

PROJECT CLOSING EVENT: FINDINGS OF FOUR YEARS OF RESEARCH

Friday, 24 January 2025 • **12pm- 2.30pm CET**
Online Conference

AGENDA

12:00 PM WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Prof. Wim Van Lancker (KU Leuven)

12:05 PM PRESENTATION OF BABEL DATA AND METHODS

Dr. Tijs Laenen (KU Leuven)

12:15 PM THE POVERTY EFFECTS OF BASIC INCOME

Elise Aerts (University of Antwerp)

12:35 PM COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

Dr. Herwig Immervoll (OECD)

12:45 PM BREAK

13:00 PM BASIC INCOME AND LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION

Cyrille Francisco (KU Leuven)

13:20 PM COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

Prof. Loek Groot (University of Utrecht)

13:30 PM THE POLITICAL FEASIBILITY OF BASIC INCOME

Marie-Laure Mulayi (KU Leuven) and Floriane Geels (UC Louvain)

13:50 PM COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

Prof. Femke Roosma (Tilburg University)

14:00 PM CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: BEYOND THE BABEL PROJECT AND Q&A

Prof. Yannick Vanderborght (UC Louvain)

14:30 PM END

Basic Income in Belgium (BABEL)

- Four-year collaboration between four research teams and three universities
KU Leuven, University of Antwerp, UC Louvain
- Diverse perspectives on basic income
Advocates and sceptics
Political scientists, economists and sociologists
- Funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office (Belspo)
- Focus on Belgium (*why??*)

A disarmingly simple idea...? (Van Parijs, 2004)

- Details matter
 - Assumption: a BI proposal can inspire welfare reform in Belgium and beyond if
 - (1) sufficient support by the public and gatekeepers of the welfare state;
 - (2) better outcomes in terms of poverty reduction at given budgetary cost;
 - (3) does not negatively affect labour supply (too much)
 - Objectives:
 - (1) Investigate redistributive, budgetary, and employment consequences of a variety of BI proposals;
 - (2) Investigate legitimacy and political feasibility of these proposals;
 - (3) In doing so, collect new, experimental data and make it available for all (open science)
- ➔ Data and findings will hopefully inspire both scientists and policymakers

BABEL



BASIC INCOME IN
BELGIUM

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Obj. 1: poverty effects

- Microsimulation modelling (EUROMOD + EU-SILC)

Obj. 2: labour supply effects

- Wave 1 & 3 of BABEL survey
- Win4Life survey

Obj. 3: political feasibility

- Wave 1 & 2 of BABEL survey
- Qualitative elite interviews

Poverty effects

- How would the introduction of a universal basic income affect poverty in the context of the Belgian welfare state?
- We chose microsimulation modelling rather than policy experiments.
- Advantages: large-scale “implementation” and greater variation in terms of policy design and interaction with the existing system (e.g., financing)
 - **the devil is indeed often in the detail!**
- Disadvantage: no info on possible behavioural effects and their impact.

Labour supply effects

- How would the introduction of a universal basic income affect citizens' behaviour in terms of work, entrepreneurship, caring, volunteering, etc.?
- We assessed self-reported behavioural *intentions* through two surveys:
 - Wave 1 of the BABEL survey (N=3000 min. retirees; recruited via Bilendi in 2021)
 - Wave 3 of the BABEL survey (N=1500, recruited via Bilendi in 2024)
- Wave 1: a vignette experiment testing how people's intentions are affected by the policy design features of UBI (e.g., its amount).
- Wave 2: an information experiment testing how people's intentions are affected by the predicted impact of UBI on their household income (cf. winners vs losers).

**Let us assume that the Belgian government wants to introduce a basic income.
This basic income would have the following characteristics:**

- The Belgian government provides a monthly income of €500.
- That amount is paid to all adults living in Belgium, on the condition that they have the Belgian nationality.
- Working people receive the money they earn themselves in addition to the Basic Income.
- People who are not working are not obliged to search for a paid job.
- The basic income replaces no existing social benefits.
- The basic income is paid for by income taxes and social security contribution, which stay as they are. Potential additional costs are covered by a new climate tax on CO2 emissions.

...

Now we would like to know what you would do if you received a monthly basic income from the government. Multiple answers are possible.

1. I would quit work completely
2. I would reduce my working hours
3. I would volunteer
4. I would start a business
5. I would provide more care for others
6. I would look for a new job
7. I would follow a training course
8. I would not change anything

The elephant in the room



- How trustworthy are people's self-reported intentions?
- According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (cf. Ajzen), intentions often turn into actual behaviour.
- Because the proof of the pudding is in the eating, we fielded an extra survey among the winners of the Win4Life lottery game (N=64).
- How did they change their behaviour after receiving UBI-like payments?

Political feasibility

- Suppose there are basic income proposals that would succeed in reducing poverty while not disenchanting work (or even incentivizing it).
- Are these proposals then also feasible from a *political* perspective??
- Two (inter-connected) components to this question:
 - How does public opinion think about basic income?
 - How do political elites feel about it?

Public opinion

Wave 1 of the BABEL survey assessed citizens' support for basic income, not only focusing on the impact of policy design but also of policy outcomes.



These were, however, strictly hypothetical!



Wave 2 (N=2500) examined the impact of more realistic scenario's, in which the outcomes were based on our microsimulating models.

Political elites

Step 1: document analysis of the official positions of political parties, trade unions and employers' organizations.



We wanted to dig deeper!



Step 2: in-depth interviews with top-tier representatives of the different organizations, uncovering their positions and arguments regarding UBI.

Connection: how do trade union representatives respond to information about their members' attitudes toward UBI?

A research team from different Belgian universities has studied what effect the introduction of the above-described basic income would have on people’s household income.

The results suggest that the household income of people like you is predicted to decrease by about €100 to €200 per month.

With this information in mind, would you say you are against or in favour of having this basic income in Belgium?

1/Extremely against

2/Strongly against

3/ Somewhat against

4/ Neither in favour nor against

5/ Somewhat In favour

6/ Strongly in favour

7/Extremely in favour

The same research team also studied what effects the introduction of the above-described basic income would have on the level of poverty in Belgium.

The results show that the poverty rate is predicted to decrease from 11,2% to 5,4%. This means that there would be about 650.850 people less in poverty compared to the situation today.

With this information in mind, would you say you are against or in favour of having this basic income in Belgium?

1/Extremely against

2/Strongly against

3/ Somewhat against

4/ Neither in favour nor against

5/ Somewhat In favour

6/ Strongly in favour

7/Extremely in favour

Want to know more?

- Don't go anywhere...
- Consult the project end report (+ publications listed there) on our website www.babel-project.be
- Check out our Open Science Framework page: <https://osf.io/7ghfs/>





The poverty effects of basic income

Elise Aerts, Ive Marx, Gerlinde Verbist & Toon Van Havere
Centre for Social Policy, University of Antwerp

BABEL project closing event - 24 January 2024

Research question

- **What are the consequences of implementing universal basic income in Belgium?**
 - Examine the *poverty and inequality* outcomes of a wide array of UBI proposals
 - Shed light on *who will benefit* from these proposals and to what extent
 - Explore the impact of a UBI on *work incentives*
- **Strict focus on income only**
 - Other potential outcomes of UBI (income security, well-being, bargaining power, ...) not taken into account

Research method

■ **Microsimulation modelling**

- Can be used to answer “what-if” questions → ex-ante policy evaluation
- By comparing incomes between the baseline and UBI scenarios, we can assess its aggregate budgetary and redistributive effects

■ **Microsimulation tax-benefit model EUROMOD**

- ! Focus on static ‘first-order effects’, behavioral effects are not considered
- ! Assumption full take-up of rights

■ **EU-SILC (European Survey on Income and Living Conditions)**

- 2019 input data → updated to 2022

Take-away message 1:

The poverty-reducing impact of UBI depends on exactly how and where it is implemented

A higher UBI does not necessarily yield more poverty reduction

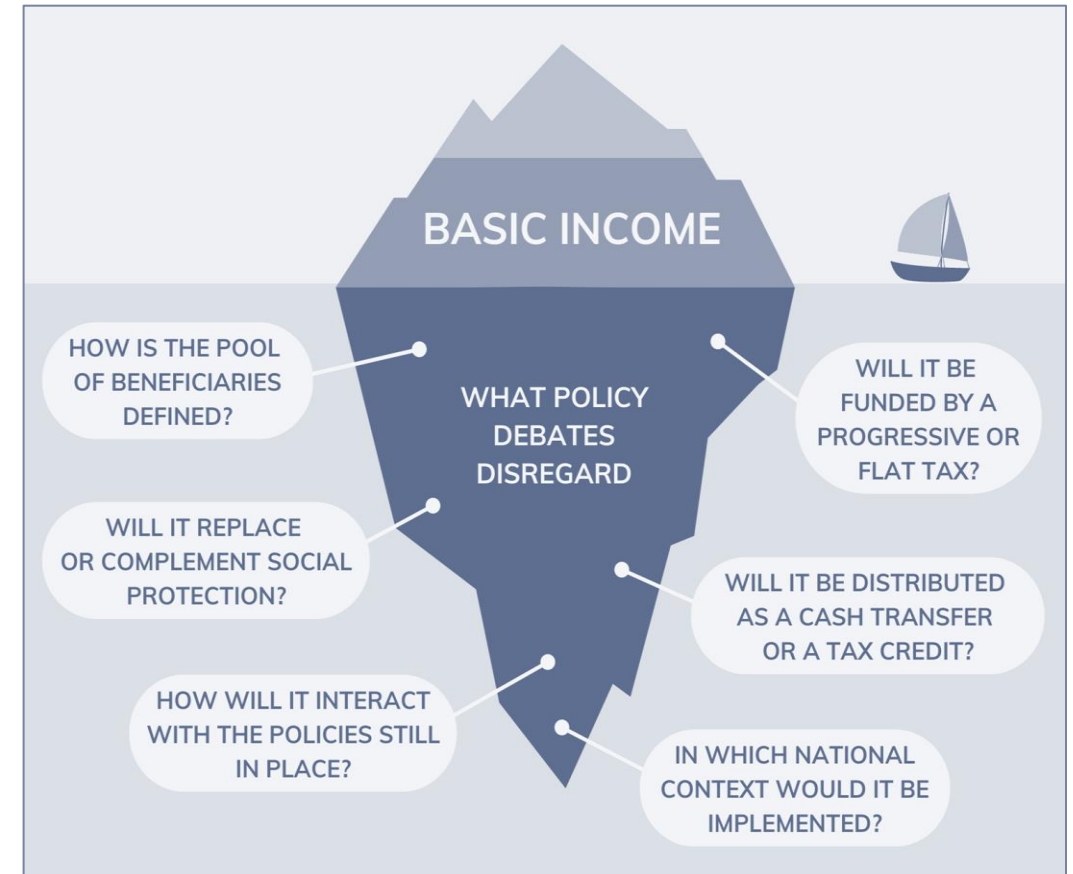
BE	Baseline	Low UBI scenario		Medium UBI scenario		High UBI scenario	
		NMT	MT	TAX	SOC	PROG	FLAT
Inequality	0.2178	0.2089*	0.2139*	0.2017*	0.2310*	0.1920*	0.2218*
60% poverty risk							
Population	11.0%	8.8%*	10.1%*	7.0%*	12.3%*	7.5%*	10.3%*
Children	12.3%	9.0%*	11.4%*	3.7%*	16.5%*	6.7%*	9.4%*
Active working age	9.5%	7.1%*	8.3%*	6.0%*	10.3%*	5.4%*	8.1%*
Elderly	14.6%	14.1%*	14.5%	14.0%*	14.5%	15.2%	18.7%*
60% poverty gap							
Population	16.7%	11.9%*	13.9%*	14.1%*	29.4%*	18.3%*	20.5%*
Children	14.0%	8.7%*	10.7%*	8.4%*	28.1%*	12.9%	17.4%*
Active working age	17.0%	9.6%*	13.1%*	12.3%*	34.2%*	21.4%*	25.6%*
Elderly	19.1%	19.2%	18.8%	19.3%	19.2%	17.7%	14.9%*

* are significant differences (p<0.05)

The simplicity of UBI tends to be vastly overstated

Recognizing UBI's **multidimensionality** is crucial for understanding its vast and far from uniform range of potential poverty effects:

- 1) UBI is never simple – it requires many choices
- 2) Those choices matter, even apparently 'minor' choices matter
- 3) The implications of those choices will also vary across different national contexts

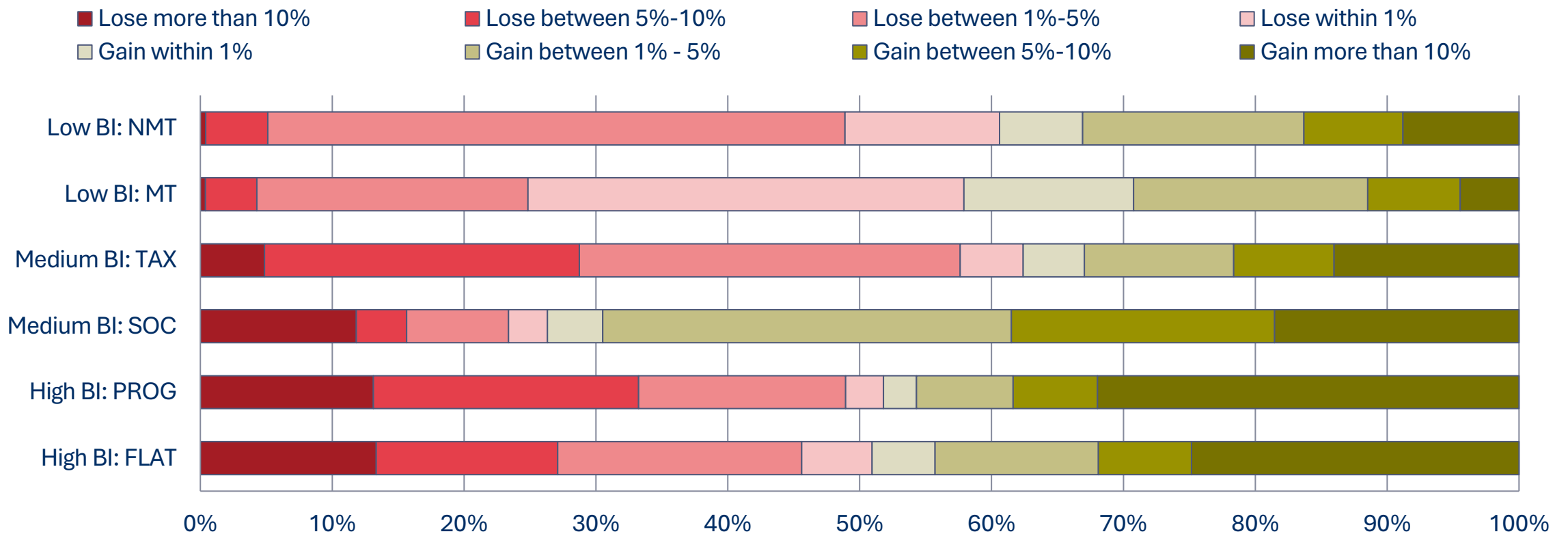


Take-away message 2:

UBI cannot escape the trade-off between social desirability and political feasibility

A UBI designed to reduce poverty would come at the expense of losses for a large share of the population

Winners and losers expressed as a percentage from population on active working age



A UBI designed to reduce poverty would come at the expense of weaker financial incentives to work

	BASELINE	UBI SCENARIO 1: €400 + €50 financed by abolishing all tax benefits	UBI SCENARIO 2: €700 + €200 financed by abolishing all tax benefits and all social benefits	UBI SCENARIO 3: €1200 + €200 financed by abolishing all tax benefits, all social benefits and increasing PIT rates
60% poverty risk	11%	5% ↘	16% ↗	9% ↘
Average METR	61%	65% ↗	55% ↘	69% ↗
Average PTR	55%	70% ↗	48% ↘	65% ↗

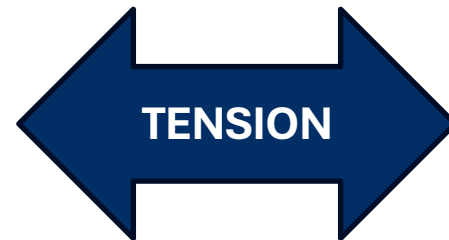
Take-away message 3:

UBI would put singles and single parents at a relative disadvantage

The principle of individual rights sits fundamentally uneasily with the empirical realities of household economics

Individualisation of social rights

In the last decades, there has been a reconceptualization of social citizenship based on the male breadwinner model towards an individualized adult worker model



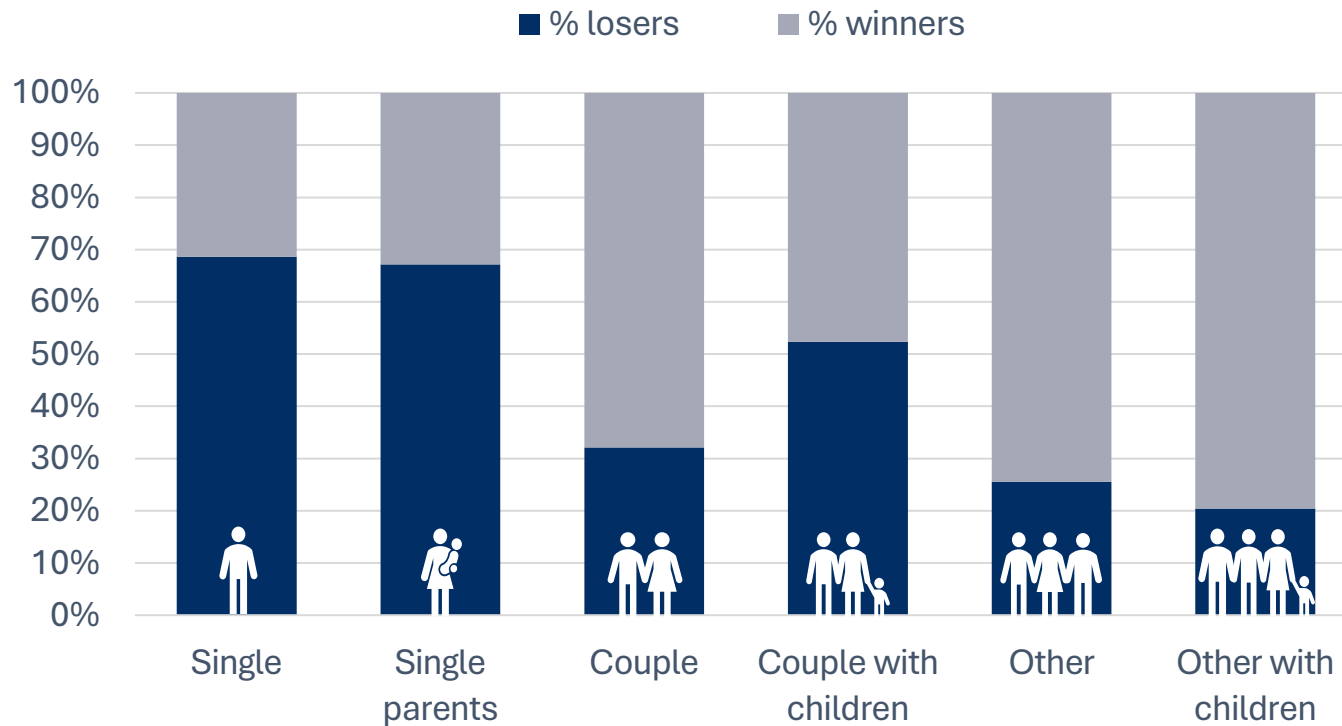
Economies of scale

Both research and policy has long recognized the importance of taking into account both economies of scale and the different needs of each household member

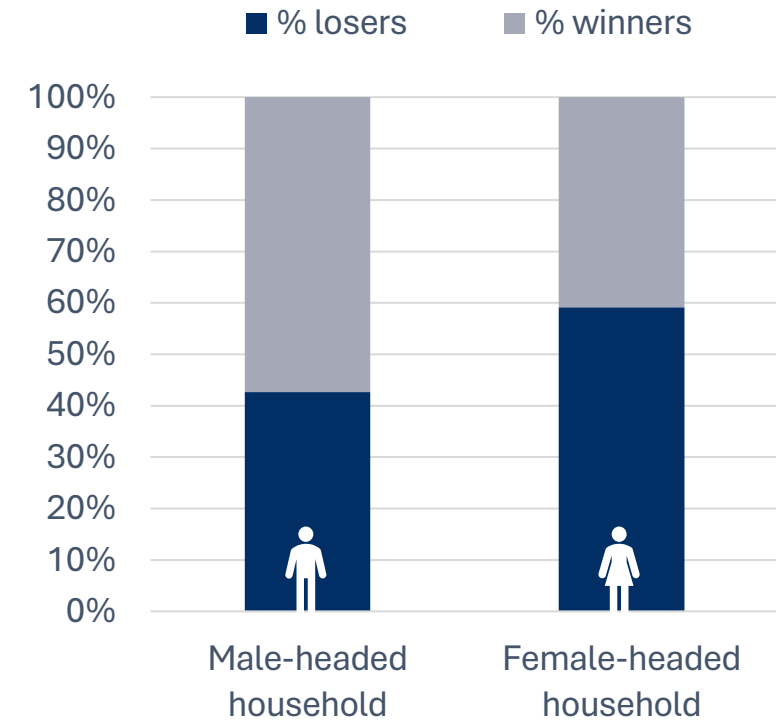
Distributional effects on aggregate can mask significant losses for certain households

	BASELINE	UBI SCENARIO: €1200 + €200 financed by abolishing all tax benefits, all social benefits and increasing PIT rates
Overall poverty risk		
Population	11%	9%
Differentiated by family type		
Single adult without children	21%	26%
Single adult with children	21%	27%
Couple without children	11%	8%
Couple with children	8%	3%
Other type of household without children	3%	1%
Other type of household with children	5%	1%

A UBI would shift purchasing power from one-adult to multi-adult households



➔ A UBI puts singles and single parents at a relative disadvantage compared to larger families



➔ And because single parenthood is far more common among women, the effects will also be far from gender-neutral

Conclusion

Not a miracle remedy for persistent poverty

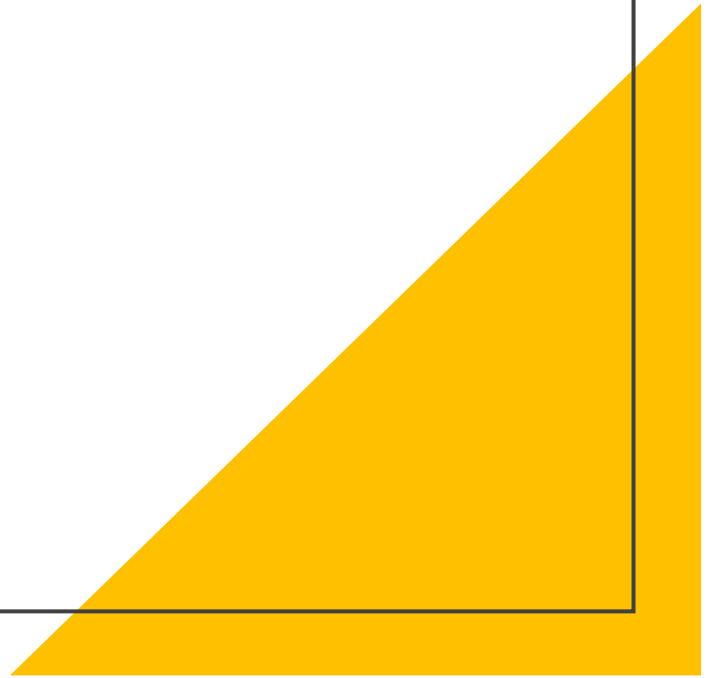
Not a miracle remedy for persistent poverty

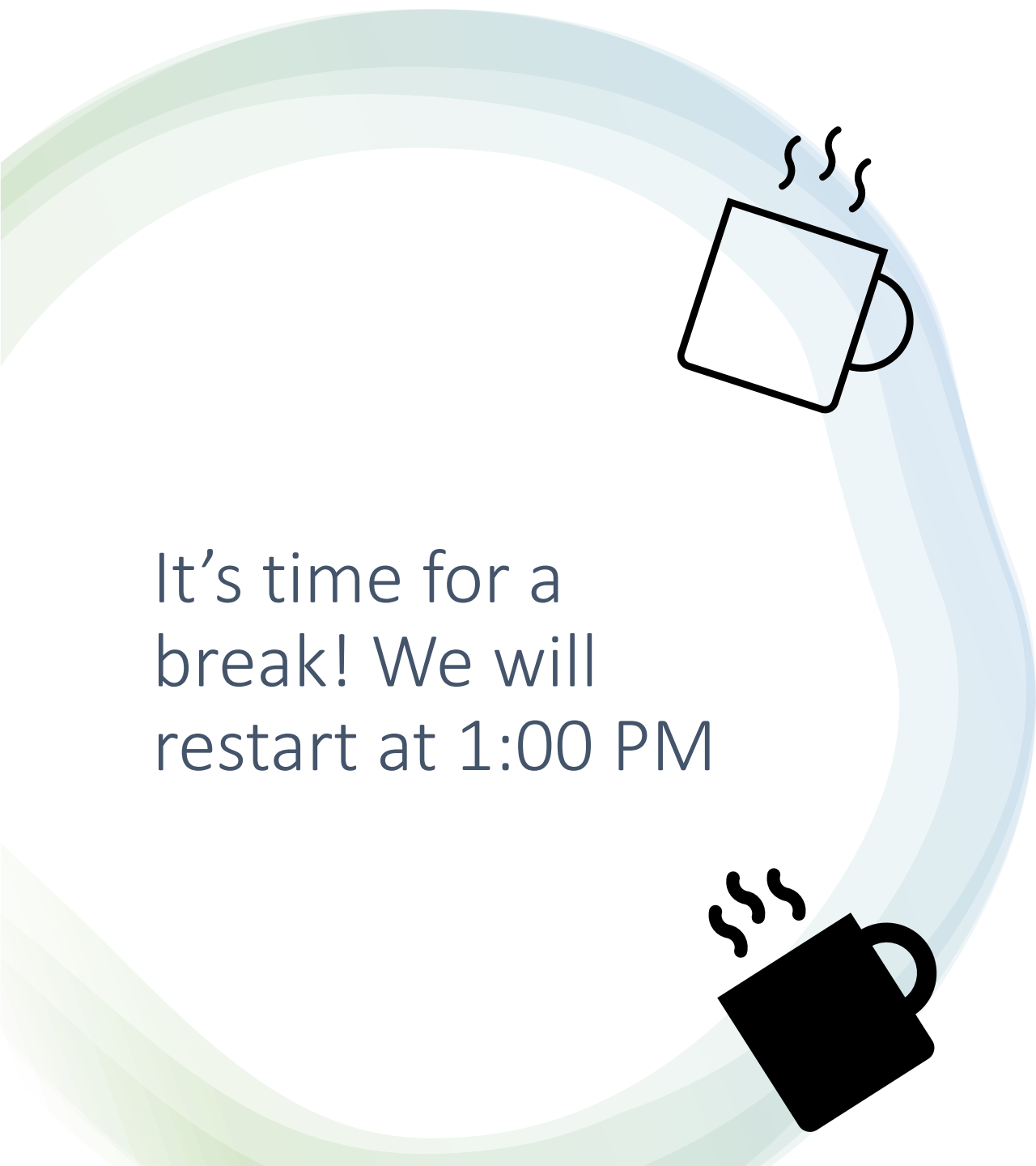
- BI can certainly help to reduce poverty, but always **at the expense of**:
 - Significant shares of the population incurring significant losses
 - Higher levels of spending (and thus taxes)
 - Weaker work incentives
- A **partial, modestly generous BI scheme** that retains at least some of the existing means-tested and household-targeted benefits seems to make the most potential sense

Thank you!

Comments and reflections

Dr. Herwig Immervoll (OECD)





It's time for a
break! We will
restart at 1:00 PM

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Basic Income & Work:

Rethinking Social Security,
Redefining Work

Cyrille Francisco



Redefining the Concept of Work

- Unpaid labor (e.g., caregiving, volunteering) is often overlooked (Folbre, 2001).
- BI challenges conventional definitions by recognizing *both paid and unpaid* contributions.
- Ensures essential tasks beyond formal employment are valued as fundamental to collective well-being.

Concern: Labor Market Impacts

- The existing welfare state's reasons behind conditions:
 - Work incentive
 - Deservingness

Unconditional income could undermine work incentives and reduce overall productivity (Murray, 2016; van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017).

Gaps in BI Research

- Over-reliance on short-term experiments or limited demographic targets
- Lack of systematic analysis of BI design (integration with taxes/social security)
- Insufficient evidence on impacts beyond employment (e.g., education, entrepreneurship, civic engagement)
- Limited gender-specific findings, hindering understanding of BI's differential effects on men and women

Research Aims & Questions

1.Labor Supply Effects

1. What can past experiments tell us?
2. How valid are existing findings, and what are their limitations?

2.Behavioral & Socioeconomic Impacts

1. How do recipients adapt their activities?
2. How do different BI designs shape intentions?

3.Gender Equality

1. How might BI influence men's vs. women's work decisions?
2. Potential scenarios that mitigate or exacerbate gender disparities



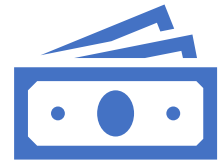
Systematic critical
review of the studies



Vignette experiment



Micro-simulated
informed experiment

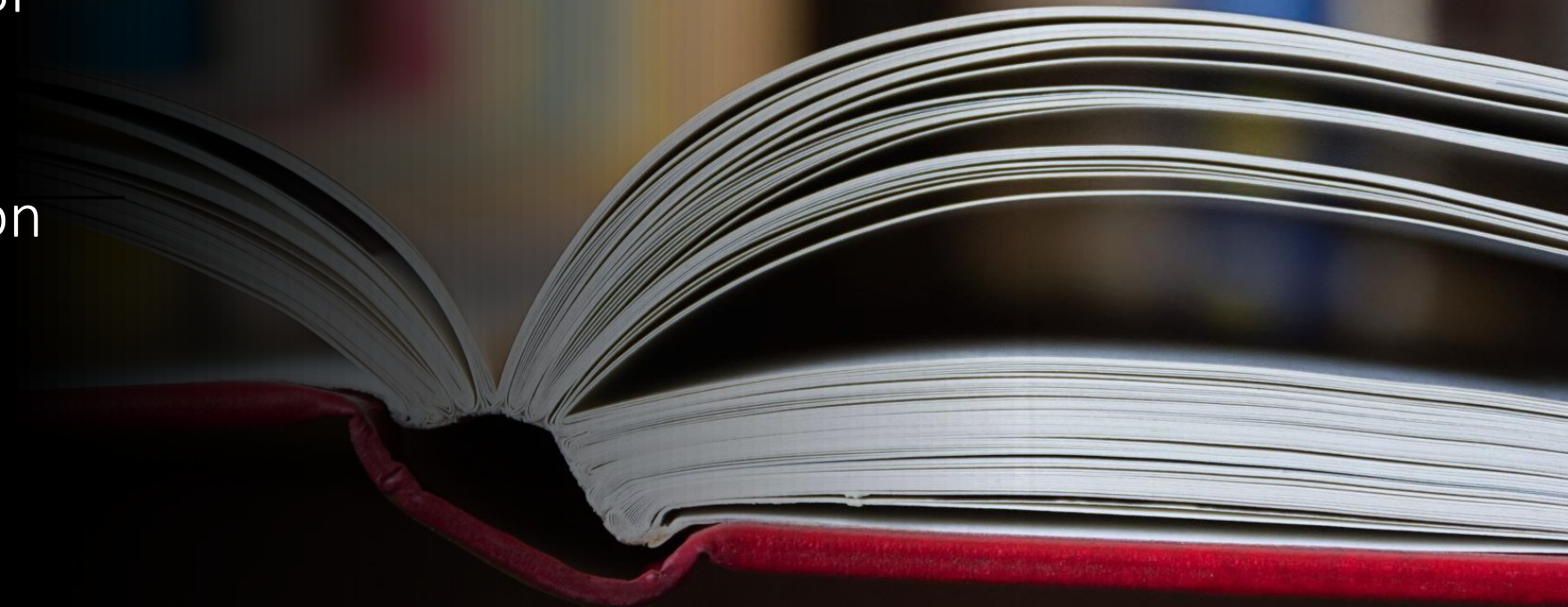


Lottery study



Critical Literature review:

- Over six decades of BI research
- Limited work reduction
- Identification of methodological flaws



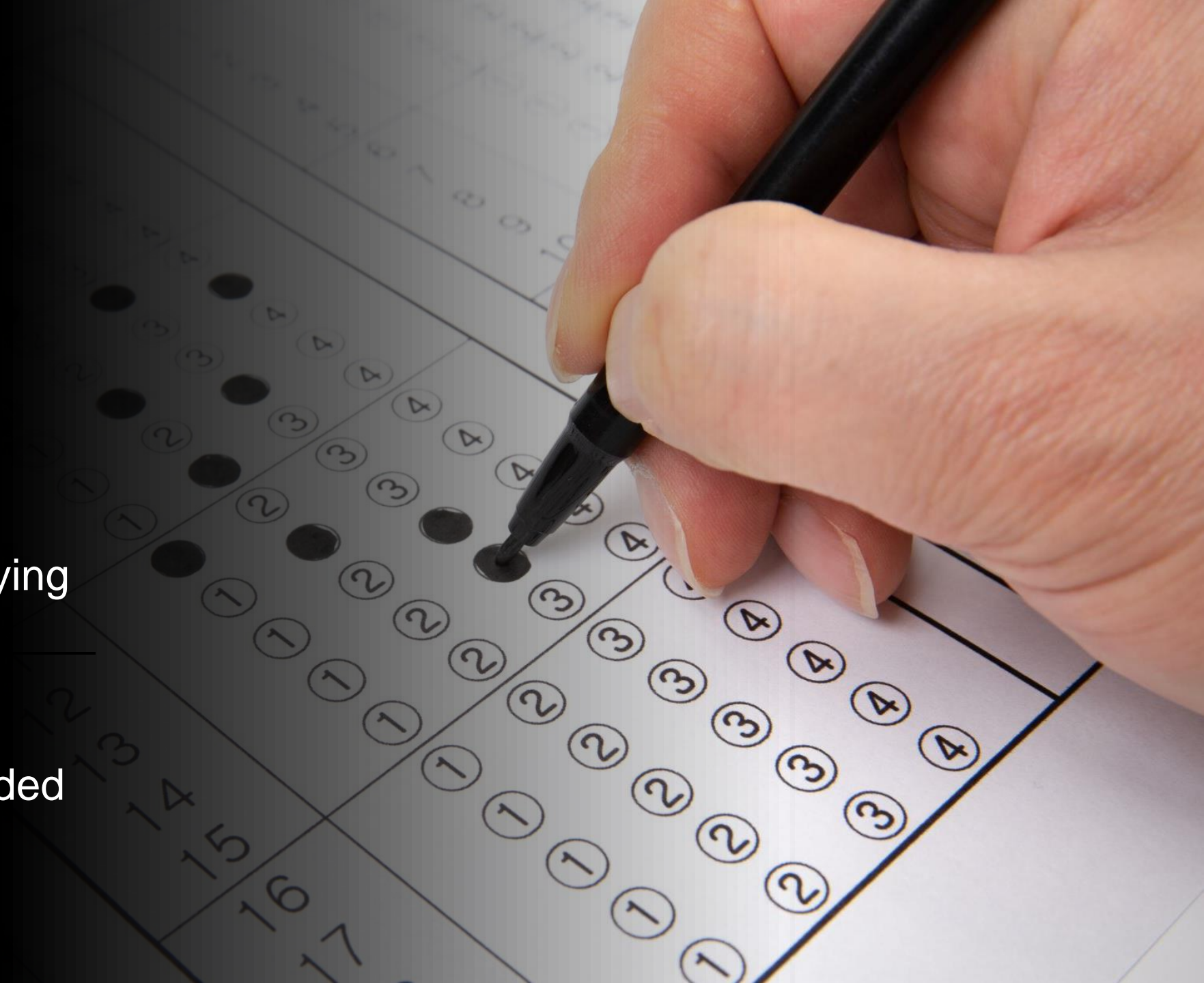
	Divergence from canonical BI definition	External validity issues			Internal validity issues						
		Representativeness	Lack of employment community effect	Lack treatment effect analysis	Hawthorne effect	Time limit	Attrition	Low sample size	Randomi- sation issue	Under- reporting	Context bias
NIT experiments	• Similar	• low-income earners	yes,	yes,	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
		• specific household composition and ethnic groups	except Dauphine	except Seattle- Denver							
Dutch experiments	• Low benefit	• specific locations • social assistance beneficiaries	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	No
		• specific locations									
Finish experiment	• Low benefit	• long-term unemployed people	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	yes
Spanish experiment	• Low benefit	• vulnerable people	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no
UCTs	• high / low amounts	• specific locations • target groups	no	some	no	no	some	some	no	no	yes
Lottery Studies	• some high winnings • some are lump sums	• lottery participants	yes	no	no	no	some	some	no	no	no

	Divergence from canonical BI definition	External validity issues		External & internal validity	Internal validity issues						
		Representativeness	Lack treatment effect analysis	Lack of employment community effect	Hawthorne effect	Time limit	Attrition	Low sample size	Randomi- sation issue	Under- reporting	Context bias
NIT experiments	• Similar	• low-income earners	yes,	yes,	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
		• specific household composition and ethnic groups	except Seattle- Denver & MINCOME	except Dauphine							
Dutch experiments	• Low benefit	• social assistance beneficiaries	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
		• specific locations									
Finnish experiment	• Low benefit	• long-term unemployed people	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	yes
Spanish experiment	• Low benefit	• vulnerable people	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no
UCTs	• high / low amounts	• specific locations	some	no	no	no	some	some	no	no	yes
		• target groups									
Lottery	• some high winnings	• lottery participants	no	yes	no	no	some	some	no	no	no
Studies	• some are lump sums										
Vignette experiment	• Corresponding	• Divers sample	no	yes	Limited	yes	no	no	no	no	no
Micro-simulated information experiment	• Corresponding	• Divers sample	no	yes	Limited	yes	no	no	no	no	no



Vignette Experiment

- 3,000 respondents (Belgium)
- 216 scenarios (varying amount, conditions, financing)
- Captures how BI design shapes intended behaviour



Respondents' intentions

	Frequency	
	Number of respondents	Percentage
Quit work	85	3%
Work less	683	23%
Volunteer more	419	14%
Start own business	225	8%
Provide more care for others	600	20%
Look for a new job	162	5%
Following a training course	441	15%
Would not change anything	1649	55%

- Most respondents do not wish to change anything about their current situation.
- The intention to reduce work is relatively small
- Many behavioral intention other than work reduction

Activities Beyond work

Reframing “Work”: BI can enable people to reallocate time toward other meaningful pursuits.

Survey Insights:

- Among those who plan to reduce paid hours, many intend to volunteer, pursue further education, or provide caregiving for family.
- Financial security from BI can lower barriers to starting a business or undertaking professional training.

Societal Benefit: Activities beyond paid employment—caregiving, community work, skill development—can strengthen social bonds and enhance well-being without precipitating mass labor-market exits.

People's combined intentions

	Frequency		Percent	
	Total Sample	Workers	Total Sample	Workers
Reduce work and economically active	89	73	3%	4%
Reduce work and socially active	183	138	6%	8%
Reduce work and economically & socially active	177	130	6%	8%
Reduce work only	297	245	10%	14%
No work reduction	2253	1129	75%	66%

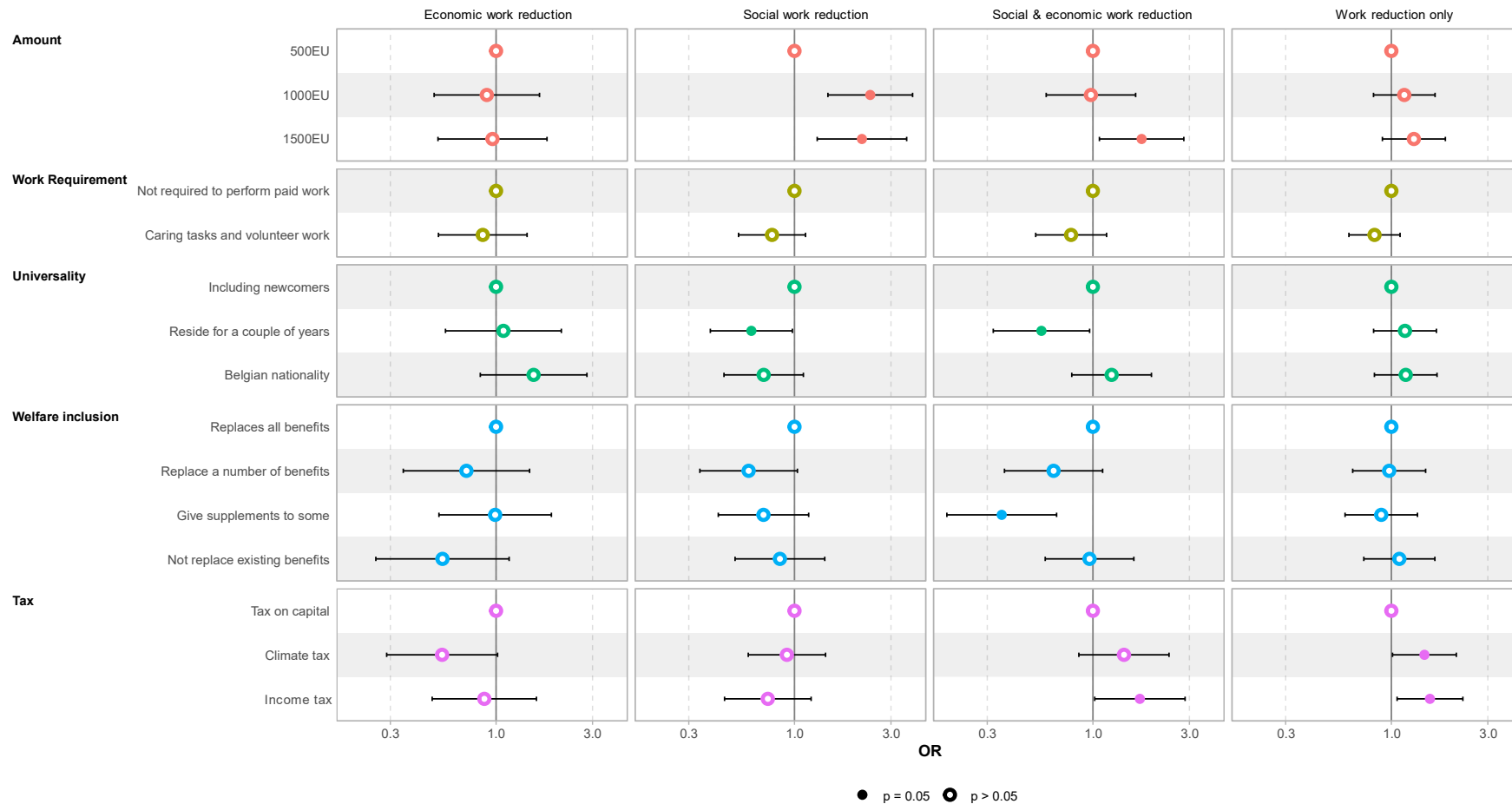
- Most respondents do not wish to change anything about their current situation.
- Majority of those wanting to change something aims at combining a reduction of paid work with other economic or social activities.
- Only a small group would not perform any paid work.

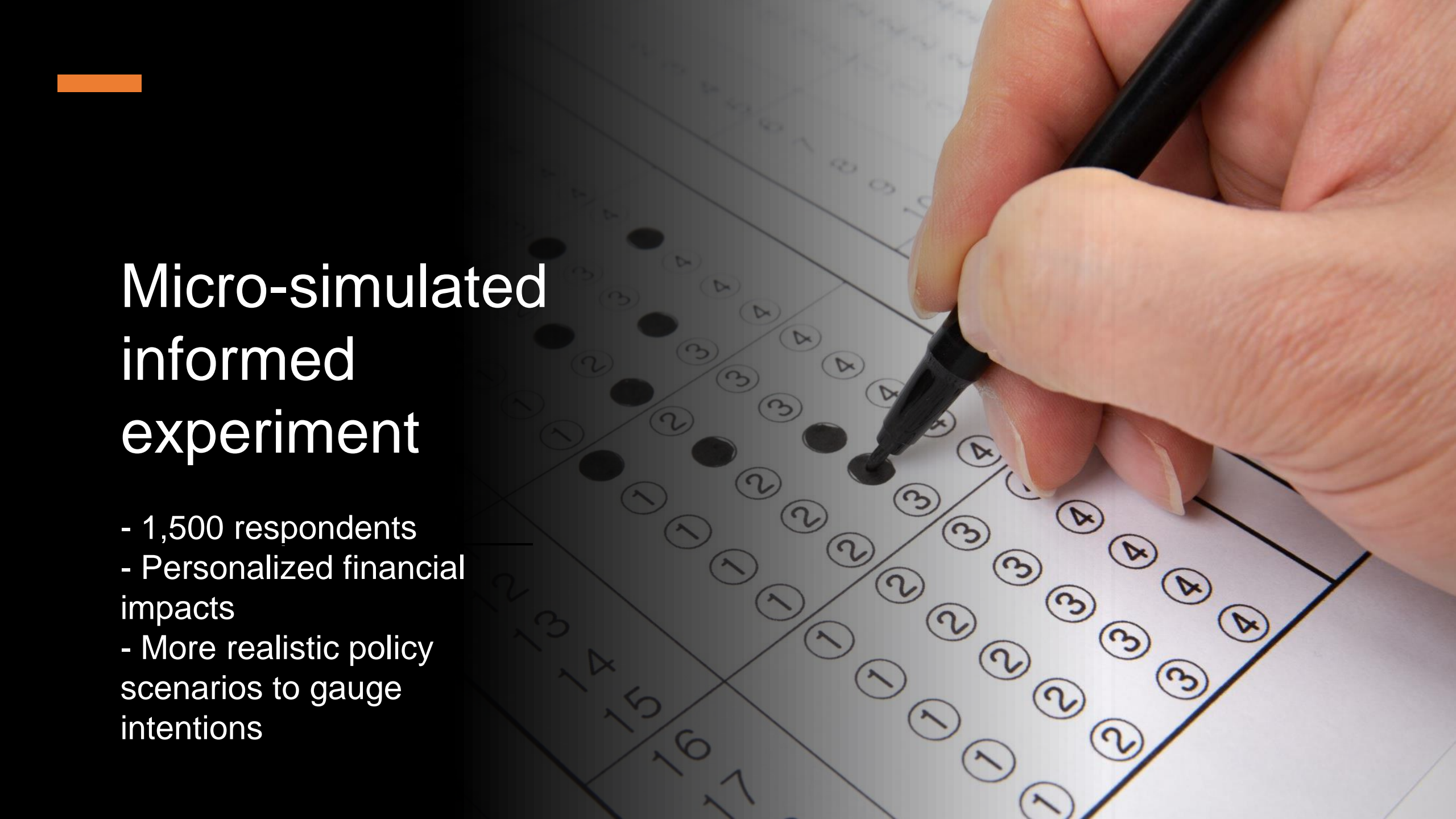
Design Effect

More generous BI amounts increase the probability of respondents aiming at exercising their 'real freedom' for a social purpose

Applying an increase in income tax or a capital tax seems to increase the likelihood of intending to "reduce work only" as opposed to BI financed by a climate tax

The universality feature of BI influences the inclination towards combining work reduction and social activity.





Micro-simulated informed experiment

- 1,500 respondents
- Personalized financial impacts
- More realistic policy scenarios to gauge intentions

Distribution of intention

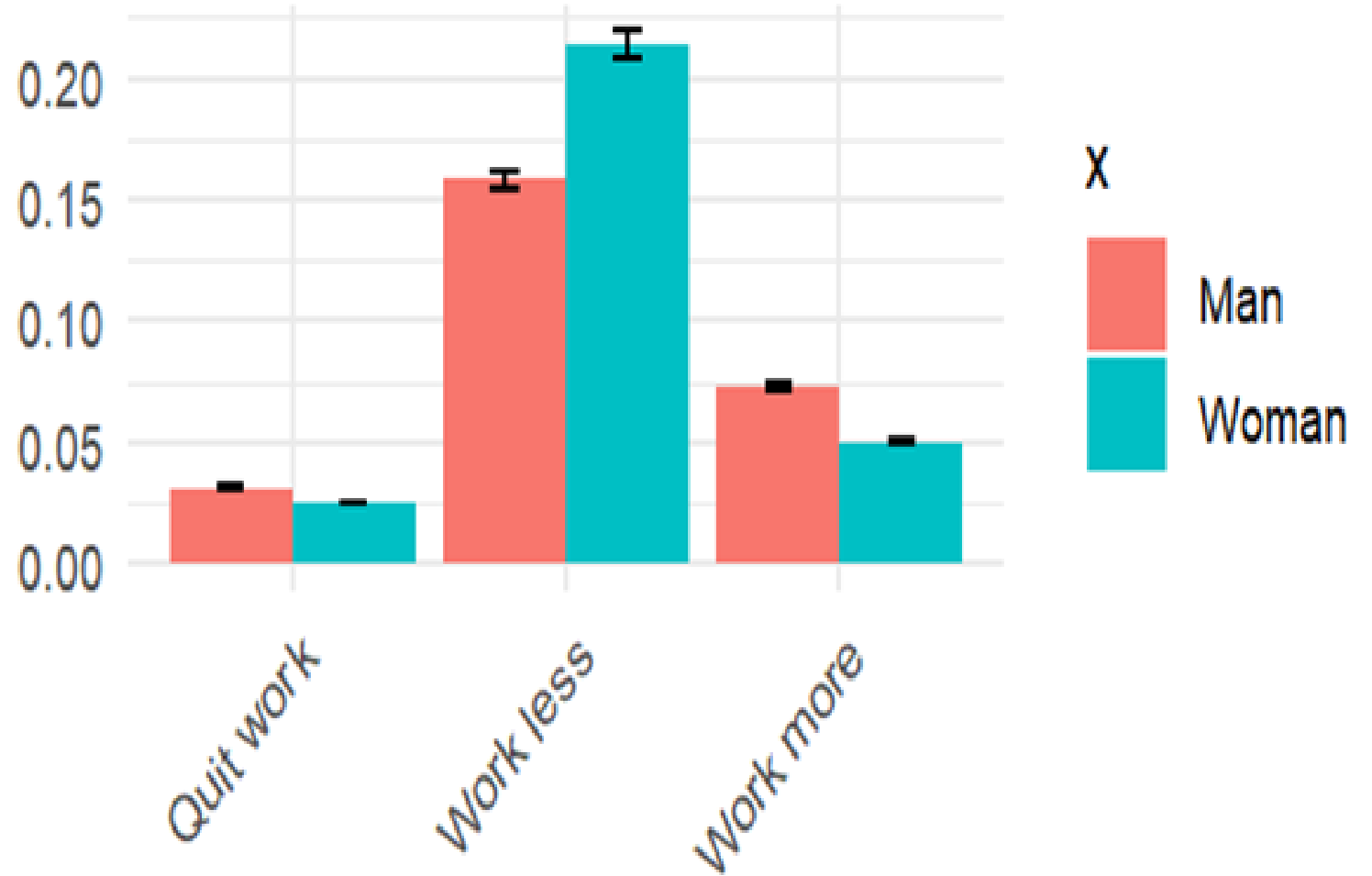
	Frequency	
	Number of answers	Percentage*
Quitting	38	3 %
Work more	47	4 %
Reducing Work	304	26 %
Volunteering	203	17 %
Start Own Business	157	13 %
Informal Care	243	20 %
Child Care	213	18 %
Looking for a New Job	200	17 %
Following a Training Course	379	32 %
I would not do anything	136	11 %

Gender

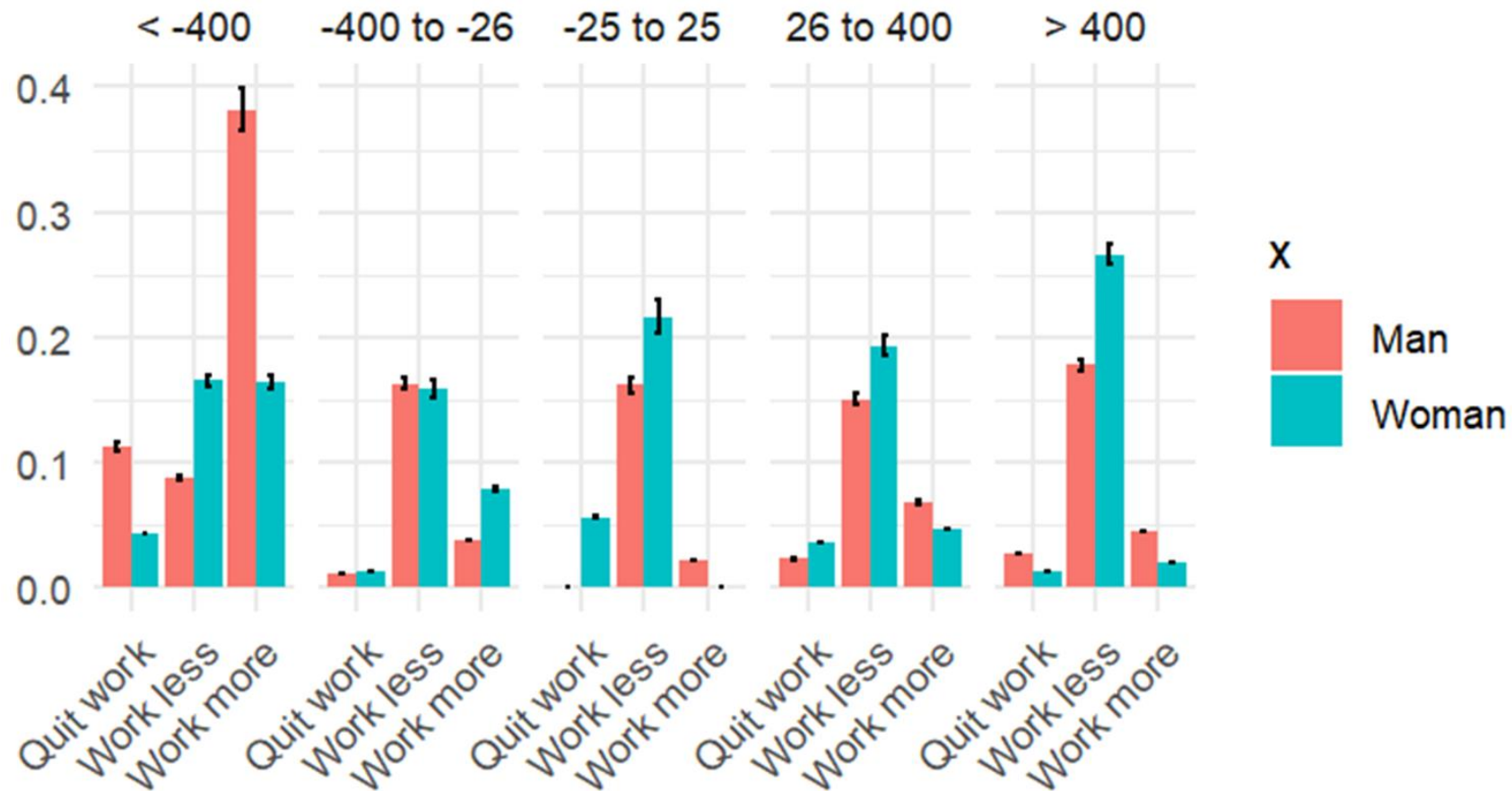
- BI can potentially recognize and remunerate unpaid care work, promoting financial independence for women.
- Conversely, critics argue it could reinforce traditional gender roles if women are expected to reduce paid work more often.

Predicted probability: Gender

- Women intend to reduce work more
- While men are leaning toward working more

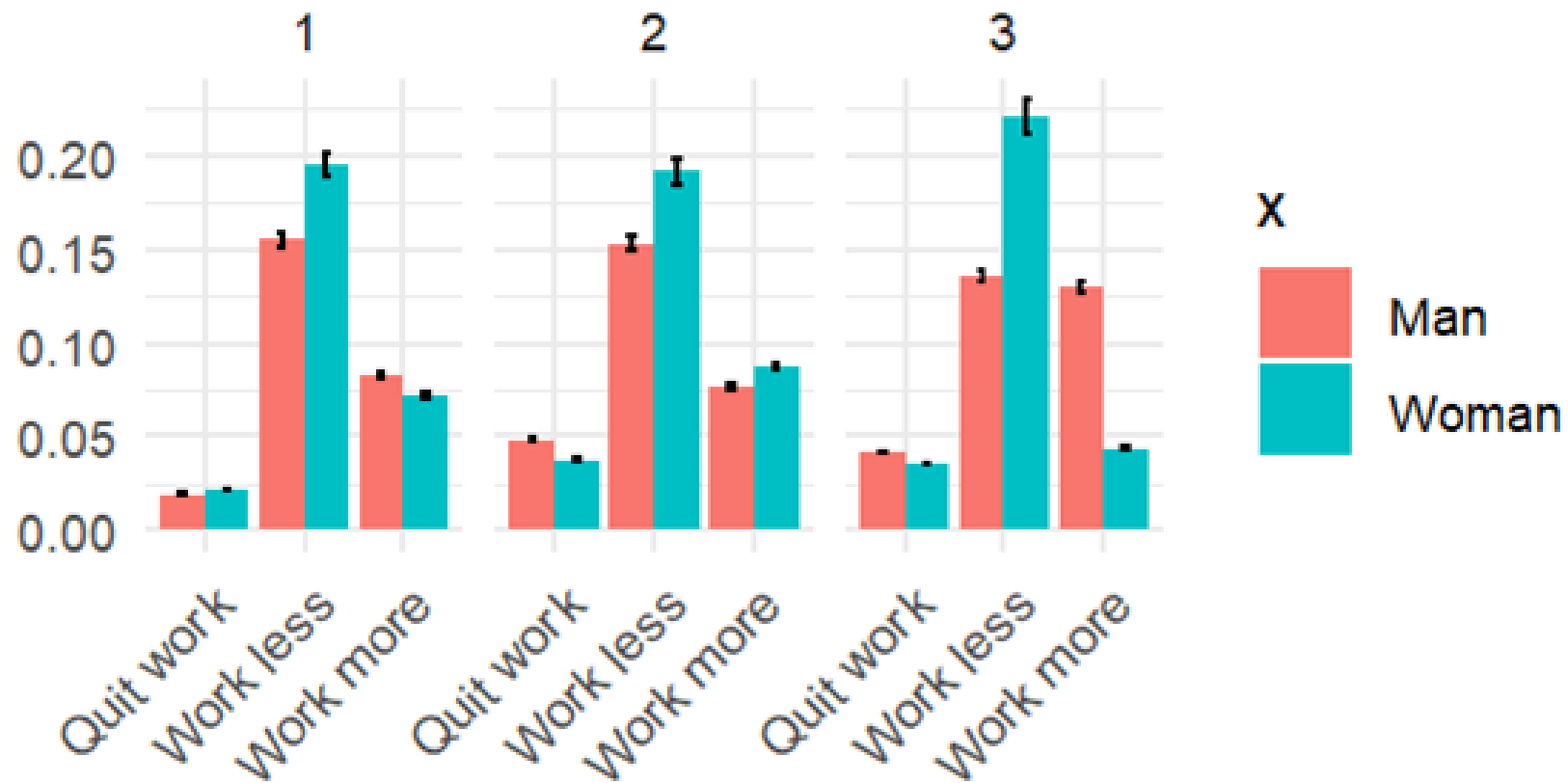


Micro-simulation



- The higher the micro-simulation results, the higher the intention of women to reduce work.
- Interestingly, men do not seem to be responsive to simulation result change

Scenario: Similar trends





Win for life results

- Real-world unearned income effect
- Directly surveys winners
- 500–3000€/month
- 64 in 2024 & 83 respondents in 2004 (Total= 147)



Work response in 2004

	Number of responses
Reducing	5
Quitting	5 (1)
No work reduction	72
Total	83

Work response 2024

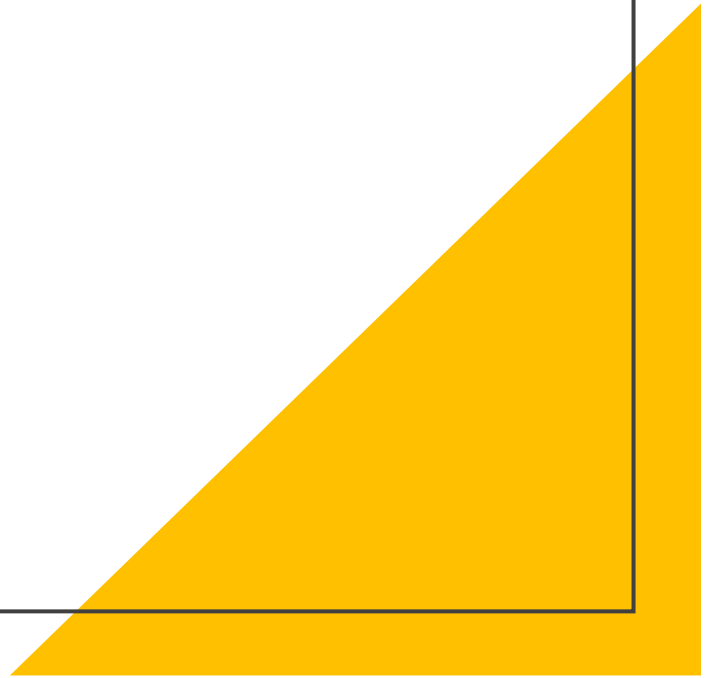
	<2000	2000	3000	5000	Total
Reducing	0	4	1	0	5
Quitting	0	1	0	0	1
No work reduction	22	24	10	2	58
Total	22	29	11	2	64

Conclusion

- Low Reduction in Work: Consistent with previous studies, our results confirm only a slight reduction in work effort under BI.
- This questions the fear of employment disincentive and in turn the conditionality of existing benefits
- Varying impact: Different BI program designs lead to varying effects across demographic groups. Gender, parental status, income, and education influence behavioural responses.
- Broader Testing for Comprehensive Insights: Examining employment effects across a wider set of studies is beneficial to understand nuanced responses to BI.
- Innovative, Cost-Effective Methodologies: Our new methods provide accessible, practical, and economical tools for analysing BI's behavioural impacts.

Comments and reflections

Prof. Loek Groot (University of Utrecht)



A close-up photograph of a tall stack of Euro coins, likely 1 Euro coins, resting on a surface covered with various Euro banknotes. The background is blurred, showing colors of the banknotes in shades of green, yellow, and red. The coins are in sharp focus, showing the 'EURO' and 'SARDE' markings.

Public support and the political viability of a Basic Income in Belgium and Beyond

Marie-Laure Mulayi

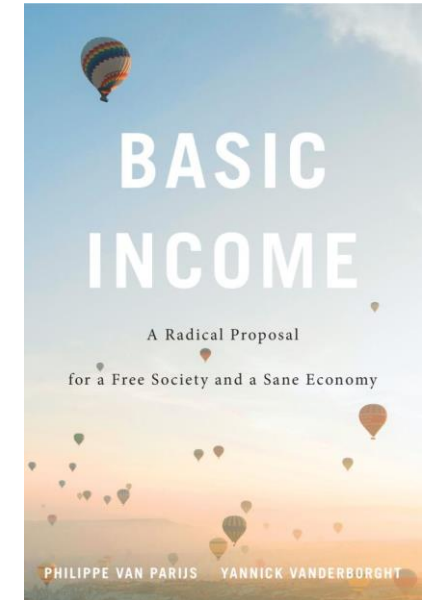
Centre For Sociological Research (KU Leuven)

BABEL Closing Event

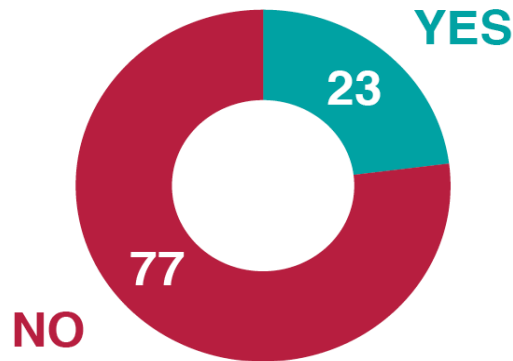
24/01/2025

Basic Income as a(n) (un)popular policy idea?

Pour faire battre
le cœur de la France
**Le Revenu
Universel
d'Existence**



Swiss Unconditional Basic Income Referendum Results



Source: Mother Jones



**MAYORS FOR A
GUARANTEED
INCOME**

Basic Income: What's in a name?

- Conceptual ambiguity
- Characteristics: Individuality, Universality*, Unconditionality
- Multidimensional approach: level of the benefit, eligible population, funding mechanism
- Narrative/framing differences

NAME OF THE PROPOSAL	TARGETED OR UNIVERSAL (WHO GETS IT?)	BEHAVIORAL CONDITIONS (WHAT DO PEOPLE HAVE TO DO IN EXCHANGE?)	INDIVIDUAL/ HOUSEHOLD	AMOUNT	FREQUENCY OF PAYMENT
<i>Universal Basic Income (UBI)</i>	Universal (Citizens or Residents)	None	Individual	Same for everyone (often indexed at poverty line)	Usually monthly (but could be yearly or weekly)
<i>Unconditional Basic Income</i>	Universal (Citizens or Residents)	None	Individual	Same for everyone (often indexed at poverty line)	Usually monthly (but could be yearly or weekly)
<i>Freedom Dividend</i>	Universal (Citizens over 18 years old)	None	Individual	\$1,000 for everyone	Monthly
<i>Guaranteed Income</i>	Targeted (Citizens or Residents whose income is less than a given threshold, sometimes set generously high)	None	Individual or Household	Varied up to a certain floor (amount that allows recipients to reach a defined income floor)	Monthly
<i>Negative Income Tax</i>	Targeted (Residents whose income is less than defined income cutoff when filing taxes)	None	Household	Varied based on income and income cutoff	Annually
<i>Earned Income Tax Credit</i>	Targeted (Residents whose earned income from formal labor is less than defined income cutoff when filing taxes)	Work in formal employment	Household	Varied based on income and income cutoff	Annually

Source: Gonzalez & Bidadanure (2020)

The policy design dimensions of Basic Income (Laenen, 2023)

Basic Income

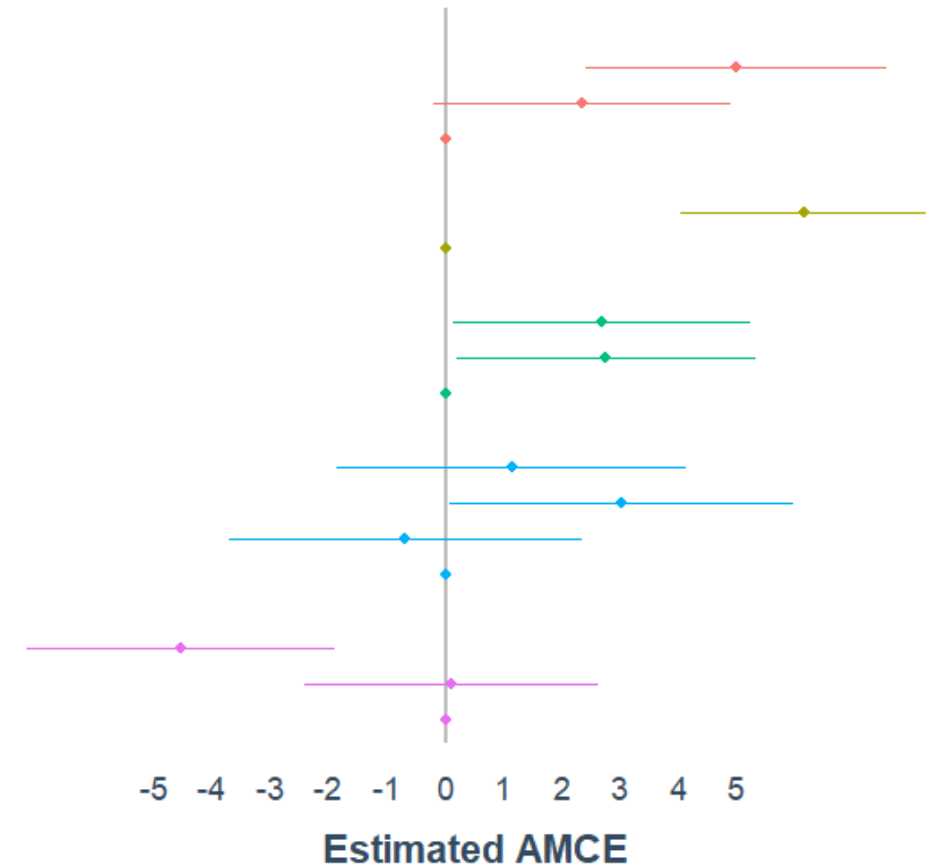
Accumulation	Administration	Conditionality
Duration	Financing	Frequency
Generosity	Individuality	Integration
Modality	Uniformity	Universality

QUID effects of policy design dimensions?

- *Universality*: public is sensitive to the identity of potential BI claimants (Bay & Pedersen, 2020)
- *Conditionality*: imposing work requirements increases support (Rincon, 2021; Laenen et al., 2022)
- *Financing*: tax aversion (Simanainen & Kangas, 2020)
- *Integration*: BI on top of existing social benefit (Stadelmann-Steffen & Dermont, 2020).
- Interactions between design dimensions
 - These studies allow us to identify the conditions under which support for a UBI could **increase**, i.e., combining universality with progressive taxation or citizenship requirements (Rincon, 2021) or **decrease**, i.e., combining work requirements and differentiating benefit levels based on work trajectories (Laenen et al., 2022)

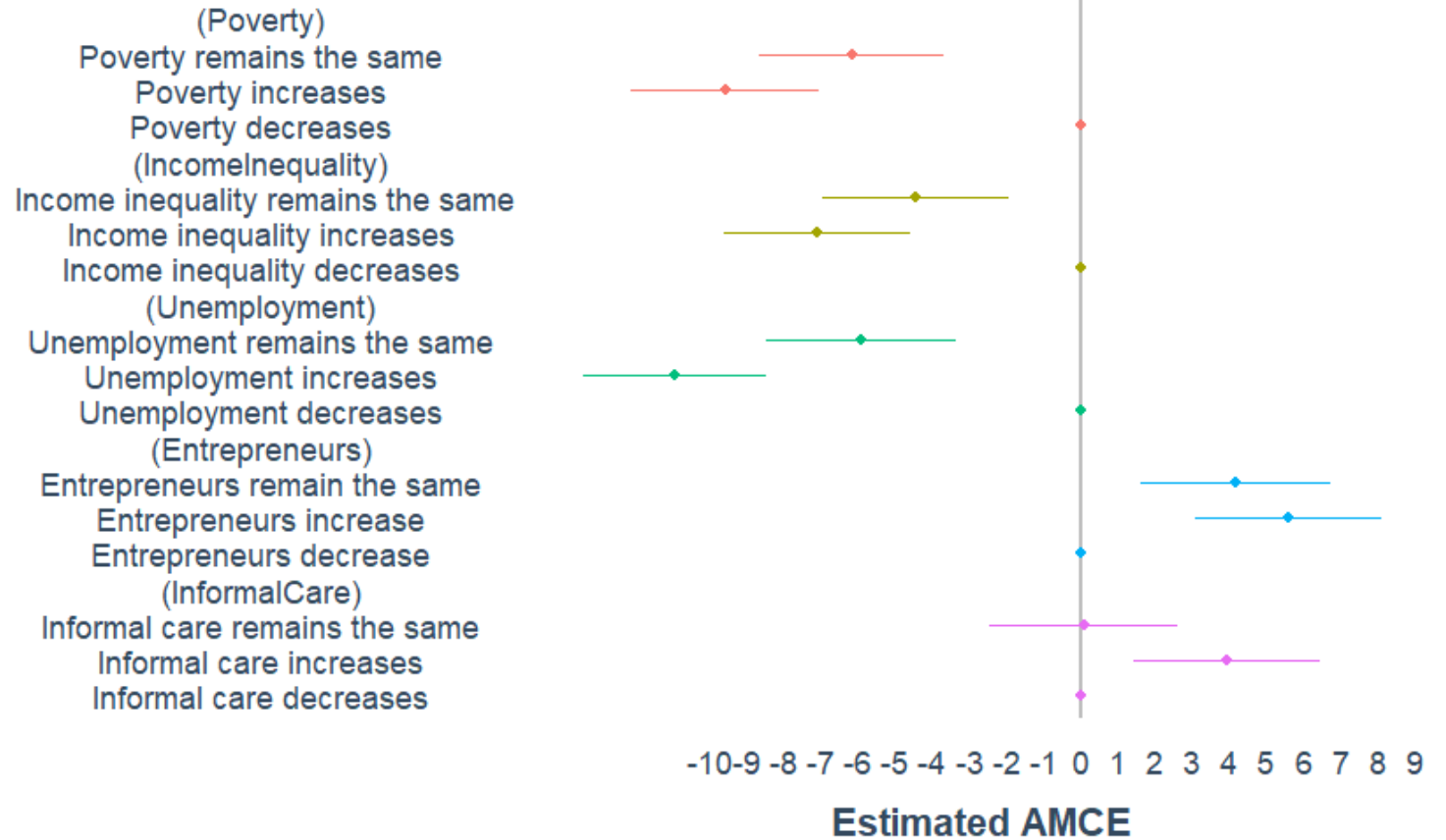
Empirical example 1: Effects of BI design characteristics in Belgium

(Amount)
1500eu
1000eu
500eu
(Conditionality)
conditional
unconditional
(Universality)
nationality requirements
residency requirements
including newcomers
(Integration)
not replacing existing benefits
give supplements to some
replace a number of benefits
replace all benefits
(Financing)
taxes in the future
tax on capital
climate tax



Source: First wave of BABEL Survey

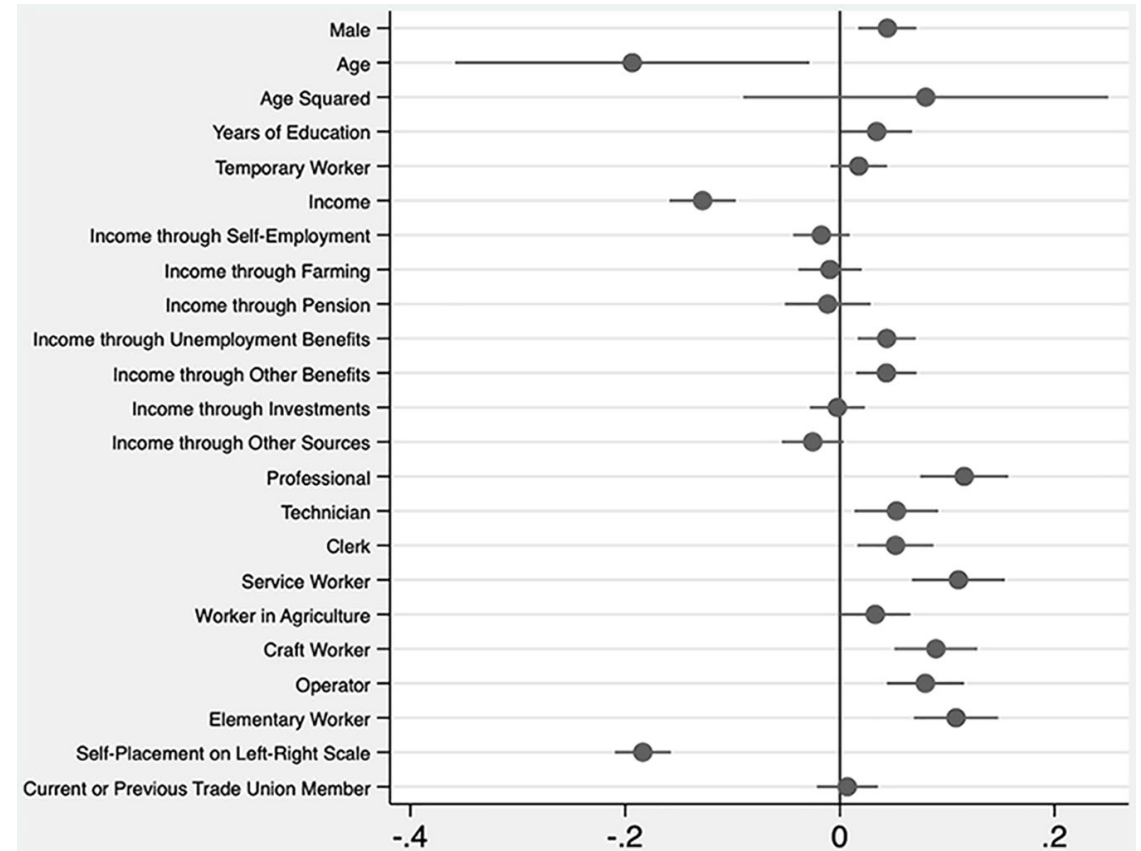
Empirical example 2: Effects of BI outcomes in Belgium



Source: First wave of BABEL Survey

The political economy of Basic Income

- Factors associated with individual support for BI
 - Self-interest vs. egalitarian values
- Findings (Vlandas, 2021)
 - Young age, left political ideology, low-income, unemployment etc.



Source: Vlandas (2021)

Figure 1: Mean level of support for design dimensions conditionality and universality among the full sample, rightist, centrist and leftist individuals (N=2955) (Mulayi et al., 2023)

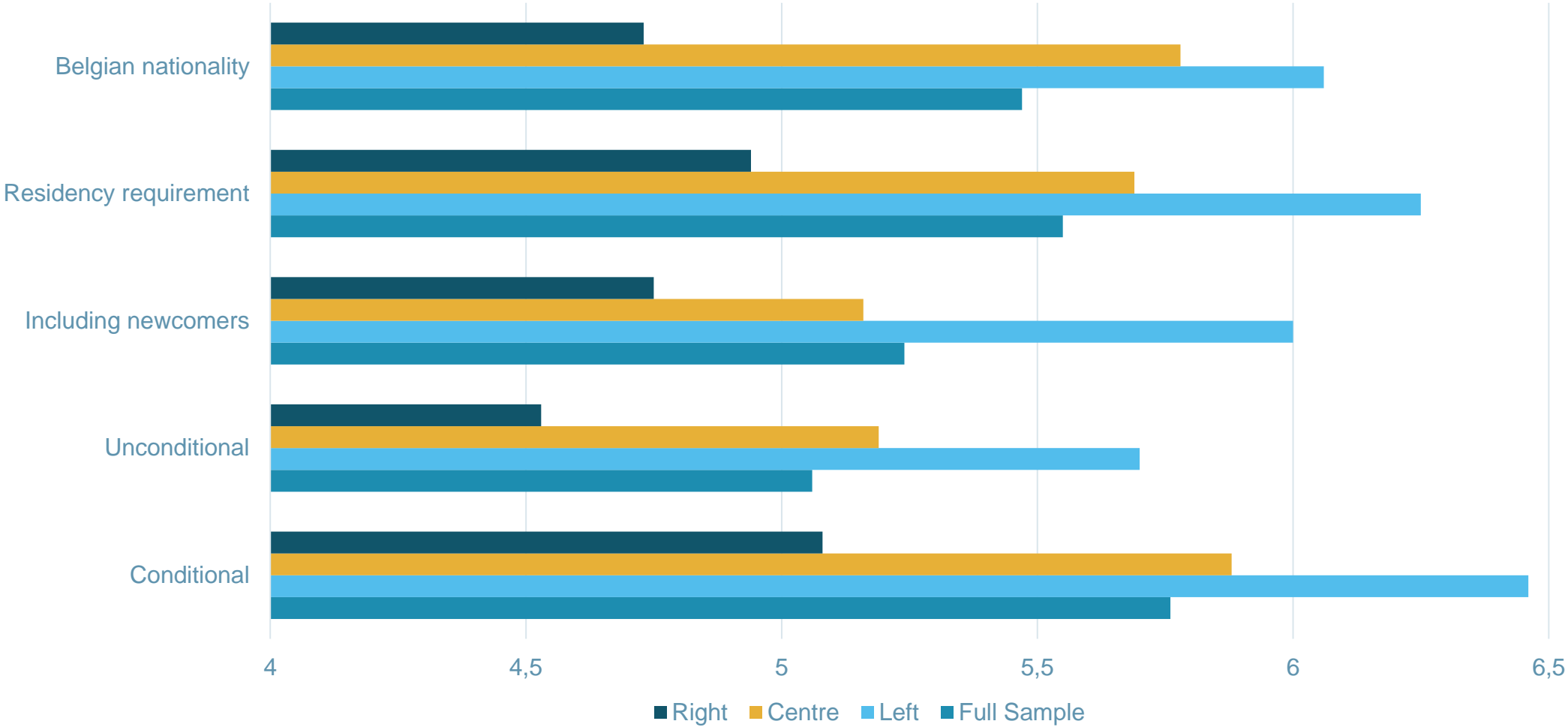
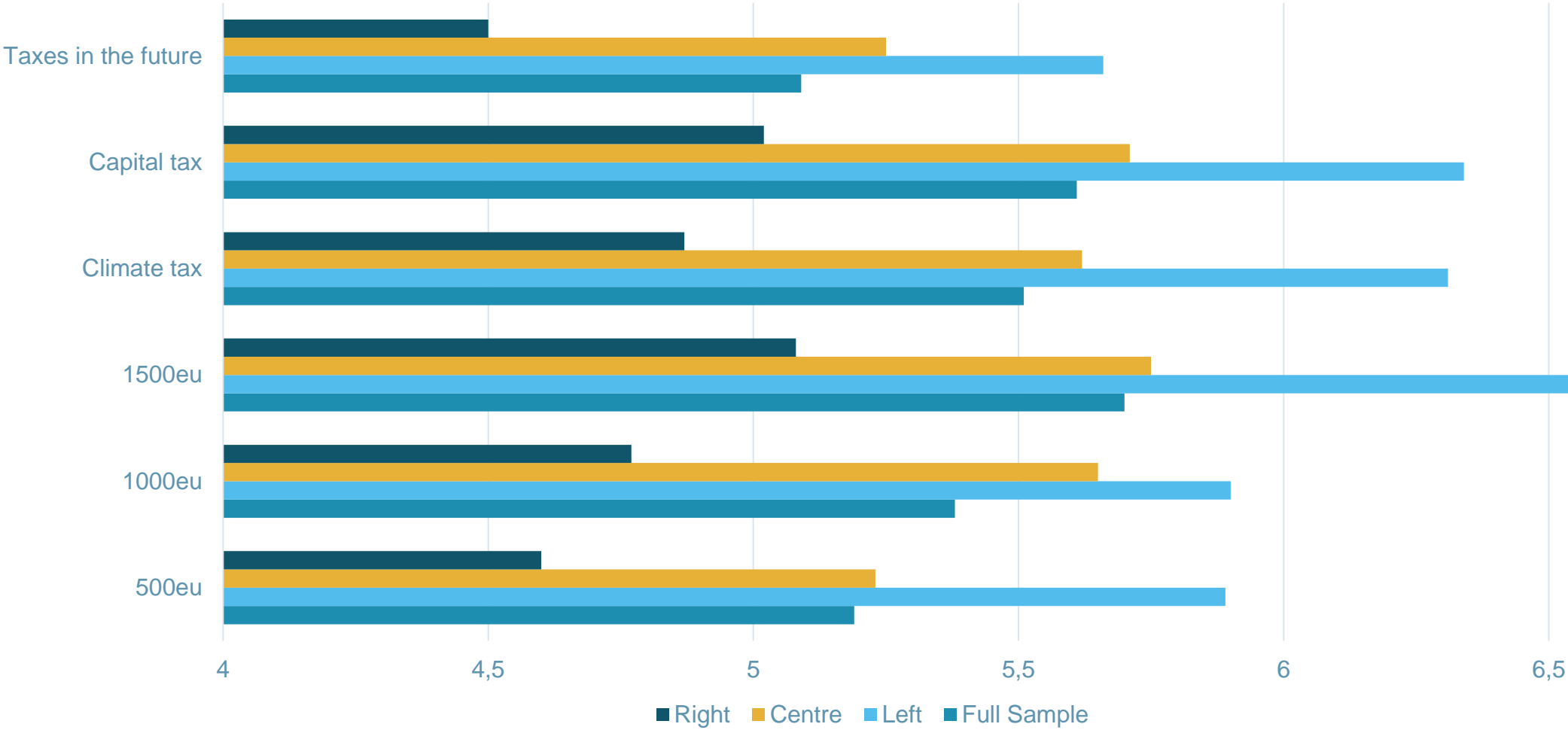
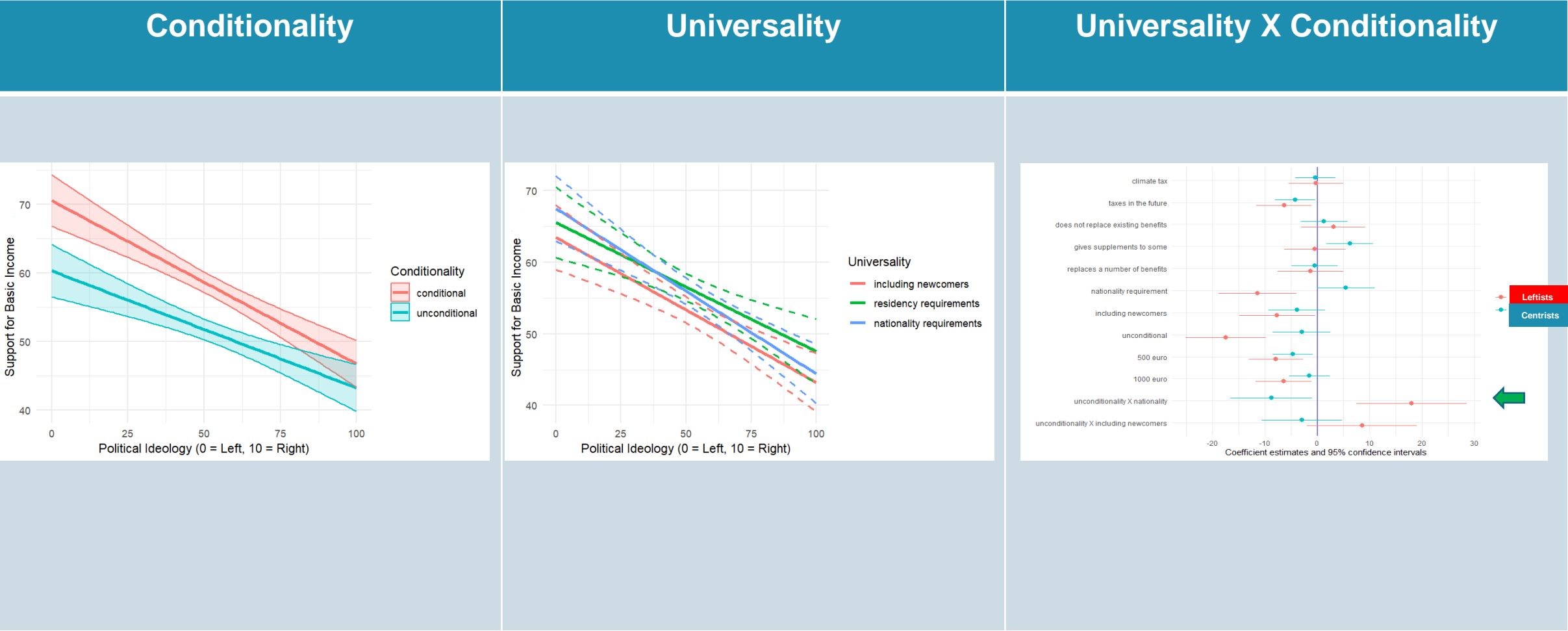


Figure 2: Mean level of support for design dimensions amount and taxes among the full sample, rightist, centrist and leftist individuals (N=2955) (Mulayi et al., 2023)



Empirical example 3: ideological predispositions



Comparison between Leftists and Centrists (Mulayi et al., 2023)

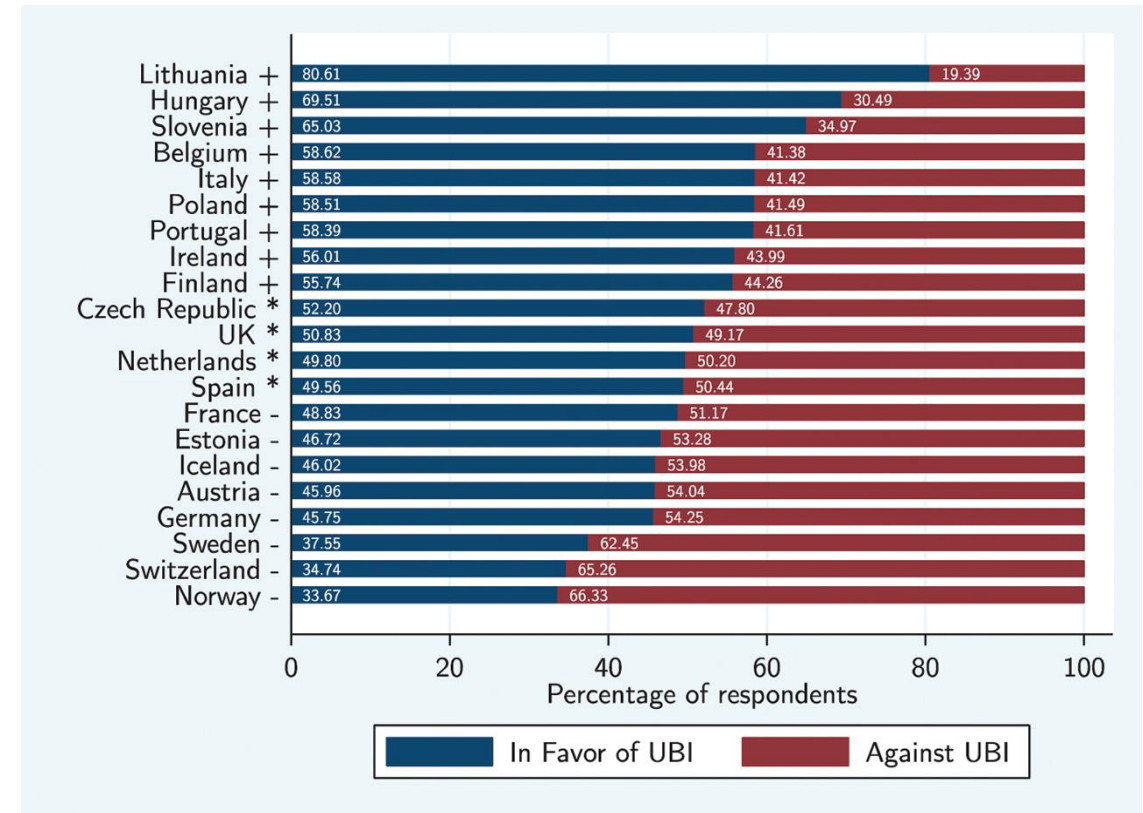
Empirical example 4: Media report (Laenen et al., 2023)

- Support for different types of BI among different societal groups
- Main conclusions:
 - Higher support among left-wing voters in Wallonia
 - Higher support among people who are critical of the welfare state
 - Higher support among socially vulnerable groups
- Available in Dutch and French on <https://babel-project.be/>



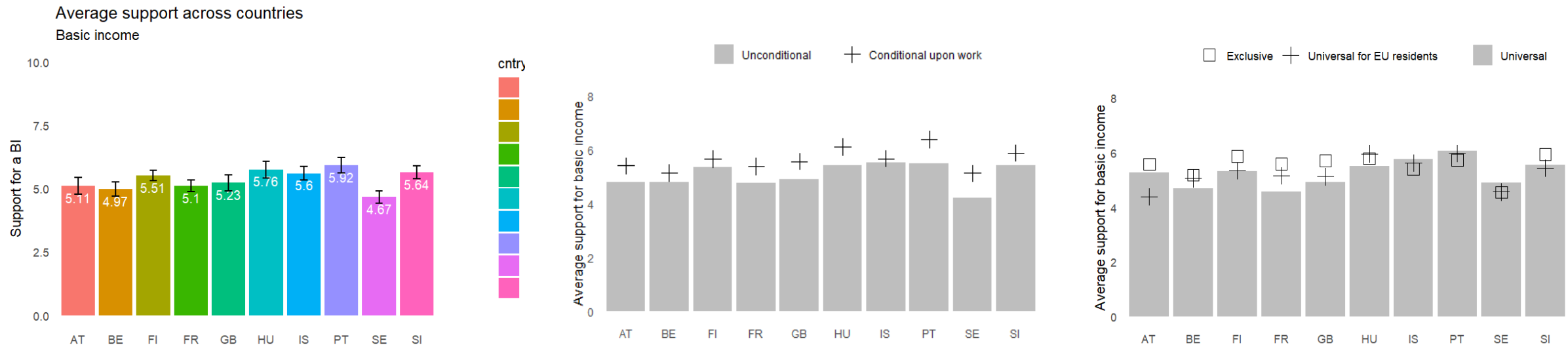
Cross-national findings

- How does the institutional context affect public support for a BI?
- Findings
 - Variation between European countries (Lee, 2018)
 - Material deprivation and social Spending (Roosma and van Oorschot, 2019)
 - Moderating effect of the size of the welfare state (Parolin & Sioland, 2021)



Source: Lee (2018)

Empirical example 5: Cross-national findings (Mulayi 2025, forthcoming)

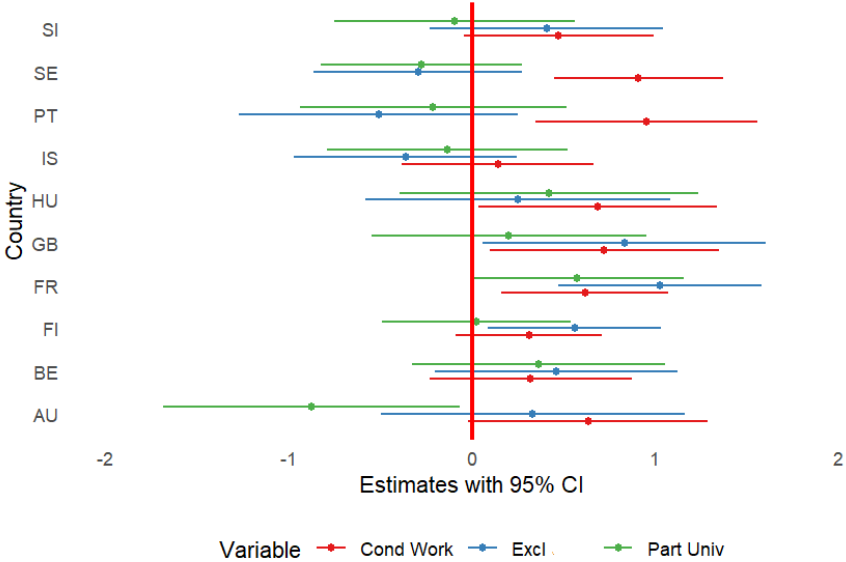


Empirical example 5: Cross-national findings (Mulayi 2025, forthcoming)

Table 1: Regression for support for a BI on the conditionality and universality dimension (N=5752)

	Model 1
Intercept	4.71(0.19)***
Conditionality (ref: Unconditional)	
Conditional upon work	0.57(0.09)***
Universality (ref: Universal)	
Universal for EU residents	-0.01(0.11)
Exclusive	0.29(0.11)**
Countries Fixed effects (CFE)	CFE

Graph 1: Coefficient plot of Support for a BI by the conditionality and universality dimension across country



Conclusion

- Support for BI is multidimensional and influenced by key design features
 - Opportunity to build coalition?
- Support for BI aligns with the Left-Right political divide
 - The design dimension conditionality is a contested feature across the political spectrum
- Support for BI remains low across European countries
 - National support for a BI is inversely related to levels of social protection
 - Globalization challenges the definition of BI eligibility and conditionality



Thank you for your
attention!

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UCLouvain

SAINT-LOUIS BRUXELLES

The Political Feasibility of UBI

Floriane Geels

Political feasibility : what are we talking about ?

- « A policy is politically feasible when the background conditions are such that there is a reasonable probability of the policy becoming actualized in the foreseeable future » (De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012)
- Political feasibility from the perspectives of institutional actors
 - Political parties
 - Trade unions (TU)
 - Employers' organisations (EO)
- Spoiler alert : UBI does not seem politically feasible in BE (for now)



Why is it so ?

Synthetic Results

1) Strategic arguments

- Cyclical interest towards UBI from parties :
 - Upsurge of the UBI theme (2016-2020) → Strategic positioning of francophone parties
 - 'Down' since 2022
- Use of UBI proposals : theoretical idea more than concrete reform tool
 - Social dividend (MR), youth BI (Ecolo), participation BI (Engagés)
- Less salience for Flemish parties → right-wing dominated political scene + regionalism
- Trade unions' reluctance : political adversaries' proposals + defence of institutionalized position
- UBI = threat for social dialogue ? (TU and EO)

2) Ideological arguments

- Francophone parties : UBI proposals illustrative of left-right cleavage
- Strong work ethic → almost all actors
 - Stronger on the Flemish political scene
 - Work = good for the individual (anti-poverty and emancipatory, TU) and for society's prosperity (EO)
- Rejection of unconditionality
 - Shared strong attachment to insurance system
 - “Activation” principle (making work pay)
- Doubts on universality
 - Preference for targeted measures (EO & Flemish parties)
 - Unfairness of universality (TU)
- Different framing of social policies issues
 - Fight against poverty (Flemish parties), solidarity (TU), reciprocity & activation (EO)



3) Pragmatic arguments

- Unaffordability : shared by all actors
 - Waste of resources needed elsewhere (TU)
 - Need for public agencies' accountability (EO)
 - State's deficit and North-South transfers (Flemish parties)
- Labor shortage context: UBI = wrong direction (work disincentive)
- Adequateness of current system (with improvements), preferred to UBI
- Lack of evidence/implementation worldwide (EO)
- UBI : not politically attractive ?
 - Multidimensional: various proposals under one name
 - Non-priority proposal

In sum:

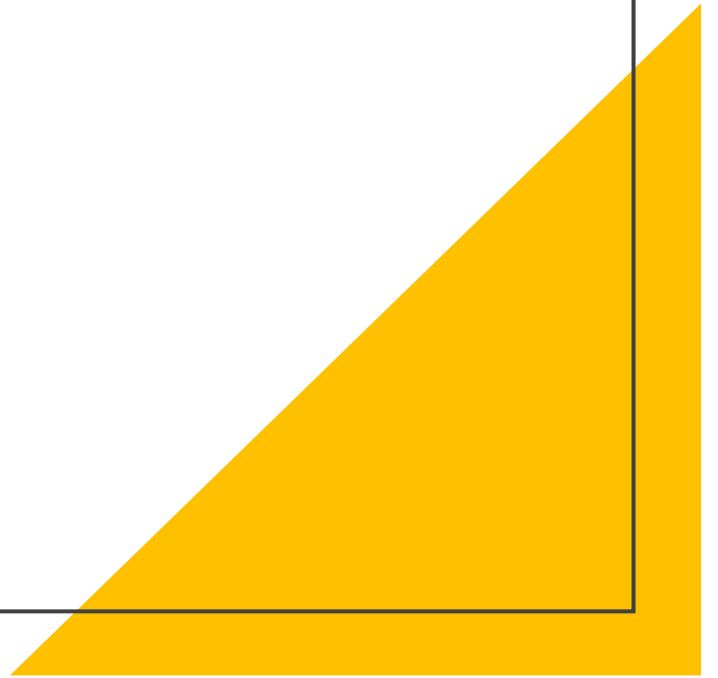
- UBI hardly politically feasible in Belgium BUT
- Raising essential questions on Belgian social protection system
- Importance of taking into account the general context (socio-economic, political, etc.)
- Insightful multi-actors perspective

Any questions ?

Do not hesitate to contact me by email at floriane.geels@uclouvain.be

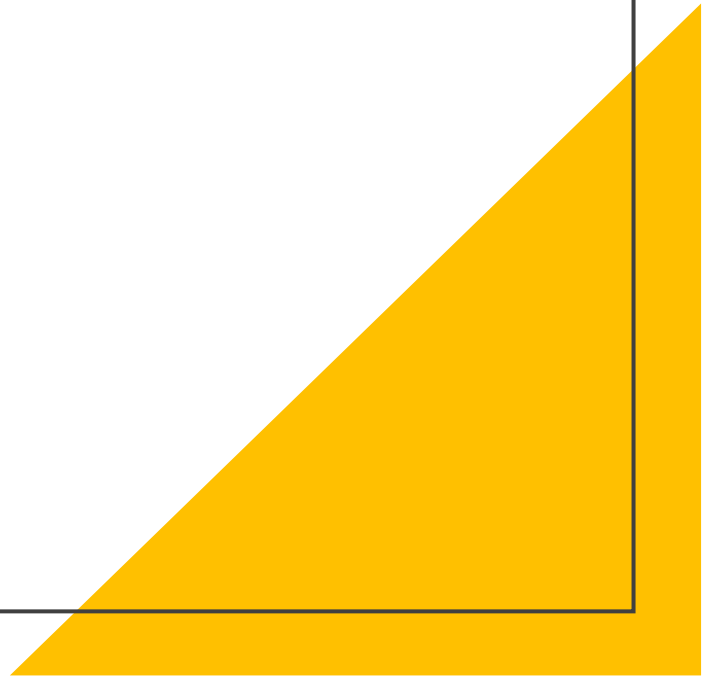
Comments and reflections

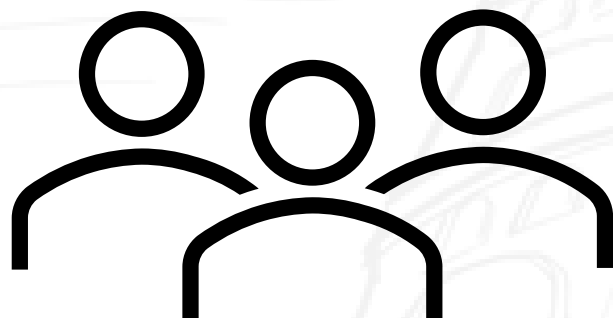
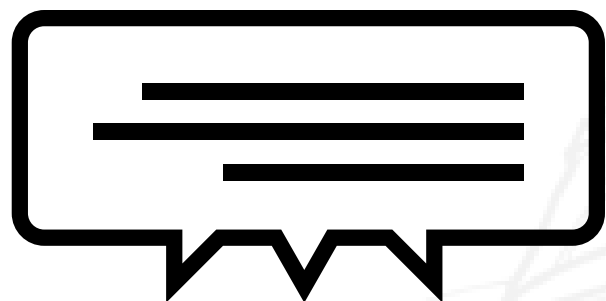
Prof. Femke Roosma (Tilburg University)



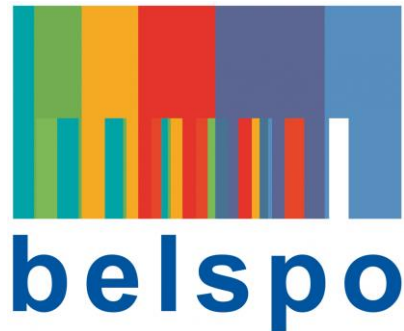
Concluding reflections

Prof. Yannick Vanderborght (UC Louvain)





Q&A



Thank you for your interest in our work!
All findings and data from this project are
available on our website, Feel free to visit
<https://babel-project.be/> to explore the
outcomes in more detail.

KU LEUVEN