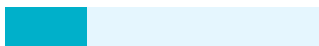
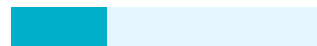


Early childhood education

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	Year 4	Year 6
Did not attend ECE	 26%	 30%
Attended ECE	 74%	 70%

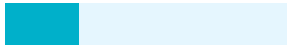
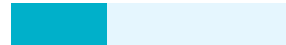
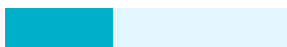
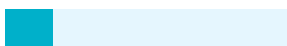
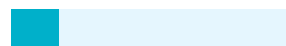
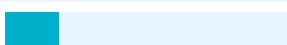
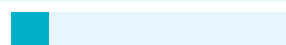
Students who attended at least one year of ECE vs those who did not attend, Tonga, PILNA 2021

() Standard errors appear in parentheses.

In Tonga, over 70% of students from PILNA 2021 had attended at least one year of ECE. This was similar, on average, for boys (72%) and for girls (72%). 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 year four students and year six students in Tonga in PILNA 2021.

Table STT1.2

ECE Attendance by year level

Category	Year 4	Year 6
	 26% (26)	 30%
	 38% (38)	 43%
	 17% (17)	 15%
	 19% (19)	 12%

ECE attendance and duration of attendance, Tonga, PILNA 2021

() Standard errors appear in parentheses.

Similar proportions of year four students (74%) and year six students (70%) attended at least one year of ECE. Nineteen per cent of year four students and 12% of year six students reported attending ECE for three years or more, but more than one out of four students in both year four (26%) and year six (30%) reported they did not attend any ECE at all, (refer to Table STT1.2).

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 year four and year six levels. No differences were found at the year four level but differences were found at the year six level across the literacy domains – reading and writing. Year six students who attended at least one year of ECE scored higher in reading and writing than year six students who did not attend any ECE.

What does this mean?

Most students (70%) who participated in PILNA 2021 attended ECE for at least one year. Similar proportions were observed across year four and year six students, showing ECE attendance rates were stable over time.

Student performance in reading and writing tended to be higher for year six students who attended ECE than for those who did not; there were no differences in numeracy performance. For year four students, there were no differences in performance between those who attended ECE and those who did not. It is not known why these associations were noted at the year six level and not the year four level, or, why numeracy performance was not associated with ECE attendance in either year level.