

Bravado puts boys in maths fast lane

BOYS have an overinflated sense of their maths ability compared with girls and their overconfidence translates to greater success in the workplace.

A study of 1323 boys and girls at three co-educational high schools in Sydney has found boys and girls are equally competent in maths.

Girls were found to be less interested and less confident, but more realistic about their abilities than boys, who overrated their competence. That overconfidence led to more boys choosing more difficult maths subjects for the HSC and aiming towards high-status maths- and science-related careers.

Dr Helen Watt, of Monash University, said her three-year study of Sydney students in years 7 to 11 suggested girls needed to be told they were just as capable as boys. Strategies to increase girls' participation could include linking maths to social uses, such as medicine, she said.
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