

Women equal to men in math ability

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VILLANOVA, Pa., Jan. 8 (UPI) -- Women have comparable ability to men in math but men are more confident about their math ability, U.S. researchers found.

Lead author Nicole Else-Quest, a psychology professor at Villanova University, said girls around the world are not worse at math than boys, but girls from countries where gender equity is more prevalent are more likely to perform better on mathematics assessment tests.

"Stereotypes about female inferiority in mathematics are a distinct contrast to the actual scientific data," Else-Quest said in a statement. "These results show that girls will perform at the same level as the boys when they are given the right educational tools and have visible female role models excelling in mathematics."

Else-Quest and colleagues examined data from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study and the Programme for International Student Assessment, representing 493,495 students ages 14-16 from 69 countries. Both studies' results were released in 2003.

The TIMSS focuses on basic math knowledge, while the PISA test assesses students' ability to use their math skills in the real world. The testing measured different math abilities but there were only small gender differences for each, on average. However, from nation to nation, the size of the gender differences varied a great deal.

The findings are published in Psychological Bulletin.