

More opportunities, better integration?  
Citizenship rights at birth and educational  
outcomes of young migrants

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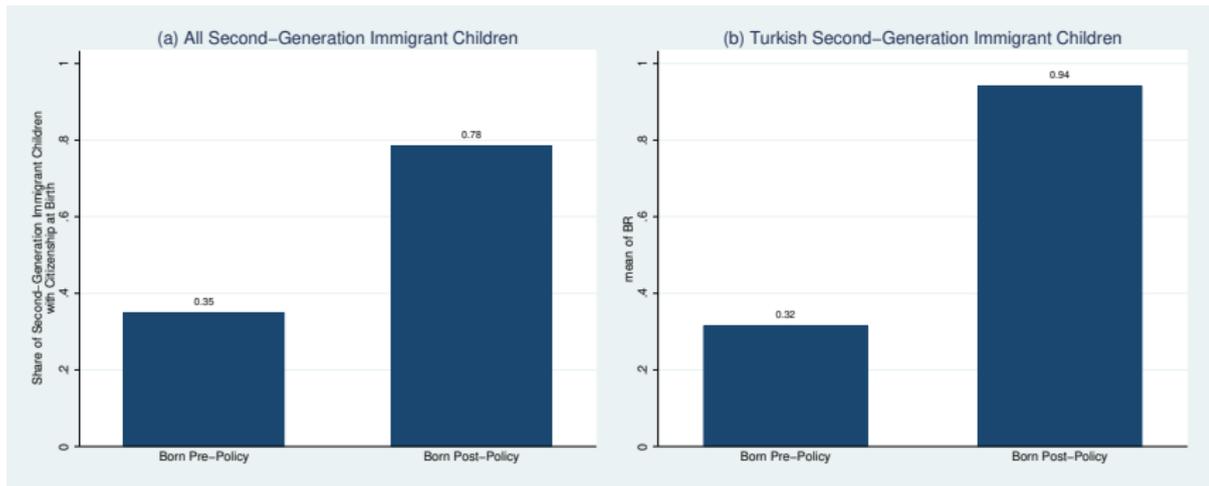
October 28, 2019

# Reform of German Citizenship and Nationality Law

## *Access to Citizenship for Immigrant Children Born in Germany*

	Born $\leq$ 1999: Ius Sanguinis	Born $\geq$ 2000: Ius Soli
Principle	Citizenship inherited through parents	Citizenship automatically acquired by birth on German soil
Condition	Previous naturalization of at least one parent	8-year residency in Germany of at least one parent
Exception	Transition rule from 01/01 - 31/12/2000	

# Implications of the Reform



*Share of Second-Generation Immigrants with German Citizenship since Birth: A Comparison of Children Born Pre- and Post-Policy.*

# Why Should Birthright Citizenship Matter?

Citizenship rights improve immigrants' long-term perspectives in the host country

- Can act as a catalyst for integration efforts in immigrant families
- Can create incentives for immigrant parents to invest in the human capital of their children

This should ultimately foster immigrant children's educational integration

How did the introduction of birthright citizenship affect immigrant children's educational outcomes over their early life-cycle?

- At the preschool level:
  - participation in preschool
  - developmental outcomes (e.g., German language proficiency)
- At the primary school level:
  - school starting age
  - grade retention
- At the secondary school level:
  - tracking into secondary schools
  - educational achievements at age 15/16

Introduction of birthright citizenship led to:

- 1 An increase in the preschool enrolment rate of immigrant children
- 2 An improvement in immigrant children's German language skills
- 3 An improvement in immigrant children's socio-emotional development

Introduction of birthright citizenship caused:

- 1 Immigrant children to enter primary school earlier (i.e., school starting age decreased)
- 2 A sizeable reduction in the probability that immigrant children had to repeat a grade in primary school (by 25 percent)

## Results at the Secondary School Level

After primary school, German children are referred to different secondary school tracks: low, intermediate, academic

The introduction of birthright citizenship led to:

- 1 A significant increase in immigrant children's likelihood of attending the academic track of secondary school (by 40 percent)
  - Closes the academic track enrollment gap between immigrant and native German children by more than half
- 2 Large positive effects on immigrant children's grades (German, Mathematics) measured at age 15/16
  - Reduces the academic achievement gap between immigrant and native German children by almost 90 percent

## Putting the Results into Perspective

The educational effects of birthright citizenship are comparable to those of alternative early-life interventions such as:

- Provision of universal preschool (Germany)
- Head Start (US)
- Targeted tutoring (Italy)

However, birthright citizenship is arguably associated with much lower costs than these alternative interventions:

- Main direct costs of birthright citizenship
  - administrative costs
- Direct costs of alternative interventions
  - hiring of new personnel
  - construction/expansion of childcare facilities
  - training of tutors

Our results suggest birthright citizenship to be a policy with substantial benefits:

- increases immigrant children's participation in non-compulsory preschool education
- has positive effects on important developmental outcomes at the end of pre-school period
- caused immigrant children to progress faster through primary school
- enabled them better access to the academic track of secondary school
- improved their academic achievement at the secondary school level

⇒ Granting citizenship rights to immigrant children in places where they are poorly integrated into the education system can be an effective policy to reduce educational disparities