

Have Young Adults' Opinions on the Social Role of the State Changed since the 2008 Economic Crisis? – *Adrien Papuchon*

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o Key Question

As new and recent entrants in the labour market, young people in many countries have experienced with the 2008 economic crisis a sharp rise in their unemployment rate. At the same time, they may have seen the support they received diminish, whether public support – subject to reductions – or the support received from their families. Social policies indeed contribute significantly to the way in which the transition into adulthood takes place and the manner in which young people and their contemporaries live. How has this experience of the crisis affected their opinions on the role of the state? Have differences in opinion on the role of the state across age groups widened in the years following the crisis? Are evolutions comparable across countries?

o Methodology

The data from the *International Social Survey Programme* (ISSP), the 2006 and 2016 editions of which focused on the role of the state, provide valuable insights. They make it possible to cover 14 countries: France, Germany, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Norway, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Switzerland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Latvia. National contexts are taken into account through Esping-Andersen' typology of welfare state regimes. The descriptive analysis of the evolutions is completed by a test of interaction effects in order to precise effects of age, of period and of generation.

o Mains Results

- Between 2006 and 2016, young people's opinions shifted, practically everywhere, in favor of greater state intervention and increased social expenditure. Except in the case of Germany, Spain (increased expenditure) or Sweden (restriction of the role of government), there is no continuity in the trends observed between 1996 and 2016. As a result of the crisis, there has been a movement towards increased youth support for state intervention, except in the Scandinavian countries.
- Among people aged 65 and over, shifts in opinions differ more between countries and have led, in most cases, to the opinions of young adults and those of their elders coming closer together. However, we cannot speak of a parallel evolution of opinions - except in the case of Sweden.
- The introduction of an interaction between the survey year and the age group makes it possible to verify that the effect of the crisis in favor of greater state intervention is greater among young adults than seniors. The intergenerational gap is tending to blur in the countries of conservative and Mediterranean regimes. The results tend to support the hypothesis that people in more favorable circumstances, who benefit less from state intervention, are less supportive of such intervention.
- The opinion on the role of government and the amount of its social expenditure depend on the national context. There is a surge in demand to reduce economic inequality in the liberal countries, a decline in the expected role of the state in Finland and Norway, but not in Sweden
- This set of results thus tends to confirm that the difference of opinion between age groups varies in accordance with the national context, but not in the way suggested by the approach in terms of social welfare regime, according to which the differences should be small in social democratic and liberal regimes and high in the others. Strong divergences are observed in countries usually considered to be similar: between France and Germany, between the Czech Republic and the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, or even between Sweden and Finland or Norway.

o Message

These results indicate that interpretations that postulate intergenerational conflict are based on an overly schematic view of relationships between generations and their respective "interests". Although the analysis cannot control with a satisfactory degree of precision the economic situation of young adults, it implicitly invites to further study class differentiations in transitions to adulthood, so far overlooked in sociological research that too often tends to consider youth as a homogeneous whole. Further work could reveal a new diversity, but perhaps also new connections between young people in different countries.