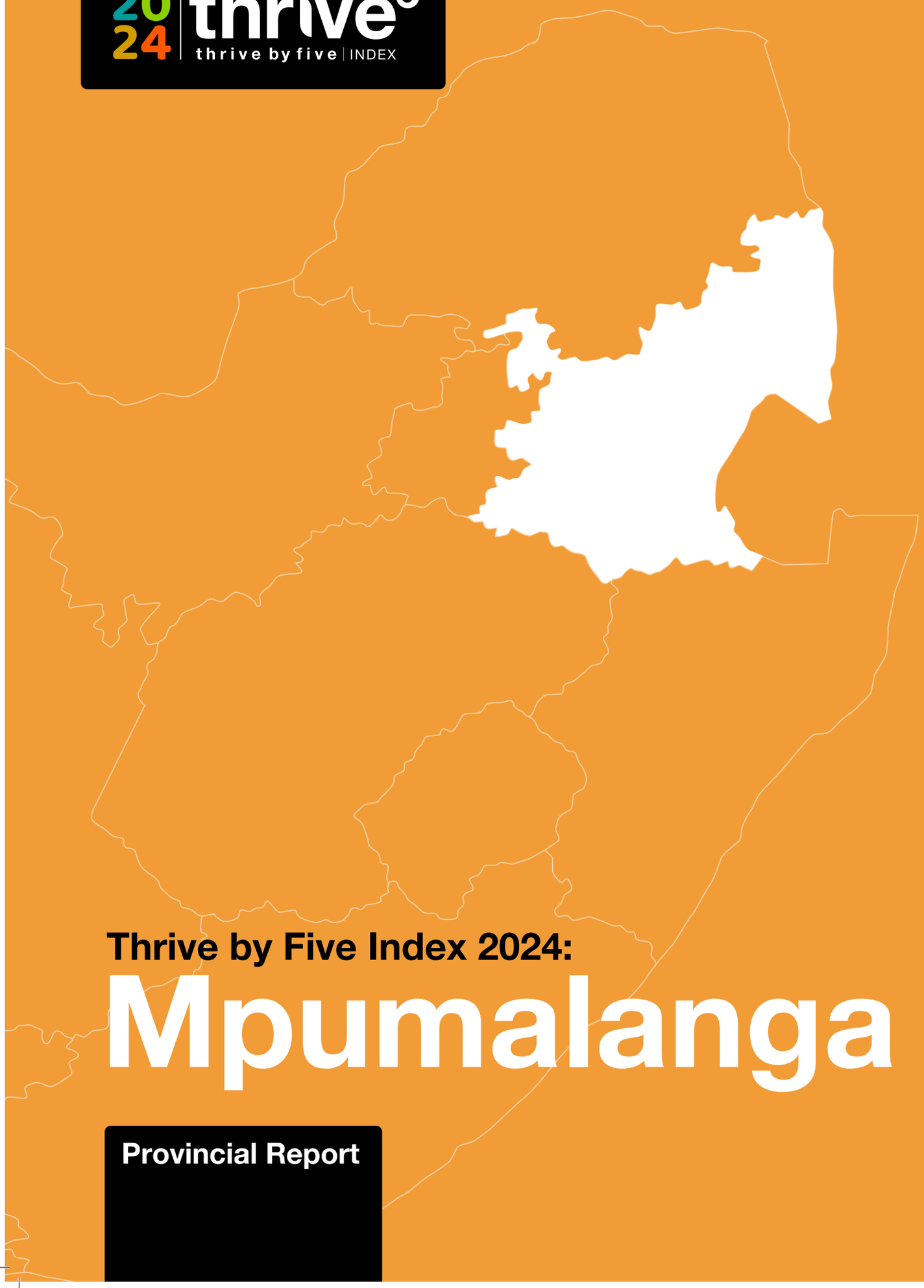
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Thrive by Five Index 2024:

Mpumalanga

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About the Thrive by Five Index

The *Thrive by Five Index*, first launched in 2021, is the largest survey of preschool child outcomes in South Africa. It was established as a collaborative effort to track progress and promote positive change in Early Childhood Development.

The *Thrive by Five Index 2024* is the second in a planned series of cross-sectional, nationally and provincially representative studies conducted every three years. The 2024 survey was led by the Department of Basic Education and coordinated by DataDrive2030, with support from the FirstRand Foundation, the LEGO Foundation, This Day Foundation, and Yellowwoods.

www.thrivebyfive.co.za
Published: September 2026

basic education
Department:
Basic Education
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Mpumalanga Provincial Report

SEPTEMBER 2026

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Executive Summary

The ***Thrive by Five Index 2024*** is South Africa's second nationally and provincially representative assessment of the developmental status of four-year-old children. Building on the inaugural 2021 Index, it provides evidence on children's early learning, social-emotional functioning and physical growth, while also examining the quality of Early Learning Programmes (ELPs), household environments and other factors associated with children's development. The Index is intended to support evidence-based planning and action to improve children's readiness for school and long-term developmental outcomes.

This report presents the findings for Mpumalanga Province. It focuses on children aged 50–59 months who were enrolled in ELPs during the 2024 Index. The findings provide a cross-sectional picture of children's developmental status in the province.

Overall, 52% of four-year-old children attending an ELP in Mpumalanga are On Track for overall early learning, while 28% are Falling Behind and 20% are Falling Far Behind. Children perform best in Emergent Literacy and Language, where 64% are On Track. Outcomes are lower in Cognition and Executive Function (52%), Emergent Numeracy and Mathematics (48%), and Gross Motor Development (45%). Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration is the weakest-performing domain, with only 28% of children On Track. Overall, Mpumalanga's early learning outcomes are broadly similar to the national pattern.

Substantial disparities are evident within the province. Girls outperform boys across all five developmental domains. Overall, 60% of girls are On Track for early learning compared with 44% of boys. The largest gender differences are evident in Emergent Literacy and Language and Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration. Socio-economic differences are also evident: 72% of children attending the highest-fee 20% of ELPs are On Track, compared with 50% of children attending the remaining 80%. The difference is particularly marked in Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration, where 55% of children in higher-fee ELPs are On Track compared with 26% in lower-fee ELPs.

Development extends beyond early learning. Around two-thirds of four-year-old children attending ELPs in Mpumalanga meet the expected standards for social-emotional functioning. 67% meet the standard for emotional readiness for school, while 70% meet the standard for social relations with peers and adults. These outcomes are somewhat higher than the national estimates of 56% and 63%, respectively. Gender differences are relatively small, with girls slightly more likely than boys to meet the standard for social relations, while emotional readiness is similar for girls and boys.

The province records a moderate or severe stunting rate of 2%, with a further 18% of children showing signs of mild stunting. Although moderate and severe stunting is lower than the national estimate, physical growth remains an important developmental consideration because national findings show that children who are stunted have substantially weaker early learning outcomes than their non-stunted peers.

The findings also highlight a marked difference between caregiver perceptions and measured developmental outcomes. Although 52% of children are On Track for overall early learning, 95% of interviewed caregivers believe that their child is developing at the same rate as, or faster than, other children of the same age. This suggests there may be gaps in caregivers' awareness of developmental expectations and milestones for four-year-old children.

The Thrive by Five Index highlights the importance of integrated action across the early childhood development system. Improving children's outcomes in Mpumalanga will require continued attention to the quality of teaching and learning in ELPs, targeted support to address gender and socio-economic disparities, sustained efforts to promote healthy growth and social-emotional development, and greater support for caregivers to recognise and promote children's development during the early years.

Introduction

Why the Thrive by Five Index matters

The first five years of life are a critical period for children's development. During these early years, rapid brain development lays the foundation for later learning, health and wellbeing. Children's development during this period is influenced by the quality of the care, nutrition, stimulation and learning opportunities they experience at home and in early learning settings.

The *Thrive by Five Index* was established to provide reliable national and provincial evidence on how young children in South Africa are developing before they enter formal schooling. First conducted in 2021, the *Index* is designed to monitor children's developmental outcomes, identify areas requiring attention, and support evidence-based planning across the early childhood development (ECD) sector. The 2024 *Index* is the second in a planned series of nationally and provincially representative cross-sectional studies conducted every three years.

This report presents the findings for the Mpumalanga Province. It focuses on four-year-old children (50–59 months) attending Early Learning Programmes (ELPs) and examines three key developmental outcomes:

- Early learning;
- Social-emotional functioning; and
- Physical growth.

The report also examines characteristics of ELPs, household circumstances and home learning environments to provide a broader understanding of the contexts in which children are developing.

Purpose of the Index

The *Thrive by Five Index 2024* was designed to:

- **Determine** the proportion of young children in SA who attend ELPs who are On Track for their age in three key areas of development: early learning, social-emotional functioning, and physical growth.
- **Monitor** trends in performance gaps and gains over time and across socio-economic groups.
- **Explore** a range of potential predictors of key child outcomes.
- **Track** progress towards local and global development goals.
- **Inform** decision-making and actions to improve developmental outcomes for young children.

Access to organised early learning in the Province

This report presents findings on the developmental outcomes of four-year-old children enrolled in ELPs across Mpumalanga. By focusing on children already participating in organised early learning, it provides insight into how these children are developing and into the environments in which they learn. The findings do not, however, represent children who are not enrolled in an ELP.

According to the *General Household Survey 2024* [1], 59% of four-year-old children in Mpumalanga attend an ELP, a further 11% attend Grade R or school, while 30% are not enrolled in any form of organised early learning.

Mpumalanga Sample

The *Thrive by Five Index 2024* is the largest survey of preschool child outcomes conducted in South Africa to date. The study used a stratified, multistage sampling design to obtain nationally and provincially representative samples of children attending ELPs.

Across South Africa, the final sample included 5,001 children attending 1,388 ELPs in 414 wards. Within each participating ELP, children aged 50–59 months were randomly selected to participate in the study.

In Mpumalanga, the planned sample comprised 38 wards, 114 ELPs and 456 children. The realised sample included all 37 selected wards, 121 ELPs and 453 children, achieving 99% of the planned child sample. The final provincial sample included 242 boys and 249 girls, with a mean age of approximately 55 months.

Table 1: *Planned and realised samples for the 2024 Thrive by Five Index in Mpumalanga.*

Stages	Planned sample size	Realised sample size	Realised / planned
Wards	**38**	**37**	**97%**
ELPs	**114**	**121**	**106%**
Children	**456**	**453**	**99%**

Table 2: *Gender distribution and mean age of children in the Mpumalanga sample*

Gender	% of sample	Mean age (months)	N
Boys	**49%**	**54.8**	**242**
Girls	**51%**	**54.9**	**249**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data

The Mpumalanga sample reflects the linguistic diversity of the province. siSwati was the most commonly reported home language (27%), followed by English (19%), isiZulu (15%), Sepedi (14%) and Xitsonga (14%). Smaller proportions of children spoke isiNdebele (6%) or other languages (6%) at home. Overall, 39% of children spoke more than one language at home, notably lower than the national figure of 56%.

[1] GHS 2024 analysis by Katharine Hall, Children's Institute UCT. July 2025

Children's socio-economic circumstances are a key lens for understanding disparities in developmental outcomes and access to opportunities. Economic circumstances are deeply connected to the resources and support systems available to young children. These circumstances significantly affect caregiver wellbeing, child health and nutrition, the home learning environment, and access to quality ELPs, all of which are major influences on developmental outcomes.

A core objective of the Index is to report on and monitor the performance gap between children from higher and lower socio-economic groups. Monthly ELP fees, reported by principals and validated through cross-checks with parent-reported data, are used as the most appropriate available proxy for children's socio-economic circumstances. Fees offer a practical reflection of what households are likely able to afford within their local context, providing a useful, if imperfect, indicator of relative economic means.

Almost all ELPs in Mpumalanga charge fees (99%) which is consistent with the national figure of 97%. Among participating ELPs in the province, monthly fees range from R0 to R3,500. Fee quintiles were constructed using provincial fee thresholds to help account for notable differences in the cost of living between provinces. These quintiles were created at the ELP level by ordering ELPs according to the fees they charge and grouping them into five equal-sized categories based on the unweighted distribution of fees. Table 3 shows a comparison of the fee distribution and levels between the provincial and national samples.

Table 3: *Minimum and Maximum fees by quintile in Mpumalanga and nationally*

Fee bands	Mpumalanga sample			National sample		
	Minimum fees	Maximum fees	Number children	Minimum fees	Maximum fees	Number children
Fee Quintile 1	**R0**	**R120**	**103**	**R0**	**R120**	**1,043**
Fee Quintile 2	**R121**	**R160**	**86**	**R121**	**R240**	**1,039**
Fee Quintile 3	**R161**	**R250**	**113**	**R241**	**R350**	**998**
Fee Quintile 4	**R251**	**R350**	**99**	**R351**	**R800**	**948**
Fee Quintile 5	**R351**	**R3,500**	**90**	**R801**	**R6,400**	**973**

Source: Unweighted data from Thrive by Five Index 2024 data.

To enable meaningful comparisons by socio-economic context, ELPs were grouped into fee-based categories using provincial fee thresholds. The four lower fee quintiles constituted the lower-fee 80% of ELPs, while the highest fee quintile represented the top 20%.

Table 4 presents the minimum and maximum monthly fee ranges for these two categories, along with the number of ELPs and children included in each group. Throughout this report, child-level findings are presented for the full sample, as well as disaggregated by these ELP fee categories.

Table 4: *Proportion of ELPs and children in the Bottom 80% and Top 20% fee groups in Mpumalanga and nationally.*

80/20 Split	Mpumalanga sample			National sample		
	Fee range	Number of ELPs	Number of children	Fee range	Number of ELPs	Number of children
Bottom 80%	**R0-R350**	**97**	**363**	**R0-R800**	**1,113**	**4,028**
Top 20%	**R351-R3,500**	**24**	**90**	**R801-R6,400**	**275**	**973**

Source: Thrive by Five Index 2024 data

More detailed technical information is available in the ***Thrive by Five Index 2024 Technical Report***

Measures

The study assessed children's development using standardised tools that have been developed or validated for use in the South African context. Early learning was assessed using the Early Learning Outcomes Measure (ELOM 4&5), which evaluates children's development across five domains:

- Gross Motor Development;
- Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration;
- Emergent Numeracy and Mathematics;
- Cognition and Executive Function; and
- Emergent Literacy and Language.

Based on their performance, children were classified as:

- **On Track –** demonstrating developmental competencies expected for their age;
- **Falling Behind –** showing developmental delays that warrant attention; or
- **Falling Far Behind –** showing substantial developmental delays relative to age expectations.

The Social-Emotional Functioning (SEF) Rating Scale was used to measure children's social relations with peers and adults and their emotional readiness for school. It is administered as an interview questionnaire with the child's practitioner. Children's scores are categorised as either Meet the Standard (indicating the child performs at the expected level for their age) or Don't Meet the Standard.

Physical growth was assessed by measuring children's height and classifying height-for-age according to World Health Organization standards to identify stunting.

The Learning Programme Quality Assessment Tool (LPQA v2) was used to measure the quality of ELPs. It involves a two-hour observation of a class and has 22 items spread across five domains: Materials & Equipment, Planning & Assessment, Learning Programme, Teaching Strategies and Relationships & Interactions.

The domain and total scores are categorised into three rating levels: Inadequate, Basic and Good.

Interviews with principals and practitioners and facility observations provided rich contextual data on early learning environments.

Interviews were also completed with primary caregivers (PCGs) of the assessed enrolled children. The vast majority of PCGs were biological mothers.

Limitations

The findings presented in this report describe four-year-old children attending ELPs in Mpumalanga during 2024. They do not represent children who were not enrolled in an ELP at the time of the survey.

Provincial findings should be interpreted as a cross-sectional snapshot. The current provincial sample was not large enough to support reliable comparisons over time, although strengthening provincial trend analysis is planned for future rounds.

The provincial sample size also means that estimates are less precise than the corresponding national estimates. Comparisons between provincial and national findings should therefore be interpreted with appropriate caution, particularly where differences are small.

Despite these limitations, the *Thrive by Five Index* provides the strongest available evidence on the developmental status of young children attending ELPs in Mpumalanga. The findings offer an important evidence base to inform provincial planning, strengthen early childhood development services and improve children's readiness for school.

Child outcomes

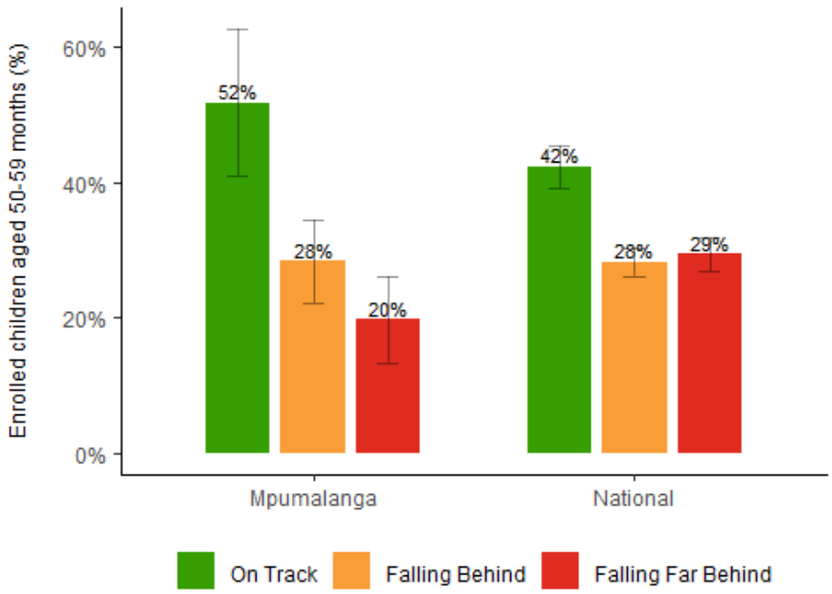
Early learning

Percentage children On Track

The *Thrive by Five Index* assesses children's early learning using the Early Learning Outcomes Measure (ELOM4&5), which measures children's development across five domains that are important for school readiness.

Overall, 52% of four-year-old children attending ELPs in Mpumalanga are developmentally **On Track** for their age, while 28% are **Falling Behind** and 20% are **Falling Far Behind.** Mpumalanga performs better than the national findings, where 42% of children are On Track and 29% are Falling Far Behind. These findings indicate that half of the children attending ELPs in the province have not yet developed the knowledge and skills expected for their age before entering formal schooling. Mpumalanga performs slightly better than the national findings.

Figure 1: *ELOM Total – Percentage of children On Track, Falling Behind and Falling Far Behind in Mpumalanga compared with the national average.*



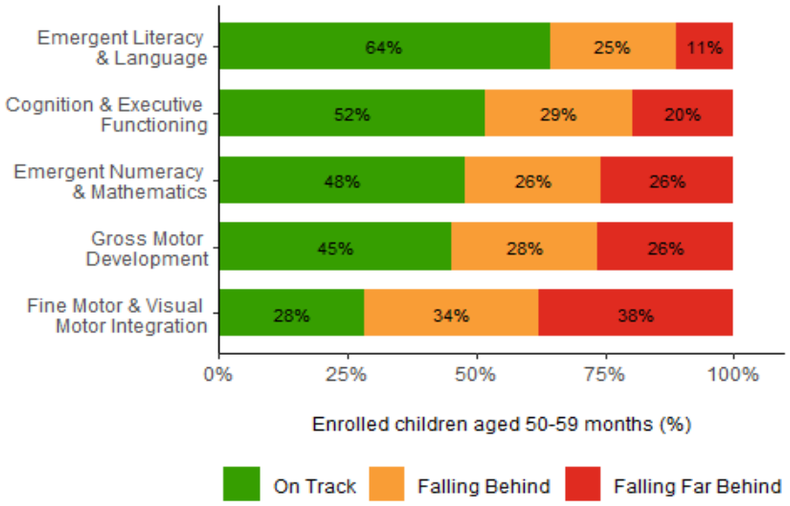
Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data. Error bars show the 95% confidence interval around the estimates.

Performance across developmental domains

Children's performance varies across the five developmental domains assessed by the ELOM.
The strongest performance in Mpumalanga is in Emergent Literacy and Language, where 64% of children are On Track, compared with 53% nationally. This is followed by Cognition and Executive Functioning (52%), compared with 40% nationally, and Emergent Numeracy and Mathematics (48%), compared with 33% nationally. In Gross Motor Development, 45% of children are On Track, similar to the national figure of 44%. Performance is weakest in Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration, where 28% of children are On Track, similar to 29% nationally.

Overall, children in Mpumalanga perform better than the national findings in Emergent Literacy and Language, Cognition and Executive Functioning, and Emergent Numeracy and Mathematics, while outcomes in Gross Motor Development and Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration are similar to the national findings.

Figure 2: *Percentage of children On Track, Falling Behind and Falling Far Behind in each developmental domain.*

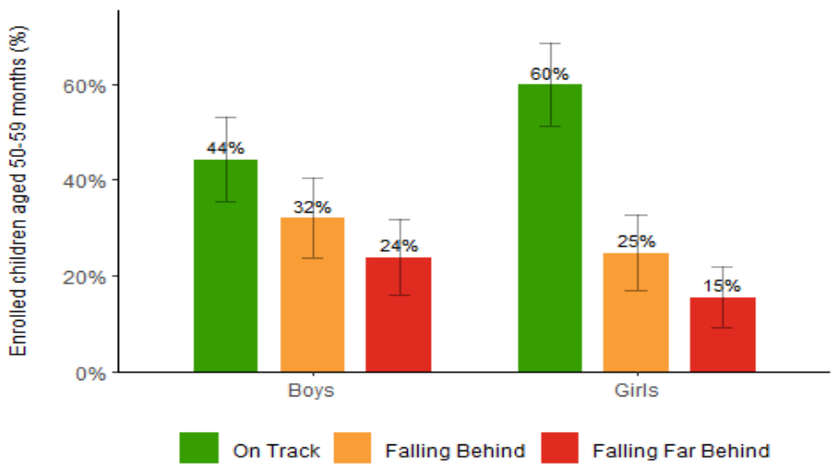


Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data.

Gender differences in learning outcomes

Clear differences in developmental outcomes are evident between girls and boys. Overall, 60% of girls are On Track for overall early learning compared with 44% of boys. Boys are also more likely to be Falling Far Behind, at 24% compared with 15% of girls. This pattern is consistent with the national findings, where girls also perform better across most developmental measures.

Figure 3: *Percentage of children On Track, Falling Behind and Falling Far Behind by gender.*



Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data. Error bars show the 95% confidence interval around the estimates.

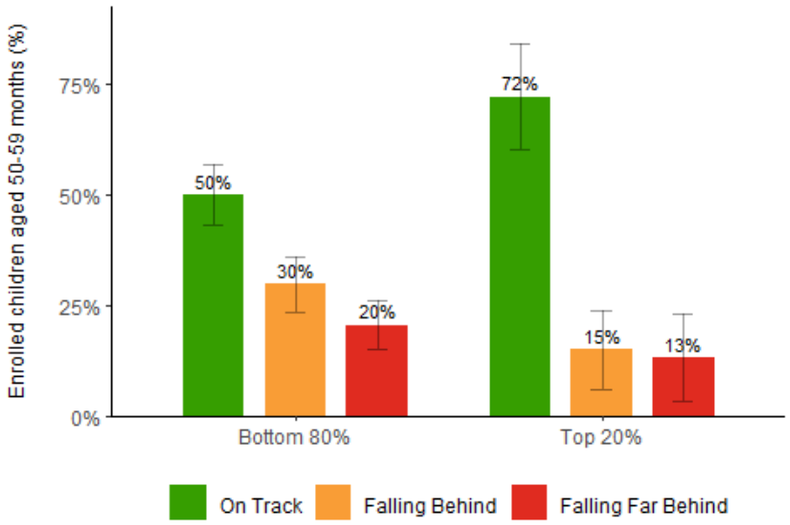
Differences by ELP fee group

Large differences in children's developmental outcomes are evident across ELP fee groups in Mpumalanga. Among children attending the highest-fee 20% of ELPs, 72% are On Track for overall early learning, compared with 50% of children attending the remaining 80%.

Children attending higher-fee ELPs perform better across all five developmental domains. The largest difference is in **Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration**, where 55% of children in the highest-fee 20% are On Track compared with 26% in the remaining 80%. Differences are also evident in Emergent Literacy and Language (75% vs 63%), **Emergent Numeracy and Mathematics (59% vs 47%), Cognition and Executive Functioning (60% vs 51%), and Gross Motor Development (51% vs 45%).**

These findings highlight socio-economic inequalities in children's early learning outcomes within the Mpumalanga, mirroring the national picture and reinforcing the importance of ensuring that all children have access to high-quality early learning opportunities, regardless of the resources available to the ELPs they attend.

Figure 4: *Percentage of children On Track, Falling Behind and Falling Far Behind by Bottom 80% and Top 20% fee groups.*



Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data. Error bars show the 95% confidence interval around the estimates.

Caregiver perceptions of children's development

Understanding how caregivers engage with their child's ELP and how they perceive their child's development is meaningful, as responsive caregiving depends on knowing and recognising a child's individual needs and strengths. Primary Caregivers (PCGs) were asked how they viewed their child's development compared to other children of the same age. Almost all caregivers (95% of those who were interviewed) believed their child was developing as quickly as or faster than other children their age. These perceptions were consistent across both higher and lower fee groups. This is in stark contrast to the ELOM 4&5 findings, which show that only 52% of enrolled children in Mpumalanga are developmentally On Track for early learning.

There are several likely reasons for this difference between perceived and actual performance. Firstly, PCGs were asked how their child was developing relative to other children of the same age, rather than whether they believed their child was meeting age-expected developmental milestones. This means that reference group effects may have influenced responses, as caregivers are likely to compare their child with other children in their immediate social context, whose developmental experiences may be similar.

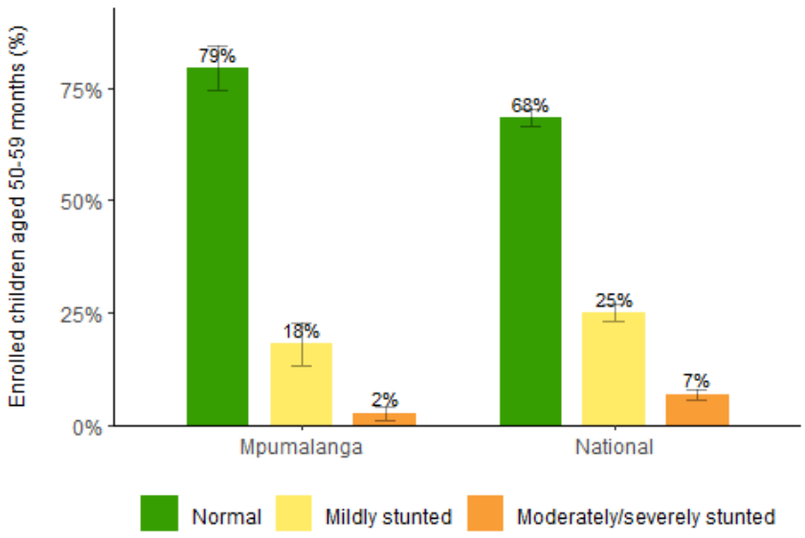
Secondly, caregivers may not always have clear information about what development typically looks like at this age, and some may also be hesitant to identify or report concerns about their child's development. This highlights the importance of raising public awareness around early development and increasing access to tools that help caregivers accurately understand and support their children's growth.

Physical growth

Children's physical growth was assessed by measuring height and classifying growth according to World Health Organization standards.

In Mpumalanga, 2% of children aged 50–59 months enrolled in ELPs are moderately or severely stunted, compared with 7% nationally. A further 18% show signs of mild stunting, compared with 25% nationally. Overall, 79% of children in Mpumalanga have normal growth, compared with 68% nationally. Children with growth faltering are less likely to meet the early learning standard. National findings show that by the age of four years, moderately or severely stunted children are on average five months behind their non-stunted peers when it comes to early learning. Mildly stunted children are approximately two months behind.

Figure 5: *Stunting rates in Mpumalanga compared with the national average.*



Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data. Error bars show the 95% confidence interval around the estimates.

Social-emotional functioning

Children's readiness for school depends not only on cognitive development but also on their ability to regulate emotions and build positive relationships. The survey measured children's:

- Social Relations with Peers and Adults: This includes abilities such as cooperating independently, participating effectively in group activities, resolving conflicts without aggression, and comfortably seeking support, assistance, or information from familiar adults.

- Emotional Readiness for School: This encompasses skills such as effectively communicating with adults, appropriately expressing needs and emotions, demonstrating independence, adapting to changes in routine at home or school, showing confidence in new situations, and initiating activities.

In Mpumalanga, 67% of children meet the expected standard for emotional readiness for school, compared with 56% nationally, while 70% meet the standard for social relations with peers and adults, compared with 63% nationally. Children in Mpumalanga therefore perform better than the national findings on both measures of social-emotional functioning.

Gender differences are relatively small. For emotional functioning, 68% of boys and 66% of girls meet the expected standard. For social relations, 72% of girls meet the expected standard compared with 68% of boys. This differs from the clearer gender pattern observed in overall early learning outcomes, where girls outperform boys.

Although over two-thirds of children meet the expected standard, a substantial proportion enter school without the social-emotional skills expected for their age. National analysis found that stronger social-emotional functioning is associated with better early learning outcomes, reinforcing the importance of supporting children's emotional wellbeing and relationships alongside cognitive development.

Early Learning Programmes

Access to an Early Learning Programme (ELP) is important, but the extent to which children benefit will depend on the quality of the programme. The *Thrive by Five Index* assessed programme quality using the LPQA v2. Interviews were also conducted with principals and practitioners, providing information on the characteristics of the ELP.

This section presents findings on programme quality and the characteristics of ELPs in Mpumalanga.

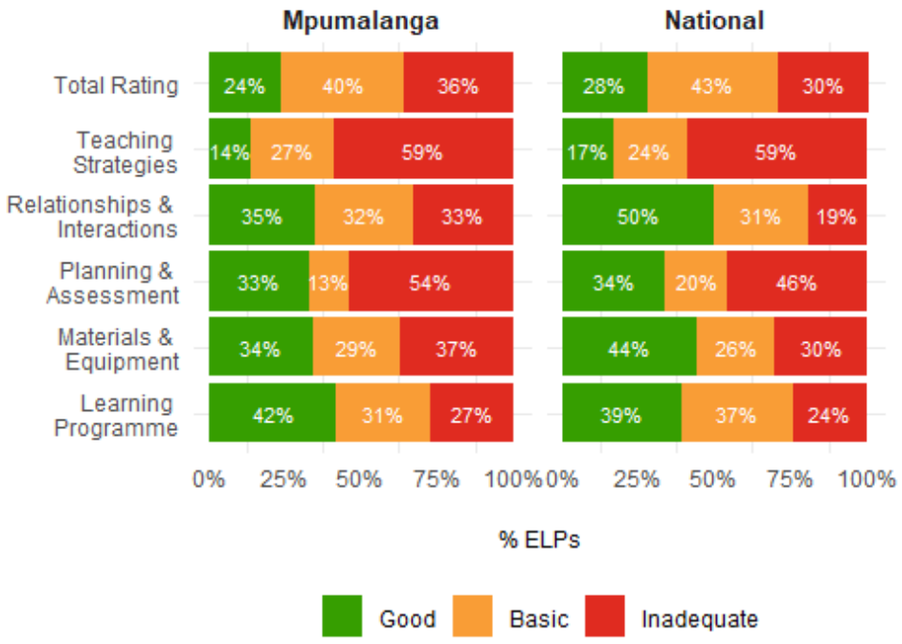
Programme quality

Learning programme quality matters. The Learning Programme Quality Assessment Tool (LPQA v2) measures the quality of a group learning programme for children aged 3–5 years in five domains aligned with the South African National Curriculum Framework (NCF):

- Materials & Equipment: Evaluates the learning materials and how they are organised in the classroom.
- Planning & Assessment: Examines curriculum use, programme planning, and child monitoring.
- The Learning Programme: Examines the daily schedule and the quality of numeracy, literacy, group times, and free-play sessions.
- Teaching Strategies: Evaluates the strategies used by ELP staff to support and extend children's learning and encourage independence.
- Relationships & Interactions: Examines interactions between children and staff and how staff encourage positive peer interactions.

Mpumalanga performs relatively well in the Learning Programme domain, with 42% of ELPs achieving a Good rating, slightly higher than the national figure of 39%. Performance is weaker in Relationships and Interactions and Materials and Equipment, where 35% and 34% of ELPs respectively achieve a Good rating, compared with 50% and 44% nationally. Planning and Assessment is also an area of concern, with 54% of ELPs rated Inadequate, compared with 46% nationally.

Figure 6: *LPQA ratings, Mpumalanga compared with the national average.*



Source: Thrive by Five Index 2024 data.

Teaching Strategies represent the province's weakest LPQA domain: only 14% of ELPs received a Good rating, while 59% were rated Inadequate. This is particularly important because Teaching Strategies was the only LPQA domain significantly associated with children's ELOM4&5 outcomes in the national analysis.

ELP characteristics

Table 5 summarises key characteristics of the 121 ELPs sampled in Mpumalanga, with national figures provided for context. On average, ELPs in Mpumalanga have been operating for 18 years, with 81% having been open for more than six years. Most ELPs (85%) were founded by either the current principal or a previous principal, the same as the national figure.

The average enrolment per ELP was 52 children, while attendance on the day of the Index averaged 41 children. The average observed class size was 20 children, similar to 19 nationally. ELPs were open for an average of 45 hours per week, compared with 46 hours nationally. Most ELPs in Mpumalanga (80%) operated from purpose-built ECD centres, substantially higher than the national figure of 57%. A further 10% operated from someone's home, while only 2% were based on school premises.

Just over half (53%) of ELPs had access to tap water within the building, similar to 52% nationally. However, 49% had a flush toilet on site, compared with 59% nationally. Access to an outdoor play area was widespread, reported by 93% of ELPs compared with 87% nationally.

Table 5: *ELP origin, size and infrastructure, Mpumalanga compared to national*

Indicator	Mpumalanga	National
General		
Average years in operation	18 years	17 years
% More than 6 years in operation	81%	84%
Founded by current / past principal	85%	85%
Average number of enrolled children	52	45
Average attendance on day of survey	41	36
Average class size (observed)	20	19
Average hours open per week	45	46 hours/week
N range	**120-121**	**1,381-1,388**
Infrastructure		
Purpose built ECD centre	80%	57%
In someone's house	10%	22%
On school premises	2%	8%
In the garage of someone's house	3%	5%
At a place of worship	3%	3%
Community hall / centre	2%	2%
Municipal building	0%	1%
Other	0%	1%
N range	**121**	**1,277-1,384**
Amenities		
Tap water in building	53%	52%
Flush toilet on site	49%	59%
Outdoor play area	93%	87%
N range	**121**	**1,386-1,388**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data.
Note: Due to Don't know responses and Refusals, sample sizes (N) differed for questions.

ELP registration and income

In Mpumalanga, 40% of ELPs reported being fully registered as Partial Care Facilities, compared with 55% nationally. A further 13% were conditionally registered and 21% were in the process of registration, while 19% were not registered. Among ELPs reporting full or conditional registration, 94% were able to provide evidence of registration.

Parent fees were the primary source of income for 99% of ELPs in Mpumalanga. At the time of the Index, 48% of all ELPs received the government ECD subsidy, slightly higher than the national figure of 44%. Among ELPs with full or conditional registration, 78% received the subsidy, compared with 67% nationally.

However, the reliability of subsidy payments was a concern. Among subsidised ELPs, only 25% reported always receiving the subsidy on time, compared with 53% nationally. While 62% reported always receiving the expected subsidy amount, only 23% reported receiving the expected amount both reliably and on time, compared with 38% nationally.

In addition, 12% of ELPs in Mpumalanga offered Grade R, compared with 26% nationally. Among those offering Grade R, 28% reported that the Grade R class was registered with the Department of Basic Education, compared with 48% nationally.

Table 6: *Registration and income, Mpumalanga compared to National.*

Indicator	Mpumalanga	National
Partial Care Facility Registration		
Fully Registered	40%	55%
Conditionally Registered	13%	8%
In Process	21%	18%
Not Registered	19%	15%
Lapsed Registration	6%	3%
Don't know	2%	1%
Of those who reported full / conditional registration - Able to provide evidence of registration (certificate)	94%	91%
N	**121**	**1,388**
Income		
Receives the ECD subsidy (% of ELPs with full or conditional PCF registration)	78%	67%
Receives ECD subsidy (% of ELPs)	48%	44%
% subsidised ELPs always receiving subsidy on time	25%	53%

% subsidised ELPs always receiving expected subsidy amount	62%	60%
% subsidised ELPs always receiving expected subsidy amount, and on time	23%	38%
Parent fees cited as the primary source of income	99%	96%
N range	**58-121**	**546-1,370**
Grade R		
Offers Grade R	12%	26%
Grade R registered with DBE	28%	48%
N range	**19-121**	**399-1,388**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data.
Note: Due to Don't know responses and Refusals, sample sizes (N) differed for questions.

Employment conditions and staff retention

ELPs in Mpumalanga employed an average of six paid staff, including four paid teaching staff. Practitioners worked an average of 40 hours per week. Most principals and practitioners were women: 90% of principals and 91% of practitioners.

Employment conditions varied. In Mpumalanga, 60% of practitioners had an employment contract, 46% received paid sick leave and 54% received paid holiday leave. Only 5% reported monthly earnings of R5000 or more for full-time employment, compared with 9% nationally.

Principals had worked at their current ELP for an average of 12 years. Among practitioners, 14% had worked at their current ELP for less than one year, 40% for one to four years, 35% for five to ten years, and 9% for more than ten years. Overall, 19% of practitioners reported that they were considering leaving the ECD profession, compared with 26% nationally.

Most ELPs in Mpumalanga (85%) belonged to an ECD Forum, compared with 75% nationally.

Table 7: *Employment conditions and staff retention, Mpumalanga compared to national.*

Indicator	Mpumalanga	National
Conditions of employment		
Number of paid staff (average of all paid staff)	6	6
Number of paid teaching staff (average)	4	4
Average hours worked per week	40	40
Practitioners earn above minimum wage	5%	9%
Practitioner has employment contract	60%	57%
Practitioner gets paid sick leave	46%	52%
Practitioner gets paid holiday leave	54%	48%
ELP is member of ECD Forum	85%	75%
% of principals who are female	90%	95%
% of practitioners who are female	91%	96%
N range	**114-121**	**1,107-1,388**
Retention and stability		
Principals - average years at current ELP	12	12
Practitioners - years at current ELP:		
<1 year	14%	20%
1-4 years	40%	36%
5-10 years	35%	27%
>10 years	9%	15%
% Practitioners thinking of leaving the ECD profession	19%	26%
N range	**116-121**	**1,206-1,383**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data.
Note: Due to Don't know responses and Refusals, sample sizes (N) differed for questions.

Principal and practitioner qualifications

In Mpumalanga, 41% of principals had an NQF Level 5 or higher ECD qualification, compared with 15% of practitioners. A further 44% of principals and 51% of practitioners had an NQF Level 4 qualification. However, 9% of principals and 29% of practitioners reported no formal ECD training. The proportion with no formal ECD training was lower than the national figure for both principals (15%) and practitioners (34%).

Table 8: *Principal and practitioner qualifications, Mpumalanga compared to national.*

Indicator	Mpumalanga	National
Highest ECD qualification of principal		
None	9%	15%
NQF 1 / Accredited skills programme	6%	9%
NQF 4	44%	38%
NQF 5	32%	25%
Above NQF 5	9%	12%
N	**121**	**1,382**
Highest ECD qualification of practitioner		
None	29%	34%
NQF 1 / Accredited skills programme	5%	14%
NQF 4	51%	33%
NQF 5	14%	14%
Above NQF 5	1%	4%
N	**116**	**1,216**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data.
Note: Due to Don't know responses and Refusals, sample sizes (N) differed for questions.

Curricula and in-service training

In Mpumalanga, 76% of practitioners reported using a curriculum, similar to the national figure of 77%. Among those using a curriculum, 55% reported having accompanying learning resources, also similar to the national figure of 56%. The majority (71%) reported using national curricula or standards (NCF/CAPS/ELDA/NELDS) compared with only 58% nationally.

During 2023 and 2024, 47% of principals received in-service training, the same as the national figure, while 40% of practitioners received in-service training, compared with 50% nationally. Among practitioners who received training, 48% were trained by non-governmental organisations and 43% by the national or provincial Department of Basic Education, compared with 36% and 35% nationally, respectively.

Table 9: *Curricula and training reported in use, Mpumalanga compared to national.*

Indicator	Mpumalanga	National
Training		
Principal received in-service training in past 2 years	47%	47%
Practitioner received in-service training in the past 2 years (2023-2024)	40%	50%
Training provided to practitioners by NGOs	48%	36%
Training provided to practitioners by DBE (national / provincial)	43%	35%
Training provided to practitioners - all other training providers	15%	39%
N range	**50-121**	**590-1,388**
Curriculum use		
Practitioners use curriculum	76%	77%
Of those with a curriculum, what % have accompanying learning resources	55%	56%
N range	**86-116**	**968-1,223**
Type of curriculum used		
National curriculum / standards (NCF/CAPS/ELDA/NELDS)	71%	58%
Other	29%	39%
Own curriculum	0%	3%
N range	**121**	**944-1,179**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data .
Note: "Other" category contains curriculum names with less than 2% uptake in the province.
Due to Don't know responses and Refusals, sample sizes (N) differed for questions

Inclusion of children with disabilities and additional support needs

The survey examined the extent to which ELPs accommodate children with disabilities and additional support needs. Children with disabilities were not directly assessed as part of the *Thrive by Five Index* child assessments. However, principals were asked whether their ELP enrolled children aged four years and older with significant functional difficulties related to seeing, hearing, walking or moving, communicating or learning.

One-third (38%) of ELPs in Mpumalanga reported accommodating at least one child with a disability, indicating that many ELPs are already providing opportunities for inclusive early learning.

Strengthening inclusive early learning remains an important priority for improving equitable access to quality education for all children. Continued investment in practitioner support, specialised services and

accessible learning environments is also needed to enable ELPs to better meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Health and nutrition services

Early Learning Programmes play an important role in supporting children's health and nutrition alongside learning. Health services reached a relatively high proportion of ELPs in Mpumalanga during 2023 and 2024. Immunisation services reached 81% of ELPs, compared with 65% nationally, while 80% received deworming services, compared with 61% nationally, and 72% received Vitamin A supplementation, compared with 60% nationally. Growth monitoring reached 27% of ELPs, similar to the national figure of 25%. Only 6% of ELPs reported receiving none of the listed health and nutrition services, compared with 19% nationally.

However, screening services were less widely available. Vision screening reached 15% of ELPs, hearing screening 14%, and developmental screening 18%, broadly similar to the national figures of 17%, 16% and 21%, respectively. Nutrition training or support reached only 6% of ELPs, compared with 15% nationally.

These findings are particularly important given that 2% of children attending ELPs in Mpumalanga are moderately or severely stunted, with a further 18% showing signs of mild stunting. The integration of nutrition, health monitoring and early learning provides an important opportunity to support children's health and developmental outcomes through coordinated service delivery. The findings also demonstrate the potential for ELPs to serve as platforms for delivering essential child health services.

Table 10: *DoH official visited ELP in 2023 or 2024, Mpumalanga compared to national.*

Indicator	Mpumalanga	National
Vision screening	15%	17%
Hearing screening	14%	16%
Developmental screening	18%	21%
Growth monitoring	27%	25%
Immunisations	81%	65%
Deworming	80%	61%
Vitamin A	72%	60%
Provide nutrition training / support	6%	15%
Other	0%	2%
None	6%	19%
N	**121**	**1,387**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data

Home language and Language of Learning and Teaching

Children learn most effectively when opportunities for learning are available in languages they understand, particularly during the early years.

Mpumalanga is characterised by considerable linguistic diversity. The Index therefore examined the alignment between children's home language and the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) used within ELPs.

For 85% of children, the language used by the practitioner matched the child's main home language, higher than the national figure of 71%. However, there was a substantial difference by ELP fee group: the main home language matched the classroom language for 89% of children attending the lower-fee 80% of ELPs, compared with 40% of those attending the highest-fee 20%.

When children's full multilingual language profiles were considered, 95% of children had at least one home language that matched the language used in the classroom, compared with 90% nationally. This was 96% among children attending the lower-fee 80% of ELPs and 88% among those attending the highest-fee 20%.

These findings suggest that most children in Mpumalanga experience learning in a familiar language. However, alignment with children's main home language is considerably lower among children attending the highest-fee 20% of ELPs.

Table 11: *Alignment between home language and language of learning and teaching (LoLT), Mpumalanga compared to national.*

Language combinations	Mpumalanga			National
	Total	Bottom 80% ELP Fees	Top 20% ELP Fees	
The child's main home language (as reported by PCG) matches the language that the practitioner uses in the classroom (as observed by the assessor)	85%	89%	40%	71%
Any of the child's home languages match the language that the practitioner uses in the classroom (as observed by the assessor)	95%	96%	88%	90%
N	**378**	**312**	**66**	**3,841**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data.

Household profile and nurturing care

Children's development is shaped not only by their experiences in ELPs, but also by the care, resources and relationships available within their homes and communities. Primary Caregiver (PCG) interviews were completed for 378 of the 491 assessed children in the Mpumalanga, representing 77% of the provincial child sample. The majority of PCGs were the child's biological mother (69%), followed by the grandmother (13%), the biological father (8%), and other caregivers (10%).

Employment, education, assets, and basic services

Household circumstances differed substantially between children attending the lower-fee 80% of ELPs and those attending the highest-fee 20%. Overall, 55% of PCGs in Mpumalanga had completed Grade 12. This ranged from 52% among PCGs of children attending the lower-fee 80% of ELPs to 82% among those attending the highest-fee 20%. PCG unemployment was 52% overall, compared with 45% nationally, and differed markedly by fee group: 55% in the lower-fee group compared with 24% in the highest-fee group.

Access to a working cellphone was almost universal at 97%. However, access to other household assets differed substantially by fee group. A functional laptop or computer was available in 27% of households in the lower-fee group and 72% in the highest-fee group. Internet access through a connection in the dwelling was reported by 11% and 51%, respectively, while ownership of a working motor vehicle was reported by 35% and 66%.

Overall, 13% of households had a tap inside the dwelling, compared with 27% nationally. This was reported by 10% of households in the lower-fee group and 36% in the highest-fee group.

Table 12: *Employment, assets and basic services, Mpumalanga and national.*

Indicator	Mpumalanga sample			National
	Total	Bottom 80% ELP Fees	Top 20% ELP Fees	
PCG completed grade 12	55%	52%	82%	56%
PCG is unemployed	52%	55%	24%	45%
Household has access to a working cellphone	97%	97%	97%	100%
Functional laptop/computer in the home	31%	27%	72%	29%
Internet is mainly accessed by connection in the dwelling	15%	11%	51%	23%
HH has a motor-car in working order	38%	35%	66%	36%
Main water source: tap inside dwelling	13%	10%	36%	27%
N	**378**	**312**	**66**	**3,841**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data
Note: Due to Don't know responses and Refusals, sample sizes (N) differed for questions

Home Learning Environment

Access to children's books varied across households in Mpumalanga. Overall, 22% of sampled households had no children's books, 22% had one, 45% had two to five, and 12% had more than five.

Differences were evident by ELP fee group. Among households whose children attended the lower-fee 80% of ELPs, 22% had no children's books and 10% had more than five.

Among those attending the highest-fee 20%, 18% had no children's books and 27% had more than five.

Overall, 36% of PCGs in Mpumalanga reported reading to their child at least three times a week, the same as the national figure. This was reported by 33% of PCGs in the lower-fee group and 55% in the highest-fee group.

Fathers had lived in 51% of sampled households at some point during the previous six months, compared with 45% nationally. However, 69% of fathers were not involved in any of the measured home learning activities, compared with 60% nationally, while 13% had participated in home learning activities at least three times during the previous week, compared with 18% nationally.

Father involvement differed substantially by fee group: 72% of fathers in the lower-fee group were not involved in home learning activities, compared with 33% in the highest-fee group. Similarly, 11% of fathers in the lower-fee group participated in home learning activities at least three times during the previous week, compared with 36% in the highest-fee group.

The national Thrive by Five findings show a positive association between high levels of father involvement and children's early learning and development. More specifically, the association was only statistically significant when comparing children with no reported father involvement to those whose fathers had engaged in play-based activities with them three or more times in the past week. These findings reinforce the importance of encouraging fathers and father figures to participate in activities such as reading, storytelling, singing, playing, counting and drawing with children.

National analysis also found that access to books was positively associated with children's Early Learning Outcomes Measure (ELOM 4&5) scores after accounting for child age, child gender and ELP fee level. Children living in households with 10 or more books scored an average of 6.6 points higher than those living in households with no books, a meaningful and statistically significant difference.

Table 13: *Home learning environment (HLE), Mpumalanga and national.*

Indicator	Mpumalanga sample			National
	Total	Bottom 80% ELP Fees	Top 20% ELP Fees	
Books and reading				
No children's books in the home	54%	43%	93%	56%
1 children's book in the home	20%	23%	10%	45%
2-5 children's books in the home	99%	99%	100%	100%
More than 5 children's books in the home	34%	23%	77%	29%
PCG reads books to child ≥3×/week	60%	53%	87%	23%
N	**339**	**266**	**73**	**3,841**
Father involvement				
Father lives in the household	51%	49%	73%	45%
Father not involved in HLE activities	69%	72%	33%	60%
Father did HLE activities 3+times in the past week	13%	11%	36%	18%
N	**378**	**312**	**66**	**3,841**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data
Note: Due to Don't know responses and Refusals, sample sizes (N) differed for questions

Health, hunger and social protection

The survey collected information on children's health, household food security and access to social protection. Access to social protection was high in Mpumalanga. Overall, 97% of children had a birth certificate, similar to the national figure of 98%. The Child Support Grant reached 86% of children, compared with 78% nationally. Uptake differed substantially by ELP fee group, with 90% of children attending the lower-fee 80% of ELPs receiving the grant compared with 43% of those attending the highest-fee 20%.

Reported food insecurity was relatively low. Overall, 4% of PCGs reported that a household member had skipped meals because of food shortages during the previous three months, compared with 6% nationally. In addition, 3% reported that a child had skipped meals over the same period, compared with 2% nationally. Child hunger was reported by 3% of households in the lower-fee group and none in the highest-fee group.

Pregnancy and birth-related risks were also reported. In Mpumalanga, 19% of children were born prematurely, compared with 13% nationally, while 18% were born with a low birth weight, compared with 11% nationally. Overall, 17% of children were reported to have been exposed to at least one of the measured pregnancy or birth-related risk factors, similar to the national figure of 18%.

Reported alcohol consumption during pregnancy was 4%, the same as nationally, while 1% of mothers reported smoking during pregnancy, compared with 3% nationally.

National analysis found that low birth weight was significantly associated with lower early learning scores, with children born with a low birth weight scoring an average of 2.9 points lower on the ELOM 4&5 than their peers. These findings underscore the importance of identifying and supporting children exposed to pregnancy and birth-related risks as part of an integrated approach to early childhood development.

Table 14: *Health, hunger and social protection, Mpumalanga and national.*

Indicator	Mpumalanga			National
	Total	Bottom 80% ELP Fees	Top 20% ELP Fees	
Social protection				
Child has birth certificate	97%	98%	95%	98%
Child receives Child Support Grant	86%	90%	43%	78%
N	**378**	**312**	**66**	**3,841**
Hunger				
Household member skipped meals due to food shortage (past 3 months)	4%	11%	4%	6%
Child skipped meals (past 3 months)	3%	5%	0%	2%
N	**378**	**266**	**66**	**3,841**
Pregnancy related risks				
Mother smoked during pregnancy	1%	1%	3%	3%
Mother consumed alcohol during pregnancy	4%	5%	2%	4%
Premature birth (<37 weeks)	19%	20%	16%	13%
Low birth weight (<2.5 kg)	18%	18%	16%	11%
Overweight (>4kg)	3%	3%	1%	6%
Exposure to at least one pregnancy / birth risk factor	17%	18%	13%	18%
N	**378**	**266**	**66**	**3,841**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data
Note: Due to Don't know responses and Refusals, sample sizes (N) differed for questions

Caregiver social connectedness and daily functioning

Responsive caregiving during the preschool years plays a critical role in child development, particularly for children exposed to early adversity. Responsive caregiving refers to a caregiver's timely and developmentally appropriate responses to a child's cues, as well as ongoing emotional support and engagement in activities that promote learning. The capacity of PCGs to provide responsive care may be constrained by structural stressors such as poverty, gender inequality and unsafe communities, while strong social support can help buffer these pressures and support responsive caregiving.

Two aspects of PCG wellbeing were included in the PCG interview: social connectedness and daily functioning. PCGs were asked to select the most appropriate response from a short list of options for each of four statements shown in Table 15.

Overall, the indicators of PCG well-being in Mpumalanga present a mixed picture. Family support was relatively strong, with 86% of PCGs agreeing or strongly agreeing that their family tries to help them, similar to 85% nationally. However, only 36% reported that they could count on their friends when things go wrong, substantially lower than the national figure of 51%.

Most PCGs reported relatively low levels of difficulty with daily functioning. While 72% reported that taking care of things at home was not difficult, 28% found this somewhat, very or extremely difficult, compared with 39% nationally. Similarly, 91% reported no difficulty getting along with other people, while 9% experienced some level of difficulty, compared with 18% nationally.

These findings should be interpreted with caution. The indicators presented capture only a limited dimension of caregiver wellbeing and do not provide a comprehensive measure of stress or mental health. Nonetheless, the findings suggest that while most PCGs report relatively few difficulties with daily functioning and strong family support, support from friends appears more limited.

Table 15: *Primary caregiver social connectedness and daily functioning, Mpumalanga and national.*

Social connectedness and daily functioning		Mpumalanga Responses	National Responses
Social connectedness	**"My family tries to help me"**		
	Agree/strongly agree	86%	85%
	Disagree/strongly disagree	14%	15%
	"I can count on my friends when things go wrong"		
	Agree/strongly agree	36%	51%
	Disagree/strongly disagree	64%	49%

Daily functioning	**"In the last 4 weeks, I found taking care of things at home"**		
	Not difficult	72%	61%
	Somewhat difficult	16%	26%
	Very/extremely difficult	12%	13%
	"In the last 4 weeks, I found getting along with other people"		
	Not difficult	91%	82%
	Somewhat difficult	6%	13%
	Very/extremely difficult	3%	5%
N		**375-378**	**3,836-3,841**

Source: Weighted estimates based on Thrive by Five Index 2024 data
Note: Due to Don't know responses and Refusals, sample sizes (N) differed for questions

Conclusion and key recommendations

The Mpumalanga findings present a mixed provincial picture. Overall, 52% of four-year-old children attending ELPs are On Track for early learning. Outcomes are strongest in Emergent Literacy and Language and weakest in Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration. Girls perform better than boys across most early learning measures, and substantial differences are evident by ELP fee group: 72% of children attending the highest-fee 20% of ELPs are On Track, compared with 50% of those attending the remaining 80%.

These differences are also reflected in the environments surrounding children. Household access to education, books, digital resources, transport and basic services differs markedly by ELP fee group. ELP conditions present a mixed picture. Parent fees are the primary source of income for 99% of ELPs, while 48% receive the ECD subsidy. Although subsidy coverage is slightly higher than nationally, the reliability of payments is a concern, with only 23% of subsidised ELPs reporting that they always receive the expected amount and receive it on time. Most practitioners do not earn above the minimum wage. At the same time, Mpumalanga records strengths in access to health services, ECD Forum membership and the alignment between children's home languages and classroom language.

Programme quality remains an important area for improvement. Teaching Strategies are the weakest LPQA domain, with only 14% of ELPs achieving a Good rating and 59% rated Inadequate. This is particularly important given the national finding that Teaching Strategies were the only LPQA domain significantly associated with children's ELOM 4&5 outcomes.

The evidence therefore points to inequalities across children's early learning outcomes, ELP quality and household learning opportunities. At the same time, Mpumalanga performs relatively well on social-emotional functioning: 67% of children meet the expected standard for emotional readiness and 70% meet the standard for social relations. Physical growth outcomes are also comparatively positive, with 2% of children moderately or severely stunted, compared with 7% nationally, although a further 18% show signs of mild stunting.

The marked difference between caregiver perceptions of child development and measured developmental outcomes highlights the importance of supporting caregivers to recognise children's developmental progress before they enter formal schooling.

Key recommendations

1. **Make teaching quality the province's top quality-improvement priority.**

   Focus practitioner training, coaching and support on practical teaching strategies that extend children's thinking, participation and independence. Only 14% of Mpumalanga ELPs achieved a Good rating for Teaching Strategies, while 59% were rated Inadequate, making this the weakest programme-quality domain in the province. National analysis also identified Teaching Strategies as the only observed programme-quality domain significantly associated with ELOM 4&5 outcomes. Practitioner development should therefore prioritise practical, responsive and play-based teaching approaches and provide ongoing support to help practitioners apply these approaches consistently in the classroom.

2. **Target support to developmental domains where Mpumalanga children struggle most.**
   Strengthen play-based learning activities, practitioner support and learning materials, particularly for Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration, which is the weakest developmental domain in the province, with only 28% of children On Track. While Mpumalanga performs comparatively well in Emergent Literacy and Language, Cognition and Executive Functioning, and Emergent Numeracy and Mathematics, fine motor development remains a clear area requiring additional attention. Particular focus should also be given to boys: only 44% of boys are On Track overall compared with 60% of girls, and boys are more likely to be Falling Far Behind. Targeted support should therefore ensure that learning activities engage both girls and boys and provide regular opportunities to develop fine motor, visual-motor and related foundational skills.

3. **Prioritise quality improvement and resources in lower-fee ELPs.**
   Direct additional resources and quality support towards ELPs serving poorer communities, where developmental disadvantage is greatest. Overall, 50% of children attending the lower-fee 80% of ELPs are On Track, compared with 72% in the highest-fee 20%. The largest difference is in Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration, where only 26% of children in lower-fee ELPs are On Track compared with 55% in higher-fee ELPs. Differences are also evident across all other developmental domains. Quality-improvement initiatives should therefore prioritise lower-fee and under-resourced ELPs through targeted practitioner coaching and access to appropriate play and learning materials, helping to ensure that children's developmental opportunities are not determined by the resources available to their ELP or household.

4. **Use the province's registration and subsidy platform to drive quality.**
   Strengthen the connection between public funding, ELP sustainability and quality improvement, with particular attention to the reliability of subsidy payments. Almost all ELPs in Mpumalanga (99%) rely primarily on parent fees, while 48% receive the ECD subsidy. Although subsidy coverage is slightly higher than nationally, payment reliability is a significant concern: only 25% of subsidised ELPs report always receiving the subsidy on time, and just 23% report always receiving both the expected amount and receiving it on time. Improving the predictability and reliability of subsidy payments would strengthen ELP sustainability and provide a more stable platform from which ELPs can invest in programme quality and practitioner support.

5. **Close critical infrastructure, health and nutrition gaps around ELPs.**
   Build on Mpumalanga's comparatively strong health-service reach while addressing gaps in screening and preventive support. 81% of ELPs received immunisation services, 80% deworming and 72% Vitamin A supplementation, all above national levels. However, only 15% received vision screening, 14% hearing screening and 18% developmental screening, while nutrition training or support reached just 6%. Although moderate or severe stunting is comparatively low at 2%, a further 18% of children show signs of mild stunting. Strengthening DBE–Health collaboration should therefore focus on maintaining the province's strong health-service coverage while expanding developmental, vision and hearing screening, nutrition support and appropriate referral pathways through ELPs.

6. **Mobilise families around simple home learning and developmental milestones.**
   Expand access to children's books and promote frequent reading, storytelling, counting, drawing and play at home, including active engagement of fathers and father figures. Overall, 22% of households have no children's books, only 36% of PCGs read to their child at least three times a week, and 69% of fathers did not participate in any of the measured home learning activities. Findings suggest a gap between caregiver perceptions and measured developmental outcomes: 95% of caregivers believe their child is developing at the same rate as or faster than other children of the same age, compared with only 52% of children who are actually On Track. Caregiver engagement should therefore combine practical, low-cost ideas for supporting learning at home with accessible information about developmental milestones and how to recognise when a child may need additional support.

7. **Reach the children still outside organised early learning.**
   According to the 2024 General Household Survey, 30% of four-year-old children in Mpumalanga are not enrolled in any form of organised early learning. Expanding access must continue alongside efforts to improve quality for children already enrolled.

The recommendations presented above reflect the key priorities emerging from the Mpumalanga findings and stakeholder engagement. They should be read alongside the national *Thrive by Five Index 2024* recommendations, which provide a broader framework for strengthening early learning across South Africa. The full national recommendations are available in the **Thrive by Five Index 2024 Recommendations Brief.**

Addendum: Sampled wards and number of ELPs and children assessed in Mpumalanga

District	Municipality	Ward ID	# sampled ELPs	# sampled children
Ehlanzeni	Bushbuckridge Local Municipality	83205008	4	16
		83205012	3	12
		83205013	1	4
		83205023	3	12
	City of Mbombela Local Municipality	83206003	3	12
		83206009	4	16
		83206036	5	15
		83206038	4	15
	Nkomazi Local Municipality	83204002	3	10
		83204005	1	4
		83204006	3	12
		83204012	4	15
		83204015	5	17
		83204019	3	12
		83204030	2	7
		83204031	3	12
Gert Sibande	Dipaleseng Local Municipality	83006003	3	12
	Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality	83004006	3	12
	Govan Mbeki Local Municipality	83007005	6	20
		83007019	2	8
		83007020	1	4
	Lekwa Local Municipality	83005001	2	5
		83005005	2	8

District	Municipality	Ward ID	# sampled ELPs	# sampled children
Gert Sibande	Mkhondo Local Municipality	83003003	4	16
		83003006	3	12
		83003009	3	12
		83003018	2	8
	Msukaligwa Local Municipality	83002001	3	12
Nkangala	Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality	83106012	3	12
		83106019	5	16
		83106021	4	13
		83106022	3	12
	Emakhazeni Local Municipality	83104005	1	4
		83104007	5	21
	Emalahleni Local Municipality	83102009	3	9
		83102026	1	4
		83102027	3	12
	Steve Tshwete Local Municipality	83103011	2	6
	Thembisile Hani Local Municipality	83105005	2	8
		83105018	4	16



2024 thrive5
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BUILDING FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFELONG SUCCE

The Thrive by Five Index 2024 is led by the Department of Basic Education and coordinated by DataDrive2030, with the support of the FirstRand Foundation, the LEGO Foundation, This Day, and Yellowwoods.

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