

# Year 4 cohort

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

## Introduction to the 2021-year four 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

## Conclusions for year four

Year four students in Tonga had mixed performance across the PILNA subjects compared with previous PILNA cycles. These students scored similarly in numeracy, slightly lower in reading, and slightly lower in writing than PILNA 2018. The average score in numeracy was similar to all previous PILNA cycles, the average reading score was lower than all previous PILNA cycles, and the average writing score was lower than 2018 but higher than 2015. Average scores in numeracy (488), reading (453), and writing (489) were, however, higher than the scores across the region (numeracy, 479; reading, 444; writing, 484).

Most year four students are meeting the minimum expected proficiency standards in numeracy but less than half are doing so in reading; 75% of students were at or above these levels in numeracy and 47% were at or above them in reading. Minimum expected proficiency levels for writing have not yet been established but writing performance decreased compared with 2018.

In year four, girls scored higher than boys in numeracy (girls, 497; boys, 480), reading (girls, 466; boys, 443), and writing (girls, 496; boys, 482). Also, more girls were meeting the minimum expected proficiency levels than boys in numeracy (girls, 81%; boys, 70%) and reading (girls, 56%; boys, 38%).

Year four students in government schools scored about the same in numeracy (government, 489; non-government, 483), reading (government, 454; non-government, 454), and writing (government, 490; non-government, 486) compared with students in non-government schools.

Year four students in urban schools tended to score slightly higher in numeracy (urban, 493; non-urban, 483), reading (urban, 459; non-urban, 449), and writing (urban, 493; non-urban, 485) than students in non-urban schools.

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