

# Retention Survey 2021



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Section 12(1)(c) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, establishes that all private schools should reserve at least 25% of their seats for students from socioeconomic disadvantaged backgrounds in their entry level classes. The section states that private unaided schools have the responsibility to dispense and provide free education to children from disadvantaged and weaker sections. This report analyses the survey conducted for a total of 2067 parents and legal guardians with an aim of assessing the differences in retention rates between students who enrolled in a private school with those who did not get admission to a private school under RTE Section 12(1)(C) in three states – Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand. It also compares the learning experience of both groups of students during the pandemic, the school characteristics, and evaluates the number of students who are not admitted to a 12(1)(c) implementing school who then enrol in a private school.

The primary findings of this report show that in all the three states retention rates for children enrolled under Section 12(1)(c) implementing schools were significantly higher when compared to the retention rates for children who do not benefit from Section 12(1)(c) of RTE. In fact, we observe very low dropout rates among children who benefit from the policy, despite the huge disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The report also highlights that many children who apply and enrol in RTE Section 12(1)(c) seats would otherwise enrol in private schools if not selected, indicating that the population who could benefit the most is not being reached. Further, the learning experience during the pandemic for children in private schools, in terms of having online classes and their frequency, was observed to be better in comparison to the same for children in public schools, signalling that private schools were more able to adapt to the changing circumstances.







The report also underlines the effect of enrolment/non-enrolment in 12(1)(c) implementing schools on the retention rates for the state of Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand. The results indicate that enrolment in a 12(1)(c) implementing school has a positive and significant effect on retention rates in both the states. Finally, some of the criticism for Section 12(1)(c) of RTE is that children from vulnerable backgrounds could face discrimination in private schools. However, this survey finds no evidence supporting this argument, the survey results show that children who do not feel part of the school community or face negative attitudes from their teachers are below 2%.

We observe a few key areas which require further research. There is a need to incorporate larger samples of children from SC, ST and other vulnerable groups and also compare them with discrimination rates in public schools. Future research must also understand the reasons for large differences in dropout rates between children in 12(1)(c) seats and children in private schools who do not benefit from the policy, and determine if the increase in dropout rates of children in private schools is a general trend as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, we need to improve our understanding of the barriers that families from the most vulnerable backgrounds face to apply for Section 12(1)(c) seats, since the majority of families that apply seem to be already enrolling their children in private schools.





# INTRODUCTION

Section 12(1)(c) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, establishes that all private schools should reserve at least 25% of their seats for students from socioeconomic disadvantaged backgrounds in their entry classes. The section states that private unaided schools have the responsibility to dispense and provide free education to children from disadvantaged and weaker sections. According to the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, “the said section is rooted in the belief that the values of equality, social justice and democracy can be achieved only through the provision of inclusive elementary education to all.” By 2019, only 17 states/Union Territories were admitting children under the quota. Over 41 million children enrolled in these seats between 2012 and 2019 (The Education Times, 2020).

The main objective of this report is to assess the differences in retention rates between students who enrolled in a private school with those who did not get admission to a private school under RTE Section 12(1)(C) in three states – Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand. This report will also compare the learning experience of both groups of students during the pandemic, the school characteristics, and it will calculate the number of students who are not admitted to a 12(1)(c) implementing school who then enrol in a private school.



*“RTE 12(1)(c) is rooted in the belief that the values of equality, social justice and democracy can be achieved only through the provision of inclusive elementary education to all.”*



# WHY IS THE RETENTION SURVEY IMPORTANT?

Retention rates refer to the percentage of children who enroll in school and continue their education after a given period. This report is assessing retention rates for children who enrolled in 12(1)(c) implementing schools in 2020.

## 1

Assessing retention rates is of particular importance because of the huge disruptions in learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many students from the most vulnerable backgrounds have been forced to discontinue their studies to focus on income-generating activities to support their household, a decision that could have significant long-term effects on those families.

## 2

The “Emergency Report on School Education” coordinated by a team including Jean Dreze (Bakhla, N. Drèze, J. Paikra, V. Khera, R. 2021), states that 37% of children in rural areas of 15 states dropped out because of the pandemic, while in Tamil Nadu a report by the School Education Department finds that 125,000 children dropped out for the same reason (Sathyanarayana, R. 2021).

## 3

Additionally, it is of particular importance to determine if there are differences in the disruption of learning between public and private schools, across different socioeconomic groups and gender during the pandemic. Assessing and understanding those differences could allow relevant stakeholders to take corrective action.

## 4

This is the fourth Retention Survey conducted by Indus Action over the years, and is the first one that surveys students who were not admitted under Section 12(1)(c), helping provide a counterfactual narrative. By comparing both groups, we will be able to improve our understanding of what kind of household benefits most from the policy, what kind of students are at a higher risk of dropping out, and possible areas for improvements in the implementation.





# METHODOLOGY

The current Retention Survey focuses on children who applied for admission under RTE Section 12(1)(c) to a private school for the AY 2020-21. The survey has been carried out in three states which have ensured efficient implementation of the provision and for which Indus Action had access to data – Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand.

For Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand, Indus Action has the contact details and information related to the application and admission of four groups of children:

01

Students who applied for a place in private schools and got admission without lottery.

02

Students who applied for a place in a private school but did not receive admission due to an error in the application or process (did not submit paperwork on time, missing documents, etc).

03

Students who applied for a place in a private school and got admission through a lottery system due to excess demand.

04

Students who applied for a place in a private school and did not receive admission through a lottery system due to excess demand.



The focus in Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand are groups (iii) and (iv), since they were allocated randomly. Group (iii) is the treatment group and group (iv) is the control group. Based on the available data we surveyed the majority of families who had shared information with Indus Action regarding their admission status. However, in Chhattisgarh, a limitation was that we were not able to determine a-priori if children's places in 12(1)(c) implementing schools were allocated through lottery. Therefore, we interviewed children from the four mentioned groups and compared the outcomes of children in groups (i) and (iii) with children in groups (ii) and (iv). The resulting sample sizes are shown in table 1.

**Table 1. Sample sizes Retention Survey**

<b>State</b>	<b>Treatment/ Admitted Students</b>	<b>Control/ Not Admitted Students</b>
<b>Chhattisgarh</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>570</b>
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Uttarakhand</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1202</b>	<b>864</b>

In all states, a group of trained callers implemented a survey to both groups, asking for basic details of the family, the status of the children (studying or dropout), learning experience during COVID-19, and basic services and infrastructure available at the school. The analysis of results consists of descriptive statistics comparing both groups and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis to identify statistically significant differences in Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand.





# LITERATURE REVIEW OF RTE SECTION 12(1)(C)

**In this section, we briefly summarize relevant literature dealing with different potential outcomes of RTE Section 12(1)(c) or other similar interventions.**

In 2007, the Government of Delhi introduced a policy change similar to Section 12(1)(c) of RTE requiring 395 elite private schools to reserve 20% of their seats for students from weak socioeconomic backgrounds (i.e., households earning less than Rs. 200,000 per year). Rao (2019) uses a natural experiment resulting from the random assignment of some seats (where demand for seats exceeded supply) to measure

- generosity, fairness and prosocial behavior outcomes;
- tastes for social interaction between rich and poor children; and
- learning and classroom behavior following the integration of poor children.

He finds that wealthy students who interact with poor classmates (treatment group) show more prosocial behaviour as they are more likely to volunteer for charity and become “substantially more generous towards poor recipients” in dictator games. These changes in behaviour are only visible for children in classes affected by the policy change, which allows us to establish the causal relation.

Secondly, the author finds that “wealthy students become more willing to socially interact with poor children outside school, and thus exhibit less discrimination against the poor”. A final result from Rao’s study is that academic outcomes in English for wealthy children in treatment schools slightly decline. However, scores in Math and Hindi remained unchanged. Overall, the author concludes that integrating children from poor backgrounds with wealthier children can lead to significant changes in social behaviour with very small changes/costs on the academic performance of the most advantaged group

A paper by Muralidharan and Sundararaman (2013) evaluates an experimental school choice program using vouchers in Andhra Pradesh (AP) that led to 23% of students in public schools in treated villages moving to private schools. The study compares the academic performance of children who received the voucher through a lottery system and enrolled in private schools with those who did not receive the voucher and remained in public schools. The paper also compares the efficiency of public and private schools to reach their respective academic outcomes.





# RESULTS

A total of 2067 parents/legal guardians were surveyed – 1150 in Chhattisgarh, 441 in Tamil Nadu and 476 in Uttarakhand. The following section outlines the main results of the survey for each state in terms of sample composition, retention and dropout rates, learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher attendance, and peer and teacher attitudes towards children.





# ALL STATES

**Table 2. Main statistics of the Retention Survey for Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand**

Variable	Chhattisgarh	Tamil Nadu	Uttarakhand	Total
Girls as % of enrolment in 12(1)(c)	47.1%	<b>48.6%</b>	47.7%	47.4%
SC and ST as % of enrolment in 12(1)(c)	<b>21.1%</b>	4.4%	15.8%	NA
Retention rate 12(1)(c) students	<b>98.8%</b>	97.6%	90.8%	94.4%
Dropout rate for 12(1)(c) students*	1.21%	1.35%	1.85%	1.4%
Dropout rate for non-12(1)(c) students	37.6%	22.2%	20%	30.8%
Share of 12(1)(c) children who report having online classes during the pandemic	77.3%	88.7%	<b>95.7%</b>	85.3%
Share of 12(1)(c) families who reply "always" to the question "Teacher comes regularly to school?"	58.4%	<b>75%</b>	59.1%	62.3%
Share of 12(1)(c) children who provide positive responses to "How strongly do you agree or disagree that your child feels part of the school community?"	68.4%	75.7%	<b>97.8%</b>	77.4%

*\*Retention and dropout rates of children enrolled in 12(1)(c) schools do not add up to 100% because some families did not answer all questions in the survey*





As mentioned in the descriptive analysis, the dropout rate for children in 12(1)(c) implementing schools in all three states was below 2%, while the dropout rate for children not enrolled in 12(1)(c) implementing schools is much higher, between 20% and 37.6%. Overall, the dropout rate of children not-enrolled in RTE in this survey is 30.8% and the retention rate for children in 12(1)(c) seats is 94.4%. In all three states, a large proportion of children who were not admitted to Section 12(1)(c) implementing schools enrolled in private schools and only a small share of the sample comprises children in public schools.

There are small gender differences in terms of enrollment in Section 12(1)(c) implementing schools. Overall we observe that males account for a higher share of enrollment in Section 12(1)(c) seats than females by 3 to 5 percentage points. However, in Chhattisgarh we observe that the dropout rate of males is 8.3 percentage points higher than the dropout rate for females who are not enrolled in a 12(1)(c) seat.

Results for teacher attendance and responses to the children belonging to the school community in 12(1)(c) implementing schools are similar. Positive responses accounted for the majority of answers, while only a small percentage of parents reported that their children did not feel part of the school community. In fact, in Chhattisgarh, a larger proportion of families in public schools reported negative experiences.





## SAMPLE COMPOSITION

A total of 1150 legal guardians were surveyed in the state. 50.4% of the respondents reported that their children enrolled in a 12(1)(c) implementing schools, 34% reported that their children were not admitted to such a school and 15.6% applied for admission for AY 2021-22. According to Indus Action records on admissions to Section 12(1)(c) seats and current survey information, many of the children in the last group are applying for an RTE Section 12(1)(c) seat again, after being denied admission the previous year (Indus Action, 2021).

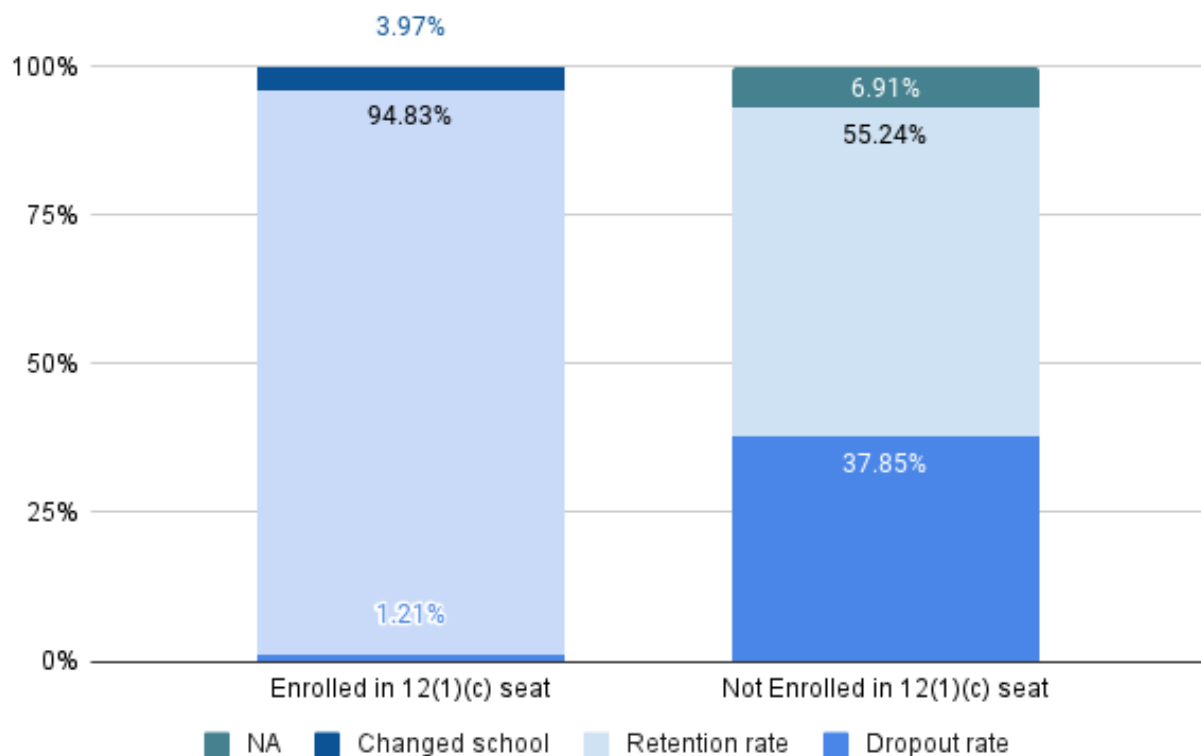
There are imbalances in the gender composition of the children enrolled in 12(1)(c) implementing schools and those who were not admitted. Girls represent 47.1% of admitted students and 52.9% of students not admitted. According to a report by Central Square Foundation (2021), across the country boys account for a larger share of enrollment in Private Unaided Schools while girls account for a larger share of enrollment in Government Schools, a phenomenon that could be replicated for Section (12)(1)(c) applications. In terms of caste distribution, OBC groups represent 29.3% of admitted students to 12(1)(c) implementing schools, while SC children and ST students represent 15.9% and 5.2% respectively. SC and ST children are proportionately represented in admissions to 12(1)(c) implementing schools compared to the state population, based on the 2011 census statistics.



# RETENTION, DROPOUT RATES AND SCHOOL SELECTION

Dropout rates differ significantly between children enrolled in 12(1)(c) implementing schools and those who were not admitted. Only 1.2% of children enrolled dropped out, compared to 37.6% of students not admitted who dropped out of school (see graph 1). Overall, 94.8% of children enrolled in 12(1)(c) implementing schools remained in the same school, while 4% changed to a different school.

**Graph 1. Dropout and retention rates for children enrolled in 12(1)(c) seats and for children in other public or private schools**



Dropout rates for those not admitted to 12(1)(c) implementing schools differ by gender, with 33.8% of total female children dropping out, compared to 42.1% of male children. In terms of dropout rates for not admitted children from different caste groups, 42.7% of total SC children dropped out compared to 36.1% and 50% of children from OBC and general groups, respectively.

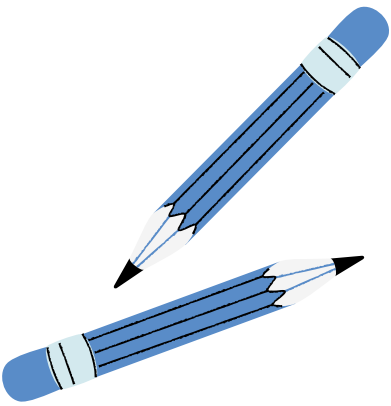
As expected, the main causes for dropping out was the economic situation of families imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. 90% of families who reported the reasons for dropout mentioned the pandemic, their financial situation, or both.

Another result to highlight is the selection of schools by families whose children were not admitted to RTE Section 12(1)(c) seats. Only 23.5% of children studied in public schools, while 65.8% of them enrolled in a private school. The remaining 10.7% did not answer the question.

**Parents cited the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic situation induced by it as the main reasons for children dropping out of school.**







# LEARNING EXPERIENCE DURING COVID-19

A larger proportion of children not admitted to 12(1)(c) implementing schools reported not having online classes during the pandemic (33%), compared to students enrolled in a RTE Section 12(1)(c) seat (22.3%). Similarly, a larger fraction of children enrolled in 12(1)(c) implementing schools participated in online classes than those not accepted (80.8% vs 76.9%) and access to smartphones and computers was also higher for children enrolled in RTE Section 12(1)(c) seats.

## SCHOOL SERVICES AND OTHER FACILITIES

58.4% of guardians of children enrolled in RTE Section 12(1)(c) reported that the teacher “always” attended classes, compared to 58.8% of children not accepted to RTE Section 12(1)(c) seats but studying in private schools. For the sample of students in public schools (54 children), 54.4% of guardians reported that the teacher “always” comes to school. Negative reports of teacher attendance were similar between private and public schools.

Secondly, we asked about the availability of extracurricular activities and participation of children in them. 62.7% of guardians with children enrolled in 12(1)(c) implementing schools reported that there were extracurricular activities in the school, compared with 64.4% of guardians of children enrolled in private schools (non-RTE) and 50.9% in public schools. Similarly, 62.2% of guardians of the first group reported that their children participated in extracurricular activities, compared to 60.6% and 50.9% of the second and third groups respectively.



*When we asked guardians “How strongly do you agree or disagree that your child feels part of the school community?”,*



The survey revealed that 68.6% of guardians of children enrolled in RTE Section 12(1)(c) seats “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that their children felt part of the school community (in a scale of 1 to 5), compared to 71.9% of guardians whose children are in private non-RTE seats and 61.4% of guardians of children in public school. There were only small differences between those who reported that their children do not feel part of the school community of students in any private school, but a larger share of guardians (7%) from public schools disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.

*Similarly, when we asked parents “How do you rate the teachers and peers’ attitude towards your child?”,*



84.6% of parents of children enrolled in Section 12(1)(c) implementing schools answered “good” or “very good”, compared to 79.5% of parents of children not enrolled in 12(1)(c) seats. Negative responses accounted for 3% and 1% for children in 12(1)(c) seats and children in any other school respectively.



## SAMPLE COMPOSITION

475 legal guardians were surveyed in Uttarakhand. 31.5% of them are in the control group and the remaining 68.3% are in the treatment group. However, 37.3% of the respondents in the original control group reported that they applied for a RTE Section 12(1)(c) seat for their children this year, and an additional 8.7% reported that their children were admitted to 12(1)(c) implementing schools. Therefore, 54% of respondents from the control group continued to the survey as expected. In comparison, 87% of respondents of the treatment group reported that their children enrolled in 12(1)(c) implementing schools after winning the lottery.

The resulting sample is not balanced in the gender composition, since girls represent 27.2% and 47.7% of control and treatment groups respectively. However, families from SC and ST groups are similarly represented in both groups. SC and ST families are overrepresented in our sample, accounting for 13% and 2.8% of the sample size respectively, while at a state level they represent 3.6% and 0.5% of the total population respectively, based on the 2011 census statistics.

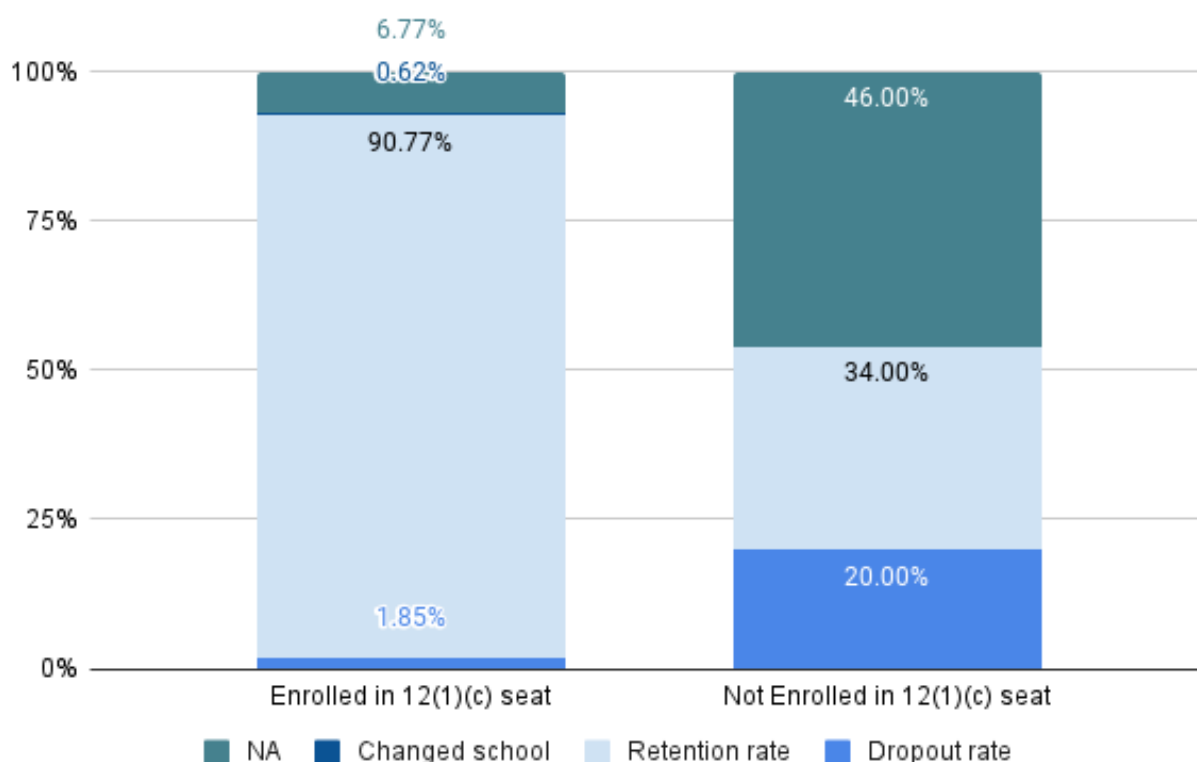




# RETENTION, DROPOUT RATES AND SCHOOL SELECTION

There are large differences in dropout rates between the control and treatment groups. 90.8% of the guardians of children in the treatment group reported that their children remained in the same school and only 1.9% of them reported that their children dropped out of school. In contrast, the dropout rate of the control group was 20%. The graph 2 shows the retention and dropout rates for each group.

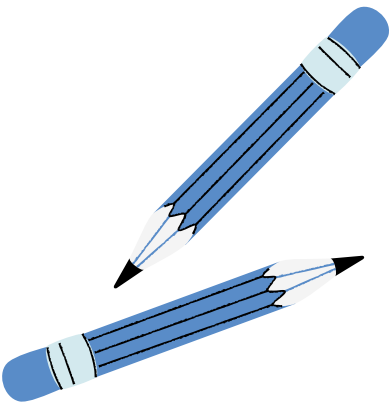
**Graph 2. Dropout and retention rates for children enrolled in 12(1)(c) seats and for children in other public or private schools**



The dropout rates by gender are similar in both control and treatment groups, since 19% and 1.3% of girls in control and treatment groups dropped out, compared to 20.4% and 2.4% of boys in control and treatment groups respectively. The main reasons for dropping out of school are “cannot afford education” and “due to COVID”, with 64.7% of families who reported their dropout reason mentioning both of them. The remaining respondents mentioned at least one of the two as the reason for dropout.

A large share of students in the control group enrolled in private schools. As mentioned above, 37.3% of respondents from the control group reported that they had applied for an RTE Section 12(1)(c) seat, 39.3% reported that their children were enrolled in private schools, 20% did not provide an answer and only 3.3% reported that their children were enrolled in a public school.





# LEARNING EXPERIENCE DURING COVID-19

The large majority of guardians of children in 12(1)(c) implementing schools (95.7%) reported that their children had online classes during the pandemic with only 2% of them reporting not having had online classes. In comparison, 8.5% of guardians of children in the control group reported that they did not have online classes during the pandemic.

In both control and treatment groups guardians reported high participation rates in online classes and that the classes were held daily. Less than 2% of respondents from both groups reported that they did not have a smartphone or computer in their home.

## SCHOOL SERVICES AND OTHER FACILITIES

Firstly, we asked families if the “teacher comes to school regularly”. In 12(1)(c) implementing schools, 59.1% of guardians reported that the teacher “always” went to school, 12.2% reported “often” and only 2.3% reported low teacher attendance. In the control group, low teacher attendance accounted for 4.3% of reports. For extracurricular activities, a larger share of guardians in the treatment group reported that both the school offered extracurricular activities and that their children participated in them (73.2% and 82.8% respectively), compared to guardians of children in the control group (65.6% and 62.5% respectively).





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*Finally, we asked if the children feel part of the school community and if teachers and their peers displayed positive attitudes towards them.*

*Positive responses for both questions were higher for the treatment group (i.e., parents of children enrolled under RTE 12(1)(c)) than for the control group.*



48.7% of guardians in the treatment group “strongly agreed” that their children felt part of the school community compared to 30.8% of guardians in the control group.

Overall, 97.8% of guardians in the treatment group responded positively to the first question, compared to 88.5% of positive responses in the treatment group. Less than 2% of parents in both groups felt that their children did not feel a part of the school community. Similarly, 88.8% of guardians in the treatment group responded positively to the second question, compared to 76.9% positive responses in the control group. Negative responses accounted for less than 2% of respondents in both groups.

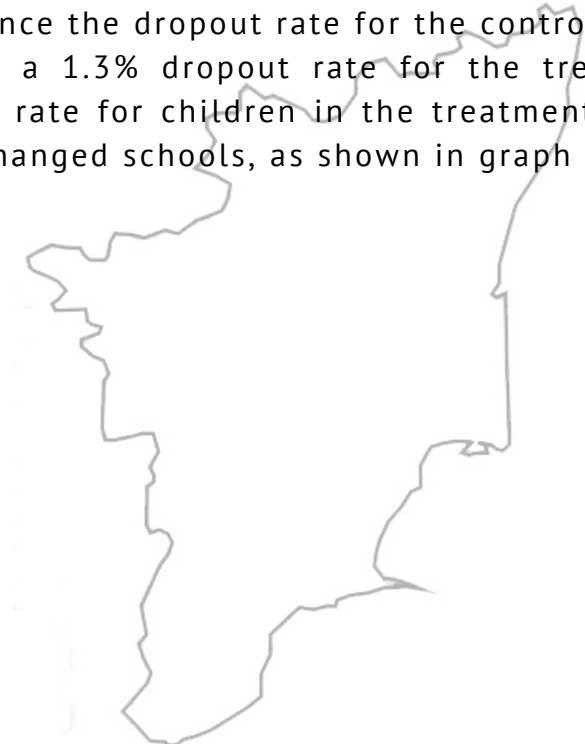


## SAMPLE COMPOSITION

A total of 441 families participated in the Retention Survey in the State – 297 from the treatment group and 144 from the control group. However, 15.28% of respondents of the control group reported that they applied this year for RTE, 18.1% reported that they are enrolled in a 12(1)(c) implementing school and the remaining 66.7% reported that they were not admitted to a RTE 12(1)(c) seat. Female and male children are similarly represented in both treatment and control groups, where girls represent 48.6% of the treatment group and 47.8% of the control group.

## RETENTION, DROPOUT RATES AND SCHOOL SELECTION

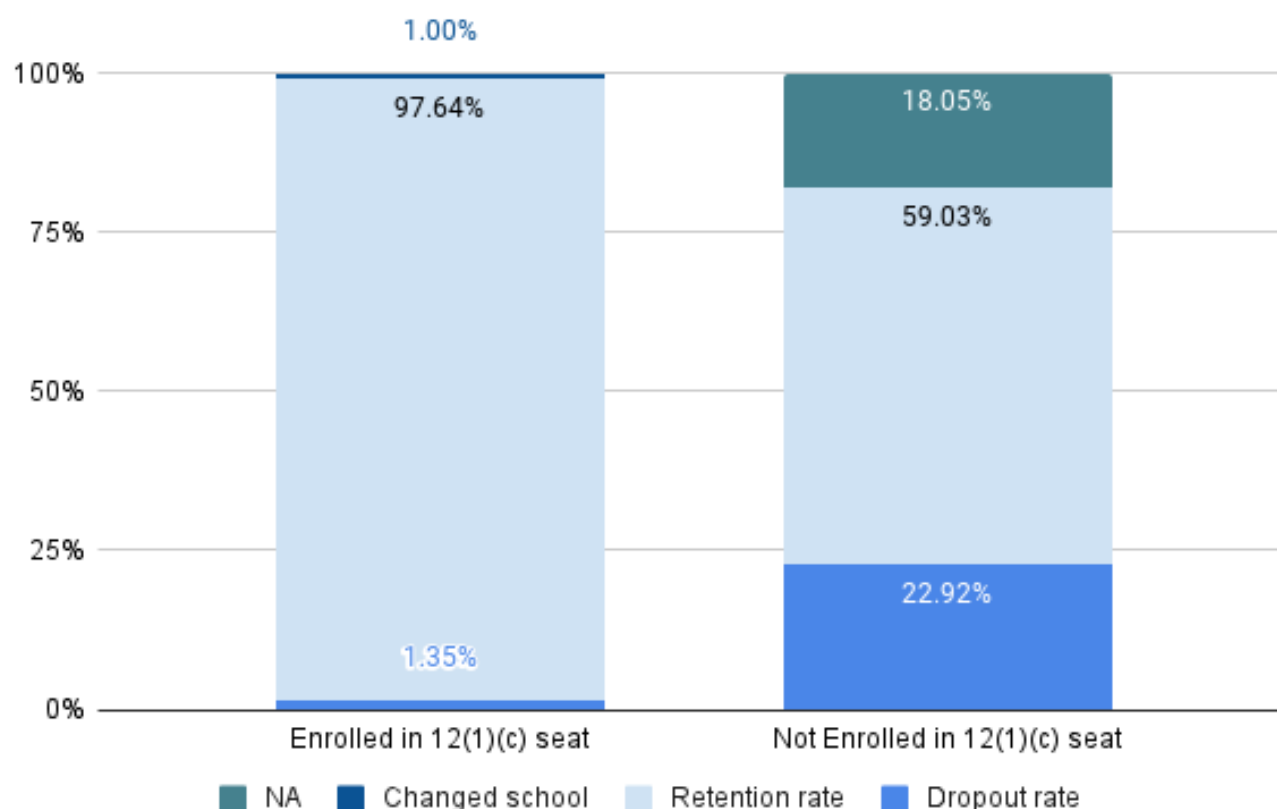
Dropout rates differ between groups by more than 20 percentage points, since the dropout rate for the control group is 23% compared to a 1.3% dropout rate for the treatment group. The retention rate for children in the treatment group is 97.6%, while 1% changed schools, as shown in graph 3.



There is a 4 percentage point difference in the dropout rate between male and female children. 20.3% and 24.3% of males and females in the control group dropped out of school respectively, although the sample size of children who dropped out of school is small (36 children). In the treatment group the dropout rates for male and female were 0.7% and 2.1% respectively. In terms of dropout by caste category, children of general and SC backgrounds had higher dropout rates than the average of the control group, since 56.6% and 25% of them dropped out respectively.

A large fraction of children in the control group enrolled in private schools (31.9%), while only 6.9% of them were enrolled in a public school. As mentioned before, 15.3% of them applied this year for a 12(1)(c) seat, 27.8% did not provide an answer and 18.1% reported being enrolled in a 12(1)(c) implementing school.

**Graph 3. Dropout and retention rates for children enrolled in 12(1)(c) seats and for children in other public or private schools**



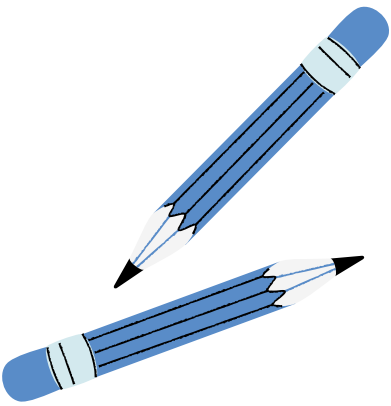


# LEARNING EXPERIENCE DURING COVID-19

88.7% and 84.7% of families in the treatment and control groups respectively reported that their children had online classes during the pandemic. A similar proportion in both groups reported not having online classes; 9.7% of the control group and 11% of the treatment group. In government schools 40% of families reported that their children did not have online classes, although the sample size for children in public schools is small (12 children).

Similarly, the majority of families reported that their children participated in online classes (86.8% and 87.5% in control and treatment group respectively), and 13.2% of the control group and 12.1% of the treatment group reported that their children did not participate or participated sometimes. In terms of access to technology a larger share of families in the treatment group reported having a computer or smartphone (99%) compared to the control group (90.6%).





# SCHOOL SERVICES AND OTHER FACILITIES

Firstly, we asked families if the teacher attended school regularly. 75% of respondents in the treatment group reported that the teacher “always” attended, 5.2% reported “often” and 9.5% of respondents reported that the teacher attended “sometimes”, “rarely” or “never”. In the control group, only 31.7% of respondents reported that the teacher “always” attended school, 3.3% reported often, 43.3% reported “sometimes” and 11.7% reported “rarely” or “never”.

When asked about the availability of extracurricular activities at school, 59% of the control group reported that the school offered extracurricular activities, compared to 50.4% of the treatment group. 53.3% of respondents in the control group and 50% of respondents in the treatment group reported that their children participated in them.

A large share of respondents in the treatment group (75.7%) “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that their child feels part of the school community, compared to 36.8% of respondents in the control group. 59.6% and 17.6% of the respondents in the control and treatment group respectively were “neutral”, while negative responses accounted for 6.7% of responses of the treatment group and 3.5% of responses of the control group. Finally, when asked “how do you rate the teachers and peers’ attitude towards your child?” 80.6% of respondents in the treatment group and 42% of respondents in the control group reported “very good” or “good”. 57.9% and 16.9% of respondents in the control and treatment group provided neutral responses and negative reports accounted for 2.5% of responses in the treatment group.



# STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

In this section, we estimate the effects on retention rates of being enrolled or not in a 12(1)(c) implementing school, through an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression for children in Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand (tables with results are included in the Annex). Therefore, families who reported that they applied this year to RTE were not included in the regression analysis. For both cases we introduced three variables that controlled for gender, caste and age to account for variabilities not explained by enrolment in a 12(1)(c) seat.

Firstly, in Tamil Nadu we find that enrolment in a 12(1)(c) implementing school has a positive and significant effect on retention rates at 5%. According to the model, being in the treatment group (i.e., enrolled under an RTE 12(1)(c) seat) increases the probability of retention in school by 25 percentage points. In this regression, neither gender, caste and age are significant, so they do not seem to be related to retention or dropout rates.

Results in Uttarakhand are similar. Enrollment in a 12(1)(c) implementing school has a positive and significant effect on retention rates at 5% and neither gender, caste and age are statistically significant. According to the model, children enrolled in a 12(1)(c) school have a probability of remaining in school that is 29.8 percentage points higher than those in the control group.

These results confirm what was previously stated in the descriptive analysis of the survey data for each state. In the following section we discuss the results of this report and lay out questions for future research.

**Enrolment in RTE 12(1)(c) has significant positive effect on retention rates regardless of gender, caste, and age.**





# DISCUSSION

01

Students enrolled under Section 12(1)(c) show significantly higher retention rates and lower dropout rates than those not enrolled under the Act.

Our hypothesis to explain the differences in retention rates between children enrolled in Section 12(1)(c) schools and those who not enrolled is that the policy generated a safety net for the first group. Considering that the majority of children who do not benefit from Section 12(1)(c) of RTE still enroll in a fee paying private school, the economic shock caused by the pandemic could explain the differences in dropout rates. However, further research is needed to confirm this hypothesis.

02

Section 12(1)(c) may not be reaching the most vulnerable children.

A second result, similar to the findings by Damera (2017) and Romero and Singh (2021), is that many children who apply and enroll in RTE Section 12(1)(c) seats would otherwise enroll in private schools if not selected, indicating that the population who could benefit the most is not being reached. As mentioned by Indus Action RTE BSR (2021), despite the policy being implemented in some states for over nine years, awareness levels remain low, especially for families from more vulnerable and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

03

The number and frequency of online classes during the pandemic was higher in private schools than in public schools.

Thirdly, we observe that the learning experience during the pandemic for children in private schools, in terms of having online classes and their frequency, was better than for children in public schools, signalling that private schools were more able to adapt to the changing circumstances. A larger sample of children enrolled in public schools is needed to confirm this hypothesis and to compare retention rates between private and public schools. It may be the case that retention rates for children in public



schools were higher than for children in private schools who did not benefit from RTE, since the second group had to continue paying for education despite the general drop in incomes.

Finally, some of the criticism for Section 12(1)(c) of RTE is that children from vulnerable backgrounds could face discrimination in private schools. This survey finds no evidence supporting this argument, since reports of children who do not feel part of the school community or face negative attitudes from their teachers are below 2%. Further research should try to incorporate larger samples of children from SC, ST and other vulnerable groups and also compare them with discrimination rates in public schools.

Future research should try to understand the reasons for the large difference in dropout rates between children in 12(1)(c) seats and children in private schools who do not benefit from the policy, while more research is needed to determine if the increase in dropout rates of children in private schools is a general trend as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some other questions that arise include: What are the future alternatives for children who were forced to drop out? Did they drop out of school permanently or they will return to school the following year?

Similarly, we need to improve our understanding of the barriers that families from the most vulnerable backgrounds face to apply for Section 12(1)(c) seats, since the majority of families that apply seem to be already enrolling their children in private schools. If enrollment of children from disadvantaged backgrounds increases, will there be any improvement in the learning outcomes of the child? Will private schools perform better for children from disadvantaged backgrounds than public schools?

RTE Section 12(1)(c) provides a unique opportunity to improve our understanding of the differences in educational outcomes between children enrolled in public and private schools and of the possible benefits that changing from a public to private school may have for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Similarly, after more than 8 years of 12(1)(c) implementation it may be time to assess some of the medium- to long-term outcomes of this provision.





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# ANNEXURE

**Annex 1.** Results of OLS regression estimating the effects of enrollment in a 12(1)(c) school on retention rates in Tamil Nadu.

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.424686
R Square	0.180358
Adjusted R Square	0.172361
Standard Error	0.259563
Observations	415

ANOVA	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	4	6.07828	1.51957	22.55459	7.46E-17
Residual	410	27.62293	0.067373		
Total	414	33.7012			

Variable	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	0.755658	0.090109	8.386058	8.17E-16	0.578525	0.932791	0.578525	0.932791
Treatment Control	0.265692	0.028304	9.387057	4.31E-19	0.210052	0.321331	0.210052	0.321331
Gender	0.025124	0.025547	0.983436	0.325973	-0.0251	0.075344	-0.0251	0.075344
Age	-0.01058	0.018373	-0.57565	0.56517	-0.04669	0.025541	-0.04669	0.025541
Caste	0.013991	0.064401	0.21724	0.828129	-0.11261	0.140588	-0.11261	0.140588





**Annex 2.** Results of OLS regression estimating the effects of enrollment in a 12(1)(c) school on retention rates in Uttarakhand.

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.448084
R Square	0.200779
Adjusted R Square	0.192624
Standard Error	0.258345
Observations	397

ANOVA	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	4	6.572615	1.643154	24.61945	3.38E-18
Residual	392	26.1629	0.066742		
Total	396	32.73552			

Variable	Coefficients	Standard Error	T Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	0.658912	0.099298	6.635708	1.08E-10	0.463689	0.854135	0.463689	0.854135
Treatment Control	0.298125	0.031397	9.495489	2.2E-19	0.236399	0.359852	0.236399	0.359852
Gender	-0.00101	0.0269	-0.03751	0.970094	-0.05389	0.051876	-0.05389	0.051876
Age	0.002354	0.015302	0.15381	0.877839	-0.02773	0.032438	-0.02773	0.032438
Caste	0.051571	0.035215	1.464439	0.143876	-0.01766	0.120806	-0.01766	0.120806

