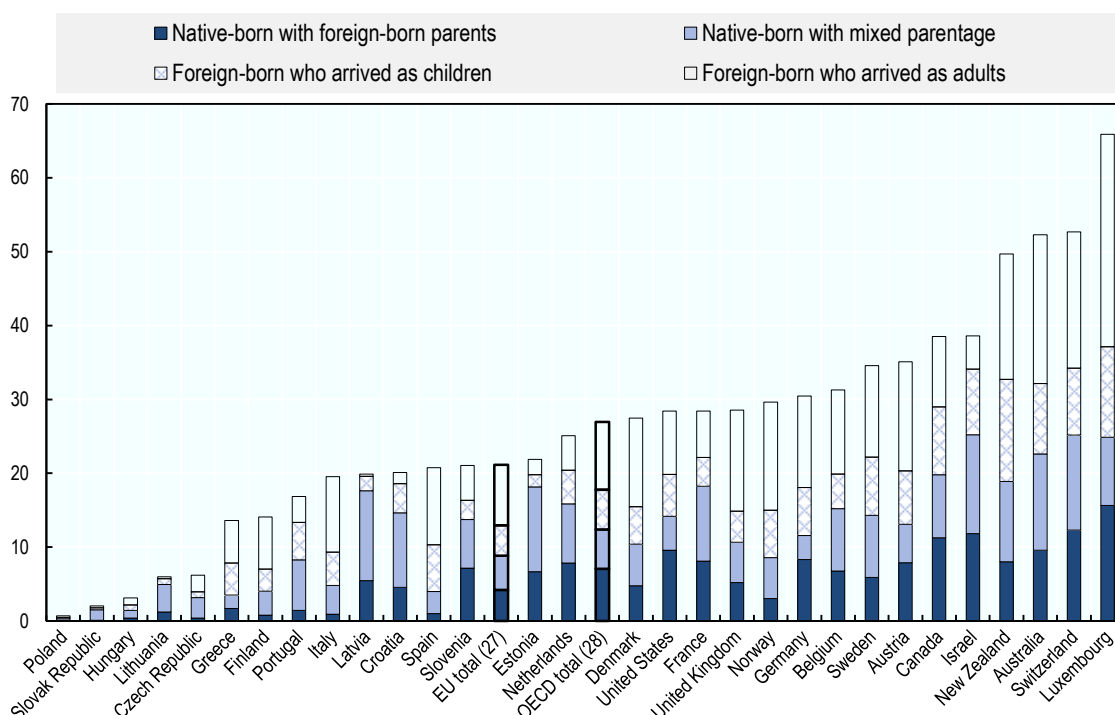


# Introduction

## Why is the integration of young people with migrant parents an important issue?

OECD-wide, youth who are either themselves foreign-born or who are native-born with foreign-born parents account for nearly one in five 15 to 34-year-olds, or 38.7 million people (OECD/EU, 2018<sup>[1]</sup>). Their population share is increasing in virtually all OECD countries, although the size and composition varies greatly across countries, reflecting countries' different migration histories. Irrespective of whether they migrated or not, some of these young people hold the citizenship of their country of residence, while others do not. In this publication, the term “youth with migrant parents” refers to all youth who are migrants (foreign-born) themselves but arrived during childhood, as well as those who are native-born but have at least one parent who is foreign-born.

**Figure 1. Foreign-born and native-born youth with migrant parents in OECD countries, 2017**



Note: In Germany, the parental origin is based on the country of birth of parents for the native-born still living with their parents, and on own citizenship or the citizenship at birth of the parents for those who do not live anymore with their parents. Averages factor in rates that cannot be published individually because sample sizes are too small.

Source: OECD/EU (2018<sup>[1]</sup>).

While immigrants who arrived as adults will always face some challenges related to the fact that they have been raised and educated in a different country and education system – and often language – this should not be the case for youth who arrived with their parents as children, and certainly not for youth who have foreign-born parents but are themselves native-born. As a result, they are generally considered the benchmark for successful integration policies.

## Young people with migrant parents face challenges in the education system ...

Youth with migrant parents often face specific challenges in the education system. Data from the OECD Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) show that in all OECD countries with the exception of New Zealand, foreign-born students have lower educational outcomes at age 15 (OECD/EU, 2018<sup>[1]</sup>). The situation for those who are native-born with immigrant parents is more diverse. In OECD Europe, they lag behind their peers with native-born parents by over half a school year. The gap exceeds one year of schooling in the Nordic countries and in longstanding immigrant destinations such as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland. In contrast, in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, which have disproportionately large shares of high-educated immigrants, native-born students with foreign-born parents have higher educational outcomes than their peers with native-born parents.

Adjusting to a language of instruction that is different from their first language is a major challenge for many young people with migrant parents, especially for those who are foreign-born. In addition, immigrant parents, despite good intentions and in many cases high ambitions, are often less able than native-born parents to support their child's learning in school. The reasons are manifold and include a mix of language difficulties, lack of familiarity with the host country's education system and low awareness of available support offers, sometimes exacerbated by a lack of financial means to invest in remedial learning offers.

Foreign-born students who have spent several years in an education system abroad with a different curriculum and teaching methods face additional hurdles. In addition to language barriers, 'late arrivals' need to adapt to a new learning environment, which is particularly difficult for those who come from lower-performing education systems. PISA results suggest that the older a child is at the time of arrival, the less likely it is to attain baseline levels of academic proficiency at age 15 in math, reading and sciences (OECD, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>).

Children of immigrants who successfully complete secondary education often struggle to enter further education pathways. Compared with their peers of native-born parentage they are less likely to find an apprenticeship, although this type of training tends to be of particular benefit for children of immigrants (OECD, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>). At the same time, and despite high educational aspirations, children of immigrants are underrepresented in higher education, which is an important factor for occupational mobility and good labour market performance.

## ... and in the labour market

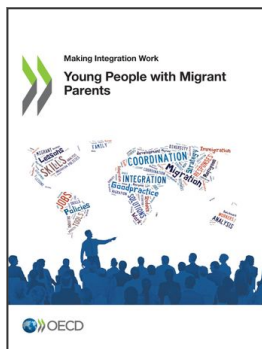
Entering the labour market constitutes a challenge for many youth. Lower performance and reading levels put students with migrant parents at an over-proportionate risk of leaving school early and of facing subsequent unemployment. OECD-wide, 14% of the 15-34 year-old native-born children of immigrants are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and in two-thirds of OECD-countries, native-born with foreign-born parents are more likely than their peers with native parentage to be both NEET and low-educated (OECD/EU, 2018<sup>[1]</sup>).

Compared with their peers of native-born parentage, offspring of immigrants also need more time, on average, to find their first job after finishing school (OECD/EU, 2015<sup>[4]</sup>). Youth with migrant parents can

often rely on fewer social networks to help them obtain relevant information and improve their opportunities in the job-search process. They often lack role models to look up to and remain underrepresented in the public sector in a number of OECD countries. Negative stereotypes and discrimination are further components that complicate both, the search for a first job and subsequent career advancement. Those who have obtained their qualifications abroad often face further challenges related to the assessment and recognition of their credentials.

## The purpose of this publication

Ensuring that youth with migrant parents can reach their full potential, in the education system and in the labour market, is both an economic imperative and key to social cohesion. There is a balance to strike between providing mainstream programmes for all youth in need of support, and designing programmes that account for the particular needs of youth with migrant parents. Building on 14 countries reviews on the integration of immigrants and their children and further comparative work by the OECD (OECD, 2010<sup>[5]</sup>; OECD, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>; OECD, 2018<sup>[6]</sup>), this publication presents key lessons and examples of good practice from OECD countries, to highlight ways in which policy-makers can tackle key barriers and support integration.



From:  
**Young People with Migrant Parents**

Access the complete publication at:  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/6e773bfe-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2021), "Introduction", in *Young People with Migrant Parents*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/bc03f828-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, as well as any data and 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. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.