

Private Sector (De)Motivation? Students' Career choices for the Public or the Private sector

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Abstract

In this paper, we study the preferences of two groups of students: those who aspire to become civil servants and those who are choosing a career in the private sector. For each group, we investigate students' beliefs regarding the public and the private sector. We use a survey conducted in a French university known for training future civil servants as well as students who will work in the private sector. Our results show that students who choose the public sector have higher trust in institutions, a better perception of the public sector and are more likely to see public servants as motivated by pro-social reasons. These students are also more likely to distrust the private sector, to believe that conducting business is easy, and less likely to see the benefits of public-private partnerships. They are also more likely to believe that private sector workers are self-interested. The results suggest that students aspiring to become civil servants may be motivated to work for the public sector, but they may also be *demotivated* to work for the private sector. We find symmetrical results for students aspiring to pursue a career in the private sector.

Keywords: Public service motivation, private sector motivation, career choices, civil servants.

1 Introduction

Society holds both positive and negative stereotypes of public and private sector workers. A positive stereotype of public workers is that they are motivated by prosocial objectives, accepting to work for lower wages in order to contribute to society's wellbeing. A negative stereotype is that they tend to be lazy. People working in the corporate sector are sometimes positively portrayed as being more efficient. They are sometimes negatively portrayed as being self-interested individuals without any concern for society's wellbeing. Individuals' choices to start a career in one sector rather than the other may be related to individuals' beliefs regarding such stereotypes.

In this paper, we study the positive and the negative perceptions that students have of the public and the private sector, taking into account the students' own career choices for either the public or the private sector. To investigate these differences in perceptions and aspirations, we rely on an original dataset that includes information collected from a questionnaire addressed to students enrolled at *Sciences Po*, one of the most prestigious universities in France. *Sciences Po* is particularly known to be the best educational program leading to the highest positions in the French public sector. Since 2005, between 70% and 88% of the students admitted to the French National School of Administration (*ENA*) are former *Sciences Po* students. However, most *Sciences Po* students choose careers in the private sector. For instance, in the cohort of students who graduated in 2013 and who entered the labor market in the year following their graduation, 69% worked in the private sector, 23.5% worked in the public sector, and 7.5% worked for an international

organization or a European institution. Whatever sector they choose, all students occupy highly qualified positions.

We are especially interested in understanding what motivates—or demotivates—students to aim for a career in one sector rather than the other. The survey includes questions that assess students’ trust in institutions, the determinants of their career choices (public vs. private sector), students’ level of distrust in the private sector and the private provision of public goods. To answer our research questions, we rely on standard statistical methods (group comparison tests), ordered response models (ordered probit and logit), and principal component analyses. We also construct two dimensions: one to account for students’ distrust in the corporate sector, and another to account for students’ views on how easy they think it is for entrepreneurs or companies to conduct business. We study students’ individual preferences on these dimensions by estimating ideal points with Bayesian estimation methods.

We find that students who aspire to work in the public sector: (i) are more likely to trust public institutions; (ii) believe that their classmates who also choose to work in the public sector have pro-social motivations; (iii) are less likely to believe in some of the stereotypical advantages of working in the private sector; (iv) tend to show more distrust for the private sector in general; (v) believe that conducting business is relatively easy; and (vi) are less likely to see benefits in public-private partnerships. These beliefs are consistent with these students’ being motivated to work in the public sector *and* demotivated to work for the private sector.

We find symmetrical results for the beliefs of students who aspire to work in the private sector. For instance, they believe more often that a lower workload is a motivating reason to work for the public sector, in line with a common negative stereotype associated with civil servants.

To summarize, we find that students who are aspiring to careers in the public sector tend to believe more in the positive stereotypes associated with the public sector, and the negative stereotypes associated with the private sector. Symmetrically, students who aspire to work for the private sector tend to believe more in the negative stereotypes associated with the public sector, and the positive stereotypes associated with the private sector.

Part of the literature on public administration has investigated the motivations that drive students to choose a career in the public sector. The literature generally finds that students attracted to jobs in the public sector have a higher public service motivation. The research tends to consider that students who choose to work in the public sector self-select because they match with the public sector (see section 2 below). However, students who choose to work for the public sector may choose to do so because they mismatch with their perceptions of the private sector, rather than because they match with the public sector.

In this paper, we are able to distinguish between four combinations of perceptions and professional aspirations: (i) the perception of the public sector by students who plan to become civil servants, (ii) the perception of the public sector by students who want to work in the private sector, (iii) the perception of the private sector by future public workers, and (iv) the perception of the private sector by future private sector workers. While we confirm the literature’s findings that students attracted to public sector jobs have higher levels of public service motivation, we also show that they exhibit higher levels of private sector demotivation.

The university where we conduct our questionnaire places a great emphasis on political sciences and public affairs, suggesting that we are likely to be estimating a lower bound for the discrepancy between the beliefs of future public and private workers. Nationwide, students aspiring to careers in the private sector may believe more strongly in the negative stereotypes associated with public workers, and may have higher levels of mistrust in public institutions. Furthermore, the negative stereotypical beliefs—and therefore defiance—regarding the other sector may be reinforced over time. Indeed, workers usually specialize in one of the two sectors, which gives them very limited informa-

tion about how the other sector actually works. These results emphasize a great challenge current administrations face in their quest for legitimacy and recognition.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 relates our work to the public administration and economics literature. Section 3 describes the questionnaire and students' responses. Section 4 presents our data analyses. We conclude in section 5.

2 Literature

A large literature in the fields of public administration and economics studies the differences between public and private workers' characteristics. This research generally relies on the definition of "public service motivation" (PSM) by Perry and Wise (1990), i.e. "an individual predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations" (p. 368).¹ Perry et al. (2010) further explains that "the definition clearly sought to emphasize motives, such as civic duty and compassion, that are commonly associated with public organizations" (p. 682). In spite of some debates on its definition (Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999; Brewer and Selden, 2000; Vandenabeele, 2007) and its measurement (Rainey, 1982; Naff and Crum, 1999; Perry, 1996; Brewer and Selden, 2000; Brewer, 2000), public service motivation has been regularly associated with notions such as self-sacrifice (Perry and Wise, 1990; Perry, 1996), altruism (Francois, 2000; Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999) and pro-social motivation (Grant, 2008).

The PSM literature has generated several research questions (Perry et al., 2010), such as (i) whether PSM determines people's willingness to work in public organizations (Rainey, 1982; Lewis and Frank, 2002; Vandenabeele, 2008; Wright and Christensen, 2010), (ii) whether PSM is positively related to individual performance (Naff and Crum, 1999; Alonso and Lewis, 2001; Bright, 2005a; Vandenabeele, 2009), and (iii) whether people with high PSM are less dependent on utilitarian incentives to manage performance (Crewson, 1997; Karl and Sutton, 1998; Houston, 2000; Heyes, 2005; Bright, 2005b, 2009; Frank and Lewis, 2004; Delfgaauw and Dur, 2008, 2010). Some other papers have focused on the determinants of PSM (Perry, 2000; Moynihan and Pandey, 2007).²

Our paper is mainly related to the first type of questions. We study whether students attracted to public sector jobs have different beliefs regarding institutions and career motivations, than students who aspire to work in the private sector. Previous research has shown that public workers are more willing to help others and to be useful to society ((Rainey, 1982; Lewis and Frank, 2002; Georgellis et al., 2011)).³ Gregg et al. (2011) use data from the British Household Panel Survey to show that individuals in the non-profit sector are more likely to donate their labor (measured by unpaid overtime), than those in the for-profit sector. Using the American General Social Surveys, Houston (2006) finds that government employees are more likely to volunteer for charity work, and to donate blood, than for-profit employees. However, he finds no difference among public service and private employees in terms of individual philanthropy. Analyzing data from the American National Election Study, Brewer (2003) shows that public servants report higher participation in civic affairs. Using survey data from the German Socio-Economic Panel Study, Dur and Zoutenbier (2015) also find that public sector employees are significantly more altruistic than observationally equivalent private

¹Three types of motives can be distinguished: rational motives (i.e. motives grounded in utility maximization and connected to personal identification or self-interest), norm-based motives (i.e. a desire to serve the public interest: patriotism, duty, loyalty,...), affective motives (i.e. related to human emotions such as altruism, empathy, moral values, etc.).

²Another part of the literature -not grounded on PSM- also shows that public workers are more risk averse than private workers (Roszkowski and Grable, 2009; Bonin et al., 2007; Pfeifer, 2011).

³Some papers show that work motivation between public and private sectors differ according to the hierarchical levels that workers occupy (Buelens and Van den Broeck, 2007) and gender (DeHart-Davis et al., 2006).

sector employees, but that they are also more lazy. Finally, using revealed preferences, Buurman et al. (2012) show that public sector employees have a stronger inclination to serve others, compared to employees from the private sector.⁴

Most of these papers have post-employment choice settings. A further understanding of job selection requires data on people’s career choices before they actually start being employed. A few papers have analyzed such data. For instance, Carpenter et al. (2012) provide evidence showing that students with a strong public service orientation (evaluated by surveys) are more attracted to government jobs. Vandenabeele (2008) uses data on students enrolled in Flemish Universities to show that students with high PSM have higher preferences for prospective public employers. Through experiments conducted on students selected to work for the private and public sectors in Indonesia, Banuri and Keefer (2016) show that prospective entrants into the Indonesian Ministry of Finance exhibit higher levels of pro-social motivation than other students.

Our paper contributes to this empirical literature on job selection, and relies on data relative to students who plan to work either in the public or in the private sector. We show that students attracted to the public sector tend to trust public institutions more than students aspiring to careers in the private sector. Our results also highlight that these students hold negative opinions about the corporate sector and the values of the workers the corporate sector attracts. In other words, we investigate how the public sector is perceived by the students having to make a career choice, but we also explore the reverse question, namely how they also perceive the private sector.

Finally, our paper is related to the growing economics literature on stereotypes, i.e. widely held and oversimplified beliefs about groups. Previous research has used the social cognition approach (Hilton and Von Hippel, 1996; Schneider, 2004; Bordalo et al., 2016) to study stereotypes. By asking questions on careers in public and private sectors to two groups of students (i.e. those planning to work in the private sector and those planning to work in the public sector), we derive some results on the –possibly stereotyped– vision of these two groups regarding the sector they do not choose to work in.

3 The questionnaire

Students had the choice to answer the survey in French or in English. The questionnaire included questions on students’ views regarding (i) the public sector and the private sector; (ii) their classmates’ views of both sectors; (iii) social relations at work, more specifically on unions and labor laws; (iv) entrepreneurship and economic regulations; and (v) a case study on public-private partnerships. The questionnaire also included a question on students’ choices for future jobs and careers.

The questionnaire was sent by the administration in mid September 2014, two weeks after the beginning of classes, to the undergraduate and graduate students from the main campus (in Paris) and one of the smaller campuses (in Le Havre), representing a cohort of approximately 12,000 students. A total of 1,420 students completed at least part of the questionnaire, with approximately half of the students answering all of the questions (the questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete from start to finish). Answers were recorded as students made progress through the questionnaire, so we are able to analyze some of the answers of students who did not completely finish it.

Among the students who completed at least part of the questionnaire, a few (5%) were from the satellite undergraduate campus. Overall, 62% of respondents were Master’s degree students, and

⁴However, when tenure increases, this difference in pro-social inclinations disappears and even reverses later on. Their results also suggest that quite a few public sector employees do not contribute to charity because they feel that they have already been contributing enough to society through work for too small a paycheck.

38% were undergraduate students (there were also three PhD students and one student preparing administrative admissions' exams who answered it). The share of female and male students who answered the questionnaire was representative of the gender ratio in the overall student population (40% of respondents were male students, whereas the male student population was 41% in 2014). The share of respondents was similar across Master's degrees (Table 1 in Appendix A). For instance, 19.4% of all Master's students were in public affairs in 2014, whereas 20.0% of respondents were in public affairs. Finally, given that some questions dealt specifically with French institutions, we kept the answers submitted by French students only (most respondents were French students). The final dataset therefore includes the answers given by the 1,257 French students who completed at least part of the survey. A total of 740 students answered the question on their professional goals: 41% of these students were aspiring to work in the public sector, and 59% in the private sector.

4 Results

We investigate two dimensions using the questionnaire. First, we explore how two groups of students (i.e. those planning to work in the public sector and those willing to work in the private sector) comparatively perceive the public sector (section 4.1). Second, we analyze these students' relative perception of the private sector (section 4.2).

4.1 Perception of the public sector

4.1.1 Trust in institutions

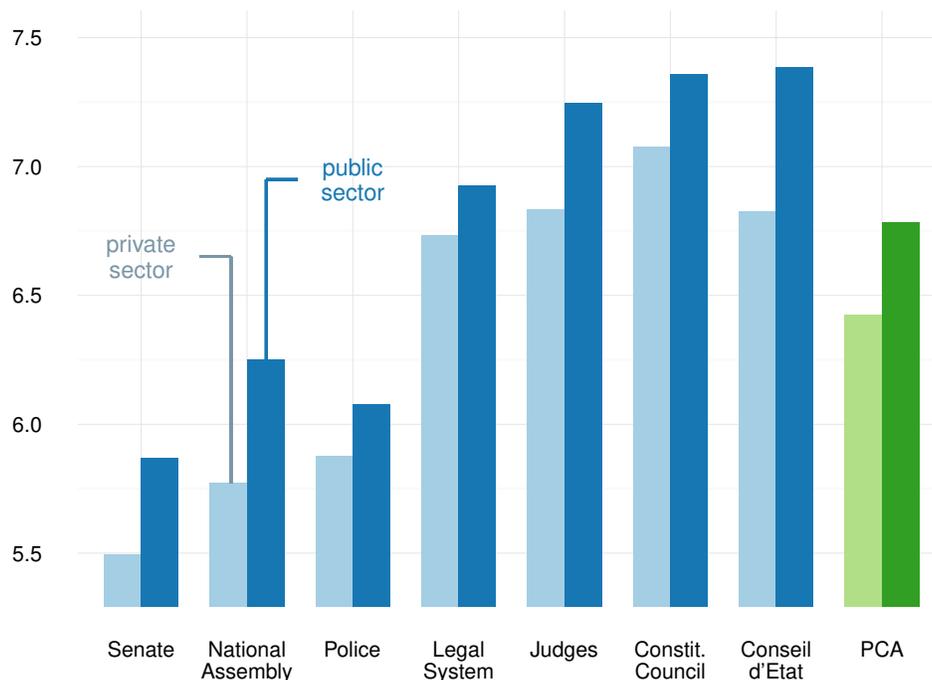
Two sets of questions enable us to compare the perception of the public sector across students. First, students were asked to report their level of trust in a list of institutions on an 11-point scale. The institutions under scrutiny were: the Upper Chamber (*Senate*), the Lower Chamber (*National Assembly*), the police (*Police*), the legal system in general (*Legal System*), the judges in general (*Judges*), the French Constitutional Court (*Constit. Council*), and the French Administrative Supreme Court (*Conseil d'Etat*). Figure 1 graphs the average level of trust for both types of students (i.e. those aspiring to work in the public sector, and those preferring the private sector). The two columns on the right-hand side of the graph show the average scores for the first dimension of a Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which represents the average level of trust in institutions.⁵ Table 2 in Appendix A shows the *p-value* associated with the two-group mean comparison test for each variable.

Students who plan to become civil servants show a higher level of trust in public institutions than students who aspire to careers in the private sector. Indeed, students who plan to work in the public sector have a higher level of trust for all the listed public institutions. The differences are significant for the Lower Chamber (*p-value*=0.002), the Upper Chamber (*p-value*=0.022), judges (*p-value*=0.005), the Constitutional Council (*p-value*=0.078), and the administrative Supreme Court (*p-value*<0.001). The first dimension of the PCA, which represents the average level of trust in institutions, is also significantly higher for prospective public servants (*p-value*=0.001). Although views about the legal system in general and the police are not statistically different across students, those aspiring to become civil servants still display a higher average level of trust.

Result 1 Students who plan to become civil servants display a higher level of trust in public institutions.

⁵The PCA's first dimension is positively correlated with all answers.

Figure 1: Comparison of the level of trust in institutions according to the prospective sector of work (0 to 10 scale).

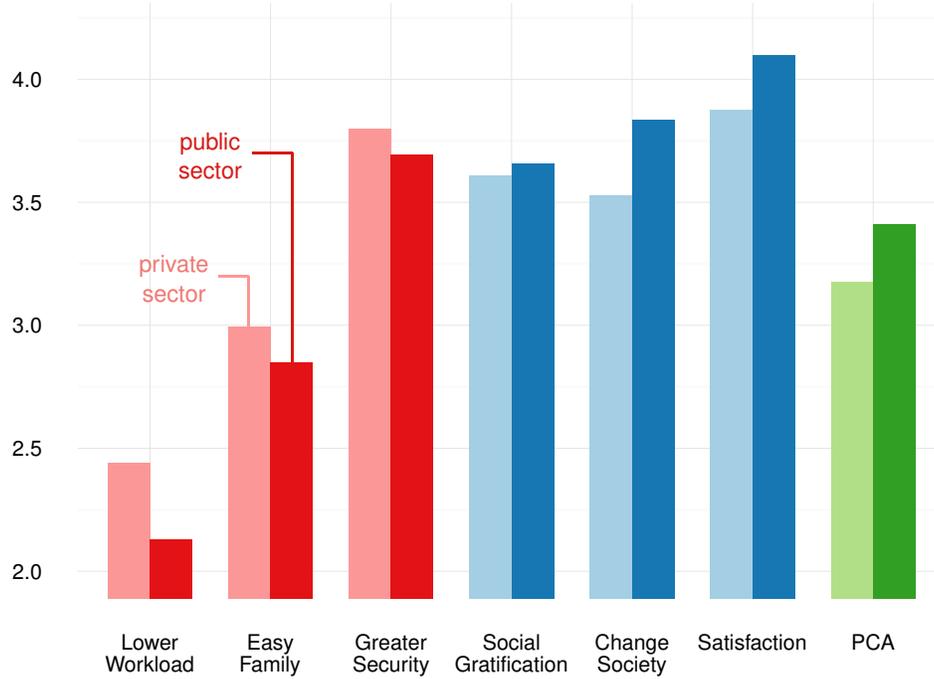


4.1.2 Reasons to become a civil servant

After indicating their trust in public institutions, students were asked to report their beliefs regarding the factors that determine their classmates' choices to become civil servants. This series of questions contrasts with many other surveys that tend to focus on individual perceptions of one's own motivations. Indeed, our questions relate to beliefs in *stereotypes* regarding careers in the public sector. Respondents could answer: *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, *Agree*, or *Strongly Agree*. The listed potential benefits of being a civil servant included a lower workload (*Lower Workload*), a more convenient family life (*Easy Family*), a greater job security (*Greater Security*), a source of social gratification (*Social Gratification*), more opportunities to change society (*Change Society*), and personal satisfaction to deal with public affairs (*Satisfaction*).

Figure 2 shows the average scores for each group of students, ranking the answers from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Table 3 in Appendix A presents the results of ordered probit estimations and the p-values of two-group mean-comparison tests. Students who aspire to become civil servants are more likely to see *pro-social* reasons as driving their classmates' choices for the public sector. The estimations indicate that students who aspire to work in the public sector are more likely to believe that their classmates choose to become civil servants (i) for the satisfaction they get by dealing with public affairs ($p\text{-values} < 0.001$), and (ii) for the opportunities they have to change society ($p\text{-values} < 0.001$). On the contrary, students who do not plan to become civil servants are more likely to believe that their classmates are willing to work in the public sector for *self-concerned* reasons, i.e. the lower workload ($p\text{-values} < 0.001$), and the convenience to organize family life ($p\text{-value}=0.105$ for the ordered probit estimation, and $p\text{-value}=0.085$ for the two-group mean-comparison test). The students who aspire to become civil servants tend to believe in the

Figure 2: Difference of perception of the reasons driving students to choose the public sector according to the prospective sector of work.



positive stereotypes associated with work in the public sector, whereas the students who aspire to work in the private sector tend to believe more often in the negative stereotypes. However, both types of students tend to agree more often with the positive stereotypes compared with the negative stereotypes.

Finally, we conduct a PCA on these six dimensions. The first axis is positively correlated with the *pro-social* motivations to choose the public sector (i.e. *Satisfaction*, *Social Gratification*, *Change Society*), depicted in blue in figure 2, and negatively with the *self-concerned* motivations (i.e. *Greater Job Security*, *Lower Workload*, *More Convenient Family Life*), depicted in red in figure 2. Comparing the PCA scores of the two types of students show that, on average, students aspiring to a career in the public sector are more likely than their classmates to think that students aspire to become civil servants for *pro-social* reasons ($p\text{-value} < 0.001$).

Result 2 Both types of students recognize that people aspiring to work in the public sector generally do so for pro-social reasons (i.e. satisfaction of being involved in public affairs, possibility to change society). However, this result is stronger for students who want to become public servants. Students who plan to work in the private sector are more likely to believe that their classmates who aspire to careers as civil servants do so for *self-concerned* reasons (i.e. lower workload, more convenient family life).

4.2 Perception of the private sector

While the literature tends to focus on civil servants' perception of the public sector, our questionnaire enables us to investigate aspiring civil servants' perception of the private sector. To do so, we use

three series of questions that deal with the private sector.

4.2.1 Reasons to work in the private sector

First, the questionnaire asked students to report their perception of the factors that determine their classmates' motivations for careers in the private sector. These questions were similar to those asked for the public sector, but using different stereotypes. The suggested motivations were the following: work with more competent teams (*Competence*), more motivated teams (*Motivation*), benefiting from more flexibility (*Flexibility*), a stronger sense of entrepreneurship (*Entrepreneurship*), and having the opportunity to earn higher wages (*Wage*).

Figure 3: Difference of perceptions of the reasons driving students to choose the private sector according to the prospective sector of work.

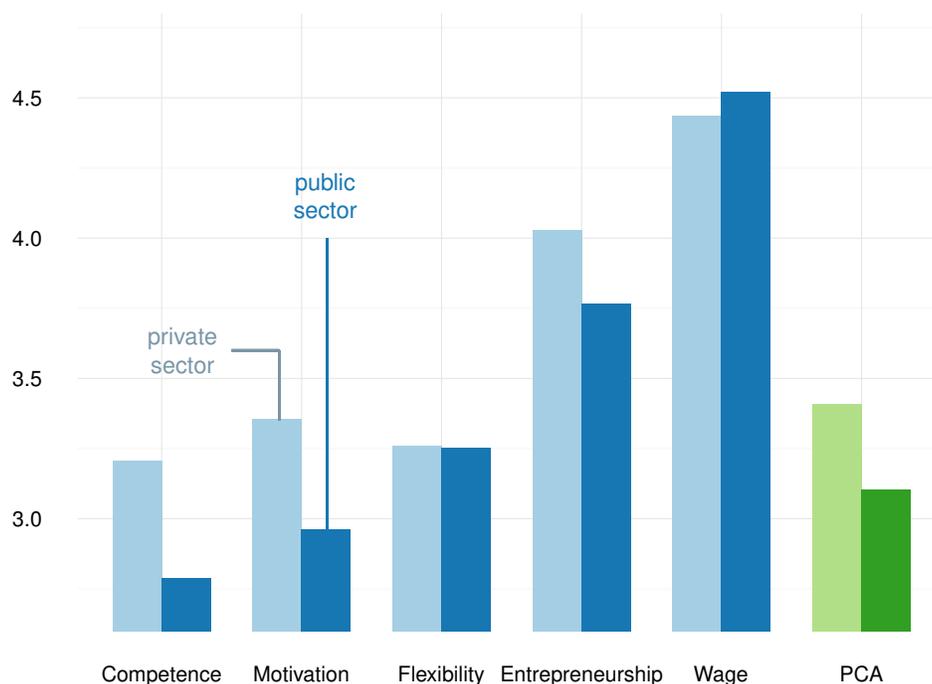


Figure 3 shows the average perception of each factor driving students to work in the private sector according to their own prospective careers. Table 4 in Appendix A further shows the results of ordered probit estimations and p-values of two-group mean-comparison tests. Students who aspire to become public workers are less likely to say that their classmates aspire to work in the private sector because of (i) its greater possibilities of entrepreneurship ($p\text{-values} < 0.001$), (ii) its more competent teams ($p\text{-values} < 0.001$), and (iii) its more motivated teams ($p\text{-values} < 0.001$).

We can interpret this result in two non-mutually excluding ways. First, it might be that students who plan to become civil servants believe that other reasons than the ones listed motivate their classmates' choices. However, the list contains most of the arguments usually mentioned to explain the choices for preferring the private sector over the public sector. Second, it might be that students who aspire to work in the public sector are less likely to believe that the private sector allows for more entrepreneurship, more competent and/or more motivated teams.

Result 3 Students who plan to work in the public sector are less likely to see entrepreneurship, competence and motivation as the factors that drive other students' choices to work in the private sector.

4.2.2 Beliefs about the private sector

The questionnaire included a series of questions about the challenges companies and salaried workers face in France. Using a technique of ideal point estimates, we reconstruct the attitudes of respondents towards private firms on two dimensions. The first dimension represents students' level of distrust in private firms (*Distrust in companies*). The second dimension reflects to what extent students believe that conducting business in France today is easy (*Easy to do business*). The questions are presented below, with a plus sign for a positive relationship, and a minus sign for a negative relationship.

Distrust in companies is associated with students' beliefs on whether:

- union representatives should benefit from extra protection against being fired (+);
- employees should have a stronger role in the company's decision-making process (+);
- controls of labor law enforcement are currently sufficient in France (-);
- thresholds above which union representation becomes mandatory in the company are too high (+);
- firings should be banned when companies make profits (+);
- the government should legislate to limit employers' excessive remunerations (+).

Easy to do business is associated with students' beliefs on whether:

- procedures to fire an employee should be made easier for the employer (-);
- procedures to create a new business should be made easier (-);
- procedures to hire an employee should be simplified (-);
- labor is too costly, which currently contributes to high unemployment in France (-);
- it's easy to create a company in France nowadays (+);
- it's easy to find fundings in France nowadays to open a business (+);
- it's easy for a young entrepreneur currently in France to get access to legal advice to open a business (+).

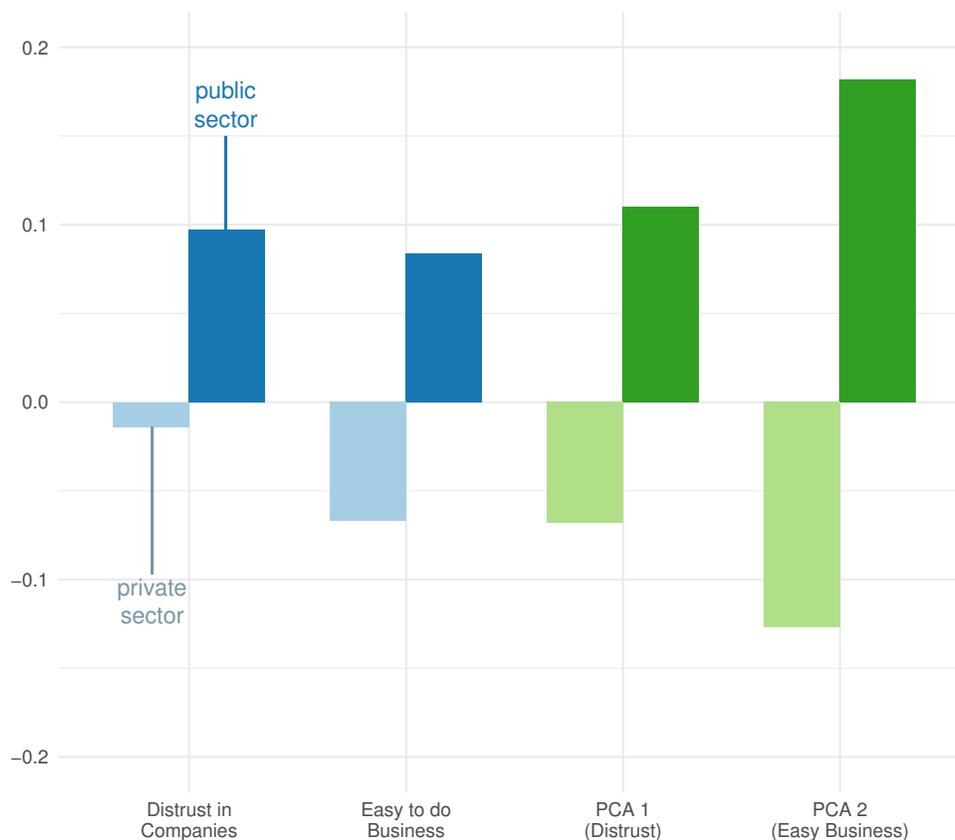
To construct the two dimensions, we use an augmented version of the *graduated response model* often used in *ideal point estimations*. Our method departs from PCA. First, we use our definitions of the dimensions (*Distrust in companies* and *Easy to conduct business*) to assign *ex ante* the sign of the correlation between the questions and the desired dimension. Second, we do not consider the answers as continuous, but as ordered variables. The estimation of ideal points takes into account this information to generate the two dimensions. The full methodology to estimate the two dimensions is presented in Appendix B. For robustness purposes, we also run PCA for each of the two dimensions, and we obtain identical results.⁶

Figure 4 represents the average scores of the two dimensions according to the students' willingness to work in the public sector. Table 5 in Appendix A shows the results of two-group mean-comparison tests. We find that students who plan to work in the public sector display a

⁶The correlation coefficient between the first axis of the PCA and our first dimension is greater than 0.99. It is equal to 0.975 for our second dimension.

higher distrust in the private sector ($p\text{-value}=0.088$), and are more likely to think that conducting a business in France is currently relatively easy ($p\text{-value}=0.017$).

Figure 4: Comparison of the attitudes towards the private sector according to the self-declared prospective job of the students.



Result 4 Students who plan to work in the public sector have a higher level of distrust in the private sector, and are more likely to believe that doing business is easy.

4.2.3 Perception of public-private partnerships

The questionnaire included a case study about public-private partnerships. The questions relate to students' beliefs regarding the benefits of a private provision of public goods. They reflect the perception of the relative advantages of the private and public sectors. The first question asked students whether they perceived delegated management of public goods as a good thing *per se* (*Delegated Management*).⁷ The three following questions interrogated students whether delegating management is a good thing to reduce management costs, to foster innovation, and to improve the quality of the services (*Cost Reduction, Innovation, Quality Improvement*). The next question

⁷In our context, delegated management refers to the decision of a public authority to contract out the management of a public service to a private company for a defined period a time.

described a conflict between the contracting public authority and its private partner, and investigates whether students perceived the decision (of the public authority) to expropriate the private firm as being legitimate (*Legitimate Expropriation*). Students were then asked to what extent the State should compensate the firm when expropriation took place (*Damages*).

The final questions analyzed the case of arbitration to solve the conflict (instead of litigation by national courts). The questions asked students to what extent the arbitration decision should take into account the following arguments: the state must stick to its contractual commitments towards the firm (*Commitments*), the state must be allowed to nationalize sectors it considers as essential for economic growth (*Nationalization*), water is a vital good, which justifies that the state can overpass the contractual agreements (*Necessary Good*), and devaluation is a legitimate motive for the firm to increase prices (*Devaluation*). Finally, we run a PCA, and explain the scores on the first dimension, which represents an overall positive perception of private provision of public goods⁸.

Figure 5: Differences in the perceptions of the private provision of public goods according to the prospective sector of work.

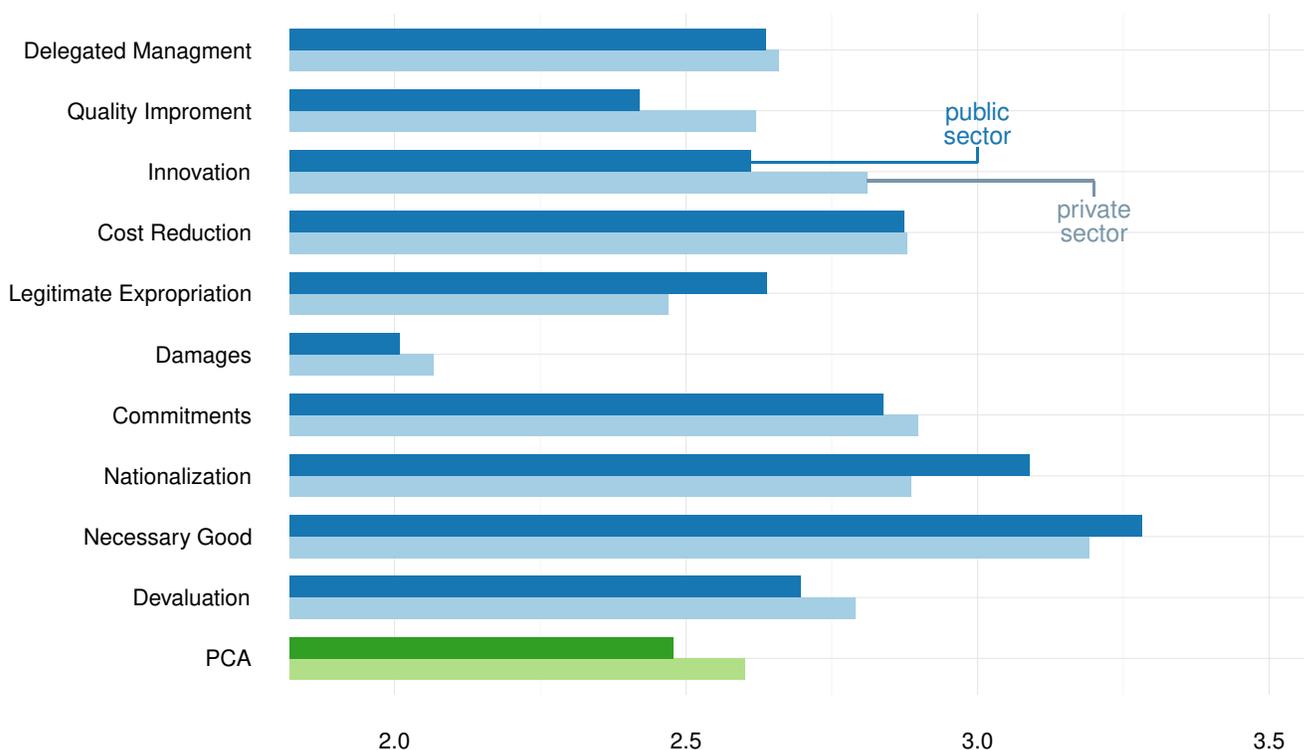


Figure 5 shows the average scores for the two groups of students. Table 6 in Appendix A presents the associated estimates of regression estimations and p-values of two-group mean-comparison tests. The statistical analysis confirms the above findings. Students who want to become civil servants are less likely to see delegated management as improving the quality of services ($p\text{-value}=0.012$) or as fostering innovation ($p\text{-value}=0.010$). Moreover, they are more likely to consider expropriation as legitimate ($p\text{-value}=0.020$). Third, students who plan to work in the public sector are also more

⁸The first dimension is positively correlated with all variables except *Legitimate Expropriation*, *Nationalization*, and *Necessary Good*.

likely to consider that the state must be allowed to nationalize key sectors ($p\text{-value}=0.002$). Finally, the PCA shows that students who aspire to become civil servants have a worse perception of the overall benefits of a private provision of public goods.

Result 5 Students who aspire to become civil servants are less likely to see advantages of private provision of public goods, and are thus more likely to support the state in case of public-private partnerships.

4.3 Robustness Checks

As the above subsections have showed, the questionnaire contained questions about both the perception of the public and the private sectors, and students' willingness to work in the public sector after the completion of their studies. The fact that both the dependent and the independent variables were obtained from the same survey might generate some methodological concerns, usually referred to as the *Common Source Bias* (CSB). In our case, we are not able to rule out the possibility that participants sought to reduce cognitive dissonance or to improve / protect self-image by aligning their answers. Nevertheless, the impact of the CSB is limited by the fact that questions were asked on successive screens, and that half of the dimensions discussed above were explored before participants were asked about their willingness to work in the public sector. Moreover, the willingness to work in the public sector was obtained by asking whether participants intended to pass exams to enter the public sector. Given the long preparation that these exams require, it seems unlikely that previous declarations about the attractiveness of each sector affect participants' declaration about their intention to pass these exams.

In order to test the robustness of our results to the CSB, we use respondents' identifier to retrieve the master program of graduate students. We then associate to each graduate student the average proportion of students registered in his/her graduate school who ended up working in the private sector (based on the post-graduation employment survey of students who graduated in 2015). This measure reflects the average ex-post propensity to really work in the private sector, and is not subject to the CSB. We observe that this variable is highly correlated with the individual declarations in the survey ($\hat{\rho} = 0.468$, $p < 0.001$). We run all the previous estimations replacing the potentially biased self-declaration by this exogenous measure. We cluster observations at the graduate school level given the level of aggregation of information. The new results, displayed in table 7, loose in significance, mostly because of the reduction in the variance in the explanatory variable and in the degree of freedoms, but confirm the above results. Indeed, individuals with higher chances of working in the public sector trust significantly more the national institutions (National Assembly, Senate, Judges, Administrative Supreme Court), are more likely to believe that public servants work in the public sector for noble reasons (Gratification, Change) and less likely to believe they do so for the potentially lower workload (Workload). They are also less likely to believe that students who want to work in the private sector plan to do so for the possibilities of entrepreneurship. Regarding the economy, they are more likely to believe that unionists should be more protected against employers. Moreover, in the case of public-private partnerships, they are more likely to find the intervention of the state as legitimate, and more likely to accept nationalization.

5 Conclusion

The literature suggests that public workers have a higher public service motivation. The contribution of this paper is to show that this view of public workers may only be part of a broader picture.

Indeed, future public workers have a worse perception of private business, which may suggest that they mismatch with the private sector. In addition, we show that students attracted to jobs in the private sector have reciprocal behavior: they praise business and private activities, but mistrust the public sector to a larger extent than students who aspire to work for the public sector. These results are consistent with self-selection effects driving career choices. Students' preferences can match—but also mismatch—specific sectors.

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A Tables

Table 1: Descriptive statistics, Master's degree students, survey respondents compared to overall population

Field of Master's degree	All students		Only French students	
	Overall	Respondants	Overall	Respondants
Business	12.66%	13.28%	15.48%	13.87%
Economics and finance	15.59%	15.44%	16.05%	15.05%
Environment	1.81%	2.50%	1.70%	2.49%
European affairs	4.64%	3.40%	3.84%	2.62%
History	0.82%	1.82%	1.13%	1.96%
International Affairs	20.10%	18.39%	11.81%	14.53%
Journalism	1.68%	1.82%	2.07%	1.83%
Law	8.60%	9.99%	10.28%	9.81%
Political science	2.21%	3.06%	2.37%	3.40%
Public affairs	19.42%	20.09%	26.16%	23.82%
Sociology	0.62%	1.36%	0.90%	1.44%
Other	5.91%	0.00%	0.49%	0.00%
Urban	5.93%	8.85%	7.70%	9.16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Observations	4,696	891	2,997	764

Note: Includes all Masters' degree students who at least started completing the survey.

Table 2: Comparison of the level of trust in institutions for prospective public servants and others.

Institution	Intend to pass exams for public servants?		
	Yes	No	p-value
National Assembly	5.771	6.250	.002
Senate	5.493	5.868	.022
Legal System	6.734	6.928	.179
Police	5.878	6.079	.207
Judges	6.835	7.247	.005
Constitutional Council	7.078	7.359	.078
Administrative Supreme Court	6.826	7.385	<0.001
PCA	-.162	.294	.001

Note: The sample of students consists of 304 respondents who declared planning to become public servants, and 436 who said the opposite.

Table 3: Difference of perception of the reasons driving students to choose the public sector according to the willingness to become public servants.

Reason	Ordered Probit			Mean comparison
	Estimated Effect	t-stat	p-value	p-value
Greater Security	-.103	-1.284	.199	.178
Public Affairs Satisfaction	.291	3.54	<0.001	<0.001
Social Gratification	.063	.795	.427	.519
Change Society	.334	4.142	<0.001	<0.001
Lower Workload	-.329	-4.098	<0.001	<0.001
Easy Family	-.127	-1.619	.105	.085

Table 4: Difference of perceptions of the reasons driving students to choose the private sector according to the self-declared prospective job of the students.

Reason	Ordered Probit			Mean comparison
	Estimated Effect	t-stat	p-value	p-value
Higher wage	.111	1.247	.212	.107
More flexibility	-.029	-.361	.718	.931
More entrepreneurship	-.322	-3.981	<0.001	<0.001
More competent teams	-.416	-5.268	<0.001	<0.001
More motivated teams	-.39	-4.951	<0.001	<0.001

Table 5: Comparison of the attitudes towards the private sector according to the self-declared prospective job of the students.

Dimension	Private Sector	Public Sector	p-value
Distrust in companies	-.014	.097	.088
Easy to conduct business	-.067	.084	.017

Note: The sample of students consists of 304 respondents who declared planning to become public servants, and 436 who said the opposite.

Table 6: Difference of perceptions of private provision of public goods according to the self-declared prospective job of the students.

Reason	Ordered Probit			Mean comparison
	Estimated Effect	t-stat	p-value	p-value
Delegated Management	-.032	-.381	.703	.745
Reduce Cost	-.01	-.121	.903	.956
Foster Innovation	-.224	-2.651	.008	.010
Service Quality	-.209	-2.479	.013	.012
Legitimate Expropriation	.212	2.544	.011	.020
Expropriation Compensation	-.109	-1.313	.189	.239
Engagements	-.204	-1.067	.286	.286
Nationalize	.682	3.163	.002	.002
Vital Good	.301	1.446	.148	.149
Devaluation	-.312	-1.455	.146	.146
PCA	-.43	-3.193	.001	.001

Table 7:

	Coefficient	T-stat	P-value
National Assembly	.022	3.408	0.011
Senate	.0251	4.158	0.004
Legal System	.0173	1.781	0.118
Police	.0121	1.331	0.225
Judges	.0202	2.444	0.045
Constitutional Council	.0199	1.622	0.149
Administrative Supreme Court	.0368	2.61	0.035
Greater Security	.0012	.457	0.648
Public Affairs Satisfaction	.0132	5.601	0.648
Social Gratification	.0084	3.229	0.001
Change Society	.0108	5.89	0.000
Lower Workload	-.0105	-1.867	0.062
Easy Family	.0015	.337	0.736
Higher Wage	.0051	1.595	0.111
More Flexibility	.0038	1.009	0.313
More Entrepreneurship	-.0048	-1.668	0.095
More Competent Teams	-.0042	-.985	0.324
More Motivated Teams	-.0022	-.479	0.632
<i>protec_del c</i>	.0082	2.521	0.040
<i>particip_s e</i>	.0045	.674	0.522
<i>control_tr l</i>	.0019	.631	0.548
<i>baisse_seu c</i>	-.0023	-.378	0.717
<i>limit_iicenc</i>	.0007	.077	0.941
<i>gouv_iimit l</i>	.0079	.844	0.426
<i>alleg_iicenc</i>	-.0092	-1.509	0.175
<i>crea_eentr_i</i>	.0027	1.318	0.229
<i>alleg_procr</i>	.0013	.42	0.687
<i>faciliter_b</i>	.0026	1.693	0.134
<i>cout_trav_n</i>	-.0044	-.767	0.468
<i>financ_entl</i>	.0044	.969	0.365
<i>cons_eentr_i</i>	.0024	.901	0.398
Delegated Management	.0019	.36	0.719
Reduction of Costs	.0007	.143	0.886
Foster Innovation	-.0017	-.332	0.740
Service Quality	-.002	-.298	0.765
Legitimate Expropriation	.0117	2.124	0.034
Engagements	-.0078	-.683	0.516
Nationalize	.026	2.505	0.041
Vital Good	.0186	1.667	0.140
Devaluation	.01	.695	0.509

B Ideal Points Estimates

The Bayesian estimation of ideal points is usually referred as the *one dimensional item response theory*. Such models originally aimed at measuring students' performance on a test, and to locate them on a unique dimension. The objective consisted in estimating three sets of parameters: (i) an ability parameter for each student, (ii) a difficulty parameter for each question of the test, and (iii) a discrimination parameter for each question. Bayesian methods were developed to discriminate students according to their ability, by taking into account questions' difficulty level, and by estimating their 'relevance' to correctly discriminate students.⁹

These models have since been used in the political science literature, especially in the case of Supreme Court voting (Bafumi et al. (2005), Martin and Quinn (2002), Martin et al. (2005)), where researchers located Justices on a liberal-conservative dimension.

Our goal consists in estimating students' preferences on two dimensions (Distrust in Companies and Easy to do Business). To do so, we use the answers given to our questionnaires described in subsection 4.2.2. The possible answers to these questions were ordered in the following order: *strongly disagree, slightly disagree, indifferent, slightly agree, strongly agree*.

The model is defined by a logistic utility model, where the latent utility depends both on the questions and students' parameters:

$$y_{ij}^* = \alpha_j \theta_i + u_{ij}$$

where α_j is the discrimination parameter of question j , θ_i is the score of individual i on the estimated dimension, and u_{ij} is a random component.

Given that we have five possible ordered answers, the associated observed choices are given by:

$$\begin{aligned} y_{ij} &= 1 \text{ si } y_{ij}^* \leq \phi_{1j} \\ y_{ij} &= 2 \text{ si } y_{ij}^* > \phi_{1j} \text{ et } y_{ij}^* \leq \phi_{2j} \\ &\vdots \\ y_{ij} &= 5 \text{ si } y_{ij}^* > \phi_{4,j} \end{aligned}$$

where ϕ_j is the vector of thresholds for the ordinal choice model.

The hyperpriors are set as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha_j &\sim N(\mu_\alpha, \sigma_\alpha^2) \\ \phi_j &\sim N(\mu_\phi, \sigma_\phi^2) \\ \theta_i &\sim N(0, 1) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mu_\alpha &\sim N(0, 1) \text{ et } \sigma_\alpha \sim \text{Exp}(0.1) \\ \mu_\phi &\sim N(0, 1) \text{ et } \sigma_\phi \sim \text{Exp}(0.1) \end{aligned}$$

⁹Researchers anticipated the possibility that some questions could be correctly answered by low-skilled students and wrongly answered by high-skilled students

Given that we know a priori the correlation of the answers with the desired axes, we are able to reverse the order of the answers for the questions which are negatively correlated (see section 4.2.2). We use this information and overidentify the model by setting:

$$\ln(\alpha_j) \sim N(\mu_\alpha, \sigma_\alpha^2)$$