Attitudes towards global policies to address inequality and climate change

Pre-registration plan

Adrien Fabre, CNRS & CIRED

Thomas Douenne, University of Amsterdam

Linus Mattauch, TU Berlin

Abstract

Policies such as a global wealth tax or a global carbon price funding a global basic income would be effective and progressive ways to combat inequality, climate change, and poverty. A recent survey suggests strong support for such policies in twenty countries. Yet, such policies are mostly absent from political platforms and the policy debate. Why? Using complementary surveys in the United States and in Europe, we will study if and under what conditions citizens support global redistributive policies, and test several hypotheses that could reconcile strong stated support with a lack of salience of these issues. First, we hypothesize that the support is sincere and that a candidate would not lose votes at an election by endorsing such policies. Second, we hypothesize that global redistribution is a secondary issue for most people and that a candidate would not gain votes at an election by campaigning on it. Third, we hypothesize pluralistic ignorance, i.e. that most people underestimate the support for global redistributive policies. Fourth, we hypothesize weak opinions on this issue and answers that are inconsistent or vary with the question framing.

Structure of the questionnaires

We plan to launch three anonymous online surveys in January to March 2023: two surveys in the U.S., denoted *US1* and *US2*, and one survey in four European countries (France, Germany, Spain, the U.K.), denoted *EU*.

The EU survey will more or less concatenate the two US surveys. The reason to have two separate US surveys is twofold: we will use information obtained in US1 on the level of support for some policies as a treatment in US2; respondents are more attentive in shorter surveys. For budgetary reasons, we will run only one EU survey and the main difference with the US ones is that it will not include this informational treatment.

We will ensure representativeness of the samples using the quota method with the following strata: age, gender, region (U.S.) or country (EU), income, education, urban category, as well as ethnicity in the case of the U.S.

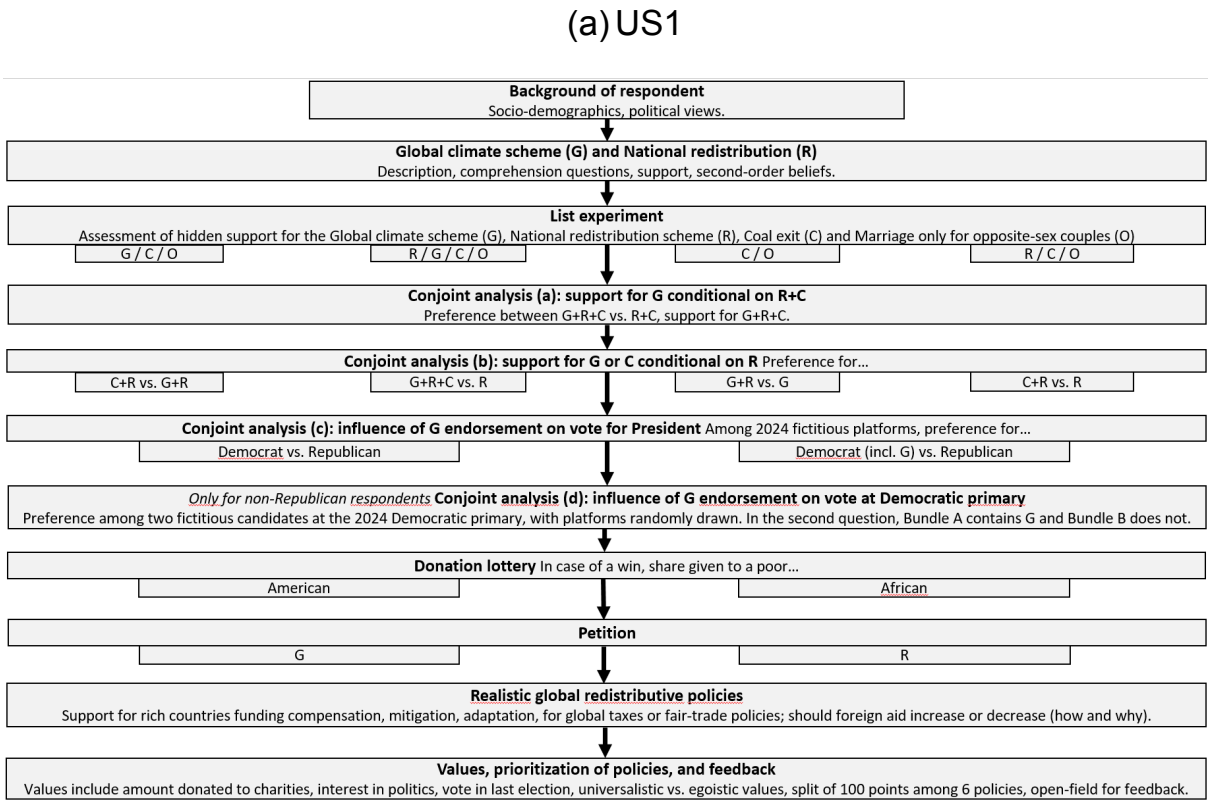
We will define post-stratification weights and use these weights throughout the analysis. We will use two kinds of weights: the default weights will be based on the quota strata, and weights used for a robustness check will be based on quota strata and vote at the last election (we do not use the latter as default as people may lie to that question). Weights will be trimmed between 0.25 and 4 to avoid giving some respondents an excessive weight. We will exclude from the final sample respondents who fail the attention test or who rush through the survey (complete it in less than 4 min in the U.S. or 6 min in the EU).

The samples should have the following characteristics:

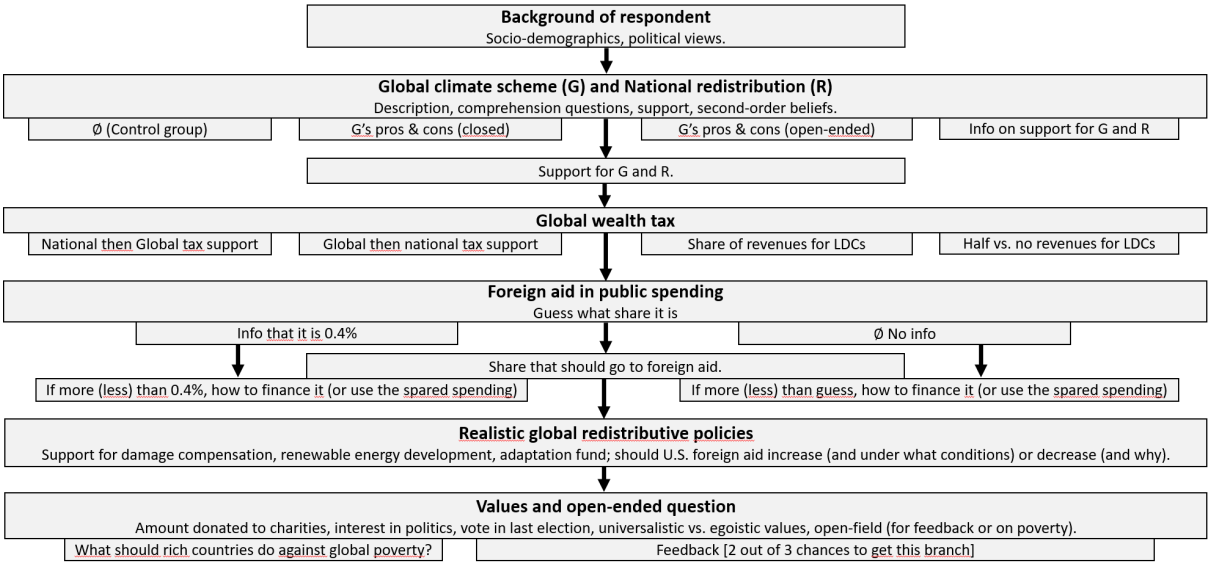
- US1: n=3000, median duration = 11 min;
- US2: n=2000, median duration = 11 min;
- EU: n=3000, median duration = 18 min.

The questionnaires are uploaded to the repository. The surveys' structures will be as follows, where underneath rectangles represent random branches:

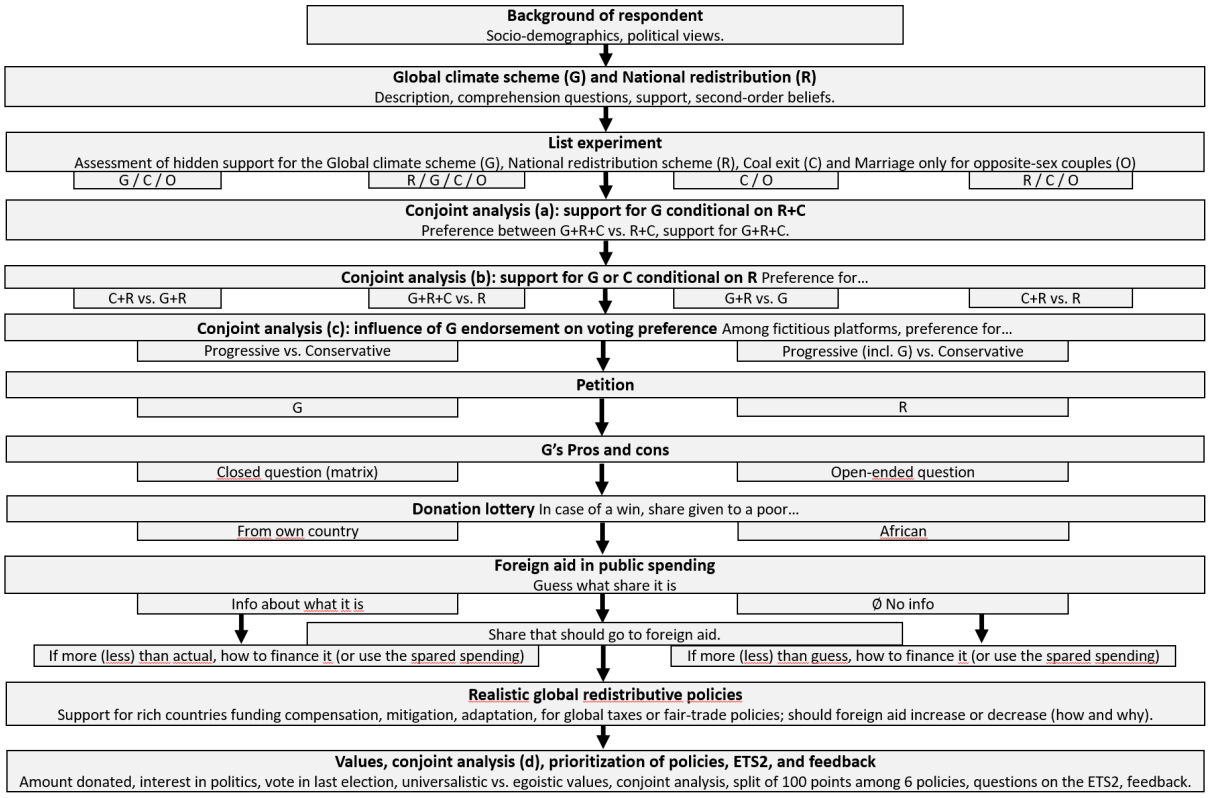
Figure 1: Survey flows



(b) US2


Background of respondent
Socio-demographics, political views.
Global climate scheme (G) and National redistribution (R)
Description, comprehension questions, support, second-order beliefs.
Ø (Control group)
G's pros & cons (closed)
G's pros & cons (open-ended)
Info on support for G and R
Support for G and R.
Global wealth tax
National then Global tax support
Global then national tax support
Share of revenues for LDCs
Half vs. no revenues for LDCs
Foreign aid in public spending
Guess what share it is
Info that it is 0.4%
Ø No info
Share that should go to foreign aid.
If more (less) than 0.4%, how to finance it (or use the spared spending)
If more (less) than guess, how to finance it (or use the spared spending)
Realistic global redistributive policies
Support for damage compensation, renewable energy development, adaptation fund; should U.S. foreign aid increase (and under what conditions) or decrease (and why).
Values and open-ended question
Amount donated to charities, interest in politics, vote in last election, universalistic vs. egoistic values, open-field (for feedback or on poverty).
What should rich countries do against global poverty?
Feedback [2 out of 3 chances to get this branch]

(c) EU


Background of respondent
Socio-demographics, political views.
Global climate scheme (G) and National redistribution (R)
Description, comprehension questions, support, second-order beliefs.
List experiment
Assessment of hidden support for the Global climate scheme (G), National redistribution scheme (R), Coal exit (C) and Marriage only for opposite-sex couples (O)
G / C / O
R / G / C / O
C / O
R / C / O
Conjoint analysis (a): support for G conditional on R+C
Preference between G+R+C vs. R+C, support for G+R+C.
Conjoint analysis (b): support for G or C conditional on R Preference for...
C+R vs. G+R
G+R+C vs. R
G+R vs. G
C+R vs. R
Conjoint analysis (c): influence of G endorsement on voting preference Among fictitious platforms, preference for...
Progressive vs. Conservative
Progressive (incl. G) vs. Conservative
Petition
G
R
G's Pros and cons
Closed question (matrix)
Open-ended question
Donation lottery In case of a win, share given to a poor...
From own country
African
Foreign aid in public spending
Guess what share it is
Info about what it is
Ø No info
Share that should go to foreign aid.
If more (less) than actual, how to finance it (or use the spared spending)
If more (less) than guess, how to finance it (or use the spared spending)
Realistic global redistributive policies
Support for rich countries funding compensation, mitigation, adaptation, for global taxes or fair-trade policies; should foreign aid increase or decrease (how and why).
Values, conjoint analysis (d), prioritization of policies, ETS2, and feedback
Amount donated, interest in politics, vote in last election, universalistic vs. egoistic values, conjoint analysis, split of 100 points among 6 policies, questions on the ETS2, feedback.

Hypotheses testing

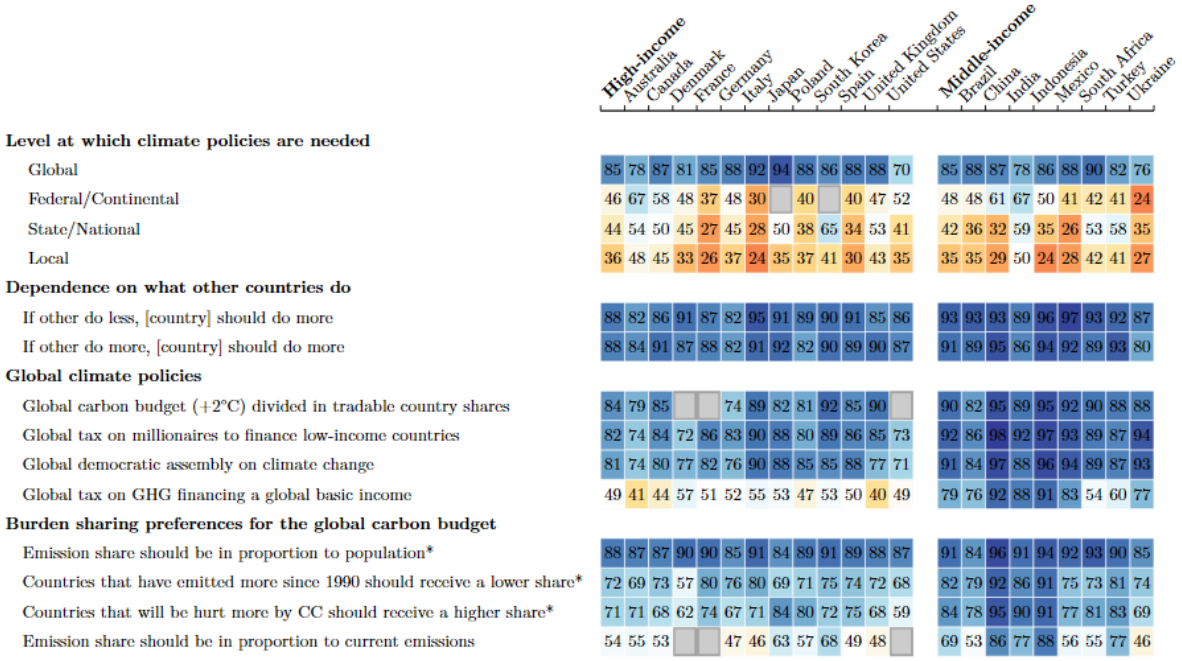
H0: Strong stated support for a Global climate scheme

Unpublished results from a survey in twenty countries run by Dechezleprêtre et al. (2022) show strong levels of support for global climate policies implying international redistribution (see Figure 2). For instance, the Global climate scheme (G) – a global carbon price financing a global basic income – is supported by 49% of Americans (after excluding *Indifferent* answers), even though it is made clear that G would make the typical American worse off by $100 per month.

We hypothesize a majority support for G once combined with a National redistribution scheme (R) that counterbalances its negative distributive impacts on typical (i.e. median) households through a redistribution from the top 5% to the bottom 95%. In most parts of the surveys, we analyze the level of support for G conditional on R, although the conjoint analysis (b) will tell us whether G and R together (G+R) is preferred to R alone.

We also hypothesize majority (stated) support for other global redistributive policies: a global wealth tax financing (at least partly) low-income countries, more public spending on foreign aid, the cancellation of low-income countries' public debt, the democratization of international institutions, the removal of tariffs on import from low-income countries, a minimum wage at 50% of local median wage, and a global financial register, a maximum wealth limit at $10 billion (U.S.) / €100 million (EU), and transfers from high- to low-income countries to cover climate damages, adaptation, or mitigation costs.

Figure 2: Percentage of support for global climate policies among non-Indifferent answers.



Finally, the closed and open-ended questions on the pros and cons of G will inform us on why some people support it and some others not, and reveal its conditions of acceptance.

H1: Sincerity of stated support

It is difficult to prove the sincerity of low-stake statements but we will use different methods to test it and hypothesize that the null hypothesis of sincere support will not be rejected.

List experiment

There may be a desirability bias in favor of G, so that some people would not assume to not support G, even in an anonymous survey. Our list experiments[1] will allow us to recover the hidden level of support for G, by comparing the average number of policies supported within the list G/C/O and for C/O (where *C* stands for a national climate policy like Coal exit and *O* for another policy like Death penalty for major crimes). If there is a social norm pushing some people to state their support for G even when they secretly oppose G, we would uncover that social norm.

Our list experiment does not contain simply two random branches but four, for two reasons. First, we will compare the hidden support for G (which makes most people worse-off in high-income countries) to the hidden support for R (which makes most people better-off). A social norm in favor of R would likely have less effect than a similar norm on G given that R already makes 95% of people better-off (so that the egoistic motive would coincide with the norm). We hypothesize that the patterns of answers will be comparable for G and R, and the deviations from stated support small, which would be consistent with sincere answers. We would have suggestive evidence against H1 if hidden support for G is lower than stated support, and we would weakly reject H1 if the difference between stated and hidden support is positive and larger for G than for R. Even in such cases, hidden support could still be majoritarian, i.e. insincerity would concern only some people.

Second, the answer (the number of policies supported) might depend on the number of policies in the list, which might lead to underestimate the hidden support. To measure this potential bias, we will re-estimate the hidden support for G by comparing the answers to G/R/C/O and R/C/O.

Petition

To increase the stake of the statement, we will ask respondents whether they are willing to sign a petition for G (or R, depending on the random branch), and that the share of signatories among the representative sample will be transmitted to the Head of State's cabinet. We would weakly reject the hypothesis of sincerity if the deviation between stated support and petition signature is larger for G than for R.

---

[1] A list experiment asks "How many of the following policies do you support?". A random subsample faces a list of policies that includes the policy of interest and another random subsample faces the same list excluding that policy. The hidden level of support for that policy is then estimated by subtracting the average number of supported policies in both subsamples.

Conjoint analysis

Using different questions asking the preferred bundle of policies between two bundles, we will observe whether adding G to a political platform makes it more or less supported. G has two main components: a solution to climate change and a global redistribution. Thus, G might be supported for its climate component and despite the global redistribution, or vice versa. Using the conjoint analysis, we will see whether G acts as a substitute or a complement for a national climate policy C. We will also see whether the globally redistributive aspect is appreciated in itself, and whether it is complementary to R (which offsets the negative distributive effect on typical households in high-income countries). Finally, by comparing the preference between pairs of bundles when one bundle contains G or not, we will test whether people sincerely prefer to have G in a political platform.

(a) We hypothesize that G+R+C will be preferred to R+C by at least as many people who state they support G. The contrary would suggest that G is supported mainly because of its climate dimension and despite its globally redistributive aspect.

We hypothesize that the support for G+R+C will be at least as high as the support for G or R alone, which would suggest a complementarity between G and R and a strong support for C. The contrary could be due to a low support for C.

(b) The preference between C+R and R will tell us to what extent people support C and help us interpret the results of (a). The preference between G+R and R will confirm the extent to which people support G. Then, the preference between C+R and G+R will tell us whether, conditional on R, G is more or less supported than C. Finally, the preference between G+R+C and R should confirm the results of (a). We hypothesize that we will *not* find the following chain: C+R preferred to G+R by a majority, G+R in turn preferred to R by a majority, and a higher support for R than for G+R+C. Although such a chain could in principle emerge from sincere preferences as a case of the Condorcet paradox, it would strongly suggest that C+R is preferred to G+R+C by a majority, which would be inconsistent with a sincere majority support for G.

The last two conjoint analyses will allow testing a variant of H1:

H1bis: a candidate would not lose votes at an election by endorsing G.

(c) By comparing the preference between a bundle of progressive policies and a bundle of conservative policies, (randomly) with or without G in the progressive bundle, we will assess the effect of vote outcome of adding G to a progressive platform. By framing the choice as relating to the next election, we will further increase the realism of the assessment. We hypothesize that adding G will not decrease the voting share of the progressive candidate. The contrary would be a strong rejection of H1bis.

(d) We will similarly compare the choice between two fictitious candidates at the next election (in the U.S., the question will be framed as the next Democratic primary and displayed only to non-Republican). Here, we will follow the classical conjoint analysis methodology, i.e. for five different types of issues (economic, societal, climate, tax, foreign policy), we will randomly include (or not) some policy among a pool of policies. We will ask respondents to make a choice between two such pairs of bundles. In the second pair, one bundle will systematically include G while the other

will not. Some restriction will be placed on the policies that can enter on a given bundle: only one type of wealth tax can be included (national or global). This conjoint analysis will not only reveal whether adding G increases or decreases the preference for a bundle, but also the magnitude of the effect of G compared to other policies (like a higher minimum wage, a national climate policy, or another globally redistributive policy. We hypothesize that G will not have a negative effect. The contrary result would mean that it would be detrimental for a democratic candidate to campaign with G, and this result would reject H1bis.

Prioritization of policies

Using the set of policies of the conjoint analysis (d), we randomly select 6 policies and ask the respondent to allocate 100 points among them to signal the magnitude of their support for each. If G receives more than one sixth of the points (when it is randomly selected), it means that it is more supported than the average policy of in our set. Given that the set of constituted of policies prominent in the public debate (although generally progressive), such high prioritization for G would support H1.

H2: Global redistribution is not a vote-determining issue

Relatedly to what precedes in (d), we hypothesize that G will have a relatively low effect compared to national policies salient in the policy debate (like an increase in the minimum wage or a pro-choice policy). Rejection of this hypothesis would mean that not only G is sincerely supported, but it matters a lot to voters. This would be difficult to reconcile with the absence of G in the public debate, unless we also find pluralistic ignorance.

H3: Pluralistic ignorance of the strong support

We measure the second-order belief concerning the support of G and R in an incentive-compatible way: the respondents who get closest to the true level of support can win $50 or €50 or £50. We hypothesize pluralistic ignorance of support for G, i.e. that most people underestimate the level of support for G. To test this, we will compare the stated support to the average perceived support. H3 will be rejected if perceived support for G is lower than stated support. We will test pluralistic ignorance for R in the same way (although we do not formulate any hypothesis here). We will then compare the deviations from stated to perceived for G and R. A stronger deviation for G would confirm H3 even further as it would mean that not only is there pluralistic ignorance, but a stronger one than for a benchmark policy. We will also test **H3bis**: that there is pluralistic ignorance from the most educated or richest people, and will conduct the same tests on these subsamples.

H4: Weak opinion, malleable support

As often in attitudinal surveys, the opinion of most people may not be well-formed, as people may not have reflected upon the topic before. With such a weak opinion, many answers would be sensitive to the framing or wording of the question, and malleable to informational or contextual treatments. In turn, weak opinion could explain why we find a strong support for globally redistributive policies and yet these are absent from the policy debate: first, the

support could be attenuated or reversed with another framing; second, such policies are more *accepted* than *strongly supported*, and are not actively defended by any group.

Pros and cons of G

To test for weak opinion, we will read the answers to the open-ended question: the more vague the answers, the higher the number of "I don't know", the stronger the support for H4. This analysis will be complemented by studying the answers to the closed question on G's pros and cons as well as the conditions under which the respondent believes foreign aid should be increased or the reasons why it should not be increased. In particular, we will test in US2 whether providing pros and cons (and thus fostering an introspective "deliberation") will have an effect on respondents' opinion.

Universalistic values

Another test will be to study values through questions that do not relate to policies, and check that support for G corresponds to universal values. In the opposite case, stated support for G would seem inconsistent with nationalistic or egoistic motives, and would thus appear rather weak. To test for universalism, we will create a lottery and ask respondents to decide what share of the lottery prize of $100/€100/£100 they would donate to a poor person, should they win. We will randomize the description of the recipient as being either African or from the respondent's country.

Another way in which we measure universalism is asking the preferred revenue-use of a wealth tax. We ask this question differently in different branches to further test the sensitivity to framing and wording. Respondents either have to state their support for a global tax on millionaires to finance low-income countries, to choose the share of a global tax on wealth in excess of $5 million that should be pooled to finance low-income countries (vs. be retained by the millionaire's country), or to choose whether half or no revenue from such a tax should finance low-income countries.

Finally, we also ask respondents how much they give to charities, to what extent they consider some issues a problem (global poverty, domestic income inequality, climate change), and which group they defend when they vote, from sentient beings to their family and themself, through humans and their fellow citizens, etc.

Bandwagon effect

If most people underestimate the level of support for G (pluralistic ignorance) and are sensitive to social norms, namely to the support of their fellow citizens, informing them about the true level of support would increase their stated support for G. We hypothesize such a bandwagon effect. If there is no bandwagon effect despite pluralistic ignorance, it would mean that the attitudes towards G are not so malleable, and we would reject H4.

Bibliography

Dechezleprêtre, Antoine, Adrien Fabre, Tobias Kruse, Bluebery Planterose, Ana Sanchez Chico, and Stefanie Stantcheva. "Fighting Climate Change: International Attitudes toward Climate Policies." NBER Working Paper Series. 2022. https://doi.org/10.1787/3406f29a-en.