

# Wealthy Americans and Redistribution: The Role of Fairness Preferences

ALAIN COHN, LASSE J. JESSEN, MARKO KLAŠNJA, and PAUL SMEETS\*

We examine the attitudes of the wealthy towards government redistribution using a large and diverse sample of individuals from the top 5% of the income and wealth distribution in the U.S., as well as the remaining 95%. Three results stand out: (1) wealthy Americans have distinct fairness preferences, with a greater willingness to accept inequalities relative to the general public, (2) individuals who self-report having experienced upward social mobility and became first-generation wealthy are particularly accepting of inequality, while those born into wealth have fairness preferences similar to the general population; (3) the disparity in fairness preferences between the rich and the general public is predictive of greater opposition to redistribution among the wealthy, resulting in more conservative voting behavior. These findings provide new insights into the reasons behind the wealthy's opposition to government redistribution.

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\* Cohn: University of Michigan, 105 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48109 (email: [adcohn@umich.edu](mailto:adcohn@umich.edu)); Jessen: Kiel University, Olshausenstraße 40, 24098 Kiel, Germany (email: [jessen@economics.uni-kiel.de](mailto:jessen@economics.uni-kiel.de)); Klašnja: Georgetown University, 3700 O St NW, ICC-593, Washington DC, 20057 (email: [marko.klasnja@georgetown.edu](mailto:marko.klasnja@georgetown.edu)); Smeets (corresponding author): University of Amsterdam, Plantage Muidergracht 12, 1018TV Amsterdam, Netherlands (email: [p.m.a.smeets@uva.nl](mailto:p.m.a.smeets@uva.nl)). We thank seminar and conference participants at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association, the University of Basel, Berlin, Bocconi, Carnegie Mellon, Cornell, CPB, Hamburg, Kassel, Kiel, Maastricht, Michigan, Munich, Nijmegen, Tiber, UCLA, Utrecht, Trinity, Zurich, IAST Toulouse, IMEBESS, SJDM, for their valuable feedback. We also thank Ricardo Perez-Truglia and three anonymous referees for their constructive and valuable comments. We are grateful for the financial support provided by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (Paul Smeets, grant number: 016.Veni.175.019) and Georgetown University. Earlier versions of the paper circulated under the title “Why do the rich oppose redistribution? An experiment with America’s top 5%” and “The Wealth Gap in Fairness Preferences: Evidence from America’s Top 5%”.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The United States continues to be one of the most economically unequal societies in the advanced world (Alvaredo et al., 2018). A common policy proposal to address economic inequality is to increase government redistribution through higher taxes on the wealthy (Piketty, 2014). However, concerns have grown that the rich have disproportionate influence in business and politics, making them more likely to block policies that promote economic equality. For example, wealthy individuals can more easily afford to give money to political campaigns and are more likely to have regular personal contact with elected officials (Page et al., 2013; Kalla and Broockman, 2016). Affluent individuals are also overrepresented in policymaking circles. For example, two-thirds of the members of the House of Representatives are millionaires, compared to only 7% of U.S. households (Wolff, 2017; Eggers and Klašnja, 2019). As a result, public policies often align more closely with the views of wealthy Americans than those of average citizens (Gilens and Page, 2014; Bartels, 2016). Despite these concerns, our understanding of the attitudes of wealthy Americans towards government redistribution remains limited due to the challenges in recruiting large and representative samples of this population.

In this paper, we aim to fill this gap by conducting a survey of a large and diverse sample of individuals in the U.S. with income and wealth in the top 5% of the distribution ( $n=465$ ) and a general population sample ( $n=417$ ). Our study uses self-reported data on income and wealth, with thorough screening procedures employed to ensure data accuracy. Moreover, our analysis reveals a close correspondence between the income and wealth distributions observed in our dataset and those obtained from the Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF), a comprehensive source of financial data on households in the U.S.

Our findings indicate that, on average, wealthy Americans are less supportive of government redistribution compared to the general population. They prefer lower top income taxes and estate taxes on large fortunes relative to the general population, even after accounting for socio-demographic differences between the two groups (e.g., the wealthy are, on average, older and more educated). Our analysis further reveals that the wealthy prefer less redistribution irrespective of whether a tax increase would directly affect them, suggesting that their attitudes are not just driven by self-interest.

Next, we examine why wealthy individuals prefer less government redistribution compared to the general population. Specifically, we investigate the role of fairness preferences, given that previous research has established a link between fairness preferences and attitudes towards redistribution in general population samples (e.g., Almås et al. 2020; Kerschbamer and Müller, 2020; Müller and Renes, 2021; Fehr et al., 2021). In addition, we explore other factors that may influence attitudes towards government redistribution, including beliefs about the role of effort and luck in economic success (e.g., Piketty, 1995; Fong, 2001; Alesina and Angeletos, 2005), altruism (e.g., Fong, 2001; Ghiglini et al, 2021), and trust in government (e.g., Edlund 1999; Sapienza and Zingales, 2013; Kuziemko et al., 2015; Alesina et al., 2018; Peyton 2020).

To measure fairness preferences, we use an experimental design that involves impartial third parties ('spectators') who redistribute unequal earnings between two workers who performed the same task (e.g., Cappelen et al., 2013; Almås et al., 2020). We implemented three treatments that manipulated the source of inequality in earnings among workers: luck, merit, or a combination of the two. By employing the luck and merit treatments, we are able to identify the prevalence of different fairness types within each group. The inclusion of the mixed treatment, which introduced risk regarding the source of inequality, aims to capture the multifaceted nature of real-world scenarios and enhance the ecological validity of our findings.

Importantly, the decision to redistribute earnings in the experiment does not involve the material payoff of the spectators, thereby eliminating the possibility of attributing differences in fairness preferences to different levels of selfishness. This feature becomes particularly relevant when comparing the preferences of wealthy individuals to those of the general population, considering the expected disparity in their levels of marginal utility of money, stemming from their different levels of wealth.

We find that the top 5% exhibit distinct fairness preferences compared to the bottom 95%, as they are more willing to accept income inequality, regardless of its source. This difference in inequality acceptance reflects a different composition of fairness types. Compared to the bottom 95%, twice as many top 5% participants (25% vs. 12%) consider inequality as fair even when the source of inequality is luck ('libertarian' fairness view). In contrast, the view that inequality is unfair regardless of whether it stems from luck or effort ('egalitarian' fairness view) is half as common among the top 5% compared to the bottom 95% (9% vs. 18%).

Interestingly, we find that individuals who self-report having climbed the income ladder through entrepreneurship or other means are more accepting of income inequality than those who have inherited their wealth. First-generation wealthy are also less supportive of government redistribution than others. These findings contradict the notion that individuals who have experienced upward mobility will be sympathetic to more equal income distributions given their humble beginnings.

Additionally, our results suggest that inequality acceptance plays an important role in explaining the difference in attitudes towards government redistribution between the wealthy and non-wealthy. Controlling for differences in inequality acceptance, the disparity in tax attitudes between the two groups decreases by up to 33%. Individual differences in inequality acceptance also appear to have important downstream consequences for voting behavior. While the top 5% were

about 10 percentage points more likely to vote for the Republican nominee Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election, accounting for the variation in inequality acceptance reduces the gap in voting preference between the wealthy and non-wealthy by 45%.

Our study contributes to the emerging literature on the attitudes of the wealthy towards government redistribution. Despite the conventional assumption that wealthier individuals prefer less redistribution (e.g., Acemoglu et al. 2015), the empirical evidence presents a mixed picture. For example, Page et al. (2013) found that a group of wealthy Americans from the Chicago metropolitan area have more conservative views on tax policies and social welfare. In contrast, Broockman et al. (2019) found that, relative to the general population, high-income entrepreneurs in the technology industry are more supportive of liberal policies, including policies that would raise taxes on the wealthy. These conflicting findings may reflect differences in sample selection, as it is difficult to obtain comprehensive data that provides a good representation of the wealthy. Previous studies either relied on small or specialized samples of the rich or applied a relatively broad definition of the wealthy that includes more than just the top of the income and wealth distribution (e.g., the top 10% of income earners in general population samples; see, e.g., Gilens and Page, 2014). Our study sheds light on the attitudes of the wealthy towards government redistribution by drawing on one of the largest and most diverse samples of the wealthy to date.

Our study further adds to the literature on the social preferences of the wealthy. Previous studies have primarily focused on altruism, which involves the trade-off between one's own material payoff and the payoff of others. For instance, Andreoni et al. (2021) show that wealthier individuals in the Netherlands are more likely to return misdelivered envelopes filled with cash than those who are less wealthy. Similarly, Smeets et al. (2015) found that Dutch millionaires exhibit greater prosociality in dictator games than any other group studied in the literature. In

contrast, Fisman et al. (2015) found that elite students from Yale Law School are more selfish than the general population. A related line of inquiry examines the relationship between income and altruism in laboratory settings, where subjects earn income before making distribution decisions. For example, Erkal et al. (2011) found that individuals who earn a high relative income are less willing to share part of their income with others, which aligns with our finding that upward mobility experience is associated with greater acceptance of income inequality. However, unlike previous research that examines the trade-off between self-interest and altruism, our study employs an experimental design that allows us to measure inequality acceptance independent of self-interest, accounting for potential differences in selfishness between the wealthy and non-wealthy.

Moreover, our study contributes to the expanding body of research examining the relationship between various types of social preferences and the demand for government redistribution. For example, using a spectator approach that precludes self-interest as a motive, Almås et al. (2020) found that Americans are more inclined to accept income inequality than Norwegians, which may account for why European countries tend to have more progressive tax systems and more generous social programs than the U.S. In line with this, Müller and Renes (2021) demonstrate in a sample of the German population that individuals with egalitarian preferences are more likely to support government interventions aimed at reducing inequality compared to those with efficiency-minded preferences. Examining the German population using a stakeholder approach, Kerschbamer and Müller (2020) found that individuals with higher levels of inequality aversion and altruism are more likely to support redistribution. Fehr et al. (2021) show, in a sample of the Swiss population, that the association between support for redistribution and inequality aversion, as well as altruism, is more pronounced among individuals with higher incomes. Our study, which focuses on the U.S. and uses a spectator framework, confirms that inequality acceptance is a key predictor of support for

redistribution for both the general population and the wealthy, with the relationship being stronger for the latter group.

Finally, recent studies demonstrate that individuals who are informed that they are wealthier than they originally believed are less likely to support redistributive policies (Cruces et al., 2013; Karadja et al., 2017; Alesina et al., 2018; Fehr et al., 2022; Hvidberg et al., 2023). In line with these findings, our study reveals that individuals who have experienced upward social mobility and have actually attained wealth tend to exhibit greater inequality acceptance. These results suggest that opposition to redistribution may predominantly arise from self-made individuals.

## 2. SAMPLE, EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN, AND QUESTIONNAIRE

We conducted the survey in collaboration with YouGov, one of the leading online survey companies.<sup>1</sup> YouGov maintains a large participant pool of about 2 million individuals in the U.S., which allowed us to recruit broad national samples of the top 5% and bottom 95% of the income and wealth distribution in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> YouGov's panel is well-suited for studying the wealthy because it regularly surveys

<sup>1</sup> The survey was developed in collaboration with Elizabeth Suhay and Gonzalo Rivero. Suhay et al. (2021) is a companion paper, which focuses on respondents' first- and second-order causal attributions for getting ahead in life and how they correlate with views on economic conservatism. The survey was approved by the IRB board at Georgetown University (IRB# 2016-1087). We obtained informed consent from all participants.

<sup>2</sup> Our motivation was to investigate fairness preferences among individuals at the very top of the income and wealth distributions. Previous studies in economics (e.g., Alvaredo et al., 2013; Auten and Splinter, 2019) and other social sciences (e.g., Keister, 2014; Yavorsky et al., 2019) often focused on the top 1%. However, it is worth noting that these studies examined the financial circumstances of the wealthy rather than capturing their attitudes and preferences. Obtaining a sufficiently large sample from this narrow segment presents a challenge for conducting an opinion survey. To address this, we expanded our sample to include the top 5% while still maintaining a focus on the economic elite. Supplementary analyses for the subsample of the top 1% are provided in Appendix A4.1.

this group as part of their Affluent Perspective Global Study, which focuses on consumer habits of the rich.

Our study took place between December 2016 and April 2017 with a total sample of 882 individuals (top 5%: N = 465; bottom 95%: N = 417).<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of the survey, we asked detailed questions about the respondents' household income, gross liquid assets (i.e., wealth without real estate property), liabilities, and sources of wealth. The income and asset questions have a substantially higher top-coded category than in most public opinion surveys (over \$1 million and \$50 million for income and assets, respectively), allowing us to precisely differentiate various subsets of individuals at the very top of the income and wealth distribution. We classify as top 5% (top 1%) the individuals with an annual household income of above \$250,000 (\$750,000) or gross liquid assets of \$1 million (\$5 million) or more.<sup>4</sup> These thresholds are based on the 2016 Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF), which is conducted by the U.S. Federal Reserve Board and combines survey and administrative data.<sup>5</sup> Figure A1 in the Appendix presents the distributions of household income and gross financial assets for the top 5% and the bottom 95% sample, respectively.<sup>6</sup>

Our top 5% sample is one of the largest and most diverse samples of the wealthy recruited for an academic study. It spans individuals from across the U.S. and

<sup>3</sup> As is usual in surveys administered by YouGov, participation was rewarded with “points” (worth about \$2), which the participants could collect and redeem for gift cards or merchandise.

<sup>4</sup> We have information on both income and wealth for 746 subjects. In 136 cases, we only have information on either income (49) or wealth (87). In section A4.2 of the appendix, we show that the main results are robust to defining the top 5% only based on income.

<sup>5</sup> The actual threshold values from the SCF for the top 5% (1%) sample for income and wealth are \$260,000 (\$865,000) and \$1.71 million (\$8.19 million), respectively. However, as we measured income and wealth using brackets, we use the brackets that contain the thresholds provided by the SCF to classify the participants into the groups.

<sup>6</sup> Table A1 in the appendix presents descriptive statistics for each sample. We targeted a total sample size of 900 participants but had to exclude 9 respondents who skipped the experimental task (which provides us with a measure of inequality acceptance), and another 9 respondents (from the bottom 95%) who reported neither their income nor their wealth.



closely tracks the distribution of the known financial and professional characteristics of the economic elite. Previous studies used geographically constrained samples (e.g., high net-worth individuals from the Chicago metropolitan area, see Page et al., 2013) or they drew participants from one specific industry (e.g., Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, see Broockman et al., 2019). Other studies on the affluent have used large public opinion surveys, such as the General Social Survey (GSS) or the American National Election Studies (e.g., Fong, 2001; Alesina and Giuliano, 2011; Gilens, 2012; Bartels, 2016). However, these public opinion surveys typically do not include the types of measures we are interested in (e.g., fairness preferences), and studies based on these surveys apply a broader definition of the wealthy (e.g., the top third or quarter of the income distribution) to obtain sufficiently large samples, thus being unable to systematically study the very rich.

Our sampling procedure, described in section A1 of the appendix, ensured a diverse national sample of wealthy Americans. Figure A3 in the appendix shows the geographic distribution of our top 5% sample and compares it with the distribution of county-level average household income in the U.S. Our top 5% sample is dispersed across the U.S. and is not concentrated in just a few wealthy areas such as New York City, Chicago, or Silicon Valley. Our sample also tracks closely where the rich Americans live, as seen from the broad correspondence of our wealthy respondents' locations with the high-income counties on the map.

In addition, our top 5% sample also mirrors the known financial characteristics of wealthy Americans. Figure A4 in the appendix shows that our top 5% respondents exhibit similar distributions of household income, gross financial assets, liabilities, and main sources of wealth as the respondents in the 2016 SCF.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> If anything, our top 5% participants tend to have more financial assets, as shown in Panel (b) of Figure A4. This could be due to the slightly higher share of older people in our sample who have accumulated more wealth in their retirement accounts.

Unlike previous studies, our top 5% respondents also come from a diverse set of industries. Table A3 in the appendix shows that the breakdown by industry in which our participants work compares well with the data on the top 5% income earners from the 2016 Current Population Survey.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth noting that the income and wealth information that we use to construct the two samples is self-reported. YouGov regularly asks their participants to report their current financial situation and updates that information in their database. However, it is well known that some people are reluctant to provide accurate information about their finances due to privacy concerns, or simply because they do not know exactly how much money they currently have (e.g., Moore et al., 2000).

We took several precautionary steps to address potential issues of measurement error. First, we used income and wealth brackets when asking people about their financial situation, as it has been shown that people feel more comfortable reporting financial information in this way (Juster and Smith, 1997).<sup>9</sup> Second, people have been found to give more honest answers in online relative to paper-based or telephone surveys (e.g., Chang and Krosnick, 2009). Third, YouGov's subject pool typically participates repeatedly in their surveys, which can reduce measurement error both in general (e.g., Cantor, 2008) and specifically when dealing with self-reported income (e.g., Bound and Krueger, 1991).

Fourth, our survey started with the same financial background questions as in surveys previously administered by YouGov. This allows us to validate the responses and exclude people who provided inconsistent information across

<sup>8</sup> To make the two data sets comparable, here we define our top 5% sample only based on income, as the CPS data do not include information about the wealth of the survey participants.

<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the survey questions asking about income and gross financial assets were designed with a pop-up for the seven highest categories that only unfolded if a participant indicated to belong to the highest initial income or wealth category. This unfolding structure has been shown to reduce income nonresponse (Yan et al., 2010).

surveys.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, during fielding, we worked with YouGov to flag respondents with inconsistent and improbable responses across various financial and other survey items. In cases where YouGov reported similar inconsistencies from these respondents in their previous surveys, we replaced them with new respondents to ensure data integrity.

Fifth, we recorded participants' response times to address attentiveness during the survey. We conducted additional data consistency and quality robustness tests within our survey, none of which affect our conclusions (see section 3.6 below and section A4 in the appendix for more details). It is worth noting that studies linking self-reported and administrative data have found minimal instances of income misreporting (Hvidberg et al., 2023; Karadja et al., 2017) and earnings misreporting (Bound et al. 1994; Pischke, 1995).

#### *Explaining attitudes towards redistribution*

The aim of our study is to: (i) measure and (ii) explain differences in attitudes toward government redistribution between the top 5% and bottom 95% (see appendix B for a copy of the questionnaire and instructions for the experiment). We measured these attitudes in two ways. First, we asked participants whether they would prefer a higher or lower effective income tax rate for the top income bracket (which, at the time of the survey, was 33% for households earning \$467,000 and more) on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Second, we asked them the same question about the effective estate tax rate (which, at that

<sup>10</sup> To minimize the risk of misreported financial information, we only allowed respondents in our top 5% sample to continue with the survey if their reported income and gross financial assets matched the same information YouGov obtained in a respondent's most recent survey. While this procedure likely excluded some respondents whose financial situation legitimately changed between the two surveys, we believe it also screened out respondents who might have been more likely to misrepresent their income and wealth. Because misreporting is more consequential for our study of the wealthy, we applied this procedure only for respondents in our top 5% sample.

time, was 17% for individuals with estates valued at \$5.45M or more). Both the top income tax rate and estate taxes on large fortunes are established policy instruments that target individuals at the top of the income or wealth distribution, thereby directly affecting the extent of government redistribution.

We consider several possible factors that could explain the observed differences in tax attitudes between the wealthy and non-wealthy. Our focus is on inequality acceptance, which captures a preference for income equality even when one's own income is not at stake.

#### *Fairness preferences (inequality acceptance)*

We measured inequality acceptance in a controlled experiment adapted from Almås et al. (2020). The experiment involved two types of participants: *spectators* and *workers*. Our survey participants were assigned the role of spectators and had to decide whether to redistribute earnings between a pair of workers who had completed the same assignment. For each spectator we recruited two workers on the online marketplace Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), resulting in a total of 1,782 workers. The workers were offered a flat payment of \$1.00 for completing the assignment and a short questionnaire, and were told that they can earn additional money. Their task consisted of double-checking and correcting a digitized list of identification numbers for a duration of 5 minutes (more details on the task are given in appendix B3). After completing the task, we informed the workers that they would be matched with another worker and that one of them would receive an additional \$6.00, whereas the other would not receive an additional payment. Workers did not know who in the pair was assigned the bonus to prevent entitlement effects, which in turn could influence the spectators. We further explained that a third person (i.e., the spectator) would be informed about how the earnings were allocated and would then have the opportunity to redistribute income between the two workers.

Using a between-subjects design, we randomly assigned the spectators to one of three treatments that manipulated the relative importance of hard work and luck as determinants of workers' earnings, thus experimentally varying the source of earnings inequality.<sup>11</sup> Spectators may respond to workers' unequal earnings because of differences in both their inequality acceptance and beliefs about the sources of income inequality. Randomly assigning the source of unequal earnings helps us control the beliefs about the source of inequality and isolate our spectators' inequality acceptance.

In the "Luck" treatment, workers' initial earnings were determined by chance. A random draw selected one of the two workers to receive the payoff of \$6.00. This translates into an hourly wage that is substantially higher than the average wage earned in this online labor market.<sup>12</sup> The other worker earned nothing for the task (but both workers still got to keep the participation fee of \$1.00).

In the "Merit" treatment, the worker in the pair who performed better on the task earned \$6.00, and the other worker received no bonus payment. Individual performance was determined by the total number of corrected mistakes. However, we did not reveal workers' actual performance to the spectators, only who performed better.

The "Mixed" treatment is a combination of the Luck and Merit treatments (Cappelen et al., 2023). In this treatment, spectators were also informed about which worker in the pair had the higher performance and earned \$6.00. However, there was a 20% chance that a worker's performance score would be reduced to zero, introducing uncertainty for the spectators who could not discern whether a

<sup>11</sup> Table A2 in the appendix provides randomization checks for each sample. We find no significant differences in background characteristics across conditions.

<sup>12</sup> According to a recent survey of workers, the average hourly wage on MTurk is about \$3 (Hara et al., 2018). Given that it took 5 minutes to complete the task, our workers were paid an extrapolated expected hourly wage of \$36.

worker's relative performance was influenced by the negative shock or represented their true, unaltered performance. This treatment aims to provide a more realistic representation of the complexities found in real-world situations. In reality, individuals' income levels are often influenced by a combination of both hard work and luck. Consequently, it is possible that wealthy individuals may invoke the risk associated with the source of inequality being attributed to luck as a rationale for not redistributing to the low-income worker. This notion is reminiscent of Exley (2016), who demonstrates how individuals employ risk as a justification for refraining from charitable donations.

The spectators' task was to decide how much of the initial earnings to redistribute from the high- to the low-income worker, yielding one of the following income distributions: (\$6, \$0), (\$5, \$1), (\$4, \$2), (\$3, \$3), (\$2, \$4), (\$1, \$5), or (\$0, \$6). Note that the choice did not involve a default option, which means that spectators had to make an active choice before they could proceed with the survey. Moreover, we explained to the spectators that the amount of money at stake is considerable for the workers and that they should carefully consider their decision. Although it may be cognitively less demanding to not redistribute any money, spectators who chose that option did not make faster decisions (see Figure A16 in the appendix). Thus, distributive choices serve as a proxy for participants' fairness preferences. For example, a spectator who does not redistribute any earnings is more inequality accepting than someone who redistributes so that both workers earn the same.

Our approach to measuring fairness preferences offers two key advantages over other distribution experiments, such as the commonly used dictator game. First, it allows for a *ceteris paribus* comparison of inequality acceptance between groups with different levels of wealth because the choices in the experimental task do not have any monetary consequences for the spectators. As such, differences in distributive choices cannot be explained by the possibility that an extra \$1 means less to a wealthy person than to a poor person due to diminishing marginal utility

of wealth. Second, the decisions made by the spectators do not involve a trade-off between their own material payoff and the payoff of others. This means that differences in distributive choices cannot be attributed to individual differences in material self-interest. Consequently, our experimental task allows us to measure “pure” inequality acceptance, free from any potential confounding effects of self-interest.

While we did not randomize the question order, we took several measures to minimize the influence of the tax attitude questions on distributive choices. First, we strategically inserted 29 other questions between the tax attitude questions and the experimental task, effectively spacing out these two survey blocks. This arrangement aimed to prevent immediate association between tax attitudes and distributive choices. Second, we refrained from using the term “redistribution” when asking about tax attitudes, further reducing potential priming effects. Additionally, the question order was the same for both the top 5% and bottom 95% groups, which helps maintain comparability and ensures that any order effects are consistent across both groups.

#### *Other factors influencing attitudes towards government redistribution*

In addition to fairness preferences, we examine three other possible determinants of attitudes toward redistribution that have been prominently discussed in the literature. One such determinant is meritocratic beliefs, which are the beliefs about the source of inequality in society, derived from the question: “How important do you think is [hard work, being lucky] for getting ahead in life” measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all important” (= 0) to “very important” (=

6).<sup>13</sup> To construct the measure of meritocratic beliefs, the response to the question about luck is subtracted from the response to the question about hard work.<sup>14</sup>

Second, we measured altruism using a survey question from the Global Preferences Survey (Falk et al., 2018): “In general, how willing are you to give to good causes without expecting anything in return?” Responses were given on an 11-point Likert scale ranging from “completely unwilling” (= 0) to “very willing” (= 10). A potential limitation of this measure is the absence of incentives, which may result in responses being influenced by social desirability bias. This could potentially lead respondents, particularly the wealthy, to overstate their generosity. On the other hand, the lack of incentives can make responses more comparable between the wealthy and individuals from the general population because differences in marginal utility of wealth between the groups cannot influence the results. While the measure has been experimentally validated in the lab with student samples and shown to correlate with a broad range of prosocial behaviors, including donations in non-student samples (Falk et al., 2018) and investments in sustainable funds (Bauer et al., 2021), it has yet to be tested with wealthy individuals.<sup>15</sup> In light

<sup>13</sup> The question about the importance of effort versus luck in getting ahead in life was drawn from the Social Inequality Module surveys (1987, 1992, 1999, 2009) of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP).

<sup>14</sup> There have been different approaches in the literature to conceptualize beliefs about the sources of success in life. For example, Fong and Poutvaara (2019) propose that people attribute different causes to success (or lack thereof) for high- and low-income individuals. Suhay et al. (2021) distinguish between first- and second-order causal attributions for success. First-order attributions are composed of dispositional factors (hard work and intelligence) and situational factors (family background and luck). Second-order attributions are composed of beliefs about the importance of individual choice, genes, and the environment. We opted for the simple trade-off between hard work and luck because this classification has formed the basis of an extensive economics literature on inequality (e.g., Piketty, 1995; Bénabou and Ok, 2001; Fong, 2001; Alesina and Angeletos, 2005; Alesina and Guiliano, 2011; Alesina et al., 2018).

<sup>15</sup> As part of the survey, we asked the respondents about the share of their income donated to charitable causes, including poverty reduction, in the previous year. We observe a significant correlation between our measure of altruism and the share of income donated to alleviate poverty ( $\rho = 0.187$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However, the magnitude of this correlation is relatively modest, possibly due to measurement error. Notably, charitable donation decisions may not solely stem from altruistic motives, but rather be influenced by other factors. For example, wealthy individuals may donate a



of the measure's potential limitations, the findings on altruism should be approached with caution.

Third, we measured trust in government by using the following question: "How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington D.C. to do what is right?"<sup>16</sup> Responses were measured on a 4-point scale using the options "never" (= 0), "only some of the time" (= 1), "most of the time" (= 2), and "just about always" (= 3).

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. *Attitudes Toward Government Redistribution*

We find that the top 5% are on average less supportive of government redistribution than the bottom 95%. Panel (a) of Figure 1 shows that the top 5% favor a lower effective income tax rate for top income earners whereas the bottom 95% prefer a slightly higher rate. The difference between the two groups is 0.48 points or about 0.4 standard deviations ( $p < 0.001$ ).<sup>17</sup> The top 5% also want a larger decrease in the federal estate tax rate than the bottom 95%.<sup>18</sup> Panel (b) of Figure 1

fraction of their wealth to private foundations or donor-advised funds to reduce their tax liability (e.g., Saez and Zucman, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> The question about trust in government is drawn from the American National Elections Studies surveys (most recently, the 2016 ANES features this question).

<sup>17</sup> Our main results often involve multiple hypothesis testing because of multiple outcome variables, treatments, and samples. A concern therefore is whether some of our key conclusions may be an artifact of such multiple comparisons (i.e., that some of the statistically significant results arise by chance). However, all of our key results are robust to a multiple-testing adjustment. We use the false discovery rate (FDR) procedure, which is a common approach to controlling the share of false positives among statistically significant results (see Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995). The FDR procedure ensures that in the presence of multiple tests the share of Type I errors remains no more than the desired target rate (e.g., 5% with the commonly used significance threshold of 0.05). Table A18 in the appendix shows that the inferential interpretation of our results remains unchanged when we apply the FDR adjustment.

<sup>18</sup> That the bottom 95% are not necessarily supportive of higher taxes on the wealthy is consistent with prior evidence (Scheve and Stasavage, 2016; Sides, 2016).

shows a difference of 0.43 points or about 0.3 standard deviations between the two groups ( $p < 0.001$ ).<sup>19</sup>

Although sizable, these attitudinal gaps could simply be driven by compositional differences between the wealthy and the general population (Kertzer, 2022). For example, the top 5% are, on average, older and more educated. However, Table 1 shows that when we control for socio-demographic differences (age, gender, race, education, and religion), the difference between the top 5% and the bottom 95% in tax attitudes actually *increases* (columns 2 and 5 of Table 1 for the top income and estate tax attitudes, respectively).

The top 5% are also more likely to identify with the Republican Party compared to the bottom 95%. The observed differences in tax attitudes may therefore be explained by the different patterns of partisan identification between the two groups. However, columns 3 and 6 of Table 1 show that the differences in tax attitudes between the top 5% and bottom 95% remain significant even conditional on party identification.

**Result 1:** The top 5% are less supportive of redistribution through income or estate taxes compared to the bottom 95%. This discrepancy in tax attitudes persists even after accounting for socio-demographic differences and differences in party identification between the two groups.

### 3.2. *Fairness preferences*

Lower support by the top 5% for government redistribution through higher taxes on the rich is likely to be partly driven by material self-interest. However, our data

<sup>19</sup> The gaps in tax attitudes between the wealthy and the general population are or tend to be larger in magnitude than differences in tax attitudes with respect to gender (male vs. female), age (younger vs. older than the median age of 47) and education (some college or less vs. 2-year college degree or more); see Figure A15 in the appendix.

suggest that self-interest alone is unlikely to fully explain the differences in tax attitudes compared to the bottom 95%. For example, even individuals in the top 5% who are not directly affected by the top income tax (i.e., those with incomes below \$350,000) prefer lower taxes for top earners relative to the bottom 95% (-0.31 vs. 0.11,  $p < 0.001$ ), and individuals in the top 5% who are unlikely to be subject to the estate tax (i.e., those with gross financial assets below \$5M) nonetheless prefer a larger reduction in the estate tax rate compared to the bottom 95% (-0.53 vs. -0.28,  $p = 0.019$ ).<sup>20</sup>

These patterns suggest that the differences in tax attitudes between the wealthy and non-wealthy are, at least in part, driven by factors beyond narrow self-interest. Figure 2 shows the difference in inequality acceptance by treatment between the top 5% and bottom 95%, measured by the share of income allocated to the low-income worker in our experimental task. Overall, across all treatments, the top 5% redistribute less than the bottom 95% ( $p = 0.003$ ).

In the Luck treatment, the top 5% redistribute 36.5% of the earnings, compared to 42.6% by the bottom 95% ( $p = 0.008$ ). Moreover, Figure 3 shows a lower share of top 5% spectators who eliminate inequality between workers in the Luck treatment (70.2% vs. 80.1%,  $p = 0.044$ ).

The results are similar for the Mixed treatment. The top 5% redistribute less when inequality arises from a combination of luck and hard work (27.4% vs. 32.9%,  $p = 0.027$ ), and the share of spectators who establish equality also tends to be smaller among the top 5% (27.5% vs. 37.8%,  $p = 0.073$ ).

In the Merit treatment, where earnings are assigned based on workers' relative performance, the difference in the share of income allocated to the low-income

<sup>20</sup> It is possible that some participants among the top 5% that are currently not directly affected by top income and estate tax rates expect to be affected in the near future. However, we find significant differences in tax attitudes even when we apply more conservative thresholds for being affected.

worker is smaller and not significant (23.8% vs. 26.3%,  $p = 0.234$ ). However, there are still large differences in distributive choices between the two groups in that treatment as only half as many spectators among the top 5% choose to equalize workers' earnings relative to the bottom 95% (9.0% vs. 17.8%,  $p = 0.025$ ). Across all treatments, the top 5% redistribute on average 4.7 percentage points less than the bottom 95% ( $p < 0.001$ , see column 1 of Table 2).

As with tax attitudes, the difference in inequality acceptance between the wealthy and non-wealthy remains qualitatively and statistically the same after we control for socio-demographic characteristics (column 3 of Table 2) and party identification (column 4 of Table 2). We further do not find evidence that the top 5%'s higher inequality acceptance is due to less cognitive effort or time spent on the questions. Section A4.3 in the appendix shows that the top 5% spent more time to complete the survey and roughly the same amount of time to complete the experimental task. Moreover, removing fast responders from the analysis does not affect the results.

The consistent difference in inequality acceptance between the top 5% and bottom 95% across treatments (as shown in column 2 of Table 2) indicates that the source of inequality does not differentially affect the distributive choices of the two groups. In particular, we do not find supporting evidence for our conjecture regarding excuse-driven fairness preferences among the wealthy, which could potentially influence their decisions on redistribution when faced with uncertain sources of inequality.

Given that we observed distributive choices under different sources of income inequality, we can characterize the prevalence of different fairness types among the top 5% and bottom 95%. We follow the literature in defining three distinct fairness types (e.g., Almås et al., 2020). First, the share of *egalitarians* is determined by the fraction of spectators who implement full equality in the Merit treatment. Second, the share of *libertarians* is given by the fraction of spectators who do not

redistribute any income to the unlucky worker in the Luck treatment. Third, the share of *meritocrats* is determined by the fraction of spectators who allocate more income to the better performing worker in the Merit treatment minus the fraction of spectators who allocate more income to the lucky worker in the Luck treatment. Based on these definitions, we are able to classify 93.3% of the top 5% and 90.4% of the bottom 95%.

Figure 4 shows that there are about half as many egalitarians among the top 5% compared to the bottom 95% (9.0% vs. 17.8%,  $p = 0.025$ ). In contrast, the share of libertarians is more than twice as large among the top 5% (25.1% vs. 12.1%,  $p = 0.004$ ). Meritocrats, who make up the largest group in both samples, are similarly represented among the top 5% and bottom 95% (59.1% vs. 60.5%,  $p = 0.825$ ). Thus, the difference in distributive choices between the two groups is the result of an unequal proportion of “extreme” types: those who consider inequality as unfair even when it is the result of differences in effort (egalitarian fairness view), and those who view inequality as fair even when the source of inequality is pure luck (libertarian fairness view).<sup>21</sup>

**Result 2:** The top 5% are more inequality accepting than the bottom 95%. This difference in inequality acceptance is not explained by differences in measured socio-demographic characteristics, except for income. Instead, the greater inequality acceptance among the top 5% can be attributed to a larger share of libertarians and a smaller share of egalitarians within this group, while the share of meritocrats remains statistically indistinguishable between the two groups.

<sup>21</sup> Our findings align with those of Almås et al. (2020), who examined fairness preferences using national samples from the U.S. and Norway. They found that the difference in inequality acceptance between these countries stems from variations in the share of extreme fairness types, specifically a greater prevalence of libertarians in the U.S. and a higher representation of egalitarians in Norway, while the proportion of meritocrats is relatively similar in both countries.

### *Heterogeneities among the Top 5%*

Recent public appeals by millionaires for higher taxes on the rich suggest that the top 5%’s lower support for redistribution as a group masks heterogeneities.<sup>22</sup> We use the breadth and diversity of our top 5% sample to explore the variation in inequality acceptance within this group. Building on the literature that emphasizes the influence of personal experiences on the formation of social preferences (e.g., Voors et al., 2012; Cappelen et al., 2020; Kosse et al., 2020), we investigate the role of social mobility experience.

We measured social mobility by asking participants to place themselves in a percentile (on a scale from 1 to 100) of household income, both at present and when they were growing up. The difference between the present and childhood income rank provides us with a measure of individual income mobility. Figure A2 in the appendix shows that this measure correlates strongly with Chetty et al.’s (2014) measure which is based on administrative tax records ( $r = 0.612$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For ease of exposition, we classify the wealthy into “low mobility” (upward mobility of one decile or less), “medium mobility” (upward mobility of more than one and less than five deciles), and “high mobility” (upward mobility of five deciles or more).

As an alternative approach to measuring social mobility, we also consider the main source of a household’s wealth, which may reflect the extent to which income is earned through personal effort versus inherited advantage. We asked participants whether they derive most of their wealth from inheritance, salary, own business, investments (including property and pensions), or other sources. It is worth noting that while the main source of wealth is not a direct measure of social mobility

<sup>22</sup> See: <https://millionairesforhumanity.org/letter/>. See also, an Open Letter to the 2020 Presidential Candidates signed by 18 billionaires: <https://medium.com/@letterforawealthtax/an-open-letter-to-the-2020-presidential-candidates-its-time-to-tax-us-more-6eb3a548b2fe>.

experience, it can still provide insight into the relationship between earned income and fairness preferences.

Table 3 presents the results using the mobility measure based on the income scale placement. Column 1 shows that the disparity in inequality acceptance between the two groups increases with upward mobility experience. For example, the difference in distributive choices between the bottom 95% and the top 5% individuals who experienced high social mobility (8.3 percentage points,  $p < 0.001$ ) is three times as large as the difference between the bottom 95% and the low-mobility wealthy (2.9 percentage points,  $p = 0.124$ ), and almost twice as large as the difference between the bottom 95% and the medium-mobility wealthy (4.4 percentage points,  $p = 0.008$ ). As such, the difference in inequality acceptance between the top 5% who experienced high- vs. low social mobility (5.4 percentage points,  $p = 0.030$ ) is as large as the difference between the top 5% and the bottom 95%.<sup>23</sup> Controlling for socio-demographic characteristics in column 2 and party identification in column 3 does not substantially change these results.

Table 4 presents the results where we differentiate the top 5% by their main source of household wealth. Column 1 reveals that those among the top 5% who built their wealth through a business are significantly less willing to redistribute income than others. They redistribute 9.2 percentage points less than the bottom 95% ( $p < 0.001$ ), nearly double the gap in inequality acceptance between the bottom 95% and the top 5% as a whole ( $p = 0.005$ ). In fact, the top 5% individuals who mainly inherited their wealth are on average indistinguishable in inequality

<sup>23</sup> Our measure of social mobility experience may be subject to ceiling/floor effects, meaning that individuals who grew up at the very top or bottom of the income ladder may not have had the opportunity to experience significant upward or downward mobility. However, we tested the robustness of our results by excluding respondents who placed their household at the top or bottom 10% of the income scale when growing up. As shown in Appendix Table A12, the overall pattern of heterogeneity with respect to social mobility remains robust. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this issue to our attention.

acceptance from the bottom 95% ( $p = 0.586$ ). These results are robust to controlling for socio-demographic characteristics in column 2 and party identification in column 3.

Although we cannot definitively establish a causal relationship between social mobility experience and inequality acceptance, the observed patterns suggest that experiencing upward mobility is associated with an increase in inequality acceptance.<sup>24</sup>

**Result 3.** Individuals who have experienced upward social mobility or are business owners are more inequality accepting than those in the top 5% who have not had such experiences.

### 3.3. *Meritocratic Beliefs, Altruism, and Trust in Government*

*Meritocratic Beliefs*—Wealthy individuals may believe more strongly that success in life is primarily the result of hard work as opposed to luck because many of them have learned that hard work pays off, either directly through their personal experiences or indirectly through their parents and friends. Thus, the wealthy may be more inclined to blame poor people for their poverty and think that it is unfair to take resources away from hard-working people. However, Panel (a) of Figure 5 shows that the top 5% and the bottom 95% hold similar beliefs about the relative importance of hard work versus luck (1.75 vs. 1.78,  $p = 0.837$ ).<sup>25</sup> Thus, the

<sup>24</sup> The heterogeneity in attitudes toward redistribution is consistent with the patterns observed for inequality acceptance. Specifically, the high-mobility wealthy prefer both a lower top income tax rate and a lower estate tax rate compared to the rest of the top 5% (as shown in Appendix Table A13).

<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, the top 5% place a higher level of importance on both hard work (5.38 vs. 5.10,  $p < 0.001$ ) and luck (3.64 vs. 3.31,  $p = 0.005$ ) compared to the bottom 95%. However, section A5 of the appendix shows that the average importance attributed to hard work and luck explains only a minimal fraction of the difference in attitudes towards redistribution. In section A5 of the appendix, we also report specifications that incorporate our measures of beliefs in hard work and luck as separate variables. However, these alternative specifications do not produce any



difference in meritocratic beliefs does not appear to account for the gap in support for redistribution between the top 5% and the bottom 95%.

Although the average difference in beliefs between the top 5% and bottom 5% is negligible, there is notable heterogeneity in beliefs. Appendix Table A14 indicates that individuals with high upward mobility who belong to the top 5% hold stronger beliefs about the importance of hard work in achieving success ( $p = 0.208$ ), whereas those who experienced low mobility believe that hard work is less important compared to the general population ( $p = 0.007$ ). Despite that both beliefs and preferences exhibit heterogeneity with respect to social mobility experience, the relationship between social mobility and inequality acceptance persists even after controlling for meritocratic beliefs (see Appendix Table A15). Thus, social mobility experience appears to have a broader impact on preferences beyond its effect on beliefs.

*Altruism*—A common assumption is that affluent individuals exhibit lower levels of altruism compared to the general population (Almås et al., 2022), implying that the top 5% may oppose redistribution due to their lower willingness to contribute to the betterment of others. However, panel (b) of Figure 5 suggests that the top 5% are not less altruistic than the bottom 95%. In fact, they appear to display a higher willingness to give to good causes without any expectation of reward (8.8 vs. 8.1,  $p < 0.001$ ). This is in line with recent studies that have also found no evidence of greater selfishness among the wealthy (e.g., Hoffman, 2011; Smeets et al., 2015; Andreoni et al., 2021). Nevertheless, caution is necessary when interpreting these results, as our measure of altruism relies on self-reports and may be prone to social desirability bias.

meaningful changes in the results. We thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this to our attention.

*Trust in Government*—Previous research has suggested that a factor contributing to the lack of support for government redistribution is distrust in the government’s ability to redistribute effectively (e.g., Hetherington, 2005; Rudolph and Evans, 2005; Kuziemko et al., 2015; Alesina et al., 2018).<sup>26</sup> Thus, it could be that the top 5% are less in favor of redistribution because they are more distrustful of government.

Panel (c) of Figure 5 shows that the top 5% trust the U.S. government to a similar degree as the bottom 95%. Trust in government is generally low, with average scores of 0.96 for the top 5% and 0.98 for the bottom 95% on a 0-3 scale ( $p = 0.868$ ). According to the response options, this means that the average person thinks one can trust the government “only some of the time.” While trust in government is generally low, as has also been documented in other studies (e.g., Kuziemko et al., 2015), we do not find that the top 5% differ from the bottom 95%. Thus, variation in trust in government cannot explain why the wealthy are less in favor of government redistribution.

**Result 4:** The top 5% indicate to be more altruistic, hold similar beliefs about the role of hard work relative to luck in success in life, and trust the government to a similar degree as the bottom 95%.

### 3.4. *Predicting Attitudes toward Redistribution*

We assess the predictive power of fairness preferences concerning attitudes toward government redistribution, relative to the other three factors. We accomplish this in two steps. First, we conduct a dominance analysis to evaluate the predictive value of each factor. Second, we employ the Blinder-Oaxaca

<sup>26</sup> However, a recent study that experimentally varied subjects’ beliefs about the integrity of government officials finds no effect of trust in government on attitudes toward redistribution (Peyton, 2020).

decomposition method (Blinder, 1973; Oaxaca, 1973) to examine the degree to which controlling for each of the four factors reduces the difference in tax attitudes between the wealthy and non-wealthy.

The dominance analysis is an algorithmic approach that performs a pairwise comparison of the R-squared with and without the inclusion of a predictor of interest for all the possible models that contain some subset of the other predictors (e.g., Budescu, 1993).<sup>27</sup> The average marginal improvement in the R-squared when the predictor is included yields a statistic, which is then normalized so that the sum of each predictor's statistics adds up to 100%.

Table 5 shows the results from the dominance analysis for the top 5% in panel (a) and bottom 95% in panel (b). Among the top 5%, our four predictors account for roughly one-third of the total variation in tax attitudes. Inequality acceptance and meritocratic beliefs are the two strongest predictors of tax attitudes. For example, inequality acceptance accounts for 42% of the variance explained in the top 5%'s attitudes about the top income tax rate (column 1). Meritocratic beliefs play a similarly important role and capture 39% of the variance explained. In contrast, altruism and trust in government explain only 6% and 13%, respectively. The results are similar for the estate tax attitudes (column 2). Fairness preferences and meritocratic beliefs together account for more than 80% of the variance explained in tax attitudes.<sup>28</sup> Among the bottom 95%, fairness preferences and meritocratic beliefs are also the strongest predictors relative to trust in government and altruism. However, the four factors jointly explain only 6% to 15% of the

<sup>27</sup> An alternative approach for determining the importance of variables is to compare the size of standardized coefficients. However, this approach can be more sensitive to model specification than the algorithm-based variance decomposition methods like dominance analysis. Moreover, standardized coefficients depend on the observed range of the regressors, which may vary for data- and sample-related issues rather than substantive reasons (Grömping, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Inequality acceptance and meritocratic beliefs remain among the top predictors of tax attitudes when we control for socio-demographic variables (see Table A16).

variance in income and estate tax attitudes. The overall higher predictive power of fairness preferences among the top 5% is in line with theories proposing that richer individuals are more likely to vote in accordance with their personal values than their material self-interest when the two motives conflict (Enke et al., 2022).

Up to this point, we have established that: (i) the top 5% have higher inequality acceptance, and (ii) inequality acceptance is highly predictive of attitudes toward redistribution, especially among the top 5%. As a final step, we perform the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition to estimate the share of the difference in tax attitudes between the top 5% and bottom 95% that can be accounted for by the differences in inequality acceptance and the remaining three predictors. Figure 6 summarizes the results.<sup>29</sup> Inequality acceptance accounts for between 20% and 33% of the gap in tax attitudes between the top 5% and bottom 95% (both p-values are smaller than 0.002). In contrast, the remaining three predictors do not explain the difference in tax attitudes. Thus, only inequality acceptance explains (at least part of) the difference in attitudes toward redistribution between the top 5% and bottom 95%.

**Result 5:** Inequality acceptance and meritocratic beliefs are the strongest predictors of tax attitudes. However, only inequality acceptance can explain, at least in part, the difference in tax attitudes between the top 5% and the general population.

### *3.5. Behavioral Consequences of Attitudes Toward Redistribution*

In addition to attitudes toward redistribution, we also examine a behavior that can be a downstream consequence of these attitudes: vote choice. In our survey, we asked about voting in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. We create a dummy

<sup>29</sup> Table A17 in the appendix presents the full analysis. We regress tax attitudes on a dummy for the top 5% and control for the predictors one at a time. The results from the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition are presented at the bottom of that table.

variable for whether participants voted for the Republican candidate Donald Trump (conditional on voting). Over the past decades, the Republican Party has grown more conservative on major issues like inequality, government-sponsored health insurance, and the minimum wage, generally arguing that redistributing wealth through the government will not fix the problem of economic inequality (McCarty et al., 2016).

Panel (a) of Figure 7 shows that the top 5% were 10 percentage points more likely to vote for Donald Trump ( $p = 0.004$ ). This sizable gap in voting behavior between the wealthy and non-wealthy is robust to socio-demographic controls and similar in magnitude to the often-mentioned gender gap in presidential voting.<sup>30</sup> Even though voting behavior is likely determined by a multitude of values on topics that go beyond government redistribution, we find that the difference in inequality acceptance between the top 5% and bottom 95% account for roughly 45% of the gap in voting between the two groups (see panel (b)). Thus, the differences in distributive choices observed in the experiment between the top 5% and bottom 95% translate to meaningful differences in real-world behavior between the two groups.

### 3.6. *Robustness*

We provide several robustness checks of our main results in the appendix. First, the academic and public debate on inequality has often focused on the top 1% rather than the top 5% of the income and wealth distribution (e.g., Alvaredo et al., 2013;

<sup>30</sup> According to an exit poll that is routinely conducted on Election Day by Edison Research, women were 11 percentage points less likely to vote for Trump in the 2016 election compared to men (Center for American Women and Politics. 2016. “Presidential exit poll.” Rutgers Eagleton Institute of Politics. Retrieved March 26, 2019, from <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/voters/womens-vote-watch>). In our study, we find a gender difference in presidential voting of 15 and 9 percentage points for the top 5% and bottom 95%, respectively.

see also the Occupy Wall Street movement). In section A4.1 of the appendix, we show that the differences in tax attitudes and inequality acceptance are even larger when we consider the top 1% as the economic elite rather than the top 5%. Second, individuals with greater assets are typically older and more likely to be retired than those who classify as top 5% based only on their income. In section A4.2 of the appendix, we show that the results do not meaningfully change when we restrict our analysis to participants who earn enough to qualify as top 5% but do not have sufficient liquid assets to meet the wealth threshold. Third, in any survey or experiment, researchers have limited control over the degree of carefulness with which participants read questions and instructions. Although we took several steps to ensure high-quality data (see section 2), it could still be that the top 5% paid less attention to the survey relative to the bottom 95%. Yet, as shown in section A4.3 of the appendix, we do not find evidence that the top 5% filled out the survey less carefully. The top 5% took slightly more time to complete the survey (and experimental task), and the results do not change meaningfully when we exclude the 10% fastest respondents.

Fourth, to further guard against concerns about inattentiveness and/or misreporting, we show in section A4.4 that our main results remain robust even when excluding respondents who provide seemingly inconsistent answers across various survey items. Finally, it is worth considering the possibility that the probability of the primary breadwinner participating in a survey decreases as household income increases. Consequently, this may result in a different proportion of breadwinners within the top 5% compared to the bottom 95%. However, in section A4.5, we show that our main results remain robust even after accounting for the potential influence of breadwinner status.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

We show that Americans who report income or wealth in the top 5% prefer less government redistribution than the general population. The difference in attitudes toward redistribution between the wealthy and non-wealthy is associated with a disparity in fairness preferences observed among these two groups. In particular, the share of individuals who endorse a libertarian fairness view is more than twice as large among the top 5%. In other words, wealthy individuals are more likely to consider unequal incomes as fair even if the inequality arises from chance. In contrast, the bottom 95% are more likely to consider unequal incomes as unfair even if brought about by differences in effort. Thus, the egalitarian fairness view is more common among the bottom 95%. Finally, the results suggest that the differences in fairness preferences between the top 5% and bottom 95% explain a considerable portion of the differences in tax attitudes and voting behavior.

Scholars have long debated why economic inequality can persist in democratic countries like the U.S. where the political system is largely based on the principle of “one person, one vote” (e.g., Bonica et al., 2013). Although we cannot provide causal evidence on why wealthy Americans are more inequality accepting than the general public, our results raise the possibility that their distinctive fairness preferences contribute to the continued growth in economic inequality in the U.S. As wealthy individuals are more likely to hold positions of power in business and politics, their preferences have a disproportionate impact on distributional outcomes in society. For example, many high-income individuals are business owners or top executives, which gives them greater influence on the wage distribution in firms. The wealthy also have more resources than the average citizen to shape politics according to their preferences. This can create a self-perpetuating cycle in which greater inequality in society leads to more economic and political power for the wealthy, which in turn reinforces inequality. Policies that improve

social mobility may be insufficient to break this cycle because our results further suggest that fairness preferences are shaped by the personal experience of upward mobility. Individuals who climbed the income ladder are more inequality accepting than those who grew up in a wealthy household. Future research is needed to better understand the role of social mobility in the formation of fairness preferences.



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## FIGURES

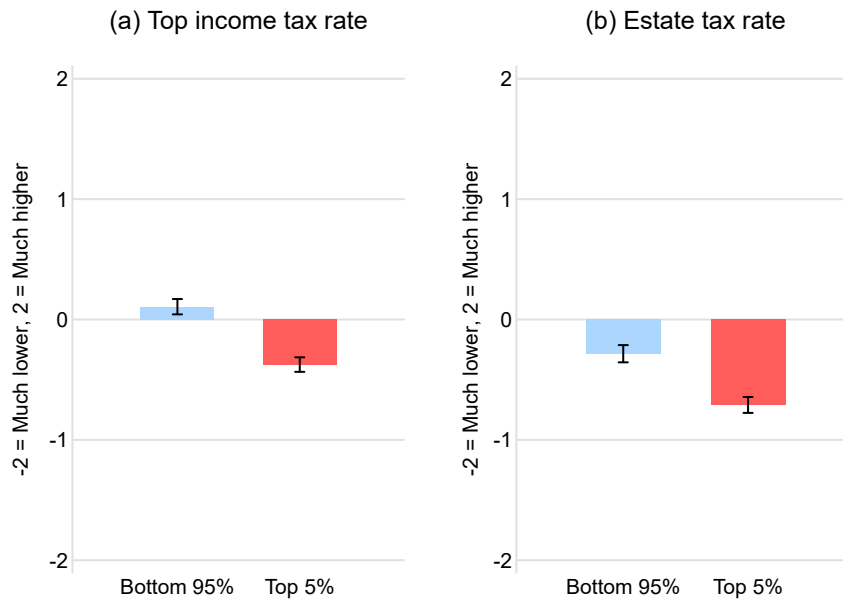


FIGURE 1. ATTITUDES TOWARD REDISTRIBUTION

*Notes:* Attitudes among the top 5% (red) and bottom 95% (blue) regarding (a) the top income tax rate and (b) the estate tax rate. Participants were asked whether they preferred a higher or lower tax rate on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Error bars indicate s.e.m.

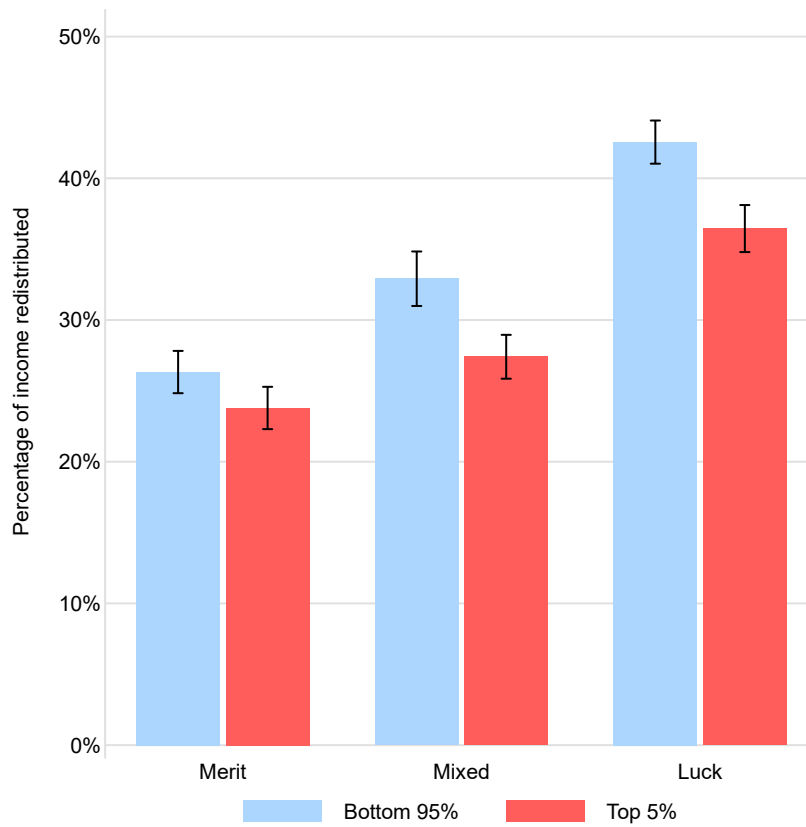


FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES IN THE EXPERIMENT

*Notes:* Percentage of income redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker by treatment for the top 5% (red) and bottom 95% (blue). In the Merit treatment, earnings were assigned based on workers' relative performance. In the Mixed treatment, earnings were determined based on workers' relative performance but there was also an element of chance. In the Luck treatment, earnings were assigned purely based on chance. Error bars indicate s.e.m.



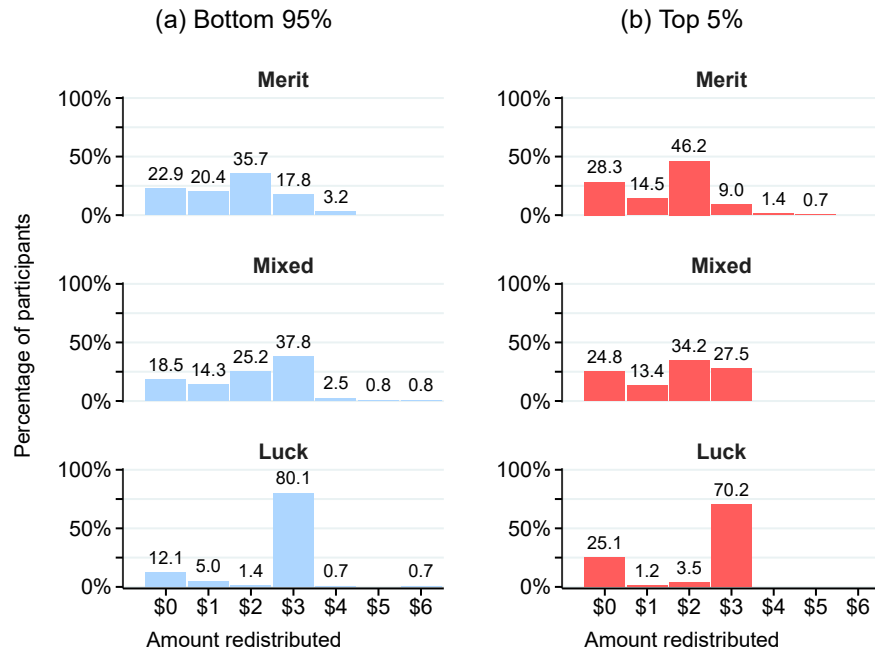


FIGURE 3. DISTRIBUTIONS OF DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES IN THE EXPERIMENT

*Notes:* Distributions of amount (in U.S. dollars) redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker by treatment for the bottom 95% (panel (a), blue bars) and the top 5% (panel (b), red bars). The numbers on top of the bars indicate the exact percentages.

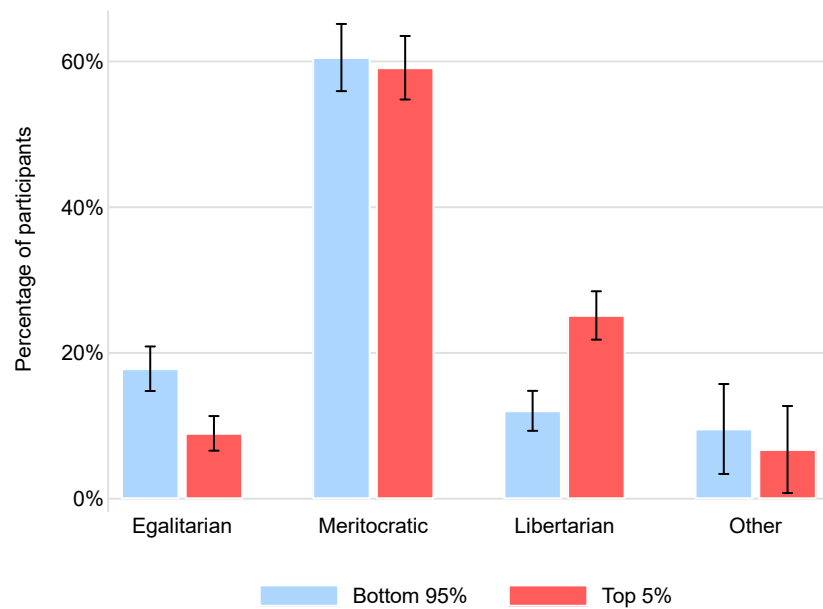


FIGURE 4. FAIRNESS TYPES

*Notes:* Fairness types among the top 5% and bottom 95%. Egalitarians are spectators who implement full equality in the Merit treatment. Libertarians are spectators who do not redistribute any income to the low-income worker in the Luck treatment. The percentage of meritocrats is determined by the share of spectators who allocate more income to the better performing worker in the Merit treatment minus the share of spectators who allocate more income to the low-income worker in the Luck treatment. The remaining participants fall into the category “Other.” Error bars indicate s.e.m.

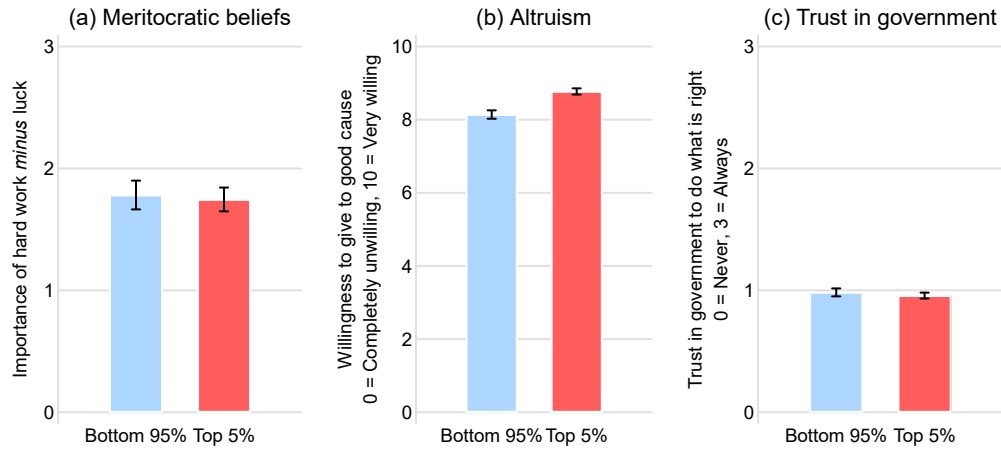


FIGURE 5. MERITOCRATIC BELIEFS, ALTRUISM AND TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

*Notes:* Meritocratic beliefs, altruism, and trust in government among the top 5% (red) and bottom 95% (blue). For the measure of meritocratic beliefs in panel (a), participants were asked about the importance of hard work and luck for getting ahead in life on a scale from “not at all important” (= 0) to “very important” (= 6). The difference between the two answers yields our measure of meritocratic beliefs. For the measure of altruism in panel (b), participants were asked how willing they are to give to good causes without expecting anything in return on an 11-point scale from “completely unwilling” (= 0) to “very willing” (= 10). For the measure of trust in government in panel (c), participants were asked how much of the time they think they can trust the federal government to do what is right, from “never” (= 0) to “just about always” (= 3). Error bars indicate s.e.m.

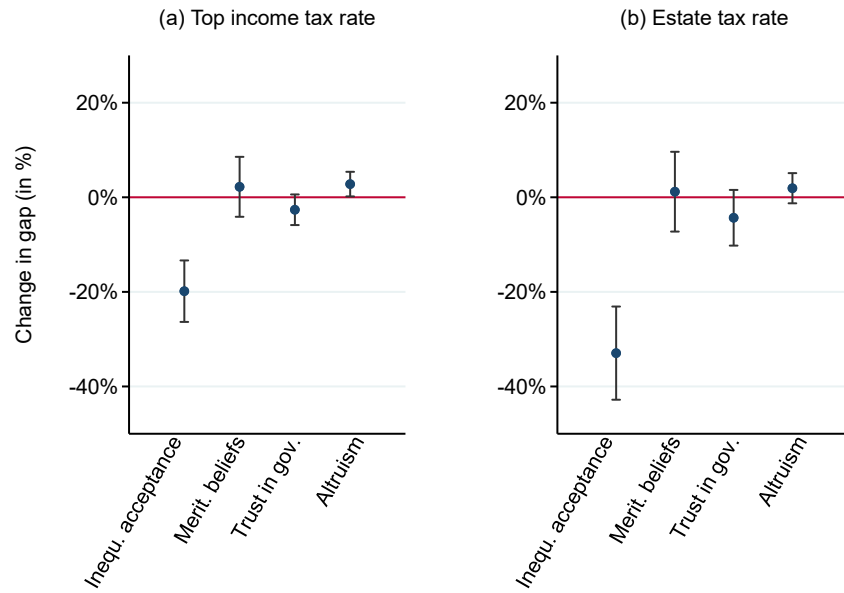


FIGURE 6. EXPLAINING THE GAP IN ATTITUDES TOWARD REDISTRIBUTION

*Notes:* This figure summarizes the results from the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition, which evaluates how much of the differences in attitudes toward redistribution between top 5% and bottom 95% is explained by differences in inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs, trust in government, and altruism. Panel (a) presents the results for the top income tax rate and panel (b) for the estate tax rate. The graphs indicate the percentage change in the difference in tax attitudes after controlling for inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs, trust in government, and altruism, respectively. The baseline difference in tax attitudes is -0.48 regarding the top income tax and -0.42 regarding the estate tax on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Error bars indicate robust standard errors for the percentage change in the difference in attitudes between the top 5% and the bottom 95% and are calculated using the delta method. The complete analysis can be found in Table A17 in the appendix.

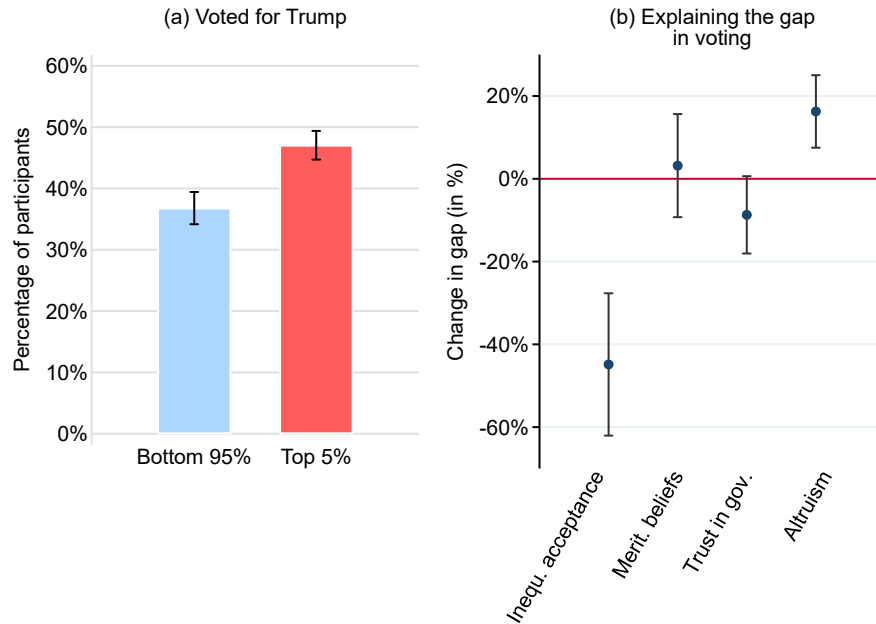


FIGURE 7. VOTING BEHAVIOR IN THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

*Notes:* Panel (a) presents voting behavior in the 2016 presidential election among the top 5% (red) and bottom 95% (blue). The percentage of participants who voted for candidate Trump is conditional on voting. Error bars indicate s.e.m. Panel (b) presents the results from the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition, which evaluates how much of the difference in voting behavior between top 5% and bottom 95% is explained by differences in inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs, trust in government, and altruism. The graph indicates the percentage change in the difference in voting between the top 5% and bottom 95% after controlling for inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs, trust in government, and altruism, respectively. The baseline difference in voting for Trump is 10.3%. Error bars indicate robust standard errors for the percentage change in the difference in voting between the top 5% and the bottom 95% and are calculated using the delta method.

## TABLES

TABLE 1—ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT REDISTRIBUTION

<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	<i>Top income tax rate</i>			<i>Estate tax rate</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Top 5%	-0.481*** (0.088)	-0.750*** (0.121)	-0.681*** (0.119)	-0.425*** (0.098)	-0.588*** (0.132)	-0.534*** (0.129)
Age		0.006** (0.003)	0.007** (0.003)		-0.002 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)
Male		-0.147 (0.094)	-0.101 (0.092)		-0.185* (0.103)	-0.149 (0.102)
White		0.126 (0.129)	0.206 (0.128)		0.076 (0.139)	0.180 (0.139)
College (undergraduate)		0.258** (0.119)	0.258** (0.117)		0.216 (0.133)	0.241* (0.130)
College (graduate or higher)		0.345** (0.134)	0.294** (0.133)		0.487*** (0.148)	0.443*** (0.146)
Protestant		-0.624*** (0.110)	-0.436*** (0.111)		-0.756*** (0.118)	-0.567*** (0.120)
Catholic		-0.670*** (0.124)	-0.514*** (0.125)		-0.861*** (0.134)	-0.716*** (0.133)
Other religion		-0.041 (0.132)	-0.018 (0.126)		-0.206 (0.153)	-0.204 (0.146)
Republican			-0.806*** (0.091)			-0.840*** (0.095)
Constant	0.106* (0.064)	-0.003 (0.189)	-0.010 (0.181)	-0.285*** (0.072)	0.167 (0.212)	0.159 (0.206)
Observations	826	825	812	810	809	794
Adjusted $R^2$	0.034	0.094	0.169	0.022	0.104	0.176

*Notes:* The table reports the results of OLS regressions of tax attitudes on the top 5% indicator and individual background variables. The dependent variable in columns (1)-(3) is the attitude toward the top income tax rate; the dependent variable in columns (4)-(6) is the attitude toward the estate tax rate. Both are measured on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). “Age” is measured in years. “Male” is an indicator for male participants. “White” is an indicator for White people. “College (undergraduate)” is an indicator for participants who obtained an associate or bachelor degree. “College (graduate or higher)” is an indicator for participants who obtained a graduate or postgraduate degree. “Protestant,” “Catholic,” and “Other religion” are indicator variables for religion. “Republican” is an indicator for identifying as republican. Columns (1) and (4) are baseline models with only the top 5% indicator; columns (2) and (5) add socio-demographic controls; columns (3) and (6) add a control for party identity. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE 2—ESTIMATES OF DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES IN THE EXPERIMENT

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>Share of income redistributed</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Top 5%	-0.047*** (0.013)	-0.061*** (0.023)	-0.062*** (0.019)	-0.060*** (0.019)
Mixed	-0.093*** (0.017)	-0.096*** (0.025)	-0.095*** (0.016)	-0.096*** (0.016)
Merit	-0.144*** (0.015)	-0.162*** (0.021)	-0.143*** (0.015)	-0.145*** (0.015)
Top 5% X Mixed		0.006 (0.033)		
Top 5% X Merit		0.036 (0.031)		
Age			-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Male			-0.036** (0.014)	-0.032** (0.014)
White			0.031 (0.019)	0.037* (0.020)
College (undergraduate)			0.021 (0.018)	0.021 (0.019)
College (graduate or higher)			0.034* (0.020)	0.029 (0.021)
Protestant			-0.071*** (0.017)	-0.059*** (0.017)
Catholic			-0.056*** (0.019)	-0.047** (0.019)
Other religion			0.030 (0.018)	0.026 (0.018)
Republican				-0.066*** (0.016)
Constant	0.418*** (0.013)	0.426*** (0.015)	0.441*** (0.028)	0.444*** (0.029)
Observations	882	882	880	852
Adjusted $R^2$	0.096	0.095	0.136	0.156

*Notes:* The table reports OLS results. The dependent variable is the share of income redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker in the experiment. “Top 5%” is an indicator variable for the wealthy. “Mixed” and “Merit” are treatment indicators. Column (2) includes interaction terms between the top 5% and the treatment indicators to estimate differential responses to the treatments. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Column (3) includes controls for sociodemographic characteristics. Column (4) adds a control for party identity. “Age” is measured in years. “Male” is an indicator for male participants. “White” is an indicator for White people. “College (undergraduate)” is an indicator for participants who obtained an associate or bachelor degree. “College (graduate or higher)” is an indicator for participants who obtained a graduate or postgraduate degree. “Protestant,” “Catholic,” and “Other religion” are indicator variables for religion. “Republican” is an indicator for identifying as republican. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE 3—HETEROGENEITY AMONG THE TOP 5% IN DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES IN THE EXPERIMENT: INCOME MOBILITY

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>Share of income redistributed</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Top 5%, high mobility	-0.083*** (0.021)	-0.088*** (0.024)	-0.084*** (0.024)
Top 5%, medium mobility	-0.044*** (0.017)	-0.056*** (0.021)	-0.054** (0.021)
Top 5%, low mobility	-0.029 (0.019)	-0.047** (0.023)	-0.046** (0.023)
Mixed	-0.096*** (0.017)	-0.098*** (0.016)	-0.099*** (0.016)
Merit	-0.149*** (0.015)	-0.148*** (0.015)	-0.150*** (0.015)
Age		-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Male		-0.036** (0.014)	-0.033** (0.014)
White		0.030 (0.020)	0.035* (0.020)
College (undergraduate)		0.018 (0.018)	0.017 (0.019)
College (graduate or higher)		0.032 (0.020)	0.027 (0.020)
Protestant		-0.072*** (0.017)	-0.061*** (0.017)
Catholic		-0.055*** (0.019)	-0.047** (0.020)
Other religion		0.026 (0.018)	0.022 (0.018)
Republican			-0.067*** (0.016)
Constant	0.423*** (0.013)	0.451*** (0.028)	0.457*** (0.029)
Observations	872	870	844
Adjusted $R^2$	0.104	0.143	0.166
Differences between Top 5% subgroups:			
High vs. low mobility	-0.054** (0.025)	-0.041* (0.024)	-0.038 (0.024)
High vs. medium mobility	-0.038* (0.023)	-0.031 (0.022)	-0.029 (0.022)
Medium vs. low mobility	-0.015 (0.021)	-0.010 (0.021)	-0.008 (0.020)

*Notes:* The table reports OLS results. The dependent variable is the share of income redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker in the experiment, regressed on three indicators for the wealthy, split by the change in household income on the income scale (in deciles) when growing up relative to the present into low ( $\leq 1$  decile), medium (between 1 and 5 deciles) and high ( $\geq 5$  deciles). Since all participants are from the top 5% and have a relatively homogenous income, our estimated effects of experienced mobility are unlikely to be driven by the effect of own income, which we would otherwise have to control for. “Mixed” and “Merit” are treatment indicators. Column (2) controls for sociodemographic characteristics. Column (3) also controls for party identity. The bottom of the table reports the linear combinations of the differences between the coefficients for the subsamples of the wealthy. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.



TABLE 4—HETEROGENEITY AMONG THE TOP 5% IN DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES IN THE EXPERIMENT: SOURCE OF WEALTH

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>Share of income redistributed</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Top 5%, wealth from business	-0.092*** (0.021)	-0.109*** (0.024)	-0.103*** (0.024)
Top 5%, wealth from salary	-0.036** (0.016)	-0.060*** (0.020)	-0.058*** (0.020)
Top 5%, wealth from investments	-0.032 (0.024)	-0.056** (0.028)	-0.051* (0.028)
Top 5%, wealth from inheritance	-0.016 (0.030)	-0.038 (0.031)	-0.036 (0.031)
Mixed	-0.094*** (0.017)	-0.096*** (0.016)	-0.096*** (0.016)
Merit	-0.148*** (0.015)	-0.148*** (0.015)	-0.149*** (0.015)
Age		-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Male		-0.036** (0.014)	-0.033** (0.014)
White		0.038** (0.019)	0.042** (0.020)
College (undergraduate)		0.025 (0.018)	0.024 (0.018)
College (graduate or higher)		0.042** (0.019)	0.036* (0.020)
Protestant		-0.068*** (0.017)	-0.058*** (0.017)
Catholic		-0.050*** (0.019)	-0.043** (0.019)
Other religion		0.030 (0.018)	0.024 (0.018)
Republican			-0.061*** (0.016)
Constant	0.420*** (0.013)	0.429*** (0.028)	0.434*** (0.029)
Observations	872	870	843
Adjusted $R^2$	0.107	0.147	0.163
Differences between Top 5% subgroups:			
Business vs. inheritance	-0.076** (0.034)	-0.071** (0.033)	-0.067** (0.032)
Business vs. investment	-0.060** (0.029)	-0.053* (0.029)	-0.052* (0.029)
Business vs. salary	-0.057** (0.023)	-0.049** (0.022)	-0.045** (0.022)
Salary vs. inheritance	-0.020 (0.031)	-0.023 (0.030)	-0.022 (0.029)
Salary vs. investment	-0.003 (0.026)	-0.004 (0.026)	-0.007 (0.026)
Investment vs. inheritance	-0.016 (0.036)	-0.018 (0.036)	-0.015 (0.035)

*Notes:* The table reports OLS results. The dependent variable is the share of income redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker in the experiment, regressed on four indicators for the wealthy, split by the main source of their wealth. “Mixed” and “Merit” are treatment indicators. Column (2) controls for sociodemographic characteristics. Column (3) also controls for party identity. The bottom of the table reports the linear combinations of the differences between the coefficients for the subsamples of the wealthy. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE 5—DOMINANCE ANALYSIS

<i>(a) Top 5%</i>				
Rank	<i>Top income tax rate</i>		<i>Estate tax rate</i>	
	(1)		(2)	
1	Inequality acceptance	42%	Meritocratic beliefs	44%
2	Meritocratic beliefs	39%	Inequality acceptance	37%
3	Trust in government	13%	Trust in government	15%
4	Altruism	6%	Altruism	5%
Total variance explained		32%	33%	

<i>(b) Bottom 95%</i>				
Rank	<i>Top income tax rate</i>		<i>Estate tax rate</i>	
	(1)		(2)	
1	Meritocratic beliefs	49%	Inequality acceptance	37%
2	Inequality acceptance	44%	Meritocratic beliefs	35%
3	Altruism	5%	Trust in government	20%
4	Trust in government	3%	Altruism	9%
Total variance explained		6%	15%	

*Notes:* The table reports the results from the dominance analysis for the top 5% (panel a) and bottom 95% (panel b). This procedure estimates the relative contribution of our measures on inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs, altruism, and trust in government in explaining variation in attitudes toward redistribution. Column (1) examines attitudes toward the top income tax rate, column (2) focuses on attitudes toward the estate tax rate. For each outcome variable the four measures are ranked by the size of their relative contribution to the variance explained with numbers adding up to 100%. The bottom rows show the percentage of total variance explained by all four beliefs and preference measures combined.

For Online Publication

Appendix to

**Wealthy Americans and Redistribution:  
The Role of Fairness Preferences**

ALAIN COHN, LASSE J. JESSEN, MARKO KLAŠNJA, AND PAUL SMEETS

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## APPENDIX A – SAMPLING AND ADDITIONAL RESULTS

### A1. SAMPLING PROCEDURES

We adopted YouGov’s standard procedure to obtain a representative sample of the general population. According to a recent evaluation by the Pew Research Center, YouGov’s procedure performs well in terms of accuracy of the survey responses compared to the methods used by other online opt-in panel providers (Kennedy et al., 2016).<sup>31</sup> YouGov’s sampling procedure consists of three steps: (i) defining the sampling frame, (ii) quota sampling based on the sampling frame, and (iii) further balancing the final sample against the sampling frame using propensity score matching.

For the first step, we relied on YouGov’s in-house sampling frame, which contains information on gender, age, race, education, party identification, voter turnout, political ideology, and political interest. The demographic portion of the frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2010 American Community Survey.<sup>32</sup> Data on voter registration status and turnout were added to this frame using the November 2010 Current Population Survey. Data on political interest and party identification were then added to this frame using the 2007 Pew Religious Life Survey.

In the second step, respondents in our general population sample were quota-sampled to approximate the sampling frame. To this end, YouGov conducts more interviews than the target sample size (in our case, 450 respondents in the general population sample). In the third and final step, a matching model is used to calculate propensity scores for all individuals with completed interviews. Excess respondents with the lowest propensity scores (i.e., those who are least similar to the distribution

<sup>31</sup> The report compared the online survey providers without identifying them, but YouGov revealed its identity (Rivers, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> The American Community Survey (ACS) is conducted by the Census Bureau every year and includes more than 3.5 million respondents. Except for the decennial census, the ACS is the most comprehensive source of information in the U.S. on Americans’ socio-demographic characteristics. The ACS is used to determine the distribution of federal and state funds for a variety of government programs. Response to the ACS is required by law.

of socio-demographic characteristics in the sampling frame) were eliminated until the target sample size was achieved, in order to further approximate the sampling frame.

The sampling procedure for the wealthy followed the same principles, but with some minor modifications. First, we worked with YouGov to develop a custom sampling frame for the wealthy. This sampling frame contains information on gender, age, race (i.e., white vs. non-white), and education based on households with more than \$350,000 in household income in the 2015 American Community Survey.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the vast size of the YouGov respondent pool (about 2 million respondents), there is still a limited number of respondents who belong to the top 5% of the income or wealth distribution, and they are usually harder to reach than most respondents from the general population. To maximize the number of completed interviews among the affluent, YouGov did not quota-sample the wealthy based on the affluent sampling frame (as it did for the general population); instead, it aimed to reach as many top income earners and wealth holders as possible. As for the general population sample, YouGov completed more interviews than the target sample size of 450 affluent respondents. Consequently, we once again implemented the matching step, whereby propensity scores based on the affluent sampling frame were calculated for each respondent who completed the survey. As for the general population sample, respondents with the lowest propensity scores were eliminated until the target sample size of 450 respondents was reached.

<sup>33</sup> While the most detailed financial information on the wealthy is contained in the Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF), that survey does not contain comprehensive demographic information. This is the reason why we use the demographic information from the ACS rather than the SCF to define the sampling frame for the wealthy. However, the ACS does not contain information on respondents' wealth, only income. While the income threshold for the top 5% is close to \$250,000, we raised the income threshold for defining the sampling frame for the wealthy in the ACS to \$350,000. We did this because the information from the SCF (where both income and wealth are available) suggests that a sizable share of respondents with income around \$250,000 have nonetheless relatively low wealth.

## A2. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS AND RANDOMIZATION CHECKS

In this section, we provide summary statistics for our samples and randomization checks for the redistribution experiment. Figure A1 shows the distributions of household income and gross liquid assets for the top 5% and bottom 95%. Table A1 summarizes the socio-demographic background of the two groups. Compared to the bottom 95%, the top 5% are, on average, older, more likely to be male or White, more educated, and less religious (all  $p$ -values  $< 0.001$ ).

The top 5% also experienced more upward social mobility ( $p < 0.001$ ) and are more likely to have accumulated wealth by being entrepreneurs and investors ( $p < 0.001$ ). We constructed the variable “income mobility” by taking the difference in respondents’ placement on an income scale (from 1 to 100) at the present and when growing up. Because of potential measurement error, we validated our measure of social mobility using data from Chetty et al. (2014). Chetty et al. use administrative tax records and then calculate the income rank of a child’s household (i.e., when the child was 29-30 years old) and the income rank of the parents’ household (i.e., when the child was 12-16 years old). While Chetty et al.’s approach is similar to ours, their measure of social mobility is based on the income rank of a child at a specific age. By contrast, our participants reported their current income rank for whatever age they were at the time of the survey, which varies from participant to participant. Figure A2 compares the two measures. The figure plots the linear prediction of own income rank as a function of parents’ income rank for the birth cohort of 1979-82 using data from Chetty et al. (2014). It also plots the mean decile income rank of our participants versus the decile rank of their parents, separately for the bottom 95% and the top 5%. Despite some differences in the construction of these measures and data sources, the income mobility of the bottom 95% in our sample is highly correlated with the linear prediction based on Chetty et al. (2014) ( $r = 0.612$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, our subjective measure of social mobility seems to be a good proxy for actual social mobility.

Table A2 provides randomization checks for the socio-demographic variables between the three conditions of the redistribution experiment, separately for the top

5% (panel (a)), and bottom 95% (panel (b)). Both panels show that respondent characteristics are balanced across treatments, suggesting that the randomization was successful.





FIGURE A1. DISTRIBUTIONS OF INCOME AND WEALTH

*Notes:* The figure presents the distributions of (a) annual household income, and (b) gross liquid assets for the bottom 95% (left panel) and the top 5% (right panel). Household income is measured for the previous year using 18 brackets, from “less than \$10,000” to “more than \$1 million.” Gross liquid assets are measured for the previous year using 10 brackets, from “less than \$250,000” to “more than \$50 million.” The figure does not show all the brackets for the two variables, but combines some of them for clarity of presentation. Gross liquid assets are defined as cash, savings, mutual funds, stocks, bonds, retirement accounts (such as IRAs, 401(k)s, 403(b)s, etc.), and all other types of investments, but excluding a respondent’s home and other real estate value.

TABLE A1—DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	Top 5%		Bottom 95%		(5) $\Delta$	(6) p-values
	(1) Mean	(2) SD	(3) Mean	(4) SD		
Age	62.701	(11.434)	47.072	(16.431)	15.629	<0.001
Male	0.772	(0.420)	0.422	(0.494)	0.350	<0.001
White	0.927	(0.261)	0.736	(0.441)	0.191	<0.001
College (undergraduate)	0.327	(0.470)	0.309	(0.463)	0.018	0.577
College (graduate)	0.611	(0.488)	0.113	(0.317)	0.498	<0.001
Protestant	0.254	(0.436)	0.347	(0.477)	-0.093	0.003
Catholic	0.224	(0.417)	0.164	(0.371)	0.060	0.026
Other religion	0.219	(0.414)	0.106	(0.308)	0.113	<0.001
Republican	0.320	(0.467)	0.235	(0.425)	0.084	0.006
Income mobility (in deciles)	2.842	(2.799)	-0.229	(2.233)	3.071	<0.001
Primary Source of wealth						
Inheritance	0.092	(0.290)	0.031	(0.174)	0.061	0.001
Salary	0.499	(0.501)	0.775	(0.418)	-0.276	<0.001
Own business	0.253	(0.435)	0.051	(0.221)	0.201	<0.001
Investment	0.156	(0.363)	0.043	(0.203)	0.113	<0.001
Other	0.000	(0.000)	0.077	(0.267)	-0.077	<0.001
None	0.000	(0.000)	0.023	(0.149)	-0.023	0.001
Observations	465		417			

*Notes:* The table reports the means and standard deviations of socio-economic characteristics of the top 5% (columns 1 and 2) and the bottom 95% (columns 3 and 4). “Age” is measured in years. “Male” is an indicator for male participants. “White” is an indicator for White people. “College (undergraduate)” is an indicator for participants who obtained an associate or bachelor degree. “College (graduate or higher)” is an indicator for participants who obtained a graduate or postgraduate degree. “Protestant,” “Catholic,” and “Other religion” are indicator variables for religion. “Republican” is an indicator for identifying as a republican as opposed to a democrat, independent, or other. “Income mobility” refers to the change in household income on the income scale (in deciles) when growing up relative to the present. “Primary Source of wealth” is the self-reported primary source of household wealth. Column (5) presents the differences in means between the top 5% and bottom 95%, and column (6) shows the p-values of these differences (Chi-square tests for binary variables and rank-sum tests for continuous variables).

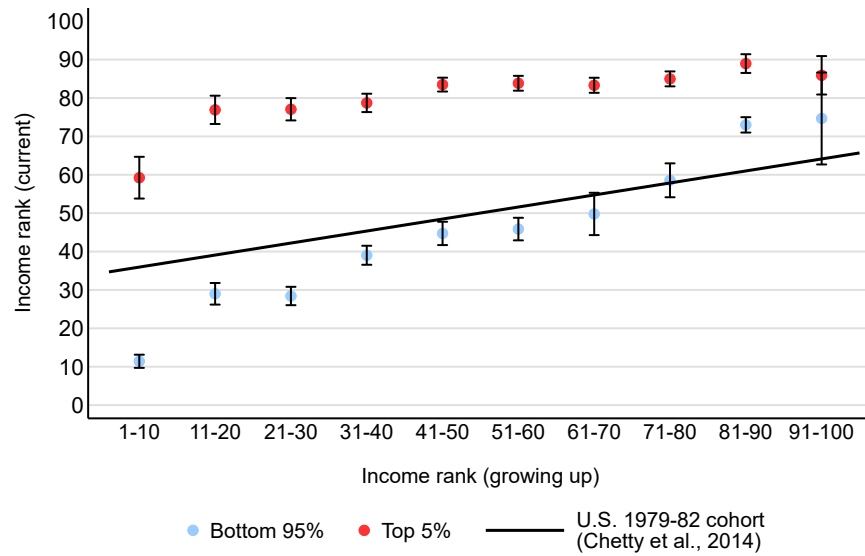


FIGURE A2. VALIDATION OF SOCIAL MOBILITY MEASURE

*Notes:* The figure compares our subjective measure of social mobility with a similar measure from Chetty et al. (2014) that is based on administrative tax records. The dots represent the mean decile income rank of our participants (y-axis) versus the income rank of their parents, in red for the top 5% and in blue for the bottom 95%. Error bars indicate s.e.m. The line indicates the predicted income rank by income rank when growing up based on OLS regressions and data from Chetty et al. (2014). Chetty et al. calculate income rank of children at age 29-30 versus their parents income rank when a child was at age 12-16 for the 1979-82 birth cohort.

TABLE A2—RANDOMIZATION CHECKS

(a) Top 5%							
	Merit		Mixed		Luck		p-values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Age	63.676	(10.471)	62.215	(12.310)	62.298	(11.440)	0.753
Male	0.779	(0.416)	0.772	(0.421)	0.766	(0.425)	0.962
White	0.938	(0.242)	0.933	(0.251)	0.912	(0.284)	0.645
College (undergraduate)	0.324	(0.470)	0.289	(0.455)	0.363	(0.482)	0.370
College (graduate or higher)	0.628	(0.485)	0.651	(0.478)	0.561	(0.498)	0.230
Protestant	0.290	(0.455)	0.242	(0.430)	0.234	(0.425)	0.482
Catholic	0.200	(0.401)	0.208	(0.407)	0.257	(0.438)	0.408
Other religion	0.186	(0.391)	0.275	(0.448)	0.199	(0.400)	0.131
Republican	0.303	(0.461)	0.320	(0.468)	0.333	(0.473)	0.851
Income mobility (in deciles)	2.737	(3.002)	2.883	(2.742)	2.894	(2.680)	0.999
Primary Source of wealth							
Inheritance	0.106	(0.309)	0.088	(0.285)	0.084	(0.278)	0.778
Salary	0.504	(0.502)	0.503	(0.502)	0.491	(0.501)	0.968
Own business	0.262	(0.442)	0.252	(0.435)	0.246	(0.432)	0.943
Investment	0.128	(0.335)	0.156	(0.365)	0.180	(0.385)	0.456
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Observations	145		149		171		

(b) Bottom 95%							
	Merit		Mixed		Luck		p-values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Age	47.732	(16.761)	48.050	(15.813)	45.511	(16.573)	0.357
Male	0.452	(0.499)	0.412	(0.494)	0.397	(0.491)	0.608
White	0.758	(0.430)	0.731	(0.445)	0.716	(0.452)	0.710
College (undergraduate)	0.280	(0.451)	0.319	(0.468)	0.333	(0.473)	0.589
College (graduate or higher)	0.127	(0.334)	0.134	(0.343)	0.078	(0.269)	0.273
Protestant	0.350	(0.479)	0.347	(0.478)	0.343	(0.476)	0.991
Catholic	0.166	(0.373)	0.186	(0.391)	0.143	(0.351)	0.640
Other religion	0.102	(0.303)	0.119	(0.325)	0.100	(0.301)	0.869
Republican	0.233	(0.424)	0.261	(0.441)	0.215	(0.413)	0.703
Income mobility (in deciles)	-0.488	(2.325)	-0.126	(2.415)	-0.026	(1.929)	0.162
Primary Source of wealth							
Inheritance	0.022	(0.146)	0.051	(0.221)	0.026	(0.161)	0.410
Salary	0.791	(0.408)	0.745	(0.438)	0.781	(0.416)	0.689
Own business	0.058	(0.234)	0.041	(0.199)	0.053	(0.224)	0.845
Investment	0.036	(0.187)	0.051	(0.221)	0.044	(0.206)	0.851
Other	0.072	(0.259)	0.071	(0.259)	0.088	(0.284)	0.871
None	0.022	(0.146)	0.041	(0.199)	0.009	(0.094)	0.295
Observations	157		119		141		

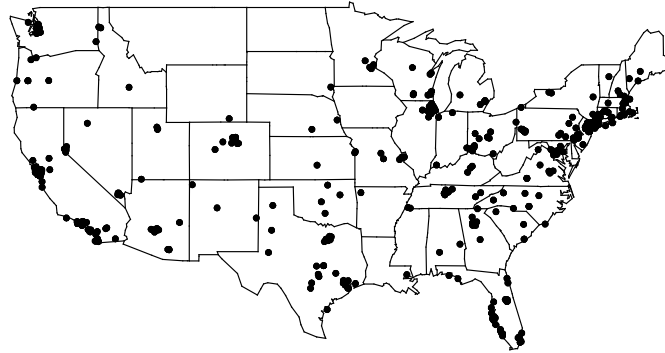
Notes: The table reports randomization checks for the redistribution task, separately for the top 5% (panel (a)) and bottom 95% (panel (b)). Columns (1) to (6) report the means and standard deviations of participants' socio-demographic background by treatment. "Age" is measured in years. "Male" is an indicator for male participants. "White" is an indicator for White people. "College (undergraduate)" is an indicator for participants who obtained an associate or bachelor degree. "College (graduate or higher)" is an indicator for participants who obtained a graduate or postgraduate degree. "Protestant," "Catholic," and "Other religion" are indicator variables for religion. "Republican" is an indicator for identifying as a republican as opposed to a democrat, independent, or other. "Income mobility" refers to the change in household income on the income scale (in deciles) when growing up relative to the present. "Self-made wealth" is an indicator for participants who built their wealth through an own business or financial investments. These two variables are our measures of social mobility. Column (7) shows the p-values for the null hypothesis that the three treatment groups have the same characteristics (Chi-square tests for binary variables and Kruskal-Wallis tests for continuous variables).

### A3. COMPARISON OF TOP 5% SAMPLE TO OTHER SOURCES

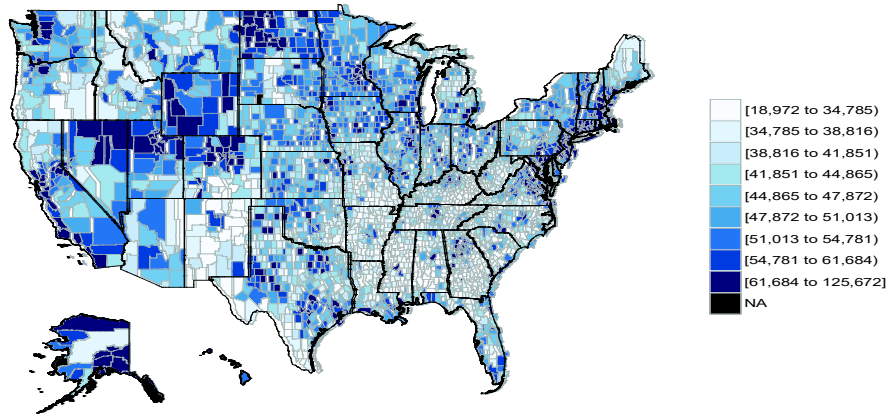
#### *A3.1. Geographic Coverage of the Top 5%*

In Figure A3 we show the geographic coverage of our top 5% sample. Panel (a) shows the location (black dots) of each respondent in our top 5% sample. Panel (b) shows the county-level average household income across the U.S., based on the data from the 2016 American Community Survey (ACS).

There are two main takeaways. First, our wealthy respondents are dispersed across the U.S., and are not concentrated in just a few wealthy areas, such as New York City or Silicon Valley. Second, most of our wealthy respondents are drawn from high-income counties, as seen from the broad correspondence between the distributions in panel (a) and panel (b) of Figure A3. Therefore, our sample tracks fairly closely where the rich Americans are located across the U.S.



(a) Zip codes of top 5% sample



(b) Average county income

FIGURE A3. GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF THE TOP 5%

*Notes:* Each black dot in panel (a) shows the zip code of a participant from our top 5% sample. One participant did not provide that information. Panel (b) shows the average county-level household income, based on the 2016 American Community Survey. Darker shades indicate higher average household income. The legend for the shading colors in panel (b), expressed in U.S. dollars, is indicated to the right of the map.

### *A3.1. Financial Characteristics*

Figure A4 compares the distributions of financial characteristics of our top 5% sample with the equivalently defined sample from the 2016 Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF).<sup>34</sup> The SCF is the most detailed source of financial information on U.S. households. It contains a large representative sample of U.S. households, and much like our survey, an oversample of wealthy households.<sup>35</sup> Because of the detailed information in the SCF, we were able to recreate the financial information in essentially the same way as it is recorded in our survey.

Panel (a) in Figure A4 compares the distribution of household income among individuals in our sample (in red) and in the SCF (in maroon) with more than \$250,000 in income or more than \$1M in gross financial assets; panel (b) examines the distributions of gross financial assets in the two surveys; panel (c) compares the distributions of liabilities; panel (d) compares the distributions of the main source of wealth (from salary, own business, investments, or “other”). The main takeaway is that the distributions of these financial characteristics in our sample are reasonably similar to the distributions of the same characteristics in the SCF sample. The main discrepancy is that our sample contains more individuals with larger gross financial assets, which is possibly in part a consequence of the fact that our sample contains more respondents who are older, and have therefore accumulated more wealth in retirement accounts (which are part of the gross financial assets).

<sup>34</sup> This means that we compare individuals in our survey with more than \$250,000 in household income or more than \$1 million in gross financial assets to individuals in the SCF defined in the same way.

<sup>35</sup> The SCF deliberately over-samples wealthy households in order to provide more precise estimates of the overall wealth and the more rarely-held assets, and to correct for any differential non-response across the wealthy and less-wealthy respondents. The SCF contains weights calculated based on non-publicly available IRS data for the entire U.S. population. The weighted SCF sample is representative of all U.S. households. In Figure A4, we compare our raw survey data to the weighted SCF data.

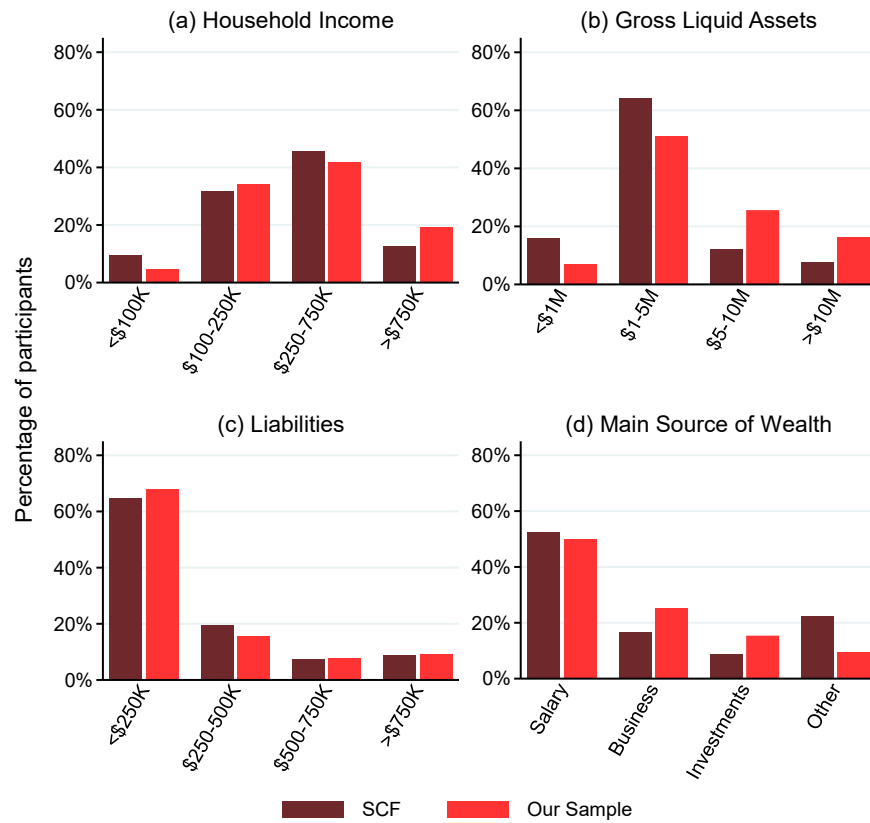


FIGURE A4. FINANCIAL BACKGROUND OF OUR TOP 5% COMPARED TO THE SURVEY OF CONSUMER FINANCES

*Notes:* The red bars indicate quantities from our top 5% sample with either household income above \$250,000 or gross financial assets above \$1 million; the maroon bars indicate quantities from the equivalently defined sample of the wealthy from the Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF). The bars represent percent shares of the total applicable sample. The SCF shares are weighted by SCF-provided weights. The shares from our data are unweighted.



### *A3.2. Industry Characteristics.*

Table A3 compares the distribution of employment in different industry sectors among respondents in our sample, and among high-income individuals in the 2016 Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS contains information on household income but not on gross financial assets. For comparability, in defining the rich in our sample we only focus on income and disregard gross financial assets. Since income information in the CPS is censored at the top, we define the top 5% in the CPS in terms of top-coded household income. In our sample, we focus on individuals with more than \$250,000 in household income, which corresponds roughly to the top 5% in terms of income. We utilize the industry categories reported in the CPS. The information on industry in our survey comes from an open-ended question asking respondents which industry they were employed in at the time of the survey.<sup>36</sup> We coded these open-ended answers to conform to the CPS industry categories.

Table A3 shows that the industry breakdown among our rich respondents is quite similar to the breakdown among the rich respondents in the CPS. The only noteworthy differences are in public administration, leisure and IT.

<sup>36</sup> 27% of respondents who are not retired did not answer the occupation question.

TABLE A3—EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY OF OUR TOP 5% COMPARED TO THE CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY

	CPS (in %)	Our top 5% sample (in %)
Professional and business services	24.9	25.4
Education and health services	21.9	20.1
Financial activities	12.7	11.8
Wholesale and retail trade	9.8	7.1
Manufacturing	8.7	8.3
Public administration	5.4	1.8
Transportation and utilities	4.5	4.1
Leisure and hospitality	4.0	7.7
Construction	3.8	4.1
Information	2.9	8.9
Agriculture	1.2	0.6

*Notes.* All entries are percent shares of the total sample. The first column shows the employment shares by industry among respondents in the 2016 Current Population Survey (CPS) who belong to the top 5% in terms of (top-coded) household income. The second column shows the equivalently defined employment shares by industry among participants in our survey with household income above \$250,000, which roughly corresponds to the top 5% in terms of household income in the U.S. The CPS shares are weighted by the CPS-provided weights. The shares in our data are unweighted.

## A4. ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

### *A4.1 Top 1%*

There is no academic consensus on where to draw the line between top income earners and wealth holders, respectively, and the rest of the population. Yet, the academic and public debate on inequality has sometimes focused on the top 1% rather than the top 5% (e.g., Alvaredo et al., 2013; see also the Occupy Wall Street movement). We therefore repeat the main analysis with the top 1% and compare the results to the top 2-5% as well as the bottom 95%. About half of the participants in our top 5% sample (222 out of 465 participants) also belong to the top 1%.<sup>37</sup>

Overall, we find that the differences to the bottom 95% tend to be larger for the top 1% than for the top 2-5%. As shown in Panels (a) and (b) of Figure A5, the top 1% show significantly less support for increasing the top income tax rate (-0.55 vs. -0.21,  $p = 0.006$ ) and the estate tax rate (-0.87 vs. -0.56,  $p = 0.018$ ) compared to the top 2-5%. The comparisons between the top 1% and bottom 95% are also significant (both  $p$ -values are less than 0.001).

We also observe larger differences in distributive choices between the top 1% and bottom 95% than between the top 2-5% and bottom 95%, as shown in Figure A6. The top 1% generally redistribute less than the other two groups, but the differences to the top 2-5% are not significant (the lowest  $p$ -value is 0.097). The differences to the bottom 95% are significant for the Luck and Mixed treatments ( $p = 0.005$  and  $0.008$ ), but not for the Merit treatment ( $p = 0.281$ ), which is the condition where we generally observe the lowest amount of redistribution. One should keep in mind, however, that the sample sizes are smaller compared to the original samples. Together, we tend to find larger differences when we focus on the top 1% rather than the top 5% as the economic elite. Thus, the results for the top

<sup>37</sup> In our data, a respondent qualifies to be in the top 1% with household income of \$750,000 or more, or gross liquid assets of \$5 million or more. Given the binned nature of our income and wealth variables, these values are closest to the cutoff values obtained from the 2016 Survey of Consumer Finances, which are \$865,000 for household income and \$8.19 million for gross liquid assets.

5% can be considered as lower bound estimates of the differences between the wealthy and the rest of the population.<sup>38</sup>

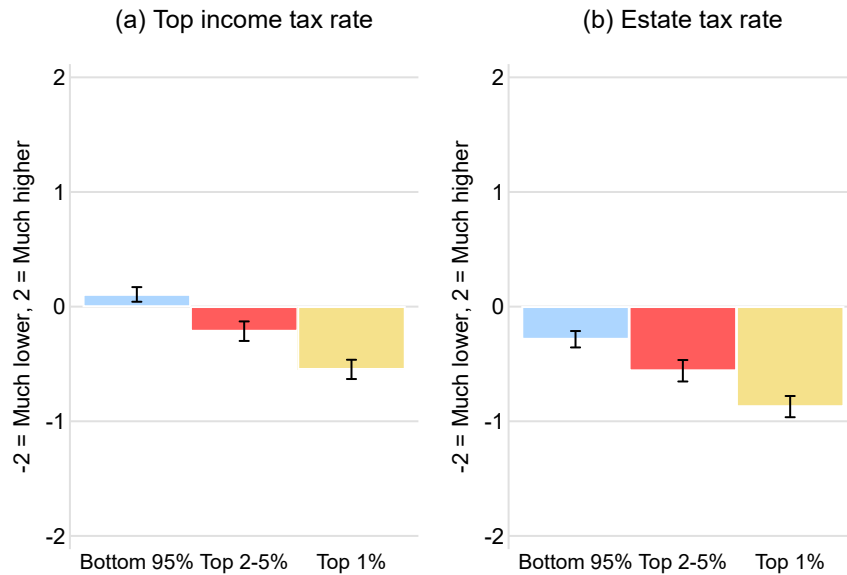


FIGURE A5. ATTITUDES TOWARD REDISTRIBUTION OF THE TOP 1% AND TOP 2-5%

*Notes:* Attitudes toward redistribution of the top 1% (yellow), top 2-5% (red), and bottom 95% (blue) regarding: (a) the top income tax rate and (b) the estate tax rate. Participants were asked whether they would prefer a higher or lower tax rate on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Error bars indicate s.e.m.

<sup>38</sup> The results on meritocratic beliefs, altruism, and trust in government are also similar for the top 1% and the top 2-5% (these findings are available on request).

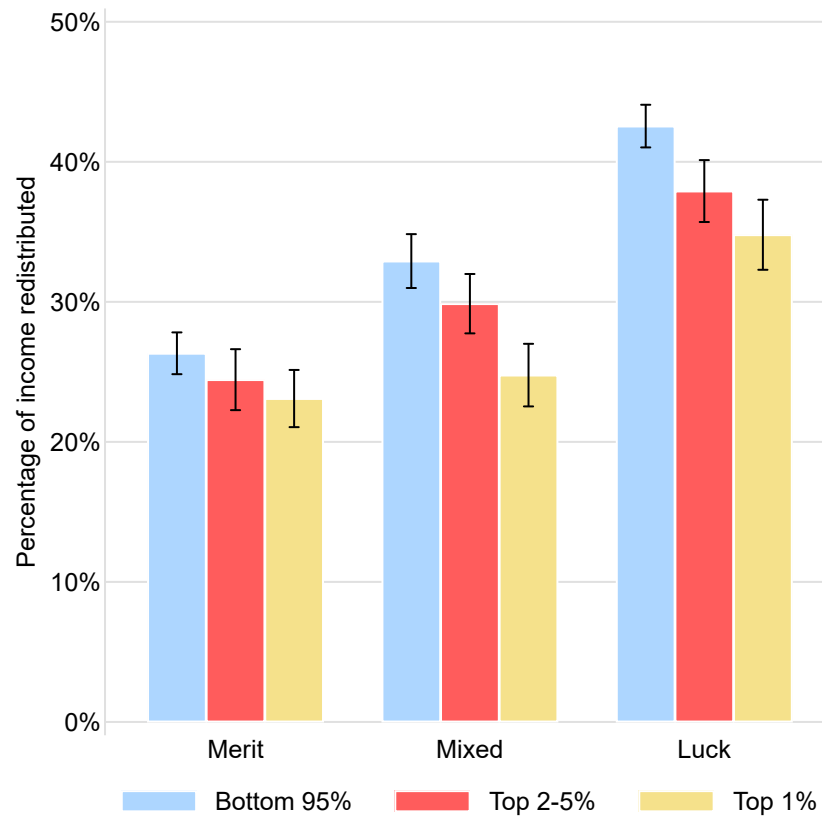


FIGURE A6. DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES OF THE TOP 1% AND TOP 2-5%

*Notes:* Percentage of income redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker in the redistribution task by treatment for the top 1% (yellow), top 2-5% (red), and bottom 95% (blue). In the Merit treatment, earnings were assigned based on workers' relative performance on the task. In the Mixed treatment, earnings were determined based on workers' relative performance but there was also an element of chance. In the Luck treatment, earnings were assigned based on chance. Error bars indicate s.e.m.

#### *A4.2 Top 5% Income Earners*

In the main text, we categorize the wealthy based on their income and wealth because both income and wealth concentration have received attention in the literature on inequality (e.g., Saez and Zucman, 2016; Piketty et al., 2017). Of the 465 participants in our top 5% sample, almost all (93%) have enough liquid assets to be placed in the top 5% based on assets alone. In contrast, only 61% have enough income to be classified as top 5% based on income alone. We therefore check whether the results hold when focusing on top income earners only.<sup>39</sup>

Overall, we find that the results are largely consistent with our main results when we classify the top 5% only based on income. Panels (a) and (b) of Figure A7 show that high-income earners are less supportive of increasing the top income tax rate (-0.43 vs. -0.03,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the estate tax rate (-0.74 vs. -0.43,  $p = 0.002$ ) than the general population.

The results from the experimental task also mirror our previous findings, as shown in Figure A8. The top earners generally redistribute less than the bottom 95%, with the largest difference occurring in the Luck treatment ( $p = 0.002$ ). Together, these findings suggest that our results are robust to using a different definition of the affluent that is based only on income.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> In our data, individuals with greater assets are older and more often retired than the high-income earners. Non-retired and younger individuals with top incomes likely have busier schedules and may thus be less inclined to answer a survey (or do so less carefully).

<sup>40</sup> Other results for the top 5% defined in terms of income only are also similar to the results for the sample of the wealthy based on both income and wealth (these findings are available upon request).

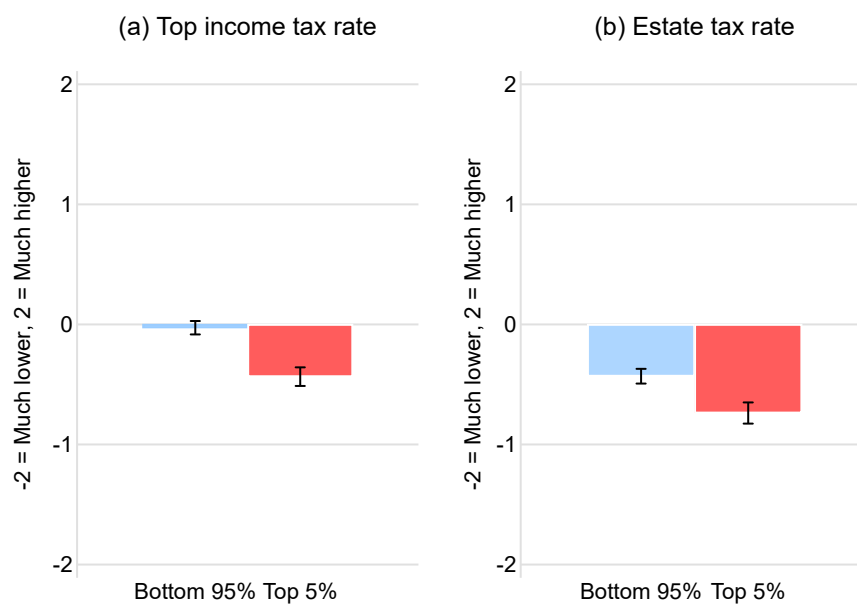


FIGURE A7. ATTITUDES TOWARD REDISTRIBUTION OF TOP 5% INCOME EARNERS

*Notes:* Attitudes toward redistribution of the top 5% (red) and bottom 95% (blue) income earners regarding: (a) the top income tax rate and (b) the estate tax rate. Unlike in the main analysis where the samples are defined based on both household income and gross liquid assets, here the two samples are defined only based on income. Participants were asked whether they would prefer a higher or lower tax rate on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Error bars indicate s.e.m.

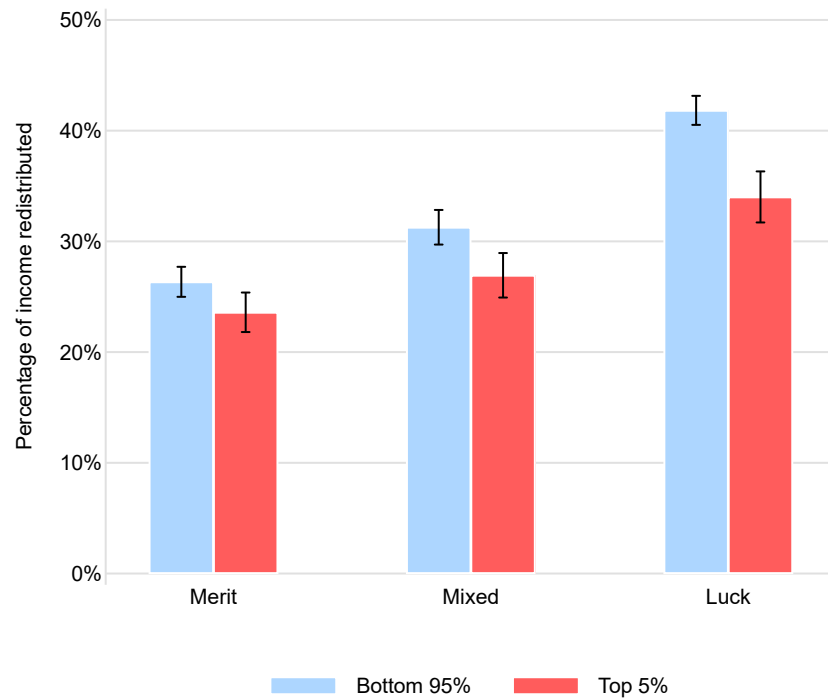


FIGURE A8. DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES OF TOP 5% INCOME EARNERS

*Notes:* Percentage of income redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker by treatment for the top 5% (red) and bottom 95% (blue) income earners. Unlike in the main analysis where the samples are defined based on both household income and gross liquid assets, here the two samples are defined only based on income. In the Merit treatment, earnings were assigned based on workers' relative performance on the task. In the Mixed treatment, earnings were determined based on workers' relative performance but there was also an element of chance. In the Luck treatment, earnings were assigned based on chance. Error bars indicate s.e.m.



### *A4.3 Excluding Fast Responders*

In any survey or experiment, researchers have limited control over the degree of carefulness with which participants read the questions and instructions. We implemented several procedures aimed at improving the quality of the data (see section 2 in the main text) but lack of attention remains a possible source of bias, especially if it varies across the two groups. For example, it is possible that the top 5% paid less attention to the survey questions than the bottom 95% as they might have a higher opportunity cost of time. However, we find that the top 5% spent more time filling out the survey than the bottom 95% (19.42 vs. 17.33 minutes,  $p = 0.002$ ). It also took them slightly more time to complete the experimental task (1.75 vs. 1.68 minutes,  $p = 0.056$ ).<sup>41</sup>

Another way to check for the potential issue of inattention is to exclude participants with particularly short survey completion times. To this end, we rerun our main analyses but exclude the 10% fastest respondents of the survey. Overall, the results remain essentially the same, as shown in Figures A8 and A9.<sup>42</sup> The top 5% have more negative attitudes toward redistribution, and they redistribute less in the experimental task, especially in the Luck treatment. Together, we do not find evidence that differential attention to the survey questions or experimental task instructions drives the differences in tax attitudes and fairness preferences between the top 5% and bottom 95%.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Due to a technical problem, the time stamps for the experimental part have not been recorded for about 10% of the total sample.

<sup>42</sup> This is also true when we exclude the fastest 10% respondents with regard to the experimental task. The results are available upon request.

<sup>43</sup> The results on meritocratic beliefs, altruism, and trust in government are also similar compared to the full sample (the findings are available upon request).

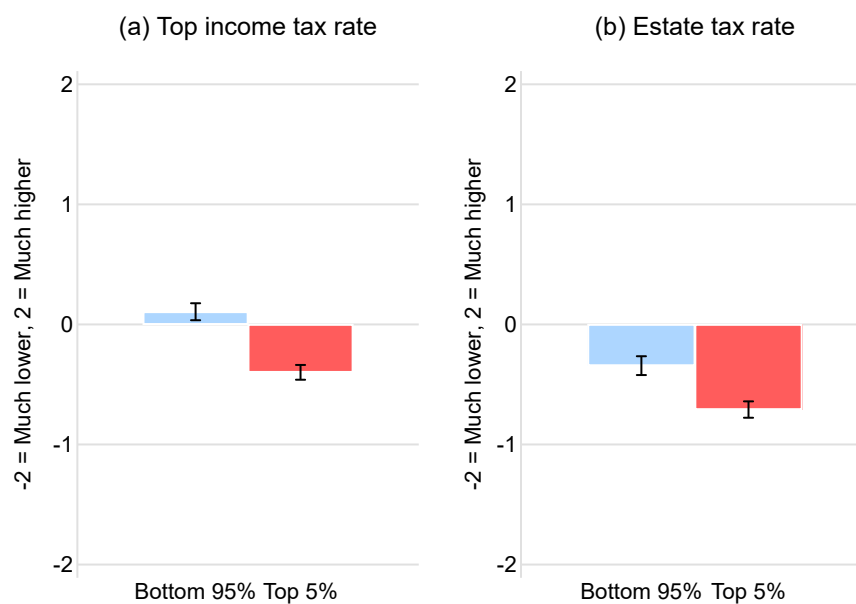


FIGURE A9. ATTITUDES TOWARD REDISTRIBUTION WHEN EXCLUDING FAST RESPONDERS

*Notes:* Attitudes toward redistribution of the top 5% (red) and bottom 95% (blue) regarding: (a) the top income tax rate and (b) the estate tax rate, when excluding the 10% fastest responders. Participants were asked whether they would prefer a higher or lower tax rate on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Error bars indicate s.e.m.

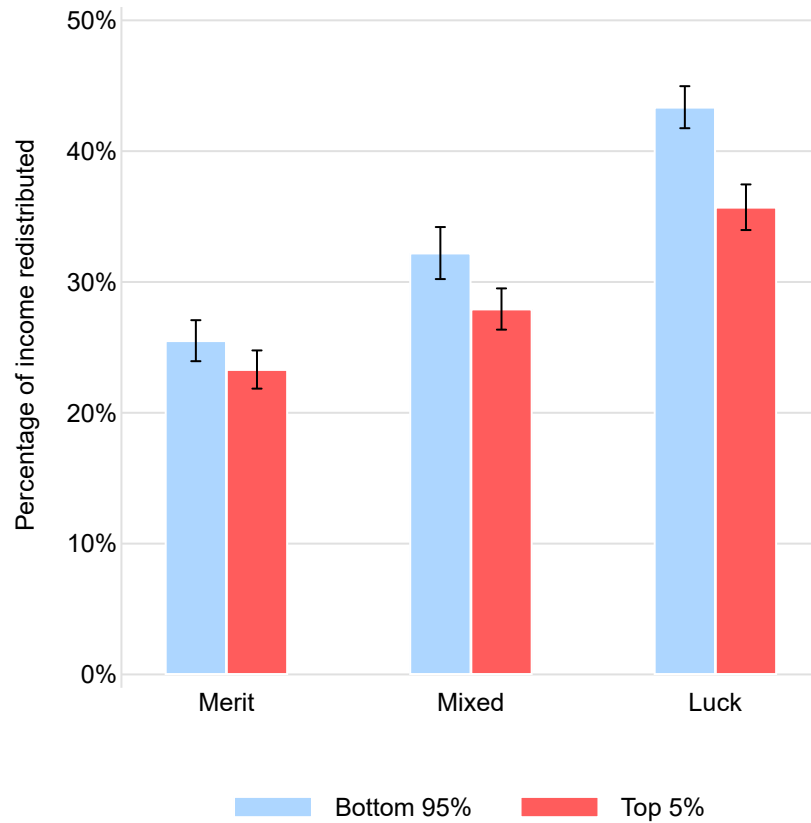


FIGURE A10. DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES WHEN EXCLUDING FAST RESPONDERS

*Notes:* Percentage of income redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker by treatment for the top 5% (red) and bottom 95% (blue). This analysis excludes respondents with the 10% fastest completion time of the entire survey. In the Merit treatment, earnings were assigned based on workers' relative performance on the task. In the Mixed treatment, earnings were determined based on workers' relative performance but there was also an element of chance. In the Luck treatment, earnings were assigned based on chance. Error bars indicate s.e.m.

#### *A4.4 Additional Data Quality Checks*

Here, we detail additional quality checks both in the survey design stage and the analysis stage to minimize the probability of misreports of income, wealth, and other variables in our survey data.

In addition to the screening based on the consistency of respondents' answers to the income and wealth questions in our survey compared to prior surveys (described in Section 2 in the paper), we conducted several consistency checks within our survey *during the fielding stage*, based on a number of survey items. Using this procedure, we flagged those respondents whose response patterns raised concerns about their truthfulness, and asked YouGov to check those respondents' behavior in previous surveys. Upon YouGov's inspection, respondents whose previous behavior raised similar red flags were removed from our survey, and YouGov replaced them with fresh respondents sampled according to our sampling procedure (described in Section A1 above). Three dozen respondents were replaced this way, 80% of whom were from the general population sample. The procedure we used was as follows. First, we examined the consistency of answers across all the survey items capturing the respondent's economic situation: household income, assets, the share of liquid assets in retirement accounts, liabilities, main source of wealth, employment status, age, and enrollment in school. We sought to identify stark inconsistencies in answer patterns across all these survey items in combination. For example, we would flag a potentially inconsistent profile a respondent who reported being young (e.g. age < 30), a student, with low wealth (so no inheritance) but high income and a salary as the main source of wealth (despite being a student) and a low share of liquid assets in retirement accounts (so most retirement assets in non-liquid instruments like a 401(k)). We also probed carefully any respondent who reported the lottery as their main source of wealth.

We made similar consistency checks across the ideology, party identification and voting survey items. For example, a respondent was flagged if they placed themselves at the far left on a 0-10 ideology scale but identified themselves as a "strong Republican" who voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election.

Finally, we looked at respondents' answers to open-ended fields on occupation and the place in the income ladder when growing up. If respondents made nonsensical answers (e.g. a meaningless work in the occupation field), we checked the consistency of other survey items and if needed, asked YouGov to examine that panelist's prior survey responses.

We now repeat a similar procedure within our entire dataset in the *analysis stage*, using the variables that are most likely to indicate misreporting. We flag the respondents whose answers potentially suggest misreporting and repeat our analyses excluding these respondents. The available survey questions allowed us to systematically flag respondents based on the following criteria:

***Inconsistent absolute and relative income:*** As mentioned, our survey contains a question on the actual household income as well as a question on the subjective placement on an income scale from 1 to 100. We flag respondents who reported actual household income that places them in the top 20% of the actual distribution, but who placed themselves in the bottom 20% on the subjective relative income scale. Similarly, we flag respondents who reported the actual household income placing them in the bottom 20%, but who placed themselves in the top 20% on the subjective relative income scale. These inconsistencies may not reflect misreporting of actual income, as respondents may have misinterpreted the relative income scale or misjudged their subjective relative placement. Nonetheless, we take a conservative approach and flag 21 respondents as potential misreporters.

***Total donation amount exceeding annual income:*** Our survey asked respondents to report the amount (in US\$) they donated to various causes in 2015. 12 respondents reported total donation amounts that exceeded their reported annual household income. Even though it is possible to donate more than the annual income (for example by donating from savings), we flag such respondents as potential misreporters.

***Inconsistent zip code and state:*** Our survey contains a question on the zip code of the current home address of the respondent, and a question on the home state. We

derive the state from the zip code and identify 18 respondents where the state derived from the zip code does not match the home state selected in the survey question. While it is possible that a respondent may have multiple residences or for some other reason reports a different home state from the zip code of residence, we flag these respondents as potential misreporters.

***Inconsistent employment status:*** Our survey contains two questions on employment status, one custom-designed by us, and the other fielded on every YouGov survey. The answer categories for the first question were: retired, unemployed, non-managerial employee, manager, business owner, and other. The answer categories for the second question were: working full-time, working part-time, temporarily laid-off, unemployed, retired, permanently disabled, taking care of home or family, student, and other. While some categories clearly overlap between the two questions, others do not, which may potentially explain inconsistencies in responses across the two questions. However, we again take a conservative approach and flag the 54 respondents who answered inconsistently, for example by choosing “permanently disabled” on the second question, but “manager” on the first.

***Inconsistent political ideology:*** As in our initial screening, we use multiple questions on political ideology and party affiliation to evaluate respondents’ ideological consistency. YouGov’s default ideology item asks for respondents’ ideological placement on a 7-point scale from “very conservative” to “very liberal.” We also included a question asking respondents to place themselves on a 0-10 left-right scale. A third item is YouGov’s default party identification item on a 7-point scale from “strong republican” to “strong democrat.” While respondents may plausibly identify as conservative who identify with the democratic party and vice versa, or may interpret differently the two ideological scales, we conservatively flag 64 respondents whose answers are potentially suggestive of misreporting (e.g. Respondents who place themselves far-right on a left-right scale and liberal on the liberal-conservative scale; respondents who identify as democrats but place

themselves far-right, etc.). While the most glaring inconsistencies were dealt with in the survey fielding stage (as described above), we flag the less extreme but still possibly problematic inconsistencies here.

***Any inconsistency:*** Finally, we combine all of the approaches and flag the 154 respondents who we identify as possible misreporters by at least one of the above criteria.

We applied these criteria to both the general population sample and the top 5%, meaning that we excluded respondents who provided seemingly inconsistent answers, even if their responses may have been truthful. Still, each criterion alone only flags at most 7% of all respondents, and 17% of respondents are flagged by any of the criteria. The low rate of possible misreporting is indicative of the strict screening measures that we implemented during the fielding phase.

We repeat the analysis of the main results excluding respondents flagged by each of the above criteria. In Tables A4-A7 below, we replicate the results from Table 1 in the paper on tax attitudes (both income and estate taxes) with sociodemographic controls, the results from Table 2 in the paper on the income redistributed in the experiment, and the results from Table 3 in the paper on the heterogeneity in fairness preferences among the top 5%. We first replicate the baseline results in the paper with sociodemographic controls in column (1) of each table, then repeat the analyses excluding the respondents flagged by each individual criterion in columns (2)-(6), and excluding the respondents flagged by any of the five criteria in column (7). The results are very robust, indicative of no bias due to possible systematic misreporting.

Finally, we note that other studies find that self-reports of income are reasonably reliable in surveys. Linking surveys with register data in Sweden and Denmark, respectively, Karadja et al. (2017) and Hvidberg et al. (2023) have recently found low shares of income misreporting. Similar patterns have on average been observed for reported annual earnings in the U.S. using a variety of matched survey and administrative datasets (e.g. Bound et al. 1994; Duncan and Hill, 1985; Pischke

1995). These patterns are consistent with the high reliability of self-reports of other financial summaries, such as health insurance coverage (Davern et al., 2008). What is more, the reliability of self-reported financial information tends to be higher in the context of repeated responses (Bound and Krueger, 1991; Bollinger, 1998), as is the case with YouGov opt-in panelists. Less is known about the reliability of self-reports of wealth, but there is some evidence that non-response bias is a bigger concern than misreporting conditional on a response (Johansson and Klevmarken, 2022). Because of our screening procedures, item non-response on income and wealth variables is not an issue in our data.



TABLE A4—ROBUSTNESS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCOME TAXES FROM TABLE 1 COLUMN (2)  
WITH RESPECT TO POTENTIAL MISREPORTING

<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	<i>Top income tax rate</i>						
	<i>None (Baseline) (1)</i>	<i>Income (2)</i>	<i>Donations (3)</i>	<i>Zipcode (4)</i>	<i>Employment (5)</i>	<i>Politics (6)</i>	<i>Any Criteria (7)</i>
Top 5%	-0.750*** (0.121)	-0.784*** (0.122)	-0.769*** (0.122)	-0.740*** (0.123)	-0.798*** (0.126)	-0.690*** (0.124)	-0.743*** (0.133)
Age	0.006** (0.003)	0.006** (0.003)	0.006* (0.003)	0.006* (0.003)	0.007** (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.005 (0.003)
Male	-0.147 (0.094)	-0.148 (0.095)	-0.133 (0.095)	-0.168* (0.094)	-0.168* (0.096)	-0.167* (0.097)	-0.189* (0.103)
White	0.126 (0.129)	0.129 (0.132)	0.129 (0.130)	0.158 (0.130)	0.124 (0.136)	0.045 (0.139)	0.116 (0.149)
Undergrad	0.258** (0.119)	0.272** (0.119)	0.259** (0.119)	0.257** (0.120)	0.291** (0.123)	0.283** (0.125)	0.341*** (0.132)
Grad	0.345** (0.134)	0.357*** (0.135)	0.348** (0.135)	0.348** (0.136)	0.356*** (0.138)	0.390*** (0.138)	0.439*** (0.147)
Protestant	-0.624*** (0.110)	-0.611*** (0.111)	-0.613*** (0.111)	-0.627*** (0.111)	-0.666*** (0.115)	-0.688*** (0.112)	-0.721*** (0.119)
Catholic	-0.670*** (0.124)	-0.674*** (0.127)	-0.669*** (0.125)	-0.651*** (0.126)	-0.692*** (0.130)	-0.747*** (0.127)	-0.780*** (0.138)
Other	-0.041 (0.132)	-0.046 (0.134)	-0.039 (0.133)	-0.040 (0.134)	-0.070 (0.138)	-0.060 (0.138)	-0.106 (0.148)
Constant	-0.003 (0.189)	-0.007 (0.191)	0.014 (0.191)	-0.009 (0.192)	0.012 (0.195)	0.171 (0.200)	0.123 (0.209)
Observations	825	807	816	807	774	770	687
Adjusted $R^2$	0.094	0.092	0.095	0.091	0.104	0.104	0.110

*Notes:* The table shows the robustness of the results from Table 1 Column (2) with respect to the exclusion of potential misreporting. It reports the results of OLS regressions of income tax attitudes on the top 5% indicator and sociodemographic controls. The dependent variable is the attitude toward the top income tax rate, measured on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Column (1) replicates the baseline results with the full sample, columns (2) to (6) exclude participants flagged by the respective criteria discussed in section A4.4. Column (7) excludes all participants flagged by any of the criteria. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE A5—ROBUSTNESS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS ESTATE TAXES FROM TABLE 1 COLUMN (5)  
WITH RESPECT TO POTENTIAL MISREPORTING

<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	<i>Estate tax rate</i>						
	<i>None (Baseline) (1)</i>	<i>Income (2)</i>	<i>Donations (3)</i>	<i>Zipcode (4)</i>	<i>Employm. (5)</i>	<i>Politics (6)</i>	<i>Any Criteria (7)</i>
Top 5%	-0.588*** (0.132)	-0.592*** (0.133)	-0.604*** (0.134)	-0.574*** (0.135)	-0.615*** (0.136)	-0.572*** (0.135)	-0.588*** (0.144)
Age	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.004)	-0.004 (0.004)
Male	-0.185* (0.103)	-0.194* (0.105)	-0.164 (0.104)	-0.188* (0.104)	-0.202* (0.107)	-0.171 (0.105)	-0.190* (0.112)
White	0.076 (0.139)	0.087 (0.142)	0.067 (0.139)	0.072 (0.141)	0.105 (0.146)	0.017 (0.148)	0.047 (0.162)
Undergrad	0.216 (0.133)	0.219 (0.135)	0.237* (0.134)	0.215 (0.135)	0.244* (0.138)	0.289** (0.136)	0.316** (0.144)
Grad	0.487*** (0.148)	0.495*** (0.149)	0.500*** (0.149)	0.476*** (0.152)	0.495*** (0.152)	0.567*** (0.147)	0.579*** (0.158)
Protestant	-0.756*** (0.118)	-0.759*** (0.120)	-0.758*** (0.119)	-0.753*** (0.120)	-0.773*** (0.122)	-0.840*** (0.120)	-0.829*** (0.127)
Catholic	-0.861*** (0.134)	-0.866*** (0.135)	-0.866*** (0.135)	-0.853*** (0.136)	-0.867*** (0.142)	-1.009*** (0.132)	-1.018*** (0.144)
Other	-0.206 (0.153)	-0.187 (0.155)	-0.226 (0.154)	-0.191 (0.155)	-0.258 (0.158)	-0.166 (0.158)	-0.217 (0.170)
Constant	0.167 (0.212)	0.116 (0.215)	0.143 (0.216)	0.199 (0.215)	0.155 (0.219)	0.304 (0.221)	0.274 (0.236)
Observations	809	791	800	791	759	757	675
Adjusted $R^2$	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.102	0.108	0.136	0.133

*Notes:* The table shows the robustness of the results from Table 1 Column (5) with respect to the exclusion of potential misreporting. It reports the results of OLS regressions of estate tax attitudes on the top 5% indicator and sociodemographic controls. The dependent variable is the attitude toward the estate tax rate, measured on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Column (1) replicates the baseline results with the full sample, columns (2) to (6) exclude participants flagged by the respective criteria discussed in section A4.4. Column (7) excludes all participants flagged by any of the criteria. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE A6—ROBUSTNESS OF DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES IN THE EXPERIMENT FROM TABLE 2 COLUMN (3)  
WITH RESPECT TO POTENTIAL MISREPORTING

<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	<i>Share of income redistributed</i>						
<i>Exclusion Criteria:</i>	<i>None (Baseline)</i> (1)	<i>Income</i> (2)	<i>Donations</i> (3)	<i>Zipcode</i> (4)	<i>Employment</i> (5)	<i>Politics</i> (6)	<i>Any Criteria</i> (7)
Top 5%	-0.062*** (0.019)	-0.064*** (0.019)	-0.062*** (0.019)	-0.058*** (0.019)	-0.066*** (0.019)	-0.060*** (0.018)	-0.064*** (0.019)
Mixed	-0.095*** (0.016)	-0.092*** (0.016)	-0.095*** (0.016)	-0.093*** (0.016)	-0.090*** (0.017)	-0.098*** (0.017)	-0.096*** (0.018)
Merit	-0.143*** (0.015)	-0.141*** (0.015)	-0.145*** (0.015)	-0.142*** (0.015)	-0.143*** (0.016)	-0.142*** (0.015)	-0.145*** (0.016)
Age	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Male	-0.036** (0.014)	-0.029** (0.014)	-0.037*** (0.014)	-0.034** (0.014)	-0.041*** (0.014)	-0.035** (0.014)	-0.032** (0.015)
White	0.031 (0.019)	0.037* (0.020)	0.030 (0.020)	0.029 (0.020)	0.035* (0.020)	0.033* (0.020)	0.041* (0.022)
College (undergraduate)	0.021 (0.018)	0.020 (0.018)	0.021 (0.018)	0.017 (0.018)	0.025 (0.019)	0.032* (0.019)	0.028 (0.019)
College (graduate or higher)	0.034* (0.020)	0.036* (0.020)	0.037* (0.020)	0.030 (0.020)	0.033* (0.020)	0.048** (0.020)	0.046** (0.021)
Protestant	-0.071*** (0.017)	-0.073*** (0.017)	-0.072*** (0.017)	-0.069*** (0.017)	-0.073*** (0.017)	-0.072*** (0.017)	-0.077*** (0.018)
Catholic	-0.056*** (0.019)	-0.061*** (0.019)	-0.053*** (0.019)	-0.056*** (0.019)	-0.059*** (0.020)	-0.059*** (0.019)	-0.064*** (0.021)
Other	0.030 (0.018)	0.029 (0.019)	0.026 (0.018)	0.031* (0.018)	0.028 (0.019)	0.032* (0.018)	0.022 (0.020)
Constant	0.441*** (0.028)	0.432*** (0.029)	0.441*** (0.029)	0.452*** (0.028)	0.443*** (0.029)	0.426*** (0.029)	0.437*** (0.030)
Observations	880	859	868	862	826	818	729
Adjusted $R^2$	0.136	0.133	0.137	0.136	0.141	0.142	0.147

*Notes:* The table shows the robustness of the results from Table 2 Column (3) with respect to the exclusion of potential misreporting. It reports the results of OLS regressions of the share of income redistributed in the experiment on the top 5% indicator and sociodemographic controls. Column (1) replicates the baseline results with the full sample, columns (2) to (6) exclude participants flagged by the respective criteria discussed in section A4.4. Column (7) excludes all participants flagged by any of the criteria. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE A7—ROBUSTNESS OF HETEROGENEITY IN DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES IN THE EXPERIMENT FROM TABLE 3 COLUMN (2)  
WITH RESPECT TO POTENTIAL MISREPORTING

<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	<i>Share of income redistributed</i>						
	<i>None (Baseline) (1)</i>	<i>Income (2)</i>	<i>Donations (3)</i>	<i>Zipcode (4)</i>	<i>Employm. (5)</i>	<i>Politics (6)</i>	<i>Any Criteria (7)</i>
Top 5%, high mobility	-0.088*** (0.024)	-0.088*** (0.024)	-0.086*** (0.024)	-0.084*** (0.024)	-0.090*** (0.025)	-0.087*** (0.024)	-0.084*** (0.025)
Top 5%, medium mobility	-0.056*** (0.021)	-0.057*** (0.021)	-0.057*** (0.021)	-0.056** (0.022)	-0.063*** (0.022)	-0.054** (0.022)	-0.062*** (0.023)
Top 5%, low mobility	-0.047** (0.023)	-0.051** (0.024)	-0.047** (0.023)	-0.042* (0.023)	-0.050** (0.024)	-0.045** (0.022)	-0.049** (0.024)
Mixed	-0.098*** (0.016)	-0.095*** (0.016)	-0.098*** (0.016)	-0.096*** (0.016)	-0.094*** (0.016)	-0.101*** (0.017)	-0.099*** (0.017)
Merit	-0.148*** (0.015)	-0.145*** (0.015)	-0.149*** (0.015)	-0.147*** (0.015)	-0.148*** (0.016)	-0.146*** (0.015)	-0.149*** (0.016)
Age	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Male	-0.036** (0.014)	-0.029** (0.014)	-0.036** (0.014)	-0.034** (0.014)	-0.040*** (0.014)	-0.035** (0.014)	-0.032** (0.015)
White	0.030 (0.020)	0.036* (0.020)	0.028 (0.020)	0.028 (0.020)	0.034* (0.021)	0.031 (0.020)	0.040* (0.022)
College (undergraduate)	0.018 (0.018)	0.017 (0.018)	0.018 (0.018)	0.013 (0.018)	0.022 (0.019)	0.029 (0.019)	0.023 (0.019)
College (graduate or higher)	0.032 (0.020)	0.034* (0.020)	0.035* (0.020)	0.028 (0.020)	0.031 (0.020)	0.046** (0.020)	0.043** (0.021)
Protestant	-0.072*** (0.017)	-0.074*** (0.017)	-0.073*** (0.017)	-0.070*** (0.017)	-0.073*** (0.017)	-0.073*** (0.017)	-0.078*** (0.018)
Catholic	-0.055*** (0.019)	-0.060*** (0.019)	-0.052*** (0.019)	-0.055*** (0.020)	-0.057*** (0.020)	-0.058*** (0.019)	-0.062*** (0.021)
Other	0.026 (0.018)	0.025 (0.019)	0.023 (0.018)	0.028 (0.018)	0.025 (0.019)	0.029 (0.018)	0.020 (0.020)
Constant	0.451*** (0.028)	0.443*** (0.029)	0.452*** (0.029)	0.463*** (0.028)	0.454*** (0.029)	0.437*** (0.029)	0.449*** (0.030)
Observations	870	849	858	852	816	809	720
Adjusted $R^2$	0.143	0.139	0.144	0.143	0.148	0.150	0.155

*Notes:* The table shows the robustness of the results from Table 3 Column (2) with respect to the exclusion of potential misreporting. It reports the results of OLS regressions of the share of income redistributed in the experiment on three top 5% indicators, split by the change in household income on the income scale when growing up relative to the present, and sociodemographic controls. Column (1) replicates the baseline results with the full sample, columns (2) to (6) exclude participants flagged by the respective criteria discussed in section A4.4. Column (7) excludes all participants flagged by any of the criteria. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

#### *A4.5 Breadwinner Status*

We measure household income, but not individual income. While adult partners in households plausibly share similar preferences and attitudes, it is possible that they diverge. Moreover, it is possible that the likelihood of the main breadwinner participating in a survey declines with household income, and therefore, that different people take the survey in the top 5% sample (non-breadwinners) and the bottom 95% (breadwinners). While we do not have direct information on the main breadwinner status, we use the information on the respondents' employment to infer it. We classify respondents as likely not breadwinners if they stated that they are temporarily laid off, unemployed, permanently disabled, taking care of home or family, studying, retired before reaching retirement age, or another employment status that is not full-time employment, part-time employment, or retired (at or beyond the retirement age). By this classification based on employment status, 36% of the bottom 95% sample and 13% of the top 5% sample are likely not breadwinners in their household. Our key results are robust to adding this variable as an additional control, as seen in columns (2) and (5) of Table A8 for tax attitudes, and column (2) of Table A9 for fairness preferences. As an alternative robustness check, we restrict the sample to include only the 75% of participants who are likely breadwinners (see columns (3) and (6) of Table A8 and column (3) of Table A9). Even within this restricted sample, we still observe significant differences in tax attitudes and fairness preferences between the top 5% and the bottom 95%. However, the differences in income tax attitudes and fairness preferences decrease slightly in magnitude.

TABLE A8—ROBUSTNESS OF ATTITUDES TOWARD REDISTRIBUTION: ACCOUNTING FOR BREADWINNER STATUS

<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	<i>Top income tax rate</i>			<i>Estate tax rate</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Top 5%	-0.750*** (0.121)	-0.750*** (0.121)	-0.590*** (0.144)	-0.588*** (0.132)	-0.589*** (0.132)	-0.569*** (0.159)
Age	0.006** (0.003)	0.006** (0.003)	0.007* (0.004)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.004)
Male	-0.147 (0.094)	-0.149 (0.094)	-0.298*** (0.109)	-0.185* (0.103)	-0.208** (0.103)	-0.255** (0.121)
White	0.126 (0.129)	0.125 (0.129)	0.040 (0.151)	0.076 (0.139)	0.060 (0.138)	0.020 (0.165)
College (undergraduate)	0.258** (0.119)	0.255** (0.119)	0.160 (0.145)	0.216 (0.133)	0.184 (0.134)	0.092 (0.167)
College (graduate or higher)	0.345** (0.134)	0.340** (0.136)	0.236 (0.158)	0.487*** (0.148)	0.440*** (0.150)	0.327* (0.176)
Protestant	-0.624*** (0.110)	-0.625*** (0.110)	-0.666*** (0.125)	-0.756*** (0.118)	-0.764*** (0.118)	-0.838*** (0.137)
Catholic	-0.670*** (0.124)	-0.670*** (0.124)	-0.812*** (0.140)	-0.861*** (0.134)	-0.864*** (0.133)	-0.940*** (0.153)
Other religion	-0.041 (0.132)	-0.041 (0.132)	-0.157 (0.149)	-0.206 (0.153)	-0.210 (0.153)	-0.210 (0.173)
Non-breadwinner		-0.023 (0.109)			-0.217* (0.121)	
Constant	-0.003 (0.189)	0.015 (0.197)	0.206 (0.225)	0.167 (0.212)	0.338 (0.229)	0.484* (0.270)
Observations	825	825	636	809	809	624
Adjusted $R^2$	0.094	0.093	0.098	0.104	0.107	0.119

*Notes:* The table reports the results of OLS regressions of tax attitudes on the top 5% indicator and individual background variables. The dependent variable in columns (1) - (3) is the attitude toward the top income tax rate; the dependent variable in columns (4) - (6) is the attitude toward the estate tax rate. Both are measured on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). “Age” is measured in years. “Male” is an indicator for male participants. “White” is an indicator for White people. “College (undergraduate)” is an indicator for participants who obtained an associate or bachelor degree. “College (graduate or higher)” is an indicator for participants who obtained a graduate or postgraduate degree. “Protestant,” “Catholic,” and “Other religion” are indicator variables for religion. “Non-breadwinner” is a proxy variable for not being a breadwinner in the household, constructed from employment status information. Columns (1) and (4) replicate the results from Table 1 Columns (2) and (5) with socio-demographic controls; columns (2) and (4) also control for breadwinner status, and columns (3) and (6) exclude all non-breadwinners from the analysis. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE A9—ROBUSTNESS OF ESTIMATES OF DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES IN THE EXPERIMENT: ACCOUNTING FOR  
BREADWINNER STATUS

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>Share of income redistributed</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Top 5%	-0.062*** (0.019)	-0.062*** (0.019)	-0.053*** (0.021)
Mixed	-0.095*** (0.016)	-0.095*** (0.016)	-0.109*** (0.018)
Merit	-0.143*** (0.015)	-0.143*** (0.015)	-0.155*** (0.017)
Age	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.001)
Male	-0.036** (0.014)	-0.035** (0.014)	-0.044*** (0.016)
White	0.031 (0.019)	0.032 (0.020)	0.035 (0.024)
College (undergraduate)	0.021 (0.018)	0.022 (0.018)	0.035 (0.022)
College (graduate or higher)	0.034* (0.020)	0.036* (0.020)	0.036 (0.023)
Protestant	-0.071*** (0.017)	-0.070*** (0.017)	-0.075*** (0.019)
Catholic	-0.056*** (0.019)	-0.055*** (0.019)	-0.080*** (0.021)
Other religion	0.030 (0.018)	0.030 (0.018)	0.015 (0.020)
Non-breadwinner		0.009 (0.017)	
Constant	0.441*** (0.028)	0.434*** (0.031)	0.419*** (0.037)
Observations	880	880	669
Adjusted $R^2$	0.136	0.136	0.152

*Notes:* The table reports OLS results. The dependent variable is the share of income redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker in the experiment. “Top 5%” is an indicator variable for the wealthy. “Mixed” and “Merit” are treatment indicators. Columns (1) replicates the results from Table 2. Column (2) adds an additional control for breadwinner-status. “Non-breadwinner” is a proxy variable for not being a breadwinner in the household, constructed from employment status information. Column (3) excludes all non-breadwinners from the analysis. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

## A5. DIFFERENT WAYS TO OPERATIONALIZE MERITOCRATIC BELIEFS

The one-dimensional trade-off between the relative importance of hard work and luck, which formed the basis of our measure in section 3.3, may not fully capture the complexity of how individuals view the importance of these two factors for success in life. While this measure has been widely used in the literature on inequality, it may not accurately reflect individuals' beliefs.

We implement two alternative approaches for analyzing meritocratic beliefs. First, we conducted a direct test to examine if the belief in the average importance of both luck and hard work for achieving success in life offers valuable insights in addition to the relative importance of hard work over luck. Second, we include separate measures for the importance of hard work and luck.

### *Average importance of hard work and luck:*

Panel (b) in Figure A11 shows the average importance of hard work and luck for success in life by groups. The figure indicates that the top 5%, on average, place a higher value on the importance of hard work and luck in comparison to the bottom 95% (4.51 vs. 4.20,  $p < 0.01$ ). However, Table A10 reveals that the average importance attached to hard work and luck has little explanatory power when it comes to variation in tax attitudes. For example, the measure for importance explains only 2-3% of the variation in tax attitudes of the top 5%. Moreover, in our analysis of the factors that account for the divergence in tax attitudes between the top 5% and bottom 95%, we observe that the combination of our initial measure for meritocratic beliefs and the measure of importance explains only 5% of the discrepancy in income tax attitudes ( $p = 0.490$ ) and 13% of the gap in estate tax attitudes ( $p = 0.154$ ). In contrast, our singular measure of inequality acceptance explains 20% and 33% (both  $p < 0.001$ ), respectively, of the divergence in tax attitudes, indicating that it is a more important predictor (see Figure A12).



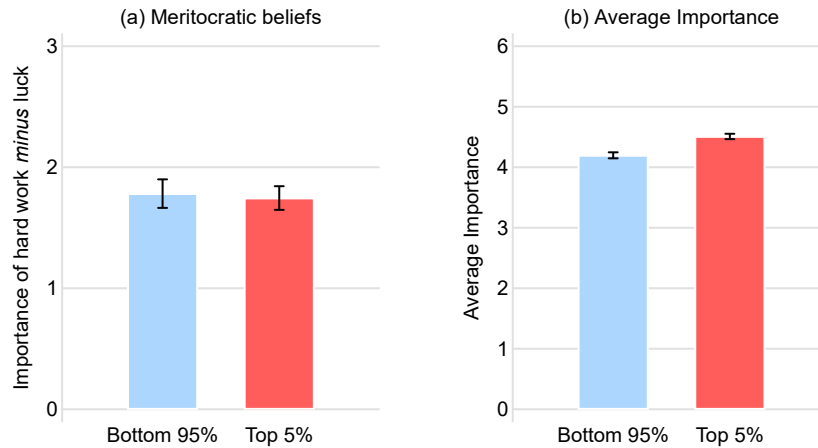


FIGURE A11. MERITOCRATIC BELIEFS AND AVERAGE IMPORTANCE

*Notes:* Meritocratic beliefs and average importance of hard work and luck for success in life among the top 5% (red), and bottom 95% (blue). For the measure of meritocratic beliefs in panel (a), participants were asked about the importance of hard work and luck for getting ahead in life on a scale from “not at all important” (= 0) to “very important” (= 6). The difference between the two answers yields our measure of meritocratic beliefs. For the measure of average importance in panel (b), we calculate the average absolute importance of hard work and luck for getting ahead in life. Error bars indicate s.e.m.

TABLE A10—DOMINANCE ANALYSIS WITH MERITOCRATIC BELIEF AND AVERAGE IMPORTANCE

(c) Top 5%				
	Top income tax rate		Estate tax rate	
Rank	(1)		(2)	
1	Inequality acceptance	41%	Belief Merit	44%
2	Belief Merit	39%	Inequality Acceptance	34%
3	Trust in government	12%	Trust in government	14%
4	Altruism	5%	Altruism	5%
5	Belief Importance	2%	Belief Importance	3%
Total variance explained		33%	35%	

(d) Bottom 95%				
	Top income tax rate		Estate tax rate	
Rank	(1)		(2)	
1	Belief Merit	49%	Belief Merit	36%
2	Inequality Acceptance	39%	Inequality Acceptance	33%
3	Belief Importance	5%	Trust in government	18%
4	Altruism	4%	Altruism	8%
5	Trust in government	2%	Belief Importance	5%
Total variance explained		7%	16%	

*Notes:* The table reports the results from a dominance analysis for the top 5% (panel a) and bottom 95% (panel b). This procedure estimates the relative contribution of our measures on inequality acceptance, meritocratic belief, the average absolute importance of hard work and luck for success in life, altruism, and trust in government in explaining variation in attitudes toward redistribution. Column (1) examines attitudes toward the top income tax rate, column (2) focuses on attitudes toward the estate tax rate. For each outcome variable the five measures are ranked by the size of their relative contribution to the variance explained with numbers adding up to 100%. The bottom rows show the percentage of total variance explained by all four beliefs and preference measures combined.

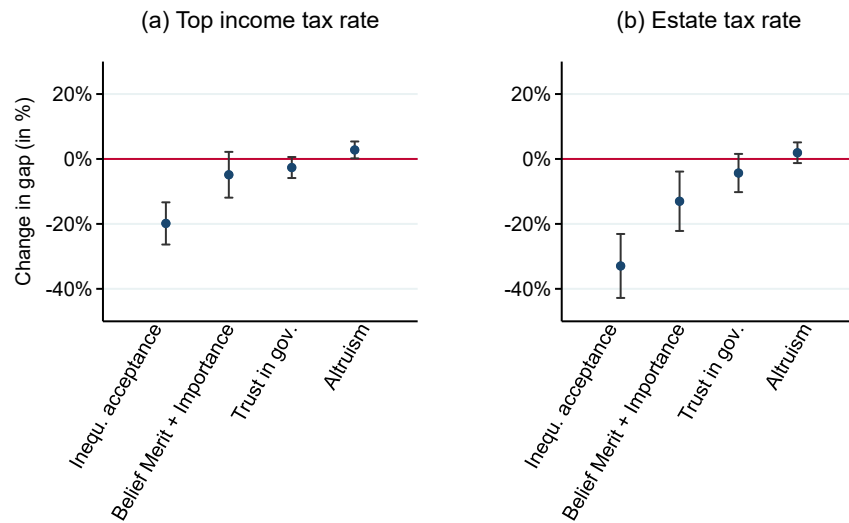


FIGURE A12. EXPLAINING THE GAP IN ATTITUDES TOWARD REDISTRIBUTION - MERITOCRATIC BELIEFS AND AVERAGE IMPORTANCE

*Notes:* This figure summarizes the results from the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition, which evaluates how much of the differences in attitudes toward redistribution between top 5% and bottom 95% is explained by differences in inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs and importance of beliefs, trust in government, and altruism. Panel (a) presents the results for the top income tax rate and panel (b) for the estate tax rate. The graphs indicate the percentage change in the difference in tax attitudes after controlling for inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs, trust in government, and altruism, respectively. The baseline difference in tax attitudes is -0.48 regarding the top income tax and -0.42 regarding the estate tax on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Error bars indicate robust standard errors for the percentage change in the difference in attitudes between the top 5% and the bottom 95% and are calculated using the delta method.

#### *Separate measures for importance of hard work and luck:*

Figure A13 shows the importance attached to hard work and luck individually, ranging from “not important at all” to “very important” on a 7-point scale, for both the bottom 95% and top 5%. Compared to the bottom 95%, the top 5%, on average, attribute greater importance to both hard work (5.38 vs. 5.10,  $p < 0.01$ ) and luck (3.64 vs. 3.31,  $p < 0.01$ ).

After conducting a dominance analysis with hard work and luck beliefs as separate predictors (see Table A11), it becomes evident that both variables are significant contributors to the explained variation in tax attitudes. However, our analysis indicates that inequality acceptance remains the best predictor for variation in tax attitudes among the top 5%, and the second best predictor among the bottom

95%. Including separate variables to account for beliefs in hard work and luck in the decomposition of the tax attitudes gap yields the same results as including the difference in beliefs and the degree of importance assigned to each belief. This is because the two sets of predictors represent linear combinations of the same underlying variables (see Figure A14).

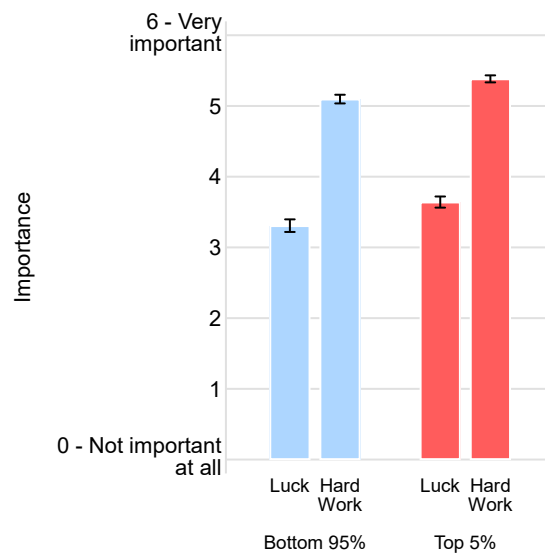


FIGURE A13. BELIEF IN LUCK AND BELIEF IN HARD WORK

*Notes:* Belief in the importance of hard work and luck for success in life among the top 5% (red), and bottom 95% (blue). Participants were asked about the importance of hard work and luck for getting ahead in life on a scale from “not at all important” (= 0) to “very important” (= 6). Error bars indicate s.e.m.

TABLE A11—DOMINANCE ANALYSIS WITH SEPARATE MEASURES FOR IMPORTANCE OF HARD WORK AND LUCK

(e) Top 5%				
	Top income tax rate		Estate tax rate	
Rank	(1)		(2)	
1	Inequality acceptance	42%	Inequality Acceptance	34%
2	Belief luck	21%	Belief hard work	30%
3	Belief hard work	20%	Belief luck	18%
4	Trust in government	12%	Trust in government	14%
5	Altruism	5%	Altruism	5%
Total variance explained		33%	35%	
(f) Bottom 95%				
	Top income tax rate		Estate tax rate	
Rank	(1)		(2)	
1	Belief hard work	44%	Belief hard work	34%
2	Inequality acceptance	38%	Inequality acceptance	32%
3	Belief luck	12%	Trust in government	18%
4	Altruism	4%	Belief luck	8%
5	Trust in government	2%	Altruism	7%
Total variance explained		7%	16%	

*Notes:* The table reports the results from the dominance analysis for the top 5% (panel a) and bottom 95% (panel b). This procedure estimates the relative contribution of our measures on inequality acceptance, belief about the importance of hard work for success in life, belief about the importance of luck for success in life, altruism, and trust in government in explaining variation in attitudes toward redistribution. Column (1) examines attitudes toward the top income tax rate, column (2) focuses on attitudes toward the estate tax rate. For each outcome variable the four measures are ranked by the size of their relative contribution to the variance explained with numbers adding up to 100%. The bottom rows show the percentage of total variance explained by all four beliefs and preference measures combined.

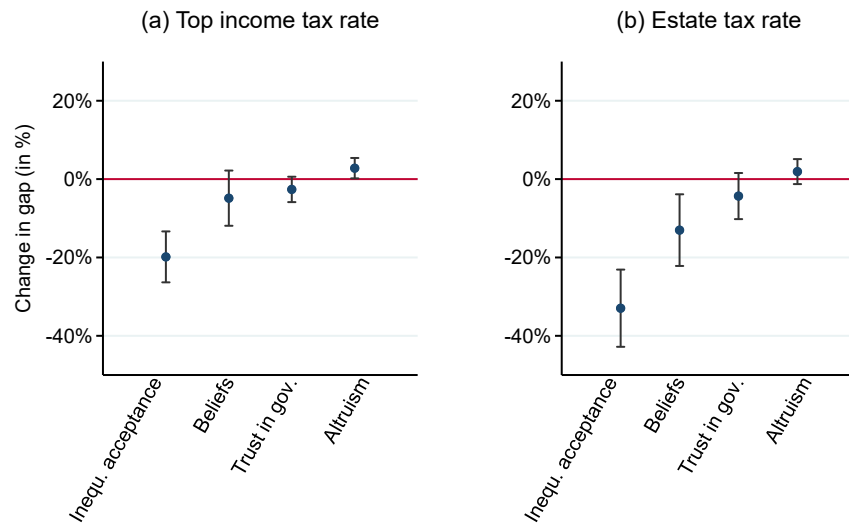


FIGURE A14. EXPLAINING THE GAP IN ATTITUDES TOWARD REDISTRIBUTION –  
SEPARATE MEASURES FOR IMPORTANCE OF HARD WORK AND LUCK

*Notes:* This figure summarizes the results from the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition, which evaluates how much of the differences in attitudes toward redistribution between top 5% and bottom 95% is explained by differences in inequality acceptance, belief in luck and belief in hard work, trust in government, and altruism. Panel (a) presents the results for the top income tax rate and panel (b) for the estate tax rate. The graphs indicate the percentage change in the difference in tax attitudes after controlling for inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs, trust in government, and altruism, respectively. The baseline difference in tax attitudes is -0.48 regarding the top income tax and -0.42 regarding the estate tax on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Error bars indicate robust standard errors for the percentage change in the difference in attitudes between the top 5% and the bottom 95% and are calculated using the delta method.

## A6. ADDITIONAL RESULTS

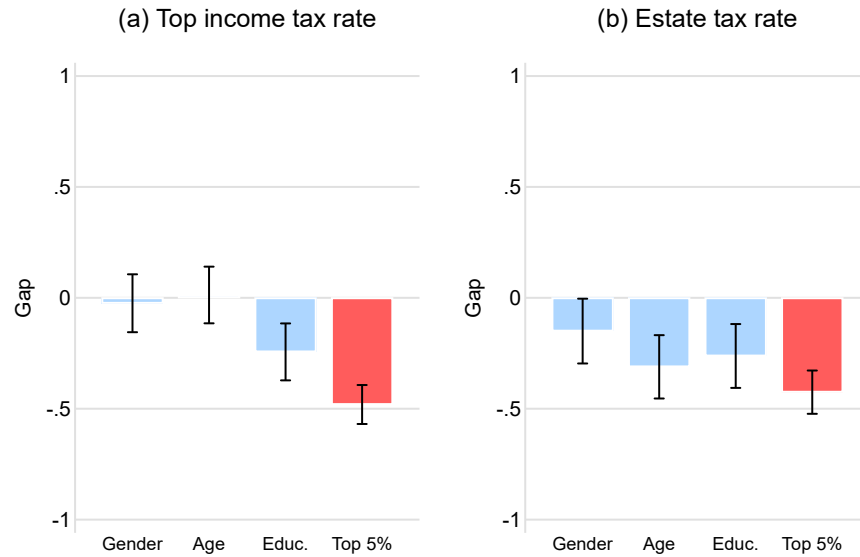


FIGURE A15. MAGNITUDE OF THE DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDES TOWARD REDISTRIBUTION IN COMPARISON

*Notes:* Differences in attitudes regarding (a) the top income tax rate, and (b) the estate tax rate. We compare the gender gap (male vs. female), the age gap (older or equal vs. younger than the median age of 47), and the education gap (some college or less vs. 2yr college degree or more) among the bottom 95% (blue bars) with the difference in attitudes between the bottom 95% and top 5% (red bar). Tax attitudes are measured on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Error bars indicate s.e.m.

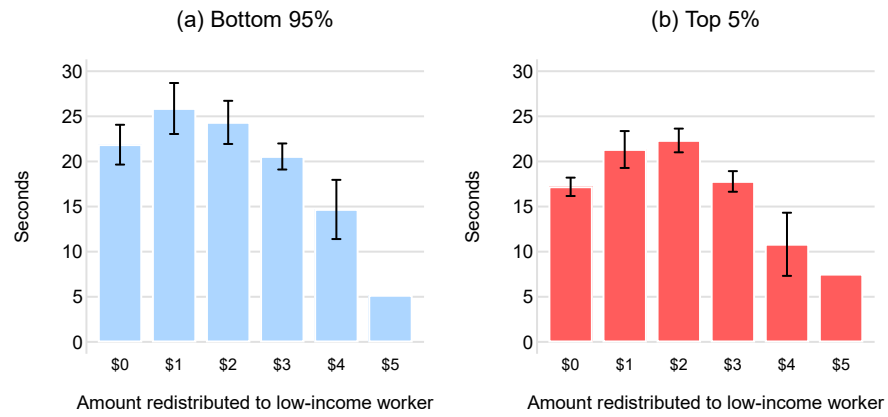


FIGURE A16. DECISION TIME IN THE EXPERIMENT

*Notes:* This figure shows average decision times (in seconds) of the top 5% (red bars) and bottom 95% (blue bars) by the amount redistributed in the experimental task. We winsorize the data at the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile to mitigate the impact of outliers that have very high decision times. Due to a technical problem, the time stamps for the experimental task have not been recorded for about 10% of the total sample. Error bars indicate s.e.m.

TABLE A12—HETEROGENEITY AMONG THE TOP 5% IN DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES IN THE EXPERIMENT – EXCLUDING RESPONDENTS AT THE TOP AND BOTTOM OF THE INCOME SCALE WHEN GROWING UP

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>Share of income redistributed</i>			
	Baseline (1)	Excluding top 10% (2)	Excluding bottom 10% (3)	Excluding top and bottom 10% (4)
Top 5%, high mobility	-0.088*** (0.024)	-0.078*** (0.024)	-0.089*** (0.025)	-0.079*** (0.025)
Top 5%, med. mobility	-0.056*** (0.021)	-0.047** (0.022)	-0.059*** (0.021)	-0.050** (0.021)
Top 5%, low mobility	-0.047** (0.023)	-0.020 (0.025)	-0.058*** (0.022)	-0.032 (0.024)
Mixed	-0.098*** (0.016)	-0.096*** (0.016)	-0.093*** (0.016)	-0.091*** (0.017)
Merit	-0.148*** (0.015)	-0.145*** (0.016)	-0.148*** (0.015)	-0.145*** (0.016)
Age	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.001 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Male	-0.036** (0.014)	-0.041*** (0.014)	-0.037*** (0.014)	-0.043*** (0.014)
White	0.030 (0.020)	0.035* (0.020)	0.035* (0.019)	0.040** (0.020)
College (undergraduate)	0.018 (0.018)	0.016 (0.018)	0.024 (0.018)	0.022 (0.018)
College (graduate or higher)	0.032 (0.020)	0.024 (0.020)	0.041** (0.019)	0.032 (0.020)
Protestant	-0.072*** (0.017)	-0.069*** (0.017)	-0.072*** (0.017)	-0.070*** (0.017)
Catholic	-0.055*** (0.019)	-0.045** (0.019)	-0.060*** (0.020)	-0.050** (0.020)
Other religion	0.026 (0.018)	0.035* (0.019)	0.021 (0.018)	0.030 (0.018)
Constant	0.451*** (0.028)	0.460*** (0.029)	0.438*** (0.028)	0.445*** (0.029)
Observations	870	836	829	795
Adjusted $R^2$	0.143	0.146	0.143	0.145

*Notes:* The table reports OLS results. The dependent variable is the share of income redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker in the experiment. Column (1) replicates the results from Table 3 column (2) and includes three indicators for the wealthy, split by the change in household income on the income scale (in deciles) when growing up relative to the present into low ( $\leq 1$  decile), medium (between 1 and 5 deciles) and high ( $\geq 5$  deciles). Column (2) repeats the analysis but excludes the 10% of respondents among the wealthy who placed themselves highest on the income scale when growing up. Column (3) excludes those who placed themselves lowest when growing up. Column (4) excludes both the 10% who placed themselves highest and the 10% who placed themselves lowest. “Mixed” and “Merit” are treatment indicators. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.



TABLE A13—HETEROGENEITY AMONG THE TOP 5% IN ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT REDISTRIBUTION: INCOME MOBILITY

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>Top income tax rate</i>			<i>Estate tax rate</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Top 5%, high mobility	-0.893*** (0.126)	-1.128*** (0.151)	-1.048*** (0.151)	-0.759*** (0.140)	-0.894*** (0.167)	-0.817*** (0.164)
Top 5%, medium mobility	-0.292*** (0.111)	-0.563*** (0.139)	-0.507*** (0.135)	-0.347*** (0.122)	-0.497*** (0.154)	-0.452*** (0.148)
Top 5%, low mobility	-0.414*** (0.128)	-0.700*** (0.145)	-0.617*** (0.142)	-0.287* (0.146)	-0.496*** (0.159)	-0.437*** (0.156)
Age		0.006* (0.003)	0.007** (0.003)		-0.003 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)
Male		-0.139 (0.094)	-0.097 (0.092)		-0.172 (0.105)	-0.142 (0.103)
White		0.093 (0.129)	0.169 (0.128)		0.063 (0.140)	0.164 (0.140)
College (undergraduate)		0.267** (0.119)	0.271** (0.117)		0.208 (0.134)	0.237* (0.131)
College (graduate or higher)		0.363*** (0.134)	0.314** (0.133)		0.495*** (0.148)	0.453*** (0.147)
Protestant		-0.592*** (0.109)	-0.410*** (0.111)		-0.738*** (0.118)	-0.557*** (0.121)
Catholic		-0.654*** (0.125)	-0.498*** (0.126)		-0.852*** (0.135)	-0.706*** (0.134)
Other religion		-0.049 (0.132)	-0.028 (0.125)		-0.222 (0.152)	-0.221 (0.145)
Republican			-0.801*** (0.092)			-0.839*** (0.096)
Constant	0.105 (0.064)	0.009 (0.190)	-0.000 (0.183)	-0.276*** (0.072)	0.177 (0.217)	0.169 (0.210)
Observations	820	819	806	805	804	789
Adjusted $R^2$	0.051	0.107	0.181	0.030	0.110	0.181
Differences within the Top 5%:						
high vs. low mobility	-0.479*** (0.156)	-0.429*** (0.148)	-0.430*** (0.145)	-0.473*** (0.175)	-0.398** (0.166)	-0.380** (0.163)
high vs. medium mobility	-0.601*** (0.142)	-0.566*** (0.136)	-0.541*** (0.132)	-0.413*** (0.155)	-0.397*** (0.146)	-0.365*** (0.141)
medium vs. low mobility	0.122 (0.143)	0.137 (0.137)	0.110 (0.130)	-0.060 (0.161)	-0.001 (0.151)	-0.015 (0.145)

*Notes:* The table reports OLS results. The dependent variables are the attitude towards the top income tax rate (in columns 1-3) and the estate tax rate (in columns 4-6) on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2), regressed on three indicators for the wealthy, split by the change in household income on the income scale (in deciles) when growing up relative to the present into low ( $\leq 1$  decile), medium (between 1 and 5 deciles) and high ( $\geq 5$  deciles). Columns (2) and (5) control for sociodemographic characteristics. Columns (3) and (6) also controls for party identity. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE A14—HETEROGENEITY AMONG THE TOP 5% IN MERITOCRATIC BELIEFS: INCOME MOBILITY

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>Meritocratic Beliefs</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Top 5%, high mobility	0.317 (0.251)	0.508* (0.286)	0.415 (0.282)
Top 5%, medium mobility	0.036 (0.182)	0.286 (0.236)	0.221 (0.233)
Top 5%, low mobility	-0.553*** (0.205)	-0.300 (0.242)	-0.452* (0.235)
Age		0.003 (0.005)	0.002 (0.005)
Male		-0.267 (0.171)	-0.243 (0.168)
White		-0.220 (0.217)	-0.244 (0.222)
College (undergraduate)		-0.066 (0.223)	-0.072 (0.225)
College (graduate or higher)		-0.192 (0.238)	-0.154 (0.240)
Protestant		1.032*** (0.190)	0.829*** (0.198)
Catholic		0.830*** (0.214)	0.696*** (0.214)
Other religion		0.075 (0.234)	0.100 (0.234)
Republican			0.958*** (0.166)
Constant	1.808*** (0.120)	1.446*** (0.333)	1.366*** (0.340)
Observations	846	845	823
Adjusted $R^2$	0.009	0.052	0.088
Differences within the Top 5%:			
high vs. low mobility	0.870*** (0.277)	0.808*** (0.276)	0.866*** (0.268)
high vs. medium mobility	0.280 (0.260)	0.222 (0.255)	0.194 (0.249)
medium vs. low mobility	0.589*** (0.215)	0.586*** (0.218)	0.672*** (0.212)

*Notes:* The table reports OLS results. The dependent variable is meritocratic belief, i.e. the importance of hard work minus the importance of luck for getting ahead in life, each measured on a scale from “not at all important” (= 0) to “very important” (= 6). Meritocratic belief is regressed on three indicators for the wealthy, split by the change in household income on the income scale (in deciles) when growing up relative to the present into low ( $\leq 1$  decile), medium (between 1 and 5 deciles) and high ( $\geq 5$  deciles). “Mixed” and “Merit” are treatment indicators. Column (2) controls for sociodemographic characteristics. Column (3) also controls for party identity. The bottom of the table reports the linear combinations of the differences between the coefficients for the subsamples of the wealthy. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE A15—HETEROGENEITY AMONG THE TOP 5% IN DISTRIBUTIVE CHOICES IN THE EXPERIMENT WHEN CONTROLLING FOR MERITOCRATIC BELIEFS: INCOME MOBILITY

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>Share of income redistributed</i>					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Top 5%, high mobility	-0.083*** (0.021)	-0.076*** (0.020)	-0.088*** (0.024)	-0.075*** (0.024)	-0.084*** (0.024)	-0.074*** (0.024)
Top 5%, medium mobility	-0.044*** (0.017)	-0.041** (0.016)	-0.056*** (0.021)	-0.046** (0.021)	-0.054** (0.021)	-0.046** (0.021)
Top 5%, low mobility	-0.029 (0.019)	-0.045** (0.019)	-0.047** (0.023)	-0.054** (0.023)	-0.046** (0.023)	-0.055** (0.023)
Meritocratic belief		-0.021*** (0.003)		-0.018*** (0.003)		-0.016*** (0.003)
Mixed	-0.096*** (0.017)	-0.102*** (0.016)	-0.098*** (0.016)	-0.102*** (0.016)	-0.099*** (0.016)	-0.103*** (0.016)
Merit	-0.149*** (0.015)	-0.152*** (0.015)	-0.148*** (0.015)	-0.150*** (0.015)	-0.150*** (0.015)	-0.150*** (0.015)
Age			-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Male			-0.036** (0.014)	-0.045*** (0.014)	-0.033** (0.014)	-0.041*** (0.014)
White			0.030 (0.020)	0.021 (0.020)	0.035* (0.020)	0.032 (0.020)
College (undergraduate)			0.018 (0.018)	0.016 (0.018)	0.017 (0.019)	0.018 (0.019)
College (graduate or higher)			0.032 (0.020)	0.028 (0.020)	0.027 (0.020)	0.026 (0.021)
Protestant			-0.072*** (0.017)	-0.057*** (0.017)	-0.061*** (0.017)	-0.048*** (0.017)
Catholic			-0.055*** (0.019)	-0.044** (0.019)	-0.047** (0.020)	-0.038* (0.019)
Other religion			0.026 (0.018)	0.023 (0.017)	0.022 (0.018)	0.021 (0.017)
Republican					-0.067*** (0.016)	-0.051*** (0.017)
Constant	0.423*** (0.013)	0.464*** (0.014)	0.451*** (0.028)	0.490*** (0.028)	0.457*** (0.029)	0.484*** (0.029)
Observations	872	846	870	845	844	823
Adjusted $R^2$	0.104	0.154	0.143	0.183	0.166	0.194
Differences within the Top 5%:						
high vs. low mobility	-0.054** (0.025)	-0.031 (0.024)	-0.041* (0.024)	-0.021 (0.024)	-0.038 (0.024)	-0.019 (0.023)
high vs. medium mobility	-0.038* (0.023)	-0.035 (0.022)	-0.031 (0.022)	-0.029 (0.022)	-0.029 (0.022)	-0.028 (0.022)
medium vs. low mobility	-0.015 (0.021)	0.004 (0.021)	-0.010 (0.021)	0.009 (0.020)	-0.008 (0.020)	0.009 (0.020)

*Notes:* The table reports OLS results. The dependent variable is the share of income redistributed from the high- to the low-income worker in the experiment, regressed on three indicators for the wealthy, split by the change in household income on the income scale (in deciles) when growing up relative to the present into low ( $\leq 1$  decile), medium (between 1 and 5 deciles) and high ( $\geq 5$  deciles). “Mixed” and “Merit” are treatment indicators. Odd columns replicate the results from Table 3. Even columns add an additional control for meritocratic belief. The bottom of the table reports the linear combinations of the differences between the coefficients for the subsamples of the wealthy. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE A16—DOMINANCE ANALYSIS WITH SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CONTROLS

(a) <i>Top 5%</i>				
Rank	<i>Top income tax rate</i>		<i>Estate tax rate</i>	
	(1)		(2)	
1	Inequality acceptance	33%	Meritocratic beliefs	31%
2	Meritocratic beliefs	31%	Religion	25%
3	Religion	17%	Inequality acceptance	25%
4	Trust in government	11%	Trust in government	11%
5	Altruism	5%	Altruism	4%
6	Education	2%	Education	3%
7	Male	1%	Male	1%
8	Age	0%	Age	0%
9	White	0%	White	0%
Total variance explained		36%	41%	

(b) <i>Bottom 95%</i>				
Rank	<i>Top income tax rate</i>		<i>Estate tax rate</i>	
	(1)		(2)	
1	Meritocratic beliefs	31%	Meritocratic beliefs	30%
2	Inequality acceptance	28%	Inequality acceptance	29%
3	Education	14%	Trust in government	16%
4	Religion	14%	Altruism	8%
5	Age	5%	Education	5%
6	Altruism	3%	Age	5%
7	Trust in government	2%	Male	4%
8	White	2%	Religion	2%
9	Male	1%	White	1%
Total variance explained		9%	17%	

*Notes:* The table reports the results from the dominance analysis for the top 5% (panel a) and bottom 95% (panel b). This procedure estimates the relative contribution of our measures on inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs, altruism, and trust in government in explaining variation in attitudes toward redistribution. Column (1) examines attitudes toward the top income tax rate, column (2) focuses on attitudes toward the estate tax rate. For each outcome variable the measures are ranked by the size of their relative contribution to the variance explained with numbers adding up to 100%. The bottom rows show the percentage of total variance explained by all measures combined. “Education” contains both an indicator for undergraduate and graduate education. “Religion” contains indicators for protestant, catholic and other religion.

TABLE A17—EXPLAINING THE GAP IN ATTITUDES TOWARD REDISTRIBUTION BETWEEN THE TOP 5% AND BOTTOM 95%

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>(a) Top income tax rate</i>				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Top 5%	-0.481*** (0.088)	-0.386*** (0.085)	-0.479*** (0.085)	-0.459*** (0.087)	-0.494*** (0.088)
Inequality acceptance		2.159*** (0.215)			
Meritocratic beliefs			-0.181*** (0.019)		
Trust in government				0.360*** (0.078)	
Altruism					0.025 (0.022)
Constant	0.106* (0.064)	0.061 (0.064)	0.422*** (0.073)	-0.251** (0.102)	-0.102 (0.192)
Percentage of top 5% gap explained	-	19.9%	-2.2%	2.6%	-2.8%
Observations	826	826	807	823	826
Adjusted $R^2$	0.034	0.139	0.129	0.058	0.034

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>(b) Estate tax rate</i>				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Top 5%	-0.425*** (0.098)	-0.285*** (0.095)	-0.449*** (0.093)	-0.395*** (0.095)	-0.438*** (0.097)
Inequality acceptance		2.580*** (0.218)			
Meritocratic beliefs			-0.227*** (0.020)		
Trust in government				0.577*** (0.076)	
Altruism					0.015 (0.024)
Constant	-0.285*** (0.072)	-0.363*** (0.070)	0.131 (0.081)	-0.856*** (0.108)	-0.403** (0.215)
Percentage of top 5% gap explained	-	33.0%	-1.2%	4.3%	-1.9%
Observations	810	810	793	807	809
Adjusted $R^2$	0.022	0.145	0.154	0.078	0.021

*Notes:* The table reports OLS results from regressions of attitudes toward redistribution on a top 5% indicator and variables for inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs, altruism, and trust in government. In panels (a) and (b), the dependent variables are attitudes on the top income tax rate and estate tax rate. Both are measured on a 5-point scale from “much lower” (= -2) to “much higher” (= 2). Column (1) is the baseline model with only the top 5% indicator; column (2) controls for inequality acceptance; column (3) for meritocratic beliefs; column (4) for trust in government; column (5) for altruism. At the bottom of each panel, we report the percentage change in the top 5% gap that is explained by differences in inequality acceptance, meritocratic beliefs, altruism, and trust, respectively. We use the Blinder-Oaxaca method, as it accounts for variation in the number of observations across model specifications because of item nonresponse in the survey. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE A18—CONTROLLING THE FALSE DISCOVERY RATE IN THE MAIN RESULTS

(a) Figure 1: Attitudes toward Redistribution (rank-sum tests of differences between top 5% and bottom 95%, MH=2)		
Attitudes	p-value	FDR-adjusted p-values
Top income tax rate	<0.001	<0.001
Estate tax rate	<0.001	<0.001
(b) Figure 2: Distributive Choices (rank-sum tests of differences between top 5% and bottom 95%, MH=3)		
Treatments	p-values	FDR-adjusted p-values
Merit	0.234	0.234
Mixed	0.027	0.040
Luck	0.008	0.024
(c) Figure 4: Fairness Types (rank-sum tests of differences between top 5% and bottom 95%, MH=4)		
Types	p-values	FDR-adjusted p-values
Egalitarian	0.025	0.050
Meritocratic	0.825	0.825
Libertarian	0.004	0.016
Other	0.748	0.825

*Notes:* The table reports conventional p-values and FDR-adjusted “p-values” for all analyses of the main text that are susceptible to a multiple-hypothesis testing problem (i.e., the possibility that multiple hypothesis-testing increases the probability of committing a Type I error above the target rate for a single hypothesis test). An FDR-adjusted p-value is the maximum Q level (i.e., the share of false positives in all statistically significant results at some  $\alpha$  level, in our case  $\alpha = 0.05$ ) that satisfies the following inequality:  $p_k \leq (k/m) Q$ , where  $p_k$  is the conventional p-value (as reported in the table),  $k$  is that p-value’s rank (from lowest to highest) among  $m$  p-values in that set of coefficients (see Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995). For example, an FDR-adjusted p-value of 0.05 indicates the no more than 5% of the family of our original statistically significant results would constitute false positives. Panels (a)-(c) refer to the comparisons between the top 5% and the bottom 95% in Figures 1, 2, and 4. The number of hypotheses tested (MH) is indicated for each panel.

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## APPENDIX B – INSTRUCTIONS

### B1. SPECTATOR SURVEY

Here, we reproduce the key survey questions.

#### *Household Income*

Thinking back over the last year, what was your family's annual income?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$119,999
- \$120,000 - \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more
- Prefer not to say

If a respondent chose “\$150,000 or more,” a pop-up window opened with the following options:

- \$150,000 - \$199,999
- \$200,000 - \$249,999
- \$250,000 - \$349,999
- \$350,000 - \$499,999
- \$500,000 - \$749,999
- \$750,000 - \$1 million
- More than \$1 million

#### *Gross Liquid Assets*

What is the total value of your investable assets? This includes all cash, savings, mutual funds, stocks, bonds, retirement accounts (such as IRAs, 401 (k)s, 403(b)s, etc.), and all other types of investments, but excludes your home and other real estate value.

- Less than \$250,000
- \$250,000 to under \$500,000
- \$500,000 to under \$750,000
- \$750,000 to under \$1,000,000

- \$1-2 million
- \$2-5 million
- More than \$5 million
- Prefer not to answer

If a respondent chose “More than \$5 million,” a pop-up window opened with the following options:

- \$5-10 million
- \$10-25 million
- \$25-50 million
- More than \$50 million

#### *Top income tax rate attitudes*

The effective income tax rate for the top category of annual household income above \$467,000 is currently 33%. That means, for example, that a family earning \$500,000 pays \$165,000 in taxes. In your opinion, should the top income tax rate be higher, the same, or lower?

- Much lower
- Somewhat lower
- The same
- Somewhat higher
- Much higher
- I don't know

#### *Estate tax rate attitudes*

The Federal Estate Tax applies when a deceased person leaves more than \$5.45 million in wealth to his or her heirs. Currently, the effective federal estate tax rate is 17%. That means, for example, that on an inheritance worth \$10 million, an heir pays \$1.7 million in taxes. In your opinion, should the federal estate tax rate be higher, the same, or lower?

- Much lower
- Somewhat lower
- The same
- Somewhat higher
- Much higher
- I don't know

#### *Vote choice in the 2016 presidential election*

Who did you vote for in the election for President?

- Donald Trump
- Hillary Clinton
- Gary Johnson
- Jill Stein
- Other (please specify)
- Did not vote for President

#### *Meritocratic beliefs*

Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 6 for each of the following factors how important you think it is for getting ahead in life: (1) Hard work, (2) Being lucky.<sup>44</sup>

Not important at all                      0 1 2 3 4 5 6                      Very important

#### *Trust in government*

How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington D.C. to do what is right?

- Just about always
- Most of the time
- Only some of the time
- Never

#### *Altruism*

In general, how willing are you to give to good causes without expecting anything in return?

Completely unwilling                      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10                      Very willing

#### *Self-placement on the income scale (current and growing up)*

In our society there are groups which tend to be towards the top and groups which tend to be towards the bottom of the income scale. If 1 equaled the bottom of the scale and 100 equaled the top of the scale, where would you put yourself now on this scale?

Enter a number from 1 to 100 \_\_\_\_\_

And where would you put the household you grew up in on the same scale?

<sup>44</sup> This battery also asked for the importance of the following factors: having connections, coming from a wealthy family, and being intelligent.

Enter a number from 1 to 100 \_\_\_\_\_

*Source of Wealth*

What has been the main source of your household's wealth?

- Inheritance or family assets
- Salary
- Income from own business
- Property
- Lottery
- Other (please specify)
- I prefer not to answer

*Charitable donations*

What charitable causes did your household donate to in 2015? (Choose all that apply)

- Religious organizations
- Health and well-being (including medical research)
- Reducing poverty abroad
- Reducing poverty in the US
- Emergency aid
- Democracy and human rights
- Nature and environment
- Animal welfare
- Education and research (except medical)
- Art and culture
- Sports and recreation (excluding memberships/fees)
- Other objectives

What is the total amount your household gave to this cause in 2015? If you are unsure, you can make an estimate.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> The respondents were asked to indicate an amount only for those causes they chose in the first part of the question. The charitable donations variable used in the analysis is the sum total of all the amounts a respondent indicated (as a share of household income).

## B2. SPECTATOR EXPERIMENT

Here, we produce the instructions to the spectators in the experiment, by treatment.

### *B2.1 Treatment Luck*

Unlike the other questions in this survey, you will now make a choice that has real monetary consequences for other people. We therefore ask you to pay careful attention to the instructions.

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We recently hired two individuals via an online platform to work on an assignment. Let us call them worker A and worker B. The assignment was the same for both workers and consisted of manually double checking entries from a list of participant ID numbers. Each worker received a flat payment of \$1.00 for signing up, regardless of their potential additional payment for the assignment.

After completing the assignment, we told the workers that their earnings for the assignment will be determined **by chance**:

- The worker **who was chosen by chance** earns **\$6.00** for the assignment.
- The other worker earns **nothing** for the assignment.

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**Worker A was chosen by chance** and therefore earns \$6.00 for the assignment. Thus, worker B earns nothing for the assignment.

We did not inform the workers about who was chosen by chance. However, we told the workers that a third person will be informed about this outcome. We also told them that this person would get the opportunity to **redistribute the earnings**.

**You are the third person** and will now choose whether to redistribute the earnings for the assignment between worker A and worker B. Your decision is completely anonymous. The workers will receive the payment that you choose once the study is complete, but they will not receive any further information.

Please consider your decision carefully, as \$6.00 is a considerable amount of money for these workers.

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You can now redistribute the earnings of the two workers. Worker A was the lucky worker who was chosen by chance. Please choose one of the following options:

I do **not** want to redistribute earnings:

- Worker A is paid \$6.00 and Worker B is paid \$0.00

I want to redistribute earnings:

- Worker A is paid \$5.00 and Worker B is paid \$1.00
- Worker A is paid \$4.00 and Worker B is paid \$2.00
- Worker A is paid \$3.00 and Worker B is paid \$3.00
- Worker A is paid \$2.00 and Worker B is paid \$4.00
- Worker A is paid \$1.00 and Worker B is paid \$5.00
- Worker A is paid \$0.00 and Worker B is paid \$6.00

## *B2.2 Treatment Mixed*

Unlike the other questions in this survey, you will now make a choice that has real monetary consequences for other people. We therefore ask you to pay careful attention to the instructions.

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We recently hired two individuals via an online platform to work on an assignment. Let us call them worker A and worker B. The assignment was the same for both workers and consisted of manually double checking entries from a list of participant ID numbers. Each worker received a flat payment of \$1.00 for signing up, regardless of their potential additional payment for the assignment.

After completing the assignment, we told the workers that their earnings for the assignment will be based on a **scoring system**. Each worker's score is determined **by the performance** on the assignment. However, one in five workers is unlucky and his or her score is randomly set to zero, regardless of the actual performance.

- You and the workers do not know whether a worker was unlucky and his or her score was set to zero. You only observe which worker had the highest score.
- The worker with the **higher score** earns **\$6.00** for the assignment.
- The other worker earns **nothing** for the assignment.

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**Worker A had the higher score** and therefore earns \$6.00 for the assignment. Thus, worker B earns nothing for the assignment.

We did not inform the workers about who had the higher score. However, we told the workers that a third person will be informed about this outcome. We also told them that this person would get the opportunity to **redistribute the earnings**.

**You are the third person** and will now choose whether to redistribute the earnings for the assignment between worker A and worker B. Your decision is completely

anonymous. The workers will receive the payment that you choose once the study is complete, but they will not receive any further information.

Please consider your decision carefully, as \$6.00 is a considerable amount of money for these workers.

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**You can now redistribute the earnings** of the two workers. Worker A had the highest score, which was determined by the performance in the assignment, but 1 in 5 workers is unlucky and the score is set to zero, regardless of the actual performance.

Please choose one of the following options:

I do **not** want to redistribute earnings:

- Worker A is paid \$6.00 and Worker B is paid \$0.00

I want to redistribute earnings:

- Worker A is paid \$5.00 and Worker B is paid \$1.00
- Worker A is paid \$4.00 and Worker B is paid \$2.00
- Worker A is paid \$3.00 and Worker B is paid \$3.00
- Worker A is paid \$2.00 and Worker B is paid \$4.00
- Worker A is paid \$1.00 and Worker B is paid \$5.00
- Worker A is paid \$0.00 and Worker B is paid \$6.00

### *B2.3 Treatment Merit*

Unlike the other questions in this survey, you will now make a choice that has real monetary consequences for other people. We therefore ask you to pay careful attention to the instructions.

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We recently hired two individuals via an online platform to work on an assignment. Let us call them worker A and worker B. The assignment was the same for both workers and consisted of manually double checking entries from a list of participant ID numbers. Each worker received a flat payment of \$1.00 for signing up, regardless of their potential additional payment for the assignment.

After completing the assignment, we told the workers that their earnings for the assignment will be determined **by their performance** on the assignment:

- The worker who **performs best** earns **\$6.00** for the assignment.
- The other worker earns **nothing** for the assignment.

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*Page break*

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**Worker A performed best** and therefore earns \$6.00 for the assignment. Thus, worker B earns nothing for the assignment.

We did not inform the workers about who performed best. However, we told the workers that a third person will be informed about this outcome. We also told them that this person would get the opportunity to **redistribute the earnings**.

**You are the third person** and will now choose whether to redistribute the earnings for the assignment between worker A and worker B. Your decision is completely anonymous. The workers will receive the payment that you choose once the study is complete, but they will not receive any further information.

Please consider your decision carefully, as \$6.00 is a considerable amount of money for these workers.

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You can now redistribute the earnings of the two workers. Worker A performed best in the assignment. Please choose one of the following options:

I do **not** want to redistribute earnings:

- Worker A is paid \$6.00 and Worker B is paid \$0.00

I want to redistribute earnings:

- Worker A is paid \$5.00 and Worker B is paid \$1.00
- Worker A is paid \$4.00 and Worker B is paid \$2.00
- Worker A is paid \$3.00 and Worker B is paid \$3.00
- Worker A is paid \$2.00 and Worker B is paid \$4.00
- Worker A is paid \$1.00 and Worker B is paid \$5.00
- Worker A is paid \$0.00 and Worker B is paid \$6.00



### B3. WORKER INSTRUCTIONS

Here, we reproduce the instructions for the workers who were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk.

#### Instructions:

We are hiring workers to double check digitized entries from a list of ID numbers.

Your task is to check as many entries as possible and to correct any mistakes you find.

You will have exactly 5 minutes to work on this task.

On the next screens you will first see an example of how to perform the task, and then we will give you a short practice task to make sure you understand the assignment. The 5-minute working period starts once you have completed the practice task.

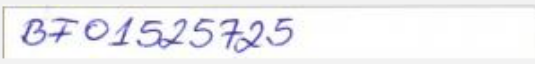
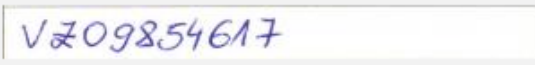

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#### Example:

This is an example of how to perform the task. You do not have to fill in anything yet.

		Enter the correct ID number here if the digitized entry is incorrect (leave empty if correct)
	BF01525725	<input type="text"/>
	VZ09854617	<input type="text"/>
	LF35818979	<input type="text"/>

On the left hand side you see a list of handwritten ID numbers that have been digitized.

Your task will be to detect mistakes and to correct them. If a digitized entry is incorrect, fill in the correct ID number from the handwritten list in the corresponding field. If the entry is correct, leave the corresponding field empty. ID numbers always start with 2 capital letters, followed by 8 numbers.

In the above example, only the last ID is not digitized correctly. On the next screen you will see how you should fill out this table.

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**Example (with solution):**

		Enter the correct ID number here if the digitized entry is incorrect (leave empty if correct)
<input type="text" value="BF01525725"/>	BF01525725	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text" value="VZ09854617"/>	VZ09854617	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text" value="LF35018070"/>	LF35818979	<input type="text" value="LF35018070"/>

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**Practice Task:**

This is a practice task.

For each row, please check whether the digitized entry is correct. If it is incorrect, fill in the correct ID number from the handwritten list in the corresponding field. If the entry is correct, leave the corresponding field empty. Remember, ID numbers always start with 2 capital letters, followed by 8 numbers.

		Enter the correct ID number here if the digitized entry is incorrect (leave empty if correct)
<input type="text" value="JS34761217"/>	JS34761217	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text" value="OQ53623846"/>	OQ53623846	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text" value="JL02404329"/>	JL02404339	<input type="text"/>

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*Page break*

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*If a worker did not complete the task correctly, the following error message is displayed:*

*“Your answer is not correct. Please read the instructions carefully and try again.”*

*If a worker completes the task correctly, she or he can go on to the next screen*

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You have successfully completed the practice task. Now you can proceed to the work assignment.

The 5-minute working period will start once you continue to the next screen.

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*Page break*

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*Countdown timer staring at 5 minutes at the top of the screen.*

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**Work Assignment:**

		Enter the correct ID number here if the digitized entry is incorrect (leave empty if correct)
BF01525725	BF01525725	<input type="text"/>
VZ09854617	VZ09854617	<input type="text"/>
LF35018070	LF35018070	<input type="text"/>
JS34761217	JS34761217	<input type="text"/>
OG53623846	OG53623846	<input type="text"/>
JL02404329	JL02404329	<input type="text"/>
OR88203325	OR88203325	<input type="text"/>
AN61955507	AN61955507	<input type="text"/>
EA75221074	EA75221074	<input type="text"/>
TA17025956	TA17025956	<input type="text"/>
XD05093005	XD05093005	<input type="text"/>
BZ63665856	BZ63665856	<input type="text"/>
SK84914405	SK84914405	<input type="text"/>

...

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*Page break*

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The 5-minute working period is over.

Finally, please provide us with some basic information about yourself.

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*Page break*

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What is your age? \_\_\_\_

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is the primary ethnicity or race you identify with?

- Asian/Asian American
- Black/African American
- White/European American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Other

Which category best describes your highest level of education?

- High school/GED or less
- Some college
- College degree
- Master's or professional degree (for example: JD, MD, MBA)
- Doctoral degree

What is your current employment status?

- Full-time employee
- Part-time employee
- Self-employed or small business owner
- Unemployed and looking for work
- Student
- Not in labor force (for example: retired, or full-time parent)

What is your household income compared to the average household income in your country?

- Much lower than average income
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- Much higher than average income

In general, to what extent are you politically liberal or conservative?

- Very liberal
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- Very conservative

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*Page break*

*Each worker was only shown one of the three texts regarding a bonus payment.*

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Thank you for completing the HIT!

Your secret key is:

Please copy the key and paste it into AMT before you close this window. If the key you entered is correct, you will receive a payment of US \$1.00.

### **Bonus Payment** (*Treatment Luck*)

You may receive a bonus payment for completing the work assignment. Whether or not you will receive any additional money depends on the decision made by a participant of an ongoing research study.

You will be matched to another worker who completed the same assignment. The size of the bonus payment for you and the other worker is determined by chance:

- The worker **who is chosen by chance** earns **US \$6.00** for the assignment.
- The other worker earns **nothing** for the assignment.

A third person will be informed about which worker receives the bonus payment and then gets the opportunity to redistribute the earnings between you and the other worker. This person can choose to redistribute any amount in \$1.00 steps (for example \$5.00/\$1.00, \$4.00/\$2.00 etc.). He or she can also choose to redistribute the whole amount or no money at all. We will not reveal any personally identifying information about you to this third person.

You will receive the bonus payment once all workers have completed the assignment and the third person has made a decision. This can take a few weeks.

Thank you for your participation!

### **Bonus Payment** (*Treatment Mixed*)

You may receive a bonus payment for completing the work assignment. Whether or not you will receive any additional money depends on the decision made by a participant of an ongoing research study.

You will be matched to another worker who completed the same assignment. The size of the bonus payment for you and the other worker is based on a scoring system. Each worker's **score is determined partly by chance and partly by their performance** on the work assignment.

- The **worker with the higher score** earns **US \$6.00** for the assignment.
- The other worker earns **nothing** for the assignment.

A third person will be informed about which worker has the higher score and receives the bonus payment and then gets the opportunity to redistribute the earnings between you and the other worker. This person can choose to redistribute any amount in \$1.00 steps (for example \$5.00/\$1.00, \$4.00/\$2.00 etc.). He or she can also choose to redistribute the whole amount or no money at all. We will not reveal any personally identifying information about you to this third person.

You will receive the bonus payment once all workers have completed the assignment and the third person has made a decision. This can take a few weeks.

Thank you for your participation!

### **Bonus Payment** (*Treatment Merit*)

You may receive a bonus payment for completing the work assignment. Whether or not you will receive any additional money depends on the decision made by a participant of an ongoing research study.

You will be matched to another worker who completed the same assignment. The size of the bonus payment of you and the other worker is determined by your performance on the task:

- The worker who **performs better** on the work assignment earns **US \$6.00** for the assignment.
- The other worker earns **nothing** for the assignment.

A third person will be informed about which worker performed better and receives the bonus payment and then gets the opportunity to redistribute the earnings between you and the other worker. This person can choose to redistribute any amount in \$1.00 steps (for example \$5.00/\$1.00, \$4.00/\$2.00 etc.). He or she can also choose to redistribute the whole amount or no money at all. We will not reveal any personally identifying information about you to this third person.

You will receive the bonus payment once all workers have completed the assignment and the third person has made a decision. This can take a few weeks.

Thank you for your participation!