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# Migrants' support for welfare state spending in Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands

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## Abstract

This contribution describes differences between 10 migrant groups and natives in their attitudes towards government spending in three residence countries: Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands. Previous research provided evidence that “migrants” as a catch-all category of people from different origins are in favor of more government spending on social welfare. We study to what extent support for government spending can be explained by self-interest explanations of welfare state attitudes as well as by differences in ideological position. The contribution employs data from the Migrants' Welfare State Attitudes project, including migrant groups from similar origins in Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands. The study moves beyond the larger migrant groups of Turks and Poles that received attention in previous research as well, and includes a greater variety of groups that differ in terms of their skill levels. The overall finding is that migrants' welfare state spending preferences are, as in the case of natives, significantly related to socio-demographic differences and standard ideology measures of attitudes to regulation of the economy and family values. However, even with these standard variables included, spending preferences differ strongly between migrant groups, residence countries, and welfare spending domain. A comparison between country of origin and residence country provisions seems to be a promising path for further understanding migrant group differences in welfare state spending attitudes. The study challenges the idea that all migrants are supportive of extended welfare state arrangements.

## KEYWORDS

migrants' integration, welfare state attitudes

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Research on attitudes about the welfare state has only very recently shown interest in migrants and minority members. In the United States, there are a sizable amount of studies addressing the role of race and migration status in explaining welfare state support (Alesina, Glaeser, & Sacerdote, 2001; Keely & Tan, 2008; Lind, 2007; Luttmer, 2001). However, in Europe, the migrant perspective has been neglected almost completely. Instead, research favored interest in the extent to which immigration affects welfare state attitudes among majority populations (e.g., Eger, 2010; Ervasti & Hjerm, 2012; Facchini & Mayda, 2012; Larsen, 2011; Mewes & Mau, 2013; Reeskens & Van Oorschot, 2013; Svallfors, 2012; Van der Waal, De Koster, & Van Oorschot, 2013; Vandoninck, Meeusen, & Dejaeghere, 2017). That well-developed line of research finds that a sizable part of the population perceives immigration as a burden for welfare states because of the commonly held belief that migrants drain resources unevenly. This perception of “them” profiting from “us” is found to have affected the vote for the populist radical right (e.g., Ennser-Jedenastik, 2017). Additionally, welfare state research has focused on the extent to which first and second generation migrants and natives differ in participation in entitlement programs (e.g., Borjas & Hilton, 1996), and whether countries differ in the social rights given to migrants (e.g., Sainsbury, 2006).

A question that remains understudied is how migrants themselves perceive the welfare state. Only a small minority of the European publications have controlled for migration status (yes/no) or for ethnic origin (e.g., Van Oorschot, 2006). Through the studies by Reeskens and Van Oorschot (2015) and Kolbe and Crepaz (2016) we have come to learn more about migrants' attitudes towards the European welfare states. Their findings based on the European Social Survey (ESS) suggest that migrants largely assimilate to the attitudes of natives, and that their marginally higher support for state intervention can largely be explained by their more vulnerable socio-economic position. This study builds upon these important contributions, but tackles the migrant perspective on the welfare state in greater detail.

To this aim, we use data from the Migrants' Welfare State Attitudes (MIFARE) project that involved a primary data collection among 10 migrant groups and natives. Our data allows us to analyze migrants' welfare state preferences from several perspectives. First of all, we are able to study group differences in attitudes towards government spending in a much more detailed way than previous studies that looked at migrants as a catch-all category of people from different origins. This study not only focuses on the larger, well studied, migrant groups of Turks and Poles, but includes a greater variety of groups that differ in terms of their motives for migrating and their skill levels: Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Russian, Romanian, Spanish, British, and American migrants. The choice for these origin countries ensures strong variance in average economic positions of migrants in the residence countries, something that migration research, with its focus on the less-well integrated migrant groups, often overlooks. Moreover, in much of the previous research employing the ESS (e.g., Reeskens & Van Oorschot, 2015), respondents were interviewed only in the host country language. This is an important limitation because it increases socio-economic selectivity on those included in the survey. This selectivity in the groups and individuals included in previous studies is problematic because migrants' socio-economic status and, related to this, degree of vulnerability play an important role in explaining their welfare support. The MIFARE survey alleviates this problem as migrants could also participate in the language of their country of origin, ensuring that migrants without proficiency in the language of the host country are included in the sample as well.

Second, migrant groups from similar origins were surveyed in three different receiving countries: Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands. While all three countries are three highly-developed welfare state regimes (Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands) they show some differences in their integration policies granting migrant access to welfare state arrangements.

Third and finally, our data enables us to analyze what explains the differences in migrants' attitudes towards different domains of welfare spending: unemployment, social assistance, state pensions, elderly care, health care, and childcare.

Theoretically, this article looks into several explanations for differences between migrant groups and natives in spending preferences, including self-interest and ideology approaches (Chung & Meuleman, 2017). In sum, we question to what extent support for government spending varies between migrant groups (and natives) and can be explained by socio-demographic differences that are related to self-interest explanations of welfare state attitudes, such as income and labor market position, as well as by differences in ideological position.

## 2 | THEORIES ON WELFARE ATTITUDES

### 2.1 | Self-interest

One of the classical hypotheses in the field posits that support for the welfare state is guided by self-interest. The point of departure in this assumption is that support for more government spending for sick, disabled, or unemployed people is stronger among people who are at higher risk themselves of falling into these categories (Andreß & Heien, 2001; Busemeyer & Neimanns, 2017; Gelissen, 2002; Goerres & Tepe, 2010; Habibov, 2013; Jæger, 2006; Reeskens & Van Oorschot, 2013, 2015; Rehm, Hacker, & Schlesinger, 2012; Van Oorschot, 2006). People in lower socio-economic positions, i.e. people on lower income, with lower levels of education, in more insecure labor market relations or who are unemployed, as well as people in worse health conditions, are in more vulnerable positions and therefore more likely to support government intervention from which they have a higher likelihood to profit in the future.

Previous research often assumed that migrants in general are more likely to be in this category of “at risk” group (Reeskens & Van Oorschot, 2015). Hence the hypothesis that migrants are more in favor of extended government spending on welfare due to their self-interest. However, there needs to be a more careful unpacking of the concept of “migrant”. In most European countries, immigrant integration and intergroup relations have been discussed in relation to migration from non-Western countries and, more recently, from Eastern European countries (Diehl, Lubbers, Mühlau, & Platt, 2016; Heath, Rothón, & Kilpi, 2008). However, many European countries have large shares of immigrant populations from neighboring European Union (EU) member states and other Western countries as well. Although highly skilled workers exist in each migrant group, migrants from Western countries tend to be in a better socio-economic position (Van Tubergen, Maas, & Flap, 2004). Following self-interest approaches, immigrants in better socio-economic positions are likely to be less supportive of additional government spending on welfare. Since among the Western immigrant groups migrants with higher socio-economic positions are better represented, this should explain the variance among migrant groups (and natives) in their support of welfare state spending. It is therefore highly relevant to distinguish between migrant groups to see whether differences in their attitudes are, indeed, attributable to variance in self-interest as this approach predicts.

Following this line of reasoning, one would anticipate that:

**H1:** Differences between migrant groups and natives in support for government spending on welfare schemes are explained by differences in (economic) self-interest (a), with stronger self-interest being associated with stronger support for government spending (b).

### 2.2 | Ideologies

In the literature on welfare state attitudes, a second theoretical approach to understand variance in preferences is based on ideology (Chung & Meuleman, 2017). People's general ideologies on state intervention and state responsibilities would affect people's preferences about government spending. Ideological beliefs encompassing a limited government and more individual responsibility may relate to restrictions of government spending on welfare (Achterberg, Houtman, & Derks, 2011; Blekesaune, 2013; Emmenegger & Klemmensen, 2013; Feldman & Steenbergen, 2001; Habibov, 2013). Previous research has highlighted the association between ideological position

and welfare state attitudes (Chung & Meuleman, 2017), though its causality has not received much discussion (but see Achterberg et al., 2011). The findings redirect the question from why people vary in their welfare state attitude to why people vary in their ideological position. Also, people's general ideological positions (e.g., left/right position or support for redistribution) originate in people's socio-economic position. This reflection aside, it is of interest to see whether, in case migrants' (economic) self-interest fails to explain differences in welfare state attitudes, general economic beliefs do. Migrants may be socialized, both in the country of origin and in their family with varying degrees of the role of the government in the economy (Blekesaune, 2013; Habibov, 2013). Following this line of reasoning one would anticipate that:

**H2:** Differences between migrant groups and natives in support for government spending on welfare schemes are explained by differences in ideology of economic individualism (a), with stronger support for economic individualism being associated with less support for government spending (b).

Another belief system that may play a major role in understanding differences between migrant groups is the role of the family. Research has shown evidence that people with more conservative family values and more conservative gender attitudes are less likely to support the government to take the role of provider (Van Oorschot, Reeskens, & Meuleman, 2012). This is especially true for childcare provisions (Chung & Meuleman, 2017). On a more general level, religious norms may drive these positions. Religions often prescribe more traditional family and gender norms. This leads to the anticipation that:

**H3:** Differences between migrant groups and natives in support for government spending on welfare schemes are explained by differences in gender and family values (a), with a stronger support for conservative gender and family values being associated with less support for government spending (b).

That being said, it is important to note, however, that familiaristic welfare policies—that support the family as a care provider, such as financial compensations for stay-at-home-mothers—(Esping-Andersen, 1999; Leitner, 2003) are compatible with conservative family values. This is a competing expectation about the role of conservative family values, and our test should provide evidence whether this association is a likely alternative to our hypothesis.

### 2.3 | Domains of government spending in the three residence countries

Government spending differences between domains of spending and between the three residence countries will also reflect actual spending levels on these domains in the three countries (Koster & Kaminska, 2012). Chung and Meuleman (2017) have shown that a country's actual childcare spending strongly affects public opinion on government childcare spending, such that larger provision is associated with stronger support. This links to a broader literature, which anticipates a positive feedback effect between state responsibility and public opinion. The overall logic is that once the state engages in different domains, the public expects continuation and expansion of these policies (Pierson, 2000). Table 1 shows the available indicators about welfare generosity and health care indicators, revealing some variance between the countries of residence. Overall, we find the most generous unemployment and social assistance arrangements in Denmark, and the least generous arrangements in Germany; more generous (state) pension arrangements in the Netherlands than in both other residence countries, and cheaper and more generous childcare arrangements in Denmark than in Germany, and in particular as compared to the Netherlands. These figures are, however, averages, and there is quite some variation depending on the household situation and level of income when applying for the benefit. As an example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) figures on childcare spending show that childcare fees in the Netherlands are among the highest in Europe, whereas they are in the mid-range in Germany and among the lowest in Denmark. However, families are compensated strongly in the Netherlands for the cost of childcare, but this is means-tested. In the Netherlands, the cost of childcare spending is unequally distributed among income groups, with a high absolute cost for the higher income categories. This, in

**TABLE 1** Benefit generosity and policy-domain related indicators in residence and origin countries

	Unemployment Initial unemployment replacement rate (no top-ups, single earner, 67% average wage) <sup>a</sup>	Social assistance Long-term unemployment replacement rate (+ top-ups, single earner, 67% average wage) <sup>a</sup>	Pensions Net pension replacement rate <sup>b</sup>	Elderly Old age poverty <sup>b</sup>	Health Life expectancy at birth, men <sup>c</sup>	Child care Dual earner, childcare net cost as rate of average wage <sup>d</sup>
<i>Residence countries:</i>						
Denmark	84	79	66	4.6	78.4	11.9
Germany	59	48	50	9.4	78.5	11.2
Netherlands	74	68	96	2.0	79.8	23.5
<i>Origin countries:</i>						
Spain	78	32	90	6.7	75.6	5.6
United Kingdom	20	53	29	13.4	79.2	45.0
Poland	45	32	53	8.2	73.4	6.9
Romania	45	13	-	-	71.2	-
Russia	-	-	81	-	64.5	-
China	-	-	86	-	74.6	-
Japan	69	62	40	19.4	80.5	21.7
Turkey	53	0	105	17.2	72.3	-
Philippines	-	-	-	-	65.3	-
United States	61	9	45	21.5	76.9	39.7

Source.

<sup>a</sup>OECD, Tax-benefit models. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/benefits-and-wages.htm> (accessed May 31, 2017).

<sup>b</sup>OECD, Pensions at a glance. Retrieved from <http://oecd.stat> (accessed February 17, 2017).

<sup>c</sup>WHO. Life expectancy at birth. Retrieved from [http://apps.who.int/gho/indicatorregistry/App\\_Main/view\\_indicator.aspx?iid=65](http://apps.who.int/gho/indicatorregistry/App_Main/view_indicator.aspx?iid=65) (accessed June 12, 2017).

<sup>d</sup>OECD, Tax-benefit model 2014. Out-of-pocket childcare costs for a dual-earner family: Full-time care at a typical childcare center, Chart PF3.4.B. Retrieved from <http://oecd.stat> (accessed February 17, 2017).

turn, is related to the large differences between the countries in their use of informal childcare arrangements for children under the age of two, ranging from over 50% in the Netherlands, to 15% in Germany, to 0.6% in Denmark. Overall, however, childcare arrangements are less generous in the Netherlands than in the other countries, and following Chung and Meuleman (2017), this should be reflected in the welfare state attitudes, with more support for generous policies in more generous states.

However, in the case of migrants, the expectations of government intervention in different areas can be shaped both by the context in the country of residence and origin, and by the differences between these two contexts. The article focuses on the latter. Since statistics from some of our studied origin countries (and from non-Western countries in general) are unavailable, we have too few cases to test in a sophisticated manner the hypothesis that “the more generous the benefit in the country of origin as compared to the country of residence, the more likely the migrant group will be to support government spending on the respective domain”. Table 1 provides some indications of the differences, though, which we relate to differences in attitudes between migrants and natives. In the rest of the article, we first analyze to what extent migrant group differences are explained in terms of self-interest and ideology, and then study to what extent remaining (unexplained) differences are associated with the differences in benefit generosity between origin country and residence country. Here we expect that better arrangements in the

country of origin on a specific domain as compared to the country of residence are associated with stronger support for government spending in that domain.

### 3 | DATA AND MEASUREMENTS

We rely on a primary dataset from the MIFARE project that was funded by NORFACE (Bekhuis, Fage Hedegaard, Siebel, Degen, & Renema, 2018). The dataset contains information about 10 migrant groups and natives who were approached in Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands. In each country, first-generation migrants from four EU countries (Poland, Romania, Spain, and the United Kingdom) and from five non-EU countries (the United States, Russia, China, Japan, and Turkey) were sampled. Migrants from the Philippines were sampled in Denmark and the Netherlands only. The objective was that 300 respondents from each origin country participated in each residence country, as well as 300 natives. Migrants who were aged 16 or older at the time of migration were randomly sampled from the municipality registers in the countries.<sup>1</sup> The sample participants were sent an invitation letter and questionnaire both in the host country language and country of origin language. Moreover, they could fill out the questionnaire in either language online. Since we anticipated that response rates among non-Western and Eastern European migrant groups would be lower, a larger number of invitations (1,100) were sent out to migrants from Poland, Romania, Russia, China, the Philippines, and Turkey, as compared to the other groups (900). Response rates varied between the migrant groups and natives. Among natives, response rates were highest in Denmark and the Netherlands (up to 50%) and lower in Germany (35%). Among the migrant groups, we found the highest response among Russian migrants in the Netherlands (48%). In Germany, among all groups response rates were around 10 percentage points lower than in the Netherlands and Denmark. The dataset contains 9,157 respondents (migrants and natives). In Denmark, we were able to test the representativity of the sample to characteristics available in the national register, such as gender, age, marital status, employment situation, and income. Although some group-specific deviations were found, the sample turned out to be representative for each migrant group. For the Netherlands, we were able to test on representativity based on welfare benefit dependency by migrant group, and also here we found minor differences comparing the sample to the population. Migrants' country of origin and country of destination are included as predictors of the government spending attitudes.

#### 3.1 | Attitudes to government spending

Respondents were asked about their attitudes on government spending on unemployment, social assistance, old age state pensions, elderly care, health care, and childcare. They were asked whether the national government should spend more or less, and it was made explicit that spending more might require an increase in taxation. The five answer categories ranged from "much less" to "much more", and a "don't know" answer category was given explicitly, which was treated as missing in the analyses. The exact wording and answer categories are given in Appendix Table A1. The correlations between the items range from 0.22 between spending on health care and spending on social assistance, to 0.55 between spending on unemployment and spending on social assistance. Factor analyses of the scalability of the items into one scale of government spending shows that there are, tested on all respondents, two underlying dimensions. The first dimension relates to health care or universal government spending, combining the items on health care, state pensions, childcare, and elderly care. The second dimension combined the preferences on spending on unemployment and social assistance. However, this factor solution was unstable between the various migrant groups in the different countries. Therefore, the items are analyzed separately.

#### 3.2 | Independent variables—Self-interest indicators

To measure people's (economic) self-interest, we rely on people's education, income, employment status, and labor market contract. Moreover, we account for self-interest with measures on benefit take up and health assessment.



### 3.2.1 | Education

Based on ISCED<sup>2</sup> categorization, the highest level of education was assigned based on the highest level attained in either the country of origin or the country of residence. We distinguished between higher (upper secondary and tertiary education) and lower educated respondents.

### 3.2.2 | Income

Respondents were asked to indicate their net household income (including benefits). Missing values were at 11.3%. These were imputed by regression on educational level, employment situation, dependency on benefits, gender, age, length of stay, children and partner in the household.

### 3.2.3 | Employment status

Respondents could indicate whether their main activity during an average week was “work”, “unemployed”, “study” or other activities that were subsumed into “something else”. Respondents with work are taken as the reference category.

### 3.2.4 | Labor market contract

We created five dummy variables. Respondents with a job could indicate whether they had a permanent contract (the reference category), or whether they had a temporary contract. Self-employed respondents were coded into a separate category, just like respondents with a job but with no formal contract or a zero-hours contract. People with no work at all were coded into a separate category.

### 3.2.5 | Benefit take-up

Respondents were asked whether they received a country of residence benefit from a social security scheme. We coded whether respondents received: (i) an unemployment benefit; (ii) a social assistance benefit; (iii) a disability benefit; (iv) a state pension; and (v) child care support.

### 3.2.6 | Health assessment

Respondents were asked to assess their health with the question, “How is your health in general?”. The answers to this subjective health assessment were coded such that respondents with bad health (very bad, bad or fair) were contrasted to respondents with good health (good or very good).

## 3.3 | Independent variables—Ideological positions

To capture economic individualism, respondents were asked to state to what extent they agree with two questions about what the government might do for the economy, “cuts in government spending” and “more government regulation of business” (see Appendix Table A1). The questions are similar to International Social Survey Programme wording, and respondents were offered a “can't choose” category. The correlation between the two items was, however, almost zero, and we therefore included both “Favoring cuts in government spending” and “Opposing more regulation”. In order not to lose the “can't choose” respondents, we compare respondents (strongly) favoring government cuts and respondents (strongly) opposing more regulation to all others.

Conservative family values were captured with a measure on gender roles and on support for gay marriage, respectively. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the conservative statements, “A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family”, and the progressive formulation that, “Homosexuals should be free to get married if they want to”. Given the relatively low associations ( $r = -.41$ ), we decided here as well to include both indicators separately. Both items were recoded such that on both items conservative respondents are compared to all others.

Respondents were also asked who should be primarily responsible for childcare for working parents, and care in everyday life for elderly people who cannot take care of themselves. They could choose between the answer categories "family members or friends", "people that live nearby (neighbours)", "government agencies", "non-profit organizations", "private providers that are paid for" and a "can't choose" option was given. Respondents mentioning "the family or friends" on one of the items were coded into evaluating the "family as primarily responsible in providing care". Lastly, we accounted for religious identification of the respondent. Respondents could indicate on a 4-point scale whether they consider themselves as not religious at all (1) to very religious (4).

We control for gender, having children in the household, having a partner, and age of the respondent. Moreover, we control for length of stay in the country (which equals, for natives, their age), for proficiency in the country of destination's language, and for the mode in which the questionnaire was filled out (written or online). Missing values were limited, not exceeding the 1% within each of the migrant groups by country of residence. The exception is, however, the dependent variable, where a relatively large group chose the given answer category "don't know", which were excluded from the analysis. We exclude missing values listwise, leaving us with 8,482 respondents for the multivariate analyses.

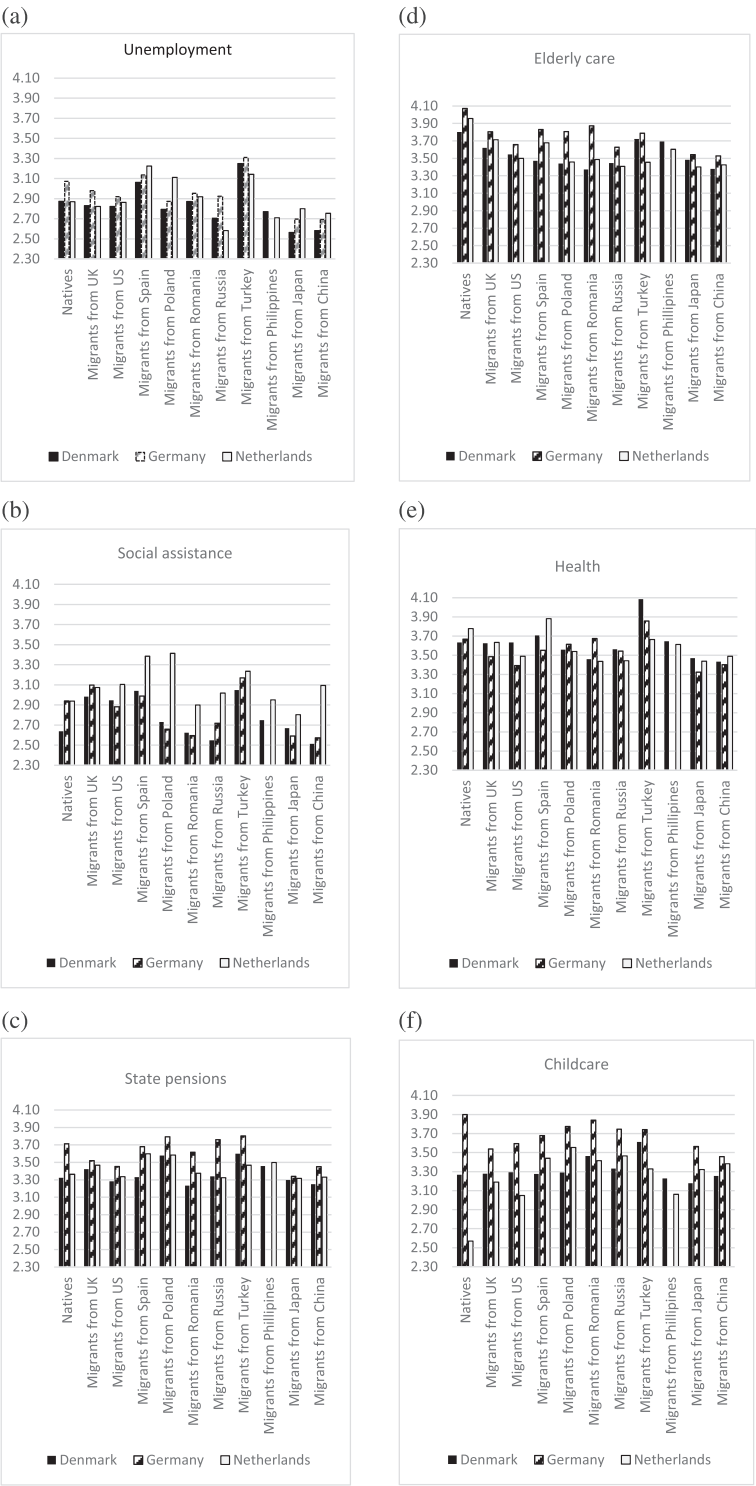
## 4 | FINDINGS

The migrant groups in our sample turn out to vary socio-economically as we anticipated, ensuring variance in the socio-economic position between the migrant groups. Based on their household income, we find for all three countries that the socio-economic position among migrants from Poland and Turkey is relatively worse, compared to natives and the other migrants included in the survey. Migrants from China, the Philippines, Russia, and Romania also have a (somewhat) lower household income than natives. The Spanish migrants are in a comparable position to natives, while Japanese, British, and American migrants earn more.

Turning to support for government spending among the migrant groups and natives, in Figure 1 we provide the average per migrant group for each of the welfare state domains that were evaluated. Figure 1 makes it clear that differences between natives and specific migrant groups exist, that there are differences between countries of residence, and that differences in support for government spending are also dependent on the specific domain of spending. For the income schemes provided by the state, unemployment benefits, social assistance, and state pensions, native Danes, Germans, and Dutch take a middle position compared to the various migrant groups. Migrants from Turkey stand out here, in that they give more support to government spending on unemployment, social assistance, and state pensions than other migrant groups in the three countries. Spanish and Polish migrants are also more likely to support government spending, but their attitudes vary somewhat between domains and residence countries. On the other hand, migrants from Japan and China are generally somewhat less likely to support government spending.

Natives stand out in their preference for additional government spending on elderly care. Native Danish, German, and Dutch respondents support spending on elderly care more strongly than any of the migrant groups in each of the countries. Also in the domain of health care, natives show relatively strong support for additional spending, with Turkish and Spanish migrants scoring about equal to natives or higher. In Germany, natives are more supportive of additional spending on childcare than migrants from all origins. But the opposite is found for the Netherlands, where respondents show the least support of all groups for government spending on childcare. Migrants in the Netherlands show much larger support for spending on childcare, but less so than all migrant groups in Germany. Figure 1 clearly provides evidence for migrant group variance, country of residence variance, and government spending domain variance. In our modelling, we investigate whether this variance in spending preferences is explained by the differences in self-interest and ideological positions.

We present the results of multivariate multilevel models predicting support for each of the welfare state spending domains to scrutinize to what extent the differences between migrant groups and natives (model 1) remain after



**FIGURE 1** Support for “Government spending” (1 = “much less” to 5 = “much more”) among natives and migrant groups in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands  
Note. Migrants from the Philippines not included in Germany.

**TABLE 2** Multivariate regression parameters to explain attitudes on government spending in the domains of unemployment, social assistance, and state pension (n = 8,482)

	Unemployment benefit			Social assistance			State pension		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Ethnic groups</b>									
- Natives (ref)									
- Americans	.05	.13**	.08	.29**	.37**	.31**	.04	.11*	.08
- British	.09*	.15*	.08	.39**	.46**	.39**	.16**	.20**	.16**
- Spaniards	.36**	.38**	.29**	.47**	.50**	.40**	.31**	.34**	.29**
- Poles	.16**	.10	.04	.28**	.21**	.13**	.38**	.35**	.31**
- Romanians	.13**	.12*	.09	.04	.01	-.04	.15**	.15**	.12**
- Turks	.40**	.32**	.26**	.44**	.32**	.23**	.31**	.27**	.24**
- Russians	-.07	-.11*	-.09	.10	.04	.05	.15**	.15**	.16**
- Chinese	-.13*	-.11*	-.12*	.04	.01	-.01	.11*	.14**	.12**
- Filipino	-.04	-.06	-.05	.11**	.07	.04	.27**	.26**	.26**
- Japanese	-.13*	-.10*	-.11*	-.01	.02	-.00	.02	.04	.04
<b>Country of residence</b>									
- Germany (ref)									
- Denmark	-.11**	-.09**	-.10**	-.05	.01	.01	-.25**	-.21**	-.21**
- The Netherlands	-.05*	-.05	-.04	.29**	.28**	.30**	-.14**	-.13**	-.12**
<b>Self-interest indicators</b>									
Level of education: higher		-.06**	-.05**		-.00	.01		-.08**	-.08**
Income		-.03**	-.02**		-.05**	-.05**		-.02**	-.02**
<b>Employment situation</b>									
- Employed (ref)									
- Unemployed		.15**	.16**		.20**	.20**		.05	.05
- Not employed: study		.02	.03		.08	.09		-.02	-.01
- Not employed: other		.03	.03		.01	.02		.01	.03
<b>Labor market contract</b>									
- Permanent (ref)									
- Self-employed		-.06	-.04		.01	.03		-.01	.00
- Fixed term		.07*	.06*		.18**	.16**		.04	.03
- No formal contract/zero hour		.10	.10		.10	.10		-.01	-.01
- No work		.02	.01		.07	.05		-.03	-.03
<b>Benefit take-up</b>									
Unemployment benefit		.25**	.25**						
Social assistance benefit					.14**	.13**			
State pension benefit								.01	.01
<b>Child allowance</b>									
Bad health		.15**	.14**		.15**	.14**		.09**	.08**
<b>Ideological positions</b>									
Favoring cuts in government			-.19**			-.22**			-.05**
Opposing business regulations			-.23**			-.27**			-.19**
Conservative gender roles attitudes			.01			.04			-.03

(Continues)

**TABLE 2** (Continued)

	Unemployment benefit			Social assistance			State pension		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Conservative family values			-.06			-.10**			-.04
Family responsibility			-.10**			-.05			-.05*
Importance of religion			.01			.04**			.00
<i>Controls<sup>a</sup></i>									
Gender: female	.03*	.02	-.01	.03*	.02	-.01	.03*	.02	-.01
Child in the household	-.03*	-.01	-.01	-.03*	-.01	-.01	-.03*	-.01	-.01
Having a partner	.04*	.01	.01	.04*	.01	.01	.04*	.01	.01
Age	-.002*	-.003*	-.002*	-.002*	-.003*	-.002*	.005**	.004**	.004**
Length of stay	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**
Residence country language proficiency	.01	-.01	-.01	.01	-.01	-.01	.01	-.01	-.01
Mode: written questionnaire (ref = online)	.04**	.03*	.02	.04**	.03*	.02	.04**	.03*	.02
Intercept	2.84	3.03	3.15	2.60	2.90	2.97	3.09	3.31	3.38
Proportion explained variance	4.3	7.7	10.6	5.5	10.0	13.1	5.5	6.8	8.0

Notes.

\*\* $p < .01$  \* $p < .05$ .

<sup>a</sup>Controls are estimated as common coefficients in the multivariate models. Except for age which is tested as common coefficient for the domains of "state pensions" and "elderly care" and a separate common factor for the other domains. "Child in the household" is tested as a separate coefficient for the domain of childcare only.

including the (economic) self-interest characteristics (model 2) and after adding the ideological explanations (model 3). Responses to the preferences of the six welfare domains are nested within individuals, accounting for the within-respondent response pattern. We estimate OLS regression coefficients within Mlwin. A robustness check was conducted in which we contrasted respondents who favor more spending to the other respondents, performing logistic regression analyses, which did not lead to other conclusions. Since we are interested in the remaining differences in welfare state spending preferences between migrant groups, and natives, we favor the simpler regression models above the logistic regression models.

In Tables 2 and 3, model 1 shows that for all the domains, significant migrant group differences exist after including control variables. The pattern is comparable to the Figure 1 discussion.<sup>3</sup> After the inclusion of the self-interest explanations, in model 2, the differences largely remain. This implies that the included self-interest characteristics cannot account for the migrant group differences in support for additional government spending. Even though we find support for the general expectations from the self-interest approach, namely that a higher socio-economic position is generally associated with less support for additional government spending (mainly in the income related government spending schemes), it does *not* explain the differences between the migrant groups, or between Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands. Mediation (in terms of reduction of the differences between migrant groups and natives) only takes place between Turkish migrants and natives, but hardly at all when comparing the other migrants to natives.

In model 3, we include ideological attitudes to explain government spending preferences. Overall, the found effects are as expected: support for cuts in government spending and opposing business regulations are associated with less government spending on all of the domains. A conservative gender role attitude is associated with less government spending preference on elderly care and on childcare. Conservative family values, measured as opposition to gay marriage, are associated with less government spending preferences on social assistance, elderly care,

**TABLE 3** Multivariate regression parameters to explain attitudes on government spending in the domains of elderly care, health care and childcare (n = 8,482)

	Elderly care			Health care			Childcare		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Ethnic groups</i>									
- Natives (ref)									
- Americans	-.25**	-.21**	-.24**	-.06	-.01	-.04	.22**	.20**	.17**
- British	-.13*	-.11*	-.15**	.02	.05	.01	.24**	.24**	.18**
- Spaniards	-.07	-.04	-.10	.17**	.22**	.16**	.41**	.40**	.32**
- Poles	-.22**	-.24**	-.25**	-.01	.00	-.01	.46**	.45**	.45**
- Romanians	-.20**	-.19**	-.20**	-.09	-.07	-.08	.50**	.50**	.51**
- Turks	-.15**	-.15**	-.16**	.31**	.31**	.30**	.47**	.49**	.49**
- Russians	-.31**	-.30**	-.26**	-.07	-.05	-.03	.42**	.41**	.45**
- Chinese	-.29**	-.26**	-.25**	-.14**	-.10*	-.12**	.29**	.28**	.29**
- Filipino	-.07	-.06	-.04	.04	.08	.09	.17**	.16**	.23**
- Japanese	-.30**	-.28**	-.29**	-.15**	-.13**	-.14**	.24**	.24**	.23**
<i>Country of residence</i>									
- Germany (ref)									
- Denmark	-.18**	-.16**	-.17**	.10**	.11**	.10**	-.33**	-.35**	-.38**
- The Netherlands	-.10**	-.13**	-.08**	.08**	.10**	.10**	-.41**	-.42**	-.41**
<i>Self-interest indicators</i>									
Level of education: higher		-.08**	-.08**		-.08**	-.08**		.01	.00
Income		-.00	-.00		.00	.01		.00	.00
<i>Employment situation</i>									
- Employed (ref)									
- Unemployed		-.02	-.01		.02	.03		-.04	-.02
- Not employed: study		.02	.03		.12**	.13**		.04	.05
- Not employed: other		.01	.03		.05	.06		.01	.02
<i>Labor market contract</i>									
- Permanent (ref)									
- Self-employed		-.00	.01		.05	.06		.02	.03
- Fixed term		.02	.02		-.01	-.02		.09**	.08**
- No formal contract/ zero hour		.02	.03		.07	.01		.07	.09
- No work		-.03	-.04		-.06	-.07		-.00	.01
<i>Benefit take-up</i>									
Disability benefit					.03	.03			
State pension benefit		.01	.01						
Child allowance								.16**	.15**
Bad health		.03	.02		.10**	.10**		-.02	-.02
<i>Ideological positions</i>									
Favoring cuts in government			-.12**			-.07**			-.22**
Opposing business regulations			-.10**			-.16**			-.27**

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

	Elderly care			Health care			Childcare		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Conservative gender roles attitudes			-.04			-.01			-.07*
Conservative family values			-.11**			-.09**			-.07*
Family responsibility			-.10**			-.04			-.16**
Importance of religion			.02			-.00			-.02
<i>Controls<sup>a</sup></i>									
Gender: female	.03*	.02	-.01	.03*	.02	-.01	.03*	.02	.02
Child in the household	-.03*	-.01	-.01	-.03*	-.01	-.01	.14**	.10**	.10**
Having a partner	.04*	.01	.01	.04*	.01	.01	.04*	.01	.01
Age	.005**	.004**	.004**	-.002*	-.003*	-.002*	-.002*	-.003*	-.003*
Length of stay	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**
Residence country language proficiency	.01	-.01	-.01	.01	-.01	-.01	.01	-.01	-.01
Mode: written questionnaire (ref = online)	.04**	.03*	.02	.04**	.03*	.02	.04**	.03*	.03*
Intercept	3.54	3.65	3.28	3.49	3.49	3.58	3.23	3.27	3.45
Proportion explained variance	7.1	7.5	8.9	3.3	4.1	5.2	6.6	7.3	9.6

Notes.

\*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

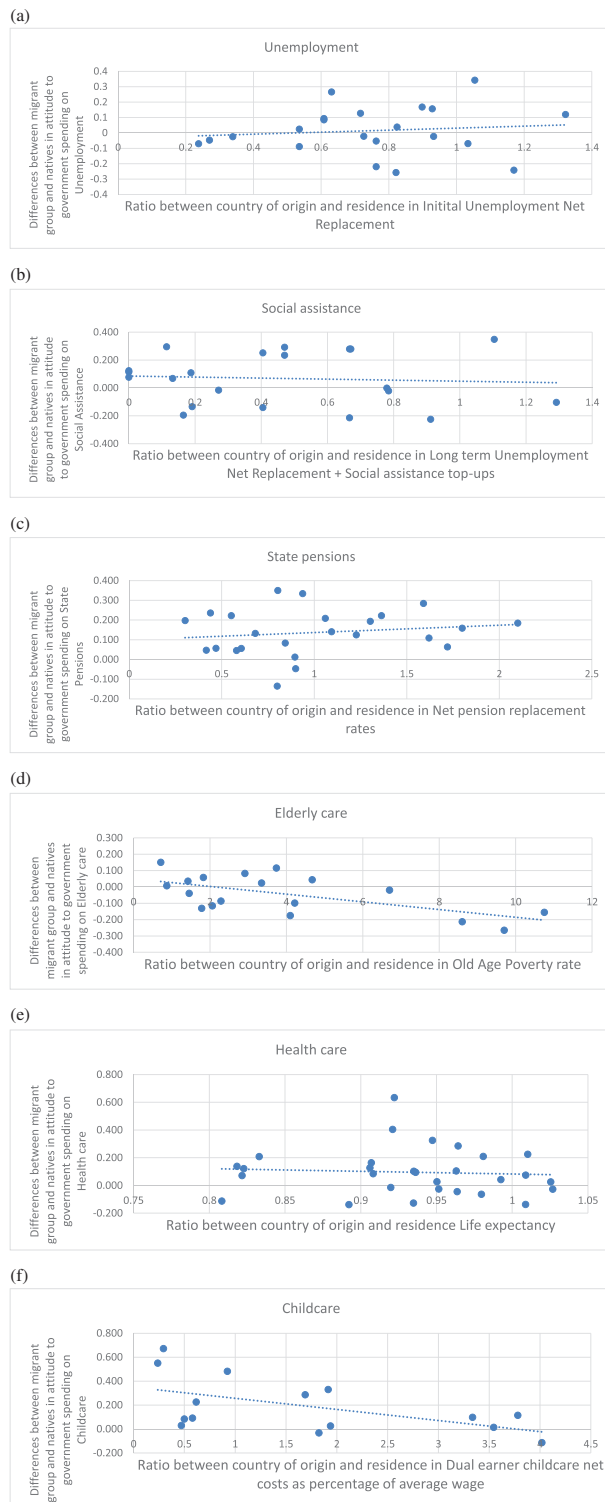
<sup>a</sup>Controls are estimated as common coefficients in the multivariate models. Except for age which is tested as common coefficient for the domains of "state pensions" and "elderly care" and a separate common factor for the other domains. "Child in the household" is tested as a separate coefficient for the domain of childcare only.

health care, and childcare. Lastly, respondents who see the family as primarily responsible for taking care of the elderly and children prefer less government spending on unemployment, state pensions, elderly care, and childcare. Religious self-identification has hardly an effect beyond these attitudinal measures. However, our crucial test was whether differences between migrant groups would be reduced after including these ideological positions. This is hardly the case. Only for Spanish and Turkish respondents are their higher levels of preference for government spending partly explained by the inclusion of the ideological differences between the groups.

Controlling for both self-interest explanations and ideological positions, we find that migrants from Russia, China, and Japan are in general less in favor of more spending than natives, whereas migrants from Spain and Turkey are more in favor of additional spending than natives. Moreover, we find that migrants remain less likely to prefer more spending on elderly care, but prefer more spending on childcare.

A comparison of self-interest and ideology effects shows that income and being unemployed only affect spending in the income-related domains (unemployment benefit, social assistance, and state pensions), whereas education is related to domains of health care and elderly care as well. People who perceive their health to be in a worse condition are more likely to support government spending in all domains. General ideologies on the role of the government are related foremost to spending on the income schemes, whereas gender and family values are mainly associated with spending on health care, elderly care, and childcare.

A final expectation we formulated is that differences in domain-specific provisions between the country of origin and residence may be associated with differences in attitudes between migrants and natives on government spending on that domain. As we have shown, a large part of the variance between migrant groups and natives in government spending attitudes could not be attributed to self-interest or ideological explanations. The remaining



**FIGURE 2** Association between ratio of country of origin and country of destination welfare support and the remaining difference between migrant group and natives in preferences for social spending after accounting for interest and ideology [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



differences in attitudes between migrants and natives in the government spending attitudes (in each of the residence countries: Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands) are related to differences between country of origin and country of residence in generosity of provisions and relevant indicators on poverty and life expectancy. These figures are given as a first exploration of a possible association, since there are too few countries included here to formally test the relationship. Figure 2a presents the association between the ratio of the origin and residence country's initial unemployment net replacement rate and the remaining difference we found in the attitude towards government spending on unemployment. There is a small positive association, meaning that when in the country of origin the initial unemployment replacement rate is higher than in the residence country (x-axis values over 1), the migrant group in the residence country is more supportive of additional spending in the domain of unemployment as compared to the native population. This finding is in line with the general idea that migrants apply their country of origin experience to the situation in the country of residence. It therefore holds that migrant groups from an origin where the initial unemployment replacement rate was lower than in the residence country are less in favor of additional government spending. However, given that the projected slope in the figure is not very steep, the association is weak. For the attitude on spending on social assistance we find an opposite effect as that in the domain of unemployment. Here we find a slight negative slope (Figure 2b): for migrant groups where in the country of origin the generosity for social assistance is weaker than in the country of residence, we find that they are more supportive of additional government spending on social assistance than natives. There is a small positive association between the ratio in net pension replacement rates and the extent to which migrant groups differ from natives in their support for government spending on state pensions (Figure 2c): migrants from origin countries with better net pension replacement rates than the destination country are more in favor of spending more on pensions.

The figure on elderly care (Figure 2d) shows that if the old age poverty rate is higher in the country of origin than in the country of residence, migrants tend to be less favorable of government spending on elderly care than natives. We find no association between the health care indicator of life expectancy and support for government spending on health care (Figure 2e). Lastly, we find that migrant groups who are faced with higher childcare costs in the country of origin than in the country of residence are less supportive of government spending on childcare than natives (Figure 2f).

## 5 | CONCLUSIONS

The two dominant explanations of welfare state attitudes among the majority population refer to self-interest and ideology. Our analyses of the MIFARE survey data collected among 10 migrant groups and natives in Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands show that these explanations are also of relevance among migrants. However, these key explanations in the welfare state literature were unable to explain the large differences we found between migrant groups and natives in government spending attitudes. Migrants from China and Japan, and to a smaller extent from Russia and the United States, are less favorable of additional government spending than natives. On the other hand, we found evidence that migrants from Turkey and Spain, and to a lesser extent from Poland, were more in favor of government spending. Only a small part of the differences between migrant groups were explained by differences in self-interest (e.g., the on average better economic position of US migrants explained their lower support for government spending, and the generally worse-off economic position of Turks explained partly their higher support) and ideological positions (e.g., the lower support among Turks for economic individualism explained part of their stronger preference of government spending, whereas the less conservative family values among Spanish migrants partly explained their stronger support). Although economic individualism and conservative family values may be measured more adequately in future research, we think that we captured some of the key aspects of these ideologies. We have to conclude that major differences remained between migrant groups as well as between natives and migrant groups, also after controlling for self-interest and ideology.

The remaining differences between migrant groups might be due to socialization in the country of origin. Hence, we explored differences in state provisions between the country of origin and the country of residence. For four welfare policy domains we found, indeed, that a less generous arrangement in the country of origin as compared to the country of residence was associated with less support for government spending on that domain in the country of residence. This finding implies that for migrant groups, a country of origin versus country of residence comparison is relevant where they have a preference for more spending, in particular when in their country of origin generosity on the domain was higher. This is in line with the finding from Chung and Meuleman (2017), who showed that people have stronger support for generous policies in countries where these policies are already more generous. However, the associations we found were weak. Moreover, for the domain of social assistance, we found a reversed association. Given the limited number of residence countries, as well as origin countries with comparable figures, we were not able to strictly test these associations, and a more formal test of the association would be necessary. Moreover, net replacement rates regarding unemployment benefits, social assistance, and pensions as well as costs for childcare are highly dependent on the household composition and average wage before relying on the benefit–refinements that should be addressed in future research.

The Netherlands stood out in terms of support for additional spending on childcare. All migrant groups support additional spending on this domain more strongly than the Dutch do, whereas this was not found in Denmark and Germany. The Dutch government does not spend less on childcare as percentage of gross domestic product, but its fees are highly income-dependent, rendering childcare relatively expensive for high earners. More differences between countries of residence were found as well. All three countries score relatively well on their integration policies, but there are also marked differences between the countries. The Migrant Policy Index (MIPEX, 2017) evaluates access to social security to be most favorable in Germany and the Netherlands, and less so in Denmark, which has the most restrictions and reductions for immigrants since 2014. Migrants have access to old-age pension in Denmark only after having lived in the country for 10 years, and they risk losing residence permits for their family if they receive certain benefits (MIPEX, 2017). An interesting hypothesis to be tested further is that in countries that are more restrictive in granting migrants access to the welfare state, migrants will profit less from additional government spending. If these more restrictive conditions apply, we would expect migrants to be less likely to support additional government spending, and that their self-interest structure would not be as relevant in their support for the welfare state. Since we studied migrants in three receiving countries only, we were not able to make a strong empirical test of this hypothesis. It is, however, a hypothesis that deserves testing in future research.

The study shows that most previous research heaping together all migrants in one catch-all category, or focusing only on non-Western migrants missed a careful interpretation of the role of *migrant* status. Being a migrant cannot be equated to a less favorable socio-economic status and therefore stronger support for welfare state spending. Our analyses make clear that accounting for different migrant groups remains relevant to understand why migrants support welfare state spending. Our exploration of socialization and dominant welfare provision modes in the country of origin are promising explanations to further understand migrant group differences.

Our findings have important implications for current policy debates as they strongly challenge the oft-held assumption that generous welfare states work like a magnet and attract migrants who hope to benefit from social policies. Rather, our results show great variation in welfare state support among migrants, and point out that some migrant groups expect less from the welfare state than natives do.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> It was not possible in Germany to sample on this criterion. Migrants who had been in Germany before the age of 16 were dropped from the data we analyzed here.
- <sup>2</sup> International Standard Classification of Education.
- <sup>3</sup> We also estimated interaction models in which country of origin dummies were interacted with country of destination dummies. Many of these interactions turned out to be significant, implying that the differences in spending preferences between migrant groups and natives in Germany (reference) vary from the differences between migrant groups and natives in the other countries. Our results show that there are country of origin effects, country of destination effects, and community effects (country of origin x country of destination).

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## APPENDIX

**TABLE A1** Questionnaire wording of attitude measures

Attitude	Original wording in questionnaire	Original answer categories
Attitudes to government spending	Listed below are again various areas of government spending in the [host country]. Please show, by ticking one box for each area, whether you would like to see more or less government spending. Remember that if you say "much more", it might require a tax increase to pay for it.	1. Spend much more 2. Spend more 3. Spend the same as now 4. Spend less 5. Spend much less 6. Can't choose
Economic individualism: in favor of cuts of government spending	Here are two things the government might do for the economy. Please indicate whether you are in favor of or against the following actions? Cuts in government spending	1. Strongly in favor of 2. In favor of 3. Neither in favor of nor against 4. Against 5. Strongly against 6. Can't choose
Economic individualism: in favor of little government regulation in business	More government regulation of business	1. Strongly in favor of 2. In favor of 3. Neither in favor of nor against 4. Against 5. Strongly against 6. Can't choose
Conservative gender attitudes	And do you agree or disagree with the following statements? A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family	1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
Conservative family values	Homosexuals should be free to get married if they want to	1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
Family responsibility	People also have different views on who should be primarily responsible for childcare for working parents and care in everyday life for elderly people who cannot take care of themselves. Who do you think should primarily provide help to...	1. Family members or friends 2. People that live nearby (neighbors) 3. Government agencies 4. Non-profit organizations 5. Private providers that are paid for 6. Can't choose