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COMFORT IN NUMBERS?

SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG DISABILITY BENEFIT RECIPIENTS IN NORWAY

ANN-HELÉN BAY, AXEL WEST PEDERSEN AND HENNING FINSERAAS*

Abstract

There are growing concerns both in academic and political debates that the provision of cash transfers to people in economically active age groups does not support and might even undermine active social citizenship. In this article we study the social integration and political participation of disability benefit recipients in Norway. We anticipate that disability benefit recipients are less likely than others to participate in social and political arenas, but postulate that the degree of their social and political marginalisation depends on contextual factors. In particular we expect that the presence of a large proportion of disability benefit recipients in the local area where the individual disability benefit recipient lives will make it less likely that they will be marginalised in terms of social networks; we anticipate that this positive network effect will also spill over into participation in voluntary organisations and the propensity to vote in national elections. Analysing Norwegian survey-data, we find that disability benefit recipients are somewhat marginalised both socially and in terms of participation in voluntary organisations. In municipalities with a high proportion of disability benefit recipients, individuals belonging to this group are more likely to have close friends, but this beneficial contextual effect is not found to spill over into increased organisational and political participation.

Keywords: social integration, political participation, active citizenship, peer effects, disability benefit recipients

1. INTRODUCTION

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In contemporary debates about the welfare state, there are growing concerns that generous cash transfers do not guarantee - and might even undermine - active citizenship. This criticism of social transfers has its advocates on the political Right as well as on the Left. According to critiques from the Right, the welfare state has proved itself unable to improve the life chances of welfare recipients, leaving them to a life of passive welfare dependency. At the societal level, the welfare state crowds out civil society and norms of reciprocity. Private obligations become a public responsibility, squeezing families, communities and social networks (Wolfe 1989:142). Critiques from the Left point to processes of marginalisation and social exclusion. Employers use the social security system cynically to get rid of less productive workers. Excluded workers end up with low incomes and become socially isolated (Jensen and Pfau-Effinger 2005:5). Within both camps labour market participation is seen as the most important arena for social integration as well as the primary source of individual empowerment.

In this article we analyse social integration and political participation among welfare recipients in Norway. We have chosen to focus on disability benefit recipients, because this group of welfare recipients is particularly important in the Norwegian context, both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. Viewed in comparative perspective, disability rates in Norway are very high (OECD 2006). In 2012 about 10 per cent of all individuals of working age were receiving disability benefits. Moreover, the receipt of disability benefits is almost always an end state. Once you have left the labour market to live on disability benefits, the likelihood of ever returning to work is extremely small, and an overwhelming majority of disability benefit recipients in Norway will remain dependent on benefits until they retire at the age of 67. In other welfare states, part of this group would probably be recipients of either social assistance or unemployment benefits (Hatland and Øverbye 2011), but we assume that our results are applicable to a broader category of long-term benefit recipients in modern welfare states more generally.

While disability benefits and other forms of welfare benefit are hot political topics and a considerable amount of research is being done to explain their high take-up rates and to search for effective measures to limit the inflow of new claimants, relatively little research in recent years has tried to shed light on the situation of benefit claimants in terms of social welfare and citizenship (Elstad 2010). The general presumption seems to be that being a benefit claimant is a decidedly undesirable situation, both from a societal and from an

individual perspective. Accordingly inquiries based on the ideal of active citizenship for disability benefit recipients are of little relevance, and all attention is concentrated on finding ways to prevent people from becoming benefit recipients and reintegrating as many as possible into the labour market.

In this article we take as our point of departure that high rates of disability and high rates of claiming welfare benefits are a social reality that will not go away in the short term, and that disability benefit recipients constitute a sizeable population subgroup whose social integration and political participation merits attention. Two research questions are pursued: first, are disability benefit recipients less active in social and political arenas compared to members of employed segments of the adult population and, second, does the level of social integration and political participation among disability benefit recipients vary with the composition of the local community in which they live and in particular with the proportion of disability benefit recipients in that community? Three aspects of social and political participation are studied: having close friends, being an active member in a voluntary organisation, and casting one's vote in a national election.

Our study is based on a survey covering a random sample of the population in 30 municipalities and city districts in Norway. Stratification of the sampling in this survey allows us to undertake analyses which combine individual and contextual variables that might influence the level of social and political participation.

2. HYPOTHESES, PERSPECTIVES AND FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS RESEARCH

According to both dependency theory and 'leftist' concerns over marginalisation and social exclusion, generous social benefits and high replacement rates will not prevent social and political exclusion as a result of benefit recipients' position outside the labour market. On the contrary, it is assumed that receipt of welfare benefits is associated with passivity at the individual level. Some of the stipulated mechanisms are quite straightforward. A workplace is an arena for establishing friendships and is likely to offer stimuli to participate in voluntary organisations and in politics through debates between colleagues. It can also be a source of group identity and self-confidence which in turn fosters participation in the wider society (Pettersen and Rose 2009). The effects of being attached to a specific workplace and being

active in the labour market cannot easily be compensated for by means of cash benefits from the state.

In sum, this leads us to hypothesise that disability benefit recipients are at a greater risk of lacking close friends, that they participate less in voluntary organisations, and that they have a higher propensity to abstain from voting compared to the employed adult population.

On the other hand, generous disability benefits will provide the recipients with the financial means to participate on more or less equal terms in various social activities and furthermore, disability benefit recipients can be assumed to have more time to spend with friends and relatives. It is not completely self-evident that attachment to a workplace is as critical for the development of friendship networks as is often assumed, or that the development of group identities and the level of self-confidence required for political participation cannot be achieved by people who (no longer) participate in the labour market. As discussed further below, it is possible to imagine that there are local societal conditions under which social integration and/or political participation will not be particularly low among disability benefit recipients compared to the rest of the population.

Earlier studies comparing participation among disability benefit recipients with that among the employed part of the population present a mixed picture. An early contribution was a sophisticated longitudinal study carried out by Hedström (1980). Based on a Swedish survey panel undertaken in 1968 and 1974, Hedström studied changes within a group who had become disability benefit recipients and compared them with a control group who shared similar characteristics on various dimensions. He found that those who had become disability benefit recipients reduced their political participation compared with the control group, but increased their social participation.

An analysis undertaken by Goul Andersen (2001) of the Danish national election in 1994 found a high level of non-voting among disability benefit recipients below the age of 60. In a Norwegian study of living conditions, Blekesaune and Øverbye (2000:120) found that disability benefit recipients had fewer friends and participated less in leisure activities but showed only slightly less interest in politics compared to other groups. Saurama (2005), in a study undertaken in Finland, Denmark and Norway, found that approximately one quarter of disability benefit recipients in each of these countries reported that they lacked a reliable

friend. Their score on measures of political self-efficacy, however, was high in all three of these countries.

2.1 Does the local context matter?

The literature cited above points to the general effects of receipt of welfare benefits and of being outside the labour market. In related research on people who are unemployed, considerable interest has been directed to the study of potential contextual and neighbourhood effects on well-being and on social and political integration. A prominent hypothesis in this strand of research has been that the subjective well-being of unemployed people depends upon the level of unemployment in the community. The higher the unemployment rate in the surrounding society, the less negative will be the experience of unemployment for the individual – in terms of subjective well-being and other outcomes (Blanchard 1988).

One of the mechanisms that might drive this relationship is psychological. If you are one of very few unemployed people in a community, it is easier to blame yourself for your fate, to individualise your problems and to lose self-confidence, and the reverse is true if the experience of unemployment is shared by many people (Schlozman and Verba 1979). Another, closely related, explanation involves the degree of social stigma attached to the status of being unemployed. Here it is the surrounding community who presumably will be more inclined to blame the individuals concerned when unemployment is a rare phenomenon, and conversely blame external, societal forces when the unemployment strikes more widely (Blanchard 1988, Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003, Frey and Stutzer 2002). A third potential mechanism, again closely related to the first, is the existence of a stronger propensity for unemployed people to develop a collective identity and perhaps even for political mobilisation when their numbers reach a critical mass in the community (Schlozman and Verba 1979). Finally it is possible to think of a fourth mechanism in terms of what labour economists have referred to as the ‘complementarity of leisure’ effect in connection with the spouse’s decision to retire (Hurd 1990). The idea is that the utility of being out of work increases if there are more people around with whom you can share your leisure time as a non-active benefit recipient (Lindbeck *et al.* 1999).

In a recent study by Oesch and Lipps (2012), the assumption about a positive association between the local unemployment rate and the subjective well-being of unemployed people is examined using data from Germany and Switzerland. The authors do not find any correlation

between the local level of unemployment and subjective well-being among the unemployed. In both Germany and Switzerland, job loss massively impairs subjective well-being, independent of the regional unemployment rate (Oesch and Lipps 2012: 10).

The more specific hypothesis about a negative relationship between the scope of unemployment and social stigma has received some support in cross-national and longitudinal research (Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003, and Clark 2003), while the hypothesis about a positive relationship between the unemployment rate and the inclination of the unemployed to mobilise politically does not appear to have general empirical support (Schlozman and Verba 1979 - see also Jahoda, Lazarsfelt and Zeisel 1933).

In a recent strand of the economics literature, the ideas about declining stigma and complementary leisure have been evoked as important mechanisms behind a so-called ‘social interaction’, ‘peer’, or ‘social multiplier’ effect on the take-up of social security benefits. Lindbeck *et al.* (2007) conclude that local variations in sickness absenteeism in Sweden can be ascribed, in part, to neighbourhood interaction effects. A Norwegian study of sickness absenteeism finds a similar ‘multiplier’ effect among workplace colleagues (Dale-Olsen *et al.* 2011). Bragstad and Hauge (2008) explain part of the regional variation in disability benefits utilisation with reference to variations in attitudes to work ethics. Rege *et al.* (2012) identify interaction effects in the take-up of disability benefits in areas which have experienced plant down-sizing. Finally Markussen and Røed (2012) find strong interaction effects and social multipliers in the propensity to leave the labour market and take up social security benefits - without discriminating between different types of benefit.

Although the normative concerns and the policy questions that motivate this strand of literature are different from ours, some of the implied mechanisms (reduced stigma and complementary leisure effects) may be relevant for understanding spatial variations in the degree of social inclusion and political participation among disability benefit recipients.

2.2 Hypotheses about contextual effects

Based on the discussion above, it is fairly straightforward to hypothesise that disability benefit recipients are more likely to have close friends in communities with a high proportion of disability benefit recipients. An area with many disability benefit recipients can open up more opportunities for social interaction outside working life compared to areas where the

entire adult population is in full time employment. Moreover, being in receipt of disability benefits is likely to become normalised to a greater degree and to become more weakly associated with social stigma in communities in which a large segment of the population are also in receipt of disability benefits. On this latter point, findings concerning unemployment might not be directly relevant to disability benefits. Whereas high unemployment rates – as already mentioned - are likely to support the notion that unemployment is a condition outside an individual's control, it is possible to imagine that high local disability rates will tend to be interpreted as the result of a failing work ethic among the surrounding community. Contradictory hypotheses can be made for participation in voluntary organisations and voting. On the one hand a high ratio of disability benefit recipients in the community may mobilise participation. Drawing on research on unemployment, it seems reasonable to assume that being part of 'a tribe of disability benefit recipients' might stimulate group identity, increase the individual's self-confidence and thereby create a sense of political efficacy. On the other hand, a society with a large segment of welfare recipients may nurture an inward looking welfare dependency culture – which could at the same time be met with resentment from the general community. Disability benefit recipients may in this case have strong networks with people in similar circumstances, without being drawn into engagement with the wider community or mainstream political life in general.

This latter hypothesis is inspired by Putnam's distinction between bonding and bridging networks. A bonding network strengthens exclusive identities and homogenous group constellations, whereas a bridging networks fosters integration with the larger society and across social and cultural divides (Putnam 2000). If disability benefit recipients are more likely to be involved in social networks in communities where many other people are disability benefit recipients, it remains an open empirical question whether this will help facilitate a more general social and political integration – or put in other words: whether the social networks in areas with many disability benefit recipients are bridging or bonding.

3. DATA AND METHODS

Our data are from the Norwegian Life course Survey, Generation and Gender, LOGG 2007/2008. We use a stratified subsample drawn randomly from the population in 30 municipalities and city districts (23 municipalities and seven city districts of Oslo). Data collection was completed in 2008 in cooperation with Statistics Norway. The data include

information from three sources: computer assisted telephone interviews, postal surveys, and public register data. The response rate was 59.6% (n=15,140) for the telephone interviews and 72.4% for the subsequent postal surveys. We have restricted the sample to respondents aged 18 to 65.

The dependent variables that are intended to capture the three welfare concepts are binary indicators of whether the respondent has close friends in the neighbourhood (Friends), whether the respondent is an active participant in a voluntary association (Participant), and whether the respondent voted in the previous general election (Voter). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on all dependent and independent variables.

The main independent variables are a binary indicator of whether the respondent is a disability benefit recipient (self-reported), the (estimated) proportion of disability benefit recipients in the municipality/city district, and an interaction term between being a disability benefit recipient and the proportion of disability benefit recipients. We have mean-centered the proportion of disability benefit recipients to ease interpretation, i.e. the coefficient for being a disability benefit recipient gives us the difference between disability benefit recipients and employed persons in a municipality/city district with an average proportion of disability benefit recipients, while the interaction term tells us whether this difference varies across municipalities/city districts depending on the proportion of disability benefit recipients.

Table 1 about here

We include a range of control variables which we assume are determined prior to or jointly with our independent variables and also potentially correlated with the dependent variables. These are binary indicators of whether the respondent is unemployed, a retirement pensioner, or answers 'other' on the question of main activity (being employed is the reference category), gender, age and age-squared, binary indicators for level of education (elementary school and high school, college/university degree being the reference category) and the log of the population size of the municipality/city district. Furthermore, although not exogenous, we control for the log of household income (adjusted for household size) and the log of average income in the municipality/city district, to ensure that the disability coefficients are not simply picking up effects of income poverty at the individual or district level.

All models are estimated as linear probability models using random effects generalised least squares regression. The intercept is allowed to vary across municipalities/city districts, and we assume that the error term is normally distributed. Since we have a cross-level interaction term, i.e. an interaction term involving one variable at the individual level (being a disability benefit recipient) and one variable at the contextual level (proportion of disability benefit recipients), one might argue that we should estimate a more complex model where we allow the individual level coefficient to vary across contexts. However, the conclusions are the same if we do so (results available upon request). We consistently estimate robust standard errors to account for the inherent heteroscedasticity due to estimating linear probability models.

4. RESULTS

Table 2 displays the results for the dependent variable ‘Having close friends in the neighbourhood’. In the first column we include no control variables beyond the categories which are part of the ‘main activity’-question from which we derive the disability-indicator. The reference group is respondents with paid employment. In the second column we include the proportion of disability benefit recipients in the municipality and the interaction term with being a disability benefit recipient. Finally in the third column we include the individual and contextual control variables.

Table 2 about here

The results show that disability benefit recipients have a lower probability of having close friends compared to persons in paid employment. The difference remains when individual and contextual variables are controlled for. The control variables are mainly insignificant, with the exception of education – those with high education levels report having more friends compared to those with only compulsory schooling.

More importantly, we find a significant interaction effect between being a disability benefit recipient and the proportion of disability benefit recipients in the municipality/city district. While those who are not in receipt of a disability benefit display a somewhat lower probability of having close friends in municipalities with many disability benefit recipients, it

is quite the opposite for disability benefit recipients. The probability of having close friends is significantly larger when the disability benefit recipient lives in a municipality with a high proportion of disability benefit recipients. The results suggest that the negative consequences of being a disability benefit recipient in terms of access to close friendship networks is being mitigated for recipients who live in communities where a large proportion of the population is in a similar situation. In this respect there does indeed appear to be ‘comfort in numbers’.

Table 3 about here

Table 3 displays the results of similar analyses for participation in voluntary organisations. Also with respect to participation in voluntary organisations, disability benefit recipients appear to be less integrated than employed individuals. The bivariate association is fairly strong but it becomes weaker after control for contextual and individual variables. The results for the control variables show, as would be expected, that participation in voluntary organisations is significantly higher in small communities, and that males and those with more education are more likely to participate than women and individuals with less education. The coefficients for the proportion of disability benefit recipients in the municipality and the interaction term with being a benefit recipient oneself both come out with negative signs but neither is statistically significant.

Table 4 about here

Finally, table 4 shows results for our third dependent variable: voting in national elections. The results show that disability benefit recipients do not differ from those who are employed when it comes to the propensity to vote. When all control variables are entered, there appears a small negative coefficient for being a disability benefit recipient (as compared to being employed) but it is only significant at the 10 per cent level. Our main contextual variables do not come out with statistically significant coefficients. In municipalities with many disability benefit recipients, those who are not in receipt of-disability benefits appear to be slightly less likely to vote, while there is an opposite tendency among disability benefit recipients, but neither of these findings is statistically significant.

Our analyses reveal that disability benefit recipients are less active than persons in paid employment in terms of friendship networks and participation in voluntary organisations. The

deviation is most evident when it comes to friends. However, for those who live in municipalities with a high proportion of disability benefit recipients we observed an increased propensity to have close friends among disability benefit recipients.

A remaining issue is whether integration in a social network acts as a ‘bridge’ to other forms of activity among benefit recipients, or whether – on the contrary – it has a bonding effect, in the sense that having close friends somehow hampers engagement with the larger society through political activity. In our final analysis, we explore the patterning of participation in the different arenas. Are disability benefit recipients who report having close friends more active in societal arenas than recipients who do not report having close friends?

To answer these questions, we combine information about the individual’s activity in both the social and the political spheres. First we have collapsed activity in a voluntary organisation and voting into one dichotomous variable (called societal participation) that distinguishes between those who are active in both arenas (‘Active’) and everybody else (‘Not active’).

In Figure 1 we show the distribution of the disability benefit recipients and the employed over a fourfold matrix where each square is defined by the intersection of two dichotomous variables: having friends and being active.

Figure 1 about here

As could be expected, the pattern for the disability group is not dramatically different from the pattern among the employed. While 11 per cent of the disability benefit recipients report that they both lack close friends and are not active, the corresponding figure is 5 per cent among the employed. Conversely 31 per cent of disability benefit recipients report being active on both fronts while the corresponding figure for the employed is 40 per cent. In both population subgroups it is very rare to be without friends while reporting to be active – about 3 per cent.

As a second step, we have constructed a variable that groups the respondents into three categories: those who do not report to have close friends; those who report to have friends without being active (in terms of societal participation); and finally those who combine having close friends with being active.

Since this variable has three categories we use a multinomial logit model to estimate the effect of the same set of explanatory variables that were used in the previous models. We have chosen to let the middle category (having friends but being inactive) serve as the reference category. The first column in table 5 shows the effect of the various independent variables on the propensity to lack friends in addition to being inactive on the societal arena. The coefficients confirm our previous finding that being in receipt of disability benefits is associated with having fewer close friends and that this effect is significantly smaller in municipalities with a large proportion of disability benefit recipients.

Table 5 about here

The second column shows the effect on the propensity to be active in societal arenas given that the respondent reports having close friends. These results are relevant to evaluating the bridging versus bonding hypotheses. The negative sign on the coefficient for being a disability benefit recipient suggests that this group is in general slightly less likely to combine close friendships with broader societal engagement compared with the employed population, but the difference is not statistically significant. In addition we find negative coefficients for the proportion of disability benefit recipients in the municipality and the associated interaction term with being a disability benefit recipient oneself. Again neither of these coefficients reach statistical significance by themselves, but the results consistently support the ‘bonding’ hypothesis better than the ‘bridging’ hypothesis. Taken together with the negative sign for status as a disability benefit recipient, we can safely assume that the compound difference between a disability benefit recipient living in an area with many other recipients on the one hand and an employed person living in an area with few disability benefit recipients on the other is indeed significant. In the former group the link between having close friends and being politically active is significantly weaker than in the other group.

In other words: there is no indication that close friendships have a mobilising effect on societal participation among disability benefit recipients. Disability benefit recipients who live in municipalities where a large proportion are in the same situation, are more likely to be included in a close friendship network, but having close friends does not appear to spill over

into engagement into more general societal participation to the same extent in this group as in the employed majority of the population.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this article we have examined social and political participation among disability benefit recipients in Norway and have tried to answer the question of whether the welfare state is successful in promoting active citizenship among this population subgroup. This is an important topic, not least because much contemporary debate on welfare reform is based on rather simplistic ideas about the needs and aspirations of welfare recipients, in particular the idea that labour market participation is a *sine qua non* for achieving social inclusion and for approaching the ideal of active citizenship.

Our first finding is that disability benefit recipients deviate somewhat from the employed when it comes to access to social networks: Being a disability benefit recipient reduces the chance of having close friends. However, when the disability benefit recipient lives in a municipality with many other recipients, the chance of having close friends increases.

Why do disability benefit recipients lack close friendship networks? We tried to include personal income as an intermediate variable, but it did not appear to be significantly related to the propensity to have close friends in the neighbourhood. Norwegian disability benefit recipients are secured a fairly high level of income, and the data seem to rule out the possibility that their lack of close friends is the result of a remaining income gap compared with the employed population.

However, we also find that disability benefit recipients are particularly disadvantaged in terms of access to friendship networks in municipalities with a low proportion of people in the same situation. This indicates that the risk of social isolation is aggravated if the status of disability benefit recipient is associated with the notion of being outside 'the main stream'. The tendency for the social integration of disability benefit recipients to improve with the proportion of recipients in the community, suggests that disability benefit recipients form networks with each other and/or are more easily included in networks with employed people when the status of disability benefit recipient is shared by many other people in the community. This finding represents a challenge to the broadly shared belief that participation

in paid work is a universal and indispensable precondition for social integration in a modern society. Successful efforts to increase employment and to lower disability rates might actually incur a social cost for those who cannot work and are destined to remain outside the labour market.

We hasten to emphasise that our research design does not allow for firm conclusions about causal effects. As pointed out by Manski (1993), the identification of this kind of social interaction effect is extremely difficult even with an ideal data-set with a combination of many macro-units that can be followed over time. Our analysis of cross-sectional data for 30 macro-units can therefore only be considered to be exploratory.

Turning to the analysis of societal participation, we find that disability benefit recipients are as likely to vote as the economically active population. This finding is in line with earlier Norwegian studies (Blekesaune and Øverbye (2000)), and it indicates that receipt of social security benefits does not seem to affect the exercise of an individual's political rights.

However, we also find that disability benefit recipients participate somewhat less in voluntary organisations compared to the employed. One possible, rather straightforward, explanation for this is that many disability benefit recipients suffer from conditions that prevent them from participating in a range of organised activities, especially sports clubs and other organisations involving physically demanding activities.

In light of a number of prominent hypotheses derived from research on unemployment, we expected participation in voluntary organisations by this group to be greater in communities with a high proportion of disability benefit recipients. However, this expectation was not supported by the data. The reduced stigma that could follow from being a member of a large minority group does not appear to mobilise disability benefit recipients to participate in voluntary organisations. As we have already indicated, one possible explanation is that a high proportion of disability benefit recipients in a community could create a stigmatising notion among the general population that being a benefit recipient is a matter of choice rather than sheer fate. If both the surrounding society and disability benefit recipients themselves interpret their situation as being the result of a failing work ethic, it is likely to have a negative effect on societal participation among this group and the capacity for political mobilisation will be limited.

Living in areas containing many disability benefit recipients is positive for the social integration of individual recipients but this does not spill over into broader societal engagement. On the contrary, our analyses indicate that disability benefit recipients who live in areas where many are in the same situation, are less likely, compared the employed population, to combine having close friends with participation in other arenas like national elections and voluntary organisations. The explanation could be – using Putnam’s terminology – that the social networks of disability benefit recipients in these areas are of the bonding type, fostering exclusive identities and closed group constellations.

Our study is limited both in time and space, but can be taken as a starting point for future research in various ways. While we have simply compared the social integration and societal participation of disability benefit recipients using the situation of the employed population as the point of comparison, one would need longitudinal data where the same individuals and local communities can be followed over time in order to generate conclusions about causal effects. Another logical extension of the present study would be to look at these issues in a comparative context. In Norway disability benefit recipients constitute an important group of welfare benefit recipients and of workless individuals. There is reason to believe that in other countries a significant proportion of the kind of individuals who in Norway receive disability benefits would receive other types of welfare benefits or perhaps be dependent on support from their families. A comparative study would therefore open up interesting opportunities to investigate the effect of different entitlement regimes, but it would also raise difficult challenges concerning the choice of comparable groups in different countries.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Dependent variables					
Friend	6784	0.9137677	0.2807275	0	1
Voter	6316	0.8936035	0.3083688	0	1
Participant	4748	0.441449	0.4966122	0	1
Independent variables, individual level					
Disability benefit recipient	6784	0.0785672	0.2690819	0	1
Unemployed	6784	0.0142983	0.1187265	0	1
Old age pensioner	6784	0.0247642	0.155417	0	1
Other	6784	0.1096698	0.3125008	0	1
Household income (ln)	6784	11.64684	1.065177	0	15.26582
Male	6784	0.4943986	0.5000055	0	1
Age	6784	42.54098	13.24801	18	66
Age sqrd	6784	1985.219	1140.424	324	4356
Elementary school	6784	0.1894163	0.3918678	0	1
High school	6784	0.4407429	0.4965128	0	1
Independent variables, aggregate level (municipality/district)					
Share of disabled	30	0.0113813	0.0244836	-0.0370554	0.0588811
Mean income (ln)	30	12.46248	0.1153806	12.28409	12.79792
Number of inhabitants (ln)	30	9.758727	2.16586	6.794587	13.21516

Table 2. Linear regression coefficients. Dependent variable: Having close friends

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)
Disability benefit recipient	-0.0837*** (0.0233)	-0.119*** (0.0315)	-0.0967*** (0.0298)
Share disability benefit recipients		-0.0440 (0.204)	-0.695** (0.341)
Disabled*share disabled		2.433** (1.015)	2.337** (1.023)
Mean income (ln)			-0.0617 (0.0756)
Number of inhabitants (ln)			-0.00913 (0.00600)
Unemployed	-0.0545* (0.0278)	-0.0546** (0.0278)	-0.0529* (0.0286)
Old age pensioner	-0.0300 (0.0274)	-0.0295 (0.0274)	-0.0176 (0.0295)
Other not employed	0.00708 (0.0127)	0.00676 (0.0127)	0.0129 (0.0145)
Household income (ln)			0.00476 (0.00367)
Male			0.000791 (0.00767)
Age			-0.000192 (0.00208)
Age sqrd			-3.34e-06 (2.38e-05)
Elementary school			-0.0243* (0.0140)
High school			-0.0109 (0.00727)
Constant	0.922*** (0.00790)	0.922*** (0.00839)	1.757** (0.895)
Observations	6,900	6,900	6,784
Number of municipalities/districts	30	30	30

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 3: Linear regression coefficients. Dependent variable: Participation in voluntary organization

	(1)	(2)	(3)
VARIABLES			
Disability benefit recipient	-0.104*** (0.0192)	-0.0947*** (0.0189)	-0.0447* (0.0234)
Share disability benefit recipients		1.068** (0.501)	-0.567 (0.502)
Recipient*share recipients		-0.866 (0.828)	-0.928 (0.995)
Mean income (ln)			-0.118 (0.100)
Number of inhabitants (ln)			-0.0343*** (0.00616)
Unemployed	-0.174** (0.0719)	-0.174** (0.0714)	-0.138* (0.0707)
Old age pensioner	0.0137 (0.0469)	0.0129 (0.0472)	0.00565 (0.0557)
Other not employed	-0.0869*** (0.0210)	-0.0857*** (0.0213)	-0.0147 (0.0271)
Household income (ln)			0.00835 (0.00882)
Male			0.0754*** (0.0132)
Age			0.00131 (0.00623)
Age sqrd			-4.87e-06 (7.35e-05)
Elementary school			-0.207*** (0.0247)
High school			-0.127*** (0.0154)
Constant	0.471*** (0.0151)	0.462*** (0.0163)	2.201* (1.189)
Observations	4,807	4,807	4,748
Number of municipalities/districts	30	30	30

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 4: Linear regression coefficients. Dependent variable: Voting in national elections

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Variables			
Disability benefit recipient	0.00164	-0.00399	-0.0348*
	(0.0153)	(0.0224)	(0.0203)
Share disability benefit recipients		-0.761***	-0.244
		(0.188)	(0.282)
Recipient*share recipients		0.635	0.544
		(0.687)	(0.622)
Mean income (ln)			0.109**
			(0.0530)
Number of inhabitants (ln)			-0.00194
			(0.00239)
Unemployed	-0.0748**	-0.0747**	-0.0460
	(0.0368)	(0.0363)	(0.0328)
Old age pensioner	0.0480***	0.0491***	-0.0229
	(0.0156)	(0.0157)	(0.0179)
Other not employed	-0.0658***	-0.0672***	-0.00274
	(0.0205)	(0.0205)	(0.0188)
Household income (ln)			-0.00226
			(0.00505)
Male			0.00377
			(0.00681)
Age			0.00709**
			(0.00290)
Age sqrd			-3.67e-05
			(3.17e-05)
Elementary school			-0.0790***
			(0.00980)
High school			-0.0515***
			(0.00816)
Constant	0.895***	0.901***	-0.615
	(0.00581)	(0.00495)	(0.643)
Observations	6,378	6,378	6,316
Number of municipalities/districts	30	30	30

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 5. Multinomial logistic regression coefficients.

Variables	Without friends vs with friends, but inactive	With friends and active vs with friends, but inactive
Disability benefit recipient	0.732*** (0.197)	-0.110 (0.134)
Share disability benefit recipients	11.22* (5.955)	-2.410 (2.295)
Recipient*share recipients	-23.00*** (8.595)	-4.588 (4.975)
Mean income (ln)	1.077 (1.079)	-0.337 (0.502)
Number of inhabitants (ln)	0.0471 (0.0805)	-0.156*** (0.0269)
Unemployed	0.743* (0.410)	-0.315 (0.466)
Old age pensioner	0.151 (0.342)	-0.101 (0.204)
Other not employed	-0.311 (0.302)	0.0987 (0.120)
Household income (ln)	-0.0519 (0.0487)	0.0570 (0.0421)
Male	0.138 (0.114)	0.324*** (0.0588)
Age	-0.0170 (0.0390)	0.0244 (0.0280)
Age sqrd	0.000280 (0.000426)	-0.000157 (0.000330)
Elementary school	0.0137 (0.214)	-0.943*** (0.112)
High school	-0.0128 (0.144)	-0.570*** (0.0666)
Constant	-15.23 (12.67)	4.350 (5.953)
Observations	4,448	

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure 1. The distribution of disability benefit recipients (N=345) and the employed population (N=3 472) according to their score on friendship networks and societal participation.

