

Conclusions for students

A wealth of information on student experiences and circumstances was collected in PILNA 2021. The areas that were reported on show how students feel towards key aspects of their education; provide insights into student learning difficulties and well-being and highlight areas for future research.

Overall, student attitudes toward school and the three domains assessed in PILNA 2021 were positive. Most students reported that they enjoyed school and the PILNA subjects (between 89-97%) and acknowledged their importance (between 89-95%) These findings generally reflect positive learning environments.

Many students are experiencing challenges to their well-being and seldom experience positive attitudes. Only half of the students indicated that they frequently felt calm and relaxed or looked forward to the next day. Also, about one in five students reported frequent negative experiences such as hunger, tiredness or not having enough friends. Overall, this suggests that some students have positive experiences while at school, but a significant number of students are experiencing poor well-being outcomes.

A range of information was collected on students' difficulties with learning and self-management. This shows how many students are experiencing learning difficulties, with three areas standing out: difficulties learning or remembering, controlling (own) behaviour, and concentrating and focusing attention.

Variables from the student contextual questionnaires were compared to students' performance in the PILNA numeracy, reading and writing assessments. This was done to understand whether any contextual factors were associated with differences in student performance. The aim was to identify key areas for future research on the influences that students' demographic background and school-based experiences may have on their educational performance.

Higher performance scores were found in students:

- who had attended at least one year of early childhood education.
- who belonged to a household above their country's average level of wealth.

Student performance was also compared to the newly developed PILNA scales. With some exceptions, students who performed at or above the expected proficiency level in numeracy and reading typically had:

- higher scores on the PILNA language scale – meaning that they used the language they completed the PILNA assessments with in most contexts;
- higher scores on the caregiver support scale – a scale used to summarise how supportive caregivers were of a student and their learning;
- higher scores on the numeracy and reading attitude scales – meaning that they had more positive attitudes towards the subject they performed well in;

- higher scores on the school attitude scale – meaning that they had more positive attitudes towards school in general; and

Overall, most students had positive attitudes toward school and were confident in their abilities in literacy and numeracy. Associations between household or student factors and student performance may show areas where changes could raise performance or create better student experiences.