

working paper

eeecon  
[triple:e:con]

# Fairness Views and Political Preferences - Evidence from a representative sample

Daniel Müller, Sander Renes

Working Papers in Economics and Statistics

2019-08

University of Innsbruck  
<https://www.uibk.ac.at/eeecon/>



**University of Innsbruck**  
**Working Papers in Economics and Statistics**

The series is jointly edited and published by

- Department of Banking and Finance
- Department of Economics
- Department of Public Finance
- Department of Statistics

Contact address of the editor:  
research platform "Empirical and Experimental Economics"  
University of Innsbruck  
Universitaetsstrasse 15  
A-6020 Innsbruck  
Austria  
Tel: + 43 512 507 71022  
Fax: + 43 512 507 2970  
E-mail: [eeecon@uibk.ac.at](mailto:eeecon@uibk.ac.at)

The most recent version of all working papers can be downloaded at  
<https://www.uibk.ac.at/eeecon/wopec/>

For a list of recent papers see the backpages of this paper.

# Fairness Views and Political Preferences - Evidence from a representative sample

Daniel Müller and Sander Renes\*

May 9, 2019

## Abstract

We elicit distributional fairness ideals of impartial spectators using an incentivized elicitation in a large and heterogeneous sample of the German population. We document several empirical facts: i) egalitarianism is the predominant ideal; ii) females are more egalitarian than men; iii) men are relatively more efficiency minded; iv) left-leaning voters are more likely to be egalitarians whereas right-leaning voters are more likely to be efficiency minded; and v) young and highly-educated participants hold different fairness ideals than the rest of the population. Moreover, we show that the fairness ideals predict preferences for redistribution and intervention by the government, as well as actual charitable giving, even after controlling for a range of covariates. Hence, our paper contributes to our understanding of the underpinnings of voting behavior and ideological preferences, as well as the literature that links lab and field behavior.

**Keywords:** Distributional fairness, impartial spectator, representative sample, political attitudes, voting behavior, lab to field.

---

\*Müller: University of Innsbruck (e-mail: Daniel.Mueller@uibk.ac.at). Renes: Erasmus School of Economics (e-mail: srenes@ese.eur.nl). We thank seminar participants in Mannheim and Rotterdam and Alexander Cappelen, Ernst Fehr, Hans Peter Grüner, Verena Fetscher and Erik Sørensen for helpful comments. We are indebted to the GIP team, in particular to Franziska Gebhard, for logistical support conducting the study. Financial Support from the German research foundation (DFG, SFB 884) is gratefully acknowledged.

# 1 Introduction

How should we divide the pie? Despite the apparent simplicity of this question, the division of scarce resources is one of the most fundamental problems we face, and it is arguably one of the most important topics in the social sciences. In any distributional question, scarcity of means and plurality of goals collide, while material self-interest and other-regarding concerns pull individuals in different directions. Recent empirical evidence shows that individuals tend to disagree on how these conflicting impulses should be resolved, which makes finding an acceptable division even harder. It is, for instance, often assumed that left-wing voters are relatively egalitarian, while the political right is thought to focus more on efficiency. Such disagreement about which qualities make an distribution or outcome desirable, can greatly complicate any discussion that impacts the final outcomes or distribution. If the difference of opinion between the political left and right is driven by fundamentally different views on what is fair, it is not surprising that political debate on issues like redistribution, the welfare system and the provision of universal health care, tends to become heated. Finding an acceptable middle ground will require all parties to make concessions with regard to their moral ideals. Knowledge about these ideals can therefore greatly benefit the search for (universally) acceptable policies and achievable reform.

In this paper, we measure the prevalence of four stylized fairness types and relate these types to personal characteristics, political preferences and charitable giving. To do so, we run an incentivized elicitation in a large and heterogeneous sample of the German population in the German Internet Panel (GIP). In two decision tasks, the decision maker selects an allocation of money for two other, anonymous persons. By paying *other* respondents the chosen amounts, we incentivize decision makers to think about which distribution they consider fair.<sup>1</sup> We consider four normative criteria (types) that were suggested in the literature: equality of outcomes (egalitarian); maximizing the minimum (maxi-min); maximizing the total amount of resources (efficiency); and maximizing the highest outcome (maxi-max). The allocations are constructed in such a way that each of the criteria leads to a different choice by a decision maker. Since individual decision makers are forced to choose one allocation, these choices show the dominant criterion used by this decision maker to evaluate fairness of allocations and thus his or her fairness type. By excluding material self-interest, our elicitation method focuses on pure fairness ideals and is thus not concerned with the trade-off between self-interest and moral ideals. This separation of pure ideals from the trade-off between personal income and ideals, combined with a focus on the most important, or primary criterion

---

<sup>1</sup> A comment on the role of incentives in our elicitation seems appropriate here. Decision makers are not directly paid for their choices. One could therefore argue that only if people are social, that is, if they care about the payoffs for other people, will their decisions actually be incentivized. There is, however, abundant evidence that people do care in economically-relevant ways about payoffs for other people. Hence, pecuniary income for others can serve as incentives for third-party observers who do not have a personal *direct* stake in the allocation.

rather than a more nuanced measure of the trade-offs between different criteria, allows a quick measurement through a discrete choice experiment. This makes it possible to quickly measure the relative importance of these criteria in a large group. We show that these measures indeed capture a policy and decision relevant aspect of preferences by relating it to policy preferences and charitable giving.

We document several empirical facts about the distribution of these spectator-type fairness ideals. First, the German population predominantly and consistently chooses egalitarian allocations. From an economic point of view these choices are striking: in both choice tasks the egalitarian option is (weakly) Pareto-dominated by at least one other allocation. Second, females are more egalitarian than males across all age groups. Third, males are more efficiency minded than females. This result is similar to the finding in the literature concerning self-involved fairness, which showed that females are more pro-social.<sup>2</sup> Fourth, our results show that left-leaning voters are more likely to be egalitarian, whereas right-leaning voters are relatively more likely to be efficiency-minded. Commentators often assume a relation between distributive ideals and political preferences, but up to now very little empirical evidence existed that shows it empirically. A noteworthy deviation from this trend can be found at the very extremes of the distribution. Both individuals who place themselves at the extreme-left or at the extreme-right end of the political spectrum are overwhelmingly egalitarian. Fifth, age, education and earnings all significantly correlate with fairness ideals. Since these are exactly the characteristics in which the student population differs from the general population, this should serve as a warning that laboratory results about social preferences cannot be directly extrapolated. Finally, maxi-max preferences are empirically irrelevant. Given that randomly clicking individuals would have chosen this option in 25% of the cases, we take this as evidence that individuals make deliberate choices.

The panel structure of the GIP survey provides a unique opportunity to relate the choices in our abstract setting to stated and revealed preferences in situations where we expect fairness preferences to matter. Our analysis shows that compared to efficiency-minded individuals, egalitarians and maxi-min types are more likely to favor redistributive taxation in Germany. Furthermore, we see that the fairness ideals of the voter-base of the largest German party are close to those held by the average voter. Efficiency-minded individuals are relatively more likely to be found in right-off-center parties. We are also able to connect our elicited preferences to actual charitable donations by the participants. Consistent with ex-ante expectations, we find that egalitarians are more likely than all other types to donate the money earned for participation in the GIP to charity, while maxi-min types are weakly more likely to donate than efficiency-minded individuals.

Spectator-type moral ideals are of significant importance in the organization of societies. In

---

<sup>2</sup>In a meta-study of the dictator game, Engel [2011] finds that women give significantly more than men.

many political or policy decisions an individual's self-interest is not, or only indirectly, involved. Voters are asked to decide on many policy proposals that may never directly affect them, from the availability of birth control to women (for male voters), to a change in tax rates for incomes above their own, to the placement of a large (nuclear) power plant far away from their homes. Despite the, at best, indirect connection between their personal life and such proposals, males, US conservatives, unions, and environmental organizations respectively, have put up very strong lobbying campaigns around these proposals. Clearly these policies matter to voters, even if they are not personally affected by them. Spectators also play an important role in the legal system. There is no clear link between the life of the jury members and the verdict they give. Despite having no skin in the game, many juries take considerable time deliberating, which shows their willingness to expend their own time in the interests of a just outcome. The same can be said of judges, particularly those on the constitutional courts with life-long appointments. In the economic sphere, a spectator's view plays a vital part when a company or person declares bankruptcy. A neutral third party is brought in to determine a fair way of distributing the (insufficient) assets over the competing claims. Every bankruptcy therefore involves an impartial spectator's judgment about what is fair. Despite the importance of spectator's judgments, existing empirical evidence focuses mostly on situations where the decision maker has a personal monetary stake in the outcome and thus faces a potential trade-off between morals and self-interest. In this paper we avoid this trade-off completely and therefore focus on spectator ideals directly.

Our study also contributes to the question of whether the fairness ideals held by students are similar to those found in the rest of the population, and whether laboratory measures are useful for predicting behavior outside of this closed world. Recently these questions have attracted much attention.<sup>3</sup> The consensus seems to lean towards a finding that students are less social than the rest of the population. The scarce evidence available on empirical fairness ideals in the population has so far been confined to the fairness view of stakeholders. This gap in the literature has, for example, been noted by Konow [2003]. To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first study to elicit fairness ideals of an impartial spectator in a large and heterogeneous sample using monetary incentives. Hence, our study has the potential to inform the debate in the social preference literature, as well the empirical social choice literature. Our finding, that young, highly-educated participants are systematically different from the remaining population, should serve as a warning that laboratory findings cannot be directly extrapolated to the general population. At the same time, the relations we find with stated political and policy preferences, as well as actual donations to charity, indicate that similar experimental measures of fairness can capture preferences that influence behavior outside of the laboratory setting.

---

<sup>3</sup>See for example Cappelen et al. [2007], Bellemare et al. [2008], Gaertner and Schokkaert [2011], Fisman et al. [2017] and Cappelen et al. [2015].

We proceed as follows. In Section 2 we briefly discuss existing theoretical and empirical fairness research. Section 3 describes the survey and our measures. Section 4 depicts the distribution and correlates of fairness views in the German population. Section 5 shows that fairness measures have predictive power for preferences for redistribution, the desired income tax rates and revealed charitable behavior. Section 6 concludes the article.

## 2 Different Views on Distributive Justice

Social scientists have recently shown a great interest in fairness preferences, mostly in situations where the decision maker has a stake in the distribution, and has no uncertainty about her own position ex-ante. In the laboratory, such a situation is mimicked by the classical dictator game [Kahneman et al., 1986] in which a decision maker decides on how to split a pie between herself and one other person. This game has had a large impact through the insight that people often care about the income of others. The findings in this literature led to the development of *social* preference models [Fehr and Schmidt, 1999, Bolton and Ockenfels, 2000] that emphasize not just the personal stake in allocations, but also the perceived fairness or equity of the results. Besides the recent interest in perceived fairness of outcomes, there is a long tradition of studying impartial fairness from a normative point of view in philosophy, economics, and political science. In this tradition, researchers are interested in how a decision maker should choose between different income distributions from a normative point of view. In their seminal works Harsanyi [1953] and Rawls [1971] famously propose that, in order to achieve a just decision, the social planner needs to be behind the *veil of ignorance*. That is, to make a fair decision, the decision maker should be ignorant of her own income, social status, wealth, abilities etc., and thus ignorant of her own stake in the outcome. In this *original position*, social planners are, according to the proponents of this theory, then able to make judgments about income distributions, which are free of self-interest. Hence, the veil of ignorance can be seen as a thought experiment aimed at reaching impartiality of decision makers, which in turn should lead to fair and just outcomes.

Another device that has been used in the literature to achieve impartiality (and the implied fairness of impartiality) is the “impartial spectator”.<sup>4</sup> The concept of an impartial spectator traces back at least to the work by Adam Smith in 18th century, but a similar separation between self-interest and judgment is also pursued before by David Hume when he refers to “the general point of view” [Smith, 2010, Hume, 2013]. The main difference between the impartial spectator and the participant behind the veil of ignorance is that the impartial spectator will never be involved in the

---

<sup>4</sup>In this paper we use the terms ‘impartial spectator’ and ‘third party spectator’ interchangeably. Konow [2009] uses the term ‘quasi-impartial spectator’ to clarify that the strict conditions assumed to reach impartiality might not be completely fulfilled in real life.

distribution that is evaluated. In Smith’s words, she is only assumed to be “sympathetic” to the stakeholders. Moreover, while planners behind-the-veil-of-ignorance are not permitted to acquire any information that could introduce a self-interested bias, the impartial spectator is explicitly encouraged to gather information helpful in reaching a better, or fairer decision.

## 2.1 Empirical Literature

The empirical literature on fairness echoes this theoretical debate, with some studies using a set-up inspired by the veil of ignorance and others using spectator judgments. Most empirical papers based on the veil of ignorance are versions of dictator games with uncertainty about the decision maker’s position in the final allocation (see for instance Bosmans and Schokkaert [2004] and Schildberg-Hörisch [2010]). In contrast, the majority of empirical papers that focus on spectator judgments are vignette studies.<sup>5</sup> The incentivized impartial spectator we use in the survey was already successfully used by Konow [2000] to test the accountability principle as a basis of perceived fairness.

Traub et al. [2005] highlight the importance of the distinction between spectator and veil of ignorance judgments, as well as the importance of the amount of information possessed by their subjects when making a moral judgment. They find a statistically significant difference between the choices made by subjects when they switch from a self-concern (veil of ignorance) to an umpire mode (impartial observer). In their experiments subjects are asked to judge lotteries. Subjects that are informed about both the support and the associated probabilities of the lotteries are more inequality-averse as umpires than as decision makers behind-the-veil. Subjects who only know the support, but not the associated probabilities are less inequality-averse as umpires than as involved decision makers behind-the-veil. Similarly, Croson and Konow [2009] compare behavior behind the veil of ignorance with impartial spectators and find that “stakeholders are less inclined to respond to the generosity of others than are spectators”. More recently, Becchetti et al. [2011] show that impartial spectators and, to a smaller extent, stakeholders behind-the-veil both reward talent more strongly than the informed stakeholders does.

Konow [2009] presents some interesting results regarding the choices of impartial spectators. His vignette study shows that spectators are more likely to agree with each other when they possess more information. This finding suggests that the impartial spectator, or “quasi-spectator”, in the tradition of Smith is an attractive approach to elicit fairness preferences. Under these conditions one might hope to find agreement when all relevant information is known. Amiel et al. [2009], using a vignette survey with students in several countries, present evidence suggesting that impartial spectators behave in a more social way (i.e. transfer more money) than involved participants.

Fairness views of third party spectators have also been studied by Cappelen et al. [2013] and

---

<sup>5</sup>For an excellent overview, please consult Gaertner and Schokkaert [2011].

Almås et al. [2016]. The former look at fairness views on risk-taking. They find that stakeholders and spectators “act on the same fairness views” but to a different extent. The latter compare fairness views of Americans and Scandinavians using a large-scale online experiment and show that Americans and Scandinavians differ significantly in their fairness views. Aguiar et al. [2013] compare fairness views of planners behind the veil of ignorance, impartial spectators and ‘ideal observers’ (who are assumed to be omniscient) in order to find out which of those procedures is most useful in ensuring impartiality. They find that the ideal observers choose significantly more equal distributions than stakeholders behind the veil or impartial spectators.

In this paper, we use an incentivized spectator setting, similar to several recent laboratory experiments. Dickinson and Tiefenthaler [2002] study the fairness views of spectators when subjects earn their position. Their results indicate a variety of different fairness ideals exists within their student population. However, in contrast to our study, they do not classify people into types. Mollerstrom et al. [2015] use the impartial spectator to study the perceived fairness of controllable versus uncontrollable luck. Their results show that spectators often adjust their fairness views based on what part of the outcomes was under the participants’ control. Moreover, a ‘benevolent dictator’ (a third party observer) is used in Cettolin and Riedl [2016] as a device to elicit fairness ideals under conditions of uncertainty. Their result indicates that the fairness of uncertain allocations, like their certain counterparts, is judged according to a variety of different ideals. In this paper we continue along this line of research by documenting fairness types in a large, random sample of the German population and correlating these ideals to demographic variables as well as political preferences and charitable behavior.

## 2.2 Normative Fairness Ideals

Normative theory has carved out several ideal-types of distributive justice. Most famously, Rawls [1971] suggested that, if people were to be placed behind the veil of ignorance, they would choose distributions according to the *difference principle*. This principle selects the distribution that maximizes the minimum income. Based on the assumed general acceptance and impartiality of the participant behind the veil, he argues that this maxi-min rule is the only moral or fair selection criterion. However, from an empirical point of view, support for this principle seems somewhat less compelling. Frohlich and Oppenheimer [1990] find little support for the maxi-min principle, instead many participants endorse the efficiency principle with a floor constraint, i.e. maximize the sum as long as a minimum income is guaranteed.<sup>6</sup> Mitchell et al. [1993] on the other hand find considerable support for Rawls’ maxi-min principle in an experiment with a hypothetical society and decision makers behind the veil-of-ignorance. Similarly, Michelbach et al. [2003] find that a

---

<sup>6</sup> See also Frohlich et al. [1987a], Frohlich et al. [1987b] and Frohlich and Oppenheimer [1992].

“considerable minority” uses maxi-min as a decision criterion.

The (weak) Pareto principle allows another simple approach to distributive justice. If in allocation  $\mathcal{A}$  at least one person is better off and no one is worse off than in allocation  $\mathcal{A}'$ , then  $\mathcal{A}$  Pareto-dominates  $\mathcal{A}'$  and  $\mathcal{A}$  should be preferred to  $\mathcal{A}'$ . While this principle is compelling, it does not provide a complete ranking of all potential allocations. To complete the ranking of allocations, one has to compare losses of one individual with the gains of another. If these losses and gains are treated equally, this boils down to the simple efficiency ranking proposed for instance by Posner [1983]. In the monetary allocations in our questions, efficiency yields the same ranking of distributions as Harsanyi’s [1953, 1955] utilitarianism, as long as one assumes that utility is (close to) linear in the sums of money involved. Hence, to the extent that utility functions are linear over the stakes used, utilitarianism does not require separate attention in this paper. Efficiency concerns have been shown to play an important role in settings with personal stakes in the distribution of money, see Charness and Rabin [2002] and Engelmann and Strobel [2004], but less is known in situations involving impartial spectators.

A third, simple comparison rule for allocations is proposed by egalitarianism, see e.g. Roemer [1996]. In this philosophy, equality is considered the only moral or fair criterion by which to judge outcomes. Hence, in this view, *differences* in outcomes (like income) should be minimized. Although there is some discussion about what should be equalized, egalitarians are expected to redistribute windfall gains, such as any earnings from the experiment, equally. In our experiment, egalitarianism violates the Pareto principle, as the egalitarian allocation is dominated by the maxi-min allocation. Intriguingly, we find that egalitarianism is the most popular ideal-type.

Finally, one can also obtain a (partial) ranking of allocations based on the maximization of the highest income. Admittedly, this maxi-max criterion seems like a rather theoretical possibility. The position of the most advantaged individual does receive some attention in liberal thought in the Rawlsian tradition, but then mostly as something that might be envied [Green, 2013]. The maxi-max criterion does, however, give a complete and transitive ranking of the alternatives [Brafman and Tennenholtz, 1997]. We included this criterion also as a test for the reliability of our data. If it is chosen in roughly the same proportion as our other criteria, this could be a signal of random choice by our participants. Nevertheless, it is ultimately an empirical question whether people do or do not follow this ideal, and we decided to put this question to a direct test. As it turns out, maxi-max preferences are empirically irrelevant.

These are the four types of idealized fairness concerns that we distinguish in our set-up. We exploit the fact that these different normative theories predict different choice patterns, to assign a fairness type to our participants that corresponds to the most important criterion to the decision maker.

## 3 Data

### 3.1 The German Internet Panel

Our elicitation was part of wave 20 (November 2015) of the German Internet Panel (GIP). The GIP is maintained by the collaborative research center 884 “Political Economy of Reforms” at the University of Mannheim. The GIP is an well-established panel based on a probability-based sample of the German population between the ages of 16 and 75 years. The recruitment of participants was done offline using face-to-face interviews, which precludes many of the potential data and subject issues common to online platforms. During recruitment of the sample, special care was taken to include people that in general do not have access to the internet (for example by handing out tablets and computers).<sup>7</sup> A new wave is fielded every second month and all enrolled participants are invited to take part. Each wave takes around 20 minutes to answer in total.

The repeated nature of the survey is a big advantage for our research. It allows us to relate our experimental measures to demographic information and information about political and policy preferences collected in other waves of the GIP.<sup>8</sup> In terms of topics, the GIP predominantly covers attitudes towards reform policies, the (welfare) state and general political opinions. The data from this survey are available for scientific use via the data archive of the GESIS Institute for Social Science. Participants are paid a flat fee for their participation in a wave, and additional payments are made if a participant completes all waves in a year. To this end, all participants hold an account with the GIP. Data about these payments are not usually available for research, but researchers connected to the collaborative research center can access them through a secure data facility and we use this data in Section 5 when we discuss charitable giving by our respondents.

### 3.2 The Experimental measure

The standard approach in empirical justice research is the vignette study. Respondents are confronted with a hypothetical situation and given the relevant context, then they are asked to provide their judgment or choice. Vignettes have certainly proven to be a useful instrument in empirical justice research.<sup>9</sup> However, we believe that following the standard methodology of experimental economics has distinct advantages in our setting. First, it is unclear how to relate answers in vignette studies to the political variables and socio-demographic characteristics that we are interested in, without explicitly asking about similar problems. By using an abstract frame and avoiding loaded

---

<sup>7</sup>For more information on sampling procedures and other logistical issues please consult Blom et al. [2015], Blom et al. [2016b] and Blom et al. [2016a].

<sup>8</sup>In a related study, Kerschbamer and Muller [2017] study distributional preferences of *stakeholders* in the GIP.

<sup>9</sup>Please see Konow [2003] and Gaertner and Schokkaert [2011] for excellent reviews and Faravelli [2007] for a classical, but relatively recent (third party spectator) vignette study on fairness views.

words like ‘fairness’ or ‘distribution’ we avoid the usual connotations associated with such words. This allows us to identify more stable, underlying preferences that are context-free and thus translate to other decisions as well. These underlying fairness preferences could explain the stable part of policy preferences found in papers like Margalit [2013] and Hacker et al. [2013]. Second, many participants in large scale surveys, like the GIP, might not be willing to read lengthy texts which describe the moral scenario to be evaluated in a vignette. Our design allows us to be brief and work without extensive explanations. Monetary incentives are the paradigm in experimental economics, mainly to induce subjects to think carefully about their choices and to minimize concerns about experimenter-demand effects and hypothetical and social-desirability biases. As such, we consider them a vital part of our measurement. By involving real payments to real people, we make it a consequential choice.

The experimental task consists of two multiple-choice questions. Each question asks respondents to indicate their preferred allocation from four different options. Each allocation specifies a distribution of money over two other, unknown participants in the GIP. The allocations are designed such that each of the allocations corresponds to a different classical fairness ideal: maxi-min, egalitarianism, efficiency mindedness, or maxi-max.<sup>10</sup> The sum of the payments in each allocation is also shown to participants.<sup>11</sup> The order of the options in every decision task is randomized across participants. Table 1 shows the options in the two tasks.<sup>12</sup>

	Egalitarian	Maxi-min	Efficiency	Maxi-max
Choice 1	(8,8)	(10,9)	(15,7)	(16,2)
Choice 2	(8,8)	(9,8)	(12,6)	(13,3)

Table 1: Allocations of money (in Euros) participants are asked to choose from (in Euros). Note that we allow a maxi-min decision maker to be indifferent between (8,8) and (9,8) in choice 2.

As can be seen in Table 1, the average monetary value of each choice was around 20 Euro

<sup>10</sup>Screenshots of the design can be found in the Online Appendix.

<sup>11</sup>Showing the sum was done to decrease cognitive burden on participants. We received comments of readers that feared that this might cause experimenter demand effects and therefore an overestimation of the amount of efficiency concerns in the German population. As the distribution of main concerns in Figure 1 shows, we find only 10% of the population uses efficiency as its main fairness, which is well below the 30% usually found in laboratory experiments.

<sup>12</sup>The experimental measure presented in this paper was part of a larger set-up, combining two different measures on distributional preferences. In each part, subjects made two choices about the distribution of money between two other randomly-selected, anonymous respondents. The second part involved two choices with risk in the final allocation. This second part is thus conceptually very different from the first part and will not be discussed in this paper.

(\\$22 at the time the survey was fielded), which is more than twice the German federal minimum hourly wage. The selection of the winners was done via the participant ID which identifies the responses of each participant over the GIP waves. This ID cannot be used to obtain any personal information, such as name and address of the person concerned. The subjects who received a payment were informed about their winnings via the GIP infrastructure, and payments were made via their account at the GIP. This allowed us to ensure anonymity of our respondents. All of this was explained in the instructions, so subjects were aware of this set-up before making their choices.

When explaining the incentives, we avoided the word “probability”. Instead, we explained that we would pay 400 randomly-selected participants according to 200 randomly-selected decisions. Participants were not eligible to be selected more than once for payment. We also informed participants that about 3500 respondents were expected to participate in the GIP wave. We believe that this approach made it easier for subjects to understand the relevant probabilities. In general, the questions were short and easy to understand, something we consider a distinctive advantage of the neutral, impartial spectator frame.

All in all, 3,159 participants took part in the wave 20 of the GIP. Of those, 2890 participants completed our questions. The GIP records the time it takes participants to complete the survey. We drop all participants who spent less than 30 seconds on our questions (215), leaving us with 2675 participants. Our conclusions remain virtually identical if we include all respondents, but standard errors increase. Moreover, and more importantly, we drop 486 participants who were not consistent across the two questions. For these participants the elicitation did not show a dominant criterion, and hence we cannot simply assign one of the four types. This means, in our analysis we only use the 2189 participants who chose in accordance with the same idealized fairness type in both decision tasks.<sup>13</sup> Note that the amount of consistency found already indicates that choices were not made randomly. We lose less than 20% of observations in this step, if participants had randomly selected one of the four choices, we would have lost 75%.

## 4 The Distribution of Fairness Ideals in the German Population

We begin by depicting the raw distribution of fairness ideals in Germany. This is important for several reasons. First, empirical evidence on the distribution of spectator fairness ideals is rare. However, examples in which people make judgments in such a situation are abundant in real life. We

---

<sup>13</sup>We allowed for maxi-min types to be indifferent between the egalitarian and the maxi-min option in choice 2. That is, we do not assume that maxi-min subjects necessarily follow the stricter lexicographic interpretation of the maxi-min rule. Our conclusions are however hardly affected by this definition.

can relate the preferences to personal characteristics of our respondents, which allows us to better understand how these preferences vary with income, age and education. Since there are large differences in these variables across different populations, this could help to explain differences in political and redistributive preferences between countries or groups. Finally, we are able to compare students with the rest of the population, which is important because experimental findings generally rely almost exclusively on student samples. As we show here, highly-educated, young participants are quite different from the rest of the population. This implies that conclusions on fairness ideals based on students, will most likely differ from those based on the general population.

#### 4.1 Distributions by Subgroup

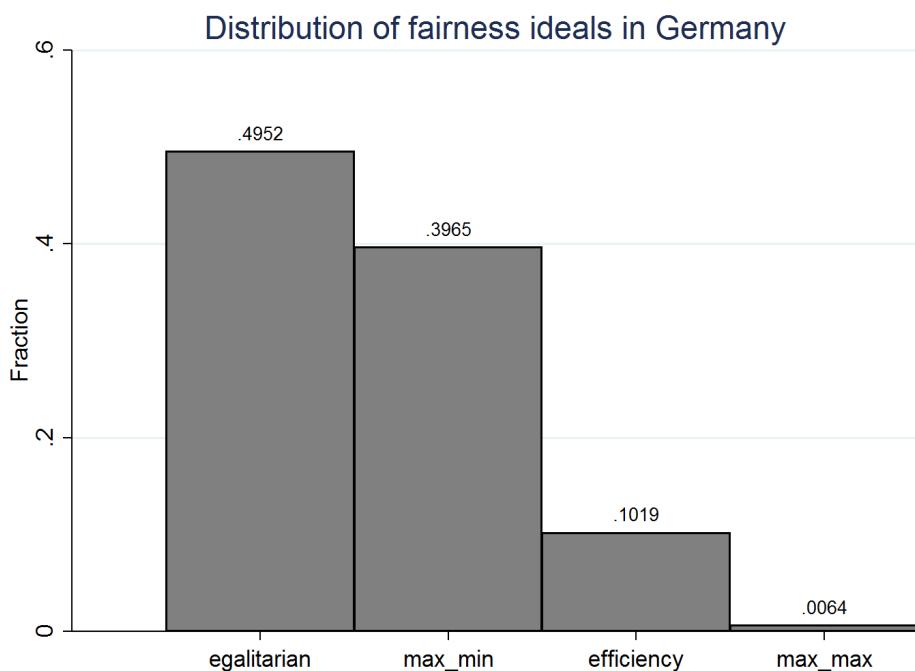


Figure 1: Distribution of fairness ideals.

Figure 1 depicts the distribution of consistent fairness types in our sample of the German population. The most popular option, with roughly half of the choices, is egalitarianism while maxi-min and efficiency are chosen by the other half of the participants. This pattern is striking, since the egalitarian option was dominated by the maxi-min allocations. In economic terms, this finding implies that half of the participants in our sample demonstrate a willingness to reduce incomes in order to achieve more equality. Most experimental studies find more subjects who focus

on efficiency and less egalitarian choices. Engelmann and Strobel [2004], for example, find that selfishness, maxi-min and efficiency mindedness explain most choices, while egalitarian preferences (or inequality aversion) do not predict choices very well in their experiment.

Figure 2 depicts the fairness ideals of four subgroups of the population: current students and three different educational levels of non-students. We split the sample of non-students according to the highest attained level of general education: those who had no vocational training (low); those who had some vocational training(mid); and those who at least passed the grade required to start college (high). The figure clearly shows that students are different from the rest of the population. A  $\chi^2$  goodness-of-fit test rejects the null hypothesis of similarity of the distribution of students and non-students at all normal confidence levels ( $\chi^2$  on independence of the distribution yields  $p < 0.001$ ). Even compared to the highly-educated non-students, students are less likely to choose the dominated egalitarian allocations. At the same time, both students and the highly-educated are about two times more likely to select the efficiency-maximizing allocation than the low-educated respondents. These findings hold important implications for empirical justice research which builds on laboratory/classroom experiments, as it shows that the prevalence of maxi-min types and efficiency types might be systematically overestimated in such studies.<sup>14</sup>

A similar picture emerges in Figure 3 where we plot the distribution for different age groups. In particular, in the age group of 16 to 34 years, maxi-min is the modal choice, whereas in all other age groups egalitarians are most numerous ( $\chi^2$  on independence of the distribution yields  $p < 0.001$ ). The fraction of efficiency-minded people mildly decreases with age. The fraction of maxi-max types is again negligible in all four age groups.

Two findings catch the eye in Figure 4 in which we compare the distribution of fairness ideals between male and females. First, females are clearly more likely to prefer the egalitarian allocation, and second, males are more likely to prefer the efficient allocation, although egalitarians are also the predominant types among males ( $\chi^2$  on independence of the distribution:  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding seems to confirm previous findings, see for example Michelbach et al. [2003] who find that females are more egalitarian than men. The difference between men and women seems to be consistent across age groups. Men are more likely to be efficiency minded and women more likely to be egalitarian, regardless of the age quantile (not reported separately).

Figure 5a depicts fairness ideals by self-reported monthly net income. We have merged the income brackets with the lowest and highest 10% of the distribution to avoid cells with very small numbers of observations. While we do not find any sudden shifts in the distribution between the different income levels, there are some visible trends. The distribution becomes less ‘downward sloping’ as income increases ( $\chi^2$  on independence of the distribution:  $p < 0.001$ ). This shift is

---

<sup>14</sup>It also relates to the discussion on the role of efficiency mindedness among students in Engelmann and Strobel [2004] and Fehr et al. [2006].

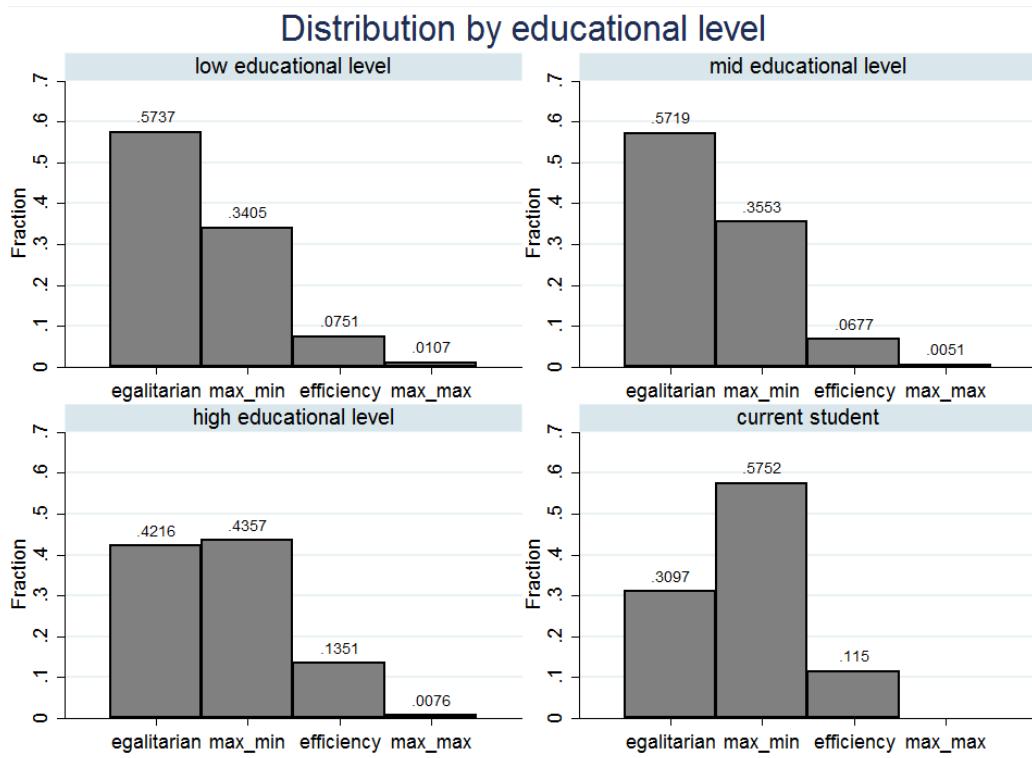


Figure 2: Fairness ideals by education. Current students (right bottom), no vocational training (low education), with vocational training (mid), grade required to start college (high).

mostly caused by the decrease in the fraction of egalitarians and the increase in the fraction of efficiency-minded people in the higher income brackets. In particular, the top ten percent are almost as likely to choose the maxi-min allocation as they are to choose the egalitarian allocation. They are almost four times more likely to choose the efficient allocation than the bottom ten percent.

Figure 5b plots the same distribution by employment status. As before, we conclude that students (at school and at university) are the exception, rather than the rule. They are the only group where maxi-min and not egalitarian types are clearly modal and they are relatively likely to choose efficiency. Another group that visibly stands out is made up of participants not currently employed (either unemployed or house-makers). Here, egalitarians and maxi-min types are approximately balanced. It appears that employment status is a relatively strong predictor of these preferences ( $\chi^2$  on independence of the distribution yields  $p < 0.001$ ).

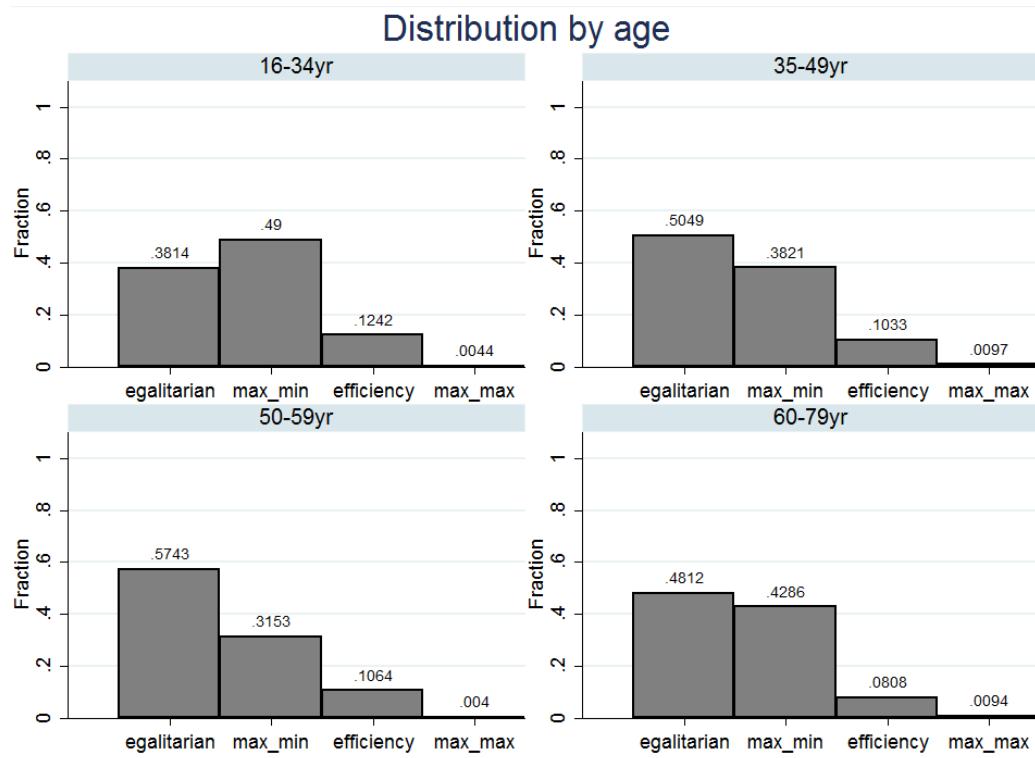


Figure 3: Fairness ideals by age.

## 4.2 Regression Analysis

In order to assess the relative importance of these factors, we try to predict the observed fairness types in a set of one-versus-all regressions.<sup>15</sup> We standardize all explanatory variables by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation of the explanatory variables. Table 2 reports the results.

The regressions mostly confirm our earlier conclusions. We find that gender and education are the strongest predictors of fairness types. Males are much more likely to be efficiency minded and less likely to be egalitarian. A higher education mostly seems to shift individuals away from egalitarian preferences. Increases in age are related to an increase in the fraction of egalitarians and a decrease in the efficiency-seeking type. Although the student population clearly holds different fairness ideals than the rest of the population, as indicated by the  $\chi^2$  test, this effect does not survive when we control for more covariates simultaneously. This result is an indication that students

---

<sup>15</sup>Note that we do not run regressions against the maxi-max types, since there are only 14 participants who we consistently classified as maxi-max.

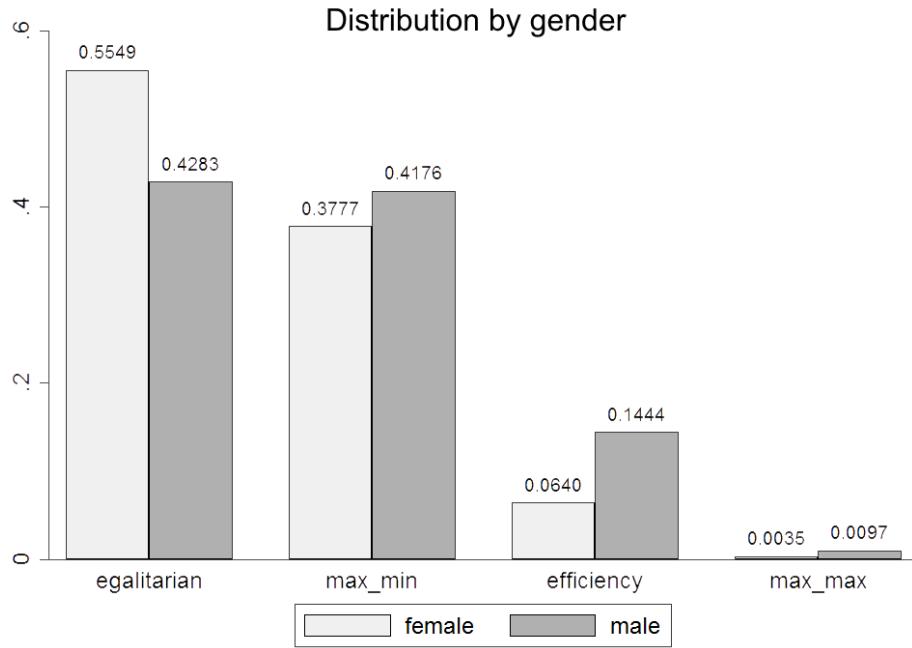
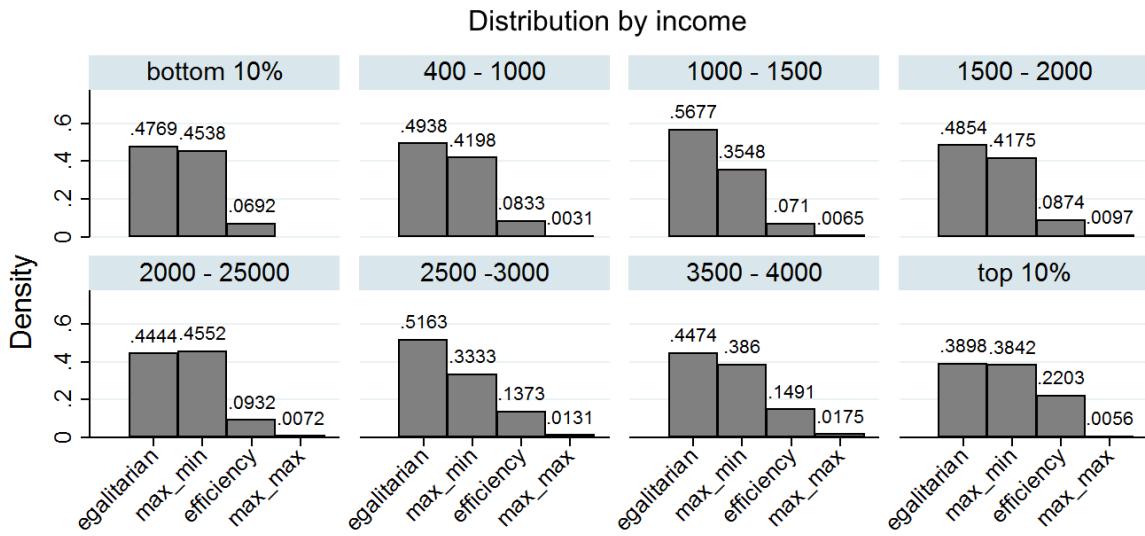


Figure 4: Fairness ideals by gender.

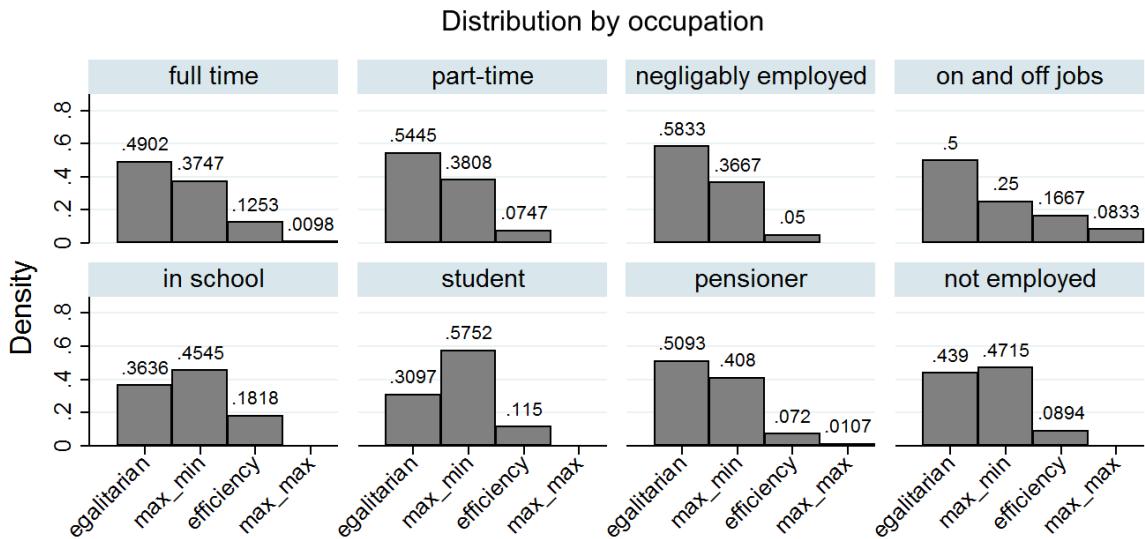
are not different per se, but that difference between the student population and the non-student population is driven by a composition effect. Income turns out to be significant only in predicting maxi-min and efficiency-minded types (columns 1 and 3), respectively. The last variable, “East” is an extra control we added to account for the part of Germany in which the participant lives. It is the standardized version of a dummy that is equal to 1 if the participant lives in former East-Germany.<sup>16</sup> As can be seen from Table 2 though, this control does not appear to be a significant predictor of fairness preferences.

---

<sup>16</sup>Due to privacy concerns the dataset does not let us differentiate between Berlin and Brandenburg (the state surrounding Berlin), so that inhabitants of Berlin are coded as living in East-Germany.



(a) Fairness ideals by personal monthly net income (in Euros).



(b) Fairness ideals by occupation.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Egalitarian	Maxi-min	Efficiency
Age	0.0156 (0.0135)	0.00121 (0.0137)	-0.0164* (0.00865)
Student	-0.00564 (0.0103)	0.0168 (0.0107)	-0.0100* (0.00585)
Income	-0.00487 (0.0132)	-0.0263* (0.0134)	0.0301*** (0.0103)
Male	-0.0584*** (0.0117)	0.0210* (0.0116)	0.0343*** (0.00713)
Education	-0.0756*** (0.0134)	0.0545*** (0.0133)	0.0217*** (0.00797)
East	0.0166 (0.0133)	-0.0174 (0.0130)	-0.000977 (0.00789)
Constant	0.515*** (0.0129)	0.387*** (0.0126)	0.0908*** (0.00705)
Observations	1,795	1,795	1,795
R-squared	0.044	0.019	0.040

Table 2: Explanatory power of individual characteristics. OLS regressions, dependent variables are dummies that equal 1 if the individual is of that type. All explanatory variables are standardized. Robust standard errors are given in parentheses, \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

## 5 Fairness Views: Politics, Policy and Charitable Behavior

In the previous section we related fairness ideals to observable demographics, but for these ideals to be meaningful, they should influence preferences and decisions. In this section, we look at three aspects of real life where preferences and decisions are likely to be influenced by fairness ideals. First, many governmental policies influence the distribution of income. We therefore expect distributional preferences to influence preferences over policies, in particular for policy areas that directly deal with income (re-)distribution. Second, if individuals want to express their fairness ideals at a societal level in a democracy, they can do so by voting for parties with a policy platform that delivers the distribution closest to their optimal policy. If voters indeed vote in accordance with their preferences for fairness, we should find that voters with similar preferences vote for similar parties. Third, individuals can be motivated to donate to charity out of a concern for others, or a concern for social justice, both of which are likely to correlate with fairness ideals. In this section, we test whether our experimental measures can be used to predict preferences and choices with respect to these three aspects of participants' lives.

### 5.1 Preferences for Redistribution

The GIP has over 20 waves to select questions from, which can lead to multiple comparison problems. To prevent identifying spurious relationships, we first searched for questions that were repeated verbatim, related to redistribution or taxes, and had more than 1000 respondents in common with our elicitation. This uniquely identified our first policy question in 3 waves. This first question only covers the desirability of government intervention, but not the willingness to pay for redistribution. To complete the picture, we searched for questions about the tax-system, again using the restriction that it needed to have more than 1000 respondents in common with our elicitation. We found one question that satisfied this restriction and was on a similar 5-point Likert scale as the other questions, and was therefore suited for our purposes. The questions we identified are (translated from German):

1. Please rate how much you agree with the following statement: The government should take measures in order to reduce income inequality. (Columns 1- 3)
2. Should people who earn more because they work more, be taxed more? (Column 4)

These questions were asked in wave 15 (fielded January 2015), wave 17 (fielded May 2015) and wave 21 (fielded in January 2016).<sup>17</sup> In both questions, participants were asked to indicate their

---

<sup>17</sup>Complete, English translations of the German questions can be found in the Online Appendix.

opinion on a 5-point Likert scale. We recoded the answers so that they run from 0, least willing to accept taxes and intervention, to 4, most willing to accept taxes and intervention.<sup>18</sup>

In all regressions, the egalitarian types are used as the reference group. The coefficients on the other three types consequently display the average difference in policy preference of individuals between that type and the egalitarian type. In column (1) and (3) the question was embedded in a survey experiment, in those waves the order of the questions in the survey was randomized over two groups of participants. We control for potential differences by including a treatment dummy in both cases.

Table 3 shows that experimental fairness preferences are predictive for policy preferences, even after controlling for the standard battery of individual characteristics.<sup>19</sup> In all cases the coefficients on the non-egalitarian types have the expected sign. In line with expectations, efficiency-minded people are consistently less likely to favor high income taxes. Looking at the first three columns, it is particularly reassuring to find that the predictive power is robust over time. Even though wave 15 and 21 are a year apart, the relationship between our measures and participants' opinion on government redistribution seems robust and in line with what one would expect. Given that there are only 14 maxi-max types, we do not have the statistical power to differentiate them from the rest. It is remarkable, however, that we never find a significant difference between the maxi-min types and the egalitarians in these policy preferences. If one looks at the numbers of observations for both types and the size of the coefficients, this does not appear to be driven by large standard errors. Although both types can be said to have a preference for (re)distribution, there are clear differences between the two types if one looks at correlations with observable characteristics (see Section 4) and charitable behavior (as we will show below). In their attitude towards redistributive taxation within the current German system, however, both types seem to be very similar.

Looking at the control variables, we find some interesting results. First, the positive coefficient on the male dummy is remarkable. Men seem to favor *more* redistribution and *more* intervention by the government in taxation than women, once fairness preferences are controlled for. Hence, our data indicates that the finding that females are more supportive of redistributive measures than males, is likely driven by the differences in fairness ideals held by males and females (see also Figure 4). The male dummy looses significance in column (4), such that the robustness of preference over different frames remains an open question. The coefficient on the 'trust in government' variable, measuring the trust an individual has in the federal government on a 5-point scale, is also surprising. The negative sign in the first three regressions indicates that individuals who trust the government more, want the government to intervene less. A study by Kuziemko et al. [2015] in the US finds

---

<sup>18</sup>The distribution of answers to each of these questions are shown in 5

<sup>19</sup>We again use ordinary least squares since the marginal effects are easier to interpret. The coefficients from an ordered logit model are very similar in sign and significance and can be found in the tables in the Appendix.

Dependent Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Reduce Inequality			Income Tax
Wave	W15	W17	W21	W17
Maxi-min	-0.0245 (0.0528)	-0.0476 (0.0540)	0.0102 (0.0582)	-0.0580 (0.0418)
Efficiency	-0.231** (0.0959)	-0.434*** (0.0998)	-0.181* (0.101)	-0.198*** (0.0729)
Maxi-max	-0.502 (0.389)	-0.578 (0.391)	-0.498 (0.452)	-0.148 (0.287)
Male	0.126** (0.0532)	0.140** (0.0547)	0.229*** (0.0571)	-0.0273 (0.0424)
Age quantile	0.116*** (0.0241)	0.102*** (0.0249)	0.0679** (0.0265)	0.103*** (0.0196)
Income	-0.125*** (0.0236)	-0.147*** (0.0243)	-0.168*** (0.0241)	-0.100*** (0.0171)
Education	0.0379 (0.0311)	0.0106 (0.0325)	0.104*** (0.0349)	0.0577** (0.0260)
Trust government	-0.0646** (0.0313)	-0.0612* (0.0327)	-0.0972*** (0.0345)	-0.0207 (0.0256)
East	0.195*** (0.0609)	0.193*** (0.0638)	0.219*** (0.0665)	0.0359 (0.0491)
Treatment control	0.115** (0.0500)		-0.243*** (0.0547)	
Constant	2.292*** (0.131)	2.524*** (0.132)	2.623*** (0.141)	2.087*** (0.106)
Observations	1,701	1,686	1,652	1,676
R-squared	0.054	0.067	0.069	0.047

Table 3: Ordinary Least Squares, robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ . Policy preferences as dependent variable, measured on 5-point scale.

essentially the opposite effect. Although the effect is not very strong, we do find it in all waves, even though these are up to a year apart. This result could be caused by the German environment where governmental redistribution is already a strong and consistent part of the tax-system. In general, the average support for government redistribution is considerable (averages 2.33-2.38 and mode of 3 on a 0-4 scale). If individuals who like the current system are more trusting of the government, they might not want to change it. In that case this result could reverse for countries like the US with less redistribution or less trust in the government. The coefficient on income has a negative and significant sign. Individuals with a higher income are less likely to support higher redistribution, which is in line with material self-interest. Moreover, younger respondents are less likely to desire some form of redistribution, and this effect survives when we control for other covariates. Age is measured in the quantiles used in Figure 3, where the youngest group is coded as 1 and the oldest as 4.<sup>20</sup> The effect of education level, measured on the same three point scale as in Figure 2, on policy preferences is less consistent. It appears that higher educated individuals have a weak preference for more redistribution and are more likely to favor high labor taxes on very high incomes, but the effect is not always significant. This effect survives in other specifications of the model. A final result is that participants living in East-Germany are more positive towards government intervention aimed at redistribution. Given the history of this part of Germany, this does not seem to be too surprising. Taken together, the evidence in this section shows that experimental fairness measures help to predict preferences for government intervention and redistribution, even after controlling for the standard battery of demographic covariates.

## 5.2 Politics and Fairness Types

The participants of the GIP are regularly asked to place themselves on the standard political scale from 1, ‘left’, to 11, ‘right’. We use this scale to determine the five groups in Figure 6a, in which we group the answers in the center of the scale into three bins because there is little difference between the subgroups within these bins. For the largest groups of respondents in the center of the scale, we find the relationship most commentators assume exists. Right-leaning participants are more likely to be efficiency minded, while left-leaning participants are more egalitarian. This relationship breaks down, however, at the extremes of the scale. At both ends of the scale we find strong egalitarian preferences.

The GIP has regularly asked participants what party they voted for in the last election and what party they identify with most. We split the sample of participants into groups based on the party

---

<sup>20</sup> We tried several specifications of this model. Treating age as a continuous variable gives qualitatively the same relationship. Repeating the regression with dummies for the four age quantiles does not identify a significant difference between the two quantiles on the bottom or between the highest two quantiles.

they report to have voted for, in the last election.<sup>21</sup> To make the comparison easier, Figure 6b plots the *differences* relative to the overall distribution. We calculate the distribution of fairness types within the sub-groups that voted for a given party and subtracted the average fractions found in the entire sample (from Figure 1). This exercise shows how voters of a particular party differ from the average participant. The parties in Figure 6b are grouped based on whether they are leftist (Die Linke, Bündnis 90 - Die Grünen), center parties (SPD, CDU/CSU, FDP) or right-wing (AfD, NPD). From this figure it becomes clear that left-leaning voters are more likely to be egalitarians and less likely to be efficiency minded than right-leaning voters ( $\chi^2$  on independence of the distribution yields  $p < 0.001$ ). The trend is again broken at the far-right (NPD): It appears that the term “National Socialism” was aptly chosen: in terms of their distributive fairness ideals the far-right is closer the far-left than to the center, although these political extremes likely define their in-group differently. While this finding is perhaps not surprising, there is only limited empirical evidence concerning this presumed regularity in large representative samples. Another interesting finding is the similarity between the established parties. The voter-base of each of the largest three parties is extremely close to the others and to the average German voter. Whether this is due to a median-voter bias of the parties or actual demand by their voter base is unclear from our data, but it would be an interesting area for future research.

### 5.3 Revealed Charitable Behavior and Fairness Types

We now turn to the relation between fairness types and revealed charitable behavior. All participants of the GIP receive a flat payment of four euro on their GIP account for every wave they participate in. Participating in all waves in a year yields an extra bonus of ten euros, the bonus is reduced to five euro if one wave is missed and zero if more than one wave is missed in any single year. Every six months the GIP account is automatically paid out to the participants. Participants can have the money transferred directly to their bank account, receive the corresponding value in Amazon vouchers, or donate it to charity.<sup>22</sup> Participants set their pay-out option when registering for the GIP, but can change their setting at any time. Before payment, respondents receive an email that asks them to review their account settings with regard to the payment method, but only about 2% of the participants change their settings after receiving this email. Below we will analyze the payout in October 2015, in which 14.3% of all participants chose to donate their money to charity.

Giving to charity should increase (given a basic confidence in the veracity of the charitable causes) with one’s concern for others’ well-being. Egalitarians are willing to actively reduce incomes

---

<sup>21</sup>The last national election to take place before this study was in September 2013, and the last GIP wave to ask about this election was in September 2015.

<sup>22</sup>The participants cannot choose the exact charitable organization, all donations are shared equally among the Red Cross, WWF and the SOS Kinderdorf.

in order to achieve equality, which signals concern for others. Consequently, we expect egalitarians to be more likely to donate than the other types. In contrast, maxi-min types are expected to care about others' welfare, but will not violate strict Pareto dominance, creating a similar but possibly smaller incentive to donate. Efficiency-minded individuals should show the smallest donations, as they do not show an indication of favoring income to those less-well-off over income to others. This difference may be reinforced by the possible inefficiencies found in charities – not every euro given to charity actually benefits the poor. Consequently, efficiency-minded participants should be less likely to give to charity than either of the two other types.

We test these conjectures in Table 4. We regress the dummy whether a person has donated to charity or not, on a set of control variables like age, income (in 1000 euros), gender, education levels (according to the groups used before) and the fairness-type dummies.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, we also control for trust in the government and the exact amount the participants received (which depends on how many waves the participant answered). Note that income, age and monetary amount cannot be zero, hence the average is not captured in the constant. As before, egalitarians serve as the reference group. We find that egalitarians are significantly more likely to donate to charity than both maxi-min and efficiency types. The coefficient on efficiency indicates that the donation rate decreases by six percentage points from the unconditional baseline of approximately 13% (we drop observations for which we miss some controls, such that the base-rate for donations is slightly below the average in this pay-out round). The doubling of the likelihood of donations of the egalitarian type compared to the efficiency-minded type is both statistically and economically clearly significant. As expected, the maxi-min types are located between efficiency-minded participants and egalitarians.

Additionally we find that older, more educated and high income individuals are more likely to donate to charity. In particular, the finding that richer people are more likely to donate money is interesting. It provides suggestive evidence against the popular conclusion that becoming rich makes one more selfish. See for example Trautmann et al. [2013] and Smeets et al. [2015] for a discussion of this issue.

To sum up, this section presented a test of the external validity of laboratory fairness measures. Our setting provides a direct link, where we observe these individuals both in the lab and when choosing to donate to charity or not. We find credible evidence that we can draw conclusions from lab measures to field behavior. Consequently, these measures can help provide new insights on the important debate regarding the relation between lab and field measures, see for example Levitt and List [2007] and Benz and Meier [2008]. To the best of our knowledge, we are the first to demonstrate the predictive power of third party spectator fairness views, which is particularly interesting because these fairness ideals are philosophically-motivated and usually abstract concepts.

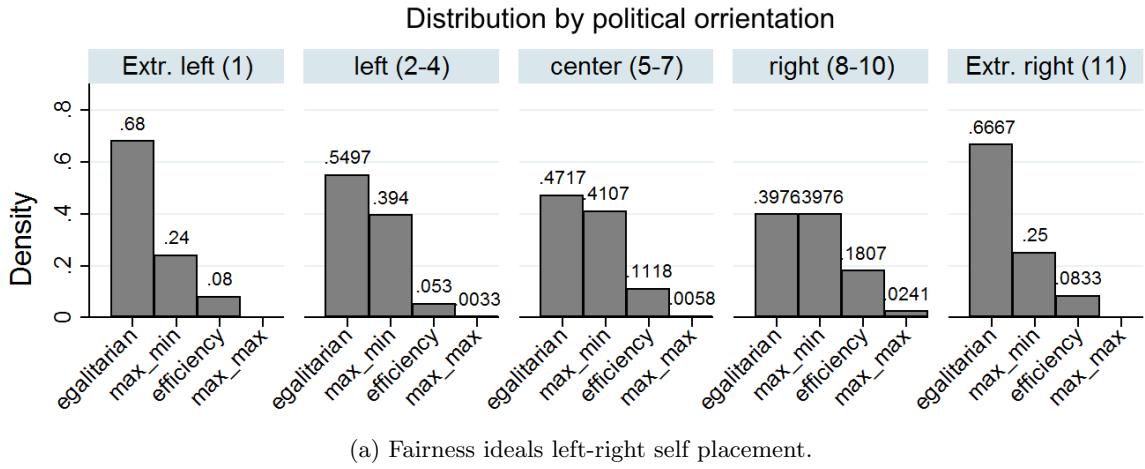
---

<sup>23</sup> Table 7 in the Appendix reports the same model estimated via a logit regression.

Donation	(1)
Maxi-min	-0.0319* (0.0163)
Efficiency	-0.0597** (0.0244)
Maxi-max	0.0909 (0.117)
Age quantile	0.0554*** (0.00778)
Income	0.0288*** (0.00780)
Male	-0.0367** (0.0165)
Education	0.0345*** (0.00960)
Trust government	-0.000490 (0.00851)
Amount donated	-0.0146** (0.00571)
East	-0.0133 (0.0185)
Constant	0.0927 (0.0733)
Observations	1,792
R-squared	0.055

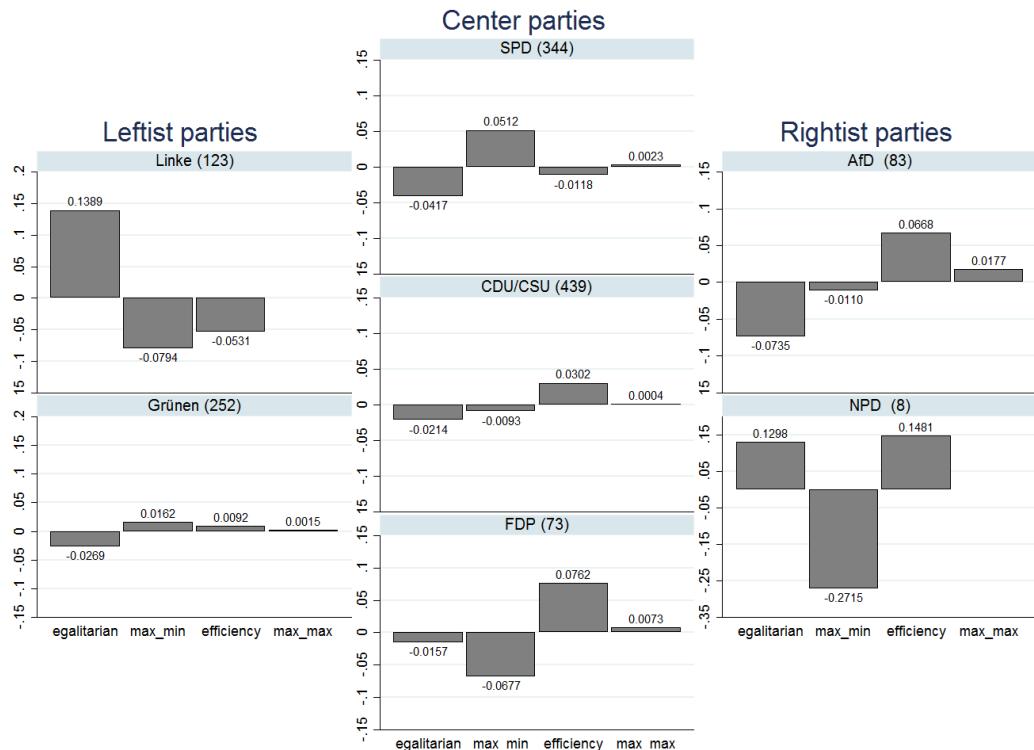
Table 4: Ordinary Least Squares, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables is a dummy whether the participant donated money to charity. Robust standard errors in parentheses.  
 \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

We show that these ideals can help predict real world behavior and give insight into choices made in several different real-life contexts.



(a) Fairness ideals left-right self placement.

### Distribution by party affiliation



(b) Fairness ideals by Party.

Figure 6: Fairness and politics.

## 6 Conclusion

In this paper, we make several contributions to the literature. First, we elicit the distribution of impartial-spectator fairness ideals of a large and heterogeneous sample of the German population using an incentivized and neutrally-framed experimental measure. While distributional preferences of stakeholders have often been studied, little is known about the fairness views of spectators in a broader population. These fairness views are important, as many real-life situations, particularly in the political arena, are closely approximated by an impartial observer. Surprisingly, our results show that egalitarians form the majority of the German population. This is unexpected, since egalitarian allocations are (weakly) Pareto-dominated in our experimental task.

Second, although much of the normative work in the fields of ethics and political philosophy has searched for a single, ideal criterion for distributive justice, we contribute to the empirical literature on the plurality of fairness ideals held by individuals. We document a considerable individual heterogeneity of fairness ideals and we also show how individual characteristics are correlated with support for different fairness criteria. In particular, we find differences between the young and old, male and female, high and low income, and high and low educated participants. We therefore contribute to the emerging empirical literature showing it is unlikely that all individuals share the same fairness ideals [Cappelen et al., 2007, Fisman et al., 2007].

Third, although it is a commonly-held belief that left-wing voters are more egalitarian and right-wing voters are more efficiency minded, there is surprisingly little empirical evidence on how partisan voters differ with respect to their distributive preferences. Notable exceptions are Fisman et al. [2017] who, in a stakeholder framework, show that conservatives in the United States make a different equity-efficiency trade-off and Kerschbamer and Muller [2017] who find that inequality-averse, altruistic and maxi-min subjects are more likely to express left-wing political attitudes. In our study, we relate the distributive ideals of individuals to their political preferences and show that right-wing voters are indeed more efficiency minded and left-wing voters more egalitarian. There is a noticeable break in this trend at the extremes, both left-wing and right-wing extremist are very egalitarian. In line with expectations from Hotelling-Downs political competition models we find that the German established parties are close to the median voter.

Fourth, we show that our experimentally-elicited fairness types are meaningful measures of underlying political and policy preferences. We show that right-off-center parties are more likely to attract efficiency minded individuals than left-off-center parties. These same efficiency minded individuals are less supportive of governmental redistribution and less supportive of higher taxation. Lastly, efficiency minded individuals are less likely to donate to charity than maxi-min and egalitarian types. The predictive power of our fairness measures is considerable, even when controlling for a battery of individual characteristics. These findings add to the discussion on how laboratory

measures relate to field behavior. The current study is to the best of our knowledge the first to confirm the external validity of experimental fairness measures using third party spectators.

Furthermore, we present evidence suggesting that student populations hold systematically different fairness views than the rest of the population. This finding suggests that previous studies in empirical social choice have systematically overestimated the importance of maxi-min and efficiency-minded types. These findings thus also contribute to the current discussion in the experimental literature regarding the generalizability of results obtained from student samples.

## References

- Fernando Aguiar, Alice Becker, and Luis Miller. Whose impartiality? an experimental study of veiled stakeholders, involved spectators and detached observers. *Economics and Philosophy*, 29(02):155–174, 2013.
- Ingvild Almås, Alexander W Cappelen, and Bertil Tungodden. Cutthroat capitalism versus cuddly socialism: Are americans more meritocratic and efficiency-seeking than scandinavians? *Norwegian School of Economics Working Paper*: <https://ideas.repec.org/p/hka/wpaper/2017-003.html>, 2016.
- Yoram Amiel, Frank A Cowell, and Wulf Gaertner. To be or not to be involved: a questionnaire-experimental view on harsanyi's utilitarian ethics. *Social Choice and Welfare*, 32(2):299–316, 2009.
- Leonardo Becchetti, Giacomo Degli Antoni, Stefania Ottone, and Nazaria Solferino. Spectators versus stakeholders with or without veil of ignorance: the difference it makes for justice and chosen distribution criteria. *Working Paper*: <https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/inqinqwps/ecineq2011-204.htm>, 2011.
- Charles Bellemare, Sabine Kröger, and Arthur Van Soest. Measuring inequity aversion in a heterogeneous population using experimental decisions and subjective probabilities. *Econometrica*, 76(4):815–839, 2008.
- Matthias Benz and Stephan Meier. Do people behave in experiments as in the field? evidence from donations. *Experimental Economics*, 11(3):268–281, 2008.
- Annelies G Blom, Christina Gathmann, and Ulrich Krieger. Setting up an online panel representative of the general population the german internet panel. *Field Methods*, 27(4):391–408, 2015.

- Annelies G Blom, Michael Bosnjak, Anne Cornilleau, Anne-Sophie Cousteaux, Marcel Das, Salima Douhou, and Ulrich Krieger. A comparison of four probability-based online and mixed-mode panels in europe. *Social Science Computer Review*, 34(1):8–25, 2016a.
- Annelies G Blom, Jessica ME Herzing, Carina Cornesse, Joseph W Sakshaug, Ulrich Krieger, and Dayana Bossert. Does the recruitment of offline households increase the sample representativeness of probability-based online panels? evidence from the german internet panel. *Social Science Computer Review*, page 0894439316651584, 2016b.
- Gary E Bolton and Axel Ockenfels. Erc: A theory of equity, reciprocity, and competition. *The American Economic Review*, pages 166–193, 2000.
- Kristof Bosmans and Erik Schokkaert. Social welfare, the veil of ignorance and purely individual risk: An empirical examination. *Research on Economic Inequality*, 11:85–114, 2004.
- Ronen I Brafman and Moshe Tennenholtz. On the axiomatization of qualitative decision criteria. In *AAAI/IAAI*, pages 76–81. Citeseer, 1997.
- Alexander W Cappelen, Astri Drange Hole, Erik Ø Sørensen, and Bertil Tungodden. The pluralism of fairness ideals: An experimental approach. *The American Economic Review*, 97(3):818–827, 2007.
- Alexander W Cappelen, James Konow, Erik Ø Sørensen, and Bertil Tungodden. Just luck: An experimental study of risk-taking and fairness. *The American Economic Review*, 103(4):1398–1413, 2013.
- Alexander W Cappelen, Knut Nygaard, Erik Ø Sørensen, and Bertil Tungodden. Social preferences in the lab: A comparison of students and a representative population. *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 117(4):1306–1326, 2015.
- Elena Cettolin and Arno Riedl. Justice under uncertainty. *Management Science*, 63(11):3739–3759, 2016.
- Gary Charness and Matthew Rabin. Understanding social preferences with simple tests. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, pages 817–869, 2002.
- Rachel Croson and James Konow. Social preferences and moral biases. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 69(3):201–212, 2009.
- David L Dickinson and Jill Tiefenthaler. What is fair? experimental evidence. *Southern Economic Journal*, pages 414–428, 2002.

- Christoph Engel. Dictator games: A meta study. *Experimental Economics*, 14(4):583–610, 2011.
- Dirk Engelmann and Martin Strobel. Inequality aversion, efficiency, and maximin preferences in simple distribution experiments. *The American Economic Review*, pages 857–869, 2004.
- Marco Faravelli. How context matters: A survey based experiment on distributive justice. *Journal of Public Economics*, 91(7):1399–1422, 2007.
- Ernst Fehr and Klaus M Schmidt. A theory of fairness, competition, and cooperation. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, pages 817–868, 1999.
- Ernst Fehr, Michael Naef, and Klaus M Schmidt. Inequality aversion, efficiency, and maximin preferences in simple distribution experiments: Comment. *The American Economic Review*, 96(5):1912–1917, 2006.
- Raymond Fisman, Shachar Kariv, and Daniel Markovits. Individual preferences for giving. *The American Economic Review*, 97(5):1858–1876, 2007.
- Raymond Fisman, Pamela Jakielo, and Shachar Kariv. Distributional preferences and political behavior. *Journal of Public Economics*, 155:1–10, 2017.
- Norman Frohlich and Joe A Oppenheimer. Choosing justice in experimental democracies with production. *American Political Science Review*, 84(02):461–477, 1990.
- Norman Frohlich and Joe A Oppenheimer. *Choosing justice: An experimental approach to ethical theory*, volume 22. Univ of California Press, 1992.
- Norman Frohlich, Joe A Oppenheimer, and Cheryl L Eavey. Choices of principles of distributive justice in experimental groups. *American Journal of Political Science*, pages 606–636, 1987a.
- Norman Frohlich, Joe A Oppenheimer, and Cheryl L Eavey. Laboratory results on rawls's distributive justice. *British Journal of Political Science*, 17(1):1–21, 1987b.
- Wulf Gaertner and Erik Schokkaert. *Empirical social choice: questionnaire-experimental studies on distributive justice*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Jeffrey Edward Green. Rawls and the forgotten figure of the most advantaged: In defense of reasonable envy toward the superrich. *American Political Science Review*, 107(1):123–138, 2013.
- Jacob S Hacker, Philipp Rehm, and Mark Schlesinger. The insecure american: Economic experiences, financial worries, and policy attitudes. *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(1):23–49, 2013.

- John Harsanyi. Cardinal utility in welfare economics and in the theory of risk-taking. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 61(5):434, 1953.
- John C Harsanyi. Cardinal welfare, individualistic ethics, and interpersonal comparisons of utility. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 63(4):309–321, 1955.
- David Hume. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Start Publishing LLC, 2013.
- Daniel Kahneman, Jack L Knetsch, and Richard H Thaler. Fairness and the assumptions of economics. *Journal of Business*, pages S285–S300, 1986.
- Rudolf Kerschbamer and Daniel Muller. Social preferences and political attitudes: An online experiment on a large heterogeneous sample. *Innsbruck Working Papers in Economics and Statistics*: <https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/innwpaper/2017-16.htm>, 2017.
- James Konow. Fair shares: Accountability and cognitive dissonance in allocation decisions. *The American Economic Review*, pages 1072–1091, 2000.
- James Konow. Which is the fairest one of all? a positive analysis of justice theories. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 41(4):1188–1239, 2003.
- James Konow. Is fairness in the eye of the beholder? an impartial spectator analysis of justice. *Social Choice and Welfare*, 33(1):101–127, 2009.
- Ilyana Kuziemko, Michael I Norton, and Emmanuel Saez. How elastic are preferences for redistribution? evidence from randomized survey experiments. *American Economic Review*, 105(4): 1478–1508, 2015.
- Steven D Levitt and John A List. What do laboratory experiments measuring social preferences reveal about the real world? *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21(2):153–174, 2007.
- Yotam Margalit. Explaining social policy preferences: Evidence from the great recession. *American Political Science Review*, 107(1):80–103, 2013.
- Philip A Michelbach, John T Scott, Richard E Matland, and Brian H Bornstein. Doing rawls justice: An experimental study of income distribution norms. *American Journal of Political Science*, 47 (3):523–539, 2003.
- Gregory Mitchell, Philip E Tetlock, Barbara A Mellers, and Lisa D Ordonez. Judgments of social justice: Compromises between equality and efficiency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(4):629, 1993.

Johanna Mollerstrom, Bjørn-Atle Reme, and Erik Ø Sørensen. Luck, choice and responsibility – an experimental study of fairness views. *Journal of Public Economics*, 131:33–40, 2015.

Richard A Posner. *The economics of justice*. Harvard University Press, 1983.

John Rawls. *A theory of justice*. Harvard university press, 1971.

John E Roemer. *Egalitarian Perspectives: Essays in philosophical economics*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Hannah Schildberg-Hörisch. Is the veil of ignorance only a concept about risk? an experiment. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(11):1062–1066, 2010.

Paul Smeets, Rob Bauer, and Uri Gneezy. Giving behavior of millionaires. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 112(34):10641–10644, 2015.

Adam Smith. *The theory of moral sentiments*. Penguin, 2010.

Stefan Traub, Christian Seidl, Ulrich Schmidt, and Maria Levati. Friedman, harsanyi, rawls, boulding—or somebody else? an experimental investigation of distributive justice. *Social Choice and Welfare*, 24(2):283–309, 2005.

Stefan T Trautmann, Gijs van de Kuilen, and Richard J Zeckhauser. Social class and (un) ethical behavior a framework, with evidence from a large population sample. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8(5):487–497, 2013.

## A Appendix

### A.1 Screenshots

The screenshot shows a web-based survey interface. At the top, there is a logo of three stylized figures and the text "Gesellschaft im Wandel". Below this, a message reads: "Im Folgenden sind jeweils vier Varianten (A, B, C und D) zur Verteilung von Geld an Person 1 und Person 2 dargestellt. Wir bitten Sie, sich bei Ihrem Vorschlag für eine der Varianten zu entscheiden." Below the message, four variants are listed:

- Variante A: Person 1 soll 10 Euro erhalten, Person 2 soll 9 Euro erhalten.
- Variante B: Person 1 soll 15 Euro erhalten, Person 2 soll 7 Euro erhalten.
- Variante C: Person 1 soll 8 Euro erhalten, Person 2 soll 8 Euro erhalten.
- Variante D: Person 1 soll 16 Euro erhalten, Person 2 soll 2 Euro erhalten.

Below the variants, a note says: "Bitte beachten Sie, dass sich Ihr Vorschlag darauf auswirken kann, wie viel Geld zwei andere (anonyme) Befragungsteilnehmer tatsächlich erhalten." A question follows: "Welche Variante bevorzugen Sie?" Below the question, four tables show the distribution for each variant:

Variante A		Variante B		Variante C		Variante D	
Person 1:	10	Person 1:	15	Person 1:	8	Person 1:	16
Person 2:	9	Person 2:	7	Person 2:	8	Person 2:	2
Summe	19	Summe	22	Summe	16	Summe	18
C		C		C		C	

At the bottom left is a button labeled "">>>>". On the right, there are logos for "LINK INSTITUT" and "UNIVERSITÄT MANNHEIM".

Figure 7: Screenshot Decision Task 1.



Im Folgenden sind jeweils vier Varianten (A, B, C und D) zur Verteilung von Geld an Person 1 und Person 2 dargestellt. Wir bitten Sie, sich für eine der Varianten zu entscheiden.

Variante A: Person 1 soll 9 Euro erhalten, Person 2 soll 8 Euro erhalten.

Variante B: Person 1 soll 12 Euro erhalten, Person 2 soll 6 Euro erhalten.

Variante C: Person 1 soll 8 Euro erhalten, Person 2 soll 8 Euro erhalten.

Variante D: Person 1 soll 13 Euro erhalten, Person 2 soll 3 Euro erhalten.

Bitte beachten Sie, dass sich Ihr Vorschlag darauf auswirken kann, wie viel Geld zwei andere (anonyme) Befragungsteilnehmer tatsächlich erhalten.

**Welche Variante bevorzugen Sie?**

Bei dieser Frage können Sie nur eine Antwort geben.

Variante A	Variante B	Variante C	Variante D
Person 1: 9 Person 2: 8	Person 1: 12 Person 2: 6	Person 1: 8 Person 2: 8	Person 1: 13 Person 2: 3
Summe 17	Summe 18	Summe 16	Summe 16



&lt; Zurück

Weiter &gt;

Figure 8: Screenshot Decision Task 2.

## A.2 Translated Instructions

This part of the questionnaire is about four proposals on the distribution of money. The amounts of money are real and can be paid to randomly selected participants of the questionnaire. We kindly ask you to select a proposal on how to divide the money between two other participants of the questionnaire in each of the four [two] decision situations. We will call these two participants person 1 and person 2. All other participants, not only you, will make four such proposals. Not all decisions are going to be paid out for real in the end. Instead, the computer will randomly choose 50 proposals made by the participants for each of the 4 decisions. This means that at the end 4 times 50 that is 200 proposals will be paid out for real. We estimate that 3500 people will take part in this questionnaire.

For each randomly selected proposal, two randomly chosen participants will be selected who will receive the proposed monetary amounts. One person will be randomly assigned to the role of person 1 and to the other to the role of person 2. Each of the two will then receive the payoff of corresponding to the relevant proposal. Each of the proposals made can be randomly selected for the actual payoff by the computer. So it could be that your proposal will be chosen and that two other participants will receive exactly as much money as you proposed. You could also be selected and receive the payoff that another participant proposed. In this case the money will be directly

transferred to your account at the GIP. None of the participants can be chosen more than once to receive money. All decisions made will of course stay anonymous. We will notify the winners.

Below four proposals (A, B, C and D) on how to distribute money between person 1 and person 2 are depicted. We kindly ask you to indicate which of these alternatives you prefer.

- Alternative A: person 1 should receive 10 Euros; person 2 should receive 9 Euros.
- Alternative B: person 1 should receive 15 Euros; person 2 should receive 7 Euros.
- Alternative C: person 1 should receive 8 Euros; person 2 should receive 8 Euros.
- Alternative D: person 1 should receive 16 Euros; person 2 should receive 2 Euros.

Please pay attention that your decision can affect how much two other (anonymous) randomly selected participants actually receive.

Which alternative do you prefer?

### A.3 Translated Wording of Questions in the GIP Used Here

#### **Income differences Tax financed**

Now we will deal with a different topic. Please indicate to which extent you agree with the following statement:

The government should take measures to reduce income differences. Keep in mind that these measures must be financed by taxes that would lead to reductions of one's salary.

You can only give one answer:

1. I strongly agree
2. I agree
3. I am indifferent
4. I disagree
5. I strongly disagree

#### **Tax equity:**

Should people who work more than others and therefore also earn more pay less or more taxes than they currently do?

1. Pay far less taxes than they currently do
2. Pay slightly less taxes than they currently do
3. Pay the same amount of taxes that they currently do
4. Pay slightly more taxes than they currently do

5. Pay a lot more taxes than they currently do

#### A.4 Additional Results

Table 5 shows the distribution of support for the main policy variables. The three different versions of the “Reduce Inequality” questions in waves 15, 17 and 21 show that the support for redistribution is fairly stable over time. The Table also shows that more people agree that the government should intervene to reduce inequality, then there is support for increase the taxes on high earning individuals.

Dependent Variable	Reduce Inequality						Income Tax	
	Wave		W15		W17		W21	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Completely disagree	142	4.46	156	5.22	181	6.52	91	3.06
Disagree	625	19.65	477	15.96	531	19.11	447	15.05
Neutral	796	25.02	775	25.93	625	22.5	1,572	52.93
Agree	1,248	39.23	1,215	40.65	987	35.53	741	24.95
Completely agree	370	11.63	366	12.24	454	16.34	119	4.01
<b>Total</b>	3,181	100	2,989	100	2,778	100	2,970	100

Table 5: Distribution of answers to the main policy variables and their coding.

Figure 9 depicts the frequencies by left, center and right party. The parties in Figure 6b are grouped in the same way as in Figure 6b based on whether they are leftist (Die Linke, Grüne/Bündis ‘90), center parties (SPD, CDU/CSU, FDP), and right-wing (AfD, NPD).

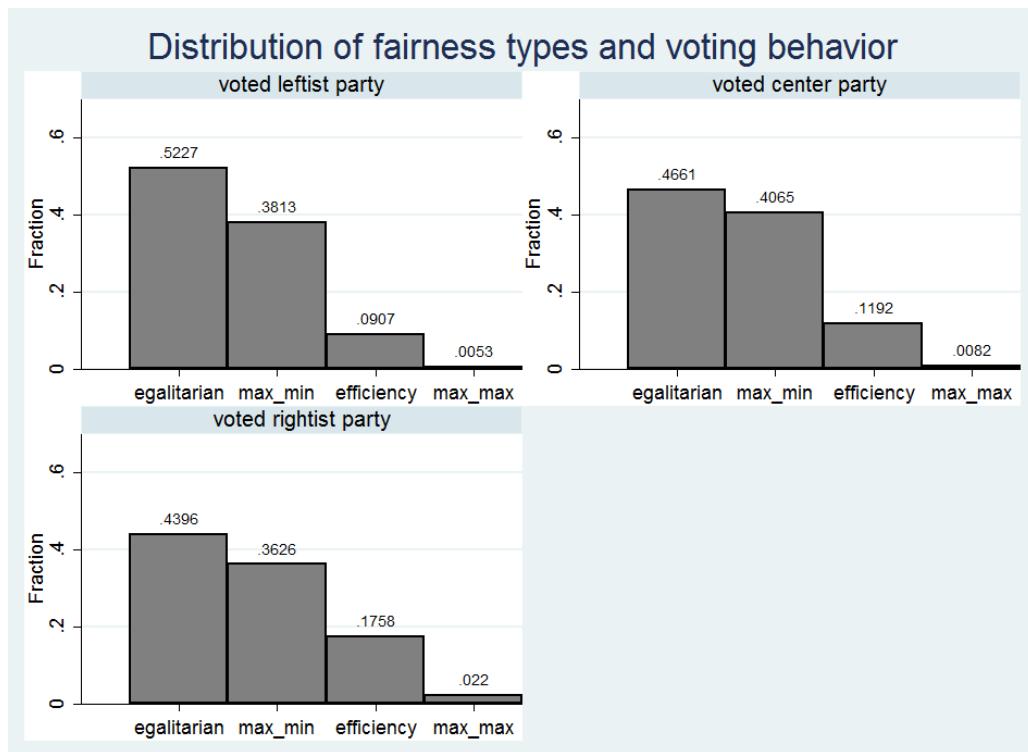


Figure 9: Fairness ideals left vs right.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Reduce Inequality			
Dependent Variable	W15	W17	W21	Income Tax
Maxi-min	-0.0440 (0.0931)	-0.0805 (0.0953)	0.0202 (0.0944)	-0.111 (0.101)
Efficiency	-0.417** (0.171)	-0.753*** (0.176)	-0.280* (0.165)	-0.451** (0.177)
Maxi-max	-0.821 (0.827)	-0.835 (0.728)	-0.719 (0.810)	-0.234 (0.631)
Male	0.284*** (0.0945)	0.336*** (0.0974)	0.430*** (0.0939)	-0.0646 (0.101)
Young	-0.487*** (0.0948)	-0.431*** (0.0977)	-0.313*** (0.0948)	-0.511*** (0.103)
Income	-0.233*** (0.0419)	-0.273*** (0.0407)	-0.295*** (0.0397)	-0.230*** (0.0402)
Education	0.0905* (0.0525)	0.0462 (0.0563)	0.192*** (0.0551)	0.121** (0.0598)
Trust government	-0.172*** (0.0582)	-0.161*** (0.0611)	-0.209*** (0.0602)	-0.0704 (0.0627)
Treatment control	0.199** (0.0891)		-0.419*** (0.0894)	

Table 6: Ordered Logit, policy preferences. Standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

	Donation	(1)
Maxi-min	-0.318** (0.159)	
Efficiency	-0.639** (0.292)	
Maxi-max	0.717 (0.668)	
Age	0.0457*** (0.00632)	
Income	0.000225*** (5.55e-05)	
Male	-0.366** (0.163)	
Education	0.352*** (0.103)	
Trust government	-0.0168 (0.0835)	
Amount donated	-0.132*** (0.0432)	
Constant	-3.346*** (0.634)	
Observations	1,792	

Table 7: Robust Logit, pay-out selection and fairness-types. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**University of Innsbruck - Working Papers in Economics and Statistics**

Recent Papers can be accessed on the following webpage:

<https://www.uibk.ac.at/eeecon/wopec/>

- 2019-08 **Daniel Müller, Sander Renes:** Fairness Views and Political Preferences - Evidence from a representative sample
- 2019-07 **Florian Lindner, Michael Kirchler, Stephanie Rosenkranz, Utz Weitzel:** Social Status and Risk-Taking in Investment Decisions
- 2019-06 **Christoph Huber, Julia Rose:** Individual attitudes and market dynamics towards imprecision
- 2019-05 **Felix Holzmeister, Jürgen Huber, Michael Kirchler, Florian Lindner, Utz Weitzel, Stefan Zeisberger:** What Drives Risk Perception? A Global Survey with Financial Professionals and Lay People
- 2019-04 **David M. McEvoy, Tobias Haller, Esther Blanco:** The Role of Non-Binding Pledges in Social Dilemmas with Mitigation and Adaptation
- 2019-03 **Katharina Momsen, Markus Ohndorf:** When do people exploit moral wiggle room? An experimental analysis in a market setup
- 2019-02 **Rudolf Kerschbamer, Daniel Neururer, Matthias Sutter:** Credence goods markets and the informational value of new media: A natural field experiment
- 2019-01 **Martin Geiger, Eric Mayer, Johann Scharler:** Inequality and the Business Cycle: Evidence from U.S. survey data
- 2018-18 **Matthias Sutter, Jürgen Huber, Michael Kirchler, Matthias Stefan, Markus Walzl:** Where to look for the morals in markets?
- 2018-17 **Rene Schwaiger, Michael Kirchler, Florian Lindner, Utz Weitzel:** Determinants of investor expectations and satisfaction. A study with financial professionals
- 2018-16 **Andreas Groll, Julien Hambuckers, Thomas Kneib, Nikolaus Umlauf:** LASSO-Type Penalization in the Framework of Generalized Additive Models for Location, Scale and Shape
- 2018-15 **Christoph Huber, Jürgen Huber:** Scale matters: Risk perception, return expectations, and investment propensity under different scalings
- 2018-14 **Thorsten Simon, Georg J. Mayr, Nikolaus Umlauf, Achim Zeileis:** Lightning prediction using model output statistics

- 2018-13 **Martin Geiger, Johann Scharler:** How do consumers interpret the macroeconomic effects of oil price fluctuations? Evidence from U.S. survey data
- 2018-12 **Martin Geiger, Johann Scharler:** How do people interpret macroeconomic shocks? Evidence from U.S. survey data
- 2018-11 **Sebastian J. Dietz, Philipp Kneringer, Georg J. Mayr, Achim Zeileis:** Low visibility forecasts for different flight planning horizons using tree-based boosting models
- 2018-10 **Michael Pfaffermayr:** Trade creation and trade diversion of regional trade agreements revisited: A constrained panel pseudo-maximum likelihood approach
- 2018-09 **Achim Zeileis, Christoph Leitner, Kurt Hornik:** Probabilistic forecasts for the 2018 FIFA World Cup based on the bookmaker consensus model
- 2018-08 **Lisa Schlosser, Torsten Hothorn, Reto Stauffer, Achim Zeileis:** Distributional regression forests for probabilistic precipitation forecasting in complex terrain
- 2018-07 **Michael Kirchler, Florian Lindner, Utz Weitzel:** Delegated decision making and social competition in the finance industry
- 2018-06 **Manuel Gebetsberger, Reto Stauffer, Georg J. Mayr, Achim Zeileis:** Skewed logistic distribution for statistical temperature post-processing in mountainous areas
- 2018-05 **Reto Stauffer, Georg J. Mayr, Jakob W. Messner, Achim Zeileis:** Hourly probabilistic snow forecasts over complex terrain: A hybrid ensemble postprocessing approach
- 2018-04 **Utz Weitzel, Christoph Huber, Florian Lindner, Jürgen Huber, Julia Rose, Michael Kirchler:** Bubbles and financial professionals
- 2018-03 **Carolin Strobl, Julia Kopf, Raphael Hartmann, Achim Zeileis:** Anchor point selection: An approach for anchoring without anchor items
- 2018-02 **Michael Greinecker, Christopher Kah:** Pairwise stable matching in large economies
- 2018-01 **Max Breitenlechner, Johann Scharler:** How does monetary policy influence bank lending? Evidence from the market for banks' wholesale funding

University of Innsbruck

Working Papers in Economics and Statistics

2019-08

Daniel Müller, Sander Renes

Fairness Views and Political Preferences - Evidence from a representative sample

**Abstract**

We elicit distributional fairness ideals of impartial spectators using an incentivized elicitation in a large and heterogeneous sample of the German population. We document several empirical facts: i) egalitarianism is the predominant ideal; ii) females are more egalitarian than men; iii) men are relatively more efficiency minded; iv) left-leaning voters are more likely to be egalitarians whereas right-leaning voters are more likely to be efficiency minded; and v) young and highly-educated participants hold different fairness ideals than the rest of the population. Moreover, we show that the fairness ideals predict preferences for redistribution and intervention by the government, as well as actual charitable giving, even after controlling for a range of covariates. Hence, our paper contributes to our understanding of the underpinnings of voting behavior and ideological preferences, as well as the literature that links lab and field behavior.

ISSN 1993-4378 (Print)

ISSN 1993-6885 (Online)