

Social and Emotional Skills for Better Lives

Findings from the OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills
2023: Helsinki (Finland)



Helsinki (Finland)

This site note provides an overview of how social and emotional skills are distributed among different student groups and how they relate to students' health, well-being, educational outcomes and future aspirations in Helsinki. It draws on data from the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2023.

Helsinki is the capital of Finland.

SSES 2023 measured the following skills among 10- and 15-year-old students in Helsinki:

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

Helsinki also participated in SSES 2019, results are therefore compared between 2019 and 2023. Results are also compared to the average across participating sites. This average includes:

- Sites that participated in SSES 2023 in all analyses: Bulgaria, Bogotá (Colombia), Chile, Delhi (India), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Gunma (Japan), Helsinki (Finland), Jinan (China), Kudus (Indonesia), Mexico, Peru, Sobral (Brazil), Spain, Turin (Italy) and Ukraine
- The following cities that participated in SSES 2019, where possible: Daegu (Korea), Houston (United States), Istanbul (Türkiye), Manizales (Colombia), Ottawa (Canada), Sintra (Portugal) and Suzhou (China)

Data for achievement motivation between 2019 and 2023 are not comparable, therefore analyses for this skill only include SSES 2023 sites.

All SSES 2019 sites surveyed both 10- and 15-year-olds, whereas surveying 10-year-olds became optional in SSES 2023. The average across sites for 10-year-olds therefore includes data from all SSES 2019 sites who did not participate in 2023 and the following SSES 2023 sites: Bogotá (Colombia), Helsinki (Finland), Jinan (China), Kudus (Indonesia), Sobral (Brazil) and Ukraine.

The OECD collaborated with the Education Division, City of Helsinki as the national project partner to implement the SSES in Helsinki.

For further information, refer to 'Social and emotional skills for better lives: Findings from the OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023' and the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023 Technical Report (forthcoming).

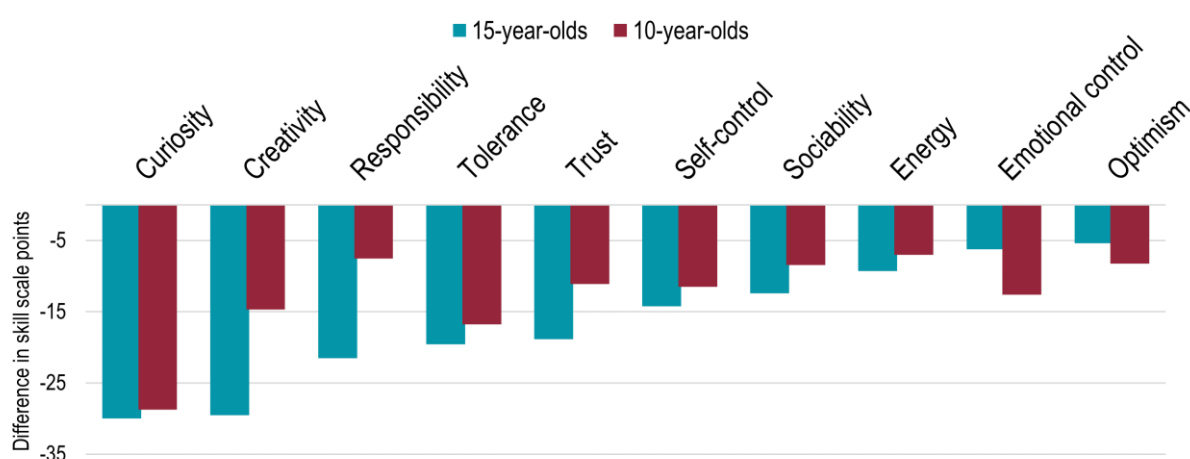
Cautionary notes for interpretation of data for Helsinki (Finland)

Data for 15-year-old students in Helsinki should be interpreted with some caution as student response rates were lower than expected (70%).

How have levels of students' social and emotional skills changed between 2019 and 2023 in Helsinki?

- Both 10- and 15-year-olds in Helsinki reported lower levels of most social and emotional skills (all except stress resistance, assertiveness, empathy, and persistence) in 2023 compared to 2019.
- Differences in levels of 15-year-old students' social and emotional skills between these years were largest for curiosity and creativity, followed by responsibility, tolerance, and trust (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Social and emotional skills where both 10- and 15-year-old students reported lower levels in 2023 compared to 2019 in Helsinki



Note: All differences between 2019 and 2023 are statistically significant. Each social and emotional skill scale is scaled to fit approximately normal distributions with means around 500 points and standard deviations around 100 points. Differences between 2019 and 2023 are reported in points.

Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table B2.8

How are students' social and emotional skills distributed across socio-demographic groups in Helsinki?

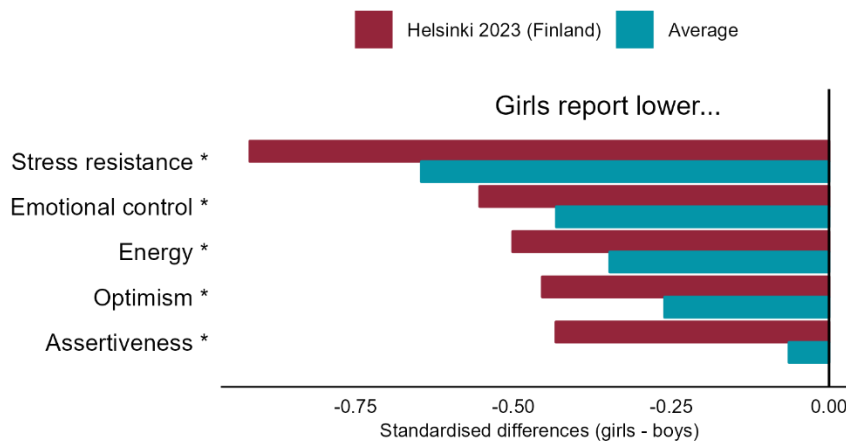
Differences in skills between boys and girls

- 15-year-old girls in Helsinki reported lower levels of emotional regulation skills (stress resistance, emotional control, and optimism), energy, assertiveness, and trust than 15-year-old boys in both 2019 and 2023, on average.
 - Gender differences at age 15 in stress resistance, emotional control, and energy were larger in Helsinki in 2023 compared to 2019. For emotional control and energy, this was due to girls reporting lower levels of these skills in 2023 compared to 2019, while boys' levels of these

- skills remained broadly similar. For stress resistance, the gender difference increased as girls reported similar levels in 2023 compared to 2019, while boys reported higher levels.
- 15-year-old girls also reported lower levels of creativity, self-control, and persistence than boys in 2023, while there were no significant gender differences seen in these skills in 2019.
 - Many of these gender differences were also visible at age 10 in Helsinki, although they were smaller than at age 15. Girls reported lower levels of emotional regulation skills, energy, and assertiveness than boys, on average, at age 10 in Helsinki. Unlike for 15-year-olds, there were no significant changes in the size of gender differences among 10-year-olds in these skills between 2019 and 2023.
 - 15-year-old boys in Helsinki reported lower levels of empathy and tolerance than 15-year-old girls in both 2019 and 2023, on average.
 - Gender differences at age 15 in both empathy and tolerance were similar in size in 2023 compared to 2019.
 - Boys also reported lower levels of empathy and tolerance, as well as creativity and responsibility, than girls at age 10 in Helsinki in both 2019 and 2023.
 - In general, gender differences in Helsinki tend to be larger than in other sites. Differences between boys and girls in stress resistance, emotional control, energy, optimism, assertiveness, creativity, empathy, and tolerance in 2023 were larger in Helsinki compared to the average across sites. The average difference in stress-resistance between boys and girls was particularly large in Helsinki, at close to one standard deviation (0.92) at age 15 and around half a standard deviation (0.51) at age 10 in 2023. These differences were some of the largest seen for each age group across all skills and sites in SSES.

Figure 2. Largest gender differences in skills in Helsinki at age 15 in 2023

Standardised differences between the scores of 15-year-old girls and boys in Helsinki compared to the average across sites



Note: The five skills with the largest gender differences in Helsinki are included, ordered from the largest to smallest difference. All standardised differences between boys and girls are statistically significant with a threshold $p < 0.05$. Differences in Helsinki that are significantly different to the average across sites are indicated by the asterisk against each skill.

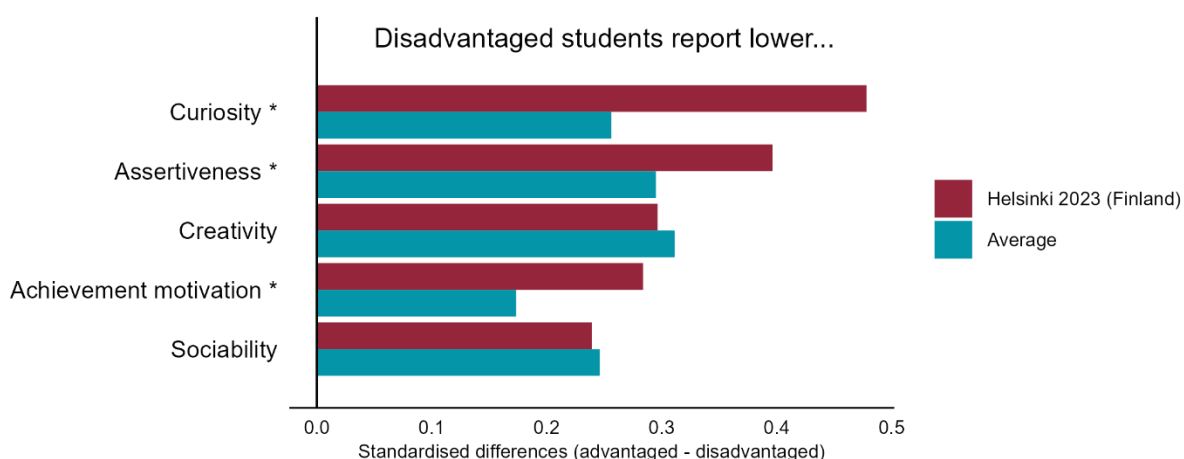
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table B2.4

Differences in skills between advantaged and disadvantaged students

- Disadvantaged 10- and 15-year-old students in Helsinki reported lower levels of almost all skills than advantaged students, on average. The only skills where differences by socio-economic background were not seen in 2023 were for assertiveness at age 10 and for stress resistance and self-control at age 15.
- The social and emotional skills with the largest differences between advantaged and disadvantaged students at age 15 in Helsinki were curiosity, assertiveness, creativity, achievement motivation and sociability. Differences in curiosity, assertiveness and achievement motivation were also larger in Helsinki compared to the average across sites.
- Differences by socio-economic background in assertiveness at age 15 widened in 2023 compared to 2019. This was due to disadvantaged students reporting lower levels of this skill in 2023 compared to 2019, while levels remained broadly stable for advantaged students. Disadvantaged students also reported lower levels of optimism, energy, and sociability than advantaged students, on average, at age 15 in 2023, while no such differences in these skills by socio-economic background were seen in 2019.

Figure 3. Largest differences between advantaged and disadvantaged students in skills in Helsinki at age 15 in 2023

Standardised differences between the scores of 15-year-old advantaged and disadvantaged students in Helsinki compared to the average across sites



Note: The five skills with the largest socio-economic differences in Helsinki are included, ordered from the largest to smallest difference. All standardised differences between advantaged and disadvantaged students are statistically significant with a threshold $p < 0.05$. Differences in Helsinki that are significantly different to the average across sites are indicated by the asterisk against each skill.

Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table B2.5

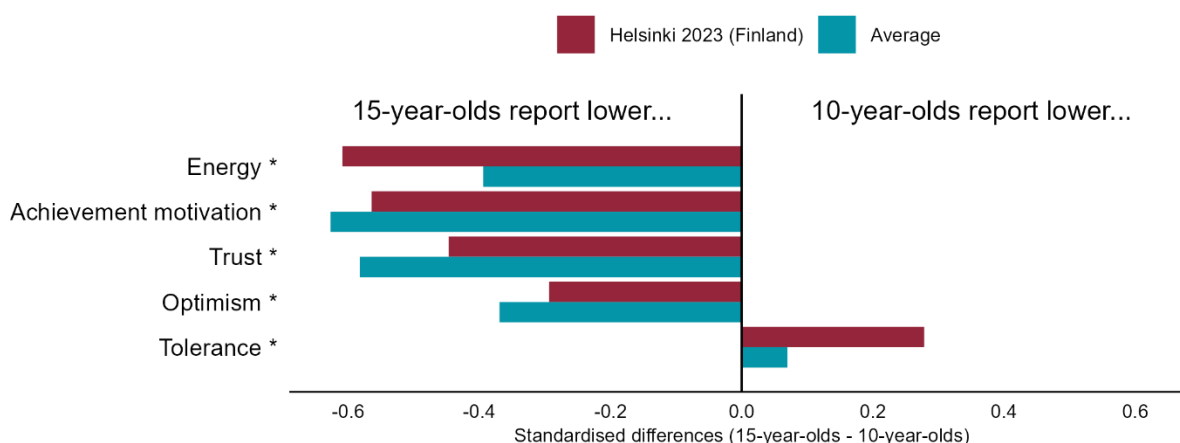
Differences in skills between 10- and 15-year-olds

- 15-year-old students in Helsinki reported lower levels of most skills than 10-year-olds, on average, in 2023: energy, achievement motivation, trust, optimism, sociability, persistence, assertiveness, creativity, stress-resistance, curiosity and responsibility.
 - Differences between 10- and 15-year-olds in trust and persistence were wider in 2023 compared to 2019.

- In 2019, 15-year-olds reported higher levels of assertiveness and responsibility than 10-year-olds in Helsinki, therefore the direction of these differences reversed in 2023. There were also no age differences in creativity in 2019, therefore this difference emerged in 2023.
- 10-year-old students in Helsinki reported lower levels of tolerance, empathy and emotional control than 15-year-olds, on average. Age differences in empathy were smaller in 2023 compared to 2019 in Helsinki.

Figure 4. Largest age differences in skills in Helsinki in 2023

Standardised differences between the scores of 10 and 15-year-old students in Helsinki compared to the average across sites



Note: The five skills with the largest age differences in Helsinki are included, ordered from the largest to smallest difference. All standardised differences between 10- and 15-year-olds are statistically significant with a threshold $p < 0.05$. Differences in Helsinki that are significantly different to the average across sites are indicated by the asterisk against each skill.

Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table B2.3

How are students' social and emotional skills linked to their educational outcomes and career prospects in Helsinki?

Levels of absence and tardiness and students' ambitions for the future

- In Helsinki, 48% of 15-year-olds had arrived late for school at least once in the two weeks prior to the SSES assessment, similar to the average across sites (48%). In Helsinki, 25% of students had skipped classes and 19% had skipped at least one day of school in the prior two weeks, below the average across sites (29% and 31% respectively).
- In Helsinki, 63% of 15-year-olds expect to complete tertiary education and 33% expect to have a managerial or professional job, below the average across sites (84% and 57% respectively).

Relationships between social and emotional skills and academic outcomes

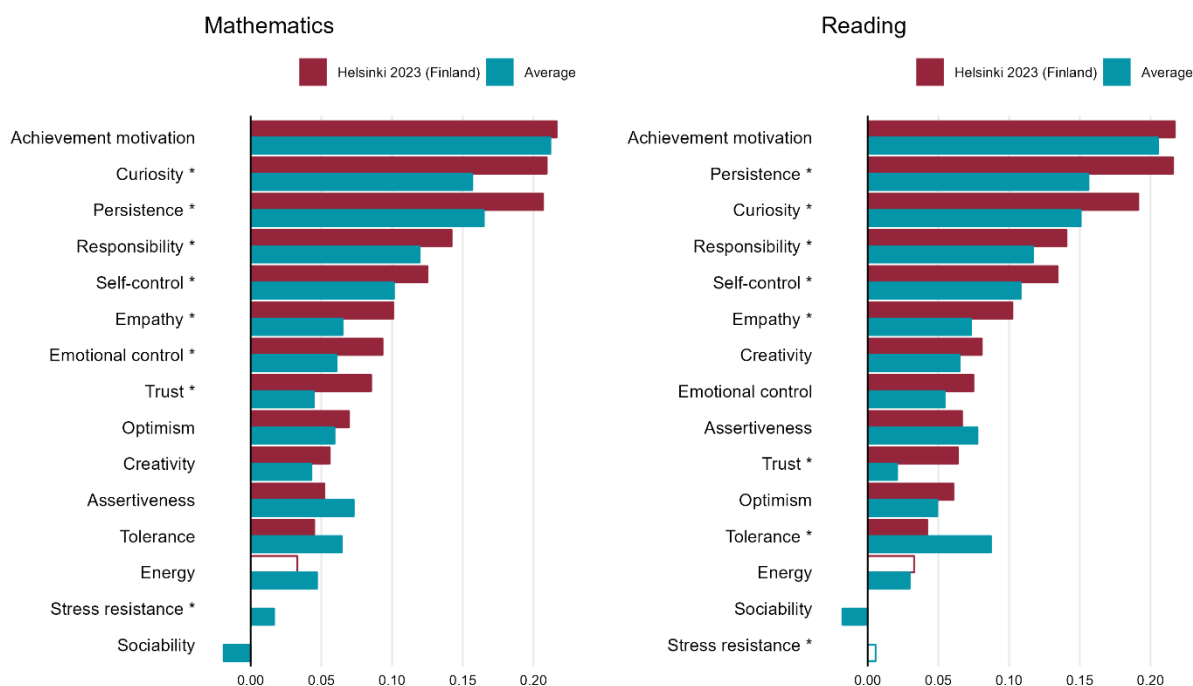
- In Helsinki, 15-year-old students with higher levels of task performance skills (achievement motivation, persistence, responsibility, and self-control), open-mindedness skills (curiosity, creativity and tolerance), empathy, and emotional control tend to achieve better grades in maths, reading and arts and report being late and skipping school less often. Higher levels of trust, optimism and assertiveness are also associated with better grades in reading and maths.

Students with higher levels of optimism, trust, energy, and stress resistance also report being late and skipping school less often.

- In Helsinki, the relationships between many skills (most task performance skills, curiosity, empathy, and trust) with better grades are stronger than on average across sites (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Relationships between students' social and emotional skills and grades in Helsinki in 2023 compared to the average across sites

Standardised regression coefficients of individual skills on maths and reading grades among 15-year-olds in Helsinki compared to the average across sites



Note: Significant coefficients at a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are coloured, non-significant coefficients are outlined. Coefficients in Helsinki that are significantly different to the average across sites are indicated by the asterisk against each skill.

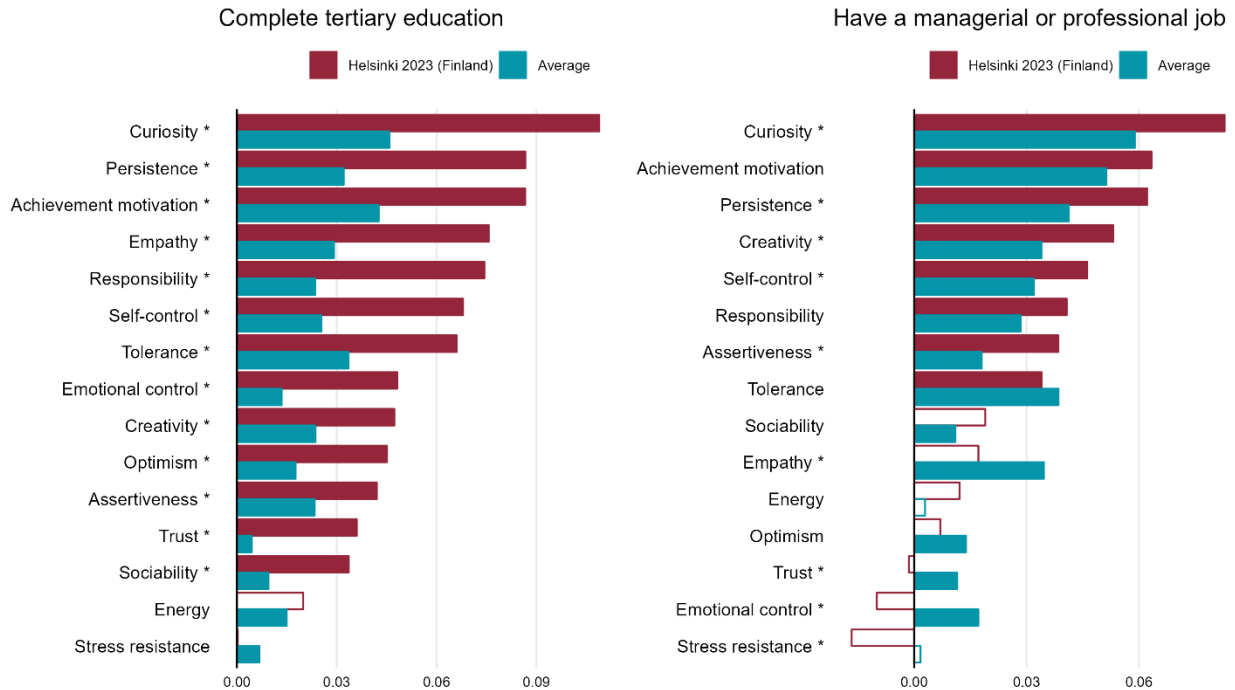
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables B4.1 and B4.4

Relationships between social and emotional skills and students' ambitions for the future

- In Helsinki, 15-year-old students with higher levels of task performance skills, open-mindedness skills and assertiveness report higher expectations of both completing tertiary education and having a managerial or professional job at age 30. Students with higher levels of empathy, optimism, trust and sociability are also more likely to expect to complete tertiary education.
- The relationships between most skills and students' ambitions for the future are stronger in Helsinki than on average across sites (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Relationships between students' social and emotional skills and their future aspirations in Helsinki in 2023 compared to the average across sites

Standardised regression coefficients of individual skills on students' expectations to complete tertiary education and have a managerial or professional job in the future among 15-year-olds in Helsinki compared to the average across sites



Note: Significant coefficients at a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are coloured, non-significant coefficients are outlined. Coefficients in Helsinki that are significantly different to the average across sites are indicated by the asterisk against each skill.

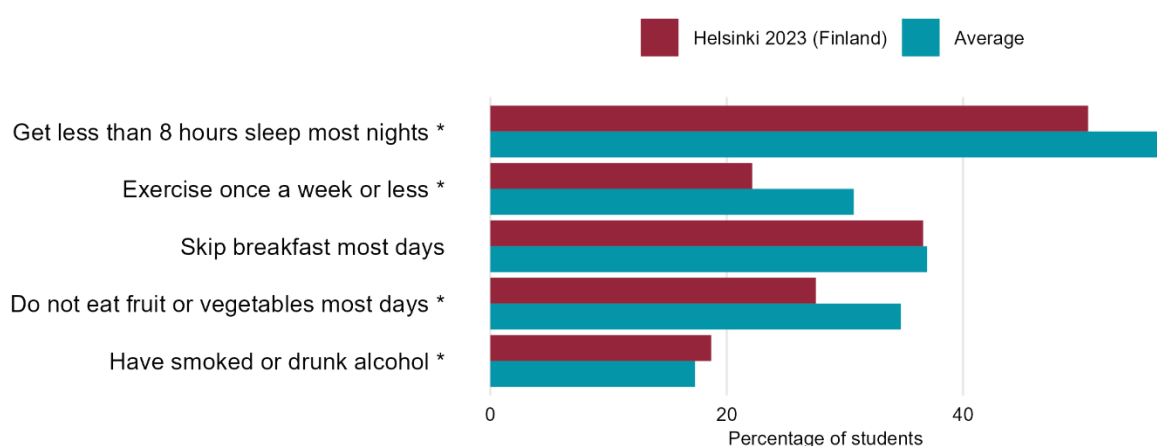
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Tables B4.19 and B4.30

How are students' social and emotional skills linked to their health and well-being outcomes in Helsinki?

Students' health behaviours

- 15-year-old students in Helsinki reported higher frequencies of several healthy behaviours compared to the average across sites: getting 8 hours sleep, exercising, and eating fruit or vegetables. Rates of eating breakfast were similar to the average across sites, while rates of having smoked or drunk alcohol were slightly higher than average (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Percentage of 15-year-old students engaging in unhealthy behaviours in Helsinki in 2023 compared to the average across sites



Note: Frequencies of each behaviour that are significantly different to the average across sites are indicated by an asterisk against the behaviour.

Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table B3.3

Gender differences in health and well-being outcomes

- In Helsinki, girls report poorer levels of all health and well-being outcomes (health behaviours, life satisfaction, current psychological well-being, test and class anxiety, relationship satisfaction, body image) than boys, on average. Gender differences in all health and well-being outcomes except health behaviours are larger in Helsinki than on average across sites.
- Data on students' life satisfaction, current psychological well-being and test and class anxiety were also collected in 2019. Levels of these outcomes remained broadly stable between 2019 and 2023 for both boys and girls in Helsinki.

Relationships between social and emotional skills and students' health and well-being outcomes

- Higher levels of all social and emotional skills are associated with higher levels of health behaviours, life satisfaction, current psychological well-being, relationship satisfaction and body image in Helsinki. Higher levels of all skills except tolerance, empathy, self-control, and achievement motivation are associated with lower levels of test and class anxiety.
- The relationships between the following skills and health and well-being outcomes were stronger in Helsinki compared to the average across sites:
 - Trust and all outcomes except test and class anxiety
 - Responsibility and all outcomes except life satisfaction
 - Optimism and all outcomes except current psychological well-being
 - Energy and all outcomes except life satisfaction

Key features of SSES 2023

What is the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills?

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

Which social and emotional skills are covered in the Survey?

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

How were these skills measured?

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

Who participated in the Survey?

All sites in SSES 2023 surveyed 15-year-olds and surveying 10-year-olds was optional. Students in sixteen sites – six countries and ten sub-national entities – participated in SSES 2023. Data from seven sites who participated in the first round of SSES in 2019, but not in 2023, are also included in analyses in this report wherever possible to expand the coverage of the international average.

Some 18,000 10-year-old and 52,000 15-year-old students took the SSES assessment in 2023, representing about 630,000 10-year-olds and 3 million 15-year-olds in the schools of the 16 participating sites. In Helsinki, 2,300 10-year-old and 2,500 15-year-old students completed the assessment, representing about 5,900 10-year-old and 4,100 15-year-old students.

References

- Kankaraš, M. and J. Suarez-Alvarez (2019), "Assessment framework of the OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 207, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5007adef-en>. ^[1]