

Executive Summary

Migration flows are profoundly changing the composition of classrooms. Analyses of PISA data reveal that in 2015, almost one in four 15-year-old students in OECD countries reported that they were either foreign-born or had at least one foreign-born parent. In Switzerland and Luxembourg more than one in two 15-year-old students reported that they were either foreign born or had at least one parent who was. Between 2003 and 2015, the share of students who had either migrated or who had a parent who had migrated across international borders grew by six percentage points, on average across OECD countries.

Migration flows from several decades ago still loom large. Of all groups of students with an immigrant background, defined here as either being foreign-born or having at least one foreign-born parent, the share of second-generation immigrant students (native-born children of foreign-born parents) grew most rapidly (by three percentage points) on average across OECD countries between 2003 and 2015. The share of native-born students with a mixed heritage, i.e. students who were born in the country in which they sat the PISA test and have one native- and one foreign-born parent, grew by two percentage points, on average, across OECD countries. Migration waves after 2000, which are reflected in the share of foreign-born students, account for only a one percentage-point increase, on average across OECD countries. In 2015, recent arrivals – foreign-born students who had settled in the host country at or after the age of 12 – represented about one-third of all first-generation immigrant students, on average.

The ability of societies to maintain social cohesion in the presence of large migration flows depends on their capacity to integrate immigrants. Education can help immigrants acquire skills and contribute to the host-country economy; it can also contribute to migrants' social and emotional well-being and sustain their motivation to participate in the social and civic life of their new communities. But ensuring that students with an immigrant background enjoy academic, social and emotional well-being implies that these students must first overcome the adversities associated with displacement, socio-economic disadvantage, language barriers and the difficulty of forging a new identity – all at the same time.

The capacity of students with an immigrant background to overcome these hardships and be resilient should be judged not only on their ability to attain baseline levels of academic proficiency, but also on their sense of belonging at school, their satisfaction with life, their level of schoolwork-related anxiety and their motivation to achieve. These five indicators represent key dimensions of well-being measured by PISA in 2015.

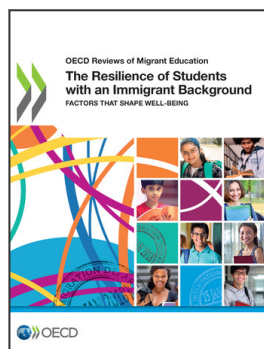
Students with an immigrant background tend to underperform in school. This is particularly true of first-generation immigrant students (foreign-born students of foreign-born parents). On average across OECD countries, as much as 51% of first-generation immigrant students failed to reach baseline academic proficiency in reading, mathematics and science, compared to 28% percent of students without an immigrant background who failed to reach that level. Similar differences are observed in most other well-being outcomes as well: 41% of first-generation immigrant students reported a weak sense of belonging, compared to 33% of students without an immigrant background who so reported; 31% of first-generation immigrant students reported low life satisfaction, compared to 28% of students without an immigrant background; and 67% of first-generation immigrant students reported high schoolwork-related anxiety, compared to 61% of students without an immigrant background.

Academic underperformance among students with an immigrant background is particularly pronounced in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland. In these countries, immigrant students (students, native- or foreign-born, who have two foreign-born parents) are more than twice as likely as students without an immigrant background to fail to achieve baseline academic proficiency.

But even in some countries where academic underperformance among students with an immigrant background is not as marked, the analysis also shows that students with an immigrant background suffer in other measures of well-being too. In the Slovak Republic and Spain, for example, immigrant students were considerably less likely than native students to report a strong sense of belonging at school. In France, Iceland, Spain and the United Kingdom, immigrant students were considerably less likely to report being satisfied with their life. In Austria, Finland, Luxembourg and Switzerland, they were considerably more likely than native students to report high levels of schoolwork-related anxiety. While in most countries, immigrant students expressed greater motivation to achieve, in Israel and Mexico, immigrant students were significantly less likely to report high achievement motivation than students who had no direct experience of migration.

Socio-economic disadvantage and language barriers are two of the greatest obstacles to the successful integration of students with an immigrant background. For example, differences in socio-economic status explain over one-fifth of the gap between immigrant students and students without an immigrant background in the likelihood of attaining baseline levels of academic proficiency, on average across OECD countries. Similarly, immigrant students in OECD countries who do not speak the language of assessment at home are around eight percentage points less likely to be academically resilient than native-speaking immigrant students.

Education systems, schools and teachers can play a significant role in helping students with an immigrant background integrate into their communities, overcome adversity and build their academic, social, emotional and motivational resilience. Introducing early assessment of language and other skills, providing targeted language training, building a diversity-aware teaching force that can support all learners, offering additional support to disadvantaged students and schools, implementing effective anti-bullying programmes, ensuring the availability of and participation in extracurricular activities, and engaging parents can improve the well-being of students with an immigrant background, in all of its facets.



From:

The Resilience of Students with an Immigrant Background

Factors that Shape Well-being

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264292093-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2018), “Executive Summary”, in *The Resilience of Students with an Immigrant Background: Factors that Shape Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264292093-2-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any 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.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org. Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at info@copyright.com or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at contact@cfcopies.com.