

## Ugandans views on public primary schooling.



### **Key highlights**

Among Ugandans with a primary school going child in the household:

- Parents perceive pupil absenteeism as a considerably larger problem than teacher or head teacher absenteeism from school.
- Majority of Ugandan parents (60%) are interested in following up teacher attendance in their schools.
- Almost half (47%) believe that if they asked the head teacher to see the attendance register, they would allowed to do so.
- However, less than half (40%) think there are enough teachers in school for all grades.
- There appear to be distinct groups of parents according to their engagement with the school: 37% of parents are quite disengaged in that they do not go to school meetings neither when invited by the school nor of their own accord. On the other hand, another 37% go both when invited as well as of their own accord.

## Introduction

Twaweza works on enabling children to learn, citizens to exercise agency and governments to be more open and responsive in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. The Uwezo annual national learning assessment continues to be a core initiative of Twaweza and has been carried out since 2009 in Uganda. Its purpose is to collect independent data on the level of Ugandan children’s capacities in basic literacy and numeracy, as well as to communicate the findings directly to parents, in the national media, and to national-level actors in the education sector.

Both teacher and pupil attendance are key factors for achieving learning outcomes. In 2016, Twaweza in Uganda designed an experimental initiative to promote discussion of these issues between parents, school staff and local leadership. Part of the formative baseline, Twaweza commissioned a study to assess the perception of Ugandans on key education-related issues, including teacher and pupil absenteeism, and parental involvement and participation in schools.

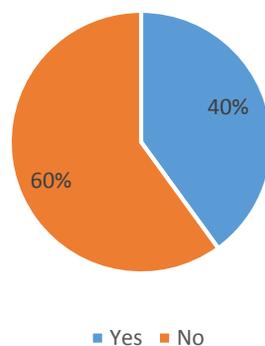
## Methodology

Twaweza East Africa commissioned Research World International in October 2016 to gather feedback on a number of issues of programmatic relevance, through a nationally representative “omnibus” survey<sup>1</sup>. Conducted through randomly selected quantitative face-to-face interviews with respondents 15 years and above, the survey used a semi-structured questionnaire administered through smart phones. A sample size of 2,252 interviews was determined with an error margin of +/-2% at 95% confidence interval. This sample was distributed proportionately based on the estimated population size, representative of the rural/urban stratification by region and sub region.

## Part one: Views on public primary schooling in Uganda

Before delving into questions on public primary schooling in Uganda, the study established which of the respondents had a child in the household who attend a public primary school. As illustrated in Figure 1, 40% of households in Uganda have a public primary school going child. The data presented in this brief is based on this sub-sample of respondents unless we mention otherwise.

**Figure 1: Proportion of respondents (households) with a child attending a public primary school (n=2252)**

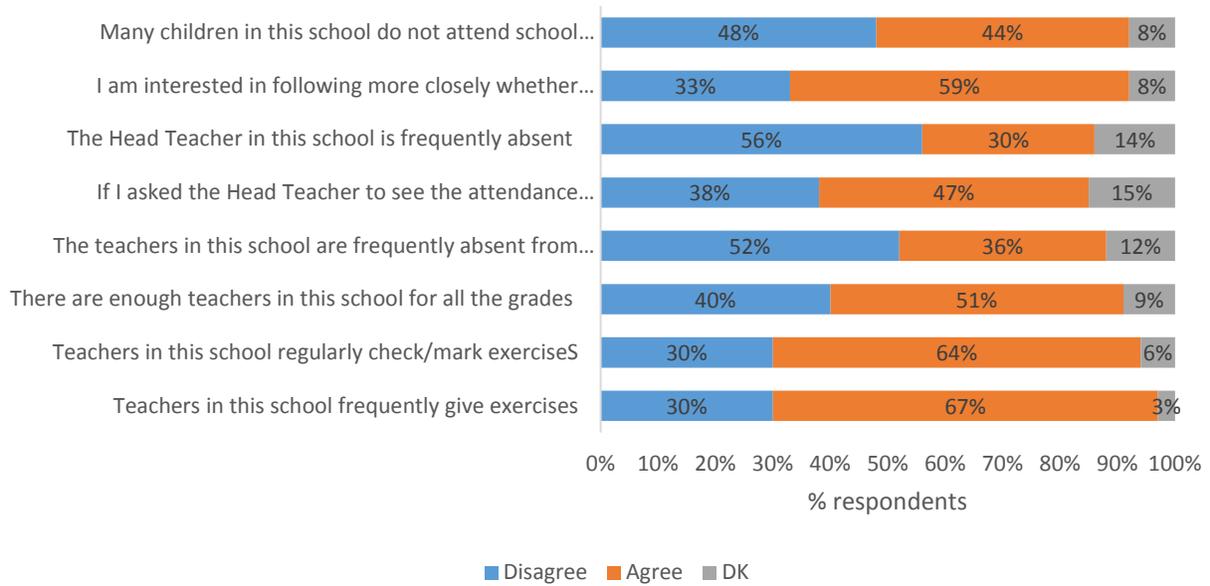


<sup>1</sup> <https://www.surveyanalytics.com/omnibus-survey-definition.html>

**Fact 1: About 6 out of 10 parents say they are interested in following up teacher attendance**

Two-thirds of respondents (67%) report that teachers frequently give exercises to pupils and 64% report the teachers regularly check and mark the children’s exercises. The majority also feel that teachers and head teachers are largely present in school and attend class as they should. More than half of respondents (60%) are interested in following up teacher attendance in their schools, while nearly half (47%) also believe if they asked the head teacher to see the attendance register, they would be allowed to do so. On the other hand, 44% of the respondents say many children do not attend school regularly, and 40% think there are enough teachers in school for all grades.

**Figure 2: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements related to school quality at the public primary school your child attends (n=902)**

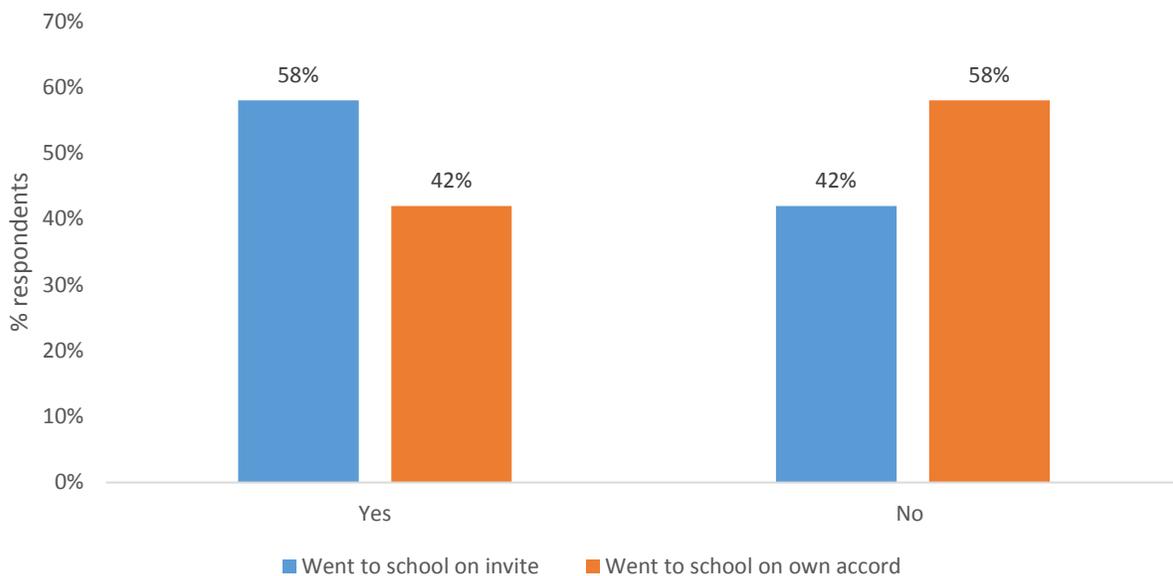


## Part 2: Levels of parental involvement in public primary schools

**Fact 2: About 6 out of 10 parents have attended a parents and teachers (PTA) meeting in the last one year.**

This survey also interrogated the level of parental involvement in children's learning: 58% of parents report that they or a member of their household had attended at least one PTA meeting in the last school year. When the same category of respondents were asked if they had visited their children's school at their own will or without having been asked to do so, 42% responded that they had (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: How many have visited their child's school in the past year (n=906)**



A further look at the responses revealed that generally, urban respondents were more likely to have attended a meeting as compared to rural respondents. Among the (58%) respondents who attended a meeting on invitation, (63%) were urban compared to rural (57%), while there were no differences between male and female respondents. Similarly among the 42% respondents who attended a meeting without being required to do so, 53% were urban as compared to 39% rural; in this group there were slightly more males (43%) as compared to females (40%).

**Fact 3: Parents tend to belong to one of two groups in terms of engagement: those who are very engaged, and those who are really disengaged.**

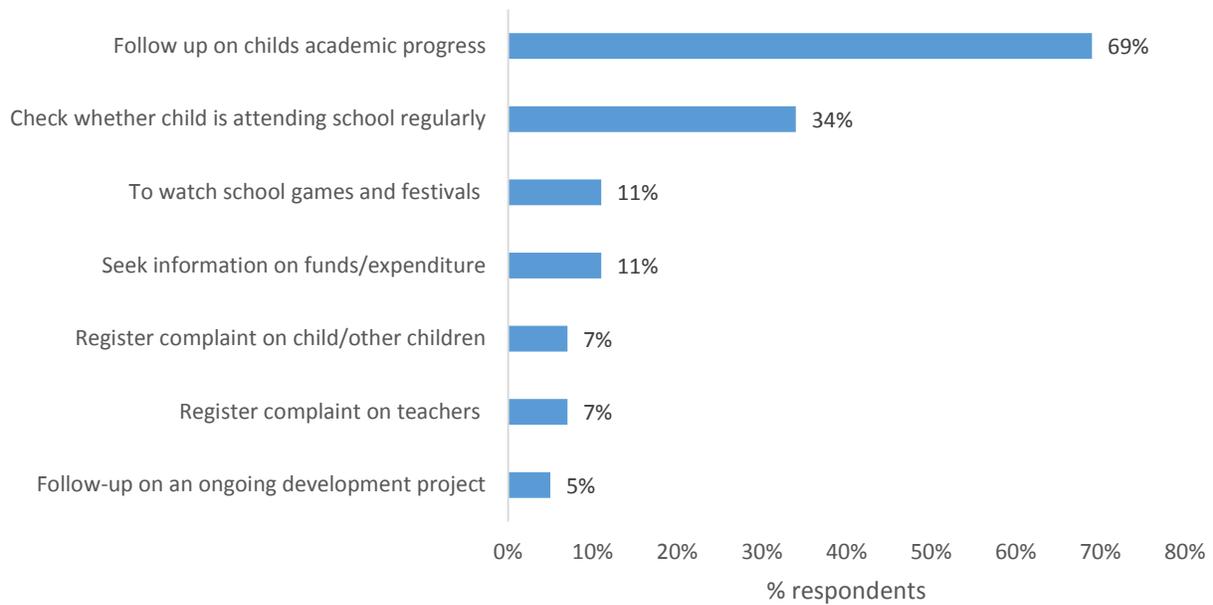
We categorized parents according to their responses whether they attend a school meeting on invitation, and whether they visit the school on their own accord. As can be seen in Table 1 below, 37% of parents doesn't go to school when they are invited nor do they go on their own accord. These could be termed as the disengaged parents. But an equally large group (37%) both go when called as well as of their own accord; these could be termed as the very engaged parents. There is a group (21%) who goes when called, but not otherwise; and 5% who responded they don't go when called, but have gone of their own accord.

**Table 1: School meetings/visits behaviour**

(n=906)		Went to school on own accord		
Went to school when called	No	Yes		Total
No	37%	5%		42%
Yes	21%	37%		58%
	58%	42%		100%

The study also revealed varied reasons (*figure 5*) for those who visited their child school without being required to do so. The main ones were: following up on child’s academic progress, confirm whether the child is attending school regularly, to watch school games and festival to complain about a child or teachers conduct, and follow up on a development project.

**Figure 5: Reason for visiting school [Multiple Answers] (n=379)**



## Conclusions

In the opinion of Ugandans in this survey, teachers and head teachers appear to be performing their duties well: they are thought to be present in school and class, and to assign and check homework. These perceptions are interesting as they offer quite a contrast to findings from several studies<sup>2</sup> which have described acute absenteeism<sup>3</sup> of head teachers and teachers from their schools, with some placing absenteeism rates between 40% and 50%<sup>4</sup> and some reporting that Uganda's teacher and head teacher absenteeism could be the highest in the world<sup>5</sup>. These findings are supported through our own Uwezo Annual Learning Assessments: e.g. in 2012 we found that at least 1 out of every 10 teachers was absent from school on the day of assessment<sup>6</sup>. For Twaweza, it will be important to explore further this disconnect between people's perceptions and the reality, as parental awareness of these key issues of quality of education is likely the first step if they are to be engaged in solving the issues.

Lastly, the number of people (with a child in the household attending public primary school) who claim to have attended a meeting (on invitation) at school in the last one year is almost 6 in every 10 adults. We further analysed this data and found that parents tend to group into either being quite engaged – which includes going to school when invited but also of their own accord, or being quite disengaged – meaning, not going of their own accord but also not going when invited. There is a group (about one-fifth) who only go to school when invited. This characterization may be useful in thinking about reaching out with further information and materials first to groups of parents who appear to already be more keen to engage with the school; they may be able to persuade the 21% who go on invitation only to follow up more keenly (while perhaps we should not expect much action from those who do not attend even on invitation). The reasons parents gave for attending of their own accord suggest there is grounds for engagement – they appear to be concerned about their children's performance as well as attendance. These insights may be useful in the future when designing parental engagement initiatives.

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<sup>2</sup>[http://www.teachersforefa.unesco.org/v2/phocadownload/Country\\_Support/tissa\\_uganda\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.teachersforefa.unesco.org/v2/phocadownload/Country_Support/tissa_uganda_full_report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup><http://www.theigc.org/project/improving-services-delivery-an-assessment-of-absenteeism-data/>

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.anppcanug.org/wp-content/uploads/research\\_reports/ANPPCAN\\_Uganda\\_report\\_teacher\\_absenteeism.pdf](http://www.anppcanug.org/wp-content/uploads/research_reports/ANPPCAN_Uganda_report_teacher_absenteeism.pdf)

<sup>5</sup><http://observer.ug/component/content/article?id=5599:uganda-teacher-absenteeism-is-highest-in-world>

<sup>6</sup>[http://www.uwezo.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/UG\\_Uwezo2012ALAREport.pdf](http://www.uwezo.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/UG_Uwezo2012ALAREport.pdf)