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Migration policy backlash, identity and integration of second-generation migrants in France

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Migration policy backlash, identity and integration of second-generation migrants in France[*]

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Abstract

Do symbolic aspects of integration policies affect migrants' integration into the host society? In this paper, we study the effects of a symbolic change in birthright citizenship rules in France that requires second-generation immigrants to state their allegiance on their integration. Adopting a Difference-in-Differences approach, we show that, contrary to its stated aim of fostering a greater sense of belonging, this policy led to a loss of national identity and an increase in perceptions of discrimination among the target group. We document that these effects are not driven by changes in naturalization rates or an increased general hostility. We also show that while the reform did not affect their economic or political integration, it did reduce their cultural integration, as measured by religiosity and naming patterns. Overall, rather than promoting integration, such migration policies can lead to a backlash.

1   Introduction

With an increasing need to integrate migrants and their children, host countries face the challenge of designing the most effective migration integration policies. Many countries have introduced measures requiring migrants to demonstrate their adherence to the host society's values– for example, making naturalization contingent on symbolic gestures such as shaking hands with officials in several countries or the implementation of policies such as the veil ban in France. Nation-building theories argue that policies that somehow force immigrants to assimilate into the host society (e.g., mandatory integration requirements, or stricter assimilation policies) effectively increase cultural homogeneity (Alesina et al., 2021). However, recent evidence indicates that although these policies may positively impact immigrants' short-term economic integration, they can also hinder their social and cultural integration, undermining the broader goals of nation-building (Fouka, 2024).

Forceful integration policies often contain both tangible and symbolic elements, which can impact integration in divergent ways (Fouka, 2024). While the practical aspects may incentivize greater integration, the symbolic elements may convey exclusionary signals, potentially triggering backlash and resistance from migrants. Isolating symbolic effects is crucial for understanding how even unenforced policies or rhetoric can influence feelings of exclusion and social acceptance. A case in point is Trump's current threat to end birthright citizenship for certain migrant groups, which, even if not applied, may send powerful symbolic messages of exclusion. Although some studies have examined the combined symbolic and material effect, there remains limited evidence of their purely symbolic impact, as it is hard to isolate from the material effects.

In this paper, we investigate the symbolic effect of a change in France's birthright citizenship rules on the identity formation and integration of second-generation immigrants. We do so by exploiting the 1993 Méhaignerie-Pasqua law in France (commonly referred to as the Pasqua Law), which introduced a symbolic change to naturalization procedures. In France, individuals born in the country to two foreign parents could quasi-automatically acquire French nationality at 18, provided they had resided for at least five years in France since the age of 11. The 1993 reform required second-generation immigrants to sign a simple document explicitly expressing their desire to become French (known as the *manifestation de volonté*) between the ages of 16 and 21 to obtain French nationality. It was implemented with the stated goal of fostering a sense of belonging by making the process of acquiring citizenship more deliberate and prominent, rather than a passive decision.

This law constituted a clear disruption from the French *Ius Soli* traditions, which granted French citizenship to second-generation migrants upon fulfilling a minimal set of requirements, by imposing a forceful affirmation act. Although this additional requirement did not actually change access to citizenship, it conveyed a strong sense of exclusion

towards migrants.[1] Specifically, it undermined the firmly established social contract that had previously recognized second-generation immigrants as French, conditional on residing in the country. It called into question their sense of "Frenchness" and the legitimacy of their claim to French nationality.

To analyze the effects of the Pasqua Law, we rely on the rich and unique survey data *Trajectory and Origins* (TeO) 2008, which oversamples individuals of foreign origins and contains detailed information on their socio-economic situations as well as their identity and feeling of discrimination. We adopt a Difference-in-Differences approach that compares the affected cohorts of second-generation migrants (i.e., individuals born in France of non-French parents) born up to 7 years before (pre) and after (post) 1974 to French-born individuals (i.e., individuals born in France of at least one French parent) in the same cohorts. The French-born individuals are not concerned by the Pasqua law as they obtain French nationality at birth. We tackle potential cohort compositional changes by using Mahalanobis matching techniques. Since there is no full compliance in our setting, the results are to be interpreted as Intention-to-Treat (ITT) effects.

Our main outcomes of interest are the sense of belonging to the French society and the perceived alienation or discrimination. We measure these by the extent of agreement of the respondent to the statement "I feel French" which describes their sense of attachment to the French nation, and "I am seen as French", which captures the perception of one's own position as a member of the in-group or the out-group of the French society. We are also interested in individuals' perception of being discriminated against based on their skin color, origins, or nationality. In addition to identity and perceived discrimination, we also examine the impact of the reform with a reduced-form approach on the cultural, social, economic, and political integration of individuals, as proxied by their intensity of religiosity, family formation decisions, labor market outcomes, and political participation.

We find that the Pasqua law had a significantly negative effect on both dimensions of national identity and increased the self-perceived discrimination among second-generation immigrants. More precisely, it led to a 8.7 p.p and 9.4 p.p decline in the probability of reporting "feeling French" and of "being seen as French" respectively. These magnitudes are sizeable and account for one- to two-third of the second-generation migrant-to-native gap in the respective dependent variables. It also increased their perception of being discriminated against based on nationality or origin by 10.4 p.p. We rule out that this is driven by a generalized backlash against migrants. In fact, the effects disappear in a battery of placebo estimates where we use as alternative treated groups segments of the population that share same origins, or ethnic traits as second generation migrants, without being subject to the Pasqua Law, either because citizens already (e.g. because

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[1]The reform also introduced a deadline at age 21 to complete the procedure. We show that this age limit was largely non-binding, as most individuals would have naturalized between the ages of 16 and 18 regardless.

they have one French-national parent, or have Algerian nationality), or because they are not eligible to *Ius Soli* naturalization (i.e., not born in France).

We also show that there are some relevant dimensions of heterogeneity by migrants' gender, socio-economic status (SES), and origins. Finally, our results suggest that the Pasqua law also had consequences for the pattern of social integration of second-generation migrants in France. Exposure to the Pasqua legislation increases the attachment of migrants to their religion of origin, and reduces the probability of marriage (and in particular of intercultural marriage), while we do not find compelling evidence of labor market or political participation effects. We also argue that the Pasqua Law had an overwhelming symbolic value, as we document that it had almost no real effects on actual naturalization rates.

Our work primarily contributes to the vast literature that analyzes the determinants of migrants' integration in destination countries.

A first strand of the literature discusses the effect of naturalization policies and concession of birthright policies on the integration of immigrants (Govind, 2021; Govind and Sirugue, 2023; Gathmann and Garbers, 2023; Gathmann and Keller, 2018; Felfe et al., 2020, 2021; Dahl et al., 2022). This literature shows that naturalization policies that facilitate access to citizenship rights of first and second-generation immigrants (e.g., through birthrights) provide successful tools to obtain long-term integration These studies analyze the reduced form effect of changes in legislation that concede citizenship rights to first and second-generation immigrants. As such, they are not able to distinguish the practical consequences of naturalization (e.g., due to the improved access to the labor market), from the individual incentive coming from the 'national identity effect'. In this paper, we isolate an effect on national identity by looking at a reform of birthright citizenship with a highly symbolic value, but extremely limited practical consequences for the treated cohorts. We present evidence that the Pasqua reform had only a symbolic value, without any major consequences in terms of naturalization rates.
In the analysis, we show in fact no correlation or differential trends in naturalization between the Pasqua and non-Pasqua cohorts. Moreover, in 1998, the abrogation of the Pasqua Law restored the standard *Ius Soli* principle, cancelling any real effect of the Pasqua reform on, for example, citizenship rights or labor market access of second-generation migrants. This is probably the reason why, as we observe the integration outcome of the second-generation migrants in 2008 i.e. 10 years later the abrogation of the Pasqua Law, we see observe an effect of Pasqua treatment on choices of immigrants that pertain to the social, or personal dimension (e.g. religion, family formation), while we find no effect on labor market or political participation.

As an additional contribution, most existing studies analyzed policies that facilitate access to citizenship. In this paper, we study a reform that conditions access to citizenship rights on the signature of a compulsory manifestation of will. As such, our work also

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touches upon the recent literature on the effects of forced assimilation or mandatory integration policies on immigrants' outcomes (Fouka, 2020; Abdelgadir and Fouka, 2020; Corekcioglu, 2021; Ferwerda and Finseraas, 2022; Emeriau et al., 2024; Neureiter, 2018; Qian and Tabellini, 2021). Our results add to these studies by discussing the effects of a forceful act of affirmation of naturalization on the long-run integration of immigrants. In most countries, the act of affirmation of the new nationality takes place during the naturalization ceremony through a formal oath of allegiance as the last formal step to acquire citizenship. In the US, this is often cited by immigrants as a high moment in their "feeling American". We argue that the forceful act of affirmation of French nationality introduced by the Pasqua Law had an opposite symbolic value, as it underlined the immigrant's belonging to an out-group of the French society. This is in line with evidence from the literature that forced policies worsen the social and cultural integration of immigrants in the long-run. However, while most studies find some short-run evidence of positive economic returns (e.g., in terms of employment) of mandatory requirements (e.g., minimum language skills), we do not find any evidence of labor market returns from conditioning birthright citizenship rights in France.

As such, our work also contributes to the strand of the literature, both in sociology and economics, which discusses the different social and economic incentives that determine the adaptation strategy of second-generation immigrants in the destination. Some of these studies propose identity formation as an important theoretical channel for the integration of migrants (Berry, 1997; Alba and Nee, 2009; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Luthra et al., 2018; Bisin et al., 2011; Schøyen, 2017; Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Casey and Dustmann, 2010). However, to our knowledge, no compelling empirical evidence exists that investigates the effect of a national reform of birthright citizenship to connect the host nation's identity to the pattern of integration of immigrants. This gap in the literature is mostly due to the contemporaneous lack of exogenous variation coming from external reforms, and suitable data allowing for analysis of both the feeling of national identity and patterns of long-term integration. The case study analyzed in this paper is a unique opportunity to push these knowledge barriers. As discussed above, the Pasqua reform presents specific changes in birthright citizenship that had sizable symbolic consequences, but no practical implications for migrants 10 years after its abrogation (e.g., in terms of naturalization rates). Still, our results point to consequences of treatment by the Pasqua Law for choices that are related to the religious, personal, and family dimensions of the immigrant. This evidence suggests national identity may provide a mediating factor between immigration policies and the integration outcome of migrants. As mentioned above, the existence of such a mediating factor has been theorized but not supported by any empirical evidence so far.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we provide information on the institutional context and the Méhaignerie-Pasqua legislation. We present the theoretical

framework in Section 3 and the data and methodology in Section 4. In Section 5, we present the main set of results for identity, discrimination, and integration, as well as heterogeneities. In Section 6, we provide a discussion of the results. Section 7 concludes.

2 A Symbolic Policy on Naturalization: The 1993 Méhaignerie-Pasqua law

In this section, we provide a historical account of birthright citizenship (*Ius Soli*) in France, and how the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law in 1993 marked a sharp departure from that tradition. France inherited its rule of *Ius Soli* from pre-revolutionary political institutions, which granted the right to obtain French nationality to any person born in France from foreign parents (Weil, 2008). While this has marginally changed over time, the main aspects of the present-day version of the rule can be traced back to the law of 16 June 1889.

In line with most migrant-receiving countries, and unlike the U.S., France has *conditional* birthright citizenship. Article 21-7 of the Civil Code states that individuals born in France to foreign parents can automatically acquire French nationality at 18, provided they have resided for at least five years in France since the age of 11. Until 1993, eligible individuals were considered French unless they explicitly refused French nationality. They would obtain their ID card and passport upon a simple administrative procedure that the above residence conditions are met.

The introduction of the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law, promulgated on the 22nd of July, 1993, marked an end to the automatism, representing a major disruption of the French tradition of Jus Soli.[2] While it did not modify formal requirements for citizenship (e.g., in terms of years of residence, etc.), the law reversed the logic from having the choice to refuse French nationality to imposing on second-generation immigrants to explicitly express their will to become French as a condition to obtain French nationality. More specifically, persons concerned by the law had to fulfill a "manifestation of will" (*manifestation de volonté*) between the ages of 16 and 21 y.o., to acquire French nationality.[3] Thus, the reform changed citizenship access from being a passive opt-out choice to being an active opt-in decision and imposed a time window to fulfill the administrative procedure. In practice, in terms of administrative costs, individuals faced similar costs of naturalizing before and after 1993, except they had to express their willingness to become French

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[2]Before the implementation of the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law, Jus Soli has been attacked on many occasions but suspended only twice (Weil, 2003): by the Napoleonic Civil Code of 1804, which implemented Jus Sanguinis instead of Jus Soli and by the Vichy Regime, which authorized a special commission to withdraw the French nationality to the family of de-naturalized persons.

[3]After their 21st birthday, second-generation migrants who had not applied were considered foreigners. To obtain citizenship, they would then have to go through the standard naturalization procedure for first-generation migrants.

Jeunes **de 16 à 21 ans** nés en France de parents étrangers

الشباب البالغين من السن 16 إلى 21 سنة المزدادين في فرنسا من أبوين أجنبيين

Fransa'da yabancı uyruklu anababadan **doğmuş** *16-21 yaş arasindaki gençler*

Jovens de 16 a 21 anos nascidos em França de pais estrangeiros

Young people between 16 and 21 years of age born in France of foreign parents

« Je manifeste la volonté d'acquérir la nationalité française »
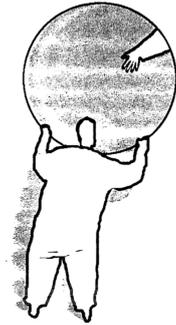
How long does it take ?
Your dossier will be handed over to the local judge within 3 days of you making your request. If your dossier is complete you will be invited to see the judge who will then give you a request certificate. He then has 6 months to officially record your request and he will then give you an official request certificate. If you are refused, you will have 6 months to appeal against the decision before a regional court.

The **official record of your request to become French** is very valuable. Look after it carefully. It is the proof that you are French. **French national identity cards** are issued by the county prefecture. To obtain one, just provide 2 photos, 2 proofs of address (rent receipt, gas or electricity bill, pay slip, social security card, etc.), a full birth certificate and the official record of your request.

Figure 1: Examples of information campaigns about Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law
Source: Observatoire Régional de l'Intégration et de la ville d'Alsace, Les Cahiers de l'Observatoire n°22

explicitly.

The Méhaignerie-Pasqua law of 1993 impacted individuals based on their age at the time the law was introduced. On the one hand, people who in 1993 already had the chance to go through the administrative procedures to obtain their French passport, faced the traditional Jus Soli regime. On the other hand, second-generation immigrants who had not gone through the standard procedure by 1993 fell under the new regime. This cohort of people (the vast majority less than 20 years old in 1993) would have to formally request to become French citizens in order to obtain the passport. This additional administrative step would not have any major consequence, provided that the citizenship request was filed in the 16 - 21 age window.

The political discussions surrounding the 1993 Méhaignerie-Pasqua law were centered on the need to instill a stronger sense of national belonging among second-generation individuals. It was instated to oppose the idea that second-generation migrants became French "unknowingly and unintentionally". The reform thus had a strong symbolic aim, at least from the perspective of the State, rather than a judicial one. It marked a clear difference between children of French-born individuals, who continued to enjoy a vested right to French citizenship, and the children of Foreign-born individuals, who were abruptly assigned to an outgroup of individuals that were required to manifest the willingness to become French citizens, as a form of discontinuity with the non-French origins of their parents (Ribert, 2006).

The Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law, while maintaining the principle that children born in France to foreign parents had a fundamental right to naturalization, was widely perceived by the public as a restrictive shift in immigration policy. The law was heavily publicized to increase awareness of the nationality application procedures (see Figure 1 below). Under this legislation, individuals seeking French nationality had to submit their request to the local tribunal d'instance. Although from the State's perspective, the recording and acceptance of these requests were purely formal, the timing and visibility of the law heightened public perceptions of its significance. The law was enacted in 1993 during a period of increasing hostility toward immigration, coinciding with Charles Pasqua's appointment as Interior Minister in the government of Édouard Balladur, following the center-right coalition's victory in the legislative elections.[4] Despite not being explicitly directed at any specific immigrant group, the law was passed in the aftermath of the third wave of migration, which included a significant proportion of Sub-Saharan and North African immigrants. Consequently, it directly affected the children of these first-generation migrants, who were increasingly subject to stigmatization in France's political discourse.[5] As a result, the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law was widely perceived as an anti-immigration measure aimed at reinforcing distinctions between "natives" and "foreigners," thereby challenging the notion of "Frenchness" for second-generation immigrants. Moreover, it created considerable confusion among second-generation individuals who were often unaware that they were not automatically granted French nationality at birth. The law was also introduced alongside two other legislative reforms that imposed stricter controls on immigration, further reinforcing the perception that it was part of a broader anti-immigration agenda.[6]

The Méhaignerie-Pasqua law would have very minor (if any) effect on actual naturalizations. While people would lose the right to fill in the request of French citizenship only after the 21st birthday, Figure B.2 hows the vast majority of naturalizations in our

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[4]Charles Pasqua became interior minister in 1993, in the government of Edouard Balladur, after the center-right coalition led by Jacques Chirac had won the legislative elections. The fact that Charles Pasqua was unfavorable to immigration as well as his political and intellectual connection with Jacques Chirac are well-established facts. Regarding the anti-immigration orientation of Charles Pasqua, Hargreaves (1995) maliciously recalls his lapsus" in an interview with *Le Monde* journal in 1993: *In June 1993, French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua announced that one of the prime objectives of the centre-right government which had just taken office was 'zero immigration' (Le Monde, 2 June 1993). Although Pasqua later qualified this statement, saying his objective was 'zero illegal immigration' (Le Monde, 8 June 1993), his remarks were deeply symbolic of the acute sensitivity attached to the field of immigration in French public life.*". Regarding the relations between Charles Pasqua and Jacques Chirac, one can refer to Collovald (2014).

[5]In June 1991 in Orléans, Jacques Chirac stigmatized migrant families from the Parisian neighborhood La Goutte d'Or," presenting these families as taking advantage of the French social security system, living in polygamy in small apartments, and having a myriad of children. The most famous and controversial part of his discourse was that if to all of this, you add the noise and the smell (*le bruit et l'odeur*), French working neighbors of these persons were legitimately outraged. The population of La Goutte d'Or" was mainly originating from former French colonies in Africa.

[6]These are the Laws on identity checks (10 August 1993) and the Law on The control of immigration and the conditions of entry, reception, and residence of foreigners in France (24 August 1993). This is why the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law will be (wrongly) commonly known as the Pasqua Law.

cohorts of interest occurred much earlier, between the age of 16y.o and 18y.o. If any, the cohort exposed to the uncertainty induced by Méhaignerie-Pasqua seems to naturalize somewhat younger than the previous cohort (exposed to the standard Ius Soli legislation). More importantly, in 1998, the socialist government, then in power, retracted the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law, by adopting the Guigou law (*Loi n° 98-170 du 16 mars 1998*) and retroactively granted French nationality to whoever had been penalized by the 1993 reform. This implies that in the long-run, the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law has not entailed any "real" citizenship take-up effect on the impacted cohorts. Consistent with these priors our empirical results do not support any significant effect of the introduction of the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law on naturalizations (cfr. Section 5.2.2 below).

At the same time, the reform sent a strong negative signal to migrants and their offspring, and it may have durably altered migrants' expectations about their future treatment (and that of their children) by French institutions. This is far from a negligible aspect, as the law was aimed at second-generation immigrants during their adolescence and young adulthood, a time of life that seems key for attitudes, preferences, and beliefs formation (see e.g. Newcomb, 1967).[7] This is particularly the case in a country such as France, where 85% of the migrant population believes "it is important to have the country's citizenship for being truly French" (Simonsen, 2017). While its stated aim was to foster more national identity, it could have had the exact opposite effect, an argument that was by itself raised by its opponents at the time. In the next Section we develop a model that will be useful to guide our theoretical understanding over the potential mechanisms through which the forceful naturalization process triggered by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law may have affected the process of identity formation

3 From Identity Investment to Migration Policy: a Theory

In this section, we will blend theoretical modelling describing identity formation processes inspired by Akerlof and Kranton (2000), with the policy example offered by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law described above. Our theoretical model allows us to assess the effects of policies (such as naturalization policies) that alter immigrants' incentives to provide identity investments. This gives a coherent framework for studies on the effect of changes in naturalization policies on immigrants' integration (see Gathmann and Garbers, 2023 for a review). More specifically, the model enables us to discuss the expected theoretical effects of a mandatory naturalization policy such as the Mèhaignerie-Pasqua law, and interpret our empirical results.

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[7]Note that since the shock affect people during their young adulthood, it is not likely to alter early life choices.

We propose a model that builds on the theoretical framework developed by Cassar and Meier (2018). We describe mechanisms that are coherent with identity theory by Akerlof and Kranton (2000), in a setting where national identity provides individuals with incentives that are inherently non-monetary. There is growing recognition that acquiring citizenship has a 'meaning' such that individuals —particularly children of immigrants— may be motivated by non-monetary returns when investing in the development of a national identity (Bloemraad, 2006; Simonsen, 2017). Analogous to the non-pecuniary rewards observed among e.g. academics and entrepreneurs (Hamilton, 2000) — a growing body of sociological and psychological research suggests that children of immigrants may derive substantial psychological and social benefits from cultivating a sense of belonging within the national community, e.g., through perceived social inclusion, enhanced self-esteem, and civic recognition (Phinney et al., 2001; Verkuyten and Yildiz, 2007). Through citizenship rights, the internalization of national identity can be understood as a means of psychological empowerment and identity coherence, especially among youth navigating dual cultural frameworks (Berry, 1997; Schwartz et al., 2006).

Thus we assume a representative migrant agent, characterized by the following utility function U, where the pursuit of national belonging works as a form of self-realization and status affirmation:

$$U(d, e, x) = u(d) + M(\theta, x, e) - C(e), \qquad (1)$$

where $e \geq 0$ is the personal investment of the individual in the national identity of the host country (France). $d \geq 0$ represents their consumption. Provided that investment effort is costly: $C'(e) > 0$ and $C''(e) > 0$. However, the wage of a person positively depends on e, such that $w = w(e)$, with $w'(e) \geq 0$. The budget constraint of an individual is simply: $C = w(e)$. The exact shape of $w'(.)$, the economic returns on identity investments are shaped by the society at large and the labor market in particular.

People receive a utility flow M from their investment in their French identity with $M = M(\theta, x, e)$, where x is a vector of exogenous factors that determine societal openness to migration, multiculturalism, including neighbourhood effects, native behaviors, and migration policy changes that may open the nation to multiculturalism, i.e. $M'_x(\theta, x, e) > 0$, where θ is the vector of weights for each attribute. Based on the discussion above, we assume there are positive returns from identity investments, thus $M'_e(\theta, x, e) > 0$.

People choose the identity investment e, which maximizes their utility (1) under the

budget constraint $C = w(e)$.[8] We obtain the following first-order condition:

$$\underbrace{w'(e^*)u'_w + M'_e(\theta, x, e^*)}_{R(e,x,w')} = C'(e^*) \tag{2}$$

From equation (2), the optimal identity investment e^* is the one that equalizes the marginal cost of providing effort with the marginal utility of identity effort, $R(e, x, w'(.))$ which comes from higher wages and consumption, $w'(.)$, and non monetary returns from identity investments $M'_e(.)$.

Figure 2 presents diagrammatically the equilibrium at point O, where the downward sloping $R(.)$ curve meets the upward sloping $C(.)$ curve. At this point, the representative migrant agent chooses an optimal level of identity effort e^*, and obtains the corresponding utility $U(e^*)$. The diagrammatic exposition of the identity maximization problem prompts comparative statics exercises on the level of societal openness x, as well as the shape of the $M(.)$ function around the equilibrium. In particular, we discuss optimal identity effort in a country characterized by a high level of societal openness x_h. The red dashed $R(.)$ indicates high optimal effort, e^{*h}, provided that $M''_{ex} > 0$. Intuitively, the marginal utility of identity investment increases with societal openness in this case, so we have an equilibrium such as I (standing for Integration), where migrants exert a high effort to acquire the identity of the destination. In the symmetric case where $M''_{ex} < 0$, identity effort in a country characterized by a high level of societal openness x_h will be low instead. In this case, the marginal utility of identity investment *decreases* with societal openness, so we obtain an equilibrium such as P (Polarization), where migrants exert low effort to acquire the identity of the destination i.e. choose e^{*l}.

Ideally, a government that is willing to maximize the identity investment by the population of immigrants would want to observe the equilibrium where migrants are in the host society (whether this is P, or I), which in turn depends on the shape of the $M(.)$ function. At an equilibrium such as P, with $M''_{ex} < 0$ restrictive migration policies that reduce x (e.g. restrictions to citizenship requirements or cultural assimilation programs) would be desirable, as they would induce upward shifts of the blue $R(.)$ function, thus higher identity effort by migrants treated by the policy at the equilibrium. However, the same policies would be completely counterproductive at an I equilibrium, with $M''_{ex} > 0$, as they would imply an inward shift of the red $R(.)$ curve, thus reducing the identity effort of migrants.[9] Since governments take policy decisions based on their own expectations

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[8]Accordingly the maximization problem is as follows:

$$\max_e U(c, e, x) = u(w[e]) + M(\theta, x, e) - C(e).$$

[9]Empirically, this type of reponse has been documented in different settings (Fouka, 2020; Abdelgadir and Fouka, 2020; Arendt et al., 2025; Foged et al., 2025).

regarding the exact shape of the $M(.)$ function, which remains unknown, a migration policy whose stated objectives are to foster national identity could have had the exact opposite effect, as argued by opponents of the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law at that time. The empirical analysis will allow us to argue negative effects of the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law on identity are indirect evidence that governments' expectations regarding the prevailing set of non-monetary incentives would not be ex-post correct. From a theoretical perspective, this is the source of the "scarring effect" we aim at identifying empirically.
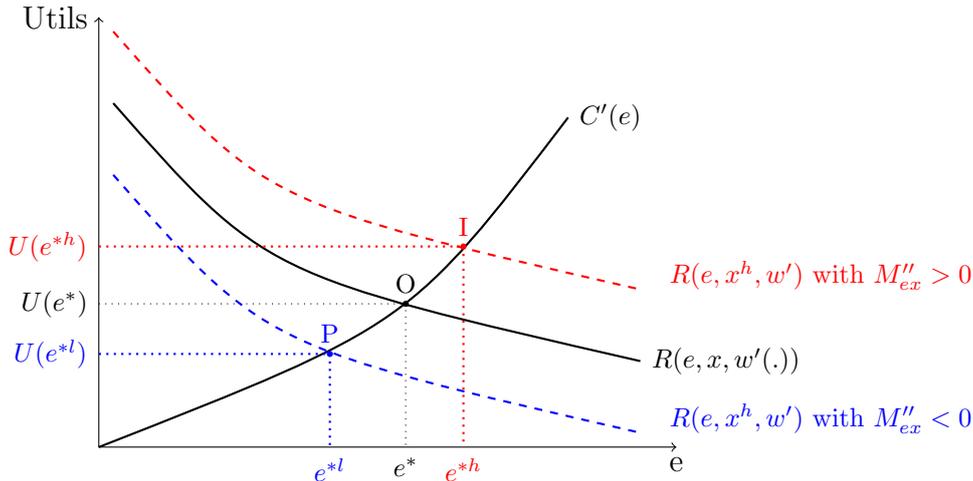
Figure 2: Optimal identity investment and Comparative statics with second-order cross-partials M''_{ex}

4 Data & Methodology

4.1 Data

For our analysis, we rely on the Trajectoires et Origines (TeO) survey. This survey was conducted in mainland France in two waves, in 2008 and 2018, by the French National Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) and is representative of the mainland French population. The dataset provides rich information on individuals' origins, demographic characteristics and socio-economic outcomes. In addition, this survey provides unique information on individuals' identity and self-reported experience of discrimination. It over-sampled individuals with migration histories, including individuals born in France from parents born abroad, making this survey particularly suited for our analysis.

One crucial aspect of TeO lies in its richness. We have extensive information on individual characteristics (gender, education, origins, naturalization trajectory) and parental background (parents' education and origins). Besides, we have detailed information on two sets of individual outcomes that will serve as a basis for the empirical analysis. The first set describes the respondent's attitudes, feelings and beliefs, capturing own sense of French national identity and perceptions of being discriminated. TeO data measure the

extent of agreement of the respondent (on a 1-5 scale) to the following two statements: "I feel French", "I am seen as French". We dichotomize the answer to this question in a binary variable measuring whether the person strongly agrees (5) or not with the statement. It also includes a question on the perception of being discriminated based on skin color, nationality or origins in the last five years to which the respondent can answer either yes or no.

The second set of outcomes describes the social and economic behaviors of the individual, namely own intensity of religiosity (i.e. having a religion, religion is important, practicing religion, wearing religious signs, food restrictions for religion), family formation decisions (marriage probability, intermarriage, fertility, probability of giving European name/ Arabic name), employment (employment probability, hours of work, civil servant, self-employment), and own political participation (signed in electoral lists, follows French politics, voted at presidential and municipal elections).

In the main part of our study, we exploit the first wave of TeO, which contains 21,761 observations and provides us with detailed information on current living conditions and life trajectories of surveyed individuals. We constituted a main sub-sample comprising 3724 people born in France between 1967 and 1980. 2412 individuals are born to French-born parents (hereafter referred to as French-born), and 1312 individuals are born to two foreign parents (hereafter referred to as second-generation immigrants). Throughout the paper, we extend the analysis and the sample in several directions. We discuss the robustness of our results as we consider both older and younger cohorts of migrants. By including younger cohorts we are also able to discuss the reversal of policy (Guigou reform, cfr. Section E below).

Table 1 describes our baseline sample. We present averages and standard deviations of the main sets of variables we use in the analysis. In Panel A we present descriptive statistics that relate to individual characteristics (gender, age, education, origins, parental background). In Panel B we consider identity and perceived discrimination outcomes as well as social, political a labor market outcomes of individuals. We present figures separately for French-born natives (cfr. Column [1]) versus individuals born in France from foreign parents (i.e. second generation migrants), which we assign to two different groups based on their cohort of birth. We have a pre-Pasqua cohort of second generation migrants (cfr. Column [2]), which includes those migrants that were already 19 years old in 1993, i.e. people born up to 1974. These are individuals who reached majority age about one year before the introduction of the Pasqua Law, thus are more likely to have had already the chance to go through the administrative procedures to obtain the French passport under the traditional Jus Soli regime. The second group includes individuals born starting from 1974 (cfr. Column [3]): these individuals turned 18 years old under the new legislation, and so, were more likely to have been required to explicitly manifest their will to become French in order to obtain the French passport. In Table 1, we compare

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Table 1: Summary statistics

Variable	[1] French-born Mean	(Std. Dev.)	[2] 2nd gen (pre-reform) Mean	(Std. Dev.)	[3] 2nd gen (post-reform) Mean	(Std. Dev.)
Panel A: Individual characteristics						
Female	0.52	(0.5)	0.566	(0.496)	0.532	(0.499)
Age	34.24	(4.009)	37.26	(2.1)	30.41	(1.873)
Primary ed.	0.087	(0.28)	0.121	(0.326)	0.1	(0.31)
Secondary ed.	0.462	(0.499)	0.564	(0.496)	0.48	(0.5)
Tertiary ed.	0.451	(0.498)	0.315	(0.465)	0.422	(0.494)
French national	1	(0)	0.963	(0.19)	0.962	(0.191)
Father: primary	0.454	(0.498)	0.786	(0.41)	0.732	(0.443)
Father: second.	0.369	(0.483)	0.14	(0.347)	0.217	(0.413)
Father: tertiary	0.177	(0.382)	0.074	(0.262)	0.051	(0.22)
Africa	0.118	(0.323)	0.254	(0.463)	0.407	(0.492)
Asia, ME	0.015	(0.123)	0.043	(0.204)	0.21	(0.408)
Europe	0.17	(0.375)	0.703	(0.457)	0.383	(0.486)
Panel B: Identity, discrimination and integration outcomes						
I feel French: strongly agree (sa)	0.864	(0.342)	0.755	(0.43)	0.609	(0.488)
I am seen as French: sa	0.727	(0.407)	0.535	(0.499)	0.291	(0.455)
Perceived discriminated	0.157	(0.364)	0.145	(0.352)	0.339	(0.474)
(impvie) Religion important in life	0.18	(0.386)	0.316	(0.465)	0.478	(0.5)
(culte) Practice religion	0.164	(0.37)	0.252	(0.434)	0.327	(0.469)
(relsoi) Has a religion	0.555	(0.497)	0.704	(0.457)	0.793	(0.405)
(miam) Respects food restrictions	0.136	(0.343)	0.258	(0.438)	0.47	(0.499)
Children: Arab name	0.038	(0.191)	0.111	(0.314)	0.239	(0.427)
Children: European name	0.163	(0.369)	0.178	(0.383)	0.156	(0.363)
Children: French name	0.547	(0.498)	0.405	(0.491)	0.22	(0.415)
Married	0.723	(0.448)	0.768	(0.422)	0.635	(0.482)
Partner from same origin	0.496	(0.5)	0.122	(0.328)	0.114	(0.319)
share with children	0.669	(0.471)	0.828	(0.378)	0.551	(0.498)
Employed	0.869	(0.337)	0.834	(0.372)	0.796	(0.404)
Number of hours	0.332	(0.166)	0.317	(0.179)	0.302	(0.182)
Civil servant	0.217	(0.412)	0.185	(0.389)	0.168	(0.374)
Self employed	0.058	(0.233)	0.056	(0.231)	0.043	(0.2)
Interested in French politics	0.215	(0.41)	0.19	(0.392)	0.192	(0.394)
Electoral lists	0.908	(0.289)	0.854	(0.353)	0.824	(0.381)
Voted at pres. elect. (1st)	0.916	(0.278)	0.902	(0.297)	0.886	(0.318)
Voted at muni. elect.	0.799	(0.401)	0.817	(0.387)	0.728	(0.445)
Observations		2412		622		690

Notes: This table reports the summary statistics of our control group (Natives) and treatment group (second-generation immigrants) by cohort (pre- and post-reform). Authors' calculation based upon TeO data.

both groups with the sample of French-born natives, which is the control group of our empirical analysis. Panel A shows the majority of respondents in our sample are women (ranging from 52% of natives to 56% of second-generation migrants in the pre-Pasqua cohort). Some differences emerge in terms of education. Also, there is a certain degree of heterogeneity when it comes to parental background: French-born natives are more likely to have a father with a tertiary education degree compared to second-generation migrants. The two cohorts of second-generation migrants quite differ in terms of their origins, as in the Pasqua cohort, we observe relatively higher shares of Asian origins. We will address these sample imbalances in the empirical analysis.

Panel B displays non-negligible differences in national identity and discrimination perceptions between the three groups. French-born natives are more likely to strongly agree with the statement "I feel French" compared with pre-Pasqua second-generation migrant respondents. Similarly, they self-perceive more as seen as French, and are less likely to feel discriminated. More importantly, descriptive evidence in Column [3] suggests that the Pasqua cohort of second-generation migrants has a lower sense of French identity and a higher perception of being discriminated relative to both natives and the non-Pasqua cohort of second-generation migrants. They are also quite different in terms of their social behaviors: They are more likely to give importance to religion in their life, also through regular practice or respect of food prescriptions. The Pasqua cohort of second-generation migrants seems less likely to marry, and if married, to choose a migrant partner. Finally, the Pasqua-cohort displays a somewhat comparable fertility, and a higher probability to give Arabic names to their children compared to other groups.

4.2   Methodological approach

The 1993 reform fully impacted the cohort of second-generation migrants (treated group) born in France between 1974 and 1980 (post-reform cohort). In this paper, we will exploit the fact that those born in France to foreign parents before 1974 (pre-reform cohort) were not directly impacted by the Pasqua law. In addition, children born in those years of at least one French parent (control group) were not at all concerned by this change. Using a differences-in-difference approach, we study the extent to which this reform scarred the generations impacted by it.

More specifically, we investigate whether this reform impacted the identity formation and perceived discrimination of the affected cohort, as well as their social and economic integration. To do so, we estimate the following regression equation among those born in France between 1967 and 1980:

$$Y_{ic} = \alpha + \beta Treat_i + \delta Post_c + \gamma(Treat_i \times Post_c) + X_i + \rho_r + \epsilon_{ic} \qquad (3)$$

In the main part of the paper Y_{ic} denotes different outcomes related to the sense of belonging, feeling of discrimination. Throughout the analysis, we also consider economic, social, and political outcomes of the individual. $Treat_i$ is a dummy that takes the value 1 if the individual is born in France to foreign parents or 0 if the individual has at least one French parent (i.e, whether they are second-generation or French-born, respectively). $Post_c$ refers to whether individuals are affected (born after 1974) or not (born before 1974) by the reform. X_i is a vector of individual characteristics, namely age, gender, and education level, and parental characteristics such as their country of birth, and their education. A regional fixed effect ρ_r is included, and the errors are bootstrapped clustered at the birth cohort level.

In this empirical setting, γ is our main coefficient of interest. It captures the difference between second generations impacted by the reform or not, netting out general tendencies captured by the difference between pre- and post-period for the French-born. Conditional on covariates, it captures the effect of the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law on the sense of belonging and identity.

To better grasp the intuition of our identification strategy, let us take the case of Samira (17 yo in 1993) and Aicha (19 yo in 1993); both are observationally equivalent (other than their age) migrants, born and grown up in France, and surveyed by TeO in 2008. Samira has not requested citizenship yet and will have to do it in the new regulatory framework introduced by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law. Public discussions and information campaigns such as those described in Figure 1 point out to the young Samira that she has to sign a formal request to become French and obtain citizenship, and that she will receive the French passport only upon approval of her request by a *tribunal d'instance*. Aicha, on the other hand, had automatically obtained her French citizenship a few months earlier, when the Jus Soli legislation was still in effect. As a result, she only needed to follow the standard administrative procedures to obtain her passport. Samira's experience, however, serves as a stark reminder that she is not truly considered French—despite being born, raised, and educated in France—as she must still formally apply for French citizenship through a more salient legal process than the one Aicha underwent. We argue that undergoing this experience could leave a lasting mark on Samira's identity formation and her perception of discrimination. This, in turn, may influence the choices she makes, ultimately shaping her economic and cultural integration trajectory relative to Aicha's.

In our main analysis, we measure the outcomes of equation (3) in 2008, the year of the first round of TeO. This allows γ to capture the "scarring effect" of direct exposure to the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law on naturalized migrants born in France, such as Samira, 15 years after its enactment. We argue that this is the only lasting impact of the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law. Figure B.2 does not indicate any delay in the age at naturalization for the Pasqua (Post) cohort compared to the non-Pasqua (Pre) cohort. As we discuss in Section

5.2.2 below, even a more rigorous empirical analysis finds no evidence that exposure to the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law affected either the likelihood of acquiring French citizenship or the age at naturalization.[10] We also estimate the results using the second wave of TeO in 2019, that is, 25 years after the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law. (results available upon request). These estimates suggest that 25 years after exposure to the Méhaignerie-Pasqua naturalization regime, effects on identity and perceived discrimination faded. By then, what persists are the cultural and social integration choices that second-generation immigrants made during young adulthood, shaping their long-term trajectories.

Figure 3 displays the average levels of identity and perceived discrimination for the treated group (2nd generation migrants), and the control group (natives), for the Pasqua and pre-Pasqua cohorts of natives (bold lines) and 2nd generation migrants (dashed lines). The Figure shows no pretrend as attitudes of natives and migrants tend to overlap for the pre-Pasqua cohorts. However, the attitudes gap tends to widen in the Pasqua cohorts, with second generation migrants being less likely to feel French and more likely to have felt discrimination.

Besides pretrends, there are potential concerns that compositional differences in the Pasqua and non-Pasqua cohorts (captured by the $Post$ dummy), possibly correlated with the status of second-generation migrant (i.e. $Treat = 1$) may bias the coefficient γ. Given the evidence presented in Table 1 above, obvious candidate dimensions to these differences are the region of origin of migrants and the socio-economic status, as proxied by the parental education. In Table 2 below, we report results from a balancing test performed by regressing the dummy $Post$ on origins and parental education dummies. In Panel A, we consider the region of origin of the father, and the mother, conditional on the regional fixed effects. Unsurprisingly, the test in Column (1) reveals a relative under-representation of individuals of European origin in the Pasqua group, alongside a relative over-representation of those with African, Asian, and Middle Eastern. These compositional differences reflect the distinct migration pathways of the third wave—comprising the parents of the Pasqua cohort of second-generation migrants—compared to earlier migration waves. In Panel B, we consider the highest educational attainment of the father and the mother, respectively. Here a clear over-representation emerges in the Pasqua cohort of individuals coming from families where the parent has a lower (secondary instead of tertiary) level of education.

To account for these composition differences, we apply the covariates matching methodology described by Imbens and Rubin (2015). This method selects a control sub-sample, which is more balanced in terms of covariates with respect to the treated sample of second-generation immigrants. To do so, we match the Pasqua (post-) and non-Pasqua (pre-) cohorts using the *Mahalanobis Metric Matching* method on the origin of the father, origin

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[10]Notice that the 1998 Guigou Law retroactively granted French citizenship to French-born migrants who had not acquired it under the Méhaignerie-Pasqua regime.

Figure 3: Event-study graphs
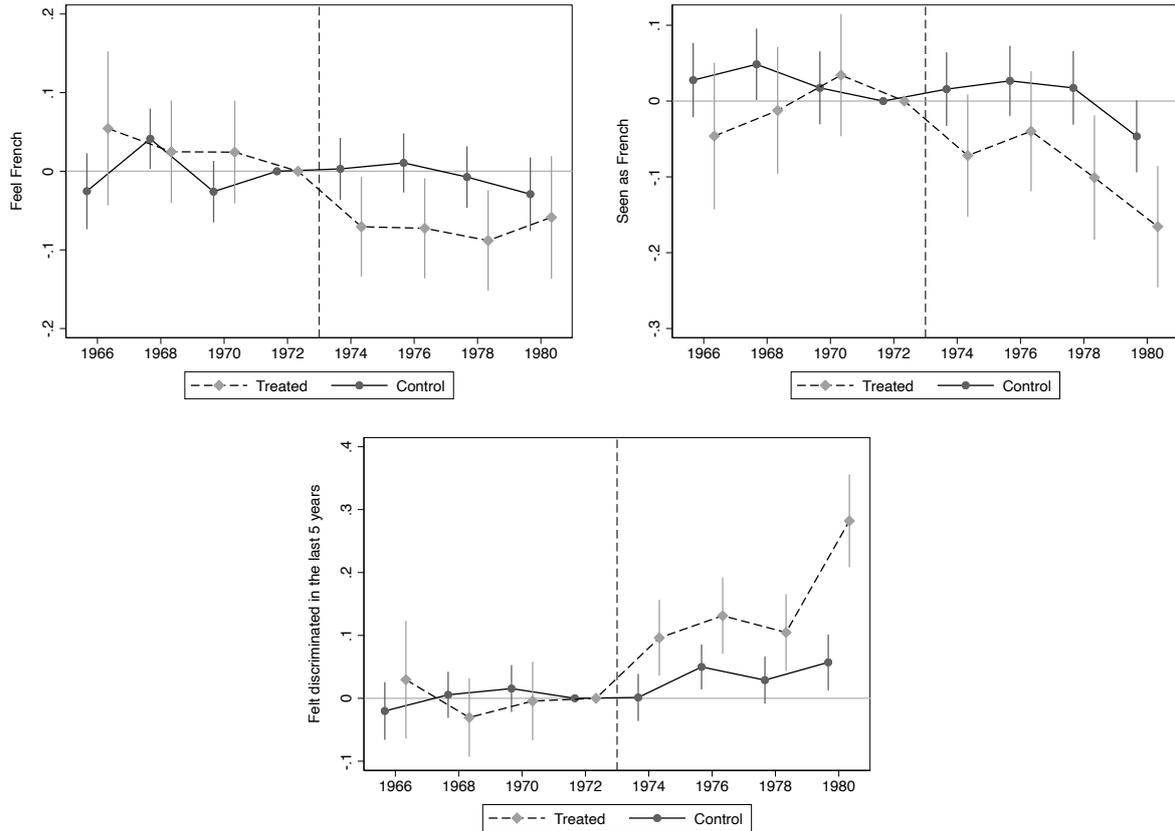
Notes: This event-study graph shows the evolution of identity outcomes (Feeling French, Seen as French, and Perceived discrimination) among the treated and control group by birth cohorts, on the balanced sample.

of the mother, the education of the father, the education of the mother, as we stratify the sample between natives and second-generation migrants in each cohort. In this way, we compute and minimize the distance on observable characteristics between individuals in each group-cohort, based upon the five nearest neighbours of each observation (see e.g. Zhao, 2004; Moriconi et al., 2022). In column (2), we report the results of the balancing tests on the balanced sample. The test shows that we are able to satisfactorily overcome the over-representation issue, as there are no longer significant differences between Pasqua and non-Pasqua cohorts at conventional levels.

A second set of compositional concerns in the treatment group relates to selection into (return) migration. It may be argued that those treated individuals who were particularly 'scarred' by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Legislation could decide to leave France e.g. to return to their country of origin. Hence, we would not observe these individuals in France in 2008 (and 2019), resulting in a selected group of second-generation migrants observed in TeO. These would be individuals born between 1974 and 1980, who were not 'scarred enough' by exposure to the Méhaignerie-Pasqua regime and decided to stay in the country. If it

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Table 2: Balancing test

	[I] Unbalanced				[II] Maha Balanced			
	(1) Father	(2) Mother	(3) Father	(4) Mother	(5) Father	(6) Mother	(7) Father	(8) Mother
Panel A: Country of origin (reference Maghreb)								
Subsaharan Africa	0.080	0.089	0.006	0.010	0.054	0.049	0.010	0.010
	(0.055)	(0.061)	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.078)	(0.086)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Other Africa	0.148	0.216**	-0.014	0.009	0.192	0.229	-0.008	0.018
	(0.115)	(0.108)	(0.016)	(0.009)	(0.143)	(0.171)	(0.011)	(0.015)
Asia	0.083	0.116	-0.033	-0.025	0.133	0.150*	-0.029	-0.023
	(0.077)	(0.070)	(0.030)	(0.023)	(0.089)	(0.089)	(0.025)	(0.023)
Turkey & ME	0.125	0.167*	0.035	0.041	0.002	-0.005	0.041	0.044
	(0.094)	(0.095)	(0.030)	(0.035)	(0.139)	(0.151)	(0.033)	(0.036)
Southern Europe	-0.260***	-0.249***	0.016	0.016	0.014	0.007	0.040	0.039
	(0.061)	(0.059)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.031)	(0.030)
Other Europe	-0.243**	-0.181**	0.011	0.016	-0.064	-0.044	0.035	0.036
	(0.120)	(0.091)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.116)	(0.086)	(0.025)	(0.027)
East Europe	-0.356***	-0.118	-0.000	0.001	-0.146	0.061	0.018	0.018
	(0.133)	(0.193)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.156)	(0.188)	(0.015)	(0.014)
Panel B: Parental Education (reference Tertiary)								
(up to) Primary educ.	0.179**	-0.019	0.014	0.007	0.043	0.001	0.011	0.013
	(0.070)	(0.101)	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.083)	(0.095)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Secondary educ.	0.355***	0.158	0.031	-0.003	0.057	0.022	0.025	-0.013
	(0.089)	(0.131)	(0.024)	(0.005)	(0.104)	(0.122)	(0.021)	(0.010)
Observations	1312	1312	1312	1312	1312	1312	1312	1312
Cohort FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

Notes: Balancing tests for the composition of the Pasqua group, conditional on the regional fixed effects and cohort fixed effects. We present separate tests for the unbalanced sample (See columns (1)-(4)) and the Mahalanobis matched sample on origin of the father, origin of the mother, education of the father, and education of the mother, using the five nearest neighbors (Columns (5)-(8)). We also present separate tests without cohort fixed effects (See columns (1),(2),(5),(6)) and with cohort fixed effects (See columns (3),(4),(7),(8)). Bootstrapped standard errors (500 replications) clustered at the cohort level. Authors' calculation based upon TeO data.

existed, this type of selection would impose a downward bias to the estimated γ, under the plausible assumption that people leaving France were likely those experiencing the largest losses in French national identity. To gain more insight on this issue, we exploit the longitudinal dimension of *Échantillon démographique permanent (EDP)* and check for any differential attrition between the affected and unaffected cohorts of second-generation migrant individuals in full-count census data. Figure C.1 plots the probability of being in the 2008 Census, conditional on living with their parents in the 1990 census, between second generation migrants in the affected group (Post-cohort) and the unaffected group (Pre-cohort), for different cohort windows going from ± 7 years (i.e. the full cohort covering 1967-1980) to ± 1 year (covering 1973-1974). The figure does not seem to point to any statistically significant difference between the two cohorts. This remains true even in Figure 4, where we perform the same exercise for the ± 4 years' cohort, considering all census rounds between 2006 and 2017. Also, in this case, no significant differences emerge between the conditional probabilities of the two cohorts. Since TeO is meant to be representative of the second-generation migrant population in France in the coverage years, evidence in these figures reassures us that attrition in TeO should not reflect systematic selection of the sample of second-generation migrants based on the Méhaignerie-Pasqua treatment.

5 Main Results: Identity, Discrimination, and Integration

5.1 Baseline Results

Table 3 presents the main set of estimates on measures of identity and perceived discrimination. The outcome variable Y_{ic} in equation (3) is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent reports strongly agreeing with "feeling French" (cfr. Column [1]), "being seen as French" (cfr. Column [2]), and perceiving being discriminated in the last five years (cfr. Column [3]). In Panel A, we present estimates for the full unbalanced sample, while in Panel B, we report results for the balanced sample obtained after retrieving the balancing weights from the Mahalanobis matching procedure described above. All regressions include controls for individual and parental characteristics and regional fixed effects. Standard errors are cluster bootstrapped at the birth cohort level. At the bottom of the table, we report average values of each dependent variable for the sample of French-born and the sample of second-generation migrants (regardless of the cohort).

Estimates for the sense of belonging show a systematic negative coefficient for the interaction term Post×Treat (i.e. γ coefficient in equation (3)). In the unbalanced sample, treatment by the Pasqua Law reduces the sense of 'feeling French' among second-

Table 3: Results on identity and feeling of discrimination

	Panel A: Unbalanced sample		
	Feeling French	Seen as French	Perceived discriminated
Post	0.004	0.004	-0.000
	(0.035)	(0.037)	(0.019)
Treat	-0.128***	-0.234***	0.039
	(0.032)	(0.037)	(0.029)
Treat x Post	-0.126***	-0.128***	0.143***
	(0.025)	(0.039)	(0.030)
Observations	3724	3724	3724
R squared	.05	.11	.14
Mean dep. var. (natives)	0.889	0.827	0.012
Mean dep. var. (2nd gen.)	0.776	0.564	0.058
	Panel B: Balanced sample		
	Feeling French	Seen as French	Perceived discriminated
Post	0.011	0.015	-0.000
	(0.032)	(0.036)	(0.022)
Treat	-0.133***	-0.241***	0.037
	(0.031)	(0.039)	(0.033)
Treat x Post	-0.087***	-0.094***	0.104***
	(0.024)	(0.036)	(0.033)
Observations	3724	3724	3724
Adj. R-squared	.05	.11	.11
Mean dep. var. (natives)	0.892	0.828	0.012
Mean dep. var. (2nd gen.)	0.753	0.514	0.08

Notes: All regressions include controls for individual characteristics (gender, age, age-squared, education, nationality), parental background (origin of father and mother, education of father and mother), and fixed effects for the region of residence. Bootstrapped standard errors (500 replications) clustered at the cohort level. Significance levels: * 10% ** 5% *** 1%

generation migrants by 12.6 percentage points, and the perception of 'being seen as French' by 12.8 percentage points. It is also associated with an increase in the perceived discrimination by 14.3 percentage points. As we move to the balanced sample, these effects are confirmed: treatment by the Pasqua Law is associated with a 8.7 percentage points' decrease in the probability of feeling French, a 9.4 percentage points' decrease in the probability of self-perceiving as being seen as French, and a 10.4 percentage points increase in the probability self-perceiving discrimination based upon origins, nationality or skin. These figures are very sizeable as they correspond to the 11.5%, 18%, and 130% increase compared to the average value of the respective dependent variables.

We can interpret findings in Table 6 through the lenses of the theoretical model outlined in Section 3, where identity investments by migrants are shaped by both societal openness and non-monetary incentives to pursue identity effort. The Méhaignerie-Pasqua law, by imposing a symbolic and selective affirmation of allegiance, appears to have acted as a negative policy shock that diminished perceived societal openness (a reduction in the parameter x in the model). According to the framework, when the marginal utility of identity investments increases with societal openness ($M_{ex}'' > 0$), such a symbolic exclusion can reduce optimal identity investment. Consistent with this, the treated cohorts report significantly lower probabilities of feeling French or being seen as French, and higher levels of perceived discrimination. These results suggest that the law may have inadvertently shifted second-generation migrants to a more "Polarized" state, where the perceived returns to adopting a French identity are undermined by institutional signals of exclusion. Thus, the empirical evidence highlights the unintended scarring effects of symbolic policy interventions on identity formation. This scarring effect is measured on the treated cohort of second-generation migrants in 2008, i.e., 15 years after the introduction of the policy.

We also test the effects of the reversal of the policy in 1998, known as the Guigou law, in Appendix Section E. We re-estimate equation 3 with the relevant birth cohort threshold of 1980. In this case, *Post* takes the value 1 if the individuals are born between 1981 and 1986, and 0 if they are born between 1974 and 1980. Since the pre-cohort in this design is the impacted cohort (i.e., post-cohort) under the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law, this constitutes a less clean design, but can nonetheless give us some insights into the effect of the reversal of the policy. The results in Table E.1 all go in the opposite direction from the main result. It suggests that the policy reversal strengthened national identity and reduced perceptions of discrimination, even if these gains do not fully compensate for the identity losses induced by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law. The reversal effect also lends support to the idea that our main result meaningfully captures the effect of the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law.

5.2 Threat to identification

In this section, we address the main potential threats to our identification strategy, namely, selective attrition, change in naturalization behavior, and general anti-immigrant hostility.

5.2.1 Attrition

Given the fact that we observe outcomes in 2008 and 2019 (15 and 26 years after the policy change, respectively), our analyses may suffer from a compositional bias if there is selective attrition. Indeed, the policy change may have induced individuals, especially the most affected ones, to leave France. This would imply that we only observe a selected group of stayers in our data. To shed light on this potential issue, we exploit the longitudinal dimension of the Census data in the *Échantillon Démographique Permanent (EDP)* to check for differential attrition between the pre-reform and post-reform cohorts among second-generation immigrants. Figure 4 shows that there are no significant differences between the two groups in any of the Census waves between 2006 and 2017.[11] If anything, we expect that those who potentially leave the country are the ones who suffered the most from an identity loss, such that our estimates can be interpreted as a lower bound effect.

Figure 4: Differential attrition rate by treatment status based on census year
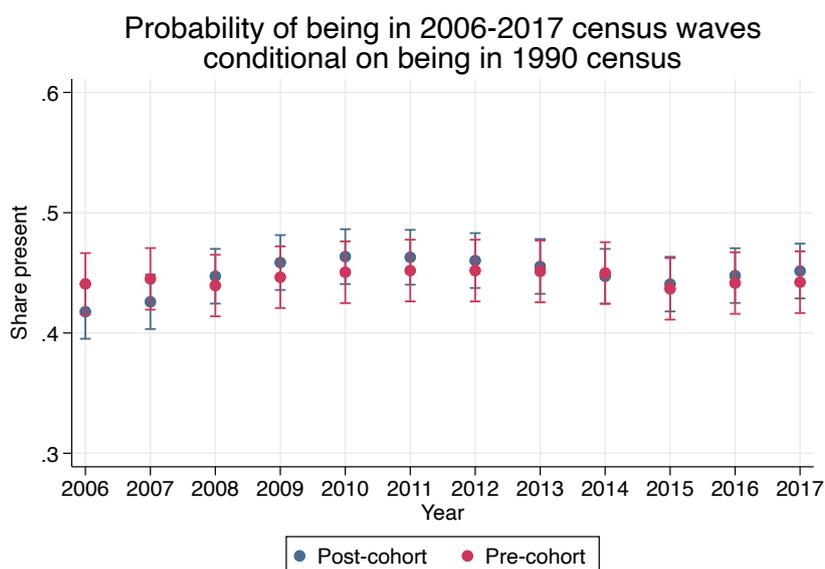
Notes: This shows the probability of being observed in different census rounds between 2006 - 2017 among the pre- and post-cohorts of the treated group, conditional on living with their parents in the 1990 census. This is estimated on the ±4 cohort (1970 - 1977).

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[11]Because of the rotating sampling design of the Census data, the overall probability reaches a maximum of 50%. Because of data constraints, this can be estimated only through 2017, but the pattern is likely to hold until 2019.

5.2.2 Naturalization

An additional key question for the identification of the parameter γ is whether the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law directly influenced naturalization behaviors among the affected cohort. To investigate this, Table 4 presents estimates from a local linear regression comparing second-generation migrants who naturalized before and after the implementation of the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law. The analysis examines differences in both naturalization rates and the age at naturalization between the post-reform cohort (Post) and the preceding one. Results show no statistically significant discontinuities in either outcome around the reform's implementation. These findings align with expectations under the Guigou Law (1998), which repealed the Pasqua Law and retroactively granted citizenship to the affected cohorts (Spire and Thave, 1999). The absence of sharp changes around the policy cutoff suggests that the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law did not result in a systematic alteration of naturalization behavior, likely due to its subsequent repeal and the restoration of rights under the Guigou framework.

Table 4: Results on naturalization

	Pr. French	Age naturalized
Post	-0.002	-0.927
	(0.022)	(1.518)
Observations	3807	3807
R squared	0.064	0.135
Mean dep. var. (2nd gen.)	0.958	15.892

Notes: Bootstrapped standard errors (500 replications) clustered at the cohort level in parentheses. Significance levels: * 10% ** 5% *** 1%

These findings carry important implications for interpreting our estimated treatment effect in equation (3). Specifically, the analysis in Table 4 reveals no significant differences in either the probability of naturalization or the age at which it occurred between the Méhaignerie-Pasqua cohort and the previous cohort, on average.[12] This evidence rules out the possibility that the estimated γ in Equation (3) captures changes in access to, or the timing of, naturalization. Instead, it supports interpreting γ as reflecting differences in identity-related or integrative outcomes that are not driven by legal, economic, or political constraints associated with failures (or delays) in citizenship acquisitions. By excluding these direct channels, the interpretation of γ aligns with the perspective outlined in Section 2: namely, that it captures the scarring effect of a reform which transformed the process

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[12]This is true despite our sample includes individuals who might have missed the deadline to request French nationality, but later obtained it under the provisions of the Guigou Law. These people would have obtained citizenship at a later age.

of acquiring citizenship from a passive automatic one (with possibility of opt-out), into an active, discretionary opt-in decision.

5.2.3 Reform or generalized hostility?

A second question regarding baseline estimates presented in Section 5 is whether the estimated γ coefficients capture the effect of the Mèhaignerie-Pasqua treatment, or more generally a response of second generation migrants to the general hostility atmosphere experienced by migrants and their descendants during the 1980s and the 1990s. To gain further insight over this, we estimate equation (3) with different definitions of treated groups compared to a control group that consists of individuals born in France of two parents born in France. We compare groups that were not directly targeted by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua policy to test whether there was a general hostility effect against individuals of foreign origins. This exercise is analogous to placebo tests as we do not expect to find any effect on other groups, except in our main specifications, in absence of a more generalized hostile environment following the Pasqua policy.

In Figure 5, we report the γ from equation 3 for the outcome "Feeling French" in the upper-left panel and "Being seen as French" in the upper-right panel for the balanced sample. Each coefficient is estimated with individuals born in France to two parents born in France as the control group. The first estimate ("2nd gen") is similar to the coefficient of Treat $\times$ Post from Panel B (balanced sample) in Table 3, with second-generation immigrants as the treated group. The second estimate ("FR Mixed origin") refers to individuals with mixed origins, i.e., with one foreign and one French parent, as the treated group. We should not observe a direct effect of the Pasqua policy for this group, as they obtain French nationality at birth through their French parent. The third estimate ("Algerians") refers to individuals born in France to at least one Algerian parent as the treated group. Again, this group is not concerned by the Pasqua policy as they are eligible for the French nationality at birth through a special rule known as the "*double droit du sol*". The fourth estimate ("1.5 gen") refers to those who are born abroad and arrived young in France (before age 10) as the treated group. The fifth estimate ("first gen") shows the effect when comparing foreign individuals who arrived in France after the age of 10. Neither of these groups is directly impacted by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua reform, as they are not eligible for birthright citizenship, unlike their counterparts who are born in France to foreign parents.

The results suggest that almost all of the alternate placebo-treated groups were affected by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua reform, whether we look at the feeling of belonging or being seen as French.[13] These results imply that the effect estimated in the main analysis

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[13]The only exception is for the 1.5 generation group that seem to experience a reduction in their sense of belonging. Even though less robust, this might be interpreted as a spillover effect of the policy onto migrants who arrived in France at a young age.

Figure 5: Placebo tests
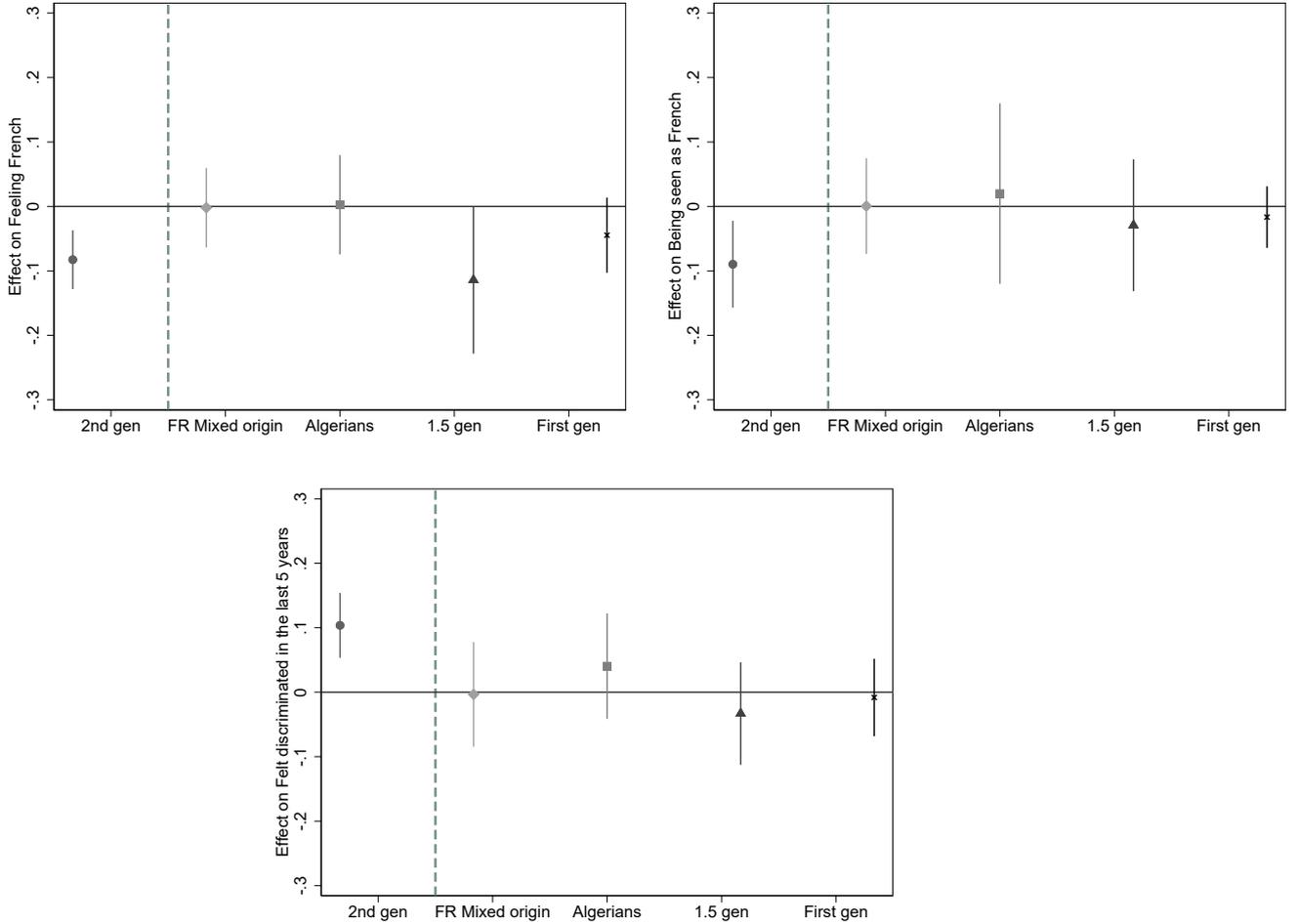
Notes: Each figure reports the estimated γ coefficient from eq. (3) with different definitions of the treated group compared to the control group which consists of individuals with two French-born parents. The treated groups are defined as follows: "2nd gen" refers to second-generation individuals (i.e. individuals born in France from two foreign parents); "FR Mixed origin" refers to individuals with mixed origins (i.e. individuals with a French and a foreign parent); "Algerians" refer to individuals born in France to at least one Algerian parent; "1.5 gen" refers to individuals who are born in a foreign country and arrived in France young (below the age of 10); and "First gen" are individuals who are born abroad and arrived in France after the age of 10. For each of these treated group definitions, we report estimates on the balanced sample. All regressions include controls for individual characteristics (age, age squared, gender, education, nationality), parental background (origin of father, education of father and mother), and fixed effects for the region of residence. Bootstrapped standard errors (500 replications) clustered at the cohort level. Authors' calculation based upon TeO data.

cannot be explained by an increasingly hostile environment towards individuals of foreign origins generally. Instead, it reassures us that our main specification captures a direct effect of the Méhaignerie-Pasqua reform on the targeted group.

5.3 Heterogeneous Identity Responses

Results in Table 3 are consistent with a marginal utility of identity investments which is increasing with societal openness. It may also be argued that for some specific subgroups of the migrant population returns to identity investment may be more sensitive to societal openness compared to other groups. For these groups the scarring effect can be larger than for others.

To investigate this further, in Figure 6 we plot the coefficient from sub-sample analyses where regression of equation (3) by gender, socio-economic status (SES) based on father education level, and origin. We report results on the balanced sample for feeling French, being "seen as French" and perceived discrimination. Figure 6 confirms there are some interesting dimensions of heterogeneity. The scarring effect of the Pasqua Law on identity appears to be concentrated among men, individuals from medium/high socio-economic backgrounds, and from non-European (Caucasian) ethnic origins.

It seems reasonable to think the identity response being particularly large for these groups. The Méhaignerie-Pasqua law was enacted in a context where political rhetoric targeted migrants of African and Asian origin, reinforcing a sense of exclusion (e.g., Le Bruit et l'Odeur speech by Jacques Chirac in 1991). This suggests that the Pasqua Law may have exacerbated the feeling of belonging to the outgroup by ethnic groups that are more distant from the French caucasian. Men may have been more affected because the "problème des banlieues" discourse at the time disproportionately associated young men from immigrant backgrounds with social unrest and delinquency (cfr. Wieviorka, 1993; Lapeyronnie, 2008). Finally, individuals from more educated families may have been more attuned to the broader political discourse surrounding the law and, consequently, more affected by its symbolic implications. Additionally, these individuals were likely more exposed to the vocal opposition to the law from universities, student associations, and intellectual circles, where protests against the law were particularly strong (Hajjat, 2012). Thus, the new Méhaignerie-Pasqua requirements may have been perceived even more by high SES individuals not just as an additional administrative procedure but as a symbolic act of forced allegiance, deepening the psychological impact of the law.

Figure 6: Heterogeneous identity responses to Pasqua Law
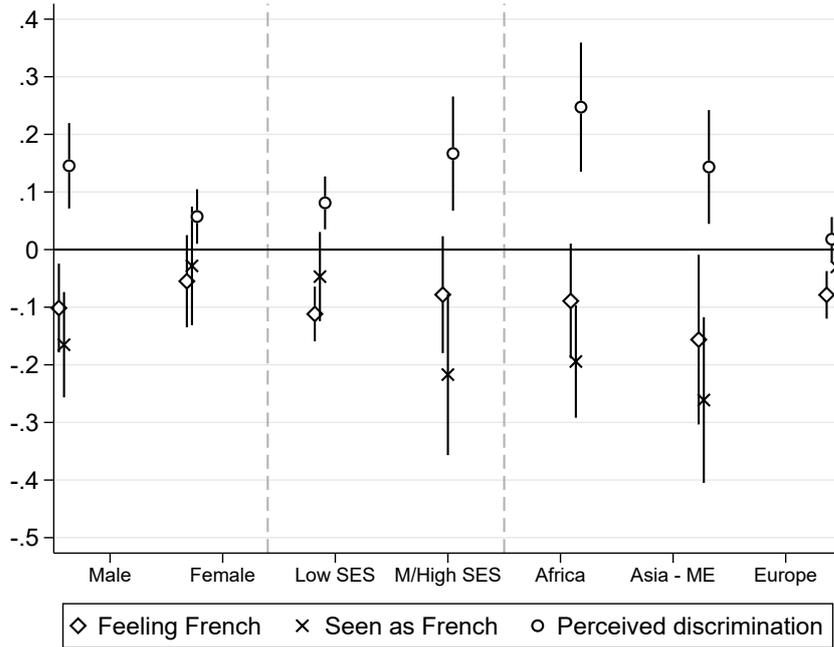
Notes: The figure reports the estimated γ coefficient from eq. (3) on the subsamples described on the x-axis i.e. Male vs. Female respondents; individuals with low socio-economic status (measured by father having less than primary education) vs. medium-high SES (father with at least secondary education); individuals with a father having African, Asian, or Middle-East, and European origins. For each subsample, we report estimates on the balanced sample. All regressions include controls for individual characteristics (gender, education, nationality, age at naturalization), parental background (origin of father, education of father and mother), and fixed effects for the region of residence. Standard errors are bootstrapped (500 replications) clustered at the cohort level. 90% confidence interval is plotted.

## 5.4 Social, political and economic integration

The reduction in the optimal identity effort induced by the exposure to the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law may be signalled by actual integration patterns chosen by second-generation migrants, beyond their sense of belonging to the French society. Figure 7 presents estimates of equation (3) on four sets of social, political and economic outcomes of second generation migrants in France. In the top-left panel, we present the estimated γ on individual outcomes of religious intensity. These are a set of dummies equal to one if the respondent has a religion, if the religion is important to the respondent, if the respondent practices a religion, practices food restrictions for religious purposes, or wears religious signs. In the top-right panel, we present the estimated γs on family formation outcomes i.e. the probability of marriage, the probability of intercultural marriage (conditional on being married), the number of children, and the probability of giving a French name, or an Arabic name to their children. The bottom-left panel considers labor market outcomes such as employment probability, hours of work, civil servant position (conditional on employment), and probability of self-employment. Finally, in the bottom-right panel, we present estimates on political participation outcomes such as following French politics, International politics, being enrolled on the electoral lists, voting in presidential elections (first round), and voting at the municipal elections. For each outcome, Figure 7 plots the estimated coefficients with corresponding confidence intervals (at 90% level).

Results suggest that exposure to the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law had significant and lasting effects on the identity preferences of second-generation migrants, particularly in religiosity, and family formation domains. Estimates in the top-left panel of Figure 7 show that individuals whose families were affected by the Pasqua Law are 7–11 percentage points more likely to report valuing religion, identifying with a religious denomination, and engaging in religious practices, including dietary observance. The top-right panel further reveals that exposure to the policy is associated with a lower likelihood of marriage among second-generation migrants. When they do marry, they are slightly more likely to choose a partner with a migrant background (even if non-significant). These are signals of moving preferences towards endogamy (Farahzadi, 2024). Fertility levels also appear to be affected. Conditional on having a child, parents exposed to the policy are less likely to give their children French names and more likely to choose Arabic names. These patterns suggest that exposure to Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law may have altered long-term preferences and behaviors related to identity formation. In particular, the shifts toward religious affiliation, endogamous marriage, and ethnic naming practices signal a reduced identification of French-born migrants with the French national identity, as evidenced. In terms of our theoretical model, such family and social behavior responses may reflect a form of adaptive investment in alternative sources of belonging and social recognition, triggered by the the reduction of the non monetary returns from integration into the

identity of the host nation (cfr. the blue $R(.)$ function with $M''_{ex} < 0$ in Figure 2).

Estimates on employment outcomes in the bottom-left panel do not suggest statistically significant compositional effects of exposure to Pasqua policy on work incentives. Finally, no specific effect emerges of Pasqua policy on political involvement. Migrants who were treated by the Pasqua policy manifest a certain interest in French politics, which however does not translate into a more effective political participation.

Figure 7: Estimates on religiosity, family formation, employment, and political participation
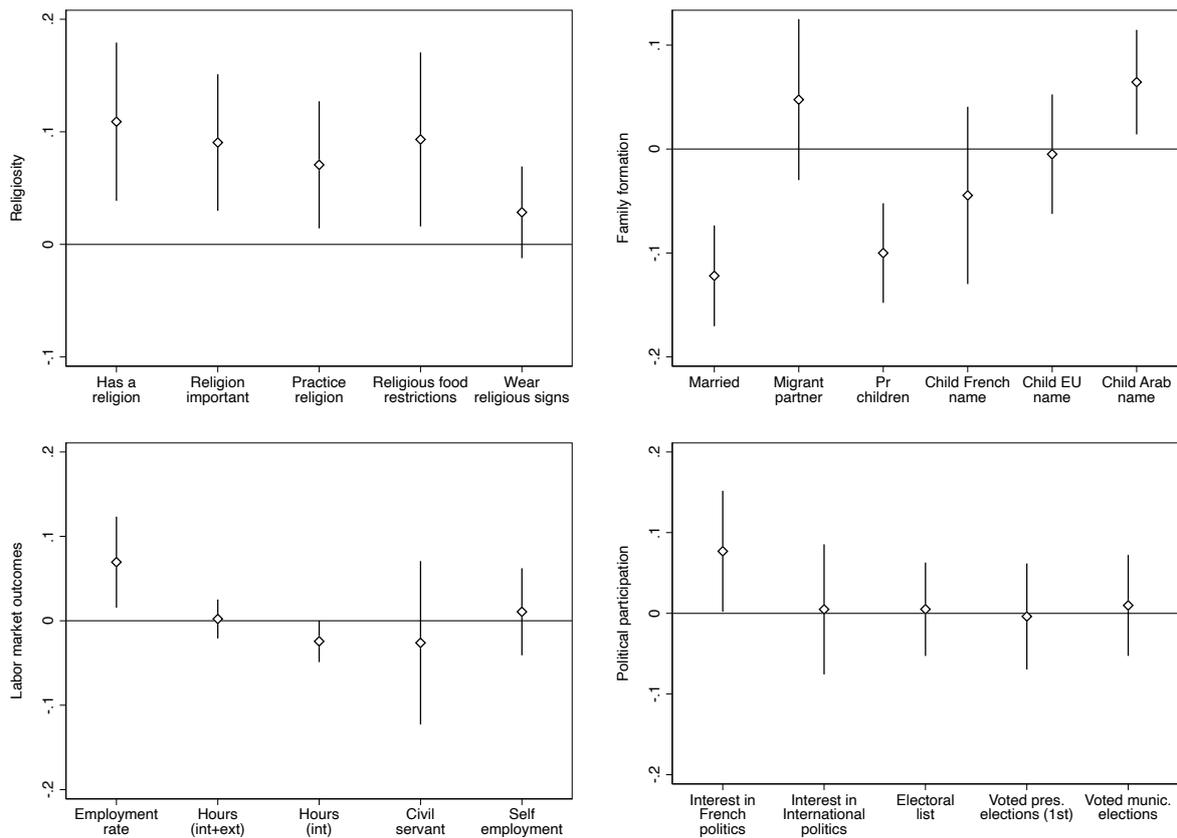
Notes: Each figure reports the estimated γ coefficient from eq. (3) on the outcomes described on the x-axis in the four domains of religiosity (top-left panel), family formation (top-right panel), employment (bottom-left panel), and political participation (bottom-right panel). All regressions include controls for individual characteristics (gender, education, nationality, age at naturalization), parental background (origin of father, education of father and mother), and fixed effects for the region of residence. Standard errors are bootstrapped (500 replications) clustered at the cohort level. 90% confidence interval is plotted.

6 Discussion

6.1 Home v/s host-country identity substitution?

Baseline estimates presented in Section 5 indicate that treatment by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua reform weakens the sense of French national identity, while reinforcing the salience of the culture of origin (e.g., through religiosity, marriages, or naming patterns). In this section, we investigate whether the Méhaignerie-Pasqua treatment triggers a mechanism of substitution of the French identity, with the identity from the parents' origin country among second-generation migrants. In Table 5, we report estimates of eq. (3) using individuals of mixed origin, i.e., with at least one foreign parent. This is a preferred control group for this analysis, as these individuals have a migrant background comparable to the main treated group (second-generation migrants), but are not directly treated by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua reform (as confirmed by placebo results presented in Figure 5).

Table 5: Results on home-country sense of belonging

	Sense of belonging to		
	France	Mother's country of origin	Father's country of origin
Treat x Post	-0.093**	0.096*	-0.032
	(0.046)	(0.052)	(0.078)
Observations	2495	2495	2495
R squared	.07	.08	.07
Mean dep. var. (Mixed-origin)	0.542	0.542	0.083
Mean dep. var. (2nd gen.)	0.753	0.329	0.121

Notes: All regressions include controls for individual characteristics (gender, age, age-squared, education, nationality), parental background (origin of father, education of father and mother), and fixed effects for the region of residence. The control group in this table consists of individuals of mixed origins, and the outcome for them is their sense of belonging to the country of origin of their foreign parent. Bootstrapped standard errors clustered at the cohort level in parentheses. Significance levels: * 10% ** 5% *** 1%

In column 1, we present results for the outcome of feeling of belongingness to France, which makes these estimates directly comparable with those reported in Table 3 (cfr. Panel B, first column). As in baseline estimates, we find that treatment reduces the feeling of French identity. In Panel 2 and 3, we consider the feeling of belonging to the mother's and father's country of origin, respectively. The results suggest that the loss of belonging to France is accompanied by an increase in the sense of belonging to the mother's country of origin. This implies that the reform either led to a complete loss of identity or that it may induce second-generation migrants to feel closer to their parents' country of origin, while reducing their connection with France.

6.2 Intra-family conflict

We also explore whether the Méhaignerie-Pasqua reform may have led to increased intra-household conflict due to the increased saliency of the naturalization choice. This would be in line with the evidence by Dahl et al. (2022) that shows that birthright citizenship increased intra-family conflict stemming from clashes between parents' and children's identities. In this section, we estimate equation 3 with different outcomes related to conflict experienced at 18 years of age. We find that second-generation immigrants impacted by the reform experienced more family conflict, especially on topics related to identity and traditions, namely on religion. In Appendix Table E.2, we test the effect of the reversal of the policy (Guigou law) on the degree of conflict and find that the policy reversal led to a reduction in family conflicts.

Table 6: Results on conflict

	Conflict between parents	Conflict with parents					
		Religion	Friends	Dating	Leisure	Career	School
Post	0.032	-0.076*	0.022	-0.039	0.032	0.010	0.037
	(0.047)	(0.039)	(0.080)	(0.063)	(0.069)	(0.055)	(0.085)
Treat	-0.062	0.000	0.033	0.064**	0.026	0.026	0.001
	(0.041)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.029)	(0.043)	(0.034)	(0.035)
Treat x Post	0.106***	0.073*	0.021	0.043	0.068	-0.025	0.019
	(0.040)	(0.038)	(0.043)	(0.046)	(0.044)	(0.029)	(0.045)
Observations	3714	3714	3714	3714	3714	3714	3714
Adjusted R-squared	.03	.03	.01	.07	.02	.01	.04
Mean dep. var. (natives)	0.219	0.17	0.302	0.365	0.479	0.273	0.453
Mean dep. var. (2nd gen.)	0.186	0.17	0.357	0.47	0.498	0.287	0.398

Notes: All regressions include controls for individual characteristics (gender, age, age-squared, education, nationality), parental background (origin of father and mother, education of father), and fixed effects for the region of residence. Standard errors bootstrapped (500 replications) clustered at the cohort level in parentheses. Significance levels: * 10% ** 5% *** 1%

7 Conclusion

In this paper, we exploit exogenous variation associated with a reform of citizenship rights to study the effect of a change in birthright citizenship laws on national identity, perceived discrimination, and ultimately the cultural, economic, and political integration of second-generation immigrants in France, using cross-sectional data from the 2008 wave of the survey *Trajectory and Origin* (TeO). We considered a law (commonly known as Pasqua Law) in place between 1993 and 1997, which introduced a symbolic restriction to the citizenship rights of second-generation immigrants in France. We adopt a difference-in-difference approach that compares the cohort of second-generation migrants, who acquired citizenship rights under the Pasqua Law, with the previous cohort that was

subject to traditional *Ius Soli* legislation, compared to French-born individuals in the same cohorts. We exploit this exogenous variation to identify the effect of the introduction of the Pasqua Law on national identity and perceived discrimination, and ultimately the cultural, economic, and political integration of second-generation immigrants.

Our results indicate that Pasqua treatment has a significant negative effect on the national identity of second-generation immigrants in France and increased their perception of being discriminated. This is a long-lasting effect that we observe 10-15 years after the treatment by the Law. We also show that the reform led migrants to be more entrenched in their roots as seen by an increase in religiosity and a decrease in intercultural marriages. Finally, we do not find compelling evidence of labor market or political participation effects, which is consistent with very limited practical (non-symbolic) effects of the Pasqua legislation for the effective access of second-generation migrants to rights and services in France after its abrogation in 1998. This paper thus provides important insights into the potential backlash effect of migration policies that impose forceful allegiance to the host country on migrants.

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Appendix

A   Méhaignerie Law

A.1   Application form

Figure A.1: Manifestation of will document

Il m'en est délivré un justificatif qui désigne le juge d'instance compétent pour en prononcer l'enregistrement, indique la liste des pièces devant être produites devant ce magistrat (1), énumère les pièces que je produis aujourd'hui, et précise que la décision sur l'enregistrement devra intervenir dans un délai de 6 mois à compter de la date du récépissé constatant la production de la totalité de ces pièces.

Je suis avisé que je peux demander également sur un formulaire séparé la francisation soit de mon nom seul, soit de mon nom et de mes prénoms ou de l'un d'eux, soit des prénoms ou de l'un des prénoms de mes enfants mineurs dont j'ai indiqué l'état civil.

Francisation demandée :   Oui ☐   Non ☐

Qualité de l'autorité qui recueille la manifestation de volonté (2) :

NOM (3) :   DATE ET SIGNATURE :

Cadre réservé à la mention d'enregistrement par le juge du tribunal d'instance

N° du registre d'ordre :

Enregistré par Nous :

Juge au tribunal d'instance de :

Sous le n°_____ / _____

DATE :   SIGNATURE
                                                                          DU MAGISTRAT D'INSTANCE :

La loi n° 78-17 du 6 janvier 1978 relative à l'informatique, aux fichiers et aux libertés, s'applique aux réponses faites à ce formulaire. Elle garantit un droit d'accès et de vérification pour les données vous concernant auprès du magistrat du tribunal d'instance compétent pour en prononcer l'enregistrement.

(1) Si la manifestation est recueillie à la mairie, en préfecture ou dans une gendarmerie, le document sera transmis dans un délai de 3 jours francs au juge d'instance compétent.
(2) Mairie, préfecture, gendarmerie, tribunal d'instance.
(3) Nom du juge si la manifestation de volonté est recueillie au tribunal d'instance.

Notes: This shows the naturalization application form whereby the top part of the second page refers to the statement of the willingness to become French. It states the following: "Born in France and having resided there habitually for five years, or benefiting from the exemption from the internship provided for in Article 21-7 of the Civil Code, I hereby express my desire to acquire French nationality."

B Choice of pre v/s post-cohorts

Figure B.1: Share of cohorts exposed to the 1993 Pasqua reform

Exposure to Pasqua reform by birth cohort
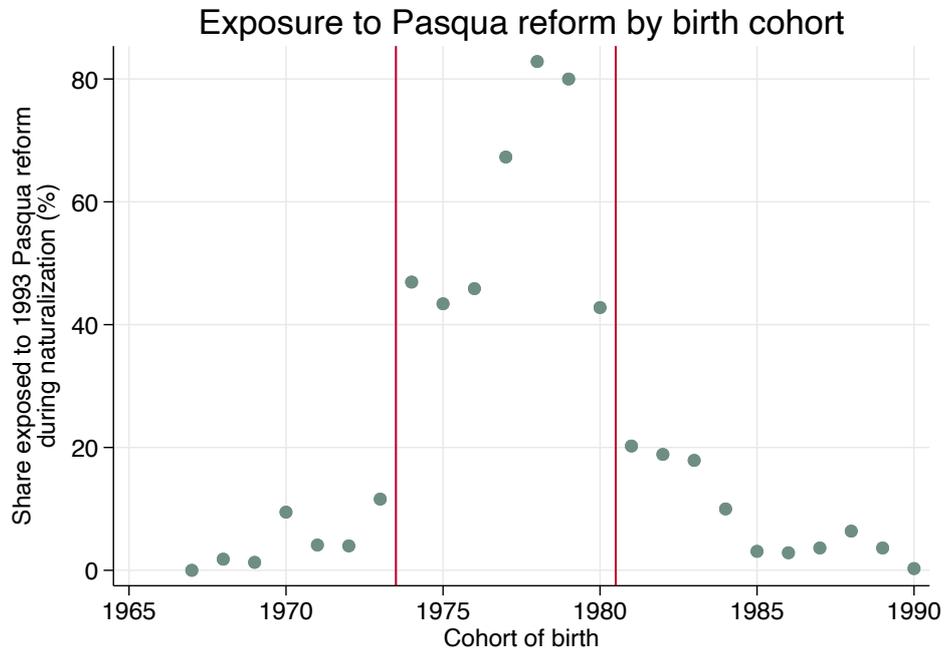
Notes: This figure shows the share of each cohort of second-generation immigrants that were naturalized between July 1993 and June 1998 when the Pasqua-Méhaignerie law was in place. The most impacted cohorts are those born between 1974 and 1980.

Figure B.2: Age at naturalization
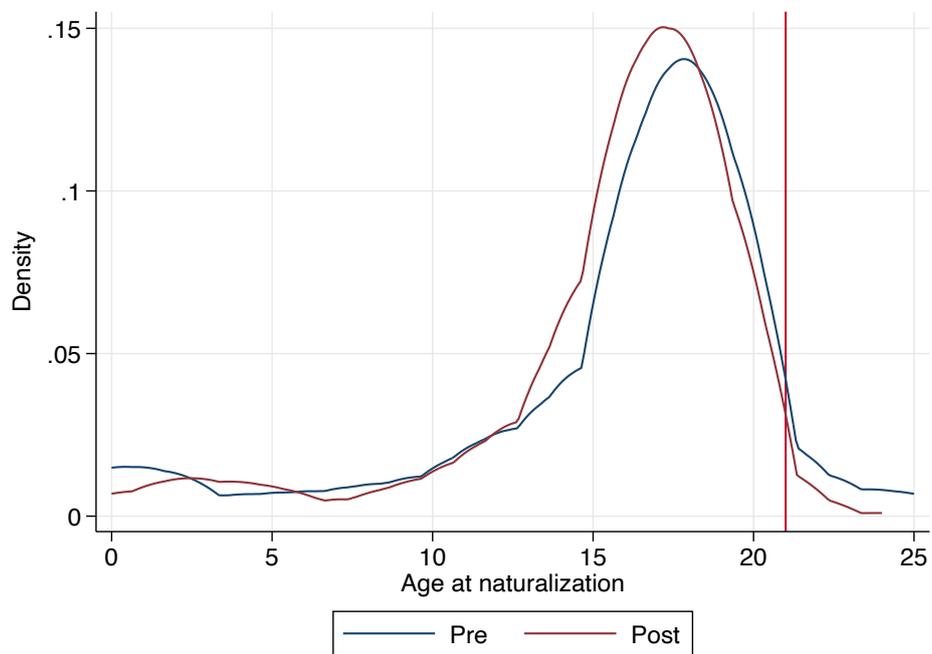
Notes: This figure shows the distribution of the age at naturalization of the pre- and post-reform cohorts, and a vertical line at 21 years of age.

C   Attrition

Figure C.1: Differential attrition rate by treatment status based on birth year window
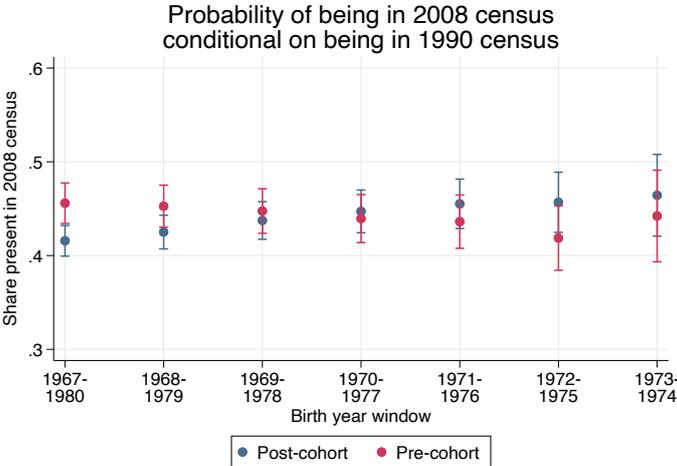
Notes: This shows the probability of being observed in the census round of 2008 among the pre- and post-cohorts of the treated group, conditional on living with their parents in the 1990 census. This is estimated for different cohort windows, going from ±7 (1967 - 1980) to ±1 (1973 - 1974).

D Balancing on parents' religion

Table D.1: Balancing test

	[1] Unbalanced		[2] Maha Balanced	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
Panel A: Country of origin (reference Maghreb)	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Subsaharan Africa	0.145***	0.138***	0.013	-0.009
	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.028)	(0.040)
Other Africa	0.227**	0.265***	0.191	0.194*
	(0.105)	(0.063)	(0.124)	(0.110)
Asia	0.184***	0.243***	0.056	0.078
	(0.046)	(0.040)	(0.069)	(0.072)
Turkey & ME	0.301***	0.402***	0.077	0.162**
	(0.087)	(0.050)	(0.094)	(0.075)
Southern Europe	-0.131***	-0.114***	0.003	-0.003
	(0.030)	(0.025)	(0.034)	(0.031)
Other Europe	-0.138**	-0.005	-0.124*	-0.093
	(0.056)	(0.111)	(0.062)	(0.101)
East Europe	-0.254	0.027	-0.180	0.046
	(0.185)	(0.143)	(0.182)	(0.153)
Others	0.470***	0.077	0.472***	0.015
	(0.031)	(0.182)	(0.014)	(0.177)

Notes: Balancing tests for the composition of the Pasqua group, conditional on the regional fixed effects. In column [2], Mahalanobis matching on origin of the father, origin of the mother, education of the father, education of the mother, fathers' religion, using the five nearest neighbors. Authors' calculation based upon TeO data.

Table D.2: Results on identity and feeling of discrimination (matched on religion)

| | Panel A: Unbalanced sample | | |
	Feeling French	At home in France	Perceived discriminated
Treat	-0.023	-0.014	0.007
	(0.047)	(0.044)	(0.032)
Post	-0.081**	-0.176***	0.027
	(0.029)	(0.046)	(0.034)
Treat x Post	-0.079**	-0.105**	0.095***
	(0.033)	(0.041)	(0.023)
Observations	4024	4024	4013
R squared	0.067	0.159	0.093
Mean dep. var. (French-born)	0.896	0.843	0.09
Mean dep. var. (2nd gen.)	0.723	0.448	0.258
	Panel B: Balanced sample		
	Feeling French	At home in France	Perceived discriminated
Treat	-0.011	-0.003	-0.002
	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.034)
Post	-0.076*	-0.179***	0.016
	(0.039)	(0.043)	(0.030)
Treat x Post	-0.074**	-0.094*	0.081***
	(0.033)	(0.048)	(0.024)
Observations	4024	4024	4013
R squared	0.069	0.156	0.092
Mean dep. var. (French-born)	0.899	0.841	0.09
Mean dep. var. (2nd gen.)	0.734	0.454	0.248

Notes: All regressions include controls for individual characteristics (gender, age, age-squared, education, nationality), parental background (origin of father and mother, education of father and mother), and fixed effects for the region of residence. Standard errors are bootstrapped (500 replications) clustered at the cohort level in parentheses. Significance levels: * 10% ** 5% *** 1%

E Reversal of the policy: 1998 Guigou reform

Estimates presented in the main analysis suggest the cohort of French-born immigrants who were directly exposed to the change in naturalization procedures enacted by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua Law suffered a loss of French identity and a corresponding increase in perceived discrimination. In this section, we turn to the analysis of the policy reversal induced by the Guigou Law, (n⁰ 98-170) promulgated by the Jospin government in 1998 to re-establish the standard Jus Soli legislation. To analyze this policy reversal, we re-estimate equation (3) using second-generation immigrants as the treatment group and natives as the control group, as we did before. However, we now exploit 1980 as the threshold cohort. This cohort year identifies as treated the cohort of second-generation immigrants born between 1981 and 1986 (included), which were reinstalled with own birthright citizenship rights by the policy change from the Méhaignerie-Pasqua to the Guigou regime; the untreated part of the treatment group includes the Pasqua cohort of second generation migrants (i.e. those born between 1974 and 1980), who had already acquired own citizenship right under the Méhaignerie-Pasqua regime so were not directly affected in their citizenship rights from the policy change.

Empirical results indicate that the transition from the restrictive Méhaignerie-Pasqua regime to the more liberal Guigou regime produced benefits in terms on French national identity and perceptions of discrimination, though such benefits were not uniform and significant across all dimensions. Table E.1 presents estimates on French identity and perceived discrimination directly comparable with those in Panel B of Table 3. The estimated γ coefficients in Table E.1 take the opposite sign compared to those in Table 3, suggesting that the policy reversal strengthened national identity and reduced perceptions of discrimination across all three dimensions of interest. However, observed gains from the policy reversal do not seem to fully compensate for the identity losses induced by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua law. The size and significance of the estimated γ coefficient closely resemble the one in Table 3 in the "Seen as French" dimension. Conversely, estimates for "Feeling French" and perceived discrimination are smaller in magnitude and not precisely estimated. Identity formation is shaped by multiple, long-term factors beyond legal status alone, including social integration and public discourse. These findings may suggest that reinstating birthright citizenship had a positive effect, but identity losses inflicted by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua policy were not entirely reversible.

Further evidence on migrant integration suggests that the policy reversal also favored social integration of migrants, but did not weaken cultural links to the origin. Figure E.1 presents evidence that aligns with estimates in Table E.1, showing that the estimated γs take the opposite sign compared to Figure 7 with respect to family formation decisions. The reinstatement of Jus Soli increased the probability of intercultural marriage and lowered the likelihood of giving their children Arabic names, while increasing the probability

of choosing French names. We do not observe any reversal in migrants' behavior when it comes to religiosity. Although the cohort of second-generation migrants affected by the Guigou policy was too young to have been directly impacted by the Méhaignerie-Pasqua regime, they were nonetheless exposed to the broader public discourse surrounding it. This suggests that the policy reversal induced by the Guigou Law likely emerged in a context of heightened political rhetoric targeting migrants, which may have dampened the benefits of restoring birthright citizenship in terms of integration and cultural convergence. Naturalization policy continues not to matter a lot for economic and political integration.

Table E.1: Results on identity and feeling of discrimination of the policy reversal

	Panel: Balanced sample		
	Feeling French	Seen as French	Perceived discriminated
Treat x Post	0.018	0.099**	-0.016
	(0.031)	(0.041)	(0.036)
Observations	3669	3669	3669
Adj. R-squared	.08	.18	.17
Mean dep. var. (natives)	0.887	0.830	0.021
Mean dep. var. (2nd gen.)	0.62	0.304	0.285

Notes: All regressions include controls for individual characteristics (gender, age, age-squared, education, nationality), parental background (origin of father, education of father and mother), and fixed effects for the region of residence. Standard errors clustered at the regional level in parentheses. Significance levels: * 10% ** 5% *** 1%
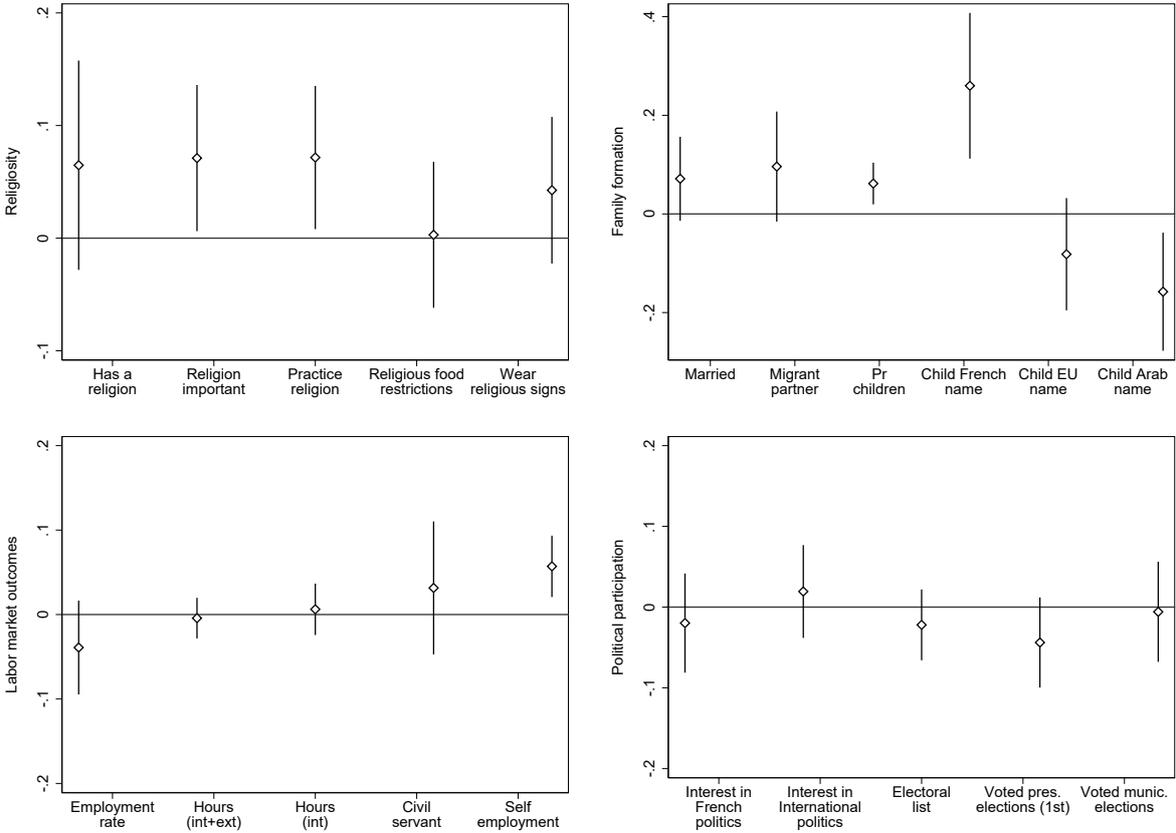
We also test the effect of the policy reversal on intra-family conflict and sources of conflicts. The results in Table E.2 reveal that the policy reversal reduced conflict between parents, including a reduction in conflict about religion.

Table E.2: Results on conflict - 1998 Guigou law (policy reversal)

	Conflict	Conflict with parents					
	between parents	Religion	Friends	Dating	Leisure	Career	School
Post	0.066	0.003	0.078	-0.012	0.020	-0.085	-0.093
	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.065)	(0.090)	(0.110)	(0.083)	(0.059)
Treat	0.011	0.086***	0.054	0.116***	0.080	-0.029	-0.019
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.038)	(0.040)	(0.057)	(0.047)	(0.067)
Treat x Post	-0.107**	-0.025	-0.075	-0.056	-0.069	0.024	-0.021
	(0.046)	(0.029)	(0.055)	(0.038)	(0.050)	(0.055)	(0.069)
Observations	3741	3741	3741	3741	3741	3741	3741
Adjusted R-squared	.05	.03	.04	.06	.02	.02	.07
Mean dep. var. (natives)	0.166	0.127	0.329	0.351	0.48	0.317	0.485
Mean dep. var. (2nd gen.)	0.271	0.231	0.436	0.493	0.553	0.32	0.472

Notes: All regressions include controls for individual characteristics (gender, age, age-squared, education, nationality), parental background (origin of father, education of father and mother), and fixed effects for the region of residence. Standard errors clustered at the regional level in parentheses. Significance levels: * 10% ** 5% *** 1%

Figure E.1: Estimates on religiosity, family formation, employment, and political partic-
ipation (policy reversal)

Notes: Each figure reports the estimated γ coefficient from eq. (3) on the outcomes described on the
x-axis in the four domains of religiosity (top-left panel), family formation (top-right panel), employment
(bottom-left panel), and political participation (bottom-right panel). All regressions include controls
for individual characteristics (gender, education, nationality), parental background (origin of father,
education of father and mother), and fixed effects for the region of residence. Bootstrapped standard
errors clustered at the cohort level. 90% confidence interval is plotted.