

**The Political Sources of Government Redistribution in the Developed World:  
A Focus on the Middle Class**

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**Abstract**

This paper focuses on the relationship between political participation and income redistribution by the state in the developed countries over the last 25 years, with a particular focus on middle income groups. The first part offers a detailed description of several aspects of government redistribution as it affects the second, third and fourth income quintiles, employing data from Luxembourg Income Study income surveys. The second part describes a cross-national analysis of 71 country-years that seeks to explore the sources of variation in redistribution toward and away from individual middle income groups, with a particular focus on electoral turnout, the partisan orientation of national governments and union density. The third part takes a closer look at participation, employing data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems to calculate rates of several modes of participation by middle income groups, including voting in national elections, belonging to a labor union, individually contacting elected or public officials, participating in protests or demonstrations, and working with others to achieve a common public purpose. The overall conclusion is that political participation does matter, but that its relationship to government redistribution varies by mode of participation and by income subgroup within the broadly defined middle class.