

## **Neoliberalism and Welfare Chauvinism in Germany:**

### **An Examination of Survey Evidence**

#### **Abstract**

Anti-immigration sentiments can take on a variety of forms, but a particularly prevalent version across Europe is welfare chauvinism. According to welfare chauvinism, the services of the welfare state should be provided only to natives and not to immigrants. Like many other European countries, German politics also features welfare chauvinism, and not only on the far right segment of the political spectrum. What drives welfare chauvinism? Most studies of welfare chauvinism try to assess whether economic or cultural factors matter most. In an attempt to bridge these perspectives, this article brings in neoliberalism. An examination of survey results from EBRD's *Life in Transition* project suggests that neoliberal economic attitudes are a key determinant of welfare chauvinism. German respondents who have neoliberal economic views tend to see immigrants as a drain on the welfare state, while those who have economically leftist views tend to see immigrants as providing a positive contribution.

**Keywords:** welfare chauvinism, neoliberalism, populism, Germany, education

#### **Introduction**

Immigration has become a hot button issue in many European countries. As a recent Eurobarometer poll showed<sup>1</sup>, immigration was not politicized ten years ago. From 2008 to 2012, below 10 percent of respondents mentioned it as one of their most important political issues. In 2015, immigration shot up to 36 percent, rivaling unemployment as the top issue. As immigration became a hotly contested topic,

various forms of anti-immigration sentiment emerged. One that seems to have particular resonance is welfare chauvinism: the notion that the benefits of the welfare state should not be given to immigrants and foreigners since they are a drain on the national social protection system. This position is particularly common among radical right wing parties, but is also widespread beyond them. This article is dedicated to investigating the main drivers of welfare chauvinism in Germany.

Although anti-immigrant sentiment in general and welfare chauvinism in particular are easiest to find among radical right parties, these attitudes are also spread rather broadly throughout society. Indeed, some mainstream parties have tried to ward off the radical right challenge by co-opting parts of their agenda. The most obvious example of this in Europe is Austria's ÖVP (*Österreichische Volkspartei*) under Sebastian Kurz.<sup>2</sup> Even in countries like Denmark, social democratic parties now argue that immigration needs to be curtailed in order for the welfare state to survive.<sup>3</sup> The spread of welfare chauvinism to mainstream parties is relevant across Europe.<sup>4</sup>

In Germany, the same pressures can be expected to exert themselves, especially as Angela Merkel prepares to step down as chancellor. Although Merkel has tried to stem the tide of anti-immigrant sentiment, she has also had to balance the various factions within the CDU (*Christlich Demokratische Union*), with the more conservative CSU (*Christlich-Soziale Union*) a particularly strong opponent of her welcoming approach.<sup>5</sup> Naturally, the AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*), now the third largest party in the Bundestag, is one of the loudest political voices in the anti-immigration camp.<sup>6</sup> Overall, political parties will find it hard to resist the pull of welfare chauvinism since these ideas are rather popular with voters. Another recent Eurobarometer poll<sup>7</sup> showed that a majority of people in most European countries sees immigrants as a burden on the national welfare system. Politicians will naturally try win votes by voicing these concerns.

What drives welfare chauvinism and how can it be weakened? The main argument of this article is that welfare chauvinism is strengthened in part by neoliberalism, understood as a set of pro-market ideas which shape how most people in Europe see the workings of the economy. As the results show, welfare chauvinism and neoliberalism have a particularly close association: people who agree with neoliberal economic ideas also find welfare chauvinism appealing. I suggest that this is so because these two attitudes share a common basis: they circumscribe solidarity, aim to target the neediest and recommend a Spartan strictness to managing common resources. They are both about making the “tough” but “necessary” choices. As Stuart Hall wrote in his essay on the formulas of Thatcherism: “iron times, back to the wall, stiff upper lip, get moving, get to work, dig in.”<sup>8</sup> This also means that people need not be overt racists in order to be drawn to welfare chauvinism. The supposedly neutral economic criteria of neoliberalism can lead them to the same outcome.

By linking the two phenomena – welfare chauvinism and neoliberalism – this article aims to bridge the two main explanations offered so far in the literature on welfare chauvinism. Some scholars see economic factors as most decisive, while others emphasize cultural factors instead. According to the economic explanation, welfare chauvinism is a rational response of those in vulnerable economic positions, members of the working class in particular. People in precarious positions see immigrants as competition for the very economic resources that they themselves need, including the services of the welfare state.<sup>9</sup> Those who are better-off are more likely to see immigrants as positive contributors to society and therefore legitimate recipients of social services. However, much of the recent analysis has thrown its weight behind a second explanation. This explanation is cultural. It argues that the divide among the natives is not about economic resources but about cultural capital instead. In particular, the focus is on education and the symbolic resources which it provides. Those with less education are not

comfortable living in diverse societies and would prefer to be surrounded by ethnic and racial homogeneity. Those with higher education, on the other hand, are more open-minded and tolerant.<sup>10</sup>

The main contribution of this article is that it adds neoliberalism into the analysis of welfare chauvinism. Our day and age is not only characterized by high levels of immigration, i.e. it is not only an “era of migration.”<sup>11</sup> It is also an era of neoliberalism. By this umbrella term, I refer to various interconnected notions that emphasize the benefits of free markets, private property and economic competition and de-emphasize or discard such values as equality, solidarity and cooperation. Just like welfare chauvinism, neoliberalism has infiltrated many parties, not only on the right. Therefore, the analysis is not focused on voting for the radical right *per se*, but on adopting these broad attitudes instead. Furthermore, welfare chauvinism is more widespread than voting for the radical right: the latter usually encompasses 10 to 15 percent of the electorate, while the former encompasses at least twice as many people.

This article makes several points. First, the empirical results generally tend to support the cultural, not the economic explanation of welfare chauvinism. Education matters much more than socio-economic or class position. Second, neoliberal attitudes are positively associated with welfare chauvinism and negatively with the opposite, an optimistic attitude toward migration which sees immigrants as giving a positive contribution. And third, though education is a consistent (negative) determinant of welfare chauvinism, it should be approached carefully. Among those respondents who combine higher education with an acceptance of neoliberalism, the likelihood of welfare chauvinism increases notably. On the other hand, welfare chauvinism weakens among those respondents who combine higher education with leftist economic attitudes.

In other words, if education is not combined with a critical rejection of neoliberalism it can end up re-enforcing welfare chauvinism instead of weakening it. If we emphasize the cultural drivers of welfare chauvinism, we also implicitly place our hopes with education as a factor that can weaken it. Unfortunately, it appears that this is not quite so easy. If we want to tackle welfare chauvinism, we may need to tackle neoliberalism first. In a roundabout way, this leads us back from cultural to economic factors, or at least to the way we culturally understand the economy.

### **The sources of welfare chauvinism**

Welfare chauvinism is a particular version of anti-immigrant sentiment which takes shape on the terrain of the welfare state. The main prescription of welfare chauvinism is that the services of the welfare state should be restricted to “our own”<sup>12</sup>, i.e. only those who belong to the ethnically defined community and who have contributed to it.<sup>13</sup> Immigrants are seen as free riders, as a burden to taxpayers. This position is most commonly associated with right-wing populist parties, but applies more broadly. Mainstream parties have adapted to the new political landscape by taking on a dose of welfare chauvinism as well. Through this, welfare chauvinism is legitimized and normalized.

The main suggestion of this article is that welfare chauvinism draws strength from neoliberalism. How can we define neoliberalism? This is not an easy task, as most scholars of neoliberalism admit. Partly, the problem is the omnipresence of neoliberalism. As Mirowski argues, neoliberalism is to us like water is to fish.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Peck suggests that it is difficult to think *about* neoliberalism because we are so accustomed to thinking *with* it.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, As Davies writes, the content of the term has shifted multiple times throughout the past several decades.<sup>16</sup> It is something of a moving target.

Even so, neoliberalism can be linked to the general position that market forces are beneficial. Neoliberalism extols the virtues of competition, individualism and private initiative. Values such as equality, solidarity and the public good are critiqued, if not discarded entirely. Neoliberalism can be traced back to the writings of Austrian political economists Friedrich von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises in the first half of the twentieth century, but various national contexts contain distinct strands, as neoliberalism continues to evolve and mutate over time and space. Although it has been dealt a blow with the financial crisis of 2008, neoliberalism has persisted to shape political agendas across the globe.<sup>17</sup> Its grip on our collective fate seems so strong that some analysts see no way out, even as we suffer crisis after crisis.<sup>18</sup>

How is neoliberalism relevant to welfare chauvinism? As mentioned earlier, the two share a key affinity: both are essentially about constraining solidarity, about separating the “deserving” from the “undeserving” and about targeting the neediest. Solidarity is not discarded entirely, but it is significantly circumscribed, such that it can encompass only those who are defined as the core native group. The liberal approach to social service provision is built on targeting, rather than providing a universalistic system. Liberal welfare states use means-testing and conditionality in order to pinpoint segments of the population that are “entitled” to assistance.<sup>19</sup> Welfare chauvinism is quite compatible with this approach, since it also aims to target those in need, though priority is given to the “needy” and “deserving” amongst the native population. Immigrants, on the other hand, fall outside this definition. As critical social policy scholars argue, welfare chauvinism draws on both cultural “othering” and neoliberal arguments to support itself.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, welfare chauvinism complements neoliberalism and may contribute to its hegemony.<sup>21</sup>

What does an emphasis on neoliberalism contribute to our understanding of the main sources of

welfare chauvinism? If an empirical association between neoliberal attitudes and welfare chauvinistic attitudes can be established, then previous economic and cultural explanations of welfare chauvinism can be bridged. Welfare chauvinism then is not solely about someone's class position in the economy, nor is it about the cultural capital gained through education, but it is about the way we culturally, as a society, understand the economy.

As mentioned, previous work on welfare chauvinism tends to either emphasize economic or cultural factors. Economic factors are usually seen through the class positions of individuals. In particular, there are some groups who occupy particularly vulnerable positions in the economy, which might make them susceptible to welfare chauvinism. The working class is one such group. The literature on radical right parties has by now firmly demonstrated that a process of the proletarianization of radical right voting is under way in much of Western Europe.<sup>22</sup> This literature has roots going back to Seymour Martin Lipset's classical statement on "working class authoritarianism."<sup>23</sup> Another group that is being lured by the radical right are small entrepreneurs, i.e. the *petite bourgeoisie*.<sup>24</sup> Once again, this position goes back to Lipset and his views on fascism as the "extremism of the center."<sup>25</sup> Although voting for the radical right and adopting welfare chauvinism is not the same phenomenon, it can be expected to overlap. Therefore, any empirical analysis needs to investigate the relevance of economic circumstances.<sup>26</sup>

The second explanation centers around cultural sophistication. This is not a factor that is easy to capture empirically, but education has served as a good proxy. Education has been described as having a liberalizing effect, it may be able to contribute to tolerance and openness and instills universalistic values.<sup>27</sup> Education is said to open people up to other cultures and protects against prejudice.<sup>28</sup> Stuberger has argued that education can work as the basis around which group consciousness is formed, which

makes it the central cleavage structuring political competition in rich western democracies.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, we can expect that education can weaken chauvinism.

Generally speaking, there seems to be a growing consensus that the cultural cleavage has overtaken the economic cleavage as the dominant one in most polities in Western Europe. The mainstream parties of the left are defined more by a progressive attitude towards diversity and immigration and less by bread-and-butter issues. Sometimes, even mainstream right-wing parties – such as the CDU under Merkel – are marked by the same tolerance for diversity. This makes it possible for the radical right to capture the other end of the cultural cleavage and voice the concerns of the culturally conservative citizens. Such a constellation pits the progressive cosmopolitans versus the nostalgic conservatives, i.e. those who would prefer to live in ethnically, racially and culturally homogenous societies.<sup>30</sup> This does not mean that class issues have disappeared entirely. They have, however, been submerged under cultural politics. As van der Waal, Achterberg and Houtman aptly put it, class is not dead, it has been buried alive.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of the welfare state, this situation has been described in terms of a “new progressive's dilemma” or a “new liberal dilemma”, i.e. a forced choice between solidarity and diversity.<sup>32</sup> As the claim goes, European welfare states were built in times of ethnic homogeneity and were not designed with high levels of immigration in mind. This dilemma suggests that robust welfare states are a luxury only homogenous societies can afford. Criteria of “deservingness” have emerged in such a way as to exclude immigrants.<sup>33</sup> The suggestion is that the legitimacy of the welfare state will be weakened if immigrants are seen as somehow taking advantage of the system. For the native population, immigrants are seen as less deserving of state assistance than the elderly, disabled persons and the unemployed. Immigrants are the new “undeserving poor.”<sup>34</sup> Welfare chauvinism is the crucial ingredient in this

constellation. It purports to “defend” the welfare state against abuse. The contention of this article is that the opposite is closer to the truth.

## **Hypotheses**

The relationships described above can be formulated into several testable claims. As mentioned, the starting point for most discussions of welfare chauvinism is the debate between economic and cultural factors. The former are usually operationalized in terms of occupying particular class position, but may also be seen in terms of being exposed to various forms of hardship. The latter are usually operationalized in terms of education.

Hypothesis 1. Persons located in disadvantaged economic positions will be more likely to adopt welfare chauvinism.

Hypothesis 2. Persons who have a high degree of education will be more likely to reject welfare chauvinism.

These hypotheses formulate the central claims of the economic and the cultural perspective. However, as was mentioned above, the main goal of this article is to assess the ways that neoliberal attitudes impact welfare chauvinism. Hypothesis 3 formulates a neoliberal optimist thesis, while Hypothesis 4 formulates a leftist optimist thesis.

Hypothesis 3. Persons who adopt neoliberal economic attitudes are more likely to reject welfare chauvinism.

Hypothesis 4. Persons who adopt leftist economic attitudes are more likely to reject welfare chauvinism.

These two claims focus on the link between neoliberal attitudes and welfare chauvinism. But as was mentioned earlier, it is also worth considering how neoliberalism impacts education, since education can be seen as a factor which can reduce welfare chauvinism. The next step is to investigate the relevance of the overlap between education and neoliberalism and whether a particular combination of each impacts welfare chauvinism. This can be formulated in terms of the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5. Persons who combine high education and neoliberal economic attitudes are more likely to adopt welfare chauvinism.

Hypothesis 6. Persons who combine high education and leftist economic attitudes are more likely to reject welfare chauvinism.

Hypothesis 5 is formulated in terms of “making matters worse”: people who combine particular factors are more likely to become welfare chauvinists. If it is supported then it is warranted to speak of education as something that, under certain conditions, does not dampen welfare chauvinism but actually amplifies it. The flip-side of Hypothesis 5 is Hypothesis 6. It is about highly educated leftists: are they more likely to reject welfare chauvinism? These two hypotheses will be operationalized in the form of interaction terms, with the constituent parts included in the test as well. The following section introduces the data.

## Data

This article relies on the *Life in Transition Survey* (LITS), a large comparative data-set built by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.<sup>35</sup> Its main goal is to shed light on how the societies of the former socialist bloc are coping with the transition to open markets and liberal democracy. The data-set, therefore, includes all of the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Occasionally, however, the survey also encompasses a Western country, and Germany was included in 2010 and 2016.

As will be discussed shortly, the main advantage of LITS relative to other large survey projects is in the questions that can be used to operationalize neoliberalism. With regard to welfare chauvinism, LITS asks its respondents to choose between the claim “Immigrants make a valuable contribution to the national economy of our country” and the claim that “Immigrants are a burden for the national protection system” (respondents can also choose “none of the above”). The former attitude captures migration optimism, the latter welfare chauvinism. As Table 1 shows, about 25 to 27 percent of respondents in Germany see immigrants as providing a valuable contribution, while about 37 to 38 see them as a burden. A comparison of percentages for 2010 and 2016 does not indicate a dramatic increase.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

With regard to neoliberalism, LITS offers three questions that are particularly useful in operationalizing the strength of neoliberal attitudes. All of these questions ask respondents to place themselves on a continuum from 1 to 10, i.e. from the leftist end (1) to the liberal end (10). The first question is about

inequality. It offers two opposite statements: “Incomes should be made more equal” or “We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort.” The second question is about privatization. The poles are: “Private ownership of business and industry should be increased” and “Government ownership of business and industry should be increased.” And the third question is about competition as a way of organizing society. The extremes are: “Competition is good. It stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas” and “Competition is harmful. It brings out the worst in people.”

These three questions capture the main elements of the neoliberal worldview: its emphasis on individualism, market-based competition, private initiative as well as a critique of the state and the public interest. These questions also function at different levels of generality. The issue of inequality is important because it is a topic that has gained public prominence lately. It is the least abstract of the three questions. The question of privatization captures the power shift from the public sector to the private sector. This issue is a little more abstract than the issue of inequality since respondents are asked to think about something that may not be on their minds very often. The issue of competition is most abstract. It asks respondents to consider society generally and captures a key imperative of neoliberalism, i.e. the drive to promote market-based incentives. It is relatively rare for a survey to ask such a question, making this particular data-set rather valuable.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics while Figure 1 presents three density curves (modified histograms), which make it possible to observe the entire distribution. As can be seen, most respondents place themselves somewhere in the middle on all three questions. However, with regard to income inequality, the distribution is tilted slightly to the left (with respondents generally preferring more equality), while the distribution for the competition issue is tilted slightly to the right (with respondents generally seeing competition as a good thing). Attitudes toward privatization (nationalization) are

moderate. The neoliberal composite score used throughout this paper is constructed as a sum of respondents' answers to these three questions. Since neoliberal economic positions can be seen as the opposite of left-wing economic positions they may be called right-wing economic positions. They are treated as such in this article. In Figure 1 and elsewhere in this article, more neoliberal is to the right side of the graph, more leftist is to the left side of the graph.

(Insert Table 2 about here)

(Insert Figure 1 about here)

With regard to the key measures of economic position, LITS offers several possibilities. The following are tracked: monthly income, whether the respondent owns their own business (in order to capture small entrepreneurs), whether respondents are blue-collar workers (i.e. employed in mining, construction or manufacturing), whether they are unemployed, and whether they are retired. These variables offer a mix of measures, some based on class position, others on other forms of economic standing. Tracking economically passive groups – the unemployed and the retired – is important because they may be especially sensitive to welfare chauvinism since they depend on the welfare state. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for these variables.

With regard to education, two variables were used. First, the original question which sorts respondents into eight groups, from no education, to primary education, all the way to a bachelor's degree, a master's degree or a doctorate. And second, a simple categorical variable was constructed based on this variable which tracks whether respondents have a university diploma (bachelor's or higher). As can be seen in Table 2, several control variables are included as well (age, gender, rural vs. urban residence, East Germany, and non-German ethnicity).

## **Analysis: Socio-economic factors and education**

The first step in the analysis is to weigh the relative importance of the economic and the cultural hypotheses. As mentioned, the former was operationalized in Hypothesis 1 and the latter in Hypothesis 2. Table 3 presents the results of several multivariate models. All models in this analysis use robust standard errors (Huber-White standard errors), which have been recommended as a way to adopt a conservative approach to inference.<sup>36</sup> The dependent variable which tracks welfare chauvinism is a simple categorical variable which takes on the value of 0 if the respondent did not select the answer and 1 if they did.

(Insert Table 3 about here)

As can be seen in Table 3, there is very little evidence which would support the economic explanation. Variables for income, business ownership, blue collar workers, unemployed status and retired people are not consistent determinants of welfare chauvinism. All in all, there is no evidence to support Hypothesis 1, i.e. the claim that persons in disadvantaged economic positions will be more likely to adopt welfare chauvinism. In additional models, where the dependent variable was the opposite of welfare chauvinism, i.e. the attitude that immigrants make a positive contribution, the result was once again similar. There was no link between socio-economic position and such attitudes of migration optimism.

There is, however, more evidence to support the cultural hypothesis, i.e. Hypothesis 2. The models in Table 3 use two different operationalizations of the education variable. First, an ordinal scale is used,

which ranges from 1 to 8, and second, a categorical variable is used which tracks if the respondent has a university diploma (bachelor's degree or more). Both of these variables led to statistically significant results, as can be seen in Models 1 and 2.

The size of the effect can be approximated with odds ratios. For those respondents who have a university degree odds ratios were around 0.24 in models predicting welfare chauvinism. This means that respondents with a university education were about 76 percent less likely to be welfare chauvinists than respondents without a university education. In other words, education clearly has a negative effect on welfare chauvinism. All in all, Hypothesis 2 received support. Persons who have a high degree of education will indeed be more likely to reject welfare chauvinism. In additional models, where the dependent variable was the attitude that immigrants make a positive contribution, the relevance of education was also confirmed. Those with higher levels of education were much more likely to fall in this group of migration optimists.

There are also several control variables which led to consistent results throughout. As Table 3 shows, the most important determinants, both with a negative sign, were the variables which track respondents from East Germany and respondents who have a non-German ethnicity. It is not very surprising that people who are not ethnic Germans reject welfare chauvinism. Since these people are foreign and/or immigrants themselves it is only natural that they tend to see immigration in a positive light.

More interesting is the finding concerning respondents from East Germany. Although East Germany appears prominently in many discussions of the rise of right-wing populism in Germany, respondents from this part of Germany were actually more likely to reject welfare chauvinism. This is certainly something that future surveys will need to inspect, as it goes against expectations. However, it should

be reiterated that welfare chauvinism and voting for the radical right are not the same phenomena. While voting for the AfD is more common in East Germany, it appears that the same cannot be said of welfare chauvinism. Unfortunately, the LITS data-set does not allow for a closer examination since no question was included on voting choices. Both of these findings – the relevance of non-German ethnicity and the relevance of East Germany – were replicated in models where the dependent variable was the attitude that immigrants provide a positive contribution. In these models, the variables for non-German ethnicity and East Germany were statistically significant and positive determinants.

The results presented in Table 3 were also subjected to a variety of robustness checks. The factors that were tested included: employment in various sectors, such as farming, services, the public sector, membership in political parties, membership in labor unions, church activity, various religious denominations, physical health, interpersonal trust, household size, married status, various regions of Germany etc. Inclusion of these variables did not alter the results shown in Table 3.<sup>37</sup>

### **Analysis: Neoliberalism and welfare chauvinism**

The next step in the analysis is to assess the relevance of neoliberalism for welfare chauvinism. Should welfare chauvinism be seen as compatible with neoliberalism? Hypothesis 3 formulated a neoliberal optimist thesis according to which those persons who adopt neoliberal economic attitudes are more likely to reject welfare chauvinism. The opposite was suggested in Hypothesis 4, a leftist optimist thesis according to which people who have leftist economic views reject welfare chauvinism.

In Table 3, models 3 and 4 investigate these questions. Two variables were used for neoliberalism. First, a scale that ranges from 3 to 30. It was constructed using the three economic questions introduced

earlier: on income inequality, privatization and competition. The second variable simply codes all respondents above the median (17) as 1 and all respondents below the median as 0. This eases interpretation and makes it possible to talk about “neoliberals” and “leftists.” Of course, labeling them in such a manner is only a convenience and does not imply that the respondents would self-identify as either neoliberals or leftists.

As can be seen in Table 3, both measures of neoliberalism led to statistically significant results. Neoliberalism is a positive determinant of welfare chauvinism. In other words, people who are more neoliberal have an increased likelihood of adopting welfare chauvinism. The categorical variable used in Model 4 can be used to estimate the size of the effect. Odds ratios are about 1.8 in models predicting welfare chauvinism. In other words, in comparison with “leftists”, “neoliberals” are 80 percent more likely to be welfare chauvinists. Once again, this finding was replicated in models where the dependent variable was an optimistic attitude towards immigration. In this case, neoliberalism was a negative determinant.

The same juxtaposition can be inspected visually as well. Figure 2 presents three density curves which map the distributions for the frequency of neoliberal attitudes among welfare chauvinists and migration optimists (with the sample as a whole added for reference). As can be seen, the distribution for welfare chauvinists is centered slightly to the right, i.e. in the liberal direction, while the distribution for migration optimists is centered slightly to the left. The distribution for the sample as a whole is somewhere in between these two groups. All in all, there is quite a lot of evidence to reject Hypothesis 3 and a lot of evidence to support Hypothesis 4. “Neoliberals” are more likely to accept welfare chauvinism. For “leftists” the reverse is true.<sup>38</sup>

(Insert Figure 2 about here)

What about the link between education and neoliberalism? As the earlier analysis showed, education is negatively associated with welfare chauvinism. If this is the case, how does neoliberalism matter for this relationship? In Table 3, Model 5 investigates what effect a combination of high education and neoliberalism has on the likelihood of welfare chauvinism. Model 6 assesses the same for the combination of high education and leftism. These concerns were formalized in Hypothesis 5 and 6. The question to be answered is whether, under certain conditions, education may actually strengthen welfare chauvinism.

As can be seen in Table 3, the particular combination of high education and neoliberalism does indeed increase the chances that a person adopts welfare chauvinism. The reverse holds too, namely, that a combination of leftist economic views and high education lessens the likelihood of welfare chauvinism. In Model 5 the interaction term is positive and statistically significant, while in Model 6 it is negative and statistically significant. Therefore, the interaction term which tracks highly educated neoliberals is a positive determinant of welfare chauvinism while the interaction term which tracks highly educated leftists is a negative determinant of welfare chauvinism. As the interaction terms were introduced, the behavior of the constituent parts did not change, i.e. they did not lose statistical significance nor switch sign.

Therefore, education, if combined with neoliberalism, can actually lead to more welfare chauvinism. The main finding of previous models, namely, that education can weaken welfare chauvinism needs to be qualified. If education combines with neoliberalism, it can at times strengthen welfare chauvinism. A simple descriptive breakdown of the data can illustrate the nature of the effect. Among those

respondents who are welfare chauvinists, neoliberalism is much more common among those who have a university diploma. While even those welfare chauvinists who do not have a university diploma tend to be neoliberal at slightly above 50 percent, this is much more the case among the highly educated. For this group, the percentage increases to 77 percent. This is the underlying data that led to the statistically significant result for both interaction terms in Models 5 and 6.<sup>39</sup>

The final model in Table 3 assess whether the inclusion of a measure for xenophobia alters the results in general and the impact of neoliberalism in particular. As can be seen, this measure is positive and highly statistically significant. This measure was constructed using respondents' answers to seven questions. In these questions, respondents are asked if they would agree to have certain groups as neighbors. This includes: immigrants, Roma, people of a different religion, people of a different race, Jewish people, people who speak a different language, people who have AIDS. These groups were selected since they can be reasonably seen as politically defined groups. The other categories offered did not fit this criterion in quite the same way (e.g. elderly people, unmarried couples living together, poor people etc.).

The same statistically significant results emerge when the ordinal scale is replaced with categorical variables for each of the seven groups. For each of these, the variable is positive and statistically significant. Effect sizes are large too. For example, when a categorical variable is constructed which tracks if the respondent selected at least two of the seven groups, the odds ratio exceeds 3. Yet despite this strong impact, the inclusion of the variable for xenophobia had little impact on the other results. Neoliberalism remains a strong predictor of welfare chauvinism, even net of the impact of xenophobia. Indeed, the correlation between the neoliberal ordinal scale and the xenophobia ordinal scale is very weak, around zero. Therefore, it would appear that neoliberalism can lead people to welfare chauvinism

even when they are not chauvinists, xenophobes or racists *per se*. These two options seem to work like two paths which can lead to the same outcome. Some people dislike diversity which leads them to welfare chauvinism. Others may be open to diversity, but their neoliberalism nudges them in the direction of welfare chauvinism.

## **Conclusions**

The aim of this article was to investigate the relationship between neoliberalism and welfare chauvinism in Germany. This attitude is rather broadly spread out throughout the citizenry, in Germany as well as elsewhere in Europe. A key characteristic of welfare chauvinism is that it offers a way to frame the anti-immigrant agenda in a way that is not explicitly racist, but is based on “hard” and “neutral” economic criteria. Therefore, proponents of welfare chauvinism often portray this position as a defense of the welfare state. However, as this article has aimed to show, given that welfare chauvinism is tightly connected to neoliberalism, the opposite is more likely to be true.

There are several conclusions to the analysis conducted in this article. First, the analysis began by assessing the relative explanatory power of the two main theories of welfare chauvinism. Overall, the economic explanation did not receive support while the cultural explanation did. Welfare chauvinism is not necessarily more likely among groups who occupy disadvantaged positions in the economy. Rather, education, as the key measure of cultural capital, is a consistent negative determinant of welfare chauvinism.

The main contribution of the article is in the way the analysis brings in neoliberalism. This type of approach can potentially help bridge the economic and cultural perspective. Economic factors may not

matter directly, but they may have an impact through the cultural models that we use to understand the economy. The particular data-set used, *Life in Transition Survey*, is useful because it contains several questions which can be used to measure the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with key elements of the neoliberal worldview. Neoliberal attitudes emerge as a consistent positive determinant of welfare chauvinism and a consistent negative determinant of the opposite. People who are more neoliberal tend to be welfare chauvinists while people who are economically more leftist tend to reject welfare chauvinism.

In a roundabout way, this analysis brings us back from cultural to economic factors. While economic traits, seen structurally, do not explain a person's attraction to welfare chauvinism, this does not mean that economic factors have no place in the analysis. Neoliberalism is the main way in which people in Western societies understand the workings of the economy. This article therefore suggests that the economy does matter, or rather, what matters is the way we culturally understand the economy. In a more basic sense, it is quite intuitive that neoliberalism and welfare chauvinism are associated: they are both about constraining solidarity.

The analysis also controlled for the possibility that some respondents may be driven to welfare chauvinism because they are motivated by some form of xenophobia, i.e. a dislike of diversity. This measure was indeed a positive and statistically significant determinant of welfare chauvinism. Yet, its inclusion did not alter the impact of the measure for neoliberalism. Xenophobia and neoliberalism are not correlated. In other words, the relevance of neoliberalism persists, even after controlling for the impact of the fear of ethnic and cultural diversity. Therefore, some people may turn to welfare chauvinism because they are xenophobic. But, people need not be overt racists or xenophobes in order to be welfare chauvinists. Neoliberalism may lead them to the same outcome.

The analysis also looked more closely at the way education and neoliberalism interact. While higher education – and a university diploma in particular – is indeed associated with a weaker likelihood that a person will adopt welfare chauvinism, additional probing revealed that there is a particular cocktail of factors where education may be part of the problem, not the solution. Among those German respondents who are both highly educated and neoliberal, the likelihood of welfare chauvinism increases notably. However, when education is combined with a leftist economic attitude, the likelihood of welfare chauvinism drops. Therefore, education may not always be able to weaken welfare chauvinism. If neoliberalism is – like welfare chauvinism – a set of attitudes and dispositions diffused widely throughout society, then the struggle against it should not be restricted to just one conduit either. Higher education alone, it seems, is not necessarily an effective break on neoliberalism.

Finally, this article throws new light on the emerging consensus regarding the main cleavage which structures politics in Western democracies. As this body of research argues, political conflict in rich democracies increasingly pits the educated and open-minded liberals against the closed-minded, uneducated and angry chauvinists. In Germany, this is the juxtaposition of Prenzlauer Berg yuppies versus Dresden's Pegida. However, this article suggests a slight wrinkle to this story. If liberal economic attitudes are connected to welfare chauvinism, then we need to look elsewhere for ways out of the angry closed-mindedness that can be observed in many Western countries, Germany included. This conclusion also extends to the main trade-off which has been suggested for our time: diversity versus solidarity. To the extent that the results for Germany shown in this article are a guide, the main choice may simply be more solidarity versus less solidarity.

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- 3 As two researchers from Aalborg University say: “In 2014, Social Democrats proposed restrictions on foreigners' rights to receive unemployment benefits, insisting that non-native citizens have to prove themselves by taking Danish classes, while also demanding tightened control of their residency in Denmark.” Oscar Garcia Agustin and Martin Bak Jorgensen, “Danes First, Welfare Last”, *Jacobin*, 31 January 2019, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/01/denmark-social-democrats-immigration-welfare> (accessed 30 March 2019).
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- 26 As an additional comment, it should be mentioned that many radical right parties in the 1980s and 1990s adopted explicitly neoliberal attitudes. However, as mainstream conservative and even social democratic parties also caught the neoliberal bug and adopted various versions of the "third way", radical right parties responded in two ways. First, they began to emphasize immigration much more than the economy and, second, adopted welfare chauvinism as their approach to social policy. Therefore, as neoliberalism permeated the political spectrum, it took up new forms and mutated. The shift described above has been documented in many contributions: Herbert Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2007); Cass Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Sarah L. De Lange, "A New Winning Formula: The Programmatic Appeal of the Radical Right", *Party Politics* 13, no. 4 (2007): 411-435; Ashley Lavelle, *The Death of Social Democracy: Political Consequences in the 21st century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016); Pietro Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Nonna Mayer, "The Radical Right in France" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 615-640.
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- 37 From this list of factors, the most consistent determinant was trust: People who had higher levels of generalized trust were less likely to be welfare chauvinists and more likely to be migration optimists.
- 38 The measure for neoliberalism used here was a composite one. Out of these three questions, which matter more and which matter less in explaining the likelihood of welfare chauvinism? The interesting conclusion which emerges here is that it is not attitudes towards income inequality which are the strongest determinant of welfare chauvinism, but attitudes toward privatization and competition instead. The correlation between competition and privatization is 0.44, between privatization and inequality –0.29 and between competition and inequality –0.22. Out of the three, attitudes toward inequality are slightly anomalous. For migration optimists, the distribution of attitudes is centered towards the

left, most clearly on the privatization issue and the competition issue. For income inequality, this is not the case. It is interesting, therefore, that inequality has been the issue that has gained so much prominence in European and American public discussion. Inequality may not be the most relevant when it comes to issues such as welfare chauvinism. Instead, perhaps our analysis should encompass a broader view of neoliberalism, as has been attempted in this article.

39 Another way to express the size of the effect is to calculate marginal effects for the interaction term. Once again, the result will be expressed in terms of odds ratios, focusing on the interaction term which captures neoliberals with a university education. The odds that the respondent will be a welfare chauvinist when they do not have a university education are 1.8 times greater when they are neoliberal than when they are not neoliberal. When they do have a university education, the odds that they will be a welfare chauvinist are 5.3 times greater when they are a neoliberal than when they are not. Therefore, the relevance of the interaction is confirmed.

**Table 1.** Welfare chauvinism in Germany (2010 and 2016), *Life in Transition Survey*

	2010	2016
“Immigrants make a valuable contribution to the national economy of our country”	25.2 %	27.3 %
“Immigrants are a burden for the national protection system”	37.4 %	38.2 %
“None of the above”	26.6 %	34.5 %
“Refused answer”	10.8 %	

Note: Sample weights applied.

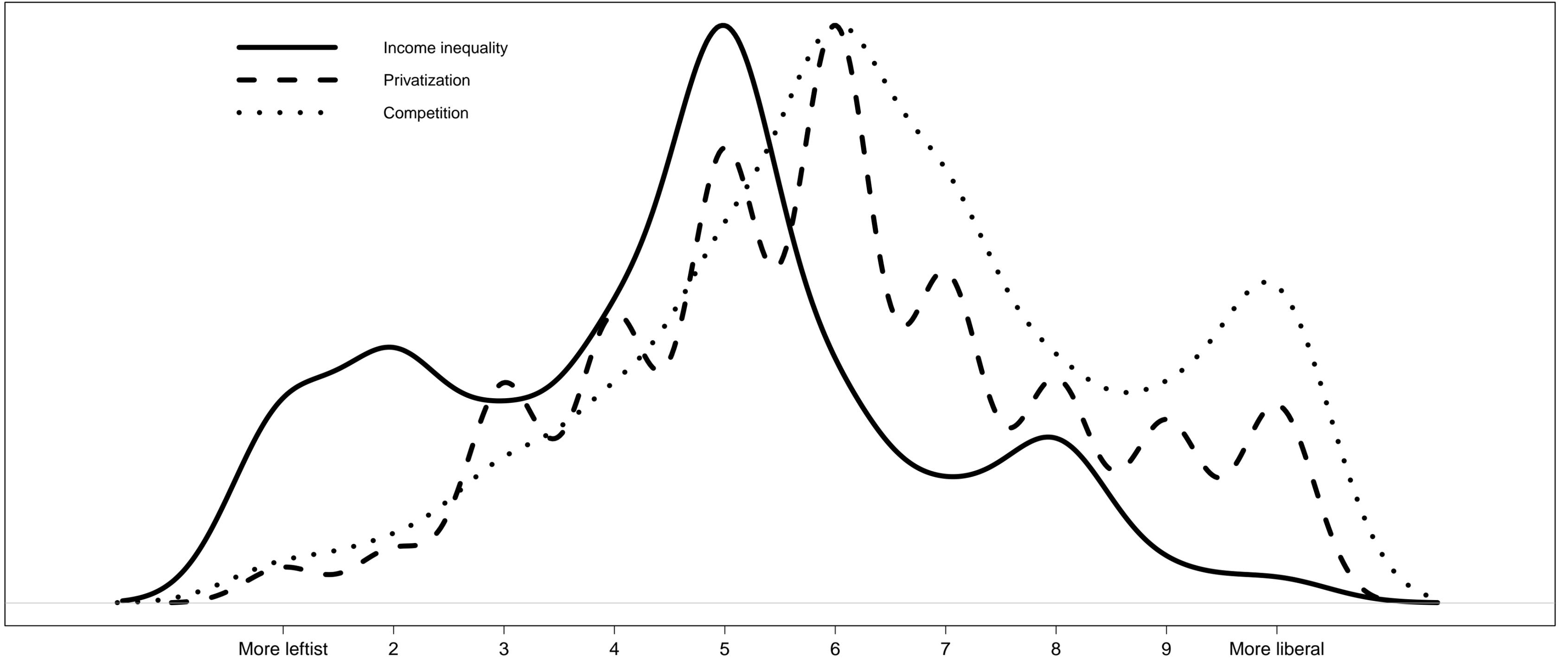
**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics

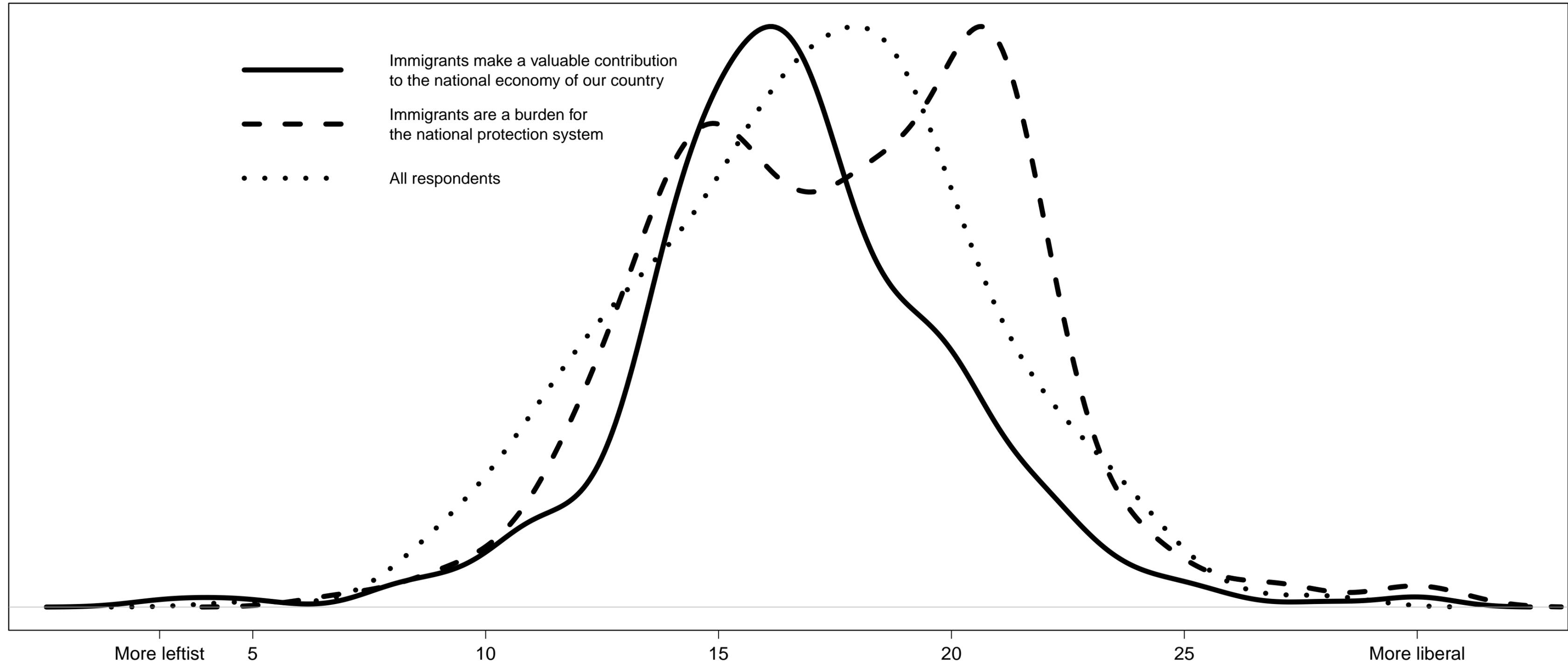
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
<i>Socio-economic variables</i>				
Income (euros) (68.9 % missing)	370	7600	2329.6	1046.3
Business owner (1=yes) (7.4 % of total)	0	1	0.1	0.3
Blue collar worker (1=yes) (10.9 % of total)	0	1	0.1	0.3
Unemployed (1=yes) (24.1 % of total)	0	1	0.2	0.4
Retired (1=yes) (17.9 % of total)	0	1	0.2	0.4
<i>Education</i>				
Ordinal scale (1 to 8)	1	8	4.5	1.7
University education (1=yes) (15.5 % of total)	0	1	0.2	0.4
<i>Neoliberalism</i>				
Composite scale	3	30	17.1	3.6
Neoliberalism categorical (1 if above median) (45.4 % of total)	0	1	0.5	0.5
<i>Control variables</i>				
Age	18	93	45.6	15.3
Gender (1=male) (54.3 % of total)	0	1	0.5	0.5
Rural vs. urban residence (1=rural) (58.1 % of total)	0	1	0.6	0.5
East Germany (1=yes) (23.4 % of total)	0	1	0.2	0.4
Non-German ethnicity (1=yes) (5.2 % of total)	0	1	0.1	0.2
Would not like to have various groups as neighbors (0 to 7)	0	7	0.9	1.1

**Table 3.** Logistic regression models for welfare chauvinism (dependent variable: “Immigrants are a burden for the national protection system.”)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<i>Socio-economic variables</i>							
Wealthy (1=top 10 %; 0=bottom 90 %)	0.284 (0.194)	0.084 (0.191)	0.149 (0.194)	0.112 (0.190)	0.100 (0.190)	0.112 (0.190)	-0.002 (0.194)
Business owner (1=yes)	-0.024 (0.223)	0.156 (0.216)	0.044 (0.219)	0.079 (0.217)	0.057 (0.214)	0.063 (0.216)	-0.058 (0.221)
Blue collar worker (1=yes)	0.261 (0.169)	0.305 (0.170)	0.394 (0.177)	0.305 (0.174)	0.305 (0.174)	0.310 (0.175)	0.310 (0.185)
Unemployed (1=yes)	0.274 (0.166)	0.290 (0.163)	0.315 (0.169)	0.264 (0.168)	0.260 (0.169)	0.278 (0.169)	0.181 (0.166)
Retired (1=yes)	0.155 (0.234)	-0.209 (0.226)	0.209 (0.233)	0.243 (0.230)	0.254 (0.231)	0.244 (0.230)	0.159 (0.228)
<i>Education</i>							
Ordinal scale (1 to 8)	-0.376*** (0.036)						
University education (1=yes)		-1.437*** (0.195)	-1.572*** (0.207)	-1.451*** (0.193)	-2.159*** (0.376)	-1.181*** (0.218)	-1.146*** (0.508)
<i>Neoliberalism</i>							
Composite scale			0.054*** (0.015)				
Neoliberalism categorical (1 if above median)				0.579*** (0.106)	0.498*** (0.110)	0.530*** (0.107)	0.491*** (0.110)
<i>Interaction term</i>							
Neoliberal * university education					1.139* (0.449)		
Leftist * university education						-1.108* (0.512)	-1.146* (0.508)
<i>Control variables</i>							
Age	0.007 (0.004)	0.008 (0.005)	0.007 (0.005)	0.007 (0.004)	0.007 (0.004)	0.007 (0.005)	0.005 (0.004)
Gender (1=male)	0.041 (0.110)	-0.004 (0.108)	-0.003 (0.111)	-0.014 (0.109)	-0.025 (0.109)	-0.013 (0.109)	-0.026 (0.111)
Rural vs. urban residence (1=rural)	-0.134 (0.111)	-0.087 (0.110)	-0.062 (0.113)	-0.077 (0.111)	-0.072 (0.110)	-0.072 (0.110)	-0.086 (0.113)
East Germany (1=yes)	-0.514*** (0.130)	-0.533*** (0.129)	-0.495*** (0.133)	-0.475*** (0.131)	-0.466*** (0.131)	-0.464*** (0.132)	-0.395 (0.134)
Non-German ethnicity (1=yes)	-1.316*** (0.352)	-1.012** (0.298)	-0.968** (0.318)	-0.907** (0.293)	-0.924** (0.296)	-0.912** (0.294)	-1.043 (0.294)
Would not like to have various groups as neighbors (0 to 7)							0.432*** (0.058)
Constant	-0.820** (1.281)	0.716* (0.227)	-1.692*** (0.348)	-0.983*** (0.235)	-0.939*** (0.235)	-0.912*** (0.235)	-1.153*** (0.238)
Observations	1715	1715	1715	1715	1715	1715	1715

Note: Coefficients and robust standard errors in parentheses. p<0.05 \*; p<0.01 \*\*; p<0.001 \*\*\*





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Immigrants make a valuable contribution to the national economy of our country

- - -

Immigrants are a burden for the national protection system

.....

All respondents

More leftist

5

10

15

20

25

More liberal