

# Conclusion for writing performance

## Mean writing scores

The PILNA 2021 writing results for year four show that the Tonga students had an average score of 489 points and their performance is a little ahead of the regional average of 484 points.

The writing results for year six students in Tonga showed an average score of 479 points. This score is 28 points less than the regional average of 507 points.

## Gender

When the year four writing result is disaggregated by gender, the girls' mean score is 496 and the boys are 14 points behind, with a mean score of 482 points.

When the year six writing result is disaggregated by gender, the girls' mean score is 494 and the boys are 28 points behind, with a mean score of 466 points.

## School authority

At the year four level, students in government schools showed slightly higher mean scores (490) than non-government schools (486).

At the year six level, students in non-government schools had higher mean scores (492) than students in government schools (476).

## School location

At the year four level, students in urban schools had an average of 493 points, compared to 485 points for students in non-urban schools.

At the year six level, students in urban schools had an average of 490 points, compared to 469 points for students in non-urban schools.

## Trends

The trend in writing performance for students in year four and year six showed an increase from 2015 to 2018 and a decline in 2021.

## Coding

PILNA writing assessment at year four and six, students were required to write a story based on either of the two prompts provided. The prompts were provided to encourage ideas and engagement in the process. The criteria for the narrative task encompass the two main features of writing – content and language elements – as can be seen in the writing rubric. Six writing skills are assessed in PILNA: quality of ideas, structure and organisation, grammar and syntax, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.

Coding data allow for an interpretation of how students have performed. A code is assigned to each criterion according to how well the student has performed. A Code 0 is assigned when there is insufficient evidence to assess.

## Year four coding

**Quality of ideas (Codes 1–8):** This criterion measures the quality of the students' ideas and how well those ideas have been developed to produce an entertaining story. About eight out of ten year four students in Tonga were given Code 4 or below in this criterion. These students would have struggled to write a few words or random words, or words copied from the prompt. Two out of ten year four students in Tonga knew how to write a story that relates to a prompt, these students were awarded Code 5 or above.

**Structure and organisation (Codes 1–5):** This measures the students' ability to shape a story, or to produce a coherent story, with ideas that relate to each other and are logically sequenced. Close to 40% of year four students in Tonga received Code 3 in this criterion. These students wrote stories that had some story elements but there were also some irrelevant details and gaps in logic. Two out of ten year four students were awarded the top two codes in this criterion, indicating that their stories were well shaped, coherently written with logically sequenced events. A little more than 40% of year four students lacked the understanding of a story structure and their writing was limited to a few words and ideas (Codes 0–2).

**Grammar and syntax (Codes 1–4):** This measures the students' ability to produce a range of sentence structures with accuracy. Up to 70% of year four students in Tonga received Code 2 or below in this criterion, indicating that they had written repetitive sentences that had a lot of glaring errors in grammar.

**Vocabulary (Codes 1–4):** This measures the variety of students' vocabulary in telling the story. Eight out of ten (77%) year four students in Tonga received Code 2 or below in this criterion, indicating that the writers had limited vocabulary.

**Spelling (Codes 1–2):** This measures the students' ability to spell both basic and more difficult words. More than 60% of the year four students in Tonga received Code 1 in this criterion, indicating that they were able to spell some basic words correctly in their writing test.

**Punctuation (Codes 1–3):** This measures the range and precision of punctuation used in telling the story. More than 40% of year four students in Tonga received Code 1 in this criterion, indicating that they had mostly used commas and full stops but had made some errors using them.

## Year six coding

**Quality of ideas (Codes 1–8):** This criterion measures the quality of the students' ideas and how well those ideas have been developed to produce an entertaining story. More than 70% or seven out of ten year six students in Tonga were given Code 4 or below in this criterion. These students struggled to write a few words or random words, or words copied from the prompt. Two out of ten year six students in Tonga knew what to do in the writing test and wrote stories that related to a prompt, these students were awarded code 5 or above.

**Structure and organisation (Codes 1–5):** This measures the students' ability to shape a story, or to produce a coherent story, with ideas that relate to each other and are logically sequenced. Eight out of ten year six students in Tonga received Code 3 or below. This showed that they had an awareness of story structure by including some story elements, but there was an overall lack of coherence or sequence from gaps in logic or irrelevant detail in their stories. About 16% of year six students in Tonga were awarded the two top codes in this criterion, indicating that their stories were introduced and well developed and had a clear conclusion, with no gaps in logic or irrelevant details.

**Grammar and syntax (Codes 1–4):** This measures the students' ability to produce a range of sentence structures with accuracy. Up to 70% of year six students in Tonga received Code 2 or below in this criterion, indicating that they had written repetitive sentences that also had a lot of errors in grammar.

**Vocabulary (Codes 1–4):** This measures the variety of their vocabulary in telling the story. Eight out of ten (79%) year six students in Tonga received Code 2 or below, in this criterion, indicating that the students had limited vocabulary and struggled to express themselves in their story.

**Spelling (Codes 1–2):** This measures the students' ability to spell both basic and more difficult words. Nearly 70% of the year six students in Tonga received Code 1 in this criterion, indicating that they were able to spell some basic words correctly in their writing test.

**Punctuation (Codes 1–3):** This measures the range and precision of punctuation used in telling the story. Nearly half the year six students in Tonga received Code 1 in this criterion, indicating that they had mostly used commas and full stops but had made some errors using them.