

# Study shows female students perform better on longer tests

4 September 2019, by Bob Yirka



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A team of researchers from Universitat de les Illes Balears and Erasmus University Rotterdam, has found that female students score better than male students on tests over two hours long. In their paper published in the journal *Nature Communications*, the researchers describe their study of test results of students taking the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and what they found.

For many years, have shown female students have achieved higher PISA scores on reading and verbal tests, while boys did better on math and science. These findings have led to efforts by [school administrators](#) to improve the way students are taught, particularly girls who tend to shun STEM fields. But now, it appears there is more to the test results than was previously thought.

To learn more about the differences in test taking between genders, the researchers studied PISA results from 2006 to 2015 in a new way. They noted that prior research had shown that students give their best answers at the beginning of a test and grow progressively worse as the test continues. They report that when they tracked the progression of test taking with the students, they

found that the performance of the males degraded more so than did the females. This led to fewer overall performance differences for longer tests. As an example, they noted that during the early stages of math tests, the boys were outperforming girls by up to 6 percent. But by the end of the [test](#), performance was nearly equal. The researchers suggest their findings indicate that girls are able to maintain their concentration on tests for longer periods than boys.

To confirm their findings, the researchers also looked at the data from a prior study that involved performance by students who had completed 441 tests of varying lengths. They report that they found the same trend—longer tests had a smaller gender gap.

The researchers suggest that girls have more self-discipline and tend to take a more serious approach to learning. They also note that prior studies have shown that women are better at planning, and might be using that ability when working on tests that take a lot of time.

**More information:** Pau Balart et al. Females show more sustained performance during test-taking than males, *Nature Communications* (2019). [DOI: 10.1038/s41467-019-11691-y](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-019-11691-y)

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APA citation: Study shows female students perform better on longer tests (2019, September 4) retrieved 3 March 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-09-female-students-longer.html>

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