5

Taking action for collective well-being and sustainable development

This chapter examines students' ability to take action for collective well-being and sustainable development. This fourth dimension of global competence builds on the three other dimensions and highlights the action-oriented and practical nature of these skills. The chapter explores students' sense of agency regarding global issues and their capacity to take action and highlights differences related to their socio-economic background. It also explores students' performance on the cognitive test items covering this dimension.

What the data tell us

– Students in Albania, Baku (Azerbaijan), Costa Rica, Jordan, Korea, Kosovo, Malta, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Chinese Taipei and Turkey reported the highest levels of agency regarding global issues. The lowest levels were observed in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, the Russian Federation and the Slovak Republic.

– Students were most likely to report that they take action concerning energy consumption: some 71% of students across OECD countries reported that they do so. The second most common activity was following world events via Facebook and Twitter (64% of students reported that they do so).

– Students who exhibited more positive intercultural attitudes were more likely to report that they take action than those who exhibited less positive attitudes. This positive association held in almost all countries/economies and for all indices. Large differences in the number of actions taken were observed between students in the top and bottom quarters of the indices of students' interest in learning about other cultures and of agency regarding global issues.

– The largest proportions of correct answers in the part of the assessment covering taking action for sustainability and collective well-being were observed in Canada, Hong Kong (China), Korea, Scotland (United Kingdom), Spain and Chinese Taipei. In all of those countries and economies, students answered more than 40% of the items correctly.

The fourth dimension of global competence explores students' ability and willingness to take action for collective well-being and sustainable development (Boix Mansilla, V & Jackson, A., 2011[1]; UNESCO, 2014[2]). This dimension focuses on young people's role as active and responsible members of society and refers to their readiness to respond to a given local, global or intercultural issue or situation. Students proficient in this dimension are willing and able to take informed, reflective action. This might involve standing up for a schoolmate whose human dignity is being threatened, initiating a media campaign at school about environmental issues, disseminating a personal viewpoint on the refugee crisis via social media or taking considered actions to avoid spreading a life-threatening virus. Students who are willing to take action are engaged in improving living conditions in their own communities and in building a more just, peaceful, inclusive and environmentally sustainable world (OECD, 2018[3]; Council of Europe, 2018[4]).

In recent years, the concept of global citizenship has emerged as a response to the growing need for people who are actively engaged in the development of sustainable societies. Since many of the challenges that the world is facing are global, responses to them should be too. However, individuals cannot be citizens of the world in the same way that they are citizens of a country (Davies, 2006[13]). This apparent paradox raises a question about the nature of global citizenship: How does it work?

Citizenship implies playing an active role that goes beyond having positive attitudes or emotions. It has implications for rights, responsibilities, duties and entitlements. Three components have emerged as key aspects of global citizenship: 1) social justice; 2) rights; and 3) culture and global links. Social justice means understanding the global implications of social and economic policy and being able to influence decision-making processes at the global level, as well as in other people's lives (Wringe, 1999[14]). Rights, on the other hand, focus on the ethical side of citizenship, in the sense that global citizenship transcends national boundaries. Global citizens regard planet Earth as our common home. As such, the identity that unites human beings is not cultural, social, national or political, but rather ethical (Griffiths, 1998[15]). This notion emphasises human rights and social responsibility (Lynch, 1992[16]). Culture and global links highlight the complex notion of "us" and "them" in a world marked by migration and hybrid identities (Yamashita, 2006[17]). Culture is not only about the origins of people, but also about the links between them and the outside world, whether social, cultural or economic. Global citizens are expected to understand the implication of actions for themselves and for others, and they should ultimately translate this understanding into actions for collective well-being and sustainable development.

Taking action is the ultimate goal of the three dimensions explored in previous chapters. Students who are able to examine local and global issues, who understand the perspectives of others and who are able to communicate effectively across different cultures should be capable of taking action for collective well-being and sustainable development. In PISA 2018, the capacity to take action was assessed using 2 questions in the student questionnaire and 14 test items in the cognitive test. One of the challenges in measuring this skill is that real actions are not directly observed. In this case, one has to explore the factors that enable effective action taking, such as understanding actions and their consequences, a sense of agency regarding global issues and self-reported information on activities in which students are involved.

A SENSE OF AGENCY REGARDING GLOBAL ISSUES

Agency regarding global issues[1] is defined as a worldview in which one sees oneself as connected to the world community and feels a sense of responsibility for its members. An engaged person, one with a sense of agency, has concerns for people in other parts of the world, as well as feelings of moral responsibility to try to improve others' conditions, irrespective of distance and cultural differences (Veronica Boix Mansilla, 2016[5]). People who have a sense of agency regarding global issues care about future generations and so act to preserve the environmental integrity of the planet. They exercise agency with critical awareness of the fact that other people might have a different vision of what humanity needs, and they are open to reflecting on and changing their vision as they learn about those different perspectives. Rather than believing that all differences can be eliminated, they strive to create space for different ways of living with dignity (Engberg and Hurtado, 2011[6]).

In recent years, the formation of a wider outlook on the world has gained importance with the rise of notions like global citizenship and global engagement (Andreotti, 2009[7]; Paige et al., 2009[8]; Mannion et al., 2011[9]; de Oliveira Andreotti, Biesta and Ahenakew, 2014[10]). Global agency is seen as a learning task through which adolescents learn about people and ideas to gain a better understanding of them. Such contact with people and ideas can dispel prejudice and ultimately stimulate a desire to take action for improving collective well-being and sustainable development (Allport, 1954[11]). Students who feel a sense of agency regarding global issues are those who perceive themselves as global citizens who have certain responsibilities towards others and the world.

PISA 2018 asked students the extent to which they agree ("strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree", "strongly agree") with the following six statements: "I think of myself as a citizen of the world"; "When I see the poor conditions that some people live under, I feel a responsibility to do something about it"; "I think my behaviour can impact people in other countries"; "It is right to boycott companies that are known to provide poor workplace conditions for their employees"; "I can do something about the problems of the world"; and "Looking after the global environment is important to me". Responses to these statements were combined to create the index of agency regarding global issues. Positive values in this index indicate that students have a greater sense of global-mindedness than the average student across OECD countries.

The results show that students in Albania, Baku (Azerbaijan), Costa Rica, Jordan, Korea, Kosovo, Malta, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Chinese Taipei and Turkey reported the highest level of agency regarding global issues. The lowest levels of agency were observed in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, the Russian Federation (hereafter "Russia") and the Slovak Republic (Figure VI.5.1). In 53 of 63 countries and economies that took the student global competence questionnaire, girls reported greater agency regarding global issues than boys. The largest gender gaps in favour of girls were observed in Australia, Ireland, Jordan, Lithuania and New Zealand. By contrast, no difference between boys and girls was observed in Baku (Azerbaijan), Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hong Kong (China), Kosovo, Montenegro, Panama, Russia, Thailand and Viet Nam. Moreover, in all countries/economies, advantaged students (those in the top quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status) reported greater agency regarding global issues. The socio-economic differences in this index were widest in Australia, Austria, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Korea, Kosovo and Scotland (United Kingdom) and narrowest in Peru, Russia and Turkey.

Few differences in agency regarding global issues were observed between immigrant and native-born students. In seven countries and economies (Australia, Canada, France, Hong Kong [China], Ireland, Saudi Arabia and New Zealand), immigrant students exhibited greater agency regarding global issues; the reverse was true only in Kazakhstan and Lebanon (Table VI.B1.5.3).

The index of agency regarding global issues varied between students within each participating country and economy. The widest dispersions were found in Baku (Azerbaijan), the Dominican Republic and Jordan, while students in Brunei Darussalam, Macao (China), Malaysia, the Republic of Moldova (hereafter "Moldova"), Thailand and Viet Nam tended to respond in similar ways. Between-school variations in this index were also small. Between-school variation exceeded 10% of all variation only in Lebanon and exceeded 5% only in Germany (Table VI.B1.5.1). Large dispersions indicate greater inequalities in the distribution of this attitude, while large variations between schools are a sign of greater stratification on this measure. Patterns of polarisation were found to be similar to those of other indices. Students in the middle two quarters of the index of agency regarding global issues had similar mean indices, while those in the top quarter showed much higher values in the index than those in the third quarter, and those in the bottom quarter showed much lower values than those in the second quarter (Table VI.B1.5.3).
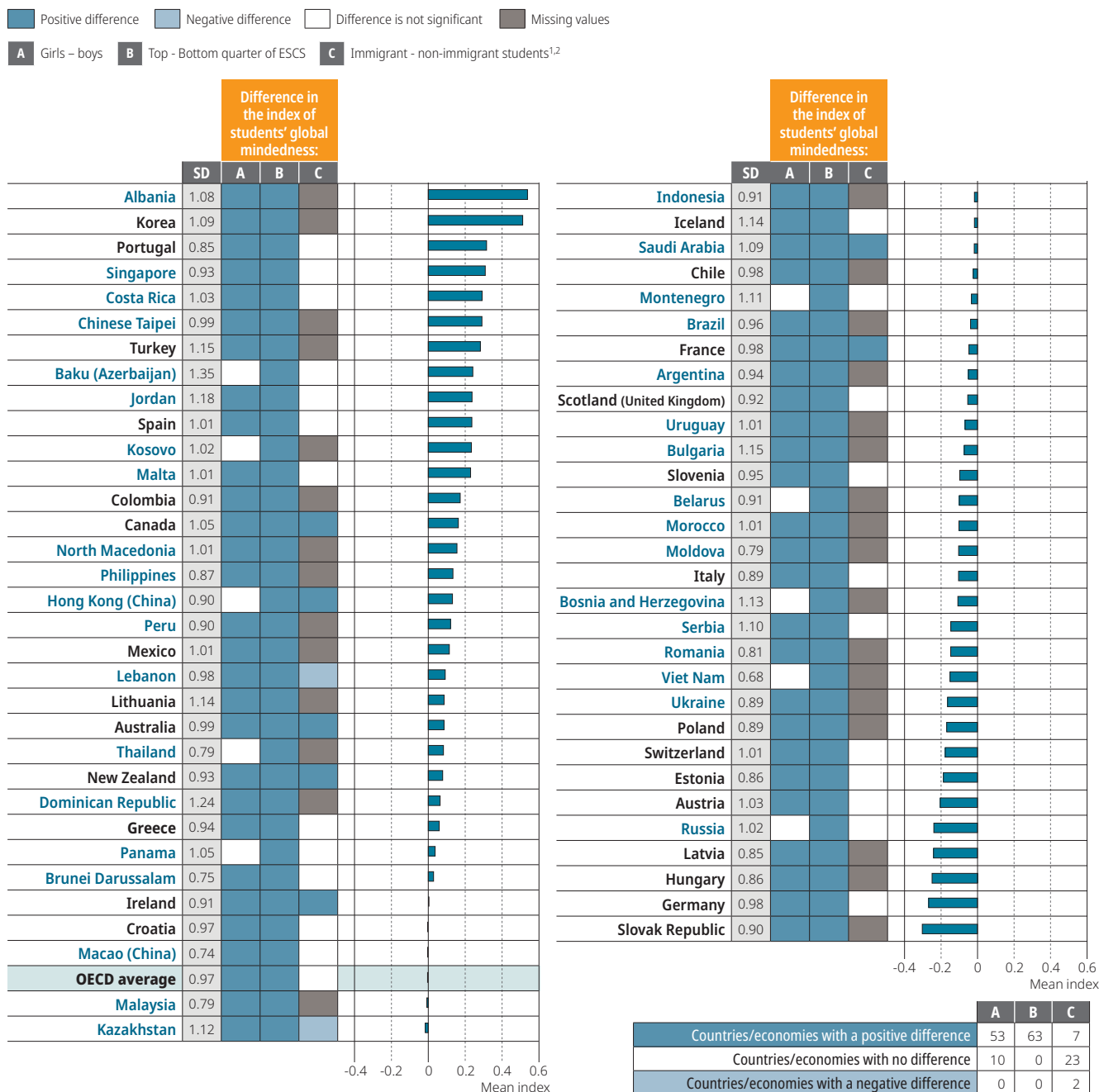
Some 78% of students, on average across OECD countries, agreed or strongly agreed that looking after the global environment is important to them (Figure VI.5.2). Some 76% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they think of themselves as citizens of the world; 67% agreed or strongly agreed that when they see the poor conditions that some people in the world live under, they feel a responsibility to do something about it; 66% agreed or strongly agreed that it is right to boycott companies that are known to provide poor workplace conditions for their employees; 58% agreed or strongly agreed that they can do something about the problems of the world; and 56% agreed or strongly agreed that they think their behaviour can impact people in other countries.

Taking action for collective well-being

Students were more likely to agree with statements that did not involve an active role (i.e. the first two statements) than with statements that imply that they need to take action. This could indicate some degree of pessimism about whether students can make a difference. In other words, students may well be aware of a global issue and have positive attitudes about it, but remain reluctant to take action or may not see themselves as responsible for solving that issue (Table VI.B1.5.1).

Figure VI.5.1 **Students' agency regarding global issues**

Average, dispersion and variations, by students' socio-demographic profile

Legend: Positive difference | Negative difference | Difference is not significant | Missing values

A: Girls – boys | B: Top - Bottom quarter of ESCS | C: Immigrant - non-immigrant students[1,2]

	SD	A	B	C	Mean index
Albania	1.08				
Korea	1.09				
Portugal	0.85				
Singapore	0.93				
Costa Rica	1.03				
Chinese Taipei	0.99				
Turkey	1.15				
Baku (Azerbaijan)	1.35				
Jordan	1.18				
Spain	1.01				
Kosovo	1.02				
Malta	1.01				
Colombia	0.91				
Canada	1.05				
North Macedonia	1.01				
Philippines	0.87				
Hong Kong (China)	0.90				
Peru	0.90				
Mexico	1.01				
Lebanon	0.98				
Lithuania	1.14				
Australia	0.99				
Thailand	0.79				
New Zealand	0.93				
Dominican Republic	1.24				
Greece	0.94				
Panama	1.05				
Brunei Darussalam	0.75				
Ireland	0.91				
Croatia	0.97				
Macao (China)	0.74				
OECD average	0.97				
Malaysia	0.79				
Kazakhstan	1.12				

	SD	A	B	C	Mean index
Indonesia	0.91				
Iceland	1.14				
Saudi Arabia	1.09				
Chile	0.98				
Montenegro	1.11				
Brazil	0.96				
France	0.98				
Argentina	0.94				
Scotland (United Kingdom)	0.92				
Uruguay	1.01				
Bulgaria	1.15				
Slovenia	0.95				
Belarus	0.91				
Morocco	1.01				
Moldova	0.79				
Italy	0.89				
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1.13				
Serbia	1.10				
Romania	0.81				
Viet Nam	0.68				
Ukraine	0.89				
Poland	0.89				
Switzerland	1.01				
Estonia	0.86				
Austria	1.03				
Russia	1.02				
Latvia	0.85				
Hungary	0.86				
Germany	0.98				
Slovak Republic	0.90				

	A	B	C
Countries/economies with a positive difference	53	63	7
Countries/economies with no difference	10	0	23
Countries/economies with a negative difference	0	0	2

1. After accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile. The socio-economic profile is measured by the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS).

2. Differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are only presented for countries and economies where more than 5% of students have an immigrant background. The values for countries/economies with smaller proportions of immigrant students are reported as missing.

Note: The global competence sample from Israel does not include students in ultra-Orthodox schools and, thus, is not nationally representative. See PISA 2018 Technical Report (OECD, forthcoming) for details.
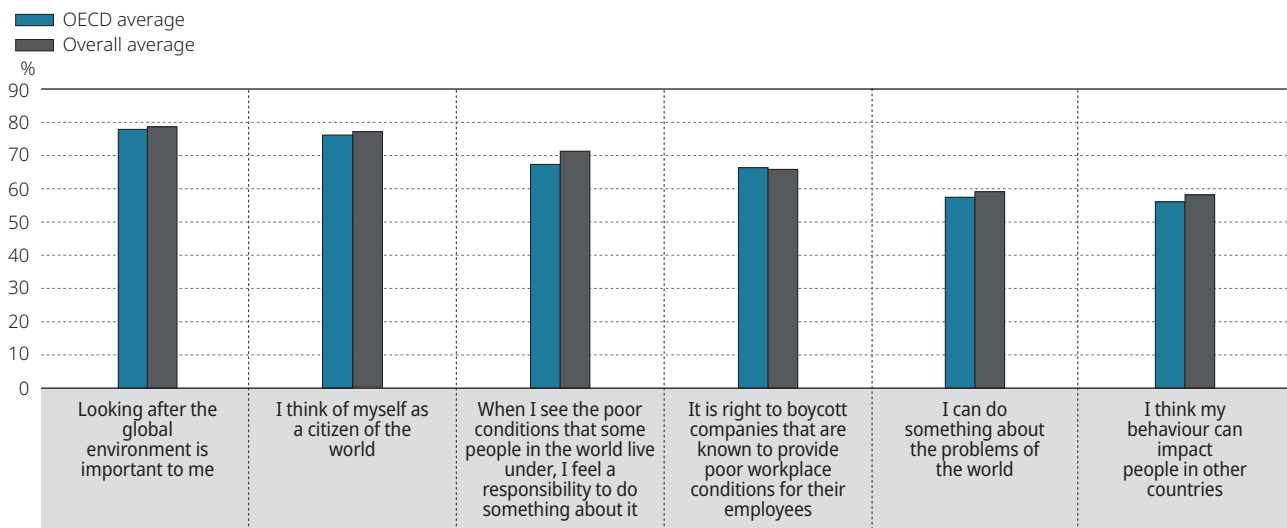
Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the index of students' agency regarding global issues.

Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Tables VI.B1.5.1 and VI.B1.5.3.

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Figure VI.5.2 **Students' agency regarding global issues**

OECD and overall averages

Legend: ■ OECD average ■ Overall average

Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table VI.B1.5.1.

StatLink ⏫ https://doi.org/10.1787/888934170089

HOW AGENCY REGARDING GLOBAL ISSUES IS RELATED TO STUDENTS' ATTITUDES

Having a sense of agency regarding global issues is likely to be associated with knowledge about and self-efficacy regarding those issues and positive attitudes towards other cultures. These associations highlight the conditional nature of the fourth dimension of global competence. One cannot feel a sense of agency regarding global issues, and ultimately be willing to take action, without being interested in those issues, without respecting others, and while lacking the confidence required for an active role. The following sections explore the associations between agency regarding global issues and key attitudes.

Associations between the index of agency regarding global issues and the eight indices explored in previous chapters were positive, albeit modest in strength. The strongest associations were with attitudes towards immigrants (correlation coefficient of 0.36), followed by awareness of intercultural communication (correlation coefficient of 0.31) and students' interest in learning about other cultures (correlation coefficient of 0.3). Correlation coefficients with the indices of knowledge of global issues, self-efficacy regarding global issues, perspective taking, respect for people from other cultures and cognitive adaptability were slightly weaker and ranged in strength between 0.18 and 0.26 (Figure VI.5.3). Minor variations in the strength of the associations were observed between countries/economies, and few correlation coefficients exceeded the threshold of 0.5.

The positive sign of those associations confirms the hypothesis that students' agency regarding global issues is a product (and a producer) of those positive attitudes and dispositions. However, the weakness of those associations indicates that the different indices are distinct enough from each other and measure different constructs. In other words, the nine attitudes and dispositions form the complementary ingredients that enable students to live in an interconnected world.

CAPACITY TO TAKE ACTION

The capacity to take action is seen as the culmination of the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired by students. Students who have knowledge of global and intercultural issues, who are able to understand the perspectives of others and who have interest in other cultures should also be able to translate such positive attributes into actions that benefit their local communities and the world in which they live (Milfont and Sibley, 2012[12]).

PISA 2018 assessed students' willingness to take action using a series of eight statements requiring a yes-or-no answer, covering topics related to environmental protection, gender equality, and staying informed about international and social issues, such as poverty and human rights. The eight statements were: "I reduce the energy I use at home to protect the environment"; "I choose certain products for ethical or environmental reasons, even if they are a bit more expensive"; "I sign environmental or social petitions online"; "I keep myself informed about world events via Twitter or Facebook"; "I boycott products or companies for political, ethical or environmental reasons"; "I participate in activities promoting equality between men and women"; "I participate in activities in favour of environmental protection"; and "I regularly read websites on international social issues (e.g. poverty, human rights)".

Figure VI.5.3 **Engagement with global issues and other student attitudes**

Based on students' reports, OECD average.
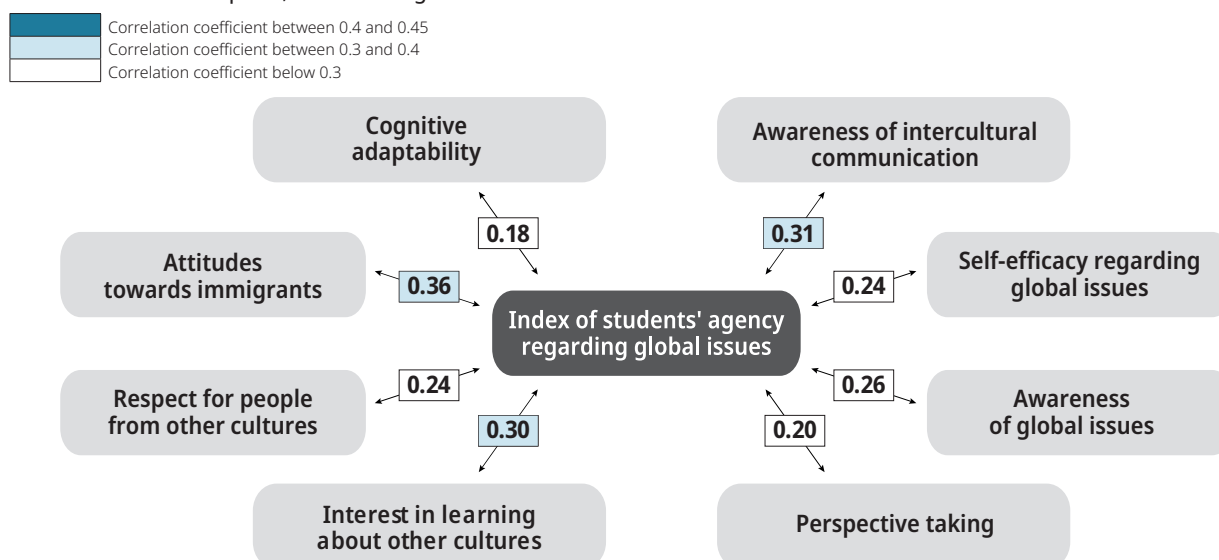
Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table VI.B1.5.5

StatLink ⟐ https://doi.org/10.1787/888934170108

Students were most likely to report that they take action concerning energy consumption. Some 71% of students across OECD countries reported that they reduce the energy they consume at home by turning the heating or air-conditioning down in order to protect the environment (Figure VI.5.4). The second most common activity was following world events via Facebook and Twitter (64% of student reported that they do so). Some 46% of students reported that they read websites on international social issues, and around 45% reported that they choose certain products for ethical or environmental reasons even if they are more expensive. The least common actions among students were participating in activities in favour of environmental protection (39% of students reported that they do so), participating in activities promoting gender equality (33%), boycotting products or companies for political, ethical or environmental reasons (27%), and signing environmental or social petitions online (25%).

These findings show that students are more likely to engage with simple actions that do not require time or financial commitments. Reducing energy consumption is the easiest and most common action. Following global issues via social media and the Internet, which are commonly used and readily available to adolescents, is the second most commonly exhibited form of agency. The least common actions are those that require active participation or involve forms of active citizenship that adolescents may not be familiar with or that require time and effort, such as signing petitions.

However, there were substantial variations between countries. For instance, more than 80% of students in Albania, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Jordan, Kosovo, Macao (China), Peru, the Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates reported that they reduce energy consumption, while less than 65% of students in Belarus, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Montenegro, Russia, Scotland (United Kingdom), Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Switzerland and Ukraine so reported. In contrast, signing environmental or social petitions was relatively more common than the OECD average (more than 50% of students reported doing so) in Baku (Azerbaijan), Jordan and Turkey, while it was uncommon in Australia, Canada, Croatia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Macao (China) and Portugal (less than 20% of students reported that they sign petitions).

Participation in activities to promote equality between men and women was common, with more than 50% of students reporting engagement in this type of action in Baku (Azerbaijan), the Dominican Republic, Iceland, Indonesia, Jordan, Morocco, the Philippines, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam. Student participation in these activities was least common in Belarus, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Scotland (United Kingdom), Switzerland and Ukraine.

More than 75% of students in Belarus, Hong Kong (China), Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, the Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Scotland (United Kingdom), Chinese Taipei, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, Ukraine and Viet Nam reported that they follow global events via social media, while less than 55% of students in Austria, Brunei Darussalam, Germany, Kazakhstan, Panama and Switzerland so reported.

Figure VI.5.4 **Students' capacity to take action**

OECD and overall averages
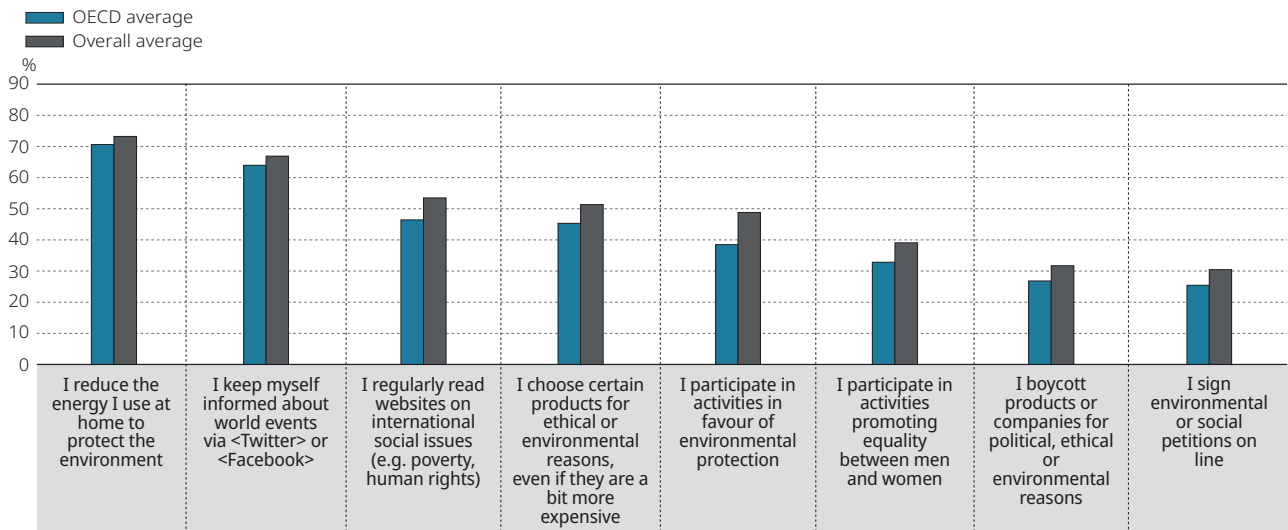
Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table VI.B1.5.8.

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## Students' knowledge, skills and attitudes and capacity to take action

This subsection explores students' capacity to take action as reflected in their sense of self-efficacy regarding global issues; 1) awareness of global issues; 1) capacity to understand different perspectives; 3) interest in learning about other cultures; 4) respect for people from other cultures; 5) attitudes towards immigrants; 6) awareness of intercultural communication; 7) cognitive adaptability; and 8) agency regarding global issues. Tables VI.B1.5.9 to VI.B1.5.16 present the proportion of students who reported taking action by quarters of those indices. In general, students with higher values in these indices were more likely to report that they take actions for collective well-being and sustainable development. The differences between the top and bottom quarters of the indices were positive and significant across most countries/economies and for all types of actions.

Table VI.B1.5.17 presents the total number of actions for collective well-being and sustainable development that each student reported that he or she takes. This consists of a summative index of the eight activities the questionnaire asked students about. The index has a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 8. This index has an average of 3.5 across OECD countries and a standard deviation of 2. Students in Indonesia, Jordan, Morocco, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and Viet Nam reported taking more than five actions, on average, while those in France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Switzerland reported taking fewer than three (Figure VI.5.5).

In 26 countries and economies, boys reported a greater number of actions taken for sustainability and collective well-being. The largest gender differences in favour of boys were observed in Baku (Azerbaijan), the Dominican Republic, Kazakhstan, Kosovo and Serbia. The reverse was true in 17 countries and economies, with the largest differences in favour of girls observed in Canada, Iceland, Ireland and New Zealand (Table VI.B1.5.19). In 47 countries and economies out of the 64 that took the global competence student questionnaire, students from an advantaged background reported a greater number of actions taken for sustainability and collective well-being. The largest socio-economic differences are found in Canada, Macao (China), Morocco, New Zealand, Scotland (United Kingdom) and Viet Nam. Minor differences were observed between immigrant and non-immigrant students. Among countries and economies with more than 5% immigrant students, immigrants reported taking more actions for sustainability and collective well-being in seven countries/economies while the reverse was true only in five.

Figure VI.5.6 shows the average number of actions taken by students across OECD countries by quarters of the indices of students' self-reported knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions. Students who exhibited more positive attitudes (those in the top quarter of the nine indices) were more likely to report that they take action than those who exhibited less positive attitudes (those in the bottom quarters of the indices). This positive association held in all countries/economies that took the questionnaire and for almost all indices. Large differences in the number of actions taken (greater than 0.5 of a standard deviation) between students in the top and bottom quarters of indices were observed for the indices of students' interest in learning about other cultures and agency regarding global issues. It logically follows that students are more likely to take action if they believe that they can make a difference and feel a moral obligation towards others in the world.

Figure VI.5.5 **Number of actions taken by students for collective well-being and sustainable development**
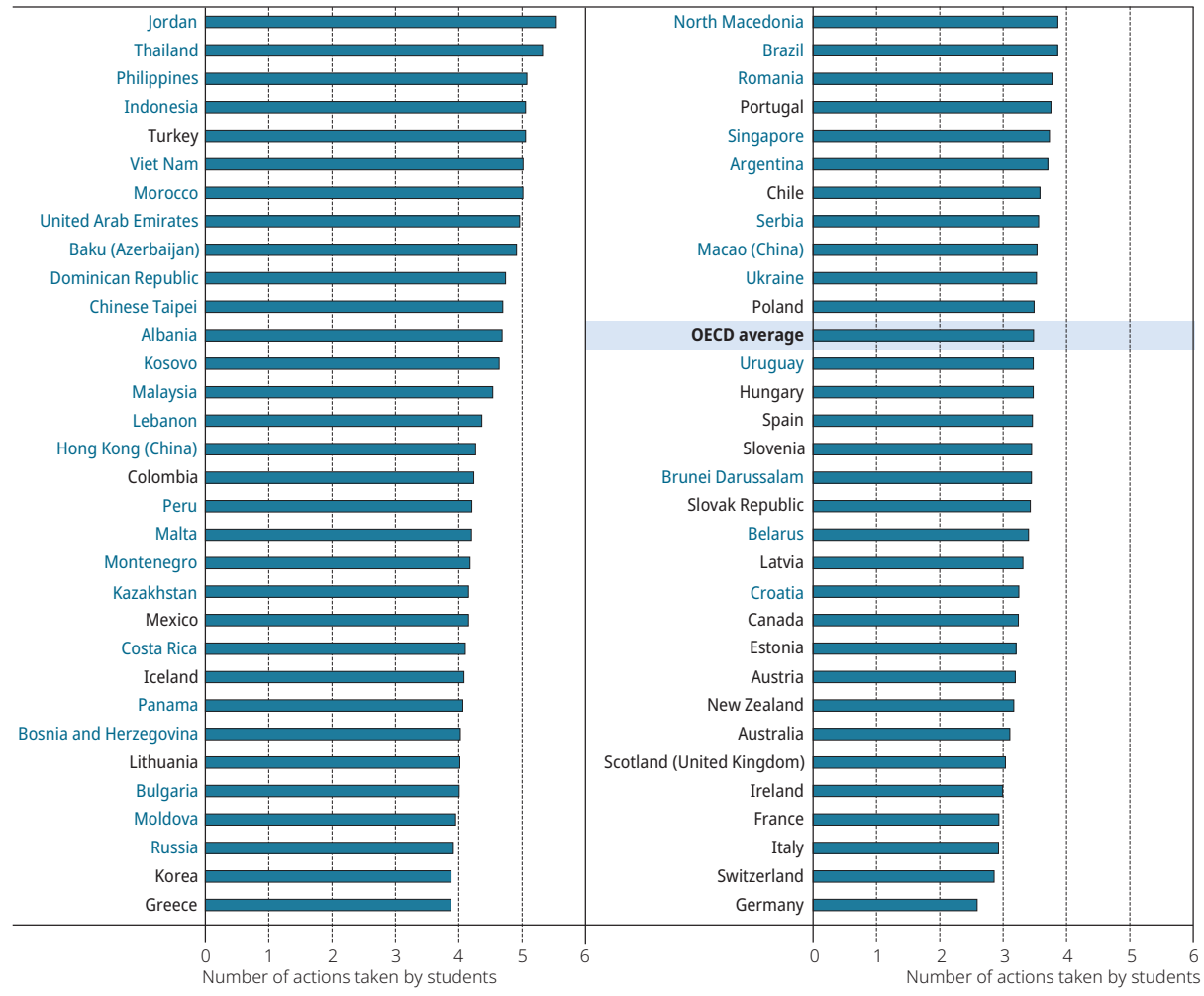

Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the number of actions taken by students for collective well-being and sustainable development.

Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table VI.B1.5.17.

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Figure VI.5.6 **Number of actions taken, by students' attitudes**

Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table VI.B1.5.17.

StatLink 🔗 https://doi.org/10.1787/888934170165
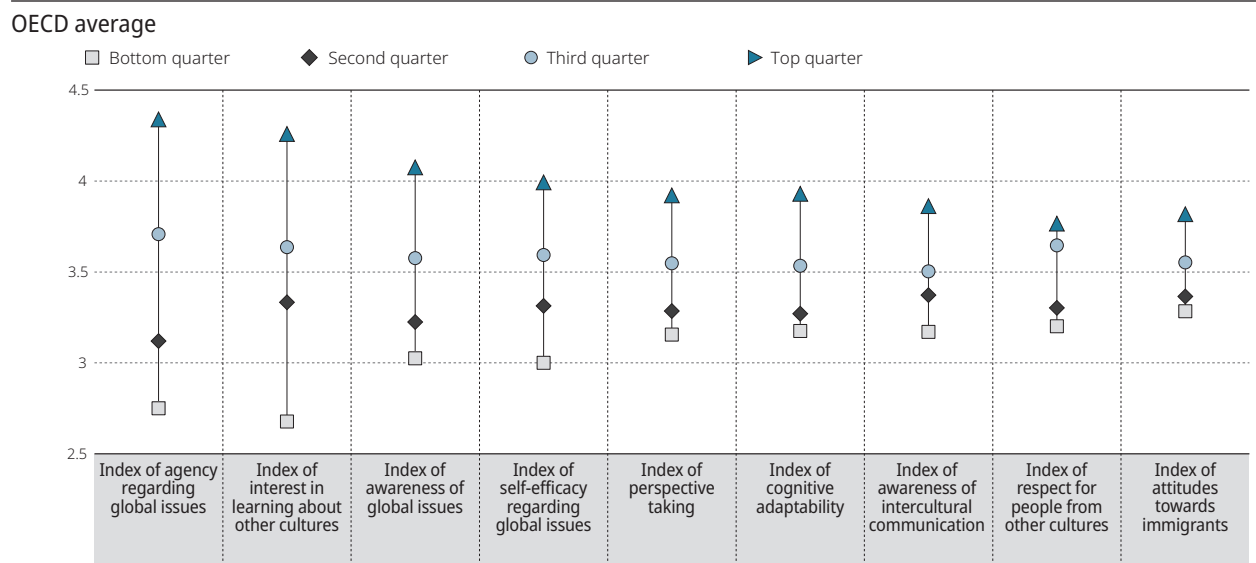
These positive associations held in most countries, even after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile. Figure VI.5.7 shows the rise in the number of actions students take associated with an increase of one unit in each of the indices. The strongest associations were with the indices of interest in learning about other cultures and agency regarding global issues.

On average across OECD countries, an increase of one unit in the index of interest in learning about other cultures was associated with a rise of 0.61 in the number of actions taken by students. All associations were positive and significant. The strongest associations were observed in Australia, Iceland, Ireland, Korea, New Zealand, Scotland (United Kingdom), Slovenia and Chinese Taipei. Similarly, an increase of one unit in the index of agency regarding global issues was associated with a rise of 0.56 in the number of actions taken by students. The associations were particularly strong in Australia, Ireland, Macao (China), Moldova, New Zealand, Romania, Scotland (United Kingdom) and Viet Nam (Table VI.B1.5.18).

Figure VI.5.7 **Change in students' attitudes and in number of actions taken**

OECD average

■ Before accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile[1]
◆ After accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile

Change in the number of actions taken by students associated with a one-unit increase in the following indices:
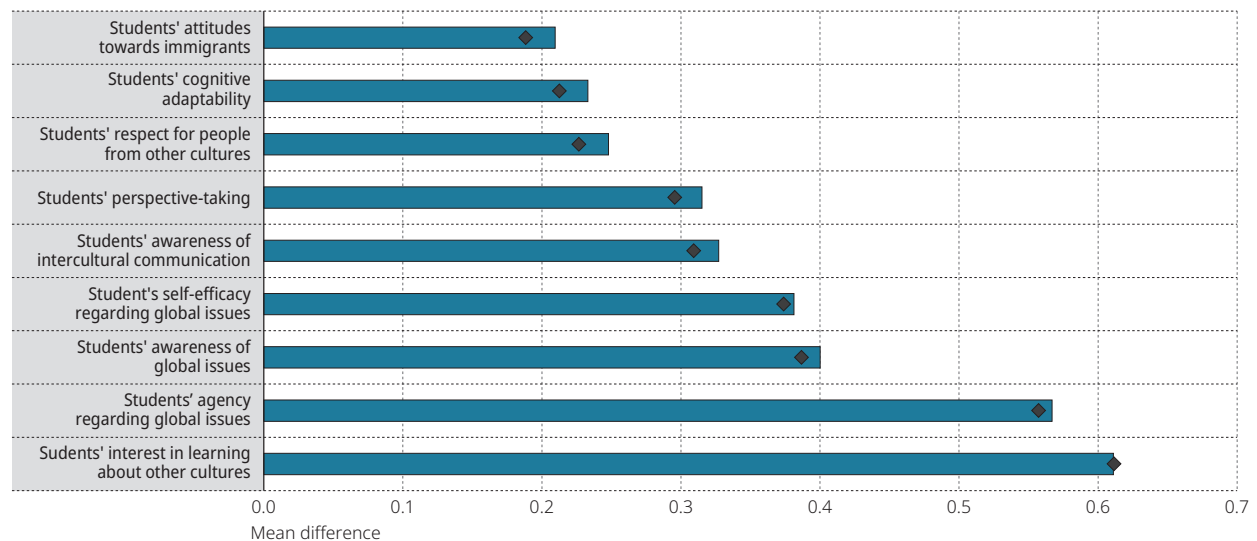
1. The socio-demographic profile is measured by the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS). The school socio-economic profile is measure by average ESCS for the school.

Note: All associations are statistically significant.

Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table VI.B1.5.18.

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Box VI.5.1. **Students' and parents' capacity to take action**

Chapter 2 explored the relationships between parents' and students' awareness of global issues. Findings show that parents, regardless of their socio-economic background, may impart certain interests and knowledge to their children and, arguably, may reinforce certain attitudes. This finding is in line with existing evidence on parents' role in the lives of their children (Black, Devereux and Salvanes, 2003[18]). This chapter explores the associations between students' and parents' capacity to take action. Parents were presented with the same eight statements as their children about actions taken for collective well-being and sustainable development.

Figure VI.5.8 presents the proportion of parents who reported that they take action for collective well-being and sustainable development. The findings show that across the 14 countries that distributed the parent questionnaire, 93% of parents reported that they reduce energy consumption at home. Some 60% of parents reported that they choose certain products for ethical reasons and 49% of parents reported that they read websites on social issues and follow world events via social media. The least common actions parents take were: 1) participating in activities in favour of environmental protection (43% of parents reported that they do this); 2) participating in activities to promote gender equality (30%); 3) signing petitions on line (26%); and 4) boycotting products for ethical or environmental reasons (25%).

When comparing parents' and students' responses on these same questions, it is clear that parents were more likely to report that they reduce energy consumption at home or that they choose certain products for ethical reasons, while students' were more likely to report that they follow world events on the Internet or via social media.
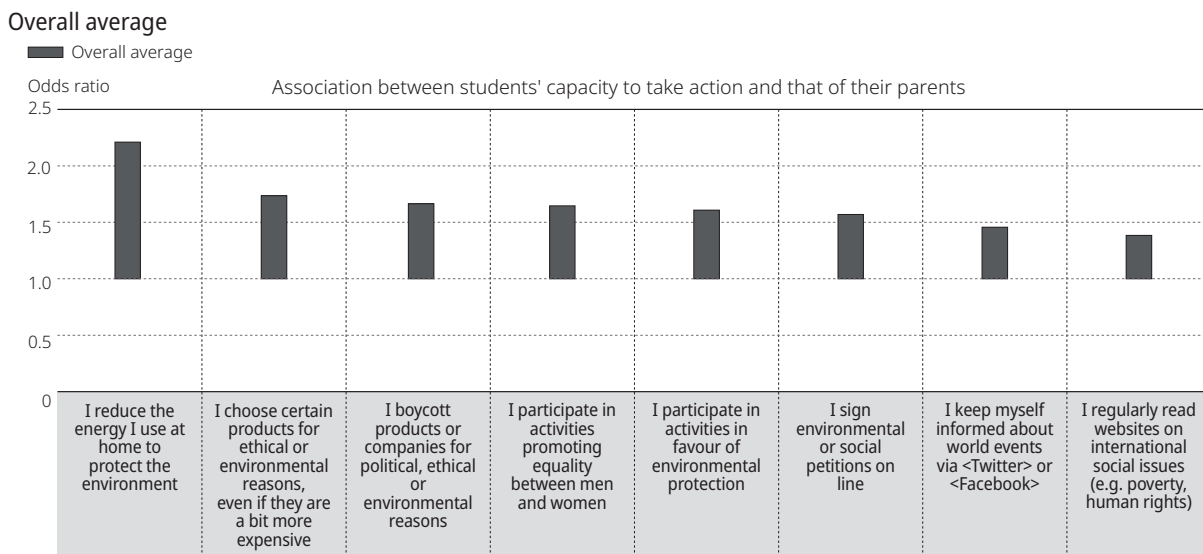
Figure VI.5.8 **Parents who take action for collective well-being and sustainable development**

Overall average

Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table VI.B1.5.7.
StatLink ⧉ https://doi.org/10.1787/888934170203
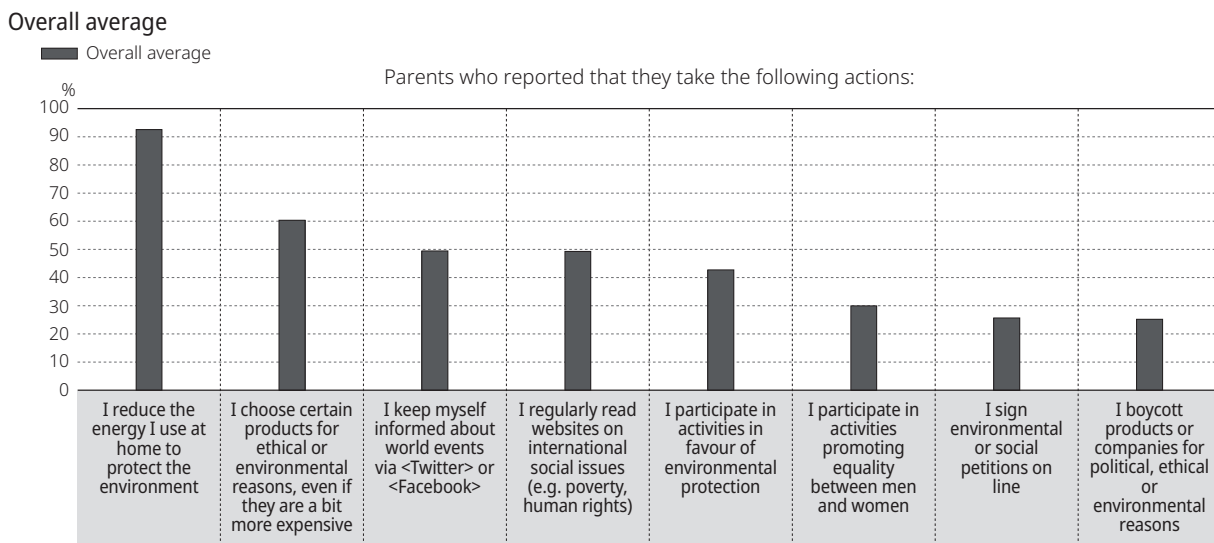
Figure VI.5.9 presents the association between parents' and students' capacity to take action. In general, parents who perform a particular action, such as reducing energy consumption or engaging in a participative activity, are likely to have children who do the same. Associations between parents taking an action and the likelihood that their children take the same action were positive and significant, on average, in most countries/economies that distributed the parents' questionnaire.

The strongest association observed was between parents reducing energy consumption by turning off the lights, heating or air-conditioning and children doing the same. On average across the 14 countries and economies that distributed the parent questionnaire, the children of parents who reported that they take this action were 100% more likely to follow suit than the children of parents who reported that they do not take this action. The other associations were also positive and significant, with the children of parents who reported that they take those actions being about 50% to 70% more likely to take the same actions as their parents.

Figure VI.5.9 **Students and parents who take action for collective well-being and sustainable development**

Overall average

Note: All associations are statistically significant.
Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table VI.B1.5.7.
StatLink ⧉ https://doi.org/10.1787/888934170222

TAKING ACTION FOR COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: PERFORMANCE ON THE COGNITIVE TEST

Students who sat the global competence test in the 27 participating countries and economies answered 14 test items covering students' capacity to take action for collective well-being and sustainable development. Figure VI.5.10 presents the average proportion of correct answers on all test items. As explained in Chapter 2, answers were scored as full credit, partial credit or no credit. For the purpose of this analysis, partial credit was coded as no credit.

The findings show that the largest proportion of correct answers on these test items were observed in Canada, Hong Kong (China), Korea, Scotland (United Kingdom), Singapore, Spain and Chinese Taipei. In all of these countries and economies, students answered more than 40% of the items correctly; students in Singapore answered 52% of the items correctly. On average across all countries and economies, students answered 33% of the test items correctly. The smallest proportions of correct answers (less than 25%) were observed in Albania, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Panama, the Philippines and Thailand.

Figure VI.5.10 **Percentage of correct answers: Taking action for collective well-being and sustainable development**

Overall average
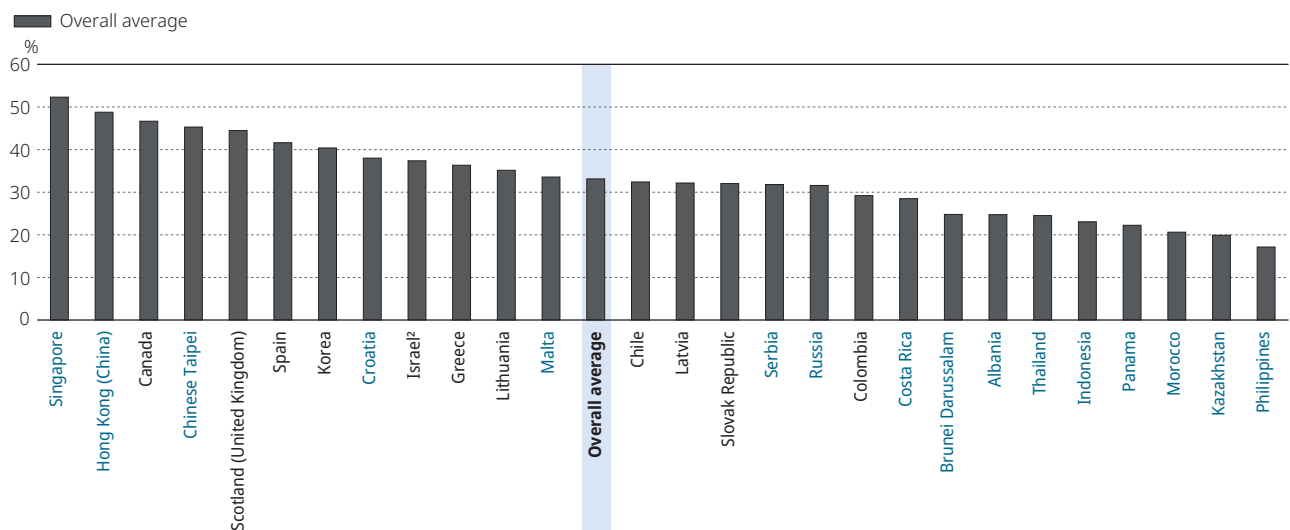
Note: Taking action for collective well-being and sustainable development was assessed using 14 items in the cognitive test.
Only the 27 countries and economies that conducted the cognitive test are shown.
Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the percentage of correct answers on the cognitive test.
Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table VI.B1.5.6.
StatLink ⧉ https://doi.org/10.1787/888934170241

Nine released test items covered students' capacity to take action for collective well-being and sustainable development. The test items originated from three test units: "ethical clothing", "language policy" and "rising sea levels". Those test items ranged in difficulty from proficiency Level 2 to proficiency Level 5.

Language policy: Test item 2

The test item with the largest proportion of correct answers among released items was Item 2 in the test unit "language policy". The language policy unit is about a fictional country, Armaz, where the fictional language, Ursk, is spoken. A group of Ursk-speaking lawmakers proposed a policy that would require all public schools to teach all classes except foreign-language classes in Ursk. There are a number of citizens in Armaz who speak Jutanese, which is a minority language in Armaz but is spoken widely outside its borders. They are concerned about the effects of this policy. In this unit, PISA students must consider the impacts of the policy and reason through its possible consequences. The content domain of this unit was categorised as evaluating actions and consequences, culture and intercultural relations with an emphasis on perspective taking, stereotypes, discrimination and intolerance.

In the second test item in this unit, students must consider four possible consequences (see figure below) and determine which one would be the most serious if the Ursk-only policy is enacted. All consequences are possible, but one summarises a serious potential consequence of the policy. Here, B is the correct answer. In order to understand why this is the correct answer, students must consider the fact that a special school would remove Jutanese-speaking students from the general population. By isolating

a group of students like this, the Ursk-speaking students would have fewer personal interactions with them, which could lead to Ursk-speaking students relying on generalisations and stereotypes rather than interactions with individuals. This could then lead to widening divisions between Ursk and Jutanese speakers. This test item corresponds to proficiency Level 3.

Across the 27 participating countries and economies, 49% of students answered this test item correctly. At least 60% of students in Hong Kong (China), Korea, Singapore and Chinese Taipei answered this question correctly (Table VI.B1.5.6).
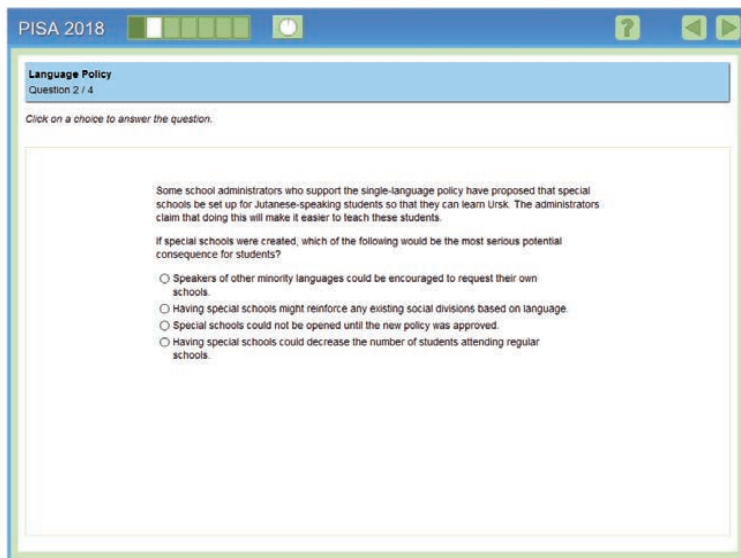
Rising sea levels: Test item 5

The test item with the smallest proportion of correct answers among released items was Item 5 in the unit "rising sea levels". In this test item, students were asked to consider a set of proposals and identify which represent a short-term response to rising sea levels and which a long-term response. The students must recognise which proposals are a response to an immediate need of the country and which are longer-term responses to more systemic challenges. Here, sea defences, desalination technologies for drinking water and moving villages are all short-term responses. Each proposed response might require several years to complete, but they all address short-term problems faced by people who live on an island in the midst of rising sea levels. By contrast, reducing greenhouse gases and supporting research for new protection strategies are responses that must unfold over a longer period of time. Each of these solutions could take decades before people feel their effects and before they fully address the systemic causes of rising sea levels. The correct responses, therefore, were: Short term, Long term, Short term, Short term, Long term. This test item corresponds to proficiency Level 5, as it requires knowledge about global issues, critical evaluation of actions and consequences, and response on a complex multiple-choice format.
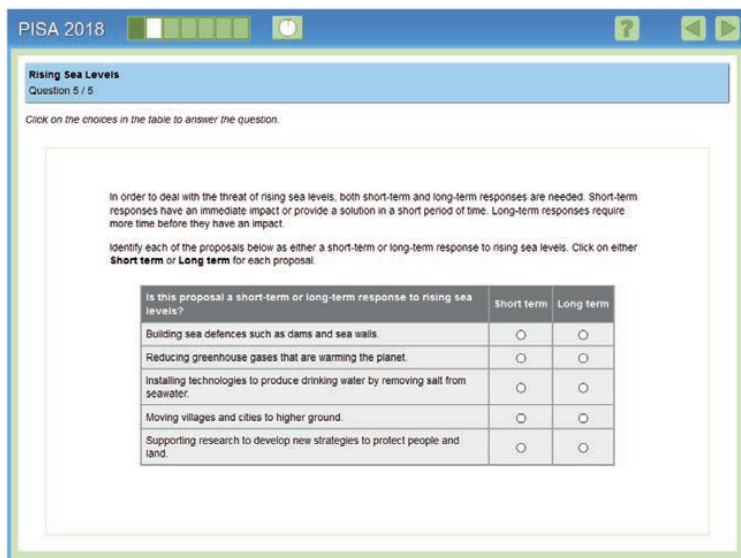
Only 12% of students in the 27 participating countries and economies answered this test item correctly. The largest proportions of students who gave correct answers were observed in Hong Kong (China) (23% of students) and Chinese Taipei (28%).

Ethical clothing: Test item 1

In another released test unit, "ethical clothing", students were introduced to the concept of "fast fashion", which is a trend whereby clothing is inexpensive, of poorer quality and produced to meet the frequent changes to fashion trends. This clothing is not intended to be worn by consumers for several seasons; instead, it is likely to be discarded or donated once the style has become less popular. Students also learn about an alternative concept: durable fashion. Durable clothing is more expensive, of better quality and is intended to be worn over a longer period. In addition, students are told about three principles of ethical clothing production: fair wages, minimising environmental waste and minimising water usage. Throughout the unit, students are asked to consider the consequences of clothing production and make connections with these principles. The content domain of this unit was categorised as environmental sustainability, with a focus on policies, practices and behaviours for environmental sustainability.

In the first test item in this unit, a list of four possible consequences of the fast fashion trend is presented (see figure below), and students need to decide whether each consequence violates one or more of the principles of ethical clothing production. The first and third consequences violate the principles. The first consequence violates the second principle because more clothing in landfills adds to environmental waste instead of minimising it. The third consequence violates the first principle because keeping pay rates low means the company or industry is not working to ensure that workers earn fair wages. The second and fourth consequences do not violate the principles. To receive credit on this item, students had to answer all parts of the item correctly. The correct answers are: Yes, No, Yes, No. This item corresponds to proficiency Level 4.

On average across all countries and economies that conducted the test, 26% of students gave a correct answer to this item. The largest proportions of students who answered correctly (more than 40%) were observed in Canada, Hong Kong (China), Korea, Singapore and Chinese Taipei; the smallest proportions (less than 15%) were observed in Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Panama, the Philippines and Thailand.

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Note

1. The comparability of scaled indices across countries and economies is examined in Annex A5. The annex presents the findings of in-depth measurement invariance analyses for every index used in PISA 2018, Volume VI.

2. The global competence sample from Israel does not include students in ultra-Orthodox schools and, thus, is not nationally representative. See PISA 2018 Technical Report (OECD, forthcoming) for details.

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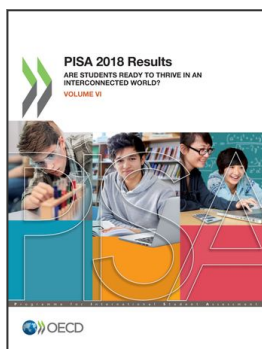
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