



4

Learning Outcomes of Students with an Immigrant Background

On average, more than 10% of 15-year-old students across OECD countries are foreign-born or have foreign-born parents. This chapter compares the reading performance of students with an immigrant background with the performance of students without an immigrant background in the same country, and with the performance of students in other countries. It examines performance differences among first- and second-generation immigrants; and between those students who speak a different language at home than the one in which they were assessed, and those who speak the same language at home. Performance in reading is also analysed according to immigrant students' country or region of origin.



STUDENTS WITH AN IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND

Immigrant populations in OECD countries have grown significantly in recent decades. Between 1990 and 2000 alone, the number of people living outside their country of birth nearly doubled worldwide, to 175 million (OECD, 2006). As discussed in Volume V, *Learning Trends*, the proportion of students with an immigrant background also increased in OECD countries, with some countries observing changes of more than five percentage points in their student immigrant population between 2000 and 2009. This growing proportion of students with an immigrant background poses challenges to education systems. Larger immigrant student populations increase the diversity of the student body and school systems need to engage with this diversity to secure high-quality instruction for all students. PISA offers a unique opportunity to identify school systems that are effective in capitalising on the potential of students with an immigrant background.

PISA distinguishes between three types of student immigrant status: *i*) students without an immigrant background, also referred to as native students, are students who were born in the country where they were assessed by PISA or who had at least one parent born in the country;¹ *ii*) second-generation students are students who were born in the country of assessment but whose parents are foreign-born; and *iii*) first-generation students are foreign-born students whose parents are also foreign-born.² Students with an immigrant background thus include students who are first- or second- generation immigrants.

THE SIZE OF THE IMMIGRANT-BACKGROUND STUDENT POPULATION AND MEAN PERFORMANCE OF THE SYSTEM

Figure II.4.1 shows the proportion of 15-year-old students who have an immigrant background. The grey bar represents the percentage of first-generation students and the blue bar represents the percentage of second-generation students. Across OECD countries, 10% of the students assessed by PISA have an immigrant background. This group represents 40% of students in Luxembourg. In New Zealand, Canada and Switzerland, students with an immigrant background represent around 24% of students. In Israel, the United States, Australia, Germany and Austria, students with an immigrant background represent between 15% and 20% of the student population, and in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, between 10% and 15%. Among the partner countries and economies, students with an immigrant background represent around 70% of the student population in Dubai (UAE) and Macao-China. They also represent a sizeable percentage of the student population in Qatar, Hong Kong-China and Liechtenstein (between 30% and 50%). In Singapore, Jordan, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Croatia, the percentage is between 10% and 15% (Table II.4.1).

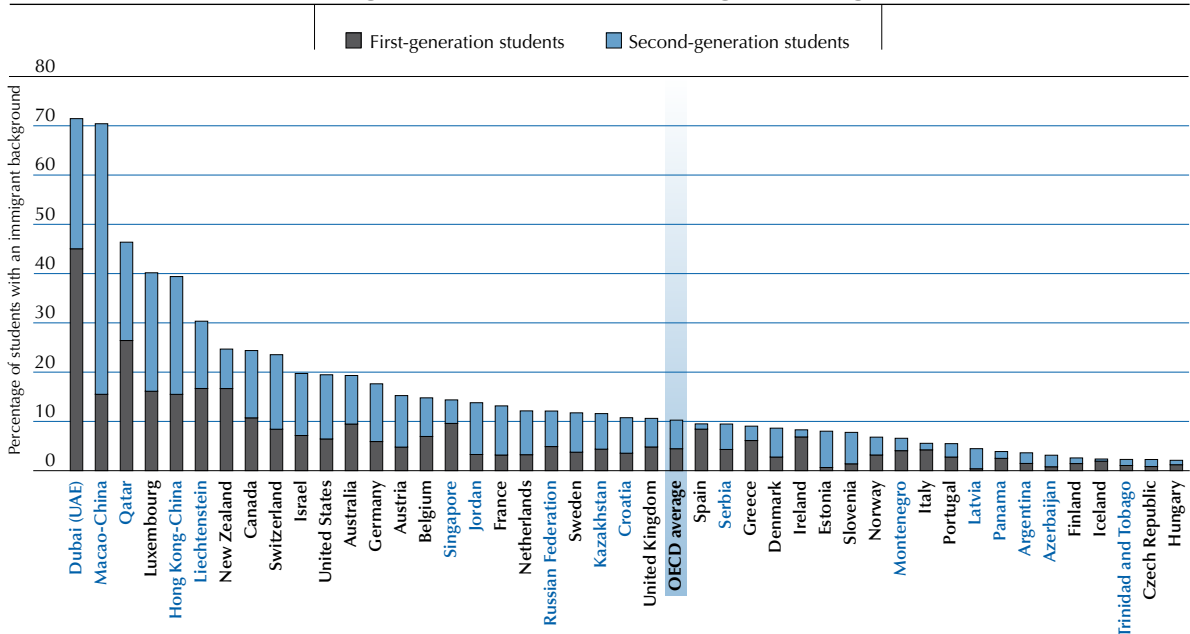
Both within and across countries, students with an immigrant background constitute a heterogeneous group. They differ in their country of origin, language and culture, and bring a wide range of skills, knowledge and motivations to their schools. Although a significant subgroup of migrants is highly skilled, that is not true for many others who are socio-economically disadvantaged (OECD, 2010f). Such a disadvantage, along with cultural and ethnic differences, can create divisions and inequities between the host society and newcomers. These problems go well beyond how migration flows can be channelled and managed; they require consideration of how immigrants can be integrated into host societies in ways that are acceptable to both the immigrants and the populations in the receiving countries.

Education and training are key to integrating immigrants into labour markets and society. They can help overcome language barriers and facilitate the transmission of the norms and values that provide a basis for social cohesion. PISA offers a crucial perspective on this discussion by assessing the performance of 15-year-old students with an immigrant background. The performance disadvantages of these students pose major challenges to education systems; in some countries, the disadvantage is as high, or even higher, among second-generation immigrants than among first-generation immigrants.

The performance of foreign-born students is influenced at least in part by their educational experience in another country and can therefore be only partially attributed to the host country's education system. The educational disadvantage in the country of origin can be magnified in the host country even though, in absolute terms, the students' educational performance might have improved. Foreign-born students may be academically disadvantaged either because they are immigrants entering a new education system or because they need to learn a new language in a home environment that may not facilitate this learning. Comparing within subgroups of the immigrant student population (*i.e.* by first- or second-generation immigrant status, by year of arrival or by language spoken at home), PISA sheds light on the sources of the disadvantages faced by students with an immigrant background.



■ Figure II.4.1 ■
Percentage of students with an immigrant background



Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of students with an immigrant background (first- or second-generation students).

Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.1.

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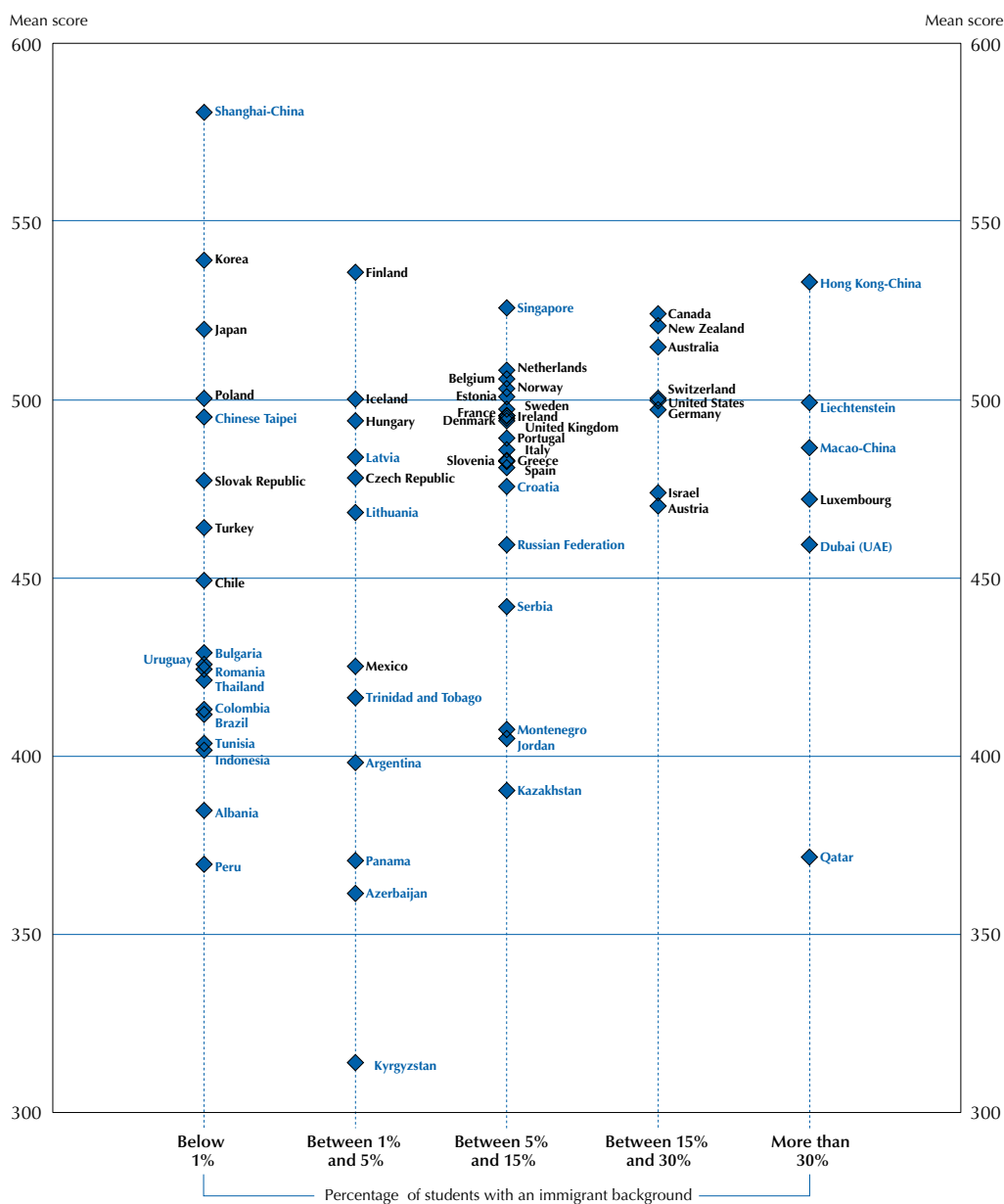
When interpreting performance gaps between native students and those with an immigrant background, it is important to account for differences among countries in terms of the national origin(s) and socio-economic, educational and linguistic backgrounds of their immigrant populations. The composition of immigrant populations is shaped by immigration policies and practices, and the criteria used to decide who will be admitted into a country vary considerably across countries. While some countries tend to admit relatively large numbers of immigrants each year, often with a low degree of selectivity, other countries have much lower or more selective migrant inflows. In addition, the extent to which the social, educational and occupational status of potential immigrants is taken into account in immigration and naturalisation decisions differs across countries. The composition of past migration flows tends to persist because of network effects that facilitate migration from the same countries of origin. In addition, some migration flows may not be easily restricted because of international treaties (*i.e.* free circulation agreements and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees) or because of generally recognised human rights (*i.e.* the right of immigrants or citizens to live with their families). As a result, immigrant populations have more skilled or socio-economically advantaged backgrounds in some countries than in others. Among OECD countries:

- Australia, Canada and New Zealand are countries with immigration policies that favour the better qualified (OECD, 2005).
- The United States has a migration system that tends to favour family migration, both of immediate family, as in other countries, and also of parents, siblings and adult children.
- In the 1960s and 1970s, European countries such as Austria, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland recruited temporary immigrant workers, many of whom then settled permanently. Immigration has increased again over the past ten years, except in Germany. In Austria, Germany and Switzerland, and to a lesser extent in Sweden, immigrants are less likely to have an upper secondary education and more likely to have a tertiary degree (OECD, 2005). As a result, migrants tend to be of two types – the low-skilled and the highly qualified.
- France and the United Kingdom draw many immigrants from former colonies who have often already mastered the language of the host country.
- Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain, among other countries, have recently experienced a sharp growth in migration inflows. In Spain, for example, the pace of immigration increased more than tenfold between 1998 and 2004 (OECD, 2010f).

A new OECD review of migrant education, *Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students: Policies, Practice and Performance* (OECD, 2010g), highlights the diversity of immigrant populations across and within OECD countries and the challenges this diversity presents for developing effective education policy. The review finds that the most effective policies to address the needs of at-risk immigrant students are not of the “one size fits all” kind. Policies that adopt a holistic approach, considering education policy along with other types of policy interventions, are critically important at all levels (schools, communities, and municipal, regional and national governments). The review also acknowledges that in this field of education policy, finding the right balance between universal and targeted interventions is particularly challenging.

■ Figure II.4.2 ■

Students' reading performance, by percentage of students with an immigrant background



Source: OECD, *PISA 2009 Database*, Table II.4.1.


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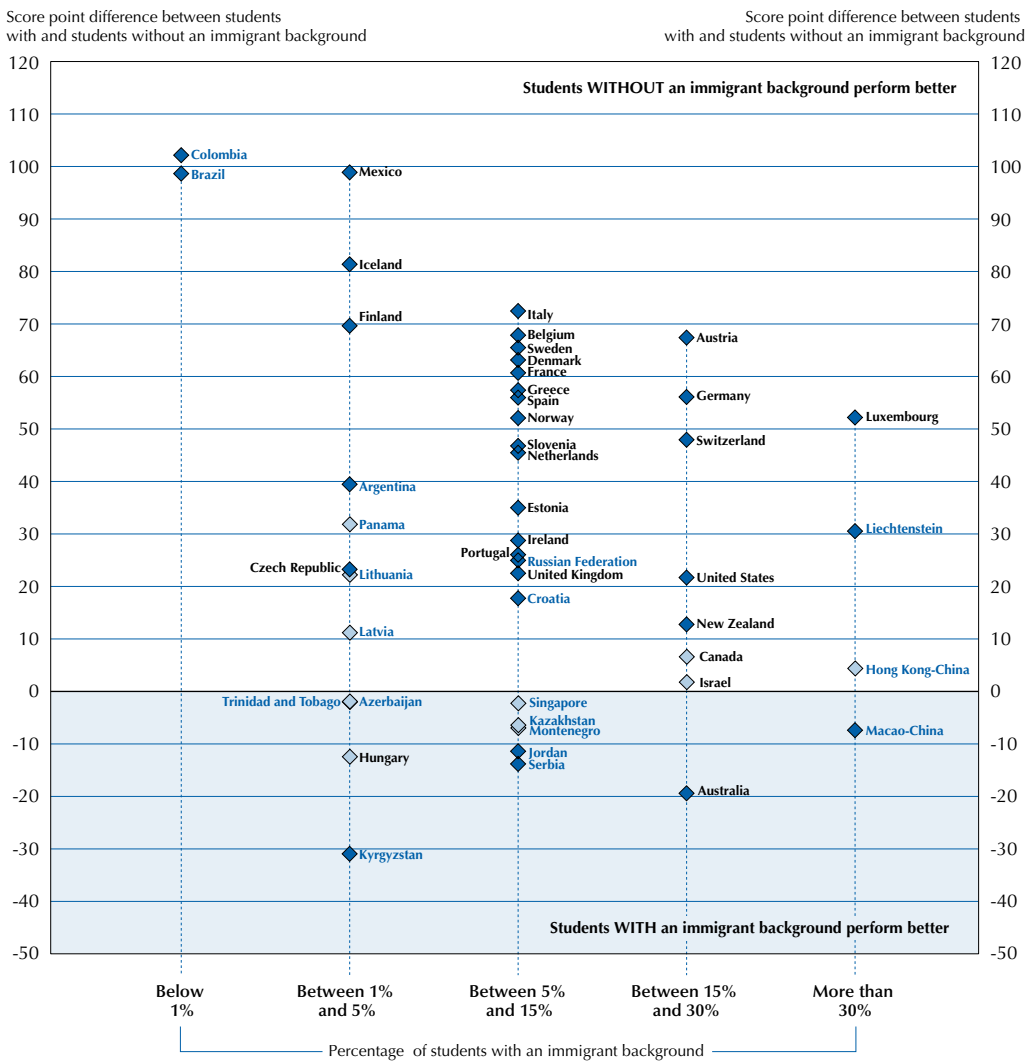


Figure II.4.2 groups countries and economies by the proportion of immigrant students in their student populations and shows the mean performance in reading for all students. The figure shows that there is no relationship between a country's or economy's mean performance and the proportion of students with an immigrant background. There is also no relationship between mean performance and the size of the performance gap between native students and those with an immigrant background, as Figure II.4.3 shows.³ These findings contradict the assumption that high immigration levels will inevitably result in a decline in the performance of an education system.

This chapter compares the performance of students with an immigrant background to both the performance of other students in the same country without an immigrant background and the performance of immigrant students in other countries. It also describes performance differences among first- and second-generation immigrants. Following a review of the extent to which such performance differences can be attributable to socio-economic and linguistic factors, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the extent to which students with an immigrant background face inferior or superior schooling conditions in their host countries relative to their native peers.

■ Figure II.4.3 ■

Performance difference between students with and without an immigrant background, by percentage of students with an immigrant background



Note: Score point differences that are statistically significant are marked in a darker tone.

Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.1.

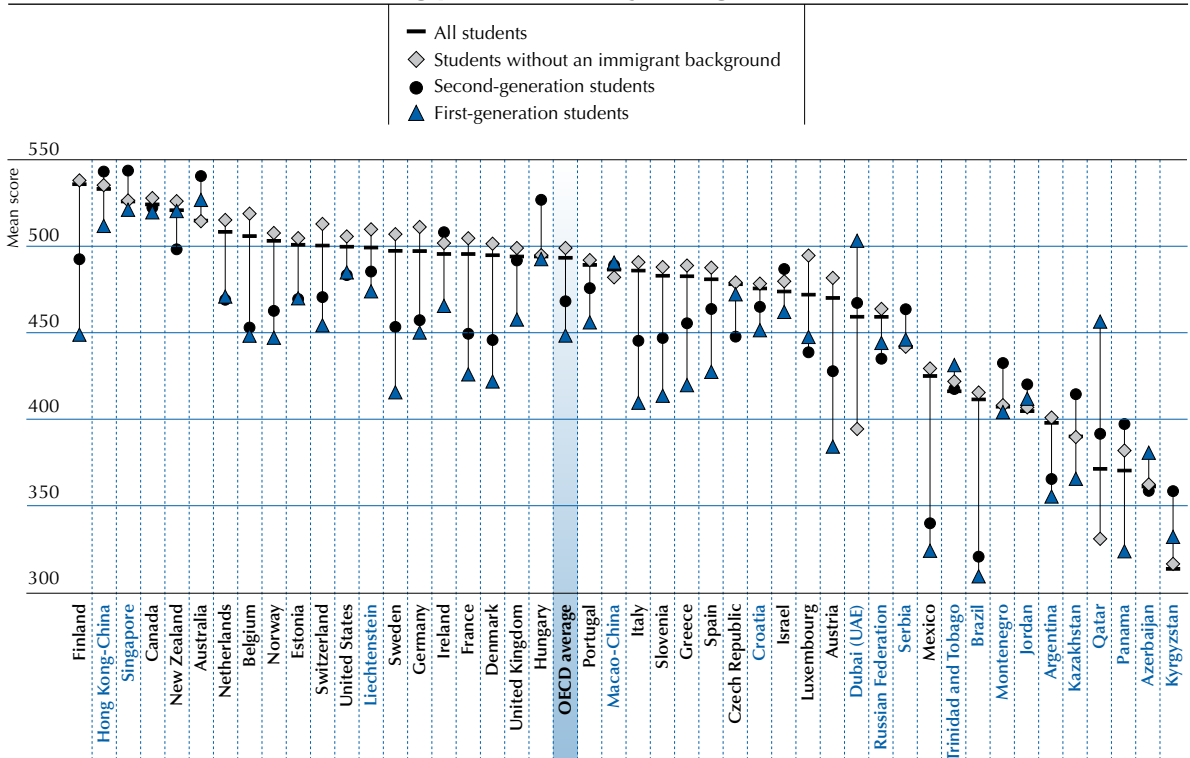
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PERFORMANCE GAPS ACROSS IMMIGRANT STATUS

Figure II.4.4 shows the average performance of students according to their immigrant status for those countries with significant shares of 15-year-olds with an immigrant background,⁴ with countries sorted by the average performance of all students. The figure highlights three main findings. First, students without an immigrant background tend to outperform students with an immigrant background in most countries and economies. The exceptions are Australia for both first- and second-generation students, and Israel and Hungary where second-generation students outperform students without an immigrant background. Second, the size of the performance gap among these groups of students varies markedly across countries. Third, second-generation students tend to outperform first-generation students.

■ Figure II.4.4 ■

Reading performance, by immigrant status



Countries are ranked in descending order of the mean score of all students.

Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.1.

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Among OECD countries, first-generation students lag 52 score points, on average, behind students without an immigrant background, a difference that exceeds the equivalent of one school year's progress (see Table A1.2 and Box II.1.1).

Moreover, in many OECD countries, first-generation immigrant students are at a significantly greater risk of being poor performers. In Mexico, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Italy, Iceland, Belgium, Spain, Norway, France, Greece and Slovenia, first-generation immigrant students are at least twice as likely to perform among the bottom quarter of students when compared to students without an immigrant background. The same is true in the partner countries Brazil and Panama (Table II.4.1).

While the educational experience abroad can help to explain the performance gap for first-generation immigrants, second-generation students were born in the country and therefore benefited from the education system of the host country from the beginning of their schooling trajectories. Despite this, second-generation students also lag behind those without an immigrant background by an average of 33 score points across OECD countries (Table II.4.1).



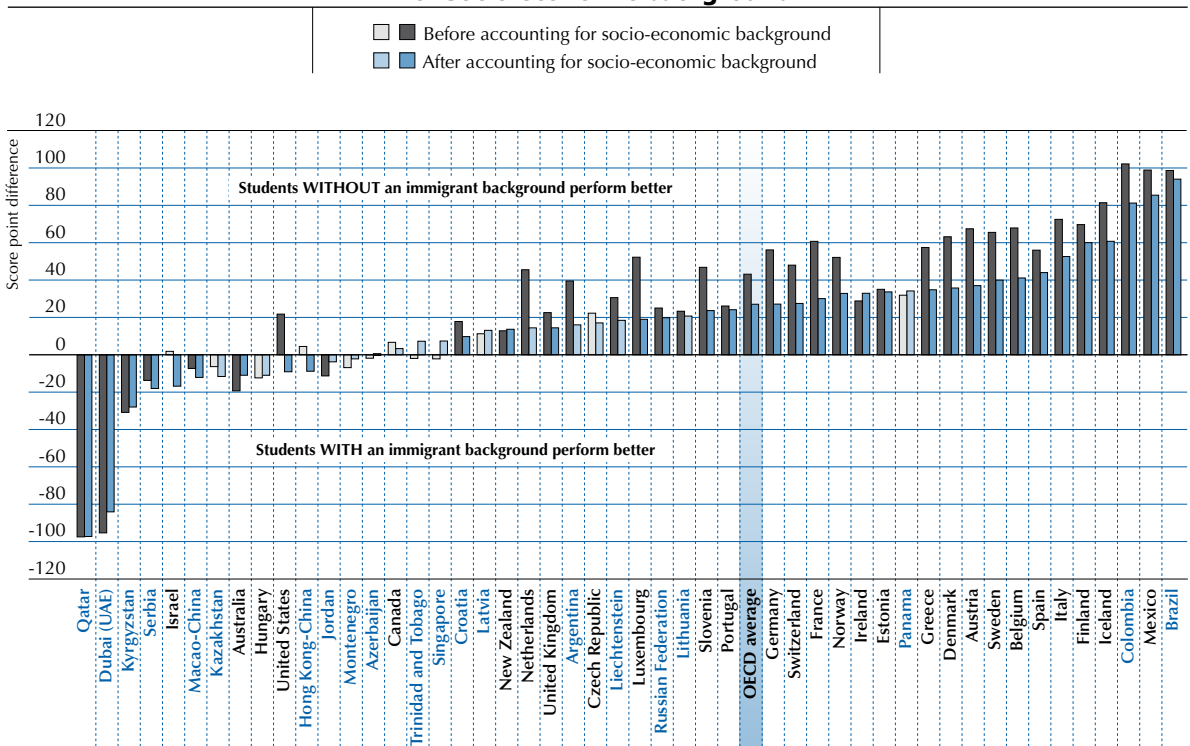
In general, students with an immigrant background are socio-economically disadvantaged, and this explains part of the performance disadvantage among these students. On average across OECD countries, students with an immigrant background tend to have a socio-economic background that is 0.4 of a standard deviation lower than that of their non-immigrant peers. This relationship is particularly strong in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Iceland, Denmark, Austria, Germany and the United States. Only in Australia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, New Zealand and Portugal is there no observed difference in the socio-economic background of students by immigrant status (Table II.4.1).

The large gaps in performance and socio-economic background suggest that schools and societies face major challenges in realising the potential of students with an immigrant background. However, as Figure II.4.4 shows, in some education systems the gaps are barely noticeable or very narrow, while in others they are significantly above these averages. For example, in Australia, second-generation students, who account for 10% of the student population, outperform students without an immigrant background by 26 score points.⁵ In Canada, where almost 25% of students have an immigrant background, these students perform as well as students without an immigrant background. Similarly, no statistically significant differences are observed for the Czech Republic, for second-generation students in Israel, Ireland, Portugal and the United Kingdom, and for first-generation students in Hungary and New Zealand, among OECD countries.

In general, a part of these differences persist even after accounting for socio-economic factors. Figure II.4.5 shows the size of the performance gap between students with and without an immigrant background before and after accounting for socio-economic status. In Luxembourg, for example, accounting for the socio-economic status of students reduces the performance disadvantage of students with an immigrant background from 52 to 19 score points and, on average across OECD countries, the gap is reduced from 43 to 27 score points.

■ Figure II.4.5 ■


Reading performance by immigrant status, before and after accounting for socio-economic background



Note: Score point differences that are statistically significant are shown in a darker tone.

Countries are ranked in descending order of score point differences after accounting for the economic, social and cultural status of students.

Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.1.

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The narrowing of the gap after accounting for the socio-economic status of students tends to be similar across countries. The rank order of countries in terms of the performance gap between immigrant and native students remains fairly stable before and after accounting for socio-economic context. This reduction shows the extent to which performance differences between students of different immigrant status reflects their lower socio-economic background and not necessarily their immigrant background. The fact that the gap is still apparent after accounting for socio-economic background, however, indicates that students from an immigrant background face educational challenges that can be attributed directly to their immigrant background, placing them at a particular disadvantage.

Without longitudinal data it is not possible to directly assess to what extent the observed disadvantages of students with an immigrant background are reduced over successive generations. However, it is possible to compare the performance of second-generation students, who were born in the country of assessment and have thereby benefited from participating in the same formal education system as their native peers for the same number of years, with that of first-generation students, who usually started their education in another country.

On average across OECD countries, second-generation students outperform first-generation students by 18 score points in reading. The relative advantage of second-generation students compared with first-generation students exceeds 40 score points in Finland, Austria and Ireland (Figure II.4.4) and is larger than 30 score points in Sweden, Spain, Italy, Greece, the United Kingdom and Slovenia. These large gaps highlight the disadvantage of first-generation students and possibly the different backgrounds across immigrant cohorts (Table II.4.1). However, they could also signal positive educational and social mobility across generations.

Cross-country comparisons of performance gaps between first- and second-generation immigrant students need to be treated with caution, since they may in some cases reflect the characteristics of families participating in different waves of immigration more strongly than the success of integration policies. New Zealand is a case in point. First-generation students perform as well as students without an immigrant background while second-generation students lag behind the former group of students by 22 score points (Table II.4.1). This result signals that there may be important differences in the characteristics of the cohorts of students with an immigrant background. Even students from the same countries of origin, however, show considerable differences in their performance across the different host countries (OECD, 2006f).

Despite the gaps, some students with an immigrant background succeed in school in a number of countries. Across OECD countries, an average of 5% of first- and second-generation students perform at Level 5 or 6 and can be considered top performers in PISA; the same is true for 8% of students without an immigrant background. In Australia, New Zealand and Canada, more than 10% of first- and second-generation students are top performers in PISA. Moreover, in these countries, a similar or higher percentage of students with immigrant background reach proficiency Level 5 or above when compared to students with no immigrant background. In Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Germany, France and the Netherlands, the percentage of PISA top performers among students without an immigrant background is at least five percentage points higher than among first- and second-generation students (the same is true in Austria, Canada, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States for first-generation students when compared to students with no immigrant background) (Table II.4.2).

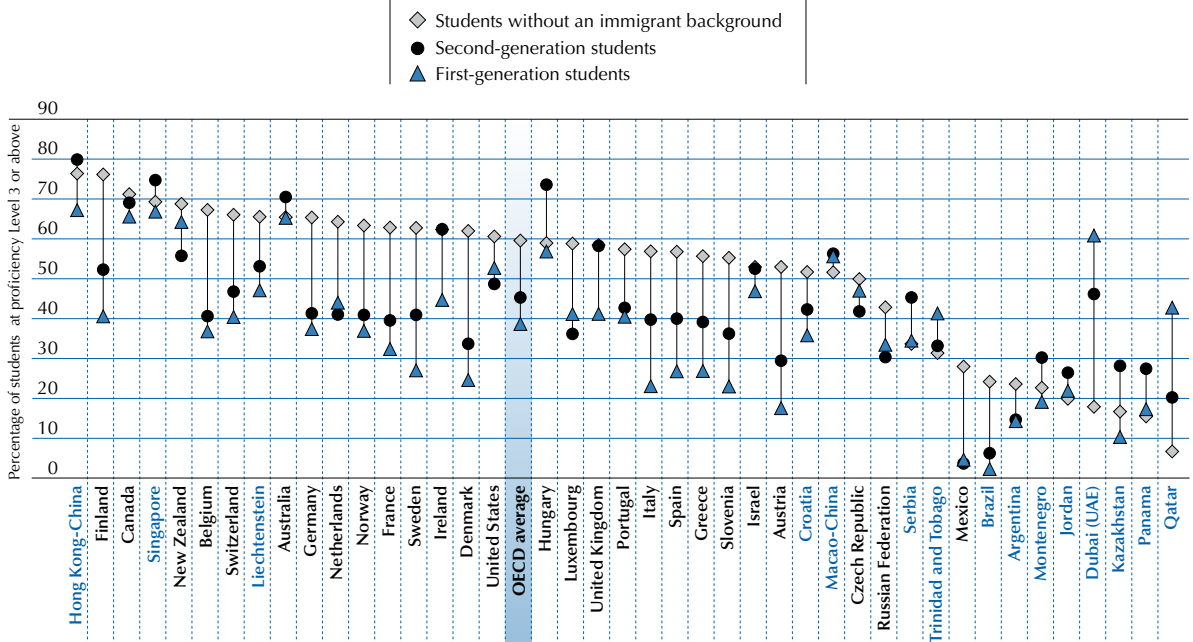
Figure II.4.6 shows the percentage of students with an immigrant background who reach at least proficiency Level 3. Among OECD countries with at least 5% of students with an immigrant background, at least half of first-generation students reach Level 3 in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States and at least half of second-generation students do so in Canada, Australia, Ireland, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Israel and Finland. On the other hand, less than one in three first-generation students reaches Level 3 in Austria, Slovenia, Italy, Denmark, Spain, Greece, Sweden and France. The same is true among second-generation students in Austria (Table II.4.2).

In many countries students with an immigrant background perform poorly. Figure II.4.7 shows the proportion of students not reaching baseline proficiency Level 2 by immigrant status. This is the level at which students begin to demonstrate the reading literacy competencies that will enable them to participate effectively and productively in life (see Chapter 2 in Volume I, *What Students Know and Can Do*). Across the OECD, 17% of students without an immigrant background do not reach this level; the same is true for 27% of second-generation students and for 36% of first-generation students (Table II.4.2).



■ Figure II.4.6 ■

Percentage of students at proficiency Level 3 or above, by immigrant status



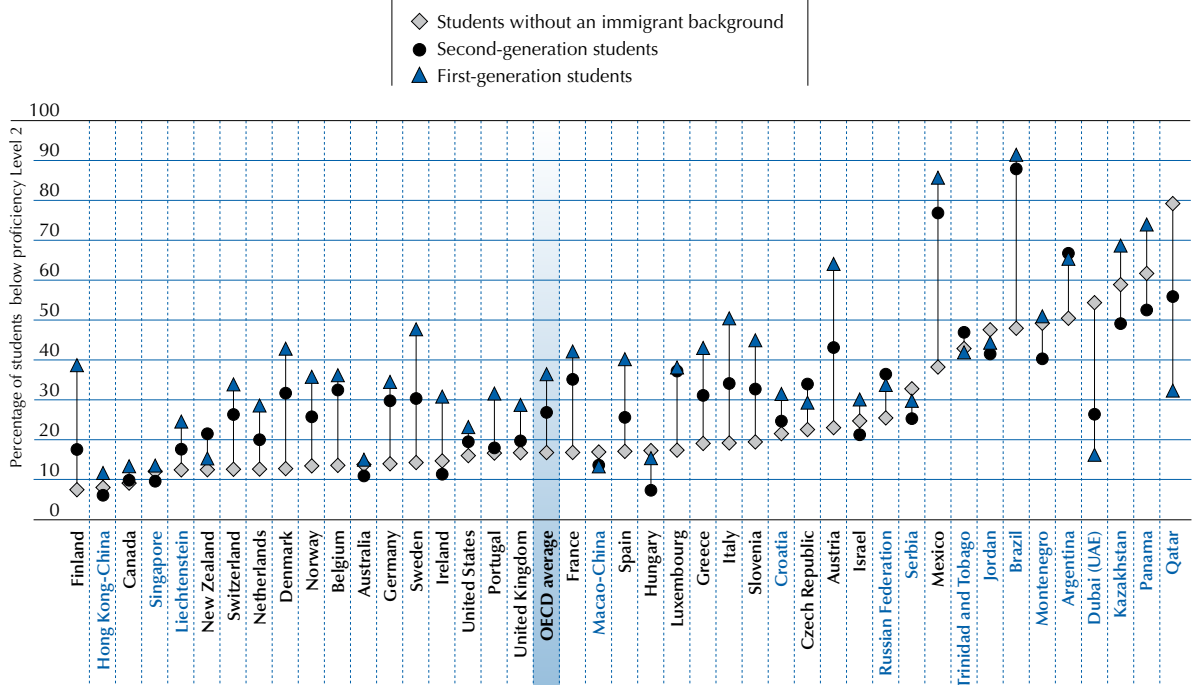
Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of students without an immigrant background at proficiency Level 3 or above.

Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.2.

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■ Figure II.4.7 ■

Percentage of students below proficiency Level 2, by immigrant status



Countries are ranked in ascending order of the percentage of students without an immigrant background below proficiency Level 2.

Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.2.

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Even in some countries with good reading performance overall and large proportions of students with an immigrant background, the proportion of poorly performing students with an immigrant background is relatively high. For example, among the OECD countries with more than 10% of students with an immigrant background, the percentage of first-generation students who do not reach Level 2 ranges from 13% and 15% in Australia and Canada, respectively, to 64%, 48% and 42% in Austria, Sweden and France, respectively. In other countries, like Italy, Greece or Denmark, the percentage of students with an immigrant background who do not reach Level 2 is also high, but the percentage of students with an immigrant background is less than 10%. Moreover, in Austria, the percentage of students who do not attain proficiency Level 2 is 42 percentage points higher for first-generation students when compared to students without an immigrant background (Table II.4.2).

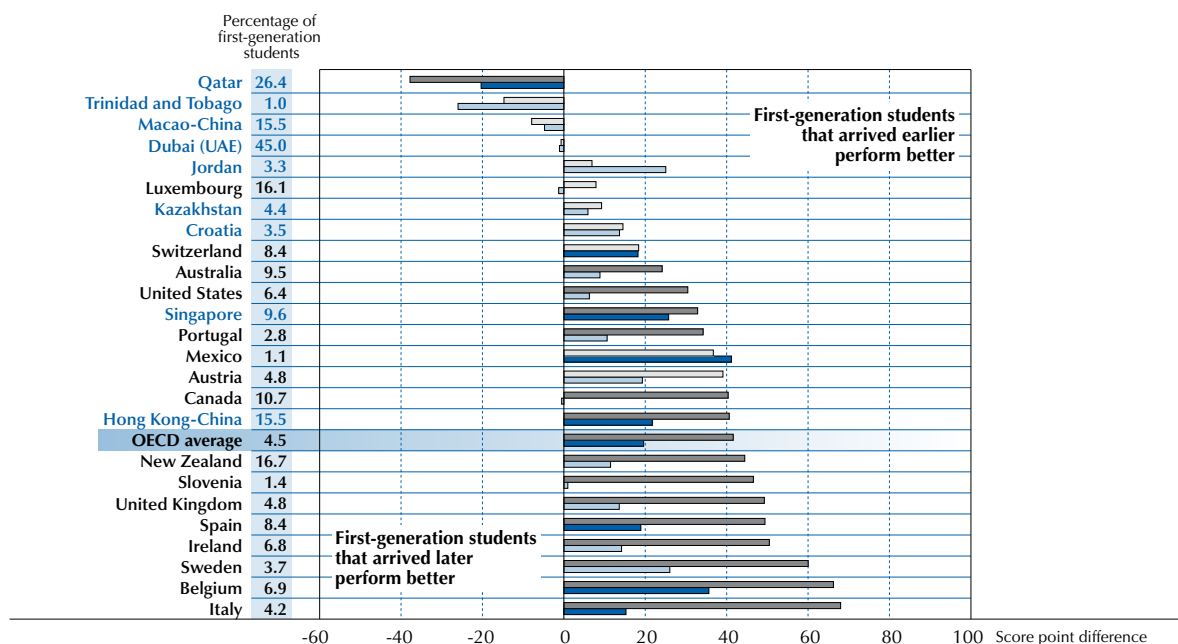
FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS AND AGE OF ARRIVAL

PISA asked first-generation students how old they were when they arrived in the country of assessment. Using this information, it is possible to distinguish between first-generation students who arrived: *i*) when they were five years old or younger, that is before the typical starting age of primary school in many school systems; *ii*) when they were between six and 12 years old, that is before the typical starting age of secondary school in many school systems; and *iii*) when they were older than 12 years. Given that PISA surveyed 15 years-olds, the third group has participated in the education system of the host country for a maximum of three years, the second group for no more than nine years and the first group for their entire school career.

■ Figure II.4.8 ■

Performance differences among first-generation students, by age of arrival

- Difference in reading performance between first-generation students who arrived at age 5 years or younger and those who arrived at an age older than 12 years, after accounting for socio-economic background
- Difference in reading performance between first-generation students who arrived at age 5 or younger and those who arrived at an age between 6 and 12 years, after accounting for socio-economic background



Note: Score point differences that are statistically significant are marked in a darker tone.

Countries are ranked in ascending order of score point differences between first-generation students who arrived at age 5 years or younger and those who arrived at an age older than 12 years.

Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Tables II.4.1 and II.4.3.

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Figure II.4.8 plots the performance differences between those who arrived when they were younger than five and those who arrived when they were between six and 12 years of age and the performance difference between those who arrived when they were younger than five and those who arrived when they were older than 12, after accounting for socio-economic background. For reference, the figure also reports the proportion of first-generation students in these countries and economies. Countries are sorted by the gap between first-generation students who arrived when they were younger than five and those who arrived when they were older than 12, after accounting for socio-economic background.

Figure II.4.8 shows that, in general, first-generation students who arrived in the host country at a younger age outperform those who arrived when they were older. On average across OECD countries, first-generation students who arrived when they were 5-years-old or younger score 42 points higher than first-generation students that arrived after they were 12-years-old. The size of the gaps, however, varies considerably across countries and across groups. For example, after accounting for socio-economic background in Italy and Belgium, the gap between those who arrived when they were 5 or younger and those who arrived when they were older than 12 is greater than 65 score points, while the gap between those who arrived when they were 5 or younger and those who arrived when they were between six and 12 years of age is 36 score points in Belgium and 15 score points in Italy. This suggests that where the education system of the host country had a longer opportunity to shape the learning outcomes of immigrant students, it was able to improve student performance. In contrast, there is no gap between those who arrived when they were younger than five and those who arrived when they were older than 12 in the OECD countries Sweden, the United States, Portugal, Austria, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Mexico, after accounting for socio-economic background (Table II.4.3).

IMMIGRANT STATUS AND HOME LANGUAGE

A different country of birth for the student or the students' parents is not the only attribute shared by students with an immigrant background: in many countries, a large share of students with an immigrant background speak a language at home other than the language they use at school and in which they were assessed by PISA. In PISA it is possible to distinguish between those students whose language at home is the same as the language of assessment and those students whose language at home is different. Across countries, it is common for students with an immigrant background not to speak the language of assessment at home. Students with an immigrant background are more likely to speak a language different than that of the assessment at home in the United States, Sweden, Austria, Norway, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and Iceland (Table II.4.4).

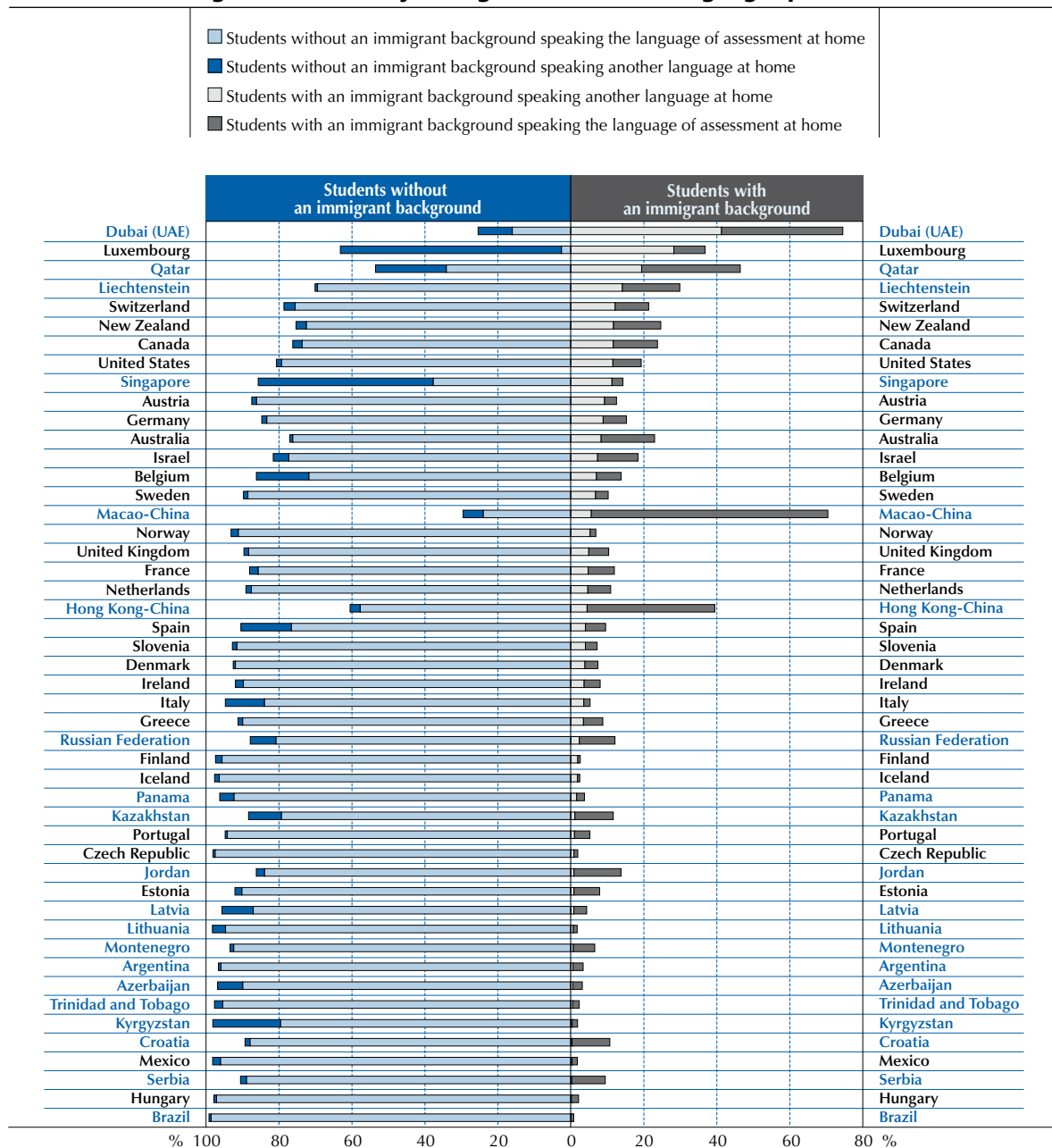
Figure II.4.9 shows the percentage of students in each country who fall into each of the four groups regarding immigrant status and the language spoken at home. Countries are ranked by the proportion of students with an immigrant background who do not speak the language of assessment at home. The figure highlights the relationship between these two dimensions and the diversity across countries on these issues. For example, on average across OECD countries 6% of students have an immigrant background and do not speak the language of assessment at home. In Luxembourg, 28% of students have an immigrant background and do not speak the language of assessment at home and 9% have an immigrant background but do speak the language of assessment at home. In Switzerland, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, Austria, Germany and Australia, between 8% and 13% of students have an immigrant background and do not speak the language of assessment at home.

Students with an immigrant background whose language at home is different from the language of assessment face considerable obstacles to succeeding in school. In general, they do not perform as well as students without an immigrant background, as Figure II.4.10 shows. However, the size of the performance gap across countries varies considerably, and accounting for socio-economic background does not eliminate all of these differences.

As Figure II.4.10 shows, on average across OECD countries, students without an immigrant background outperform students with an immigrant background who do not speak the language of assessment at home by 57 score points, but this is reduced to 35 score points after accounting for the students' socio-economic status. In some countries, however, the gaps are quite substantial, even after accounting for socio-economic status. For example, in Italy, Ireland, Spain and Greece, the gap after accounting for socio-economic status remains at 50 or more score points; and in all of these countries, students with an immigrant background who speak a language at home that is different from the language of assessment represent more than 3% of all students. In Belgium, Sweden and Norway this performance difference is at 40 score points or above and the percentage of students with an immigrant background who do not speak the language of assessment at home is greater than 5%.

■ Figure II.4.9 ■

Percentage of students, by immigrant status and language spoken at home



Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of immigrant students who speak a language at home that is different from the language of assessment.

Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.4.

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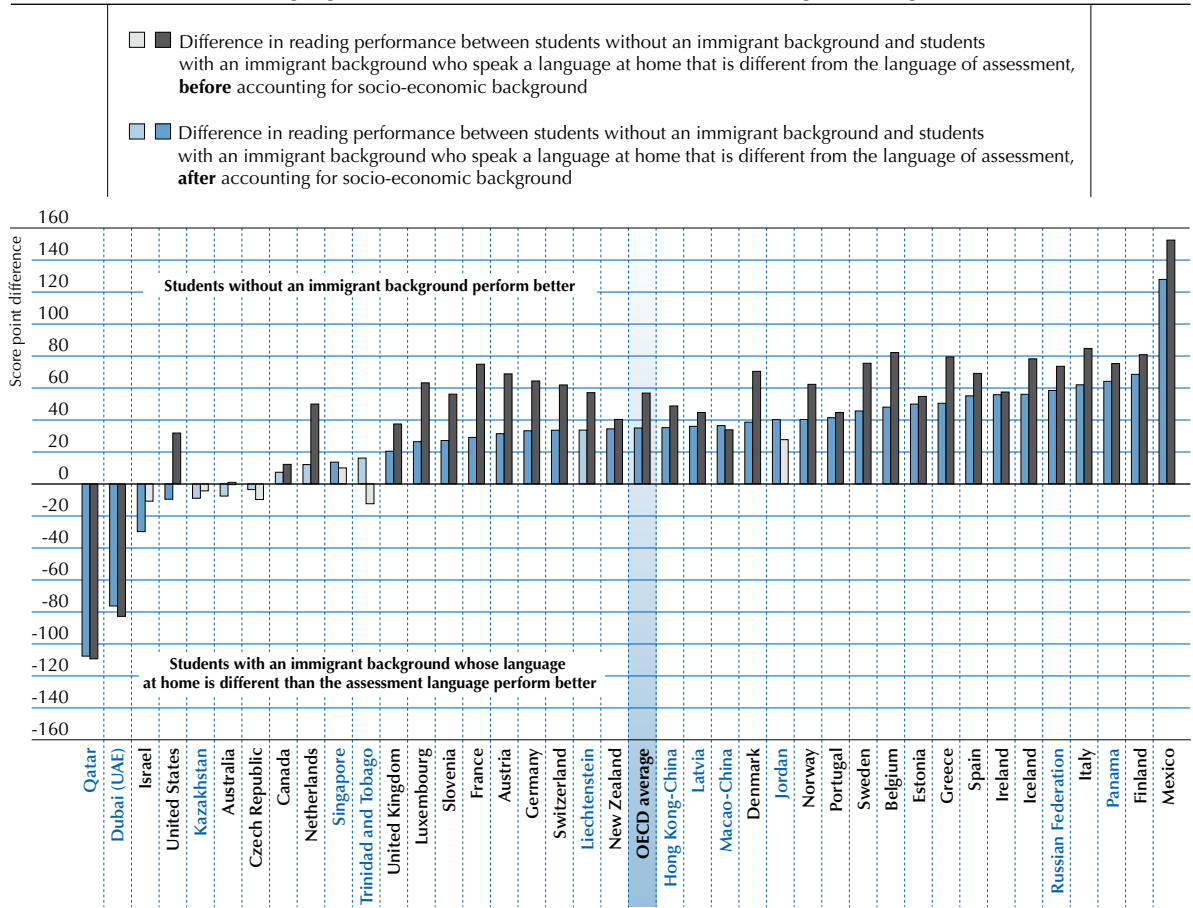
Among the OECD countries with at least 5% of students with an immigrant background that do not speak the language of assessment at home, the performance difference between them and students without an immigrant background is not apparent in Canada and Australia (Table II.4.4). Despite the varying linguistic, cultural, economic and social backgrounds of immigrant students, these disparities suggest that the relative performance levels of students with an immigrant background cannot be attributed solely to the composition of immigrant populations, the language they speak at home, or their educational and socio-economic backgrounds.



■ Figure II.4.10 ■

Immigrant status, language spoken at home and reading performance

Performance differences between students with an immigrant background whose language at home is different from the language of assessment and students without an immigrant background



Note: Score point differences that are statistically significant are marked in a darker tone.

Countries are ranked in ascending order of score point differences between students without an immigrant background and students with an immigrant background who speak a language at home that is different from the language of an assessment, after accounting for the economic, social and cultural status of students.

Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.4.

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PERFORMANCE, IMMIGRANT STATUS AND COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

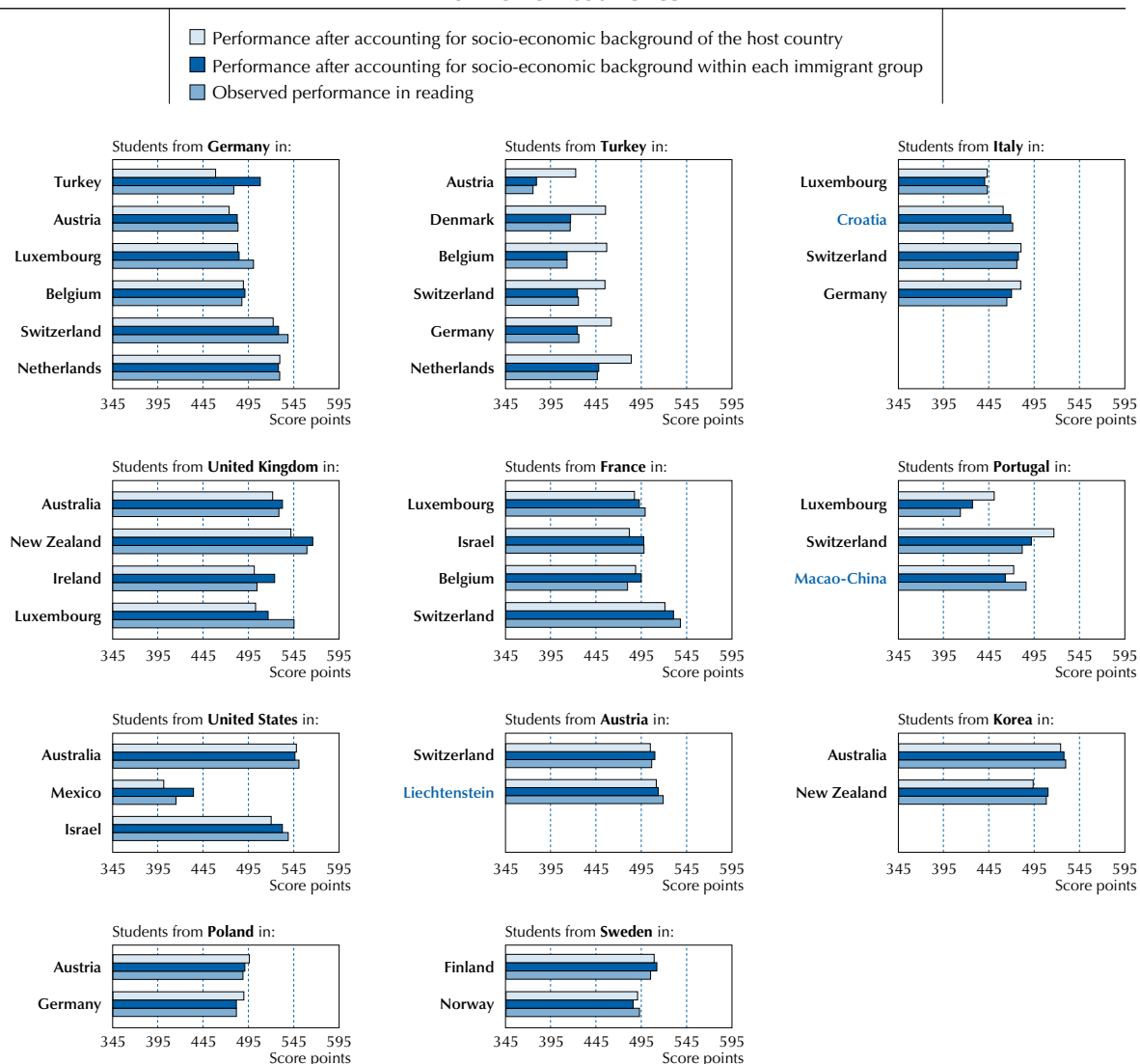
The relative performance of students with an immigrant background cannot be attributed solely to their country of origin. Figures II.4.11 and II.4.12 show the performance of students with an immigrant background from the OECD and other countries across a number of host countries, before and after accounting for the socio-economic background of the students or the host country. These figures highlight how performance varies for students with the same country of origin across different host countries. They also show how students from different countries of origin fare within the same host country.

Figure II.4.11 shows, for example, that students with an immigrant background from Turkey perform 69 points lower in Austria than in the Netherlands, even after accounting for their socio-economic status. In Luxembourg, students with an immigrant background from Portugal perform 65 score points below students with an immigrant background from France, after accounting for their own socio-economic status. Students with an immigrant background from Germany perform 44 score points higher in Switzerland than in Luxembourg, while students with an immigrant background from Portugal in Switzerland outperform students with a similar background in Luxembourg by 65 score points (Table II.4.5).


The performance of students with an immigrant background from countries and regions outside the OECD are represented in Figure II.4.12. Students from China perform well above the OECD average (above 560 score points) in Australia and New Zealand. Students with an immigrant background from South Africa also perform above the OECD average in Australia and New Zealand, even after accounting for socio-economic background. Students with an immigrant background from Pakistan perform above the OECD average in the United Kingdom but well below it in Denmark, even after accounting for socio-economic background (Table II.4.5).

■ Figure II.4.11 ■

Reading performance in host countries by students with an immigrant background from OECD countries



Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.5.

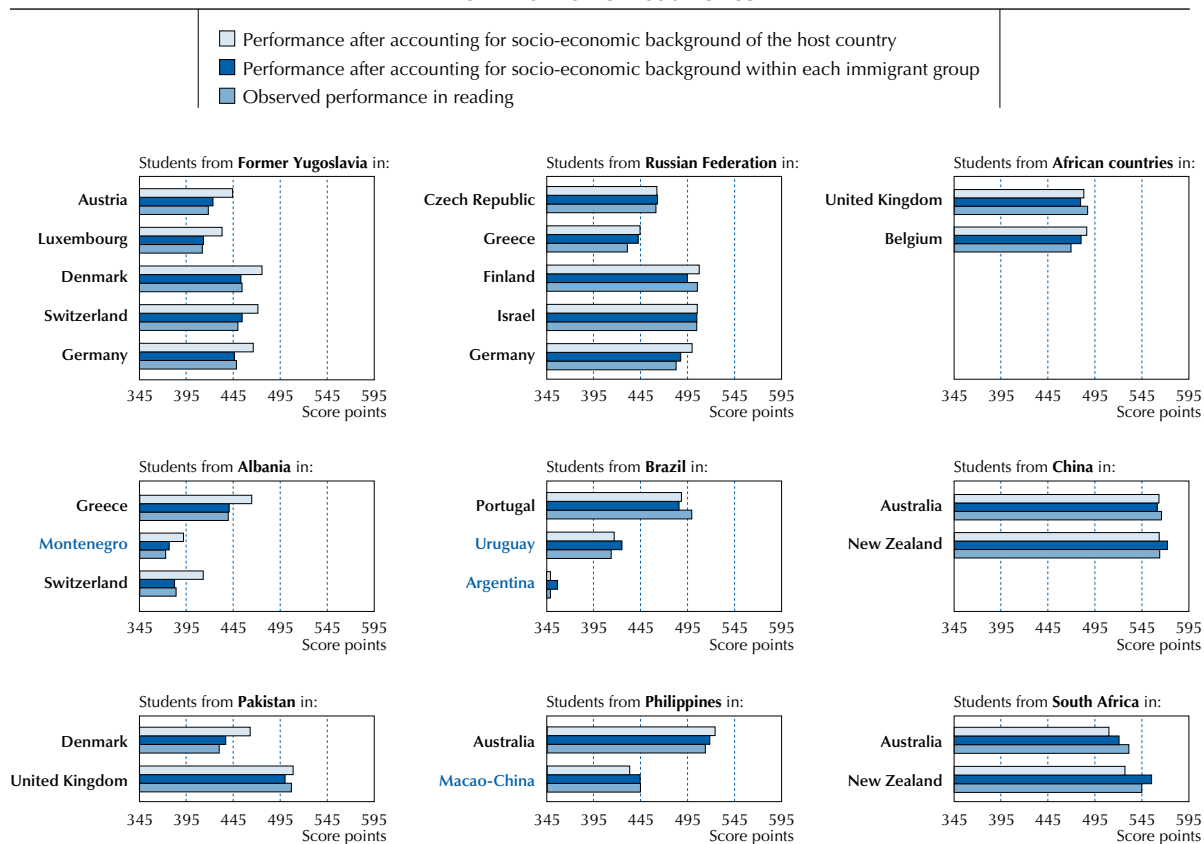
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These performance differences only account for the socio-economic background of students. It is possible that these differences in the performance of students from the same country of origin in different host countries reflect the selection processes determining how immigrant families choose their country of residence. These selection processes are also determined in part by the immigration policies of different countries and must be kept in mind when analysing these and the other results presented in this chapter.



■ Figure II.4.12 ■

Reading performance in host countries by students with an immigrant background from non-OECD countries



Source: OECD, *PISA 2009 Database*, Table II.4.5.
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IMMIGRANT STATUS AND SCHOOL RESOURCES

To explore to what extent differences in schooling conditions in host countries might contribute to observed outcomes, Figure II.4.13 examines differences between the characteristics of schools attended by immigrant and native students. The most consistent feature is that students with an immigrant background attend schools with a more disadvantaged socio-economic intake. On average across the OECD, students with an immigrant background attend schools with an average *PISA index of economic, social and cultural status* of -0.26, while students without an immigrant background attend, on average, schools with an index value of 0.04 (Table II.4.6). That is, students with an immigrant background tend to face the double challenge of coming from a disadvantaged background themselves and going to a school with a more disadvantaged profile - both of which chapters of this volume show to be negatively related to student performance. These differences in the composition of schools attended by students with and without an immigrant background are particularly pronounced in the Netherlands, Denmark and Greece, where the difference is higher than two-thirds of a student-level standard deviation in the OECD area. In contrast, in the OECD countries the United Kingdom, Norway, Estonia, Ireland, Portugal, the Czech Republic, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Finland, students with and without an immigrant background attend schools with a similar socio-economic composition.

By contrast, differences in the quality of resources for education between schools attended by students with and without an immigrant background tend to be small, on average across the OECD area (Figure II.4.13). In Mexico, Belgium, Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg and Switzerland, however, students with an immigrant background attend schools in which principals more frequently report that the low quality of educational resources hinders learning.

■ Figure II.4.13 ■

Characteristics of schools attended by students with and without an immigrant background

School characteristics are MORE favourable for students with an immigrant background by:

School characteristics are LESS favourable for students with an immigrant background by:


	at least 0.50 index points	
	between 0.20 and 0.49 index points	
	up to 0.19 index points	

	Percentage of students with an immigrant background	Percentage of students in schools that have more than 25% students with an immigrant background	School average PISA index of economic, social and cultural status ¹	Quality of educational resources ¹	Student/teacher ratio ¹	Teacher shortage ¹
OECD						
Australia	19	38				
Austria	15	21				
Belgium	15	19				
Canada	24	37				
Chile	1	0	c	c	c	c
Czech Republic	2	0				
Denmark	9	7				
Estonia	8	12				
Finland	3	0				
France	13	17		w	w	w
Germany	18	27				
Greece	9	8				
Hungary	2	0				
Iceland	2	1				
Ireland	8	5				
Israel	20	33				
Italy	6	3				
Japan	0	0	c	c	c	c
Korea	0	0	c	c	c	c
Luxembourg	40	72				
Mexico	2	1				
Netherlands	12	12				
New Zealand	25	38				
Norway	7	3				
Poland	0	0	c	c	c	c
Portugal	5	2				
Slovak Republic	1	0	c	c	c	c
Slovenia	8	7				
Spain	9	10				
Sweden	12	12				
Switzerland	24	40				
Turkey	1	0	c	c	c	c
United Kingdom	11	13				
United States	19	31				
OECD average	10	14				
Partners						
Albania	1	0	c	c	c	c
Argentina	4	1				
Azerbaijan	3	2				
Brazil	1	0				
Bulgaria	1	0	c	c	c	c
Colombia	0	0				
Croatia	11	8				
Dubai (UAE)	71	82				
Hong Kong-China	39	81				
Indonesia	0	0	c	c	c	c
Jordan	14	20				
Kazakhstan	12	13				
Kyrgyzstan	2	0				
Latvia	4	4				
Liechtenstein	30	59				
Lithuania	2	1				
Macao-China	70	100				
Montenegro	7	4				
Panama	4	4				
Peru	0	0	c	c	c	c
Qatar	46	68				
Romania	0	0	c	c	c	c
Russian Federation	12	8				
Serbia	9	6				
Shanghai-China	1	0	c	c	c	c
Singapore	14	10				
Chinese Taipei	0	0	c	c	c	c
Thailand	0	0	c	c	c	c
Trinidad and Tobago	2	1				
Tunisia	0	0	c	c	c	c
Uruguay	1	0	c	c	c	c

Note: Only significant differences between students with and without immigrant background are reported in this figure.

1. Scores were standardised within each country sample to make an index which has 0 as the country mean and 1 as the standard deviation within the country.

Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.6.

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In most countries, schools attended by students with and without an immigrant background tend to be comparable in terms of human resources. Among OECD countries, only in Iceland, the United Kingdom, Israel, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria and Ireland is the student-teacher ratio higher in schools attended by students without an immigrant background, while the opposite is true in Slovenia, New Zealand and the United States (Figure II.4.13). Only in Canada, Australia and Luxembourg do principals of schools attended by students with an immigrant background report more often than principals of schools attended by native students that a shortage of teachers hinders learning in their schools, while the opposite is true only in Iceland, Belgium and Germany.

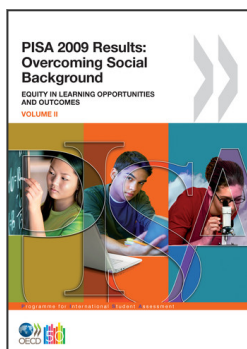
In short, while differences in the socio-economic background of schools in many countries make it difficult to provide equity in learning opportunities for students with an immigrant background, inequality in the distribution of resources does not seem to mediate the performance gaps between students with and without an immigrant background except in a small number of countries.

The analyses described in this chapter show that performance gaps between students with and without an immigrant background exist in most countries. These differences in performance are rarely solely the result of the socio-economic background or language of students, signalling that there is an independent relationship between the immigration status of students and their performance. The analyses that compare performance among immigrant students who arrived at a younger age show that some countries help these students improve their performance if their education system had a long enough opportunity to shape learning outcomes. The analysis comparing first- and second-generation immigrants underscore the fact that eliminating performance differences between students with and without an immigrant background takes time; but the fact that some countries succeed in reducing this gap more than others offers reasons to be optimistic about the possibility to ameliorate the disadvantages associated with an immigrant background.



Notes

1. This implies that students who were born abroad but who had at least one parent born in the country of assessment are also classified as students without an immigrant background.
2. If information on only one of the parents is missing, it is assumed that the other parent has the same immigrant background as the one whose information is missing. If the information on the country of birth of the student is missing, the variable is coded as missing.
3. For OECD countries, there is no association (the cross country correlation is equal to -0.02 , $p = 0.921$) and for all countries the association is slightly negative (the cross country correlation is equal to $r = -0.35$ and $p = 0.045$). That is, when all countries are considered, the performance gap tends to be smaller in countries with higher proportions of immigrants.
4. For the purpose of this analysis, these are the countries in which at least 30 students from five schools have an immigrant background.
5. The same is true in Hungary but the margin is smaller and these students are a much smaller proportion of the population, less than 1%. Also in this case, this advantage does not translate to all students with an immigrant background unlike in Australia.



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