

# **Educational Disruption and Exam Preparedness:**

## **The State of Lebanon's Grade 12 Students in 2025**

## Introduction

Lebanon continues to face compounded crises severely impacting its education sector. The escalation of the Israeli aggressions between September and November 2024 exacerbated existing educational disruptions for the current academic year 2024–2025. More than a million civilians were displaced, and schools were either directly damaged or repurposed as shelters. According to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's (MEHE), the aggression directly affected approximately 500,000 students, teachers, and school staff (MEHE, 2024a). The government's emergency response primarily relied on repurposing educational facilities as shelters for displaced populations without a strategy to sustain educational activities. As a result, 638 educational institutions, accounting for 43% of all schools, were converted into shelters. Additionally, around 40% of educational institutions were either located in unsafe areas or had hazardous access routes, which left only 310 educational institutions operational during this period (MEHE, 2024b).

These disruptions have had a profound impact on children's education, particularly for Lebanese students residing near the southern border or in areas directly affected by the aggression, such as the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Beqaa, and Baalbek regions. Many have been unable to attend classes in person, relying instead on remote learning methods such as WhatsApp, which provide limited educational resources and minimal interaction. As a result of repeated and prolonged school closures since the Israeli aggression in October 2023, a significant number of these students have now missed two consecutive academic years. This has led to deepening learning losses and further undermined academic progress in the most affected regions.

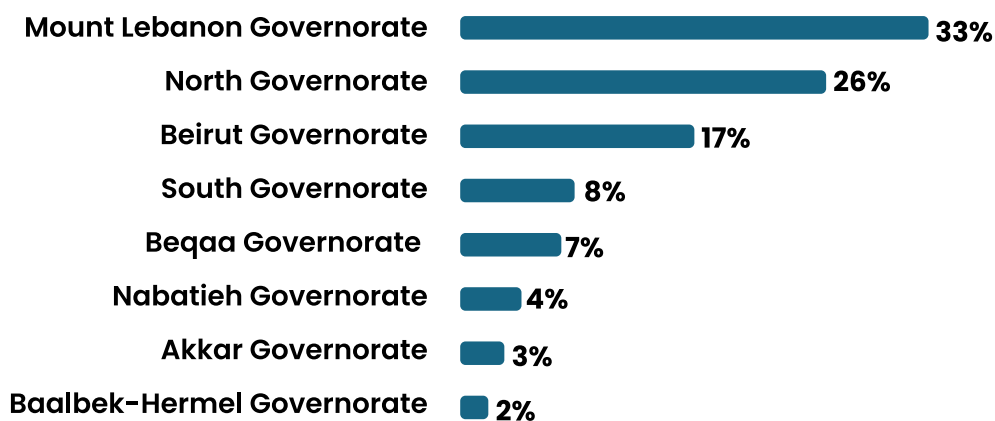
Given this context, it is crucial to examine the readiness of grade 12 students to sit for the official exams and to understand the extent of the challenges they are facing. This study, now in its third consecutive year and part of a continuous monitoring effort since 2020, specifically targets official exam students to provide an evidence-based assessment of their preparedness and to inform policy responses.

## Methodology and Sample

We conducted an online survey from June 3 to June 19, 2025, involving 511 grade 12 students preparing for official examinations. The survey was administered through SurveyMonkey, with subsequent data cleaning and analysis performed using Excel and STATA. To ensure broad and diverse participation, the survey link was disseminated through the Centre for Lebanese Studies' social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, and was also shared with our network of educators across Lebanon. This approach was intended to reach a wide and representative sample of students from different regions and school backgrounds.

The sample comprised 79% Lebanese students, 15% Syrians, and 6% Palestinians and other nationalities. Around 68% of respondents attended private schools, 28% attended public schools, and 4% were enrolled in UNRWA schools. Most respondents (85%) were aged 17–18 years, with a gender distribution of 61% females and 39% males, and included participants from all Lebanese governorates. Notably, 57% of participants reported that they are residents of areas directly affected by the Israeli aggression.

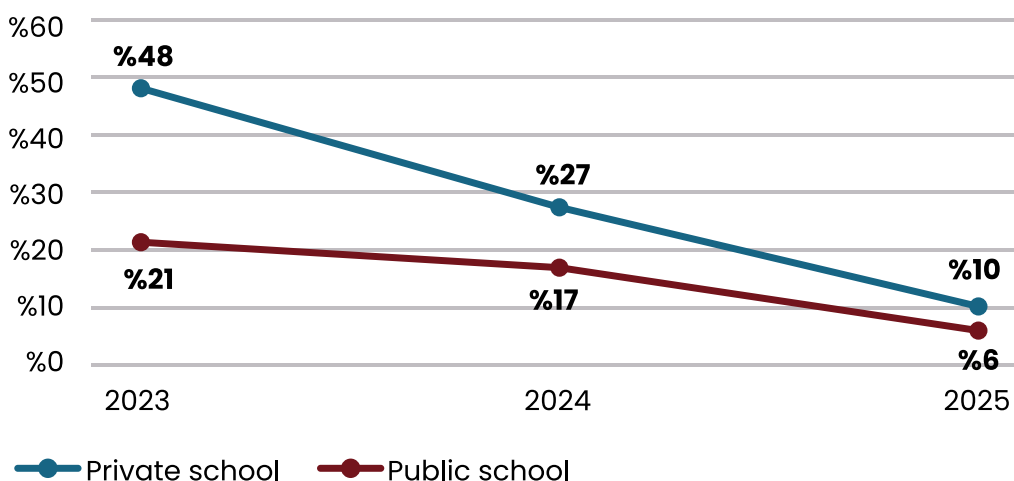
### Sample distribution by governorate



### Readiness for official examinations

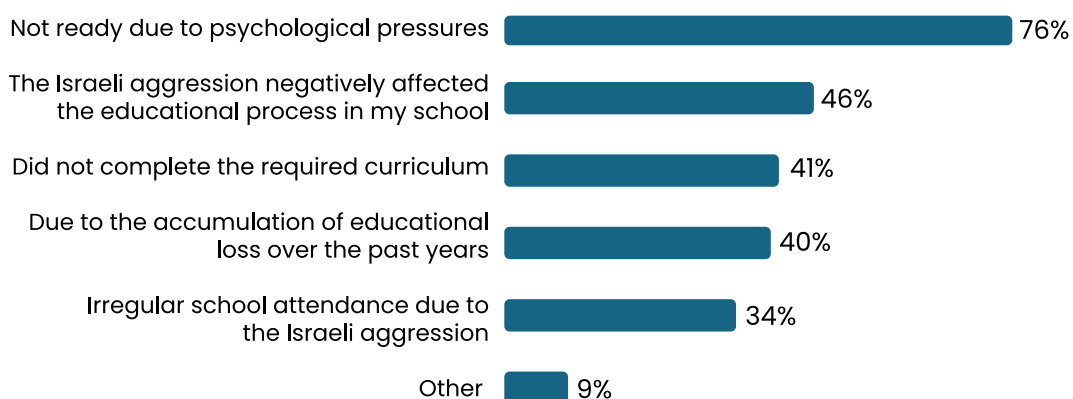
Readiness for official examinations was alarmingly low this year, with only 10% of private school students and 6% of public school students reporting that they felt ready, marking a sharp decline from the previous year's rates of 27% and 17% in 2024 and 48% and 21% in 2023, respectively.

Percentage of grade 12 students who reported that they are ready for official exams



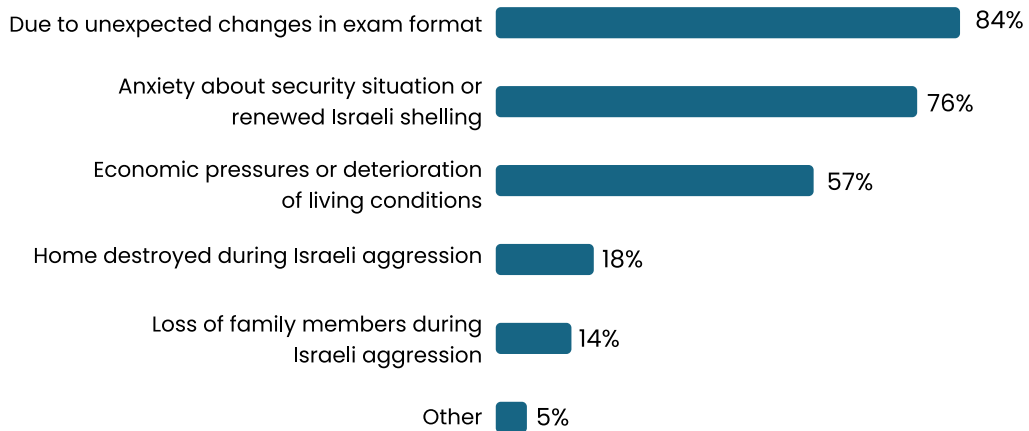
A closer examination of the underlying reasons for this decline reveals the central role of psychological well-being. Psychological distress emerged as the primary factor contributing to students' lack of readiness for official examinations, cited by 76% of respondents, followed by the impacts of aggression (45%), incomplete curriculum coverage (41%), and cumulative learning losses (40%).

### Reasons for Students' Lack of Readiness for Official Exams



Correspondingly, psychological distress among students has reached critical levels, with merely 10% reporting good mental health. Major sources of stress included unexpected changes to the official exam format or procedures (84%), fear of renewed aggression in their area of residence (76%), and financial pressure due to deteriorating living conditions (57%).

### Factors Causing Psychological Stress Among Students



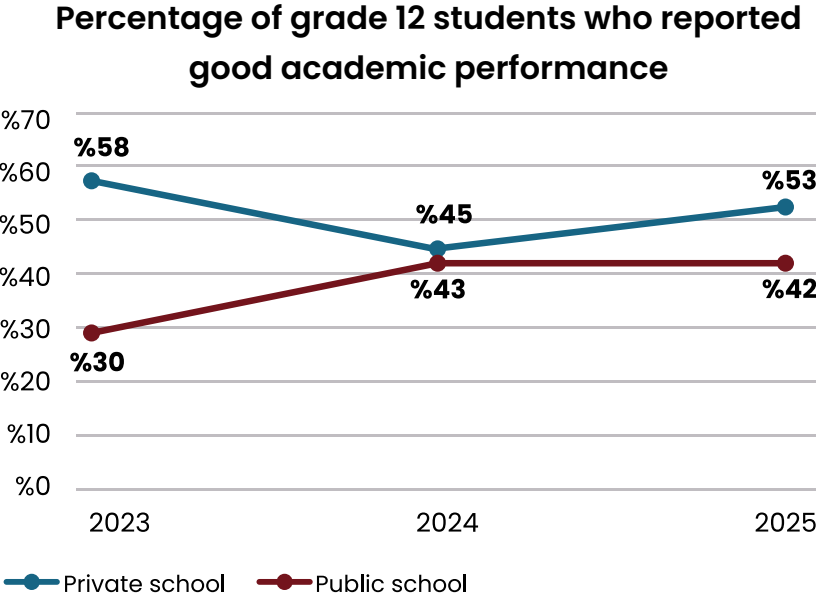
In addition to psychological stress, students’ readiness for the official exams was significantly undermined by incomplete curriculum coverage resulting from ongoing crises and repeated school interruptions. Only 24% of private school students reported that their school was able to cover the entire curriculum, compared to just 12% of public school students. Teacher strikes further compounded these challenges, particularly in public schools, where 63% of students indicated that the strikes significantly affected their readiness for the official examinations.

Moreover, policy measures adopted by the Ministry of Education were met with considerable skepticism and disapproval among students. An overwhelming 91% of respondents opposed the cancellation of optional subjects from the official examinations, a policy that previously allowed students to select specific subjects to focus on for the exams, thereby reducing their overall academic burden. The removal of this option has heightened students’ sense of pressure and dissatisfaction, particularly in the context of ongoing disruptions. While the Ministry’s decision to reduce the curriculum by 40% received moderate support, with only 58% expressing approval, indicating that this measure has not effectively addressed students’ concerns. In addition, the extension of the academic year was widely viewed as inadequate, with only 6% of private school students and just 1% of public school students considering it sufficient to ensure complete curriculum coverage. Taken together, these findings highlight a disconnection between recent policy interventions and students’ concerns, emphasising the extent to which these measures have fallen short in supporting students’ readiness for official examinations.

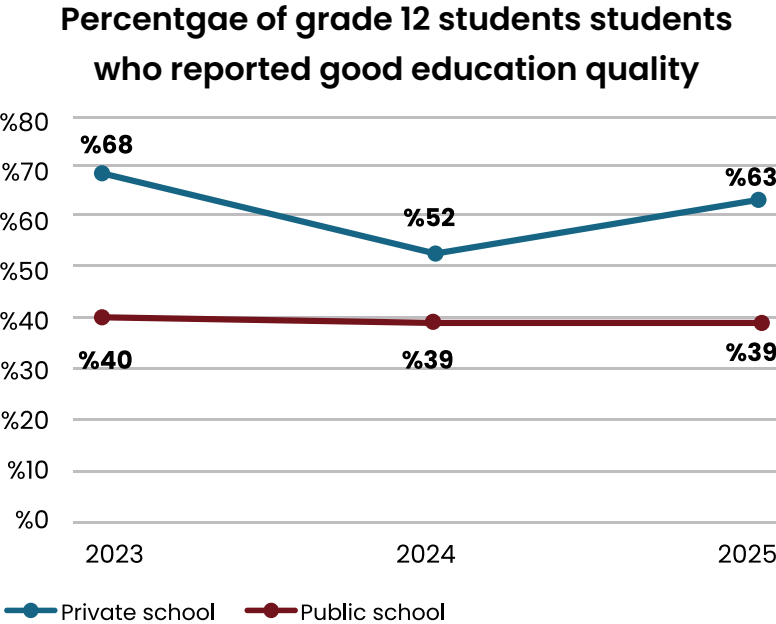
### Education Quality and Academic Performance

Significant disparities persisted between private and public school students regarding self-reported educational quality and academic performance. Our findings reveal that private school students consistently reported higher rates of good academic performance compared to their peers in public schools over the past three years. In private schools, there was a notable drop in self-reported academic performance from 58% in 2023 to 45% in 2024, but this figure rebounded to 53% in 2025. Public school students, on the other hand, reported an increase in perceived academic performance from 30% in 2023 to 43% in 2024, after which the rate stabilised at 42% in 2025. However, the public education sector, which has long suffered from chronic underfunding,

resource limitations, and a lack of institutional support, has been particularly unable to adapt to and withstand the repeated shocks and disruptions of recent years. Importantly, despite the differences between sectors, these self-reported rates remain low in both private and public schools, highlighting widespread educational challenges affecting all students across Lebanon’s education system.



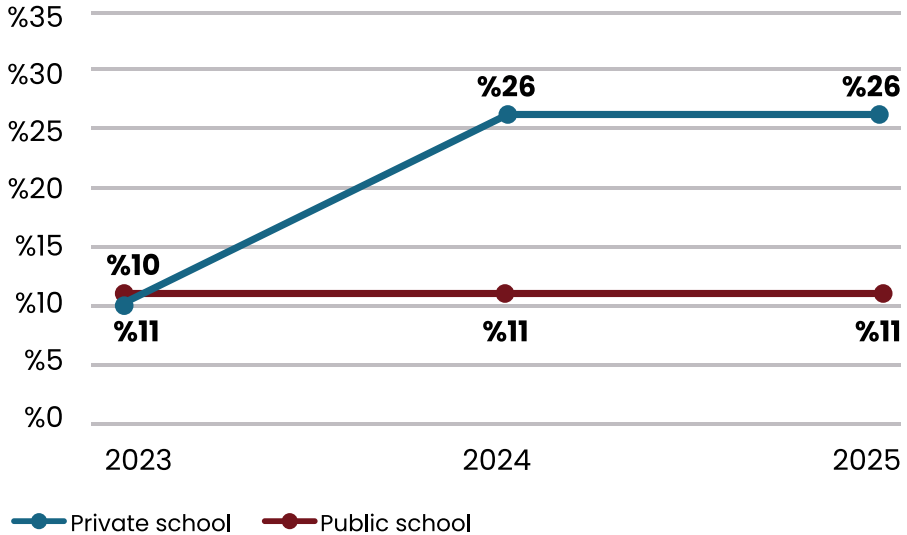
Students’ perceptions of educational quality followed a somewhat similar trend. Across all three years, private school students consistently rated the quality of their education more positively than their public school peers. Private school students reported high levels of perceived educational quality in 2023 (68%), followed by a decline in 2024 (52%) and a subsequent improvement in 2025 (63%). In contrast, public school students’ perceptions of good educational quality remained low and virtually unchanged at around 40% throughout the same period. While this persistent gap highlights ongoing concerns about the quality of education in the public sector, it is important to note that, despite the difference between sectors, perceptions of educational quality remain unsatisfactory in both sectors.



Furthermore, when asked whether the skills and knowledge they had gained from their latest three years of schooling were sufficient to continue their education, 26% of private school students in

both 2024 and 2025 responded positively, up from just 10% in 2023. This suggests some progress in private schools' ability to equip students for educational progression, although the overall percentage remains modest. In contrast, public school students' confidence in this area remained persistently low and unchanged over the same period, with only 11% each year feeling adequately prepared. These findings reveal a persistent challenge across both sectors, but especially in public schools, where students continue to feel underprepared for future educational opportunities.

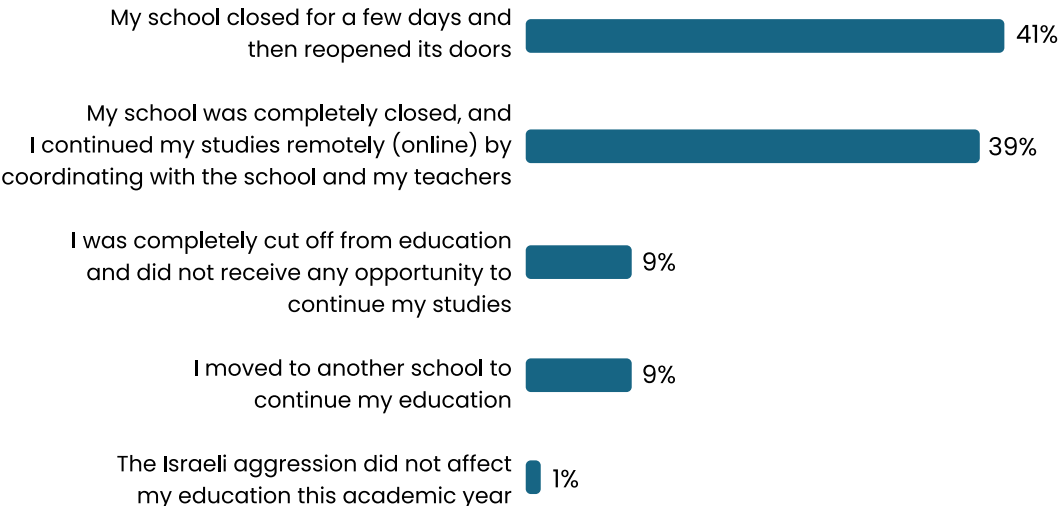
**Percentage of grade 12 students who reported sufficient skills and knowledge for continued education**



**Impact of Israeli Aggression**

As reported earlier, the Israeli aggression during the 2024–2025 academic year resulted in extensive school interruptions, with the most severe disruptions concentrated in areas directly affected by the aggression. In these high-impact regions, 57% of our respondents resided, and the educational consequences were substantial: among these students, 86% experienced forced displacement and 96% reported some form of schooling disruption. The forms of disruption varied: 41% faced temporary school closures before schools reopened, 39% continued their studies remotely through online platforms, 9% were completely cut off from education, and another 9% had to transfer to different schools to continue learning. Only a very small fraction (1%) indicated that the aggression had no effect on their education.

**The Impact of the Israeli Aggression on Students Residing in Directly Affected Areas**



While these figures highlight the impact in directly affected areas, it is important to recognise that the psychological effects of the aggression were widespread, reaching well beyond the frontlines or regions that experienced heavy airstrikes, such as the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Beqaa, and Baalbek. Students across Lebanon reported heightened anxiety about the possibility of renewed airstrikes, while many faced the trauma of losing family members during the war, the destruction of their homes, or the loss of their family's primary source of income. These factors, combined with prior educational disruptions, have not only compounded pre-existing learning losses but have also further undermined students' academic readiness and overall well-being across the country.

## Conclusion

The compounded educational losses in Lebanon, significantly intensified by the recent Israeli aggression, have profoundly undermined grade 12 students' readiness for official examinations. Our findings reveal that persistent disparities between private and public schools, coupled with repeated school disruptions, high levels of psychological distress, and a lack of preparedness for further education, continue to pose critical challenges for students across the country. While private school students consistently reported better perceived academic performance, educational quality, and confidence in their skills compared to their public school peers, it is evident that outcomes remain unsatisfactory in both sectors.

Importantly, the study underscores that recent policy responses have not sufficiently addressed the concerns of students preparing for official examinations. Measures such as the cancellation of optional subjects, partial curriculum reductions, and the extension of the academic year were widely viewed as inadequate, further fuelling students' anxiety and dissatisfaction. Moreover, the pronounced impact of psychological distress, driven by both the direct and indirect effects of aggression, displacement, and economic hardship, highlights the urgent need for integrated psychosocial support within educational frameworks.

The challenges reported in this study reflect deeper, systemic issues within Lebanon's education sector. The sector continues to suffer from longstanding structural weaknesses: underinvestment in public education, lack of contingency planning for emergencies, and an overreliance on ad hoc policy solutions that fail to address the root causes of educational inequality. The inability to ensure curriculum coverage, provide stable learning environments, and support student well-being is not only a product of recent crises but the culmination of years of neglect, fragmentation, and limited accountability in educational governance.

The persistent lack of readiness for official exams, now observed for the third consecutive year, should therefore be understood as a reflection of ongoing systemic failings within the education sector. Without effective reform that addresses governance, equity, quality, and resilience in the education system, Lebanese students will remain vulnerable to future shocks. A reflective approach that recognises and confronts these root causes is essential for restoring not only academic achievement, but also hope and confidence in Lebanon's educational future.

## References

Ministry of Education and Higher Education (2024a). *Fact sheet on education response plan Reporting Period 7–11 October, 2024*. <https://www.mehe.gov.lb/ar/SiteAssets/Lists/News/AllItems/MEHE%20Fact%20Sheet%20on%20Education%20Emergency%20Response-Final-ENG.pdf>

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