Confident and creative individuals

This fact sheet describes the key findings in the *Educational Opportunity in Australia 2020* report in relation to the confidence and creativity of Australian children and young people.

The Educational Opportunity report is the first major study to assess performance against the goals in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration, a commitment by all Australian governments to build an education system that supports all students to be successful lifelong learners, creative and confident individuals and active and informed citizens. The report looks at which children and young people are developing these attributes at four key educational milestones: school entry, the middle school years, the senior school years and early adulthood.

What is a creative and confident individual?

Confidence refers to a person's sense of self-belief; a belief that we are competent, capable and that we matter to others. It can also relate to optimism, about our own and collective future, and our ability to make the most of a range of opportunities. Confidence underpins our ability to connect and work with others, to show initiative, and follow through on ideas and plans.

Creativity relates to our ability to think deeply and in different ways; to imagine, explore and explain complex concepts and ideas; and to develop connections and solutions that are not immediately obvious (Harris, 2016). Creativity underpins children's and young people's capacity to explore, discover, learn and develop a growth mindset (Lucas and Claxton, 2015).

It is possible for a learner to be very confident but with limited creativity, and vice versa. It is also possible for learners to be strong in both areas, and for these traits and skills to reinforce each other, and underpin development in other learning areas (Jackson & Endekov, 2019). Confidence and creativity help to prepare children and young adults to meet challenges in all aspects of life, particularly in the worlds of education and work (Kleitman et al, 2010 and Kleitman et al, 2012). Conversely, low levels of confidence and creativity can hold people back from exploring, progressing and succeeding in their endeavours.

Key findings

Gaps in confidence and creativity between population groups are much smaller than in relation to academic achievement. For example, levels of confidence among children in the middle years are comparable across most groups, with very small gaps of 1-2 percentage points between national averages and regional/remote students, Indigenous students, and students from a language background other than English.

The largest gap in confidence and creativity is between students from low and high socioeconomic backgrounds, although these gaps are also smaller than for academic achievement**.** The gap in the proportion students from low and high socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds that have high levels of confidence is around 10 percentage points in the middle years (62.5% compared to 72.2%), nearly 14 points in the senior years of school (67.7% compared to 81.3%) and just under 10 points in early adulthood (67.7% compared to 76.6%).

Early patterns of confidence and creativity relating to gender are reversed by adulthood, with males becoming more confident and creative than females as young adults. Girls have stronger foundations at school entry than boys, with a greater proportion on track in their social competence (83.2% compared to 68.6%) and emotional maturity (86.0% compared to 68.4%). However, in early adulthood a lower proportion of females than males display qualities of creativity (67.7% compared with 72.7% of males) and confidence (69.3% compared with 74.6% of males).

There are also strong links between confidence and creativity, and measures of successful learners, specifically maths ability and engagement in learning and work in adulthood. Confidence and creativity are strongly associated with full-time engagement in work and education at age 24. Of those who were not fully engaged in their early 20s, only 59.9% exhibited creativity as an attribute (compared with 73.7% fully engaged) and 58.8% are very confident (compared with 76.5%).

Proportion (%) and estimated number of children and young people succeeding and missing out on indicators of confidence and creativity from school entry to early adulthood

		Successful	Missing out	Comments
Entry to school (Age 0-8)	Developmentally on track in social competence	75.8% 245,593	24.2% 78,408	• **Girls are much more socially competent** (83.2% compared with 68.6% of boys) and emotionally mature at this stage (86.0% compared with 68.4% of boys). • **Largest gaps in these outcomes** between children from very remote communities and major cities (16-19 percentage points), Indigenous and non-Indigenous children (13-16 points) and low and high-SES children (11-14).
	Developmentally on track in emotional maturity	77.1% 249,805	22.9% 74,196	
		Successful	**Missing out**	**Comments**
Middle school years (Age 9-14)	Exhibits behaviours indicative of creativity	72.8% 212,585	27.2% 79,427	• **Low point in levels of confidence for all young people** and appear to recover in the senior years of school, and into adulthood. • **No significant 'confidence gap'** for rural and Indigenous students – but still apparent in relation to socio-economic status (9.7 percentage points).
	Possesses a strong sense of self-efficacy or belief in self	67.5% 197,108	32.5% 94,904	
		Successful	**Missing out**	**Comments**
Senior school years (Age 15-19)	Exhibits strong creative problem solving	65.0% 206,489	35.0% 111,187	• **There is a gendered element** to high levels of confidence at this stage, with 78.0% of males possessing a strong sense of self belief compared with 72.5% of females. • **Australian students doing well in creative problem solving compared with the OECD** average (65% proficient or above, compared with 57% across the OECD).
	Possesses a strong sense of self-efficacy or belief in self	75.3% 239,210	24.7% 78,466	
		Successful	**Missing out**	**Comments**
Early adulthood (Age 20-24)	Adaptable to change and open to new ideas	70.1% 266,888	29.9% 113,837	• **Young adults fully engaged in work and study** more likely to display high levels of creativity (13.8 percentage point difference, compared with not fully engaged). • **Males are more likely to rate themselves as confident and creative** compared with females (by around five percentage points).
	Confident in self and the future	71.9% 270,315	28.1% 110,410	

Source: based on analysis in Lamb et al, Educational Opportunity in Australia in 2020

What does this mean?

There is broad recognition that confidence and creativity are essential for future workforces characterised by globalisation, demand for creative and critical thought, and increasing automation and technology-driven solutions (Lucas and Smith, 2018). But the reality is that these so-called 'future needs' are actually critical needs right now, particularly as Australia works through a global pandemic and recession, and rebuilds its economy over the coming decade.

The integration of general capabilities into the Australian education system is relatively recent. Teaching, learning, measuring and assessing capabilities within education settings is still a work in progress both here, and internationally.

Key to supporting all students to develop creativity and confidence will be retaining and enhancing the focus on capabilities that are already in the Early Years Learning Framework and Foundation to Year 10 (F-10) curriculum. This will require improved support for educators to integrate development of confidence and creativity in all areas of the curriculum; and developing a more strategic and nuanced approach to measurement and assessment (Lucas and Smith, 2018).

What we measured

Milestone 1 – Early years looked at which children were developmentally ready at the point of entry to school, across all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census as well as their skills in the basic literacy and numeracy subdomain. To understand early creativity and confidence the report uses the AEDC to assess development in social competence and emotional maturity. AEDC data on responsibility and respect as well as prosocial and helping behaviour is used to explore early indications of skills needed to be active and informed citizens.

Milestone 2 – Middle school years used a range of data sources to look at Year 7 students' reading and numeracy, Year 8 students' achievement in science; and Year 6 students' proficiency in Information Communication Technology (NAPLAN, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, NAP-ICT). It examined the proportion of 10 to 11 year old students reporting high levels of confidence and displaying various creative behaviours using data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). It also looked at civic knowledge, attitudes and skills in Year 6, using data from the National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship (NAP-CC).

Milestone 3 – Senior school years used the Census to examine what proportion of young people had attained a Year 12 or an equivalent qualification by the age of 19 and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data to look at achievement in reading, maths and science. It also examined proficiency in creative problem-solving, and confidence using data from PISA. Keeping informed about current events and belief in the importance of civic activities was explored using data from NAP-CC.

Milestone 4 – Early adulthood used the Census to look at engagement in full time work, training or study at age 24 and 29 as well as who had gained a post-school qualification. It also examined levels of self-reported creativity and confidence using the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY). The LSAY was also used to explore the extent to which young adults report being socially and politically active in their community and remaining informed about the world around them.

References

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More information

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