

Why do some countries become more welfare chauvinistic even though they get richer?



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Abstract

Welfare chauvinism refers to the notion that people who are not originally from a country should be restricted access to welfare services. Previous research has mainly looked at this concept by comparing countries across one point in time.

This thesis aims to look at what affects welfare chauvinism over time, with the research question: "Why do some countries become more welfare chauvinistic even though they get richer?" Past research shows that an increase in GDP per capita tends to have a negative effect on welfare chauvinism, but not always. Using waves four and eight of the European Social Survey and data from the OECD and the CPDS in Europe, I attempt to find explanatory variables for the change in welfare chauvinism over time.

Using quantitative methods and bivariate regression analyses, the study finds no statistical significance for explanations like satisfaction with income, welfare state generosity, populist right-wing parties' vote shares, or immigrant stock.

To address the lack of significance, a small qualitative case study has been conducted to attempt to find an explanation for the research question, but even this case study raised more questions than answers.

The study finds that the realistic group threat theory does not seem to affect welfare chauvinism over time in Europe. I propose a direction for future research to use more advanced methods and attempt to do the same analysis once more data on welfare chauvinism has emerged.

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Since this marks the final project I produce as a bachelor student in Political Science I also want to say, thanks to all my lecturers through the years which have given me the foundation I needed to complete this research project. Getting to know the students, lecturers, and the University has been an honor.

"I did not know that the Dunning-Kruger effect had so many valleys!"

Knut M. Solvig,

11.05.23

List of abbreviations

PRWP - Populist right-wing party

PRWPs - Populist right-wing parties

RWPs - Right-wing parties

RGCT - Realistic Group Conflict Threat (theory)

WC - Welfare chauvinism

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1 Introduction

The number of immigrants moving to other countries has increased in the last decade. For some, the welfare state is seen as one of the pillars of any democratic country. Welfare states tend to need immigrants to remain sustainable, but simultaneously, the cultural and economic threat that ensues causes political tension (Lutz & Knotz, 2022, p. 276). It can become problematic when this system is perceived as threatened by some groups seen as less deserving of accessing the welfare state.

Studies done in Norway show that about 60 percent of the respondents believe that immigrants should not receive the same rights as natives (Cappelen et al., 2016; Cappelen & Midtbø, 2016) This brings us to the notion of "welfare chauvinism."

Welfare chauvinism (WC) is the belief that "welfare services should be limited to 'our own'" (Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990, p. 212). WC as a term has grown in popularity over the past thirty years (Careja & Harris, 2022, p. 212). Some argue that immigrants should never have access to welfare services, while others argue that they should have access on arrival or after a year of work. In other words, there are different definitions and understandings of WC.

Because of the many ongoing immigration crises in the world, WC is a highly relevant point of study. For example, the massive migration following the war in Ukraine and the wealthiest people in Norway moving to Switzerland to pay less taxes.

Different countries have different attitudes towards immigrant WC. Previous research has shown that this can be explained by, among other things, differences in GDP per capita between countries and which political ideology is most prominent in a country (Crepaz & Damron, 2009; Ford, 2016; Hjorth, 2016; Jylhä et al., 2019; Van Der Waal et al., 2013).

Previous evidence shows that countries are less welfare-chauvinistic when they have a higher GDP per capita (Bell et al., 2023; Mewes & Mau, 2012). However, some studies do not find this link (Gorodzeisky & Semyonov, 2009; Heizmann et al., 2018). Ziller and Careja (2022) found no significant causal relationship between GDP per capita and WC over time in Western Europe. These research papers all illustrate the conflicts of previous research. This thesis will use the same dependent variable and some of the same independent variables that Ziller and Careja (2022) used in their study.

The primary focus of this study will be on the cases not included in Ziller and Careja (2022)'s analysis. These cases include As well as on explanations like satisfaction with income, welfare state generosity, PRWPs vote shares, and immigrant stock to figure out if any of these can explain the change in WC over time.

The research question in this is: "Why do some countries become more welfare chauvinistic even though they get richer?" This research question attempts to find what could be some possible explanations for why a wealthy democracy does not necessarily become less welfare-chauvinistic as it becomes richer.

The research design is a cross-sectional time series design. The study focuses on countries and the welfare-chauvinistic attitudes of its population over time. I also look at the changes over time across the countries. The research method in this thesis uses quantitative methods. The European Social Survey, which measures individual opinions on a wide range of issues, serves as the data foundation. In order to conduct an analysis using micro and macro variables¹, it was necessary to aggregate² the ESS dataset. Data from the OECD were also used to collect information on GDP per capita for each country, as well as data from the CPDS on some other independent variables. In total, 16 countries are presented and analyzed for the years 2008 and 2016. Further, I attempted to find some qualitative evidence from documents through a small document analysis of two countries.

This thesis is structured as follows. First, the relevant theory in WC and immigration will be presented. For economic explanations, the Realistic Group Conflict Threat Theory (RGCT) is used to examine the possible threat that immigrants pose to the general population of a country. The dualization and generosity hypotheses are introduced to explain the generosity of the welfare state and its connection to immigrants (Römer, 2017). The hypotheses that this study aims to test are presented with explanations of why they were chosen. Furthermore, the methods section will explain the choice of research design and how the empirical data was collected. The results section will present and discuss the empirical evidence based on the theoretical framework and hypotheses. After analyzing the empirical evidence, the implications of the findings for WC research will be discussed. Finally, avenues for future research will be presented along with concluding statements.

¹micro = individual measures; macro = national or state measures

²aggregating means combining observations into a collective identity (country)

2 Theoretical frameworks

2.1 Welfare chauvinism - definitions

WC can be defined in different ways. The first definition says, "welfare services should be restricted to 'our own'" (Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990, p. 212). This is the first definition that was introduced when Andersen & Bjørklund (1990) looked at Progress parties in Norway and Denmark. Another way to define WC is to exclude immigrants from an existing redistribution system (Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990; Kitschelt & McGann, 1995). However, yet another way to define it is the "unwillingness to grant the same entitlements to all people in a society" (Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2016, p. 333).

WC also includes indirect and direct types. *Direct WC* means that policies are directly aimed at immigrants, for example, by explicitly saying that immigrants should not gain access to welfare benefits. *Indirect WC* is where policy measures are directed to the larger population but negatively affect immigrants, for example, by increasing social benefits for natives (Careja et al., 2016). In this case, immigrants are not necessarily directly mentioned and excluded, but they are being suppressed.

WC can happen on different levels: micro, meso, and macro. First, *micro WC* entails individual attributes like one's attitude towards immigration. Secondly, *meso* is a middle point between micro and macro. Meso tends to be policies from political parties or trade unions. Lastly, *macro* looks at the national and politics of WC, like national or subnational policies (Careja & Harris, 2022). This thesis builds on micro-WC and examines individuals' attitudes toward immigrants.

2.2 Hypotheses and theory

Further, the more concrete theories that build up the hypotheses in this study will be presented.

2.2.1 Welfare state generosity

Welfare state generosity includes, among other elements, social expenditure and welfare services (Otto, 2018). A generous welfare state can be said to either support the population with a wide range of welfare services or that they support it with a more significant sum of resources. For example, if country *X* supports citizens by covering a whole hospital bill, and country *Y* pays 50% of the bill, country *X* has a more generous welfare state.

Römer (2017) proposed two hypotheses in her study of how different kinds of welfare states affect immigrants' access to welfare provision. The first one is the *dualization hypothesis*, which believes that generous welfare states are likely to exclude immigrants from access to welfare benefits. On the other hand, the *generosity hypothesis* says the opposite, that generous welfare states will grant greater access to benefits for material, cultural and institutional reasons. Material, cultural, and institutional reasons include increased income, a more diverse cultural society, and a larger workforce. Römer finds that generous welfare states are more likely to grant immigrants access to welfare benefits, while less generous welfare states are more likely to exclude immigrants. In other words, she confirmed that the generosity hypothesis is the one that holds water when analyzing her empirical evidence; this is in some way logical since a welfare state which has a less generous welfare system also has fewer resources and, therefore, might have to prioritize the native population. Following the findings from the generosity hypothesis, I present the first hypothesis as follows:

H1: *A generous welfare state leads to a decrease in welfare chauvinistic attitudes*

Esping-Andersen (1990, pp. 167–169) proposes three kinds of welfare state regimes, liberal, corporatist, and social-democratic. In a liberal welfare regime, benefits tend to be modest. Corporatist welfare regimes hold a more conservative stance and are closely connected to the Church. In such a regime, social insurance and family services are often lacking, and non-working wives tend to be excluded. Lastly, the social-democratic regime is the smallest of the three; it also includes the middle class and wants everyone to benefit. Van Der Waal et al. (2013, p. 173) found evidence that social-democratic welfare regimes tend to hold less welfare-chauvinistic attitudes than countries with liberal and corporatist welfare regimes. These findings strengthen the first hypothesis.

Bell et al. (2022) finds that Norway, Finland, and Sweden are the countries in Europe with the highest moderate welfare-chauvinistic attitudes, which means that they believe that immigrants should get access to welfare services only first when they become citizens. However, they note that in Nordic welfare states, the total exclusion of immigrants from welfare benefits is nearly non-existent. Seeing as the Nordic welfare states are all social-democratic and part of the most generous type of welfare states, it is expected that a generous welfare state decreases their overall welfare-chauvinistic attitudes over time.

2.2.2 Economic threat

Economic threat entails a lack of financial security, which forces anti-outgroup³ attitudes. Economic threat is part of a larger family of ethnic threats (Mayda, 2006; Stephan et al., 1999). Some other ethnic threats include; cultural threat (Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012; Sniderman et al., 2004), security threat (Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012; Messina, 2014; Sniderman et al., 2004), welfare threat (Mayda, 2006), and political threat (Blalock, 1967).

The realistic group conflict theory (RGCT) is an economic and material theory. The theory says that the majority's economic power and well-being are threatened by the arrival of immigrants (Callens & Meuleman, 2017; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012; Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Stephan et al., 1999).

Kuntz et al. (2017) studied anti-immigrant sentiments before and after an economic crisis in Europe. They found that when the economy becomes a scarce resource (as it does in a financial crisis), anti-immigrant sentiments increase in countries where also economic insecurity increases. It is then natural to expect that a change in economic stability at the micro level will also affect welfare-chauvinistic attitudes and that this happens even though GDP per capita has increased.

Bell et al. (2023, p. 13) further finds that an increase in GDP per capita does not necessarily turn to a decrease in WC. They say that it is even more important how the individuals themselves perceive the economic conditions.

Following past research and the RGCT theory, the second hypothesis is as follows:

H2: *Even with an increase in GDP per capita, the population is not coping any better with current income.*

³Outgroup means people who are different from the general population: for example immigrants

Kros and Coenders (2019) attempted to fill the gap in the research for longitudinal analyses on WC. They found that economic egalitarianism, as well as ethnic threat, explains the link between WC and economic risk. However, a potential issue with this article is that they only have two cases, Great Britain and the Netherlands. Since they only look at these two cases, it is not necessarily a given that these findings can be generalizable to the population of Europe or the world. Furthermore, they aggregate two quite different phenomena into the variable of ethnic threat. They combined economic and cultural factors, making it unclear what the variable measures. It would have been better to see if the economic and cultural threats are as significant or if there are some differences. It can be up to future research to look closer at the cultural aspect and other possible ethnic explanations for the change in WC.

2.2.3 Populist right-wing parties

PRWPs are typically parties who are radically conservative. These parties are more or less against immigration and then to be nationalistic in their ideology. PRWPs are in some instances, being increasingly referenced as *radical* right-wing parties instead of populist (Rydgren, 2017). Despite this, the study holds onto the wording of PRWPs since this is the term that the majority of research literature uses, which makes it more relevant to compare the study's findings with this one.

Seeing as some of the rise in WC comes from PRWPs, they may have a significant influence on welfare-chauvinistic attitudes in the population as a whole. PRWPs tend to split people into two groups, the *undeserving* group, and the *deserving* group. Welfare benefits are to be reserved for those seen as deserving. In the deserving group, we find people, such as the elderly, who have contributed to building the society and which usually *needs* help in the form of welfare services. In contrast, the elderly are the undeserving. The undeserving group includes immigrants, social assistance receivers, and the unemployed (Churi, 2021, p. 1094). These are seen as undeserving since they are often able to help themselves and often get stamped as people who reap the benefits of others' hard work. This notion of immigrants being undeserving of social benefits can be used to further justify the restriction of immigrants (Thomann & Rapp, 2018).

As multiple researchers' have shown, people are more willing to help others they can identify themselves with. As well as those they have been helped by in the past or those who have no control over their economic situation (Coughlin & Wilensky, 1980; de Swaan, 1988; Raijman et al., 2003; Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2012; van Oorschot, 2006).

Since PRWPs have pretty radical and strong opinions towards immigration, it would be natural to expect that these opinions trickle down into the population at large, especially those who already support one of these parties. Therefore, PRWPs might be supporting the further increase of welfare-chauvinistic attitudes in a country.

Funke et al. (2016, p. 228) looked at the effect of financial crises on voting behavior, finding that PRWPs get a 30% increase in vote shares following a financial crisis. This finding can further strengthen the possibility that the citizens do not want immigrants to further "ruin" the economy, and they, therefore, vote for a PRWP. Seeing as the Great Recession happened in 2008, there might still be some effect of the crisis stuck in peoples' minds in 2016 and, therefore, can be a possible answer to the research question (Grusky et al., 2011).

Bell et al. (2023, p. 2) mentioned that since the subjective economic conditions matter as much as they do for WC, it is crucial to see the influence of PRWPs as well. They find that PRWPs do affect people's attitudes towards WC (Bell et al., 2023, p. 10). It is interesting to see if this explains the differences over time. The third hypothesis is then as follows:

H3: *When vote shares towards PRWPs increase, welfare chauvinism also increases*

2.2.4 Immigrant population

It is essential to distinguish between immigrant *stock* and immigrant *flow*. Immigrant stock entails the number of people who live in a country they do not originate from. The flow, on the other hand, looks at the number of immigrants who enters the country and leaves the country at a particular time (Bartram et al., 2023). This study looks at immigration stock, since it is irrelevant for the research question how many people *emigrate*⁴ to another country.

⁴Emigration measures people who leave a country, which would not be a suitable measure for immigrants.

Research has shown that having a larger immigrant population decreases WC (Bell et al., 2023; Eger & Breznau, 2017; Mewes & Mau, 2013; Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2012). Immigrants can be described as being a part of the "outgroup". However, research shows that if someone who is a part of the ingroup knows someone in the outgroup, it can produce more positive intergroup attitudes (Wright et al., 1997, p. 74). This belief is called the *extended contact hypothesis*. However, suppose one finds themselves in a dire economic situation, for example, after an economic crisis. In that case, research has shown that people tend to be restrictive towards immigrants and gain more exclusionist welfare-chauvinistic attitudes (Achterberg & Houtman, 2006; Kros & Coenders, 2019).

The extended contact hypothesis follows the RGCT theory, as mentioned earlier; if there is a limitation in resources, an increase in the immigration population does not help the cause.

It is not necessarily easy to know if an increase in immigration stock is better or worse for welfare-chauvinistic attitudes. Therefore there are proposed two hypotheses, the first hypothesis (**H4a**) follows the findings of Bell et al. (2023), Eger and Breznau (2017), Mewes and Mau (2013), and Reeskens and van Oorschot (2012). The second hypothesis (**H4b**), which follows the findings from Ziller and Careja (2022, p. 187). The hypotheses are then as follows:

H4a: *An increase in immigrant stocks causes a decrease in welfare chauvinism.*

H4b: *An increase in immigrant stocks causes an increase in welfare chauvinism.*

3 Method

3.1 Research design

Past studies have primarily used cross-sectional designs (Ford, 2016; Hjorth, 2016; Mau & Burkhardt, 2009), but Careja and Harris (2022, p. 220) suggest that one should look closer at both cross-country variation, as well as incorporating longitudinal designs. Therefore, I will look at WC from a cross-sectional and longitudinal perspective and attempt to explain changes in WC over time.

I have conducted an observational study in contrast to an experimental study. The reasoning for this is twofold. Firstly, observational studies can help prevent selection bias⁵ by using data collected by others (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, p. 89). Secondly, many datasets are publicly available online that hold a high degree of quality, and it is more logical in this case not to conduct an experimental study.

This thesis will be primarily built on quantitative research methods. By choosing this method, it makes it easier to compare the findings with other studies. Quantitative is also an excellent way to find causal mechanisms between variables.

I will also use qualitative methods to conduct a small case study. This case study is performed to gain a deeper understanding of the possible causal relationship that might emerge in the quantitative analysis. The cases chosen for the case study will be further looked at later in this section.

3.2 Data

This study uses data from the European Social Survey (ESS). As the name entails, the dataset includes data on European individuals. ESS is a cross-sectional dataset with data across ten waves from 2002 to 2020. This dataset is a typical choice for researchers when looking for empirical evidence of WC (Attewell, 2021; Degen et al., 2019; Eger & Breznau, 2017; Heizmann et al., 2018; Im, 2021). Since the dataset has a well-measured and explicit variable for WC (mentioned later), it is a natural choice of data foundation.

⁵Also known as a sample of convenience

The ESS dataset has no measures on GDP per capita or any other regional or national measurements. Therefore it was necessary to include these from other third-party datasets. I then used data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for GDP per capita, social spending, and immigrant stock (OECD, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c). The Comparative Political Dataset (CPDS) was also used to find empirical evidence on how many vote shares went to PRWPs (Armingeon et al., 2022).

The analysis will be conducted across the years 2008 (wave 4) and 2016 (wave 8). This does not mean the period between 2008 and 2016 but only the two time points. The reason for choosing the years 2008 and 2016 is methodological in nature. The ESS dataset includes the variable of WC in only two out of the ten currently available waves. To my knowledge, no variable exists that measures WC as the ESS dataset does. The years are also eight years from each other, which gives an excellent foundation to visualize change over time.

3.3 Cases

The OECD and CPDS do not have any data on Russia and Israel. Estonia was also only included in 2016 and not 2008. Since I want to compare the two time points, the same number of cases must exist in 2008 and 2016. If not, a country would have no change over time, which naturally is a problem for longitudinal analysis.

After omitting Russia, Estonia, and Israel from the data, 16 cases remain. The cases that stand as objects of analysis are; Belgium, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, and Slovenia. These countries represent a wide geographical area, and even after excluding Russia, Estonia, and Israel, they should be good enough to make statistical inferences.

One last point to make when discussing case selection is the country of Ireland. This country was quite an outlier for change in GDP per capita and social spending from 2008 to 2016 (see [Figure 1](#)). Even though this is the case, I have chosen to keep the country in the analysis since it is a valuable data point for the rest of the variables⁶.

⁶Regression analyses were ran with both Ireland omitted and included, and there were no differences in statistical results.

3.4 Dependent variable

In both waves 4 and 8 of the ESS dataset, there is an ordinal variable coded as *imsclbn* measured on a five-point Likert scale. The variable measures the welfare-chauvinistic attitudes of the respondents, which is also a variable that other researchers use as their dependent variable when looking at WC (Bell et al., 2023; Degen et al., 2019; Eger & Breznau, 2017; Heizmann et al., 2018; Ziller & Careja, 2022).

The respondents were asked "When should immigrants obtain rights to social benefits/services?". The respondents could choose between five different responses: (1) Immediately on arrival; (2) After a year, whether or not they have worked; (3) After working and paid taxes at least a year; (4) Once they have become a citizen; (5) They should never get the same rights.

Previous research has chosen to collapse the first two categories because they both hold an "inclusionist" attitude towards immigrants (Mewes & Mau, 2013; Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2012). There is a clear difference between gaining rights immediately on arrival contra living in the country for one year, which is why this study includes all the original five categories. For example, if welfare benefits are to be given on arrival, people could travel there solely for the benefits. It is, therefore, better to keep the labels like the respondents understood them. Another point is that by having five categories, it is possible to make the variable behave as a continuous variable, which is necessary to do linear regressions (Slettebak & Kaasa, 2021, p. 210).

3.5 Independent variables

In this section the different independent variables will be presented together with their measurement scales. The measurement validity will be discussed on them all to make sure that the variables measure what they are supposed to measure.

3.5.1 GDP per capita

The first independent variable is a continuous variable from the OECD which measures GDP per capita in US Dollars. GDP per capita, in simple terms, means the economic output per person in a country. The variable of GDP per capita is used as a measurement of the wealth of a country.

Of course, economic output might not always equal wealth because some countries could be more conservative with their economic output. Despite this, prior research has used GDP per capita as an indicator of wealth, and therefore this study takes the same path.

The variable will not be used as a potential explanation for the change in WC other than confirming findings from past research that GDP per capita does not necessarily affect WC, e.g., Ziller and Careja (2022). So the variable is used as an empirical pointer to *why* the research question is necessary and to shine a light on the gap in the research of WC.

3.5.2 *Satisfaction with income*

To check if the macro variable of GDP per capita can represent how the population feels, I also introduce a micro variable from the ESS. The variable of satisfaction with income is a good variable to examine household income. Since this variable measures individual attitudes, I had to aggregate the variable into the mean of each country, as I did with the dependent variable.

The respondents were asked about their "feeling about household's income nowadays." The variable is categorical and is measured on a four-point scale, so the respondents had four possible answers; (1) Living comfortably on present income; (2) Coping on present income; (3) Difficult on present income; (4) Very difficult on present income. It is important to remember that this variable is reverse-coded, and a negative number should not be confused with a more challenging economic situation. Seeing as the respondents have been asked how they feel about the household's income, it also includes potential rich parents or partners. The way this variable is measured follows the recommendations from Kellstedt and Whitten (2018, p. 111) about conceptual clarity.

3.5.3 *Social spending*

To check welfare state generosity, I am using a variable from the OECD called "percent of social spending by GDP per capita." This is a continuous variable measured in the percentage of GDP per capita. Social spending/welfare state generosity has shown to have a negative effect on WC earlier (Römer, 2017, p. 186). It is then interesting to look further into whether this can affect WC over time or if it is only limited to cross-sectional research.

Since the theoretical concept in question is welfare state generosity, it is essential that social spending can measure this accurately. Social spending does measure how much money the state uses on things like welfare services, which is what this study aims to measure. Therefore, it seems like social spending does adequately measure welfare state generosity.

3.5.4 Populist right-wing parties

To study whether or not PRWPs affect WC, I have used data from the CPDS. The chosen variable is continuous and measures the vote share for PRWPs.

The CPDS dataset has six different labels for the amount of "right" a party is. The first category of "right" measures parties on the level with *Fremskrittspartiet (FrP)* in Norway, which is a PRWP. Germany has the far-right party *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NDP)* in the first "right" category, which is a far-right neo-nazi party.

3.5.5 Immigrant stock

The immigrant population could be an important explanation for the research question. The variable is a continuous measure from the OECD, measured in percent of the population. I have chosen to look closer at the immigration stock contra the flow since the stock is a more static number that does not include people to emigrate.

The measure of immigrant stock is useful since it is not measured in absolute numbers. If the measure used absolute numbers (e.g., 100 000 immigrants), it makes it harder to compare, for example, Luxembourg with Germany since these countries have a big difference in total population.

3.6 Regression analysis

A regression analysis is a way to find if certain independent variable(s) have a relationship with a dependent variable. Before doing a regression analysis, it is necessary to take a stance on which type of model should be used. A multivariate regression analysis could have been used in theory, but in practice this does not work. A multivariate regression needs to include more parameters than cases and should consist of *at least* 15-20 cases. This study only includes 16 cases, and therefore a multivariate regression could cause some major problems (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, p. 211).

In this thesis, a bivariate regression analysis will be used instead and look at the independent variables isolated from the dependent variable. By conducting a bivariate rather than a multivariate regression, it is more likely that the statistical results produced are valid.

3.7 Validity & reliability

Validity means that a measure actually measures what it is supposed to measure (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, p. 114). There is a high degree of validity in this study. I have also done measurement checks on all the variables which are being used in this thesis.

Reliability is concerned with the ability to replicate a study by following the same measures by the original study (Bryman, 2016, p. 157). The study holds a high degree of reliability. I am clear with my choices of research- design, and methods, as well as making sure that both the dependent and independent variables are clear to the reader. Therefore, it is easy to find the cases, datasets, and variables I have used in this study. To be able to compare the countries over time, I have calculated the *change* from 2008 to 2016 like this: $x_{2016} - x_{2008}$ as well as the same with the dependent variable: $y_{2016} - y_{2008}$. By doing this, it is easier to look at the tiniest changes in the data.

Since the variables hold a high degree of reliability and validity, it is possible to use the measures to do hypothesis testing on them accordingly (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, p. 116).

3.8 Case study

I also have a small case study to further collaborate on the findings in the thesis and prop my empirical evidence up with qualitative evidence. The case study follows a *most similar* design by including two cases⁷ that are similar to each other on GDP per capita (they both increase over time), but different in welfare-chauvinistic attitudes (one decreases, one increases) (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 304). I will look closer at Germany, which has increased its economic output over time, but at the same time, has decreased in welfare-chauvinistic attitudes. Germany is chosen for two main reasons, 1) Germany is one of the countries which had the most significant decrease in WC; 2) Germany is located at the heart of Europe, which makes it easier to compare to other countries in the same area.

⁷Which is the minimum amount of cases possible in such a design (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 304)

Further, I will compare Germany with Hungary, which increased its economic output over time but became more welfare-chauvinistic. Hungary is the most welfare-chauvinistic country out of all the cases and, therefore, a natural case object for further analysis. By looking closer at these cases, I hope to get a better qualitative understanding of the potential causes of WC over time since GDP per capita does not always have an effect. I will look closer at documents from the Political Yearbook⁸.

⁸<https://politicaldatayearbook.com/>

4 Results

The descriptive statistics of the dependent variable across both the time points, 2008 and 2016, are presented in the Appendix in [Table A1](#) and [Table A2](#). The countries excluded from the general analysis are still included in the descriptive statistics table in the Appendix; the reason behind this is to create transparency in how many cases are omitted. The number of observations is pretty much the same across time, which is good to know.

Since the study looks at changes over time, most of the scatterplots look at the *change* in the independent and the dependent variable. In the Appendix, [Figure A1](#), [Figure A2](#), [Figure A3](#), and [Figure A4](#) show the absolute values for all the independent variables with their 2008 value and their 2016 value. It might be good to have these plots as supplementary material to compare the countries cross-sectionally.

[Figure 1](#) shows the relationship between WC and GDP per capita.

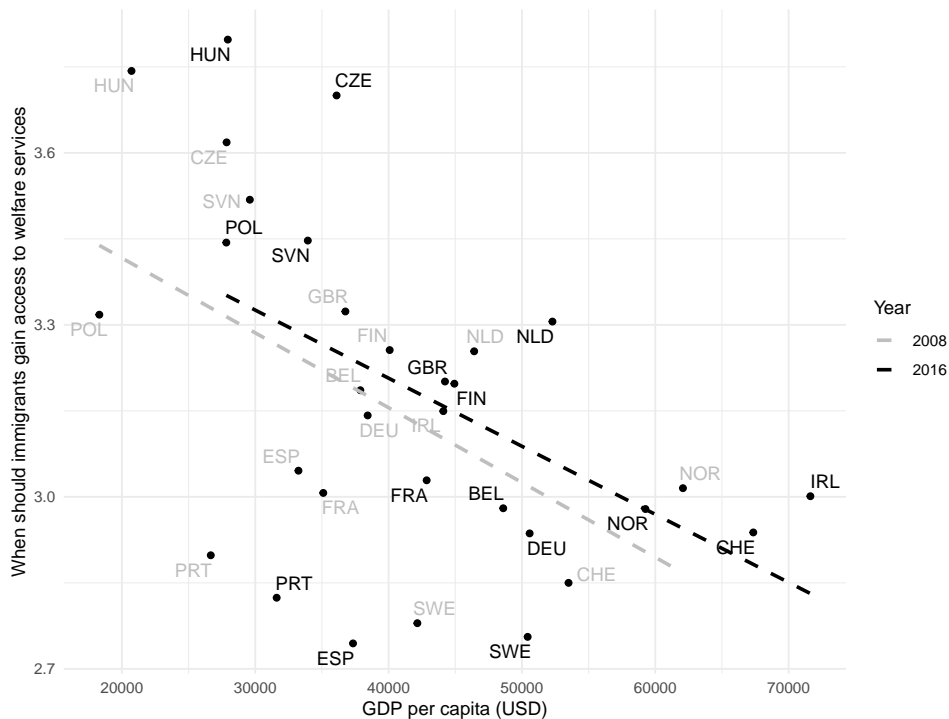


Figure 1: Average welfare chauvinism over time by GDP per capita

The fitted lines in the figure show a clear trend. The richer a country is, the less welfare-chauvinistic it is. It is then apparent that, at least for some countries, it is possible to say that increased GDP per capita equals less chauvinism. The y-axis shows the scale of when immigrants should gain access to welfare services, while the x-axis shows the country's GDP per capita. The graph is grouped by year, where 2008 is gray and 2016 is black. The general structure of this graph is symmetrical, though there are many more cases at the bottom half of the graph than at the top.

Previous research shows that in a cross-sectional analysis, countries are less chauvinistic if they have a higher GDP per capita (Bell et al., 2023; Mewes & Mau, 2012). Germany is one of these countries; they have become richer by about 10 000 USD per capita and become about 0.4 points less welfare-chauvinistic. Though some countries like Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Netherlands, France, and Switzerland get richer, but also more chauvinistic. None of the countries have seen a dramatic change in WC, but there are nonetheless *some* differences there.

Ireland saw the most significant change in wealth than any of the other countries during this time. The fact that Ireland is so different from all the other cases has been examined by earlier research. Even though Ireland was struck hard (like most other countries) by the Great Recession in 2008, did they have a massive increase of 26% in GDP in 2015. Because of this increase, economists are reluctant to believe that this increase is entirely accurate. One of the reasons for the increase in GDP is that companies like Microsoft and Apple established their European headquarters in Ireland (Mink, 2023). It is then essential to remember that Ireland's GDP increase might be artificial.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
(Intercept)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.08* (0.03)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.05)
Social spending change	0.00 (0.01)				
Satisfaction with income change		-0.03 (0.28)			
PRWPs vote shares change			0.00 (0.00)		
Immigrant stock change				0.00 (0.02)	
GDP per capita change					-0.00 (0.00)
R ²	0.01	0.00	0.16	0.00	0.01
Adj. R ²	-0.06	-0.07	0.10	-0.07	-0.06
Num. obs.	16	16	16	16	16

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Table 1: Bivariate regression with independent variables and intercept (welfare chauvinism)

Judging from [Table 1](#), the regression results do not support any of the hypotheses. None of the statistics are statistically significant. Despite this, results that are not significant do not necessarily mean that there are no valuable findings. It is now interesting to take a closer look at the individual hypotheses and any potential patterns in the data.

4.1 Hypothesis 1: Welfare state generosity

The first hypothesis is that *A generous welfare state leads to a decrease in welfare chauvinistic attitudes*. This hypothesis is built on the generosity hypothesis following the findings from Römer (2017).

[Figure 2](#) shows the change in social spending (in percent of GDP) across the countries in the sample. Most cases are gathered at the center of the plot, meaning they have kept their social spending the same. The fitted line is slightly positive. There is no clear difference between the countries which decrease in WC and those who do not.

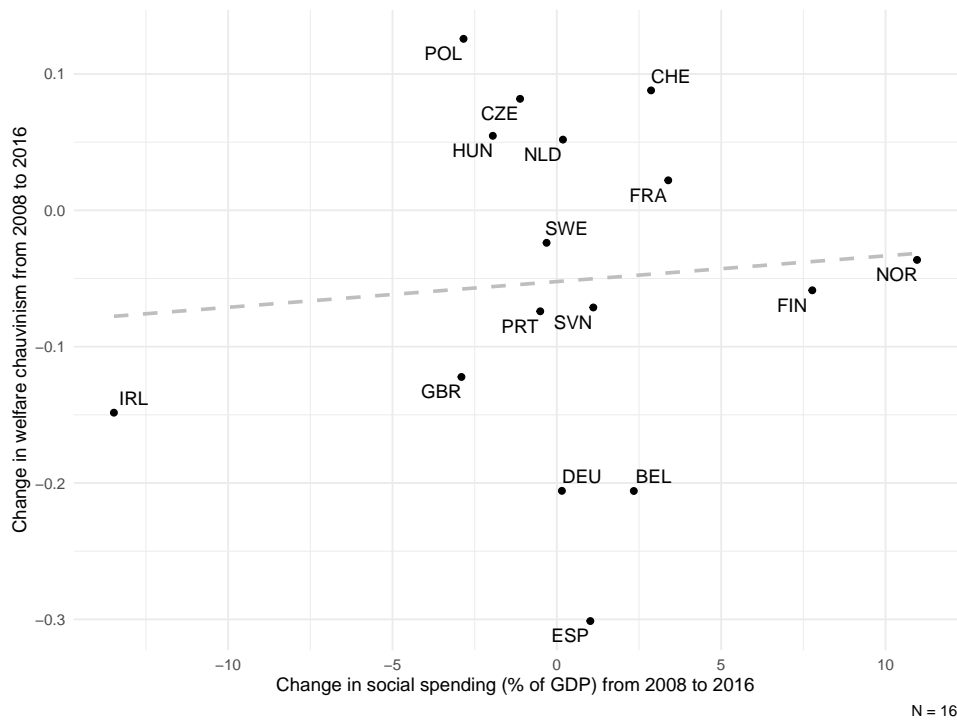


Figure 2: Change in welfare chauvinism by change in social spending by % of GDP per capita between 2008 and 2016

As mentioned earlier, social-democratic welfare states are usually less welfare-chauvinistic. Since Norway and Finland have increased their social spending and become less welfare-chauvinistic, it is possible to elaborate on the findings from Van Der Waal et al. (2013, p. 172) that social-democratic welfare states tend to have less welfare-chauvinistic attitudes that seem to hold over time.

Even though Ireland saw an increase in GDP per capita by 26%, it seems like they did not have time from 2015 to 2016 to increase social spending; such a significant increase is bound to take some time to be implemented into the state budget, which could explain the -15% in social spending.

Table 1 and the empirical analysis found no solid holds for confirming the hypothesis. Therefore, it is implausible to infer any causal relationship between WC and welfare state generosity over time. The hypothesis is therefore rejected in favor of the null hypothesis of no correlation.

4.2 Hypothesis 2: Satisfaction with income

The second hypothesis is that *even with an increase in GDP per capita, the population is not coping any better on current income.*

Figure 3 shows how the different countries are dispersed and the changes in the population's *subjective* satisfaction with their income.

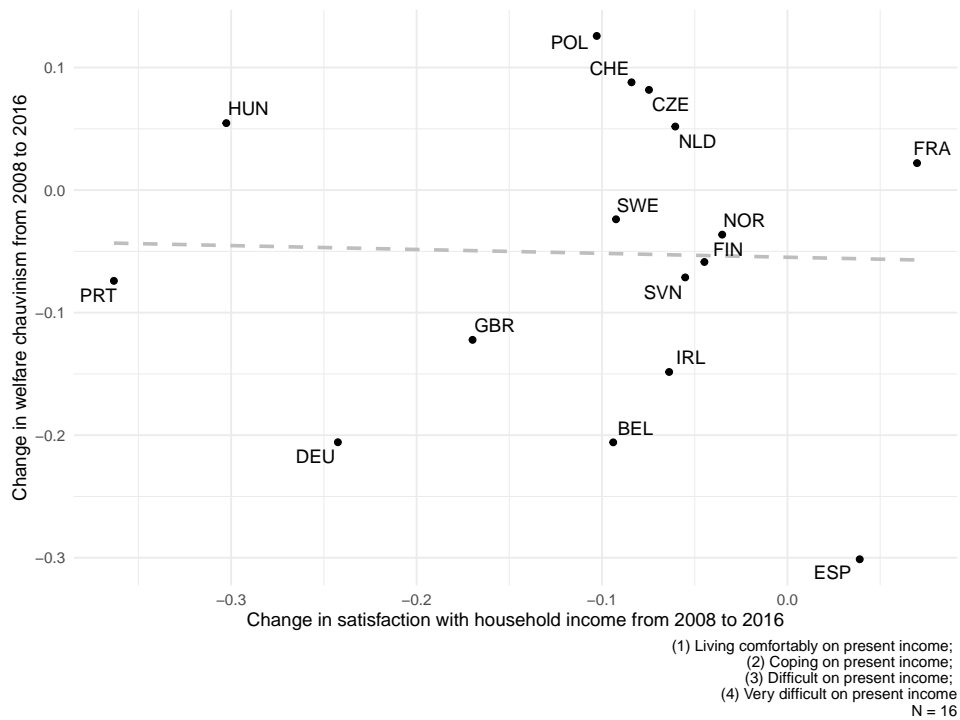


Figure 3: Average welfare chauvinism over time by satisfaction with income between 2008 and 2016

The emphasis on *subjective* is important; it is a problem in quantitative analyses that something that is a comfortable income for some is not the same for everyone. Recall that this variable is reverse-coded; 1 is "Living comfortably on present income" and 4 is "Very difficult on present income." A decrease in satisfaction with income on the x-axis means that the countries generally get *more* satisfied.

There is no clear pattern, but the graph is relatively left-skewed. This means that people have generally become more satisfied with their income over time.

Only a few countries (France and Spain) have seen a decrease in subjective household income. Most cases have gotten better subjective household income. For example, Hungary has become more welfare-chauvinistic and richer over time, but the population has become more positive towards their income.

It seems like the RGCT theory is not one of the main factors for the change in WC over time. Immigrants, as a threat to one's own economic or material resources, do not seem to affect WC. Therefore it seems like the RGCT theory cannot be used in analyses over time in Europe. This contradicts the study done by Ziller and Careja (2022, pp. 185–186), they found statistical significance results with a substantial result of -0.153, which means that they found people living comfortably on current income to be less welfare-chauvinistic.

Ziller and Careja (2022) looked at Western Europe, which could be an explanation for the difference in findings.

Table 1 and the empirical analysis found no solid holds for confirming the hypothesis. Therefore, it is impossible to infer any causal relationship between WC and satisfaction with income over time. The hypothesis is therefore rejected in favor of the null hypothesis of no correlation.

4.3 Hypothesis 3: Populist right-wing parties

The third hypothesis is about vote shares towards PRWPs, *when vote shares towards PRWPs increases, welfare chauvinism also increases.*

Figure 4 shows the distribution of the cases by vote shares towards PRWPs.

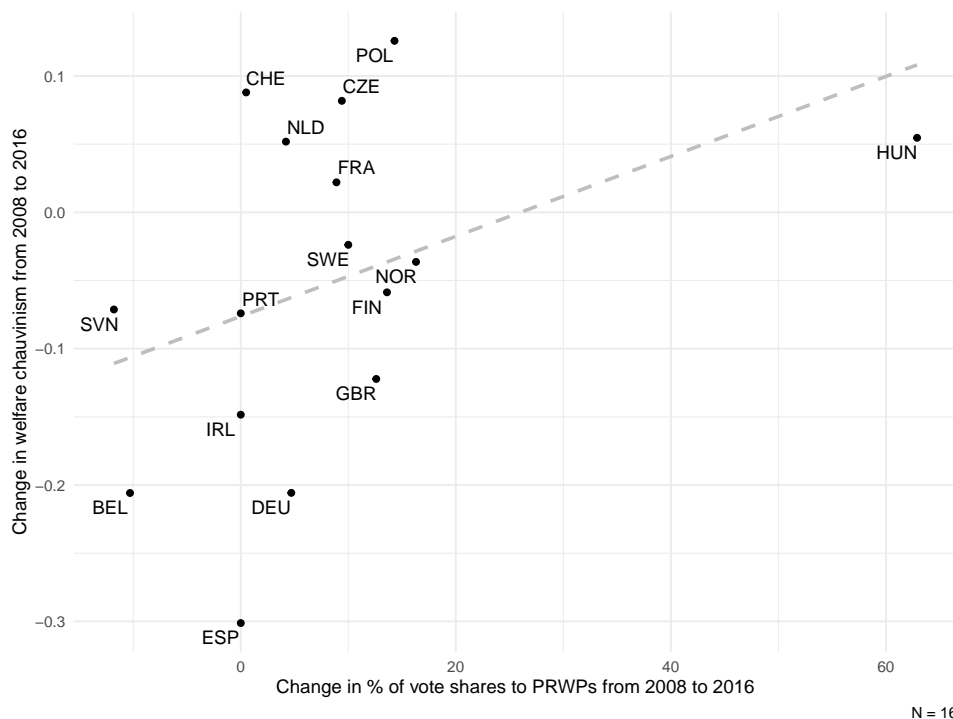


Figure 4: Average welfare chauvinism over time by PRWPs vote shares between 2008 and 2016

The general distribution of the data is close to no change in vote shares. Some countries get less welfare-chauvinistic and decrease the number of PRWPs' vote shares. These countries include Slovenia, Belgium, and Portugal. However, other than these countries, only Poland, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, France, and Switzerland follow the hypothesis (increase in WC and increase in PRWP vote shares). The fitted line in the graph shows a clear relationship in favor of the hypothesis that WC is affected by the increase in PRWPs' vote shares.

However, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the UK, Germany, Spain, and Ireland all get less welfare-chauvinistic even when the PRWP vote shares increase. There is, therefore, no immediate support for the hypothesis, as the data seems to be spread out.

Further, for certain cases, more votes towards PRWPs equals more welfare-chauvinistic attitudes (France, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, and Poland).

Hungary has increased its votes toward PRWPs by 62.9 percent. The case of Hungary will be looked at later in the case study to figure out how they have increased by such a drastic amount compared to the other cases. Interestingly, Hungary has increased by less than 0.1 points in WC. This drastic change further confirms that PRWPs do not necessarily affect WC, at least not directly.

Model 3 in [Table 1](#) shows that there is absolutely no substantial significance nor any statistical significance. The intercept is, however, barely significant, which means that when vote shares for PRWPs parties are zero, WC decreases by 0.08. Even though the intercept is significant, there is no point in going further with it since the votes shares are shown not to affect WC.

[Table 1](#) and the empirical analysis found no solid holds for confirming the hypothesis. Therefore, it is impossible to infer any causal relationship between WC and PRWPs vote shares over time. The hypothesis is therefore rejected in favor of the null hypothesis of no correlation.

4.4 Hypothesis 4: Immigrant population

The last hypothesis in this thesis is split in two, since previous research has found evidence for both sides. The first one, *an increase in immigrant stocks causes a decrease in welfare chauvinism* (H4a). And the second one, *an increase in immigrant stocks causes an increase in welfare chauvinism* (H4b).

Figure 5 shows the effect immigration stock has on WC.

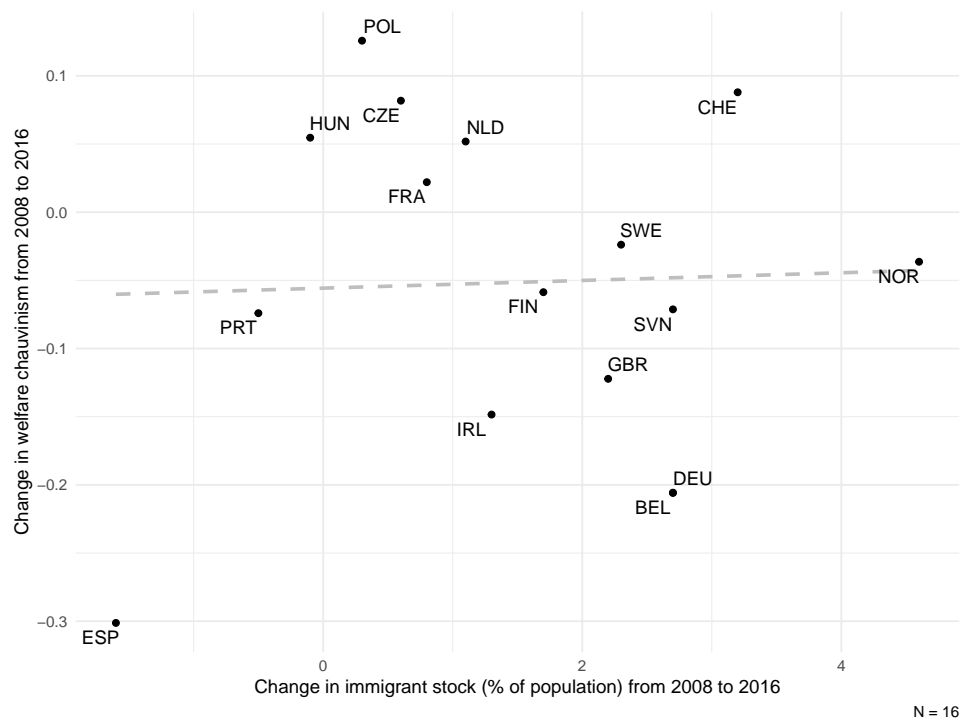


Figure 5: Average welfare chauvinism over time by immigrant stock between 2008 and 2016

The data distribution is close to the center, if not left-skewed. Hungary has increased in WC and decreased in immigration stock. Portugal and Spain have decreased in WC and immigrant stock. Norway, Sweden, Finland, Slovenia, the UK, Ireland, Germany, and Belgium have all decreased in WC and increased in immigrant stock. This finding can confirm hypothesis 4a.

Switzerland, the Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands, and Poland have increased in WC as well as immigration stock. This finding can confirm hypothesis 4b.

H4a and H4b are two hypotheses that, in practice, say two different things. This means that both cannot be true. Since the graph shows evidence of both being true, one should be cautious about confirming either.

It seems like the change in WC resides somewhere other than immigration stock. One possibility for this could be geographical location since, for example, Norway, Sweden, and Finland all reside in Scandinavia and become less welfare-chauvinistic and have seen an increase in immigrant stock.

Most countries have seen an increase in immigrant stock, which is to be expected following the various immigrant crises these past years.

There might be a possibility that the reason why some of the countries in [Figure 5](#) decrease in WC when immigration increases is that they, in turn, know people in the outgroup. This follows the extended group hypothesis mentioned earlier (Wright et al., 1997, p. 74).

[Table 1](#) and the empirical analysis found no statistical significance for confirming the hypotheses. Therefore, it is impossible to infer any causal relationship between WC and immigrant stock over time. Both hypotheses are therefore rejected in favor of the null hypothesis of no correlation.

4.5 Case study: Germany and Hungary

All the hypotheses based on the quantitative data have proved to be not significant, both substantively and statistically. Since the statistical analyses have not answered the research question well, searching for some qualitative explanations is necessary.

The cases of Germany and Hungary have been selected through a most similar design to try and figure out what could explain why some countries get more welfare-chauvinistic even though they get richer.

An interesting thing about Germany is that during 2015 and 2016, there was an increased political debate about refugees (Poguntke & Kinski, 2017; Poguntke & Von dem Berge, 2016). The RGCT theory would expect that WC would increase since an increase in immigrants would introduce more pressure on limited resources.

However, there was a major terrorist attack in Berlin in December 2016. Terrorism has connotation towards one of the threats which immigrants pose to a society (Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012, p. 480). It is, therefore, illogical that WC actually *decreased*.

Further, The PRWP "Alternative für Deutschlands" (AfD) had electoral success. Following the analyses done in this study it is logical that PRWPs do not affect WC over time.

These findings from Germany raise more questions than answers since the opposite effect has been observed in [Figure 1](#). According to the theory, the qualitative happenings in Germany should negatively affect WC. One potential explanation for this is that it might take some time for these situations to take root in the population and change the population's welfare-chauvinistic attitudes. It is, therefore, not impossible to assume that when WC again is to be measured in the ESS data, Germany has increased in WC. This would be an interesting avenue for future research.

Hungary had some immigration influx from 2008 to 2016. Even though the number of immigrants decreased from 2015 to 2016, there were still many discussions in the political agenda. The European Union laid forth a plan to relocate immigrants across its member states, and on the 2nd of October 2016, the Hungarian people participated in a referendum about this. Even though the results were not valid (because of less than 50 percent participation), 98.4% said they did not want this plan to go through ([Várnagy, 2017](#)). This could indicate why Hungary has become more welfare-chauvinistic, even though they increased their GDP per capita from 2008 to 2016.

5 Discussion

Even though there was no statistical significance in the bivariate regression models, there are some interesting results.

The RGCT theory has previously been seen to have an effect on WC across countries. However, as we have seen in this study, there has not been found any causal relationship between WC and the RGCT theory when analysing changes over time. This is an interesting finding seeing as this is a theory which has relatively strong holds in the research literature.

Future research such be cautions with assuming that the RGCT theory can be used both cross-sectionally as well as longitudinal.

PRWPs have also earlier shown to have an effect on WC. This study does however not find any causal relationship for PRWPs effect on WC. There is however a slight pattern in the data that might point in the direction that an increase in PRWP vote shares does also increase welfare-chauvinistic attitudes.

The two cases looked at in the case study further build upon the findings in this study. For example, Germany had both an increase in PRWPs and a terrorist attack, with a decrease in welfare-chauvinistic attitudes. This finding further undermines the original hypothesis (**H3**), confirming the quantitative results.

It is interesting to see that welfare state regimes might be an indicator for WC also over time. The study finds that social-democratic countries in the analysis seem to become less welfare-chauvinistic over time. It would be interesting for future research to take a closer look at how Esping-Andersen (1990)'s classification of different welfare state regimes can affect WC over time.

Ziller and Careja (2022) looked at both the ESS wave four and eight and the same dependent variable as this thesis but only included cases from Western Europe.

They also used independent variables like GDP per capita, social spending, coping on income, and proportion of immigrants, which this study also does. Together with these variables, they also include micro variables like age and gender since they did some multilevel regression models. They find some of the same results as this study, for example, that GDP per capita is not significant for WC, and neither is social spending.

However, they find that an increase in the immigration population over time relates to increased levels of WC, which this study does not find. In addition, they found that coping with income is statistically significant, which this thesis does not find any evidence for.

The difference in findings might mean that the relationship Ziller and Careja (2022) finds only exists in Western European countries.

It is therefore highly relevant for future research to distinguish the cases into the European regions (East, North, West, South). As the research field stands right now, it seems like Western European countries are more welfare-chauvinistic over time than those in Central- and Eastern Europe.

6 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to figure out why some countries become more welfare-chauvinistic even though they become richer. To answer the research question, different hypotheses were introduced and analyzed.

Firstly, *H1* says that when welfare state generosity increases, WC decreases. Past research has shown that a generous welfare state is more likely to support immigrants (Crepaz & Damron, 2009; Römer, 2017; Van Der Waal et al., 2013). This study tried to see if this finding exists when analyzing WC over time. No evidence points in the direction that this hypothesis is accurate over time. However, social-democratic welfare states (which tend to have a high degree of welfare generosity) do indeed get less welfare-chauvinistic over time following the findings of Van Der Waal et al. (2013). The hypothesis shows no statistical significance and is rejected.

Secondly, *H2* says that despite an increase in GDP per capita, the population does not cope any better with current income. The RGCT threat theory inspires this hypothesis, but there is no evidence to accept the hypothesis. *H2* is therefore also rejected.

H3 says that when vote shares towards populist right-wing parties increase, so does WC. Testing the hypothesis through a bivariate regression model reaches no statistical significance. There are also no clear patterns in the plots that prove this hypothesis. It seems like PRWPs do not have any causal relationship with WC in Europe over time.

H4a says that when the immigrant stock increases, WC decreases. The second hypothesis, *H4b*, says that when the immigrant stock increases, so does WC. Neither of these hypotheses holds during the statistical tests, and there are also no clear patterns in the plots. Therefore, both *H4a* and *H4b* are rejected.

6.1 Limitations in study

Some limitations in this study are mainly the lack of observations. Since there was a methodological limitation in how many cases it was possible to include. It would also be beneficial to include the countries on which the OECD and the CPDS do not have any data on. For example, the omittance of Russia is unfortunate because of its vast size in both cultural- and geographical aspects. Though there has been no clear answer to the research question, the way forward to finding the answer should now be more straightforward for future research.

6.2 The way forward

This thesis can be used as a stepping stone for future research. One could adopt a multilevel regression analysis to include demographic variables together with macro variables, which could help to find explanations of WC further.

The RGCT theory has been shown to not matter to any high degree in the analyses in this study. This is an exciting finding since some differences between the European continents might not have been apparent. Ziller and Careja (2022) found a statistically significant relationship between satisfaction with income and WC in Western Europe, and this study finds no relationship in all of Europe paints a clear picture that there might be some factor which is unaccounted in their thesis, for example, the case of Eastern Europe. A potential way forward for future research is isolating the cases into West, North, East, and South Europe could bring out the possible differences in Europe. By isolating the cases, it will be clearer what cultural shifts could explain the variation in WC.

This study found that the social-democratic welfare state regime seems less chauvinistic over time. It is interesting for future research to look at the effect of different welfare state regimes on WC.

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8 Appendix

A Descriptive statistics of dependent variable

Descriptive statistics for ESS wave 4

Country	Observations	Average	Stand. Dev.	25th percentile	Median	75th percentile	Minimum	Maximum	Missing
Belgium	1737	3.19	0.93	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	23
Czech Republic	1923	3.62	0.90	3.00	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	95
Estonia	1572	3.38	0.84	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	89
Finland	2160	3.26	0.90	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	35
France	2042	3.01	1.02	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	31
Germany	2676	3.14	1.01	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	75
Hungary	1435	3.74	0.79	3.00	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	109
Ireland	1752	3.15	0.87	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	12
Israel	2241	2.73	1.31	1.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	249
Netherlands	1745	3.25	0.95	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	33
Norway	1521	3.02	1.06	2.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	28
Poland	1495	3.32	0.86	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	124
Portugal	2022	2.90	0.90	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	345
Russia	2129	3.57	0.94	3.00	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	383
Slovenia	1233	3.52	0.86	3.00	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	53
Spain	2455	3.05	0.99	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	121
Sweden	1729	2.78	1.11	2.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	101
Switzerland	1753	2.85	0.91	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	66
United Kingdom	2307	3.32	0.92	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	45

Table A1: Descriptive statistics of welfare chauvinism and country in ESS wave 4 (Only including countries in both ESS 4 and ESS 8)

Descriptive statistics for ESS wave 8

Country	Observations	Average	Stand. Dev.	25th percentile	Median	75th percentile	Minimum	Maximum	Missing
Belgium	1759	2.98	1.02	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	7
Czech Republic	2194	3.70	1.05	3.00	4.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	75
Estonia	1990	3.30	0.90	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	29
Finland	1890	3.20	0.94	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	35
France	2009	3.03	1.03	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	61
Germany	2808	2.94	0.95	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	44
Hungary	1526	3.80	0.96	3.00	4.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	88
Ireland	2670	3.00	0.97	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	87
Israel	2390	2.99	1.25	2.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	167
Netherlands	1642	3.31	0.94	3.00	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	39
Norway	1507	2.98	1.03	2.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	38
Poland	1549	3.44	0.87	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	145
Portugal	1239	2.82	1.06	2.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	31
Russia	2129	3.65	0.95	3.00	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	301
Slovenia	1264	3.45	0.90	3.00	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	43
Spain	1823	2.74	1.05	2.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	135
Sweden	1462	2.76	1.09	2.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	89
Switzerland	1466	2.94	0.92	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	59
United Kingdom	1909	3.20	0.86	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	50

Table A2: Descriptive statistics of welfare chauvinism and country in ESS wave 8 (Only including countries in both ESS 4 and ESS 8)

B Absolute values for scatterplots

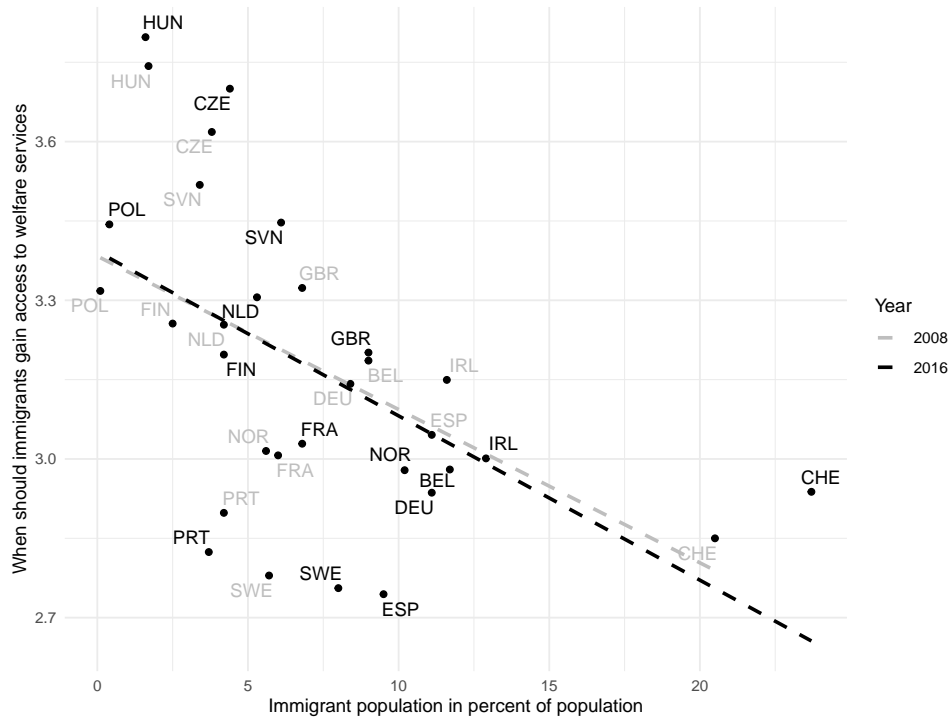


Figure A1: Average welfare chauvinism over time by immigrant population

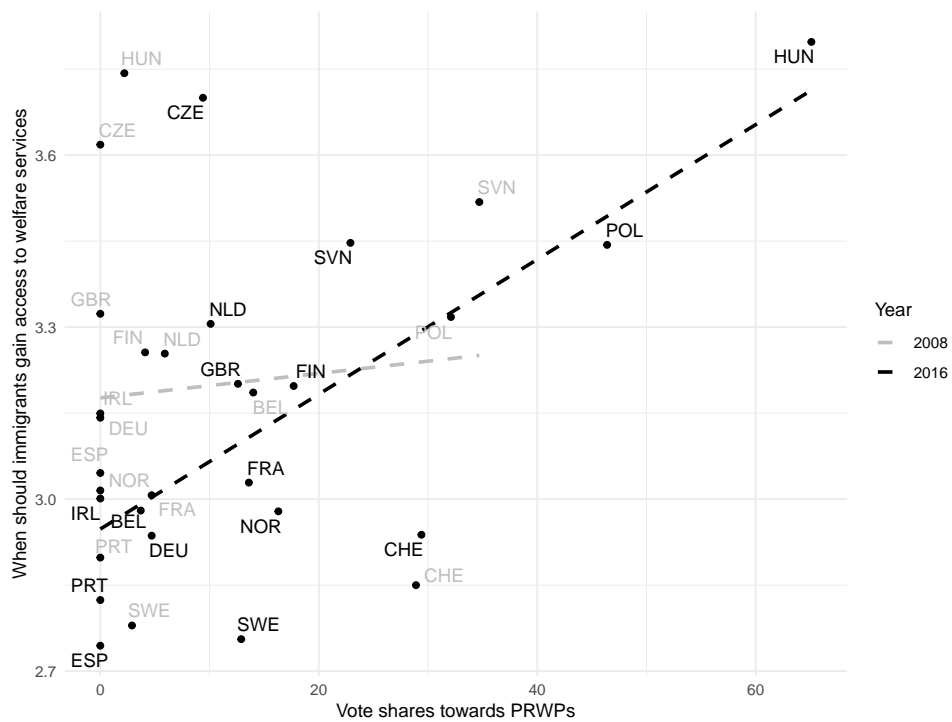


Figure A2: Average welfare chauvinism over time by PRWPs vote shares

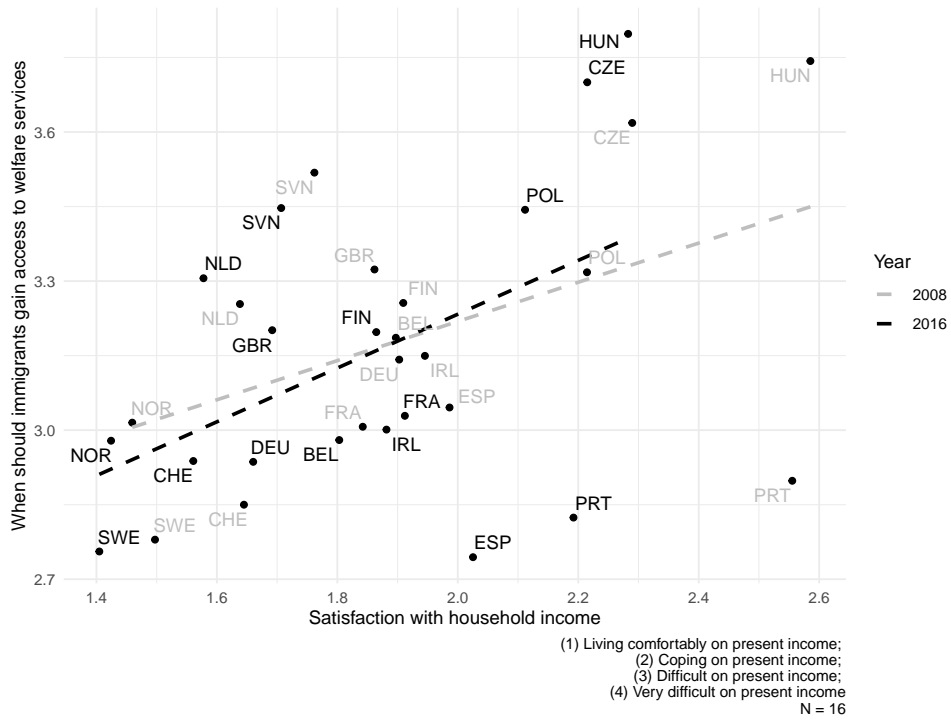


Figure A3: Average welfare chauvinism over time by satisfaction with income

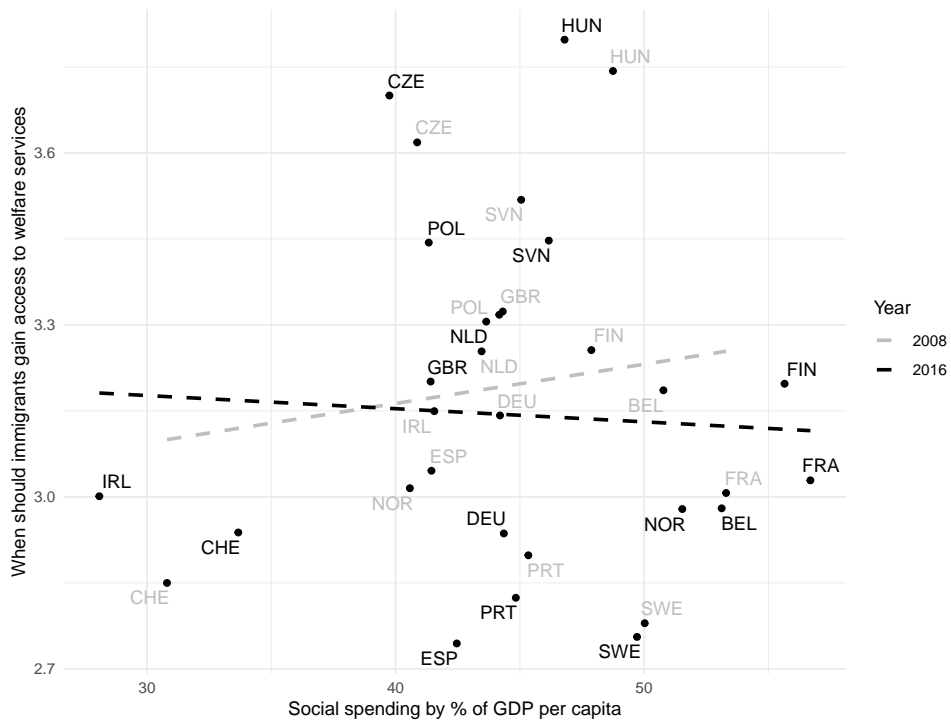


Figure A4: Average welfare chauvinism over time by social spending (in %)