

Grade 3 Cohort

The numeracy, reading, and writing performance of grade three students.

Introduction to the 2021 grade three cohort

Grade three students who participated in PILNA 2021 have had different schooling experiences from previous PILNA cohorts. Formal learning in Pacific countries 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, and their access to education, although further research is needed to validate any wider impacts of these events.

What is relatively unique for this 2021 grade three cohort compared to the 2021 grade five cohort is that the events between 2019 and 2021 cover a greater proportion of their formal schooling to date. Most of their formal schooling years have been subject to periodic education disruptions.

PILNA 2021 is the first large-scale regional assessment to show the consequences of these disruptions. It has collected the information necessary to link them to student performance and analysis of this information will be undertaken in the near future and provided alongside the PILNA 2021 results when available.

Conclusions for grade three

Grade three students in Papua New Guinea had mixed performance in the PILNA 2021 subjects compared with PILNA 2018. These students scored lower in numeracy, higher in reading, and higher in writing than did PILNA 2018 students. Average scores in numeracy (483), reading (455), and writing (506) were, however, higher than the scores across the region (numeracy, 479; reading, 444; writing, 484).

Nearly three quarters (73%) of grade three students are meeting the minimum expected proficiency standards in numeracy but less than half (45%) are meeting them in reading. Minimum expected proficiency levels for writing have not yet been established but writing performance is increasing.

In grade three, girls tended to score about the same as boys in numeracy (girls, 485; boys, 484), reading (girls, 458; boys, 453) and writing (girls, 507; boys, 504). Also, slightly more girls were meeting the minimum expected proficiency level than boys in reading (girls, 47%; boys, 43%), but a similar proportion were meeting them in numeracy (girls, 74%; boys, 73%).

The scores of grade three students in non-government schools and government schools were similar in numeracy (government, 485; non-government, 482), reading (government, 455; non-government, 456), and writing (government, 505;

non-government, 506).

The scores of grade three students in urban schools and non-urban schools were similar in numeracy (urban, 488; non-urban, 483), reading (urban, 455; non-urban, 455), and writing (urban, 506; non-urban, 505). Experiential and environmental data, as outlined in the contextual sections, may provide some insights into the reasons for these performance trends.