

What constitutes a good school?

Findings from a study of schools in Karnal





Who is Breakthrough?

Breakthrough works towards making violence and discrimination against women and girls unacceptable. We transform gender norms by working with adolescents and youth, their families and communities, as well as by using media campaigns, the arts and popular culture to build a more equal world around us.

What do we do in Haryana?

We work across six states, Haryana being one of them. In Haryana, we work in seven districts: Karnal, Rohtak, Panipat, Sonapat, Jhajjar, Gurugram, Faridabad. Our work in Haryana is focussed on adolescent empowerment with an aim to shift attitudes and behaviors of adolescents to be more gender progressive and equitable.

What is this booklet about?

To facilitate this work, we conducted an evaluation study in June 2022 across 20 schools in 20 gram panchayats of Karnal. Data was collected from 346 adolescents and 20 other community stakeholders including ASHA and Anganwadi workers, school teachers and community leaders. Through this booklet, we want to share some key findings from this study with you, with a special focus on good school indicators.

What are good school indicators?

Breakthrough has introduced some indicators and criteria that transform a school into a good school. These criteria include aspects such as no corporal punishment, healthy and positive environment, no gender and caste discrimination among others. Following these, we assessed the current situation of schools with the objective of being able to come up with a proper customized action-plan to address issues and ensure that every school is a good school. The following three graphs score the 20 schools based on this evaluation.

Figure 1: Co-education schools

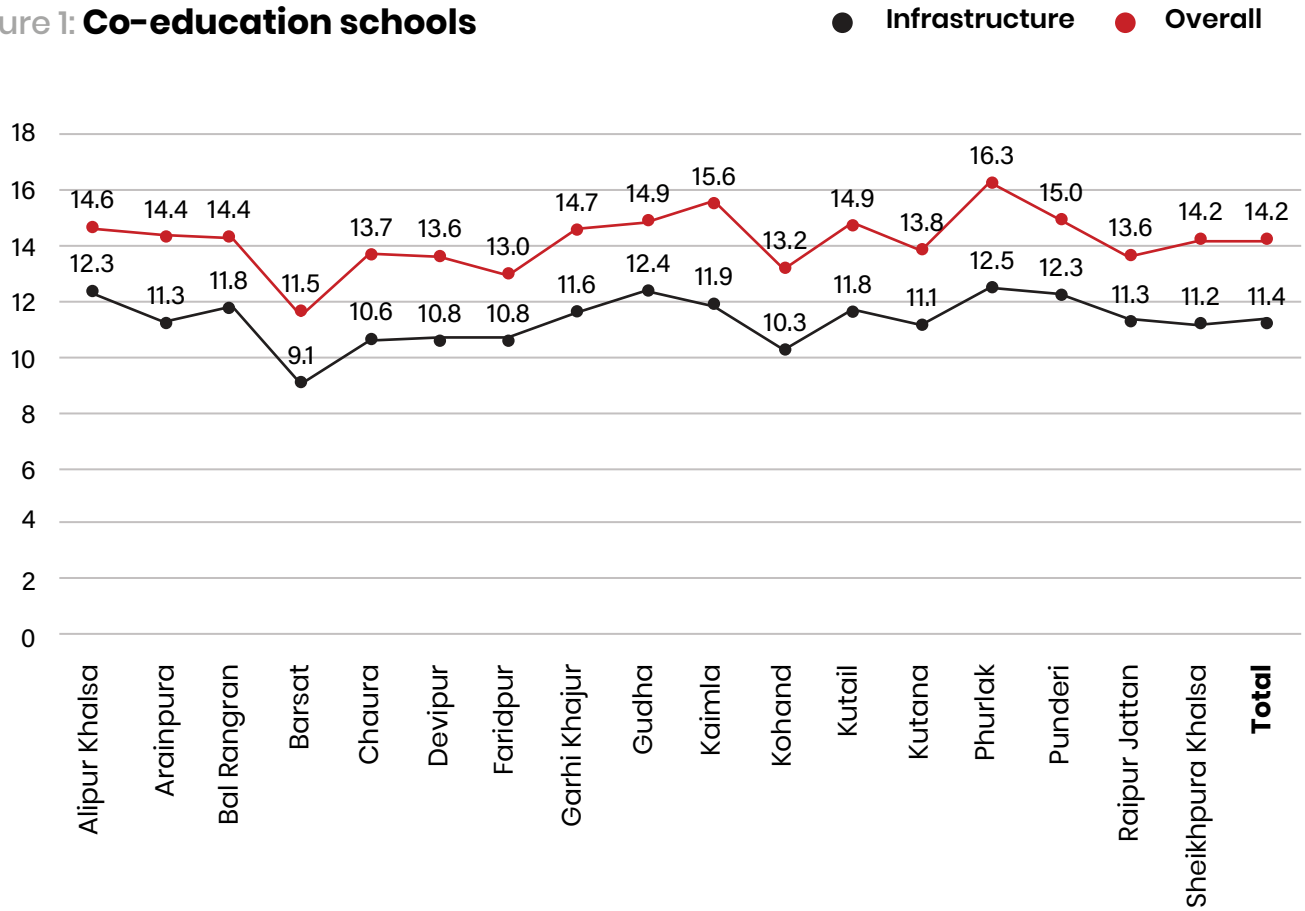
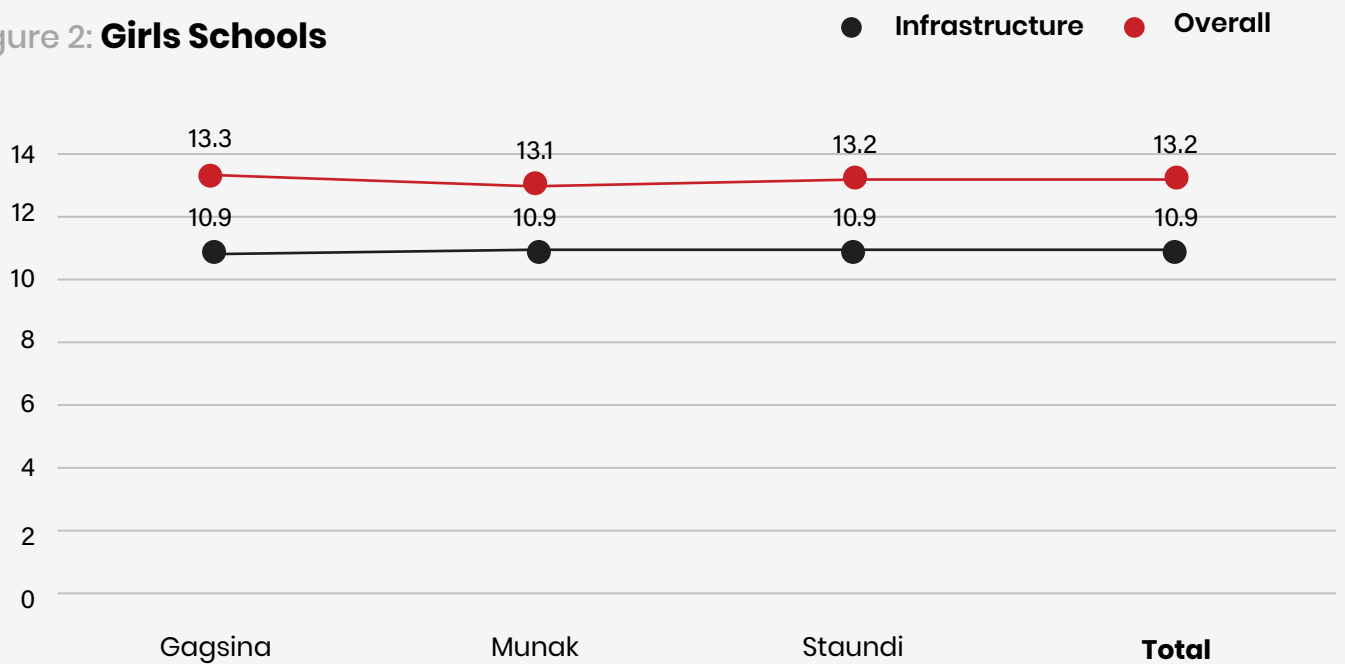
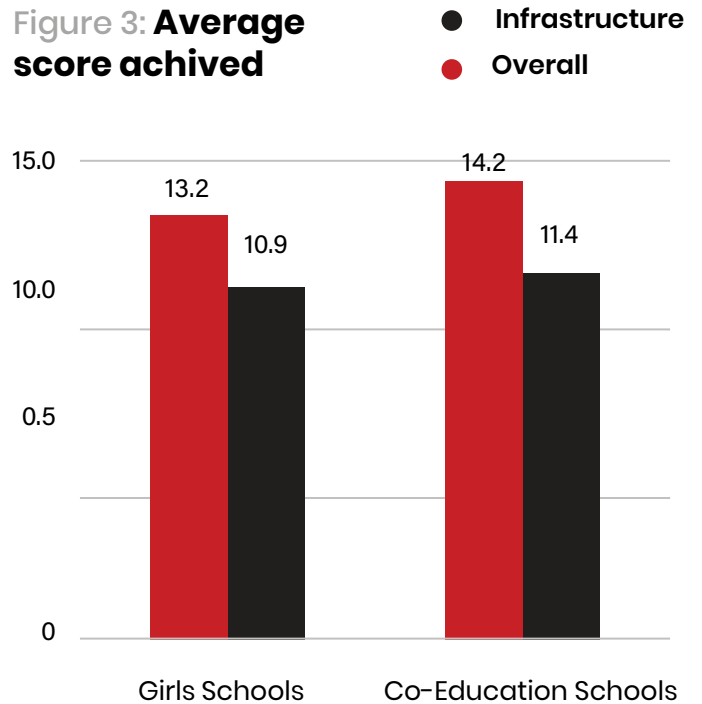


Figure 2: Girls Schools



Please note: Under infrastructure, indicators such as availability of black boards, playgrounds, clean and functional toilets etc. have been assessed. The overall assessment additionally includes aspects such as no corporal punishment, safe school spaces for children, functional platforms for students to voice their concerns, etc. The overall score of the co-educational school has been calculated out of 20 and that of infrastructure out of 13. The overall score of the girls' school is calculated out of 17 and that of infrastructure out of 12.

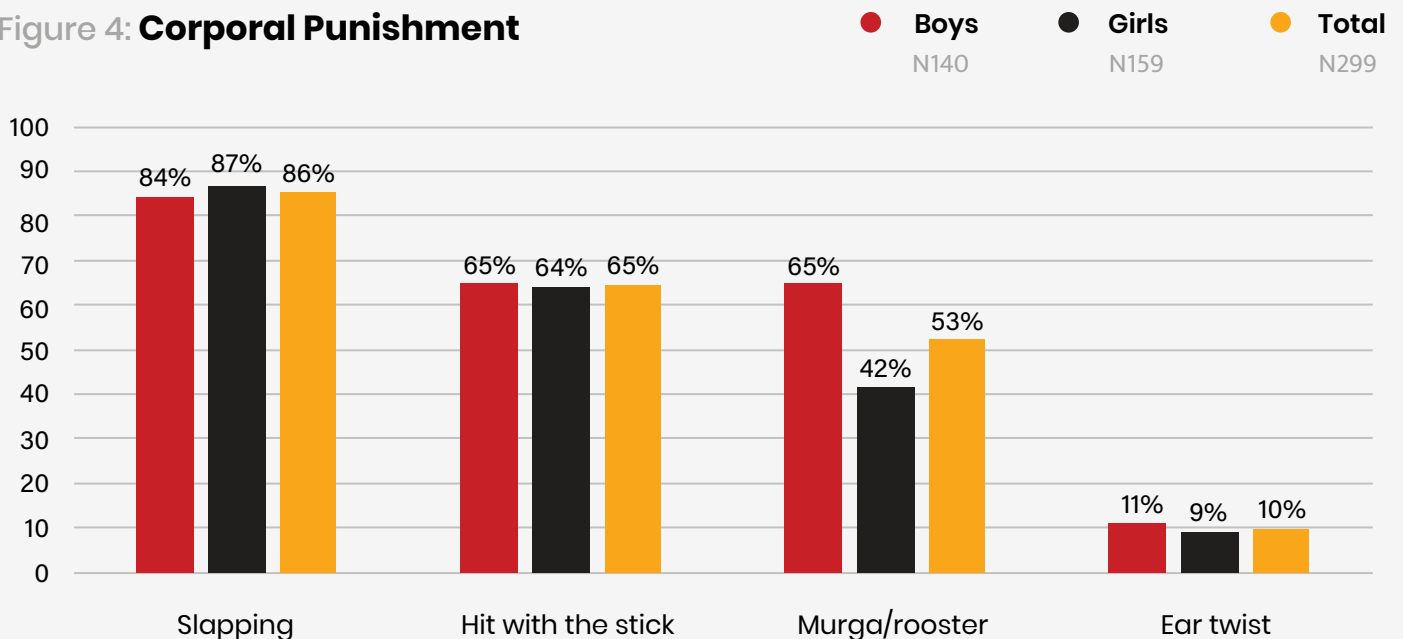
Figure 3: **Average score achieved**



What are some key findings of the study?

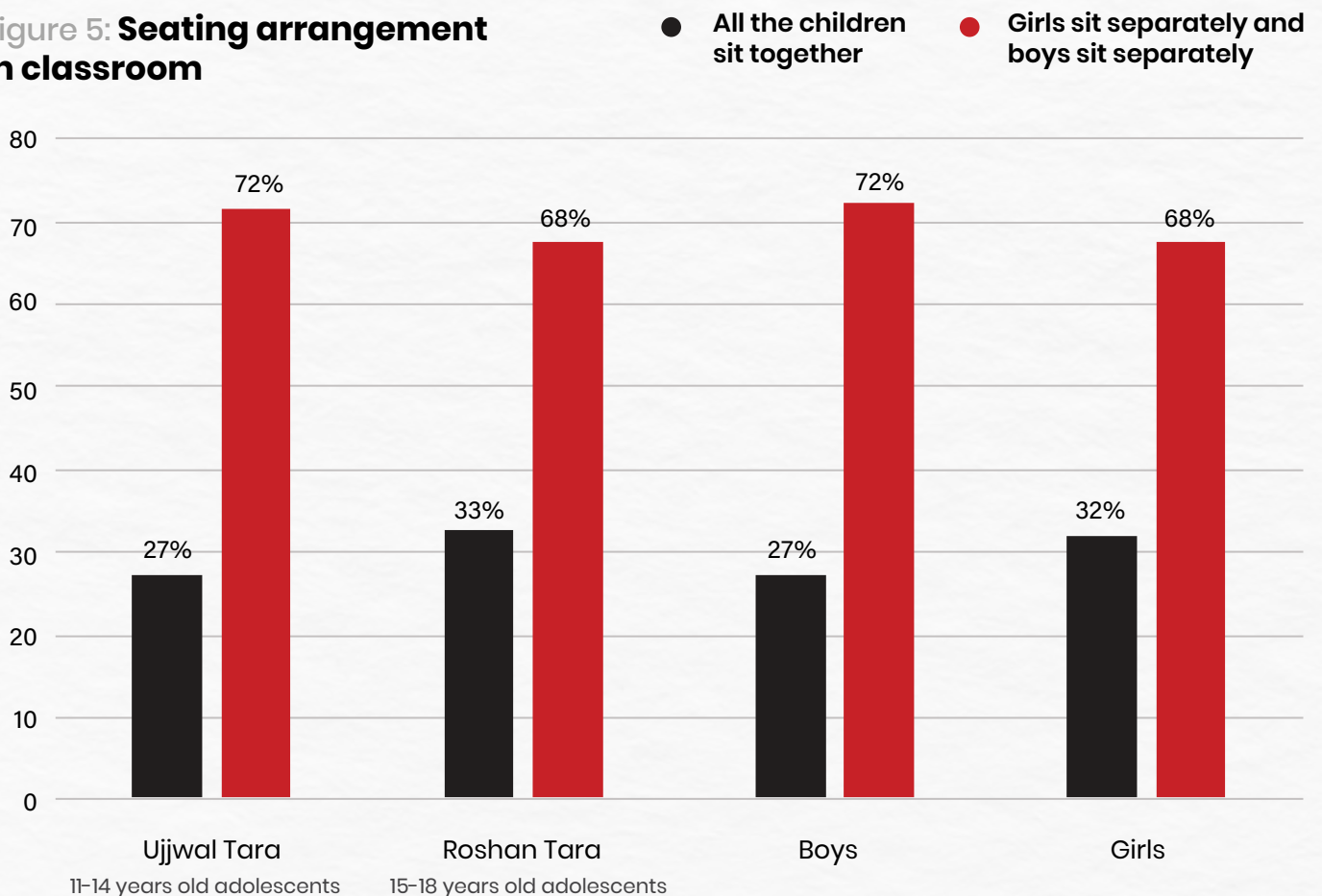
- **Corporal punishment is highly prevalent in all schools.** Nearly all the students mention 'slapping' and more than half the students report 'being hit with a stick' and 'murga/rooster punishment' as disciplinary methods. Students themselves believe that strict punishment is essential and the only way to maintain discipline.

Figure 4: **Corporal Punishment**



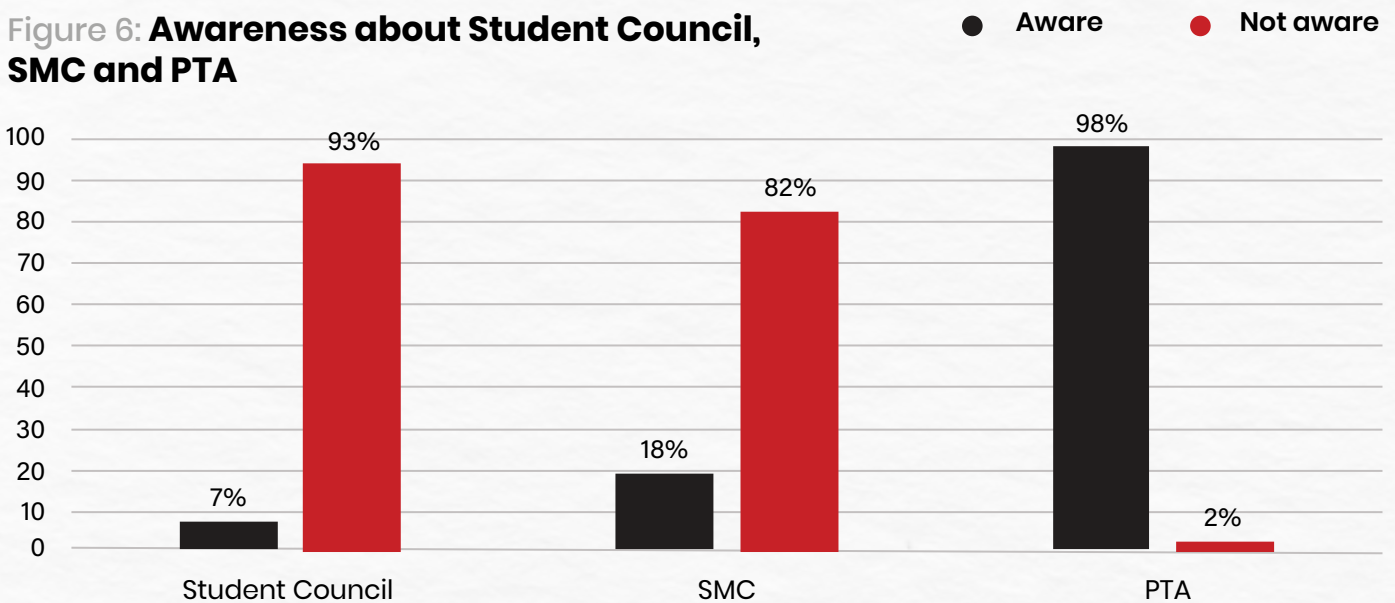
- **Majority of adolescents report witnessing and/or experiencing violence in some form during the past year.** The most cited reason for witnessing violence is substance/alcohol/ drug abuse. For experiencing violence, over a third of respondents report fights with siblings followed by not completing homework/ reading. One-fifth of the adolescents report teachers and mothers to be perpetrators of violence.
- **Segregation on the basis of sex is highly prevalent in all schools.** Boys and girls do not sit together either in the classroom or during mealtimes. Teachers also report not being very comfortable with the idea of girls and boys sitting together. Some of reasons provided by different stakeholders for this segregation include:
 - Girls hesitate to sit with boys.
 - Parents of girls are not comfortable with the idea of them sitting with boys.
 - Adolescents should maintain boundaries as a sign of respect to teachers.
 - Adolescents are immature, so the gap between them needs to be maintained.

Figure 5: Seating arrangement in classroom



- **Student Councils and School Management Committees (SMC) barely exist** in the study area. And even if they are present, they are barely functional and need strengthening. Majority of adolescents (except seven percent) have no knowledge of what student councils are, and only eighteen percent of adolescents are aware of the existence of School Management Committees (SMC).
- Unlike Student Council and SMC, **nearly all respondents are well aware about Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and report that their parents attend the meetings regularly.**

Figure 6: Awareness about Student Council, SMC and PTA



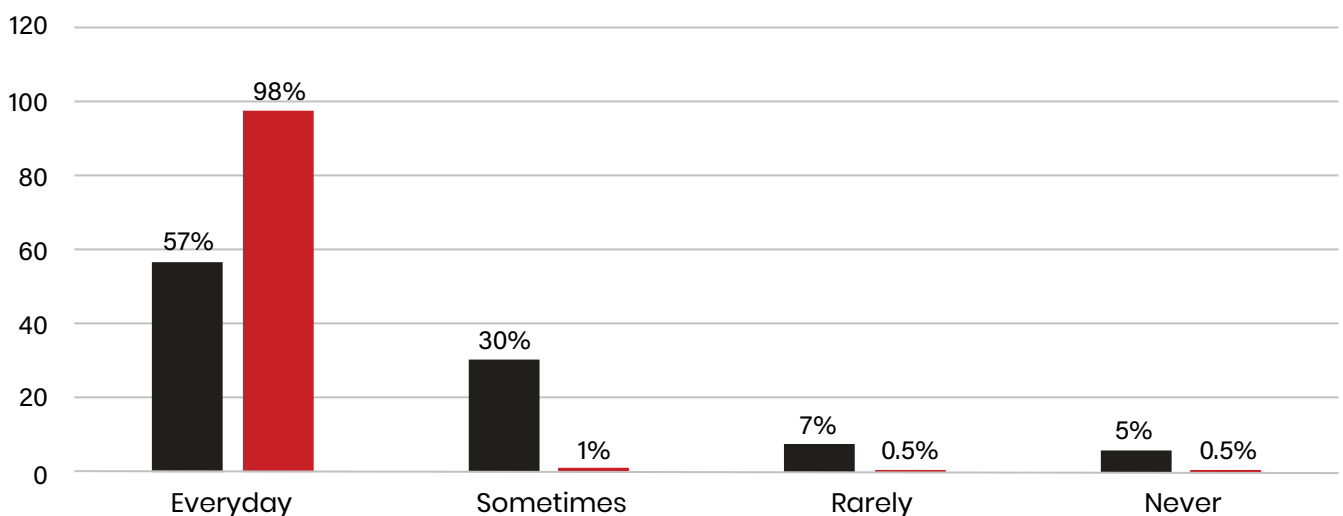
- While pad distribution systems are working relatively well in schools, **pad disposal facilities (referring to dustbins) were only reported by about half of the adolescents.**

Figure 7: Proportion of respondents who reported that infrastructure is present and usable



- Nearly all **students perceive the school to be a safe space** mainly because of having friends and ‘strict and helpful’ teachers. They also report comfort in sharing their problems with teachers.
- Both **teachers and students report awareness about gender and caste-based discrimination issues** and share they often speak to each other about the same.
- There is a **major gender difference in awareness around menstruation**. While all girls surveyed report being aware, only a little over half the boys report the same.
- **Taboos related to menstruation are prevailing**. Nearly ninety percent girls report not being allowed to worship, forty percent report not being allowed to consume or touch ghee and/or pickle, and over ten percent report not being allowed to enter the kitchen during their menstrual cycles.
- Despite all adolescents stating that gender roles are not correct, in real life the **frequency of boys doing household chores is less as compared to girls**. Data reveals that boys spend 88 minutes doing household chores, while girls spend 133 minutes doing household chores which is 1.5 times more than boys. More girls (three-fifth) report missing school/classes due to household chores than boys (about half).

Figure 8: Frequency of doing household chores like cleaning, cooking, washing, getting things from the market, taking care of animals etc. ● Boys ● Girls



- Overall, **older adolescent boys tend to support discriminatory gender norms more**, indicating the possibility of them perpetuating these norms as future fathers/husbands.
- Qualitative data, including from parents and frontline workers reveal a clear **preference for higher education for boys**, based on the perception that the end goal of education for boys is career and for girls it is getting married.

