# Nurturing Social and Emotional Learning Across the Globe

**FINDINGS FROM THE OECD SURVEY ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS 2023**



**OECD**

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# Preface

Technological advancements, shifting labour markets and complex social and environmental issues are forcing learners to acquire a broader set of skills. In this evolving landscape, cognitive, but also social and emotional skills—such as empathy, creativity, persistence, and emotional regulation—are essential for addressing personal and collective challenges and uncertainties.

These competencies are fundamental to creating vibrant, innovative economies where people can work together effectively, adapt to new challenges, and lead with empathy and integrity. The benefits of educational attainment and cognitive skills have been studied extensively, but, with new data, also the benefits of social and emotional skills are increasingly understood: In the workplace, social and emotional skills foster effective collaboration, enable creative approaches, and drive innovation—qualities that are indispensable in today's rapidly changing economic landscape. On a societal level, social and emotional skills are the foundation that holds communities together and empower citizens to contribute to the greater good. They enable constructive dialogue, conflict resolution, and cooperation in solving shared problems. Without these skills, societies risk fragmentation, division, and an inability to tackle the collective challenges of the future.

Social and emotional learning not only benefits individual learners but also helps create learning environments where collaboration, communication, and empathy are central to the educational experience. These skills—enabling students to understand and regulate their emotions, interact effectively with others, and persist through challenges—are vital for both short-term academic success and long-term personal development. Social and emotional learning enables students to engage more deeply with their studies and approach learning with greater curiosity and creativity.

Social emotional learning does not only emerge as a byproduct of interacting with others. While social experiences can foster these skills, social and emotional learning requires intentional effort, planning, and practice. Just as academic subjects are systematically taught, social and emotional learning must be actively cultivated through structured activities, explicit teaching, and guided reflection. Social and emotional learning does not stop when the school day ends. It continues beyond the classroom and should be encouraged at home, as well as in the various activities students engage in outside of school.
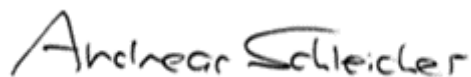
Understanding how to improve social and emotional skills of future generations requires insights into where systems are succeeding and where more attention is needed. The OECD's report, *Nurturing Social and Emotional Skills Across the Globe: Findings from the OECD's Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023*, offer insights into key differences, both within and between education systems in how these critical skills are fostered in schools, homes and society.

The report focuses on data from students aged 10 and 15, examining their learning environments and the ways social and emotional skills are promoted across schools, homes, and broader society. The report provides key recommendations for enhancing the promotion of social and emotional skills through improving school policies and practices (e.g. teachers' feedback, training, preparedness and attitudes; teaching of these skills across subjects offline, digitally and remotely; and extra-curricular activities), improving school climates (e.g. student belonging; relationships; and handling of bullying and stress), and

advancing gender equality (e.g. challenging stereotypes; and ensuring equitable access to careers and parental support for skill development).

The report uses data from 16 countries and subnational entities that participated in 2023, from Bulgaria to Ukraine, while drawing on data from 23 education systems that participated in both 2019 and 2023 where available. Two cities, Bogotá (Colombia) and Helsinki (Finland), participated in subsequent rounds of the survey, both before and after the COVID pandemic, offering a unique opportunity to explore how education systems have adapted to support students' social and emotional development to recover from the pandemic.

The responsibility falls on all of us—policymakers, educators, communities, and parents—to close gaps and take proactive actions to improve social and emotional learning. We must make social and emotional education a priority, knowing that we are working towards a world that values achievement, connection, open-mindedness, collaboration, and compassion. The future may be uncertain, but by equipping the next generation with these essential skills, one thing is certain: they will be ready to meet it.

**Andreas Schleicher**

Director for Education and Skills

Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary-General

# Foreword

The Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) is the most comprehensive international large-scale assessment to date on students' social and emotional skills. It was designed to address gaps in existing data by covering a comprehensive range of skills and gathering extensive contextual information about school and home factors that might influence these skills, all using reliable, validated tools for cross-country comparison.

The first round of the SSES was conducted in 2019 in ten cities from around the world, with findings published from 2021-23. It showed the feasibility of measuring social and emotional skills across countries and demonstrated its value in addressing research questions and policy issues related to social and emotional skills. Participating local governments from Bogotá (Colombia) to Suzhou (People's Republic of China) applied findings to policy and practice, often in collaboration with partner foundations or universities.

This report is the second of two international reports on the rich findings of the SSES 2023. It documents robust and reliable information on students' social and emotional education in school, as well as family and societal aspects of such social and emotional learning and how these aspects relate to students' social and emotional skills. It reinforces the evidence base for countries to focus more on social and emotional skills as a pathway to developing well-rounded citizens in their education policy agendas.

Together with other OECD surveys in the Directorate for Education and Skills, the SSES points to the holistic, lifelong development of cognitive and social and emotional skills as the best foundation for fulfilled and productive lives.

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# 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 (CERI) to improve understanding of social and emotional learning in schools and beyond. SSES aims to provide evidence on the differences in students' social and emotional skills between students aged 10 and 15 and if these skills are distributed equitably among students of different genders and backgrounds. Additionally, the SSES examines how each of these skills matters for important student outcomes, how they are promoted in school and at home, and how they are shaped by society.

## Which social and emotional skills are covered in the SSES?

The SSES 2023 measured 15 separate skills across 5 domains. Table 1 lists each skill and describes it, as well as an example of the behaviour (and its opposite) found among highly skilled students. These skills were selected to provide comprehensive coverage of those skills relevant to students' current and future success and well-being (Kankaraš and Suarez-Alvarez, 2019[1]). A mapping showed that most education systems in participating countries and subnational entities (hereafter, "sites"; see below) address all of these skills, except optimism and trust (see Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1 of this report; see also OECD (2021[2]).

### 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 and/or to travel to new destinations.<br>Opposite: Dislikes change; is not interested in exploring new things. |
| | Tolerance | Is open to different points of view, values diversity; is appreciative of foreign people and cultures. | Has friends from different backgrounds.<br>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 and/or creates valued artworks.<br>Opposite: Acts conventionally; not interested in the arts. |
| Task performance | Responsibility | Able to honour commitments and be punctual and reliable. | Arrives on time for appointments and/or gets chores done right away.<br>Opposite: Does not follow through on agreements/promises. |
| | Self-control | Able to avoid distractions and sudden impulses and focus on the current task to achieve personal goals. | Postpones fun activities until important tasks are completed and/or does not rush into things.<br>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.<br>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 and/or is good at public speaking.<br>Opposite: Can struggle to work with a larger team and/or may avoid public speaking. |
| | Assertiveness | Able to confidently voice opinions, needs, and feelings and exert social influence. | Takes charge in a class or team.<br>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.<br>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 and/or sympathises with homeless people.<br>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 and/or avoids being harsh or judgmental.<br>Opposite: Is secretive and suspicious in relations with people. |
| Emotional regulation | Stress resistance | Effectiveness in modulating anxiety and ability to solve problems calmly (relaxed, handles stress well). | Is relaxed most of the time and/or performs well in high-pressure situations.<br>Opposite: Worries about things most of the time, difficulties sleeping. |
| | Optimism | Positive and optimistic expectations for self and life in general. | Generally in a good mood.<br>Opposite: Often feels sad and/or 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.<br>Opposite: Gets upset easily; is moody. |

Some changes were made to skills measured in the SSES 2023 versus 2019. In 2019, achievement motivation and self-efficacy were measured as "additional skills" that were created from items used to evaluate other skills (OECD, 2021[3]). In 2023, achievement motivation is measured using a new set of dedicated items, while self-efficacy is not measured. Items to measure co-operation were included in 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 completed a questionnaire indicating how much they agreed or disagreed 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*". In 2019, these self-reports by students were compared to ratings of students' social and emotional skills by teachers and parents, showing consistent patterns of results (OECD, 2021[3]). Therefore, only students' self-reports were used in 2023.

## Who participated in the SSES?

Students aged 10 and 15, as well as their teachers and principals, participated in the SSES 2019 and 2023. Students' parents or other primary caregivers (e.g. legal guardians) were also surveyed in some sites. Additionally, sites filled out a questionnaire on national and regional policies and practices to promote social and emotional education in their site (OECD, 2024[4]).

### Sites

Students in 16 sites – that is, 6 countries and 10 subnational entities – participated in the SSES 2023. All sites of the SSES 2019 and 2023 surveyed 15-year-olds. While in 2019, all sites surveyed 10-year-olds,

only six sites did so in 2023, as surveying this age group was optional. Figure 1 shows the participating sites, including whether they surveyed 10-year-olds.

## Figure 1. Participants in the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2019 and the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023



| **Participants in 2023** | **Participants in 2019 and 2023** | **Participants in 2019** |
|---|---|---|
| Bulgaria | Bogotá (Colombia)[1] | Daegu (Korea)[1] |
| Chile | Helsinki (Finland)[1] | Istanbul (Türkiye)[1] |
| Mexico | | Manizales (Colombia)[1] |
| Peru | | Ottawa (Canada)[1] |
| Spain | | Sintra (Portugla)[1] |
| Ukraine[1] | | Suzhou (People's Republic of China)[1] |
| Delhi (India) | | Houston (United States)[1] |
| Dubai (United Arab Emirates) | | |
| Emilia-Romagna (Italy) | | |
| Gunma (Japan) | | |
| Jinan (People's Republic of China) [1] | | |
| Kudus (Indonesia) [1] | | |
| Sobral (Brazil) [1] | | |
| Turin (Italy) | | |

Note: 1. Sites surveying 10-year-olds in addition to 15-year-olds.
All sites surveyed 10-year-olds in 2019 as it was mandatory. However, only Ukraine, Ji Nan (People's Republic of China), Kudus (Indonesia), and Sobral (Brazil) did so in 2023, as sampling of 10-year-olds was optional in 2023.

Bogotá (Colombia) and Helsinki (Finland) participated in both SSES 2019 and 2023. Where possible, results in these sites are compared between 2019 and 2023.

Data from seven sites that participated in the first round of SSES in 2019 but not in 2023 are also included in analyses wherever possible to expand survey coverage (OECD, 2021[3]).

Table A3 in Annex A provides a short description of each site.

*Students*

A minimum of 3 000 students from each site and age group participated in the survey.

The report uses "15-year-olds" as shorthand for the SSES target population of older students, i.e. the group of older students the survey results represent. More specifically, the SSES covers students aged between 15 years and 3 months and 16 years and 2 months at the time of the assessment and those who were enrolled in school. Further, the report uses "10-year-olds" as shorthand for the SSES target population of younger students. This group includes students enrolled in school whose age varied between 10 years and 3 months to 11 years and 2 months at the time of the assessment.

The target population differed slightly in terms of key aspects. For example, Mexico, Delhi (India), Helsinki (Finland), and Sobral (Brazil) only surveyed students in public schools, while the sample in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) only included students from private schools.

Table A3 in Annex A provides a description of the target population(s) in each site participating in the SSES 2023.

*Teachers*

The report uses "teachers of 15-year-olds" or "teachers of 10-year-olds" and equivalents as shorthand for the target population of teachers teaching the modal grade or grades in which 15-year-old students (optionally 10-year-old students) were enrolled. The national modal grade for 15-year-old (or 10-year-old) students is the grade most 15-year-old (or 10-year-old) students in the site attended. Where responses from teachers are presented in this report, they are weighted so that they are proportionate to the number of teachers teaching most 15-year-olds and 10-year-olds in participating sites.

*Principals and schools*

The principals of the schools in which students were assessed provided information on their schools' characteristics by completing a school questionnaire. The report uses "principals" and "school leaders" to mean the same thing. Where responses from school principals are presented in this report, they are weighted so that they are proportionate to the number of 15-year-olds and 10-year-olds, respectively, enrolled in the school.

The report uses "lower secondary education" and "primary education" to refer to the school environments of 15-year-old and 10-year-old students, respectively. However, the SSES did not include teachers or students in other age groups enrolled in International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) Levels 1 and 2 at these schools. In a few cases, both programmes are provided at the same school.

*Cautionary notes*

Caution is required when interpreting estimates for certain samples in some sites as one or more SSES sampling standards were not met. These include:

- **Mexico:** The data for students, teachers and principals do not fully represent the target population and present major deviations from several technical standards. For this reason, data for Mexico for all samples are excluded from the international average and reported separately.
- **Ukraine:** The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine meant that a minority of Ukrainian regions where it was not safe to conduct the survey were 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 below the standard (72%). Data for 15-year-old students should be interpreted with caution as student response rates were much lower than the standard (57%).

- **Delhi (India):** Student data should be interpreted with some caution, as student response rates were lower than expected (72%).
- **Helsinki (Finland):** Data for 15-year-old students should be interpreted with some caution as student response rates were lower than the standard (70%). The response rate for teachers of 10-year-old students was similarly lower than the standard (74%), and the sample size was lower than stipulated in the technical standards.
- **Kudus (Indonesia):** Data for both 10-year-old and 15-year-old students and their teachers should be interpreted with some caution. There were signs of moderate deviations in the technical standards for the sampling of students and teachers. Additionally, the sample drawn for students may not fully represent the target population. The data are estimated to represent 9 199 10-year-old students and 4 697 15-year-old students in Kudus.

Table A3 in Annex A lists cautionary notes for each site.

## How to interpret the findings in this report

### *Averages 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. Annex A presents cautionary notes for Mexico.

In the case of some sites, data may not be available for specific indicators or specific categories. When data are missing or inapplicable for some sub-categories of a population or indicator, the average may not be calculated consistently across sites across tables or all table columns.

Two types of averages were calculated for 15-year-old students and their teachers:

- an average of all sites participating in 2023 (and in some cases, 2019) – referred to as "Average"
- an average that includes only sites with available data for both 10-year-olds and 15-year-olds, allowing for comparison between these age groups – referred to as "Average [15-10-year-olds common sites]".

As mentioned above, while all sites included 10-year-olds and their teachers in the 2019 SSES, only six chose this option in 2023.

### *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 between the two groups and the more noticeable the difference is likely to be (Sullivan and Feinn, 2012[5]).

### *Standard errors*

The statistical estimates presented in this report are based on samples of students or teachers 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 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*

Due to rounding, some figures in the tables may not total correctly. Totals, differences, and averages are always calculated using exact numbers and are rounded only after calculation. All standard errors in this report 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

**% dif.** Percentage-point difference

### *Additional technical information*

Readers interested in additional technical details are invited to consult the short technical note at the end of this volume (Annex A), the *SSES 2019 Technical Report* (OECD, 2021[6]) and the *SSES 2023 Technical Report* (forthcoming).

This report contains StatLinks for tables and figures 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, 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 SSES database houses the raw data and scales presented in this report. Access to the database can be requested via the project's website at https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/SSES-Round-2-Database.html.

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# Executive summary

The Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2023 is an international survey of students' social and emotional skills at ages 10 and 15.

Volume I, Social and Emotional Skills for Better Lives, showed how skills such as persistence, empathy, curiosity, creativity and assertiveness matter for key outcomes and how these skills differ by age and student background.

This publication, Volume II, points to significant differences between and within participating countries and subnational entities (hereafter, "sites") in how social and emotional skills are promoted in school, at home, and by society, as well as how this relates to differences in skills. The findings presented in this volume support key recommendations for improving policies and practices to better promote socio-emotional learning in three areas.

## Social and emotional education in school

- **Enhance teacher feedback, particularly on students' strengths:** Students who received more teacher feedback reported higher social and emotional skills. However, teacher feedback needs to be improved, especially in developing students' strengths. This is particularly important for 15-year-olds and girls. Teachers of 15-year-olds in Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates, UAE) and Jinan (People's Republic of China, hereafter "China") provide more feedback than teachers in other sites.

- **Increase the opportunities teachers provide for social and emotional learning:** Few teachers provide opportunities for students to learn how to regulate emotions and engage with others; most focus on developing skills related to task performance. Only in Bogotá (Colombia), Delhi (India), Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru did over 80% of teachers provide ample learning opportunities to regulate emotions and engage with others.

- **Leverage digital technologies:** Most teachers perceived online teaching as a challenge for social and emotional learning. Peru was the only education system where most teachers saw opportunities rather than challenges.

- **Boost teacher preparedness:** Tasks related to social and emotional teaching were among the tasks that teachers, particularly in lower secondary, felt least capable of and lacked training in. More training was provided in Delhi (India), Dubai (UAE), Jinan (China) and Kudus (Indonesia). Only 52% of teachers of 15-year-olds drew extensively on official resources, while 32% used informal resources. The use of official resources was more widespread in Bulgaria, Delhi (India), Peru and Ukraine.

- **Create structures and mindsets that promote social and emotional learning:** The formal integration of teaching social and emotional skills into general practices and teaching across subjects is very common across sites. However, between one and eight in ten students attended schools where not all teachers and principals agreed that these skills could be taught. A shared

mindset of the wide-ranging impact of social and emotional skills was even less common. A shared mindset on the teachability of social and emotional skills was more common in Emilia-Romagna and Turin (Italy), Helsinki (Finland) and Spain, and about teachers' responsibility in Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Helsinki (Finland) and Kudus (Indonesia).

- **Support extra-curricular activities**: Engagement in extra-curricular activities was positively related to all social and emotional skills in students aged 10 and 15. However, only a third (or less) of 15-year-olds engage regularly in different extra-curricular activities. In most sites, even fewer disadvantaged students and girls do so.

## School environments that nurture socio-emotional growth

- **Build schools into hubs of community:** Students who felt greater belonging and more positive than negative emotions at school reported higher social and emotional skills, particularly in terms of their social and emotional regulation skills.
- **Address site-specific sources of negative emotions:** Students report different mixes of emotions in each site, especially confidence, motivation, anxiety and anger. In Ukraine and Spain, students report high confidence but low motivation. In Italian sites, students are more anxious than motivated.
- **Improve experiences of disadvantaged groups:** Low-performing 15-year-olds and girls report lower sense of belonging, fewer positive and more negative emotions than their peers in almost all sites. Low performers also struggle with anger and girls with confidence. Disadvantaged 15-year-olds report less belonging in most sites, but not worse happiness, motivation or anxiety.
- **Promote relationships to promote skills:** Students reporting better relationships with teachers and peers report higher social and emotional skills. Teacher relationships are more associated with task performance, curiosity, optimism, and tolerance, while peer relationships correlate with stronger social skills and trust. However, 15-year-olds perceive less concern from their classmates and teachers than 10-year-olds.
- **Enhance teachers' coping strategies to support their well-being and ability to model positive emotional regulation:** In Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru, almost 70% of teachers report high use of effective stress-coping strategies, compared to only around 30% in other sites.
- **Address bullying:** Many students are both victims and perpetrators of bullying. On average, around 67% of perpetrators said they had been bullied, while approximately 40% of victims also report bullying other students. The highest level of overlap between bullying perpetration and victimisation was seen in Bulgaria and Delhi (India).
- **Complement bullying prevention with socio-emotional learning:** Both victims and perpetrators tend to have lower responsibility, emotional control and trust than students not involved in bullying. Victims, including those who also engage in bullying, have lower optimism and stress resistance. Victims who do not engage in bullying distinguish themselves from perpetrators through higher empathy.

## Addressing gender equity

- **Tackle gender stereotypes:** Many boys, especially in Bulgaria, Dubai (UAE), Helsinki (Finland), Kudus (Indonesia) and Ukraine, believe leadership and access to economic resources are more important for men than women.
- **Promote gender equity at home:** Students in homes with shared responsibilities reported fewer gender stereotypes and greater tolerance, trust, emotional regulation and task performance skills.

However, domestic tasks are more often the responsibility of female family members, particularly in Bulgaria, Delhi (India), Dubai (UAE), Gunma (Japan) and Kudus (Indonesia).

- **Encourage diverse careers pursuits:** Among students with similarly high levels of curiosity and math skills, boys are twice as likely as girls to expect careers in science and technology instead of health. Results suggest that tackling gender stereotypes can be one way forward in certain sites: girls disagreeing that boys are better at technology are more likely to pursue careers in science and technology in Peru, Spain and Ukraine.

- **Strengthen school-family partnerships:** Data from Bogotá (Colombia), Peru and Ukraine show that most parents see skills such as persistence and emotional regulation as important for their child's development as literacy and numeracy. Parents are more likely to view themselves as responsible for their child's social and emotional learning compared to how they perceive the responsibility of students or teachers.

## Infographic 1. SSES 2023 key results [1/2]

### Students aged 10 and 15 who receive teacher feedback, especially on strengths, report higher social and emotional skills, especially:

- Creativity
- Persistence
- Trust
- Optimism
- Achievement motivation

But **one in four students** almost never receives feedback on their strengths*
*average across education systems

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### Do social and emotional skills make a difference?

The share of 15-year-olds* in schools where all staff think social and emotional skills can:

**Be taught**
58%

**Improve academic outcomes**
48%

**Help youth employment**
21%

**Help reduce social inequality**
19%

*average across education systems

**OECD**
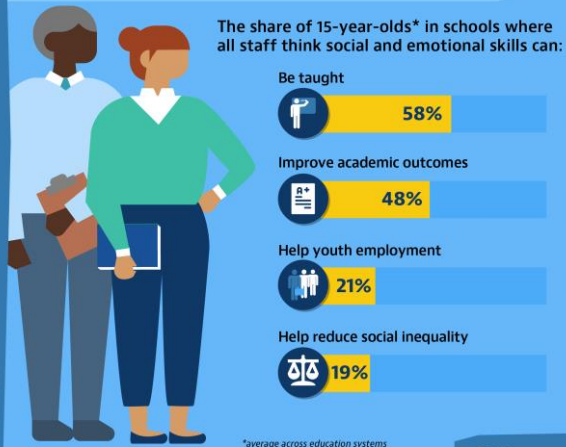
### Most teachers believe online and remote teaching hinders social and emotional learning

% of teachers* who think online or remote teaching **hinders** or **fosters** co-operation, trust and empathy
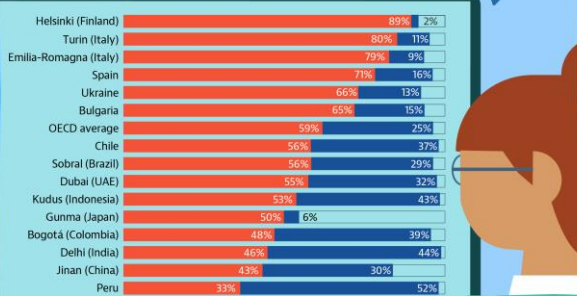
| | hinders | fosters |
|---|---|---|
| Helsinki (Finland) | 89% | 2% |
| Turin (Italy) | 80% | 11% |
| Emilia-Romagna (Italy) | 79% | 9% |
| Spain | 71% | 16% |
| Ukraine | 66% | 13% |
| Bulgaria | 65% | 15% |
| OECD average | 59% | 25% |
| Chile | 56% | 37% |
| Sobral (Brazil) | 56% | 29% |
| Dubai (UAE) | 55% | 32% |
| Kudus (Indonesia) | 53% | 43% |
| Gunma (Japan) | 50% | 6% |
| Bogotá (Colombia) | 48% | 39% |
| Delhi (India) | 46% | 44% |
| Jinan (China) | 43% | 30% |
| Peru | 33% | 52% |

*teachers of 15-year-olds who taught students online or remotely during the previous year

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### Students with positive teacher and peer relationships report improved social and emotional skills

Positive **peer-to-peer** relationships result in **higher...**
- Optimism
- Sociability
- Trust

Positive **student-teacher** relationships result in **higher...**
- Achievement motivation
- Persistence
- Curiosity

*These are top skills for academic achievement*

**OECD**
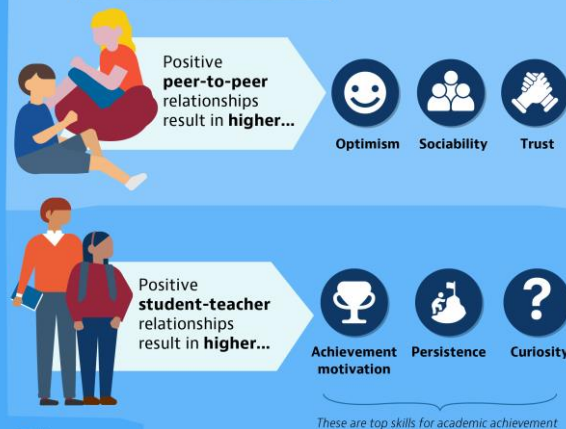
## Infographic 2. SSES 2023 key results [2/2]

### Students who get poor grades feel more angry at school

**% students who feel angry at school more than half of the time**

| High performers | | Low performers |
|---|---|---|
| 18% | Sobral (Brazil) | 29% |
| 16% | Delhi (India) | 29% |
| 14% | Bulgaria | 26% |
| 9% | Emilia-Romagna (Italy) | 26% |
| 14% | Chile | 25% |
| 15% | Turin (Italy) | 25% |
| 12% | Average | 21% |
| 9% | Dubai (UAE) | 17% |
| 13% | Bogotá (Colombia) | 16% |
| 8% | Peru | 13% |
| 6% | Jinan (China) | 11% |

In some sites, almost **1/3** of 15-year-olds with poor grades **feel angry most of the time at school**

### Both bullies and bullying victims have fewer social and emotional skills

Responsibility · Emotional control · Trust · Optimism · Empathy · Achievement motivation

Stronger skills / 0 / Weaker skills

**More empathy** distinguishes **victims** from **bullies** in most sites

Victims · Bullies

OECD

### Boys are more likely to accept gender stereotypes

**% of 15-year-old girls and boys who agree with the statement: "Men make better political leaders than women."**

| girls | | boys |
|---|---|---|
| 45% | Kudus (Indonesia) | 73% |
| 16% | Bulgaria | 59% |
| 8% | Dubai (UAE) | 52% |
| 7% | Ukraine | 49% |
| 27% | Delhi (India) | 43% |
| 5% | Helsinki (Finland) | 37% |
| 10% | Average | 33% |
| 2% | Emilia-Romagna (Italy) | 29% |
| 3% | Jinan (China) | 29% |
| 3% | Turin (Italy) | 26% |
| 3% | Spain | 25% |
| 3% | Chile | 19% |
| 8% | Sobral (Brazil) | 18% |
| 3% | Peru | 14% |
| 9% | Gunma (Japan) | 13% |
| 2% | Bogotá (Colombia) | 12% |

Students with **higher tolerance** and **emotional control** agree less with **gender stereotypes**

OECD

### Students in homes where male and female members share domestic responsibilities tend to:

**1** **Disagree** with gender stereotypes

**2** Have **greater social and emotional skills** such as:

Creativity · Responsibility · Optimism

Tolerance · Stress resistance

OECD

# 1 Social and emotional learning in school and at home

This chapter explains why social and emotional skills matter while summarising findings from the first volume of the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2023. It then describes how education systems are working to incorporate social and emotional learning. It further acknowledges that social and emotional learning occurs in all areas of students' lives, in and outside school. Finally, it presents the general approach and outline of this volume.

## Why should social and emotional education matter?

Social and emotional skills are the invisible skills that build the foundations of our society (Steponavičius, Gress-Wright and Linzarini, 2023[1]), that drive innovation and resilience in our economy and the cohesion between our communities in a world of increasing polarisation.

We live in a time of uncertainty – the COVID-19 pandemic was a stark reminder that we cannot take anything for granted. The future, inherently unpredictable, will continue to surprise us. To navigate this world, we need to redouble our efforts to enhance sustainability, striving to maintain a delicate balance. Equally important is investing significantly more in young people, equipping them with crucial skills such as self-control, creativity and empathy. These abilities will be essential for them to thrive in an uncertain world.

Social and emotional skills are the skills that make us human, particularly in a world of artificial intelligence (AI). Many tasks that are easy to teach and to test have become easy to digitise and automate. As a result, the demand for skills necessary to perform routine tasks is diminishing, while there is a growing need for skills related to technology-intensive tasks. A recent OECD publication, *Artificial Intelligence and the Changing Demand for Skills in the Labour Market* (Green, 2024[2])*,* states that most workers exposed to AI will not require specialised AI skills (e.g. machine learning, natural language processing, etc.). The skills most demanded in occupations highly exposed to AI will be management and business skills. One can predict that having high levels of social and emotional skills, such as assertiveness, creativity and perseverance, will make a greater difference in the future job market. Another recent OECD report (2023[3]) showed that AI could potentially outperform large shares of the population on the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): 90% of adults in literacy and 88% of adults in numeracy. According to experts, AI will solve all literacy and numeracy tests by 2026 (OECD, 2023[3]). This pushes us to think harder – how do we focus on skills that make us human, and not only on those that are easily digitalised?

The first volume of the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2023 findings (OECD, 2024[4]) looked at the extent to which students can engage meaningfully with others, collaborate, manage themselves, be open and achieve things.

People often perceive academic results and social-emotional skills as opposing ends of a broad spectrum, competing for the allocation of student learning time. Findings from the first volume of SSES 2023 show that these skills are not in opposition. Students with greater social and emotional skills make better grades in school. Virtually any social and emotional skill that SSES measures is predictive of better grades in academic subjects. These positive relationships between skills and grades hold across any demographic group – for both 10 and 15-year-olds, for both girls and boys, and for both socio-economically advantaged or disadvantaged students. Social and emotional skills can unlock potential in any education system that administered the SSES, from Bulgaria to Peru, from Delhi (India) to Houston (United States). Not all skills predict academic achievement in the same way – some of them are stronger predictors (Steponavičius, Gress-Wright and Linzarini, 2023[1]). These include achievement motivation, persistence, curiosity and responsibility. Skills in the domain of emotional regulation matter, too: empathy, tolerance, emotional control and optimism.

The first volume of SSES 2023 findings also showed an important relationship between students' social and emotional skills and well-being. Students who are better at regulating their emotions have higher levels of energy and trust and also tend to display healthier behaviours. They tend to show greater psychological well-being and are less worried about school and academic tests. Strengthening students' social and emotional skills becomes a source of students' well-being. It is a common belief that reducing ambitions for young people can alleviate their stress. However, this approach might inadvertently lower their potential achievements. Instead, the focus should be on enhancing their emotional resilience to help them navigate and overcome these challenges effectively.

One of the most striking results is that 15-year-olds report lower social and emotional skills levels than 10-year-olds, especially for trust, energy, optimism, creativity and curiosity. Children are born with an abundance of creativity and curiosity. Ten-year-olds often exhibit a natural curiosity, questioning everything they are told, experimenting with anything given to them, and demonstrating a willingness to learn, unlearn and relearn as their context changes. However, as they mature, they are compelled to conform to adult modes of thinking, which can result in diminished innate creativity. The decline in students' social and emotional skills as students grow older is something education systems need to be cognisant of and work to reverse, as the skills of creativity and curiosity seed innovation and resilience in our societies. This decline is particularly strong in Asian education systems (Suzhou [People's Republic of China, hereafter "China"], Jinan [China], Kudus [Indonesia] and Daegu [Korea]).

SSES 2023 findings from the 16 participating sites (6 countries and 10 subnational entities) also showed that not all students live healthy lives. Nearly 40% of students on average across sites skip breakfast most days; 35% do not eat fruit or vegetables most days; 31% exercise only once a week or less. Particularly worrying is the share of students who get fewer than eight hours of sleep most nights – nearly 60% on average across sites (this share rises for Gunma [Japan] at 80%).

Many 15-year-olds expect to complete a tertiary education degree and have a managerial or professional career. Young people who are more open-minded, have better task performance skills and more empathy have higher aspirations for the future. Students have career aspirations that align with their skills. While the causal sense of this relationship is unknown, a hypothesis is that societies that want more and better entrepreneurs may decide to invest in skills such as creativity, optimism, assertiveness and energy, which are found to be higher for students expecting to start a business.

In every education system, disadvantaged students have lower social and emotional skills than advantaged students. Socio-economic gaps are largest in creativity, tolerance, assertiveness, curiosity, sociability and empathy. This gap in social and emotional skills rises dramatically when considering students with increasing levels of socio-economic advantage. This gap can be explained by different access to social and emotional learning opportunities both in and outside school.

Many education systems have managed to close the gender gap in academic performance – on average, boys and girls perform more or less the same in mathematics and science, according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), although disparities still exist at both the low and high ends of the performance spectrum (OECD, 2023[5]). Education systems have made significant efforts to give boys and girls similar learning opportunities.

The pattern is different when it comes to social and emotional skills. SSES 2023 findings reveal that boys report lower levels of tolerance and empathy; girls report lower levels of stress resistance and emotional control. Girls report lower levels of emotional regulation skills, energy and trust than boys at age 10, and these differences widen by age 15. Girls also report poorer levels of all health and well-being outcomes. Notably, the gaps between boys and girls in health and well-being outcomes are larger in some sites than others, so this cannot only be due to gender differences in developmental psychology.

Policy makers, teachers and parents need to be aware of these findings. What is not measured cannot be improved. The first volume of the SSES made visible what is invisible.

This second volume looks into what education systems, educational practitioners, parents and students currently do and what they can do to address some of the challenges unveiled by the first volume.

## How education systems are working to incorporate social and emotional learning

As social and emotional learning has gained traction among governments, education authorities and stakeholders, introducing and integrating social and emotional education has been increasingly recognised as a key goal for education systems.

To better understand how social and emotional learning is incorporated into education in general, this section analyses qualitative information about the 15 education systems of the 16 sites that participated in SSES 2023 (of note, Emilia-Romagna and Turin, the two Italian sites, are treated as one site – Italy – in this section).

First, social and emotional skills appear in the officially stated education goals (mission statements, strategy documents) of all sites participating in SSES 2023. This holds for both primary and secondary education levels. Social and emotional skills are formally embedded in more than one way in each education system. However, there are differences across sites in the way social and emotional skills appear in education systems. Embedding social and emotional skills in health and physical education is the most frequent approach reported by sites participating in SSES 2023 (Figure 1.1). It is also more common to embed social and emotional skills in formal curricula specifically targeted at these skills than in academic subjects. Interestingly, many education systems report embedding them in both academic and specific curricula. Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Jinan (China), Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru, for example, embed these skills in both curriculum types at both levels of education. Some sites reported additional ways of addressing these skills in their system beyond government documentation and requirements. Bogotá (Colombia) reported city-level initiatives to promote skills, Dubai (United Arab Emirates) includes them in school inspections, and Gunma (Japan) uses extra-curricular clubs as a primary way to promote these skills.

## Figure 1.1. Social and emotional skills in education systems' official documents and structures, 2023

Number of education systems where social and emotional skills appear in the following official documents and structures
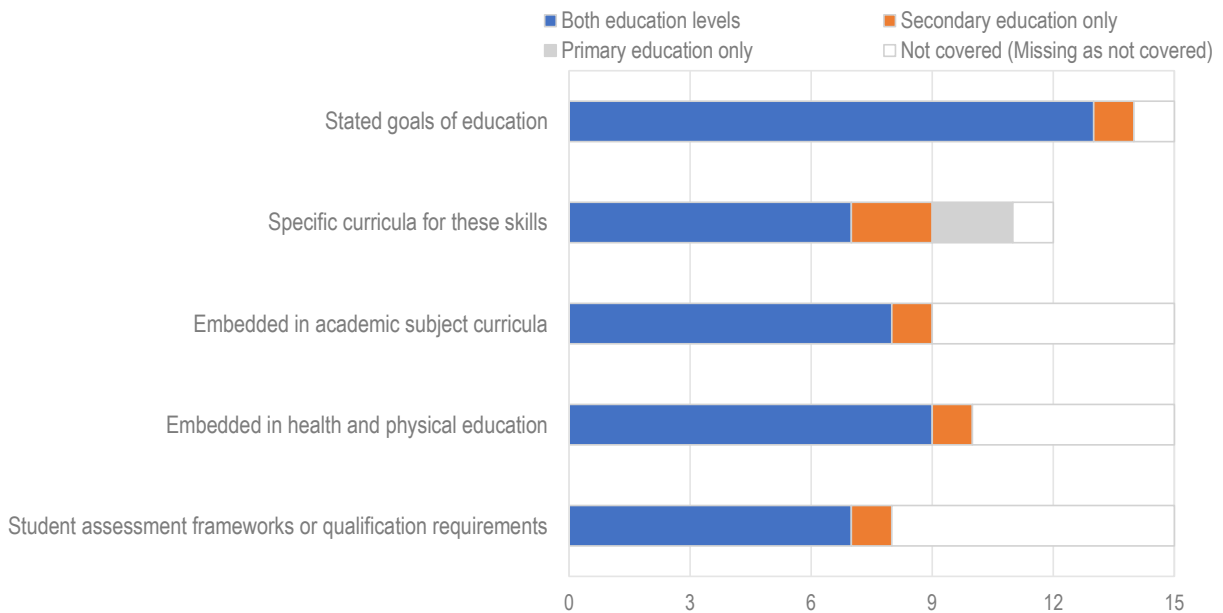


Source: OECD, SSES background questionnaire Table A1.1.

*StatLink* 🔗 https://stat.link/i5tg7m

Second, in most sites, social and emotional skills appear most frequently in curriculum frameworks and standards. This suggests that social and emotional skills are part of the stated curriculum but not necessarily the attained curriculum. Social and emotional skills may not filter down well to students, as curriculum frameworks are often abstract to teachers and separate from their daily practice and needs. Notably, in two sites, social and emotional skills appear in student courses: in Delhi (India), as part of the Happiness Curriculum [see Box 1.1 in OECD (2024[4])] and in a "morality" class in Gunma's primary schools in Japan (in which students learn about tolerance, empathy and patience). In one site only – Ukraine – social and emotional skills appear in teacher training standards published by the government.

Participating sites reported the social and emotional skills (or closely related concepts) covered in their official documents and components of their education system and at which education level (Figure 1.2). Almost all skills are covered by at least half of the education systems. Two skills are covered by all at both education levels: responsibility (in the domain of task performance) and co-operation (collaboration). In addition, quite a few skills are covered at nearly all sites, particularly at the secondary level of education, including creativity, tolerance, sociability and emotional control.

## Figure 1.2. Social and emotional skills targeted by education systems, 2023

Number of education systems targeting each of the social and emotional skills assessed in the SSES in 2023
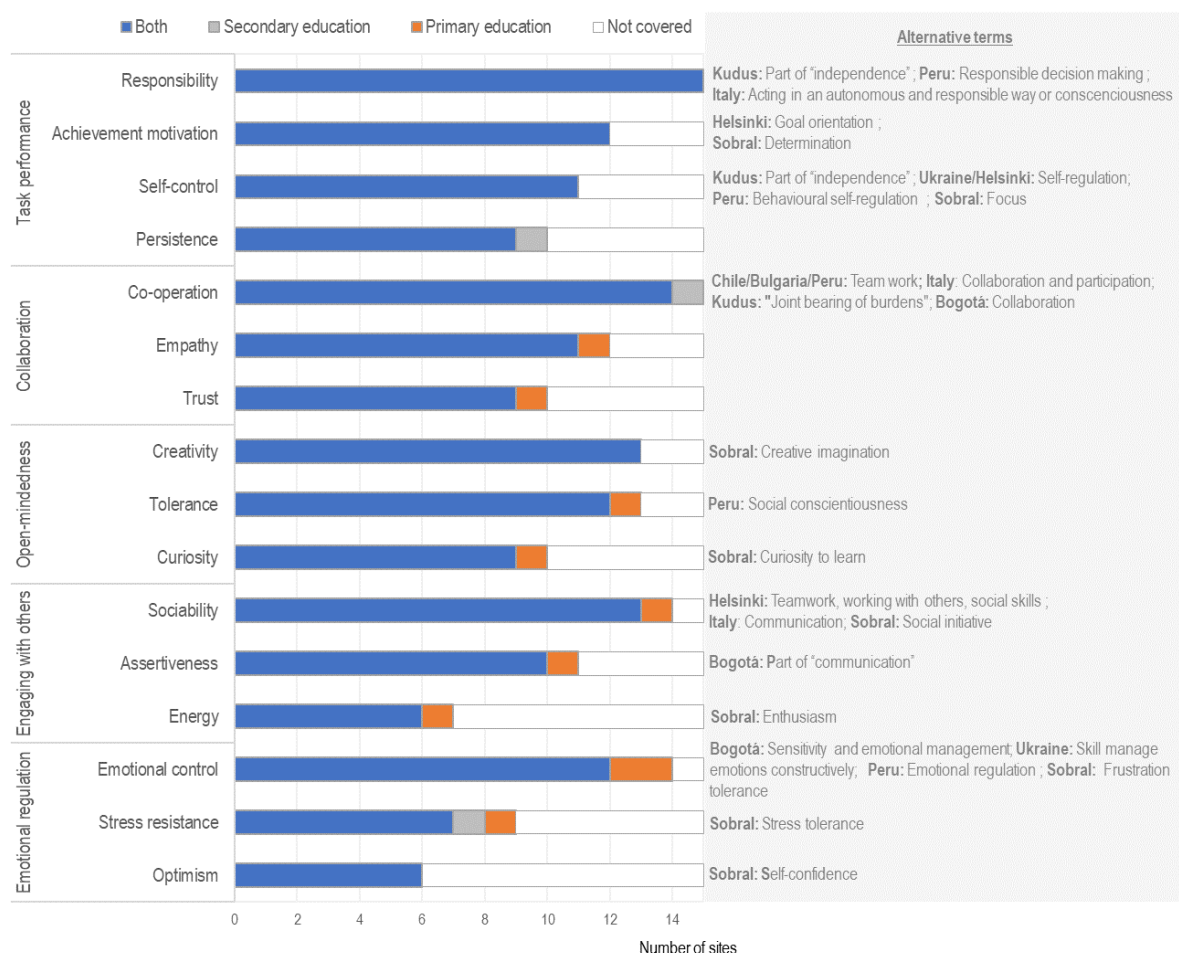


Source: OECD, SSES background questionnaire Table A1.1.

Not all education systems refer to these skills using the same terminology, as illustrated by Figure 1.2. For example, the skill of "responsibility", covered in virtually all education systems, is referred to as "independence" in Kudus' education system and "responsible decision making" in Peru, while "co-operation" (also universally covered) is referred to as "teamwork" in Bulgaria, Chile and Peru, "collaboration" in Bogotá (Colombia), and as "*gotong royong*" which means "joint bearing of burdens" in Kudus (Indonesia). Different regions take different approaches to framing skills, resulting from different cultural contexts and value systems. Asian sites, e.g. Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia), often refer to "value education" and "character education", with clearer moral dimensions sometimes linked to desired national/citizen characteristics. Latin American sites often emphasise co-operation and emotional management skills. They also link skills explicitly to democratic and collective priorities, such as peaceful co-existence (Bogotá [Colombia]) and stable democratic society based on diverse identities (Bogotá [Colombia], Chile and Peru).

Sites were also asked if some skills were particularly highlighted or emphasised in their education systems, and if so, which ones. Interestingly, there is no universal pattern across education systems, suggesting that the value attributed to each skill might depend on political contingencies related to the time period and/or on cultural differences across systems. A given skill is only emphasised in a few sites (Table 1.1). In particular, 5 of the 15 education systems (Chile, Bogotá [Colombia], Dubai [United Arab Emirates], Gunma [Japan] and Kudus [Indonesia]) emphasised tolerance; 4 (Bogotá [Colombia], Helsinki [Finland], Kudus [Indonesia] and Mexico) emphasised social skills – co-operation and/or sociability – and 3 (Bogotá [Colombia}, Helsinki [Finland] and Jinan [China]) emphasised creativity. Task performance skills are also emphasised in Helsinki (Finland) and Kudus (Indonesia).

Although education systems vary in their formal approaches to social and emotional learning, it remains a shared goal across all of them. This second volume of SSES 2023 findings aims to explore how this goal is translated and achieved in practice. It examines what actually occurs in classrooms, schools and beyond by analysing responses from students, teachers and school leaders. This comprehensive approach provides insights into students' environments both within and outside of school, offering a holistic view of implementing social and emotional learning.

## Table 1.1. Most commonly emphasised skills across education systems

Sites reporting the three most commonly emphasised skills, another skill, or none of the skills as particularly emphasised in their education system

| | Tolerance | Co-operation | Creativity | Other skill(s) or domain emphasised | None of the 15 skills are particularly emphasised |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bulgaria | | | | | X |
| Chile | X | | | Assertiveness | |
| Mexico | | X | | | |
| Peru | | X | | Emotional Regulation; Empathy | |
| Spain | | | | | X |
| Ukraine | | | | | X |
| Bogotá (Colombia) | X | X | X | Emotional Regulation | |
| Delhi (India) | | | | | X |
| Dubai (UAE) | X | | | | |
| Gunma (Japan) | x | | | | |
| Helsinki (Finland) | | X | X | Curiosity, Responsibility, Sociability, Trust, Achievement motivation | |
| Italy (both sites) | | | | | X |
| Jinan (China) | | | X | | |
| Kudus (Indonesia) | X | X | | Responsibility, Self Control and Sociability | |
| Sobral (Brazil) | | | | | X |

Source: Sites' responses to SSES background questionnaire.

## Approach and outline of this volume

This volume focuses on the social and emotional learning that takes place at school. However, it also recognises that social and emotional learning takes place in all areas of students' lives: not only in classrooms, in school (outside of the classroom), but also at home and in local communities (Cantor et al., 2018[6]). This is why this report acknowledges the multiple opportunities that children and adolescents have to develop these skills (Figure 1.3).

This volume looks at three (horizontal) components. The first component – "Social and emotional education" – refers to the educational practices and policies enacted by different education practitioners and stakeholders to directly and, most often intentionally, develop social and emotional skills in students. The second and third (horizontal) components refer to wider experiences of youth that also influence social and emotional skill development. The second component focuses on what happens in school, and the third on what happens outside of school.

The volume further acknowledges students' inclusion in different layers of education systems and society. It characterises the social and emotional learning instruction received by students in class from their teachers, the structures available to support teachers in school, as well as during their initial and in-service training. It describes factors affecting students' social and emotional skill development, whether

intentionally or not, such as family dynamics, the quality of students' relations with their classmates, friends and teachers and students' participation in extra-curricular activities. These factors offer valuable learning opportunities to develop these skills, particularly if they align with the goals pursued by the explicit social and educational instruction students receive.

This volume looks at various indicators that are at the core of key components of social and emotional learning. Figure 1.3 shows where each of these indicators is situated.

### Figure 1.3. Indicators of social and emotional learning (SEL)

| | Student | Classroom | School | Education and training system |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **social and emotional education** | social and emotional skills | - quality opportunities dedicated to SEL<br>- teacher feedback<br>- digital technology potential leveraged for SEL | shared mindset about the approach and value of social and emotional | - inclusion of SEL in official stated goals for education<br>- inclusion of SEL in curriculum<br>- provision of teaching resources for SEL<br>- initial and in-service training for teachers on SEL |
| **school climate and experiences influencing social and emotional skill development** | - sense of beloging<br>- emotions at school | -participation in extracurricul activities<br>- study and career aspirations<br>- social representations of skills, values and goals in life | - student-student relations<br>- bullying form and prevalence<br>- teacher-student relations<br>- teachers' emotional regulation skills | |
| **out-of-school experiences influencing social and emotional skill development** | | distribution of responsibilities at home | | |
| | **Child / Adolescent** | **Home** | **Community** | **Society** |

Source: Authors.

*StatLink* 🖳 https://stat.link/txd89u

This volume is organised around the three horizontal components of Figure 1.3:

- Chapter 2 describes the form and prevalence of teaching and schooling practices used to promote social and emotional learning in all SSES-participating sites. It covers the first component of Figure 1.3, describing the social and emotional education provided in classrooms and schools and how teachers are supported in this endeavour by their schools and teacher training systems.

- Chapter 3 examines the schoolwide context that can influence students' social and emotional skill development. It covers the second component of Figure 1.3, describing students' experiences at school and their relations with other students and their teachers.

- Chapter 4 examines family dynamics and how the wider cultural context influences students' social representations of social and emotional skills, role models, and career aspirations. It covers the third component of Figure 1.3. Thanks to the inclusion of a special module on gender-related issues in the SSES 2023 student questionnaire, Chapter 4, which is more exploratory in nature, has a special focus on gender differences in social and emotional skills.

- This volume also includes text boxes that feature interesting country case studies, showcasing practices and policies effective at developing students' social and emotional skills.

Finally, the two volumes of survey results call for further research and studies into social and emotional skills and the contexts surrounding them. There are still some blank spaces in of Figure 1.3 and some boxes that need to be filled in. The next round of the survey plans to complete this evidence base by taking on new subjects. With the rise of artificial intelligence and social media in the lives of young people, it seems essential to be able to analyse how social and emotional skills can enable these technologies to be used responsibly and safely. Another important challenge is to gain a better understanding of teachers' own social and emotional skills and their knowledge in this area, as it is highly likely that they are directly linked to the social and emotional skills of their students.

# Annex 1.A.

Online tables for each chapter can be accessed via the StatLink.

## Table 1.A.1. Tables Chapter 1 - Social and emotional learning in school and at home

| Table | Title |
|---|---|
| Table A1.1 | Social and emotional skills in education systems, 2023 |

*StatLink* 🖳 https://stat.link/oqwkmd

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# 2 Social and emotional education in school

This chapter examines the diverse policies and practices schools employ to foster social and emotional learning among students and highlights avenues for enhancing social and emotional education. The chapter starts with teachers' approaches to promoting social and emotional learning in classrooms, their perspectives on online and remote teaching, and their preparedness for social and emotional education. Next, the chapter looks at schools' organisation of social and emotional education and student engagement in extra-curricular activities. Finally, the presence of a shared mindset among school staff about the value of social and emotional education and teachers' role in it is examined.

# In Brief

## Policy insights

Results from the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2019 and 2023 suggest the following key tasks related to policies and practices to better promote social and emotional learning in school:

- **Enhance teacher feedback, particularly on students' strengths:** Students aged 10 and 15 who received more feedback from teachers reported higher social and emotional skills. However, teacher feedback needs to be enhanced, especially in developing students' strengths. This is particularly important for 15-year-olds and girls. For example, on average, only one out of four 15-year-old students receive regular feedback on their strengths in half of all participating countries and subnational entities (hereafter, "sites"). Teachers of 15-year-olds in Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Jinan (People's Republic of China, hereafter "China") provide more feedback than the other sites. Evidence-based guidance and tools can be used to ensure all students regularly receive constructive and holistic feedback.

- **Increase the opportunities teachers dedicate to social and emotional learning:** In most sites, teachers focus on task performance skills. At the same time, they provided the fewest opportunities for students to learn how to regulate their emotions and engage with others. Only in Bogotá (Colombia), Delhi (India), Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru, did over 80% of teachers provide ample learning opportunities in these areas. The results call for a particular focus on lower secondary education and the teaching of emotional regulation, so as to increase students' learning opportunities in class (e.g. through teacher training and the design of teaching resources).

- **Leverage the potential of digital technologies for social and emotional learning:** Most teachers perceived online and remote teaching as a challenge rather than an opportunity for social and emotional learning, especially for developing social skills. Moreover, supporting student learning through digital technology was the task that teachers felt least capable of performing among all teaching tasks. Peru was the only education system where most teachers saw opportunities rather than challenges in all domains of social and emotional learning. Teachers' digital confidence was high in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Kudus (Indonesia). To leverage the potential of digital technologies, education systems need to ensure that software and digital technologies are tuned towards socio-emotional learning and that teachers receive sufficient training and support to use them effectively.

- **Boost teacher preparedness:** Tasks related to teachers' social and emotional teaching were among the tasks that teachers, particularly in lower secondary, felt least capable of. A greater emphasis on relevant topics in teacher training and providing high-quality teaching resources can boost teacher preparedness. However, many teachers, especially in secondary, had no training on key topics related to social and emotional learning. Only one out of two teachers of 15-year-olds drew to a large extent on official resources, on average, while one out of three teachers used informal resources. Teachers in Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Jinan (China) and Kudus (Indonesia) benefitted from more training and teachers in Bulgaria, Delhi (India), Peru, and Ukraine used more official resources than teachers in other sites.

- **Support students' engagement in extra-curricular activities**: Engagement in extra-curricular activities was positively related to all social and emotional skills in both age groups. However,

only one out of three (or less) 15-year-olds engage regularly in different extra-curricular activities. In most sites, even fewer disadvantaged students and girls did so. Offering a variety of guided extra-curricular activities at low or no cost at school may allow students to benefit from this extra socio-emotional boost, whereas elsewhere, it may not be available or affordable. In Bulgaria, Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia), all or almost all students benefit from extra-curricular offers at school.

- **Create structures that promote social and emotional learning in school:** The formal integration of teaching social and emotional skills into general practices and teaching across subjects is very common across sites. Teaching social and emotional learning across subjects is almost universal in Helsinki (Finland), Kudus (Indonesia) and Spain. Bogotá (Colombia), Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Peru, Sobral (Brazil) and Spain offer social and emotional education as a separate subject for over half of all 15-year-olds.

- **Cultivate a shared mindset about social and emotional education, and ensure alignment with school approach:** Chile, Delhi (India), Kudus (Indonesia), and Peru demonstrated a stronger alignment between their approach to social and emotional education and the staff's mindset than other education systems. However, between four and eight in ten students across education systems attended schools where not all teachers and principals agreed that these skills could be taught. A joint acknowledgement of the wide-ranging impact of social and emotional skills was even less common. A shared mindset about teachers' responsibility was quite common in Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Helsinki (Finland) and Kudus (Indonesia) and on the teachability of social and emotional skills in Emilia-Romagna and Turin (Italy), Helsinki (Finland) and Spain. Bogotá (Colombia), Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Peru, Sobral (Brazil) and Spain offer social and emotional education as a separate subject for over half of all 15-year-olds; a relatively widespread shared mindset and a stronger teacher preparedness in some of these sites suggest a move towards a more transversal approach. Lastly, the fact that school staff in most sites agree about parents' responsibility in socio-emotional learning suggests a good foundation for strengthening family-school partnerships. This is needed, as two out of ten students were in schools that did not provide feedback or advice to parents or guardians about their children's social and emotional skills. Notably, almost all students in Jinan (China), Kudus (Indonesia), and Ukraine were in schools that provided such feedback.

## Improving policies and practices for social and emotional development in school

Schools function as microcosms of society, making them ideal environments for social and emotional learning (Ulferts, 2023[1]). In schools, students encounter diverse ways of thinking, living and communicating. These institutions provide opportunities for students to experience success, form relationships and friendships, and learn that personal achievements often depend on others. Daily, students navigate complex social situations and manage pressure, frustration and occasionally, failure and rejection.

To fully leverage schools' potential as nurturing environments for students' social and emotional growth, policies and practices need to be implemented across various areas of school life and operations. These initiatives should be well-integrated and aligned to ensure effectiveness (European Commission, 2021[2]; Jones and Bouffard, 2012[3]; Chatterjee Singh and Duraiappah, 2020[4]). To this end, this chapter analyses the SSES data from 2023 (and 2019, where available), focusing on policies and practices in key areas, and identifies opportunities for improving social and emotional education across surveyed sites. These include policies and practices related to:

- promoting social and emotional learning in classrooms
- preparing teachers to be champions of social and emotional teaching
- creating structures that promote social and emotional learning and teaching
- cultivating a shared mindset about the value and approach to social and emotional education

The SSES 2019 and 2023 data show that education systems in different regions of the world face common challenges in implementing social and emotional education in schools, e.g. successfully integrating social and emotional learning in lower secondary education. However, there are important variations in how social and emotional learning is promoted in classrooms and organised in schools, as well as in terms of teacher preparation and awareness among school staff about the role of schools in promoting these skills across the different sites. Overall, results indicate that the key levers for improving social and emotional education quality and equity vary across different education systems. This suggests that sites can learn valuable lessons from each other in various aspects of implementation.

## Promoting social and emotional learning in classrooms

Teachers play a crucial role in creating school and classroom environments that nurture students' social and emotional growth (Ulferts, 2023[1]). They implement the written curriculum and provide opportunities for students to collaborate, debate, express creativity, and experience joy and pride in learning. Additionally, they guide students to consider others' perspectives and needs, while mentoring them on conflict resolution in social settings. Research unsurprisingly confirms that teachers' classroom practices significantly impact students' social and emotional growth (Steponavičius, Gress-Wright and Linzarini, 2023[5]; Durlak et al., 2011[6]).

This section presents findings on how to enhance social and emotional learning in classrooms through improving the feedback teachers provide to students and expanding opportunities for social and emotional skill development. More effort is also needed to ensure that the opportunities digital technology offers for promoting social and emotional learning are fully leveraged, rather than becoming a risk to their development.

### *Students who receive more teacher feedback report higher social and emotional skills*

Teacher feedback is an essential part of learning. Receiving feedback, even on areas for improvement, is not demotivating if it is done well; it can fuel learning and motivate students to keep trying (EEF, 2021[7]). Regular feedback is, however, not just important for cognitive growth; it is also important socio-emotionally (Schwab, Markus and Hassani, 2022[8]; Ma, Xiao and Hau, 2022[9]).

The SSES 2023 asked students to report on the frequency of teacher feedback. Figure 2.1 shows the average strength of the relationship between teacher feedback and students' social and emotional skills for each of the skills assessed on average across sites (see also Table A2.3 as listed in Annex 2.A and on line via the StatLink). It also shows the range of the relationship strength (minimum and maximum) across sites.

Teacher feedback was associated with higher social and emotional skills. Teacher feedback seems to have had an influence on all skills in both age groups in most sites, as seen in Figure 2.1. On average and in all sites, 10-year-olds and 15-year-olds who received more teacher feedback reported being more creative, motivated to excel, optimistic, sociable and trusting. Teacher feedback showed less consistent and strong relationships to skills required for regulating emotions such as emotional control and stress resistance as well as self-control and responsibility (see Table A2.3). A potential explanation is that the type of feedback provided by teachers in many sites is less suitable for promoting skills in these areas.

## Figure 2.1. Relationship between teacher feedback and students' social and emotional skills

Standardised regression coefficients of 15-year-old students' individual skills on the teacher feedback index, average across sites
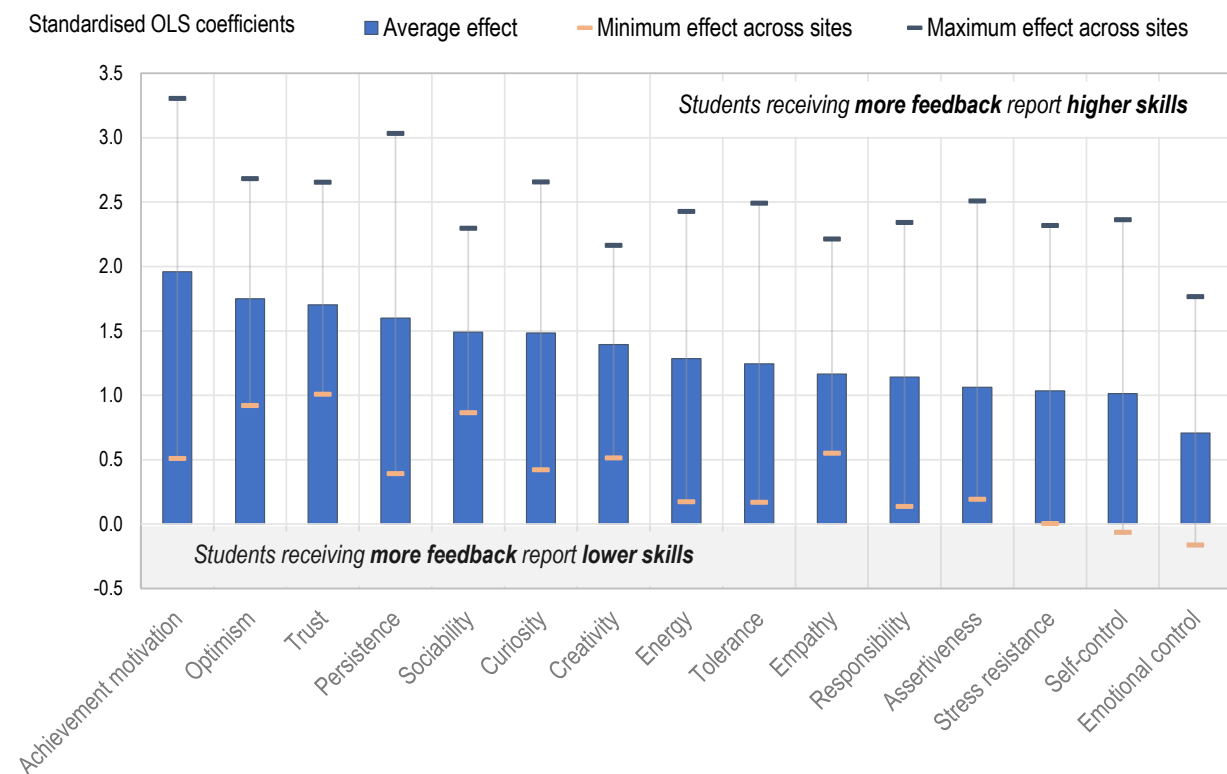


Notes: All coefficients for the average relationship across sites are statistically significant with a threshold $p < 0.05$. Models control for gender, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how the teacher feedback index was calculated.
Social and emotional skills are listed by the size of the effect on the teacher feedback index.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.3.

*StatLink* ᐧᔑᐳ https://stat.link/2jp8dk

### In most systems, teacher feedback seems to foster academic motivation; in a few, it also builds empathy

Important differences in the relationship between teacher feedback and social and emotional skills emerged not only between skills but also across sites. For example, Figure 2.2 shows how the strength of the relationship between teacher feedback, and students' empathy and achievement motivation, varies by site.

The figure indicates that the advantage of receiving more teacher feedback, in terms of empathy and achievement motivation, is weaker—though still significant—in Helsinki (Finland), Spain and Turin (Italy), compared to other sites. In contrast, the relationship is relatively strong in Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Gunma (Japan), Jinan (China), Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru.

The figure also illustrates that in most sites, the relationship tends to be stronger for achievement motivation. One potential reason may be that teacher feedback focuses more on academic achievement

than on prosocial behaviour like empathy. Gunma (Japan) is the only system where teacher feedback seems to instil both achievement motivation and empathy equally well, as it relates strongly to both skills.

### Figure 2.2. Relationship between teacher feedback and students' empathy and achievement motivation

Standardised regression coefficients of 15-year-old students' empathy and achievement motivation on the teacher feedback index, across sites



Notes: All coefficients are significant at a threshold of $p < 0.05$. Models control for gender, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how the teacher feedback index was calculated.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.3.

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### *Teacher feedback focuses more on students' areas of improvement than their strengths*

While feedback generally matters, the type of feedback also matters. It is important to strike a balance between pointing to areas for improvement and areas of strength, such as particular achievements and learning progress (Lüdtke and Köller, 2002[10]; OECD, 2005[11]; Pekrun et al., 2014[12]).

The SSES 2023 measured different types of teacher feedback by asking students how often something happens at school (from never to every lesson or almost every lesson). Student reports show that feedback frequently focuses on students' weaknesses rather than their strengths (Figure 2.3). While on average across sites, four out of ten 15-year-olds reported that their teachers provide them with feedback on ways

to improve performance (42%) and areas in which they could improve (39%) in many lessons or every – or almost every – lesson, fewer than three out of ten reported frequently receiving feedback on their strengths (27%; see also Table A2.1). A substantial share of students (14% to 15%) on average across sites never or almost never receive feedback from their teachers, particularly on their strengths (24%). On average and in most sites, all types of teacher feedback were related to social and emotional skills, but in particular, teacher feedback on strength (Tables A2.4, A2.5, and A2.6).

## Figure 2.3. Type of teacher feedback, by sites

Percentage of 15-year-old students who reported receiving the following types of feedback in many lessons or every or almost every lesson
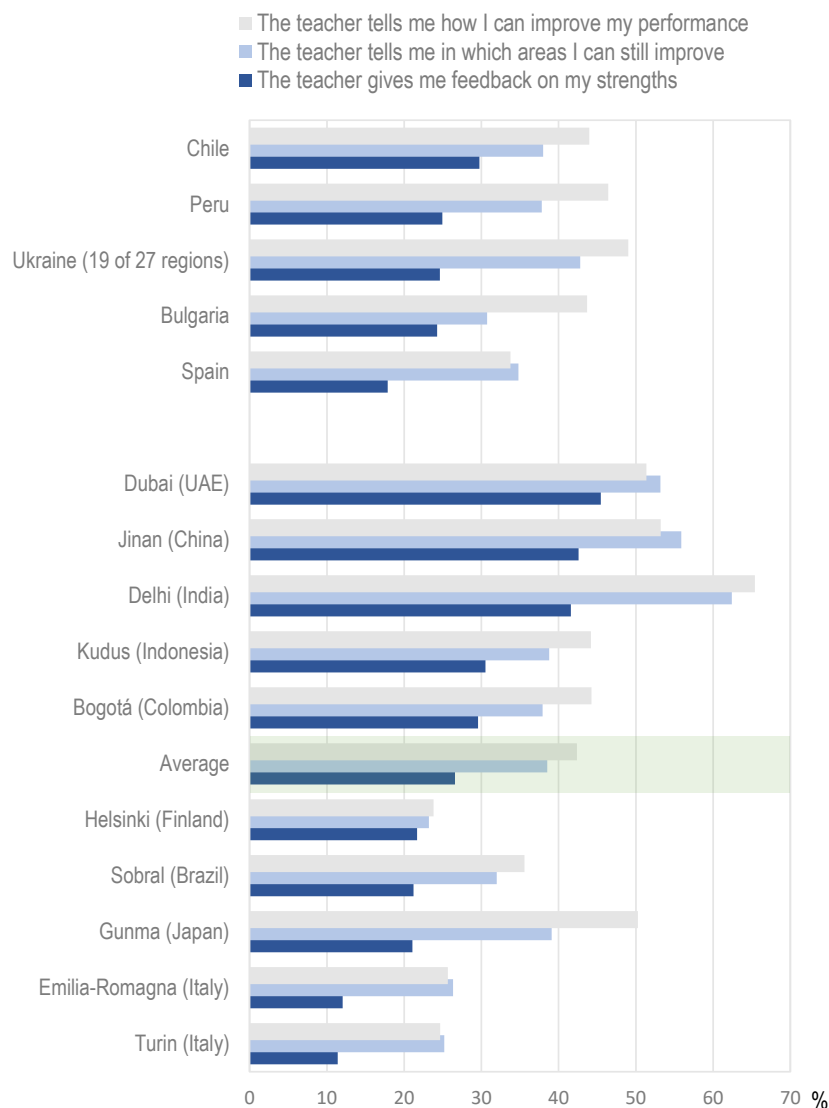


Notes: Sites are listed in descending order of the percentage of students who reported that their teachers provided feedback on their strengths in every or almost every lesson.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.1.

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Figure 2.3 indicates that the frequency of teacher feedback could be improved across all sites, but particularly in Bulgaria, Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland), Turin (Italy), Sobral (Brazil) and Spain. According to student reports, twice as many 15-year-olds in Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), and Jinan (China) receive regular feedback (42% to 65%, depending on the type of feedback) compared to those in Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Helsinki (Finland), and Turin (Italy), where only 11% to 26% of students receive regular feedback.

In almost all sites, regular teacher feedback on students' strengths was less common than on their weaknesses. Helsinki (Finland) presents a unique case. Students there reported receiving relatively balanced feedback, including on their strengths. However, the overall feedback frequency was lower, with less than one-quarter of students reporting regular feedback across different types, ranging from 22% to 24%.

## Action for impact: Enhance teacher feedback

Education systems, especially in Bulgaria, Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland), Turin (Italy), Sobral (Brazil) and Spain, need to train and support teachers in providing regular, holistic and constructive feedback. Several evidence-based tools and guidance are available to assist in this process (EEF, 2021[7]; EEF, 2021[13]; Vincent-Lancrin et al., 2019[14]; Yeh, 2017[15]). These resources include explanations of how feedback impacts students' academic and socio-emotional learning, lesson plans that incorporate regular feedback, didactical techniques to ensure consistent feedback and rubrics for providing formative feedback.

### *Ten-year-old students and boys receive more feedback*

On average, and in most sites with available data, 10-year-olds received regular feedback more often than 15-year-olds (see Table A2.1). On average, 38% of 10-year-olds reported receiving regular feedback on their strengths, compared to only 28% of 15-year-olds. As students get older, they tend to work more independently. However, adolescence is a critical phase marked by significant biological, psychological, and social changes, often resulting in temporary fluctuations in social and emotional skills and a plateau in self-esteem development (OECD, 2024[16]; OECD, 2021[17]; Orth, Erol and Luciano, 2018[18]). Additionally, for many students, this phase marks the transition into the labour market. Therefore, providing sufficient feedback and encouragement is crucial to help them navigate these challenges successfully.

On average, and across most sites and both age groups, girls reported receiving less feedback than boys (see Table A2.2). In some sites, disadvantaged and low-performing students received more feedback, potentially indicating targeted teacher support and differentiated instruction. This approach aims to provide struggling students with extra support needed to catch up (OECD, 2016[19]; 2012[20]). For instance, in Bulgaria, Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Helsinki (Finland) and Spain, 15-year-old low-performing students received more feedback than top-performing students. This was also the case for 10-year-old low-performing students in Helsinki (Finland) and Sobral (Brazil). However, the opposite was true in Jinan (China) and Ukraine, where 15-year-old top performers reported more frequent feedback than their low-performing peers.

Regarding socio-economic status, disadvantaged 15-year-olds reported more feedback on average compared to their advantaged peers in Bulgaria, Chile, and Peru. Conversely, in Jinan (China), disadvantaged students in both age groups reported less teacher feedback than their advantaged peers.

In most sites, there were no gender or socio-economic differences in the strength of relationships between teacher feedback and social and emotional skills (Tables A2.7 and A2.8). This suggests that receiving

frequent feedback from teachers is equally important for all students - girls and boys, advantaged and disadvantaged alike - to thrive socio-emotionally.

### *Secondary teachers provide fewer opportunities for developing students' skills than primary teachers*

Providing students with opportunities to probe and enrich their social and emotional skills is key to effective social and emotional education (Jones and Bouffard, 2012[3]; Gedikoglu, 2021[21]).

In the SSES 2023, teachers were asked how often they include opportunities for students to develop different social and emotional skills in their lessons (from never to every lesson). On average, across sites, most teachers of 15-year-old students reported providing opportunities for developing these skills in most or every lesson (see Table A2.24).

However, teachers seem to focus on certain skills more than others. For example, teachers primarily focus on developing task performance skills, providing fewer opportunities for learning how to regulate emotions. While 83% of 15-year-olds' teachers reported creating many opportunities in class to develop task performance skills, on average, only 71% of teachers did so for skills for emotional regulation and engaging with others.

Over 80% of teachers provided learning opportunities for developing task performance skills in most or every lesson in over half of all sites (see Table A2.24), while only in Bogotá (Colombia), Delhi (India), Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru, 80% of teachers did so for emotional regulation and engaging with others. These findings may partly be explained by the fact that some education systems do not target these skills, particularly in lower secondary (see Figure 1.2 in Chapter 1). However, skills to regulate emotions and engaging with others have been linked to positive outcomes, such as better health behaviours, well-being and entrepreneurial aspirations (OECD, 2024[16]).

SSES 2023 data suggests that teachers of 15-year-olds provide fewer opportunities for developing students' social and emotional skills in class than teachers of 10-year-olds. This was the case for skills in all domains except for open-mindedness (being curious, creative and tolerant of different cultures) on average and in at least half of all sites.

Figure 2.4 shows the percentage of teachers of 10-year-olds and 15-year-olds who reported including opportunities to develop skills in different domains, in most or every lesson, for each site with available data for both age groups (see also Table A2.24). The figure shows the opportunity gaps between the age cohorts that were particularly large: emotional regulation (between 3 and 13 percentage points), engaging with others (between 4 and 11 percentage points) and collaboration (between 3 and 11 percentage points). Interestingly, 15-year-old students reported lower skill levels for some of these skills (i.e. trust, optimism and energy) than 10-year-olds (OECD, 2024[16]). Only Ukrainian teachers showed no significant difference between age groups in all these skills. Interestingly, the skill differences between 10- and 15-year-old students in Ukraine were also smaller compared to many other sites (OECD, 2024[16]).

**Figure 2.4. Opportunities to develop social and emotional skills in lessons, by age and sites**

Percentage of teachers of 10- and 15-year-olds who reported to include opportunities for students to develop emotional regulation, engaging with others and collaboration in most or every lesson
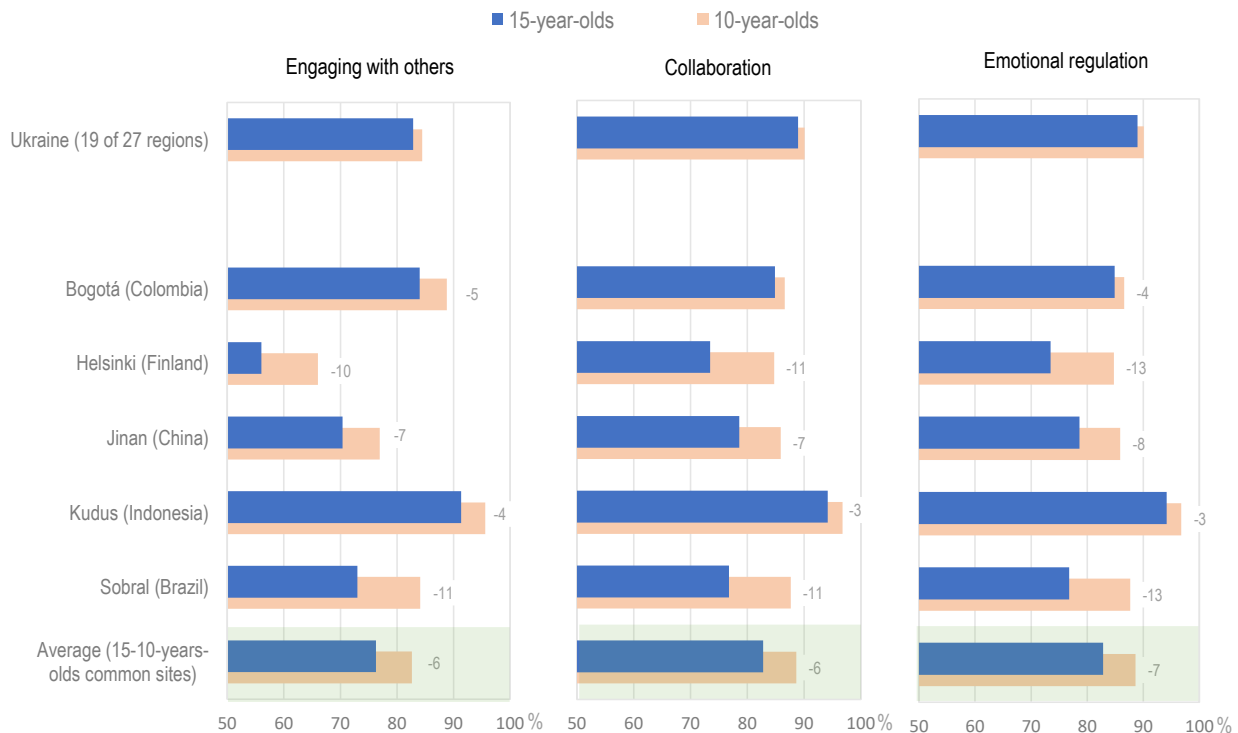


Notes: Teachers were asked how often they promote skills or characteristics in their target class like "being assertive, sociable, and enthusiastic around other people" (engaging with others), "being cooperative, trusting, and understanding of other people" (collaboration) and "controlling one's emotions, staying optimistic, and coping with stress" (Emotional regulation). Only age differences that are statistically significant with a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are noted by bars. Sites are listed in alphabetical order.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.24.

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## Action for impact: Increase opportunities for socio-emotional learning

While teachers of 15-year-olds in Bogotá (Colombia), Delhi (India), Kudus (Indonesia), and Peru reported providing relatively holistic learning experiences, in other sites, there is a greater need for teacher training to focus on enhancing pedagogical skills, lesson planning, and fostering social-emotional learning, particularly for lower secondary teachers. This training should prioritise domains of students' development that are less well covered, such as emotional regulation or engaging with others, as key components. School leaders must also provide structures that encourage holistic discussions on students' social and emotional development, ensuring consistent support across the school environment.

This should be supplemented by resources such as structured lesson plans, assessment rubrics, and access to collaborative platforms for sharing best practices (Paniagua and Istance, 2018[22]; OECD, 2021[23]; Vincent-Lancrin et al., 2019[14]). These resources should complement—not replace—

comprehensive teacher training, ensuring teachers are well-prepared to address diverse student needs effectively.  To avoid curriculum overload, training and additional support for teachers should emphasise how to integrate social and emotional learning into the teaching of subject matter, making it a natural part of classroom instruction.

### *Most teachers perceive challenges in online/remote social-emotional skill development, especially in Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Helsinki (Finland) and Turin (Italy)*

Nowadays, a substantial share of students' learning and social interactions happens on line and through the use of digital technologies (OECD, 2023[24]). Digital technologies bring new risks but also opportunities for children's social and emotional learning and well-being (OECD, 2023[24]; Burns and Gottschalk, 2020[25]; OECD, 2021[26]; OECD, 2023[24]). Teachers play a crucial role in shaping and guiding students' online and digital experiences (OECD, 2023[27]; Ulferts, 2021[28]). Therefore, the impact of the digitalisation of students' lives will also depend on teachers' preparedness and competence for this task.

However, according to SSES 2023, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for teaching was not included in any training for 12% of teachers of 15-year-olds (see Table A2.23 and Figure 2.7 further below). Only 38% had had training in the use of ICT for teaching in the previous 12 months.

Data from the SSES 2023 also revealed that supporting student learning through digital technology is the task teachers felt least capable of performing. Around one-third of teachers felt they could not do this at all or, at best, moderately, ranging from over 80% in Bulgaria, Spain and Ukraine responding in this way to 10% or less in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Kudus (Indonesia) (see Table A2.26).

Some 40% of all teachers of 15-year-olds, on average, had taught students on line or remotely during the previous year (see Table A2.27), ranging from 11% and 12% in Chile and Helsinki (Finland) to 89% and 92% in Ukraine and Jinan (China). Teachers of 10-year-olds had less recent online or remote teaching experience, on average and in most of the sites with available data.

In the SSES 2023, teachers with recent experiences in online and remote teaching were asked if, in their opinion, the development of social and emotional skills was hindered or fostered by online or remote teaching. Teachers of 15-year-olds in most sites responded by seeing more challenges than opportunities for students' social and emotional growth through online or remote teaching, particularly for skills relating to social interactions. On average, 65% of teachers felt that skills for engaging with others were hindered a bit or a lot by online or remote teaching (see left panel in Figure 2.5 and Table A2.28). In comparison, 51% of teachers felt that task performance skills were hindered a bit or a lot by online or remote teaching.

One-third and less of teachers with recent online or remote teaching experience perceived online and remote teaching as able to foster students' social and emotional skills.

More teachers of 15-year-olds saw opportunities to foster skills related to achievement. For example, one out of three teachers felt that task performance skills could be fostered on line and remotely. Conversely, on average, only one out of four teachers saw opportunities for promoting skills related to social interactions on line or remotely (i.e. skills for collaboration and engaging with others).

On average, teachers of 15-year-olds in Bogotá (Colombia), Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru had the most positive views on digital opportunities to promote social and emotional skills, while teachers' views in Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Helsinki (Finland) and Turin (Italy) were the most negative ones across sites (see Table A2.28). For example, over 80% of teachers in Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Helsinki (Finland), and Turin (Italy) believed that online/remote teaching hindered students' ability to engage with others, while less than 10% felt that these skills could be fostered through such teaching methods.

**Figure 2.5. Teachers' view on teaching social and emotional skills online and remotely, by sites**

Percentage of teachers of 15-year-olds who perceived that the following skills were hindered or fostered because of online or remote teaching
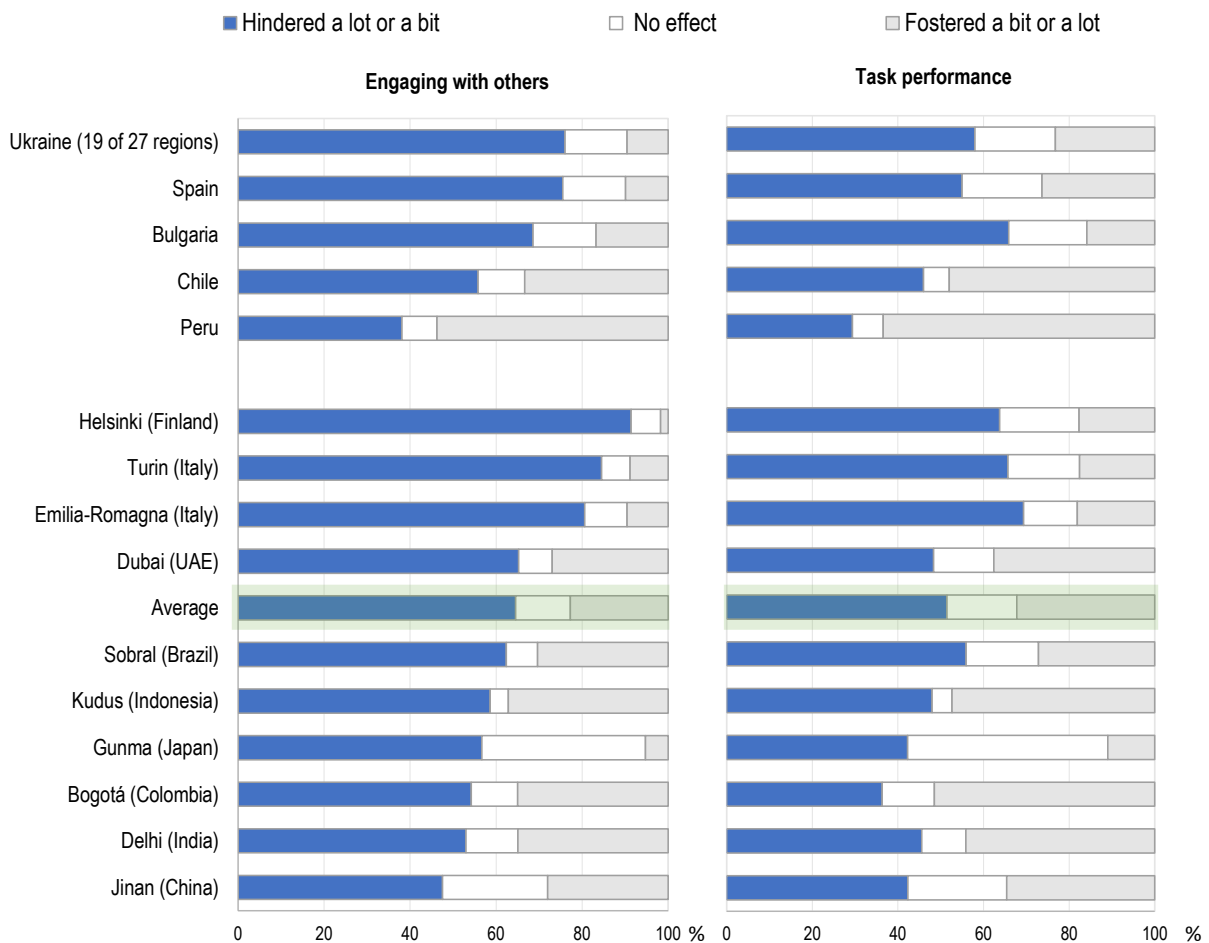


Notes: Teachers were asked about the extent to which the development of different skills or characteristics were hindered or fostered due to online or remote teaching, including "being assertive, sociable, and enthusiastic around other people" (engaging with others) and "being persistent, responsible, and self-disciplined" (task performance). These items were answered by teachers who reported recent online/remote teaching experience. Sites are listed in descending order of the percentages of teachers who perceived that engaging with others skills were hindered because of online or remote teaching.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.28.

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In contrast, in Bogotá (Colombia), Kudus (Indonesia), and Peru, only 38% to 59% of teachers were sceptical, while 35% to 54% held positive views on fostering these skills through online or remote teaching. Peru's education system was the only site where a majority of teachers saw opportunities rather than challenges to social and emotional learning in all areas during online and remote teaching.

Teachers' views on social and emotional learning in online/remote settings have likely been influenced by their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. These views may reflect not only their experiences with remote/online teaching but also their observations of the pandemic's overall impact on students' social and emotional skills (OECD, 2023[24]). Teachers' predominantly negative view of digital technology may also stem from the fact that it is often not well-suited, nor effectively used, to support students' social and

emotional development. Regardless of the specific experiences informing these beliefs, it can be assumed that teachers' attitudes toward online teaching play a crucial role in their decisions to integrate digital tools into their teaching methods (Ulferts, 2021[28]).

Comparing age cohorts revealed that teachers of 15-year-olds perceived more negative impacts of online and remote teaching on students' social and emotional development than those teaching 10-year-olds (see Table A2.28). These differences in perception between teachers of the two age groups were evident across half of the sites. On average, the disparities were particularly noticeable in skills related to emotional regulation, engaging with others and achievement motivation.

## Action for impact: Leverage the potential of digital technologies

To leverage the opportunities for social and emotional learning through digital technologies (OECD, 2021[26]; 2023[27]), education systems need to ensure that software and digital technologies are tuned towards incorporating socio-emotional learning into academic learning. Partnerships between schools and education technology (EdTech) companies, as well as usability studies with students and teachers, are essential building blocks for ensuring the design of apt technology. Moreover, experts and teaching professionals (expert teachers, teacher educators, researchers and implementors of social and emotional learning programmes) should be involved in the design process (Ulferts, 2023[1]). Education systems also need to provide schools with access to such technology, as well as training and support for teachers, to ensure its effective use.

## Preparing teachers to be champions of social and emotional teaching

The design and implementation of effective learning opportunities, guidance and feedback requires a sophisticated set of skills and knowledge of teachers (Ulferts, 2023[1]; Jones et al., 2018[29]; Ulferts, 2021[28]). Teachers also need to feel capable of delivering high-quality instruction and support in classrooms and helping students grow both academically and socio-emotionally (Schonert-Reichl, 2017[30]; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy and Hoy, 1998[31]). To develop such skills, teachers need sufficient training in important areas of social and emotional education.

Results from the SSES 2023 presented in this section show that efforts to provide teachers with the skill set and confidence needed to deliver effective social and emotional education need to intensify.

### *Teachers of 15-year-olds felt less capable of developing and understanding students' social and emotional skills than teachers of 10-year-olds*

When asked about their ability to perform various teaching tasks, most teachers of 15-year-olds (between 68% to 76%) reported feeling capable to a moderate or large extent (see Table A2.26).

Teachers in Bulgaria, Spain, and Ukraine stood out because only two out of ten or fewer felt capable of understanding students' feelings and emotions or helping students develop social and emotional skills. In contrast, in almost all other sites, more than eight out of ten teachers reported feeling confident in these social and emotional teaching tasks.

Despite such variations, a common pattern emerged: In most sites, fewer teachers felt capable of handling tasks related to social and emotional learning compared to other teaching responsibilities. Moreover, teachers of 15-year-olds felt less capable in social and emotional teaching than those of 10-year-olds in most sites with available data (see Table A2.26).

Figure 2.6 shows the percentage of teachers who reported feeling capable of understanding students' feelings and emotions, as well as helping students develop social and emotional skills, for both age groups (see also Table A2.26).

### Figure 2.6. Teacher efficacy in social and emotional teaching, by sites

Percentage of teachers of 15-year-olds and teachers of 10-year-olds who reported they were capable of the following tasks to a moderate or large extent
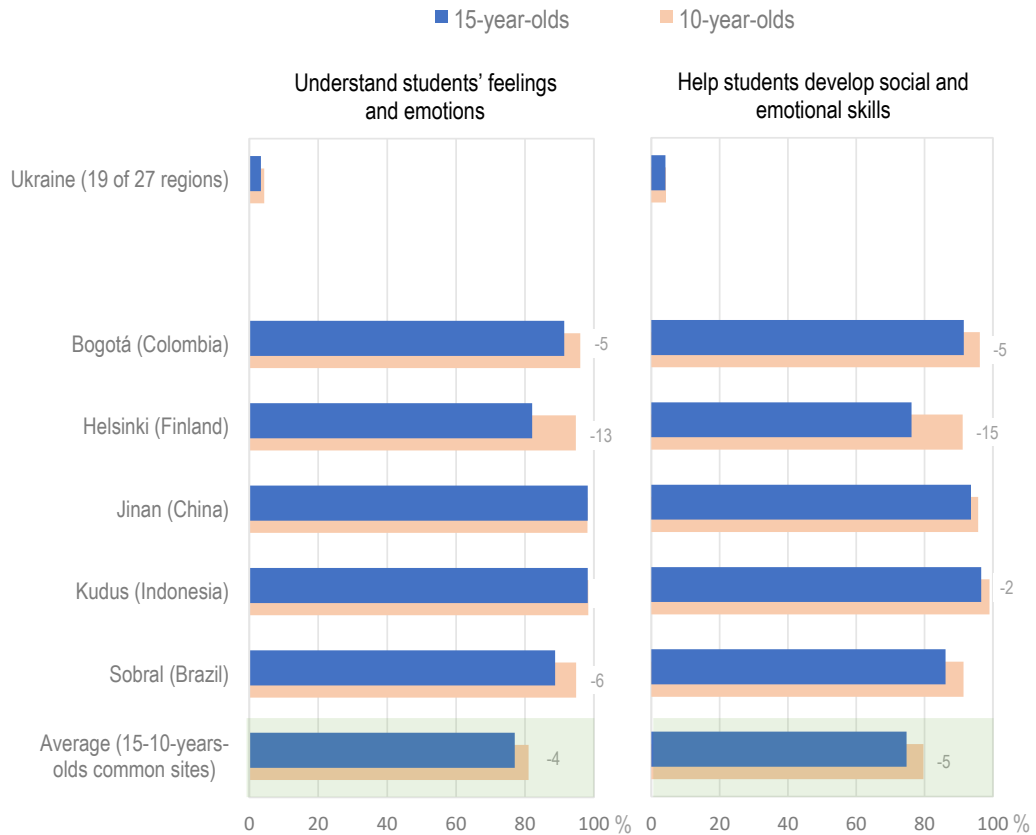


Notes: Only age differences that are statistically significant with a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are noted by bars.
Sites are listed in alphabetical order.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.26.

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On average, while 20% of teachers of 10-year-olds did not feel sufficiently able to help students develop social and emotional skills, this proportion increased to 25% among teachers of 15-year-olds. Significant differences were observed in Bogotá (Colombia), Helsinki (Finland) and Kudus (Indonesia).

Similarly, 19% of teachers of 10-year-olds felt insufficiently capable of understanding students' feelings and emotions, compared to 23% of teachers of 15-year-olds. Significant differences in this aspect were noted in Bogotá (Colombia), Helsinki (Finland) and Sobral (Brazil).

***Social and emotional education is underrepresented in teacher training, with a significant gap compared to subjects and pedagogy training in some education systems***

Teacher training can boost teacher efficacy and is crucial for ensuring high-quality instruction and support, and, thus, student learning (OECD, 2020[32]). For training to be impactful, it must address the various tasks that teaching encompasses, especially those where teachers express a greater need and feel less capable (Ulferts, 2023[1]; 2021[28]).

The SSES 2023 data reveal a lack of social and emotional topics in teacher training, which is particularly concerning given teachers' reported low confidence in this area. The SSES questionnaire asked teachers about the topics included in their teacher education, in-service training programmes, training for other professional qualifications, and professional development activities.

Figure 2.7 shows the percentage of teachers of 15-year-olds with and without training in different topics related to social and emotional teaching on average across sites (see also Table A2.23). The share ranged from 16% to 40%, depending on the topic. For example, 29% of teachers of 15-year-olds had no training in incorporating social and emotional learning in the classroom. Another 40% of teachers lacked training in monitoring students' social and emotional skills on a regular basis.

Regular monitoring and formative assessment of students' skills are key for student progress and the improvement of social and emotional education in schools (OECD, 2005[11]; 2020[33]; European Commission, 2021[2]). To design suitable lessons and provide effective support, teachers need a clear understanding of their students' current social and emotional skill levels. This knowledge is crucial for guiding students' growth into socially and emotionally competent individuals.

Lack of training in social and emotional education was most notable in Chile, Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland), and Spain, Turin (Italy).

Across the surveyed sites, an average of 28% to 37% of teachers reported participating in professional development activities related to social and emotional education within the past 12 months (see Figure 2.7 and Table A2.23). Among the topics covered in these recent professional development activities, identifying and combatting bullying received the most coverage, while monitoring students' social and emotional skill development was the least.

Teachers of 15-year-olds were less likely than those of 10-year-olds to have received training on various topics related to social and emotional education (see Table A2.23). The most significant and consistent difference was in training for regular monitoring of students' social and emotional skills: 34% of 15-year-olds' teachers lacked training in this area, compared to only 25% of 10-year-olds' teachers on average. Significant differences also emerged in most sites for other key areas (see Table A2.23).

## Figure 2.7. Teachers' training in social and emotional teaching and the use of information and communication technology

Percentage of teachers of 15-year-olds with and without training in topics related to social and emotional education and the use of information and communication technology, average across sites
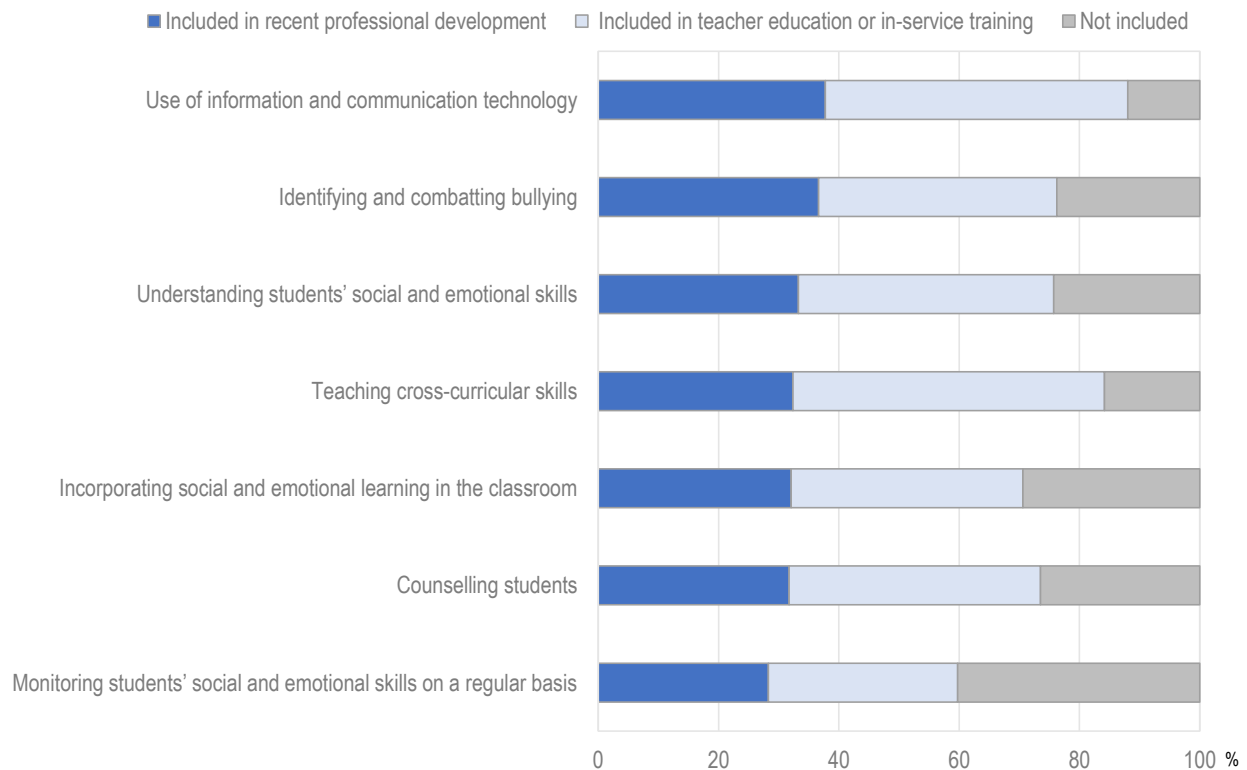


Notes: Recent professional development activities refer to activities during the last 12 months. The reported percentage encompasses two groups of teachers: those who received recent professional development on these topics and those who had covered these topics in earlier training sessions. Type of trainings are listed in descending order of the percentages of teachers with recent training.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.23.

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Figure 2.8 shows the percentage of teachers of 15-year-olds without training in incorporating social and emotional learning in the classroom, as well as in classroom praxis, pedagogy and content of taught subjects in each of the sites (see also Table A2.23). Overall, fewer teachers in Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Jinan (China) and Kudus (Indonesia) lacked training in the incorporation of social and emotional learning into teaching than teachers in other sites (less than 15% of teachers) as well as on related topics (see Table A2.23). In Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland) and Turin (Italy) over 45% of teachers had no training on the topic.

Figure 2.8 also shows that the gap in training for social and emotional teaching is not solely due to a general lack of teacher training. For example, 13% of teachers lack training in classroom praxis, pedagogy and content of taught subjects in Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Peru and Spain. However, only 22% of Peruvian teachers reported a lack of training in incorporating social and emotional learning into teaching compared to over 40% in Emilia-Romagna (Italy) and Spain.

## Figure 2.8. Teachers' training in social and emotional teaching, by sites

Percentage of 15-year-olds' teachers without training in the following topics



🟠 Classroom praxis, pedagogy and content of some or all subject(s)

🔺 Incorporating social and emotional learning in the classroom
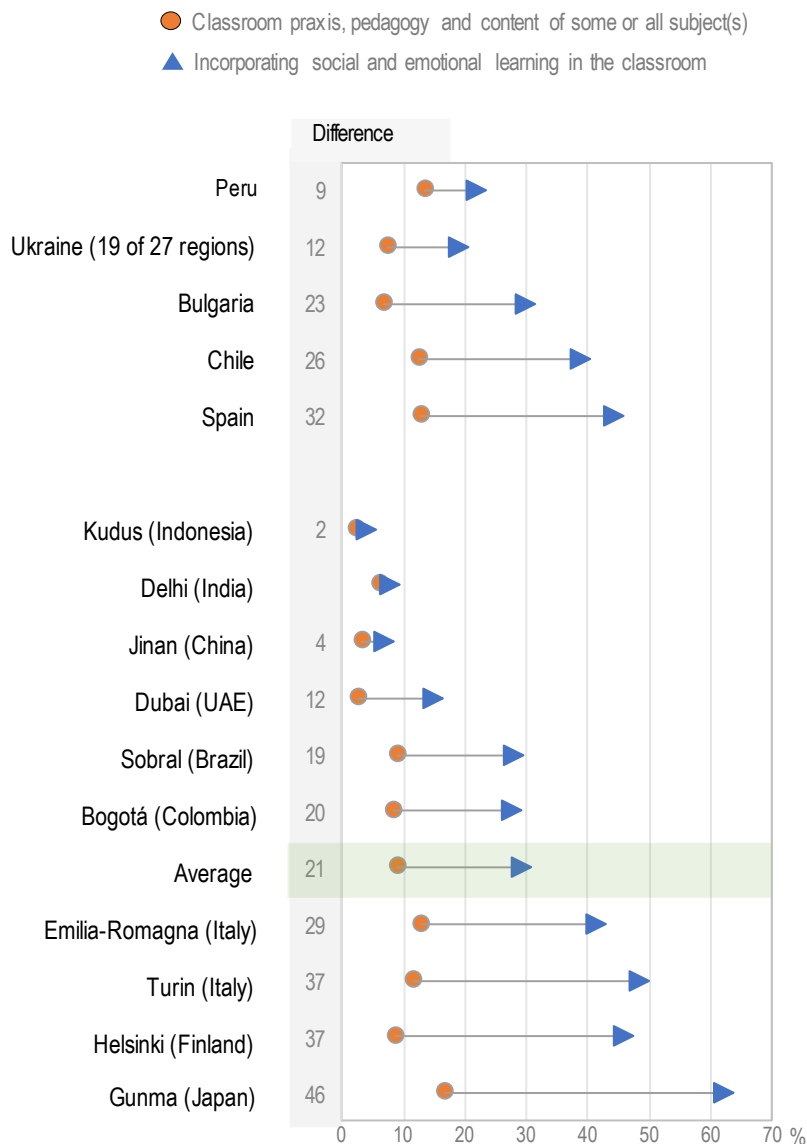
Notes: Only differences that are statistically significant with a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are noted by site names. Sites are listed in ascending order of the difference in the percentages without training in the two topics.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.23.

StatLink 🔢 https://stat.link/pmzcfb

***Many teachers rely on unregulated materials for lesson planning, while in half of the education systems, teachers extensively use official resources***

Actionable tools and resources may help teachers plan and implement social and emotional education more effectively. However, the growing emphasis on social and emotional education has led to a proliferation of programmes and tools, and these resources vary in quality and cost. Teachers often lack the time and expertise to effectively evaluate them. Providing certified resources could help teachers make informed choices about which tools to use in their classrooms.

However, across the surveyed sites, on average, only about half of the teachers reported extensively using official resources (e.g. curricular guidelines, frameworks or teaching material published by ministries or local authority) to integrate social and emotional learning into their teaching, as shown in Figure 2.9 (see also Table A2.25). One-third of teachers of 15-year-olds drew heavily on unofficial resources, most of whom drew on information from the web and social media (22%) (see Table A2.24).

Figure 2.9 illustrates significant variations across sites in the resources teachers use to integrate social and emotional teaching into their lessons. The use of official resources varies dramatically: fewer than one in four teachers reported extensive use in Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland) and Turin (Italy), while in Bulgaria, Delhi (India), Peru and Ukraine, the rate was three times higher (see Table A2.25). In particular, teachers in Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland), and Turin (Italy) demonstrated low usage of both official and unofficial resources compared to other sites. Similarly, the use of unofficial resources shows marked differences: only one in five teachers or fewer used such resources extensively in Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland) and Spain, compared to more than double that rate in Delhi (India), Kudus (Indonesia), Peru and Sobral (Brazil).

## Action for impact: Boost teacher preparedness

A greater emphasis on relevant topics in teacher training is necessary to enhance teacher preparedness for social and emotional education, particularly in Chile, Spain, Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland), and Turin (Italy). Many effective programmes for fostering social and emotional learning in schools include teacher training components, which can serve as models for improving teacher preparation in this area (Oliveira et al., 2021[34]; Laura et al., 2016[35]; OECD, 2015[36]).

In Bogotá (Colombia), Helsinki (Finland), Kudus (Indonesia), and Sobral (Brazil), the focus should be on supporting secondary teachers to catch up to the level of efficacy demonstrated by primary teachers.

Additionally, providing high-quality, actionable resources, such as lesson plans, assessment tools, and explanations of social and emotional skills, can help teachers improve their instruction and lesson planning. These resources may be particularly valuable in areas where teachers feel less confident, and training is lacking. Teachers in Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland), and Turin (Italy) could particularly benefit from such resources.

Offering official, certified resources can also help prevent teachers from relying on potentially ineffective materials that may contain myths and misconceptions. For example, Chile is offering a Comprehensive Learning Diagnosis (DIA) assessment tool as an official resource for teachers and schools (see Box 2.1).

Awareness campaigns and training are needed to prevent the spread of misconceptions and the use of ineffective materials. This is especially important in Bulgaria, Delhi (India), Peru, and Ukraine, where many teachers rely heavily on unofficial resources.

## Figure 2.9. Teachers' use of resources for social and emotional teaching, by sites

Percentage of teachers of 15-year-olds who reported drawing to a large extent on official and unofficial resources in their lesson planning
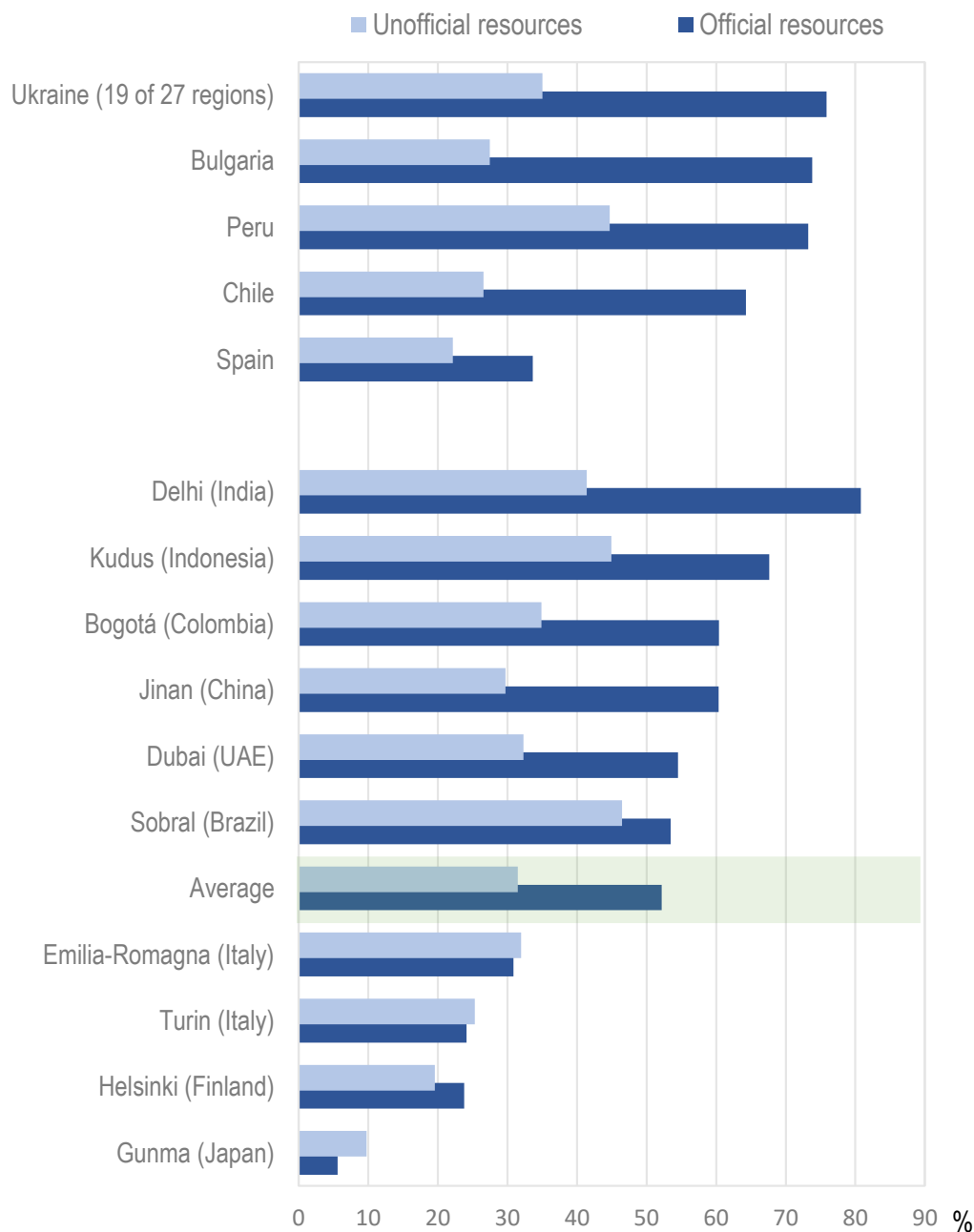


Notes: Official resources include official curricula, curricular guidelines or frameworks / original sources (e.g. constitutions and human rights declarations) / teaching material directly published by the Ministry of Education or by the local education authority. Unofficial resources include teaching/learning materials published by commercial companies / television or print media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, etc.) / web-based sources of information (e.g. wikis, newspapers on line) and social media / documents published by NGOs, international associations, public institutions, academic institutions. Sites are listed in descending order of the percentages of teachers who reported to draw to a large extent on official resources in their lesson planning.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.25.

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**Box 2.1. Chile's Comprehensive Assessment of Learning (DIA): Towards a more holistic, supportive assessment**

The DIA is a voluntary assessment tool developed by the Education Quality Agency (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación) in Chile. The approach aims to complement the national assessment system with a more holistic evaluation of student learning. It supports students' comprehensive development by providing timely information and guidance on both academic and socio-emotional learning. Key features of the DIA are explained below.

**Three evaluation periods**

- **Diagnosis at the beginning of the academic year**: Provides information on students' previous academic and socio-emotional learning to help plan the new school year.
- **Mid-year monitoring**: Tracks academic achievements and key aspects of school environments that promote a holistic development, enabling adjustments to teaching strategies.
- **End-of-year assessment**: Assesses progress to inform planning for the following year.

**Multi-method approach**

- Includes tests, questionnaires and socio-emotional activities that are administered on paper or digitally through a web platform.
- Socio-emotional learning is evaluated by teachers through activities with 1st through 3rd graders, while 4th through 12th graders fill in a questionnaire.
- Online reports are generated at the grade and school level.

**A focus on socio-emotional learning**

- Three areas of socio-emotional learning are covered: intrapersonal (self-awareness, emotional self-regulation, responsible decision-making); interpersonal (awareness of others, empathy, collaboration and communication); and collective (inclusiveness, prosocial behaviour, democratic commitment)
- Questionnaires are used to evaluate students' skills and their perceptions on school's implementation of social and emotional learning.

**Implementation support**

- An immediate release of results makes it possible to identify and address strengths and areas needing improvement at each course level in a timely manner.
- To encourage schools to use the data collected to improve cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes, administration and analysis guides, as well as strategies and actions for addressing difficulties detected, are provided and explained in workshops and webinars.

**Multi-level data use**

- Principals and teachers use the data to guide and monitor their school improvement strategy.
- Aggregated information is provided to the Ministry of Education and local education services to help understand broader trends without imposing classifications or consequences on schools.

Source: Agencia de Calidad de la Educación (2023[37]), *Marco de Evaluación de los Aprendizajes Socioemocionales*

## Creating structures that promote social and emotional learning and teaching

Most education systems today, including those that participated in the SSES 2023, aim to develop students' social and emotional skills (see Figure 1.2 in Chapter 1) (OECD, 2021[23]). However, goals are not always attained (OECD, 2020[38]). To successfully attain these goals, schools need to create structures that promote social and emotional education and ensure that their beliefs and practices align with these goals.

Results from the SSES 2023 – and partially SSES 2019 – suggest that most students attend schools that adopt a whole-school approach that embeds social and emotional education in general practices and teaching across all subjects. While this aligns with current research, these findings underline the importance of improving teacher support and preparation, as such an approach largely builds on teachers as champions of social and emotional education.

***Most schools integrate social and emotional skills into general teaching and practice, but in some education systems, over half of students learn them in separate subjects***

The SSES 2023 asked school principals how students' social and emotional skills are promoted and taught at their schools. For some of the questions, data from 2019 were also available. The responses show that sites differ in their areas of strength in creating structures that promote social and emotional skills more holistically in school (see Box 2.2).

**Box 2.2. Schools across sites vary in how holistically they integrate social and emotional education**

Figure 2.10 shows the organisation of social and emotional education in Bulgaria, Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Helsinki (Finland) – three sites that differ in their areas of strength in creating structures that promote social and emotional skills more holistically in school. The figure shows the percentages of students in schools where principals reported different ways of organising social and emotional education.

**Figure 2.10. Differences in the organisation of social and emotional education, by sites**

Percentage of 15-year-old students in schools whose principals reported that schools promoted and taught social and emotional skills in the following ways in Bulgaria, Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Helsinki (Finland)
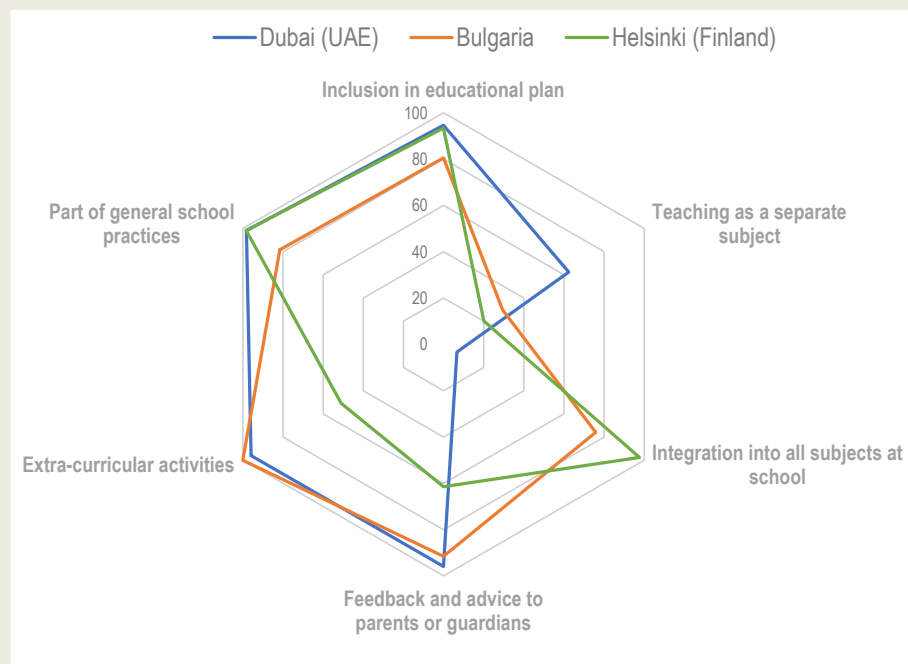


Notes: Sites were selected because they differed in how they organised social and emotional education in their schools.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A2.22 and A2.21.

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In Bulgaria, principals from virtually all schools attended by 15-year-old students reported that extra-curricular activities outside the classroom are used to promote social and emotional skills (Table A2.21). At the same time, social and emotional education is less integrated across all subjects or offered as a separate subject (only for 76% and 30% of 15-year-olds, respectively) than in other sites (Table A2.22).

Conversely, extra-curricular activities are only offered at schools attended by 51% of 15-year-olds in Helsinki (Finland), but social and emotional education is integrated into all subjects taught at school for almost all students (98%) (Tables A2.21 and A2.22). Trend data also shows that the integration into general practices and disciplinary rules has increased between 2019 and 2023 in both age groups, suggesting a shift towards an even more holistic approach to social and emotional education in Helsinki

(Finland) (Table A.2.30). At the same time, schools offered fewer extra-curricular activities to promote social and emotional skills among 10-year-old students.

In comparison, Dubai's (United Arab Emirates) social and emotional education provides separate subjects specifically focused on the promotion of social and emotional skills to the majority of its 15-year-old students (62%), while the integration into all subjects is only happening for a minority of students (7%), according to principals.

The presence of a shared mindset about teachers' responsibility for promoting social and emotional education among school staff in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) was as common as in Helsinki (Finland) (see Table A2.20), and teacher training was stronger than in most sites (see Table A2.23). This suggests a move towards a more transversal approach, which could help avoid curriculum overload and provide a more tangible approach to social and emotional education.

Figure 2.10 also shows that feedback and advice to parents on students' social and emotional development is provided at over 90% of schools 15-year-olds attend in Bulgaria and Dubai (United Arab Emirates). On the other hand, only 61% of students were in such schools in Helsinki (Finland), though school staff of all schools agreed on the role of parents in students' social and emotional learning (see Table A2.20).

On average, 86% of 15-year-old students attended schools across surveyed sites whose principals reported that developing these skills is one of the objectives included in the school educational plan (see Figure 2.11 and Table A2.21). This suggests that most schools strive to follow established national or local curricula and frameworks. In Delhi (India), Jinan (China) and Sobral (Brazil), all or almost all students attended such schools.

According to their principals, most surveyed schools integrate social and emotional education into existing general practices and teaching across subjects rather than providing specific programmes, classes or activities targeting these skills. This aligns with the whole-school approach to social and emotional education that systematically integrates social and emotional education into schools' daily life, culture and operations (Chatterjee Singh and Duraiappah, 2020[4]; Steponavičius, Gress-Wright and Linzarini, 2023[5]; Jones and Bouffard, 2012[3]). Skills are not just taught in class but are considered the result of daily interactions and experiences of students as members of the school community.

While a variety of well-evaluated social and emotional programmes exist, these have been increasingly criticised as they do not offer a sustainable and universal approach to social and emotional education (Laura et al., 2016[35]; Jones and Bouffard, 2012[3]). Often, these programmes are implemented on a relatively small scale with few students and for a limited period.

On average, around 86% of students are in schools where the general school practices aim specifically at developing social and emotional skills. The school's disciplinary rules (i.e. guidelines and regulations to promote appropriate behaviour and maintain an orderly, respectful, and safe learning environment) are used for 84% of 15-year-olds to promote these skills (see Figure 2.11 and Table A2.21)

## Figure 2.11. Organisation of social and emotional education

Percentage of 15-year-old students in schools whose principals reported that schools promoted and taught social and emotional skills in the following ways, average across sites
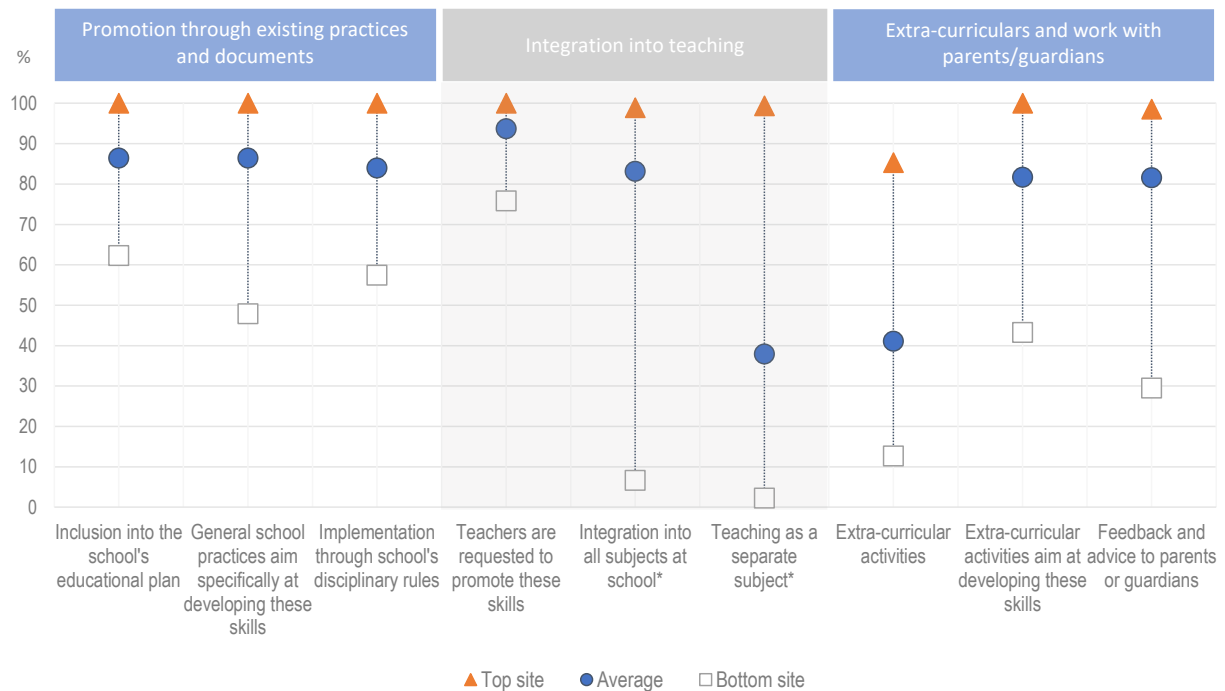


Notes: Apart from activities marked with an asterisk (*), which were only assessed at the sites surveyed in 2023, the average results cover sites that participated in the survey in both 2019 and 2023. Consequently, averages are not directly comparable.
Items are listed in descending order of the percentages of 15-year-old students attending schools whose principals reported the following items.
Source: OECD, SSES Databases (2019, 2023) Tables A2.22 and A2.21.

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In line with the whole-school approach, the teaching of social and emotional skills was mostly integrated into all subjects taught in school, on average and in most sites participating in the SSES 2023 (see Figure 2.11 and Table A2.21). This is the case for 83% of 15-year-olds on average and for over 95% of students in Helsinki (Finland), Kudus (Indonesia) and Spain (Table A2.22). Research has shown that social and emotional skills can effectively be taught in various subjects (Vincent-Lancrin et al., 2019[14]; Paniagua and Istance, 2018[22]; Durlak, Mahoney and Boyle, 2022[39]). Conversely, on average, 38% of students attended schools where social and emotional education is taught as a separate subject (see Table A2.22). In Bogotá (Colombia), Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Peru, Sobral (Brazil) and Spain, over half of all 15-year-olds are in schools that provide separate subjects on social and emotional education. Trend data for Bogotá (Colombia) also suggest a shift away from a holistic approach at secondary schools, as the integration of socio-emotional education into schools' general practices and disciplinary rules has decreased between 2019 and 2023 (see Table A2.30).

Research has shown that social and emotional skills can effectively be taught in various subjects (Vincent-Lancrin et al., 2019[14]; Paniagua and Istance, 2018[22]; Durlak, Mahoney and Boyle, 2022[39]). Transversal integration can help students experience the positive outcomes that social and emotional competences can have in different subjects and may help improve the learning climate in schools. However, this requires all teaching staff's preparedness and constant attention to students' social and emotional skills. Results

presented in the previous and following sections show that many sites need to invest in teacher training, support and shared mindset and a better alignment of school structures, practices and beliefs.

In addition to teaching across subjects, many schools use extra-curricular activities (e.g. sports clubs, drama clubs, gardening clubs) outside the classroom to promote these skills, and feedback and advice to parents or guardians about their children's social and emotional skills (for 82% of 15-year-olds, on average) (Figure 2.11 and Table A2.21). In Bulgaria, Delhi (India), Kudus (Indonesia) all or almost all students benefit from extra-curricular offers and in Jinan (China), Kudus (Indonesia) and Ukraine nearly all students were in schools that provided such feedback.

Research shows that stronger parental involvement and extra-curricular activities helps student learning in social and emotional learning (OECD, 2023[24]; Laura et al., 2016[35]; European Commission, 2018[40]). However, parental involvement has decreased in many education systems around the world from pre- to post-COVID (OECD, 2023[24]). Trend data from the SSES suggest that parental involvement has remained stable in Helsinki (Finland), but schools in Bogotá (Colombia) involved parents and guardians less in students' socio-emotional learning in 2023 than in 2019 (see Table A2.30). The fact that school staff in most sites agree about parents' responsibility in socio-emotional learning suggests a good foundation for strengthening family-school partnerships in this regard (see Between one and eight in ten students across education systems attend schools where staff lack agreement on the teachability of social and emotional skills).

## Action for impact: Develop supportive structures and align practices and beliefs

Results from SSES demonstrated that education systems have diverse strengths in creating structures that promote social and emotional learning at school, suggesting potential for peer learning among participating sites.

The findings underscore the importance of regular, comprehensive assessments that cover students' skills and key elements of effective social and emotional education, including school structures and practices, teacher training and beliefs. Such assessments help ensure the alignment of these various elements (EEF, 2021[41]; European Commission, 2021[2]). They also identify necessary changes in either structures to better promote socio-emotional learning in schools or in teacher support, training and awareness to make these structures work.

The joint analysis of different indicators here revealed that stronger investments are needed in teacher preparation and support, as well as in cultivating a shared mindset about the value of social and emotional education and teachers' role in it. This is particularly important to make the predominantly transversal teaching of socio-emotional skills work effectively in many sites (see Cultivating a shared mindset about the value and approaches to social and emotional education).

Conversely, in other sites, such as Bogotá (Colombia), Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Peru, Sobral (Brazil) and Spain social and emotional skills are taught as a separate subject for over half of all 15-year-olds. However, a shared mindset is relatively widespread and teacher preparedness is stronger in some of these sites. In these cases, a shift towards a more transversal approach seems feasible, which could help avoid curriculum overload and provide a more integrated approach to social and emotional education. Additionally, the widespread agreement among school staff in most sites about parents' responsibility in socio-emotional learning suggests a good foundation for strengthening family-school partnerships in this area.

### *Students engaging in extra-curricular activities report higher social and emotional skills*

As Figure 2.11 showed, principals reported that extra-curriculars are offered at most schools on average across sites. Data from the SSES show that students participating in extra-curricular activities have higher social and emotional skills, underscoring the importance of these offers (OECD, 2021[17]).

Figure 2.12 shows the strength of the relationship between engagement in extra-curricular activities and students' social and emotional skills on average across sites (see also Table A2.11). It also shows the range of strength of the relationship across sites. On average and in most sites, participation in extra-curricular activities was positively related to all social and emotional skills of both 15-year-old and 10-year-old students (Figure 2.12; Table A2.11). This finding is in line with research showing that extra-curricular activities are an effective means of skill promotion (Durlak, Weissberg and Pachan, 2010[42]; Marsh and Kleitman, 2002[43]).

#### Figure 2.12. Relationship between participation in extra-curricular activities and students' social and emotional skills

Standardised regression coefficients of 15-year-old students' individual skills on the index of extra-curricular activities, average across sites
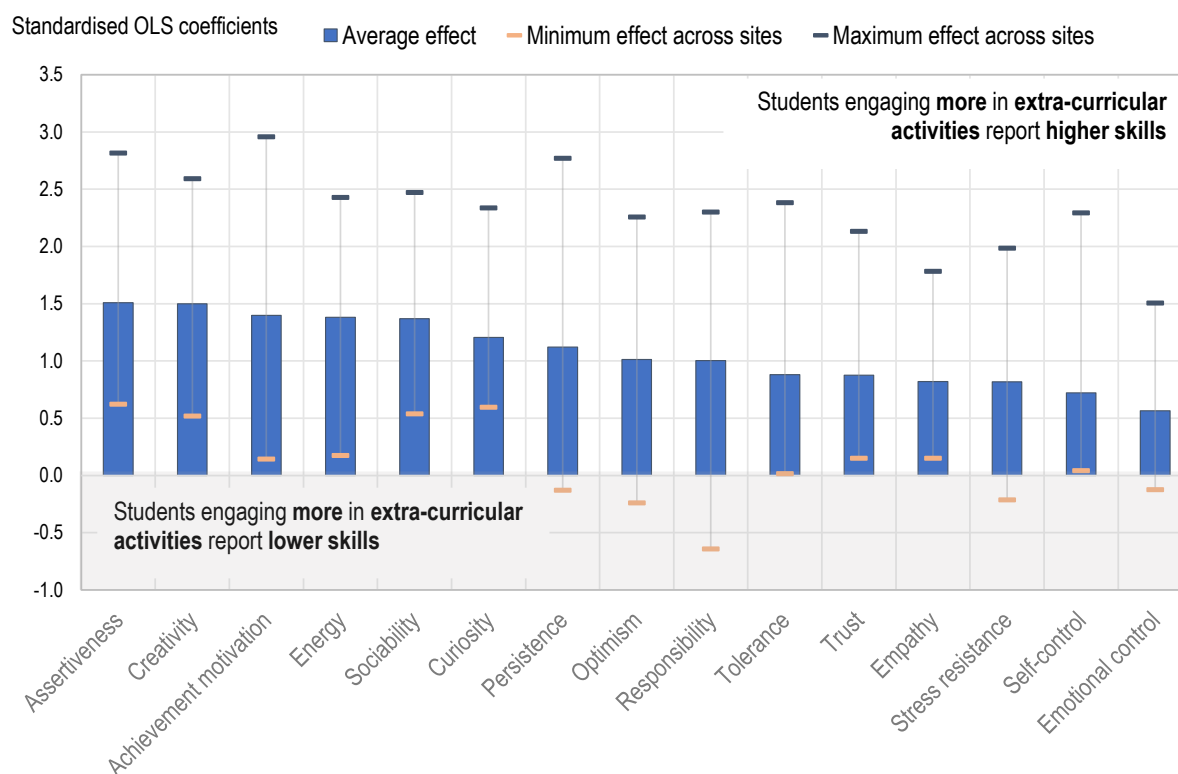


Notes: All coefficients are statistically significant with a threshold of $p < 0.05$. Models control for gender, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how the extra-curricular activities index was calculated. Social and emotional skills are listed by the size of the effect on the participation in extra-curricular activities index.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.11.

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Notably, positive relationships emerged in all sites between engagement in extra-curricular activities and 10-year-olds' and 15-year olds' skills in engaging with others (assertiveness and sociability) and open-mindedness (creativity and curiosity) (Figure 2.12; Table A2.11).

Less consistent relationships emerged in terms of emotional control, which was only related in 8 of the 15 sites for 15-year-olds and some sites for 10-year-olds (Table A2.11). Most extra-curricular activities may not adequately challenge or develop students' emotional control skills.

### *Most 15-year-olds regularly participate in arts activities, while fewer engage in environmental protection, sports or volunteering*

Considering their link to social and emotional skills, it is unfortunate that relatively few students reported engaging regularly in extra-curricular activities inside or outside of school. When students were asked how often they participate in several extra-curricular activities (no participation at all or from once a month to more than once a week), one-third or fewer of 15-year-olds reported participating in various extracurricular activities at least once a month, on average across sites (see Figure 2.13 and Table A2.9). The only exception was arts activities, in which 53% of students reported to engage regularly.

### Figure 2.13. Student participation in extra-curricular activities

Percentage of 15-year-old students participating at least once a month in these types of activities/clubs, average across sites
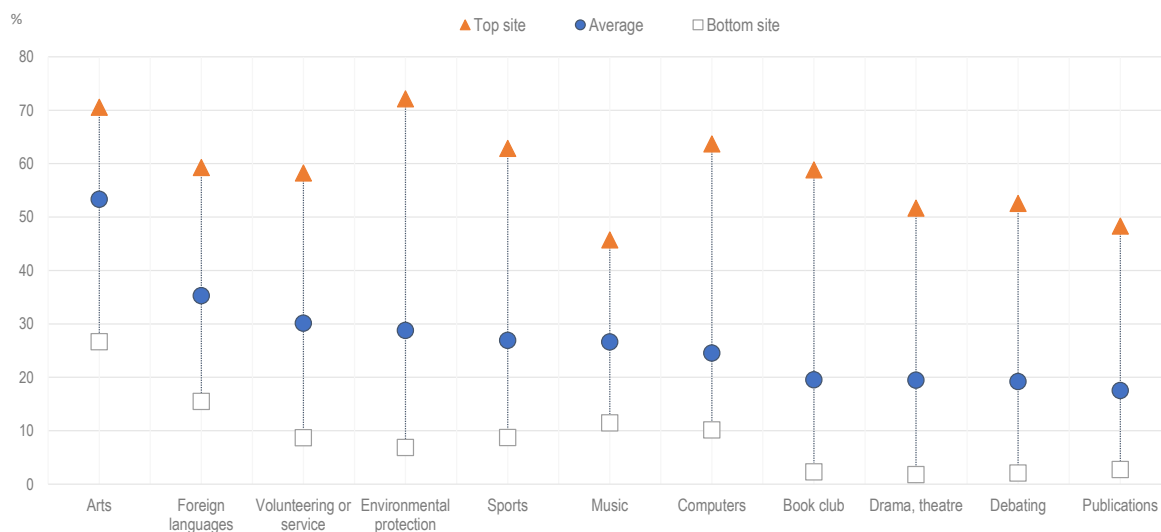


Notes: Activities are listed in descending order of the percentages of students in schools that offer the activity.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.9.

*StatLink* 🖾🖵 https://stat.link/wxetgp

The data show that only 27% of 15-year-old students, on average, across sites, reported participating at least once a month in sports teams or sporting activities (see Table A2.9). Interestingly, the share is twice as high in Delhi (India). Boosting students' engagement in sports appears crucial because one-third of 15-year-olds do not regularly exercise (OECD, 2024[16]).

Considering that environmental threats and declining civic engagement across countries are some of the biggest challenges of our times (OECD, 2022[44]), increasing participation in related extra-curricular activities seems particularly worth investing in: 29% and 30% of 15-year-old students are engaged in environmental protection activities and volunteering or service activities (Figure 2.13 and Table A2.9). In Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru, almost half of all 15-year-old students and in Delhi (India), 72% of 15-year-olds engaged regularly in environmental protection activities. In Delhi, as well as in India, more generally, eco clubs are used to foster a deep-seated environmental consciousness and drive action at the grassroots level to support national efforts towards sustainability (see Box 2.3).

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### Box 2.3. Eco clubs in India: A national effort towards sustainability

Eco clubs are integral to environmental education initiatives in India, primarily driven by the National Green Corps (NGC) and similar programmes. Their primary goal is to educate students about environmental issues and promote sustainability. Through these clubs, students engage in hands-on activities, such as tree planting, waste management, recycling, water conservation and energy-saving practices, which help raise awareness and develop essential skills like observation, analysis and problem solving related to environmental challenges. The primary objective is to instil a sense of responsibility towards the environment and encourage students to adopt eco-friendly habits.

Each eco club comprises 50-60 students and is supervised by one or two teachers in charge. A key feature of these clubs is the involvement of students as leader volunteers, often on a rotational basis. This setup seeks to empower students to take on leadership roles in environmental stewardship, allowing them to develop skills in project management, teamwork, and community engagement.

Eco clubs conduct a variety of activities, including environmental audits, tree planting and waste management, and they often participate in broader campaigns and community outreach efforts. These clubs organise events like poster-making competitions, debates, and awareness campaigns to educate the school and local community about environmental issues such as pollution, climate change, and biodiversity conservation. Both government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide training, resources and financial assistance to support these activities. With a network of over 100 000 eco clubs across the country, the initiative reaches millions of students annually. Around 2 000 eco clubs have been established in various schools and colleges in Delhi alone.

Source: Sarabhai, Kartikeya V. and Sweta R. Purohit, Sweta R (2023[45]), *Seeds of Change: State of the Education Report for India 2023; Education to Address Climate Change*, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387156; Department of Environment Government of NCT of Delhi, (2024[46]), "Eco Clubs in Schools and Colleges", https://environment.delhi.gov.in/environment/eco-clubs-schools-and-colleges.

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### *Older students, disadvantaged students, and girls engage less in extra-curricular activities*

Advantaged students were more engaged in extra-curricular activities than disadvantaged students for both age groups on average and in most sites. Only in Peru were disadvantaged 15-year-old students more engaged, which is also the site with the smallest socio-economic gap in terms of students' social and emotional skills (OECD, 2024[16]). Equally important, 15-year-old girls were less engaged in extra-curricular activities than boys, on average and in six sites, though participation patterns by gender may vary for the different types of activities (see Table A2.10). Only girls in Ukraine participated, on average, more than boys in extra-curricular activities.

SSES 2023 data show that socio-economically disadvantaged students report lower levels of all skills than advantaged students, and girls report lower emotional regulation skills, energy, trust and sociability than

boys (OECD, 2024[16]). For most sites and skills, there were no gender or socio-economic differences in the strength of relationships between engagement in extra-curricular activities and social and emotional skills (Tables A2.12 and A2.13). This shows that extra-curricular engagement is important for all students' socio-emotional growth – both girls and boys, advantaged and disadvantaged, alike. Disadvantaged students' and girls' lower participation in extra-curricular activities could partially explain some of these differences. Therefore, facilitating disadvantaged students' and girls' access to such activities and encouraging them to participate could be a key lever for increasing equality in skill acquisition.

Further results from the SSES 2019 and 2023 suggest that facilitating access to extra-curricular activities and encouragement to participate or continue participation in extra-curricular activities could also help reduce the dip in skills observed between the ages of 10 and 15 (OECD, 2024[16]). Students 15 years of age were less engaged in extra-curricular activities in all six sites with available data than 10-year-olds (Table A2.9). Differences emerged for all studied activities, with differences ranging from 1 to 25 percentage points.

Figure 2.14 shows the percentage of students participating in sports and environmental protection activities by age group (see also Table A2.9).

## Figure 2.14. Engagement in sports and environmental protection activities by age and sites

Percentage of 10- and 15-year-old students engaging in sports and environmental protection activities
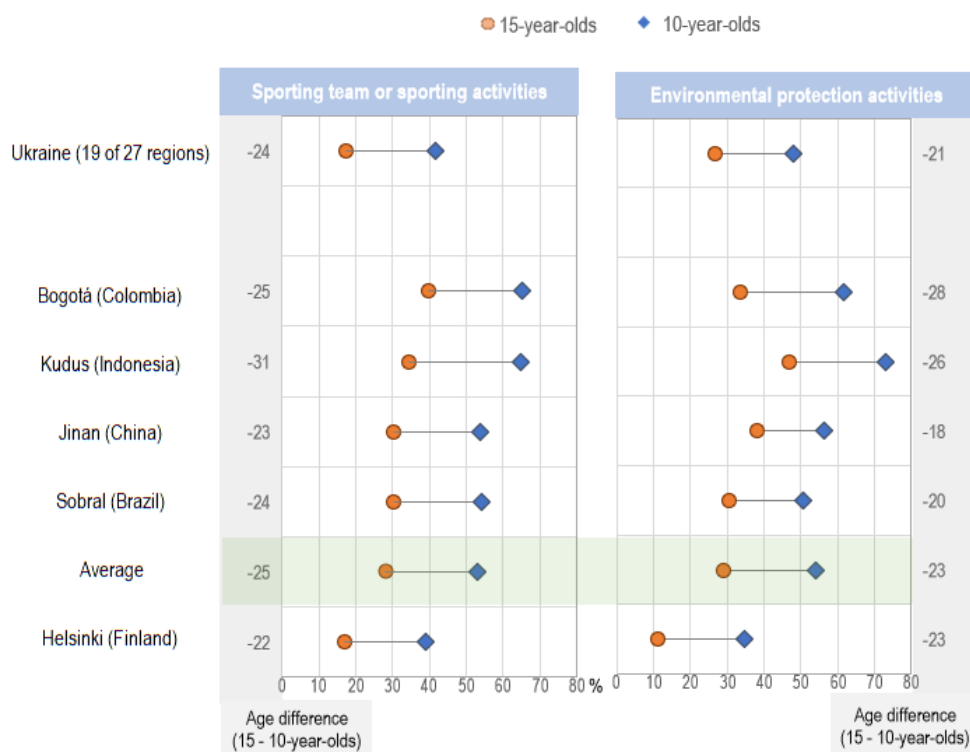


Notes: Only statistically significant differences with a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are noted by site names.
Sites are listed in descending order of 15-year-old students' engagement in sports activities.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.9.

*StatLink* 📊 https://stat.link/pj41k8

For these two activities, differences were particularly stark: 53% of 10-year-olds versus only 28% of 15-year-olds with available data participated in sports, and 54% of 10-year-olds versus 31% of 15-year-olds participated in environmental protection activities (Figure 2.14, Table A2.9). As discussed earlier, widespread participation in these activities beyond primary education seems particularly important. Overall, the differences in the two age cohorts' participation in the different activities were larger in Bogotá (Colombia) and Kudus (Indonesia) and smaller – though still significant – in Jinan (China) and Sobral (Brazil) for many activities.

## Action for impact: Support students' extra-curricular engagement

Education systems need to ensure that students can access a broad range of extra-curricular activities to boost their socio-emotional learning. Students also need to be encouraged to keep engaging in such activities as they grow older. Efforts to facilitate access and continuous engagement should particularly target girls and disadvantaged students.

The way extra-curricular activities are organised may differ across sites. Such activities may be organised inside or outside of schools, and their organisation may vary across sites. Such activities may also be more or less structured; for example, students may take part in classes or clubs that are supervised and guided, or students may engage in these activities independently without supervision (Feldman and Matjasko, 2005[47]).

Where parental associations, community youth, religious or other organisations offer a variety of extra-curricular activities, especially if at low costs and in disadvantaged communities, students – including those at a disadvantage – may benefit from this extra boost of social and emotional skills outside schools and homes.

Elsewhere, schools may step in to provide this extra boost outside of classes. Integrating extra-curricular activities in school structures seems like a convenient way of engaging students in such activities (OECD, 2020[33]). Offering extra-curricular activities in schools for free, which is, for example, the case for most of those school-based activities in Sobral's (Brazil) public schools, may grant access to students who may otherwise not be able to afford such activities. It may also help to encourage less motivated students to engage in extra-curricular activities or to keep engaging. Additionally, schools can provide guidance during such activities, which allows students to get the most out of their engagement.

## Cultivating a shared mindset about the value and approaches to social and emotional education

In most education systems, schools implement a whole-school approach where teachers across subjects are perceived as the primary drivers of social and emotional education (Figure 2.11, see also Table A2.21). Making this approach work requires joint efforts and a shared mindset among school staff regarding the value and approach to social and emotional education.

Results presented in this section suggest that efforts to cultivate a joint mindset need to intensify across sites to ensure that all school staff acknowledge the teachability and wide-ranging impact of socio-emotional skills and the role of teachers in their promotion.

### *A minority of students attend schools where staff agree on the impact of social and emotional skills on employability and educational equity*

The SSES 2019 and SSES 2023, as well as further research, show that social and emotional skills relate to a range of important key life outcomes, including academic achievement, lower bullying, and higher career aspirations and prospects. They may also help increase equity in education (OECD, 2024[16]; 2021[17]); see also (Steponavičius, Gress-Wright and Linzarini, 2023[5]; OECD, 2023[24]). The emphasis that an education system puts on social and emotional education in practice will depend, among other things, on the extent to which teachers and principals are aware of the impact of developing social and emotional skills (Schonert-Reichl, 2017[30]; Laura et al., 2016[35]; Jones and Bouffard, 2012[3]) on students' lives.

In the SSES 2023, principals and teachers were asked how much they agree that social and emotional skills impact different outcomes (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The share of students in schools where the principal and all teachers (strongly) agreed that students' social and emotional skills impact key outcomes varies substantially depending on the outcome considered (see Table A2.16).

Figure 2.15 displays the percentage of 15-year-old students in schools where *all teachers and the principal* agreed (i.e. schools with a shared mindset) that social and emotional skills impact increasing youth employment, economic success and social equality for each site (see also Table A2.16). Only 19% of 15-year-olds attended schools with a shared mindset on the impact of social and emotional skills on social equality.

The figure also shows that only 21% of 15-year-olds attended schools with a shared mindset on the impact of social and emotional skills on youth employment and economic success. Overall, results show that most 15-year-old students were not attending schools where all teachers and principals were aware of the wide-ranging impact of social and emotional skills (Table A2.16).

Schools in all sites would benefit from raising awareness about the evidence on the impact of social and emotional skills, but schools in some sites would benefit more than others (see Table A2.16). For example, in Emilia-Romagna and Turin (Italy), Gunma (Japan), Sobral (Brazil) and Ukraine, 5% of 15-year-olds or less were in schools with a shared mindset about the importance of these skills for social equality. However, even in Peru, where the share is the highest, less than half of all students are in schools where all staff agreed on the importance of these skills for increased social equality.

Awareness campaigns are particularly relevant in lower secondary because the shared awareness of school staff about social and emotional skills' impact was lower in secondary as compared to primary education for a range of outcomes, including active citizenship, well-being, capacity to cope with challenges, academic outcomes and social equality (see Table A2.16).

**Figure 2.15. Shared mindset on the impact of social and emotional skills on increasing youth employment, economic success and social equality, by sites**

Percentage of 15-year-old students in schools where all teachers and the principal (strongly) agree that social and emotional skills have an impact on increasing youth employment, economic success and social equality
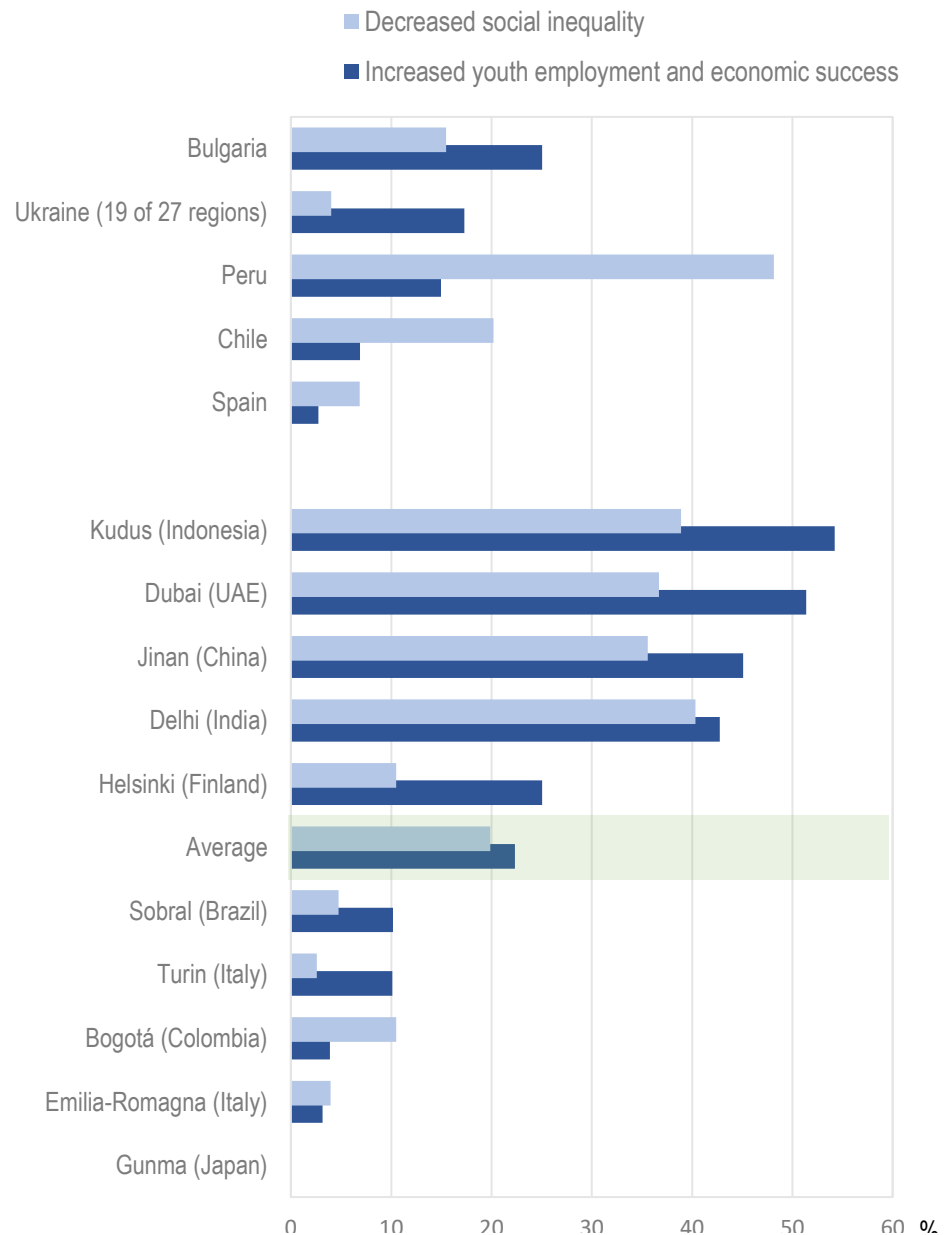


Notes: See Annex A for information about how the indices on a shared mindset was calculated.
Sites are listed in descending order of the percentages of students in schools where all teachers and principals agreed or strongly agreed that social and emotional skills impact youth employment and economic success.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.16.

*StatLink* 🖳📉 https://stat.link/yui960

***Between one and eight in ten students across education systems attend schools where staff lack agreement on the teachability of social and emotional skills***

The SSES 2023 examined teachers' and principals' opinions about who should be responsible for developing students' social and emotional skills. Overall, the results indicate that the majority of school principals and teachers believe that the development of social and emotional skills of students is a joint responsibility of different players, which requires the involvement of teachers, parents and guardians, students themselves, and civil society (see Tables A2.18 and A2.19) (Schonert-Reichl, 2017[30]; OECD, 2021[17]; OECD, 2015[36]).

Nonetheless, results also show that these beliefs are often not shared among all school staff. Figure 2.16 shows the average percentage of 15-year-old students across sites in schools where *all teachers and the principal* agree (i.e. schools with a shared mindset) that the listed actors should be responsible for developing social and emotional skills (see also Table A2.20). The figure also shows how this percentage varies across sites.

### Figure 2.16. Shared mindset on responsibilities and teachability

Percentage of 15-year-old students in school where all teachers and the principal agree that the following actors should be responsible for developing social and emotional skills and that these skills can be taught, average across sites
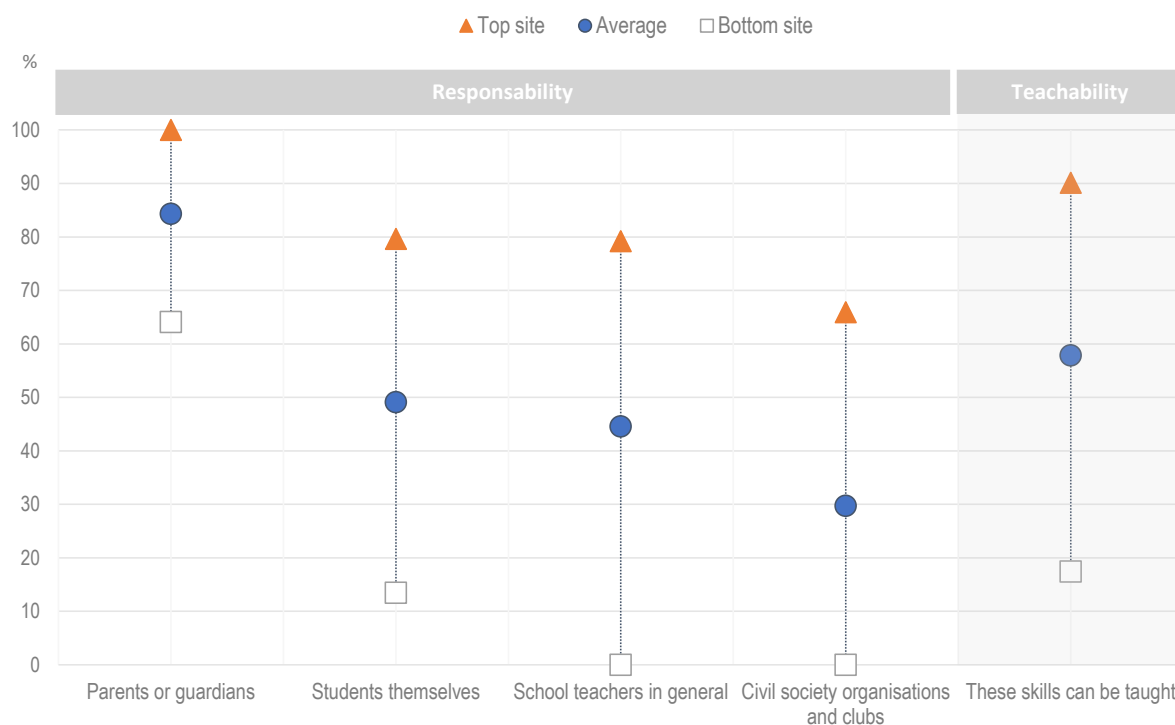


Notes: When interpreting results about the shared mindset in schools, it is important to consider the variation across sites in terms of the number of schools and teachers represented from each site (see Table A2.29 fixed number to change). See Annex A for information about how the indices on a shared mindset was calculated.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A2.20.

*StatLink* 🔗 https://stat.link/1uglth

Only two out of five students were enrolled in schools where all teachers and the principals shared the belief that teachers, in general, should be responsible for students' social and emotional development (42% of students). In contrast, over four out of five 15-year-olds attended schools with a shared mindset about the responsibility of parents and guardians (84% of 15-year-olds).

A shared mindset of teachers' responsibility in students' social and emotional development was more prominent in primary education; a difference as large as 19 percentage points to secondary education emerged. These findings point to misalignments between the structures that schools use to promote social and emotional learning and staff's beliefs (further discussed below).

Further results show that disagreement about teachers' responsibility for social and emotional learning is more common among teachers than principals, particularly lower secondary teachers (see Tables A2.18 and A2.19). Participating sites must ramp up efforts to raise awareness among teachers about their critical role in students' social and emotional learning. Particularly in Sobral (Brazil), Gunma (Japan) and Ukraine, where over 20% of teachers did not think teachers should be responsible for this task, despite a strong cross-subject integration in some of these sites (see Tables A2.19 and A2.22).

A finding of particular concern is that 42% of 15-year-old student attended a school without a shared mindset among school staff that social and emotional skills can be taught (i.e. where principals and all teachers disagreed that these skills cannot be taught; see Figure 2.16 and Table A2.20).

While agreement of staff about teachability was quite common in schools in Chile, Emilia-Romagna and Turin (Italy), Helsinki (Finland) and Spain, with close to or over 80% of students attending such schools, it was far less common in other sites, with less than 40% of students attending such schools in Delhi (India), Kudus (Indonesia) and Sobral (Brazil) (Table A2.20).

Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia) were the two sites where more teachers and principals expressed scepticism about the teachability of these skills. Over 15% of teachers agreed that no one should be responsible, as these skills cannot be taught, and over 12% of students attended schools whose principals did not believe in the teachability of social and emotional skills (Tables A2.18 and A2.19). Interestingly, Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia) were also the two sites where the highest share of teachers reported having received training in social and emotional teaching (see Table A2.23). A deeper understanding of the provided training's content and implementation is needed.

SSES 2023 data show that less than half of all 15-year-old students were in schools where all teachers and the principal share a mindset about the responsibility of students themselves, and one-quarter of students were in schools where staff share the belief that civil society organisations and clubs have a responsibility in the social and emotional development of students (Figure 2.16, Table A2.20).

A shared agreement among school staff about the responsibility of the broader community in students' social and emotional development would be a promising starting point for fruitful partnerships. Research shows that students acquire social and emotional skills also outside their schools and homes and that students who engage in volunteering and sports, activities, organisations and youth clubs have higher social and emotional skills (Durlak, Mahoney and Boyle, 2022[39]; Marsh and Kleitman, 2002[43]; OECD, 2021[17]).

### *Chile, Delhi (India), Kudus (Indonesia), and Peru demonstrated a stronger alignment between their approach to social and emotional education and the staff's mindset*

A transversal approach to social and emotional education, where teaching is integrated across subjects, requires that school staff share a belief in the benefits of investing in social and emotional learning. A shared belief in its impact on academic outcomes can be particularly motivating for teachers to incorporate it into their subject teaching.

However, Figure 2.17 shows the percentage of students in schools where social and emotional education is integrated into subject teaching, alongside the percentage of students in schools where all teachers and the principal agree that social and emotional learning positively impacts academic outcomes. The figure reveals that the integration of social and emotional teaching across subjects is common for the majority of 15-year-olds in all education systems except Dubai (United Arab Emirates), ranging from 72% in Gunma (Japan) to 99% in Kudus (Indonesia) (see Most schools integrate social and emotional skills into general teaching and practice, but in some education systems, over half of students learn them in separate subjects).

**Figure 2.17. Integration of social and emotional learning across subjects and shared mindset of the impact of social and emotional skills on academic outcomes**

Percentage of 15-year-old students in school whose principals reported that social and emotional skills are integrated across all subjects and those attending schools where all teachers and principal agreed that these skills improve academic outcomes, across sites
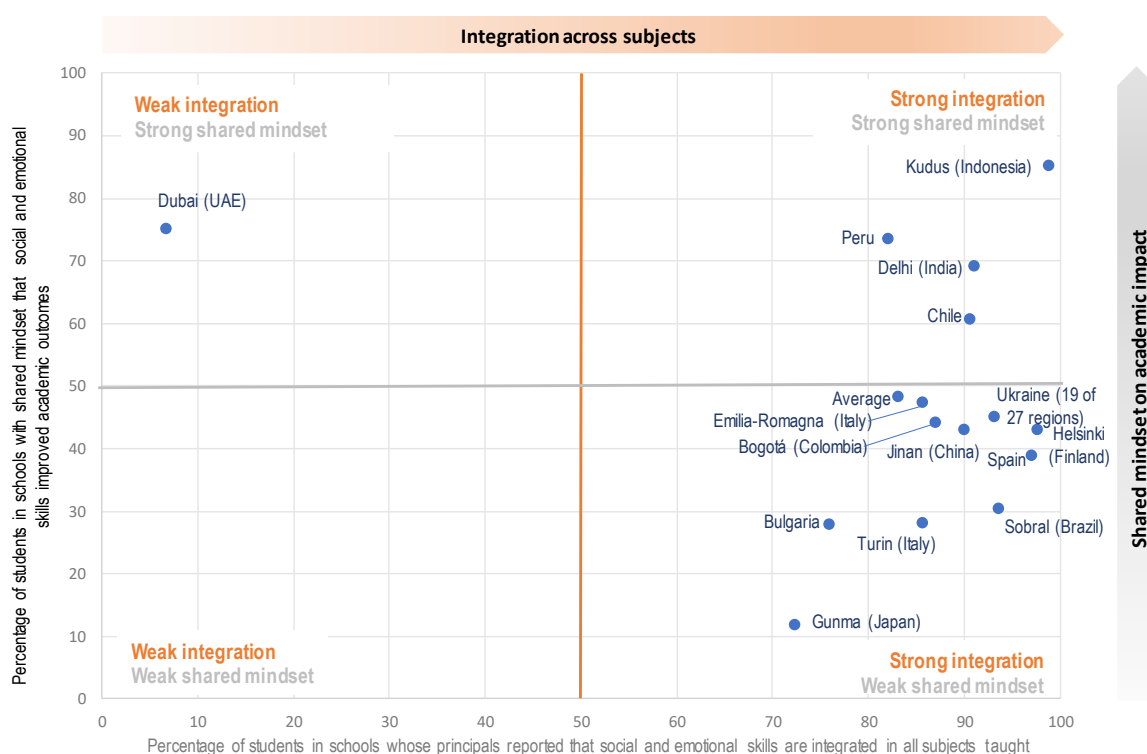


Notes: See Annex A for information about how the indices on a shared mindset were calculated. When interpreting results about the shared mindset in schools, it is important to consider the variation across sites in terms of the number of schools and teachers represented from each site (see Table A2.29).
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A2.22 and A2.16.

*StatLink* 🔗 https://stat.link/8l6gxz

Nevertheless, only in Chile, Delhi (India), Kudus (Indonesia), and Peru was there alignment between the approach to social and emotional education and the staff's mindset, as most students attended schools where all staff agreed that social and emotional skills impact academic learning. The smallest gap between students in schools with a transversal approach and those where staff shared this belief was in Peru, with

a difference of just 9 percentage points. In contrast, Dubai (United Arab Emirates) was the only system where a shared belief in the academic benefits of social and emotional skills was more widespread (75% of students) than the transversal approach to teaching these skills (7% of students) (see Box 2.2).

While most systems need to promote research on the academic benefits of social and emotional education within subject teaching, the results indicate significant potential for Dubai to move towards a more transversal approach, where these skills are currently taught mainly as a separate subject. Further findings show that teachers in schools where principals reported using a transversal approach were not more likely to believe in the positive impact of social and emotional skills in any of the education systems (see Table A2.17). Therefore, systems and schools must invest in updating teachers' knowledge with recent research evidence.

### *Education systems need to address different beliefs when working with schools*

Figure 2.18 highlights that education systems need to focus on different beliefs when working with schools. It shows the percentage of 15-year-old students in schools with a shared mindset about teachers' responsibility for social and emotional education and the percentage in schools with a shared belief in the academic benefits of social and emotional skills.

The figure indicates that systems with a shared belief in the academic benefits of social and emotional education tend to have a stronger consensus on the role of teachers in fostering these skills. However, convincing staff of the academic impact alone is not sufficient. In only eight systems was there a positive correlation between teachers' belief in the impact of social and emotional skills and their belief that teachers should be responsible for developing these skills (see Table A2.17). No such relationship was found in Chile, Bogotá (Colombia), Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Helsinki (Finland), Jinan (China), Kudus (Indonesia) or Peru.

Figure 2.18 shows that Peru and Chile need to focus particularly on cultivating a shared sense of responsibility for social and emotional education among school staff. While the belief in academic benefits is relatively widespread, many students attend schools where not all staff feel teachers should be responsible for teaching these skills. Therefore, additional support is needed to encourage teachers to take up this responsibility.

The results also highlight potential in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) to adopt a more transversal approach. Similar to Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia), where most schools follow such an approach, the majority of school staff in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) not only believe in the academic benefits of social and emotional education but also feel that teachers should be responsible for developing these skills.

Furthermore, the figure shows that Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Helsinki (Finland), Jinan (China), and Turin (Italy) need to focus on updating knowledge about the positive benefits of social and emotional learning. Meanwhile, schools, decision-makers, and policymakers in Bogotá (Colombia), Bulgaria, Gunma (Japan), Sobral (Brazil), Spain, and Ukraine must address both the belief in the positive impact of promoting social and emotional skills and the fundamental role that teachers play in fostering these skills.

## Figure 2.18. Shared mindset of teacher responsibility and academic impact

Percentage of 15-year-old students in schools where staff agreed that teachers should be responsible for developing social and emotional skills and those attending schools whose staff agreed that these skills improve academic outcomes, across sites
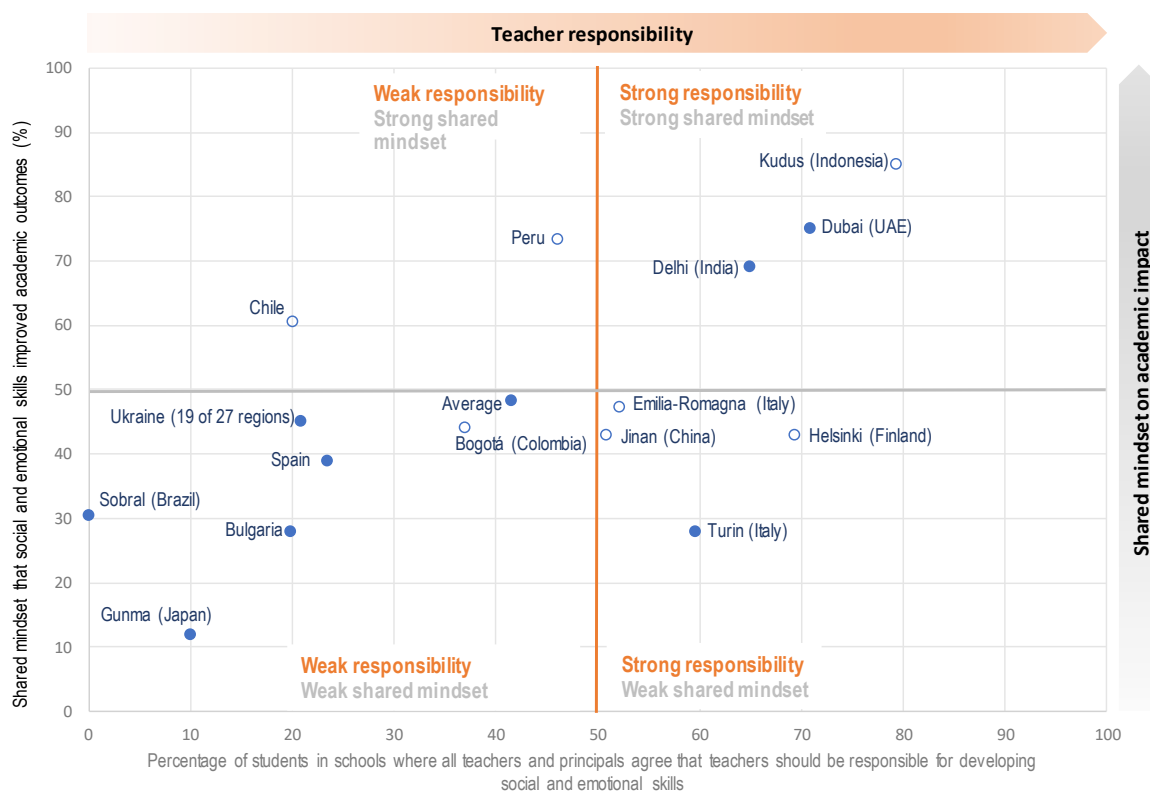


Notes: Sites with a significant relationship at a threshold of $p < 0.05$ between teacher responsibility of developing social and emotional skills and shared mindset of the impact of social and emotional skills on academic outcomes are coloured, sites with non-significant relationship are outlined. See Annex A for information about how the indices on a shared mindset were calculated. When interpreting results about the shared mindset in schools, it is important to consider the variation across sites in terms of the number of schools and teachers represented from each site (see Table A2.29).
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A2.20 and A2.16.

*StatLink* 🔗 https://stat.link/q0c214

Overall, increasing awareness of teachers' responsibility still seems to be a task for most sites. In addition, an increase in teacher support is needed. Data from the SSES 2023 suggest that a substantial share of teachers lack preparedness for the challenging task of integrating social and emotional teaching in their work (see Preparing teachers to be champions of social and emotional teaching). Insufficient preparedness can explain why some teachers reject responsibility for students' social and emotional growth. Indonesia's wide-ranging Emancipated Learning reform described in Box 2.4 is a promising example that combines a greater emphasis on social and emotional education with strengthened support and empowerment of teachers.

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**Box 2.4. Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar (Emancipated Learning) reform**

The Merdeka Belajar (Emancipated Learning) reform, rolled out progressively since 2020, aims to enhance educational outcomes by shifting focus to foundational learning and cultivating a joyful, empowering school environment. The reform ranges from early childhood to tertiary education, covering both secular and religious schools. It grants more autonomy and flexibility to schools and teachers and seeks to empower students with agency, as well as engage the entire school community, in line with the country's traditional social concept of mutual collective responsibility (*gotong royong*). Focusing on social-emotional education and character building are central elements, aiming at well-rounded, happy individuals equipped for the future. The reform is built on two main sets of policies: an overhaul of the curriculum and assessment and enhancing instructional capacity.

*The new Kurikulum Merdeka (Emancipation Curriculum)*

- The overall curriculum content is reduced by focusing **on foundational skills,** such as literacy and numeracy, to allow for deeper learning.
- **Project-based learning (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila) was introduced** to engage students in collaborative projects that address real-world problems, fostering critical thinking, creativity and responsibility.
- The curriculum allows schools and teachers more flexibility and autonomy to adapt the curriculum to their context, promoting a more student-centred approach.

*More holistic and formative assessments*

- **A** Minimum Competency Assessment **(AKM)** evaluates numeracy and literacy and incorporates questions requiring higher-order thinking.
- **A character survey gauges students' social and emotional learning** and adherence to the Pancasila philosophy, Indonesia's official state ideology.
- **A learning environment survey assesses factors contributing to the quality of learning in schools.**
- **Digital tools** facilitate the use of assessment data**, such as the Education Scorecard (Rapor Pendidikan), which is a platform that enables the dissemination of results at different levels of aggregation.**

*Enhancing instructional capacity*

- Schools are encouraged to form **professional learning communities** where teachers can share practices, reflect and learn from each other.
- The **Master Teacher Programme (**Pendidikan Guru Penggerak) aims to develop teacher leaders who can guide their peers in adopting new teaching methods that emphasise student agency, well-being and moral growth.
- The Emancipated Teaching Platform (Merdeka Mengajar) provides resources, lesson plans and spaces for teachers to collaborate and share knowledge.

Note: There are two types of schools in Indonesia. Secular schools under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (MoECRT) enrol about 85% of primary and secondary students. Religious schools (*madrasah*) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) enrol the remaining 15% of students.

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## Action for impact: Cultivate a shared mindset among school staff

Overall, most sites should work on cultivating a shared mindset among school staff to ensure that social and emotional teaching is implemented across subjects and practices in schools. For others (e.g. Dubai [United Arab Emirates]), adjusting schools' structures to promote social and emotional skills may be worthwhile considering. Results show that many education systems must ramp up efforts to raise awareness among teachers, especially lower secondary education, about their critical role in students' social and emotional learning. Awareness campaigns, along with more support (e.g. training, tools and resources), and establishing social and emotional education as a key topic in regular exchanges among school staff could help all teachers feel ownership of social and emotional education.

Initiatives aimed at increasing awareness about the teachability of social and emotional skills need to target both principals and teachers, particularly in some sites. Investing in cultivating a shared agreement among school staff about the responsibility of the broader community in students' social and emotional development could be a promising starting point for fruitful partnerships with the world outside school. While some sites more than others must raise awareness of the teachability and responsibility of different actors in students' socio-emotional development, campaigns, professional exchanges and trainings are needed in all sites, particularly in lower secondary education, to elevate school staff' awareness of the wide-ranging impact of social and emotional skills.

## Key actions for impacts on social and emotional education in schools

Following the discussion in Chapter 1 on the importance of social and emotional education, the skills targeted by each education system, **Chapter 2** has identified key areas for improving social and emotional education in school for each system. These include improving the promotion of social and emotional learning in both traditional and virtual classrooms, and better preparing and supporting teachers for this task. The SSES results discussed in the chapter also show that many systems need to invest in creating structures to support social and emotional education, encouraging extra-curricular activities, and cultivating a shared mindset on the value of these skills. The next chapter will expand on how the wider school environment provides support, ensures safety, and contributes to students' social and emotional development.

# Annex 2.A. Chapter 2 Tables

Online tables for each chapter can be accessed via the StatLink.

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| Table A2.3 | Relationship between teacher feedback and social and emotional skills |
| Table A2.4 | Relationship between teacher feedback and social and emotional skills - The teacher gives me feedback on my strengths |
| Table A2.5 | Relationship between teacher feedback and social and emotional skills - The teacher tells me in which areas I can still improve |
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| Table A2.21 | Promotion of social and emotional learning - Principal questionnaire |
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| Table A2.30 | Differences in school's offer of extra-curricular activities, promotion of social and emotional learning and teacher self-efficacy between 2019 and 2023 |

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# 3 School environments that nurture socio-emotional growth

This chapter examines how safe, positive school environments and supportive relationships promote the full range of social and emotional skills, albeit with different aspects supporting different skills. The chapter starts with students' sense of belonging and emotions at school, followed by teacher-student and peer-to-peer relationships, including how teachers' coping strategies relate to students' social and emotional learning. The chapter then addresses bullying, revealing unique data on perpetration versus victimisation. It explores how bullying manifests differently across participating countries and subnational entities and key strategies to tackle this.

# In Brief

## Policy insights

Results from the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2019 and 2023 suggest the following recommendations for policy makers and practitioners to leverage school climate as a source of healthy social and emotional development and skills:

- **Build schools into hubs of community:** Students aged 15 with a greater sense of belonging at school reported higher social and emotional skills, particularly sociability, emotional regulation skills and trust. Similarly, both 10 and 15-year-old students who experienced more positive and fewer negative emotions at school demonstrated higher skills, especially optimism and emotional control. To improve students' social and emotional skills, schools should focus on nurturing a sense of community. Evidence-based, contextualised, whole-school approaches to improving school environments can help foster a wider sense of belonging and strengthen students' skills.

- **Address site-specific sources of negative emotions:** Students report different mixes of emotions in each site, especially variations in confidence, motivation, anxiety and anger. Policymakers and educators must examine the particular experiences that students report in their site, to develop strengths and address sources of excessive negative emotions. Holistic approaches to teaching and school environments alongside explicit social and emotional learning can boost students' skills, development and perceptions of school.

- **Improve school experiences for vulnerable groups:** Low academic performers in most sites report less sense of belonging at school, fewer positive and more negative emotions, especially anger, compared to their advantaged peers. Fifteen-year-old girls compared to boys show the same pattern, but with especially low confidence. Socio-economically disadvantaged students report less belonging. Yet results vary considerably by site and suggest that these inequalities are not inevitable outcomes. To address such disparities, schools must include targeted efforts to promote positive experiences and belonging for struggling groups, especially low performers and girls.

- **Promote relationships to promote skills:** Students aged 10 and 15 who report better relationships with their teachers demonstrate higher skills, especially higher task performance and open-mindedness skills. In contrast, stronger peer-to-peer relationships correlate in particular with better social skills and better trust across both age groups. However, 15-year-olds perceive less personal concern from their classmates and teachers compared to 10-year-olds. To address this, schools should create opportunities for students to form meaningful relationships with teachers and classmates, fostering complementary skill sets. Special attention should be given to promoting relationships in secondary schools.

- **Enhance teachers' coping strategies to support well-being and model healthy emotional regulation:** The use of effective strategies for managing work stress varies significantly among teachers across different sites, ranging from 68% in some sites to as low as 15% in others. Proven effective approaches, such as approaching problems optimistically and practising good health habits, can enhance teachers' own capacities and skills, particularly in emotional regulation. Notably, teachers in Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru reported the highest use of these proven skills and reported better well-being. To improve teachers' social and emotional skills, schools should focus on reducing teachers' work-related stress and promoting the use of

effective coping strategies. By doing so, teachers can improve their well-being and become better role models for positive emotional regulation in the classroom, creating a more supportive learning environment for students.

- **Prioritise creating safe and secure school environments for student success:** Bullying remains a significant concern across all sites, with some areas facing particularly high levels. Bulgaria, Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia) report the highest incidence of bullying. Notably, in these sites, school leaders report very low levels of bullying, suggesting a concerning normalisation of such behaviours. To address this issue, sites with significant bullying problems should urgently implement comprehensive anti-bullying strategies. These approaches should target all relevant stakeholders, including school staff, students and parents, and draw on evidence-based effective practices. However, creating and maintaining safe school environments is crucial for all education systems, not just those with high bullying rates. Such environments support students' academic and socio-emotional development, as well as their overall health and well-being.

- **Tailor anti-bullying interventions to local contexts**: The nature and prevalence of bullying vary significantly across different sites, necessitating context-specific approaches. In certain sites, a large proportion of students are involved in bullying, with Delhi (India) having the highest involvement. The roles of perpetrator and victim often overlap: in Delhi (India) and Bulgaria, most bullying perpetrators also report being victims, while in Chile and Peru, only a minority of students report this dual role. The type of bullying also differs across sites: in Gunma (Japan) and Peru, social or verbal bullying is much more common, with physical bullying being rare. Contrastingly, in Bulgaria, physical bullying is almost as common as social or verbal bullying. These variations can significantly impact intervention effectiveness. Therefore, anti-bullying strategies should be carefully tailored to local contexts. For instance, in sites where most students involved in bullying are both victims and perpetrators, approaches targeting specific roles may be less effective. In areas with very high bullying rates, whole-school interventions addressing broader school climate issues are likely to be more beneficial than resource-intensive individual interventions.

## Creating school environments that nurture social and emotional skills

Children learn, socialise and navigate their emotions better in safe, supportive environments, and environments become safer and more supportive when children and adults are able to manage their emotions and socialise well (Jones, McGarrah and Kahn, 2019[1]; Cefai et al., 2018[2]; Charlton et al., 2021[3]). As a social species, human brains are wired to prioritise emotions and social dynamics above academic learning (Rogers and Thomas, 2023[4]), which may be particularly true for adolescents (Chatterjee Singh and Duraiappah, 2020[5]). Positive, safe school environments (where students feel physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually safe, accepted and supported) are therefore essential for all types of learning.

The results from the SSES 2019 and SSES 2023 demonstrate how different elements of the school environment from teacher-student relationships to bullying, play different roles in students' social and emotional development. It illustrates how building schools' sense of community and confronting the complexity of bullying are essential for fostering students' socio-emotional skills. However, equity remains a problem. Girls and low academic performers report a lower sense of belonging and fewer positive school experiences than their peers across sites, while socio-economically disadvantaged students report less belonging.

Holistic approaches that address multiple elements necessary for creating safe and supportive school environments will likely work best to support students' full range of skills. These approaches include:

- building schools' sense of community and students' positive experiences
- promote relationships and teachers' coping strategies in order to develop skills
- creating safe and secure school environments.

The data suggest that sites vary in their ability to realise the nurturing components of school environments. Moreover, tackling equity issues within sites could help level out differences in skill levels observed for different student groups (e.g. advantaged versus disadvantaged students, boys versus girls). School climate and students' skills can form a virtuous circle: healthier school environments promote social and emotional skills, while stronger skills, in turn, contribute to better environments (Osher and Berg, 2018[6]).

## Building schools into hubs of community

Students who are happy and feel part of a positive, supportive community show greater cooperation and readiness to learn (Cantor et al., 2019[7]). They also dare to express their wishes and opinions and find it easier to cope with failure, anxiety or stress (Chatterjee Singh and Duraiappah, 2020[5]).

These findings adds to research that suggests that a positive, safe school environment is crucial for students' social and emotional development and skills for all students (Rogers and Thomas, 2023[4]; Center on the Developing Child, 2009[8]; Green and García-Millán, 2021[9]).

This section examines the SSES 2019 and SSES 2023 data on students' holistic experiences of their school environment. It shows how building schools' sense of community, enhancing students' positive experiences and addressing sources of negative experiences can bolster their social and emotional development. For example, students who felt greater belonging at school reported being better able to engage with others, while students with more positive emotions at school reported better emotional regulation. However, students are not benefiting equally and the specific mix of students' emotions varies by site. Low academic performers and girls report a lower sense of belonging and more negative emotions than their peers. In some sites, students struggle with motivation, in others, anger or anxiety. Both whole-school and targeted support are needed to build an inclusive, positive school community for all.

### *Students who feel they belong and have more positive emotions at school report higher social skills and better emotional regulation*

Feeling included and valued and that school is a place of positive experiences and healthy challenges are key to a nurturing school environment and academic learning (Ibarra, 2022[10]; Rogers and Thomas, 2023[4]; Cantor et al., 2019[7]). When students feel connected and safe, "they can build social capital and more readily use adults as social models, accept feedback, and navigate and persevere through challenges" (Osher and Berg, 2018, p. 5[6]). Thus, students' sense of belonging and the emotions they have while at school can be considered good indicators of a school's overall climate.

In SSES 2019 and 2023, students reported on their sense of belonging at school. In 2023, they also reported on the emotions they felt at school. For the former, students were asked whether they felt like they belonged at school, felt liked or lonely, made friends easily or felt left out. For the latter, students were asked how often they had experienced specific positive and negative emotions at school in the past four weeks, such as confidence, happiness, anxiety or anger.

Students who felt greater belonging, more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions at school reported higher levels of all socio-emotional skills, on average across all sites. Figure 3.1 shows the

strength of the relationships between students' skills and their sense of belonging, positive emotions and negative emotions while at school for 2023 sites (see also Tables A3.3, A3.9, A3.15).

### Figure 3.1. Relationship between students' sense of belonging and emotions at school and their social and emotional skills

Standardised regression coefficients of individual skills on the 15-year-old students' sense of belonging and emotions at school indices, average across sites
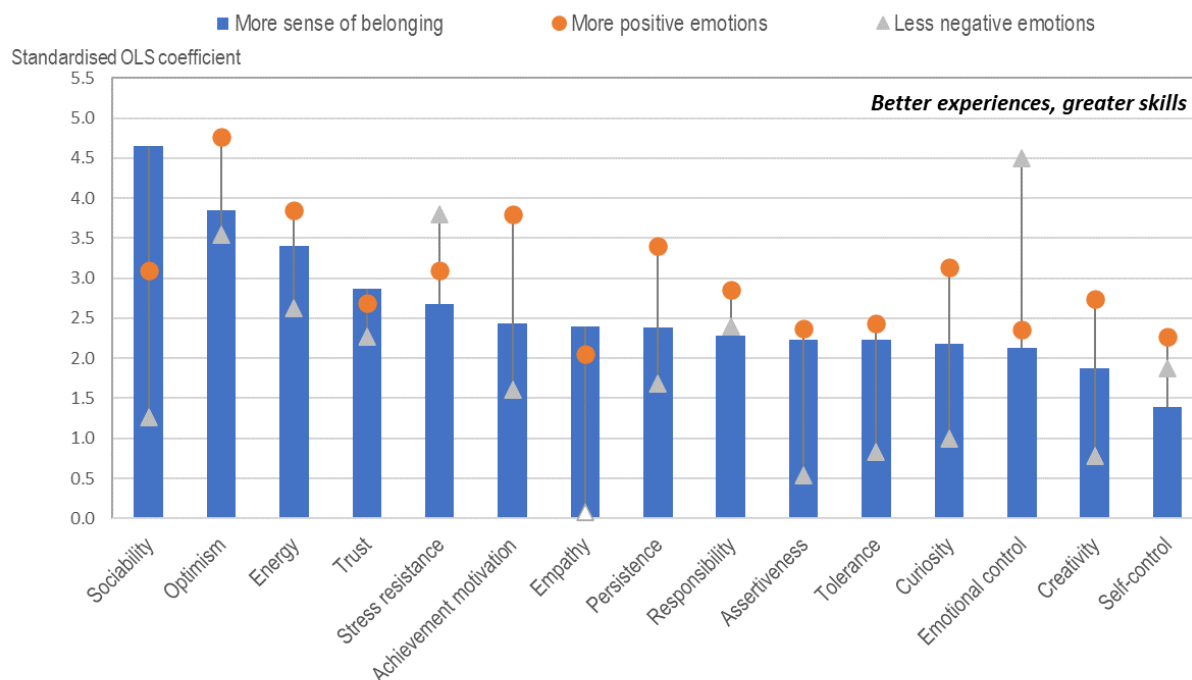


Note: Significant average coefficients at a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are coloured, non-significant coefficients are outlined Models control for gender, educational achievement, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how the indices were calculated. Social and emotional skills are listed in order of the size of effect of students' sense of belonging.
Source: OECD, SSES Databases (2023) Tables A3.3, A3.9 and A3.15

*StatLink* ᐧᐧᐧ https://stat.link/2krmtz

SSES findings for 15-year-olds suggest that sense of belonging and positive emotions at school each foster particular skills. Belonging promotes emotional regulation and social skills, such as sociability, optimism, energy and trust. Positive emotions and experiences at school (e.g. enjoyable social interactions, greater achievements) promote optimism and energy, but they also relate strongly to achievement motivation, persistence and curiosity. These are key skills for academic success, even when controlling for academic achievement, gender and socio-economic or migrant status (see Figure 3.1 Note).

Yet SSES data also show the harm of too many negative experiences. 15-year-olds students with more negative emotions at school report especially low levels of emotional control, stress resistance, optimism and energy—some of the same skills needed to build belonging. This finding may be particularly important for adolescence. This is a developmentally malleable period, but positive affect and mental health also typically decline (Goldbeck et al., 2007[11]; Marquez et al., 2024[12]; OECD, 2024[13]). Improving students' experiences at school (both social and academic) may help mitigate this, while nurturing key skills for their adult lives.

The strength of the relationships between skills, belonging and emotions at school vary by site, although significant relationships emerged for all measures and skills in almost all sites, except for empathy, assertiveness and negative emotions. For example, the relationships between positive emotions at school and skills are at least twice as strong in Jinan (China) as they are in Delhi (India) for all skills except empathy and tolerance (Table A3.9). Additionally, sense of belonging dropped from 2019 and 2023 in Bogotá (Colombia) and Helsinki (Finland), the two sites that participated in both rounds of SSES (see Box 3.3). These variations between sites suggest that, while experiences at school impact students' social and emotional skills, this interacts with factors outside school—and in some sites more than others.

Students' emotions at school affects their skills at both ages 10 and 15, for almost all skills in all sites that assessed both cohorts. Additionally, there was no significant shift from ages 10 to 15 in the relationships between skills and negative or positive emotions in most sites. Creativity, curiosity and empathy were more related to positive emotions at age 10 than 15 in most sites. In a few cases, though, the reverse. The relationship between trust and negative emotions was stronger at 15 than at 10, on average and in half of sites (Tables A3.15). Energy and positive emotions also showed a stronger relationship at age 15 (Table A3.9).

By contrast, age differences in the relationship between belonging and skills depended on the site. For example, in 2019 Houston (United States) showed no significant age difference for any skill except curiosity, while Suzhou in 2019 (China) showed a stronger relationship at age 10 compared to 15 for almost all skills (Table A3.3). This indicates that the secondary school environments in Houston (United States) are able to nurture belonging and thereby promote skills just as much as their primary schools, while these effects fade in Suzhou (China).

These results suggest that school environment matters for all ages, but its influence changes from childhood to adolescence and some systems are leveraging its potential more than others. Positive experiences in school may particularly improve adolescents' energy and capacity for trust. These skills are key skills for well-being and life satisfaction (OECD, 2024[13]). For sense of belonging, sites differ in their ability to maintain its influence at age 15, although it relates to skills at both ages and in all sites. On the one hand, the varying sizes and structures of secondary schools may interact with different expectations of adolescence in each site (e.g. levels of independence, whether extracurriculars occur inside or outside schools). The social role of school may decline in some sites but not others. On the other, the SSES shows that outcomes are not guaranteed. Some systems can do more to strengthen their secondary schools' capacity to nurture belonging and skills.

SSES data demonstrates that school environment can significantly promote skills necessary for academic, social and personal success. Schools' capacities to build a sense of community are important levers. Holistic approaches like integrating positive experiences into daily school life and creating opportunities for social connection should supplement structured programmes, like *Aulas en Paz* (Box 3.1).

> **Box 3.1. Aulas en Paz: Peace education meets social and emotional skills in Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru**
>
> Aulas en Paz ("Classrooms in Peace") is a multi-component, evidence-based programme that seeks to promote peaceful coexistence and reduce aggression in primary school environments, especially in vulnerable communities with histories of violence and substance abuse. Inspired by international programmes and designed by the University of the Andes Colombia, it includes: 1) a universal curriculum to develop citizen competencies; 2) parent workshops and home visits to parents of children with the greatest need; and 3) positive reinforcement in extra-curricular peer groups, each with two children who present aggressive behaviours. It has demonstrated effectiveness in children ages 7-10

in Colombia. Activities seek to promote socio-emotional competencies, such as empathy, anger management, creative generation of alternatives and healthy assertiveness.

Aulas en Paz deliberately leverages the school community by partnering with teachers, families and students. It builds on a tradition of peace education in Colombia that seeks to reconcile after decades of civil war and to reduce community and domestic violence. Exposure to violence is related to higher levels of aggression and emotional dysregulation in children. Hence, Aulas en Paz seeks to break the cycle by supporting children, schools and families in building healthy alternative strategies.

Since 2008, Aulas en Paz has been implemented in 17 departments in Colombia as well as in Chile, Mexico and Peru. It has demonstrated effectiveness even in difficult conditions. A two-year, quasi-experimental evaluation with 1 154 students from 55 classrooms in 7 Colombian public schools located in neighbourhoods with youth gangs and drug cartels found improved prosocial behaviour and assertiveness as well as reduced aggression and verbal victimisation. This was despite partial implementation, as half of the activities were not used. To date, in Colombia, the programme has reached 9 112 teachers, 266 450 students between second and fifth grades, and at least 20% of the families of these students.

Its low cost has helped make Aulas a competitive option in low- and middle-income countries.

Source: Universidad de los Andes Colombia (2023[14]), "Aulas en Paz", https://imagina.uniandes.edu.co/hub/aulas-en-paz/; Chaux et al. (2017[15]), "Classrooms in peace within violent contexts: Field evaluation of Aulas en Paz in Colombia", https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0754-8.

### *Inequality in students' sense of belonging and positive emotions at school is a consistent problem in some sites, while it only affects some groups in other sites*

A key challenge of education and policy making is to improve equity and ensure all children can learn and thrive. It is concerning, therefore, that the SSES 2023 shows that different student groups do not benefit equally from a nurturing school environment. Figure 3.2 shows how, depending on the site, 15-year-old students' sense of belonging, positive emotions and negative emotions at school vary widely by gender, socio-economic status and educational achievement.

Some sites show consistent, significant differences the three measures, such as Chile, Helsinki (Finland), Jinan (People's Republic of China, hereafter "China") and Spain. In almost all these sites, girls, low academic performers and socio-economically disadvantaged students report significantly less belonging and fewer positive emotions. Girls and low academic performers also report significantly more negative emotions (Tables A3.2, A3.5 and A3.11).

In contrast, some sites show no differences between some groups. For example, in Delhi (India) and Peru, there are no significant differences between disadvantaged and advantaged students, and Delhi (India) shows no gender differences in positive emotions or belonging. In Turin (Italy) and Bogotá (Colombia), there are no disparities between high and low academic performers in belonging and positive emotions.

Importantly, however, no site achieves equity for all groups in all three measures (belonging, positive emotions and negative emotions).

## Figure 3.2. Differences in sense of belonging and emotions at school by student characteristics and sites

Differences in 15-year-olds' sense of belonging, positive emotions and negative emotions at school indices, by gender, socio-economic status and educational achievement



Note: Significant average differences at a threshold p < 0.05 are coloured, while non-significant average differences are outlined. High and low academic performers are students respectively in the top or bottom quarter of educational achievement in their site. High/low performers in Gunma (Japan) and Kudus (Indonesia) cannot be defined because of the grades distributions. Advantaged and disadvantaged students are students respectively in the top or bottom quarter of the index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in their site. Sites are listed in alphabetical order.

Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A3.2, A3.5 and A3.11.

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### *Students in Spain and Ukraine feel more confident but less motivated, while students in Italian sites feel more anxious*

Students' perceptions and experiences at school affect their development, including skills. As Figure 3.1 shows, higher levels of negative emotions are linked to lower levels of all social and emotional skills for both age groups, particularly emotional regulation. SSES data also shows that students' emotions vary by site. It also shows wide variation, up to 30 percentage points (Table A3.4). Policy makers and education leaders should examine the composition of students' emotions in their systems to identify specific needs and skills to target.

In SSES 2023, students were asked how often they had felt various positive or negative emotions at school in the last four weeks, such as confident, motivated, happy, anxious or angry. Students rated frequency with statements from "never or almost never" to "about half the time" to "all or almost all of the time" (see Tables A3.4, A3.10). Figure 3.3 shows results for four emotions, with the percentage of 15-year-olds in each site that reported feeling that emotion over half the time.

This varying mix of students' feelings suggest different underlying causes, as well as different needs. Other SSES data may help illuminate. For example, high levels of anger in Bulgaria could partly be explained by high levels of bullying, especially physical bullying, compared to other sites (see below). Students in Gunma (Japan) have the highest test and class anxiety of all sites (OECD, 2024[13]), which may help explain their low confidence and high anxiety (24% report feeling anxious most of the time, see Table A3.10).

Cultural differences likely also affect how students report on their own emotions. For example, students in Helsinki (Finland) and Jinan (China) report low levels of positive emotions, but they also report low levels of negative ones. In comparison, students in Bogotá (Colombia) and Kudus (Indonesia) report high levels of confidence, motivation and happiness, but also relatively high levels of anxiety and anger (Tables A3.4, A3.10). These results indicate different attitudes towards reporting intense emotions.

Policy makers and education leaders need to consider emotions prevalent in their schools to better identify and address relevant issues in the school environment, such as bullying or stressful exams. For example, students in Gunma (Japan) might benefit from approaches that address sources of anxiety, while Spain and Ukraine might focus on boosting student engagement through new teaching approaches. This can also help improve social and emotional skills. Approaches should be tailored to site needs, combining holistic efforts to address students' experiences—such as anxiety or motivation—with explicit social and emotional learning. Social and emotional learning is more effective when it is both explicit and properly contextualised (Yaeger, 2017[16]; Jones et al., 2021[17]; Durlak et al., 2011[18]).

### Figure 3.3. Composition of students' emotions at school, by sites

Percentage of 15-year-old students who reported they have felt the following ways more than half the time while at school



■ Motivated ■ Confident ■ Anxious ■ Angry
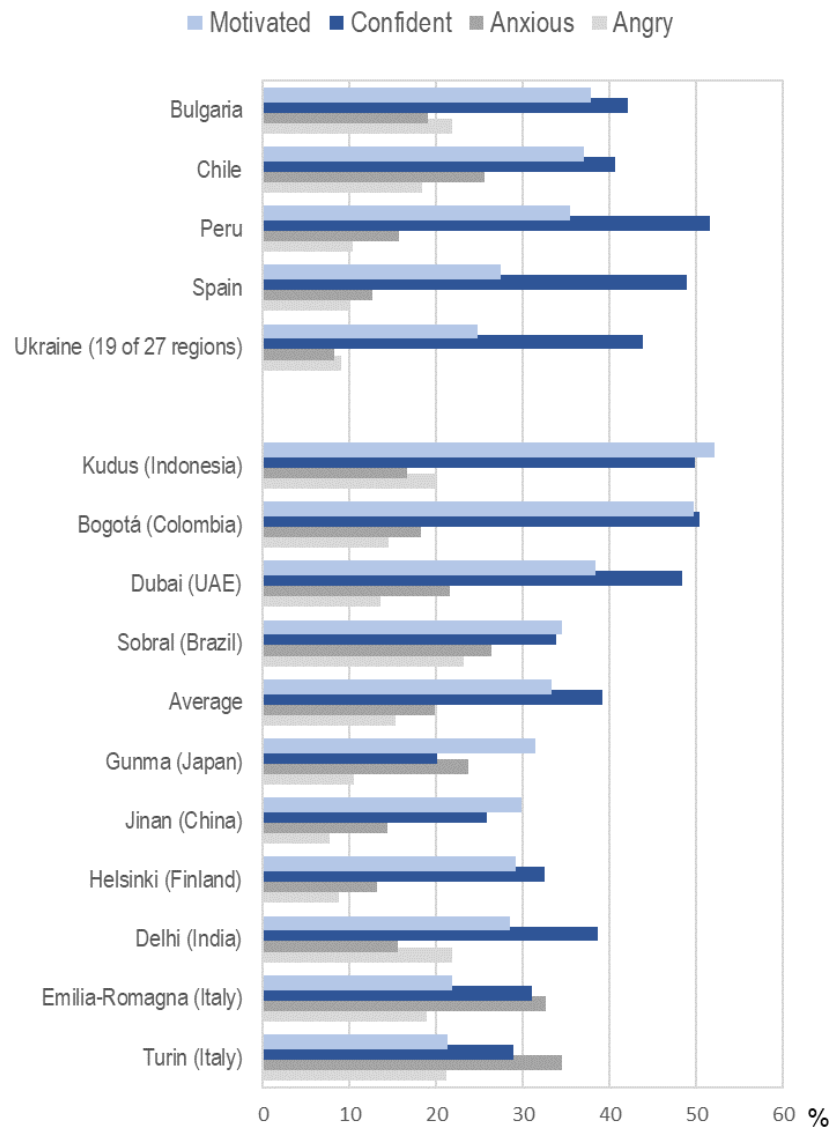
<span style="color:blue">Restricted Use - À usage restreint</span>

Note: Sites are listed in descending order of the percentage of students who reported they have felt motivated more than half the time.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A3.4 and A3.10

*StatLink* https://stat.link/e5qbns

### *Low performers struggle more with anger at school, girls with confidence, but no pattern emerges for disadvantaged students*

SSES data reveal that the emotions of particular groups also need attention, because they do not always match expectations or population patterns. This is notably true for anger and confidence. Figure 3.6 shows

the percentage differences between two groups for two emotions: on the left, differences in anger between low and high performers and, on the right, differences in confidence between boys and girls.

## Figure 3.4. Differences in confidence and anger, by gender, educational achievement and sites

Percentage of students who reported they felt either angry or confident more than half the time, by academic achievement (left) and gender (right), by site
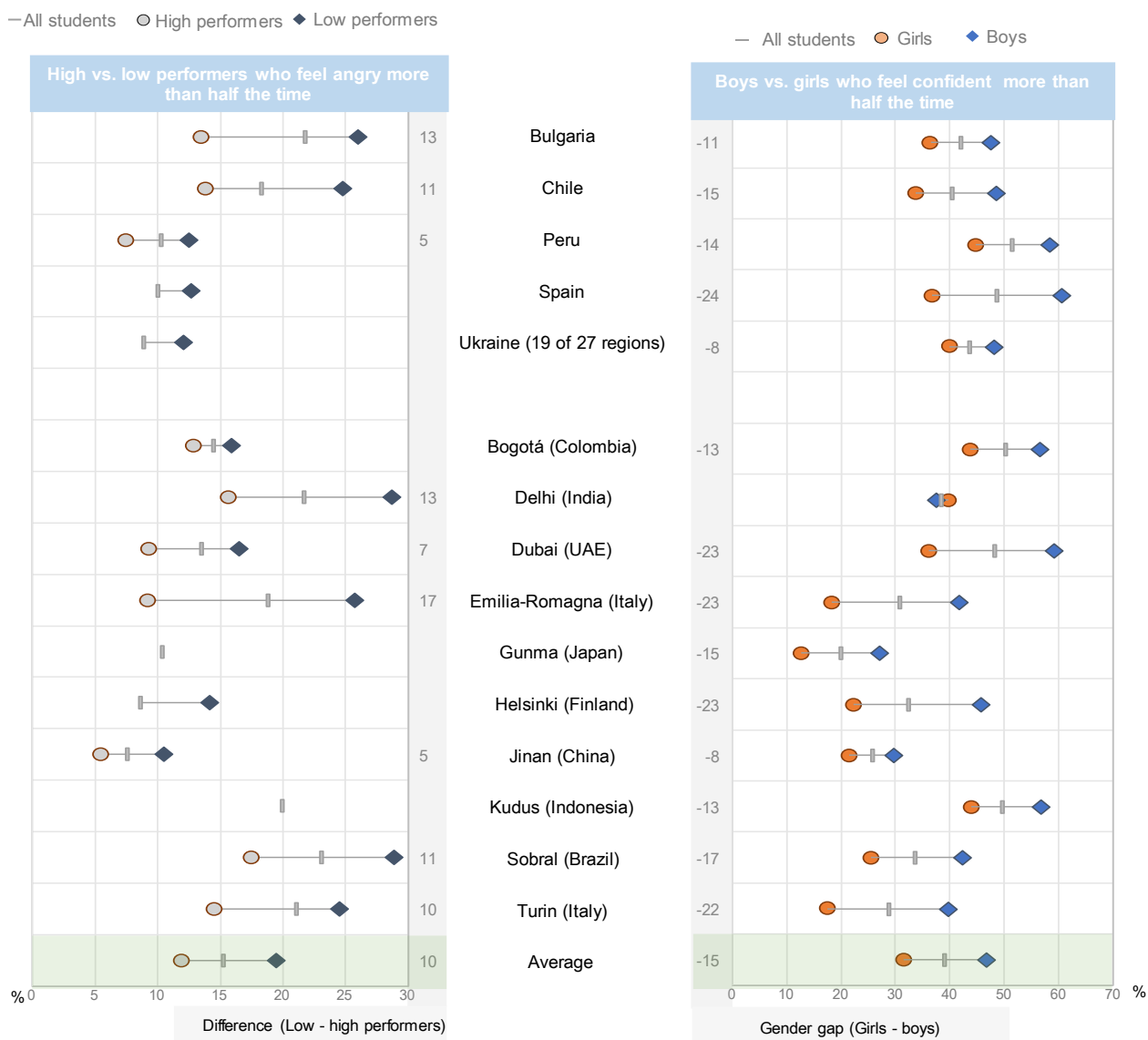


Note: Only differences that are statistically significant at a threshold of p<0.05 are noted next to site names. High/low performers refer to students scoring in top/bottom quarter in math and reading distribution in their own sites. High/low performers in Gunma (Japan) and Kudus (Indonesia) cannot be defined because of the grades distributions. In Ukraine and Spain, the percentages for high performers is missing due to the small sample size (fewer than 30 students and 5 schools). Sites are listed in alphabetical order.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A3.4, A3.6, A3.10 and A3.14

*StatLink* https://stat.link/rgh9wp

In most sites, low performers report feeling significantly angrier compared to high performers, but not more anxious, less happy or less motivated (Tables A3.8, A3.14). On average, 19% of low performers report feeling angry most of the time on average, compared to 12% of high performers. However, this varies by site. In Delhi (India) and Sobral (Brazil), 29%—almost one-third—of low performers feel angry most of the time. Jinan (China), Peru, Spain and Ukraine report the lowest levels of anger among low performers, at 11-13%.

In contrast, girls struggle with lack of confidence in all sites except one, but not with interest in school (Table A3.6). For example, only 32% of girls report feeling confident more than half the time on average, compared to 47% of boys. These differences were also present at age 10 in most sites that surveyed that age, but the gap widens at age 15 in all sites except Ukraine. Again, however, some sites struggle more than others. Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Helsinki (Finland), both Italian sites, and Spain present the largest gender gaps at age 15—over 22 percentage points. Delhi (India) is the only site with no significant gender difference in confidence at age 15.

Yet disparities in emotions disappear when comparing socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students. Most sites show no significant differences in either positive or negative emotions between these groups. Only feeling interested showed a slight significant difference in half of sites, favouring advantaged students. Yet some sites show the opposite pattern. In Bogotá (Colombia), Chile and Emilia-Romagna (Italy), for example, advantaged students reported higher levels of anxiety than disadvantaged ones (Table A3.13).

These findings show that policymakers and educators must not impose homogenous solutions on students. Equity requires adapting approaches not just to context, but groups within that context. This matters for social and emotional learning. Universal programmes that have positive effects for some groups can have null or adverse effects for others (Daley and McCarthy, 2021[19]; Rowe and Trickett, 2018[20]). Effective social and emotional learning must balance whole-school expectations with the needs of different students. Designing initiatives explicitly for equity can help (Jones et al., 2021[17]). This means incorporating student voice in programme design (Cefai et al., 2018[2]) and using contextualised, inclusive approaches that affirm student identities and address their lived experiences (Yaeger, 2017[16]; Cantor et al., 2019[7]; Wigelsworth, 2016[21]). This can boost students' engagement and intervention effectiveness, especially for adolescents (Yaeger, 2017[16]).

## Action for impact: Build schools' sense of community

Strengthening schools' sense of community and increasing positive experiences can help foster students' social and emotional skills – as well as their academic development. Whole-school approaches to social and emotional learning can enhance both school environments and students' skills even better than isolated lessons, when they are effectively implemented (Cefai et al., 2018[2]; Jones et al., 2021[17]). However, any intervention must be contextualised and respond to students' lived experiences, including those of particular groups (e.g. low performers, girls) (Denham, 2018[22]; Yaeger, 2017[16]; Jones et al., 2021[17]).

Addressing sources of negative emotions in each site, such as low engagement or a culture of stressful exams, can improve school communities and students' skills. Integrating pedagogy for engagement, appropriate student agency and culturally relevant material can enhance motivation, belonging and positive emotions at school (Gutman and Schoon, 2013[23]; Rogers and Thomas, 2023[4]). These should be paired with explicit social and emotional learning that targets skills relevant to students' experiences, such as emotional regulation or assertiveness (Cefai et al., 2018[2]; Durlak et al., 2011[18]). Delhi's (India) Happiness Curriculum (OECD, 2024[13]) or the United Kingdom's .b Mindfulness programme are two examples (Clarke et al., 2015[24]).

Finally, low-stakes, convenient monitoring and assessment platforms, like Chile's Diagnóstico Integral de Aprendizajes (DIA) (see Chapter 2), can encourage schools to engage with this topic, track their progress and tailor their efforts.

## Promoting relationships to promote skills

Relationships are perhaps the most critical component of a nurturing school environment. As Chatterjee Singh and Duraiappah put it, "When children feel comfortable with their teachers and peers, they are more willing to grapple with challenging material and persist at difficult learning tasks" (2020, p. 75[5]), including social and emotional learning. According to the SSES data, schools can promote skills through promoting quality relationships at school. Although all good relationships can promote skills, improving students' relationships with teachers seems more important for skills related to learning, innovation and achievement. Students' relationships with their peers, on the other hand, relate more to sociability and emotional regulation skills. However, sites vary in their ability to promote relationships, especially in secondary schools, where students perceive less care and concern from teachers and classmates.

### *Students who have better relationships with their teachers are more open-minded, motivated and persistent*

Students' relationships with their teachers and adults at school affect numerous student outcomes (Poulou, 2017[25]; Cantor et al., 2019[7]), including social and emotional outcomes (Cefai et al., 2018[2]; Wigelsworth et al., 2022[26]). This is also true for adolescents (Yaeger, 2017[16]).

In SSES 2023, students were asked whether their teachers were respectful, friendly, or mean and if they showed concern for students. Figure 3.5 shows the strength of the relationship between 15-year-old students' relationships with their teachers and peers, and their social and emotional skills.

Students with better relationships with their teachers reported higher levels of all social and emotional skills, with particularly strong associations in achievement motivation, persistence, curiosity and optimism. Notably, this correlation holds true even when controlling for academic achievement, and similar patterns are observed among 10-year-old students (see Table A3.17). The relationships with achievement motivation, persistence and curiosity are also significantly stronger for student-teacher relationships than peer-to-peer relationships (see Tables A3.19, A3.17).

## Figure 3.5. Relationship between students' perceived relationships with teachers and peers and their social and emotional skills

Standardised regression coefficients of 15-year-old students' individual skills on teacher-student and peer-to-peer relationships, average across sites
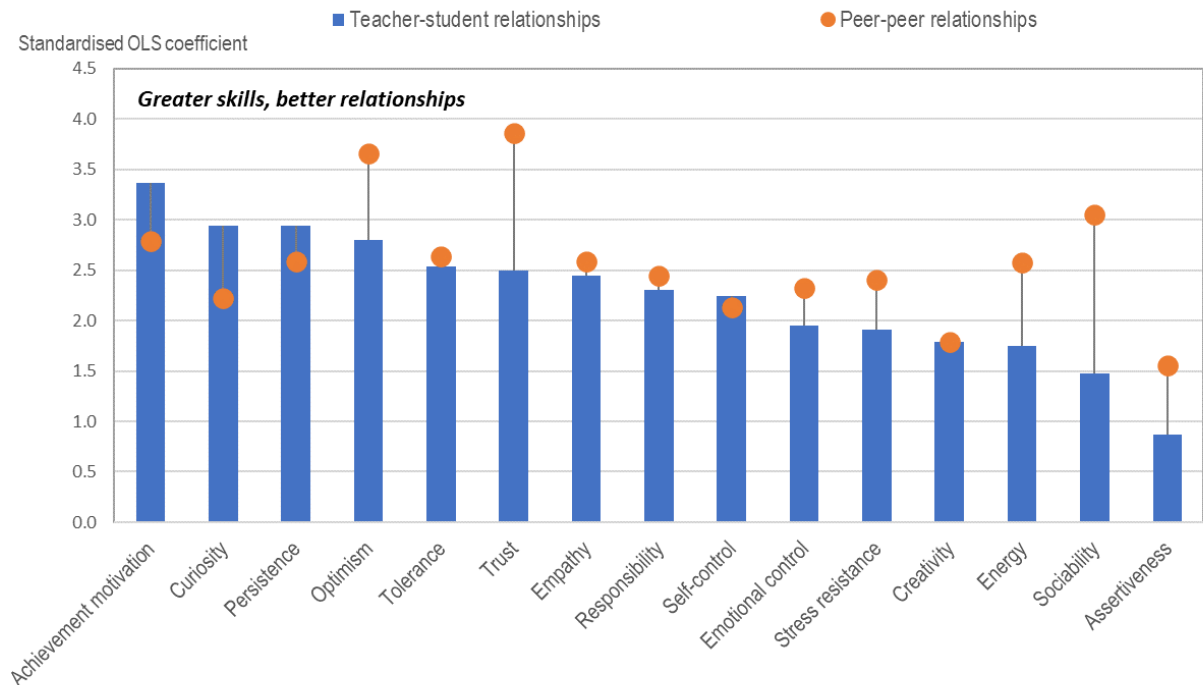


Note: All coefficients are statistically significant with a threshold of $p < 0.05$. Models control for gender, educational achievement, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how teacher-student and peer-to-peer relationship indices were calculated. Social and emotional skills are listed by the size of the effect on teacher-student relationships.
Source: OECD, SSES Database 2023 Tables A3.17 and A3.19.

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These findings suggest that high-quality teacher-student relationships play a crucial role in fostering students' ability to strive for excellence, engage with learning, persevere through challenges and maintain optimism. They also imply that teacher-student relationships should go beyond promoting achievement—partly because broadening such relationships will, in fact, enhance learning and achievement. Other research finds that positive, safe relationships with teachers enable curiosity, motivation and academic learning (Rogers and Thomas, 2023[4]; Cantor et al., 2019[7]).

Teachers' own social and emotional capacities and skills are a key factor in good teacher-student relationships and effective social and emotional learning (Green and García-Millán, 2021[9]; Cefai et al., 2018[2]; Jones, McGarrah and Kahn, 2019[1]). Further results from the SSES 2023 discussed in Box 3.2 show that teachers' capacity to cope with stress – one aspect of emotional regulation – differs across sites.

**Box 3.2. Enhance teachers' coping strategies to support their well-being and ability to model positive emotional regulation in class**

Teachers play a pivotal role in creating an environment that nurtures social and emotional learning as well as academic learning in schools (Wigelsworth et al., 2022[26]; Cefai et al., 2018[2]; OECD, 2021[27]). To do this, they must have adequate emotional capacity and robust social and emotional skills themselves (CASEL, 2024[28]; Jones et al., 2021[17]; Green and García-Millán, 2021[9]). Coping strategies for managing stress can help teachers maintain their own well-being and teach social and emotional skills (Maricuțoiu et al., 2023[29]) (see also Chapter 2). Teachers who cope well and regulate their emotions better can establish better relationships with their students and to be better able to model how to manage one's own emotions (Aldrup, Carstensen and Klusmann, 2024[30]).

**Only 30% of teachers use effective coping skills in some sites, while in others, almost 70% do so**

In SSES 2023, teachers reported on their work-related stress and, separately, on the extent (from "not at all" to "to a large extent") to which they use different coping strategies for such stress, such as maintaining good sleep habits or approaching problems optimistically (see Table A3.20).

Results show that teachers' use of coping strategies was significantly related to their well-being at work in most sites and on average (see Table A3.21). Notably, across most sites the relationships were significant and strongest for strategies related to managing emotions and physical health: approaching problems optimistically, setting realistic goals and maintaining good health and sleep habits.

Figure 3.6 shows how the use of these strategies varies by site. It illustrates teachers' average use of coping strategies across sites and the range between highest and lowest scoring sites. In Peru, Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia), over 50% of teachers of 15-year-olds reported that they approach problems optimistically to a large extent, and close to 50% or more teachers maintain good health habits. By contrast, this is 35% or less in other sites (Table A3.20).

Teachers in Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru reported high use of proven effective strategies. For example, 59% or more reported maintaining good health habits and approaching problems optimistically. They also set realistic goals more often. These approaches can be classed respectively as lifestyle, emotion-focused and action-focused strategies, which all have proven benefits (Buettner et al., 2016[31]; Madigan and Kim, 2021[32]; Lee et al., 2023[33]; Corbett et al., 2022[34]). Conversely, fewer teachers from Kudus (Indonesia) and Peru reported using less effective strategies, such as working more hours, than in other sites.

**Figure 3.6. Teachers' use of coping strategies**

Percentage of teachers of 15-year-olds who used the following coping strategies to a large extent, average across sites
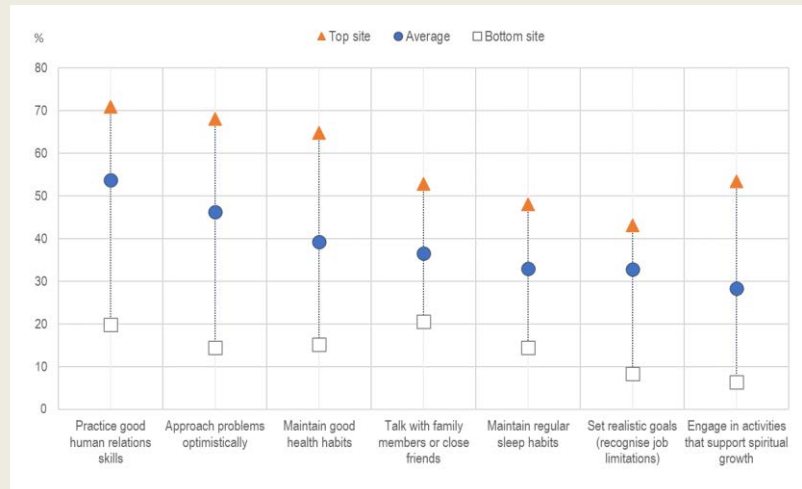


Note: Top and bottom sites are those sites with respectively the highest and lowest percentages of teachers who reported using a given strategy "to a large extent."
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A3.20.

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### Peer-to-peer relationships are particularly important for developing trust, engaging with others and regulating emotions

Youth naturally orient more towards their peers as they age (Denham, 2018[22]; Immordino-Yang, Darling-Hammond and Krone, 2019[35]). During late childhood and adolescence, in particular, peer relationships become crucial for young people's development – and for effective social and emotional learning (Yaeger, 2017[16]; Cefai et al., 2018[2]).

Students in SSES 2023 were asked about the quality of their relationships with their classmates, e.g. if classmates were friendly, respectful, mean, or showed concern for other students. Similar to teacher-student relationships, 15-year-old students with better relationships with their peers reported higher levels of all social and emotional skills across all sites. This was also true at age 10 (see Table A3.19).

Yet, Figure 3.5 shows that some skills showed significantly stronger relationships with peer-to-peer relationships than with teacher-student relationships for 15-year-olds: trust, engaging with others (sociability, energy, assertiveness) and emotional regulation skills (optimism, emotional control, stress resistance). This pattern also appears in most sites (see Tables A3.19, A3.17).

SSES findings suggest that relationships with peers and teachers serve different purposes. Good relationships with teachers are particularly relevant for persistence, motivation and curiosity, while positive relationships with peers seem to help refine social skills and the management of emotions. Positive relationships with peers also seem important for developing trust, which facilitates well-being and learning (OECD, 2024[13]; Center on the Developing Child, 2009[8]). Such positive relationships are also necessary for civic engagement, encouraging individuals to consider the collective good rather than solely focusing on their own interests (Balliet and Van Lange, 2013[36]; Talò, 2018[37]).

However, the strength of the relationship between skills and peer-to-peer relationships varies between sites. In Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Gunma (Japan) and Jinan (China), relationships between skills and peer-to-peer relationships are strongest. The relationships for teacher-student relationships and skills were strongest in Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Jinan (China) (Tables A3.19 and A3.17). These variations may reflect how relationships in school vary in nature and intensity between contexts, due to factors like class sizes, school structures and expected roles of teachers or students.

### *Perception of care and concern in school relationships drops as students age*

Positive relationships strengthen development more when they are infused with safety, reliability and care for the individual. These features enable children and youth to explore the world, withstand adversity and develop healthy self-concepts (Center on the Developing Child, 2009[8]; Cantor et al., 2019[7]). Consequently, it is concerning that 15-year-olds in SSES 2023 perceived significantly less care and personal concern from both teachers and peers in their relationships with them, compared to 10-year-olds.

Figure 3.7 shows the percentage of 15- and 10-year-olds that either agreed or strongly agreed with each of the listed statements. SSES 2023 asked students, on the one hand, if teachers and peers were generally respectful (e.g. teachers and classmates are "respectful" and "friendly") and on the other, if they showed care and concern, such as "the students at my school are interested in other students' well-being".

### Figure 3.7. Changes in perceived relationships with teachers and peers, by age and sites

Percentage of 10-year-olds and 15-year-olds who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements regarding perceived relationship with teachers
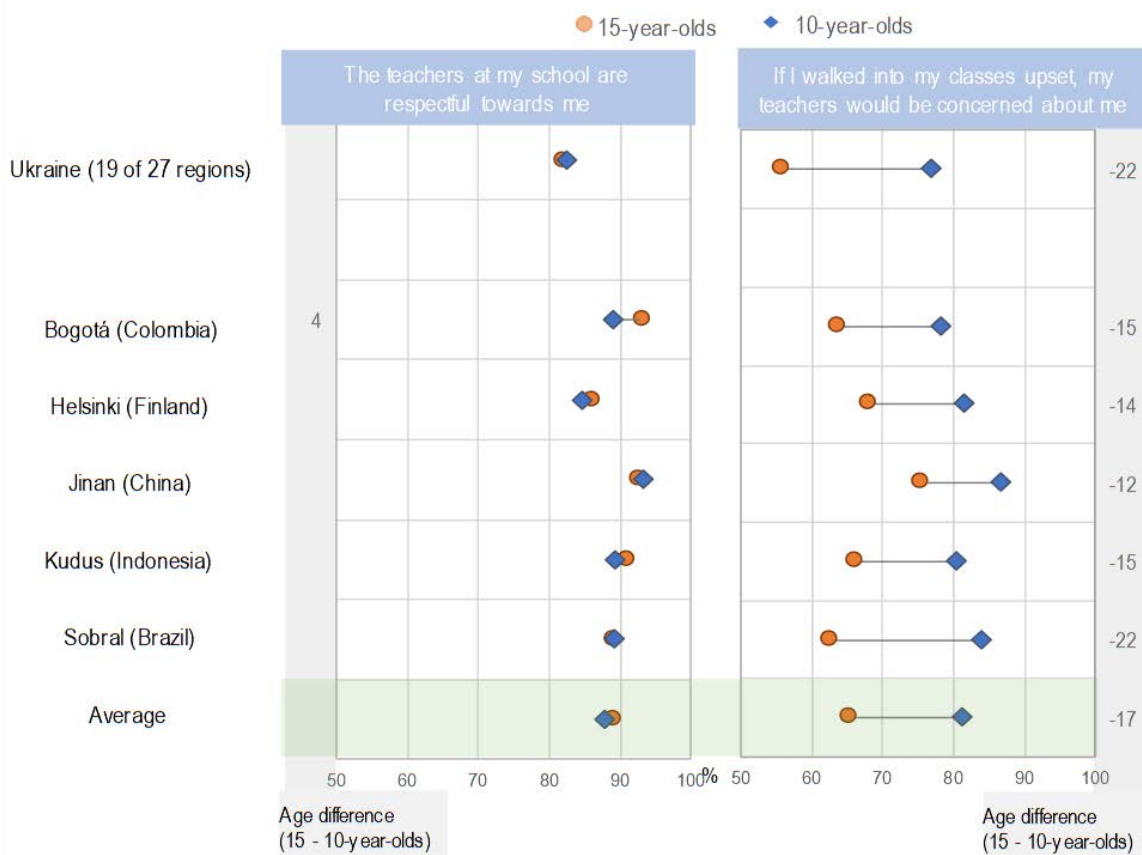
Percentage of 10-year-olds and 15-year-olds who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements regarding perceived relationship with peers
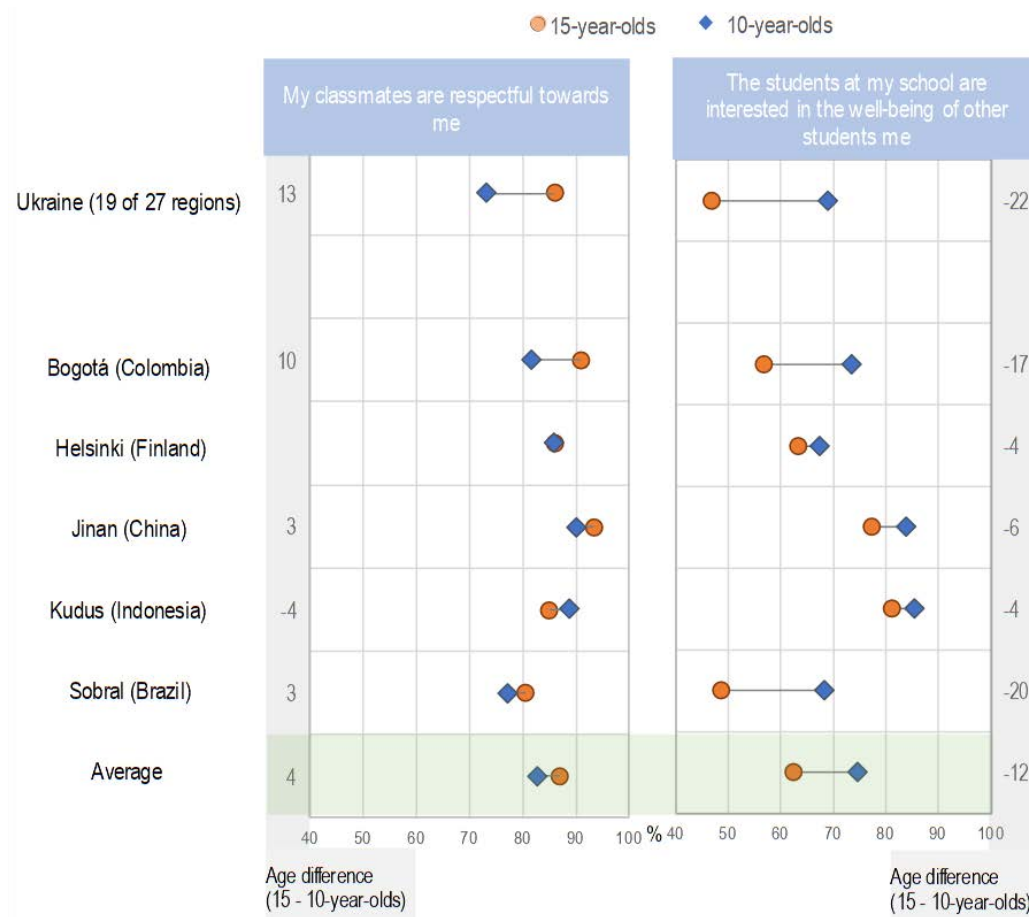


Note: Only age differences that are statistically significant at a threshold of p <0.05 are noted by site names. Sites are listed in alphabetical order.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A3.16 and A3.18

*StatLink* 🖳📊 https://stat.link/z2n984

Two patterns emerge. Figure 3.7 illustrates that 15-year-olds perceive similar levels of respect from teachers and classmates compared to 10-year-olds. However, they perceive less care and concern. Whereas 81% of 10-year-olds agree or strongly agree that their teachers would be concerned if the student were upset, only 65% of 15-year-olds agree on average – a statistically significant drop of 16 percentage points (Table A3.16).

A similar pattern emerges for peer-to-peer relationships across all sites, although with smaller significant decreases of 8-12% (Table A3.18). This shift appears for all six sites that surveyed both age cohorts, although the size of the change varies. In Sobral (Brazil), there is a 22 percentage-point drop in students who agree that their teachers would be concerned if they arrived upset to class, compared to 12 percentage-point drops in Jinan (China) and Helsinki (Finland) (Table A3.16).

This finding has implications for policy and practice, but it should also be placed in its developmental context. Adolescents naturally seek independence from adults and broaden their social circles (Yaeger, 2017[16]; Denham, 2018[22]), which can create emotional distance between adolescents and their school relations, especially with teachers. Lower life satisfaction has also been shown to mediate adolescents'

perception of relationships in school (Boruchovitch et al., 2021[38]). Finally, brain development at this age creates heightened social sensitivity, particularly to social rejection (Chatterjee Singh and Duraiappah, 2020[5]). Thus, this perceived lack of concern may partially reflect such normal changes.

Yet Figure 3.7 suggests that some sites can and should invest more in promoting relationships in schools, especially in secondary education. Primary schools often emphasise relationships and social and emotional learning more. Schools and classes are often smaller than in secondary schools; students spend more time with the same teacher(s) and classmates and they change class groupings less often. Teachers in primary schools also report feeling more prepared to teach social and emotional skills than teachers in secondary schools (see Chapter 2) (OECD, 2023[39]). Although adolescent needs differ, they still require the care and stability of strong relationships, which can benefit mental health and mitigate the effects of toxic stress and adversity (Yaeger, 2017[16]; Center on the Developing Child, 2015[40]; Steponavičius, Gress-Wright and Linzarini, 2023[41]). Secondary education, in particular, should create more opportunities for students to form meaningful, sustained relationships with staff and peers, such as through relationship mapping, school- or year-wide projects, regular advisory, "tutor group" or "homeroom" periods, or extra-curricular activities.

## Action for impact: Promoting relationships to promote skills

Small interactions, daily culture and formal structures are all important for enhancing relationships in schools (Osher and Berg, 2018[6]). School structures must support teachers in their relationship work and allow for sufficient time. Training teachers on how their interactions, language and coping strategies can foster care, respect and emotional regulation in their classrooms will benefit both staff and students (Green and García-Millán, 2021[9]; Jennings et al., 2019[42]; Ritchart, 2015[43]).

Reducing teachers' non-teaching workload can create more time and capacity for cultivating relationships with students (OECD, 2021[44]). Integrating regular relationship-building opportunities into school schedules, such as "homeroom" periods or extra-curricular activities, can provide all students with chances to form connections outside of classes while allowing staff to monitor vulnerable students. Strategies like "relationship mapping" can leverage existing relationships without requiring costly new interventions (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2024[45]).

### Creating safe and secure school environments

The significant negative impacts of bullying[1] and other forms of violence in schools on students' health, well-being and education outcomes are well established (Moore et al., 2017[46]). Making schools safe learning environments is, therefore, a global priority in education. A significant minority of students are impacted by bullying; however, the prevalence and nature of bullying behaviours vary between schools and education systems. Examining the nature of the problem is an essential step in designing, implementing and monitoring effective approaches to reduce violence and its consequences.

***On average across sites, 30% of 15-year-olds are involved in bullying, either as a victim, a perpetrator, or both***

Bullying directly impacts a large minority of students. On average across sites, 30% of 15-year-old students report being bullying victims or perpetrators, or both. Students are considered victims of bullying if they report experiencing unkind or aggressive behaviours, such as being hit, pushed or made fun of a few times a month or more in the previous year. Similarly, bullying perpetrators are students who said they enacted

these behaviours a few times a month or more in the same timeframe. Bullying behaviours include verbal or social bullying, such as being made fun of or left out of things, and physical bullying, such as being hit, pushed or threatened.

The extent of bullying varies considerably across sites (see Figure 3.8 and Table A3.34). Students in Delhi (India) report the highest levels of both bullying victimisation and perpetration, where 64% of students are involved in bullying. Levels of bullying are also higher than average in Bulgaria and Kudus (Indonesia), where approximately 40% of students report being involved. Students in Jinan (China) and Gunma (Japan) report the lowest levels of bullying among SSES sites; however, a significant minority of students, between 16% and 19%, remain directly involved. While addressing bullying is, therefore, a particular priority in those sites with very high levels, it remains an issue that has long-term and wide-ranging impacts on many students in all systems. Box 3.3 examines how levels of bullying have changed in Bogotá (Colombia) and Helsinki (Finland) since 2019.

### Figure 3.8. Overlap between being victim and perpetrator of bullying, by sites

Percentage of 15-year-olds who reported being a victim of bullying, a perpetrator or both
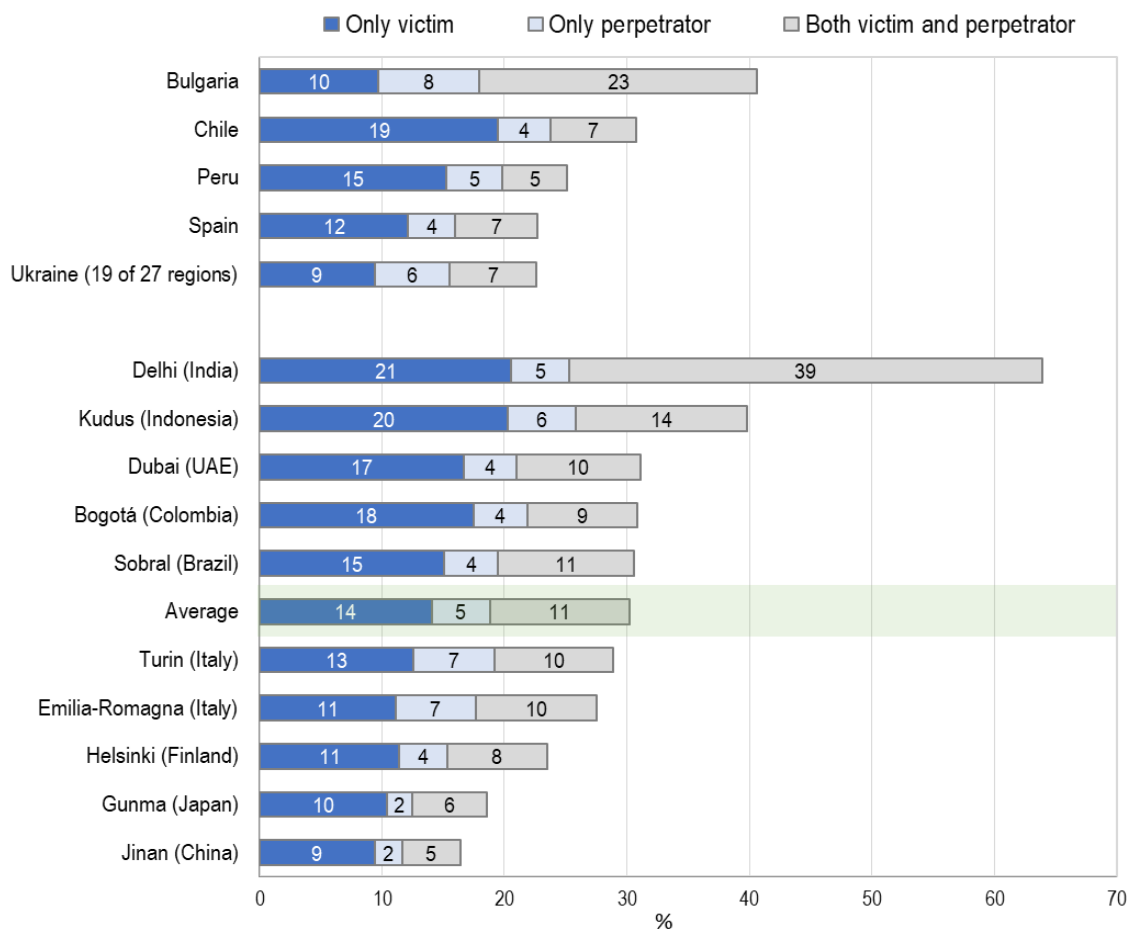


Note: The percentages of involvement in bullying refer to students who reported being involved in bullying - victim and/or perpetrator - in at least one of the items several times a month or more often. Sites are listed in descending order of the total involvement in bullying.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A3.34

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*Many students are both bullying victims and perpetrators, particularly in Delhi (India) and Bulgaria*

Many students who are victims of bullying also report bullying other students and vice versa. On average, across sites, students involved in bullying can be considered as victims only (14% of all students), both victims and perpetrators (11%) and perpetrators only (5%) (see Figure 3.8 and Table A3.34). Most perpetrators also report being victims in all sites, meaning that students who are perpetrators only are the smallest group involved in bullying (fewer than 5% of all students in most sites and fewer than 10% in Bulgaria, Italian sites [Emilia-Romagna and Turin], Kudus (Indonesia) and Ukraine). On the other hand, just under half of all victims of bullying also report bullying other students on average across sites.

Of these three experiences (victims, perpetrators, or both), there is the greatest variation across sites in the proportion of students who report being both victims and perpetrators. This group ranges from 5% of all students in Peru and Jinan (China) to 39% in Delhi (India). In fact, all the elevated levels of bullying in Bulgaria and almost all in Delhi (India), compared to the average across sites, can be accounted for by this group of students (see Figure 3.8 and Table A3.34). On the other hand, there is less overlap between these experiences in other sites. In both Chile and Peru, only 26% of bullying victims reported also being perpetrators, for example (see Table A3.34).

*Social and verbal bullying is most common, and students who are bullied physically are also usually bullied verbally or socially*

Verbal and social bullying are more common than physical bullying across all sites; 28% of all students are involved in some form of verbal or relational bullying, while 16% are involved in physical bullying on average across sites (see Table A3.38). However, the extent of this difference and the overlap between these experiences among students vary. Levels of verbal or relational bullying were only slightly higher than physical bullying in Bulgaria (27% and 24% of all students reported being victims of these forms of bullying, respectively, see Figure 3.9 and Table A3.38). In addition, while sites with high levels of verbal or social bullying tend to also have high levels of physical bullying, there are exceptions. For example, in Bogotá (Colombia), Chile and Dubai (United Arab Emirates), physical bullying victimisation was below the average across sites, but verbal or social bullying were similar to or above average (see Figure 3.9 and Table A3.38).

Most students involved in physical bullying are also involved in verbal or social bullying. On average, across sites, 12% of students are victims of verbal or social bullying only, 10% are victims of both verbal or social and physical bullying, and just 3% are victims of physical bullying only (see Figure 3.9 and Table A3.39). This means that instances of students only being involved in physical bullying are rare, while it is common for students to only experience or perpetuate verbal or social bullying.

*Understanding the nature of bullying is key to designing effective anti-bullying approaches*

A range of anti-bullying interventions are effective in reducing bullying perpetration and victimisation in schools worldwide (Gaffney, Ttofi and Farrington, 2021[47]; Gaffney, Farrington and Ttofi, 2019[48]). Differences in the nature of bullying between education systems or individual schools, such as those discussed in this chapter, may impact the effectiveness of interventions. For example, in schools where most students are involved in bullying, efforts to involve peer bystanders (students who are witnesses but not involved in bullying) may be less effective, as these students are in the minority. Understanding the problem's scale and nature is an essential step in choosing or designing an anti-bullying approach.

### Figure 3.9. Students' involvement in different forms of bullying, by sites

Percentage of 15-year-old students who reported being victims of verbal or social and/or physical bullying

■ Only victim of physical bullying  □ Only victim of verbal/social bullying  □ Victim of both forms

| Site | Only victim of physical bullying | Only victim of verbal/social bullying | Victim of both forms |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bulgaria | 6 | 9 | 18 |
| Chile | 2 | 16 | 9 |
| Peru | 2 | 14 | 5 |
| Spain | 4 | 9 | 6 |
| Ukraine (19 of 27 regions) | 2 | 9 | 5 |
| Delhi (India) | 7 | 17 | 35 |
| Kudus (Indonesia) | 3 | 17 | 14 |
| Bogotá (Colombia) | 2 | 17 | 8 |
| Dubai (UAE) | 2 | 16 | 9 |
| Turin (Italy) | 3 | 12 | 7 |
| Average | 3 | 12 | 10 |
| Emilia-Romagna (Italy) | 4 | 9 | 8 |
| Sobral (Brazil) | 2 | 12 | 12 |
| Gunma (Japan) | 1 | 10 | 5 |
| Helsinki (Finland) | 2 | 9 | 8 |
| Jinan (China) | 2 | 8 | 5 |

Note: The percentages of victim of bullying refer to students who reported being victim in at least one of the items several times a month or more often. Sites are listed in descending order of the total percentage of victims of bullying.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A3.39

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In sites with high levels of bullying and where most students involved are both victims and perpetrators, a comprehensive whole-school approach that involves all students as well as parents, teachers, and other school staff, as well as the wider community, may be particularly relevant. For example, informal peer involvement (such as discussions in class and role-playing activities) and providing information to parents are two anti-bullying intervention components associated with greater reductions in both perpetration and victimisation outcomes compared to others (Gaffney, Ttofi and Farrington, 2021[49]). One aspect these features have in common is that they do not target individual bullies or victims, which may be challenging or even counter-productive when bullying is widespread and systemic.

***School leaders often do not recognise problems with bullying in their schools, particularly in sites where students report high levels of bullying***

A whole-school approach to reducing bullying and improving school climate can be effective. However, such transformative approaches require committed leadership to involve, co-ordinate and motivate staff,

students, parents and the wider community (Pearce et al., 2022[50]). This can be a challenge where school leaders lack the necessary information, training or resources to identify and tackle bullying.

Results from SSES 2023 suggest that students' experiences and school leaders' assessments of bullying levels in their schools often do not align. Such discrepancies are particularly evident in sites where students report the highest levels of bullying. Fewer than 5% of school leaders in Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia) said intimidation or bullying occurs monthly or more among students in their school, while fewer than 10% reported this in Bulgaria. These assessments stand in stark contrast to reports from students in these sites (see Figure 3.10 and Table A3.22).

### Figure 3.10. Relationship between levels of bullying reported by students and school leaders

Percentages of 15-year-old students who reported being victim of physical bullying and of students in school where principals reported bullying several times a month or more often, across sites
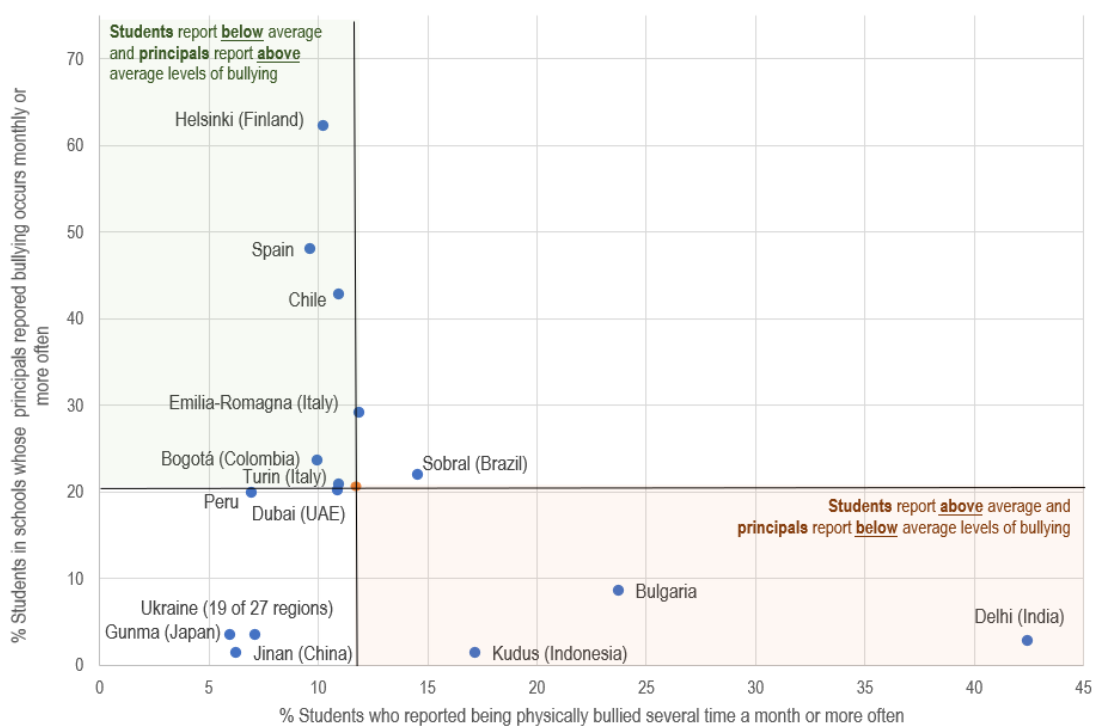


Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A3.22 and A3.40.

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There are several potential explanations for discrepancies between student and school leader responses. While students were asked if they had experienced different forms of aggressive behaviours, these experiences may not meet the threshold for bullying according to principals or even by students themselves. For example, although behaviours such as making fun of others and hitting or pushing are problematic, if students participated willingly or were of equal strength or status, such behaviour may not be considered bullying. In addition, many incidences of bullying may be managed between students themselves or by classroom teachers or other staff, meaning principals only hear of a minority of cases. However, even when these differences are considered, such discrepancies in those sites with the highest levels of bullying remain stark. This misalignment between students' experiences and school leaders' assessments may also contribute to the bullying problem. In sites where very few principals recognise there are issues with bullying, this suggests that acts of violence experienced by students, such as hitting and pushing or threatening others, may have become normalised in the school. Leadership is key to

improving school climate and driving an effective whole-school approach, a strategy that engages all stakeholders (Gaffney, Ttofi and Farrington, 2021[49]). For such an approach to work, acknowledgement of the problem by school leadership is an important first step in addressing it.

While levels of bullying in schools were relatively low in most sites, according to school leaders, Helsinki (Finland), Spain and Chile stand out as particular exceptions (see Figure 3.10). In these sites, over 40% of students are in schools where school leaders said bullying occurs monthly or more often in their school. While levels of bullying are, therefore, a cause for concern for many school leaders in these sites, this also suggests they tend to be better informed of bullying incidents. In fact, Helsinki (Finland) is the only site where there was a clear relationship between principals' assessments of bullying levels and the experiences reported by students in these schools (see Table A3.42). For example, 5% of students report being physically bullied in schools where their principals say it happens less than monthly, 11% in schools where it happens monthly, and 15% where it happens weekly or more often in Helsinki. This suggests that school leaders in Helsinki are better informed about the scale of bullying in their schools than in other sites.

### Students involved in bullying tend to have lower levels of social and emotional skills, with variance in skill levels between victims and perpetrators

Students who are bullied, bully others, or take on both roles often share common background characteristics and risk factors. One such risk factor is low levels of social and emotional skills: students who are bullying victims, perpetrators, or both tend to have lower levels of almost all social and emotional skills compared to students not involved in bullying (see Figure 3.11 and Tables A3.35, A3.36 and A3.37). Both victims and perpetrators, including students who are both, tend to have lower responsibility, emotional control and trust. However, differences emerge depending on how students are involved in bullying for other skills. Firstly, victims of bullying tend to have poorer levels of all emotional regulation skills (emotional control, optimism and stress resistance) and energy compared to students not involved in bullying. However, students who are only perpetrators have similar levels of optimism, stress resistance and energy to those not involved in bullying in most sites. For sociability, perpetrators (including those who are also victims) have similar levels to those not involved in bullying in most sites, whereas in around half of sites, students who are only victims have poorer levels. Differences depending on students' role in bullying are also found for empathy. Victims of bullying typically have higher levels of empathy in around half of sites (Bogotá [Colombia], Bulgaria, Chile, Italian sites [Emilia-Romagna and Turin], Sobral [Brazil], Spain and Ukraine), while perpetrators (including those who are also victims) have lower levels of this skill in almost all sites. For tolerance, bullying perpetrators tend to have lower levels in most sites, while students who are only victims have broadly similar levels to students not involved in bullying.

These results establish a clear link between students' social and emotional skills and their involvement in bullying, suggesting fostering these skills can help create safer schools. At the same time, environments where students feel safe are key to supporting students' social and emotional development. Wider research suggests that low empathy is a particularly important risk factor for involvement in bullying (Zych, Ttofi and Farrington, 2016[51]). Higher levels of empathy among victims who are not also perpetrators suggest this skill might help students avoid retaliating or becoming bullies themselves. Social and emotional learning approaches can therefore complement other bullying prevention strategies, although they should not be a stand-alone approach. Wider research finds that other well-established interventions can be more effective than social and emotional learning at reducing bullying (Gaffney, Ttofi and Farrington, 2021[49]; Vreeman and Carroll, 2007[52]). This may reflect that, while low social and emotional skills are a risk factor for bullying involvement, the precise mechanisms of these relationships are complex. For example, students with low levels of optimism and energy may be a target for bullies, but exposure to aggression can itself also undermine student well-being, leading to lower levels of these skills. It is also unclear from wider longitudinal research if high empathy protects against bullying or whether bullying causes low empathy (Zych, Farrington and Ttofi, 2019[53]). If low levels of skills are largely a consequence

of bullying or other adverse experiences (rather than a cause), building students' social and emotional skills alone may have less impact on bullying outcomes.

### Figure 3.11. Relationship between students' bullying involvement and social and emotional skills

Standardised regression coefficients of 15-year-old students' individual skills on the index of bullying, average across sites
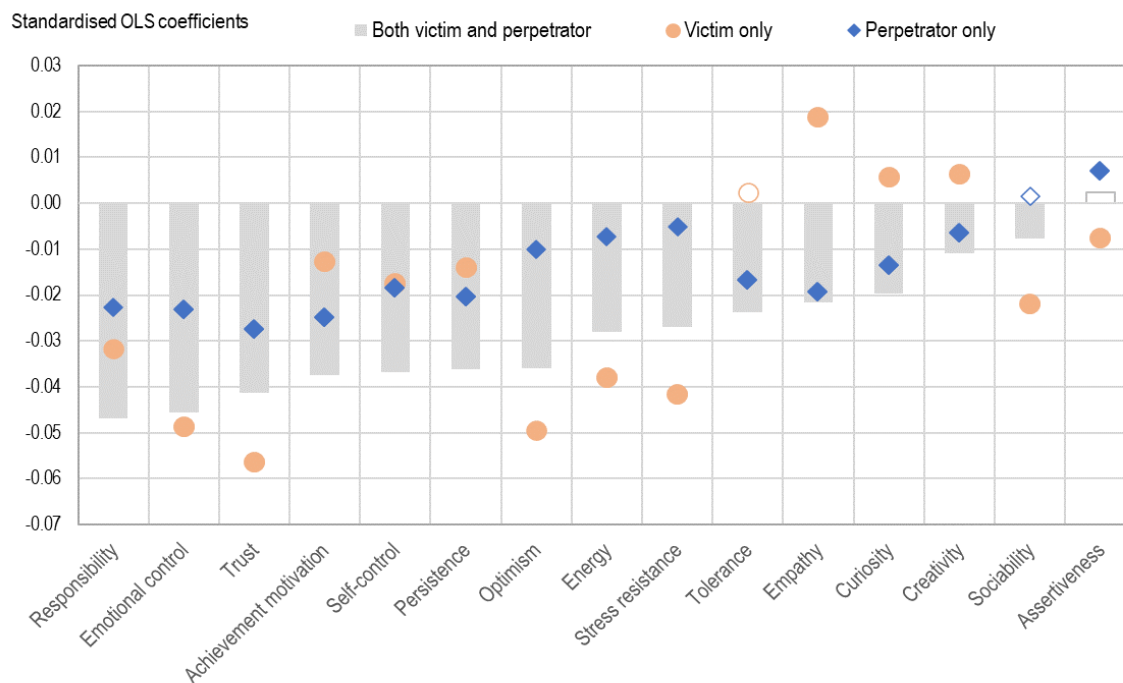


Note: Significant coefficients at a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are coloured, non-significant coefficients are outlined. Models control for gender, educational achievement, socio-economic and migrant status. Reference group is the students who reported not being victim or perpetrator of bullying. See Annex A for information about how the bullying indices were calculated. Social and emotional skills are listed by the size of the effect on being both victim and perpetrator of bullying.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A3.35, A3.36 and A3.37.

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Social and emotional learning programmes may also be more successful at reducing bullying in some sites or schools than others. In sites with the highest levels of bullying (Bulgaria and Delhi [India]), no differences in levels of empathy, engaging with others skills (sociability, energy, assertiveness), optimism or self-control are found between students who are bullying perpetrators only and those not involved in bullying. This suggests different levels of these skills among students are not a significant contributor to their involvement in bullying. In these sites, the normalisation of bullying behaviours in the school may play a more important role. Therefore, education systems' strategies for bullying prevention should integrate social and emotional learning into comprehensive anti-bullying strategies. Implementing practices with a strong evidence base, such as having clear school rules and working with parents as part of a whole-school approach (Gaffney, Ttofi and Farrington, 2021[47]), can help reduce bullying and create a school environment where students feel safe and secure. Such an environment creates the ideal hub for students to develop both their academic and social and emotional skills.

***Boys are more involved in bullying than girls, particularly in physical bullying and as perpetrators***

Overall, boys are more likely to be involved in bullying than girls. Around one-third of boys (34%) were involved in bullying, meaning they reported being a victim, perpetrator, or both, compared to approximately one-quarter of girls (26%), on average across sites (see Table A3.34). However, boys are not over-represented in all bullying roles. A similar proportion of girls and boys report being bullying victims only. On average, across sites, 13% of girls and 14% of boys reported being victims only of social or verbal bullying, while 6% of girls and 8% of boys reported being victims only of physical bullying (see Figure 3.12). The heightened involvement of boys is, therefore, mostly due to more boys being perpetrators, either in isolation or in addition to being victims. One explanation for this finding is that boys tend to only be victims of bullying from other boys, while girls can often be victims of both boys and girls. This would be consistent with findings from the Programme of International Assessment (PISA) that show single-sex girls' schools tend to have lower levels of bullying than gender-balanced schools, while single-sex boys' schools have higher levels (OECD, 2019[54]). Alternatively, perhaps girls are less likely to report taking part in bullying than boys.

### Figure 3.12. Levels of verbal or social and physical bullying by gender

Percentage of 15-year-old students who reported being victim of bullying, perpetrator or both, by form of bullying and gender, average across sites
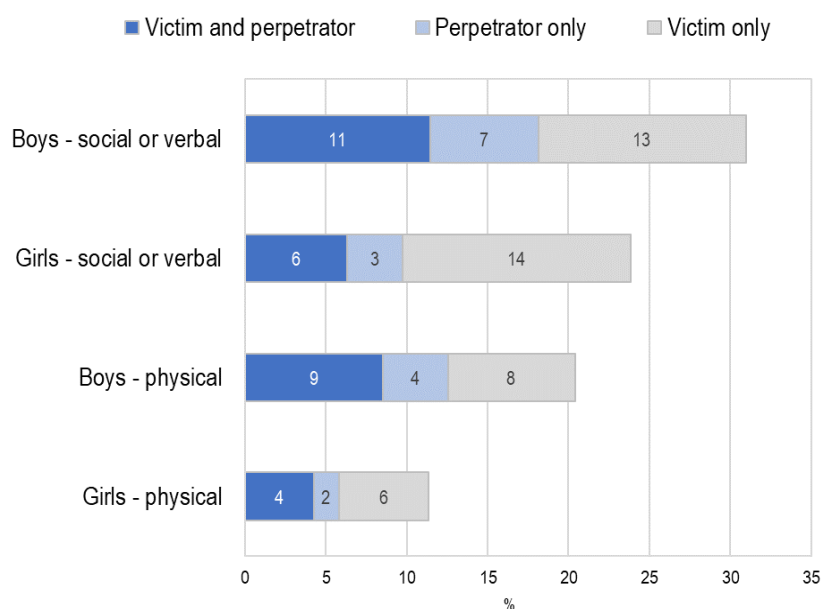


Note: The percentages of involvement in bullying refer to students who reported being involved in bullying - victim and/or perpetrator - in at least one of the items several times a month or more often.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A3.38.

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Low academic attainment is also associated with greater involvement in bullying, both as a victim and perpetrator (see Tables A3.25 and A3.31). This is particularly the case in Bulgaria and Delhi (India), sites with high levels of bullying. Furthermore, disadvantaged students and students from migrant backgrounds tend to be more involved in bullying than other students in some sites. In Bogotá (Colombia), Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Helsinki (Finland) and Sobral (Brazil), disadvantaged students had lower

levels of bullying perpetration than advantaged students, while advantaged students had lower levels of both perpetration and victimisation than disadvantaged students in Bulgaria. However, in all these sites except Bogotá (Colombia), the link between socio-economic background and bullying involvement was weaker than that with academic achievement.

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**Box 3.3. How have levels of bullying and belonging shifted in Bogotá (Colombia) and Helsinki (Finland)?**

Bogotá (Colombia) and Helsinki (Finland) participated in SSES 2019 and 2023, enabling comparisons of students' sense of belonging at school and levels of bullying between these years.

In both cities, 15-year-old students' overall sense of belonging at school was lower in 2023 than in 2019 (see Table A3.1). In both Bogotá and Helsinki, the proportion of students who feel like an outsider, awkward and out of place, and lonely at school increased and fewer students said they make friends easily. In Bogotá, the largest shift was in the proportion of students who agreed they made friends easily: 66% of students agreed with this in 2023, down from 75% in 2019. While in Helsinki, 19% of students agreed they felt lonely in school in 2023, up from 14% in 2019.

Students in both rounds of SSES were asked how often they were made fun of, threatened, hit or pushed, or had their belongings taken away. In both cities, a similar proportion of 15-year-old students said they were made fun of in 2023 compared to 2019 (between 12% and 13% of students at least a few times a month in both sites across these years) (see Table A3.23). While this experience remained stable, levels of all types of physical bullying were greater in Helsinki in 2023 compared to 2019. In 2023, 7% of students in Helsinki said they were threatened at least a few times a month in 2023, up from 3% in 2019. Students in Helsinki were also more likely to say that other students had hit or pushed them and had taken away or destroyed their belongings in 2023. In Bogotá, a similar proportion of students said they were hit or pushed or had their belongings taken or destroyed in both 2019 and 2023, while they were slightly more likely to report being threatened in 2023 (5% compared to 3%).

Source: OECD, SSES 2019 and 2023 Databases Tables A3.1 and A3.23.

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## Key actions for improving school environments and safety

Following Chapter 2's discussion on enhancing social and emotional education in schools, Chapter 3 expanded the scope to the holistic school environment. It discussed how improving students' sense of belonging, positive experiences at school and relationships can strengthen their social and emotional skills and overall development. It also provided new insights about bullying, such as the frequent overlap between perpetrators and victims or misalignment between students' and principals' perceptions of bullying in their schools. The SSES results discussed in this chapter show that many systems can do more to build strong, healthy school communities, particularly in secondary schools. Solutions like creating more opportunities for staff and students to develop relationships, addressing site-specific sources of students' negative emotions (anxiety, anger), and tackling bullying directly, can improve not only school climate and safety, but students' and staff's socio-emotional development.

The next chapter will shift attention to students' home environments and their impact on students' social and emotional skills, especially the effects of gender stereotypes, beliefs and home gender roles.

# Annex 3.A. Chapter 3 Tables

Online tables for each chapter can be accessed via the StatLink.

## Table 3.1. Tables Chapter 3 - School environments that nurture socio-emotional growth

| Table | Title |
|---|---|
| Table A3.1 | Sense of belonging |
| Table A3.2 | Sense of belonging, by student characteristics |
| Table A3.3 | Relationship between students' sense of belonging and social and emotional skills |
| Table A3.4 | Positive emotions at school |
| Table A3.5 | Positive emotions at school, by student characteristics |
| Table A3.6 | Positive emotions at school, by gender |
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## Notes

[1] Bullying is typically defined as unwanted aggressive behaviour that is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power or strength. However, definitions can vary across cultures and contexts. In the SSES, students are considered a victim or perpetrator of bullying if they report experiencing or carrying out any of the following behaviours at least a few times a month in the past year: being left out of things on purpose; being made fun of; being threatened; taking away or destroying belongings; being hit or pushed around; and having nasty rumours spread about them.

# 4 Addressing gender equity

Through the lens of gender equity, this chapter explores how students' beliefs about gender norms, their family environment and career expectations interact with their social and emotional skills. The development of gender stereotypes and students' social and emotional skills are influenced by both the home and school environment, as well as wider societal factors. Monitoring and addressing gender disparities in social and emotional skills can promote more equitable outcomes for students.

# In Brief

## Policy insights

Results from the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2023 suggest the following recommendations for policy makers and practitioners to promote gender equality and parental involvement in developing students' socio-emotional skills:

- **Policies and programmes that tackle gender stereotypes should go beyond women and girls and involve men and boys:** Most interventions to combat gender stereotypes are directed at women and girls. However, gender stereotypes are more prevalent among boys than girls in almost all education systems in participating countries and subnational entities (hereafter, "sites"). This is particularly the case for beliefs that men are better suited to leadership and entitled to greater access to economic resources. On average, across sites, 33% of boys said that men make better political leaders than women, while only 10% of girls agreed with this.

- **Promote greater equality in domestic responsibilities:** It was more common for students to say that female relatives were responsible for tasks such as cleaning, cooking and childcare than male relatives in all sites. Students in homes where responsibilities for unpaid domestic tasks are shared between male and female relatives tend to agree less with gender stereotypes than those where these are mainly the responsibility of female relatives. Promisingly, this effect was often even greater for boys. Students in more equitable homes also had greater social and emotional skills, on average.

- **Tackle gender stereotypes and social norms in school**: Gender stereotypes and social norms that children learn at home and in wider society can be reinforced or challenged in school. The beliefs and behaviours of peers, teachers and other staff, as well as curriculum and teaching and learning materials, can all influence gender beliefs. Training staff to recognise and challenge stereotypes and avoid these in their teaching; increasing the representation of men in the teaching profession; and reducing gender norms in the roles and responsibilities of school staff are some approaches taken by systems.

- **Engage parents in students' social and emotional skill development:** The parental role model is key the development of gender norm and social and emotional skills. In sites where data are available (Bogotá [Colombia], Chile, Ukraine), almost all parents consider themselves responsible for students' social and emotional skill development and believe they are important for their children's success. Some parents consider certain skills more important than others, with persistence and emotional control almost universally valued. Schools should actively work with parents as key partners to support students' social and emotional development. This can include providing information about which skills students are developing and how; the value of different skills for life outcomes; and how parents can reinforce students' learning at home.

- **Provide opportunities for students to develop their interests and self-efficacy in different domains.** Girls are less likely to choose a career in information and communication technology (ICT), science, and engineering than boys, while boys are less likely to expect to work in health and education, even when they have skills that are a good fit for these occupations. Girls in some sites who expect to have a career in ICT, science or engineering are more likely to say their hobbies or talents were a very important factor in their choice, while in certain sites, girls who disagreed with stereotypes that boys are better at technology than girls were more likely to expect a career in this field. Reducing gender stereotypes around different interests, skills, and careers may, therefore, support students in considering a broader range of career possibilities.

## Gender equality and social and emotional skills

Issues of gender equality are intertwined with students' social and emotional skill development. The SSES identifies average gender differences in skills that can contribute to disparities in important life outcomes, such as academic performance, health and well-being, and career expectations (OECD, 2024[1]). Girls tend to have higher levels of tolerance, empathy and responsibility, while boys have higher levels of trust and emotional regulation skills, on average. While the direction of these differences is stubbornly consistent across sites, their size varies, and there are notable exceptions. For example, on average, there are no gender differences in empathy in Bogotá (Colombia) or Kudus (Indonesia), nor in optimism in Gunma (Japan) or Ukraine. While gender differences to the detriment of girls in stress resistance and emotional control are particularly pervasive, typical differences between girls and boys are twice as large in Helsinki (Finland) and Italian sites (Emilia-Romagna and Turin) than in several other sites. These data prompt important questions for education systems and wider society. What factors could explain these differences? Can gender disparities in social and emotional skills be reduced? Could targeting students' social and emotional skills support gender equality in other outcomes? Understanding gender gaps in these skills is a key element of diagnosis and can assist policy makers in identifying potential levers to promote gender equality. Education systems have made significant progress over the past decade in reducing gender differences in academic achievement. Consistent monitoring of gender disparities in these outcomes has helped achieve this. In a similar vein, assessment of students' social and emotional skills can help systems to track progress towards more equitable outcomes.

Social and emotional learning and the shaping of beliefs and social norms about gender take place in all aspects of students' lives. From the home environment, where children's beliefs, behaviours and skills are first shaped, to school, where interactions with staff and peers and learning experiences can either reinforce or challenge gender norms. Moreover, broader societal factors, such as cultural norms and legal structures, further shape the opportunities and constraints individuals face in developing their social and emotional skills in ways that support or hinder gender equality. Achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is a global objective, as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015[2]). Promoting shared domestic responsibilities, ensuring full participation of women in leadership and decision making, and fostering equal rights to economic resources are some of the key targets for countries to achieve this.

 Promoting gender equality is not only a moral objective but a socio-economic strategy: addressing gender inequalities can enhance the growth, competitiveness and sustainability of economies (Fluchtmann, Keese and Adema, 2024[3]). While significant progress has been made in recent decades, gender inequality persists in all areas of social and economic life. Women continue to spend a disproportionate amount of time on unpaid care work and have lower employment rates and lower wages (OECD, 2023[4]), while men represent the vast majority of the prison population and have higher rates of suicide (OECD, 2023[5]). This chapter explores the attitudes and skills of 15-year-olds across 15 sites, providing insights into whether such disparities are likely to persist among the next generation, as well as how they might be addressed.

## Gender stereotypes and social norms

The formation of beliefs about what it means to be a boy or a girl starts in early childhood (King et al., 2021[6]). Gender stereotypes and social norms can impact children's perceptions of what behaviours and opportunities, including careers, are appropriate or available to them (OECD, 2020[7]). In this section, levels of students' agreement with explicit gender stereotypes are discussed, including how these beliefs relate to their social and emotional skills.

***Some students believe certain social and emotional skills are more important for girls or boys, particularly in Bulgaria and Delhi (India)***

Most students believe that social and emotional skills are equally important for girls and boys. However, 11% to 15% of students on average across sites (depending on the skill domain) say these skills are more important for students of a certain gender (see Figure 4.1). In all sites, at least 5% of students hold such beliefs for some skills, meaning teachers in all systems are likely to encounter students with such attitudes in their classrooms. These beliefs are particularly common in Bulgaria and Delhi (India), where over 20% of students said each domain of social and emotional skills was more important for either girls or boys (see Table A4.7).

## Figure 4.1. Beliefs that social and emotional skills are more important for boys or girls

Percentages of 15-year-old students who report the following beliefs on social-emotional gender expectations by gender, average across sites
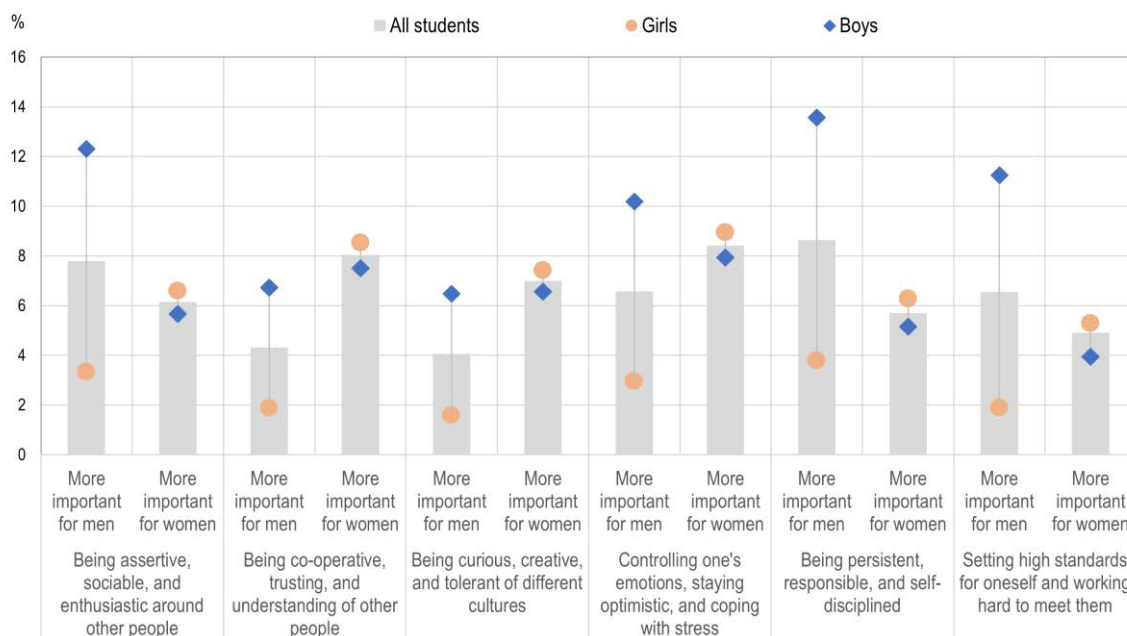


Note: All gender differences are significant at a threshold of p < 0.05.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.7 and A4.8.

*StatLink* 🖳🖵 https://stat.link/ce5wfj

While most boys say social and emotional skills are equally important regardless of gender, fewer boys tend to say this than girls. More boys say social and emotional skills are important for themselves, particularly for engaging with others and task performance skills (see Figure 4.1). On average, across sites, 12% of boys said that skills related to engaging with others (being assertive, social and enthusiastic around other people) are more important for boys than girls. These beliefs were particularly high among boys in Kudus (Indonesia) (37%), Delhi (India) (27%), and Bulgaria (20%) (see Table A4.8). For task performance skills, 14% of boys said being persistent, responsible and self-disciplined is more important for boys on average across sites. Kudus (Indonesia) and Bulgaria also emerge as having particularly large proportions of boys with this belief (33% and 23% respectively), as well as Helsinki (Finland) (21%) and Dubai (United Arab Emirates) (22%). On the other hand, such beliefs were much less common in Bogotá

(Colombia) and Chile, where fewer than 5% of boys said any set of skills were more important for themselves than girls.

In some sites, more students perceive collaboration and open-mindedness skills as more important for girls than boys. In Bulgaria, 21% of students said that collaboration (being co-operative, trusting and understanding of other people) is more important for girls than boys, while 16% of students said the same in Delhi (India). Relatively high proportions of students in these sites also said that open-mindedness skills (being curious, creative and tolerant of other cultures) are more important for girls than boys. However, only a small proportion of students (fewer than 5%) said collaboration or open-mindedness skills were more important for girls in Bogotá (Colombia), Gunma (Japan) and Jinan (People's Republic of China, hereafter "China").

These results show some alignment with typical gender disparities seen in social and emotional skills. Girls tend to have higher levels of empathy and tolerance (from the collaboration and open-mindedness domains), while boys tend to have higher levels of energy and sociability (from the engaging with others domain), as well as self-control (from task performance) (OECD, 2024[1]). Students' beliefs about the roles of men and women may influence the importance they place on developing different social and emotional skills, contributing to gender disparities in these outcomes. Traditional gender roles can create an expectation, for example, that women should be more nurturing and have more concern for others, while men should be assertive and self-disciplined (Stewart et al., 2021[8]). Educators may need to address and challenge such stereotypes to support students' social and emotional learning.

### Boys tend to agree more with gender stereotypes than girls, particularly that leadership and access to economic resources are more important for men

The extent to which 15-year-old students agree with explicit gender stereotypes varies depending on the nature of the belief (see Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3). Overall, students agree most with stereotypes that men and women have different temperaments and that women are better prepared to care for children than men. Such beliefs are relatively common among both boys and girls: over 40% of girls agreed both that women are better prepared to care for children and that girls are more sensitive, compared to around half of boys on average across sites. Beliefs that men are better suited to leadership positions or that access to economic resources is more important for men were less widely held than other stereotypes. However, levels of these beliefs varied the most between boys and girls. For example, on average, across sites, 33% of boys said that men make better political leaders than women, while only 10% of girls agreed with this.

These data suggest significant progress has been made in combating beliefs among girls that men are better suited to leadership or should have greater access to economic resources in most sites. In all sites except Delhi (India), fewer than 5% of girls said higher education was more important for men than women (see Table A4.18). In around half of the sites, fewer than 5% of girls said having a well-paying job was more important for men or agreed that men make better political leaders (see Tables A4.4 and A4.18). However, such beliefs are more common among boys. In Kudus (Indonesia), 73% of boys said men make better political leaders, while 59% said so in Bulgaria, 52% in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and 49% in Ukraine. Even in sites where such beliefs are very low among girls, such as Italian sites (Emilia-Romagna and Turin), Jinan (China) and Spain, between 25 and 30% of boys agreed men make better political leaders, while 37% of boys did so in Helsinki (Finland).

While much progress has been made in the representation of women in business, politics, and other sectors in recent decades, women remain under-represented in many fields and senior positions. The SSES results suggest that beliefs among boys, rather than among girls, are or will become a greater barrier to addressing these issues. There is a significant minority, or even majority in some sites, of boys who believe that men are better suited to positions of power than women (see Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4). Therefore, tackling these beliefs among boys and men should become a greater priority.

### Figure 4.2. Levels of students' agreement with gender stereotypes

Percentage of 15-year-old students agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements by gender, average across sites
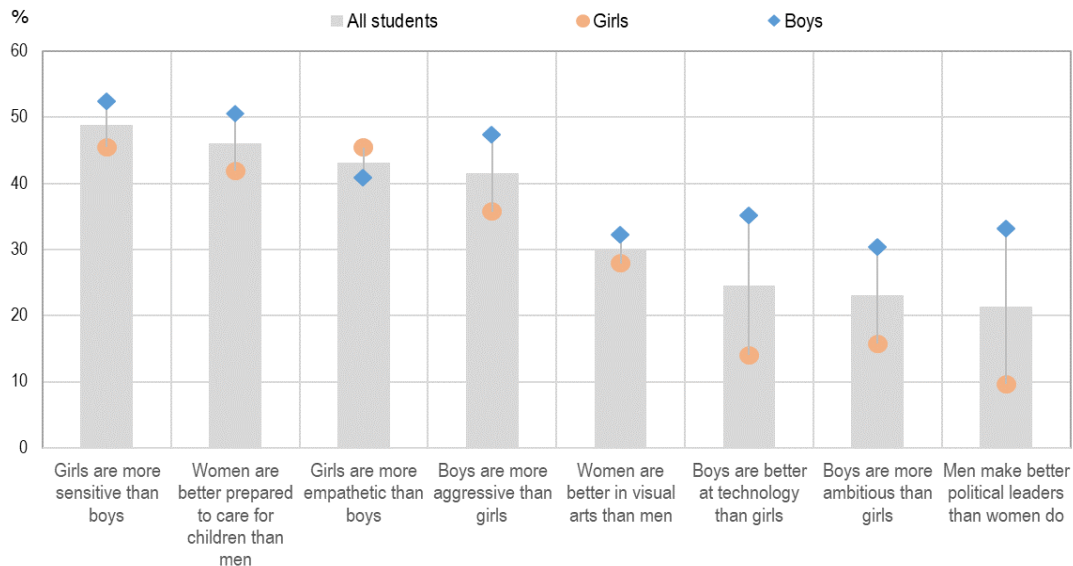


Note: All gender differences are significant at a threshold of $p < 0.05$.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.2 and A4.4.

StatLink ᐧᐧᐧᐧ https://stat.link/tsl5iw

### Figure 4.3. Beliefs that attributes or achievements are more important for men or women

Percentage of 15-year-old students who report the following beliefs by gender, average across sites
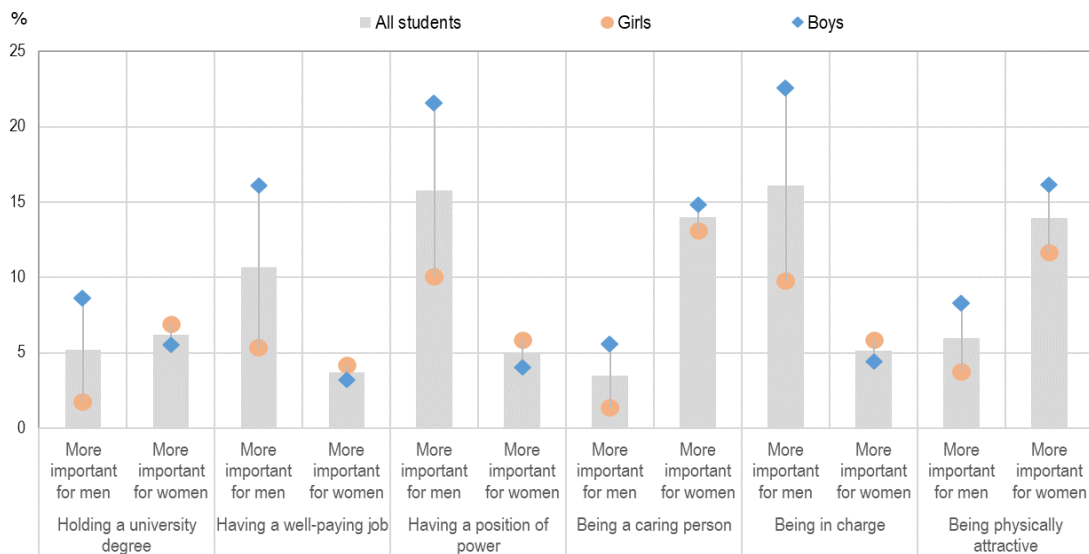


Note: All gender differences are significant at a threshold of $p < 0.05$.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.17 and A4.18.

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## Figure 4.4. Students' agreement with gender stereotypes about ambition and leadership, by sites

Percentage of 15-year-old students agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement, by gender
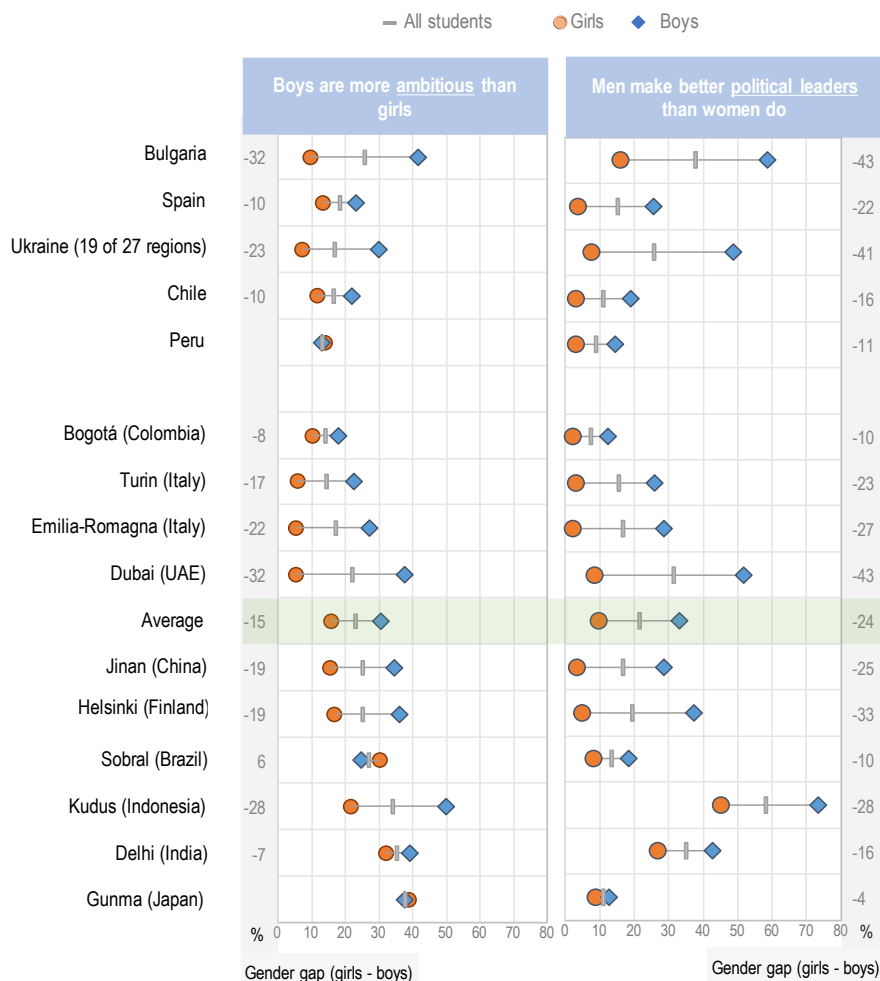


Note: Only differences that are statistically significant with a threshold of p < 0.05 are noted by site names. Sites are listed in descending order of the percentages of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that boys are more ambitious than girls.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.2 and A4.4.

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### Beliefs that women are better prepared to care for children are highest in Bulgaria, Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia) and lowest in Spain and Bogotá (Colombia)

The highest level of agreement with explicit stereotypes among students was with statements that boys and girls have different temperaments in relation to sensitivity, empathy and aggression and that women are better prepared to care for children. Almost half of students (49%) agreed that girls are more sensitive than boys, while 43% said girls are more empathetic than boys and 42% that boys are more aggressive than girls (see Figure 4.2). A similarly high proportion of students agreed that women are better prepared to care for children than men (46%).

Figure 4.5 shows the proportion of all students, as well as boys and girls, in each site who agreed that women are better prepared to care for children than men and that girls are more empathetic than boys. Students in Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia) had the highest level of agreement with these stereotypes,

where 72% and 75% of students respectively agreed that women are better prepared to care for children than men. In Bulgaria, this was the case for 66% of students. On the other hand, this belief was held by 26% of students in Spain and 25% in Bogotá (Colombia).

### Figure 4.5. Students' agreement with gender stereotypes about childcare and empathy, by sites

Percentage of 15-year-old students agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement, by gender
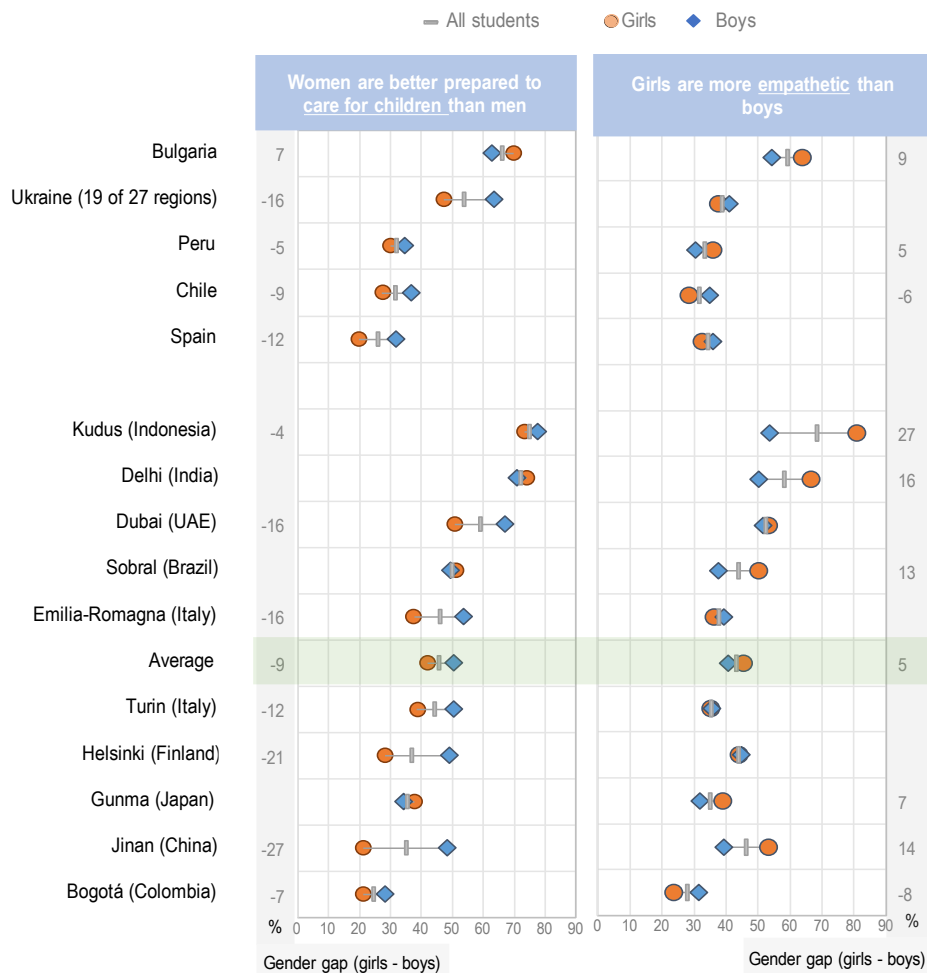


Note: Only differences that are statistically significant with a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are noted by site names. Sites are listed in descending order of the percentages of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that women are better prepared to care for children than men.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.2 and A4.4.

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On average, across sites, more boys than girls said women are better prepared to care for children than men. However, there are exceptions and gender differences tended to be smaller than for stereotypes about women in leadership. There are no significant gender differences in this belief in Delhi (India), Gunma (Japan) or Sobral (Brazil), while girls were more likely to agree than boys in Bulgaria. Gender differences in this belief were widest in Helsinki (Finland) and Jinan (China), where around half of boys agreed that women are better prepared to care for children than men, compared to 28% and 21% of girls, respectively.

## Action for impact: Challenging gender stereotypes in schools

Beliefs that certain roles or temperaments are more important for men or women can be reinforced or challenged in schools through teaching and learning materials. Reviews of textbooks find women and girls are more likely to be portrayed conducting domestic tasks such as cleaning, cooking and childrearing, while men are more likely to be shown doing sports (Mihira et al., 2021[9]). Gender stereotypes can also be perpetuated within new digital tools, for example many artificial intelligence personal assistants have female-sounding voices and names. To address this, many education systems have implemented programmes to eradicate such stereotypes from materials, and several organisations have developed guidelines to support this (Brussino and McBrien, 2022[10]). These include, among other things, having a balanced representation of men and women in images and examples, as well as using gender-neutral job titles (UNESCO/EQUALS Skills Coalition, 2019[11]).

However, revising teaching materials may have less impact if traditional gender norms continue to be reflected in teachers' own beliefs or behaviours. Women often assume greater responsibility for childcare at home and constitute 96% of pre-primary teachers and 83% of primary teachers on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2024[12]). Increasing the diversity of the teaching workforce could help challenge common gender stereotypes, and some systems have implemented strategies to recruit more male teachers (UNESCO, 2022[13]). However, when men enter the teaching profession, they are often expected to take on disciplinary roles and responsibilities for sports or science and maths education (Cruickshank et al., 2019[14]). Instead, seeing more men take on more nurturing responsibilities and women leading extra-curriculars such as sports could help shift students' perspectives on appropriate behaviour for men and women.

### *Students with greater tolerance and emotional control are more likely to disagree with gender stereotypes*

Students with greater tolerance, defined as being open to different points of view and valuing diversity, are more likely to disagree with gender stereotypes in most sites (see Figure 4.6). Although few social and emotional learning interventions explicitly target tolerance, those that do often promote gender equality within broader efforts to foster diversity and inclusion (Steponavičius, Gress-Wright and Linzarini, 2023[15]). Greater disagreement with gender stereotypes was associated with higher tolerance in all sites except Bulgaria and Kudus (Indonesia), where there was no relationship, and Delhi (India), where this was associated with lower tolerance. The lack of such a relationship, or the reverse, in a few sites, suggests that approaches to building tolerance within these systems may not focus as much on gender equality. Tackling students' beliefs may also be more challenging in these sites as agreement with gender stereotypes among students is particularly high. In these systems, a more expansive cultural shift that involves school staff, parents and wider society may be needed to change students' attitudes.

### Figure 4.6. Relationship between agreement with gender stereotypes and students' social and emotional skills

Standardised regression coefficients of 15-year-old students' individual skills on the gender bias index, by gender, average across sites
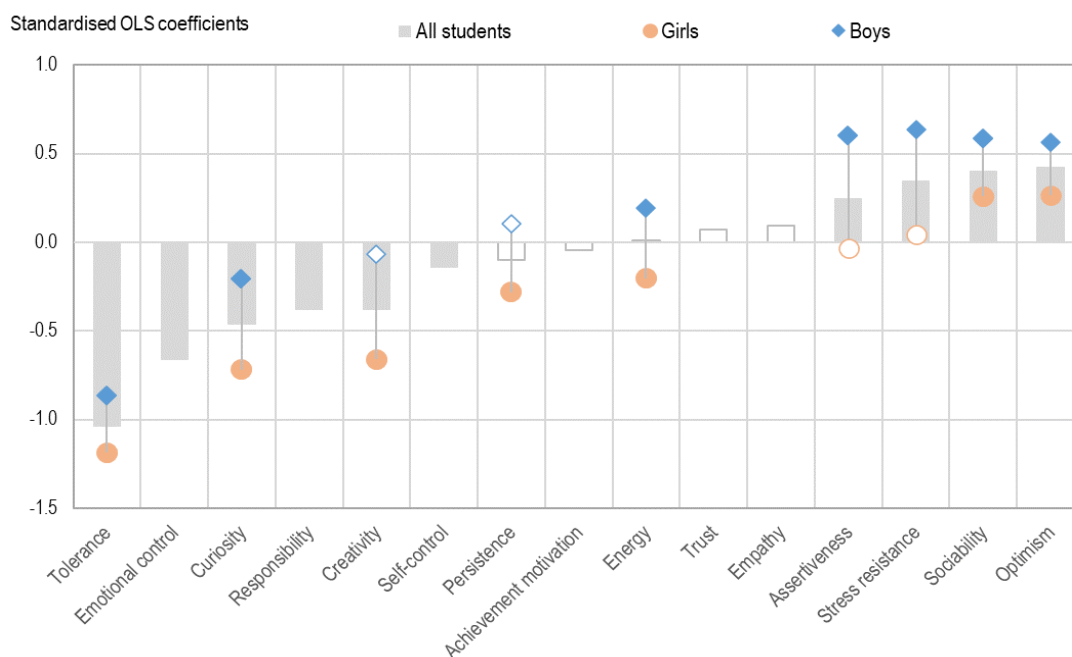


Note: Significant coefficients at a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are coloured; non-significant coefficients are outlined. Gender coefficients are not presented when the difference between the girls' and boys' effects is not significant. Model controls for gender, educational achievement, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how the gender bias index was calculated. Social and emotional skills are listed by the size of the effect on the gender bias/stereotypes index.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.5 and A4.6.

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Students with greater emotional control are also less likely to agree with gender stereotypes. This is the case in most sites, although no such relationship is observed in Bulgaria, Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland), Turin (Italy) or Ukraine. Emotional control is a common target of social and emotional learning interventions, with approaches typically supporting students to recognise and reflect on their emotions before reacting. Students with greater emotional control use effective strategies for regulating temper, anger and irritation in the face of frustrations, and there is good evidence that approaches can be effective in reducing aggression and behavioural problems (Steponavičius, Gress-Wright and Linzarini, 2023[15]). These results suggest that emotional regulation skills might also support students in rejecting stereotypical beliefs. Further research could help understand this mechanism, but perhaps reduced impulsivity and greater self-reflection can help students consider a wider range of perspectives and possibilities, including less rigid roles for men and women.

In most sites, disagreement with gender stereotypes is associated with greater curiosity and creativity among girls (see Figure 4.7). Promisingly, this suggests rejection of gender stereotypes might support broader career ambitions for girls as these skills are both linked to greater take-up of career development activities and expectations to have a career in ICT, science and technology (OECD, 2024[1]).

**Figure 4.7. Relationship between agreement with gender stereotypes and students' social and emotional skills, by sites**

Standardised regression coefficients of 15-year-old students' individual skills on the gender bias index, by gender



Note: Significant coefficients at a threshold of p < 0.05 are coloured; non-significant coefficients are outlined. Gender coefficients are not presented when the difference between the girls' and boys' effects is not significant. Model controls for gender, educational achievement, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how the gender bias index was calculated. Sites are listed in alphabetical order.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.5 and A4.6.

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However, higher levels of other social and emotional skills are sometimes linked to greater agreement with gender stereotypes, particularly among boys. This means that students who agree with statements such as "boys are more ambitious than girls" and "women are better prepared to care for children than men" tend to have greater levels of certain skills than students who disagree with these statements. In around half of the sites, boys who agree with gender stereotypes typically have higher optimism than those who reject them. Boys who agree with gender stereotypes also tend to have greater skills for engaging with

others (energy, sociability and assertiveness) and stress resistance in some sites. Notably, only in South American sites (Bogotá [Colombia], Chile, Peru and Sobral [Brazil]) are no skills positively linked to agreement with gender stereotypes among boys. These results build a complex picture of a minority of boys in some sites who hold traditional views about gender roles, have lower levels of tolerance and emotional control yet are more assertive, sociable and/or optimistic. Unravelling these relationships may help systems better understand and engage with students, particularly boys, who agree with gender stereotypes.

### Tackling gender stereotypes should go beyond women and girls and involve men and boys, but how this is approached matters for success

Some common themes emerge across sites in relation to students' beliefs about gender. Boys are more likely to hold stereotypical beliefs than girls, with a particular gender divide in views on women's leadership and access to economic resources. There is some overlap between tolerance and rejection of gender stereotypes, and greater tolerance among girls may explain some of the gender differences in these beliefs. However, there is much variation between sites, and local context should be considered when tackling these issues.

Table 4.1 summarises levels of four beliefs among boys and girls across sites: social and emotional skills are not equally important for girls and boys; a well-paying job is not equally important for men and women; men and women are not equally suited to political leadership; and men and women are not equally prepared to care for children. Three sites emerge with the highest proportions of both boys and girls with these beliefs: Bulgaria, Delhi (India) and Kudus (Indonesia). While boys tend to have higher levels of gender stereotypes than girls in these sites, efforts to challenge these beliefs would need to target both groups. In other sites, gender stereotypes surrounding women in leadership are very low among girls. Yet, a large minority of boys hold such views, including in Helsinki (Finland), Italian sites (Emilia-Romagna and Turin) and Spain. In these sites, approaches that specifically target such views among boys may be more effective.

Social norms and gender stereotypes are often the target of interventions to promote gender equality. An education approach is often used when working with students, parents or teachers, where participants' knowledge and awareness of restrictive norms and stereotypes is developed, including what stereotypes are, how to identify them and how to counteract them (Brussino and McBrien, 2022[10]). While boys in the SSES tend to hold more rigid views about gender, a recent review found only one-quarter of intervention evaluations specifically worked with men and boys (Stewart et al., 2021[8]).

A key implication of these results and wider research is that policies and programmes that tackle gender stereotypes should go beyond women and girls and involve men and boys. But how should policy makers approach this challenge? Approaches with greater success in shifting boys' attitudes tend to involve peer learning or leadership, such as using older students to mentor young students and including men and boys in the design of interventions (Stewart et al., 2021[8]). Working with male-only cohorts and having interventions led by men may also support better outcomes, although there is a risk this reinforces a view that men cannot learn with or from women. Importantly, interventions often achieve mixed results, and few approaches have been evaluated in different contexts. Education systems should, therefore, carefully consider the specifics of programme content to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or other unintended outcomes and evaluate the impact of approaches taken.

## Table 4.1. Summary of beliefs about gender stereotypes and social norms, by sites

Percentage of students holding each belief, by gender and site

| | Social and emotional skills not equally important for girls and boys | | Well-paying job not equally important for men and women | | Men and women not equally suited to political leadership | | Men and women not equally suited to care for children | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys |
| Bulgaria | 22.4 | 33.2 | 17.4 | 36.6 | 16.0 | 58.6 | 69.8 | 62.6 |
| Chile | 6.1 | 8.9 | 4.0 | 6.4 | 2.9 | 18.8 | 27.3 | 36.6 |
| Peru | 8.8 | 11.8 | 6.5 | 11.1 | 2.9 | 14.3 | 29.9 | 34.5 |
| Spain | 9.1 | 11.4 | 4.2 | 8.3 | 3.5 | 25.5 | 19.9 | 31.8 |
| Ukraine | 6.4 | 15.4 | 8.9 | 26.3 | 7.3 | 48.6 | 47.4 | 63.6 |
| Bogotá (Colombia) | 4.9 | 6.7 | 3.0 | 3.4 | 2.0 | 12.2 | 21.3 | 28.2 |
| Delhi (India) | 20.4 | 31.9 | 17.1 | 30.4 | 26.6 | 42.8 | 74.1 | 71.0 |
| Dubai (UAE) | 8.0 | 21.7 | 12.2 | 32.8 | 8.2 | 51.7 | 50.8 | 66.9 |
| Emilia-Romagna (Italy) | 9.6 | 15.5 | 6.5 | 14.8 | 2.0 | 28.6 | 37.6 | 53.7 |
| Gunma (Japan) | 4.2 | 7.0 | 16.6 | 20.8 | 8.7 | 12.6 | 37.8 | 34.1 |
| Helsinki (Finland) | 10.5 | 18.6 | 10.4 | 26.5 | 4.7 | 37.4 | 28.4 | 49.2 |
| Jinan (China) | 4.6 | 11.0 | 5.3 | 13.2 | 3.4 | 28.5 | 21.3 | 48.3 |
| Kudus (Indonesia) | 11.9 | 29.5 | 15.4 | 34.8 | 45.0 | 73.4 | 73.4 | 77.7 |
| Sobral (Brazil) | 14.0 | 13.1 | 9.9 | 10.4 | 8.0 | 18.3 | 51.3 | 49.4 |
| Turin (Italy) | 8.9 | 13.3 | 5.7 | 13.4 | 3.0 | 25.9 | 38.5 | 50.5 |
| **Average** | 10.0 | 16.6 | 9.5 | 19.3 | 9.6 | 33.1 | 41.9 | 50.6 |

Note: Levels of each belief among students are coloured incrementally from white to dark blue based on the following categories: less than 5%, between 5 and 15%, between 15 and 25%, between 25 and 50% and over 50% of students. The belief that social and emotional skills are not equally important for girls and boys is an average across six statements representing all social and emotional skill domains.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.18 and A4.4.

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## Responsibility for domestic tasks

Although most working-age women across OECD countries are employed, gender roles in domestic house and care work have remained remarkably rigid (OECD, 2017[16]). On average, across OECD countries, women spend twice as much time on unpaid tasks, such as cleaning, cooking and childcare, compared to men (OECD, n.d.[17]). On the other hand, men spend a greater share of their time on paid work and leisure than women. In this section, responsibilities for domestic responsibilities from the perspectives of students are discussed, as well as how the division of labour in families relates to students' social and emotional skills and levels of gender stereotypes.

### *When both parents participate in domestic tasks, students are less likely to agree with gender stereotypes*

Students in households where both parents are responsible for domestic tasks agree less with gender stereotypes compared to those where female family members are mainly responsible, on average (see Figure 4.8). Notably, this effect is sometimes larger for boys. This means that the tendency for boys to agree, for example, that boys are more ambitious than girls or that men make better political leaders than women, can reduce even more when both male and female relatives participate in domestic tasks.

## Figure 4.8. Relationship between less equitable distribution of domestic tasks in the home and agreement with gender stereotypes

Regression coefficients of 15-year-old students' agreement with gender stereotypes on the home gender role index, by gender, average across sites
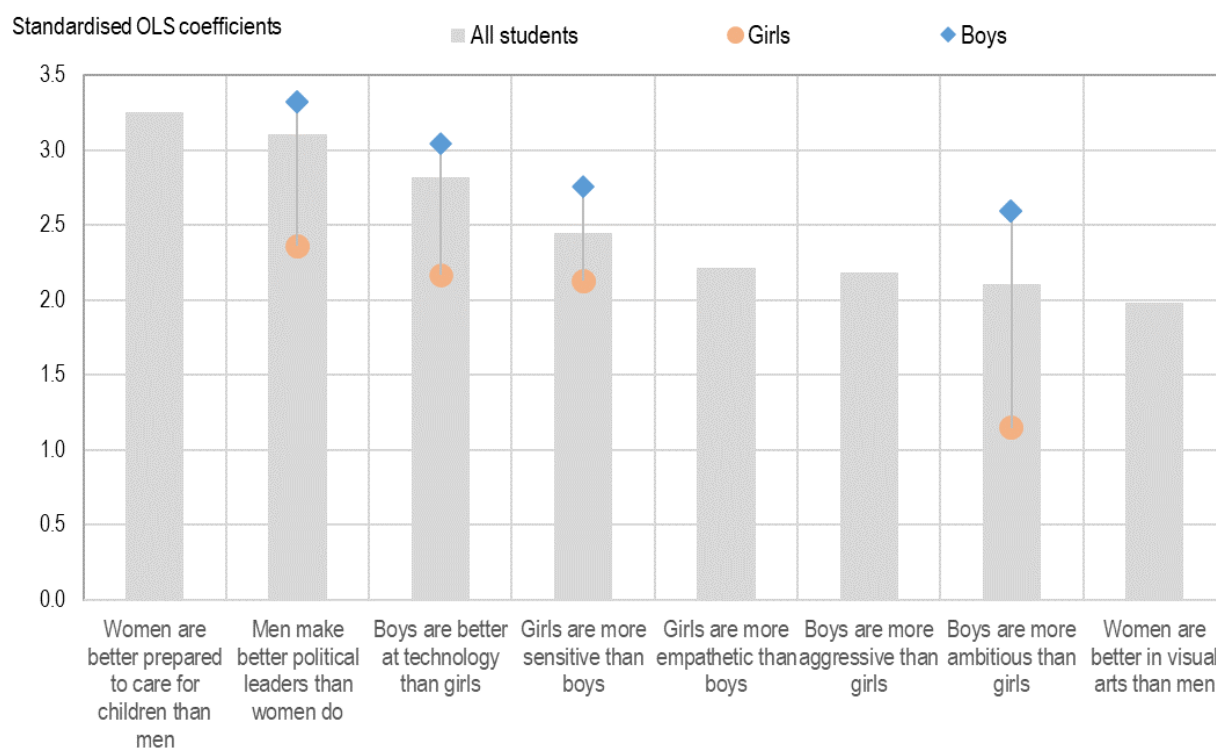


Note: Significant coefficients at a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are coloured; non-significant coefficients are outlined. Gender coefficients are not presented when the difference between the girls' and boys' effects is not significant. Model controls for gender, educational achievement, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how the home gender role index was calculated. Gender bias/stereotypes are listed in the size of the effect on the home gender roles index.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.19 and A4.20.

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### *Students' female relatives are responsible for domestic tasks more often than male relatives*

It was much more common for students to say that female relatives are mainly responsible for domestic tasks than male relatives in all sites (see Figure 4.9). On average, across sites, 45% of students said female family members were mainly responsible for preparing meals, 40% said they were responsible for cleaning the house, and 33% said they were responsible for childcare, while fewer than 5% said these were the main responsibilities of male relatives. However, there was significant variation between sites. In Chile, Spain, Bogotá (Colombia) and Jinan (China), at least 60% of students said responsibilities for childcare, preparing meals and cleaning were shared between female and male relatives, while over 70% did so in Helsinki (Finland). On the other hand, it was more common for female relatives to be solely responsible for both cleaning and cooking in Bulgaria, Delhi (India), Dubai (UAE), Gunma (Japan), and Kudus (Indonesia) than for these tasks to be shared, and for cleaning in Italian sites (Emilia-Romagna and Turin).

## Figure 4.9. Distribution of responsibilities for domestic tasks, by sites

Percentage of 15-year-old students who agreed the following group is responsible for each domestic task



Note: Sites are listed in descending order of the percentages of students agreeing that looking after the children is a shared task between males and females.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A4.9.

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The SSES results suggest that sharing domestic responsibilities more equally at home can foster more equitable beliefs among students about gender roles. However, although gender stereotypes are reduced among students in more egalitarian homes, they are not eradicated. One explanation for this is that, even in households where domestic tasks are a shared responsibility, it is common for women to take on a greater share of these tasks (OECD, 2023[18]). Social norms can and do change. Women's entrance into the workforce and access to property ownership in many areas of the world are just two examples. However, shifts in gender norms for household chores have been slower to change, meaning many women are shouldering this responsibility alongside paid work (Cookson et al., 2023[19]).

The SSES finds that, in a small number of systems with available data (Bogotá [Colombia], Peru, and Ukraine), students with parents who disagree with gender stereotypes are more likely to disagree with these stereotypes themselves (see Tables A4.25 and A4.26). In addition, some relationships are observed between parents' gender stereotypes and their children's social and emotional skills. For example, parental disagreement with the statement "girls are more empathetic than boys" is linked to higher levels of tolerance among boys in all three sites, while disagreement with this statement or "girls are more sensitive than boys" is associated with greater curiosity, assertiveness, or both, among girls in all three systems (see Tables A4.27 and A4.28). The parental role model is clearly a key mechanism for challenging gender stereotypes, particularly for boys (Giménez-Nadal, Mangiavacchi and Piccoli, 2019[20]). However, schools can also challenge such social norms. One area where education systems can influence is their

engagement with parents. Expectations from schools, such as collecting a sick child or volunteering for events, put demands on families, and these often fall disproportionately on mothers (Buzard, Gee and Stoddard, 2023[21]; Fleischmann and de Haas, 2016[22]). One clear indicator of this within the SSES data was that 80% of the respondents to the parent questionnaire across the eight sites where this was administered were female. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic heightened awareness of this issue when women bore the brunt of responsibilities for childcare while schools and other provisions were closed (OECD, 2021[23]; Alon et al., 2020[24]). In addition, wider research shows that active and regular engagement of fathers with their children predicts a range of positive outcomes, including the reduction of behavioural problems in boys and psychological problems in young women (Sarkadi et al., 2007[25]). This underscores the importance of improving fathers' engagement in their children's schooling and promoting a more equitable distribution of parenting tasks.

### *Students in families where responsibility for domestic tasks is shared between male and female relatives tend to have greater social and emotional skills*

Students in homes where responsibility for domestic tasks, such as cleaning, cooking and childcare, are shared between male and female relatives tend to have greater levels of all social and emotional skills compared to those where these are the responsibility mainly of female relatives (see Figure 4.10).

#### Figure 4.10. Relationship between less equitable distribution of domestic tasks in the home and students' social and emotional skills

Standardised regression coefficients of the 15-year-old students' home gender roles index on individual skills, by gender, average across sites



Note: Significant coefficients at a threshold of p < 0.05 are coloured; non-significant coefficients are outlined. Gender coefficients are not presented when the difference between the girls' and boys' effects is not significant. Model controls for gender, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how the home gender role index was calculated. Social and emotional skills are listed by the size of the effect on the home gender roles index.
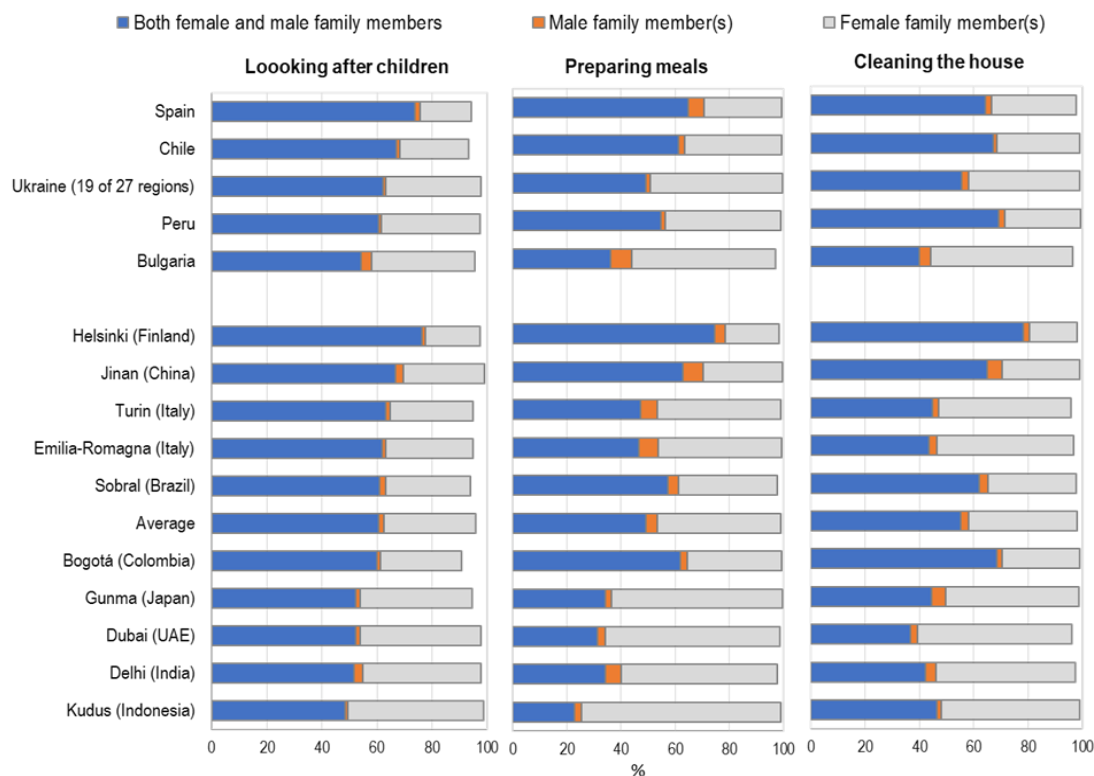Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.14 and A4.16.

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In the SSES, girls are typically assessed as having poorer emotional regulation skills (emotional control, stress resistance and optimism), trust and energy, while boys tend to have lower levels of tolerance and empathy. However, behind these averages there is much variation. Students' home environments may explain some of this. In households where domestic responsibilities are shared, both boys and girls have higher levels of tolerance on average across sites, but this increase tends to be greater for boys in several sites (Chile, Spain, Bogotá [Colombia], Sobral [Brazil] and Turin [Italy]). Shared domestic responsibilities are associated with greater increases in empathy among boys than girls in Bulgaria, Spain, Bogotá (Colombia), Dubai (UAE), Emilia-Romagna (Italy) and Gunma (Japan). Similarly, the positive relationship between more equitable distribution of household tasks and girls' emotional regulation skills, trust and energy is greater than for boys in Peru, Ukraine, Bogotá (Colombia), Delhi (India), Dubai (UAE) and Emilia-Romagna (Italy) for at least one of these skills. These results are promising because they suggest that home environments where men and women share tasks such as cleaning and cooking could help reduce gender disparities in social and emotional skills. However, this is just one factor that can influence gender disparities and is clearly not a silver bullet. Gender disparities in these skills were widest in Helsinki (Finland) and Italian sites (Emilia-Romagna and Turin) (OECD, 2024[1]), yet the proportion of students in these sites that said domestic responsibilities were shared between male and female relatives were either similar to or above average. This suggests that, while greater equity in the home is a promising target to promote a range of positive outcomes, approaches to reducing gender disparities in social and emotional skills need to be multi-faceted.

One factor that might confound the relationship seen between domestic responsibilities and students' social and emotional skills is family structure. Students in single-parent homes may attribute responsibility for household tasks to the parent they live with most of the time, which may be more commonly mothers than fathers. Using data from the SSES parent survey in Bogotá (Colombia), Peru and Ukraine, the effect can be adjusted for. Figure 4.11 shows the relationship between inequity in domestic responsibilities and students' skills before and after adjusting for households where no father is present in these sites. This shows that, while the strength of the relationship reduces a little for some skills in these sites, most remain broadly similar, and a consistent relationship remains.

**Figure 4.11. Relationship between less equitable distribution of domestic tasks in the home and students' social and emotional skills before and after adjusting for homes without fathers in a subset of sites**

Standardised regression coefficients of the 15-year-old students' home gender roles index on individual skills, by gender, average across Bogotá (Colombia), Peru and Ukraine
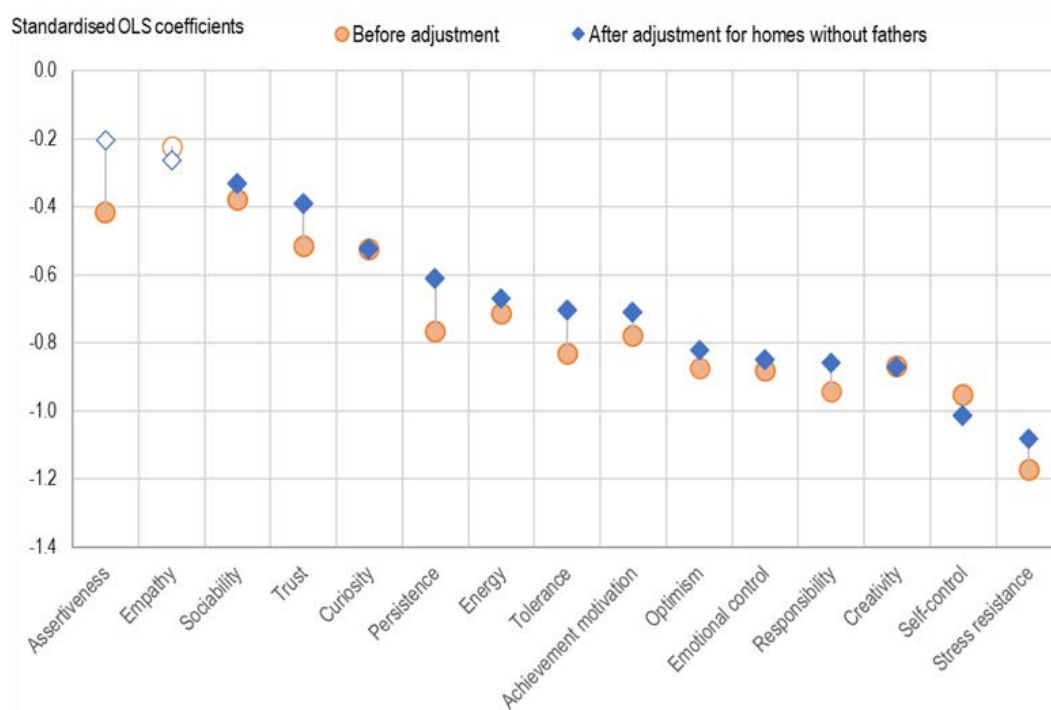


Note: Significant coefficients at a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are coloured; non-significant coefficients are outlined. Model controls for gender, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how the home gender role index was calculated. Social and emotional skills are listed by the size of the effect on the home gender roles index adjusted for homes without fathers.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.14 and A4.15.

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***Boys are more likely to say male relatives are responsible for bringing in income than girls, even when both parents work full-time***

More boys than girls say that male relatives are mainly responsible for bringing in income for their household (see Figure 4.12

Figure 4.12). This suggests girls often give greater recognition to the contribution of female relatives to family finances; boys tend to give this less recognition, or both. On average, across sites, 32% of boys say household income is mainly the responsibility of male relatives, compared to 24% of girls. These gender differences in students' perspectives are largest in Bulgaria, Delhi (India), Helsinki (Finland), and Jinan (China), while there was no difference in Gunma (Japan)

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## Figure 4.12. Family members responsible for different domestic tasks

Percentage of 15-year-old students who report male or female family members are responsible for different tasks in the home by gender, average across sites
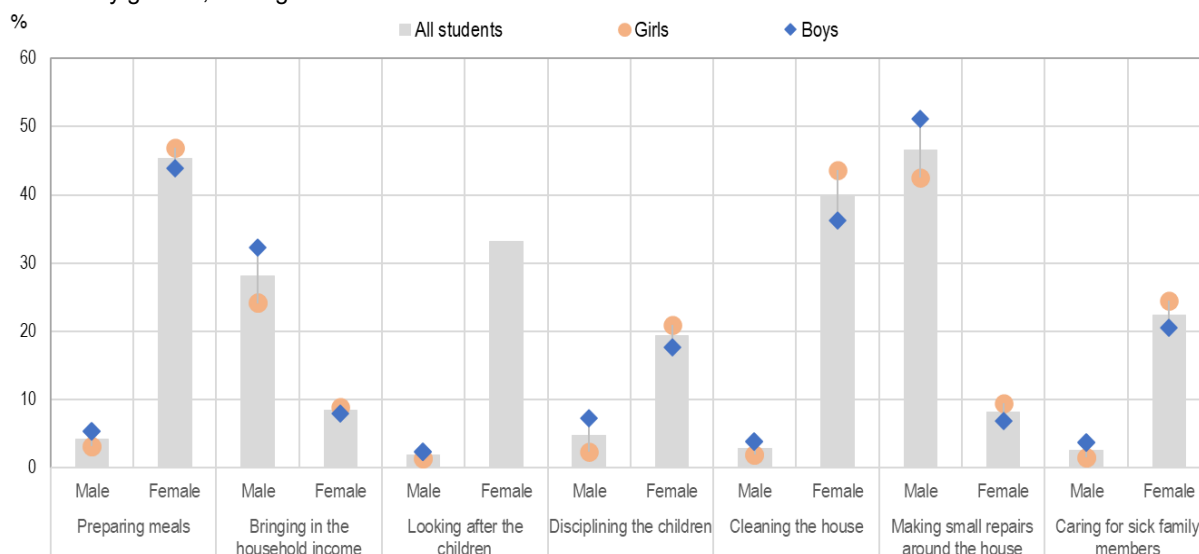


Note: Gender percentages are not presented when the difference between the girls and boys is not significant at a threshold of p < 0.05..
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.9 and A4.10.

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Although fewer girls and boys say male relatives are responsible for household income when both parents work full-time, similar gender differences in responses remain. On average, across sites, 14% of girls in households where both parents work full-time say that male relatives are mainly responsible for bringing in household income, compared to 23% of boys (see Table A4.12).

Compared to household income, gender differences in students' perspectives on tasks such as preparing meals and cleaning were more variable. On average, across sites, around half of both girls and boys said that responsibility for preparing meals was shared among male and female relatives. However, gender differences did emerge in some systems. More boys than girls in Helsinki (Finland) said preparing meals was a responsibility of female relatives than male relatives (27% of boys compared to 14% of girls), while similar gender differences are seen in perspectives on responsibilities for cleaning and childcare tasks. On the other hand, the opposite is seen in Bogotá (Colombia), Gunma (Japan) and Sobral (Brazil), where girls are more likely to say that domestic chores are mainly the responsibility of female relatives than boys.

What factors might contribute to these different perspectives? In some sites, perhaps parents impress more on their daughters than their sons that tasks are shared in the household. In others, girls might themselves be more involved than boys in domestic tasks, meaning they are more likely to consider it a responsibility of women in the home. While the mechanism is unclear and warrants further research, these results show that boys' and girls' perspectives often differ not only on more hypothetical issues but also on seemingly objective questions about who does which tasks in their own homes.

### *Schools can challenge gender stereotypes, but engaging parents and other caregivers in this task is also key*

Schools can promote gender equality and challenge gender stereotypes in multiple ways. For example, promoting gender equality can be included as a curriculum objective; teaching and learning materials can be revised to remove stereotypical representations of men and women; and school staff can be trained to be aware of and address gender biases (Brussino and McBrien, 2022[10]). However, since families play an important role in the formation of gender stereotypes, working with parents and other caregivers is also key. Some systems provide parents with practical resources to help them understand issues around gender equality and make changes at home. The SSES is one such resource that could be used to help parents reflect on relevant issues and implications. Results that may help prompt such conversations include students' beliefs about the roles of men and women and gender disparities in social and emotional skills, as well as student involvement in bullying, health and well-being outcomes and career aspirations.

Data from parents in three sites (Bogotá [Colombia], Peru, and Ukraine) highlights that the vast majority of parents think social and emotional skills are important for their child's development and success, with skills such as persistence and emotional control valued above literacy and numeracy (see Figure 4.13). In all three sites, almost all parents agree that they are responsible for developing students' social and emotional skills (96% on average across the three sites), more so than other groups, including students themselves (87%) and teachers (73%) (see Figure 4.14). These results suggest that focusing on how promoting gender equality can support students' social and emotional skills may be a more effective approach in engaging parents than the link with academic success in these sites. However, most respondents to the parent survey in all three sites were students' mothers, therefore it is unclear if patterns of responses would be different among fathers.

### Figure 4.13. Parents' agreement that skills are important for their child's development and success in a subset of sites

Percentage of parents of 15-year-olds who rated each skill as important or very important for their child's development and success, average across Bogotá (Colombia), Peru and Ukraine
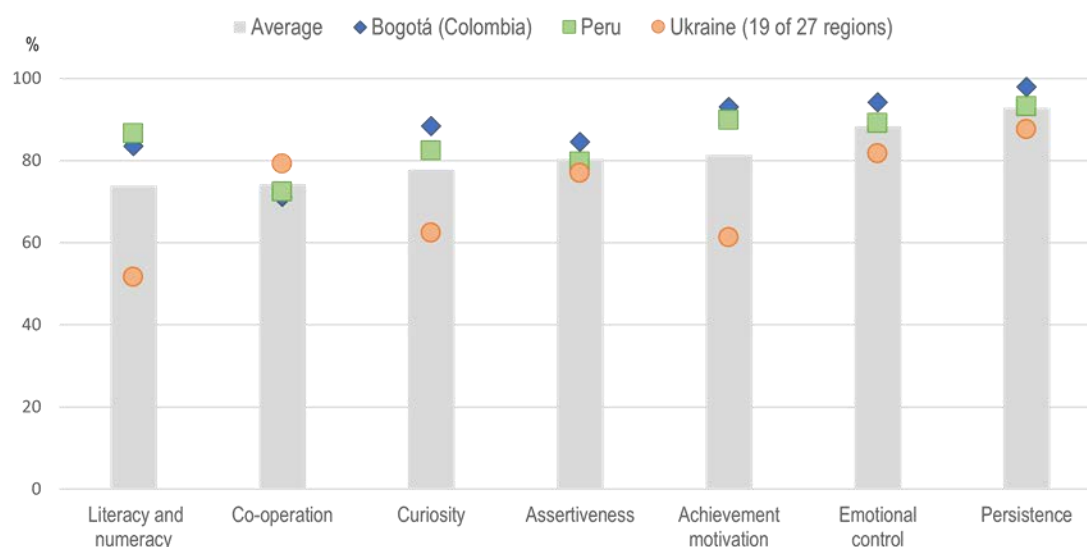


Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A4.29.

**Figure 4.14. Parents' views on who is responsible for students' social and emotional skill development in a subset of sites**

Percentage of parents of 15-year-olds who agreed each group should be responsible for developing students' social and emotional skills, average across Bogotá (Colombia), Peru and Ukraine
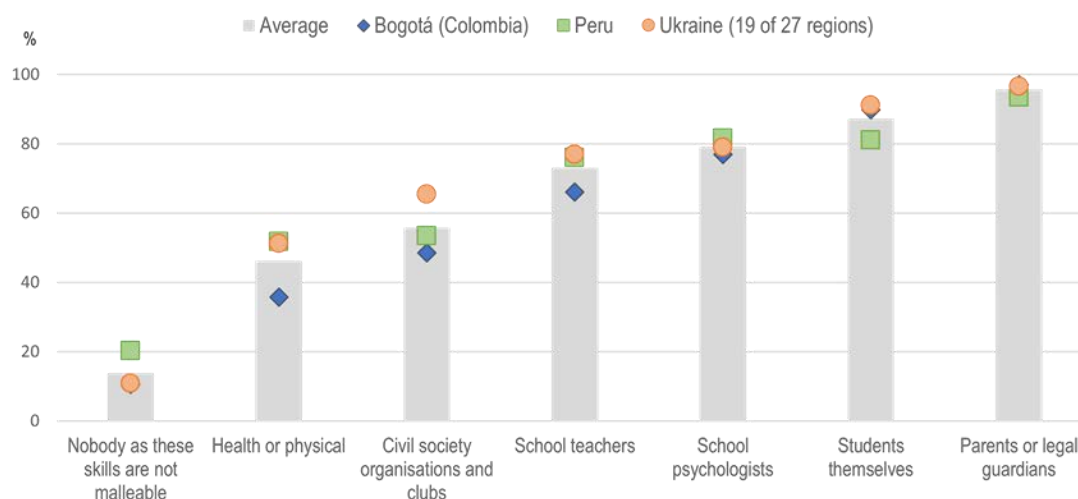


Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A4.30.

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**Box 4.1. Gender stereotypes and bullying**

Bullying behaviours towards gender non-conforming students is one way traditional gender norms can be reinforced in schools. Boys who do not conform to stereotypical gender norms are more likely to experience bullying than girls. On average across sites, 34% of students agreed that boys in their school who display gender non-conforming characteristics or behaviours are made fun of, while 24% agreed the same for girls.

While gender non-conformity can be a risk factor for being a victim of bullying, high conformity with stereotypical gender roles is associated with bullying perpetration among boys (Loverno et al., 2020[26]). School environments where students associate certain skills with either men or women or feel at risk of being bullied for expressing non-gender conforming characteristics or behaviours may hinder their social and emotional development.

**Figure 4.15. Agreement that students displaying non-gender conforming characteristics are made fun of in school, by sites**

Percentage of 15-year-old students agreeing or strongly agreeing that students displaying non-gender conforming characteristics are made fun of in school

Students make fun of girls who display masculine characteristics or behaviours
Students make fun of boys who display feminine characteristics or behaviours

Bulgaria
Spain
Chile
Peru
Ukraine (19 of 27 regions)

Dubai (UAE)
Turin (Italy)
Sobral (Brazil)
Emilia-Romagna (Italy)
Delhi (India)
Bogotá (Colombia)
Average
Helsinki (Finland)
Jinan (China)
Kudus (Indonesia)
Gunma (Japan)

0    10    20    30    40    50    60 %
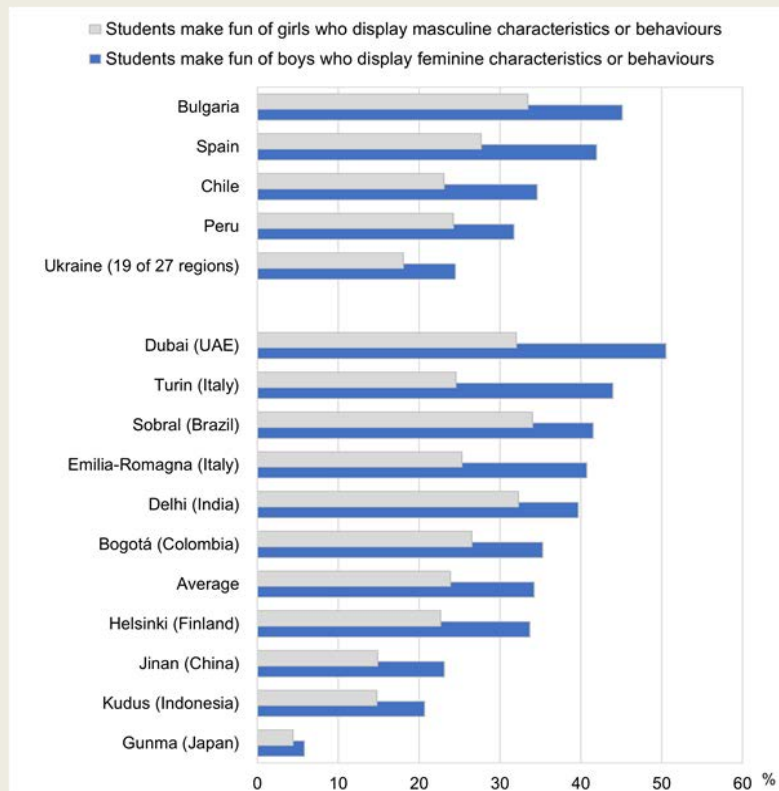
Note: Sites are listed in descending order the percentages of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that students make fun of boys who display feminine characteristics or behaviours
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A4.33

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## Students' career expectations

Gender stereotypes at home, in school and in wider society influence both boys' and girls' study and career choices (Master, 2021[27]; Ellemers, 2018[28]). Gender norms in career expectations are evident even among very young children: five-year-old girls are likelier to aspire to caring or creative roles, while five-year-old boys are likelier to aspire to jobs in transportation or construction (OECD, 2020[7]). The influence of gender stereotypes on career choices can further entrench inequalities because careers that are associated with traditional gender roles for women, such as teaching and caregiving, typically offer lower salaries. This section explores career expectations of students with similar academic and social and emotional skills and the relationship between gender stereotypes and aspirations.

***Among students with similarly high levels of curiosity and maths skills, more boys expect a career in ICT, science and technology, while more girls expect a career in health***

Women and girls are under-represented in science, technology engineering and maths (STEM) careers globally (OECD, 2017[29]). This impacts women's earning potential, as jobs in these sectors are some of the most lucrative. Gender disparities in occupational choices may also make women, who are over-represented in clerical and service work and under-represented in senior management positions, more vulnerable to job displacement through automation. The influence of women on technologies such as artificial intelligence, which are shaping society at a quickening pace, is also reduced, and lack of diversity within a workforce can be detrimental to innovation and productivity (Gomez and Bernet, 2019[30]). On the other hand, men are less likely to enter professions such as teaching and nursing. The lack of men in caring roles may reinforce gender stereotypes that care is women's work.

Women and girls have the skills to succeed in STEM careers (Charlesworth and Banaji, 2019[31]). On average, across sites, 8% of girls have high attainment in maths and high levels of curiosity, compared to 6% of boys (defined as being in the top quarter of students for both skills in their site). However, among students with high levels of both these skills, almost half as many girls expected to have an ICT, science, or engineering career as boys (see Table 4.2). At the same time, over half as many boys with these same skills expect to have a career in health as girls.

**Table 4.2. Future career expectations among students with high curiosity and maths attainment, by site**

| | Students in top quartile for both curiosity and maths attainment in their site | | | Among students in the top quartile for both curiosity and maths attainment: | | | | | |
| | | | | Expect a career in ICT, science or engineering | | | Expect a career in health | | |
| | Girls | Boys | Gender diff | Girls | Boys | Gender diff | Girls | Boys | Gender diff |
| | % | % | % diff. | % | % | % diff. | % | % | % diff. |
| Bulgaria | 7.6 | 4.2 | **3.4** | 22.1 | 26.0 | -4.0 | 27.5 | 8.3 | **19.3** |
| Chile | 5.1 | 2.3 | **2.8** | 16.5 | 32.3 | -15.8 | 46.3 | 24.5 | **21.9** |
| Peru | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a |
| Spain | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a |
| Ukraine | 10.5 | 6.2 | **4.3** | 16.8 | 43.0 | **-26.3** | 17.2 | 6.6 | **10.6** |
| Bogotá (Colombia) | 7.2 | 6.1 | 1.1 | 24.2 | 43.5 | **-19.3** | 29.4 | 12.6 | **16.7** |
| Delhi (India) | 8.5 | 7.1 | 1.4 | 4.5 | 19.3 | -14.8 | 33.0 | 1.8 | **31.1** |
| Dubai (UAE) | 9.3 | 6.9 | **2.4** | 30.4 | 44.1 | -13.7 | 33.1 | 21.0 | 12.1 |
| Emilia-Romagna (Italy) | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a |
| Gunma (Japan) | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a |
| Helsinki (Finland) | 7.2 | 6.2 | 1.0 | 9.0 | 18.3 | -9.3 | 29.1 | 17.3 | 11.8 |
| Jinan (China) | 6.8 | 11.6 | **-4.8** | 26.9 | 26.1 | 0.8 | 15.7 | 8.5 | 7.2 |
| Kudus (Indonesia) | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a |
| Sobral (Brazil) | 6.2 | 6.3 | -0.1 | 4.5 | 14.3 | -9.8 | 51.1 | 24.2 | **26.9** |
| Turin (Italy) | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a | a |
| **Average** | 7.6 | 6.3 | **1.3** | 17.2 | 29.7 | **-12.5** | 31.4 | 13.9 | **17.5** |

Note: ICT, science and engineering sectors refer to ISCO codes 21, 25, 31 and 35. The health sector refers to ISCO codes 22, 32 and 2634. Statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between girls and boys are bold.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table A4.22.

*StatLink* 🖾🖳 https://stat.link/ms3lwc

### *More girls say their grades and availability of financial support, training and employment opportunities are important influences on their career choice than boys*

Having the necessary skills is only one factor in students' career choices. Students also need to be interested in their chosen field and feel confident in their abilities. Practical or structural issues, such as the availability of training and employment opportunities, can also have an impact. Students were asked how important different influences are on their career plans, such as school grades and parental expectations. On average, across sites, over 75% of both girls and boys said available employment opportunities, their talents, expected salary, and available education or training options were important or very important factors in their choice (see Table A4.23).

There were some gender differences in students' career influences. In all sites except Gunma (Japan), more girls said their school grades were an important factor in their choice (83% of girls on average across

sites, compared to 74% of boys), while more girls also said practical considerations such as availability of education or training options, financial support, and employment opportunities were important.

The high proportion of students in most sites who cite their grades, talents and hobbies as important factors highlights the important role that students' interests and evaluations of their abilities have on their career choices. In most sites, girls who expect to have a career in ICT, science or technology were more likely to say their hobbies or talents were an important factor in their career choice than those who expect a career in health (see Table A4.24). This was the case for girls in Bulgaria, Chile, Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Gunma (Japan), Jinan (China), Kudus (Indonesia), Peru, Spain, and Ukraine for either or both their hobbies or talents. On the other hand, in most sites, there is no difference in the importance of their talents or hobbies for their career choice among boys who expect a career in these sectors. This suggests that developing related hobbies and recognising their talents may have been particularly formative for girls who expect a career in ICT, science or technology.

### *Disagreement with gender stereotypes is associated with less gender-normative career expectations in only a minority of sites*

Gender stereotypes can perpetuate ideas that STEM careers are for men or that caring roles are for women. These beliefs may impact students' perceptions of their skills and the pursuit of hobbies in related areas. Beliefs that boys are better at mathematics, for example, can negatively affect girls' self-efficacy and limit the career paths they consider open to them (Zander et al., 2020[32]). On average, across sites, 24% of students agreed that boys are better at technology than girls (see Figure 4.16). Levels of this belief were highest among students in Bulgaria, Kudus (Indonesia) and Ukraine. This belief was also more common among boys than girls in all sites except Gunma (Japan). On average, across sites, 35% of boys agreed that boys are better at technology, compared to 14% of girls. Gender differences in this belief were widest in Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Helsinki (Finland) and Ukraine. Similarly, as discussed earlier in this chapter, beliefs that women are better suited to caring tasks may influence students' career aspirations in fields such as nursing and teaching.

Girls who agree that boys are better at technology were less likely to expect a career in ICT, science or engineering in Peru, Spain and Ukraine than those who disagreed, while there were no differences in other sites (see Table A4.21). Boys who disagreed that girls are more empathetic than boys were just as likely to aspire to a career in health compared to boys who agreed with this statement, except for Bulgaria, where agreement with this statement was associated with higher aspirations for this career. In Spain and Turin (Italy), boys who disagreed that women are better prepared to care for children than men were more likely to expect a career in health than other boys. The lack of relationships between stereotypical beliefs and career aspirations in most sites may reflect that explicit biases among students themselves may play a relatively small role in their career choices. Students may assert, for example, that different occupations can be for both men and women, while making career choices that align with social norms themselves. Greater agreement with many stereotypes among boys, including that boys are better at technology, also suggests that such beliefs among men and boys may play a larger role than those among women and girls.

These results suggest education systems need to go further than tackling explicit gender stereotypes to help students consider a broader range of career options. Intervention programs focused on increasing diversity in different professions are one tool used to address these disparities, particularly for attracting girls to STEM careers. Common features of such interventions include giving students opportunities to develop and put their skills into practice and exposure to role models, such as via mentoring or networking opportunities (Palid et al., 2023[33]). Such approaches may help build girls' self-efficacy in science and mathematics, particularly in sites where explicit biases among girls are already low. Another tool available to schools is to ensure more equitable access to and participation in relevant extra-curricular activities. Wider research finds that boys participate in clubs with a focus on computers, such as programming or

coding, much more than girls and spend more of their free time on related activities (OECD, 2024[34]; Dabney et al., 2012[35]). Where participation in such activities is voluntary, girls' take-up may be impacted by gender norms at school and in wider society. There is some evidence that efforts are having a positive impact. More girls in both Helsinki (Finland) and Bogotá (Colombia) expect to have careers in ICT, engineering or technology in 2023 compared to those in 2019, reducing gender gaps in these expectations (OECD, 2024[1]). On the other hand, there was no shift in gender differences in expectations for careers in health or teaching between these years in these sites. As demonstrated in this chapter, boys often hold more traditional gender ideologies than girls, and boys' career expectations are no less typical in countries with more egalitarian gender beliefs. Notably, gender gaps in aspirations to work as teachers are often larger in countries with more egalitarian gender beliefs (Han, Borgonovi and Guerriero, 2020[36]). Without explicit policies and interventions to widen boys' career expectations, their lack of representation in certain professions may result in even greater disparities due to the lack of male role models.

## Figure 4.16. Agreement that boys are better at technology than girls, by sites

Percentage of 15-year-old students agreeing or strongly agreeing with the following gender stereotypes, by gender
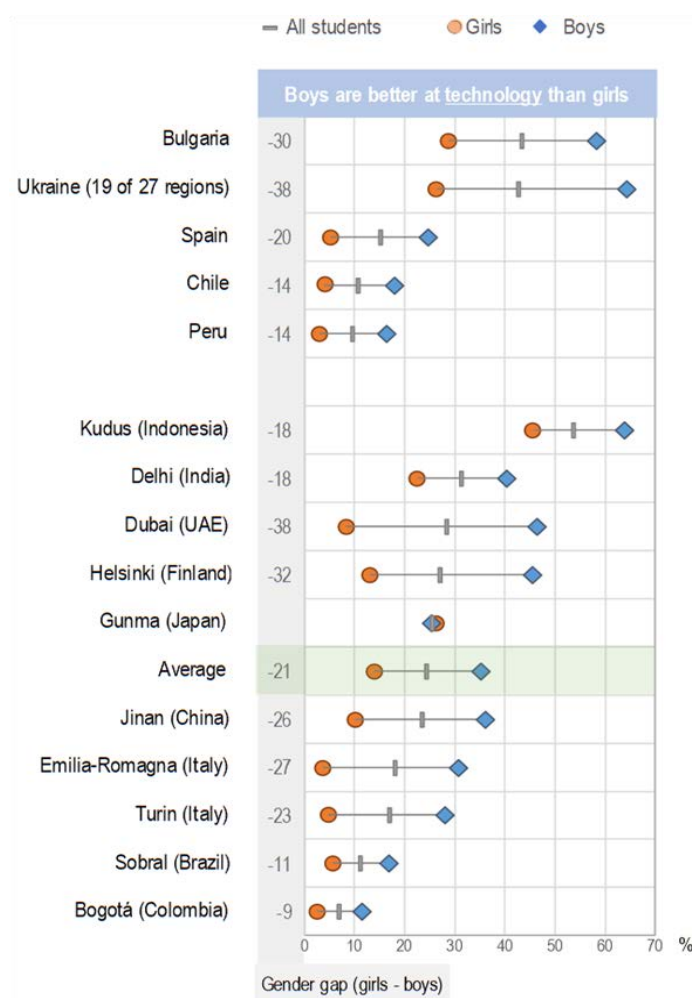


Note: Only differences that are statistically significant with a threshold of p < 0.05 are noted by site names. Sites are listed in descending order of the percentages of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that boys are better at technology than girls.
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables A4.2 and A4.4.

*StatLink* 🖳 https://stat.link/d9fqr1

## Key actions for promoting gender equity

Previous chapters in this volume outline how school policies, practices and environments can nurture students' social and emotional growth. Equally, as discussed in this chapter, schools are well-placed to challenge students' gender stereotypes and promote more equitable development of social and emotional skills. However, students' home environments also play a key role in both social and emotional learning and the development of gender norms. Policies and interventions that target both school and home environments, including more equitable division of unpaid domestic responsibilities, and facilitate positive engagement between schools and families are therefore needed to make greater progress. Promisingly, social and emotional learning can provide a framework to support parental engagement, allowing for a broader discussion with parents and guardians about their child's strengths and development needs. The SSES results discussed in this chapter also show that, while efforts to promote gender equity appear to have had a positive impact on girls' beliefs about the roles and rights of women, greater focus should be placed on engaging boys, who often hold more stereotypical beliefs.

Social and emotional learning takes place in all domains of students' lives and all students need opportunities at school, home and in wider society to develop and express their social and emotional skills, without hindrance from stereotypical norms and expectations. Ultimately, the development and assessment of these skills, including persistence, stress-resistance, empathy and co-operation, can help students reach their full potential and build more prosperous, equitable and cohesive societies.

# Annex 4.A. Chapter 4 Tables

Online tables for each chapter can be accessed via the StatLink.

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| Table A4.2 | Gender bias/stereotypes (aggregated) |
| Table A4.3 | Gender bias/stereotypes, by gender |
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| Table A4.25 | Relationship between parents and students' gender stereotypes - girls are more empathetic than boys, by gender |
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| Table A4.32 | Gender-based violence |
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*StatLink* 🏮🖳 https://stat.link/mptvs4

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# Technical background

The OECD would like to acknowledge and thank the Ayrton Senna Institute (São Paulo, Brazil), the institute that supported the development phases of the psychometric work in this assessment, and 2E Estudios y Evaluaciones, the contractor that conducted data processing and scaling for the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2023 Main Survey.

## Construction of social and emotional skill assessment scales

Social and emotional skill scales in SSES are scaled to fit approximately normal distributions with means around 500 and standard deviations around 100. In statistical terms, a one-point difference on a skill scale therefore corresponds to an effect size (Cohen's d) of 0.01; and a ten-point difference to an effect size of 0.10.

The SSES assessment, like all assessments, is susceptible to several possible measurement errors. Despite the extensive investments SSES makes in monitoring the translation process, standardising the administration of the assessment, selecting questions, and analysing the data quality, complete comparability across countries and subpopulations cannot always be guaranteed. While self-reported questionnaires are an established method for measuring social and emotional skills, they can be affected by the respondent's interpretation of the questionnaire item. Self-reported measures are also susceptible to multiple biases: **social desirability bias**, where students provide answers they think are more socially acceptable; **reference group bias**, where students compare themselves to the group of persons around them while answering questions, and when the reference group itself can differ from one student to another, and from school to school; **response style bias**, where students from different cultures provide different patterns of responses, such as providing more extreme or more modest responses.

SSES acknowledges these potential biases and tries to minimise the effect of these potential biases on the variables and relations between variables presented in this report. For this, the SSES controls for acquiescent response tendencies in students' social and emotional skills. In 2019, the SSES used anchoring vignettes to examine reference group bias and assessed students' social and emotional skills via direct (student) and indirect (parent and teacher) assessment (OECD, 2021[1]). The pattern of results was similar for the direct and indirect assessment of social and emotional skills, and unlike adjustments by acquiescence, anchoring vignettes did not generally improve the assessment beyond what was already done. Therefore, only a direct assessment of social and emotional skills via students' self-reports was used in 2023, and responses were controlled for acquiescence.

### *Acquiescent response style*

Acquiescence refers to tendencies among respondents to provide their agreement or disagreement to different positively and negatively worded statements irrespective of the content, wording and direction. Such response styles may result in biased measures, and the calculation of acquiescence response sets (ARS) has been suggested as a way of modelling such response tendencies for Likert-type items (Primi et al., 2020[2]). One way to control for acquiescence is using a balanced set of items per scale in which positively and negatively worded items are paired within scales. One of the design features of the SSES assessment was to have both positively and negatively worded items within each item set measuring a

particular construct scale. However, the items were not evenly balanced. To derive an acquiescence response set, 34 pairs of items across all scales were selected. To control for acquiescent response styles, multiple group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) models were estimated using ARS as control variables as part of multiple indicator multiple cause (MIMIC) models, which generally showed improved model fit and higher levels of measurement invariance.

### Trend scales

To refine the social and emotional skills assessment, some items were replaced with new items between 2019 and 2023. Most of the analysis on social and emotional skills in this report used the "main scales" constructed from all items of the SSES 2023 skills assessment. "Trend scales" are used for all analyses that include participating countries and subnational entities (hereafter, "sites") in SSES 2019 and 2023. These scales were constructed using only items in common between the two years ("trend items") to allow results to be compared between sites in SSES 2019 and 2023. Trend scales were only used for the analysis where trend items or indices relating to the school or home environment were available – for example, the index of students' sense of belonging was measured in 2019 and 2023. Achievement motivation was measured in SSES 2019 as a "compound skill" created from items used to evaluate other skills (OECD, 2021[1]). In SSES 2023, achievement motivation is measured using a new set of dedicated items, and no trend scale is available for this skill.

### Cross-site comparability of social-emotional assessment scales

The SSES 2019 Technical Report (OECD, 2021[3]) and the SSES 2023 Technical Report (OECD, forthcoming[4]) explain the scaling procedures and the construct validation of all social-emotional assessment scales in detail. This section summarises the analyses carried out to validate the cross-site comparability of the social and emotional skill assessment scales used in this report. The internal consistency of scaled indices, factor analysis to assess construct dimensionality, and the invariance of item parameters are the three approaches SSES 2019 and 2023 used to examine the comparability of scaled indices across sites. Based on these three approaches, all indices examined in this report meet the reporting criteria. Internal consistency refers to the extent to which the items that make up an index are interrelated. Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the internal consistency of each scale within the sites and to compare it among sites. The coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating higher internal consistency. Similar and high values across sites are an indication of reliable measurement across sites. Commonly accepted cut-off values are 0.9 for excellent, 0.8 for good, and 0.7 for acceptable internal consistency. The reliability for each of the social and emotional skills assessment scales was higher than 0.7 in each site and for each scale (concretely in 178 of the 225), with the following exceptions in SSES 2023:

- Achievement motivation: Delhi (India) (0.65)
- Assertiveness: Bogotá (Colombia) (0.66), Delhi (India) (0.42), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.60), Sobral (Brazil) (0.67)
- Creativity: Delhi (India) (0.58)
- Curiosity: Delhi (India) (0.69), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.66)
- Emotional control: Delhi (India) (0.63)
- Empathy: Bogotá (Colombia) (0.68), Delhi (India) (0.53), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.60), Sobral (Brazil) (0.65)
- Energy: Bulgaria (0.67), Bogotá (Colombia) (0.68), Delhi (India) (0.40), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.64), Sobral (Brazil) (0.60), Ukraine (0.67)
- Optimism: Delhi (India) (0.53), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.68)

- Persistence: Delhi (India) (0.60), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.69)

- Responsibility: Delhi (India) (0.59), Sobral (Brazil) (0.68)

- Self-control: Bulgaria (0.61), Bogotá (Colombia) (0.66), Delhi (India) (0.51), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.47), Mexico (0.69), Peru (0.69), Sobral (Brazil) (0.62), Ukraine (0.64)

- Sociability: Delhi (India) (0.66), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.68)

- Stress resistance: Bogotá (Colombia) (0.69), Delhi (India) (0.42), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.51), Sobral (Brazil) (0.65)

- Tolerance: Bogotá (Colombia) (0.64), Delhi (India) (0.56), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.61), Mexico (0.69), Sobral (Brazil) (0.66), Ukraine (0.64)

- Trust: Bulgaria (0.69), Delhi (India) (0.50).

Exceptions for SSES 2019 are noted in the SSES 2019 Technical Report (OECD, 2021[3]).

The analyses of the SSES data involved a series of iterative modelling and analysis steps. These steps included the application of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate constructs and an MGCFA to review measurement invariance across groups (gender, age cohorts and sites). In assessing measurement equivalence for SSES trend scales, comparisons were made between cycle groups (Round 1 and Round 2). In addition, MGCFA models were estimated using ARS as control variables as part of MIMIC models, which generally showed improved model fit and higher levels of measurement invariance.

All items had a Likert-type format with five categories and included both positively and negatively worded statements. The five categories were "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neither agree nor disagree", "agree" and "strongly agree". Each item was scored from 0 to 4 for items with positively worded statements and reverse scored for the negatively worded ones.

The SSES student surveys in Delhi (India), Helsinki (Finland), Mexico and Ukraine were conducted in the third quarter of 2023 and were therefore not included in the data for estimating the scaling parameters for the student direct assessment.

In testing for measurement invariance, three different models were specified and compared:

- **Configural invariance** is the least constrained model. This model assumes that the items measuring the underlying latent construct are equivalent across all reference groups (e.g. sites). If the strength of the associations between the groups is the same, then the latent construct is assumed to have the same meaning for all groups (i.e. the structure of the construct is the same). Configural invariance would make it possible to examine whether the overall factor structure stipulated by the measures fits well for all groups in the sample. However, for scales reaching configural invariance, neither scores nor their associations can be directly compared across groups.

- **Metric invariance** is achieved if the structure of the construct is the same across groups (i.e. configural invariance is achieved) and the strength of the association between the construct and items (factor loadings) is the same across groups. Metric invariance would allow for comparisons of within-group associations among variables across groups (e.g. correlations or linear regression) but not for the comparison of scale mean scores.

- **Scalar level invariance** is achieved when metric invariance has been achieved, and the intercepts/thresholds for all items across groups are equivalent. When scalar invariance is achieved, it is assumed that differences in scale means across groups are free of any cross-group bias. At this level of measurement equivalence, scale scores can be directly compared across groups.

Results of the MGCFA are presented in Table 0.1. Finally, the item response theory (IRT) generalised partial credit model (GPCM) was used to scale items and generate scores.

**Table 0.1. Levels of measurement invariance for social and emotional skills scales**

|  | Age cohorts | Gender | Sites |
|---|---|---|---|
| Curiosity | Metric | Metric | Metric |
| Tolerance | Metric | Scalar | Metric |
| Creativity | Scalar | Scalar | Metric |
| Responsibility | Metric | Scalar | Metric |
| Self-control | Metric | Scalar | Metric |
| Persistence | Metric | Scalar | Metric |
| Achievement motivation | Metric | Scalar | Metric |
| Sociability | Metric | Scalar | Metric |
| Assertiveness | Scalar | Scalar | Metric |
| Energy | Metric | Metric | Metric |
| Empathy | Metric | Metric | Metric |
| Trust | Metric | Scalar | Metric |
| Stress resistance | Scalar | Metric | Metric |
| Optimism | Scalar | Scalar | Metric |
| Emotional control | Scalar | Metric | Metric |

## Construction of the questionnaire indices

Several SSES measures reflect indices that summarise responses from students, principals or teachers to a series of related questions. There are three different types of indices:

- **Simple indices** are constructed using an arithmetic transformation or recoding of one or more items in exactly the same way across assessments. Here, item responses are used to calculate meaningful variables, such as the recoding of the four-digit International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) 2008 codes into "highest parents' socio-economic index (HISEI)".
- **Complex composite indices** are based on a combination of two or more indices. The index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) is a composite score derived from three indicators related to family background.
- **Scale indices** are constructed by combining multiple items intended to measure an underlying latent construct. The indices were scaled using GPCM unless otherwise indicated.

## Simple indices

### Student age

Student age (Age_Std) was calculated as the age in months at the time of the questionnaire administration. It is the difference between the date the student questionnaire was administered and the student's date of birth. Student age was derived from information about the student's date of birth and the actual start date of the administration of the student questionnaire. Generally, data from the student tracking forms (STF) were given priority over information provided by students when responding to the questionnaire.

### Gender

A student gender variable (Gender_Std) was computed by using valid codes (i.e. not missing) from the student questionnaire variable STQM00401 STF (1 for girls, 2 for boys and 3 for other). When Gender_Std had a missing value, STF_Gender from the STF was used.

*Grades*

SSES collected information on school grades in three subjects: reading (Sgrade_Read_Lang), mathematics (Sgrade_Math) and the arts (Sgrade_Arts). As different sites used different grading systems, all grades were transformed on a scale from 1 to 50.

*Immigrant background*

Information on the country of birth of students and their parents was also collected. Included in the database are three country-specific variables related to the country of birth of the student and their mother and father (STQM11901, STQM11902 and STQM11903). The variables indicate whether the student, mother and father were born in the country of assessment or elsewhere. The index on immigrant background (IMMBACK) is calculated from these variables. It has the following categories: 1) native students (students who are born in the country of assessment and students who had at least one parent born in the country of assessment); and 2) non-native students (students who are born abroad and/or parents who are born abroad). Students with missing responses for either the student or for both parents were given missing values for this variable.

*Parents' level of education*

In the student questionnaire, respondents were asked about the highest level of education of each of their parents with questions using nationally appropriate terms according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (UNESCO, 2017[5]). Respondents were asked to select from ten levels ranging from no completion of ISCED Level 1 (primary education) through to completion of ISCED Level 8 (doctoral or equivalent level). An index, HISCED, was derived by taking either parent's highest level of education from the student questionnaire. If data were only available for one parent, then that is used as the highest level.

*Parents' highest occupational status*

Occupational data were collected using open-ended questions in the student questionnaires (STQM011-STQM014). The responses were coded to four-digit ISCO codes and then mapped to the International Socio-economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) (Ganzeboom and Treiman, 2003[6]). The highest occupational status of parents (HISEI) corresponds to the higher ISEI score among parents or to the only available parent's ISEI score. A higher ISEI score indicates higher levels of occupational status.

*Shared mindset on the impact of social and emotional skills*

A school was categorised as having a shared mindset among school staff about the impact of social and emotional skills if all teachers and the school's principal (strongly) agreed on a particular positive outcome of social and emotional skills. This categorisation was done separately for each item of the scales on the impact of social and emotional skills (TCQM10601/PRQM11801-TCQM10610/PRQM11810). Caution is warranted when interpreting results as the number of schools and teachers from each school participating in the SSES 2023 varied across participating sites (see Table T2_avgteachsch_mean).

*Shared mindset on the responsibility for developing social and emotional skills*

A school was categorised as having a shared mindset among school staff about the responsibility for developing social and emotional skills if all teachers and the principal of the school responded "yes" to the responsibility of a particular group (e.g. "school teachers in general", "parents or guardians"). This categorisation was done separately for each item of the scales on the responsibility for developing social

and emotional skills (PRQM11901/TCQM10701-PRQM11907/TCQM10707). Caution is warranted when interpreting results as the number of schools and teachers from each school participating in the SSES 2023 varied across participating sites (see Table T2_avgteachsch_mean).

## Scaled indices

### Bullying perpetration

To measure students' involvement in bullying as a perpetrator (ST_BULLYPERP), students were asked how often ("Never or almost never", "A few times a year", "A few times a month", "Once a week or more") they had done the following in the past 12 months: "I made fun of other students", "I spread nasty rumours about other students", "I left other students out of things on purpose", "I threatened another student", "I took away or destroyed things that belonged to other students", and "I hit or pushed other students around" (Items STQM15801-STQM15806). Students received higher scores on this scale if they indicated a higher frequency of occurrence of these situations.

### Bullying victimisation

To measure students' involvement in bullying as a victim (ST_BULLY), students were asked how often ("Never or almost never", "A few times a year", "A few times a month", "Once a week or more") they experienced the following in the past 12 months: "Other students made fun of me", "Other students spread nasty rumours about me", "Other students left me out of things on purpose", "I was threatened by other students", "Other students took away or destroyed things that belonged to me", and "I got hit or pushed around by other students" (Items STQM15701-STQM15706). Students received higher scores on this scale if they indicated a higher frequency of occurrence of these situations.

### Emotions at school

Students rated the frequency in which they felt certain emotions at school in the previous year ("Never or almost never", "Less than half of the time", "About half of the time", "More than half of the time", "All or almost all of the time"). Four items referring to positive emotions (e.g. "confident", "motivated", "happy") from STQM155 were used to build the index of positive emotions (ST_ POSEMOT). Three items referring to negative emotions (e.g. "anxious", "upset", or "angry") were used to build the index of negative emotions at school (ST_ NEGEMOT). Higher scale scores correspond to a high frequency of positive and negative emotions at school.

### Engagement in extra-curricular activities

To measure students' engagement in extra-curricular activities (ST_EXTRACUR), students were asked how often they participate in several extra-curricular activities (e.g. "School play or school musical", "Volunteering or service activities"). The responses to the 11 items (STQM15901-STQM15911) with 4-point response options ("I don't", "Once a month", "Once a week", "More than once a week") were scaled to the index of ST_EXTRACUR. Students indicating a higher frequency of extra-curricular activities obtained higher scores on the scale.

### Gender stereotypes and biases

Students rated their agreement with the following gender stereotypes and biases: "Boys are more ambitious than girls", "Men make better political leaders than women do", "Boys are better at technology than girls", "Boys are more aggressive than girls", "Women are better prepared to care for children than

men", "Girls are more empathetic than boys", "Women are better in visual arts than men", and "Girls are more sensitive than boys" (Items STQM14601-STQM14608). Each of the items included in this scale had five response options ("Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Neither agree nor disagree", "Agree", or "Strongly agree"). Higher scores on the gender stereotypes and biases scale (ST_GENBIAS) indicate greater agreement with gender stereotypes and biases, while lower scores indicate greater disagreement.

### Home gender roles

To measure how responsibilities for domestic tasks in students' homes are distributed, students were asked whether male relatives, female relatives or both are mainly responsible for the following domestic tasks: preparing meals, looking after children, cleaning the house and caring for sick family members (Items STQM14901, STQM14903, STQM14905 and STQM14907). Higher scores on the home gender roles scale (ST_HOMGEN) indicate that female relatives are mainly responsible for these tasks, while lower scores indicate that these are shared between male and female relatives.

### Impact of social and emotional skills

Teachers and principals rated their agreement to the question if social and emotional skills have an impact on different positive outcomes (e.g. "Decreased absenteeism and truancy", "Increased student participation and engagement in school", "Improved well-being of students). The TC_SESIMPAC and PR_SESIMPACT scales consisted of the same ten items answered by principals and teachers (TCQM10601-TCQM10610 and PRQM11801-PRQM11810). Each of the ten items included in this scale had five response options ("Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Neither agree nor disagree", "Agree", or "Strongly agree"). All items in the scale were positively worded. Teachers and principals indicating a greater impact of social and emotional skills received higher scores on the scales.

### Inclusion of social and emotional learning in teacher training

Teachers were asked if any topics listed below were included in their teacher education, in-service training programme, training for their other professional qualifications or professional development activities. Teachers could choose between the following response options: "Included in my teacher education or in-service training programme or training for other professional qualifications", "Included in my professional development activities during the last 12 months", or "Not included". Two scales were built from teachers' responses to the eight items (TCQM10801-TCQM10808). Teachers receiving higher scores on the scale of inclusion of social and emotional learning in teacher training (TC_SESITE1) had received more training on the eight items relating to social and emotional teaching, whether they were included in training in the last 12 months or in previous trainings. Teachers receiving higher scores on the scale of inclusion of social and emotional learning in recent teacher training (TC_SESITE2) had received more training on the eight items relating to social and emotional teaching in training in the last 12 months.

### Opportunities for developing student´s social and emotional skills

Teachers were asked how often they promote different skills or characteristics in their target class ("Never", "In some lessons", "In most lessons", or "In every lesson"). Items referred to skills of each of the domains assessed in the SSES 2023 framework, including "Being assertive, sociable and enthusiastic around other people" (engaging with others) or "Being persistent, responsible and self-disciplined" (task performance). All seven items (TCQM11601-TCQM11607) in the scale of teachers' opportunity to develop social and emotional skills (TC_OPPODEV) were positively worded. Higher scale scores correspond to providing more opportunities for developing social and emotional skills in class.

### Peer-to-peer relationships

Question STQM151 collected the students' ratings about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements about their relationships at school (e.g. "My classmates are respectful towards me", "If I walked into my classes upset, my classmates would be concerned about me"). Six items were used to scale the students' responses into the index of ST_STUCLASS. Each of the six items included in this scale had four response options ("Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", or "Strongly agree"). One item in the scale was negatively worded, and it was reverse-coded prior to scaling. Higher scale scores correspond to better student-classmate relationships.

### Promotion of social and emotional learning

Principals were asked in which ways the development of students' social and emotional skills were promoted in their school (e.g. "The development of these skills is one of the objectives included in the school educational plan", "Implementation of the development of these skills is part of the school's disciplinary rules"). Eight items (PRQM1201-PRQM1208) were included in this scale (PR_SESPRO), with two response options ("No" or "Yes"). Principals indicating a high level of promotion of social and emotional learning at their school obtained higher scores on the scale.

### Sense of belonging

The ST_BELONG scale consisted of six items from the STQM154 question, three of which were positively worded (e.g. "I make friends easily at school") while the other three were negatively worded (e.g. "I feel like an outsider [or left out of things] at school"). Each of the six items included in this scale had four response options ("Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", or "Strongly agree"). Students indicating a greater sense of belonging obtained higher scores on the scale.

### Skills and online and remote teaching

Teachers who indicated that they had taught students online or remotely during the previous year (TCQM12001) were asked about the extent to which the development of different skills or characteristics were hindered or fostered due to online or remote teaching in their opinion ("Hindered a lot", "Hindered a bit", "No effect", "Fostered a bit" or "Fostered a lot"). The six items (TCQM12301-TCQM12307) referred to each of the skills assessed in the SSES 2023 assessment, e.g. "Controlling one's emotions, staying optimistic, and coping with stress" (emotional regulation), "Setting high standards for oneself and working hard to meet them" (achievement motivation). All items in the scale were positively worded. Higher values on the index mean that the teachers had a stronger belief that online and remote teaching can foster rather than hinder social and emotional learning.

### Student-teacher relationships

A multi-dimensional CFA model was constructed using items related to student perceptions of their teachers. For the first dimension, ST_RELTEACH, students rated the agreement or disagreement with some statements about their perception of the relationship between students and teachers. Some of these statements were "The teachers at my school are respectful towards me" or "The teachers at my school are friendly towards me". Six items were used to scale the student's responses into the index. Each of the six items included in this scale had four response options ("Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", or "Strongly agree"). One item in the scale was negatively worded, and it was reverse-coded prior to scaling. Higher scale scores correspond to better relationships with teachers as perceived by the students.

*Teacher coping strategies*

Question TCQM128 asks teachers to rate the extent to which they used some strategies to cope with work-related stress (e.g. "Maintain a sense of humour", "Practice good human relations skills"). Based on nine items, the index TC_COPING was constructed with the responses to a four-point scale ("Not at all", "To a small extent", "To a moderate extent", or "To a large extent"). Higher scale scores correspond to a greater number of strategies to cope with work stress. All items in the scale were positively worded.

*Teacher efficacy*

Teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they could do different tasks in teaching the target class ("Not at all", "To a small extent", "To a moderate extent", or "To a large extent"). Items of the efficacy scale included tasks relating to the perceived efficacy of engaging students (e.g. "Help students value learning") and in managing the classroom (e.g. "Get students to follow classroom rules"). The scale also included tasks related to socio-emotional teaching (e.g. "Understand students' feelings and emotions"). All items in the scale were positively worded.

Three scales were built from the 11 items (TCQM11801-TCQM118011). While the teachers' overall efficacy (TC_SELFEFF) index was derived from all items, two other scales were built from four items each to measure teachers' efficacy in student management (TC_STSELFEFF) and teacher efficacy in classroom management (TC_CLSELFEFF). Higher scale scores correspond to greater perceived levels of overall teaching efficacy, as well as efficacy in student engagement and classroom management.

*Teacher feedback*

To measure teacher feedback (ST_FEEDBACK), students were asked how often the following things happen in their school (STQM15201-STQM15203): "The teacher gives me feedback on my strengths", "The teacher tells me in which areas I can still improve" and "The teacher tells me how I can improve my performance". Students were given the following response options according to a four-point frequency scale: "Never or almost never", "Some lessons", "Many lessons", and "Every lesson or almost every lesson". Three positively worded items contributed to the index. Higher values on the index mean that students reported more teacher feedback.

## Scaling related to the index of socio-economic status

A measure of parental socio-economic status (SES) was derived for each site, based on three indices: the highest level of parental occupation (HISEI), the highest level of parental education (PARED) and household possessions (HOMEPOS). The household possessions index (HOMEPOS) consists of student-reported possessions at home, resources available at home and the number of books at home. HOMEPOS is a summary index of all household and possession items (STQM130, STQM131, STQM134 and STQM134). The computation of missing values for respondents with missing data for only one index variable was imputed with predicted values plus a random component based on a regression of the other two index variables within sites. If there were missing data on more than one index variable, the index was not computed for that student, and a missing value was assigned. After imputation, all three components were standardised for SSES sites with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Then, the ESCS was constructed as the arithmetic mean of the three indicators after their imputation and standardisation.

## Single items

In addition to the indices listed above, the following single items were used in this report:

- Importance of social and emotional skills and cognitive skills, as perceived by parents (PAQM12101-PAQM12107)
- Responsibility for developing social and emotional skills, as perceived by teachers, principals and parents (PRQM11901/TCQM10701/PAQM12201-PRQM11907/TCQM10707/PAQM12207)
- Social and emotional skills education in school (PRQM12101 and PRQM12104)
- Teachers' experience with online/remote teaching (TCQM12001)
- Teachers' sources of information (TCQM11701-TCQM11707)
- Teachers' working hours (TCQM10401-TCQM10409).

## Cross-site comparability of background scaled indices

While the SSES 2019 Technical Report (OECD, 2021[3]) and the SSES 2023 Technical Report (OECD, forthcoming[4]) explain in detail the scaling procedures and the construct validation of all contextual questionnaire data, this section presents a summary of the analyses carried out to validate the cross-site comparability of the main scaled indices used in this report. The internal consistency of scaled indices, factor analysis to assess construct dimensionality, and the invariance of item parameters are the three approaches SSES used to examine the comparability of scaled indices across sites. Based on these three approaches, all indices examined in this report met the reporting criteria.

Internal consistency refers to the extent to which the items that make up an index are interrelated. Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the internal consistency of each scale within the sites and to compare it among sites. The coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating higher internal consistency.

Similar and high values across sites are an indication of reliable measurement across sites. Commonly accepted cut-off values are 0.9 for excellent, 0.8 for good, and 0.7 for acceptable internal consistency.

For the samples of 15-year-old students, their teachers and principals, the average reliability for each of the scale indices described above was higher than 0.70, and by site only in the following exceptions:

- Bullying perpetration: Gunma (Japan) (0.67)
- Engagement in extra-curricular activities: Gunma (Japan) (0.38), Spain (0.67), Ukraine (0.70)
- Emotions at school (positive): Delhi (India) (0.65)
- Emotions at school (negative): Gunma (Japan) (0.65), Peru (0.60), Spain (0.66), Turin and Emilia-Romagna (Italy) (0.69)
- Home gender roles: Delhi (India) (0.65), Dubai (United Arab Emirates) (0.69), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.63), Turin and Emilia-Romagna (Italy) (0.66), Ukraine (0.64)
- Peer-to-peer relationships: Delhi (India) (0.65)
- Sense of belonging: Bulgaria (0.69), Delhi (India) (0.56)
- Teacher coping strategies: Bulgaria (0.64), Chile (0.67), Gunma (Japan) (0.69), Turin and Emilia-Romagna (Italy) (0.66)
- Teacher efficacy in student engagement: Mexico (0.67), Peru (0.55)
- Teacher efficacy in classroom management: Peru (0.69)
- Teacher feedback: Delhi (India) (0.62).

For the samples of 10-year-old students, their teachers and principals, the average reliability for each of the scale indices described above was higher than 0.70, and by site only in the following exceptions:

- Emotions at school (negative): Bogotá (Colombia) (0.69), Sobral (Brazil) (0.67)

- Gender stereotypes and biases: Sobral (Brazil) (0.69)
- Home gender roles: Kudus (Indonesia) (0.68), Ukraine (0.69)
- Peer-to-peer relationships: Kudus (Indonesia) (0.69), Sobral (Brazil) (0.68)
- Sense of belonging: Bogotá (Colombia) (0.62), Kudus (Indonesia) (0.54), Sobral (Brazil) (0.62), Ukraine (0.48)
- Teacher coping strategies: Bogotá (Colombia) (0.69), Helsinki (Finland) (0.68)
- Teacher efficacy in student engagement: Bogotá (Colombia) (0.67)
- Teacher feedback: Sobral (Brazil) (0.62), Ukraine (0.69).

Exceptions for SSES 2019 are noted in the SSES 2019 Technical Report (OECD, 2021[3]).

The analyses of the background scale indices also involved a series of iterative modelling and analysis steps. Items from all scales were initially evaluated through an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). A CFA was then carried out on the scales, with only acceptable items from the EFA, to assess the constructs. Generally, maximum likelihood estimation and covariance matrices are not appropriate for analyses of categorical questionnaire items because the approach treats items as if they are continuous. Therefore, the SSES analysis relied on robust weighted least squares estimation (WLSMV) models (Muthén, du Toit and Spisic, 1997[7]; Flora and Curran, 2004[8]) to estimate the CFA.

For ease of interpretation, all reversely worded items were recoded, so the highest value for each item represents a higher attribute.

The SSES student surveys in Delhi (India), Helsinki (Finland), Mexico and Ukraine were conducted in the third quarter of 2023 and were therefore not included in the data for estimating the scaling parameters for the student background questionnaire. Furthermore, a MGCFA was used to test measurement invariance. For the student questionnaire, the MGCFA was evaluated for the following groups: gender, age cohorts and sites.

In testing for measurement invariance, three different models were specified and compared: configural invariance, metric invariance and scalar invariance (see Cross-site comparability of social-emotional assessment scales

for a description).

Results of the MGCFA are presented in Table 0.2. Finally, items were scaled using the GPCM. More detailed information on the measurement invariance of the scales in the background questionnaires can be found in Chapter 14 of the SSES 2019 Technical Report (OECD, 2021[3]) and in the SSES 2023 Technical Report (OECD, forthcoming[4]).

### Table 0.2. Levels of measurement invariance: Scales in the student, teacher and principal questionnaires

|  | Age cohort | Gender | Sites |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bullying perpetration | Scalar | Scalar | Scalar |
| Bullying victimisation | Scalar | Scalar | Scalar |
| Emotions at school | Scalar | Scalar | Metric |
| Engagement in extra-curricular activities | Scalar | Scalar | Metric |
| Home gender roles | Metric | Scalar | Scalar |
| Gender stereotypes and biases | Not invariant | Not invariant | Not invariant |
| Impact of social and emotional skills, as reported by teachers | Not invariant | - | Not invariant |

| Impact of social and emotional skills, as reported by principals | Scalar | - | Not invariant |
|---|---|---|---|
| Inclusion in teacher training | Scalar | - | Not invariant |
| Inclusion in recent teacher training | Scalar | - | Not invariant |
| Opportunities for developing social and emotional skills | Scalar | - | Scalar |
| Peer-to-peer relationships | Scalar | Scalar | Metric |
| Sense of belonging | Not invariant | Not invariant | Not invariant |
| Student-teacher relationships and teacher feedback | Scalar | Scalar | Metric |
| Teacher coping | Not invariant | - | Not invariant |
| Teacher efficacy (overall) | Scalar | - | Not invariant |
| Teacher efficacy in classroom management | Scalar | - | Metric |
| Teacher efficacy in student engagement | Scalar | - | Metric |
| Skills and on line teaching | Scalar | - | Not invariant |

Note: In instances where there were only three items for the scale (i.e. teacher feedback and negative emotions), the models indicated a perfect fit and could not be evaluated due to the limited number of degrees of freedom. Therefore, an MGCFA was evaluated on a combination of these scales with related scales using multi-dimensional models.

## Description of each site, their target population and cautionary notes

The group of students the survey results should represent, the target population, differed slightly across sites. A random sample of students was surveyed from the target population. Table 0.3 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, and these differences should be considered when interpreting analyses.

**Table 0.3. 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 do not fully represent the target population and present major deviations from several technical standards. For this reason, data for Mexico are 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. |

| Site description | Target population definition | Cautionary notes |
|---|---|---|
| **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.<br>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. | The Russian Federation'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 are labelled "Ukraine (19 of 27 regions)".<br>In addition, the consequences of the war also had an impact on students' participation rates.<br>Data for 10-year-old students should be interpreted with some caution, as student response rates were lower than expected (72%).<br>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.<br>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.<br>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, a non-member economy. | 15-year-old students in private schools.<br>There were 18 100 SSES-eligible students in 170 schools. | None. |
| **Emilia-Romagna** is a region located in northern Italy, an OECD member country. | 15-year-old students in public and private schools.<br>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.<br>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.<br>There were 5 883 SSES younger cohort eligible students in 96 public schools and 4 090 SSES older cohort eligible students in 68 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 People's Republic of China, an OECD Key Partner country. | 10-year-old and 15-year-old students in public and private schools.<br>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.<br>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-year-olds 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 are 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.<br>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.<br>There were 14 647 SSES-eligible students in 150 schools. | None. |

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# Nurturing Social and Emotional Learning Across the Globe

## FINDINGS FROM THE OECD SURVEY ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS 2023

The OECD's Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2023 represents the largest global initiative to gather comparable data on the development of social and emotional skills - including creativity, empathy, achievement motivation, responsibility and collaboration skills - among 10- and 15-year-old students. The report - Nurturing Social and Emotional Learning Across the Globe - reveals striking disparities both within and between participating countries and subnational entities in how these critical skills are fostered in schools, homes and society. These findings offer insights into the relationship between educational environments and student outcomes, highlighting the urgent need for improvements. Key recommendations focus on enhancing school policies and practices (e.g. teachers' feedback, training, preparedness and attitudes; teaching of these skills across subjects offline, digitally and remotely; and extra-curricular activities), improving school climates (e.g. student belonging; relationships; and handling of bullying and stress), and advancing gender equality (e.g. challenging stereotypes; and ensuring equitable access to careers and parental support for skill development). This report serves as a vital resource for policymakers and practitioners seeking to improve social-emotional learning worldwide.