

Conclusions for students

A wealth of information on student experiences and circumstances was collected in PILNA 2021. The reported areas 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. A high proportion of students reported that they enjoyed school and the PILNA subjects (between 86-96%) and acknowledged their importance (between 86-95%). These findings might reflect generally positive learning environments, but the causes and consequences of student attitudes in these areas still need to be discovered.

Many students are experiencing positive attitudes, while some are experiencing challenges to their well-being. More than half of the students indicated that they frequently had good days. Also, about one in five students reported frequent negative experiences such as tiredness, sadness, not having enough friends, or clean clothes/shoes or pocket money. Overall, this suggests that while many students have positive experiences, few 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 two areas standing out: difficulties learning or remembering and controlling (own) behavior.

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 of the 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 parents with a university-level education or higher.

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

- higher scores on the caregiver support scale – a scale used to summarise how supportive caregivers were of a student and their learning and;
- higher scores on the reading, mathematics and school attitude scale – meaning that they had more positive attitudes towards reading, mathematics and school in general.

Overall, most students had positive attitudes toward school and were confident in their abilities in literacy and numeracy. However, a substantial proportion of students are experiencing learning difficulties and face well-being challenges. Associations between household or student factors and student performance may show areas where changes could raise performance or create better student experiences.