

Public Perceptions of the Causes of Poverty: Multilevel Analysis of 28 European Nations

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It is known that economic crisis can lead to high level of unemployment and poverty which, according to prior research, can affect public attitudes towards the poor. Furthermore earlier research have pointed out that citizen’s attitudes towards the poor are strongly related to general support for the welfare state. The purpose of paper is to analyse public perceptions of the causes of poverty among the Europeans. Focus of the study is on the individual blame explanation and national context factors. The paper provides also a methodological contribution by applying more dynamic approach regarding the national level explanatory factors by exploring how trends in macro-level circumstances affect on public opinion. Theoretically it is more justified to explore how changes, instead of static approach, in macro level characteristics are associated with public opinion. The results of this study will provide information how current economic recession with growing unemployment and poverty might impact on welfare attitudes of Europeans. Studied macro level context variables are welfare state regime, trends in the incidence of poverty and unemployment, trends in economic growth and social expenditures as well as trends in migration inflows. On the other hand, socio-economic status, age, gender, self perceived economic circumstances, awareness of poverty, political orientation and values regarding social equality and solidarity serve as micro level variables. The study utilizes Eurobarometer survey 2007.