International Attitudes Toward Global Policies

Adrien Fabre[1,2], Thomas Douenne[3] and Linus Mattauch[4]

[1]*CNRS*

[2]*CIRED*

[3]*University of Amsterdam*

[4]*TU Berlin*

The "global climate scheme" (a global carbon price funding a global basic income) would be an effective and progressive way to combat climate change, and poverty. Yet, such policy is mostly absent from political platforms and the policy debate. Using surveys on 40,000 respondents in 20 countries covering 72% of global CO_2 emissions, we document majority support for this and other global policies. Using a complementary survey on 3,000 U.S. respondents,we test several hypotheses that could could reconcile strong stated support with a lack of salience of these issues. The complementary analyses show that the stated support is mostly sincere, although we cannot rule out insincerity for 3% to 9% of the population from the willingness to sign a real-stake petition and a list experiment, respectively. Global redistributive policies rank high (though not highest) in the prioritization of policies. Conjoint analyses reveal that the Democratic party would not significantly lose votes if it endorsed the global climate scheme, while a candidate at the Democratic primary would actually win votes by doing so. Accurate beliefs about the level of support for the scheme dismisses the hypothesis of pluralistic ignorance of the support. Strong universalistic attitudes are con-

firmed in more general questions, suggesting that the support cannot be explained away by malleable opinion or experimenter demand. Finally, we conclude that there is no compelling reason why global policies do not enter the public debate or political platforms, as they seem genuinely supported by a majority of the population.

Ethical theories often warrent transfers from high- to low-income people, hence from high- to low-income countries. This is the case of utilitarianism, the benchmark ethical theory used in economics. Utilitarianism assigns the same weight to each person and thus considers that a dollar is better allocated to a low-income person, which has a higher marginal utility than a high-income person.[1]

Addressing global poverty, inequalities and climate change are at the heart of the universally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). It has been pointed out that low-income countries generally do not have enough domestic resources to eliminate the poverty gap in the short run.[2] In other words, it would hardly be possible to achieve the first SDG and end extreme poverty by 2030 without international transfers.

Climate change is another issue that calls for a global response and international transfers. Postulating that each human has an equal right to emit CO_2, low emitters have a legitimate claim *vis-à-vis* high emitters, that can be settled by monetary transfers. Coupling this burden-sharing principle to the carbon budget (remaining emissions that would be compatible with the Paris agreement) naturally defines a global climate policy. We call it the "Global climate scheme" and denote it G; it consists of a global cap-and-trade system where emission rights are auctioned each year

to polluting firms and the revenues finance a global basic income. Using the price and emissions trajectories from the Stern-Stiglitz report,[3] we estimate that the basic income would amount to $30 per month for each human above 15 in 2030, enough to lift out of extreme poverty the 700 million people who live with less than PPP $2 per day. Conversely, high emitters like a typical American (with median U.S. CO_2 emissions) would lose in net $85 per month, as they would face $115 per month in price increases (assuming a carbon price of $90/t$CO_2$ in 2030).

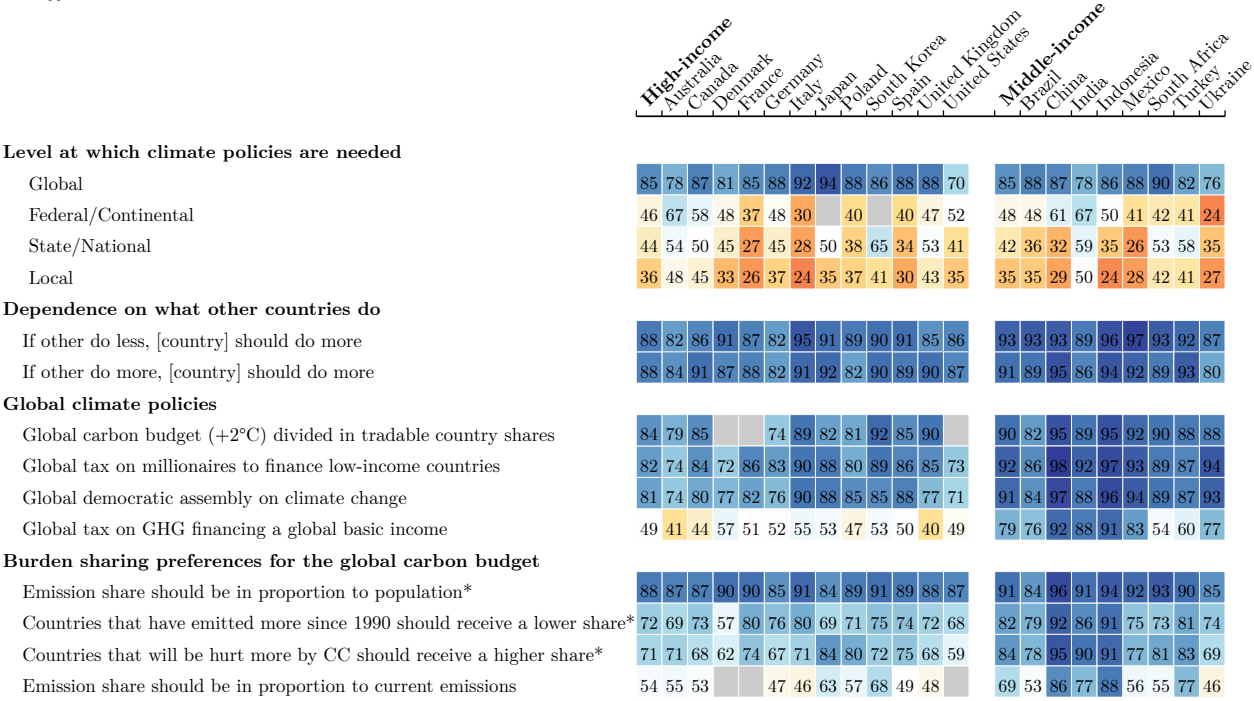
If high emitters share universalistic ethical values, we expect strong support for G, even in high-income countries. On the contrary, if people defend their own financial interest, we expect low support for G in high-income countries.

In this paper, we study attitudes toward global policies that address climate change, global poverty or inequalities, with a focus on G. We measure stated support for different global policies using unpublished results from a survey[4] on climate attitudes conducted in 2021 on 40,680 respondents from 20 countries covering 72% of global CO_2 emissions. We then conduct a representative survey on 3,000 U.S. respondents to study in detail the sincerity and rationales behind the support for G, the attitudes toward various global policies, global redistribution, and universalistic values.

1 Results

Global support The global survey shows strong support for climate policies at the global level (Figure 1). When asked "At which level(s) do you think public policies to tackle climate change need to be put in place?", 70% (in the U.S.) to 94% (in Japan) choose the global level. Meanwhile,

Figure 1: Share of support (somewhat or strongly) for the main global policies among non-*indifferent* (n = 40,680).



the European level is chosen by less than half of the European respondents while the federal level is chosen by only 52% of U.S. respondents. More local levels are generally chosen less than broader ones. This preference for the global level is consistent with the two of the three key motives identified to support climate policies:[4–6] effectiveness and fairness (the third being self-interest).

Several global policies obtain an absolute majority support in all countries: "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", "a global democratic assembly whose role would be to draft international treaties against climate change [where] each adult across the

world would have one vote to elect members of the assembly" (though this one receives only 48% of support in the U.S.), and an international emission trading scheme where "countries that emit more than their national share would pay a fee to countries that emit less than their share". In high-income countries, this global quota obtains 64% of absolute (i.e. *somewhat* or *strong*) support and 84% of relative support (i.e. excluding *indifferent* answers). The support is even higher in middle-income countries, though one should interpret the results with caution in middle-income countries as their samples are only representative of the online population (young, graduated and urban people are over-represented). After the support for the global quota, we ask how the carbon budget should be divided among countries. The preferred burden-sharing rule is to allocate the rights to emit on an equal per capita basis: this fairness principle secures an absolute majority support in all countries, and a relative majority support never below 84%. Taking into account historical responsibilities and vulnerability to climate damages is also popular, though less consensual, while grand-fathering (i.e. allocating emission shares in proportion to current emissions) comes last everywhere. The Global climate scheme, i.e. a global quota where emission rights are allocated on an equal per capita basis, has the same distributive effects as a global carbon tax that would fund a global basic income. We also test the support for this policy, but here we specify to the respondents the distributive effects: that it would lift the 700 million people who earn less than $2/day out of extreme poverty, and that the typical person in their country would lose a certain amount (that we specify) due to the price increases. Despite their similarity, the global tax is less supported than the global quota, and it even fails to obtain a majority in Anglo-saxon countries. This lower support is likely due to the fact that distributive effects are made salient in the case of

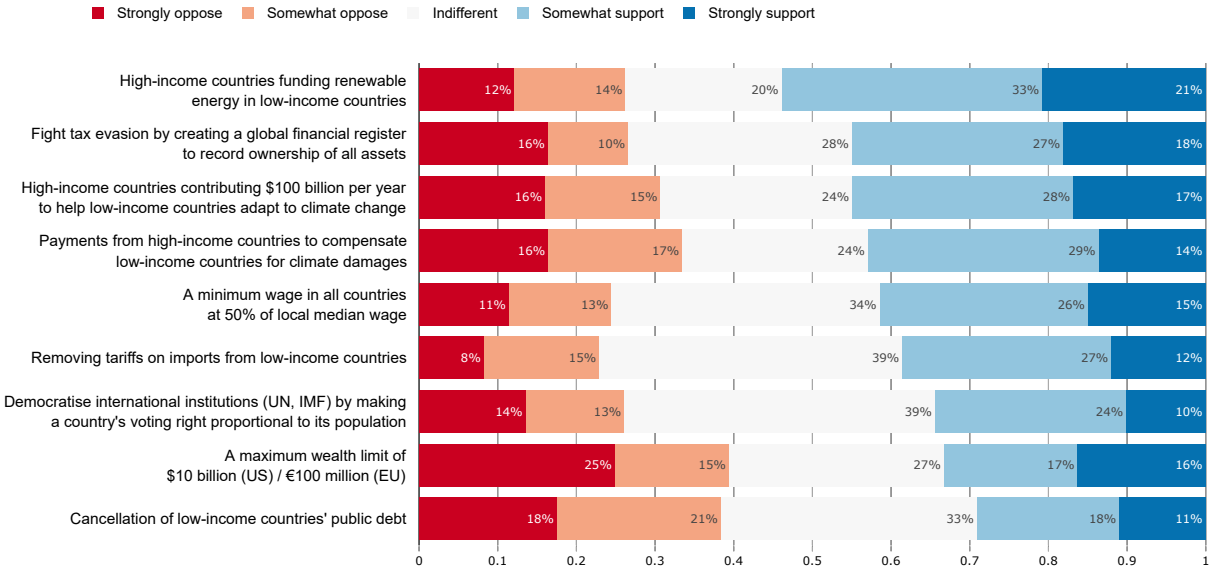
the tax, an interpretation that is consistent with the level of support for the global quota once we make the distributive effects salient, which we do in the complementary surveys.

Stated support for various policies In the complementary U.S. survey, we describe the Global climate scheme (G), explain its distributive effects (specifying the amounts at stake), test the understanding that typical people would lose in high-income countries and that the poorest humans would win using an incentivized question, and then give the correct answer. We proceed the same way for a National redistribution scheme (R) that would tax the top 5% to finance cash transfers offseting the monetary loss of G for the median emitter, expecting people to find out that the richest would lose and the typical people in their country would win. Then, we display summaries of the schemes' description to make sure that the respondents remember them ask again incentivized question of comprehension, and latter give the expected answer that a typical fellow citizen would neither win nor lose with G and R combined. Finally, we ask directly ask the support for G and for R in simple *Yes*/*No*: the stated support for each is at 54% (n = 3,000).

We also test support for more realistic global policies (Figure 2). All receive relative majority support but two: "a maximum wealth limit of $10 billion" and the "cancellation of low-income countries' public debt". Climate-related policies are particularly popular: "high-income countries funding renewable energy in low-income countries" obtains absolute majority support while loss and damages compensation (which was approved at the COP27) receives a relative support of 57%.

After explaining that "0.4% of U.S. government spending (that is, 0.2% of U.S. GDP) is spent on foreign aid to reduce poverty in low-income countries", less than 20% state that U.S.

Figure 2: Support for various global policies in the U.S. (n = 3,000).



foreign aid should be reduced while 57% state that it should be increased, including 14% who support an inconditional increase. To the 43% who answer that aid should be increased but only if some conditions are respected. The three conditions most chosen are all largely respected by the Global climate scheme: "that we can be sure the aid reaches people in need and money is not diverted" (chosen by 74%)," that recipient countries comply with climate targets and human rights" (59%), and "that other high-income countries also increase their foreign aid" (44%). On the other side, not wishing to increase their country's foreign aid is mostly justified by prioritizing one's fellow citizens or viewing each country as responsible for its own fate.

Sincerity of support We use several methods to assess the sincerity of the support for the Global climate scheme (G): a list experiment, a real-stake petition, conjoint analyses, and the prioritization of policies. All methods suggest that the support is either completely sincere, or the share of insincere answers is limited.

The tacit support for G measured through the list experiment is 46%, i.e. 8 p.p. lower than at the direct question. This may be the sign of a social norm pushing some people to state that they support G although they secretly do not. Still, if there is a social norm in favor of G, there is a similar norm in favor of the National redistribution scheme, as the gap between the tacit and direct support for it is comparable (at 7 p.p.).

When told that "we will send the results to the U.S. President's office, informing him what share of American people are willing to endorse the Global climate scheme", 4 p.p. fewer people are willing to sign a petition for G than to simply state their support. For the National redistribution scheme, the proportion of support is not significantly different in the petition and in the simple question.

In our *conjoint analyses*, we ask respondents to make five choices between pairs of political platforms. The first conjoint analysis suggests that G is supported for itself, independently from being complemented by a national climate policy (denoted C, "Coal exit" in the U.S., "Thermal insulation plan" in Europe) and the National redistribution scheme (denoted R). Indeed, 55% of (n = 3,000) respondents prefer the combination of C, R and G to the combination of C and R alone, indicating a similar support for G conditional on R and C than for G alone (as it does not significantly differ from the direct support of 53%). For the second analysis, we split the sample into four random branches. This analysis shows that the preference for C, R and G together is as high, at 55% (n = 750), if the alternative is R alone; that the support for G conditional on R, at 59% (n = 750), is somewhat higher than the direct support for G; that the support for C conditional on

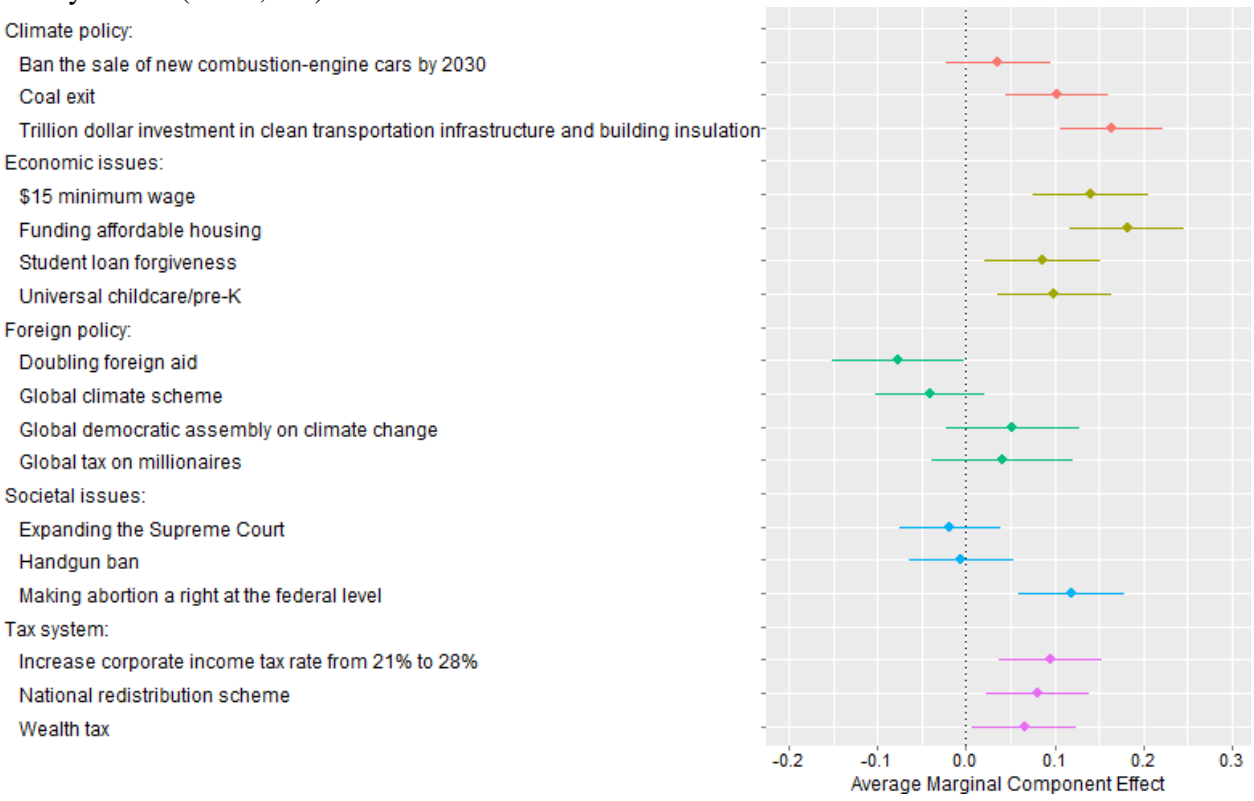
Table 1: Number of supported policies in the list experiment in function of the composition of the list. G stands for the Global climate scheme and R for the National redistribution scheme (n = 3,000).

	Number of supported policies
Mean	1.364
List contains: G	0.464***
	(0.054)
List contains: R	0.494***
	(0.053)
List contains: G $\times$ R	$-$0.001
	(0.091)
Observations	1,799
R^2	0.111

R is even higher, at 63% (n = 750); which is confirmed by the fact that 52% (n = 750) prefer C to G (both) conditional on R. In other words, there is majority support for G and for C, slightly more people prefer C but C does not act as a substitute for G, and some people find G complementary to R though the number of people requiring R to support G remains small.

The third analysis suggests that a Democratic candidate would not significantly lose voting share at the 2024 presidential election if he or she were to endorse G. To estimate this, we present to two random branches of the sample hypothetical Democratic and Republican platforms that differ only by the presence (or not) of G in the Democratic platform. Although the share of respondents choosing "None of them" is slightly higher (at 13% instead of 11%) when the Democratic platform includes G, the share choosing the Democrat is not significantly lower (52% in both cases). Our last two analyses is run on the subsample of non-Republicans (n = 1,250), i.e. the respondents who choose *Democrat*, *Independent*, *Non-Affiliated* or *Other* for their political affiliation. We frame the choice between two platforms as a hypothetical duel at the 2024 Democratic primary and force the respondents to choose between candidate A or B. In the fourth analysis, 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 3). Except for the category *foreign policy*, which features G 42% of the time, the policies are prominent progressive policies and they are drawn uniformly. When a platform features G and not the other, the one with G is chosen 53% (which is significantly more than half) of the time (n = 3,000). The fifth analysis draws random Democratic platforms in a similar ways, except that candidate A's platform always contains G while candidate B includes no foreign policy. In this case, 61% of respondents choose

Figure 3: Conjoint analysis (asked only to non-Republicans). Average Marginal Component Effects (relative to the baseline: an absence of policy of that category) of policies in the choice of candidate for a hypothetical duel in the 2024 Democratic primary, where both platforms are randomly drawn (n = 2,000).



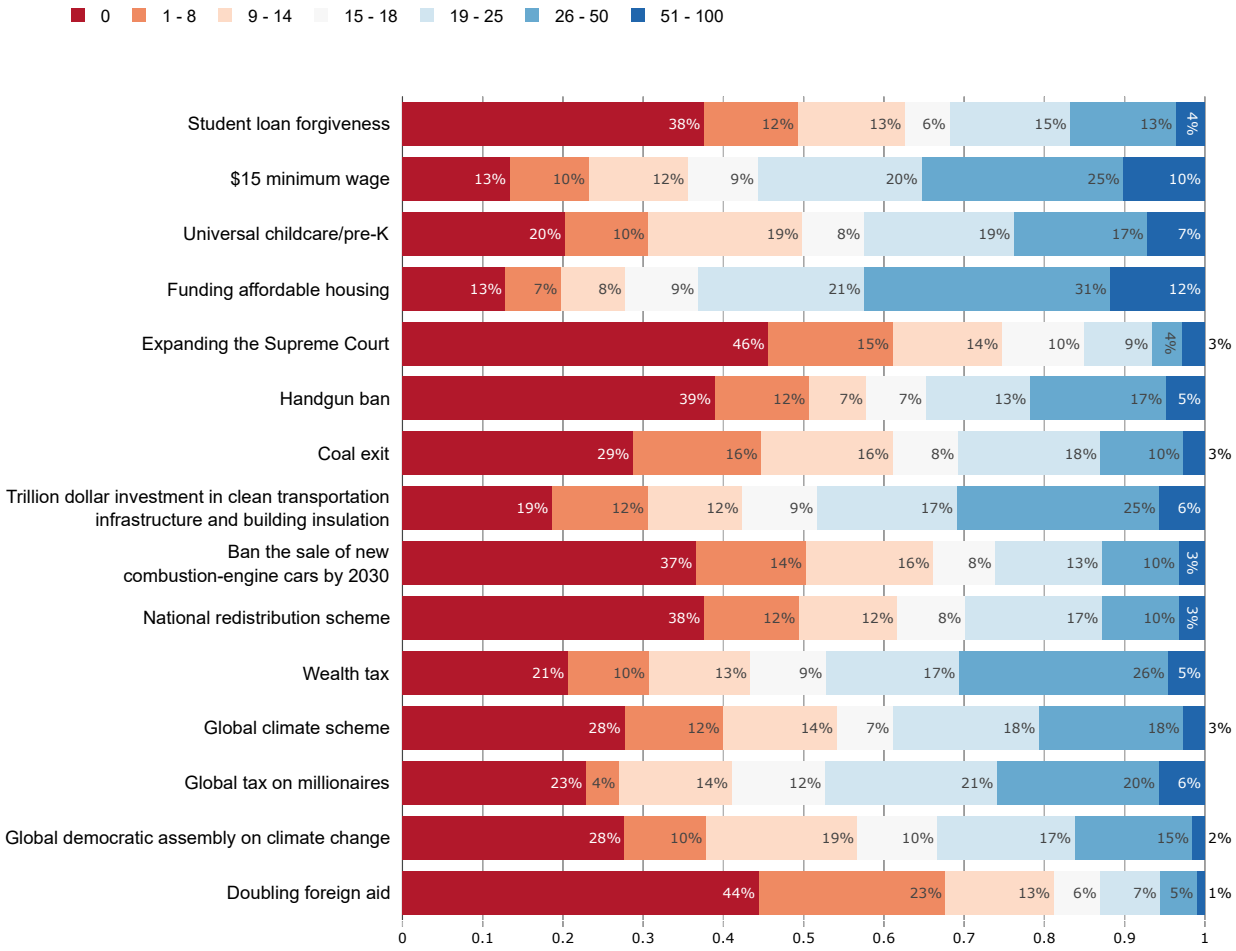
A (n = 3,000). In short, our conjoint analyses indicate that a candidate at the Democratic primary would have more chances to obtain the nomination by endorsing G, and this endorsement would not penalize her or him at the presidential election.

At the end of the survey, we pick six policies at random (and uniformly) among the progressive policies used in the last conjoint analyses, and ask respondents to allocate 100 points (using sliders) among them, 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 (Figure 4). G ranks in the middle of all policies (9th. out of 17), with an average number of points of 15.3 which is only slightly lower than average. It is higher than to "ban the sale of new combustion-engine cars by 2030" (13.4) and "coal exit" (10.0), but lower than the third climate policy: "trillion dollar investment in clean transportation infrastructure and building insulation" (20.3). The support for other globally redistributive policies is variable: "Doubling foreign aid" is the least supported policy (8.4), while the "Global tax on millionaires" is one of the five policies with more than 20 points (20.2), and the "global democratic assembly on climate change" is just below G (14.5). The most supported policies are "Funding affordable housing" (28.5), "$15 minimum wage" (23.8), and "Universal childcare/pre-K" (22.1).

Second-order beliefs To explain a strong support for G despite its absence from political platforms and the public debate, we hypothesized pluralistic ignorance, i.e. that most people and policy-makers wrongly perceive G as unpopular. People would then hide their support for such globally redistributive policies, knowing that advocating for them would be vain. We do not find any evidence of pluralistic ignorance in an incentivized question on the perceived support. On the contrary, people have quite accurate beliefs regarding the level of support for G. Indeed, the mean (resp. quartiles) perceived support is 52.0% (resp. 36, 53, 69%, n = 1,500) vs. an actual support of 53%. For the record, the second-order beliefs are equally accurate for R, with mean (resp. quartiles) perceived support of 54.7% (resp. 40, 55, 71%, n = 1,500) vs. 56%.

Figure 4: Prioritization of policies. Each respondent faces six policies taken at random from the ones below and allocates 100 points among them to signal the strength of their support for each one (n = 3,000).



Universalistic values Another hypothesis to explain the discrepancy between the lack of interest for global policies in the public debate despite a strong stated support is that opinions on the topic are weak and malleable. A way to test this is to ask broad question on people's values, to see whether their core values are consistent with universalism. Asked what group they defend when they vote (n = 3,000), 19% choose "sentient beings (humans and animals)", 25% "humans", 34% "Americans", 15% "My family and myself", and the rest (7%) choose another group (mostly "My State or region" or "People sharing my culture or religion"). The first two categories can be described as universalist, and they represent close to one out of two people. The share of universalist even constitutes a majority (at 51%) of non-Republicans. When asked what should U.S. diplomats defend in international climate negotiations, only 14% prefer "U.S. interests, even if it goes against global justice"; 25% prefer global justice (mitigated or not by U.S. interests) and the bulk of respondents (37%) prefer "U.S. interests, to the extent it respects global justice" (n = 3,000). Finally, when asked to judge the extent to which climate change, global poverty and U.S. inequality are an issue, climate change is generally viewed as the biggest problem (with a mean of 0.40 once we recode answers between -2 and 2), followed by global poverty (0.20) and U.S. inequality (0.19, n = 3,000). Overall, answers to these broad value questions are consistent with half of Americans supporting global policies like G, as people find that global issues are among the biggest problems, almost half of them are universalist when they vote, and most of them wish that U.S. diplomats take into account global justice.

2 Discussion

In 20 among the largest countries, we find strong majority support for global climate policies, even in high-income countries that would financially lose from the globally redistributive policies that we test. The complementary survey in the U.S. confirms these results. For example, there is a strong support for global taxes on the wealthiest, and majority support for our flagship policy, a Global climate scheme (G) that would establish both carbon pricing at the global level through an emission trading system, and a global basic income funded by its revenues. A list experiment and a real-stake petition show that the support for G is mostly sincere. This genuine support is confirmed by the prioritization of this global climate policy above some prominent national climate policies, and consistent with around half of the population holding universalistic (rather than nationalistic or egoistic) values. Moreover, the conjoint analyses reveals that a Democratic candidate should not lose voting shares by endorsing G, and would even win votes at the Democratic primary by doing so. Besides a potential lack of sincerity and weak opinions, we dismiss another hypothesis to explain the scarcity of global policies in the public debate despite a strong support: that people underestimate the support of their fellow citizens. As we ruled out all our pre-registered hypotheses, we now need to formulate new hypotheses.

We see four potential explanations for the scarce mention of globally redistributive policies in the public debate. Among the new hypotheses, the first two are variations of pluralistic ignorance, and the last two represent complementary (rather than substitute) explanations. First, there may be pluralistic ignorance of univeralistic values, of the support for G, or of the electoral advantage

of endorsing it *among policy makers*. We intend to test this hypothesis by running a survey on Congress staffers and Members of the European Parliament. Second, there may be a more subtle form of pluralistic ignorance: although people correctly predict what people would answer to a survey question, they may view globally redistributive policies as unrealistic, perhaps because they have never reflected upon the fact that many people across the world hold univeralistic values and are supportive of global solidarity. Third, most people and perhaps even most policy makers may have simply never heard of G, let alone built their political ideas upon it. The ignorance of G itself seems supported by the feedback fields, where the most common answer is a variation upon "thank you for this interesting, thought-provoking survey". Fourth, most institutions are national: the largest scale votes take place at the national level, most media target a national audience, most commentators frame their discourse from a national perspective, and relations to foreign countries as conflictual. The prominence of national institutions may create a nationalistic bias in political thoughts, silencing the univeralistic values of people.

In any case, if any (or several) of the remaining hypotheses is confirmed by evidence, we could draw the same conclusion. There is a strong support for global policies that address climate change and global inequality, even in high-income countries, and the frontier of what is considered politically realistic might soon shift on this issue. Publishing evidence for this might actually contribute to garner more attention to global policies in the public debate and political platforms.

Methods

1. Mill, J. S. *Utilitarianism*. Oxford Philosophical Texts (Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York, 1861).

2. Bolch, K. B., Ceriani, L. & López-Calva, L. F. The arithmetics and politics of domestic resource mobilization for poverty eradication. *World Development* **149**, 105691 (2022).

3. Stern, N. & Stiglitz, J. E. Report of the High-Level Commission on Carbon Prices. Tech. Rep., Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition (2017).

4. Dechezleprêtre, A. *et al.* Fighting climate change: International attitudes toward climate policies. *NBER Working Paper* **1714** (2022).

5. Klenert, D. *et al.* Making carbon pricing work for citizens. *Nature Climate Change* **8**, 669 (2018).

6. Douenne, T. & Fabre, A. Yellow Vests, Pessimistic Beliefs, and Carbon Tax Aversion. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* (2022).

Acknowledgements We are grateful for financial support from the University of Amsterdam and TU Berlin. We are grateful for financial support from the OECD, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Conseil d'Analyse Economique and the Spanish Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge. We also acknowledge support from the Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment and the Economic and Social Research Council through the Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy. We thank Antoine Dechezleprêtre, Tobias Kruse, Bluebery Planterose, Ana Sanchez

Chico, and Stefanie Stantcheva for their invaluable inputs for the project. We thank Auriane Meilland for feedback. We thank Laura Schepp, Martín Fernández-Sánchez, Samuel Gervais, Samuel Haddad, and Guadalupe Manzo for assistance in the translation.

Registration The project was preregistered in the Ooen Science Foundation registry (osf.io/fy6gd).

Competing Interests The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

JEL codes P48, Q58, H23, Q54.

Keywords Climate change, global policies, cap-and-trade, perceptions, survey, inequality, wealth tax.

Correspondence Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Adrien Fabre (email: fabre.adri1@gmail.com).