

Grade 7 cohort

The numeracy, reading, and writing performance of grade seven students.

Introduction to the 2021 grade seven cohort

Grade seven students who participated in PILNA 2021 have had different schooling experiences from previous PILNA cohorts. Formal learning in the Pacific region has been significantly disrupted since 2019, when the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in periodic school closures throughout the region. Other health-related events and natural disasters, such as the measles outbreak in Samoa and the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption, have created further learning disruptions.

These events may have also had wider impacts on school-age children, such as effects on their mental health, their community commitments, or their access to education, although further research is needed to validate any wider impacts of these events.

The 2021 grade seven cohort of students have had a smaller proportion of their total school years affected by these learning disruptions than the 2021 grade five students, who may have been more affected by them. The effects of learning disruptions on students with more years of formal schooling compared with fewer years of formal schooling have not, however, been well established. Future research and analysis are needed in this area.

Importantly, PILNA 2021 is the first large-scale regional assessment to show the consequences of these disruptions. It has collected the information necessary to link learning disruptions to student performance. Analysis of this information will be undertaken in the near future and provided, alongside the PILNA 2021 results, when available.

Conclusions for grade seven

Grade seven students in Federated States of Micronesia had lower scores across the PILNA subjects compared to PILNA 2018. These students scored less in numeracy, less in reading, and less in writing than in PILNA 2018. Average scores in numeracy and reading were also lower than any other PILNA cycle, although the average writing score was higher than 2015. Average scores in numeracy (506), reading (481), and writing (499) were also lower than the scores across the region (numeracy, 531; reading, 492; writing, 507).

About half the grade seven students are also meeting the minimum expected proficiency standards in numeracy and reading; 56% of students were at or above these levels in numeracy and 47% in reading. Minimum expected proficiency levels for writing have not yet been established but writing performance has decreased since 2018.

In grade seven, girls tended to score about the same as boys in numeracy (girls, 510; boys, 503), higher than boys in reading (girls, 489; boys, 474), and higher than boys in writing (girls, 507; boys, 491). Also, slightly more girls were meeting the minimum expected proficiency levels than boys in numeracy (girls, 58%; boys, 54%) and reading (girls, 50%; boys, 45%).

Grade seven students in non-government schools tended to score substantially higher in numeracy (government, 498; non-government, 572), reading (government, 470; non-government, 577), and writing (government, 493; non-government, 548) than students in government schools. This continues a trend seen in the past two PILNA cycles, 2015 and 2018.

Experiential and environmental data, as outlined in the contextual sections, may provide some insights into the reasons for these performance trends.