

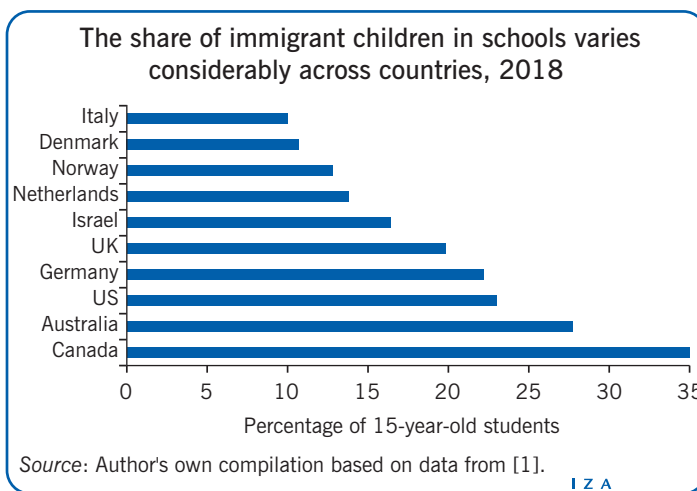
Immigrants in the classroom and effects on native children

Having immigrant children in the classroom may sometimes, but not always, harm educational outcomes of native children

Keywords: educational performance, immigrant concentration, native children, test scores

ELEVATOR PITCH

Many countries are experiencing increasing inflows of immigrant students. This raises concerns that having a large share of students for whom the host country language is not their first language may have detrimental effects on the educational outcomes of native children. However, the evidence is mixed, with some studies finding negative effects, and others finding no effects. Whether higher concentrations of immigrant students have an effect on native students differs across countries according to factors such as organization of the school system and the type of immigrants.



KEY FINDINGS

Pros

- ⊕ In some countries, test scores of native children are not affected by the presence of immigrant children in the same classroom.
- ⊕ Increased immigration to the US has a small but positive net effect on the high school completion rate of native children.
- ⊕ Immigrant children who have stayed a few years or non-refugee immigrants may have no detrimental effects on their native peers.
- ⊕ If the share of immigrant children in schools is below a certain threshold, it may not affect native children.

Cons

- ⊖ In most countries, a high share of immigrant children in schools leads to lower test scores of native children.
- ⊖ A high share of immigrant students can lead to higher dropout rates from high school and lower chances of passing exams.
- ⊖ Native flight from schools that have many immigrant children can amplify negative effects on native children, as native parents move their children to schools with fewer immigrant children.
- ⊖ Native children with low parental education are most affected by immigrants in the classroom.

AUTHOR'S MAIN MESSAGE

Recent evidence suggests that the effects of a high concentration of immigrant children on the educational outcomes of native children vary from negative to zero, depending on the country. Policymakers need to carefully consider any available evidence for their own country before implementing educational or immigration policies to address this problem. However, in most cases, the negative effects are rather small and seem to be related to disadvantaged immigrants or refugees. Thus, the effects might be remedied by improving immigrant children's language acquisition and providing general support to all children from disadvantaged backgrounds.