

Improved safety and wellbeing of learners

Information Brief

Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices in 2025: School-Related Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health



Photo: Leh Wi Lan

Introduction

Strengthening safety and wellbeing at school is key to ensuring that learners can focus on their studies and improve their learning outcomes. But in Sierra Leone's secondary schools, incidents of violence, bullying and sexual abuse have impacted negatively on education indicators, especially amongst more vulnerable learners.

Leh Wi Lan is working in partnership with the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to address School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) and build understanding of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) amongst teachers and learners.

To measure the effectiveness of these interventions, an annual Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey is carried out in schools across Sierra Leone. The first was carried out in February 2024, providing a baseline of data.

This Information Brief explores key findings from the 2025 survey, specifically in terms of teacher participants, and provides learning for future work in the area.

Overall findings

Teachers show improvement in all areas of knowledge, attitudes and practices with average scores increasing by 5.1 percentage points (pp) since 2024.

Teachers score better in knowledge but less well in attitudes and practices, indicating they know the rules but may hold conflicting beliefs and values.

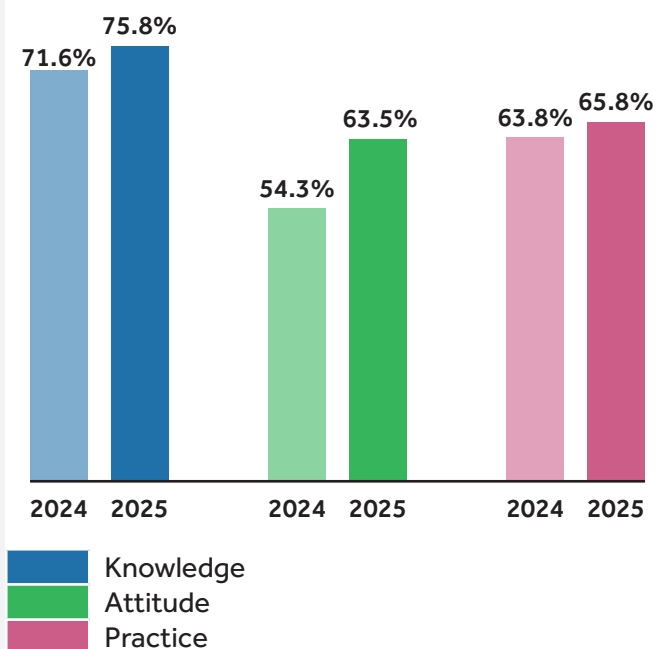
The biggest improvement was found in the average attitudes score, which increased by 9.2 pp.

Female teachers were more likely to achieve desired scores in attitudes, particularly in terms of gender inclusion.

Younger teachers are still less likely to achieve desirable scores, but since the 2024 survey they increased their average scores more than older teachers.

Senior secondary teachers achieved slightly higher scores than those teaching junior secondary level (70.8% compared with 66.8%).

Overall Teacher Scores



Learners show greater improvement in average scores than teachers – with an overall increase of 7.2pp

Violence in school

The survey finds some major improvements in practices around corporal punishment and reporting of violence since 2024:

	Far fewer say it's normal for learners to receive corporal punishment (39.5% down from 55.7%)
	More would report violence in school (87.5% up from 83.9%)
	Most believe that teachers and students would be sanctioned if reported for violence (78.9% and 66.4% respectively).
	Nearly three-quarters believe they wouldn't face consequences for reporting violence.

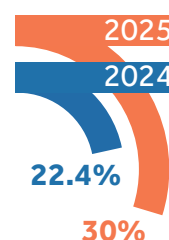
Fewer learners believe that teachers will be sanctioned for violence (68.6%) and more believe that learners perpetrating violence will be sanctioned (76.2%).

However, we still see some concerning scores around understanding and attitudes of violence with fewer understanding that MBSSE forbids learners from being harmed, threatened or made to feel unsafe (73.0% down from 82.3%), more reporting that school makes learners feel unsafe (75.0% up from 72.1%) and more saying they have witnessed violence at school (62.5% up from 60.8%).

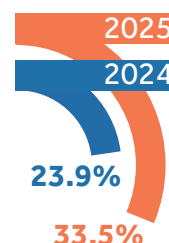
We also see an increase in teachers recognising that vulnerable learners are at risk of abuse and harassment, which may be the result of improved understanding of the issue:

% of teachers recognising violence amongst vulnerable groups

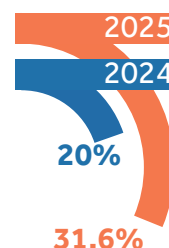
Learners with disabilities



Pregnant and parenting learners








Female learners being sexually harassed by male staff





Teacher-student relationships

There are good improvements in teachers' knowledge scores related to sexual relationships in school:

	More know that teachers are forbidden to have sexual relationships with learners (90.1% up from 85.1%) or romantic relationships (88.8% up from 86.7%)
	More know that teachers should not offer grades for sex (88.8% up from 80.8%)
	Many more would report a romantic relationship between school staff and a learner (87.5% up from 78.0%)
	90.8% say that girls have the right to refuse sex (up from 88.2%)
	84.2% know that sexual touching is forbidden regardless of declarations of love or gifts (up from 80.4%).






Learners also showed great improvements in this area with more achieving a desirable score here than in other areas.

However, we have seen the rise of two worrying attitudes:

	17.1% believe sexual relationships with learners should be tolerated if the learner consents (up from 11.3%)
	13.8% believe touching a girls' breast does not constitute sexual violence (up from 9.0%)

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services

Findings indicate improved understanding, attitudes and practices around SRH, with some questions scoring much higher since the baseline survey:

	Far more teachers understand that learners can access SRH services without adult permission (63.2% up from 47.4%)
	Most teachers have provided SRH advice when approached by learners, though this has slightly decreased (72.4% from 74.5%).
	Far more believe that family planning services should be offered in school (80.3% up from 65.5%)
	Less than a third believe that family planning education would encourage learners to start having sex (32.9% down from 44.7%)
	A similar proportion of respondents are uncomfortable talking about family planning as in 2024 (27.6% compared to 27.8%)

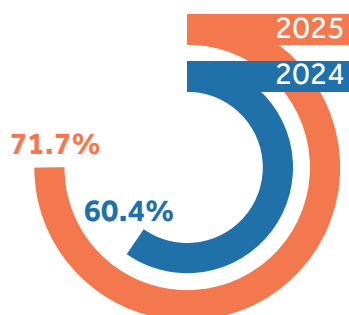
Though more teachers understand learners can access SRH services without adult permission – this increased by 16pp - less than half of learners have the same knowledge.

There is an improvement in some attitudes around menstruation with 90.1% believing that both boys and girls show know about periods (up from 82.3%) and 65.8% believing that girls should participate in school and sport during their period (up from 58.4%). However, some remaining stigma must be addressed to improve girls' inclusion as 71.7% still think girls are less focused in class during their period (though this is down from 74.1%).

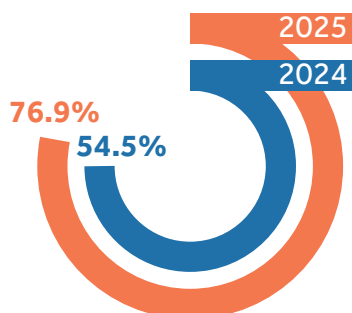
Pregnancy

There are many significant improvements around teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices towards pregnant learners. However, some discriminatory attitudes persist, indicating more work is required to challenge stigma and bias.

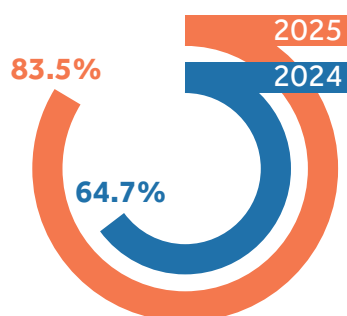
Policy includes pregnant learners



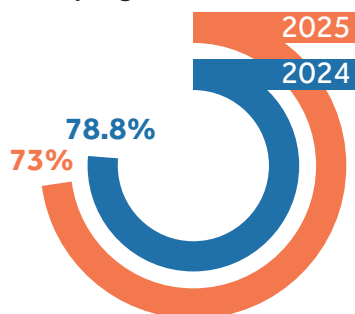
Pregnant learners should go to school



Support pregnant learners



Believe pregnant learners distract others



39.8% of learners say teachers make fun of pregnant girls – this is down from 50.4%

Conclusions and recommendations

The significant improvements in the percentage of teachers achieving desirable knowledge about SRH and different types of violence at school show that interventions by LWL and other partners have been effective to support a change at school level. However, there remains considerable scope for stronger understanding, better attitudes and improved practices in the following areas:

Safety: Additional research is needed to better understand how teachers perceive violence and safety in schools, so that improvements can continue especially in terms of safeguarding vulnerable learners.

Gender inclusion: Stigma around sensitive gender-related topics – including FGM, menstruation and pregnancy – need to be targeted, particularly in terms of the beliefs of male teachers.

Fear of reporting: Violence in school is widely understood but there is a need to reduce the fear of reporting for both teachers and learners.

Attitudes: Changing attitudes takes time and requires investment in consistent social behaviour communications at all levels of education and community.



An information brief on learner participants is available.

About the survey

152 teachers

84% male | 16% female

15 Junior Secondary | 10 Senior Secondary

Five districts sampled: Bo, Bombali, Kailahun, Port Loko, and Western Area Rural

Methodology¹

Teachers were asked 35 questions across three domains: Knowledge, Attitude and Practices. Each question is designed with a desired response in mind (i.e. an answer that would demonstrate good understanding and customs). The actual answers from participants were compared with these desired responses and the number of correct matches determined a score. A higher score reflects greater alignment with the desired response.

¹ Note: The 2024 survey covered different districts and sampled 103 more teachers than the 2025 survey, so any comparisons are indicative rather than direct correlations.



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The second phase of the Leh Wi Lan programme is part of the Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Programme II (SSEIP II), which is funded by UK International Development. This five-year programme supports Sierra Leone's Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to deliver improved education outcomes at secondary level, with a focus on schoolgirls and learners with disabilities. Leh Wi Lan is implemented by a consortium of national and international organisations led by Cambridge Education.