

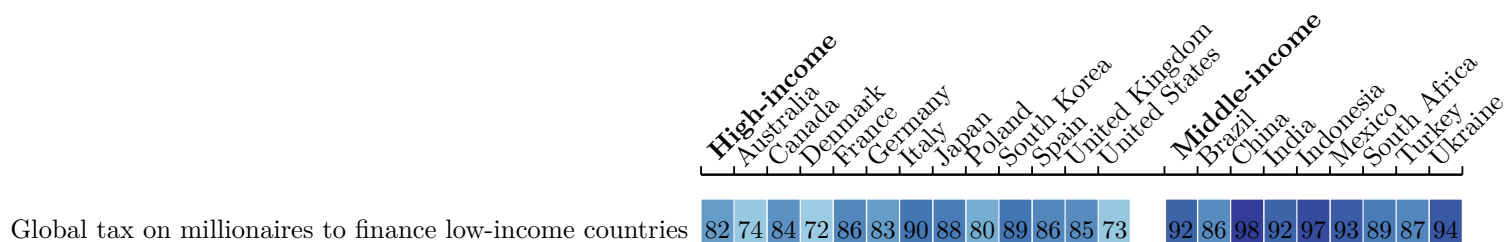


A Global Wealth Tax – Policy Brief

September 21, 2023 – [Link to most recent version](#)

[Link to most recent version](#)

Figure 1: Support for a Global Wealth Tax (in percent).



1 Summary

Fabre et al. (2023) survey attitudes toward global policies in 20 among the largest countries and find near consensus for a global tax on millionaires that would finance low-income countries. The world's richest 1% (those with a wealth above €900,000) own 38% of global wealth (Chancel et al. 2022), and the wealth in excess of €1 million represents 24% of global wealth. It is logical that the other 99% massively support taxing the wealthiest. What is more interesting, 90% of Americans and 92% of Europeans want to pool at least 10% of the revenues of a global wealth tax to finance low-income countries. When asked the preferred amount that should finance low-income countries, the average answer is one third.

In this policy brief, we propose a global wealth tax and specify how its revenues should be allocated between countries (Section 2), we estimate the distributive effects of such a tax (Section 3), and show that it would be strongly supported all over the world (Section 4).

*The author is Adrien Fabre, CNRS researcher in economics at CIREN. E-mail: adrien.fabre@cnrs.fr.

2 Design

Coordinated national wealth taxes. While action at a global level reduces tax avoidance, taxing wealth at the national level already makes a significant dent on inequality and generates important revenues. The implementation of national wealth taxes should therefore not be delayed by the wait of a global wealth tax. We call like-minded political parties of all countries to include a wealth tax proposal in their platform, and implement it when they arrive in power. We propose below a design of wealth tax that can be replicated in any country so that national wealth taxes would be compatible and part of a global wealth tax system.

A progressive tax schedule. Let us introduce a basic example of what a moderate wealth tax can raise, we call it the “basic” tax schedule. It consists of a 2% tax on wealth in excess of \$5 million, a 6% marginal tax rate above \$100 million, and 10% above \$1 billion. This basic tax would raise \$1.85 trillion each year, that is 1.76% of the Gross World Product (GWP). [Chancel et al. \(2022\)](#) offer a [world wealth tax simulator](#) that allows estimating the revenues of a custom global wealth tax by world region.¹ For example, a progressive wealth tax with the following schedule could raise 6% of the GWP: 0.5% marginal tax rate between \$500,000 and \$1 million, 1% between \$1 and \$2 million, 3% between \$2 and \$5 million, 5% between \$5 and \$20 million, 10% between \$20 and \$100 million, and 20% above \$100 million. 6% of the GWP is also a good estimate of the long-term revenues that can be reasonably expected from a strongly progressive global wealth tax,² though more can be collected in the short term with an even more progressive tax (see e.g. [Chancel et al. 2022](#) who propose a top marginal rate of 90%). Ideally, the tax schedule should be defined by democratically aggregating people’s preferences ([Fabre 2022](#)).

A minimum tax to finance lower-income countries. We propose that all countries introduce the *basic tax schedule* as a minimum wealth tax, and then top it up with the progressive wealth tax of their choice, such as the one just described. Half of the basic tax should be pooled and transferred to lower-income countries. More could be pooled, at the discretion of each country. An ad hoc Fund would collect the pooled revenues and allocate them to lower-income countries’ governments. This Fund could decide to manage a country’s revenues directly if the government seriously violates of human rights or would divert a substantial fraction of the revenues. In such cases, projects and public services would be financed by the Fund and supervised by multilateral development agencies.

¹Similar simulators exist for [the U.S.](#) ([Saez & Zucman 2019](#)) and [the UK](#) while [Kapeller et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Oxfam \(2022\)](#) offer similar estimates for the EU and many countries, respectively. Despite differences in some assumptions and the data used, all these simulators and calculations yield comparable estimates.

²The last tax schedule applied to the U.S. and rebated equally to all Americans would raise 6% of the U.S. in the long term according to the [simulator](#) of [Blanchet \(2022\)](#), and a similar fraction can be raised at the global level using an appropriate tax schedule.

Allocating the revenues in function of the GDP per capita. The revenues should be allocated in priority to the poorest countries. A good indicator of poverty is the poverty gap: it expresses the minimum amount that would be required to lift everyone above the poverty line. However, allocating revenues in function of the poverty gap would disincentivize countries' governments to effectively address poverty. To avoid bad incentives, it is preferable to allocate the revenues in function of a well-measured indicator correlated to the poverty gap. We propose an allocation key based on GDP per capita, according to how it predicts the poverty gap predicted in a linear regression (see more details below).

3 Distributive effects

Taxing the global top 1%. To fully specify its distributive effects, we would need to know what the wealth tax would finance. As it can be used to finance a range of programs which benefit different people, the only precise estimates we can give relate to the losers of the policy: the wealthiest people who would be taxed. The basic tax would only affect people with a wealth above \$5 million, which represent less than 0.1% of the world adult population (0.7% of the population in the U.S. and Canada, and 0.2% in Europe). A tax on all millionaires (in dollars) would affect 1.2% of adults worldwide (7% in the U.S. and Canada, 3% in Europe). While we do not detail the distributive effects between individuals, we describe the distributive effects between countries.

1% of the Global World Product redistributed to lower income countries. Assuming that countries do not pool for low-income countries more revenues than half of the basic tax, the redistribution between countries is financed by a 1% tax on wealth in excess of \$5 million, a 3% marginal tax rate above \$100 million, and 5% above \$1 billion. Such a tax would raise 0.9% of the Gross World Product, that is \$926 billion per year.³ The tax would raise \$392 billion from the U.S. and Canada (that is 2.11% of their GDP), \$221 billion from East Asia (0.73%), \$172 billion from Europe (1.00%), \$51 billion from South and South East Asia (0.32%), \$36 billion from Latin America (0.49%), \$27 billion from the Middle East and North Africa (0.35%), \$20 billion from Russia and Central Asia (0.46%), and \$5 billion from Sub-Saharan Africa (0.14%).

Two billion people lifted out of stark poverty. To allocate the revenues between countries, we regress the poverty gap on GDP per capita, using a quadratic specification with the logarithm of both variables, weighting each country by its population, and excluding countries with zero poverty gap or above the world average in GDP per capita (see Figure 2). We use the GDP per capita in nominal rather than in purchasing power parity (PPP) as it better reflects the capacity to pay on the world market. We use the poverty gap at \$3.65

³The calculations were realized using the [world wealth tax simulator](#).

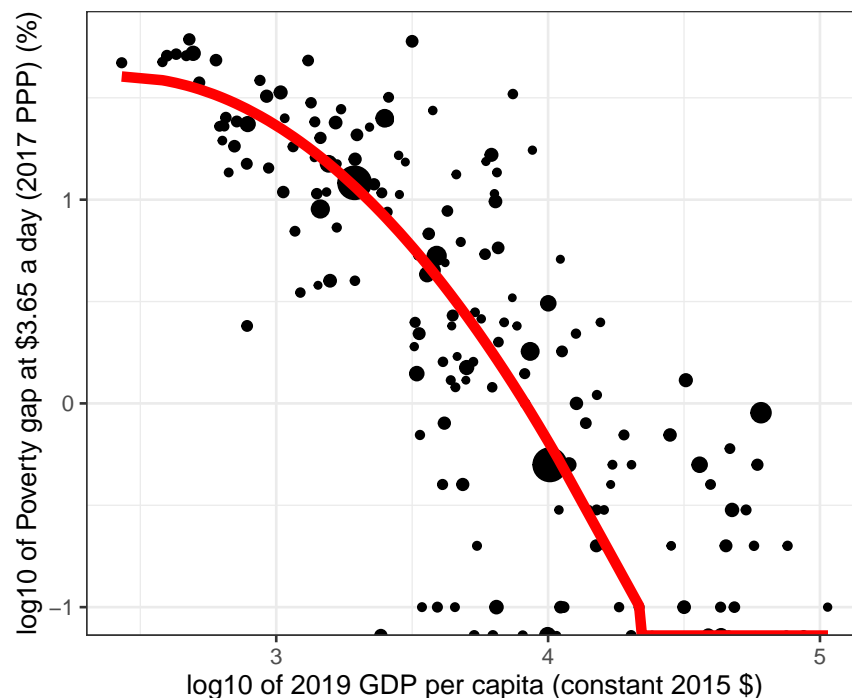
a day (in 2017 PPP).⁴ The global average poverty gap is 8% of the poverty line, which corresponds to about \$850 billion per year in PPP. We use the poverty line at \$3.65 (rather than \$2.15 or \$6.85) because it corresponds to a financing need of the same magnitude as the revenues from the tax. In other words, the redistribution operated by the tax should roughly allow to close the poverty gap at \$3.65 a day, i.e. to lift above that threshold the 24% of people who live below it.

Large transfers to Sub-Saharan Africa. Table 1 (in Appendix) gives statistics on the revenues allocated to large countries (above 30 million inhabitants).⁵ Sub-Saharan Africa would receive 39% of total revenues. Indeed, due to its high poverty gap, Sub-Saharan Africa would receive \$26 per month per capita, 3 times the global average, which would amount to 25% of its GDP.

⁴The World Bank defines the poverty gap as “the mean shortfall in income from the poverty line [here \$3.65 a day] (counting the nonpoor as having zero shortfall), expressed as a percentage of the poverty line”. For both variables, we use the last available data from the [World Bank](#).

⁵We do not show countries which are allocated zero revenues, or countries (like Poland) which are allocated less than 0.07% of their GDP.

Figure 2: Poverty gap regressed on GDP per capita. The red line represents the *statutory poverty gap* used to compute the allocation key between countries of the revenues of a global wealth tax ($R^2 = .76$).



In the long term, funding carbon removal. After some years, stark poverty should be greatly reduced (if not totally eliminated). Given that poorer countries would receive more revenues, income inequality will diminish, especially between low-income countries and lower-middle-income countries. Therefore, as the policy goes on, the transfers would be less concentrated and would become more evenly spread out over low- and middle-income countries. As the poverty gap at \$3.65 a day would vanish at some point, the formula will need to change and allocate revenues based on a higher poverty line instead. In the second half of the century, the use of revenues could progressively shift from funding low-income countries to funding negative CO₂ emissions. Indeed, 5-15 GtCO₂ of carbon removal will be needed each year (through nature-based solutions like reforestation, bioenergy with carbon capture and storage, or direct air capture) to meet the climate target adopted in the Paris agreement (IPCC 2022). The global wealth tax could provide an appropriate source of funding for tenders to remove predefined amounts of CO₂ from the atmosphere in line with the climate target (Edenhofer et al. (2023) estimate the funding need at 0.3-3% of world GDP in the second half of the century).

4 Support

Near consensus for a global wealth tax. Fabre et al. (2023) run representative surveys in 20 countries, on about 2,000 respondents per country. They ask the support for “a tax on all millionaires in dollars around the world to finance low-income countries that comply with international standards regarding climate action [which] would finance infrastructure and public services such as access to drinking water, healthcare, and education”, in a 5-Likert scale from *strongly oppose* to *strongly support*. There is absolute majority support in each country, from 53% in the U.S. to 86% in China. Figure 1 shows that the relative support (excluding *Indifferent* answers) ranges from 72% in Denmark to 98% in China.

Fabre et al. (2023) also run complementary surveys on 2,000 Americans and on 3,000 Europeans (representative of France, Germany, Spain and the UK). Asking almost the same question (the only difference being that the revenues are allocated to low-income countries *unconditional* on their climate action), they find comparable levels of support. The global wealth tax obtains absolute majority support in each of the five Western countries, with a relative support ranging from 70% in the U.S. to 90% in Spain (Figure 3).

People want one third of tax revenues for low-income countries. Fabre et al. (2023) also ask respondents what percentage of the global tax revenues should be pooled to finance low-income countries, if a global tax on wealth (in excess of \$5 million) were in place. In each country, at least 88% of respondents answer a positive amount, with an overall average of 30% (Germany) to 36% (U.S., France) (Figure 4).

A platform is preferred when it includes a global wealth tax. Fabre et al. (2023) make people choose between two random platforms. In Europe, respondents are prompted

Figure 3: Support for a global wealth tax.
 “Do you support or oppose a tax on millionaires of all countries to finance low-income countries?
 Such tax would finance infrastructure and public services such as access to drinking water, healthcare, and education.”

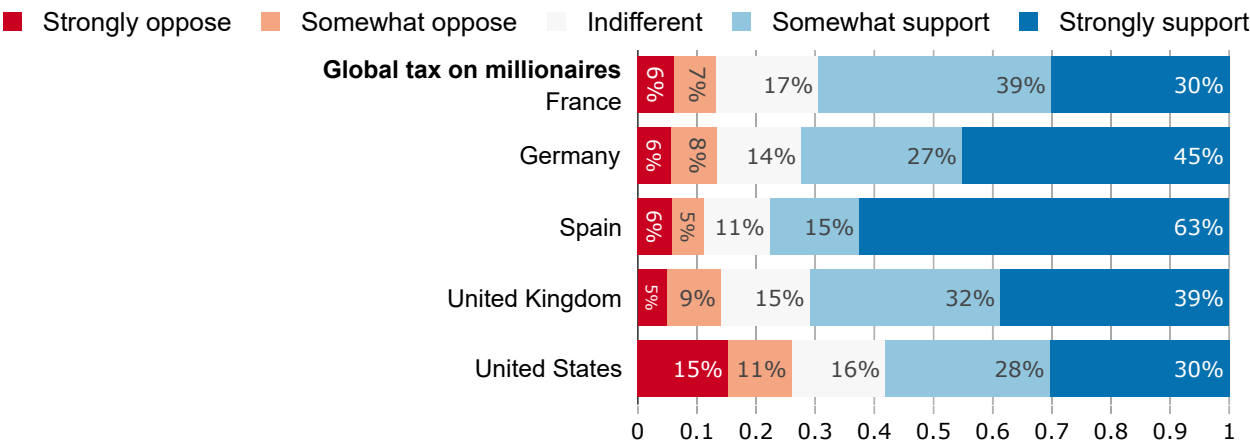
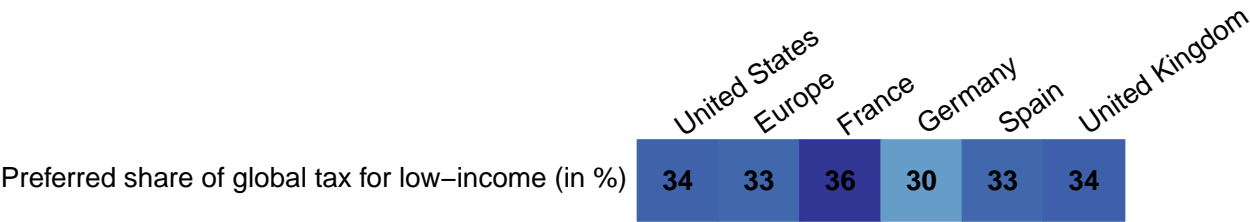


Figure 4: Percent of global wealth tax that should finance low-income countries (*mean*).



to imagine that a left- or center-left coalition will win the next election and are asked what platform they would prefer that coalition to have campaigned on. In the U.S., the question is framed as a hypothetical duel in a Democratic primary, and asked only to non-Republicans. A policy (or an absence of policy) is randomly drawn for each platform in each of five categories: *economic issues*, *societal issues*, *climate policy*, *tax system*, *foreign policy* (Figure 5). A platform that includes a global tax on millionaires rather than no foreign policy is 5 to 13 percentage points (p.p.) more likely to be preferred in all countries (the effect is significant and at least 9 p.p. in all countries but Spain). These effects are large, and not far from the effects of the policies most influential on the platforms, which range between 15 and 18 p.p. in most countries (and 27 p.p. in Spain) and all relate to improved public services (in particular healthcare, housing and education).

A global wealth tax is one of the main priorities. Each respondent is then asked to allocate 100 points among six policies picked at random (among the policies used in the previous question), with the instruction that “the more you give points to a policy, the

more you support it". For each policy presented, the average support is thus 16.67 points. The global tax on millionaires ranks at worst in fifth position (out of 15 or 17) in every country, and receives an average number of points from 18.3 (Spain) to 22.9 (Germany). In Germany, the global tax on millionaires is the most prioritized policy. In other countries, the most prioritized policies relate to improved public services (in particular healthcare, housing and education) and are thus complementary to a wealth tax, which can finance them.

We are here to feed the public debate on global redistribution. We welcome counter-proposals, criticisms and suggestions concerning our policy brief (including pull requests). Feel free to engage the discussion on [github](#).

Figure 5: Political preferences in the UK.

Effects of the presence of a policy (rather than none from this domain) in a random platform on the likelihood that it is preferred to another random platform. (For the other countries, see [Fabre et al. 2023](#))

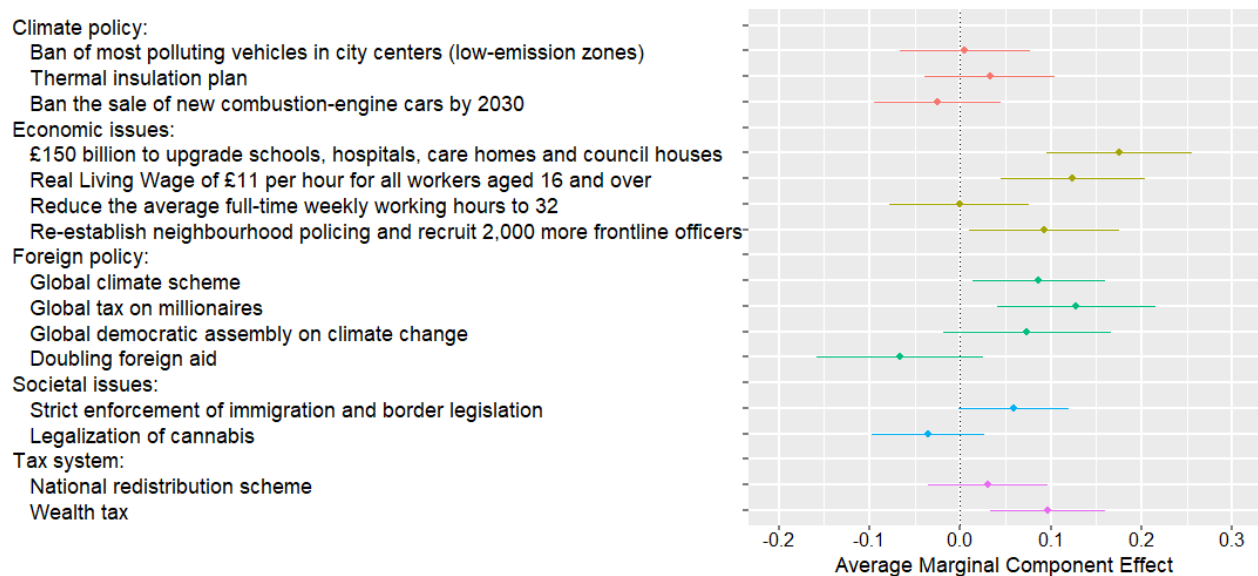


Figure 6: Mean prioritization of policies.

Mean number of points allocated policies to express intensity of support (among six policies chosen at random). Blue color means that the policy has been awarded more points than the average policy.

	United States	Europe	France	Germany	Spain	United Kingdom
econ1	13	21	10	14	35	31
econ2: [Higher minimum wage] (DE: Bürgerversicherung)	23	22	25	21	22	23
econ3	21	15	13	18	17	13
econ4	28	22	27	17	24	20
soc1	10	17	13	17	12	21
soc2	13	9	14	8	10	8
climate1	14	15	11	18	20	12
climate2: Thermal insulation plan (US: also transport)	20	18	22	19	15	17
climate3: Ban the sale of new combustion-engine cars by 2030	11	9	8	8	9	11
tax1: National redistribution scheme	14	15	16	15	15	15
tax2: Wealth tax (ES: raise tax on top incomes)	19	19	21	18	17	19
foreign1: Global climate scheme	15	20	20	23	16	17
foreign2: Global tax on millionaires	21	20	20	23	19	20
foreign3: Global democratic assembly on climate change	15	15	15	17	14	13
foreign4: Doubling foreign aid	9	11	13	14	9	8

Table 1: Allocation of the global wealth tax revenues.

	Revenues over GDP (in percent)	Revenues per capita (in \$ per month)	Revenues per capita over average revenues p.c.	Global share of revenues
Madagascar	107.62	43	4.69	1.78
DRC	102.87	42	4.63	5.92
Afghanistan	80.90	39	4.30	2.27
Mozambique	77.67	39	4.25	1.80
Yemen	60.84	36	3.89	1.67
Ethiopia	50.57	33	3.62	5.71
Uganda	38.31	29	3.22	1.95
Tanzania	30.89	27	2.92	2.46
Nepal	29.63	26	2.86	1.10
Pakistan	15.98	19	2.11	6.34
Bangladesh	13.81	18	1.96	4.23
Myanmar	13.45	18	1.93	1.32
Kenya	12.17	17	1.83	1.26
India	8.55	14	1.51	26.96
Sudan	8.47	14	1.50	0.90
Ghana	8.17	13	1.47	0.63
Ukraine	5.11	10	1.13	0.52
Nigeria	4.73	10	1.08	3.01
Angola	4.45	10	1.04	0.48
Uzbekistan	2.66	7	0.76	0.34
Vietnam	2.40	7	0.72	0.89
Morocco	2.28	6	0.70	0.33
Philippines	1.91	6	0.63	0.92
Egypt	1.68	5	0.58	0.81
Indonesia	1.54	5	0.55	1.89
Algeria	1.29	4	0.49	0.28
Iraq	0.84	3	0.37	0.21
Iran	0.77	3	0.35	0.39
South Africa	0.42	2	0.23	0.18
Colombia	0.38	2	0.22	0.14
Thailand	0.37	2	0.22	0.19
Peru	0.35	2	0.21	0.09
Brazil	0.15	1	0.12	0.32
Russia	0.09	1	0.09	0.15
Mexico	0.09	1	0.08	0.14
China	0.09	1	0.08	1.46

Bibliography

- T. Blanchet. Uncovering the Dynamics of the Wealth Distribution, 2022. [Link](#). [2](#)
- L. Chancel, T. Piketty, E. Saez, & G. Zucman. World Inequality Report 2022. 2022. [Link](#). [1](#), [2](#)
- O. Edenhofer, M. Franks, M. Kalkuhl, & A. Runge-Metzger. On the Governance of Carbon Dioxide Removal – A Public Economics Perspective. 2023. [Link](#). [5](#)
- A. Fabre. French favored redistributions derived from surveys. *Revue économique*, 2022. [Link](#). [2](#)
- A. Fabre, T. Douenne, & L. Mattauch. International Attitudes Toward Global Policies. *CIREN Working Paper*, 2023. [Link](#). [1](#), [5](#), [7](#)
- A. IPCC. WGIII Summary For Policymakers. Technical report, 2022. [Link](#). [5](#)
- J. Kapeller, S. Leitch, & R. Wildauer. A European wealth tax. 2021. [Link](#). [2](#)
- Oxfam. Taxing Extreme Wealth. Technical report, 2022. [Link](#). [2](#)
- E. Saez & G. Zucman. *The Triumph of Injustice: How the Rich Dodge Taxes and How to Make Them Pay*. W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY, first edition edition, 2019. ISBN 978-1-324-00272-7. [2](#)