

# Solidarity with Disabled People in Times of Crisis

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## ABSTRACT

Against the background of crisis and cuts, citizens can express solidarity with groups in various ways. Using novel survey data this text explores the attitudes and behaviours of citizens in their expressions of solidarity with disabled people and in doing so illuminates the differences and similarities across two European contexts: Italy and therefore the UK. The findings reveal pools of solidarity with disabled people across both countries that wear the one hand similar foundations like the social embeddedness and social trust of citizens, while on the opposite hand contain some differences, like the more direct and active nature of solidarity in Italy compared to the united kingdom and the role of religiosity as a crucial determinant, particularly in Italy. Across both countries the role of 'deservingness' was key to understanding solidarity, and the study's conclusions raise questions on a solidarity embedded by a degree of paternalism and even religious piety.

## INTRODUCTION

Across the European Union, the impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent austerity measures implemented by governments that have hollowed out public services in some countries have further exacerbated growing inequalities. One group for whom the intensification of inequalities has been most keenly felt is that of disabled people, a group who are often exposed to multiple sorts of discrimination due to their intersectionality. In this article we draw our definition of disabled people from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which states: 'persons with disabilities include those that have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

To appreciate the nature of the challenges for disabled people in times of crisis in several European contexts, it helps if we will conceptualise not only the absence of support for disabled people but also its presence. In this article we analyse support for disabled people through the frame of solidarity. We understand solidarity through the definition. 'The preparedness to share resources with others by personal contribution to those in struggle or in need and through taxation and redistribution organized by the state'. The main target of this study is to analyse solidarity with disabled people at a time when the pool of resources are curtailed across a broad range of public services. The article (and the massive collaborative project from which it's derived) therefore builds on an understanding of solidarity as both a group of behaviours

and a variety of attitudes pointing to the willingness to assist and support others that are during a status of (current or potential) social marginalisation. Our study will simultaneously address direct and indirect sorts of solidarity: that's , we consider both those actions directly put in situ by people to support disabled people, and their support for the allocation of public resources for the advantage of disabled people. The relevance of adopting this analytical approach across two distinct European contexts is further vindicated by the prevailing body of research which has debated the isomorphism between norms and attitudes among citizens and therefore the shape of welfare regimes. During a Europe which is experiencing popular discontent with established institutions and political parties, understanding such attitudes is significant for our comprehension of the direction of travel in terms of support for marginalised groups.

Our article offers a singular contribution to those debates at the intersection of solidarity and therefore the way forward for the state by that specialize in one specific marginalised group: disabled people. Moreover, this text offers not only unique data (drawn from an outsized comparative study of solidarity across Europe) but our survey responses also are situated during a context of crisis and austerity when welfare regimes across Europe are experiencing turbulence and transformation. Our analysis is guided by the subsequent research questions: (1) What are the socio-demographic characteristics, the social traits, the social beliefs and cultural orientations of people engaged in solidarity activities in support of disabled people in Italy and therefore the UK?; (2) Which factors tend to market or inhibit solidarity in favour of disabled people at

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the individual level?; and (3) Is there variance when comparing the 2 countries?

The central focus of this text is thus to explore the attitudes and behaviours among citizens in support of disabled people as how to know the multi-faceted nature of solidarity and to illuminate the similarities and differences between two European contexts that have experienced political tumult. The structure of the article is as follows: (1) we outline the background of our study

in terms of the Italian and UK contexts; (2) next, we present our theoretical background and hypotheses; (3) we elaborate our first set of findings stemming from our data on public attitudes and solidarity behaviours towards disabled people; (4) then, we address the explanatory factors of solidarity through the results of a multivariate logistic regression analysis; (5) finally we expand on our conclusions by highlighting a number of the similarities and differences between Italy and therefore the UK in terms of how solidarity with disabled people is expressed.