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Perceptions of Inevitability and Demand for Redistribution: Evidence from a Survey Experiment

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Highlights
- Believing that inequality is inevitable may affect demand for redistribution
- We explore this idea with a survey experiment in a high-inequality context
- Inevitability beliefs can be reduced by learning about lower inequality elsewhere
- Exposure to this type of information increases support for redistributive policies
- Our analysis sheds light on a novel mechanism in the literature on redistribution

ABSTRACT

Believing that inequality is inevitable may limit demand for redistribution. We explore this idea with a survey experiment in South Africa, one of the most unequal countries in the world. Inevitability beliefs can be influenced by learning about lower inequality elsewhere. We find that the demand for redistributive policies reacts to this information, while it is insensitive to other types of information/messages. Our analysis suggests a promising, and heretofore unexplored, avenue of research for refining our understanding of the determinants of demand for redistribution.

Keywords: inequality, demand for redistribution

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