

# Just Don't Call it a Tax! Framing in an Experiment on Voting and Redistribution

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## Abstract

Utilizing a simplified version of the Meltzer–Richard redistribution mechanism, we designed a laboratory experiment to test whether it matters if voters were asked to decide on a tax rate or a minimum income, leaving the redistribution mechanism itself unchanged. Framing the vote about redistribution as a decision about a minimal income increases the individually and ideally preferred level of redistribution. This effect outlives the groups' deliberation processes and leads to the implementation of a higher level of redistribution.

**Keywords:** Redistribution, voting, framing, laboratory experiment, minimal income, taxation

## INTRODUCTION

In democratic societies, the level of redistribution is decided by the people through public deliberation and the election of governments which propose redistribution policies to find majorities. Public deliberation about redistribution can focus on different aspects, e.g. on the minimal necessary income or the proportional burden to be taken by individuals to reduce income inequality. This study analyzes whether the level of redistribution a society agrees upon can be manipulated by the way in which the issue of redistribution is presented. Specifically, we test if it makes a difference

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