

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 changes to their mental health, 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 Marshall Islands had mixed performance in the PILNA subjects. Compared with PILNA 2018, the scores for 2021 were lower in numeracy, lower in reading and higher in writing. Compared to the region (numeracy, 531; reading, 492), the 2021 average scores in numeracy (505) and reading (485) were lower. The writing score (508) was comparable to the score for the region (507).

Over half the grade seven students (57%) are meeting the minimum expected proficiency standards in numeracy and half (51%) are meeting the expected proficiency standards in reading. Minimum expected proficiency levels for writing have not yet been established but writing performance is increasing.

In grade seven, girls scored higher on average than boys in numeracy (girls, 511; boys, 501), reading (girls, 499; boys, 473) and writing (girls, 517; boys, 501). Also, more girls were meeting the minimum expected proficiency level than boys in reading (girls, 58%; boys, 44%), and in numeracy (girls, 62%; boys, 53%).

Grade seven students in non-government schools scored higher on average in numeracy (government, 498; non-government, 544), reading (government, 476; non-government, 532), and writing (government, 504; non-government, 531) than did students in government schools.

Grade seven students in non-urban schools scored, on average, similarly in numeracy (urban, 506; non-urban, 505), higher in writing (urban, 506; non-urban, 517), and lower in reading (urban, 487; non-urban, 479) than did students in urban schools.

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