Abstract:

In economically industrialized and politically democratic countries, taxes and public expenditures are important forces modifying the distribution of disposable income. There is considerable variation in the extent of redistribution through the fiscal system, with the amount of redistribution in the United States being smaller than in many European countries, yet still substantial. Differences over the extent to which the highest income households and businesses should be taxed have been prominent among the distinctions between the Democratic and Republic parties during the last three decades. We hope that answers to our questions and their correlations with other items in ANES surveys will help to shed light on the nature and strength of support for redistribution through the tax system and on the extent of concern about income and wealth inequalities. In this preliminary report, we first describe the data and its correlations with major categories of interest to us, then conduct a first investigation of a major question of theoretical interest—how much do economic self-interest and ideology or values, respectively, shape preferences on tax progressivity. We conclude with a preliminary analysis of similarities and differences between the new data and related items in the ANES 2004 survey.