

**The Politics of Low Pay: Corporatism, Left-wing Parties and Low-wage
Workers**

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Abstract

Politics has often been conceptualized as a conflict between political parties that represent the economic interests of different groups in society. This conception of politics has, however, been considerably weakened by the economic and social transformations of the last decades and by the rise of post-materialist values among newer generations of electors. Indeed, the vote of manual workers for left-wing parties has declined significantly in recent decades as did the impact of left-wing parties on social spending.

At the same time, the issue of low-wage work has become prominent in the partisan debates of several countries such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom following the mobilization of low-paid workers, unions and community associations. Low-wage workers who mainly work in the service sector have often precarious work and living conditions following decades of labor markets deregulation and are highly dependent on governmental policies to insure decent living and work conditions. One of these policies, the minimum wage, has been at the center of the electoral campaigns of many left-wing parties in recent years. However, the issue of low-wage work has rarely been studied in political science.

This thesis seeks to explain the partisan dynamics surrounding the issue of low-wage work. My main argument is that low-wage workers tend to vote for left-wing parties in accordance with their economic interests, especially in countries with a weak degree of corporatism such as the United States and the United Kingdom. In those countries, left-wing parties have strong incentives to make pledges related to low-wage work like increasing the minimum wage in their electoral manifesto, because unions are unable to negotiate decent working conditions for the majority of

workers. Indeed, in countries with weak corporatism, low-wage workers are very dependent on governmental interventions to ensure minimum working standards and improve their living conditions. In countries with strong corporatism, however, unions negotiate collective agreements that ensure minimum working conditions for the majority of workers, workers with weaker bargaining power are thus less dependent on government policies to insure decent working conditions. Therefore, left-wing parties should be able to consolidate their vote among low-wage workers in countries with a weak degree of corporatism. Once in power, left-wing parties should also increase the minimum wage and the direct cash transfers to low-income families more than governments led by right-wing parties, especially when corporatism is weak. The emphasis on policies targeted to low-wage workers by left-wing parties in countries with a weak degree of corporatism could also limit the capacity of radical parties to attract the vote of low-wage workers.

This thesis is composed of 4 articles, one on electoral pledges related to low-wage work, one on the vote of low-wage workers, one on the impact of left-wing parties on minimum wages and one on the impact of left-wing parties on direct cash transfers received by low-income families. These four articles demonstrate the relevance of a materialist conception of politics and the role of institutions regulating the labor market on partisan dynamics.

Résumé

La politique a longtemps été conçue comme un affrontement entre partis politiques qui représentent les intérêts économiques de différentes couches de la société. Cette grille d'analyse a toutefois été mise à mal par les transformations économiques et sociales des dernières décennies notamment la montée des valeurs post-matérialistes chez les nouvelles générations d'électeurs. Le vote des travailleurs manuels pour les partis de gauche a notamment fortement décliné dans les dernières décennies tout comme l'impact des partis de gauche sur les dépenses sociales.

Parallèlement à ces transformations, l'enjeu du travail faiblement rémunéré s'est imposé dans les débats partisans de nombreux pays comme les États-Unis, le Canada ou le Royaume-Uni suite à la mobilisation des travailleurs faiblement rémunérés, des syndicats et des associations communautaires. Les travailleurs faiblement rémunérés qui travaillent principalement dans le secteur des services ont souvent des conditions de travail et de vie précaires à la suite de la dérèglementation du marché du travail dans les dernières décennies et sont souvent très dépendants des politiques gouvernementales pour s'assurer de conditions de vie et de travail décentes. Une de ces politiques, le salaire minimum s'est notamment retrouvé au centre de la campagne électorale de nombreux partis de gauche. Cependant, le concept de travail faiblement rémunéré a rarement été abordé en science politique.

Cette thèse s'intéresse aux dynamiques partisanes propres à l'enjeu du travail faiblement rémunéré. Mon principal argument est que les travailleurs faiblement rémunérés ont tendance à voter pour des partis de gauche en concordance avec leurs intérêts économiques, particulièrement dans les pays avec un faible degré de corporatisme comme les États-Unis ou le Royaume-Uni. Dans ces

pays, les partis de gauche ont intérêt à faire des promesses destinées aux travailleurs faiblement rémunérés dans leur plateforme électorale comme augmenter le salaire minimum, car les syndicats sont incapables de négocier des conditions de travail décentes pour la majorité des travailleurs. En effet, dans les pays faiblement corporatistes, les travailleurs faiblement rémunérés sont très dépendants des interventions gouvernementales pour établir des conditions de travail et de vie décentes. Dans les pays fortement corporatistes, les syndicats négocient des conventions collectives qui établissent des conditions de travail minimales pour la grande majorité des travailleurs, les travailleurs avec un plus faible pouvoir de négociation sont donc moins dépendants des interventions gouvernementales pour obtenir des conditions de travail décentes. Les partis de gauche devraient donc être en mesure de consolider le vote des travailleurs faiblement rémunérés dans les pays faiblement corporatistes. Une fois au gouvernement, les partis de gauche devraient augmenter davantage le salaire minimum et les transferts directs aux travailleurs faiblement rémunérés que les gouvernements dirigés par des partis de droite lorsque le corporatisme est faible. L'accent mis sur les politiques ciblées auprès des travailleurs faiblement rémunérés par les partis de gauche dans les pays faiblement corporatistes devrait également limiter la capacité des partis radicaux d'attirer le vote des travailleurs faiblement rémunérés.

Cette thèse est constituée de quatre articles, un sur les promesses électorales concernant le travail faiblement rémunéré, un sur le vote des travailleurs faiblement rémunérés, un sur l'impact des partis de gauche sur le salaire minimum et un sur l'impact des partis de gauche sur les transferts destinés aux familles à faibles revenus. Ces quatre articles permettront de constater si la conception matérialiste de la politique est encore pertinente, mais surtout de démontrer l'impact des institutions régulant le marché du travail sur les dynamiques partisanes.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

During the post-war era, the strength of left-wing parties was a major factor to explain the implementation of different social and labor policies in industrial democracies. This was consistent with a largely held conception, among political scientists and sociologists, of political parties as representatives of conflicting socio-economic interests within society (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Korpi, 1983). According to power resource theory, the adoption of generous and universal social policies as well as extensive labor protection laws was dependent on the degree of mobilization and organization of the working class through left-wing parties and large industrial unions (Stephens, 1979; Korpi, 1983; Esping-Andersen, 1985). Policies put forward by left-wing parties and the negotiation power of large industrial unions allowed industrial workers to have better living and working conditions despite their weak individual negotiation power with employers.

This theory was supported by two types of evidence. First, studies analyzing class voting confirmed that production workers tended to vote more for left-wing parties in the post-war era, especially in countries with a high union density and a strong bargaining system such as Scandinavia (Alford, 1963; 1967; Korpi, 1983). Second, studies analyzing the impact of left-wing parties on social policies showed that countries with frequent left-wing governments tended to have much more generous and universal social policies (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hicks and Swank, 1992; Schmidt, 1996; Imbeau and al., 2001; Huber and Stephens, 2001). However, more recent studies have shown that both class voting and the effect of partisanship on social policies have declined significantly in the last forty years. Many industrial workers now tend to vote for radical right-wing parties, while left-wing parties are now quite popular among certain segments of the highly educated professional class (Häusermann and Gingrich, 2015; Gingrich, 2017). As for the

impact of left-wing governments on social policies, it seems to have declined significantly since the 1970s and 1980s when governments stopped expanding welfare states and started to reform and recalibrate them (Huber and Stephens, 2001; Swank, 2002; Schmidt, 2010; Swank, 2013; Bandau and Ahrens, 2019).

Despite these results pointing towards the end of class-based politics, issues related to labor policies and redistribution are still at the forefront of political debates. For example, the issue of low wages has been central to the electoral campaigns of several left-wing parties. Indeed, left-wing parties in power in Germany, New Zealand, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, and in several Canadian provinces and American states have adopted major increase to the minimum wage in the last few years. In other countries, such as Australia, Ireland and the United Kingdom, left-wing parties have pledged major increase of the minimum wage, but were ultimately not elected. These political debates about the minimum wage followed decades of mobilization by grass-roots activists and unions to improve the working and living conditions of low-wage workers. In the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, Living Wage movements organized several protests and strikes, most famously the fast-food strike in the United States, as well as campaigns to unionize low-wage workers (Reynolds and Kern, 2001; Bunyan, 2016; Parker and al., 2016).

The thesis examines how the issue of low-wage plays out in partisan politics. In parallel with the disengagement of production workers with left parties, I assume that low-wage workers in many advanced democracies vote for left-wing parties in accordance with their economic interest. My main argument is that contrary to class-based politics that have been more prominent in countries with a strong bargaining system such as Scandinavian countries, the issue of low-wage work plays

a much more important role today in countries with a weak bargaining system. In those countries, left-wing parties have strong incentives to make pledges related to low-wage work in their electoral platform such as increasing the minimum wage as unions are unable to negotiate efficient wage floors by themselves (Meyer, 2016). Indeed, in those countries, low-wage workers are highly dependent on government policies to establish minimum working standards and to improve their living conditions, while in countries with a strong bargaining system most workers are covered by collective agreements. This should influence low-wage workers to vote more for left-wing parties, especially in countries with a low degree of corporatism. On the other hand, low-wage workers should vote less for left-wing parties in countries with a high degree of corporatism as these parties do not tend to propose specific policies to address low-wage work. This could create opportunities for radical left and right parties that either propose a radical change of the economic system or appeal to the cultural values of low-wage workers. Finally, those electoral dynamics should be reflected into governments' policies with left-wing governments, particularly under weak bargaining system, increasing the minimum wage and direct transfers to low-wage workers more than right-wing governments.

The Reconfiguration of Partisan Politics

Analyzing the role played by the issue of low-wage work and low-wage workers in partisan politics could help us better understand the reconfiguration of partisan politics that has taken place in the last decades. Recent studies on electoral behaviors and on the impact of partisanship on social policies confirm that the classical model of class-based mobilization has lost most of its explanatory powers since the post-war era (Nieuwebeerta, 1995; Huber and Stephens, 2001; Knutsen, 2006; 2018; Schmidt, 2010; Swank, 2013; Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015; Bandau and

Ahrens, 2019). Different factors have been proposed to explain this decline. Several studies point towards a big decline in partisan affiliation where citizens tend to vote less based on the socio-economic group they belong and more on other factors such as candidate/leader evaluations or specific campaign issues (Dalton, 1988; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002; Dassonneville 2011).

Another important line of research points more towards a realignment of social cleavages based on cultural values instead of economic interests. A new post-materialist cleavage has emerged centered around the opposition between, on the one hand, a cosmopolitan vision based on the respect of differences and the emancipation of citizens and, on the other hand, a traditional and authoritarian vision that put more emphasis on the respect of social norms, deference to authority and cultural homogeneity (Kitschelt, 2004; Inglehart, 2008). These transformations have led to the emergence of “new” right/left-wing political parties associated with cultural rather than economic issues (Kriesi and al., 2008). Green parties have a discourse based on the protection of the environment, but also hold very socially-liberal and cosmopolitan views on social and cultural issues (Carter, 2013). On the other hand, radical right-wing parties are opposed to multiculturalism and seek lower levels of immigration, while criticizing supranational structures like the European Union (Dennison and Geddes; 2018). The successes of Green and populist right parties have in turn pushed center-left and center-right parties to put more emphasis on cultural issues like the environment and immigration. This has transformed the broader left-right cleavage that is now often conceived as intertwined with cultural and social issues (Kriesi, 2010). As such, professionals and skilled workers in the service industry are now more likely to vote for left-wing parties because of their preference for the socially liberal agenda put forward by these parties, despite their favorable socio-economic situation, while production workers are increasingly supporting right-

wing parties because of their authoritarian and traditional vision of society (Evans, 2000 ; Waal and al., 2007 ; Kitschelt and Rehm 2014 ; Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015 ; Gingrich, 2017; Oesch and Rennwal, 2018).

Even if this realignment is mostly driven by cultural factors, it also has had an impact on the positions of left-wing parties on socio-economic issues. Indeed, highly educated service workers who are in majority women have different economic interests and preferences than the traditional working class. Citizens with high levels of education and strong socially liberal views tend to be highly supportive of social investment policies such as labor activation, increased public investment in child care and education (Garrizman and al., 2018). This seems to have an impact on partisan politics, since left-wing parties have a significant positive effect on spending on social investment policies, while their impact on traditional social protection has declined (Huber and Stephens, 2014; Kühner, 2018). Middle-class professionals are, however, less supportive of traditional redistributive programs such as unemployment insurance compared to citizens with lower levels of education and income (Garrizman and al., 2018). This also has an important impact on partisan politics, because when left-wing parties have weak support among the working class and strong support among the middle-class, they tend to provide less generous unemployment insurance schemes (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). These studies show that despite the weakened association between left-wing parties and the working class, this theoretical framework based on electoral politics is still relevant to understand the evolution of left-wing parties' position on economic issues (Häusermann and al., 2013).

The analysis of partisan realignment is, however, not limited to the middle-class/working-class dichotomy. Several studies have sought to analyze if different segments of the working class have different policy and partisan preferences and whether the decline in class voting is due to a specific segment of the working class. According to King and Rueda (2008), there is a strong political division among the working class created by the dualization of the labor market. The rise of unemployment and non-standard employment has created a division between different categories of workers, the insiders that are fully integrated in the labor market and the outsiders that regroup unemployed, temporary and part-time workers. According to King and Rueda, social democrat parties tend to propose and defend policies that benefit insiders such as strong employment protection for full-time permanent workers and strong social insurance programs like pensions that benefit workers with a long and uninterrupted career (Rueda, 2005; King et Rueda, 2008). Following this logic, they postulate that insiders still vote for left-wing parties, while outsiders either do not vote or vote for radical parties.

Empirical studies have, however, shown contradictory results. Indeed, studies on the electoral behaviors of insiders have found no statistically significant relationship between being an insider and voting for a center-left party (Emmenegger 2009; Rovny and Rovny, 2017). Some studies even found a statistically significant relationship between outsiders and voting for left-wing parties (Häusermann and Walter, 2010; Emmenegger and al., 2015). There is a wide variation in the results based on the definitions and subcategories of outsiders. Indeed, unemployed citizens tend to vote for radical left and right parties, while workers with non-standard employment tend to vote like other workers (Corbetta and Colloca, 2013) or vote for parties associated with the new left like green parties (Marx and Picot, 2013; Marx, 2014). Some studies also include the level of skill and

wage in their definition of outsiders. Those studies tend to show a statistically significant positive relationship between outsiders and left-wing parties (Häusermann and Walter, 2010; Schwander and Häusermann, 2013; Emmenegger and al., 2015).

Most of these studies, however, do not account for the level of inequalities in the labor market that vary extensively across countries. Indeed, institutions regulating the labor market like collective bargaining systems and employment protection legislation can create different patterns of dualization. In continental and southern Europe, there is a wide gap between full-time workers with undetermined contracts (insiders) that are protected by strong employment protection laws and have access to generous occupational social insurance and the outsiders who are either unemployed or only have access to precarious employment (Esping-Andersen, 1993). This division based on employment is, however, much less relevant in English-speaking countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, as employment protection is much weaker, social programs are less tied to employment and unemployment tend to be much lower. The extensive labor market deregulation in the 1980s has contributed to higher levels of job creation than in continental Europe, but the jobs created were mostly low-skilled service jobs (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Iversen and Wren, 1998). Since those countries have low levels of union density and weak non-coordinated collective bargaining system, most of those low-skilled service jobs tend to offer low wages (Grimshaw, 2011; Bosch and Gauthier, 2011). Wage inequalities are indeed much more important in countries with a low degree of corporatism as most workers are not covered by collective bargaining that can guarantee minimum levels of pay (Wallerstein, 1999; Bradley and al., 2003; Oesch, 2006). Considering the wide different patterns of dualization and inequalities in

the labor market, we can expect political cleavages to be very different in countries with low and high degree of corporatism.

Argument and Contributions

This thesis seeks to confirm the relevance of socio-economic cleavages in contemporary partisan dynamics through a relatively unexplored issue in political science: low pay work. I believe that by combining the study of political parties' positioning on low-wage work issues, the electoral behaviors of low-wage workers and the impact of left-wing governments on minimum wage and cash transfers this thesis can fill some gaps in both the comparative welfare state literature and the literature on the reconfiguration of electoral cleavages. Indeed, the political economy and welfare literature give us insight to propose new hypotheses on the influence of institutions regulating the labor markets on the vote for left and radical parties, while the analysis of electoral behaviors can help us better understand why left-wing governments still have a significant impact on certain policies.

The central argument binding the articles in this dissertation is that institutions regulating labor markets are very important to understand the reconfiguration of partisan cleavages. In countries with a low degree of corporatism, political cleavages based on low pay should be much stronger than in countries with a strong level of corporatism. As collective bargaining cover fewer workers, low-wage workers in countries with a weak degree of corporatism are much more numerous and more reliant on labor standards and social protection imposed and offered by governments to ensure decent working and living conditions. This, in turn, creates, political opportunities for left-wing parties to mark their commitment to redistribution and gain votes among low-wage workers

by putting forward issues related to low-wage work during electoral campaigns (Wilson, 2017). Indeed, the low level of protection offered by collective bargaining makes it easy for left-wing governments to have a direct impact on the lives of low-wage workers through relatively targeted and inexpensive policies like national minimum wage and targeted cash transfers. This is all the more important as more than 20% of full-time workers are considered low-wage workers according to the OECD (2018) in several countries with a low degree of corporatism such as Canada, United Kingdom and the United States (more on the composition of low-wage workers in chapter 2). Finally, unions that are generally institutionally linked to left-wing parties tend to be favorable to government interventions when the collective bargaining system is weak in order to limit competition from non-unionized low-wage workers.

On the opposite, in highly coordinated countries, a lot of low-skilled service workers are already protected by collective bargaining agreements that guarantee minimum wages, minimum working conditions and occupational social protection such as old-age pension and sick pay and are thus having higher wages and are much less reliant on government protection (Visser and al, 2016). Furthermore, in countries with a strong and coordinated bargaining system, unions allied with left-wing parties tend to discourage left-wing governments from intervening in wage fixation. Indeed, as they cover most workers through coordinated collective bargaining, unions are able to implement wage floors by themselves and do not want to delegate wage negotiations to the government as it could discourage workers to join a union (Mabbett, 2016; Meyer, 2016). Left-wing governments have thus few incentives to put forward policies that address low-wage work. Indeed, a lot of highly coordinated countries do not even have a national minimum wage for this reason (Meyer, 2016).

The strong dependence of low-wage workers towards government policies in countries with a low degree of corporatism should also create an incentive for low-wage workers to support left-wing parties. Indeed, groups who directly benefit from specific social programs tend to be more favorable to government intervention to reduce inequalities (Linos and West, 2003; Svallfors, 2004; Jæger, 2006; Blekesaune, 2007). By targeting directly low-wage workers, left-wing parties should also reduce the incentives of low-wage workers to vote for radical parties. On the contrary, in countries with a high degree of corporatism, low-wage workers have fewer incentives to vote for left-wing parties as they are protected by collective bargaining and left-wing parties offer few policies targeted at them. This could in turn create an opportunity for radical left and right parties that either propose a radical change of the economic system or appeal to the cultural values of low-wage workers. The vote of low-wage workers for radical parties should thus be stronger in countries with a strong degree of corporatism. This is a stark contrast with the model proposed by power resource theory in which production workers tend to vote more for left-wing parties in countries with a strong degree of corporatism like in Scandinavia (Knutsen, 2006). In the power resource model, strong industrial unions increase the popularity of left-wing parties among production workers and the emergence of a highly coordinated collective bargaining system (Korpi, 1983), but by doing so they create few incentives for governments to address the issue of low-wage work. This is an important element to consider, because it implies that the different socio-economic characteristics used to analyze economic cleavage such as social class, wage levels, skills and employment status are not interchangeable and that they can all have their own logic and be influenced by different institutional factors. It also means that institutions regulating the labor markets can influence the electoral incentives to vote for radical parties.

Finally, the electoral dynamics created around the issue of low-wage work should also have an impact on the policies implemented by left-wing governments. The impact of partisanship on welfare policies has declined in recent years, but remains quite significant for policies addressing social risks related to labor markets such as unemployment insurance (Jensen, 2012; Bandau and Ahrens, 2018). Two policies have a strong and direct impact on low-wage workers: national minimum wages as it is the most common policy to limit low pay and direct cash transfers specifically targeted at low-wage workers and low-income families as they provide a substantial part of the income of low-wage workers with children, especially lone-earner families. In low corporatist countries, left-wing governments have strong incentives to increase the level of minimum wages and cash transfers to increase redistribution and consolidate their electoral base.

Summary of Each Chapter

This thesis follows an article-based structure with a first chapter defining key concepts and four articles testing my theoretical expectations with empirical data. In the first chapter, I define the concept of low-wage work and summarize the research done in economics and sociology on this topic. I also explain the relationship between low-wage work and corporatism that is central to the argument. Below I summarize briefly the four empirical articles starting with the article on the positions of political parties on low-wage work related issues.

Low-Wage Work in Electoral Manifestos

In the first empirical chapter, I seek to analyze the position of political parties on issues associated with low-wage work. Several studies have analyzed the rising salience of post-materialist issues like the environment or immigration (Green-Pedersen, 2007; Carter, 2013; Dennison and Geddes,

2018). However, few studies have taken into account that the salience of socio-economic issues might have also changed, particularly those associated with low-wage work. To analyze the position of political parties on such issues, I have created a database that quantifies the number of sentences related to low-wage work in the electoral manifestos of 18 western democracies between 1990 and 2019. The results show that the mentions of low-wage work issues have increased significantly in the last few years and that left parties emphasized this issue much more than right-wing parties. The different families of right parties are similar in their mentions of low-wage work issues, while ecologist parties mention issues related low-wage work less often than center-left and radical left parties. Importantly, as predicted, the effect of left-wing parties is stronger in countries with a low degree of corporatism.

The Vote of Low-Wage Workers

The first empirical chapter reveals that low wages have become a salient issue in several countries. However, we do not know whether the position of left-wing parties on this issue influences the vote of low-wage workers. This paper fills this gap in the literature by examining how labor market institutions influence the voting behavior of low-wage workers in advanced democracies for left-wing and right-wing parties. To analyze the vote of low-wage workers, I used the International Social Survey Programme. I have selected data covering 5 waves of surveys and 19 advanced democracies from 1999 to 2019. The results from the quantitative analyses show that being a low-wage worker increases the likelihood of voting for left-wing parties and more so in countries where corporatism is weak as predicted. In addition, I find that the likelihood of low-wage workers to vote for radical parties is higher in countries where the collective bargaining process is strong as I hypothesized.

Left-wing Parties and Policies Targeted to Low-Wage Workers

The first two empirical chapters show that left-wing parties have strong incentives to propose policies targeting low-wage workers especially in countries with a low degree of corporatism. The two most important policies that can specifically be targeted at low-wage workers are minimum wages and direct cash transfers. The last two empirical chapters, the first on minimum wages and the second on direct cash transfers, seek to fill an empirical gap in the literature on partisanship by showing that left-wing parties still have a significant impact on policies that are targeted at lower-income individuals in contrast to broader policies like pensions and healthcare where the impact of partisanship has declined significantly in the last few years. To test the impact of left governments on minimum wages, I use data from the OECD on the level of minimum wages in 17 countries from 1960 to 2014. The results from the quantitative analyses show that minimum wages tend to increase more when governments are more left-wing, but only in countries with a low degree of corporatism. For the chapter on cash transfers, I have assembled a new dataset, covering the period between 1982 and 2019 and 17 countries, based on the information on cash transfers and tax credits provided by the OECD Taxing wage series for both low-income and middle-income families. The results show that benefits for low-income families tend to increase when governments are more left-wing. As expected, the impact of left-wing governments on benefits for middle-income families is not significant. Contrary to the models in the other chapters, corporatism has, however, no impact, which suggest that there are other factors at play like the strong left-right polarization in social transfers in Nordic countries.

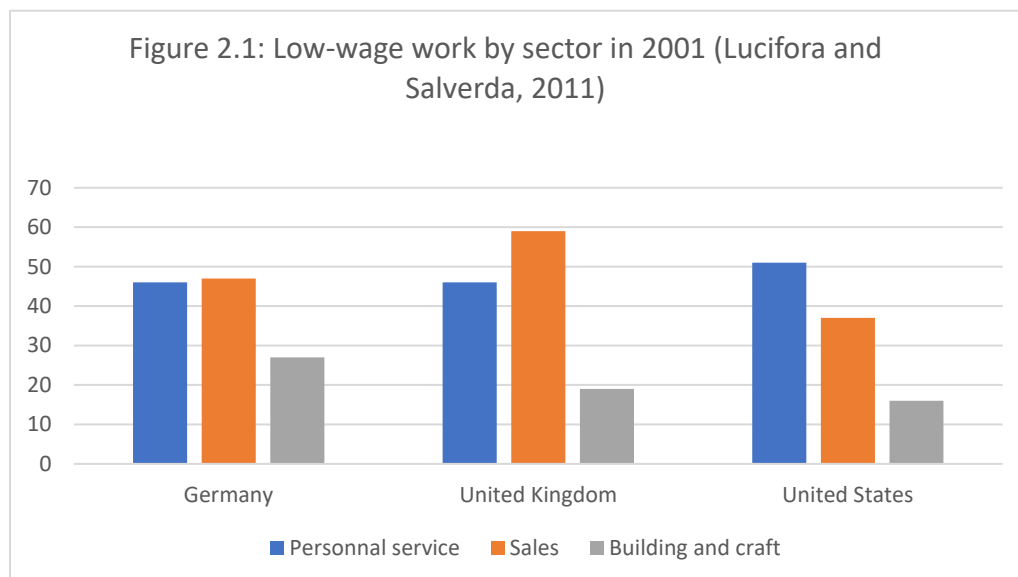
Chapter 2 Low-Wage Workers and Corporatism

In the post-war era, most sociological and political studies used the concept of social class to analyze the impact of socio-economic cleavages. Social classes were generally defined by a dichotomy between a working class composed mostly of production workers and a middle-class of white collar. The working class corresponded to clearly defined social cleavages, as it was socially distinct, had a clear collective identity and different organizations representing it, notably unions (Bartolini and Mair, 1990). However, the evolution of the labor market in recent decades has challenged the traditional social class model.

Indeed, the rise of productivity in the industrial sector considerably reduced the number of manual workers in advanced democracies (Cirillo, 2018). As an example, the share of workers in the industrial sector in the United Kingdom went from 33% of the total workforce in 1970 to 10.5% in 2008, while it went from 23.8% to 9.7% in the United States (OECD, 2020). In most OECD countries, more than 80% of workers are currently employed in the tertiary sector. This rise of productivity in the post-war era (Appelbaum and Schettkat, 1995; Iversen and Wren, 1998) combined with the mobilization of production workers through industrial unions (Esping-Andersen, 1990) also led to better wages and working conditions for industrial workers and especially for high-skilled and qualified workers. The wages of industrial workers are now generally better than average wages. Indeed, the average hourly wage in 2019 in the UK was 16.4£, compared to 22.4£ for the average wage in the industrial sector (OECD, 2021).

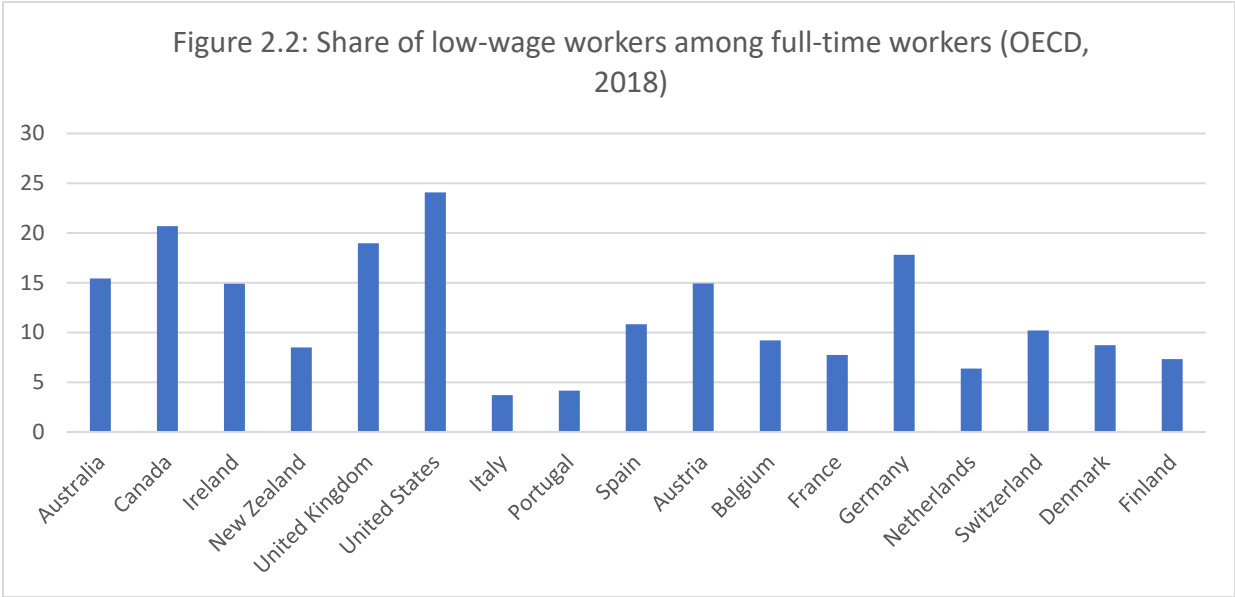
However, the rising wages in the industrial sector did not translate into a reduction of inequalities in the labor markets, which either increased or remained stable in most OECD countries. Indeed, the rise of the service sector has created a deeply polarized labor market between low-skilled

workers who provide direct services to individuals (e.g., waiters, hairdressers, orderlies) and high-skilled professionals and workers providing business services (e.g., accountants, lawyers, IT specialists) (Kolev and Saget, 2010). This is especially true in countries with a weak bargaining system such as the United States and the United Kingdom where the decline in union membership and the deregulation of labor markets have created a large category of mostly service workers with low-pay, irregular employment and weak social protection (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Bosh and Gautié, 2011). Following labor markets reform in the 1990s, there was also a major rise of low-wage work in the service sector in Germany (Mason and Salverda, 2010). In these three countries, more than 40% of sales and service workers were considered low-wage workers in 2001 as shown in Figure 2.1, while the share of low-wage workers in building and craft was much lower at around 15-25%. Those statistics show that workers in the industrial sector, for the most part, are able to negotiate working conditions that are similar or better than average workers. On the other hand, new types of work now characterize low-wage work such as sales and services sectors.



Who Are Low-Wage Workers?

The concept of low-wage work has often been used in the last decades by sociologists and economists to analyze the evolution of inequalities in the labor market. Low-wage workers are defined by the OECD, the European Commission and most studies as workers earning less than two thirds of the median wage of full-time workers (Lucifora and Salverda, 2011). Low-wage workers encompass an important share of workers, but there is a wide variation between countries. According to the OECD, 24% of full-time workers are considered low-wage workers in the United States, 21% in Canada, 19% in the United Kingdom and 18% in Germany (OECD, 2018). This is a sizable portion of the workforce as it is twice the share of production workers and four times the rates of unemployment. On the opposite side, in Nordic countries, less than 10% of full-time workers are considered low-wage workers.



The socio-demographic characteristics of low-wage workers, however, do not vary much across western countries. Indeed, in most countries, the hospitality and restaurant sector have the lowest-paid jobs followed by retail, personal services and some low productivity manufacturing sectors

such as food processing and textiles (Lucifora and al, 2005; Grimshaw, 2011; Lucifora and Salverda, 2011). Most of those jobs require less education and specialized skills than average. Indeed, the prevalence of low pay is twice as high for low-skilled workers compared to medium-skill workers (Grimshaw, 2011; McKnight and al., 2016). Contrary to jobs in the industrial sector, the low-paid service jobs are predominantly held by women. Indeed, in most countries above 60% of low-wage workers are women and in countries with the highest level of low-wage work, such as Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, above 30% of women workers are low-wage workers (Grimshaw, 2011; Lucifora and Salverda, 2011; Wilson, 2021). The share of low-wage workers is also much higher among young people: the prevalence of low-wage work is twice as high for younger workers (less than 25 years old) compared to prime-aged workers (between 25 and 55 years old). Interestingly, the gender gap is much lower for younger workers than for prime-aged workers and the age gap is much higher in countries with a relatively low level of low-wage workers such as Denmark (Mason and Salverda, 2010; McKnight and al., 2016). Finally, immigrants are also overrepresented among low-wage workers though the immigrant status has, in most, countries a smaller impact in comparison to other factors such as age, gender, occupation and skills (Grimshaw, 2011; Lucifora and Salverda, 2011).

Studies on Low-Pay in Economics and Sociology

The concept of low-wage work has been primarily studied by economists and sociologists. Economists have been debating since the 19th century the impact of low-wage work on employment (Lucifora and Salverda, 2011). In this section, I review studies that have sought to understand the relationship between low-pay and employment, the social mobility of low-wage

workers, their living conditions, the impact of public policies on low-wage workers and their patterns of mobilization.

Low-Pay and Employment

First, several economists postulate that there is a trade-off between employment and low pay. The rising productivity in the industrial sector combined with the emergence of new technologies create less demand for lower-skilled workers and more for high-skilled workers (Grimshaw, 2011). A flexible labor market with low mandatory wage floors could thus allow countries to maintain low levels of unemployment for low-skilled workers, while unemployment should be higher in countries with high wage floors (Iversen and Wren, 1998). The empirical results for this theory are mixed, as the correlation between unemployment and the incidence of low pay is positive, but weak (Grimshaw, 2011). Also, most studies on minimum wages have shown that rising minimum wages have minimal or no negative impact on employment (Card and Krueger, 1994; Card and Krueger, 1995; Dolado and al., 1996; Leonard and al., 2014; Neumark and al., 2013).

Low-Pay and Mobility

Economists have also tried to determine if low wages are transitory, meaning that low-wage jobs could serve as a stepping stone to better-paid jobs for unexperienced or unemployment workers. Studies show that low-wage jobs are indeed transitory for a lot of young workers and some long-term unemployed workers and that low-paid workers generally have better living conditions than unemployed workers (Schnabel, 2016). This is especially true in Denmark where most young low-paid workers transition to higher paid jobs as they age (Mason and Salverda, 2010). However, more than half of low-wage workers in countries with high prevalence of low-pay like Germany

and the United Kingdom are trapped in low-wage jobs or in alternance of low-paid jobs and unemployment in the long-term (Grimshaw, 2011; Abel and al., 2017). Low-skill workers are often unable to transition to better paid jobs, because those jobs, often in the retail or hospitality sector, offer few possibilities for upskilling or advancement (Schnabel, 2016).

The Living Conditions of Low-Wage Workers

Sociologists have mostly been interested in the living conditions and mobilization of low-wage workers. Several studies have analyzed the relationship between in-work poverty and low pay. The relationship is complicated at the individual level because a lot of low-wage workers, especially young workers and women, live in a household with a worker earning a higher wage (Marx and Nolan, 2012; Salverda, 2018). There are indeed more low-paid workers than workers living in poverty (Grimshaw, 2011). Even if the majority of low-wage workers are not poor *per se*, the prevalence of poverty among low-wage workers is much higher than for other workers (McKnight and al, 2016). There is also a strong correlation at the country level between the prevalence of low-pay and the overall level of poverty (Cantillon and Marx, 2003). Low income is not the only issue associated with low-wage work. Low-wage workers also tend to have precarious working conditions such as temporary employment, employment with no guaranteed hours, part-time jobs and gig employment (Grimshaw, 2011; McKnight, 2016). So, a lot of low-wage workers live under a constant economic stress not only because of their low hourly wage, but because their hours of work are not guaranteed (Wilson, 2021). It is also important to note that a lot of low-wage workers are women with extensive care responsibilities that limit their capacity to work long weeks and to seek better opportunities, especially when they are lone mothers (Munger, 2002). Several low-wage workers also face discrimination, because they are immigrants and/or racialized individuals.

The lack of language skills and local networks for immigrants can make it particularly difficult to defend their rights and to find better employment (Zuberi, 2006; Wilson, 2021). Finally, low-wage jobs can also be alienating because of their repetitive nature (Zuberi, 2006; Munger, 2002).

Impact of Policies on Low-Wage Workers

Sociologists and public policy specialists have determined that several public policies have a huge impact on the living conditions of low-wage work. In countries with policies more favorable to unions, low-wage workers tend to be better protected from unfair dismissal, have more predictable schedule and better pay (Wilson, 2021; Zuberi, 2006). Also, most low-wage workers lack occupational social security like pension and health insurance provided by employers (Grimshaw, 2011), they are thus especially dependent on the social protection offered by governments. Active labor market policies can also have an indirect impact on low-wage workers. Active labor market programs based on training and upskilling combined with strong unemployment protection can help low-wage workers find better employment opportunities and exit low-wage work. However, activation strategies that put too much pressure on workers to rapidly seek employment tend to prevent the mobility of low-wage workers (Bosch, 2009). Family and child care policies can also have a huge impact on lone parents with low-paid jobs, because they allow them to work full-time and seek better opportunities (Bosch, 2009). The two policies that have the more direct impact on the income level of low-wage workers are, however, minimum wages and direct cash transfers. Countries with high national minimum wage or with strong sectoral minimum wages negotiated through collective bargaining tend to have less low-wage workers (McKnight and al, 2016). For example, the massive increase of minimum wages in New Zealand and Portugal in recent years led to a massive decrease in the prevalence of low-wage work as seen in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Minimum wage and low-pay in Portugal and New Zealand (OECD, 2020)

	Minimum wage (2002-2018)	Low-Pay prevalence (2002-2018)
New Zealand	From 52% of the median wage to 61%	From 14% of workers to 9%
Portugal	From 51% of the median wage to 62%	From 17% of workers to 4%

Contrary to minimum wages, direct cash transfers to low-paid households do not impact the number of low-wage workers as cash transfers are not calculated as wages. However, targeted cash transfers to families and in-work tax credits have a big impact on the income and prevalence of poverty among low-wage workers (Mechelen and Bradshaw, 2013; McKnight, 2016). According to one study, targeted cash transfers are the most effective policies to limit in-work poverty if they are generous enough as they consider the composition of the household contrary to minimum wages (Ray and al., 2014).

Mobilization of Low-Wage Workers

The similarity in terms of living conditions between low-wage workers, however, is not necessarily reflected in a shared sense of identity. Indeed, contrary to the working class in the industrial era, low-wage workers lack a common sense of identity (O'Brien, 2008). Despite the difference in the way they self-identify, notably in terms of ethnicity, low-wage workers tend to have a strong sense of solidarity (O'Brien, 2008). Indeed, in the United States, big coalitions regrouping trade unions, ethnic associations and community activists have pushed for better working conditions (Wilson, 2021). They have used different tactics such as lobbying, ballot measures, as well as protests at different levels of government to push for higher minimum wages. The movement has been

especially strong in the fast-food sector where multiple one-day strikes have brought awareness to their campaign to raise the hourly minimum wage to 15\$ (Hannah, 2016). Movements fighting for better working conditions have also emerged in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. In those countries, the role of trade unions has generally been more prominent as they led campaigns to unionize low-paid sectors (Boris and Klein, 2006; Wills, 2008; Prowse and Fells, 2016). They also tried to raise awareness and directly influence businesses with their accreditation of businesses offering a Living Wage (Wilson, 2021). These Living Wage movements had a lot of success in raising the minimum wage in several municipalities and states in the US, provinces in Canada and at the national level in the United Kingdom and New Zealand (Wilson, 2021).

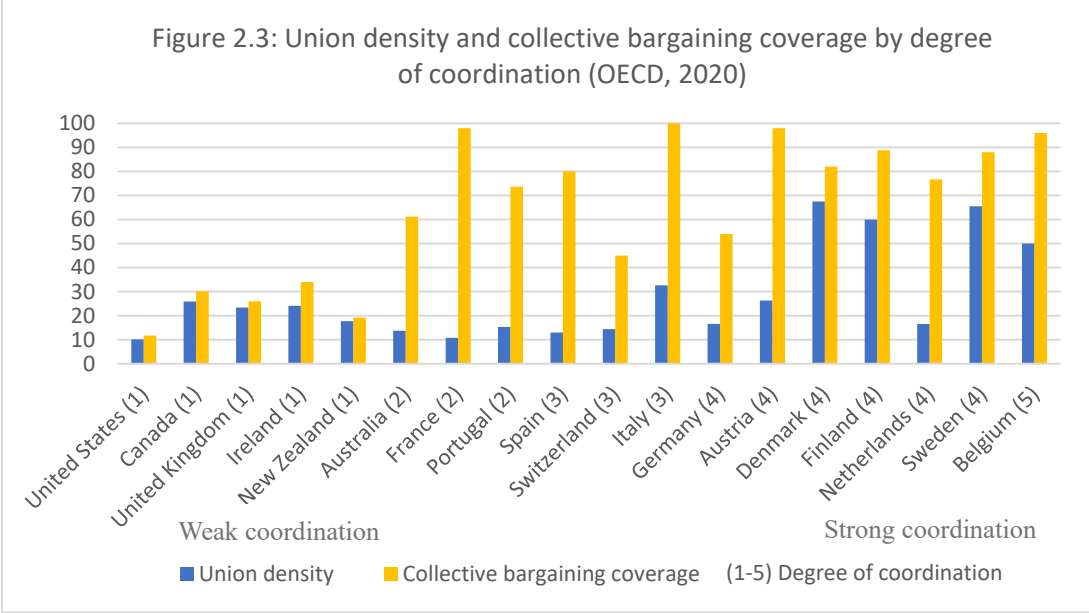
However, despite these recent successes, we know very little about the political behaviors of low-wage workers. Most studies analyzing low-wage workers have only shown that low-wage workers are more prone to abstain from voting like other economically disadvantage citizens (Emmeneger and al., 2015; Schraff, 2019; Marinova, 2020). The literature on attitudes towards redistribution shows that groups who directly benefit from social programs, like the unemployed, tend to be more favorable to redistribution and social policies (Linos and West, 2003; Svallfors, 2004; Jæger, 2006; Blekesaune, 2007). This also seems to be the case for low-income workers; one study shows that poor workers are as favorable to redistribution as other poor people and both are much more favorable to redistribution than the rest of the population (Levanon, 2018). Another study shows that such favorable attitudes towards redistribution are also reflected in their voting behaviors, as disadvantaged workers, which include low-wage workers, tend to vote more often for pro-redistribution and protest parties in the Netherlands (Emmeneger and al., 2015). We have,

however, no comparative research on the support of low-wage workers for pro-redistribution parties.

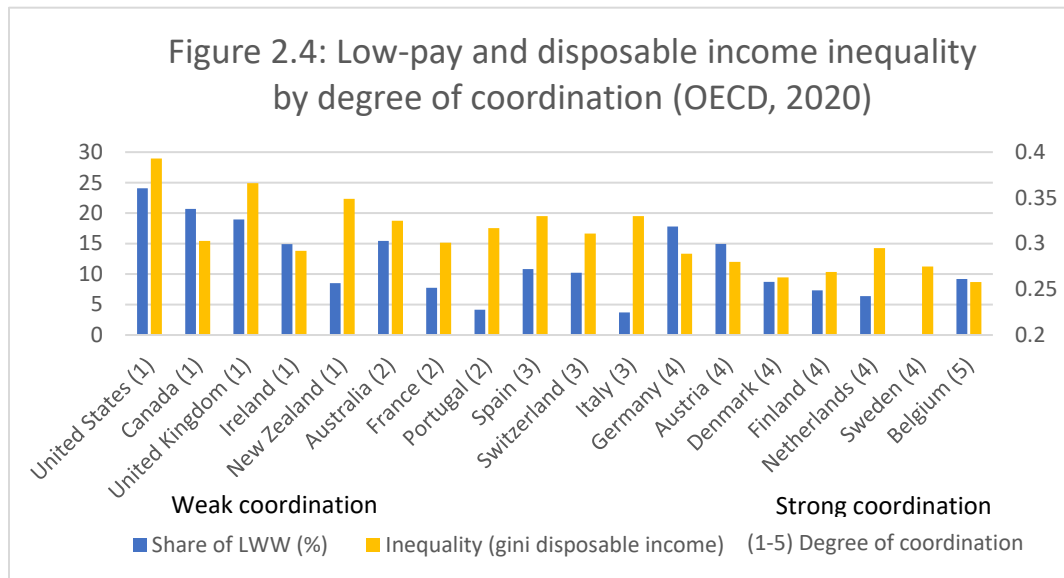
Labor Market Institutions and Low-Wage Workers

The research on low wages shows that the structure of labor markets has a huge impact on the prevalence of low-pay and on the level of inequality. Power resource theory postulates that the level of inequality is mostly influenced by the strength of the groups representing the working class (Stephens, 1979; Korpi, 1983; Esping-Andersen, 1990). Collective action through unions and left-wing parties allows workers to reduce corporate power by creating a balance between labor compensation and capital-related profits that is fairer to workers (Korpi and Palme, 2003). Strong unions can negotiate better pay for the workers they represent, thus reducing the level of inequality before tax and transfers (Bradley and al., 2003) and the level of wage inequality (Pontusson and Rueda, 2000). However, a majority of workers are unionized only in a few countries, namely Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden as seen in Figure 2.3. This, however, does not mean that a majority of workers are not protected by collective bargaining in other countries. Indeed, the coverage of collective bargaining is much higher than union density in most countries as seen in Figure 2.3. This is because a lot of countries have institutionalized mechanisms to extend the coverage of collective agreements to non-unionized workers, either through government regulations or because of the centralized nature of collective bargaining that regroup the vast majority of employers. The proponents of neo-institutional approaches in political economy put more emphasis on the level of coordination between social partners to explain inequalities. According to this approach, when wage bargaining happens between relatively centralized business associations and unions at the sectoral or national level, wage inequalities are lower than

when wage bargaining only happens at the business level (Wallerstein 1999). According to the neo-institutional approach, this type of negotiation is possible in coordinated market economy, because businesses have an interest in coordinating with each other and with unions in the wage negotiation process in order to avoid the recruitment of their qualified employees by other businesses (Swenson, 1989; Hall and Soskice, 2003). Even though power resource theory and neo-institutionalism have different explanations to explain why certain labor markets are more regulated, they both agree that more unionized and coordinated labor markets reduce the level of inequality and low pay. Indeed, union density and the degree of coordination of collective bargaining¹ are very strongly correlated. Scandinavian countries have the highest level of union density, highly coordinated collective bargaining and low level of inequality, while English-speaking countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom have the opposite as seen in Figure 2.3 and 2.4.



¹ The indicator for the degree of coordination that is used in Figure 2.3 and Figure 2.4 is explained in more details at page 45.



While union density, the coverage of collective bargaining system and the degree of coordination of collective bargaining are all major factors influencing the prevalence of low-pay (Bosch and Gautié, 2011; Bonoli, 2006: 24-26), the degree of coordination between unions and business associations is essential to create effective wage floors negotiated through collective bargaining (Grimshaw, 2011). Indeed, countries with strong coordination between social partners generally have a wide coverage of collective agreements, because either governments or business associations extend the coverage of collective bargaining to most workers. Wide coverage is, however, not enough, because collective agreements between unions and business that fix minimum wages separately for each business or each sector will create huge inequalities between the workplaces/sectors that are more unionized and productive compared to other workplaces/sectors (Grimshaw, 2011). Indeed, in France, most workers are covered by collective bargaining negotiated at the sectoral level, but the less productive sectors have negotiated minimum wages that are below or at the level of the national minimum, which means that social partners are unable to limit low-pay by themselves (Bosch and al., 2010). In countries with strong coordination at the national level, on the other hand, the bargaining power of strong unions representing productive sectors can help establish high wage floors for everyone (Bosch and al,

2010). It is notably the case in Scandinavian countries where the collective agreements of less productive sectors like retail and hospitality establish comparatively high wage floors compared to other countries. We can, however, see in Figure 2.4 that the share of low-wage workers (LWW) is also relatively low in several countries with weak coordination such as France, New Zealand and Portugal. That can be explained by the interventions of governments to compensate the failures of collective bargaining through high minimum wages.

Corporatism and Government Policies Concerning Low-Wage work

Labor market and social policies have a huge impact on the working and living conditions of low-wage workers, but there is an important variation in the type of policies implemented in countries with a low and high level of corporatism. The clearest example are minimum wage policies. All countries with a very low level of coordination between social partners had a national minimum wage in 2018, while the majority of country with a high level of coordination didn't have one as seen in Table 2.2. This difference can be explained by the diverging interests of unions in countries with a low and high degree of corporatism. Social democrat and labor parties have generally strong and institutionalized relationships with unions and are largely influenced by their opinions on issues concerning minimum wages. When coordination is strong and unions are able to establish wage floors that cover the majority of workers, unions prefer to avoid government interventions in wage fixing. As they are able to limit inequalities on the labor markets and the competition from low-wage workers by themselves, unions do not want a national minimum wage as it can disincentivize unionization for lower-wage workers and set a lower target for employers to set their demands (Meyer, 2016). However, when unions are unable to establish effective wage floors for the majority of workers, they tend to push for the adoption and increase of minimum wages. Higher

minimum wages allow unions, especially unions representing lower-skilled workers, to limit the concurrence from non-unionized low-wage workers that can weaken their bargaining power with employers. This is why unions in the United Kingdom started to push for the adoption of the minimum wage in the late 1980s following the labor market reforms that weakened their ability to establish wage floors. The minimum wage was finally established when the Labour came back in power following the 1997 election (Meyer, 2016). A similar scenario unfolded in Germany, where unions started pushing for a minimum wage in the mid-2000s following the Hartz reforms and a minimum wage was established when the social-democrats made it a condition to sign a coalition deal in 2013 (Mabbett, 2016).

Table 2.2: The presence of the minimum wage by degree of corporatism in 2018²

Corporatism level (Visser, 2016) ³	Minimum wage	No minimum wage
1 Weak	Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States	
2	Australia, France, Portugal	
3	Spain	Italy, Switzerland
4	Germany, Netherlands	Austria, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden
5 Strong	Belgium	

Historically, minimum wages tended to be higher in the few countries with a high degree of corporatism that had minimum wages, as unions tended to be stronger in these countries and employers more favorable to higher wages (European Commission, 2007: 82-83; Grimshaw and Bosch, 2013: 52-53). However, this correlation was reversed in the 2000s. Indeed, the level of minimum wages fell in several countries with high degree of corporatism such as Belgium and

² The countries included in this and the following tables are the countries selected for the analyses in the empirical chapters. These are advanced democracies with post-industrial economies that are democratic since at least the 1980s.

³ The indicator for corporatism is explained in more details at page 45.

Netherlands, but increased significantly in countries with a weak bargaining system such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Grimshaw and Bosch, 2013: 76). In countries with strong corporatism, governments have continued to let official mechanisms such as negotiations between social partners or fixed indexation rules determine the level of the minimum wage without intervening to fix higher wages (Visser, 2016). However, the increased inequalities, the pressures from Living wage movements and unions combined with the low level of unemployment pushed governments in countries with weak bargaining system, especially left-wing ones, to intervene directly by pledging to increase the minimum wages and ultimately increasing it (Wilson, 2017). Left-wing parties went even further in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, by pledging to adopt new laws to strengthen and institutionalize sectoral collective bargaining that would limit low pay (NZ Labour, 2017; UK Labour, 2019). It is thus not surprising that left-wing parties have a significant impact on wage inequalities in liberal market economies (Rueda et Pontusson, 2000) and in countries with a low degree of coordination in collective bargaining (Rueda, Pontusson and Way, 2002), but not in countries with a high level of corporatism.

Collective bargaining does not only influence wages, it also provides minimum working standards and often occupation protection such as old-age pensions and sick pay. Workers in low corporatist countries are thus much more dependent on minimum labor standards enacted by governments and on governmental social programs as it's often the only social protection they have access to. Interestingly, social programs are also much more targeted toward lower-income individuals in countries with a weak bargaining system. Indeed, corporatism strongly influences the emergence of different types of welfare states as seen in Table 2.3. The social-democratic type of welfare state with universal and egalitarian social programs is only possible in countries with strong unions that

limit inequalities between workers (Esping-Andersen, 1990), while the weakness of unions tends to lead to the liberal type where governments mostly provide targeted social programs to lower-income citizens. This is also consistent with neo-institutionalist approaches in political economy, as employers in liberal market economies are more critical of universal and generous social programs such as unemployment insurance that could limit the flexibility of the labor market (Hall and Soskice, 2003).

Table 2.3: Degree of corporatism and type of welfare state regimes in 2018

Corporatism level (Visser, 2016)	Liberal	Conservative	Social-democrat
1 Weak	Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States		
2	Australia	France, Portugal	
3		Italy, Spain, Switzerland	
4		Austria, Germany, Netherlands	Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden
5 Strong		Belgium	

The clearest evidence of the different approaches to social policy in countries with low and high degree of corporatism are direct cash transfers to families. Indeed, in most countries with a high degree of corporatism, families are still given flat-rate benefits that does not vary in function of their income as seen in Table 2.4. At the opposite, governments in countries with a low degree of corporatism have reformed their family benefits by introducing new income-tested benefits that provide more support for low-income families (Ferrarini and al., 2013). They have also introduced targeted in-work tax credits that benefit mostly low-wage workers with children as seen in Table 2.5. I believe that this difference can be explained by the different incentives that left-wing parties have in countries with a low and high degree of corporatism. In countries with a high degree of

corporatism, left-wing governments have few incentives to introduce new targeted benefits, because governments are attached to the principle of universality and rely on a strong collective bargaining system to limit inequalities between workers. They thus do not need to implement specific policies targeted at low-income workers.

Table 2.4: Degree of corporatism and type of family benefits in 2018

Corporatism level (Visser, 2016)	Income-tested family benefits	Only flat-rate family benefits
1 Weak	Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom	United States
2	Australia, Portugal	
3	Spain, Italy	Italy, Switzerland
4	Netherlands	Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden
5 Strong		Belgium

Table 2.5: Degree of corporatism and in-work cash transfers in 2018

Corporatism level (Visser, 2016)	Targeted in-work cash transfer	No targeted in-work cash transfer
1 Weak	Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States	Ireland
2	France	Australia, Portugal
3		Italy, Spain, Switzerland
4		Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden
5 Strong		Belgium

To conclude this chapter, I want to emphasize that in highly corporatist countries, the universal and institutionalized nature of social and labor policies limit partisan debate on low-wage work as policies addressing this issue are rarely proposed even by left-wing governments. Indeed, the popularity of universal programs, the resistance of unions towards governments intervention in wage-fixing and the relatively low number of low-wage workers create few incentives for left-wing parties to put forward the issue of low-wage work. However, in countries with a low degree

of corporatism, left-wing governments have fewer options to reduce inequalities as they cannot rely on large welfare state or strong bargaining system. They thus tend to propose new targeted policies such as minimum wages and in-work tax cash transfers to reduce inequalities. These policies are even more interesting for left-wing parties as low-wage workers constitute on average a larger share of the electorate in countries with a low degree of corporatism. New policy proposals and the constant debate on the appropriate level of minimum wages, cash transfers or other targeted policies should thus influence the emergence of a stronger partisan divide between left- and right-wing parties on the issue of low-wage work in countries with a low degree of corporatism. Following this logic, the vote of low-wage workers for radical parties should also be lower in countries with a low degree of corporatism since center-left are addressing the issue of low-wage work directly by proposing specific policies. The next four chapters present different analyses to test this argument. First, in considering the positions of political parties on issues related to low-wage work (chapter 3) and correspondingly, the voting behavior of low-wage workers (chapter 4). Second, in examining the impact of left-wing governments on the evolution of minimum wages (chapter 5) and cash transfers to low-income families (chapter 6).

Chapter 3 A New Focus for Left-wing parties: The Salience of Low-wage Work in the Electoral Manifestos of OECD Countries⁴

Low wages have become a major issue for social movements in the last decade as shown by the mobilization around the Fight for \$15, the living wage movements and the fast-food strikes (Reynolds and Kern, 2001; Bunyan, 2016). These movements follow decades of labor market deregulation and neoliberalism that led to the growth of low-paid and unskilled jobs in the service sector. Indeed, above 15% of workers are now considered low-wage workers in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and a few other countries (OECD, 2018). The issues of low-wage work and minimum wages have also become more present in partisan debates in the United States and Canada where left-wing parties have pledged minimum wages of 15\$, while right-wing parties have mostly criticized the idea (Wilson, 2017). This is not unique to North America: announces of major minimum wage increases have been made in various countries such as Germany, Portugal and South Korea (OECD, 2020).

Despite those recent movements and debates, scholars have rarely considered the importance of issues related to low-wage work in electoral and partisan politics. A few studies have explored the impact of partisan politics on minimum wage policy. They generally found that the presence of left-wing parties in government is associated with higher minimum wage (Blais and al.,1989; Rueda, 2008). Moreover, an emerging body of literature has analyzed the voting behavior of low-wage workers and has found that they are more prone to abstention (Schraff, 2019; Marinova,

⁴ Article published in *Party Politics*: Durocher, Dominic. 2022. "A New Focus for Left-wing parties: The Salience of Low-wage Work in the Electoral Manifestos of OECD Countries" *Party Politics*. See the appendix for proof of publication.

2022). We know much less, however, about how and why issues related to low-wage work are put forward and prioritized by political parties. Several studies on issue salience have shown that post-materialist issues like the environment or immigration have become more prominent in the electoral manifestos of left-wing parties in recent years and that they tend to differentiate them from right-wing parties (Green-Pedersen, 2007; Wagner and Meyer, 2014) On the other hand, welfare expansion has become more difficult to achieve for left-wing parties since the 1980s, because of socio-economic constraints and the rise of neoliberalism (Pierson, 2001). This, however, does not mean that left-wing parties have completely abandoned socio-economic issues as shown by the debates around employment protection and the rising focus on family policies (Picot and Menendez, 2019; Huo, 2019, Huber and Stephens, 2014). The current paper seeks to fill a gap in this literature by examining how partisanship and labor market institutions influence the salience of an emerging socio-economic issue, low-wage work.

In this article, I argue that the issue of low wages offers an opportunity for left-wing parties to consolidate their vote among low-wage workers and other voters favorable towards redistribution (Wilson, 2017). Indeed, policies targeted towards low-wage workers such as minimum wages and targeted cash transfers allow left-wing parties to present themselves as champions of workers and redistribution at a relatively low cost. This article thus postulates that left-wing parties tend to put more emphasis on the issue of low wages than right-wing parties in electoral campaigns, especially in recent years. However, the literature on post-materialist and radical parties shows that left- and right parties do not have uniform views on socio-economic issues. This is why I also analyze the mentions related to low-wage work for different types of parties including radical right, radical left, ecologist and Christian Democratic parties.

While my main expectation is intuitive, my central hypothesis is that institutions regulating the labor market condition the incentives that left parties have to champion low-wage issues. In particular, the degree of coordination in the bargaining process between unions, and the private and governmental sectors should have a strong influence on whether left parties emphasized this type of issue. For example, when the degree of corporatism is strong in a country, such as in Sweden or Belgium, left-wing governments are likely to let unions address the issue of low-wage work through the collective bargaining process. However, in countries with a weak bargaining process such as Canada and the United Kingdom, social partners are unable to regulate low-wage work through collective bargaining (Meyer, 2016), thus putting more pressure on left-wing parties to address this issue.

To test these claims, I use party manifestos data available through the Comparative Manifesto Project and construct original indicators to study the position of political parties on the issue of low wages across 18 western democracies between 1990 and 2019. The results confirm that the mentions of low-wage work issues have increased significantly in the last few years and that left parties emphasized this issue much more than right-wing parties. Moreover, as predicted, the effect of left-wing parties is stronger in countries with a weak bargaining process. Despite their different positions on socio-economic issues, radical left and right parties do not mention low-wage work related issues more often than other left and right parties respectively. The results are important because they suggest that the salience of socio-economic issues is influenced by labor market institutions and that a rising socio-economic issue dividing center-left- and right parties has emerged despite the recent emphasis on post-materialistic cleavages.

Explaining Parties' Ideological Positions

The position of political parties is generally studied on a left-right ideological dimension defined in large part by socio-economic issues. Studies based on either electoral manifestos (Budge, 2013) or expert surveys (Budge, 2006) define left parties as favorable to government interventions in the economy, labor groups, redistribution and more generous welfare states, while right parties are presented as more favorable to free-market economy and smaller welfare states. The left-right ideological dimension is also considered as one of the main dimensions of party competition in Western democracies even if new dimensions have appeared in recent decades (Kriesi and al. 2008; Dalton 2017). Scholars have thus been interested in studying why and when parties change their positions on the left-right ideological scale in response to public opinion, party supporters, electoral results, shifts in the positions of other parties and economic conditions for example (Ezrow and al., 2011; Somer-Topcu, 2009; Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009; Adams and al., 2009; Klüver and Spoon, 2016).

Electoral manifestos and expert surveys have also been used to understand the evolution of political debates on specific issues related to the left-right axis. In the case of social policies, studies have mostly sought to understand whether the end of welfare expansion led to a decline in polarization between left- and right parties. For example, Pierson thought that polarization between left and right parties with respect to welfare programs would continue to diminish as the economic transformations of the last few years have limited the capacity of left-wing parties to expand the welfare state. Moreover, he argued that the unpopularity of large cuts to social programs would limit retrenchment by right-wing parties (Pierson, 2001). Empirical studies based on electoral manifestos have, however, shown that polarization between left- and right-wing parties on welfare

issues has remained stable in the last few decades (Nygård, 2006; Finseraas and Vernby, 2011). Interestingly, however, results seem to vary according to the type of welfare regime. Gingrich and Häusermann (2015) have found that left-wing parties are now less favorable to welfare expansion in countries with a liberal welfare regime such as the United States and the United Kingdom than during the late 1970s and 1980s, while left-wing parties in Northern and Continental Europe are now more favorable or have maintained their position on welfare expansion. This literature, however, mostly analyzes the position of political parties on broad policy/ideological dimension such as welfare expansion/retrenchment. While we can now better understand if parties are more or less favorable to welfare expansion, we know less about which specific policies and issues are put forward by political parties and the reasons why.

The literature on issue salience seeks to answer this question by analyzing how certain issues become central in partisan debates. In recent decades, issues such as immigration and the environment have been put forward by new parties such as populist right-wing and ecologist parties (Carter, 2013; Dennison and Geddes; 2018). The positions and success of these parties have in turn influenced the positions of mainstream parties. For example, the growth of populist parties has led mainstream parties to adopt stricter positions on immigration (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020). This has transformed the left-right cleavage by introducing a new opposition between parties with a more traditional and authoritarian mindset and parties with a more libertarian and cosmopolitan vision (Kriesi, 2010).⁵

⁵ Similarly, a related literature examines how the presence of women in parties influence the content of party manifestoes (Kittilson, 2010; Greene and O'Brien, 2016).

However, despite the rising importance taken by new issues such as immigration and environment, issues related to welfare policies have kept their preeminence in the electoral manifestos of left-wing parties (Green-Pedersen, 2007; Wagner and Meyer, 2014). Debates on welfare policies have, however, changed significantly in the last decades. Studies analyzing policy reforms have found that left-wing parties have reoriented their priorities since the 1990s, favoring investment and activation policies to encourage social mobility and employment instead of expanding passive social protection programs such as pension and unemployment programs (Huo, 2009; Huber and Stephens, 2014). In recent years, the deregulation of the labor market has led to the growth of a large group of service workers with precarious working conditions, low wages and weak social protection that could constitute a potential electorate for left-wing parties (Wilson, 2017). One study show that left-wing party now put more emphasis in their platform on policies that help workers in non-standard employment (Picot and Menendez, 2019). No empirical study, however, has been undertaken to examine whether political parties have been responsive to the rise of low-wage work in adjusting their positions on this issue.

The Issue of Low-Wage Work in Politics

Rising inequalities in the western world have become a major preoccupation for academics and social movements in recent years. The deregulation of labor markets since the 1980s has contributed to the creation of a large number of unskilled jobs in the service sector (Oesch and Rodrigues Menes, 2011; Wilson, 2017). For example, in the United States, the share of workers without college education working in the service industry increased by 53% between 1980 and 2005 (Autor and Dorn, 2013). Unskilled workers in the retail sector and the hospitality industry tend to be low-paid, because of low productivity growth and weak unions (Esping-Andersen, 1993;

Appelbaum and Schettkat, 1995, Grimshaw, 2011). In addition, low-paid jobs are more likely to be temporary or part-time, generally do not offer access to occupational social protection and offer few possibilities of advancement or upskilling. Indeed, few low-wage workers transition to better paid jobs (Grimshaw, 2011).

In politics, the issue of low-wage work has mostly risen in the context of debates on the minimum wage. Indeed, in the past decades, multiple Living Wage movements were formed to promote better policies and better working conditions for low-wage workers across the United States and the United Kingdom, for example (Reynolds and Kern, 2001; Bunyan, 2016). Those movements have contributed to large protests, such as the fast-food workers strikes in the United States. They have also tried to influence businesses to offer better wages and lobbied governments to increase the minimum wage. According to Wilson (2017), the increase in inequalities in liberal regime countries has influenced the priorities of voters that have become more concerned by issues related to low-wage work and poverty. For example, the minimum wage has increased in several countries and subnational entities in recent years especially, when left-wing parties are in power (Wilson, 2017). In Germany and in the United Kingdom, left-wing parties pushed for the adoption of minimum wage laws with the support of unions who feared competition from low-wage workers (Mabbett, 2016; Meyer, 2016).

Consequently, I argue that the issue of low wages offers an opportunity for left-wing parties to push forward pro-workers and pro-redistribution positions favored by their leaders and militants and consolidate their vote among low-wage workers by championing policies that affect them, such as minimum wages. Even though the electoral gains are probably small, putting forward those

policies have very few drawbacks for left-wing parties. Indeed, increases of the minimum wage are broadly popular among the electorate (Zohlnhöfer and Engler, 2013) and don't involve financial costs that would have to be financed by unpopular tax increase on the middle-class. As such, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Left-wing political parties tend to mention more often issues related to low-wage work in their electoral manifestos.

Even if left parties are broadly favorable to redistribution and government intervention, there exist significant differences in the positions of social-democrat, radical left and ecologist parties. Accordingly, we can expect differences across left-wing parties in the extent to which they emphasize issues associated with low-wage work. Ecologist parties have emerged in the last decades to address concerns related to climate change and environmental protection. They tend to have left-wing views on socio-economic issues, but they put more emphasis on post-materialist issues, especially the environment, compared to other left-wing parties (Dalton, 2009). Their electorate is also different as they attract mainly professionals and highly educated citizens and are much less popular among the working class than other left-wing parties (Dolezal, 2010). I thus believe that ecologist parties put less emphasis on low-wage issues in their electorate manifestos than social democrats as they have fewer electoral incentives and socio-economic issues are less of a priority.

Radical left parties, on the other hand, should put more emphasis on low-wage issues than social-democrat parties. Radical left and socialist parties are generally small parties that have kept a

strong emphasis on socio-economic issues and continue to criticize the capitalist system that led to low wages in their electoral manifestos despite the rise of post-materialist issues (Fagerholm, 2017). Radical left ideology is also popular among low-income citizens that could benefit from policies targeted to low-wage workers (Visser and al., 2014). However, I believe that radical left and social-democrat parties address the issue of low-wage work in a different manner in their electoral manifesto. Radical left parties are more critical of the economic system and are less likely to form the government. They should thus put more emphasis on criticizing low-wage work and the economic system that creates these low-paid jobs. As for social democrats, as they are more centrist and generally seek to form government, they should put less emphasis on the capitalist economic system and instead propose targeted policies such as increasing the minimum wage.

Hypothesis 2: Radical left-wing political parties tend to mention more often issues related to low-wage work in their electoral manifestos than center-left parties.

Hypothesis 3: Ecologist parties tend to mention less often issues related to low-wage work in their electoral manifestos than radical and center-left parties.

Hypothesis 4: Radical left-wing political parties tend to be more critical of low-wage work in their electoral manifestos than center-left parties.

Hypothesis 5: Radical left-wing political parties tend to mention less often the minimum wage than center-left parties.

Compared to left-wing parties, right-wing parties tend to be less favorable to labor market regulations and socio-economic redistribution through social programs. This is, however, not the case for Christian democrats' parties that have historically put less emphasis on economic liberalism than conservative and liberal parties. Indeed, Christian democrats have built cross-class alliances that integrate the working class by creating generous social insurance programs, while maintaining strong ties with Catholic unions (Kalyas and van Kersbergen, 2010). Studies have confirmed that governments with Christian Democratic parties tend to provide more generous social transfers (Huber and al., 1993) and tend to deregulate less the labor market (Zohlnhöfer and Voigt, 2021) than other governments. Also, the rise of a post-materialist cleavage has created a division between mainstream right-wing parties such as conservative and liberal parties that still put emphasis on economic issues and radical right parties that put more emphasis on cultural issues such as immigration (Kriesi and al., 2008). While, some radical right parties have strong neoliberal views, others have more ambiguous economic policies (Kitschelt, 2004; Rovny, 2013). Radical right parties have become more favorable to the welfare state over time as they attracted a larger share of the working class who remains pro-redistribution and they also often present themselves as defenders of the welfare state threatened by immigration and globalization (Nordensvard and Ketola, 2015; Afonso and Rennwald, 2017). The popularity of radical parties among the working class combined with their ambiguous economic positions should lead them to mention issues related to low-wage more often than other right-wing parties.

Hypothesis 6: Christian democrats and radical right political parties tend to mention more often issues related to low-wage work in their electoral manifestos than other right-wing parties.

The tendency of left-wing parties to integrate the issue of low-wage work in their manifestos should also be related to the institutional characteristics of the labor market. Countries with a highly coordinated collective bargaining process have a lower level of wage inequality and fewer low-paid jobs (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Wallerstein, 1999; Bosch and Gauthier, 2011), which could render the issue of low-wage work less salient. Indeed, Living Wage movements are mostly in liberal countries with a high level of labor market inequality such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Also, when unions are strong and include the majority of workers, they prefer to avoid direct intervention from governments in wage fixation. They want to maintain their role in the fixation of wages, since direct government intervention could discourage workers to join a union to negotiate better wages and work conditions (Mabbett, 2016; Meyer, 2016). I thus believe that the different families of left-wing parties in highly coordinated countries have fewer electoral incentives to emphasize issues related to low-wage work in their electoral manifesto since there are less low-wage workers that could vote for them and they have less pressure from unions and social movements.

Hypothesis 7: Left-wing parties put less emphasis on issues related to low-wage in their electoral manifestos when the level of corporatism is high.

Methodology

Data

I have selected 18 industrialized countries from North America, Europe and Oceania: Austria (AUT), Australia (AUS), Belgium (BEL), Canada (CAN), Denmark (DNK), France (FRA), Germany (DEU), Ireland (IRE), Italy (ITA), Netherlands (NLD), New Zealand (NZL), Norway

(NOR), Portugal (PRT), Spain (ESP), Sweden (SWE), Switzerland (CHE), the United Kingdom (GBR) and the United States (USA).⁶ This selection provides countries with an adequate variation of strong and weak level of corporatism. Countries with a similar level of economic development were selected, because low-wage workers in developing countries tend to be concentrated in the informal sector. Ex-communist countries were also excluded as they were transitioning to a capitalist labor market at the beginning of the 1990s. The sample consists of 1012 data points (party-election) across 145 elections and 273 parties from 1990 to 2019.

Position of Political Parties Towards Low-Wage Work

To measure the attention of political parties towards low-wage work, I used electoral manifestos available through the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP). The CMP provides textual analyses of electoral manifestos by counting the number of quasi-sentences associated with different topics. Contrary to experts' surveys, which are based on broad questions to measure the salience of different political issues, analyzing electoral manifestos can provide information on very specific topics put forward by political parties. The CMP does not have an indicator specifically related to low-wage work, but it compiles all quasi-sentences contained in the electoral manifestos. I thus manually constructed 4 original indicators by using those quasi-sentences made available by the CMP. In particular, I searched for specific key words related to low-wage work: minimum wage, living wage, decent wage, fair wage, low wage, low paid.⁷ I coded these quasi-sentences according to four categories 1) critics of low-wage work, ex: "There is no future for Britain as a low-wage economy" (UK Labour 1997) 2) calls for decent wages, ex: "A good job requires a fair wage"

⁶ To facilitate the translation of electoral manifestos, Finland and Greece were excluded, because of their complex case structure that would make the search by keywords very difficult without basic knowledge of the language.

⁷ The key words are similar in other languages, but slightly varies in function of the language.

(Ireland Labour 2016) 3) propositions to establish, increase or expand the minimum wage, ex: “Raise the minimum wage to £4.20” (UK Labour 2001) 4) critics of the minimum wage, ex: “No Conservative government will introduce a national minimum wage” (UK Conservative 1997).⁸

To test the first, second, third, sixth and seventh hypothesis, the sum of the number of quasi-sentences related to the first 3 categories are calculated minus the fourth categories divided by the total number of quasi-sentences in an electoral manifesto. This method of summing the positive mentions, subtracting the negative mentions and dividing by the total number of sentences is exactly how the left-right indicator of the CMP is calculated. To test the 4th and 5th hypotheses, I use the number of quasi-sentences related to criticisms of low-wage work (category 1) and for minimum wage expansion (category 3) both divided by the total number of quasi-sentences. This is necessary for making the distinction between the position of left and radical left parties.

Classification of Political Parties

The first and seventh hypothesis imply that we must distinguish left- and right-wing political parties. In the first model, the left-right indicator of the *Parliaments and governments database* is used. This database (Döring and Manow, 2020) offers a left-right indicator created from different experts’ survey such as Chapel Hill. Political parties that have a value of less than 5 on the 0 to 10 scale are considered left-wing parties. For the second, third and fourth hypotheses we need to distinguish different types of left- and right parties. I use a nominal variable of the different families of political parties (radical left, social democrat, ecologist, liberal, conservative, Christian

⁸ Some sentences containing the key words are not related to low-wage work and are thus not coded.

democrats, agrarian radical right and other)⁹ coded by the CMP. The left-right indicator from the CMP is not used, because pledges related to low-wage issues are often coded in categories used to measure left ideology.

Corporatism

To measure corporatism, the indicator for coordination of wage-setting available through the *ICTWSS database* (Visser, 2016) is used. Wage-setting coordination between social partners is necessary to impose wage floors across different industries and thus limiting the growth of low-wage employment. I have created a dichotomous variable of countries with a low and high degree of corporatism to have enough countries in each category.¹⁰ Australia, Canada, France, Italy, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States have a low degree of corporatism as collective bargaining occurs either only at the firm or industry level or only produce weak guidelines for wage-setting at the national level. Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden have a high level of corporatism as their collective bargaining system ensures that standards related to wages are imposed at the national level.¹¹ Ireland is considered a country with strong corporatism between 1990 and 2009, because during this period, social pacts were negotiated between unions, business associations and governments to fix national standards in wage-setting, but is classified as a country with a low degree of corporatism afterwards because social partners stopped negotiating those social pacts (Teague and Donaghey, 2015).

⁹ I renamed the socialist and other left category, radical left parties and the nationalist category, radical right parties as they are more commonly classified in the literature. Examples of radical left parties are Podemos in Spain and Die Linke in Germany, while examples of radical right parties are the UDC in Switzerland and Front National in France.

¹⁰ A model with the original five categories is presented in Table 3.C1 of the appendix.

¹¹ Countries with a value of 1, 2 or 3 are considered low corporatism countries, countries with a value of 4 and 5 are considered high corporatism countries.

Models

First, descriptive statistics are presented to look at the indicator of low-wage work related issues by political parties' families, countries and year. Then linear regression models (OLS) are used to analyze the impact of the political party's ideology on the mentions of the issue of low-wage work in their electoral manifesto. To account for the cross-national structure of the data where political parties are clustered within countries and election years, election fixed-effects and clustered robust standard errors are also included for each political party. The fixed-effects allow the analysis and comparison of the strategic choices of different types of political parties in each election while controlling for several institutional characteristics both in time and between countries such as the different electoral systems, party systems, but also economic variables such as unemployment and economic growth. In Table 3.D1 of the appendix, a multilevel model including several control variables is presented as a robustness test, the results are similar to the fixed effect model. The effects displayed in Table 3.2 should thus be interpreted as within-election effect – i.e., the effect of being a left-wing party on the number of mentions of the issue of low-wage work within an election. For the seventh hypothesis, I interact the corporatism variable with government ideology to examine whether left-wing parties emphasize low-wage work issues more under low or high corporatism.¹² Finally, in all the models there is a control variable for government incumbency, because parties tend to pledge more welfare expansion when they are in opposition (Jensen and Seeberg, 2015). This variable is measured through the *Parliaments and governments database* (Döring and Manow, 2020).

¹² The effect of corporatism should have an impact mostly on the transversal dimension, because the corporatism index does not change in each country, it is unlikely to have an impact on the evolution of low-wage work related issues in the same country.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

First in Table 3.1, we can see the indicator of the parties' position on low-wage work (the combinations of mentions related to critics of low-wage work, calls for decent wages, proposition to increase minus critics of the minimum wages divided by the number of all quasi-sentences in an electoral manifesto) by types of parties (left vs right) and types of countries (non-corporatist vs corporatist). The mentions of low-wage work issues are not frequent in electoral manifestos. Indeed, only 0.2% of all quasi-sentences are considered related to low-wage work and most electoral manifestos (61%) have no quasi-sentences related to low-wage work.

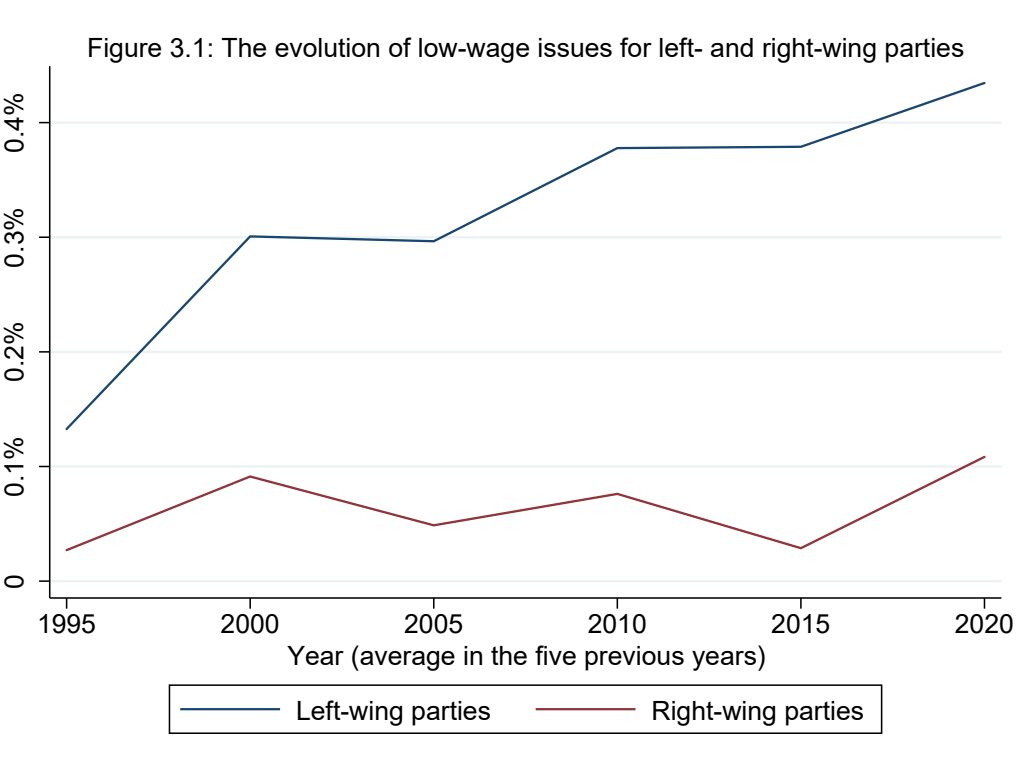
Table 3.1: Mentions of low-wage related issues by types of parties and countries

	Low-wage related issues (%)		
	Non-Corporatist	Corporatist	All countries
Left parties	0.5	0.2	0.3
Right parties	0.1	0.03	0.1
All parties	0.3	0.1	0.2

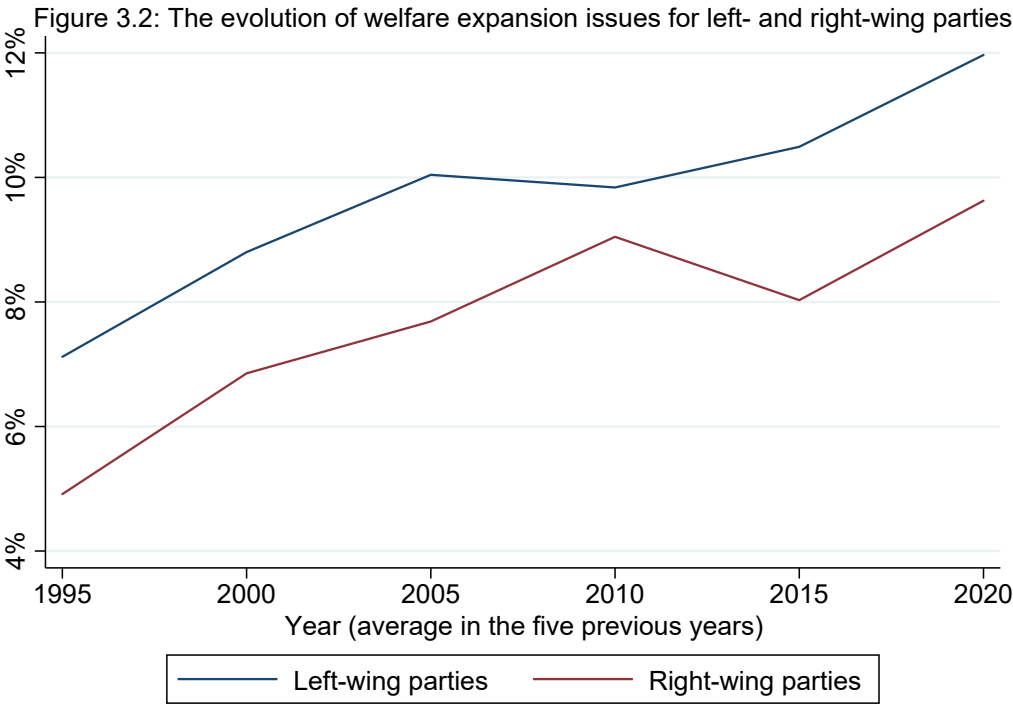
Even if issues related to low-wage work are relatively marginal in party manifestos, we can assume that the differences across parties may transfer in significant public debates during electoral campaigns. For example, low wages have been a central issue for the Labour Party in the United Kingdom in 1992, 1997, 2010 and, in these three elections more than 1% of all quasi-sentences in the electoral manifesto of the Labour Party were related to low-wage work issues. Indeed, there are wide variations in the mentions of low-wage work issues depending on the country, the time period and the political parties as displayed in Table 3.1. Low-wage work issues are mentioned 3 times more often in the electoral manifestos of left-wing parties (0.3%) compared to those of right-

wing parties (0.1%). The difference is even starker if we only look at countries with weak corporatism, as low-wage issues are mentioned five times more in manifestos of left-wing parties (0.5%) compared to those of right-wing parties (0.1%).

In Figure 3.1, we can see the evolution of the mentions of low-wage work related issues for left- and right-wing parties. The mentions of low-wage work issues by left-wing parties have increased significantly by the end of the 1990s and then progressively since 2005. These results are consistent with the conclusion of recent qualitative case studies that have shown that left-wing parties have put more emphasis on the issue of low-wage work and minimum wage in recent years (Meyer, 2016; Wilson, 2017). The mentions of low-wage work issues by right-wing parties have slightly increased in recent years, but have been mostly stable since the late 1990s. It thus seems that the gap between left-wing and right-wing parties that has appeared in recent years is due to the increase in the mentions of this issue among left-wing parties.

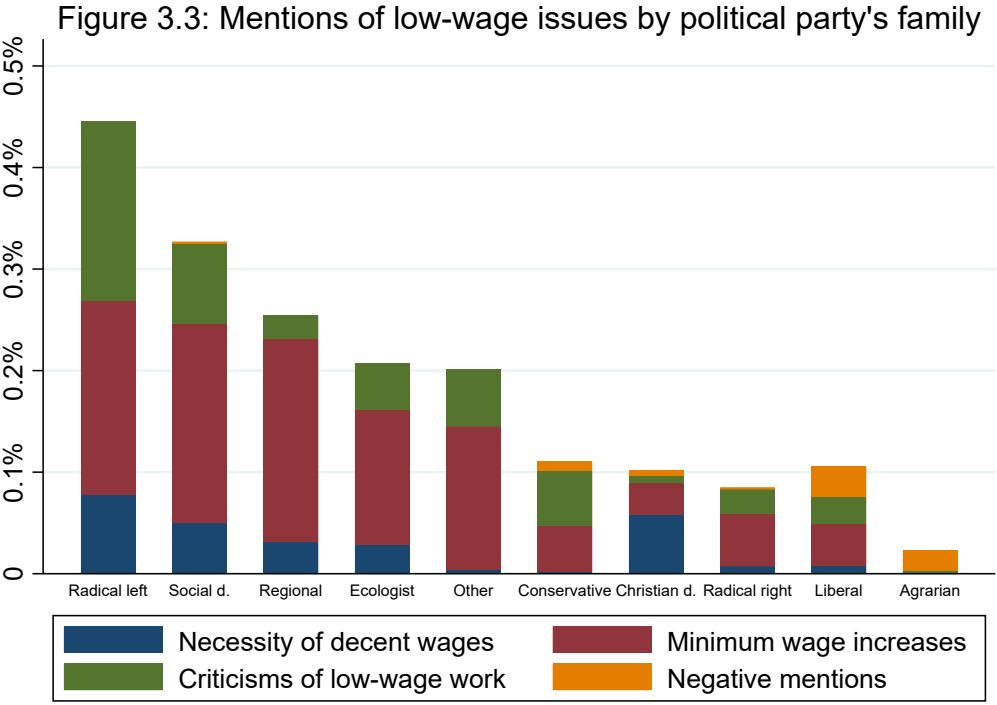


To better understand the evolution of low-wage work issues, the same graph is reproduced for mentions of welfare expansion. In Figure 3.2, we can see that the mentions related to welfare expansion by left-wing parties have increased continuously since the 1990s, the evolution is very similar to the one seen for low-wage issues in Figure 3.1.¹³ However, contrary to low-wage work issues, the mentions of welfare expansion for right-wing parties have also increased since the 1990s. This highlights the fact that while right-wing parties have also emphasized more welfare expansion in recent decades, they did so without increasing their mentions of low-wage work issues. Those preliminary results thus suggest that the issue of low-wage work has become more polarized since the 1990s and that, in contrast to the issue of welfare expansion.

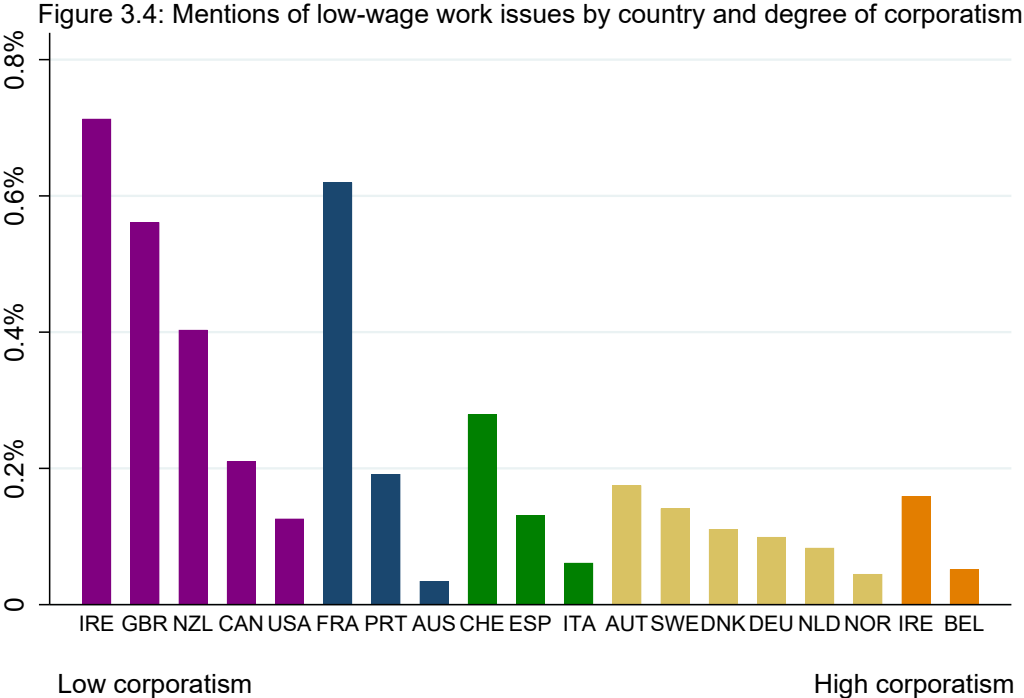


¹³ In Table 3.A1 of the appendix, there is a regression model with welfare expansion mentions as the independent variable to confirm the statistical relationship between mentions of low-wage related issues and positive mentions of welfare expansion by left-wing parties. The relationship is positive and significant. This means that pledges related to the minimum wage and low-wage work are complementary to expansion of social programs and not a compensation for weaker social programs (Wilson, 2017).

In Figure 3.3, we can see the mentions of low-wage work issues in electoral manifestos by political parties' families. Left-wing political parties (ecologist, radical left and socio-democrat parties) put more emphasis on issues related to low-wage work in their electoral manifestos than right-wing parties (liberal, conservative, radical right and Christian democrat). Ecologist parties mention less often low-wage work related issues compared to radical left and social-democrat parties. Radical left and social-democrat parties are similar in their mention of the minimum wage, but radical left parties tend to criticize low-wage work much more than social-democratic parties. Interestingly, the different types of right-wing parties are very similar in their mentions of low-wage issues. Finally, the high number of mentions for regionalist parties is driven by left-wing regionalist parties in the United Kingdom such as SNP and Plaid Cymru and parties representing Maoris in New Zealand. Those preliminary results seem to confirm the first hypothesis on the difference between left- and right-wing parties and the hypotheses (H2, H3 & H4) on the differences between different left-wing parties, but not the hypothesis (H6) on the differences within right-wing parties.



In Figure 3.4, we can see the mentions of low-wage work issues by country and by level of corporatism.¹⁴ The first element to note is that low-wage work related issues are mentioned the most in Ireland (low corporatism)¹⁵, the United Kingdom and France followed by New Zealand. These countries all have a minimum wage and low degree of corporatism. Surprisingly, the issue of low-wage work is not often mentioned in the United States and Germany despite the recent debate around the minimum wage. Those preliminary results are also consistent with the theoretical expectations that there are more mentions of low-wage related issues in countries with a low degree of corporatism.



¹⁴ Each color represents one degree of corporatism in a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) see the corporatism indicator in the methodology section.

¹⁵ Ireland appears twice in the graph as it had strong coordination between social partners before 2009 but the coordination stopped afterwards.

Regression Models

In the first column of Table 3.2, the results for the relationship between left-wing parties and mentions of issues related to low-wage work in electoral manifestos are presented. The first hypothesis postulates that left-wing governments put more emphasis on low-wage related issues than right-wing parties. The results shown in Table 3.2 indicate that the regression coefficient for left-wing parties is positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The coefficient of 0.24 indicates that the share of quasi-sentences related to low-wage issues in left-wing parties' electoral manifestos is 0.24 percentage points greater than for right-wing parties. This is a fairly large effect and similar to what we can see in Table 3.1 since the average share of quasi-sentences related to low-wage issues in all electoral manifestos is 0.2 per cent. The variable for incumbency is not statistically significant. There are also in Table 3.B1 of the appendix four models for each category related to low-wage issues (minimum wage, criticisms of low wages, necessity of decent wages, negative mentions). All categories have a positive relationship (apart from negative mentions of the minimum wage, which is negative) and are statistically significant.

Table 3.2 Mentions of low-wage work related issues in electoral manifestos

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Left party	Left parties	Low-wage	Minimum wage	Right parties	Corporatism X Left
Left parties	0.24 (0.04)***					0.33 (0.07)***
Corpo. × Left						-0.18 (0.08)**
Radical left		0.15 (0.11)	0.10 (0.05)**	0.02 (0.06)		
Ecologist		-0.17 (0.08)**	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.10 (0.05)**		
Right parties		-0.25 (0.06)***	-0.05 (0.02)***	-0.15 (0.04)***		
Christian dem.					0.10 (0.06)	
Radical right					0.04 (0.06)	
Liberal					0.00 (0.06)	
Agrarian					0.04 (0.07)	
Left parties					0.28 (0.06)***	
Other		-0.08 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.19 (0.08)**	
Government	-0.00 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)
Constant	0.03 (0.07)	0.22 (0.08)***	0.11 (0.07)	0.09 (0.04)**	-0.07 (0.09)	0.05 (0.08)
Observations	1012	1012	1012	1012	1012	1012
Elections	145	145	145	145	145	145
R ²	0.285	0.303	0.268	0.257	0.286	0.293

Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Regression models with election fixed effects

In the second column, there is a distinction between three types of left parties: social democrat/center-left parties (category of reference), radical left and ecologist parties. The second hypothesis postulates that radical left parties put more emphasis on low-wage related issues than center-left parties, while the third hypothesis postulates that ecologist parties put less emphasis on these issues. The effect of ecologist parties is as expected negative and statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The negative coefficient for ecologist parties (-0.17) means that these parties mention less often issues related to low-wage work than center-left parties and is closer to the mentions by right-wing parties (-0.25). The difference of the effect with right-wing parties is in fact not statistically significant. The effect of radical left parties is positive but, contrary to expectation, not statistically significant. The average number of mentions for radical left parties is significantly higher if we look at Figure 3.3, but it may be influenced by a few cases of radical left parties with very high number of mentions, like the electoral manifestos of French Communist in 1997 and 2002 where mentions of low-wage issues represented more than 5% of quasi-sentences. This means that radical left parties do not put more emphasis on low-wage work than center-left parties in their electoral manifestos.

However, the results in column 2 do not indicate if radical left parties put more emphasis on certain dimensions of low-wage work compared to center-left parties. The fourth hypothesis postulates that radical left parties tend to criticize low-wage work in their electoral platform more often than center-left parties, but put less emphasis on the minimum wage. In the third column, the results show the number of mentions associated with criticisms of low-wage work. The effect of radical left parties is positive and statistically significant at the 0.05 level. As expected by H4, these results show that radical left parties put more emphasis on general criticisms of the low-wage work than

social-democrat parties. In column 4, the effect of radical left parties for mentions related to the minimum wage is, however, not significant. Indeed, contrary to the fifth hypothesis, both types of parties put as much emphasis on specific policies to address the issues, namely increasing the minimum wage. For their part, ecologist parties mention less often the minimum wage compared to center-left parties, but the difference for criticisms of low-wage work is not significant.

In column 5, there is a distinction between five types of right parties: conservative (category of reference), Christian democrats, radical right, liberal and agrarian parties. Based on hypothesis 6, we can expect Christian democrats and radical right parties to mention low-wage work related issues more often than conservative parties. The effect of Christian democrats' parties is as expected positive, but not statistically significant. Similar results for radical right parties, the effect is positive, but not statistically significant. It is thus interesting to note that the type of right-wing parties does not influence the emphasis put on low-wage work issues despite the important differences in terms of ideology and patterns of electoral support.

The seventh hypothesis postulates that the effect of left-wing parties on the mentions of issues related to low-wage work is stronger when the degree of corporatism is weak than when the degree of corporatism is high. Given that the model includes country-year fixed-effects, it is not possible to include the dummy variable *corporatism* in the model – only its interaction with *left-wing parties*. This does not amount to a model specification error, however, given that the country-year fixed-effects already capture the effect of corporatism (Andreass and al., 2013: chapter 3). As predicted, the effect of corporatism on the relationship between government ideology is negative and statistically significant at the 0.05 level which means that the effect of left-wing parties is

weaker in countries with strong corporatism. The effect of left-wing parties is stronger in low corporatist countries. This is given by the coefficient *left* (0.33) which is positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. On the other hand, the effect of left-wing parties under strong corporatism is given by the sum of *left* (0.33) and *corporatism X left* (-0.18) which equals 0.15 – this effect is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, left-wing parties also tend to mention low-wage work issues in their electoral manifestos when the degree of corporatism is high, but the magnitude of the effect is smaller – as predicted – than under low corporatism. In Table 3.C1 of the appendix, there is a model with the five categories variable for corporatism that show similar results.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our results indicate that left-wing parties clearly mention low-wage related issues more often than right-wing parties in their electoral manifesto and that the polarization between left- and right-wing parties have become much more important than for the welfare expansion indicator. Radical left parties tend to put more emphasis on broad criticisms of low-paid work than center-left parties, but do not mention more often issues related to low-wage work, while ecologist parties mention these issues less often. Combined with the study of Picot and Menendez (2019) on non-standard employment, this confirms that precarious and low-wage work have become important issues for left parties to distinguish themselves from right-wing parties. As for right-wing parties, they are all relatively similar.

While the previous results are quite intuitive, I also show that the effect of left-wing parties on mentions of low-wage work related issues is stronger in countries with weak corporatism. In

countries with a high level of corporatism, left-wing parties have fewer incentives to emphasize issues related to low-wage work because there are less low-wage workers and they have less pressure from unions that are able to implement wage floors. Indeed, most Living Wage movements have emerged in countries with a high level of inequality and low degree of corporatism such as the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The emergence of Living Wage movements also coincided with a rise in the mentions of low-wage issues by left-wing parties in the early 1990s. Finally, pledges to increase the minimum wage and to support low-wage workers are not used by political parties as an alternative to traditional social programs. Indeed, mentions of low-wage work issues and pledges concerning welfare expansion have both increased in recent years, showing a growing emphasis on inequalities and social policies in recent electoral manifestos.

Few studies in the fields of political economy or the welfare state have analyzed low-wage work as a political issue. The rising mentions of low-wage related issues by left-wing parties in the last three decades and even more strongly in the last few years could lead to multiple interesting research avenues to better understand the evolution of welfare states and left-wing parties. For example, the political preferences and behaviors of low-wage workers are still largely unknown and the multiple policies directly targeted to low-wage workers such as minimum wage and in-work benefits are rarely analyzed in broader studies on welfare state regimes.

APPENDIX

For Table 3.A1, we are interested in the variation of low-wage work issues and mentions related to welfare expansion through time, fixed-effects for political parties are thus included. The effects displayed in Table 3.A1 should thus be interpreted as within-party effect – i.e., the effect of mentions related to welfare expansion on the number of mentions of the issue of low-wage work within parties.

Table 3.A1: Mentions of low-wage work related issues in left parties manifestos

	(1)
	Welfare expansion
Welfare expansion	0.02 (0.01)**
Government	0.07 (0.09)
Constant	-0.46 (0.21)**
Observations	479
Political parties	110
R^2	0.464

Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Regression models with election fixed effects

Table 3.B1: Mentions of low-wage work related issues in electoral manifestos

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Minimum wage	Decent wage	Low-wage	Negative mentions
Left parties	0.13 (0.03)***	0.04 (0.01)***	0.05 (0.02)***	-0.01 (0.01)**
Government	-0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)
Constant	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.08 (0.09)	0.00 (0.00)
Observations	1012	1012	1012	1012
R^2	0.255	0.197	0.233	0.158

Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Regression models with election fixed effects

Table 3.C1: Mentions of low-wage work related issues in electoral manifestos

(1)	
Corporatism with 5 values	
Left parties	0.49 (0.10)***
Corporatism 2 × Left parties	-0.31 (0.18)*
Corporatism 3 × Left parties	-0.24 (0.14)*
Corporatism 4 × Left parties	-0.33 (0.11)***
Corporatism 5 × Left parties	-0.43 (0.11)***
Government	0.01 (0.03)
Constant	0.05 (0.07)
Observations	1012
Elections	145
R^2	0.300

Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Regression models with election fixed effects

In Table 3.D1, the models are similar to the one presented in Table 3.2, but use multilevel regression instead of fixed effects. Since, these models does not control for variables related to countries and time period variables for the electoral system, unemployment (AMECO, 2020), inflation (OECD, 2020) and real gdp growth (OECD, 2020) are included. The results are similar to the ones presented in Table 3.2, though the effect of radical left parties becomes stastically significant.

Table 3.D1: Mentions of low-wage work related issues in electoral manifestos (Multilevel model)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Left party	Left parties	Low-wage	Minimum wage	Right parties	Corpo. X Left
Left parties	0.25 (0.03)***					0.37 (0.04)***
Corpo. × Left						-0.24 (0.05)***
Radical left		0.16 (0.06)***	0.11 (0.02)***	0.01 (0.04)		
Ecologist		-0.13 (0.06)**	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.08 (0.04)*		
Right parties		-0.24 (0.04)***	-0.05 (0.02)***	-0.15 (0.03)***		
Other		-0.05 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.04)		
Christian dem.					0.08 (0.07)	
Radical right					0.04 (0.07)	
Liberal					-0.00 (0.06)	
Agrarian					-0.06 (0.10)	
Left parties					0.28 (0.05)***	
Other					0.21 (0.06)***	
Government	-0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)
Proportional	-0.15 (0.05)***	-0.17 (0.05)***	-0.06 (0.02)***	-0.07 (0.03)**	-0.18 (0.05)***	-0.08 (0.05)
Unemployment	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)*	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)*	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)
GDP growth	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Inflation	-0.03 (0.01)**	-0.03 (0.01)***	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)*	-0.03 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.01)**
Constant	0.29 (0.07)***	0.59 (0.08)***	0.13 (0.03)***	0.35 (0.05)***	0.32 (0.08)***	0.25 (0.01)***
lns1_1_1 constant	-1.97 (0.16)***	-1.90 (0.15)***	-2.98 (0.19)***	-2.33 (0.16)***	-1.95 (0.16)***	-2.12 (0.20)***
lnsig_e constant	-0.77 (0.02)***	-0.78 (0.02)***	-1.69 (0.02)***	-1.12 (0.02)***	-0.77 (0.02)***	-0.77 (0.02)***
Observations	1012	1012	1012	1012	1012	1012
Elections	145	145	145	145	145	145

Standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Multilevel regression models

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A new focus for left-Wing Parties: The salience of low-Wage work In the electoral manifestos of OECD countries

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Abstract

The recent mobilization by Living wage movements and unions to raise minimum wages have put the issue of low-wage work at the center of political debates in several countries. To study the position of political parties on this issue, we use electoral manifestos from 18 western democracies from 1990 to 2019. The results show that left-wing parties mention much more often the issue of low-wage work than right-wing parties, especially in countries with a weak degree of corporatism. The different categories of respectively left- and right-wing parties are quite similar in their mentions of low-wage work issues. However, ecologist parties mention low-wage work issues less often than other left parties and radical left parties tend to make broad criticisms of low-wage work more often than center-left parties.



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Chapter 4 Bucking the Trend: How Corporatism Influences the Vote of Low-wage Workers for Left-wing Parties in the Context of Class Realignment¹⁶

In advanced democracies, political dynamics have long been analyzed in terms of social classes (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Korpi, 1983). According to this perspective, politics is conceptualized as a conflict between political parties representing the economic interests of different groups in society. For instance, production workers have tended to support left-wing parties favorable to unions, a better redistribution of income and better working conditions (Stephens, 1979; Esping-Andersen, 1990). Historically, the vote of production workers for left-wing parties has been the strongest in Nordic countries where unions are powerful and the collective bargaining system is strong (Knutsen, 2006). The decline of political mobilization based on unions and the rise of new radical parties have, however, weakened the association between the working class and left-wing parties (Nieuwbeerta, 1995; Knutsen, 2006; 2018).

At the same time, a new form of mobilization to improve workers' conditions has emerged in countries with weak collective bargaining systems. Indeed, Living Wage movements regrouping low-wage workers, unions and community associations have succeeded in putting the issue of low-wage at the center of political debates in several countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom (Figart, 2004; Wilson, 2017). Low-wage workers are especially vulnerable in countries with a low degree of corporatism as they are rarely protected by collective bargaining negotiated by unions. They are thus highly dependent on government policies promoted by left-wing parties

¹⁶ Article submitted to the *Political Behavior*. See appendix F for proof of submission.

such as minimum wages, direct cash transfers and minimum employment standards to improve their working conditions (Lohmann and Marx, 2018; Zuberi, 2006).

The concept of low-wage workers originated first in sociology and economics to study the rise of a large low-skilled service sector with poor working conditions and few possibilities of advancement or upskilling (see for example Munger, 2002; Lucifora and al., 2005; Bosch and Gautié, 2011; Grimshaw, 2011). Surprisingly, however, few studies have analyzed the voting behaviors of this growing group of workers representing between 10-25 % of the workforce (OECD, 2018). Studies have shown that they are more prone to abstain from voting like other economically disadvantage citizens (Emmeneger and al., 2015; Schraff, 2019; Marinova, 2022) and one study has shown that disadvantaged workers (which include low-wage workers) tend to vote for pro-redistribution and protest parties in the Netherlands (Emmeneger and al., 2015). Furthermore, we do not know how low-wage workers fit in the realignment of class cleavages observed in recent years. I believe that the rising salience of issues related to low-wages in countries with low corporatism create a different political dynamic for low-wage workers that cannot be explained by the recent models of class realignment.

This paper fills this gap in the literature by examining how labor market institutions influence the voting behavior of low-wage workers in advanced democracies. In particular, I predict that low-wage workers are more likely to support left-wing parties that generally put forward policies aimed at reducing inequalities in the labor market in countries with a low degree of corporatism. Indeed, in those countries, left-wing parties have greater incentives to politicize issues of wage regulations, and to propose policies addressing labor inequalities and precarious working conditions that favor

low-wage workers. This is much less likely under corporatist systems with a strong collective bargaining process that tends to create higher wage floors and where unions are opposed to government intervention in wage fixing (Mabbett, 2016; Meyer, 2016). I also predict that labor market institutions also have an impact on the vote of low-wage workers for radical parties. As left parties do not tend to address the issue of low-wage work through specific policies in countries with a high degree of corporatism, this creates an opening for radical left and right parties that propose a radical change of the economic system, appeal to the social values of low-wage workers and criticize the negative impact of globalization.

To test these expectations, data from the International Social Survey Programme from 1999 to 2019 in 19 advanced democracies are used. Overall, the results confirm the main expectations. They show that being a low-wage worker increases the likelihood of voting for left-wing parties. Furthermore, the likelihood of low-wage workers voting for left-wing parties is particularly higher in countries where the collective bargaining process is weak. As for the likelihood of low-wage workers voting for radical left and right parties, it is higher in countries where the collective bargaining process is strong. The results are important because they reveal a new connection between left-wing and radical political parties, a growing socio-economic group and labor market institutions in the context of a decline in class voting.

The Decline of Class Voting

The social cleavage theory of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) explains the creation of partisan systems by social divisions at key moments in history, such as the class cleavage resulting from the Industrial Revolution. Alford's study (1963) showed that production workers tended to vote for

left-wing parties, while managers, professionals and clerks tended to vote for right-wing parties in Anglo-Saxon countries during the middle of the twentieth century. This cleavage resulted from the imbalance in the capacity to negotiate good working conditions (Korpi, 1983). White-collar workers had more power to negotiate good wages either by themselves or through professional groups because of their specialized skills or their hierarchical position. Production workers, however, were generally unskilled and thus had to gather in large industrial unions to reduce the asymmetry of powers with employers and to create social democratic' parties to improve labor legislation and public social protection (Stephens, 1979; Korpi, 1983). In addition, when unions and left-wing parties were strong, they often created neo-corporatist institutions and arrangements to facilitate centralized bargaining between unions and businesses. The vote of production workers for left-wing parties has thus been the strongest in Nordic countries where the union density is high, collective bargaining is strong and where the level of inequality is lower (Knutsen, 2006).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, however, several studies have shown that the vote of production workers for left-wing parties has declined significantly (Nieuwbeerta, 1995; Knutsen, 2006). Some authors point to a general decline of political cleavages based on sociodemographic characteristics due to the weakening of voters' identification with parties and the growing importance of other factors in voting behaviors such as candidates or leaders' evaluations, as well as campaign issues (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002; Dassonneville 2011). Others argue that class voting has evolved due to the emergence of new cleavages based on globalization and on labor market dualization. First, radical right parties have succeeded in attracting the vote of production workers by putting forward issues related to globalization such as immigration, international trade and European integration (Kriesi and al., 2006). As for left-wing parties, they have become more popular among

middle-class voters that have more libertarian/cosmopolitan views (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014; Oesch and Rennwal, 2018). Disadvantaged workers also tend to have lower trust and confidence in the capacity of political parties to respond to their interests (Emmenegger and al., 2015; Schraff, 2019), which can favor radical parties that criticize the political and economic system.

Another strand of studies postulates that labor market dualization has fragmented the working class in two groups with conflicting interests (King and Rueda, 2008). Insiders are fully integrated in the labor market and are favorable to better employment protection, while the outsiders (unemployed, workers with temporary contracts and part-time workers) want better access to full-time permanent jobs (King and Rueda, 2008). The voting patterns of insiders/outsideers for left- or right parties, however, seem to vary in function of the definition and specific categories of insiders/outsideers (Corbetta and Colloca, 2013; Marx and Picot, 2013; Marx, 2014). The nature of the divide between insider/outsideer should also vary in function of the institutional characteristics of the labor-market institutions. Indeed, in countries with weak employment protection and low unemployment such as the United States and the United Kingdom, a divide based on employment protection could be much less salient. Moreover, the lack of strong collective bargaining process in those countries creates a big gap in terms of wages and working conditions between workers who are able to negotiate good working conditions and workers who rely on minimum working standards fixed by governments (Esping-Andersen, 1993).

This divide based on wages has been much less studied in electoral studies than the one based on employment status despite its importance in countries with a weak bargaining process. Those workers employed mainly in the service sector are highly dependent on public policy supported

by left-wing parties, such as minimum wages, to improve their working conditions and thus have major incentives to support left-wing parties in countries with a weak bargaining system.

Low-Wage Workers

Many studies in sociology and economics have considered the growing importance of low-wage workers. Economic studies have shown that low-wage work is increasing in numerous countries and that, apart from students, they rarely transition to better paid employment (Grimshaw, 2011; Schnabel, 2016; Abel and al., 2018). In sociology, studies have mostly analyzed the living conditions of low-wage workers defined not only by low-pay, but also by alienation through repetitive work and by a sense of insecurity related to non-standard employment (Munger, 2002; Zuberi, 2006). These studies have also shown that low-wage workers mobilize to improve their living conditions through a wide range of associations and groups, including ethnic associations, to create large grass-root coalitions pushing for change instead of relying mainly on formal unions (O'Brien, 2008). Importantly, as indicated in the introduction, few studies in political science have studied low-wage workers and considered the voting behaviors of low-wage workers.

This article focuses on the emergence and characteristics of this new categorization of workers and show that they are different from other established groups of workers. In the post-war era, the mobilization of workers through large industrial unions (Esping-Andersen, 1990) combined with the massive increase of productivity in the industrial sector (Appelbaum and Schettkat, 1995; Iversen and Wren, 1998) led to significant wage increases and a general improvement of working conditions for production workers. However, this rising productivity also led to fewer jobs and employment in the industrial sector has been declining since the mid-1970s (Cirillo, 2018). The

high unemployment rates and the influence of neoliberalism prompted governments to deregulate labor markets, which has contributed to the creation of unskilled low-wage jobs in the service sector, especially in countries with a weak collective bargaining system (Iversen and Wren, 1998; Oesch and Rodrigues Menes, 2011; Wilson, 2017). Contrary to jobs in the industrial sector that generally offer intermediate wages to unskilled workers, service sector jobs tend to be low-paid because of lower productivity growth and weaker unions (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Appelbaum and Schettkat, 1995). Low-paying jobs are now mostly concentrated in the retail sector, the hospitality industry and some low productivity manufacturing sectors such as food processing and textiles. Those low-paid jobs are more likely to be temporary or part-time and generally do not offer access to occupational social protection (Grimshaw, 2011). These changes have thus created a large category of low-wage workers unable to negotiate good working conditions and unable to find better employment. Indeed, few low-wage workers transition to better paid jobs (Grimshaw, 2011; Schnabel, 2016; Abel and al., 2018), because jobs in the retail and hospitality sectors offer few possibilities of advancement or upskilling. Moreover, the socio-economic situation of workers in those sectors limits their capacity to train or search better jobs (Munger, 2002).

Expectations

Low-wage workers are defined by a common socio-economic situation. We do not know, however, if it leads to distinct political and electoral behaviors. As they constitute an important share of the electorate (around 20% of workers and 10% of the electorate depending on the countries), they can have an important influence on electoral outcomes.¹⁷

¹⁷ Studies have shown that low-wage workers vote less than other electors (Emmenneger and al., 2015; Schraff, 2019; Marinova, 2022). 85% of ISSP respondents in selected countries said they voted in the last election, compared to 80% of the low-wage workers respondents which means that they can still have a significant impact on the results.

Contrary to production workers, low-wage workers are, in most countries, rarely unionized or covered by collective bargaining. However, low-wage workers are often dependent on governmental social protection to ensure decent wages and living conditions. Studies have shown the important impact that policy such as minimum wages, labor standards, child care and housing can have on the life of workers with low paying jobs (Lohmann and Marx, 2018; Zuberi, 2006). According to the literature on attitudes towards redistribution, groups who directly benefit from social programs, like the unemployed, tend to be more favorable to government intervention to reduce inequalities (Linos and West, 2003; Svallfors, 2004; Jæger, 2006; Blekesaune, 2007). Unlike recipients of unemployment insurance, low-wage workers earn most of their income from their wages, not from social transfers. However, this does not seem to have a negative impact on their attitudes towards redistribution, according to a recent study which shows that the working poor and the non-working poor have similar favorable view of redistribution (Levanon, 2018).

Also, in the past decades, multiple Living Wage movements were formed to promote better policies and better working conditions for low-wage workers in, among others, the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand (Reynolds and Kern, 2001; Bunyan, 2016; Parker and al., 2016). Low-wage workers have participated in those movements notably in campaigns to unionize low-paid sectors (Boris and Klein, 2006; Wills, 2008; Prowse and Fells, 2016) and in large protests such as the fast-food workers strikes in the United States. Even if this mobilization is still limited, low wages have become an important issue in the political debates of numerous countries following those campaigns (Figart, 2004; Wilson, 2017). Indeed, several left-wing governments have adopted or increased the minimum wage in recent years, especially in countries with weak or weakening collective bargaining system (Meyer, 2016; Wilson, 2017). These movements even led

left-wing parties in some countries, like New Zealand and the United Kingdom, to pledge in their electoral manifestos to strengthen and institutionalize sectoral collective bargaining to limit low pay (NZ Labour, 2017; UK Labour, 2019). Also, several governments have introduced or improved cash transfers/tax credits directly targeted to low-income workers like the EITC in the United States (Ferrarini and al., 2013).

The class voting literature postulates that economically disadvantaged workers tend to vote for left-wing parties, because they are more favorable to redistribution and to labor market regulation (Emmenegger and al., 2015). I postulate a similar relationship between low-wage workers, support for redistribution and labor market regulation and the vote for left-wing parties. Studying low-wage workers allows us to specifically determine if workers struggling to negotiate good wages are still voting for left-wing parties despite the evolution of the labor market. I thus propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Low-wage workers are more likely to vote for left-wing parties than other electors.

Although I believe the relationship between low-wage workers and left-wing parties prevails in general, I postulate that this connection is influenced by the structure of industrial relations, particularly the presence or absence of corporatist structures. Low-wage workers do not receive the same type of protection in different varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice, 2001). This institutional setting, therefore, influences 1) the incentives of left-wing parties to mobilize low-wage workers, and 2) the support of low-wage workers for left-wing parties. Numerous studies have shown that the level of wage inequality is higher and low-wage workers are more numerous

when corporatism is weak (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Oesch, 2006; Bosch and Gaudié, 2011). More importantly, low-wage workers are much more dependent on governments' interventions in countries with weak corporatism as they are rarely protected by collective bargaining that guarantee minimum wages, minimum working conditions and occupational social protection such as old-age pension and sick pay (Visser, 2016).¹⁸ Consequently, the mobilization of low-wage workers through Living wage movement has been stronger in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and the United States (Reynolds and Kern, 2001; Bunyan, 2016; Parker and al., 2016) and governments in those countries have adopted policies specifically targeted at low-wage workers to improve their living standards such as minimum wage and cash transfers to low-income workers. Studies have even shown that left-wing parties are more likely to raise the minimum wage than right-wing parties in countries with a weak degree of corporatism, but not in countries with a high-level degree of corporatism (Rueda, 2008). On the other hand, the relation between low-wage workers and left-wing parties should be weaker in countries with a high degree of corporatism such as Sweden, because social partners negotiate sectoral wage floors without direct interventions by the government, thus diminishing the electoral incentives associated with promoting such policies for left-wing parties. Indeed, most countries with a high degree of corporatism do not have a national minimum wage, in part because unions prefer to negotiate wage floors directly with employers when the collective bargaining process is strong (Mabbett, 2016; Meyer, 2016) and none have introduced cash transfers directly targeted to low-income workers.¹⁹ Also, in countries with strong bargaining system, low-wage workers tend to be younger and are

¹⁸ Corporatism is strongly correlated with a high level of collective bargaining coverage. Indeed, in high corporatist countries the average coverage of collective bargaining is 79%, while it is only 48% in low corporatist countries (Visser and al, 2016).

¹⁹ However, when the capacity of the collective bargaining system to impose effective wage floors weakens, unions tend to change their position and support the introduction of a national minimum wage like in Germany.

more susceptible to transition to better paid jobs which probably reduces the importance of low-wage issues in their electoral choices (Mason and Salverda, 2010; Schnabel, 2016). Consequently, I postulate, that low-wage workers should vote more for left-wing parties when corporatism is weak²⁰:

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between low-wage workers and support for left-wing parties is greater when the level of corporatism is low than high.

Furthermore, I believe the institutional setting also influences the level of support of low-wage workers for radical parties. Low-wage workers tend to have less confidence in the political system and the capacity of political parties to be responsive to their interests (Emmenegger and al., 2015; Schraff, 2019). This can lead low-wage workers to support protest parties such as radical left and radical right parties and ideologies (Visser and al., 2014; Emmenegger and al., 2015). The different ways in which left parties address the issue of low-wage work in countries with a low and high degree of corporatism could influence the popularity of radical parties among low-wage workers. When corporatism is low, left parties tend to send clear signals to low-wage workers that they can improve their living conditions through targeted policies such as minimum wages and direct cash transfers. Left parties should thus be able to mobilize the support of low-wage workers by showing that they can be responsive to their interest. Therefore, low-wage workers should tend to vote more

²⁰ It is important to note that corporatism is strongly correlated with two variables often used in political analyses: inequality and welfare regimes (the correlation coefficient between the gini index for disposable income (OECD, 2020) and corporatism equals -0.77, while the correlation coefficient with the welfare regime equals 0.77). Considering the high correlation between these variables it is difficult to distinguish the specific impact of corporatism from the impact of inequality and welfare regime. I consider that corporatism is the most adequate variable to study to analyze the behavior of low-wage workers for two reasons 1) the theoretical explanation is more explicit for corporatism as it can be linked to both the protection of low-wage workers on the labor market and the policies put in place by governments 2) the level of corporatism can explain both the emergence of different welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990) and the level of inequality (Wallerstein, 1999).

for left parties. On the other hand, when corporatism is high, left parties do not propose specific policies targeted to low-wage workers, which creates an opening for radical parties. The lack of political debates around the issue of low-wage work could influence low-wage workers to opt for a protest vote against the economic system and the political elites. Radical left parties can attract low-wage workers since, even if they do not propose targeted policies towards low-wage workers, they seek to change the economic system that led to low-wage work. In addition, the lack of mobilization along an economic axis by center-left parties could lead low-wage workers to vote in function of social issues such as immigration that could favor radical right parties.

Hypothesis 3: Low-wage workers are more likely to vote for radical left and radical right parties compared to other parties only when the level of corporatism is high.

Methodology

Data

To analyze the relation between low-wage workers and left-wing parties, we need data that identify whether an individual is a low-wage worker and the party they supported at the most recent election. Few datasets allow us to calculate individual earnings which is necessary to identify low-wage workers. For these reasons, I use survey data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP).²¹ The series on the role of government and social inequalities have variables on socio-economic characteristics of respondents and on their voting intention. The latest waves of surveys (1999, 2006, 2009, 2016 and 2019)²² are used. Nineteen industrialized countries for

²¹ CSES databases, for example, only include household income.

²² The older waves of surveys have less countries available, especially few countries with a high degree of corporatism and control variables are missing in some cases.

which ISSP data is available have been selected: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. The sample thus consists of 26853 individuals across 58 country-year pairs. The list of country-year pairs included in the analysis is in the appendix (Table 4.A2). Countries recently democratized such as eastern European countries have also been excluded.²³

Classification of Electoral Choices

Studies on class voting generally classify electoral choices whether based on a left-right dichotomy or a classification associated with the main party families (i.e. Social Democrats, Greens, Christian Democrats, Radical right, etc.). This article uses a mix of both approaches. First, as the first two hypotheses pertain mostly to support for left-wing parties, a left-right dichotomous variable as dependent variable is used. Several recent studies on the evolution of left-wing parties' electorates also used this empirical strategy (Waal and al., 2007; Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015; Gingrich, 2017). To classify left-wing parties, the left-right indicator of the *Parliaments and governments database* is used. This database (Döring and Manow, 2018) offers a left-right indicator created from different experts' survey such as Chapel Hill Expert Survey. Political parties that have a value of less than 5 on the 0 to 10 scale are considered left-wing parties. The list of parties classified as left-wing is presented in the appendix (Table 4.A2). To test the third hypothesis, I use categories of political parties for left, right, radical (left and right) parties as defined in the *Parliaments and governments database* (Döring and Manow, 2018). Radical right-wing populist parties are the

²³ I decided not to use European database like the European Social Survey, because I wanted to include non-European countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States which have a low degree of corporatism and strong Living Wage movements.

parties included in the ISSP surveys that are considered as right-wing by the *Parliaments and governments database* (Döring and Manow, 2018), plus the SVP in Switzerland and True Finns in Finland as those parties change their ideology over time and recent studies classified those parties as radical right-wing (Oesch, 2008; Nordensvard and Ketola, 2015). Radical left-wing parties are the parties included in the ISSP surveys that are considered as communist/socialist by the *Parliaments and governments database*. Left parties regroup social-democrats, ecologist parties and other parties that are classified as left parties according to the dichotomous indicator based on expert surveys minus the radical left parties. Right parties regroup liberal, conservative, Christian democrats and other parties that are classified right-wing by the dichotomous indicator minus radical right parties.

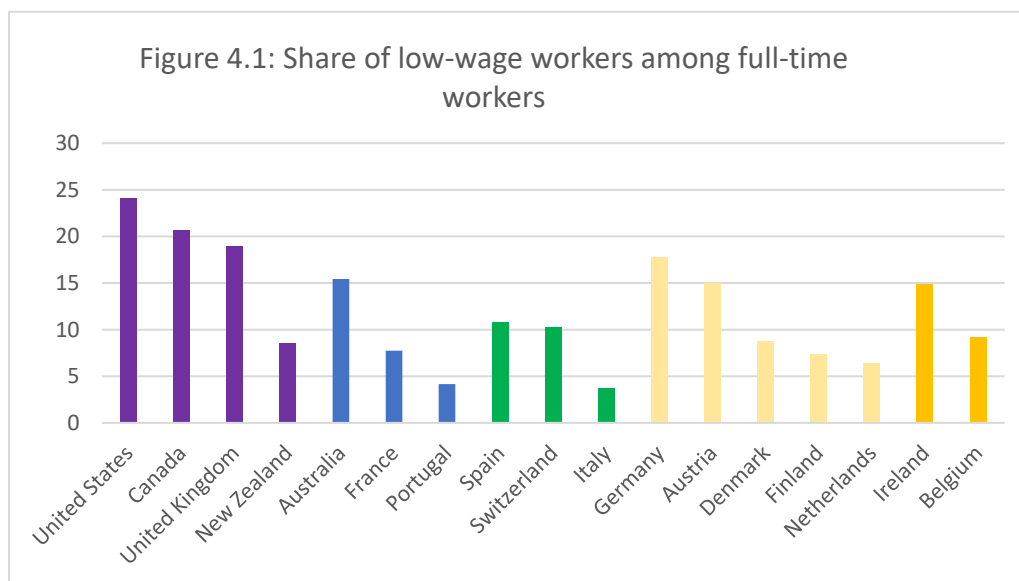
Classification of Low-Wage Workers

The main independent variable, being a low-wage worker, is based on the definition of low-pay used by the OECD and most researchers that study low-pay and low-wage workers (Lucifora and al., 2005; Schnabel, 2016; OECD, 2018). Low-wage workers are workers earning less than two thirds of the median earnings of full-time workers. The indicator is thus based on individual earnings and employment status, while most studies that use an income variable use measures derived from the household income.²⁴ Earnings are measured as the personal annual net earnings of workers. In all the models, only workers are included²⁵, because the objective is to compare the

²⁴ Recent studies, especially in the United States, have shown that income still has an important impact on the vote of electors despite the decline of class voting (Waal and al., 2007; Bartels, 2008; Gelman, 2009; Brady and al., 2009). However, the relationship between income and the vote could be strongly influenced by high-paid citizens like business owners and managers who, according to the class voting literature, are more likely to vote for right-wing parties (Oesch, 2006; Knutsen, 2006; 2018) and by non-working citizens with low incomes.

²⁵ Respondents are considered workers in this analysis when they consider full-time or part-time work as their main source of living and work at least 10 hours a week on average. Self-employed workers are included.

electoral behavior of low-wage workers compared to workers with higher wages.²⁶ In Figure 4.1 below, the share of low-wage workers among full-time workers in 2018 by degree of corporatism is shown (OECD, 2018).²⁷



Corporatism

To measure corporatism, the indicator for coordination of wage-setting available through the *Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts* database is used (Visser, 2016). Wage-setting coordination between social partners is necessary to impose wage floors across different industries. It is thus directly related to the regulation of low wages in the labor markets. This indicator also has the advantage of being available for a large number of countries and years (Kenworthy, 2003). I transform the indicator for coordination of wage-setting which has 5 different values, into a dichotomous variable, because otherwise there

²⁶ This methodological choice has been used before (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). Though some work on class voting extrapolates social class based on previous work or the occupation of another member of the household which is impossible for wages in the ISSP data (Knutsen, 2006; Oesch, 2008).

²⁷ Each color represents one degree of corporatism in a scale of 1 (countries more to the left of the graph) to 5 (countries more to the right) see the corporatism indicator in the next section. Data for Norway and Sweden are not available. Data for Switzerland are for 2016 instead of 2018.

would not be enough countries in each category.²⁸ Countries with a low degree of corporatism have either no coordination in wage-fixing or weak guidelines at the national level (Australia, Canada, France, Italy, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States). Countries with a high degree of corporatism have a collective bargaining system that leads to national standards in wage-setting (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland²⁹, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden).

Control Variables

To decide what variables needed to be controlled for in the next analyses, I follow the logic of the block-recursive model of voting behaviors (Miller and Shanks, 1996; Blais and al. 2002). In particular, this model assumes that sociodemographic characteristics represent the first block of factors – the more remote/distant in terms of causal sequence – influencing vote choice. Since low-wage workers are defined by their sociodemographic attributes, we only need to control for other sociodemographic variables. Importantly, we do not need to account for other variables that are more "proximate" to the vote in terms of causal sequence. For example, there is no control for party identification in the next analyses because sociodemographic characteristics might influence one's party identification but the opposite is not possible. In terms of sociodemographic controls, I include dichotomous control variables for gender, union membership, public/private employment, part-time work³⁰, and self-employment and continuous variables for age and education³¹ in years.

²⁸ Countries with a value of 1, 2 or 3 are considered low corporatism countries, countries with a value of 4 and 5 are considered high corporatism countries. There is a model with an interaction between low-wage workers and the five categories of corporatism in the appendix at Table 4.D1.

²⁹ Ireland is considered a corporatist country, because between 1987 and 2009 unions, business associations and governments negotiated social pacts that fix national standards in wage-setting (Teague and Donaghey, 2015).

³⁰ Part-time workers are respondents who consider paid work as their main source of living and work between 10 and 30 hours a week on average.

³¹ Age and years of education are divided by 10 to make sure the coefficients are visible in the result tables.

Women and young people tend to be overrepresented among low-wage workers (Lucifora and al., 2005; Bosch and Gautié, 2011) and are more likely to vote for left-wing parties (Knutsen, 2018). Workers with high levels of education, union members and public sector employees are underrepresented among low-wage workers (Lucifora and al., 2005; Grimshaw, 2011; Schnabel, 2016), but more likely to vote for left-wing parties (Kitschelt, 2004; Knutsen, 2006; Waal and al. 2007). Part-time and self-employed work are correlated to low-wage work (Lucifora and al., 2005; McKnight and al., 2016) though their voting patterns differ. Self-employed workers tend to vote for right-wing parties (Oesch and Rennwal, 2018), while part-time workers tend to vote less for traditional left-wing parties and more for “new left” parties (Marx and Picot, 2013).

Models

To analyze the impact of being a low-wage worker on the likelihood of voting for a left-wing party, I use logistic regression models. In a second step, I use multinomial regression to analyze the impact of being a low-wage work on the likelihood of voting for radical parties. To account for the cross-national structure of the data where voters are clustered within countries and survey years, country-year fixed effects and associated clustered standard errors are included. The effects displayed in the next tables should thus be interpreted as within-country effect – i.e., the average effect of being a low-wage worker on the likelihood of voting for a left-wing party within a country-year. The use of fixed-effects controls for all time-invariant variables at the country-level (e.g., party systems, electoral systems, economic conditions, etc.). In Table 4.B1 of the appendix shows that the results are substantively the same when using multilevel logistic regression. Table

4.E1 of the appendix also shows that the results do not vary significantly through time by testing a model that adds an interaction with the year of the survey.³²

Results

In the first column of Table 4.1, the effect of being a low-wage worker (LWW) on the likelihood of voting for a left-wing party is presented with all the control variables. It is the average marginal effect on the likelihood of voting for a left-wing party of every variable that is shown (full results with coefficients from the logistic regression are displayed in the appendix at Table 4.C1).

Table 4.1: The vote of low-wage workers for left-wing parties

	(1) Base model	(2) Corporatism
Low-wage worker	0.07 (0.01)***	0.09 (0.01)***
Corporatism x LWW		-0.04 (0.02)**
Self-employed	-0.10 (0.01)***	-0.10 (0.01)***
Part-time	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Unionized	0.13 (0.01)***	0.13 (0.01)***
Education (years)	0.04 (0.02)**	0.04 (0.02)**
Woman	0.04 (0.01)***	0.04 (0.01)***
Public sector	0.09 (0.01)***	0.09 (0.01)***
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Observations	26853	26853
Countries	19	19
Country-year pairs	59	59
Log Pseudolikelihood	-17661.145	-17658.351

Average marginal effects. Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Logistic models with fixed effects

The first row of Table 4.1 shows that the average effect of being a low-wage worker is positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level across countries. This indicates that low-wage workers tend to vote more for left-wing parties than other electors as expected in the first hypothesis. In

³² It is important to look at this relationship through time as the impact of economic characteristics on electoral behaviors (especially social class) have declined in the last decades.

substantive terms, being a low-wage worker increases one's likelihood of voting for a left-wing party by 7 percentage points. The effects of the other control variables linked to respondents' socio-economic situation are also significant. Self-employed workers are less likely to vote for left-wing parties, while unionized, public sector workers, women, and educated voters are more likely to vote for left-wing parties.

In the second column, the results testing hypothesis 2 with respect to the voting behavior of low-wage workers in countries where the degree of corporatism is low and high, respectively are presented. Recall that we expect low-wage workers to have a positive and significant effect on the likelihood of voting for left-wing parties when there is a low degree of corporatism, but the effect to decrease in magnitude when corporatism is high. To test this expectation, I interact *corporatism* (a dummy variable) with the variable *low-wage workers*. Given that the model includes country-year fixed-effects, it is not possible to include the dummy variable *corporatism* in the model – only its interaction with *low-wage workers*. This does not amount to a model specification error, however, given that the country-year fixed-effects already capture the effect of corporatism (Andreass and al., 2013: chapter 3). Moreover, note that the results are substantively the same when the results are replicated with a multilevel regression model as indicated in Table 4.B1 of the appendix that controls for additional confounding factors at the country level.

The results in column 2 indicate that the interaction coefficient between corporatism and voting for left-wing parties is negative and significant as expected. The effect of low-wage workers under low corporatism is given directly by the effect of *low-wage workers* (0.09) which is positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that being a low-wage worker increases

one's likelihood of voting for a left-wing party by 9 percentage points in countries with a low degree of corporatism. On the other hand, the effect of low-wage workers under strong corporatism is given by the sum of the effect of *low-wage workers* (0.09) and *corporatism X LWW* (-0.04) which equals 0.05 – this effect is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, low-wage workers also tend to vote more for left-wing parties when the collective bargaining process is stronger but the magnitude of the effect (0.05) is smaller – as predicted – than under low corporatism (0.09). The interaction effect is similar when corporatism is measured as an ordinal variable as shown in Table 4.D1 in the appendix.

Radical (Left and Right) Parties

With respect to the third hypothesis, I analyze the effect of being a low-wage worker on the vote for radical (left and right) parties in countries with low and high corporatism. Two separate models one with a single category for both radical left and right parties (Table 4.2) and another one with both categories separately (Table 4.3) are presented.³³ With the first model we can analyze most observations together since several countries only have radical left parties, but no radical right parties (3470 respondents in 4 countries) or vice versa (3327 respondents in 3 countries). In Table 4.2, the results of the multinomial logistic regression with three outcomes: voting for a radical party, voting for a left-wing party³⁴ and voting for a right party³⁵ are presented. Each column presents the marginal effect of the independent variables on the probability of voting for a given party family.

³³ Only country-year pairs where at least one radical party are included in the ISSP database are used in these models (5073 respondents in 3 countries (Canada, New Zealand and the United States) are thus excluded).

³⁴ Include all non-radical left-wing parties such as social-democratic, ecologist and left-wing regionalist parties.

³⁵ Include all non-radical right-wing parties such as conservative, liberal and Christian democrat's parties.

Table 4.2: The vote of low-wage workers for radical parties (Corporatism)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Radical parties	Left parties	Right parties
Low-wage worker	0.02 (0.01)	0.05 (0.01)***	-0.07 (0.01)***
Corporatism x LWW	0.04 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)*	-0.01 (0.02)
Self-employed	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.09 (0.01)***	0.10 (0.02)***
Part-time	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Unionized	0.02 (0.01)**	0.09 (0.01)***	-0.11 (0.01)***
Education (years)	-0.08 (0.01)***	0.03 (0.02)	0.05 (0.02)***
Woman	-0.03 (0.01)***	0.05 (0.01)***	-0.01 (0.01)
Public sector	0.00 (0.01)	0.08 (0.01)***	-0.08 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)*
Observations	21780		
Countries	16		
Country-year pairs	47		
Log Pseudolikelihood	-20318.464		

Average marginal effects. Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Multinomial logistic model with fixed effects

Recall that we expect low-wage workers to have a significant effect on the likelihood of voting for a radical party when there is a high degree of corporatism, but decreases in magnitude when corporatism is low. The results in column 1 confirm the hypothesis and indicate that the interaction coefficient between corporatism and voting for radical wing parties is positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The effect of low-wage workers under low corporatism is given directly by the effect of *low-wage workers* (0.02) which is positive, but not statistically significant. On the other hand, the effect of low-wage workers under strong corporatism is given by the sum of the effect of *low-wage workers* (0.02) and *corporatism X LWW* (0.04) which equals 0.06 – this effect is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, low-wage workers do not tend to vote more for radical parties when the collective bargaining process is weaker, but when corporatism is strong, they tend to vote more for radical parties (0.06) as expected in hypothesis 3. The effect of the vote of left parties in this model is smaller (0.05) than the effect of left-wing parties presented in Table 4.1. This can be explained by the exclusion of a few low corporatist countries like the

United States and New Zealand that do not have radical parties and the fact that radical left parties are in the radical left category in Table 4.2 but were in the left category in Table 4.1. It is important to note that most of the countries missing are low corporatist countries, so the interaction with corporatism relies only on a few countries.³⁶ Table 4.3 shows a similar model, but with separate categories for radical left and right parties. This model separates the effect of low-wage workers on voting for radical left and right parties. The limit of this analysis, however, is that it only includes countries that have both a radical right and radical left parties, reducing therefore the number of respondents and countries analyzed.

Table 4.3: The vote of low-wage workers for radical left/right (Corporatism)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Radical Left parties	Left parties	Right parties	Radical Right parties
Low-wage worker	0.03 (0.01)***	0.07 (0.02)***	-0.10 (0.02)***	0.00 (0.01)
Corporatism x LWW	0.01 (0.01)	-0.06 (0.02)***	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)**
Self-employed	-0.03 (0.01)***	-0.09 (0.02)***	0.11 (0.02)***	0.01 (0.01)
Part-time	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.01)
Unionized	0.05 (0.01)***	0.06 (0.01)***	-0.09 (0.01)***	-0.02 (0.01)**
Education (years)	0.02 (0.01)**	0.06 (0.02)***	0.06 (0.02)***	-0.13 (0.02)***
Woman	0.00 (0.01)	0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.01)***	-0.04 (0.01)***
Public sector	0.02 (0.00)***	0.09 (0.01)***	-0.09 (0.01)***	-0.02 (0.01)***
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)***	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)***
Observations	14978			
Countries	11			
Country-year pairs	31			
Log Pseudolikelihood	-15896.941			

Average marginal effects. Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Multinomial logistic model with fixed effects

The results in column 1 indicate that the interaction coefficient between corporatism and voting for radical left-wing parties is positive, but not statistically significant. The effect of low-wage workers under low corporatism is given directly by the effect of *low-wage workers* (0.03) which

³⁶ Overall, 11 countries out of 19 and 31 elections out of 59 have both radical left and right parties. Three low corporatist countries are included (France, Italy, Switzerland) and 8 high corporatist countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden). Ireland, Portugal and Spain were excluded as they have radical left parties, but not radical right, as were Australia and United Kingdom as they have radical right parties, but no radical left.

is positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This means that low-wage workers tend to vote for left-wing parties in countries with weak and strong corporatism. The results in column 4 indicate that the interaction coefficient between corporatism and voting for radical right-wing parties is positive and statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The effect of low-wage workers under low corporatism given by the effect of *low-wage workers* is, however, not statistically significant. The effect of low-wage workers under strong corporatism is given by the sum of the effect of *low-wage workers* (0.00) and *corporatism X LWW* (0.03) which equals 0.03 – this effect is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. As in Table 4.2, low-wage workers do not tend to vote more for radical right parties when the collective bargaining process is weaker, but when corporatism is strong, they tend to vote more for radical right parties. Corporatism seems to have an impact mostly on the vote for radical right parties as low-wage workers vote for radical left parties both in countries with weak and strong corporatism. Finally, the results in column 2 also indicate that the impact of low-wage workers under low corporatism on the vote of left parties (*corporatism X LWW*) is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and decreases as expected (as observed in Table 4.1) under high corporatism. This thus confirms that the interaction effect we discovered in Table 4.2 is not the result of low-wage workers voting more for radical right parties in high corporatist countries. Also, the effect of low-wage workers on the vote for left-wing parties under high corporatism is not significant. This means that when corporatism is weak, low-wage workers tend to vote for left and radical left parties, but when corporatism is strong, they tend to vote for radical (left and right) parties.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our results indicate that low-wage workers tend to vote more for left-wing parties than for right-wing parties. Workers struggling to negotiate good wages and working conditions are thus still voting for left-wing parties despite the evolution of the labor market and changing values. More importantly the results show that the nature of economic cleavages varies according to the institutional characteristics of the labor market. The issue of fixing floor wages is indeed a partisan issue that divides left- and right-wing parties in countries with a low-degree of corporatism (Rueda, 2008). It mobilizes large coalitions of workers and organizations through Living wages movements, while in countries with a high level of corporatism, the issue of fixing floor wages is restricted to social partners. The clear voting pattern of low-wage workers in countries with a low degree of corporatism such as the United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand could explain why the minimum wage has been so central in the recent electoral campaigns of left-wing parties in these countries (Wilson, 2017). This political dynamic based on labor market institutions seems unique to low-wage workers and have not been observed for other economic variables such as social class or the insider/outsider dichotomy. Also, the emphasis on issues related to low-wage workers in countries with a low degree of corporatism seems to limit the vote of low-wage workers for radical right parties. These results are especially interesting as they show that labor market institutions and economic policies can influence the choice of disadvantaged workers for radical right parties.

APPENDIX A

Table 4.A1: List of countries-year included in the analysis

Countries	1999	2006	2009	2016	2019
Australia	x	x	x	x	
Austria	x		x		
Belgium			x	x	
Canada	x	x			
Denmark		x	x	x	x
Finland		x	x	x	x
France		x	x	x	
Germany		x	x	x	x
Ireland		x			
Italy			x		x
Netherlands		x			
New Zealand	x	x	x	x	x
Norway	x	x	x	x	
Portugal					
Spain	x	x	x	x	
Sweden	x	x	x	x	
Switzerland		x	x	x	x
U. Kingdom	x	x	x		
United States	x	x	x	x	

Table 4.A2: List of political parties classified as left-wing parties (radical left in bold)

Countries	Left-wing parties
Australia	Labor Party, Greens, Australian democrats, Katter's Australian Party
Austria	Social Democratic Party, Liberal Forum, Green Party, Communist Party
Belgium	Socialist Party, Socialist Party -- Different, Groen, Workers' Party of Belgium , Francophone Ecologists
Canada	New Democratic Party, Green Party, Quebec Bloc
Denmark	Social Democrats, Socialist Peoples Party, Social Liberal Party, Red-Green Alliance , The Alternative
Finland	Social Democratic Party, Left Alliance , Green League
France	Socialist Party, Left Front , Greens, French Communist Party
Germany	Social Democratic Party, Alliance 90 / Greens, Die Linke , Pirate Party
Ireland	Labour Party, Green, Sinn Fein
Italy	Italy of Values, Democratic Party, Federation of Left, Left and Liberty, Power to the People, Free and Equal
Netherlands	Labour Party, Democracy 66, Socialist Party , Green Left
New Zealand	Labour Party, Green Party, Alliance, Progressive Party, Maori Party, Mana Party
Norway	Labour Party, Centre Party, Socialist People's Party, Red Electoral Alliance , Green Party
Portugal	Socialist Party, Unified Democratic Coalition, Bloc of the Left
Spain	Socialist Workers Party, Podemos, United Left , Republican Left of Catalonia, Galician Nationalist Bloc, EH Bildu, En Marea
Sweden	Social Democrats, Left Party , Greens
Switzerland	Social Democratic Party, Christian Democratic Party, Party of Labour , Greens, Green Liberal Party, Protestant Party

United Kingdom	Labour, Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru
United States	Democratic Party

APPENDIX B

These models are similar to the one presented in Table 4.1, but use multilevel regression instead of fixed effects. Since, these models do not control for institutional variables, variables for the electoral system, the left-wing cabinet share of the government in place and the effective number of parties in the elections are included. The results are similar to the ones presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.B1: The vote of low-wage workers for left-wing parties (Multilevel)

	(1) Base model	(2) Corporatism
Low-wage worker	0.07 (0.01)***	0.08 (0.01)***
Corporatism x LWW		-0.04 (0.02)**
Self-employed	-0.10 (0.01)***	-0.10 (0.01)***
Part-time	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Unionized	0.13 (0.01)***	0.13 (0.01)***
Education (years)	0.03 (0.02)**	0.03 (0.02)*
Woman	0.04 (0.01)***	0.04 (0.01)***
Public sector	0.09 (0.01)***	0.09 (0.01)***
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Proportional	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)
Left government	0.10 (0.03)***	0.10 (0.03)***
Eff. N. parties	-0.02 (0.01)**	-0.02 (0.01)*
Country-year var(cons)	0.24(0.05)	0.24(0.05)
Observations	26853	26853
Countries	19	19
Country-year pairs	59	59
Log Pseudolikelihood	-17785.202	-17782.308

Average marginal effects. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Multilevel logistic models

3 additional variables have been included to control for political institutions:

proportional representation, the left-wing cabinet share (Döring and Manow, 2018)

the effective number of parties (Gallagher, 2019)

APPENDIX C

Tables 4.C1, 4.C2 and 4.C3 are similar to the ones presented in Table 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3; but with regression coefficients instead of marginal effects. In Table 4.C2 and 4.C3, left parties are used as the category of reference.

Table 4.C1: The vote of low-wage workers for left-wing parties (coefficients)

	(1)	(2)
	Base model	Corporatism
Low-wage worker	0.33 (0.04)***	0.38 (0.05)***
Corporatism x LWW		-0.16 (0.07)**
Self-employed	-0.45 (0.05)***	-0.45 (0.05)***
Part-time	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)
Unionized	0.58 (0.05)***	0.58 (0.05)***
Education (years)	0.16 (0.07)**	0.16 (0.07)**
Woman	0.19 (0.04)***	0.19 (0.04)***
Public sector	0.38 (0.05)***	0.39 (0.05)***
Age	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)
Constant	-0.19 (0.11)*	-0.18 (0.11)*
Observations	26853	26853
Countries	19	19
Country-year pairs	59	59
Log Pseudolikelihood	-17661.145	-17658.351

Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Logistic models with fixed effects

Table 4.C2: The vote of low-wage workers for radical parties (Base outcome: Left parties)

	(1)	(2)
	Radical parties	Right parties
Low-wage worker	0.02 (0.11)	-0.30 (0.07)***
Corporatism x LWW	0.42 (0.12)***	0.05 (0.08)
Self-employed	0.11 (0.08)	0.48 (0.06)***
Part-time	-0.04 (0.10)	0.05 (0.05)
Unionized	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.52 (0.06)***
Education (years)	-0.64 (0.14)***	0.05 (0.08)
Woman	-0.34 (0.06)***	-0.15 (0.05)***
Public sector	-0.18 (0.06)***	-0.41 (0.06)***
Age	-0.09 (0.03)***	0.01 (0.02)
Constant	-0.11 (0.22)	-0.70 (0.11)***
Observations	21780	
Countries	16	
Country-year pairs	47	
Log Pseudolikelihood	-20318.464	

Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Multinomial logistic model with fixed effects

Table 4.C3: The vote of low-wage workers for radical left/right parties (Base outcome: Left parties)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Radical Left parties	Right parties	Radical Right parties
Low-wage worker	0.32 (0.20)	-0.45 (0.09)***	-0.14 (0.14)
Corporatism x LWW	0.35 (0.21)*	0.20 (0.10)*	0.46 (0.17)***
Self-employed	-0.21 (0.15)	0.53 (0.09)***	0.31 (0.11)***
Part-time	-0.05 (0.16)	0.07 (0.07)	0.05 (0.11)
Unionized	0.57 (0.13)***	-0.43 (0.05)***	-0.34 (0.10)***
Education (years)	0.13 (0.17)	0.01 (0.08)	-1.49 (0.21)***
Woman	-0.14 (0.11)	-0.26 (0.05)***	-0.58 (0.08)***
Public sector	0.03 (0.08)	-0.47 (0.07)***	-0.42 (0.09)***
Age	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.02)*	-0.16 (0.03)***
Constant	-1.42 (0.28)***	0.92 (0.16)***	2.26 (0.36)***
Observations	14978		
Countries	11		
Country-year pairs	31		
Log Pseudolikelihood	-15896.941		

Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Multinomial logistic model with fixed effects

APPENDIX D

The model presented below uses the ordinal variable for corporatism with five categories instead of the dichotomous variable to analyze the interaction effect of low-wage workers with corporatism. The results show that the effect of low-wage workers is especially countries with a very weak degree of corporatism.

Table 4.D1: The vote of low-wage workers for left-wing parties (interaction with corporatism)

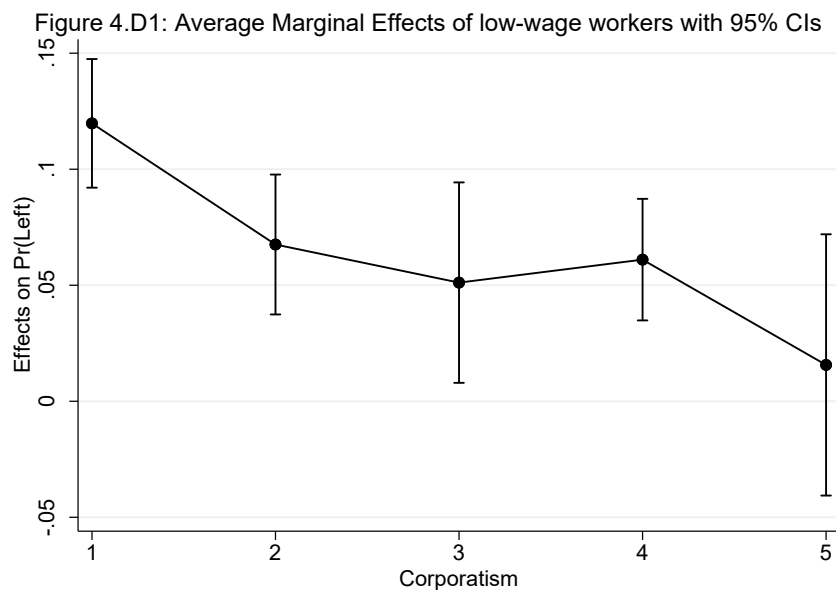
	(1)
	Corporatism
Low-wage worker	0.12 (0.01)***
Corporatism 2 X LWW	-0.05 (0.02)***
Corporatism 3 X LWW	-0.07 (0.03)***
Corporatism 4 X LWW	-0.06 (0.02)***
Corporatism 5 X LWW	-0.10 (0.03)***
Self-employed	-0.10 (0.01)***
Part-time	-0.01 (0.01)
Unionized	0.13 (0.01)***
Education (years)	0.04 (0.02)**
Woman	0.04 (0.01)***
Public sector	0.09 (0.01)***
Age	-0.00 (0.00)
Observations	26853
Countries	19
Country-year pairs	59
Log Pseudolikelihood	-17652.125

Average marginal effects.

Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Logistic models with fixed effects



APPENDIX E

This model introduces an interaction effect with the year to analyze if the vote of low-wage workers for left-wing parties has changed over time. The year has no significant influence.

Table 4.E1: The vote of low-wage workers for left-wing parties (interaction with time)

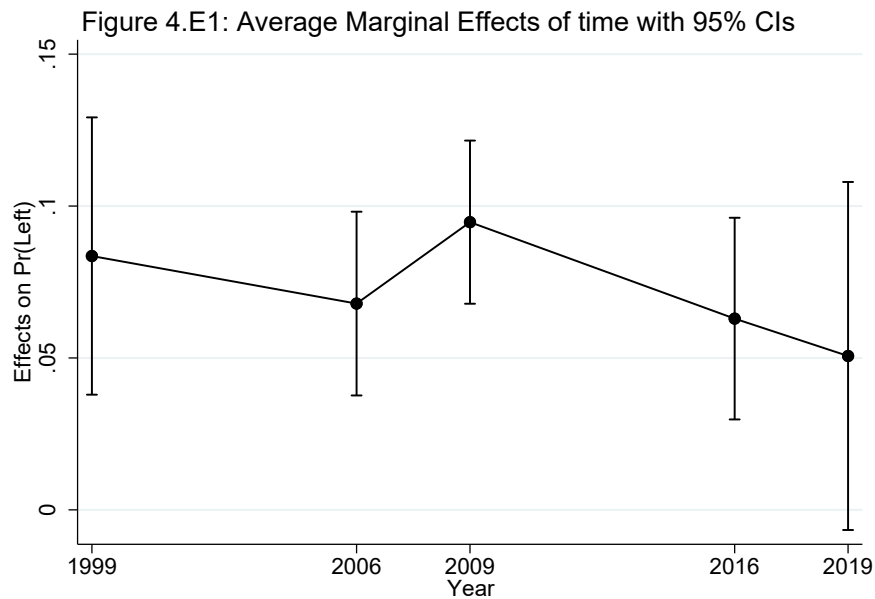
	(1) Year
Low-wage worker	0.08 (0.02)***
2006	-0.02 (0.03)
2009	0.01 (0.03)
2016	-0.02 (0.03)
2019	-0.03 (0.04)
Self-employed	-0.10 (0.01)***
Part-time	-0.01 (0.01)
Unionized	0.13 (0.01)***
Education (years)	0.04 (0.02)**
Woman	0.04 (0.01)***
Public sector	0.09 (0.01)***
Age	-0.00 (0.00)
Observations	26853
Countries	19
Country-year pairs	59
Log Pseudolikelihood	-17659.071

Average marginal effects.

Clustered robust standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Logistic models with fixed effects



APPENDIX F

Proof of submission to *Political Behavior*.

← Submissions Being Processed for Author

Page: 1 of 1 (1 total submissions)

Results per page 10

Action	Manuscript Number	Title	Initial Date Submitted	Current Status
Action Links	POBE-D-22-00281	Bucking the Trend: How Corporatism Influences the Vote of Low-wage Workers for Left-wing Parties in the Context of Class Realignment	23 Aug 2022	Submitted

Page: 1 of 1 (1 total submissions)

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Chapter 5 La politique du salaire minimum : le rôle des partis politiques dans les pays de l'OCDE (1960-2014)³⁷

Amorcée en 2013 par une série de manifestations et de grèves, la campagne pour l'augmentation du salaire minimum à 15\$ aux États-Unis a entraîné un débat politique animé entre le Parti démocrate et le Parti républicain (Luckerson, 2015 ; Wilson, 2017). La politisation du salaire minimum n'est cependant pas unique aux États-Unis. En Allemagne, l'adoption d'un salaire minimum constituait en 2013 une condition du parti social-démocrate pour participer à un gouvernement de coalition (Mabbett, 2016). Au Canada³⁸, en Corée du Sud (Min-ho, 2017), au Portugal (Bugge, 2017) et au Royaume-Uni (Rodionova, 2017), d'importantes augmentations du salaire minimum ont eu lieu ou ont été annoncées au cours des dernières années pour faire suite à des promesses électorales. Cette politisation n'est guère surprenante puisque l'enjeu du salaire minimum est lié à des débats plus généraux concernant la redistribution et la régulation de l'économie qui sont utilisées pour distinguer la gauche de la droite (Budge, 2013).

À ce jour, peu d'études ont toutefois abordé le lien entre la politique partisane et le salaire minimum, la littérature scientifique sur le salaire minimum ayant principalement porté sur l'impact du salaire minimum sur l'emploi et sur la pauvreté (Card et Krueger, 1994 ; Card et Krueger, 1995 ; Dolado et coll., 1996 ; Leonard et coll., 2014 ; Neumark et coll., 2014). Pourtant, la littérature sur l'influence de la politique partisane sur le développement de l'État-providence abonde, notamment

³⁷ Article previously published in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*: Durocher, Dominic. 2019. "La politique du salaire minimum: le rôle des partis politiques dans les pays de l'OCDE (1960–2014)". *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 52(2): 229-245. See Appendix D for proof of publication.

³⁸ Il n'y a pas de salaire minimum national au Canada, mais le gouvernement de l'Alberta a annoncé une augmentation du salaire minimum à 15\$ l'heure en 2015, suivi de la Colombie-Britannique et de l'Ontario en 2017 (Stewart, 2017).

grâce à l'apport des travaux liés à la théorie des ressources du pouvoir. Cette dernière démontre que la force des partis de gauche de même que leur capacité à former des alliances avec d'autres partis contribuent au développement d'États-providence qui redistribuent davantage (Stephens, 1979 ; Korpi, 1983 ; Esping-Andersen, 1985).

Quelques études américaines ont trouvé un lien entre l'affiliation partisane des législateurs (Kau et Rubin, 1978 ; Krehbiel et Rivers, 1988) et le vote en faveur d'une hausse du salaire minimum. Au Canada, trois études (Blais et coll., 1989 ; Dickson et Myatt, 2002 ; Green et Harrison, 2006) ont démontré que l'idéologie des gouvernements provinciaux influençait le niveau du salaire minimum. Toutefois, à notre connaissance, une seule étude quantitative porte sur l'influence de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur le salaire minimum dans un cadre international (Rueda, 2008). Elle confirme l'impact de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur la fluctuation du salaire minimum, mais seulement lorsque le degré de corporatisme est faible. En contrepartie un fort degré de corporatisme n'inciterait pas les partis politiques à adopter ou à augmenter le salaire minimum. L'étude de Rueda (2008) ne se penche cependant que sur le cas de six pays qui disposent d'un salaire minimum. De plus, cette étude comparative inclut des pays sans salaire minimum national. La conclusion de l'étude, selon laquelle un degré de corporatisme élevé diminue l'effet partisan, est donc fortement influencée par le fait que plusieurs de ces pays très corporatistes n'ont aucune variation de leur salaire minimum, peu importe le parti au pouvoir.

Dans cet article, nous examinons l'impact de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur la variation du salaire minimum dans 17 pays entre 1960 et 2014. L'utilisation de données panels permet de mesurer l'impact de l'idéologie du parti au pouvoir sur l'évolution du salaire minimum dans

chaque pays dans le temps et de prendre en compte différents facteurs institutionnels. Conformément à la théorie des ressources du pouvoir, nous faisons l'hypothèse que le salaire minimum devrait augmenter davantage lorsque le gouvernement est formé de partis politiques se présentant comme de gauche, puisque ces partis ont tendance à promouvoir une plus grande redistribution et une plus grande régulation du marché du travail. Comme indiqué par Rueda (2008), le degré de corporatisme devrait cependant limiter l'impact de l'idéologie des partis politiques sur l'évolution du salaire minimum, puisque les négociations corporatistes permettent de fixer des revenus planchers qui limitent le travail faiblement rémunéré. Nos données confirment que le salaire minimum tend à augmenter lorsque l'idéologie des gouvernements tend vers la gauche et à diminuer lorsque l'idéologie des gouvernements tend vers la droite. De plus, nos données démontrent que la relation entre l'idéologie des gouvernements et l'évolution du salaire minimum n'est pas significative lorsque le corporatisme est fort.

L'État-providence et la théorie des ressources du pouvoir

Les théories qui utilisent l'idéologie des partis politiques pour expliquer la variation dans les politiques publiques postulent que les partis politiques proposent des politiques publiques qui correspondent aux intérêts et aux préférences de leur électorat (Hibbs, 1992 ; Schmidt, 1996). Dans l'étude des politiques sociales et de l'État-providence, cette hypothèse a principalement été défendue par les tenants de la théorie des ressources du pouvoir (Stephens, 1979 ; Korpi, 1983 ; Esping-Andersen, 1985). Cette théorie explique les différences dans l'expansion des États-providences et dans l'étendue de la régulation des marchés du travail entre les pays industrialisés par le degré de mobilisation et d'organisation de la classe ouvrière, de même que par sa capacité à former des coalitions avec d'autres groupes. L'organisation de la classe ouvrière permet de

modifier le rapport de force avec les organisations qui défendent les employeurs et les classes sociales plus aisées comme les partis de droite et les entreprises privées. Le degré de syndicalisation et la fréquence des gouvernements sociaux-démocrates permettraient ainsi d'expliquer le degré de démarchandisation des États-providences, c'est-à-dire le degré d'indépendance des travailleurs par rapport au marché en cas de chômage, d'invalidité ou de vieillesse (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Selon plusieurs chercheurs, les transformations économiques des trente dernières années ont par contre réduit l'influence de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur le développement de l'État-providence (Huber et Stephens, 2001 ; Swank, 2002). Selon Paul Pierson (2001), l'augmentation du chômage, l'augmentation du nombre de travailleurs dans les services et les plus faibles niveaux de croissance économique depuis les années quatre-vingts ont limité la capacité des partis de gauche à étendre la couverture des programmes sociaux, tandis que la popularité de ces programmes auprès de la population a diminué la capacité des partis de droite de couper dans les programmes sociaux. De plus, la transition d'une société industrielle à une société postindustrielle a transformé le rapport entre les partis politiques et leur électorat, les nouvelles classes moyennes composées de professionnels des milieux socioculturels étant de plus en plus portées vers les partis de gauche, alors que le vote des travailleurs manufacturiers leur est de moins en moins acquis. En effet, le lien entre les classes sociales et le vote s'est considérablement réduit avec le temps, remettant ainsi en question les prémisses de la théorie des ressources du pouvoir (Häusermann et coll., 2013). La littérature récente sur la partisanerie et l'État-providence indique que l'effet des partis politiques de gauche a en effet diminué depuis la période d'après-guerre, mais que ces partis

politiques ont encore une influence significative sur le développement des politiques sociales (Schmidt 2010 ; Swank 2013 ; Bandau 2017).

Selon la littérature, l'effet des partis politiques varie aussi en fonction des politiques publiques analysées. La littérature sur l'État-providence distingue les programmes sociaux qui protègent des risques sociaux liés aux cycles de vie comme les soins de santé et les pensions de vieillesse des programmes qui protègent des risques sociaux associés au marché du travail comme l'assurance-chômage (Esping-Andersen, 1999). Selon Jensen (2012), l'effet de l'idéologie des partis politiques sur les programmes liés aux cycles de la vie est faible, puisque la majorité des électeurs sont exposés à ce type de risque social. À l'opposé, l'effet des partis politiques est significatif pour les programmes liés au marché du travail, puisque les électeurs des partis de gauche sont plus exposés à ces risques et en faveur d'une plus grande redistribution. L'hypothèse que les partis de gauche ont un effet significatif sur les politiques liées au marché du travail a cependant seulement été démontrée avec le programme d'assurance-chômage (Jensen, 2012 ; Bandau, 2017).

L'idéologie des gouvernements et le salaire minimum

Nous croyons que le salaire minimum représente également une politique sur laquelle les partis politiques pourraient avoir une influence significative. Tout d'abord, la théorie des ressources du pouvoir postule que les partis de gauche cherchent à renforcer le pouvoir de négociation des travailleurs par rapport aux employeurs (Korpi, 1983 ; Esping-Andersen, 1985). Le salaire minimum permet ainsi aux partis de gauche de limiter la capacité des employeurs d'imposer de bas salaires lorsque les syndicats sont faibles (Meyer, 2016). De plus, les bas salaires constituent un risque social associé au marché du travail et la mobilité sociale des travailleurs faiblement

rémunérés est faible (Schnabel, 2016). Selon la théorie de Jensen (2012), ce type de programme devrait davantage opposer les partis de droite et de gauche, puisque l'électorat de droite est moins exposé à ce type de risque social. L'idéologie des partis de gauche ainsi que leur base électorale devrait inciter les partis de gauche à proposer des augmentations du salaire minimum plus importantes que les partis de droite.

Au niveau empirique, de récentes études qualitatives portant sur les cas du Royaume-Uni et de l'Allemagne ont démontré que la présence de partis de gauche au gouvernement avait eu une influence sur l'adoption d'un salaire minimum national dans ces pays (Mabbett, 2016 ; Meyer, 2016 ; Wilson 2017). Les études quantitatives portant sur les déterminants politiques de l'évolution du salaire minimum ont également identifié un lien entre l'idéologie et l'augmentation du salaire minimum. Aux États-Unis, par exemple, les législateurs démocrates votent en plus grand nombre pour l'augmentation du salaire minimum que les législateurs républicains (Kau et Rubin, 1978 ; Krehbiel et Rivers, 1988). De plus, le salaire minimum augmente davantage lorsque le président et le Congrès sont démocrates (Bartels, 2008) ou que l'idéologie dominante de l'État est libérale (Waltman et Pittman, 2002). Au Canada, les gouvernements conservateurs provinciaux sont associés à des augmentations moins importantes du salaire minimum (Blais et coll., 1989 ; Dickson et Myatt, 2002 ; Green et Harrison, 2006). Finalement, une étude quantitative comparée a identifié une relation entre les gouvernements de gauche et l'augmentation du salaire minimum dans les pays où le degré de corporatisme est faible (Rueda, 2008). Ces résultats nous amènent donc à proposer l'hypothèse suivante :

Hypothèse 1 : Les gouvernements idéologiquement plus à gauche augmentent davantage le salaire minimum que les gouvernements idéologiquement plus à droite.

Le rôle des partis politiques dans le développement des politiques sociales et ainsi du salaire minimum devrait par contre varier d'un pays à l'autre en fonction des caractéristiques institutionnelles. Plus particulièrement, nous croyons que le corporatisme devrait conditionner de façon importante l'effet des partis de gauche sur l'augmentation du salaire minimum. Dans les pays où le corporatisme est fort³⁹, les associations d'entreprises et les syndicats sont en effet généralement impliqués dans l'élaboration des politiques publiques qui concernent le marché de l'emploi. Selon David Rueda (2008), lorsque le corporatisme est fort, les partis de gauche auront tendance à se fier aux syndicats et au processus de négociation collective pour réduire les inégalités au bas de la distribution des salaires entre travailleurs. Par exemple, les partis de gauche tendent à avoir un impact sur les inégalités seulement dans les économies de marché libérales (Rueda et Pontusson, 2000) ou dans les pays où le processus de négociation collective est décentralisé (Rueda, Pontusson et Way, 2002).

Le salaire minimum devrait être particulièrement influencé par le corporatisme, puisque la négociation est centralisée entre partenaires sociaux. Le corporatisme permet dans plusieurs pays d'établir des salaires planchers sans avoir recours à l'intervention directe des gouvernements (Meyer, 2016). Les syndicats, lorsqu'ils sont forts et couvrent une portion significative de la population, préfèrent ainsi éviter l'intervention directe des gouvernements dans la fixation des salaires. Ils souhaitent maintenir leur rôle dans la fixation des salaires, puisqu'un salaire minimum

³⁹ Le corporatisme est une forme de gouvernance où le gouvernement, les syndicats et les associations d'entreprises négocient pour réguler le marché de l'emploi (Molina et Rhodes, 2002).

décidé par le gouvernement pourrait décourager les salariés faiblement rémunérés de rejoindre un syndicat pour négocier leurs conditions de travail (Meyer, 2016). À l'opposé lorsqu'ils sont faibles et couvrent une faible part des travailleurs faiblement rémunérés, les syndicats sont favorables à l'intervention du gouvernement afin de limiter la concurrence des travailleurs faiblement rémunérés.

De plus, les procédures utilisées pour modifier le salaire minimum varient en fonction du degré de corporatisme. Ainsi dans plusieurs pays où le degré de corporatisme est élevé, les gouvernements consultent les partenaires sociaux avant d'établir le salaire minimum. À l'opposé dans plusieurs pays avec un faible degré de corporatisme, le gouvernement tend plutôt à modifier le salaire minimum sans consultation formelle (voir le tableau 5.A1 à l'annexe A). Les gouvernements qui n'ont pas à négocier avec les partenaires sociaux et à respecter des règles fixes devraient donc avoir une plus grande marge de manœuvre pour fixer le salaire minimum en fonction de leur idéologie.

L'effet du degré de corporatisme devrait surtout se situer au niveau transversal puisque le degré de corporatisme varie davantage entre les pays que dans le temps dans un même pays. Ainsi nous proposons l'effet d'interaction suivant quant à l'effet de l'idéologie des gouvernements et du degré de corporatisme sur le salaire minimum :

Hypothèse 2 : L'effet des gouvernements idéologiquement plus à gauche sur le salaire minimum est positif lorsque le degré de corporatisme est faible et nul lorsque le degré de corporatisme est fort.

Les deux hypothèses retenues sont similaires à celles testées par Rueda (2008). La contribution de cette analyse est donc principalement empirique. L'étude de Rueda est composée de 6 pays avec un salaire minimum et de 9 pays sans salaire minimum entre les années 1970 et 1990. Selon Rueda, les résultats de l'étude démontrent une relation entre les gouvernements de gauche et l'augmentation du salaire minimum, mais seulement dans les pays où le degré de corporatisme est faible. Selon nous, les résultats de Rueda ne permettent toutefois pas de conclure que le corporatisme limite l'influence de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur le salaire minimum et particulièrement sur *l'augmentation* du salaire minimum. Une limite importante de l'analyse de Rueda est que plusieurs des pays qui ont un degré de corporatisme élevé n'ont pas de salaire minimum en vigueur. Il n'est donc pas possible de mesurer l'effet des partis de gauche sur le salaire minimum dans ces pays corporatistes n'ayant au préalable pas de salaire minimum. Ainsi, afin de vérifier si le corporatisme conditionne l'effet de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur le salaire minimum, il est nécessaire d'étudier des pays ayant adopté le salaire minimum et présentant des degrés de corporatisme différent. Il existe pourtant plusieurs pays qui ont à la fois un salaire minimum fixé par le gouvernement et un degré de corporatisme élevé qui facilite la régulation du marché de l'emploi par les accords entre partenaires sociaux. Par conséquent, notre étude propose un test empirique plus exhaustif en intégrant 17 pays qui ont un salaire minimum et qui ont des degrés de corporatisme divers sur la période 1960-2014. Cette augmentation du nombre de pays est tout d'abord due à l'intégration de pays d'Europe du Sud et d'Europe de l'Est qui se sont démocratisés dans les cinquante dernières années. De plus, plusieurs pays qui n'avaient pas de salaire minimum national durant la période de l'étude de Rueda ont aujourd'hui un salaire minimum comme l'Australie, l'Irlande et le Royaume-Uni.

Méthode

Données et variables

L'OCDE publie différentes données sur le salaire minimum de ses pays membres. L'indicateur le plus pertinent pour une étude comparative est le ratio du salaire minimum sur le salaire médian des travailleurs à temps plein. La plupart des études sur le salaire minimum utilisent le ratio du salaire minimum sur le salaire moyen afin de contrôler pour la croissance des salaires dans le temps (Blais, 1989 ; Myatt et Dickson, 2002 ; Rueda, 2008). L'OCDE recommande toutefois d'utiliser le ratio par rapport au salaire médian puisqu'il reflète davantage le niveau de salaire des travailleurs au milieu de la distribution des revenus (OCDE, 2017).⁴⁰

L'analyse inclut les pays suivants : Australie (1997-2014), Belgique (1975-2013), Espagne (1979-2013), États-Unis (1960-2014), France (1960-2013), Grèce (1976-2013), Hongrie (1994-2013), Irlande (2000-2014), Japon (1975-2014), Luxembourg (1971-2012), Nouvelle-Zélande (1969-2014), Pays-Bas (1964-2013), Pologne (1991-2012), Portugal (1982-2012), République Tchèque (1993-2013), Royaume-Uni (1999-2014) et Slovaquie (1994-2013).⁴¹ Le fait d'utiliser des données récentes nous permet d'intégrer un plus grand nombre de pays. Toutefois, l'étendue des années disponibles avec la base de données de l'OCDE varie de manière importante entre les pays. Certains pays ont des données disponibles depuis le début des années soixante. D'autres pays ont des données seulement à partir du milieu des années 1990. Par conséquent, nous avons effectué un

40 Une baisse ou une hausse du salaire médian peut toutefois contribuer à hausser ou diminuer le ratio du salaire minimum même s'il n'y a pas de changement dans le montant du salaire minimum fixé par le gouvernement. Par conséquent, nous avons testé un modèle avec la valeur réelle du salaire minimum ajustée pour le taux de change. Le tableau 5.C1 disponible à l'annexe C, démontre que les résultats sont similaires au modèle de base.

41 Nous avons exclu de l'analyse les pays qui n'ont pas de salaire minimum, comme l'Allemagne (avant 2013), l'Autriche, le Danemark, la Finlande, l'Islande, l'Italie, la Norvège, la Suède et la Suisse (Meyer, 2016). Nous avons également exclu de l'analyse le Canada. Ce dernier n'a pas de salaire minimum national, mais différents salaires minimums provinciaux.

test de robustesse qui démontre que les résultats sont similaires lorsque l'on sélectionne uniquement les pays qui ont des données depuis les années 1960-1970 (voir le quatrième modèle du tableau 5.C1 à l'annexe C).

Les études qui ont examiné l'impact de la composition des gouvernements sur le développement de l'État-providence utilisent généralement la proportion de partis de gauche au cabinet mesurée par année ou grâce à une moyenne cumulative (Esping-Andersen, 1990 ; Huber et Stephens, 2001 ; Korpi et Palme, 2003 ; Allan et Scruggs, 2004). En codifiant uniquement les partis de gauche, cet indicateur ne prend pas en compte la grande variation dans l'idéologie des partis politiques qui ne s'identifient pas à la gauche. À titre d'exemple, les partis chrétiens-démocrates favorables à l'État-providence sont comptabilisés de la même manière qu'un parti conservateur qui souhaite réduire la taille de l'État (Döring et Schwander, 2015). De plus, cet indicateur postule que les intérêts et positions des partis de gauche sont similaires à la fois entre les pays et dans le temps.

Une mesure qui prend à la fois en compte le changement de positions des partis politiques dans le temps et entre les pays représenterait une mesure plus adéquate de l'idéologie des gouvernements. Le « Comparative Manifesto Database » produit un tel indicateur de la position de chaque parti politique sur une échelle gauche-droite à partir d'une étude des programmes électoraux des partis à chaque élection. L'indicateur se situe entre -100, indiquant un parti très à gauche, et 100, indiquant un parti très à droite (Budge, 2013). Cet indicateur est basé sur la quantification des thématiques liées à la division gauche-droite incluses dans les plates-formes électorales.⁴² Cet

⁴² L'indicateur est formé en mesurant le nombre de quasi-phrases associées aux thèmes considérés comme de droite moins le nombre de quasi-phrases associées aux thèmes de gauche divisé par le nombre total de quasi-phrases associées à un thème. Les thèmes associés à la gauche sont: market regulation, welfare state expansion, education expansion, labour groups (positive), economic planning, protectionism (positive), controlled economy, nationalisation,

indicateur mesure donc les orientations générales que les partis politiques présentent à l'électorat. Ainsi un parti qui mentionne à plusieurs reprises être en faveur de régulations économiques ou d'étendre les programmes sociaux sera considéré comme à gauche et aura un indicateur avec une valeur négative.⁴³

La position de chaque gouvernement est mesurée en regroupant les scores des différents partis en fonction de la proportion des sièges que chaque parti occupe au cabinet (Seki et Williams, 2014). Les données sont issues de la base de données « Seki-Williams Annual Government Partisanship » qui combine les données du *Comparative Manifesto Project* pour créer un indicateur de l'idéologie des gouvernements (Seki et Williams, 2014). Afin de confirmer l'hypothèse 1, l'effet de l'idéologie du gouvernement sur le salaire minimum devrait être négatif ce qui indiquerait que les gouvernements de gauche (valeurs négatives) sont associés à une augmentation du salaire minimum.

Le degré de corporatisme est mesuré à l'aide d'un indicateur de coordination dans la fixation des salaires de la base de données « Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts » (Visser, 2016). Cet indicateur est une variable ordinale qui comprend 5 valeurs (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Les valeurs 1, 2 et 3 désignent un système de négociation collective faiblement coordonnée principalement entre les firmes ou les secteurs d'activité avec au

anti-imperialism, peace (positive), military (negative), internationalism (positive), democracy. Les thèmes associés à la droite sont: free-market economy, welfare state limitation, economic incentives, economic orthodoxy, protectionism (négative), military (positif), freedom and human rights, constitutionalism (positive), political authority, national way of life (positive), traditional morality (positive), law and order, civic mindness (positive) (Budge, 2013).

⁴³ Au tableau 5.B1 de l'annexe B, les moyennes des indicateurs pour les gouvernements composés de partis de droite et de partis de gauche ont été calculées pour chaque pays. Il existe une différence importante des valeurs de l'indicateur de l'idéologie entre les gouvernements de droite et de gauche dans tous les pays où il y a alternance.

maximum des lignes directrices pour la négociation au niveau national, tandis que les valeurs 4 et 5 désignent un système de négociation collective qui mène à l'imposition des standards nationaux.⁴⁴ Comme il existe peu de cas dans chaque catégorie, nous avons créé une variable dichotomique. Un degré de corporatisme faible regroupe les degrés 1, 2 et 3 de la mesure de coordination dans la fixation des salaires, tandis qu'un degré de corporatisme fort représente les degrés 4 et 5.⁴⁵ Différentes mesures existent pour mesurer le degré du corporatisme. Elles mettent l'accent sur l'organisation des partenaires sociaux, la participation de ces groupes au processus de décision ou le degré de consensus (Kenworthy, 2003). Malheureusement, les bases de données qui combinent différentes variables pour composer un indice de corporatisme ont un nombre de pays ou d'années souvent limité. L'index de coordination dans la fixation des salaires a l'avantage d'être disponible pour un grand nombre d'années et de pays. De plus, elle analyse la coordination entre partenaires sociaux plutôt que la structure des regroupements de syndicats et d'entreprises séparément. Nous utiliserons cet indicateur dans le deuxième modèle dans un effet d'interaction avec l'idéologie gouvernementale. L'effet du degré de corporatisme devrait surtout se situer au niveau transversal⁴⁶. Plus précisément, nous anticipons que les partis de gauche ont un plus grand impact sur l'évolution du salaire minimum dans les pays avec un faible degré de corporatisme que dans les pays avec un degré élevé de corporatisme.

⁴⁴ 1) Fragmented wage bargaining, confined largely to individual firms or plants. 2) Mixed industry and firm-level bargaining, weak government coordination through minimum wage setting or wage indexation. 3) Negotiation guidelines based on centralized bargaining. 4) Wage norms based on centralized bargaining by peak associations with or without government involvement. 5) Maximum or minimum wage rates/increases based on centralized bargaining

⁴⁵ Un modèle avec un degré de corporatisme fort qui regroupe les valeurs 3, 4 et 5 a aussi été testé, voir le tableau 5.C1 de l'annexe C.

⁴⁶ Dans la mesure où le degré de corporatisme change peu dans un pays donné, il est peu susceptible d'avoir un impact sur l'évolution du salaire minimum dans ce même pays.

Variables de contrôles

Les syndicats ont intérêt à maintenir un revenu minimum plancher élevé afin de limiter la compétition des travailleurs faiblement rémunérés et non syndiqués (Rueda, 2008 ; Meyer, 2016). La force des syndicats devrait donc avoir une relation positive avec la variation du salaire minimum. De plus, comme les syndicats sont à la fois liés aux partis de gauche et au corporatisme, il importe de distinguer la force des syndicats des deux variables principales de cette étude. La force des syndicats est généralement mesurée à l'aide de la densité syndicale, c'est-à-dire le pourcentage de travailleurs membres d'un syndicat dans un pays. Nous avons obtenu les données sur la densité syndicale grâce à la base de données de « Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts » (Visser, 2016).

La majorité des discussions et des débats autour du salaire minimum portent sur l'effet du salaire minimum sur l'emploi. Une variable contrôle pour le taux de chômage a donc été incluse dans le modèle afin de vérifier s'il influence l'effet de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur le salaire minimum. En période de chômage élevé, les gouvernements, peu importe leur allégeance idéologique, pourraient être plus réticents à augmenter le salaire minimum compte tenu des risques potentiels sur l'emploi évoqués par plusieurs économistes (Blais et coll., 1989). Le taux de chômage est mesuré en pourcentage de la force de travail et est issu de la base de données de l'« Annual macro-economic database of the European » (AMECO, 2020).

Modèle

Les données retenues pour l'analyse correspondent à des données de type *Time-Series-Cross-Section* (TSCS), puisqu'elles ont une dimension transversale avec un nombre de pays relativement

petit (N=17) et une dimension longitudinale où nous avons plusieurs observations par pays dans le temps (1960-2014), pour un total de 171 observations. La plupart des travaux sur l'effet des partis politiques utilisent des données pour chaque année-pays. L'utilisation de ce type de données peut cependant biaiser les résultats et réduire artificiellement l'effet des partis politiques, puisque l'idéologie des gouvernements ne change pas chaque année (Schmitt, 2016). Nous calculons donc l'effet de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur la variation du salaire minimum entre le début et la fin d'un mandat gouvernemental.⁴⁷ Notre hypothèse, basée sur l'effet de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur le salaire minimum, est davantage compatible avec une analyse de la dimension longitudinale de l'effet de l'idéologie des gouvernements, puisque c'est l'idéologie des gouvernements qui devrait influencer la variation du salaire minimum dans le temps à l'intérieur de chaque pays.

Par conséquent, nous utilisons un modèle de régression des moindres carrés ordinaires avec des effets fixes au niveau des pays ce qui permet de mesurer l'effet moyen de l'idéologie des gouvernements intra-pays (*within-effect*). De plus, les effets fixes au niveau des pays nous permettent de contrôler pour des variables omises du modèle au niveau du pays.⁴⁸

Différents tests de diagnostics nous ont indiqué la présence d'hétéroscédasticité interpanel et d'autocorrélation intrapanel.⁴⁹ L'utilisation d'erreurs types robustes ajustées par cluster (Cluster-

⁴⁷ Un modèle par année a aussi été testé et est disponible au quatrième modèle du tableau 5.C1 l'annexe C. Les résultats sont très similaires au modèle mesuré par mandat.

⁴⁸ Le test de Hausman nous permet de confirmer que l'utilisation des effets fixes est appropriée pour notre modèle, puisque l'utilisation des effets aléatoires entraînerait un biais au niveau des estimateurs.

⁴⁹ Le « modified Wald statistic for groupwise heteroskedasticity » et le « Woolridge test for autocorrelation in panel data » ont été utilisés pour tester ces deux postulats. Suivant les recommandations de De Boef and Keele (2008), un test F ainsi que l'*Aikake information criterion* (AIC) nous indiquent que nous devons seulement inclure la valeur du salaire minimum au début du mandat, une variable lag de l'idéologie des gouvernements n'étant pas nécessaire.

robust standard errors) entraînerait toutefois un biais compte tenu du faible nombre de « clusters ». Nous utilisons donc un modèle de régression linéaire avec des erreurs types robustes corrigées pour de petits échantillons développé par Pustejovsky et Tipton (2016).

Afin de tester les deux hypothèses, nous utiliserons deux modèles. Le premier modèle permettra de mesurer l'effet de l'idéologie des gouvernements. Le deuxième modèle permettra quant à lui de mesurer l'effet du corporatisme sur l'influence de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur le salaire minimum grâce à l'utilisation d'un effet d'interaction entre le degré de corporatisme et l'idéologie des gouvernements. Ainsi nous pourrions déterminer si les partis politiques ont une influence sur la variation du salaire minimum dans les pays où le degré de corporatisme est fort.

Résultats

Dans la première colonne du tableau 5.1, nous présentons les résultats du premier modèle qui analyse l'effet de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur la variation du salaire minimum. L'hypothèse 1 postule que les gouvernements idéologiquement plus à gauche augmentent davantage le salaire minimum. Les résultats du tableau 5.1 indiquent que le coefficient pour la variation de l'idéologie des gouvernements est négatif et statistiquement significatif avec un intervalle de confiance à 95%. Ainsi, un gouvernement plus à gauche avec une idéologie de 10 points sur l'échelle de l'idéologie des gouvernements (-100 à 100) est associé à une augmentation de 0,8 du ratio du salaire minimum par rapport au salaire médian durant le mandat.⁵⁰

L'utilisation de la méthode des moindres carrés avec des effets fixes et d'un modèle dynamique peut biaiser les coefficients, le biais devrait être toutefois négligeable puisque le nombre de périodes dans le temps est plus grand que 20 (Beck et Katz 2011).

⁵⁰ L'idéologie moyenne des gouvernements composés en majorité de partis de gauche ou équilibrés entre la gauche et la droite est de -13 (voir tableau 5.B1 dans l'annexe B).

Tableau 5.1 - L'influence des partis politiques sur le salaire minimum

	(1)	(2)
	Modèle 1	Modèle 2
Valeur du salaire minimum	-0.42 (0.13)***	-0.45 (0.11)***
Idéologie des gouvernements	-0.08 (0.03)**	
Taux de chômage	-0.02 (0.18)	0.02 (0.17)
Taux de syndicalisation	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)
Corporatisme faible x idéologie		-0.12 (0.03)***
Corporatisme fort x idéologie		0.01 (0.02)
Corporatisme fort		1.19 (1.07)
Observations	171	171
R^2	0.281	0.307

Erreurs types entre paranthèses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

L'effet du niveau de corporatisme

La deuxième hypothèse postule que l'effet de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur la variation du salaire minimum est positif lorsque le degré de corporatisme est faible, mais nul lorsque le degré de corporatisme est fort. Les résultats à la colonne 2 du tableau 5.1 confirment cette hypothèse. Comme prédit, l'effet de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur l'évolution du salaire minimum est négatif et statistiquement significatif lorsque le niveau de corporatisme est faible (voir le coefficient de *corporatisme faible X idéologie*, -0,12). Toutefois lorsque le niveau de corporatisme est fort, l'effet de l'idéologie n'est pas statistiquement différent de zéro (voir coefficient de *corporatisme fort X idéologie des gouvernements*, 0.01). De plus, un test de Wald démontre que la différence des effets de *corporatisme faible X idéologie* et de *corporatisme fort X idéologie* est statistiquement significative.⁵¹

51 À noter que les résultats sont similaires lorsque *corporatisme fort* est défini par les valeurs 3, 4 et 5 de l'indicateur de coordination dans la fixation des salaires plutôt que par les valeurs 4 et 5. Les résultats sont disponibles au quatrième modèle du Tableau 5.C1 de l'annexe C.

Discussion

Le rôle des partis politiques de gauche est central aux recherches sur l'État-providence et le développement des programmes sociaux. Alors que les études se sont concentrées sur l'évolution des pensions de vieillesse et de l'assurance-chômage, peu d'études ont examiné le salaire minimum. En se basant sur la théorie des ressources de pouvoir et l'argument de Rueda quant au rôle du corporatisme sur l'impact des partis politiques dans le développement des politiques sociales, nous avons émis l'hypothèse que les gouvernements idéologiquement plus à gauche sont associés à des augmentations plus importantes du salaire minimum et que le degré corporatisme diminue l'impact de l'idéologie des gouvernements sur l'évolution du salaire minimum.

En utilisant les données de l'OCDE et du « Comparative Manifesto Project » pour 17 pays entre 1960 et 2014, nos analyses confirment principalement le rôle des partis de gauche sur l'évolution du salaire minimum. Ainsi, si des partis politiques qui promettent davantage de régulation économique et une expansion de l'État-providence font partie du gouvernement, le salaire minimum aura davantage tendance à augmenter. À l'opposé, si des partis politiques de droite qui promettent une réduction des dépenses et une libéralisation du marché de l'emploi sont élus, le salaire minimum aura tendance à diminuer par rapport au salaire médian durant le mandat de ce gouvernement. Les résultats sont donc conformes aux attentes de la théorie des ressources du pouvoir qui postule que les partis de gauche ont un effet sur l'évolution des programmes sociaux et particulièrement sur les programmes qui renforcent le pouvoir de négociation des travailleurs. Cette théorie est toutefois seulement valide pour expliquer l'évolution du salaire minimum lorsque le niveau de corporatisme est faible. Cette relation vient aussi supporter la théorie de Jensen (2012) que la présence de partis de gauche au gouvernement a un impact significatif sur les programmes

sociaux liés au marché du travail. Les politiques liées au marché du travail comme le salaire minimum et l'assurance-chômage redistribuent davantage la richesse entre différentes catégories de travailleurs. Selon cette théorie les partis de gauche ont donc principalement une influence sur les politiques de redistribution verticales.

La majorité des données utilisées dans cette analyse sont relativement récentes, 84% datant d'après 1980 et 66% d'après 1990. L'effet des partis politiques sur le salaire minimum est donc demeuré significatif, et ce, malgré le constat fait par de nombreux chercheurs que la marge de manœuvre des partis politiques a diminué à la suite des transformations économiques des années quatre-vingt et quatre-vingt-dix (Huber et Stephens, 2001 ; Pierson, 2001 ; Swank, 2002) et que l'électorat des partis politiques a changé radicalement en raison de la transition vers une société postindustrielle (Häusermann et coll., 2013). Selon Shaun Wilson ce sont ces transformations économiques qui ont contribué à politiser le salaire minimum ces dernières années. Les augmentations récentes du salaire minimum dans certains pays, comme la Nouvelle-Zélande et le Royaume-Uni, découleraient ainsi d'une volonté d'aider les travailleurs à faible revenu suite aux réformes néolibérales qui ont affaibli les syndicats et réduit les dépenses sociales. Les stratégies de prédistribution comme l'augmentation du salaire minimum seraient particulièrement avantageuses pour les partis de gauche puisqu'ils permettent de satisfaire leur électorat sans augmenter les dépenses sociales et les taxes. Une meilleure compréhension du comportement électoral des travailleurs faiblement rémunérés est toutefois nécessaire afin de déterminer si l'effet des partis de gauche sur le salaire minimum découle d'une volonté de mobiliser un électorat qui leur est favorable.

Enfin, nos résultats confirment également le rôle du corporatisme sur la relation entre l'idéologie des gouvernements et l'évolution du salaire minimum. La relation statistique entre l'idéologie des gouvernements et l'évolution du salaire minimum n'est en effet pas significative lorsque le niveau de corporatisme est élevé. La théorie avancée par David Rueda (2008) est que les gouvernements s'intéressent peu au salaire minimum lorsque le corporatisme est élevé, puisque les partenaires sociaux sont capables de fixer des revenus planchers. Historiquement, dans les pays qui disposent d'un salaire minimum national et ont un processus de négociation salariale relativement centralisé, le salaire minimum national avait tendance à être plus élevé que dans les pays où le processus de négociation collective est décentralisé et couvre une faible proportion des travailleurs (Grimshaw, 2013 : 52-53). Ces dernières années, toutefois, les pays où la coordination entre les entreprises et les syndicats est relativement forte sont les seuls pays de l'OCDE à avoir connu une croissance du salaire minimum plus faible que la croissance du revenu médian (Grimshaw, 2013 : 76). Ainsi, aux Pays-Bas, le salaire minimum a diminué significativement passant de l'équivalent de 68% du revenu médian en 1967 à 45% en 2016. De plus, cette baisse du salaire minimum a été accompagnée d'un déclin des salaires minimums planchers au niveau sectoriel (de Beer, Been et Salverda, 2017). Pour le moment, la littérature sur le salaire minimum n'a pas développé de théorie permettant d'expliquer la variation du salaire minimum dans les pays avec un fort degré de corporatisme. Des études de cas permettraient de mieux comprendre les interactions politiques entre les gouvernements et partenaires sociaux qui ont mené au déclin du salaire minimum dans plusieurs pays avec un fort degré de corporatisme.

ANNEXE A

Tableau 5.A1 : Pays par degré de corporatisme et modes de fixation du salaire minimum (Visser, 2016)⁵²

Modes de fixation du salaire minimum	Corporatisme faible	Corporatisme fort
Décidé suite à des négociations avec partenaires sociaux	Hongrie	Belgique, Espagne, Grèce
Décidé par un comité d'experts	Australie, Irlande, Nouvelle-Zélande, Royaume-Uni	Japon
Décidé par le gouvernement à l'aide de règles fixes	Luxembourg	Pays-Bas
Décidé seulement par le gouvernement	États-Unis, France, Pologne, Portugal, République Tchèque, Slovaquie	-

⁵² Voir la variable corporatisme dans la section Données et variables. Le degré de corporatisme le plus fréquent pour chaque pays a été retenu.

ANNEXE B

Tableau 5.B1 : Moyenne, minimum et maximum de l'indicateur de l'idéologie des gouvernements

	Gouvernements à majorité de partis de droite	Gouvernements à majorité de partis de gauche ou balancés	Valeurs minimales	Valeurs maximales
Australie	33	-14	-34	48
Belgique	3	-9	-17	17
R. Tchèque	18	-4	-17	27
France	6	-21	-33	27
Grèce	12	-21	-29	32
Hongrie	3	1	-9	11
Irlande	-5*	-	-12	6
Japon	-6.5*	-	-46	18
Luxembourg	-8	-20	-34	3
Pays-Bas	2	-10	-32	15
Nouvelle-Z.	1	-21	-29	37
Pologne	6	-6	-9	21
Portugal	11	-8	-18	31
Slovaquie	7	-10	-11	22
Espagne	3	-17	-23	11
R-U	16	2	-3	15
É-U	21	-4	-20	33
Total	6**	-13	-46	48

* Il n'y a pas eu de gouvernements composés de partis de gauche ou balancés en Irlande et au Japon.

** L'indicateur d'idéologie ne prend pas en compte, l'indicateur pour le Japon et l'Irlande.

Nous avons compilé différentes valeurs de l'indicateur d'idéologie afin d'illustrer la variation de l'idéologie dans chaque pays. La distinction entre les gouvernements de droite et gauche est basée sur l'index de Schmidt du CPDS (Armingeon et coll., 2017). Les gouvernements avec une hégémonie ou une dominance des partis de droite ou de centre sont considérés comme des gouvernements composés à majorité de partis de droite. Tandis que les gouvernements où il y a une balance du pouvoir entre la gauche et la droite ou avec une hégémonie ou une dominance des partis de gauche sont considérés comme des gouvernements composés à majorité de partis de gauche ou balancés. Le regroupement des gouvernements avec une domination des partis de gauche et un équilibre gauche/droite s'explique par le fait que dans la plupart des pays, il existe soit une alternance gauche/droite comme au Royaume-Uni ou une alternance entre des coalitions de partis de droite et de centre et des coalitions où au moins un parti de gauche est un acteur important comme en Belgique.

ANNEXE C

Tableau 5.C1 - Tests de robustesse : L'influence des partis politiques sur le salaire minimum

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Années	Valeurs réelles	Pays	Corporatisme
Valeur du salaire minimum	-0.13 (0.04)***		-0.44 (0.15)***	-0.44 (0.11)***
Idéologie des gouvernements	-0.03 (0.01)***	-0.00 (0.00)***	-0.10 (0.04)***	
Taux de chômage	0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.00)**	0.22 (0.16)	0.01 (0.17)
Taux de syndicalisation	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.06)
Valeur du salaire minimum		-0.06 (0.02)**		
Corporatisme faible x idéologie				-0.11 (0.04)***
Corporatisme fort x idéologie				-0.02 (0.03)
Corporatisme fort				1.18 (1.46)
Observations	553	550	124	171
R^2	0.119	0.122	0.230	0.296

Erreurs types entre parenthèses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

(1) Les données sont compilées pour chaque année plutôt que par mandat gouvernemental.

(2) La valeur réelle du salaire minimum ajustée en fonction des taux de change est utilisée comme variable dépendante plutôt que le ratio par rapport au salaire médian. Les données sont calculées par année puisque la valeur réelle du salaire minimum augmente avec le temps.

(3) Seulement les pays qui ont des données depuis les années 1960-1970 sont sélectionnés.

(4) Le degré de corporatisme fort est défini par les valeurs 3, 4 et 5 de l'indi-

ANNEXE D

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ETUDE ORIGINALE

La politique du salaire minimum : le rôle des partis politiques dans les pays de l'OCDE (1960–2014)

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Résumé

L'enjeu politique de la fixation du salaire minimum a été relativement peu étudié en science politique. Dans cet article, nous examinons le rôle des partis politiques de gauche sur la fixation du salaire minimum. Comme prédit par la théorie des ressources du pouvoir, les partis de gauche devraient encourager l'augmentation du salaire minimum. Nous postulons toutefois que cet effet diffère selon le niveau de corporatisme. Plus particulièrement, nous pensons que l'effet des partis politiques de gauche devrait être plus faible sous des niveaux de corporatisme élevés puisque les partenaires sociaux sont davantage consultés et que les gouvernements ont tendance à leur déléguer la régulation des salaires. Nos résultats confirment ces hypothèses. Ils indiquent que le salaire minimum tend à augmenter lorsque les gouvernements sont davantage à gauche idéologiquement et que cette relation est plus forte lorsque le degré de corporatisme est faible.

Abstract

The political issue of setting the minimum wage rate has been relatively little studied in political science. In this article, we analyze the influence of left-wing political parties on minimum wage rates. As predicted by power resource theory, the presence of left-wing parties in government should result in higher minimum wage rates. However, we postulate that the effect of left-wing parties is influenced by the degree of corporatism. More specifically, we find that the effect of left-wing parties is lower when corporatism is strong, because governments tend to consult social partners more and allow them to handle wage regulation. Our results confirm these hypotheses. They indicate that minimum wage rates tend to increase when governments are more left-wing and that this relation is stronger when corporatism is weak.

Mots-clés: salaire minimum; parti politique; corporatisme; redistribution

Keywords: minimum wage; political party; corporatism; redistribution

Amorcée en 2013 par une série de manifestations et de grèves, la campagne pour l'augmentation du salaire minimum à 15\$ aux États-Unis a entraîné un débat

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Chapter 6 Targeted Transfers, a Left-wing Policy? The Impact of Left-wing Governments and Corporatism on Transfers to Low-income Families in OECD Countries (1982-2019)⁵³

Left-wing parties have played a major role in the emergence and expansion of welfare states during the post-war period. Indeed, the presence of left-wing parties in government led to more generous social programs and better protection against social risks for the working class (Stephens, 1979; Korpi, 1983; Esping-Andersen, 1985). However, in recent decades, the relationship between the working class and left-wing parties weakened (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015), as lower economic growth and higher unemployment limited the capacity of left-wing parties to expand the welfare state (Pierson, 2001). There is now a wide consensus that the effect of political parties on the development of traditional security programs such as old-age pension has significantly declined since the 1980s (Huber and Stephens, 2001; Schmidt, 2010; Swank, 2013; Bandau and Ahrens, 2019). However, as traditional programs were retrenched, left-wing parties invested in other social programs to address different types of social risks such as lone-parenthood and child poverty. Indeed, recent literature on partisanship shows that left-wing parties have an important impact on policies related to social investment such as labor activation measures, public investment in child care and education (Huber and Stephens, 2014; Kühner, 2018).

In this article, I analyze the impact of left-wing parties on the level of family benefits, a topic that has been relatively neglected in the study of the welfare state.⁵⁴ Child benefit policies are important

⁵³ Article submitted to the *Journal of Social Policy*. See appendix C for proof of submission.

⁵⁴ Indeed, only few studies, relying on older data, have analyzed the impact of partisanship on child benefits (Wennemo, 1992; Montanari, 2000). Family benefits, however, have changed significantly over the last forty years as several governments introduced new types of child benefits targeted to lone-parents, replaced flat-rate benefits with income-tested ones and created tax credits to low-income workers with children (Ferrarini and al., 2013).

to consider given their substantial impact on poverty and inequality (Mechelen and Bradshaw, 2013; Wang and al., 2014). Moreover, the article makes two other important contributions to the literature. First, despite the trend towards more targeted benefits, the impact of left-wing parties on benefits received by low-income families have not been studied yet. This is an important gap in the literature on welfare policy as we do not know if the impact of partisanship varies in function of the income of the recipients. Second, I also draw on the literature on the institutional impact of industrial relations on partisanship (Rueda, 2008) to analyze the impact of corporatism on the relationship between left-wing parties and family benefits.

This article starts by an overview of the recent literature on the impact of partisanship on the welfare states. The data on family benefits assembled from the OECD taxing wages series and regrouping 17 OECD countries from 1982 to 2019 is then presented. Finally, the results and analysis are presented. They show a significant relationship between left-wing governments and the level of benefits received by low-income families. This relationship is, however, not significant for benefits received by middle-income families. The relationship with corporatism is also not significant. Those results are important as they show that the impact of left-wing parties on social policies is still important and is stronger for policies targeted to low-income families and policies related to the social investment paradigm.

Partisanship and the Welfare State

Politics has often been presented as a conflict between political parties pledging different types of economic and social policies. Studies on partisanship have obtained mixed results concerning the effect of left- and right-wing parties on the evolution of public policies and the overall size of the

government (Hibbs, 1992; Blais and al., 1993; Imbeau and al., 2001). However, there was a relative consensus that left-wing parties had a strong positive effect on the generosity of social programs such as unemployment insurance and old-age pension in the post-war era (Hicks and Swank, 1992; Schmidt, 1996; Imbeau and al., 2001; Huber and Stephens, 2001). According to power resource theory, the strength of groups representing the working-class, mainly unions and left-wing parties, led to more generous social programs and better protection against social risks (Stephens, 1979; Korpi, 1983; Esping-Andersen, 1985; Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Most welfare states have stopped their expansion in the 1970s and 1980s (Korpi and Palme, 2003; Starke, 2006). The increase in unemployment, the expansion of the service sector and lower economic growth since the 1980s have limited the capacity of left-wing governments to expand social programs (Pierson, 2001). However, the continuing popularity of social programs has limited the capacity of right-wing governments to significantly retrench the welfare state (Brooks and Manza, 2006). Consequently, the recent literature on partisanship shows that the effect of political parties on the welfare state has declined significantly since the post-war period (Huber and Stephens, 2001; Schmidt, 2010; Swank, 2013; Bandau and Ahrens, 2019). Those studies are mostly based on traditional social security programs such as old-age pension and unemployment insurance that are particularly influenced by economic and demographic factors such as rising unemployment and population aging. However, studies focusing on social investment policies such as labor activation measures, public investment in child care and education have shown that the presence of left-wing parties in government still has a significant impact on other types of social policies (Huber and Stephens, 2014; Kühner, 2018).

Despite the growing preoccupation with child poverty associated with the rise of the social investment paradigm (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2006), only two studies, both relying on data that predates the 1990s, have analyzed the impact of political parties on the generosity of family benefits. Wennemo (1992) demonstrated that the strength of left-wing parties⁵⁵ had a significant effect on the level of benefits received by middle-income families during the period of welfare state expansion (data from 1930 to 1985). The strength of Christian Democrat parties also had a significant positive effect on the level of direct cash transfers received by middle-income families. However, neither had a significant effect on tax-based benefits like tax rebates. Another, more recent study, analyzed the impact of left-wing parties on family benefits by contrasting the period of welfare state expansion between 1950 and 1970 with the period of retrenchment between 1975 and 1990 (Montanari, 2000). The presence of left-wing parties in government had no effect on the level of benefits received by a middle-income family in neither period and the presence of Christian Democrat parties in government was only significant during the expansion period. These studies show contrasting findings concerning the impact of partisanship on family benefits given to middle-income families. It is coherent with the theory that programs linked to life-cycle social risks such as having kids are less impacted by partisanship because a broader segment of the population benefits from them (Jensen, 2012). However, I believe that the political dynamics influencing the evolution of family benefits and family tax credits have significantly changed in recent years and thus that the question of the relationship between partisanship and family benefits should be revisited.

⁵⁵ She analyzed the relation at five years intervals (1950, 1955, 1960...) and measures the strength of left-wing parties as the average share of portfolios of left-wing parties and as the average vote share during the five preceding years.

Evolution of Family Benefits and Theoretical Expectations

Universal family benefits were introduced in most Western countries during the post-war period to improve the economic well-being of families and increase the birth rate. These benefits were mostly flat-rate cash transfers or tax allowances given to all families with children and were pushed by both left-wing and Christian Democratic parties (Wennemo, 1992). Christian Democrats and other conservatives and religious organizations such as the Catholic church supported the expansion of child benefits to promote the traditional family model (Wennemo, 1992). Indeed, child benefits encourage both large families, as benefits are often more generous as the number of children grows, as well as the male breadwinner model by compensating women who decide to have more children and stay at home rather than joining the labor force.

However, the economic and social transformations of the last decades created new needs and demands for social protection. Rising wage inequalities and the decline of the traditional family structure pushed governments to address new social risks such as lone-parenthood and in-work poverty (Bonoli, 2005). Many governments chose to replace flat-rate family benefits with income-based benefits and introduced new tax credits targeted to low-income and lone-parent families (Ferrarini and al., 2013). In-work tax credits towards low-wage workers were also introduced to stimulate employment (OECD, 2005). Increasing the targeting of family benefits allowed governments to contain the costs of these programs by freezing or cutting the family benefits for middle-income and high-income families, while providing more generous benefits to lone parents and working poor families. These transformations were also influenced by the social investment paradigm popular among left-wing parties that conceives social services and programs as investments to increase employment, create better jobs and improve social mobility (Huo, 2009;

Morel and al., 2012). The new targeted benefits increased the financial incentives of social assistance beneficiaries to work as they can continue to receive their targeted child benefits if they switch to low-wage work (Banting and Myles, 2013:23), while also receiving additional sums through in-work tax credits. Thus, instead of compensating parents with large families as a passive form of protection, parents, especially lone parents, are now encouraged to work. Also, in this paradigm, reducing child poverty through cash transfers becomes a priority, because it is conceived as an investment to improve future employment opportunities of less fortunate kids (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2006).

Recent research on partisanship shows that left-wing parties have an important impact on social investment policies such as labor activation measures and public investment in child care and education, even if their impact on traditional social protection has declined (Huber and Stephens, 2014; Kühner, 2018). Social investment policies are popular with middle-class professionals who now form a large part of the left-wing parties' electorate (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). Even though some of those policies, such as targeted child benefits, are mostly destined to low-income workers, middle-class professionals tend to support social-investment policies because of their post-materialistic view related to gender equality, work-family conciliation and equality of opportunities (Garrizman and al., 2018).

Targeted child benefits should also attract support from the more traditional working-class groups supporting left-wing parties as those programs are targeted to low-income workers and unemployed workers. Indeed, contrary to flat-rate child benefits that mostly protect against life-cycle risks, targeted benefits also protect against social risks related to the labor markets by

supplementing the income of low-wage workers and the unemployed. Recent studies also show that left-wing parties have a stronger effect on the generosity of social programs related to labor market risks like unemployment insurance than life-cycle risks like old age pension and health-care insurance (Jensen, 2012; Bandau and Ahrens, 2019). Public opinion is more polarized when it comes to labor market-related risks as low-income individuals prefer stronger unemployment protection compared to high-income individuals (Busemeyer and al., 2009). Indeed, low-income individuals are more exposed to labor market risks like unemployment (Cusack and al., 2006). Expanding programs addressing labor market risks might thus be useful for left-wing parties to mobilize their base, who are more exposed to labor market risks, but also more favorable to redistribution between rich and poor (Jensen, 2012). I thus believe that left-wing parties support the expansion of targeted child benefits more than right-wing parties as targeted child benefits fits with both a traditional conception of redistribution popular among low-income citizens and with the social-investment paradigm popular among the middle-class segment of their electorate.

Hypothesis 1: Left-wing governments raise the level of family benefits received by low-income families more than right-wing governments.

On the other hand, I believe that left-wing and right-wing parties have the same impact on the level of benefits received by middle-income families. Indeed, I believe that right-wing parties might also be interested in increasing the level of benefits received by middle-income families. Historically, both left-wing parties and Christian-Democrat parties have supported the creation and expansion of universal child benefits (Wennemo, 1992). For left-wing parties, universal child benefits are a program that benefits both the working class and middle-class parts of its electorate.

For right-wing parties, universal child benefits can also be used to promote the traditional family model that corresponds to the more traditional social values associated with Christian-Democrat and other conservative parties as opposed to the libertarian values that put more emphasis on encouraging women to work (Garrizman and al., 2018; Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). Also, flat-rate benefits and tax allowances have less of a redistributive impact. The electorate of right-wing parties is generally less favorable towards redistribution between rich and poor, but is generally favorable to redistribution towards other social groups such as parents or retirees (Busemeyer and al., 2009; Jensen, 2012). Finally, tax allowances related to children can be presented by right-wing parties as tax cuts that reduce the fiscal burden of middle-class families. As such, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The level of benefits received by middle-income families is not influenced by government's ideology.

Corporatism

The evolution of family benefits is also influenced by institutional factors. In most countries with a strong and coordinated collective bargaining system like Germany and Sweden, transfers to families are still flat-rate benefits. Indeed, family benefits in high corporatist countries are only income-tested in the Netherlands and no country has a tax-credit program targeted to low-income workers. Therefore, the transfers in those countries achieve mostly horizontal redistribution which means supporting families for the additional cost of having children no matter their income. I believe that in high corporatist countries, left-wing governments have less incentive to introduce new targeted benefits, because governments tend to rely on a strong collective bargaining system

to limit inequalities between workers and thus do not try to implement specific policies targeted at low-income workers (Wallerstein, 1999; Hall et Soskice, 2003; Rueda, 2008).

However, since the 1970s, governments in countries with a low degree of corporatism like Canada and the United Kingdom have introduced new income-tested family benefits, family tax credits and in-work benefits targeted to low-income families (Ferrarini and al., 2013). In those countries, family benefits mostly redistribute income between different income groups, thus achieving vertical redistribution. In the absence of strong unions, low-income workers and other social groups concentrate their efforts on the governments, instead of the collective bargaining system to reduce inequalities. Partisanship thus has more impact on policies that reduce inequalities between workers like minimum wage and government spending in countries with a low degree of corporatism (Rueda, 2008). Similarly, one study has also shown that the presence of left-wing parties in government has a positive impact on inequalities between workers in countries with a low degree of corporatism, but not on those with high corporatism (Pontusson, Rueda and Way, 2002). I thus postulate that the effect of left-wing parties on the evolution of benefits to low-income families is stronger in countries with a low degree of corporatism because left-wing parties have more incentives to reduce inequalities between workers through family benefits. I, however, believe that corporatism has no impact on the relationship between left-wing governments and benefits received by middle-income families. Indeed, those benefits do not aim to reduce inequalities between workers and thus do not compensate for a weak collective bargaining system.

Hypothesis 3: The effect of left-wing governments on the level of family benefits received by low-income families is stronger when the degree of corporatism is low.

Method

Data and variables

To test the hypotheses, the level of family benefits received by different types of family, low- and middle-income families in particular must be analyzed. Since the 1990s, the conventional approach to measure the generosity of social programs is to divide the value of the benefits received by an average production worker by his average wage (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Korpi and Palme, 2003; Allan and Scruggs, 2004; Bandau and Ahrens, 2019; SOFI, 2019). This type of indicator reflects the level of benefits received by middle-income families. For middle-income families, the family benefits received by a family earning 100% of the average production worker wage divided by the average production wage is thus measured as previous studies on child benefits have done (Wenemo, 1992; Montanari, 2000).

For low-income families, I build on this measure and calculated the benefits received by a family earning 50% of the average production worker wage divided by the average production worker wage. Dividing the amount of benefits by the average production worker wage allows comparisons through time and across countries by controlling for inflation and wage increases. A worker earning 50% of the average production worker wage is a typical low-wage worker (less than 67% of the median wage) that earns around the minimum wage if he or she works full-time in a country with a relatively high minimum wage (OECD, 2020). Finally, to examine if the relationship varies according to the family situation, as many countries offer more generous benefits to lone-parent families, the value of the benefits for both lone-parent and two-earner families for both income levels is measured.

Benefits are measured for families with two children of 7 and 11 years old which is similar to how the OECD measured family benefits in the Taxing Wages series. The level of child benefit and tax credits received by these families will be calculated from the formulas given by the OECD through its Taxing Wages series (OECD, 1980/2021). The average production worker wage is also available through the OECD Taxing Wages series.⁵⁶

Our categorization of family benefits is relatively large and include universal family benefits, income-tested family benefits, tax credits related to the presence of children, targeted in-work tax credits and tax allowances related to the presence of children or lone-parent status.⁵⁷ This categorization is similar to the one used by the Child Benefits database calculated by the Swedish Institute for Social Research (SOFI, 2019) and which is a reference for Wennemo (1992) and Montanari (2000).⁵⁸ The analysis includes the following countries for the period 1982-2019: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada⁵⁹, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States. These countries have all at least one child benefit program or an in-work tax credit for parents and have a clear partisan cleavage between left- and right-wing political parties.⁶⁰ The analysis starts in 1982 because the OECD started to provide precise descriptions of tax rates and benefits in the 1982

⁵⁶ The OECD used the average production wage up to 2004 and then switch to the average wage. To keep the continuity of the data, the average wage growth rate to extrapolate the average production worker wage after 2004 is used. This method is similar to the one use by the Comparative Welfare Entitlements Dataset (Scruggs and al., 2014)

⁵⁷ Except for the quotient system in France that modifies the amount of taxes paid according to the number of children. The inclusion of tax allowance is necessary because in some cases governments have transformed the structure of benefits by replacing tax allowances related to children with direct cash transfers.

⁵⁸ This database is not used because the benefits are calculated only once every 5 years.

⁵⁹ Only transfers from the federal government are included.

⁶⁰ Italy, Greece and Switzerland have been excluded from the analysis. Data for Italy and Greece could not be compiled with the Taxing wage series, while the ideological composition of governments in Switzerland does not vary much.

edition of its Taxing Wage series. In Table 6.1, the average change in family benefits for different types of families is shown. The average change is positive, but inferior to 0.5% for every type of families.

Studies on the impact of partisanship generally use the share of left-wing political parties in the cabinet measured annually or through a cumulative average (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Huber and Stephens, 2001; Korpi and Palme, 2003; Allan and Scruggs, 2004). However, this indicator has several limits as it considers that all non-left-wing parties have similar position towards the welfare state. For example, Christian Democrat parties which are favorable to the welfare state are in the same category as conservative parties that promise a reduction of the size of the welfare state (Döring and Schwander, 2015). Also, this indicator assumes that the interests and positions of left-wing parties are similar between countries and through times. I thus decided to use an indicator where the ideology of political parties can vary through times and between different left-wing parties. The indicator is based on the left-right ideological positions of political parties provided by the Comparative Manifesto Database. The indicator goes from 100, which indicates an electoral manifesto that contains only pledges associated with left-wing ideology, to -100, which indicates an electoral manifesto that contains only pledges associated with right-wing ideology (Budge, 2013).⁶¹ This indicator is based on the quantification of themes associated with the left-right divide in electoral manifestos.⁶² A political party that has multiple pledges linked to economic regulations or extension of social programs would thus be considered left-wing and have a positive value. The data used are coming from the Seki-Williams Annual Government Partisanship database that

⁶¹ The direction of this indicator is reversed to better correspond with the hypotheses.

⁶² The indicator is formed by combining the number of quasi-sentences associated with themes classified as right-wing minus the number of quasi-sentences classified as left-wing divided by the total number of quasi-sentences link to a theme (Budge, 2013).

combines data from the *Comparative Manifesto Project* to create an indicator of government's ideology where each party is weighted according to their share of portfolios in cabinet (Seki and Williams, 2014).⁶³ Most studies on partisanship use data for each country-year combination or a cumulative average of the last few years. This type of data can, however, introduce bias and artificially reduce the effect of political parties because the ideology of governments does not change every year (Schmitt, 2016). I thus calculate the effect of government ideology on the difference between the value of family benefits received during the year of an election⁶⁴ and the value of family benefits received during the year of the next election as the data are based on electoral manifestos.⁶⁵

As shown in Table 6.1, the average ideology of government is around 0 (0.02) with an important variation corresponding to changes in government. According to the first hypothesis, the effect of government's ideology on the evolution of transfers and tax credits should be positive which would indicate that left-wing governments (positive values) are associated with an increase of family benefits for low-income families. As a robustness test, models with the share of left-wing parties in the cabinet as this a common measure used in studies on partisanship are presented in Table 6.A1 and 6.A2 of the appendix.

⁶³ For the data between 2013 and 2019, I calculate the government ideology indicator with the Comparative Manifesto Project directly.

⁶⁴ Family benefits are calculated according to the budget adopted in each election year.

⁶⁵ In the few cases where there were small changes in the composition of a coalition between two elections or if a coalition is very short-lived, I took data from the coalition configuration that lasts the longest.

Table 6.1: Descriptive statistics of variables

	Mean	Standard deviation
Change in benefits low-income lone-parent	0.62	2.87
Change in benefits low-income two parents	0.31	2.11
Change in benefits middle-income lone-parent	0.18	2.17
Change in benefits middle-income two parents	0.37	2.73
Government's ideology (electoral manifestos)	0.02	17.07
Share of left-wing parties in government	0.44	0.44
Corporatism (dichotomous)	0.51	0.5
Government's surplus/deficit	-2.24	4.31
Real GDP growth	2.60	2.21
Inflation	3.29	3.37
Unemployment	7.63	3.88
Countries	17	
Observations	157	

The indicator for the degree of corporatism is the coordination of wage-setting indicator available through the *Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts database* (Visser, 2016). Wage-setting coordination between social partners is necessary to impose wage floors across different industries that can limit inequalities between workers and families. Contrary to other indicators of corporatism, this indicator is available for a large number of countries and years (Kenworthy, 2003). I transform the wage-setting coordination indicator that has 5 different values into a dichotomous variable to have enough countries in each category.⁶⁶ Countries with weak corporatism (Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, United States) have collective bargaining systems where coordination between social partners either occurs mainly at the firm/industry level or only produce weak guidelines at the national level, while countries with a strong degree of corporatism (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden) have a collective

⁶⁶Countries with a value of 1, 2 or 3 are considered low corporatism countries, countries with a value of 4 and 5 are considered high corporatism countries.

bargaining system where national standards concerning wages are imposed at the national level. Ireland is classified as a corporatist country between 1987 to 2009, because during this period, social pacts were negotiated between unions, business associations and governments to fix national standards in wage-setting. However, Ireland is considered a low corporatist country before 1987 and after 2009, because those social pacts were not being negotiated (Teague and Donaghey, 2015). To confirm hypothesis 3, we expect left-wing governments to be associated with an increase of family benefits for low-income families under low *corporatism* while a smaller effect under *corporatism*.

Control Variables

In the model, various economic indicators often used in studies analyzing the impact of partisanship on social policies such as GDP growth and unemployment are included to control for the economic situation during the government's term (Huber and Stephens, 1993; Allan and Scruggs, 2004). The unemployment rate is measured as a share of the labor force and comes from the "Annual macro-economic database of the European" (AMECO, 2020). GDP growth is measured as the real GDP growth per capita and comes from the OECD database (OECD, 2020). Unlike most pension and unemployment programs that are financed through payroll taxes and are calculated through replacement rates, family benefits are financed through general revenues and need to be indexed yearly to maintain the same level of benefit (Palier, 2006). This is why there is a control variable for inflation as family benefits are generally pegged to a consumer price index. Inflation is measured as the variation of the CPI index from the OECD database (OECD, 2020). These types of programs are also particularly vulnerable to cuts or an indexation freeze to reduce deficits. It is also important to control for the fiscal situation at the beginning of a government's

term, the deficit/surplus ⁶⁷ as a percent of GDP during the first year of the government's term is thus included as an additional control variable. This indicator is available through the OECD database (OECD, 2020). The average fiscal balance at the beginning of a government's mandate is a deficit equivalent to 2.2% of GDP as shown in Table 6.1.

Model

The data used in this analysis correspond to *Time-Series-Cross-Section* data (TSCS) because they have a cross-national dimension with a low number of countries (N=17) and a longitudinal dimension because there are multiple observations by countries through times (each government terms between 1982-2019), for 157 observations.

TSCS data allow the estimation of the between and within-effects of the predictors (Bell and Jones, 2015). For example, the between-effect of government ideology would indicate whether countries with left-wing governments redistribute more than countries with right-wing governments. On the other hand, the within-effect of government ideology would indicate whether left-wing governments redistribute more than right-wing governments on average within each country. The hypothesis, based on the effect of government ideology on the evolution of family benefits, is more compatible with an analysis of the longitudinal dimension (*within-effect*) because it is the ideology of each government that should influence the evolution of family benefits through times within each country. For the third hypothesis, I am also interested in comparing whether this partisanship within-effect is greater under non-corporatist countries than corporatist countries. An interaction

⁶⁷ Deficits are coded with negative values and surplus with positive values.

term between the variable *corporatism* and *government ideology*⁶⁸ is thus included. Therefore, I use an ordinary least squares regression model with fixed effects for each country to analyze the average effect of government ideology in each country (*within-effect*). Including fixed effects for each country controls for institutional variables (time-invariant variables measured at the country level) omitted from the model and account as well for the between-effect mentioned above. The use of cluster-robust standard errors at the country level is inadequate given the low number of country clusters (Esarey and Menger, 2019). For this reason, I use linear regression models with small-sample corrections for cluster-robust standard errors developed by Pustejovsky and Tipton (2016).

Results

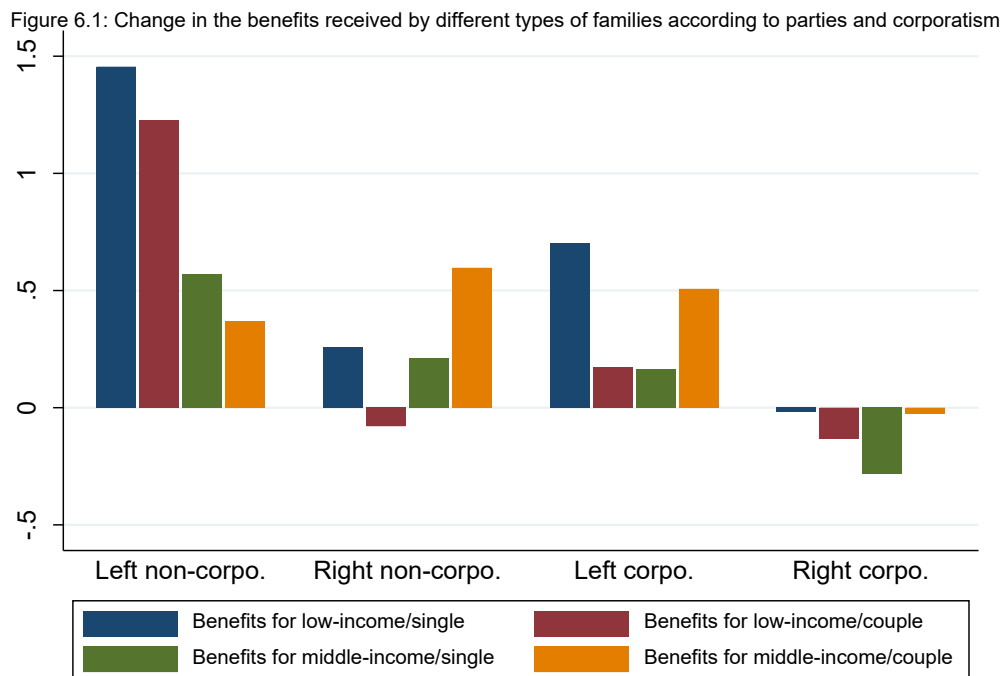
Descriptive Statistics

First of all, the variation of benefits received by different types of family is presented in Figure 6.1. The first four columns show that benefits tend to increase when left-wing⁶⁹ are in power in countries with a low degree of corporatism. As predicted by the hypothesis, the increase is much more important when governments are more left-wing. Indeed, the next four columns show that when right-wing governments are in power, the benefits tend to stay constant, with the exception of benefits received by a middle-income two earners family. Also, the increase in benefits (1.5%) for low-income families is greater than for middle income families (around 0.5%). When we look

⁶⁸ Given that the model includes country-year fixed-effects, it is not possible to include the dummy variable *corporatism* in the model – only its interaction with *low-wage workers*. This does not amount to a model specification error, however, given that the country-year fixed-effects already capture the effect of corporatism (Andreass and al., 2013: chapter 3).

⁶⁹ For this graph, left-wing governments are governments that have left-right indicator score below the median of their country.

at countries with a strong degree of corporatism, benefits still increase more when governments are more left-wing, but the difference is much smaller.



Results for Low-income Families

The first two models below analyze the impact of government ideology on the evolution of family benefits received by two types of low-income families. These models serve to determine if a government ideology has an impact on policy based on redistribution between income groups.

Table 6.2: The impact of government ideology on family benefits received by low-income families (electoral manifestos)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Lone-parent	Two-parents	Corporatism 1	Corporatism 2
Government's ideology	0.03 (0.01)**	0.03 (0.01)***	0.04 (0.02)**	0.04 (0.01)***
Corporatism x Government's ideology			-0.02 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Government's surplus/deficit	0.11 (0.07)	0.18 (0.08)**	0.11 (0.07)	0.18 (0.09)**
Real GDP growth	0.05 (0.11)	0.06 (0.08)	0.06 (0.11)	0.07 (0.08)
Inflation	0.12 (0.13)	0.12 (0.11)	0.12 (0.12)	0.12 (0.11)
Unemployment	0.04 (0.08)	0.05 (0.07)	0.05 (0.08)	0.05 (0.07)
Countries	17	17	17	17
Observations	157	157	157	157
R ²	0.151	0.191	0.154	0.199

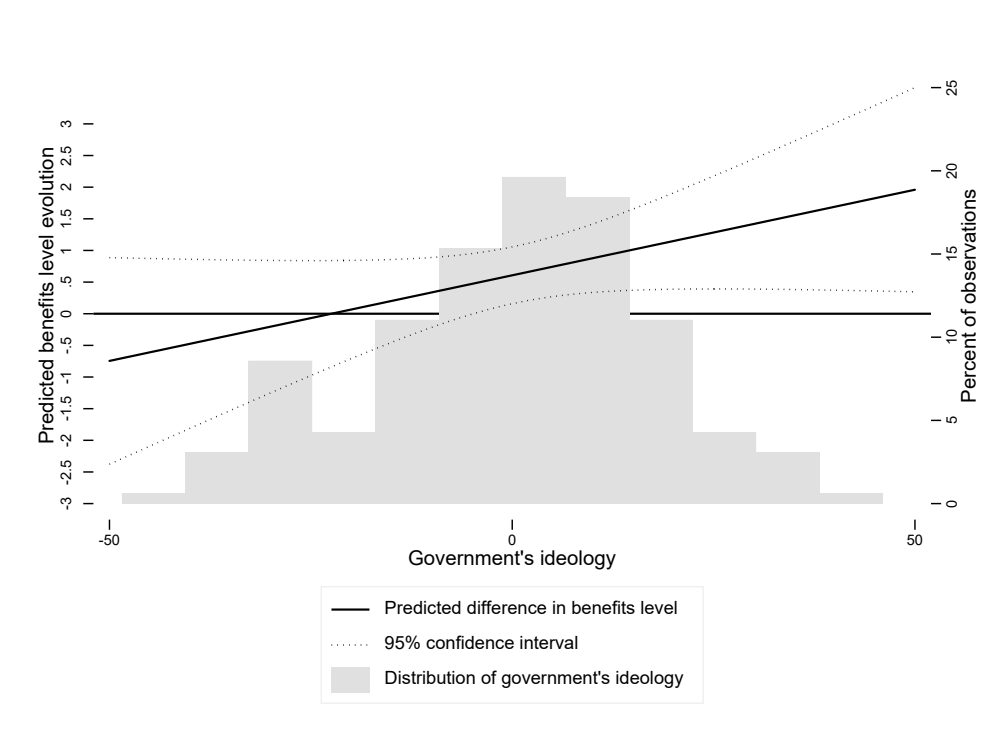
Clustered robust standard errors with small-sample correction in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. OLS with fixed effects

In the first column of table 6.2, the results for the relationship between left-wing governments measured through electoral manifestos (-100/100 scale with most governments located between -30 & 30) and benefits received by a low-income lone-parent family (50% of the average production worker wage) are presented. The first hypothesis postulates that left-wing governments increase the level of family benefits further than right-wing governments. The results shown in Table 6.2 indicate that the regression coefficient for the government's ideology measured through the electoral manifesto is positive and statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The results are similar for low-income two-parents' families albeit statistically significant at the 0.01 level. With respect to the control variables, only the fiscal surplus/deficit at the beginning of the government's term for two-parents' families is significant, as surpluses tend to increase the level of benefits. The results are similar with left parties' cabinet share: the effects of left-wing governments are positive and statistically significant (the results are in Table 6.A1 of the appendix).

Figure 6.2 below presents the predicted values of family benefits for lone-parents (first model of Table 6.2). A center-left government (the average score for a left-wing government which is 10 on the government ideology scale from -100 to 100) is predicted to increase the amount of benefits received by a low-income lone-parent family by 0.88 points of percentage of the average production worker wage (about 462\$US with the 2016 American average wage as a reference). On the other hand, the results indicate that right-wing governments do not decrease family benefits much; the predicted changes in benefits are not statistically different than 0 for right-wing governments. The effect of government's ideology becomes positive and statistically significant at around 0 on the -100/100 left-right scale.

Figure 6.2: The impact of government ideology on family benefits received by low-income lone-parent families (electoral manifestos)



The next two models analyze the effect of corporatism on the relationship between government ideology and family benefits for the 2 types of families with an interaction effect between the degree of corporatism and the government ideology. The second hypothesis postulates that the effect of left-wing government on the level of benefits received by a low-income family is stronger when the degree of corporatism is weak than when the degree of corporatism is high. In columns 3 and 4, the coefficient for government ideology is stronger in low corporatist countries and statistically significant at the 0.05 level for lone-parent and at the 0.01 level for two-parent families. As predicted the effect of corporatism on the relationship between government ideology is also negative for both lone-parent and two-parent low-income families. However, the interaction term is not statistically significant at the 0.1 level for both lone- and two-parent families. This null result

could be explained by the relatively strong polarization on welfare policies in a few countries with a high degree of corporatism like Nordic countries (Nygård, 2006). If Nordic countries are excluded, for example, the interaction coefficient for corporatism becomes negative and significant at the 0.01 level for both low-income lone-parents and couples (See Table 6.B1 in the Appendix). The impact of partisanship is especially strong in Sweden. Indeed, in the economic crisis of the early 1990s the Swedish government stopped to automatically index several social benefits such as unemployment benefits and child benefits and never restored automatic indexation. This led to important indexation of child benefits under social-democratic led governments and freezes under right-wing governments.

Results for Middle-Income Families

For the next models, the same relationships for family benefits received by a middle-income lone-parent and two-parent families (100% of the average production worker wage) are analyzed. The models serve to determine if a government's ideology has an impact on policies that seek to increase the well-being of families regardless of their income level.

Table 6.3: The impact of government ideology on family benefits received by middle-income families (electoral manifestos)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Lone-parent	Two-parents	Corporatism 1	Corporatism 2
Government's ideology	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)
Corporatism x Government's ideology			0.01 (0.04)	0.03 (0.02)
Government's surplus/deficit	0.17 (0.09)*	0.13 (0.06)**	0.16 (0.10)*	0.13 (0.07)*
Real GDP growth	-0.11 (0.06)*	0.08 (0.08)	-0.12 (0.06)**	0.07 (0.09)
Inflation	0.06 (0.10)	0.04 (0.06)	0.05 (0.10)	0.03 (0.06)
Unemployment	0.07 (0.06)	0.07 (0.07)	0.07 (0.06)	0.06 (0.08)
Countries	17	17	17	17
Observations	157	157	157	157
R^2	0.141	0.172	0.141	0.180

Clustered robust standard errors with small-sample correction in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. OLS with fixed effects

In the first column of Table 6.3, the results for the relationship between left-wing governments measured through electoral manifestos and benefits received by a middle-class family (100% of average production worker wage) are presented. Recall that the third hypothesis postulates that

left-wing governments do not have an impact on the level of family benefit received by middle-income families. The results shown in Table 6.3 indicate that the regression coefficient for the government ideology is positive for lone-parent families and negative for two-parent families, but neither are statistically significant even at the 0.1 level. The effect of corporatism on the impact of left-wing governments is positive, but not significant. Thus, a government's ideology does not explain the variation of family benefits received by middle-income families. This is consistent with previous research on family benefits and with the hypotheses. With respect to control variables, the fiscal deficit at the beginning of the government's term is significant for both types of families, while GDP growth is significant for transfers received by lone-parent families. The results are similar if the left parties' cabinet share is used instead: the effects of left-wing governments are positive, but not statistically significant (the results are in Table 6.A1 of the appendix). In short, left-wing governments do not have any effect on benefits received by middle-income families. In accordance with the hypotheses, their impact is limited to the benefits received by low-income families.

Discussion and Conclusion

The strength of left-wing political parties is one of the most important factors to explain the expansion of the welfare state in the post-era according to power resource theory (Stephens, 1979; Korpi, 1983; Esping-Andersen, 1985). However, most studies analyzed the evolution of old-age pensions and unemployment insurance, while only two studies analyzed the impact of political parties on the evolution of family benefits (Wennemo, 1992; Montanari, 2000). The importance given to child poverty by left-wing parties since the 1980s (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2006) and

the transformation in the structure of family benefits led me to study the evolution of family benefits with more recent data.

One of the biggest changes in the last decades is the introduction of income-tested benefits and in-work benefits targeted to low-income families and workers. The targeting of family benefits is, however, strongly associated with the labor market structure. Countries with a relatively high degree of corporatism like Nordic countries kept their flat-rate family benefits and did not introduce new targeted benefits to reduce child poverty. However, in countries with a low degree of corporatism like Canada, New Zealand or the United States, governments have introduced a variety of income-tested family benefits and in-work tax credits to reduce child poverty and inequalities. Even though corporatism has an impact on the structure of child benefits, it does not seem to have an effect on the relationship between left-wing government and family benefits received by low-income families, though data with more countries would be useful to validate those results. It could be explained by the relatively strong polarization on welfare policies in Nordic countries.

These transformations led me to study the impact of left-wing parties on benefits received by low-income families and middle-income families separately. After compiling data on family benefits with OECD documents for 17 countries between 1982 and 2019, the results confirm the impact of left-wing governments on the evolution of family benefit received by low-income families. These results support the theory put forward by Jensen (2012), the impact of left-wing governments is stronger when social policies clearly redistribute between different income groups and weaker for social programs related to life-cycle social risks. Family benefits offer an interesting test to this

theory because we can analyze the vertical (redistribute between income groups) and horizontal (reduce risks linked to life cycles) dimensions of redistribution with the same social program. Other policies targeted towards low-income citizens like minimum wage are strongly influenced by the ideology of the government (Wilson, 2017). The influence of left-wing governments on those policies, especially in low corporatism countries followed decades of labor-market deregulation which created a large class of low-wage workers vulnerable to poverty (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Wilson, 2017). This is interesting as this shows that the impact of left-wing parties could potentially not only vary in function of the type of social programs, but also vary in function of the income of recipients.

APPENDIX A

In Table 6.A1, the results for the relationship between left-wing governments measured through the left-wing parties' cabinet share⁷⁰ and benefits received by a low-income family are presented. The first column indicates that the regression coefficient for the government's ideology measured with the cabinet share of left-wing parties is positive like in Table 6.2, and statistically significant at the 0.05 level for lone-parent families and at the 0.01 level for two-parent families.

Table 6.A1: The impact of government ideology on family benefits received by low-income families (left cabinet share)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Lone-parent	Two-parents	Corporatism 1	Corporatism 2
Share of left-wing parties in government	1.34 (0.56)**	1.27 (0.34)***	1.53 (0.78)**	1.40 (0.41)***
Corporatism x Left share			-0.61 (0.98)	-0.39 (0.61)
Government's surplus/deficit	0.15 (0.06)**	0.22 (0.09)**	0.14 (0.07)**	0.21 (0.08)**
Real GDP growth	0.03 (0.12)	0.04 (0.08)	0.03 (0.11)	0.04 (0.08)
Inflation	0.11 (0.11)	0.11 (0.10)	0.11 (0.11)	0.11 (0.09)
Unemployment	0.04 (0.08)	0.05 (0.06)	0.05 (0.07)	0.05 (0.07)
Countries	17	17	17	17
Observations	157	157	157	157
R^2	0.170	0.219	0.172	0.221

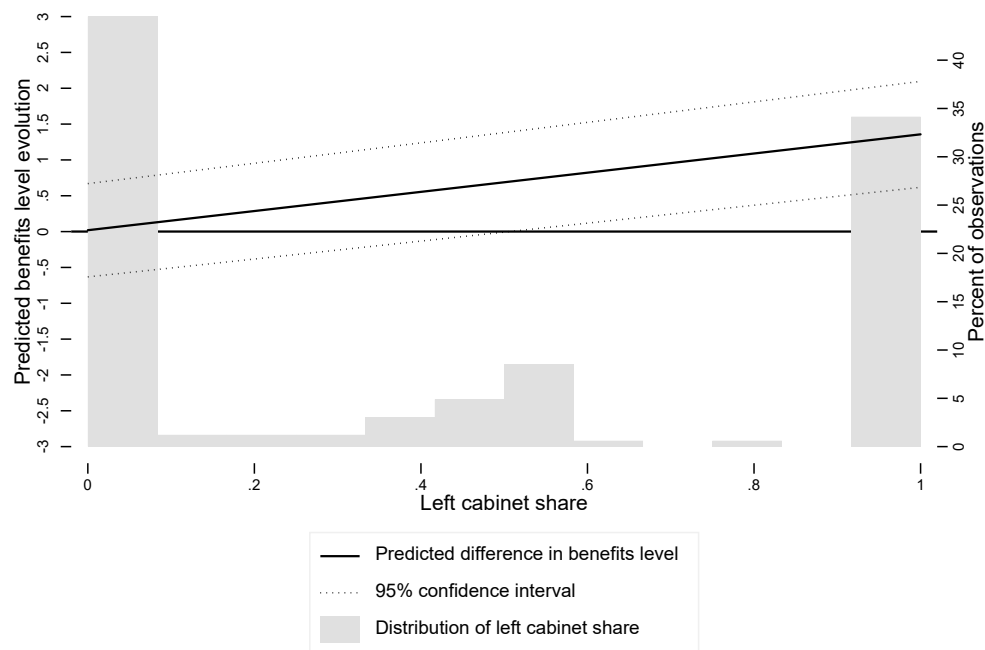
Clustered robust standard errors with small-sample correction in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. OLS with fixed effects

As shown in Figure 6.A1, a center-left government (100% of left-wing parties in cabinet) is predicted to increase the amount of benefits received a low-income family by 1.36% of the average production worker wage (about 715\$US with the 2016 American average production as a reference), while the increase for a right-wing government is not significant. As in Table 6.2, the interactions with corporatism are not statistically significant. In summary, left-wing governments are associated with increased benefits for low-income families, while right-wing governments have no significant effect on the evolution of benefits. To know if the effect of left-wing governments is limited to benefits received by low-income families, the same models for benefits received by middle-income families are analyzed in the next section.

⁷⁰ To measure the share of left-wing parties in the cabinet (our first indicator), the *Parliaments and governments database* is used. This database (Döring and Manow, 2018) offers a left-right indicator created from different experts' survey such as Chapel Hill Expert Survey. Political parties that have a value of less than 5 on the 0 to 10 scale are considered left-wing parties. Table 6.1 indicating the mean and standard deviation for each independent variable, shows that on average 44% of portfolios in the cabinet are distributed to left-wing parties.

Figure 6.A1: The impact of government ideology on family benefits received by low-income lone-parent families (left cabinet share)



In Table 6.A2, the results for the relationship between left-wing governments measured through the left-wing parties' cabinet share and benefits received by a middle-income family are presented. The first column indicates that the coefficient for the government's ideology measured with the cabinet share of left-wing parties is not statistically significant even at the 0.1 level for lone-parent families and for two-parent families.

Table 6.A2: The impact of government ideology on family benefits received by middle-income families(left cabinet share)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Lone-parent	Two-parents	Corporatism 1	Corporatism 2
Share of left-wing parties in government	0.82 (0.51)	0.21 (0.65)	0.74 (0.70)	-0.03 (0.89)
Corporatism x Left share			0.25 (0.82)	0.76 (1.00)
Government's surplus/deficit	0.19 (0.09)**	0.14 (0.06)**	0.19 (0.09)**	0.15 (0.06)***
Real GDP growth	-0.13 (0.07)*	0.07 (0.09)	-0.13 (0.07)*	0.07 (0.09)
Inflation	0.05 (0.09)	0.04 (0.06)	0.05 (0.09)	0.04 (0.06)
Unemployment	0.08 (0.06)	0.09 (0.07)	0.08 (0.06)	0.08 (0.07)
Countries	17	17	17	17
Observations	157	157	157	157
R ²	0.162	0.171	0.163	0.174

Clustered robust standard errors with small-sample correction in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. OLS with fixed effects

APPENDIX B

In Table 6.B1, the results for the interaction between corporatism and left-wing governments without Nordic countries are presented. The second row indicates that the interaction coefficient for corporatism and left-wing governments becomes statistically significant at the 0.01 level for both lone-parent families and couples if Nordic countries are excluded (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) from the analysis.

Table 6.B1: The impact of government ideology on family benefits received by low-income families (without Nordic countries)

	(1)	(2)
	Corporatism 1 parent	Corporatism 2 parents
Government's ideology	0.04 (0.02)**	0.04 (0.01)***
Corporatism x Government's ideology	-0.08 (0.03)***	-0.09 (0.03)***
Government's deficit/surplus	0.17 (0.08)**	0.30 (0.07)***
Real GDP growth	0.17 (0.09)*	0.07 (0.16)
Inflation	0.04 (0.15)	0.04 (0.14)
Unemployment	0.02 (0.10)	0.11 (0.04)**
Countries	13	13
Observations	121	121
R ²	0.149	0.208

Cluster robust standard errors with small-sample correction in parentheses.

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. OLS with fixed effects

APPENDIX C

Proof of submission to the *Journal of Social Policy*.

Submission Confirmation



Thank you for your submission

Submitted to Journal of Social Policy
Manuscript ID JOSP-2022-0204
Title Targeted transfers, a left-wing policy? The impact of left-wing governments and corporatism on transfers to low-income families in OECD countries (1982-2019)
Authors Durocher, Dominic
Date Submitted 24-Aug-2022

Conclusion

The decline of the industrial sector and the rise of new left and right parties have transformed the study of electoral cleavages in recent decades. The literature on class realignment shows that socio-cultural values have become very important to explain the vote of different social groups in society (Kriesi and al., 2008; Inglehart, 2008). This, however, does not mean that economic cleavages are irrelevant to understand contemporary partisan politics. Indeed, socio-economic issues are still important to differentiate left- and right-wing parties and their electorates.

In recent years, the issue of low-wage work has become prominent in the electoral campaigns of several countries such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The mobilization of low-wage workers who are often dependent on government policies to ensure decent working conditions led left-wing parties to address this issue by pledging to increase the minimum wage. Despite this recent mobilization, the issue of low-wage work has rarely been studied in political science. We do not know for example if the institutions regulating labor markets influence the electoral behaviors of low-wage workers and if left-wing governments influence the policies targeted to those workers. In the next sections, the major theoretical and empirical contributions of this thesis are presented as well as potential research avenues.

Theoretical Contributions

Combining the Analysis of Electoral Behaviors and Social Policies

In political science, studies of electoral cleavages and of social policies have generally been made in silos (Häusermann and al., 2013). Researchers should more often take both into account to improve our understanding of partisan dynamics around socio-economic issues. This is the

approach I favored in this thesis by studying the positioning of political parties on low-wage work issues, the electoral behaviors of low-wage workers and the impact of left-wing governments on minimum wage and cash transfers. Combining these different elements allowed me to offer a more comprehensive picture of the issue of low-wage work in electoral politics and propose original hypotheses. Indeed, the starting point of this thesis was the literature on minimum wages. Qualitative research on the minimum wage shows that this issue has become progressively more important in the political debates of several countries especially where the collective bargaining is weak (Meyer, 2016; Wilson, 2017). Those findings led me to postulate that low-wage workers should vote for left-wing parties, especially in countries with a weak bargaining system. This hypothesis is counterintuitive for researchers that only study electoral cleavages, because historically class cleavages have been stronger in countries with strong unions and bargaining system (Knutsen, 2006). In turn, analyzing the electoral behavior of low-wage workers can help us to explain why left-wing parties still have a strong impact on the level of minimum wages and cash transfers received by low-income families. Instead of relying on untested assumptions about the electorate of left-wing parties to explain the actions of left-wing parties like many studies on partisanship, this thesis provides evidence that left-wing parties have electoral incentives to push forward those policies.

Impact of Corporatism on Socio-economic Cleavages

The most important theoretical contribution of this thesis is to show that institutions regulating the labor market are essential to understand some of the realignments of socio-economic cleavages in recent years. The argument proposed in this thesis is thus that the importance of different socio-economic cleavages in each country vary in function of the institutions regulating the labor markets.

The different articles in this thesis show that, in countries with a weakly coordinated bargaining system like the United States or the United Kingdom, the issue of low pay is more salient than in countries with a strong bargaining system like Belgium or Sweden. In countries with a low degree of corporatism, low-wage workers are much more dependent on policies implemented by governments such as minimum wages and targeted cash transfers to ensure decent working conditions, because most of these workers are not covered by collective bargaining. This creates incentives for left-wing parties in low corporatist countries to specifically mention issues related to low-wage work in their electoral manifestos as shown in chapters 3. This could in turn influence low-wage workers to vote for left-wing parties in those countries. Indeed, the results presented in chapter 4 show that low-wage workers tend to vote more for left-wing parties in countries with a low degree of corporatism. As shown in chapter 5, this electoral dynamic is also reflected in the policies implemented by left-wing governments, as the impact of left-wing governments on the level of minimum wages is stronger in countries with a low degree of corporatism. The impact of corporatism is especially interesting considering that socio-economic cleavages were considered less important in countries with low unionization and weak bargaining system because class voting was weaker in those countries (Knutsen, 2006; Edlund, 2007).

The Vote for Radical Parties

The recent literature on class voting shows that the working class tend to vote for either left parties or radical right parties – and increasingly for the latter in the last decades (Emmeneger and al., 2015; Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015; Knutsen, 2018). One major contribution of this thesis is to propose a theoretical framework to better understand how institutional factors can influence the vote of low-wage workers for either left- or radical right parties. The analyses in chapter 4 show

that low-wage workers tend to vote less for radical right parties and more for center-left parties in countries with a low degree of corporatism. Indeed, in these countries, low-wage workers receive clear signals that left-wing parties seek to improve their living conditions with pledges specifically addressing the issue of low wages or the need to increase the minimum wage. On the other hand, in countries with a high degree of corporatism, left-wing parties do not make specific pledges or implement policies targeted towards low-wage workers, which can create an opening for radical right parties. Indeed, results show that low-wage workers tend to vote less for center-left and more for radical right parties in countries with a high degree of corporatism. The analysis of the electoral platforms in chapter 3 shows that the vote of low-wage workers for radical right parties cannot be explained by the position of radical right parties on issues related to low-wage work. Indeed, they mention low-wage work issues as often as other right parties and much less often than left-wing parties. The lack of mobilization through economic policies by center-left parties could, however, push low-wage workers to vote for radical right parties that are closer to their socio-cultural views, notably on immigration. Also, contrary to expectations, corporatism has no impact on the vote of low-wage workers for radical left parties. The analysis of the electoral platforms also shows that radical left parties tend to mention low-wage work issues as often as center-left parties.

The Impact of Left-wing Parties on Targeted Policies

This thesis also made an important theoretical contribution to the field of social policy. The literature on partisanship has no clear theoretical expectation on the impact that left-wing parties have on benefits received by low-income individuals and workers compared to benefits received by middle-income individuals. Previous studies on partisanship have established that left-wing governments have a lesser impact on policies related to life-cycle risks like old-age pensions and

on healthcare spending that benefit most citizens compared to policies related to labor market risks like unemployment insurance (Jensen, 2012; Bandau and Ahrens, 2019). This thesis expands this theory, by postulating that left-wing parties have a larger impact on benefits received by low-wage workers and low-income families. These policies could help left-wing parties to consolidate their low-income electorate, reaffirm their commitment to redistribution and social investment policies popular among their middle-class voters without increasing taxation on the middle-class. In chapter 3, the analysis of the electoral platforms shows that left- and right-wing parties are more polarized on issues related to low-wage work than on overall mentions of welfare expansion. In chapter 5, the analysis shows that left-wing parties have a significant and positive impact on the level of minimum wages, especially in countries with a low degree of corporatism. Finally, chapter 6 shows that left-wing parties have a significant and positive impact on the benefits received by low-income families, but not on benefits received by middle-income families. This is especially important as it shows that the impact of left-wing parties not only varies in function of the type of social programs, but also varies in function of the income of recipients. To my knowledge, no previous studies have established that the impact of left-wing parties is stronger for benefits targeted at lower-income individuals compared to benefits received by middle-income individuals.

Empirical Contributions

Low-wage Work in Politics

The main empirical contribution of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of low-wage work in partisan politics. The issue of low-pay has been mostly studied by economists and sociologists, but has largely been ignored by political scientists. The quantitative analyses validate assumptions made through qualitative studies about the increasing salience of low-wage

work as a partisan issue (Wilson, 2021). Indeed, data in chapter 3, confirm that the issue of low-wage work has become more important in electoral campaigns in the last few years, mostly because left-wing parties have put this issue forward more consistently. There have been even fewer studies on the electoral behaviors of low-wage workers; we mostly know that these workers tend to abstain from voting like other economically disadvantage citizens (Emmeneger and al., 2015; Schraff, 2019; Marinova, 2022). To my knowledge, this thesis is thus the first comparative study to confirm the relationship between low-wage workers and vote for left-wing parties. Finally, there have been more studies on minimum wages, but only one comparative study with relatively old data (Rueda, 2008).

New Data

To conduct the quantitative analyses, I have used a mix of existing databases like the International Social Survey Program and the OECD data on minimum wages with new databases created specifically for this thesis. For chapter 3 on the positions of political parties, I have collected new data based on electoral manifestos available through the Comparative Manifesto Project. Through the use of specific keywords related to low-wage work, I have created a code of different types of quasi-sentences related to low-wage work. This new database allowed me to analyze the positions of different types of political parties on low-wage work, to compare the salience of low-wage work in different countries and through time. For chapter 6, I needed to calculate the benefits received by low-income and middle-income families. However, data available through the OECD taxing wage series were available for low-income families only from the mid-2000s. I thus generated the benefits for four types of families in 17 countries by using the mathematics formulas for each type of benefits. This dataset allowed me to compare the effect of left-wing parties for both low-income

and middle-income families which had not been done in previous studies on family benefits, which only analyzed the impact on middle-income families (Wenemo, 1992; Montanari, 2000).

The Future of Research on Low-wage Politics and Socio-Economic Cleavages

This thesis offers an overview of the partisan dynamics concerning low pay in OECD countries. However, additional research might be needed to better understand the relations between the institutions regulating wages, positions of political parties, the electoral behaviors of low-wage workers and the impact of left-wing parties on policies. This thesis shows that low-wage is a more important partisan issue in countries with a low degree of corporatism, but it does not establish a clear temporal sequence on what factors, the vote of low-wage workers or the actions of political parties, explain the other. It could, for example, be interesting to look at specific cases where the issue of low wages has emerged suddenly in the last few years, to see if it influenced the vote of low-wage workers. Surveys with more specific questions concerning low-wage work could also help us to understand how low-wage workers perceive their political and economic interests. It could show if low-wage workers have different perspectives on the policies promoted by left-wing parties depending on the level of corporatism. Also, a more in-depth analysis of the attitudes of low-wage workers on both socio-economic and socio-cultural issues in countries with a low and high degree of corporatism could help us better understand the relationship between low-wage workers and radical right parties.

On a broader scale, this thesis has important implications for researchers interested in economic cleavages. The results show that the voting patterns of low-wage workers are quite different than the voting patterns of manual workers. Indeed, the vote of low-wage workers for left-wing parties

remained stable in recent decades, while the vote of manual workers for those parties has declined significantly. Also, the vote of low-wage workers is stronger in countries with a low degree of corporatism, while the vote of manual workers is weaker in countries with a low degree of corporatism. It is thus important for researchers to consider that socio-economic characteristics associated with a lower socio-economic status such as occupation, income, education, skills, employment status and wages are not interchangeable. The concept of the working class is still widely used in research, in the media and in the common language, but different operationalizations can have completely different empirical implications. The use of education to define the working class in the American media might, for example, obfuscate the fact that low income was still associated until recently with a vote for the Democrats (Bartels, 2008; Gelman, 2009; Brady and al., 2009). I thus believe that we still need more research on the electoral behaviors of groups with different socio-economic characteristics and on the role of institutions in influencing those behaviors. New studies could help us better understand and therefore better explain to a broader audience the role of economic interests in post-industrial economies.

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