

Reader's guide

What is the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills?

The Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) is an international survey designed by the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation to improve understanding of social and emotional skills among 10- and 15-year-old students. SSES aims to understand how levels of these skills differ among students with different characteristics; how these skills matter for important student outcomes; and how students' school and home environments influence skill development.

Which social and emotional skills are covered in SSES?

The 15 skills measured were selected to provide a comprehensive coverage of those that are relevant for children's and adolescents' success and well-being. Further information on why and how these skills were selected can be found in the SSES assessment framework (Kankaraš and Suarez-Alvarez, 2019^[1]). See Table 1 for a full list of the skills included in SSES 2023 and their definitions.

Some changes were made to skills measured in SSES 2023 compared to SSES 2019. In SSES 2019, achievement motivation and self-efficacy were measured as 'additional skills' that were created from items used to evaluate other skills. In SSES 2023, achievement motivation is measured using a new set of dedicated items and self-efficacy is not measured. Items to measure cooperation were included in SSES 2023, however this skill did not conform to the necessary technical standards and was therefore excluded from the analysis. Further information can be found in the SSES 2023 Technical Report (forthcoming).

How were these skills measured?

All students complete a questionnaire where they indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements. Examples of statements include: *'I keep working on a task until it is finished'*, *'I stay calm even in tense situations'* and *'I am able to defend my interests when they are challenged'*.

Who participated in SSES?

Students in sixteen sites – six countries and ten sub-national entities - participated in SSES 2023. Data from seven sites who participated in the first round of SSES in 2019, but not in 2023, are also included in analyses in this report wherever possible to expand the coverage of the average across sites.

Bogotá (Colombia) and Helsinki (Finland) participated in both SSES 2019 and 2023. For these two sites, only their data from SSES 2023 are included in the average across sites. Where possible, results in these sites are compared between 2019 and 2023. All sites in SSES 2019 and 2023 surveyed 15-year-olds. All SSES 2019 sites surveyed 10-year-olds, however surveying this age group was made optional in SSES 2023. See

Table 2 for a list of sites who participated in SSES 2019 and 2023, including whether they surveyed 10-year-olds.

Students' teachers and principals were also surveyed in all SSES 2019 and SSES 2023 sites. Students' parents were surveyed in some sites. Teacher, principal and parent data are not used for analyses in this report; however, teacher and principal data will be included in future outputs.

Table 1. Description of the skills included in the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023

Domain	Skill	Description	Behavioural examples
Open-mindedness	Curiosity	Interested in ideas and love of learning, understanding and intellectual exploration; an inquisitive mindset.	Likes to read books, to travel to new destinations. Opposite: Dislikes change, is not interested in exploring new products.
	Tolerance	Is open to different points of view, values diversity, is appreciative of foreign people and cultures.	Has friends from different backgrounds. Opposite: Dislikes foreigners or people from different backgrounds.
	Creativity	Generates novel ways to do or think about things through exploring, learning from failure, insight and vision.	Has original insights, creates valued artworks Opposite: Acts conventionally; not interested in arts
Task performance	Responsibility	Able to honour commitments and be punctual and reliable.	Arrives on time for appointments, gets chores done right away. Opposite: Doesn't follow through on agreements / promises.
	Self-control	Able to avoid distractions and sudden impulses and focus attention on the current task in order to achieve personal goals.	Postpones fun activities until important tasks are completed, does not rush into things. Opposite: Is prone to say things before thinking them through. Binge drinking.
	Persistence	Able to persevere in tasks and activities until they get done.	Finishes homework projects or work once started. Opposite: Gives up easily when confronted with obstacles/distractions.
	Achievement motivation	Sets high standards for oneself and works hard to meet them.	Enjoys reaching a high level of mastery in some activity. Opposite: Lack of interest in reaching mastery in any activity, including professional competencies.
Engaging with others	Sociability	Able to approach others, both friends and strangers, initiating and maintaining social connections.	Skilled at teamwork, good at public speaking. Opposite: Can struggle in working with a larger team, avoids public speaking.
	Assertiveness	Able to confidently voice opinions, needs, and feelings, and exert social influence.	Takes charge in a class or team. Opposite: Waits for others to lead the way; keeps quiet when disagrees with others.
	Energy	Approaches daily life with energy, excitement and spontaneity.	Is always busy; works long hours. Opposite: Gets tired easily without physical cause.
Collaboration	Empathy	Understands and cares about others, and their well-being. Values and invests in close relationships.	Consoles a friend who is upset, sympathises with homeless people. Opposite: Tends to misinterpret, ignore or disregard other person's feelings.
	Trust	Assumes that others generally have good intentions and forgives those who have done wrong.	Lends things to people, avoids being harsh or judgmental. Opposite: Is secretive and suspicious in relations with people.
Emotional regulation	Stress resistance	Effectiveness in modulating anxiety and able to calmly solve problems (is relaxed, handles stress well).	Is relaxed most of the time, performs well in high-pressure situations. Opposite: Most of the time worries about things, difficulties sleeping.
	Optimism	Positive and optimistic expectations for self and life in general.	Generally in a good mood. Opposite: Often feels sad, tends to feel insecure or unworthy.
	Emotional control	Effective strategies for regulating temper, anger and irritation in the face of frustrations.	Controls emotions in situations of conflict. Opposite: Gets upset easily; is moody.

Table 2. Participants in SSES 2019 and 2023

	SSES 2023 participant	SSES 2019 participant	Surveyed 15-year-olds	Surveyed 10-year-olds (optional in SSES 2023)
Bulgaria	Yes		Yes	
Chile	Yes		Yes	
Mexico	Yes		Yes	
Peru	Yes		Yes	
Spain	Yes		Yes	
Ukraine	Yes		Yes	Yes
Bogotá (Colombia)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Daegu (Korea)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Delhi (India)	Yes		Yes	
Dubai (United Arab Emirates)	Yes		Yes	
Emilia-Romagna (Italy)	Yes		Yes	
Gunma (Japan)	Yes		Yes	
Helsinki (Finland)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Houston (United States)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Istanbul (Türkiye)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Jinan (China)	Yes		Yes	Yes
Kudus (Indonesia)	Yes		Yes	Yes
Manizales (Colombia)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Ottawa (Canada)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Sintra (Portugal)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Sobral (Brazil)	Yes		Yes	Yes
Suzhou (China)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Turin (Italy)	Yes		Yes	
Total	16	9	23	13

Before starting the survey, each site agreed a definition of their target population: the group of students the survey results should represent. From the target population, a random sample of students was surveyed. Table 3 provides a list of each site that participated in SSES 2023, their target population definition and any cautionary notes that should be considered when interpreting their data. The target population varies between sites, with some only surveying students in public or private schools, and these differences should be considered when interpreting analyses.

Table 3. SSES 2023 site descriptions, target population definitions and cautionary notes

Site description	Target population definition	Cautionary notes
Bulgaria is an OECD accession candidate country located in Europe.	15-year-old students in public and private schools. There were 57 373 SSES eligible students in 1 091 schools.	None.
Chile is an OECD member country located in South America.	15-year-old students in public and private schools. There were 229 026 SSES eligible students in 5 753 schools.	None.
Mexico is an OECD member country located in North America.	15-year-old students in public schools. There were 633 576 SSES eligible students in 16 284 schools. However, these estimates are not consistent with those from PISA 2022.	The data is not fully representative of the target population and present major deviations from several technical standards. For this reason, data for Mexico is excluded from the international average and reported separately.

Peru is an OECD accession candidate country located in South America.	15-year-old students in public and private schools. There were 543 882 SSES eligible students in 16 977 schools.	None.
Spain is an OECD member country located in Europe.	15-year-old students in public and private schools. There were 487 622 SSES eligible students in 7 876 schools.	None.
Ukraine is a prospective OECD member country located in Europe.	10-year-old and 15-year-old students in public and private schools from 19 of 27 Ukrainian regions. There were 415 927 SSES younger cohort eligible students enrolled in 11 963 schools and 289 953 SSES older cohort eligible students in 11 038 schools.	Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine meant that a minority of Ukrainian regions where it was not safe to conduct the survey are not covered. Data are representative of 19 of 27 Ukrainian regions. For this reason, data for Ukraine is labelled 'Ukraine (19 of 27 regions)'. In addition, the consequences of the war also had an impact on students' participation rates. Data for 10-year-old students should be interpreted with some caution as student response rates were lower than expected (72%). Data for 15-year-old students should be interpreted with caution as student response rates were much lower than expected (57%).
Bogotá is the capital of Colombia, an OECD member country.	10-year-old and 15-year-old students in public and private schools. There were 87 501 SSES younger cohort eligible students in 1 679 schools and 91 501 SSES older cohort eligible students enrolled in 1 146 schools.	None.
Delhi is the capital of India, an OECD Key Partner country.	15-year-olds in public schools managed by the Directorate of Education in the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. There were 244 856 SSES eligible students in 964 schools.	Data should be interpreted with some caution as student response rates were lower than expected (72%).
Dubai is a city in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a non-OECD member country.	15-year-old students in private schools. There were 18 100 SSES eligible students in 170 private schools.	None.
Emilia-Romagna is a region located in northern Italy, an OECD member country.	15-year-old students in public and private schools. There were 22 594 SSES eligible students in 172 schools.	None.
Gunma is a prefecture located in central Japan, an OECD member country.	15-year-old students in public and private schools. There were 14 757 SSES eligible students in 79 schools.	None.
Helsinki is the capital of Finland, an OECD member country.	10-year-old and 15-year-old students in public schools. There were 5 883 SSES younger cohort eligible students in 96 public schools and 4 090 SSES older cohort eligible students in 68 public schools.	Data for 15-year-old students should be interpreted with some caution as student response rates were lower than expected (70%).
Jinan is the capital city of Shandong province in eastern China, an OECD Key Partner country.	10-year-old and 15-year-old students in public and private schools. There were 105 510 SSES younger cohort eligible students in 708 schools and 71 167 SSES older cohort eligible students in 338 schools.	None.
Kudus is a city in the Central Java province of Indonesia, an OECD Key Partner country.	10-year-old and 15-year-old students in public and private schools. There were 13 716 SSES younger cohort eligible students in 570 schools and 10 470 SSES older cohort eligible students in 207 schools.	Data for both 10- and 15-year-olds should be interpreted with some caution as the samples drawn may not be fully representative of the target population. The data is estimated to be representative of 9 199 10-year-old students and 4 697 15-year-old students in Kudus.
Sobral is a municipality in the state of Ceará in the northeast region of Brazil, an OECD accession candidate and Key Partner country.	10-year-old and 15-year-old students in public schools. There were 2 339 SSES younger cohort eligible students in 55 schools and 2 586 SSES older cohort eligible students in 34 schools.	None.
Turin is a city located in northern Italy, an OECD member country.	15-year-old students in public and private schools. There were 14 647 SSES eligible students in 150 schools.	None.

How to interpret findings in this report

Average across sites

Where averages across sites are provided, these correspond to the arithmetic mean of all participating sites, except for Sintra (Portugal) and Mexico. Data for Sintra (Portugal) did not meet the technical standards. See Table 3 for cautionary notes for Mexico.

Standardised differences

Standardised differences quantify the size of the difference between two groups – such as differences in levels of stress resistance between boys and girls – using a common scale. The difference can be interpreted as the number of standard deviations, on average, by which the groups differ. Typically, a standardised difference (also referred to as effect size, Cohen's *d*) of around 0.2 is considered small, 0.5 is moderate and 0.8 or more is large. The larger the difference, the less overlap there is between the two groups and the more noticeable the difference is likely to be (Sullivan and Feinn, 2012^[2]).

Standard errors

The statistical estimates presented in this report are based on samples of students, rather than values that could be calculated if every person in the target population in every country had answered every question. Therefore, each estimate has a degree of uncertainty associated with a sampling error, which can be expressed as a standard error.

Statistically significant findings

Differences considered to be statistically significant from either zero or between estimates are based on the 5% level of significance, unless otherwise stated. In the figures, statistically significant estimates are denoted in a darker tone.

Rounding

Because of rounding, some figures in the tables may not add up exactly to the totals. Totals, differences and averages are always calculated on the basis of exact numbers and are rounded only after calculation. All standard errors in this publication have been rounded to one or two decimal places. If the value 0.0 or 0.00 is shown, it does not imply that the standard error is zero, but that it is smaller than 0.05 or 0.005, respectively.

Abbreviations

Coef Coefficient

Dif. Difference

ESCS Index of economic, social and cultural status

N Number of observations

S.D Standard deviation

S.E Standard error

SSES Survey on Social and Emotional Skills

% S. D. Percentage of standard deviation

Additional technical information

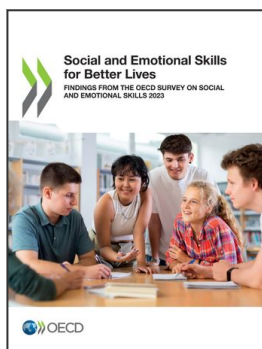
Readers interested in additional technical details are directed towards the short technical note at the end of this volume (Annex A), the SSES 2019 Technical Report (OECD, 2021^[3]) and the SSES 2023 Technical Report (forthcoming).

This report has StatLinks for tables and graphs at the end of the chapters, which means that all tables and figures are assigned a URL leading to an Excel® spreadsheet containing the underlying data. To download the matching Excel® spreadsheet, just type the link into your Internet browser, starting with the <https://doi.org> prefix, or click on the link from the e-book version.

The database of the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills houses the raw data and scales presented in this report. The database allows users to break down data in more ways than is possible in this publication in order to conduct their own analyses of students' social and emotional skills in participating sites. The database can be accessed from the project's website (<http://www.oecd.org/education/cei/social-emotional-skills-study/>).

References

- Kankaraš, M. and J. Suarez-Alvarez (2019), "Assessment framework of the OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 207, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5007adef-en>. [1]
- OECD (2021), *OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills, Technical Report*, <https://www.oecd.org/education/cei/social-emotional-skills-study/sses-technical-report.pdf> (accessed on 8 April 2024). [3]
- Sullivan, G. and R. Feinn (2012), "Using Effect Size-or Why the P Value Is Not Enough", *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, Vol. 4/3, pp. 279-282, <https://doi.org/10.4300/jgme-d-12-00156.1>. [2]



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