



**ECA CANADA-CARIBBEAN
GENDER EQUITY IN
EDUCATION POLL 2026**



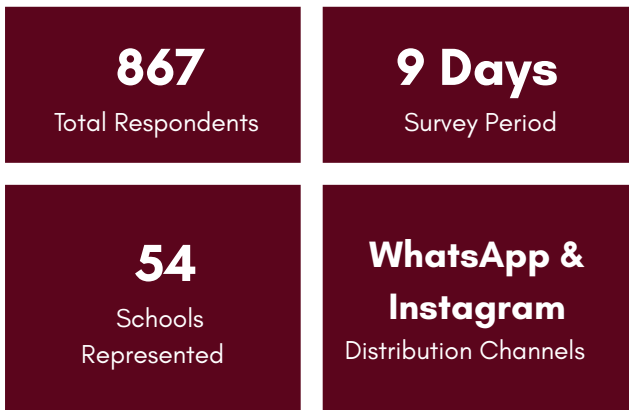


ECA CANADA-CARIBBEAN GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION POLL 2026

OVERVIEW

As part of the Canada-Caribbean Institute-Research Symposium, the team also conducted a UNICEF poll, to assess the impact of gender on educational access, participation and outcomes in the Caribbean. The poll was issued via a UNICEF poll on 12 February 2026, via Whats App and Instagram, with closure on February 17, 2026. The poll targeted students and community members across the Caribbean. This report summarises the key findings from 867 participants who completed the ECA Canadian-Caribbean Gender Equity in Education Survey, which was issued as part of the 2026 CCI symposium. The results however offer a candid look at how students and community members are engaging with educational opportunities, what barriers they face, and how they perceive gender equity in their schools and programmes.

ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS



Poll responses were collected via two digital platforms:

Platform	Respondents	Percentage
WhatsApp	854	98.5%
Instagram	13	1.5%
Total	867	100%

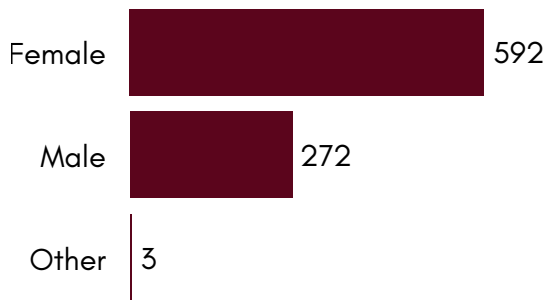
WhatsApp was the dominant engagement channel, accounting for 98.5% of all responses.



DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

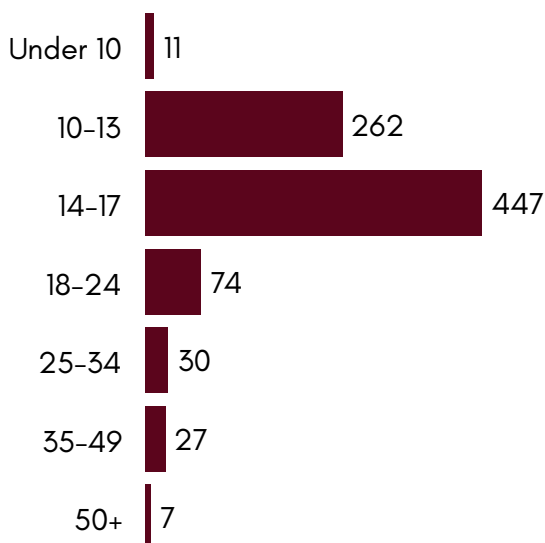
SEX DISTRIBUTION

Youth were asked to self-identify as female, male or other. Females represented more than two-thirds of total U-Reporters. The breakdown is as follows:



AGE DISTRIBUTION

The majority of U-Reporters (51.6%) fell in the 14-17 age bracket, consistent with a secondary-school-aged audience.



LOCATION – SCHOOL AFFILIATION

Of the 867 respondents, 419 (48.3%) provided a school name. The schools listed are predominantly located across Trinidad and Tobago, spanning multiple regions from South Trinidad to Tobago. 448 respondents (51.7%) did not provide a school affiliation; of those who did, 113 selected 'School not listed' or 'Other'.

1

Female dominated at 68.3%, highlighting strong female engagement with gender equity topics.

2

Secondary school students aged 14-17 were the largest group (52.1%), making the survey highly relevant to this cohort.

3

Rio Claro West Secondary was the most represented school, contributing 53 respondents – 12.6% of those who provided a school.

4

Schools from South, Central, East, and West Trinidad as well as Tobago were represented, indicating wide geographic reach.

5

WhatsApp drove nearly all poll participation (98.5%),



PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATIONAL ENROLMENT

The headline numbers were encouraging. A strong majority of respondents 77% confirmed that they are actively participating in their educational setting. Only 19% indicated they were not participating, with 4% falling into the "other" category.

When it comes to formal enrolment, 68% of youth said they are currently enrolled in an educational programme, 31% said they are not enrolled, and just 1% selected "other". This can be seen as a positive sign that the majority of the target population appears to be engaged in learning.

That said, there are about one in five people who are not participating, and nearly 1 in 3 people who are not enrolled. This represents a group that deserves closer examination.

TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

Among those enrolled, the distribution across programme types is quite varied. Secondary education is by far the most common, with 48% of enrolled respondents studying at that level.

After secondary, the picture fragments a bit. Notably, 17% of respondents reported having no formal programme at all, they are in neither secondary, university, college, nor skills training. University accounts for 13%, "other" programmes for 14%, college for 5%, and skills-based training for 4%.

The relatively high "none" figure (17%) is worth flagging, as these individuals are not

in any structured programme. Paired with the enrolment data above, this suggests a small but real cohort who may be falling through the cracks and who could be targeted for outreach.

PERCEPTIONS OF EQUAL ACCESS

This is one of the more striking findings in the dataset. A substantial 76% of respondents believe that equal access to education exists in their context. That is a majority expressing confidence in the system which is meaningful.

However, 20% said they do not experience or observe equal access, and 3% gave an "other" response. One in five people flagging unequal access is not a figure to dismiss. These voices point to lived realities that may not be visible in aggregate statistics, and they are exactly the kind of signal that a gender equity programme needs to take seriously.

WHAT IMPACTS SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

Youths were asked to identify which factors most affect their participation in school, selecting from a list labelled A through E (plus "Other"). The responses were notably spread, which itself tells a story there is no single dominant barrier.

The distribution was as follows:

- Factor A (care responsibilities), 26%
- Factor C (financial constraints), 25%
- Factor E (employment opportunity) 22%
- Factor D (None of the above), 14%
- Safety concerns, 7%
- Other, 7%



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Factors A, C, and E together account for nearly three-quarters of all responses. This concentration suggests that while barriers are varied, there are specific, identifiable influences that the programme should prioritise addressing. While understanding what A, C, and E represent in the full survey instrument would allow for targeted interventions, there is a need for further research to address the unknown, recorded here as 14%, other factors.

HOW RESPONDENTS RATE THEIR OWN PARTICIPATION

Participants were asked to rate their own level of participation in school on a scale of 1-5, where 1-represented Very Low and 5 Very High. There was an additional, other category. The results skew toward the higher end, which broadly aligns with the 77% active participation figure seen at the start.

Self-rated participation breakdown:

- Moderate, 42% (the largest group)
- Rating High, 20%
- Very Low, 15%
- Low, 11%
- Very High 10%
- Other, 2%

The clustering around Rating 3 (moderate participation) is worth noting. It suggests that while most people are showing up, many do not feel they are participating in their full potential. This finding points to an opportunity to foster deeper engagement once they are there.

PERCEIVED GENDER GAPS IN EDUCATION

Respondents were asked to identify where they believe the greatest gender gaps exist. Seven options were offered, inclusive of an "Other" category. The spread appeared even in some of the other questions, indicating that gender inequity is seen as a multifaceted problem rather than one concentrated in a single area.

Some of the perceived areas where gender gaps existed included:

- Leadership or management, 23%
- Educational performance, 20%
- Educational retention, 14%
- Employment opportunities, 13%
- Completion of educational training programmes, 11%
- None of the above, 10%
- Other, 4%

Leadership or management roles (23%) as a response category is followed closely by educational performance (20%). Together they represent nearly half of all perceived gender gap concerns. Understanding the specific content of these areas in the original survey would allow the programme to focus its gender equity efforts most effectively.



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RECOMMENDATIONS & CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of the key recommendations, these included:

- The push for equal and fair opportunities for all genders.
- The re-examination of the male underachievement phenomenon with closer scrutiny of the socialising practices across genders and the impact of academic expectations and outcomes.
- The use of role models within educational systems to educational retention and aspirations.
- The design and implementation of:
 - training or professional development programs that encourage mental skills for males
 - training modules (for staff and students) that address aspects of gender bias within educational systems
- The development of support mechanisms that bolster the experiences for students whose care responsibilities impact educational engagement.

CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

Taken together, this data paints a picture of a population that is largely engaged with education but still navigating real barriers to access, to full participation, and to achieving gender equity.

The majority are enrolled and still in school, which suggests that there have been some achievements, with a strong base to work from. However, there are other participants, nearly 20%, who while in school continue to face many challenges, which would impact their future trajectories. More data is needed therefore to identify targeted groups and to develop effective interventions.