ABSTRACT: Increasing inequality and associated egalitarian sentiments have put redistribution again on
the political agenda in advanced capitalist countries. Apart from self-interest, support for redistribution
may also be affected by altruistic and egalitarian preferences but knowledge about the distribution of
these preferences in the broader population and how they relate to political support for redistributive
policies is still scarce. Here, we take advantage of Swiss direct democracy where people voted several
times in national plebiscites on strongly redistributive policies. Based on a novel, non-parametric
clustering procedure, we identify three disjunct groups of individuals with fundamentally different
other-regarding preferences: (i) a large share of inequality averse people, (ii) a somewhat smaller yet
still large share of people with an altruistic concern for social welfare and the worse off, and (iii) a
considerable minority of primarily selfish individuals. Controlling for a large number of determinants of
support for redistribution, we document that inequality aversion and altruistic concerns play an
important role for redistributive voting that is particularly pronounced for above-median income
earners. However, the role of these motives differs depending on the nature of redistributive proposals.
Inequality aversion has large and robust effects in plebiscites that demand income reductions for the
rich while altruistic concerns play no significant role in these plebiscites.