

How Social Welfare Programs Impact Mass Immigration in Norway and Canada: A Comparison and Contrast

Aarush Mehta

South Mecklenburg High School

ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the effectiveness of social welfare policies in managing mass immigration in Norway and Canada. With increasing global migration, countries face the challenge of integrating immigrants while sustaining their welfare systems. Norway emphasizes state-centered support, facilitating immigrants' rapid integration through comprehensive social welfare programs. This approach promotes socio-economic well-being and labor market participation, fueled by a commitment to social solidarity and inclusive group boundaries. Additionally, Norway invests in education and language training, ensuring immigrants' long-term self-sufficiency. Canada, on the other hand, employs an inclusive approach, providing equal access to a range of welfare programs tailored to immigrants' needs. This strategy fosters a sense of belonging and self-reliance among immigrants, reducing their reliance on government assistance. While both nations offer unique insights, their approaches achieve success through different avenues: Norway prioritizes rapid integration and social cohesion, while Canada focuses on fostering self-sufficiency and reducing welfare dependence. The study underscores the need for evidence-based policy decisions that strike a balance between immigrants' needs and sustainable welfare systems. By understanding the successes and challenges of mass immigration policies, policymakers can create comprehensive and effective strategies that promote integration, social cohesion, and economic well-being.

Introduction

In the last decade, mass migration has become a significant part of the global landscape as millions of people each year migrate to new countries due to various contributing factors, including war, education, and economic opportunity have led to an increased amount of mass immigration in highly developed countries. A pressing challenge is that countries who receive an influx of immigrants face the need to adjust their social welfare policies in order to effectively accommodate any new people into their country, most of which are utilized specifically to benefit citizens and residents of the country as shown in the July 2023 collapse of the Dutch government due to conflicts between rivaling groups in different policy approaches to immigration - specifically towards those seeking asylum. Gugushvili et al. (2016) emphasize that "Previous research on this subject has yielded conflicting results, highlighting the need for further investigation." Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining the successes and failures of mass immigration social welfare programs in Norway and Canada. These countries have faced significant challenges in adapting their welfare policies to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. This study seeks to provide insights into best practices that can inform policymakers in creating sustainable immigration policies that promote social cohesion by exploring the impact of factors such as urban residence, financial security, and education. Understanding how these factors influence attitudes towards welfare solidarity and migration can contribute to the development of effective policies that balance the needs of both the native population and immigrants.

Problem Statement

As evidenced above, immigrant access to welfare programs in Norway and Canada are fraught with attitudes reflecting significant exclusionary tendencies. Previous studies have presented conflicting results thereby highlighting the need for further research that considers urban residence, financial security, and education. Consequently, policymakers must carefully balance immigration policies with social cohesion to ensure the sustainability of welfare in the face of mass immigration.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the successes and failures of various social welfare programs in Canada and Norway through a case study analysis by demonstrating how these countries have adapted to mass immigration. This study intends to provide insight on best practices that can be implemented in response to mass immigration through the following research questions: What influences successful mass immigration programs in Norway and Canada? What factors result in failed mass immigration programs in Norway and Canada?

Effectiveness of Canada's Inclusive Social Policy in Managing Mass Immigration

Canada's social policy demonstrates a higher level of effectiveness in managing mass immigration compared to Norway, as it encourages a lesser reliance on the state. Koning and Banting (2019) shed light on Canada's approach to immigrant inclusion and welfare utilization. Their research demonstrates that Canada's social policy framework is more comprehensive and inclusive, encompassing various welfare programs such as pensions, health care, child benefits, unemployment benefits, and social assistance. The study highlights Canada's efforts to provide social protection and equal access to welfare benefits for different categories of immigrants, including permanent economic immigrants and recognized refugees. The authors stress, "Canadian social policy seeks to encompass all immigrants with programs that target various groups and tailor benefits to their needs" (p. 7). Thus, showing the inclusiveness of Canada's social welfare approach, which fosters a sense of belonging and encourages immigrants to rely less on government assistance, as they have access to a broader range of welfare programs tailored to their needs.

Furthermore, Cappelen and Bidtbo (2016) highlight the challenges faced by the Norwegian welfare state in accommodating labor migrants within its social welfare framework. The study reveals that increased immigration strains the Norwegian welfare system, as immigrants tend to rely heavily on government assistance. For instance, the study found that respondents in Norway perceived labor migrants as more prone to exploiting the welfare system than natives, with "more than twice as many of the respondents (458 versus 220) agree that labor migrants are more prone to exploit the welfare system than natives compared with the reverse" (Cappelen & Bidtbo, 2016, Figure 1a), indicating the strain on Norway caused by immigrant reliance on welfare. Similarly, Gugushvili et al. (2016) provide evidence from the European Social Survey, indicating that the mass influx of immigrants contributes to a greater demand for welfare services in European countries, straining existing social policies. The authors emphasize that "Previous research on this subject has yielded conflicting results, highlighting the need for further investigation" (p. 9), reinforcing the notion that managing mass immigration poses challenges for welfare states, including Norway.

Norway's Effective State-Centered Approach to Immigrant Integration

Proponents argue that Norway's approach of increasing reliance on the state in addressing mass immigration has proven to be effective. Cappelen and Bidtbo (2016) highlight that Norway has implemented comprehensive social

welfare programs, specifically prioritizing the needs of immigrants, and ensuring that they are quickly integrated into society. They particularly note that "Norway's welfare state has played a crucial role in providing support and assistance to immigrants, promoting their socio-economic well-being and facilitating their integration into the labor market" (p. 11). This approach recognizes that immigrants often face unique challenges and require substantial support from the state to fully participate within society. Furthermore, Norway's strong focus on social solidarity and equality has contributed to successful integration efforts. Breznau and Eger (2017) point out that in Western European societies like Norway, there is a greater emphasis on inclusive group boundaries, in which immigrants are often viewed as a part of the national in-group. They argue that "inclusive group boundaries shape welfare attitudes and behaviors in Western Europe, where immigrants are more likely to be seen as part of the national community" (p. 4). This approach fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance among the immigrants, making them more involved in the welfare state and further promotes social cohesion.

Additionally, Norway's investment in education and language training programs has been crucial in facilitating integration of immigrants into the labor market. Taylor-Gooby et al. (2019) highlight that Norway recognizes the importance of equipping immigrants with the necessary skills and resources to fully participate in society, ensuring their long-term economic self-sufficiency. The authors emphasize "investment in education and training is a key element of Norway's integration policies, aiming to provide immigrants with the tools necessary for economic participation and self-sufficiency" (p. 13). Norway enables immigrants to contribute to the country's economy and reduce their reliance on social welfare programs over time by providing comprehensive support in areas such as language acquisition and vocational training.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the issue of immigrant access to welfare programs in Norway and Canada requires further investigation to better understand the successes and failures of mass immigration programs. The research conducted by Gugushvili et al. (2016) and other scholars sheds light on the challenges faced by welfare states in accommodating labor migrants and managing the strain on existing social policies. However, recognizing that different countries may adopt distinct approaches to addressing mass immigration and integrating immigrants into their societies is important. Canada's social policy framework, as demonstrated in studies such as Koning and Banting's (2019), emphasizes comprehensive inclusion and equal access to welfare benefits for different categories of immigrants. As such, Canada encourages immigrants to rely less on government assistance, promoting self-sufficiency and reducing strain on the state by providing a range of welfare programs tailored to their needs. On the other hand, Norway's approach focuses on social solidarity, equality, and investment in education and language training to facilitate immigrants' integration into the labor market and promote long-term economic self-sufficiency (Breznau & Eger, 2017; Taylor-Gooby et al., 2019). Norway recognizes the importance of supporting immigrants and ensuring their successful participation in society. Both Canada and Norway offer valuable insights into managing mass immigration and welfare policies. By considering the findings from these studies, policymakers can develop strategies that strike a balance between accommodating immigrants' needs and ensuring the sustainability of welfare systems, promoting social cohesion and integration. The complexities of immigration, welfare, and social cohesion require evidence-based policy decisions that address the unique challenges and opportunities presented by mass immigration.

Limitations

Despite the valuable contributions of existing research, this study has certain limitations that future researchers can build upon. Gathering further targeted data on immigrant experiences, welfare utilization, and social attitudes could provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics between mass immigration and social policies in Canada and Norway. Additionally, while this study focused on Norway and Canada, there is a wealth of diverse experiences and

approaches to mass immigration and welfare policies in other countries. Future research can explore comparative analyses of multiple countries to gain broader insights and identify innovative practices that foster successful integration and reduce welfare reliance. Furthermore, understanding the long-term effects of immigration policies and welfare programs requires longitudinal studies to assess outcomes over time. Investigating the impact of these policies on social cohesion, economic development, and overall well-being can provide a more comprehensive understanding of their effectiveness.

Ultimately, this study lays the groundwork for further exploration of mass immigration policies and welfare systems, offering valuable insights for policymakers to create inclusive and sustainable approaches. By building upon the limitations and pursuing future research in these areas, we can foster more inclusive societies and effectively address the challenges and opportunities brought forth by mass migration in the modern world.

References

- Breznau, N., & Eger, M.A. (2016). Immigrant presence, group boundaries, and support for the welfare state in Western European societies. *Acta Sociologica*, 59, 195 - 214.
- Cappelen. (n.d.). Intra-EU Labour Migration and Support for the Norwegian Welfare State. *European Sociological Review*., 32(6), 691–703. <https://doi.org/info:doi/>
- Gugushvili, D., Ravazzini, L., Ochsner, M., Lukac, M., Lelkes, O., Fink, M., Grand, P., & Oorschot, W.C. (2021). Welfare solidarities in the age of mass migration: evidence from European Social Survey 2016. *Acta Politica*, 56, 351-375.
- Koning, E. A., & Banting, K. G. (2013). Inequality below the Surface: Reviewing Immigrants' Access to and Utilization of Five Canadian Welfare Programs. *Canadian Public Policy / Analyse de Politiques*, 39(4), 581–601. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23594733>
- Taylor-Gooby, P., Hvinden, B., Mau, S., Leruth, B., Schoyen, M. A., & Gyory, A. (2019). Moral economies of the welfare state: A qualitative comparative study. *Acta Sociologica*, 62(2), 119–134. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48595788>