

EDUCATION

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EFP Takeaways

Differences in Educational Outcomes across Generations in the Second Great Wave of Immigration

Background

The United States has experienced the second largest wave of immigration in its history over the past five decades. Presently, immigrants and children of immigrants account for nearly one-quarter of all school-aged children in the U.S. Given that this figure is expected to increase to one-third by 2050, it is critical to understand how this new wave of immigrant youth in the United States fared in the public education system. While many studies have focused on educational outcomes for immigrants, very few have focused on cross-generational differences. To address this gap, David Figlio and Umut Özek examine academic achievement and attainment outcomes across first, second, and third generations of immigrants in the United States in vol. 15, issue 4 of *Education Finance & Policy*.

The Study

Through an innovative use of matched administrative school and natality records, the authors examined educational experiences of immigrants in the U.S. public school system. In particular, the authors assessed educational outcomes across first, second, and third generations of immigrants in the United States. Through creative matching of birth and school data from the state of Florida, Figlio and Özek examined generational differences for standardized test scores, disciplinary problems, attendance, on-time high school graduation, and college readiness.

For more details:

- View the [full issue](#).
- See the [full article in Education Finance and Policy](#).
- [Sign up here to receive future EFP Takeaways](#).
- Summary of:
Figlio, D., & Özek, U. (2020). Cross-generational differences in educational outcomes in the second great wave of immigration. *Education Finance and Policy*, 15(4), 648-674.

Findings

Analyses revealed four main findings:

- There was a general pattern of successively reduced academic achievement in the generations following the generation that immigrated to the United States.
- In particular, for both Hispanic and Asian students, early-arriving first generation immigrants performed better than second generation immigrants, who performed better than third generation immigrants. See the figure below.
- Recent immigrants gained considerably on their white peers in reading and math tests between third and eighth grades while the achievement gaps remained stagnant for more established immigrant generations.
- These patterns remain unchanged even after controlling for observed student, family and school attributes, or whether the student's or the mother's reported racial/ethnic identity is used.

8th Grade Test Scores by Race, Immigrant Generation, and Grade at Entry

