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**PPPA 6021: Data Visualization**  
**Final Policy Brief**  
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**Are Chilean schools effectively supporting the development of socio-emotional skills for all students? An exploration of socioeconomic differences.**

## **Introduction**

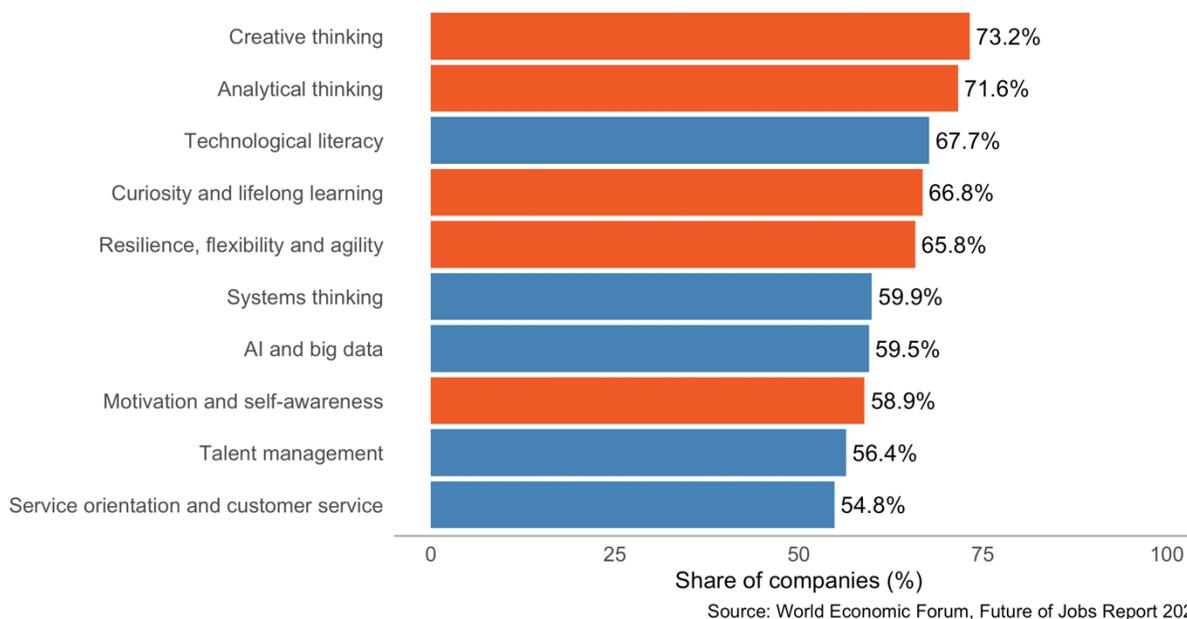
In Chile, education policy has increasingly emphasized the development of socio-emotional skills such as teamwork, creativity, and perseverance, recognizing their critical role in students' academic success and long-term employability.

According to UNESCO (2024), socio-emotional skills are defined as *“the set of abilities that individuals can develop throughout their lives and that determine their capacity to connect with and understand their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors; to relate to and understand the emotions, thoughts, and behaviors of others; and to function adaptively within a given context”* (p. 11).

The following graph presents the top 10 skills that employers report are increasing in importance in today's labor market. Socio-emotional skills are at the top of the list. Abilities like creative thinking, analytical thinking, curiosity, resilience, and motivation are now considered even more important than technical knowledge in many jobs. For example, 73% of employers identify creative thinking as one of the most relevant skills for the future of work. These skills are no longer viewed as “soft” or secondary; they are seen as essential complements to academic knowledge and technical expertise (OECD, 2024).

### Top 10 Skills Increasing in Importance According to Employers (2023)

Employers are placing growing importance on socioemotional skills, making them critical for the workforce



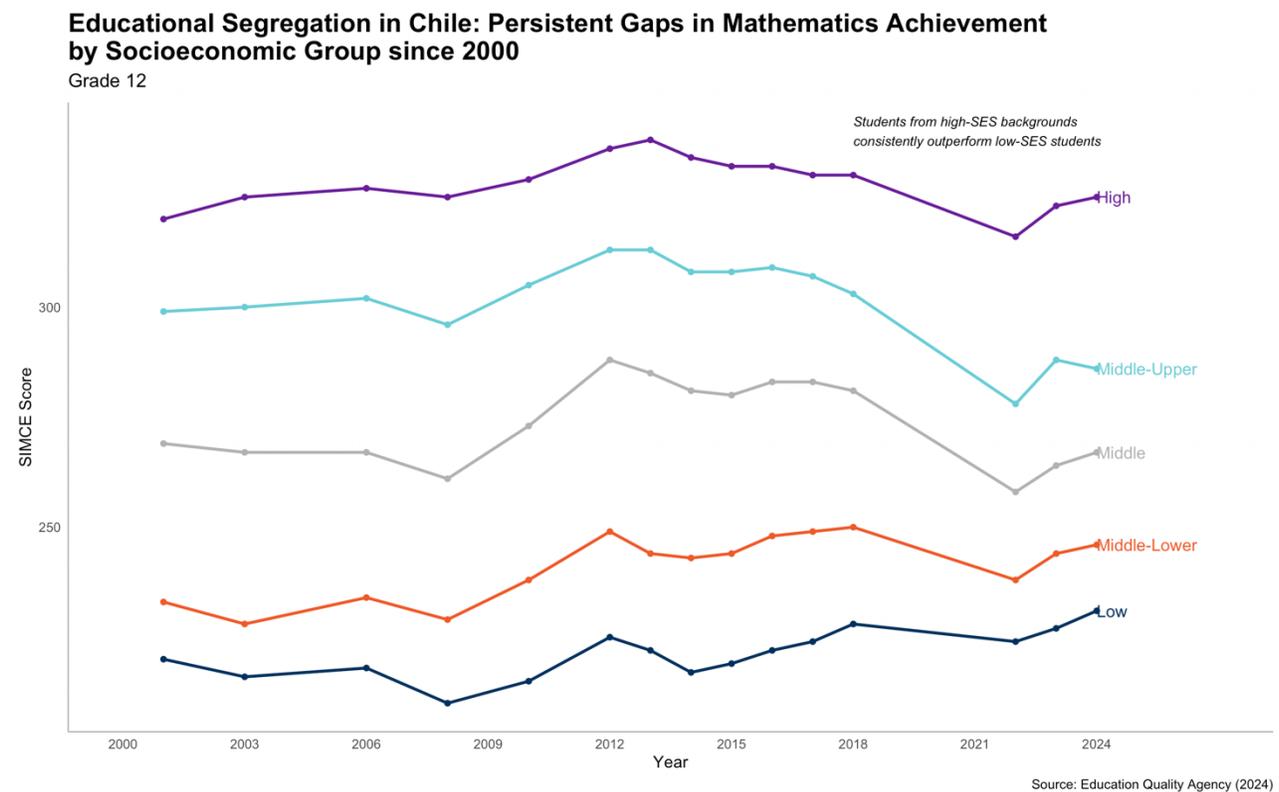
However, an important question remains: Are all Chilean students equally prepared in these areas? This policy brief examines data from the 2024 SIMCE assessment, which measures students' academic performance in Chile, and the 2022 PISA assessment, which collects student self-reports on socio-emotional skills. By analyzing these self-perceptions, this brief reveals a worrying pattern: students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds consistently report weaker skills in key areas, including leadership, creativity, and perseverance. These findings suggest that, just as academic outcomes are shaped by socioeconomic status, so too are socio-emotional skills—raising equity concerns that merit urgent policy attention in Chile.

### Setting the stage: Socioeconomic inequalities in Chilean students in academic tests

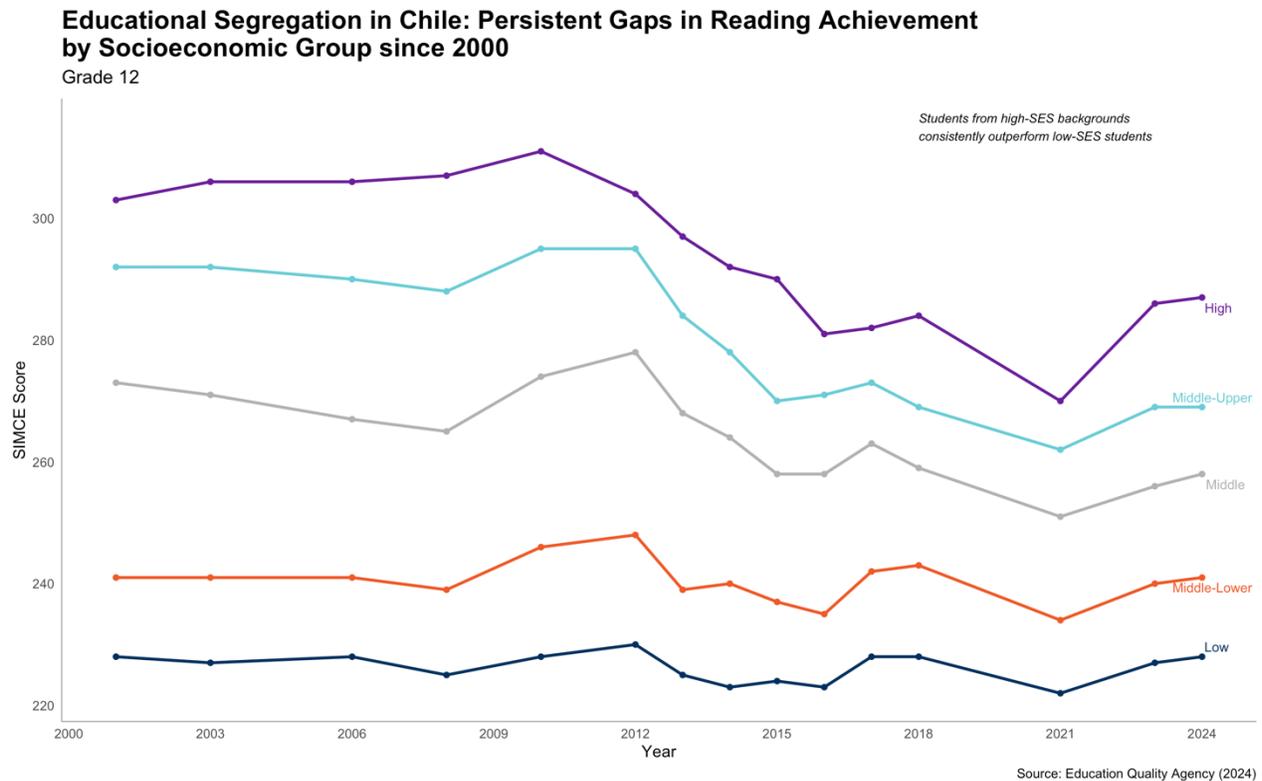
In Chile, longstanding socioeconomic inequalities have shaped students' academic performance for decades. Data from SIMCE 2024 confirm this persistent pattern: students from

higher socioeconomic backgrounds consistently outperform their peers from lower-income backgrounds in mathematics.

SIMCE (Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación in Spanish) is Chile’s national standardized assessment system. It measures students’ academic achievement across core subjects—such as mathematics, reading, and science—at various grade levels, providing key data for education policy and monitoring equity gaps. As shown in the next graph, students in the top SES group have maintained a strong advantage of nearly 100 points over those in the lowest group across the past two decades in the mathematics test. While there have been some fluctuations over the years, the gap has remained remarkably stable, underscoring how deeply entrenched these inequalities are.



A similar pattern is observed in reading achievement. The SIMCE 2024 data shows that students from high-SES backgrounds continue to outperform their lower-SES peers by a wide margin, with an average gap of around 60 points over the past two decades (see next graph). Although reading scores across all socioeconomic groups have fluctuated more than mathematics scores, the relative positions of the groups have remained unchanged. This persistent gap highlights that, despite policy efforts, Chile's education system continues to reproduce socioeconomic inequalities in mathematics and reading comprehension.

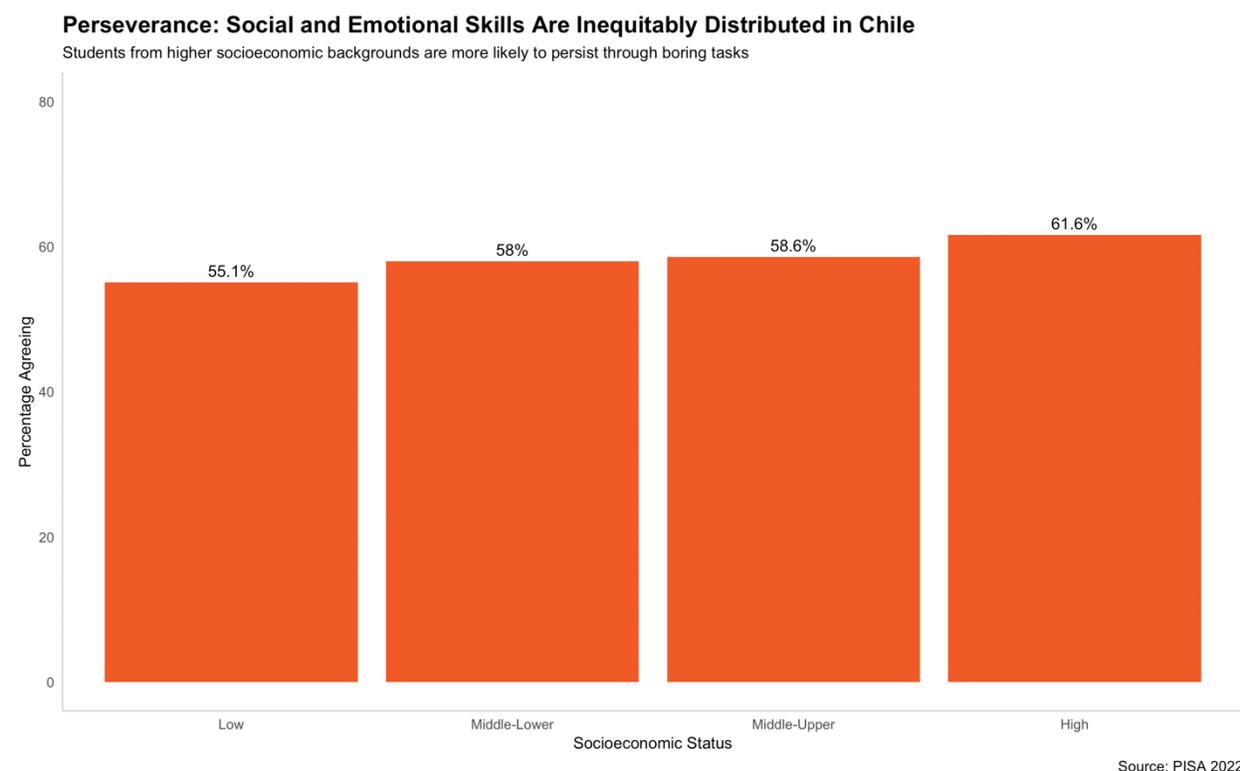


This persistent academic divide raises a key question: are similar patterns emerging in the development of socio-emotional skills? The next section explores this issue.

## Socio-emotional skills and socioeconomic status in Chilean students

The PISA 2022 data provide valuable insight into how socio-emotional skills—such as perseverance, creativity, and teamwork—vary across socioeconomic groups in Chile. While these skills are distinct from academic outcomes, they are no less critical for students' success in school and beyond.

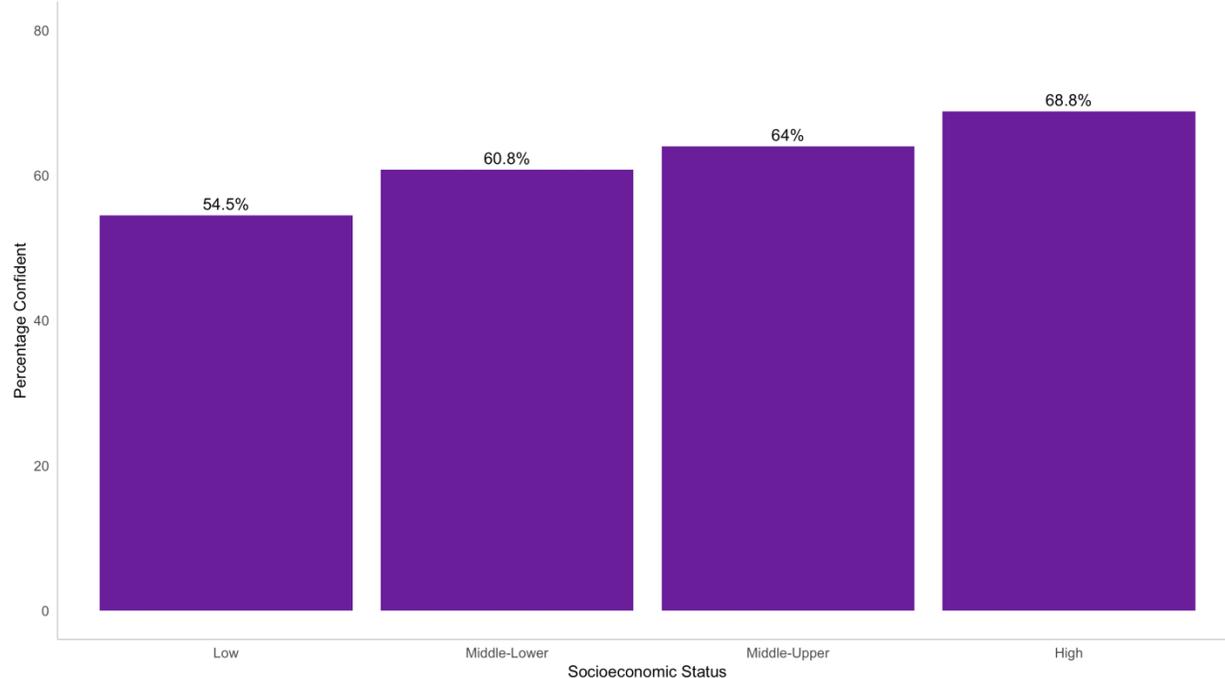
The results reveal a clear socioeconomic gradient across all the skills analyzed. In perseverance, for example, 61.6% of students from the highest SES group report being able to persist through boring tasks, compared to just 55.1% of students from the lowest SES group.



Although this gap of around 6.5 percentage points is smaller than the disparities observed in academic performance, it suggests that students from higher-income households may develop stronger persistence strategies over time.

A similar pattern is evident in creativity: 68.8% of high-SES students feel confident generating creative ideas for school projects, while only 54.5% of low-SES students express the same confidence. This 14-percentage-point difference highlights how socioeconomic background may shape not only academic results but also students' belief in their own creative abilities.

**Creativity: Social and Emotional Skills Are Inequitably Distributed in Chile**  
Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds feel more confident generating creative ideas for school projects

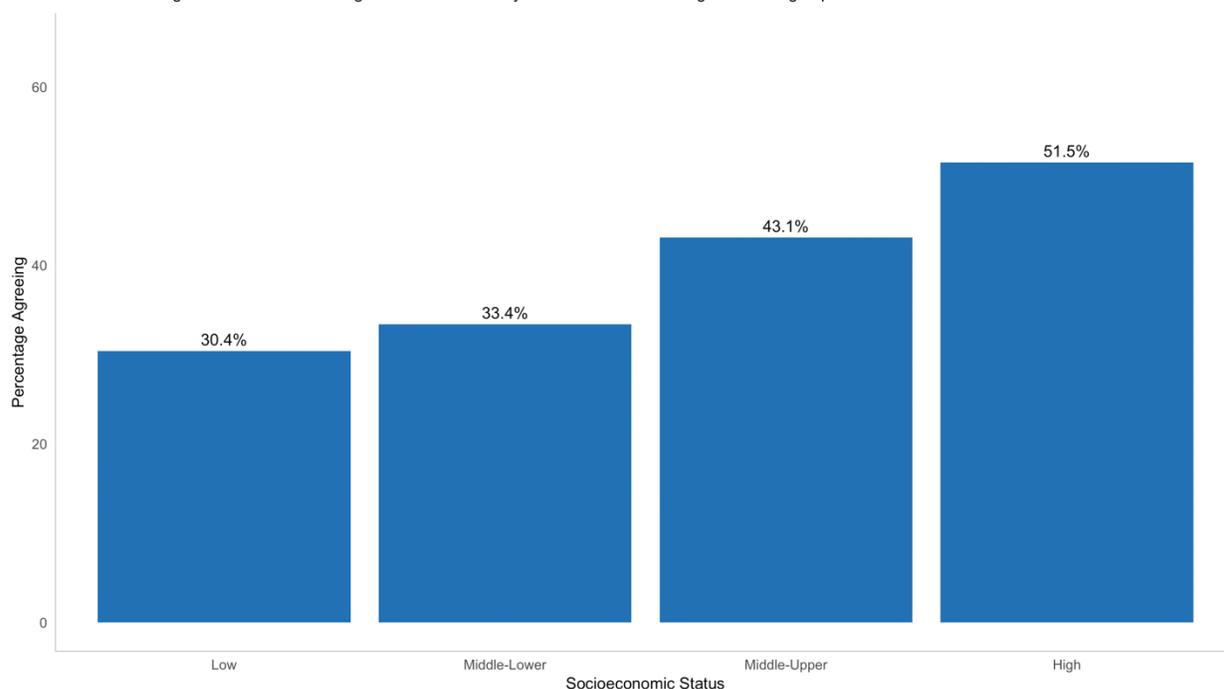


Source: PISA 2022

The most striking gap appears in teamwork-related skills. While 51.5% of students from the top SES group feel comfortable taking the lead in group work, only 30.4% of their low-SES peers report the same—a difference of over 20 percentage points that points to deeper inequalities in leadership confidence and comfort with collaborative roles.

### Teamwork: Social and Emotional Skills Are Inequitably Distributed in Chile

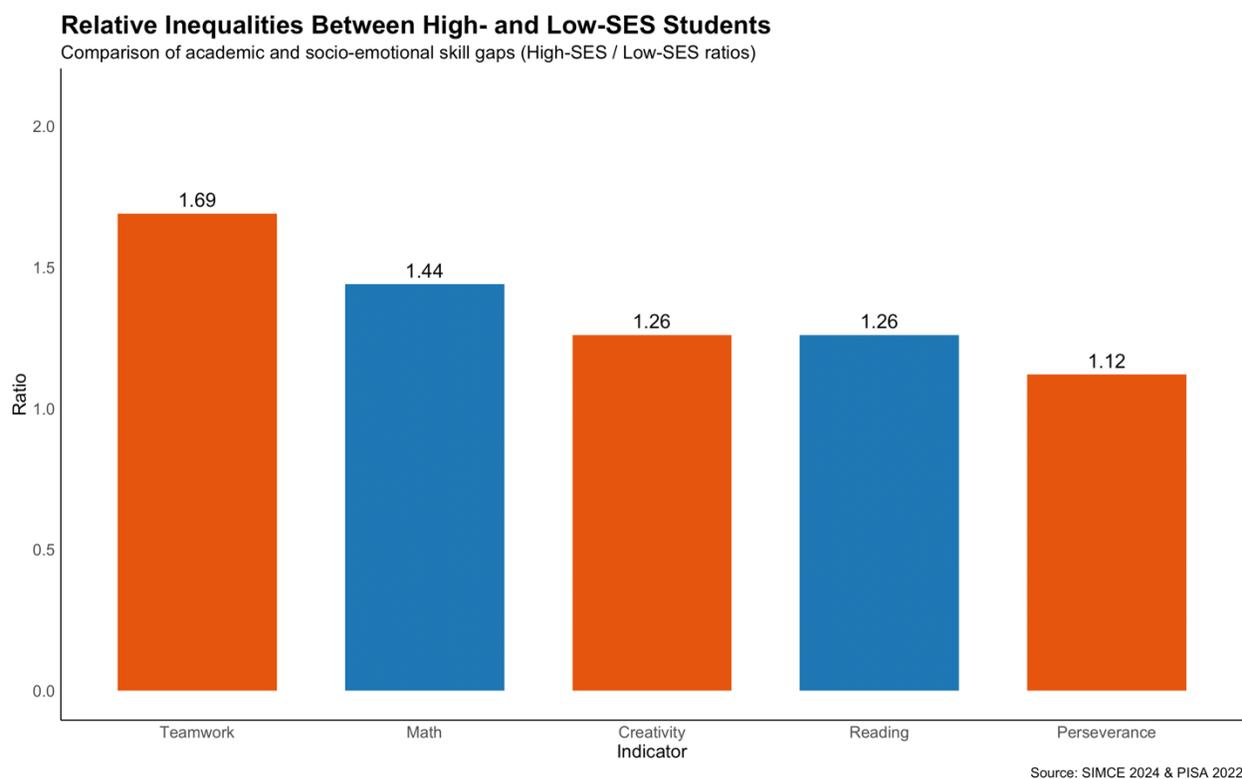
Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to feel comfortable taking the lead in group work



Source: PISA 2022

### Comparing Academic and socio-emotional inequalities: A ratio perspective

To better understand the magnitude of socioeconomic inequalities across different areas, I calculated the ratio between high- and low-SES students for each indicator. This ratio shows how much better high-SES students perform (or perceive themselves) relative to their low-SES peers. For academic outcomes, the ratios are based on SIMCE test scores, while for socio-emotional skills, they are based on student self-reports from PISA 2022.



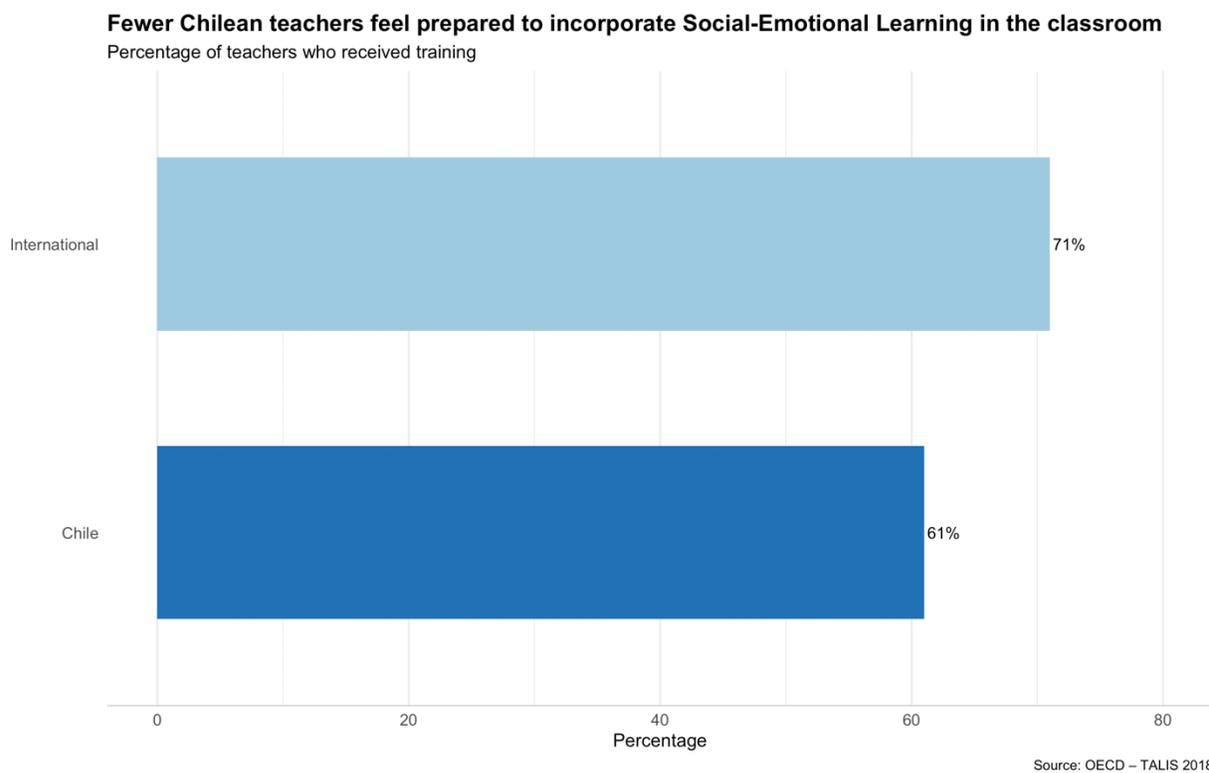
The results highlight that while academic inequalities remain substantial—1.44 times higher in mathematics and 1.26 times in reading—the gaps in socio-emotional skills are also important. The most pronounced disparity is in teamwork: high-SES students are 1.69 times more likely to feel comfortable taking the lead in group work compared to their low-SES peers. Creativity shows a moderate gap (1.26), and perseverance displays the smallest relative difference (1.12).

This comparison suggests that although academic inequalities receive the most policy attention in Chile because the country monitors academic performance since 2000, socio-emotional gaps—especially in leadership and collaborative confidence—are equally critical and should not be overlooked. Addressing these broader dimensions of student development is essential to achieving more equitable outcomes in Chile’s education system.

## Policy implications and next steps

The data analyzed in this brief highlight two critical challenges: (1) the persistence of deep academic inequalities across socioeconomic groups in Chile, and (2) substantial gaps in socio-emotional skills, particularly in teamwork and leadership confidence. Although Chile has a well-established system for monitoring academic outcomes through SIMCE, there is currently no equivalent national framework to track students' socio-emotional development over time or across different contexts.

The policy solutions proposed here aim to address both immediate and long-term needs. First, teacher training is essential: the TALIS 2018 data show that only 61% of Chilean teachers feel prepared to foster socio-emotional skills, compared to 71% internationally. This gap suggests an urgent need for enhanced professional development that equips teachers with practical strategies to integrate teamwork, creativity, and perseverance into daily instruction.



Second, establishing a national socio-emotional learning monitoring system is critical. While PISA offers valuable cross-sectional data, it is not designed to provide continuous national monitoring or to diagnose socio-emotional gaps at the school level in Chile. A national system—using surveys or self-report tools—would allow Chile to regularly track socio-emotional progress of students and identify where additional support is needed, ensuring that socio-emotional learning is not sidelined in education policy.

Third, targeting resources to vulnerable schools is vital to reduce the observed inequalities. As the analysis shows, students from low-SES backgrounds report significantly lower confidence in leadership and creativity, skills that are fundamental not only for school success but also for long-term personal and professional growth. These schools need tailored interventions: materials, training, and coaching that address their specific challenges in cultivating socio-emotional learning.

However, one key limitation of the current evidence is its reliance on self-reported data, which, while useful, may not fully capture students' real-world application of socio-emotional skills. Moving forward, Chile's education system should explore more robust assessment tools—such as teacher-rated behaviors, peer evaluations, or performance tasks—to complement self-reports. Additionally, longitudinal data would help policymakers understand how socio-emotional skills evolve over time and what interventions are most effective.

In summary, while Chile has made progress in highlighting the importance of socio-emotional learning, the data reveal clear inequities that require urgent and sustained policy action. Strengthening teacher preparation, establishing national monitoring systems, and prioritizing support for vulnerable schools are essential steps to ensure that all students—not just those from privileged backgrounds—develop the skills they need to thrive.

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