

What explains the gender gap in poverty?: A Comparison of Eastern and Western European EU countries
(abstract)

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Casper et al (1994) suggested three distinct reasons why a country may have a small gender gap in poverty : women's high level economic empowerment and overall economic development, generous welfare subsidies to families at risk of poverty, and a high likelihood that people will marry and stay married. In this paper I use data from the 2006 wave of EU-SILC and macro-level indicators collected primarily from Eurostat and OECD publications to argue that all three of these strategies work in developed Western European societies. None, however, are associated with a decline in the gender poverty gap in post-communist EU countries. In these less developed, peripheral economies a fourth strategy seems more viable: extended families and inter-generational transfers are associated with a smaller gender inequality in poverty. I further argue that this arrangement builds on the institutional legacy inherited from the state socialist era and is simultaneously supported by the neo-liberal social policy which has been the precondition of entry to the EU for all post-communist societies.