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Back to School Parents Survey Report 2025–2026 Academic Year

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Back to School Parents Survey Report

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List of Acronyms

BTS	:	Back-to-School
ECE	:	Early Childhood Education
ESWG	:	Education Sector Working Group
MHPSS	:	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MoFSS	:	Ministry of Family and Social Services
MoNE	:	Ministry of National Education
UNICEF	:	United Nations Children's Fund

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Executive Summary



As Türkiye continues efforts to ensure inclusive access to education, findings from the Back-to-School (BTS) Parents Survey confirm that school exclusion remains a persistent and systemic challenge, particularly for refugee and vulnerable children. The 2025-2026 BTS Parents Survey, implemented by ESWG under UNICEF’s leadership, reached 2,442 households across urban, refugee-hosting, and earthquake-affected provinces, capturing education access data for 6,363 children. Overall, 84% of children surveyed were enrolled in education, while 16% did not attend education programmes.

Among children who are not attending education programmes, exclusion is driven primarily by structural and socio-economic barriers. Boys account for a slightly higher proportion (54%) compared to girls (46%), reflecting broader economic pressures and the prevalence of child labour, which affects over one in ten out-of-school children. Age-disaggregated analysis highlights critical pressure points within the education cycle. Children aged 6–9 years represent the largest share of out-of-school children (57%), indicating challenges related to delayed or failed school entry. Adolescents aged 14–17 years account for 26%, reflecting the cumulative impact of prolonged disengagement, economic necessity, and limited reintegration opportunities, while children aged 10–13 years constitute 17% and remain a key group for early prevention interventions.

Economic hardship emerges as the dominant barrier to school participation across all age groups. Despite the availability of free public education, financial constraints affect over one-third of out-of-school children, with parents frequently citing the cost of uniforms, supplies, transportation, and related expenses as primary reasons for delayed or non-

enrolment. Administrative and registration barriers further compound exclusion, affecting nearly 30% of children. These challenges are largely linked to missing identification documents, unresolved address registration, limited awareness of enrolment procedures, school-level refusals, and capacity constraints—issues that disproportionately affect refugee and displaced households’ children.

Among children who are not attending education programmes, exclusion is driven primarily by structural and socio-economic barriers. Boys account for a slightly higher proportion (54%) compared to girls (46%), reflecting broader economic pressures and the prevalence of child labour, which affects over one in ten out-of-school children.

Physical access barriers, including distance to schools and inadequate transportation options, particularly in urban, peri-urban, and relocation settings, continue to hinder regular attendance. Protection and psychosocial factors also play a significant role. Bullying, prolonged absence from education, and negative peer influence contribute to disengagement, while child labour, household caregiving responsibilities, and agricultural work further limit children’s ability to attend school. For a subset of refugee families, uncertainty linked to intentions to return to Syria influences education decisions, underscoring the need for flexible and confidence-building education pathways rather than reflecting low demand for learning.

Children with disabilities face additional barriers, despite representing a smaller proportion of the overall caseload. Limited access to disability-related services, insufficient assistive devices, and a shortage of teachers trained in inclusive education continue to restrict meaningful participation. Residual impacts of the February 2023 earthquakes persist, including damaged school infrastructure and fear of re-entering concrete buildings, further affecting attendance in some communities.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) remains the most critical access gap. Among children aged 3–5 assessed through the survey, a total of 81% children age 3-5 years is not attending ECE programmes. Non-attendance is largely driven by perceptions that children are too young, financial barriers, distance to services, and limited availability of age-appropriate facilities. These gaps pose long-term risks to school readiness, learning

outcomes, and retention throughout the education cycle.

Overall, the BTS Parents Survey confirms that school exclusion in Türkiye is the result of intersecting economic, administrative, access-related, protection, and vulnerability factors that intensify with age and displacement status. Addressing these challenges requires age-responsive and evidence-based BTS strategies that prioritize early entry and ECE, strengthen education-linked social protection mechanisms, streamline registration and enrolment processes, improve access to schools, and expand flexible and alternative education pathways for adolescents. Sustained multi-sectoral collaboration between the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), ESWG partners, municipalities, and donors remains essential to translating these findings into durable, child-centred impact.

A. Background

As Türkiye entered the 2025–2026 academic year, access to education remained a significant challenge for over 1 million school-age refugee and foreign children with nearly 22% out of school, particularly those living in vulnerable and earthquake-affected contexts. Syrian children under Temporary Protection represented the largest group affected and continued to face multiple, overlapping barriers to education. These included economic hardship, administrative and documentation constraints, language difficulties, limited transportation options, peer bullying, low parental awareness of education pathways, and the ongoing effects of the February 2023 earthquakes, which disrupted education systems across 11 provinces.

The scale and complexity of these challenges underscored the need for coordinated inclusive and evidence-informed education responses. In this context, UNICEF, in its role as lead of ESWG, prioritised approaches aimed at strengthening education access, retention and system responsiveness for refugee and host-community children. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying barriers to enrolment, supporting continuity of learning, and ensuring that the most vulnerable children were reached.

BTS Parents Survey, led by UNICEF, serves as a key evidence-generation mechanism within the education response. The survey is designed to capture parental perspectives on school access, participation and barriers to education, and to inform programme design, policy dialogue and advocacy efforts. Findings from previous survey cycles have contributed to the development of targeted interventions and informed engagement with national and local education stakeholders.

As Türkiye entered the 2025–2026 academic year, access to education remained a significant challenge for over 1 million school-age refugee and foreign children with nearly 22% out of school, particularly those living in vulnerable and earthquake-affected contexts.

B. Scope of the Survey

Survey Coverage and Population

The BTS Parents Survey reached 2,442 households and 6,363 children aged 3-17 years across urban, refugee-hosting, and earthquake-affected provinces in Türkiye. The sample included children from Turkish host communities as well as refugee populations, primarily Syrian and Afghan households, enabling analysis across nationality, gender, and age groups.

The survey covered ECE and school-age children for assessment of access to both early learning programmes and formal education. Data collected through the survey provides insights into enrolment patterns, barriers to school participation, and household-level factors influencing education access.

Methodology Overview

Quantitative analytical method was applied to identify trends, disparities, and barriers to education access, while data in numbers and percentages within the narrative were used to present findings clearly and support evidence-based decision-making. In addition, regular reflection and review sessions with ESWG members further strengthened data quality, validated findings, and helped identify areas for improvement.

The survey applied a quantitative analytical approach to identify patterns, disparities, and barriers affecting children's access to education. Data collected from households was analyzed using numerical and percentage-based indicators, enabling clear presentation of trends related to school enrolment, non-attendance, and key barriers to education.

The analysis included disaggregation by age group, gender, nationality, and geographic location, which allows identification of vulnerable groups and structural factors contributing to school exclusion. The findings were further triangulated through regular reflection and review sessions with ESWG members, which supported validation of results, strengthened data quality, and helped identify priority areas for programme and policy response.

Survey Limitations

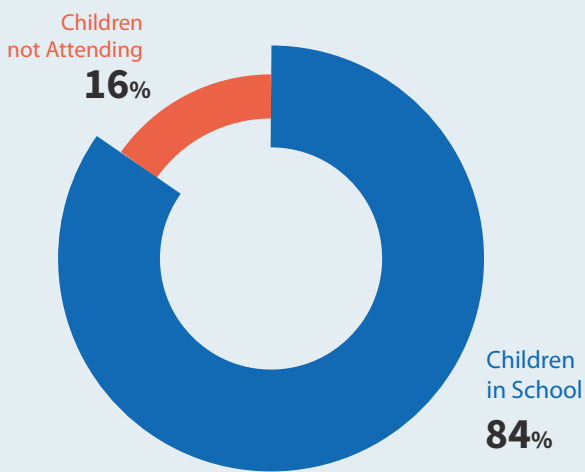
Despite efforts to ensure comprehensive coverage, the BTS Parents Survey faced several limitations. The rapid rollout of the survey contributed to sampling bias, with some groups, particularly children with higher or more complex educational needs, likely underrepresented. Language and literacy barriers also persisted, even though the survey tools were available in Arabic, English and Turkish, limiting the ability of some respondents to participate fully.

Reaching remote and marginalised populations remained challenging, which affected the inclusivity of the sample. Selfreporting bias and cultural variations in the understanding of disability may have led to underreporting of certain concerns. In addition, difficulties in achieving a high and diverse response rate may affect the overall representativeness of the findings. Data quality, confidentiality and reliability were further constrained in areas with limited connectivity, posing additional challenges for consistent and accurate data collection.



C. Assessment Findings

The BTS survey reached 2,442 households and 6,363 children aged 3-17 years across urban, refugee-hosting, and earthquake-affected provinces in Türkiye, providing a sufficiently large and diverse sample to identify system-level trends. Within the assessed population, 84% of children were enrolled in school, while 16% (1,028 children) were identified as not attending education programmes.



The findings highlighted persistent disparities in educational access. Refugee children experienced the highest levels of non-attendance living in earthquake-affected communities, with 20.82% of Syrian and 19.68% of Afghan children identified as out of school, compared to 17.42% of Turkish children. Among other refugee nationalities including Iraqi, Palestinian, and Ukrainian populations approximately 30% of school-age children were not enrolled in any education programme. Girls accounted for 45.73% of out-of-school children, with disparities increasing among older age groups and refugee populations.

ECE emerged as the most critical access gap. Among children aged 3-5 years, only 19.40% were enrolled in ECE, while 80.60% were not attending any early learning programme. Participation was particularly low among 3-4-year-olds (13.5%), compared to 27.3% among 5-year-olds. ECE enrolment was highest among earthquake-affected host communities (30%) and lowest among Syrian children (17.9%), raising concerns regarding school readiness and long-term educational continuity.

Education exclusion was driven by intersecting and cumulative barriers. Administrative and registration challenges affected 37.67% of children, largely due to missing identification documents, unresolved address registration, and limited awareness of enrolment procedures. Financial constraints impacted 32.19% of households, despite free public education, as families struggled with indirect costs such as uniforms, learning materials, and transportation. Distance and transportation barriers affected 16.21% of children, particularly in rural and earthquake-affected areas, while child labour prevented 14.16% from attending education programmes. Additional barriers included bullying and social exclusion (9.82%), limited disability-inclusive education (7.31%), and overcrowded classrooms and infrastructure damage (7.08%). Language barriers and residual earthquake impacted further compounded exclusion risks.

Comparing with the last year's results, the BTS Parents Survey findings show a broadly stable but persistent pattern of school exclusion in Türkiye. The previous survey assessed approximately 2,455 households and over 6,800 children aged 3-17, with the majority of respondents being refugee households and communities affected by the 2023 earthquakes. Similar to the current year's findings, the earlier survey also identified structural barriers to education linked primarily to financial constraints, administrative hurdles, and transportation challenges. These consistent patterns indicate that exclusion from education continues to be driven largely by systemic socio-economic and procedural barriers rather than isolated local factors.

ECE emerged as the most critical access gap. Among children aged 3-5 years, only 19.40% were enrolled in ECE, while 80.60% were not attending any early learning programme.



The overall scale of school exclusion remains broadly consistent across the two survey cycles. While the current survey identifies 16% of children (1,028) as out of school, the previous survey similarly at 16%, highlighted that a notable proportion of school-age children in refugee and earthquake-affected communities remained outside the education system. This alignment suggests that although enrolment levels remain relatively high overall, a persistent group of vulnerable children continues to face barriers to participation in education.

Across both years, economic vulnerability and administrative barriers remain the dominant drivers of exclusion. Financial difficulties, registration and documentation challenges, and transportation constraints were consistently identified as the most significant obstacles to school enrolment and attendance. The current year's findings reinforce this pattern, with administrative barriers affecting 29.75% of children and financial constraints impacting 36.20% of households.

Overall, the BTS Parents Survey 2025-2026 confirmed that school exclusion in Türkiye resulted from a combination of economic, administrative, access-related, protection, and vulnerability factors, with risks disproportionately affecting refugee children, younger learners, and adolescents. The findings underscored the need for coordinated, multi-sectoral responses, including strengthened education-linked social protection, streamlined enrolment procedures, expanded ECE provision, improved transportation and infrastructure, enhanced psychosocial and language support, and inclusive education reforms. Close collaboration among MoNE, ESWG partners, municipalities, and donors remained essential to translating evidence into sustained impact and ensuring equitable access to safe, inclusive, and quality education for all children in Türkiye.

Geographic, Gender, and Age Patterns of School Exclusion

Children who are not attending education programmes are present across all surveyed provinces, with particularly higher concentrations in urban and peri-urban settings, refugee-hosting areas, and earthquake-affected regions. This pattern confirms that school exclusion is a systemic issue, rather than a challenge confined to specific locations. Gender distribution among out-of-school children shows near parity, with 54% boys and 46% girls, indicating that exclusion is largely driven by economic, administrative, and protection-related barriers rather than gender-specific constraints. The slightly higher proportion of boys is consistent with evidence that 10.43% of out-of-school children are engaged in work, pointing to the influence of male-dominated child labour patterns and household coping strategies. These findings suggest that responses should prioritize addressing underlying economic and protection drivers rather than narrowly targeting gender-based enrolment gaps.

Age-disaggregated analysis shows that exclusion occurs predominantly at initial school entry, with 57% of out-of-school children aged 6–9 years, underscoring a critical risk of early disengagement and long-term learning loss. Adolescents aged 14–17 years account for 26% of out-of-school children, reflecting challenges related to prolonged absence, economic pressures, and reduced likelihood of reintegration into formal education. Children aged 10–13 years (17%) represent a transitional group at heightened risk of permanent exclusion if timely re-enrolment support is not provided. Overall, the concentration of exclusion in early grades highlights the need for early intervention to prevent sustained disengagement from the education system.



Overall, the BTS Parents Survey 2025-2026 confirmed that school exclusion in Türkiye resulted from a combination of economic, administrative, access-related, protection, and vulnerability factors, with risks disproportionately affecting refugee children, younger learners, and adolescents.

1. Education Access Barriers Across All Age Groups: Key Findings from Parents Survey

Economic constraints emerged as the most significant barrier, with 36.20% of out-of-school children unable to attend school due to indirect education costs, while 48.15% of parents cited financial concerns as their primary reason to enrol children in education programmes. Administrative and registration barriers affected 29.75% of non-attending children, driven mainly by lack of ID or address registration (51.85%), limited information on registration procedures (38.89%), school-level refusal (12.96%), and capacity or quota constraints (5.56%).

Physical access barriers remain substantial, with 16.56% of out-of-school children citing distance or transportation challenges, and 19.94% of parents identifying this as a key concern. Child labour was reported for 10.43% of out-of-school children, closely mirrored by parents concerns (10.26%), underscoring the link between household economic stress and school exclusion.

Protection and psychosocial factors also influence exclusion, with 9.82% of out-of-school children reporting peer bullying, 9.82% prolonged absence from schooling, 8.59% negative peer influence, and 6.44% reluctance linked to intentions to return to Syria. Disability-related barriers, while affecting a smaller proportion, represent high-severity risks: 6.13% reported difficulties accessing disability services, 0.92% reported loss of assistive devices due to earthquakes, and 0.61% cited lack of trained teachers in inclusive education.

Residual earthquake impacts persist, with 2.76% of out-of-school children reporting fear of returning to concrete buildings and 2.15% citing school destruction as a barrier, alongside losses of learning materials and assistive devices. Parents intention to enrol child or children in school-data shows that 57% plan to register their children, while 43% do not, primarily due to financial concerns (48.15%), registration challenges (15.95%), and intentions to return to Syria (17.38%).

ECE shows the most critical access gap. Among 1,172 children assessed in 456 households, 81% were not enrolled in ECE, while only 19% were attending. Key barriers included perceptions that children were too young (55.31%), financial constraints or requested ECE expenses (34.08%), distance to ECE facilities (13.41%), and capacity limitations (5.59%).

Table 1. Top Reasons for Children Being Out of School (Multiple responses allowed)

Reason for Being Out of School	% of Responses
Other*	38.65%
Not being able to cover school expenses	36.20%
Problems faced during registration	29.75%
Distance to school / transportation problems	16.56%
Child is working	10.43%
Peer bullying (at school or on the way)	9.82%
Child has been out of school for a long time	9.82%
Negative influence from other children not attending school	8.59%
Intention to return to Syria	6.44%
Problems accessing disability support/services	6.13%
Lack of information about relevant education opportunities or pathways	4.60%
Negative influence from education personnel (teachers or school management)	4.29%
Child is working in agriculture	3.68%
Overcrowded classrooms	3.68%
Supporting household chores (including care of elderly or siblings)	3.37%
Fear of returning to a concrete school building	2.76%
School destroyed in the earthquake	2.15%
Loss of assistive device due to earthquake	0.92%
No teacher trained in disability inclusion in the school	0.61%
Loss of stationery due to earthquake	0.31%

Note: *The majority of responses under "Other" relate primarily to health-related issues and cases of children being underage.

The findings indicate that exclusion from ECE is shaped by intersecting factors, including unclear eligibility, indirect financial burdens, limited physical access, and insufficient availability of services. Given the well-established link between early learning and long-term educational outcomes, the extent of ECE exclusion poses a significant risk to sustained participation in education and highlights the need to expand ECE services, strengthen parental awareness, and reinforce education-linked social support.

Overall, the analysis shows that children who are not attending or excluded from ECE face compounded barriers, primarily driven by economic and administrative constraints, with early-grade and ECE exclusion represents a critical threat to long-term educational continuity.

2. Geographical Patterns of School Exclusion

South-East

Children who are out of school are widely distributed across the South East region, with 1,503 households surveyed covering 3,822 children, of whom 701 are identified as out of school. This indicates a substantial level of exclusion across the region, suggesting that barriers to education are both widespread and persistent rather than localized. The geographic spread, including areas affected by displacement and past shocks, reinforces the structural nature of school exclusion in this context. Overall attendance patterns show that 18% of children are out of school, while 82% remain enrolled.

1,503
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Age-disaggregated data highlights that exclusion is most concentrated among younger children. Those aged 6-9 years account for the largest share of out-of-school children (54%), pointing to critical barriers at the point of school entry and early grade participation. This pattern suggests risks of delayed enrolment and early disengagement, which can lead to long-term learning deficits if not addressed promptly. Adolescents aged 14-17 years represent 28% of out-of-school children, indicating sustained challenges related to prolonged absence, economic pressures, and reduced likelihood of re-entry into formal education pathways. Meanwhile, children aged 10-13 years (18%) form a transitional group that remains vulnerable to permanent exclusion without timely support for reintegration.

Analysis of the main reported reasons for school exclusion shows that economic barriers are the most

prominent. The inability to cover school-related expenses is the leading factor, affecting approximately 39% of responses, underscoring the role of household financial constraints in limiting access to education. Administrative barriers also play a notable role, with problems faced during registration accounting for 23.81% of responses, reflecting challenges related to documentation and enrolment procedures. Child labour represents 11.90% of responses, reinforcing the link between economic vulnerability and children's participation in income-generating activities. Physical access issues, including distance to school or transportation problems (11.90%), remain a significant obstacle, particularly in dispersed or underserved areas. Prolonged absence from school (10.12%) also contributes to exclusion, reflecting the difficulty of reintegrating children who have been out of education for extended periods. Protection-related concerns, including peer bullying at school or on the way (8.33%), further contribute to children's disengagement from education. Additionally, lack of information about education opportunities and pathways (7.74%), negative influence from other children not attending school (7.74%), and children working in agriculture (5.95%) highlight how economic, administrative, and social barriers interact to shape patterns of exclusion in the South-East.

Gender-disaggregated analysis shows near parity in exclusion, with 352 boys and 349 girls identified as out of school. For both boys and girls, economic barriers remain a key driver of school exclusion, though their relative importance varies across genders. Among girls, the inability to cover school-related expenses is the leading factor, accounting for 42.35% of responses, followed by problems faced during registration (20.00%). Child labour accounts for 12.94% of responses, while distance to school or transportation problems represent 11.76%, indicating that both economic pressures and physical access constraints significantly influence girls' school participation. Peer bullying (10.59%) and prolonged absence from school (8.24%) also contribute to girls' disengagement from education, alongside lack of information about education opportunities (7.06%) and negative peer influence from other children not attending school (7.06%).

Among boys, economic and administrative barriers remain the most prominent drivers of exclusion. The inability to cover school-related expenses accounts for 32.35% of responses, followed by problems faced during registration (26.47%), highlighting the combined impact of household financial constraints and administrative challenges. Distance to school or transportation problems represent 10.78%, while prolonged absence from school accounts for 9.80%, reflecting the difficulty of reintegrating children who have been out of education for extended periods. Child labour accounts for 8.82%, while lack of information about education opportunities (8.82%) and negative peer influence from other children not attending school (6.86%) also contribute to school exclusion. Additional factors include children working in agriculture (5.88%) and peer bullying (4.90%).

Overall, while the distribution of specific barriers differs slightly between genders, economic constraints, administrative barriers, and access-related challenges remain the dominant drivers of school exclusion for both boys and girls. In addition, “other” reasons account for 32.14% of responses overall, which mainly relate to health problems, relocation due to the earthquake, and cases where the child is considered underage for school enrolment, further reflecting the complex and context-specific factors influencing school attendance.

Istanbul

Children who are out of school are present across surveyed locations in Istanbul, with 429 households surveyed covering 1,123 children, of whom 109 are identified as out of school. While the overall scale of exclusion is smaller compared to other regions, the findings still point to persistent structural barriers affecting children’s participation in education in urban settings.

Gender distribution among out-of-school children shows that boys account for 62%, while girls represent 38%, indicating that school exclusion in Istanbul disproportionately affects boys.



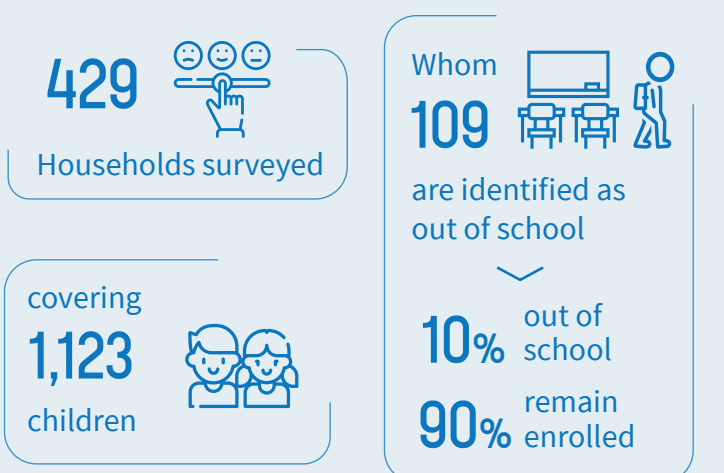
Overall attendance patterns show that 10% of children are out of school, while 90% remain enrolled. Although the majority of children remain connected to the education system, the presence of one in ten children being excluded highlights continuing challenges related to access and retention within a large metropolitan context.

Gender distribution among out-of-school children shows that boys account for 62%, while girls represent 38%, indicating that school exclusion in Istanbul disproportionately affects boys.

Age-disaggregated analysis shows that exclusion is heavily concentrated among younger children. Children aged 6-9 account for 73% of out-of-school children, highlighting significant barriers at the stage of school entry and early grade participation. Adolescents aged 14-17 represent 20% of out-of-school children, and children aged 10-13 account for 7%.

Analysis of the main reported reasons for school exclusion shows that economic and administrative barriers are the most prominent drivers. The inability to cover school-related expenses accounts for 32.14% of responses. Problems faced during registration also represent 32.14% of responses, and access-related constraints remain significant, with distance to school or transportation problems reported in 26.19% of responses.

Child labour accounts for 13.10% of responses, reflecting the influence of household economic pressures on children’s participation in income-generating activities. Prolonged absence from school (10.71%) further contributes to exclusion, indicating the difficulty of reintegrating children who have been out of education for extended periods. Additional factors include intentions to return to Syria (9.52%) and problems accessing disability services (8.33%), while



negative peer influence (5.95%) and peer bullying at school or on the way (4.76%) highlight the role of social and protection-related dynamics affecting school participation.

For both genders, the inability to cover school-related expenses remains the dominant barrier (approximately 34 to 36% for boys and girls). However, some differences appear in secondary drivers. Child labour is more prominent among boys (around 13%), while it is slightly lower among girls (around 11%). Administrative barriers remain substantial for both groups, with registration-related challenges affecting approximately 36% of boys and around 24% of girls. Physical access constraints are also reported for both genders but are slightly higher among girls (around 26%) compared to boys (around 21%).

To sum up, the Istanbul findings highlight that while school exclusion is less widespread than in other regions, the underlying drivers remain consistent: economic hardship, administrative barriers, and child labour continue to shape children’s access to education even within an urban context.

Aegean

Children who are out of school are present across surveyed locations in the Aegean region, specifically in Antalya, Balıkesir, and İzmir, with 195 households surveyed covering 535 children, of whom 96 are identified as out of school. While the overall scale of exclusion is relatively limited compared to other regions, the findings indicate that structural barriers to education remain present across these urban and peri-urban contexts. Overall attendance patterns show that 18% of children are out of school, while 82% remain enrolled.

Age-disaggregated analysis for the Aegean region (Antalya, Balıkesir, and İzmir) shows that school exclusion is primarily concentrated among younger children. Children aged 6-9 account for 51% and children aged 10-13 represent 26%, while adolescents aged 14-17 account for 23% of out-of-school children, suggesting that exclusion affects both early learners and adolescents, though the highest concentration remains in the early primary school years.

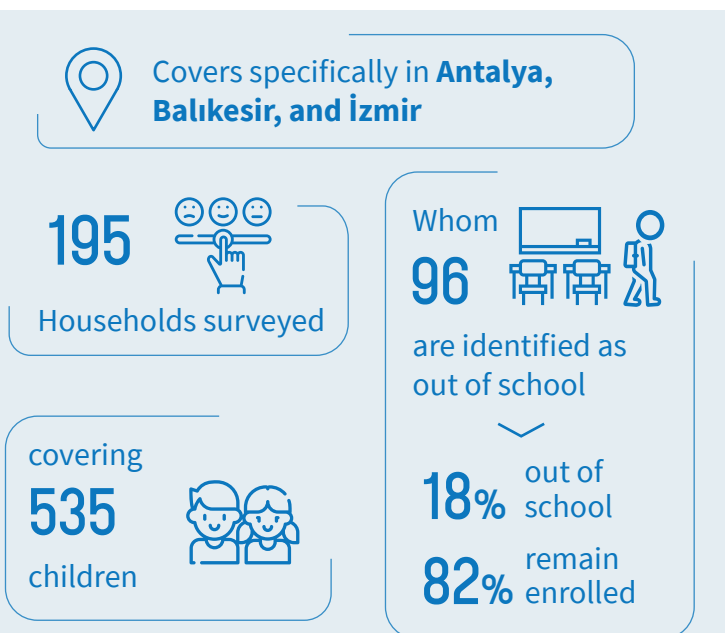
Analysis of the main reported reasons for school exclusion indicates that economic and administrative barriers remain the most prominent drivers. The inability to cover school-related expenses accounts for 38.24% of responses. Problems faced during registration account for 35.29%, reflecting administrative challenges such as documentation requirements and enrolment procedures. Access-related barriers also remain significant, with distance to school or transportation problems reported in 17.65% of responses.

Additional factors contributing to exclusion include peer bullying at school or on the way (8.82%), as well as intentions to return to Syria (5.88%), problems accessing disability services (5.88%), and children who have been out of school for a prolonged period (5.88%). Other reported factors include children working in agriculture (2.94%), negative influence from other children not attending school (2.94%), lack of teachers trained in disability inclusion (2.94%), and overcrowded classrooms (2.94%).

Gender-disaggregated findings show that 52% girls and 48% boys among out-of-school children, indicating near parity between genders. For both boys and girls, the inability to cover school-related expenses remains the dominant barrier.

Across both boys and girls, the main reasons for being out of school are primarily linked to economic and administrative barriers. The inability to cover school-related expenses emerges as the leading driver, accounting for 28.57% of responses among boys and 45.45% among girls. This is followed by problems faced during registration, reported by 21.43% of boys and 40.91% of girls.

In summary, the findings for the Aegean region indicate that school exclusion is primarily driven by economic and administrative barriers, particularly the inability to cover school-related expenses and challenges faced during registration. Access-related constraints, such as distance to school and transportation difficulties, also contribute to children being out of school.



3. Age-Specific Distribution of Out-of-School Children and Drivers of Exclusion



Across all age groups, the analysis shows a progressive shift in exclusion drivers from health, readiness, and early access barriers in younger children to economic pressure, administrative constraints, child labour, and protection risks among older cohorts. Coverage patterns indicate that exclusion scales significantly during primary and adolescent years, requiring age-responsive, layered interventions that combine financial assistance, flexible registration, inclusive services, protection measures, and retention-focused strategies within a coordinated national level framework.

Summary of Key Reasons for Children Being Not attending education programmes- All age groups.

The analysis shows that children are not attending education programmes due to a combination of economic, administrative, access-related, protection, and vulnerability factors, often overlapping rather than occurring in isolation. Economic constraints are among the most significant drivers, with 36.20% of responses indicating that families are unable to cover indirect school-related expenses despite free public education. This is closely linked to household coping strategies, including child labour, which affects 10.43% of out-of-school children, as well as children working in agriculture (3.68%) or supporting household chores (3.37%).


Administrative and system-level barriers represent another major pressure point, with 29.75% of children facing problems during school registration. These challenges are primarily related to documentation gaps, lack of information on registration procedures, and school-level capacity or compliance issues, reinforcing that exclusion is driven by system navigation failures and lack of parental awareness and interest in education.

Physical access barriers further contribute to exclusion, particularly in high-density and relocation settings. 16.56% of respondents cited distance to school or transportation difficulties, reflecting mismatches between population movement and school catchment planning, especially in peri-urban and refugee-hosting areas.

Protection and psychosocial factors also play a significant role. Nearly 9.82% of children experienced peer bullying (either at school or on the way), while an equal proportion (9.82%) had been not attending education programmes for an extended period, making reintegration more difficult. Negative peer influence was reported by 8.59%, and 6.44% of parents cited intentions to return to Syria, highlighting how insecurity, belonging, and future uncertainty influence school participation decisions.

Children with disabilities and specific vulnerabilities face compounded exclusion risks. 6.13% reported problems accessing disability-related services, while 0.61% cited the absence of teachers trained in inclusive education. Earthquake-related shocks continue to affect a smaller but highly vulnerable group, with 2.76% of children afraid to return to concrete buildings, 2.15% reporting school destruction, and 0.92% reporting loss of assistive devices.

Finally, a substantial share of responses fell under “Other” (38.65%), which predominantly reflects health-related issues and children being underage for school enrolment, indicating unmet health needs and gaps in early childhood and school readiness services. Overall, the findings confirm that economic hardship and administrative barriers are the dominant drivers of exclusion, while protection concerns, disability, and disaster-related impacts intensify vulnerability for specific groups. These patterns underscore the need for integrated, multi-sectoral responses combining education access, social assistance, protection, health, and system-level reforms.


Nearly 9.82% of children experienced peer bullying (either at school or on the way), while an equal proportion (9.82%) had been not attending education programmes for an extended period, making reintegration more difficult.

ECE, Ages 3-4: Coverage and Key Drivers of Exclusion



The survey covers 264 families, identifying 681 children within surveyed households, indicating a substantial cohort of early learners already experiencing exclusion. The primary driver keeping children aged 3–4 not attending education programmes is the inability of households to cover school-related expenses, reported by 34.8% of respondents, highlighting that cost barriers emerge even before compulsory schooling. This is followed by health-related issues and age eligibility concerns, grouped under “other reasons” (26.1%), reflecting gaps in early childhood readiness, screening, and inclusive ECE services. Registration-related challenges (19.6%) further limit access, suggesting administrative procedure at entry level. Structural barriers such as distance to school and transportation constraints (10.9%) and difficulties accessing disability services (10.9%) compound exclusion risks. Social factors; including negative peer influence, bullying, and early disengagement from structured learning are already evident, signalling early pathways toward long-term exclusion if not addressed.

Pre-Primary Transition, Age 5: Coverage and Key Drivers of Exclusion



The analysis reflects responses from 192 families, covering 491 children, and captures challenges at the critical transition into formal education. More than half of out-of-school cases (51.5%) are attributed to health conditions and perceived underage status, underscoring systemic gaps in school readiness and flexible enrolment mechanisms. Registration barriers (24.2%) remain a dominant constraint, particularly for children lacking complete documentation or prior ECE exposure. Financial constraints (15.2%) and distance to school (12.1%) continue to restrict access, while early engagement in child labour (9.1%) and extended absence from education (12.1%) indicate early household coping strategies. Protection-related concerns including peer bullying, negative school environments, and earthquake-related fears are present, revealing that both structural and psychosocial barriers influence school entry at this age.

Primary School Age, 6-9 Years: Coverage and Key Drivers of Exclusion



This age group represents the largest coverage, with 920 families surveyed, 2,383 children identified, and 590 out-of-school children recorded, signalling a significant scale of exclusion during early primary years. Exclusion at this stage is driven by a convergence of administrative, financial, and systemic factors, with health- and age-related issues (34.2%), registration challenges (30.3%), and inability to cover school expenses (29.7%) reported at comparable levels. Transportation and distance barriers (16.8%) further exacerbate access constraints, particularly in overstretched urban and earthquake-affected settings. Child labour (8.4%), and peer bullying emerge more prominently, reflecting early disengagement from the education system. Additionally, intention to return to Syria (7.7%) begins to influence household education decisions, increasing the risk of interrupted schooling and prolonged absenteeism.

Upper Primary to Lower Secondary, Ages 10-13: Coverage and Key Drivers of Exclusion



Data from 660 families, encompassing 1,743 children, identifies 173 out-of-school children, highlighting increasing dropout risks at this children age. Financial barriers intensify, with 35.8% of respondents citing inability to afford education costs as the leading reason for exclusion. Health-related factors and age considerations (32.5%) remain significant, while registration barriers (19.2%) continue to impede re-entry and grade progression. Economic pressures become more visible through child labour (10.8%) and agricultural work (4.2%), reflecting households' reliance on children's income. Psychosocial risks, including peer bullying, negative peer influence, and extended absence from schooling, indicate weakening attachment to education. Disability-related access gaps and earthquake-induced losses, though reported less frequently, further illustrate compounded vulnerabilities for specific sub-groups.

Adolescents, Ages 14-17: Coverage and Key Drivers of Exclusion



The adolescent cohort includes 406 families, 1,065 children, and 265 identified out-of-school adolescents, demonstrating the highest absolute number of exclusions relative to coverage. Administrative barriers peak at this stage, with 31.3% reporting registration challenges, often linked to documentation gaps, age-grade mismatch, or limited secondary school capacity. Economic hardship (28.4%) remains a major constraint, while health- and age-related factors (25.4%) continue to affect participation. Distance to secondary schools (14.9%), peer bullying (10.5%), and child labour (9.0%) reflect compounded structural and protection risks. Notably, intention to return to Syria (6.0%) is more pronounced among adolescents, influencing decisions to disengage from education in favor of short-term livelihood strategies or migration planning. Long-term disengagement, overcrowded classrooms, and negative school environments further weaken retention at this stage.

4. Nationality: Key Drivers of School Exclusion

Syrian Children Key Drivers of School Exclusion and Return Intentions

The BTS survey data for Syrian households highlights a pattern of school exclusion driven primarily by economic hardship, administrative barriers, and future uncertainty, rather than lack of demand for education. The exercise reached 1,849 Syrian families, covering 5,120 children, and identified 846 Syrian children as not attending education programmes. Overall enrolment trends mirror broader findings, confirming the reliability of the data while underscoring persistent structural gaps.

Economic constraints remain the most influential exclusion driver, with 36.90% of responses indicating inability to cover indirect school-related expenses. This is closely followed by registration-related barriers (29.66%), reflecting challenges linked to documentation, address registration, and limited information on procedures. Distance and transportation issues (16.90%) further affect access, particularly in urban, peri-urban, and relocation settings where school catchment planning has not kept pace with population movement.

Protection and psychosocial factors continue to compound exclusion risks for Syrian children. Peer bullying (9.66%), prolonged absence from schooling (9.31%), and negative peer influence (8.97%) highlight how safety, belonging, and social environment influence school participation. Child labour (10.34%) and children working in agriculture (2.76%) reflect household coping mechanisms under sustained economic pressure.

A critical and distinguishing factor for Syrian families is intention to return to Syria, cited by 7.24% of respondents as a reason for children being not attending education programmes. While numerically lower than economic and administrative barriers, this factor carries significant strategic importance, as it reflects future uncertainty, temporary settlement perceptions, and hesitation to invest in long-term education pathways. This finding suggests that exclusion linked to return intentions is not rooted in rejection of education, but rather in uncertainty about duration of stay and relevance of the host-country education system.

Disability-related barriers (6.90%) and residual earthquake impacts including fear of returning to concrete buildings (3.10%), school destruction (2.41%), and loss of assistive devices (0.69%) affect a smaller but vulnerable subset of Syrian children, requiring targeted and specialized responses.

Finally, a substantial proportion of responses fall under “Other” (37.24%), largely linked to health-related issues and children being underage, indicating gaps in early childhood services, school readiness, and health-education linkages. Overall, the findings confirm that for Syrian children, school exclusion is shaped by overlapping economic, administrative, protection, and displacement-related factors, with return intentions acting as a cross-cutting driver of enrolment indecision, reinforcing the need for integrated education, social protection, and durable-solution-sensitive programming.



Economic constraints remain the most influential exclusion driver, with 36.90% of responses indicating inability to cover indirect school-related expenses.

Afghan Children Key Drivers of School Exclusion

The BTS survey data for Afghan households indicates that school exclusion is driven primarily by administrative barriers, prolonged disengagement from education, and health- and age-related factors, rather than large-scale economic constraints. The assessment reached 58 Afghan families, covering 146 children, and identified 24 Afghan children as not attending education programmes. While the sample size is smaller, the findings provide indicative insights into exclusion dynamics affecting Afghan children.

Gender-disaggregated data shows a significant gender imbalance, with 67% of out-of-school children being girls and 33% boys, suggesting heightened vulnerability of Afghan girls to exclusion. Age analysis indicates that exclusion occurs predominantly at early grades, with 58% of out-of-school children aged 6–9 years, while 38% are adolescents aged 14–17 years, pointing to both delayed school entry and prolonged absence as key exclusion pathways.

The most frequently reported barriers fall under “Other” (55%) and are largely linked to health-related issues and children being underage, highlighting gaps in early childhood development, school readiness, and health–education linkages. Registration-related challenges (55%) also emerge as a dominant barrier,

underscoring difficulties with documentation, system navigation, and access to accurate information. Additionally, 20% of children were reported to have been not attending education programmes for a long time, indicating entrenched exclusion and increased risk of permanent disengagement.

Economic constraints were reported less frequently but remain relevant, with 15% of responses citing inability to cover school-related expenses. Protection and school environment factors including negative influence from peers not attending school (10%), negative experiences with education personnel (10%), and peer bullying (10%) further contribute to exclusion. Smaller proportions cited child labour (5%), distance and transportation challenges (5%), overcrowded classrooms (5%), and household caregiving responsibilities (5%), reflecting overlapping but lower-intensity barriers.

Overall, the findings suggest that for Afghan children, school exclusion is strongly shaped by administrative constraints, early-grade access challenges, and prolonged absence, with girls disproportionately affected. The prominence of health- and age-related reasons underscores the need for early identification, school readiness support, targeted registration assistance, and gender-sensitive outreach, alongside system-level facilitation to prevent long-term disengagement from education.



5. Recommendations Based on Findings from the BTS Parents Survey

1. Strengthen Education-Linked Social Support to Mitigate Economic Barriers



Expanding education-linked social support remains critical to reducing school exclusion driven by indirect education costs. It is recommended that MoNE, in collaboration with the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS), UNICEF, ESWG members, and partners, strengthen education-linked cash and in-kind assistance targeting economically vulnerable households, particularly those with multiple out-of-school children. Closer alignment between education, social protection, livelihoods, and child protection interventions is essential to reduce negative coping mechanisms, including child labour, and to support sustained school participation. Advocacy efforts should continue to ensure strict enforcement of expenses-free education policies, particularly for early grades and ECE, where informal costs continue to deter enrolment.

2. Simplify Registration Processes



To address persistent administrative barriers, it is recommended that ESWG members, in close coordination with MoNE and relevant authorities, establish structured case-resolution mechanisms to support families facing documentation, address registration, and school-level enrolment challenges. Standardized and multilingual registration guidance should be widely disseminated through schools, community centres, and outreach teams to improve caregiver awareness of enrolment procedures. Referral pathways should be strengthened for cases involving school refusal or capacity constraints, alongside regular capacity-building for school administrators on inclusive registration policies and legal entitlements.

3. Improve Physical Access and Transportation to Schools



Improving physical access to education requires coordinated planning and investment. It is recommended that MoNE, in collaboration with local municipalities, ESWG members, and donors, conduct school catchment and access mapping in urban, peri-urban, relocation, and refugee-hosting areas to identify distance-related barriers. Based on these findings, transportation solutions such as subsidized school transport, adjusted school placement, and community-based arrangements should be expanded. Where access gaps persist, the establishment of temporary or satellite learning spaces should be considered to ensure equitable access to education.

4. Expand ECE as a Strategic Priority



Given the scale of ECE exclusion, it is recommended that MoNE, UNICEF, and ESWG members explicitly prioritize ECE within BTS planning, advocacy, and resource mobilization. Low-cost, community-based ECE models should be expanded in underserved areas, alongside targeted parental awareness campaigns addressing eligibility criteria and the developmental benefits of early learning. Coordination with social protection actors is essential to mitigate indirect costs and address physical access and capacity limitations that continue to restrict ECE participation.

5. Promote Early-Grade Entry and Prevent Prolonged School Disengagement



To reduce long-term exclusion, it is recommended that early-grade enrolment (ages 6–9) be prioritized within outreach, and enrolment support activities. School readiness, bridging, and catch-up programmes should be strengthened for children who are underage, delayed, or have never enrolled. Schools should be supported to identify and follow up on cases of prolonged absence through simple early warning mechanisms, ensuring timely reintegration before disengagement becomes entrenched.

6. Address Child Labor Through Integrated Prevention and Reintegration Approaches



Addressing child labour requires integrated, multi-sectoral responses. It is recommended that all out-of-school children identified through BTS survey be systematically screened for child labour risks and referred through established child protection mechanisms. Flexible and alternative learning pathways, including catch-up and part-time models, should be expanded to facilitate reintegration of working children. Complementary economic support and livelihoods linkages for households should be strengthened to address the root causes of labour-related school exclusion.

7. Strengthen Protection, School Safety, and Psychosocial Support



To improve school safety and wellbeing, anti-bullying prevention and response mechanisms should be strengthened through school-wide policies, confidential reporting systems, and teacher training. Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services should be further integrated into BTS outreach and school-based programmes, particularly for children with prolonged absence or exposure to violence, fear, or displacement. Coordination with protection actors is essential to improve safety along routes to school and within school environments.

8. Enhance Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities and Specific Needs



It is recommended that MoNE, in collaboration with ESWG members and donors, strengthen inclusive education systems to ensure access for children with disabilities. This includes expanding referrals to disability-related services, providing assistive devices and learning materials, and strengthening teacher training in inclusive education practices. Schools should be supported to implement reasonable accommodation measures and individualized support planning, with particular attention to children affected by earthquakes and other shocks.

9. Address Residual Earthquake-Related Barriers to Education



While recovery efforts continue, it is recommended that earthquake-sensitive targeting remain integrated into education planning and monitoring. Safe school awareness initiatives should be implemented to address fears related to returning to school buildings, and replacement of lost learning materials and assistive devices should be prioritized. Where infrastructure damage persists, temporary or alternative learning arrangements should be supported to ensure continuity of education.

10. Integrate Durable-Solution-Sensitive Approaches for Syrian Children



To address enrolment hesitation linked to return intentions, it is recommended that education outreach and counselling for Syrian families emphasize the transferability and long-term value of education across contexts. Flexible education pathways should be promoted to reduce perceived risks associated with enrolment, while ensuring inclusive access regardless of perceived duration of stay. Coordination between education, protection, and social services is essential to address uncertainty and strengthen sustained participation.

11. Implement Targeted and Gender-Sensitive Interventions for Afghan Children



Given the distinct exclusion patterns affecting Afghan children, particularly girls, it is recommended that targeted registration and documentation support be strengthened in coordination with relevant authorities. Early-grade enrolment and school readiness interventions should be prioritized, with gender-sensitive outreach to address barriers facing Afghan girls. Strengthened health–education referral mechanisms and community-based engagement are essential to prevent prolonged disengagement from education.

12. Strengthen Data Use, Monitoring, and Multi-Sectoral Coordination



To improve evidence-based planning, it is recommended that BTS survey data and analysis continue to strengthen data quality, disaggregation, and representation of marginalized groups, including children with disabilities and early-grade learners. Regular joint reflection and validation exercises with ESWG members should be institutionalized to inform advocacy and programming. Strengthening coordination between education, social protection, health, and protection sectors at national and sub-national levels is essential to address overlapping barriers and reduce recurrent exclusion.

