

Caregiver support

Another crucial factor that the PILNA student assessment captured was caregiver support for students. Caregiver support, in its many forms, is widely recognised as an enabler of success in children's education.

Students from PILNA 2021 were provided with a list of activities and asked to indicate how frequently someone they lived with provided help or support with the activities. They could respond with 'Always', 'Most of the time', 'Sometimes', or 'Never'.

Caregiver support by proportion of students

Table STT1.6 shows the proportion of students in both year four and year six who answered with either 'Always' or 'Most of the time'.

Table STT1.6

Percentage of students whose caregivers frequently support their children

Category	Year 4	Year 6
Check that homework is complete	 68% (2.1)	 72% (1.6)
Help with your homework	 62% (1.8)	 61% (1.7)
Ask about your school work	 66% (2.0)	 75% (1.5)
Ask about what you read	 57% (2.3)	 59% (1.9)
Understand problems and worries	 54% (2.5)	 53% (1.9)
Comfort if feeling upset	 52% (2.6)	 52% (1.7)
Support or encourage	 63% (2.2)	 68% (1.6)
Give advice and guidance	 64% (2.1)	 73% (1.3)

Percentage of students whose caregivers frequently support their children, Fiji, PILNA 2021

() Standard errors appear in parentheses.

The results showed that about two out of three students reported that their caregivers 'Always' or 'Most of the time' checked their homework was complete (year four, 68%; year six, 72%), helped with their homework (year four, 62%; year six, 61%), or asked about their schoolwork (year four, 66%; year six, 75%).

More than two out of three students reported that their caregivers supported or encouraged them (year four, 63%; year six, 68%), as well as gave them advice and guidance (year four, 64%; year six, 73%).

Across both year levels, about half the students reported that their caregivers 'Always' or 'Most of the time' understood their problems and worries (year four, 54%; year six, 53%) or comforted them when they were feeling upset (year four, 52%; year six, 52%). This may be an area to monitor, as these questions may be linked with student well-being.

The proportions of students receiving frequent support from their caregivers in Fiji were also greater than the regional proportions in all areas and at both year levels.

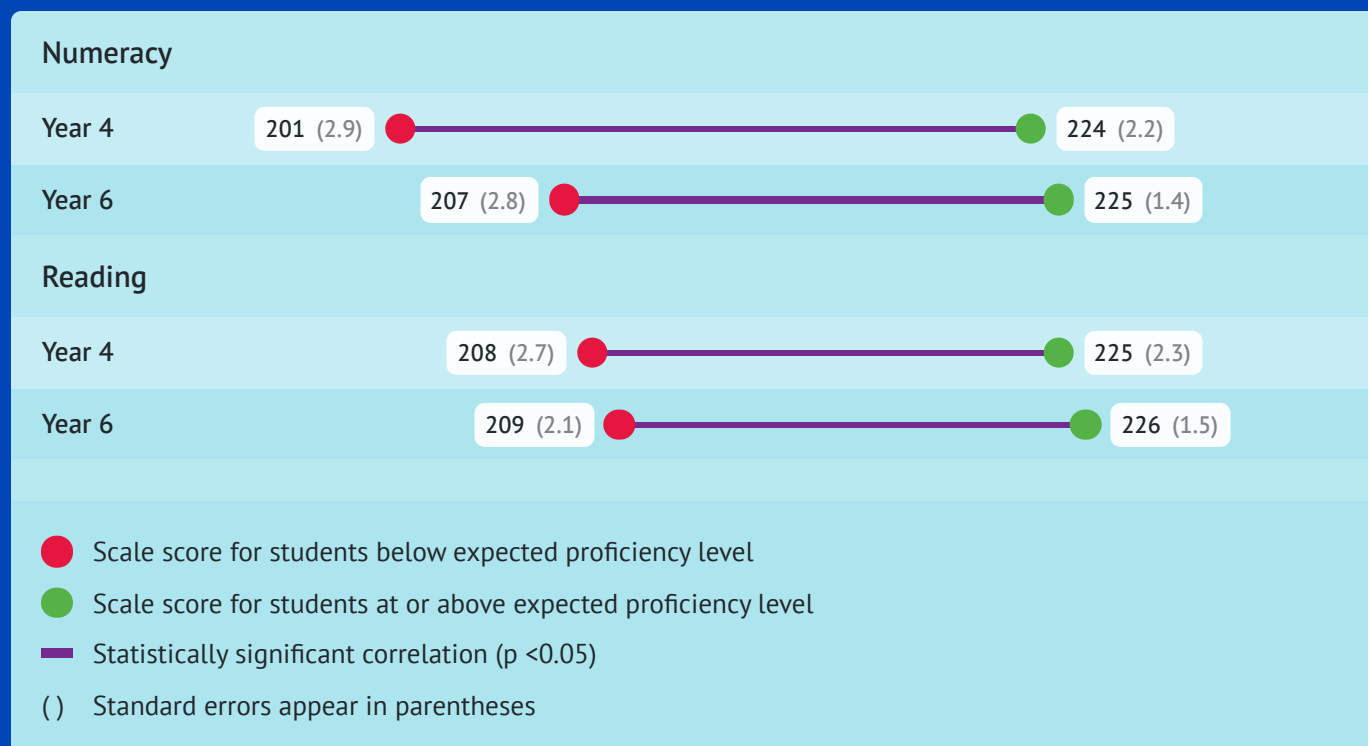
Caregiver support and student performance

From the responses to the questions about caregiver support (Table STT1.6), a regional scale was developed. This scale was designed to measure the level of caregiver support being offered to students. High scores on this scale represent a greater level of caregiver support than low scores.

The PILNA scale for caregiver support has an average of 200 and a standard deviation of 40. Most scores are expected to be within 40 points of 200 (160–240). The scale was formed by statistical analysis of answers to all eight questions students were asked about their caregiver support.

Scores for caregiver support were compared to two groups at both year levels and in numeracy and reading: for students who were at or above the expected proficiency level and students who were below the expected proficiency level in the cognitive domain. The results of these comparisons are set out in Figure STF1.2.

Figure STF1.2: PILNA Caregiver Support Scale



The results show that, for both year levels and in both numeracy and reading, students in Fiji who performed at or above the expected proficiency level scored higher on the caregiver support scale.

What does this mean?

About two out of three students in Fiji frequently receive support from their caregivers with homework, guidance, and encouragement. Lower proportions of students, however, frequently felt that their caregivers understood their issues or had their caregivers comfort them when they were upset (about half). These statistics might point to a disconnect between students and caregivers in the region, although high proportions of students are frequently supported by their caregivers.

There is evidence that support from caregivers is associated with students' performance in numeracy and reading at both year levels. Students who met the performance expectations in these areas had higher levels of caregiver support. The same trend was identified across the region.