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WorldViews

Trump says no other country has birthright citizenship. He's wrong.

By [Amanda Erickson](#)

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On Tuesday, President Trump [said he will try to end the right to U.S. citizenship](#) for babies born in the United States to noncitizens. He will issue an executive order, he said, to override the 14th Amendment, which states that “all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.”

“We’re the only country in the world where a person comes in and has a baby, and the baby is essentially a citizen of the United States . . . with all of those benefits,” Trump [said in an interview with Axios](#).

He's wrong.

At least 30 countries subscribe to the principle of *jus soli*, wherein a person's citizenship is based on the territory of his or her birth. Simply put, birthright citizenship. Jus soli is law in Canada, the United States and nearly every country in South and Central America.

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Sociologist John Skrentny theorized that jus soli is strongest in the Western Hemisphere because of the region's colonial history. Traditionally, lenient naturalization laws made it more appealing for Europeans to travel to — and settle in — the New World. That was important, [Skrentny told PolitiFact](#), because “getting people to move in was a good way to establish authority.”

Although most European countries do not offer automatic citizenship at birth to anyone born there, many make it easy for those children to later obtain citizenship.

“In Europe, 8 countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom) have strong jus soli dispositions, where children born from foreign parents can acquire nationality quite easily (for example, in France, with a 5 years residency condition),” [wrote Charline Becker](#) of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, a human rights organization. “And seventeen states have safeguards allowing otherwise stateless children to acquire the nationality when they are born in the territory.”

There is also evidence that getting rid of jus soli [could create a human rights crisis](#). Without citizenship documents, residents can't attend school or work in the formal economy. When the Dominican Republic ditched its birthright citizenship, it [created a class of 200,000 stateless people](#), including 60,000 children.

In Japan, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Koreans have lived without citizenship rights for decades. Many moved there after Japan annexed Korea in 1910; 600,000 stayed after the end of World War II. Japan revoked their citizenship, and they lost their voting rights and were barred from most jobs.

Read more:

[Map: Every 10 minutes, a stateless baby is born](#)

[Statelessness in the United States](#)

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