

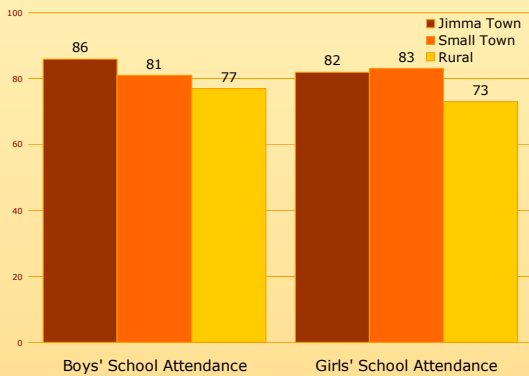
# School Attendance of Adolescents in Jimma Zone

This Policy Brief examines school enrollment and attendance and reasons for non-enrollment among boys and girls by place of residence and food security.

*Based on data from Round 1 (September 2005-March 2006) of the Jimma Longitudinal Family Survey of Youth*

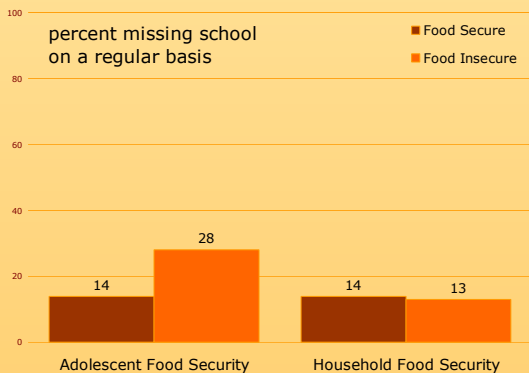
Increasing the education level of urban and rural youth is a key strategy for economic development. A more educated population is the hallmark of social development. Education is associated with increased economic productivity, the rejection of harmful health practices, and more proactive use of formal health care services. Women with more education are more involved in household decision-making and have a greater say regarding contraceptive use and family size, and men with more education are more accepting of family planning and their wives' utilization of formal prenatal care.

The Jimma Longitudinal Family Survey of Youth asked adolescent respondents about whether they were enrolled in school, their frequency of attendance, and reasons for missing school or not continuing with their education. In this Policy Brief we address the following questions: To what extent are adolescents in Jimma Zone enrolled in and attending school? Do boys have better school attendance than girls? How does food insecurity affect school attendance? What are the reasons for not being enrolled in school?



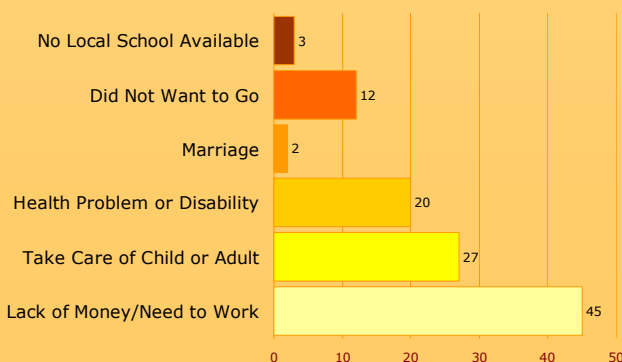
## Regular School Attendance

**School enrollment and regular attendance is widespread among adolescents in Jimma Zone. Between 77 and 86 percent of adolescent boys in the JLFSY study area are enrolled in school and attending regularly (that is, are absent less than several days a month), as are between 73 and 83 percent of girls. Enrollment and attendance is lowest in rural areas and highest among youth living in Jimma Town.**



## Food Security and School Attendance

**Food security is an important factor in whether youth attend school regularly. Adolescents who lack food security (in the last 3 months worried about not having enough to eat, had to skip meals or go the entire day without eating, or had to ask for food outside of the home) are almost twice as likely than adolescents with food security to miss school on a regular basis (several days a week or several days a month). Food insecurity at the household level is also associated with a much higher level of missed school among youth. Roughly one in four youth from food insecure households missed school on a regular basis. The association of food insecurity with school days missed is not surprising. In Policy Brief 5 we have shown that the absence of food security is a major problem for the households in Jimma Zone. In Policy Brief 6 we found that adolescents lacking food security are more often depressed.**

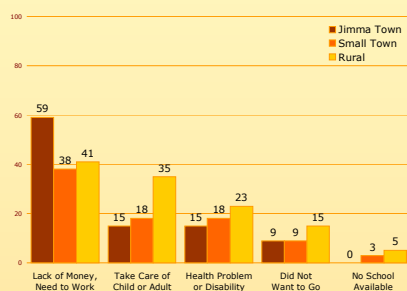


## Reasons for Not Being Enrolled in School

**One out of ten adolescents in the JLFSY study area is not enrolled in school at all. Of these youth, the leading reason for not being enrolled in school is a lack of money or the need to work (45%). The next most commonly cited reasons for not being in school are the obligation to take care of a child or an adult (27%), followed by health problems or a disability (20%). Only 2% of youth left school to marry and only 12% said they were not in school because they did not want to stay in school. Access to education is not an obstacle to school enrollment in the study area: only 3% of youth not in school said they were not in school because the nearest school was too far away.**

## Reasons for Not Being Enrolled in School by Place

There are sharp differences by place of residence in the reasons for not being enrolled in school. Lack of money or the need to work is the most common reason adolescents in Jimma Town give for not being in school. Rural residents also mention the lack of money and the need to work, but not as frequently as Jimma Town residents. On the other hand, rural youth are much more likely than urban youth to mention the need to care for a child or an adult as a reason for not being in school. Rural youth are also more likely to say they are not enrolled in school because of poor health (23%).



## Aspirations for Higher Education

The girls and boys of Jimma Zone have very high expectations about their future educational attainments. Four-fifths expect to go beyond high school. Girls most commonly expect to complete the preparatory level, while boys expect that they will complete college. These expectations of higher education are unlikely to be met for many of the adolescents, given the few centers of higher education available to them. Nonetheless, it is clear that most members of this cohort will complete high school, a vast improvement over the educational level of earlier cohorts. Many of them are likely to obtain at least some preparatory or college education.

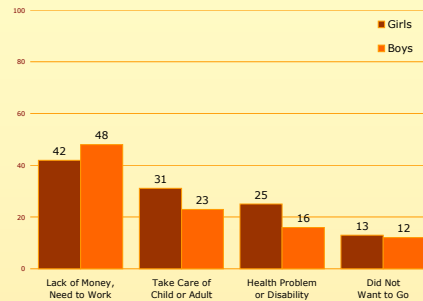
## Policy Recommendations

Most adolescent boys and girls in Jimma Zone are enrolled in and regularly attend school. Because of this, the educational attainments of these adolescents will far exceed those of persons who are now young adults. This bodes well for their future social and economic development and for their health-related behavior. Through youth clubs (many of which are school-based,) these adolescents have become aware of the risk of HIV/AIDS (Policy Brief 2). Educated youth are more receptive to public health messages about hygiene and disease, the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and fertility regulation. Investments in public health interventions targeted at adolescents and young adults are likely to have a very high pay-off.

The success in producing a highly educated cohort of young persons also creates the necessity for economic policies that will meet their desires for skilled, secure, and well-paying jobs. This will be a major challenge to economic development planners as these and future well-educated cohorts of young persons reach adulthood.

## Reasons for Not Being Enrolled in School for Boys and Girls

Boys more often than girls say they are not enrolled in school because of lack of money or the need to work. On the other hand, girls are more likely than boys to say they need to care for a child or an adult; and girls are more likely than boys to mention health problems or a disability as a reason for not being enrolled in school.



## The Jimma Longitudinal Family Survey of Youth

The Jimma Longitudinal Family Survey of Youth (JLFSY) began in 2005. It is representative of Jimma Town, the small towns of Yebu, Serbo, and Sheki, and nearby rural areas. The stratified sample includes 3500 households and 2100 boys and girls ages 13 to 17, yielding about 700 adolescents each for Jimma Town, the small towns, and the rural areas. Household data were collected from the household head or the spouse of the head. Adolescents were directly interviewed. Questionnaire data were collected by trained interviewers in the Amharic and Oromifa languages.



Jimma Zone in Ethiopia

The JLFSY is an interdisciplinary effort by specialists in epidemiology, community health, biostatistics, demography, sociology, and economics. The study examines critical challenges that youth face such as health, education and training, employment and earnings, forming families, and becoming productive citizens. A special focus of the study is on key sources of support for youth as they meet these challenges including parent and kin investments, household resources, parent and kin guidance, local community infrastructure, and informal support networks.

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This research is being conducted by faculty and students affiliated with the **Partnership in Improving Reproductive Health**



**Jimma University**  
DPFH · Department of Population and Family Health  
Jimma · Ethiopia



**Brown University**  
PSTC · Population Studies and Training Center  
Box 1836 · Providence · RI · 02912 · United States · <http://www.pstc.brown.edu>