Household wealth

Household wealth is frequently seen as an enabler of education. Conceptually, it enables support, materials, spare time, and other factors that might influence a student's learning. The PILNA programme collected information from students to estimate their level of household wealth. It was unlikely that students would know the monetary value of their household wealth, so a list of home possessions and facilities was provided and students were asked to indicate which of these they had in their home. They could respond with either 'Yes' or 'No'. The list included telephones, TVs, and cars, as well as home facilities, such as electricity, a flushing toilet and tap water.

From this list, a new scale was created for household wealth. Student's responses to these questions resulted in a score that estimated their level of household wealth. Higher scores on this scale indicated that the student came from a wealthier household. Lower scores on this scale indicated that the student came from a less wealthy household.

> *The PILNA scale for household wealth 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 from statistical analysis of the answers to ten out of thirteen questions students were asked about their household wealth*
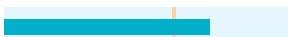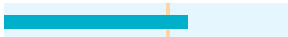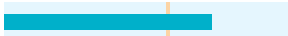
The scale was also developed separately for each country participating in PILNA, and scores on this scale were benchmarked against each country's average wealth. This was done to make comparisons between students in households with above average we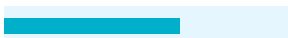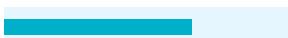alth in a country and students in households with below average wealth. Varying levels of average household wealth across countries in the region meant that a standardised approach to assessing wealth would not be appropriate for regional comparisons.

Household wealth and student performance

Table STT1.5 shows the average student performance in numeracy, reading and writing at year four and year six levels for students in households at or above their country's average level of wealth and for students in households below their country's average level of wealth.

Table STT1.5		
Average achievement of students by household wealth and year level		
Household wealth	**Year 4**	**Year 6**
Numeracy		
Below country average	476 (3.8)	539 (3.5)
At or above country average	497 (4.2)	557 (3.0)
Reading		
Below country average	443 (4.1)	511 (3.7)
At or above country average	470 (4.5)	539 (3.5)
Writing		
Below country average	476 (2.4)	508 (1.7)
At or above country average	486 (2.4)	521 (2.0)

Average achievement of students by household wealth and year level, Fiji, PILNA 2021

( ) Standard errors appear in parentheses.

▌ Expected minimum proficiency score.

Students from wealthier households had higher average performance on the PILNA assessments. This was observed across all domains – numeracy, reading and writing – and across both year levels.

What does this mean?

Students from wealthier households tended to have higher levels of achievement. These possible associations between wealth and achievement were found relative to Fiji's average household wealth. This was the same as the trend found across the region in PILNA 2021 and is unsurprising, given the worldwide phenomenon of inequality and educational outcomes – students with access to greater resources or socio-economic advantages tend to perform better in education (ACER & UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022).