

# Food Comes First, Then Morals: Redistribution Preferences, Parochial Altruism, and Immigration in Western Europe

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David Rueda, University of Oxford

Altruism is an important omitted variable in much of the political economy literature. While material self-interest is the base of most approaches to redistribution (first affecting preferences and then politics and policy), there is a paucity of research on inequality aversion. I propose that other-regarding concerns influence redistribution preferences and that (1) they matter most to those in less material need and (2) they are conditional on the identity of the poor. Altruism is most relevant to the rich, and it is most influential when the recipients of benefits are similar to those financing them. Using data from the European Social Survey from 2002 to 2012, I will show that group homogeneity magnifies (or limits) the importance of altruism for the rich. In making these distinctions between the poor and the rich, the arguments in this article challenge some influential approaches to inequality, immigration, and voting.

Food first, then morality.

—Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*

This article examines a set of assumptions underlying most arguments about the importance of economic circumstances to political outcomes. If inequality matters to individual political behavior, it seems reasonable to assume that it does so through its influence on redistribution preferences. While redistribution preferences are the essential building blocks of most of our political economy models, however, we simply do not know enough about their determinants. Analyzing the demand for redistribution is therefore an essential first step for an accurate understanding of the supply of redistribution (social policy, the welfare state, etc.).

I want to make three related points in this article. First, I argue for an integration of material self-interest and other-regarding concerns. In terms of the influence of relative income, I adopt a slightly modified version of the model proposed by Romer (1975) and Meltzer and Richard (1981). I argue that a significant determinant of redistribution preferences is the difference between an individual's income and the mean in her country. The lower below the mean the income is, the more an individual gains from redistribution

and the stronger I expect her support for it to be. The higher above the mean, the more an individual loses from redistribution and the weaker her support. Second, I argue for the importance of something that, for now, I will term "altruism." I will explain that I consider other-regarding preferences an important motivation for individuals. Moral benefits are derived from the support of redistribution but, I will further argue, these moral benefits are inextricably dependent on the identity of the poor. Altruism is most relevant when the recipients of benefits are similar to those financing them. Third, I propose that the material benefits of redistribution dominate the preferences of the poor. The rich, on the other hand, can afford to be altruistic. Combining the second and third points above, I will show that group homogeneity magnifies (or limits) the importance of altruism for the rich. In making this distinction about the influence of altruism and group homogeneity on the poor and the rich, the arguments in this article challenge some influential approaches to the politics of inequality. I will elaborate on this in the pages that follow but I will make three general points here. The first relates to

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David Rueda (david.rueda@politics.ox.ac.uk) is professor of comparative politics and professorial fellow at the Department of Politics and International Relations and Nuffield College, Oxford University, Oxford OX1 1NF, UK.

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the role of altruism in the political economy literature, the second to the influence of immigration in European welfare states, and the third addresses the political consequences of heterogeneity.

The political economy literature has generally been limited to relatively simple material self-interested motivations: an individual's position in the income distribution determines her preferences for redistribution. Most political economy arguments (one could in fact say most comparative politics arguments) start from this initial assumption and address other factors in more complex causal chains (the role of parties, labor market institutions, the nature of government, federalism, international factors, etc.). An increasing amount of convincing evidence indicates, however, that other-regarding concerns are an important motivation for individuals. As argued by Alesina and Giuliano, political economy models "can accommodate altruism, i.e., a situation in which one agent cares also about the utility of somebody else. But altruism is not an unpredictable 'social noise' to be randomly sprinkled over individuals" (2011, 94). Altruistic concerns need to be systematized into predictable political economy hypotheses.

The future of the welfare state has come under increasing pressure from immigration. A comprehensive welfare state, the argument goes, was possible in Western European countries because of homogeneous societies. More ethnically heterogeneous societies are expected to display lower levels of support for redistribution (see, e.g., Alesina and Glaeser 2004). Migration has produced an "Americanization" of European welfare politics by making the poor less likely to support redistribution (even though they economically benefit from it) because of noneconomic concerns (cultural, values, etc.) related to population heterogeneity.<sup>1</sup> The analysis presented in the following pages will challenge these arguments. The significant differences in support for redistribution in Western Europe have little to do with the poor (who consistently support redistribution regardless of population heterogeneity) and a lot to do with the altruism of the rich.

As ethnic heterogeneity has grown in Western Europe and the future of the welfare state has been increasingly questioned, two distinct political challenges have become apparent. On the one hand, immigration poses a challenge to main Left parties who face a "new liberal dilemma" (Reeskens and Van Oorschot 2012): maintaining public support for a

generous welfare state in an increasing multicultural society. On the other hand, some populist Right parties have taken up "welfare chauvinism" as a way to appeal to poor voters (see, e.g., De Koster, Achterberg, and Van der Waal 2013). I return to the role played by redistribution preferences on voting for Left and populist Right parties in the conclusions.

## ARGUMENT

This article's analysis attempts to integrate three distinct approaches to the formation of preferences for redistribution. The first one relies on the idea that the level of redistribution preferred by a given individual is fundamentally a function of her material self-interest (two different facets of this argument should be distinguished, one dealing with redistribution and the other with insurance, risk, and mobility). The second approach maintains that other-regarding concerns matter. Altruistic individuals derive utility not only from their own material gains but also from those of other people. The third approach emphasizes identity and in-group solidarity, arguing that ethnic, national, or religious fractionalization reduces overall support for redistribution.

This article will integrate insights from these three approaches into one argument and focus on the relationship between in-group identity and altruism. In the following pages, I will explore in more detail these general frameworks and elucidate this article's claims. In essence, I argue for the importance of nonmaterial factors but propose that (1) they matter most to those in less material need and (2) they are conditional on the identity of the poor. Relative income, I will argue, sets the material baseline from which the influence of altruism and identity emerges.

## Material self-interest

Most political economy arguments start from the assumption that an individual's position in the income distribution determines her preferences for redistribution. The most popular version of this approach is the theoretical model proposed by Romer (1975) and developed by Meltzer and Richard (1981). To recapitulate very briefly, the Romer-Meltzer-Richard model assumes that the preferences of the median voter determine government policy and that the median voter seeks to maximize current income. If there are no deadweight costs to redistribution, all voters with incomes below the mean maximize their utility by imposing a 100% tax rate. Conversely, all voters with incomes above the mean prefer a tax rate of zero.

When there are distortionary costs to taxation, the Romer-Meltzer-Richard model implies that, by increasing the distance between the median and the mean incomes, more inequality should be associated with more redistribution. The

1. The term "Americanization" has been used by Freeman (2009, 61) who, argued that migration "has reduced the political clout of those social strata that have traditionally been the chief source of support for welfare state development, and it has contributed to the erosion of the political consensus on which the welfare state rests. It has led to the Americanization of European welfare politics."

general view in the comparative literature on this topic, however, is either that there is no association between market income inequality and redistribution or, contrary to the prediction of the Romer-Meltzer-Richard model, less market inequality is associated with more redistribution (e.g., Alesina and Glaeser 2004; or Moene and Wallerstein 2001).

These findings must be considered with a degree of caution. This is because most of this literature relies on macro-comparative empirical analyses (with redistribution as the dependent variable) and does not pay much attention to individual preferences.<sup>2</sup> When looking at individual data, in fact, there is some support for the argument that relative income influences preferences. Using comparative data, a relative income effect is found in, among others, Bean and Papadakis (1998) and Finseraas (2009). Using American data, Gilens (2005) and McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2008) (again, among others) find similar effects.

Moreover, the idea that material self-interest determines redistribution preferences should not be limited to a measure of present income. In the words of Alesina and Giuliano, “economists traditionally assume that individuals have preferences defined over their lifetime consumption (income) and maximize their utility under a set of constraints” (2011, 94). Because of the potential to define economic material self-interest intertemporally (as lifetime consumption/income), this approach opens the door to arguments about social insurance and risk (Iversen and Soskice 2001; Moene and Wallerstein 2001; Rehm 2009) and about social mobility and life-cycle profiles (Alesina and Giuliano 2011; Benabou and Ok 2001; Haider and Solon 2006).

It is nevertheless the case that the importance of income as a determinant of redistribution preferences is highly variable. While the rich support redistribution less than the poor in most industrialized democracies, the strength of this relationship is hardly consistent (Beramendi and Rehm 2016). I propose that one of the reasons for this lack of consistency in the literature has to do with the (variable) influence of altruism and its connection to ethnic heterogeneity. In this article’s argument, the Romer-Meltzer-Richard material self-interest model sets a baseline that is then affected by the influence of altruism and in-group identity.

While agreeing that insurance, risk, and mobility are linked to redistribution, in the following pages I evaluate whether there is a connection between present relative income and redistribution preferences. Like other authors emphasizing ma-

terial self-interest as a determinant of redistribution preferences, I argue that income affects preferences for redistribution across the entire income distribution. I expect that an individual in, say, the 10th percentile of the income distribution benefits more from the Romer-Meltzer-Richard redistributive scheme (lump-sum payments financed by a linear income tax) than an individual in the 30th percentile. As a result, I expect the former individual to have stronger preferences for redistribution than the latter.

### Altruism

The possibility that other-regarding concerns influence redistribution preferences has received increasing amounts of attention in the recent political economy literature. There is neural evidence that individuals have a dislike for unequal distributions, independent from social image or potential reciprocity motivations (Tricomi et al. 2010). In laboratory experiments, individuals have been shown to have concerns for the welfare of others (see, e.g., Charness and Rabin 2002; and Fehr and Gächter 2000). A number of alternative models have been presented to analyze different kinds of other-regarding concerns (for reviews, see DellaVigna 2009; Fehr and Schmidt 2006). As I will document below, support for redistribution is widespread in Western Europe and extends into income groups whose support for redistribution could not possibly be motivated by short-term income maximization. Altruism constitutes one plausible reason why affluent individuals might support redistribution even though its effect is to reduce their disposable income.

The dimension of altruism that is most relevant to this article’s argument pertains to the willingness of individuals to make sacrifices in order to realize welfare gains for those in society who are worse off. The kind of altruism I am interested in, therefore, is not characterized by unconditional kindness (which would imply that an individual’s utility increases as the material gains received by any other individual increase). It is a conditional form of altruism that is often defined as positive inequity aversion.

### Identity and in-group altruism

I also build on a significant recent literature exploring the role of identity on the formation of preferences for redistribution. There are material self-interest reasons why identity could matter to redistribution preferences. Group homogeneity could promote information sharing, the identification of free riders, and communication.<sup>3</sup> In this article, however, I emphasize the connection between altruism and group homogeneity. Much

2. Even the macro-comparative conclusion is less unambiguous than the consensus in the literature suggests. Milanovic (2000) and Kenworthy and Pontusson (2005) show that rising inequality tends to be consistently associated with more redistribution within countries.

3. For an analysis of the mechanisms underlying these effects, see Habyarimana et al. (2007).

of the literature on altruism emphasizes that other-regarding considerations are bounded by racial, ethnic, or religious cleavages or, in other words, take the form of “in-group solidarity” or “parochial altruism.”<sup>4</sup> Habyarimana et al. aptly summarize this line of argument by recognizing that “individuals may attach positive utility to the welfare of fellow ethnic group members but no utility (or negative utility) to the welfare of non-group members” (2007, 710).

There is a clear relationship between this identity approach and the altruism arguments analyzed in the previous section. While positive inequity aversion implies that an individual’s utility will increase as the poor benefit from more redistribution, identity arguments emphasize that this may be dependent on who the poor are. Perceiving the poor as different, these arguments suggest, detracts from altruism. There can be little doubt that racism has served as an obstacle to redistributive politics in the American case (Gilens 2009; Luttmer 2001). Alesina and Glaeser (2004) argue persuasively that the United States is not an exceptional case in this respect.

While the arguments about self-interest presented in the previous section imply that support for redistribution will decrease with income, conceptions of altruism and identity imply that there are “moral” benefits attached to the promotion of equality within in-group members. The implications of these arguments are reflected in figure 1. The solid lines represent the relationship expected in models proposing that altruism promotes redistribution (e.g., Alesina and Glaeser 2004). In the figure, all individuals (poor and rich alike), obtain moral benefits from supporting redistribution when group homogeneity is high, which means that altruism pushes preferences for redistribution upward.

Alternatively, some of the existing literature posits that ethnic, religious, or national cleavages matter more to the preferences of the poor than to the preferences of the affluent or, in other words, that “identity politics” diverts the poor from the pursuit of material self-interest. This effect is shown in figure 1 with a dotted line for the scenario with less group homogeneity. Perhaps the most well-known example of these arguments is its application to the United States and the contention that second-dimension issues (particularly cultural and social ones) outweigh economic ones for the American working class.<sup>5</sup> In these arguments, altruism does not matter. But, to the extent that these second-dimension concerns are correlated with population heterogeneity, they would lead

us to expect that the poor in heterogeneous countries have weaker redistribution preferences (not because they lack altruism but because they are distracted from their material self-interest). Redistribution preferences would then converge as income grows (as suggested by the dotted line in fig. 1).

### The parochial altruism of the rich

The sections above suggest that both material self-interest and parochial altruism should matter to redistribution preferences. To integrate the arguments about these two distinct dimensions, however, I will argue that a hierarchy of preferences exists. I propose that poor people value redistribution for its material consequences. The redistributive preferences of the rich, on the other hand, are less significantly affected by their immediate material self-interest. For the rich, the moral benefits of parochial altruism become more relevant.

The idea that altruistic concerns will be trumped by material ones for the poor is compatible with previous political economy work on material and nonmaterial incentives. Levitt and List construct a model in which individuals maximize their material gains but, when wealth-maximizing action has a moral cost, they deviate from that action to one with a lower moral cost (2007, 157). More importantly, they also argue that, as the stakes of the game rise, wealth concerns will increase in importance relative to moral concerns. I argue in this article that higher stakes (i.e., the poor’s need for the benefits of redistribution) increase the importance of relative income as a determinant of redistribution preferences. Lower stakes for the rich (there are material costs to increasing redistribution, but for the rich they do not involve dramatic consequences comparable to those for the poor) mean that altruistic concerns will be more important.

The implications of this article’s argument are summarized in figure 2. I expect population heterogeneity to be associated with less support for redistribution. Since I argue that for the poor altruism is trumped by material incentives, redistribution preferences converge regardless of group homogeneity as income declines. I expect group homogeneity to promote altruism only for the rich.

To explore the theoretical alternatives summarized above, I will consider the effects of income distance at the individual level and of the macro level of ethnic heterogeneity (measured as immigration). Income distance is meant to capture the effects of material self-interested preferences and the macro measure of immigration the influence of parochial altruism. The first expectation is that income distance will be a significant determinant of redistribution preferences. I also expect, however, that decreasing levels of heterogeneity will make the rich (and only the rich) more supportive of redistribution.

4. For an analysis of parochial altruism, see Bernhard, Fischbacher, and Fehr (2006).

5. See Frank (2004), and the critique in Bartels (2006).

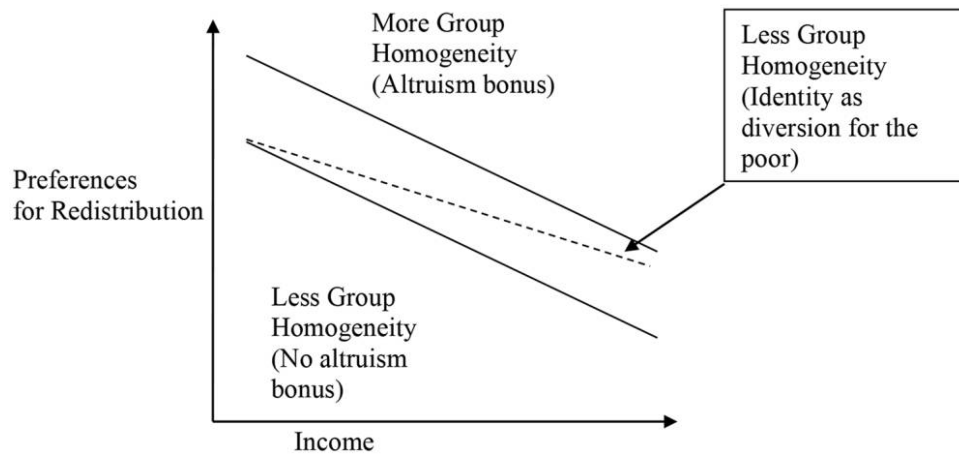


Figure 1. Identity and support for redistribution

Exploring the importance of altruism and group heterogeneity by looking at the interaction of income distance (at the individual level) and immigration (at the macro level) is a direct test of this article’s hypotheses. It is, however, an approach that is dependent on a particular conception of altruism. There are two ways of thinking about altruism or other-regarding preferences in the political economy literature. The first analyzes altruism as an individual characteristic (a personality trait or “taste for giving”).<sup>6</sup> The second one understands other-regarding concerns to be affected by a “contextual” logic (often connected to macro inequality and welfare). Previously in this article, I have referred to one of the most common expressions of this approach: “in-group solidarity” or “parochial altruism.” While I accept that the role of altruism as an individual characteristic in determining redistribution preferences may be an important one, I emphasize a situational approach in this article. I agree that, for many economic outcomes, personality measures may be as predictive as cognitive ones (see, e.g., Almlund et al. 2011) but find this compatible with the main argument in the previous pages.<sup>7</sup>

6. In the personality trait research, altruism has often taken the form of a self-reported measure (the Self-Report Altruism, SRA, scale) aggregating different items capturing an individual’s engagement in altruistic behaviors (pushing a stranger’s car out of the snow, giving money to a charity, etc.). See, e.g., the research on altruistic personality by Rushton, Chrisjohn, and Fekken (1981). For altruism as a “taste for giving,” see, e.g., Andreoni (1990).

7. It is certainly possible that there are some individuals that have more altruistic personalities than others. But this would not affect the general implications of my argument unless these personality types were highly correlated with individual income and ethnic macro heterogeneity (and I have no reason, theoretical or empirical, to believe this is the case). I return to this issue in the robustness tests below.

A final observation about the theoretical claims must be made. As mentioned above, an influential literature in comparative political economy has argued that redistribution preferences are affected by the demand for insurance against an uncertain future (Iversen and Soskice 2001; Moene and Wallerstein 2001; Rehm 2009). A related set of arguments connects ethnic identity to risk. The basic intuition in this approach is that some identity groups may be linked with particular profiles regarding risk, mobility, and so on (as in Benabou and Ok 2001; or Piketty 1995). Consequently, in segmented labor markets where the poor are different from the rich, the rich may feel less vulnerable to risk. To the extent that it is possible, I will try to address these concerns empirically below (by introducing an explicit measure of risk into the analysis). However, as argued by Alt and Iversen (2017) in a recent contribution, arguments about altruism and social “distance” and arguments about insurance in segmented labor markets have very similar empirical impli-

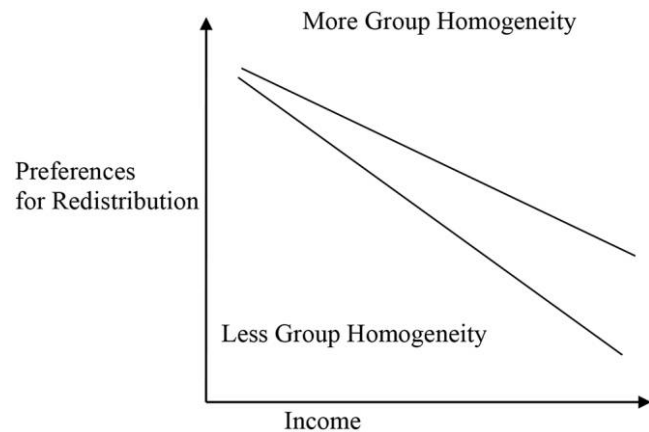


Figure 2. Identity and support for redistribution: Rich as parochially altruistic.

cations (even if based on very different microfoundations). The analysis to be developed in the following pages will not be able to fully resolve this issue.

## DATA

The analysis in this article draws on individual-level data from the European Social Survey (ESS) in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012. Relative to similar survey data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), there are two noteworthy drawbacks to using the ESS: the ISSP covers a longer time period than the ESS and includes the United States and other non-European advanced democracies of interest. On the other hand, the advantage of the ESS is that the surveys use consistent measures of income. By contrast, income measures reported by the ISSP vary not only between countries within each wave, but also for many countries between waves. As a reliable measure of income is essential for this article's purposes, this feature outweighs the aforementioned disadvantages of the ESS relative to the ISSP.

Because the theoretical claims involve the parochial altruism of domestic respondents, I restrict the analysis to individuals who declare themselves to have been born in the country where the survey was conducted.<sup>8</sup> Including foreign-born respondents in the main analysis would complicate how the "in-group" is defined. Like a number of other authors studying redistribution preferences using ESS data, I also restrict the analysis to Western European countries (see, e.g., Reeskens and Van Oorschot 2012; or Stegmueller et al. 2012). This choice is motivated partly by theoretical reasons and partly by empirical ones. Theoretically, the nature of redistribution in Western and Eastern European countries is arguably quite distinct,<sup>9</sup> and the theoretical claims presented above assume a Western European welfare state. In addition, there may be particularities to the postcommunist transition experience that are not fully taken into consideration in the theoretical claims above (not only with regard to the connection between immigration and redistribution preferences but also to the secondary link to voting).<sup>10</sup> There are theoretical reasons not to include some Western countries as well. The arguments presented above emphasize the role of immigrants as potential recipients of redistribution benefits. While it is reasonable to expect foreign-born individuals to be concentrated among the poor in most Western European countries, the two countries where this might not be the case

(Switzerland and Luxembourg) are not included in the analysis (more on this below).

Empirically, since the article aims to address within-country temporal changes (as well as cross-sectional ones), I only include in the analysis countries with more than two ESS waves available. Because of the lack of foreign population data (as well as other macro controls) coinciding with the chosen redistribution preferences question, the number of Central and Eastern European cases would be very limited (it also means that Italy, which has only one ESS wave in which these data are available, was dropped from the analysis). As a consequence, the following Western European countries are included (although data are not available for all years in some of them): Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

## Dependent variable

Like other work using ESS data (see, e.g., Rehm 2009), I use a question asking respondents if they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: "The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels." Discarding don't-knows and nonresponses (as I also do in the empirical analysis), table A.1 in the appendix (appendix and tables A.1, B.2 available online) shows the overall distribution of responses in all the countries and years included in the analysis. The high level of overall support for redistribution among West Europeans is surely the most striking feature of table A.1. While 70% of the respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement that the government should take measures to reduce income differences, only about 15% explicitly express opposition to redistribution. Given the apparent consensus in support of redistribution, however, it seems quite appropriate to interpret neutrality ("neither agree nor disagree") as another, less overt, expression of opposition.

While table A.1 is informative, it does not illustrate two of the things this article's argument is about: the existence of national variation in support for redistribution and the differences between rich and poor. Figure 3 shows the general level of support (i.e., the percentage of agrees and strong agrees) for redistribution in each of the countries in the sample, and the level of support for redistribution among the poor (those individuals below the 25% percentile, with household incomes at most 17,000 purchasing power parity (PPP)-adjusted 2010 US dollars below the country-year mean) and among the rich (those above the 75% percentile with household incomes at least 9,000 PPP-adjusted 2010 US dollars above the mean).<sup>11</sup>

8. They are more than 91% of the total sample.

9. See, e.g., Ferge (2001), who argues that the essence of the European welfare model is missing in the Eastern European welfare system.

10. According to, e.g., Whitefield (2002), electorates in post-communist Eastern Europe tend to be more volatile and less attached to parties.

11. More on this measure of income below.

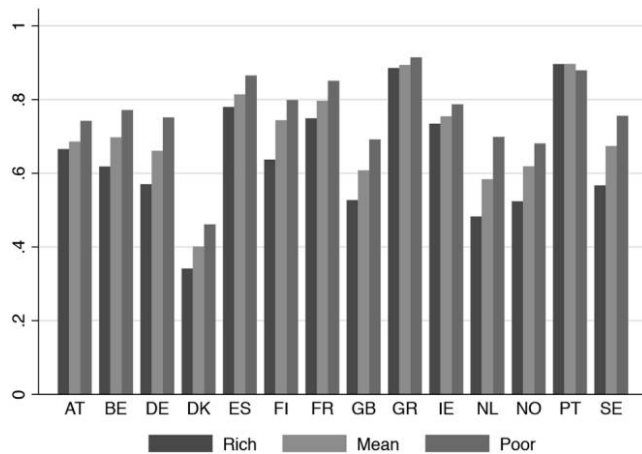


Figure 3. Support for redistribution (general, among poor and among rich)

Figure 3 reflects a remarkable amount of cross-national variation. Support for redistribution is generally high in countries like Spain, France, Greece, Ireland, and Portugal. It is generally low in countries like Denmark, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Norway. The support of redistribution among the rich and the poor mirrors these general trends, but the differences between poor and rich are quite interesting. For example, in Sweden and Finland, where the general support for redistribution is relatively high, the difference between rich and poor is large. In Austria, where the general support for redistribution is again relatively high, the difference between rich and poor is low (in Portugal the difference is even smaller). There are countries with large differences between the rich and poor that have high general levels of support but also that have low levels of support. The analysis below will help explain these patterns.

### The measure of relative income

To capture material self-interest, the key variable in the analysis is the distance between the income of respondents and the mean income in their country (at the time of the survey). I construct this measure based on respondents' answers to the following survey question: "Using this card, if you add up the income from all sources, which letter describes your household's total net income? If you don't know the exact figure, please give an estimate. Use the part of the card that you know best: weekly, monthly or annual income."<sup>12</sup> Two different cards are shown to respondents, depending on the year of the survey. In the surveys from 2002 to 2006, the card places the respondent's total household income into 12 categories with different ranges. The surveys from 2008 to 2012,

12. The wording of this question between 2008 and 2012 is a bit different, but the meaning remains the same. In these surveys, "after tax and compulsory deductions" replaces "net."

on the other hand, offer only 10 categories that capture the deciles in the country income distribution.

This scheme poses several challenges for this article's purposes. To begin with, the 2002–6 income bands identified above cover very different income ranges. While category R, for example, contains a range comprising €1,800 (€1,800–€3,600), the range for category U is €30,000 (€90,000–€120,000). The same can be said about the income deciles used from 2008 to 2012. There is an additional problem. The argument about the effects of relative income implies that the appropriate measure for income is the difference between an individual's income and the country mean income but, if I were to use these categories (whether income bands or deciles), this measure would be difficult to interpret.

To address these issues, I transform the income bands into their midpoints. For the 2002–6 surveys, for example, this means that category J (less than €1,800) becomes midpoint €900 and category R (€1,800 to under €3,600) becomes €2,700. For the 2008–12 surveys I do the same (even though this is slightly more complicated since the categories are now country- and survey-specific deciles). Using midpoints has been recognized for some time as an appropriate way to create scores for income categories. They have been used extensively, for example, in the American politics literature analyzing General Social Survey (GSS) data.<sup>13</sup> For each respondent, therefore, I calculate the distance between her household income (i.e., the midpoint of her income category) and the mean income of her country-year survey.<sup>14</sup>

This still leaves us with one remaining problem, namely, that the purchasing power of a certain amount of income varies across the countries included in our analysis. Simply put, it could be argued that the meaning of being €10,000 below the mean is different in Switzerland than in Greece. I address this by converting euros or national currencies into PPP-adjusted 2010 US dollars.<sup>15</sup>

13. There is an additional complication: defining a midpoint for the open-ended top category (since this category has no upper limit). In this article I extrapolate from the next-to-last category's midpoint using the frequencies of both the next-to-last and last (open-ended) categories, using the formula suggested in Hout (2004).

14. This represents a simple centering, which leaves the distribution of incomes unchanged. However, it takes into account that mean incomes differ over countries.

15. I also use an alternative measure of relative income, the distance between an individual's income and the mean in her country-year as a percentage of the mean in her country-year. This is measured in local currency (and not PPP-adjusted dollars). The income distribution for the countries in the sample is, for obvious reasons, quite different when using this alternative measure. But the substantive results remain the same (see the robustness tests in the appendix).

### Macro variables

The analysis in the following pages includes the percentage of foreign-born population as the variable capturing population heterogeneity. A large literature in political economy has focused on immigration (and ethnic diversity) as a determinant of redistribution preferences. Much of this work is based on the observation that more ethnically heterogeneous societies display lower levels of support for redistributive welfare programs (see Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Finseraas 2008; or Freeman 2009).

I use the stocks of foreign born as percentage of population from the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OECD) international migration database.<sup>16</sup> As mentioned above, while it is reasonable to expect foreign-born individuals to be concentrated among the poor in most European countries,<sup>17</sup> an ideal measure would capture this concentration directly. It is in fact possible to use the ESS surveys to assess the percentage of self-defined foreign-born individuals below the income mean. This survey-based measure of foreign-born population among the poor is highly correlated with the OECD measure (the correlation coefficient is .70). Because the number of foreign-born individuals below the mean income in the ESS surveys is low for most countries (and the percentages vulnerable to change if a few more individuals were included in the surveys), I stick with the OECD variable.

Figure 4 illustrates a high degree of cross-national variation in the levels of foreign-born population. There are countries with high levels of foreign-born population (around 15%) like Belgium, Spain, and Sweden in 2010 and 2012 (Ireland surpasses even these levels from 2008 to 2012). The lowest levels are found in Finland and Greece before 2008 (significantly less than 5%). The figure also shows that change over time is equally (if not more) significant. Foreign-born populations increase dramatically in Spain and Ireland from 2002 to 2012, but they experience much more muted growth in Germany, the Netherlands, and Portugal.<sup>18</sup>

16. See <https://data.oecd.org/migration/foreign-born-population.htm>. Because of missing data, the observation for Portugal 2012 is from 2011. The definition of foreign-born covers all people who have migrated from their country of birth to their current country of residence. Because of missing data, the exception in the sample is Greece, where foreign born is defined by nationality rather than country of birth.

17. The two countries where this might not be the case (Switzerland and Luxembourg) are not part of the sample. These countries would also be clear outliers regarding the levels of foreign-born population. While the average in the sample is around 10%, in Switzerland it is 25% and in Luxembourg it is 38%.

18. All results in this article are confirmed by using alternative measures of ethnic heterogeneity. See the robustness tests in the appendix.

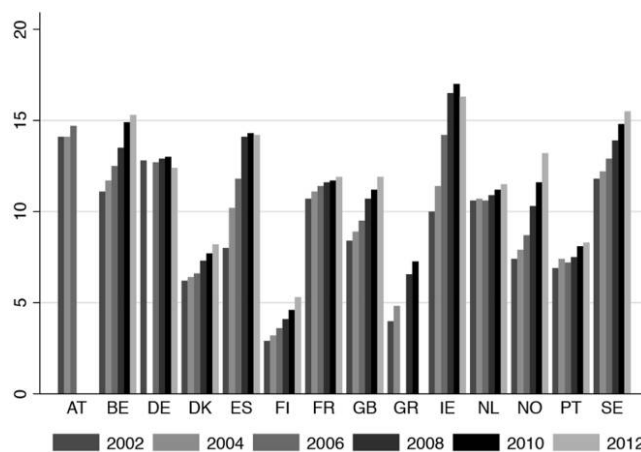


Figure 4. Foreign-born population

This article's analysis of support for redistribution also controls for actual levels of redistribution in the country where—and at the time when—a particular survey was conducted.<sup>19</sup> Previous research indicates that average support for redistribution tends to fall when the existing levels of redistribution are high. The idea that there is some threshold at which the disincentive effects of redistribution become more severe (see, e.g., Tanzi and Schuhknecht 2000) provides a possible explanation for this relationship. Arguably, people who live in countries with large redistributive welfare states are more concerned about, and more aware of, the disincentive effects of redistribution. It also seems likely that some respondents take actual levels of redistribution into account when expressing their preferences, that is, that they are expressing agreement or disagreement with the proposition that the government should do more to reduce income differences. While these considerations make controlling for the effect of existing levels of social policy generosity essential, it is important to emphasize that the results I will describe below are robust to the exclusion of this variable.

### Individual-level control variables

In what follows, I present the results of estimating several different models. The first one contains no control variables and includes only relative income, foreign-born population, and (as the article's argument stresses that heterogeneity matters more for the rich than the poor) their interaction. The second one includes social spending and the most commonly used individual-level control variables in analyses of redistribution preferences. This model introduces age (measured

19. In this regard, I follow Luttmer (2001), who has a similar empirical strategy. I use one of the measures of social benefits provided by the OECD (total social spending as percentage of GDP). See <http://www.oecd.org/social/expenditure.htm>.



in years), gender (a dummy for female), years of education, union membership, and church attendance (a dummy equal to one if respondent attends religious services at least once a week).<sup>20</sup> It also includes class. It is common in political sociology to think about redistribution demands as related to social class, rather than income (see, e.g., Svallfors 2006). The variation of income within class categories is high enough to allow us to assess whether the results regarding relative income and population heterogeneity are robust to controlling for the effects of class. To this end, I rely on an international comparative version of the European Socio-economic Classification, based on the class categories in the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero schema (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992).

**RESULTS**

As mentioned above, the dependent variable used in this article’s analysis takes the value of one if the respondent indicates that she either “agrees” or “strongly agrees” that “the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels” (and zero otherwise). I estimate a logistic model and report odds ratios.<sup>21</sup> The odds ratio should be interpreted as the probability of supporting redistribution. I also report significance tests for the odds ratios.

The data used in the analysis have a multilevel structure (one level, the individual, is nested within the other, the country).<sup>22</sup> To address potential complications (clustering, nonconstant variance, underestimation of standard errors, etc.), I estimate logit models with random country intercepts via maximum likelihood. These mixed-effects models contain both fixed effects (analogous to standard regression estimates) and a country-specific random intercept that is a function of the macro variables (foreign-born population as the measure of heterogeneity and the level of social benefits).<sup>23</sup> Common contemporary shocks affecting all countries and individuals, such as aggregated changes in economic conditions, are captured by year fixed effects (estimated in all models). The systematic differences between countries are captured by the country-specific random constants (which implies that country effects are drawn from a common normal distribution with estimated variance). In an additional model, column 3 in table 1, the unobserved country char-

Table 1. The Determinants of Redistribution Preferences

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Individual-level variables:			
Income distance	.910**	.942**	.942**
Age		1.007**	1.008**
Gender		1.351**	1.351**
Education		.979**	.979**
Attends religious services		.942**	.942**
Union member		1.393**	1.395**
Class:			
Lower manager		1.391**	1.391**
Intermediate occupations		1.478**	1.478**
Small employer (nonagr)		1.278**	1.277**
Small employer (agr)		1.402**	1.401**
Lower supervisor		1.774**	1.774**
Lower sales		1.778**	1.778**
Lower tech		2.034**	2.033**
Routine		2.013**	2.013**
Macro variables:			
Foreign-born population	.926**	.921**	.919**
Social spending		1.009	1.009
Micro-macro interaction:			
Income distance × foreign-born population	.998**	.998**	.998**
Observations	106,453	98,751	98,751
Countries	14	14	14
Year fixed effects	yes	yes	yes
Country fixed effects	no	no	yes

Note. Logit results. Numbers are odds ratios. See text for details.

\* Statistically significant at 95% level of confidence.

\*\* Statistically significant at 99% level (two-tailed tests).

acteristics are specified as fixed effects. Note that this specification is a lot more stringent: it only uses the over-time variation within countries to estimate the effect of immigration and its interaction with income.

Table 1 reports the results of the analyses. The most important finding concerns income distance (and its interaction with foreign-born population). I will analyze what these results mean in more detail below but, at this stage, suffice it to say that the distance between an individual’s household income and the country-year mean (measured in tens of thousands of 2010 PPP-corrected dollars) and its interaction with the macro measure of population heterogeneity

20. Previous analyses of individual preferences using more or less the same controls include Iversen and Soskice (2001) or Rehm (2009).

21. See the robustness tests in the appendix for alternative models yielding similar results.

22. In the appendix, I also estimate an alternative model with three levels: individuals nested within years, nested within countries.

23. For more details about maximum likelihood estimation of random intercept multilevel models, see Rabe-Hesketh, Skrondal, and Pickles (2005).

are highly significant. Individuals further above the national mean prefer less redistribution, as do those who live in countries with a larger share of foreign-born populations. There is also clear evidence in the table that the effect of income is conditional on population heterogeneity.

Although not the focus of this article's analysis, the results in table 1 also show the individual control variables to be significant determinants of redistribution preferences. Age, being a woman, and union membership are positively associated with support for redistribution, while additional years of education and attending religious services is associated with a decrease in the likelihood of supporting redistribution. The existing levels of redistribution (measured as social spending as percentage of GDP, the only control variable measured at the macro level) has no significant effect over redistribution preferences, questioning the idea that there is a threshold at which the disincentive effects of redistribution become more severe.<sup>24</sup>

To illustrate the effects of relative income, I calculate the average predicted probability that an individual with a particular income has preferences in favor of redistribution. "Simple" predicted probabilities are calculated by setting the variables of interest to some chosen values (e.g., rich or poor) while holding all other variables at one observed value (e.g., the mean). The average predicted probabilities reported below, however, are calculated by setting the variables of interest to some chosen values (i.e., different levels of income) while holding all other variables at all their observed values. The reported estimates are the average of these predictions.<sup>25</sup>

Figure 5 presents the average predicted probabilities (and 95% confidence intervals) for income distances ranging from \$25,000 (in 2010 PPP-corrected dollars) below the mean (the 10th percentile in the sample's relative income distribution) to \$92,000 above the mean (the 99th percentile).<sup>26</sup> The estimates control for the level of heterogeneity (foreign-born population), and they make clear that support for redistribution is at its highest when an individual is poor. The

24. Social spending and the measure of heterogeneity included in the analysis (foreign-born population) are picking up very different things. It is simply not the case that those countries with low social spending have high levels of foreign-born population and that those countries with high social spending have low levels of foreign born population. The correlation between these macro variables is low (the coefficient is only 0.15).

25. I will use the estimates from the second model in table 1 (col. 2).

26. The *x*-axis marks the 10th percentile in the sample's relative income distribution (\$25,000 below the mean), the 25th percentile (\$17,000 below the mean), the median (\$6,000 below the mean), the mean (0), the 75th percentile (\$9,000 above the mean), the 90th percentile (\$29,000 above the mean), the 95th percentile (\$52,000 above the mean), and the 99th percentile (\$92,000 above the mean).

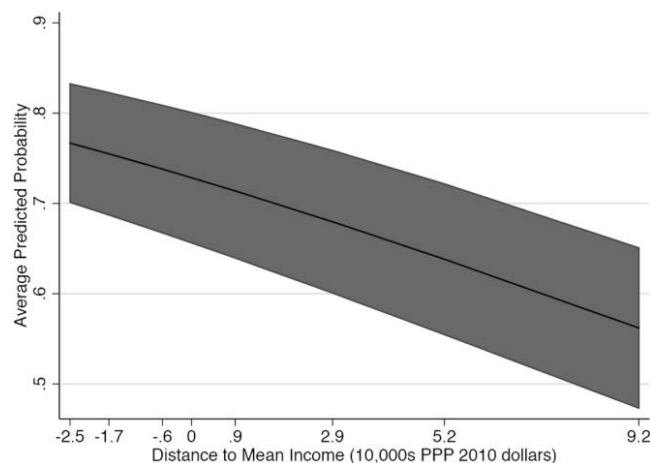


Figure 5. Income distance effects

likelihood of agreeing or strongly agreeing that governments should reduce income differences for those at the lowest level of income is close to 77%. As income goes up, support for redistribution is dramatically reduced. For those individuals with incomes at the mean, the likelihood of supporting redistribution is around 73%, for those \$52,000 above the mean it is 64%, and for those \$92,000 above the mean it is around 56%. Material self-interest receives a remarkable amount of support from the results in figure 5. The first message in this article, therefore, is that the Romer-Meltzer-Richard logic explains a great deal when we want to understand the determinants of individual redistribution preferences.

I went on to argue that the effects of income distance interact with the effects of altruism and that the effects of altruism are affected by in-group identity. To address these claims I turn to the effects of population heterogeneity. Figure 6 presents average predicted probabilities conditional on income levels when the levels of foreign-born population are high or low. In this case, I vary both the individual income distance and the macro level of heterogeneity (while holding the rest of the variables at all their observed values). I select 5.3% and 14.7% to represent low and high levels of foreign-born population (the 10th and 90th percentile in the sample). Figure 4 showed that 5.3% of foreign-born population was close to the level of Finland in 2012 and 14.7% was similar to Austria from 2002 to 2006. Neither of these chosen levels are close to the extreme values in the sample.

The results in figure 6 show that increasing levels of population heterogeneity decreases the support for redistribution. Both the poor and the affluent have a higher likelihood of agreeing or strongly agreeing that the government should reduce income differentials when they are in a low heterogeneity country (dark gray in fig. 6). The more interesting finding in figure 6, however, is that the difference between preferences

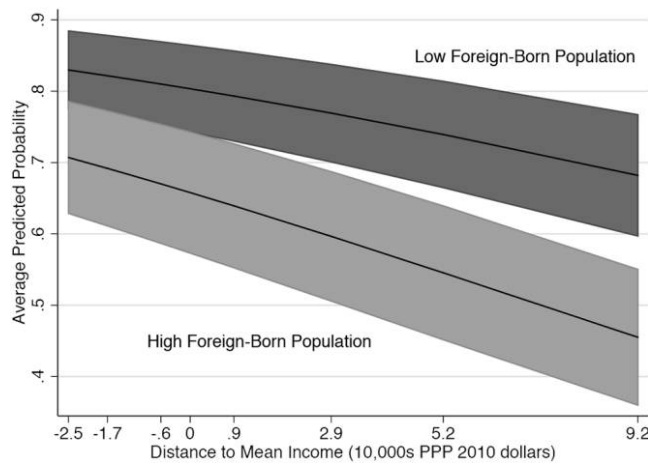


Figure 6. Income distance effects (high and low heterogeneity)

with high and low heterogeneity levels gets much larger as income grows. The affluent and rich are much less likely to support redistribution when there is a high level of heterogeneity (light gray).

To better illustrate the effects in figure 6, I present the average predicted probabilities of supporting redistribution for the “poor” and “rich” when the levels of foreign-born population are either low or high. I define the poor as those in the 10th percentile of the sample’s income distribution (25,000 PPP-corrected 2010 dollars below the country-year mean) and the rich as those in the 90th percentile (29,000 PPP-corrected 2010 dollars above the country-year mean). The levels of population heterogeneity are the same as in figure 6. The calculations in table 2 make clear that the poor have very high support for redistribution no matter whether they are in countries with high or low heterogeneity. The average predicted probabilities for the poor decrease by 0.12 (from around 0.83) when the levels of foreign-born population increase from low to high. This same difference in population heterogeneity is associated with a more substantial decrease of 0.17 when an individual is in the 90th percentile of the income distribution.

**ROBUSTNESS TESTS**

While the previous section provides convincing evidence in support of this article’s hypotheses, there are alternative arguments in the existing literature with implications about the relationship between income and redistribution preferences that need to be taken into consideration. Several robustness tests are reported in the appendix; they use model 2, including control variables, from table 1 and focus on the estimates of interest, the average predicted probabilities of supporting redistribution for the poor and the rich (defined the same way as in table 2) conditional on population heterogeneity. Table B.2

in the appendix contains three types of robustness tests. Tests 1–9 explore the sensitivity of the main results to the inclusion of a battery of additional control variables. Tests 10–12 replace the immigration variable in the main model for alternative measures of population heterogeneity. And tests 13–17 present results from estimating alternative models.

Lack of space prevents me from including an extensive explanation of these tests and their justification in the main text (the reader should refer to the discussion in the appendix), but I will briefly summarize the main findings. Regarding the inclusion of additional control variables, the results in table B.2 show the main findings of the article not to be affected by ideology (measured as respondents’ self-placement on a scale between 0, far to the left, and 10, far to the right); the negative externalities of inequality (measured either at the macro level or at the micro level, more concretely, as fear of crime); the level of urbanization (measured at the individual levels from the survey); individual labor market status; the levels of unemployment among the native population; the Great Recession; occupational unemployment (as a proxy for insurance demand); or altruism (measured as a personality trait, rather than a contextual factor). The results are also robust to alternative measures of population heterogeneity. Table B.2 shows similar findings when heterogeneity is measured as the levels of unemployment among the foreign born (a proxy for the ethnically different as potential beneficiaries of redistributive policies), and as the proportion of self-defined members of an ethnic minority (in the ESS) within the poor. In a more strict test for an alternative measure of heterogeneity, I also use an individual measure of attitudes about immigration (whether it is perceived as positive or negative) and show that the main

Table 2. Support for Redistribution: Average Predicted Probabilities for Poor and Rich Conditional on Population Heterogeneity

Low Foreign-Born Population		High Foreign-Born Population	
Poor	Rich	Poor	Rich
.83**	.77**	.71**	.60**

Note. Numbers are average predicted probabilities of agreeing or strongly agreeing that government should reduce differences in income levels. The poor are 25,000 PPP-corrected 2010 dollars below the country-year mean income (10th percentile of the total sample). The rich are 29,000 PPP-corrected 2010 dollars above the country-year mean income (90th percentile).

\* Statistically significant at 95% level of confidence.

\*\* Statistically significant at 99% level (two-tailed tests).

results stay the same. Table B.2 in the appendix, finally, also shows that the main results above are not sensitive to alternative models. The findings remain substantially similar when multiple imputation is used to address missing values, with alternative measures for the relative income variable (both eliminating the top income category and measuring income differences as percentage of the mean in local currency), by estimating a three-level structure (individuals nested within years, nested within countries), and when using a more restrictive definition of support for redistribution (only strong agreements that “the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels”).

### CONCLUSION: WHY REDISTRIBUTION PREFERENCES?

Most analysts would agree that an individual’s relative income (i.e., whether she is rich or poor) affects her political views. We do not know enough, however, about how material self-interest and other-regarding concerns affect individual redistributive preferences. And we do not know enough, in particular, about these effects in contexts of high or low ethnic heterogeneity. In the discussion of altruism and identity that is the main thrust of this article, I suggested that lower stakes mean that altruistic concerns are more important for the rich. I also argued that altruism would be conditional on the identity of the poor. This article’s results show that “moral” gains from supporting redistribution are most obvious to the rich in countries characterized by low levels of immigration.

These findings regarding group heterogeneity are important in two respects. First, in some ways they confirm the conventional wisdom about the effects of heterogeneity. More heterogeneous countries do exhibit less aggregate support for redistribution. Second, and more important, they question the logic behind this conventional wisdom. As I mentioned above, many of these arguments rely on the assumption that heterogeneity diverts low-income individuals from pursuing their material self-interest. The poor know that they gain from redistribution, but they may not support it if they do not share an identity with other poor individuals (this is the argument underlying much of the “welfare chauvinism” literature about Europe). I have argued for an alternative explanation that integrates identity considerations into a general altruism logic. In doing so, I have also offered evidence showing that these differences have little to do with the poor. It is the altruism of the rich that is affected by heterogeneity.

But why should we care about redistribution preferences in the first place? I argued in the introduction that the (often implicit) model behind much of comparative politics and political economy starts with redistribution preferences. These redistribution preferences affect how individuals behave po-

litically, and their behavior in turn affects the strategies of political parties and the policies of governments. In this concluding section, I will focus on perhaps the most momentous potential consequence of redistribution preferences: voting. While I understand that the effects of redistribution preferences on voting are causally complex (and would require a detailed analysis I have no space to develop here), it is nevertheless possible to address this question in a preliminary way.

As mentioned in the introduction, two distinct political challenges to the welfare state have become apparent with increasing levels of immigration. Many Western European governments have been under pressure to provide welfare benefits only to their native population (De Koster et al. 2013), but immigration poses a challenge especially to Left parties who are faced with a “new liberal dilemma” (Reeskens and Van Oorschot 2012): maintaining a comprehensive welfare state in an increasingly multicultural society without losing public support, especially in times of economic austerity.

While, absent the challenge of immigration, the commitment of traditional main Left parties to redistribution has generally been assumed, the preferred economic policies of populist Right parties are not particularly clear. In the pioneering work of Kitschelt and McGann (1995), the radical Right was considered a fusion of neoliberalism (on the traditional economic dimension) and authoritarianism (on the values/culture dimension). The free-market orientation of the populist Right, however, has been questioned (see De Lange 2007; and Ivarsflaten 2005). Mudde (2007) (among others) argues that second dimension issues (ethno-nationalism, opposition to cosmopolitanism and globalization, etc.) more than economic policy define populist Right parties, and Rovny (2013) shows that these parties often aim to attract voters by blurring their position on the economic dimension. As argued by Afonso and Rennwald (forthcoming), the redistributive strategies of populist Right parties span “from libertarian to socialist, with different shades of welfare chauvinism in-between.”

Do the relationships emphasized in this article matter to voting? An answer to this question needs to focus on the role of redistribution preferences in determining voting for main Left and populist Right parties. This is first because it is of course understood that a number of other factors influence voting and are, in turn, potentially affected by different levels of population heterogeneity. To the extent that this is the case, it is beyond the scope of this article to explore these effects. The question of relevance to the arguments in this article then is whether the patterns described above have consequences for voting behavior. In other words, having demonstrated that immigration affects the relationship be-

Table 3. The Determinants of Voting

	Main Left Party		Populist Right	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Individual-level variables:				
Redistribution preferences	1.829**	1.694**	.901*	.829**
Income distance		.990*		.950**
Age		1.008**		.988**
Gender		1.068**		.658**
Education		.966**		.919**
Attends religious services		.481**		.428**
Union member		1.526**		.831**
Class:				
Lower manager		1.190**		1.211
Intermediate occupations		1.157**		1.369*
Small employer (nonagr)		.743**		1.758**
Small employer (agr)		.486**		.866
Lower supervisor		1.337**		2.738**
Lower sales		1.275**		2.195**
Lower tech		1.502**		2.384**
Routine		1.518**		2.398**
Macro variables:				
Foreign-born population		1.070**		.814**
Social spending		1.008		.860**
Observations	53,399	39,244	27,724	22,715
Countries	14	14	8	8

Note. Logit results. Numbers are odds ratios. See text for details.

\* Statistically significant at 95% level of confidence.

\*\* Statistically significant at 99% level (two-tailed tests).

tween income and redistribution preferences, the task that remains is to explore whether redistribution preferences matter to voting.

The vote choice variable in the analysis reported below is based on a retrospective statement from each ESS respondent about the party he or she voted for in the last national election. I create two indicator variables equal to one if the vote was cast for the main Left party or the populist Right party (and zero if any other party was chosen). As in other analyses of voting,<sup>27</sup> respondents who abstained are not included in the sample. The reason for this is that an appropriately unified model of turnout and party choice is much more complex than simply including abstention as another “party” (see, e.g., Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006).<sup>28</sup>

27. In the US case, see Gelman et al. (2008); or Hersh and Nall (2015).

28. Two additional clarifications about the analysis of voting must be made. The first one is about the definition of main parties of the Left and populist Right parties, which is not uncontentious. The second one is about the need to choose ESS waves in which voting data coincide with the

Table 3 shows the results from a set of analyses similar to the ones presented in previous sections of this article. This time, however, redistribution preferences are one of the explanatory variables, and voting is the outcome I am trying to explain. As before, I present the results of estimating two different models for each dependent variable. The first one includes only redistribution preferences. The second one adds the individual- and macro-level controls that were part of the previous analyses of redistribution preferences. These now include the effects of income and immigration on voting (net of the influence of redistribution preferences explicitly in the model as a separate explanatory variable). While, as shown in the previous sections, redistribution preferences are partly endogenous to these additional characteristics, I would argue that they also represent preferences other than redistributive ones affecting vote choice. Thus I am interested to see if redistribution preferences still matter even

redistribution preferences data. See the detailed explanation in section C of the appendix.

after the inclusion of variables that partly capture some channels of their effect.

The results in table 3 are quite clear. Taking models 2 and 4 as our guide, high redistribution preferences make individuals significantly more likely to vote for the left (70% more likely, *ceteris paribus*) and significantly less likely to vote for the populist right (almost 18% less likely). These general findings are confirmed by the models including no control variables at all. Putting these findings together with those about the influence of immigration on the relationship between income and redistribution preferences suggests that the relationship between immigration levels and the success of populist Right parties using “welfare chauvinism” to attract the votes of poor citizens may need to be reexamined.

The estimates for the control variables are also illuminating. They show that age, years of education, and being a union member significantly increase the likelihood of voting Left and decrease the likelihood of voting populist Right. The effect of income is what one would expect (higher incomes make people both less likely to vote for the Left and for the populist Right), but it is interesting to note that immigration makes individuals more (rather than less) likely to vote Left and less (rather than more) likely to vote for the populist Right. While, for the reasons mentioned above, this analysis remains a preliminary one, these are nevertheless nonintuitive findings that do not necessarily confirm the expectations in the existing literature.

I will conclude the article simply by noting that in recent times issues related to population heterogeneity (immigration, ethnicity, race) have come to dominate electoral politics in industrialized democracies. The fact that this has been the case at a time of economic uncertainty is no coincidence. The connection between the demand for redistribution in economically challenging times and increasingly heterogeneous populations is therefore essential to our understanding of the politics of advanced economies.<sup>29</sup> This article’s argument and findings are a step in this direction.

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29. See the recent contribution in Huber (2017).

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