

Timing of citizenship acquisition and immigrants' children educational outcomes: a family fixed-effects approach

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The potential impact of legal status on the educational outcomes of the children of immigrants has received growing attention in the literature. However, while existing studies suggest a positive effect of host country citizenship on educational outcomes, previous work rarely emphasises challenges related to causal identification, despite strong potential for endogeneity in the relation between parental citizenship acquisition and their children's education achievements. Focusing on the Netherlands, this paper takes a causality-oriented approach to analyse the potential effect of parents' naturalisation on their children's scores at a high-stake standardised test at the end of primary school. We use data from central population registers to identify full cohorts of second-generation siblings and we exploit variation in their exposure to naturalisation to net out the effect of time-constant parental characteristics. We find that children who naturalised before taking the test have scores about 0.1 standard deviation higher than those who were still foreign citizens at that date. These results are robust to use of a novel bounding estimator that gauges the sensitivity of the estimates to omitted variable bias. Overall, our findings provide new evidence that the relationship between citizenship and education is not (only) driven by selection.