

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0047-2727(17)30142-1
DOI: doi: [10.1016/j.jpubeco.2017.08.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2017.08.010)
Reference: PUBEC 3804

To appear in: *Journal of Public Economics*

Received date: 27 June 2016
Revised date: 23 August 2017
Accepted date: 28 August 2017



Please cite this article as: Fisman, Raymond, Jakiela, Pamela, Kariv, Shachar, Distributional Preferences and Political Behavior, *Journal of Public Economics* (2017), doi: [10.1016/j.jpubeco.2017.08.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2017.08.010)

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Raymond Fisman, Pamela Jakiela, and Shachar Kariv[†]

September 26, 2017

Abstract

We document the relationship between distributional preferences and voting decisions in a large and diverse sample of Americans. Using a generalized dictator game, we generate individual-level measures of fair-mindedness (the weight on oneself versus others) and equality-efficiency tradeoffs. Subjects' equality-efficiency tradeoffs predict their political decisions: equality-focused subjects are more likely to have voted for Barack Obama in 2012, and to be affiliated with the Democratic Party. Our findings shed light on how American voters are motivated by their distributional preferences.

JEL Classification Numbers: C91, D64.

Keywords: Distributional preferences, social preferences, fair-mindedness, self-interest impartiality, equality, efficiency, redistribution, political decisions, voting, party affiliation, American Life Panel (ALP), experiment

*Previously circulated as “The Distributional Preferences of Americans.” We thank Daniel Markovits, Daniel Silverman, and numerous conference and seminar participants for helpful discussions and comments. We thank the American Life Panel (ALP) team at the RAND Corporation for software development and technical and administrative support. We acknowledge financial support from the Center for Equitable Growth (CEG) at the University of California, Berkeley.

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