

Are second-generation immigrants more integrated into European societies than their parents? **Alan Manning** and colleagues look at evidence on economic integration for France, Germany and the UK.

# The integration of immigrants and their children in Europe

**I**mmigration is currently high up the political agenda in most European countries as they struggle to deal with the increased flow of migrants that many have experienced in recent years. Many countries have a sizeable fraction of the population who are hostile to immigration, especially to immigrants from poorer countries or those of a different ethnicity to the majority.

In this climate, it is critically important to understand more about how immigrants fare – and not just the first-generation immigrants but their children too. After all, the longer-run effects of immigration are probably much more influenced by how the descendants of immigrants fare than the immigrants themselves.

In a recent study, we compare the

experiences of first- and second-generation immigrants in France, Germany and the UK in terms of their education, earnings and employment. These countries all experienced large-scale immigration in the 1950s and 1960s so that enough time has elapsed to be able to evaluate how the immigrants' children are getting on.

Although these countries have all had sizeable immigrant populations for a considerable time, they also differ in important ways. First, the ethnic composition of immigrant inflows is different: immigrants in France and the UK came from former colonies of those countries, while Germany employed immigrants from southern Europe and Turkey.

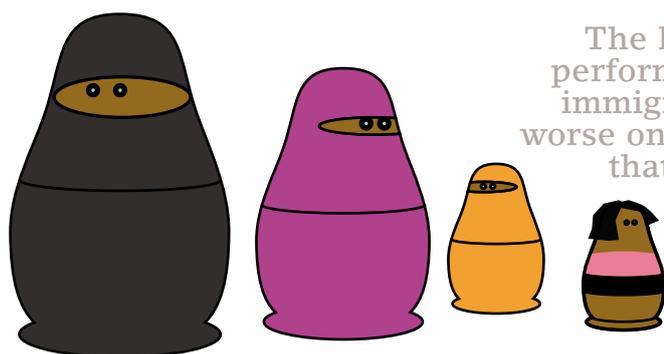
Second, these countries have adopted very different policies towards the

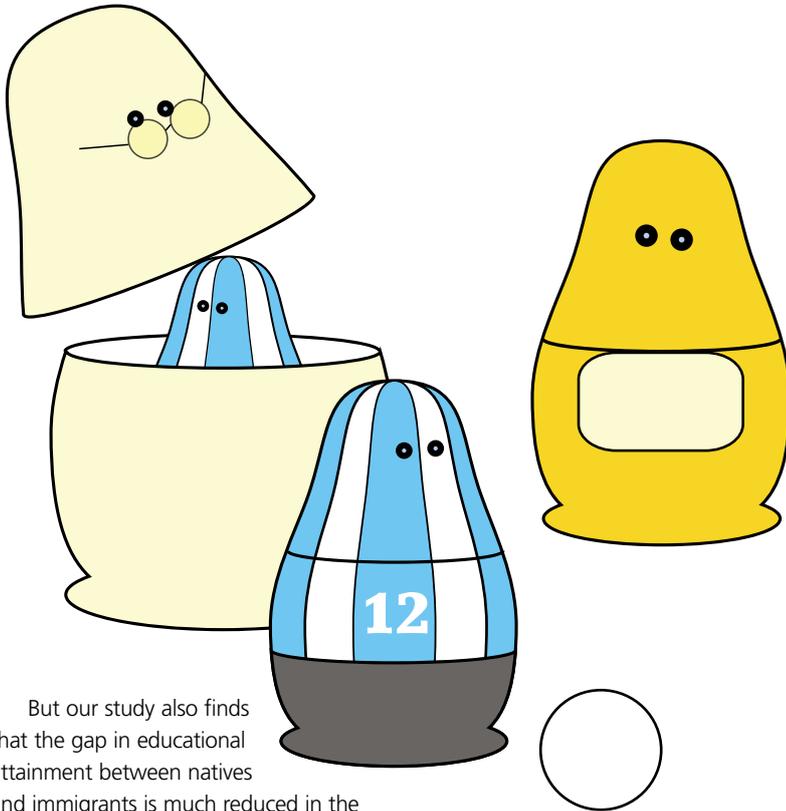
integration of immigrants. Put very crudely, the UK has sought to accommodate and celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity, while France has sought to deny its existence (at least in the public sphere) in the interest of 'equal treatment'. The proposed banning of the burqa is a good example of the latter approach.

In contrast with both these countries, which typically granted immigrants full citizenship, Germany did not, until relatively recently, give citizenship to immigrants or their children who were not ethnically German. Long after it was clear that they had come to stay, Germany thought of its immigrants as only temporary residents.

Other European countries with more recent immigration are considering which, if any, of these models would be the best one to adopt to facilitate the integration of immigrants and their children. So it is important to know how immigrants have fared in France, Germany and the UK.

The central finding of our research is that in all three countries, the labour market performance of most immigrant groups as well as their descendants is, on average, worse than that of the native population (after controlling for education, potential experience and regional allocation).





But our study also finds that the gap in educational attainment between natives and immigrants is much reduced in the second generation compared with the first generation. While there is considerable heterogeneity across immigrant groups and the children of immigrants still do worse than the children of native-born parents, they often do better than their own parents. This suggests perhaps that education systems are working to integrate the children of immigrants though it is much harder to say whether progress is as fast as it could be.

Evidence of progress in labour market performance is not the same for all countries and all immigrant groups. For immigrants' net earnings, the UK stands out as having particularly large differences for the first generation but also much improved outcomes for the second generation.

In France and Germany, differences are not so clear-cut. The difference in male employment rates between immigrants and natives in Germany and the UK seem similar for first- and second-generation immigrants, but France has a number of groups in which the second-generation immigrants seem to be doing worse than the first. For women, the patterns are similar but there is clearer general evidence of a reduction in employment gaps for the second generation, especially for those immigrant groups where female employment rates are very low in the first generation.

In all countries, there is considerable heterogeneity in outcomes across immigrant groups, and any sensible account of immigrant disadvantage must pay attention

to the fact that immigrants cannot be treated as an undifferentiated lump.

Does the French, German or British model of attitudes to immigrants appear more favoured by these findings? The answer is that no simple link appears. France, which until recently has been accused of sticking its head in the sand over the existence of poor outcomes for immigrant groups, does not seem to have worse outcomes than the UK, which has had anti-discrimination legislation for over 40 years. The UK, often accused now of paying insufficient attention to the assimilation of immigrants, has, if anything, the largest improvement from the first to the second generation.

One possible explanation for our inability to paint a simple picture is that government policy is much less important than many people think. In day-to-day life and economic activity, it is the behaviour and aspirations of immigrants and their children – and how they are treated by those with whom they interact – that is important in determining economic outcomes.

By a stroke of a pen, governments may be able to pass anti-discrimination legislation or prevent Muslim schoolgirls wearing the hijab. But it is much harder to change attitudes – and it is these attitudes that ultimately determine outcomes.

This article summarises 'The Economic Situation of First- and Second-generation Immigrants in France, Germany and the United Kingdom' by Yann Algan, Christian Dustmann, Albrecht Glitz and Alan Manning, which is published in the February 2010 issue of the *Economic Journal* (<http://www.res.org.uk/economic/ejtoc.asp?ref=0013-0133&vid=120&iid=542&oc=0>). An earlier version is available as CEP Discussion Paper No. 951 (<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp0951.pdf>).

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