

# Student attitudes

## Student attitudes to subjects and school

Most students in the region, both year four and year six, reported agreement with all the attitude statements ('Agree a lot' or 'Agree') about the cognitive domains and school. This shows overall positive attitudes to reading, writing, mathematics and school.

On average, roughly 90% of students from Cook Islands reported that they enjoyed going to school (year four, 88%; year six, 92%) and felt that it was important to do so (year four, 91%; year six, 94%). Additionally, more than four out of five students reported that they felt safe at school (year four, 86%; year six, 86%) and safe travelling to school (year four, 88%; year six, 86%). Most year four and year six students from Cook Islands enjoy schooling, value schooling, and feel safe at school and travelling to school.

When it came to literacy, more than eight out of ten students reported that they enjoyed reading (year four, 86%; year six, 85%) and writing (year four, 87%; year six, 87%). About four out of five students reported that they found reading easy (year four, 85%; year six, 79%) and found writing easy (year four, 83%; year six, 83%). Similar levels of agreement were seen between year four and year six students on all questions related to reading and writing.













































There was, however, a noticeable difference in agreement for questions related to mathematics. At the year four level, 75% of students agreed that they found mathematics easy and 81% agreed that they did well in mathematics. At the year six level, 66% of students agreed that they found mathematics easy and 70% agreed that they did well in mathematics. Students were also less likely to report that they enjoyed doing mathematics at year six (73%) than they were at year four (86%). These values are lower than the results for reading and writing for both year levels.

Interestingly, students at both year levels still agreed, in similar proportions to reading and writing, that mathematics was important (year four, 87%; year six, 88%).

The full breakdown of these results can be seen in Table STT1.7.

Table STT1.7

## Percentage of students agreeing with statements about reading, writing, mathematics and school

Statement	Year 4	Year 6
<b>Reading</b>		
Enjoy reading	 86% (2.7)	 85% (3.1)
Read in my own time	 83% (3.3)	 79% (2.1)
Think it is important to be a good reader	 86% (3.3)	 90% (3.0)
Find reading easy	 85% (2.2)	 79% (3.6)
Do well in reading	 80% (3.7)	 84% (3.3)
<b>Writing</b>		
Enjoy writing	 87% (2.4)	 87% (3.1)
Do writing in my own time	 79% (7.1)	 77% (1.9)
Think it is important to be a good writer	 90% (2.3)	 89% (2.1)
Find writing easy	 83% (3.3)	 83% (1.9)
Do well in writing	 79% (3.4)	 77% (4.3)
<b>Mathematics</b>		
Enjoy doing mathematics	 86% (3.2)	 73% (4.1)
Do mathematics in my own time	 69% (7.0)	 64% (5.9)
Think it is important to be good at mathematics	 87% (2.7)	 88% (5.3)
Find mathematics easy	 75% (3.8)	 66% (5.1)
Do well in mathematics	 81% (2.0)	 70% (5.1)
<b>Schooling</b>		
Enjoy going to school	 88% (2.2)	 92% (1.2)
Think it is important to go to school	 91% (2.4)	 94% (1.1)
Think it is important to do well in school	 90% (2.3)	 94% (1.4)
Find school easy	 76% (3.0)	 74% (3.3)
Feel like I belong at this school	 85% (2.9)	 85% (2.0)
Feel safe at the school	 86% (3.0)	 86% (2.4)
Feel safe travelling to school	 88% (3.3)	 86% (1.9)

( ) Standard errors appear in parentheses.

The PILNA scales for attitudes to school, reading, writing, and numeracy all have an average of 200 and a standard deviation of 40. Most scores on these scales are expected to be within 40 points of 200 (160–240). The attitudes to reading, writing, and numeracy scales were all formed from the five questions students were asked in each area. The attitude to school scale was formed from the answers to seven questions students were asked in this area.

Comparisons to student performance were made between the average attitudes of students who were at or above expected levels of performance and students who were below these levels of performance.

The analysis showed that, across both year levels, students who performed at or above the expected proficiency level in reading and numeracy scored higher on the attitude scales school. This means that they tended to have positive attitudes to school.

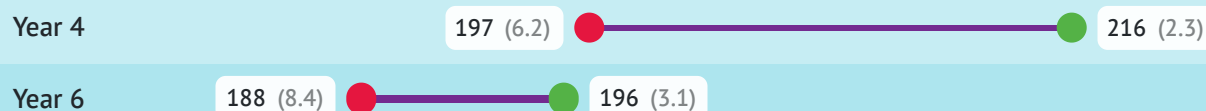
Year four and year six students who performed at or above the expected level in reading had higher attitude scores on average (year four, 216; year six, 196) than students in the same year groups who did not meet expected numeracy performance (year four, 197; year six, 188).

Interestingly, year six students who met the expected level of reading performance had lower average attitude scores (196) than year four students who met the expected reading performance (216). Year six students who did not meet the expected reading performance also had lower average attitude scores (188) than year four students who did not meet the expected reading performance (197). This indicates that year six students had lower attitude scores to reading than year fours in both performance categories. These results are presented in Figure STF1.3.

### Figure STF1.3: PILNA Scale: Student attitudes to reading

Average scores of students on attitude towards reading scale by year level and proficiency

#### Reading



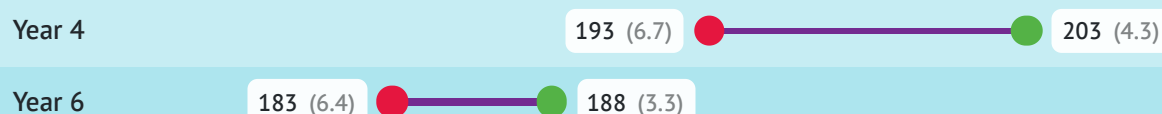
- Scale score for students below expected proficiency level
- Scale score for students at or above expected proficiency level
- Statistically significant correlation ( $p < 0.05$ )
- ( ) Standard errors appear in parentheses

For numeracy, the differences in attitude were smaller than observed for reading. Year four students who performed at or above the expected level in numeracy had higher attitude scores on average (203) than students in the same year group who did not meet expected reading performance (193). Additionally, for year six students, no clear difference was observed in attitude between those at or above the expected proficiency level and those below the expected proficiency level. These comparisons are shown in Figure STF1.4.

### Figure STF1.4: PILNA Scale: Student attitudes to Numeracy

Average scores of students on attitude towards mathematics scale by year level and proficiency

#### Numeracy

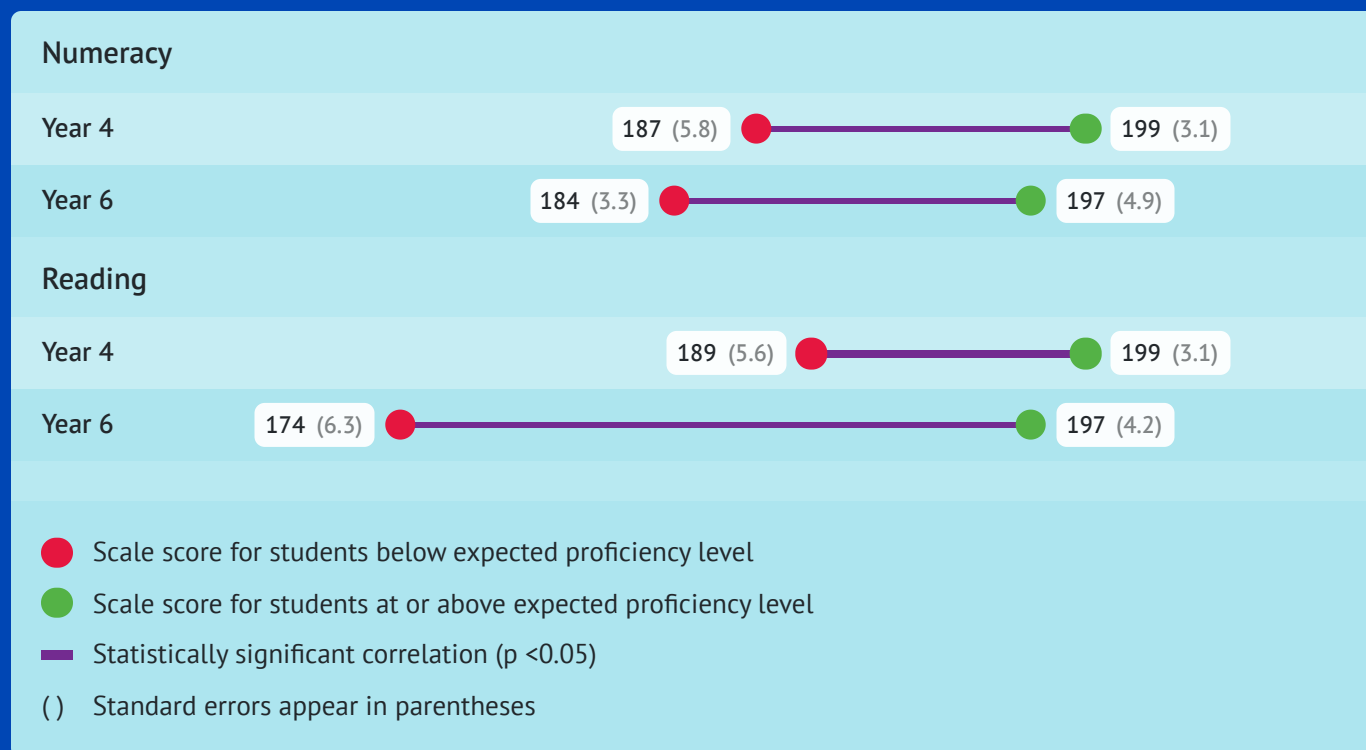


- Scale score for students below expected proficiency level
- Scale score for students at or above expected proficiency level
- Statistically significant correlation ( $p < 0.05$ )
- ( ) Standard errors appear in parentheses

Comparisons were also made between student performance and attitudes to school in general. Across both year four and year six levels, students who were performing at or above the expected level had higher attitude scores to school in general. This was true for students performing at expected levels in numeracy and for students performing at expected levels in reading. Figure STF1.5 shows these comparisons.

**Figure STF1.5: PILNA Scale: Student attitudes to schooling**

Average scores of students on attitude towards schooling scale by year level and proficiency



## What does this mean?

The findings from this PILNA cycle show that a high proportion of students from Cook Islands in both year levels are enjoying reading, writing, and mathematics and identify them as being important. However, when it comes to ratings about finding each subject easy or rating themselves as doing well in each subject, one area falls behind: numeracy. Numeracy ratings in these areas for both year levels were noticeably lower than for reading and writing. This may mean that, while students are still enjoying mathematics at these year levels, a larger proportion are challenged by the subject than are challenged by reading and writing. This may be an area that requires more attention by educators.

When comparing student attitude scores to performance, one thing was clear; students who met the expected performance in a subject area generally had higher attitude scores for the subject and for school in general. This suggests an association between student attitudes to a subject and their performance in that subject. Importantly, this association is not clear and causality cannot be determined. For example, do positive attitudes to reading make someone more likely to be a better reader or is it those who are already good at reading who develop positive attitudes to reading because it's easier for them?