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Webinar: The Economics of Migration

Marginal Returns to Citizenship and Children's School

Performance: Who benefits and what works?

ABSTRACT

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 school performance for immigrant children. For identification, we use two national reforms, which introduced birthright citizenship and defined pathways to naturalization for first-generation immigrants. We find relevant heterogeneity in the returns to citizenship with reverse selection on gains, i.e., the returns are highest for those with the highest resistance to take-up. There is also

perverse selection on gains for observable characteristics, especially whether the child is born in Germany. On average, the provision of citizenship significantly improves immigrant children's school outcomes in terms of a reduced probability of retention and better school grades. Policy simulations suggest that increasing citizenship take-up, e.g. by adopting U.S.-style birthright citizenship, would have positive effects for schooling outcomes.

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