

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Australian students motivated to achieve – but some more motivated than others**

Australian 15-year-olds may be more motivated to achieve than the majority of their OECD peers but motivation is significantly affected by disadvantage, according to a report released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Overall, Australian students reported higher levels of motivation than 26 of the 35 OECD countries surveyed in the 2015 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), but significant differences were found between cultural and geographical groupings within Australia.

“The data show that disadvantage continues to negatively affect Australian students, with those from Indigenous and low socioeconomic status backgrounds, and those in regional and remote areas, less motivated to achieve academically,” ACER Deputy CEO (Research) Dr Sue Thomson said.

“This is important because motivation to achieve plays a key role in educational success, and in an individual’s drive to set and attain education and career goals.”

#### **Geographic and socioeconomic analysis**

Overall, students in NSW had the highest motivation to achieve while students in Tasmania recorded the lowest motivation levels; one of the biggest individual disparities was recorded against the statement, *I want to be one of the best students in my class*, with 79 per cent of students in NSW in agreement in contrast to 64 per cent of Tasmanian students. PISA measured motivation by collecting student responses on a scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree) to five statements in order to calculate a mean score that would allow for comparison.

Female, non-Indigenous, high socioeconomic status (SES) and metropolitan-based students were more highly motivated to achieve than their peers, while Australian-born students recorded the lowest motivation levels, compared to first generation and foreign-born students.

More specifically, students from the highest SES quartile demonstrated significantly higher levels of agreement to ‘competitive’ achievement motivation items – 82 per cent agreed *I want to be one of the best students in my class* and 86 per cent agreed *I see myself as an ambitious person* compared to students in the lowest SES quartile (68 per cent and 76 per cent respectively). More non-Indigenous students than Indigenous students agreed that *I see myself as an ambitious person* (75 per cent and 66 per cent respectively).

#### **Modelling motivated behaviours**

Given a range of three hypothetical student-based motivation scenarios, several groups were far more likely to incorrectly label negative motivation behaviours (‘Julian gives up easily when confronted with a problem and is often not prepared for his classes’) as positive: 14 per cent of Indigenous students compared with 5 per cent of non-Indigenous peers; 13 per cent of remote area students compared with 5 per cent of metropolitan students; and 9 per cent of students in the lowest SES quartile compared to 3 per cent in the highest quartile.

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High performance in PISA does not necessarily correspond to high achievement motivation, as some countries towards the top of the index were some of the lowest performers academically. However, the report says that achievement motivation is important in influencing future-oriented expectations and intentions, and in promoting the kind of mindset that helps students identify long-term career goals that protect against school failure.

The report analyses data produced by the 2015 PISA survey, a large-scale three-yearly study of the reading, science and maths literacy of more than half a million 15-year-olds in 72 countries, including 14 500 students in 750 Australian schools. PISA is managed in Australia by ACER.

Read the full report, *PISA Australia in Focus Number 3: Motivation*, published by ACER, at <https://research.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/32/>

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