# Online Appendix: What Does It Take to Be Rich?

## Contents

**Appendix A: Detailed description of samples** **1**

**Appendix B: Percentile-based cumulative graphs of estimates** **3**

**Appendix C: Perceptions by respondent income** **5**

**Appendix D: Guesses for share rich or poor** **5**

## Appendix A: Detailed description of samples

The first sample was a convenience sample of 614 Americans collected through the Prolific Academic survey platform in 2020. This study was approved by [redacted] IRB. This sample only answered the question about the income it takes to be rich, and not the question about what income qualifies as poor. Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample.

The second sample is a representative sample of 3893 Germans collected through the survey platform Respondi in 2020. This study was declared exempt from the requirement of a full ethics review by the [redacted] IRB. The questions about the rich and the poor, as well as an additional question about the share of the population that the respondents estimate to

| ‘ | German population | Survey (unweighted) | Survey (weighted) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender: male | 49.2 | 48.8 | 49.0 |
| Gender: female | 50.8 | 51.2 | 51.0 |
| Region: West | 84.7 | 69.4 | 84.6 |
| Region: East | 15.3 | 30.6 | 15.4 |
| Age: 18 - 39 | 31.6 | 30.7 | 31.7 |
| Age: 40 – 59 | 35.2 | 35.0 | 35.2 |
| Age: 60 - 99 | 33.2 | 34.3 | 33.1 |
| Education: low | 35.8 | 31.5 | 35.7 |
| Education: middle | 30.5 | 35.2 | 30.6 |
| Education: high | 33.6 | 33.3 | 33.7 |

Note: Showing percentages. Population data from the German Mikrocenzus as reported by Kantar Group.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of German sample.

| | US population | Convenience sample | Representative sample |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender: male (%) | 49 | 51 | 48 |
| Median age | 39 | 30 | 48 |
| Median household income ($) | 66k | 40-50k | 40-50k |
| College educated (%) | 33 | 64 | 31 |
| White (%) | 72 | 71 | 65 |
| Black (%) | 13 | 9 | 12 |
| Hispanic (%) | 18 | 9 | 14 |

Note: Population data from the American Community Survey 2019 1-year estimates.
In the representative sample, race and ethnicity were measured in one variable.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the United States samples.

be rich or poor, were asked as part of a broader survey. Table 1 shows a comparison between the sample and the German population on targeted demographic variables.

The third sample is a representative sample of 1000 Americans collected through the survey company YouGov in 2021. This study was approved by [redacted] IRB. The questions about the rich and poor were asked as part of a broader survey within YouGov's daily Omnibus survey. Table 2 shows a comparison between this sample, the US convenience sample, and the US population on targeted demographic variables.

# Appendix B: Percentile-based cumulative graphs of estimates

Tables 1 and 2 show estimates of the thresholds for rich and poor in the German and US representative samples, plotted as cumulative distributions of percentiles of the real income distribution. They show, for each percentile of the actual income distribution, what percent of respondents consider a household in that percentile rich or poor respectively.

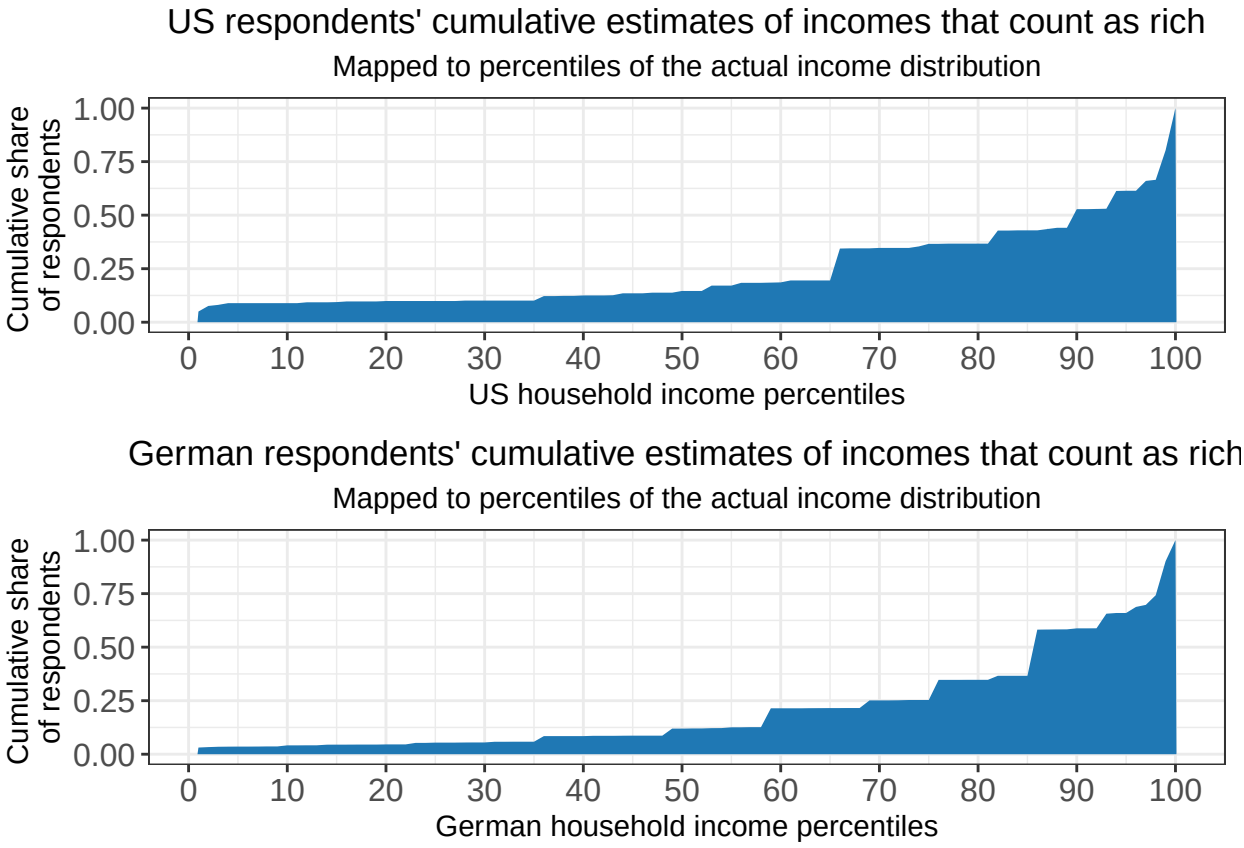


Figure 1: Estimates of threshold for rich, US representative sample

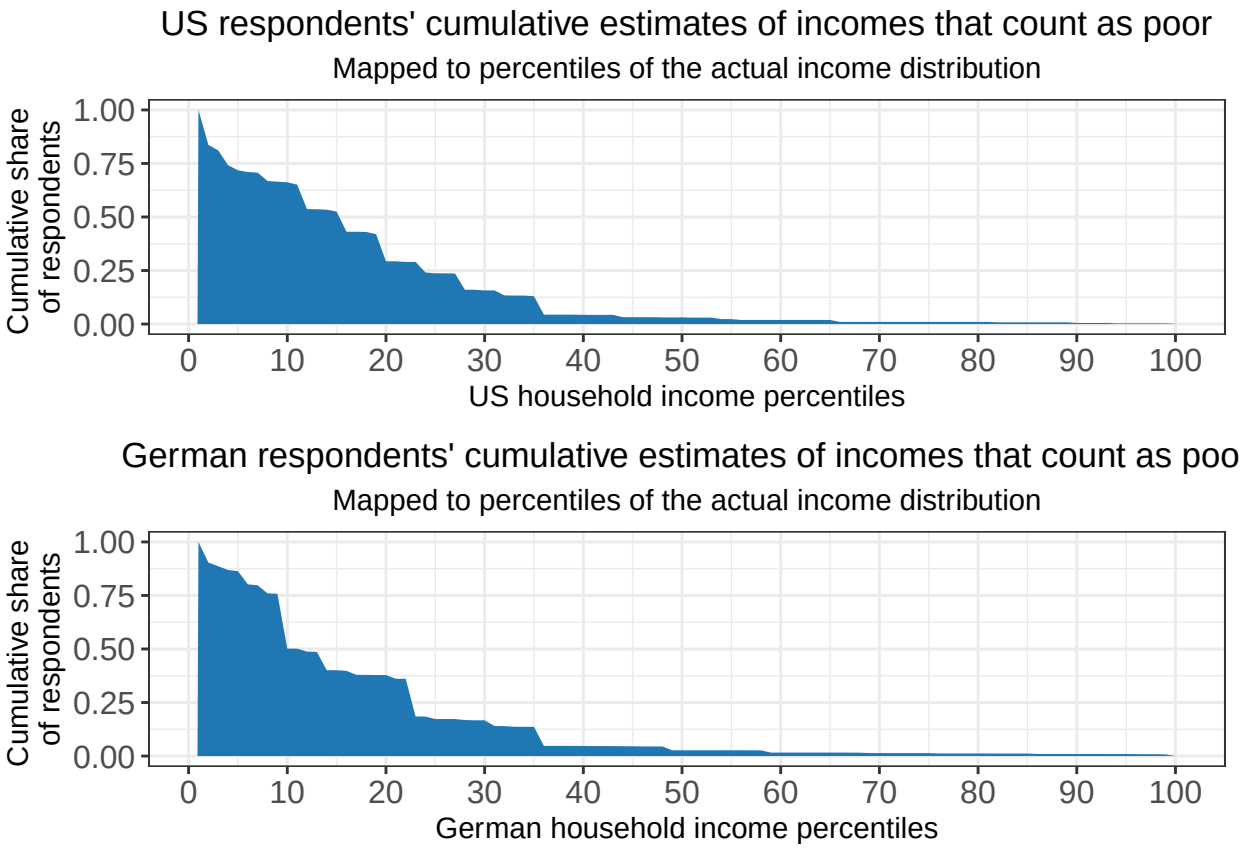


Figure 2: Estimates of threshold for poor, US representative sample

# Appendix C: Perceptions by respondent income

Figures 3 and 4 break down perceptions of the rich and poor thresholds by the respondents' own income, for the US and German representative samples respectively.

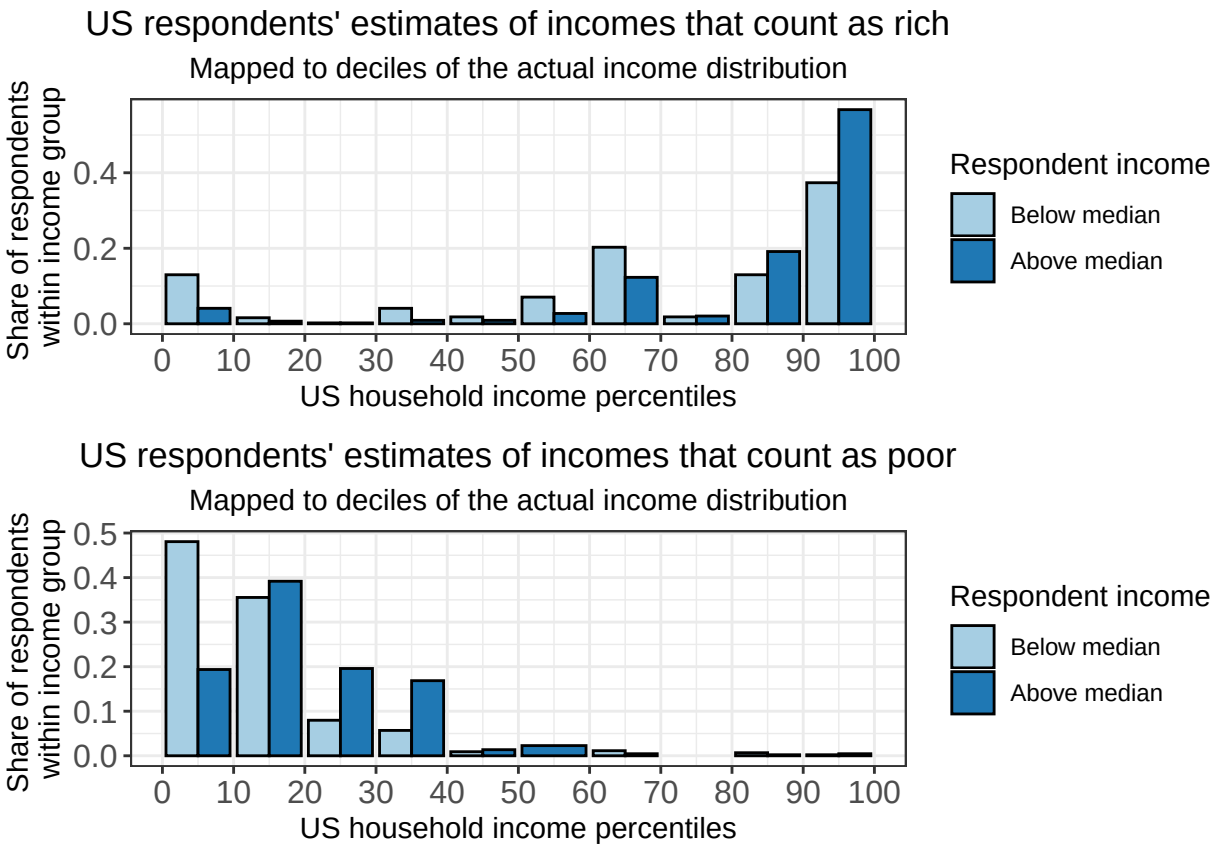


Figure 3: Estimates of threshold for rich by respondent income, United States representative sample

# Appendix D: Guesses for share rich or poor

The German sample was additionally asked to estimate the share of the public who are rich or poor. The questions immediately followed the threshold questions, and were phrased as:

- "And out of every 100 households in Germany, how many would you say make that much money or more? In other words: what percent of German households earn that

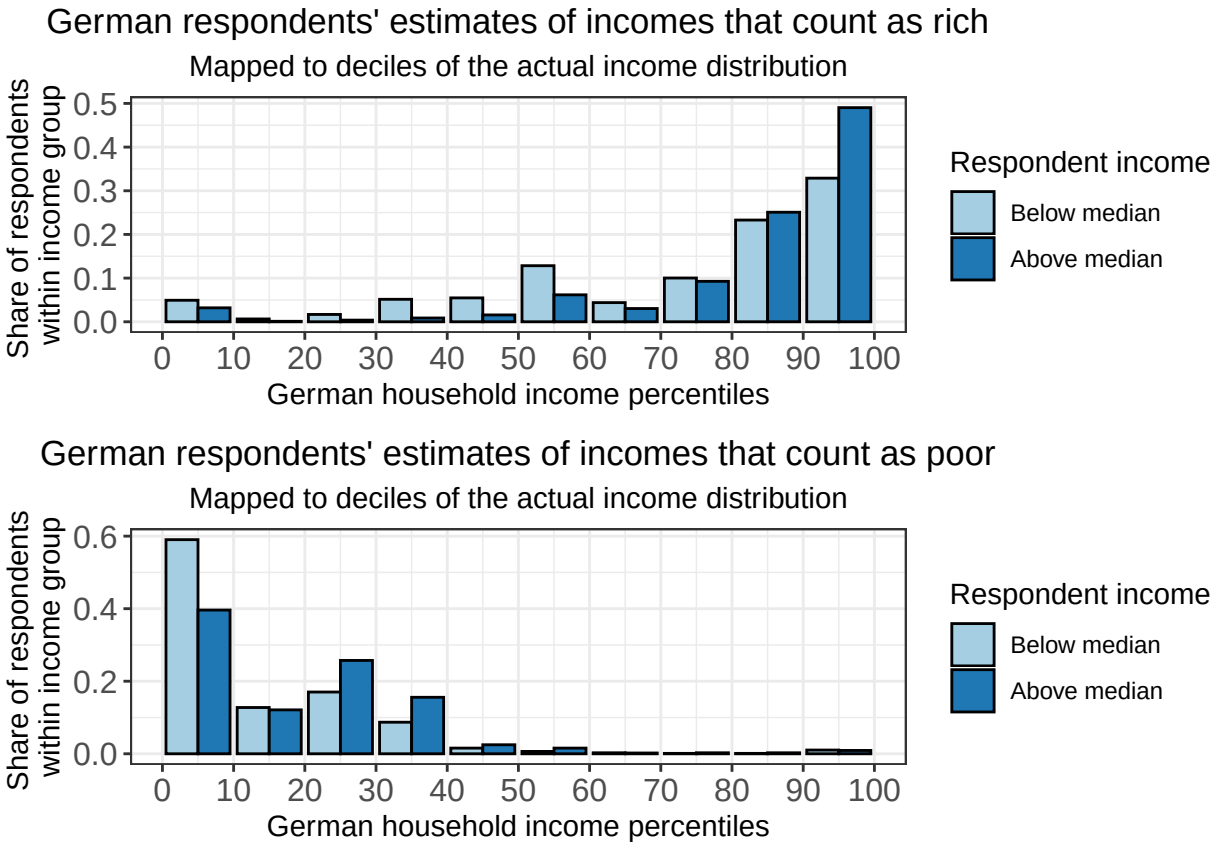


Figure 4: Estimates of threshold for rich by respondent income, German representative sample

much money or more?"

- "And out of every 100 households in Germany, how many would you say make that little money or less? In other words: what percent of German households earn that little money or less?"

The questions for rich and poor appeared on consecutive survey pages, and responses were constrained to numeric responses between 0 and 100. Figure 5 illustrates respondents' guesses for what share of German households are rich and poor, respectively. The results are displayed separately for respondents with below average and above average incomes. The relationship between respondent income and thresholds for rich and poor no longer holds when respondents are instead asked about shares of the population.

Figure 6 additionally displays respondents' guesses for what share of the population is either rich or poor (the sum of the two separate guesses for share rich and share poor), but with the respondents split by formal education rather than income. Logically impossible answers are more common among those with lower formal education, highlighting the concern that questions involving shares of the population are complicated for many respondents.

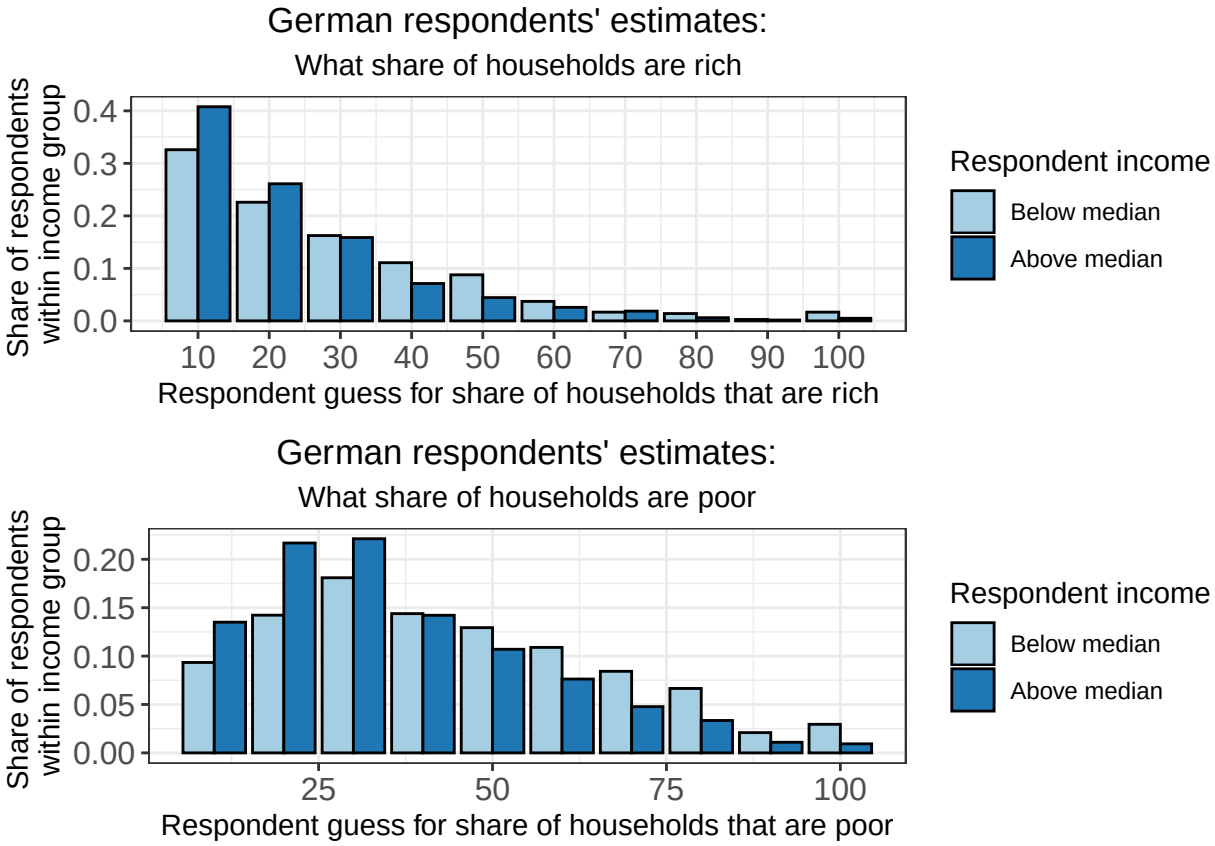


Figure 5: Estimates of share of German households that are rich or poor, by respondent income

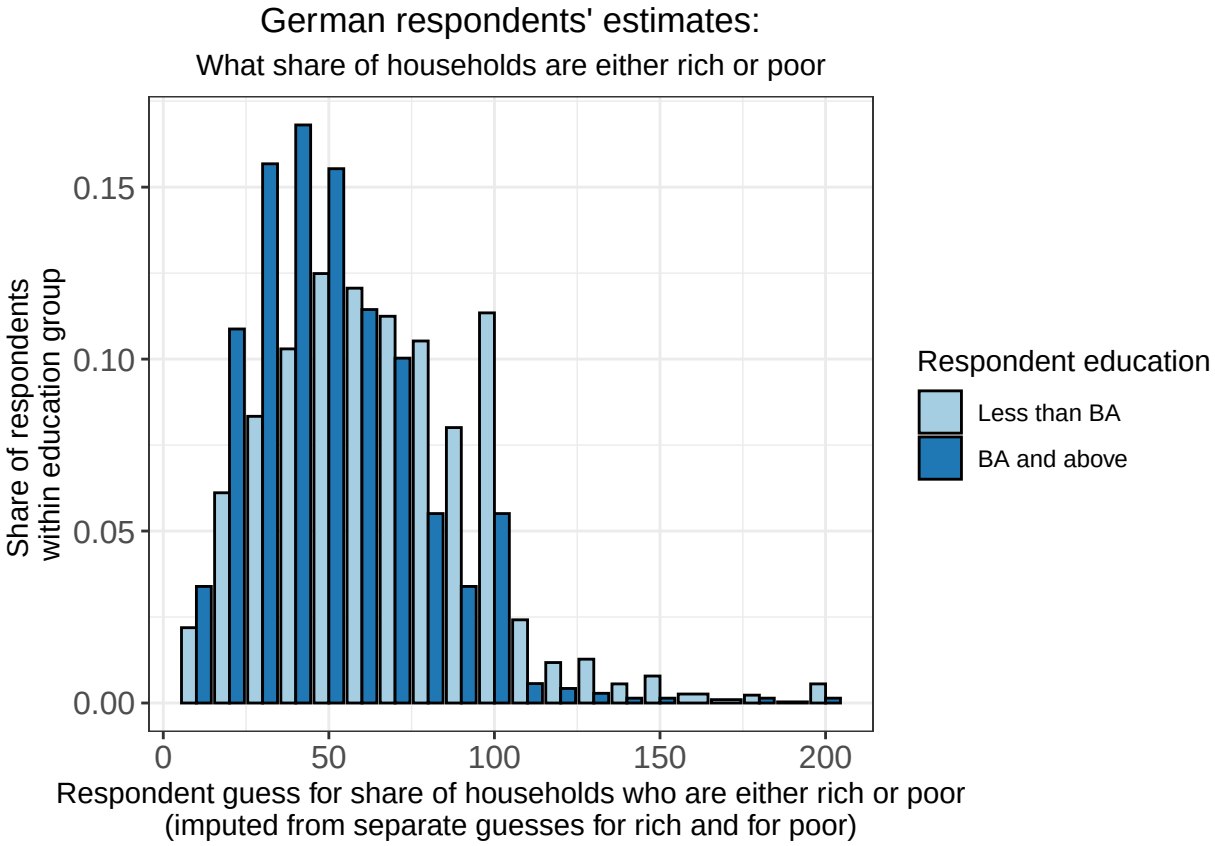


Figure 6: Estimates of share of German households that are rich or poor, by respondent education