

Study shows immigrant students succeed in education

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There are relatively few differences in problem solving, mathematics and science achievement between immigrant students and non-immigrant students after accounting for socio-economic status, literacy, recency of arrival and language spoken at home, a major study by researchers at the University of Sydney and the Hong Kong Institute of Education has found.

There is even less difference for second-generation immigrant students when compared to first-generation immigrant students - suggesting that differences in [educational outcomes](#) largely iron out over successive generations of immigrants.

The large-scale study into the effects of immigrant status on academic outcomes was funded by the Australian Research Council and published in the latest issue of the prestigious [Journal of Educational Psychology](#).

Led by Professor Andrew Martin from the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney, the research involved 113,767 15 to 16 year-old students from 17 OECD countries (including more than 12,000 Australians).

Professor Martin said the significant effects of socio-demographic and settlement factors suggest it is not immigrant status per se that explains lower achievement and problem-solving skill, but various factors that are embedded within and associated with [immigrant status](#) that make a substantial difference.

"Importantly," Professor Martin said, "this counters 'deficit' perspectives on immigrants (deficit views are that immigrants are inherently less capable) - instead, there is a constellation of circumstances and factors in immigrant students' lives that affect their [academic outcomes](#)."

Major factors affecting immigrant students' achievement were low socio-economic status, not speaking the 'local' language at home, poor reading proficiency, and recent arrival.

"Schools that address some of these factors by intensively assisting literacy development and providing additional logistic support, such as after-hours homework group, access to computers, breakfast club, fundamental materials (books), exposure to extra-curricular activity and so on, are laying a better foundation for positive outcomes for immigrants."

Key findings:

- There were few differences in problem-solving, mathematics, and science achievement between immigrant students and non-immigrant students after accounting for socio-economic status, literacy, recency of arrival, and language spoken at home. Thus, immigrant students can perform well in problem solving, mathematics, and science - but for them to do so it is important to address socio-economic, settlement, language/literacy, and school factors.
- Second-generation immigrants tended to perform better than first-generation immigrants, indicating that educational differences largely iron out over successive generations of immigrants.
- There were significant differences between countries in how immigrants performed in mathematics, science and problem solving. In Australia, for example, after controlling for socio-

economic and settlement factors, immigrants performed better than non-immigrant students in science and mathematics. Thus, in Australia, compared with non-immigrant students of similar socio-economic background and other relevant attributes, [immigrants](#) performed slightly better.

- There were significant differences between schools in how well immigrant students performed in [problem solving](#), science and mathematics achievement. Thus, some schools do a very good job of assisting immigrant students' achievement - and other schools don't do such a good job.

Provided by University of Sydney

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