

**Attitudes Toward Income Inequality in France:
Do People Really Disagree? ***

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Existe-t-il un consensus dans les attitudes vis-à-vis des inégalités de revenu en France ?

Résumé : Cet article présente les résultats d'une enquête organisée en France en juillet 1998 auprès d'un échantillon représentatif de 2000 personnes au sujet des attitudes vis-à-vis des inégalités de revenu. Le principal enseignement est qu'il semble exister un très large consensus au sujet des écarts de revenus qui devraient s'appliquer dans la société "idéale", et que ces écarts souhaités par les uns et les autres sont relativement proches des écarts effectivement en vigueur. Les personnes à bas revenus, de même que les électeurs de gauche, ont certes tendance à souhaiter des écarts de revenus relativement plus faibles (par exemple entre caissières et cadres supérieurs) que les personnes à haut revenu ou que les électeurs de droite, mais le fait est que ces différences sont quantitativement extrêmement faible. En particulier, les attitudes concernant des sujets tels que la peine de mort, la place des étrangers, le rôle des femmes, etc., permettent de différencier les uns et les autres de façon nettement plus probante que les attitudes vis-à-vis des inégalités de revenu.

Attitudes Toward Income Inequality in France: Do People Really Disagree?

Abstract: These seminar notes report preliminary findings from a survey run in July 1998 in France on individual attitudes toward income inequality. The main finding is that people simply do not seem to disagree very much about the ideal pay scale and income ratios across individuals. Low-income individuals, as well as left-wing voters, do indeed tend to favor a more compressed income distribution than high-income individuals and right-wing supporters, but the point is that these disagreements are quantitatively very small. In particular, people seem to disagree much more about issues such as the death penalty, foreigners, the rôle of women, etc., than about income inequality.

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I. Introduction and motivation

The general question that this research is trying to address is following: what are the determinants of individual attitudes toward income inequality and income redistribution? Needless to say, a completely satisfactory answer to this question is far beyond the scope of this paper. At a more modest level, these seminar notes simply try to report the bits and pieces that I have learned from a social survey that I recently organized in France. Before I describe these findings, some information about the economic literature that led me into this very applied research might be useful.

The standard economic, public-choice model of redistribution is the “selfish median voter” model: individual income levels and selfish interest uniquely determine individual most-preferred redistributive tax rates, and the equilibrium tax rate is equal to that of the median income voter. As a consequence, a lower (median income)/(mean income) ratio leads to higher tax rates: the median income voter has stronger interest to vote for large redistribution if the gap between his own income and the economy’s mean income is larger. This simple model has been used by the recent literature on long-term growth in order to generate the prediction that more income inequality (as measured by a lower median/mean ratio) leads to larger tax rates and therefore to lower growth.

Unfortunately, cross-country regressions do not seem to confirm such a relationship: income inequality tends to be negatively correlated with growth, but such a negative relationship can be due to many other factors (imperfect credit markets, etc...), and indeed there seems to exist no robust relationship between income inequality and the level of redistribution and taxation (see Benabou (1996) for a recent survey of this literature on “inequality and growth”). For instance, pre-fisc income inequality did increase substantially in the US since the 1970s (in particular the pre-fisc median/mean ratio declined); but, if anything, taxation and redistribution have become less progressive since then. Pre-fisc income inequality is larger in the US than in Europe, but redistribution tends to be larger in Europe, etc..

More generally, what this kind of Europe/US casual empiricism also suggests is that individual income and selfish interests are not the only determinants of individual attitudes toward income inequality. The main reason why there is less redistribution in the US than in Europe has probably something to do with differing perceptions and

beliefs about what makes people unequal and about the incentive costs of redistribution, rather than with differing economic interests alone. In order to understand macro questions such as “why do some countries have more redistribution than others?”, we first need to come back to the micro level and try to better understand individual attitudes toward income inequality.

In Piketty (1995), I constructed a theoretical model based on the idea that people have different views about redistribution because they have different beliefs about the costs of redistribution, and that these beliefs are determined by individual economic mobility experience. That is, everybody agrees that the probability of ending up with a high income is an increasing function of individual effort, but individuals disagree about the quantitative importance of this effort coefficient (as opposed to pure luck and other factors that are beyond one’s control). Individuals who put high effort and obtain a high income will update their beliefs by putting more weight on high effort coefficients, and conversely. Individuals who believe more in effort will consequently believe that the incentives costs of redistributive taxation are very high, and will therefore favor less redistribution.¹ Different starting points and mobility trajectories lead to different beliefs, including in the long-run (only full experimentation by infinitely-patient agents would allow complete learning and convergence to the true beliefs). One key result of this model is that in equilibrium high income agents tend to believe more in effort and therefore to favor less redistribution, even in the case where nobody is selfish and everybody has the same social objective. That is, individual income has a spurious effect on attitudes toward redistribution, via endogenous beliefs about effort.

In Piketty (1996), I tried to use individual-level data from the US General Social Survey (GSS) over the 1972-1994 period in order to test for the predictions of the Piketty (1995) model. The present paper reports preliminary findings from a social survey that we organized in France in July 1998. The results of this survey broadly confirm the results that I already obtained with the GSS as well as with 1983-1993

¹More generally, strong beliefs in effort could lead to believe that some low-income individuals do not put enough effort and therefore do not deserve social transfers, as in the Fong (1996) interpretation (in the Piketty (1995) model, everybody is assumed to be ex ante identical and to have the same “preferences” over work and leisure, so that only the pure “incentive costs” effect applies, except in the case where high-effort believer want to induce low-effort believer to experiment and learn (see Piketty (1995, p.563, note 31)).

data from the UK British Social Attitudes survey (BSA) and with data from various waves and from the seven countries (not including France..) covered by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). That is, the effect of individual income on attitudes toward redistribution is to a large extent spurious, as predicted by the Piketty (1995) model (see section II below for a brief summary of these regression results).

However, the advantage of designing my own survey questionnaire is that I was able to formulate very specific questions in order to go beyond this basic finding.² In particular, I was able to ask questions about the exact income threshold above which individuals want income tax to be raised in order to pay for redistribution, about the percentage of the population which individuals believe to have more than a number of pre-specified income thresholds, about their ideal income ratio between various occupations, about their ideal income level for a minimum income scheme, etc.. Such precise, quantitative questions do not exist in existing social surveys (such as the GSS, the BSA and the ISSP), where one can only use qualitative and relatively imprecise questions such as “Do you think there is too much income inequality?”, “Do you think we should spend more on welfare?”, etc..³ In addition, the advantage of working with French data is that for various historical reasons (and probably also because of the electoral system), the French political landscape is not divided into just two parties (as in the UK and in the US), but rather into a large number of exotic parties, from the old-style communists to the fascist National Front. I believe that this makes the analysis of the complex, multi-dimensional relationship between income, beliefs, political affiliation and redistribution potentially more interesting and more informative, and this was one of the main motivations for running this survey.

² Note that this « finding », although it might seem new to economists, is actually not novel for political scientists, political sociologists and social psychologists alike. See, e.g., Gilens (1996), who uses evidence from various surveys (including the GSS) to argue that the reason why the middle-class and the well-to-do are more opposed to welfare spending than the poor has more to do with differing perceptions of the causes of poverty than with self-interest. See also Fong (1996), who uses data from the National Longitudinal Survey (NSY) and the GSS to argue that the apparent effect of economic status on public generosity is in fact mediated through its effects on beliefs about the determinants of income.

³ The only exception is the ISSP 1987 « Social Inequality » module, where quantitative questions about how much does and should earn a bricklayer, a doctor, a cabinet minister, etc., were asked ; but no quantitative question was asked about income thresholds, minimum incomes or income taxation.

The main finding that emerges from this survey is that disagreements about income inequality are quantitatively much smaller than one might have thought (or, at least, much smaller than what I would have thought...) (see section III below). That is, irrespective of the fact that income-based disagreements are (at least partly) spurious (see section II), the point is that low-income individuals and high-income individuals have pretty similar most-preferred levels of income inequality. For instance, everybody, including very low-income individuals, seem to accept that senior managers in a large firm make 4 to 5 times as much money as a shopkeeper. These figures vary with individual income, and they always vary in the “right” direction, but these variations are simply very small quantitatively. I show that several obvious potential explanations for this result (“lower-income groups have crazy expectations about their probability of becoming a senior manager”, “lower-income groups want everybody to make as much as senior managers”, “lower-income groups want to get money from the “200 families”, not from senior managers”) do not seem to work. Therefore I am led to conclude that the poor simply accept the view that social and economic efficiency requires income inequalities to be about what they are, for instance because the poor internalize the same kind of incentive costs of redistribution (rightly or wrongly) as everybody else. I believe that this is one major lesson that one can draw from asking quantitative questions in social surveys.

The other important finding is that the issue of income inequality and of reducing income differentials does not seem to be a salient issue in France’s current political conflict (see section IV below). That is, most-preferred income ratios vary even less with individual political affiliation than they do with individual income. Again, the fact that individuals who choose to locate themselves on the extreme-left of the political spectrum seem to favor almost the same socially-optimal inequality level as self-declared right-wing individuals was a surprise to me, especially if one has in mind the violence of political discourses and political conflict between these various segments of the French political spectrum. In order to interpret this finding, I first show that left-wing and right-wing electorates all have the same average income in France: only the extreme-left and the extreme-right supporters have average incomes that are substantially lower than those of other electorates. Next, I briefly show that survey questions about the death penalty, the rôle of women, foreigners or the issue of globalization seem to characterize the nature of the left/right conflict much better than issues of income inequality and income redistribution.

Note that such a view of the “post-modern” political conflict is certainly not novel. For instance, Kitschelt’s 1994 book on the transformation of the European social democracy argues that the traditional “pro-redistribution vs anti-redistribution” dimension of conflict between left-wing and right-wing parties is being progressively replaced by a “libertarian vs authoritarian” dimension. Roemer (1997) recently tried to formalize this new argument as to “why the poor do not expropriate the rich in a democracy” in the context of a two-dimensional political competition model, where the left-wing party chooses to adopt very moderate views on the redistribution dimension in order to attract more votes on the libertarian dimension. My data is broadly consistent with the Kitschelt-Roemer view, except that the reason why the left chooses to abandon the redistribution axis should maybe not be interpreted in terms of a deliberate strategy of “abandoning the poor”: the point is that everybody, including the poor, seems to accept income inequalities almost as they are. Moreover, at least in the French case, it is not impossible that the left/right conflict has always had a similar nature. That is, it is possible that, except during short and chaotic periods, concrete issues such as income ratios between well-defined and socially-visible occupations have always generated a relative consensus, and that political conflict has always tended to focus on more abstract, non-income issues.

II. Basic finding: the spurious effect of income

In all countries, low-income individuals tend to favor more redistribution than high-income individuals. That is, if one runs a regression between answers to survey questions such as “Do you think that income inequalities should be reduced?” or “Do you think we are spending too much, too little or the right amount on welfare?” and self-declared individual income, then the coefficient on income is always very significant and has the “right” sign. If one adds other socio-demographic characteristics on the right-hand side, such as age, sex, occupation, city size, etc., the income coefficient remains highly significant and its size usually does not vary very much. However, if one adds on the right-hand side of the regression answers to survey questions such as “Some people say that people get ahead by their own hard work; others say that lucky breaks or help from other people are more important; which do you think is most important?” (GSS), then the size of the income coefficient is significantly reduced (although it usually remains statistically significant). I have run

similar regressions by using data from the GSS, the BSA, the 1985 and 1990 “Rôle of Government” and the 1987 “Social Inequality” modules of the ISSP, and for all countries and surveys I have obtained similar results: by adding the answers to such questions on the right-hand side, the size of income coefficient is usually reduced by at least 20-30%.⁴ Conversely, if one includes only the “ahead” question on the right-side and one further adds the income variable, then the size of the highly-significant “ahead” coefficient is not reduced.

These regression results should be interpreted in the following way. First, high-income individuals tend to believe more in the rôle of effort, while low-income individuals tend to believe more in luck and other factors that are beyond one’s control. Next, other things equal, individuals who believe more in effort favor less redistribution. Finally, and most importantly, the fact that the income coefficient declines substantially when one adds beliefs about effort on the right-hand side, while the beliefs coefficient does not when one adds income on the right-hand side, shows that beliefs are not simply self-serving. That is, when beliefs and self-interest differ (e.g. in case a high-income individual believes that luck is important), beliefs still matter. Of course, whether a 20-30% reduction of the income effect is substantial is a matter of judgment. One certainly cannot conclude from such results that income per se does not matter, but rather that individual attitudes about redistribution are a complex mix of selfishness and non-selfish beliefs about what makes people unequal. Note however that beliefs about effort are never precisely measured in survey questions (as opposed to income, for which one often has a continuous variable, or at least a discrete variable with 10 or more income brackets). For instance, in the GSS, we only know whether individuals believe that hard work is “the most important factor to get ahead”, whether they think that it is “luck”, or whether they think that it is “both”. The fact that one observes a 20-30% reduction in the income coefficient by including a variable with such a low informational content suggests that, if one could perfectly measure beliefs, the reduction in the income coefficient would be even greater.

Note also that the income coefficient reduction goes up to 40-50% (45% in the GSS) if one also adds on the right-hand side answers to questions such that “During the last few years, has your financial situation been getting better, worse, or has it stayed

⁴ For the complete regression results obtained with the GSS, see Piketty (1996).

the same". The interpretation is less clear, however: this could mean that recent income mobility has a strong (but ill-measured) effect on beliefs about effort, as predicted by the Piketty (1995) model, or simply that selfish individuals extrapolate (possibly in an excessive manner) from their recent income changes what their future income is likely to be, and therefore what their personal interest in redistribution is likely to be.⁵

I have run the same kind of regressions with data from my 1998 French survey, with similar results. The income coefficient is reduced by about 15% when one includes beliefs about effort on the right-hand side, which is slightly less than the reduction that we obtained with the GSS and the BSA. The only other important difference is the following. With the GSS and the BSA, one could obtain the same results by using answers about political affiliation or about the party vote during the latest election as the dependent variable (instead of the answer about redistribution): the income coefficient is always highly significant and has the right sign and its size declines substantially as one adds beliefs about effort on the right-hand side. With the French data, income does not have any significant effect on political affiliation or party vote, and attitudes toward redistribution are almost completely disconnected from political attitudes per se (see section III below).

Although this finding about the spurious effect of income on attitudes toward redistribution is robust and suggestive, the main shortcoming is that in available international surveys it is impossible to characterize quantitatively how much attitudes toward redistribution vary across individuals and income groups. I now turn to the quantitative results obtained with the French survey.

III. A relative consensus about income inequality?

The main results are summarized on table 1.

⁵ In Piketty (1996), I also found in the GSS that positive income shocks were more often and more strongly interpreted in the « right-wing » way (i.e. « effort pays off ») during the 1980s than during the 1970s, which is consistent with the Piketty (1995) learning model : rising income inequality leads individuals to put more effort (for given initial beliefs), and therefore leads more often to right-wing interpretations of positive income shocks ; note that this also implies that periods of rising inequalities do not

Insert Table 1 : Opinions about income ratios, as a function of individual income

Row (3) of table 1 reports the average answers to the question “According to you, what is the average monthly wage of a senior manager in a large firm?”. Row (3) shows that lower-income groups tend to lower-estimate the actual wages of high-pay occupations, which is something that I also found in the 1987 “Social Inequality” module of the ISSP as well as in surveys run in France in 1983 and 1993 by Credoc (the French survey institute which run my 1998 survey). Note however that this is a very small bias: the average answer (across all income groups) is 31771 francs per month (about 6000\$), and average answers by income groups go from around 27000 francs for lower income groups to 33000 francs for higher income group (note also that the relationship is not entirely monotonic: the lower middle-class tends to over-estimate the average wage of senior managers). In other words, everybody agrees that senior managers in large firms make on average about 30000 francs per month.

Row (4) of table 1 reports average answers to the question “According to you, what should be the average income of a senior manager in a large firm”, and rows (5) and (6) compute the absolute and percentage difference with row (3). Note that everybody, including high-income groups, would like senior managers to have a lower monthly income than what they think they currently make. Low-income groups tend to favor larger income reductions for senior managers, as expected. But the point is that variations across income groups are quantitatively very small: the desired income reduction for senior managers is equal to 14,1% on average (across all income groups), and it varies from 15-20% for lower-income groups to 5-10% for upper-income groups (down to 0,7% for the top income bracket). These variations are statistically significant, but to me they seem amazingly small. For instance, individuals in the bottom income bracket all make less than 45000 francs per year (and probably around 20-25000 francs on average), but they think that the income of senior executives should be reduced by only 16,9%. That is, they believe that senior managers should have a monthly income that is larger than their own annual income! Overall, what these figures show is an amazing degree of consensus about the orders of magnitude of what the income of senior managers should be like. Disagreements exist, and they go in the “right” direction, but these are

favor the development of pro-redistribution beliefs, since individuals have little

disagreements about 10% or 15% marginal adjustments. This is even more striking if one notes that disagreements are of the same order of magnitude if one looks at individuals with conflicting political affiliations (see rows (3) to (6) of table 2 and section III below).

Regression analysis confirms this analysis: if one runs a regression between the desired income reduction for senior managers and individual income bracket, then the income coefficient is statistically significant but quantitatively very small. I have tried to include all available variables on the right-hand side of the regression (sex, age, education, occupation, city size,...), but this never leads to a substantially higher income coefficient.⁶ The poor and the rich simply seem not to disagree too much about what the income of senior managers should be.

Several obvious stories can contribute to explain this finding, and we know briefly discuss each of them.

(i) Potential explanation n°1 : “lower-income groups have crazy expectations about their probability of becoming a senior manager”

This first, obvious explanation is a very standard expected-mobility argument about why the poor do not want to expropriate the rich: if most individuals in lower-income brackets expect to become a senior manager in the near future, then it is not really surprising that they do not want the income of senior managers to be reduced by more than 15-20%.⁷ However, in the present context, this argument does not seem to carry much weight. If we concentrate on individuals who declare that their income prospects for the next 5 years are negative, then the desired incomes for senior managers vary very little (never more than 5%), including for the lowest income group. Presumably, individuals who make less than 45000 francs per year and who

incentives to experiment low-effort strategies.

⁶ As was already noted in section II, this income coefficient declines by about 15% when one includes beliefs about effort on the right-hand side (row (21) of table 1 illustrates the extent to which lower-income groups more often believe in the rôle of factors that individual do not control) ; but the point is that the income coefficient is very low to start with.

⁷ This standard argument has recently been re-visited by Benabou and Ok (1998), who show that the idea that “everybody expects to be richer than average” is actually not as crazy as it might seem at first sight.

expect their income to decline in the next five years do not expect to become a senior manager any time soon, but they still do not want senior managers' income to be substantially reduced. In fact, the regression with the desired income reduction for senior managers as the dependent variable shows that the income coefficient declines (very slightly) when we include individual income prospects for the next five years: optimistic prospects lead to lower desired reductions, which corresponds to the standard expected-mobility effect, but the point is that lower income groups are less often optimistic than higher income groups. We have also tried to include other variables that could measure individual expected mobility probabilities, such as income changes during the past 10 years, age, diplomas, etc., but the general conclusion is that desired income reductions for senior managers never vary very much (desired reduction never exceed 15-20%, even in the worst scenario, i.e. individuals with income below 45000 francs, negative income prospects for the next 5 years, negative income changes during the past 10 years, no diploma and 50-to-55-year-old).

(ii) Potential explanation n°2 : “lower-income groups want everybody to make 30000 francs a month”

Another obvious explanation would be that low-income groups are ready accept that senior managers make 30000 francs per month, but that they also want everybody else to make 30000 francs per month. Rows (7) to (11) of table 1, which report average answers to the questions “According to you, what is the average monthly wage of a shopkeeper?” and “According to you, what should be the average monthly income of a shopkeeper?”, show that this is not the case. First, note that in the same way as for senior managers, lower-income groups tend to slightly underestimate the average wages of shopkeepers. But the key point is that lower income groups and upper income groups want the income of shopkeepers to rise by amount the same amount (about 30%). That is, everybody believes that the average monthly wage of a shopkeeper is about 5600 francs, and everybody would like the monthly income of a shopkeeper to be around 7500 francs. This represents a non-negligible rise of the shopkeepers' living standards, but the point is that this does not vary across income groups (the degree of similarity of reported numbers across income groups strikes me as amazingly large). Moreover, everybody, including the very lowest income

groups, whose members are much more likely to find a job as shopkeeper than as a senior manager, seems to agree that the monthly income of shopkeepers should be about 4-5 times smaller than that of senior managers (7-7500 francs vs 25-30000 francs). It is true that most individuals, especially those from lower income groups, want to reduce income ratios, but the point is that nobody wants to alter dramatically the orders of magnitude of those ratios: people believe that the actual income ratio between shopkeepers and senior managers is about 5-6, and they simply would like the ratio to be reduced around 4-5. Note also that the implicit redistribution advocated by the various income groups is approximately budget-balanced: people want the monthly income of senior managers to be reduced by about 4500 francs and the monthly income of shopkeepers to be increased by about 1800 francs, which is almost feasible since there are probably 3 times as many shopkeepers as senior managers. The general conclusion is that all individuals, including those from the very bottom income brackets, have very “reasonable” views about income redistribution.

(iii) Potential explanation n°3 : “lower-income groups want to get money from the “200 families”, not from people making 30000 francs a month”

Another potential explanation is that the poor do not want the income of senior managers to be reduced by too much because they believe that the burden of redistribution should fall on a few dozen of very-high-income capitalist families rather than on well-paid wage-earners. The survey data shows that people indeed tend to overestimate the numerical importance of very-high-income groups, but overall the weight of this explanation seems very limited.

First, the fact that nobody wants shopkeepers to make 30000 francs a month shows that people do not have completely crazy expectations about how much one should take away from the “200 families”.

Next, rows (11) and (12) report the answers to the questions “Some people think that in the current situation, we should ask additional effort to high-income households; others think that taxes are already very high and that we should not raise them any more; to which opinion do you feel closest?” and “What is the monthly income threshold above which we should ask additional effort?” (the second question was asked only to those who answered “We should ask additional effort to high-income

households” in the previous question). First, note that those who want to raise taxes on high-income households are always a minority, even among the bottom income brackets: on average, about 45-46% of the population wants to raise taxes on high-income households, and this percentage goes from 48-50% for lower-income groups to about 45% for middle-income groups and about 34% for the top income groups. Next, when those who want to raise taxes on the rich are asked the monthly household income threshold above which they want to raise taxes, pro-tax individuals from all income groups say that the threshold should be around 30000 francs (in practice, about 7-8% of French households make more than 30000 francs per month). Again, we observe that the threshold is an increasing function of individual income, but the point is that these variations are quantitatively very small (from 26-27000 francs for the bottom income brackets, up to 35000 francs for the top income brackets). Moreover, these numbers unambiguously show that nobody seems to believe that the burden of redistribution should fall exclusively on the “200 families”. Everybody agrees that senior managers and the top 10% of the income distribution are the typical income group to which we should ask effort to pay for redistribution, and everybody seems to agree that this effort should be moderate.

Answers to the questions “According to you, what is currently the average monthly household income?”, “According to you, what is the percentage of households who have more than 20000 francs per month?” and “According to you, what is the percentage of the population who have more than 50000 francs per month” (rows (13) to (15) of table 1) show that these conclusions should be somewhat qualified. First, row (13) shows that everybody, and especially the lowest income groups, underestimates the average income: the average self-declared annual income is about 140000 francs (see row (2) of table 1), ie 12000 francs a month, while on average respondents believe to be the average income to be around 10000 francs a month (the “true” average household income is around 14000 francs per month, and the “true” median around 12000). On the other hand, everybody tends to overestimate the percentage of households making more than 20000 francs per month: the true percentage is about 20%, while average estimates by income brackets are all around 27-28% (except for the bottom income group at 30%, the similarity in reported numbers is again very amazing). Overestimates are even more striking when people are asked what percentage of households make more than 50000 francs per month: the “true” percentage is around 2%, but the average

estimates given by respondents go from about 14% for lower-income groups to about 10% for upper-income groups (with an average around 12%). Note that only about 5% of the sample declares an annual income above 300000 francs (see row (1) of table 1), i.e. 25000 francs per month (the “true” percentage is about 10%).

In other words, it is true that everybody, and especially the lowest income groups, tends to vastly overestimate the fraction of the population that is above the “average senior manager in a large firm”, which might contribute to explain why they do not want senior managers’ income to be reduced by too much. Note also that lower-income groups tend to underestimate the income of senior managers, but to overestimate the fraction of the population that is above them. In a sense, this finding is consistent with the “200 families” view of redistribution: well-paid wage-earners are not that well-paid and are not the right target; the ill-defined social groups above them are sufficiently numerous to pay for redistribution.

This effect certainly exists, but regression analysis shows that this does not seem to be the main explanation as to why the poor do not want the senior managers’ income to be reduced by too much. If one runs a regression between the desired income reduction for senior managers on the left-hand side, and individual income and the perceived percentage of households over 50000 francs per month (“rev50000”) on the right-hand side, then the coefficient on rev50000 is statistically significant and negative. This negative coefficient shows that those who believe in a higher fraction of households above 50000 francs do not want to reduce too much the incomes of those senior managers who make 30000. Moreover, adding rev50000 on the right-hand side does indeed lead the income coefficient to rise. That is, controlling for the fact that lower-income groups tend to overestimate more than other income groups the percentage of very rich households, the true effect of income is actually larger than in the simple regression. In other words, one reason why the apparent effect of income seems so small is indeed because lower-income groups also tend to believe that the burden of redistribution should fall on richer groups. But the point is that the income coefficient rises by only about 10% when rev50000 is included, which is not very surprising if one looks at row (15) of table 1: low-income groups do not overestimate the number of very rich by that much more than high-income groups do.

(iv) The case of the minimum income scheme (“RMI”)

The only redistribution question for which income seems to make a really large difference is the minimum income scheme (“RMI”): 5% of lower-income groups want to suppress it, vs. almost 20% for higher income groups (see row (16) of table 1). Note however that the proportions who want to keep the RMI with the same amount or who want to raise this amount do not vary that much by income group, and that among those who want to raise this amount (who represent 45-50% for all income groups, up to 60% for lower-income groups), almost everybody reports the same ideal level for the RMI (around 4000 francs) (see row (20)). Note that this ideal level of 4000 francs is actually not that different from the actual level, if one takes into account the housing benefits that usually go with the RMI (the phrasing of the question was probably not completely adequate, because only the pre-housing-benefit level of 2500 francs was mentioned, and most people do not know how housing benefits work for RMI recipients; this inadequate phrasing might contribute to explain why a majority of the respondents wants to raise the level of the RMI). As was already noted in section II, part of the reason why low-income individuals do not want to suppress the RMI is because they believe less in effort and more in “bad luck” than higher income groups (see row (21) of table 1). If one runs a regression between a dummy variable equal to 1 for those who want to suppress the RMI on the left-hand side and income and the right-hand side, then the income coefficient is reduced by about 15% when one adds beliefs about effort on the right-hand side.

IV. Is the left/right political conflict really about income redistribution?

How much do attitudes toward redistribution vary with political affiliation and party vote? Table 2 summarizes the main results.

Insert Table 2: Opinions about income ratios, as a function of political affiliation

(i) The “political affiliation” and “party vote” variables

People were asked to rank themselves on a scale going from left to right, with “1” as the extreme-left, “7” as the extreme-right, and “4” as the center. About 80% of the respondents chose to locate themselves on 3, 4 and 5, and only about 5% on the two extremes (see row (1) of table 2). The average “political positioning” is 3,8, i.e.

slightly at the left of the center. Note that this political positioning variable is highly correlated with answers to the question about party vote during the 1997 general election: row (22) of table 1 shows that the average political positioning goes from 2,4 for Communist Party voters to 3,2 for Socialist Party voters, around 4,5 for mainstream right-wing parties voters and 5,2 for National Front voters. Note that 39,5% respondents declare that they voted for the Socialist Party, although the true score was almost 10 points lower! In the GSS, one also observes that many respondents who did not vote for the winning party tend to misreport their vote later on, especially when economic results are good and the government seems to be doing well (and conversely when the economy is in recession and the government seems to be doing badly: in 1981, a majority of GSS respondents reported that they voted for Carter in 1980!). The correlation between the political positioning variable and the party vote variable is equal to 0,68. Given that the party vote can depend on the existence and personal characteristics of party candidates in local constituencies, the political positioning variable seems more informative, and this is the variable that I will use from now on (moreover, the response rate to the political positioning question is over 80%, whereas almost 47% of the sample does not respond to the party vote question, including abstention and blank bulletins; given the limited size of the sample (2004 individuals), this is an important additional advantage of the political positioning variable).

The first thing to note about the French political conflict is the absence of any robust relationship between political affiliation and individual income. Row (2) of table 2 shows that, with the noticeable exception of extreme-left and extreme-right supporters, whose income is significantly below the average income, the average income is basically the same for all political affiliations. The average income of left-wing and center-left supporters is slightly above average, while that of center and center-right supporters is slightly below average, and that of right-wing supporters is above average. The same is true if one uses the party vote instead of political affiliation (see row (24) of table 2). The correlation between political positioning and income brackets is equal to -0.017 , while that between party vote and income brackets is equal to -0.026 . If one runs regressions between political positioning (or party vote) and individual income, then the income coefficient is always very close to 0 and is never statistically significant. Age and sex are almost significant at the 5% confidence interval, but the coefficients are very small (the young and the old are

slightly more to the right, and women are slightly more to the left), and including such variables on the right-hand side of the regression does not change anything to the income coefficient (very close to 0, and never significant). The only socio-demographic variable that comes very significantly is professional occupation and especially city size: people living in rural areas are more often right-wing, while people living in large cities are more often left-wing. This is a traditional axis of political conflict in France: peasants and pensioners living in rural areas or in small cities are more right-wing, while urban wage-earners are more left-wing. But the explanatory power of these variables remains small: the R^2 of the regression never goes above 0,02. Moreover, even by including all these variables on the right-hand side, the income coefficient remains non-significant (the income coefficient becomes positive as one includes city size, but the standard deviation of the coefficient remains 10 times as large as the coefficient!). In other words, political affiliation almost do not depend on personal economic characteristics, and seem to be determined only by personal beliefs and perceptions (see below).

(ii) “Concrete” attitudes toward redistribution do not vary very much with political affiliation

Rows (3) to (6) of table 2 also show that attitudes toward redistribution do not seem to be an important determinant of political affiliation. The average desired income reduction for senior managers is equal to 10,3% for the extreme-left, 15,5% for the left, 8,6% for the center-left, 17,9% for the center, 6,2% for the center-right, 7,6% for the right, and 9,9% for the extreme-right. If one runs a regression between this desired income reduction and political affiliation (or the opposite..), the political affiliation coefficient is never statistically significant. In contrast, individual income always came very significantly in such regressions, although the quantitative magnitude of the coefficient was very small (see section II above). In both cases, desired income reductions for senior managers simply do not vary very much. To me, these results really came as a surprise. Given the violence of political discourses about social justice and the evils of the market in France, I would have expected the left and the extreme-left to favor more substantial income reductions for senior managers than the right.

Moreover, in the same way as with individual income, the reason why desired income reductions almost do not vary with political affiliation is not because the left and the extreme-left want everybody to make as much as senior managers. Rows (7) to (10) show that extreme-left and left-wing supporters would like to raise the monthly income of shopkeepers by about 40%, while the right would like to raise it by 30%. Note that in contrast to the case of senior managers, political affiliation does have a statistically significant effect on the desired pay raise for shopkeepers (and this effect is not washed out by individual income or any other available variable). But the point is that this effect is just very small. That is, the only difference between the left (including the extreme left) and the right is that the left wants to give a few hundred francs more to shopkeepers, while preserving basically the same income ratios. Note that individuals who choose to locate themselves on the extreme-right report desired incomes which are also very much in line with the rest of the population. There just seems to exist a very large consensus about what the quantitative hierarchy of income should be like.

What is more puzzling, however, is that political affiliation seems to matter much more for the question about taxing the rich (see row (11) of table 2). A clear majority of left-wing supporters is in favor of “asking an additional effort to high-income households”, while a very strong majority of right-wing supporters believes that “we should not raise taxes any more”. This is puzzling, given that: (i) even within the very lowest income brackets, there is never a majority in favor of “taxing the rich” (see row (11) of table 1 and section II above); (ii) left-wing supporters who want to tax the rich also report average thresholds around 30000 francs; (iii) left-wing supporters want to reduce senior managers’ income by less than the poor. In regressions with political affiliation as the dependent variable, the question on “taxing the rich” always comes very significantly and has a much stronger explanatory power than all socio-demographic variables (but a smaller explanatory power than the questions about “social liberalism” described below). In regressions with responses to “taxing the rich” as the dependent variable, both political affiliation and individual income are significant and have the “right” sign, but the political affiliation coefficient is larger than the income coefficient. The only interpretation that I could think of is that left-wing supporters react to relatively abstract questions such as “taxing the rich” in an “ideological” the way: left-wing supporters identify themselves to the abstract idea of “taxing the rich” much more than the poor. But when they are asked concrete and

quantitative questions about redistribution (such as the desired income reduction for senior managers), then left-wing supporters come with the same answers as right-wing supporters, while the poor are in favor of (slightly) more “concrete” redistribution. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the responses to the question about the RMI (see rows (16) to (20) of table 2): the percentage in favor of suppressing the RMI is clearly higher on the right and on the left (this is an “ideological” issue, in the sense that only a small minority is in favor of this solution, and everybody knows that the RMI will never be suppressed), but the reported ideal level for the RMI is not larger among left-wing supporters (including those of the extreme-left) than among right-wing supporters. Every time that they are asked to give concrete numbers about redistribution, left-wing supporters (including those of the extreme-left) basically give the same numbers as right-wing supporters.

(iii) What is the left/right political conflict really about?

Given that there seems to exist a very large consensus about what the quantitative hierarchy of income should be like, what is the left/right political conflict about? Tables 3 and 4 give some answers. Needless to say, a complete analysis of the beliefs system of the left and the right is far beyond the scope of this paper, and the aim of this section is simply to show that there are survey questions for which responses vary much more with political affiliation than concrete questions about redistribution.

Insert Table 3: Opinions about social issues, as a function of political affiliation

Table 4: Opinions about social issues, as a function of individual income

The questions that come most significantly in regressions and have the largest explanatory power on political affiliations are the questions about the death penalty, the rôle of women, foreigners and globalization. Row (1) of table 3 shows that only about 30% of left-wing and center-left supporters are in favor of the death penalty, but that this percentage goes up to 60% for those who locate themselves at the center, 64% at the center-right, 75% at the right and 83% at the extreme-right. Row (2) shows that only 20% of the left and center-left think that “women have a special rôle to play at home and for educating children”) (the remaining 80% think that

“women must have the same rôle as men in professional and political life”), but that this percentage goes up to 30-32% at the center and center-right, 39% at the right and 51% at the extreme-right. Row (3) shows that only 20% of left-wing and center-left supporters believe that “foreigners are not able to integrate to society and occupy any social position”, but this percentage goes up to 32% at the center, 38% at the center-right, 53% at the right and 61% at the extreme-right.

Note that on all those issues, one observes a monotonic evolution between the center, the center-right, the right and the extreme-right. That is, the more you go to the right, the less “liberal” you are, in the sense that you believe that there is no way that dangerous criminals can be brought back to normal way, that there is no way that women can escape their natural rôle of looking after the kitchen and the kids, that there is no way foreigners can escape their original culture and civilization, etc.. In that sense, the extreme-right and the National Front can hardly be viewed as an “anomaly” in the right-wing family: on the contrary, they stand as the logical continuation of the anti-liberal right. This also shows that the anti-tax attitude of the right should rather be interpreted in a conservative way (“only the natural market forces can select those who have enough personal will”, “those who are lazy or unable should not be subsidized”) rather than in the liberal way (“everybody can become everybody, as long as we do not interfere with private choices and incentives”).

Note also that on all these issues, the extreme-left is actually at the right of the left and of the center-left (the observed relationship is monotonic only if one excludes the extreme-left, and is U-shaped otherwise). This illustrates the ambiguity of left-wing interventionism and its relationship with liberalism. On the one hand, the left is characterized by some form basic optimism about human nature and its ability to escape its initial condition, and therefore by a strong attachment to liberty and laissez-faire. But on the other hand, the beliefs that “everybody can become everybody” only if some enlightened elite designs appropriate state interventions can easily degenerate into some form of authoritarianism, anti-liberalism and radical pessimism about human nature.

This fundamental ambiguity of the left/right conflict with respect to the question of liberalism is well-illustrated by the answers to the questions about globalization and “can everybody become everybody”: rows (4) to (6) all show a very clear U-shaped pattern of anti-liberalism. In the context of 1998 France, this authoritarian and anti-

liberal potential of the left is however very limited: only 2,7% of all individuals choose to locate themselves on the extreme-left (see row (1) of table 2), and, on all issues except globalization, individuals who choose to locate themselves on the left (which includes most communist party voters) are as liberal or more liberal than those who choose to locate themselves on the center-left.

Rows (1) to (4) of table 4 also helps to explain why, in spite of its slightly more pro-redistribution stance, the left is not more successful than the right for attracting the poor. On all those issues (death penalty, rôle of women, foreigners, globalization), low-income individuals always tend to be less liberal than middle-income and high-income individuals. Note also that variations by income brackets are always less dramatic than variations by political affiliation. This clearly illustrates that the left is about promoting a certain liberal view of society, not about helping the poor per se. Rows (5) of tables 3 and 4 exemplify this complex relationship between the left and the poor: the relationship between individual income and the percentage of individuals believing that “any individual is potentially able to occupy any social position” is clearly monotonic (low-income individuals believe they are able to replace the affluent, but the affluent disagree), whereas the relationship is much less clear with respect to political affiliation.

The only “social liberalism” issue where the left-wing liberalism and the interests/preferences of the poor go in the same direction is the question as to whether social transfers should be distributed in cash or in kind. Unsurprisingly, the poor tend to prefer social transfers in cash, whereas the rich would prefer to monitor the consumption of the poor by having more in-kind transfers (see row (7) of table 4). But row (7) of table 3 also shows that there is a clear left/right pattern on this issue: more than 40% of left-wing supporters favor transfers in cash, and this percentage goes down to 30% at the center and 20% at the right. The reason why this percentage goes up again at the extreme-right is simply due to the fact that extreme-right supporters are poorer: controlling for income, the relationship is monotonic (except for the extreme-left, which then appears more right-wing than the left). This question about social transfers also confirms that the natural tendency of the right is to be anti-liberal (although in a much less dramatic ways than questions about the death penalty, women or foreigners). This is also apparent with survey questions on whether voters can easily be manipulated in democracies and whether one should heavily regulate private choices about marriage, divorce and abortion (results not

reported here): variations for these two questions are much less dramatic than for the death penalty, women and foreigners questions, but they always tend to show that the right is less liberal than the left.

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Table 1 : Opinions about income ratios, as a function of individual income

	Annual household income brackets											
	average	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
(1)	5,97	7,0	10,0	8,0	6,9	8,8	10,9	14,2	13,7	10,6	5,1	4,9
(2)	141284	22500	55000	70000	80000	92500	110000	135000	175000	225000	275000	450000
(3)	31771	27707	26742	25345	31507	33221	35528	34520	32264	32625	32296	32976
(4)	27306	23014	25015	21722	23976	26739	27653	27741	28859	31025	30104	32753
(5)	-4465	-4693	-1727	-3623	-7531	-6482	-7875	-6779	-3405	-1600	-2192	-223
(6)	-14,1	-16,9	-6,5	-14,3	-23,9	-19,5	-22,2	-19,6	-10,6	-4,9	-6,8	-0,7
(7)	5670	5521	5711	5410	5496	5660	5641	5691	5651	5820	5813	6027
(8)	7477	7325	7384	7068	7337	7506	7436	7502	7560	7677	7751	7711
(9)	1807	1804	1673	1658	1841	1846	1795	1811	1909	1857	1938	1684
(10)	31,9	32,7	29,3	30,6	33,5	32,6	31,8	31,8	33,8	31,9	33,3	27,9
(11)	45,7	48,7	44,9	47,8	50,8	49,0	47,6	43,4	46,7	44,8	33,8	34,0
(12)	29976	27091	26764	26671	26083	26882	27525	31437	33410	32198	38369	36595

Notes: Columns represent annual household income brackets: 1 = under 45000 francs; 2 = 45000-65000; 3 = 65000-75000; 4 = 75000-85000; 5 = 85000-100000; 6 = 100000-120000; 7 = 120000-150000; 8 = 150000-200000; 9 = 200000-250000; 10 = 250000-300000; 11 = over 300000 francs.

Row (1) = percentage distribution of income (7,0% of the sample is in bracket 1, 10,0% in bracket 2, etc.; 5,97 is the average bracket)

Row (2) = average income (the average income is 141284 francs, if one attributes to all individuals in a given bracket the average income of that bracket, and 450000 francs for the top bracket)

Row (3) = average answer to the question: "According to you, what is the average monthly wage of a senior manager in a large firm?" ("Selon vous, combien gagne en moyenne, par mois, un cadre supérieur dans une grande entreprise?")

Row (4) = average answer to the question: "According to you, what should be the average monthly income of a senior manager in a large firm?" ("Et d'après vous, quel devrait être le revenu mensuel moyen d'un cadre supérieur dans une grande entreprise?")

Row (5) = (4) - (3)

Row (6) = % (5)/(3)

Row (7) = average answer to the question: "According to you, what is the average monthly wage of a shopkeeper?" ("Selon vous, combien gagne en moyenne, par mois, une caissière de supermarché?")

Row (8) = average answer to the question: "According to you, what should be the average monthly income of a shopkeeper?" ("Et d'après vous, quel devrait être le revenu mensuel moyen d'une caissière de supermarché?")

Row (9) = (8) - (7)

Row (10) = % (9)/(7)

Row (11) = percentage responding "We should ask additional effort to high-income households" ("Il faut demander un effort supplémentaire aux ménages disposant de revenus élevés") to the question "Some people think that in the current situation, we should ask additional effort to high-income households; others think, on the contrary, that taxes are already very high and that we should not raise them any more; to which opinion do you feel closest?" ("Certaines personnes pensent que dans le contexte actuel, il faudrait demander un effort supplémentaire aux ménages disposant de revenus élevés; d'autres pensent, au contraire, que les impôts sont déjà très élevés et qu'il ne faut pas les augmenter encore; de quelle opinion êtes-vous le plus proche?") (the only other possible answer is "We should not raise taxes any more" ("Il ne faut pas augmenter à nouveau les impôts"))

Row (12) = average answer to the question "What is the monthly income threshold above which we should ask additional effort?" ("A partir de quel niveau de revenus mensuels pensez-vous qu'il faudrait demander un effort supplémentaire?") (this question was asked only to those who responded "We should ask additional effort to high-income households" to the previous question)

Table 1 (continued) : Opinions about income ratios, as a function of individual income

	Annual household income brackets											
	average	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
(13)	9902	9398	8636	8831	8614	9775	10206	10108	10233	10613	10554	11303
(14)	27,5	30,4	28,1	27,1	28,3	27,2	28,2	26,8	27,0	26,3	27,0	27,1
(15)	12,5	14,0	14,0	14,2	15,6	12,9	12,7	11,8	12,1	10,4	11,5	9,9
(16)	10,2	5,0	6,9	7,7	8,0	8,9	9,6	11,5	9,1	11,7	21,8	18,2
(17)	3,0	3,1	3,0	1,9	2,5	5,8	1,9	3,2	3,0	5,0	0,0	1,5
(18)	32,8	33,0	31,2	31,1	24,0	32,0	31,3	36,9	38,2	32,5	24,5	37,9
(19)	54,0	58,9	59,0	59,3	65,5	53,3	57,2	48,4	49,7	50,7	53,8	42,4
(20)	3939	3777	3785	3850	3875	3776	4054	3987	4063	3935	4269	4064
(21)	26,4	33,7	33,5	23,7	38,5	30,1	30,0	23,3	27,6	18,1	16,4	11,3

Notes:

Row (13) = average answer to the question "According to you, what is currently the average monthly household income?" ("D'après vous, quel est aujourd'hui, en France, le revenu mensuel moyen dont dispose chaque ménage?")

Row (14) = average answer to the question "According to you, what is the percentage of households who have more than 20000 francs a month?" ("A votre avis, quel est le pourcentage de ménages qui disposent aujourd'hui, en France, de plus de 20000 francs par mois?")

Row (15) = average answer to the question "According to you, what is the percentage of households who have more than 50000 francs a month?" ("A votre avis, quel est le pourcentage de ménages qui disposent aujourd'hui, en France, de plus de 50000 francs par mois?")

Rows (16) to (19) = percentage distribution of the answers to the question "The level of the minimum income ("RMI"), for a single individual (with no kid), is about 2500 francs a month; to which opinion to you feel closest? We should suppress the RMI (row (16)), we should maintain the RMI with a lower level (row (17)), we should maintain the RMI with the same level (row (18)), or we should maintain the RMI with a higher level (row (19))" ("Le montant du RMI est actuellement, pour une personne seule (sans enfant à charge), d'environ 2500 francs par mois; de quelle opinion, parmi celles-ci, êtes-vous le plus proche? Il faut supprimer le RMI; il faut maintenir le RMI, mais avec un montant plus faible; il faut maintenir le RMI tel qu'il est, avec le même montant qu'actuellement; il faut maintenir le RMI avec un montant plus élevé")

Row (20) = average answer to the question "According to you, what should be the level of the RMI for a single individual?" ("A votre avis, à combien devrait s'élever le montant du RMI pour une personne seule?") (this question was asked only to those who answered that we should maintain the RMI with a different level)

Row (21) = percentage responding "mostly by factors that individuals do not control (social origins, luck, ..)" ("surtout par des facteurs que les individus ne contrôlent pas (origines sociales, chance,...)") to the question "According to you, how can we account for the professional successes of some and the failures of others in today's society?" ("D'après vous, comment s'explique principalement, dans notre société, la réussite professionnelle des uns et l'échec professionnel des autres") (the two other possible answers are "mostly by personal will and individual choices" ("surtout par l'initiative personnelle et les choix individuels") and "as much by personal will as by factors that individuals do not control" ("autant par les initiatives personnelles que par des facteurs que les individus ne contrôlent pas")

(non-answers are excluded; they represent 12,9% of the sample for the income bracket question, 8,6% and 6,1% for the "higher executive" questions, 4,3% and 6,1% of the sample for the "shopkeeper" questions, 3,1% for the "tax" question, 15,2% on the "average income" question, 17,8% on the "over 20000 francs" question, 18,2% on the "over 50000" question, 5,6% on the "RMI" question, and 4,3% to the "professional success" question)

Table 2 : Opinions about income ratios, as a function of political affiliation

	Extreme left			Centre			Extreme right				
	average	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
(1)	3,8	2,7	9,6	24,4	41,1	13,6	6,1	2,5			
(2)	147511	111913	154444	154813	142909	148528	165694	109509			
(2')	6,2	5,1	6,4	6,5	6,0	6,1	6,6	5,2			
(3)	33224	30196	36648	31273	31789	32303	34975	25764			
(4)	28089	27089	30977	28593	26105	30299	32308	23226			
(5)	-5135	-3107	-5670	-2680	-5685	-2004	-2667	-2538			
(6)	-15,5	-10,3	-15,5	-8,6	-17,9	-6,2	-7,6	-9,9			
(7)	5691	5724	5573	5790	5686	5695	5617	5372			
(8)	7507	8042	7848	7722	7389	7284	7279	7183			
(9)	1816	2318	2275	1932	1703	1589	1662	1811			
(10)	31,9	40,5	40,8	33,4	30,0	27,9	29,6	33,7			
(11)	46,3	51,7	69,2	53,4	43,5	34,9	24,7	42,6			
(12)	30219	28188	28323	30650	29870	34112	31200	26835			
(13)	9928	9532	9600	10393	9701	9811	10821	9107			
(14)	27,0	26,2	25,2	28,2	27,5	25,7	26,1	23,8			
(15)	12,3	14,2	10,8	12,6	12,7	11,2	12,3	10,7			
(16)	9,8	9,2	7,0	6,8	9,8	11,3	19,5	18,3			
(17)	2,6	0,0	2,3	1,6	2,0	6,8	2,4	1,9			
(18)	33,7	21,7	30,0	32,2	34,7	37,5	38,6	27,9			
(19)	54,0	69,2	60,8	59,5	53,5	44,3	39,5	52,0			
(20)	3946	4031	4188	3980	3962	3596	3838	4113			
(21)	25,9	33,0	34,2	24,6	27,0	20,6	18,1	29,0			
	average EXG	PC	Verts	PS	DVG	DVD	UDF	RPR	FN	EXD	
(22)	2,3	6,9	7,9	39,5	3,7	4,7	6,9	19,7	7,7	0,8	
(23)	3,8	2,2	2,4	3,5	3,2	3,1	4,4	4,6	4,7	6,3	
(24)	150572	128169	147699	153900	153414	152389	163540	137118	147304	153334	132371
(25)	6,3	5,7	6,3	6,3	6,5	6,7	6,6	6,1	6,1	6,4	4,8

Notes: For rows (1) to (21), columns represent answers to the question: "Political preferences are usually ranked on a scale going from left to right; how would you classify yourself on such a scale?" ("On classe habituellement les préférences politiques sur une échelle de ce genre, allant de gauche à droite; vous, personnellement, où vous classeriez-vous sur cette échelle?") (respondents must choose a number from 1 (extreme-left) to 7 (extreme-right), with 4 as the centre)

Row (1) = percentage distribution of political affiliation (2,7% of the sample is at the extreme-left, 9,6% at the left, 24,4% at the centre-left, etc.; 3,81 is the average political affiliation)

Row (2) = average income (see row (2) of table 1)

Row (2') = average income bracket

Rows (3) to (21) = see rows (3) to (21) of table 1

For rows (22) to (25), columns represent answers to the question "What party did you vote for during the June 1997 general elections?" ("Lors des élections législatives de juin 1997 (il y a un an), pour quel parti ou mouvement politique avez-vous voté?") (respondents must choose between Extrême gauche, Parti Communiste, Verts, Parti Socialiste, Divers gauche, Divers droite, UDF, RPR, FN and Extrême droite)

Row (22) = percentage distribution of the vote

Row (23) = average answers to the "political affiliation" question

Row (24) = average income (see row (2)); Row (25) = average income bracket

(non-answers are excluded; they represent 19,1% of the sample for the political affiliation question; absence, blank bulletins and non-answers represent 46,8% of the sample to the "1997 election" question)

Table 3 : Opinions about social issues, as a function of political affiliation

	average	Extreme left			Centre		Extreme right	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1)	52,4	57,6	30,1	34,3	59,5	63,9	75,3	83,2
(2)	28,5	30,3	19,2	22,0	30,2	32,0	39,3	51,4
(3)	31,3	24,4	21,9	21,7	32,1	38,0	53,5	61,2
(4)	16,9	37,8	21,2	13,0	14,8	14,0	26,1	45,2
(5)	25,5	35,6	22,6	25,3	25,7	21,4	31,5	32,5
(6)	51,4	53,3	28,6	45,0	55,0	58,5	66,2	72,0
(7)	32,4	42,6	42,2	32,5	30,5	26,7	22,8	43,7

Notes: Columns represent answers to the question: "Political preferences are usually ranked on a scale going from left to right; how would you classify yourself on such a scale?" (see table 2)

Row (1) = percentage responding "for" to the question "Are you for or against the death penalty?" ("Etes vous personnellement pour ou contre la peine de mort?")

Row (2) = percentage responding "Women have a special rôle to play at home and for educating children" to the question "Some people believe that women must have the same rôle as men in professional and political life; others believe that women have a special rôle to play at home and for educating children; to which opinion do you feel closest?" ("Certains pensent que les femmes doivent avoir le même rôle que les hommes dans la vie professionnelle et politique; d'autres estiment que les femmes ont un rôle particulier à jouer à la maison et pour l'éducation des enfants; de quelle opinion êtes vous le plus proche?") (the other possible answer is "Women must have the same rôle as men" ("Les femmes doivent avoir le même rôle que les hommes"))

Row (3) = percentage responding "No, especially if they come from different cultures and civilisations" ("Non, surtout quand ils viennent de cultures et de civilisation différentes") to the question "Do you think that foreigners are able to integrate to society and occupy any social position?" ("Pensez-vous que les étrangers sont capables de s'intégrer à la société et d'occuper n'importe quelle position sociale?") (the two other possible answers are "Yes, thanks to their personal will" ("Oui, grâce à leurs propres initiatives") and "Yes, but only if society helps them" ("Oui, mais seulement si la collectivité les aide"))

Row (4) = percentage responding "A true danger, and governments cannot do anything about it" ("Un véritable danger, et les gouvernements ne peuvent rien y faire") to the question "Do you think that globalization is for our country:" ("Estimez-vous que la mise en contact de pays différents par le biais de la mondialisation est plutôt pour notre pays:") (the two other possible answers are "A true chance" ("Une véritable chance") and "A chance, but only if governments protect us from the excesses of globalization" ("Une chance, mais seulement si les gouvernements nous protègent des excès de la mondialisation"))

Row (5) = percentage responding "Yes" to "Do you think that any individual is potentially able to occupy any social position?" ("Pensez-vous que dans notre société, chaque individu est potentiellement capable n'importe quelle position sociale?") (the other possible answer is "No")

Row (6) = percentage responding "There will always exist inequalities between individuals, and the government cannot do anything about it" ("Il existera toujours des inégalités insurmontables entre les individus, et même les aides de la collectivité ne peuvent rien y faire") (the other possible choice was "There will always exist inequalities across individuals, but the government can contribute to attenuate them" ("Il existera toujours des inégalités insurmontables entre individus, mais les aides de la collectivité peuvent contribuer à les atténuer"))

Row (7) = percentage responding "Only in cash" or "Mostly in cash" to the question "According to you, should social transfers (family benefits, minimum income (RMI), unemployment benefits,..) be distributed mostly in cash or mostly in kind (food, housing,..)" ("A votre avis, faut-il mieux, de façon générale, verser les transferts sociaux (allocations familiales, RMI, allocations chômage,..) plutôt en espèces ou plutôt en nature (nourriture, logement, équipement et services,..)") (the other possible answers are "Only in kind", "Mostly in kind" and "As much in kind as in cash")

(non-answers are excluded; they represent 5,3% of the sample for the "death penalty" question, 3,2% for the "rôle of women" question, 3,1% for the "foreigners" question, 3,7% for the "globalization" question, 1,2% for the "social position" question, and 2,7% for the "transfers in kind" question)

Table 4 : Opinions about social issues, as a function of individual income

	Annual household income brackets											
	average	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
(1)	54,9	60,6	56,6	56,0	61,7	65,7	56,5	55,9	51,7	45,0	48,0	45,4
(2)	27,5	25,6	37,2	36,4	37,9	31,8	26,8	24,8	25,2	18,5	15,2	20,1
(3)	32,8	36,9	40,7	34,6	45,0	39,5	34,9	30,1	27,6	23,4	23,3	28,5
(4)	18,4	31,2	25,4	24,3	31,0	21,5	15,7	17,4	15,9	8,6	10,5	3,6
(5)	25,8	36,1	29,6	31,1	24,0	27,7	24,0	22,9	26,1	22,2	16,9	22,8
(6)	53,0	58,4	55,5	53,8	52,7	39,2	47,3	40,2	49,0	54,1	59,7	56,4
(7)	31,7	38,7	32,8	31,5	41,9	28,0	28,8	31,5	30,7	31,6	24,8	29,1
(8)	3,79	3,82	3,84	3,79	3,79	3,99	3,80	3,76	3,69	3,77	3,79	3,89

Notes: Columns represent annual household income brackets (see table 1)

Rows (1) to (7): see rows (1) to (7) of table 3

Row (8) = average answer to the "political affiliation" question