

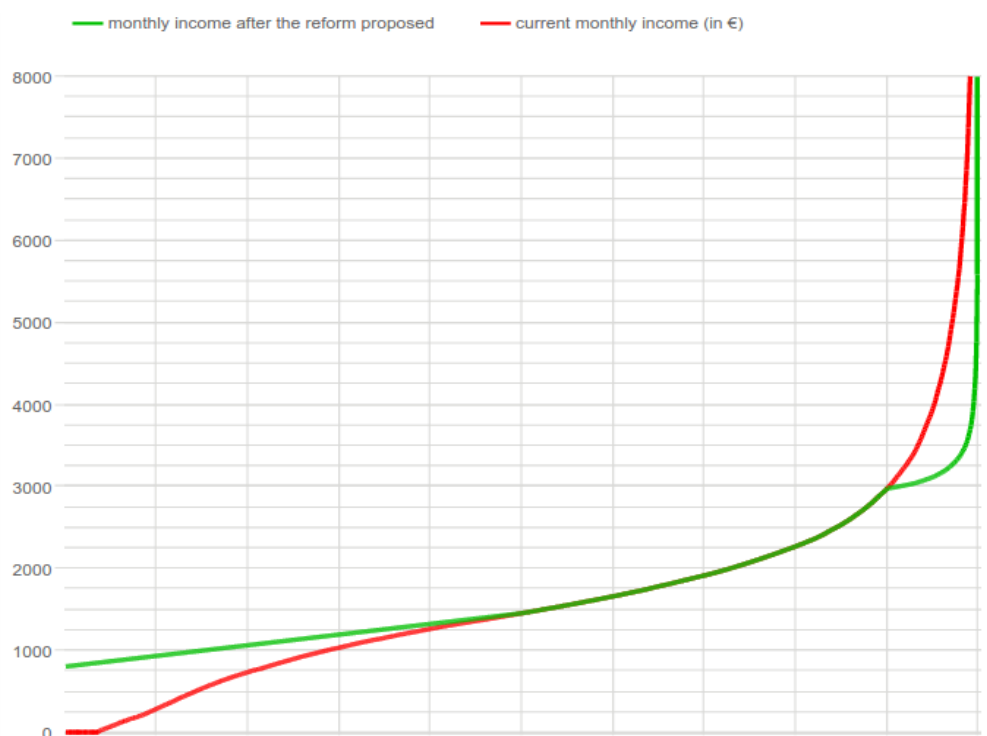
The program of the French people

While presidential candidates profess their agenda for 2017, and driven by my curiosity of a young researcher in social sciences, I asked myself what would the politics wanted by the French people look like. To this end, I carried out in autumn 2016 two computer-administered surveys about taxes and politics respectively, on two representative samples of a thousand people, via a polling organization, Bilendi, and using the method of quotas. This article only provides the most significant results of this rich survey which contains around a hundred questions; complete results and detailed explanations are available [here](#). The global observation is that many progressive propositions, among which many are very ambitious, are met with approval by a majority of the French, regardless of the usual partisan cleavage. Yet, these propositions are absent in the programs of the favorite candidates for the upcoming presidential elections. More than a way to make the preferences of the French be heard, this survey questions the capacity of our electoral process to bring about the reforms expected by the population.

Redistribution of income

This survey, in line with [recent research](#) on preferences about income distribution, is the first of its kind offering the public to express themselves on a fiscal redistribution adjusted by the citizens themselves. This original approach gives an idea of what sort of redistribution would take place if, instead of being voted at the Assemblée Nationale, the income tax rates were calculated based on the results of surveys and then approved by referendum. As a matter of fact, this is the process that was simulated by the inquiry where 73% of the respondents think that the personal opinion of each one of us should be given more credit when deciding the income tax rates. The first survey determined the proportion of taxpayers that should be advantaged by redistribution (typical answer¹: the poorest half of the population); the proportion that should be disadvantaged (the richest 10%); or the desired amount for minimum social benefits (a basic income of 800€ for people with no income). Redistribution was then [calculated](#) following the typical answer to these questions (see chart 1)

and the second survey asked the French if they would approve of a fiscal reform to apply such redistribution while showing on a chart the spread of incomes before (red curve) and after the reform (green curve). Even though this redistribution would be substantial (10% of the national income transferred from the richest to the poorest) it was widely supported: 52% of the respondents approved it whereas 26% only rejected it (the rest didn't express an opinion).



Incomes after taxes and transfers of French adults, from the poorest to the richest

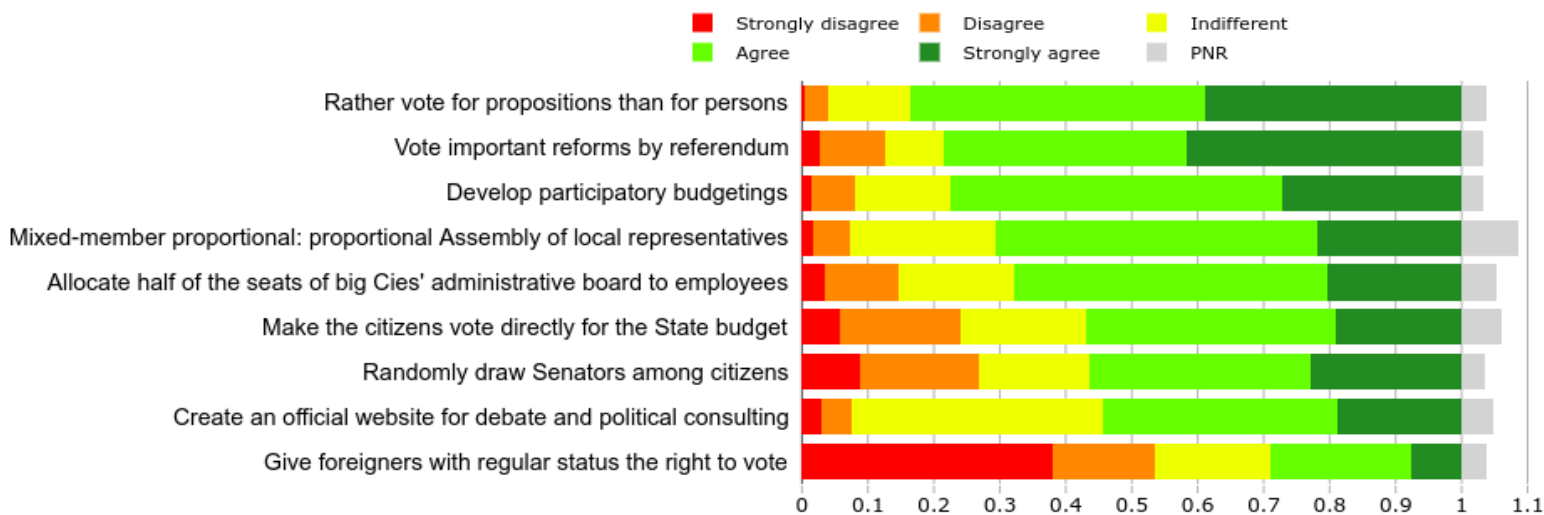
1 The “typical” answer is an approachable way to evoke the median. The amounts presented in this article were calculated raking data, notably to take into account the over-representation of graduates in the original data.

Confirming [previous surveys](#) that showed in particular that the French people demanded an important increase of the minimum wage, about 1500€ (after taxation), this inquiry quantifies precisely the strong desire for redistribution of the citizens and uncovers the bases of a reform that they approve.

Enhancement of democracy

Yet again echoing [previous surveys](#) that showed that the French are broadly favorable to a deepening of democracy, either by “allowing a citizen assembly to demote the elected that do not respect their commitments”, by strictly observed non-accumulation of mandates or by giving more power to local authorities; this work shows a consensus about propositions that had never been tested by surveying before, absent from the public debate. As you can read on Chart 2, the citizens acclaim every proposed measure of direct democracy, whether by modifying the ballot rules for the election of deputies², by increased control over the investment budget of their towns or by measures that promote the self-management of their companies.

Adhesion to various proposals on democratic functioning

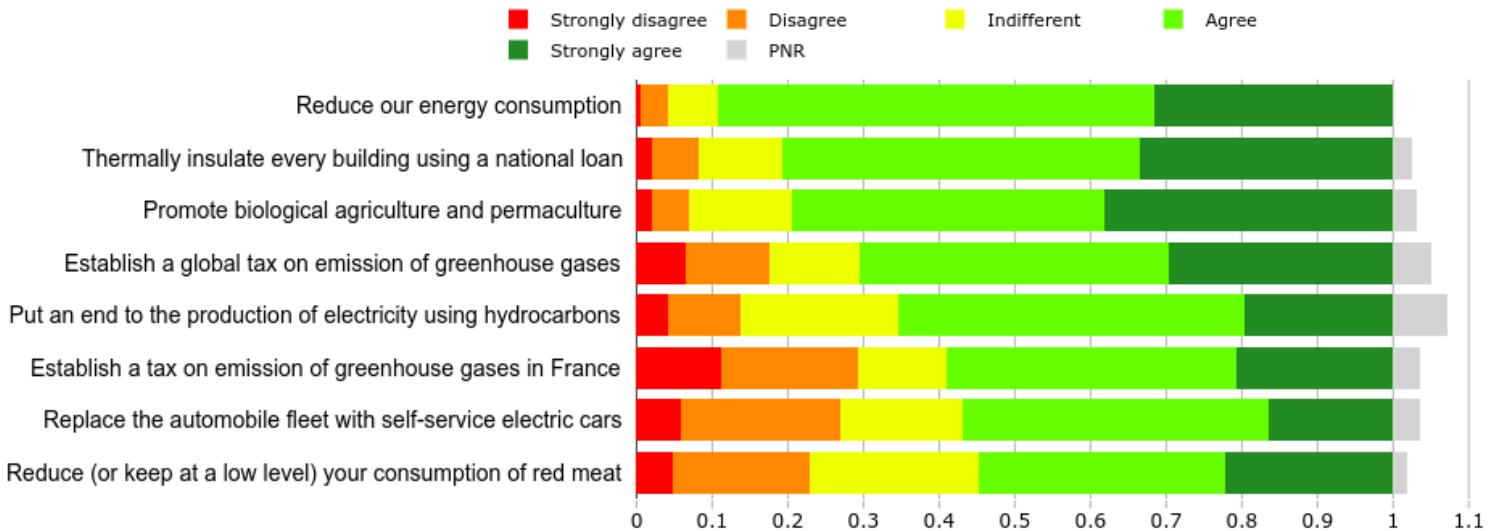


Fighting climate change

Even if, at this rate, France is [not on the path](#) to respect its ecological commitments, all the proposed measures to fight global warming are vastly supported among the population (see chart 3), including ambitious proposals such as reducing our energetic consumption (89% of approval), replacing progressively the automobile fleet with self-service electric cars (55%) or the thermal insulation of every single building financed by a national loan (79%). Even when it comes to adopting a change of behavior, such as limiting our consumption of red meat, the majority of respondents are determined to apply political ecology precepts.

² The mixed-member proportional is an electoral system, variants of this system are in vigor in countries such as Germany and New Zealand for the election of deputies. It allows a proportional representation at a national scale while ensuring every district is represented, reserving part of the seats of the assembly to national lists.

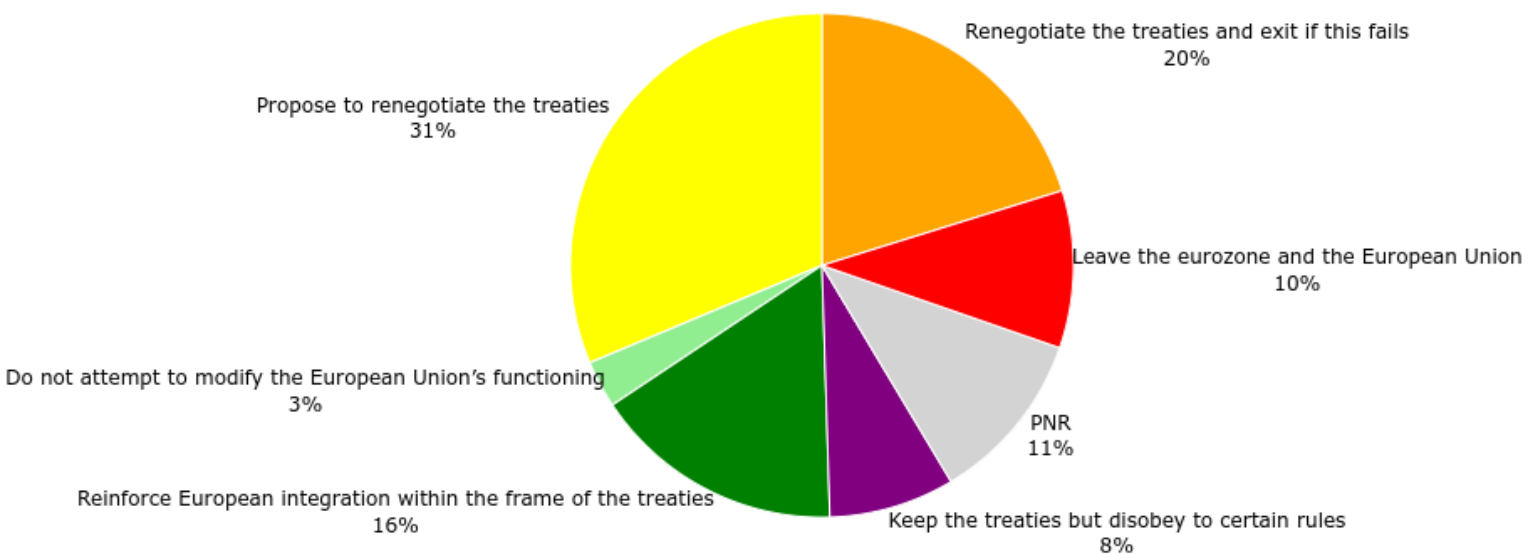
Adhesion to various proposals to fight climate change



European integration

Regardless of the scores of the extreme right, the majority of our fellow citizens believe in European integration. Indeed, even if 54% oppose the establishment of a European unemployment insurance (34% approve), 53% are in favor of a European basic income (“guaranteeing for each European enough money to survive, depending on the purchasing power of each region”, only 38% oppose this) and 48% are in favor of a European corporate tax (28% against it). Furthermore, aware that the EU institutions could be more democratic, 51% favor a renegotiation of its treaties (see chart 4). Meanwhile, the French are attached to the EU and its good functioning and won't risk leaving the Union if the other countries are unwilling to modify the treaties. With a similar moderation, the typical opinion regarding the public deficit is to reduce it under 3% of the GDP in accordance with the Stability and Growth Pact.

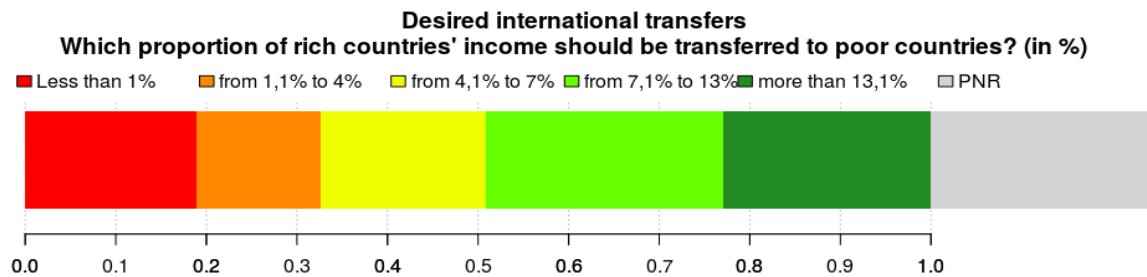
How should France position itself in relation to the European Union?



Global solidarity

The most spectacular lesson to learn from this inquiry is about the global redistribution

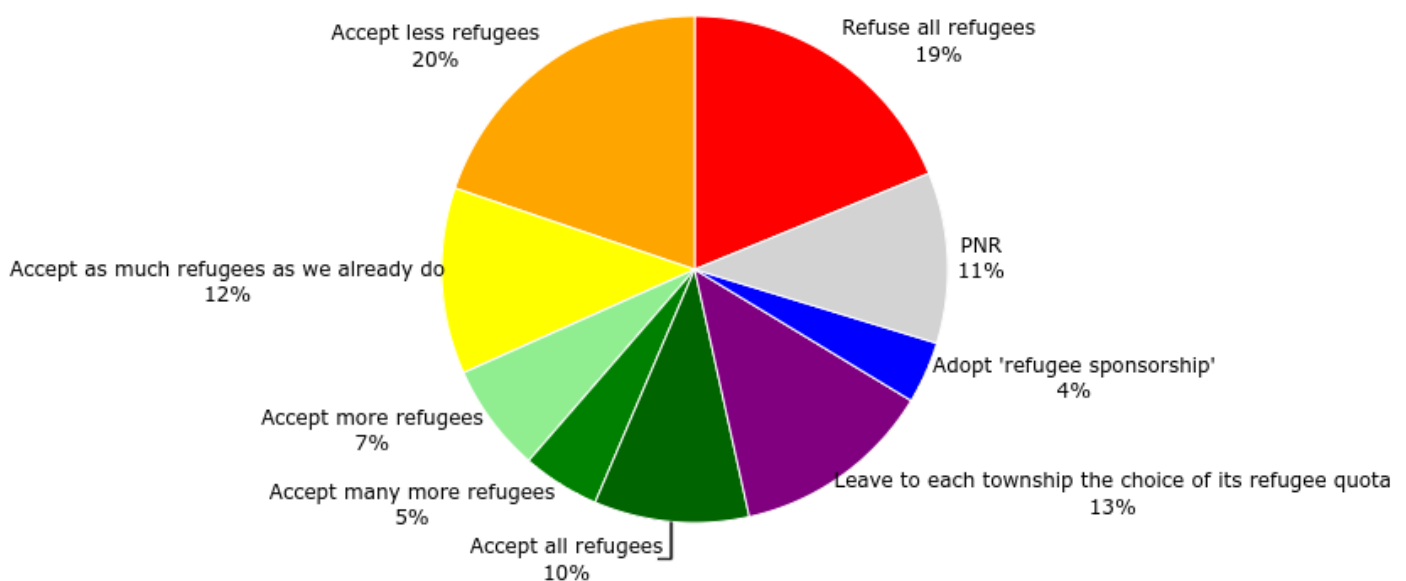
of wealth. While France has never upheld its [commitment](#) to contribute with 0,7% of its GDP in Overseas Development Aid, half of the French answer at least 5% to the question “How much of their income should rich countries transfer to poor countries?” and 18% of them even answered “20% or more” (see Chart 5). This will for international solidarity can be found in other questions: 60% of the expressed answers approve a worldwide basic income of 20€ per month for each human adult; likewise, the funding of such an income by taxation of greenhouse gases emissions [cap and share](#) gathers 57% of favorable opinions among the ones who answered. A majority is in favor of the institution of a global assembly to tackle climate change or to regulate finances.³ The global taxation of wealth [as exposed by the economist Thomas Piketty](#), receives 55% of positive answers without even excluding those who didn't express their opinion (31% are against it) while “a world tax on the wealthiest 1% in order to fund the development of the poorest countries (vaccination, access to drinking water, health, education...)” gathers 79% of approval.



Decentralizing the reception of refugees

This universal fraternity has nonetheless a limit: national borders. Indeed, while millions of people are fleeing war-torn regions and France only receives [a few thousands](#) of them the typical opinion about refugees is the status quo (see chart 6). Nonetheless, 58% agrees that the refugee quotas should be decided at the township level rather than at the national or European level, which could eventually lead to receiving a greater amount of refugees, in areas where, moreover, they would be welcomed.

Which policy must be adopted regarding refugees that wish to enter France?



³ 50 % (resp. 45%) of “yes” to the question “Are you in favor of establishing a global assembly (elected with proportional representation of global lists) dedicated solely to tackling global warming?”. Likewise, 45 % of “yes” to a similar question on a global assembly to “regulate the financial system (notably to avoid financial crises)”. These figures reach 65 % and 58 % when excluding non-answers.

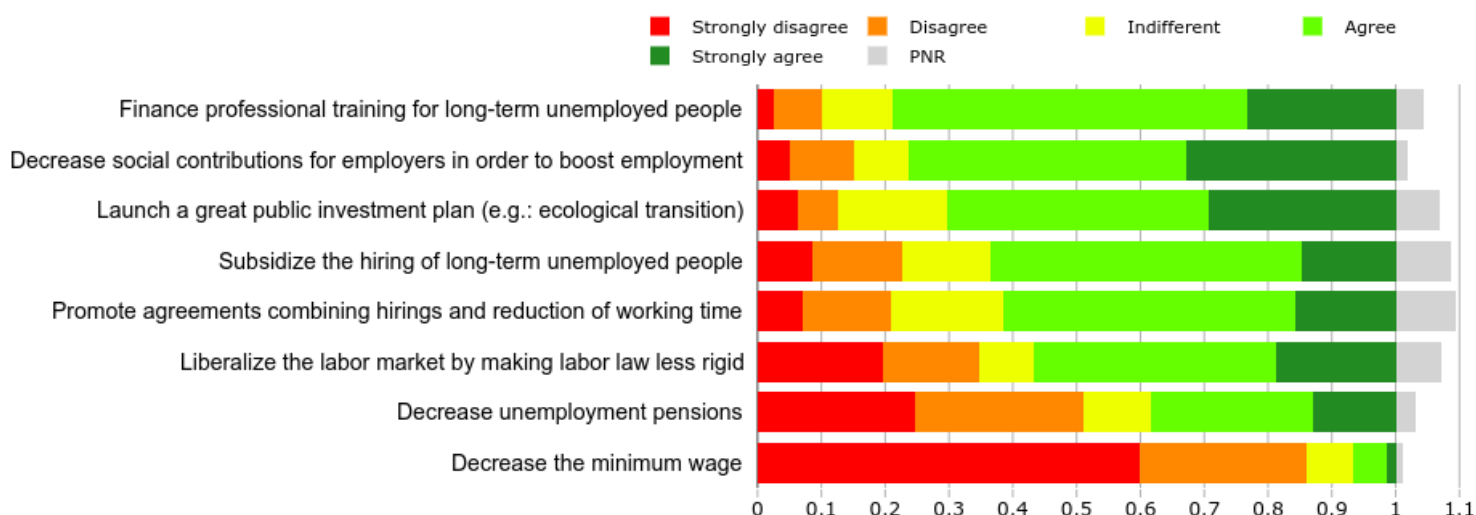
In conclusion, this survey reminds of the importance of devising policies based on the opinions of citizens by showing that most of the population generally supports humanist, audacious and forward- looking propositions, in contrast with the unpopular reforms supported by several candidates. These results, that highlight several elements of the political program the French people really want, might even become a new turning point for the French political life to become more democratic, in the line of movements such as *Nuit Debout* or the *civic tech*. Indeed, if political decisions reflected the opinion of a majority of citizens for every proposition, as 81% of them would have it (see Chart 2), they would likely satisfy the general interest. In any case, they would be in accordance with the directions demanded by the public opinion: redistribution, ecology and democracy.⁴

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Many other questions were asked, their results could be published in this article (but I believe there is not enough space):

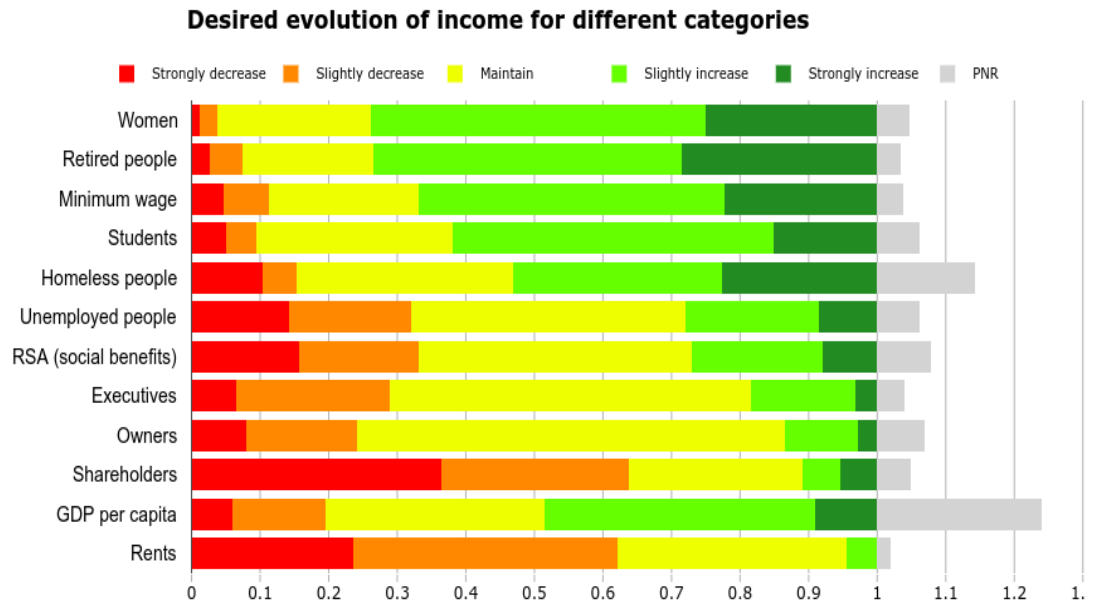
- Rather taxing capital than work
- Taking into account life expectancy when calculating retirement pensions, with the freedom to chose the amount of contribution (respecting a certain range) as well as the age of retirement
- Desired tax rate for someone earning three million euros per year (status quo)
- Approval of the marital quotient, divided opinions on the extension of the social benefits to people under 25
- Favorable opinion towards the fusion of the IRPP and social contributions, as well as the deduction of rent from the taxable income (combined with a decrease of the property tax for indebted owners, see *Trannoy and Wasmer, 2013*)
- Taxation of inheritance (status quo)
- Basic income (median response: 700€ per month), social benefits and minimum wage
- Priorities (purchasing power, security, environment)
- Simplifying the fiscal system
- Support for measures against unemployment

Adhesion to different political propositions to tackle unemployment

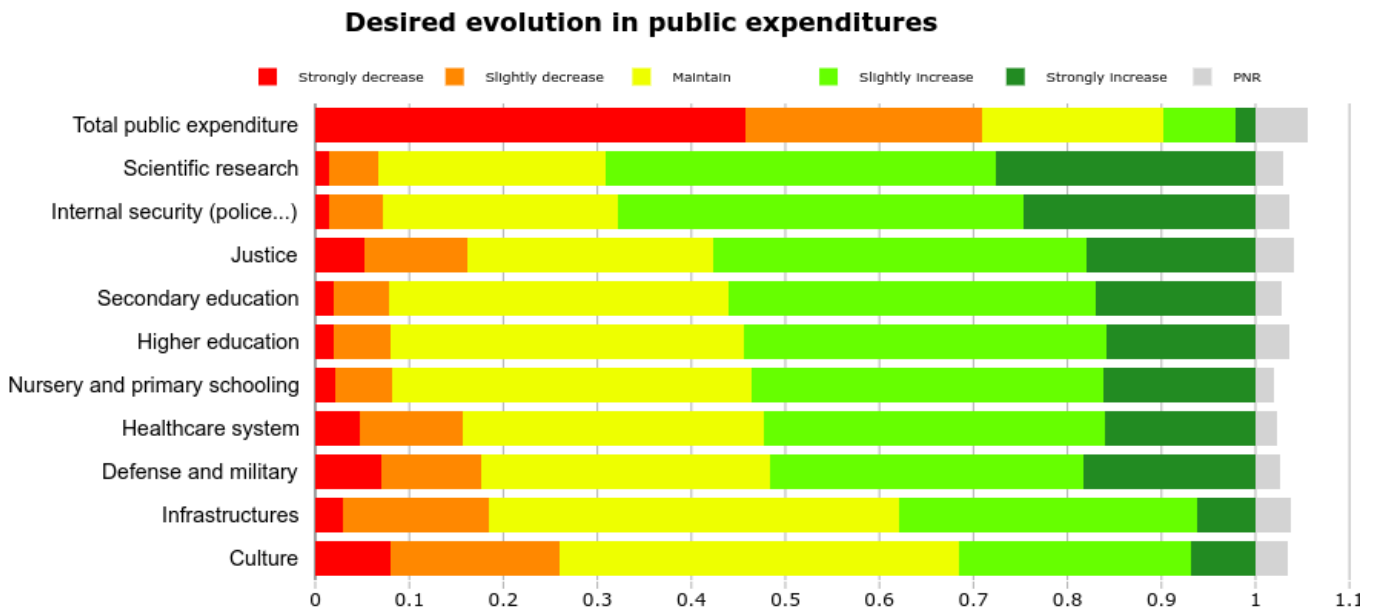


4 To which we could add “security”, but the survey was relatively lacking questions on this subject, among them, suppressing state assistance for those guilty of some infractions.

– For a redistribution mode based on categories of people



– Contradictory answers regarding the evolution of public expenditure



– Desired evolution of different taxes

