

Cross-country study looks at social integration among minority adolescents

October 1 2018



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An international research group has published the conclusions of a study focused on juvenile delinquency among ethnic and religious minorities from five different Western countries. Through the prism of

delinquency, the study examines the social integration of minorities and concludes that interaction with public institutions and the living conditions of these young people contribute to different patterns of integration depending on the country. Researchers from the PACTE research unit (CNRS/Sciences Po Grenoble/University Grenoble Alpes) and colleagues published their results in September 2018 in the form of a book (Springer publishing).

Five countries with five different social models – France, the United States, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom – served as the basis for a single study into the [social integration](#) of ethno-religious minority youth, entitled "Understanding and preventing youth crime". A team of French researchers and a dozen counterparts in the countries studied asked approximately 10,000 teenagers between the ages of 11 and 14 to complete the same questionnaire. As a result, for the first time ever, macro and micro integration mechanisms in these different countries could be compared.

The study shows that reported minor crimes were primarily electronic in nature: 35 percent of middle-school students, for example, said they had engaged in illegal downloading at some point in the year. Alcohol is the drug most commonly consumed by the [young people](#) interviewed (41 percent), far more than cannabis (10 percent). Researchers insist on the fact that [police services](#) are underinformed of delinquent behaviour in all five countries: nearly 85 percent of those who committed crimes said they had not attracted police attention. This figure highlights the importance of such a study in providing more comprehensive data than those provided by police services – data which is hardly comparable between countries.

Researchers also looked at another aspect: the social integration of teenagers in relation to their dealings with [public institutions](#). In France, for example, young people who took part in the study feel less attached

to school than in the other four countries, and police services have trouble earning their trust, unlike in the Netherlands and Germany. Nevertheless, an attachment to school increases on average in the overall sample of adolescents in relation to religiosity: the more important religion is, the more important school is, too. Responses do not indicate that religion systematically weakens a commitment to school – to the contrary. However, this positive relationship, observed in Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom was not confirmed in France, where religiosity has no effect.

Juvenile delinquency is, on average, more frequent among foreign youth born in non-European countries, though most of this "ethnic" effect is, in fact, attributable to what are known as "structural disadvantages": socio-economic conditions, run-down neighbourhoods and academic segregation, etc. These teenagers are also more frequently victims of abuse at their hands of their parents. Lastly, the research team pointed out the generational dynamic observed in their study. Acceptance of moral standards in the host country increases from one generation to the next in a family from a country outside the European Union.

More information: Minority youth and social integration. September 2018, Springer. [DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-89462-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89462-1)

Provided by CNRS

Citation: Cross-country study looks at social integration among minority adolescents (2018, October 1) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-10-cross-country-social-minority-adolescents.html>

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