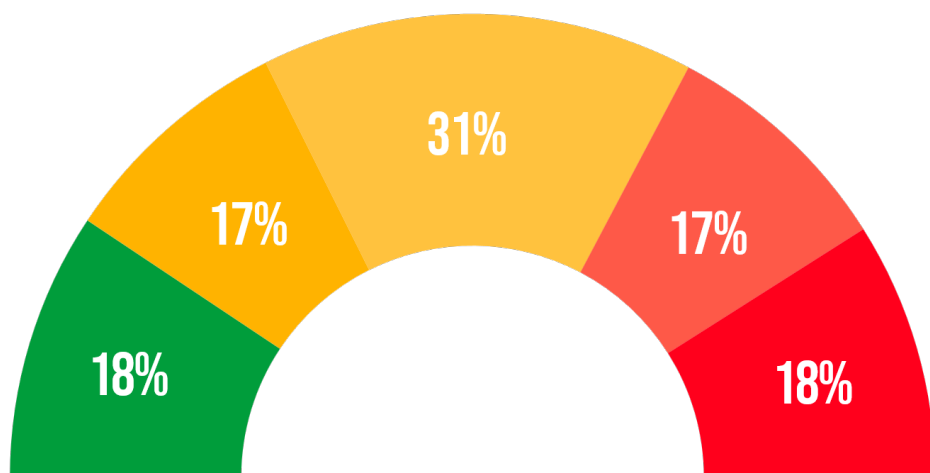
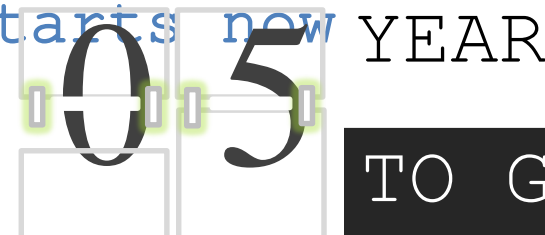




Progress on SDG 4: A Review of Key Targets and Challenges

Yongyi Min
UNDESA Statistics Division
September 2025

A decisive five-year countdown starts now YEARS



SDG PROGRESS BASED ON AN ASSESSMENT OF SDG TARGETS WITH TREND DATA.

● ON TRACK ● MODERATE PROGRESS ● MARGINAL PROGRESS
● STAGNATION ● REGRESSION

» The SDGs have improved millions of lives in the past decade, but progress is not sufficient to achieve all the Goals.

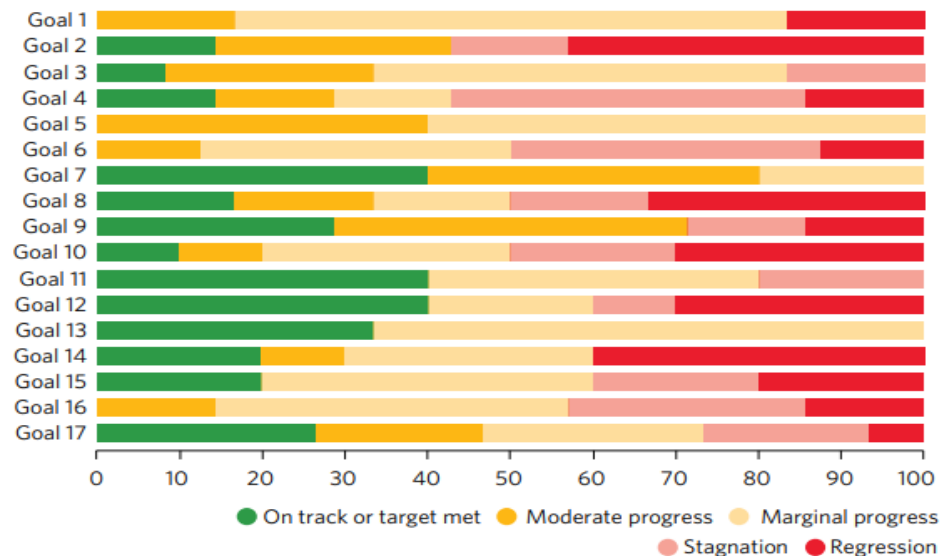
» Of the SDG targets with trend data, only 35% are on track or show moderate progress. Nearly half are moving too slowly or making only marginal progress, while 18% have regressed.

Quality Education

4 QUALITY
EDUCATION


- 4.1 Effective learning outcomes ○
- 4.2 Early childhood education ○
- 4.3 TVET and tertiary education ○
- 4.4 Skills for employment ●
- 4.5 Equal access to education ●
- 4.6 Adult literacy and numeracy ●
- 4.7 Sustainable development education ●
- 4.a Education facilities ○
- 4.b ODA for scholarships ●
- 4.c Qualified teachers ●

Progress assessment for the 17 Goals based on assessed targets, by Goal (percentage)

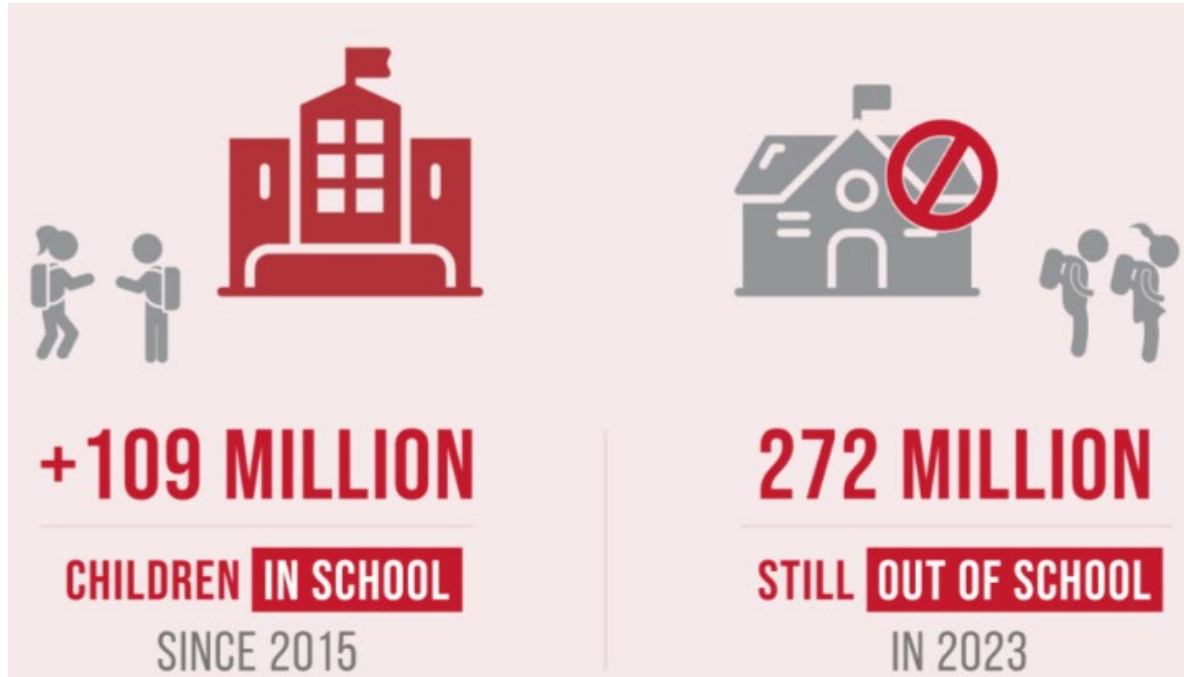


Legend

- On track or target met
- Moderate progress, but acceleration needed
- Marginal progress, and significant acceleration needed
- Stagnation
- Regression
- Insufficient data

4.1 Effective learning outcomes

- **109 million** more children in school since 2015
- Completion rates rose from **85%, 74%, 53%** (2015) to **88%, 78%, 60%** (2024) across education levels
- Girls now exceed boys by **2–3 percentage**
- Progress is slower than **previous 9 years**
- **272 million** children and youth remained out of school in 2023



4.2 Early childhood education

- **Two-thirds of young children** developmentally on track (84 countries, 2015-2024)
- **75% of children** worldwide participated in pre-primary education (2023)
- Only **103 countries** guarantee free pre-primary education
- Only **66 countries** mandate at least **one year of pre-primary** education





4.3 TVET and tertiary education

- **Over half of youth (15-24)** recently participated in formal/non-formal education
- **One-sixth** of working-age adults (15-64) engaged in continued learning
- **Extremely low participation** among adults aged 25-54 (**only 3%**)

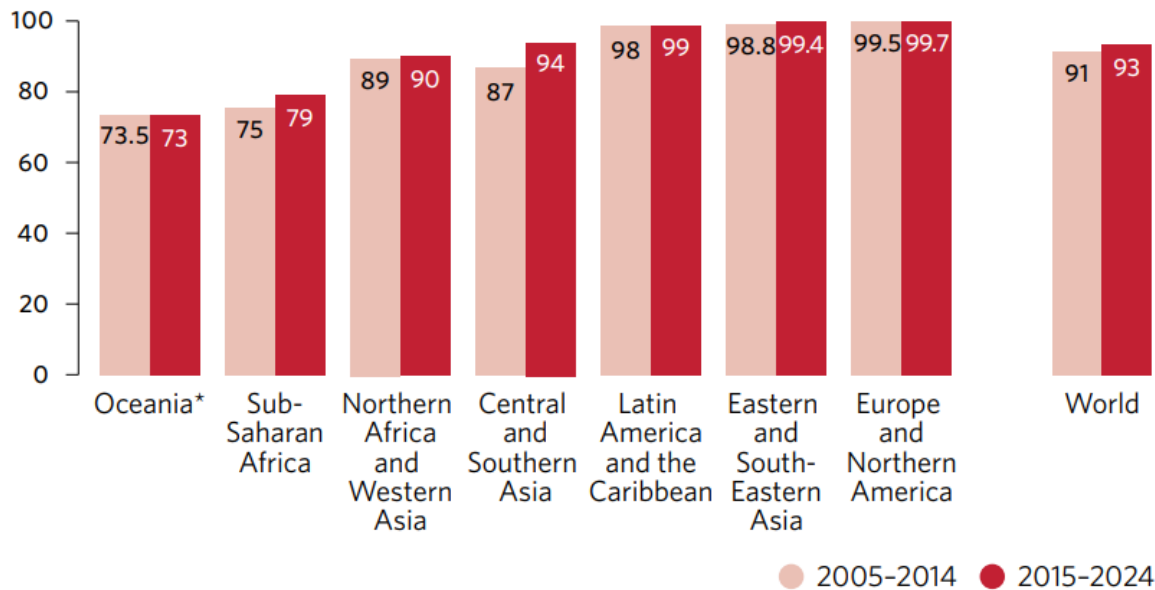


© Desola Lanre-Ologun / Unsplash

4.6 Adult literacy and numeracy

- Global adult literacy rate increased from **85% to 88%** (2014-2024)
- Youth literacy rate rose from **91% to 93%** (2014-2024)
- Though **754 million adults** remain illiterate worldwide (2024), **Women** accounting for **63%**

Youth literacy rate, 2005-2014 and 2015-2024 (percentage)



* Excluding Australia and New Zealand.



4.a Education facilities

- **Over a fifth** of primary schools lack basic services (**drinking water, basic sanitation facilities, electricity**)
- **Half of primary schools** lack computers, internet, and disability-adapted infrastructure
- **LDCs**, fall substantially behind the global average. **Over a third** of primary schools in LDCs lack basic services

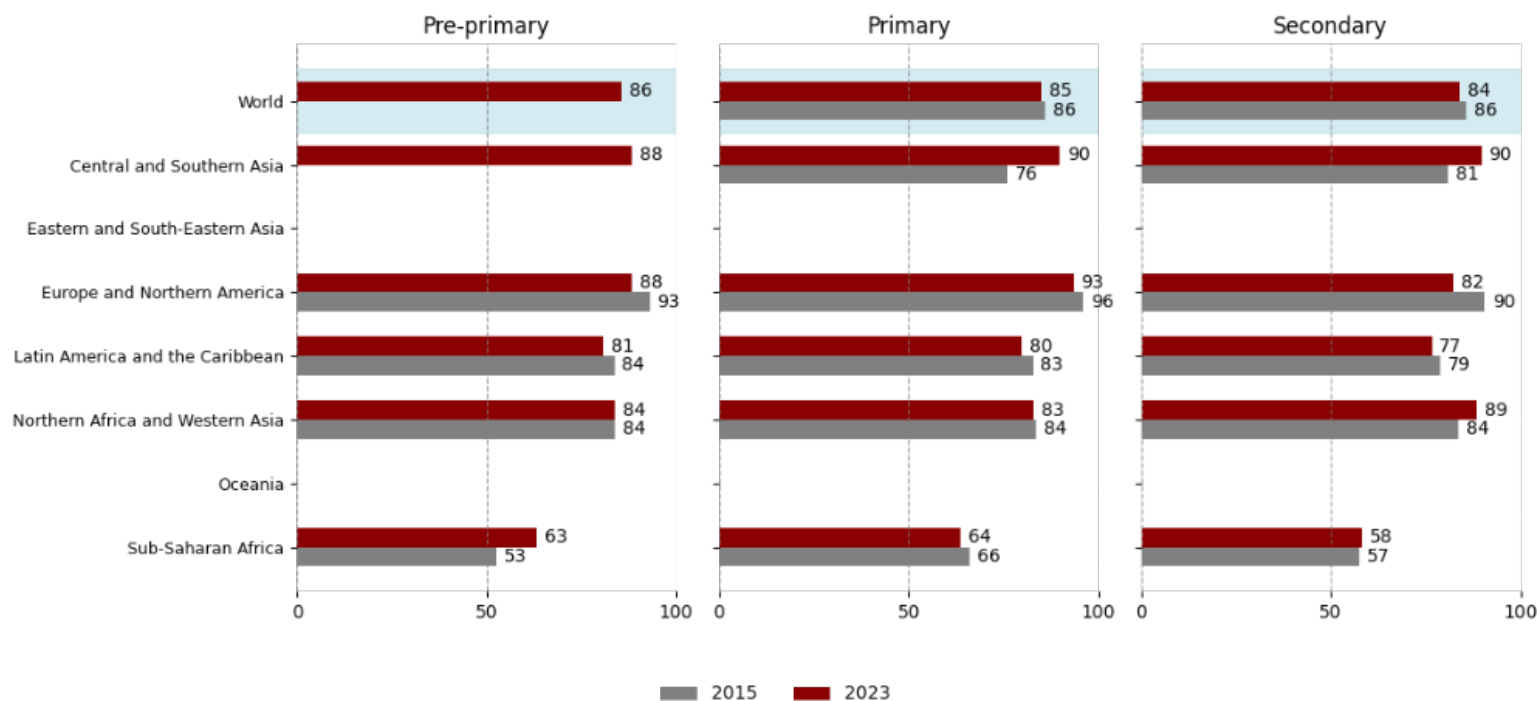


© UNICEF/UNI419970/Preechapanich



4.c Qualified teachers

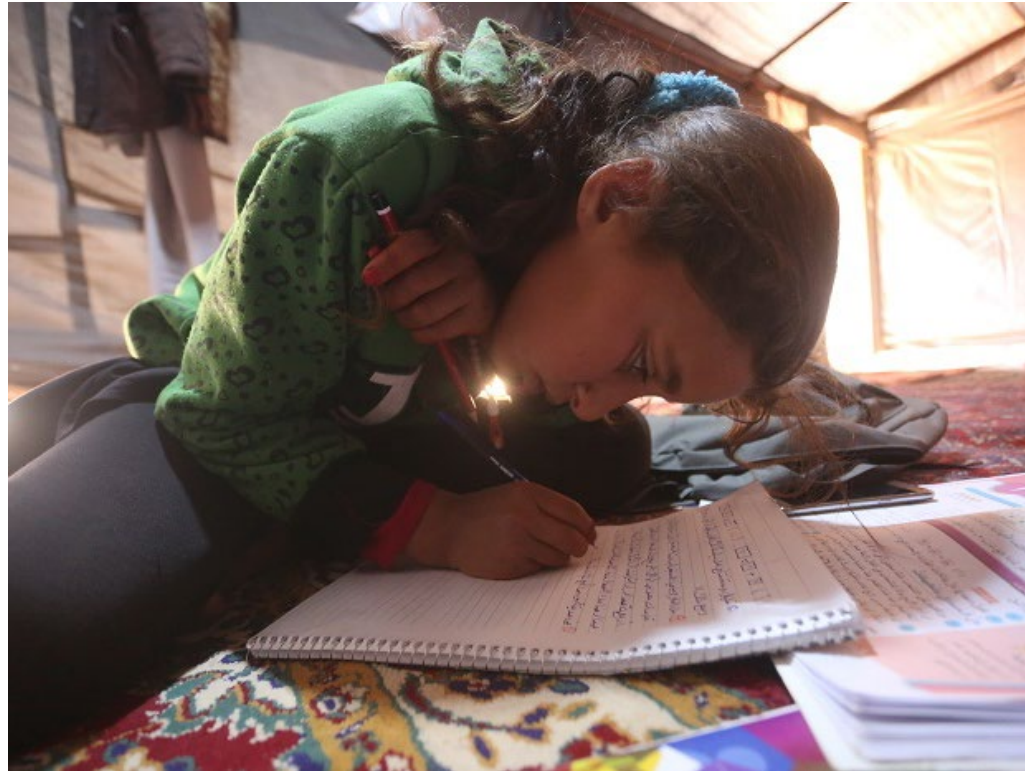
- **15% of teachers globally** do not meet national minimum qualification standards (2023)
- **Only 60%** of teachers in sub-Saharan Africa meet qualifications vs. **90%** in leading regions





Key Actions for Progress

- **Scale up quality early childhood education** programs.
- **Enforce legal guarantees** for free and compulsory education.
- **Close digital and infrastructure gaps**, with particular focus on LDCs.
- **Expand lifelong learning opportunities** for adults and marginalized populations.



© UNICEF/Ali Haj Suleiman

Learn more in the Report:



The Sustainable Development Goals Report **2025**

