

Student difficulties

The PILNA 2021 student questionnaire collected information about difficulties students experienced beyond well-being. Specifically, the questionnaire asked students to respond to statements about their ability to learn, manage themselves, and navigate their environment. Their responses highlight the learning support needs in the region.

Students were provided with a list of situations and were asked to indicate whether they had any difficulty with them. The situations were framed around physical, cognitive, and behavioural challenges, such as seeing, hearing, managing behaviour and walking. The responses they could give were 'No difficulty', 'A little difficulty', 'A lot of difficulty', or 'I cannot do it at all'.

Proportions of students experiencing challenges

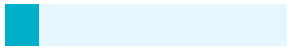
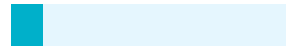
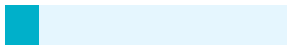
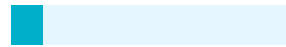
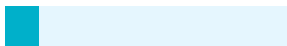
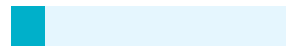
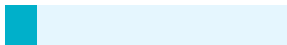
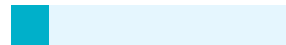
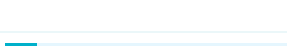
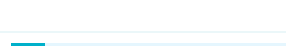
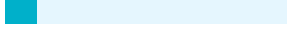
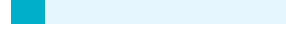
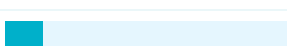
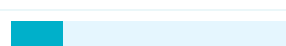
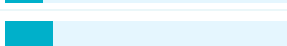
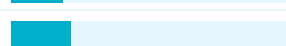
Table STT1.9 lists the challenges to student learning measured by the questionnaire. This table also shows the proportions of year four and year six students who reported these as either 'A lot of difficulty' or 'I cannot do this at all'. This allows us to identify the proportion of students on whom these factors posed a severe burden.

Overall, the distribution of students reporting at least 'A lot of difficulty' across the eight items was relatively concentrated. For both year four students and year six students, the proportions of students reporting at least 'A lot of difficulty' across the items was between 11% and 21%.

The most frequently reported difficulty was 'Controlling your behaviour' (year four, 17%; year six, 21%)

Table STT1.9

Percentage of students with difficulties

Category	Year 4	Year 6
Seeing, even if wearing glasses	 12% (1.1)	 11% (1.5)
Hearing, even if wearing a hearing aid	 12% (1.2)	 11% (1.4)
Walking or climbing steps	 12% (1.2)	 12% (1.5)
Being understood by other people when I speak	 11% (1.4)	 13% (1.7)
Self-care, such as feeding or dressing yourself	 11% (1.2)	 12% (1.5)
Learning or remembering things	 13% (1.2)	 18% (1.7)
Controlling your behaviour	 17% (1.7)	 21% (1.9)
Concentrating and focusing your attention	 14% (1.2)	 18% (2.0)

Percentage of students with difficulties, Tonga, PILNA 2021

() Standard errors appear in parentheses.

These findings can be compared with teachers' responses to a similar set of items (*Student difficulties reported by the teacher*). Not all the items were the same but interesting comparisons that can be made for the items about controlling their behaviour, concentrating and focusing their attention.

What does this mean?

A substantial minority of students in Tonga are experiencing challenges related to learning and school environments in general. Generally, the learning challenges reported on in this section were reported at a lower rate than the regional averages. These findings can inform learning support activities in Tonga.