

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 grade five and grade seven who answered with either 'Always' or 'Most of the time'.

Table STT1.6

Percentage of students whose caregivers frequently support their children

Category	Grade 5		Grade 7	
Check that homework is complete		54% (3.2)		56% (2.2)
Help with your homework		58% (3.0)		50% (1.4)
Ask about your school work		55% (3.6)		60% (2.7)
Ask about what you read		47% (3.4)		46% (3.1)
Understand problems and worries		33% (2.9)		35% (2.0)
Comfort if feeling upset		45% (3.8)		40% (3.4)
Support or encourage		56% (3.6)		54% (2.8)
Give advice and guidance		59% (2.9)		64% (2.2)

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

() Standard errors appear in parentheses.

The results show that about half the students reported that their caregivers 'Always' or 'Most of the time' checked their homework was complete (grade five, 54%; grade seven, 56%), helped with their homework (grade five, 58%; grade seven, 50%), or asked about their schoolwork (grade five, 55%; grade seven, 60%).

A little more than half the students reported that their caregivers supported or encouraged them (grade five, 56%; grade seven, 54%), as well as gave them advice and guidance (grade five, 59%; grade seven 64%).

Across both year levels, only about two out of five students reported that their caregivers 'Always' or 'Most of the time' understood their problems and worries (grade five, 33%; grade seven, 35%) or comforted them when they were feeling upset (grade five, 45%; grade seven, 40%). This may be an area to monitor, as these questions may be linked with student well-being.

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

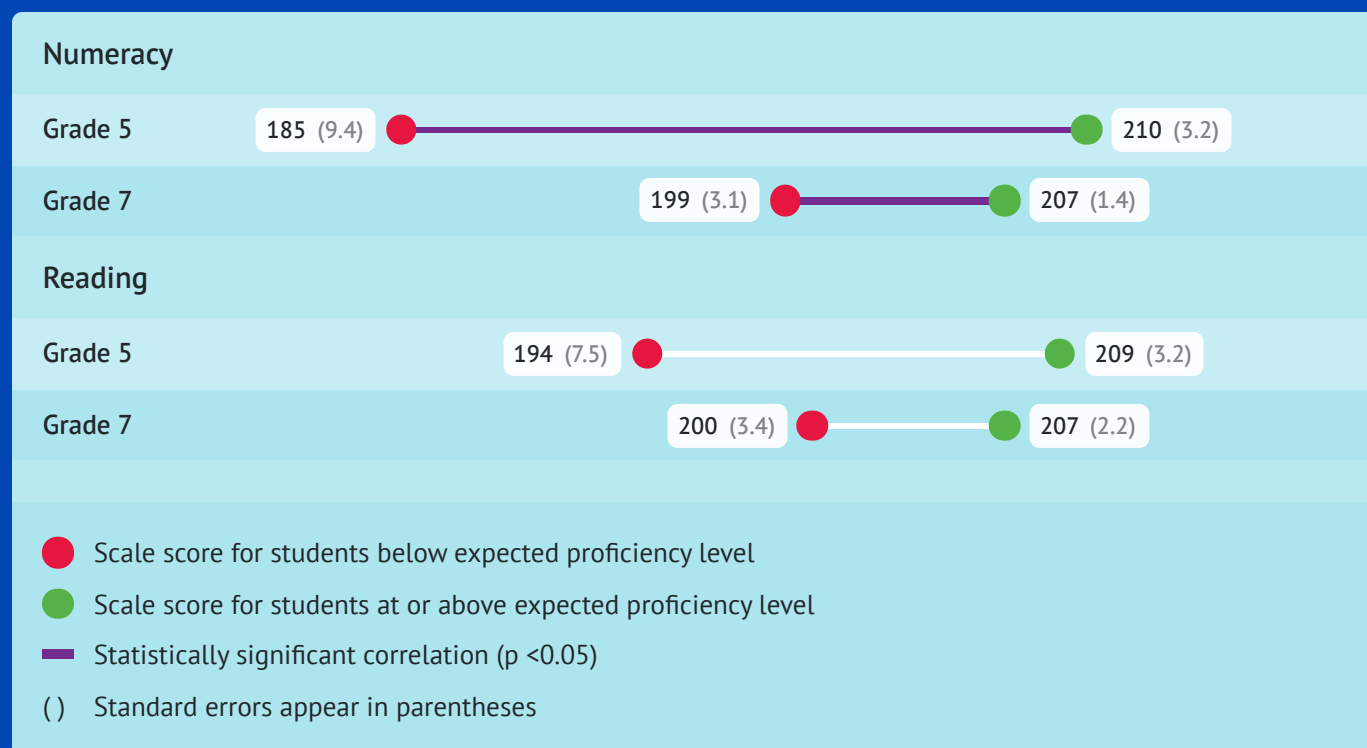
The PILNA scale for caregiver support has an average of 200 and a standard deviation of 40. Most scores are expected to be within 40 points of 200 (160–240). The scale was formed by statistical analysis of answers to all eight questions students were asked about their caregiver support.

Scores for caregiver support were compared for two groups at both the year group 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.

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

Figure STF1.2: PILNA Caregiver Support Scale

Average scores of students on language scale by year level and proficiency, RMI, PILNA 2021



What does this mean?

Consistent with findings from the previous PILNA cycle, we have seen high levels of caregiver support for students. About half the students in the region 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. These statistics might point towards 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 performance expectations in these areas had higher levels of caregiver support.