

## Origins of Persistent Differences in Human Capital Accumulation

The Protestant Reformation led to formal institutional change starting in the early 1520s. The key changes occurred first at the city level. City councils and magistrates across German-speaking Europe passed "church ordinances." These laws established the first experiments in mass public education in European history and new rules governing religious doctrine and social welfare provision. This research assembles evidence on the formal provisions of 1,000+ city-level Reformation ordinances. We use these data to study the determinants of long run differences in human capital accumulation. Plausibly exogenous variation in exposure to Protestant media and post-Reformation innovations in schooling is used to examine the impact of early institutional innovations in the provision of public education.