

## Paternalism Across the World

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**Abstract:** Paternalistic policies are central to the citizen-state relationship, yet our understanding of public support for different types of paternalism remains limited. In this study, we examine preferences for soft and hard paternalism using a large-scale, between-subjects survey experiment conducted with nationally representative samples from 58 countries, encompassing approximately 60,000 participants. Globally, people show a stronger preference for soft paternalism over hard paternalism. However, we observe striking variation both across and within countries. Paternalistic preferences systematically differ based on economic development and demographic factors such as age, education, and religiosity. Greater economic security and higher democratic capital are associated with a larger gap between preferences for soft and hard paternalism. Furthermore, our preference measure predicts support for specific paternalistic policies. To contextualize these findings, we propose a conceptual framework.