

4.4.4. Access to education

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Following the Taliban takeover, primary and elementary schools were reopened for both boys and girls[1308] after having been closed since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.[1309] Girls have however been denied education beyond primary level,[1310] as the de facto authorities only reopened secondary schools for boys in September 2021.[1311] Initially, the de facto authorities policies towards girls' secondary education was inconsistent.[1312] In 2021–2022, some secondary schools for girls were able to open[1313] and private secondary schools were reportedly allowed to continue to offer education for girls.[1314] However, by 2023, sources indicated that most secondary schools had closed[1315] in all provinces, including private secondary schools.[1316] In 2025, the ban on secondary education for girls remains in place and secondary schools remain closed for girls.[1317] Women's university studies were moreover 'suspended' until further notice on 20 December 2022,[1318] and one of the last 'loopholes' to acquire higher education was closed. Women were further barred from pursuing medical education in December 2024.[1319] PVPV inspectors have been monitoring and enforcing the Morality law and girls' education bans in educational institutions and *madrassas.*[1320] PVPV inspectors monitored compliance on how to wear proper *hijab*, compliance with the ban on girls above the sixth grade or girls who looked older; and that classrooms and offices for female and male teachers were segregated.[1321] In some instances, UNAMA observed that the Morality law was applied arbitrarily in the context of girls' education.[1322]

There have been initiatives to provide girls with education online,[1323] but these methods have not been 'equally accessible or sustainable'[1324] *inter alia* due to Afghanistan's unstable internet connection.[1325] Reportedly, underground secret schools have been running despite the ban.[1326] Some sources reported on such initiatives being known by the local de facto authorities in some areas, and that they 'accepted' or 'informally permitted' such initiatives[1327] or 'shut a blind eye' to them.[1328] In 2025, online education and underground schools remained an important lifeline,[1329] although online educations programs[1330] as well as underground schools[1331] were being undermined by cuts to international funding. In a survey by Bishnaw, participants reported increasing difficulties accessing non-formal learning spaces such as underground schools, online programs, and private tutoring.[1332] Rawadari noted that, in 2024, as well as in the first half of 2025, the Taliban have been identifying and shutting down educational centres that secretly provided learning opportunities to girls.[1333] Some radio stations have been offering educational programs,[1334] but in some provinces, radio stations have been instructed to stop broadcasting educational programs for girls beyond grade six.[1335]

In the absence of higher education opportunities many women and girls have turned to education in *madrassas*.1336 Reportedly, no age limit is imposed1337 and girls over the age of 12 are able to study in de facto authority-registered *madrassas* in some provinces.1338 Female *madrassa* enrolment has augmented1339 and a 'significant' number of female students have been enrolled in Taliban religious *madrassas*.1340 Some sources mentioned alleged plans to restrict access to *madrassa* education for women and girls,1341 and several *madrassas* have been closed.1342 UNAMA reported that in some provinces de facto officials took steps to close *madrassas* to women and girls beyond grade six in late August 2025 due to violations of the *hijab* regulations, the teaching of 'modern secular courses' and the age of the girls.1343 Rahimi noted in an interview of October 2025 that from the beginning, the top leadership of the Taliban have not been promoting or been fond of the idea of women attending *madrassas*, especially amid the sentiment of people using it to as a workaround to teach general topics for women. He stated that there have been more efforts to make sure that female *madrassas* only focus on religious subjects and get rid of this loophole.1344

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