

The Real and Perceived Economics of Immigration: Welfare Chauvinism and Immigrants' Use of Government Transfers in Twelve Countries

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Abstract

Recently, a large number of studies have addressed the possible nefarious effects immigration-induced diversity might have on support for redistribution. Most studies conclude that there is only weak evidence that immigration leads the majority population to withdraw its support for a redistributive state. However, this does not necessarily mean that solidarity is unaffected by diversity. Unease about immigration is more likely to lead the public to question who should be entitled to social benefits rather than whether we need a redistributive welfare state in the first place. Indeed, welfare chauvinism – general support for social programs, but a desire to reform them in such a way to exclude outsiders – seems to have risen in popularity in many Western welfare states. This paper maps the variation in public support for welfare chauvinism in twelve countries (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States), and dispels one of the possible explanations for this variation, namely that welfare chauvinism has made more headway in those countries where immigrants' overreliance on welfare benefits is higher. Using data from the Luxembourg Income Study, the World Values Survey, and the International Social Survey Programme, the paper shows there is no positive relationship between immigrant welfare dependence and welfare chauvinism. This suggests that the economic costs of immigration are not automatically translated into political discourse.

1. Introduction

For a long time, the thesis that ethnic homogeneity has a positive effect on social solidarity, and consequently, on the expansion of a redistributive welfare state, has been rather uncontroversial among scholars of comparative social policy. For example, this theory has been used to explain why the ethnically diverse United States have developed a rather minimal social safety net, whereas the homogeneous population of Sweden has come to be covered by a universal and generous set of social programs. However, whereas most observers see value in this thesis when explaining the historical development of welfare states, not every scholar is

convinced that it is applicable to the present-day context, when populations are becoming more diverse *after* welfare state institutions have already been erected. Indeed, a large number of studies has recently applied this thesis to immigration-induced diversity, and the overall conclusion that comes out of this work is that there is only ambiguous and mixed evidence of an overall negative effect of immigration on support for or the size of Western welfare states.

While this conclusion is as important as it is comforting, it should not lead us to overlook the signs that portions of the electorate demonstrate less solidarity towards immigrants than towards native-born citizens. Immigrants' alleged welfare abuse has become a prominent topic in the public debate, and parties that explicitly describe immigration as a threat to the welfare state are rewarded handsomely in more and more countries. In a way, therefore, immigration *has* had an effect on solidarity, but just not one that is detectable on an aggregate level: rather than decreasing overall solidarity, immigration seems to have made some people more selective in who they are willing to share a welfare state with. Rather than fuelling neo-liberalism, therefore, the tension between diversity and solidarity is more likely to manifest itself in the form of welfare chauvinism: general support for a redistributive welfare state, but unwillingness to share it with newcomers to the community. A welfare chauvinist, in other words, would oppose reductions in benefit levels or in the progressiveness of the tax system, but support reforms that restrict or qualify immigrants' access to social programs or services.ⁱ In accordance with this ideology, as variegated a set of countries as Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom, and the United States have over the last two decades implemented exactly these types of welfare chauvinist reforms. Again, this shows that welfare states *did* change in response to immigration, even though it might be difficult to capture this by studying patterns in welfare spending or changes in the height of benefits.

It seems timely, therefore, that the study of the tension between diversity and solidarity switches its focus to welfare chauvinism and immigrant-exclusionary welfare reforms. In this paper, I map public support for welfare chauvinism in twelve welfare states that constitute the most typical cases of the three classic categories of Gøsta Esping-Andersen's (1990) welfare regimes,ⁱⁱ and show that, while there is significant variation between countries, indeed large portions of the population express unease about the costs of immigration and willingness to differentiate between immigrants and native-born citizens. Second, this paper finds that the cross-national variation in these sentiments cannot simply be understood by looking at actual patterns of immigrants' welfare use. In other words, it does not appear to be the case that welfare chauvinism is highest in those countries where immigrants' overrepresentation in the social security system is high as well. This suggests that the costs of migration are not automatically translated politically, and that institutional and political factors are important in understanding this translation.

This paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the existing theoretical arguments and empirical evidence on the tension between diversity and solidarity, and argues that welfare chauvinism and exclusionary reforms are more likely outcomes of this tension than the aggregate and large-scale outcomes that most studies have tried to capture. The third section surveys welfare chauvinism in twelve countries, and shows there is little support for the argument that it has made most headway where the overrepresentation of immigrants among recipients of government transfers is highest. The final section suggests explanations for this finding and concludes.

2. Diversity and solidarity, natural enemies?

2.1 Theory

The argument that immigration is a threat to social solidarity, and as such, to the future existence of redistributive welfare states, has a long tradition. T.H. Marshall (1950) argued that the historical reason for extending social rights was some form of pre-existing solidarity in a community. To many observers, it almost goes without saying that such 'natural solidarity' is difficult to sustain in an open society with a continuously changing religious, ethnic, and linguistic composition. Already in 1986, Gary Freeman posited that migration "has led to the Americanization of European welfare states" (Freeman, 1986, p. 61). More recently, David Goodhart argued that the United Kingdom has become 'too diverse' to sustain a generous welfare state, and described the relationship between diversity and solidarity as an inescapable trade-off: "This is America versus Sweden. You can have a Swedish welfare state provided that you are a homogeneous society with intensely shared values" (Goodhart, 2004). Similarly, a volume on this subject in the Netherlands states in the introduction that "solidarity cannot exist without borders" (Entzinger & Van der Meer, 2004, p. 7), and goes on to discuss possible strategies to salvage the Dutch welfare state from the corrosive impact of immigration.

Perhaps because of the intuitive plausibility of this argument, not all scholars who describe diversity and solidarity as natural enemies are explicit about the theoretical mechanisms in this relationship. Nevertheless, we can distinguish at least four different arguments in this literature for why immigration-induced diversity might weaken the base of support for redistribution and social programs. First, some authors defend a biological hypothesis, and argue that there is a strong and positive relationship between feelings of solidarity and similarity in genetic composition. Freeman, for instance, maintains that "racial or ethnic animosity is genetically inbred [...] whatever the potential benefits, replacement migration runs against deeply ingrained human instincts" (2009, p. 7).

A second mechanism is less deterministic and is rooted in social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982). Very simplistically, we can summarize this long-standing and well-developed literature by three of its main assertions: (1) individuals use social categories they deem important to classify people around them; (2) individuals derive their social identity from these categories; and (3) individuals tend to develop positive feelings towards people who share the social categories they identify with (the in-group), and negative feelings towards people who do not (the out-group). Since race, religion, and language are obvious social categories, so the argument goes, it is likely that native-born citizens will be distrustful towards newcomers with a different background. And even though there is no consensus on whether frequent contact with immigrants reinforces or attenuates this distrustⁱⁱⁱ, many authors have taken the conclusions of social identity theory to mean that diversity has a negative effect on trust and that this lack of trust, in turn, will translate in lower levels of solidarity. In a well-known recent study in this tradition, Robert Putnam (2007) goes further and postulates what he calls 'constrict theory', predicting that diversity even makes people less trusting of members of their own in-group. While he does not draw implications from this conclusion for solidarity or the sustainability of the welfare state, other authors refer to his work to make exactly these links.

A third argument builds on the assumption that people are willing to contribute to a redistributive welfare state out of reciprocal altruism: the willingness to share, in this account,

does not have biological or socio-psychological origins, but is based on a consideration that all members of the community contribute when they can and receive support when they cannot (Fong, 2007). This theory offers a powerful explanation for why in virtually every welfare state, the public exhibits much more support for pensions and sickness insurance than for unemployment benefits and social assistance (Jaeger, 2007): while few would argue that becoming sick (let alone old) is something you can be held accountable for, many more people would argue the unemployed and able-bodied poor are simply facing the consequences of their own life choices. From this perspective, there are at least two reasons why immigrants are likely to be seen as undeserving of state support, and therefore, why an increase in immigration could be hypothesized to lead to a decrease in solidarity. First, as newcomers to a community, immigrants have a shorter history of contributing to the system. Second, they tend to be overrepresented among recipients of exactly the types of benefits that are least likely to be warmly supported by a reciprocal altruist (see Section 3).

When perceptions are widespread that for many immigrants the very reason to migrate is actually to profit from a generous welfare system, or that there is something about immigrants that make them particularly likely to claim welfare (either that the height of a benefit is high in comparison to the standard of living in their country of origin, or that they are just lazy people), the feeling among the general public that tax money is going to people who do not deserve it is of course even more likely to emerge (Boeri, 2009). Accordingly, Woojin Lee, John Roemer, and Karine van der Straeten (Lee, Roemer, & Van der Straeten, 2006, p. 447) predict diversity to result in a “decrease in the public sector [...] because many voters believe that the poor minority is undeserving and is a main beneficiary of the welfare state”.

Finally, some authors describe a mechanism that is closely related to power resource theory, which posits that the size of a welfare state and its base of support among the public depends on the efforts of left-wing forces to bring about economic equality (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In this account, the major reason to see immigration as threatening is that it weakens these efforts. For instance, Stephen Castles and Godula Kosack (1985) argue that, partly because of the reasons reviewed above, an inflow of labour migrants divides the working class, and thereby reduces the mobilizing and organizational potential of proletarian powerhouses such as trade unions. Similarly, Moses Shayo (2009) reasons that an increase in diversity will mean that fewer people will identify first and foremost with their social class and that therefore overall support for redistribution will decrease. A second variant of this argument is that immigration-induced diversity has diverted the attention of the left from its traditional calling: rather than combating poverty and economic inequality, so the argument goes, the left now also dedicates much of its time and resources to fighting discrimination and ethnic inequality (Fraser, 2001).^{iv}

2.2 Empirics

Taken together, the available empirical evidence for these arguments is mixed. The findings are more robust in some countries than in others, and there is more evidence for some observable implications of these arguments than for others.

One of the hypotheses that finds most consistent support in empirical research is that diversity has a negative effect on trust. A large number of studies, especially in the American context, have found that trust is lower in diverse neighbourhoods (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002;

Putnam, 2007), even though scholars have reached different conclusions on what *kind* of diversity (ethnic, linguistic, religious) is most important in this regard (Leigh, 2006; Letki, 2008; Lancee & Dronkers, 2011). The evidence that such a decrease in trust necessarily erodes support for redistribution and welfare programs, however, is weaker. In a case study of Canada, for example, Stuart Soroka, Richard Johnston, and Keith Banting (2004) find a weak negative relationship between diversity and trust, but do not observe any decrease in support for welfare programs as a result. Comparing a number of European welfare states, Wim van Oorschot and Wilfred Uunk (2007, p. 234) actually find that “more immigration makes people more solidaristic with immigrants”. Other studies do find some support for the thesis that diversity decreases support for social programs, but only seldom is the evidence overwhelming. Alberto Alesina and Edward Glaeser (2004, p. 153), for instance, find that in the United States there is only a weak negative relationship between a state’s percentage of black population and its public support for welfare. Similarly, in a comparison of sixteen Western democracies, Markus Crepaz (2006) finds a very weak negative relationship between diversity and support for welfare programs. In a study of seventeen European countries, Steffen Mau and Christoph Burkhardt (2009, p. 255) come to the same conclusion: “overall, it seems that there is an association between migration and welfare state solidarity, but it is not particularly strong”. One might expect that the evidence is stronger when one focuses on *perceptions* of diversity, but that does not seem to be the case either. Claudia Senik, Holger Stichnoth, and Karine van der Straeten (2009) study the relationship between perceived levels of immigration and support for redistribution among native-born citizens in a large number of European countries, and also find only a very small negative relationship: “an increase in the perceived share of immigrants of one standard deviation (about 16 percentage points) is associated with a decrease in the probability of supporting the welfare state of about 1 percentage point” (Senik, Stichnoth, & Van der Straeten, 2009, p. 346).

The only two studies that I am aware of that do find a strong negative effect of diversity on support for redistribution are county-level analyses in Sweden. First, Maureen Eger (2010) finds that counties that have recently received a large inflow of immigrants display much less support for universal welfare programs than their counterparts that have welcomed a smaller number. She finds that on a 100-point scale, “each unit increase in the percentage of new immigrants in that year decreases support for the welfare state by 8.84”. A second study, by Matz Dahlberg, Karin Edmark, and Heléne Lundqvist (2011) find a similarly large and negative relationship (of .347 on a 5-point scale) between the increase in a county’s refugee population and the support for social benefits among its inhabitants.

When we look at studies that measure the effect of diversity on the size of the welfare state more directly, the picture is similar. On the one hand, there is some evidence that racially diverse communities have developed less generous welfare state structures. Alesina and Glaeser (2004, p. 141), for example, show that there is a strong negative correlation between racial fractionalization and social welfare spending in a comparison of a large number of countries. And even though this relationship would be much weaker if one would repeat the analysis for Western and non-Western countries separately – and indeed, comparing 17 Western European countries, Mau and Burkhardt (2009) hardly find any relationship between the two variables – most authors seem to agree that diversity is at least one of the explanations for why the United States has developed a less generous welfare state than Western European

countries. On the other hand, however, it is more contested whether this necessarily means that immigration-induced diversity will reduce the size of already existing welfare state structures. Christer Gerdes, for example, finds no relationship at all between the intake of refugees in Danish communities and the size of the public sector, and concludes that “welfare states with well-established institutions are not very sensitive to a change in ethnic diversity due to immigration” (Gerdes, 2011, p. 90). Comparing a large number of Western countries, Clem Brooks and Jeff Manza (2007) find the effect of immigration on welfare spending to be insignificant. In another cross-national comparison, Soroka, Banting, and Johnston (2006) do find a negative relationship between changes in share of immigrant population and welfare spending, but note at the same time that this conclusion is heavily influenced by the cases of the United States and the Netherlands and that the effect of immigration would almost disappear when these two cases are excluded. In this context, it is interesting to note that Jens Hainmueller and Michael Hiscox (2010) find only a weak negative relationship between changes in the percentage of foreign-born and welfare expenditure *within* the United States.

All in all, we can summarize the large body of empirical literature on the relationship between diversity and solidarity by four observations: first, there is evidence for the hypotheses reviewed in the previous section, but only few studies conclude that the effect of diversity is very large; second, the evidence is more convincing in Sweden and the United States than in other contexts; third, there is more empirical reason to believe that diversity erodes trust than that it erodes support for welfare programs; and fourth, there seems to be more evidence that diverse communities have developed weaker welfare states than that the inflow of migrants has decreased the generosity of already existing welfare state structures.

2.3 Welfare chauvinism: when solidarity becomes selective

Despite the plausibility of theoretical arguments on the tension between diversity and solidarity, the scarcity of systematic and unambiguous evidence that immigration has negatively affected either the base of support or the overall generosity of Western welfare states is not surprising. First, with the exception of Putnam’s constrict theory and power resource theory, the theories reviewed in section 2.1 give more reasons to predict that people will be unwilling to share with immigrants than that they will stop supporting the principle of a welfare state they might benefit from themselves. Second, and related to this, there are strong institutional barriers to (support for) welfare state retrenchment (Pierson, 1994; 1996). Not only does the median voter in virtually every capitalist society benefit from redistribution, but welfare state institutions also enjoy a large degree of legitimacy beyond what can be explained by economic self-interest (Brooks & Manza, 2007). Therefore, any plans for across-the-board reductions in benefits will be confronted with an opposing majority. Third, and most importantly, the strongest opposition to immigration tends to be found among blue-collar workers and the unemployed, exactly those groups of voters who can also be expected to be adamant supporters of redistribution (Crepaz, 2008; Svallfors, 2006).

For these reasons, unease about immigration is more likely to lead to welfare chauvinism and welfare chauvinist reforms than to (support for) wholesale retrenchment.^v For one thing, suggestions to reduce immigrants’ social rights will not be met by the type of large and well-mobilized opposition general welfare reforms are likely to solicit. After all, one group of people that will benefit most from a welfare system that is inclusive of immigrants is future

newcomers, and they obviously do not have a role to play in the decision-making process. Among the people who could affect that process, on the other hand, few have anything to lose from these types of reforms, and considering that large portions of the electorate of many Western countries express economic concerns about immigration (Gibson, 2002; Crepaz, 2008), it seems safe to consider these reforms at the very least as 'not-unpopular' (Vis, 2009). Moreover, in a growing number of countries there are parties that offer exactly the policy mix welfare chauvinists are looking for. Many authors have noted that whereas anti-immigrant sentiment used to be voiced by parties with a right-wing economic agenda, modern anti-immigrant parties defend a more centrist or even leftist position on issues of redistribution (Hainsworth, 2000, p. 10; Mudde, 2000, p. 174; Andersen & Bjørklund, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Guibernau, 2010). Those voters who are most likely to be affected by a diversity-driven decrease in solidarity, therefore, now have the option to pay heed to that sentiment in the voting booth without being afraid that their vote will dismantle the welfare state.

In sum, the lack of clear evidence of a negative relationship between immigration and support for the welfare state might simply reflect that most studies have operationalized the variables of interest too broadly. And in fact, the evidence in research that does specifically measure selective solidarity is more robust. For example, it is telling that Mau and Burkhardt (2009) who, as discussed above, only find a weak relationship between diversity and solidarity and no relationship at all between diversity and social expenditure, do observe a strong negative relationship between share of non-Western immigrants and willingness to grant equal social rights. Erzo Luttmer (2001) uses a different way of capturing selective solidarity, and finds that support for welfare decreases with an increase in the number of recipients in a local community, but that it increases with an increase in the number of recipients in the community with the same race as the respondent. Yet another strategy is used by Ann-Helen Bay and Axel Pedersen (2006): they survey support for universal welfare programs among the Norwegian electorate, and find that this support drops when respondents are asked if they would still be in favour of such programs if they were to be extended to non-citizens.

Similarly, it is not surprising that the effect of immigration-induced diversity on welfare state institutions does not manifest itself on an aggregate level. However, to argue that immigration has not changed the configuration of Western welfare states would be to deny the many reforms that have been adopted over the last two decades or so that restrict or qualify immigrants' access to benefits. These reforms come in different guises, and entail different degrees of exclusion. First, in some cases a category of migrants is explicitly and indefinitely excluded. For instance, since the introduction of the so-called *Linkage Law* in 1998, undocumented migrants have no access to any service of the Dutch welfare state except emergency care, legal counselling, and schooling for children under the age of 16 (Minderhoud, 2004). In the United Kingdom, reforms in 1996 and 1999 excluded temporary migrants from non-contributory benefits and denied welfare to asylum seekers who are awaiting a decision on their application (Sales, 2002). The welfare reforms of the mid 1990s in the United States went even further and excluded all immigrants that are not citizens from certain benefits such as food stamps and Supplemental Security Income (Fragomen, 1997). A second type of reform excludes immigrants temporarily through the installation or extension of residence requirements for access to benefits. Denmark, for example, has recently coupled the height of a

social assistance benefit to the number of years the recipient has lived in the country (Andersen, Elm Larsen, & Hornemann Møller, 2009). Third, and finally, some reforms do not directly exclude immigrants from benefits, but make the requirements for access more onerous for newcomers than for native-born citizens. The German government, for instance, cuts the unemployment and social assistance benefits of those immigrants that do not attend their integration courses (SOPEMI, 2004, p. 107).

3. Surveying welfare chauvinism and immigrants' relative use of benefits

In comparison to the body of literature on the effect of immigration on general solidarity, the number of cross-national studies of welfare chauvinism is marginal. This partly reflects a lack of survey data. There are some surveys that ask respondents specifically about the welfare use and welfare entitlement of immigrants, but few of them have been conducted cross-nationally (and those few, moreover, only cover a small number of countries). As a result, it is difficult to compare the degree of welfare chauvinism in different countries, let alone at different points in time. What is possible, on the other hand, is to use different questions from large cross-national surveys in order to offer a general impression of the degree to which respondents (1) see the position of immigrants in the welfare state as a problem and (2) are comfortable with differentiations between the native-born and immigrant population. Table 1, based on data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and the World Values Survey (WVS), aims to do exactly that. It displays the support in twelve countries for a number of statements that could be interpreted to reflect welfare chauvinism.^{vi,vii}

Table 1. Indirect indicators of welfare chauvinism in 12 countries.

	<i>Immigration is not good for economy</i>	<i>Government spends too much money assisting migrants</i>	<i>Legal migrants should not have same rights as citizens</i>	<i>Employers should prioritize native-born when jobs are scarce</i>	<i>In favour of inequality reduction, but against immigration</i>	<i>Concerned about sick, unemployed, and elderly, not about immigrants</i>	<i>Prepared to help sick and elderly, but not immigrants</i>
AUT	32.4	61.6	44.3	72.1	27.7	34.6	22.5
BEL	-	-	-	55.7	36.4	34.7	29.1
CAN	12.7	48.4	42.4	47.2	-	-	-
DEN	45.9	47.8	38.7	34.3	18.5	31.7	25.6
FRA	38.4	52.1	39.0	54.1	40.8	36.6	30.4
GER	36.3	71.6	41.5	62.5	39.3	25.1	13.3
IRE	41.5	63.5	32.7	73.7	32.0	40.6	26.4
NOR	31.2	60.4	41.3	*34.7	-	-	-
SWE	20.3	40.7	32.7	11.3	13.1	20.4	8.4
SWI	23.3	44.9	43.7	*48.0	-	-	-
UK	41.6	65.6	37.6	58.1	31.7	47.0	30.9
USA	24.0	52.3	46.3	49.3	-	-	-

Source: ISSP 2003 (first three variables); WVS 2000 (last four variables, with the exception of *, drawn from WVS 2005). Cell entries are the percentage of respondents that agree with the statements in the first row (see note v & vi).

Two observations stand out. First, large portions of the electorate in Western welfare states display scepticism about immigration and willingness to differentiate between native-born citizens and newcomers. More than half of the respondents agree that their government

spends too much money assisting immigrants and that employers should prioritize the native-born when jobs are scarce, while more than 40 percent indicate that legal migrants should not have the same rights as native-born citizens. Second, we see large differences between countries. Canada, Sweden, and Switzerland score low on virtually every indicator in Table 1, whereas welfare chauvinism appears to be high in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. For some countries, the picture is more mixed. Many Danes, for example, think that immigration is not good for the economy, but at the same time relatively few of them think it is fair if employers prioritize native-born citizens in their hiring practices. Irish respondents display the exact opposite pattern.

All in all, the high percentages in Table 1 suggest that it would be wrong to conclude that solidarity is unaffected by immigration. While, as said, none of these indicators directly measure the concept of welfare chauvinism as defined in the previous section, the conclusion does seem safe that a large number of people are uncomfortable sharing with a growing subset of the population. The relevance of understanding why we see more of this in some countries than in others is obvious. One of the most intuitive and often-heard arguments is that welfare chauvinism has made more headway where the overreliance of immigrants among recipients of government transfers is highest. The theory of reciprocal altruism seems to offer particularly convincing support for this hypothesis. After all, when immigrants are among the most frequent and long-term beneficiaries of welfare programs, it seems more likely that a public perception will emerge that immigrants are ‘undeserving’ abusers of the welfare system (O’Connell, 2005; Hero & Preuhs, 2007). This argument is present outside academia as well. Anti-immigrant politicians often attempt to legitimize their exclusionary reforms by referring to ‘objective facts’ concerning the use of social benefits by immigrants, and the costs this brings to the public treasury (Menz, 2006, p. 409; Halvorsen, 2007, p. 253).

So far, however, the available research that attempts to link immigrants’ welfare use to public opinion is limited to a small number of case studies (Hanson, Scheve, & Slaughter, 2009; Banting, Soroka, & Koning, forthcoming). The remainder of this section, therefore, explores whether there is evidence that welfare chauvinism indeed tends to be higher in those countries where immigrants’ overrepresentation among recipients of social benefits is high as well.

For a cross-nationally comparable indicator of the degree to which immigrants are overrepresented among recipients of government transfers, I use data from the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS), which has surveyed both immigration status and welfare income in different countries. More specifically, I construct an Immigrant Overrepresentation Index (IOI), which is calculated as the difference between the amount of money in government transfers an average immigrant receives (IR) and an average native-born receives (NR) as a percentage of the native-born’s receipt (expressed in a formula, $IOI = (IR - NR) / NR * 100$). If in a certain year the average immigrant receives 50 percent more in social assistance than an average native-born citizen, the IOI for social assistance in that year would be 50. If, on the other hand, the average native-born citizen would receive 50 percent more, the score would be -50.^{viii}

Table 2 displays IOIs for different sets of government transfers in twelve countries in 2000. (Table A1 in the Appendix reports IOIs for different benefits separately.) In the first place, it seems noteworthy that the degree of immigrants’ overreliance on government transfers depends very much on the type of transfers we are talking about. As the first column in Table 2 shows, if we combine all government transfers documented in the LIS, in half of the countries

immigrants are actually receiving *less* than native-born citizens, and in none of the other countries is immigrants' overrepresentation particularly high. The same observation holds when we narrow our focus to four of the core programs of the modern welfare state: cash benefits, unemployment benefits, child benefits, and public pensions. (Of course, this is in large part because in most of the countries under study, immigrants are on average younger than the native-born population, and are therefore receiving few pension benefits, but that doesn't change that an Austrian, German or Norwegian arguing that the state pays out more money in social programs to immigrants than to native-born citizens is wrong.) The picture becomes different when we focus on programs that target the poor and unemployed. In all countries under study, immigrants receive more in combined cash and unemployment benefits than the non-immigrant population, and for 10 of the 12 countries, their overrepresentation becomes even higher when we look at cash benefits alone.

Table 2. Immigrants' overrepresentation among recipients of government transfers in 12 countries, 2000.

	<i>All transfers</i>	<i>Cash, unemployment, child, and pension benefits</i>	<i>Cash and unemployment benefits</i>	<i>Cash benefits</i>
<i>AUT</i>	-9.6	-4.2	54.5	15.6
<i>BEL</i>	16.8	17.1	96.0	158.5
<i>CAN</i>	35.8	34.7	10.2	30.8
<i>DEN</i>	-0.8	12.3	182.2	448.0
<i>FRA</i>	6.2	-3.4	62.2	65.8
<i>GER</i>	-11.4	-9.3	62.8	142.3
<i>IRE</i>	11.0	5.0	5.3	8.4
<i>NOR</i>	-15.2	-21.5	279.0	731.4
<i>SWE</i>	15.7	-2.8	174.5	840.6
<i>SWI</i>	-79.9	-79.9	58.1	24.0
<i>UK*</i>	23.6	13.7	163.1	186.4
<i>USA</i>	-37.4	-41.6	82.5	104.5

Source: LIS. * UK data is not based on comparison between native-born and foreign-born, but on comparison between white and non-white population. Cell entries show the difference between immigrants' and native born citizens' receipt as a percentage of native-born citizens' receipt.

Perhaps even more striking than the differences between programs are the differences between countries, especially when we exclusively focus on cash benefits. Immigrants' overrepresentation is massive in the Scandinavian countries under study (with IOIs as high as 730 in Norway and 840 in Sweden), but modest to negligible in Austria, Canada, Ireland, and Switzerland. It is beyond the scope of this paper to extensively discuss explanations for this variation, but three factors of relevance seem worth mentioning. First, admission policy matters. While some countries employ a wide range of measures to minimize the chance that immigrants end up depending on welfare programs – for instance, selecting on the basis of skill and language criteria, or requiring family migrants to have sponsors who can financially support them – other countries are much less demanding in that regard. Second, the economic integration of immigrants is affected by labour market regulations. While high minimum wages and last-in-first-out principles might protect workers from exploitation, unfair dismissal, and economic insecurity, the other side of the coin is that they make it harder for new entrants on the labour market such as immigrants to get in (Rueda, 2005). Third, and finally, the eligibility

requirements for accessing social benefits are important. Most obviously, if large portions of the immigrant population do not qualify for a benefit, immigrants' overrepresentation in that program will be low. Moreover, an underrepresentation of immigrants in programs with onerous requirements is likely to translate in their overrepresentation in the program of last resort, namely cash benefits. (For example, the high IOI for cash benefits in Sweden does not only reflect immigrants' difficulties in entering the labour market, but also their failure to qualify for work-related benefits such as sickness insurance or unemployment insurance.)

Again, however, this is not the place to elaborate on explanations for the differences in Table 2. The question is whether the differences in Table 2 help to explain the differences in Table 1. Because of the small number of cases, I limit the analysis here to simply correlating the different IOIs with the different indicators of welfare chauvinism.^{ix} Even though this is a rather crude technique, at any rate this analysis gives a tentative estimate of whether there is some truth in the argument that welfare chauvinism tends to be high in countries where immigrants' relative reliance on government transfers is high as well.

Table 3. Correlations between indicators of welfare chauvinism and IOIs.

	<i>All transfers</i>	<i>Core programs</i>	<i>Cash & unemploym.</i>	<i>Cash benefits</i>
<i>Immigration is not good for the economy</i>				
<i>Government spends too much money assisting migrants</i>				
<i>Legal migrants should not have same rights as citizens</i>	-.530	-.412		-.415
<i>Employers should prioritize native-born when jobs scarce</i>			-.666	-.896
<i>In favour of inequality reduction, but against immigration</i>			-.657	-.820
<i>Concerned about sick, unemployed, elderly, not migrants</i>		.536		-.645
<i>Prepared to help sick and elderly, not migrants</i>		.632		-.621

Correlations with a significance level over .3 are omitted (two-tailed significance test). Bold entries have significance level under .1. N varies between 8 and 12.

As Table 3 show, there is very little support for such an argument. In only six of the 28 relationships do we find a correlation with a significance level under .1 (the bold entries in the table), and five of these six actually portray a *negative* relationship between immigrant overrepresentation and welfare chauvinism. (Even if we set the bar for statistical significance at a very high .3, still 17 of the 28 relationships are insignificant, and only two of the 11 'significant' relationships are positive.) Especially detrimental to the hypothesis that is tested here is that we find the strongest negative relationships when we focus on unemployment and cash benefits. If immigrants' reliance on social benefits indeed fuels welfare chauvinism, we would expect that this relationship is most detectable in an analysis of those programs that are generally the most contested part of the social security system. Instead, we find that welfare chauvinism is at its *lowest* where immigrants are most overrepresented among recipients of unemployment and cash benefits.^x

Some might reason that a large overrepresentation of immigrants in the welfare system might only be of relevance if the number of immigrants is high, or in other words, that the effect of immigrants' overrepresentation is contingent on the size of the immigrant population. For that reason, I have re-run the analysis with interaction terms of the IOIs and share of foreign-born in the population. As Table 4 shows, the conclusions of this analysis are

fundamentally the same. We find only 8 relationships that are significant at a .1 level, and only two of them are positive. And again, exactly where we would most expect positive correlations is where we find the strongest negative relationships.

Table 4. Correlations between indicators of welfare chauvinism and interaction terms of IOIs and share of immigrant population.

	<i>Share *</i> <i>all</i> <i>transfers</i>	<i>Share *</i> <i>core</i> <i>programs</i>	<i>Share *</i> <i>cash &</i> <i>unemploym.</i>	<i>Share *</i> <i>cash</i> <i>benefits</i>
<i>Immigration is not good for economy</i>				
<i>Government spends too much money assisting migrants</i>				-0.370
<i>Legal migrants should not have same rights as citizens</i>	-0.381			-0.483
<i>Employers should prioritize native-born when jobs scarce</i>			-0.737	-0.861
<i>In favour of inequality reduction, but against immigration</i>			-0.643	-0.733
<i>Concerned about sick, unemployed, elderly, not migrants</i>		0.641	-0.485	-0.704
<i>Prepared to help sick and elderly, not migrants</i>		0.676	-0.504	-0.730

Correlations with a significance level over .3 are omitted (two-tailed significance test). Bold entries have significant level under .1. N varies between 8 and 12.

All in all, this cursory analysis lends little credence to the argument that welfare chauvinism is a response to overrepresentation of immigrants in the social security system. At any rate, this theory seems unfit to explain the differences between the countries under study. If anything, it appears that we find the lowest opposition to the costs of immigration and the least willingness to differentiate between immigrants and native-born citizens exactly where immigrants are most overrepresented among recipients of cash and unemployment benefits.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Although it contradicts a pervasive argument in public debate, the conclusion that actual benefit use of immigrants has little to do with welfare chauvinism among the public is perhaps not all that surprising: many authors have found that objective facts are seldom important in the formation of public opinion, especially when it concerns immigration (Messina, 2007, p. 76; Sides & Citrin, 2007, p. 496). Before concluding, I will briefly suggest two explanations for the findings in the previous section.

First, the presence of a well-mobilized and publicly visible anti-immigrant organization – most obviously, a successful anti-immigrant party – makes (economic) concerns about immigration a more prominent part of political discourse^{xi}, and as such, increases the salience of those concerns among the broader public. As Hugh Mehan (1997, p. 267) puts it, “the idea that the immigrant is the enemy does not just bubble up naturally in the citizenry. [...] This anti-immigrant sentiment is manufactured and promoted by elites”. From this perspective, the reason why welfare chauvinism is high in Austria (even though immigrants are comparatively not strongly overrepresented among recipients of government transfers) and low in Sweden (where we see the highest overrepresentation of all cases under study) might be that the anti-immigrant *Freedom Party* has for a long time played a large role in Austrian politics, whereas Sweden has so far only had two short experiences with a small anti-immigrant party. While this

argument might thus account for part of the puzzle, it does not, however, offer a complete explanation. For example, it does not help us to understand why welfare chauvinism appears to be lower in Norway (where immigrants' overrepresentation is high, and the anti-immigrant *Progress Party* is an important political player) than in Ireland (where immigrants are hardly overrepresented at all, and an anti-immigrant party has never made it to parliament).

A second explanation focuses on the nature of the welfare regime. As a sizeable body of literature attests, the structure of a welfare state has large consequences for how legitimate it is perceived to be. More specifically, in universal welfare states the number of people that are simultaneously contributing to and benefiting from the system is high, which decreases the chance that welfare recipients are seen as undeserving (Korpi, 1980; Larsen, 2008).^{xii} For that reason, a number of authors have argued that such universal settings are also likely to mute welfare chauvinism (Banting, 2000; Crepaz & Damron, 2009; Mau & Burkhardt, 2009, p. 226). Indeed, this argument seems to help explain some of the findings in Section 3. Even though Switzerland does not fit in this pattern, it does indeed seem the case that welfare chauvinism is higher in the conservative-corporatist welfare states that emphasize contributions (Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany) than in the social-democratic welfare states based on universality (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden). Moreover, this institutionalist argument can also help to explain why we find evidence of a negative relationship between immigrant overrepresentation among welfare recipients and welfare chauvinism. Since the more generous and universal welfare states where the poor and the unemployed are most likely to be seen as people who deserve protection also tend to have rigid labour markets which hinder the economic integration of immigrants and hence increase their reliance on the state, it makes sense that high overrepresentation of immigrants in the welfare system and low degrees of welfare chauvinism go together.

Clearly, to tease out the relative merit of these explanations requires more research, and by no means does this paper intend or pretend to offer a conclusive account of the origin of welfare chauvinism. Instead, this paper merely aims to defend two arguments. First, while existing empirical research has only found little evidence that immigration-induced diversity has eroded general support for the welfare state or led to an across-the-board retrenchment of programs, it would be wrong to conclude that immigration has had no effect on solidarity or the institutional configuration of Western welfare states. Such a conclusion would belie that large portions of the population appear to feel less solidary towards immigrants than towards native-born citizens, and that in a large number of countries this selective solidarity has already translated in exclusionary reforms in social policy. For that reason, it seems that our understanding of the future of the welfare state in an era of immigration would be advanced more by studies of welfare chauvinism and exclusion of immigrants from benefits than by replications of the studies reviewed in the second section of this paper.

Second, the relevance of this research agenda is emphasized even more by the finding that the origins of welfare chauvinism appear not to be as clear-cut as is often suggested in the public debate. The analysis of income data from the LIS and survey data from the WVS and ISSP offers no support for the argument that welfare chauvinism is a response to immigrants' use of welfare programs: at any rate, it does not seem to be the case that welfare chauvinism is highest in those countries where immigrants are most overrepresented among recipients of government transfers. This suggests that the economics of immigration are not automatically

translated into the political debate, and that party-political and institutional dynamics are important mediators in this translation. Understanding better how and to what extent these factors matter is crucial if we want to avoid a future institutionalization of selective solidarity.

Word count: 7,988

Notes

ⁱ While the term ‘welfare chauvinism’ is often used in the literature on anti-immigrant politics, few scholars offer an explicit definition. Markus Crepaz and Regan Damron (2009) define it as follows: “the sense that immigrants are attracted to a country because of its generous welfare benefits, do not pay taxes, take away the jobs of natives, depress wages, and abuse health care, education, and other public services” (p. 439). At least for the purpose of this paper, however, I find it more useful to define welfare chauvinism as a political ideology than as a set of stereotypes and beliefs.

ⁱⁱ Canada, Ireland, United Kingdom, and United States represent the ‘liberal’ regime; Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and Switzerland have a ‘conservative-corporatist’ welfare regime; and Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, finally, are exponents of the ‘social-democratic’ regime. The Netherlands and Finland could theoretically be included in this sample, but are excluded for reasons of data availability.

ⁱⁱⁱ There is, in fact, an ongoing debate between adherents of Gordon Allport’s (1954) so-called contact hypothesis (which stipulates that people will be more likely to trust members of out-groups if they have frequent contact with them), and proponents of the contrasting conflict theory (which hypothesizes, conversely, that frequent contact will make people less trusting of members of out-groups).

^{iv} An additional concern is that some of the policies adopted with these new goals in mind – in particular, multiculturalist policies – might actually run counter to efforts aimed at fostering support for redistribution. Because multiculturalism inevitably emphasizes differences between groups of citizens, some observers fear that the adoption of such policies make it unlikely that these groups will develop feelings of solidarity towards each other. Brian Barry (2001, p. 88), for instance, argues that “a situation in which groups live in parallel universes is not one well calculated to advance mutual understanding or encourage the cultivation of habits of cooperation and sentiments of trust”.

^v This is not to say, however, that welfare chauvinism is a necessary and unavoidable consequence of immigration (see Section 3 and 4), nor that there are no institutional brakes on welfare chauvinist reforms. In particular, national and international law limit how far policy-makers can go in differentiating in social rights between immigrants and native-born citizens (Joppke, 2001; Geddes, 2003; Stokke, 2007).

^{vi} For presentation purposes, I have reformulated the questions and collapsed some of the answer categories. For the first four indicators, the original formulations are: “Immigrants are generally good for [country’s] economy” (the table reports the percentage of respondents that chose the option ‘disagree’ or ‘disagree strongly’); “Government spends too much money assisting immigrants (percentage ‘agree’ or ‘agree strongly’); “Legal immigrants to [country] who are not citizens should have the same rights as [country nationality] citizens” (percentage ‘disagree’ or ‘disagree strongly’); and “When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to [nation] people than immigrants” (percentage ‘agree’). The last three indicators are composed on the basis of different variables in the WVS. The first of these three reports the percentage of respondents that reports to be against immigration (by answering, in a question on immigration policy, that the government should ‘set strict limits’, or ‘prohibit all people from coming’), but also indicates to be in favour of inequality reduction by agreeing with the statement that ‘incomes should be made more equal’. Second, respondents were asked to what extent they “feel concerned about the living conditions” of a variety of social groups. The entries in Table 1 show the percentage of people who indicate to be less concerned about immigrants than about the unemployed, the sick and disabled, and the elderly. The last variable is based on the question whether respondents would be “prepared to actually do something to improve the conditions” of these social groups, and has been similarly constructed.

^{vii} Whereas studies of public opinion on immigration often exclude the immigrant respondents from the sample, the percentages in Table 1 are based on all respondents. Only in some of the countries does the WVS include a

question on country of birth, and the ISSP only asks respondents about their citizenship status, not about their immigration status. In any case, none of this seems to have large consequences. In those country surveys in the WVS that did include a question on country of birth, immigrants turn out to be massively underrepresented (in the 2000 German survey, for example, only 3.3 of the respondents are immigrant, while the percentage in the population in that year was almost 12.5 percent). Excluding non-citizens from the ISSP sample does not significantly alter any of the findings in this paper (these calculations are not shown, but can be made available upon request).

^{viii} Of course, one could think of other operationalizations of immigrants' reliance on government transfers, such as a comparison of the percentages of immigrants and native-born that receive benefits, or a measure that is exclusively based on how much benefits immigrants are receiving without comparing this to the receipt among native-born citizens. The former measure, however, does not capture that the height of a benefit can differ substantially between one recipient and another, whereas the latter measure is not only troubled by cross-national differences in benefit generosity and eligibility requirements, but is also a poorer indicator from a conceptual point of view.

^{ix} The different timing of the various waves of the LIS, WVS and ISSP make it impossible to match data from the same years, or to consistently employ the same lag between income data and public opinion data. In order to maximize the number of cases, I have correlated the WVS data with LIS data that was gathered a year earlier, the same year, or a year later, while I have correlated the ISSP data with LIS data that was collected either 1, 2 or 3 years earlier. The results in Table 3 are based on the most recent combination in each country that could be made following these rules; including all possible combinations does not alter the main findings: only seven of the 28 correlations appear significant at a .1 level, and six of them display a negative relationship (these results can be made available upon request).

^x Scattergrams (included in the Appendix) do not suggest that the absence of positive relationships is the result of nonlinearity or outlying cases. Moreover, the main conclusions (hardly any significant correlations, and evidence of negative relationships where we would most expect positive coefficients) do not change if we exclude the UK (for which the IOI is based on ethnicity rather than on immigration status), nor if we use overrepresentation indexes based on the difference between citizens and non-citizens rather than that between native-born and foreign-born. I have also re-run the analysis with slightly different operationalizations of the three constructed variables (for the first variable, I used a different indicator of support for inequality reduction in the WVS; for the last two, I calculated the percentage of respondents that expressed a *very large* difference between their concern for the elderly, the sick, and the unemployed on the one hand and immigrants on the other), and again the findings were similar. These calculations can be made available upon request.

^{xi} An expanding literature suggests that the appearance of anti-immigrant parties on the political scene does not only increase the salience of anti-immigrant sentiments by voicing those themselves, but also by making other parties adopt a more restrictive stance out of electoral calculations (Norris, 2005; Bale, Green-Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther, & Sitter, 2010; Van Spanje, 2010).

^{xii} While there is some research that questions the validity of this argument (Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Gelissen, 2000), these dissenting studies are certainly in the minority.

Appendix

Table A1. Immigrants' overrepresentation in different social programs in 12 countries, 2000.

	<i>All transfers</i>	<i>Pension benefits</i>	<i>Child benefits</i>	<i>Unemployment benefits</i>	<i>Cash benefits</i>
<i>AUT</i>	-9.6	-14.4	9.4	88.5	15.6
<i>BEL</i>	16.8	-14.0	57.0	86.7	158.5
<i>CAN</i>	35.8	35.6	100.5	-14.5	30.8
<i>DEN</i>	-0.8	-465.9	84.2	65.2	448.0
<i>FRA</i>	6.2	-33.3	100.1	60.3	65.8
<i>GER</i>	-11.4	-55.5	93.2	17.8	142.3
<i>IRE</i>	11.0	8.2	-8.6	-7.5	8.4
<i>NOR</i>	-15.2	-230.0	49.1	95.7	731.4
<i>SWE</i>	15.7	-109.6	48.7	85.9	840.6
<i>SWI</i>	-79.9	-145.7	70.2	117.8	24.0
<i>UK*</i>	23.6	-203.4	99.9	-74.3	186.4
<i>USA</i>	-37.4	-89.0	-10.9	11.7	104.5

Source: LIS. * UK data is not based on comparison between native-born and foreign-born, but on comparison between white and non-white population. Cell entries show the difference between immigrants' and native born citizens' receipt as a percentage of native-born citizens' receipt.

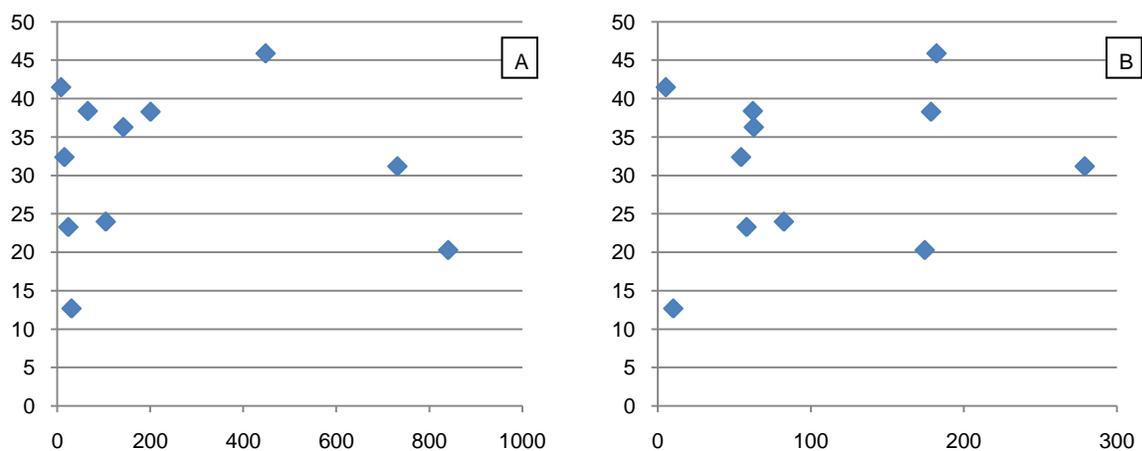


Figure A1. 'Immigration not good for the economy' with cash benefit IOI (A), and cash & unemployment benefit IOI (B).

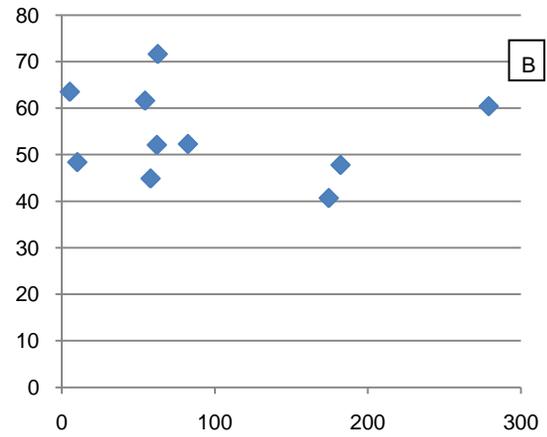
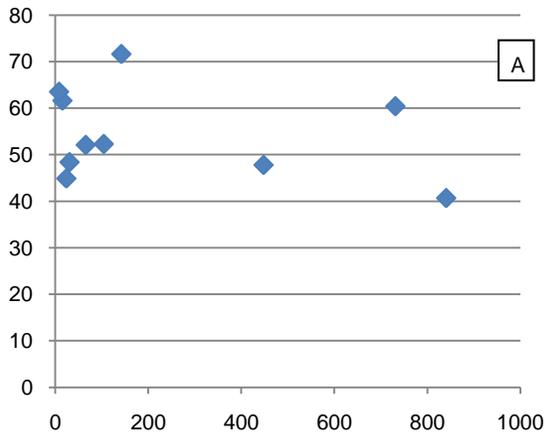


Figure A2. 'Government spends too much money assisting immigrants' with cash benefit IOI (A), and cash & unemployment benefit IOI (B).

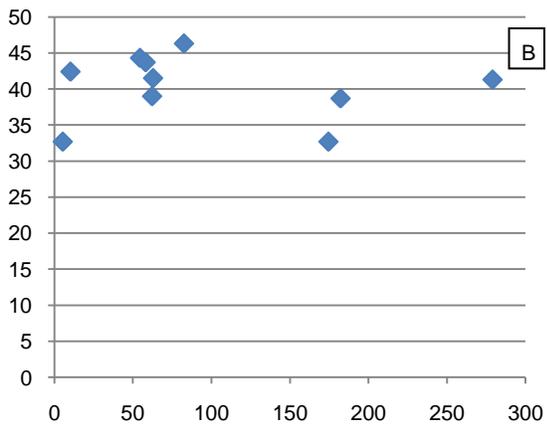
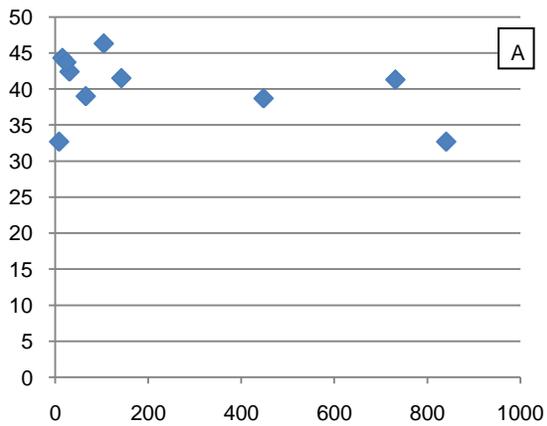


Figure A3. 'Legal migrants should not have same rights' with cash benefit IOI (A), and cash & unemployment benefit IOI (B).

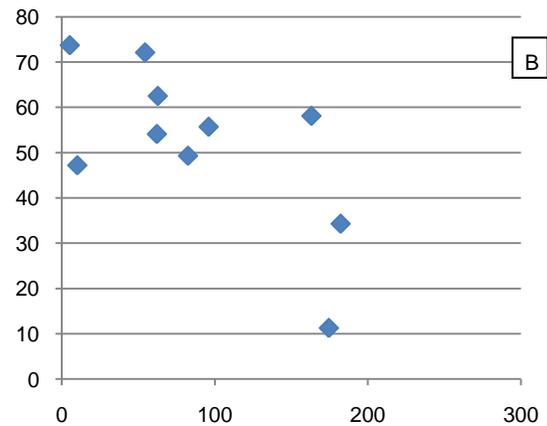
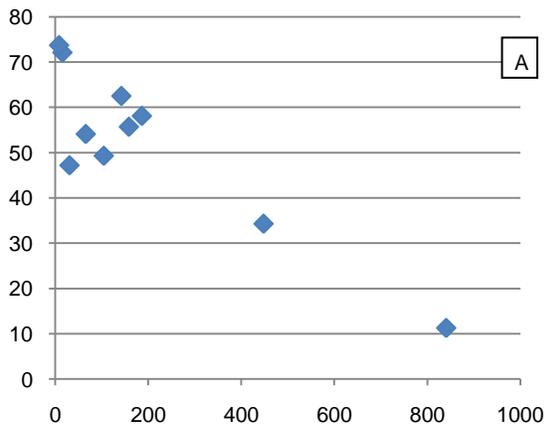


Figure A4. 'Employers should prioritize native-born when jobs are scarce' with cash benefit IOI (A), and cash & unemployment benefit IOI (B).

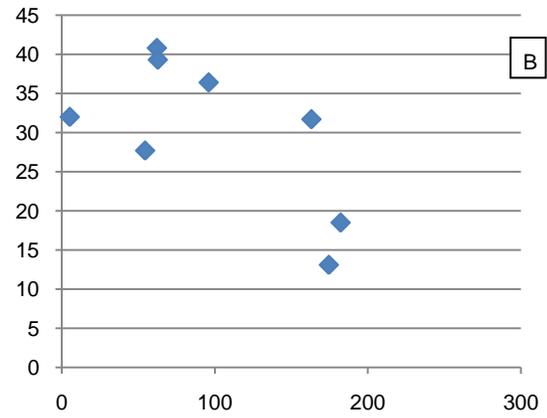
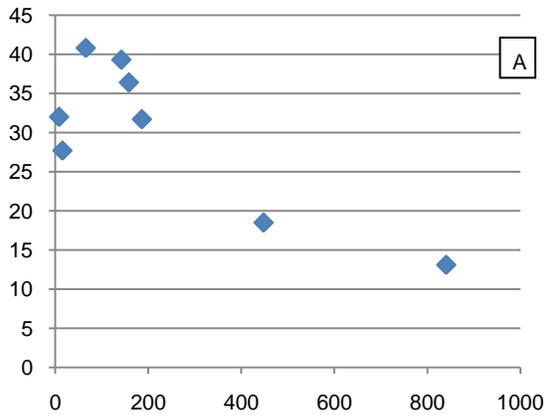


Figure A5. 'In favour of inequality reduction, but opposed to immigration' with cash benefit IOI (A), and cash & unemployment benefit IOI (B).

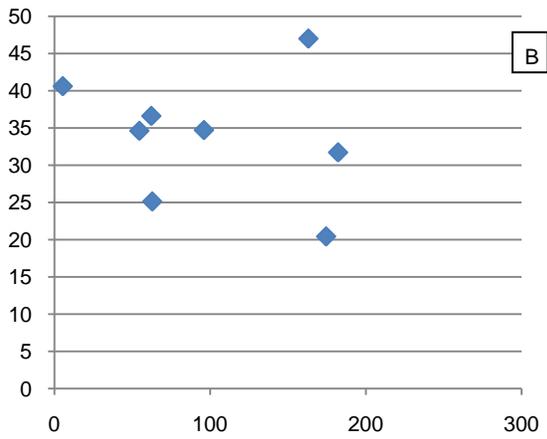
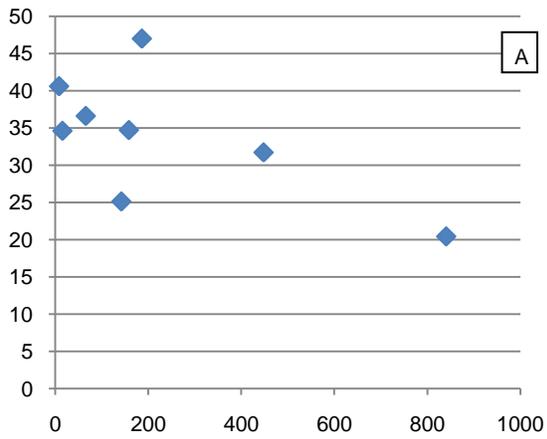


Figure A6. 'Concerned about the elderly, sick and unemployed, but not about immigrants' with cash benefit IOI (A), and cash & unemployment benefit IOI (B).

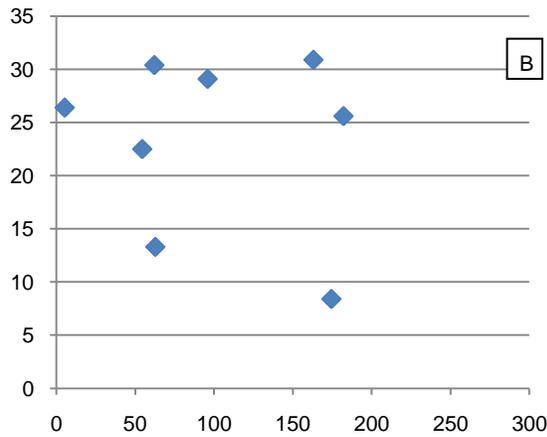
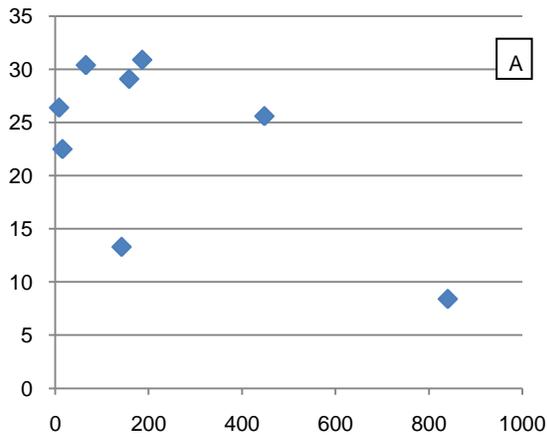


Figure A7. 'Prepared to help sick and unemployed, but not immigrants' with cash benefit IOI (A), and cash & unemployment benefit IOI (B).

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