

Webinar

Citizenship for the children of immigrants: how does it matter and to whom?

26 October 2021

Online - Zoom

Scientific organiser: [Maarten Vink](#) | Chair in Citizenship Studies, European University Institute

Introduction

This webinar focuses on the role of citizenship in the lives of children of immigrants. Acquiring citizenship at birth is likely to exert an effect on children's human capital through a more secure future in the country of birth and their parents' expectations on the returns to host country specific human capital investments. Vice versa, growing up in a country without being formally recognized as a full member of society can adversely affect assimilation processes, in a context where socioeconomic background and racial discrimination already challenge modes of incorporation. While recent studies have identified the relevance of citizenship for immigrants' children on, especially, educational outcomes (see e.g. [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), the effect of the *timing* of the citizenship acquisition remains understudied. This element is crucial because in Europe territorial birthright citizenship remains the exception and, as a result, children are largely dependent on the timing of their parents' naturalisation. How this affects educational outcomes has remained largely understudied. Based on two recent papers, on the cases of Germany and the Netherlands, we discuss a) empirical strategies to identify causal effects; b) the relevance of the timing of citizenship acquisition on education outcomes of immigrants' children; and c) heterogenous effects within the study population.

This webinar will have two 15 minute presentations, followed by comments from three commentators and then plenary discussion where the audience can submit questions to the speakers.

The webinar is organised by the [Global Citizenship Observatory](#)



Programme

26 October

18.00 - 19.30 Chair: [Maarten Vink](#) | Chair in Citizenship Studies, European University Institute

Speakers:

The effects of birthright citizenship versus naturalization on children's school performance

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

Citizenship is the most important right a host country can bestow on its immigrant population. Yet, little is known which citizenship policies work and who actually benefits from them. To answer these questions, we estimate the marginal returns to citizenship on children's school performance and skill development. For identification, we use two national reforms in Germany, which facilitated naturalization for first-generation immigrants and introduced birthright citizenship. We find substantial unobserved heterogeneity in returns with reverse selection on gains, i.e., the returns are highest for those with the lowest propensity of take-up. Citizenship significantly improves the school performance of immigrant children but has only modest effects on test scores. Policy simulations indicate that raising citizenship take-up would generate sizable benefits overall. Based on marginal treatment response functions, we also show that expanding birthright citizenship carries higher returns than facilitating naturalization.

Timing of citizenship acquisition and immigrants' children educational performance: towards causal inference

[Marie Labussière](#) | University of Amsterdam

Various studies suggest a positive effect of host country citizenship on the educational outcomes of immigrants' children. However, little is known about when and for whom citizenship matters and how much this is affected by potential endogeneity in the relation between parental citizenship acquisition and their children's educational outcomes. Focusing on the Netherlands, this paper exploits siblings' variation in their exposure to naturalisation in order to net out the effect of time-constant parental characteristics. Results from a linear mixed model show that children who acquire Dutch citizenship have a substantial advantage in terms of academic performance over those who are still foreign citizens, especially if they naturalised in early childhood. A novel bounding estimator that gauges the sensitivity of the estimates to omitted variable bias confirms the robustness of these results. Moreover, the effects of citizenship are concentrated among students whose parents are at a disadvantage in the labour market and housing market, shedding light on hitherto under-explored effect heterogeneity. These findings not only show an independent effect of host country citizenship: they also provide new analytical insights into the factors that condition the relevance of citizenship for second generation children.

Commentators

[Elina Kilpi-Jakonen](#) | University of Turku

[Thomas Soehl](#) | McGill University