

*Abstract:*

*In many countries, school attendance starts on a fixed date. In contrast, New Zealand uses rolling admissions and children can start school throughout the year, right after their fifth birthday. However, children turning five during a school holiday need to wait until the start of the following teaching term. This system generates an exogenous variation in the amount of time spent in primary school and enables us to estimate the causal effects of early schooling, independent from the effects of age. Using rich microdata on all high school leavers in New Zealand from 2009-2016, we find that an additional month of early schooling increases the probability of achieving a top high school certificate by 6% and qualifying for university entrance by 5%. These are large long-term effects.*