



The Great Polarization
Economics, Institutions and Policies in the Age of Inequality

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From Crisis to Redistribution? Global Attitudes Towards Equality, Welfare, and State Ownership

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Abstract

The global financial crisis of 2008 provided a jolt to economies and politics across the world. It gave rise to major waves of protest, from the Arab Spring to the Occupy movement, and later to right-wing populism and anti-immigrant sentiment. Using data from the World Values Survey (WVS), we examine popular attitudes towards redistribution before and after the global financial crisis in 40 different countries across North America, Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Our analysis focuses on three different forms of redistribution: income equality; government responsibility for welfare; and state ownership. We show that popular support for redistribution increased in many countries after the crisis, especially with respect to income equality. Across the entire pre- and post-crisis period, older, female, single, less educated, part-time employed, and unemployed respondents were more likely to favor redistribution than others. Yet support for income inequality increased faster, after the crisis, for those with more education and full-time employment. Finally, whereas in some countries, support for redistribution was associated with anti-immigrant attitudes, in other countries support for redistribution correlated with the rejection of such intolerant attitudes.