



Toolkit for Evidence-Informed Policymaking in Migrant Integration

Section 2 Finding and Assessing Evidence to Support Policy Design and Implementation

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The full toolkit can be found at:
www.migrationpolicy.org/research/toolkit-evidence-policymaking



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SPRING is a EU-funded project focusing on the integration of recently arrived migrants in the context of the large-scale arrivals of refugees and other migrants since 2014. It aims to develop a toolbox to improve the innovation, effectiveness and sustainability of the work done by Europe's integration stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. The project mobilises significant research, networks and communications capacity and gathers, summarises and shares the best available research and evidence on the effectiveness, innovation, transferability, sustainability and evaluation methods for integration policies and practice.

The SPRING Platform integrationpractices.eu is the main hub to make the project results available to practitioners as well as to the general public.

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2. Finding and Assessing Evidence to Support Policy Design and Implementation

Key takeaways

- ★ Different types of evidence, available from a variety of sources, can serve different purposes: evidence on existing migrant integration policies and practices to learn about the status quo, evidence on integration outcomes to identify policy gaps and needs, and evidence linking specific policies to specific integration outcomes to assess those policies' impact and cost-effectiveness.
- ★ Finding and assessing evidence takes time. Developing a search strategy can make it easier to identify evidence in a structured and efficient way. This involves determining search objectives and setting inclusion and exclusion criteria, including relevant time period, geography, target group, and policy focus.
- ★ Not all evidence is created equally. Evidence should be assessed based on quality, relevance, and transferability. Policymakers can use existing standards for evidence quality to identify high-value information; these usually rank meta-analyses and randomised controlled trials at the top of the list.
- ★ When weighing policy options, it is important to look not only at the evidence on a policy's impact but also evidence on how it achieves the desired outcomes and on its cost-effectiveness, transferability, and potential to be scaled up.
- ★ To improve the use of evidence, policymakers and implementers require easy access to research, collaborative relationships with researchers, capacity, funding, and an ever-improving evidence base.

Evidence about which migrant integration policies work and under which conditions is crucial to the design and improvement of integration policies. Solid evidence can also increase political buy-in and investment in improving policies that support migrant integration. Yet, the limited high-quality evidence that is available on what works in the integration field can be difficult to find, access, and interpret, hindering its impact on policies and the lives of migrants and other members of society.

It is thus important for integration policymakers and other stakeholders to hone their ability to navigate this uneven evidence landscape, gathering evidence that is available and knowing who to turn to for reliable information. It is also essential to be able to critically examine the origins, reliability, and relevance of evidence, keeping an eye out for assumptions and biases.⁴

In this section, you will learn...

- what the different types of evidence and data are, and what their advantages and disadvantages are when pursuing different goals;
- how and where to find integration-related evidence, including by developing a search strategy;
- how to evaluate the quality and transferability of evidence; and
- how to assess and strengthen key stakeholders' capacity to use evidence effectively.

BOX 2.1

Case study: Using evidence to build political buy-in and secure funding in the Netherlands

The VIA programme (Verdere Integratie op de Arbeidsmarkt, or Further Integration in the Labour Market) was launched by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in the Netherlands in 2018. Using pilot projects, the programme aimed to promote the labour market integration of people with a migration background. In the programme, evidence played an important role:

- The collection of data from migrants before the start of the programme helped identify employment gaps between migrants and native-born individuals and was instrumental in securing political buy-in and funding for the programme.
- Evidence gathered during the pilot projects was used to ensure that those that were promising would be continued and scaled up, including by securing new funds from the ministry and other stakeholders.

Note: The VIA programme's full name was changed to Voor een Inclusieve Arbeidsmarkt (For an Inclusive Labour Market) in December 2022. Because most of the reports and other sources available still refer to the programme by its old name, this toolkit does as well to avoid confusion.

Source: author interview with Jürgen Wander, Programme Manager, VIA Programme at the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 1 March 2022.

⁴ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 'Building Capacity for Evidence Informed Policy Making: Towards a Baseline Skill Set' (summary, OECD Publishing, Paris, n.d.), 4; OECD, *Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons from Country Experiences* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020).

2.1 What types of evidence and data can be used to improve integration policy design and implementation?

People often use ‘evidence’ and ‘data’ interchangeably, but is there a difference? And what exactly qualifies as evidence and what as data?

Evidence is a body of information that proves whether a hypothesis is true—for example, whether an integration policy is effective. This toolkit uses a broad definition of what information constitutes evidence, including quantitative and qualitative data, stakeholder input, academic research, and many other forms of information that allow policymakers to assess whether policies are effective in improving integration outcomes.

Data, while a component of evidence, is raw information that has not been interpreted and is not necessarily being used to prove whether a specific policy is working or not.⁵ For example, data can tell us that 172 newcomers completed an integration course, but raw data cannot definitively say whether the integration course has had the desired positive impact on integration outcomes—that requires multiple sources of data, including on integration outcomes, and analysis and interpretation.

In the wide and varied world of evidence relevant to integration policymaking, there are three broad categories:

- 1 Evidence on migrant integration policies and practices (or policy input).** This type of evidence allows policymakers to compare what policies and practices have been used over time and across geographic contexts. This type of evidence only measures how policies look on paper; it does not cover how policies are implemented and whether these policies are effective in shaping integration outcomes.
- 2 Evidence on migrant integration outcomes (policy outcomes).** This type of evidence can be used to understand the baseline of migrants’ integration outcomes—how they are faring currently—and to identify the most pressing gaps for policymakers to address. Such evidence can be used to set policy priorities and encourage political buy-in, but it cannot establish whether improvements in migrant integration outcomes are being caused by policies.
- 3 Evidence linking migrant integration policies to migrant integration outcomes (policy impact).** This type of evidence allows policymakers to assess whether and under which conditions migrant integration policies are effective. This is the most valuable type of evidence—and the most rare and difficult to produce. It requires determining the extent to which certain integration outcomes (e.g., a specific refugee group’s local language proficiency) can be attributed to a specific policy (e.g., a new mandatory language training curriculum), while trying to isolate the impact of other factors (e.g., making local friends). For a more in-depth discussion of how to generate this type of evidence through evaluations, check out Section 3.

⁵ Gerhard Van de Bunt and Lorraine Nencel, *Social Research Methodology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Amsterdam: VU University Amsterdam, 2011).

2.2 Where can I find evidence?

The growing body of evidence on migrant integration can be challenging to navigate. Recent years have seen a proliferation of online databases, but it can still be difficult to find and access evidence on a specific topic. The list below highlights some of the main databases and portals through which you can find and access the three kinds of evidence described above. The final part of this subsection looks specifically at accessing relevant academic research.

Evidence on migrant integration policies

Integration policies, strategies, and practices vary widely across countries, regions, and cities. Using the databases below, you can assess information on how policies in one context compare to those in another, and how they have changed over time.

- ▶ The **Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX)** identifies and measures integration policies across 56 countries. Countries receive a score and are classified based on how well their integration policies cover issues such as securing basic rights, supporting equal opportunities, and leading to positive long-term outcomes. The index includes policies on labour market mobility, education, political participation, access to nationality, family reunion, health, permanent residence, and antidiscrimination. While this is a useful tool to compare how governments approach promoting the integration of migrants and to assess how integration approaches have changed over time, it does not provide specific information on the policies implemented and their outcomes.
- ▶ The **Regions for Migrants & Refugees Integration (REGIN) Project** adapted the MIPEX national framework for the regional level, creating **MIPEX-R**. It provides a set of indicators that can be used to evaluate regional governance models of integration. MIPEX-R focuses on eight policy areas: antidiscrimination, culture and religion, education, health care, housing, labour market, language, and social security and assistance. It also scores regional migrant integration governance systems (actions, actors and relations, and resources) and governance processes (policy formulation, output, implementation, and evaluation). The current version includes 25 regions from seven European countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden). Like MIPEX, MIPEX-R only considers policies as they appear on paper, not how they are implemented or how they affect integration outcomes.
- ▶ The **Intercultural Cities Index (ICC-Index)**, created by the Council of Europe, can be used by cities to assess progress on the intercultural integration model over time and learn from concrete best practices in other cities. **Reports** for more than 100 cities (many in Europe, but also some non-European countries) outline actions the cities have taken to promote integration. **Interactive charts** show how participating cities compare to each other on different dimensions of the index: commitment, education, neighbourhoods, public services, business and employment, cultural and civil life, public spaces, mediation and conflict resolution, language, media, international outlook, intelligence/competence, welcoming, and governance.

- ▶ The **National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM)** provides a standardised research tool for assessing migrant integration policies that target beneficiaries of international protection. NIEM also provides country profiles and assessments of policies related to socioeconomic integration, general conditions, legal integration, and sociocultural integration of this population in 14 European countries.
- ▶ The **Multiculturalism Policy Index (MCP)** monitors multicultural policies for immigrants, national minorities, and Indigenous groups on an annual basis from 1960 onwards for 21 Western countries. In a series of maps, graphs, and analyses, the MCP website highlights trends and developments in these policies. Raw data and evidence on multicultural policies for immigrant minorities are available on [this page](#).

Evidence on integration outcomes

Several databases and platforms measure migrants' integration outcomes—for example, their access to health care or education and labour market integration. However, they do not typically evaluate the causes of those outcomes and the context in which they take place.

- ▶ **Eurostat's migration and asylum resources** offer quantitative data on a range of migrant integration outcomes, including employment, education, social inclusion, health, and active citizenship. Data come from the [European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions](#), the [European Health Interview Survey](#), the [European Social Survey](#), and the [EU Labour Force Survey](#). Eurostat's high-quality data allow policymakers to compare integration outcomes across countries and over time, though the use of broad categories (e.g., all foreign-born individuals) means it is not always possible to explore diversity within immigrant populations (e.g., outcomes for migrants with different legal statuses). [Searching for data](#) and understanding the statistics require expertise on data and statistical categories, though [a guide](#) is available on how to use the site.



Tip: Eurostat's 'Statistics Explained' articles on migrant integration share key findings and interpretation of the data as well as useful graphs to provide annual information in an accessible way for people not trained in data analysis.

- ▶ The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s **Database on Immigrants in OECD and Non-OECD Countries (DIOC)** compiles data from population censuses. The data cover immigrants' demographic characteristics, duration of stay, labour market outcomes, and educational background and are available for 2000/01, 2005/06, 2010/11, and 2015/16.
- ▶ The **OECD's 'Settling In' series** provides survey data on the integration outcomes of migrants and their children in EU, OECD, and selected G20 countries. The survey has been held every three years since 2012 and collects information on 74 indicators related to labour market and skills, living conditions, and civic engagement and social integration. The analysis is shared as a report and is available in English, French, and German.

- ▶ The **Ethmig Survey Data Hub** aims to improve knowledge-sharing and to facilitate easy access to and sharing of survey data on the economic, social, and political integration of ethnic minorities and migrants. The database captures national and local surveys collected since 2000 in 28 EU Member States and 7 non-EU countries. As of early 2023, the hub was in development, but it plans to offer a survey registry, a survey question data bank, a post-harmonised survey data bank, and a survey data playground.
- ▶ The European Commission's **Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography (KCMD) Data Portal** presents information on migration and demography relevant to EU policies. Its **Data+ Catalogue** helps users to discover related datasets, web portals and platforms, stakeholder organisations, and networks and forums. The portal allows users to select key themes and the type of resource they are looking for, including [datasets on migrant integration](#).



Want to learn more about sources of data on both integration policies and outcomes? Check out:

- ★ The [Data Inventory on Integration Policies, Outcomes, Public Perceptions, and Social Cohesion](#) created by the [Whole-COMM](#) project.

Evidence that links integration policies to outcomes

Evidence demonstrating a causal relationship between policies and integration outcomes is the most difficult kind of evidence to produce and, thus, the most limited. The databases and repositories listed below attempt to link policies to integration outcomes, but causal evidence of policy impact, cost-effectiveness, and/or potential transferability is typically missing. These databases also do not weigh policies based on the strength of the evidence (see Section 2.4 for information on how to assess evidence). But even with these limitations, the databases below provide a valuable starting point to identify effective integration policies.

- ▶ The **SPRING Consortium's Evidence on Integration Policy Practices repository** is an easy access point to the most relevant research on migrant integration, inclusion, and participation in Europe. The repository is based on an extensive review of research published between 2011 and 2022, with key findings on 11 topics translated into easy-to-read summaries and practical recommendations for different stakeholders such as governments, civil-society organisations, and social partners.
- ▶ The **OECD's 'Making Integration Work' series** summarises the main challenges and good policy practices for supporting the lasting integration of immigrants and their children. Each report focuses on a specific theme and presents relevant concrete policy lessons, along with supporting examples and comparisons of the integration policy frameworks in different OECD countries.
- ▶ The **IMMERSE Consortium's Database of Good Practices and Resources in Social Integration of Refugee and Migrant Children** helps users search for child-focused good practices, policy papers, tools, and resources, by country, language, and subtheme. These good practices are also analysed in a series of working papers in the database's [publication portal](#).

- ▶ The **European Website on Integration (EWSI)**, an initiative of the European Commission Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, collects up-to-date information and self-reported good practices on migrant integration. It also provides information on the European Union’s work on integration, an overview of available EU funding, guidance on how that funding works, and country pages with further information about EU Member States’ integration policies. Policies in the **good practices database** can be filtered by date; geographic area; theme; and target population age, gender, reason for migration, and residence status—but not by policy effectiveness. The site also lists contact persons for each good practice, which can facilitate information exchange.
- ▶ The **European Migration Network (EMN)’s Research Library** includes policy research reports related to migrant integration, migration, education, international protection, and other integration-related topics. The EMN is a European expert network that work together to share objective, comparable policy-relevant information.

Exploring academic research

When you are looking for evidence on a specific topic (for example, on a certain target group, type of policy measure, or context), academic research can offer a wealth of information. Yet, academic publications are unfortunately not always the most accessible forms of evidence. Many academic publications are written for an audience of other academics, not policymakers or practitioners, and therefore include few practical recommendations for policy design and implementation. In addition, academic research is frequently put behind a paywall, limiting who can read it in the first place. Still, academic studies can often complement the other forms of evidence discussed above.



Tip: To save time, prioritise literature reviews and meta-analyses that summarise and assess the findings of multiple other studies.

- ▶ The **Migration Research Hub** by IMISCOE gathers migration research, project information, and an **index of experts**. Its main audience is the research community, but it can also be a useful resource for policymakers seeking to access the most relevant academic literature. Its **research database** includes academic as well as grey literature—from scholarly journal articles and books, to reports, policy briefs, and datasets. Results can be sorted by different subthemes by using a **taxonomy system** and are easily filterable by type of publication, year, and country.



Want to learn more about how to use the Migration Research Hub? Check out:

- ★ **CrossMigration’s YouTube video** on how to use the platform.
- ★ **Melissa Siegel**, a professor of migration studies, also offers **an introduction to this resource**.

2.3 Developing a search strategy

You need to find evidence to support a policy or project you’re working on. Where do you start? This section presents a list of steps and key questions to help you develop a targeted search strategy.

Step 1. Determine the objectives of your search

The questions that you would like to answer and the goals you hope to achieve will determine what type of evidence you need. Which of the following do you aim to do?

- Put an issue on the policy agenda
- Convince stakeholders to allocate funding to an issue
- Build political buy-in to change existing policies
- Identify gaps in existing policies
- Improve existing policies
- Inform the design of new policies
- Other: _____

Step 2. Set inclusion and exclusion criteria for evidence

With your objectives in mind, you will next need to think carefully about what characteristics will make a piece of evidence relevant (or not). This will help you narrow down the pool of available evidence.

Temporal criteria

Does the evidence need to be recent?

If yes, what is the earliest relevant year? When deciding on the right cutoff date, think about significant changes in migration patterns and policies.

Geographic criteria

Do you need evidence to come from the same geographic area where you are working, or would evidence from other countries, regions, and cities also be useful?

How similar does another geographic area need to be (in terms of governance structures, immigration history, urbanisation, etc.) for evidence from that location to be relevant to your work?

Target group criteria

Which characteristics of the target population you are working with must be shared by the target population of a piece of evidence for that information to be relevant? You may wish to think about the population's legal status, duration of stay, country of origin, socioeconomic status, and migrant generation, among other factors.

Thematic criteria

Within the broad issue area you are interested in, which more specific topics are most closely related to your work? For example, when studying migrant health, are you looking for evidence on mental and/or physical health, the spread of communicable and noncommunicable diseases, or something else?

Quality criteria

What level of quality does a piece of evidence need to have for it to be useful to you? See Section 2.4 for guidelines on how to assess the quality of evidence.

Step 3. Reflect on concepts and terminology

Different terminology and synonyms can be used to describe the same or related aspects of migrant integration. For example, many terms are used to describe the process of migrants integrating into a receiving country's labour market and the policies and projects that address their participation. Searching for 'labour market integration' may help you find some useful information, but only using that term will mean overlooking other important pieces of evidence. Try creating a mind-map, like the one below, or even a simple list to brainstorm a set of terms relevant to your search.

FIGURE 2.1

Sample mind-map of key concepts and terminology

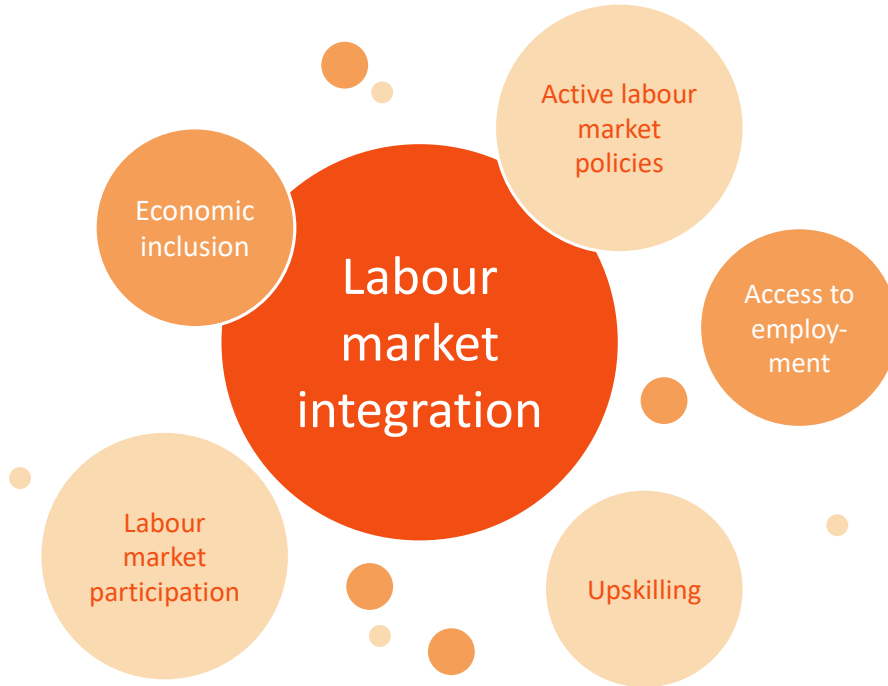
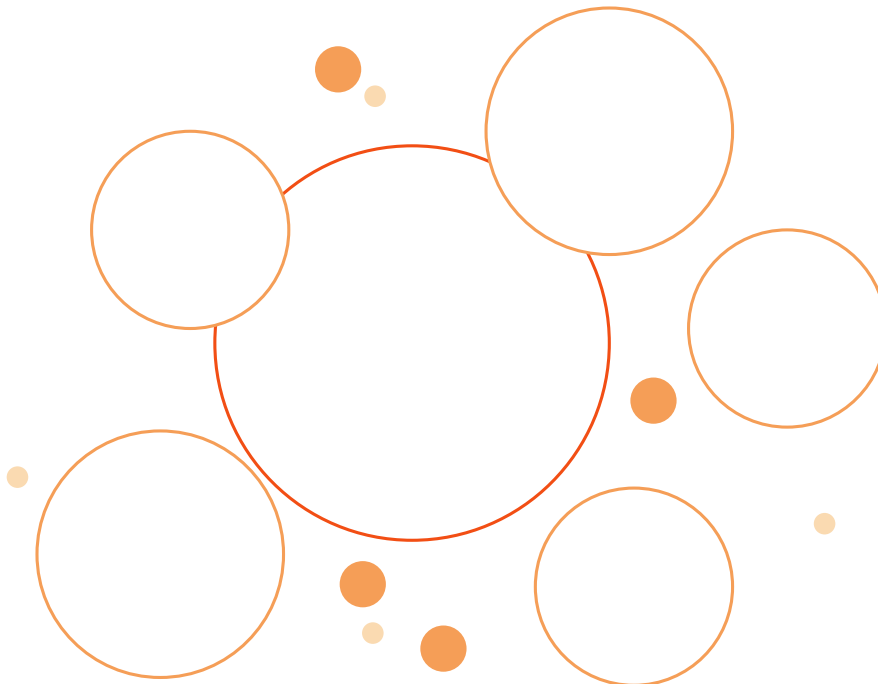


FIGURE 2.2

Blank mind-map of key concepts and terminology



Step 4. Determine where to look for evidence

You now have a strong idea of *what* you are looking for. But *where* should you look? The integration-related databases and evidence repositories described in Section 2.2 are often a good place to start. The search objectives, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and key terms you have identified can help you decide which of those resources to use.

Another strategy, particularly if you are having trouble finding information on specific policy questions, geographic areas, or population groups, is to reach out to individuals and organisations involved in migrant integration to learn from their expertise and experiences. This can include other policymakers and practitioners, nongovernmental organisations, researchers, and integration programme beneficiaries (such as migrants and receiving community members). Section 6 provides more information on effective stakeholder engagement more broadly, but some key questions to consider in this context are:


- What stakeholders are the most likely to have access to the type of evidence you are looking for? Think about their role in migrant integration policy. Are they involved with policy design, implementation, evaluation, or evidence dissemination, or are they affected by the policy?
- What stakeholders might be the most willing to contribute? Consider, for example, who might have an interest in helping you access the evidence needed to design or implement a policy well.
- If you are reaching out to migrant and refugee communities, can you ensure that you will engage with them in a transparent, well-planned and systematic, and nondiscriminatory way?


Step 5. Search online databases effectively

Knowing how to use databases well can make your search for relevant evidence easier and more effective. The tips below can help you use key functions of many databases.

Looking for a specific phrase? Put it in quotation marks.



If you enter more than one word in a search bar, the database may or may not interpret words written next to each other as a phrase. It may bring you results that include that phrase, or it may bring you results that include the words separately. Putting the phrase in double quotation marks will let you search for the whole phrase together.

Search: workforce training policies	
Employee Training Handbook An employee training handbook for new hires in the Office of Workforce Development, outlining key policies .	
Assessing Workforce Characteristics A training course agenda for researchers studying the characteristics of the workforce . It includes course policies .	

Search: "workforce training policies"	
UK Workforce Training Policies A report on workforce training policies implemented in the United Kingdom in the 1990s and 2000s.	
Jobs of Today and Tomorrow Presentation slides from a conference on workforce training policies in Europe and North America.	

Are multiple variations of a word relevant? Try truncation to find them all.

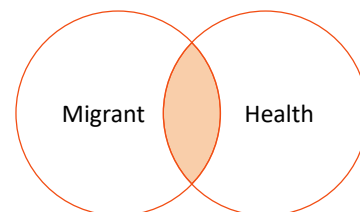
In most databases, you can use the symbol * or ? to replace multiple letters at the start or end of a word. This can make it possible to search for the root of a word and find results that use its variants.

Search: child*	
Unaccompanied children in the United States A report analysing arrival numbers and services for child migrants in U.S. communities.	
Early Childhood Education and Care Programmes A guide to designing programmes for immigrant and native-born children's earliest years.	
Search: *migra*	
Migration Statistics Interactive data tools with statistics on immigration and emigration around the world.	
Humanitarian Migrants in Italy A report on asylum seekers migrating to Italy and their first-instance asylum case outcomes.	

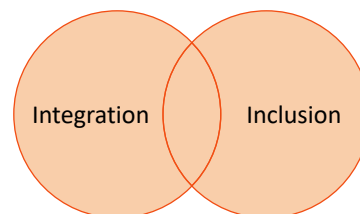
Want to make sure multiple words are included or excluded? Use Boolean operators.

Using the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT in database searches can help you broaden or narrow a search.

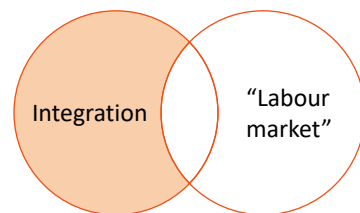
AND narrows the search to include only results that contain both search terms, excluding those that include only one or the other. This will produce fewer results. This is useful to connect unrelated terms that are important to your research. For example, a simple search for **migrant health** could yield some results that include only one or the other word, but adding AND to your search—**migrant AND health**—will ensure each search result mentions both words.



OR broadens the search to include one, the other, or both search terms. It will produce more results. This works well for synonymous or closely related words, for example **integration OR inclusion**. This search will yield results including either inclusion or integration, or both.



NOT will limit the search to results that contain the first term and do not contain the second term. This can help you avoid irrelevant results. For example, if you want to find information about aspects of integration other than labour market integration, you could search for **integration NOT "labour market"**.



Want to learn more about Boolean search operators? Check out:

- ★ [This YouTube video](#) on how Boolean searches work in databases and catalogues.

2.4 Assessing the quality and relevance of evidence

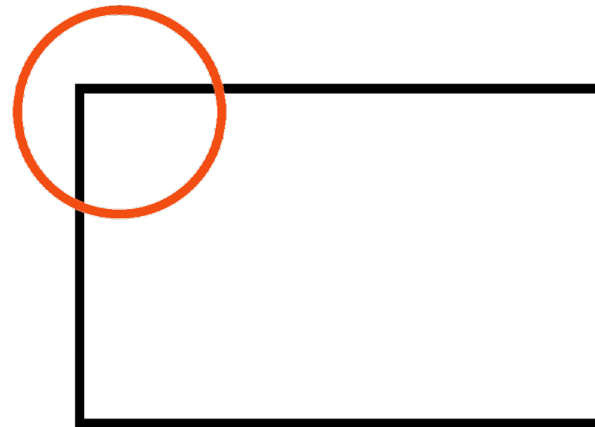
Although the amount of evidence available on immigrant integration is growing, not all evidence is created equally and not all evidence points in the same direction. Finding evidence is only the first step in using it to inform policy design and implementation. Next, you will need to assess the value of this evidence. This section provides tools to help you assess and rank evidence based on quality, impact, transferability, opportunities to scale policies up, and cost-effectiveness.

Assessing the quality of evidence

The quality of pieces of evidence varies depending on the methodology that was used to create them. There is an ongoing debate about whether it is possible to create a fixed hierarchy or ranking of types of evidence based on quality.⁶ However, existing standards typically give more weight to randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and to systematic reviews, which make it possible to establish a causal link between an integration policy and its outcomes. Table 2.1 provides an example of a hierarchy of evidence quality, which you can use to weigh the available evidence and get a better sense of what evidence to trust or prioritise.

It should be noted that while quality of evidence is important, it is often not possible to conduct RCTs in real life because of ethical considerations, cost constraints, and gaps in expertise. For example, in the case of the VIA programme in the Netherlands, multiple organisations did not want to participate in RCTs because of ethical concerns; they did not want to deprive a group of people of access to a programme expected to benefit them for the sake of creating a control group.⁷

Standards for evidence quality, including the example in Table 2.1, often rank non-experimental quantitative methodologies and qualitative evidence lower in the hierarchy, but these types of evidence may still be very useful for policymaking. In the absence of experimental evidence, non-experimental quantitative evidence can point to the *likely* causal impact of policies while qualitative research is very effective in assessing the role of meaning and context in public policies.⁸



6 Mark Petticrew and Helen Roberts, 'Evidence, Hierarchies, and Typologies: Horses for Courses', *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 57, no. 7 (2003): 527–529.

7 Gregor Walz, Auke Witkamp, Noortje Hipper, and Lennart de Ruig, 'Evaluatie Programma Verdere Integratie Op de Arbeidsmarkt: Derde Rapport Uitvoering, Opbrengsten En Impact van Het Programma' (programme evaluation, Rijksoverheid, The Hague, the Netherlands, November 2021), 43.

8 Joseph A. Maxwell, 'The Value of Qualitative Inquiry for Public Policy', *Qualitative Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2020): 177–186.

TABLE 2.1

Example hierarchy of evidence quality

Level (highest to lowest)	Type of evidence
1	Systematic reviews and meta-analyses: These studies systematically assess the outcomes of multiple policies addressing the same issue.
2	Randomised controlled trials with definitive results: RCTs randomly assign individuals to either benefit from a policy or not, with the latter group acting as a control group. This allows researchers to isolate whether changes in specific outcomes were caused by the policy. (See Section 3 for more on RCTs.)
3	Randomised controlled trials with nondefinitive results: These RCTs have, for example, a limited sample that does not provide unequivocal proof of a policy’s impact on integration.
4	Cohort studies: This is a type of longitudinal study in which a group of people (e.g., potential beneficiaries of a policy) are followed over a period of time.
5	Case-control studies: These are observational, not randomised studies comparing the integration outcomes of two groups, but they do not establish a link between outcomes and policy.
6	Cross-sectional surveys: These surveys are conducted a one point in time and target a specific group of interest (e.g., beneficiaries of a policy). It is not possible to use their results to establish causality between outcomes and policy.
7	Case reports: These are detailed reports produced using existing information on a policy, what it seeks to achieve, and the target beneficiaries.

Source: Julia Brannen, ed., *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research* (Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1992).

Assessing what the body of evidence says about the quality of a particular policy

Understanding the quality of individual pieces of evidence, in terms of the rigorousness of their methods, is one thing. Understanding what those pieces of evidence tell us about the quality of the policy being studied is another. High-quality evidence may be available on a policy but show that the policy itself is of poor quality—ineffective, exorbitantly expensive to implement, nearly impossible to scale up, or difficult to transfer to another context.

To answer the question ‘how confident can I be that a certain policy is having the desired positive impact?’, you will need to look at what the full body of evidence has to say about the policy. Nesta, a UK-based innovation foundation, uses the standards of evidence in Table 2.2 for this purpose. It introduces a five-level hierarchy to help users assess the full body of evidence on a specific policy, with Level 1 providing the lowest level of evidence and Level 5 the highest level of evidence.

TABLE 2.2

Nesta’s standards of evidence

Level (lowest to highest)	What evidence is required about the policy?	How can evidence be generated?
1	Information about the policy, why it matters, and why it could make an impact in a logical and convincing way (e.g., a logical framework).	Level 1 evidence can be generated using the theory of change and by using existing data from other sources.
2	All of the information from Level 1, plus evidence that shows a positive change in integration outcomes, though it cannot be confirmed that these changes are caused by the policy.	Level 2 evidence can be gathered through surveys conducted both before and after a policy change, panel studies (a type of longitudinal study), interval surveying, or qualitative research.
3	All of the information from Levels 1 and 2, plus evidence that can prove causality by isolating the impact of the specific policy on outcomes from that of other contextual factors.	Level 3 evidence can be generated using impact evaluation methods such as randomised controlled trials. Randomly assigning individuals to the control and the policy group and having a larger sample size will further strengthen the evidence.
4	All of the information from Levels 1–3, plus evidence on why and how the policy is having the observed impact and evidence on the policy’s cost-effectiveness.	Level 4 evidence requires process evaluation and value for money evaluation, such as a cost-benefit analysis.
5	All of the information from Levels 1–4, plus evidence that the policy is transferrable to other contexts and able to be scaled up, while remaining impactful and cost-effective.	Level 5 evidence can be produced by replicating evaluations of a policy in different contexts or by producing future scenario analysis.

Note: More information on some of these methods for generating evidence, such as randomised controlled trials and value-for-money evaluations, can be found in Section 3.

Source: Ruth Puttick and Joe Ludlow, *Standards of Evidence: An Approach that Balances the Need for Evidence with Innovation* (London: Nesta, 2013).



Want to learn more about standards of evidence? Check out:

- ★ Nesta’s [What Counts as Good Evidence?](#) report and [Standards of Evidence](#) short video offer an overview of the topic.
- ★ The OECD’s [Mobilising Evidence for Good Governance](#) report includes information about [principles for the use of evidence](#) and [standards of evidence](#) in OECD countries. The overall report provides rich examples and assesses the state of play of evidence standards in policymaking.
- ★ Nesta’s [Using Research Evidence: A Practice Guide](#), in Section C, provides information on how to use standards of evidence as well as systematic reviews, research, and rapid evidence assessments.

Assessing the relevance and transferability of evidence

Evidence on effective migrant integration policies is being collected in varied contexts around the world, and what is effective in one may not be in another. Integration is a complex process that is influenced not only by the particular policy or practice that is being studied, but also by other factors—from the characteristics of the target group and the broader society, to differences in legal systems.

When seeking to gauge whether a piece of evidence collected in one context is relevant to yours, it can be helpful to consider:

- **Timeliness:** How recent is the piece of evidence? Have there been any major changes (migration trends, policies, etc.) since then that would make the evidence less applicable today?
- **Contextual similarity:** Do the legal, social welfare, health-care, educational, labour market, and other systems strongly shape the evidence on a certain policy? How comparable are the relevant systems in that context and yours?
- **Target group:** Is the target group in this piece of evidence similar to the one you are working with (e.g., with respect to legal status, socioeconomic background, demographic composition, duration of stay in the country, and country of origin)? Are there certain characteristics that must be similar for the evidence to be relevant to you and some that are less important?
- **Scalability:** How scalable is a policy within its own context? Are the lessons learnt from scaling the policy up in its own context and can they help answer questions about scalability in other contexts?
- **Capacity to adapt:** Would stakeholders in your context support the adaptation and implementation of this policy? Would they commit to making the policy sustainable over time?
- **Transfer conditions:** Are time and resources available to test and implement the policy in a new context? Can policy adaptation be monitored and evaluated?



Want to learn more about transferring and scaling up migrant integration practices? Check out:

- ★ The Migration Policy Group's report [How Can Good Practices Be Transferred/Upscaled? Trends and Key Features of Transferability](#) highlights trends, explains the process, and provides examples.

2.5 Conditions that facilitate the use of evidence

The growing body of knowledge and evidence can greatly improve policymaking, but only if it reaches the right hands. An elaborate review of 145 studies identified the main obstacles to and facilitators of using evidence in policymaking.⁹ To improve the use of evidence in policy design and implementation, policymakers require:

- **Easy access to research and evidence.** The various sources described in Section 2.2, including [the SPRING Consortium’s evidence repository](#), make integration-related research available and offer tools to help policymakers access and navigate it. The dissemination of evidence through these platforms, as well as by the individual organisations that produce evidence, is discussed in more depth in Section 4.
- **Collaboration and relationships with other policymakers and researchers.** Effective partnerships and knowledge-sharing across stakeholders is key to promoting evidence-informed policymaking. Section 6 explores the importance of stakeholder involvement throughout the policymaking cycle, including for this purpose.
- **Capacity.** Certain research skills are needed to find, assess, and use evidence in policymaking. This toolkit, as well as the wealth of resources and other toolkits it highlights, aim to improve the capacity of integration policymakers and practitioners.
- **Funding.** Finding, assessing, and using evidence for policymaking take both time and money. Different sources of funding and funding strategies can be leveraged to increase the resources available for evidence-informed policymaking, as will be discussed in Section 5.
- **Further improvements in the clarity, relevance, and reliability of research findings.** While the evidence base for migrant integration policymaking is growing, there are still notable gaps. For example, many sources describe best practices without a thorough evaluation of their quality. Databases that collect good practices, including the European Website for Integration, should assess the quality of evidence and the broader cost-effectiveness, scalability, and transferability of these practices to make it easier for policymakers to identify those practices shown by high-quality evidence to be working well.

⁹ Kathryn Oliver et al., ‘A Systematic Review of Barriers to and Facilitators of the Use of Evidence by Policymakers,’ *BMC Health Services Research* 14, no. 2 (2014).

BOX 2.2**How do we know if evidence is being used in policymaking? A look at diagnostic tools**

It is not always clear if an organisation lacks an evidence culture or the capacity to use data in policymaking. Diagnostic tools that assess policymakers' capacity to use evidence can help identify obstacles and inform strategies to improve the status quo.

The Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement has produced a self-assessment tool called [Is Research Working for You?](#) that organisations can use to gauge their capacity to find, assess, present, and apply research.

The Urban Institute's [Research and Evaluation Capacity: Self-Assessment Tool and Discussion Guide](#) is designed to measure organisational capacity to engage with research and evaluation. It considers how organisations perform in seven major areas, defines overarching goals for research and evaluation capacity-building efforts, and helps users formulate key questions they have about how to address the shortcomings and objectives they identify.

2.6 Further reading and resources

Resources on building capacity to find, assess, and use evidence in policymaking:

- ★ The International Network for Advancing Science and Policy (INASP)'s [Evidence-Informed Policy Making \(EIPM\) Toolkit](#) provides a complete search strategy (in Module 2) and an approach to critically assessing evidence (in Module 3).
- ★ The OECD report [Building Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making: Lessons from Country Experiences](#) guides policymakers through how to increase the use of evidence in their work (see Chapter 3).
- ★ The OECD and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) held a joint workshop in 2018 entitled '[Skills for Policymakers for Evidence-Informed Policy Making \(EIPM\)](#)', from which the organisers posted [recordings of presentations](#) on the skills, processes, and institutional structures needed to incorporate evidence into policymaking.

Resources to improve how you assess evidence:

- ★ [Savvy Info Consumers: Evaluating Information](#) is a guide from the University of Washington that compiles different frameworks for evaluating sources of information.
- ★ [Critical Appraisal Tools](#) by the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine provides worksheets and other tools in several languages to help you critically review the findings of different types of studies (including systematic reviews, randomised controlled trials, and qualitative studies).
- ★ The Joanna Briggs Institute's [Critical Appraisal Tools](#) can be used to assess the quality of evidence from a wide variety of studies.

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