

Year 4 cohort

The numeracy, reading, and writing performance of year four students.

Introduction to the 2021 year 4 cohort

Year four 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 year four cohort compared to the 2021 year six 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.

Conclusion for year four

Year four students in Small Island States had mixed performance in the PILNA subjects compared with previous PILNA cycles. The 2021 students scored lower in numeracy and lower in reading than any other PILNA cycle but similar in writing in 2018. Average scores in reading (454) and writing (509) were, however, higher than the scores across the region, whilst the average score in numeracy (480) was similar to that in the region (numeracy, 479; reading, 444; writing, 484).

Most year four students (63%) are meeting the minimum expected proficiency standard in numeracy but only about half (49%) are meeting it in reading. The proportion for numeracy (63%) is lower than that of the region (67%) but the proportion for reading (49%) is higher than that of the region (43%). Minimum expected proficiency levels for writing have not yet been established but writing performance is increasing.

In year four, girls scored higher than boys in numeracy (girls, 496; boys, 472), reading (girls, 484; boys, 435), and writing (girls, 492; boys, 475). Also, more girls than boys were meeting the minimum expected proficiency levels in numeracy (girls, 72%; boys, 59%) and reading (girls, 58%; boys, 44%).

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