RETENTION SURVEY OF STUDENTS STUDYING UNDER RTE SECTION 12(1)(C) FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022

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ABOUT INDUS ACTION

At Indus Action, we strive to improve the delivery of welfare rights for families with an income of less than Rs. 10,000 ($135) per month across 20 States in India. 890 million citizens continue to remain below the poverty line due to a lack of sustainable access to welfare rights like education, health, and livelihood security.

We solve the problem of access by mobilising communities to claim their welfare entitlements and build capacity and technology tools for governments to improve last-mile delivery of welfare rights. We also advocate for process and policy-level changes based on our research and on-ground work with communities.

Our goal is to place 1 million+ families currently below the poverty line on an irreversible path out of poverty by 2025. We aim to do this through a portfolio of rights that builds their resilience against poverty and helps them exercise their civic skills.

We define success as families receiving benefits to which they are entitled. This means that (1) a family has newly accessed and successfully received at least 3 legislated rights; (2) at least one child in the family has benefited from access to free education through the Right to Education Act; (3) at least 2 other members of the family have received access to entitlements through direct benefit transfer for young mothers, pensions for elderly members, access to affordable quality healthcare/insurance and social security.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Citation

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ABBREVIATIONS

RTE: Right to Education

UT: Union Territories

MDG: Millenium Development Goals

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

IHD: Institute for Human Development

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

NSS: National Sample Survey

NER: Net Enrollment Ratio

NSS: National Sample Survey

NSSO: National Sample Survey office

SC: Scheduled Caste

ST: Scheduled Tribe

OBC: Other Backward Classes

PAB: Project Approval Board

RTI: Right to Information

EWS: Economically Weaker Section

DG: Disadvantaged Groups

MIS: Management Information System

CWSN: Children with Special Needs

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation.

NEP: New Education Policy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 12(1)(c) of India's Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, mandates private unaided schools across the country to reserve 25% of their seats in elementary grades (Grades 1-8) for economically weaker sections and disadvantaged groups. As of 2022, 12 years after the implementation of the RTE Act, only 18 states and Union Territories (UTs) are implementing the 12(1)(c) clause of the RTE Act. Furthermore, in the implementing states, there is an under-subscription of the available RTE 25% seat, meaning that the number of children admitted under the 12(1)(c) clause is less than the overall number of seats available, and a significant number of seats lie vacant. As of the year 2019-20, 43.7 lakh children were admitted to private schools under the RTE 12(1)(c) clause. The percentage of RTE seats filled varies across states, with Rajasthan having the highest seats filled at approximately 70% (Indus Action, 2021).

Indus Action conducts this report to study the status of students who gained admission to Private schools under the RTE 12(1)(c) clause, a year after being admitted. This is important to study the success of the policy beyond just access. Retention is indicative of private schools being a relevant choice for vulnerable families and social inclusion within schools. While the report primarily focuses on the retention of students in these schools, it also touches upon parental satisfaction with the school.

Children taking admissions under the RTE 12(1)(c) clause are admitted to Kindergarten classes (nursery or KG) or Class 1, depending on the state rules regarding 12(1)(c), the age of the child and the entry-level class of the schools. This study reports on the retention of students in private schools one year after their admission. The report is based on a telephonic survey of 4055 parents who applied for 25% of the reserved seats in three states: Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Odisha. The sample includes 3631 children who gained admission to private schools under the 12(1)(c) clause and 424 children who applied but did not gain admission.

We find high average retention rates of 95.5% after one year for children who gained admissions under the RTE 12(1)(c) clause in 2021. All three states surveyed show retention above 90%. This is comparable to the retention rate for students who were admitted in the year 2020, which was 94.4%.

INTRODUCTION

The Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) focused on ensuring access to education for children, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shifted the focus to the quality of education. In India, within the Right to Education Act, 2009, Section 12(1)(c) focuses on ensuring that private, unaided, non-minority, recognized schools reserve at least 25% of seats in their entry classes. Accessing seats in these private, unaided schools has itself been a challenge across the country. Thus, the focus over the past decade has been on improving and ensuring access. However, it is crucial to ensure that once the students reach school, they continue their education in these schools.

The policy paves the way for the social integration of students belonging to the richer or relatively better-off classes and children from the Economically weaker sections (EWS) and Disadvantaged Groups (DG) (as defined by the RTE Act) within private schools. It also creates a channel for the children from the latter, legally defined categories to exercise school choice. The number of students gaining access to private school education under the RTE 12(1)(c) clause is reported through government websites, PAB minutes, RTIs, Lok Sabha questions and Reports such as our organisation's (Indus Action's) Bright Spots Reports of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and the State of the Nation Report 2015, 2017.

However, along with the reporting on access to the 25% reserved seats under RTE 12(1)(c), it is also crucial to study the retention factor, i.e. students from EWS and DG categories who continue to be enrolled in the private unaided schools after gaining admission. Retention of students in schools is indicative of the policy's success in terms of being a real choice for vulnerable families as well as social inclusion within schools. Dropouts from these schools after having gained admissions would be indicative of failure either on the part of the school environment or persisting social and economic inequity.

Studying retention is further essential to understand students' learning experiences and integration within schools. Accordingly, this report studies a representative sample of students who applied for the RTE 12(1)(c) admissions in the 2021-22 academic year in three states: Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Uttarakhand.

The purpose of this report is multifold. Firstly, it presents the state-wise and aggregate percentage of students retained in schools a year after their admissions under the RTE 12(1)(c) clause. Secondly, we report the retention percentage associated with the different sub-groups of gender and category of application. Thirdly, we focus on the medium of awareness and the modes through which parents fill out their applications. Last, but not least, we report the school quality indicators that express parental satisfaction with the schools in which their children are admitted under the RTE 12(1)(c) clause.

> *Retention of students in schools is indicative of the policy's success in terms of being a real choice for vulnerable families as well as social inclusion within schools.*

The report starts with a literature review of retention in school education in India, followed by the methodology of data collection and limitations. We then present our results and finally conclude with a discussion and recommendations for policy, practice and research on 12(1)(c) implementation.

▌ LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to offer a brief overview of the issue of retention in school education across India. School dropout is a persistent problem across education systems in low and middle-income countries (UNESCO & United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2015). While efforts to promote access have led to near universalisation of primary education, however upper primary and secondary school dropout rates and low levels of student learning are pressing challenges. While there is a plethora of literature on school participation, school dropout is a relatively understudied issue (Nakajima et al., 2018)[1]. The focus of this report is retention within Section 12(1)(c) of the RTE Act. However, this literature review highlights some of the key factors affecting retention in school education across India. While the introduction of the Right to Education Act in 2009 was lauded as India's commitment to provisioning access to elementary education as a public good, there is a real dearth of literature on its implementation, particularly relating to student retention within the RTE Section 12(1)(c). For the purpose of this study, retention is defined as the phenomenon where a child, upon admission to a private unaided school under section 12(1)(c) of the RTE Act, is continuing in that same school after a year of their admission.

This review is not exhaustive and instead tries to identify important considerations in the broader sociopolitical, economic and cultural context, which could help lay the foundation to understand school retention of students enrolled under the RTE Section (12)(1)(c).

Extent of dropouts:

With the enactment of the RTE 2009 Act, primary school enrollment in India has been near-universal. However, learning and retention of students in schools have not grown at a similar pace. A joint report[2] by the Institute for Human Development (IHD) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reports that 4 in 10 young people in India exit the education system before reaching 18 years of age (p. 12). The 75th round (2017-2018) of the National Sample Survey (NSS) shows that the age-specific Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) declines quite substantially with age (p.12). Thus, the decline implies a high drop-out rate of students before completing schooling. As per the IHD-UNDP report, in 2018-19, the dropout rate at the primary level was 4.5% but shoots to 18% at the secondary level.

Government of India policies such as providing free and compulsory primary education and mid-day meals for children in the 6-14 year age group have encouraged students and families to complete primary education. However, the dropouts increase drastically after the completion of primary education. It is thus important to understand the factors impacting dropout at a school level across the country.

1. Is the learning crisis responsible for school dropout? A longitudinal study of Andhra Pradesh, India
2. School to Work Transition in India: Data and Information Base (UNDP)

Reasons for dropout:

There are multiple factors that impact retention or drop-out at a school level. As per Mukherjee[3] Universal Elementary Education comprises of three crucial elements - enrolment, retention, and quality of education. There is a clear inter-dependence among the three factors and thus, all three need to be studied while addressing the issue of drop-out from school. Analysis based on the UDISE data finds that female dropout is higher at primary and upper primary levels, whereas male dropout is higher in the secondary and higher secondary levels. Some key factors for dropping out of school, as per the NSS (75th) report, are lack of interest in education, engagement in economic activities among boys (36.9%) and domestic activities among girls (30.2%), marriage among girls, lack of vocational training and skill building.[4] Other reasons include distance from school, poor quality of teaching, financial constraints, and poor school facilities. Student absenteeism is another factor that leads to eventual dropouts. "Net Attendance Ratios (NAR) in India at the primary level were 86.8% for males (86.6% in rural and 87.7% in urban) and 85.1% for females (84.8% in rural and 86.2% in urban). NARs at the upper primary level for males were 72.5% (72.1.5% in rural areas compared to 73.5% in urban areas and 71.8% for females (70.7% in rural areas compared to 75.0% in urban areas."[5] Kingdon and Banerji (2009), based on a study in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2011), based on a survey of schools in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have both contended that poor learning levels at the primary level are one of the significant factors of exclusion from school education.

While some reasons for dropout are highlighted as more prominent than others, it seems plausible that there might be a combination of multiple reasons, with the most important one being captured in different surveys. Important to note here is that these reasons were given by a parent/family member and not the child who actually dropped out. Even for the reasons specified, there might be differences based on geography and demography.

Trends in dropout:

There are various factors related to caste, gender, religion, and geography that impact students' retention in schools. An analysis of the National Family Health Survey 3 Data[6], 2014, shows the following trends with respect to dropout for different subgroups of the population:

- Moving from primary to higher stages of education increases the chances of dropout by 2.7 times.
- A Muslim student is 1.9 times more likely to drop out than a Hindu student.
- The chances of dropout increase 1.7 times with an increase in family size by one.
- Each higher class of a father's education reduces the likelihood of dropout by 16%, but the mother's primary or secondary education does not show such effects.

3. Elementary Education in India: Enrolment, Retention and Quality
4. The retention rate in school education in India
5. Household Social Consumption on Education in India
6. Factors Leading to School Dropouts in India: An Analysis of National Family Health Survey-3 Data

- The dropout among children belonging to the SC and ST categories is higher than among children from OBC and general categories.
- Dropout rates among children from rural areas (13.7%) were higher than that of urban areas (11.9%).
- Households with 6 or more children saw three times higher dropouts than households with one or two children.
- An increase in landholdings was inversely related to the level of dropout.
- Families with low SLI (Standard of Living Index) (17.2% dropout) had almost double the dropout as compared to families with high SLI (8.3%).
- Children of illiterate parents were four times more likely to drop out than those of literate parents.
- Father's economic activity and the mother's exposure to mass media were other factors whose positive growth was inversely related to dropping out.

It is evident from the research that households with multiple vulnerabilities would be the ones where children are most likely to drop out of education. These include socially, educationally and economically disadvantaged families. RTE Section 12(1)(c) provides an opportunity for vulnerable families in terms of school choice for gaining admission in private schools under the 25% quota for socially and economically disadvantaged families. However, the retention of students studying within private schools under 12(1)(c) is not monitored, and schools themselves may have limited incentive to report dropouts of students.

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Retention within 12.1.c.:

While this literature review discusses retention in school education in India more generally, the key focus of this report, is the retention of students admitted under Section 12(1)(c) of the RTE Act. The most commonly reported aspect with respect to challenges for parents and children being able to access the provision or dropping out has been the ancillary cost that parents/guardians need to bear for the education of their wards. An IndiaSpend article in 2020 wrote about how the demand for fees for books and uniforms is leading to a gap in the implementation of the above-mentioned provision in Maharashtra. It also mentions discriminatory practices like having children admitted through the 12(1)(c) provision seated in separate classrooms. Economic Times had a similar article from 2018 in Bangalore, which mentioned the parents being asked for additional costs during admission. The Telegraph reported on cases where children were unable to get access to the seats due to issues related

to reimbursements by state governments to private schools, which are either not being provided or delayed, children being failed in exams, and schools asking for extra fees.

However, there isn't much in-depth research conducted on the retention of students studying under the provision, or if there is, there is a dearth of public documents and data available on the same. Thus, this survey and report hope to contribute to that body of literature as well as identify key action steps that can be taken by state governments, as well as civil society, to understand retention of students under the RTE 12(1)(c) provision better.

▌METHODOLOGY

Data

The data for this report was obtained from the MIS state application data of three states, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Uttarakhand. A stratified sample based on the participating states' applications, districts wise distribution of application numbers and the ratio of boys and girls in was prepared. Of the overall sample, a number of parents could not be reached due to various reasons, including network issues, switched-off phones, incorrect phone numbers and others. Indus Actions' team of trained callers initially contacted a sample of 6919 parents who applied for the 25% reserved seats for admissions of children in Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Odisha in the 2021-22 academic session. Of these 6919 parents/guardians, 4055 parents/guardians consented to speak to the callers for a 7-8 minute telephonic survey.

Thus, the survey was conducted with 4055 consenting respondents (parents/guardians) who applied for admissions under RTE 12(1)(c) policy for obtaining a seat under the 25% reservation for EWS and DG categories.The data from the survey was collected on a form.io format questionnaire using a Rapid Survey Tool application at the backend. The questionnaire can be found in the annexure to this report. The calls were conducted by trained callers from the respective survey states to account for cultural, contextual and lingual differences.

Data limitations

Our survey was conducted via phone call, which poses a challenge in terms of understanding the question within context. This also poses a challenge in capturing an accurate response for the same without the nuances of an in-person interaction. Without the building of trust, sometimes responses that are received, especially for a government service, might be biased or sugar-coated.

The sample represents parents/guardians consenting to be a part of a 7-8 minutes survey. Hence, the findings can be biased towards a self-selected group of respondents who had the time as well as motivation to discuss the issue. While we maintain complete confidentiality and anonymity of parents' responses, the explicit communication of this was limited.

Furthermore, to have a comparison group, 30% of the initial sample comprised of respondents who applied for the 25% RTE seats but whose children did not receive admission. However, in the final survey data, this group comprises of approximately 10% of the overall respondents. In many instances, the phone numbers of the respondents were incorrect, i.e. the recorded numbers were of a cyber cafe or school principals where parents had filled in

their application forms. We could not retain the contact numbers of these parents from the cyber cafes or schools and further investigation on this was beyond the scope of our survey. To keep our sample nationally representative, the survey was planned to cover 4 states, including Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu and Odisha. However, due to operational difficulties, the survey could not be completed for Tamil Nadu and this report shows findings from the other 3 states.

Sample Characteristics

The sample includes a total number of 4055 parents surveyed in 3 states, namely Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Odisha. The details of the sample are represented in the tables 1 and 2 below. We use a sample that is stratified by district, gender and the overall number of applications per state. Our original sample includes girls and boys in a ratio of 2:3. In the respondent sample, the ratio of the states remains similar to the intended sample (25:11:5), and the ratio of girls to boys is 3:4.

Table 1: Admitted/non-admitted

Admitted under RTE 12(1)(c)	**3631**
Applied but Non-admitted under RTE 12(1)(c)	**424**

Table 2: State-wise numbers

	Total surveyed	Admitted	Non-admitted	Girls	Boys
Chhattisgarh	2437	2220	217	946	1491
Odisha	451	390	61	211	240
Uttarakhand	1167	1021	146	478	689
Total	**4055**	**3631**	**424**	**1635**	**2180**

By the medium of the survey we report on the following indicators:

1. State-wise retention

2. Retention by the categories of application and gender

3. Medium of awareness about the policy and applications for admission

4. School quality indicators to assess parental satisfaction

Results

1. Retention

How many of those who won the lottery are still continuing in the same school?

Table 3: Retention

State-wise Retention	Studying in the same school (retention)	Dropped out*	Different school	Total admitted students	Retention%
Chhattisgarh	2039	149	32	2220	91.8%
Odisha	380	8	2	390	97.4%
Uttarakhand	993	6	22	1021	97.3%
Total	**3412**	**163**	**56**	**3631**	**95.5%**

Figure 1: Retention
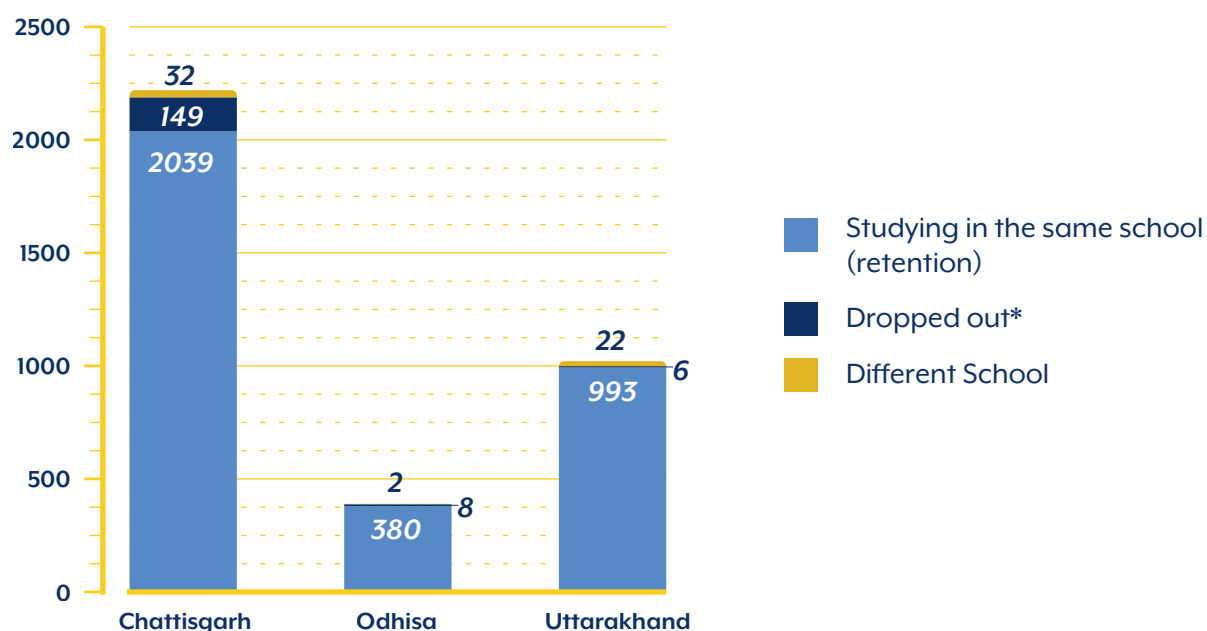
The survey was conducted through a trained team of callers. All callers were provided with the same level of training and support, and the final recording of the data was up to their individual discretion. However, during analysis, we found some discrepancies and contradictions in the observations (based on the written remarks of the callers) that are recorded as dropouts. As such, the re-calling activity for the dropped-out students could not be undertaken due to the limited time and resources of the team and data on dropouts is reported as is (as recorded by the callers). We plan to address this issue in our next round of the survey.

2. Retention by gender and category of application

Table 4: Applications, admissions and retention by gender

Gender**	Applications	Admissions	Retained students	% students retained
Male	2420	2080	1905	91.6%
Female	1635	1551	1507	97.2%
Total	4055	3631	3412	94%

Figure 2: Applications, admissions and retention by gender
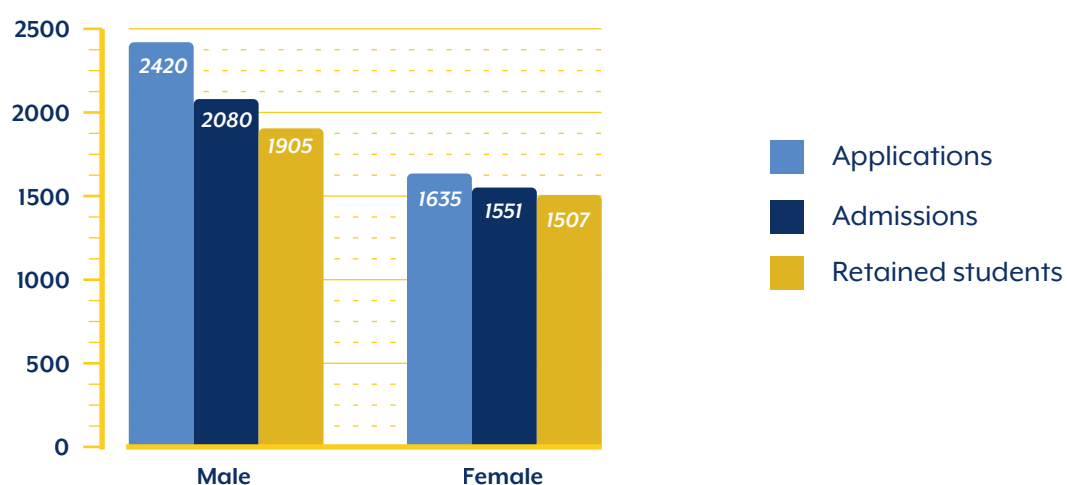
**For the purpose of this report we report gender as the officially recorded sex of the child.

While retention is high for all students, female students show a higher retention percentage than male students by 5 percentage points.

Table 5: Applications, admissions and retention by category of application

Category of applicant	Applications	Admissions	Retained students	% students retained in school
General/EWS	970	836	809	96.8%
OBC	1477	1347	1263	93.8%
SC	908	821	758	92.3%
ST	497	462	420	90.9%
CWSN	6	5	4	80.0%

Figure 3: Applications, admissions and retention by category of application
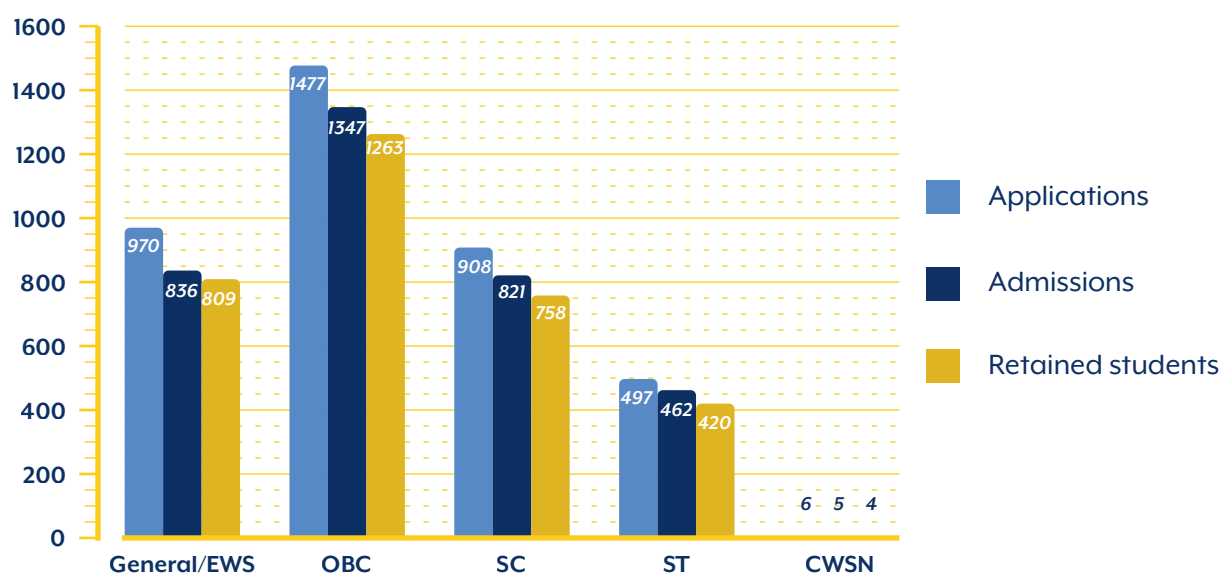
Retention is above 90% for students from all categories (except CWSN). However, retention is marginally higher for the EWS category as compared to the DG categories.

Of the total number of applications in our sample, there are only 6 who have applied in the CWSN category. Two students also reported dropping out because of being differently abled. While our sample was not stratified for the category of application, the low number of CWSN children in a random sample indicates a low number of applications in general.

3. Medium of awareness and applications

Figure 4: How did people learn about the RTE 12(1)(c) application?
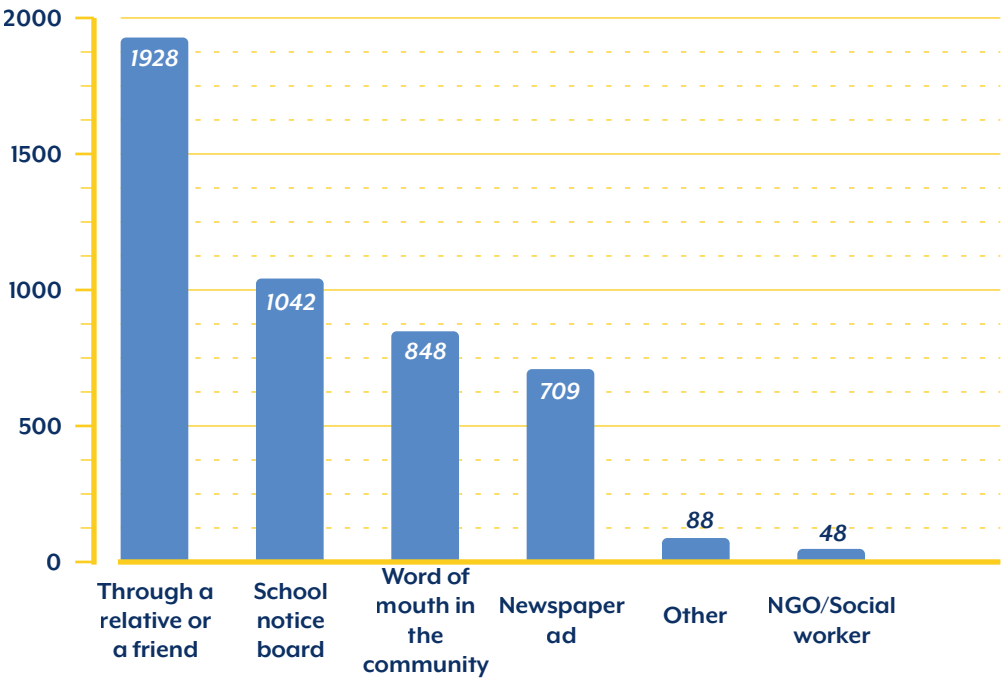
The total number here adds up to more than 4055 because some parents would have received this information from multiple sources.

Figure 5: How did parents fill their RTE applications?

Legend:
- Through a Cyber Cafe
- On their own
- Help from a relative/friend
- Through an NGO/Social Worker
- Other

92.3% — 5.3% — 1.5% — 0.5% — 0.4%
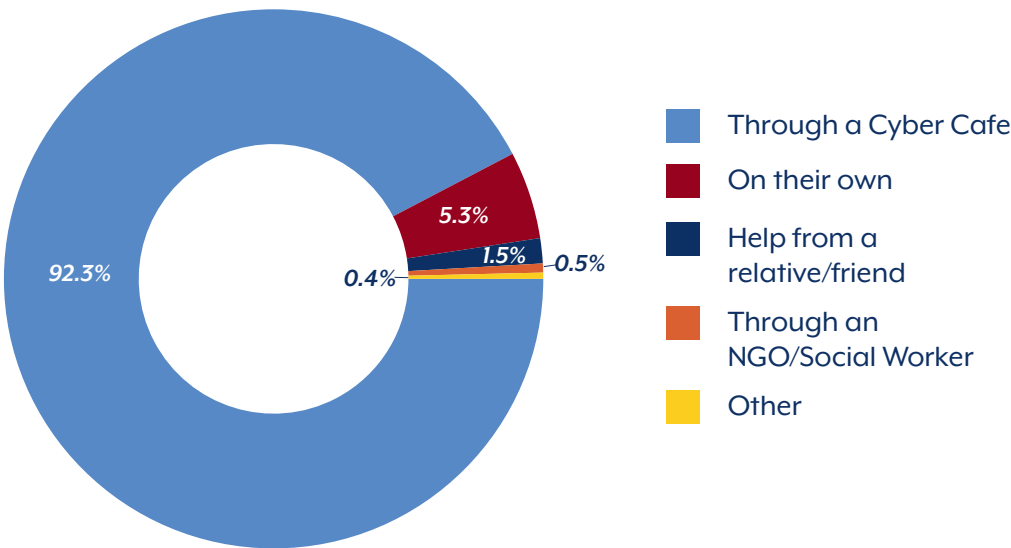
The number of applications filled in cyber cafes makes up a significant proportion of the total applications in our sample. This could be due to the requirement of uploading documents onto the portal, which is better supported by a computer system than a mobile phone, and the fact that parents may not be very digitally equipped or otherwise literate to fill out the applications on their own.

4. School Quality Indicators for Admitted and Non-admitted students

(i) Figure 6: Teacher attendance in school

Non-admitted   **Admitted**
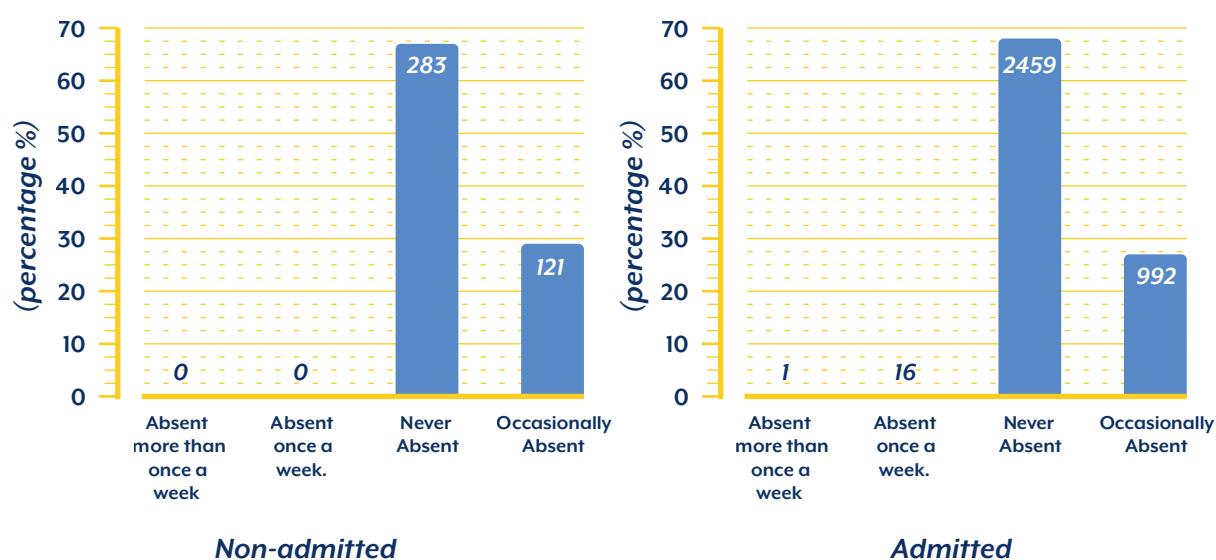
*There are a number of observations where this question is unanswered, these are not reported.

(ii) Figure 7: Communication of parents with teachers

Non-admitted

Admitted
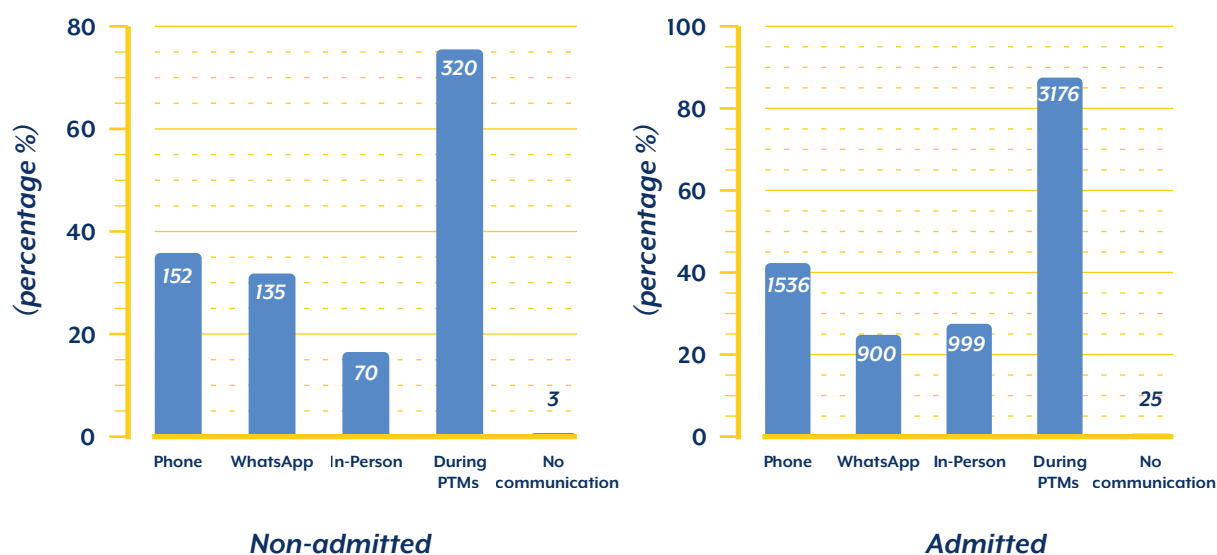
*This adds up to more than 4055 because some parents would have multiple modes of communication with the teacher.

(iii) Figure 8: Student-teacher interaction frequency

Non-admitted

Admitted

(iv) Figure 9: Child integration in school indicators recorded on a scale of 1-5.
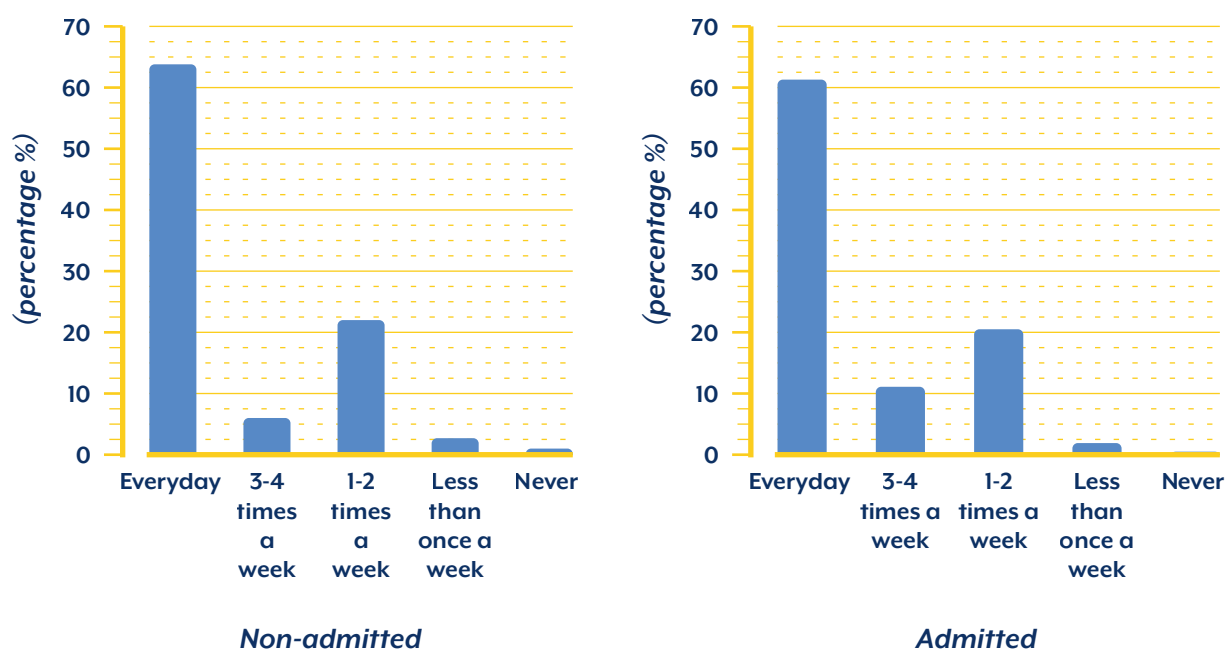
(iv) Figure 9: Child integration in school indicators recorded on a scale of 1-5.
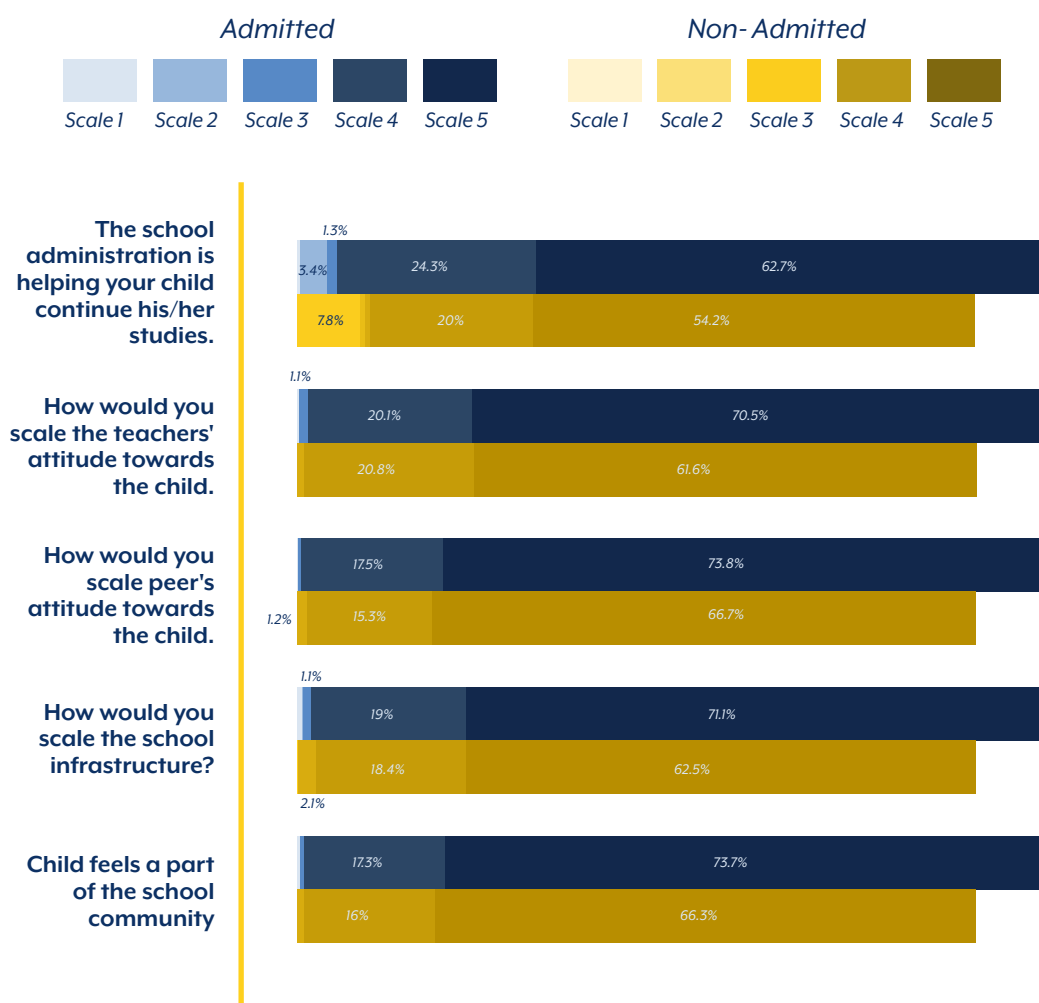
*The percentages in each row do not add up to 100% because not all parents have answered these questions.

(v) Table 6: Child participation in extra-curricular activities

Child participated in Extracurricular activities	Yes	%	No	%
Admitted and retained in RTE 12(1)(c) School	1613	47.3%	1799	52.7%
Non-Admitted enrolled students + school-changed students	308	66.9%	152	33%

vi) Table 7: Facilities in school

Facilities provided by the school	Yes	%	No	%
Mid-day meal provided by the school				
Admitted and retained in RTE 12(1)(c) School	24	0.7%	3388	99.2%
Non-Admitted enrolled students + school-changed students	28	6%	432	93.9%
Medical facilities provided by the school				
Admitted and retained in RTE 12(1)(c) School	1741	40.4%	1671	48.9%
Non-Admitted enrolled students + school-changed students	282	61.3%	127	27.6%

Analysis and trends: comparison with the last year

Retention

vii) Table 8: Trends in retention.

Year	2021-22	2022-23
States surveyed	Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu	Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Odisha
Overall Retention	94.4%	95.5%
States wise Retention% (Sample size)		
Chattisgarh	98.8% (n= 580)	91.8% (n= 2220)
Uttarakhand	90.8% (n= 325)	97.3% (n= 1021)
Tamil Nadu	97.6% (n= 297)	NA
Odisha	NA	97.4% (n= 390)

DISCUSSION

Using a sample of 3631 students admitted under the RTE 12(1)(c) clause across three states (Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha), this study finds a high (95.5%) rate of retention. The positive aspect is that students, parents, and schools are doing well and reporting a positive experience of being enrolled under the provision. A different hypothesis is that children utilizing the RTE 12(1)(c) provision are not from the lowest socio-economic quintile of the eligible population. This has also been evidenced in research done by Vijay (IAS) in Karnataka7, and JPAL in Chhattisgarh8.

Through this process, we've also realized that the child's voice may not necessarily be heard and that there is a definite need to conduct studies/research with students themselves. This will help us understand how they perceive inclusion in the classroom, their education and learning, as well as social relationships in and out of the classroom.

> *Using a sample of 3631 students admitted under the RTE 12(1)(c) clause across three states (Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha), this study finds a high (95.5%) rate of retention.*

There needs to be a more proactive approach taken by the government in tracking children gaining admission through the provision. If there are dropouts, there should be a mechanism to track where the children are dropping out to - is it to another school, or are they out of the education system completely; is it due to migration, personal circumstance or costs or a social issue? It is critical that states develop an efficient and robust child tracking system, which parents/guardians can also access, along with the school.

The well-being, attendance and learning of students should be regularly monitored through their performance in school, at least till the child reaches grade 8, if not beyond. A study such as this for retention should become part of the regular yearly cycle for state governments. This isn't only due to the fact that the government is providing reimbursement for the students entering through the provision, which makes it their fiscal responsibility to ensure that the monies are being spent well, but also because it is the overall responsibility of the state to ensure free and compulsory education for each child up to 8th standard as per the RTE Act. Thus, in the absence of a Monitoring and Evaluation system, it would be difficult to determine if the policy is working as intended and if children are really receiving the education they deserve.

> *The well-being, attendance and learning of students should be regularly monitored through their performance in school, at least till the child reaches grade 8, if not beyond.*

7. Choice for the poor or poor choice?
8. The Incidence of Affirmative Action: Evidence from Quotas in Private Schools in India

Also, monitoring will help identify drop-outs in school education, which will impact overall education-related policies and address the educational challenges at the state level.

There are also cases where children have been denied admission to a private school despite obtaining a seat via the lottery process. Or have been asked to pay ancillary fees to the school. There have to be clear directives provided by both the Union Govt and the states in such cases. The onus to solve this shouldn't be on the parents alone, who are unable to pursue legal recourses for the same due to the high costs and time required for it. A recent ruling in Delhi high court supports the cause of the aggrieved parents because of the denial of admission from the school.

A challenge with the online application process has been that a lot of the parents are either unable to successfully access and fill out an online application form or be able to provide the required documentation, or both. This leads to either the school preferences being filled out incorrectly or errors in the application form, or incomplete documentation, thus leading to rejection by the administrative authority. Also, the bottom-most percentile of low SES parents are not applying under the provision. One reason for this is a lack of awareness and then a lack of knowledge to fill out the application form - both technology as well as process knowledge. Thus, we recommend a provision from the government to hold RTE Melas (2-3 day camps) at suitable locations to assist parents in filling out forms, as well as have the option to go to the nearest government office and get their forms filled out without any charges.

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There needs to be specific information provided about the phone number being entered on the form. In the process of calling parents for this survey, we encountered multiple challenges, with only 60% of the phone numbers still being active. In the calls we made, many numbers either belonged to the computer operators at cyber cafes or someone who didn't live near the parent. There can be a special mention next to the phone number cell on the form highlighting its importance. Also, more awareness generation needs to be done via the government and other channels such as radio and television around this.

Over the years, we've seen the same pattern of limited supply (school facilities and resources) for Children With Special Needs (CWSN). It has become a dilemma similar to the chicken and

egg problem: should schools provide the necessary facilities first, or should parents demand accessibility before schools take action? In our opinion, both need to happen simultaneously. While one can argue the merits of segregated vs integrated classrooms, if we are to follow the inclusion provisions laid out in the RTE Act as well as the NEP more recently, more emphasis must be laid on schools in providing the required CWSN facilities, governments in ensuring that the rules are being followed, and CSOs, NGOs, and the government in making parents/guardians aware of the provisions. Parents, on the other hand, will have to join the fight in ensuring that there is a demand-side pressure on schools as well. The number of applications under the CWSN category is minuscule, but that is also because mainstream schools don't provide the facilities required for CWSN. There are very few private schools with Special Educators and other infrastructure-related facilities. These can be highlighted differently on the application form, as well as relaxing the rules for admission under CWSN. As a starting point, the list of schools and the special needs that they cater to must be collated by the efforts of the state and district-level functionaries. Delhi9 and Odisha have 3% reservations for CWSN, within the 25%. Delhi has also relaxed the age criteria for CWSN in order to ensure inclusion and has collated a list of schools10 catering to various CWSN needs.

This retention survey covers a particular objective of checking whether children are still in school, a year after being enrolled. There is immense scope in going in-depth with the research, both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, tracking and following year-on-year retention of students. There is also scope to understand where schools' best practices to ensure inclusion and retention and to emulate these bright spots across the country.

Section 12(1)(c) currently only supports education from Kindergarten to Grade 8, post which it becomes difficult for children to continue within the same schools. While some schools may accommodate children beyond Grade 8, there are multiple challenges. Dropouts also happen post-grade 8 due to the provision not being extended to high and higher secondary schools. An exception to this is Chhattisgarh, which has extended the entire RTE Act from grades 9-12. Rajasthan also provides a subsidised education for grades 9-12 for children continuing education in the same schools under Sec 12(1)(c). A full subsidy would go a long way in ensuring retention, even in Rajasthan. However, there is no central reimbursement being provided to the state for students beyond grade 8th. This is an essential issue for the Union Government to look into and to make education free and compulsory for all students up to grade 12.

In conclusion, Indus Action will continue doing these retention studies year-on-year for students enrolled under RTE Sec 12(1)(c), subject to data availability and government consent. However, we hope that this serious issue of assessing the implementation of the RTE 12(1)(c) provision, retention and monitoring the quality of education being provided to all children is taken up by the state and union governments.

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ANNEXURE

Annexure 1:

Questionnaire for the survey

Section 1: questions answered by all respondents

Sno.	Question	format
1	Child name*	text
	Parent name*	text
	School name*	text
2	Child gender*	Options: male, female, other
3	Date of birth	MM/YYYY
4	State*	dropdown: CG, UKD, OD
5	City of residence*	text
6	Category of Application	EWS SC ST OBC CWSN HIV positive
7	Child won lottery*	Yes, No
8	Mode of awareness for application*	**Multiple choice:** -Newspaper advertisement -Through the school notice board -Word of mouth in the community -Through a relative/friend. -NGO/Social worker -Other
9	Filling the RTE application	On my own Through a cyber cafe Through a NGO/Social worker Help from a relative/friend Other

*All the star-marked questions were mandatory questions in the survey

Section 2: Those who answered yes to 1.7

	Lottery Winners	
2.1	Which class did your child get admitted to?	Dropdown: Nursery, KG, First
2.2	Which year did your child get admission to RTE?	Select option: 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22
2.3	Where is the child studying	Dropdown: Same school, different school, dropped out of schooling.

Section 3: Those who answered no to 1.7

	Did not win the lottery	
3.1	Which kind of school is your child currently studying in?	**Select:** Private aided Private Unaided Government School Madarsa Unrecognised Private school Not Studying in any School
3.2	Do you pay any fees for your child's education?	Yes No

Sub-section 3: Those who answered: Not studying in any school 3.1, dropped out of schooling in 2.3

When did your child drop out of school?	MM/YYYY
Why did your child drop out?	• Could not afford education • Could not afford transportation cost • Child faced difficulty in studying/ needs extra tuition • Relocation • Discrimination • Other

Section 4

Section 4	
Is there any covid related issue you/your child is currently facing while attending school?	• Difficulty in learning • Any health issues • Loss of a close family member • Other • Other Covid related difficulties
In the last 1 year, has the school administration been accommodative in helping your child continue his/her studies?	Scale of 1-5

Section 5

1	How often does your child communicate with the teacher?	Everyday 3-4 times a week 1-2 times a week Less than once a week Never
2	2. How regularly does the teacher come to school?	Never absent Occasionally absent Absent once a week Absent more than once a week
3	Is the child involved in any extracurricular activities in school?	Yes/No
4	How strongly do you agree that your child feels part of the school?	Scale of 1-5
5	On a scale of (1-5) how would you scale the teachers attitude towards the child?	Scale of 1-5
6	On a scale of (1-5) how would you scale the peers' attitude towards the child?	Scale of 1-5

7	On a scale of (1-5) how would you scale the school infrastructure. (classrooms, playground, toilets etc)	Scale of 1-5
8	Does the school provide a mid-day meal?	Yes/No
9	Does the school have any medical facilities?	Yes/No

Annexure 2:

What are the top reasons for children changing schools or dropping out?

a. Change of school

Allotted school too far	23
Quality of education is not good	12
Faced discrimination in school	0
Relocation	2
Other reasons	20
Total	57

b. Dropout

other	107
Relocation of family	58
Could not afford transport and other costs	10
Child faced difficulty in learning and requires extra tuition	7
Child faced discrimination in school	7
To Parents could not afford to educate the child	2

Other reasons include a range of challenges faced by parents in keeping children in school. These include the following.

Reason	Frequency
The school has been closed.	3
Death of a parent/family member/	1
Death of the child	1
Child specially-abled and unable to cope with school/difficulty in speaking	2
Name did not come in the lottery	15
Could not get admission because got delayed in seeking admissions.	1
Seats are not available in school.	1

School did not give admission	1
School quality not good	1
School asking for fees	1

What kind of schools are the children who were not admitted study in (Govt/govt aided/ govt unaided).

Non-admitted students (Control)

Students who did not get admitted under 12(1)(c)	
Government School	65
Not studying in any school	20
Private aided school	176
Private unaided school	158
Religious school	5
Total	423

Annexure 3:

How did people learn about the RTE 12(1)(c) application?

	N	%
Through a relative or a friend	1928	47.5%
School notice board	1042	25.7%
Word of mouth in the community	848	20.9%
Newspaper ad	709	17.5%
Other	88	2.2%
NGO/Social worker	48	1.2%

Annexure 4:

How did parents fill in their RTE applications?

	N	%
Through a Cyber Cafe	3742	92.3%
On their own	213	5.3%
Help from a relative/friend	61	1.5%
Through an NGO/Social Worker	22	0.5%
Other	15	0.4%
Total	4055	

Annexure 5:

School Quality Indicators for Admitted and non-admitted students

(i) Teacher attendance in school

	Non-Admitted	%	Admitted	%	Grand Total
Absent more than once a week	0	0%	1	0%	1
Absent once a week.	0	0%	16	0%	16
Never Absent	283	67%	2459	68%	2742
Occasionally Absent	121	29%	992	27%	1113
Not Answered	20	5%	163	4%	178
Grand Total*	424		3631		4055

(ii) Communication of parents with teachers

	Non-Admitted	%	Admitted	%
Phone	152	35.8%	1536	42.3%
WhatsApp	135	31.8%	900	24.8%
In-Person	70	16.5%	999	27.5%
During PTMs	320	75.5%	3176	87.5%
No communication	3	0.7%	25	0.7%

(iii) Student-teacher interaction frequency

	Non- Admitted (%)	Admitted (%)
Everyday	61.3%	63.8%
3-4 times a week	11.1%	6%
1-2 times a week	20.5%	22%
Less than once a week	1.9%	2.7%
Never	0.5%	1%

iv) Child integration in school indicators recorded on a scale of 1-5.

	1	2	3	4	5
The school administration is helping your child continue his/her studies. (Admitted students)	0.3%	3.4%	1.3%	24.3%	62.7%
The school administration is helping your child continue his/her studies? (Non-admitted students)	7.8%	0.5%	0.7%	20.0%	54.2%
On a scale of (1-5), how would you scale the teachers' attitude towards the child. (Admitted students)	0.2%	0.1%	1.1%	20.1%	70.5%
On a scale of (1-5), how would you scale the teachers' attitude towards the child. (Non-admitted students)	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	20.8%	61.6%
On a scale of (1-5), how would you scale peer's attitude towards the child. (Admitted students)	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%	17.5%	73.8%
On a scale of (1-5), how would you scale peer's attitude towards the child. (Non-admitted Students)	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	15.3%	66.7%
On a scale of (1-5), how would you scale the school infrastructure? (Admitted students)	0.6%	0.1%	1.1%	19.0%	71.1%
On a scale of (1-5), how would you scale the school infrastructure? (Non-admitted students)	0.2%	0.0%	2.1%	18.4%	62.5%
Child feels a part of the school community (Admitted students)	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	17.3%	73.7%
Child feels a part of the school community (Non-admitted students)	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	16.0%	66.3%

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