

# Bulgaria

This country 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 Bulgaria. It draws on data from the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2023.

SSES 2023 measured the following skills among 15-year-old students in Bulgaria:

- 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)

Results for Bulgaria in this note are 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.

The OECD collaborated with the Lachezar Tsotsorkov Foundation as the national project partner to implement the SSES in Bulgaria.



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).

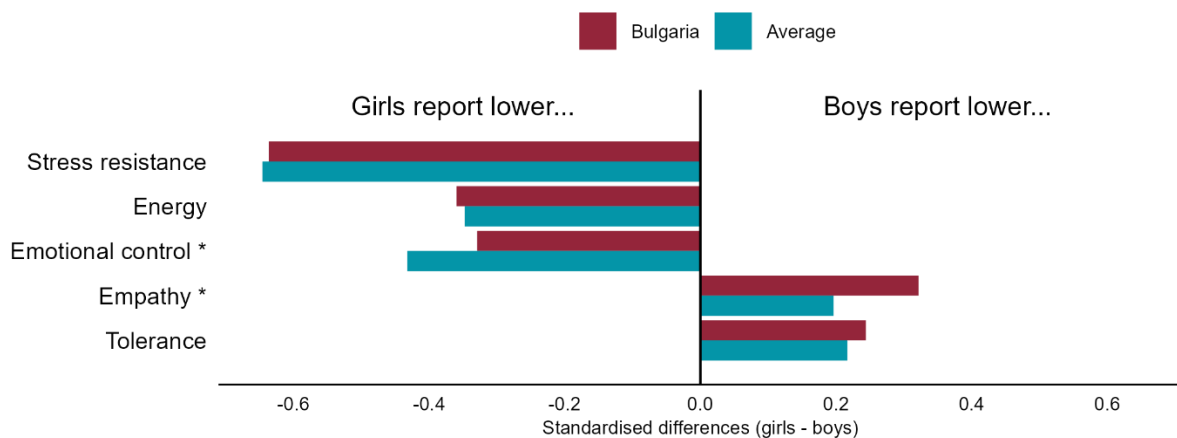
## How are students' social and emotional skills distributed across socio-demographic groups in Bulgaria?

### Differences in skills between boys and girls

- 15-year-old girls in Bulgaria reported lower levels of stress resistance, energy, emotional control, trust, assertiveness, optimism, self-control than 15-year-old boys, on average. Gender differences at age 15 in assertiveness were larger than average in Bulgaria, while gender differences in emotional control were smaller than on average across sites.
- 15-year-old boys in Bulgaria reported lower levels of empathy, tolerance, achievement motivation, creativity, and curiosity than 15-year-old girls, on average. Gender differences at age 15 in empathy were larger in Bulgaria than on average across sites. While girls reported lower levels of creativity and similar levels of curiosity than boys on average across sites at age 15, the opposite was found in Bulgaria, where boys reported lower levels of these skills.

### Figure 1. Largest gender differences in skills in Bulgaria

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



Note: The five skills with the largest gender differences in Bulgaria 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 Bulgaria that are significantly different to the average across sites are indicated by the asterisk against each skill.

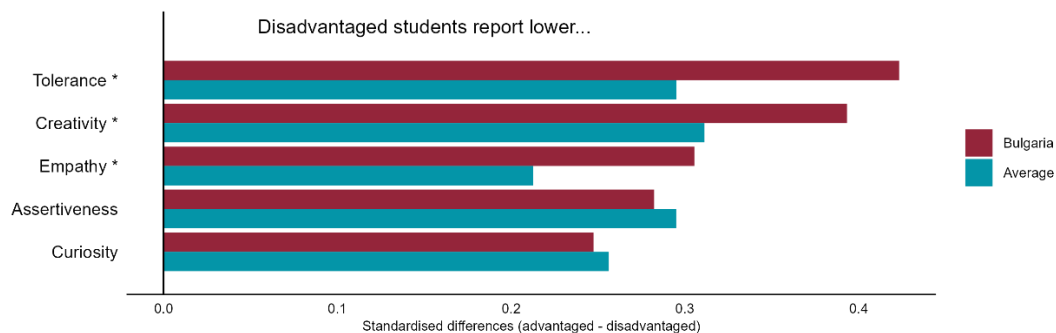
Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table B2.4

### Differences in skills between advantaged and disadvantaged students

- Disadvantaged 15-year-old students in Bulgaria reported lower levels of tolerance, creativity, empathy, assertiveness, curiosity, sociability, persistence, achievement motivation, energy than advantaged students, on average. At age 15, differences by socio-economic background were larger in Bulgaria than on average across sites for empathy, creativity and tolerance.

## Figure 2. Largest differences between advantaged and disadvantaged students in skills in Bulgaria

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



Note: The five skills with the largest socio-economic differences in Bulgaria 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 Bulgaria 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 Bulgaria?

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

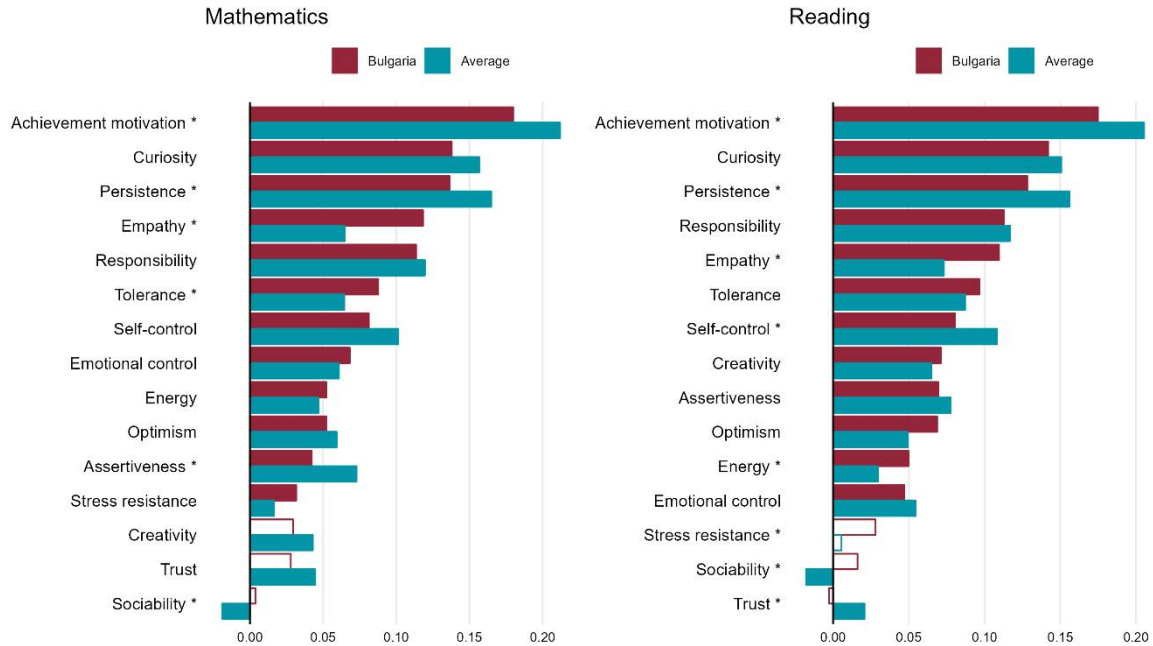
- In Bulgaria, 65% of 15-year-olds had arrived late for school at least once in the two weeks prior to the SSES assessment, above the average across sites (48%). In Bulgaria, 45% had skipped classes (above the average across sites: 29%) and 29% had skipped at least one day of school in the two weeks prior to the SSES assessment (below although close to the average across sites: 31%).
- In Bulgaria, 71% of 15-year-olds expect to complete tertiary education and 45% expect to have a managerial or professional job when they are 30. Both expectations were below the average across sites (84% and 57%, respectively).

### **Relationships between social and emotional skills and academic outcomes**

- In Bulgaria, 15-year-old students with higher levels of achievement motivation, persistence, responsibility, tolerance and emotional control tend to achieve better grades in all three subjects: mathematics, reading and arts. In Bulgaria, 15-year-old students with higher levels of achievement motivation, responsibility, curiosity, persistence, self-control, emotional control, tolerance, empathy, creativity, optimism, trust and energy, reported being late and skipping school less often.
- The positive relationships between the skill of empathy and grades in maths and reading were stronger in Bulgaria than on average across sites, while the relationship between persistence and grades in all three subjects was smaller than on average.

**Figure 3. Relationships between students' social and emotional skills and grades in Bulgaria compared to average across sites**

Standardised regression coefficients of individual skills on maths and reading grades among 15-year-olds in Bulgaria 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 Bulgaria that are significantly different to the average across sites are indicated by the asterisk against each skill.

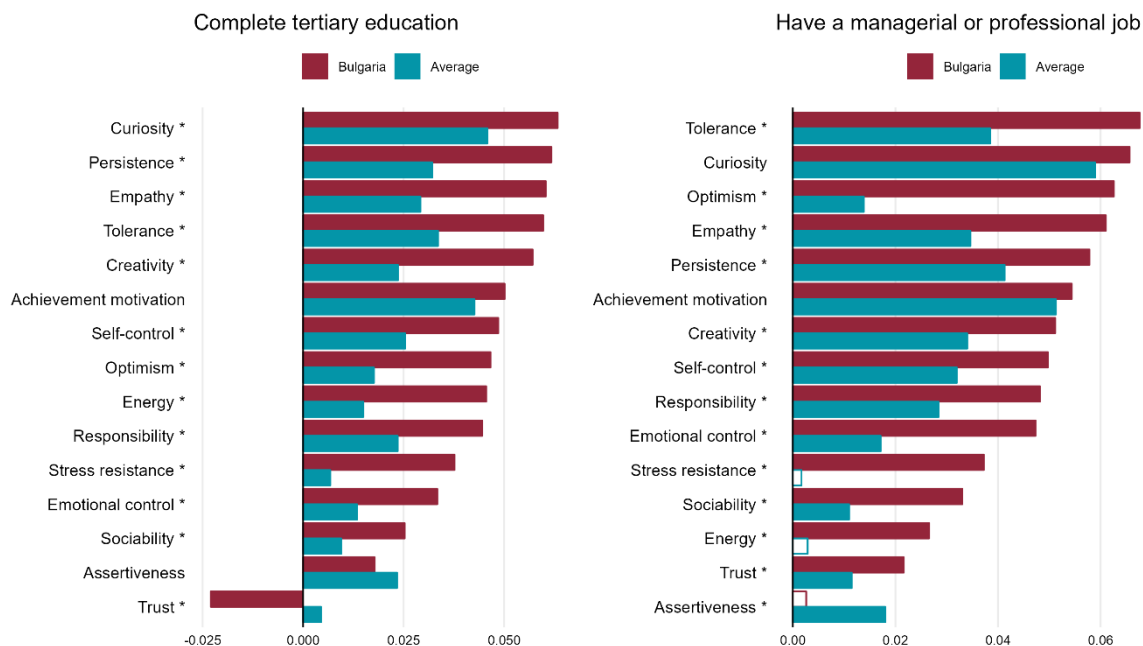
Source: OECD, SSSES 2023 Database Tables B4.1 and B4.4

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

- In Bulgaria, 15-year-old students with higher levels of curiosity, persistence, empathy, tolerance, creativity, achievement motivation, self-control, optimism, energy, responsibility, stress resistance, emotional control and sociability, tend to have higher expectations of completing tertiary education and having a managerial or professional job when they are 30. Students with higher levels of assertiveness also tend to have higher expectations of completing tertiary education, while students with higher levels of energy and trust tend to have higher expectations of a managerial or professional job in Bulgaria.
- The relationship between skills and students' expectations to attend tertiary education and have a managerial or professional job at age 30 are larger in Bulgaria than on average across sites for virtually all predictive skills (except for trust which is negatively related to the expectation of attending tertiary education in Bulgaria).

## Figure 4. Relationships between students' social and emotional skills and their future aspirations in Bulgaria compared to 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 Bulgaria 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 Bulgaria that are significantly different to the average across sites are indicated by the asterisk against each skill.

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

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

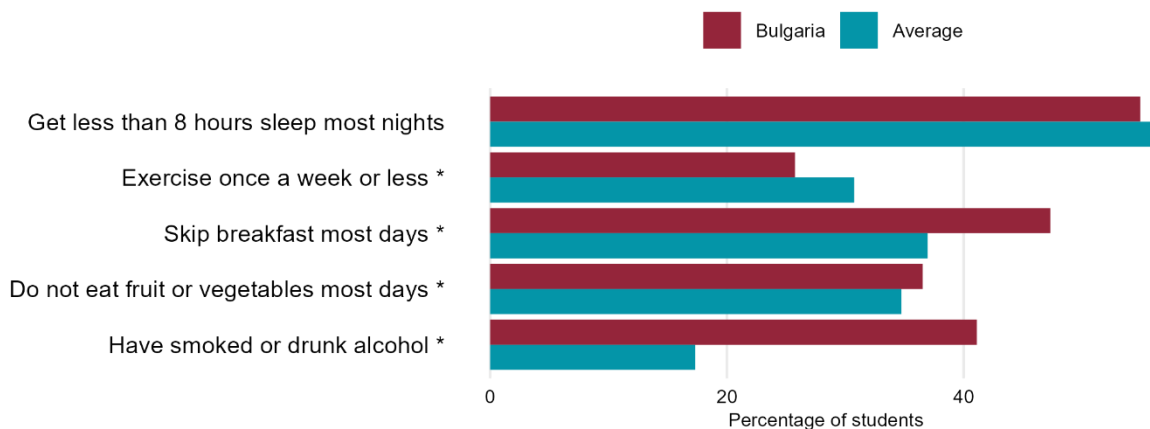
### Students' health behaviours

- 15-year-old students in Bulgaria reported higher frequencies of two unhealthy behaviours, compared to other sites: smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol; and skipping breakfast. In Bulgaria, 41% of 15-year-olds reported having smoked cigarettes or drunk alcohol at least once in their life, above the average across sites (17%). In Bulgaria, 47% of 15-year-olds do not eat breakfast most days compared to 37% on average across sites.

### Gender differences in health and well-being outcomes

- On average across sites, girls reported lower levels of all health and well-being outcomes (current psychological well-being, test and class anxiety, health behaviours, relationship satisfaction, body image) than boys. The same was observed in Bulgaria. However, gender differences in body image are smaller in Bulgaria than on average across sites.

**Figure 5. Percentage of students engaging in unhealthy behaviours in Bulgaria compared to average across sites**



Source: OECD, SSES 2023 Database Table B3.3

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

- In Bulgaria, 15-year-old students with higher levels of all skills – particularly optimism, stress-resistance, energy and achievement motivation – reported better current psychological well-being, health behaviours, relationship satisfaction and body image. In Bulgaria, 15-year-old students with higher levels of stress resistance, emotional control, optimism, energy, sociability, assertiveness, creativity and responsibility tend to have lower test and class anxiety.
- The positive relationships between achievement motivation, creativity and curiosity and most health and well-being outcomes were stronger in Bulgaria than on average across sites.

## 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<sup>[1]</sup>).

### ***How were these skills measured?***

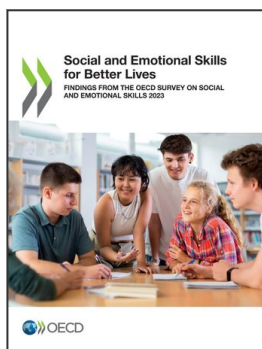
All students complete a questionnaire where they indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements. Examples of statements include: 'I keep working on a task until it is finished', 'I stay calm even in tense situations' and 'I am able to defend my interests when they are 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 Bulgaria 3,000 15-year-old students completed the assessment, representing about 57,400 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]



**From:**

## **Social and Emotional Skills for Better Lives**

Findings from the OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023

**Access the complete publication at:**

<https://doi.org/10.1787/35ca7b7c-en>

### **Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2024), "Bulgaria", in *Social and Emotional Skills for Better Lives: Findings from the OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/296b8b39-en>

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.