

Written by one of the world's leading policy researchers, this book seeks to assess the threat posed to modern welfare states by globalization and demographic change. Using empirical methods, and bringing together insights from across the social sciences, Castles interrogates a range of theories suggesting that the welfare state is in crisis. Systematically using data for 21 advanced OECD nations, he distinguishes crisis myths from crisis realities, locating, in the process, likely trajectories of welfare state development in coming decades. The findings of this book confront many of the basic assumptions of contemporary scholarship. Economic globalization has not led to a race to the bottom. Analogous processes within the European Community have not led to a downward harmonization of social spending. There is no new politics of the welfare state, with the Left still outspending the Right. Over the past two decades, spending has been increasing and converging across the OECD. Rather than being in a state of crisis, western welfare states have achieved a steady state. The supposed impact of population aging on social welfare budgets also turns out to be myth, with differences in spending actually being a function of the structure of welfare systems, not of any demographic imperative. The only potentially real threat is of rapidly declining fertility, but Castles argues that welfare state spending in the form of family-friendly public policy is, in fact, our best defense against this problem. This is a book with significant policy implications. It identifies the factors likely to mould welfare state growth and decline in future years, and the diverse problems and challenges confronting welfare state policymakers in different families of nations. It is a book for those who like assessing evidence before jumping to unwarranted conclusions, and a book for those who wish to see the shape of things to come.

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Castles' mastery of the complexity of the debates on the welfare state crisis is superb in its simplicity. Castles' objective to enhance modeling an focus on the.

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