

AUGUST 2021



# SHUJAAZ INC. BAROMETER

Tracking the impact of  
Covid-19 on adolescent  
girls in Kenya

unicef   
for every child

SHUJAAZ  
INC.





## ABOUT

This special edition COVID-19 Barometer is a joint project between Shujaaz Inc and UNICEF (Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office and Kenya Country Office).

It is the outcome of a collaboration launched in September 2020, rooted in our shared work to break down barriers, so that young people in East and Southern Africa can build a better future for themselves and their communities.

One of the objectives of our collaboration is to produce a range of youth-led, data-driven research products, providing insight into the most effective ways to support young people in East Africa. This special edition Barometer is designed to provide a snapshot into the lives of Kenyan girls aged 15-19 (also referred to as adolescent girls) in 2021.

This edition of our COVID-19 Barometer includes new insights from Shujaaz Inc's annual national youth survey, which draws on face-to-face interviews with 2,015 young people conducted between December 2020 and January 2021. Drawing on additional qualitative research, the Barometer aims to provide an update on the challenges, lifestyles, priorities and aspirations of adolescent girls, during a turbulent pandemic. This edition focuses on key topics including education, sexual and reproductive health, financial security, mental wellbeing and resilience. We hope it provides a valuable update for organisations working with adolescent girls across Kenya, and inspiration for similar research in East and Southern African countries.

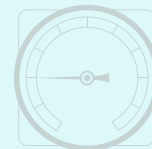


## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This Barometer relies on several sources of primary and secondary data:

- Shujaaz Inc annual national surveys of young Kenyans (15-24 years old):
  - Wave 2019 (N=2,020) April 2019, Wave 2020 (N=2,015) December 2020 – January 2021.
  - The sample for the survey was drawn using a stratified multistage approach. The census data (2009 for Wave 2019 and 2019 for Wave 2020) on Kenyans aged 15-24 were used as the sampling framework. Proportional to population size calculations were done to allocate number of Primary Sampling Units in each of the 47 counties. A total of 200+ Secondary Sampling Units [SSU] were selected randomly from the list of SSUs in each county. A total of 10 PSUs/households were selected in each SSU using a random route technique. Only one respondent was interviewed in each household.
  - The participants of the survey were males and females, both urban and rural.
  - There were n=517 adolescent girls participating in Wave 2019 and n=602 adolescent girls participating in Wave 2020 surveys. In both surveys, adolescent girls represented all 47 counties in Kenya.
- Shujaaz Inc [large-scale mixed-method study on vulnerable, marginalized and disenfranchised young people in Kenya](#) conducted in partnership with USAID Youth Power program in April-August 2020:
  - The study used a range of data-collection methods: desk review, WhatsApp focus group discussions (130 participants), positive deviant interviews (6 participants), key informant interviews (3 participants), stakeholder interviews (9 participants), SMS surveys (N=7,630), big data analysis focusing on Twitter (10,000+ Shujaaz Twitter users), and design-thinking sessions (41 participants).
  - All young people were aged 18-26 and resided in six USAID priority counties: Nairobi, Mombasa, Isiolo, Kakamega, HomaBay, and Nakuru.
  - The participants of the qualitative data collection were recruited using referral and snowballing techniques. The participants for the quantitative data collection were selected randomly from the Shujaaz database.
- Shujaaz Inc Barometer collection of studies conducted in 2020, available [here](#)
- Shujaaz Inc peer-reviewed publications written in partnerships with Tulane University and Full Access Full Choice consortium in Kenya:
  - Hutchinson, P., Mirzoyants, A., & Leyton, A. (2018). Empowering youth for social change through the Shujaaz multimedia platform in Kenya. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 24(1), 102–116.
  - Leyton, A., Hutchinson, P., & Mirzoyants, A. (2021) The use of branding strategies to increase the uptake of modern contraception among Kenyan youth. *International Journal of Market Research*, 63(1), 15-26. First published online, September 29, 2020.
  - Lisa M. Calhoun, Anastasia Mirzoyants, Sylvia Thuku, Lenka Benova, Therese Delvaux, Thomas van den Akker, Courtney McGuire, Bernard Onyango, Ilene S. Speizer (2020, under review) Perceptions of peer contraceptive use and its influence on contraceptive method use and choice among young women and men in Kenya.
- PMA2020 data and publications, available [here](#)
- Kenya Demographic Health Survey 2014, available [here](#)



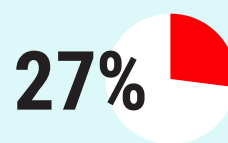


# ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN KENYA: A SNAPSHOT

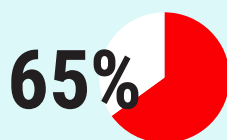


♀ **2.9M**

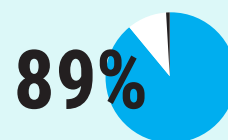
THERE ARE **2.9 MILLION 15-19-YEAR-OLD GIRLS**<sup>1</sup> LIVING IN KENYA TODAY, REPRESENTING ABOUT 6% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION OF KENYA



ADOLESCENT GIRLS MAKE UP **27% OF KENYA'S TOTAL YOUTH POPULATION**<sup>2</sup> (THOSE AGED 15-24)



**65% OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS ARE CURRENTLY LIVING IN RURAL AREAS, 35% ARE CURRENTLY LIVING IN URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AREAS**<sup>3</sup>



**89% OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS LIVE WITH THEIR PARENTS AND/OR GRANDPARENTS, 10% WITH OTHER PEOPLE & ONLY 1% LIVE ALONE**<sup>4</sup>

 **FOUR**

THE **AVERAGE SIZE OF THE GIRLS' HOUSEHOLD IS 4 PEOPLE**, ONLY 3% REPORT THAT THE SIZE OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD IS MORE THAN 8 PEOPLE<sup>4</sup>





## INCOME & HUNGER

Things are not in a good shape because of this Covid-19, my friends are also crying there are no hustles and jobs, they are jobless, there is no money, they are really crying so much because of the problems.

**FEMALE, UNKNOWN**

Last year during covid time, I found it hard to stay at home with my parents since schools were closed, I went out to look for a hustle that can give me some money. I started selling secondhand clothes for someone just to get some money for myself.

**FEMALE, KITALE**

I plan my budget monthly with the money my parents give me. As girls surviving with no money is tricky.

**FEMALE, 19, TRANS NZOIA**

### THE KEY STATS<sup>5</sup>

**89%** of 15-19-year-old girls live with their parents or grandparents, who are responsible for paying for their basic needs

**13%** of adolescent girls are working as micro-entrepreneurs, employees or seasonal workers to earn income

**25%** of 15-19-year-old girls feel they could take advantage of a business opportunity

**89%** of adolescent girls don't feel able to manage their current and future financial situation

### NINE IN TEN GIRLS LEFT FINANCIALLY VULNERABLE

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown measures have had a significant and lasting impact on the financial security of adolescent girls across Kenya. As outlined above, most adolescent girls in Kenya are dependent on their parent or guardian's income to cover their basic needs. However, the combination of an economic downturn in 2019 and the continued Covid-19 pandemic have led to sustained job losses and dwindling household incomes.

In the Shujaaz Inc 2020 annual survey, girls reported experiencing extreme financial vulnerability. Only 27% of adolescent girls reported feeling able to cover day-to-day expenses of food and transport, while only 20% felt able to handle a crisis in their household, for example a family member becoming ill, losing a job or being the victim of a robbery.<sup>6</sup> In fact, only 11% of 15-19-year-old girls reported feeling able to take advantage of an opportunity (like setting up a micro-enterprise) as well as covering their expenses or handling a financial shock.<sup>7</sup>

**27%**

**OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS  
REPORTED FEELING ABLE TO  
COVER DAY-TO-DAY EXPENSES**

**11%**

**OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS FELT  
ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF  
AN OPPORTUNITY ALONGSIDE  
COVERING THEIR EXPENSES OR  
HANDLING A FINANCIAL SHOCK**

As a result, we've tracked a steady increase in girls trying to take control of their finances. In 2020, 13% of girls reported that they had found work as an employee, seasonal worker or as a micro-entrepreneur, up from 9% in 2019.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, 11% reported taking out loans in 2020, compared to 8% in 2019. However, in survey interviews 12% of girls also reported being forced to turn to petty crime to pay for their basic needs, compared to only 7% last year.<sup>9</sup>



## INCOME & HUNGER

Covid has affected us girls and women from the ghetto. [...] When you go present yourself that you are looking for a job it is so hard because they are saying so much about covid; getting a hustle is hard so even feeding the family has been hard.

**FEMALE, NAIROBI**

You really find it difficult to manage the food stuff, how to get food for daily usage and daily needs for upkeep for my brothers. We really have to suffer, we really have to struggle for you to get anything that you need to eat. Raised in this kind of life many people really suffer out here knowing very well that they have to depend on themselves to get what they want. I really hate it how we live out here.

**FEMALE, NAIROBI**

### ONE QUARTER OF GIRLS STRUGGLING TO AFFORD FOOD

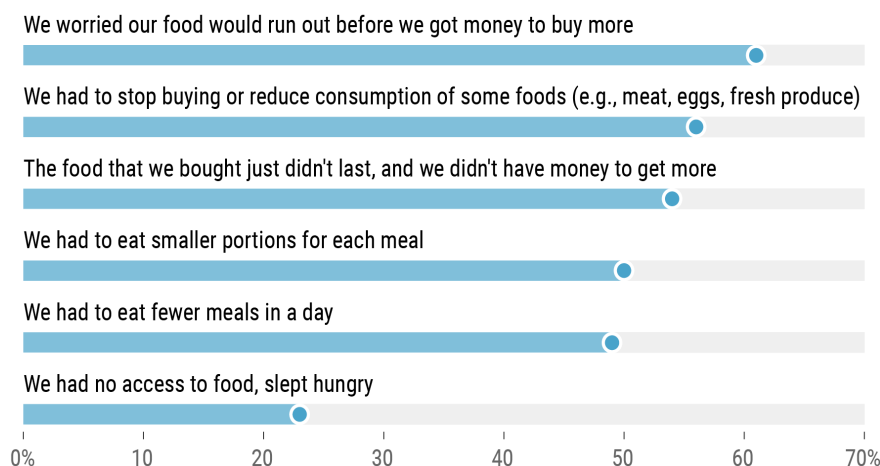
In August 2020, in an SMS survey of young people in the Shujaaz Inc network, up to 6 in 10 adolescent girls reported that they had gone to bed hungry on at least one evening in the previous week.<sup>10</sup>

Speaking in survey interviews in December 2020 and January 2021, just under one quarter (24%) of adolescent girls reported that they struggled daily to afford food in 2020, suggesting a slight improvement from August.<sup>11</sup>

However, the return of additional Covid-19 containment measures in 2021 might risk reversing this trend. When asked specifically about the impact of the pandemic on their household's income, more than half of adolescent girls said that their households had to change or restrict their eating and cooking habits. About a quarter of girls (23%) said they often or sometimes did not have access to food at all during the pandemic.<sup>12</sup>

### 'HOW OFTEN DID THIS HAPPEN TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD DURING COVID-19?'<sup>13</sup>

*Shown: adolescent girls (N=602) reporting 'often or sometimes'*



<sup>10</sup> Shujaaz Inc COVID-19 Barometer, SMS survey of Shujaaz fans signed-up to the SMS platform (n=123, adolescent girls) | <sup>11</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>12</sup> Ibid | <sup>13</sup> Ibid



## EDUCATION

My experience during Corona has been hard especially as a student since it has hampered my education.

**FEMALE, 18, KISUMU**

Corona has affected so many things, for example I was to graduate from school this year but due to Covid I have to re-do the class again.

**FEMALE, 18, TAITA TAVETA**

Covid-19 has affected me so much because we are not in school we can't learn, we cannot go back to school again, we are students! There is no job I can do, I cannot do any hustle, there is no money to start a hustle, and there is no money to go to a job.

**FEMALE, ANONYMOUS**

### THE KEY STATS<sup>14</sup>

**1 in 5**

adolescent girls (19%) have not completed primary school; the majority of these girls (66%) reside in rural areas and are in the lowest two quintiles by income or financial status (58%)

**69%**

of adolescent girls report that they've completed at least some level of secondary school

**12%**

report that they've completed secondary school and have advanced to vocational or other advanced training

**81%**

of adolescent girls report that they were attending school before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic

**75%**

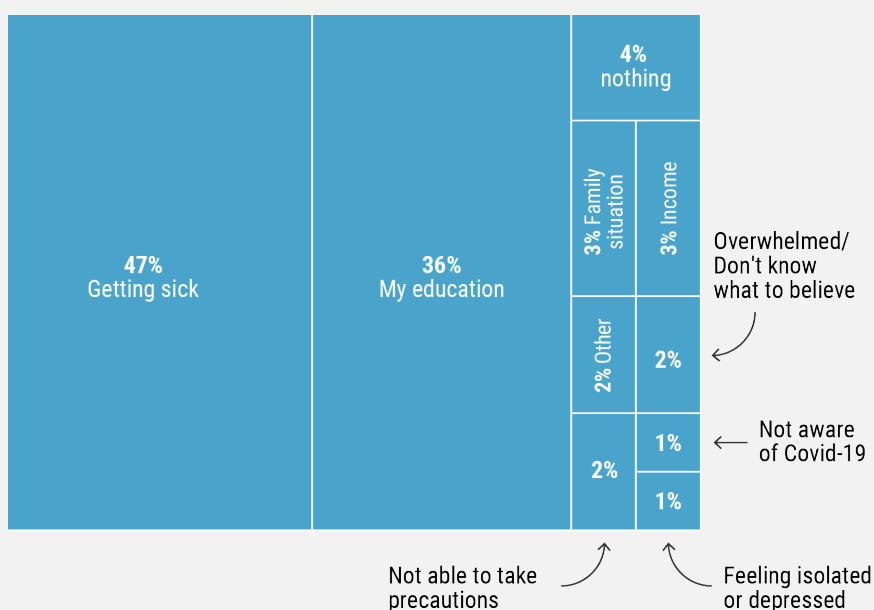
of girls report being unable to do any schoolwork at all during the 2020 school closures

### EDUCATION IS TOP OF GIRLS' PRIORITY LIST

In a large-scale qualitative study in April-August 2020, all 57 female participants reported that their secondary and tertiary education are critical milestones in their lives.<sup>15</sup> They highlighted that, the higher their educational achievement, the better they believe their chances are to achieve their objectives in life. Kenyan girls dream big: in the 2019 Shujaaz Inc annual national survey, 86% of adolescent girls said the most desired level of education (if they had a chance to choose) would be a college or university degree or above.<sup>16</sup>

Unsurprisingly therefore, during 2020 Covid-19 lockdown measures, girls were most concerned about the impact of interruptions on their education, second only to their health.

### WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CONCERN DURING COVID-19?<sup>17</sup>



<sup>14</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=2,015), December 2020 – January 2021

<sup>15</sup> Youth Power, Kenya Cross-Sectoral Youth Assessment Report: <https://www.youthpower.org/resources/kenya-cross-sectoral-youth-assessment-report> | <sup>16</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (n=517 adolescent girls), April - May 2019 | <sup>17</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021





## EDUCATION

School is good, I really love Mathematics and also seeing my friends, there is school food and I missed seeing my Maths teacher.

**FEMALE, 15, NYAMIRA**

I save some money so that I can continue with school and if I get a job however small, I will do it to the best of my ability.

**FEMALE, 18, BOMET**

### COVID-19 INTERRUPTS EDUCATION – BUT GIRLS TRY TO RETURN TO SCHOOL

On March 15th, 2020, the Government of Kenya closed schools nationwide in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In Kenya, the physical closure of school buildings effectively shut off all access to any form of education for the majority of adolescent girls; with 75% of girls reporting that they were unable to continue with their schoolwork because of the pandemic.<sup>18</sup>

A small proportion of girls (6%) reported that they were able to access some form of education.<sup>19</sup> The great majority of those girls (47%) were from middle or high-income households in rural areas – suggesting that school closures were either less rigorously applied in rural areas, or higher-income families were able to access digital or remote education.<sup>20</sup>

# 75%

OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS UNABLE TO CONTINUE THEIR SCHOOL WORK DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

# 7%

OF GIRLS WERE CONCERNED THEY WOULD BE UNABLE TO RETURN TO SCHOOL

In interviews in December 2020, 74% of adolescent girls (or 91% of those in school at the start of the year) said they were hoping to return to school, when schools reopened. A further 7% (or 9% of those in school at the start of the year) said they were concerned they would be unable to return to school – with many citing worries that their parents might be unable to afford school-related expenses like uniforms and transport.<sup>21</sup>

Official county reports suggested that an average of 80% of all students (both boys and girls) returned to continue their education as classes reopened in January 2021.<sup>22</sup> An assessment by the Population Council showed that 16% of girls and 8% of boys had not yet returned to school by February 2021.<sup>23</sup> Between March and May 2021 the Government of Kenya took the decision to close schools again in response to the recurrent threat of Covid-19, causing further interruptions.





PHOTO

**"CORONA HAS AFFECTED  
SO MANY THINGS, FOR  
EXAMPLE I WAS TO  
GRADUATE FROM SCHOOL  
THIS YEAR, BUT DUE TO  
COVID I HAVE TO RE-DO  
CLASSES AGAIN."**

**FEMALE, 18, TAITA TAVETA**



## CONNECTIVITY

When I want to get money from my parents for airtime to communicate to my friends, I will ask my parents to give me money to buy something, but I will not be specific.

**FEMALE, ELDORET**

[During the pandemic] My crew and I are shooting short videos and uploading them on YouTube. I'm also making pillows, mats and sharpening my culinary skills.

**FEMALE, ANONYMOUS**

When I don't have anything, I'm still doing – I have enrolled to an online course. Sometimes I chat with my friends and other times I play games on my phone.

**FEMALE, ANONYMOUS**

### THE KEY STATS<sup>24</sup>

**50%**

of adolescent girls own a phone, compared to 64% of adolescent boys

**40%**

of adolescent girls use the internet, compared to 60% of boys

**38%**

of girls use social media, with Facebook as the leading social network

**30%**

of adolescent girls own a smart phone, 10% have a feature phone and 16% have a basic phone; some own more than one phone

**56%**

of adolescent girls with internet access go online once a day, 11% at least once a week and 33% less than once a week

### COVID-19 DRIVES UP MOBILE AND INTERNET USAGE

The Covid-19 pandemic sparked seismic changes in how the world communicates. The global increase in use of, and reliance on, internet connectivity, digital technology and digital platforms during the pandemic was echoed in Kenya – including among adolescent girls.

**50%**

OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS REPORT OWNING A MOBILE PHONE IN 2020, UP FROM 34% IN 2019

**40%**

OF GIRLS REPORTED HAVING ACCESS TO SOME FORM OF INTERNET (MOBILE OR WIFI)

Mobile phone ownership among adolescent girls increased to 50% in 2020, up from 34% in 2019; with smartphone ownership increasing by 76% from 17% in 2019, to 30% in 2020.<sup>25</sup> Like girls around the world weathering and adapting to Covid-19 containment measures, Kenyan girls turned to their mobile phones and to the internet to feel connected to friends, and to find new ways to earn and learn. In 2020, 40% of girls reported having access to some form of internet (either mobile data or WIFI), compared to 28% in 2019.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=2,015), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>25</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 and (N=517 adolescent girls) April - May 2019 | <sup>26</sup> Ibid



## CONNECTIVITY

I don't have a smartphone to go to most of the social media platforms, but when I get money the first thing will be to buy a smartphone, so that I can do what other people do like going on Facebook.

**FEMALE, ANONYMOUS**

Most of us don't have phones, I only have a sim card which when I get money we save them there. When I want to communicate, I will use my mother's phone to communicate to them.

**FEMALE, KITALE**

I don't have a smartphone, my elder brother took mine and gave me his as he was going to Nairobi.

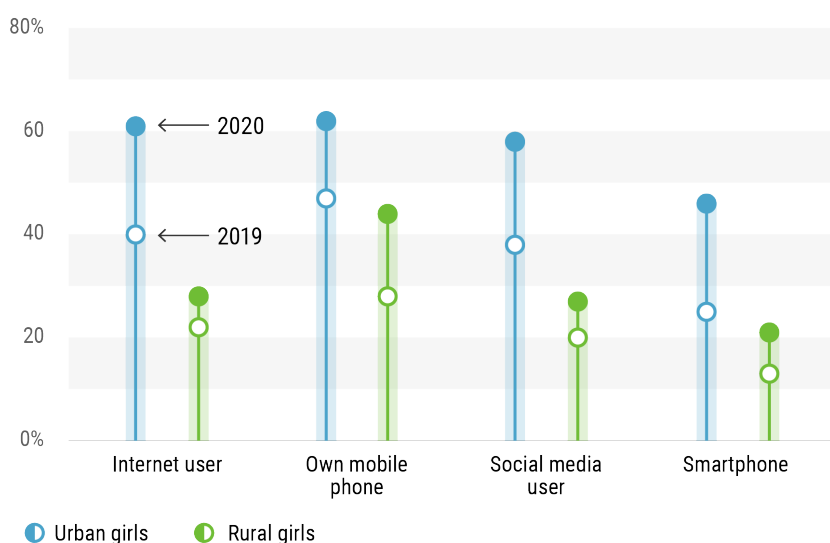
**FEMALE, NAKURU**

### THE URBAN VS. RURAL DIGITAL DISPARITY OVERTAKES THE GENDER DIVIDE

Despite increases in overall connectivity, mobile phone ownership among adolescent boys continues to significantly outstrip girls: only 50% of adolescent girls report owning a mobile phone (but not necessarily a SIM card), compared to 64% of adolescent boys.<sup>27</sup> The digital divide widens around internet access; as only 40% of adolescent girls report using the internet, often via borrowing a smartphone, computer or using a cybercafé, compared to 60% of adolescent boys.<sup>28</sup> However, the national gender divide appears to be closing; the percentage difference in mobile phone ownership between genders (among adolescents only) was 24 percentage points in 2019, falling to 14 percentage points in 2020.<sup>29</sup>

In its place however, the urban vs. rural digital divide has widened between 2019 and 2020, particularly when it comes to internet access. Smartphone ownership among adolescent girls living in urban areas jumped from 25% to 46% and internet use increased from 40% to 61% between 2019 and 2020.<sup>30</sup> But in rural areas, smartphone ownership increased from 13% to only 21% among adolescent girls, and internet use from 22% to only 28%. New data from this year's Shujaaz Inc annual survey suggests that the urban vs. rural digital divide is widening, beyond the national gender divides.<sup>31</sup>

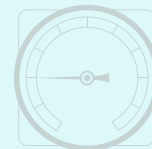
### ACCESS TO AND OWNERSHIP OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN KENYA, BY YEAR AND LOCATION<sup>32</sup>



Girls living in rural areas are the most disadvantaged group among all 15-24-year-olds in Kenya, reporting the lowest income-levels, rates of education and use of contraceptives. While less than a third of adolescent girls living in rural areas have access to smartphones or the internet, that trend risks worsening, as they're denied access to the social, financial and educational benefits of connectivity.

<sup>27</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>28</sup> Ibid | <sup>29</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=2,015), December 2020 – January 2021 and (N=2,020), April – May 2019 | <sup>30</sup> Ibid | <sup>31</sup> Ibid | <sup>32</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 2019 and 2020, shown here, urban adolescent girls (n=211 in 2020 and n=171 in 2019) and rural adolescent girls (n=391 in 2020 and n=346 in 2019)





## SEX & RELATIONSHIPS

I was employed in a hotel and we had to stop working and I didn't have money. I cannot go to live with my dad. So, I explained everything to my boyfriend. I expected him to support me pay my bills. But instead, he asked me to move in with him. He helped me a lot and that's why I moved in with him.

**FEMALE, ANONYMOUS**

I love him [my boyfriend]. The funny thing is, we started living together this year, the corona year and he has been supportive more than any other person in my family and I love him so much.

**FEMALE, NANYUKI**

### THE KEY STATS<sup>31</sup>

**32%**

of adolescent girls report that they're sexually active

**2%**

report that they're married and living with a partner

**73%**

of sexually active girls report having used a form of modern contraception

**80%**

of sexually active girls say it would be a 'big problem' if they got pregnant

### THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS LITTLE IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Among the international community, as well as among young Kenyans, there has been significant discussion about the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated containment measures on adolescent girls. In particular, there has been speculation of the pandemic's impact on: adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health; girls' relationship status; rates of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy.

As the pandemic is still ongoing there are no conclusive data sets yet on these impacts. The Shujaaz Inc 2020 national survey did not capture any significant changes to adolescent girls' relationship status. In interviews with adolescent girls between December 2020 and January 2021, 70% of adolescent girls reported being single but not dating, compared to 72% in 2019, and 27% reported being single but dating, compared to 23% in 2019 – reflecting only minor changes between the two cohorts and their relationship status.<sup>34</sup>

**70%**

**OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS REPORTED BEING SINGLE, BUT NOT DATING**

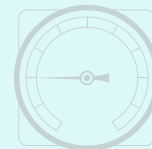
**27%**

**OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS REPORTED BEING SINGLE BUT DATING**

Of the adolescent girls interviewed between December 2020 and January 2021, only 2% reported being married and living with a partner, compared to 4% in 2019 cohort. In addition, 6% [n=36] of the adolescent girls from the 2020-2021 interviews reported being a mother, compared to 7% of the adolescent girls in the 2019-2020 interviews.<sup>35</sup> In a survey conducted between June 2020 - February 2021, the Population Council reported that 4% of adolescent girls were pregnant, or recently had a baby.<sup>36</sup>

According to the latest available national data, collected by the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics, in 2014 16% of adolescent girls were mothers and 19% of adolescent girls were pregnant.<sup>37</sup> Updated national population surveys are required to fully understand and assess the impacts of Covid-19 on adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health, relationship status, rates of pregnancy and child marriage.

<sup>33</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=2,015), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>34</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 and (N=517 adolescent girls) April – May 2019 | <sup>35</sup> Ibid | <sup>36</sup> Population Council (24 June 2021) Promises to Keep: Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescents in Kenya | <sup>37</sup> Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) 2014.



## SEX & RELATIONSHIPS

I have a boyfriend. We have been in a relationship for two years now and when I was in form four, High School he had never asked for sex. As soon as I was done, he taught me about using protection majorly condoms and we have never had a problem since then in our relationship and sex.

**FEMALE, 19, BUNGOMA**

If she uses a long-term contraceptive, honestly, I can't blame her because she is trying to protect her future.

**FEMALE, ANONYMOUS**

I spent the week with my boyfriend and he took me to hospital to agree for an implant so that we stay safe.

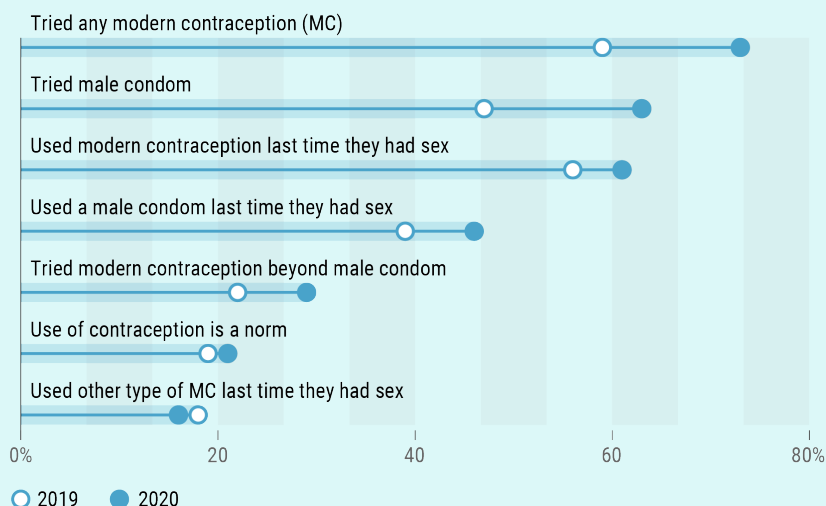
**FEMALE, 17, KISUMU**

### USE OF CONDOMS DRAMATICALLY INCREASES DURING THE PANDEMIC

In the Shujaaz Inc 2020 national survey, slightly more girls told us that they were sexually active (32%), compared to in our 2019 survey (29%). Among other trends, the 2020 survey also indicates an increase in trial and use of male condoms.<sup>38</sup> In 2020, 63% of sexually active adolescent girls reported having tried a male condom, with 46% saying they used one the last time they had sex, compared to only 47% having ever tried one in 2019 and 39% reporting using one the last time they'd had sex.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the proportion of sexually active adolescent girls reporting having ever tried any form of modern contraception increased to 73% from 59% in the previous year.<sup>40</sup>

### ADOLESCENT GIRLS' SRH BEHAVIOURS, BY YEAR

*Shown: Sexually active adolescent girls [n=190 in 2020 and n=148 in 2019]*



More research is required to better understand this trend, but male condoms are believed to be the most accessible method of contraception for young people. They can be obtained without compromising a person's anonymity, without parental consent, or even without any interactions with other people, for example from a dispenser.

While adolescent girls reported a slight increase in use of hormonal contraception methods, the number who report using hormonal contraception the last time they had sex remains relatively low. This can partially be explained by the reported shortage of the girls' preferred method, injectable hormonal contraception. Injectable hormonal contraception was difficult for the girls to access during the pandemic, as a result of limited supply due to a slow-down in import activities during the pandemic, and reduced access because of reported closures or reduced services of sexual health clinics.

<sup>38</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 and (N=517 adolescent girls) April – May 2019 | <sup>39</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 and (N=517 adolescent girls) April-May 2019 | <sup>40</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 and (N=517 adolescent girls) April-May 2019



PHOTO

**"I DON'T HAVE A  
SMARTPHONE TO GO ON  
MOST OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA  
PLATFORMS, BUT WHEN I  
DO GET MONEY THE FIRST  
THING WILL BE TO BUY A  
SMARTPHONE, SO I CAN DO  
WHAT OTHER PEOPLE DO LIKE  
GOING ON FACEBOOK."**

**FEMALE, ANONYMOUS**





## GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION

In my area, men rarely support women when it comes to leadership matters. I wish they did though women here have so much potential.

**FEMALE, ANONYMOUS**

We need security that protect us from marriages that are not our plan and creating more awareness to our parents that we should be given equal rights to boys.

**FEMALE, KALAMA**

I get a lot of attention from boys but there is one who I love a lot and I feel safe when I'm with him but when my aunt hears that we are together she gets mad at me and even beats me telling me not to be together with the boy, she wants me to be together with the son of her friend instead.

**FEMALE, 17, KAKAMEGA**

### THE KEY STATS<sup>41</sup>

**62%**

of adolescent girls believe that gender-based discrimination and violence still exist in Kenya

**33%**

of adolescent girls believe that gender-based discrimination and violence is caused by cultural views about gender roles

**43%**

of adolescent girls reported a first-hand experience with gender-based discrimination

**19%**

of girls say they have experienced a form of physical or emotional abuse because of their gender, physical appearance, age, tribe or income-level

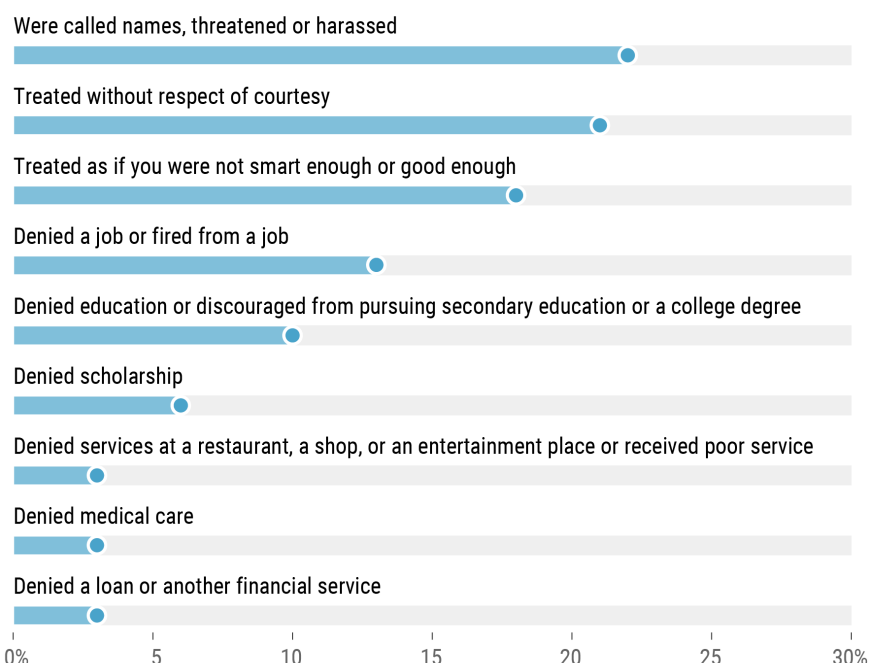
**17%**

of adolescent girls say that 'girls like them' have experienced violence during the pandemic

### MOST GIRLS EXPERIENCE GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AS PART OF LIFE IN KENYA

As part of the Shujaaz Inc 2020 national survey, we spoke to adolescent girls about their experience of being female in Kenya, and their thoughts on gender-dynamics in the country. In this year's survey, 43% of girls told us they had a first-hand experience of gender-based discrimination targeting them, or girls they know, in their professional or personal lives, or in education.<sup>42</sup> Of those, 22% reported that they were called names threatened or harassed, 13% reported being denied a job, or fired from work, and 10% report being denied education or discouraged from accessing education.<sup>43</sup>

### ADOLESCENT GIRLS' EXPERIENCE WITH GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION TARGETING EITHER THEM OR GIRLS THEY KNOW



<sup>41</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=2,015), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>42</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>43</sup> Ibid



## GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION

You are exposed to the dangers of life as a girlchild.

**FEMALE, 18, KAKAMEGA**

The problem that we experience especially those of us who do get pregnant while still living with their parents is that we are considered as people with no values.

**FEMALE, ANONYMOUS**

When I got pregnant, I experienced a lot of negative treatment from my family and friends. It really took long before my mum accepted me back. I was so much stressed, as we speak, I don't have friends, I started getting new friends since no one wanted to interact with me.

**FEMALE, ELDORET**

In our conversations, 19% of adolescent girls told us they have experienced a form of physical or emotional abuse, because of their gender, physical appearance, their age, tribal associations or their income level.<sup>44</sup> In the structure of the survey, we allow girls to define the term abuse, which is used alongside more verbal terms like 'teasing' or 'mocking'. Using the same terminology, 17% of girls reported that they believe 'girls like them' have experienced a form of violence during the pandemic.<sup>45</sup> A range of charities in Kenya reported an increase in calls to abuse helplines during the pandemic, particularly during lockdown measures.

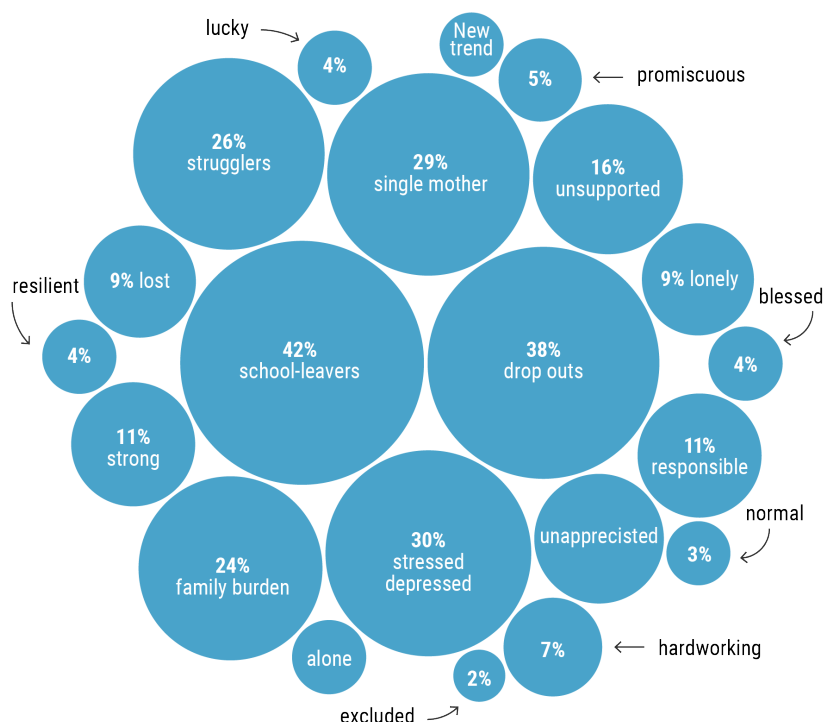
More than half (62%) reported that they believe gender-based discrimination and violence still exist in Kenya, and that girls are more likely to experience physical and emotional abuse than boys.<sup>46</sup> When we discussed the reasons for this continued discrimination, 44% of girls referenced 'cultural views' about gender roles, family upbringing or religious beliefs as a cause, with a further 22% talking about peer pressure or ignorance.<sup>47</sup> Only 10% referenced the physical differences between genders as a reason behind continued discrimination, with a further 8% citing the belief that men and women are fundamentally different.<sup>48</sup>

### YOUNG MOTHERS REPORT DISCRIMINATION AND RESTRICTED ACCESS TO SERVICES

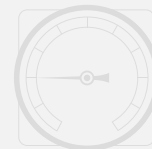
In recent conversations with adolescent mothers in the Shujaaz Inc network, girls reported that they experience significant social judgement and discrimination.

In Shujaaz Inc's 2020 national survey, a quarter of adolescent mothers reported feeling that their communities disapprove of them, and at least one in seven young mothers (13%) reported being denied access to support from families or communities, to support services, and to social activities.<sup>49</sup> In fact, the principal associations with adolescent mothers among young Kenyans are negative; ranging from ideas that all young mothers are a 'family burden' or 'irresponsible'.

### WHAT ARE THE TOP 3 WORDS THAT BEST DESCRIBE ADOLESCENT MOTHERS?<sup>50</sup>



<sup>44</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>45</sup> Ibid | <sup>46</sup> Ibid | <sup>47</sup> Ibid | <sup>48</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (n=602 adolescent girls and n=202 adolescent mothers), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>49</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>50</sup> Ibid



## MOOD & WELLBEING

“When I am disturbed by my things I don't even like my mum to know because I will end up stressing her too.

**FEMALE, MOMBASA**

“To me, the most important relationship in my life is between me and my mum. Because, my mum is kind of a single mother. So, since I was in class five, she is the only one who has taken care of me. So my relationship and hers its very tight.

**FEMALE, ANONYMOUS**

“Despite the pandemic season we are in, I can never give up on my future plannings. What keeps me going is my future lays in my hands, and it's upon me to do the right things and work towards what I want and it will be a successful one.

**FEMALE, HOMA BAY**

### THE KEY STATS<sup>51</sup>

**85%**

of adolescent girls believe that their lives will be better a year from now

**90%**

of girls report they have someone to turn to in a crisis

**35%**

say their community doesn't give them enough support in their everyday life

**84%**

of adolescent girls believe they have something to contribute to their community and to the world

**78%**

of adolescent girls occasionally experience signs of depression or severe stress

### GIRLS HAVE FAITH IN THE FUTURE – AND THEIR RESILIENCE

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated containment measures have had a significant impact on the financial security, education and wellbeing of adolescent girls across Kenya. As a result, a concerning 78% of adolescent girls reported that they occasionally experience signs of depression or of severe stress, for example: feeling down, depressed or hopeless, feeling like a failure, experiencing sudden feelings of fear or panic, or having suicidal thoughts.<sup>52</sup> As for young people around the world, the long-term impacts of the pandemic on adolescent girls in Kenya are likely to be felt far beyond 2021.

However, despite the challenges that adolescent girls face, they report feeling positive overall about their future prospects. In conversations conducted during Shujaaz Inc's annual survey, 85% of adolescent girls said they believe that their lives will be better 'a year from now', down only 11% from 2019, despite the turbulence of the pandemic.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps more importantly, girls told us they have a strong sense of self-resilience, with 91% of 15-19-year-old girls reporting that 'when things get tough' they believe they can respond 'really well'. Crucially, 90% of adolescent girls told us they feel that they have someone to turn to in a crisis.<sup>54</sup>

**85%**

**OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS SAID THEY BELIEVE THAT THEIR LIVES WILL BE BETTER IN A YEAR**


**90%**

**OF GIRLS REPORTED THAT THEY FEEL THEY HAVE SOMEONE TO TURN TO IN A CRISIS**

However, after the strain of the pandemic applied pressure to communities across the country, 35% of adolescent girls shared that they felt their community doesn't currently give them enough support in their everyday life, an increase from 30% in 2019.<sup>55</sup> As we enter another challenging year, adolescent girls are keen to contribute; 84% of adolescent girls reported that they believe they have something to contribute to their community and to the world.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (N=2,015), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>52</sup> Shujaaz Inc annual national survey of Kenyans aged 15-24 (n=602 adolescent girls), December 2020 – January 2021 | <sup>53</sup> Ibid | <sup>54</sup> Ibid | <sup>55</sup> Ibid | <sup>56</sup> Ibid





“AS A YOUNG WOMAN, I FEEL  
MY FUTURE IS BRIGHT. I  
REALLY WANT TO PAY BACK  
MY MUM FOR EVERYTHING  
SHE’S DONE FOR ME. SHE’S  
BEEN STRUGGLING ALL ALONE  
THIS LIFE TO TAKE CARE OF  
US, SO I REALLY WANT TO BE  
SUCCESSFUL, SO I CAN HELP  
HER AHEAD.”

FEMALE, ELDORET

## ABOUT UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

UNICEF's Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office provides oversight, quality assurance and technical assistance to 21 countries in the region. UNICEF ESARO builds partnerships and generates evidence to support programming excellence to advance the skills and development and participation agenda for adolescents and young people with key stakeholders across the region.

For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

## ABOUT SHUJAAZ INC

Shujaaz Inc is a network of social ventures based in Nairobi, Kenya. We believe this generation of young people can transform our global society for the better – that's why we work to break down barriers so that young people can take control of the future.

Our Emmy-award winning team of 60 young East Africans run our three social ventures; our multimedia youth platform Shujaaz, East-Africa's biggest youth brand; Hustla MBA, our digital learning community and our newest venture, a digital networking platform.

Our social ventures inspire, entertain and mobilise 7.5 million 15-24-year-olds across East Africa. Our network connects young people with the information, skills and resources they need to take control; embedding them in a digital and real-world community that gives them the self-belief to succeed, in their context and on their terms.