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Do People Support Information Campaigns about Inequality?

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Do People Support Information Campaigns about Inequality?*

Abstract

We study beliefs about whether information campaigns can shift public support for redistribution in a survey with more than 3,000 respondents. We randomly provide respondents with evidence from a meta-study about the share of information interventions that do not significantly affect redistributive preferences. This information strongly changes respondents' beliefs about the effectiveness of such campaigns. Descriptively, respondents who are more skeptical about the effectiveness of information campaigns are also less supportive of disseminating such information. However, we find no causal effect of experimentally shifting these beliefs on support for government provision of inequality-related information to the public, which is generally high. We analyze open-ended responses to study why experimentally shifting beliefs about the effectiveness of information campaigns does not affect support for information dissemination.

JEL classification

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Keywords

information campaigns, inequality, information dissemination preferences, survey experiment

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1 Introduction

Providing information to the public through information campaigns is a central element of evidence-based policymaking. Accurate and timely information is widely regarded as essential for enabling citizens to make informed decisions and for strengthening democratic accountability and policy legitimacy. Accordingly, governments and non-government organizations frequently engage in public information campaigns on socially relevant issues such as inequality, taxation, public health, social mobility, and redistribution. Reflecting this policy practice, a growing strand of economic research has used information-provision experiments to study how providing factual information affects the policy preferences of the general public (for reviews, see Alesina et al., 2020; Stantcheva, 2023; Haaland et al., 2023).

At their core, information campaigns in the context of evidence-based policymaking aim to inform the general public, alleviate related misperceptions, and potentially affect public opinion and behavior. Indeed, the general public appears to be subject to systematic misperceptions about a variety of societal issues (see Haaland et al., 2023). Among these, misperceptions regarding social inequalities are arguably of particular relevance for both policymakers and the social sciences alike.¹ Many papers document widespread misperceptions regarding key dimensions of inequality, including its level (Henkel et al., 2025), the scope for social mobility (Davidai and Gilovich, 2015; Kraus and Tan, 2015; Alesina et al., 2018), and individuals' relative position in the income distribution (Cruces et al., 2013; Karadja et al., 2017). Against this background, a substantial body of research has examined whether correcting such misperceptions through informational interventions affects individuals' views and policy preferences related to inequality (e.g., Cruces et al., 2013; Kuziemko et al., 2015; Karadja et al., 2017; Engelhardt and Wagener, 2018; Hoy and Mager, 2021; Günther and Martorano, 2025). Overall, the effects of such informational treatments on attitudes towards inequality and redistribution have been mixed, with many studies finding no significant impact of information provision on policy preferences (Marino

¹Inequality is widely recognized as having strong implications for politics and public policy. In a classical political-economy framework, higher levels of gross income inequality should translate into increased support for redistributive policies in a majority-voting equilibrium (Romer, 1975 and Meltzer and Richard, 1981). Empirically, however, this prediction is often not borne out. Despite rising inequality in many advanced democracies, public demand for redistribution has remained largely stable or even declined (Kuziemko et al., 2015). One explanation is that individuals lack accurate information about the extent of inequality (e.g., Gimpelson and Treisman, 2018).

et al., 2024). This limited effectiveness of information provision raises a fundamental normative question: should public information campaigns about inequality be used as a policy tool to inform citizens in the first place?

We address this question from a citizen perspective by studying how information about the (limited) effectiveness of information campaigns affects individuals’ preferences for information dissemination. To this end, we conducted a survey experiment with a representative sample of the German population ($N \approx 3,000$). Drawing on meta-study evidence (Marino et al., 2024), respondents that were randomly assigned to treatment *Info-Average* are informed that in 63% of cases, studies find no effects of providing information about inequality on *average* support for redistribution.² Respondents assigned to treatment *Info-Polarization* are informed that in 78% of cases, studies find no effects on the *polarization* of redistributive preferences.³ Following the information provision, treated respondents answer the same questions on (i) their beliefs about the effectiveness of information campaigns, and (ii) their preferences for information dissemination to the public as respondents in the uninformed control group.

We find that respondents’ prior beliefs about the extent to which providing information about inequality affects redistributive preferences — both in terms of average support and polarization — are highly dispersed. When asked about the expected effects of information provision on support for redistribution, respondents on average assign a 44% probability to positive effects (increased support; factual value according to Marino et al. (2024): 23%), a 20% probability to negative effects (decreased support; factual value: 14%), and a 36% probability to no effects (factual value: 63%). Beliefs about information effects on polarization exhibit a similar pattern: on average, respondents assign a probability of 46% to positive effects (increased polarization;

²Reviewing 59 studies, Marino et al. (2024) show that exposure to information about inequality often has no significant effects on outcomes like respondents’ demand for redistribution or polarization of redistributive preferences. Although the review includes 59 studies, many feature multiple information treatments and outcome measures. The authors therefore construct 185 distinct treatment–outcome observations, each coded as showing a statistically significant positive effect, statistically significant negative effect, or null effect on redistributive preferences. The study also records 403 instances of heterogeneous treatment effect estimates related to polarization of redistributive preferences. These individual treatment effect estimates are the basis of our information intervention.

³Note that the political feasibility of redistributive policies may depend not only on average policy support in the population but also on the degree of polarization in policy views. High polarization can hinder the implementation of redistributive policies and contribute to political gridlock, particularly in debates over policies targeting disadvantaged groups (Dixit and Weibull, 2007; Bonomi et al., 2021; Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). Some argue that disagreement over redistributive policies may stem from divergent perceptions of inequality (e.g., Bursztyn and Yang, 2022; Haaland and Roth, 2023). We therefore implement two information treatments that inform about effects of information campaigns on average policy support and on polarization thereof, respectively.

factual value: 12%), 20% to negative effects (decreased polarization; factual value: 10%), and 34% to no effects (factual value: 78%). Thus, across both outcomes, respondents substantially underestimate the share of studies finding no effects, while overestimating the share of studies finding positive or negative effects. These misperceptions leave scope for our information interventions to update beliefs about the effectiveness of information campaigns.⁴

Next, we study how information about the share of studies finding no effects of information provision on redistributive preferences — and on their polarization — causally affects respondents’ posterior beliefs about the effectiveness of information campaigns. To this end, after information provision, we asked respondents which effect they consider most prominent: whether, on average, providing information about inequality increases, decreases, or has no effect on average support for redistribution and on the polarization of redistributive preferences. The treatments lead to pronounced shifts in posterior beliefs. In the control group, 46% of respondents select “no effect” as the most prominent effect on average support for redistribution; treatment *Info-Average* increases this share to 63%. Similarly, 50% of respondents in the control group select “no effect” as the most prominent effect on polarization; treatment *Info-Polarization* raises this share to 63%.⁵ As expected, belief updating toward the information provided is stronger among respondents whose prior beliefs deviated more from the actual share of studies finding no effects. In a follow-up survey conducted a few days after the main survey, we show that these treatment effects on beliefs remain significant, suggesting that the effects of information provision persist beyond the immediate survey horizon rather than reflecting merely short-lived reactions.

In descriptive analyses, respondents who are more skeptical about the effectiveness of information campaigns are also substantially less supportive of disseminating such information. This pattern raises the possibility that beliefs about the effectiveness of information provision causally affect support for information dissemination.

Despite these strong descriptive correlations – and the substantial and persistent belief updating induced by our treatments – we find no evidence that informing respondents about the

⁴Our information treatments focus on the share of studies finding no effects, rather than positive or negative effects separately, because our main interest is whether the perceived effectiveness of information campaigns in changing preferences at all affects support for information dissemination.

⁵Correspondingly, in the *Info-Average* treatment, the share of respondents selecting a decrease (increase) as the most prominent effect on average support for redistribution declines from 9% in the control group to 5% (from 45% to 33%). Likewise, in the *Info-Polarization* treatment, the share selecting a decrease (increase) as the most prominent effect on polarization declines from 10% in the control group to 7% (from 39% to 30%).

high prevalence of null findings in studies of inequality-related information campaigns causally affects their preferences for information dissemination. Across five individual outcome measures — covering support for government-led information provision, the use of information campaigns as a policy tool, universities’ knowledge transfer activities, actual newsletter subscriptions, and incentivized donations — as well as an index aggregating these dimensions, treatment effects are economically small and statistically insignificant. In the control group, baseline support for information dissemination is high: for instance, 62% support government provision of information on inequality, 74% endorse information campaigns as a general policy instrument, 79% donate a positive amount to the World Inequality Lab, and 22% subscribe to its newsletter. Treatment effects on all these outcomes are small and statistically insignificant, with sufficiently precise estimates to rule out economically meaningful effects. Re-eliciting key outcomes in our follow-up survey also yields small and insignificant coefficients, providing no evidence of delayed treatment effects. Overall, while the information treatments lead respondents to revise their beliefs about the effectiveness of information campaigns, they do not affect demand for disseminating scientific information on inequality to the public.

Complementing these experimental results, we also asked respondents how important they consider an informed population for political decision-making and elicited the reasons for their assessment in an open-ended question. More than 80% consider it important. Analyzing the human-coded answers to the open-ended question on the underlying reasons, we find that support for informing the public is predominantly grounded in democratic considerations. Approximately 40% of respondents describe information as essential for democratic governance, participation, and opinion formation. This motive is particularly pronounced among respondents who consider an informed society important, whereas those who do not more frequently cite mistrust and skepticism as reasons. These patterns suggest that preferences for information dissemination are largely rooted in normative views about democratic self-governance rather than instrumental considerations such as the effectiveness of information provision, providing additional context for our experimental findings.

We conduct a range of additional analyses to assess the robustness of our findings. Our heterogeneity analysis shows that treatment effects on belief updating are largely homogeneous across a broad range of sociodemographic characteristics, political attitudes, trust measures,

and preference traits. We find that belief-updating patterns remain remarkably stable across subgroups. Likewise, the overall null effects on preferences for information dissemination are broadly consistent across subgroups and do not mask significant counteracting effects in different subsamples. We further examine whether survey-induced measurement error – due to inattention or limited self-knowledge (i.e., cognitive uncertainty) (Dohmen and Jagelka, 2024) – attenuates treatment effects. Using two attention-check questions and a self-reported reliability measure, we find no systematic evidence that the muted effects on preferences for information provision can be attributed to measurement error.

We contribute to the literature in several dimensions. First, we speak to the political economy of information provision by studying whether people’s demand for disseminating socially relevant information depends on its perceived effectiveness. While a large literature examines motives for information demand — such as belief confirmation (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006; Mullainathan and Shleifer, 2005), inter-dependencies between belief confirmation and accuracy concerns (Chopra et al., 2024), information avoidance (Sweeny et al., 2010; Ho et al., 2021), curiosity (Golman and Loewenstein, 2018; van Lieshout et al., 2021), or instrumental value (Zimmermann, 2015; Fuster et al., 2022) — it typically takes for granted that information affects beliefs or outcomes. We relax this implicit assumption and ask whether individuals continue to support information dissemination even when confronted with scientific evidence that such information has limited effects on public opinion.

Second, we contribute to the growing literature using information-provision experiments to study redistributive preferences (e.g., Cruces et al., 2013; Bursztyn, 2016; Alesina et al., 2018; Lergetporer et al., 2018; Fehr et al., 2022, 2024; Baarck et al., 2025). Rather than examining how receiving information about inequality shapes policy views, we shift the focus to preferences for disseminating such information in the first place. We show that even when respondents update strongly toward believing that inequality information has no significant impact on redistribution or polarization, their support for providing this information remains high. This pattern suggests that demand for information dissemination is driven less by beliefs about its instrumental effectiveness and more by intrinsic and democratic considerations in a more general sense.

The paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 outlines the data and study design. Section 3 presents descriptive evidence on beliefs about the effectiveness of information campaigns, and

how these beliefs respond to information provision. Section 4 presents our results on information dissemination preferences. Section 5 provides additional (robustness) analyses. Section 6 concludes.

2 Data and Study Design

We start by introducing the survey with focus on data collection, sampling details and survey flow in subsection 2.1. Then, we provide details about the information provision experiment in subsection 2.2, and present our empirical strategy in subsection 2.3.

2.1 *The Survey*

From July to September 2025, we conducted an online survey of the German general population. Sampling and fieldwork were carried out by the survey company Bilendi, using quotas for age, gender, education, employment status, and respondents' state of residence based on official population statistics from the German Federal Statistical Office (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2024). The target population consisted of individuals aged 18 to 74. Our analytical sample comprises 3,066 respondents who completed the survey. The median completion time was 12 minutes.

Table A.1 of the Appendix reports the average characteristics of respondents in the different experimental groups. In the control group, 48% of respondents are male, approximately 95% were born in Germany and about 60% are employed full- or part-time. Around 42% of respondents have a university entrance degree.

To assess the representativeness of the sample, Appendix Table A.2 compares the survey composition with the corresponding official population benchmarks. Overall, the sample closely reflects the German population aged 18 to 74 along the quota variables. Survey means by age group, gender, employment status, education, and federal state are very similar to the official benchmarks. Thus, the realized sample is broadly representative of the German population along the main demographic and regional dimensions.

Figure 1 depicts the survey flow.⁶ At the beginning of the survey we collect a wide range

⁶A detailed transcript of the survey is given in Appendix D.

of sociodemographic information. This is followed by a neutral opening statement about social inequality. This statement is shown to all experimental groups and provides examples of what is meant by social inequality in a general sense, such as differences in income, educational attainment and wealth between different social groups. Respondents are then asked to state some general views on social inequality, the importance of an informed population for political decision making, as well as on how well-informed they perceive the average citizen, and themselves, to be.

In a next step, we elicit respondents' prior beliefs about the effect of inequality information on preferences for redistribution and the polarization of redistributive preferences. We open with a neutral statement informing respondents that we would like to ask their opinion on the results of scientific studies. Subsequently, all respondents are asked to report their prior beliefs regarding the influence of providing information about inequality on public demand for redistribution, and polarization of redistributive preferences. After that, respondents are randomly assigned to either the control group or one of two treatment groups with equal probabilities. Finally, we collect post-treatment outcome measures eliciting posterior beliefs as well as information dissemination preferences. More details on this are given in Section 2.2 with exact wordings in Appendix D.

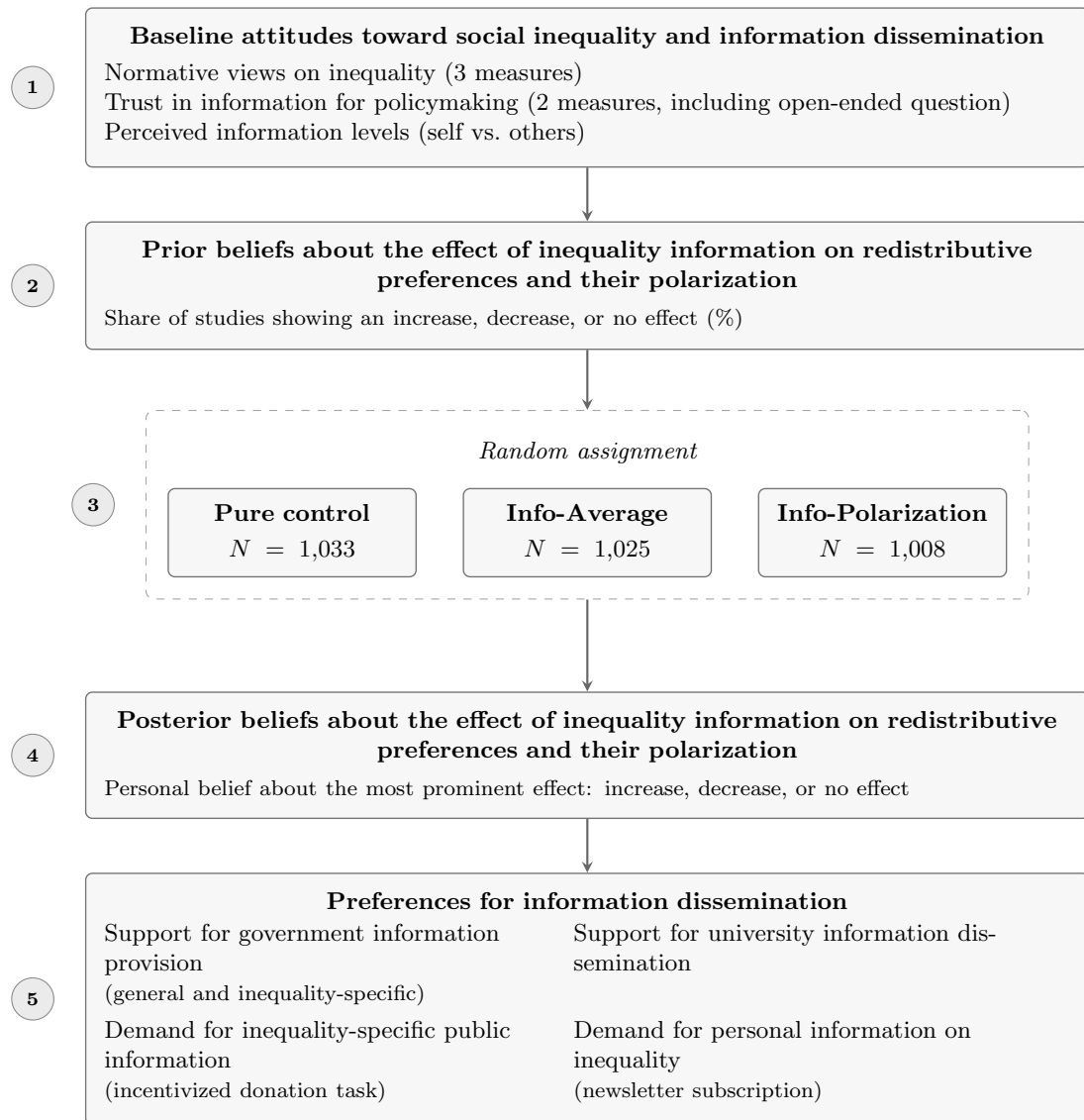
In addition, we implement several items that allow us to assess response quality in our robustness analysis. First, we include an attention check question asking for the color of the sky and telling respondents to answer 'orange'.⁷ Second, at the end of the survey, we ask respondents to self-assess the reliability of their answers (Dohmen and Jagelka, 2024) and indicate how much attention they paid to the survey. Third, we implement a *honey pot* survey item to verify that the survey is answered by humans rather than bots.⁸

A few days after taking part in the survey, we invited all respondents who gave their consent to participate in a follow-up survey, designed to measure the persistence of treatment effects. After a median time lag of three days after the main survey, we re-surveyed 2,449 respondents (80% of

⁷The question reads as follows: 'To show that you are reading the survey carefully, please select 'Orange' as the answer to the following question. What color is the sky?'

⁸A *honey pot* item is a survey question that is invisible to human respondents because it is hidden through webpage formatting code (CSS). While human participants cannot see the item, automated bots may still detect and answer it because they parse the underlying HTML structure of the webpage rather than its visual presentation. Responses to this hidden item therefore help identify likely bot-generated survey entries. Reassuringly, while the *honey pot* successfully detected bots in our test runs, it did not identify any bots among respondents in the actual survey.

Figure 1: Survey and Experimental Design



the sample). Participation in the follow-up survey is not systematically related to experimental group assignment in the main survey (see Table A.3 of the Appendix). Median response time to answer the follow-up survey is 2 minutes. In the follow-up, we start by asking some socio-demographic information and then repeat the survey items to elicit posterior beliefs about the effectiveness of information on average support for government redistribution, and polarization. We additionally repeat two outcome questions measuring information dissemination preferences.

2.2 *Experimental Design*

We run an information provision experiment to investigate whether the perceived effectiveness of information affects preferences for information dissemination. We first measure respondents' prior beliefs about the extent to which information campaigns affect redistributive preferences before providing information about the limited effectiveness of information. After randomized information provision, we elicit posterior beliefs about the extent to which information campaigns affect redistributive preferences, as well as preferences for information dissemination.

To elicit prior beliefs, we ask respondents to assess the influence of providing information about inequality on public demand for redistribution, and polarization of redistributive preferences. Specifically, they are asked to estimate the proportion (in %) of existing scientific studies finding that providing inequality information induces (i) an increase, (ii) no effect, (iii) a decrease on average public support for government redistribution, and on polarization (i.e., differences of opinions within the population).

After prior belief elicitation, respondents are randomly assigned to either the control group or one of two treatment groups with equal probabilities. Participants in both treatment groups are provided with factual information taken from the comprehensive meta-analysis by Marino et al. (2024). In their study, Marino et al. (2024) investigate the effectiveness of information provision on shifting redistribution policy preferences based on 59 scientific studies. In the first treatment group, respondents receive information about the limited effectiveness of information provision in shifting public policy support for redistribution. The treatment reads as follows (translated from German):

Important information! *A scientific overview study by Marino et al. (2024)*

shows: In 63% of cases, the provision of information about inequality has no effect on average support for government redistribution.

In the second treatment group, respondents receive information about the limited effectiveness of information provision in affecting differences in opinions (i.e., polarization) regarding government redistribution:

Important information! *A scientific overview study by Marino et al. (2024) shows: In 78% of cases, the provision of information on inequality has no effect on existing differences of opinions (polarization) regarding government redistribution.*

In both treatment groups, respondents see their own estimates alongside the factual information in a comparative bar chart (for details, see Figure C.1 and C.2 of Appendix C).⁹ After providing this information, we elicit posterior beliefs by asking all respondents to provide a personal assessment of the effect of information provision on average support for government redistribution, as well as on the polarization of redistributive preferences.

Finally, we measure several preferences for information dissemination. As a first measure, we elicit respondents' support for inequality-specific information provision by the government. We ask respondents whether they are in favor that government institutions regularly inform the public by providing scientific information on social inequality. We remind respondents that the costs of providing information (e.g., for staff and materials) must be financed through taxes. Second, we measure respondents' support for general information provision by the government as policy tool by letting them choose their preferred policy tool from a list of options.¹⁰ Third, we measure respondents' support for information dissemination by universities.¹¹ Fourth, we ask

⁹An alternative design would have been to provide information on the full distribution of findings, i.e., the shares of studies reporting positive, negative, and no effects. We deliberately focus our treatments on the share of studies finding no effects, as our main interest is whether beliefs about the overall effectiveness of information campaigns in changing preferences affect support for information dissemination. Providing information on the full distribution of effects would also have bundled several informational signals and complicated the interpretation of treatment effects. Studying how information about the prevalence of positive versus negative effects shapes dissemination preferences is an interesting avenue for future research.

¹⁰We ask 'In your opinion, what measures should policymakers prioritize in order to support or change the behavior of the population?'. Respondents can choose from the following answers (multiple choice possible): rules and regulations, recommendations for action, information and education, financial incentives and support, take no action, take other measures, namely. If respondents choose the answer 'information and education', we assign a 1, otherwise a 0.

¹¹We ask respondents which of the following tasks universities should prioritize in the public interest: research, teaching, knowledge transfer, others. We code the outcome variable *Knowledge Transfer* equal to 1 if respondents choose knowledge transfer, and 0 otherwise.

respondents to split up a donation of 50€ between themselves and the 'World Inequality Lab', a non-profit organization that researches and shares information on the causes and consequences of social inequality. We inform respondents about the organization first and then state that 20 donation decisions are randomly chosen from all respondents to be implemented. Fifth, we measure demand for informing oneself about inequality-related evidence by giving the opportunity to sign up for the newsletter of the 'World Inequality Lab'. Using these real-stakes measures helps reduce concerns about hypothetical bias and experimenter demand effects and follows a growing literature employing incentivized political outcomes in survey experiments (e.g., Haaland et al., 2023; Stantcheva, 2023).

In the follow-up survey, we re-elicited respondents' posterior beliefs about the effectiveness of information provision to affect average support for government redistribution, and its polarization. We also re-elicited support for (i) inequality-specific information provision by the government, as well as general information provision as a policy tool (see above).

In Table A.1, we show that our random assignment in the main survey worked as intended. Columns 1 to 3 present group means and standard deviations of different sociodemographic variables, while columns 4 and 5 display the differences between each treatment group and the control group. Most observables do not differ significantly between control and treatment groups at conventional levels. Out of 74 pairwise comparisons, one is significant at the 1-percent level, one at the 5-percent level, and four at the 10-percent level, as would be expected by pure chance. In Appendix Table A.5, we show that sociodemographic characteristics are also well-balanced among the subset of respondents who participated in the follow-up survey.

2.3 Empirical Model

Our analysis of treatment effects is based on the following regression model:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Info-Average}_i + \beta_2 \text{Info-Polarization}_i + \varepsilon_i, \quad (1)$$

with Info-Average_i and $\text{Info-Polarization}_i$ indicating whether individual i was assigned to the respective treatment group, and ε_i being an error which is uncorrelated with the treatment indicators. In the belief updating analysis in Section 3, the outcome variable y_i is respondent i 's

belief about the effects of information provision. In Section 4, y_i denotes our different measures of individual i 's preferences for information dissemination. The main parameters of interest are β_1 and β_2 , which capture the average treatment effect of the *Info-Average* treatment and the *Info-Polarization* treatment on y_i relative to the control group. These coefficients are identified because of random assignment. We estimate our main results without additional covariates, and show that our results hold when including additional control variables in robustness analyses.

To investigate heterogeneity of the treatment effects across different subgroups, we extend our basic model to:

$$\begin{aligned}
y_i = & \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Info-Average}_i + \beta_2 \text{Info-Polarization}_i \\
& + \sum_{k=2}^4 \gamma_k Q_{ik} \\
& + \sum_{k=2}^4 \delta_{k1} (\text{Info-Average}_i Q_{ik}) \\
& + \sum_{k=2}^4 \delta_{k2} (\text{Info-Polarization}_i Q_{ik}) \\
& + \varepsilon_i.
\end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Here, Q_{ik} are dummy variables indicating the quartile of respondent i 's prior belief about information ineffectiveness. Specifically, $Q_{i2} = 1$ if respondent i 's prior belief lies above the first quartile and at or below the median, $Q_{i3} = 1$ if respondent i 's prior belief lies above the median and at or below the third quartile, and $Q_{i4} = 1$ if respondent i 's belief exceeds the third quartile, and 0 otherwise. The reference category is Q_{i1} for prior beliefs at or below the first quartile (see Section 3 for details). The variables Info-Average_i and $\text{Info-Polarization}_i$ are indicators for assignment to the *Info-Average* treatment and *Info-Polarization* treatment, respectively, with the control group as the omitted category. In this specification, β_1 and β_2 capture the treatment effects of the *Info-Average* treatment and the *Info-Polarization* treatment for respondents in the prior belief quartile 1, while δ_{k1} and δ_{k2} measure how treatment effects differ for respondents in quartiles $k \in \{2, 3, 4\}$. Hence, the treatment effects for quartiles 2–4 are $\beta_1 + \delta_{21}$, $\beta_1 + \delta_{31}$, and $\beta_1 + \delta_{41}$, and $\beta_2 + \delta_{22}$, $\beta_2 + \delta_{32}$, and $\beta_2 + \delta_{42}$, respectively. We use the same interacted model to estimate treatment-effect heterogeneities across sociodemographic subgroups.

3 Prior Beliefs and Updating

3.1 Descriptive Evidence on Prior Beliefs

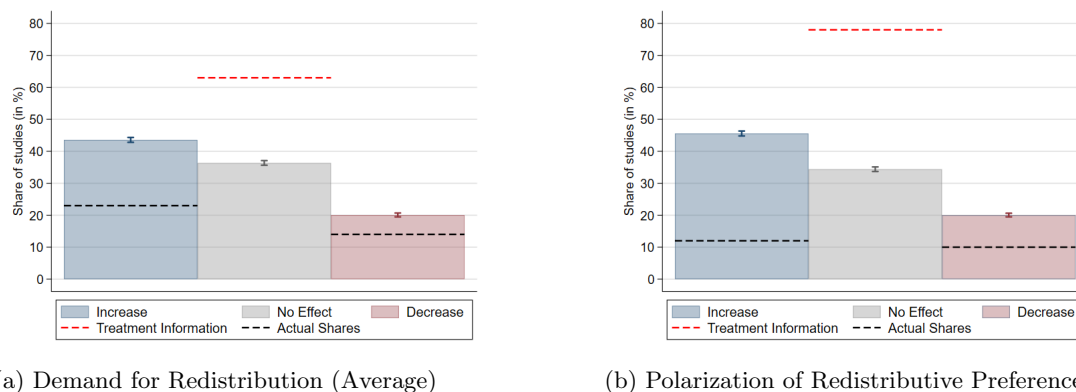
Figure 2 displays the distribution of respondents' prior beliefs about the effect of inequality information on redistributive preferences (Panel a) and their polarization (Panel b). The vertical axis reports the average expected share of studies (in percent) that respondents believe find an increase, no effect, or a decrease of the respective outcome. The red dashed line marks the factual share of studies finding no effect, as communicated in the experiment and taken from the review of Marino et al. (2024).

For redistributive preferences (Panel a), participants expect on average about 44% (SD: 21.31) of studies to find an increase, around 20% (SD: 17.22) to find a decrease, and only approximately 36% (SD: 20.49) to report no effect. For polarization of redistributive preferences (Panel b), expectations are quite similar. On average, respondents expect that roughly 46% (SD: 21.74) of studies find an increase in polarization, about 20% (SD: 16.33) find a decrease, and around 35% (SD: 20.17) find no effect.

These expectations deviate markedly from available empirical evidence. The factual shares of null effects (63% for redistribution and 78% for polarization), taken from Marino et al. (2024), are substantially higher than respondents' prior beliefs thereof. Put differently, 90% (96%) of respondents underestimate the share of studies finding no effect on average demand for redistribution (polarization), whereas only 10% (4%) overestimate it. Conversely, respondents systematically overestimate the factual shares of studies finding positive and negative effects on average support (factual shares: 23% and 14%), and on polarization (factual values: 12% and 10%). In sum, participants systematically underestimate the prevalence of null findings and correspondingly expect inequality information to generate positive or negative effects in a much larger proportion of studies than is supported by the literature.¹²

¹²Figure A.1 of the Appendix shows the determinants of individual prior beliefs regarding the share of studies finding null effects on average demand for redistribution (Panel a) and polarization (Panel b). We regress both measures on a host of socio-demographic characteristics and other preferences (e.g., political leaning, personal traits). For average demand for redistribution, we find that older respondents tend to be more likely to expect null effects (Panel a). For polarization, the age gradient is less pronounced. Instead, respondents who were born in Germany and those who vote for the social democrats (SPD) are less likely to believe in null effects (Panel b).

Figure 2: Prior Beliefs about the Effectiveness of Inequality Information



Note: Figure depicts prior belief distributions on the effectiveness of inequality information on redistributive preferences (Panel a) and polarization of redistributive preferences (Panel b). Prior population beliefs are measured prior to the information treatment in all three experimental groups. Respondents report their beliefs on study results on how information about inequality influences public demand for redistribution and the polarization of policy preferences. The red line indicates the information given in the respective treatment group: in the *Info-Average* group that 63% of studies find no average effect of inequality information on redistributive preferences, and in the *Info-Polarization* group that 78% of studies find no average effect of inequality information on polarization over redistribution. The black lines indicate the remaining shares, which are not specifically communicated: 23% of studies find increasing and 14% find decreasing effects on redistributive preferences, while 12% find increasing and 10% find decreasing effects on polarization over redistribution. Bars represent mean beliefs, while error bars denote the 95% confidence intervals around the mean.

3.2 Average Treatment Effects on Posterior Beliefs

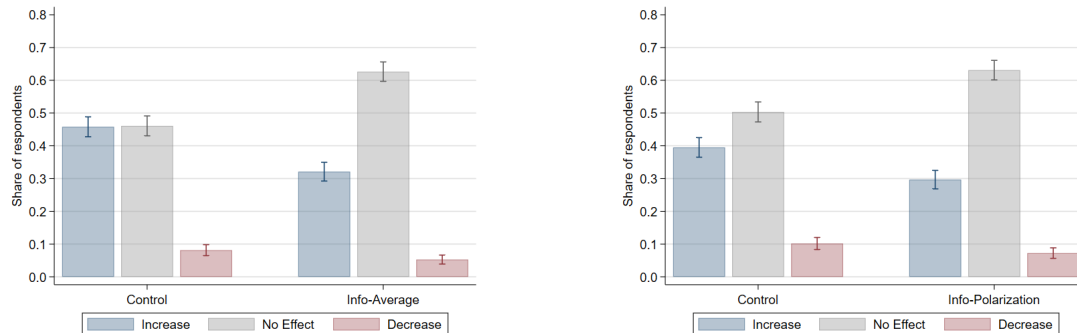
Figure 3 shows posterior beliefs about the effects of information provision, elicited after the randomized treatments. Respondents were asked whether, in their view, providing information about inequality most often increases, decreases, or has no effect on (i) average support for redistribution and (ii) the polarization of redistributive preferences. The bars display the share of respondents choosing each option.

Both treatments lead to substantial belief updating toward the communicated evidence. In Panel a, 63% of respondents in the *Info-Average* group select "no effect" as the most prominent effect on average support for redistribution, compared to only 46% in the control group. Panel b shows a similar pattern for *Info-Polarization*: 63% of treated respondents choose "no effect" as the most prominent effect on polarization (control group: 50%).

However, posterior beliefs do not fully converge to the information provided. This suggests that respondents incorporate the new evidence while still partly relying on their prior beliefs. Overall, the figure shows that learning about the high prevalence of null findings in studies of

inequality-related information provision leads to substantial, but incomplete, belief updating.

Figure 3: Posterior Beliefs about the Effectiveness of Inequality Information



(a) Demand for Redistribution (Average)

(b) Polarization of Redistributive Preferences

Note: Figure reports the share of respondents who, post treatment, select "no effect", "increase" or "decrease" as the most prominent effect of inequality information on average support for redistribution (Panel *a*) and polarization of redistributive preferences (Panel *b*). The control group received no information about prior empirical findings. The Info-Average treatment group was informed that 63% of studies find no average effect of inequality information on redistributive preferences. The Info-Polarization treatment group received analogous information regarding polarization (78%). Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals for group means.

Table 1 reports regression results for the baseline model, where the dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if respondents selected *no effect* as the most prominent effect of information provision. Consistent with the patterns shown in Figure 3, both treatments significantly increase the likelihood that respondents perceive information provision as ineffective, both with respect to redistributive preferences (column 1) and polarization (column 2). The treatment effects are similar in magnitude and do not differ significantly from each other. Moreover, information about the share of studies finding no significant effect in one domain also shifts respondents' posterior beliefs about the effects of information provision in the other domain, suggesting spillover effects in beliefs about the effectiveness of inequality information more generally.¹³

3.3 Persistence

To assess the persistence of belief updating, Appendix Table A.6 compares treatment effects in the main survey (columns 1 and 3) with those measured in the follow-up survey (columns 2 and 4). In the main survey, both treatments generate sizable and highly significant shifts in beliefs.

¹³These regression results are very similar when controlling for sociodemographic characteristics, political preferences and personal traits. Results including control variables are summarized in Table A.4 of the Appendix.

Table 1: Non-Effectiveness of Inequality Information and Belief Updating

	<i>Dependent variable: Beliefs about 'No Effect' as the most prominent effect</i>	
	Demand for Redistribution (Average) (1)	Polarization of Redistributive Preferences (2)
<i>Treatment:</i>		
Info-Average	0.166*** (0.022)	0.096*** (0.022)
Info-Polarization	0.137*** (0.022)	0.128*** (0.022)
Control group mean	0.461*** (0.016)	0.503*** (0.016)
R^2	0.021	0.012
Observations	3,066	3,066

Note: The table summarizes treatment effects on beliefs that inequality information does not affect preferences for redistribution on average (1) or polarization of redistributive preferences (2). Robust standard errors in parentheses. p -values from F -tests of equal treatment effects ($Info-Average = Info-Polarization$) are 0.193 (Column 1) and 0.139 (Column 2). Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

In the follow-up survey, treatment effects remain statistically significant but are substantially attenuated in magnitude, with persistence rates comparable to existing studies (Haaland et al., 2023). For the *Info-Average* treatment, the effects decline from 16.6 percentage points in the main survey to 7.9 percentage points in the follow-up (persistence rate: 48%). Similarly, for the *Info-Polarization* treatment, the effects decrease from 12.8 percentage points to 6.6 percentage points (persistence rate: 52%). The results point to substantial immediate belief updating in response to both information treatments, combined with meaningful persistence of belief changes in the follow-up survey which is about half the effect size as in the main survey for both treatment conditions, respectively.

3.4 Heterogeneity by Prior Beliefs

Next, we examine heterogeneities in belief updating by respondents' prior beliefs about the prevalence of null effects of inequality-related information provision. To this end, we categorize respondents into quartiles based on their prior beliefs about the share of studies finding *no effect*.¹⁴ Because beliefs are highly skewed toward underestimating null effects, this approach captures different degrees of underestimation and allows us to assess whether belief updating

¹⁴For redistributive preferences, quartiles are defined as Q1 = 0–23%, Q2 = 24–33%, Q3 = 34–50%, and Q4 = 51–100%. For polarization of redistributive preferences, quartiles are defined as Q1 = 0–21%, Q2 = 22–32%, Q3 = 33–45%, and Q4 = 46–100%.

varies with the distance between prior beliefs and the information signal. Consistent with this interpretation, updating should be strongest among respondents in the lowest quartile and weakest among respondents in the highest quartile, whose prior beliefs are already closer to the factual benchmark.¹⁵

Based on equation (2), Table 2 reports treatment effects separately for respondents in different quartiles of prior beliefs about the share of studies finding no effects. Belief updating is strongest among respondents who initially assigned a low share of studies to *no effect* and whose prior beliefs therefore deviated most from the evidence communicated in the treatments, consistent with larger updating when the provided signal induces a larger information shock. Treatment effects generally decline across higher quartiles and become statistically insignificant for respondents in Q4 when estimating effects on average support for redistribution, and in Q3 and Q4 when estimating effects on polarization (for completeness, the full regression output is provided in Table A.7 in the Appendix). We find similar patterns in the follow-up survey, where updating is likewise strongest among respondents in the lowest prior-belief quartile Q1 (see Table A.8 of the Appendix). Updating for respondents in quartiles Q2–Q4 is not statistically significant. Overall, these heterogeneous updating patterns suggest that respondents meaningfully incorporate the newly provided information when forming posterior beliefs about the extent to which information provision affects political preferences, especially when prior beliefs are most distant.

4 Support for Information Dissemination

4.1 Beliefs and Dissemination Preferences: Descriptive Relationships

We begin by examining whether respondents' posterior beliefs about the effectiveness of inequality-related information provision are associated with their support for information dissemination in the control group. We consider five outcomes capturing support for information dissemination through different channels and providers, as introduced in Subsection 2.2. Each outcome variable

¹⁵Even within this highest quartile Q4, a substantial share of respondents still underestimates the factual benchmark values: 47% report beliefs below the actual share of 63% for redistribution, and 84% report beliefs below the actual share of 78% for polarization.

Table 2: Belief Updating: Interaction by Prior Belief Quartile

	<i>Dependent variable: Beliefs about 'No Effect' as the most prominent effect</i>	
	Demand for Redistribution (Average)	Polarization of Redistributive Preferences
	(1)	(2)
<i>Main Treatment Effects:</i>		
Prior Belief 1st Quartile	0.262*** (0.040)	0.205*** (0.043)
Prior Belief 2nd Quartile	0.179*** (0.043)	0.181*** (0.043)
Prior Belief 3rd Quartile	0.165*** (0.039)	0.055 (0.044)
Prior Belief 4th Quartile	-0.002 (0.046)	0.060 (0.041)
Constant	0.240*** (0.026)	0.345*** (0.030)
Adj. R^2	0.078	0.046
Observations	3,066	3,066

Note: The table summarizes treatment effects on beliefs that inequality information does not affect preferences for redistribution on average (1) or polarization of redistributive preferences (2). Prior beliefs are divided into quartiles and interacted with treatment indicators to capture heterogeneous belief updating. The main treatment effect combines the baseline effect of the information treatment and the additional effect that varies by quartile (Info + Info \times Quartile). The omitted category is the control group in the lowest quartile of prior non-effect beliefs for the respective treatment. Quartiles of prior beliefs about the share of studies showing no effect are defined as follows. For redistributive preferences: Q1 = 0–23%, Q2 = 24–33%, Q3 = 34–50%, and Q4 = 51–100%. For polarization of redistributive preferences: Q1 = 0–21%, Q2 = 22–32%, Q3 = 33–45%, and Q4 = 46–100%. The fourth quartile entails the factual values communicated in the treatments. Among respondents in the fourth quartile, a substantial share still underestimates the true values: 47% of individuals report beliefs below the factual benchmark of 63% for redistribution, and 84% report beliefs below the factual benchmark of 78% for polarization. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

is coded as one if respondents support the respective form of information dissemination, and zero otherwise. In addition, we construct an Information Dissemination Index as the simple mean of individual outcomes, ranging from zero to one, which measures the share of dimensions for which respondents express support for information dissemination.¹⁶ We regress these outcomes on a dummy indicating whether respondents in the control group report posterior beliefs that information provision most prominently has no effect. Tables A.9 and A.10 of the Appendix report the corresponding correlations for redistributive preferences and polarization of redistributive preferences, respectively.

Across most outcomes, respondents who are more likely to expect null effects of inequality information report lower support for information dissemination. This negative relationship is visible for the Information Dissemination Index and for several individual outcomes, including support for government information provision, information campaigns as a policy tool, donations, and newsletter subscriptions. By contrast, the relationship is weak and statistically insignificant

¹⁶We pre-registered the use of two separate indices but present one comprehensive measure for brevity. Results are very similar across specifications.

for support for university-based knowledge transfer. Similar patterns emerge for beliefs about null effects of information on polarization of redistributive preferences.

Overall, the descriptive evidence indicates that respondents who are more skeptical about the effectiveness of information campaigns are also less supportive of disseminating such information. Of course, these correlations do not imply that beliefs about the effectiveness of information provision *causally* affect support for information dissemination. In the next section, we leverage our experimental variation to study the extent to which these correlations reflect causal effects of beliefs about the effects of information provision on preferences for information dissemination.

4.2 Average Treatment Effects on Support for Information Dissemination

Building on the descriptive evidence above, we now study whether experimentally shifting beliefs about the effectiveness of information campaigns causally affects support for information dissemination. We again consider the five outcome measures introduced in Subsection 2.2, as well as the Information Dissemination Index averaging these outcomes. Table 3 reports the corresponding treatment effects.

Despite substantial and persistent belief updating (see Subsection 3.2), we find no evidence that informing respondents about the limited effectiveness of inequality-related information campaigns affects support for information dissemination. The estimated treatment effects are economically small and statistically insignificant across individual outcomes and the comprehensive index. The only exception is a positive effect of the *Info-Polarization* treatment on support for information provision as a general policy tool (column 2), which is small in magnitude and significant only at the 10% level. We also show that these null results are robust across alternative outcome specifications for donation behavior (Appendix Table A.11), priorities assigned to universities (Appendix Table A.12), and support for alternative government policy tools (Appendix Table A.13).

These null effects are also economically small. Baseline support for information dissemination is relatively high in the control group: 62% of respondents support government provision of information on social inequality even if costly, 74% support information provision as a general policy tool, 39% believe universities should prioritize knowledge transfer, 79% donate a positive

amount to the World Inequality Lab, and 22% subscribe to its newsletter. Relative to these high baseline levels, treatment effects are very small. Treatment *Info-Average* shifts outcomes by between -2.5 and $+1.4$ percentage points, while treatment *Info-Polarization* shifts them by between -2.2 and $+3.2$ percentage points.¹⁷ Taken together, we estimate precise zero average treatment effects. Standard errors are small across specifications, and our sample size ($>1,000$ observations per treatment condition, exceeding the 750 observations recommended by Haaland et al., 2023) implies that the null effects are unlikely to reflect limited statistical power. Consistent with this interpretation, the minimum detectable effects (MDEs) for the comprehensive index are economically small at around 3 percentage points.¹⁸ The results are very similar when including additional control variables to further improve precision (Appendix Table A.14).

Table 3: Treatment Effects on Support for Information Dissemination

	<i>Dependent variable: Support for information dissemination</i>					
	Government Inequality- specific Information (1)	General Information (2)	University Transfer of Knowledge (3)	Others World In- equality Lab Donation (4)	Oneself World In- equality Lab Newsletter (5)	Overall Information Dissemination Index (6)
<i>Treatment:</i>						
Info-Average	-0.023 (0.022)	0.007 (0.019)	-0.025 (0.021)	0.014 (0.018)	-0.004 (0.018)	-0.006 (0.011)
Info-Polarization	-0.014 (0.022)	0.032* (0.019)	-0.000 (0.022)	0.028 (0.018)	-0.022 (0.018)	0.004 (0.011)
Control Group Mean	0.616*** (0.015)	0.742*** (0.014)	0.390*** (0.015)	0.791*** (0.013)	0.217*** (0.013)	0.551*** (0.008)
R^2	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.000
Observations	3,065	3,065	3,062	3,066	3,065	3,059

Note: The table reports treatment effects on preferences for information dissemination. Columns (1)–(3) capture stated preferences for government and university dissemination of information. Columns (4) and (5) capture two real-stake measures: an incentivized donation and a newsletter subscription - both with respect to the World Inequality Lab. Column (6) reports effects on the Information Dissemination Index, which combines the outcomes in columns (1)–(5). In the treatment groups, respondents are informed about the absence of average effects of inequality information on preferences for redistribution (Info-Average) or on polarization of redistributive preferences (Info-Polarization), respectively. More specifically, the Info-Average treatment group was informed that 63% of studies find no average effect of inequality information on redistributive preferences. The Info-Polarization treatment group received analogous information regarding polarization of redistributive preferences (78%). Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

¹⁷For the Information Dissemination Index, the *Info-Average* treatment reduces the index by 0.006 points, while the *Info-Polarization* treatment increases it by 0.004 points. Relative to the control group mean, these correspond to changes of approximately 1.1% and 0.7%, respectively.

¹⁸The MDEs are 3.02 and 2.98 percentage points for treatments *Info-Average* and *Info-Polarization*, respectively. They are calculated using the formula $(z_{1-\alpha/2} + z_{1-\beta}) \times SE(\hat{\beta})$, with $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-sided) and power $1 - \beta = 0.80$.

4.3 Persistence and Heterogeneity by Prior Beliefs

We next examine whether the null effects on support for information dissemination persist over time and vary with respondents' prior beliefs. In the follow-up survey, we repeated two outcome measures to assess whether treatment effects on preferences for information dissemination emerge beyond the main survey horizon. Specifically, we re-elicited support for (i) inequality-specific information provision by the government and (ii) information provision as a general policy tool. Table A.15 reports the corresponding results, distinguishing between inequality-specific information provision by the government (columns 1 – 2) and general information provision as a policy tool (columns 3 – 4). For direct comparison, odd-numbered columns reproduce the estimates from the main survey, whereas even-numbered columns report the corresponding follow-up results. Across both survey waves, the treatments have no meaningful effect on support for government-led information dissemination. In the follow-up survey in particular, all coefficients are small and statistically insignificant. Thus, we find no evidence of delayed treatment effects on preferences for information dissemination.

Appendix Table A.16 examines heterogeneous treatment effects by respondents' prior beliefs about the prevalence of null effects of inequality-related information provision. Following the analysis in Section 3.4, respondents are grouped into quartiles based on their initial beliefs about the share of studies finding no effects. This allows us to assess whether treatment responses vary with the distance between prior beliefs and the informational signal. Across most outcomes, treatment effects remain small and statistically insignificant. Some heterogeneity emerges for respondents in the third quartile, where information emphasizing null effects on redistributive preferences reduces support for information provision, particularly for government-provided information and newsletter subscriptions. While these effects are statistically significant, they are modest in magnitude, and we refrain from overinterpreting them given the large number of hypotheses tested. Overall, the results provide little evidence of systematic heterogeneous treatment effects. Responses do not follow a clear monotonic pattern across belief quartiles, suggesting that learning about the limited effectiveness of information provision does not substantially alter preferences for information dissemination, regardless of respondents' initial beliefs.

4.4 Explaining Information Dissemination Preferences

Our information treatments provide respondents with evidence about the limited effectiveness of information campaigns in shifting public opinion on redistribution. The absence of treatment effects on support for information dissemination therefore suggests that respondents' support for informing the public and oneself is not primarily driven by beliefs about the instrumental effectiveness of information campaigns. Instead, respondents may value information dissemination for broader democratic or normative reasons.

Several pieces of evidence support this interpretation. First, baseline support for information dissemination is generally high. As shown in Table 3, the majority of respondents supports government provision of inequality-related information, endorses information campaigns as a policy tool, and donates to an NGO engaged in research and public communication on inequality. In addition, 39% of respondents state that universities should prioritize knowledge transfer to the public over teaching or research (see Appendix Table A.12).

Second, we directly elicited respondents' views on the importance of an informed population for political decision-making.¹⁹ More than 80% of respondents indicate that an informed population is rather or very important. To better understand the reasoning behind these assessments, respondents were subsequently asked in an open-ended question to explain their answer. Importantly, both questions were asked before the elicitation of prior beliefs and before the experimental treatments, ensuring that responses were not influenced by the intervention.

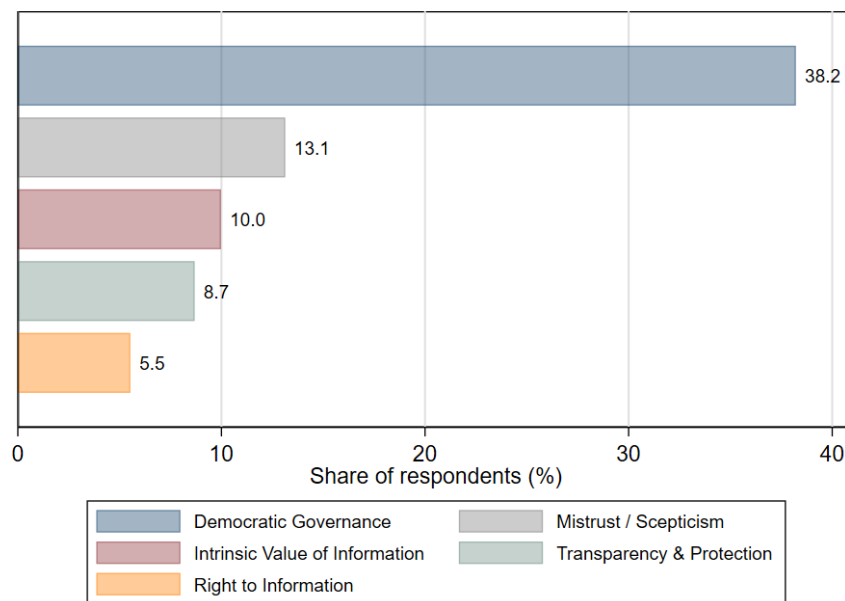
We carefully reviewed a randomly drawn subset of responses to develop a coding scheme capturing the main motivations expressed by respondents. The coding scheme, including descriptions and illustrative examples, is reported in Appendix Table B.1. A research assistant independently coded all responses while remaining blind to the research hypotheses. To assess coding reliability, we manually coded a subset of 400 responses and subsequently trained ChatGPT-5.5 on these human-coded answers. The trained model was then used to independently code an additional subset of responses, allowing us to validate the research assistant's coding. Intercoder reliability between the human coding and the model-assisted coding is substantial, with a Cohen's kappa

¹⁹The exact question reads as follows: *What do you think: Is an informed population important or unimportant for good political decisions to be made in a society? Please briefly explain your answer in keywords.*

of 0.71 (see Appendix Table B.2).

The analysis includes all respondents who provided an answer to the open-ended question. Of the full sample ($N = 3,066$), 2,787 respondents (91%) provided a response. While each respondent can give one answer, a single answer can be assigned to multiple categories. Figure 4 summarizes the five most prevalent response categories – excluding miscellaneous responses. Responses coded as 'Miscellaneous' account for 29% of answers and include uninterpretable responses like "I don't know." or "AAA". The most prevalent category is *Democratic Governance*, accounting for 38.2% of all responses. Respondents in this category describe information as essential for democratic participation, opinion formation, and informed political decision-making. Other categories include mistrust or skepticism (13.1%), transparency and protection (8.7%), and a normative right to information (5.5%).

Figure 4: Analysis of Open Text Question



Notes: The figure displays the share of respondents whose answers were coded into the depicted five categories, calculated only among those respondents who provided a response.

Splitting the sample by respondents' baseline views on the importance of an informed population further reinforces this interpretation. The results are depicted in Figure B.1 in the Appendix. Among respondents who consider an informed population important, democratic-

governance motives are substantially more prevalent (43.6%), whereas respondents who do not emphasize the importance of an informed population more frequently cite mistrust and skepticism (16%). Moreover, Appendix Table B.3 shows that the null treatment effects on support for information dissemination are broadly similar across motive categories.

Taken together, these findings suggest that support for information dissemination is driven less by beliefs about the instrumental effectiveness of information campaigns and more by democratic and normative considerations regarding the role of an informed public.

5 Further Analyses

5.1 Additional Heterogeneities

To assess whether the treatments have differential effects across respondent subgroups, Appendix Tables A.17 to A.20 report heterogeneous treatment effects on posterior beliefs and on the Information Dissemination Index. Each table presents the main treatment effect for the omitted subgroup (column 1), and the corresponding treatment-subgroup interaction coefficient (column 2) across a broad range of binarized subgroup indicators.

Posterior Beliefs: Table A.17 of the Appendix shows that the *Info-Average* treatment yields consistently positive and mostly statistically significant baseline effects, while interaction terms are generally small and insignificant, indicating limited heterogeneity. A marginally significant ($p < 0.1$) gender difference suggests slightly smaller effects for men. No systematic heterogeneity emerges across the *Credibility and Trust* and *Personal Traits* domains. Within *Political Activity and Preferences*, treatment effects are stronger among respondents who consider an informed society important. A similar pattern emerges for the *Info-Polarization* treatment (Appendix Table A.18). Baseline effects are again mostly positive and statistically significant, with little evidence of systematic heterogeneity. Some differences emerge in the *Credibility and Trust* domain, where effects tend to be stronger among respondents who trust or consider scientists credible, alongside marginal evidence related to the perceived credibility of social media ($p < 0.1$). Overall, belief updating is broadly homogeneous across observable characteristics.

Support for Information Dissemination: The *Info-Average* treatment (Appendix Table

A.19) yields small and statistically insignificant baseline effects, with interaction terms generally close to zero, indicating little systematic heterogeneity. One exception emerges in the *Credibility and Trust* domain: respondents who consider public news sources credible exhibit somewhat more positive responses, whereas those who do not show negative and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) baseline effects. Results for the *Info-Polarization* treatment (Appendix Table A.20) show a similar pattern. Baseline and interaction effects are again small and mostly statistically insignificant, suggesting limited heterogeneity. The only marginally significant ($p < 0.1$) difference arises in the *Political Activity and Preferences* domain: respondents not supporting radical parties exhibit a small positive treatment effect, whereas supporters of these parties show a negative effect.²⁰

Taken together, both treatments consistently affect posterior beliefs with only minor subgroup variation, but do not meaningfully affect support for information dissemination across observable characteristics. Hence, the overall null effects on support for information dissemination do not appear to mask substantial counteracting responses across respondent subgroups.

5.2 Addressing Measurement Error

Survey data such as ours can be subject to measurement error, as respondents might be inattentive to survey questions or lack the self-knowledge required to form well-defined preferences (e.g., Dohmen and Jagelka, 2024). In both cases, measurement error may attenuate potential treatment effects on respondents' information-dissemination preferences. In this section, we rely on two additional survey questions that we implemented to measure survey-based measurement error and empirically assess its relevance for explaining the muted treatment effects on information dissemination preferences.

To measure respondents' attention in the survey, we asked the following question: *'In surveys, there are sometimes participants who simply click through the questionnaire quickly. This can impair the results of research studies. To show that you are reading the survey carefully, please select 'Orange' as the answer to the following question. What color is the sky?'* The idea behind this question is that respondents who skim the question are likely to answer 'blue', whereas

²⁰Radical parties include AfD, BSW, and The Left.

attentive respondents will follow the instruction and select the correct answer 'orange'.²¹ In our sample, 81% of respondents passed the attention check. In Appendix Table A.22, we investigate treatment effect heterogeneity by respondents' attentiveness. Column 1 of Table A.22 shows that the effects of both treatments, *Info-Average* and *Info-Polarization*, do not differ by respondents' attentiveness, implying that inattention-induced measurement error does not drive our results. We also use an alternative measure of respondents' attention to the survey, namely the self-assessed level of attention (Stantcheva, 2021).²² Overall, 62% of respondents assessed themselves as attentive. We further classified respondents as attentive if they self-reported '*I gave this study my full attention*'. Column 2 of Table A.22 shows that there are also no heterogeneous effects by self-assessed attention levels of respondents, indicating that attention does not play a role in explaining muted treatment effects on information dissemination preferences.

A second source of measurement error in surveys is respondents' lack of self-knowledge. Even when respondents exert effort, they may still face cognitive uncertainty—that is, uncertainty about their own preferences (Enke and Graeber, 2023; Dohmen and Jagelka, 2024). Such uncertainty can generate residual measurement error when respondents state preferences for information dissemination, as they may be unable to assess the ex ante optimality or ex post utility of these choices. To assess the relevance of this concern, we follow Dohmen and Jagelka (2024) and elicit respondents' self-reported answer reliability as a proxy for cognitive certainty using the following question: '*Please indicate on the scale below how reliable your answers to this survey are,*' measured on an 11-point Likert scale from 0 to 10. We classify respondents as "reliable" if they select 9 or 10; in our sample, 48% meet this criterion. In column 3 of Appendix Table A.22, we estimate heterogeneous treatment effects by respondents' answer reliability and find a largely consistent pattern of statistical zero effects for the *Info-Average* group. For the *Info-Polarization* treatment we find a relatively small but positive and statistically significant effect at the 5% significance level. Overall, these results suggest that a lack of self-knowledge may explain a small share of the muted treatment effects for information dissemination preferences. The respective

²¹For similar attention-check questions, see, for instance, Angerer et al. (2023).

²²The exact question reads as follows: '*During the survey there are often distractions present during studies (for example, your mobile, TV, music). How much attention did you pay to this study? We appreciate your honesty! Please note, you will receive credit (regardless of your answer): I gave this study my full attention; I gave this study big attention; I gave this study some of my attention; I gave this study little attention; I gave this study almost no attention*'.

effect is, however, minor with only about 6% evaluated against the control group mean. Overall, the null effects are robust across several measures of measurement error.

6 Conclusion

The main goal of this study is to examine whether citizens' support for public information campaigns depends on their perceived effectiveness in shaping policy preferences. Using a survey experiment with a representative sample of the German population, we show that respondents substantially overestimate the extent to which inequality-related information campaigns affect policy preferences relative to the available scientific evidence. Providing respondents with meta-study evidence showing that many studies find no statistically significant effect of information campaigns in the context of inequality leads to pronounced and persistent belief updating toward "no-effect" expectations of such campaigns. Descriptively, respondents who are more skeptical about the effectiveness of information campaigns are also substantially less supportive of disseminating such information. However, despite these strong descriptive correlations and the substantial belief updating induced by our treatments, we find no evidence that experimentally shifting beliefs about the extent to which information campaigns affect policy preferences causally affects citizens' preferences for information dissemination. These null effects persist over time and are robust across sociodemographic and attitudinal subgroups. Moreover, the absence of treatment effects is unlikely to be driven by survey measurement error.

We draw two main conclusions from our analysis. First, the strong and persistent belief updating in response to the information treatments demonstrates that individuals incorporate scientific evidence when forming beliefs about the effectiveness of policy tools. However, the absence of corresponding changes in preferences for information dissemination suggests that support for such campaigns is largely independent of their perceived instrumental effectiveness, at least with respect to changing redistributive preferences in the given setting. Second, support for informing the public is both normatively grounded and remarkably strong. Open-ended responses indicate that respondents predominantly justify their support with reference to democratic governance, participation, and informed opinion formation. Consistent with these motivations, baseline support for information dissemination is high across all outcome measures, helping to explain the

-muted treatment effects and underscoring the broader democratic value attributed to an informed society.

Taken together, our findings imply that the societal value attributed to inequality-related public information extends beyond its perceived effectiveness in shaping policy preferences. Rather than primarily serving as a tool to influence redistributive attitudes, such campaigns appear to fulfill an important democratic function by promoting transparency and informed citizenship. For policymakers and organizations engaged in information provision, these results suggest that public support for disseminating socially relevant information remains robust even when such efforts are perceived as having limited influence on public opinion. More broadly, our study contributes to the political economy of information by highlighting the importance of democratic and non-instrumental motivations in shaping citizens' demand for information dissemination.

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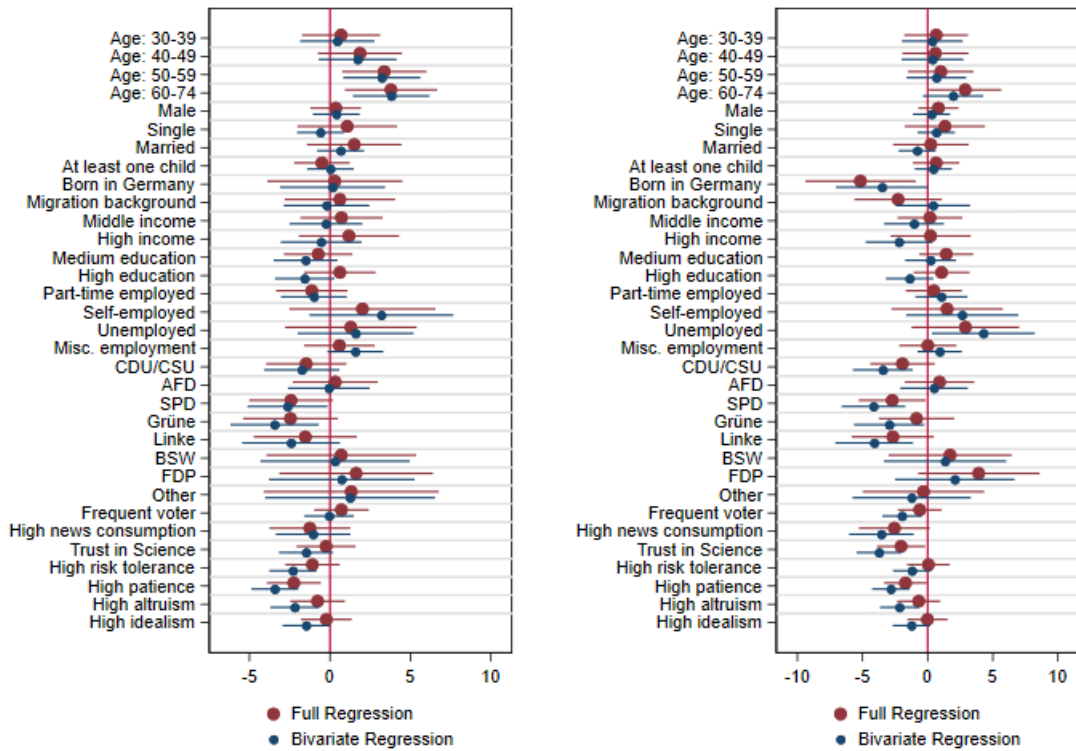
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A Appendix

Figure A.1: Determinants of Prior Beliefs about the Non-effectiveness of Inequality Information



(a) Demand for Redistribution (Average)

(b) Polarization of Redistribution Preferences

Note: The figure depicts the influence of sociodemographic characteristics and preferences on prior beliefs regarding the non-effectiveness of inequality information on redistributive preferences (Panel a) and polarization of redistributive preferences (Panel b). Prior population beliefs are measured prior to the information treatment in all three experimental groups and are operationalized as continuous measures ranging from 0 to 100, indicating the perceived probability that information is ineffective. Confidence bands indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Table A.1: Balancing Table

	Control (1)	Info-Average (2)	Info-Polarization (3)	Difference (2)-(1)	Difference (3)-(1)
Age:					
18–29	0.153 (0.360)	0.175 (0.380)	0.159 (0.366)	0.022	0.006
30–39	0.193 (0.395)	0.199 (0.399)	0.185 (0.388)	0.006	-0.008
40–49	0.181 (0.385)	0.179 (0.383)	0.165 (0.371)	-0.002	-0.016
50–59	0.202 (0.402)	0.199 (0.399)	0.224 (0.417)	-0.003	0.022
60–74	0.271 (0.445)	0.249 (0.433)	0.268 (0.443)	-0.022	-0.003
Male	0.480 (0.500)	0.473 (0.500)	0.465 (0.499)	-0.007	-0.015
Single	0.470 (0.499)	0.491 (0.500)	0.456 (0.498)	0.021	-0.013
Married	0.440 (0.497)	0.427 (0.495)	0.463 (0.499)	-0.013	0.023
At least one child	0.528 (0.499)	0.517 (0.500)	0.518 (0.500)	-0.011	-0.010
Born in Germany	0.946 (0.227)	0.933 (0.251)	0.951 (0.215)	-0.013	0.006
Migration background	0.067 (0.250)	0.086 (0.280)	0.067 (0.251)	0.019	0.001
Income:					
High income	0.236 (0.425)	0.252 (0.434)	0.249 (0.433)	0.016	0.013
Middle income	0.622 (0.485)	0.620 (0.486)	0.612 (0.488)	-0.002	-0.010
Low income	0.141 (0.349)	0.128 (0.334)	0.139 (0.346)	-0.014	-0.002
Education:					
High education	0.424 (0.494)	0.463 (0.499)	0.416 (0.493)	0.039*	-0.008
Medium education	0.339 (0.474)	0.287 (0.453)	0.352 (0.478)	-0.052**	0.013
Low education	0.237 (0.426)	0.250 (0.433)	0.232 (0.422)	0.013	-0.005
Employment status:					
Full-time employed	0.432 (0.496)	0.465 (0.499)	0.469 (0.499)	0.034	0.037*
Part-time employed	0.168 (0.374)	0.185 (0.389)	0.147 (0.354)	0.017	-0.022
Self-employed	0.035 (0.183)	0.037 (0.189)	0.037 (0.188)	0.002	0.002
Unemployed	0.046 (0.211)	0.031 (0.174)	0.047 (0.211)	-0.015*	0.000
Miscellaneous	0.318 (0.466)	0.281 (0.450)	0.301 (0.459)	-0.038*	-0.018
Party preferences:					
CDU/CSU	0.218 (0.413)	0.207 (0.405)	0.233 (0.423)	-0.011	0.015
AFD	0.190 (0.392)	0.193 (0.395)	0.194 (0.396)	0.003	0.005
SPD	0.153 (0.360)	0.138 (0.345)	0.163 (0.369)	-0.015	0.010
Green Party	0.086 (0.281)	0.096 (0.294)	0.098 (0.298)	0.009	0.012
Left Party	0.092 (0.289)	0.089 (0.285)	0.062 (0.240)	-0.003	-0.030***
BSW	0.031 (0.173)	0.042 (0.201)	0.043 (0.202)	0.011	0.012
FDP	0.023 (0.151)	0.031 (0.174)	0.024 (0.153)	0.008	0.001
No Party	0.026 (0.160)	0.024 (0.154)	0.024 (0.153)	-0.002	-0.002
Frequent voter	0.659 (0.474)	0.653 (0.476)	0.643 (0.479)	-0.007	-0.016
High news consumption	0.881 (0.324)	0.888 (0.316)	0.898 (0.302)	0.007	0.017
Trust in Science	0.738 (0.440)	0.728 (0.445)	0.744 (0.437)	-0.010	0.006
High risk tolerance	0.382 (0.486)	0.349 (0.477)	0.390 (0.488)	-0.034	0.007
High patience	0.533 (0.499)	0.535 (0.499)	0.542 (0.499)	0.002	0.009
High altruism	0.621 (0.485)	0.623 (0.485)	0.601 (0.490)	0.003	-0.019
High idealism	0.349 (0.477)	0.372 (0.484)	0.371 (0.483)	0.024	0.022
Observations	1,033	1,025	1,008	2,058	2,041

Notes: Table reports sample means with standard deviations in parentheses. Columns 4 and 5 report pairwise differences. All sociodemographic characteristics and preference variables are coded as dummies. Income groups are defined as low (<1,250 Euro), middle (1,250–4,000 Euro), and high (>4,000 Euro) monthly income. Education groups are defined as low (no or lower secondary degree), middle (intermediate secondary degree), and high (university entrance qualification). The party preference indicates the general leaning towards a particular party. Frequent voter is coded as 1 if respondents report that they vote frequently, and 0 otherwise. High news consumption is coded as 1 if respondents report consuming news several times a week or more frequently, and 0 otherwise. Trust in science is coded as 1 if respondents report that they tend to trust scientists, and 0 otherwise. High risk tolerance is coded as 1 if respondents report a value of at least 6 on an 11-point scale from low (0) to high (10) risk tolerance, and 0 otherwise. High patience is coded as 1 if respondents report a value of at least 6 on an 11-point scale from low (0) to high (10) patience, and 0 otherwise. High altruism is coded as 1 if respondents report a value of at least 6 on an 11-point scale from low (0) to high (10) altruism, and 0 otherwise. High idealism is coded as 1 if respondents report a value of at least 6 on an 11-point scale from low (0) to high (10) idealism, and 0 otherwise. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.2: Comparison of Official Population Statistics and Survey Data

	Population Survey	Official Population Statistics
Age by category		
18–29	16.21	15.58
30–39	19.21	18.32
40–49	17.48	18.22
50–59	20.84	20.82
60–74	26.26	27.06
Female	52.71	52.07
Education by category		
Low education	23.97	23.81
Medium education	32.58	33.62
High education	43.44	42.57
Employed	67.61	68.09
Federal states		
Baden-Württemberg	12.85	13.16
Bavaria	16.73	16.76
Berlin	4.34	4.36
Brandenburg	3.03	2.96
Bremen	0.95	0.90
Hamburg	2.22	2.39
Hesse	8.28	7.93
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	1.92	1.91
Lower Saxony	9.13	8.83
North Rhine-Westphalia	21.69	21.86
Rhineland-Palatinate	5.22	5.19
Saarland	1.50	1.29
Saxony	4.44	4.99
Saxony-Anhalt	2.45	2.12
Schleswig-Holstein	3.23	3.24
Thuringia	2.02	2.10

Note: We compare the composition of our survey sample (column 1) to official benchmark statistics from the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (column 2). Demographic and regional benchmarks are drawn from the 2023 population update based on the 2022 German Microcensus, while education and employment benchmarks are drawn from the 2023 Microcensus. Age is indicated in categories and we consider individuals between 18 and 74 years old. "Female" is a binary variable with value one for female respondents. Education is indicated in categories (low, medium and high) and is a binary variable taking value one if the respondent has completed a degree in the respective category. "Employed" is a dummy variable taking the value one if the respondent is employed full-time, part-time, or self-employed. The 16 German states indicate where individuals live.

Table A.3: Selection into Follow-up Survey by Treatment Assignment

Follow-up Survey Participation (1)	
<i>Treatment:</i>	
Info-Average	-0.010 (0.018)
Info-Polarization	0.002 (0.018)
Control Group Mean	0.802*** (0.012)
R ²	0.000
Observations	3,066

Note: Table reports the effects of being assigned to a treatment group in the main survey on the likelihood of participation in the follow-up. The treatment indicators correspond to information emphasizing the absence of average effects of inequality information on preferences for redistribution or on polarization of redistributive preferences, respectively. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.4: Non-Effectiveness of Inequality Information and Belief Updating – with Controls

	<i>Dependent variable:</i> Beliefs about 'No Effect' as the most prominent effect			
	Demand for Redistribution (Average)		Polarization of Redistributive Preferences	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Treatment:</i>				
Info-Average	0.166*** (0.022)	0.165*** (0.021)	0.096*** (0.022)	0.095*** (0.022)
Info-Polarization	0.137*** (0.022)	0.139*** (0.022)	0.128*** (0.022)	0.130*** (0.022)
Constant	0.461*** (0.016)	0.735*** (0.078)	0.503*** (0.016)	0.539*** (0.081)
Control	No	Yes	No	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.021	0.045	0.011	0.024
Observations	3,066	3,058	3,066	3,058

Note: The table summarizes treatment effects on beliefs that inequality information does not affect preferences for redistribution (col. 1-2) or polarization of redistributive preferences (col. 3-4). The set of control variables includes the following sociodemographic characteristics and preference measures: age groups 18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, and 60–74; male; single; married; at least one child; born in Germany; migration background; high, middle, and low income; high, medium, and low education; full-time employed, part-time employed, self-employed, unemployed, and miscellaneous employment status; party preferences for CDU/CSU, AfD, SPD, the Green Party, the Left Party, BSW, FDP, and no party; frequent voter; high news consumption; trust in science; high risk tolerance; high patience; high altruism; and high idealism. For detailed definitions and coding of all variables, see Table A.1. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.5: Balancing Table: Follow-up Survey

	Control (1)	Info-Average (2)	Info-Polarization (3)	Difference (2)-(1)	Difference (3)-(1)
Age:					
18-29	0.117 (0.322)	0.121 (0.326)	0.122 (0.328)	0.004	0.005
30-39	0.194 (0.396)	0.201 (0.401)	0.178 (0.383)	0.007	-0.017
40-49	0.190 (0.392)	0.194 (0.395)	0.172 (0.377)	0.004	-0.018
50-59	0.210 (0.408)	0.213 (0.410)	0.240 (0.427)	0.003	0.029
60-74	0.289 (0.453)	0.271 (0.445)	0.289 (0.454)	-0.017	0.000
Male	0.486 (0.500)	0.478 (0.500)	0.464 (0.499)	-0.007	-0.021
Single	0.455 (0.498)	0.487 (0.500)	0.441 (0.497)	0.032	-0.015
Married	0.454 (0.498)	0.429 (0.495)	0.479 (0.500)	-0.025	0.025
At least one child	0.529 (0.499)	0.527 (0.500)	0.519 (0.500)	-0.002	-0.010
Born in Germany	0.943 (0.232)	0.937 (0.243)	0.958 (0.201)	-0.006	0.015
Migration background	0.068 (0.251)	0.074 (0.262)	0.059 (0.236)	0.006	-0.008
Income:					
High income	0.240 (0.428)	0.261 (0.440)	0.257 (0.437)	0.021	0.016
Middle income	0.618 (0.486)	0.620 (0.486)	0.612 (0.488)	0.002	-0.006
Low income	0.141 (0.349)	0.118 (0.323)	0.131 (0.337)	-0.023	-0.010
Education:					
High education	0.413 (0.493)	0.462 (0.499)	0.399 (0.490)	0.049**	-0.014
Medium education	0.350 (0.477)	0.287 (0.453)	0.370 (0.483)	-0.063***	0.020
Low education	0.237 (0.425)	0.250 (0.433)	0.231 (0.422)	0.014	-0.006
Employment status:					
Full-time employed	0.436 (0.496)	0.482 (0.500)	0.469 (0.499)	0.046*	0.033
Part-time employed	0.163 (0.370)	0.180 (0.384)	0.148 (0.355)	0.017	-0.015
Self-employed	0.036 (0.187)	0.044 (0.206)	0.038 (0.192)	0.008	0.002
Unemployed	0.043 (0.204)	0.022 (0.147)	0.043 (0.203)	-0.021**	-0.000
Miscellaneous	0.321 (0.467)	0.271 (0.445)	0.301 (0.459)	-0.050**	-0.020
Party preferences:					
CDU/CSU	0.213 (0.409)	0.215 (0.411)	0.244 (0.430)	0.002	0.032
AFD	0.190 (0.392)	0.185 (0.389)	0.195 (0.396)	-0.005	0.005
SPD	0.156 (0.363)	0.137 (0.344)	0.172 (0.377)	-0.019	0.016
Green Party	0.089 (0.285)	0.101 (0.302)	0.102 (0.303)	0.012	0.013
Left Party	0.087 (0.282)	0.080 (0.272)	0.051 (0.219)	-0.007	-0.036***
BSW	0.035 (0.184)	0.046 (0.209)	0.037 (0.189)	0.011	0.002
FDP	0.023 (0.150)	0.035 (0.183)	0.025 (0.155)	0.012	0.002
No Party	0.029 (0.168)	0.023 (0.151)	0.023 (0.151)	-0.006	-0.006
Frequent voter	0.675 (0.469)	0.670 (0.471)	0.648 (0.478)	-0.005	-0.027
High news consumption	0.886 (0.317)	0.898 (0.303)	0.910 (0.287)	0.011	0.023
Trust in Science	0.729 (0.445)	0.750 (0.433)	0.754 (0.431)	0.020	0.025
High risk tolerance	0.367 (0.482)	0.345 (0.476)	0.378 (0.485)	-0.022	0.011
High patience	0.529 (0.499)	0.538 (0.499)	0.526 (0.500)	0.009	-0.003
High altruism	0.614 (0.487)	0.623 (0.485)	0.591 (0.492)	0.009	-0.022
High idealism	0.333 (0.472)	0.395 (0.489)	0.374 (0.484)	0.062***	0.041*
Observations	828	811	810	1,639	1,638

Notes: Table reports sample means with standard deviations in parentheses. Columns 4 and 5 report pairwise differences. All sociodemographic characteristics and preference variables are coded as dummies. Income groups are defined as low (<1,250 Euro), middle (1,250–4,000 Euro), and high (>4,000 Euro) monthly income. Education groups are defined as low (no or lower secondary degree), middle (intermediate secondary degree), and high (university entrance qualification). The party preference indicates the general leaning towards a particular party. Frequent voter is coded as 1 if respondents report that they vote frequently, and 0 otherwise. High news consumption is coded as 1 if respondents report consuming news several times a week or more frequently, and 0 otherwise. Trust in science is coded as 1 if respondents report that they tend to trust scientists, and 0 otherwise. High risk tolerance is coded as 1 if respondents report a value of at least 6 on an 11-point scale from low (0) to high (10) risk tolerance, and 0 otherwise. High patience is coded as 1 if respondents report a value of at least 6 on an 11-point scale from low (0) to high (10) patience, and 0 otherwise. High altruism is coded as 1 if respondents report a value of at least 6 on an 11-point scale from low (0) to high (10) altruism, and 0 otherwise. High idealism is coded as 1 if respondents report a value of at least 6 on an 11-point scale from low (0) to high (10) idealism, and 0 otherwise. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.6: Belief Updating: Main Survey and Follow-up

	<i>Dependent variable: Beliefs about 'No Effect' as the most prominent effect</i>			
	Demand for Redistribution (Average)		Polarization of Redistributive Preferences	
	Main Survey (1)	Follow-up (2)	Main Survey (3)	Follow-up (4)
<i>Treatment:</i>				
Info-Average	0.166*** (0.022)	0.079*** (0.025)	0.096*** (0.022)	0.056** (0.025)
Info-Polarization	0.137*** (0.022)	0.071*** (0.025)	0.128*** (0.022)	0.066*** (0.025)
Control Group Mean	0.461*** (0.016)	0.467*** (0.017)	0.503*** (0.016)	0.490*** (0.017)
R^2	0.021	0.005	0.012	0.003
Observations	3,066	2,449	3,066	2,449

Note: The table summarizes treatment effects on beliefs that inequality information does not affect preferences for redistribution (1) or polarization of redistributive preferences (2). Columns 1 and 3 depict the treatment effects for the main sample, while columns 2 and 4 show the treatment effects for the follow-up sample. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.7: Belief Updating: Interaction by Prior Belief Quartile – Full Specification

<i>Dependent variable: Beliefs about 'No Effect' as the most prominent effect</i>		
	Demand for Redistribution (Average)	Polarization of Redistributive Preferences
	(1)	(2)
Info-Average	0.262*** (0.040)	0.129*** (0.043)
Info-Polarization	0.262*** (0.041)	0.205*** (0.043)
<i>Prior Belief</i>		
Q2	0.170*** (0.040)	0.089** (0.042)
Q3	0.300*** (0.038)	0.233*** (0.043)
Q4	0.499*** (0.042)	0.324*** (0.042)
<i>Info-Average ×</i>		
Q2	-0.083 (0.058)	0.035 (0.060)
Q3	-0.097* (0.056)	-0.082 (0.061)
Q4	-0.264*** (0.061)	-0.086 (0.059)
<i>Info-Polarization ×</i>		
Q2	-0.127** (0.060)	-0.024 (0.061)
Q3	-0.169*** (0.057)	-0.151** (0.061)
Q4	-0.265*** (0.062)	-0.145** (0.059)
Constant	0.240*** (0.026)	0.345*** (0.030)
Main Treatment Effects:		
Prior Belief Q1	0.262*** (0.040)	0.205*** (0.043)
Prior Belief Q2	0.179*** (0.043)	0.181*** (0.043)
Prior Belief Q3	0.165*** (0.039)	0.055 (0.044)
Prior Belief Q4	-0.002 (0.046)	0.060 (0.041)
Adj. R^2	0.078	0.046
Observations	3,066	3,066

Note: The table summarizes treatment effects on beliefs that inequality information does not affect preferences for redistribution (1) or polarization of redistributive preferences (2). Prior beliefs are divided into quartiles and interacted with treatment indicators to capture heterogeneous belief updating. Quartiles of prior beliefs about the share of studies showing no effect are defined as follows. For redistributive preferences: Q1 = 0–23%, Q2 = 24–33%, Q3 = 34–50%, and Q4 = 51–100%. For polarization of redistributive preferences: Q1 = 0–21%, Q2 = 22–32%, Q3 = 33–45%, and Q4 = 46–100%. The fourth quartile entails the factual values communicated in the treatments. Among respondents in the fourth quartile, a substantial share still underestimates the true values: 47% of individuals report beliefs below the factual benchmark of 63% for redistribution, and 84% report beliefs below the factual benchmark of 78% for polarization. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.8: Belief Updating: Interaction by Prior Belief Quartile – Follow-up

<i>Dependent variable: Beliefs about 'No Effect' as the most prominent effect</i>		
	Demand for Redistribution (Average)	Polarization of Redistributive Preferences
	(1)	(2)
Info-Average	0.125*** (0.047)	0.092* (0.049)
Info-Polarization	0.177*** (0.049)	0.130*** (0.049)
<i>Prior Belief</i>		
Q2	0.125*** (0.047)	0.130*** (0.048)
Q3	0.246*** (0.045)	0.178*** (0.049)
Q4	0.235*** (0.054)	0.135*** (0.050)
<i>Info-Average ×</i>		
Q2	-0.014 (0.068)	-0.037 (0.069)
Q3	-0.162** (0.065)	-0.126* (0.070)
Q4	0.048 (0.073)	0.039 (0.069)
<i>Info-Polarization ×</i>		
Q2	-0.107 (0.069)	-0.134* (0.069)
Q3	-0.165** (0.065)	-0.098 (0.070)
Q4	-0.148* (0.076)	-0.008 (0.069)
Constant	0.315*** (0.033)	0.377*** (0.035)
Main Treatment Effects:		
Prior Belief Q1	0.125*** (0.047)	0.130*** (0.049)
Prior Belief Q2	0.111 (0.049)	-0.004 (0.049)
Prior Belief Q3	-0.037 (0.044)	0.032 (0.050)
Prior Belief Q4	0.173 (0.056)	0.122 (0.049)
Adj. R^2	0.028	0.014
Observations	2,449	2,449

Note: The table summarizes treatment effects on beliefs that inequality information does not affect preferences for redistribution (1) or polarization of redistributive preferences (2). Prior beliefs are divided into quartiles and interacted with treatment indicators. Quartiles of prior beliefs about the share of studies showing no effect are defined as follows. For redistributive preferences: Q1 = 0–23%, Q2 = 24–33%, Q3 = 34–50%, and Q4 = 51–100%. For polarization of redistributive preferences: Q1 = 0–21%, Q2 = 22–32%, Q3 = 33–45%, and Q4 = 46–100%. The fourth quartile entails the factual values communicated in the treatments. Among respondents in the fourth quartile, a substantial share still underestimates the true values: 47% of individuals report beliefs below the factual benchmark of 63% for redistribution, and 84% report beliefs below the factual benchmark of 78% for polarization. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.9: Posterior Beliefs on Non-Effectiveness and Information Dissemination Preferences: Demand for Redistribution (Average)

<i>Dependent variable: Support for information dissemination</i>						
	Government	University	Others	Oneself	Overall	
	Inequality-specific Information	General Information	Transfer of Knowledge	World Inequality Lab Donation	World Inequality Lab Newsletter	Information Dissemination Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Belief: No Effect	-0.176*** (0.030)	-0.130*** (0.027)	-0.007 (0.030)	-0.076*** (0.026)	-0.079*** (0.025)	-0.093*** (0.015)
Constant	0.697*** (0.019)	0.803*** (0.017)	0.393*** (0.021)	0.826*** (0.016)	0.253*** (0.018)	0.594*** (0.010)
R^2	0.032	0.022	0.000	0.009	0.009	0.036
N	1,033	1,033	1,033	1,033	1,033	1,033

Note: Table reports the correlation on the belief of the non-effectiveness of information provision in posterior (control group) with preferences for information dissemination (columns 1-5). Dependent variables in columns 1-5 are coded as dummies and used as input factors for the Information Dissemination Index (column 6). The variable 'No Effect' is a dummy equal to one, if respondents stated that information has no effect on redistributive preferences on average, 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.10: Posterior Beliefs on Non-Effectiveness and Information Dissemination Preferences: Polarization of Redistributive Preferences

<i>Dependent variable: Support for information dissemination</i>						
	Government	University	Others	Oneself	Overall	
	Inequality-specific Information	General Information	Transfer of Knowledge	World Inequality Lab Donation	World Inequality Lab Newsletter	Information Dissemination Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Belief: No Effect	-0.167*** (0.030)	-0.097*** (0.027)	-0.019 (0.030)	-0.020 (0.025)	-0.077*** (0.026)	-0.076*** (0.015)
Constant	0.700*** (0.020)	0.791*** (0.018)	0.400*** (0.022)	0.801*** (0.018)	0.255*** (0.019)	0.589*** (0.011)
R^2	0.030	0.012	0.000	0.001	0.009	0.024
N	1,033	1,033	1,033	1,033	1,033	1,033

Note: Table reports the correlation on the belief of the non-effectiveness of information provision in posterior (control group) with preferences for information dissemination (columns 1-5). Dependent variables in columns 1-5 are coded as dummies and used as input factors for the Information Dissemination Index (column 6). The variable 'No Effect' is a dummy equal to one, if respondents stated that information on average has no effect on polarization of redistributive preferences, 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.11: Treatment Effects on Willingness to Donate

	<i>Dependent variable:: Willingness to donate</i>	
	Dummy (1)	Continuous (2)
<i>Treatment:</i>		
Info-Average	0.014 (0.018)	-0.376 (0.732)
Info-Polarization	0.028 (0.018)	-0.417 (0.718)
Constant	0.791*** (0.013)	19.758*** (0.521)
R ²	0.001	0.000
Observations	3,066	3,066

Note: Table reports the effects of providing information on the willingness to donate to the World Inequality Lab. The treatment indicators correspond to information emphasizing the absence of average effects of inequality information on preferences for redistribution or on polarization of redistributive preferences, respectively. In column (1), the dependent variable is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent was willing to donate a positive amount and 0 otherwise. Column (2) shows the treatment effects on the continuous donation amount, ranging from 0 to 50. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.12: Treatment Effects on the Role of Universities

	<i>Dependent variable:: Main task of universities (dummy)</i>		
	Transfer of Knowledge	Education	Research
	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Treatment:</i>			
Info-Average	-0.025 (0.021)	0.007 (0.019)	0.017 (0.021)
Info-Polarization	-0.000 (0.022)	-0.005 (0.019)	0.015 (0.021)
Control Group Mean	0.390*** (0.015)	0.260*** (0.014)	0.321*** (0.015)
R ²	0.001	0.000	0.000
Observations	3062	3062	3062

Note: Table reports the effects of providing information on the role of universities. The treatment indicators correspond to information emphasizing the absence of average effects of inequality information on preferences for redistribution or on polarization of redistributive preferences, respectively. Dependent variables are coded as dummies equal to 1 if the respondent indicated it as the main task of universities and 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.13: Treatment Effects on Policy Measurements

	<i>Dependent variable:: Policymakers should prioritize policy measure (dummy)</i>				
	Information Provision	Financial Incentives	Recommended Actions	Rules and Prohibitions	No Action
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Treatment:</i>					
Info-Average	0.007 (0.019)	0.003 (0.022)	-0.001 (0.020)	-0.022 (0.018)	-0.000 (0.012)
Info-Polarization	0.032* (0.019)	0.009 (0.022)	0.002 (0.020)	-0.027 (0.018)	-0.015 (0.011)
Control Group Mean	0.742*** (0.014)	0.589*** (0.015)	0.291*** (0.014)	0.212*** (0.013)	0.074*** (0.008)
R ²	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001
Observations	3,065	3,065	3,065	3,065	3,065

Note: Table reports the effects of providing information on the preferences for measures that policymakers can use to support or change the behavior of the population. The treatment indicators correspond to information emphasizing the absence of average effects of inequality information on preferences for redistribution or on polarization of redistributive preferences, respectively. Dependent variables are coded as dummies equal to 1 if respondents think that the measure should be used preferentially, 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.14: Support for Information Dissemination and Demand for Information – with Controls

<i>Dependent variable: Support for information dissemination</i>						
	Government		University	Others	Oneself	Overall
	Inequality-specific Information	General Information	Transfer of Knowledge	World Inequality Lab Donation	World Inequality Lab Newsletter	Information Dissemination Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Treatment:</i>						
Info-Average	-0.020 (0.021)	0.012 (0.018)	-0.021 (0.021)	0.015 (0.017)	-0.001 (0.018)	-0.003 (0.010)
Info-Polarization	-0.018 (0.021)	0.034* (0.018)	0.001 (0.022)	0.028 (0.017)	-0.024 (0.017)	0.004 (0.010)
Constant	0.258*** (0.074)	0.397*** (0.072)	0.257*** (0.077)	0.734*** (0.062)	-0.034 (0.059)	0.320*** (0.037)
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adj. R^2	0.094	0.092	0.023	0.084	0.058	0.161
Observations	3,057	3,057	3,054	3,058	3,057	3,051

Note: Table reports the effects of providing information on inequality on the Information Dissemination Index (column 6) and the input factors of the index (column 1 - 5). The treatment indicators correspond to information emphasizing the absence of average effects of inequality information on preferences for redistribution or on polarization of redistributive preferences, respectively. Dependent variables are coded as dummies. The controls correspond to the sociodemographic characteristics and preference measures used in the balancing table: age groups 18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, and 60–74; male; single; married; at least one child; born in Germany; migration background; high, middle, and low income; high, medium, and low education; full-time employed, part-time employed, self-employed, unemployed, and miscellaneous employment status; party preferences for CDU/CSU, AfD, SPD, the Green Party, the Left Party, BSW, FDP, and no party; frequent voter; high news consumption; trust in science; high risk tolerance; high patience; high altruism; and high idealism. For detailed definitions and coding of all variables, see Table A.1. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.15: Support for Information Dissemination by the Government

<i>Dependent variable: Information dissemination by the government</i>				
	Inequality-specific Information		General Information	
	Main Survey	Follow-up	Main Survey	Follow-up
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Treatment:</i>				
Info-Average	-0.023 (0.022)	-0.024 (0.024)	0.006 (0.019)	-0.020 (0.022)
Info-Polarization	-0.014 (0.022)	-0.028 (0.024)	0.032* (0.019)	0.010 (0.022)
Control Group Mean	0.616*** (0.015)	0.585*** (0.017)	0.742*** (0.014)	0.733*** (0.015)
R^2	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001
Observations	3,065	2,449	3,065	2,449

Note: The Table reports the effects of providing inequality information on the demand for information dissemination by the government. 'Inequality-specific Information' is a dummy equal to 1 if respondents indicated that they are "Rather in favor" or "Very much in favor" regarding the regular provision of information on social inequality via the government, 0 otherwise. 'General Information' is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent chose information provision as a measure that policymakers should prioritize in order to support or change the behavior of the population. The treatment indicators correspond to information emphasizing the absence of average effects of inequality information on preferences for redistribution or on polarization of redistributive preferences, respectively. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.16: Treatment Effects on Support for Information Dissemination: by Prior Belief Quartile

	<i>Dependent variable: Support for information dissemination</i>					
	Government		University	Others	Oneself	Overall
	Inequality-specific Information	General Information	Transfer of Knowledge	World Inequality Lab Donation	World Inequality Lab Newsletter	Information Dissemination Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Info-Average	0.008 (0.037)	-0.021 (0.034)	-0.020 (0.038)	0.032 (0.030)	0.038 (0.035)	0.007 (0.019)
<i>Prior Belief Average</i>						
Q2	-0.033 (0.030)	0.009 (0.026)	0.010 (0.031)	0.012 (0.025)	-0.000 (0.026)	-0.001 (0.015)
Q3	-0.053* (0.030)	-0.005 (0.026)	-0.015 (0.030)	0.009 (0.025)	-0.031 (0.025)	-0.019 (0.015)
Q4	-0.125*** (0.035)	-0.009 (0.030)	0.009 (0.035)	0.009 (0.028)	-0.084*** (0.027)	-0.040** (0.017)
<i>Info-Average</i> ×						
Q2	0.051 (0.050)	0.050 (0.045)	-0.020 (0.052)	-0.002 (0.041)	-0.040 (0.046)	0.008 (0.026)
Q3	-0.111** (0.050)	0.044 (0.045)	-0.010 (0.050)	-0.022 (0.041)	-0.095** (0.043)	-0.038 (0.025)
Q4	-0.057 (0.058)	0.012 (0.053)	0.018 (0.058)	-0.057 (0.048)	-0.019 (0.047)	-0.019 (0.029)
Info-Polarization	-0.008 (0.038)	0.020 (0.032)	0.008 (0.039)	0.019 (0.031)	-0.069** (0.032)	-0.006 (0.018)
<i>Prior Belief Polarization</i>						
Q2	0.037 (0.030)	0.000 (0.026)	0.025 (0.031)	0.026 (0.024)	-0.014 (0.027)	0.015 (0.015)
Q3	0.030 (0.031)	-0.048* (0.028)	-0.025 (0.031)	-0.009 (0.026)	-0.037 (0.027)	-0.018 (0.016)
Q4	-0.037 (0.032)	-0.095*** (0.029)	-0.007 (0.031)	-0.052* (0.027)	-0.073*** (0.026)	-0.052*** (0.016)
<i>Info-Polarization</i> ×						
Q2	0.017 (0.052)	0.012 (0.044)	-0.054 (0.053)	0.004 (0.041)	0.050 (0.044)	0.005 (0.025)
Q3	-0.033 (0.053)	-0.017 (0.047)	0.046 (0.054)	0.013 (0.043)	0.032 (0.043)	0.009 (0.026)
Q4	0.007 (0.053)	0.058 (0.047)	-0.023 (0.053)	0.021 (0.044)	0.113*** (0.043)	0.035 (0.026)
Constant	0.653*** (0.029)	0.778*** (0.025)	0.391*** (0.029)	0.791*** (0.023)	0.271*** (0.026)	0.577*** (0.014)
Main Treatment Effects:						
<i>Prior Belief Average</i>						
Q2	0.060 (0.037)	0.029 (0.033)	-0.039 (0.038)	0.030 (0.030)	-0.002 (0.033)	0.015 (0.019)
Q3	-0.103*** (0.036)	0.023 (0.032)	-0.030 (0.035)	0.010 (0.029)	-0.057** (0.028)	-0.031* (0.017)
Q4	-0.049 (0.047)	-0.010 (0.042)	-0.001 (0.046)	-0.025 (0.039)	0.019 (0.034)	-0.012 (0.024)
<i>Prior Belief Polarization</i>						
Q2	0.009 (0.038)	0.033 (0.032)	-0.046 (0.039)	0.023 (0.030)	-0.019 (0.034)	-0.001 (0.018)
Q3	-0.041 (0.040)	0.003 (0.036)	0.054 (0.040)	0.032 (0.032)	-0.036 (0.032)	0.003 (0.020)
Q4	-0.001 (0.040)	0.078** (0.036)	-0.015 (0.039)	0.041 (0.034)	0.044 (0.031)	0.029 (0.020)
Adj. R^2	0.018	0.005	-0.002	0.002	0.011	0.016
Observations	3,065	3,065	3,062	3,066	3,065	3,059

Note: Table reports the effects of providing inequality information on the Information Dissemination Index (column 6) and the input factors of the index (column 1 - 5). The treatment indicators correspond to information emphasizing the absence of average effects of inequality information on preferences for redistribution or on polarization of redistributive preferences, respectively. Prior beliefs are divided into quartiles and interacted with treatment indicators to capture heterogeneous belief updating. Quartiles of prior beliefs about the share of studies showing no effect are defined as follows. For redistributive preferences: Q1 = 0-23%, Q2 = 24-33%, Q3 = 34-50%, and Q4 = 51-100%. For polarization of redistributive preferences: Q1 = 0-21%, Q2 = 22-32%, Q3 = 33-45%, and Q4 = 46-100%. The fourth quartile entails the factual values communicated in the treatments. Among respondents in the fourth quartile, a substantial share still underestimates the true values: 47% of individuals report beliefs below the factual benchmark of 63% for redistribution, and 84% report beliefs below the factual benchmark of 78% for polarization. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.17: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on Posterior Beliefs: Treatment *Info-Average*

	<i>Info-Average</i> (omitted subgroup) (1)		<i>Info-Average</i> – subgroup interaction (2)
<i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i>			
Age under median	0.119*** (0.026)	× Age above median	-0.044 (0.038)
Female	0.130*** (0.025)	× Male	-0.067* (0.038)
Born in West Germany	0.094*** (0.021)	× Born in East Germany	0.022 (0.049)
Not full-time employed	0.119*** (0.025)	× Full-time employed	-0.044 (0.038)
Low or medium income	0.094*** (0.022)	× High income	0.015 (0.044)
No children	0.074*** (0.027)	× Has children	0.046 (0.038)
No migration background	0.091*** (0.020)	× Migration background	0.094 (0.069)
<i>Political activity and preferences</i>			
Does not support radical parties	0.116*** (0.023)	× Supports radical parties	-0.056 (0.040)
Does not support governing parties	0.100*** (0.020)	× Supports governing parties	-0.025 (0.054)
Low or medium political interest	0.107*** (0.029)	× High political interest	-0.015 (0.038)
Does not consider informed society important	0.013 (0.044)	× Considers informed society important	0.101** (0.048)
<i>Credibility and Trust</i>			
Does not trust scientists	0.094*** (0.035)	× Trusts scientists	0.003 (0.041)
Does not consider scientists credible	0.075** (0.036)	× Considers scientists credible	0.028 (0.042)
Does not consider public news credible	0.115*** (0.027)	× Considers public news credible	-0.035 (0.038)
Does not consider social media credible	0.0838*** (0.0205)	× Considers social media credible	0.0748 (0.0521)
<i>Personal traits</i>			
Low or medium risk preference	0.104*** (0.021)	× High risk preference	-0.027 (0.043)
Low or medium patience	0.094*** (0.024)	× High patience	0.007 (0.038)
Low or medium altruism	0.069*** (0.026)	× High altruism	0.058 (0.037)
Low or medium idealism	0.110*** (0.021)	× High idealism	-0.052 (0.044)

Note: Each row reports a separate OLS regression that includes the experimental treatment *Info-Average* and its interaction terms with the subgroup indicator. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if respondents personally believe that information on inequality shows on average no effect on redistributive preferences, 0 otherwise. Column (1) reports the coefficient on *Info-Average-Treatment*, which is the treatment effect in the omitted subgroup. Column (2) reports the coefficient on the *treatment*×*subgroup* interaction term, i.e., the difference in treatment effects between the indicated subgroup and the omitted subgroup. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.18: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on Posterior Beliefs: Treatment *Info-Polarization*

	<i>Info-Polarization</i> (omitted subgroup) (1)		<i>Info-Polarization</i> – subgroup interaction (2)
<i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i>			
Age under median	0.066** (0.027)	× Age above median	0.027 (0.038)
Female	0.085*** (0.025)	× Male	-0.011 (0.038)
Born in West Germany	0.096*** (0.021)	× Born in East Germany	-0.089* (0.049)
Not full-time employed	0.059** (0.026)	× Full-time employed	0.047 (0.038)
Low or medium income	0.068*** (0.022)	× High income	0.050 (0.043)
No children	0.086*** (0.027)	× Has children	-0.011 (0.038)
No migration background	0.083*** (0.019)	× Migration background	-0.051 (0.075)
<i>Political activity and preferences</i>			
Does not support radical parties	0.088*** (0.022)	× Supports radical parties	-0.029 (0.041)
Does not support governing parties	0.071*** (0.020)	× Supports governing parties	0.056 (0.051)
Low or medium political interest	0.069** (0.029)	× High political interest	0.020 (0.038)
Does not consider informed society important	0.040 (0.044)	× Considers informed society important	0.049 (0.049)
<i>Credibility and Trust</i>			
Does not trust scientists	-0.028 (0.037)	× Trusts scientists	0.147*** (0.043)
Does not consider scientists credible	0.005 (0.037)	× Considers scientists credible	0.102** (0.043)
Does not consider public news credible	0.047* (0.028)	× Considers public news credible	0.060 (0.038)
Does not consider social media credible	0.095*** (0.020)	× Considers social media credible	-0.097* (0.053)
<i>Personal traits</i>			
Low or medium risk preference	0.077*** (0.022)	× High risk preference	0.019 (0.043)
Low or medium patience	0.073*** (0.024)	× High patience	0.019 (0.038)
Low or medium altruism	0.071*** (0.026)	× High altruism	0.017 (0.037)
Low or medium idealism	0.100*** (0.021)	× High idealism	-0.071 (0.043)

Note: Each row reports a separate OLS regression that includes the experimental treatment *Info-Polarization* and its interaction terms with the subgroup indicator. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if respondents personally believe that information on inequality shows on average no effect on polarization of redistributive preferences, 0 otherwise. Column (1) reports the coefficient on the *Info-Polarization-Treatment*, which is the treatment effect in the omitted subgroup. Column (2) reports the coefficient on the *treatment*×*subgroup* interaction term, i.e., the difference in treatment effects between the indicated subgroup and the omitted subgroup. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.19: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on the Support for Information Dissemination Index: Treatment *Info-Average*

	<i>Info-Average</i> (omitted subgroup) (1)		<i>Info-Average</i> – subgroup interaction (2)
<i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i>			
Age under median	0.004 (0.013)	× Age above median	-0.024 (0.019)
Female	-0.007 (0.012)	× Male	-0.004 (0.019)
Born in West Germany	-0.008 (0.010)	× Born in East Germany	-0.003 (0.025)
Not full-time employed	-0.015 (0.013)	× Full-time employed	0.013 (0.019)
Low or medium income	-0.017 (0.011)	× High income	0.034 (0.021)
No children	-0.014 (0.013)	× Has children	0.010 (0.018)
No migration background	-0.011 (0.010)	× Migration background	0.033 (0.036)
<i>Political activity and preferences</i>			
Does not support radical parties	-0.010 (0.011)	× Supports radical parties	0.007 (0.020)
Does not support governing parties	-0.010 (0.010)	× Supports governing parties	0.023 (0.023)
Low or medium political interest	-0.017 (0.014)	× High political interest	0.013 (0.019)
Does not consider informed society important	0.017 (0.022)	× Considers informed society important	-0.030 (0.024)
<i>Credibility and Trust</i>			
Does not trust scientists	-0.022 (0.018)	× Trusts scientists	0.020 (0.021)
Does not consider scientists credible	-0.007 (0.018)	× Considers scientists credible	0.004 (0.021)
Does not consider public news credible	-0.029** (0.014)	× Considers public news credible	0.038** (0.018)
Does not consider social media credible	-0.004 (0.010)	× Considers social media credible	-0.022 (0.026)
<i>Personal traits</i>			
Low or medium risk preference	-0.017 (0.011)	× High risk preference	0.034 (0.021)
Low or medium patience	-0.008 (0.012)	× High patience	0.001 (0.019)
Low or medium altruism	-0.006 (0.013)	× High altruism	-0.006 (0.018)
Low or medium idealism	-0.013 (0.011)	× High idealism	0.018 (0.020)

Note: Each row reports a separate OLS regression that includes the experimental treatment and its interaction terms with the subgroup indicator. The dependent variable is the Information Dissemination Index consisting of input factors that indicate whether a respondent supports information dissemination by different senders. Column (1) reports the coefficient on the *Index*, which is the treatment effect in the omitted subgroup. Column (2) reports the coefficient on the treatment×subgroup interaction term, i.e., the difference in treatment effects between the indicated subgroup and the omitted subgroup. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.20: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on the Support for Information Dissemination Index: Treatment *Info-Polarization*

	<i>Info-Polarization</i> (omitted subgroup) (1)		<i>Info-Polarization</i> – subgroup interaction (2)
<i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i>			
Age under median	0.009 (0.013)	× Age above median	-0.004 (0.018)
Female	0.007 (0.012)	× Male	0.001 (0.018)
Born in West Germany	0.006 (0.010)	× Born in East Germany	0.010 (0.024)
Not full-time employed	0.002 (0.013)	× Full-time employed	0.013 (0.018)
Low or medium income	0.015 (0.011)	× High income	-0.028 (0.021)
No children	0.012 (0.013)	× Has children	-0.008 (0.018)
No migration background	0.009 (0.009)	× Migration background	-0.020 (0.038)
<i>Political activity and preferences</i>			
Does not support radical parties	0.018* (0.011)	× Supports radical parties	-0.038* (0.020)
Does not support governing parties	0.004 (0.010)	× Supports governing parties	0.011 (0.022)
Low or medium political interest	0.003 (0.014)	× High political interest	0.005 (0.018)
Does not consider informed society important	0.002 (0.021)	× Considers informed society important	0.007 (0.023)
<i>Credibility and Trust</i>			
Does not trust scientists	0.009 (0.018)	× Trusts scientists	-0.004 (0.021)
Does not consider scientists credible	0.011 (0.018)	× Considers scientists credible	-0.008 (0.021)
Does not consider public news credible	0.013 (0.014)	× Considers public news credible	-0.014 (0.018)
Does not consider social media credible	0.006 (0.010)	× Considers social media credible	0.006 (0.026)
<i>Personal traits</i>			
Low or medium risk preference	0.006 (0.011)	× High risk preference	0.002 (0.021)
Low or medium patience	0.000 (0.012)	× High patience	0.016 (0.018)
Low or medium altruism	-0.003 (0.013)	× High altruism	0.024 (0.018)
Low or medium idealism	0.006 (0.011)	× High idealism	0.001 (0.020)

Note: Each row reports a separate OLS regression that includes the experimental treatment *Info-Polarization* and its interaction terms with the subgroup indicator. The dependent variable is the Information Dissemination Index consisting of input factors that indicate whether a respondent supports information dissemination by different senders. Column (1) reports the coefficient on the *Index*, which is the treatment effect in the omitted subgroup. Column (2) reports the coefficient on the treatment×subgroup interaction term, i.e., the difference in treatment effects between the indicated subgroup and the omitted subgroup. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.21: Quartile Treatment Effects on Posterior Beliefs: by Confidence in Prior Beliefs

<i>Dependent variable: Beliefs about 'No Effect' as the most prominent effect</i>				
	Demand for Redistribution (Average)		Polarization of Redistributive Preferences	
	High Confidence (1)	Low Confidence (2)	High Confidence (3)	Low Confidence (4)
Info-Average	0.245*** (0.053)	0.290*** (0.061)	0.124** (0.054)	0.139** (0.068)
Info-Polarization	0.310*** (0.055)	0.213*** (0.063)	0.201*** (0.056)	0.201*** (0.065)
<i>Prior Belief:</i>				
Q2	0.123** (0.052)	0.224*** (0.060)	0.097* (0.056)	0.067 (0.065)
Q3	0.291*** (0.052)	0.310*** (0.057)	0.219*** (0.060)	0.222*** (0.064)
Q4	0.478*** (0.061)	0.514*** (0.059)	0.330*** (0.057)	0.302*** (0.064)
<i>Info-Average</i> ×				
Q2	-0.035 (0.078)	-0.145* (0.087)	0.037 (0.079)	0.036 (0.093)
Q3	-0.093 (0.077)	-0.120 (0.080)	-0.075 (0.084)	-0.088 (0.090)
Q4	-0.202** (0.085)	-0.332*** (0.089)	-0.094 (0.080)	-0.079 (0.089)
<i>Info-Polarization</i> ×				
Q2	-0.115 (0.081)	-0.147* (0.089)	-0.032 (0.083)	-0.015 (0.090)
Q3	-0.232*** (0.078)	-0.105 (0.083)	-0.117 (0.085)	-0.168* (0.090)
Q4	-0.233*** (0.086)	-0.295*** (0.091)	-0.143* (0.080)	-0.128 (0.088)
Constant	0.212*** (0.034)	0.268*** (0.040)	0.306*** (0.038)	0.402*** (0.048)
<i>Main Treatment Effects:</i>				
Prior Belief Q2	0.210 (0.058)	0.145 (0.062)	0.169 (0.061)	0.187 (0.061)
Prior Belief Q3	0.152 (0.056)	0.171 (0.053)	0.084 (0.063)	0.034 (0.061)
Prior Belief Q4	0.043 (0.067)	-0.042 (0.065)	0.058 (0.057)	0.073 (0.059)
Adj. R^2	0.084	0.071	0.044	0.039
Observations	1,598	1,465	1,659	1,404

Note: Table reports OLS estimates of treatment effects on respondents' posterior beliefs about the non-effectiveness of information on inequality for preferences for redistribution (columns 1 and 2) and polarization of redistributive preferences (columns 3 and 4). Odd-numbered columns include individuals whose confidence in their prior beliefs is above the median, while even-numbered columns include individuals with below-median confidence. Prior beliefs are divided into quartiles and interacted with treatment indicators to capture heterogeneous belief updating. Quartiles of prior beliefs about the share of studies showing no effect are defined as follows. For redistribution: Q1 = 0–23%, Q2 = 24–33%, Q3 = 34–50%, and Q4 = 51–100%. For polarization of redistributive preferences: Q1 = 0–21%, Q2 = 22–32%, Q3 = 33–45%, and Q4 = 46–100%. The fourth quartile contains the factual values communicated in the treatments. Among respondents in the fourth quartile, a substantial share still underestimates the true values: 47% report beliefs below the factual benchmark of 63% for redistribution, and 84% report beliefs below the actual benchmark of 78% for polarization. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

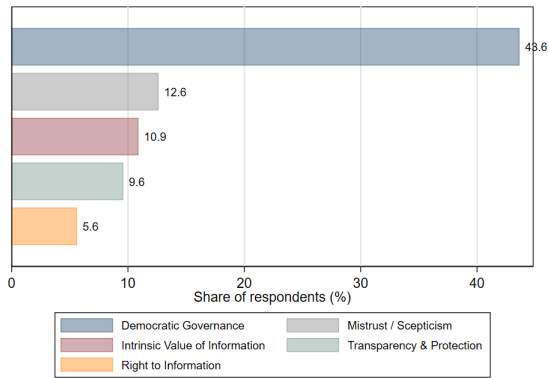
Table A.22: Treatment Effects on Information Dissemination Index: by High Attention and Reliability

	<i>Dependent variable: Information Dissemination Index</i>		
	High Attention		High Reliability
	Check Question (1)	Self-Assessment (2)	Self-Assessment (3)
Info-Average	-0.025 (0.024)	-0.014 (0.017)	-0.023 (0.015)
Info-Polarization	-0.005 (0.025)	-0.005 (0.017)	-0.019 (0.014)
Subgroup	0.025 (0.020)	0.041*** (0.016)	0.020 (0.015)
Info-Average \times Subgroup	0.025 (0.027)	0.016 (0.022)	0.035 (0.022)
Info-Polarization \times Subgroup	0.011 (0.027)	0.017 (0.022)	0.052** (0.021)
Constant	0.531*** (0.018)	0.525*** (0.013)	0.541*** (0.011)
<i>Treatment Effects for Subgroups:</i>			
Main effect Average	-0.000 (0.012)	0.001 (0.014)	0.012 (0.016)
Main effect Polarization	0.006 (0.012)	0.012 (0.014)	0.033** (0.015)
Adj. R^2	0.003	0.010	0.011
Observations	3,059	3,059	3,059

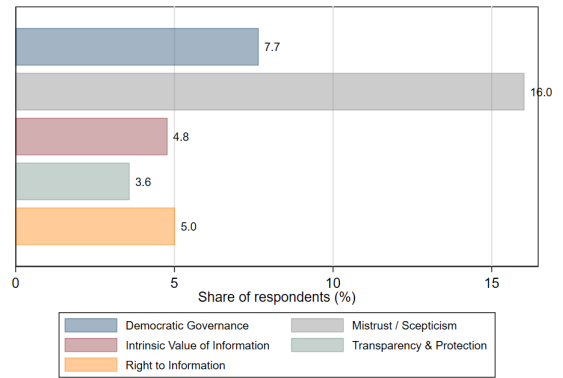
Note: Table summarizes treatment effects on the Information Dissemination Index for the subgroups of individuals who signaled high attention in the survey and reported high reliability of their responses. Attention Check is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent passed the attention check, and 0 otherwise. High Attention: Self-assessed is a dummy variable equal to 1 if respondents reported paying “full attention” to the survey, and 0 otherwise. High Answer Reliability is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent self-assessed their answer reliability at 9 or 10 on a scale from 0 (“very low reliability”) to 10 (“very high reliability”), and 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

B Open Text Question

Figure B.1: Subgroup Analysis of Open Text Question



(a) Respondents who regard an informed society as rather or very important (N=2,367)



(b) Respondents who regard an informed society as neither nor, rather or very unimportant (N=418)

Table B.1: Coding Scheme of Information Dissemination Motives

Category	Subcategory	Definition	Examples
Democratic Governance	Counteracting Extremism	Information helps prevent extremist or populist thinking, voting, or speech.	<i>An uninformed population blindly votes for populist parties.</i>
	Fact-Based Decision Making	Information reduces emotional or intuitive decisions and promotes more rational, objective, or fact-based decision-making.	<i>Knowledge is essential for rational decision-making.</i>
	Empowered Opinion Formation	Information enables individuals to form their own opinion, participate in public discussion, vote in an informed way, or better understand issues.	<i>Without understanding what is being discussed, it is difficult to form an opinion.</i>
	Political Agency	Emphasizes the role, accountability, or relevance of citizens in political decision-making.	<i>People need to be informed so they can defend their interests.</i>
Mistrust / Scepticism	Low Trust in Politics	Expressions of distrust toward political institutions or actors.	<i>Politicians do whatever they want.</i>
	Low Trust in Media	Expressions of distrust toward media organizations.	<i>Most news is politically manipulated.</i>
	Low Trust in Information Overall	General distrust in information as such.	<i>Accurate information would be very important.</i>
	Political Legitimacy / Acceptance	Information increases trust in or acceptance of political decisions.	<i>If the people know why decisions are made, they are more likely to support them.</i>
	Expert-Centered Governance	Experts are viewed as better decision-makers than citizens; public information is considered unnecessary.	<i>There are not many people left who can think for themselves.</i>
	Information Not Relevant	Information is unnecessary, irrelevant, or unlikely to make a meaningful difference.	<i>The population has no influence in any case.</i>
Intrinsic Value of Information	Curiosity / Learning	Information is interesting; learning and education are valued.	<i>Education is our greatest asset.</i>
	Knowledge as Intrinsic Good	Knowledge is valuable in itself.	<i>Knowledge is power.</i>
Transparency & Protection	Transparency	Transparency is considered valuable in itself.	<i>Society needs to know the truth because politicians conceal many things.</i>
	Protection Against Manipulation	Information helps prevent manipulation, misinformation, or being misled.	<i>Poorly informed people are easier to influence.</i>
Right to Information	Right to Information (Normative)	Normative statements asserting that people ought to be informed or have a right to information.	<i>Every citizen has the right to know what is happening in their country.</i>
Social Cohesion	Social Cohesion	Information promotes shared understanding, common ground, or unity in society.	<i>A well-informed population benefits both society and democracy.</i>
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Answers are not interpretable or do not fit existing categories of the coding scheme.	<i>Urgently needed. It's simply necessary.</i>
	Don't know	Responses in which participants explicitly state that they do not know, are unsure, or cannot provide an answer.	<i>No idea. I don't know.</i>

Notes: The table lists the different coding categories and subcategories of information dissemination motives elicited in the open-ended question used in Figure 4. For each subcategory, a definition and illustrative example responses are provided. The subcategories are further combined into aggregated categories.

Table B.2: Intercoder Reliability (Cohen’s κ) – Aggregate Categories

Category	Observed	Expected	κ	SE
Democratic Governance	0.8975	0.5191	0.787	0.050
Mistrust	0.9375	0.7932	0.698	0.048
Intrinsic Value	0.9350	0.8443	0.583	0.050
Transparency	0.9525	0.8098	0.750	0.050
Right to Information (Normative)	0.9600	0.8444	0.743	0.050
Mean κ			0.712	

Note: Intercoder reliability assessed using Cohen’s κ . Observed and expected agreement reported as proportions. Standard errors in column 5. N=400.

Table B.3: Treatment Effects on Information Dissemination Index: by Motive Categories

Subgroups:	<i>Dependent variable: Information Dissemination Index</i>				
	All (1)	Democratic Governance (2)	Intrinsic Value (3)	Transparency & Protection (4)	Low Trust (5)
Info-Average	-0.006 (0.011)	-0.018 (0.017)	0.005 (0.035)	-0.016 (0.037)	-0.039 (0.033)
Info-Polarization	0.004 (0.011)	-0.003 (0.017)	-0.021 (0.037)	0.035 (0.037)	0.025 (0.028)
Constant	0.551*** (0.008)	0.610*** (0.012)	0.579*** (0.026)	0.589*** (0.027)	0.549*** (0.020)
R^2	0.000	0.001	0.002	0.008	0.012
Observations	3,059	1,065	278	242	365

Note: The table reports OLS estimates of the effects of the *Info-Average* and *Info-Polarization* treatments on the Information Dissemination Index across motive-based subgroups. Each column represents a separate regression for respondents who identified the respective motive as important for good political decision-making. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

C Screenshots of Treatments

Wichtige Information! Eine wissenschaftliche Überblickstudie von **Marino et al. (2024)*** zeigt: In **63%** der Fälle hat Informationsbereitstellung über Ungleichheit **keinen Einfluss** auf die durchschnittliche Zustimmung zu staatlicher Umverteilung.

Ihre Schätzung: 30%
vs.
tatsächlicher Wert: 63%

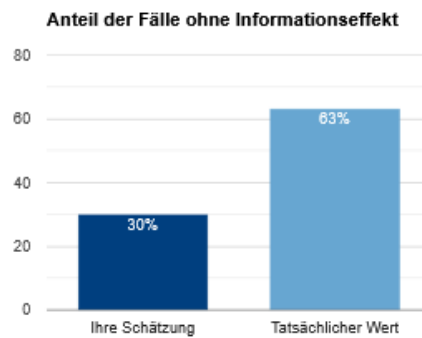


Figure C.1: Info-Average — Screenshot of the survey

Wichtige Information! Eine wissenschaftliche Überblickstudie von **Marino et al. (2024)*** zeigt: In **78%** der Fälle hat Informationsbereitstellung über Ungleichheit **keinen Einfluss** auf bestehende **Meinungsunterschiede** (Polarisierung) zu staatlicher Umverteilung.

Ihre Schätzung: 20%
vs.
tatsächlicher Wert: 78%

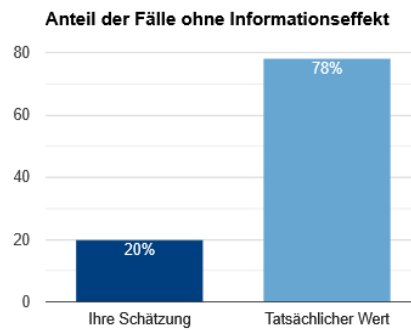


Figure C.2: Info-Polarization — Screenshot of the survey

D Survey Questionnaire

For the reader: In the following, you find a translation of the full survey. The survey was originally conducted in German.

We would now like to hear your opinion on the subject of social inequality. *By this we mean, for example, differences in income, educational attainment and wealth between different social groups.*

[Page Break]

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "Social inequality in Germany is a serious problem."
I...

- ...strongly agree
- ...somewhat agree
- ...neither agree nor disagree
- ...somewhat disagree
- ...strongly disagree

[Page Break]

Which aspect of social inequality do you consider most problematic? *Please list your main thoughts in bullet points.*

[Page Break]

To what extent do you think luck or effort determine whether someone earns a lot of money in Germany?

- Only luck: 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- Only effort: 7

[Page Break]

What do you think: Is an informed population important or unimportant for good political decisions to be made in a society?

- Very unimportant
- Rather unimportant
- Neither nor
- Rather important
- Very important

Please briefly explain your answer in keywords.

[Page Break]

How well informed are you about socially relevant issues?

- Not informed at all
- Not really informed
- Neither well nor poorly informed
- Rather well informed
- Very well informed

[Page Break]

What do you think: To what extent is the average adult in Germany informed about socially relevant issues?

- Not informed at all
- Not really informed
- Neither well nor poorly informed
- Rather well informed
- Very well informed

[Page Break]

In the following, we are interested in your opinion on the results of scientific studies on the perception of social inequality. *Please read the following information and questions carefully.*

[Page Break]

Many scientific studies examine how citizens perceive social inequalities. *One focus is* on whether **information** about existing inequalities influences **support for redistribution measures**, such as increasing government spending on disadvantaged groups. In such studies, some respondents are given specific **information** about the extent of social inequality. The studies then examine whether their **attitudes towards redistribution** change on average compared to people who did not receive such information. They also examine whether providing information leads to **polarization** – i.e. whether the opinions of different social groups (e.g. age or income groups) become more divergent. *In the following, we ask you a few estimation questions about these studies.*

[Page Break]

There are studies that examine how information about social inequality affects the population. What is your estimate:

What percentage of these studies find that information about inequality...

... increases the average level of support for government redistribution? _____

... does not affect the average level of support for government redistribution? _____

... decreases the average level of support for government redistribution? _____

How confident are you that your answers are approximately correct?

- Very uncertain: 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- Very certain: 7

[Page Break]

Now it's about how you assess the effect of information on polarization. Polarization means that existing differences of opinion between social groups (e.g., age or income groups) are reinforced. *What percentage of these studies show that information about inequality...*

... strengthens such differences in opinions? _____

... does not change such differences in opinions? _____

... reduces such differences in opinions? _____

How confident are you that your answers are approximately correct?

- Very uncertain: 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- Very certain: 7

[Page Break]

For the reader: In the following, participants in the treatment groups received additional scientific information about research findings on the effects of inequality information. Participants in the control group do not receive further information. For greater transparency, the asterisk () in the following treatment texts opened a separate window displaying the full source details of the referenced scientific study.*

Treatment 1 (Average)

Important information! A scientific overview study by **Marino et al. (2024)*** shows: In **63 percent** of cases, providing information about inequality has **no effect** on the average level of support for government redistribution.
Your estimation: XX% vs. actual value: 63%

[Page Break]

Treatment 2 (Polarization)

Important information! A scientific overview study by **Marino et al. (2024)*** shows: In **78 percent** of cases, providing information about inequality has **no effect** on existing **differences of opinion** (polarization) regarding government redistribution.
Your estimation: XX% vs. actual value: 78%

[Page Break]

For the reader: In the following, questions were then again shown to all participants, irrespective of their experimental group:

How do you assess the actual effect of information about social inequality on public support for government redistribution?

"I think that information affects the average level of support for government redistribution by..."

- ... increasing it.
- ... not affecting it.
- ... decreasing it.

[Page Break]

How do you assess the actual effect of information about social inequality on existing differences of opinion (polarization) among the population regarding government redistribution?

"I think that information affects existing differences in opinions about government redistribution by..."

- ... strengthening them.
- ... not changing them.
- ... reducing them.

[Page Break]

Are you in favor of or against government institutions regularly informing the public by providing scientific information about social inequality?

Bear in mind that the costs of providing information (e.g., for staff and materials) must be financed from tax revenue. I am...

- strongly in favor.
- somewhat in favor.
- neither in favor nor opposed.
- somewhat opposed.
- strongly opposed.

[Page Break]

Which of the following tasks do you think universities should prioritize in the public interest?

- Research
- Teaching
- Knowledge transfer (passing on acquired knowledge to the population)
- Other, namely: _____

[Page Break]

Among all participants in this survey, 20 individuals will be randomly selected to receive an additional payment of 50 euros. If you are selected, you can decide how much of it you would like to donate to the World Inequality Lab to support its public relations work on social inequality. In this case, the monetary value you allocate to the foundation will be transferred directly to a donation account. The monetary value that you retain will be credited to your points account.

World Inequality Lab

The non-profit organization 'World Inequality Lab' researches the causes and consequences of social inequality. It publishes its findings both in scientific journals and in a way that is accessible to the general public. One of its key projects is the World Inequality Database, which provides freely accessible information on the development of inequality worldwide and also for Germany in a clear and concise manner. **Your decision:** Please enter the amount you would like to donate to the World Inequality Lab from the 50 euros below.

[Page Break]

We would like to offer you the opportunity to register for the quarterly newsletter of the World Inequality Lab. *The newsletter keeps you up to date on the latest research on social inequality worldwide and in Germany.* If you select ‘Yes’, you will be taken directly to the newsletter registration form at the end of the survey.

Would you like to subscribe to the newsletter?

- Yes
- No

[Page Break]

In your opinion, what measures should policymakers prioritize in order to support or change the behavior of the population? *Multiple selections possible*

- Rules and regulations
 - Recommendations for action
 - Information and education
 - Financial incentives and support
 - No action
 - Other measures, namely:
-

[Page Break]

You have now answered several questions on social inequality, government redistribution, polarization and the effects of information. In your opinion, which research questions do you think are to be investigated with these survey questions? *Please use the text box to write your answer.*
