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Massimo Bordignon
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Federico Franzoni
Università degli Studi di Milano

Matteo Gamalerio
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Dipartimento di Economia e Finanza
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Largo Gemelli 1 - 20123 Milano – Italy
tel: +39.02.7234.2976 - fax: +39.02.7234.2781
e-mail: dip.economiaefinanza@unicatt.it

Is Populism reversible? Evidence from Italian local elections during the pandemic

Massimo Bordignon[*]   Federico Franzoni[†]   Matteo Gamalerio[‡]

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Abstract

We study the effect of economic insecurity on electoral outcomes using data on municipal elections in Italy. We implement a difference-in-differences approach that exploits exogenous variation across municipalities in the share of inactive workers due to the economic lockdown introduced by the central government to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. We show that lockdown-induced economic insecurity positively affected the electoral performance of progressive and left-wing parties, while it negatively affected conservative and far-right parties. Conversely, we find no effect for the populist Five Star Movement, local independent parties (i.e., Civic Lists), and electoral turnout. We provide evidence that extraordinary economic measures introduced by the central government to compensate workers for the economic insecurity can explain this shift in partisanship toward the left and the increasing support for pro-EU parties, away from euro-skeptic and populist forces.

Keywords: COVID-19, Elections, Voting behaviour, Populism, Economic Insecurity

JEL Codes: D70, D72, D91

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1   Introduction

In recent years, various democratic countries have experienced a rise in the electoral success of anti-establishment and populist parties at the expense of mainstream and traditional parties (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2020). We can find clear examples of this success in Donald Trump's victory, the Brexit vote in 2016, and the rising support for far-right and populist parties in European countries like France, Italy, and Spain. Recent literature in economics and political science has highlighted the role of economic insecurity as one of the main factors explaining this electoral success (Algan et al., 2017). Specifically, the literature has shown how populist and anti-establishment parties are more likely to gain votes when mainstream parties fail to deal with the economic insecurity felt by voters during a period of crisis, as happened for example in Europe during the 2008-2011 financial and sovereign debt crisis (Guiso et al., 2019). In light of this evidence, one interesting question is whether voters would react similarly to increases in economic insecurity during crises in which governments did manage to respond appropriately.

This paper analyzes the effect of the Covid-19 economic lockdown on voting behavior to study whether voters reacted differently to an increase in economic distress during a crisis in which governments worldwide responded to compensate for this increased level of insecurity. Specifically, we study the case of the economic lockdown imposed by the Italian government in the period March-May of 2020 to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, which mandated the closing of non-essential economic activities and thus led to severe economic losses for part of the population and a general increase in economic insecurity. There are several reasons to exploiting the Italian case to study this topic. First, many Italian municipalities held elections for the renewal of the municipal councils and the election of mayors in September-October of 2020, just a few months after the economic lockdown introduced by the Italian central government. This feature, combined with the availability of electoral data at the municipal level for the 2020 elections and the previous electoral years, enables us to build a panel dataset that we use to study the effect of economic insecurity on electoral outcomes.

Second, in September-October 2020, the national government led by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte received the support of both center-left parties (e.g., the Democratic Party) and populist forces (i.e., the Five Star Movement). Conversely, right-wing parties were forming the opposition, composed of both moderate (e.g., center-right Forward Italy) and more extreme-right parties like the League and Brothers of Italy. This political scenario characterized by peculiar alliances enables us to study the effect of the lockdown-induced economic insecurity from different points of view, distinguishing between different mechanisms. Specifically, it allows us to look at the impact of the lockdown-induced economic insecurity on shifts in partisanship and electoral orientation by part of voters, distinguishing between center-left and center-right political parties and between mainstream and pro-European Union parties and populist forces (see Figure A1). In addition, the alliance between forces with different political stances, such as the mainstream Democratic Party and the populist Five Star Movement, allows us to separate the eventual shifts in partisanship from a rally "round the flag" effect (Mueller, 1970), with increasing support for parties that support the central government.

Third, for the identification strategy, we exploit exogenous variation across municipalities in the intensity of the economic insecurity due to the imposition of the economic lockdown. Specifically, we use variation across municipalities in the share of inactive workers generated by the restrictions introduced by the central government as a measure of the local intensity of the economic insecurity due to the lockdown (Borri et al., 2020). As explained in section 3, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in March 2020, the Italian national government imposed the closing of non-essential economic activities and severely constrained the movement of people. Given the heterogenous pre-Covid distribution of non-essential economic activities across different areas of Italy, the economic restrictions affected different municipalities with a different intensity. We exploit this lockdown-induced variation in the share of inactive workers to run a difference-in-differences model. We use this model to compare the evolution of electoral outcomes before and after the Covid-19 crisis across municipalities

affected differently by the economic lockdown.

A priori, predicting the direction of the political impact of lockdown-induced economic insecurity is complex. On the one hand, the increase in economic insecurity due to the pandemic and the associated restrictions combined with the closing of non-essential economic activities may have increased the support for the opposition and populist political parties. On the other hand, as described in section 3, the Italian government accompanied the economic lockdown with special economic measures introduced to support the firms, the workers, and in general, the people more affected by the pandemic and the economic restrictions. Therefore, the pandemic might have convinced even traditionally skeptical voters of the usefulness of government protection and intervention in the economy in the presence of large shocks to provide support to the center-left parties more associated with these risk reduction and redistribution policies. In addition, these measures may have convinced voters to reward the protection provided by the national government and increase their support for political parties aligned with the central government, leading to a rally "round the flag" effect.

The results of the difference-in-differences analysis provide evidence of a shift in partisanship, with increasing support for center-left forces by part of voters. Specifically, we find a positive effect of the lockdown-induced economic insecurity on the electoral performance of center-left parties (i.e., the Democratic Party and other center-left political forces in the same coalition) and a negative effect on the vote shares of center-right and extreme-right parties. More in detail, we find that an increase in the share of inactive workers by one standard deviation (i.e., 14.7 percentage points) led to an increase in the vote shares of center-left parties by around 1 percentage points. At the same time, we find that a rise in the share of inactive workers by one standard deviation decreased the vote shares of center-right and extreme-right political parties by 1.2 percentage points. Conversely, the lockdown-induced economic insecurity did not affect the electoral performance of the Five Star Movement, the main populist party supporting the central government, the vote shares of independent municipal parties (i.e., Civic Lists), and electoral turnout.

We also verify the same results in public opinion survey data collected in 2020. Specifically, we use detailed survey individual data provided by IPSOS[1] to confirm further this shift in partisanship in the opinions of Italian citizens interviewed. We provide this evidence through survey data in two ways. First, we produce descriptive evidence about how survey participants' opinions changed between March and September 2020. We distinguish between individuals who had to stop working because of the economic lockdown and those who did not. The evidence shows that inactive individuals, while on average supported more center-right parties than center-left ones, over time during 2020, became more supportive of center-left parties and less of center-right forces, eventually converging toward the opinions of those who remained active. This evidence suggests that supporters of center-right parties affected by the economic lockdown changed their preference toward center-left parties in 2020. In addition, the descriptive evidence shows that inactive individuals in 2020 were more concerned about their economic situation than their health situation, confirming that the share of inactive individuals represents a good measure of the level of lockdown-induced economic insecurity.

Second, by combining the voting intentions of respondents in September 2020 with their self-reported past voting behavior (i.e., in elections held in 2018 and 2019), we build a time-variant proxy for the individual probability of voting for political parties with different political orientations. This information, combined with the variable capturing the probability of being inactive due to the lockdown, enables us to apply the same difference-in-differences strategy to these individual data. This exercise confirms the increasing support for center-left parties, and the drop in the support for center-right parties, while there is no effect for the Five Star Movement.

How can we interpret these results? First, the rising support for progressive left-wing parties and the negative effect for conservative right-wing forces signals an increasing demand for government protection and intervention in the economy, and a connected reward for those

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[1]Ipsos is a multinational market research and consulting firm with headquarters in Paris, France. We provide more details on the survey data in section 5.2.

forces more in favor and responsible for this protection during the lockdown period. To provide further evidence on this increasing demand, we repeat the difference-in-differences analysis distinguishing between the share of inactive workers in the services sector and the share of inactive workers in the industry sector. We find that the share of inactive workers in the services sector drives our results. In contrast, the share of inactive workers in the industry sector did not affect electoral outcomes.

The fact that the share of inactive workers in the service sector drives the results is evidence that the economic measures introduced by the central government to reduce workers' economic insecurity represents the more likely explanation for the increased support for progressive and left-wing parties and the negative effect for conservative and right-wing forces. As described in section 3, these economic measures represented an important innovation for the services sector, given that workers in these occupations did not benefit from any particular protection in the pre-Covid era. Conversely, the insignificant impact of the share of inactive workers in the industry sector is consistent with the fact that workers in these occupations already benefited from extensive unemployment protections even before the Covid-19 crisis. Hence, for workers in these occupations, the economic measures introduced to deal with economic security did not represent an innovation.

To further reinforce the evidence supporting this mechanism, we repeat the diff-in-diff analysis using the per capita benefits received by self-employed workers during the lockdown as the treatment variable. While this variable has the limit to be one of the various compensatory measures introduced by the Italian government (see section 3.1), it represents a good proxy for the intervention of government in the economy during the lockdown. This analysis confirms that the support for center-left parties grew more in areas that received more benefits. At the same time, these areas experienced a greater decline in electoral support for center-right parties. This evidence confirms that the economic measures introduced by the central government to reduce economic insecurity represents the more likely explanation for the increased support for center-left parties and the negative effect on right-wing forces.

Second, the positive effect for pro-EU parties like the Democratic party and the null effect for the populist and euro-skeptic Five Star Movement is further evidence that the economic measures introduced to compensate for economic insecurity represent the more likely explanation for the main results. Specifically, as described in more detail in section 3.1, the direct support of the European Union to countries during the pandemic made possible the funding of the economic measures introduced by the Italian government. Hence, these contrasting effects for mainstream pro-EU and populist euro-skeptic parties represent further evidence of the role of the protective and recovery measures introduced to compensate for economic insecurity. These EU-supported measures allowed the EU to regain credibility in front of the eyes of voters, which in turn increased their support for pro-EU parties. In addition, we find similar results in the descriptive analysis produced with the IPSOS survey data, which shows how inactive individuals became more supportive of the EU during 2020.

Third, the fact that the economic lockdown did not benefit the populist Five Star Movement allows us to rule out the existence of a rally "round the flag" effect. Specifically, in September-October 2020, the Five Star Movement was the biggest party supporting Conte's government. In addition, Giuseppe Conte was an independent politician with close links with the Five Star Movement until he became president of the Movement in August of 2021. Hence, in the presence of a rally "round the flag" effect, we should have observed increasing support for the Five Star Movement. Besides, we confirm further the absence of a rally "round the flag" effect by showing that the level of lockdown-induced economic insecurity did not affect the re-election probability of incumbent mayors.

Finally, we show that our results of the impact of the lockdown-induced economic insecurity on electoral outcomes do not change if we control for variables capturing the intensity of the economic recovery during the summer of 2020. We also show that our results do not change if we control for the pandemic's health consequences, specifically for the municipal level of excess mortality due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Besides, the analysis below shows how the effect of the health shock goes in the opposite direction, with excess mortality pos-

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itively associated with support for conservative and right-wing parties. The fact that the results are robust to controlling for the level of excess mortality indicates that potentially different positions of the political parties on health policies and countermeasures against the health consequences of the Covid-19 do not explain our results.

2   Related literature

This paper contributes to two streams of literature. First, it contributes to the literature analyzing the effect of economic insecurity on electoral outcomes, and specifically the electoral support for populist and anti-establishment forces (Algan et al., 2017) and radical-right parties (Dehdari, 2022). This literature shows how economic insecurity due to economic crises can increase both the demand and the supply of populist policies and political forces. This effect is strong in countries with low fiscal space (Guiso et al., 2021) and in which governments fail to compensate for the economic insecurity felt by voters, as happened during the 2008-2011 financial and sovereign debt crisis (Guiso et al., 2019), which worsened citizens' perceptions of quality of governance and the level of social trust (Bordignon et al., 2022). This paper contributes to this literature by showing that when governments introduce measures that compensate for the increase in economic distress, the effect of economic insecurity can go in the opposite direction, with increasing support for left-wing and mainstream parties and with a null or negative effect for populist and anti-establishment parties. In addition, our results, combined with the role played by the European Union in funding the measures introduced to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, suggest that voters can reward mainstream and pro-EU parties when governments and EU institutions manage to meet their demand for protection against economic insecurity.

Second, this paper contributes to the literature that studies the political impact of the Covid-19 crisis (Amat et al., 2020; Daniele et al., 2020; Fernandez-Navia et al., 2021; Giommoni and Loumeau, 2020; Noury et al., 2021; Picchio and Santolini, 2021). This literature

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analyzes the political consequences of the health shock and the restrictions in terms of electoral turnout (Picchio and Santolini, 2021), support for nationalist parties (Fernandez-Navia et al., 2021), and support for incumbent politicians (Giommoni and Loumeau, 2020). The literature has also studied the impact of elections on the pandemic diffusion (Cipullo and Le Moglie, 2022) and electoral incentives on the restrictions adopted by governments around the world (Pulejo and Querubín, 2021). Our paper contributes to this literature by focusing on a novel margin, i.e., the political consequences of the economic insecurity introduced by the Covid-19 crisis. Specifically, the richness of our data allows us to distinguish between the economic aspects of the Covid-19 crisis, which combine an increase in economic insecurity with measures introduced by governments to deal with that, from the health consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic captured by the excess mortality. Our analysis below shows how the economic aspects of the Covid-19 crisis generated effects that go in the opposite direction compared to the electoral impact of the health shock.

3   Institutional background

3.1   The Covid-19 in Italy

The first salient disposition to face the Coronavirus pandemic was adopted on January the 31st 2020 with the central government declaring a state of emergency for six months in order to have the appropriate operative instruments to contrast the pandemic.[2] Given the rapid diffusion of the infection, the subsequent and stricter decisions concerning gathering prohibition and movement limitations followed immediately after: from the initial isolation of a limited number of municipalities in Lombardy and Veneto, proclaimed on the 23rd of February,[3] to a progressive territorial extension, culminated on March the 9th, when in the entire country the maximum alert was declared.[4]

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[2]Resolution of the Council of Ministers (31.01.2020).
[3]Decree of the President of the Council (23.02.2020)
[4]Decree of the President of the Council (09.03.2020).

The restrictive measures were further reinforced after a few days, suspending many business activities: from the 11th of March retail shops and restaurants and then, from the 22nd of the same month, all the non-essential or non-strategic economic activities.[5] That moment coincided with the beginning of the period of most significant limitations, which lasted until the 3rd of May; from then started the so-called "phase two" of the first pandemic wave, meaning a gradual loosening the restrictions.[6] In particular, from the 4th of May, all the industry and wholesale sectors reopened, while the artistic, cultural, and sports activities, as well as retail shops and restaurants, resumed only by the end of the month. Subsequently, from June onward, the first pandemic wave turned into its third phase, consisting of a careful coexistence with the virus, which continued until the beginning of October, when the second pandemic wave stroked again the country and restrictive measures came back.

Given the forced and prolonged suspension of most economic activities, the Italian government strongly intervened to support the whole economy to attenuate the overwhelming impact of Covid-19. Considering only the period of the first pandemic wave (March-September), the government earmarked more than €100 billion to support the economy. In addition, the government provided guarantees on corporate loans extended to small businesses. Three decrees contained all the socioeconomic support programs. First, the "Care Italy" decree was approved on the 17th of March and allocated €25 billion.[7] Second, the "Recovery" decree, approved on the 19th of May and allocating €55 billion.[8] Finally, the "August" decree, which was approved on the 14th of August and allocated other €25 billion.[9]

About €35 billion of the overall budget were assigned to workers' protection, primarily to preserve the occupational levels and ensure adequate individual and family income. For this purpose, the government extended a special "Covid-19" redundancy pay to all employees of every productive sector in the entire national territory for 36 weeks. In addition, different

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[5]Decrees of the President of the Council (11.03.2020) and (22.03.2020).

[6]Decree of the President of the Council (26.04.2020)

[7]Decree Law 17 March 2020, n. 18 converted with amendments into Law 24 April 2020, n. 27.

[8]Decree Law 19 May 2020, n. 34 converted with amendments into Law 17 Law 2020, n. 77.

[9]Decree Law 14 August 2020, n. 104 converted with amendments into Law 13 October 2020, n. 126.

forms of compensation were recognized to a broad audience of self-employed, freelance, or seasonal workers, such as a €600 or €1.000 benefit distributed in March, April, and May, depending on the specific job category (we will refer to this type of intervention again in section 4 and in section 5.1). Furthermore, the government instituted the Emergency Income (REM), an extraordinary and temporary antipoverty support destined for extremely low-income families, ranging from €400 to €800. This benefit - not combinable with other forms of support - was assigned twice, plus - on request - a third time, with a fixed amount of €400. Finally, the ordinary unemployment benefits were prolonged for two months for those people who were not included in any of the newly established measures. A further important action to prevent a vast surge of unemployment consisted in the suspension of dismissal procedures, in force from the 23rd of February 2020 and then repeatedly prolonged, even beyond the following year.

It is important to notice how the abovementioned measures benefitted mostly individuals working in the services sector.[10] A structural and preexisting reason determined this occurrence: this category of workers could typically rely on a narrower level of social protection than their counterparts in the industrial sector. For example, the special "Covid-19" redundancy pay aimed to extend such benefits to traditionally excluded workers, namely to services sector workers. The new forms of protection provided by the Italian government came not only in terms of cash and benefit payments but also in terms of taxes and tariff payments postponement and loan guarantees. This increased protection for workers in the services sector is also documented by Monteduro et al., 2023, who show how the policy interventions in response to the first pandemic year played a crucial role in keeping overall income inequality under control. For example, they show that, without the government's interventions, self-employed individuals would have experienced an income loss considerably higher (on average €1.288) than employees (€311).

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[10]It is important to stress how we are referring here to a broad definition of the services sector, including also small firms, self-employed individuals, and retail shops. We provide a more detailed description of the activities considered within the services and the industry sectors in section 5.1, and Tables A3, A4, and A5.

The government also intervened in favor of Italian companies, mainly through grants and fiscal benefits, to ensure their endurance during the emergency phase and facilitate their relaunch during the recovery phase. Primarily, non-repayable contributions were distributed to companies with an economic activity up to €5 million whose April's revenue decreased by at least 33% compared to the same period the year before. The exact amount was a percentage - between 10% and 20% and decreasing as revenues increase - of the difference between the sales volume of April 2019 and April 2020. The government also recognized a 60% tax credit - up to a maximum of €80.000 - for the expenses incurred in 2020 to enforce health requirements and containment measures against the spread of the virus. The same facility was applied to sanitation costs and the purchase of personal protective equipment.

Moreover, firms and self-employed workers with total revenues below €250 million - except for banks, insurance companies, and public administrations - benefited from the abolition of June's Regional Business Tax (IRAP) payment, supported by an allocation close to €4 billion. In addition, the government developed other fiscal relaxations. The Single Municipal Tax (IMU), a property tax, was suspended for beach resorts and hotels in 2020 and theaters and cinemas. For the latter group, the suspension also applied in 2021 and 2022. Finally, the fees for the occupation of public spaces were suspended until the end of the year for retail businesses holding concessions for public land use.

At the peak of the first pandemic wave, because of the forthcoming severe economic contraction, further legislative provisions were assumed, especially to preserve the credit market, which would inevitably hit from two sides. On the one hand, earning reductions for firms and families may compromise their ability to fulfill previous financial commitments. On the other hand, these income conditions worsen their possibility of obtaining new financing. To this end, the "Liquidity" decree,[11] approved on the 8th of April, and securing €30 billion, was aimed to guarantee the necessary liquidity to all economic actors. Among the other measures, self-employed workers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) received

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[11]Decree Law 8 April 2020, n. 23 converted with amendments into Law 5 June 2020, n. 40.

an extraordinary moratorium on current account lines of credit and other short-term loans, initially until the 30th of September and then prolonged up to the end of January 2021. Moreover, for all classes of enterprises, the treasury department granted guarantees - in a range between 70% and 90% - in favor of banks and other financial institutions that provided new loans, which can amount up to 25% of the 2019 revenue and have a six-year maximum duration.

From the above brief recapitulation, it is clear how in Italy - as in almost all other countries - the public sector heavily hand stepped in to tackle the widespread consequences of the pandemic. To summarize the magnitude of the overall effort, the 2020 Italian government deficit was more than €156 billion, equal to 9,5% of the GDP, which is the highest since 1995.

It is worth mentioning that the European Union financially supported part of such an extraordinary economic intervention. At the beginning of April 2020, the European Commission proposed the institution of a temporary "Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency" (SURE) dedicated to safeguarding jobs and workers from the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.[12] The support to the EU Member States was provided via financial assistance, up to €100 billion in total, and in the form of loans granted on favorable terms, to (partially) cover the costs devoted to social safety nets. The Italian government formally required the activation of the SURE program on the 8th of August for an amount close to €28 billion, based on the measures adopted in the "Care Italy" and "Recovery" decrees. The European Commission approved the request on the 24th of August,[13] and the first tranche was distributed the 27th of October. Hence, the EU strongly contributed to bearing the financial exposure implemented by the Italian government, providing close to one-quarter of the total additional resources expended.

A further significant contribution for the Italian government derived from the European

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[12]Approved by the Council of the European Union with the Council Regulation (EU) 2020/672 of 19 May 2020.

[13]Approved by the Council of the European Union with the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2020/1349 of 25 September 2020.

Central Bank through the launch in March 2020 of the Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme (PEPP), an additional non-standard monetary policy measure aimed at safeguarding the monetary policy transmission mechanism against the COVID-19 outbreak.[14] The program consists of a temporary asset purchase program of private and public sector securities, initially amounting to €750 billion and then increased up to €1850 billion. Finally, the most significant intervention of the European institutions in 2020 was the Next Generation EU, a more than €800 billion temporary recovery instrument – proposed by the European Commission in May and approved in general political terms by the European Council in July – finalized to repair the economic and social damages caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.2   2020 municipal elections in Italy

Initially scheduled in the Spring and then postponed to the Autumn of 2020, Italian local elections took place on the 20th and 21st of September. The elections involved 1178 municipalities, 608 belonging to ordinary statute regions and 570 to special statute regions. In concomitance with these elections, there were two other electoral appointments: a constitutional referendum regarding reducing the number of parliamentarians and regional elections in six ordinary statute regions (Veneto, Liguria, Campania, Marche, Puglia, and Toscana) and the special region Valle d'Aosta.

As reformed in 1993 by Law 81/1993, the Italian legislation states the direct election of the mayor following a majoritarian rule, differentiated based on the municipal population (Bordignon and Colussi, 2020; Bordignon et al., 2016; Gamalerio et al., 2021). Specifically, municipalities with less than 15,000 inhabitants use a first-past-the-post mechanism to elect the mayor. With this system, the mayoral candidate who wins the most votes is directly elected mayor. The electoral rule also assigns a majority of 2/3 of the council seats to the list connected to the newly elected mayor. Municipalities with more than 15.000 inhabitants

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[14]Decision (EU) 2020/440 of the European Central Bank of 24 March 2020 on a temporary pandemic emergency purchase program (ECB/2020/17).

use a runoff or dual ballot electoral system, in which the candidate who wins more than 50 percent of the votes is elected mayor. If no candidate gets more than 50 percent of the votes, the first two candidates go to a second round. The winner of the second round is elected mayor. The lists connected to the elected mayor get 60 percent of the municipal council seats.

4   Empirical strategy

To study the effect of lockdown-induced economic insecurity on electoral outcomes, we perform multiple difference-in-differences analyses based either on municipal or survey data, later described in section 5.

With the Italian municipal data, we run the following model:

$$Y_{i,t} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 \cdot \%\ inactive_i + \gamma_2 \cdot post_t + \gamma_3 \cdot \%\ inactive_i \cdot post_t + \gamma_k \cdot X_{k,i} + \xi_{i,t} \quad (1)$$

where the dependent variable $Y_{i,t}$ captures electoral outcomes measured in municipality i and during the electoral year t, with $t \in [2008, 2020]$. As described in section 5.1, we have information for three electoral years for all municipalities in our sample. The continuous variable $\%\ inactive_i$ is the share of inactive workers during the first lockdown in municipality i, calculated as described in section 5.1. This variable represents our main measure that captures the level of economic insecurity suffered by workers at the municipal level. The dummy variable $post_t$ is equal to 1 for the 2020 municipal elections. The vector $X_{k,i}$ contains k covariates capturing socio-economic municipal characteristics for municipality i and electoral year t, described in section 5.1. We cluster the standard errors at the municipality level. The coefficient of interest is γ_3, which captures the effect of an increase in the share of inactive workers due to the Covid-19 restrictions on electoral outcomes.

Then, we run the following modified version of equation 1 with municipal and year of

election fixed effects:

$$Y_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \% \ inactive_i \cdot post_t + \delta_i + \lambda_t + \xi_{i,t} \qquad (2)$$

where the year of election FE λ_t control for temporal shocks that affect all the municipalities at the same time and the municipal FE δ_i captures all the time-invariant municipal characteristics. In equation 2, λ_t absorbs the variable $post_t$, while the municipal FE δ_i absorbs the variable $\% \ inactive_i$ and the vector $X_{k,i}$. The coefficient of interest in model 2 is β_1, which estimates whether an increase in the share of inactive workers during the first lockdown leads to a differential change in electoral outcomes across municipalities hit differently by the Covid-19 restrictions introduced by the central government during the first lockdown.

The central assumption of the difference-in-differences approach is that municipalities with different shares of inactive workers during the lockdown should have been following common electoral trends in the electoral years before 2020. We test this assumption, in the subsequent empirical analysis, interacting the variable $\% \ inactive_i$ with a dummy variable pre_t equal to 1 for the first (out of three) electoral years observed in the data for all municipalities in our sample. We add this interaction term to equation 2 to empirically check for the absence of differential pre-treatment trends in electoral outcomes across municipalities affected differently by the restrictions introduced during the lockdown.

We also replicate this difference-in-differences model changing the treatment variable. More precisely, we use as alternative measure of the economic insecurity level in each municipality the per capita amount (total amount in one municipality over the resident population) of the different forms of monetary compensation recognized to self-employed workers: also this variable is later described in section 5.1.

We then adopt the same empirical strategy also to study the consequences of the pandemic emergency on voting intention collected in the survey data described in section 5.2. The necessary variations to perform this second specification are the following. First, the dependent variable $Y_{i,t}$ is a dummy variable which indicates the probability of voting a spe-

cific party or coalition, for individual i in year t with $t \in [2018, 2020]$. As better illustrated in section 5.2, we know the voting preferences for both the current year (2020) and the two preceding elections (2019 and 2018), then the dummy variable $post_t$ is equal to 1 for when the year is 2020. Second, the treatment variable - properly described in section 5.2 - is a dummy variable, then more simply indicated as $inactive_i$. It represents the employment status of the interviewee: equal to 1 when inactive. Third, the vector $X_{k,i}$ contains k covariates capturing characteristics of individual i in year t. The coefficient of interest γ_3 indicates the effect of being an inactive worker due to the restrictions introduced by the Italian government on the declared voting intention. Finally, to test the common trend assumption, we interact the treatment variable $inactive_i$ with a dummy variable pre_t equal to 1 if the year is 2018.

5   Data

This research employs two different data-sets - one based on Italian municipal data and the other built around survey data provided by IPSOS Italia - on which we apply the empirical strategy described in the previous section 4.

5.1   Data on Italian municipalities

We get data on Italian municipalities from different sources: the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), the Ministry of Interior or the National Institute for Social Security (INPS). Our sample is composed of 575 of the 1178 municipalities that voted in 2020. The difference between the totality of potential and the actually employed cities is because electoral data regarding special statute regions are not available; therefore, the starting reference point is the 608 municipalities belonging to ordinary statute regions; the remaining discrepancy depends on further missing data in the relevant variables used in the empirical analysis. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the Italian territory of municipalities from ordinary (left graph) and special (right graph) statute regions that voted in 2020. We also

collected data from the two previous local elections for each municipality, thus reaching a total number of observations equal to 1725. As represented in Figure 2, most of the precedent elections occurred in 2010 and 2015, coherently with the five-year frequency established by the legislation.

Figure 1: Municipalities from ordinary and special statute regions that voted in 2020
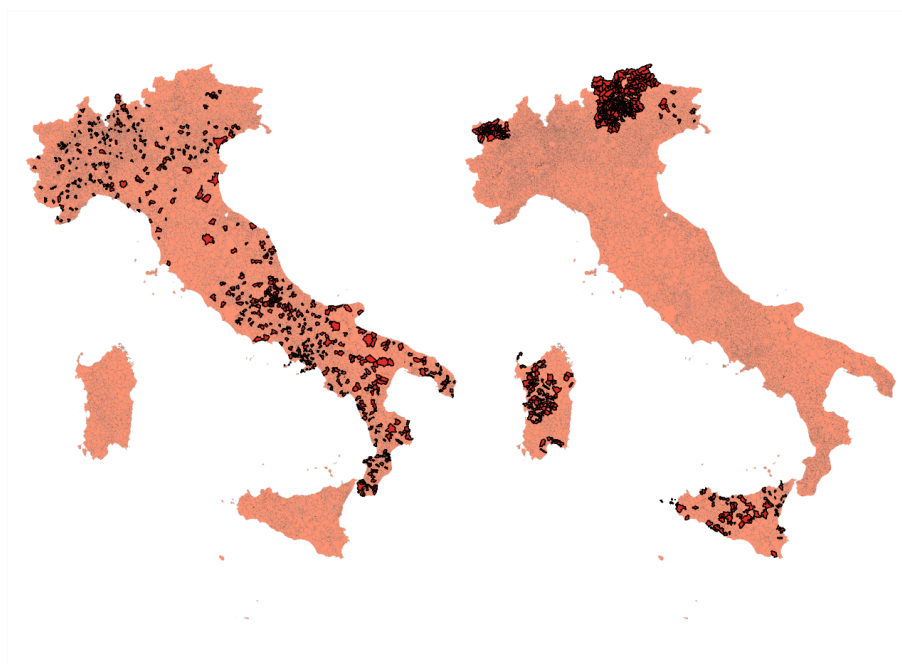
Notes. The figures highlight all municipalities which held local elections in 2020: on the left side those belonging to ordinary statute regions and on the right side those belonging to special statute regions.

The dependent variable of the analysis is the vote shares of different political parties. In municipalities above the 15.000 inhabitants, we use votes expressed to the lists (not the candidates) in the first round. The variable *Center-Right Votes* gathers the preferences conferred to center-right parties, namely: the League, Brothers of Italy, Forza Italia, and other past or present smaller parties belonging to that faction. *Center-Left Votes* collects the votes in favor of the Democratic Party plus other (smaller) leftist movements or parties. Both groups are also integrated with those civic lists - participating especially in small cities - which refer (for the name and/or the logo) clearly to one of the two coalitions. To correctly identify those lists, we exploit both the Registry of local administrators (arranged by the Ministry of Interior) and local newspapers' information. The variable *Five Star*

Figure 2: Observations by period for each electoral year
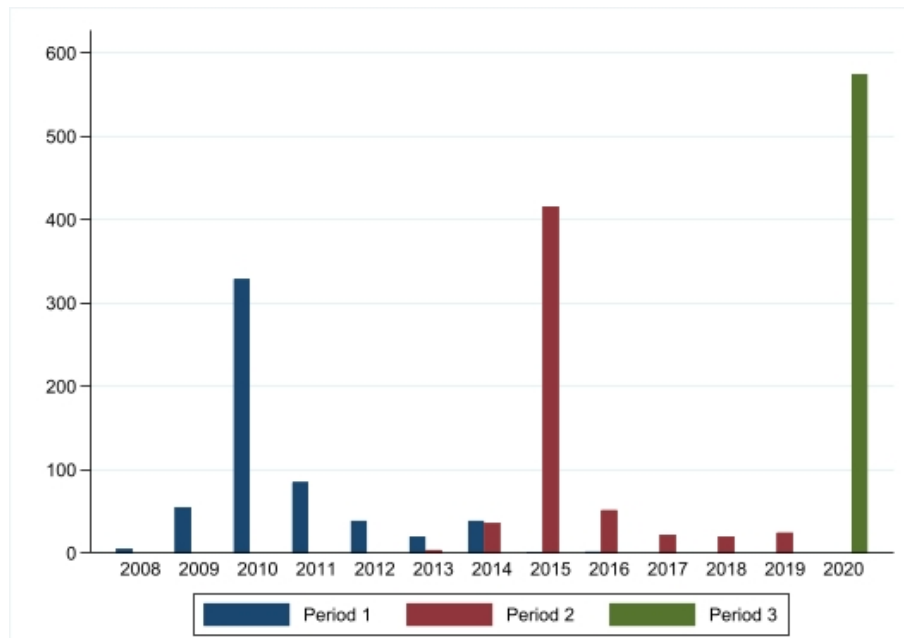
Notes. The figure shows the number of observations for each electoral year: in blue the first period, in red the second period and finally in green the third period, namely the 2020.

Votes refers to the votes for the Five Star Movement, a party that - at the time - always run alone, allowing for a neat identification. All the civic lists without an evident political affiliation are assembled in the variable *Civic Lists Votes*. Table A2 in the appendix provides a complete list of each party forming the center-right and the center-left blocks. Finally, the variable *Turnout* indicates the effective popular participation in the electoral competitions with respect to the eligible voters. All this information is derived from the historical archive of the elections of the Ministry of Interior.

To provide a consistent evidence of the programmatic platforms of these parties, Figure A1 reports a summary their political positions, as elaborated by the Manifesto Project[15]. First, it confirms that the parties forming both the Center-Left and the Center-Right coalition are actually leaning to their respective political side; then, it shows the prevalence of pro-EU stances for the Center-Left while the prevalence of against-EU stances for the Center-Right and - even more moderately - for the Five Star Movement as well.

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[15]The Manifesto Project analyses parties' election manifestos in order to study parties' policy preferences: https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/

The treatment variable - elaborated and made available by the Italian National Institute of Statistics - captures the effect of the economic lockdown in terms of economic insecurity. Specifically, we use three indicators of the share of inactive workers, which estimate how many people had to stop their working activity due to the restrictive measures.[16] The main treatment variable is the *Share Inactive Workers*, which captures the ratio between the number of people not allowed to work - in the period from the 22nd of March to the 3rd of May - and the total number of workers. More in detail, this distinction follows the ATECO 2007 [17] classification of economic activities: the DPCM of the 22nd of March clearly list those with the permission to regularly carry on the business and - by subtraction - those who had to suffer the suspension. The adoption of this treatment variable is not new in the literature since it is the same employed by Borri et al., 2020. However, differently from them, in addition to such a general subdivision, we also provide a more detailed partitioning, using two other indicators. The first indicator measures the share of inactive workers in the industry sector, while the second captures the share of inactive workers in the services sector.

For an appropriate comprehension of the treatment variable, it is important to understand which economic activities remained open. In broad terms, in the industry sector, this is the case for food and beverage, chemical and pharmaceutical products, construction of roads, railways, and other public utility operas; on the other hand, in the services sector, the wholesale commerce for raw materials, food and beverage, the logistics sector, the information and communication sector, education and health and social assistance. A broad

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[16]The starting point to build these variables is the 2017 "*Frame SBS Territoriale*" which contains an extensive municipality-based report about the typology of all active firms and businesses, including the respective number of their workers (both employers and employees). For completeness, this survey does not include some economic categories: agriculture, credit and insurance, public administration, and part of the sector regarding personal services. The following step incorporates the aforementioned restrictive measures adopted the 22nd of March and contained in the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers (DPCM) of the same day. Based on that disposals, each economic organization is assigned either to the group allowed to continue the working activity or to the group forced to stop; simultaneously, we also obtain a subdivision between active and inactive workers.

[17]The ATECO code is an alpha-numeric combination that identifies an economic activity. Letters and numbers have different meanings: letters identify the macro-sector, while numbers represent the sectors' categories and sub-categories. The numbers range from a minimum of two digits up to a maximum of six digits: the various articulations describe a different degree of detail.

classification of the suspended activities is reported in Table A3 in the appendix, while the full list of all open and close activities for both sectors is reproduced in two distinguished tables (Table A4 and Table A5), in the appendix as well.[18]

We also collected data on tourism activity and excess mortality due to the Covid-19 pandemic for robustness checks. The variables *Tourism Relevance Index* and *Elderly Excess Mortality* are drawn as follows. According to a governmental decision of July 2020, the ISTAT designed a series of novel indicators to capture the role of tourism - in terms of attractiveness (demand side) and proposal (supply side) - for each Italian municipality. We make use of the measure which embraces all the relevant aspects, the "synthetic index of tourist density", computed on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). We re-scale this variable to take values between 0 and 1. The mortality impact of the epidemic disease is evaluated in terms of excess mortality - with respect to the moving average of the previous 5 years (2015-2019) - in the period ranging from March to August 2020 and for the section of the population more than 65 years old.

Finally, we also included data - retrieved from INPS - containing information on one of the various compensatory measures introduced by the Italian government in 2020. Specifically, we collected data on the different forms of monetary compensation (€600 or €1.000) that were recognized (from the 10th of April to the 28th of July 2020) to a broad audience of self-employed, freelance or seasonal workers. More in detail, the variable *Share Bonus Self-Employed* represents the per capita amount of all these benefits, i.e., the total amount in each municipality over the resident population. As anticipated in section 4, we use this variable as a further treatment variable to reinforce our analysis with an alternative measure of the economic insecurity level in each municipality. It is important to stress how this variable captures only one of the economic interventions produced by the Italian government in 2020. We focus on this measure because of data availability.

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[18]The subdivision between active and inactive sectors is ruled by Annex 1 of the DPCM approved the 22nd of March 2020 and based on the 2007 ATECO classification. Each macro-sector, category, or sub-category is correspondingly labeled with 1 if active and with 0 if inactive.

The data set is then completed by a series of control variables that provide full information on each municipality's geographical, economic, and social characteristics. The summary and descriptive statistics of all independent and dependent variables are represented in Table 1 while Table A1 in the appendix reports each corresponding source.

Table 1: Summary and Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Center-right Votes	1725	0.077	0.164	0	1
Center-left Votes	1725	0.060	0.140	0	1
Five Stars Movement Votes	1725	0.011	0.037	0	0.574
Civic Lists Votes	1725	0.771	0.331	0	1
Turnout	1725	0.674	0.109	0.209	0.950
Share Inactive Workers	1725	0.488	0.147	0	0.958
Share Inactive Workers (Services)	1725	0.413	0.137	0	1
Share Inactive Workers (Industry)	1725	0.613	0.213	0	1
Tourism Relevance Index	1725	0.456	0.351	0	1
Elderly Excess Mortality	1725	0.118	0.574	-1	4
Share Bonus Self-Employed	1722	102.618	47.843	3.152	410.345
Population	1725	9,112	18,782	48	261,362
Share Population 0-14	1725	0.129	0.030	0.021	0.225
Share Population 15-64	1725	0.643	0.042	0.354	0.743
Share Population 64-	1725	0.227	0.065	0.094	0.614
Provincial Capital	1725	0.021	0.143	0	1
Area (km2)	1725	40.233	51.473	1.527	415.899
Density (Population/km2)	1725	452.568	1091.378	0.920	12224.405
Elevation (m)	1725	366	310	0	2,035
Share Primary Educated	1725	0.217	0.050	0.125	0.554
Secondary Educated	1725	0.290	0.038	0.113	0.463
Share Upper Secondary Educated	1725	0.270	0.042	0.117	0.412
Share Graduated	1725	0.076	0.028	0.014	0.189
Active Enterprises	1725	668	1,578	1	25,243
Occupation Rate	1725	0.422	0.076	0.188	0.596
Activity Rate	1725	0.480	0.062	0.203	0.633
Total Income	1725	108,600,000	268,100,000	673,748	4,482,000,000

Notes. The tables summaries all dependent and independent variables and provides the main descriptive statistics: the number of observations, the mean, the standard deviation and the minimum and maximum values. The variable Share Bonus Self-Employed presents only 1722 observations because data for one municipality are missing.

5.2 Survey data

The second dataset is built around survey data elaborated by IPSOS SA in Italy from March to September 2020 using the CAWI methodology. It consists of 27 sessions of surveys with about 800 interviews for each session and provides information regarding the interviewees' personal, professional, political, and geographical characteristics.

Of primary interest for our research are the data regarding the current national voting intention, the vote expressed at the 2019 European election and the vote expressed at the 2018 parliamentary election. With this information, it is possible to build an individual-based panel data-set, knowing the individual political party preferences over the years 2018, 2019, and 2020. Hence, the voting intentions represent the dependent variables, grouped as follows. The first is the probability of voting for center-left parties (Democratic Party, Free, and Equals, The Left, Italian Left, Article One). The second is the probability of voting for center-right parties (League, Brothers of Italy, Forza Italia, Us with Italy, Cambiamo!). Finally, the probability of voting for the Five Star Movement. For coherence and homogeneity, in gathering together parties to form the center-left and the center-right coalitions, we included the same political forces both with electoral and survey data.

A second relevant question, posed only in the surveys conducted during the first lockdown (late March, April, and early May 2020), regards a possible swing in the employment status. Interviewees were asked whether they regularly continued to work (i.e., active worker) or they were forced to interrupt the working activity due to the restrictive measures adopted to contain the spread of the virus (i.e., inactive worker). Students, pensioners, homeworkers, and unemployed people were excluded from this question since they could not be affected.

In order to cover the remaining period (from late May to September) with this type of information, we first estimate with a logit regression the probability of being an inactive worker, using surveys conducted between the 22nd of March and the 3rd of May, that is in the period when strongest and territorially homogeneous limitations were in place. The estimation is performed including a series of explanatory variables regarding both individual

characteristics - age, years of education, gender, profession, sector of employment (private or public), type of employment contract (permanent or fixed-term) - and features related to the municipality in which the interviewee is living - population, area, elevation, the provincial capital, per capita total income, coastal area, share of workers in different professional sectors.

Once obtained these estimates, we then predicted the employment status of the individuals interviewed in the subsequent months, attributing the status of inactive worker to those with a predicted probability equal to or higher than 0.50; symmetrically, those with a predicted probability lower than 0.50 are considered as not affected by the restrictive measure when they were in force (active workers). In this exercise - apart from excluding the above-mentioned categories which are not involved in any working activity - we performed some adjustments to refine the prediction: public sector employees with a permanent contract, farmers, and teachers were assumed to be active workers, independently from the result of the prediction. The reason behind this choice is to exclude from the category of the inactive workers people whose job was very unlikely affected by the restrictive measures since they were allowed to carry on the profession.

Hence, through these steps, we are able to define a dummy treatment variable that covers the whole temporal interval: equal to one for people who stop their working activity in compliance with the governmental decisions. Finally, the data set contains an individual weighing variable in order to make the interviewees of each session representative of the whole Italian population.

6   Results from municipal data

6.1   Main results - The effect of lockdown-induced economic insecurity on electoral outcomes

This section describes the main results of the effect of the economic lockdown on electoral outcomes. We investigate the impact on the vote shares of center-left parties, center-right parties, the Five Star Movement, local independent parties (i.e., Civic Lists), and the electoral turnout. Center-right political forces did not align with the central government during the municipal elections in September and October of 2020. Civic Lists are, by default, independent from levels of government above the municipal one (Gamalerio, 2020). Conversely, at the time of the municipal elections studied, center-left political parties and the Five Star Movement supported the central government led by Giuseppe Conte.

   We start by investigating the effect on the vote shares of center-left parties. We report in Table 2 the results estimated running models 1 and 2 presented in section 4. In column 1, we report the coefficients estimated running model 1 without additional municipal covariates, while in column 2, we add the covariates. In column 3, we report the results obtained running model 2. In column 4, we test for potentially differential pre-treatment electoral trends by adding the interaction between $\%$ $inactive_i$ and pre_t to model 2. The results in Table 2 indicate that the lockdown-induced economic insecurity positively affected the electoral performance of center-left parties. The estimated coefficients of the interaction term between $\%$ $inactive_i$ and $post_t$ are all different from zero and stable across different specifications. More in detail, the coefficients indicate that an increase in the share of inactive workers by one standard deviation (i.e., 14.7 percentage points) led to an increase in the vote shares of center-left political parties by approximately 1 percentage point. In addition, the coefficient in column 4 of the interaction between $\%$ $inactive_i$ and pre_t is not statistically different from zero. This last result confirms that the common trends assumption in electoral outcomes before 2020 holds.

Table 2: The effect on center-left vote shares

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent variable	Vote shares of center-left parties			
Covariates	No	Yes	No	No
Municipal FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
$post \cdot \%\ inactive$	0.076***	0.076***	0.071**	0.062*
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.035)
$post$	-0.063***	-0.063***		
	(0.015)	(0.015)		
$\%\ inactive$	-0.106**	-0.060		
	(0.045)	(0.041)		
$pre \cdot \%\ inactive$				-0.018
				(0.025)
Observations	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.016	0.215	0.788	0.789

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatment variable is the overall share of inactive workers. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the share of vote to center-left parties. The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable is the variation in the share of votes in favour of center-left parties. Covariates in column (2) are the following: Population, Share Population 0-14, Share Population 15-64, Share Population 64-, Provincial Capital, Area (km2), Density (Population/km2), Elevation (m), Share Primary Educated, Share Secondary Educated, Share Upper Secondary Educated, Share Graduated, Tourism Relevance Index, Active Enterprises, Occupation Rate, Activity Rate, Total Income. Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

Table 3 reports the results obtained using the vote shares of center-right political parties as the dependent variable. The structure of Table 3 is the same as that of Table 2. The results in Table 3 indicate that economic insecurity negatively affected the electoral performance of center-right parties. The estimated coefficients of the interaction term between $\%\ inactive_i$ and $post_t$ are all negative, statistically different from zero, and stable across different specifications. The results indicate that an increase in the share of inactive workers by one standard deviation (i.e., 14.7 percentage points) led to a decrease in the vote shares of center-right political parties by 1.2 percentage points. Besides, the coefficient in column 4 of the interaction between $\%\ inactive_i$ and pre_t is small and not statistically different from zero. This last result supports the common trends assumption in electoral outcomes before

2020.[19]

Table 3: The effect on center-right vote shares

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent variable	Vote shares of center-right parties			
Covariates	No	Yes	No	No
Municipal FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
post ·% inactive	-0.077***	-0.077***	-0.082***	-0.068***
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.031)	(0.025)
post	0.028**	0.028**		
	(0.012)	(0.012)		
% inactive	0.100**	0.041		
	(0.043)	(0.038)		
pre·% inactive				0.030
				(0.036)
Observations	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.006	0.262	0.795	0.795

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatment variable is the overall share of inactive workers. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the share of vote to center-right parties. The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable is the variation in the share of votes in favour of center-right parties. Covariates in column (2) are the following: Population, Share Population 0-14, Share Population 15-64, Share Population 64-, Provincial Capital, Area (km2), Density (Population/km2), Elevation (m), Share Primary Educated, Share Secondary Educated, Share Upper Secondary Educated, Share Graduated, Tourism Relevance Index, Active Enterprises, Occupation Rate, Activity Rate, Total Income. Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

In Table 4, we look at the impact of economic insecurity on the electoral performance of the Five Star Movement. The Five Star Movement is a populist political force (Boffa et al., 2023; Bordignon and Colussi, 2020) that, at the time of the 2020 municipal elections, supported the national government led by prime minister Giuseppe Conte. Columns 1-4 of Table 4 replicate the same structure of Tables 2-3. As we can see, all the coefficients are small and statistically insignificant. These results suggest that lockdown-induced economic insecurity did not affect the electoral performance of the Five Star Movement.

[19]To further validate the absence of differential pre-treatment trends in electoral outcomes across municipalities affected differently by the restrictions introduced during the lockdown, we performed the same empirical experiment using the electoral results of the 2018 General Elections and the 2019 European Elections. Even this additional test, reported in Figure A3, indicates the validity of the common trends assumption in electoral outcomes before 2020.

Table 4: The effect on Five Star Movement vote shares

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent variable	Vote shares of Five Star Movement			
Covariates	No	Yes	No	No
Municipal FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
post ·% inactive	-0.011	-0.011	-0.009	-0.010
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.016)
post	-0.001	-0.001		
	(0.004)	(0.004)		
% inactive	0.001	0.012		
	(0.009)	(0.008)		
pre·% inactive				-0.002
				(0.014)
Observations	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.006	0.166	0.550	0.550

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatment variable is the overall share of inactive workers. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the share of vote to the Five Star Movement. The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable is the variation in the share of votes in favour of the Five Stars Movement . Covariates in column (2) are the following: Population, Share Population 0-14, Share Population 15-64, Share Population 64-, Provincial Capital, Area (km2), Density (Population/km2), Elevation (m), Share Primary Educated, Share Secondary Educated, Share Upper Secondary Educated, Share Graduated, Tourism Relevance Index, Active Enterprises, Occupation Rate, Activity Rate, Total Income. Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

Finally, in columns 1-4 of Table 5, we study the impact of economic distress on the electoral performance of the Civic Lists, which are municipal political organizations independent from national political parties (Gamalerio, 2020). Finally, in columns 5-8 of Table 5, we analyze the impact on electoral turnout. Columns 1-4 and columns 5-8 of Table 5 use the same structure as Tables 2-3. As we can see, all the coefficients estimated in Tables 5 are small and statistically insignificant. Thus, the results in Tables 5 suggest that economic distress did not affect Civic Lists. Also, in contrast with existing evidence in the literature (Giommoni and Loumeau, 2020; Noury et al., 2021; Picchio and Santolini, 2021), we do not find any effect on electoral participation.

Table 5: The effect on Civic Lists and Electoral Turnout

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Dependent var.	Civic Lists vote shares				Electoral turnout			
Covariates	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Municipal FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
$post \cdot \%\ inactive$	0.010	0.010	0.018	0.013	0.011	0.011	0.009	0.005
	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.022)
$post$	0.042**	0.042**			-0.042***	-0.042***		
	(0.020)	(0.020)			(0.008)	(0.008)		
$\%\ inactive$	0.016	-0.001			0.008	-0.018		
	(0.072)	(0.060)			(0.034)	(0.031)		
$pre \cdot \%\ inactive$				-0.011				-0.009
				(0.043)				(0.018)
Observations	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.007	0.375	0.859	0.859	0.025	0.194	0.906	0.906

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatment variable is the overall share of inactive workers. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the share of vote to the Civic Lists and the Turnout. The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable is the variation in the share of votes in favour of the Civic Lists, from column (1) to (4), and in the Turnout, from column (5) to (8). Covariates in column (2) and (6) are the following: Population, Share Population 0-14, Share Population 15-64, Share Population 64-, Provincial Capital, Area (km2), Density (Population/km2), Elevation (m), Share Primary Educated, Share Secondary Educated, Share Upper Secondary Educated, Share Graduated, Tourism Relevance Index, Active Enterprises, Occupation Rate, Activity Rate, Total Income. Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

6.2 Main mechanism

Tables 2-3 in section 6.1 show that economic insecurity negatively impacted center-right parties and positively impacted center-left parties. This section provides evidence on the main mechanism that can explain the core results. In addition, we show that two potential alternative stories do not seem to explain our results.

In Table 6, we provide evidence of the main mechanism. Specifically, we split our treatment (i.e., the interaction term between the variables $\%\ inactive_i$ and $post_t$) into two separate treatment variables. The first is the interaction between $post_t$ and the variable $\%\ inactive\ services_i$, which is equal to the share of workers in the service sectors that remained inactive during the first lockdown due to the economic restrictions introduced by the central government. The second is the interaction term between $post_t$ and the variable $\%\ inactive\ industry_i$, which is the share of inactive workers in the industry sector during the first economic lockdown mandated by the central government. As explained in section 3.1, the Italian

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central government intervened in the economy to support and compensate workers in occupations affected by the economic lockdown. However, while the tools used to compensate workers in industry sectors were pre-existing to the Covid-19 crisis, the central government introduced new special economic measures to protect workers in the services sector. The reason for introducing these new special measures is that occupations in the services sector did not benefit from the same protection as the industry sector before 2020.

We provide evidence on center-left parties in columns 1 to 4 and center-right parties in columns 5 to 8. The coefficients reported in Table 6 indicate that the share of inactive workers in the service sector drives our main results. Specifically, we find a positive effect of the share of inactive workers in the services sector on the vote shares of center-left parties and a negative effect on the vote shares of center-right parties. Conversely, we do not find any effect of the share of inactive workers in the industry sector on electoral outcomes. The results remain the same if we control for both treatments, as in columns 4 and 8. This evidence suggests that the new special economic measures introduced by the central government to protect workers in the services sector may have induced those who benefited from these measures to vote for center-left parties. This increased support for center-left parties came at an electoral cost for center-right political parties, which in September 2020 did not align with the central government. Hence, these results suggest that the combination of economic insecurity with new protective measures generated a partisanship shift toward the left of the political spectrum.

To provide additional evidence on the main mechanism that explains our results, we compute another empirical analysis using an alternative measure of economic insecurity. We perform the same difference-in-differences experiment with the alternative treatment variable *Share Bonus Self-Employed*. This variable represents the per capita amount (in each municipality) of all benefits in favor of self-employed workers (see section 3.1 for a description). In other words, we measure economic insecurity through the per capita municipal incidence of one important compensatory measure introduced by the central government. Even though

Table 6: Main mechanism: Services vs. Industry

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Dependent var.	Center-left vote shares				Center-right vote shares			
Covariates	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Municipal FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elect. Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
post ·% inactive	0.071**				-0.082***			
	(0.033)				(0.031)			
post ·% inactive services		0.085**		0.083**		-0.070**		-0.065*
		(0.037)		(0.039)		(0.033)		(0.033)
post ·% inactive industry			0.014	0.005			-0.026	-0.019
			(0.024)	(0.026)			(0.018)	(0.019)
Observations	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.788	0.789	0.787	0.789	0.795	0.795	0.794	0.795

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatments variables are: the overall share of inactive workers, the share of inactive workers in the industry and services sectors. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers (in overall terms and then separately for either the services or the industry sector), during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the share of vote to the center-right and center-left parties. The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable is the variation in the share of votes in favour of the center-left parties, from column (1) to (4), and of the center-right parties, from column (5) to (8). Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

this measure has the limit to be only one of the various compensatory measures introduced by the Italian government in 2020 (see section 3.1), Table A6 shows its pertinence as an alternative treatment variable. Specifically, Table A6 shows how this variable positively correlates with the share of inactive workers in the services sector, which is indeed the variable that drives our main results.

We report the results in Table 7, where the dependent variables are the vote shares for the center-left in columns 1 and 2, and the vote shares for the center-right in columns 3 and 4. Columns 1 and 3 report the results obtained running model 2. In columns 2 and 4, we test for potentially differential pre-treatment electoral trends, including the interaction between $\% \ bonus_i$ and pre_t to model 2. Once more, Table 7 confirms the same tendency: a positive effect on the vote shares for the center-left parties and a negative effect on the vote shares for the center-right parties. Given that we measure *Share Bonus Self-Employed* by €100, we should interpret the estimated coefficients as the effect of a variation of €100 in the per capita amount. For example, an increase of €100 per capita leads to an increase of 1.3 percentage points in the vote shares for the center-left parties.

Table 7: Main mechanism: Share Bonus

|	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent var.	Center-left vote shares		Center-right vote shares	
Covariates	No	No	No	No
Municipal FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
$post \cdot \%$ bonus	0.013**	0.012*	-0.008	-0.016*
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.009)
$pre \cdot \%$ bonus		-0.001		-0.015
		(0.008)		(0.011)
Observations	1,722	1,722	1,722	1,722
R-squared	0.788	0.788	0.794	0.794

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatment variable is the overall monetary amount of the bonus in favour of self-employed workers over the resident population, divided by 100 (this means that the estimated coefficients should be interpreted as a variation of €100 in the per capita amount). The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the per capita share of the overall monetary amount of the compensations devoted to self-employed workers, introduced during the greatest lockdown period to compensate for the restrictive measures, on different electoral outcomes: the vote shares for the Center-Left in columns (1) and (2), and the vote shares for the Center-Right in columns (3) and (4). The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 574 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. Municipalities are 574 and not 575 because for one municipality of the canonical sample data are not available. The outcome variable are the variations of different electoral outcomes: the vote shares for the Center-Left in columns (1) and (2), and the vote shares for the Center-Right in columns (3) and (4). Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

6.3 Alternative stories

In this section, we control for two alternative stories that could explain our results. First, we control for a proxy of the economic recovery that many parts of Italy experienced during the summer of 2020. As shown in Figure 3, Italy experienced an important economic recovery during the third quarter of 2020. The tourism sector was the main sector to drive this recovery. Hence, in columns 2 and 6 of Table 8, we add as an additional control variable the interaction term between the dummy variable $post_t$ and the dummy variable $tourism$ which, as described in section 5, captures the relevance of tourism at the municipal level. The results in columns 2 and 6 show that our main coefficients of interest capturing the effect of lockdown-induced economic insecurity on center-left and center-right vote shares do not change once we include this proxy for the economic recovery during the summer of 2020.

Second, we show that a measure of the health consequences of Covid-19 does not explain

Figure 3: 2020 Quarterly GDP Growth
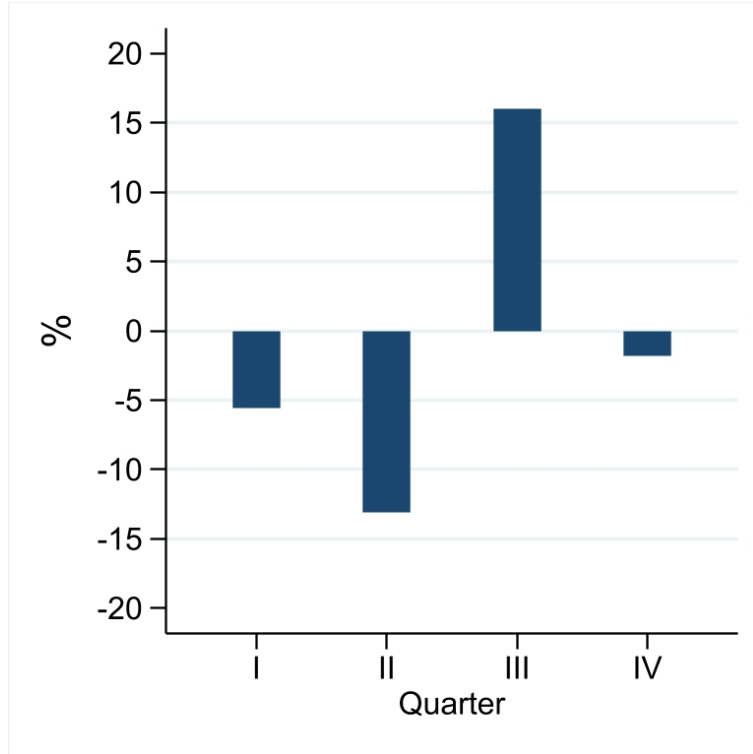
Notes. The figure shows the 2020 quarterly GDP growth in Italy, which respectively was:
-5.7%, -13.1%, +15.9% and 1.7%.

our results. Specifically, we add as a control variable the interaction term between the dummy variable $post_t$ and a measure for elderly excess mortality at the municipal level, described in section 5. The reason to control for this interaction term is that recent literature (Picchio and Santolini, 2021) has shown how the excess mortality generated by Covid-19 affected political outcomes. The results in columns 3 and 7 of Table 8 show that our main coefficients do not change once we include this measure capturing the health consequences of Covid-19. Besides, as shown in columns 4 and 8 of Table 8, the main coefficients do not change if we include both proxies for economic recovery and health consequences. In conclusion, these two alternative stories cannot explain our findings.

Table 8: Toursim and Excess Mortality

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Dependent var.	Center-left vote shares				Center-right vote shares			
Covariates	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Municipal FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elect. Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
$post \cdot \%\ inact.$	0.071**	0.077**	0.068**	0.075**	-0.082***	-0.082***	-0.093***	-0.093***
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.032)
$post \cdot tourism$		-0.021*		-0.020*		-0.001		-0.000
		(0.012)		(0.012)		(0.014)		(0.014)
$post \cdot EM$			0.005	0.005			0.022*	0.022*
			(0.008)	(0.008)			(0.011)	(0.011)
Observations	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.788	0.789	0.789	0.789	0.795	0.795	0.796	0.796

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatments variables are: the overall share of inactive workers, the tourism relevance index and the over65 excess mortality in the period March-June 2020 (with respect to the M.A. 2015-2019 of the same period). The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers (in overall terms and then separately for either the services or the industry sector), during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the share of vote to the center-right and center-left parties. The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable in the variation in the share of votes in favour of the center-left parties, from column (1) to (4), and of the center-right parties, from column (5) to (8). Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

6.4 Additional robustness checks

This section presents a sequence of robustness checks that reinforce the results presented in sections 6.1 and 6.2. The first exercise considers the possibility that, for some municipalities, the municipal elections were held on the same day as the regional elections. We are interested in this aspect because the results of municipal elections could have been affected by the concomitant regional competition, especially in 2020, due to the fact that the Italian constitutional framework delegates health policies to the regions. As this overlap does not occur, on a specific date, to all municipalities in the sample but, on the contrary, is verified over different electoral years and for different municipalities, year-fixed effects do not capture this phenomenon. Therefore, we introduce in the model described in equation 2 a dummy variable equal to 1 if, in a municipality, in a specific electoral year, the local election takes place in conjunction with the regional election. We report the results of this exercise in Table A7 in the appendix. These results do not show any alteration of the estimated coefficients, meaning that the overlap between municipal and regional elections does not influence our

findings.

Second, we deal with those cases in which some political parties did not present candidates in a specific municipality and electoral year, or we could not identify them following the procedure illustrated in section 5.1. In both situations, we coded the share of votes for the missing party/coalition as equal to zero. To check whether these cases drive our results, we modify again the model described in equation 2. More in detail, we introduce a set of dummy variables, one for each political party, equal to one if the corresponding party/coalition is not running at the municipal election of a specific year. We report the estimates in Table A8. Table A8 confirms that these cases do not drive our results, except for the coefficient estimated for the center-right, which maintains the same sign but becomes statistically insignificant. Given this result for the center-right coalition, in Table A9 in the appendix, we estimate the effect of our treatment on dummy variables capturing the probability of running at the municipal elections of each political party. It emerges that economic insecurity negatively affected the probability of competing and presenting candidates at the municipal elections for the center-right coalition only. Therefore, the results in Tables A8 and A9 suggests that a lower probability of participating in municipal elections due to the lockdown-induced economic insecurity explains the negative effect on the vote shares of the center-right coalition estimated in Table 3. We do not find the same evidence for the center-left coalition or the other political forces.

Third, we modify the regressions presented in section 6.1 clustering the standard errors at the labor district level instead of at the municipality level.[20] The aim is to assess whether electoral results are independently distributed or not within each labor district due to the high intensity of workers' inter-municipality mobility. As shown in Table A10 in the appendix, results are identical to the previous ones, indicating the absence of within-labor districts correlation. Finally, we study if the lockdown-induced economic insecurity influ-

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[20]Labor districts are geographical units where most labor force lives and works, and firms can find the labor force needed. Municipalities in the same labor district share similar economic and social characteristics. No government levels correspond to these labor districts (Gamalerio and Negri, 2022).

enced the re-election probability of the incumbent mayor. In this way, we want to test the presence of a local rally "round the flag" effect. The results in Table A11 in the appendix rule out the possibility of such an effect. We do not find evidence of a higher probability for an incumbent mayor (columns 1-4) or any municipal government member (columns 5-8) to be re-elected.

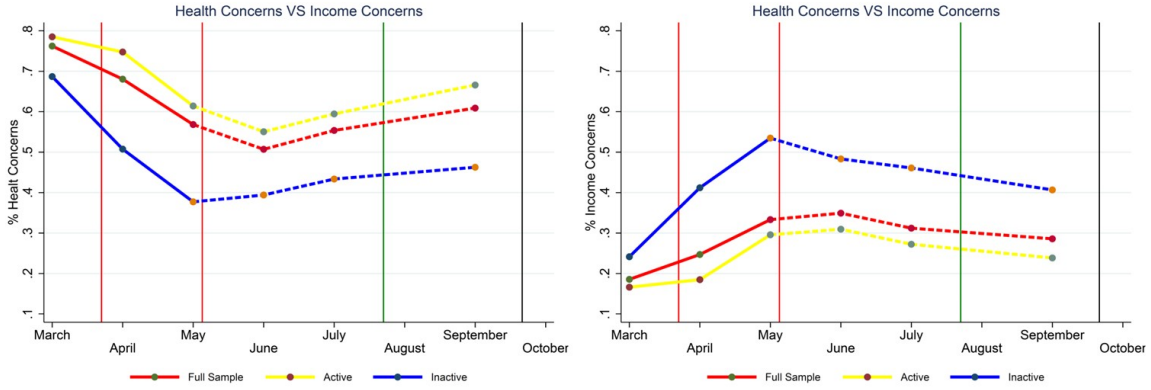# 7   Results from Survey Data

As section 6 reported results emerging from the analysis of municipal data, this section presents a set of additional results obtained using the survey data described in section 5.1 in order to provide corroborative evidence in support to the previous findings.

7.1   Descriptive Evidence from survey data

Let us begin with some descriptive evidence presented through different graphs. First, we confirm that the restrictive measures adopted to stop the spread of Covid-19 gave rise to economic insecurity. For this purpose, Figure 4 shows the answers for active and inactive workers to the following question: "What are your actual greater concerns? Health concerns or income concerns?". As it is evident - and also expected - those who suffered the break off of their working activities exhibit lower concerns toward health problems and more concerns toward income problems. As expected, the peak of this divergence is reached at the end of the greater lockdown but remains consistent even later.

The second piece of descriptive evidence in Figure 5 shows how the support for the different political forces and the European Union changed over time. The graphs indicate the following trends as election day approaches: an increase in the voting intention for the center-left and the approval rate for the European Union; vice versa, a decrease in the voting intention for the center-right; finally, no relevant deviations for the Five Star Movement. The same tendencies are described in Figure A4 in the appendix, where it is instead shown the

Figure 4: Health Concerns VS Income Concerns

average consensus - that is, the average opinion on a scale from 1 to 10 - for the same variables.

The third contribution consists of evaluating the approval rates of different institutions: the government, the prime minister, the interest in politics, and the trust in the institutions. Figure 6 shows a common tendency for all of them: an increase in the approval rates at the outbreak of Covid-19, then a decline during the following months, and finally, a recovery nearing the September elections. These results are also confirmed in Figure A5 in the appendix, where we report the average consensus.

Two messages derive from this descriptive evidence. First, people who were forced to stop their working activities were initially skeptical and diffident towards political institutions and the government. Subsequently, they received the government's support, and thus their opinion improved in terms of interest in politics and trust in the institutions. The other side of the coin is that such attitude was then reflected in terms of increased political support both in favor of the parties promoters of the extraordinary measures for which they benefited (the center-left) and for the institution which played a fundamental role in their approval and realization (the government, the prime minister and the European Union).

Figure 5: Parties' voting intention & EU approval rate
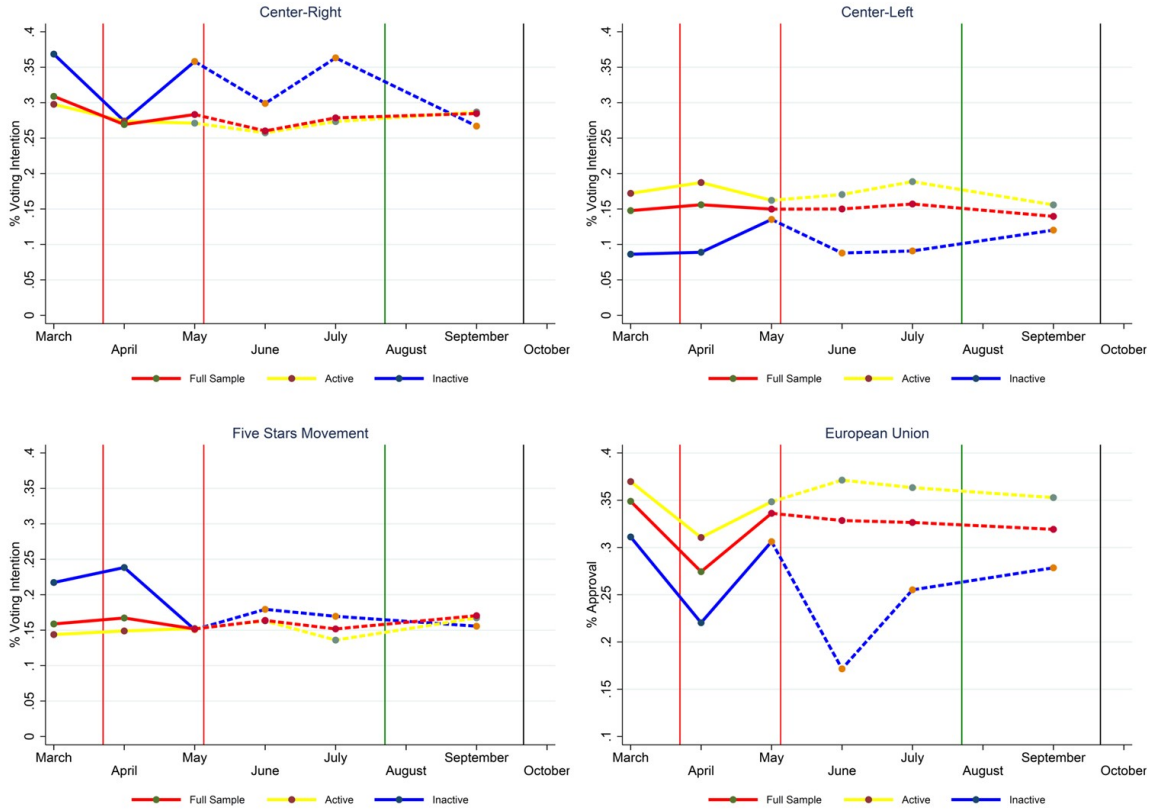
Notes. The Figure shows the voting intention - that is the exclusive probability of voting - in favour of different political forces: for center-left parties (Democratic Party and The Left), for center-right parties (League, Brothers of Italy and Forza Italia) and for the Five Star Movement. It shows also the approval rate - that is the probability of expressing a sufficient or a more than sufficient opinion - for the European Union. Results - monthly grouped - are collapsed over different subcategories: i) the full sample; ii) the active workers; iii) the inactive workers. The dotted line indicates that such subdivision is made through our predictions while the full line indicates that the information derives from the survey. The results are obtained weighting each observation with the correspondent socio-demographic coefficient in order to make the survey sample representative of the whole population. The vertical lines represents the following events: start of the greater lockdown, 22nd of March; end of the greater lockdown, 3rd of May; announcement of the launch of the Next Generation EU, 21st of July; election day, 20th of September.

7.2 Causal Evidence from survey data

This second section provides causal evidence using the survey data. As anticipated in section 4, we employ the same difference-in-differences empirical strategy used above. As described in more detail in section 5.2, the treatment variable captures people who declared, or we predicted, to have suspended their professional activities due to the restrictive measures. The control group includes people who regularly continued to work, plus students, pensioners, and homeworkers. Since our interest is studying the effect of economic insecurity, we decided to include these categories in the control group, as they were not affected by the restrictions and

Figure 6: Institutions' approval rates

did not benefit from the socioeconomic support programs. People unemployed for reasons different from the economic restrictions (e.g., unemployed before the introduction of the restrictions) are the sole professional category excluded from the analysis, given the difficulty of establishing whether these individuals received or not any benefit linked to the emergency measures introduced as a response to Covid-19.

Even though a broader time frame was available, we focus the empirical analysis on the period antecedent to the Italian local elections, which took place on the 20th and 21st of September, therefore employing four sessions of surveys, ranging from late August up to the middle of September, for a total number of 3198 interviews. In other words, we chose

the period closest to the electoral competition, considering that people, influenced by the electoral campaign and the media coverage, usually accurately decide how to vote just when the election date is approaching. Consequently, this strategy gives us a higher chance of dealing with more aware and precise answers from part of the respondents in the survey.

The results in Table 9 regard the center-left block in columns from 1 to 4 and the center-right block in columns from 5 to 8. In columns 1 and 5, the coefficients are estimated with the model 1 and without adding any covariate; in columns 2 and 6, we add a set of covariates; in columns 3 and 7, we estimate the coefficients with the model 2, that is with individual and year fixed effect; finally, in columns 4 and 8, to test for potentially differential pre-treatment trends, we add the interaction between $inactive_i$ and pre_t to model 2. The coefficients in Table 9 show how economic insecurity influenced the probability of voting for the center-left and the center-right block. More precisely, the results indicate that being inactive during the lockdown increased the probability of voting for center-left parties by close to 5 percentage points. At the same time, it decreases the probability of voting for center-right parties by slightly less than 7 percentage points. Since the coefficients in columns 4 and 8 - representing the interaction between $inactive_i$ and pre_t - are not statistically different from zero, we have a confirmation that in both cases, the common trends assumption holds.

In Table 10 - which presents the same structure as Table 9 - we study the effects on the Five Star Movement. We see how all the coefficients are small and not statistically significant. These results prove that economic insecurity did not affect the probability of voting for the Five Star Movement. Thus, even this last exercise corroborates our main findings.

Table 9: Evidence from survey data: center-left and center-right

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Dependent var.	Prob. of voting the center-left				Prob. of voting the center-right			
Covariates	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Individual FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
post·inactive	0.047**	0.047**	0.047**	0.056**	-0.069***	-0.069***	-0.069**	-0.063*
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.028)	(0.036)
inactive	-0.092***	-0.042			0.060*	-0.021		
	(0.026)	(0.031)			(0.033)	(0.047)		
post	-0.050***	-0.050***			0.047***	0.047***		
	(0.011)	(0.011)			(0.012)	(0.012)		
pre·inactive				0.018				0.012
				(0.021)				(0.030)
Observations	9,594	9,594	9,594	9,594	9,594	9,594	9,594	9,594
R-squared	0.015	0.072	0.810	0.810	0.004	0.080	0.840	0.840

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The results are obtained weighting each observation with the correspondent socio-demographic coefficient in order to make the survey sample representative of the whole population. The treatment variable is the probability of being an inactive worker. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of being an inactive worker, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the probability of vote to the center-right and center-left parties. The sample is composed by 3 observations for each of the 3198 individuals interviewed between August and September 2020 referring respectively: to the current voting intention, the vote expressed in 2019 European election and the vote expressed in 2018 parliamentary election. The outcome variable is the variation in the probability of vote in favour of the center-left parties, from column (1) to (4), and of the center-right parties, from column (5) to (8). Covariates in columns (2) and (6) referring to the individual are the following: age, years of education, gender, profession, sector of employment (private or public), type of employment contract (permanent or fixed-term). Covariates in columns (2) and (6) referring to the municipality in which the interviewee is living are the following: Population, Area (km2), Elevation (m), Provincial Capital, Per Capita Total Income, Coastal Area, Share of workers in the following Sectors: Accommodation and Food Service, Arts and Spots, Commercial, Construction, Education, Gas And Electricity, Health, Manufacturing Industry, Mineral Extraction, Other Services, Real Estate, Rental and Support, Scientific and Technological, Transport and Storage, Water and Waste Management. Robust standard errors clustered at the individual level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

Table 10: Evidence from survey data: the Five Star Movement

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent var.	Prob. of voting the Five Star Movement			
Covariates	No	Yes	No	No
Individual FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
post·inactive	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.002
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.028)	(0.029)
inactive	0.006	0.063*		
	(0.031)	(0.033)		
post	-0.067***	-0.067***		
	(0.012)	(0.012)		
pre·inactive				-0.019
				(0.022)
Observations	9,594	9,594	9,594	9,594
R-squared	0.012	0.090	0.802	0.803

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The results are obtained weighting each observation with the correspondent socio-demographic coefficient in order to make the survey sample representative of the whole population. The treatment variable is the probability of being an inactive worker. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of being an inactive worker, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the probability of vote to the Five Star Movement. The sample is composed by 3 observations for each of the 3198 individuals interviewed between August and September 2020 referring respectively: to the current voting intention, the vote expressed in 2019 European election and the vote expressed in 2018 parliamentary election. The outcome variable is the variation in the probability of vote in favour of the Five Stars Movement. Covariates in column (2) referring to the individual are the following: age, years of education, gender, profession, sector of employment (private or public), type of employment contract (permanent or fixed-term). Covariates in column (2) referring to the municipality in which the interviewee is living are the following: Population, Area (km2), Elevation (m), Provincial Capital, Per Capita Total Income, Coastal Area, Share of workers in the following Sectors: Accommodation and Food Service, Arts and Spots, Commercial, Construction, Education, Gas And Electricity, Health, Manufacturing Industry, Mineral Extraction, Other Services, Real Estate, Rental and Support, Scientific and Technological, Transport and Storage, Water and Waste Management. Robust standard errors clustered at the individual level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

8 Conclusion

This paper studies the political impact of lockdown-induced economic insecurity imposed by the Italian government to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. We provide evidence of a partisanship effect that benefited center-left and pro-EU political parties but not populist parties supporting the central government. We also show how the lockdown-induced economic insecurity electorally damaged conservative and far-right populist parties in the opposition. We provide evidence that the extraordinary measures introduced by the central government to compensate for the increased level of economic insecurity represent the most plausible explanation for these results. This evidence indicates that the *forgotten women and men* probably felt less forgotten during the pandemic than in the past. It also suggests that the social groups more heavily hitten by the pandemic, traditionally more in favor of center-right parties, realized the importance of government support in dealing with large economic shocks, thus shifting their support in favor of parties traditionally more in favor of a larger role for the public sector, such as the left parties. At the same time, voters showed more support for pro-EU parties and less for euro-skeptic and populist ones, a fact explained by the important involvement of the EU in financing the measures introduced to deal with the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The results of this paper show that the electoral effect of economic insecurity can go in the opposite direction compared to the evidence provided by the literature (Algan et al., 2017; Guiso et al., 2019) when government and mainstream parties manage to deal with economic distress, with more support for mainstream parties and less for populist and anti-establishment ones. These results open the opportunity for future lines of research that merit being analyzed, like understanding whether the above-described findings are common in the other EU countries and whether these effects are persistent or conversely disappear over time. It would be interesting to know whether similar results also happened in the past and whether the anti-populist feeling we saw emerging in Italy during the pandemic will last.

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Online Appendix: additional Tables and Figures

Table A1: **Variables definition and sources**

VARIABLE	DEFINITION	SOURCE
ELECTORAL INFORMATION		
Center-right Votes	Share of votes to the far-right parties.	
Center-left Votes	Share of votes to the left parties.	Historical archive of the elections of the Ministry of Interior
Five Stars Movement Votes	Share of votes to the Five Stars Movement.	&
Civic Lists Votes	Share of votes to the Civic Lists.	Registry of local administrators of the Ministry of Interior
Turnout	Share of eligible that voted.	
COVID-19 IMPACT		
Share Inactive Workers	% of total inactive workers due to the Covid-19 restrictive measures	
Share Inactive Workers (Services)	% of services inactive workers due to the Covid-19 restrictive measures	
Share Inactive Workers (Industry)	% of industry inactive workers due to the Covid-19 restrictive measures	Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)
Elderly Excess Mortality	Excess mortality of the over65 population in period March-August 2020, with respect to the years 2015-2019	
Share Bonus Self-Employed	per capita % of the total amount monetary compensation	National Institute for Social Security (INPS)
DEMOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS		
Population	Overall resident population	
Share Population 0-14	Share of resident population 0-14	2011 Census
Share Population 15-64	Share of resident population 15-64	Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)
Share Population 64-	Share of resident population over 65	
GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS		
Provincial Capital	= 1 if the municipality is a provincial capital	
Area (km2)	Total area of the municipality	2011 Census
Density (Population/km2)	Population density of the municipality	Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)
Elevation (m)	Height above the sea level of the municipality	
EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS		
Share Primary Educated	Share of population with a primary education.	
Share Secondary Educated	Share of population with a secondary education.	2011 Census
Share Upper Secondary Educated	Share of population with an upper secondary education.	Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)
Share Graduated	Share of graduate population.	
SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS		
Tourism Relevance Index	= 1 if the tourism relevance is maximum	Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)
Active Enterprises	Number of active enterprises of the municipality	2011 Census
Occupation Rate	Occupation rate of the municipality	Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)
Activity Rate	Activity rate of the municipality	
Total Income	Total taxable income of the municipality	Department of Finance, Ministry of Economy and Finance

Notes. The tables summaries and describes all dependent and independent variables, providing the corresponding source from which each of the is retrieved.

Table A2: **Complete index of parties and lists**

Center-Right Parties	Center-Right Civic Lists	Center-Left Parties	Center-Left Civic Lists
Alleanza Di Centro	Alleanza Frattese	Articolo Uno	Alpignano Democratica
Alleanza Nazionale	Alleanza Per Bracciano Centro Destra	Centrosinistra	Andria Bene In Comune
Alternativa Popolare	Amo Cortemilia	Coalizione Progressista	Campo Democratico
Area Popolare	Avigliano Libera	Comunisti Italiani	Cardito Democratica
Cambiamo!	Baranzate Riparte Dal Centrodestra	Con Emiliano	Casorate Democratica
Conservatori E Riformisti	Bodega Sindaco Destra Per Lecco	Democratici E Progressisti	Cologno Solidale E Democratica
Forza Italia	Bogogno Un Paese Per Tutti	Emiliano Sindaco Di Puglia	Comunità Democratica
Fratelli D'Italia	Carraresi Noi Per Voi	Giovani Democratici	Cuggiono Democratica
Futuro E Libertà	Cava Per Le Libertà	I Democratici	Democratici Insieme
Il Popolo Della Libertà	Centro Destra Arcisate	Italia Dei Valori	Democratici Per Ariano
La Destra	Centro Destra Cormio	Liberi E Uguali	Democratici Per Castelfranco
Lega Nord	Centro Destra Finalese	L'Ulivo	Democratici Per Ceccano
Lega Per Salvini Premier	Centro Destra Per Bagnacavallo	Partito Democratico	Democratici Per Lonigo
Noi Con L'Italia	Centro Destra Per Chitignano	Partito Socialista Italiano	Democratici Per Marcianise
Noi Con Salvini	Centro Destra Per Cotignola	Rifondazione Comunista	Democratici Per San Nicola
Nuovo Centro Destra	Centro Destra Per Cupello	Sinistra Democratica	Democratici Per Travagliato
Oltre Con Fitto	Centro Destra Per Figino	Sinistra Ecologia Libertà	Democratici Per Turate
Unione Italiana	Centro Destra Per Tartabini	Sinistra Italiana	Democratici Per Uzzano
Centrodestra	Centro Destra Per Verola	Socialisti E Democratici	Democratici Per Venaria
	Centro Destra Pietralunga		Democratici Riformisti
	Centro Destra Rovato		Frattamaggiore Democratica
	Centro Destra Uniti Per Peglio		Gd Gemonio Democratico
	Centro Destra Unito Con Onori		Genzano Democratica
	Centrodestra Baronissi		Giovani Democratici
	Centrodestra Per Castelfranco		Impegno Democratico
	Centrodestra Per Castelvetro		Insieme Per Almè
	Centrodestra Per L'alternativa		Insieme Per Arcade
	Centrodestra Per Luzzara		Insieme Per Brioni
	Centrodestra Per Montefiascone		Insieme Per Cascinette
	Centrodestra Per Montopoli		Insieme Per Cervinara
	Centrodestra Per Sedriano		Insieme Per Due Carrare
	Centrodestra Per Vallefoglia		Insieme Per Fara In Sabina
	Centrodestra Per Vecchiano		Insieme Per Il Paese Santo Stefano Belbo
	Circolo Della Libertà		Insieme Per Legnano
	Destra Liberale		Insieme Per Montelanico
	Destra Per Rovigo		Insieme Per Parabiago
	Due Carrare Per Il Futuro		Insieme Per Ripartire
	Forza Avezzano		Insieme Per Roncadelle
	Forza Avezzano		Insieme Per Vicoforte
	Forza Casorate		Insieme Per Vistrorio
	Forza Chieti		Insieme Per Voghera
	Forza Lonato		Intesa Democratica
	Forza Matera		Lonigo Democratica E Solidale Riparte
	Forza Pagani		Marcianise Democratica
	Forza Pomigliano		Orciano Democratica
	Idea Soragna		Pattada Democratica
	Il Centrodestra Per Caprile		Patto Democratico Per La Città
	Il Centrodestra Per San Costanzo		Pomigliano Democratica
	Il Popolo Del Centro Destra Per Bosa		Prospettiva Democratica
	Il Popolo Di Veroli Con La Destra		Quartu Democratica E Solidale
	Immagina Verucchio Centro Destra		Rocchetta Democratica
	Indipendenti Di Centrodestra Per Tallone		Settimo Progressista
	Insieme Alla Gente Centrodestra		Soragna Democratica
	Insieme Per Pernumia		Terzigno Democratica
	Insieme Per Treviolo Centrodestra		Unione E Progresso Pont
	L'arca Origgio		Unità Popolare Avigliano
	Lavoriamo Per Bogogno		Uniti Per Avigliano
	Lista Civica Avigliano		Uniti Per Bollate
	Movimento Di Destra Per Montichiari		Uniti Per Canossa
	Noi Con Rocchi Sindaco		Uniti Per Ceccano
	Noi Felizzano Insieme Per Il Centrodestra		Uniti Per Cervinara
	Per Due Carrare		Uniti Per Corsico
	Per Levanto		Uniti Per Fontevivo
	Per Torre Di Mosto		Uniti Per Malo
	Più San Bonifacio Centro Destra		Uniti Per Montefortino
	Pontenure Per Te Centro Destra Civico		Uniti Per Pont
	Pontremoli A Destra		Uniti Per Rocca Di Papa
	Popolo Di Levanto		Uniti Per Roncadelle
	Premana Centrodestra		Uniti Per S. Demetrio
	Prima I Cittadini Alleanza Di Centro Destra		Uniti Per Sant'Angelo
	Progetto Sociale Di Destra Per Cesate		Uniti Per Turate
	Rinnovamento Di Destra		Uniti Per Vistrorio
	Tutti Per Calco		Unitià Per Curtatone
	Uniti Per Lonato		Viadana Democratica
	Uniti Per Zuccarello		Viareggio Democratica
	Viva San Cesario Centro Destra		
	Viviamo Bogogno		

Notes. The tables provides the complete index of parties and lists for the variable *Center-Right Votes*, composed using the above-listed far right parties, and for the *Center-Left Votes*, composed with both the left parties and lefties civic lists.

Table A3: Classification of the suspended economic activities during the economic lockdown

SUSPENDED ACTIVITIES	
INDUSTRY SECTOR	**SERVICES SECTOR**
Rubber industry	Wholesale trade
Packaging industry	Retail trade
Textile and leather industry	Real estate activities
Wood industry	Rental services
Metallurgical industry	Travel agencies
Electronics industry	Business support services
Vehicles industry	Artistic and cultural activities
Private construction industry	Sports and entertainment activities

Notes. The Table shows a broad subdivision of the suspended activities during the economic lockdown - distinguishing between the services sector and the industry sector - in compliance with the Decree of the President of the Council dated 22.03.2020.

Table A4: **Open and Close Activities in the Industry Sector**

| ATECO CODE 2007	DESCRIPTION	ACTIVE
B	*EXTRACTION OF MINERALS FROM QUARRIES AND MINES*	
5	**Coal mining (excluding peat)**	**1**
6	**Extraction of crude oil and natural gas**	**1**
7	**Extraction of metal ores**	**0**
8	**Other mining activities from quarries and mines**	**0**
9	**Extraction support services activities**	
9.1	Support activities for the extraction of oil and natural gas	1
9.9	Support activities for the extraction of other minerals from quarries and mines	0
C	*MANUFACTURING ACTIVITIES*	
10	**Food industries**	**1**
11	**Beverage industry**	**1**
12	**Tobacco industry**	**0**
13	**Textile industries**	**0**
14	**Packaging of articles of clothing; packaging of leather and fur articles**	**0**
15	**Manufacture of leather goods**	**0**
16	**Industry of wood and cork (excluding furniture); manufacture of straw articles and weaving materials**	**0**
17	**Manufacture of paper and paper products**	**1**
18	**Printing and playback of recorded media**	**1**
19	**Manufacture of coke and petroleum refining products**	**1**
20	**Manufacture of chemical products**	**1**
21	**Manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations**	**1**
22	**Manufacture of rubber and plastic articles**	
22.1	Manufacture of rubber articles	0
22.2	Manufacture of plastic articles	1
23	**Manufacture of other products of non-metallic mineral processing**	**0**
24	**Metallurgy**	**0**
25	**Manufacture of metal products (excluding machinery and equipment)**	**0**
26	**Manufacture of computers and electronics and optics products; electromedical equipment, measuring equipment and watches**	
26.1	Manufacture of electronic components and electronic boards	0
26.2	Manufacture of computers and peripheral units	0
26.3	Manufacture of telecommunications equipment	0
26.4	Manufacture of audio and video consumer electronics products	0
26.5	Manufacture of measuring, testing and navigation instruments and apparatus; clocks	0
26.6	Manufacture of irradiation instruments, electromedical and electrotherapeutic equipment	1
26.7	Manufacture of optical instruments and photographic equipment	0
26.8	Manufacture of magnetic and optical media	0
27	**Manufacture of electrical and non-electrical household equipment**	
27.1	Manufacture of electric motors, generators and transformers and of equipment for the distribution and control of electricity	1
27.2	Manufacture of batteries of electric batteries and accumulators	1
27.3	Manufacture of wiring and wiring equipment	0
27.4	Manufacture of lighting equipment	0
27.5	Manufacture of household appliances	0
27.9	Manufacture of other electrical equipment	0
28	**Manufacture of other machinery and equipment**	
28.29.30	Manufacture of automatic dosing, wrapping and packaging machines (including parts and accessories)	1
28.95	Manufacture of machinery for the paper and paperboard industry (including parts and accessories)	1
28.96	Manufacture of machinery for the plastics and rubber industry (including parts and accessories)	1
28.1	Manufacture of general purpose machinery	0
28.2	Manufacture of other general purpose machinery	0
28.3	Manufacture of agricultural and forestry machinery	0
28.4	Manufacture of metal forming machines and other machine tools	0
28.9	Manufacture of other special-use machinery	0
29	**Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers**	**0**
30	**Manufacture of other means of transport**	**0**
31	**Manufacture of furniture**	**0**
32	**Other manufacturing industries**	
32.1	Manufacture of jewellery, costume jewellery and related articles; processing of precious stones	0
32.2	Manufacture of musical instruments	0
32.3	Manufacture of sporting goods	0
32.4	Manufacture of games and toys	0
32.5	Manufacture of medical and dental instruments and supplies	1
32.9	Other manufacturing industries	0
33	**Repair, maintenance and installation of machinery and equipment**	**1**
D	*SUPPLY OF ELECTRICITY, GAS, STEAM AND AIR CONDITIONING*	
35	**Supply of electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning**	**1**
E	*WATER SUPPLY; SEWERAGE, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND REMEDIATION ACTIVITIES*	
36	**Collection, treatment and supply of water**	**1**
37	**Management of sewerage networks**	**1**
38	**Waste collection, treatment and disposal activities; material recovery**	**1**
39	**Remediation activities and other waste management services**	**1**
F	*CONSTRUCTIONS*	
41	**Construction of buildings**	**0**
41.1	Development of real estate projects	0
41.2	Construction of residential and non-residential buildings	0
42	**Civil engineering**	
42.1	Construction of roads and railways	1
42.2	Construction of public utility works	1
42.9	Construction of other civil engineering works	0
43	**Specialized construction work**	
43.1	Demolition and preparation of the construction site	0
43.2	Installation of electrical, plumbing and other construction and installation work	1
43.3	Completion and finishing of buildings	0
43.9	Other specialized construction work	0

Notes. The table lists categories and subcategories (following the ATECO code 2007) of economic activity belonging to the industry sector, distinguishing between those remained open (= 1) and those forced to close (= 0), in compliance with the Decree of the President of the Council dated 22.03.2020.

Table A5: **Open and Close Activities in the Services Sector**

ATECO CODE 2007	DESCRIPTION	ACTIVE
G	*WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE; REPAIR OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND MOTORCYCLES*	
45	**Wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles**	
45.1	Trade in motor vehicles	0
45.2	Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles	1
45.3	Trade in parts and accessories of motor vehicles	1
45.4	Trade, maintenance and repair of motorcycles and related parts and accessories	1
46	**Wholesale trade (excluding motor vehicles and motorcycles)**	
46.1	Intermediaries of commerce	0
46.2	Wholesale of agricultural raw materials and live animals	1
46.3	Wholesale of food, beverages and tobacco products	1
46.4	Wholesale of final consumer goods	0
46.5	Wholesale of ICT equipment	0
46.6	Wholesale of other machinery, equipment and supplies	0
46.7	Specialized wholesale of other products	0
46.9	Non-specialized wholesale trade	0
47	Retail trade (excluding motor vehicles and motorcycles)	0
H	*TRANSPORT AND STORAGE*	
49	**Land transport and pipeline transport**	1
50	**Maritime and water transport**	1
51	**Air transport**	1
52	**Storage and transport support activities**	1
53	**Postal services and courier activities**	1
I	*ACCOMMODATION AND CATERING SERVICES ACTIVITIES*	
55	**Accommodation**	
55.1	Hotels and similar structures	1
55.2	Holiday accommodation and other facilities for short stays	0
55.3	Camping areas and areas equipped for campers and caravans	0
55.9	Other accommodations	
56	**Catering services activities**	0
J	*INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SERVICES*	
58	**Publishing activities**	1
59	**Film, video and television programme production; music and sound recordings**	1
60	**Programming and broadcasting activities**	1
61	**Telecommunications**	1
62	**Software production, IT consulting and related activities**	1
63	**Activities of information services and other IT services**	1
L	*REAL ESTATE ACTIVITIES*	
68	**Real estate activities**	0
M	*PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES*	
69	**Legal activities and accounting**	1
70	**Management and management consulting activities**	1
71	**Activities of architecture and engineering; technical testing and analysis**	1
72	**Scientific research and development**	1
73	**Advertising and market research**	0
74	**Other professional, scientific and technical activities**	1
75	**Veterinary services**	1
N	*RENTAL, TRAVEL AGENCIES, BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES*	
77	**Rental and operating leasing activities**	0
78	**Research, selection, supply of personnel**	
78.1	Activities of employment agencies	0
78.2	Activities of temporary (temporary) employment agencies	1
78.3	Other human resources supply and management activities	0
79	**Activities of travel agency services, tour operators and booking services**	0
80	**Surveillance and investigation services**	
80.1	Private security services	1
80.2	Services related to supervisory systems	1
80.3	Private investigative services	0
81	**Service activities for buildings and landscape**	
81.1	Integrated building management services	0
81.2	Cleaning and disinfestation activities	1
81.3	Landscape care and maintenance	0
82	**Support activities for office functions and other business support services**	
82.1	Support activities for office functions	1
82.2	Call-centre activities	1
82.3	Organization of conferences and fairs	0
82.9	Other business support services	
82.91	Activities of debt collection agencies; commercial information agencies	0
82.92	Packaging and packaging activities for third parties	1
82.99	Other business support services	0
P	*EDUCATION*	
85	**Education**	1
Q	*HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE*	
86	**Health care**	1
87	**Residential Social Care Services**	1
88	**Non-residential social assistance**	1
R	*ARTISTIC, SPORTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES*	
90	**Creative, artistic and entertainment activities**	0
91	**Activities of libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities**	0
92	**Activities related to lotteries, betting, casinos**	0
93	**Sports, entertainment and entertainment activities**	0
S	*OTHER SERVICE ACTIVITIES*	
94	**Activities of associative organizations**	1
94.1	Activities of economic, employers' and professional organisations	1

Notes. The table lists categories and subcategories (following the ATECO code 2007) of economic activity belonging to the services sector, distinguishing between those remained open (= 1) and those forced to close (= 0), in compliance with the Decree of the President of the Council dated 22.03.2020.

Figure A1: Parties' political positions
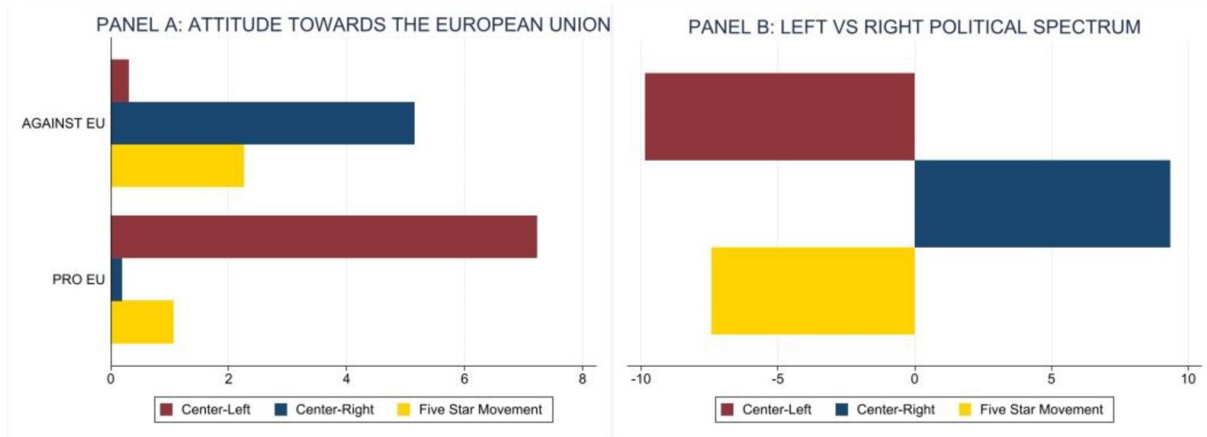
Notes. The Figure indicates different parties' political positions based on the Manifesto Project: a database which analyses parties' election manifestos in order to study parties' policy preferences. The data refers to the 2018 Italian General Elections; the Center-Left includes the Democratic Party and Free and Equal while the Center-Right includes the League, Brother of Italy and Forward Italy. The three variables inspected are: 1) European Community/Union (Positive); 2) European Community/Union (Negative); 3) the Right-Left programmatic dimensions. In Panel A the values reported constitute the relative share of statements for each category in relation to all statements in the manifesto. 0.35 means that 0.35 percent of the manifesto was devoted to that category. Since this is a relative share, the scale can run between zero (no statement at all) and 100 (the whole manifesto is about this category). In Panel B the same rules apply but the Left programmatic dimension presents negative values while the Right programmatic dimension presents positive values.

Figure A2: The effect of lockdown-induced economic insecurity on electoral outcomes
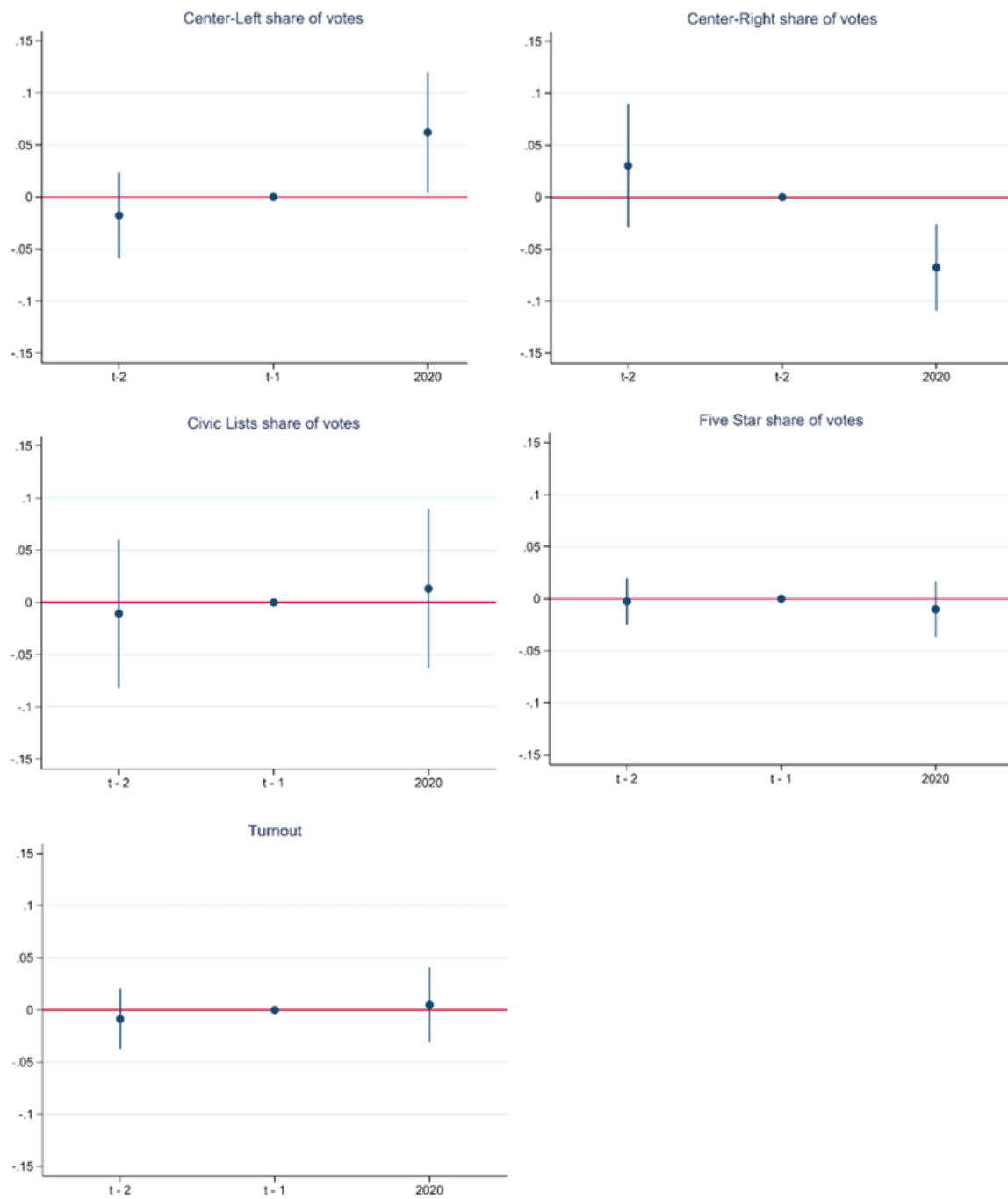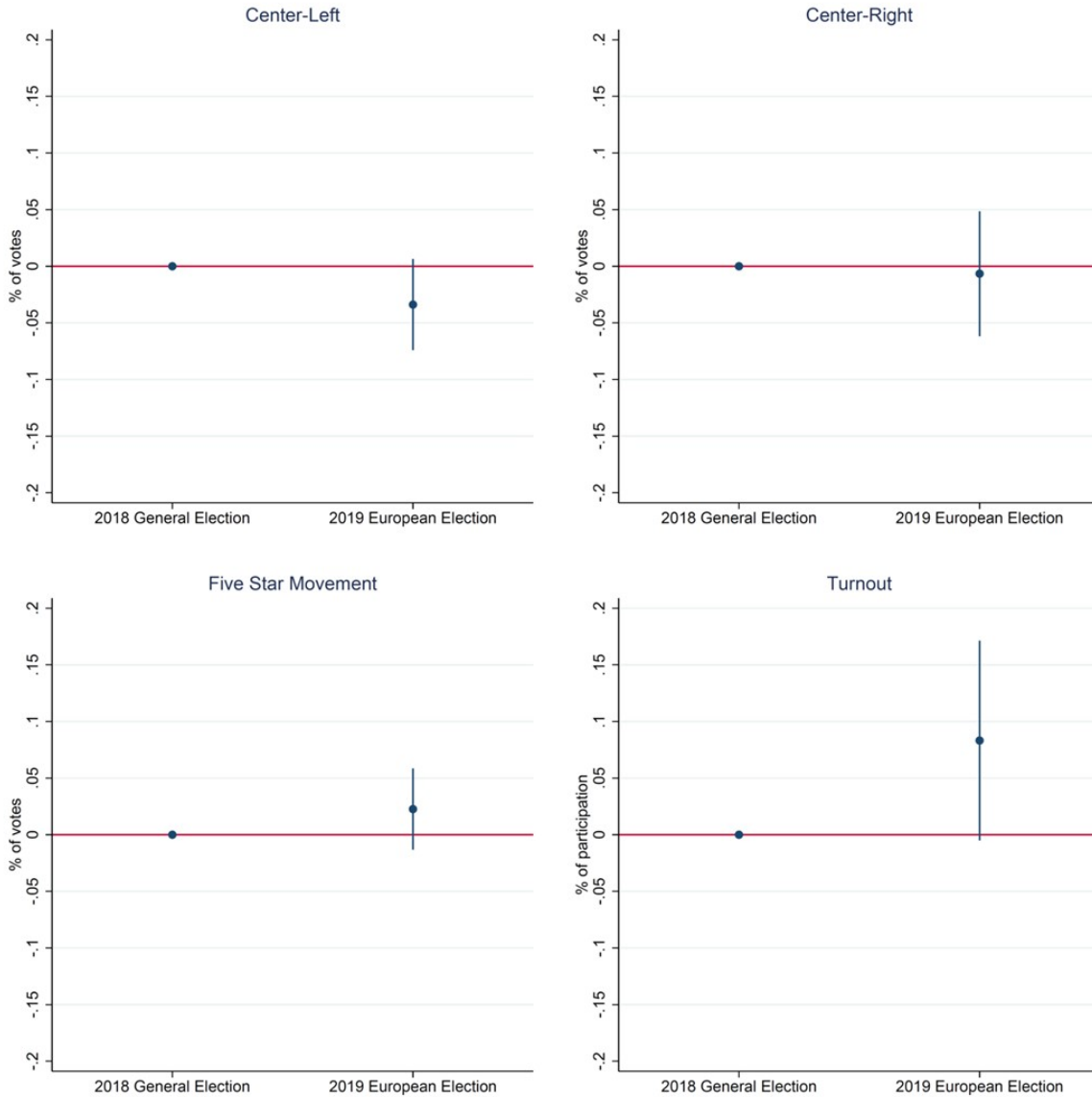
Figure A3: Additional pre-treatment trends

Notes. The Figure displays the difference-in-differences estimates of the effect of the share of inactive workers, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the share of votes of different political forces and on the turnout. The treatment variable is the overall share of inactive workers. The outcome variable is the variation in the share of votes in favour of different political forces and on the turnout. The sample is composed by 2 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the 2018 General Elections (Chamber of Deputy) and one referring to the 2019 European Elections. The variable Center-Left includes the Democratic Party and The Left/Free and Equal while the variable Center-Right includes the League, Brother of Italy and Forward Italy. All regressions include municipality and year fixed effects. Robust standard errors are clustered at the municipality level.

Table A6: Share of inactive workers & Share of per capita bonus

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent variable	*post ·% bonus*			
Covariates	No	No	No	No
Municipal FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
post ·% inactive	12.557			
	(18.994)			
post ·% inactive serv.		37.577**		40.325**
		(18.482)		(19.192)
post ·% inactive indu.			-5.618	-10.028
			(12.365)	(12.954)
Observations	1,722	1,722	1,722	1,722
R-squared	0.837	0.839	0.837	0.839

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatments variables are: the overall share of inactive workers and the share of inactive workers in the industry and services sectors. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers (in overall terms and then separately for either the services or the industry sector), during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on overall monetary amount of the bonus in favour of self-employed workers over the resident population. The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 574 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. Municipalities are 574 and not 575 because for one municipality of the canonical sample data are not available. The outcome variable is . Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

Table A7: Robustness I: Concurrent Regional Elections

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Dependent variable	Center-Left	Center-Right	Five Star M.	Civic Lists	Turnout
Covariates	No	No	No	No	No
Municipal FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
post ·% inactive	0.071**	-0.079***	-0.009	0.015	0.008
	(0.033)	(0.030)	(0.010)	(0.047)	(0.021)
Concurrent	-0.002	-0.031**	0.001	0.032**	0.016***
	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.003)	(0.015)	(0.005)
Observations	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.789	0.797	0.550	0.860	0.908

Notes. The treatments variables is the overall share of inactive workers. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on different electoral outcomes: the vote shares for the Center-Left in column (1), the vote shares for the Center-Right in column (2), the vote shares for the Five Star Movement in column (3), the vote shares for the Civic Lists in column (4) and the Turnout in column (5). The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable are the variations of different electoral outcomes: the vote shares for the Center-Left in column (1), the vote shares for the Center-Right in column (2), the vote shares for the Five Star Movement in column (3), the vote shares for the Civic Lists in column (4) and the Turnout in column (5). The dummy variable *Concurrent* id equal to 1 when in a municipality the Local Election take place the same day as the Regional Election. Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

Table A8: Robustness II: Party not competing

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent variable	Center-Left	Center-Right	Five Star M.	Civic Lists
Covariates	No	No	No	No
Municipal FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
$post \cdot \%\ inactive$	0.060**	-0.024	-0.001	0.024
	(0.027)	(0.024)	(0.008)	(0.042)
Center-Left Missing	-0.279***			
	(0.026)			
Center-Right Missing		-0.262***		
		(0.025)		
Five Star Missing			-0.085***	
			(0.007)	
Civic Lists Missing				-0.402***
				(0.046)
Observations	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.890	0.875	0.760	0.869

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatment variable is the overall share of inactive workers. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the share of vote to center-left (1), center-right (2) Five Stars Movement (3) and civic lists (4). For each political force and for each election, the regression includes also a dummy variable (Center-Left Missing, Center-Right Missing, Five Star Missing and Civic Lists Missing) which is equal to 1 if the correspondent party is not competing at the election. The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable is the variation in the share of votes in favour f the following political forces: center-left (1), center-right (2) Five Star Movement (3) and civic lists (4). Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

Table A9: Robustness III: Probability of competing

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent variable	Center-Left	Center-Right	Five Star M.	Civic Lists
Covariates	No	No	No	No
Municipal FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
$post \cdot \%\ inactive$	0.039	-0.209**	-0.089	-0.013
	(0.065)	(0.083)	(0.064)	(0.039)
Observations	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.845	0.832	0.640	0.510

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatment variable is the overall share of inactive workers. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the probability of running at the election of center-left (1), center-right (2) Five Star Movement (3) and civic lists (4). The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable is the variation in the probability of running at the election of the following political forces: center-left (1), center-right (2) Five Stars Movement (3) and civic lists (4) . Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

Table A10: The effect of lockdown-induced economic insecurity on electoral outcomes

|	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Dependent variable	Center-Left	Center-Right	Five Star M.	Civic Lists	Turnout
Covariates	No	No	No	No	No
Municipal FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
post ·% inactive	0.071**	-0.082**	-0.009	0.018	0.009
	(0.032)	(0.039)	(0.010)	(0.053)	(0.023)
Observations	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.788	0.795	0.550	0.859	0.906

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatment variable is the overall share of inactive workers. The estimated coefficients indicate the effect of the share of inactive workers, during the greatest lockdown period due to the restrictive measures, on the probability of running at the election of center-left (1), center-right (2), Five Stars Movement (3), Civic Lists (4) and Turnout (5). The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable is the variation in the probability of running at the election of the following political forces: center-left (1), center-right (2), Five Star Movement (3), Civic Lists (4) and Turnout (5). Robust standard errors clustered at the **labour district** level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

Table A11: Incumbent mayor re-election probability

|	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Dependent var.	Major				Major and/or Board			
Covariates	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Municipal FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
$post \cdot \%\ inactive$	-0.137	-0.035	0.007	0.081	0.075	0.041	0.134	0.060
	(0.152)	(0.188)	(0.237)	(0.247)	(0.141)	(0.172)	(0.209)	(0.231)
$post$	0.176**	0.130			0.111	0.127		
	(0.079)	(0.096)			(0.074)	(0.088)		
% inactive		-0.158				-0.051		
		(0.112)				(0.097)		
$pre \cdot \%\ inactive$				0.165				-0.153
				(0.232)				(0.196)
Observations	1,410	1,410	1,410	1,410	1,725	1,725	1,725	1,725
R-squared	0.011	0.032	0.458	0.459	0.020	0.042	0.352	0.353

Notes. Difference-in-differences estimates. The treatment variable is the overall share of inactive workers. The estimated coefficients indicate the probability of being re-elected of an incumbent mayor - from column (1) to (4) - and for either an incumbent mayor or a incumbent member of the municipality board, from column (5) to (8). The sample is composed by 3 observation for each of the 575 municipalities (belonging to ordinary stature regions) which voted for local elections in 2020: one referring to the last electoral competition plus the two precedent ones. The outcome variable is the variation in the probability of being re-elected for an incumbent mayor, from column (1) to (4), and for either an incumbent mayor or a incumbent member of the municipality board, from column (5) to (8). Covariates in column (2) and (6) are the following: Population, Share Population 0-14, Share Population 15-64, Share Population 64-, Provincial Capital, Area (km2), Density (Population/km2), Elevation (m), Share Primary Educated, Share Secondary Educated, Share Upper Secondary Educated, Share Graduated, Tourism Relevance Index, Active Enterprises, Occupation Rate, Activity Rate, Total Income. Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Significance at the 10% level is represented by *, at the 5% level by **, and at the 1% level by ***.

Figure A4: Parties & EU average consensus
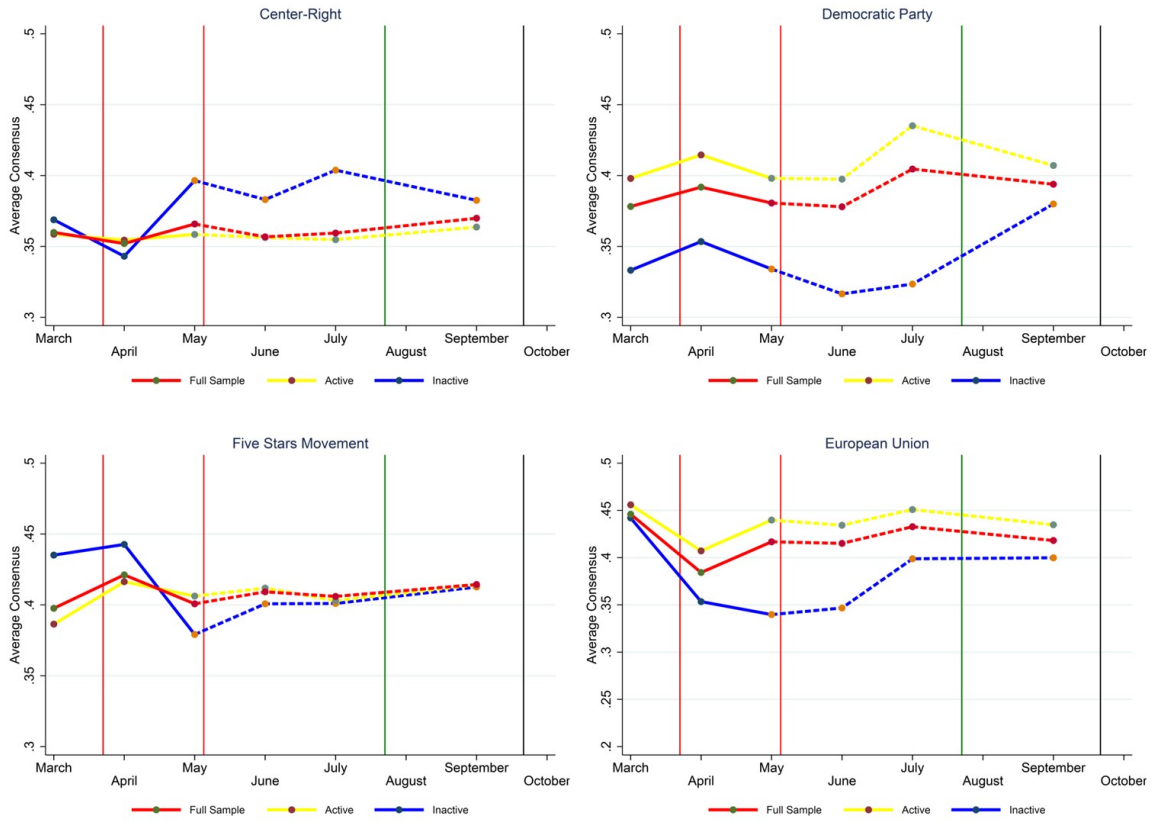
Notes. The Figure shows the average consensus - that is the average opinion in a scale from 1 to 10 - about different political forces: for the Democratic Party, for center-right parties (League, Brothers of Italy and Forza Italia) and for the Five Star Movement. It shows also the average consensus for the European Union. Results - monthly grouped - are collapsed over different subcategories: i) the full sample; ii) the active workers; iii) the inactive workers. The dotted line indicates that such subdivision is made through our predictions while the full line indicates that the information derives from the survey. The results are obtained weighting each observation with the correspondent socio-demographic coefficient in order to make the survey sample representative of the whole population. The vertical lines represents the following events: start of the greater lockdown, 22nd of March; end of the greater lockdown, 3rd of May; announcement of the launch of the Next Generation EU, 21st of July; election day, 20th of September.

Figure A5: Institutions' average consensus
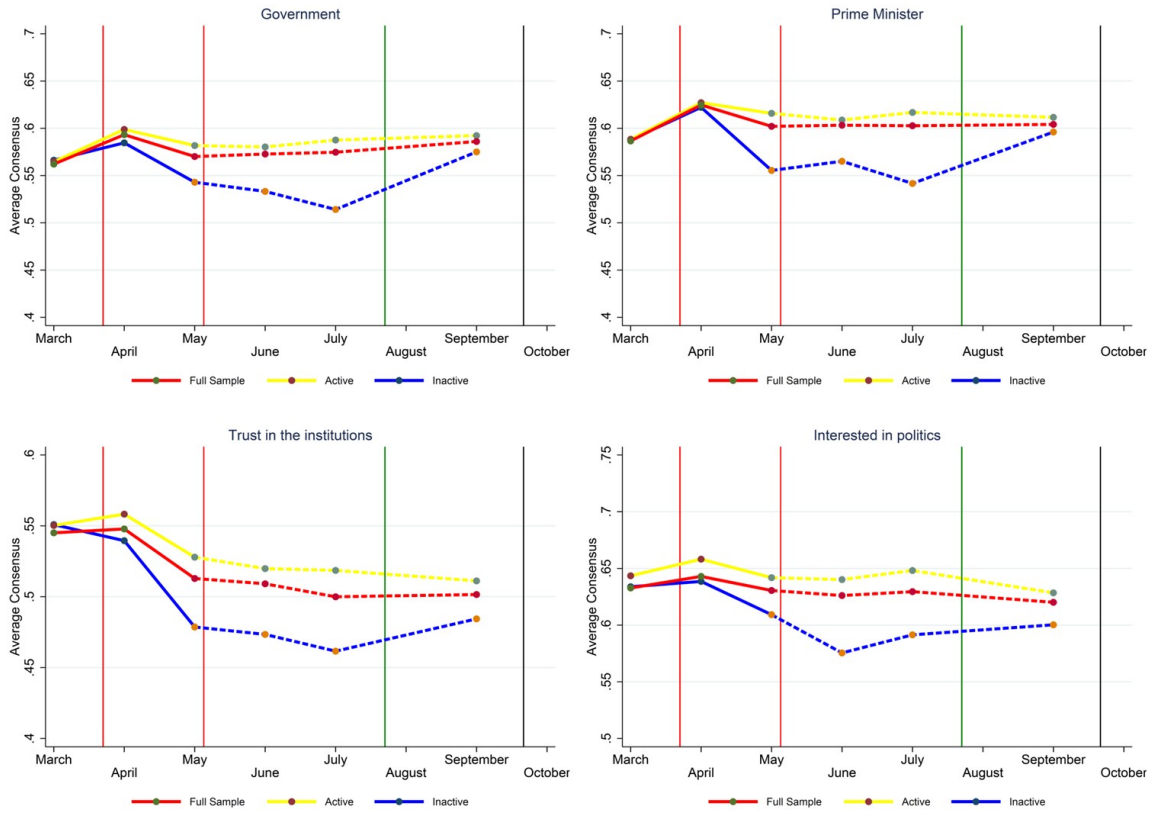
Notes. The Figure shows the average consensus - that is the average opinion in a scale from 1 to 10 - about different political variables: the government, the prime minister, the interest in politics and the trust in the institutions. Results - monthly grouped - are collapsed over different subcategories: i) the full sample; ii) the active workers; iii) the inactive workers. The dotted line indicates that such subdivision is made through our predictions while the full line indicates that the information derives from the survey. The results are obtained weighting each observation with the correspondent socio-demographic coefficient in order to make the survey sample representative of the whole population. The vertical lines represents the following events: start of the greater lockdown, 22nd of March; end of the greater lockdown, 3rd of May; announcement of the launch of the Next Generation EU, 21st of July; election day, 20th of September.

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