

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial survey of 15-year-old students that assesses the extent to which they have acquired the key knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society. The assessment focuses on proficiency in reading, mathematics, science and an innovative domain. In 2018, the innovative domain was global competence.

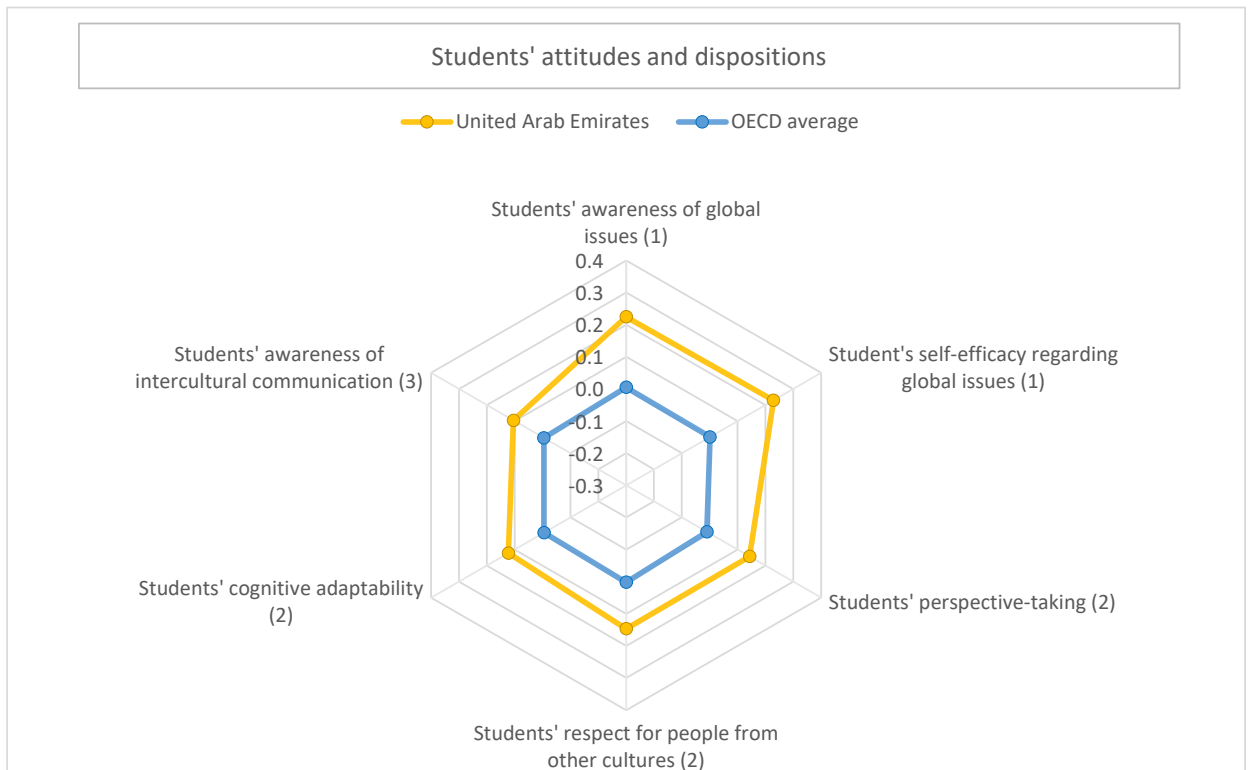
## The United Arab Emirates

In its 2018 cycle of data collection among 15-year-old students, PISA assessed the global competences needed to live in an interconnected and changing world. Global competence is defined as a multidimensional capacity that encompasses the ability to: 1) examine issues of local, global and cultural significance; 2) understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others; 3) engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions across cultures; and 4) take action for collective well-being and sustainable development. Students in 27 countries and economies both sat the global competence test and completed the global competence module in the student questionnaire. Students in a further 39 countries and economies completed the global competence module in the questionnaire only. Students in the United Arab Emirates completed the questionnaire only.

### Key Findings

- Students in the United Arab Emirates reported some of the most positive attitudes and dispositions across the countries that implemented the global competence questionnaire. Students reported high levels of awareness of and self-efficacy regarding global issues, perspective taking, respect for people from other cultures, cognitive adaptability, and awareness of intercultural communication.

**Figure 1. Students' attitudes and dispositions**



**Note:** (1) is for the first dimension of global competence, (2) is for the second dimension, (3) is for the third dimension and (4) is for the fourth dimension.

**Source:** OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table V1.B1.6.6.

### Examine issues of local, global and cultural significance

The first dimension of global competence focuses on students' ability to combine knowledge about the world and critical understanding when they form opinions about a local or global issue.

- Students in the United Arab Emirates reported the second highest level of self-efficacy regarding global issues scoring substantially higher than the OECD average and just below students in Albania. In particular, they were the most confident on explaining why some countries suffer more from global climate change than others with 76% of them saying that they could do task easily or with some effort (OECD average 72%). Students were also very confident on discussing the different reasons why people become refugees (75%, compared to the OECD average of 77%).
- On awareness of global issues, students reported levels that are higher than those observed on average across all OECD countries. Students in the United Arab Emirates were the most aware of gender equality with 82% of them reporting that they know about the topic or are very familiar with it (OECD average 83%). This is followed by causes of poverty (80%, compared to the OECD average of 78%); hunger and malnutrition in different parts of the world (79%, compared to the OECD average of 78%); and migration (78%, compared to the OECD average of 79%). Students were the least aware of global health issues (66%, compared to the OECD average of 65%).

## Understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others

The second dimension of global competence focuses on students' ability to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others.

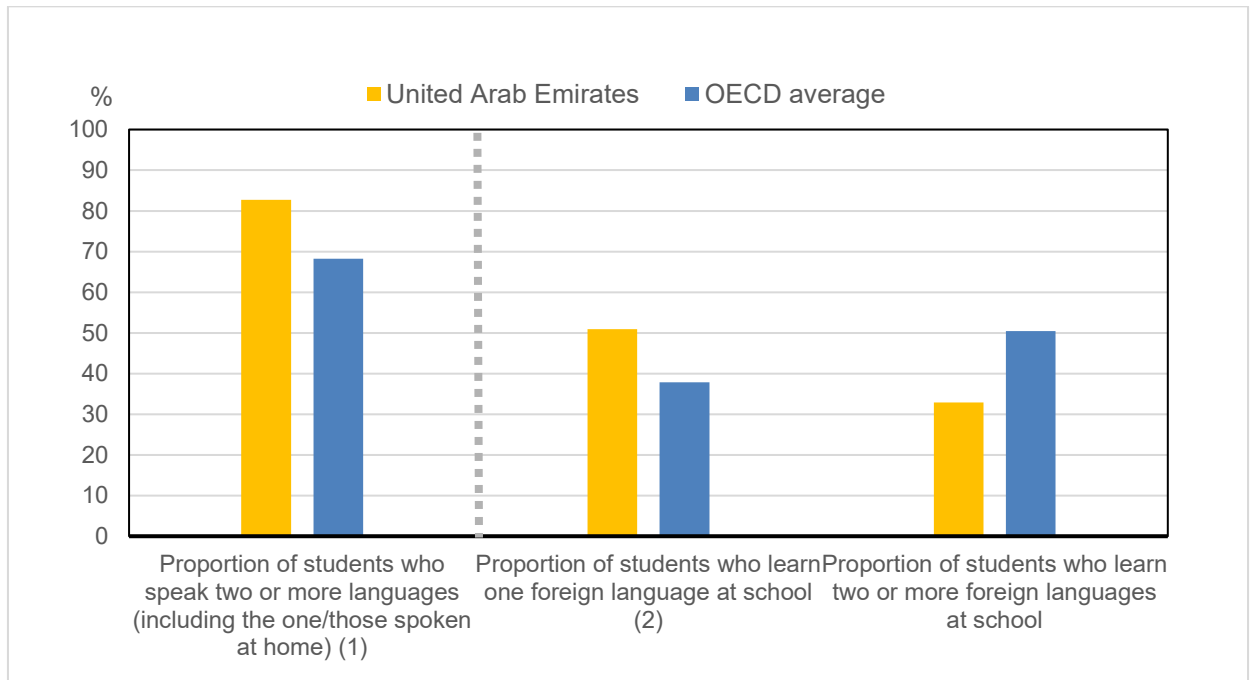
- When asked to describe their ability to understand the perspectives of others, 67% of students reported that they try to understand their friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective (OECD average 64%). About 64% reported that they believe that there are two sides to every question and that they try to look at them both (OECD average 63%); that they try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before they make a decision (OECD average 59%); and that before criticising somebody, they try to imagine how they would feel if they were in their place (OECD average 55%). On the scaled index of perspective taking, students in the United Arab Emirates reported levels higher than those observed on average across OECD countries and similar to those observed in Costa Rica, Ireland and the Republic of Moldova.
- Students in the United Arab Emirates reported high levels of respect for people from other cultures. The average on this index was positive and higher than the OECD average and similar to values observed in France, Germany and Portugal. The proportion of students responding positively exceeded 80% on all questionnaire items used in constructing this index, with the largest proportion observed for respecting people from other cultures as equal human beings with 86% of students reporting that the statement reflects their beliefs (OECD average 82%).
- Students also reported levels of cognitive adaptability that are higher than the OECD average. They were relatively confident in their ability to change their behaviour to meet the needs of new situations, to overcome difficulty in interacting with people from other cultures, to deal with unusual situations, and to resolve difficult situations with other people. More than 60% of students gave positive answers on all those questionnaire items.

## Engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions across cultures

The third dimension of global competence is the ability to engage in effective communication across cultures. Students who are proficient in this aspect of global competence are likely to be aware of the nuances of intercultural communication, to be multilingual and to have contact with people from different cultural backgrounds.

- Students in the United Arab Emirates reported levels of awareness of intercultural communication higher than those observed across OECD countries and similar to levels observed in Canada, France, Hong Kong (China), and Spain. Out of the seven questionnaire items used in the construction of this index, a majority of students exceeding 80% agreed or strongly agreed with the following three statements: "I frequently check that we are understanding each other correctly"; "I listen carefully to what others say"; "I choose my words carefully"; "I give concrete examples to explain my ideas"; "I explain things very carefully"; and "If there is a problem with communication, I find ways around it". The OECD averages varied around 80%.
- Most students in the United Arab Emirates are multilingual with 83% of them reporting that they speak two or more languages (OECD average 68%). About 51% of them reported that they learn one foreign language at school (OECD average 38%) and 33% reported that they learn two or more (OECD average 50%), while 16% reported that they do not learn any foreign languages at school (OECD average 12%).
- Speaking multiple languages is positively and sometimes strongly associated with students' global and intercultural attitudes and dispositions, even after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profiles.

Figure 2. Language speaking and learning



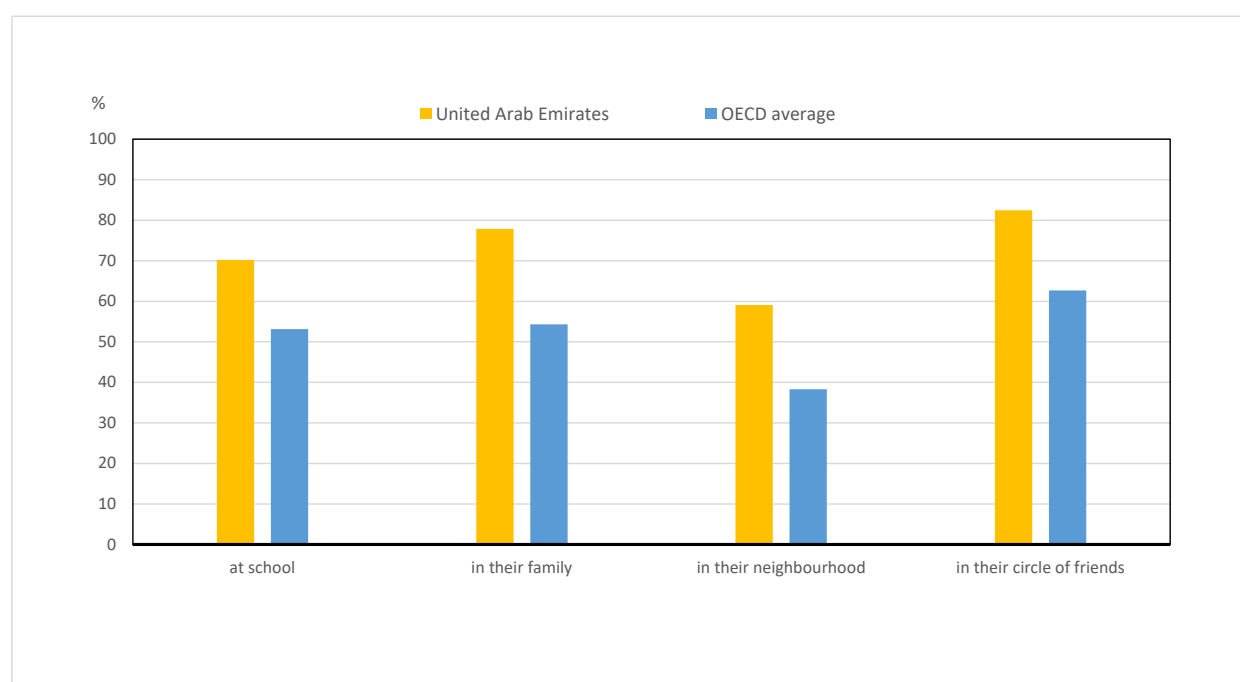
**Notes:** 1. Students were asked the following question: "How many languages, including the language(s) you speak at home, do you and your parents speak well enough to converse with others?"

2. Students reported on the number of foreign languages they learned at their school in the year they sat the PISA test.

**Source:** OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table V1.B1.4.10.

- Most students reported that they have contact with people from other countries at school (70%, compared to the OECD average of 53%), in their circle of friends (82%, compared to the OECD average of 63%), in their family (78%, compared to the OECD average of 54%) and in their neighbourhood (59%, compared to the OECD average of 38%).
- In the United Arab Emirates, having contact with people from other countries at school is positively correlated with students' global and intercultural attitudes and dispositions, even after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profiles.

**Figure 3. Contact with people from other countries**



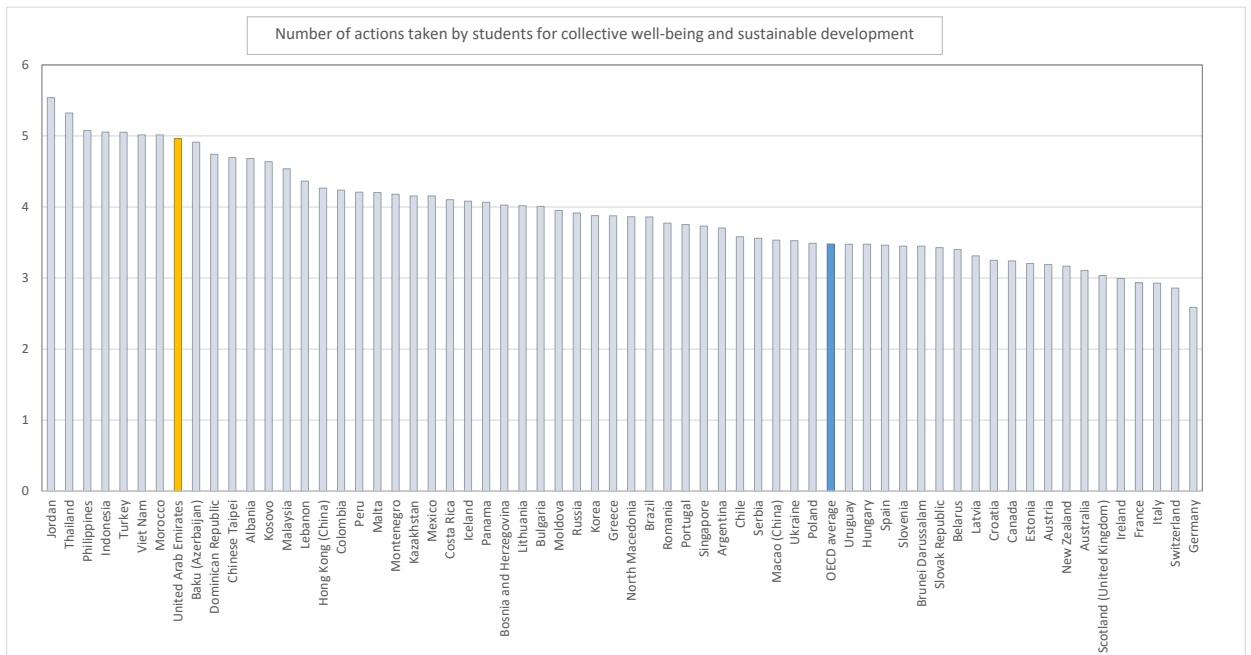
Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table V1.B1.4.4.

### Take action for collective well-being and sustainable development

The fourth dimension of global competence is about taking action for sustainable development and collective well-being, which is the ultimate goal of the three dimensions explored previously.

- Students were asked eight questions about actions they take for sustainability and collective well-being. In the United Arab Emirates students took about 5 actions, in comparison with 3.5 on average across OECD countries. The actions that were most common in the United Arab Emirates were: reducing energy use at home with 80% of students reporting that they do so (OECD average 71%); keeping oneself informed about world events using social media (76%, compared to the OECD average of 64%); participating in activities in favour of environmental protection (66%, compared to the OECD average of 38%); and reading websites on international social issues (65%, compared to the OECD average of 46%). The least common actions taken by students were: boycotting companies for political, ethical or environmental reasons (48%, compared to the OECD average of 27%); and signing environmental or social petitions (44%, compared to the OECD average of 25%).
- The number of actions for sustainability and collective well-being was positively associated with students' attitudes and dispositions. This association was not attenuated when students' and schools' socio-economic profiles were accounted for.

Figure 4. Taking action for sustainability and collective well-being



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

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

**Source:** OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table V1.B1.5.18 and Table VI.B1.5.9.

## Learning for global competence

- More than 80% of students in the United Arab Emirates attended schools where school principals reported that global issues such as climate change, global health, migration, hunger and malnutrition, causes of poverty and gender equality (OECD averages varied around 80%). Topics related to intercultural understanding such as knowledge of different cultures, openness to intercultural experience, respect for cultural diversity and critical thinking skills are also commonly covered in the curriculum.
- In schools attended by 15-year-olds, on average 34% of teachers reported needing professional development for teaching in multicultural and multilingual settings (overall average of 54%). About 27% of teachers reported needing training for communication with people from different cultures or countries (overall average of 46%), and about 24% reported needing training for teaching about equity and diversity (overall average of 42%).

## Key features of PISA 2018

### **The content**

- The PISA 2018 survey focused on reading, with mathematics, science and global competence as minor areas of assessment; the United Arab Emirates implemented the global competence questionnaire only. PISA 2018 also included an assessment of young people's financial literacy, which was optional for countries and economies. Results for reading, mathematics and science are released on 3 December 2019, results for financial literacy on 7 May 2020 and results for global competence on 22 October 2020. The United Arab Emirates did not implement the financial literacy module.

### **The students**

- Some 600 000 students completed the assessment in 2018, representing about 32 million 15-year-olds in the schools of the 79 participating countries and economies. In the United Arab Emirates, 19 277 students, in 760 schools, completed the assessment, representing 54 403 15-year-old students (92% of the total population of 15-year-olds).

### **The assessment**

- Computer-based tests were used in most countries, with assessments lasting a total of two hours. In reading, a multi-stage adaptive approach was applied in computer-based tests whereby students were assigned a block of test items based on their performance in preceding blocks.
- Test items were a mixture of multiple-choice questions and questions requiring students to construct their own responses. The items were organised into groups based on a passage of text describing a real-life situation. More than 15 hours of test items for reading, mathematics, science and global competence were covered, with different students taking different combinations of test items.
- Students also answered a background questionnaire, which took about 35 minutes to complete. The questionnaire sought information about the students themselves, their attitudes, dispositions and beliefs, their homes, and their school and learning experiences. School principals completed a questionnaire that covered school management and organisation, and the learning environment.
- Some countries/economies also distributed additional questionnaires to elicit more information. These included: in 19 countries/economies, a questionnaire for teachers asking about themselves and their teaching practices; and in 17 countries/economies, a questionnaire for parents asking them to provide information about their perceptions of and involvement in their child's school and learning. The United Arab Emirates implemented the teacher questionnaire only.
- Countries/economies could also chose to distribute three other optional questionnaires for students: 52 countries/economies distributed a questionnaire about students' familiarity with computers; 32 countries/economies distributed a questionnaire about students' expectations for further education; and 9 countries/economies distributed a questionnaire, developed for PISA 2018, about students' well-being. The United Arab Emirates implemented the students' well-being questionnaire only.

## References

OECD (2020), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume VI): Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World?* PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d5f68679-en>

## Map of PISA countries and economies



OECD member countries	Partner countries and economies in PISA 2018	Partner countries and economies in previous cycles
Australia	Albania	Algeria
Austria	Argentina	Azerbaijan
Belgium	Baku (Azerbaijan)	Guangdong (China)
Canada	Belarus	Himachal Pradesh (India)
Chile	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kyrgyzstan
Colombia	Brazil	Liechtenstein
Czech Republic	Brunei Darussalam	Mauritius
Denmark	B-S-J-Z (China)**	Miranda (Venezuela)
Estonia	Bulgaria	Tamil Nadu (India)
Finland	Costa Rica	Trinidad and Tobago
France	Croatia	Tunisia
Germany	Cyprus <sup>1</sup>	
Greece	Dominican Republic	
Hungary	Georgia	
Iceland	Hong Kong (China)	
Ireland	Indonesia	
Israel	Jordan	
Italy	Kazakhstan	
Japan	Kosovo	
Korea	Lebanon	
Latvia	Macao (China)	
	Malaysia	
	Malta	
	Republic of Moldova	
	Montenegro	
	Morocco	
	Republic of North Macedonia	
	Panama	
	Peru	
	Philippines	
	Qatar	
	Romania	
	Russian Federation	
	Saudi Arabia	
	Serbia	
	Singapore	
	Chinese Taipei	
	Thailand	
	Ukraine	
	United Arab Emirates	
	Uruguay	
	Viet Nam	

\* Puerto Rico participated in the PISA 2015 assessment (as an unincorporated territory of the United States).

\*\* B-S-J-Z (China) refers to four PISA 2018 participating Chinese provinces/municipalities: Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang. In PISA 2015, the four PISA participating Chinese provinces/municipalities were: Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Guangdong.


1. **Note by Turkey:** The information in this document with reference to "Cyprus" relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue".

**Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union:** The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

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For more information about PISA 2018, visit <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

Data can also be found on line by following the **StatLinks**  under the tables and charts in the publication.

Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using: <http://gpseducation.oecd.org/>.

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