

Social Insurance as a Collective Resource: Unemployment Benefits, Job Insecurity and Subjective Well-being in a Comparative Perspective

The main argument of this paper is that the welfare state – more specifically unemployment insurance schemes – is providing a crucial but often overlooked function by reducing the overall insecurity associated with modern labour markets. A large amount of research indicates that job insecurity, i.e. the fear (real or perceived) people at work have that they might lose their job and become unemployed, is an important stressor and as such associated with a range of adverse health outcomes. Since it seems highly likely that job insecurity is associated with concerns about future financial security, this paper argues that economic support during times of unemployment may lessen the negative effects of job insecurity on employed individuals' wellbeing. Using data for 21 countries from the European Social Survey, the article shows that the generosity of unemployment benefits seems to make a difference to the subjective wellbeing of employed individuals, especially those with limited economic resources and an insecure position in the labour market. These results indicate that unemployment insurance schemes may be viewed as a collective resource with important external benefits, i.e. benefits to society over and above those to Suggested stream: * Risk management and governing change* the unemployed who directly utilise such benefits.

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