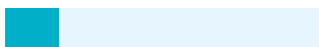
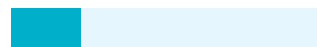




Early childhood education

Early childhood education (ECE) is often seen as an opportunity to get a head start in schooling. Information gathered from the PILNA System Questionnaire shows that, although each country has policies regarding ECE, the structure and compulsory nature varies across participating countries. As part of PILNA, students were asked to indicate their ECE history using the following categories: 'Yes, for 1 year', 'Yes, for 2 years', 'Yes for 3 years of more', or 'No'.

Table STT1.1

Percentage of students who attended ECE

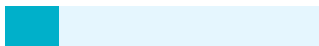
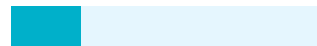
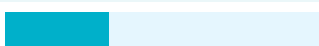
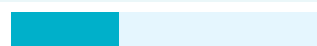
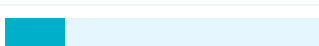
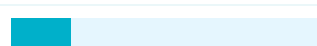
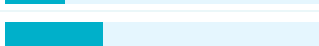
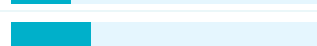
category	Grade 3	Grade 5
Did not attend ECE	 17%	 22%
Attended ECE	 83%	 78%

Students who attended at least one year of ECE vs those who did not attend, PNG, PILNA 2021

In Papua New Guinea, over 80% of students from PILNA 2021 had attended at least one year of ECE. This was similar, on average, for boys (81%) and for girls (80%). There are differences, however, in the amount of time that students spent at ECE prior to their schooling. Table STT1.1 shows these ECE differences by grade three students and grade five students in Papua New Guinea in PILNA 2021.

Table STT1.2

ECE Attendance by year level

category	Grade 3	Grade 5
Did not attend	 17%	 22%
1 year	 33%	 34%
2 years	 19%	 19%
3 years	 31%	 25%

Students did not attend ECE in ascending order with other durations, PNG, PILNA 2021

Similar proportions of grade three students (83%) and grade five students (78%) attended at least one year of ECE. Importantly, about one out of four students in grade three (31%) and in grade five (25%) reported attending ECE for three years or more, but approximately 20%, or one out of five students in both grade levels reported they did not attend any ECE at all.

ECE attendance and student performance

Statistical testing was done to learn whether there was a difference in student performance between students who had attended at least one year of ECE and students who had not attended any ECE. This was done at both the grade three and grade five levels. No differences were found at the grade three level but differences were found at the grade five level across all domains – numeracy, reading and writing.

What does this mean?

Most students (80%) who participated in PILNA 2021 attended ECE for at least one year. Similar proportions were observed across grade three and grade five students, showing ECE attendance rates were stable over time.

There did not seem to be any association between students' performance in reading, writing and numeracy and their attendance at ECE. This was consistent across both year levels and means that students did not appear to be more or less likely to achieve higher performance based on their attendance at ECE. This differs from the regional results, where student performance tended to be higher for grade five students who attended ECE than for those who did not, although there was no such difference in performance for grade three students. It is not known why there was a difference for grade five students regionally and not grade three students, but the findings suggest the possibility that at a regional level ECE has a positive effect on performance that may become noticeable only in later years of schooling. Given the diversity of ECE throughout the region, however, these results should be looked at in local contexts. One possible avenue of exploration for Papua New Guinea, is whether differences emerge in performance for students beyond grade five.