

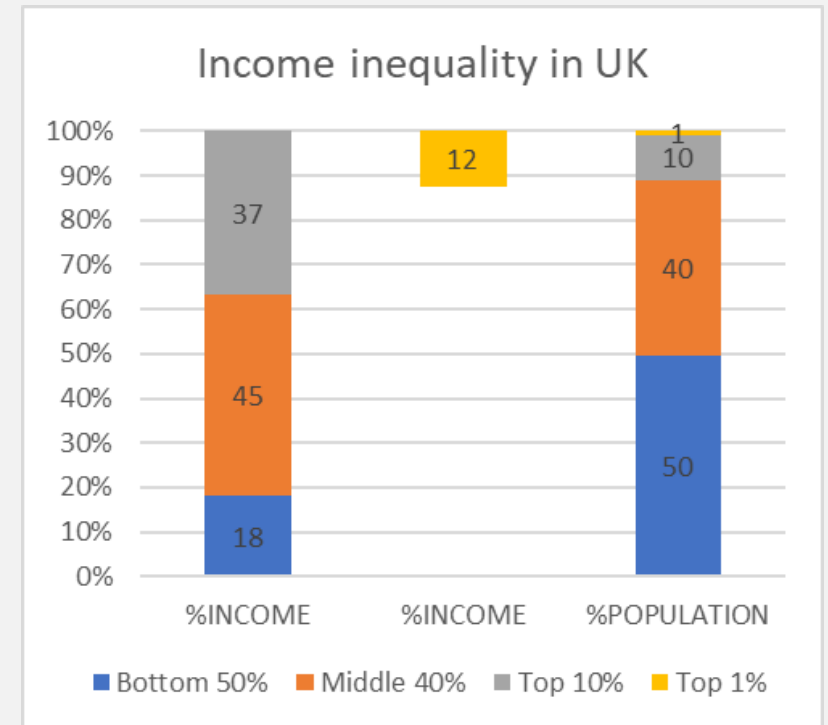
How (un)fair is the pay of workers in Europe?

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Social inequality in Europe

- There are substantial inequalities in Europe: both within and between countries
- UN Sustainable Development Goal 10: “Reduce inequality within and among countries”
- Lay people misjudge the extent of inequality and strive for justice rather equality
- How (un)fair is Europe from the perspective of lay people? And how do people react to the unfairness they identify?



Source: World Inequality Database, 2023.

Studying justice and fairness in Europe

- Two fundamental principles of empirical justice research:
 - (1) Justice lies in the eye of the beholder (Walster et al. 1973; Friedman 1977)
 - (2) Justice is multi-dimensional (Colquitt et al. 2001; Sabbagh & Schmitt 2016)
- In 2018/2019, ESS R9 featured a rotating questionnaire module with 30 items on subjective justice evaluations (Liebig et al. 2018; Adriaans et al. 2020)
- Across 29 participating countries:
 - more than 49,000 respondents
 - more than 26,000 respondent who report working for pay

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Distributive justice			Procedural justice	Belief in a just world
Outcomes	Chances	Normative orientations		
Justice of own income, distribution of income & wealth	Justice of own life chances and within society	Basic social justice orientations	Experience of exploitation, inequality-generating mechanisms, political procedural justice	General belief in a just world

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Measurement: Justice of own earnings

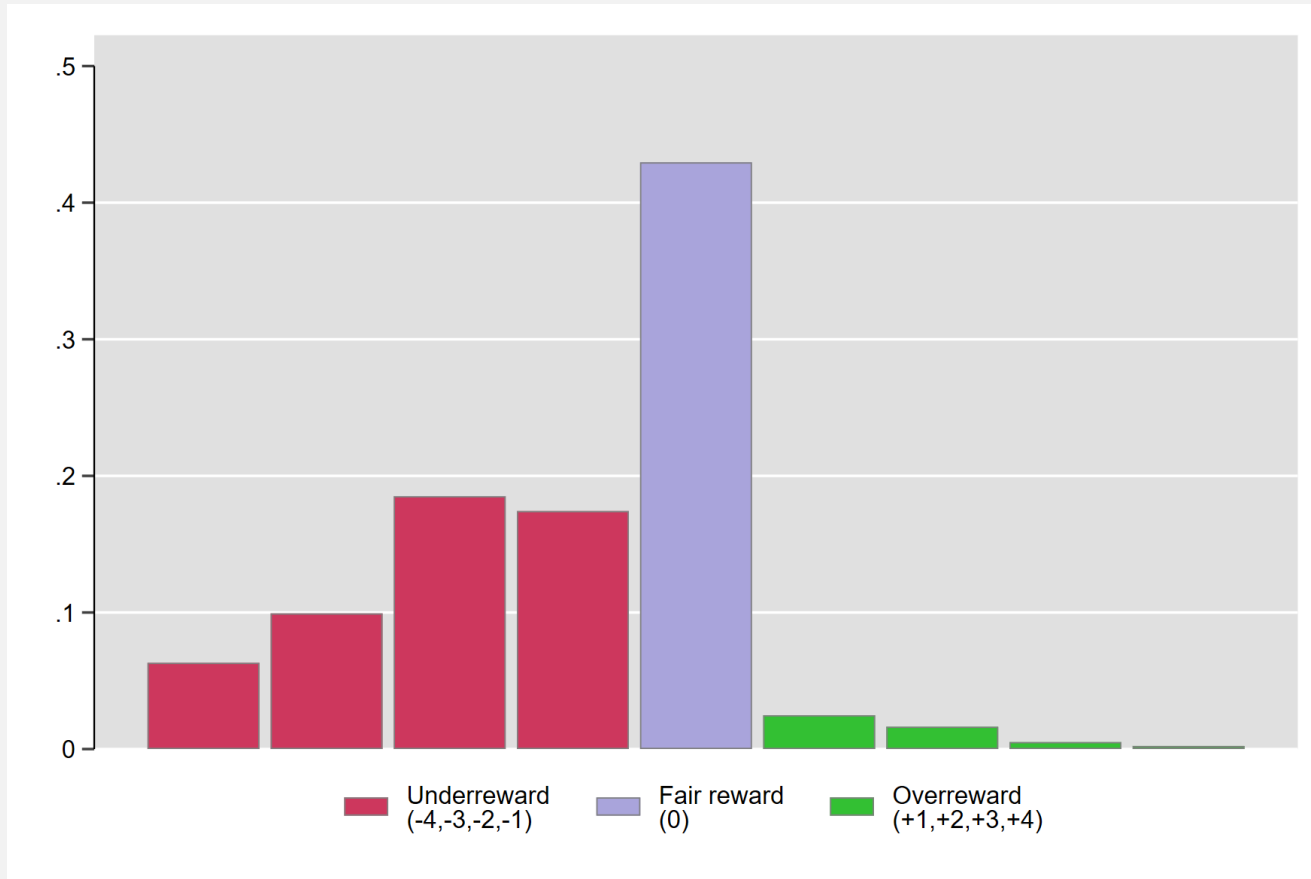
Would you say your gross pay is unfairly low, fair, or unfairly high?

- If you think your pay is unfairly low, please choose a number from the left-hand side.
- If you think your pay is fair, please choose 0.
- If you think your pay is unfairly high, please choose a number from the right-hand side.

Unfairly low pay
Unfairly high pay

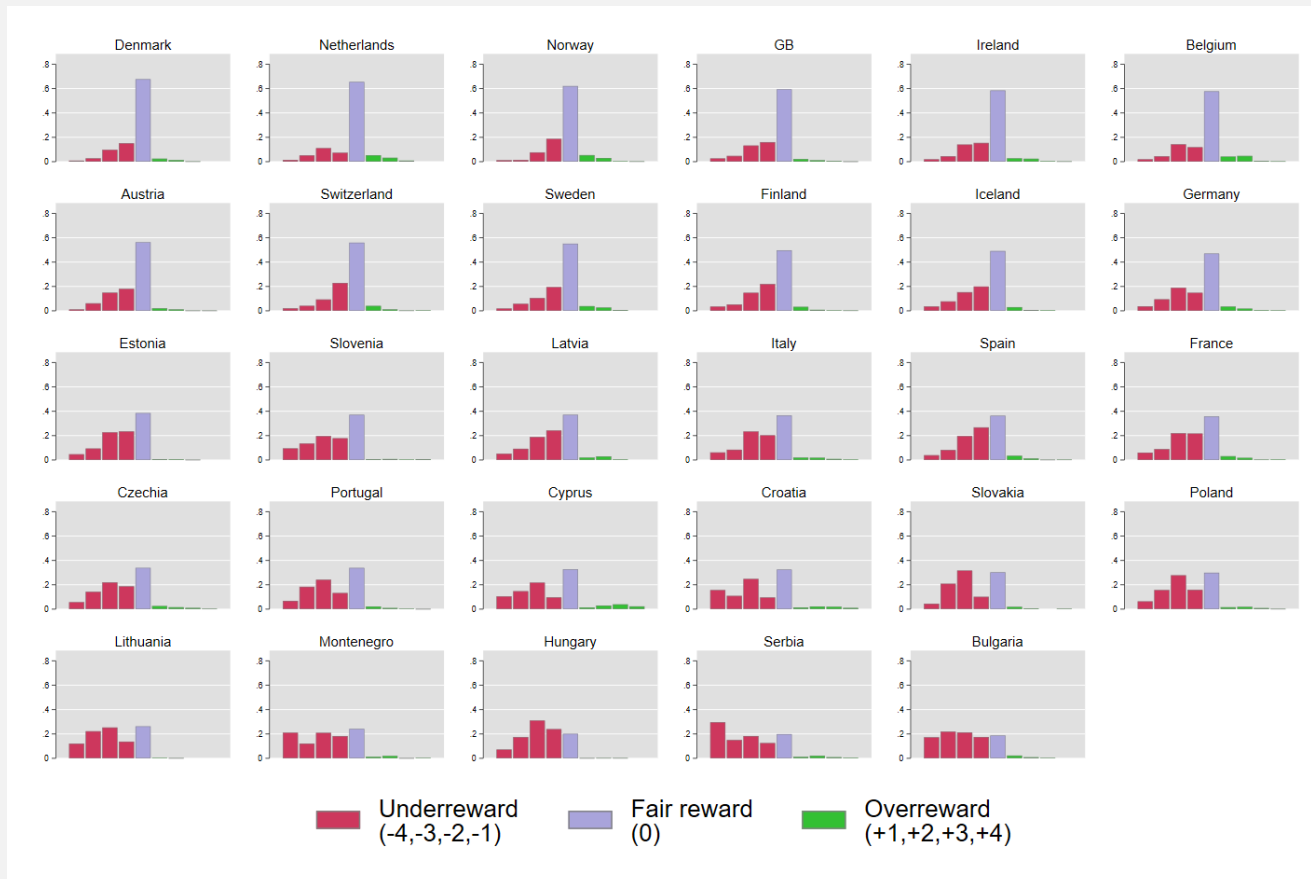
Extremely unfair	Very unfair	Somewhat unfair	Slightly unfair	Fair pay	Slightly unfair	Somewhat unfair	Very unfair	Extremely unfair
-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4

How (un)fair is the pay of workers?



- Across Europe: only **43 percent** of workers evaluate their earnings as fair
- **52 percent** unfairly low, **5 percent** unfairly high

How (un)fair is the pay of workers?



- Across Europe: only **43 percent** of workers evaluate their earnings as fair
- **52 percent** unfairly low, **5 percent** unfairly high
- Highest share of fairly paid: **Denmark** (68 percent)
- Highest share of unfairly underpaid: **Hungary** (80 percent)

Constellations of (un)fairness for self and group

		Self	
		Fair	Unfair
Group	Fair		
	Unfair		

- Fairness evaluations are formed about self and others (Jasso et al. 2016)
- Constellations of evaluations of self- and other have unique consequences (Runciman 1966, Schmitt et al. 2010, Smith et al. 2012)

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		Own pay	
		Fair	Unfair
Pay in occ.	Fair		
	Unfair		

“In general, do you think the pay of people who work in the same occupation as you in [country] is unfairly low, fair, or unfairly high?”

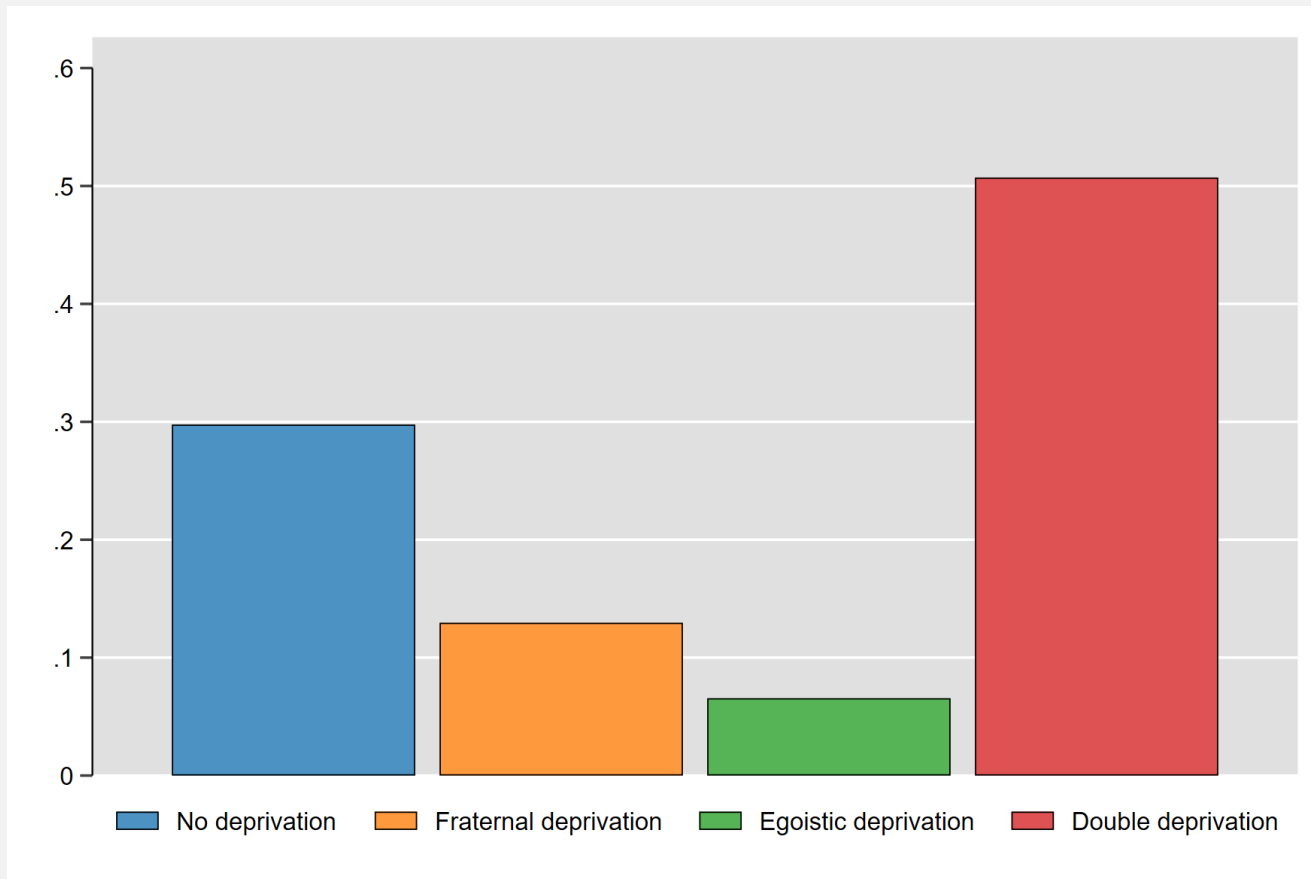
Constellations of (un)fairness for self and group

		Own pay	
		Fair	Unfair
Pay in occ.	Fair	No deprivation	Egoistic deprivation
	Unfair	Fraternal deprivation	Double deprivation

“In general, do you think the pay of people who work in the same occupation as you in [country] is unfairly low, fair, or unfairly high?”

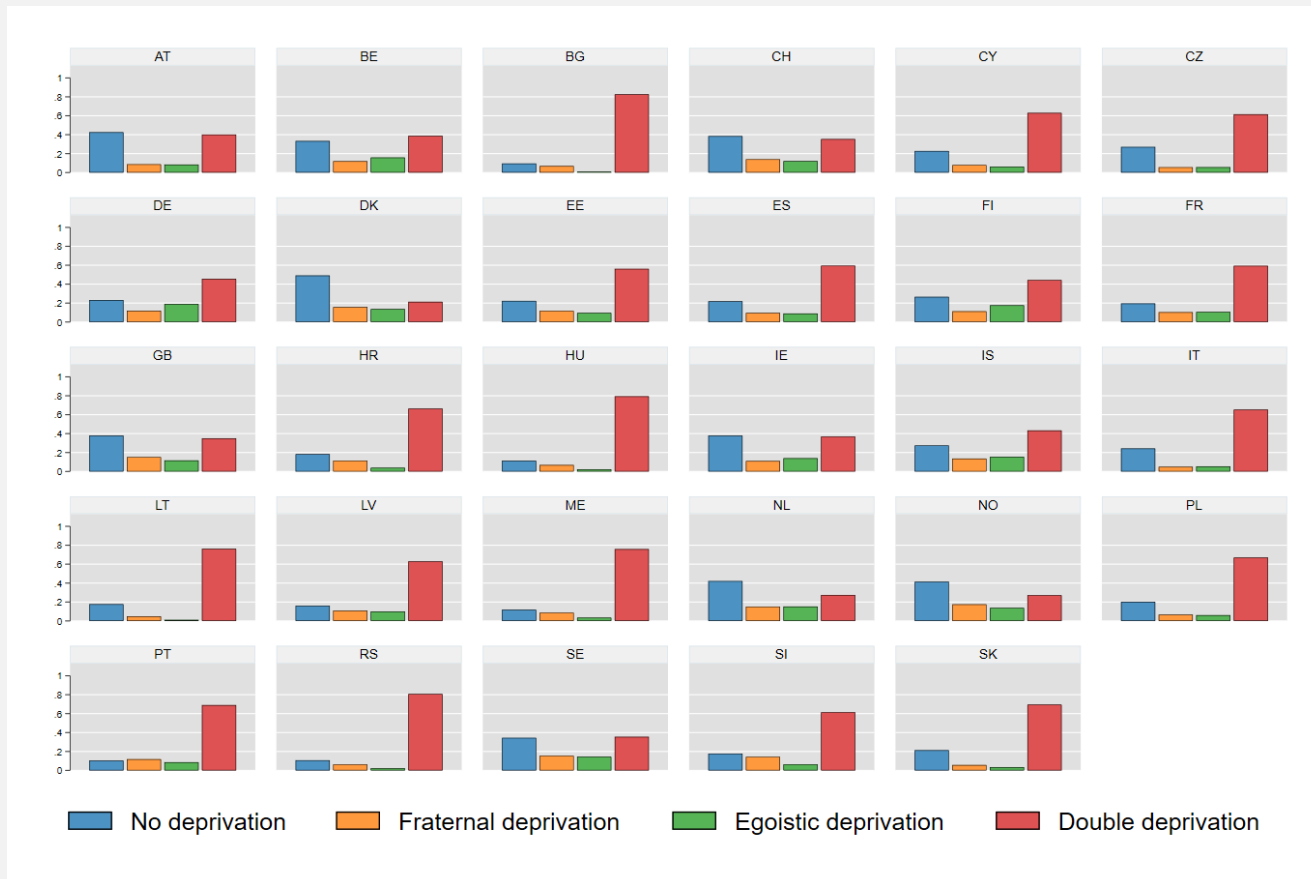
- Fairness evaluations are formed about self and others (Jasso et al. 2016)
- Constellations of evaluations of self- and other have unique consequences (Runciman 1966, Schmitt et al. 2010, Smith et al. 2012)
 - Egoistic depr. → well-being
 - Fraternal depr. → political response
- Double deprivation → intensity of justice consequences (Markovsky 1985)

Facing double deprivation



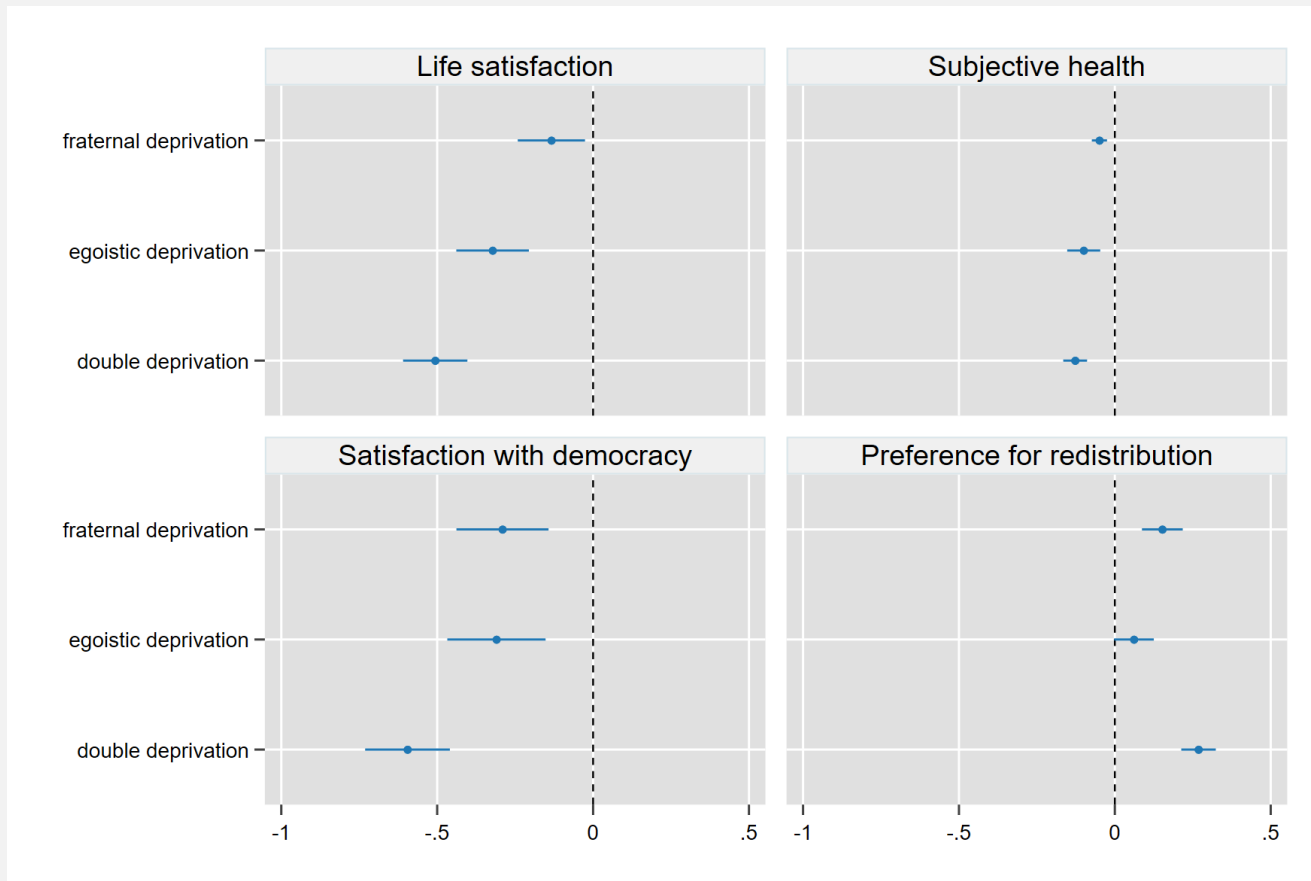
- **13 percent** perceive unfair pay only for their occupational group, **6 percent** only for themselves
- About **50 percent** of all workers perceive unfair deprivation for themselves and their group

Facing double deprivation



- **13 percent** perceive unfair pay only for their occupational group, **6 percent** only for themselves
- About **50 percent** of all workers perceive unfair pay for themselves and their group
- Highest shares of egoistic deprivation in **high-income** countries (11 percent in Norway)
- Highest shares of double deprivation in **Eastern European** countries (82 percent in Bulgaria)

Consequences of unfair pay for self and group



- **Double deprivation** shows **strongest** association with justice outcomes
- **Egoistic deprivation** more important for **well-being** than fraternal deprivation
- **Fraternal deprivation** shows **stronger** association with **redistributive preference** than egoistic deprivation
 - Group-level injustice relates to system-level call for change

Summary of findings

- Based on ESS R9, we observe a strong sense of unfair pay among workers in Europe:
 - Majority of workers in Europe evaluate their pay as unfair
 - European Workers face double deprivation of self and group
 - Regional disparities
- Unfairness of own pay associated with lower well-being, fraternal deprivation relates to stronger support for redistribution
- Multiple sources of unfairness = more intense justice consequences
- ESS R9 data offer the unique opportunity to study fairness perceptions across countries
 - Linking justice considerations to (1) inequality structures, (2) country-level contexts, and (3) personal (e.g., well-being) and political responses (e.g., preference for redistribution)

Thank you!

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