

Workshop

Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Studies in Immigrant Naturalisation

14 October 2021

Sala Europa - Villa Schifanoia, Via Boccaccio 121 - Florence

[Maarten Vink](#) | European University Institute

Introduction

Migrant integration is at the top of the political agenda in many European countries. The acquisition of citizenship through naturalisation is often regarded, in political discourse, as a reward for a successfully completed integration, or as an incentive to reach this goal. Yet not all migrants have the same opportunities or face the same obstacles when it comes to building up a life in a new country. As result, not everyone has an equal interest to naturalise, which also affects the relation between citizenship and integration. Moreover, the requirements for citizenship vary between countries, as well as within countries over time, and these also affect migrants differently. Researching why, how, and for whom citizenship status transition matters, and how varying policies impact on this relation, comes with specific methodological challenges about causal relations and possible confounding factors. To address these challenges, researchers often make use of experimental or quasi-experimental designs, which enjoy increasing popularity in the social sciences. In this workshop we discuss a selection of state-of-the-art papers focused on identifying cause-and-effect relations on immigrant naturalisation and associated outcomes. The one-day workshop is purposely kept small-scale and informal to guarantee sufficient time for in-depth discussion of the various papers.

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Programme

Understanding immigrant naturalization

09.15 - 09.30 Welcome

[Maarten Vink](#) | European University Institute

09.30 - 10.30 Chair: [Maarten Vink](#) | European University Institute

[British Nationals' Preferences Over Who Gets to Be a Citizen According to a Choice-Based Conjoint Experiment](#)

[Victoria Donnalaja](#) | European University Institute

This article contributes new evidence about the types of immigrants that British nationals would accept as fellow citizens. I analyse the preferences of a large, nationally representative UK sample employing a choice-based conjoint-analysis experiment. Respondents were presented with paired vignettes of applicant types characterized by a combination of attributes chosen randomly. The attributes of immigrants with the largest impact on the probability of granting citizenship were occupation and religion: respondents especially penalized applicants who were Muslim or with no occupation. Respondents granted citizenship at different rates on average (from 64 per cent to 80 per cent): rates were lower among respondents who had voted to leave the EU, were older, less educated, and earned less. The types of immigrant who were most likely to be granted citizenship did not, however, vary by respondents' income, education, or age, and varied little between Brexit Leave and Remain voters. My findings about nationals' citizen preferences reflect the inclusive-exclusive nature of British citizenship and national identity, whereby inclusion is conditional on productivity and on the endorsement of liberal values.

10.30 - 11.00 Coffee Break

11.00 - 12.00 Chair: [Jelena Dzankic](#) | European University Institute

[Do Lower Benefits Incentivize Refugee Naturalization? Evidence from a Natural Experiment](#)

[Frederik Jørgensen](#) | Aarhus University

Does lower benefits provide an incentive for refugees to naturalize? I identify the effect of lowering refugees' benefits on their propensity to naturalize by leveraging quasi-random variation in refugees' benefit levels induced by a major reform of the Danish social assistance system. The reform sharply reduced social assistance benefits by up to 50 percent for new refugees. I estimate the effect of this decrease in a regression discontinuity design and show that refugees' propensity to naturalize jumps by about 13½ percentage points at the benefit cutoff. I demonstrate that this marked increase is most likely driven by increased incentives that drive refugees off welfare and into the labor market in the short-term. Moreover, I show that the positive effects on naturalization are concentrated among the most capable refugees who do not face the resource constraints that follow from low education.

12.00 - 13.00 [Heterogeneous Effects of Dual Citizenship Acceptance on Immigrant Naturalisation: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Two European Policy Reforms](#)

[Maarten Vink](#) | European University Institute

Being able to hold dual citizenship is often posited as a key predictor of the propensity to naturalise among immigrants. Yet existing research on the causal and heterogenous effects of

destination country policy reform is limited. In this paper we analyse the effect of contrasting policy reforms in two West European migration destinations: a restrictive change in the renunciation requirement in the Netherlands (1997) and a liberalising change in Sweden (2001). We exploit exogenous variation in origin country citizenship legislation to identify the treatment effect of destination country policy reform. Our difference-in-differences analyses employ microlevel administrative register data on complete migrant populations in the years around these reforms. We find that the effect of dual citizenship reform is concentrated among immigrants from EU and highly developed countries and those who have arrived recently. Our findings add quasi-experimental evidence to studies on the relevance of dual citizenship acceptance for immigrant naturalisation.

13.00 - 14.00 Lunch

Understanding the economic relevance of immigrant naturalization

14.00 - 15.00 Chair: [Victoria Finn](#) | European University Institute

[Is naturalization a Passport for Better Labor Market integration? Evidence from a Quasi-Experimental Setting](#)

[Yajna Govind](#) | Copenhagen Business School

Better integration is beneficial for both migrants and the host country. In this respect, granting citizenship could be an important policy to boost migrants' integration. In this paper, I estimate the causal impact of obtaining citizenship on migrants' labor market integration. I exploit a change in the law of naturalization through marriage in France in 2006. This reform amended the eligibility criteria for applicants by increasing the required number of years of marital life from 2 to 4, generating an exogenous shock and thus a quasi-experimental setting. Using administrative panel data, I first show evidence of the impact of the reform on naturalization rates. I then use a difference-in-differences model to estimate the labor market returns to naturalization. I find that, among those working, citizenship leads to an increase in annual earnings. This effect is driven by a significant increase in the number of hours worked, as well as a positive effect on hourly wages. While the gain in earnings is similar for both men and women, the effect for men is mostly driven by an increase in hours worked compared to an increase in hourly wages for women. I provide suggestive evidence that naturalization helps reduce informality and discrimination. This paper thus provides strong evidence that naturalization acts as a catalyst for labor market integration.

15.00 - 16.00 The Economic Effects of Mandatory Civic Integration for Citizenship

[Floris Peters](#) | Maastricht University

Language and civic knowledge requirements for citizenship have proliferated across Europe, often ostensibly introduced to improve immigrants' socio-economic self-sufficiency. Yet limited empirical evidence is available of the economic efficacy of these so-called civic integration requirements for naturalisation. While additional requirements nudge migrants to invest in human capital development and may boost economic outcomes, they also delay or even block access to citizenship and risk leading to societal and economic exclusion. Our analysis draws on administrative data from the Netherlands, where civic integration requirements for citizenship were introduced by 1 April 2003 for all migrants who had not yet submitted their application by that date. We use a difference-in-differences design to exploit variation in the days of eligibility for naturalisation surrounding the policy change. We find that mandatory naturalisation tests lead to substantial delays in naturalisation and investigate how this affects employment rates and short to medium-term immigrant earnings. We explore effect heterogeneity with a focus on marginalised groups.

16.00 - 16.30 Tea break

16.30 - 17.30 Chair: [Martin Ruhs](#) | European University Institute

Citizenship and the Social Integration of Immigrants

[Christina Gathmann](#) | Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research

We investigate whether a liberal citizenship policy improves the social integration of immigrants in the destination country. The empirical analysis relies on two immigration reforms, which made some arrival and birth cohorts eligible for citizenship earlier than others. We find that the option to naturalize faster has significant effects on fertility, family formation and partner choice. Specifically, faster eligibility delays marriage but has no effect on divorce or cohabitation rates. Female immigrants have lower fertility and postpone their first birth to later ages. The average effects mask substantial heterogeneity across immigrant groups. Immigrants from more traditional cultures have not only higher fertility and marriage rates, but also adapt more slowly to a liberal citizenship policy than the average immigrant.