

# Shaping Stances: Three Decades of Trends in Young People's Attitudes towards Income Inequality and Redistribution

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Last three decades have witnessed major institutional and structural transformations across the economically developed countries. Since the 1970s, the stagnation and retrenchment of the welfare state has contributed to the disruption of the social fabric and has made the position of young particularly vulnerable. This has resulted in generations who have increasingly harder time to find economic stability when transitioning into adult lives. In the 1990s, Japanese youth “the lost generation” experienced the labour market changes and faced choices fundamentally different from the ones of their parents. The Millennials generation has come to age and entered the job market under the precarious conditions of the most recent global financial crisis and is now experiencing the handicap of graduating into the recession.

Stiglitz (2015) has argued that inequality is a choice and the cumulative result of unjust policies and misguided priorities. As inequality is a highly normative issue, the particular focus on young people and their attitudes is well justified as their preferences and attitudes are those that influence policy-making. The theoretical background that focuses on attitude formation contains several intriguing discrepancies. One of the main guiding assumption about the preference formation derives mainly from monetary self-interest ? the Meltzer-Richard median-voter model of the politics of redistribution.

This model claims that the preferred level of redistribution depends on the level of inequality: the higher the economic inequality, the greater the median voter's demand for redistribution. On the other hand, a number of empirical studies have tapped into the possible role of differentiating concepts of inequality, namely, the interaction between distributive justice and procedural justice. This in turn relates to the social justice and deservingness approach that assumes the role of social forces in the value and preference formation.

This paper will rely on and contribute to the ongoing academic discussion on inequality by focusing on the young people's attitudes and preferences toward inequality and redistributive measures. It will apply quantitative methods to explore how the attitudes of young people toward egalitarianism in 19 OECD countries have changed over the period of last 30 years.