

Experts attribute the enduring gender gap to a mix of social, biological and systemic factors that disproportionately affect the girl child.

BY SYLVIA NAMAGEMBE

**B**oys have once again outperformed girls in the 2025 Primary Leaving Examination (PLE), according to results released yesterday, continuing a long-standing gender performance trend despite higher female enrolment.

Overall, male candidates dominated Division One, with 48,220 pupils (12.54 percent) compared to 43,770 girls (10.35 percent). Boys also recorded higher numbers in Division Two, with 186,638 candidates (48.54 percent), against 201,655 girls (47.69 percent).

However, girls posted stronger figures in the middle divisions. In Division Three, 77,453 boys (20.15 percent) were graduated compared to 87,773 girls (20.76 percent). Similarly, 37,658 boys (9.79 percent) fell under Division Four, fewer than the 47,066 girls (11.13 percent) recorded in the same category.

Gender-based analysis shows that 389,469 boys (47.6 percent) registered for the examination compared to 428,324 girls (52.4 percent), indicating that more girls than boys completed the primary education cycle. This pattern has remained consistent in recent years. In 2024, girls accounted for 52.5 percent of registered candidates, while boys made up 47.5 percent.

# PLE: Gender gaps linger as boys outperform girls



Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb) officials hand over 2025 PLE results to the Education Minister and First Lady Janet Museveni in Kampala yesterday. PHOTO/MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS

The proportion of ungraded candidates stood at 8.97 percent for boys and 10.07 percent for girls, translating to 34,500 and 42,580 candidates respectively, highlighting persistent learning gaps.

Mr Hasadu Kirabira, the chairperson of the National Private Education Institutions Association (NPEIA), attributes the enduring gender gap to a mix of social, bi-

ological and systemic factors that disproportionately affect the girl child.

"The circumstances surrounding the girl child are embedded with many natural and artificial challenges. Girls face constant distractions at school, including their attention being diverted by boys and, in some cases, school staff, which affects their concentration," he said.

Mr Kirabira added that many girls lack adequate emotional and physical support from home, further undermining their academic focus.

"Many challenges start right from their homesteads through domestic violence, lack of menstrual hygiene materials and early marriages, and these affect their school attendance, retention and overall

performance," he said.

A 2024 Auditor General's report found that six out of 10 schoolgoing girls miss classes during their menstrual periods due to a lack of sanitary materials and appropriate sanitation facilities.

Mr Kirabira also pointed to the structure of the education system, describing the PLE as a high-stakes assessment that exposes long-term learning gaps.

"PLE is an exam that tests seven years of learning. Revising content from Primary One to Primary Seven is not easy, and a single examination can easily expose weaknesses built up over time," he said.

He urged parents to accept the results and focus on practical pathways for learners, particularly girls.

## CANDIDATES' NUMBERS

A total of 817,883 candidates from 15,388 examination centres registered for the 2025 PLE, an increase from 797,444 candidates in 2024. Of these, 522,036 candidates (63.8 percent) from 11,525 centres were Universal Primary Education (UPE) beneficiaries, while 295,847 candidates (36.2 percent) from 3,863 centres were from non-UPE schools.