

EDUCATION

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EFP Takeaways

The Effect of Home Country Natural Disasters on the Academic Outcomes of Immigrant Students in New York City

Background

A student's academic success is shaped by many factors outside of school, and a new body of evidence suggests that immigrant students' home country contexts can also impact academic achievement. Given that the population of immigrants in the United States continues to grow and the frequency of natural disasters is increasing, Laurito examines the impact of natural disasters in the home countries of immigrant students in New York City on their academic success. Her work is published in vol. 17 issue 2 of *EFP*.

The Study

To explore the effects of natural disasters in immigrant students' home countries, Laurito uses two main data sources that include data from 2003 to 2011: EM-DAT International Disaster Database from the Center for Research in the Epidemiology of Disasters and administrative records on public school students from the NYC Department of Education. The most common of the natural disasters that occurred during that time period outside of the United States were floods (43.8 percent of the 3,458 total natural disasters), followed by storms.

Findings

Laurito finds that substantial home country natural disasters, ones that cumulatively affected 15% or more of a country's population, decreased New York City public school students' subsequent English Language Arts (ELA) test scores by 0.05 standard deviations and decreased their math test scores by 0.028 standard deviations. The negative effects on ELA test performance persist for longer than one year. The results are largest for students in grades 6-8 and for recent immigrants.

The findings in this paper provide strong evidence that children are affected by contexts, even when not physically proximate or directly participating in those contexts. Relationships between immigrant children and their home countries may create complexities for schools educating large immigrant populations. More work is needed to understand how schools can support students affected by negative home country shocks.

For more details:

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- See the [full article in *Education Finance and Policy*](#).
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- Summary of:
Laurito, A. (2022). The Effect of Home Country Natural Disasters on the Academic Outcomes of Immigrant Students in New York City. *Education Finance and Policy*, 17 (2): 309-334.