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## Girl Power

Researchers at the University of Missouri, US and the University of Glasgow, Scotland, have found out that girls outperform boys in educational achievement in 70 percent of the countries they studied—regardless of the level of gender, political, economic or social equality.

According to the data, boys fall behind girls in

overall achievement across reading, mathematics, and science in 70 percent of the countries studied. Boys outperform girls in only three countries or regions: Colombia, Costa Rica and the Indian state, Himachal Pradesh. Boys and girls had similar educational achievements in the United States and United Kingdom, Science Daily reports.

## Oil is often the reason for interfering in another country's war

Researchers from the Universities of Portsmouth, Warwick and Essex have for the first time provided strong evidence for what conspiracy theorists have long thought—oil is often the reason for interfering in another country's war.

They found that the decision to interfere was dominated by the interveners' need for oil over and above historical, geographical or ethnic ties.

Dr Petros Sekeris, from the University of Portsmouth writes, "We wanted to go beyond conspiracy theories and conduct a careful, nuanced analysis to see whether oil acts as an economic incentive in the decision on whether to intervene in

an internal war in another country. The results show that outsiders are much more motivated to join a fight if they have a vested financial interest."

This could help explain the US interest in ISIS in northern Iraq, the researchers argue.

Dr Vincenzo Bove, from the University of Warwick writes, "Before the ISIS forces approached the oil-rich Kurdish north of Iraq, ISIS was barely mentioned in the news. But once ISIS got near oil fields, the siege of Kobani in Syria became a headline and the US sent drones to strike ISIS targets."

The study was published in the Journal of Conflict Resolution.



## Friends know how long you will live

New research from Washington University in St Louis suggests that your friends are better than you at guessing how long you will live.

"You expect your friends to be inclined to see you in a positive manner, but they also are keen observers of the personality traits that could send you to an early grave," writes Joshua Jackson, assistant professor of psychology in Arts & Sciences.

The study demonstrates that your personality at

an early age (20s) can predict how long you will live across 75 years and that close friends are usually better than you at recognizing these traits.

Personality traits such as depression and anger have been linked to an increased risk of various diseases and health concerns, including an early death.

The study was published Jan 12 in an advance online issue of the journal *Psychological Science*.

## Feeling depressed? Burn Incense

An entirely new class of depression and anxiety drugs might be right under our noses. An international team of scientists, including researchers from Johns Hopkins University and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, suggest burning frankincense (resin from the *Boswellia* plant) activates poorly understood ion channels in the brain to alleviate anxiety or depression.

To determine incense's psychoactive effects, Science daily reports, the researchers administered incense acetate to mice. They found that the compound significantly affected areas in brain areas known to be involved in emotions as well as in nerve circuits that are affected by current anxiety and depression drugs.



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Incense at a temple in Beijing, China.

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