

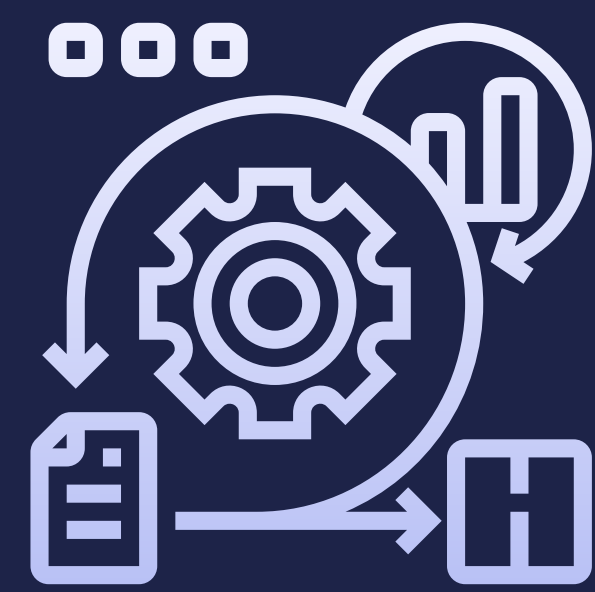


Protected or Left Behind? How Welfare Regimes Shape the Mental Health Cost of Economic Crisis

How does the level of education affect individuals' perceived internal distress in Sweden and the UK, and does one welfare regime mitigate overall levels of internal distress more effectively than the other, particularly when comparing the periods before and after the 2008 recession?

Methodology

- ✓ **Research Design**
Quantitative comparative analysis
- ✓ **Data Source**
 - European Social Survey (ESS)
 - Great Britain/UK and Sweden
 - 2006, 2012, 2014
- ✓ **Analysis**
R & JASP



Limitations

- Self-reported distress (bias)
- Education as only SES measurement
- No survey wave immediately after 2008
- Uneven time gaps between ESS rounds
- ESS code GB does not cover the full UK



Context & Relevance

The 2008 Financial Crisis

Economic Shock

Rising unemployment, financial insecurity and instability across Europe.

Psychological Consequences

Vulnerable social groups especially affected, experiencing financial and mental distress.



Welfare State Design

Sweden

Universal welfare protection and strong state support providing greater security.

United Kingdom

Conditional welfare system. Associated with higher levels of distress.

Mental Distress

- Feelings of sadness, depression and loneliness
- Sensitive to structural conditions like unemployment & economic insecurity
- Proxy for psychological well-being at population level



Main Results

Crisis Effect

Crisis did not significantly increase distress

- ESS round: not significant
- Pre-crisis mean: 1.417
- Post-crisis mean: 1.394
- Welch t-test: significant but small
- Distress slightly decreased

Crisis x SES Inequality

Crisis did not significantly widen SES inequality

- Education × ESS round: not significant
- Education × pre/post: not significant
- Three-way interaction: not significant.
- SES gaps stayed relatively stable over time

Welfare Regimes

Inequality stronger in GB/UK

- Sweden shows flatter SES differences
- | | GB/UK | Sweden |
|--------|-------|--------|
| Low | 1.521 | 1.374 |
| Medium | 1.451 | 1.340 |
| High | 1.412 | 1.346 |
- Education x country: significant

Policy Recommendations

- Strengthening welfare protection through more accessible social support and stronger income security during crises.
- Investing in education and vocational training to reduce long-term socioeconomic vulnerability and labor market insecurity.
- Integrating mental health into crisis-response policies through accessible support services and preventive programs.