

Welfare State Regimes in the 21st Century

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This paper re-examines the three conventional welfare state regimes with new data made available since the original publication of Esping-Andersen's 1990 book. We focus not only on the entitlements or "social rights", but also on the sustainability of the different regimes. We make three arguments: (1) The social democratic welfare state regimes are the most successful in keeping poverty and inequality low, and the liberal welfare state regimes are the least successful. (2) Both the social democratic and the liberal welfare state regimes have high employment levels, which makes them more sustainable than the Christian democratic welfare state regimes with their low employment levels. However, the paths to high employment in the social democratic regimes are very different from those in the liberal regimes in ways that are intimately related to the very different levels of poverty and inequality. (3) Gender equality is given most attention in the social democratic welfare state regimes, and the policies to promote gender equality have very important consequences for employment levels and fertility and thus again for the long-range sustainability of these welfare state regimes.