ECONOMIC INEQUALITY NETWORK

WORKSHOP ON PSYCHOLOGICAL & ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES ON INEQUALITY

9 & 10 OCTOBER 2025

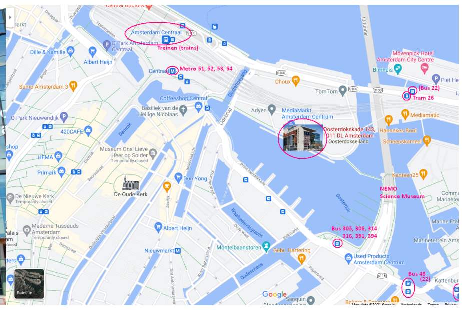
OBA OOSTERDOK PUBLIC LIBRARY (AMSTELZAAL 6.7)
AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

Workshop location: OBA Oosterdok - Public Library in Amsterdam (Oosterdokskade 143). The workshop will take place in room: Amstelzaal 6.7

How to reach OBA Oosterdok

By public transport: OBA Oosterdok can be reached by public transport using all metros, trams and buses that terminate at Amsterdam Central Station. The library is situated 500 metres east of the Central Station.

On foot: From Amsterdam Central Station: take the exit to the centre, turn left in an easterly direction. Follow the signs to Oosterdok, walk past the Double Tree Hotel and continue along the boulevard until you reach the OBA Oosterdok.



(Optional) workshop dinner on Thursday, 9 October:
De Ysbreeker restaurant (Weesperzijde 23). Preregistration required.

Speakers: If you are presenting a talk, please bring a copy of your slides on a USB drive which we can use to upload your presentation to the venue computer. For '*long talks*', each speaker will have a total of 25 minutes. We suggest aiming for approximately 20 minutes for your presentation and 5 minutes of audience questions. For '*short talks*', each speaker will have a total of 15 minutes. We suggest aiming for approximately 12 minutes for your presentation and 3 minutes of audience questions.

Organizing Committee: Leon Hilbert (University of Amsterdam), Dianna Amasino (Tilburg University) and Sarah Vahed (Radboud University). If you have any questions, at any point during the workshop, please feel free to speak to any of the committee members.

Funding: We are very grateful to have received workshop grants from the International Association for Research in Economic Psychology (IAREP) and European Association for Decision Making (EADM) that make this workshop possible.

EIN: The Economic Inequality Network brings together researchers from Psychology, Economics, and Business in the Netherlands whose work centers on economic inequality. If you are a researcher in the Netherlands and interested in joining, please email Leon (l.p.hilbert@uva.nl) or Dianna (D.R.Amasino@tilburguniversity.edu).

IAREP

eadm
The European Association for Decision Making

PROGRAM

Day 1 - Thursday, 9 October		
Time	Event	Speaker(s)
9:15 - 9:45	Welcome + registration	
9:45 - 10:00	Opening remarks	
10:00 - 11:20	Talk series 1	*Theme: Inequality and Redistributive Preferences* 1. Daniele Marchesi, University of Groningen, The Netherlands, "*Tracing the Roots of Inequality: Early-Life Conditions and Preferences for Redistribution in African and other Low- and Middle-Income Countries*" (Long Talk) 2. Christian Elbaek, Aarhus University, Denmark, "*Megastudy testing 20 treatments to increase support for wealth redistribution*" (Long Talk) 3. Rui Guan, University of Kent, United Kingdom, "*Fair Cooperation*" (Long Talk)
11:20 - 11:50	Coffee Break	-
11:50 - 12:50	Keynote	Keynote Speaker 1: Ingvild Almås (University of Zurich) *Title: Inequality and Fairness: Measuring preferences and perceptions*
12:50 - 13:50	Lunch	-
13:50 - 14:35	Talk series 2	*Theme: Conflicting Motives Under Inequality* 1. Hooman Habibnia, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria, "*Merit or Luck: The Role of Inequality in Opportunity on Hiring Decisions - MouseLab Study*" (Short Talk) 2. Janek Kretschmer, Maastricht University, The Netherlands, "*Why Do Donors Give to Less Effective Charities*" (Short Talk) 3. Anna Shcherbiak, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria, "*Conviction vs. Calculation: Beliefs in the Face of Conflicting Economic Interests*" (Short Talk)
14:35 - 15:35	Coffee + Discussion	*Small-group roundtable discussions on the themes of: Redistributive preferences; Consequences of inequality and social position; and (Perceived) causes of inequality*
15:35 - 16:30	Talk series 3	*Theme: Beliefs and Explanations of Inequality* 1. Magdalena Wasilewska, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, "*Explanations of Inequality*" (Long Talk)

		2. Avishalom Tor, Notre Dame Law School, France, "*N-Equality: Inequality Increases with the Number of Allocation Recipients*" (Long Talk)
17:00 - 18:00	Borrel	-
19:00 - 21:00	Optional dinner	De Ysbreeker restaurant (Weesperzijde 23). Pre-registration required

Day 2 - Friday, 10 October		
9:30 - 10:00	Welcome	
10:00 - 11:20	Talk series 4	*Theme: Antecedents and Consequences of Inequality* 1. Tycho van Tartwijk, Leiden University, The Netherlands, "*Parochialism in Cooperation under Equal and Unequal Contexts*" (Long Talk) 2. Lara Többen, University of Mannheim, Germany, "*Economic Inequality: Does it only hurt our trust if it is unfair?*" (Long Talk) 3. Thomas Buser, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, "*A competitive world*" (Long Talk)
11:20 - 12:00	Coffee + Discussion	-
12:00 - 13:00	Keynote	Keynote Speaker 2: Barnabás Szászi (Eotvos Lorand University) *"The robustness and generalizability of inequality research"*
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch	-
14:00 - 15:20	Talk series 5	*Theme: Perceptions of Inequality and Social Position* 1. Andrea FM Martinangeli, Université Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas, France, *"Inequality and Social Influence: Monetary Hierarchies Shape Persuasive Power"* (Long Talk) 2. Jorgo Goossens, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, "*How the Dutch Rank Themselves: Patterns of Perceived Economic Positions and Personality Traits*" (Long Talk) 3. Francisco Miguel Soler-Martínez, Aarhus University, Denmark, "*Informing about inequality's prevalence can reduce support for addressing it*" (Short Talk) 4. Ana Clara Ebert, Vrije University Amsterdam, The Netherlands, "*The Middle Class Bias: Class Misperception at the High and Low End of the SES Spectrum*" (Short Talk)
15:20 - 15:30	Closing remarks	

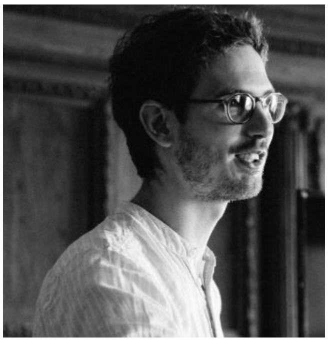
Keynotes

Keynote 1 (Thursday, 11:50 – 12:50)

Ingvild Almås (University of Zurich)

Title: Inequality and Fairness: Measuring preferences and perceptions

Keynote 2 (Friday, 12:00 – 13:00)



Barnabás Szászi (Eotvos Lorand University)

Title: The robustness and generalizability of inequality research

Abstract: Social and behavioral science research often yields highly heterogeneous results—a pattern that, I will argue, also characterizes research on inequality. Although some effects seem to be large within specific settings, they may disappear in others and show opposite patterns in yet others. The heterogeneity within these studies can come from different sources, including population heterogeneity, design heterogeneity, and analytical heterogeneity. In this talk, I will explore how we might approach the question of generalizability more constructively within our field. I will draw on examples from two areas: misperceptions of economic inequality and the effect of financial scarcity on cognition. These findings will be framed within the context of recent large-scale team science projects I have led. Finally, I will suggest practical strategies for enhancing the robustness and generalizability of our research.

Talk Series 1 (Thursday, 10:00 to 11:20)
Theme: Inequality and Redistributive Preferences

Talk 1: "Tracing the Roots of Inequality: Early-Life Conditions and Preferences for Redistribution in African and other Low- and Middle-Income Countries" (Long Talk)

Presenter: Daniele Marchesi, University of Groningen, The Netherlands

List of Authors: D. Marchesi, M. Nikolova, O. Popova, V. Angelini

Understanding how attitudes toward inequality form is central to debates on redistribution and social policy, yet the influence of early-life conditions on these attitudes remains poorly understood, especially outside high-income countries. This paper examines how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) shape adult preferences for income redistribution across a broad geographic scope including both the global North and South. We use data from the first wave of the Global Flourishing Study (GFS) - a new large-scale, multi-country longitudinal survey that follows over 200,000 individuals across 22 countries and one territory. We construct measures of ACEs based on retrospective questions about parental relationships, abuse, health, and family income. Taking advantage of the novelty of the GFS, we begin by documenting cross-country and regional patterns in both ACE prevalence and attitudes toward redistribution. We then examine the determinants of redistributive preferences and show that these differ markedly between the global North and South. In particular, ACEs are positively associated with support for redistribution in the global North but show no significant relationship in the global South. These findings suggest that early-life adversity shapes not only material outcomes but also attitudes toward inequality, and highlight how broader cultural and economic contexts contribute to differences in preferences for redistribution.

Talk 2: "Megastudy testing 20 treatments to increase support for wealth redistribution" (Long Talk)

Presenter: Christian Elbæk, Aarhus University, Denmark

List of Authors: Christian T. Elbæk, Nina Mazar, Janis H. Zickfeld, Mathilde H. Tønnesen, Morten N. Støstad, Kris-Stella Trump, Juan Diego García-Castro, Melissa Sands, Rosa Rodriguez-Bailon, Valerio Capraro, Keith Payne, Laila Nockur, Kelly Kirkland, Kajsa Hansson, Sarah Zaccagni, Margaux N. A. Wienk, Nick Buttrick, Yngwie A. Nielsen, Tobias Otterbring, Stephanie Tepper, Barnabas Szaszi, Wilson Merrell, Claudia Civai, Efraín García-Sánchez, Paul K. Piff, Thais Cardarelli, Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington, Lucas Chancel, Jiaying Zhao, Yuchen Huang, Zoe Rahwan, Daniele Nosenzo, Giulia Priolo, Pia Dietze, Stuart Soroka, Crystal Hall, Miceal Canavan, Andrea Martinangeli, Carsten Jensen, Daniel Sznycer, Karolina Ścigała, Ania Jaroszewicz, Daniel Nettle, Caroline Roux, Sergio Pirla, Jolanda Jetten, Daniela Goya-Tocchetto, Gordon Brown, Britt Hadar, Darius-Aurel Frank, Terence Dores Cruz, Stefan Pfattheicher, Panagiotis Mitkidis

Economic inequality in the United States has reached unprecedented levels. This extreme concentration of economic resources in the hands of the few has substantial negative consequences for societies and individual behavior, including reduced economic mobility and growth, and increased political polarization. Yet, public support for policies aimed at redistributing wealth remains low. This project investigates whether behavioral science interventions can effectively increase support for redistribution. Using a megastudy design, we tested 20 interventions against a null control in a nationally representative U.S. sample (N = 30,356), with a follow-up survey conducted approximately 3 weeks later (N = 24,094) to assess durability. Our outcomes focus on attitudes toward general redistribution and a specific policy: a progressive wealth tax targeting the top 0.1%. We find that many interventions significantly increase support for redistribution. The most effective strategies visualize the current scale of inequality, highlight past redistributive policies, or emphasize elite cues endorsing redistribution. Similar patterns emerge for wealth tax support, with additional effectiveness observed in interventions invoking deservingness heuristics. While treatment effects decline somewhat over time, many remain significant and meaningful in the follow-up, underscoring that redistributive preferences are highly elastic and can be influenced by behavioral science interventions—insights that can inform evidence-based policy approaches to address economic inequality, and enhance public engagement with redistributive policies.

Talk 3: "Fair Cooperation" (Long Talk)

Presenter: Rui Guan, University of Kent, United Kingdom

List of Authors: Rui Guan & Andis Sofianos

The economics literature has documented how fairness perceptions of inequality vary depending on the source of inequality. Furthermore, pro-sociality and cooperativeness have been documented to vary across societies and cultures. Using an online experiment, we study how different redistributive regimes are perceived in terms of fairness and how these regimes impact cooperation. We find that perceptions of fairness depend on taxation levels, but not the extent of meritocracy. Meanwhile, fairness perceptions significantly impact cooperation levels. Those performing worse in the initial earnings and redistribution task, are willing to cooperate at higher levels in what they perceive to be the fair regime, but no different otherwise.

Talk Series 2 (Thursday, 13:50 to 14:35)
Theme: Conflicting Motives Under Inequality

Talk 1: "Merit or Luck: The Role of Inequality in Opportunity on Hiring Decisions - MouseLab Study" (Short Talk)

Presenter: Hooman Habibnia, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria

People perceive and make sense of inequality in their environment, which shapes how they think and behave (e.g., Gimpelson & Monusova, 2014). Recognizing potential disparities in opportunity, this study investigates the impact of learning opportunity inequality on information search behavior and hiring decisions. In a pre-registered, fully incentivized experiment with 400 participants, we utilize n-arm bandit tasks to simulate diverse learning opportunities. Advantaged participants are expected to achieve better test results by leveraging acquired knowledge during the learning phase, while disadvantaged participants are anticipated to exhibit lower proficiency than their advantaged counterparts. In the hiring stage, participants review two simplified CVs, including data on test scores and learning opportunities, using the MouseLab paradigm (Johnsons et al., 1989), to make their preferred hiring choice. In the end, recruiters will receive an additional bonus based on the chosen candidate's performance, and the selected candidate will receive a fixed bonus. Drawing on motivated reasoning research, we hypothesize that privileged groups may overlook information about disadvantaged individuals' learning opportunities. Additionally, individuals with prosocial preferences may allocate more time to information search tasks. This online experiment aims to deepen our understanding of these behaviors and preferences by exploring the causal relationship between information-seeking behavior, social preferences, and group disadvantage.

Talk 2: "Why Do Donors Give to Less Effective Charities" (Short Talk)

Presenter: Janek Kretschmer, Maastricht University, The Netherlands

List of Authors: Janek Kretschmer , Samara Cooper, and Paul Smeets

We investigate how donors respond to information about charity effectiveness. In an online experiment with 1,320 American donors, we find that a substantial share of donors are "splitters" who divide their donations equally between charities—even when one is demonstrably much more effective than another serving identical recipients. This behavior persists across four philanthropic causes (education, climate, health, and clean water), and only decreases substantially when the less effective charity is explicitly described as potentially harmful. Incentivized allocation tasks and survey measures show that splitting is primarily motivated by fairness concerns toward the charities themselves rather than fairness toward the recipients. Splitters express more egalitarian views on wage distribution and attribute differences in charity cost-effectiveness to luck, whereas donors who allocate their entire gift to the more effective charity tend to hold more meritocratic beliefs and believe that differences between charities stem from effort and talent. These findings suggest that concerns about equality and merit are deeply embedded in donation behavior and that highly effective charities might benefit more from accommodating donors' fairness preferences rather than seeking full donations based solely on impact metrics.

Talk 3: "Conviction vs. Calculation: Beliefs in the Face of Conflicting Economic Interests" (Short Talk)

Presenter: Anna Shcherbiak, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria

List of Authors: Anna Shcherbiak, Hooman Habibnia

Voters' support for policies that contradict their economic self-interest remains a persistent puzzle in the social sciences. While recent research highlights how social identity shapes political attitudes, most studies focus on responses to polarizing issues such as climate change or immigration. In the context of redistribution, emerging evidence suggests that identity-protective cognition may exacerbate economic inequality when it benefits the ingroup, but the underlying mechanisms remain poorly understood. In a laboratory experiment, we investigate how identity orientation biases beliefs about the impact of redistributive policy. Participants vote on policies that either enhance their ingroup status or maximize individual earnings, with payoffs externally determined. By manipulating both ingroup status (positive/negative discrimination) and earning potential (high/low), we elicit beliefs about the welfare effects of meritocratic and redistributive policies. Results from a pilot experiment reveal that belief formation is systematically biased when identity and economic interest conflict. Specifically, participants with low earning potential but high group status overestimate the gains from increased positive discrimination for their ingroup while underestimating the personal losses from reduced redistribution. Conversely, high earners in disadvantaged groups overestimate the benefits of merit-based policies and downplay the costs of discrimination. These findings suggest that motivated reasoning generates optimistic or pessimistic biases in belief formation, helping explain why voters support policies that may reinforce economic inequality.

Talk Series 3 (Thursday, 15:35 to 16:30)
Theme: Beliefs and Explanations of Inequality

Talk 1: "Explanations of Inequality" (Long Talk)

Presenter: Magdalena Wasilewska, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

List of Authors: Thomas Douenne, Oda Sund, Magdalena Wasilewska, Joël van der Weele

Economic inequality has become central in political debates, gaining attention in media, public discourse, and academic research. Public concern is also growing, with more people strongly agreeing that income differences are too large. Given its importance, we explore how individuals explain inequality through a survey experiment on a representative Dutch sample (N = 4501) in the Longitudinal Internet studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) panel. Using textual data from an open-ended question, we analyze respondents' top-of-mind explanations for inequality. We examine which factors are cited and where people place responsibility. We link this to individual-level data from the LISS Core Study and administrative income and wealth data from the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), enabling analysis across social and economic groups. We find that structural explanations (e.g., those focused on the labour market, tax system) dominate, over dispositional (e.g., those focused on hard work, education) or situational (e.g., those focused on luck) ones. Explanation content varies by respondent characteristics, such as wealth or political affiliation. Beliefs in meritocracy, progressive taxation, and unfairness of inequality are linked to more external explanations. Notably, wealth, more than income, shapes how people explain inequality.

Talk 2: "N-Equality: Inequality Increases with the Number of Allocation Recipients" (Long Talk)

Presenter: Avishalom Tor, Notre Dame Law School, France

List of Authors: Stephen M. Garcia and Avishalom Tor

We examine the equality preferences of resource allocators, finding that a ubiquitous situational factor—the mere number of recipients (N)—shapes the tradeoffs these allocators make between their equality concerns and other considerations. Specifically, our studies offer evidence for an N-Equality Effect: Third-party allocators become less concerned about inequality as the number of recipients increases. A pilot study illustrates the N-Equality effect with university faculty salaries, showing that the variance in faculty salaries increases with department size. Study 1 offers experimental evidence that allocators facing a tradeoff between equality and the distributive principles of efficiency and equity give less weight to equality as the number of recipients increases, and supplemental experiments replicate the effect with different equality-efficiency tradeoffs. Study 2 reveals the N-Equality effect in allocators' choice that requires an equality-equity tradeoff between low variance and high variance distributions. Studies 3a-c implicate the contribution of social comparison to the N-Equality Effect, linking allocators' preferences to their concerns over social comparison among recipients (Studies 3a and 3c) and showing this concern mediates the N-Equality Effect (Study 3b). We conclude with implications for inequality research.

Talk Series 4 (Friday, 10:00 to 11:20)
Theme: Antecedents and Consequences of Inequality

Talk 1: "Parochialism in Cooperation under Equal and Unequal Contexts" (Long Talk)

Presenter: Tycho van Tartwijk, Leiden University, The Netherlands

List of Authors: Tycho van Tartwijk, Angelo Romano, Leticia Micheli

Cooperation between groups is crucial to achieve and sustain public goods. However, people tend to show discrimination in cooperation by cooperating more with their ingroup members than outgroup members. This is referred to as parochialism in cooperation, which has been identified to be ubiquitous across cultures. However, past research on parochialism in cooperation has largely relied on settings of equality, where individuals have access to equal resources, endowments, and productivity. The present experimental laboratory study (N = 240) investigates whether parochialism in cooperation differs between equal and unequal contexts. To do so, we utilize a 2 (advantaged vs disadvantaged status; between-subjects) x 2 (ingroup vs outgroup partner matching; within-subjects) x 3 (equality vs low inequality vs high inequality; within-subjects) mixed design incorporating a repeated prisoner's dilemma. Results indicate that cooperation decreases as inequality rises, and that individuals show parochialism in cooperation in all settings. However, parochialism in cooperation is reduced for disadvantaged individuals in high inequality. We review and discuss the implications of these findings on current theoretical frameworks of parochialism in cooperation.

Talk 2: "Economic Inequality: Does it only hurt our trust if it is unfair?" (Long Talk)

Presenter: Lara Többen, University of Mannheim, Germany

List of Authors: Lara Többen, Michaela Wänke

Over the past decade, inequality research has proposed that economic inequality reduces interpersonal trust but the evidence for this claim has been inconclusive. To explain this, researchers have suggested that perceived inequality mediates the effects of objective inequality on trust. However, similarly, perceived inequality predicted trust only in some studies. This may be because perceived inequality can be distinguished further into estimates of size and appraisals of inequality, such as its fairness, yet past studies have rarely regarded this distinction. In this study, we investigated whether fairness of inequality, rather than estimates of size, mediates the effects of objective inequality and therefore decreases individual's interpersonal trust. We did so within a sample collected in Germany (N = 2.206; Year: 2023), as well as data collected by the ISSP (N = 33.384; Year: 2019) and the ESS (N = 50.746; Year: 2018 / 2019). Our results show that trust correlated either equally or more strongly with fairness of inequality than estimates of size. Furthermore, fairness of inequality mediated the effects of objective inequality on trust, rather than estimates of size. Thus, our findings highlight the importance of fairness appraisals of inequality for trust. Future studies should take note of how perceived inequality is defined, especially in the face of social interactions.

Talk 3: “A competitive world" (Long Talk)

Presenter: Thomas Buser, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

List of Authors: Thomas Buser, Alexander W. Cappelen, Uri Gneezy and Bertil Tungodden

We provide the first globally representative evidence on the nature and socialization of competitiveness, drawing on survey data from 66,785 individuals across 62 countries. The data were collected through a novel survey module fielded in the 2022 Gallup World Poll, which measures individuals' willingness to compete and their views on whether children---randomly described as boys or girls---should be encouraged to compete. We document striking global regularities: in all but one country, men are more willing to compete than women, and the willingness to compete is positively associated with income, education, confidence, and risk tolerance in nearly every country. At the same time, we find large cross-country variation in both competitiveness and its socialization, which we link systematically to inequality and gender norms. In more unequal countries, individuals are more likely to value competitiveness in themselves and in children. Gender gaps in socialization vary with gender equality, reinforcing gender differences where equality is low and counteracting them where it is high. Finally, we provide quasi-causal evidence that exposure to economic and gender inequality during adolescence has a lasting impact on adult competitiveness and attitudes toward socialization. Taken together, our findings offer new insights into the behavioral foundations and formative roots of competitiveness across societies.

Talk Series 5 (14:00 to 15:20)
Theme: Perceptions of Inequality and Social Position

Talk 1: "Inequality and Social Influence: Monetary Hierarchies Shape Persuasive Power" (Long Talk)

Presenter: Andrea FM Martinangeli, Université Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas, France

List of Authors: Andrea FM Martinangeli; Biljana Meiske

We examine how purely monetary differences shape social influence in a controlled experiment using a representative German sample of over 1,500 participants. By isolating the social hierarchy outlined by income differences, free from cultural or individual confounds, we assess how advice from differently ranked advisors sways recipients' choices. We find an influence premium of high rank accounting for 0.17 standard deviations of choices, indicating an inherent psychological predisposition toward affluent sources of information. This effect, observed in absence of merit signals, suggests that visible wealth status independently amplifies interpersonal influence, offering insight into the value of monetary rank in social hierarchies.

Talk 2. "How the Dutch Rank Themselves: Patterns of Perceived Economic Positions and Personality Traits" (Long Talk)

Presenter: Jorgo Goossens, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands

List of Authors: Shashank Misra, Marike Knoef, Jorgo Goossens, Eduard Ponds

We use unique survey data to study how people perceive their position in the national income, wealth, and (future) pension income distribution in the Netherlands. Combining our survey data with administrative records, we find a strong center bias: individuals who are objectively lower ranked consistently overestimate their standing, while those ranked higher tend to underestimate it across all three domains. We then investigate the difference between perceived and actual economic rank, focusing on the role of personality traits. Our analysis reveals that, after controlling for objective rank, the traits of neuroticism and extraversion play a salient role. Individuals high in neuroticism consistently underestimate their position in the income, wealth, and pension distributions, while those high in extraversion tend to overestimate theirs. Our results are not purely driven by the mechanical nature of "center bias", since neurotic individuals already tend to be lower ranked yet still underestimate, and extraverts tend to be higher ranked yet still overestimate their position. These findings suggest that personality contributes in a systematic and measurable way to how individuals form beliefs about themselves within the economic hierarchy.

Talk 3: "Informing about inequality's prevalence can reduce support for addressing it" (Short Talk)

Presenter: Francisco Miguel Soler-Martínez, Aarhus University, Denmark

Public campaigns often aim to increase awareness of economic inequality in order to foster concern and support for redistribution. Yet such efforts may sometimes backfire. Recent research (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2024) shows that when people learn a problem is highly prevalent, they judge it as less damaging. We test whether this mechanism applies to perceptions of economic inequality. We conducted three preregistered experimental studies with North American participants recruited via Prolific. In Study 1a (N = 250), participants evaluated the case of a person in the bottom income quintile, earning 17 times less than those in the top quintile. When told that such cases are very common, participants judged inequality as less likely to harm this person's future economic prospects. Study 1b (N = 1,000) replicated this effect and extended it to the domains of health, education, and housing. In Study 2 (N = 1,040), we combined within- and between-subject designs to test both the robustness and broader implications of this effect. Replicating the original finding, prevalence information reduced perceived individual harm. Crucially, when adapting a scenario from Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2024), we found that prevalence information also lowered the perceived importance of addressing economic inequality as a societal issue. Across studies, our findings suggest that highlighting how widespread inequality is may inadvertently normalize it, thereby reducing public concern and support for redistributive action.

Talk 4: "The Middle Class Bias: Class Misperception at the High and Low End of the SES Spectrum" (Short Talk)

Presenter: Ana Clara Ebert, Vrije University Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Subjective socioeconomic status (SES) is a significant predictor of concern about economic inequality and support for redistributive policies, with more concern and support at lower levels. However, there is often a bias in how people perceive their subjective SES compared to their objective SES. Relative to their objective income levels, lower income people tend to overestimate their standing while higher income people underestimate their standing. In other words, both groups see themselves as more middle class than their respective incomes would suggest. According to the prevailing reference group hypothesis, this middle-class bias is primarily a consequence of making social comparisons with similar others, such that people generally see themselves as "in the middle." Across two correlational studies and one experimental study ($N = 1007$), we test this hypothesis against a set of novel competing hypotheses. We find minimal support for the reference group hypothesis and instead find that agreement with negative upper class stereotypes drive the middle class bias for higher income groups, $b = -0.280$, $t(233) = -3.621$, $p < .001$. We also find that motives to disidentify with one's income group and perceptions of economic ease/difficulty predict the middle class bias for higher and lower income groups. These findings offer new insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying socioeconomic misperception. Given that overestimating one's socioeconomic status is associated with less support for redistributive policies, these findings have implications for understanding attitudes and behaviors related to economic inequality.