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Shared Class, Shared Opinion? Policy Preference Congruence Between Citizens and Legislators

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Abstract
Recent studies have shown that policymakers and policy outcomes in advanced democracies are biased against the preferences of less affluent and working-class citizens. One reason for this inequality in substantive representation might be that most policymakers are well-off themselves. In this paper, we explore the effect of shared class background on the congruence between legislators' and citizens' policy preferences. To do so, we rely on original data from surveys conducted among citizens and active legislators in Switzerland. We focus on six economic and welfare policy proposals where we find differences in opinion between social classes. When we match legislators' and citizens' opinion in a one-to-many relationship, we find that social class matters more for lower social classes than for the more affluent, at least for some policy proposals.

KEYWORDS
Economic policies, Inequality, Political representation

Zusammenfassung
Jüngste Studien haben gezeigt, dass die politischen EntscheidungsträgerInnen und die Ergebnisse öffentlicher Politiken in fortgeschrittenen Demokratien die Präferenzen der weniger wohlhabenden und arbeitenden BürgerInnen weniger bzw. nicht berücksichtigen. Ein Grund für diese Ungleichheit in der inhaltlichen politischen Vertretung könnte darin liegen, dass die meisten PolitikerInnen selbst sehr wohlhabend sind. Unsere Studie untersucht die Auswirkungen des gemeinsamen Klassenhintergrunds auf die Übereinstimmung zwischen den politischen Präferenzen der PolitikerInnen und der BürgerInnen.

Dabei stützen wir uns auf Originaldaten aus Umfragen, die unter BürgerInnen und aktiven ParlamentarierInnen in der Schweiz durchgeführt wurden. Wir konzentrieren uns auf sechs wirtschafts- und sozialpolitische Vorschläge, bei denen wir Meinungsunterschiede zwischen den sozialen Schichten feststellen. Wenn wir die Meinungen von PolitikerInnen und BürgerInnen in einer Eins-zu-Viel-Beziehung abgleichen, stellen wir fest, dass die soziale Schicht für untere soziale Schichten eine größere Rolle spielt als für wohlhabendere, zumindest bei einigen politischen Vorschlägen.

Résumé

Dans les démocraties avancées, les décideurs et les politiques publiques représentent de manière biaisée les préférences des citoyens moins aisés de la classe ouvrière. Une raison de cette inégalité dans la représentation substantielle serait que la plupart des élus politiques sont eux-mêmes bien lotis. Notre étude analyse si l'appartenance à la même classe sociale influence la congruence entre les préférences politiques des parlementaires et celles des citoyens. Nous utilisons des données originales provenant d'enquêtes menées auprès de citoyens et de parlementaires actifs en Suisse. Nous nous concentrons sur six politiques économiques et sociales pour lesquelles nous constatons des différences d'opinion entre les classes sociales. En faisant correspondre les opinions des parlementaires et des citoyens dans une relation de type « un pour plusieurs », nous constatons que la classe sociale a plus d'influence sur la congruence pour les classes sociales inférieures que pour les classes plus aisées.

Riassunto

Studi recenti hanno dimostrato che i politici e i risultati delle politiche pubbliche nelle democrazie avanzate hanno un *bias* contrario alle preferenze dei cittadini meno abbienti e della classe operaia. Una delle ragioni di questa disuguaglianza nella rappresentanza sostanziale potrebbe essere che la maggior parte dei politici sono essi stessi benestanti. In questo articolo esploriamo l'effetto della condivisione del background di classe sulla congruenza tra le preferenze politiche dei legislatori e dei cittadini. Per farlo, ci basiamo su dati originali provenienti da sondaggi condotti tra cittadini e legislatori attivi in Svizzera. Ci concentriamo su sei proposte di politica economica e di welfare per le quali riscontriamo differenze di opinione tra le classi sociali. Quando abbiniamo le opinioni dei legislatori e dei cittadini in una relazione uno-a-molti, scopriamo che la classe sociale conta di più per le classi sociali più basse che per quelle più agiate, almeno per alcune proposte politiche.

INTRODUCTION

A growing literature documents that policymaking in advanced democracies is biased in favor of the preferences of affluent citizens (Bartels, 2008; Gilens, 2012; Persson & Gilljam, 2017; Elsässer et al., 2018; Lupu & Pontusson, 2023). Why do democratically elected politicians not produce policies that are more in line with the preferences of the mass public? In addressing this question, it is useful to distinguish between the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations politicians may have to make policies that correspond to the preferences of the affluent rather than the preferences of the less affluent.

Politicians are extrinsically motivated when they have an incentive to be more *responsive* to the preferences of the affluent rather than those of the less affluent.[1] Numerous studies have shown that individuals with a high socio-economic status are more likely to vote, contact public officials, make campaign contributions, be knowledgeable about politics, and have their interests represented by powerful lobbying organizations (Verba et al., 1995; Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003; Grönlund & Milner, 2006; Baumgartner et al., 2009; Schlozman et al., 2012; Bonica et al., 2013). As a consequence, affluent citizens' preferences are not only more "visible" to politicians than the preferences of less affluent citizens, but politicians also have electoral, and perhaps revolving-door, incentives to respond to the former rather than the latter.

Politicians can also be intrinsically motivated to produce policies that are more consistent with the preferences of affluent citizens than with the preferences of less affluent citizens. This happens when their personal policy preferences are more *congruent* with the former than with the latter. Elected politicians in advanced democracies tend to be better educated, have higher-status occupations, and come from more privileged backgrounds than most citizens (Matthews, 1984; Best & Cotta, 2000; Best, 2007; Carnes & Lupu, 2015; Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2016; Bovens & Wille, 2017). These inequalities in descriptive representation can lead to inequalities in substantive representation since similar socialization and life experiences among elected politicians and affluent citizens might lead them to have similar values and perceptions of material self-interest (Phillips, 1995; Burden, 2007). If politicians' behavior in office is influenced by their personal preferences (Kingdon, 1989), then there is a good chance that the policies they pursue will also reflect the preferences of affluent citizens.

While a number of studies have demonstrated that legislative behavior and policy outcomes are biased in favor of the preferences of affluent citizens, few studies have dealt with the reasons that lead to this bias (but see, e.g., Carnes, 2016). In the European context, recent studies have investigated the impact of the social class background of candidates and/or elected politicians on unequal representation (Hayo & Neumeier, 2012; Alexiadou, 2022; Hemingway, 2022; Curto-Grau & Gallego, 2023, and Elsässer & Schäfer, 2022, for an overview). Our article contributes to this literature by exploring how congruent the political attitudes of politicians are with those of citizens of different social classes and whether descriptive representation increases the likelihood that politicians and citizens have congruent attitudes.

To answer these questions, we rely on original data from surveys conducted among politicians and citizens in Switzerland. The data contain information on politicians' and citizens' opinions on six policy proposals on economic issues (i.e. taxes, pension age, health insurance and labor market). Our empirical strategy proceeds in two steps. First, we identify the policy proposals on which citizens' opinions differ by social class. Second, we examine the degree of congruence in the attitudes of politicians and social classes and how belonging to the same class affects attitude congruence between politicians and citizens. The results of our analysis indicate that descriptive representation matters for congruence, particularly for lower social classes. We find evidence that in some economic policy areas, politicians' opinions are more in

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[1]Following Powell (2004), we define responsiveness as "what occurs when the democratic process induces the government to form and implement policies that the citizens want" (p. 91).

line with the opinions of higher social classes and that representation by politicians from lower social classes does affect congruence positively for the less affluent.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we provide an overview of the existing literature. The following section describes the data and methods. We then present the results and, finally, the last section concludes the paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have demonstrated that legislative behavior and policy outcomes in advanced democracies are more in line with the preferences of affluent citizens than with those of less affluent citizens. For the US, Bartels (2008) shows that the roll call votes of senators are more strongly related to the political views of high-income constituents than to the views of middle-income constituents and that they are completely unrelated to the views of low-income constituents. Building on Bartels' study, Hayes (2012) also finds US senators' voting behavior to be positively related to high-income constituents' opinions and unrelated to low-income constituents' opinions. Ellis (2012) demonstrates for the US House of Representatives that legislators' voting behavior corresponds more closely to the preferences of more affluent constituents than to those of less affluent constituents. Focusing on income biases in US state policymaking, Flavin (2012) shows that state public policy is positively correlated with the opinions of high-income and middle-income citizens but not with the opinions of low-income citizens. Similarly, Gilens (2005, 2012) finds that the probability of change in US federal government policy is strongly related to support for change among affluent citizens, but not to support for change among middle-income and poor citizens when their policy preferences diverge from those of affluent citizens.

Analyses of representational inequality in countries other than the US yield similar results. Replicating Gilens' (2005, 2012) research design, Persson and Gilljam (2017) and Elsässer, Hense and Schäfer (2018) show that policy change is also biased towards the preferences of well-off citizens in Sweden and Germany, even though economic inequality in these countries is less pronounced than in the US (Smeeding, 2005) and parties and election campaigns are, to a large extent, funded by the state and membership dues (Koss, 2010). Kübler and Schäfer (2022) investigate whether the rise of populist radical right parties fosters preferences congruence between citizens and politicians. After comparing the opinion congruence before and after the entry of politicians from the *Alternative für Deutschland* party in the German parliament in 2017, they conclude that the degree of congruence increases for issues on immigration, but not for economic issues (see also Kübler, 2023). Using survey data from 21 democracies, Giger, Rosset and Bernauer (2012) compare the ideological positions of respondents to the position of the national executive as well as the position of the ideologically closest party in their respective country. The results indicate that in most countries low-income citizens are less ideologically congruent with the executive and the closest party present in the party system than are middle-income and high-income citizens. The pervasiveness of the representational bias towards the affluent is also observed by Lupu and Warner (2018), who analyze ideological congruence between legislators and citizens in 52 democracies over 31 years. Their results show that elected representatives are consistently more congruent with the affluent than the poor.

As mentioned above, politicians might have extrinsic motivation to respond to the preferences of affluent citizens rather than the preferences of less affluent citizens because the former are more likely than the latter to turn out to vote, contact public officials, make campaign contributions, be politically knowledgeable, and have their interests represented by powerful lobbying organizations (Verba et al., 1995; Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003; Grönlund & Milner, 2006; Baumgartner et al., 2009; Schlozman et al., 2012; Bonica et al., 2013). However,

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there is little empirical evidence showing that economic biases in policymaking are driven by these factors. Bartels' (2008) results indicate that the bias in US senators' voting behavior towards the preferences of affluent citizens is not primarily due to differences between affluent and less affluent citizens in turnout, political knowledge, or contacting of officials. Similarly, Ellis' (2012) study of the US House of Representatives shows that the greater congruence between legislators and affluent constituents cannot be explained by levels of education, political knowledge, and political engagement that are higher among affluent than among less affluent constituents. Scholars of US politics have also suggested that the affluence bias in policymaking might be attributed to the outsize influence of money in US politics (Bartels, 2008; Gilens, 2012; Flavin, 2015). However, as the studies of Persson and Gilljam (2017) and Elsässer, Hense and Schäfer (2018) have shown, affluence bias in policymaking is not a unique feature of US politics but also present in European democracies, where parties and election campaigns are, to a large extent, publicly funded.

Another line of reasoning is that politicians have policy preferences that are similar to those of affluent citizens and, therefore, have an intrinsic motivation to produce policies that are consistent with the latter's preferences. Elected politicians in advanced democracies tend to be drawn from the upper strata of society and similar socialization and life experiences among members of these strata might lead them to have similar values and perceptions of material self-interest (Phillips, 1995; Burden, 2007). For the US, Carnes (2012) shows that legislators from white-collar backgrounds vote more conservatively on economic issues than legislators from working-class backgrounds. In a comparative study of 18 Latin American countries, Carnes and Lupu (2015) find white-collar legislators to have more conservative attitudes on economic issues than working-class legislators. Based on data for Argentina, Carnes and Lupu also find white-collar legislators to be more likely to co-sponsor bills that are economically conservative. Hemingway (2022) shows that incumbent legislators – elected in 73 different (sub)national parliaments in Europe and Israel – who have a business sector occupation are more supportive of income inequality and small government than their counterparts from the working class. This study corroborates previous findings on the impacts of politicians' class identity and occupation on policy preferences in the US (Carnes, 2012), Latin America (Carnes & Lupu, 2015), the UK (O'Grady, 2019), the Netherlands (Schakel & Hakhverdian, 2018) and Switzerland (Giger et al., 2012; Rosset, 2013).

These results are generally taken as evidence that parliaments and cabinets (e.g. Hayo & Neumeier, 2012; Alexiadou, 2022; Curto-Grau & Gallego, 2023), which tend to be dominated by elected politicians with a high socio-economic status, produce policies that are in line with the preferences of affluent citizens, who tend to be more economically conservative than less affluent citizens.[2] These findings lead some to speculate that the opinions of the less well-off would get more weight in policymaking if they were descriptively better represented in parliaments as explicitly claimed by Elsässer and Schäfer (2022, p. 1376).

In this paper, we investigate this crucial relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. First, we expect the political attitudes of politicians to be, on average, more congruent with the attitudes of members of the highest social class than with those of members of lower classes. Second, we expect descriptive representation to increase the congruence between politicians and citizens belonging to the same class. If it turns out that the opinions of working-class politicians are more congruent with the opinions of working-class citizens than

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[2]Studies comparing the opinions of more and less affluent citizens typically show that affluent citizens have more conservative preferences on economic issues than the less affluent citizens. However, the former are usually found to be more liberal than the latter with regard to socio-cultural issues such as abortion and stem cell research (Ansolabehere et al., 2006; Gilens, 2009; Rigby & Wright, 2011, 2013; Flavin, 2012).

the opinions of middle-class politicians, then an increase in the descriptive representation of working-class citizens would likely lead to an improvement in their substantive representation.

DATA AND MODEL

We conceptualize and analyze the congruence between the opinions of politicians and citizens as a one-to-many relationship (Golder & Stramski, 2010) with each politician representing many (all) citizens of a particular social class. Most previous research on unequal representation uses a 'many-to-many' concept of congruence, measuring the degree of overlap between the distribution of citizens' preferences and elected politicians or candidates' preferences (e.g. Schakel & Hakhverdian, 2018; Alexiadou, 2022; Kübler & Schäfer, 2022). We opt for a 'one-to-many' congruence approach for measuring politician-citizen congruence since we do not consider the whole parliament – or even a single party – as a collective decision-making body. This theoretical and methodological choice is motivated by the low party discipline in Switzerland, the formation of *ad hoc* coalitions of parties for each legislative vote and the absence of a binding coalition agreement negotiated by the governmental parties. In sum, individual politicians have a much larger freedom to dissent from the party line, for instance to accommodate cantonal views or the positions of interest groups on the issue at stake, than in more centralized and majoritarian systems where party discipline is required.

Our data come from two different but related surveys: one conducted among active Swiss national and regional members of parliament (MPs) and the other conducted among a representative sample of Swiss citizens. In both surveys, we asked respondents to indicate whether they agree with a number of specific policy proposals. We include six policy proposals about major economic policy issues. We focus on economic issues because previous scholarship, which was based on a similar research design as ours (i.e. incumbent politicians and occupation as indicator for social class), indicates that the preferences of politicians with a working-class background are not significantly different from those of politicians with a business occupation on "non-class-focused 'political issues' questions" about law and crime, immigration or moral standards (Hemingway, 2022, p. 99). Furthermore, these six policy proposals about taxes, pension age, health insurance and labor market (see Table 1) capture the major left–right cleavage in current Swiss politics, are (relatively) salient to the mass public and politicians, show some disagreement between party electorates and, finally, vary in terms of whether they are within the competence of the national government or the competence of cantonal governments.

The survey asked MPs and citizens to indicate whether they absolutely disagree, rather disagree, rather agree, or fully agree with a policy proposal or whether they are undecided (neutral or no opinion). Each respondent rated only three policy proposals, either the ones with prefix A or those with prefix B, in randomized order.

The citizen survey was conducted among Swiss citizens who are 18 years old or older and live in Switzerland (excluding the Italian-speaking part of Ticino). The survey was carried out by FORS (Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences) between June and August 2018. FORS contacted a nationally representative sample of 10,268 citizens (the probability sample

TABLE 1 Policy proposals rated by politicians and citizens.

A1	Jobs in my Canton need to be reserved for people residing in my Canton.
A2	Taxes on high-income should be raised while taxes on low-income should be reduced.
A3	The pension age needs to be raised to 67.
B1	Elderly employees need to be protected better from dismissal.
B2	Married people need to be assessed individually for taxation.
B3	My canton should create a cantonal health insurance institution for its residents.

was obtained from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office), of which 4,677 completed the survey (response rate of 46%). Respondents received an invitation by mail with an online access code to the survey and a voucher of 10 CHF. After a first reminder, the second reminder included a paper version of the survey with a return envelope. 1,036 respondents (22%) completed the survey on paper. For these respondents, we are currently missing information on social class, so they are excluded from the analysis.

The politicians survey was conducted among the MPs who, at the time of data collection, served in either of the two chambers of the Swiss national parliament or in one of two cantonal parliaments (those of Geneva and Bern). Politicians took the survey on a tablet in a personal meeting with a member of the research team. All data were collected between the end of August and mid-December in 2018. A more detailed description of the data collection procedure is available from the authors upon request. Overall, 370 of the 495 politicians we contacted participated in our study. The response rate for politicians varies across parliaments: it ranges from 61% for the upper chamber of the federal parliament to 88% for the parliament of the canton of Bern. Across parties, MPs participated with response rates between 56% and 100% for the larger parties.

Our goal is to explore the congruence between the political attitudes of politicians and citizens of different classes. To obtain a measure of congruence for each policy proposal, we first recoded the 4-point opinion scale variable into a binary one (agree/disagree) and dropped the "undecided" (don't know or no opinion) categories for both citizens and politicians. Next, we determined for each politician-citizen pair whether the politician and citizen had the same opinion or not (see logistic regression model below). We will run a separate model for each policy proposal, using the respective congruence measure as the dependent variable. In total, the data we use in our analysis include 490,796 dyads between 361 politicians and 2,718 citizens.

Our independent variable social class is based on the five-class schema developed by Daniel Oesch and colleagues (Oesch, 2006; Oesch & Rennwald, 2010). This schema focuses on people's marketable skills and goes beyond a simple binary conception of social classes, such as distinguishing between white-collar and blue-collar workers (e.g., Alford, 1962) or manual and non-manual laborers. In our view, the five-class schema is better able to map the distinctions in post-industrial workforces, which have seen a growth in the service sector and a rising middle class. We differentiate the five social classes listed in Table 2, but collapse classes 4 and 5 because of the low number of politicians in these two lowest social classes ($n = 10$ in total).

To code the social class of the citizens in our sample, we use information collected in the survey about their occupation (recoded into ISCO codes), their status of employment, and, if relevant, their number of employees. Based on this information, we then create social classes by applying the coding rules provided by Oesch. For politicians, we use the official profession as reported in their profile on the website of parliament. In Switzerland, being a politician is not a full-time profession, not even at the national level. Since the system of a non-professional parliament is popular among the Swiss public, politicians are expected

TABLE 2 Overview of the five social classes.

Social class	Description	Politicians per social class (%)
1. Higher-grade service class	Large employers, self-employed and employed professionals, managers	257 (71%)
2. Lower-grade service class	Semi-professionals and associate managers	33 (9%)
3. Small business owners	With or without employees	64 (18%)
4. Skilled workers	Craft workers, clerks and skilled service workers	9 (2%)
5. Unskilled workers		1 (<1%)

to have—or, at least, to list—a professional occupation outside of parliament, even when they derive only a minor part of their income from this occupation. An independent coder worked through all the mentioned professions to code them into social classes according to the five-class schema developed by Oesch and colleagues. For business owners we relied on the website of the respective company to code their number of employees, which is relevant for Oesch's classification of social class. For politicians who described themselves as pensioners or homemakers, we coded their last occupation if such information was available, for example obtained from a CV on their website.

To analyze the opinion congruence between politicians and citizens, we fit the following logistic regression model for each economic policy proposal separately:

$$\Pr\big(y_{d(i,j)} = 1\big) = logit^{-1}\Big(\alpha + x_{d(i,j)}^T\beta + \gamma_i + \delta_j\Big),$$

where $d(i,j)$ refers to the dyad formed by politician i and citizen j, $y_{d(i,j)}$ is an indicator variable that takes the value 1 if politician i and citizen j have the same opinion on a policy proposal and the value 0 otherwise, $x_{d(i,j)}$ is a vector of indicator variables for the social classes of citizens (1 if citizen j is a member of a class and 0 otherwise), an indicator variable for descriptive representation (1 if politician i and citizen j belong to the same class and 0 otherwise), and interactions between the citizen social class indicators and the indicator for descriptive representation, and γ_i and δ_j are random effects for politicians and citizens.

We fit the regression models using Bayesian methods.[3] For each model, we run three chains with 2,000 iterations, of which we discard the first 1,000 as warmup. This leaves us with a total of 3,000 post-warmup draws from the posterior distribution. All models are fit with the R package brms (Bürkner, 2017).[4]

RESULTS

Opinion congruence between politicians and social groups arguably matters most when the groups in society have diverging opinions. Figures 1 and 2 show the distribution of policy attitudes by social class for the six policy proposals we analyze.

For some policy proposals, the support in the higher-grade service class, which is the highest social class in our schema, differs significantly from the support in the other social classes. Raising the pension age in Switzerland to 67 has significantly lower support among lower social classes than the higher-grade service class and small business owners. When it comes to a classical redistributive policy like raising income taxes for high incomes and lowering it for low incomes, there is significantly more support among lower social classes than among the highest one. While for these two proposals we see a clear pattern, differences in opinion between social classes are not as clear-cut for other policy proposals. The support for the introduction of single-payer health care at the cantonal level or the individual taxation of married people does not vary much across social classes. Indeed, these two policy proposals are not purely "economic", but also include a cultural component about the marriage as institution, or the individual responsibility in health prevention. This finding thus confirms previous studies showing that class differences in preferences are less pronounced for cultural issues than for economic issues (Hemingway, 2022, p. 99).

In addition to that, social classes might also differ in the importance they attribute to policy proposals, for example when it comes to policies specifically aimed at redistribution. Again,

[3]This required us to specify prior distributions for the parameters. All regression coefficients were given a Normal (0, 10) prior distribution while all standard deviations were given a Cauchy (0, 5) prior distribution.
[4]After fitting the models, we assessed their convergence. Convergence diagnostics showed no indication of non-convergence.
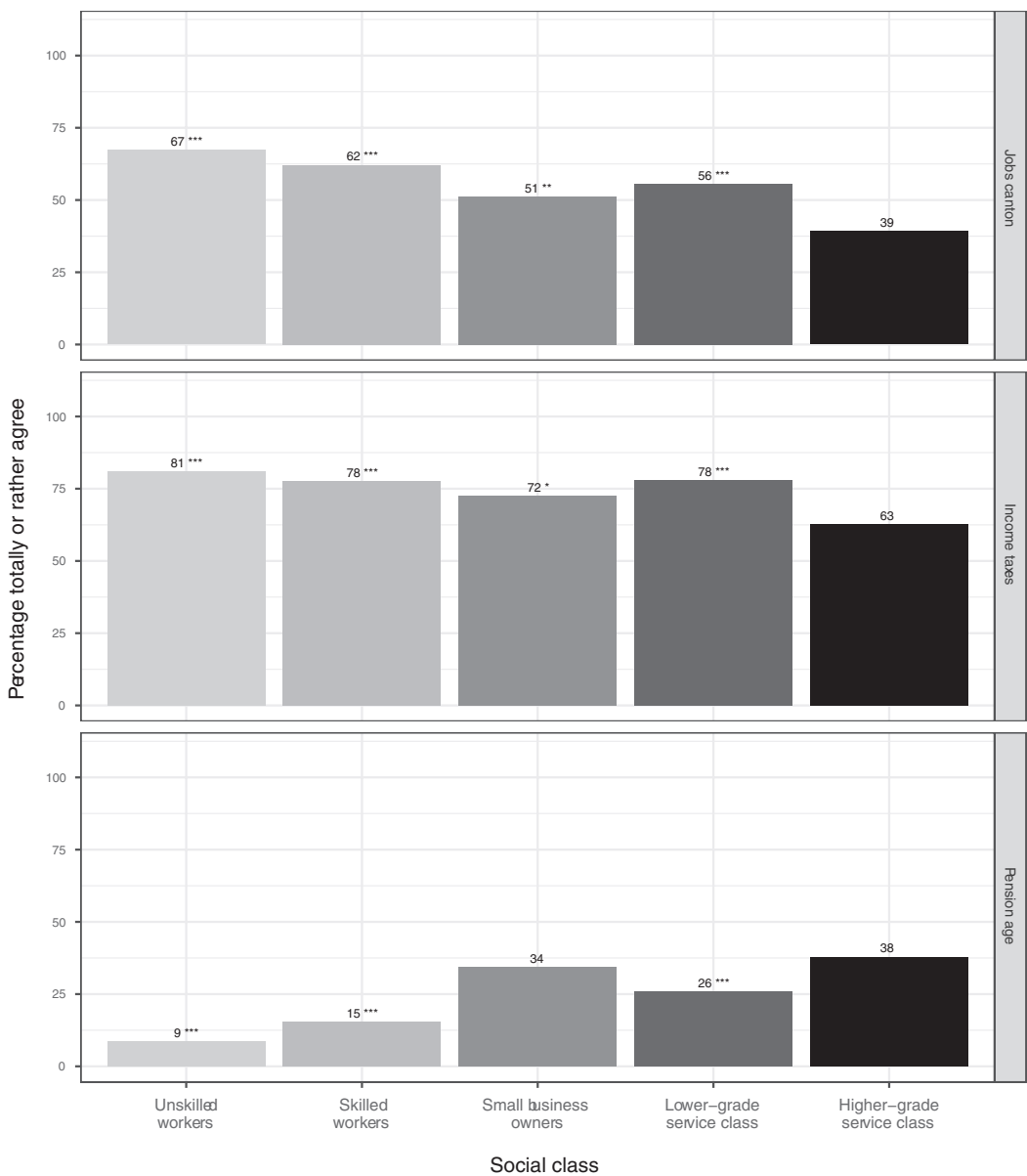
FIGURE 1 Opinion by Social Class or Statements in Group A.
Note: *$p < .1$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$, two tailed test of equal proportions (relative to higher-grade service class).

we see different patterns depending on the policy (see Table A1 in the Appendix). When it comes to raising the pension age in Switzerland, we see a clear relationship with social class: the higher the social class, the more importance citizens attribute to this policy change. A similar pattern, albeit reversed, can be observed for redistributive taxation. Here, those in higher social classes find the policy less important than those in lower social classes. However, again, social classes do not differ when it comes to the introduction of single-payer health care.

These descriptive results show that we do indeed find variation in both support and importance of policies among social classes. Do these differences matter for congruence in opinion between politicians and citizens? Do they matter more for some social classes than for others?
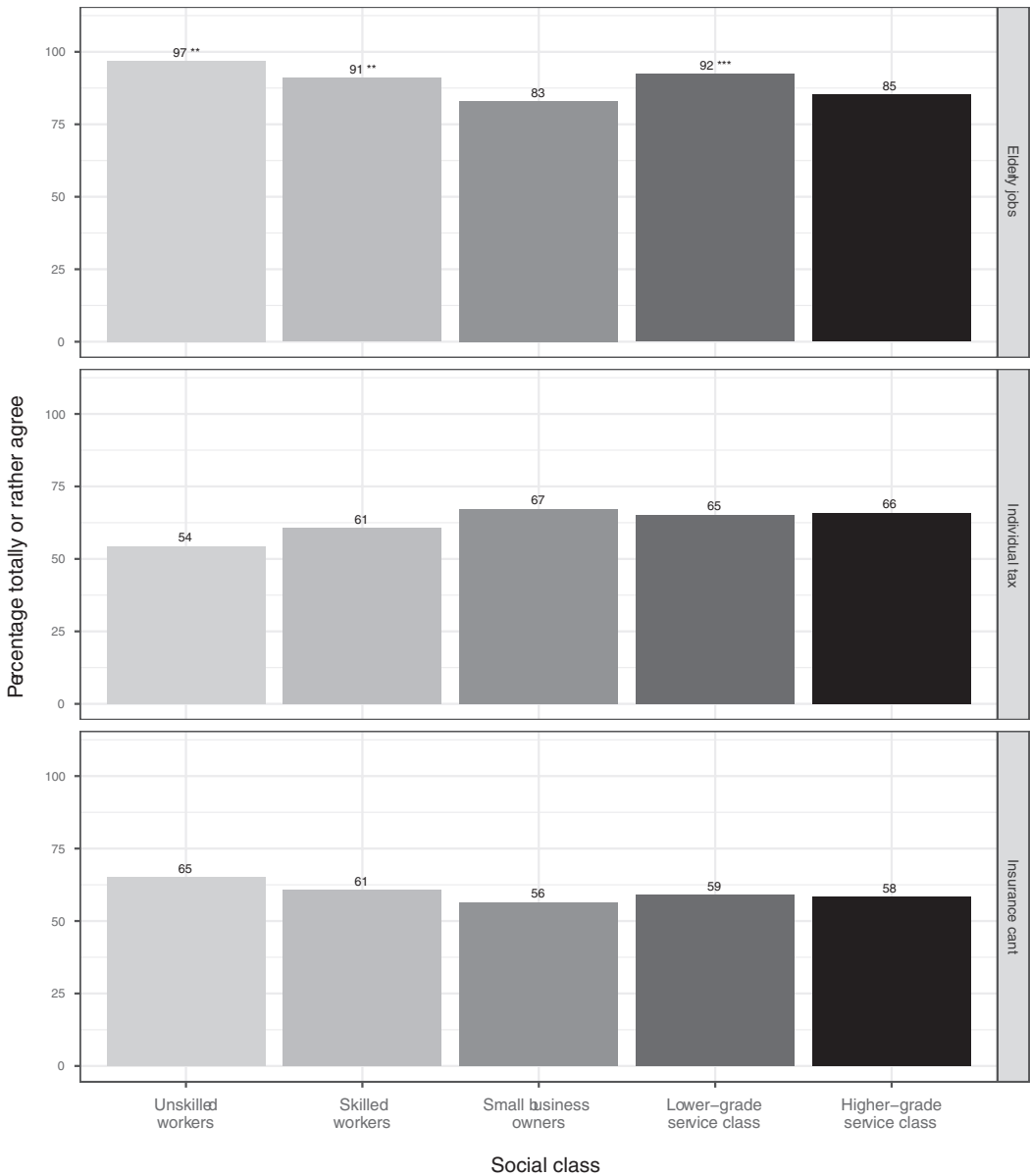
FIGURE 2 Opinions by Social Class for Statements in Group B.
Note: *$p<.1$, **$p<.05$, ***$p<.01$, two tailed test of equal proportions (relative to higher-grade service class).

To answer these questions, we run regression models on our data for each policy proposal separately (see Table 3) and visualize the results in Figure 3.

In Table 3 and Figure 3, the estimated coefficients of the social class indicators show whether for mixed-class dyads formed by a politician and a citizen from different classes, opinion congruence becomes more or less likely when the citizen comes from Class 2, Class 3, and Class 4/5, respectively, relative to the reference category, which is a mixed-class dyad between a citizen from Class 1 and a politician from a different class. Positive coefficient estimates indicate that opinion congruence becomes more likely relative to the reference category, while negative coefficient estimates indicate that opinion congruence becomes less likely. The estimated coefficient of the indicator for descriptive representation (MP same class) shows whether opinion

TABLE 3 Regression Model Results.

|	Model 1 Jobs canton	Model 2 Income taxes	Model 3 Pension age	Model 4 Elderly jobs	Model 5 Individ. tax	Model 6 Insur. cant.
Intercept	0.02	0.04	−0.17	0.99	0.43	−0.01
	[−0.02, 0.05]	[−0.11, 0.20]	[−0.30, −0.04]	[0.67, 1.29]	[0.26, 0.60]	[−0.08, 0.05]
Class 2	−0.05	−0.24	0.19	0.14	0.05	−0.02
	[−0.11, 0.00]	[−0.30, −0.18]	[0.15, 0.24]	[−0.01, 0.29]	[−0.18, 0.26]	[−0.06, 0.01]
Class 3	−0.03	−0.18	0.21	−0.19	0.13	−0.03
	[−0.09, 0.04]	[−0.26, −0.10]	[0.16, 0.26]	[−0.39, 0.00]	[−0.15, 0.47]	[−0.07, 0.02]
Class 4/5	−0.12	−0.22	0.19	0.14	−0.12	−0.03
	[−0.18, −0.07]	[−0.28, −0.17]	[0.15, 0.23]	[−0.01, 0.28]	[−0.30, 0.08]	[−0.07, 0.00]
MP same class	0.08	−0.14	0.26	−0.12	0.08	−0.03
	[0.05, 0.11]	[−0.18, −0.10]	[0.21, 0.30]	[−0.18, −0.05]	[0.03, 0.13]	[−0.07, 0.01]
Class 2 × MP same	−0.11	0.46	−0.29	0.20	−0.09	0.04
	[−0.18, −0.04]	[0.36, 0.56]	[−0.38, −0.19]	[0.06, 0.34]	[−0.21, 0.01]	[−0.05, 0.12]
Class 3 × MP same	−0.08	0.16	−0.40	0.34	−0.21	0.11
	[−0.16, −0.01]	[0.06, 0.26]	[−0.50, −0.30]	[0.20, 0.48]	[−0.33, −0.10]	[0.03, 0.20]
Class 4/5 × MP same	0.41	0.26	0.06	0.51	−0.27	0.20
	[0.32, 0.50]	[0.13, 0.39]	[−0.06, 0.19]	[0.24, 0.81]	[−0.52, −0.01]	[0.03, 0.36]
σ_γ	0.00	0.94	0.94	2.20	0.70	0.37
	[0.00, 0.01]	[0.84, 1.05]	[0.86, 1.05]	[2.01, 2.43]	[0.63, 0.79]	[0.33, 0.41]
σ_δ	0.30	0.30	0.00	0.99	1.48	0.04
	[0.29, 0.31]	[0.29, 0.32]	[0.00, 0.01]	[0.95, 1.03]	[1.42, 1.54]	[0.00, 0.06]
N	217,683	220,229	227,150	244,790	212,888	230,184
N_{MPs}	171	173	175	182	178	184
$N_{Citizens}$	1,273	1,273	1,298	1,345	1,196	1,251
WAIC	297,599.3	259,749.5	270,057.2	144,660.9	196,686.0	311,709.4
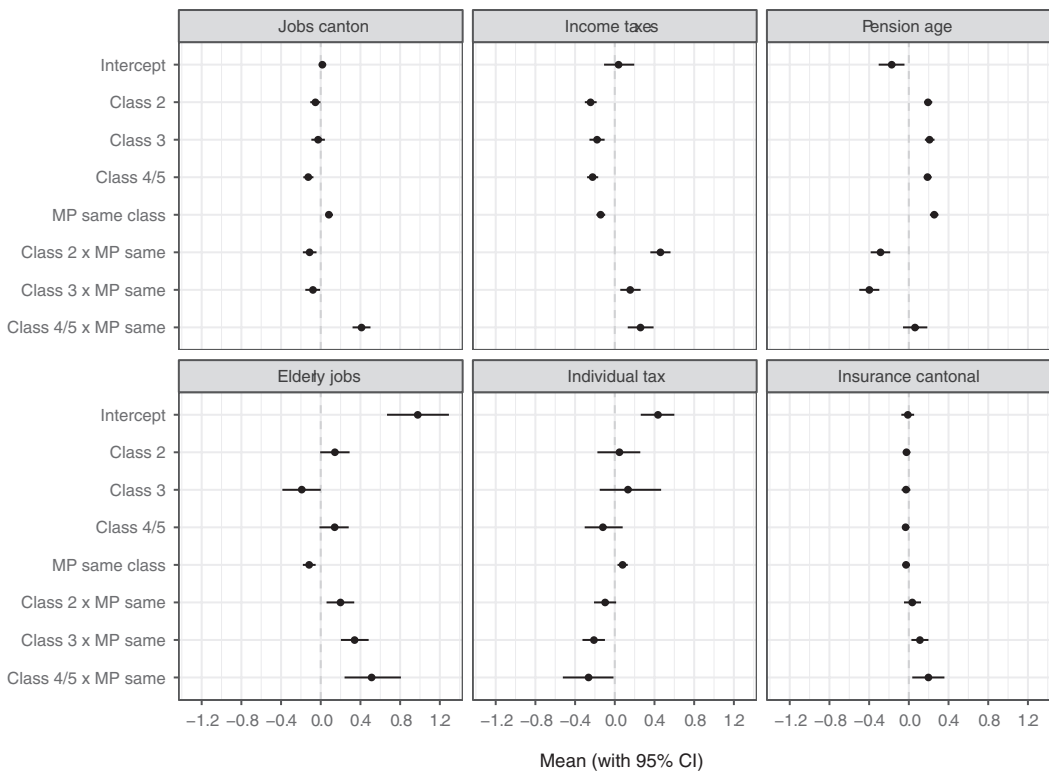
FIGURE 3 Estimated Coefficients of Congruence Models.
Note: The figure shows the mean and 95% credible interval (CI) of the posterior distribution for each coefficient.

congruence becomes more or less likely when a citizen and a politician are both from Class 1 relative to when a citizen is from Class 1 and a politician is from another class. Finally, the sum of the estimate for descriptive representation and the estimate for the interaction between descriptive representation and Class k, for $k \in \{2, 3, 4/5\}$, shows whether opinion congruence becomes more or less likely when a citizen and a politician are both from Class k compared to when a citizen is from Class k and a politician is from a different class.

Our results show that compared to the highest social class (Class 1), the lower social classes (Class 3 and Class 4/5) tend to have opinions that are less in line with the opinions of politicians from different social classes. The exception to this pattern is the policy proposal for a higher pension age, where Classes 2, 3, and 4/5 are more in line with politicians from different classes than is Class 1. Looking at the sums of the estimate for descriptive representation and the estimates for the interactions between descriptive representation and the social class indicators, we can see that for Class 4/5 the sum is positive for nearly all policy proposals in our data set (the exception is the proposal for individual taxation of married couples). This implies that for Class 4/5 descriptive representation quite consistently increases the probability of opinion congruence or, in other words, that the opinions of citizens from the lowest social class (Class 4/5) are more likely to be congruent with the opinions held by politicians from the same class than with the opinions held by politicians from other classes. For the other classes the results are more mixed, since the sum of the descriptive representation estimate and the estimate for the interaction between descriptive representation and class is positive for some proposals but negative for others.

To get a sense of the effect magnitudes, we calculated predicted probabilities based on the posterior distribution of the coefficients of each of the fitted models. In Figure 4, we show the
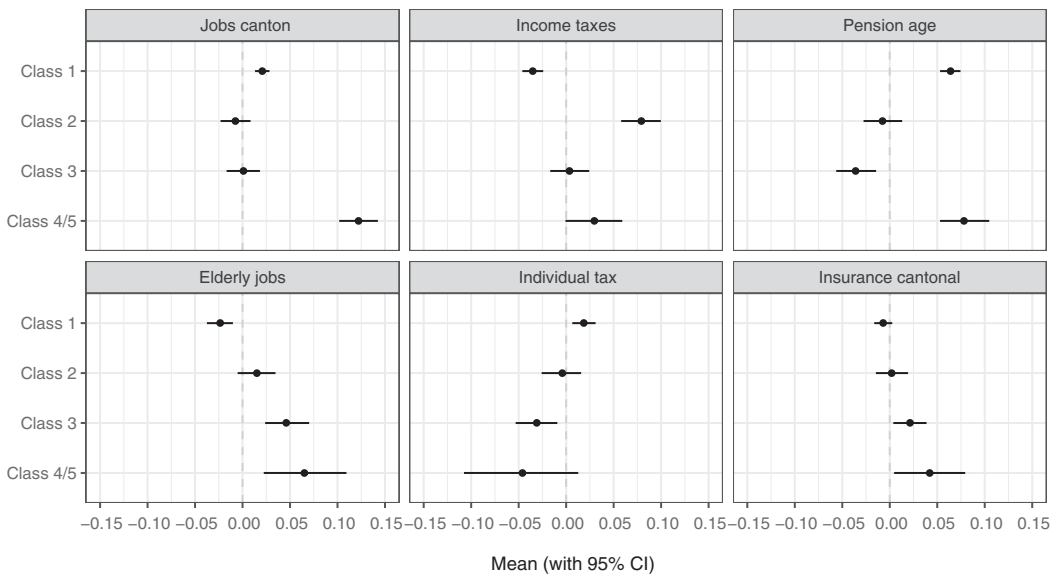
FIGURE 4 Change in the Predicted Probability of Having the Same Opinion When Politicians Are of the Same Class Rather Than a Different Class.
Note: The figure shows the mean and 95% credible interval (CI) of the posterior distribution for each change in predicted probability.

change in the predicted probability that a person holds the same opinion as a politician when we move from no descriptive representation (i.e., the politician is from a different social class) to descriptive representation (i.e., the politician is from the same social class). The results in Figure 4 show again that the lowest class (Class 4/5) benefits most consistently from descriptive representation. The effect of descriptive representation for the lowest social class is especially pronounced for proposals introducing protective measures in the job market (reserving jobs for people living in a canton and job protection for the elderly) as well as the proposal on increasing the pension age.

In sum, these empirical findings partially support expectations based on previous scholarship according to which MPs' policy positions are, on average, more congruent with the preferences of members of the highest social class than with the preferences of citizens of lower classes; and descriptive representation increases the congruence between politicians and citizens belonging to the same social class. Indeed, our mixed findings indicate that descriptive representation matters most for the lower social classes, and for labor market protection of the less affluent.

This finding fits particularly with previous work on Norway (Arnesen & Peters, 2018), showing that those considered politically disadvantaged or discriminated against are very concerned with descriptive representation. This is precisely the lower social class with the least representation, so it makes sense that this group cares the most about being represented, both descriptively and substantively. Furthermore, the fact that the empirical evidence is largely similar in the very different countries, i.e. Norway as homogeneous country in terms of the population vs. Switzerland as a country with important linguistic, religious and center-periphery cleavages, speaks to the external validity of the findings.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

In this contribution, we investigated what role descriptive representation plays when it comes to substantive representation, or, put differently, whether being descriptively represented in

parliamentary politics matters more for some social classes than for others. This question is highly relevant since the political marginalization of less privileged groups is more pronounced nowadays, and it is precisely these groups that tend to value descriptive representation more than others (Arnesen & Peters, 2018). Consequently, Elsässer and Schäfer (2022) call for an expansion of the "politics of presence" to lower social classes, which should be better represented among candidates to election and incumbent politicians.

Making use of a unique data set collected among Swiss MPs and citizens, we matched the policy opinions of citizens and their elected representatives from different social classes in a one-to-many relationship. Our findings show that descriptive representation matters, particularly for issues the lower social classes care about. For the two policy proposals the working-class citizens consider most important, i.e. the protection of elderly employees from dismissal and redistributive taxation (see Table A1 in the Appendix), descriptive representation increases the likelihood of opinion congruence between these citizens and politicians. We find this effect across all policy issues we tested, with one notable exception, the individual taxation of married couples. On this issue, social classes also do not differ much in their opinions. This might be linked to the cultural dimension of this proposal as it touches on marriage as an institution for which others have found that public opinion varies little across social classes.

For the moment, we have only included proposals on economic issues in the analyses. We could potentially expand our analyses to other policies related to sociocultural issues (e.g., policy proposals on immigration, adoption rights of same-sex couples). Enlarging the set of policy proposals could better reflect the second dimension of the party space (i.e. cultural openness vs. closedness) as it has been developing in the Swiss political system since the mid-1990s. One highly relevant question to address would then be whether the rise of the Swiss People's Party leads to an increasing politicians-citizens congruence on immigration or law-and-order issues and in turn a decreasing relevance of descriptive representation (Kübler & Schäfer, 2022); or, on the contrary, whether this impact remains limited since the preferences on cultural issues of politicians with a working-class background are not significantly different from those belonging to upper classes (Hemingway, 2022).

Beyond expanding the number and content of policy proposals, we could also reconceptualize our dependent variable measuring congruence. To better account for the importance that citizens and politicians attach to different policy proposals, we could apply a salience-based congruence concept (as suggested by Giger & Lefkofridi, 2014). Considering both policy positions and policy priorities when investigating the alignment between politicians' and citizens' preferences is a promising next research step. However, it probably requires ambitious longitudinal analyses since the political saliency (at the macro level) and the personal importance (at the micro level) of a specific policy proposal fluctuate more than policy preferences across time (Kübler, 2023).

Another fruitful avenue might be to have a closer look at the composition of the social classes among politicians. Specifically, one could separate professional politicians from others (i.e., non-professional MPs) because they might be more responsive and thus more congruent with citizens' opinion (O'Grady, 2019). Additionally, one could take a separate look at the business owners (also from the higher social classes) which might have very different interests, especially when it comes to economic policymaking. Furthermore, one could also look at the class background of elected politicians, since MPs who grew up working class or poor might hold distinct policy preferences compared to MPs who grew up in the same class as the one defined by their current occupation.

Finally, future studies could consider not only occupation as an indicator of social class, but include income and education as well (Wüest & Pontusson, 2022). The three variables are obviously correlated, but might have distinct effects on political preferences and behavior (Pontusson, 2015), since occupation captures socialization in the work place, membership in professional association, etc. (Alexiadou, 2022; Kübler, 2023). Indeed, previous studies indicate

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that income and education have similar impacts on the politicians' (un)equal representation of citizens' preferences for economic redistribution, whereas education is a more important determinant for (non-)congruence on cultural issues (Schakel & Hakhverdian, 2018). Considering the normative implications of unequal representation in advanced democracies, we are confident that Swiss scholars will investigate how social class, income and education, but also other descriptive factors such as age, gender or partisanship, affect congruence between politicians and citizens individually or even in combination with each other. Forthcoming empirical studies focusing on Switzerland are also interesting in a comparative perspective since, due to its proportional electoral rules, non-professionalized parliament and strongly decentralized system, Switzerland is a least-likely case for unequal representation to arise.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
The data that supports the findings of this study is available on request from the corresponding author.

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APPENDIX A

T A B L E A 1 Mean importance among citizens for the economic policy proposals by social class.

| Social class | Mean importance 0 (absolutely unimportant) to 10 (very important) | | | | | |
	Job protectionism	Elderly employees	Redistributive taxation	Taxation of wedded	Pension age	Single-payer health care
1	5.65	8.27	7.44	7.55	7.19	7.02
2	6.32	8.87	8.02	7.30	6.90	6.99
3	6.04	8.14	7.95	7.30	6.76	7.03
4	6.77	9.07	8.15	6.62	6.35	6.89
5	6.38	8.98	8.40	6.77	5.53	7.29
Difference class 5 to 1	0.73	0.71	0.96	−0.78	−1.66	0.27
Difference class 4 to 1	1.12	0.80	0.71	−0.93	−0.84	−0.13