

# Learners and their performance

## Student attitudes and their numeracy, reading, and writing performance.

Over 40,000 learners participated in PILNA 2021. Their literacy and numeracy performance data, as well as the broader information they provided, allow a deeper understanding of learners' needs in the South Pacific.

This regional report has provided the first of these insights into learners' attitudes to learning, their performance, and the associations between learners' circumstances and their performance.

The data show that participating students had a positive attitude toward school, they also had positive attitudes toward the PILNA subjects: mathematics, reading and writing. Most students thought that both school and these subjects were important and enjoyable. These findings were consistent across both year four and year six students. Some associations between student attitudes and performance were also identified in these areas.

Student performance decreased across most areas in PILNA 2021 compared with PILNA 2018. The exception was year four writing performance, which increased. These decreases suggest that external or regional factors in the years between 2019 and 2021 affected students' performance. This is in line with findings from the contextual surveys outlined in the next sections.

The average performance in numeracy decreased more than the performance in reading and writing. This was the case for both year four and year six students. It suggests that any external or regional factors may have a disproportionate effect on numeracy teaching and/or learning in Pacific schools.

### **Student performance in PILNA is compared against a set of benchmarks developed for the Pacific context.**

These are referred to as **PILNA proficiency scales** which assign students a proficiency level (0-8) based on their test scores. There is one scale for each PILNA subject: numeracy, reading, and writing.

Pacific stakeholders have also determined what proficiency level they expect year four and year six students to perform at in each subject.

Numeracy performance needs to be better understood. Both year four and year six students are, on average, exceeding minimum expected numeracy proficiency levels, despite seeing the largest decreases in average performance between 2018 and 2021.

These differences might be because the numeracy benchmarks are too low or because students' performance is very high in numeracy throughout the Pacific region. Comparisons with international benchmarks might provide some perspective. Regardless, student performance in this area needs to be further explored.

The domain results also suggest that reading is an area in need of improvement, despite most year six students meeting the expected minimum reading proficiency level. Reading performance decreased in comparison to PILNA 2018; on average, year four students are not meeting the expected minimum proficiency level and year six students are barely achieving the expected minimum proficiency level.

Reading performance has not shown any substantial increases over time for either year four or year six students. Identifying and addressing the reasons why reading performance is struggling to increase over time is, therefore, a priority.

Domain results in writing need further analysis as the writing proficiency scale has yet to be used to benchmark expected performance. Writing performance stayed about the same for year six students in 2021 compared with 2018 but year four students experienced a large increase in writing performance.

### Year four students:

**Across the region, year four students are typically not meeting minimum expected performance in reading but are exceeding minimum expected performance in numeracy.**

Expected levels of performance have not yet been established for writing but writing performance is increasing.

### Year six students:

**Across the region year six students are typically exceeding minimum expected performance in numeracy and are just meeting minimum expected performance in reading.**

Expected levels of performance have not yet been established for writing and average writing performance was about the same as 2018.

Many of the students completed the contextual questionnaire, which covered their experience of and attitudes to school and the literacies they are taught. It also gathered data about their wider environments.

The contextual data were used to explore any associations with the students' cognitive scores. Statistically significant differences were found across the range of analysis. These are detailed in the student, teacher and school leader sections.