Provincial FUNS Highlights: Limpopo and Free State

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Presentation Overview

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2.   Literacy challenges by schools

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Overview of Assessments Conducted

- Home Language Oral Assessment (Grades 1-4)
  - Tasks: rapid object naming, letter sound recognition, word recognition, oral reading fluency, oral comprehension

- English First Additional Language Oral Assessment (Grades 2-4)
  - Tasks: similar domains assessed in English as a second language

- Written Assessment (Grades 3-4)
  - Tasks: written comprehension and semantic awareness in the home language

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Literacy Challenges faced by schools

Outcomes	National	Tshivenda	Xitsonga	Sesotho-Setswana
Overcrowded Classrooms	23%	18%	30%	32%
Lack of reading resources	37%	59%	25%	44%
Learner's inability to read	66%	66%	54%	74%
Comprehension challenges	53%	51%	72%	71%
Lack of Teacher Content Knowledge	11%	17%	6%	15%
Learner Absenteeism	23%	7%	16%	6%

Red — High challenge — frequently reported by principals

Orange — Moderate challenge — affects many schools but not universal

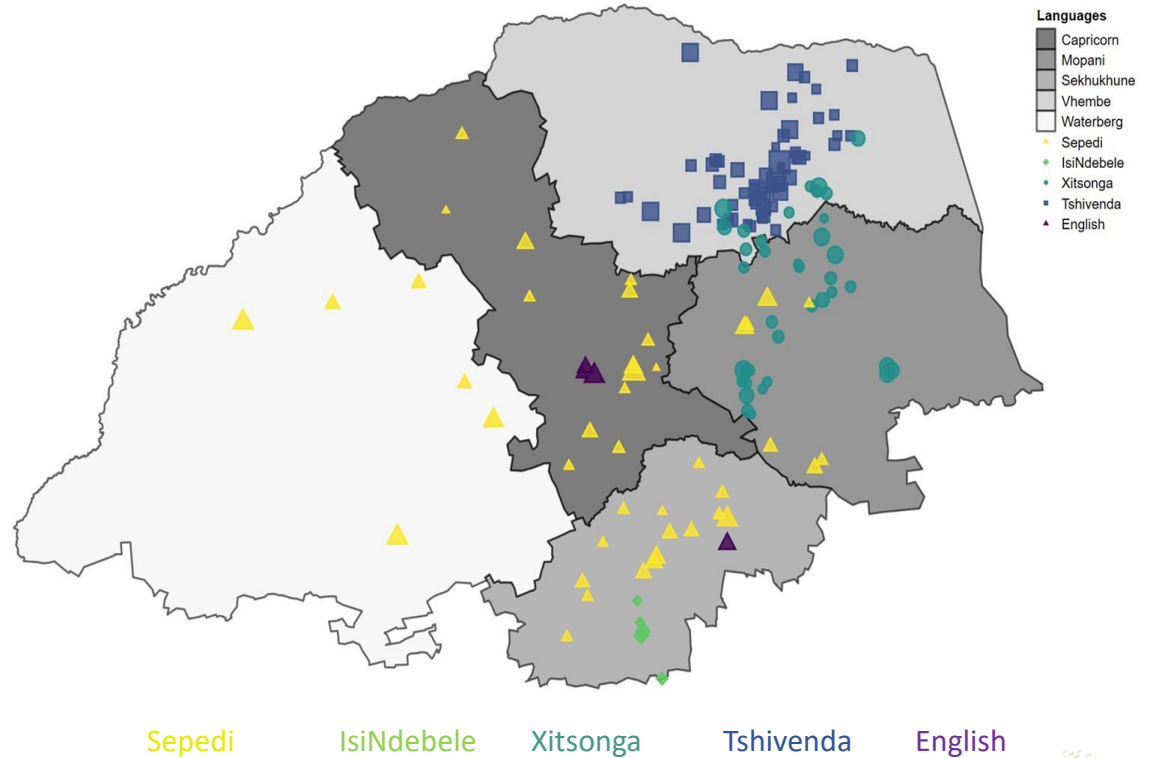**Yellow** — Low challenge — reported by fewer schools

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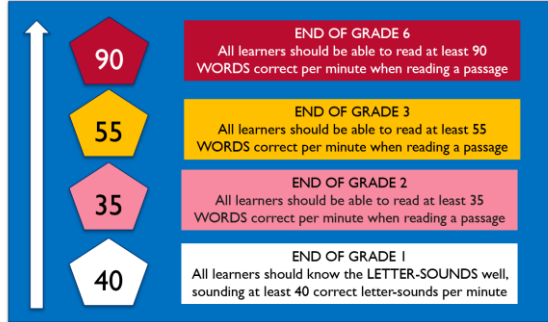Basic Education
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1. Limpopo

Sample Description and Overview

- Data was collected in **150 schools** across districts in **Limpopo.**

- Languages assessed: English, IsiNdebele, **Sepedi, Xitsonga, Tshivenda**

- Learners largely in Quintile 1 – 3 schools

Languages
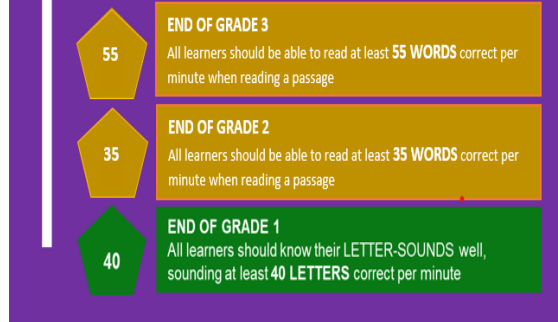- Capricorn
- Mopani
- Sekhukhune
- Vhembe
- Waterberg
- Sepedi
- IsiNdebele
- Xitsonga
- Tshivenda
- English

Sepedi   IsiNdebele   Xitsonga   Tshivenda   English

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Tshivenda, Xitsonga and Sesotho – Setswana Benchmarks

Tshivenda Reading Benchmarks

90 — END OF GRADE 6
All learners should be able to read at least 90 WORDS correct per minute when reading a passage

55 — END OF GRADE 3
All learners should be able to read at least 55 WORDS correct per minute when reading a passage

35 — END OF GRADE 2
All learners should be able to read at least 35 WORDS correct per minute when reading a passage

40 — END OF GRADE 1
All learners should know the LETTER-SOUNDS well, sounding at least 40 correct letter-sounds per minute

Xitsonga Reading Benchmarks

55 — END OF GRADE 3
All learners should be able to read at least 55 WORDS correct per minute when reading a passage

35 — END OF GRADE 2
All learners should be able to read at least 35 WORDS correct per minute when reading a passage

40 — END OF GRADE 1
All learners should know their LETTER-SOUNDS well, sounding at least 40 LETTERS correct per minute

Sepedi Reading Benchmarks

60 — END OF GRADE 3
all learners should be able to read at least 60 WORDS correct per minute when reading a passage

40 — END OF GRADE 2
all learners should be able to read at least 40 WORDS correct per minute when reading a passage

40 — END OF GRADE 1
all learners should know their LETTER-SOUNDS well, sounding at least 40 correct letters per minute
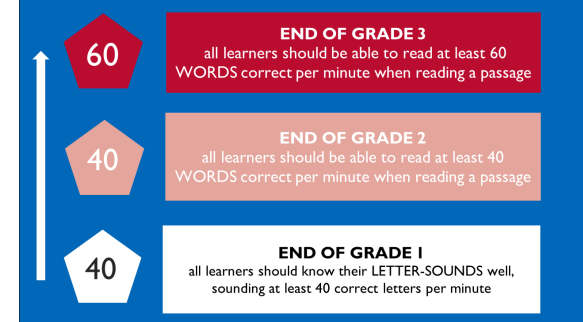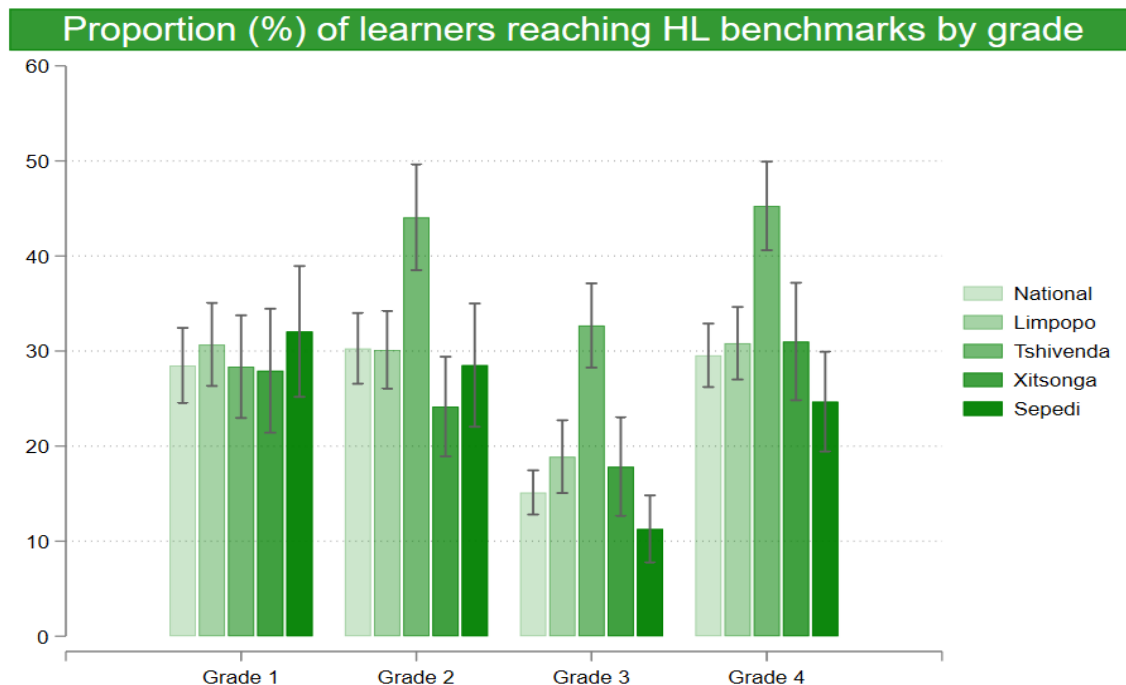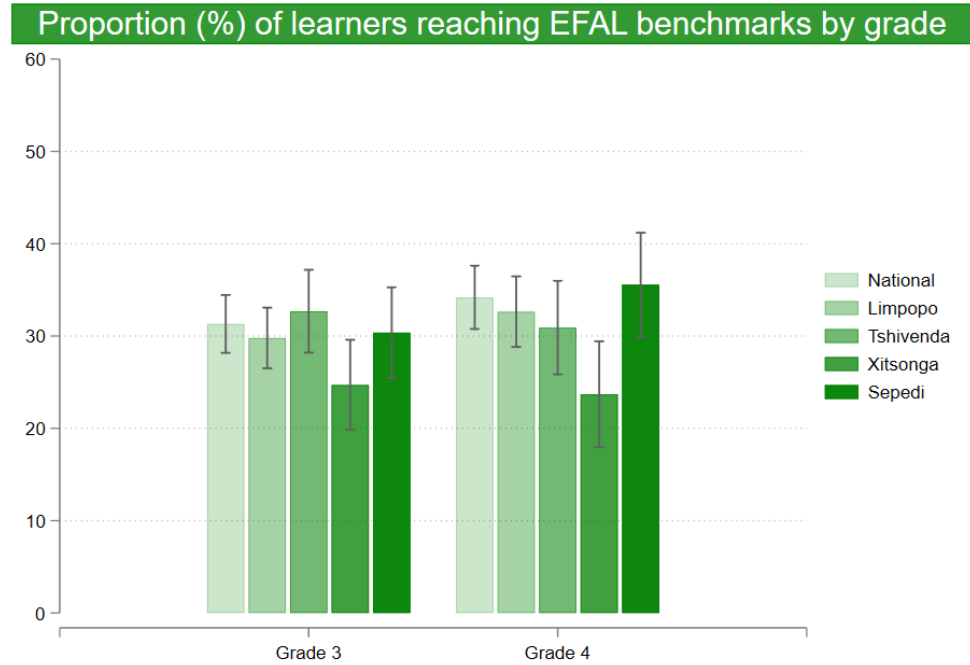
Home-Language Benchmark Performance: Limpopo

- Tshivenda learners in Grades 2 – 4 in Limpopo achieve higher results than their national and provincial peers in early grades.

- **Benchmark attainment** is **low** across grades

Proportion (%) of learners reaching HL benchmarks by grade

Legend: National, Limpopo, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Sepedi

EFAL Benchmark Performance by Grade and Language

Proportion (%) of learners reaching EFAL benchmarks by grade

Tshivenda learners in grade 3 in Limpopo have a higher proportion of learners reaching the benchmark than peers, but by Grade 4 a smaller share of Tshivenda learners reach the benchmark with a larger share of Sepedi learners reaching the benchmark compared to the other groups.

Home-Language Comprehension Performance

Average HL Comprehension Scores

Note: Figure excludes learners who scored zero for comprehension
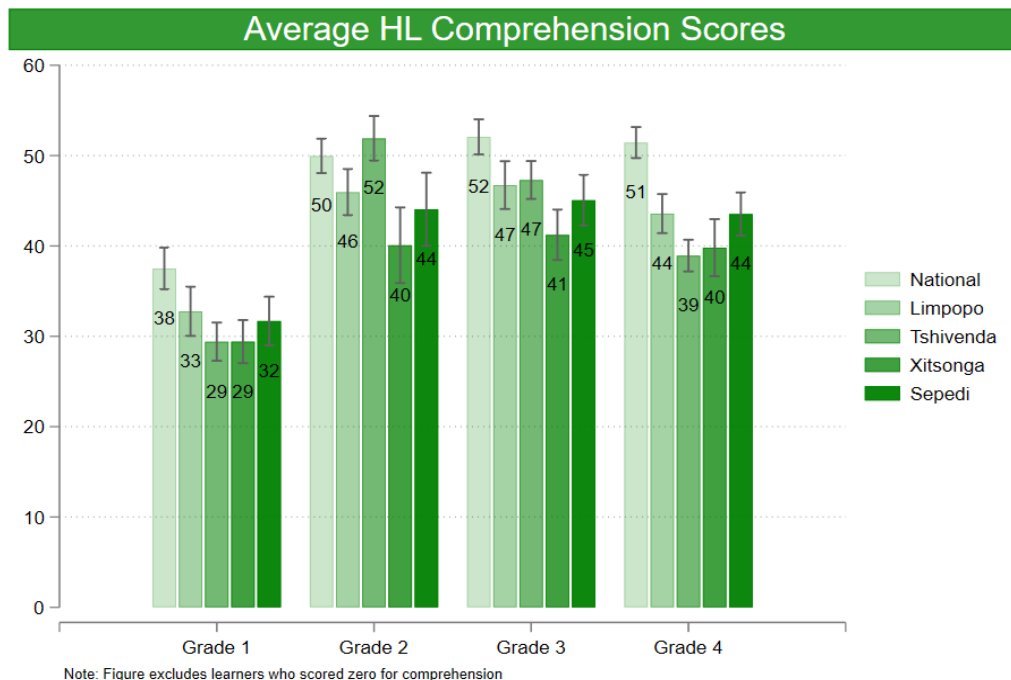
Across Grades 1 – 4 comprehension improves steadily but remains below National Levels

EFAL Comprehension Performance

Average EFAL Comprehension Scores

Note: Figure excludes learners who scored zero for comprehension
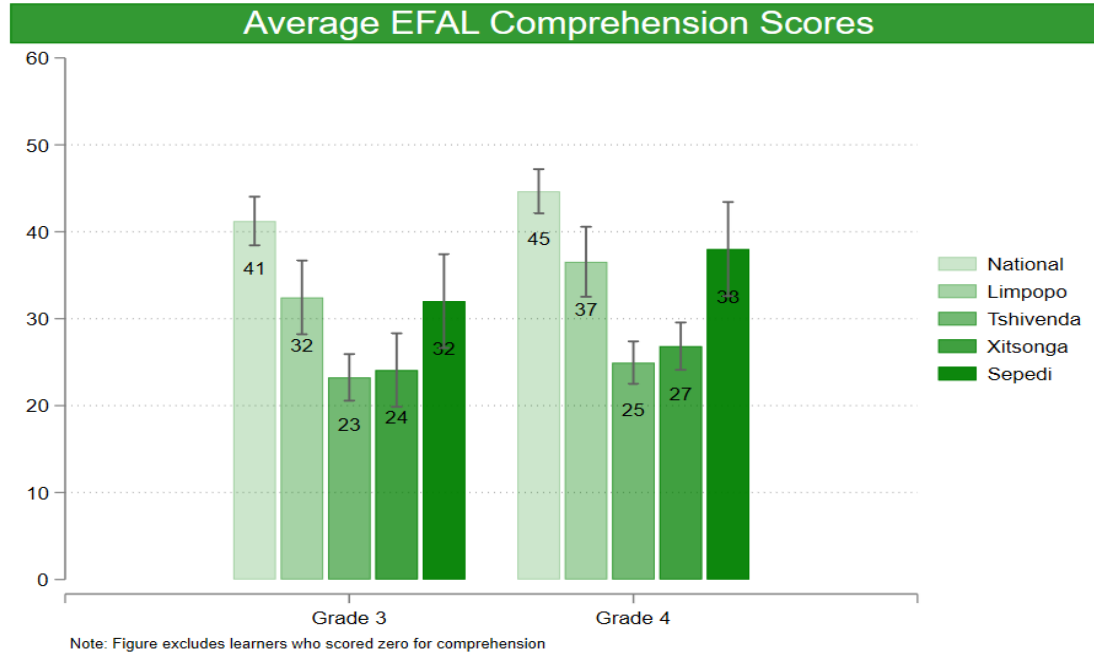
EFAL comprehension improved between Grades 3 and 4 across all groups.

Gender Differences in Reaching the Home-Language Reading Benchmark

Learning Gaps by Grade
Gender differences in the % reaching reading benchmarks

● Girls   ● Boys   — National   — Limpopo
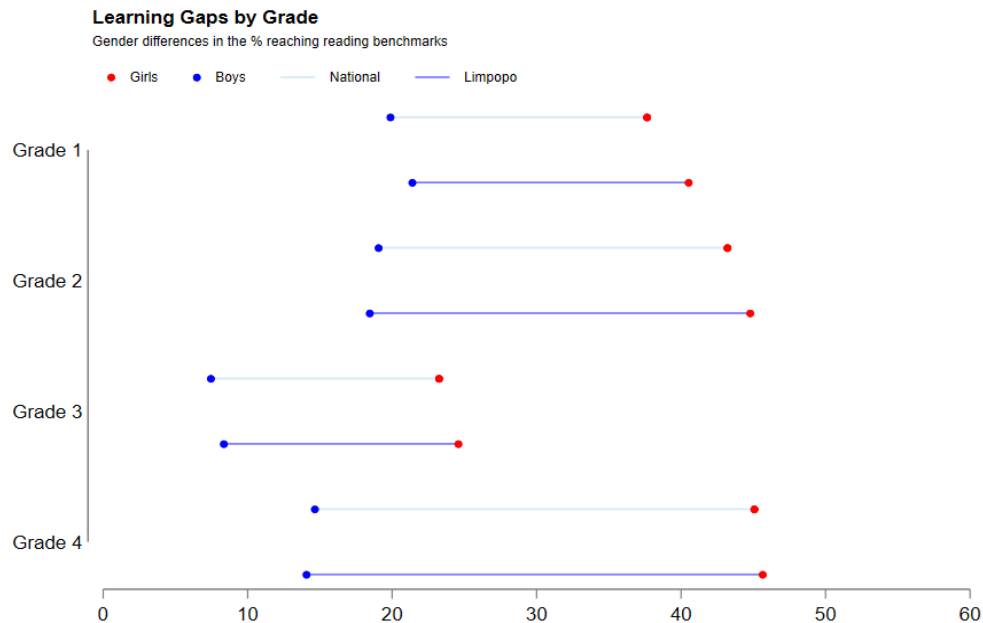
In every grade, a greater proportion of girls than boys reach the benchmark. In Limpopo, the proportion of female learners reaching the benchmark is higher than the national average across all grades
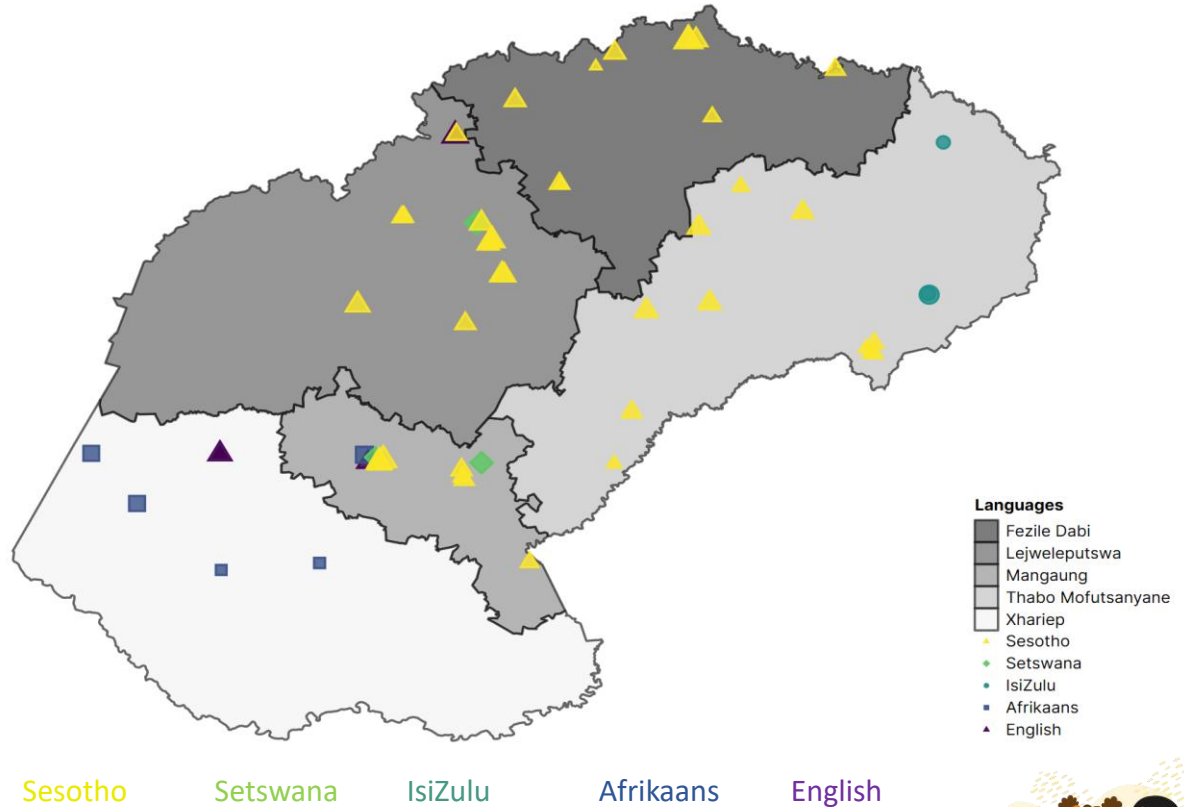
Benchmark Categorization by grade

National

Grade	Zero-Scores	Non-Readers	Pre-reader	Emerging	Meets BM	Exceeds BM
Grade 1	11	8	36	18	27	
Grade 2	27	14	15	12	25	7
Grade 3	20	9	13	39	7	12
Grade 4	16	6	12	32	17	17

Limpopo

Grade	Zero-Scores	Non-Readers	Pre-reader	Emerging	Meets BM	Exceeds BM
Grade 1	10	7	35	18	29	
Grade 2	27	14	15	11	26	8
Grade 3	19	9	12	38	8	14
Grade 4	15	7	12	32	17	17

Legend: Zero-Scores, Non-Readers, Pre-reader, Emerging, Meets BM, Exceeds BM
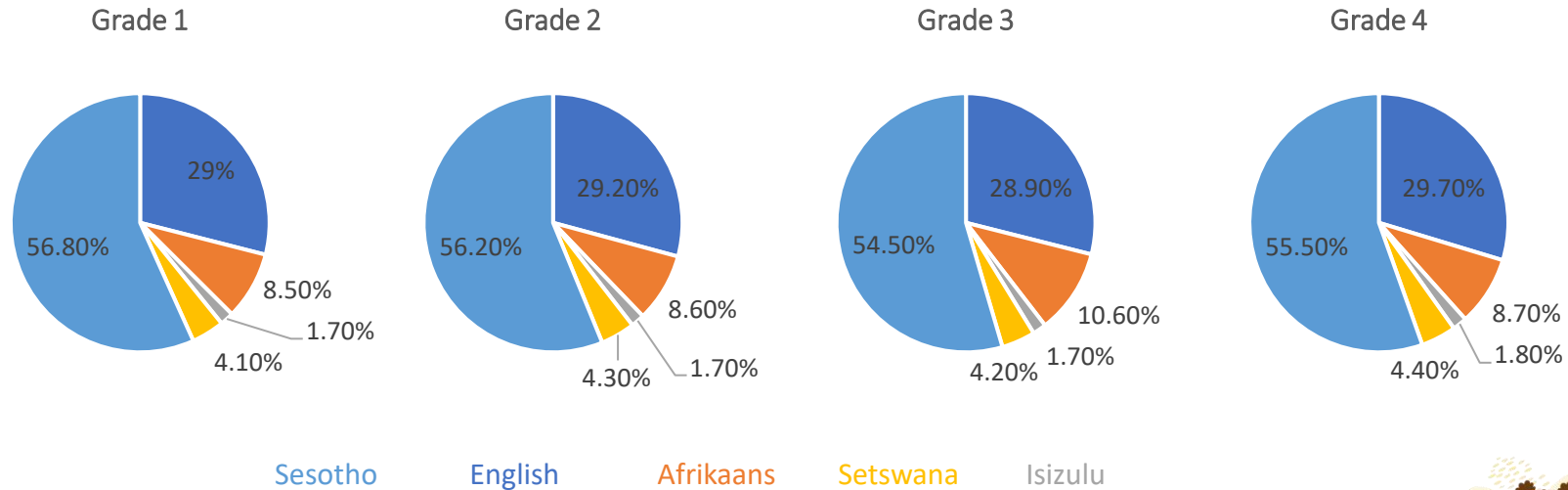
1. Free State

Sample Description and Overview

- Data was collected in **59 schools** across all Five Free State districts.

- Languages assessed: English, Afrikaans, IsiZulu, **Sesotho**, Setswana

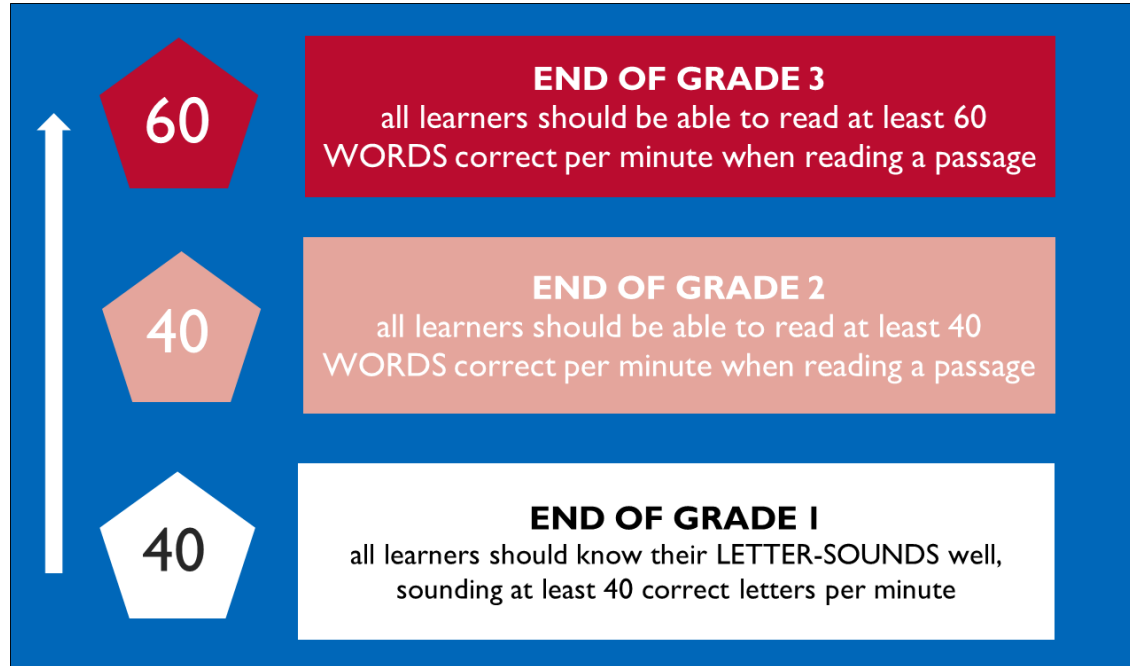- **94.9%** of learners from **Quintile 1 – 3** schools

Languages

- Fezile Dabi
- Lejweleputswa
- Mangaung
- Thabo Mofutsanyane
- Xhariep
- ▲ Sesotho
- ◆ Setswana
- ● IsiZulu
- ■ Afrikaans
- ▲ English

Sesotho   Setswana   IsiZulu   Afrikaans   English

Language Distribution of Learners

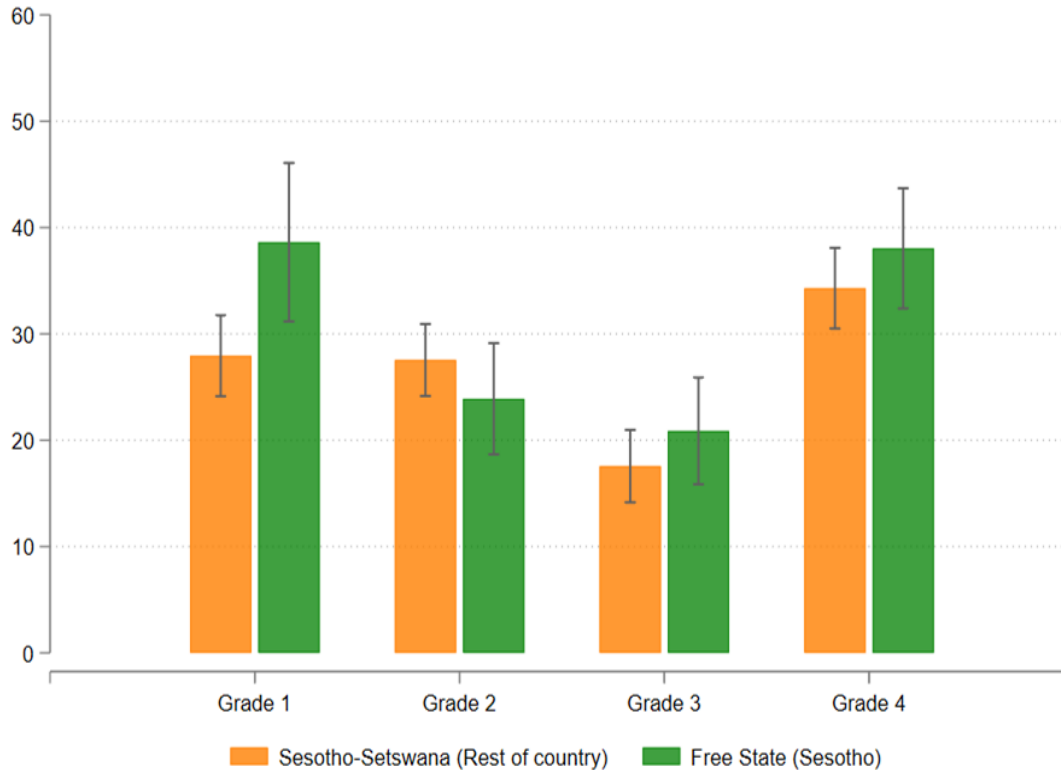## Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) and Grade

- Learners in the Free State were taught and assessed in five of the eleven official languages, with most assessed in Sesotho.

- The language of assessment matched each school's Foundation Phase LOLT, based on 2023 LURITS data.

Grade 1

- 29%
- 56.80%
- 8.50%
- 1.70%
- 4.10%

Grade 2

- 29.20%
- 56.20%
- 8.60%
- 1.70%
- 4.30%

Grade 3

- 28.90%
- 54.50%
- 10.60%
- 1.70%
- 4.20%

Grade 4

- 29.70%
- 55.50%
- 8.70%
- 1.80%
- 4.40%

Sesotho   English   Afrikaans   Setswana   Isizulu

Sesotho – Setswana Language group Benchmarks

60 — **END OF GRADE 3**
all learners should be able to read at least 60 WORDS correct per minute when reading a passage

40 — **END OF GRADE 2**
all learners should be able to read at least 40 WORDS correct per minute when reading a passage

40 — **END OF GRADE 1**
all learners should know their LETTER-SOUNDS well, sounding at least 40 correct letters per minute

% Learners reaching Reading Benchmarks: Home Language

Legend:
- Sesotho-Setswana (Rest of country) — orange
- Free State (Sesotho) — green

X-axis: Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4

Majority of learners are not meeting reading benchmarks across grades (esp. Gr 3)

FS Sesotho learners performed better than their national language group peers

% Learners reaching Reading Benchmarks: English FAL

Chart axis (vertical): 60, 50, 40, 30, 20, 10, 0

Categories: Grade 3, Grade 4

Legend:
- Sesotho-Setswana (Rest of country)
- Free State (Sesotho)
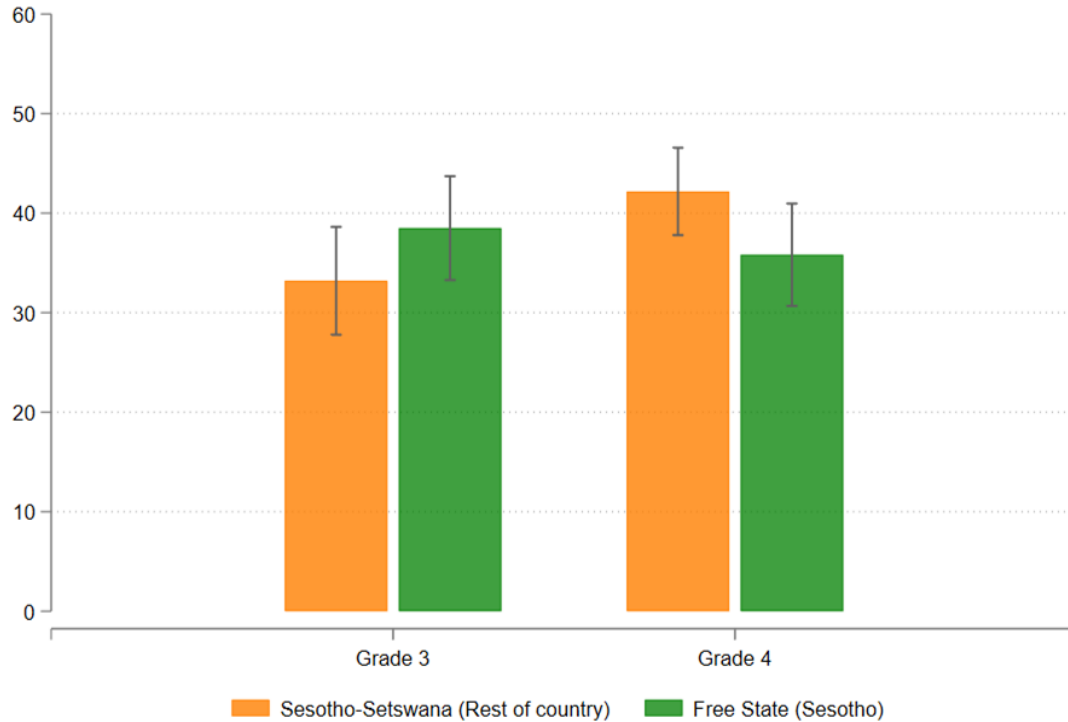
Majority of learners are not meeting reading benchmarks across grades

FS Sesotho learners performed slightly below than their national language group peers in Gr 4

Average Comprehension Scores
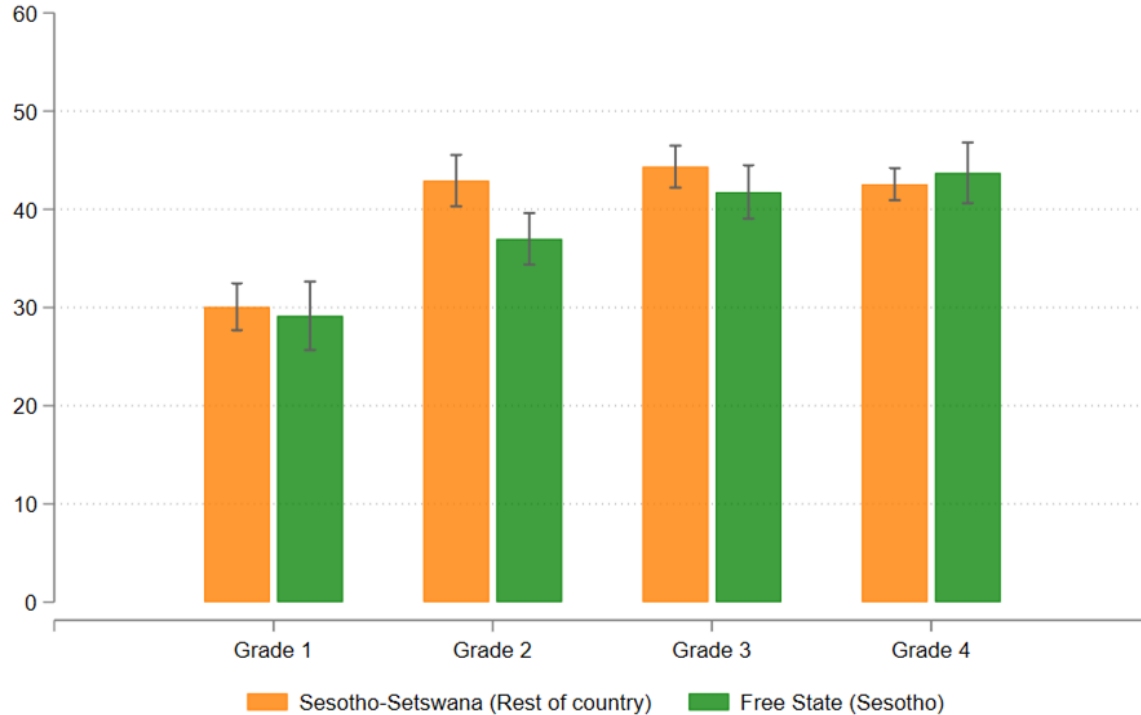
The average comprehension score ranges from 30% to 43% across grades

Note: Figure excludes learners who scored zero for comprehension

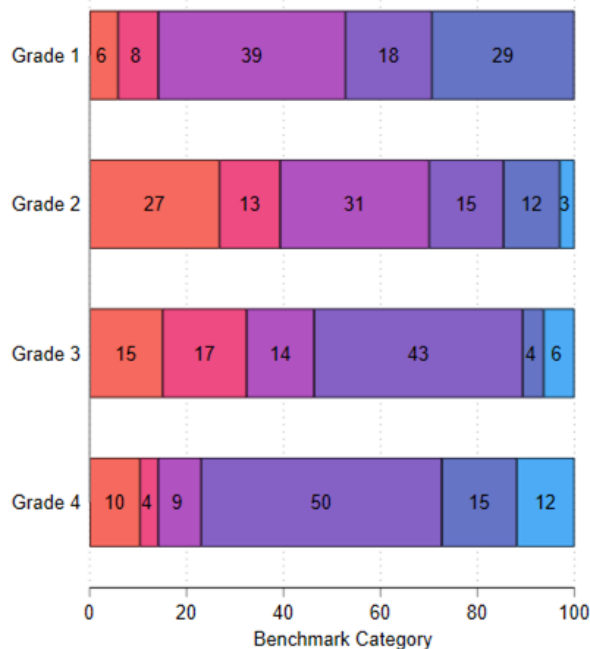# Girls are more likely to meet reading benchmarks than boys
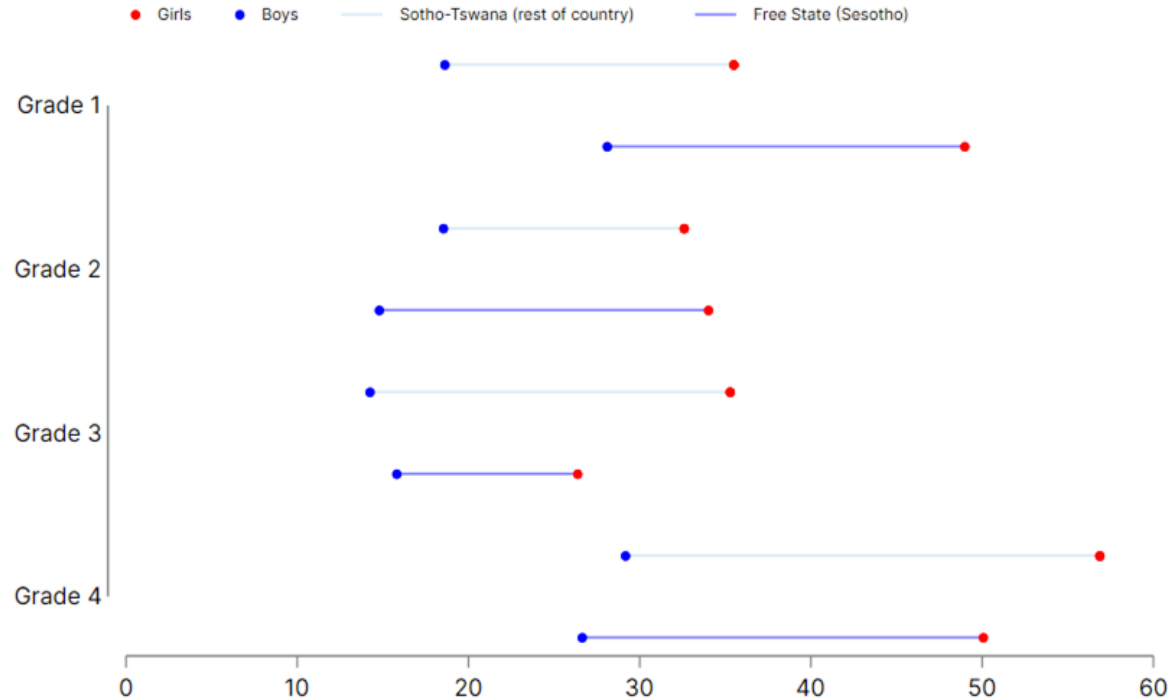
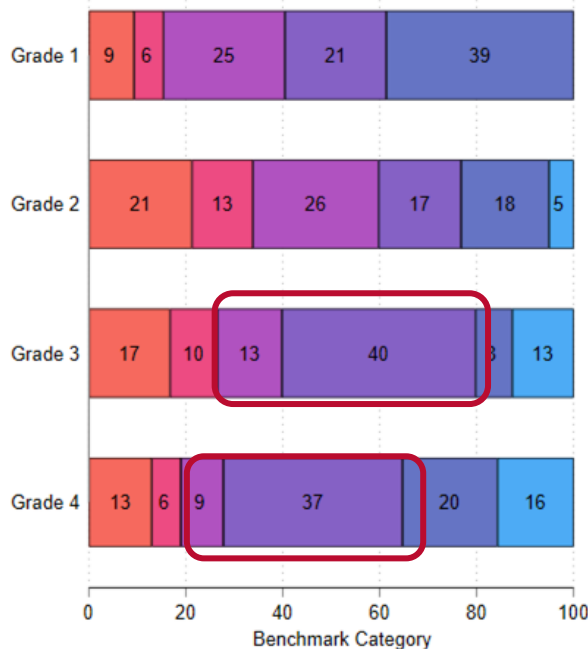**Higher proportion of girls meeting reading benchmark**

Girls are twice as likely to meet the reading benchmark than boys

Categories of achievement: Home Language

Sesotho-Setswana (Rest of the Country)

Sesotho (Free State)

A large group of learners are able to decode words, but they are doing so too slowly

How can these learners be moved further along in their literacy?

Legend: Zero-Scores · Non-Readers · Pre-reader · Emerging · Meets BM · Exceeds BM

5. Key Takeaways

Free State & Limpopo

Key Takeaways

- Both provinces show **steady progress across grades**, especially in oral reading fluency.

- However, gains are more consistent in the Free State, while Limpopo's progress varies across languages.

- **Socio-economic inequalities** remain central: over 90% of sampled learners in both provinces attend Quintile 1–3 schools

- **Gender gaps:** Girls outperform boys consistently in reading and comprehension in both provinces.

- In both provinces, less than half of the learners reach grade-level benchmarks by Grade 4.

- **Free State Sesotho learners** perform slightly better than national Sesotho peers, while **Limpopo learners** remain below National comprehension levels.

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