

Year 6 cohort

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

Introduction to the 2021 year six cohort

Year six students who participated in PILNA 2021 have had different schooling experiences from previous PILNA cohorts. Formal learning in the Pacific region 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, or their access to education, although further research is needed to validate any wider impacts of these events.

The 2021 year six cohort of students have had a smaller proportion of their total school years affected by these learning disruptions than the 2021 year four students, who may have been more affected by them. The effects of learning disruptions on students with more years of formal schooling compared with fewer years of formal schooling have not, however, been well established. Future research and analysis are needed in this area.

Importantly, PILNA 2021 is the first large-scale regional assessment to show the consequences of these disruptions. It has collected the information necessary to link learning disruptions to student performance. Analysis of this information will be undertaken in the near future and provided alongside the PILNA 2021 results when available.

Conclusions for year six

Year six students in Tuvalu had mixed performance in the PILNA subjects compared with previous PILNA cycles. These students scored lower in numeracy and higher in writing than any previous PILNA cycle. In reading, their scores were lower than in 2018 but higher than in 2015. Average scores in numeracy (521), reading (471), and writing (500) were also lower than the average scores across the region (numeracy, 531; reading, 492; writing, 507).

Most year six students are meeting the minimum expected proficiency levels in numeracy but not for reading; 69% of students were at or above the minimum expected proficiency levels in numeracy but only 44% were at or above them in reading. Minimum expected proficiency levels for writing have not yet been established but writing performance has substantially increased.

In year six, girls scored higher than boys in numeracy (girls, 532; boys, 509), reading (girls, 490; boys, 453), and writing (girls, 510; boys, 491). Also, more girls were meeting the minimum expected proficiency levels than boys in numeracy (girls, 79%; boys, 59%) and reading (girls, 53%; boys, 36%).

Year six students in non-government schools scored slightly higher in reading (government, 466; non-government, 497) and writing (government, 499; non-government, 508) than students in government schools. There were no differences in the numeracy scores of students in government and non-government schools (government, 521; non-government, 516).

Year six students in non-urban schools scored higher in numeracy (urban, 510; non-urban, 532) than students in urban schools. There were no differences in the reading (urban, 474; non-urban, 467) and writing (urban, 500; non-urban, 501) scores of students from urban and non-urban schools.

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