

**THIRD ITALIAN CONFERENCE OF EVS/WVS DATA USERS**  
**Crisis after Crisis: Value Change in Italy**  
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**In God we trust: Inter-religious othering, religiosity, and political orientation in Italy**

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**Abstract**

With globalization, migration, and fast pacing social change the inter-group relations remain a prominent topic within the sociological debate with religion and religiosity remaining some of the most frequently reported factors influencing these relationships (Allport, 1966; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Brown & Brown, 2017). Religion still plays an active role in the creation of boundaries between groups in the society resulting in the connections between religious values and social trust being exhibited towards other members of the society (Welch et al., 2004). On one side, religious belonging was found to accentuate in-group identity resulting in a negative stereotyping of the out-group. On the other, religiosity was frequently associated with altruistic values that promote tolerance. Italy poses as an interesting case for studying these relations due to its strong cultural attachment to Roman Catholicism. Previous research conducted in Italy showed that higher levels of identified religiosity are usually associated with an increase of inter-religious trust (Brambilla et al., 2013). In recent years, however, Italian right-wing populist parties increasingly used religious identities and symbols feeding “normative intersectional othering” (Khrebtan-Hörhager, 2019; Spini, 2022). Hunsberger (1995) has further developed this conceptual framework by explaining the connection between religion and prejudice through the influence of right-wing authoritarianism and religious fundamentalism. Thus, religious identity, especially in its traditional and fundamental forms, was positively associated with political conservatism via right-wing authoritarianism. For this reason, religious fundamentalists are normally expected to be more conservative and protective of their values, making them feel more threatened by alternative belief systems. In addition, other research showed that, indeed, not only are those who are more traditionally religious more likely to exhibit hostility towards potential out-groups, but that the same holds also for those who are more politically conservative (Jelen & Wilcox, 1990; Van Hiel & Mervielde, 2006; Yancy, 2010).

In this paper we therefore focus on the intertwinement of religiosity and political orientation, and on its influence on inter-religious trust in Italy. More specifically, we intend to understand whether and how is the effect of religious belonging and religiosity mediated by the political views of Italians. Does religiosity increase inter-religious trust? Is the effect of religiosity reversed among right-wing supporters? In order to answer the posited questions, we applied the linear regression modelling on the Italian data available in the fifth wave of the European Values Study (EVS, 2022). In doing so, we focused on the left-right scale as an indicator of political orientation and created a (non-)religious typology based on religiosity and religious affiliation. Our preliminary results suggest that, despite the prominent

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role of religion in the existing literature, it is the political orientation that plays a primary role while the effect of religiosity and religious belonging is only observable among the right-wing respondents. Furthermore, in the Italian case religiosity seems to mitigate inter-religious prejudice of right-wing respondents instead of contributing to a further decrease of trust.

**Keywords:** inter-religious trust; religiosity; political orientation; (non-)religion; Italy.