table above shows the trends in out-of-school children aged 5–17 years from 2002 to 2021. There were more than 592 000 children out of school in 2021 as compared to about 1,4 million in 2002, suggesting a decline of about 800 000 since 2002. During 2002, about 17,2% of children were out of school because they had no money for fees, 5,4% indicated that education was useless or they were not interested, and about 4,2% were too ill to attend. In 2021, more than one-third (35,4%) of children who were not attending school cited that they were too old/young to attend school and close to 16% reported Covid-19 was the main reason they were not attending school.

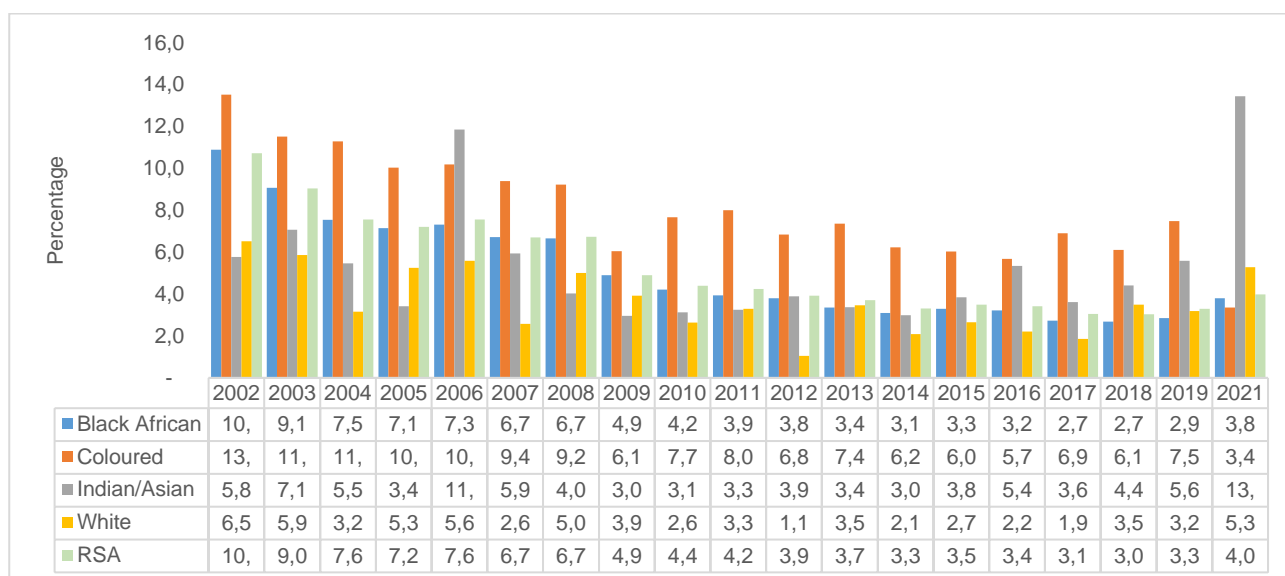
Figure 4.1: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who did not attend any educational institution by single age, 2002–2021



Source: GHS 2002–2021

Figure 4.1 describes the distribution of children aged 5–17 years not attending school by single age. In 2002, around 38,8% of five year-olds did not attend school and the proportion slightly decreased to 35, 6% in 2021. The biggest success in the two decades presented above is the reduction by half of the percentage of 6 year-olds who were out of educational institutions, which reduced from 21% in 2002 to 11,5% in 2021. Furthermore, one in ten (10,3%) of 17 year-olds were likely to not attend school in 2002 as compared to around 14,8% in 2021.

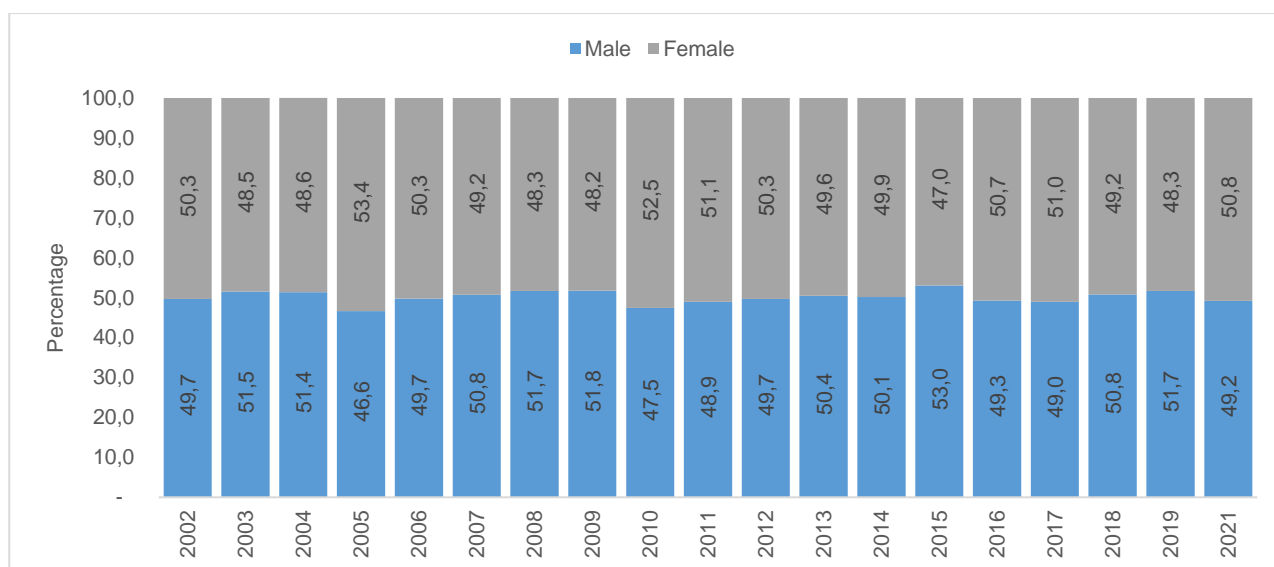
Figure 4.2: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who did not attend any educational institution by population group, 2002–2021



Source: GHS 2002–2021

Figure 4.2 describes children who did not attend educational institutions by population group. There was an overall drop in the percentage of children not attending educational institutions in the two decades presented. One in ten (10,7%) children in South Africa did not attend school in 2002, and the percentage dropped to nearly 4,0% in 2021. The percentage of black African children not attending educational institutions reduced by almost 3-folds from 10,9% in 2002 to 3,8% in 2021. The percentage of coloured children not attending educational institutions reduced by almost 4-folds from 13,5% in 2002 to 3,4% in 2021.

Figure 4.3: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who did not attend any educational institution by gender, 2002–2021



Source: GHS 2002–2021

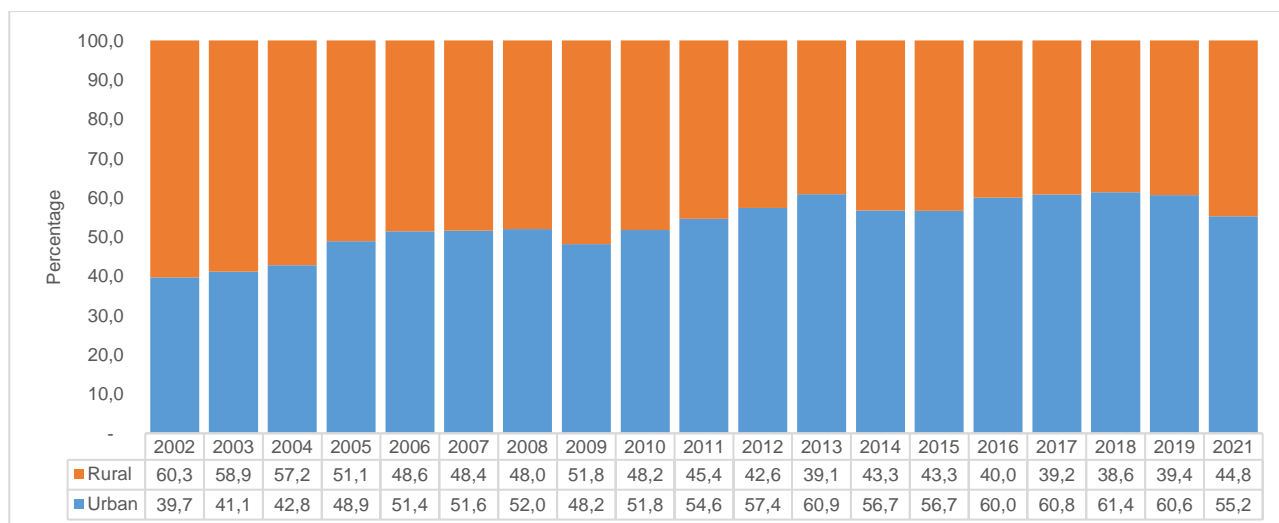
Figure 4.3 displays children who did not attend educational institutions by gender. Non-attendance of educational institutions does show gender imbalance for most of the years. Across most years, more males than females were likely to be out-of-school. In 2002, almost half children (50,3%) who were out-of-school were females compared to about 48,3% in 2019.

Table 4.2: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who did not attend any educational institution by provinces, 2002–2021

	Province									RSA
	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	
2002	8,7	16,2	3,5	5,8	27,9	7,7	11,6	8,1	10,4	10,7
2003	9,4	18,1	3,4	5,2	27,6	7,2	11,8	8,6	8,7	9,0
2004	11,8	17,9	3,7	5,5	26,9	7,6	13,3	6,4	7,0	7,6
2005	10,3	15,6	2,8	5,6	26,9	9,8	13,5	8,1	7,4	7,2
2006	10,7	13,6	2,9	4,4	26,4	9,4	17,6	8,1	6,8	7,6
2007	10,9	14,3	3,0	4,3	27,6	8,4	16,4	6,8	8,3	6,7
2008	12,9	13,0	2,9	5,3	24,2	8,2	15,8	8,9	8,8	6,7
2009	10,6	15,9	2,9	4,1	29,4	10,1	13,8	7,7	5,5	4,9
2010	14,0	12,7	2,8	5,2	28,0	9,4	14,1	8,6	5,1	4,4
2011	14,7	15,5	3,3	4,7	24,4	7,1	17,3	7,6	5,4	4,2
2012	15,4	14,2	3,4	4,1	25,7	6,4	17,0	8,7	5,1	3,9
2013	15,5	15,4	2,3	5,5	23,6	8,0	15,2	9,9	4,6	3,7
2014	16,6	14,2	3,0	4,9	19,3	11,1	16,8	7,4	6,6	3,3
2015	16,3	15,3	4,1	5,0	23,4	9,7	13,6	7,0	5,6	3,5
2016	14,3	13,1	3,6	5,6	24,1	9,1	18,9	6,6	4,6	3,4
2017	18,3	15,1	4,2	3,9	20,9	12,9	14,5	8,0	2,2	3,1
2018	17,1	12,7	4,4	2,6	24,2	9,1	17,2	8,1	4,6	3,0
2019	14,6	15,3	3,9	3,7	19,5	7,1	20,5	7,5	8,0	3,3
2021	13,9	11,6	3,5	4,1	28,9	8,7	17,2	5,4	6,6	4,0

Source: GHS 2002–2021

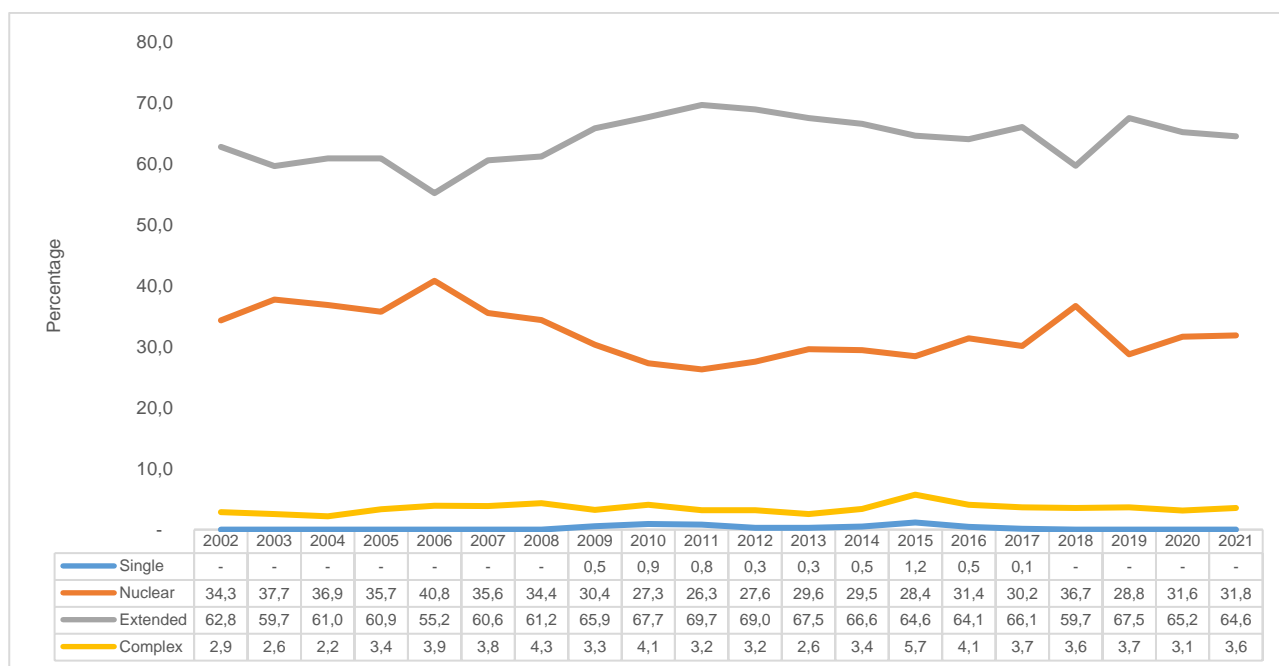
Table 4.2 shows the percentage of out-of-school children for almost two decades was largely in decline, whereas provinces had presented increases in their percentage of-out-school children. In 2002 more than a quarter (27,9%) of children who were not attending any educational institutions were from KwaZulu-Natal followed by 16,2% in Eastern Cape and 11,6% in Gauteng. There was an increase in the percentage of children who were out-of-school in Western Cape from 2002 to 2021 by (5,2 percentage points). In 2021, most out-of-school children were likely to be from KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape; whereas the smallest percentages of out-of-school children were found from Northern Cape (3,5%) and Free State (4,1%). There was a noticeable decline in the percentage of out-of-school children in Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga in the past 20 years.

Figure 4.4: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who did not attend any educational institution by geographical area, 2002–2021

Source: GHS 2002–2021

Figure 4.4 shows out-of-school children in rural and urban areas. As presented in the above graph, the first decade shows that school dropout was mostly a challenge in rural areas which was followed by a steady decline during the second decade. In 2002, six in ten (60,3%) of out-of-school children lived in rural areas compared to four in ten (44,8%) in 2021. However, the percentage of out-of-school children grew by close to 16 percentage points in urban areas from 39,7% in 2002 to 55,2% in 2021.

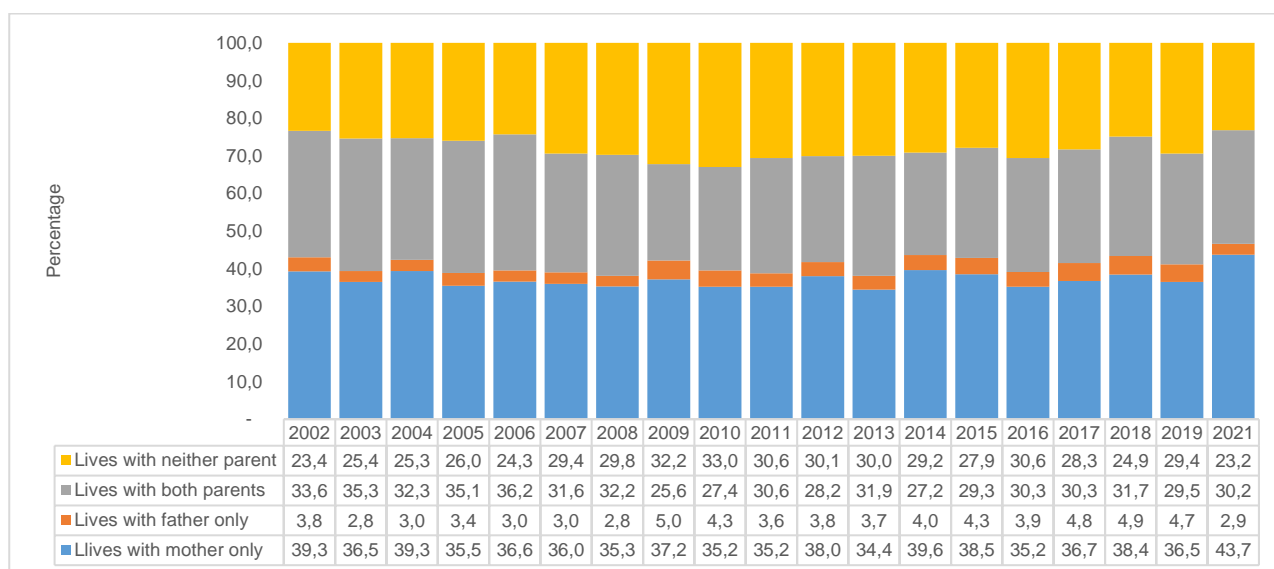
Figure 4.5: Percentage of children aged 5–17 year's old who were not attending any educational institution by household composition, 2002–2021



Source: GHS 2002–2021

Figure 4.5 describes the household structure for children who were not attending school. In 2002, around 62,8% of children not attending school lived in extended household composition, but by 2021, the proportion had increased to about 64,6%. There was a decline for children who were from nuclear households from 2002 to 2021 of about 2,5 percentage points. By 2021, 3,6% of children who were not attending school lived in a complex household composition as compared to about 2,9% two decades ago. In 2015, around 1,2% of children not attending school were likely to be living alone.

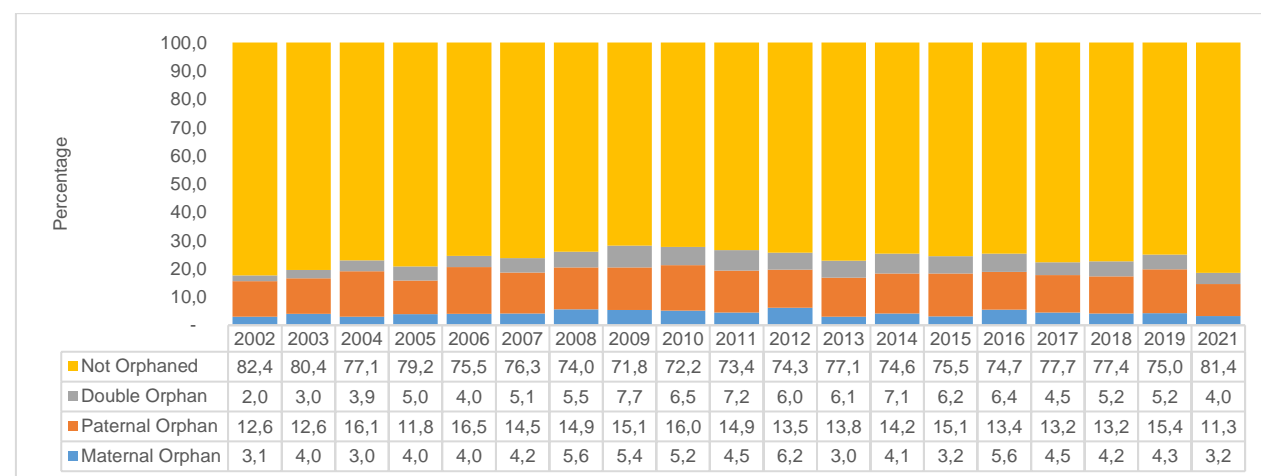
Figure 4.6: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who did not attend any educational institution by living arrangement, 2002–2021



Source: GHS 2002–2021

Figure 4.6 shows the living arrangement of children who did not attend any educational institutions. Most out-of-school children lived with their mothers followed by those who lived with both parents. Despite some of the fluctuations over the two-decades presented, there was a slight decline in out-of-school children living with their mothers only from 39,3% in 2002 to 36,5% in 2019, reaching its highest level in 2021 (43,7%). Almost one-third (33,6%) of out-of-school children lived with both parents in 2002 which reduced to 30,2% in 2021. There was an increase overtime in the percentage of out-of-school children who did live with neither their parents. The percentage of out-of-school children who lived with no parental care grew by 9,6 percentage points from 2002 to 2010 (23,4% and 33% respectively) and declined gradually to 2002 levels in 2021.

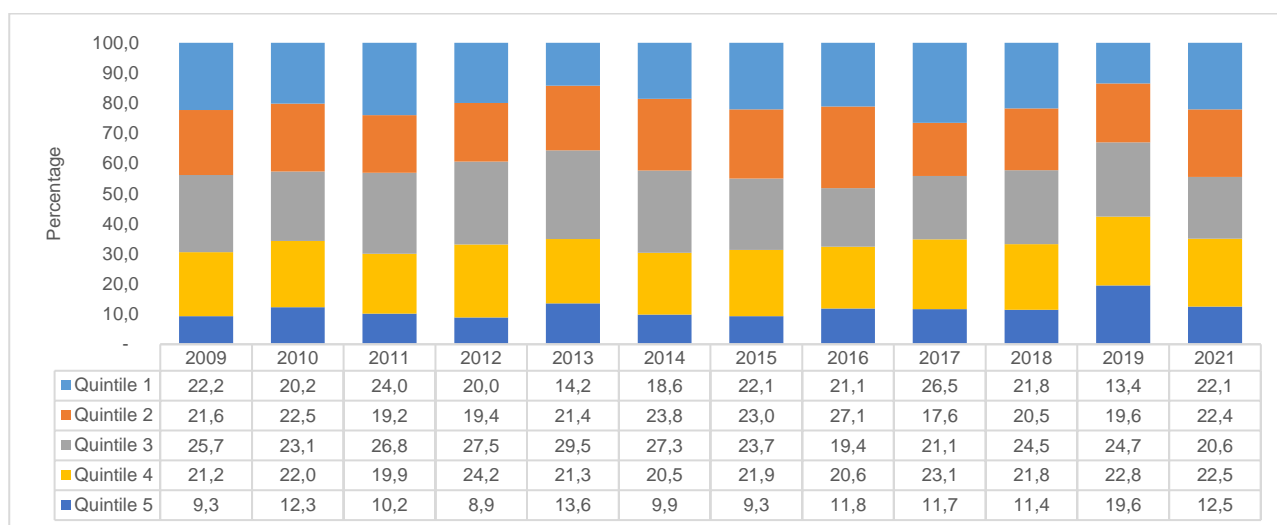
Figure 4.7: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who did not attend any educational institution by orphanhood status, 2002–2021



Source: GHS 2002–2021

Figure 4.7 above illustrates the orphanhood status of children who did not attend school. The trend shows that most out-of-school children were not orphaned. The percentage of double orphans who did not attend school grew by 5,7 percentage points from 2002 to 2009 before it declined to about 4,0% in 2021. In 2006, roughly 16,5% of out-of-school children were paternal orphans as compared to 11,3% in 2021. In 2012, approximately 6,2% of out-of-school children were likely to be maternal orphans and reduced by half (3,2%) in 2021.

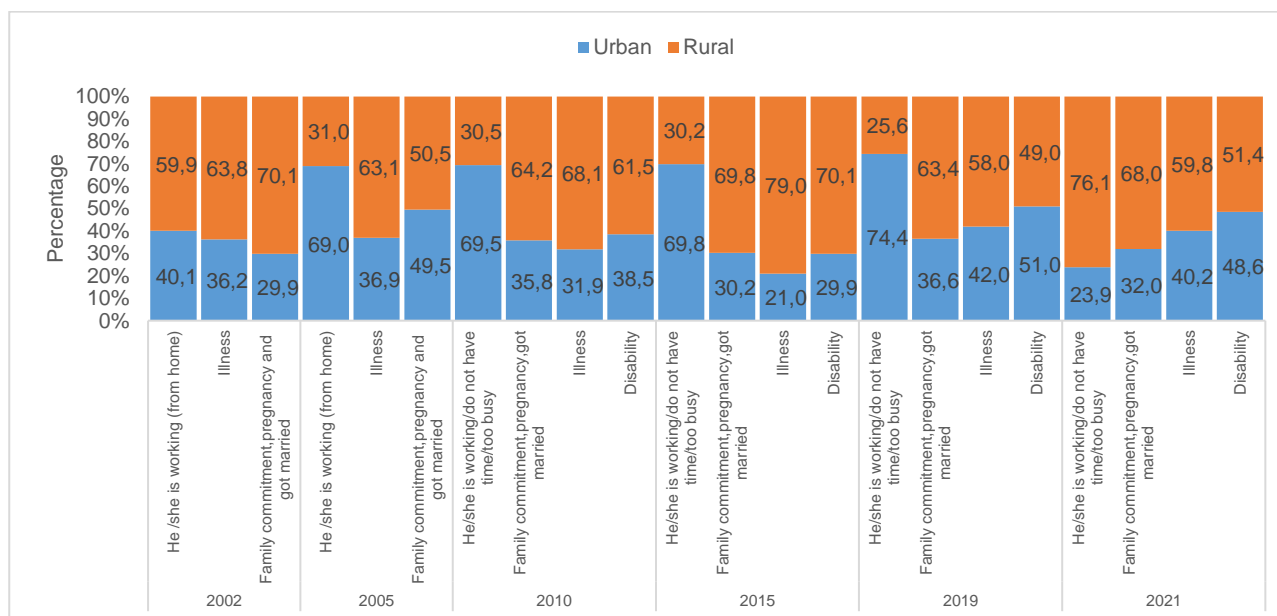
Figure 4.8: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who did not attend any educational institution by household income quintiles, 2009–2021



Source: GHS 2009–2021

Figure 4.8 presents the percentage of children who did not attend school by household income quintiles from 2009 to 2021. The figure shows that a quarter (25,7%) of children who weren't attending school were likely to be from an average income household (quintile three) in 2009 and 20,6% in 2021. One-fifth (22,2%) of children who did not attend school were from the lowest household income group (quintile 1) in 2009 and remained the same at 22,1% in 2021. There was a noticeable increase of (3,2 percentage points) between 2009 and 2021 of out-of-school children from the highest household income group (quintile five).

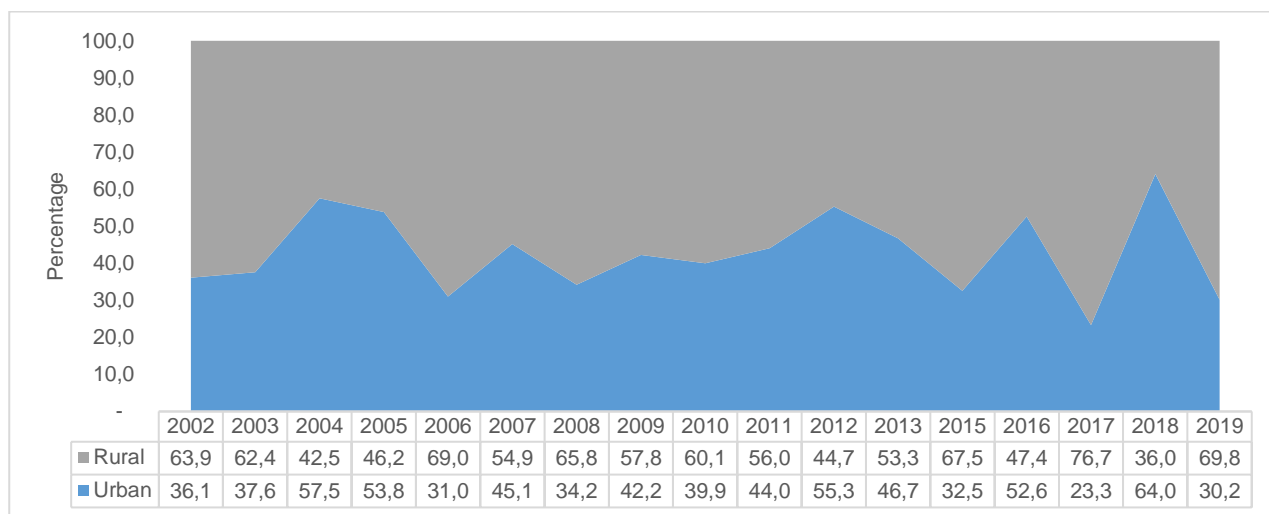
Figure 4.9: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who did not attend any educational institution by main reasons, 2009–2021



Source: GHS 2002–2021

Figure 4.9 shows children's reasons for not attending school in rural and urban areas. In 2002, about four in ten (40,1%) children in urban areas indicated that they were working or too busy to attend school compared to two in ten (23,9%) in 2021. Approximately seven in ten (70,1%) of children in rural areas cited family commitment/pregnancy/marriage as their main reasons for not attending school in 2002 and the proportion declined to about 68,0% in 2021. Reasons of illness and disability as reasons for not attending school prevailed more in rural areas than urban areas, whereas working or too busy was predominantly a problem in urban areas.

Figure 4.10: Percentage of females aged 13–17 years who did not attend any educational institution because of pregnancy, 2002–2019



Source: GHS 2002–2019;

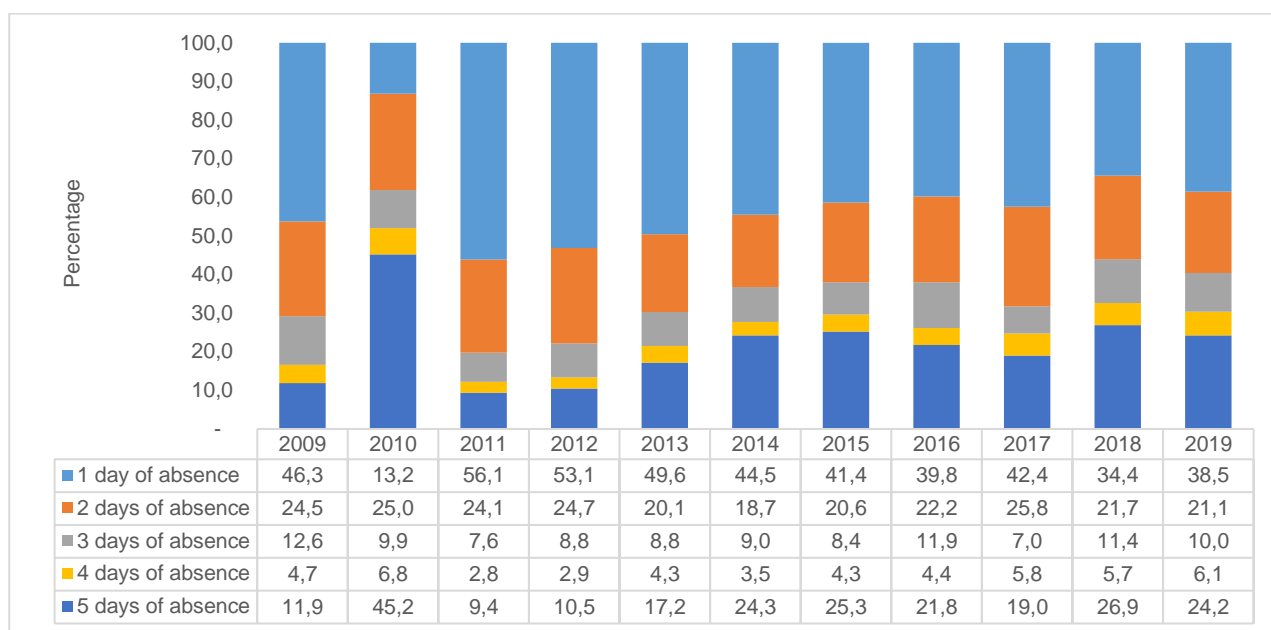
Notes: 2014 and 2021 numbers were too small

According to figure 4.10, in 2019, seven out of ten (69,8%) of females aged 13–17 were out of school because they were pregnant, which was an increase of nearly six percentage points from 63,9% in 2002. The trend shows that pregnancy was largely a reason for not attending school in rural areas than in urban areas.

4.2 Temporary absence from school

Children who were out-of-school for a short period of time for various reasons were regarded as being temporarily out-of-school. This could be because they were too ill, doing household chores or they did not feel safe at school. If children were often absent from school, it could affect their performance and progression in school and lead them to permanently drop out of school. These are some of the factors that eventually lead children to negative life outcomes and influence socio-economic activities negatively.

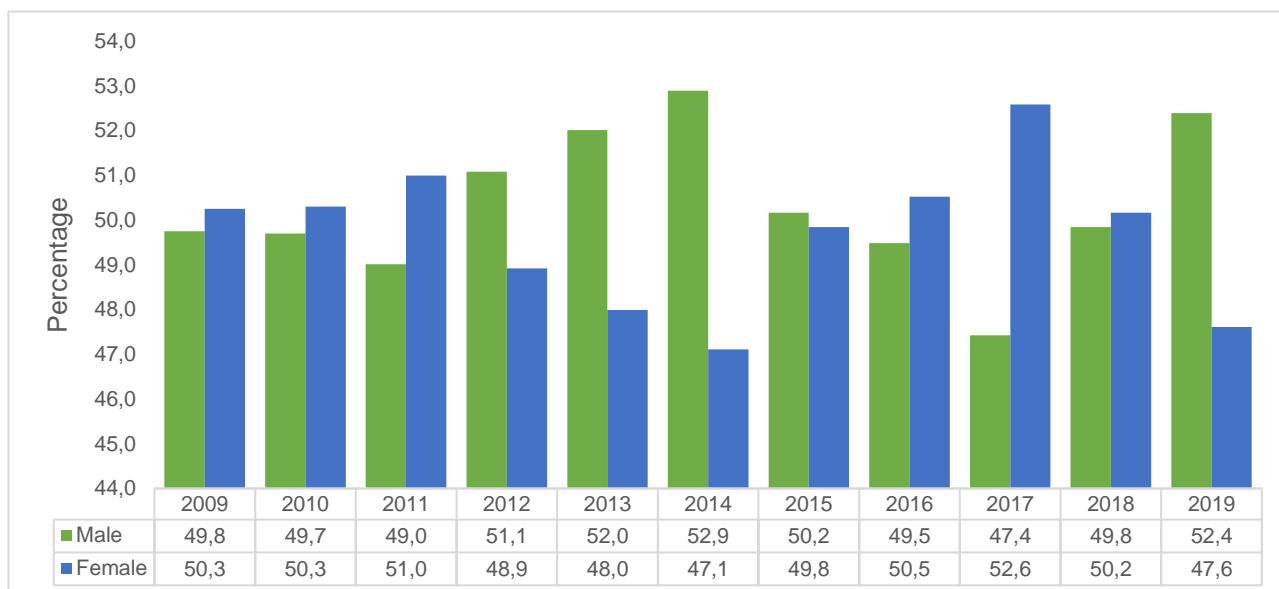
Figure 4.11: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school for one to five days a week, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009-2019

Figure 4.11 shows the percentage of children who were absent from school by the number of days of absence from 2009–2019. In 2009, close to 12% of children were absent from school for five days a week as compared to nearly 45,2% in 2010 and around 24,2% in 2019. The proportion of children who were absent from school for three days a week declined from nearly 12,6% in 2009 to close to 10% in 2019. There was an overall decline in the percentage of children who were absent from school for a day, from about 46,3% in 2009 to around 38,5% in 2019.

Figure 4.12: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school by gender, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009-2019

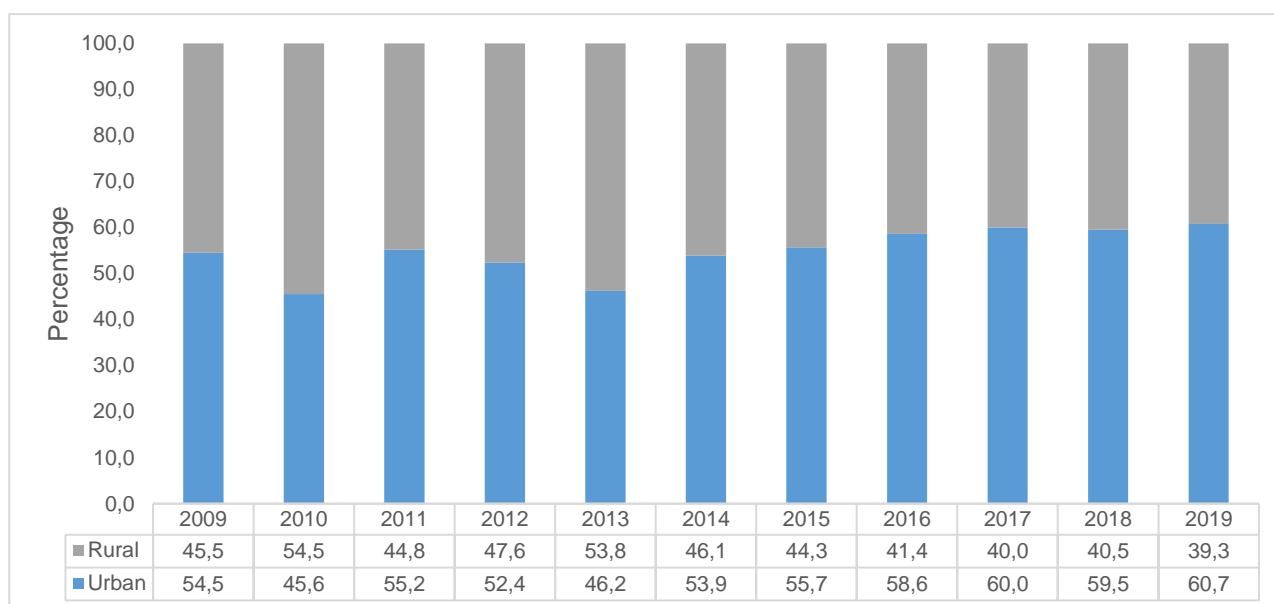
The percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school by gender between 2009 and 2019 is compared in Figure 4.11. In 2009, more than half (50,3%) of females were absent from school as compared to 49,8% males. However, they traded places in 2019. The percentage of males who were absent from school increased to about 52,4%, and of females decreased to 47,6% in 2019.

Table 4.3: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school by province, 2009–2019

	Province									RSA
	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	
2009	13,9	15,5	1,1	6,7	19,2	5,4	20,5	4,6	13,3	7,9
2010	5,4	12,3	1,6	4,4	32,5	5,9	13,4	7,5	17,1	29,4
2011	15,5	14,1	2,2	4,3	26,1	7,9	14,0	7,1	8,9	6,3
2012	10,9	17,5	2,4	5,2	29,0	7,2	15,1	6,6	6,1	8,4
2013	11,0	14,6	2,3	4,2	27,2	9,8	11,8	7,0	12,3	6,3
2014	12,6	11,9	2,3	3,9	25,6	6,8	19,8	6,5	10,6	7,1
2015	12,1	8,9	1,5	3,0	30,6	8,0	18,7	8,3	8,9	6,8
2016	12,9	14,6	3,1	4,2	16,7	6,3	23,1	7,4	11,8	5,8
2017	13,4	10,8	3,6	4,8	16,5	9,0	25,1	10,2	6,8	4,7
2018	10,6	13,4	4,4	4,6	16,5	10,2	27,9	8,2	4,4	5,2
2019	8,9	9,7	4,2	4,1	13,6	14,8	26,5	7,6	10,6	5,0

Source: GHS 2009–2019

Table 4.3 shows the percentage of children who were absent from school by province between 2009 and 2019. Temporary school absenteeism was noticeably higher in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape. The trend was increasing in Gauteng from 20,5% in 2009 to 26,5% in 2019. The trend was declining in KwaZulu-Natal from 32,5% in 2010 to 13,6% in 2019. Absenteeism in 2009 was overall the lowest in Northern Cape, Free State, North West and Mpumalanga.

Figure 4.13: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school by geographical area, 2009–2019

Source: GHS 2009–2019

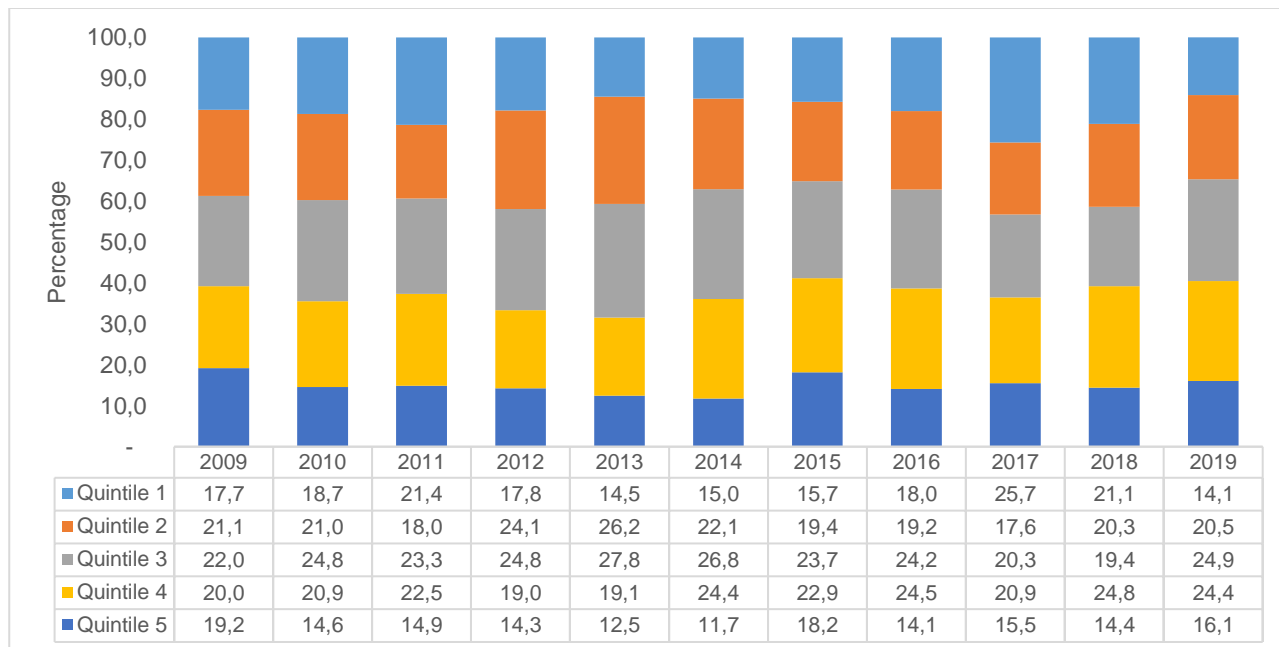
Figure 4.13 shows children who were absent from school by geographical area. Temporary absence from school was mostly a problem in urban areas for almost all the years presented. In 2009, more than half (54,5%) of children from urban areas were absent from school, and the percentage reduced to less than half (46,2%) by 2013 before it increased to nearly three-fifths (60,7%) by 2019. Nearly 46% of children in rural areas were absent from school, and the percentage declined to about 39% in 2019.

Table 4.4: Number of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school by population group, 2009–2019

	Population group (Thousands)				South Africa
	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	
2009	556	81	13	51	701
2010	2 588	128	68	87	2 871
2011	481	82	25	30	617
2012	685	76	38	41	841
2013	597	60	13	30	700
2014	628	81	5	19	733
2015	606	71	13	29	719
2016	504	85	6	25	621
2017	429	60	2	18	509
2018	491	63	15	27	595
2019	500	66	5	21	591

Source: GHS 2009–2019

Table 4.3 shows that in 2009 more than 701 000 children were absent at least a day from school and the number gradually reduced to around 591 000 by 2019. In addition, the table shows a peak of more than 2 million children absent from school in 2010. Out of the 701 000 children who were absent from school in 2009, about 556 000 were black African, around 81 000 coloureds and nearly 51 000 Whites. Fewer than 128 000 coloured children were absent from school in 2010 as compared with around 2,5 million black African children.

Figure 4.14: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school by household income quintiles, 2009–2019

Source: GHS 2009–2019

Figure 4.14 shows that one-fifth (22,0%) of children from the average household income (quintile three) were likely to be absent from school in 2009, and the proportion gradually increased to around one quarter (24,9%) by 2019. Furthermore, about 17,7% of absent children were from the lowest household income (quintile one) in 2009, and the percentage increased to about 25,7% in 2017.

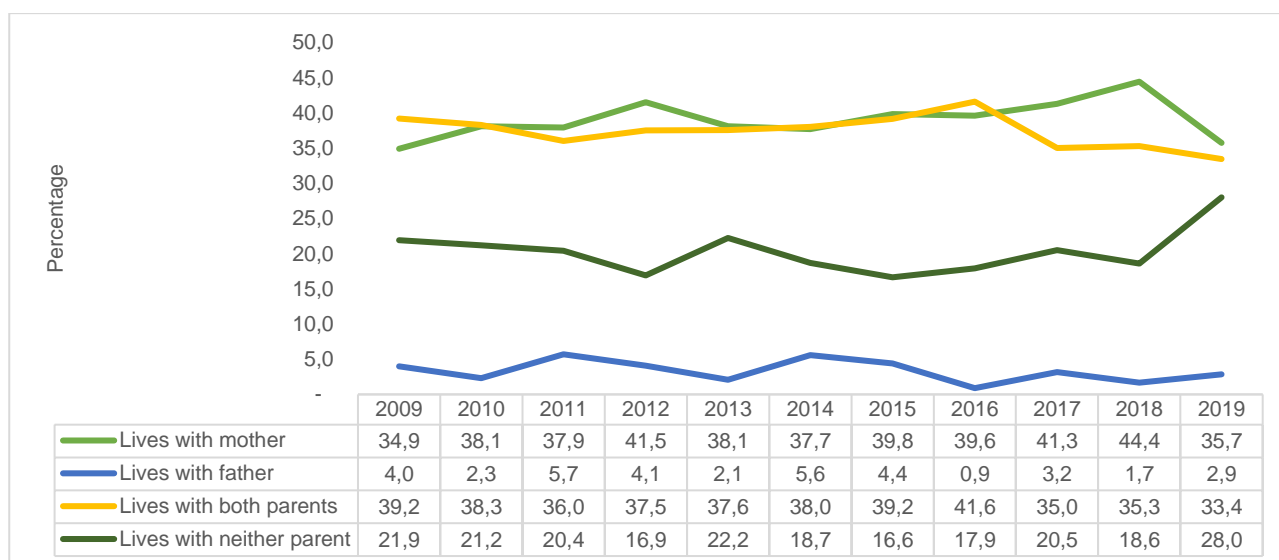
Table 4.5: Main reasons why children aged 5–17 were absent from school, 2009–2019

Reason for being absent from school	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Illness/injury	62,1	5,9	38,5	36,7	30,9	25,4	32,1	28,2	29,9	25,4	22,7
Did not want to go to school/not feeling safe at school	9,4	1,7	9,5	6,8	8,6	7,6	7,9	7,8	7,0	3,4	4,6
Need to take care of someone else	1,5	0,1	1,9	1,5	2,0	0,5	0,6	0,5	0,4	0,3	0,3
Employed/working outside the home		0,1	*	*	0,2	*	*			*	
Doing household chores	1,8	0,2	0,9	0,5	0,3	0,5	*	0,3	*	*	*
The weather was bad	4,3	0,2	19,5	30,2	8,5	6,3	2,1	3,0	8,0	4,4	2,6
No money for transport/lack of transport	4,1	0,4	3,4	1,8	2,6	1,9	2,4	3,1	2,0	1,8	1,0
Writing exams	2,8	0,3	1,5	1,3	15,9	24,6	21,3	22,7	26,9	36,9	29,8
Other	14,0	91,0	24,6	21,2	31,1	33,0	33,4	34,5	25,6	27,3	38,8
	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: GHS 2009–2019

Note: * Numbers too small

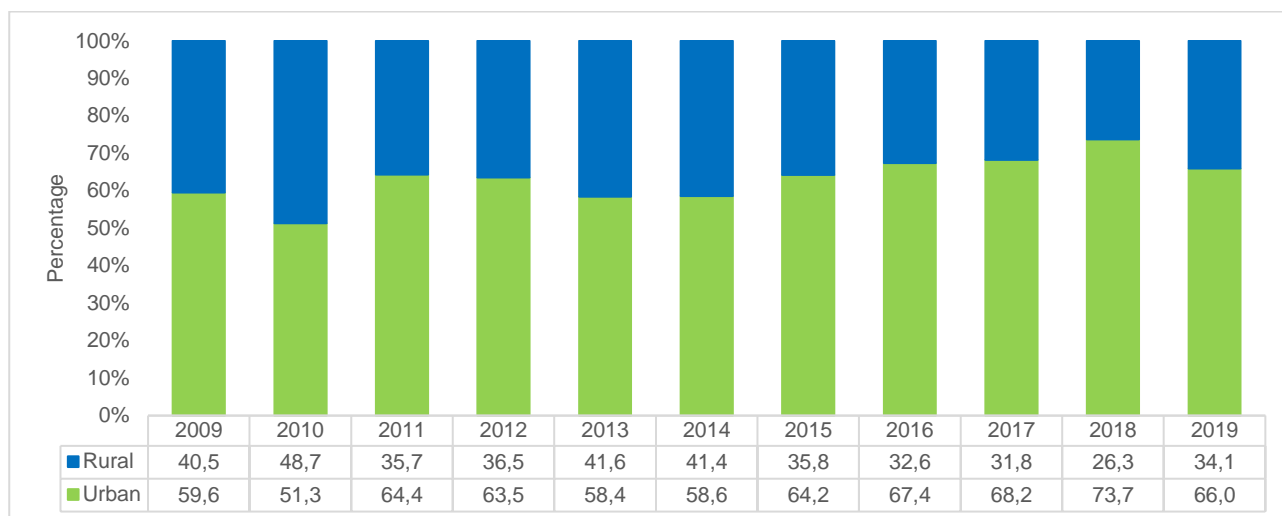
Table 4.5 displays the main reasons why children were absent from school. In 2009, three-fifths (62,1%) of children indicated that they did not go to school due to illness as compared to one-fifth (22,7%) in 2019. More than two-thirds (36,9%) of children were likely to indicate that they were writing exams and the proportion reduced to about 29,8% in 2019. In 2010, close to 91% of children who were absent from school pointed to other reasons as their main reason for being absent while about 5,9% said they were ill, and about 1,7% indicated that they did not want to go to school or felt unsafe at school.

Figure 4.15: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school because of illness by living arrangements, 2009–2019

Source: GHS 2009–2019

Absence from school due to illness was almost equally recorded among children staying with both parents and their mothers only. According to figure 4.15 nearly one-third (34,9%) of children living with their mothers were absent from school because of illness in 2009 and around 35,4% in 2019. In 2011, 5,7% of children who stayed with their fathers were absent from school as compared to about 2,9% in 2019. By 2009, nearly four out of ten ill children who were absent from school lived with both parents; still the proportion gradually decreased to roughly about one-third (33,4%) by 2019. During 2009, close to 22% lived with neither parents and the percentage gradually increased to about 28,0% in 2019.

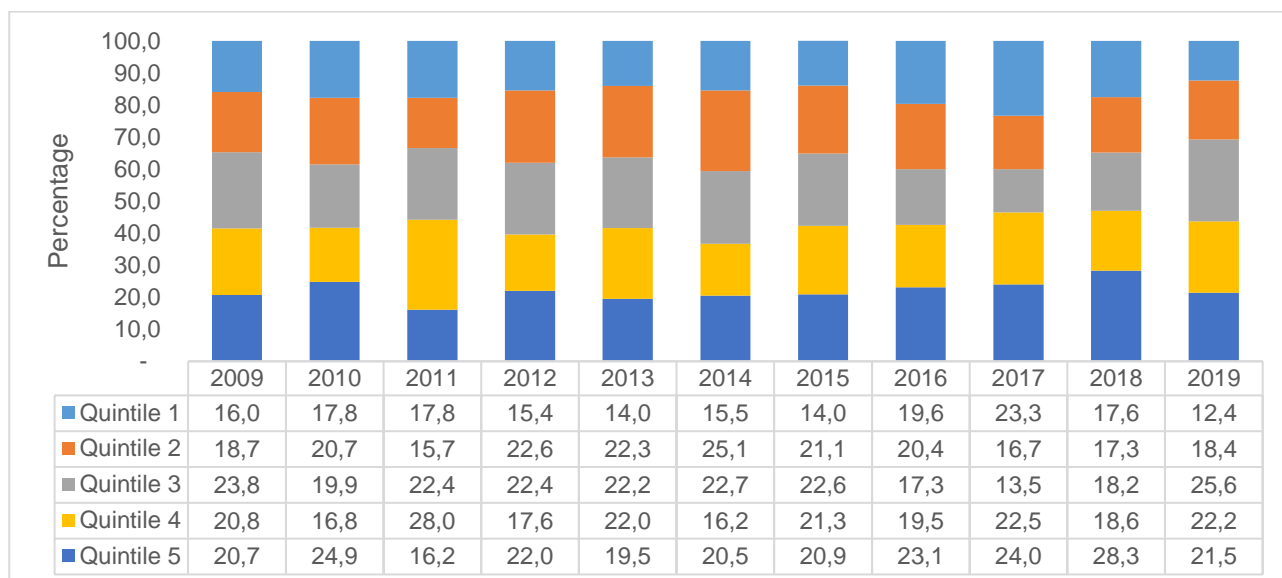
Figure 4.16: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school because of illness by geographical area, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Figure 4.16 shows children who were absent from school due to illness by geographical area. Temporary absences from school due to illness were mostly prevalent in urban areas compared to rural areas. In 2009, close to 60% of ill children resided in urban areas compared to nearly two-thirds (66,0%) in 2019. Close to 74% of children who stayed away from school due to illness were most likely from urban areas in 2018 and roughly about one-quarter (26,3%) from rural areas. During 2009, around 41% of children from rural areas were absent from school due to sickness, whereas nearly 49% in 2010 and almost 34% in 2019 were absent in these areas.

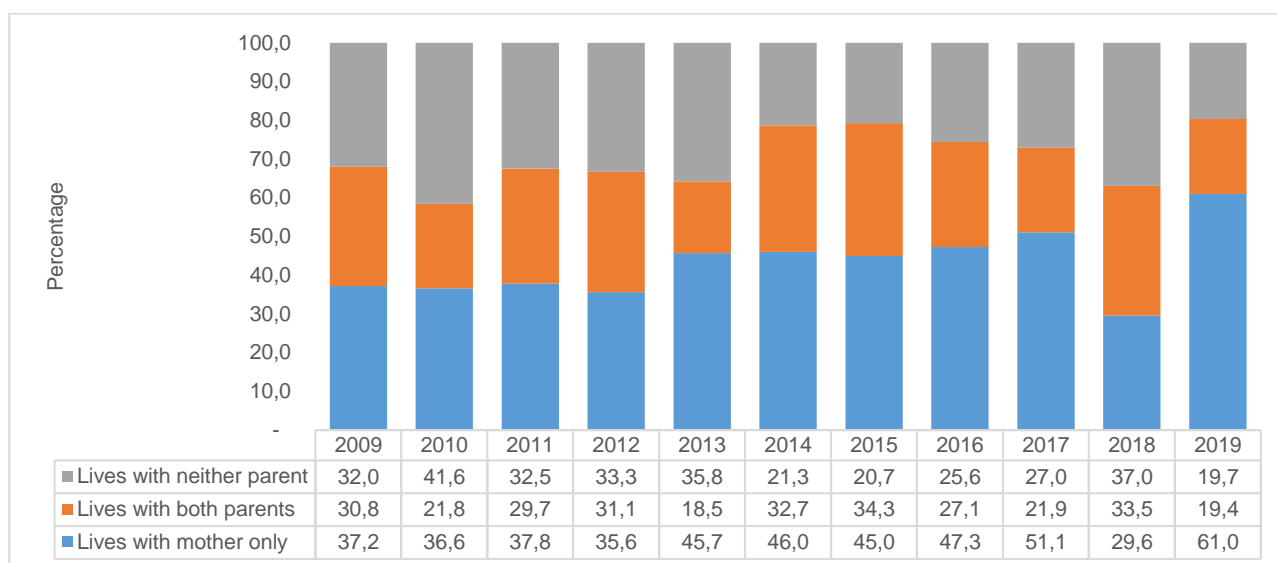
Figure 4.17: Percentage of children aged 5–17 aged who were absent from school because of illness by household income quintiles, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Figure 4.17 describes household income of children who were absent from school because they were ill. Temporary absence was predominantly present among children in higher household income groups (quintiles four and five), as 41,5% were absent in 2009, which grew to 43,7% in 2019. By contrast, only one-third (34,7%) of children in lower income quintiles (quintiles one and two) were absent from school in 2009, and this reduced to 30,8% in 2021.

Figure 4.18: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school because they felt unsafe at school/did not want to go to school by living arrangement, 2009–2019

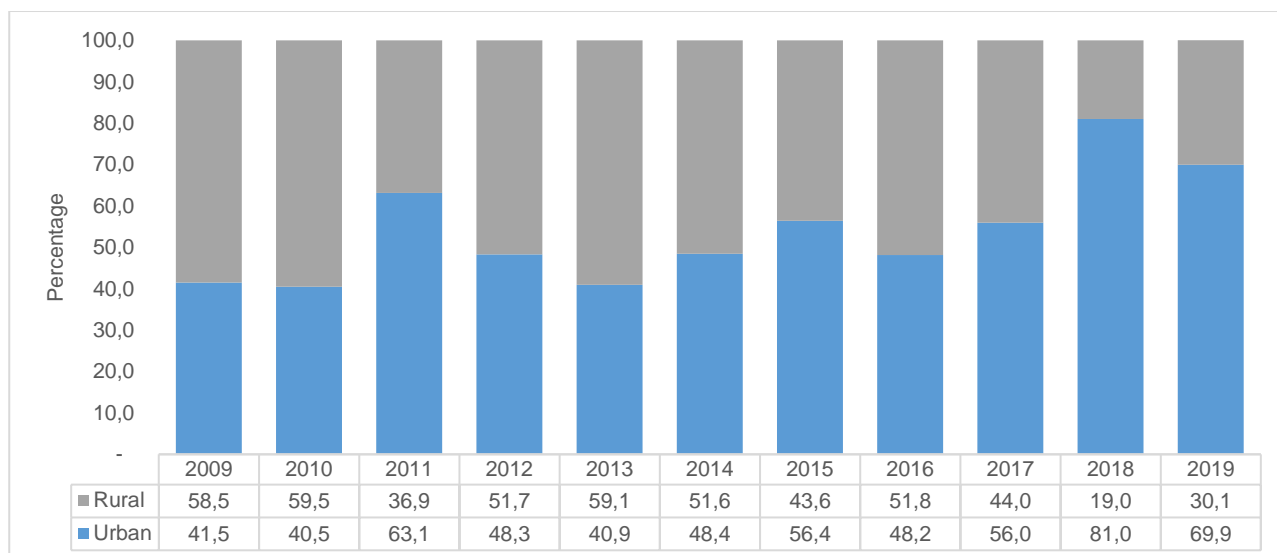


Source: GHS 2009–2019

Note: Lives with father was excluded as numbers were too small.

Figure 4.18 shows the living arrangement of children absent from school because they felt unsafe at school or did not want to go to school. Children who stayed home because they did not want to go to school or were absent because they felt unsafe at school were mostly living with their mothers only or alone (69% in 2009 and increased to 81% in 2019). From 2009 to 2019, there was an increase of 23,8 percentage points of absent children living with their mothers due to these reasons. In 2009, almost one-third (32,0%) of absent children had no parental care and close to 31% lived with both parents.

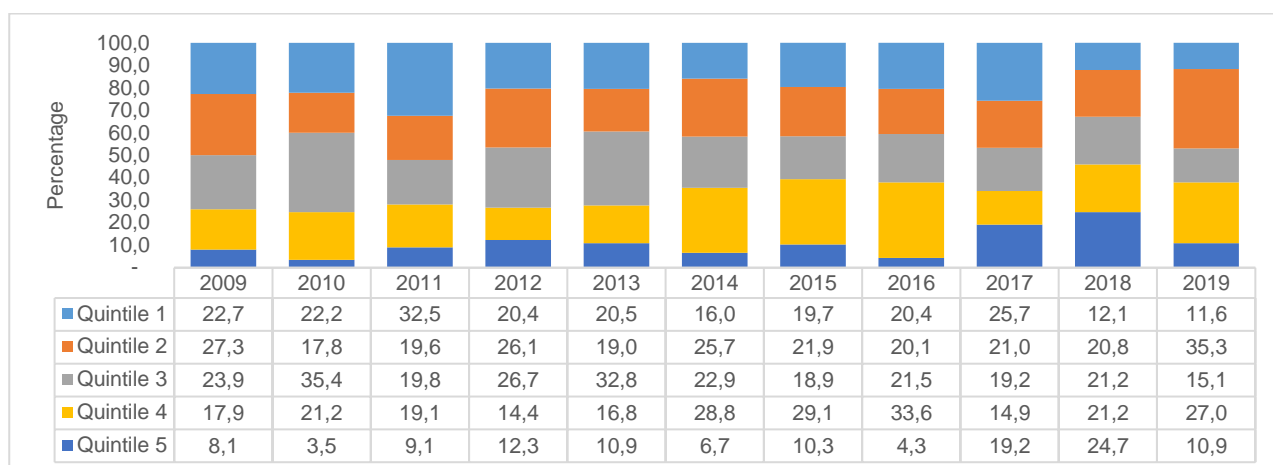
Figure 4.19: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school because they felt unsafe at school/did not want to go to school by geographical area, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Figure 4.19 shows that children who were absent because they felt unsafe at school or children who did not want to go to school were more likely to live in rural areas than in urban areas. However, these issues were also reasons for absence for a large percentage of children residing in urban areas.

Figure 4.20: Percentage of children aged 5–17 years who were absent from school because they felt unsafe at school/did not want to go to school by household income quintiles, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

In 2009, nearly half (50,0%) of children from lower household income (quintiles one and two) felt unsafe or did not want to go to school as compared to two-fifths (46,9%) in 2019. The percentage of children from higher income households (quintiles four and five) who felt unsafe at school or did not want to go to school increased from 26% in 2009 to 37,9%.

4.3 Health outcomes of children

Children are the future of any nation, and their health is paramount. They are the most vulnerable group in society and easily suffer maltreatment. The younger years are the most crucial part of their development, and if they are maltreated at this stage they could face a bleak future outcome. Their future outcomes are reliant on their parents, family and society at large. Children's health and wellbeing affects their future outcomes and life progression.

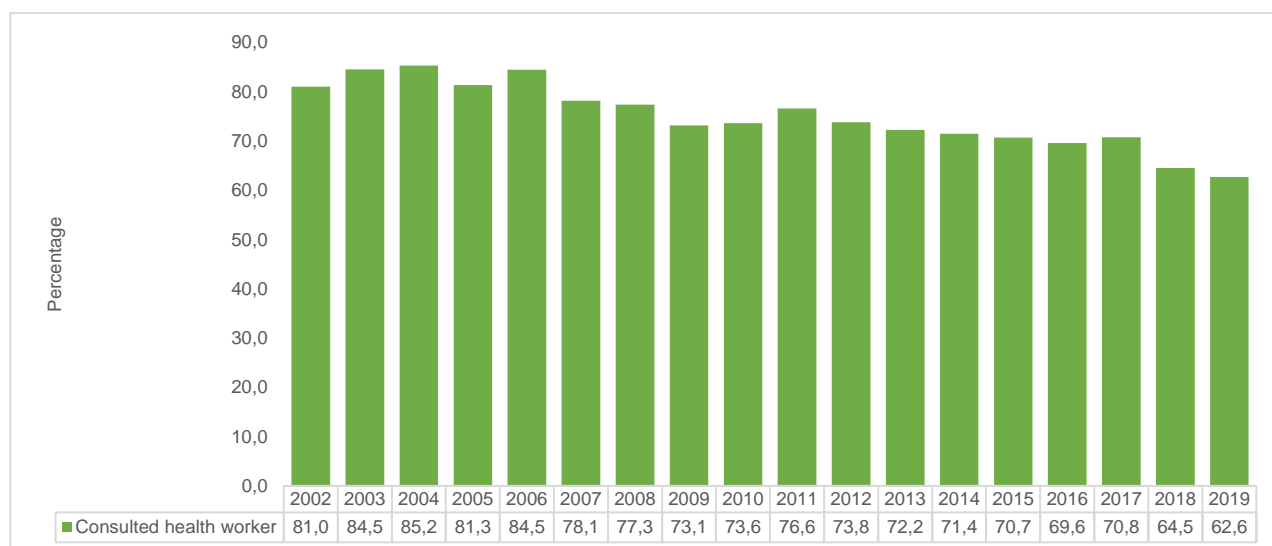
Table 4.6: Percentage of illness suffered by children aged 0–17 years, 2009–2019

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Flu or acute respiratory tract infection	68,4	68,0	68,1	70,1	71,6	66,5	68,3	73,0	81,1	75,0	79,1	66,8	82,7	84,8	83,1	86,1	86,6	83,7
Diarrhoea	4,6	6,5	6,8	7,3	7,7	6,7	7,5	3,3	2,3			9,8	12,3	12,3	13,3	11,0	9,9	13,3
TB or severe cough with blood	1,6	1,8	2,5	2,0	2,1	1,6	2,6	1,8	1,3	0,8	0,7	0,8	1,1	0,8	0,7	0,6	0,7	0,4
Abuse of alcohol or drugs	*	*		*	0,1	0,0	*	0,5	0,1	*			0,2	0,0	0,1	0,0	0,4	0,1
Depression or mental illness	1,5	0,6	0,6	0,6	0,8	0,6	0,6	3,2	0,3	0,6	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,1	0,1	0,2		0,3
Other sexually transmitted disease	*	*	0,2	0,2	*		0,1	0,6	*	*		0,1	0,1	0,1	0,0		0,0	0,0
Pneumonia												0,4	0,5	0,3	0,2	0,2	0,5	0,2
Bronchitis												1,0	1,6	0,7	1,1	0,5	0,9	1,0
Epilepsy												0,8	1,2	0,9	1,4	1,4	1,1	1,1

Source: GHS 2002–2019

Table 4.6 shows that most children suffer from flu as compared to other illnesses. Out of 2,8 million children who suffered illness roughly 83,7% were likely to have flu and around 13,3% diarrhoea in 2019. Furthermore, close to 1,5% children suffered from depression in 2002 and the percentage grew to about 3,2% in 2009 before it declined to nearly 0,3% in 2019. There was an observed increase in the percentage of children who were suffering from epilepsy from 2013 to 2017.

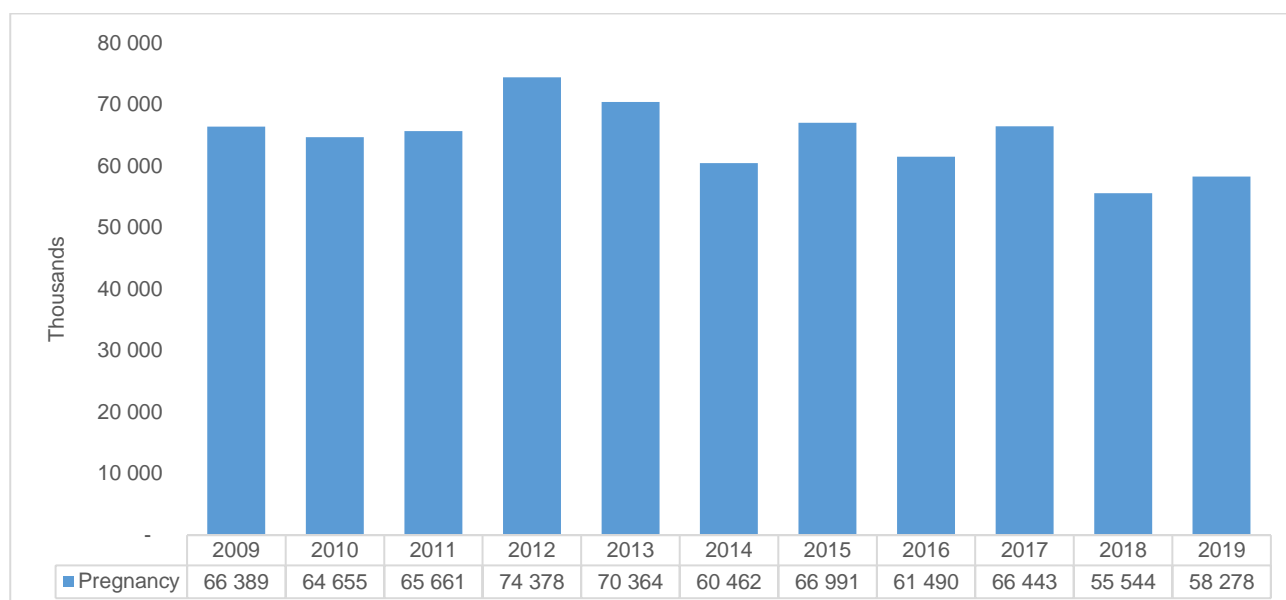
Figure 4.21: Percentage of children aged 0–17 years who did consult health workers as a result of illness suffered, 2002–2019



Source: GHS 2002–2019

Figure 4.21 presents the percentage of children who consulted health workers when they were ill. In 2002, close to 81% of children consulted health workers, and the proportions steadily increased to around 84,5% in 2006. Furthermore, the percentage declined to about three quarters (78,1%) in 2007 and 62,6% in 2019.

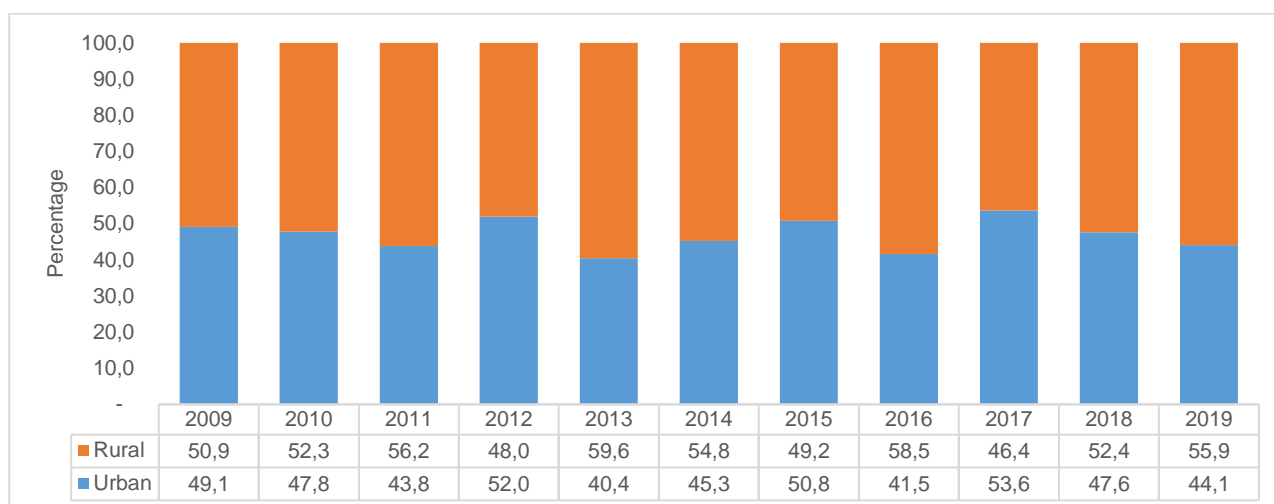
Figure 4.22: Number of children aged 12–17 years who were pregnant, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Figure 4.22 presents the number of children who were pregnant between 2009 and 2019. In 2009, more than 66 000 children were pregnant compared to around 58 000 in 2019. There were more children pregnant in 2012 as compared to other years. The number of pregnant children gradually increased to over 74 000 in 2012, before it dropped to around 58 000 in 2019.

Figure 4.23: Percentage of children aged 12–17 years who were pregnant by geographical area, 2009–2019



Source: GHS 2009–2019

Figure 4.23 displays the distribution of pregnant children by geographical area. Children in rural areas were more likely to fall pregnant than those who lived in urban areas. In 2019, more than half (55,9%) of pregnant children were from rural areas which increased from 50,9% in 2009. The urban-rural gap had also widened over time.

4.4 Summary

There was improvement in the number of children who were out-of-school from 1,4 million in 2002 to around 592 000 in 2021. Overtime, the percentage of children who were out-of-school due to their age had dropped by almost half from 65,2% in 2009 to 35,4% in 2021. Furthermore, the percentage of out-of-school children due to lack of money had reduced by half from 17,5% in 2009 to 7,2% in 2021. Vulnerability such as illness and disability were responsible for keeping close to 10% of children out of school in 2021, while an additional 10% were kept out of school due to performance related reasons or because they failed to be accepted at an educational institution. Pregnancy, marriages and other family commitments were other reasons for children's permanent absence from school.

Living arrangement and orphanhood status create discouraging environments for children's attendance of school. This is observed in the high percentage of children who lived with no parental care dropping out of school, at around 30% in 2008-2013 and falling to 23,2% in 2021. Similarly, across almost all the years, close to one-quarter of out-of-school children had lost at least one parent amongst which close to 6% were double orphans.

Children who cited pregnancy, marriages or other family commitment lived mostly in rural areas while those who referred to work related commitment and lack of time were mostly residents of urban areas. The percentage of children who were ill or had disabilities and were not able to attend school was higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

About 44,5% of children who were permanently out-of-school in 2021 were from the lower household income groups (quintiles one and two) as compared to nearly 35,0% from the highest household income groups (quintile 4 and 5). In 2019, about 34,6% of children who were temporary out-of-school were likely to belong to lower household income groups (quintile one and two) as compared to about 40,5% from the highest household income groups (quintile four and five). Temporary absence in 2019 was overall the lowest in Free State, Northern Cape and Mpumalanga. Nearly 46% of children in rural areas were temporarily absent from school in 2009 and the percentage declined to about 39% in 2019. In 2009, three-fifths (62,1%) of children indicated that they were temporarily absent from school due to sickness as compared to one-fifth (22,7%) in 2019.

More than 23 000 children suffered from depression in 2002; the number grew to about 98 000 in 2009 before it declined to nearly 7 000 in 2019. There was an observed increase in the number of children who were suffering from epilepsy from 2018 to 2019.

Chapter 5: Summary and conclusion

5.1 Status of children in South Africa

South Africa had an estimated number of 20,7 million children in 2021. Children constitute almost one-third of the total population (34,2%). Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal ranked first and second, respectively in both the total population and child population, while the Western Cape, the third most populous province in the country, ranked fifth in terms of its child population size. Childhood care and living arrangement can potentially be major risk factors for neglect or abuse of children. Children in South Africa by and large lived in extended household structures (61,5%) followed by nuclear household structures (36,5%) in 2021. Children in urban areas would more likely stay in nuclear household structures, while those in rural areas would more likely stay in extended household structures.

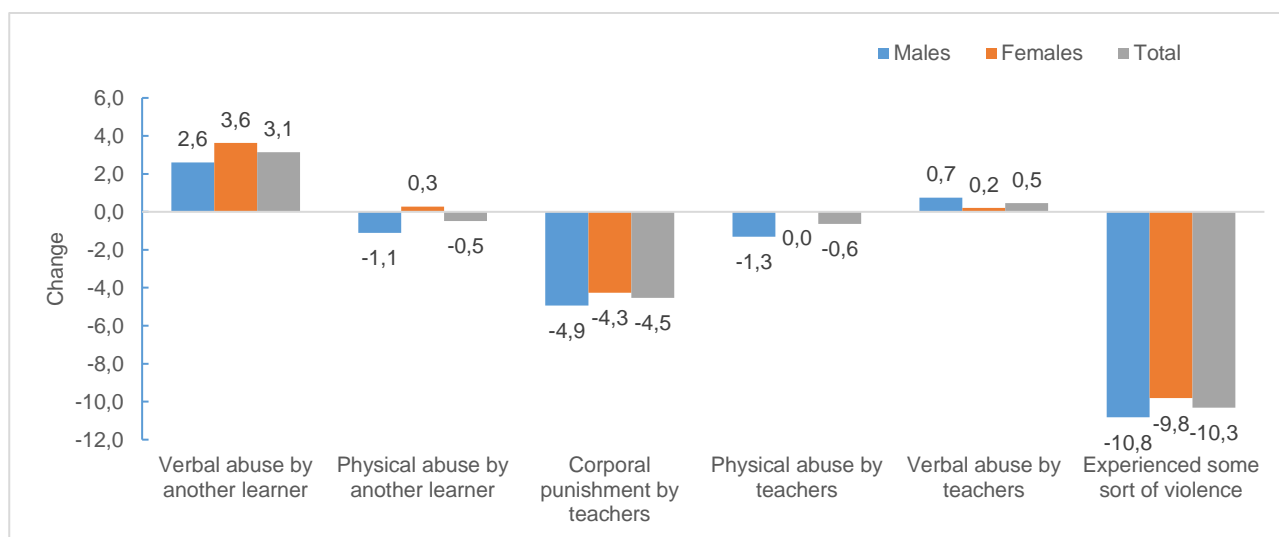
An increasing percentage of children were raised with partial parental care, as 43,4% of children lived with their mothers only in 2021. Furthermore, the percentage of children living with both parents declined by close to 6 percentage points in the two decades between 2002 and 2021 (39,5% to 33,8%, respectively). Children living with non-parental care had remained steady across the years, but this living arrangement was more prominent in rural areas (63,5% in 2002 and 59,7% in 2021).

Orphans and children with disability or illness are at major risk for abuse and neglect. In 2021, there were close to 2,3 million children who had lost at least one parent. Orphanhood was more noticeable in rural areas and peaked to 15,9% in 2006. Across all years, the majority of children living with non-parental care were not orphaned. However, double orphans and paternal orphans would more likely be living with non-parental care compared to maternal orphans.

5.2 Violence at school

Children aged 5–17 years spent most of their time at school or home. In South Africa, most of these children attend primary school (66,1%), while more than a quarter (26,5%) attend secondary school in 2021. Schools are expected to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children to fully benefit from educational opportunities. In South Africa, the percentage of children aged 5-17 who experienced some sort of violence at school reduced by almost half from 18,6% in 2009 to close to 8,2% in 2019. The most common form of violence experienced by children at school was corporal punishment by teachers, with close to 84% of children experiencing this type of violence in 2019, followed by verbal abuse by teachers (13,7%) and physical violence by teachers (10,6%).

Figure 5.1: Percentage change in types of abuse experienced by gender, 2009 to 2019

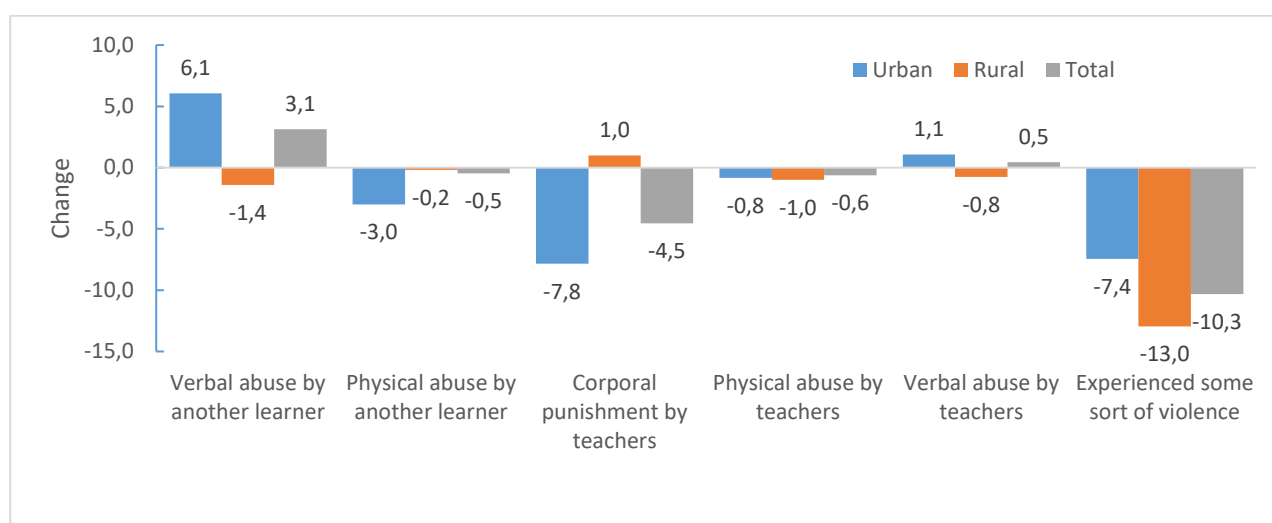


GHS 2009–2019

Abuse by teachers often targets females compared to males. In South Africa, girls were subjected to corporal punishment, physical violence, insulted, teased or harassed by teachers more than boys. Peer violence takes the form of verbal abuse, with children often being subjected to insults, teasing, harassment and bullying by other learners. Peer violence also includes physical abuse whereby children are punched or hit by fellow learners. While boys and girls are equally at risk of being abused by other learners, boys were more likely to be physically abused by fellow learners, while girls seem more prone to be subjected to verbal abuse by other learners. The percentage of females who experienced corporal punishment declined by 4,3 percentage points from 2009 to 2019, while those who experienced physical abuse by teachers remained unchanged.

In 2019, close to 14% of children indicated that fellow learners verbally abused them, and 54,2% amongst those verbally abused by other learners were females. In 2019, among children who reported being verbally abused by fellow learners, close to 46% were aged nine to 12 years. Bullying was described as one of the biggest problems at school and affected both genders equally. Bullying can result in children's absenteeism and a fear of attending school, a low self-esteem or suicide.

Figure 5.2: Percentage change in types of abuse experienced by geographical area, 2009 to 2019

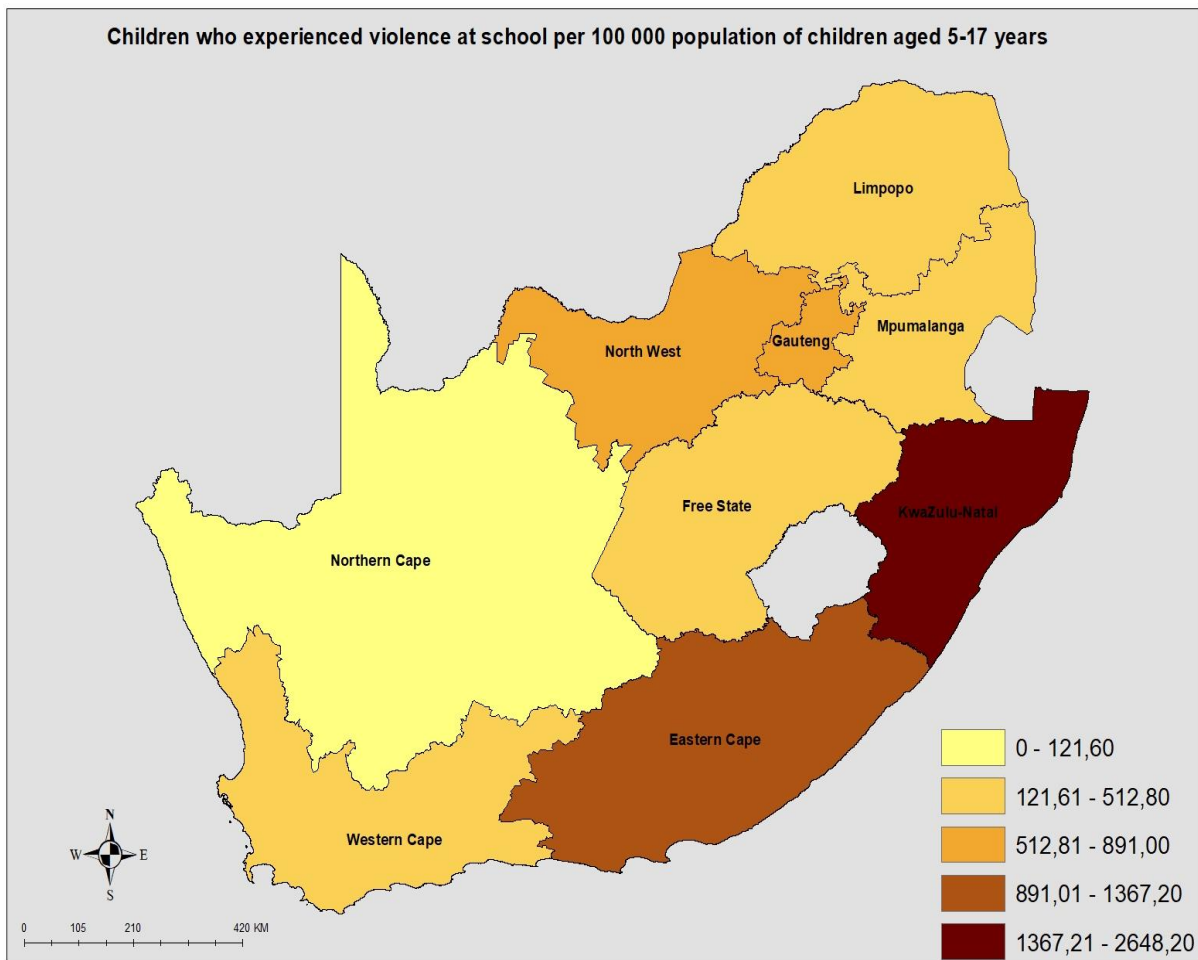


GHS 2009–2019

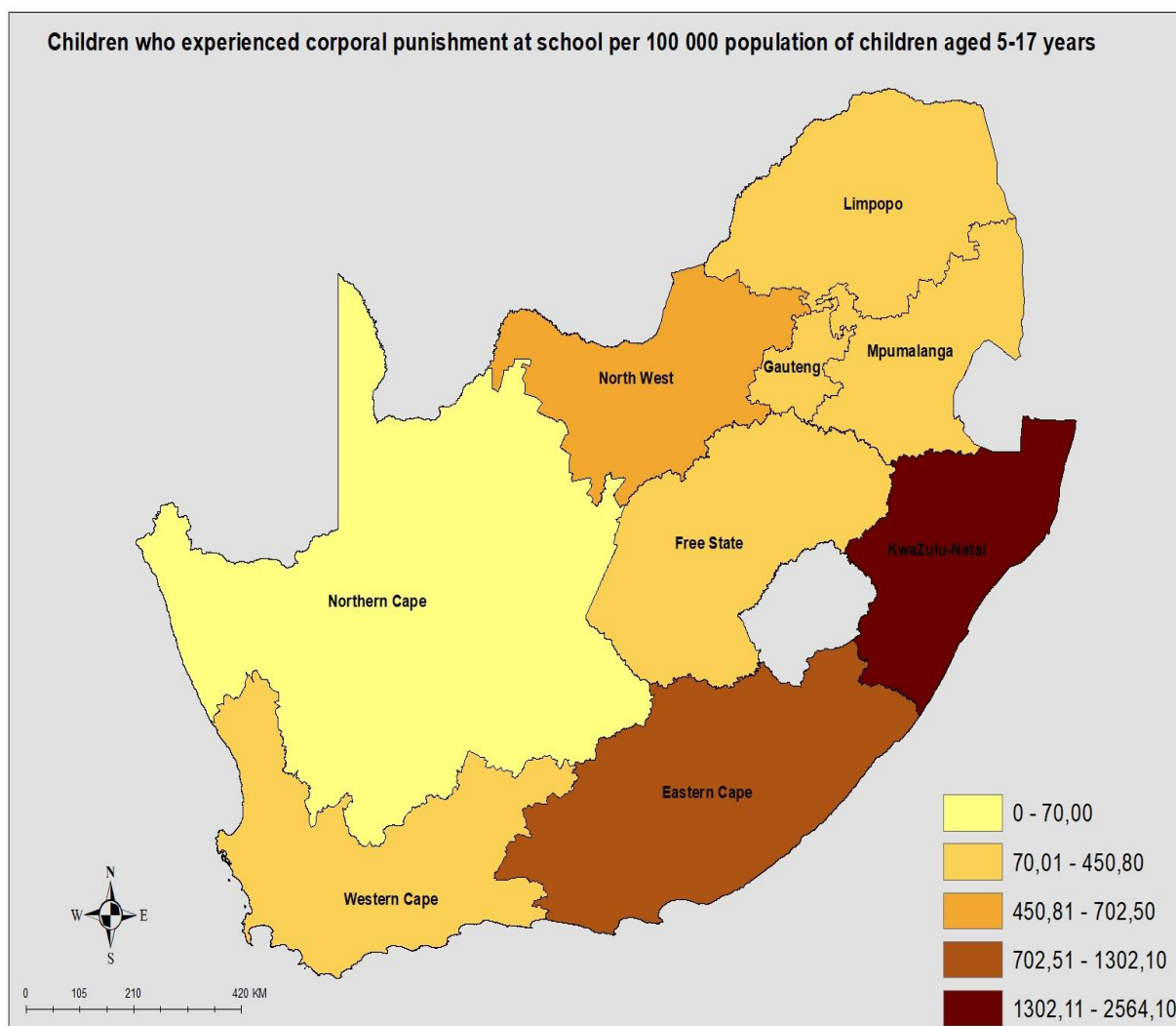
Exposure to violence affects mostly children from poor households. Children in the lowest household income quintile were two times more likely to have experienced some sort of violence in 2009 and the risks only reduced slightly within one decade. Overall, the percentage of children who experienced some sort of violence at school declined more in rural areas than urban areas. Furthermore, the percentage of children who received corporal punishment declined in urban areas. Other forms of violence, on the other hand, increased in urban areas between 2009 and 2019. Physical abuse by teachers remained mostly unchanged, while there was 6,1 percentage points increase in verbal abuse by fellow learners in urban areas. Bullying is a reality to a large proportion of children aged 5–17 in South Africa as close to 15% were verbally abused either by teachers or fellow learners in 2009 and increased to 17,7% in 2019. Verbal abuse by teachers often takes place in urban areas and targets children aged ten to 12 years (37,7% in 2019) and teenagers aged 15 to 17 years (33,1% in 2019).

Awareness of the illegality of corporal punishment did not stop households from having strong opinions about the need for corporal punishment both at school and at home. More households in rural areas than urban areas had perceptions that it was acceptable for children to be physically punished for breaking the rules.

Abuse and violent discipline may affect children regardless of their levels of wealth, social status or type of home environment. Exposure and geography may be direct factors, such as experience with the digital world for some abuse. However, certain groups of children may be vulnerable to various forms of abuse and neglect.

Map 5.1: Rate of violence at school, 2019

The above map presents the number of children who experienced violence at school per 100 000 population of children. Children in KwaZulu-Natal suffered the most from violence at school at the hands of teachers or fellow learners.

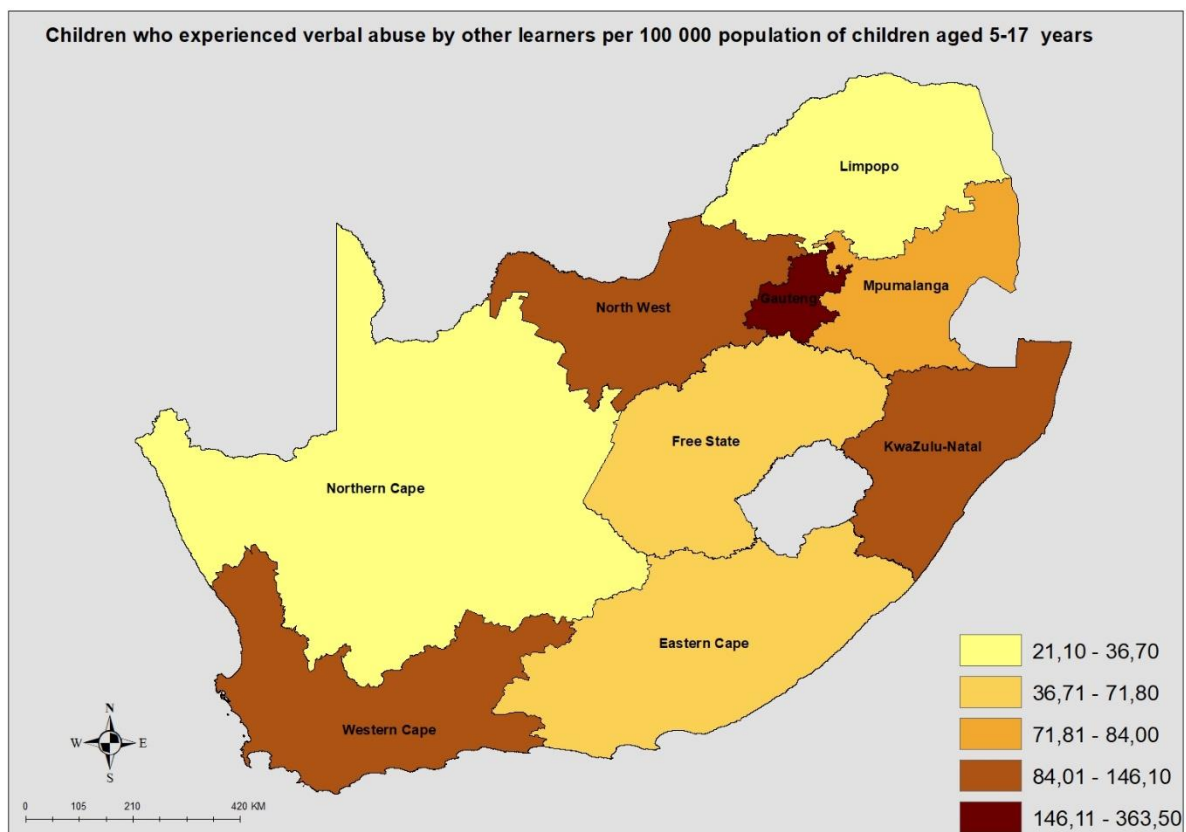
Map 5.2: Rate of corporal punishment, 2019

The above map presents the number of children who experienced corporal punishment per 100 000 population of children. Children in KwaZulu-Natal suffered the most from corporal punishment inflicted by teachers at school followed by Eastern Cape and North West. Northern Cape had the lowest rate of corporal punishment on children.

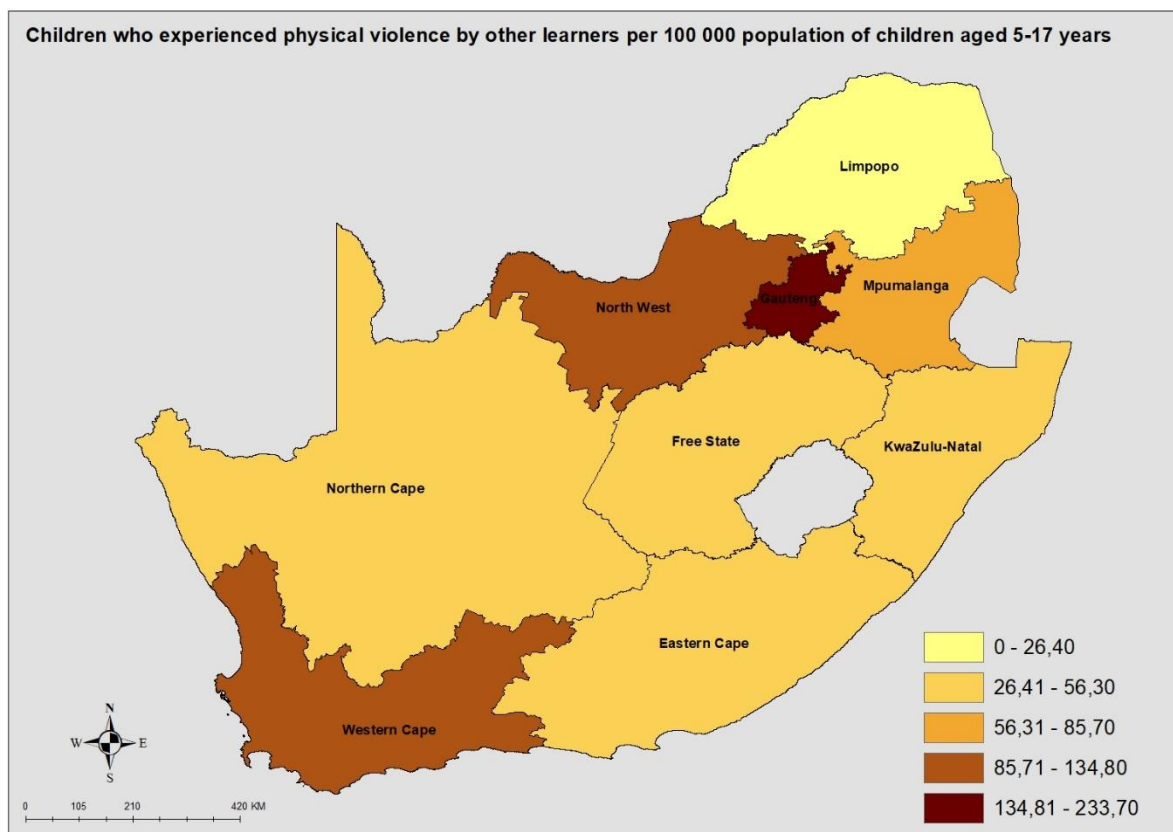
There is some decline over time in corporal punishment at school. This decline can be associated with the fact that any form of violence, whether corporal punishment or verbal abuse at school has outlawed in South Africa. Section 10 of the Schools Act of 1996 has made the administration of any form of violence a criminal offence in South African schools.

While corporal punishment was used for many decades to control students in educational contexts, it has been noted that corporal punishment can cause significant negative outcomes for the relationship between teachers and their students or an increased rate of children dropping out of school.

Many medical and psychological societies, along with human-rights groups, argue that physical punishment is ineffective in the long term, interferes with learning, leads to antisocial behaviour as well as causing low self-esteem and other forms of mental distress, and is a form of violence that breaches the rights of children.

Map 5.3: Rate of verbal abuse by other learners, 2019

The above map presents the number of children who experienced verbal abuse by other learners at school per 100 000 population of children. The majority of children who were victims of verbal abuse by other learners were found in Gauteng. The occurrence of such abuse were also prominent in Western Cape, North West and KwaZulu-Natal.

Map 5.4: Rate of physical abuse by other learners, 2019

The above map presents the number of children who experienced physical abuse by other learners at school per 100 000 population of children. The majority of children who were victims of physical abuse by other learners were found in Gauteng. The occurrence of such abuse were also prominent in Western Cape and North West.

Definition of terms

Household– a group of persons who live together and provide themselves jointly with food and/or other essentials for living, or a single person who lives alone.

Maternal orphans– children whose biological mothers have passed away, but whose fathers are still alive.

Paternal orphans– children whose biological fathers have passed away, but whose mothers are still alive.

Double orphans– children whose both biological parents have passed away.

Nuclear household–household consisting of a married couple, or a couple–or a single parent–together with their children.

Household composition– is the classification of households according to the relationships between the members.

Extended household– household consisting of the nuclear household and other family members.

Single household–indicates a household with only one child staying alone.

Complex household– household consisting of the nuclear household and at least one non-related member.

Poor or low income households– household which falls in the lowest two income quintiles.

Children– persons aged 17 years and younger.

Child maltreatment–the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Violence at school– experience of any form of violence, corporal punishment, or verbal abuse at school over the past three months.

Derived Concepts:

Urban and rural were derived using settlement type classification according to the characteristics of a residential population in terms of urban and rural, degree of planned and unplanned (in the case of urban) and jurisdiction (in the case of rural). The four broad settlement types found in South Africa are:

- a) formal urban areas
- b) informal urban areas
- c) commercial farms
- d) tribal areas and rural informal settlements

Using the settlement type criteria, areas that are comprised of formal and informal urban areas are designated as urban. All other areas are designated as rural. Rural areas comprise commercial farms and tribal areas.

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