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## Children of Communism: The Former Party Membership and Demand for Redistribution

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# Children of Communism: The Former Party Membership and Demand for Redistribution

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## ABSTRACT

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# Children of Communism: The Former Party Membership and Demand for Redistribution

The paper looks at the persistence of egalitarian norms in post-Communist societies by focusing on the former members of the Communist parties in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Russia and their children. Using the individual-level survey data, we show that there are striking differences between Russia and the CEE countries in this respect. While in the CEE both former members of the Communist parties and their children have stronger preferences for redistribution than the rest of the population, in Russia former CPSU members do not exhibit stronger preferences for redistribution – at the same time, their children support redistribution.

**JEL Classification:** D31, I30, N00, P36, P52

**Keywords:** Communist Party, inequality, redistribution, Russia, Visegrad group

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## 1. Introduction

Egalitarianism is the most important element of Communist ideology and an important reason Communism was so appealing for many in the last century. The propaganda of Socialist countries put particular emphasis on equality of their citizens; the Soviet Union, for example, while acknowledging that there are *some* people in the West, who enjoy a higher standard of living than in the USSR, pointed out that in the USSR *everybody* has access to housing, healthcare or education or has a job. Any form of inequality associated with substantial differences in income or wealth was rejected by the Communist rhetoric. Thus, there are reasons to argue that extreme inequality aversion became a persistent social norm in the Communist states. How did this norm develop in the aftermath of the collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe?

The empirical evidence on the attitudinal legacies of Communism with respect to economic inequality is mixed. On the one hand, a large array of studies points out strong paternalist sentiments of the citizens of former Communist countries, their support of welfare state and redistribution, and ultimately negative perception of inequality (Blanchflower and Freeman 1997; Suhrcke 2001; Austen 2002; Alesina and Fuchs-Schündeln 2007; Habibov 2013; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017). Inequality is seen as a consequence of external forces rather than people's own efforts; therefore, it should be corrected by the state (Redmond et al. 2002; Okulicz-Kozaryn 2014). On the other hand, however, at least during the early years of transition, in some post-Communist countries, an increase of inequality was perceived as a positive phenomenon, associated with larger economic opportunities in the society (Gijsbets 2002; Kelley and Zagorski 2004; Grosfeld and Senik 2010). This, in turn, could have changed given the painful experiences of transition (Meulemann 1996). The persistence of inequality aversion and preferences for state-led redistribution also varied across different post-Communist states (Aristei and Perugini 2016; Auspurg et al. 2019).

These conflicting results could partly be driven by the heterogeneity of attitudes towards inequality within post-Communist societies themselves. First, the results of the post-Communist transition varied a lot across different social groups. Some experienced a major loss of their social status; others were able to maintain or even improve it (Ghodsee and Orenstein 2021). It stands to reason that these groups developed different attitudes towards inequality (Verwiebe and Wegener 2000). Second, different groups were subject to Communist propaganda and indoctrination or managed to maintain a certain level of autonomy during the Communist era to a different extent. Some groups were likely to have been more loyal to the Communist regime or to have adapted better to the (formal and informal) rules of the game it was based upon—because the regime paid greater attention to some groups than to others or because these groups were exposed to alternative

socialization factors to a different extent (Neundorf and Pop-Eleches 2020). This should also have affected their perception of Communist propaganda and attitudes towards inequality.

The goal of this paper is to investigate the attitudes towards inequality in a particularly important social group of the Communist societies—former members of Communist parties (CPs),<sup>1</sup> as well as their descendants. CPs were a key element of political regimes of the Communist states; their members were both subject to strict selection and intensive indoctrination but also enjoyed substantial privileges and high social status. At the same time, the transition had a different effect on the well-being of the former Communists, depending on the political regime in the country after the fall of Communism and the way marketization occurred. Specific experiences of the Communist and transition periods were likely to produce distinct attitudes towards inequality, which through the family socialization mechanisms could have survived in the offspring generation. For Russia, Libman and Obydenkova (2019) show that regions with a higher share of former CP members in the population had a significantly lower income inequality in the 2010s; they link this effect to the behavior of former Communists (their ability to network) rather than to their preferences. In this study, the focus is specifically on how inequality is *perceived* by the CP members and their children.

The paper uses Life in Transition Survey (LiTS) data to investigate the attitude of former Communists and their children towards inequality. We acknowledge enormous differences in the transition paths of the post-Communist countries (Zweynert and Goldschmidt 2006), which most likely produced different inequality aversion levels and preferences for redistribution (Murthi and Tiongson 2009; Jami and Kimmelmeier 2021). Thus, we compare attitudes towards inequality across Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (the Visegrad group, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) and Russia. Our results show that while in the CEE former Communists experienced stronger inequality aversion than the rest of the population, this was not the case for the Russian former Communists. At the same time, in the second generation, descendants of Communists in both Russia and the CEE had stronger negative attitudes towards inequality. We explain it with different experiences of former Communists in the CEE and with Russia and with different societal factors triggering inequality aversion.

The remaining part of the paper is organized as follows. The second section presents our theoretical framework and develops the main hypotheses. The third section presents the data and the econometric model. The fourth section reports our findings and discusses their implications. The last section concludes.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Communist party' is used generically and encompasses all ruling parties of the Communist bloc countries, which in Eastern Europe occasionally had the name of a 'Socialist party' (Germany, Hungary) or 'workers' party' (Poland).

## 2. Former Communists and attitudes towards inequality

### 2.1. Theory of preference formation of former CP members

How could the CPs membership have shaped preferences for redistribution? In this section, we develop a stylized theory of formation of preferences about redistribution among the former CPs members. We argue that preferences of former CPs members about redistribution were formed and modified during two distinct periods of history of Eastern Europe: Communist era as such, as well as the period of economic transition (Pyle 2021). There are two key characteristics potentially influencing former CPs members attitudes towards redistribution during the Communist era: (a) ideological indoctrination and (b) de-facto practices of Communist rule. During the transition era, again, we single out two characteristics: (a) relative success of former CPs members during this period as opposed to other members of the society and (b) overall level of inequality in the society. The ultimate preferences towards redistribution we attempt to capture are an outcome of interplay of these four characteristics.

**Ideological indoctrination:** Throughout the Communist era, CPs members (more than other societal groups) were subject to massive propaganda and ideological pressure. In the Soviet Union, party members were expected to participate in regular events (within the party itself, as well as in specialized educational facilities, like the Soviet Universities of Marxism-Leninism), where they discussed current political events and the position of the party, as well as familiarized themselves with the most recent doctrinal changes. Communists were expected to demonstrate an extremely high level of loyalty to the regime and social engagement in favor of the regime throughout Eastern Europe. Disloyal members were subject to expulsion, which should have created strong incentives to internalize the party ideology (Whightman and Brown 1975; Mason 1982; Wightman 1983; Sulek 1990).<sup>2</sup> If the CPs were successful in indoctrinating their members, they should demonstrate higher loyalty towards Communist ideology (including its key element – egalitarianism) even after the end of the regime.

**De-facto practices:** At the same time, CP members were not only subject to indoctrination. They also frequently occupied high positions of authority in the Communist countries and, as a result, had more intensive encounters with the informal inner workings of the regime than ordinary citizens (Libman and Obydenkova 2015). In particular, they were likely to be better familiar with the wide differences in the access to goods and services between the privileged *nomenklatura* groups and the rest of the population (Matthews 2011; Filtzer 2014). De-facto practices of interaction within the party

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<sup>2</sup> In some cases, CP members' signals of loyalty were extremely costly. In the early days of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) members of the ruling party had, in addition to other obligations, to commit to the voluntary military service (in the GDR of that period, no military draft existed) (Christian et al. 2019).

were likely to have a strong socializing effect on its members, but they produced a very different socialization effect than the one the regime would prefer: disillusionment, opportunism, cynicism, and willingness to adapt to the existing environment, as well as better ability to network and to acquire connections necessary for a successful career (Bahry and Silver 1990; Harris 1986; Niethammer 1990; Titma et al. 2004; Libman and Obydenkova 2021; Otrachshenko et al. 2023). These 'opportunistic' Communists should at the very least not differ in terms of preferences for redistribution from the rest of the population. In fact, they could even be characterized by a lower inclination to support redistribution and be more open to high levels of inequality due to their pragmatism and cynicism: being disillusioned with respect to the Soviet ideology, these Communists would then perceive any calls for equality as mere rhetoric hiding elites' privileges.

**Relative success during the transition:** The initial preferences towards redistribution were likely to be moderated by the experiences former CPs members made during transition. In some cases, Communists experienced a substantial loss of their social status; their social capital (connections they meticulously built during the old regime) and the skills at networking were severely depreciated in the new market economy. In other cases, however, former CPs members were more successful than an average member of the society, precisely due to the old networks, which helped them during the transition recession. In addition, psychological costs could be important: a strong rejection of the Communist past in the society is likely to negatively affect the self-perception of the group particularly strongly linked to the past regime, i.e., former CPs members, while the prevalence of more ambivalent or even nostalgic attitudes would have a more positive effect on how former CPs members perceive themselves.

We hypothesize that these transition experiences were likely to influence attitudes towards redistribution. There is a large literature pointing out that more successful members of society should be less inclined to support redistribution and be less inequality averse (Alesina and Giuliano 2011; Guillaud 2013; Cohn et al. 2019). This could be driven not only by rational fears of the costs of redistribution but also by psychological attributes of success, making people more likely to attribute inequality to characteristics of individuals rather than situational forces (i.e., to believe that poor are in a sense responsible for their situation) (Piff et al. 2020). Brown-Iannuzzi et al. (2015) argue that it is the *subjective status* of an individual rather than objective income, which matters for inequality aversion. If that is the case, we expect those former CPs members, who perceive themselves as being more successful, to have a lower inclination towards redistribution.

**Overall inequality in the aftermath of transition:** The effect of individual wealth on attitudes toward redistribution should differ, however, depending on the overall level of economic inequality in the post-transition society. There is literature, which demonstrates that in more unequal societies



the wealthy are less inclined to have stronger preferences towards redistribution, and, in fact, could be even more likely to support redistribution. This could be associated with rational fears of instability of highly unequal societies (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). It could, however, be also driven by the overall norms and values (specifically, perceived injustice of income inequality), which could matter for the redistributive preferences to a larger extent than an individual's own income (Corneo and Grüner 2002). Dimick et al. (2016) and Deimick et al. (2018) develop a model of 'income-dependent altruism', where the wealthy prefer high levels of redistribution if they live in highly unequal societies. In this case, the prosocial preferences (concerns about the unequal distribution of income in the society and low income of others) drive the rich to be willing to part with their income for the greater good. Redistribution preferences are furthermore strongly influenced by the expected social mobility (e.g., Alesina and La Ferrara 2005; Rainer and Siedler 2008; Shariff et al. 2016), which again could be lower in more unequal societies.

Thus, in a nutshell, we can formulate four main hypotheses, reflecting each of the four factors presented above.

*H1: Former CPs members and their children should be characterized by a stronger preference towards redistribution / stronger negative attitude towards inequality (indoctrination)*

*H2: Former CPs members and their children should be characterized by a weaker preference towards redistribution / less pronounced negative or even positive attitude towards inequality (political practices)*

*H3: Former CPs members and their children should have a weaker preference for redistribution and lower inequality aversion in case they were relatively more successful during transition than other social groups.*

*H4: H3 will not hold (or can even be reversed) in case of high overall inequality in the society, leading to wealthier individuals having stronger preferences towards redistribution / stronger negative attitude towards inequality.*

In the next step, following Bisin and Verdier (2001, 2011), we also hypothesize that the transmission of Communist values may occur within a family. That is, former CPs members could have passed their values and attitudes, both which formed during the Communist era and during the transition period, to their children. In this case, children of the former Communists should also have similar redistribution preferences as their parents. However, it is also the case that some of the factors identified above could have affected the second generation to a particularly large extent: specifically, children of Communists could have been affected by the *material outcomes of transition* (relative

wealth and social position of the families they grew up in) to a larger extent than by the *values* of their parents. It means that the attitudes towards redistribution of the children of CP members would be influenced by how successful their parents fared in transition (as well as the overall inequality level in the society). In this case, for the children of Communists, we expect the mechanisms driving the hypotheses H3 and H4, but not H1 and H2, to have an impact on redistribution preferences.

In interpreting the results of our study, it is important to make an important caveat: while we can measure the *contemporary* preferences towards redistribution of the former CPs members and their offspring, we (obviously) cannot capture their *past* preferences, which existed during the Communist era. Thus, if we find that today economically successful former CP members are skeptical towards redistribution, it does not mean that during the Socialist era they were *not* ideologically indoctrinated. It is possible that loyal Communists changed their worldviews during transition. This creates a certain problem for distinguishing between hypotheses H2 and H3: economically successful Communists of the post-transition era could have at the same time been opportunistically motivated in the Communist period. In fact, hypotheses H2 and H3 can be even conceptually indistinguishable, i.e., refer to the same process of preference formation. It is possible that opportunism was the *cause* for economic success of former CPs members in the capitalist economy era (for example, because opportunists were more likely to adapt in a flexible way and exploit all opportunities society can offer).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, it is difficult to differentiate H1 and H4: are the pro-redistribution preferences of the wealthy former CP members, if we observed those empirically, driven by their ideological preferences or by the perceived high level of inequality in the society as a whole?

While we cannot provide a perfect solution to this challenge, a partial way of dealing with it would be to utilize the differences across former CPs members in terms of their individual success during the transition. While it is possible that *on average* former CPs members were particularly successful in some of the transition economies, *individual* former CPs members could have shown much worse performance. If the H2 were true, they would still oppose redistribution (since they would perceive redistribution rhetoric as simply serving the self-interested needs of bureaucrats and politicians), while if the H3 were true, the relatively unsuccessful former Communists would develop stronger support for redistribution. Similarly, we can use cross-country variation in the levels of inequality (discussed in greater detail in the next sub-section) to differentiate between H1 and H4. If former CPs members exhibit preferences towards redistribution only in countries with relatively high level of inequality, it is more consistent with H4 than with H1. However, we acknowledge that this solution is not ideal, if one accounts for some possible preference change trajectories (thus, former opportunists

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<sup>3</sup> On the flexibility of former CPs members in their supposed ideological commitments see Torres-Adan and Gentile (2022).

could turn into true believers if facing massive loss of social status and economic hardship – as a psychological defense mechanism needed to cope with these challenges). This calls for caution in interpreting our results.

## **2.2. Country-level transition paths**

Hypotheses H3 and H4 suggest that individual- and country-level variation of transition experiences and paths should influence the attitude of the former CPs members and their children towards redistribution. From this point of view, we can utilize substantial differences between the Visegrad countries and Russia to test the hypotheses; essentially, H3 and H4 allow us to make predictions about former CPs members' and their children' attitudes towards inequality in these countries.

The collapse of the Communist regime had different effects on the CPs members. In some countries, there was substantial continuity in the personal composition of elites; in others, only a small fraction of former elites managed to keep their position (Szelenyi and Szelenyi 1995). In some countries, CPs were prohibited by law, lustrations were introduced (Letki 2002; Williams et al. 2005; Horne 2012; Rožič and Nisnevich 2016; Otrachshenko et al. 2023) or there was a widespread rejection of the old regime in the society; in other countries, public attitudes towards the Communist past were split and Communist nostalgia emerged at a relatively early point of time. Furthermore, while inequality increased in all post-Communist countries during the transition, some of them ended having much higher levels of inequality than the others (Heyns 2005). Russia and the Visegrad group countries differ a lot in terms of all these characteristics.

Russia is a country where former *nomenklatura* managed to keep much stronger political control than in the CEE (Snegovaya and Petrov 2022). Social rejection of the Communist past was never universal, which led to a more positive attitude towards former Communists in the society (Libman and Obydenkova 2021). In fact, widespread Communist nostalgia (White 2010) was utilized by the emerging authoritarian regime in Russia as a legitimation tool (Leshchenko 2008). Furthermore, as the empirical research shows, former CPSU members performed better than average during the economic transition (Gerber 2000, 2001; Rona-Tas and Guseva 2001; Geisheker and Haisken-DeNew 2004), although the effect disappeared over time.<sup>4</sup> Informal networks continued to play a crucial role in the Russian economy (Kosals 2007; Ledeneva 2011), making the 'networking skills' of former CP members potentially valuable. At the same time, Russian society developed in one with a particularly high level of inequality, more than the CEE country (Novokomet et al. 2018; Otrachshenko and Popova 2022).

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<sup>4</sup> There is no clarity whether the effect was driven by the self-selection effects or by the acquisition of social skills within the party.

The CEE countries, on the other hand, were much more successful in establishing formal market institutions (e.g., Hartwell 2015), so that informal networks, while not entirely unimportant (especially in the first years of transition, see Stark 1990), were ultimately less relevant for individual's success (integration in the EU also played an important role in this respect, see Otrachshenko et al. 2016; Nikolova and Nikolaev 2017; Ivlevs et al. 2021). The Communist nostalgia in this part of the was as encompassing as in Russia (Ekman and Linde 2005; Turcsányi and Quiaoan 2020) and the negative attitudes towards former CPs were much stronger. It is not entirely clear how well former CPs members performed after transition, but there is some evidence that their success was substantially smaller than in Russia. Thus, for a broad set of post-Communist countries, Ivlevs et al. (2021) demonstrate that members of the CPs were more likely to establish private businesses but were not necessarily more successful in this respect than other groups. Verhoeven et al. (2008) show that former CPs membership benefit was particularly large in Russia and in the Czech Republic as opposed to Slovakia and Hungary.<sup>5</sup> Otrachshenko et al. (2023), finally, look at the life satisfaction of former CPs members in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. In the CEE, there is a negative correlation between former CPs membership and life satisfaction, while in the former Soviet Union there is a positive one. The level of inequality in the CEE was also smaller than in Russia.

From this point of view, from the hypothesis H3 would follow that the former CPs members should have stronger preferences towards redistribution in the CEE (particularly, because of the psychological effect of the status loss – former Communists should have seen themselves as ‘underdogs’ of transition) than in Russia. The H4, on the other hand, suggests that in Russia, due to the high level of overall economic inequality, relatively more successful former CPSU members should still be more willing to support redistribution. In the remaining part of the paper, we will look at the country-level and individual transition outcomes to investigate the validity of these arguments.

### **3. Data and empirical strategy**

As already mentioned in the introduction, to examine the CPs' preferences for redistribution, we use data from the 2016 LiTS, a nationally representative survey of individuals conducted by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank. The survey covers all former Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, except Turkmenistan. Each country's sample contains about 1,500 individuals and has detailed questions on socioeconomic characteristics, individual experiences, and preferences.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This fits anecdotal evidence of a very high share of former CP members in at least some branches of the Czech bureaucracy, see <https://ruski.radio.cz/kazhdyy-shestoy-prokuror-byvshiy-chlen-kompartii-8141703>.

<sup>6</sup> Importantly, LiTS is not a panel dataset, which precludes us from using fixed effects to control for individual-specific unobserved heterogeneity; at the same time, even if we had panel data, dummy past membership in

To measure the respondents' demand for redistribution, we use the following survey question: "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced". Possible answers range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Additionally, we also use the survey questions related to respondent's opinion regarding the population groups who deserve support from the government. The question is formulated as follows "Which of the following groups of citizens deserve support from the government?" with possible answers "elderly", "disabled", "war veterans", "families with children", "working poor", and "unemployed". Based on this question, we create several dummy variables, each of which equals one if a respondent mentioned a specific population group and 0 otherwise.

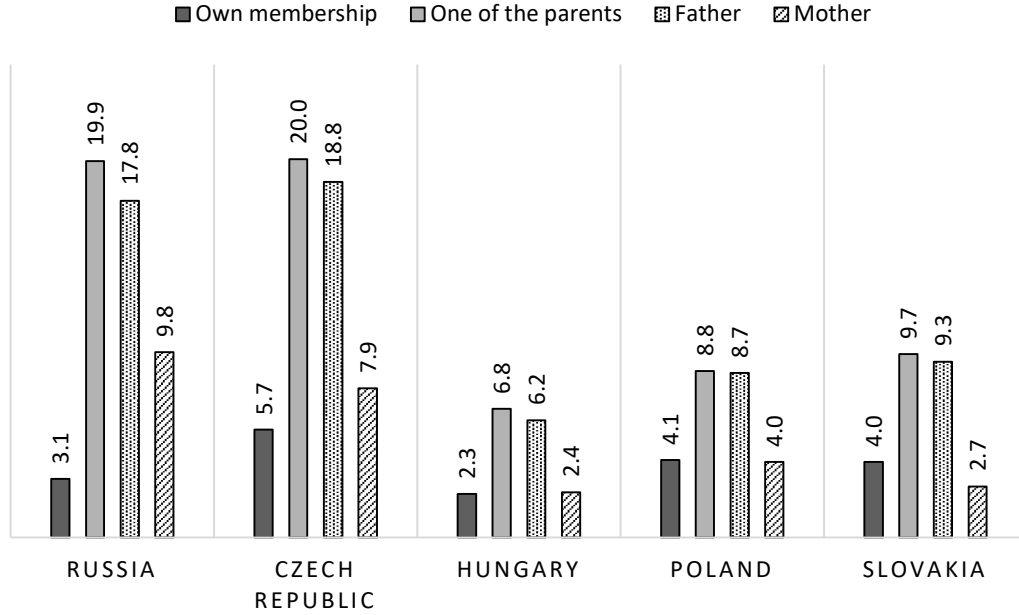
CPs membership is measured based on a survey question "Were you or any member of your family a member of the Communist Party prior to 1989/1991?" Based on this question, we construct several dummy variables, including own membership, father's membership, mother's membership, or one of parents' membership. *Figure 1* details the descriptive statistics on the former CPs membership in the analyzed countries. As shown, 2 to 5% of respondents were the CP members themselves. In Russia and the Czech Republic, about 20% of respondents have one of the parents who was a CP member, while in Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, 7 to 9% of respondents have a parent who was a CP member. In all countries, respondents' fathers are more likely to be former CP members than respondents' mothers. To provide a reference point, in the USSR the CPSU membership in the 1980s climbed to about 6% of the population; if one takes into account that the LiTS data were collected almost thirty years later, low life expectancy in Russia (and major mortality crisis the country experienced during the 1990s), a smaller share of former CPSU members in our data becomes plausible.<sup>7</sup>

In our regressions, we also control for several socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents, including age and its square, employment status, education level, self-assessed income status, wealth index, marital status, the number of children, and living in an urban area. The description and summary statistics of all variables used in the analysis are presented in *Tables A1* and *A2* in the appendix.

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the CP could have been represented as a linear combination of individual fixed effects, which would make the use of fixed effects estimators impossible anyway.

<sup>7</sup> At the same time, it means that we have to introduce a caveat for our analysis: we investigate the preferences of former CPs members, who *lived long enough* to be able to answer to the LiTS survey in the mid-2010s.



**Figure 1. Sample CP membership in the analyzed countries.**

Source: Authors' construction based on LiTS 2016.

The baseline econometric model of our interest is as follows.

$$Inequality\_aversion_{ic} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CP\_member_{ic} + \mathbf{X}_{ic}'\boldsymbol{\gamma} + \boldsymbol{\theta}_r + \varepsilon \quad (1),$$

where subscripts  $i$ ,  $c$ , and  $r$  stand for an individual, country, and region, respectively. *Inequality\_aversion* is an individual preference toward reducing income inequality. As alternative dependent variables, we also use individual preferences toward governmental support of specific disadvantaged groups of the population, such as the elderly, disabled, war veterans, families with children, working poor, and the unemployed.

*CP\_member* is a dummy variable and equals 1 if a respondent was a member of the CP and 0 otherwise. In different model specifications, we also use the CP membership of the respondent's parents instead of his/her own membership.  $\mathbf{X}$  is a set of individual socioeconomic characteristics, as described above.  $\boldsymbol{\theta}$  is a set of regional dummies. The regions correspond to federal districts in Russia, to the European NUTS3 classification in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia, and to the NUTS2 classification in Poland. Region-specific effects account for unobservable time-invariant heterogeneity between regions where respondents live, e.g. history, culture, or social norms.  $\varepsilon$  is an error term.  $\beta_0, \beta_1$ , and  $\boldsymbol{\gamma}$  are the model parameters. Standard errors are robust to heteroskedasticity and clustered at the primary sampling unit (electoral district) level, as provided by the LiTS. To simplify the interpretation and comparison of estimates, we estimate Eq. (1) using the ordinary least squares (OLS).

To assure that our results are not driven by the influence of some individual unobserved factors, e.g., family culture or personality traits, that could bias the coefficient estimates in Eq. (1), we conduct a robustness check as proposed by Oster (2019). It assesses by how many times the impact of unobserved factors should exceed the impact of observed factors to take away the causal effect of CPs membership on redistribution preferences entirely. Oster's values larger than one suggest that unobserved heterogeneity is unlikely to be the main driver of our results.<sup>8</sup> Given that the CPs were restrictive in accepting new members, it could also be the case that only people with a certain socio-economic background could have become CP members. If this is the case, our results in the model with the respondent's own CP membership could potentially be biased due to the selection on observable characteristics. To address this issue, we employ the entropy balancing matching technique (Hainmueller 2012).<sup>9</sup> This technique allows us to balance CP members (treatment group) and non-members (comparison group) based on exogenous characteristics such as age and its square, gender, and region of residence, and create balancing weights. These weights are then applied in the estimation of Eq. (1) to account for possible selection on observable characteristics. Finally, given the lack of appropriate instrumental variables for our setting, we apply Lewbel IV approach (Lewbel 2012). This approach uses heteroskedasticity to construct artificial instrumental variables and has been used in cases when no conventional instrumental variables can be easily identified (e.g., Mishra and Smyth 2015; Mavisakalyan et al. 2021; Otrachshenko et al. 2022a and 2022b).

$\beta_1$  is the parameter of our primary interest and presents the association between the CP membership (own or parental) and the demand for redistribution. A positive and statistically significant value of this coefficient would provide empirical support to our hypothesis H1, while a negative or statistically insignificant estimate would support hypothesis H2. To test the hypotheses H3 and H4, we in all specifications estimate Eq. (1) separately for Russia and the Visegrad group countries. H3 suggests that  $\beta_1$  should be positive in the CEE and negative or insignificant in Russia. H4, conversely, suggests that  $\beta_1$  should be positive in Russia and insignificant in the CEE. On top of that, we also look at individual wealth of former CPs members in Russia and in the CEE. For this purpose, we further divide the sample into four quartiles according to the respondents' perceived socioeconomic status and estimate Eq. (1) by including interaction terms between the CPs dummy and dummies for these quartiles. This shows to us insofar the correlation between the CPs membership and attitude towards inequality is driven by the relatively rich or the relatively poor former CPs members (and their offspring) in Russia and in the CEE. Thus, if H3 were to hold, we should

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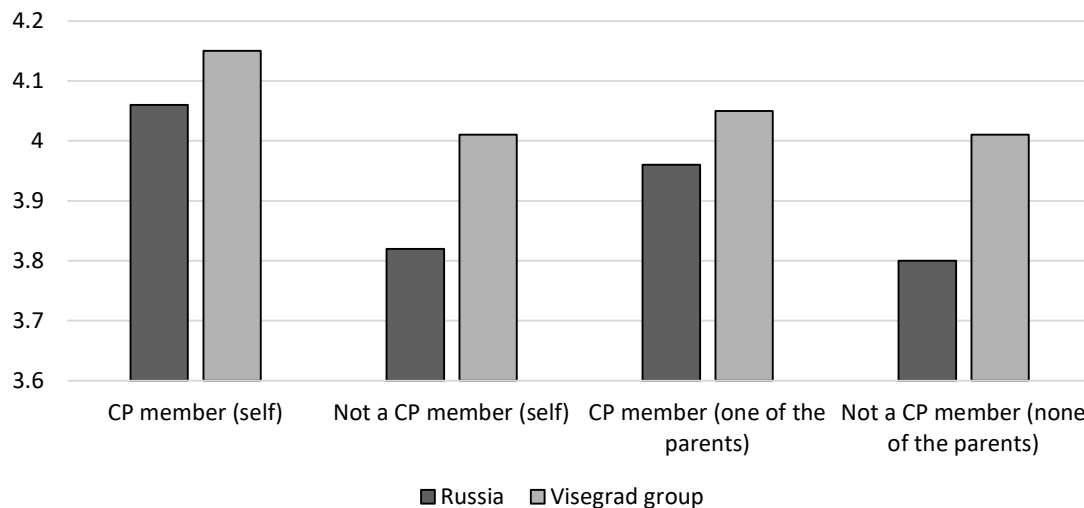
<sup>8</sup> For recent applications of this approach, see Buggle and Nafziger (2021) and Mavisakalyan et al. (2021).

<sup>9</sup> A recent example of applying this technique to study the impact of the CP membership on well-being is Otrachshenko et al. (2023).

observe former CPs members with particularly small income to have stronger preferences for redistribution (potentially in both Russia and the CEE). Focus on income quartiles is important to capture the fact that it is *relative* income and status rather than the *absolute* one, which matters for our hypotheses.

#### 4. Results

We start by presenting the descriptive evidence regarding CP membership and inequality aversion and then provide empirical support to our arguments. *Figure 2* presents the mean responses regarding reducing the gap between rich and poor between CPs members and non-members in Russia and Visegrad countries. As shown, inequality aversion is greater in the Visegrad group countries than in Russia among both members and non-members of the former CPs. Also, in both Russia and the Visegrad countries, respondents who were members of the CP themselves or have at least one of the parents who were a CP member have stronger support for reducing inequality. To understand whether these results present statistically significant differences between members and non-members after controlling for individual characteristics and regional fixed effects, we estimate Eq. (1). The main results are presented in *Table 1* (for the full results, see *Table A3* in the appendix).<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 3. CP membership and demand for redistribution in Russia and Visegrad countries.**

Source: Authors' construction based on the LiTS 2016. Notes: The figure presents average sample responses to the survey question "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced" with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

<sup>10</sup> Table 1 presents OLS results. For ordered probit results, see Table A4 in the appendix. As seen, the signs and significance remain similar.



Columns (1) and (5) in *Table 1* represent the association between own CP membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor. As shown, in both Russia and Visegrad countries this association is positive, although it is statistically significant only in the CEE. The results could be interpreted in line with the hypothesis H1 holding for the Visegrad countries only (with ideological Communists having strong preferences for reducing inequality), though this association is statistically significant at the 10% level only. The lack of correlation for Russia could be explained by prevalent opportunist sentiments of former Communists, which may be not enough to trigger greater acceptance of inequality than in the rest of the population but at the very least preclude former CPSU members from embracing redistribution (H2). The result is consistent with Libman and Obydenkova (2021), who, studying the CPSU legacies in a variety of societal aspects, also closely link them to the opportunism of former Communists.

Columns (2)-(4) and (6)-(8) in *Table 1* also present the results for children of Communists. In columns (2) and (6) we show the results for those respondents whose one of the parents was a CP member in Russia and Visegrad countries, respectively, while in columns (3), (4), (7), and (8) we distinguish which one of the parents, father or mother, was a party member. Interestingly, in both Russia and Visegrad countries, children of former Communists have strong preferences for reducing inequality between rich and poor. For the Visegrad countries, we could again interpret it in line with the hypothesis H1, but for Russia it is highly unlikely that ideological commitments are strong among children of Communists but not among Communists themselves (if anything, there are good reasons to expect children of former CPSU members to have experienced much *smaller* effect of ideology and propaganda and more systematic encounters with alternative viewpoints than their parents). The confidence intervals of the estimates for Russia and for the Visegrad countries overlap in the corresponding models. This suggests that the impacts of parental CPs on redistribution preferences in Russia and the CEE are not statistically different from each other.

We provide several checks to assure that these results are not biased due to endogeneity. First, as shown in *Table 1*, the Oster (2019)'s check suggests that the influence of unobserved factors should be 4.4 to 113.3 times larger to have a zero causal effect of CPs membership on redistribution preferences. That is, we may argue that unobserved factors unlikely to be a main driver of our results. In addition, we provide results with the entropy balancing weights (see *Table A5*). As shown, the results for children of Communists remain similar in signs, magnitude, and statistical significance. These results assure that selection on observable characteristics is likely not the main driver behind our results. The only exception is the estimated coefficient on own CP membership in Russia, where the estimate becomes marginally statistically significant, suggesting that in Russia, the former CP members themselves, not only their children, also have stronger redistribution preferences than non-

members. Finally, Lewbel’s IV approach, as reported in *Table A6*, fully confirms our findings for the Visegrad countries, but not for Russia, for which we find no significant difference in the redistribution preferences among children of the CPSU members and the rest of the population (for the former CPSU members themselves, results do not change).

**Table 1. CP membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor.**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Russia				Visegrad			
CP membership (own)	0.181 (0.188)				0.152* (0.080)			
CP membership (one of the parents)		0.175** (0.076)				0.112** (0.046)		
CP membership (father)			0.180** (0.080)				0.106** (0.047)	
CP membership (mother)				0.209** (0.099)				0.148** (0.070)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes
Oster’s check	7.69	113.3	44.16	14.78	80.38	4.94	4.60	4.39
Observations	1,230	1,230	1,230	1,230	5,278	5,278	5,278	5,278
R-squared	0.046	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.134	0.134	0.134	0.134

*Source:* Authors’ calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, self-assessed income, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. OLS estimates are reported. The dependent variable is based on a survey question “To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced” with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

We then study whether the CPs members and non-members have preferences for governmental support of specific population groups of the population, such as the elderly, disabled, war veterans, families with children, working poor, and the unemployed. The results are presented in *Table 2*. In all models, the Oster’s value is greater than one, except for models in column (9) in the case of Russia and column (1) in the case of CEE, in which the estimate of CPs membership is also zero. This suggests that unobserved heterogeneity is not a concern in *Table 2*. In Russia, both former CPSU members and their children do not differ from the non-members. In contrast, children of former Communists are likely to think that all mentioned groups of the population deserve support from the government (the result is not statistically significant in the case of the disabled). The former CPs members in the Visegrad group are themselves also likely to support war veterans and the unemployed and have weak preferences for supporting other population groups.

**Table 2. Groups of the population that deserve support from the government**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
<b>Russia</b>	Elderly		Disabled		War veterans		Families with children		Working poor		Unemployed	
CP member (self)	0.307 (0.236)		0.144 (0.247)		0.182 (0.252)		0.329 (0.236)		-0.015 (0.306)		-0.183 (0.288)	
CP member (one of the parents)		-0.058 (0.133)		0.054 (0.116)		-0.059 (0.112)		0.059 (0.113)		0.083 (0.125)		-0.044 (0.133)
Individual controls	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Oster's check	7.01	5.05	14.79	3.02	5.23	1.41	2.47	4.38	0.06	2.84	11.89	3.17
Pseudo R-squared	0.044	0.043	0.065	0.065	0.066	0.065	0.064	0.063	0.040	0.041	0.046	0.045
Observations	1,276	1,276	1,276	1,276	1,276	1,276	1,276	1,276	1,276	1,276	1,276	1,276
<b>Visegrad</b>												
CP member (self)	0.022 (0.117)		0.084 (0.110)		0.238** (0.121)		0.155 (0.114)		0.102 (0.100)		0.195* (0.109)	
CP member (one of the parents)		0.124* (0.072)		0.077 (0.071)		0.276*** (0.072)		0.206*** (0.071)		0.203*** (0.067)		0.137* (0.073)
Individual controls	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Oster's check	0.10	3.61	1.54	1.77	2.91	5.26	6.76	6.64	6.53	23.97	5.46	5.72
Pseudo R-squared	0.099	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.120	0.122	0.073	0.074	0.053	0.054	0.107	0.108
Observations	5,368	5,368	5,368	5,368	5,320	5,320	5,368	5,368	5,368	5,368	5,368	5,368

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, self-assessed income, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. Probit marginal effects are reported. The dependent variable is a dummy based on the question "Which of the following groups of citizens deserve support from the government?" 1 if a particular group is chosen, 0 if not chosen.

Hypothesis H1 may be not the only explanation for the greater support for redistribution among former CPs members and their children in the CEE countries. An alternative argument could be derived from hypothesis H3 – if more former Communists and their children in the Visegrad countries were relatively unsuccessful during the transition, it was likely to drive them into greater support of redistribution. To deal with this hypothesis, we provide two sets of results. First, we disentangle the results between CP members with different levels of perceived income, since the own economic success of the CP members may explain their redistribution preferences. For this, we divide the samples of Russia and Visegrad countries into four quartiles, where the first quartile corresponds to the poorest 25% of the sample and the fourth quartile corresponds to the richest 25% of the sample, based on the perceived income.

As shown in *Table 3*, in Russia both former CPSU members and their children are relatively richer than in the Visegrad group countries, since the 4<sup>th</sup> quartile contains a greater share of the sample in Russia than in CEE.<sup>11</sup> Still, in both Russia and Visegrad countries the majority of former Communists belong to the two lowest income quartiles. Among those, who have never been members of a CP, there is a similar pattern and most of the sample of non-Communists also belongs to the lowest two quartiles in both Russia and Visegrad. However, there are also differences between Russia and Visegrad in this respect. In Russia, the share of former Communists in the lowest two quartiles is slightly lower than the share of non-Communists in those income groups. In contrast, in Visegrad, more former Communists than former non-Communists fall into the lowest two quartiles. This suggests that former CPs members might be relatively worse off as compared to a general population in the Visegrad countries than in Russia. Importantly, the results of *Table 3* refer to the self-assessed income quartiles, i.e., are likely to be strongly influenced by the subjective social status.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Note that quartiles have been computed for the entire population and not for the CP members; thus, while within the entire population each quartile contains roughly 25% of respondents, the allocation of former CP members to these quartiles can be different

<sup>12</sup> On the systematic misperception of one's position in the income distribution see Gimpelson and Treisman (2018).

**Table 3. Sample CP membership by income quartiles.**

	Self-assessed income quartiles, % of respondents in a specific quartile			
	1st	2d	3d	4th
<b>Russia</b>				
CP member (self)	35.7	28.6	7.1	28.6
CP member (one of the parents)	30.7	36.9	9.8	22.6
Not a CP member (self)	32.3	37.1	11.3	19.3
None of the parents were CP members	32.8	36.9	11.6	18.7
<b>Visegrad</b>				
CP member (self)	51.0	29.0	12.7	7.3
CP member (one of the parents)	47.3	28.4	12.7	11.6
Not a CP member (self)	37.0	30.9	15.9	16.2
None of the parents were CP members	36.3	31.2	16.1	16.4

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* The table reports the percentage of respondents with a Communist party membership within a particular income quartile. The shares are calculated by dividing the number of respondents with/without CP membership within a particular quartile by the total number of respondents with/without CP membership, such that each row sums up to 100%. Income quartiles are created based on the self-assessed income. Self-assessed income is measured by a survey question "Please imagine a ten-step ladder where on the bottom, the first step, stand the poorest 10% people in our country, and on the highest step, the tenth, stand the richest 10% people in our country. On which step of the ten is your household today?"

We then re-estimate our baseline model by including the interaction terms between the CPs membership and three income groups in Eq. (1). The results are presented in *Table 4*. The lowest income group is used as a default category. In Russia, we mostly find no differences between former Communists and non-Communists, except the upper-middle income group (3<sup>d</sup> income quartile). Former Communists in this income group have weaker preferences for redistribution. This supports our hypothesis H3 in the case of CPs members themselves since we find evidence that those of them who are relatively better off have weaker preferences for redistribution. Concerning the children of Communists in Russia, the findings differ from the CPs members themselves. Children of Communists who are on average better off (belong to the 3<sup>d</sup> income quartile) are more likely to support reducing the gap between rich and poor. This result could fit hypothesis H4: demand for redistribution by relatively well-off groups in a country with very high income inequality.

**Table 4. CP membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor, with income quartiles' interactions**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Russia				Visegrad			
	CP membership (own)	CP membership (one of the parents)	CP membership (father)	CP membership (mother)	CP membership (own)	CP membership (one of the parents)	CP membership (father)	CP membership (mother)
CP membership	0.404 (0.246)	0.178 (0.143)	0.192 (0.127)	0.139 (0.184)	0.248** (0.104)	0.264*** (0.063)	0.271*** (0.064)	0.330*** (0.074)
<i>Income quartiles (1st income quartile is a default)</i>								
2d income quartile	-0.228** (0.101)	-0.214* (0.120)	-0.207* (0.113)	-0.259** (0.106)	-0.127*** (0.034)	-0.098*** (0.036)	-0.099*** (0.036)	-0.114*** (0.035)
3d income quartile	-0.220* (0.113)	-0.279** (0.127)	-0.308** (0.125)	-0.242** (0.121)	-0.185*** (0.051)	-0.148*** (0.050)	-0.148*** (0.050)	-0.172*** (0.051)
4th income quartile	-0.224** (0.109)	-0.245** (0.122)	-0.246** (0.119)	-0.223* (0.121)	-0.250*** (0.058)	-0.235*** (0.062)	-0.233*** (0.062)	-0.242*** (0.059)
<i>Interactions of CP membership and income quartiles</i>								
CP membership*2d income quartile	-0.305 (0.429)	-0.107 (0.222)	-0.175 (0.213)	0.196 (0.222)	-0.180 (0.175)	-0.278*** (0.104)	-0.292*** (0.109)	-0.417** (0.163)
CP membership*3d income quartile	-1.164*** (0.296)	0.268 (0.251)	0.474** (0.218)	0.100 (0.399)	-0.198 (0.180)	-0.373*** (0.132)	-0.393*** (0.135)	-0.495** (0.205)
CP membership*4th income quartile	-0.352 (0.428)	0.027 (0.227)	0.010 (0.219)	-0.092 (0.301)	-0.097 (0.239)	-0.125 (0.131)	-0.155 (0.131)	-0.253 (0.205)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	1,230	1,230	1,230	1,230	5,278	5,278	5,278	5,278
R-squared	0.051	0.054	0.057	0.053	0.133	0.135	0.135	0.135

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. OLS estimates are reported. The dependent variable is based on a survey question "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced" with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Regarding the Visegrad countries, for both CPs members and their children, we find that they have stronger preferences for redistribution. However, there are no differences in redistribution preferences between former Communists belonging to different income groups. That is, the disadvantageous former Communists and the successful former Communists are equally likely to follow the Communist ideology. This is evidence against our hypothesis H3, suggesting that former CPs members have egalitarian preferences not only when they are less successful economically. Interestingly, this is not the case for their children: relatively more successful children of former Communists, i.e. those who belong to 2<sup>d</sup> and 3<sup>d</sup> income quartiles, are likely to have weaker redistribution preferences than the disadvantageous children of former CPs members. That is, own economic success moderates the relationship between parental CPs membership and redistribution preferences, in line with our hypothesis H3. Comparing the results between Russia and Visegrad countries, we find that confidence intervals of all statistically significant estimates do not overlap for those country groups, suggesting statistical differences between them. This supports hypothesis H4, especially for those who have fathers with the former CPs membership. *Appendix Table A7* contains the results of the alternative approach, based on dividing the sample in four quartile groups and estimating regressions for each of the sub-samples separately rather than including interaction terms. The results are in line with our main findings reported above.

In addition, to study the role of own economic success in mediating the results between the CP membership and redistribution preferences, we introduce an additional variable into Equation (1), reflecting individual perception of respondents' own life success as compared to their parents. This variable is based on the respondent's answer to a survey question "To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I have done better in life than my parents", where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree". The estimated coefficient on the interaction of this variable with the CP membership helps to test whether those former CP members (or their children) who consider their life as successful have different redistribution preferences than those who do not think that they are more successful compared to their parents. *Table 5* reports the results. Few findings stand out. First, independently of the CP membership, those who consider their life as successful prefer reducing income inequality in both Russia and the Visegrad countries. Second, controlling for perceptions of own success, CP membership in Russia, both own and parental, is not associated with preferences for redistribution, while in the Visegrad countries, those whose father was a member of the former CP prefer more redistribution. Finally, preferences for redistribution of the former CP members who perceive themselves as successful do not differ from preferences of the CP members who do not perceive themselves as successful. These findings suggest that while economic success may affect

preferences for redistribution by itself, it does not necessarily moderate the CP membership-redistribution relationship.

Turning back to H2 and the results for Russia, which can be interpreted in line with this hypothesis, its main element is opportunism and de facto political practices of former CP members. In what follows, we attempt to test for the presence of this mechanism directly. For this, we use a proxy for having values in line with what we could broadly define as opportunism. In a survey, the respondents are asked to rank their preferences from 1 to 10 regarding the following statement: “People should obey the law without exception” vs. “There are times when people have good reasons to break the law”, where 1 is completely agreeing with the first statement and 10 is completely agreeing with the second statement. Using this variable, we create a dummy “opportunist” that equals one if the response to this question is above the sample mean and zero otherwise and introduce this dummy and its interaction with the CP membership into our model. The results are shown in Table 6. Opportunists are more likely to have weaker redistribution preferences. In addition, controlling for opportunism, we do not find the effects of the former CP membership. Finally, “opportunistic” former Communists do not have specific redistribution preferences and are not different from “not opportunistic” former Communists. Thus, opportunism may at least partially mediate the effect of the CP membership on redistribution preferences.



**Table 5. CP membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor, life success as a moderator.**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
		Russia				Visegrad		
	CP membership (own)	CP membership (one of the parents)	CP membership (father)	CP membership (mother)	CP membership (own)	CP membership (one of the parents)	CP membership (father)	CP membership (mother)
Done better in life than parents	0.142*** (0.042)	0.152*** (0.048)	0.150*** (0.047)	0.136*** (0.046)	0.087*** (0.018)	0.092*** (0.019)	0.093*** (0.019)	0.087*** (0.019)
CP membership	0.249 (0.604)	0.338 (0.276)	0.344 (0.271)	0.056 (0.357)	0.205 (0.223)	0.280* (0.148)	0.313** (0.149)	0.106 (0.191)
CP membership *Done better in life than parents	-0.033 (0.158)	-0.046 (0.075)	-0.045 (0.074)	0.047 (0.094)	-0.017 (0.060)	-0.051 (0.039)	-0.063 (0.039)	0.019 (0.058)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes
Observations	1,175	1,175	1,175	1,175	5,185	5,185	5,185	5,185
R-squared	0.067	0.072	0.072	0.070	0.142	0.143	0.143	0.142

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, self-assessed income, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. OLS estimates are reported. The dependent variable is based on a survey question "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced" with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Table 6. CP membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor, opportunism as a moderator.**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Russia				Visegrad			
	CP membership (own)	CP membership (one of the parents)	CP membership (father)	CP membership (mother)	CP membership (own)	CP membership (one of the parents)	CP membership (father)	CP membership (mother)
Opportunist	-0.270*** (0.075)	-0.299*** (0.086)	-0.280*** (0.086)	-0.310*** (0.081)	-0.212*** (0.043)	-0.221*** (0.044)	-0.222*** (0.044)	-0.215*** (0.043)
CP membership	0.328 (0.227)	0.111 (0.091)	0.132 (0.088)	0.061 (0.118)	0.164* (0.089)	0.070 (0.052)	0.058 (0.053)	0.127 (0.081)
CP membership*Opportunist	-0.344 (0.365)	0.114 (0.133)	0.051 (0.130)	0.319* (0.184)	-0.017 (0.141)	0.094 (0.089)	0.108 (0.089)	0.056 (0.132)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,230	1,230	1,230	1,230	5,278	5,278	5,278	5,278
R-squared	0.062	0.065	0.064	0.066	0.143	0.143	0.143	0.143

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, self-assessed income, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. OLS estimates are reported. The dependent variable is based on a survey question "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced" with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

We complete our analysis with a further robustness check: we make sure that the egalitarian preferences are specific to the CPs legacy and not to any party membership. For this purpose, we estimate Eq. (1) using the respondent’s current party membership. The current party membership variable is based on a survey question “Are you currently a member of a political party?” with the possible answers “yes” and “no”. This question is only asked regarding the own membership, so we cannot distinguish between own and parental membership in the results. In both Russia and Visegrad countries, about 1.7% of the sample report being current members of a political party. The results are shown in *Table 7* and suggest that in Russia, the current members of a political party have strong attitudes against reducing the gap between rich and poor.<sup>13</sup> In the Visegrad countries, we find no differences in redistribution preferences between members and non-members of some current political party. These findings suggest that the positive effect of former CPs membership on support for redistribution in both Russia and the Visegrad group is related to Communist ideology and not by political activism in general.

**Table 7. Current party membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor.**

	Russia	Visegrad
Current member of a political party	-0.519** (0.234)	-0.079 (0.099)
Individual controls	yes	Yes
Region FE	yes	Yes
Observations	1,226	5,260
R-squared	0.058	0.136

*Source:* Authors’ calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, self-assessed income, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. OLS estimates are reported. The dependent variable is based on a survey question “To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced” with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

## 5. Conclusion

This paper investigates how one of the key groups of the actors of former Communist regimes – the members of the CPs—as well as their offspring—perceive inequality. Given the enormous importance of inequality aversion for the Communist ideology, this appears to be one of the most plausible attitudinal legacies. At the same time, at the level of the theoretical predictions, we were

<sup>13</sup> The results are likely driven by membership in the current ruling party “United Russia” since 57% of respondents who answer to the party membership question positively also state that they are members of this party.

able to formulate a rich set of hypotheses relying on different causal mechanisms leading to different preferences for redistribution. The empirical results are also less straightforward than one would expect. In a nutshell, in the CEE countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary), former CPs members themselves and their offspring have stronger preferences for redistribution than the rest of the population, and the result is not driven by the former CPs members who are particularly successful economically. In Russia, among former CPs members themselves, only those, who were relatively unsuccessful economically, turn out to have stronger preferences for redistribution; at the same time, children of CPSU members indeed have stronger preferences for redistribution, and it is driven by relatively high-income groups.

Visegrad countries seem to fit the hypothesis of ideological legacies of Communism – former CPs members seem to show a strong commitment to egalitarian ideas. We also find evidence that economic success moderates the impact of the CPs membership dummy on egalitarian preferences of the Communists' children and that the egalitarian attitudes are stronger among former CPs members' children in the lower income quartiles, while those who are relatively more successful economically have weaker redistribution preferences. In Russia, ideology is unlikely to explain our findings. For the generation of the former CPSU members themselves, the results could fit the hypotheses H2 and H3 rather closely – opportunistic former Communists, being particularly successful during the transition period, show no particular preference for redistribution. At the same time, while we indeed find that opportunism is associated with weaker redistribution preferences in general, there is no evidence that opportunism moderates the effect of CPSU membership dummy in Russia. This could be driven by the fact that our proxy of opportunism is imperfect, but in any case calls for caution in interpreting our results.

In Russia, egalitarian attitudes seem to jump a generation. For the children of Communists, hypothetically, we observe evidence consistent with hypothesis H4: in a highly unequal country, richer CPs members' children develop stronger preferences for redistribution. The fact that the effect is present only in the second generation is consistent with our expectations that while H1 and H2 are more likely to affect only former CPs members themselves (i.e., those, who were socialized in the party), H3 and H4 could have predictive power also for their children.

Which other factors could explain why children of former CPSU members suddenly turn to greater preferences for redistribution? One possible mechanism would be the complex effect of narratives created by their parents. Being themselves skeptical of the Soviet past based on personal experience, former CPSU members could still generate a positive narrative of the USSR – either because of the generally favorable recollection of their youth or to provide an ex-post justification for their life choices. While the former CPSU members themselves could use these narratives but confront them

with the accrual recollections of how life in the USSR was, their children would genuinely believe in the stories told by their parents. The experiences of very high inequality in Russia could augment these beliefs. If this were the case, this would highlight the importance of the interaction of *narratives* and *experiences* (both of the past and of the contemporary generations) in the formation of the observed historical legacies – which is in fact a topic requiring further scholarly investigation.

The paper acknowledges its limitations. First, as it is always the case with survey data, self-reported redistribution preferences could differ from actual behavior in terms of, e.g., voting or charitable giving (survey responses can be influenced by social conformity bias). Second, while we used several tools of dealing with endogeneity, they are imperfect. Still, even interpreting our evidence as correlational (rather than causal) provides a number of interesting and counterintuitive observations. Third, as discussed in section 2, we cannot fully trace the evolution of preferences of former CPs members across the Socialist and post-Socialist periods, which calls for caution in differentiating some of our hypotheses. Still, even under these conditions, we hope for the paper to provide interesting insights, which could stimulate further analysis.

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## Appendix.

**Table A1. Variables' definitions.**

Variable	Definition
<i>Party membership</i>	
CP membership (own)	=1 if a respondent was a member of the Communist party before 1989/91 and 0 otherwise
CP membership (one of the parents)	=1 if one of the respondent's parents was a member of the Communist party before 1989/91 and 0 otherwise
CP membership (father)	=1 if a respondent's father was a member of the Communist party before 1989/91 and 0 otherwise
CP membership (mother)	=1 if a respondent's mother was a member of the Communist party before 1989/91 and 0 otherwise
Current member of a political party	=1 if a respondent is currently a member of a political party and 0 otherwise
<i>Redistribution preferences</i>	
Support for reducing the gap between rich and poor	To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced. 1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree
Groups of the population that deserve support from the government	A set of variables based on a survey question "Which of the following groups of citizens deserve support from the government? Elderly, disabled, war veterans, families with children, working poor, unemployed. =1 if a particular group is chosen, 0 if not chosen.
<i>Moderators</i>	
Done better in life than parents	To what extent do you agree with the following statement? I have done better in life than my parents. 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree.
Opportunism	A proxy for opportunism based on the rank of preferences from 1 to 10 regarding the following statement: "People should obey the law without exception" vs. "There are times when people have good reasons to break the law", where 1 is completely agreeing with the first statement and 10 is completely agreeing with the second statement. =1 if a response is above the sample mean and 0 otherwise
<i>Individual controls</i>	
Male	=1 if a respondent is a male and 0 if a female
Age	Respondent's age in years
Employed	=1 if a respondent is employed and 0 otherwise
Education	Respondent's education. =1 if primary or no education, 2=secondary education, 3=tertiary education
Income	Self-assessed income ladder based on a survey question "Please imagine a ten-step ladder where on the bottom, the first step, stand the poorest 10% people in our country, and on the highest step, the tenth, stand the richest 10% people in our country. On which step of the ten is your household today?"
Wealth index	Indicates the ownership of various goods (telephone, TV, computer/laptop/tablet, washing machine, car, bicycle, motorcycle, and internet access) by respondent's household and ranges from 1 to 8.
Married	Constructed based following Nikolova et al. (2022)
Number of children	=1 if a respondent is married and 0 otherwise
Urban	Number of children that a respondent has
	=1 if a respondent lives in an urban area and 0 otherwise

Source: Authors based on the LiTS 2016.

**Table A2. Sample descriptive statistics.**

VARIABLES	Russia					Visegrad countries				
	N obs.	mean	St. dev.	min	max	N obs.	mean	St. dev.	min	max
<i>Redistribution preferences</i>										
The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced	1,434	3.822	1.061	1	5	5,953	4.006	1.013	1	5
Elderly deserve support	1,507	0.568	0.496	0	1	6,076	0.641	0.480	0	1
Disabled deserve support	1,507	0.605	0.489	0	1	6,076	0.602	0.489	0	1
War veterans deserve support	1,507	0.393	0.489	0	1	6,076	0.216	0.412	0	1
Families with children deserve support	1,507	0.530	0.499	0	1	6,076	0.647	0.478	0	1
Working poor deserve support	1,507	0.236	0.424	0	1	6,076	0.438	0.496	0	1
Unemployed deserve support	1,507	0.163	0.369	0	1	6,076	0.312	0.464	0	1
<i>Party membership</i>										
CP membership (own)	1,507	0.031	0.174	0	1	6,076	0.041	0.197	0	1
CP membership (one of the parents)	1,507	0.199	0.399	0	1	6,076	0.114	0.318	0	1
CP membership (father)	1,507	0.178	0.383	0	1	6,076	0.108	0.310	0	1
CP membership (mother)	1,507	0.098	0.298	0	1	6,076	0.043	0.202	0	1
Current member of a political party	1,499	0.017	0.131	0	1	6,045	0.0172	0.130	0	1
<i>Moderators</i>										
Done better in life than parents	1,397	3.183	1.104	1	5	5,911	3.181	1.147	1	5
Opportunism	1,507	0.467	0.499	0	1	6,077	0.382	0.486	0	1
<i>Individual controls</i>										
Male	1,507	0.381	0.486	0	1	6,077	0.430	0.495	0	1
Age	1,507	45.12	16.60	18	93	6,077	51.39	17.35	18	95
Age squared/100	1,507	23.12	16.40	3.240	86.49	6,077	29.42	18.04	3.240	90.25
Employed	1,332	0.776	0.417	0	1	5,462	0.602	0.490	0	1
Married	1,507	0.408	0.492	0	1	6,077	0.477	0.500	0	1
Number of children	1,507	0.352	0.625	0	3	6,077	0.356	0.791	0	8
Income ladder	1,443	4.661	2.147	1	10	5,961	4.903	1.621	1	10
Wealth index	1,506	5.310	1.490	0	8	6,075	5.691	1.627	0	8
Lives in an urban area	1,507	0.736	0.441	0	1	6,077	0.370	0.483	0	1
Primary or no education	1,507	0.017	0.130	0	1	6,077	0.148	0.355	0	1
Secondary education	1,507	0.565	0.496	0	1	6,077	0.687	0.464	0	1
Higher education	1,507	0.417	0.493	0	1	6,077	0.165	0.371	0	1

Source: Authors' calculations based on the LiTS 2016.

**Table A3. Communist party membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor (full results)**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Russia				Visegrad			
CP membership (own)	0.181 (0.188)				0.152* (0.080)			
CP membership (one of the parents)		0.175** (0.076)				0.112** (0.046)		
CP membership (father)			0.180** (0.080)				0.106** (0.047)	
CP membership (mother)				0.209** (0.099)				0.148** (0.070)
Male	-0.150** (0.066)	-0.146** (0.066)	-0.148** (0.066)	-0.145** (0.065)	-0.016 (0.028)	-0.014 (0.027)	-0.014 (0.027)	-0.013 (0.027)
Age	0.001 (0.013)	-0.003 (0.013)	-0.003 (0.013)	-0.001 (0.013)	-0.006 (0.006)	-0.007 (0.006)	-0.007 (0.006)	-0.007 (0.006)
Age squared	0.004 (0.013)	0.009 (0.013)	0.008 (0.013)	0.007 (0.013)	0.008 (0.005)	0.009* (0.005)	0.009* (0.005)	0.009 (0.005)
Employed	0.077 (0.088)	0.098 (0.086)	0.091 (0.086)	0.085 (0.087)	-0.063* (0.038)	-0.065* (0.038)	-0.065* (0.038)	-0.065* (0.038)
Secondary education	0.801** (0.391)	0.822** (0.392)	0.820** (0.393)	0.830** (0.394)	0.054 (0.049)	0.054 (0.049)	0.054 (0.049)	0.056 (0.049)
Tertiary education	0.741* (0.389)	0.751* (0.391)	0.751* (0.391)	0.765* (0.393)	-0.019 (0.059)	-0.024 (0.059)	-0.023 (0.059)	-0.017 (0.059)
Income	-0.040* (0.021)	-0.039* (0.021)	-0.040* (0.021)	-0.038* (0.021)	-0.065*** (0.012)	-0.064*** (0.012)	-0.064*** (0.012)	-0.064*** (0.012)
Wealth index	0.011 (0.030)	0.008 (0.031)	0.008 (0.031)	0.008 (0.030)	0.023 (0.014)	0.023 (0.014)	0.023 (0.014)	0.024* (0.014)
Married	-0.018 (0.070)	-0.014 (0.070)	-0.012 (0.070)	-0.010 (0.071)	0.018 (0.033)	0.022 (0.033)	0.022 (0.033)	0.019 (0.033)
Number of children	0.028 (0.056)	0.023 (0.057)	0.021 (0.057)	0.021 (0.057)	0.029 (0.020)	0.027 (0.019)	0.028 (0.019)	0.028 (0.019)
Urban	0.158 (0.143)	0.162 (0.143)	0.161 (0.144)	0.161 (0.142)	0.129 (0.079)	0.133* (0.079)	0.133* (0.079)	0.131 (0.079)
Constant	2.954*** (0.528)	2.991*** (0.533)	2.998*** (0.535)	2.951*** (0.529)	4.045*** (0.236)	4.051*** (0.235)	4.048*** (0.235)	4.035*** (0.235)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	1,230	1,230	1,230	1,230	5,278	5,278	5,278	5,278
R-squared	0.054	0.057	0.057	0.056	0.136	0.137	0.137	0.136

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. Notes: \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, self-assessed income, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. OLS estimates are reported. The dependent variable is based on a survey question "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced" with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Table A4. Communist party membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor (ordered probit results).**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Russia				Visegrad			
Communist party membership (own)	0.062 (0.069)				0.062* (0.032)			
Communist party membership (one of the parents)		0.058** (0.027)				0.045** (0.018)		
Communist party membership (father)			0.059** (0.029)				0.042** (0.018)	
Communist party membership (mother)				0.071* (0.037)				0.056* (0.029)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	1,230	1,230	1,230	1,230	5,278	5,278	5,278	5,278
Pseudo R-squared	0.018	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, self-assessed income, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. Ordered probit marginal effects for outcome 5 (strongly agree) are reported. The dependent variable is based on a survey question "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced" with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Table A5. CP membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor, with entropy balancing weights.**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Russia				Visegrad			
CP membership (own)	0.310*				0.146*			
	(0.160)				(0.077)			
CP membership (one of the parents)		0.188**				0.106**		
		(0.074)				(0.045)		
CP membership (father)			0.194**				0.098**	
			(0.078)				(0.047)	
CP membership (mother)				0.230**				0.115*
				(0.097)				(0.066)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes
Observations	1,230	1,230	1,230	1,230	5,278	5,266	5,266	5,266
R-squared	0.119	0.064	0.064	0.086	0.167	0.148	0.149	0.208

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, self-assessed income, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. OLS estimates with entropy balancing weights are reported. The dependent variable is based on a survey question "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced" with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Table A6. Communist party membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor (Lewbel IV results).**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Russia				Visegrad			
Communist party membership (own)	0.234 (0.197)				0.165** (0.082)			
Communist party membership (one of the parents)		0.239 (0.171)				0.090* (0.050)		
Communist party membership (father)			0.214 (0.165)				0.083* (0.051)	
Communist party membership (mother)				0.255 (0.160)				0.133* (0.072)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	1,230	1,230	1,230	1,230	5,278	5,278	5,278	5,278
R-squared	0.046	0.049	0.049	0.048	0.134	0.134	0.134	0.134

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, self-assessed income, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. The dependent variable is based on a survey question "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced" with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).



**Table A7. CP membership and support for reducing the gap between rich and poor, by income quartiles.**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
					Russia			
	1st	2d	3d	4th	1st	2d	3d	4th
CP member (self)	0.406*	0.144	-0.396	-0.208				
	(0.239)	(0.379)	(0.604)	(0.362)				
CP member (one of the parents)					0.117	0.094	0.454**	0.244
					(0.145)	(0.143)	(0.224)	(0.178)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	391	454	140	245	391	454	140	245
R-squared	0.079	0.050	0.183	0.082	0.076	0.051	0.205	0.087
					Visegrad			
	1st	2d	3d	4th	1st	2d	3d	4th
CP member (self)	0.170*	0.028	0.077	0.577**				
	(0.099)	(0.150)	(0.177)	(0.274)				
CP member (one of the parents)					0.229***	-0.037	-0.044	0.252**
					(0.065)	(0.090)	(0.104)	(0.121)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	1,936	1,650	852	840	1,936	1,650	852	840
R-squared	0.146	0.139	0.175	0.300	0.150	0.139	0.175	0.300

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from the LiTS 2016. *Notes:* \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered at the primary sampling unit level are in parentheses. Individual controls include gender, age and its square, employment status, education level, wealth index, marital status, number of children, and living in an urban area. OLS estimates are reported. Income quartiles are created based on self-assessed income. The dependent variable is based on a survey question "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? The gap between the rich and the poor in our country should be reduced" with possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).