

**Literacy and Numeracy Skills of
2nd Generation Young Adults
in Canada, France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S.**

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What We Need Skills for: The PIAAC Research Conference

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About MPI

Areas of Work

- Immigration trends and policy
- Immigrant integration
- Migration and development
- Refugees and asylees
- U.S. and international perspectives

www.migrationpolicy.org



Prior MPI Study Findings (I)

- Immigrants lag the literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills of U.S. born
- Immigrants are 33% of U.S. adults with low English *literacy* and 24% with low *numeracy*
- 2nd generation catches up to 3rd generation, but...
- Overall U.S.' averages are low compared to many OECD countries



Prior MPI Study Findings (II)

- Wide racial and ethnic differences in skills
- *Self-reported* English language proficiency tracked *tested* English literacy
- PIAAC immigrant samples tracked those in the American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey

Source: Batalova and Fix (2015), [*Through an Immigrant Lens: PIAAC Assessment of the Competencies of Adults in the United States*](#)



Research Questions

1. What are the key demographic and social characteristics of young adults (16-34) by generation? How do they vary across countries?
2. How do the literacy and numeracy skills of the 2nd generation compare to the 1st?
3. Does the 2nd generation in other study countries catch up with the 3rd generation as in the U.S.?



Why Focus on 1st and 2nd Generation Young Adults?

1st and 2nd generation

- 40% of all 16-34 in Canada
- 25-30% in the U.K, the U.S., France, and Germany

Young adults (16-34)

- Making transition to adulthood
- Critical to future economic strength



Value of PIAAC for Country and Intergenerational Analyses

Data Used: the International PIAAC database

Strength: Standardized definitions of “immigrant generation” and other key variables across countries

Weaknesses

- Lack of ethnic/racial data (except the U.S.) or *country* of parental birth
- Only tested in host country language(s)



Research Questions

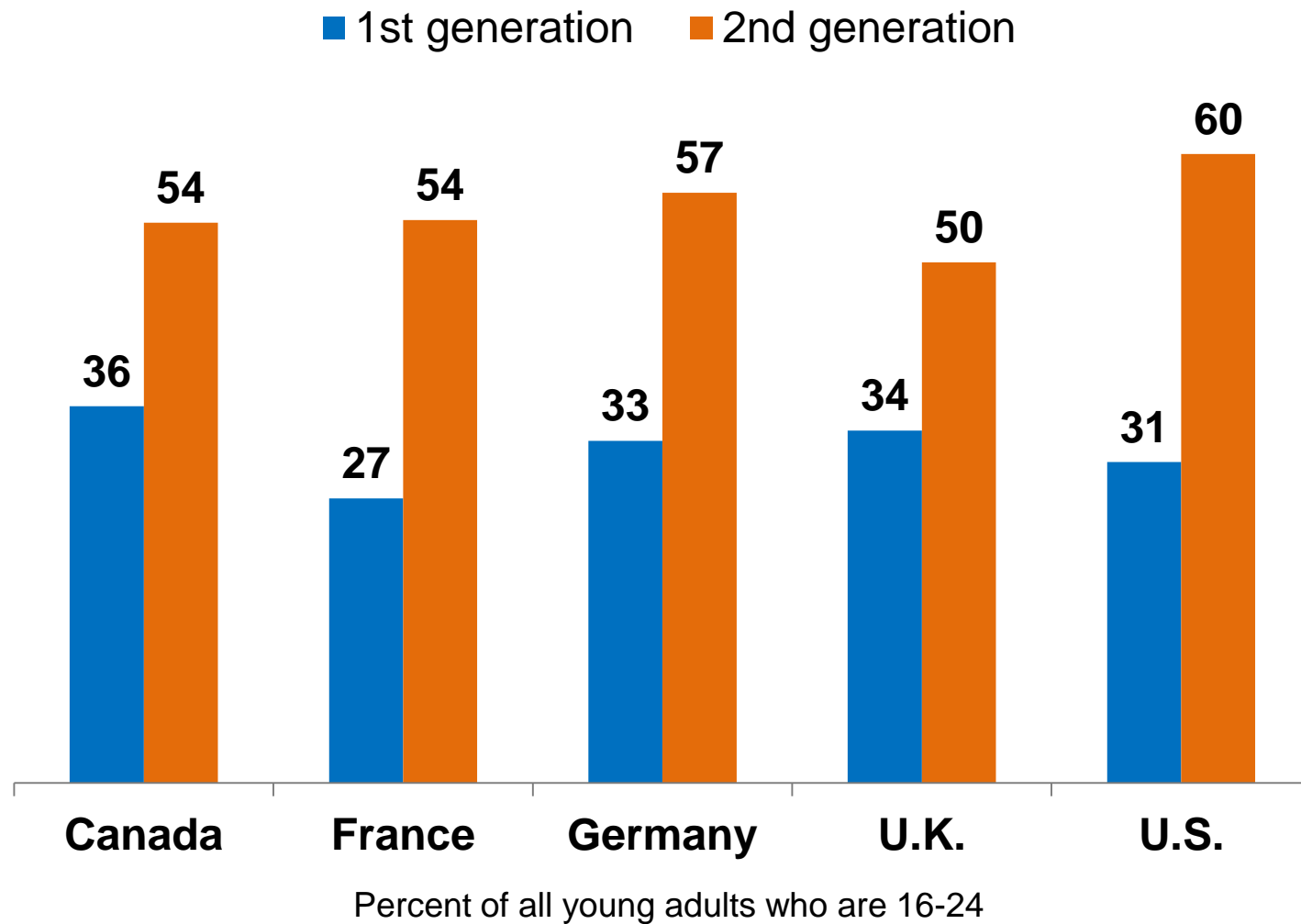
1. Socio-demographic profile by generation and study country
2. Intergenerational progress on literacy and numeracy skills: 2nd vs. 1st generation
3. 2nd vs 3rd generations: Catching up?

Population Size and Shares by Generation

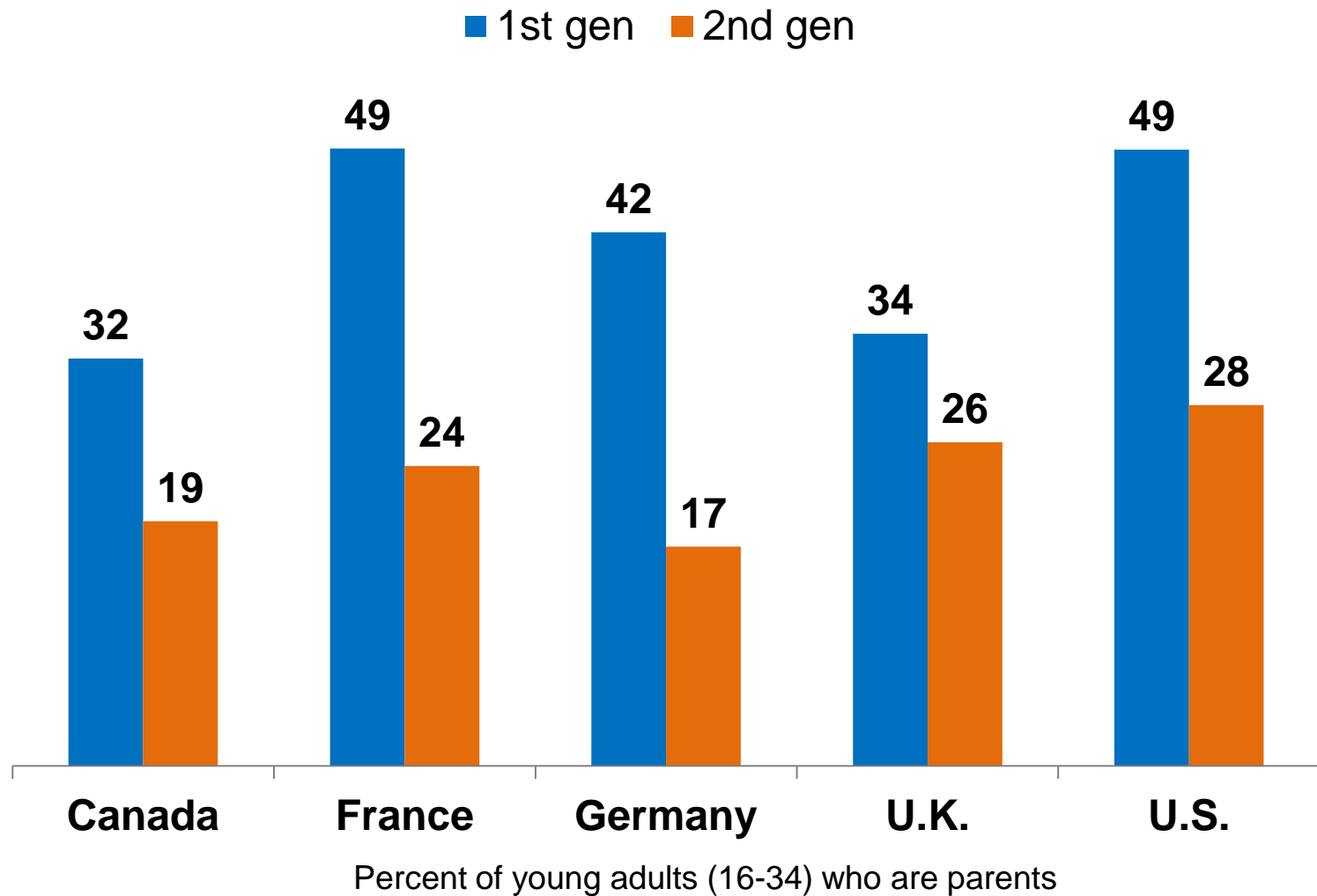
	Canada	France	Germany	United Kingdom	United States
Estimate	8,674,000	14,302,000	17,660,000	13,293,000	74,569,000
<i>By generation (%)</i>					
1st generation	22	9	14	17	13
2nd generation	19	18	13	12	15
3rd or higher generation	59	74	73	70	73

Source: MPI analysis of 2012 PIAAC data.

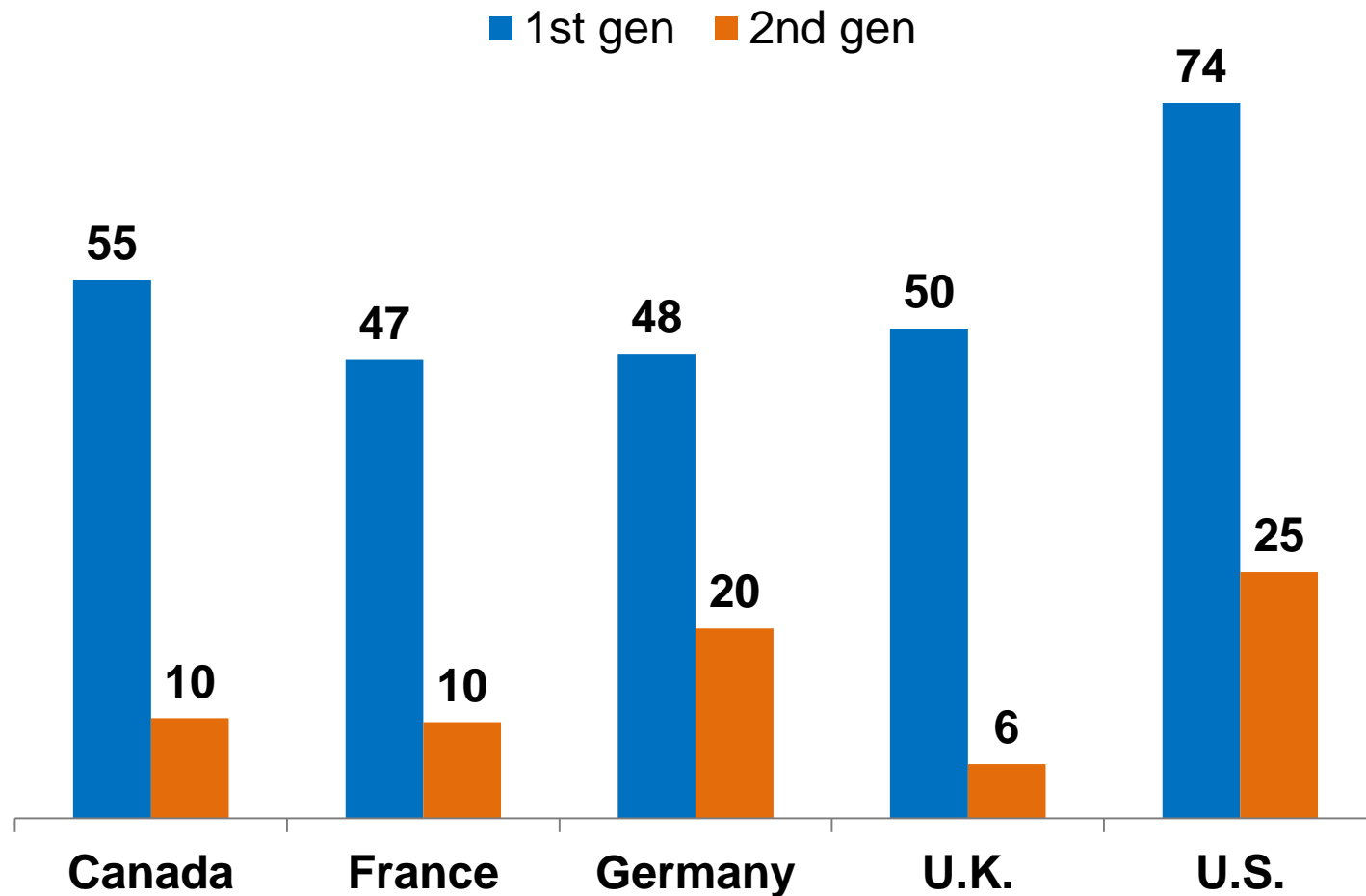
2nd Generation Is More Likely To Be of School-Going Age (16-24)



1st Generation Is More Likely To Be Parents

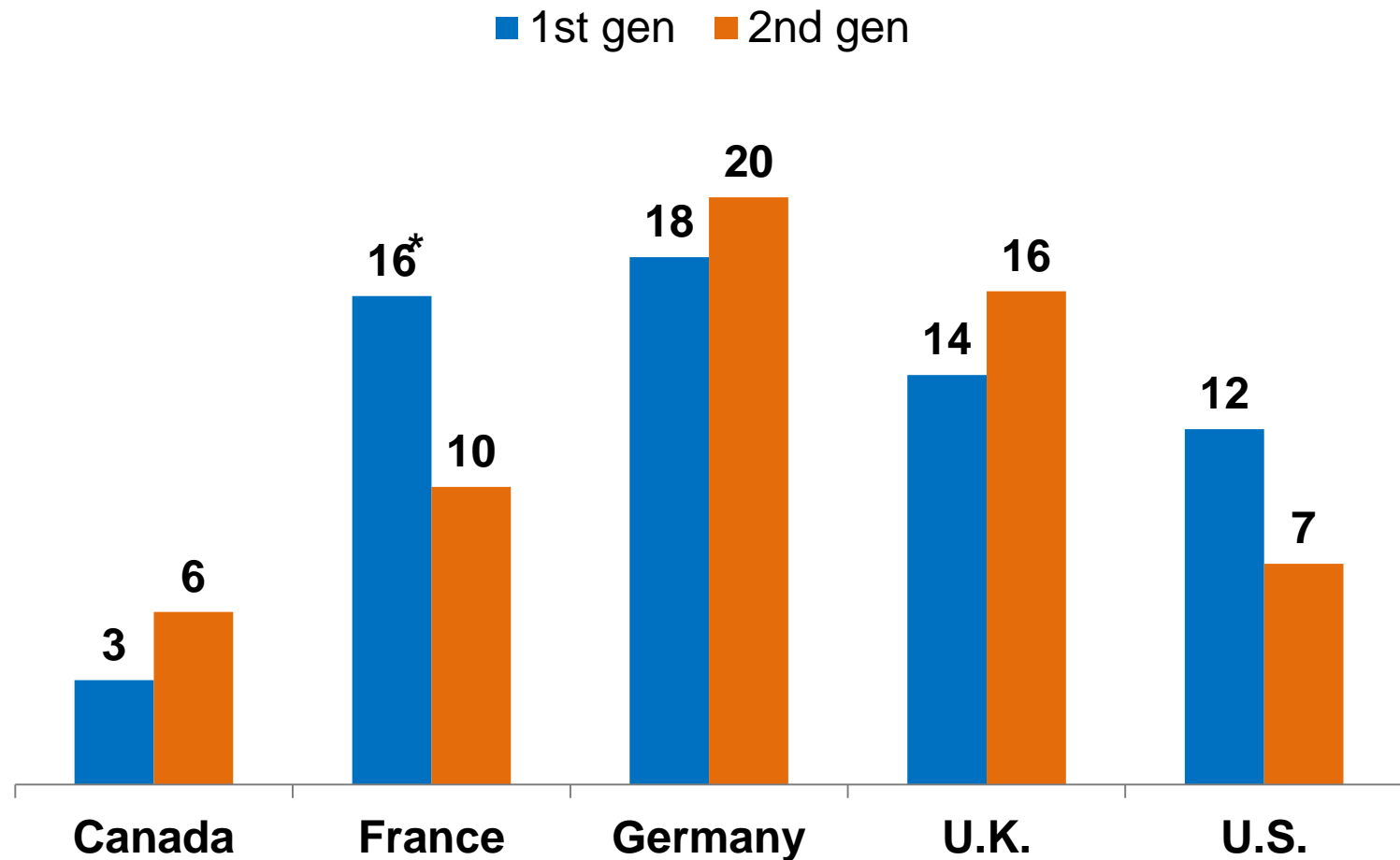


Most 2nd Generation Adults Speak PIAAC Test Language at Home



Percent of all young adults who do not speak PIAAC test language at home

Decline in Early School Leaving among 2nd Generation (16-24) in France and U.S.



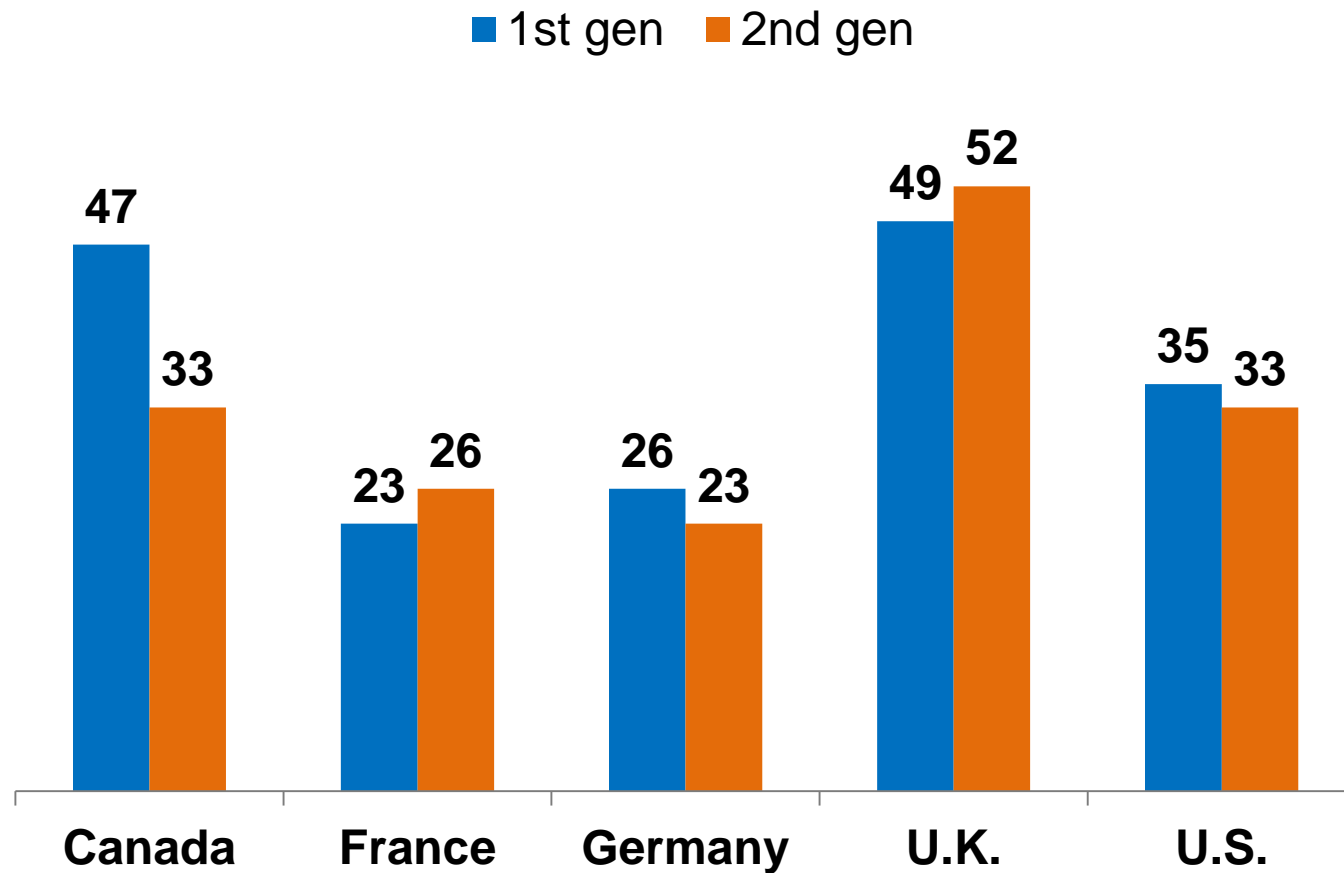
Percent of youth aged 16-24 who were not in education and had no high school diploma/equivalent

Note: *Does not meet the sample size criteria.

Source: MPI analysis of 2012 PIAAC data.

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1st and 2nd Generation (25-34) Have Similar Levels of College Education



Percent of young adults (25-34) with tertiary (BA or more) education

Source: MPI analysis of 2012 PIAAC data.

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Research Questions

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3. 2nd vs. 3rd generations: Catching up?



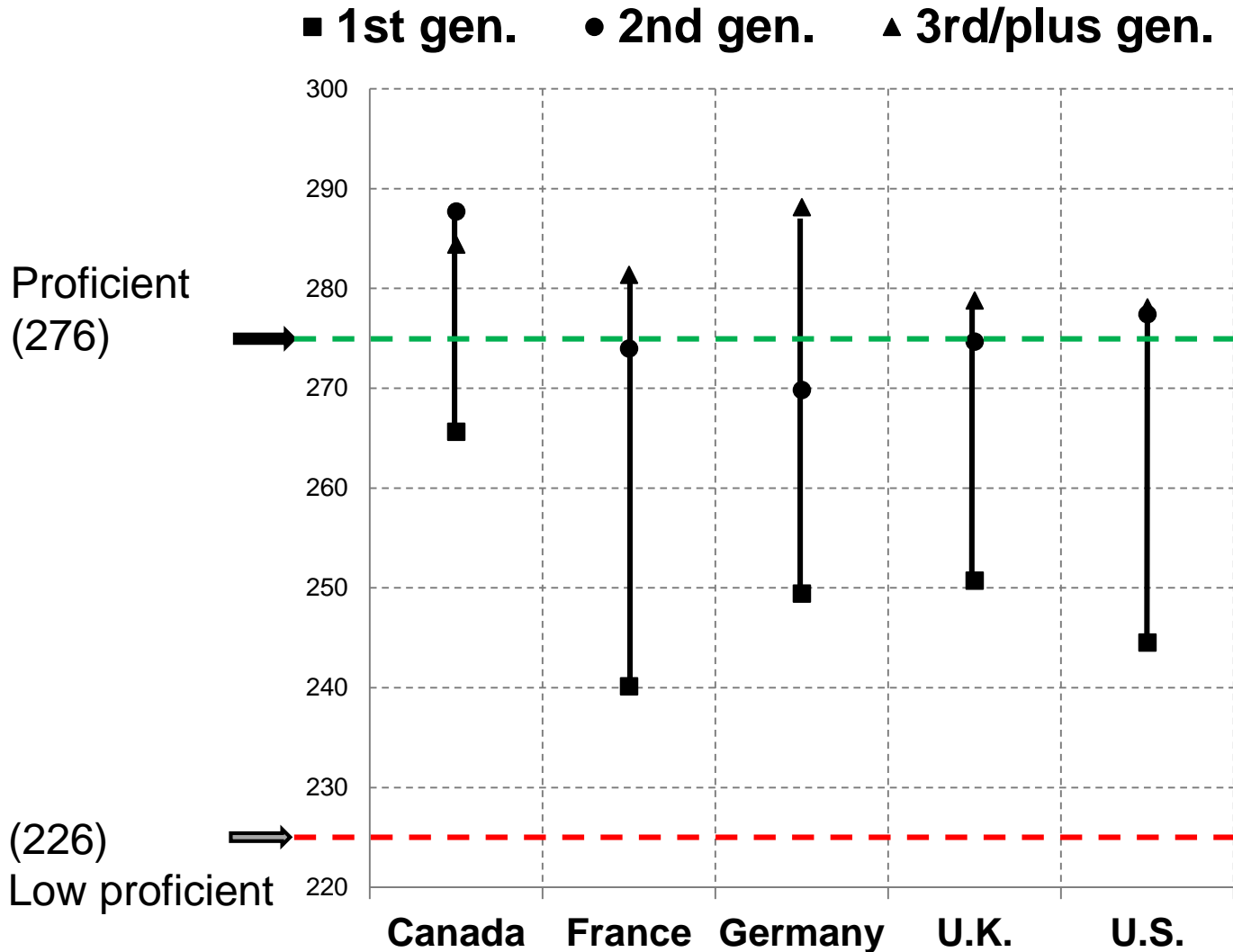
Definitions: PIAAC Proficiency

Low proficiency

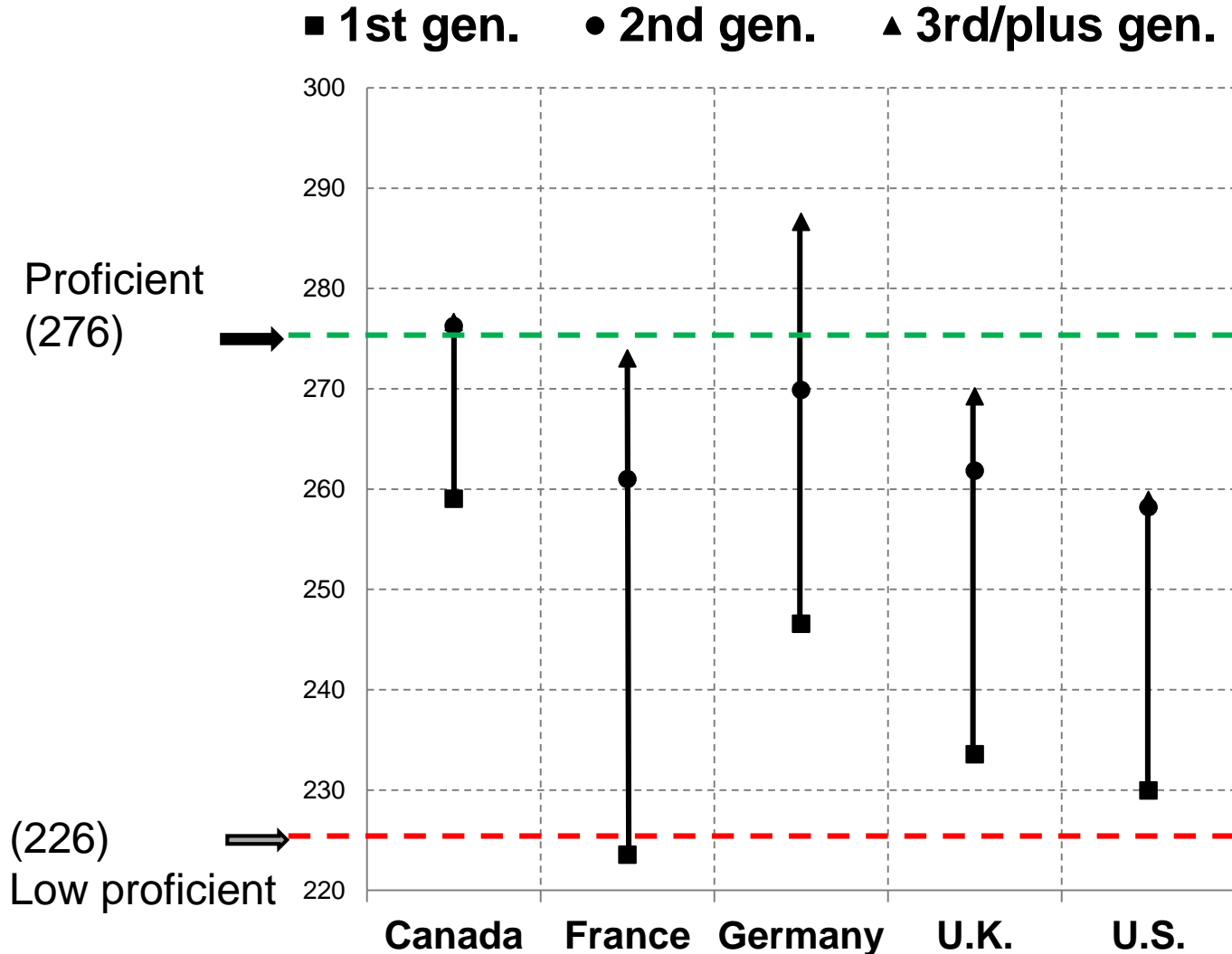
- *Literacy*: Basic vocabulary knowledge; work with simple, short texts
- *Numeracy*: Able to count and do basic arithmetic

Proficient: Identify, interpret, and evaluate one or more pieces of information and make a decision about whether that information is relevant

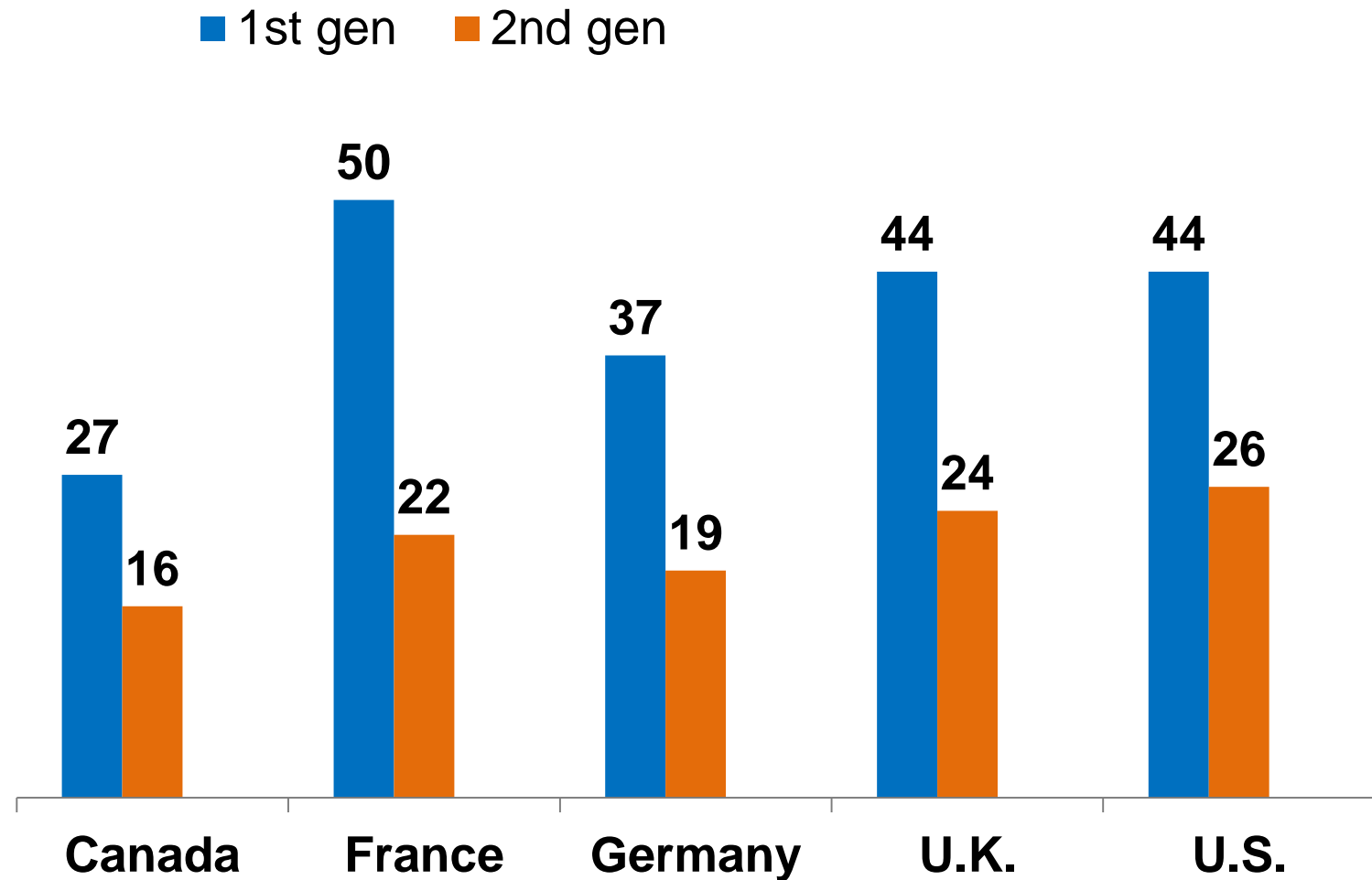
Average Literacy Scores by Generation and Country



Average Numeracy Scores by Generation and Country

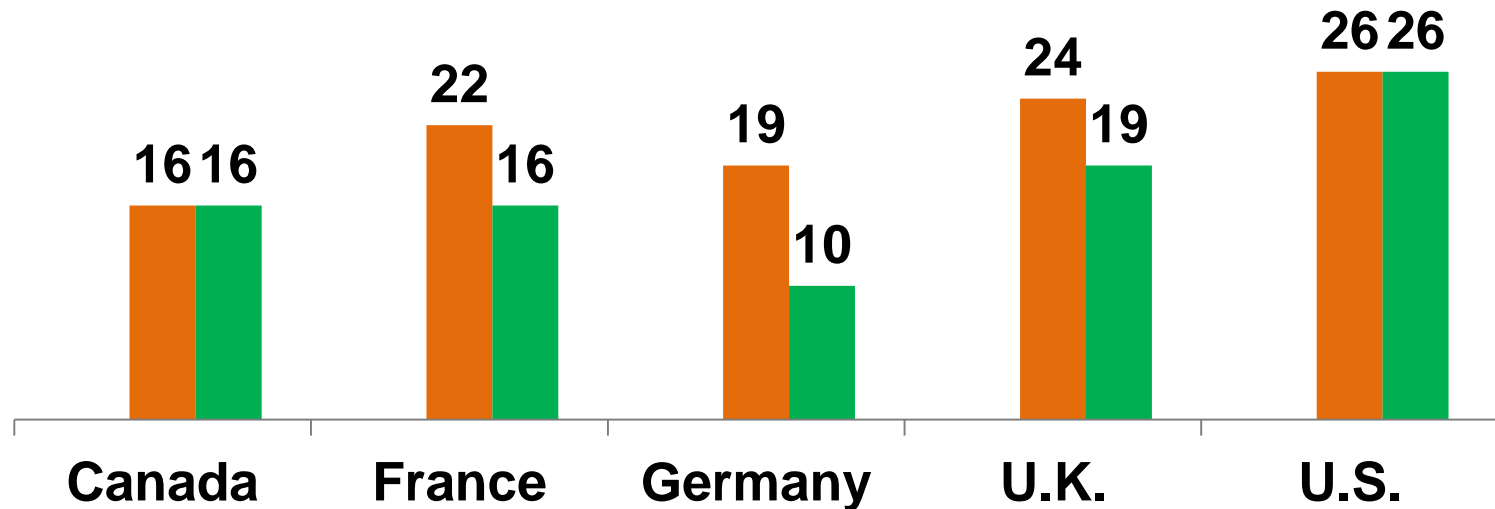


Percent Lacking Basic Numeracy: 1st vs. 2nd Generation



Percent Lacking Basic Numeracy: 2nd vs. 3rd Generation

■ 2nd gen ■ 3rd/plus gen



1st Generation by Literacy Proficiency Levels

Shares	Germany	U.K	U.S.
Of all 16-34 adults	14%	17%	13%
Of low-proficient adults (literacy)	36%	34%	30%
Of proficient adults (literacy)	7%	12%	8%

2nd Generation by Literacy Proficiency Levels

Shares	Germany	U.K	U.S.
Of all 16-34 adults	13%	12%	15%
Of low-proficient adults (literacy)	16%	10%	12%
Of proficient adults (literacy)	10%	13%	15%



Key Takeaways (I)

- 1st and 2nd generation: **important, growing shares** of young adults in five countries
- 2nd and 3rd generations are **young (16-24); less likely to be parents** than the 1st



Key Takeaways (II)

- Educational attainment of the 1st generation (25-34) lags in all countries but Canada and the U.K.
- 1st generation lags the literacy and numeracy skills of the 2nd and 3rd generations
 - **Canada:** highest literacy and numeracy scores
 - **France and the U.S.:** lowest



Key Takeaways (III)

- Literacy and numeracy are much higher among the 2nd generation in all study countries and are similar to those of the 3rd in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.
- **Germany**
 - Significant progress from the 1st to the 2nd; both lag the 3rd generation
 - 3rd generation outperformed those in the other study countries
 - Average numeracy scores are similar to literacy



Hypotheses: Three Policy Dimensions

Integration

Works well in Canada, the U.S., and France, but less so in Germany

Skills development

Works well in Canada and Germany, but lags in the U.S. and France

Admission policy

Works well in Canada, less so in the U.K.



Implications

- How do results change when we control for young adults' age, own and parental education, home language spoken, and gender?
- Need to compare policies across countries to better understand skills development of young adults from immigrant families.



For More Information

Report on literacy and numeracy of all immigrant and U.S.-born adults:
www.migrationpolicy.org/research/through-immigrant-lens-piaac-assessment-competencies-adults-united-states

Find other reports and data
by state and for the U.S. at:
www.migrationpolicy.org

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