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## **Public Discourse one the Universal Basic Income during the Pandemic – A comparative analysis**

It has been two years since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in 2020 and a definite end of it is not yet in sight. The global pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, growing fears of inflation and the ongoing climate crises are posing huge risks to the world as we know it. All of these factors contribute to a greater need for social security, now more than ever.

Therefore, there is clear legitimacy in reopening and analyzing the topic of universal basic income. The universal basic income (UBI) in the following context will be defined as: “*an income paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement*” (Van Parijs, 2004, p. 8).

People's lives, careers, education, and prospects have all been harmed by the COVID-19. The pandemic is a global health crisis and has greatly accelerated economic unease as well as social disparities. The war in Ukraine has now added further grounds for worry. The situation puts a spotlight on the significance of adequate social security policies and the need for members of our society to feel protected and looked after by the government. The reality of an acute income crisis is becoming more serious and collapsed safety nets mean people are left with no financial means to support an adequate standard of living. Many are struggling to support their basic needs and are subject to extreme poverty (World Bank Group, 2020). The economical and societal toll of the pandemic is devastating and long-term effects are becoming more apparent as permanent existential insecurity is slowly woven into the fabric of our society. The pandemic has led many to reconsider previously unquestioned paradigms and has brought back the possibility of new systems, better equipped to deal with unexpected global crises (Howe, Chauhan, Soderberg & Buckley, 2021). It has placed emphasis on the notion that people need to be able to have a certain degree of support to fall back on during times of crises. This matters not only because of the current state the pandemic has left

societies in, but also because well-informed welfare policies have the power to lessen the severity of and future exogenous events, and prevent widespread adverse socioeconomic repercussions

According to the most recent estimates published by the United Nations, the Ukraine war has led to increased dismantlement of an already weak economic recovery after the pandemic, which in turn has exacerbated a dire humanitarian catastrophe in Europe (Chen, 2022). Aggravated levels of inflation have led to prices of food, energy and day-to-day commodities to rise exponentially. The cost of living has become unsustainable for the majority of the public. The World Economics Situation and Prospects forum states that global economic growth has declined from 4 to 3.1 % as of June 2022 (United Nations, 2022). Moreover, global levels of inflation are predicted to rise to above 10 % in 2022, which is a near-tripling of the levels recorded in the previous decade (2010-2020) of ultra-loose monetary policies (United Nations, 2022).

Considering the status-quo, there is clear legitimacy and a strong social incentive to reopen the topic of universal basic income (UBI). As we gradually begin to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis, now is an opportune moment to re-examine and rethink our approach to social security, as well as suggest pragmatic and implementable solutions to make societies more fit to deal with constant change and future crises. Although the UBI has been subject to polarization, the pandemic and the social spending because of it, have led to a shift in discourse of welfare states (Weisstanner, 2022). Benefits given out to the public must be more effective in meeting the public's needs. Financial support given by governments was mostly in form of one-off payments during the pandemic (Borgioli, Horn, Kochanska, Molitor & Mongelli, 2020). While such aid packages and welfare distribution policies serve as a temporary relief, they fail to adequately support people in the long term. This puts the marginalized and most vulnerable in a position where they are forced to accept conditions of

extreme uncertainty, especially with regard to financial stability (Gadermann et al., 2020). Simultaneously, levels of inequality are rising exponentially due to income disparities and the absence of opportunities, fostering an increasingly unfair, unjust and unpredictable recovery from the pandemic.

The idea of UBI has been around for centuries and has been discussed for centuries by theoretical physicists like Stephen Hawking, global economists like Karl Widerquist and Tony Atkinson as well as philosophers such as Thomas Paine. Many debates surrounding welfare in the 20th century placed emphasis on the idea of universal payments, however, these raised concerns of freeloading (Veltman, 2019). In the 2010's, an increasing fear of inequality and the idea that a further digitalization will lead to redundancies in the workplace, led to renewed debates regarding the UBI. Public figures such as Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg have publicly leaned into the discussion with their views, marking the introduction of the UBI debate into mainstream discourse (Arnold, 2020).

When looking at current studies assessing the UBI debate within the EU, the field is dominated by descriptive cross-national studies. The majority of these studies look at general support of the UBI and how this compares across European countries. Usually, these papers will take data from an accessible ESS survey and use these insights to make inferences about the population. These studies do not offer correlational insights or relationships explaining the differences across European countries through underlying mechanisms.

The pandemic has been a strong catalyst to reexamine how public opinion about social security policy and welfare distribution changes in the face of adversity. The concept of UBI could stabilize and provide security for the public and through this lessen economic turmoil within times of recession. The one-off payments during the pandemic could have been framed to foreshadow a future with UBI and demonstrate the benefits of the concept and could have acted as catalyst for renewed consideration and discussion. Historical studies,

such as the ones by Obinger and Schmitt (2019) as well as Kasza (2006) have demonstrated that pivots in social aid and universal services frequently occur in connection to significant external events. These showed evidence that increasing welfare assistance has historically been related to the experience of warfare and conflict (Obinger & Schmitt, 2019; Kasza, 2006). Similarly, the progressive introduction of universal access to health care has been associated with the influenza pandemic that occurred between 1918 and 1919 (Breitnauer, 2019). Public opinion alone doesn't drive political change from one day to the other; however, it does play a significant role in slow, incremental change. The changes that have been driven by the outbreak of coronavirus demonstrate how global, unforeseen exogenous events can lead to unexpected shifts within the public sphere. It clarifies by what means global crises can force society wide transitions to occur and act as a catalyst for radical political shifts.

This paper aims to extract how the historical development of a country and its welfare systems over time influences the perception of the UBI. The idea to be explored is that countries with a history involving a communist system or communist values are more receptive to the idea of UBI. In this context this paper places its focus on Slovenia (a post socialist welfare state) and Germany (a more conservative welfare state) to contrast and compare. This thesis aims to contribute to the limited existing body of research assessing the way in which force majeure in its purest form – a pandemic – influences public discourse and amplifies existing discourse. Cultural norms and values that are indisputably intertwined with historical background and dealing with major historical events also undeniably influence national tendencies towards one attitude or the other. These juxtaposing perceptions of UBI in both nations will be the key theme of this paper. Given that the pandemic has only, comparatively, recently started to impact society's way of looking at the UBI, there is a clear gap in the current state of literature. It is vital to offer an updated understanding of these

shifts in public discourse, to create a more informed and holistic framework for the matter.

The objective is therefore to carry out a comparative correlational study. The hypotheses this paper therefore stipulates are as follows:

*RQ1: To what degree has the pandemic had an effect on public attitude towards the universal basic income?*

*RQ2: To what degree do socio-politically ingrained values have an affect on Attitude towards the universal basic income*

## **Literature Review**

It is vital to update the existing insights on the debate of the UBI and apply it to the new age of the pandemic we are living in. This review aims to critically reflect as well as summarize existing literature through the assessment of a total of 15 academic articles. In an effort to offer a relevant and current understanding of the public debate on the topic, none of the papers are older than five years. The articles are compared based on their method and findings as well as their conceptualization and definition of their variables. The intent of this review is to contribute to the existing body of research by concluding a more all-encompassing foundation and cognizance to the effects of the pandemic. The research question of this literature review is therefore:

*RQ: “Has the pandemic had an effect on the public debate regarding the universal basic income?”*

### *Support for UBI*

The current scope of literature exploring the effect of the pandemic on public opinion is very scarce. Only 3 out of the 15 articles assessed actually measured how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced support for the universal basic income (Nettle, 2021; Chung, 2020; Weisstanner, 2022). All three papers are unanimous in stating that the pandemic has led to a more positive association with the topic of UBI. There exists no paper inclusive of the effects of the pandemic whose findings suggest contradictory results. Two out of the three papers applied a survey method in order to measure this shift in attitude. The paper by Chung looks at the case of Korea and assesses how economic support during the pandemic drove increased support of UBI implementation and a general revitalization of the overall debate. The other two papers focused on UK and US populations. It is also noteworthy that, out of all academic papers assessed, the aforementioned papers are the only two that carry out a comparative empirical analysis in terms of pre and pandemic UBI support levels (Nettle et al., 2021; Chung, 2020).

The paper by Nettle carries out two separate studies to come to the aforementioned conclusion. In total, 802 UK/US based subjects answered a number of questions related to the UBI, for each question the individual would answer twice; ‘once thinking about how things were in normal times as if the pandemic had not occurred, and once thinking about the times of the pandemic and the aftermath’ (Nettle, 2021, p. 3). These insights were gathered in April 2020. Of the 802 respondents, 576 supported UBI more strongly for a pandemic than normal times; 163 supported it equally; and 63 supported it less strongly. The second round of data was gathered and looked at the UBI in contrast to a conditional transfer scheme (in contrast to the unconditional UBI). A total of 400 participants took part. The subjects were again 50% US and 50% UK based individuals. This was carried out during May 2020. Here participants were confronted with the question ‘Do you think a targeted welfare system or a

Universal Basic Income system is a better idea, assuming the two systems cost exactly the same amount of money overall?’ (Nettle, 2021, p. 5). Results showed that, while participants were supportive of the UBI prior to pandemic times, they were considerably more favorable towards the UBI compared to the alternative welfare scheme during pandemic times. The paper notes that the samples were not representative, the results of the study are not indicative of the actual public support for the UBI. The focus of this study was predominantly to find out within-individual differences within the backdrop of the pandemic.

The other academic paper looking at UBI support, carries out a different method. The paper by Weisstanner takes a more descriptive rather than explanatory approach in that it takes pre-pandemic data from an already existing data source from the round 8 ESS data, interestingly the second publicly available data source was taken from the aforementioned paper by Nettle (2021). However, since the paper by Weisstanner only looks at the UK population, it also only used the UK sample data from Nettle (excluding the US data). This is problematic to the degree that the sample by Nettle is not representative nor was it randomly sampled, these limitations also transfer to the study by Weisstanner. In line with the results of Nettle, this paper also found that there was aggregated support for the UBI when comparing normal times with pandemic times.

The third academic paper looks at Korea, more specifically it assesses the way in which economic support during the COVID-19 pandemic affected the UBI debate (Chung, 2020). UBI support is measured in terms of five separate capabilities; technical, economic, social and ethical, political and lastly administrative capabilities. The overall results of this study found that after having received benefits from the government during the pandemic, more people were supportive of and attracted to the UBI. This study differs not only in that it looks at a different population compared to the other two studies, but it also focuses solely on the monetary benefits provided during the pandemic as an explanatory factor for increased

support. The paper argues that people are more supportive of the UBI now than in pre-pandemic times, as they actually experience the benefits of a UBI through the cash benefits received during the pandemic. This study differs from the other two studies considering the debate surrounding the UBI in Korea is much more prevalent within the public sphere. There is more of a chance for a rise in support in Korea in comparison to the UK and the US.

Additionally, while the US and the UK governments gave out relief funds, the UK payment was conditional and, in the US, it was a 1000 dollar stimulus check in the form of a one time payment. In contrast, Korea's government distributed this money to all Koreans, every month and unconditionally. These factors therefore also affect the public debate that follows. The Korean approach much more drastically mirrors the ideal of a UBI, and hence, is more likely to affect the support of the policy within the Korean society. One aspect of this study that must be noted is that the Korean pilot programme diverts from the conceptual operationalization of Van Parijs with regard to its interpretation of universality and individuality. While every citizen received a certain amount of money, not every citizen received the same amount, some aid was given per household, and some was given per individual. Additionally, the level of financial support given was split up in range and amount based on geographical region. This is important to note when assessing the conclusion drawn from this paper. That is to say that, individuals from certain regions received much higher cash grants and will have, for this reason, presumably, held a more positive disposition towards the UBI. Following the line of reasoning presented by this paper in terms of income influencing UBI support, it is unanimous in finding that income, unemployment as well as working class status were key covariates determined in explaining variation in support for the UBI when compared to the other two papers. As the welfare policy is in relation to financial support, these results do not come as a surprise.

*Most consequential demographic variables in explaining support for UBI*

There is unanimity between the majority of papers with regard to which covariates can be extracted with relation to support of the UBI. Overall, young, lower income, politically left skewed are most likely to be supportive of the UBI. One explanation for this may be the fact that 9 of the 15 papers are basing their research on already pre-released survey data instead of empirical research (Kozák, 2021; Vlandas, 2020; Vlandas, 2021; Ricon, Vlandas & Hiilamo, 2022; Roosma & Van Oorschot, 2019; Parolin & Siöland, 2019; Midtbo, 2017; Weisstanner, 2022; Adriaans, Liebig & Schupp, 2019). Additionally, 3 of the aforementioned papers are written by the same author. This therefore means that similar conclusions reached by these papers could partially be explained by researcher bias in terms of data synthesis and interpretation (Simundić, 2013). What is more, 6 of the papers use the same ESS (European social survey) data from 2016 in order to draw their conclusions (European Social Survey, 2016). There exist almost no studies carrying out individual empirical research with regard to the UBI. This factor is vital as the conclusions drawn within these academic papers are dated since the ESS Survey used is from 2016. A revitalization of these opinions is hence paramount in order to assess the current state of public attitudes and opinions. Most use the ESS survey to draw inferences with respect to country level differences and individual level differences with regard to demographic variables. This therefore excludes further underlying mechanisms that drive these differences by only presenting moderators that weaken or strengthen support. When assessing the literature all in all there are certain moderators that were distinguished which shed light on which factors lessen or weaken the support for the UBI. These key themes are highlighted in the following section.

#### *Cultural productivism & averaged employment commitment*

Firstly, one interesting mediator that was highlighted was the notion of cultural productivism. The paper by Kozak found that 7% of Variance in UBI support occurs due to

country belonging rather than because of individual characteristics traits (Kozak, 2021).

Respondents stemming from societies where paid work has increased social salience are less likely to support the implementation of the UBI. Ipso facto, citizens living in societies where work is valued expressively higher will be less supportive of a concept that hands out money unconditionally to all individuals. This same paper also concluded that individuals coming from more affluent societies are more skeptical towards the UBI, in this sense public support can be explained by socioeconomic development.

When looking at the UBI in terms of universality and unconditionality two studies assess the way in which people differ in terms of their support of the policy based on their ranking of these aspects (Ricon, Vlandas & Hiilamo, 2022; Roosma & Van Oorschot, 2019). The first study finds that the unconditionality aspect of the UBI is the most contentious dimension. That is to say that people are more likely to support UBI being given under the condition that people search for work or prove to be genuinely unable to work, before being granted a given sum of money. They are less likely to support the notion of full unconditionality. The other study measuring differences in individual support with respect to these two attributes of the UBI conclude with similar findings (Roosma & Van Oorschot, 2019). The reason for the unanimous conclusion is most likely due to the fact that both papers use the same ESS survey to draw inferences about public support.

Only one paper assesses the way that welfare state chauvinism affects attitudes towards UBI (Parolin & Siöland, 2019). The study finds that higher levels of welfare state chauvinism are associated with negative attitudes towards the UBI, especially in countries where there are higher levels of spending. Again, this is based on data from the ESS survey of 2016, and hence these results could have changed by now.

Social justice principles interwoven into different welfare institutions shape the attitudes that people take on with regard to social distribution policy (Zimmermann, Boljka,

Rakar & Hrast, 2020). While there is a significant amount of literature that looks at the way different welfare systems foster different views towards political policy, this is one of the only recent studies that look at welfare states, respective individual opinion and the UBI (Zimmermann, Boljka, Rakar & Hrast, 2020). What differentiates this study with respect to others within this literature review is that instead of survey data, focus groups were applied. This therefore offers more detailed qualitative answers. This is the only study that takes a qualitative stance towards the concept of public support for the UBI. It argues that the embodiment of social justice principles within welfare institutions are directed by existing welfare institutions and stand as a predictor for people's judgements of the UBI. However, when looking at these conclusions drawn it is important that the study came out in the year 2020, the focus groups were carried out in 2015. Thus, the insights found must be updated in order to be verified.

#### *Limitations of overall literature review & research gap*

When looking at the current state of literature that exists with regard to the universal basic income, there are certain factors that must be noted. Firstly, as aforementioned, the majority of papers draw on already existing survey data from 2015 and 2016 to draw inferences from, this therefore makes the conclusions less up to date. Additionally, the cross sectional character of the ESS data denotes that no causal relationships can be evaluated from the results (Kozak, 2021). It is also noteworthy that when looking at the ESS round 8 cross national survey data, which includes 21 European countries in total, found that there exists a large share of the total respondents that neither support or reject the UBI (European Social Survey, 2017). This portion of undecided voters denotes that opinion formation is still evolving, support patterns could be subject to change. It is important to further study this. Firstly, due to the fact that the ESS data is dated and was carried out in 2016/2017. Secondly, in efforts to acknowledge large exogenic events such as the pandemic. There exists very

limited current research that takes into consideration the effect of the COVID 19 pandemic with regard to public support for the policy.

To answer the research question of the literature review, one can conclude that not enough literature exists at present that takes into consideration the consequences of the pandemic. However, the 3 papers that do look at the pandemic provide grounds for believing that the pandemic has increased support for the UBI. However, these articles focus on US and UK populations. In general, it can be said that no all-encompassing body of literature exists to answer the above research questions. Not enough current and updated empirical studies exist to create a holistic understanding of the way in which unprecedented exogenous events can shift public opinion. Shifts in economic and social situations can foster differing policy preferences, as citizens' perception of which issues are most salient shift accordingly (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Hogan et al., 2022). It is necessary to understand and research these shifts in perceptions as they can guide and foster paradigm shifts to come (Hall, 1993).

There exists no comparative analysis that looks at the way in which different welfare states prelude different levels of UBI support that is inclusive of the pandemic and not based on already existing survey data.

## **Theory**

### *Definition of UBI*

In order to assess and measure support for the UBI we must first define and operationalize the concept. When assessing the literature, there are several operationalizations of the concept from by a variety of renowned scholars such as Thomas Paine, Milton Friedman, Anthony Atkinsons and Van Parijs (Paine, 1797, Friedman, 1968; Atkinsons, 1996; Van Parijs, 2004). The general definition used for this paper is based on Van Parijs, who operationalizes the concept as follows A UBI denotes the idea of “*an income paid by a political community*

*to all its members on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement”* (Van Parijs, 2004, p. 8). His conditions for a universal basic income are that it is i) complementary, ii) regular, iii) universal, iv) unconditional, v) on an individual basis and iv) in the form of a cash transfer.

The philosopher highlights three distinguishing factors that define a universal basic income, separating it from other benefit schemes and definitions. Firstly, it is on an individual basis, meaning it is not based on a household. This provides the individual with purchasing power and hence, also bargaining power. It denotes that if one does not live alone, his or her income is not reduced by virtue of living together with others. Those at the margins of society like the unemployed, low-income earners or chronically ill people, are unable to secure their existence based on their pension and are left with no choice but to accept an undignified standard of living (Holzmann & Stiglitz, 2001). This is fortified by governments not paying enough into the pension fund (Blundell-Wignall, HU & Yermo, 2008). The UBI could act as an opportunity for emancipation for the more vulnerable and less fortunate welfare recipients (Mays & Marcons, 2016).

Second, it is universal, meaning it is given irrespective of sources. This hence rids people of the stigmatization attached to receiving benefits from the government, or the timely process of applying for monetary benefits in the first place (Stuber & Schlesinger 2006). Additionally, it decomposes the notion of the poverty trap as it adds to whatever income is earned. One is therefore not trapped within a situation of poverty. Through this perspective, it provides a sustainable welfare prospect as it reduces the dependence on paid employment for people to fulfil their needs.

Thirdly, it is obligation free, and not subjected to an obligation to be available on a labor market or training. The rationale from by Van Parijs is further grounded in the theory of citizenship of real libertarianism. This is founded particularly in values freedom and equality.

Freedom in that people are able to and have the choice to live their life in the way they seem fit. The UBI offers increased bargaining power of the vulnerable through providing financial autonomy. The monetary benefit is thus unconditional and not based on basic needs. The concept also provides equality through offering equal opportunities to all members of a society through means of compensation and redistributive wealth. This proves another vital factor of the UBI which is the factor that the regular payments are funded by but not limited to redistributive taxation (Van Parijs, 2001).

The following section will describe the theoretical foundation and framework of each hypothesized relationship depicted in figure 1. First the direct effect will be discussed in terms of how Slovenia's and Germany's country level differences provide grounds for variance in UBI support. Second, the mediated effect of social and cultural norms will be scrutinized through the lens of existing welfare states, grounded in social justice theory. Lastly, the hypothesized influencing role the pandemic plays is analyzed in connection to shifting UBI attitudes. This relationship is backed up by the theory of deservingness.

*Country level differences direct effect:*

When holistically assessing all recent literature, one key notion is that different countries have different levels of support for the universal basic income. Apart from individual level differences, based on political affiliation and work status for example, there are also country and cultural differences that must be considered. Differences between the two countries can also be due to general disparities in socio economic development. For example, Germany has a much bigger population, with 83 million, compared to Slovenia, which has only 2.1 million. This provides leeway for notable variations in socio-cultural structures and norms (Latif, 2020). Researchers also show that more affluent countries are more skeptical and critical towards UBI-like measures (Kozak, 2021; Vlandas, 2021). Germany can be described a society grounded in individualism. Germans are more likely to

be self-reliant, especially in terms of responsibility for one's own well-being (Darwish & Huber, 2010). This is contrasting to Slovenia, which has been long understood as a more egalitarian society that places strong emphasis on social protection as well as investment (Taylor-Gooby, Leruth & Chung, 2017). Slovenia generally is said to put much greater emphasis on the redistributive role of the state (Taylor-Gooby, Leruth & Chung, 2017). In light of the vastly different population, the different attitudes and behaviors rooted in separate ideological and social norms, it can be concluded that country level differences are indeed present among the two samples of Germany and Slovenia. These country level difference offer the foundation of H1. This notion is also backed up by already existing statistics contrasting the two nationalities (European social survey, 2016; Nettle, 2021).

*H1: The Slovenian population will have higher levels of UBI support compared to the German population*

#### *Social justice values: Mediated effect*

In order to understand the complexities of the differences in country level support, scholars argue one must first understand the historical socio-political background that preludes these opinions (Zimmermann, Boljka, Rakar & Hrast, 2020). A difference in support levels between Slovenia and Germany can also be further explained by the welfare institutions that are in place (Sabbagh & Schmitt, 2016). Perceptions of social justice differ with respect to the way in which individuals were raised and with what cultural values and norms (Kozak, 2021). The final attitude and stance towards the concept of social justice that one takes is created through a complex interplay of societally structured institutions and individual socially conditioned attitudes (Mau, 2004). To understand perceptions and attitudes of UBI we can use the approach used by Liebig and Sauer (Liebig & Sauer, 2016). Their paper

focuses on the topic of social justice and the understanding of people's perception thereof. In order to measure this, they highlight several factors. Social justice in their eyes is firstly, historically contingent, reflected in institutions (i.e. the design of welfare institutions or tax systems), socially conditioned, and can have certain outcomes in the sense that experiencing justice or injustice will subsequently influence attitudes and behaviors of individuals. This paper applies the same understanding of social justice towards understanding people's attitude towards the UBI.

Within his book 'Theory of Justice', John Rawls writes: "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions" (Rawls, 1973, p. 3). Using this as a basis for the following theoretical foundation, one's understanding of social justice can be understood to a significant degree by assessing the welfare institutions within which one is brought up and the social conditioning that this framework provides. The welfare institution can be seen as a point of departure for people's support of the UBI. What one believes as just, in relation to welfare and resource redistribution, can be linked back to the institutional setting that one is used to (Mau, 2004). This setting provides a normative ideal by offering a guide to what individuals should deserve and what level of social aid is justified. It acts as a blueprint for one's attitudes and social justice views within a society (Sachweh, 2016). Sachweh denotes that different welfare states (socio-democratic vs. conservative and liberal) represent different understandings of social justice. Further, he shows the way in which different welfare states are related to different understandings of social justice in terms of public opinion. He highlights three core normative principles: equality; need and merit.

First, is the principle of equality, which can be split up into the following definitions, equality of opportunity and equality of outcome (Flora et al., 1977). For the purpose of this study, the focus will be equality of outcome. This refers to everyone having the same chance and ability to receive or obtain certain resources. Every citizen deserves

equal levels of support in terms of resources. It is a more equal redistribution to move towards a more egalitarian society (Morel, Palier, & Palme, 2012). This can be related to the aspect of universalism, a core feature of the UBI which states that everyone receives a certain number of financial benefits irrespective of status and socioeconomic standing.

The next concept distinguished is need. This means that those that are in need deserve support from the state. Resources are granted under the condition that there is a need for it, regardless of what is given back to society. The preliminary foundation of this pillar of social justice is based on neediness and not on equality, that is, not everyone receives benefits unconditionally but solely under the condition that they are also in need of it (Deutsch, 1975, Sachweh, 2016; Sauer & Liebig, 2016).

Merit means that the level of support one receives from the state is dependent on the level of contribution one serves and the status obtained within the workforce. Benefits are given based on who is recognized as deserving, the applied principle here is the reward of hard work and the punishment of laziness (Sachweh, 2016). When synthesizing this principle with other schools of thought of social justice, certain parallels can be drawn. Merit can be seen parallel to equity, both of which stand under the umbrella of the contribution principle (Deutsch 1975; Traub & Kittel, 2020).

Sachweh shows that welfare systems differ in their ideational core and so in their predominant principles. Social democratic welfare systems prioritize equality of outcome, liberal welfare states are most likely to emphasize need and merit, whilst conservative states are related with merit and equivalence (Sachweh, 2016, pp. 298–299). Although he doesn't discuss post socialist welfare structures within his study, it is known that post socialist countries are embedded in bismarckian norms and will elevate the equality principle (Palier, 2006; Hrast & Rakar, 2016; Svallfors, 2012).

Looking at social welfare and social justice principles through this lens, existing welfare structures can be understood as a genesis for the attitude and values people hold with regard to the UBI.

This paper aims to make a comparison between two different welfare systems, which are namely Slovenia (representing a post-socialist welfare state) compared to Germany (representing a conservative welfare state). In Slovenia we can identify clear normative ideals of equality, this can be linked to the country's communist past and its respective focus on gaining equality (Svallfors, 2012). This understanding is also embedded in the population and linked to their focus on income equality within the society; these sentiments have become stronger since the economic recession (Hrast & Kopač Mrak, 2016). This can be identified when looking at health care, education as well as childcare services. Here we can see very clearly the universalistic aspect of the welfare services (Hrast & Ignjatovič, 2018).

When contrasting Slovenia to Germany, we see that there is a much greater focus on status maintenance as well as merit, thus Germans are more likely to fall into disagreement with the UBI in terms of its focus on universality. The German welfare state emphasizes individual responsibility, contribution and activation (Mau & Sachweh, 2014). Strict Equality of outcome is less likely to be at the focal point of German attitudes, rather the push towards merit and contribution with a subsequent reward. The redistributive aspect of the UBI is likely to be less favored in Germany, where welfare spending is higher as tax burdens de-incentivize individuals from advocating further redistribution (Gelissen, 2008). This can be reflected in the 'Hartz IV' reform, which provides money to those that are unable to get employment and have no income (SPD, 2022). This is founded predominantly within the need principle. It doesn't serve equality as those in need must provide and follow through with a very long and complex procedure to justify legitimate need for the benefit (Somers and Block, 2005). During the Pandemic this monetary state benefit has gone under a new reform

and is now referred to as ‘citizen income’ or ‘Bürgergeld’, which will be introduced in 2023 (Schäfer, 2022). This reform was born during the pandemic in order to serve as compensation for current and future inflation levels. This means the standard rate of benefits given to individuals is being increased. This raise is contested by socialists’ organizations as it is considered far too little, as it barely covers increased rates of inflation rather than offering individuals more emancipation (Massman, 2022). Simultaneously, however, German economists warn that excessive social benefits reduce the incentive to work (Peter, 2022, Diekmann, 2022). This notion is strongly backed up by the centre-right Christian democratic alliance (CSU and CDU), which heavily contest the reform (Küstner, 2022).

These differences between Slovenia and Germany in welfare distribution clearly show the difference in ideological approaches equality vs need and merit. They demonstrate the underlying principles that guide the justice system. This paper therefore argues, UBI support variations between Slovenia and Germany can be explained by the above-mentioned normative principles. These principles act as mediators within the relationship of nationality and support for the policy. In relation to the UBI this means German society is likely to contest unconditionality and universality much more so than the Slovenian population. This leads to the following hypotheses:

*H2a: The Slovenian population is more likely to score higher on the equality scale compared to the German population*

*H2b: The German population is more likely to score higher on the merit and need scale compared to the Slovenian population*

*H2c: Social justice values mediate the relationship between country and UBI support*

*The effect of the Pandemic*

The outbreak of the COVID-19 and accompanying looming recession has put the UBI back on the agenda. The pandemic exacerbates social inequality as the wealth gap widens and people are left with no tools to manage these unprecedented conditions adequately. In many ways the public was left to handle the pandemic crises individually, especially those occupied in non-standard work.

The pandemic in this sense highlighted the extreme insecurity of so many people in terms of employment, inadequate pay to meet their needs, benefit sanctions, etc. The current system is evidently unable to support the needs of the public in an adequate manner. The universality of the pandemic has highlighted the need for a more holistic system that addresses issues of structural inequality, sustainability, solidarity and resilience. This paper argues that the pandemic increases support of the UBI within both Slovenia and Germany. This is also in line with previous literature published regarding the pandemic's effect on UBI support (Nettle et. al, 2021; Wessteinner, 2021).

This hypothesis is founded within the theory of deservingness (van Oorschot, 2019, Laenen, 2020). This social welfare theory argues that one will express solidarity with those they attribute as being deserving, those that are undeserving however are excluded from benefits, support or help. Within this context five criteria are distinguished in order to judge deservingness. These are namely, i) control, ii) attitude iii) reciprocity, iv) identity and v) need (the CARIN criteria). For the purpose of this study and contextual relevance, this paper focuses on two aspects of this framework. The first one is the idea of control; this is associated with the idea that people with little or no control and hence personal responsibility over their financial situation are seen as more deserving of social welfare. People will attribute more financial sympathy towards those that have had no control with regard to how they got into or how to get out of a financial predicament. The second aspect refers to need, this variable refers to the fact that most people will label the beneficiary more deserving if

they are evidently in greater need of said benefit. The association of these attributes with regard to explaining support for UBI has already been applied by previous research (Rossetti, Roosma, Laenen & Abts, 2020).

When placing these two factors within the context of the pandemic, this paper argues that people will be more supportive with their views post pandemic than prior to as they experienced a loss of control in terms of it being an unforeseen global exogenous event. People are in greater need of support during the pandemic due to increased financial uncertainty (Ding & Vitenu-Sackey, 2021; Akbulaev, Mammadov & Aliyev, 2020).

This is supported by the notion that people who have experienced financial support during the pandemic and have benefited from this will in turn be more supportive of redistributive welfare programs such as the UBI (Chung, 2020). Recent studies that looked at support for UBI policy after the pandemic found that people that experienced UBI-like financial benefits during the Pandemic were more supportive of the policy. Both German and Slovenian Governments have gone ahead with financial relief funds to support citizens and companies in efforts to mitigate the economic effects of the pandemic (European Commission, 2022; Bundesministerium der Finanzen, 2022).

Based on this theoretical framework, it is expected that due to the global outbreak of the pandemic and the unanimous need for solidarity and support especially for the more vulnerable within society, that both nationalities will score higher on the equality and need scale through the pandemic. Simultaneously, both countries will also score lower on the merit scale. The notion of the pandemic affecting those, less able to support themselves, much higher than those able to stay afloat will also lead to a general decrease in the merit scale (Bradbury, 2021). Individuals will therefore frame their social justice belief system differently in light of the pandemic in order to align with a social shift in solidarity (Kittel, 2020). This is grounded in the theory of need-based justice. It adds another layer to the social

justice theory by stating that this principle is dependent on circumstance (in this case the pandemic) and social agreement.

*H3a: The pandemic leads to increased support for the UBI in Germany and Slovenia*

*H3b: The pandemic leads to an increase in the equality and need principle for Slovenia*

*H3c: The pandemic leads to an increase in equality and need principle for Germany*

*H3d: The pandemic will lead to a decrease in the merit principle for Slovenia and Germany*

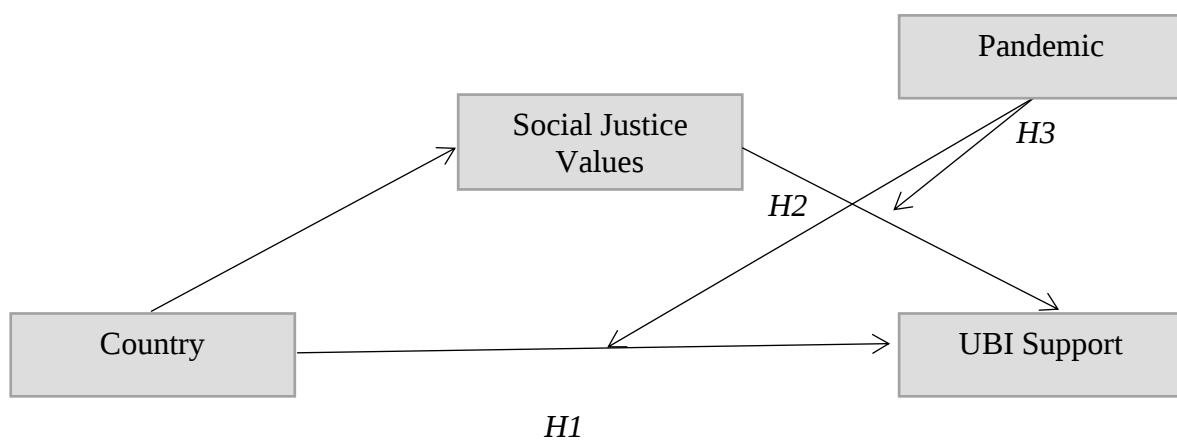


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

## Method

In order to carry out this research, and gather data to answer this paper's hypotheses, a survey was distributed to a total of 202 participants 50% were German and 50% were Slovenian. A crowdsourcing platform was used in order to gather sufficient amounts of subject data. This data was collected on Prolific.co.

The survey consists of 6 different sections. Firstly, participants are shown a consent form, which provides respondents with an outline of the purpose of the research. After agreeing to take part in the study, respondents were shown a variety of demographic

questions. These were namely regarding, age, nationality, gender, political affiliation and work status.

Next, is a description of the UBI and its key features that distinguish it from other welfare distribution programs (Appendix B). Subsequently, participants were asked how supportive they would be towards the introduction of a UBI in their country if the pandemic had not occurred with a slider from 0-100. Next, they are asked how this position has changed or if it has changed considering the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Subjects are asked again to check the horizontal slider. Following are several statement questions with regard to the UBI and its features, each statement has an answer option of 1 don't agree at all to 5 agree completely (Appendix B).

The next section measures the social justice values using the BSJO Scale for measuring order-related justice attitudes (Van Hootegeem, Meuleman & Abts, 2021). This consists of three social justice items, namely equality, need and merit. Equality is measured through three items which assess a subject's views on equal living conditions, distribution of income and wealth and lastly desirability of minor income disparities. Subjected need is made up of a total of three items which look at caring for those that are in need, the prioritizing of those that take on a role of caregivers, and providing security to cover the most basic needs. Lastly, the scale of merit was adapted, this scale is also made up of 3 statements. These refer to the concept of reward for individual effort, justified income disparities and higher earnings for hard working individuals.

The next section confronts subjects with statements relating to social justice ideologies, namely egalitarianism and individualism. Egalitarianism refers to the equality social justice principle and the individualistic ideology is in line with the merit principle. Egalitarianism is based on a two-item scale. *'The government should guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living'*; *'The government should provide a job for everyone who wants*

one' (Appendix B). Individualism is based on the following two statements: '*There is an incentive for individual effort only if differences in income are large enough*' and '*It is all right if businessmen make good profits because everyone benefits in the end*' (see Appendix B). Block four presents subjects with an attention question to make sure that they are reading all questions carefully. This is important to verify that the answers recorded within the survey are thought through and read carefully. Next, all respondents are shown the same block of questions again, however this time they are asked to answer with consideration of the current pandemic and its aftermath.

Lastly, subjects are given the option to give further feedback to the survey and are thanked for their participation. All recorded data will subsequently be analyzed using a statistics software called SPSS in order to make inferences.

### *Sample*

When looking at the sample, 50% were German and 50% were Slovenian, each nationality was made up of a total of 102 participants. 53% of the entire sample population were male and 45% were female, the rest defined themselves as either non-binary or preferred not to say.

The German sample was predominantly made up of graduates with a professional degree, with 33% having attained a bachelor's degree and 27% having attained a masters or PhD etc. 55% of the sample was in paid work, 43% working full time and 18% working part time. Overall, 35% were students and the general age of respondents was predominantly young adults with 54% being aged 25-34 and only 23% being 18-25. In terms of political orientation, scaled from 0, extreme leftist to 8, extreme right wing, more left to center left leaning. That is to say 60% of the sample fell between scores 2 to 4.

In contrast to Germany, the Slovenian sample was much lower in terms of education, with 34% having gone to university but not obtained a degree, 28 had obtained a master

degree on only 14% having obtained higher level degrees. Overall, 50% of the sample were students which is in line with the statistic of 53% of the sample being aged 18-25 and only 31% being aged 25-34. In general, 21% were in paid work and 32% were working full time and 13% part-time. Politically, the Slovenian sample is also more left to center left leaning with 62% falling between scores 2-4.

When comparing the two nationalities it becomes evident that the Slovenian sample is much younger and less educated than the German sample. Politically, it could be said that the two are quite similar, both clustering around left to center. The German sample can be summarized as young, working adults with university degrees that are politically left to center leaning. The Slovenian population can be summarized as students with no obtained degree yet, some with jobs working either full time or part time on the side, and politically left to center skewed.

## **Results**

### *Factor and reliability analysis*

To be able to measure the BJSO scales, both a factor analysis and a reliability analysis were carried out. First a factor analysis with direct Oblimin rotation was carried out for the equality, need and merit scales. As expected, three factors were extracted, each made up of three statements measuring the respective scale. All three factors have an eigenvalue above 1, equality (eigenvalue: 3.36), need (eigenvalue: 1.26) and merit (eigenvalue: 1.90). This is further supported by the scree plot. Another factor analysis was carried out for the same scales measured during pandemic times. Again, three factors were extracted, equality (eigenvalue: 3.35), need (eigenvalue: 1.24) and merit (eigenvalue: 1.97). The scree plot confirms this.

In order to verify that these scales are reliable, a reliability analysis is carried out from all three principles, for both time frames. Firstly, the reliability of equality was good for normal times, with a Cronbach's alpha of .85 ( $M=10.48$ ,  $SD=3.14$ ) and pandemic times, with a Cronbach's alpha of .83 ( $M=10.50$ ,  $SD=3.16$ ).

The need scale was also reliable during normal times, with a Cronbach's alpha of .76 ( $M=13.06$ ,  $SD=2.15$ ). The same goes for pandemic times, with a Cronbach's alpha of .80 ( $M=13.17$ ,  $SD=2.28$ ).

For the merit scale, the Cronbach's alpha of normal times was .75 ( $M=10.46$ ,  $SD=2.59$ ). For pandemic times it was .73 ( $M=10.26$ ,  $SD=2.58$ ). All six scales were then computed into one variable and mean scored.

The same was carried out for egalitarianism and individualism scales. A factor analysis was carried out with the four statements. Two factors were extracted made up of two statements each, egalitarianism (eigenvalue: 1.26) and individualism (eigenvalue: 1.18). This is verified by the scree plot. Another factor analysis was carried out for the same constructs, but during pandemic times. Again, two factors were extracted: egalitarianism (eigenvalue: 1.35) and individualism (eigenvalue: 1.78).

The normal time egalitarianism scale was slightly unreliable, cronbach's alpha .63 ( $M=8.37$ ,  $SD=1.70$ ) and so was the pandemic time scale Cronach's alpha .61, ( $M=8.61$ ,  $SD=1.58$ ) with a cronbach's alpha below .7.

The individualism, Cronbach's alpha was reliable .72 ( $M=6.06$ ,  $SD=2.02$ ) and so was the pandemic time scale for individualism, Cronbach's alpha .76 ( $M=5.88$ ,  $SD=2.09$ ).

### *Country level differences*

In order to measure the direct effect on the UBI support, a repeated measures ANOVA was carried out. Here, the Nationality was the between subjects' test, which was run with the

pandemic effect as the within subject test. When looking at the descriptive one can see that, prior to the pandemic, German subjects had an initial support of 66,5% ( $M=66.51$ ,  $SD=32,58$ ). Slovenia on the other hand had a UBI support of 59,2% ( $M=59,16$ ,  $SD=31,16$ ). When looking at the UBI support once including the pandemic and its aftermath, support levels increased with Germany going up to 70,8% ( $M= 70,77$ ,  $SD=23,37$ ) and Slovenia increased to 68,5% ( $M=66,19$ ,  $SD=27,43$ ).

The within subjects' tests show that there is a significant difference when comparing normal and pandemic UBI support percentages. When looking at the multivariate tests, we have a statistically significant effect of the pandemic  $F(1,202)= 39.45$ ,  $p>.001$ . However when checking the interaction effect of the pandemic effect and nationality, no significant result was found  $F(1,202)= 2,36$ ,  $p=.126$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.01$ . Thus, H3a stating that the pandemic will lead to increased support for both Germany and Slovenia is accepted. However, H1 stating that Slovenia will score higher in UBI support compared to Germany is rejected.

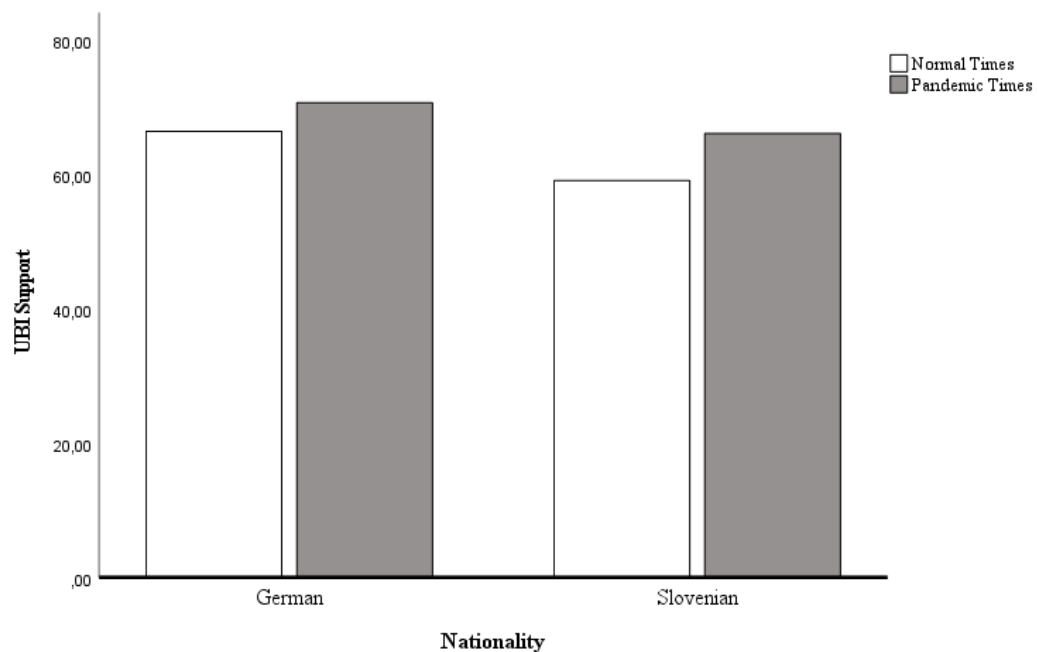


Figure 2. UBI Support, Pandemic Effect

### *Mediation*

In order to check whether there exists a mediation effect of social justice values with relation to the relationship between nationality and UBI support, a Process model 4 with a 95% confidence interval and 5000 bootstrapped samples was applied.

#### *Pre- Pandemic Support*

The first three models show the association between nationality and social justice values. Firstly, nationality is no significant predictor of equality,  $b=-.003$ ,  $t=-.04$ ,  $p=.965$ . Nationality significantly predicts both need and merit significant association. For need,  $b=.11$ ,  $t=2.17$ ,  $p=.031$ ,  $F(1, 202)=4.70$ ,  $R^2=.02$ , so 2% of the variance in need is explained by nationality. Slovenia scores on average .11 higher than Germany on need. The same goes for merit,  $F(1, 202)=13.55$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $b=.65$ ,  $R^2=.06$ , 6 % of the variance in merit is explained by nationality. Slovenia scored on average .65 higher than Germany on merit.

Equality, is a significant predictor of pandemic UBI support  $b=7.17$ ,  $t=3.49$ ,  $p=.001$ ,  $CI[3.11, 11.22]$ . The same goes for need  $b=8.09$ ,  $t=2.77$ ,  $p=.006$ ,  $CI[2.34, 13.84]$  and merit  $b=-9.14$ ,  $t=-3.78$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $CI[-13.90, -4.37]$ .

Both need  $b=.87$ ,  $CI [0.05, 2.06]$  and merit  $b=-1.97$ ,  $CI [-3.55, -.71]$  significant mediators of pre-pandemic UBI support. Whereas, equality is not  $b=-.02$ ,  $CI[-1.16, 1.13]$ .

#### *Pandemic Support*

Nationality is no significant predictor of equality,  $b=.041$ ,  $t=.44$ ,  $p=.581$ , nor need  $b=.10$ ,  $t=1.72$ ,  $p=.070$ . However, nationality is a significant predictor of merit is  $b=.26$ ,  $t=5.54$ ,  $p<.001$ , Slovenians scored higher on merit by .26 units on average.  $F(1, 202)=20.64$ ,  $p<.001$ .  $R^2=.09$ , so 9% of the variance in merit is explained by nationality.

Equality, is a significant predictor of pandemic UBI support  $b=6.12$ ,  $t=3.03$ ,  $p=.003$ ,  $CI[2.13, 10.11]$ . The same goes for need  $b=8.94$ ,  $t=3.29$ ,  $p=.001$ ,  $CI[3.58, 14.31]$  and merit  $b=-8.06$ ,  $t=-3.38$ ,  $p=.001$ ,  $CI[-12.77, -3.36]$ .

However, there was only one significant indirect effect of the pandemic social justice values on pandemic UBI support. That is to say, equality was no mediator  $b=.25$ ,  $CI[-0.65, 1.38]$  and neither was need  $b=.86$ ,  $CI[-.06, 2.07]$ . However, merit was a significant mediator of UBI support  $b=-2.11$ ,  $CI[-3.96, -0.62]$ .

Therefore the hypothesis H2c that social justice values mediate the relationship between country and UBI support, is only partially supported. Need and merit are significant mediators in normal times and only merit is a significant predictor during pandemic times.

### *Social Justice Values*

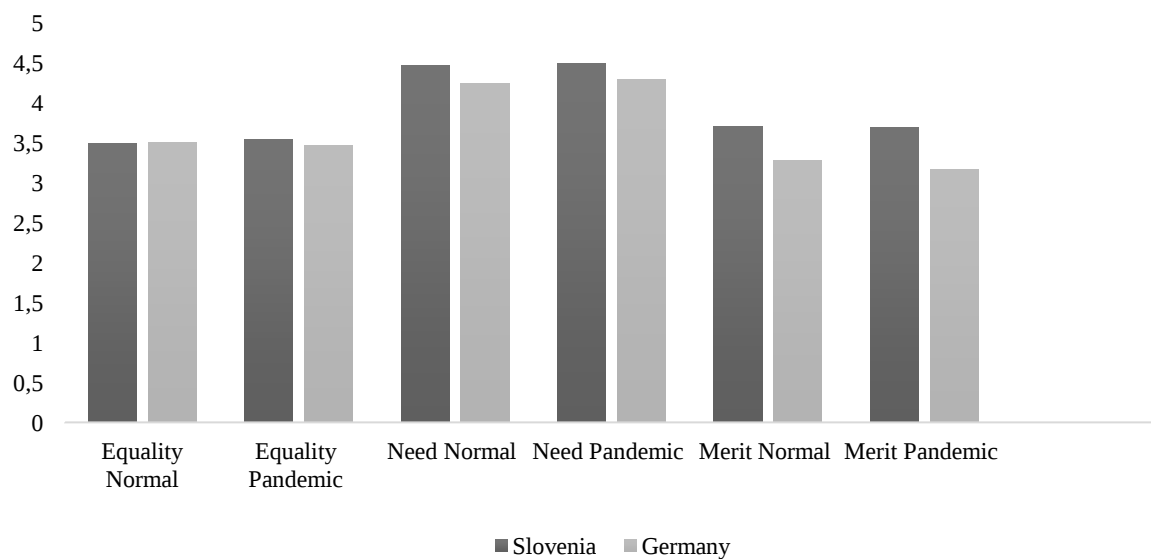
An independent sample t-test was carried out in order to test differences in social justice principal scores between Germany and Slovenia prior to and during pandemic times. Initially, Germany ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ) and Slovenia ( $M=3.49$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ) scored roughly the same on the equality scale. Rating roughly in the middle of neither agree nor disagree and somewhat agree. Comparatively, during pandemic times, these sentiments shifted slightly, Germany ( $M=3.46$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ) scored slightly lower while Slovenia ( $M=3.54$ ,  $SD=.10$ ) scored slightly higher. However, this difference in scores between nationalities was not statistically significant during normal times  $F(202)=.33$ ,  $t=.04$ ,  $p=.956$ ,  $CI[-.28, .30]$ , nor during pandemic times  $F(202)=1.30$ ,  $t=-.55$ ,  $p=.581$ ,  $CI[-.37, .21]$  Thus, regardless of Slovenia scoring marginally higher on the equality scale, H2a is rejected.

When assessing the need scale, initially, Germany ( $M=4.25$ ,  $SD=.81$ ) scored lower on the need scale compared to Slovenia ( $M=4.46$ ,  $SD=.59$ ) during normal times. The difference in scores on the need principle during normal times was statistically significant  $F(202)=8.98$ ,  $t=-2.17$ ,  $p=.031$ ,  $CI[-.41, -.02]$ . Similarly, Germans ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=.85$ ) scored lower compared to Slovenians ( $M=4.49$ ,  $SD=.65$ ) during pandemic times. Both nationalities scored higher on the need scale during pandemic times compared to normal times. Although extremely close to being significant, no significant difference between Slovenia and Germany was found for

pandemic times  $F(202)=3.58$ ,  $t=-1.82$ ,  $p=.070$ ,  $CI[-.40, 0.01]$ . Germans fall under the category of somewhat agree (score 4 out of the 5 point likert scale) while Slovenians begin to lean towards completely agreeing with the principle with effect of the pandemic.

Lastly, looking at merit, this trend continues, Slovenia scores higher both prior to pandemic ( $M=3.70$ ,  $SD=.83$ ) and during pandemic times ( $M=3.68$ ,  $SD=.81$ ) comparative to Germany ( $M=3.27$ ,  $SD=.84$ ;  $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=.83$ ). This difference in scores is significant for both normal  $F(202)=.002$ ,  $t=-3.68$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $CI[-.66, -.20]$  and pandemic times  $F(202)=.19$ ,  $t=-4.54$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $CI[-.75, -.30]$ . Therefore, we must also reject H2b stating that Germany would score higher on the need and merit principle.

When looking at *figure 3*, it also becomes clear that hypotheses H3b, H3c and H3d must be rejected, the pandemic did not lead to a significant increase in the equality  $F(1,202)=.03$ ,  $p=.868$  or need  $F(1,202)=1.55$ ,  $p=.215$  principle. Although not significant it should be noted that there was a marginal increase in the need and equality principle for Slovenia which can be seen when looking at the Mean scores. There was also a marginal decrease in merit for both countries due to the pandemic, this result isn't, however, significant  $F(1,202)=3.11$ ,  $p=.080$ .



### Figure 3. Social Justice Values

#### *Egalitarianism & Individualism*

When looking at egalitarianism, no significant difference between Slovenia ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=.81$ ) and Germany ( $M=4.08$ ,  $SD=.88$ ) was found during normal times,  $F(202)=1.29$ ,  $t=-1.78$ ,  $p=.077$ ,  $CI[-.44, .02]$ . Slovenia's scores are marginally higher than Germany during pandemic times ( $M=4.40$ ,  $SD=.73$  vs.  $M=4.22$ ,  $SD=.84$ ). These differences are also not significant  $F(202)=4.62$ ,  $t=-1.65$ ,  $p=.101$ ,  $CI[-.40, .04]$ .

In terms of pandemic effect, both nationalities significantly increase on the egalitarianism scale during pandemic times  $F(1, 202)=11.38$ ,  $p=.001$ . Both nationalities fall roughly under 4 (somewhat agree) on the 5 point likert scale of egalitarianism during pandemic times. These results have to be interpreted with caution as the egalitarianism scale was deemed slightly unreliable.

Slovenia scores significantly higher on individualism in normal times ( $M=3.18$ ,  $SD=.95$ ) compared to Germany ( $M=2.89$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ),  $F(202)=1.85$ ,  $t=-2.06$ ,  $p<.040$ ,  $CI[-.57, -.01]$ . The same goes for pandemic times, Slovenia ( $M=3.11$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ) scores marginally higher than Germany ( $M=2.77$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ),  $F(202)=.82$ ,  $t=-2.33$ ,  $p=.021$ ,  $CI[-.62, -.05]$ . Germany scores on average lower on the 5 point likert scale, ranging more between 2 (slightly disagree) and 3 (neither disagree nor agree). Slovenia's general sentiment falls under 3 (neither disagree nor agree) on average in pandemic times. In terms of pandemic effect, both nationalities significantly decrease on the individualism scale during pandemic times  $F(1, 202)=6.32$ ,  $p=.013$ .

#### *Unconditionality & Universality*

*Independent Samples Test*

|                                                                                                         |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |         |                 |                 |                       |                                           |       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------|
|                                                                                                         |                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df      | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |       |
|                                                                                                         |                             |                                         |      |                              |         |                 |                 |                       | Lower                                     | Upper |
| The universal basic income is good as it provides every citizen with the same amount of money per month | Equal variances assumed     | 10,348                                  | ,002 | ,180                         | 202     | ,857            | ,029            | ,163                  | -,293                                     | ,351  |
|                                                                                                         | Equal variances not assumed |                                         |      | ,180                         | 190,725 | ,857            | ,029            | ,163                  | -,293                                     | ,352  |
| The universal basic income is good as it unconditional and does not require means testing               | Equal variances assumed     | ,860                                    | ,355 | 1,837                        | 202     | ,068            | ,333            | ,181                  | -,025                                     | ,691  |
|                                                                                                         | Equal variances not assumed |                                         |      | 1,837                        | 200,363 | ,068            | ,333            | ,181                  | -,025                                     | ,691  |

*Table 1. Unconditionality & Universality*

An independent sample t-test was carried out in order to assess whether Germany and Slovenia displayed varying levels of support with regard to the unconditionality and universality aspect of the UBI.

Firstly, when looking at the mean, the scores are only marginally different between nationalities. In terms of universality, one can identify a slightly higher level of support for Germany with ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=1.30$ ) compared to Slovenia ( $M=3.69$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ). With the likert scale ranging from 1(Completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Both Slovenia and Germany fall within the range of somewhat agree.

The levene's test of equality is significant  $p=.002$ , we assume variances are not equal. The t-test is insignificant,  $p=.857$ ,  $CI[-2.93, 3.52]$  we accept the null-hypothesis stating that the mean score between the groups is not significantly different. There is so significant difference between the two nationalities.

When looking at unconditionality, Germany also displays a slightly higher support towards the policy feature ( $M=3.66$ ,  $SD=1.35$ ) compared to Slovenia ( $M=3.32$ ,  $SD=1.24$ ). Again, Germany falls under 4 (somewhat agree) while Slovenia is leaning more towards 3 (neither disagree nor agree). The levene's test of equality is insignificant  $p=.355$ , thus equal variances are assumed. The t-test is insignificant,  $p=.068$ ,  $CI[-0.25, 0.69]$ . There is no significant difference between the two nationalities.

## Discussion

### *Country differences in UBI support*

When assessing research question 1, it can be clearly stated that the pandemic has in fact had an influence on the general support for the UBI. Slovenian support increased by 10% from 59% to 69%. German support went from 67% to 71%, increasing by 4%. The positive effect of the pandemic on UBI support is also further backed up by the few existing studies that looked at this association (Nettle, 2021; Chung, 2020; Weisstanner, 2022). There is a clear difference for both nationalities when comparing normal to pandemic times. This also makes sense when looking at published literature concluding that shifts in socio-economic situations bring about shifts policy preferences (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Hogan et al., 2022). This is explained by a change in what issues are most salient at that point in time. In context of this study, people within both nationalities will likely recognize the necessity for increased social aid in terms of guaranteeing adequate safety nets. Thus, H3a is accepted.

This also seems logical when linking the results back to the deservingness theory and the CARIN model, as people during the pandemic experienced increased financial hardship and loss of hard earned savings (van Oorschot, 2019; Laenen, 2020; Ding & Vitenu-Sackey, 2021; Akbulaev, Mammadov & Aliyev, 2020). People had less control over their financial situation and simultaneously experienced a greater need for social welfare and monetary benefits. It makes sense that, as everyone experienced the weight of the pandemic and its aftermath, everyone is also more likely to be supportive of monetary benefits schemes like the UBI.

In terms of H1, the results suggest that Germany has a higher approval rate of the policy compared to Slovenia. Therefore, H1, stating that Slovenia would have a higher

support rate, is rejected. When trying to understand the discrepancy between the hypothesis and results in actuality, certain explanatory factors help in coming to this conclusion.

The misalignment is predominantly due to the sample size as well as demographic. Slovenia as a country only has a population of 2 million which makes it difficult to receive sample data in the first place. The sample population was largely made up of 18–24-year-old participants. This explains the result of lower UBI support in that the youth in Slovenia is much less politically active and engaged compared to other EU countries (Youthwiki, 2021). Research shows that younger individuals in Slovenia don't find their voices are heard and don't believe in the influence of their vote and political participation. As a result, they are much less involved and interested in political concepts, such as the UBI (EU Commission, 2021), and may in fact misunderstand the very nature of what the UBI is trying to achieve. Furthermore, a 2015 statistic shows that 80.4% of young people live in their parental household, which is much higher than the EU average of 65,9% (Youthwiki, 2021). Young Slovenian adults only start moving out of their family household at the age of 28 which is, on average, two years later compared to the rest of the EU. The average age of the Slovenian sample indicates that these are less likely to be concerned with topics such as the UBI, especially, as they are still living at home. During the pandemic, it is more likely that the parents will have felt and dealt with the consequences of the pandemic and the recession compared to their children, still living within the same household.

When looking at trust in government statistics in Europe, Slovenia is scoring much lower comparative to most other EU countries. A recent study of 2020 found that Slovenia's trust in government is extremely low, with a total score of 3.5 out of 10, where 10 indicates complete trust (OECD, 2020). What is more, confidence in national government was only at 45%, a decrease of 3% since 2007 (Gallup World Poll, 2020).

Therefore, an explanation for the lower support in UBI within Slovenia across both timeframes compared to Germany becomes much more apparent when considering factors such as age of the sample, political participation and trust in government in Slovenia. Additionally, the differences in results could also be due to the way in which the concept of the UBI has been communicated in Slovenia during times of the corona crisis. Korošec, a Slovenian representative of the UBI, part of the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) and the European Network for the Fair Sharing of Working Time, states that politicians in Slovenia also tarnished the concept of the UBI during the pandemic (Korošec, 2021). As there is no copyright on the name ‘universal basic income’, politicians would advocate with the label UBI, albeit, not representing the actual operationalization of the concept. This led to public uproar and created a misalignment of the concept in actuality and the concept that the public understood and associated with the UBI (Korošec, 2021). The political adaptation of the concept, at its core, had nothing to do with the UBI definition in terms of universality and unconditionality. The concept was associated with the already tarnished image of the government, especially in terms of governmental trust and crisis management.

The greater shift towards UBI support seen within the Slovenian sample with 10% (compared to Germany with 4%), might highlight a greater need for change. There may be an increased necessity for a system that is better equipped to meet the needs of the Slovenian society.

The way in which political parties deviated from the original concept and meaning of the UBI, may have influenced the interpretation of what defines the UBI. Thus, especially Slovenian first-time voters may have adapted this understanding of the concept, which digresses from unconditionality. This also explains the significantly higher score in the merit principle within the Slovenian sample.

When one compares Slovenian communication of the UBI with that of Germany during the pandemic, the opposite is found (Wirth, 2021). Germany has increased the general public UBI debate exponentially with several pilot programs being tested currently. The biggest one being a three-year trial funded by over 140,000 people (Mein Grundeinkommen, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the necessity for welfare needs and through this has encouraged the German population to become more aware of the downsides of the current bureaucratic system (AICGS, 2022). During this phase, certain German politically parties discussed the UBI more extensively, creating a more direct acknowledgment of the policy within the political. The Green party is the strongest supporter of the UBI and has placed the policy onto their official party program. They were the first to do so as a party in Germany (AICGS, 2022). The Left democratic socialist party also stands behind the UBI and its introduction. However, the Left places particular focus on the need principle in the sense that the cash payment is solely meant for those that qualify as being in need of it (Bank, 2022). The Social democratic party remains critical of the UBI and is instead still processing the 'Hartz IV' reform in efforts to provide a marginally lessen the consequences of inflation (SPD, 2022). This aids those already within a precarious financial situation and through this, is borne within the need principle. This aligns with the dominant principle of the conservative welfare model while also placing focus on solidarity and creating increased opportunities for the less fortunate. The increased communication surrounding the benefits of the UBI during pandemic times may have generally led to an increased awareness of these benefits within the German population and hence led to higher UBI support results within the sample compared to Slovenia. Additionally, the sample of this study, being young and largely left leaning, also explains this result of stronger support for the UBI compared to results recorded in previous studies. It also offers an explanation as to why Germany scored lower on the individualism

scale compared to Slovenia and also suggest a shift towards lower individualism through the pandemic.

These factors could present an explanation as to why previous cross-national studies such as the ESS survey found lower levels of support for the UBI for Germany and this paper did not (European social survey, 2016; Nettle, 2021). The ESS survey from 2016 found 61 % of Slovenians are in favor of the UBI while only 45% of Germans were strongly in favor. When comparing this to the pre-pandemic results of this paper, 59% of Slovenians initially supported the UBI compared to 67% for Germany.

### *The role of Social Justice Principles*

These above-mentioned factors also provide reason as to why there was also no support found for H2a and H2b, stating that Slovenia would score on average higher in equality and Germany scoring higher in social justice values need and merit. In general Germany and Slovenia scored roughly the same in equality, no significant difference was found here. The only significant differences were found during normal times on the need principal scale and regarding the merit principle in both time frames. Both times, Slovenia scored higher than Germany. The reason for this discrepancy between hypothesis and statistical results are twofold.

For one, as aforementioned, the Slovenian sample was not nationally representative as it is extremely quite young, which is problematic considering Slovenia has an ageing population and young people make up a much smaller segment of the population (Rener & Kralj, 2020). This is likely to have had an effect on the expected social justice principles scores and led to a shift thereof towards higher merit scores and need scores than anticipated.

The second reason for the increased support for the UBI and discrepancy in predicted social justice value scores and actuality also lies in the demographic of the German sample. Research shows that the most supportive demographic of the UBI within Germany are the

younger and higher educated population segment (Adriaans, Liebig & Schupp, 2019). This statistic is also further backed up by the literature review insights found (Kozák, 2021; Vlandas, 2020; Vlandas, 2021; Ricon, Vlandas & Hiilamo, 2022; Roosma & Van Oorschot, 2019; Parolin & Siöland, 2019). Over half of the German sample was aged 25-35, while 23% were aged 18-25, what is more 61% of the sample have attained a university degree and 23% of these have achieved higher ranking degrees than a bachelor. Moreover, the research indicates that those who see the needs of the weakest in society as not met, are more likely to support an unconditional basic income. With the German sample, the highest score was on the need principle, supporting the belief that especially those in need must be taken care of for a just society, while also scoring high in egalitarianism and the unconditionality scales. Therefore, the age and political affiliation of the German sample explains the low merit scores and the heightened scores in need and equality. It explains why Germany scored higher and ultimately, the same as Slovenia on the equality scale.

Interestingly, both nationalities score highest in the need scale. This could be due to a misunderstanding of equality and need as two completely separate principles. When considering the high score across both nationalities on the need scale in light of the increase in support for the UBI during the pandemic, there is grounds for stating that individuals were not able to fully distinguish the three principles. Participants may have falsely concluded that the need principle does not disregard the unconditionality aspect but rather highlights the necessity of financially supporting those more vulnerable in society. That is to say that, the need principle was potentially understood as more of a middle ground between the equality and the need principle. Meaning, it does not disregard the universality aspect of the UBI, rather, it highlights that particularly those most vulnerable in society deserve financial aid. The UBI in this sense is particularly meant for, but not limited to the needy. This is further backed up by the unanimous, high score in universality across both nationalities.

Additionally, despite the Slovenian welfare state system being rooted in the notion of equal opportunity, the pandemic may have raised the necessity for need based assistance particularly. This holds true for both Germany and Slovenia and could explain the generally high results for the need principle across both nationalities.

H2c stating that social justice values mediate the relationship between nationality and UBI support, is only partially accepted. This is due to the fact that need and merit are significant mediators in normal times and only merit is a significant predictor during pandemic times. Equality was no significant mediator at either point in time. A reason for equality not being a significant mediator throughout both time frames, may be due to a misinterpretation of the BSJO scale. The scale for each principle is only made up of three statements, this leaves room for a lot of self-interpretation and misinterpretation. This is because these three statements only focus on certain distinguishing principles of equality and do not offer an all-inclusive scope of the ideology (Adriaans & Fourré, 2022). Thus, there is a potential of further indifferences within each principle that have not been considered. This factor could explain the lack of mediation with regard to equality in comparison to the merit principle. The merit principle could have come across clearer and more interpretable within the context of the UBI.

In terms of merit, it can be said that this social justice value does mediate the relationship between nationality and UBI support. Germany scored most dominant on 3 (neither disagree or agree) on the merit scale and higher on UBI support. In contrast Slovenia scores higher on merit at 4 (somewhat agree) and lower on overall UBI support. When linking this back to the unconditionality score, Germany also scores 4 (somewhat agree) on this scale, whereas Slovenia scores 3 (undecided). A clear difference between Slovenia and Germany thus lies within the merit principle. A parallel can be drawn between the merit principle and UBI support, scoring lower on UBI support can be attributed to scoring higher

on the merit principle. This makes sense when considering that Slovenia also scored lower in the unconditionality principle, while Germany scored higher. These results also align with previous literature on the UBI, stating that the unconditionality aspect is the one most contested of the policy (Ricon, Vlandas & Hiilamo, 2022; Roosma & Van Ooerschot, 2019). These two factors indicate that Germany is more supportive of the unconditionality aspect of the UBI and hence more supportive of the concept in general compared to Slovenia. Slovenia on the contrary is scoring lower on unconditionality and higher on merit, and it can be concluded that the Slovenian sample is less supportive of the UBI due to its unconditionality aspect, which stands in contrast to the notion of reward for effort.

Although the differences in social justice scores between normal and pandemic times were not significant it should be noted that merit marginally decreased for both nationalities and need increased. The answer to research question 2 is therefore that social justice values affect UBI support to an extent. Merit is a significant mediator of UBI support and all three principles are significant predictors of support in both normal and pandemic times.

#### *Social Justice values and the effect of the pandemic*

The pandemic did not significantly lead to increase on the need and equality principle, nor did it decrease the merit principle. Based on the statistical analysis, the social justice values stayed roughly the same throughout the pandemic (see figure 3). No significant difference between normal and pandemic times was found. Thus, H3b, H3c and H3d are rejected. This result seems paradoxical considering there was a significant shift in UBI support for both nationalities due to the pandemic. The results of this paper seem to indicate that the core social justice values of the sample did not shift simultaneously with the UBI support shift.

The lack of a significant difference between pre-pandemic and pandemic times is potentially due to the fact that both measures were taken within pandemic times. There is a

significant chance that subjects were unable to accurately remember how their core values shifted and what exact sentiment they had prior to the pandemic. This marks one clear limitation of the study, both nationalities were asked what their sentiments were during normal and pandemic times simultaneously. This is arguably counterfactual. Sentiment shifts of social justice values and support for the UBI borne out of the pandemic may have had a spillover effect. They could have affected the self-reported sentiment recorded considering normal times. A strong change in support that happened during the pandemic may have subconsciously also influenced the self-reporting of normal times. This offers an explanation for the lack of change between normal and pandemic social justice scores. This could have potentially also led to a general underestimation of the increase in support caused by the pandemic. A better solution for this issue would have been carrying out a two-wave longitudinal study that measures UBI support at normal and pandemic times separately. Against this backdrop, when assessing similarities across the equality and need scale between Germany and Slovenia, it could indicate that the pandemic has led to a more unionized shift towards solidarity. Creating synergy, to a degree, across different welfare states to focus on need and equality more so than before. Times of crises may lessen welfare state differences in social justice principles in efforts to foster positive change (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Hogan et al., 2022).

### *Limitations*

In terms of limitations, both German and Slovenian samples were not representative. This makes it difficult to draw generalization about UBI support in either population. Therefore, the results must be interpreted in light of the sample demographic, which, for both nationalities, is composed of younger, more left-oriented adults.

Lastly, when linking the results back to the theory of social justice principles and the notion of welfare states acting as a point of departure for these cultural norms, certain factors need to be considered. The predicted difference in national social justice sentiments between Germany and Slovenia were not found. No support for the theory of different welfare states having different ideationally dominant principles was concluded (Sachweh, 2016)

One reason for this may be that there are potentially more than three principles that need to be considered in order to have a more detailed understanding of the underlying mechanisms that drive change in support for universal basic income (Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2013).

Social welfare states may be much more hybrid in terms of their core ideational principles, one must therefore look at these principles in terms of scales rather than absolutes.

What is more, the potential misinterpretation of the BSJO scale of social justice principles is arguably too simple. There are further indifferences between each principle that have not been included and hence, studied (Adriaans & Fourre, 2022). A more in-depth scale is necessary, to cover the entirety of each principle. This is vital to be able to offer a more all-encompassing understanding of the ways in which individuals and nationalities differ between one another in their ideational cores.

Additionally, it has to be taken into consideration that the theory of social justice values being linked to socio-politically ingrained and institutionally formed norms, disregards the notion of heterogeneity and individualism within a society (Arts and Gijssberts, 1998). Thus, future studies should broaden their complexity and scope by adopting a person-centered approach which considers the clustering of interwoven belief systems and individual sentiment (Likki and Staerklé, 2014; Roosma et al., 2014). More in-depth, cross-national research is necessary to create a clear framework of the way in which social justice principles align with welfare state ideologies. This is especially important as welfare state ideologies are not static and subject to change. Against this backdrop, social justice values fostered through

one's social and institutionalized surroundings should be seen as more of a force that guides one's attitude towards redistributive welfare policy.

## **Conclusion**

This study was carried out in order to gain a more detailed understanding of the way in which the pandemic had an effect on support for the UBI. Additionally, this research aimed to decipher the way in which socio-politically ingrained values on justice, rooted in different welfare states, offer explanations for different levels of support.

The assumption that unforeseen exogenous events like the pandemic have an effect on support for welfare distribution schemes, like the UBI, is supported by the study of Germany and Slovenia. When linking this back to social justice values, it can be concluded that they play a part in explaining UBI support and variations thereof. Slovenia and Germany show that different welfare institutions foster different levels of support for such schemes.

However, whether these results can be fully attributed to the welfare state cannot unanimously be confirmed based on this research. Indeed, different welfare states have different ways of interpreting and implementing solidarity during times of crises. Albeit, no support for the theory that conservative welfare states focus predominantly on need and merit, while post socialist welfare states focus on equality, was found within this study. The generally higher score in need across both nationalities can be attributed to the need-based justice theory. This poses the question whether welfare states have only specific dominant principals or whether they fall onto a spectrum of each principal, which is subject to change.

Times of global crises may diminish differences in social justice values between welfare states, and foster a more unanimous shift towards solidarity. When considering the pandemic effect and the lack of differences found between normal and pandemic times, this fault may be due to a spillover effect, triggered through the simultaneous data collection of

both time frames. Future studies should consider this limitation of the study and adapt a longitudinal study design with two separate time frames.

The pandemic not only made things considerably more arduous for the less-well-off in society, but it also pushed those who were previously well off, into a state of financial insecurity and to the margins of support. Therefore, it is evident that the pandemic has pushed the population towards need-based assistance. Considering the all-encompassing adverse consequences of the pandemic, the need principles can also be reinterpreted as a middle ground between equality and need principle. It elevates the need to support those already suffering from financial insecurity, but acknowledges that this aid is not limited to this group but given to everyone. This also explains the equally high score on universality across both nationalities, highlighting the necessity of a universal safety net. Universality is seen in contrast to need based assistance by making an already existing system of welfare distribution more accessible for those already qualified.

This is in line with deservingness theory which states that welfare is granted to those in need, that have been affected by something deemed out of their control and aim to reciprocate (Aaroe and Petersen, 2014; Piff et al., 2020). The pandemic proves that people cannot fulfil this notion of reciprocity and further exemplifies the way in which anyone can be affected by an unforeseen exogenous event like COVID-19 and through this, be categorized as deserving and in need. This evidently elevates the appeal of universality, despite the tradeoff being that the support is given to all. COVID-19 can be seen as a catalyst for the need of solidarity and empathy in times of economic and social hardship.

The UBI is a step towards not only providing individuals with a form of social protection, but it gives them the chance to live a self-determined and purposeful life. Having the foundation of a UBI creates perspective and opportunity to fulfill one's potential. The

UBI serves as a reminder that the opposite of poverty is not wealth, but social justice (Kiyak, 2022)

The insights provided by this paper add to the existing body of research regarding welfare states and the way in which unforeseen exogenous events can have an effect on public opinion and be a driver thereof. Opinions within the public sphere are not static and are subject to continuous change. The acknowledgment of this is vital as political parties have to align with social shifts in order to adequately meet the needs of a well-functioning society. Further studies must be done to have an ongoing framework of social shifts and socio-political patterns.

Future studies should focus on including more welfare state models in order to analyze a wider reach and make more accurate inferences. The research should include the person-centered notion of social justice values that stands separate to the institutionalized and societally ingrained norms.

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## **Appendix A. Abstracts**

### *Abstract: English version*

The Pandemic has led to a significant increase in financial insecurity and has exacerbated inequalities on a global scale. The far-reaching consequences of the pandemic have led to an increase in the discussion of the universal basic income (UBI) within the political and social sphere. Studies assessing the effect of the pandemic on public discourse regarding the policy are scattered and few and far between. This cross-national study looks at the way in which social justice values in existing welfare systems influence the support for universal basic income. In particular, it looks at how Slovenia, a post-socialist welfare state, differs from Germany, a more conservative welfare state, in dominant social justice principles. It further assesses the degree to which the pandemic has led to a shift in these social justice principles, and in turn UBI support. The paper aims to offer a detailed report on the way in which unforeseen exogenous events like COVID-19 catalyze public re-examination of the policy and how it can lead to a shift in dominant ideological norms.

The results indicate that the pandemic did indeed lead to an increase in support, and that there was a significant mediating role of the merit principle within this relationship. Germany and Slovenia score differently on this principle and therefore differently on their support for the UBI. The high score across both nationalities within the need principle provide grounds for the idea that the pandemic has fostered an increased shift towards solidarity and empathy. It certainly shines a light on the importance of a constant re-assessment of public opinion towards welfare distribution policies and the ramifications of broader socio-economic shifts within our society.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Social justice, welfare system, Universal Basic Income, public opinion.

*Abstract: German Version*

Die Pandemie hat zu einem erheblichen Anstieg der finanziellen Unsicherheit geführt und die Ungleichheiten auf globaler Ebene verschärft. Die weitreichenden Folgen der Pandemie haben dazu geführt, dass die Diskussion über das Bedingungslose Grundeinkommen (BGE) im politischen und sozialen Bereich zugenommen hat. In dieser länderübergreifenden Studie wird untersucht, wie die Werte der sozialen Gerechtigkeit in den bestehenden Wohlfahrtssystemen die Zustimmung für ein BGE beeinflussen. Insbesondere wird untersucht, wie sich Slowenien, ein postsozialistischer Wohlfahrtsstaat, von der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, einem eher konservativen Wohlfahrtsstaat, in ihren vorherrschenden Prinzipien sozialer Gerechtigkeit unterscheiden. Ziel der Studie ist es, einen detaillierten Bericht über die Art und Weise zu liefern, wie unvorhergesehene exogene Ereignisse wie COVID-19 eine öffentliche Neubewertung der Politik auslösen und wie dies zu einer Veränderung der ideologischen Normen führen kann.

Die Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass die Pandemie tatsächlich zu einem Anstieg der Unterstützung des BGE führte. Zusätzlich zeigt die Studie, dass Unterschiede zwischen Slowenien und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bezüglich des BGE zu einem gewissen Grad von Unterschieden in bestimmten vorherrschenden Prinzipien sozialer Gerechtigkeit erklärt werden können.

Die hohe Punktzahl beider Nationalitäten bei dem Bedürfnisprinzip lässt vermuten, dass die Pandemie eine verstärkte Hinwendung zu Solidarität und Empathie gefördert hat. Dies wirft ein Licht auf die Notwendigkeit einer ständigen Neubewertung der öffentlichen Meinung in Bezug auf die Politik der Wohlfahrtsverteilung und Auswirkungen allgemeiner sozioökonomischer Veränderungen in unserer Gesellschaft.

Schlüsselwörter: COVID-19, Soziale Gerechtigkeit, Wohlfahrtssystem, Bedingungsloses Grundeinkommen, öffentliche Meinung.

**Appendix B: Survey****Social justice theory and the UBI****Start of Block: Consent**

Q67 Dear Participant, Thank you for your interest in participating in this study conducted by researchers at the Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies at the University of Vienna! In the following questionnaire, you will answer questions about your demographics and personal attitudes.

In particular, we will ask you to answer questions about your perceptions of, and opinions about, social justice and the universal basic income. We ask that you read the questions carefully and answer them. The questionnaire will take approximately 6 minutes to complete. Before the questionnaire starts, you will see detailed information about your rights in the course of this survey on the upcoming page and will be asked for your consent again.

The data can be viewed by the course director or the supervisors of the scientific work for the purpose of performance evaluation. According to Art. 89 Para. 1 DSGVO, the collected data may in principle be stored without restriction. There is the right to information by the responsible persons at this study about the collected personal data as well as the right to correction, deletion, restriction of the processing of the data as well as a right to object to the processing and the right to data portability. Before the questionnaire starts, you will see detailed information about your rights in the course of this survey on the upcoming page and you will be asked again for your consent.

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## Q12 Consent Form

Before you start with the questionnaire, we would like to draw your attention to a few points. Your data will be collected and processed exclusively on the basis of the legal provisions (§ 2f Abs 5 FOG). You have the following personal rights in the context of this survey:

Participation in the survey is voluntary. You can cancel the questionnaire at any time. Your participation is anonymous. Your responses cannot be traced back to you and will be kept strictly confidential. To increase the integrity of science and our work, the anonymized data will be stored on a publicly viewable repository (e.g., Open Science Framework, OSF) after the study is completed. This also means that your personal data set will not be identifiable to us after the survey is completed. If you would like information about your data after the study or would like to withdraw your participation, please note this in the final comment field (together with a contact address if necessary).

Your data will be used for scientific purposes only. The research does not follow any commercial interest. We will treat all your data strictly confidential. If you have any questions about this survey, please feel free to contact the person responsible for this research:

Claire Coon, Institut of Communication Science at the University of Vienna,  
Währingerstraße 29, 1090 Vienna, [Clairekcoon@gmail.com](mailto:Clairekcoon@gmail.com)

Q33 By clicking the below buttown you consent to taking part in the study and acknowledge the above stated infromation

☐ I understand the above written and agree to participate in this research (1)

End of Block: Consent

Start of Block: Demographic

Q3 In the following section you will be presented with a series of demographic questions. Please answer these carefully.

Q8 Nationality

☐ German (1)

☐ Slovenian (3)

Q13 How old are you?

- ☐ Under 18 (1)
- ☐ 18-24 years old (2)
- ☐ 25-34 years old (3)
- ☐ 35-44 years old (4)
- ☐ 45-54 years old (5)
- ☐ 55-64 years old (6)
- ☐ 65+ years old (7)

Q9 What is your work status?

- ☐ Paid work (1)
- ☐ Unemployed (2)
- ☐ Student (3)
- ☐ Permanently sick or disabled (4)
- ☐ Retired (5)
- ☐ Housework (6)
- ☐ Community service (7)

Q14 How do you describe yourself?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Non-binary / third gender (3)
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe (4)

---

- ☐ Prefer not to say (5)



Children How many children under 18 live with you?

---

Q16 What best describes your employment status over the last three months?

- ☐ Working full-time (1)
- ☐ Working part-time (2)
- ☐ Unemployed and looking for work (3)
- ☐ A homemaker or stay-at-home parent (4)
- ☐ Student (5)
- ☐ Retired (6)
- ☐ Other (7)

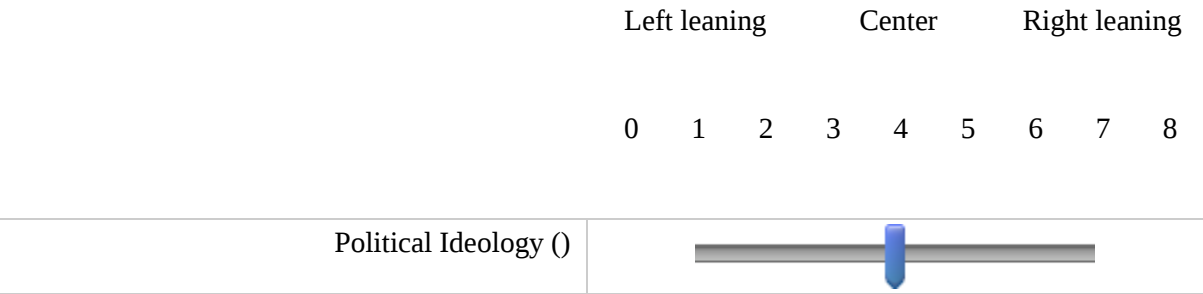
Q17 What is your current marital status?

- ☐ Married (1)
- ☐ Living with a partner (2)
- ☐ Widowed (3)
- ☐ Divorced/Separated (4)
- ☐ Never been married (5)

Q18 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Less than Primary (10)
- ☐ Primary (11)
- ☐ Some Secondary (12)
- ☐ Secondary (13)
- ☐ Vocational or Similar (14)
- ☐ Some University but no degree (15)
- ☐ University - Bachelors Degree (16)
- ☐ Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, Law Degree, Medical Degree etc) (17)
- ☐ Prefer not to say (18)

Q6 Here is a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from **extremely liberal (0 left)** to **extremely conservative (8 right)**. Where would you place yourself on this scale?



End of Block: Demographic

Start of Block: UBI definition

Q56 Some countries are currently talking about introducing a **basic income scheme**.

Universal basic income is a social security system where **every citizen is paid a modest guaranteed income every month**, enough to cover basic necessities. The payment is **the same for everyone**. The **payment is not conditional** on what other earnings the person has and they do not have to do anything in particular to receive it. The Universal basic income is defined by the following key aspects:

- (1) The government pays everyone **a regular, monthly income** to cover essential living costs
- (2) It complements social protection
- (3) The purpose is to **guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living**
- (4) It is **universal** in that it is given to every member of a society
- (5) Everyone receives the same amount regardless of whether or not they are working, it is **unconditional**
- (6) It is given on an **individual basis** as opposed to per household
- (7) This scheme is **paid for by taxes**

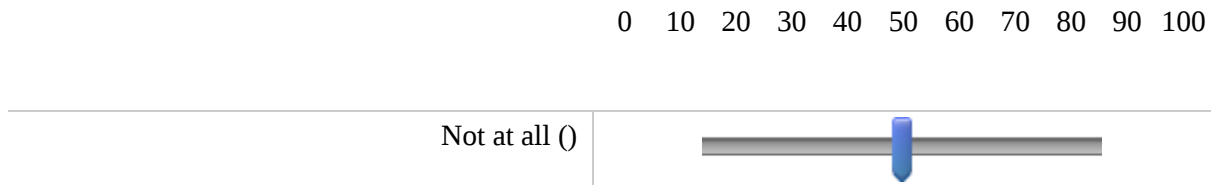
End of Block: UBI definition

Start of Block: Pre-Pandemic

Q34 Thinking about **normal times**, prior to the outbreak, as if the current **pandemic had not occurred**, to what degree would you support a universal basic income scheme?

0 indicates zero support for the policy and

100 indicates 100% full support for the policy



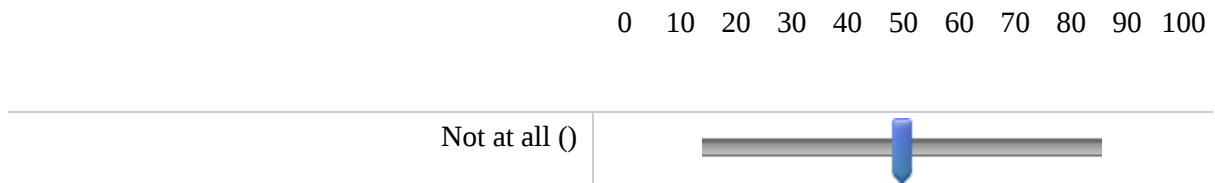
End of Block: Pre-Pandemic

Start of Block: Normal Times

Q35 Thinking about **how things are right now**, the **current COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath**, to what degree would you support a universal basic income scheme?

0 indicates zero support for the policy

100 indicates 100% full support for the policy



End of Block: Normal Times

Start of Block: UBI Statements

Q45 The universal basic income is good as it provides every citizen with the same amount of money per month

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
  - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
  - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
  - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
- 

Q46 The universal basic income is good as it unconditional and does not require means testing

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
  - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
  - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
  - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q47 A guaranteed income will allow individuals to better prepare for financial hardships

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q48 The universal basic income policy recognizes the equal value of all members of society.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q50 The universal basic income will increase overall happiness

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
  - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
  - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
  - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
- 

Q51 The universal basic income will lessen social tension due to increased sense of security amongst society

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
  - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
  - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
  - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q52 Without existential fear of survival, people work more motivated and self-determined

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q58 The universal basic income is good as it provides every citizen with the same amount of money

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q59 The universal basic income is good as it unconditional and does not require means testing

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
  - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
  - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
  - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
- 

Q60 A guaranteed income will allow individuals to better prepare for financial hardships

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
  - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
  - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
  - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q61 The universal basic income policy recognizes the equal value of all members of society.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q62 The universal basic income will increase overall happiness

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q63 The universal basic income will lessen social tension due to increased sense of security amongst society

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

-----

Q64 Without existential fear of survival, people work more motivated and self-determined

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

End of Block: UBI Statements

Start of Block: Block 4

Q55 For the following question please proceed with the answer option that states a color

- ☐ Table (1)
- ☐ Lightbulb (2)
- ☐ green (3)

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Normal times

Q68 PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

The next section will present you with several statements regarding your general views on **social justice**.

Thinking about **normal times** as if the **current pandemic had not occurred**, to what extent you agree with each statement?

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

Q20 Equality Thinking about **normal times** as if the current **pandemic had not occurred**, to what extent you agree with each statement?

|                                                                                               | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4)    | Strongly agree (5)    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| It is just, if all people have the same living conditions (1)                                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| It is just, if income and wealth are equally distributed among the members of our society (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A society is just, if there are only minor income disparities between people (3)              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q22 Need Thinking about **normal times** as if the current **pandemic had not occurred**, to what extent you agree with each statement?

|                                                                                                                                   | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4)    | Strongly agree (5)    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| A society is just, if it takes care of those who are poor and needy (1)                                                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| It is just, if people taking care of their children or their dependent relatives receive special support and benefits (2)         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A society is just, if all people have sufficient nutrition, shelter, clothing as well as access to education and medical care (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q23 Merit Thinking about **normal times** as if the current **pandemic had not occurred**, to what extent you agree with each statement?

|                                                                                                           | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4)    | Strongly agree (5)    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| It is just, if hard working people earn more than others (1)                                              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| It is just, if every person receives only that which has been acquired through their own efforts (2)      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A society is just, if differences in income and assets reflect performance differences between people (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q24 Egalitarianism Thinking about **normal times** as if the current **pandemic had not occurred**, to what extent you agree with each statement?

|                                                                            | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4)    | Strongly agree (5)    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The government should guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living. (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The government should provide a job for everyone who wants one. (2)        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q25 Individualism Thinking about **normal times** as if the current **pandemic had not occurred**, to what extent you agree with each statement?

|                                                                                                  | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4)    | Strongly agree (5)    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| There is an incentive for individual effort only if differences in income are large enough (1)   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| It is all right if businessmen/women make good profits because everyone benefits in the end. (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

End of Block: Normal times

Start of Block: Pandemic

Q70 PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

Thinking about **how things are right now** and considering the **current context of the pandemic and its aftermath**, to what extent do you agree with the following statements.

The next section will present you with the same sequence of statements. Please answer to what extent you agree with each statement from 5 point likert scale ranging from 1 completely disagree to 5 completely agree. Please answer carefully.

equality\_pandemic thinking about **how things are right now** and considering the **current context of the pandemic and its aftermath**, to what extent do you agree with the following statements.

|                                                                                               | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4)    | Strongly agree (5)    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| It is just, if all people have the same living conditions (1)                                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| It is just, if income and wealth are equally distributed among the members of our society (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A society is just, if there are only minor income disparities between people (3)              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

need\_pandemic thinking about **how things are right now** and considering the **current context of the pandemic and its aftermath**, to what extent do you agree with the following statements.

|                                                                                                                                   | Strongly<br>disagree (1) | Somewhat<br>disagree (2) | Neither agree<br>nor disagree<br>(3) | Somewhat<br>agree (4) | Strongly<br>agree (5) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| A society is just, if it takes care of those who are poor and needy (1)                                                           | <input type="radio"/>    | <input type="radio"/>    | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| It is just, if people taking care of their children or their dependent relatives receive special support and benefits (2)         | <input type="radio"/>    | <input type="radio"/>    | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A society is just, if all people have sufficient nutrition, shelter, clothing as well as access to education and medical care (3) | <input type="radio"/>    | <input type="radio"/>    | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

merit\_pandemic thinking about **how things are right now** and considering the **current context of the pandemic and its aftermath**, to what extent do you agree with the following statements.

|                                                                                                           | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4)    | Strongly agree (5)    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| It is just, if hard working people earn more than others (1)                                              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| It is just, if every person receives only that which has been acquired through their own efforts (2)      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A society is just, if differences in income and assets reflect performance differences between people (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

egalitarianism\_p thinking about **how things are right now** and considering the **current context of the pandemic and its aftermath**, to what extent do you agree with the following statements.

|                                                                            | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4)    | Strongly agree (5)    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The government should guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living. (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The government should provide a job for everyone who wants one. (2)        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

individualism\_p thinking about **how things are right now** and considering the **current context of the pandemic and its aftermath**, to what extent do you agree with the following statements.

|                                                                                                  | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4)    | Strongly agree (5)    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| There is an incentive for individual effort only if differences in income are large enough (1)   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| It is all right if businessmen/women make good profits because everyone benefits in the end. (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

End of Block: Pandemic

Start of Block: Block 6

Q54 Dear participant!

Thank you very much for your participation! You are helping us to better understand public discourse on the universal basic income.

If you have any further questions, don't hesitate to email [clairekcoon@gmail.com](mailto:clairekcoon@gmail.com)!

(please continue to the following page to be redirected to prolific )

End of Block: Block 6