**Social inequality**

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***Deze samenvatting is afkomstig uit het collegejaar 2020-2021. Het kan zijn dat sommige onderdelen iets verschillen van de huidige tentamenstof. Let hier op!***

**Samvattingen artikelen**

**Economic inequality**

* Facundo Alvaredo, F., Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., & Zucman, G. (2018). World inequality report 2018 Executive Summary (2018).

*The report shows that income inequality has increased in nearly all world regions in recent decades, but at different speeds. The fact that inequality levels are so different among countries, even when countries share similar levels of development, highlights the important roles that national policies and institutions play in shaping inequality. The income-inequality trajectory observed in the United States is largely due to massive educational inequalities, combined with a tax system that grew less progressive. Continental Europe meanwhile saw a lesser decline in its tax progressivity, while wage inequality was also moderated by educational and wage-setting policies that were relatively more favorable to low-and middle-income groups.  
 How has inequality evolved in recent decades among global citizens? We provide the first estimates of how the growth in global income since 1980 has been distributed across the totality of the world population. The global top 1% earners have captured twice as much of that growth as the 50% poorest individuals. The bottom 50% has nevertheless enjoyed important growth rates. The global middle class (which contains all of the poorest 90% income groups in the EU and the United States) has been squeezed.*

*Economic inequality is largely driven by the unequal ownership of capital, which can be either privately or public owned. We show that since 1980, very large transfers of public to private wealth occurred in nearly all countries, whether rich or emerging. While national wealth has substantially increased, public wealth is now negative or close to zero in rich countries. Arguably this limits the ability of governments to tackle inequality; certainly, it has important implications for wealth inequality among individuals. The sum of private and public wealth is equal to national wealth. The balance between private and public wealth is a crucial determinant of the level of inequality.*

*The combination of large privatizations and increasing income inequality within countries has fueled the rise of wealth inequality among individuals. In Russia and the United States, the rise in wealth inequality has been extreme, whereas in Europe it has been more moderate. Wealth inequality has not yet returned to its extremely high early-twentieth-century level in rich countries.*

*We project income and wealth inequality up to 2050 under different scenarios. In a future in which “business as usual” continues, global inequality will further increase. Alternatively, if in the coming decades all countries follow the moderate inequality trajectory of Europe over the past decades, global income inequality can be reduced—in which case there can also be substantial progress in eradicating global poverty. Global income inequality will also increase if countries prolong the income inequality path they have been on since 1980—even with relatively high income growth predictions in Africa, Latin America, and Asia in the coming three decades. Global income inequality will increase even more if all countries follow the high-inequality trajectory followed by the United States between 1980 and 2016. However, global inequality will decrease moderately if all countries follow the inequality trajectory followed by the EU between 1980 and today.*

*Tackling global income and wealth inequality requires important shifts in national and global tax policies. Educational policies, corporate governance, and wage-setting policies need to be reassessed in many countries. Data transparency is also key. Research has demonstrated that tax progressivity is an effective tool to combat inequality. Progressive tax rates do not only reduce post-tax inequality, they also diminish pre-tax inequality by giving top earners less incentive to capture higher shares of growth via aggressive bargaining for pay rises and wealth accumulation. More equal access to education and well-paying jobs is key to addressing the stagnating or sluggish income growth rates of the poorest half of the population. Governments need to invest in the future to address current income and wealth inequality levels, and to prevent further increases in them.*

* Abhijit V. Banerjee & Esther Duflo, How Poverty Ends: The Many Paths to Progress - And Why They Might Not Continue, 99 Foreign Aff. 22 (2020).

*The amount of people living in poverty has rapidly decreased. Quality of life has increased. Maternal and infant mortality rate has decreased. Access to primary education has increased. Credits for these gains can go to economic growth. Which factors helped or hurt growth? Two problems: Growth rates for the same country can change drastically from decade to decade without much apparent change in anything else. Secondly, almost every variable is partly a product of something else. Education causes growth or growth causes education? It is hard to tease out single factors that lead to growth. There are no general principles for growth and no two instances of economic expansion are quite alike.*

*Economists came to understand that transitions are an important part of the growth story. In a given economy, productive and nonproductive firms coexist, and resources do not always flow to their best use. Markets can function poorly. Misallocation saps growth, which means that reallocation can improve it. Economists have tried to quantify just how much growth could come from moving resources to their best uses. But the flip side to this is that at a certain point, the gains start to diminish. E.g. growth in India could be due to a generational swift or the accumulation of modest profits, unrelated to any change in policy. India’s economic rise is best understood as the result of correcting misallocation. That kind of growth cannot go on forever. In trying to hold on to fast growth, countries facing sharply slowing growth will veer toward policies that hurt the poor now in the name of future growth. This only increases inequality and does not serve the rich.*

*The ultimate goal remains improving quality of life, this includes feeling worthy and respected, and having their voices heard. A higher GDP may help the poor achieve many of those things, but it is not the only way of doing so. Successes of the last few decades were the result not of economic growth but of a direct focus on improving particular outcomes. The focus should be identifying the key problems and figuring out how to solve them. For example the massive distribution of free insecticide-treated bed nets is the most effective way to fight malaria. In conclusion, the best attempt is to raise living standards with the resources a country already has.*

* Wilkinson, R. G., & Pickett, K. E. (2009). Income inequality and social dysfunction. Annual review of sociology, 35, 493-511.

*Societies with lower income inequality have better health. Some studies showed statistically significant relationships between smaller income differences and better health. A broad range of social problems may also be more common in more unequal societies. E.g. teenage birth, rates of obesity, homicide, poor educational performance. The Index of Health and Social Problems is unrelated to average income internationally. Inequality trumps average income. There is a lack of relation between income and health when looking at differences between rich countries. Within countries, health is finely graded by income across society. If individual income within societies is highly predictive of health but differences in the average incomes of whole populations are not, this implies that what matters may be social position, or income relative to others, rather than material living standards regardless of others. Income redistribution from rich to poor might be expected to improve the health of the poor by more than it harmed the health of the rich. Note, however, that this model assumes that individual income influences health primarily through material rather than psychosocial pathways and does not address the importance of relative income.*

*Differences in average income are not related to population health as it varies from one rich society to another (Figure 5), but income remains a powerful predictor of health in small areas within each country (Figure 6). In contrast, the opposite is true of income inequality. When inequality is measured across whole societies, it is predictive of health, but when it is measured in small areas, it is much less likely to be. At the national level, inequality is highly predictive of health, but average income is not. But in small areas, the opposite is true—average incomes are highly predictive of health, but inequality is not. The association between worse health and greater inequality could not be explained on the assumption that a given level of individual income bought the same amount of health regardless of inequality. More unequal areas do not seem to have worse health simply because they have more poor people. Individual income is now more often assumed to be related to health for inherently contextual reasons: as a determinant and marker of social position.*

*Why do a wide range of health and social problems tend to be more common in more unequal societies? The obvious interpretation is that health and social problems whose frequency is affected by social status are made worse by increased status differentiation. Social status has been manipulated by moving animals between groups, and material conditions have been kept the same by feeding all animals the same diets and keeping them in the same compounds. Under these conditions animals that moved down the dominance hierarchy were more likely to suffer a number of conditions, including higher levels of stress hormones and a much more rapid buildup of atherosclerosis. It has led to much greater attention to the social environment—particularly to low social status, a difficult early childhood, and weak friendship networks—as sources of chronic stress and determinants of health. Although greater equality seems to make the most difference to rates of problems among the least well-off, rates also seem to be reduced among a large majority of the population, including the top tertiles or quartiles by education or income. It looks as if the vast majority benefit from greater equality. Greater equality may benefit all groups but the absolute difference is likely to be bigger lower down the social scale.*

*Several important conclusions suggest themselves. First, income inequality serves as a measure that allows us to compare the scale or importance of social stratification in different societies. Second, because it is problems with social gradients that are related to inequality, this is probably a reflection of their sensitivity, on the one hand, to the existing status differentiation and, on the other, to the size and importance of the status differences as they vary from one society to another. Third, the forms of social dysfunction associated with greater inequality are not confined to the poor but extend to almost all sections of society. Fourth, the most plausible explanation of the effects of income inequality is that material inequality serves as a determinant and measure of the scale of social status differentiation in society. Fifth, standards of health and social well-being in rich societies may now depend more on reducing income differences than on economic growth without redistribution.*

**Occupational and educational inequality**

* Tolsma, J., & Wolbers, M. H. (2014). Social origin and occupational success at labour market entry in The Netherlands, 1931–80. Acta Sociologica, 57(3), 253-269.

*In this article they studied some of the overlooked mechanisms of how social origin affects an individual’s occupational success at labour market entry. Social origin is still an important determinant of occupational success. Stratification scholars consider an individual’s occupational position as a very important (if not the most important) characteristic of social standing. The two most studied determinants of occupational success are social origin and educational attainment. Both are incorporated in the by now classic status attainment model of Blau and Duncan (1967). On the one hand, intergenerational transmission is direct by the immediate transfer of proprietorship or family business, by providing their children with occupational aspirations and by offering them the right social and cultural capital. On the other hand, there is an indirect intergenerational transmission of occupational status via level of education; children from high social origin achieve, on average, a higher level of education than those from low social origin. Primary and secondary effects of social stratification are responsible for this.*

*Trends in the mediating role of education in the intergenerational transmission of occupational attainment are a central issue. Related to this is the question whether the effect of social origin on occupational attainment – over and above what is mediated by education – has altered. Occupational attainment is increasingly based on merit or achieved properties, in particular occupation-specific knowledge and skills. Education is, therefore, considered as the single most important characteristic in the selection and allocation process in modern labour markets. It is claimed that this trend from ascription to achievement is caused by technological developments in modern labour markets, which have led to a shift in demand from a low-skilled to a high-skilled labour force.*

*Besides economic modernization, cultural modernization took place in the form of a shift in dominant value patterns. Nowadays, individuals no longer accept being judged on the basis of their social origin; they believe that status positions should be distributed based on achievement and merit. Moreover, bureaucratization limited opportunities to select on social origin. Cultural modernization has also led to institutional reforms aimed at making educational systems more meritocratic. Not only has social origin become less decisive for one’s educational degree, at the same time educational expansion may have weakened the discriminatory power of qualifications as educational degrees lost their differentiating ability. The influence of social origin on occupational attainment is weaker among the higher educated.*

*Retrospective life-course data from the Family Survey Dutch Population are analysed. It can be expected that the effects of social origin and education on occupational success are most pronounced at the start of the working career. It becomes clear that in The Netherlands an enormous educational expansion has taken place. Also, gender inequality in educational achievement has reversed in the course of time. The average occupational status of the first job of respondents has considerably increased over time.*

*Next to father’s occupational status, we find a strong, positive effect of education on occupational success at labour market entry. This finding supports modernization theory, which posits that education matters more than social origin with regard to occupational status attainment. Secondly, the impact of social origin has declined over time. They found that an individual’s occupational status depends upon his or her father’s occupational status. Apart from that, an individual’s level of education determines strongly his or her occupational status. The effect of education was found to be a few times stronger than that of social origin, indicating that achievement matters more than ascription.*

*Next, it was established that the effect of social origin has declined over time. The effect of an individual’s level of education has, on average, decreased over time too. So, this aspect of modernization theory, that predicts a trend from ascription to achievement, cannot be confirmed. In fact, the impact of level of education has even decreased faster than the social origin effect, implying that the impact of social origin relative to that of education has risen in the course of time. Given that the educational expansion prolonged the school career of individuals, they make the transition from school to work at ever later ages, where parental control and influence matter less. Furthermore, the article found evidence of a weaker impact of social origin on occupational success at labour market entry for higher educated individuals. The reason for this weaker effect is related to the fact that the educational programmes offered at higher levels of education are more focused on the acquisition of occupation-specific skills.*

* Erikson, R. (2020). Inequality of Educational Opportunity – The Role of Performance and Choice. European Review, 28(S1), S44-S55. doi:10.1017/S1062798720000897

*Two reasons for the importance of reducing inequality of educational opportunity (IEO) are typically referred to injustice and societal efficiency. Justice demands that people’s wellbeing should not depend on circumstances over which they have no control, the association between parental conditions and children’s educational outcomes ought to be reduced. The efficiency argument rests on the assumption that if children do not develop their abilities and intellectual potential in full, societal development will be impaired.   
 The perhaps most straightforward and simple representation of IEO is the correlation or association between the social origin of individuals and their educational attainment. Different categorisations of the origin have been used, the most common being parents’ (earlier most often fathers’) education, social class, social status or earnings. The total effect of several background factors tends to be greater than the effect of any single factor. The reduction of IEO was mainly a consequence of a reduced inequality in the transition from primary to secondary school. The change was thus consistent with a hypothesis that educational expansion may result in reduced IEO if the expansion has reached a level where the demand for higher education from more privileged sections of the population is satisfied. In such a case, less privileged classes have to be the source of an increase in the proportions of cohorts attaining higher education.*

*Two career steps seem most critical; the transition from compulsory school to upper secondary and the transition from upper secondary school to tertiary institutions. At both steps children from more advantaged backgrounds tend to stay on in school more often than other children and, given staying on, to select academically more advanced alternatives. The crucial issue at the first step is not only whether to stay on in education or not, but also to what track in secondary school a transition is made – in particular, the choice between academic and vocational tracks. Differences seem partly dependent on the age at which pupils leave primary education for the second level and whether the secondary school represents an elite track meant to prepare students for higher education or whether it is a comprehensive alternative followed by close to all children. IEO at the first transition varies considerably between countries. The rate of IEO at the second transition is less than that at the first, presumably primarily as a consequence of children from less advantaged backgrounds at the first step being relatively more heavily selected by ability than other children. Children from higher classes tend to do better in school than other children, and relatively more often choose academic alternatives at the higher educational level.*

*Boudon (1974) referred to transition differences between students related to separate levels of performance as the primary factor behind IEO, and differences in choice of continued schooling as the secondary factor. That children from more advantaged backgrounds perform better at school must basically be due to a combination of genetic and environmental factors. A consequence is that children from more advantaged backgrounds tend already to have a cognitive advantage at the school start. There may, on top of the effects of nature and nurture, be additional effects not related to children’s development, e.g. teachers could judge pupils differently depending on their social origin. Differences in choice may follow from what can be regarded as rational action by the students and their parents. In theory choices can be assumed to be dependent on how they judge the benefits and costs that will follow from different choices.*

*Differences in the degree of IEO between countries may to some extent depend on the educational systems, in that the organisation of schooling may make higher education differently available to children of separate social origins. The crucial characteristics are standardisation – whether equal educational standards prevail nationwide – and stratification – essentially the degree to which and at what age pupils are channelled into different tracks in school. The most persistent observation of the effects of the characteristics of the educational system is that early tracking goes together with a greater degree of IEO. Standardisation on the other hand seems to be related to a lower degree of IEO. What is meant to be a division of students according to ability, in practice often is just a division by social class.*

*Primary effects are basically due to social differences in children’s cognitive development, while secondary effects depend on how families of different origins judge the benefits, costs and difficulties of the available educational paths. Differences in children’s cognitive development can be supposed to be mainly dependent on various factors related to the interaction between parents and children. Such factors may be difficult to influence and moreover be unsuitable as objects for political intervention. The best way forward may be to try to influence the size of secondary effects. People can be expected to find it more essential to avoid downward than to achieve upward mobility, as a loss of a certain magnitude weighs more than the gain of the same quantity. This means that children with a higher-class background more than other children tend to have incentives to attain a university degree.   
 Reduced costs related to higher education may make young people of working-class origins regard continuing on to university as a less risky prospect, and they may thus more often be willing to take this route. However, as IEO is dependent, to a considerable extent, on conditions and situations in early life, changes in the conditions at the tertiary level may only have minor effects. While eliminating inequality of educational opportunity is a stated aim in countries around the world, the possibility to achieve this aim through politics is limited, given class-based differences in incentives and resources between parents and children.*

* Van de Werfhorst, H. G., & Hofstede, S. (2007). Cultural capital or relative risk aversion? Two mechanisms for educational inequality compared. The British Journal of Sociology, 58, 391-415.

*In this paper they empirically examined two explanatory mechanisms for educational inequality: cultural reproduction and relative risk aversion. One inﬂuential rational choice perspective on educational decision-making is the relative risk aversion mechanism (RRA) of Breen and Goldthorpe. Breen and Goldthorpe assume that children take their parents’ social position as a reference for their own aspirations. The relative risk aversion mechanism states that the most important goal in educational decision-making is to avoid downward mobility. It is relevant to distinguish between two types of out-comes: (i) educational performance and (ii) ambitions for the educational career. By distinguishing these two outcomes, they are able to relate cultural capital and relative risk aversion to Boudon’s primary and secondary effects of social class on educational outcomes. To what extent do the two mechanisms of cultural capital in the home environment and relative risk aversion explain educational performance and ambitions?  
 They consider cultural capital as the most important form of capital for children in school. Like all forms of capital, cultural capital is inherited by children from their parents. In its most general form, cultural capital consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in society.This dominant culture, expressed in things such as cultural codes, modes of conduct, and use of language, affects one’s system of predispositions, including values and motivations.The dominant culture corresponds to the culture found in schools.*

*According to the mechanism of relative risk aversion, the primary goal for each member of any social class is to avoid downward social mobility. People tend to strive for an educational level and social position that is at least equally as good as the position of their parents. Thus, the core of the argument is that all social classes are equally concerned with downward mobility. In their educational decision-making families will weigh the costs and beneﬁts of educational options versus leaving school. Children of lower social origins need to be more ambitious than children of higher social origins to continue schooling at, particularly higher, educational transitions. Also, children of lower social origins need a higher probability of success than children of higher social origins to decide to continue schooling at branching points.*

*It seems that the primary effect of social origin on children’s school performance is more clearly linked to cultural capital than to relative risk aversion. Kalmijn and Kraaykamp (1996) summarize that the effect of cultural capital on schooling is exerted in three ways: (i) children of families with more cultural capital are better learners; (ii) they have been familiarized with abstract and intellectual issues, and (iii) they are approached by teachers more positively(e.g. in terms of time and dedication). These three mechanisms imply that the biggest effect of cultural capital is to be found with regard to school performance. The secondary effect of social origin on schooling outcomes is clearly linked to ambitions, as it consists of social variations in schooling decisions independent of ability. It seems that, if people are concerned with class maintenance, this affects their ambitions in schooling and in work. As RRA theory presumes that mobility concerns are invariant across social classes, they cannot explain away an effect of social origin on ambitions.*

*Cultural Reproduction theory seeks to explain class variations in schooling by cultural differences between social classes. The dominant culture of society is the one that is taught in schools, and children who have become familiar with this dominant culture in their upbringing are better equipped to do well in school. Relative risk aversion theory argues that even in the absence of cultural differences, educational outcomes of children of different social classes would vary. Children of all social classes want to avoid downward mobility, and persisting educational inequalities can be understood by between-class variation in the necessity of pursuing education at particular branching points, in order to avoid downward mobility. One important ﬁnding of the present study is that there is almost no variation across social classes and parents’ education groups in children's concern with downward mobility. They showed that class variations are for a substantial part cultural: cultural capital – measured by parental involvement in highbrow culture – affected school performance at the primary and secondary schooling level.*

*One way to study the impact of relative risk aversion is by looking at the future educational career: ambitions for further schooling. Although no direct effect of social origin on short-term and long-term schooling ambitions has been found, relative risk aversion strongly affected ambitions. The impact of relative risk aversion can not reduce the direct effect of social origin. Rather, it forms an additive interesting explanatory mechanism of how people develop schooling ambitions. Thus, they conclude that ‘primary effects’ of social origin on schooling outcomes are manifested through cultural capital and not through relative risk aversion (in addition to other potential sources of class variations such as genetics). Relativerisk aversion, and not cultural capital, affects schooling ambitions, which is relevant for our understanding of secondary effects.*

**Political inequality**

* Schäfer, A., & Schwander, H. (2019). ‘Don’t play if you can’t win’: does economic inequality undermine political equality?. European Political Science Review, 11(3), 395-413.

*In this paper, we investigate whether income inequality negatively affects voter turnout. The proponents of the conflict perspective argue that a widening income gap between the rich and the poor should incentivize the poor even more to use their voting power to ‘soak the rich’ (Shapiro, 2002) while the rich should be drawn to the polls to prevent this from happening. The Meltzer–Richard (1981) model leads us to assume that it is rational to participate if the stakes are high – and they are particularly high in unequal countries. Advocates of the relative power approach or the rational abstention approach, by contrast, maintain that in the context of high inequality the rich do not need to resort to voting to influence political outcomes as they have other means to influence politics. As the poor learn from experience that the system is biased against them, they give up on participating.*

*They focus on a relatively homogeneous set of rich democracies during a period with rising income inequality to assess the relationship between inequality and turnout. For this group of countries, they find strong and consistent evidence that voter turnout is lower in more unequal societies. Within Germany, where institutional variables do not differ, relatively deprived regions have significantly lower levels of turnout. Finally, we find that turnout declines for all income groups in unequal countries but is particularly strong for low-income groups. Our results are, therefore, in line with the rational abstention perspective, which argues that inequality reduces electoral participation, particularly among the poor.*

*High levels of income inequality signal to poorer citizens that their concerns are likely to be neglected, whereas the better-off learn that they get what they want and have other, possibly more effective, means – lobbying, donations, direct contact to decisions-makers – to get their voices heard. The rational abstention approach, therefore, predicts lower turnout rates in more unequal countries. The poor also possess relatively fewer resources to invest in politics, while the rich find it easier to dominate the political agenda. Therefore, when income and wealth are unequally distributed, the less affluent are likely to find that the issues being debated are not those that interest them and so give up discussing politics.*

*In this article, they have made the most systematic effort yet to resolve the question of how political and economic inequality are related in rich democracies. Since the dynamics might differ between countries with different state capacities, they have limited our study to a relatively uniform set of rich democracies and focused on the decades since 1980. Across datasets and methods, they find a consistently negative effect of income inequality on turnout. Within Germany, where institutional variables do not differ, relatively deprived regions have significantly lower levels of turnout. Finally, we find that turnout declines for all income groups in unequal countries but particularly strongly for low income groups. Our findings, therefore, unambiguously support the relative power approach – or rational abstention approach – that expects inequality to have a negative impact on political engagement. Yet, parties have an incentive to implement social protection policies only if disadvantaged citizens actually turn out to vote. Richer citizens, in contrast, have additional means of making their voices heard since they use a whole range of other ways to engage with politics. As a result, the concerns of the poorer segments of the society are of lesser concern to policy-makers.*

* Lindh, A., & McCall, L. (2020). Class Position and Political Opinion in Rich Democracies. Annual Review of Sociology, 46.

*Scholars and public commentators have long been interested in the question of how an individual’s class position affects their political orientation. Yet because the nature of the relationship between class and politics can change as society itself transforms, scholarly perspectives on the topic have shifted quite substantially over time and, it could be argued, even in just the past few years. The article discusses class differences in political opinion across an array of substantive domains and national contexts. Specifically, two interrelated themes that they highlight are (a) the increasing scope and interdependence of economic, social, and political analysis and (b) a growing interest in understanding how class position and identity are related to social status distinctions such as race, ethnicity, and gender.*

*Manual workers express stronger redistributive preferences than managers and business professionals. They consider four types of explanations of these views: objective economic self-interest, subjective class identity, deviations from narrow economic self-interest stemming from other-regarding attitudes or misinformation, and contextual influences. First, and most obviously, a large body of research provides evidence that the microlevel link between class position and redistributive preferences is anchored in the economic risks and rewards of workers, such as their wages/income and employment security. The few studies that have carefully surveyed wealthy citizens suggest that they are more opposed to redistribution than the average manager and business professional.*

*Second, the potential significance of subjective class identity as an explanation of redistributive preferences has received some attention in prior research, which distinguishes between the class identity individuals claim for themselves and the class position researchers assign to them. Third, there is growing scholarly interest in the extent to which people’s notions of fairness and equity toward others or their lack of policy-relevant information might account for their failure to act in line with their narrow economic class interests vis-à-vis redistributive policies. Fourth, contextual economic factors can be of importance in explaining redistributive attitudes. The political significance of class is declining in postindustrial societies, as economic growth and affluence, combined with the growing salience of postmaterial values, have eroded the foundations of class politics. There are questions that gauge preferences regarding social insurance that protect against insecurities related to sickness and old age. The level of support is high in all classes and countries.*

*One of the reasons frequently given for political behavior that seems to deviate from narrow class interests is that sociocultural issues have become more salient than economic issues in shaping political decisions. Issues concerning gender relations, race and ethnicity, environmentalism, and sexuality became more outwardly salient and partisan in the wake of new social movements. Whereas workers tend to be more liberal than the middle classes on (primarily redistributive) economic issues, they tend to be more socially conservative compared with the middle class on many sociocultural issues. Immigration is one sociocultural issue that is currently politically salient in most advanced capitalist democracies and that elicits class differences in political opinion. Class divisions are apparent in all countries, with workers expressing more negative views than the middle classes, on average. Most notably, while both workers and sociocultural professionals might support egalitarian economic policies, they do not necessarily agree on sociocultural issues. It is also possible that working and middle classes will simply place different weights on the economic and sociocultural domains.*

*At the forefront of political research today, there is clear recognition of the continued significance of class in shaping political opinion. There are recent European studies that similarly reveal less political influence among the working and lower-middle classes than among the rich. Workers express a weaker sense of efficacy than members of the middle classes do. A sense of government unresponsiveness might be a gateway to populism among working- and lower-middle-class groups. Political preferences are not exogenously formed but rather are shaped by existing policies, which foster constituencies and trust or, alternatively, backlash and cynicism. From these perspectives, declines in class voting (i.e., clear differences in voting behavior between classes) observed in many Western countries may have more to do with elite political dynamics than with the exogenous erosion of class interests and identities among individuals. Party unresponsiveness to working- and lower-middle-class concerns may have grown over time and contributed to declines in class voting but left less of an imprint on class divisions in political opinion.*

* Ford, R., & Jennings, W. (2020). The changing cleavage politics of Western Europe. Annual review of political science, 23(1), 295-314.

*The article identifies some socio-demographic developments that are potentially generating new cleavages in Western European democracies: the expansion of higher education; mass migration and the growing ethnic diversity of electorates; the aging of societies and sharpening of generational divides; and increased geographical segregation of populations between prospering, globalized major cities and declining hinterlands. They reflect on the insights of the classic literature on how cleavages structure party systems—and the subsequent observation that those traditional cleavages are in long-term decline via changing class structures, secularization, and postmaterialist values underpinned by rising prosperity. We then consider how the emergence and persistence of new parties and new ideological conflicts are leading to both shifts of the dividing lines of party competition and fragmentation of party systems—as the traditional left–right dimension comes under strain.*

*Processes of nation building and industrialization had generated four major divides, or cleavages, which structured subsequent political conflict: center–periphery (territorial), religious– secular (church versus state), urban–rural, and labor–capital. The configuration of party systems in different European societies reflected the different mix of social conflicts that were salient at the outset of mass democracy. Political parties, Lipset & Rokkan (1967) argued, played a critical role in stabilizing and institutionalizing patterns of competition—developing organizational structures and forging long-term partisan commitments among core supporters. These structures and commitments enabled parties to consistently mobilize their core constituencies and to fend off the emergence of new challengers, thus “freezing” the cleavages structuring party competition. Cleavage politics is, at least in part, identity politics, since stable cleavages depend on groups with stable and shared identities that are organized into politics by parties.*

*Two issues: first is whether the traditional social cleavages, particularly those of religion and class, have declined due to social changes such as secularization and the decline of traditional industries. The second, more general question is whether the cleavage politics model of stable, socially structured party competition is in decline. There is much discussion of whether frozen party systems have thawed as more educated and politically engaged voters no longer align in stable and predictable ways with social groups or political parties. Does the new globalization cleavage drive party system change, or do existing parties adjust themselves to incorporate it into existing patterns of competition? They emphasize the flexibility and adaptability of traditional parties yet also highlight that many such parties have failed to take clear positions on the new dimension or cannot do so because it divides them internally. Therefore, Kriesi and colleagues suggest, much of the mobilization on the new dimension occurs via the emergence of new parties.*

*University graduates have distinctive social identities, values and interests, so the dramatic expansion of higher education is driving an ongoing compositional shift in the electorate with the potential to create new cleavages and party alignments. The worldview and moral values expressed by graduates are quite different in some regards from those with lower levels of formal education. While group consciousness may encourage distinctive behavior, there is little evidence that graduate political behavior is driven primarily by individual self-interest: Enthusiasm for free trade or immigration is typically no greater among individuals who stand to gain directly from them, suggesting that graduates’ preferences for such policies is a matter of social principles rather than individual interests. Graduate voters across Europe show a fairly consistent tendency to prefer political parties that display a distinct liberal stance on the second dimension of cultural values and internationalism. Mass higher education is thus generating an electoral base for the mobilization of distinctive socially liberal and pro-EU parties across Western Europe.*

*Migrant and ethnic minority communities, often facing considerable hostility and prejudice from parts of the native population, have gravitated toward center-left parties, which make greater efforts to respond to minority concerns by fielding ethnic minority candidates and by passing laws that protect minority cultures and sanction discrimination. Ethnic minority communities have strong group identities, grounded in religious and cultural traditions that set them apart from the majority. They also have strong organizational structures, often built around religious institutions, which enable them to mobilize politically around their group interests. The emergence of large ethnic minority electorates could facilitate the renewal of center-left parties, or it could catalyze their disintegration, with graduates, ethnic minorities, and nativist white voters scattering in different directions.*

*Traditionally, unskilled and skilled manual workers shared socioeconomic interests and were mobilized via social democratic parties. With the decline of traditional industries, unions, and associated social/community institutions, as well as the shift of many left parties toward the center, this social group has become partially unbound from the labor–capital cleavage—leaving it increasingly up for grabs politically. The radical right has capitalized on the threat white school leavers perceive from the rise of immigration and ethnic diversity, and the alienation produced by their demographic decline and political marginalization, to mobilize them into the basis of a new, identity- and values-driven alignment. Center-left parties can seek to resolve this dilemma if they can find new “bundles” of issues that appeal to both their new and traditional electorates, but this task is greatly complicated by defensive and hostile reactions to demographic decline among ethnic nationalist white voters. The center-right faces a related dilemma. Center-right parties cannot ignore the competition they face from the radical right for socially conservative and nationalist voters, but trying to stem such losses by adopting stronger stances on radical right issues or bringing radical right parties into coalition risks reputational damage with more moderate voters while legitimating the radical right. The emergence of the radical right meets all the classic criteria for a new political cleavage. It involves a stable pattern of alignment by a demographically distinct electorate with a clear sense of identity and shared interests, who have been organized into politics by parties articulating and packaging these interests.*

*An aging population creates potential for a new cleavage to emerge. Due to their point in the life cycle, this group is also reliant on the state for retirement benefits, health services, and social care; population aging therefore steadily increases the budgetary pressures faced by governments providing these services. These common interests are layered on top of significant generational differences in value orientations. While older voters do have shared interests, these have to date been well catered to by established political parties. Thus, while the so-called gray vote has the potential to structure ideological conflict, the heterogeneity of beliefs and interests within generations ultimately means age is not yet being mobilized as a new cleavage.*

*The rediscovery of geography as a cleavage of electoral politics is a notable feature of contemporary democratic debate in Western Europe and elsewhere. Support for radical right parties and candidates has been clustered in peripheral, often former industrial, areas. In contrast, advances made by socially liberal and green parties have been concentrated in major cities and thriving towns. These changes in how voters are distributed across a country can impact party competition by creating or reinforcing geographical cleavages.*

**Other forms of inequality**

* Billari, F.C., Hiekel, N., & Liefbroer, A.C. (2019). The social stratification of choice in the transition to adulthood. European Sociological Review, 35(5), 599-615.

*The occurrence and timing of major demographic decisions in the transition to adulthood is strongly stratified, with young adults with a high socio-economic status (SES) background usually experiencing many of these events later than young adults with a low SES background. Social stratification affects choice in the transition to adulthood through three, potentially reinforcing, pathways: stratified socialization, stratified agency, and stratified opportunity. The transition to adulthood, with a series of events that are concentrated in a relatively short age span, shapes life courses in a crucial way. The transition to adulthood as a process is marked by five events: leaving school, entering the workforce, leaving the parental home, marriage, and parenthood. This social stratification of demographic behaviour has been explained by differences in economic and cultural resources that shape children’s opportunities during the transition to adulthood.*

*First, in the socialization process, parents influence the values, attitudes, and intentions concerning demographic decisions that young adults develop. Children of high- and low SES parents may develop different intentions about demographic events. We label this stratification of intentions ‘stratified socialization’. Second, parental SES (PSES) may influence young adults’ ability to realize their behavioural intentions. High-SES parents may foster their children’s life-course agency more efficiently by stimulating planful competence and self-efficacy. Advantaged families of origin may provide economic resources to realize costly transitions. We label this stratification of the intention–behaviour link as ‘stratified agency’. Third, social stratification not only operates via explicitly agentic processes of goal setting (stratified socialization) and goal realization (stratified agency), but also via structural processes that run on top of stated intentions. Structural factors often lead to an earlier transition to adulthood among young adults with a low-SES background than among young adults with a high-SES background. We label this pathway stratified opportunity.*

*The transition to adulthood in contemporary industrialized societies has undergone significant changes that can be summarized by first, a general delay of nearly all events, and second, the de-standardization of the timing and order of events. Late modern societies are characterized by a high valorization of individualism, autonomy, self-fulfillment, and flexibility suggesting that the influence of the family of origin on young adults’ lives has become less relevant. A more structurally oriented literature, however, has stressed that socio-economic origin is still a major determinant in shaping the transition to adulthood.*

*High-SES parents are thus likely to transmit to their children the embracement of values of self-exploration and self-focus linked to the postponement of life transitions that imply strong interpersonal commitment and are hard to reverse, such as union formation, marriage, and childbearing. Therefore, young adults with a higher socio-economic background might be more likely to intend to leave the parental home relatively early, because they are more likely to internalize the idea that residential autonomy defines personal autonomy. At the same time, high-SES parents will value educational attainment very highly, sharing a concern about downwards mobility and making them more likely to transmit preferences for the postponement of family formation. Low-SES parents, by contrast, may favour the early adoption of adult roles and lead their children to internalize preferences to commit to union formation, marriage, and parenthood earlier. Young adults from low SES background also tend to leave education and enter the labour market earlier, making them economically independent from their parents earlier, too.*

*First, young adults from higher socio-economic backgrounds are better able to develop and stay committed to what they perceive to be advantageous long-term plans, i.e. develop planful competence. Second, more generous transfers from high-SES parents may increase high-SES young adults’ agency and therefore better enable them to realize their intentions. Growing up in an affluent and supportive family equips someone with greater planning skills to organize the tedious search for appropriate and affordable housing, and makes them more resilient to cope with setbacks. In addition, their parents may activate their social network.*

*In addition, though, stratification may partly be generated by differences in the opportunities and constraints that young adults from a low and a high SES background face. Structural elements of the social context in which they grow up (e.g. crowded housing, unemployment rates, scarce career options, limited access to effective contraception) may push children from low SES background to a faster transition into adulthood, particularly in the sphere of union formation and parenthood. Children from high-SES background often are enrolled in the educational system longer than children from low-SES background and women from high-SES background face higher opportunity costs in combining family life and career than women from low-SES background.*

*Age differences were only observed for the stratified socialization pathway. At young ages, respondents with high-SES parents were less likely to intend to marry and have a child within 3 years than respondents with low-SES parents, suggesting that higher-SES children are socialized into postponing demographic events that require substantial commitment. They found hardly any evidence of gender differences. The only exception was that women were better able to realize their intention to leave home than men.*

* Best, H., & Rüttenauer, T. (2018). How selective migration shapes environmental inequality in Germany: Evidence from micro-level panel data. European Sociological Review, 34(1), 52-63.

*Socio-economically disadvantaged and ethnic minorities are affected by a disproportionately high exposure to environmental pollution. Consistent with the selective migration argument, movers experience a decrease in exposure according to their income, while stationary households do not experience a reductive effect due to income. Furthermore, the moving returns differ by minority status. While native German households experience less exposure to pollution when moving to a new place of residence, minority households do not.*

*Previous studies have identified two causal mechanisms of environmental inequality: selective siting and selective migration. The first mechanism states that the increase of pollution follows already existing differences in the socio-demographic composition of neighbourhoods. Hazardous facilities are disproportionately sited in areas with low socio-economic resources and high minority shares. In contrast, the second mechanism assumes that differences in the socio-demographic neighbourhood composition emerge after pre-existing differences in pollution. This means that minority households and households with low socio-economic resources selectively move into polluted areas, while socio-economically advantaged households move out.*

*Residential choices are driven by individual preferences, e.g. the preference to live in a clean and unpolluted environment. On the other hand, individuals have to deal with the structural constraints of their actions. When selecting a place of residence, individuals try to satisfy their preferences regarding the good ‘clean environment’, given their economic and structural constraints. Environmental quality influences the rents and housing prices: While housing opportunities in low quality areas are relatively cheap, they are relatively costly in high-quality areas. Households experiencing an increase in income are able to pay more for environmental quality when migrating and consequently will end up in neighbourhoods with lower pollution. Following this market explanation, high pollution does not need to be the reason for out-migration. Even if households relocated for other reasons, high-income households sort into clean neighbourhoods, while low-income households sort into polluted neighbourhoods.*

*The ‘racial income-inequality thesis’ relates to the ‘market explanation’ in explaining the effect of ethnicity on the exposure to environmental pollution. Hereafter, the high exposure of ethnic minority groups is not a result of ethnicity itself, but rather, a result of the differences in the socio-economic resources of different ethnic groups. The ‘racial residential discrimination thesis’ explains the unequal distribution of environmental pollution by discriminating actions of real estate agents or property owners. The reasons for housing discrimination could be 2-fold: first, native inhabitants could perceive minority groups as a threat due to prejudices about their criminal behaviour. Secondly, housing agents could spuriously anticipate the housing preferences of minority groups, they could pre-select housing offers based on their prejudiced viewpoint.*

*They find that income has a significant impact on the level of perceived air pollution for movers, while it has no effect for stationary households: An increase in income leads to a significant reduction of air pollution when the household moves to a new place of residence. When simultaneously including income and nationality, the effect of income loses significance. Thus, selective migration behaviour operates as a causal mechanism, shaping the difference in pollution regarding minority status and, to a lower extent, income. They do not find a noteworthy reduction of the minority effect when controlling for income, which indicates that minority disadvantages cannot be explained solely by their relatively low socio-economic status. This contradicts the ‘racial income-inequality hypothesis’. Secondly, the disadvantage of immigrants completely vanishes in the second generation, indicating that the disadvantage does not stem from discriminative behaviour triggered by simple ethnic markers like the look or the name of a person. This contradicts the ‘racial residential discrimination thesis’, but results are not fully conclusive, as discrimination could still occur based on other characteristics like language skills or citizenship.*

* Braveman, P., Egerter, S., & Williams, D. R. (2011). The social determinants of health: coming of age. Annual Review of Public Health, 32, 381-398.

*Social factors play a role in health. The article reviews current knowledge about health effects of social (including economic) factors, knowledge gaps, and research priorities, focusing on upstream social determinants—including economic resources, education, and racial discrimination—that fundamentally shape the downstream determinants, such as behaviors, targeted by most interventions. The term social determinant of health is often used to refer broadly to any nonmedical factors influencing health, including health-related knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors (such as smoking). These factors, however, represent only the most downstream determinants in the causal pathways influencing health; they are shaped by more upstream determinants. Downstream social determinants: factors that are temporally and spatially close to health effects (and hence relatively apparent), but are influenced by upstream factors. Upstream social determinants: fundamental causes that set in motion causal pathways leading to (often temporally and spatially distant) health effects through downstream factors. This article focuses on the more upstream social determinants of health—the factors that play a more fundamental causal role and represent the most important opportunities for improving health and reducing health disparities.*

*Evidence from decades of research examining associations between key social factors and health outcomes throughout the life course overwhelmingly links greater social disadvantage with poorer health. Neighborhoods can influence health through their physical characteristics, such as air and water quality and proximity to facilities that produce or store hazardous substances; exposures to lead paint, mold, dust, or pest infestation in housing; access to nutritious foods and safe places to exercise; or risk of pedestrian accidents. The availability and quality of neighborhood services— including schools, transportation, medical care, and employment resources—can also influence health, e.g., by shaping residents’ opportunities to earn a living. Neighborhoods’ physical and service characteristics can create and reinforce socioeconomic and racial/ethnic disparities in health.*

*The physical aspects of work—the traditional domain of occupational health and safety—represent an obvious pathway through which work influences health. For example, jobs requiring repetitive movements and/or high physical workload put workers at higher risk for musculoskeletal injuries and disorders, whereas physically inactive workers in sedentary jobs are at increased risk of obesity and chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Well-paying jobs are more likely to provide benefits, greater financial security, and ability to afford healthier living conditions.*

*It is widely recognized that education can lead to improved health by increasing health knowledge and healthy behaviors. This may be explained in part by literacy, allowing more-educated individuals to make better-informed, health related decisions. Education also plays an important role in health by shaping employment opportunities, which are major determinants of economic resources. Education may also affect health by influencing social and psychological factors. More education has been associated with greater perceived personal control, which has frequently been linked with better health and health-related behaviors. Greater educational attainment is generally associated with higher relative social standing; subjective social status may predict health even after controlling for more objective indicators of social status. More education also has been linked with increased social support, which is associated with better physical and mental health; social support may buffer the health-damaging effects of stress, influence health-related behaviors, and if one’s social networks are socially advantaged, enhance access to employment, housing, and other opportunities and resources that can influence health.*

* Schneider, S.M. (2019). Why income inequality is dissatisfying—Perceptions of social status and the inequality-satisfaction link in Europe. European Sociological Review, 35(3), 409-430.

*This study proposes subjective social status—a person’s perception of his/her standing in the social hierarchy—is an important psychological mechanism driving the inequality-satisfaction link. It argues (i) the contextual effect of income inequality on subjective well-being is mediated by social status perceptions, and (ii) income inequality moderates the relationship between subjective social status and well-being. Applying multi-level modelling techniques, the study finds income inequality lowers the self-perception of social status and, in turn, the overall wellbeing of individuals (the mediation argument). It also finds that income inequality increases the importance of subjective social status to life satisfaction (the moderation argument).*

*Firstly, following relative deprivation theory, it argues that how individuals rank themselves in a social hierarchy is related to life satisfaction (subjective well-being). If this argument holds, self-evaluation processes based on social comparison constitute an important micro foundation of the inequality-satisfaction link. Secondly, the study proposes two paths whereby income inequality becomes an important contextual factor in self-evaluation. In the first, income inequality may lower an individual’s perception of his/her social status (i.e. the individual sees him/herself as lower in the social hierarchy) by providing referential standards for social comparison; this, in turn, may reduce his or her subjective well-being. In this case, subjective social status functions as an important mediator linking income inequality with life satisfaction. In the second path, income inequality acts as a moderator, enhancing the salience of social comparison and increasing the importance of social status characteristics for the production of life satisfaction. In this case, subjective social status will have a stronger effect on life satisfaction if income inequalities are high.*

*The argument—the higher a person’s social status in society, the higher his/her life satisfaction—is supported by both sociological and social psychological research. It has roots in the early work on relative deprivation theory. Relative deprivation theory ties in with social comparison theory, which considers social comparisons to be a fundamental psychological process. Social comparisons form a primary point of reference for self-evaluation of performance and beliefs.*

*This study proposes the use of subjective social status—a person’s perception of his/her social standing in the social hierarchy—measured by a self-anchoring scale, to circumvent biases. Subjective status rankings imply a dual cognitive process in which the individual places him/herself within a subjectively defined social hierarchy. The first hypothesis reads as follows: The higher the subjective social status, the higher the reported life satisfaction.*

*This study argues that, in principle, income inequality can influence subjective status and life satisfaction in two different ways: (i) subjective social status mediates the relationship between income inequality and life satisfaction, because income inequality may reduce social status perceptions (i.e. an individual sees him/herself as lower on the social ladder) by determining the referential standards for social comparison as described by the differentiation argument; (ii) income inequality moderates the relationship between subjective social status and life satisfaction by increasing the significance of social comparison and social status characteristics for the production of life satisfaction, as specified by the salience argument. Individuals living in more unequal settings will rank themselves lower in the social hierarchy than individuals living in more equal societies, and this will be independent of other status characteristics, such as income or education. The second hypothesis reads as follows: The higher the income inequality, the lower the subjective social status and the lower the life satisfaction.*

*The salience argument requires a different theoretical reasoning. In this view, income inequality functions as a moderator and enhances the importance of social status characteristics for the production of life satisfaction: the higher the income inequality in a society, the stronger the impact of subjective social status on life satisfaction. Income inequality may increase both the frequency and the consequence of comparison processes; more specifically, it will foster social comparisons and increase the value of subjective social status for the production of life satisfaction. The third hypothesis reads as follows: The higher the income inequality, the higher the effect of subjective social status on life satisfaction.*

**Gender inequality**

* Dorius, S. F., & Firebaugh, G. (2010). Trends in global gender inequality. Social Forces, 88(5), 1941-1968.

*Men and women can differ in any number of domains, so gender inequality intersects other types of inequality (educational, economie, political and so on). The objective of this article is to describe recent trends in global gender inequality as measured by convergence or divergence of indicators used by the United Nations to monitor progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (United Nation 2008).   
 First consider what is meant by gender inequality. Assuming a population that consists of 50 percent women and 50 percent men—as is roughly the case for the world (Appendix B) — there is gender equality on some characteristic Y when females constitute half of those with Y. Gender inequality occurs, then, when women and men deviate from their 50 percent share. Global gender inequality, that is the primary focus of this article, where they describe recent trends in global gender inequality across a broad range of indicators including adult literacy; enrollments in primary, secondary and tertiary education; total years of schooling completed; national parliamentarians; economically active workers; adult mortality; and life expectancy at birth. "Is global society becoming more or less equal with regard to gender?" In accounting for the global trends, they hypothesize that (1. that gender convergence is slowed globally by regional variation in population growth and (2. that gender convergence is not a uniform process across the world's regions.*

*Hypothesis 1: Global gender inequality is declining across a wide variety of welfare measures. Reports such as the World Economic Forum's "The Global Gender Gap Report" suggest that women's position relative to men's has improved in the average country. We hypothesize that the direction of the trends (though not necessarily their magnitudes) will be the same for global gender inequality as it is for gender inequality in the average country.   
 Both exogenous and endogenous change models point to declining global gender inequality. We refer to world polity/global culture theory as an exogenous model because it posits that institutional and cultural change at the nation-state level is driven by supranational forces. Proponents stress the importance of a network of international actors that share deep similarities in organizational structure, institutional goals and values, and means of achieving institutional missions. Beyond shared values, members of the world polity work to enact change within countries all over the world. The result is persistent exogenous pressure to conform to values and practices aligning with the world culture.*

*The growing cadre of national and international women's institutions shares the common goal of gender mainstreaming across all domains where emerging and longstanding gender inequalities exist. Research suggests a global trifecta for women, with nations, transnational networks of non-state actors (NGOs, INGOs and WINGOs), and nation-state member organizations (IGOs) contributing to change in gender policies that ultimately lead to more equal gender outcomes.*

*Alternative theories place more emphasis on endogenous sources as engines of change for gender inequality. Chief among these endogenous sources is economic growth. Modernization theory has long argued that economic development will improve social conditions and lead to broad improvements in human welfare. Finally, the world is becoming more interconnected as the flow of information, communication, goods, services and people continues to expand. The interconnectivity of the world's people through economic development points to the leavening effect of technological change, particularly as new technologies are adopted and spread.*

*Hypothesis 2: The decline in global gender inequality is being slowed by country differences in population growth rates. The decline would have been even faster if populations had grown at the same rate for all countries. Instead, population has tended to grow the most rapidly in regions of the world where gender inequality is highest, and this has served to slow the rate of decline in gender inequality globally. As Table 3 shows, population growth is significantly higher in those countries where gender inequality is the greatest. Global gender inequality is growing unless the decline in gender inequality within nations is rapid enough to offset the inequality-boosting effect of faster population growth in the more unequal nations.*

*Hypothesis 3: The decline in global gender inequality is also being retarded by slow and halting change in gender inequality in some non Western cultural traditions. We anticipate that notable relative gains for women in some cultural regions of the world are being offset in part by negligible relative gains for women—perhaps even losses for women—in other regions of the world. Some standing cultural traditions may be more resistant than others to change with respect to women's rights, so we cannot assume that women's gains are universal. According to Ingelhart and Norris, "cultural change is a necessary condition for gender equality: women first need to change themselves before they can hope to change society."*

* Buchmann, C., DiPrete, T.A., & McDaniel, A. (2008). Gender inequalities in education. Annual Review of Sociology, 34, 319-337.

*This article reviews the empirical research and theoretical perspectives on gender inequalities in educational performance and attainment from early childhood to young adulthood. Delayed entry into kindergarten, or academic redshirting, is more common among boys and among children from families of high socioeconomic status. In age-based comparisons, girls will have attained a slightly higher average grade level than boys. In grade-based comparisons, most common in research, boys will be slightly older on average than girls. One could argue that comparisons using chronological age ignore sex differences in maturational tempo and result in comparing more mature girls to less mature boys.*

*Research consistently finds generally similar performance of girls and boys in mathematics and reading in the early grades and a growing male advantage in math scores and growing female advantage in reading scores as they move through school. Today, from kindergarten through high school and even in college, girls get better grades in all major subjects, including math and science. Antisocial behavior and reading difficulties go hand in hand for boys; antisocial behavior leads to poor reading skills and vice versa. Emotional and behavioral problems early in childhood also contribute to educational outcomes later in life, such as the likelihood of repeating a grade in secondary school, completing high school, and enrolling in college. Girls more often demonstrate persistence in completing tasks and an eagerness to learn. Adolescent girls also possess higher levels of other noncognitive skills such as attentiveness and organizational skills. These gender differences in noncognitive skills may be central in explaining why boys get higher test scores in some domains but girls generally get higher grades.*

*Much evidence indicates that intrinsic capacities and environmental experiences play interrelated roles in the complex process of learning. There are also longstanding questions of how traditional gender stereotypes and norms influence students’ perceptions of their own abilities and the socialization of girls and boys within their families and schools. Parents are more involved in school activities with sons and more involved in home activities with daughters; as children grow older, parental involvement with boys declines, but their involvement with girls remains constant.*

*One of the most striking features in the terrain of higher education in recent years is the growing gender gap in college enrollment and completion. Young women consistently outperform their male peers in high school graduation. Women currently earn 58% percent of all bachelor’s degrees awarded in the United States. Beyond the United States, higher proportions of females than males currently attain tertiary education in most European countries. Women have made substantial gains in earning graduate and professional degrees.*

*Status attainment theory examines access to resources, broadly defined, related to attending and completing college. Rational choice perspectives consider how incentives and constraints shape individuals’ decisions regarding whether to attain higher education. Resources related to family background exert their influence at each level of educational attainment, partly through academic performance and partly through educational transitions, given performance. Even when girls and boys share the same household, family resources need not be equally distributed across sons and daughters. For example, socialization arguments emphasize the importance of role modeling, such that children model their parents as they form their own educational and occupational aspirations and attainment. Females’ higher educational aspirations and higher college graduation rates likely stem from the female advantage in academic performance that develops over the educational career. One plausible reason for the rising rates of women’s college enrollment and completion is that the returns to college have been rising more for women than for men.*

*Institutional-level factors also shape gendered patterns of college access and success. These include sociocultural changes in gender roles and expectations about life course trajectories for women and men. Shifts in the structure of the labor market such as declining discrimination against women and changes in occupational sex segregation also impact individual incentives to attend college. Changes in gender-role attitudes are also related to the growing college attendance of young women. Young women’s rising expectations for future employment encouraged them to attend and complete college, but the increase in the median age of first marriage among college students in recent decades also played a role.*

* Eurofound (2020). Women and labour market equality: Has COVID-19 rolled back recent gains?, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

*The gender employment gap cost Europe more than €320 billion in 2018, which corresponds to 2.4% of EU GDP that year. This sum combines the extra earnings in the economy, the rise in welfare contributions and the savings in public finances that would arise if the employment rate of women was the same as that of men. There is a clear economic imperative therefore to close this gap.*

*There is a social imperative too, as the gap has implications for women’s lives, including their financial security and quality of life. For instance, 17.1% of female pensioners were at risk of poverty in the EU27 in 2019, against 13.1% of male pensioners. A big factor contributing to the pension gap is the reduced time women spend in employment over the life course. Furthermore, women in employment evaluate their lives more positively and have a higher level of social inclusion on average than women who are not in paid work.*

*After falling for several years, the gender employment gap has stagnated at just under 12 percentage points since 2014. In 2019, it stood at 11.7 percentage points, with 67.2% of women (aged 20–64) in employment compared to 78.9% of men.*

*Gender inequality in the labour market is also reflected in the jobs women do: they are, for instance, overrepresented in low-paying jobs such as care assistant, cleaner and retail salesperson. While they constitute 48% of employees, women make up 58% of minimum wage earners and 62% of workers earning substantially less than the minimum wage.*

*One upshot of gender segregation in the labour market is the higher toll that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on women than men. The sectors that have been most affected by social distancing and restrictive measures are those that involve ‘interactive service work’, with physical interaction between workers and clients – tourism, retail, hospitality and aviation – and women account for 61% of workers doing this type of work.*

*Young women were most likely to lose their job in the wake of the pandemic (11%, compared to 9% of young men). Women may also be more at risk of dropping out of the labour market: of those who worked before the outbreak and then lost their job, 4% of women became inactive (against 1% of men).*

*The concentration of activity in the home during the lockdowns across Europe led to a general deterioration of work–life balance, but especially for women. For instance, family responsibilities prevented more women (24%) than men (13%) from giving the time they wanted to their job.*

* Van Hek, M., & Van der Lippe, T. (2019). Are female managers agents of change or cogs in the machine? An assessment with three-level manager–employee linked data. European Sociological Review, 35(3), 316–331.

*In this study, they investigate whether female managers contribute to greater gender equality in organizations. Specifically, they examine whether women’s and men’s earnings are affected by the share of female managers in their organization, and by being supervised by a female manager. Results are in line with the weak version of the women as cogs in the machine hypothesis: women’s and men’s earnings are not affected by the share of female managers in their organization, nor by being supervised by a female manager. Gender equality in earnings is thus not stimulated by female managerial representation.*

*Managers play a key role in organizations and decide on the hiring, wages, promotions, and training of employees. As such, a change in the demographic representation of managers may affect inequalities among employees. On the one hand, female managers may function as ‘agents of change’ who actively foster gender equality in the workplace. On the other hand, scholars argue that female managers act as ‘cogs in the machine’, lacking either the power or the will to actively stimulate gender equality in the workplace.*

*There are several reasons why female managers might improve the earnings of female employees. First, female managers, as do male managers, have the tendency of homophily. So, managers likely expect less difficulties working with same-sex employees and, hence, are more likely to support the careers of same-sex subordinates and assign them to positions directly underneath them. Second, female managers might enhance earnings of their female subordinates because they are more able to sympathize with and willing to support other women because of shared experiences with sex-based discrimination. Female managers may be stronger advocates of gender equality enhancing policies because they are more familiar with sex-based discrimination, but it may also be in their own interest to actively pursue the implementation of such policies in an organization. A fourth mechanism that explains why women earn more when the share of female managers in an organization is higher relates to social cognition with respect to sex. The presence of women in managerial positions in the organization may challenge stereotypes about women’s ambition and capability.*

*There are, however, also reasons to expect that female managers lack the power or do not have the motivation to enhance the earnings of other women in the organization. First, female managers may not have sufficient power to significantly influence the earnings of other women in the organization. Female managers are often stuck at lower levels of management where they do not have enough power to substantially affect the careers of employees. With increasing organizational bureaucratization and therefore due to increasing adherence to procedures, the influence of managers in an organization has become restricted. The ‘strong’ version of the hypotheses goes one step further, suggesting that female managers may not want to actively contribute to gender equality in earnings. First, it has been argued that only women who accept the organizational status quo are selected into (senior) management roles. Second, ‘queen bee’ theory asserts that women in leadership positions have to distance themselves from feminine issues in order to justify and secure their position. Third, research has shown that both women and men subscribe to gender stereotypes.*

*The dependent variable is employees’ net hourly income in Euros. Independent variables are employee questionnaire, department manager questionnaire and organizational questionnaire. They conclude that both women’s and men’s earnings are not affected by working in an organization with a high share of female managers, which is in line with the weak version of the women as cogs in the machine argument. They conclude that women’s and men’s wages are not differently affected by the sex of their manager. Women’s and men’s earnings are not affected by the proportion of female managers in an organization, nor by having a female manager themselves. Women in management positions do not make a substantial contribution to gender equality in earnings in organizations.*

**Social policies**

* Van der Lippe, T., De Ruijter, J., De Ruijter, E., Raub, W. (2011). Persistent inequalities in time use between men and women: A detailed look at the influence of economic circumstances, policies, and culture, European Sociological Review, 27(2), 164–179, DOI:10.1093/esr/jcp066

*The aim of this contribution is to refine explanations for inequalities in the amount of time men and women spend in paid work and housework by breaking down institutional conditions into economic circumstances, policy conditions, and cultural influences. Multilevel analyses show the importance of institutional conditions for paid work: men and women in highly developed economies and in countries with high rates of child-care facilities do more paid work, although they spend less time on paid work after having children. With respect to the influence of culture, it appears that highly educated and married women in masculine cultures do less paid work, and that married women also do more housework, than their counterparts in more feminine cultures.*

*In this study, they are especially interested in the influence of the policy context within which individuals make choices as well as the role of economic circumstances and cultural influences. According to the new home economics (Becker, 1981), in the average case, that is, of two parents, the parent with the highest earning potential will specialize in paid work and the other in housework. Since women, even higher educated women, usually earn less than their spouses, they are often the ones who will take care of the children, and will spend less time on paid employment. Moreover, mothers are still seen as the primary caregivers and social norms encourage women, rather than men, to spend less time on paid employment when they become mothers. Education is often considered the most important form of human capital. For more highly educated men and women it is appealing to devote relatively more time to paid employment, as the benefits in terms of money and status can be high. Thus we expect that more highly educated men and women will be more active in the labour market and will spend less time on household chores.*

*Theory on the influence of the institutional context on individual choices tends to use a typology of welfare regimes, the behaviour of individuals being influenced by different types of welfare states with difference features and characteristics that more or less exclude one another. According to the Esping-Andersen typology, the Scandinavian countries belong to the social-democratic cluster, which is characterized by widespread government services, equal rights for men and women, and major livelihood support. The large size of the service sector enables households to outsource domestic duties so that there are few limitations for women to spend a lot of time in the labour market. The conservative cluster contains a group of Western European countries, like Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. In this type of welfare state, the breadwinner ideology is central, there are tax incentives aimed at stimulating a male breadwinner and female homemaker model. The third type of welfare state is liberal, like England: the duties of men and women are the same, but the government is passive when it comes to facilitating women’s paid labour. A Mediterranean cluster is strongly family oriented and there is little government intervention. Given these characteristics of the various types of welfare states, we expect women in social-democratic regimes to spend more time on paid activities and less on household work than their peers in liberal, conservative, and Mediterranean regimes.*

*With regard to the influence of economic circumstances, the following effect is expected. In general, in countries with highly developed economies, men and women are more stimulated to spend time on paid labour because this also pays out in terms of status and career. The emancipating effect from a highly developed economy would apply mainly to women without children and to a lesser degree to women with children. On the other hand, more income is needed when there are children in the household.*

*Social expenditures on child care in a country: this type of social policy facilitates conditions for women, in terms of their time use in the labour market. Child-care programmes that increase women’s time in paid work might also decrease housework time, because more income is available to outsource certain domestic tasks. We expect that in countries where public expenditures on child care are large, women will generally perform more paid labour, and that the time use of men and women (concerning both paid and housework) will consequently be more in balance.*

*A more equal division of paid and household tasks between men and women is more encouraged in some countries than in others. There might be distinct housekeeping cultures next to cultures of motherhood and fatherhood. The ‘masculinity-femininity’ dimension can be described as the degree to which gender roles are clearly present in a society. The expectation is that the higher the ‘score’ of a country on this index (i.e. the more masculine a country is), the more unequal the time use of men and women and the less time women will spend on paid labour and men on household tasks.*

*The welfare regime in which they live clearly affects the time men and women spend on paid work and domestic duties. The division of housework between men and women is more unequal in communist and southern European regimes than in the liberal, conservative, and social democratic regimes. A country’s stage of economic development is important in explaining the time spent on paid work. However, one should bear in mind that economy, culture, and policy are closely related. Our analysis shows that in countries with highly developed economies, higher educated women do more paid work—it appears to be rewarding for them in terms of money and status to spend more time in the labour market. More spending on child care implies more time spent on paid work by women, an effect that is stronger when children are young. Child-care policies do affect time spent on housework of women, but to a somewhat lesser extent. Cultural differences also play a role here: although women generally do spend more time on paid work in more masculine countries, this depends largely on individual characteristics such as marital status.*

* Haas Institute (2014). Responding to rising inequality: Policy interventions to ensure opportunity for all. University of California, Berkeley: Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society.

*Income inequality has now reached levels not seen since the 1920s.57 Recent research suggests that policies such as investments in education and efforts to address the racially and economically segregated structure of U.S. metropolitan areas could decrease inequality and increase economic mobility. Higher minimum wages and enhanced EITC, although addressing poverty most directly, also have the potential to affect inequality and mobility. Saez and Piketty have suggested that inheritance taxes and more progressive taxation of the highest earners could simultaneously reduce economic inequality and provide resources to support greater social mobility, for instance by investing in education or in income supports such as the EITC.*

*Policymakers must be attentive to the impacts that universal approaches, such as these, can have on differently situated groups because these policies could unintentionally exacerbate existing disparities. Policies such as minimum age increases or enhancing the EITC do little to help the long-term unemployed or families without able-bodied workers.*

*Nevertheless, each of these policies, if carefully implemented, has the potential to lift working households out of poverty, support greater economic mobility, or reduce the growth of income inequality. The interrelatedness of these issues means that a strategy of focusing on both poverty and inequality is important, recognizing that, although related, poverty and inequality are not the same. To understand the impacts of such policies going forward requires disaggregating information on different populations and geographic areas, especially because the existing research has identified wide variations among each.*

* OECD (2015), In it together: Why less inequality benefits all (chapter 1), OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264235120-en>

*This chapter documents the longer-term trends as well as recent developments in income inequality and summarises the main messages from the in-depth chapters of the report. In particular, it highlights the channels through which inequality affects growth, the impact of women’s employment and of developments in the type of jobs on inequality, and the extent of wealth concentration and indebtedness. It discusses individual measures but especially policy packages that are both equality- and growth-friendly by focusing on four main areas: women’s participation, employment promotion and good quality jobs, skills and education, and taxes and transfers.*

*Policy makers have a range of instruments and tools at hand to tackle rising inequality and promote opportunities for all. For such policy packages to be successful, solid trust in institutions and effective social dialogue are essential. Reducing the growing divide between rich and poor and promoting opportunities for all requires policy packages in four main areas.*

*Women’s participation in economic life: governments need to pursue policies to eliminate the unequal treatment of men and women in the labour market and to remove barriers to female employment and career progression. This includes measures for increasing the earnings potential of women on low salaries and to address the glass ceiling.*

*Employment promotion and good-quality jobs: policies need to emphasise access to jobs and labour market integration. The focus must be on policies for the quantity and quality of jobs; jobs that offer career and investment possibilities; jobs that are stepping stones rather than dead ends. Addressing labour market segmentation is an important element of enhancing job quality and tackling inequality.*

*Skills and education: A focus on the early years, as well as on the needs of families with school children, is crucial in addressing socio-economic differences in education. More must be done to provide youth with the skills they need to get a good start in the labour market. With a rapidly evolving economy, further efforts, with the close involvement of business and unions, should be made in promoting a continuous up-grading of skills during the working life.*

*Tax-and-transfer systems for efficient redistribution: Adequately designed redistribution via taxes and transfers is a powerful instrument to contribute to more equality and more growth. In recent decades, the effectiveness of redistribution weakened in many countries due to working-age benefits not keeping pace with real wages and taxes becoming less progressive. Policies need to ensure that wealthier individuals but also multinational firms pay their share of the tax burden. Large and persistent losses of low-income groups underline the need for well-designed income-support policies and counter-cyclical social spending.*

* Reeskens, T. & Van Oorschot, W. (2013). Equity, equality, or need? A study of popular preferences for welfare redistribution principles across 24 European countries, Journal of European Public Policy, 20(8), 1174-1195, DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2012.752064

*Although European welfare states receive high levels of public support, insights into what kind of welfare state individuals prefer – i.e., one based on the redistributive principle of equity, of equality or of need – is scarce and fragmented. Using the 2008 wave of the European Social Survey, we find that most European populations share a preference for applying the equality principle to unemployment benefits, while they are divided over applying equity and equality for pension schemes. Individual determinants of preferences confirm that the ‘haves’ prefer equity over equality, while the ‘have-nots’ prefer the need principle more. At the country level, cross-national variation in redistribution preferences is low for unemployment benefits and cannot be explained by relevant context factors; preferences for pension redistribution depends upon its institutional design and social expenditure: welfare generosity curbs the preference for equity.*

*The equity principle posits that those who contribute more (e.g., by hightaxed incomes and consistent labour market trajectories), should receive more in case a social risk occurs to them. In practice, equity is applied by organizing social protection through social insurance. The need principle states that primarily, or even only, those in need (e.g., low income groups or long-term unemployed) should be provided with welfare provisions in order to prevent an accumulation of social risks, implying that the better off are seen as being able and responsible to provide for themselves. The principle of equality postulates that every citizen is entitled to the same type and degree of welfare provision, irrespective of the level of need or the significance of a person’s welfare state contributions.*

*They expect greater support for equality in the case of unemployment benefits redistribution, while the equity principle may be more preferred for pension provisions. One’s individual position in society affects these preferences. ‘Haves’ and ‘have-nots’ express different PRJs (principles of redistributive justice). They assume that being in a good socio-economic position, i.e., enjoying a high income and having a high educational degree, as well as being employed in the case of unemployment protection preferences, makes people more in favour of an equity-based redistribution. While the ‘have-nots’ may be more in favour of equality, they expect them to be especially supportive of the need principle, because this principle primarily targets redistribution to the poorest. They expect that a person’s political left–right orientation has an impact, supposing that the need principle is particularly favoured by the politically left, that the right is most supportive for equity, whereas the equality PRJ is mostly preferred by political centrists. Secondly, as religious people tend to be more altruistic, e.g., give more to charity, they assume that religious people are more in favour of the need PRJ.*

*They also argue that PRJs preferences relate to the context. Firstly, the norm-shaping function of public policy postulates that individual welfare preferences are an expression of the norms that support the policies that are in effect. Secondly, according to the thermostat function, policy and opinion are in a dyadic relationship: as long as public policy is not congruent with the ‘collective public preference’, individuals express dissatisfaction with present welfare policies. If the norms-shaping function is true, this would imply that people living in conservative welfare states would prefer the equity PRJ, people of universalistic welfare states the equality PRJ, and people living in liberal welfare states the need PRJ. However, there is more support to the thermostat argument, namely that there is a preference for change. If the norm-shaping function holds, we expect a smaller preference for the equity PRJ in case of universal pensions, while we expect a larger preference for equity in countries where private schemes are in effect. More severe policies emphasize the importance of work more, implying that this should lead to more equity-related preferences.*

*While Europeans are mixed between the equity and equality PRJ concerning old age pension redistribution, they give large support for equality for unemployment benefits redistribution. Equity is relatively more preferred among the ‘haves’ in society, i.e., people with higher income and educational degrees, while a redistribution based on need is especially favoured by ‘have-nots’, i.e., people with lower educational level, with lower income, people on benefit and the longer-term unemployed. The need PRJ is also more preferred by people who endorse a more altruistic perspective, namely leftist people, those concerned with others being impoverished, and religious people. Argumentation gives support to the thermostat model that argues that public opinion demands change from redistributive policies. Policy indicators confirm the norm-shaping function of public policy, as individual PRJ preferences are highly associated with the country’s institutional logic on old age pension redistribution.*