

Executive summary

The Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) is an international survey designed to improve our understanding of students' social and emotional skills, including how these skills relate to key life outcomes.

Sixteen sites, including six countries, took part in SSES 2023. Within this report, SSES 2023 data is combined with data from seven other sites that participated in SSES 2019 wherever possible.

A broad set of 10- and 15-year-old students' skills were measured:

- Task performance skills (persistence, responsibility, self-control and achievement motivation)
- Emotional regulation skills (stress resistance, emotional control and optimism)
- Engaging with others skills (assertiveness, sociability and energy)
- Open-mindedness skills (curiosity, creativity and tolerance)
- Collaboration skills (empathy and trust)

All sites measured these social and emotional skills among 15-year-olds whereas measuring them among 10-year-olds was optional in SSES 2023. All findings in this report relate to 15-year-old students unless stated otherwise.

There are disparities in social and emotional skills by students' age, gender and family background

- Younger students (10-year-olds) typically report higher social and emotional skills than older students (15-year-olds), particularly trust, energy and optimism.
- Boys tend to report higher emotional regulation skills (particularly stress resistance), energy, trust, and sociability than girls at age 15. Gender disparities in these skills largely emerge in adolescence, except for stress resistance, where a difference is already visible at age 10.
- On average, girls report higher tolerance, achievement motivation, empathy and responsibility than boys at age 15.
- Socio-economically disadvantaged students report lower levels of all skills compared to advantaged students, on average, and these gaps are largest for open-mindedness skills (creativity, tolerance and curious) and those related to engaging with others (assertiveness, sociability and empathy).

Students reported lower levels of most social and emotional skills in 2023 than in 2019 in the two sites that participated in both years

- In Helsinki (Finland) and Bogotá (Colombia), both 10-year-olds and 15-year-olds tend to report lower social and emotional skills in 2023 compared to 2019. These differences are largest for open-

mindedness skills (tolerance, creativity and curiosity) but are also found for responsibility, self-control, trust, and sociability in both sites.

- In both sites, gender disparities in emotional regulation skills and energy widened, with boys reporting even higher levels of these skills than girls on average in 2023 compared to 2019.

Girls report less healthy behaviours and lower levels of life satisfaction and psychological well-being than boys, however they tend to be more ambitious

- On average, girls report less healthy behaviours, such as eating breakfast, getting enough sleep and exercising regularly, than boys. Girls also tend to report lower well-being outcomes - life satisfaction, psychological well-being, relationship satisfaction and body image - and higher test and class anxiety than boys.
- Girls are more likely to expect to complete tertiary education and have a managerial or professional career in the future than boys.

Most 15-year-olds are not getting enough sleep which can negatively impact their well-being

- On average across sites, over half of 15-year-olds say they get less than eight hours of sleep most nights.
- Getting enough sleep has the strongest relationship with students' psychological well-being and life satisfaction of any health behaviour.
- Students with higher optimism, energy, and task performance skills (particularly achievement motivation, persistence, and responsibility) engage in healthier behaviours, including getting enough sleep, eating healthily, and exercising regularly.

Students with lower social and emotional skills tend to have poorer well-being outcomes

- Students with lower emotional regulation skills (particularly optimism), energy and trust tend to report poorer well-being outcomes, including lower life satisfaction and psychological well-being.
- The skills that are most strongly and consistently associated with well-being outcomes – optimism, energy and trust - are those with the largest drops between age 10 and 15 and the largest gender disparities.

Students with higher task performance skills and curiosity achieve greater academic success

- Students who report higher task performance skills (particularly achievement motivation and persistence) and curiosity tend to achieve better grades in reading, mathematics and arts and are late for or skip school less often.
- Task performance skills and curiosity are associated with academic achievement among both boys and girls, as well as disadvantaged and advantaged students, suggesting that these skills can support better outcomes for all students.

Students with higher open-mindedness and task performance skills are more prepared and more ambitious for their future education and career

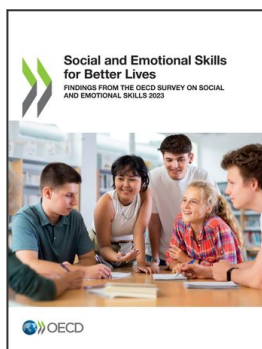
- Open-mindedness skills – particularly curiosity, but also creativity and tolerance – are associated with students' career exploration and their expectations to complete tertiary education or have a managerial or professional career in the future.
- Task performance skills (particularly achievement motivation and persistence) - the skills most strongly associated with academic performance – are also linked to these activities and expectations.

There are high levels of ambition among students, including among disadvantaged students

- Most 15-year-old students have carried out three to four career development activities as they prepare for the world of work. The most common activities are researching higher education programmes and careers online.
- Most students expect to attend tertiary education and have a managerial or professional career in the future, while around half of students say it is likely they will start their own business. Although lower than socio-economically advantaged students and students with top academic grades, there are still relatively high levels of these ambitions among disadvantaged students and those with the lowest grades.

Students are identifying career paths that align with their social and emotional skills

- Students are more likely to expect to take up a career in Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), science and engineering if they report high curiosity or creativity, while they are more likely to expect a career in health if they have high task performance skills, curiosity or empathy.
- Students who expect to start their own business tend to report higher engaging with others skills (energy, assertiveness, sociability), optimism and creativity than those who do not.



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