

Welfare Chauvinism – Who Cares?

Evidence on Priorities and the Importance the Public Attributes to Expanding or Retrenching Welfare Entitlements of Immigrants

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Abstract

In many Western European countries, welfare rights of immigrants have emerged as an important issue on the political agenda, while an extensive body of research has documented growing welfare chauvinistic preferences. However, we do not know much about the *importance* people attach to welfare chauvinism relative to welfare benefits for other social groups such as pensioners, the unemployed or families. This paper, therefore, addresses the question whether citizens in Western European countries *prioritize* expanding or restricting welfare entitlements for immigrants. Or do they subordinate this issue to other social policy reforms? Moreover, focusing on priorities allows me to disentangle which proponents of welfare rights for immigrants remain supportive even when rising benefits for immigrants comes at the cost of lowering benefits for themselves and to contribute to the debate whether welfare chauvinism is more strongly correlated with attitudes on an economic-redistributive or socio-cultural dimension. To investigate both the importance of and the priorities for welfare chauvinism, I rely on conjoint experiments and rating questions from an original survey recently fielded in eight Western European countries. I show that welfare chauvinism is indeed one of the social policy reform issues the public has strongest preferences on – more than for example on unemployment benefits or childcare. This despite the share of financial resources benefitting immigrants being relatively small. Importance of welfare chauvinism is high for both its proponents as well as its opponents. Thus, preferences on welfare chauvinism are strongly polarized, dividing voters along attitudes on a socio-cultural rather than an economic-distributive dimension. While not surprisingly, voters of right-wing populist parties are the strongest proponents of welfare chauvinism, the electorate of green parties most strongly opposes welfare chauvinism. These findings contribute to answering the question to what degree culturally connotated issues, such as immigration, structure how voters think about welfare politics.

1. Introduction and Research Questions

Welfare chauvinism has become an increasingly popular topic in the academic discourse and this for good reason. For example, Reeskens and van Oorschot (2012) have shown that a majority of Europeans prefer only a conditional access of immigrants to welfare provision while Cappelen and Midtbø (2016) show that up to 60% of Norwegians are upset by immigrants benefitting from welfare. Moreover, the findings of Marx and Naumann (2018) indicate that the massive influx of immigrants as a result of the recent refugee crisis has further strengthened welfare chauvinist preferences among a wide range of German voters. On the party level, welfare chauvinism¹ has become a key aspect of the social policy program of right-wing populist parties such as the Danish People's Party, the Dutch Freedom Party or the French Front National which could increase their vote shares significantly over the last two decades. This success has led mainstream parties on both the right and even the left (such as the Danish Social Democrats recently) to openly advocate welfare cutbacks targeting immigrants specifically. Evidence also suggests that – although limited - the articulation of welfare chauvinistic views has in some instances led to social policy reforms which deliberately affected immigrants detrimentally (Careja et al. 2016, Emmenegger and Careja 2012, Tyrberg and Dahlström 2017, Taylor-Gooby et al. 2017). Thus, believing the literature on parties and public opinion, welfare rights of immigrants seem to have become an important issue in the debate about how to reform the welfare state. This, however, might come as a surprise considering the relatively low share of financial resources of the welfare state which benefits immigrants compared to public spending for the old, the sick or the unemployed.

My first research question, therefore, asks whether the issue of welfare chauvinism is indeed as important – also for the public. When it comes to reforming the welfare state, does public opinion really care about welfare entitlements for immigrants? Or do people only care relatively little about what happens to immigrants' entitlements whereas their preferences are much more intense if other recipient groups or specific social policies are affected?

Investigating whether welfare chauvinism is a truly politicized issue in welfare politics and whether the public attributes importance to the fate of immigrants in welfare politics contributes to previous research which argues that socio-cultural issues such as immigration are becoming increasingly salient relative to economic-redistributive issues. Welfare

¹ While the term welfare chauvinism has also been used to describe a programmatic mix of pro-welfare and anti-immigrant stances, I employ welfare chauvinism in the way it was originally used (going back to Andersen and Bjørklund 1990) denoting the attitude that immigrants should be excluded from the pool of welfare recipients or at least that the welfare state should cater more strongly to natives than non-natives.

chauvinism can be considered a most likely case to show that issues and attitudes which are strongly aligned with a second, socio-cultural, non-economic dimension of political conflict (Kitschelt 1994, Kriesi et al. 2008) structure how voters think about welfare politics and are relevant for contemporary welfare politics (as for example argued by Häusermann and Kriesi 2015, Beramendi et al. 2015).

In a second step I extend the focus by not only looking at the importance but also preferences for or against welfare chauvinism. I ask first who supports and who opposes welfare chauvinism principally. Furthermore, I combine principal positions and attributed importance to ask who *prioritizes* to cut back or to expand welfare entitlements for immigrants. This is interesting especially on the pro-immigration side: while politically left-wing individuals might be expected to principally oppose welfare chauvinism and defend the welfare rights of immigrants, it is unclear whether they would uphold their support for immigrants' welfare entitlements even if this means reductions in other social benefits such as pensions, childcare or unemployment benefits where left voters would oppose cutbacks too. Therefore, I investigate whether a sizeable part of Western European voters prioritizes the opposition to welfare chauvinism and the preservation of welfare benefits for immigrants.

The focus on priorities concerning welfare chauvinism allows me to answer two questions. First, is welfare chauvinism a polarizing issue? Previous literature suggests that for example the voters of the populist right care a lot about welfare chauvinism. However, it is less clear whether left voters are equally fervent about opposing welfare chauvinism or whether they subordinate their opposition to the rejection of cutbacks for other groups of welfare recipients such as, for instance, the unemployed. Especially, evidence from conjoint experiments indicates that while (not surprisingly) welfare chauvinistic reform measures are markedly popular among culturally conservative voters, culturally liberal voters on average oppose welfare chauvinism equally strongly.

Second, I ask whether welfare chauvinistic preferences are more strongly correlated to attitudes on the economic-redistributive dimension or to attitudes of a second, socio-cultural dimension. I argue that disentangling between unconstrained positions and priorities allows me to contribute to this question whether welfare chauvinism is an inherently economic or cultural issue. I find that while economic-redistributive attitudes are indeed correlated with principal positions towards welfare chauvinism, the prioritization of preserving immigrants' welfare rights can only be explained by second dimension, socio-cultural attitudes. In accordance with that, I find that not the electorates of social-democratic or radical left parties

are the strongest defendants of immigrants' welfare benefits but that green voters represent the pole opposing welfare chauvinism most intensely.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First, I clarify the differences between positions, importance and priorities. Second, I outline the argument why welfare chauvinism can be expected to be important for the public despite the financial relevance of immigrants' welfare benefits being relatively limited. Third, I develop theoretical expectations about citizens' positions and priorities concerning welfare chauvinism. Then, I present the data and explain the research design before discussing the evidence. To concluding section discusses the implications of the results.

2. Theory

Positions, Priorities and Importance – Welfare Chauvinism in a Context of Fiscal Austerity

While welfare politics for most of the 20th century were structured around the question whether the welfare state should be further expanded or not, since the 1990s the context of welfare politics is characterized more strongly by fiscal constraints and austerity (Pierson 2001). On the one hand, welfare states face increasing demands and needs for more social services and benefits due to manifold reasons such as the emergence of new social risks, increased unemployment during the Euro crisis or a high number of refugees. On the other hand, and running contrary to increasing demands, there exists financial and political pressure to stabilize or even retrench welfare state expenditures. Welfare state recalibration therefore is no longer a positive- but rather a zero-sum game (Häusermann 2010). This means that increasing generosity and spending in one policy field or for one group of welfare recipients comes at the cost of reducing generosity in another field: welfare politics have become “politics of trade-offs” (Häusermann 2016; also Häusermann et al. 2018, Busemeyer and Garrizmann 2017, Bremer and Bürgisser 2018). Therefore, *positions* (i.e. whether one generally supports the provision of a welfare benefit) lose relevancy at the expense of *priorities* (i.e. if the welfare state – because of finite resources – can only include some policies and cater for some needs but not others, which policies and needs one would prioritize over others). Thus, concerning welfare chauvinism not only the question whether immigrants should receive welfare benefits matters in current welfare politics but also

whether one would be willing to grant welfare benefits to immigrants at the expense of cutting back the generosity of, for instance, unemployment benefits or pensions.

To clarify things, I denote simple support or opposition to welfare benefits for immigrants as the *position* on welfare chauvinism. *Importance* that is attributed to welfare chauvinism indicates how much people care about whether welfare benefits for immigrants should be high or low, i.e. whether they have a strong or only a weak preference on welfare chauvinism. *Priorities* combine aspects of position and importance. If someone prioritizes to expand welfare benefits for immigrants, it means that this voter has both a position against welfare chauvinism and attributes a high importance to the generosity towards immigrants relative to the generosity towards different groups of welfare beneficiaries.

The Importance of Welfare Chauvinism Relative to Other Social Policy Reforms

In the first research question I ask how much importance the public attributes to expanding or cutting back welfare benefits which specifically target immigrants. Do voters in Western European countries care about how much immigrants receive from the welfare state? Or do they care more about pensions for the old, public childcare facilities for families or benefits and services for the unemployed?

For two reasons, one might expect that although welfare chauvinism having received attention both in the scholarly debate and in party political discourses in many countries, welfare benefits for immigrants are a rather minor issue. These are self-interest and the relatively small financial pertinence of immigrants' welfare benefits.

According to a material self-interest approach, welfare benefits of immigrants should be one of the least popular social policies since no citizen faces the risk to become dependent of benefits for immigrants. However, this approach also suggests that the refusal of these benefits should not be what matters most. Much more, I would expect people to care most about the preservation or expansion of benefits they themselves benefit from (such as pensioners from pensions or parents from public childcare) or at least most strongly risk becoming dependent on in the future (Rehm 2009).

Furthermore, despite an important argument brought up by proponents of welfare chauvinism being that immigration puts a high financial pressure on the welfare state and that benefits for immigrants challenge the viability of the welfare state (Römer 2017), the financial relevancy of immigrants is actually rather small. This is true both concerning the inclusion of

immigrants in conventional social policies as well as for social policies specifically targeted at the integration of immigrants and refugees. Spies (2018: 88), for instance, shows for a sample of 17 European countries that against conventional wisdom immigrants have a lower welfare dependence ratio for eight welfare areas but are overrepresented only among the beneficiaries of unemployment benefits. The share of immigrants receiving welfare benefits in areas such as pensions, health care, family policies or housing is, thus, lower than the share of recipients among natives. Comparing government spending for integration policies for immigrants with other social policy areas underlines the relatively low financial significance of such policies. According to the OECD (2017: 2), Germany has in 2015 – when the number of asylum seekers has famously peaked – spent about 0.5% of its GDP on measures to integrate immigrants and refugees (including housing, social welfare, education, active labor market policies, etc.). In contrast, Germany has in the same year spent 8.3% of its GDP on pensions for the old, 2.2% on family policies, 1.2% on tertiary education and 1.5% of its GDP on the unemployed (including both unemployment benefits and active labor market policies) (OECD Social Expenditure Database 2019).

Nevertheless, I argue that mainly for two reasons it makes sense to expect that the public attributes importance to welfare chauvinism and welfare benefits of immigrants: first, the increased saliency of, second dimension, socio-cultural issues such as immigration and second, recent findings of the deservingness literature which have shown that identity seems to trump most other welfare deservingness criteria.

Economic issues have been a structuring characteristic of political conflict in West European countries for most of the 20th century. Issues such as economic inequality, redistribution, support of a big welfare state and strong state intervention in the economy have divided left and right based on economic terms. However, a majority of research nowadays agrees that one dimension is not enough to capture the structure of the political space, neither at the party level nor at the level of the mass public. Rather, it is hardly disputed that besides a first, economic dimension at least a second dimension exists. An ever-growing body of research even argues that this second dimension, integrating socio-cultural issues such as cultural liberalism, international integration or most prominently immigration has gained in saliency and importance relative to classic economic issues both for parties and voters (Clark and Lipset 2001, Ignazi 1996, Rydgren 2005). Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008: 610), for example, state that “studies of party politics and party competition in West European democracies all point to diversification. Non-economic issues such as the environment, refugees and immigrants or law and order have become increasingly central to party politics.”

More recently, Green-Pedersen and Otjes (2017) show that immigration has increasingly gained attention in party manifestos since the 1980s in all Western European countries. Moreover, many studies explaining vote choice have argued that when making a vote choice, second dimension issues generally (Kitschelt 1994, Kriesi et al. 2008) or immigration specifically (Finseraas 2012) have gained saliency. Hence, many voters seem to care more about issues such as immigration than traditionally economic topics revolving around the question of redistribution from upper to lower classes.

The saliency of immigration is also reflected in recent contributions of the welfare deservingness literature. This literature has shown consistently that immigrants are the group which is perceived least deserving to receive welfare benefits when compared to other groups of potential welfare state beneficiaries such as the elderly, the sick or the unemployed (van Oorschot 2006, van Oorschot and Uunk 2007, Ford 2016). While these findings show that solidarity for immigrants among natives is generally rather low, this tells us nothing about the *importance* which people attribute to their dislike of welfare benefits for immigrants. More recently, though, Reeskens and van der Meer (2018) have shown using a vignette experiment that foreign origin outweighs other deservingness criteria such as, for instance, need. Thus, when respondents were asked to allocate unemployment provision to fictive persons, immigrants were consistently disadvantaged even if they behaved “better” than native persons concerning other deservingness criteria. The fact that this “immigrant penalty” in welfare deservingness perceptions seems insurmountable speaks for the fact that people care strongly about what immigrants get or do not get from the welfare state.

Therefore, I hypothesize that *the general public attributes more importance to welfare chauvinism and welfare benefits for immigrants than to other social policy reform issues* (H1).

Who Prioritizes Support and Opposition to Welfare Chauvinism?

Previous literature has shown that education is a strong predictor of welfare chauvinistic attitudes with low education being correlated with welfare chauvinism (van der Waal et al. 2010, Mewes and Mau 2013). This finding has prompted several studies to investigate why it is that the sociodemographic groups which are usually the strongest support constituencies of the welfare state (voters with low education and low income) are so staunchly opposed to welfare rights of immigrants. On the one hand, explanations have focused on interest-related

accounts that the most vulnerable are the ones who perceive the economic threat from immigration to be highest (Mewes and Mau 2012). On the other hand, a cultural explanation has gained support which hints at the fact that the cultural insecurity of the low educated is the strongest driver of their welfare chauvinistic attitudes (van der Waal et al. 2010). Such a cultural understanding of welfare chauvinistic preferences is supported by Häusermann and Kriesi (2015) who show that preferences for welfare chauvinism are more closely related to preferences on typical, non-economic, second dimension issues rather than to the economic-redistributive dimension.

However, this cultural understanding has not remained undisputed. Countering it, Keskinen (2016: 321) claims very explicitly that “welfare chauvinism targeting migrants is part of a broader neoliberal restructuring of the welfare state and of welfare retrenchment.” Moreover, Van Oorschot and Uunk (2007) find that support to reduce inequality is strongly positively correlated with relative concern for the well-being of immigrants. Also, Reeskens and van Oorschot (2012: 121) argue that “from a theoretical perspective, it is plausible to assume a direct link between preferences for principles of welfare redistribution and conditioning criteria associated with immigrants’ social rights”. Furthermore, Maggini and Fernández (2019: 1) show that solidarity towards refugees “entails political commitment to both leftist positions on economic issues and to libertarian stances on cultural issues”.

This shows that previous research could not fully answer the question yet whether welfare chauvinist attitudes are more economic or socio-cultural in nature. I argue that for answering this question, it is helpful to differentiate between positions and priorities. Welfare chauvinistic *positions* can have both economic or cultural roots as individuals might oppose entitlements for immigrants because they dislike multiculturalism or because they dislike the welfare state per se. Especially, among the highly educated opposition to immigration and welfare chauvinism has been found to be strongly correlated with opposition to economic redistribution (Bay et al. 2013: 202). Going from positions to *priorities*, however, the economic aspect vanishes: if people are asked for which groups (immigrants, the old, outsiders, etc.) they would least like to retrench the welfare state, whether someone likes more or less welfare state, does not matter anymore. In a scenario where people can retain welfare benefits only for some groups but must retrench benefits for others, I argue that only voters with strongly libertarian-universalistic attitudes on the socio-cultural dimension remain supportive of immigrants’ welfare benefits. Leftist positions on the economic-redistributive dimension alone, though, are not enough to oppose the reduction of welfare benefits for

immigrants in such a scenario where fiscal pressures require retrenchment at least for some groups.

Therefore, I hypothesize that *positions on welfare chauvinism correlate both with attitudes on the economic-redistributive as well as on the socio-cultural dimension, whereas priorities on welfare chauvinism correlate only with attitudes on the second, non-economic dimension* (H2).

As a consequence of this, I also expect corresponding differences between electorates of party families. I would expect *that positions on welfare chauvinism divide between party electorates of left and right parties, opposing social democratic, radical left and green voters to conservative, liberal and most strongly populist right voters* (H3a). These expectations are for the most part in line with the findings of de Koster et al. (2013) for parties in the Netherlands. *When it comes to priorities concerning welfare chauvinism, i.e. when defending or expanding the welfare benefits of immigrants comes at the cost of reducing other social benefits, however, I argue that a divide within the left opens up* (H3b). Whereas, voters of Green parties – which have been shown to represent the universalist-libertarian pole of the second, socio-cultural dimension (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015) – are the strongest opponents of welfare chauvinism, I expect that voters of social democratic and radical left parties are less enthusiastic about defending immigrants' welfare benefits when other benefits such as pensions or unemployment benefits are at risk.

3. Data and Methods

To investigate my hypotheses on positions and priorities concerning welfare chauvinism, I use novel data from a survey which has been fielded between October and December 2018 in the context of the ERC-project “welfarepriorities”. While attitudes towards welfare chauvinism are not the core interest of this project, the survey contains several innovative questions that help to understand how welfare chauvinistic attitudes are structured and how preferences for welfare chauvinistic reform relate to other possible reforms of the welfare state.

We draw on data from around 1500 respondents in eight Western European countries (Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, Ireland, UK, Italy and Spain) each. The range of countries includes very different welfare state regimes (two countries each for the social democratic, the conservative, the liberal and the southern regimes) and both countries where immigration has been linked to the welfare state in the public debate (Denmark, Netherlands,

UK) as well as countries where the absence of a strong populist right party has by and large prevented a salient debate about welfare chauvinism (Ireland, Spain).

The final sample consists of 12'506 completed interviews which were recruited from an online panel. Quotas on age and sex (crossed) as well as education should enhance the representativity of the sample with regard to each country's adult population. To alleviate slight over- or underrepresentation of certain groups further, in all calculations I apply weights to adjust for the aforementioned socio-structural characteristics. Since, I am in this paper not interested in immigrants' own attitudes towards welfare chauvinism (which is for example the topic of Degen et al. 2018) but of citizens eligible to vote, I exclude respondents who do not identify as citizens of their country of residence. This leaves me with 11'892 native respondents.

In the first research question, I ask how much *importance* citizens attribute to welfare entitlements for immigrants relative to other social policy fields. To measure the importance of different policy fields I use two questions in which respondents are asked to allocate 100 points to six different policy fields, namely old age pensions, childcare, higher education, unemployment benefits, labor market reintegration services and last but not least *services for the social and labor market integration of immigrants*. Respondents are first asked to imagine having spare resources with which they can improve benefits in some but not all social policy fields and to allocate the 100 points according to how important they consider *benefit improvement* in each of the policy fields. In a second exercise, respondents should imagine that cutbacks are inevitable and must again allocate 100 points to the same six social policy fields, this time giving more points to those fields where they find a reduction of benefits more acceptable. The combination of these two questions allows me to measure the importance respondents attribute to each of the six social policy fields which I operationalize as the absolute difference between points attributed to the priority of expanding and retrenching in a respective policy field. For example, a respondent who distributes 30 points to expanding services for the social and labor market integration of immigrants and 10 points to retrenching such services gets an importance value of 20 for this policy field. Importance for a policy field ranges from 0 to 100 with 0 representing the lowest importance for respondents who allocate an identical number of points for a policy field in both the expansion as well as the retrenchment point distribution questions. To receive an importance of 100, a respondent must allocate the maximum number of 100 points to the expanding and the minimum 0 points to cutting back in the policy field (or vice versa) which shows that he/she cares strongly about this social policy field and has a strong preference to either

expand or cut back in this social policy field. I evaluate H1 descriptively by showing the distribution and the sample mean for each of the six social policy fields in order to compare how much citizens care about immigrants' welfare benefits.

Moreover, I show results from a conjoint experiment fielded in the same survey to underline the importance of welfare chauvinism to the Western European public. Conjoint designs allow to assess how different characteristics of an object contribute to the likelihood that respondents choose that object (see other applications in the realm of social policy in Kölln and Wlezien 2016, Bremer and Buringsser 2018). More specifically, we have confronted respondents five times with a choice between two welfare reform packages. These welfare reform packages included measures to cut back different social policies (old age pensions, childcare, tertiary education, unemployment benefits, active labor market policies and social assistance) either universally or targeted for different groups (e.g. pensions only for future pensioners, childcare for middle- and higher- income families). Importantly for my purpose, some reform packages included the proposition to *provide fewer active labor market services for immigrants than for natives* and/or to *reduce social assistance benefits for immigrants only*. Respondents had to indicate which of two reform packages they were faced with, they would prefer. Since the specific measures of the welfare packages are attributed randomly, such a conjoint design allows us to understand how strongly a cutback measure contributes to whether a welfare package is chosen or not (and therefore liked or disliked). If voters did not care about welfare chauvinism, this would mean that the propositions to cut back active labor market policies and social assistance for immigrants exclusively, would not have a strong effect on whether packages get chosen or not. If, however, these measures contribute strongly to the likelihood of a welfare reform package being chosen or not, this is another indication for the importance the public attributes to welfare chauvinism. To assess whether welfare chauvinism is politicized in the sense that it matters strongly not only to its supporters but also to its opponents, I present the conjoint both for the more culturally conservative as well as for the more culturally liberal half of respondents.

Priorities for welfare chauvinism are measured, on the one hand, with the two point distribution questions presented above which impose opportunity costs to respondents by not allowing them to expand everything or by forcing them to cut back something². Furthermore, I draw upon a trade-off question, in which the cost of providing welfare benefits for

² Since respondents are restrained to allocate no more than 100 points when asked about where they want to expand and are compelled to allocate 100 points when asked about where to retrench even if they do not want to retrench at all.

immigrants becomes even clearer. We have asked respondents whether they find it acceptable for the government to slightly cut back old age pensions for everyone in order to provide more services to help migrants find a job³. Respondents answered this question by indicating that they find this completely unacceptable, rather unacceptable, rather acceptable or completely acceptable. Since this question explicitly states that benefits for immigrants come at the cost of everyone, it is well suited to measure who the people are who are enough solidary to support welfare benefits for immigrants even at the cost of their own material self-interest.

While I use these aforementioned questions (point distribution questions and trade-off question) to measure priorities for welfare benefits for immigrants, I measure the simple position on welfare chauvinism with the question whether respondents agree that *the government should reduce social assistance benefits only for immigrants*. Respondents had the options to disagree strongly, disagree, agree or agree strongly. This positional question differs from the priorities question insofar as here choosing to retain entitlements for immigrants does not come at a cost of reducing other social benefits. Therefore, I would expect answers to the positional questions to be much more immigrant-friendly than to the questions measuring whether welfare benefits for immigrants are prioritized over other welfare benefits.

For the second hypothesis I need both a measure of economic-redistributive as well as socio-cultural attitudes. To do so, I build an index for both attitudinal dimensions which is based on a battery of two and five items respectively. I measure economic-redistributive attitudes with a classic redistributive statement (*For a society to be fair, income differences should be small*) and with a statement addressing the amount of state intervention and the preferred size of the welfare state (*Social benefits and services in [Country] place too great a strain on the economy*). To differentiate universalist from particularistic attitudes I use two statements on immigration⁴ (*Immigration is a threat to our national culture* and *Immigration is a threat to the national labor market*) and freedom of lifestyles (*Gay and lesbian couples should have the same rights to adopt children as straight couples* and *All in all, family life suffers when the*

³ Please imagine that the government wants to improve certain social benefits. However, it can only do so by cutting back on other social benefits. To what extent do you find the following cutbacks acceptable in comparison to the improvement they allow?

The government provides more services to help migrants find a job, at a cost of slightly lowering old age pensions for everyone.

⁴ To make sure that the results whether welfare chauvinistic positions and priorities are correlated with the economic or the cultural dimensions are not just driven by the two immigration items, I exclude the two for a robustness test.

woman has a full-time job) as well as a statement concerning European integration (*European integration has gone too far*). To all of these statements, respondents could answer on a four-points scale from disagree strongly to agree strongly. For both attitudinal dimensions I compute the unweighted mean of the answers and normalize them. This results in a distribution of economic-redistributive attitudes ranging from 0 (economically right) to 1 (economically left) with a mean of 0.57 and a standard deviation of 0.22 as well as with a distribution of socio-cultural attitudes ranging from 0 (particularistic-traditional) to 1 (universalistic-libertarian) with a mean of 0.52 and a standard deviation of 0.23. For the third hypothesis, I rely on a classic vote choice question⁵ and classify party electorates in party families (radical left, social democratic, green, liberal, conservative, radical right).⁶

While I evaluate hypothesis 1 in a descriptive way and by using evidence from a conjoint experiment, the remaining hypotheses are tested by means of multivariate regression models. Since both the variable measuring positions towards welfare entitlements for immigrants as well as the trade-off question have an ordinal four-points scale, in most models I calculate ordered logit regressions. Only when the dependent variable stems from the point distribution question (where possible values for priorities range from 0 to 100) I run OLS regressions⁷. In all models I control for possible confounders such as age, gender, education and income and since these are pooled analyses from all eight countries, they include country-fixed effects.

⁵ If there were to be a General Election next week, which political party do you think, you would be most likely to support?

⁶ For the classification of parties into party families, see Table A1 in the Appendix.

⁷ Tables 1 and 2, 3rd and 4th column.

4. Results

How much importance does the public attribute to welfare entitlements for immigrants relative to other social policy fields?

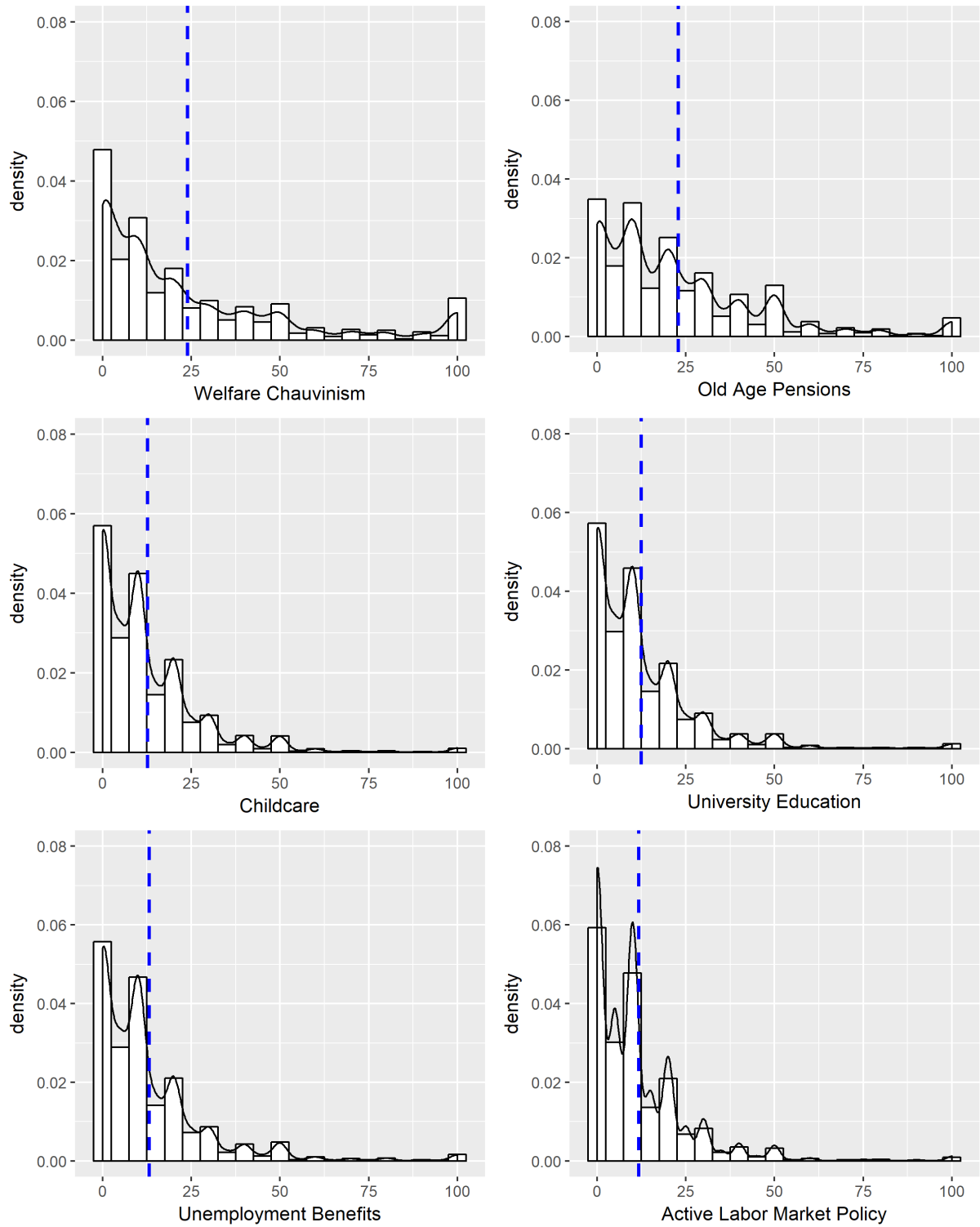


Figure 1. Distributions and Sample Means of Importance for six different social policy fields

The histograms and density plots in Figure 1 depict the distributions of importance people attribute to the six social policy fields old age pensions, childcare, tertiary education, unemployment benefits, active labor market policy and – of most interest in my paper - welfare chauvinism. A value of 0 means that a respondent wants to expand in this social policy field as much as he wants to retrench, hence, that he does not care whether this policy is expanded or cut back. This implies that the respondent attributes a very low importance to that policy field. By contrast, a value of 100 means that the respondent wants to expand or retrench exclusively in this social policy field, thereby attributing a very high importance to it.

Looking at the distributions of importance it becomes clear that welfare chauvinism together with old age pensions are the two social policy fields which people have strongest opinions on. Compared to the other four issues, there are comparatively few people who do not care at all about welfare benefits for immigrants and even less who lack a preference for expanding or retrenching pensions for the old. Furthermore, only for these two fields there exists a noteworthy number of citizens who seem to care exclusively about expanding or retrenching this social policy. This is also reflected in the average importance attributed to each social policy field indicated by the dashed, vertical lines. The average importance attributed to welfare chauvinism (24.0) and old age pensions (22.8) is about ten points higher on this scale ranging from 0 to 100 than the importance attributed to unemployment benefits (13.2), childcare (12.5), tertiary education (12.3) and active labor market policy (11.8).

Although there are quite substantial cross-country differences with regard to the average importance attributed to welfare entitlements for immigrants, welfare chauvinism and old age pensions emerge in all eight countries as the two most important social policy fields. In five countries (Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain) welfare chauvinism is ranked first, while in three countries (Netherlands, Sweden, UK) it ranks second behind old age pensions.

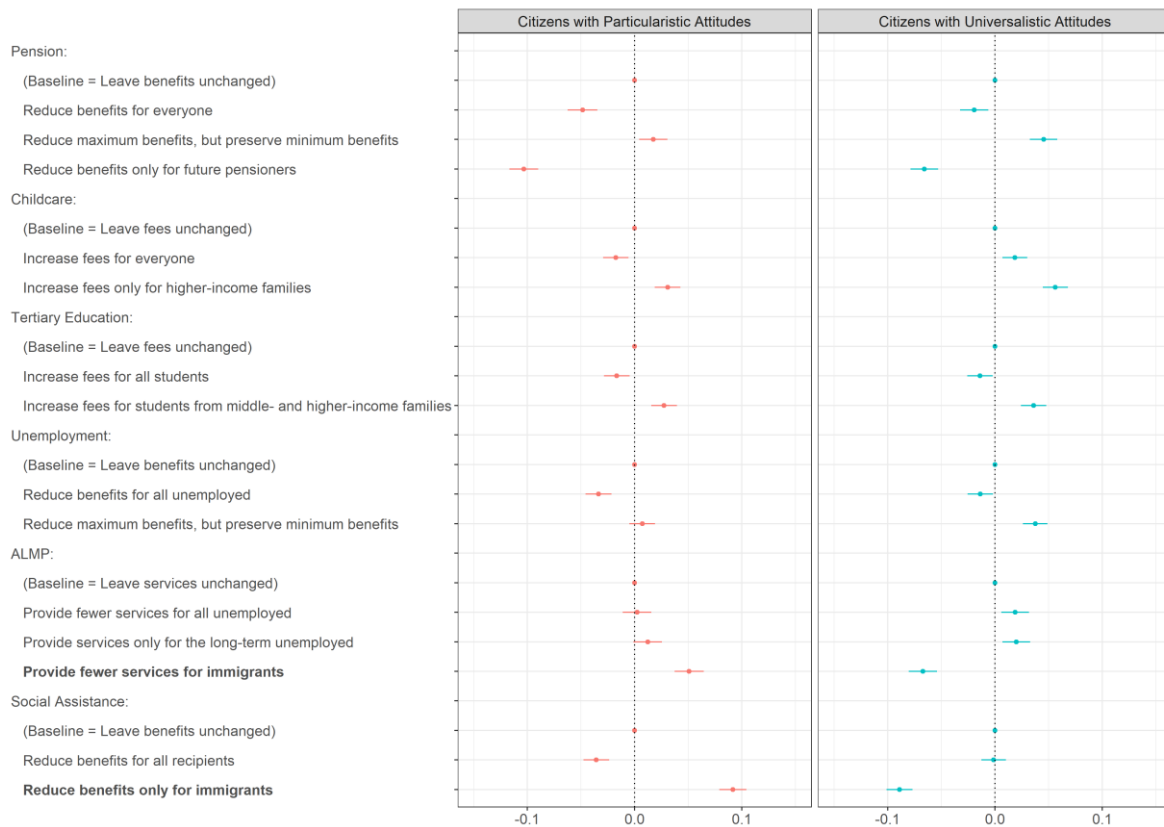


Figure 2: Retrenchment Conjoint interacted with attitude on second, socio-cultural dimension. Left column: citizens with particularistic attitudes; Right column: citizens with universalistic attitudes.

The finding that people prioritize welfare entitlements for immigrants is also reflected in conjoint experiments in which respondents have to decide between two reform packages which both include cutbacks but in different social policy fields and targeted at different groups. Figure 2 shows the results from the conjoint experiment for two subgroups separately: for respondents having rather culturally particularistic preferences (left column) and for respondents featuring more universalistic-libertarian attitudes (right column) on the second, socio-cultural dimension. If the so-called Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE) of a reform package characteristic (depicted by the point estimates in Figure 2) is positive, this means that this reform measure contributes positively to whether a reform package is chosen. If the AMCE is negative, the reform measure contributes negatively to the likelihood that a reform package containing this measure is chosen. For example, in accordance with the findings on the importance of old age pensions, it becomes clear in Figure 2 that people care about old age pensions: a reform package involving a reduction of pension benefits affecting everyone or future pensioners (i.e. a discriminating based on the generation one belongs to) is much less likely to be chosen than a package in which pensions benefits remain untouched.

Only retrenchment based on a redistributive principle (i.e. affecting only maximum pensions) seems to be acceptable in the general public.

Let us now turn to the two welfare chauvinistic reform measures which propose, on the one hand, to provide fewer active labor market services to immigrants seeking (re)integration into the work force and, on the other hand, to reduce social assistance benefits to immigrants only. Comparing the AMCEs of these two reform proposals to the AMCEs of the other twelve reform proposals, it becomes evident that, firstly, welfare chauvinistic reform measures have a very high potential to influence voter's evaluations of welfare reforms and that, secondly, welfare chauvinism strongly divides the electorate.

Not surprisingly, people located on the more particularistic side of the second, cultural dimension (Figure 2, left column) support retrenchment in immigrants' labor market policies and social assistance more strongly than any other retrenchment measures. No other reform measure seems so popular for particularistic people as welfare chauvinism. On the contrary, people with more universalist values, on average, reject the two cutbacks affecting only immigrants detrimentally more than any other cutback. Thus, if a welfare state reform package includes welfare chauvinistic retrenchment, this increases the likelihood of particularistic people to choose this reform most strongly and decreases this likelihood most strongly for people with universalistic attitudes.

A very similar picture emerges if the conjoint experiment does not contrast reform proposals to retrench but proposals to expand the welfare state (in Figure A1 in the appendix). The two reform measures which aim at improving the welfare rights of nationals while leaving the benefits for immigrants at a lower level are by quite some distance the most popular welfare expansions for the more particularistic half of respondents but among the three most disliked expansionary reform measures for respondents with rather universalistic attitudes.

This shows that, on the one hand, people do care about welfare entitlements for immigrants when evaluating a welfare reform package and, on the other hand, that the treatment of immigrants in the welfare state is one of the more controversial and polarized issues in welfare politics. Welfare chauvinism is not only important to its supporters but also to its opponents. All in all, the findings seem to support hypothesis 1 that the public in West European countries cares about welfare chauvinism and that welfare chauvinism is a highly politicized and polarized issue.

Who Prioritizes Support and Opposition to Welfare Chauvinism?

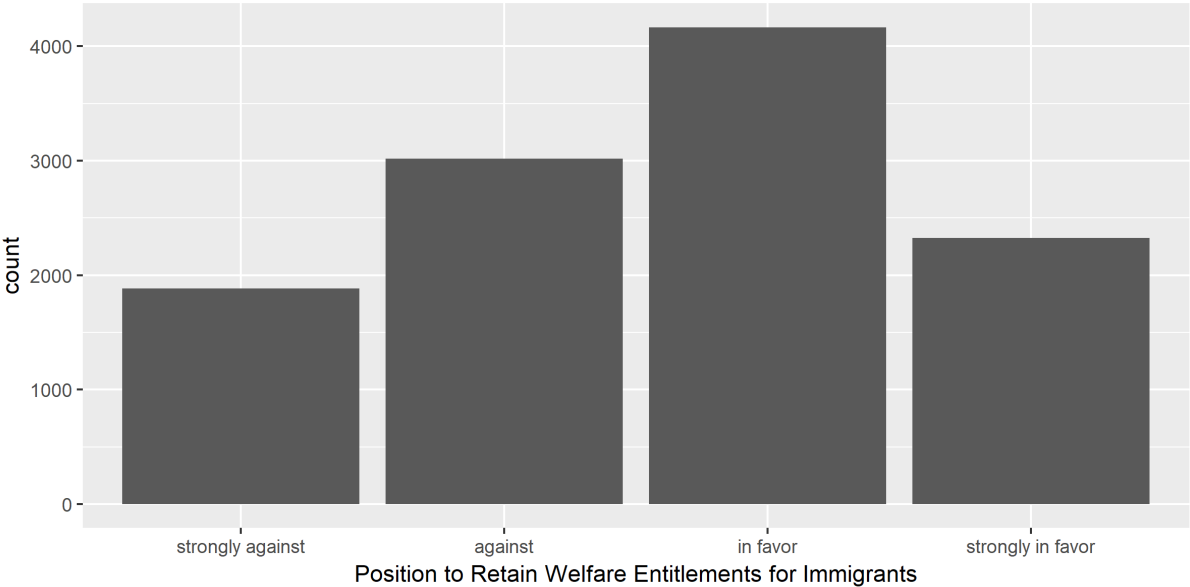


Figure 3: Distribution of answers to positional question whether respondents want to retain or cut back entitlements for immigrants

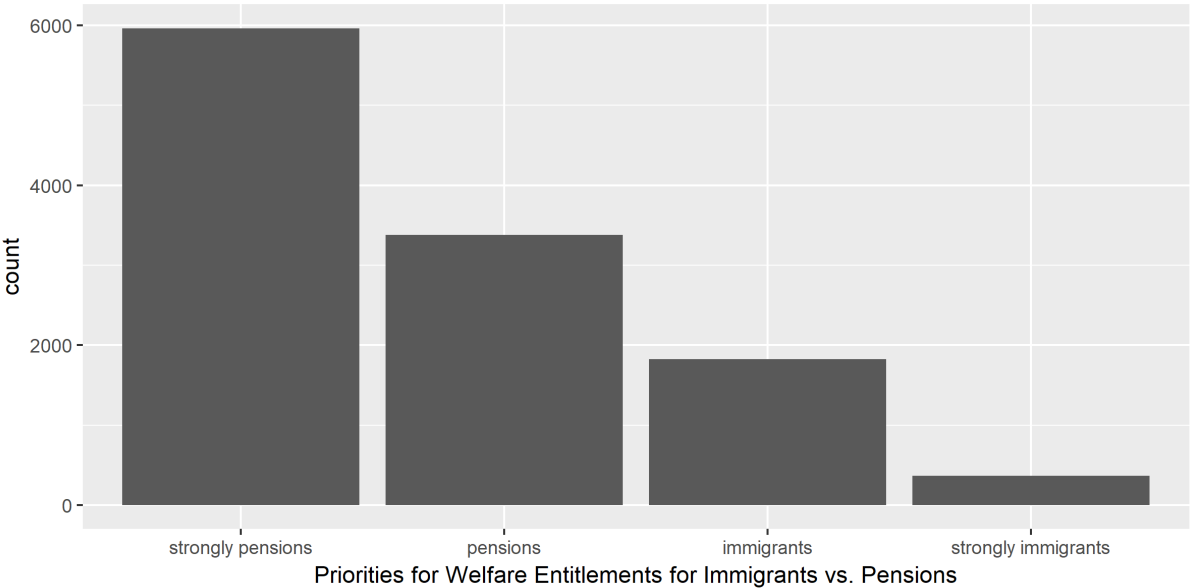


Figure 4: Distribution of answers to trade-off question in which expanding entitlements for immigrants comes at the cost of slightly lowering old age pensions for everyone

The distribution of answers to an unconstrained positional question about welfare chauvinism (Figure 3) and the trade-off question in which a choice in favor of increasing immigrants’ benefits comes at the cost of slightly lowering pensions (Figure 4) shows that it makes sense to differentiate between mere positions and priorities since answers differ fundamentally. If welfare benefits for immigrants are “cost-free”, a majority of 57% of the respondents is strongly (21%) or at least slightly (37%) in favor of retaining welfare entitlements for

immigrants at the current level. By contrast, if respondents have to decide between benefits for immigrants and old age pensions, they might benefit from themselves, the share prioritizing welfare entitlements for immigrants drops to below 20% (16% slightly; 3% strongly). On the one hand, this has the important implication that welfare entitlements for immigrants are (even) less popular in a context where welfare state politics are constrained by budgetary limits. On the other hand, the difference suggests that it might be fruitful to investigate whether the determinants of positions and priorities differ. In the remaining part of the paper, I therefore investigate whether positions and priorities on welfare chauvinism do indeed have different determinants in terms of ideology and party electorates as hypothesized above.

Support for benefits for immigrants / Opposition to Welfare Chauvinism

	Position	Trade-Off	Expansion Priorities	Retrenchment Priorities
Universalist Attitudes	4.642 ^{***} (0.095)	3.093 ^{***} (0.094)	13.141 ^{***} (0.393)	31.523 ^{***} (1.107)
Redistribution Support	1.010 ^{***} (0.092)	-0.083 (0.095)	0.616 (0.421)	-5.170 ^{***} (1.186)
Education (middle)	-0.079 (0.046)	-0.075 (0.049)	0.004 (0.226)	-1.163 (0.639)
Education (high)	0.043 (0.051)	0.089 (0.053)	0.550 [*] (0.242)	-0.824 (0.682)
Income (middle)	-0.068 (0.043)	-0.073 (0.045)	0.024 (0.206)	-0.405 (0.582)
Income (high)	-0.052 (0.050)	-0.081 (0.052)	0.086 (0.235)	-0.658 (0.662)
Age	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.015 ^{***} (0.001)	-0.011 [*] (0.005)	-0.011 (0.015)
Male	-0.040 (0.036)	0.257 ^{***} (0.038)	0.596 ^{***} (0.171)	1.202 [*] (0.483)
(Intercept)			2.240 ^{***} (0.487)	56.151 ^{***} (1.374)
AIC	25926.087	22679.280		
BIC	26057.529	22810.932		
Log Likelihood	-12945.044	-11321.640		
Deviance	25890.087	22643.280		
Num. obs.	10963	11092	11441	11441
R ²			0.127	0.084
Adj. R ²			0.126	0.083
RMSE			9.045	25.503

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

Table 1: Economic-redistributive and socio-cultural attitudes as determinants of positions and priorities for welfare benefits of immigrants (Ref. categories: low income, low education)

The first column of Table 1 shows that attitudes on both the economic-redistributive and the socio-cultural dimension are significantly related to supporting welfare chauvinism. As expected, both people with universalist values as well as people who support small income differences, but a large welfare state are more sympathetic to granting immigrants welfare entitlements. The remaining columns show regression results for different operationalizations of priorities (2nd: trade-off immigrants vs. pensions, 3rd: number of points to expand welfare entitlements of immigrants, 4th: number of points not to retrench welfare benefits for immigrants). **High values** always correspond to being **in favor of welfare benefits for immigrants** and therefore to preferences *against welfare chauvinism*.

The findings show that irrespective of the operationalization of priorities, universalist attitudes remain strongly correlated also with prioritizing welfare benefits for immigrants. By contrast, if controlled for universalist attitudes, support for redistribution is no longer (significantly) positively related to supporting welfare benefits for immigrants if costs are introduced. Thus, if expanding welfare benefits for immigrants comes at the cost of reducing other potentially redistributive welfare policies, economically leftists are no longer clearly backing welfare benefits for immigrants and opposing welfare chauvinist cutbacks. To the contrary, when it comes to retrenchment, left economic preferences are even correlated negatively with priorities for immigrants' welfare benefits. This means that people who support redistribution would on average cut back even more on welfare benefits for immigrants than economically right-wing voters when they are forced to cut back either welfare benefits for immigrants or for other groups. These findings are in accordance with H2. Although slightly attenuated, these findings are robust to the exclusion of all immigration-related questions from the operationalization of the socio-cultural dimension (see Table A2 in the appendix). Even though economic attitudes become significant for two of the three priority-questions, they remain considerably less important than socio-cultural attitudes in explaining priorities concerning welfare chauvinism. For example, on priorities for expanding immigrants' welfare rights socio-cultural attitudes such as gay rights, gender roles or European integration preferences have four times the explanatory power than economic-redistributive attitudes.

Concerning the control variables, I find in accordance with previous studies (e.g. Heizmann et al. 2018, van der Waal et al. 2010, van der Waal et al. 2013) that education level is positively, and age negatively associated with support for welfare entitlements for immigrants. Note, however, that especially the effect for education becomes mostly insignificant when attitudes are included as in Table 1. Interestingly, the effect of gender differs between unconstrained

positions and priorities. Whereas, women are principally less welfare chauvinistic than men, women reduce their support to grant welfare benefits to immigrants more strongly than men when they come at the cost of other social benefits.

Positions and Priorities of Party Electorates

Support for benefits for immigrants / Opposition to Welfare Chauvinism				
	Position	Trade-Off	Expansion Priorities	Retrenchment Priorities
Party (Conservative)	-0.729*** (0.056)	-0.433*** (0.059)	-1.335*** (0.312)	-1.662* (0.824)
Party (Green)	0.348*** (0.094)	0.271** (0.092)	1.693** (0.515)	2.278 (1.360)
Party (Liberal)	-0.703*** (0.068)	-0.288*** (0.070)	-1.201** (0.379)	-3.449*** (0.999)
Party (Radical Right)	-1.800*** (0.069)	-1.260*** (0.076)	-4.463*** (0.369)	-13.478*** (0.974)
Party (Radical Left)	0.078 (0.072)	-0.049 (0.072)	-0.350 (0.395)	-2.196* (1.042)
Education (middle)	0.160* (0.051)	-0.018 (0.054)	-0.114 (0.281)	-0.732 (0.742)
Education (high)	0.422*** (0.055)	0.276*** (0.058)	1.202*** (0.305)	1.665* (0.804)
Income (middle)	-0.135** (0.047)	-0.030 (0.050)	0.217 (0.264)	0.956 (0.696)
Income (high)	-0.068 (0.053)	-0.008 (0.056)	0.200 (0.294)	0.610 (0.775)
Age	-0.003* (0.001)	-0.018*** (0.001)	-0.024*** (0.007)	-0.053** (0.017)
Male	-0.120** (0.039)	0.274*** (0.041)	0.242 (0.216)	0.959 (0.571)
(Intercept)			11.396*** (0.557)	74.875*** (1.470)
AIC	22940.949	19403.833		
BIC	23090.187	19553.313		
Log Likelihood	-11449.474	-9680.916		
Deviance	22898.949	19361.833		
Num. obs.	9014	9119	8012	8012
R ²			0.057	0.048
Adj. R ²			0.054	0.046
RMSE			10.219	26.962

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Reference: Party (Social Democrats). Country-fixed-effects included.

Table 2: Party Families as determinants of positions and priorities for welfare benefits of immigrants (Ref. categories: low income, low education, social democratic party)

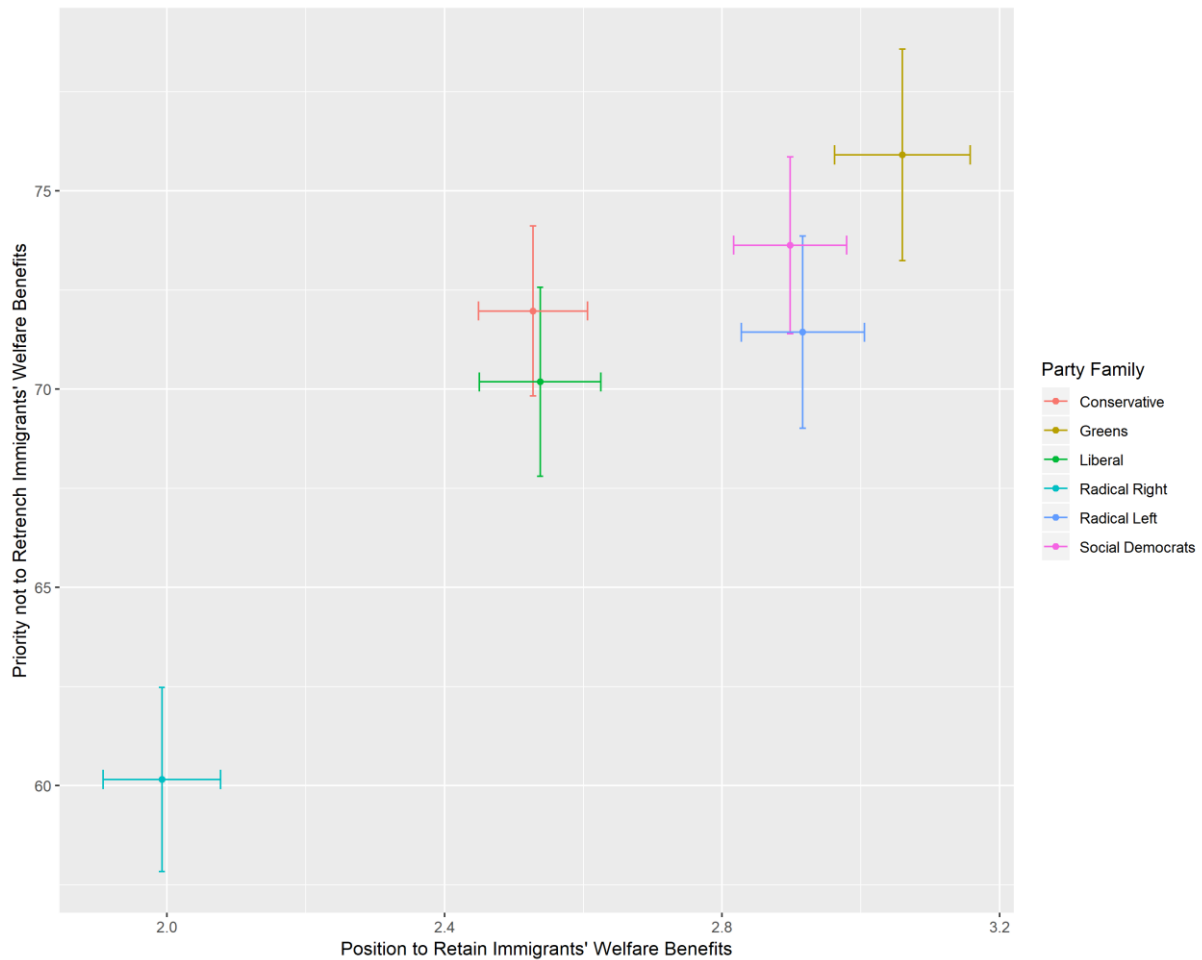


Figure 5: Predicted Positions and Priorities of *Party Families*.⁸

Table 2 and Figure 5 explore the welfare chauvinism positions and priorities of party families' electorates. They show that not surprisingly Green party voters are the most fervent supporters of immigrants' welfare benefits (significantly more supportive than the social democrats which serve as the reference category in Table 2) whereas populist right voters are most strongly opposed to granting immigrants generous welfare benefits and mostly in favor of welfare chauvinism. However, against the expectation of H2a, voters of green parties are significantly less welfare chauvinistic than the electorates of social democratic parties already concerning positions and not only concerning priorities. In fact, the pattern is quite consistent between positions and priorities. The only notable exceptions apply to voters of the radical left and the liberals. While radical left voters are principally the second least welfare chauvinistic electorate (behind the greens), radical left opposition to welfare chauvinism drops quite dramatically when this opposition comes at the cost of retrenching other social

⁸ Positions are based on a linear specification of the model "Position" in Table 2 (results do not differ substantially from the ordered logit model shown in Table 2). Priorities are based on the model "Retrenchment Priorities" in Table 2. Predicted positions and priorities for a woman with middle education, middle income and average age living in Germany.

benefits. In a scenario of retrenchment, voters of the radical left tend to be more willing than for example conservative voters to give up benefits for immigrants in order to retain other social benefits such as pensions, childcare, university education or benefits for the unemployed. However, it is important to note that the party family of radical left parties is quite heterogenous. Radical left party voters in Scandinavia (the Danish Social People's Party and the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark as well as the Swedish Left Party) and Southern Europe (Podemos in Spain) do not give up their strong opposition to welfare chauvinism when this comes at a cost. In contrast, the overall result that radical left party electorates prioritize other welfare benefits over benefits for immigrants is mainly driven by parties in Ireland (Sinn Fein), the Netherlands (Socialist Party) and Germany (the Left). Similar to the radical left, also the voters of the rather heterogenous liberal party family seem to become more welfare chauvinist in a context of fiscal austerity. Whereas they share the conservative's positions, they (rather surprisingly) are more inclined to put the burden of welfare retrenchment on immigrants when retrenchment is necessary.

5. Conclusion

In this article I examine whether welfare chauvinism is indeed important to the public and how a context of fiscal austerity and trade-offs changes the support coalitions of immigrants' welfare rights. I show that welfare chauvinism is indeed seen as an important issue by the Western European public when it comes to reforming the welfare state. My findings indicate that welfare chauvinism is a very polarized and politicized issue and that voters have stronger opinions about whether welfare benefits for immigrants should be expanded or retrenched than is the case for several other social policy reform proposals in fields such as childcare, tertiary education, unemployment benefits or active labor market policies. This despite the fact that these fields are financially more relevant.

While slightly less than half of voters in the eight Western European countries under scrutiny have a welfare chauvinistic position and would actually welcome cutbacks to immigrants' welfare benefits, the support for immigrants' welfare benefits drops dramatically if they came at the cost of pensions. Nevertheless, findings of a conjoint experiment indicate that welfare chauvinistic cutbacks provoke a very strong opposition of people situated at the universalistic-libertarian pole of a second, socio-cultural issue dimension. This opposition of welfare chauvinism is especially strong among voters of green parties. They prioritize immigrants' welfare benefits over benefits of other needy groups. Especially voters of some radical left

parties, in contrast, cannot be expected to defend immigrants' welfare benefits in a context of fiscal austerity when hard choices must be made. These findings show, first, that immigration has a vast potential to influence how people think about welfare politics. Second, they show that for most parties promoting a culturally liberal platform proposing welfare chauvinistic reforms to the welfare state is not an electorally viable strategy since culturally liberal voters care nearly as much about opposing welfare chauvinism as populist right voters care about supporting it.

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7. Appendix

Party Family	Party (Country)
Radical Left	Red-Green Alliance (Denmark) Socialist People's Party (Denmark) Die Linke (Germany) Sinn Féin (Ireland/UK) Solidarity (Ireland) LeU (Italy) SP (Netherlands) PODEMOS (Spain) V (Sweden)
Social Democrats	Social Democrats (Denmark) SPD (Germany) Labour Party (Ireland) Social Democrats (Ireland) Partito Democratico (Italy) PVDA (Netherlands) PSOE (Spain) SAP (Sweden) Labour (UK) Scottish National Party (UK)
Greens	The Alternative (Denmark) Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Germany) GL (Netherlands) PVDD (Netherlands) MP (Sweden)
Liberals	Danish Social Liberal Party (Denmark) Liberal Alliance (Denmark) Venstre (Denmark) FDP (Germany) 50+ (Netherlands) D66 (Netherlands) VVD (Netherlands) Cs (Spain) L (Sweden) Liberal Democrats (UK)
Conservatives	Conservative People's Party (Denmark) CDU/CSU (Germany) Fianna Fáil (Ireland) Fine Gael (Ireland) FDI (Italy) FI (Italy) CDA (Netherlands) CU (Netherlands) EAJ/PNV (Spain) PDeCAT (Spain) PP (Spain) KD (Sweden) M (Sweden) Conservatives (UK) DUP (UK)
Radical Right	Danish People's Party (Denmark) AfD (Germany) Lega (Italy) PVV (Netherlands) Sweden Democrats (Sweden) UKIP (UK)

Table A1: Classification of Parties in Party Families

Support for benefits for immigrants / Opposition to Welfare Chauvinism

	Position	Trade-Off	Expansion Priorities	Retrenchment Priorities
Universalist Attitudes	3.076*** (0.090)	1.961*** (0.092)	8.964*** (0.427)	21.131*** (1.182)
Redistribution Support	1.495*** (0.090)	0.361*** (0.092)	2.210*** (0.439)	-1.077 (1.216)
Education (middle)	0.009 (0.046)	0.003 (0.049)	0.296 (0.232)	-0.369 (0.642)
Education (high)	0.235*** (0.050)	0.258*** (0.052)	1.268*** (0.253)	1.135 (0.700)
Income (middle)	-0.028 (0.042)	-0.041 (0.044)	0.156 (0.216)	0.025 (0.599)
Income (high)	0.005 (0.049)	-0.038 (0.051)	0.232 (0.249)	-0.044 (0.690)
Age	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.015*** (0.001)	-0.014* (0.005)	-0.009 (0.015)
Male	-0.055 (0.035)	0.236*** (0.037)	0.536** (0.181)	1.044* (0.502)
(Intercept)			2.741*** (0.532)	56.630*** (1.475)
AIC	27407.088	23431.135		
BIC	27538.564	23562.821		
Log Likelihood	-13685.544	-11697.568		
Deviance	27371.088	23395.135		
Num. obs.	10984	11113	11109	11109
R ²			0.076	0.046
Adj. R ²			0.075	0.045
RMSE			9.441	26.152

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

Table A2: Economic-redistributive and socio-cultural attitudes (excluding preferences on immigration) as determinants of positions and priorities for welfare benefits of immigrants (Ref. categories: low income, low education)

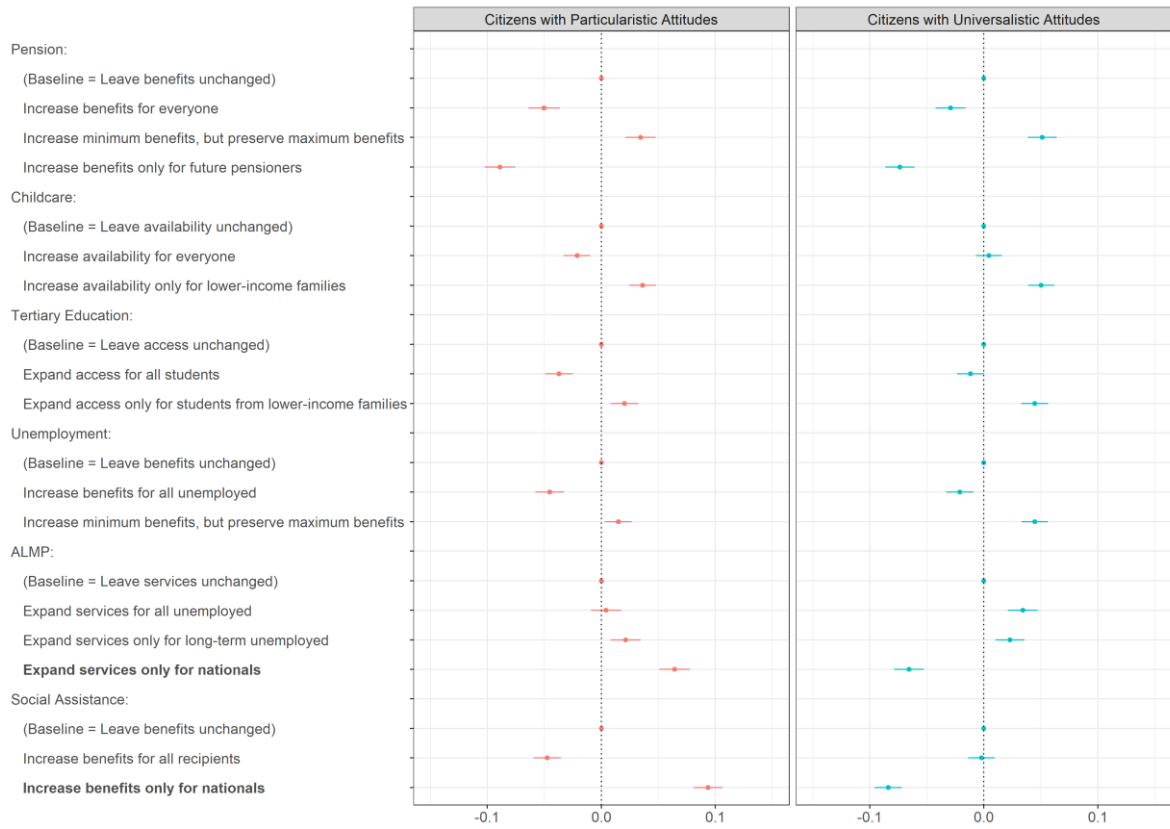


Figure A1: Expansion Conjoint interacted with attitude on second, socio-cultural dimension. Left column: citizens with particularistic attitudes; Right column: citizens with universalist attitudes.