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Support for Welfare

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Introduction to Research

- This research analyzed pre-election and post-election survey results to various questions regarding a respondent's feelings about welfare.
- My research attempts to determine what demographic supports welfare the most.
- Welfare is defined as any means-tested program that help individuals or families meet basic needs. This includes Food Stamps, Unemployment benefits, and public housing projects.
 - It's important to note that Social Security is not considered a part of welfare although this is not well known
- Nearly 1/3 of all Americans are on some form of welfare.
- In general, there is a disapproval for welfare by voters. Over 80% of people say welfare spending should be kept the same or lowered.
- People tend to favor specific projects rather the broad umbrella term "welfare".
- Welfare states are created when a government enacts policies to ensure the basic needs of its citizens are met.

Fear of the Free-Rider

- Many people are fearful of welfare becoming a free rider program. A system where those receiving benefits are using them inappropriately, or without attempting to find employment
- Taxpayers are concerned with:
 - welfare recipients not attempting to find a job, but rather are living solely off their welfare benefits
 - recipients using their "government money" to purchase drugs and non-essentials
- The media's perception of welfare can also factor into a person's perception of the average recipient on welfare
- Often times, people view African-Americans and Hispanics as the main recipients of these programs, however, there is about an equal number of whites and blacks (39% each) on welfare and less than 16% are Hispanic
 - "Welfare Queens" are the stereotypical image of those on welfare
 - They are visualized as young, black women with several children abusing the welfare system as a career
- This misconceptions can lead to diminished race relations and lower support for welfare
- Unemployment benefits prove to be more supportable because they imply work is being done to obtain a job and prevents confusion with the Social Security system which many mistake to be welfare.

Hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: As a respondent's age increases, support for welfare decreases.
- Hypothesis 2: As a respondent's income level increases, support for welfare will decrease.
- Hypothesis 3: People are more likely to support spending on "unemployment" rather than "welfare".

Data

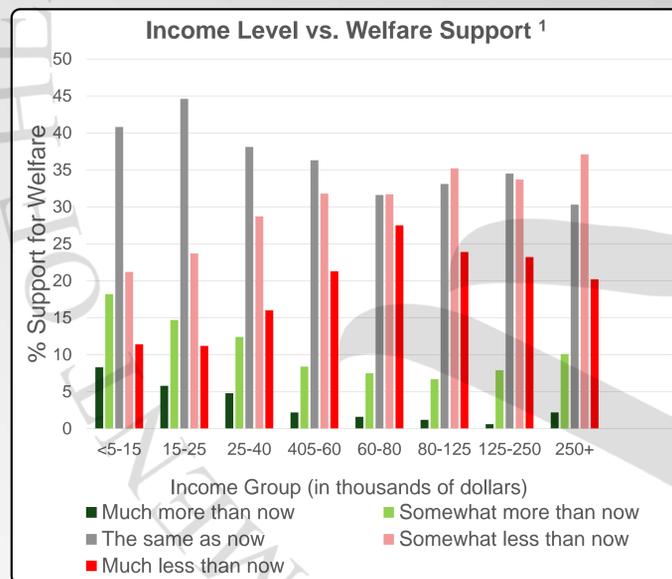
H 1: Age

AGE GROUP	MUCH MORE THAN NOW	SOMEWHAT MORE THAN NOW	THE SAME AS NOW	SOMEWHAT LESS THAN NOW	MUCH LESS THAN NOW
17-29	5.4%	12.5%	39.4%	26.8%	15.9%
30-44	4.4	10.9	37.0	26.9	20.8
45-59	5.1	10.8	35.9	29.4	18.8
60-69	3.0	11.8	37.0	31.3	17.0
70+	1.9	11.1	37.7	30.9	18.5
TOTAL	4.3	11.4	37.1	29	18.3

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	7.031	1	7.031	6.413	.011 ^{**}
Residual	504.111	538	1.000		
Total	511.142	539			

a. Dependent Variable: POST_CSEB: Public expenditure: welfare benefits
b. Predictors: (Constant), PRE_SUMMARY: R: age on interview date (age group)

H 2: Income Level



Graph Analysis:

Table "Age"

Visually, there is no clear distinction between the various age groups and support for welfare. Statistically, the r-squared value is too low and the significance is too high to deem any correlation relevant.

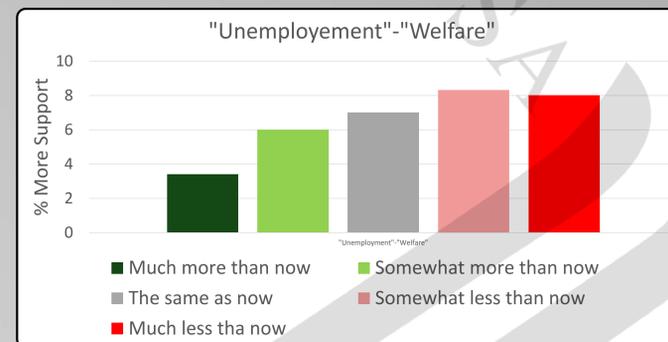
Table "Income Level vs. Welfare Support 1 and 2"

Generally, as income increases, support for welfare decreases. When separated by the extremes, we can clearly see a rise in those who think welfare should be much less amongst the wealthier respondents. At the highest group, however, we see a greater support for welfare than those groups directly below it.

Table "Unemployment"

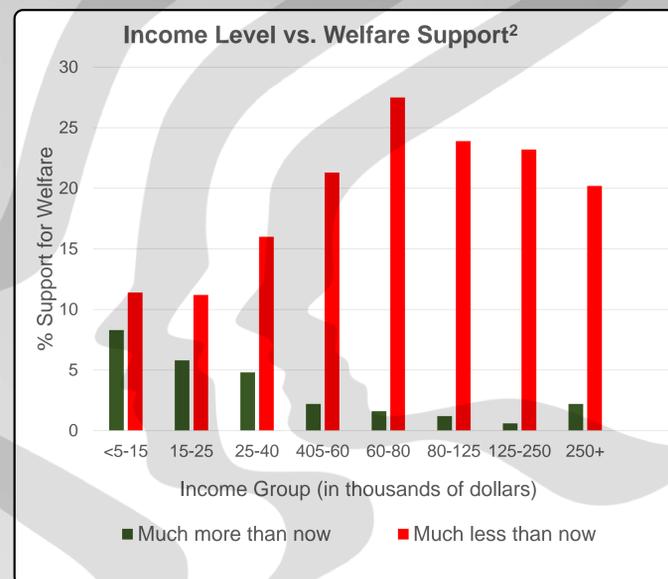
As expected, there is a strong correlation between support for welfare and support for unemployment. The difference in support between the two, however, is much different with support for "unemployment" being much higher.

H 3: Unemployment



Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Exp. B
1 (Constant)	1.753	.007	47.432	.000	
POST_CSEB: Public expenditure: unemployment benefits	.558	.011	50.3	.000	1.746

a. Dependent Variable: POST_CSEB: Public expenditure: welfare benefits



Findings

H 1: Age

My hypothesis was disproven. A respondent's age appears to have no effect on their support welfare, despite variables such as political ideology and income correlating with age. An explanation for this could be that older people tend to be more philanthropic and would want policy to benefit those in need. They could also have received similar programs when they were younger. Also, many young adults could not be as sympathetic and liberal as previous literature has hypothesized. Additionally, some people may think that social security is a part of welfare spending even though it is defined under welfare.

H 2: Income

Income level is the most clear variable that determines a respondent's support for welfare. Obviously, the more wealthy an individual is, the less likely they are to identify with someone who is on welfare. A surprising finding, however, showed that the top income earners broke the typical regression line. The wealthiest group had similar levels of support to that of the middle income level. Some research has shown that the highest income earners can be philanthropic, but the level of giving varies from person to person. Additionally, the wealthy may not feel that a slightly higher tax rate would be as detrimental as opposed to those in the upper middle class.

H 3: "Unemployment"

There is a very high correlation between those who support higher unemployment benefits and those who support social welfare programs. Surprisingly, there is a large group that believe unemployment benefits should be increased, but welfare programs in general should not. A big concern for voters is the abuse of the welfare system. Unemployment benefits are much more stable and show clearer results than other forms of social spending. They have the connotation that they are temporary and create jobs although that may not always be the case. Unemployment can also directly appeal to many more people who feel like they would need help in between jobs, but not necessarily need complete financial assistance.

Conclusion:

Although there are a variety of factors that can influence a respondent's opinion about welfare, none stand out more than income level. A strange trend appears toward the high income earners and may show that the upper class is not as heartless as the media portrays them to be. On the other hand, welfare recipients are generally viewed as lazy and greedy. Age is not a significant variable, but still sheds light on the thought processes of voters. Although no age group varied greatly, it is clear to see that support for welfare relies heavily on one's own opinion. A popular aspect of welfare is unemployment which has a much bigger support group. Most importantly, those receiving welfare are calling for more attention and those in power have a misconception about the state of the impoverished.

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