Solidaristic Unionism and Support for Redistribution in Contemporary Europe

By Nadja Mosimann and Jonas Pontusson

Using data from the European Social Survey (2002–14), this article explores the effect of union membership on support for redistribution. The authors hypothesize that the wage-bargaining practices of unions promote egalitarian distributive norms, which lead union members to support redistribution, and that this effect is strongest among high-wage workers. Consistent with the authors’ expectations, the empirical analysis shows that the solidarity effect of union membership is strongest when unions encompass a very large share of the labor force or primarily organize low-wage workers. The authors also show that low-wage workers have become a significantly less important union constituency in many European countries over the time period covered by the analysis.

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