ORCID:
MI: 0000-0003-3830-7887
EM: 0000-0001-8709-9397
CM: 0000-0003-2393-8985
FT: 0000-0001-9232-8860

Voters, issues, and party loyalty: The 2022 Italian election under the magnifying glass

Marco Improta[1], Elisabetta Mannoni[2,*], Costanza Marcellino[1], Federico Trastulli[1]

[1] Department of Political Science, LUISS University, Rome
[2] Department of Political Science, Central European University, Vienna
E-mail: mimprota@luiss.it; mannoni_elisabetta@phd.ceu.edu; cmarcellino@luiss.it; ftrastulli@luiss.it
*Corresponding author

Abstract. The 2022 Italian election marked a historic victory for the centre-right coalition. This camp was spearheaded by Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy (FDI), with a solid performance of this radical right party across the country. However, considerable nuance emerges by looking at different aspects of the vote, which we do by leveraging original data from the pre-electoral wave of the 2022 CISE/ICCP survey. After recapping both the build-up to and results of the election, we employ this data on these specific fronts. First, we analyse vote flows between the 2018 and 2022 elections in three big cities in Northern, Central, and Southern Italy: Turin, Florence, and Naples. This analysis shows that FDI becomes more competitive in these traditionally unfavourable contexts, although less so in Naples. Second, we analyse data on the configuration of Italian voters' preferences, which reveals an increasingly progressive electorate in an apparent contradiction with the election results. Third and final, we go deeper into the demand-side picture by assessing the role of sociodemographic characteristics over vote choice, presenting the voter profile of the five largest parties: the three main centre-right parties, the Democratic Party, and the Five Star Movement. Overall, the findings that emerge from our article enhance a more fine-grained understanding of this crucial election in Italy.

Keywords: 2022 Italian election, sociodemographics, issue preferences, party loyalty, vote flows, Brothers of Italy.

INTRODUCTION

The 2022 Italian general election, held on 25 September 2022, marked a historic result for Brothers of Italy (FDI) and its leader Giorgia Meloni. The largest party emerging from the electoral competition, with more than 7 million votes, FDI successfully exploited its opposition status during the XVIII (2018-2022) legislature, in which three ideologically heterogeneous coalition governments were sworn in (specifically: Conte I, Conte II and Draghi). In such a context of frenetic government turnover, FDI firmly opposed all cabinets, even those joined by the party's centre-right allies. Rewarded by vot-

ers for these choices, Meloni thus replaced Mario Draghi as the head of the government, forming the sixty-eighth Italian cabinet and becoming the first female prime minister in Italy's history.

Among the main centre-right parties, FDI is the youngest formation. Meloni's party was, in fact, founded between 2012 and 2013. Nevertheless, FDI has an established tradition. Notably, it inherits the post-fascist Italian legacy (Puleo and Piccolino 2022), characterised by the gradual transition from the Italian Social Movement (MSI) to National Alliance (AN) (Ignazi 2018). Before reaching a high support in the polls, FDI struggled to record satisfactory results in the electoral contests. Indeed, it participated in the 2013 and 2018 general elections recording poor performance (D'Alimonte 2013; Emanuele et al. 2020). Since its formation up to September 25, 2022, FDI has constantly been the junior member of the centre-right coalition (Tarchi 2018). After having reversed the balance of power, Meloni is now confronted with crucial governmental challenges. Notably, she needs to build international reliability vis-à-vis supranational actors and globalised markets while preserving at the same time responsiveness[1] towards FDI voters.

The 2022 Italian general election differed from past electoral contests as its aftermath was characterised by a less troublesome government formation and bargaining. The result emerging from the ballot boxes allowed the centre-right coalition to obtain a solid majority in both chambers (Chamber of Deputies and Senate). Different from 2022, in 2013 and 2018 government formation was characterised by the establishment of unpredictable coalitions, largely deviating from the pre-election ones (Schadee et al. 2019).

Through the analysis of the original data from the pre-electoral wave of the 2022 CISE/ICCP survey,[2] this article aims to contribute to the literature on Italian elections – and specifically to the enquiry of the 2022 election to understand how their results came about – by focussing on three main factors related to this electoral competition: issue preferences of the electorate, voters' sociodemographic characteristics, and party loy-

alty through the analysis of vote flows. Such three topics are useful as they allow better appreciation of different dimensions regarding the 2022 election. First, by scrutinising the issue preferences of the electorate, we can understand the main citizens' concerns behind this electoral contest. As issues have been increasingly centre-stage in the last electoral competitions in European countries (De Sio and Lachat 2020), in this article we provide scholars with relevant information on the Italian case. By the same token, examining the impact of the electorate's sociodemographic features over vote choice helps uncovering fundamental trajectories regarding, for instance, parties' appeal and the social composition of their supporters. This is of particular relevance in a context like Italy, where traditional social divides do not follow predictable paths (see for instance De Sio 2018 on the social traits of PD voters). Third, vote flows are informative on what we labelled as party loyalty. In studying vote flows, we aim to appreciate whether parties managed to obtain new voters, while preserving old constituencies.

The article is structured as follows. The following section delineates the historical background by focussing on the recent political developments in the Italian parliamentary and governmental arenas. Then, the third section illustrates the results of the 2022 election. In the fourth section, we explore the vote flows in three large Italian cities: Turin, Florence, and Naples. The fifth part is devoted to analysing the issue preferences of voters to understand if some issues might have played a more relevant role than others. The sixth section focusses on the 'identikit' of voters, investigating which sociodemographic categories (age, gender, education, and social class) have played the lion's share when it comes to party choice. A concluding part follows.

BACKGROUND

Formed after the election held on March 4, 2018, the XVIII (2018-2022) legislature has been characterised by high government turnover (Conti et al. 2020a) and turbulence in almost all parliamentary groups, confirming Italy's long tradition of unstable cabinets (Curini and Pinto 2017; Improta 2022). During such a legislative term, three different cabinets were formed. Counting on the relative majority of seats in both Chamber of Deputies and Senate, the Five Star Movement (M5S) established a coalition government with the League after nearly three months of challenging bargaining, eventually giving rise to the first cabinet headed by Giuseppe Conte – at the time, a non-partisan figure who howev-

---

[1] Here we refer to the responsibility-responsiveness dilemma thoroughly examined by Peter Mair (2009; 2013).

[2] The 2022 CISE/ICCP survey is a pre-electoral Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) survey investigation designed by the CISE (Italian Centre for Electoral Studies) and administered by Demetra srl as part of the Issue Competition Comparative Project (ICCP) (De Sio et al. 2019). A representative sample of Italian voters (N=861) was interviewed from 30 August to 5 September 2022, just before the blackout for polls imposed by the Italian legislation. The sample reproduces population quotas for gender, age, level of education and geographical area of residence.

er had strong ties with the M5S.[3] Almost one year after the Conte I government formation, the balance of power in terms of public support between the two governing partners changed as a consequence of the League's substantial rise in the European elections in May 2019 (Landini and Paparo 2019; Angelucci and Maggini 2019). Seeking to exploit the increased support, the League's leader Matteo Salvini strategically asked for early elections (Cotta 2020). However, Salvini's attempt to elicit an early dissolution of the legislature failed as the M5S successfully managed to form an alternative coalition with three centre-left parties – the Democratic Party (PD), Italy Alive (IV), and Article One Democratic and Progressive Movement (MDP). Conte again led the new government, but the governmental actions shifted from being characterised by clear anti- to more pro-European stances (Capati and Improta 2021; Fabbrini 2022).

The Conte II government was confronted with one of the most challenging crises Italy has ever faced: the COVID-19 pandemic. The consequences of the pandemic on the Italian political system have been vital in reshaping party competition (Capati et al. 2022; Russo and Valbruzzi 2022), public opinion preferences (Vicentini and Galanti 2021), and political leadership (Loner 2022). The Conte II government found itself handling the health crisis by implementing unparalleled measures and declaring a state of emergency. By doing so, the government put in place unprecedented restrictions on citizens' freedoms. However, conflicts deriving from the COVID-19 management were key in prompting the Conte II government's early termination. Indeed, intra-coalition tensions over the pandemic governance between Conte and Matteo Renzi, leader of the junior coalition partner, i.e., IV, led to the resignation of IV's ministers and the fall of the government.

After new negotiations between parliamentary parties and the President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella, the former President of the European Central Bank (ECB) Mario Draghi was entrusted forming a 'national unity' government, with the precise goal of limiting the spread of the virus and adequately investing the European funds and loans related to the Next Generation EU (NGEU) surrounding the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). The Draghi government, involving all the main parties but Brothers of Italy (FDI) and Italian Left (SI), was sworn in on February 13, 2021. Despite being a national unity government, intra-coalition conflicts emerged even in this exceptional ruling configuration. Specifically, government instability has been evident since the 2022 presidential election held in January. The major political formations were unable to converge on a single candidate on both sides of the political spectrum (i.e., centre-left and centre-right coalitions). Such a political deadlock was eventually solved with Mattarella's acceptance of serving for a second seven-year term at the *Quirinale* (Quirinal Palace)[4]. Turbulence in domestic politics was then coupled with the increased international insecurity deriving from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its challenging consequences (e.g., high inflation rates and gas and energy crisis). The Draghi government firmly adhered to the Western bloc positions, contributing to sanctioning Russia and supporting Ukrainian military efforts (Di Mascio et al. 2022; Newell 2022).

The Russian-Ukrainian crisis increased the complexity of coalition governance (Bordignon et al. 2022). In particular, the M5S split into two different factions. On the one hand, Conte and his loyal members started to criticise Draghi's approach. On the other hand, a smaller group of parliamentary members guided by the former leader of the M5S, Luigi Di Maio, desired to reinforce Draghi's agenda on both the pandemic and the war, criticising Conte's shift from being a government supporter to be an internal opponent. Such infighting ultimately resulted in a party split of the M5S and a withdrawal of support to Draghi by Conte.

In this context, Draghi became unwilling to find a viable and alternative governing solution, and the legislature was eventually dissolved earlier than the constitutionally mandated end of term. Considering the consistent opposition status maintained by FDI throughout the legislature, it was immediately apparent that Giorgia Meloni was the frontrunner in the 2022 electoral contest. The peculiarity of the 2022 election, compared to recent ones, lies in its decisiveness. The outcome of the election produced an easily identifiable winner. As previously mentioned, different from 2022, in 2013 and 2018 there was a deviation from pre-election coalitions. In addition, in these elections, the bipolar patterns in which the winning coalition would govern on its own became a distant memory (Emanuele and Chiaramonte 2020).

THE 2022 ITALIAN ELECTION RESULTS

The pivotal 2022 Italian election marked the victory of the centre-right coalition, historically spearheaded by

---

[3] Conte was nominated as a potential Minister of Public Administration for the M5S' *Squadra di governo* (pools of ministrable candidates) during the election campaign. After an initial role as 'mediator' between the M5S and the League, he eventually became formally affiliated with the former party. Currently, Conte is the President of the M5S.

[4] The official residence of the President of the Republic.

a party that is the direct heir of the Italian neo-fascist tradition in FDI (e.g., Improta and Trastulli 2022), leading to its return to power after 14 years. This also coincided with another historical event: the formation of the first Italian government led by a woman as its Prime Minister, i.e., FDI's leader Giorgia Meloni. The first-ever republican election held in the autumn, a direct result of the latest government crisis of the XVIII (2018-2022) legislature and anticipated by an equally unprecedented summer campaign, marked a clear affirmation of FDI as Italy's new first party, despite the highest-ever abstention rate recorded in an Italian general election (36.1%; see, e.g., Improta et al. 2022; Trastulli and Flumeri 2022; Garzia 2022). Further, it stressed the role of the centre-right as the country's leading political coalition, also due to the mixed system dictated by the *Rosatellum* electoral law (Chiaramonte and D'Alimonte 2018) and the fragmentation of the opposing camp into several parts. Among these factors, the decline in turnout is a relevant red flag for the quality of the Italian democracy. Indeed, the 2022 negative record in electoral participation also marks a historical 9-point drop from 2018. Taken together, such results indicate that Italy is becoming a country in which citizens are valuing less the electoral moment. In comparative terms, this decline echoes the recent paths traceable in the last election in Portugal (Lopes 2022) and, more generally, in most European democracies over the last decades (Flickinger and Studlar 1992).

Table 1 recaps the electoral results of the main parties we analyse, breaking down the votes, seats, and relative shares of each formation.[5] By first looking at the two coalitions, the victory of the centre-right over the centre-left is evident and encompassing, as all indicators show. Votes-wise, in both chambers, the centre-right gained around 12.3 million preferences against the centre-left's over 7.3 million. In both chambers, this equates to approximately 44% of votes in favour of the centre-right vis-à-vis just above 26.1% for the centre-left. Due to the disproportional effects produced by the electoral system as a consequence of the greater unity and thus competitiveness in the majoritarian arena, this already sizeable gap in votes became even more prominent in terms of parliamentary representation. Indeed, the centre-right won just below 60% of the seats in both chambers (237 out of 400, i.e., 59.3%, in the Chamber of Deputies, and

115 out of 200, i.e., 57.5%, in the Senate), whilst the centre-left fared just above 25% (85 out of 400, i.e., 26.1%, in the Chamber of Deputies, and 44 out of 200, here too 26.1%, in the Senate).

By disaggregating this picture and looking at individual parties, additional interesting evidence emerges. As said, the centre-right was decisively led by FDI, which emerged as – by far – the largest Italian party, both votes- and seats-wise. Indeed, Meloni's party rose from a mere 4.3% vote share in 2018 (i.e., just above 1.4 million votes) to win over 7 million votes, just below 30%, in both chambers, translating into 118 seats in the Chamber of Deputies (25.9%) and 66 seats in the Senate (33%). Within this coalition, other remarkable findings emerge – namely, the relatively similar electoral performance of the League and FI in both chambers (the former below 9%, the latter above 8%, with both winning more than 2 million votes); and the fact that in terms of votes, seats, and the related shares, FDI alone is always larger than the sum of these two partners. This is true despite the seat discrepancy between the League and FI, which favoured the former and derived from how the coalition candidates were assigned across the single-member districts amongst these two partners. In turn, this decision was based on electoral polls and prior electoral performance by Matteo Salvini and Silvio Berlusconi's parties, further highlighting the comparatively larger downfall of the League both compared to previous contests, at the national and European levels, as well as to the expected results given how intra-coalitional quotas, i.e., the partisanship of coalition candidates in single-member districts, were allocated. As expected, the role played by Us Moderates in the coalition's success was marginal, albeit this coalition partner won a disproportionate number of seats in the Chamber compared to its electoral size.

In terms of other relevant party actors, whilst it is true that the leading force of the centre-left, the PD, solidified itself as the country's second electoral force and the largest opposition party, its electoral performance was not much better compared to the '18%' 2018 election (Emanuele and Paparo 2018). Indeed, across both chambers, Enrico Letta's party won above 5 million votes, equating to 19% of the vote share in the Chamber and 18.6% in the Senate and translating into, respectively, 69 (17.3%) and 38 (19%) seats. The progressive coalition was not aided by the electoral performance of either the Left-Green Alliance or More Europe, as seen in Table 1.

Finishing off with the M5S and the centrist 'Third Pole', the former emerged as the biggest loser from the 2022 Italian election, whilst the latter made a solid elec-

---

[5] We focus here on the centre-left (i.e., PD, Left-Green Alliance, More Europe, and Civic Engagement), centre-right (i.e., FDI, League, FI, and Us Moderates), the M5S, and the 'Third Pole'. Indeed, considering such parties, we can appreciate the broader picture of the 2022 Italian electoral supply by, at the same time, being parsimonious when it comes taking into account (too) small parties.

Table 1. 2022 Italian election results: votes and seats in the Chamber of Deputies and Senate (main parties).

Parties (and coalitions)	Chamber of Deputies				Senate			
	Votes	Vote %	Seats	Seat %	Votes	Vote %	Seats	Seat %
Brothers of Italy (FDI)	7,302,517	25.9	118	29.5	7,167,136	25.5	66	33.0
League	2,464,005	8.8	65	16.3	2,439,200	8.7	27	13.5
Forward Italy (FI)	2,278,217	8.1	45	11.3	2,279,802	8.1	18	9
Us Moderates (NM)	255,505	0.9	7	1.75	243,409	0.9	1	0.5
Centre-Right	**12,300,244**	**43.8**	**237**	**59.3**	**12,285,071**	**43.7**	**115**	**57.5**
Democratic Party (PD)	5,356,180	19.0	69	17.3	5,236,344	18.6	38	19.0
Left-Green Alliance (SIVER)	1,018,669	3.6	12	3.0	989,890	3.5	4	2.0
More Europe	793,961	2.8	2	0.5	808,676	2.9	0	0
Civic Engagement (IC)	169,165	0.6	1	0.3	153,964	0.5	0	0
Centre-Left[a]	**7,358,738**	**26.1**	**85**	**21.3**	**7,329,652**	**26.1**	**44**	**22.0**
Five Star Movement (M5S)[b]	4,339,813	15.4	52	13.0	4,319,697	15.3	28	14.0
'Third Pole' (AZ-IV)[c]	2,186,747	7.8	21	5.3	2,138,092	7.6	9	4.5
Overall Total[d]	28,141,631	100	400	100	28,111,623	100	200	100

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Ministry of the Interior data. [a] Both coalitions' row totals (centre-left and centre-right) include votes and seats assigned to the related lists abroad, in the Aosta Valley, and in the single-member districts of Trentino-Alto Adige–South Tyrol. [b] Row totals for the M5S include votes and seats assigned abroad and the votes assigned in the Aosta Valley in coalition with the Italian Left and other progressive lists. [c] Row totals for the 'Third Pole' include votes assigned abroad. [d] Overall row totals include all votes and seats assigned to all parties participating in the 2022 election, including in the Aosta Valley, in Trentino-Alto Adige–South Tyrol, and abroad.

toral debut. Indeed, Giuseppe Conte's party went from being the largest formation in the 2018 contest by far, with almost 33% of the vote share and largest parliamentary groups, to its status as the third-largest Italian party behind FDI and the PD overall, with roughly 4.3 million preferences (above 15% of the vote shares in both chambers), 52 seats in the Chamber of Deputies (13%), and 28 seats in the Senate (14%). Instead, albeit eventually running outside of a competitive electoral coalition after dropping out of the PD-led centre-left, the new-born 'Third Pole' fared relatively well, with over 2.1 million votes and over 7.5% of the vote share across both chambers, 21 Chamber seats (5.3%), and 9 Senate seats (4.5%).

Before further zooming in by analysing patterns of party loyalty in three regional capitals, Table 2 shows the electoral results by region, displaying for each the vote share obtained by the main parties in 2022 and 2018 and the variation between the two elections. First and foremost, the table clearly exhibits FDI's wavering performance in the 2022 elections; it obtained from the 17.5% of the votes in Campania to 32.9% in Veneto, being the first party in 12 regions out of the 19 analysed. However, the table also reveals that Meloni's party did not perform particularly well in many Southern regions – namely, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Apulia,

and Sicily – where the M5S, instead, recorded higher support. FDI also obtained limited support in Trentino-Alto Adige-South Tyrol (stronghold of the regionalist Südtiroler Volkspartei). Yet, Table 2 showcases the massive growth of the party compared to the 2018 elections in all regions, from the minimum increase in Campania (14 percentage points) to the maximum increase obtained in Veneto (28.6 percentage points).

Indeed, interesting patterns emerge if we compare the national party variations between the two elections (displayed in the last row of the table) with those recorded across regions. By grouping the regions into North, Red Zone, and South, we see that some parties (such as FI) gained and lost across regions quasi-homogeneously with just a few exceptions, while others performed particularly well or particularly bad in some areas of the country more than in others. If we look at the Democratic Party (PD), for instance, the table shows that it was punished the most by voters in the historically left-wing area of the country – e.g., the *Red* Zone (Diamanti 2009; Galli et al. 1968) – as well as in some Northern regions, where it performed mostly worse than in 2018 – even though the national level variation indicates for this party an overall tiny increase of 0.3 percentage points.

Table 2. 2022 Italian election results by region: votes in the Chamber of Deputies (main parties).

	FDI 2022 %	FDI 2018 %	FDI variation pp	PD 2022 %	PD 2018 %	PD variation pp	M5S 2022 %	M5S 2018 %	M5S variation pp	League 2022 %	League 2018 %	League variation pp	FI 2022 %	FI 2018 %	FI variation pp
Northern Italy															
Friuli Venezia Giulia	31.6	5.5	26.1	18.3	18.5	-0.2	7.1	24.1	-17.0	11.0	26.6	-15.6	6.8	11.0	-4.2
Liguria	24.4	3.8	20.6	22.4	19.7	2.7	12.9	29.9	-17.0	9.3	20.2	-10.8	6.5	12.8	-6.4
Lombardy	28.7	4.1	24.6	19.0	21.1	-2.1	7.4	21.1	-13.7	13.4	28.4	-15.0	7.9	14.0	-6.1
Piedmont	27.2	4.1	23.1	20.0	20.5	-0.5	10.3	26.1	-15.7	10.8	23.0	-12.3	7.9	13.7	-5.7
Trentino-Alto Adige-South Tyrol	19.3	2.7	16.6	17.0	14.6	2.4	5.1	19.2	-14.1	8.8	19.7	-10.9	3.5	7.2	-3.7
Veneto	32.9	4.3	28.6	16.2	16.7	-0.4	5.8	23.8	-18.0	14.6	32.9	-18.3	7.0	10.8	-3.8
Red Zone															
Emilia Romagna	25.3	3.4	21.9	28.0	26.4	1.6	9.8	27.1	-17.4	7.6	19.6	-12.0	5.9	10.1	-4.2
Marche	29.4	5.0	24.5	20.3	21.4	-1.1	13.5	35.1	-21.6	8.0	17.6	-9.6	6.9	10.1	-3.3
Tuscany	26.1	4.2	21.9	26.4	29.6	-3.2	11.1	24.5	-13.5	6.6	17.7	-11.0	5.6	10.1	-4.5
Umbria	31.1	5.0	26.1	20.7	24.9	-4.2	12.6	27.1	-14.5	7.8	20.5	-12.6	6.9	11.4	-4.5
Southern Italy															
Abruzzo	27.9	5.0	22.9	16.6	14.1	2.5	18.5	39.6	-21.1	8.1	14.1	-6.0	11.1	14.8	-3.6
Apulia	24.0	3.8	20.2	16.3	13.4	2.9	28.0	44.9	-16.9	5.4	6.3	-0.9	11.7	19.1	-7.4
Basilicata	18.4	3.8	14.7	15.2	16.4	-1.2	24.7	43.9	-19.2	9.1	6.4	2.7	9.5	12.6	-3.1
Calabria	19.1	4.6	14.5	14.0	14.1	-0.1	29.5	43.3	-13.9	5.9	5.7	0.2	15.8	20.4	-4.6
Campania	17.5	3.6	14.0	15.4	12.8	2.6	34.8	49.5	-14.7	4.5	4.4	0.1	9.8	18.6	-8.9
Lazio	31.6	8.3	23.3	19.3	18.6	0.7	14.9	32.8	-18.0	6.4	13.5	-7.2	6.9	13.4	-6.5
Molise	21.6	3.2	18.5	17.5	14.1	3.4	24.7	45.6	-20.9	8.6	8.9	-0.2	11.5	16.4	-4.9
Sardinia	24.0	4.1	19.9	18.2	14.7	3.5	21.7	42.3	-20.6	6.4	11.0	-4.6	8.7	15.0	-6.3
Sicily	19.2	3.7	15.5	11.8	11.2	0.6	28.2	48.7	-20.5	5.1	5.2	-0.1	11.3	21.0	-9.7
Italy	26	4.4	21.6	19.1	18.8	0.3	15.4	32.7	-17.3	8.8	17.4	-8.6	8.1	14	-5.9

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Ministry of the Interior data; *Note*: pp = percentage points.

Another case of party that lost the most in its own territory (Diamanti 2009) is the League, perhaps the most evident example of a party that performed heterogeneously across different areas of the country. With a national variation of -8.6, the League lost across almost all regions, but it suffered particularly in the North (with an average decrease of 13.8 percentage points), and to a lesser extent in the Red Zone (with an average decrease of 11.3 percentage points); on the other hand, in Southern regions, rarely did the League's variation reach similar values to the national variation, and in a few cases it actually even performed slightly better than in 2018.

Contrarywise, FDI, which at the national level recorded an increase of 21.6 percentage points and improved by far its performance compared to the previous election, did so more in the Red Zone and in the Northern regions than it did in the South. The M5S, instead, which at the national level recorded a decrease of 17.3 percentage points, worsened by far its performance compared to the previous election. In the South its vote share decreased by the highest extents (often by more than 20 percentage points). Yet, as mentioned above, the M5S managed to remain the first party in many Southern regions. This is due to the massive support it enjoyed in Southern Italy in 2018. In fact, while a decrease of only 13.7 percentage points turns the M5S into the least voted of the five main parties in Lombardy in 2022, a much higher decrease of 20.5 percentage points in Sicily, still leaves the party undisturbed on the highest place on the podium – quite far from anyone else – leaving the geography of the party substantially unchanged.

VOTE FLOWS IN THREE BIG CITIES: TURIN, FLORENCE, AND NAPLES

After having observed the electoral results, we move to presenting evidence on the inter-electoral vote flows between the 2018 and 2022 general elections in three major Italian cities, to grasp the features regard-

ing one of the three dimensions of interest in this article for understanding the 2022 election's results[6]. To do so, based on data availability in large enough contexts that have an adequate number of electoral polls, we present evidence concerning the largest available city from each of Italy's three geographical macro-areas, namely the North, Centre, and South. Hence, the following cities were selected according to these criteria: Turin for the North, Florence for the Centre, and Naples for the South.[7] As will be evident in the paragraphs below, this selection of cities will usefully allow observing some peculiarities specific to different local contexts (e.g., above all, the competitiveness of the M5S in Naples).

Overall, the vote flows at large seem to confirm some general trends that emerged from the national results, whilst adding additional nuance to the picture deriving from the peculiarities of the level of analysis. Considering the territorial characterisation of the election, recent enquiries into this aspect showed that at least three 'Italies' can be identified (Emanuele 2022). First, the centre-right has its strongholds in small towns. Second, regarding opposition formations, the urban areas in the North and in the Centre confirmed their traditional support for the PD. Finally, the M5S proves to be the landmark in Southern Italy.

More in detail, the centre-left, and the PD in particular, maintain a higher electoral competitiveness in large cities, especially compared to its general performance; often being the first coalition and party in large cities, especially in the North and Centre. However, in such large centres, the PD also loses voters to, chiefly, the Third Pole and FDI. Second, although most often lagging behind the PD and centre-left coalition themselves, FDI's comprehensive victory in the 2022 was likewise made possible by the significant inroads made in such large urban contexts, where Giorgia Meloni's party also significantly improved its vote share compared to 2022 and solidified itself as a major electoral force. This was driven by inflows of voters from essentially across the entire political spectrum, but chiefly due to a reconfiguration of support internal to the centre-right (hence, from the League and FI). Third, despite not reaching the vote shares of 2018, the M5S confirmed its (by far) leading status in the South, topping both the runner-up

PD and its centre-left coalition, as well as FDI and the centre-right. Yet, Conte's party seems to have lost a lot of former voters to abstention in these contexts. Finally, the newborn Third Pole was more competitive in large urban contexts, especially in the North and Centre, than nationally, gaining the vast majority of its support at the centre, e.g., from the PD on the left and FI on the right.

Turin

Starting from the Piedmont capital (see Collini et al. 2022), the election results in Turin pointed to an above-average competitiveness of the centre-left coalition led by the PD, the heightened competitiveness of FDI, a sharp decline of the M5S, and a very good performance of the centrist Third Pole.

A look into vote flows in the Piedmont capital, graphically represented in Figure 1, provides interesting information. Indeed, whilst overall the centre-left and centre-right coalitions performed similarly in 2018 and 2022 in terms of vote share, a key difference emerges in the composition of their electoral support. On this regard, the centre-left coalition displays a higher degree of inter-electoral loyalty, with roughly two out of three voters who previously cast their vote for either the PD or other centre-left formations in 2018 doing the same in 2022. Conversely, the percentages of voters who confirm their support for centre-right parties are much lower: 46.2% for FDI, 40.4% for the League, and 18.2% for FI, with the latter being the party with the lowest capability to remobilise its electorate alongside the M5S (27%), which lost around 4 out of 10 of its 2018 voters to abstention. It is also worth noting how the least amount of change, by far, is recorded amongst those who abstained in 2018, more than 87% of which also did not vote in 2022. Defections to abstention are instead the lowest in the case of the centre-left bloc and FDI.

In terms of outflows, voters who formerly supported the PD but did not vote for Enrico Letta's party in 2022 chiefly moved towards the centrist 'Third Pole' (14% of those who voted PD in 2018) and former government partner M5S (8%). This means that the composition of the PD's electoral support in Turin in 2022 was chiefly made up of former PD voters (75%) and supporters of other centre-left partners. Conversely, outflows from parties within the centre-right coalition are mostly inwards, meaning towards other formations from this bloc. Most notably, the 'vote drain' mainly concerns the League, with over 4 out of 10 of its former voters in 2018 (40.4%) now supporting FDI and almost one-third abstaining in 2022. This reconfiguration of electoral support within the centre-right bloc significantly contributed to FDI's excel-

---

[6] Tables with flow sources and destinations are presented in the Appendix.
[7] The flows presented were calculated by applying Goodman's (1953) model to the electoral polls of the municipalities of Turin, Florence, and Naples. Following Schadee and Corbetta (1984), we eliminated the sections with less than 100 voters (in each of the two elections considered in the analysis), as well as those that registered a rate of change of more than 15% in the number of registered voters (both increasing and decreasing). The value of the VR index is 18.8 for Turin, 16.3 for Florence, and 16.5 for Naples.
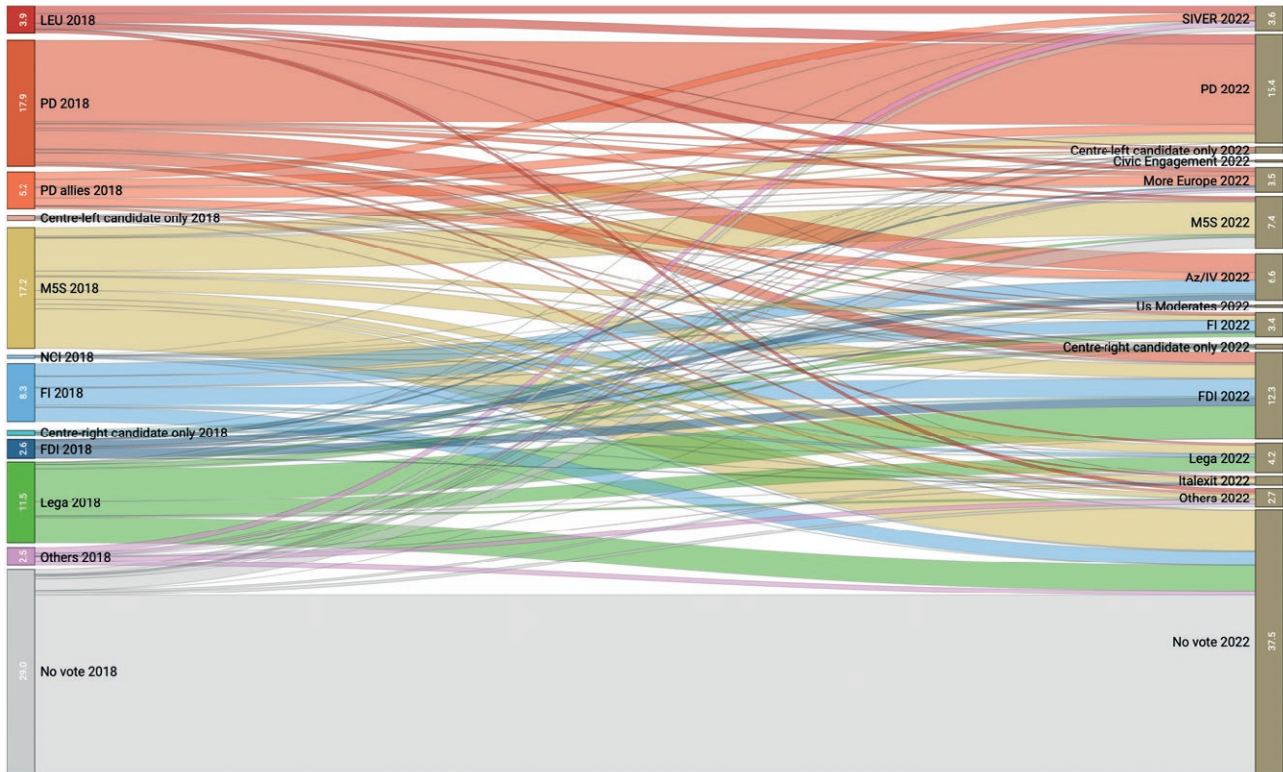
Figure 1. Turin vote flow chart (2018 and 2022 general elections). *Source*: Author's elaboration based on 2022 CISE/ICCP survey.

lent performance in Turin. Indeed, data shows how Giorgia Meloni's party enjoyed cross-cutting support across the party spectrum, with almost 7 out of 10 of the 2022 FDI voters having supported other centre-right parties in 2018 (68%, of which around 38% from the League, 20% from FI, and 10% from its own much smaller support base in 2018), alongside several former M5S (16.7%) and even PD voters (11.2%). Finally, the well-performing centrist 'Third Pole' found most of its support amongst former voters of centre-left PD (39.2%), centre-right FI (24.8%), and other centre-left formations (16%). Overall, it is possible to conclude from this analysis that electoral success or demise in Turin was primarily down to the capability to remobilise one's own electorate (in the case of the centre-left) or lack thereof (in the case of the M5S); barring the case of FDI, which instead was favoured by the reconfiguration of the internal support composition within the centre-right coalition.

Florence

Florence also emerges as a context in which the PD-led centre-left is the most supported electoral coalition (see Boldrini and Paparo 2022), although the gap with the centre-right narrowed in light of the good performance of FDI. Further, like in Turin, here too the centrist 'Third Pole' beat the M5S to the third-largest electoral competitor.

Against this backdrop, the vote flows for Florence in Figure 2 are highly informative. They, firstly, show that, similarly to other large cities, the highest degree of inter-electoral loyalty is the PD's, with 56.7% of voters who supported the main centre-left party in 2018 doing so in 2022 as well. However, here FDI follows much more closely with 53.7%, followed at a distance by the M5S (29%) and subsequently, at much lower levels of inter-electoral loyalty, the remaining centre-right parties in FI (15.7%) and, lastly, the League (13.4%). Finally, in line with what was recorded more generally, even in the Tuscan capital the vast majority of those who did not vote in 2018 confirmed their unwillingness to go to the polls in 2022 (88%).

It is also interesting to look at the outward movements from each individual formation and the composition of their 2022 electoral support. Indeed, the PD suffered a significant loss of voters both in favour of the newborn 'Third Pole' (17.6% of PD voters in 2018) and, even more remarkably, to FDI, with more than one out
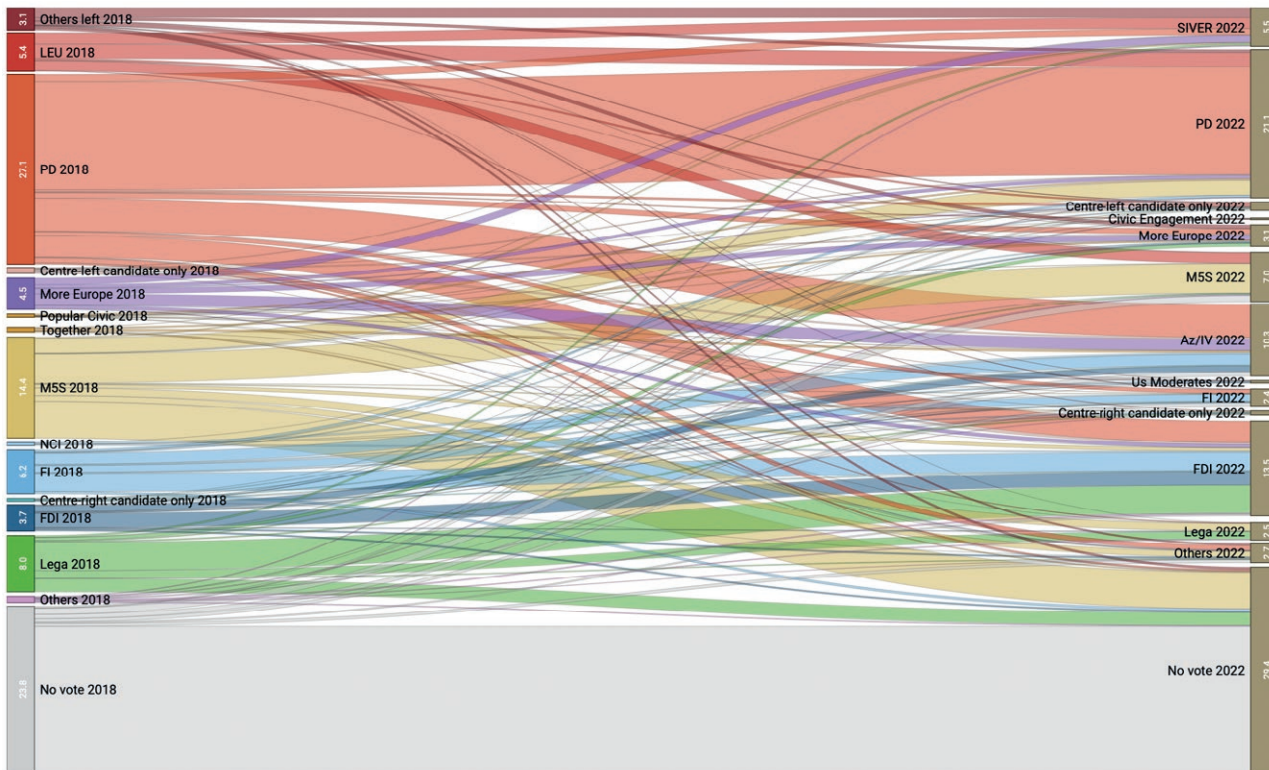
Figure 2. Florence vote flow chart (2018 and 2022 general elections). *Source*: Author's elaboration based on 2022 CISE/ICCP survey.

of 10 PD voters in 2018 shifting to the winning party of this election (11.3%). This means that Enrico Letta's party mainly maintained a central core of support from former voters of the PD itself (72.9%), with inflows from the M5S (10.1%) and centre-left parties at large (9.7%). In terms of centre-right formations, a staggering almost half of League voters in 2018 (49%) and more than four out of 10 FI supporters (41%) contributed to Giorgia Meloni's party's good performance, which also resulted from a considerable cross-cutting support (with sizeable chunks of 2018 voters of the PD and centrist More Europe, respectively 11.3% and 10.8%, voting FDI in 2022). This reflects in FDI's vote composition in 2022, which, looking at other parties, is made up of several former League (29.7%), FI (19.3%), and even PD voters (22.7%). Instead, the M5S mainly lost out to the historically high rate of abstention recorded in 2022, with over a third of its 2018 voters now refusing to vote (36.4%), whilst also losing out to the PD (14.8%) and League (7.5%). Conversely, the emerging left-wing profile of Giuseppe Conte's party was confirmed by both the vote inflows and composition of its electoral support in the Tuscan capital, as the M5S lured 27.6% of those who voted for the left-wing Free and Equal PD-supporting party

in 2018,[8] with this portion making up one of the most sizeable shares of this party's vote share (21.5%) alongside chiefly former M5S voters and voters not voting in 2018. Lastly, the newborn centrist 'Third Pole' was mainly made up of those who, in 2018, voted for parties at or around the centre of the political spectrum: PD (46.4%), More Europe (15.9%), and FI (15.2%). Interestingly, the alliance established by Matteo Renzi and Carlo Calenda managed to attract support from the leading formations of the 2018 centre-left coalition, namely, over 60% from PD and More Europe.

To sum up the case of Florence, here, like elsewhere, electoral success (e.g., in the case of the PD) or demise (e.g., in the case of the M5S) is chiefly determined by the different capacities to remobilise one's own former electorate. Further, FDI's support is here too the result of both a reconfiguration of support internal to the mainstream right and a more mainstream ability to cater to even former centre-left PD voters, which is a testament to a generalised and remarkable growth.

---

[8] The rest of this leftist electorate was divided between the PD itself (37.6%) and the Left-Green Alliance (28.6%).

Naples

Despite traditionally being a 'battlefield' and 'swing' area (Allum 1974; Palloni 1979), the M5S has been recently attracting growing and stable support in Naples. In 2022, Conte's party topped the polls in this city by quite some margin, then followed by the PD-led centre-left coalition, the FDI-led centre-right camp, and the centrist 'Third Pole'.

Figure 3 displays the vote flows traceable in Naples (see also Boldrini et al. 2022), the largest city in Southern Italy. Compared to the 2018 general elections, one of the main aspects to observe is inter-electoral loyalty, i.e., the percentage of voters who confirmed their choice between two consecutive elections. In this regard, the PD shows the highest degree of loyalty (49%), followed by the League (41%) and the M5S (41%). On the other hand, FDI and FI recorded a limited share of inter-electoral loyalty (28% and 24%, respectively), proving to be the parties with the highest level of disloyalty in the city. Moreover, an interesting trait emerging from Figure 3 is the substantial loyalty of the M5S voters, despite disruptive party transformations occurring in the XVIII (2018-2022) legislature. While 43% of the 2018

M5S voters opted for abstaining in 2022, just a negligible part of that voters decided to vote for other political formations. Additionally, as clearly visible in Table 10 in the Appendix, Conte's party was the only one to remobilise the group composed of abstainers and voters at their first election in 2018 (16% of those who abstained in 2018 went to the polls to vote for M5S in 2022). The other parties lost significant portions of their constituencies to competitors. In particular, the 2018 voters of the PD moved towards FDI (18%) and the 'Third Pole' (16%).

Furthermore, Figure 3 shows similar trends for parties regarding the comparison between the 2018 and 2022 electorates. Specifically, in 2022 the M5S managed to obtain support from the citizens already supporting it in 2018, similarly to the PD and the League. However, almost all parties failed to attract new voters and successfully remobilise former non-voters, except for the M5S, which drew the abstentionist vote (33% of its inflows).

The 2022 Italian general election saw the *exploit* of FDI and Giorgia Meloni. However, by looking at Naples, the city confirmed its loyalty to the M5S, despite the party having experienced high complexity when in government. Indeed, FDI managed to attract voters from all
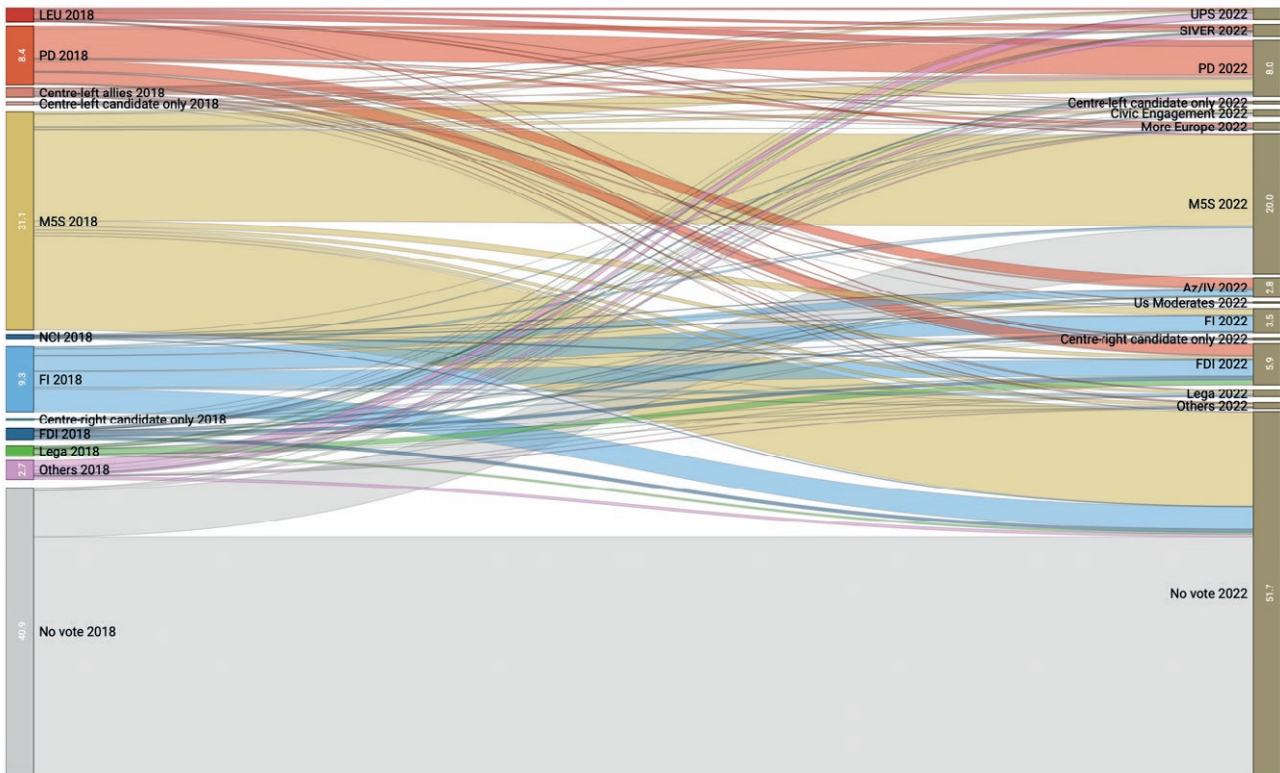

Figure 3. Naples vote flow chart (2018 and 2022 general elections). *Source*: Author's elaboration based on 2022 CISE/ICCP survey.

major parties, especially from FI (38% of its 2022 voters supported Berlusconi's party in 2018), PD (26%) and the League (12%). Yet, voters from M5S were not convinced by Meloni's electoral supply, as FDI received only 8% from former M5S voters.

Overall, the 'resistance' of the M5S in Naples can be explained by Conte's party's effective efforts in remobilising the electorate, despite huge losses towards non-voting. Thus, Conte and the M5S remained the top political formation in the city, limiting the rise of FDI.

THE ISSUE PREFERENCES OF ITALIAN VOTERS

After exploring the patterns of party loyalty, we shift the attention to the role of issues. The data collected in the pre-electoral wave of the 2022 CISE/ICCP survey showed that the Italian electorate of 2022 (1) shared some common non-polarising concerns to which it attributed high levels of priority and (2) tended to take quite progressive stances on various issues ranging from the economy to civil rights (Mannoni et al. 2022). The latter makes the results of the 2022 Italian elections even more puzzling. How come tendentially progressive preferences translated into the worst performance in the history of the Italian left (Emanuele et al. 2022) and the victory of a right-wing coalition led by a radical right party? While it goes beyond the purpose of this article to answer such a relevant question, this section will shed some light on voters' preferences regarding a list of 35 issues (11 valence and 24 positional) considered the most salient in the public debate at the time the electoral campaign was taking place. In doing so, it will reveal the context in terms of public opinion configuration where such results became possible.

Valence issues

Valence issues are defined as policy goals that do not cause sharp divisions among the public and on which, consequently, there is generally a high level of support among the electorate (e.g., Stokes 1963). In other words, these are goals that are shared by parties and voters across the political spectrum, regardless of ideology or different political stances. Because of that, when it comes to a valence issue, the outcome of party competition does not depend on the position parties take on it but rather on how credible the electorate thinks each party is to act consistently with that stance in pursuit of that policy goal (De Sio and Weber 2020; D'Alimonte et al. 2020).

The valence issues included in the 2022 CISE/ICCP survey were also those to which the respondents attributed the highest priority as opposed to positional issues[9]. Out of 11 valence issues, only one (i.e., to make Italy count more in the EU) was considered a priority by less than 80% of the respondents (see Table 3). Most of these shared policy goals refer to macroeconomic indicators and reflect the urgency to contrast obstacles to economic growth.

As the table below shows, the top priority for the Italian electorate of 2022 strictly relates to the energy crisis, and the consequent increase in electricity and gas prices – 92% of the respondents agreed that it is a priority that private citizens and firms should be guaranteed affordable prices for gas and electricity. There was also massive agreement on the importance of the economic goals to fight against unemployment (90%), reduce poverty (87%), foster economic growth (86%), contrast inflation (86%), lower taxes on labour (86%), fight tax evasion (84%), and implement the PNRR reforms to avoid losing the EU funds (80%). Hence, what emerges is a solid concern for the economic growth of the country in general, but also a substantial demand for financial stability for households and private individuals. Besides economic concerns, one of the most acclaimed issues on the list is the contrast to violence against women and femicides, which almost 90% of the respondents deem a priority in the Italian political agenda. Interestingly, Giorgia Meloni emerged as the most credible leader to pursue that goal (De Sio et al. 2022). Another priority for the 2022 Italian electorate is the fight against global warming, crucial for more than 80% of the sample.

As anticipated above, making Italy's voice count more in Europe is not as much of a priority as the rest of the valence issues. This finding, perhaps attributable to the increased cooperation with the European Union during the pandemic and the Draghi government, seems in line with a trend of declining Euroscepticism in the country (Conti et al. 2020b) compared to the past (more on this below).

Positional issues

If valence issues somewhat bring the electorate together around a shared policy goal, quite the contra-

Table 3 – Priorities attributed to 11 valence issues.

Issue goal	Priority (%)
Guarantee affordable gas and electricity prices to citizens and businesses	92%
Fight unemployment	90%
Fighting violence against women and femicide	89%
Reduce poverty	87%
Foster economic growth	86%
Fight inflation	86%
Reduce taxes on labour	86%
Fight tax evasion	84%
Fight global warming	82%
Implement the PNRR reforms to avoid losing the EU funds	80%
Make Italy count more in the EU	72%

Source: 2022 CISE/ICCP survey; Mannoni et al. 2022.

ry happens with positional issues. They are divisive, as characterised by the co-existence of two opposite policy goals that divide the public among those who favour one and those who stand for the other (Stokes 1963). In these cases, when it comes to party competition, the party's stance on a single issue does matter as it might be decisive for the final vote choice (De Sio et al. 2018).

The positional issues included in the 2022 CISE/ICCP survey were 24 in total and covered, once again, economic and financial issues, the issue of immigration, policy goals related to civil rights and freedom, climate change and environmental protection, institution-related issues, and the Russia-Ukraine war. The issues were selected to cover all relevant campaign topics (ICCP Study, see De Sio and Lachat 2020).

Table 4 summarizes the results, providing an overview of where Italian voters stood on each of those issues, and which ones they deemed most relevant. At the top of the table, we find the most salient ones, priority for far more than 70% of the respondents. Here, the economy dominates the scene: among the very first issues we find minimum wage, basic income, retirement age, and progressive taxation.

If we look exclusively at the economic issues across the table, overall, a tendency emerges to prefer the more progressive policy goal in almost all cases where this can be clearly identified. A substantial majority of respondents support the introduction of the minimum wage (84%), stand for the reduction of income inequality (79%), reject flat tax in favour of keeping progressive taxation (78%), and indeed would welcome an increase in the inheritance tax on large assets that exceed 5 million euros (67%).

However, despite the strong support for reducing income inequality and poverty in the country, most respondents clearly prefer abolishing basic income (introduced by the first Conte government in 2019), with only 39% favouring keeping it. On this specific policy goal, there was a complete turnaround in the electorate between 2018 and 2022. In 2018, when the debate was about whether basic income should be introduced, most Italians (more than 70%) wanted to introduce the measure (Emanuele et al. 2019). Now the percentage of supporters plummeted, and most voters would want it abolished. It is legit to doubt that such a radical shift came with no consequences on the vote choices of the 2022 electorate. Indeed, the M5S has by far been perceived by voters as the top promoter and guarantor of basic income and, as such, tended to get higher shares of vote support among basic income receptors (Angelucci et al. 2022; Emanuele and Maggini 2019). On the other side of the issue stands Brothers of Italy, which can safely be identified as the party that most adamantly opposed it and fiercely stands for its abolishment. Indeed, this is one of the two issues (the other, we remind it, being contrasting violence against women) for which Giorgia Meloni ranked first in credibility among all leaders (De Sio et al. 2022).

In addition, there is another economic issue on which the electorate seems to be in line with the position taken, among others, by FDI – namely, retirement age. Roughly four out of five respondents on this issue stood in favour of reducing the retirement age, contrasting the current legislation that regulates its progressive increase. While this cannot be said to be a typical rightist position, Meloni's party did include a proposal to stop longevity adjustments of retirement age in its program.

Finally, one economic issue split the public into halves – whether to insist on collecting past unpaid tax bills or forgive them and move forward. Although, as mentioned above, 84% of respondents considered fighting tax evasion a priority, that percentage lowers to 65% for the more specific issue of dealing with past unpaid taxes. Even more interesting, half of those who deemed crucial to deal with those, would rather forgive them than keep collecting them.

A somewhat ambivalent tendency also emerges on the issues of immigration and rights granted to immigrants. A majority (57%) would like to maintain the current level of access to social services for immigrants (instead of limiting it) and to grant more easily Italian citizenship to Italian-born, Italian-raised children of legal immigrants (instead of maintaining the current legislation on it). However, a much more substantial majority (68%) stands against the current state of

Table 4. Percentage of support for opposite policy goals.

Progressive issue goal (where applicable)	Support (%)	Conservative issue goal (where applicable)	Support (%)	Overall priority (%)
Introduce the minimum wage	84%	Not introducing the minimum wage	16%	79%
Maintain the basic income	39%	Abolish the basic income	61%	76%
Reduce retirement age	79%	Keep the existing normative that regulates the progressive increase of retirement age	21%	76%
Keep progressive taxation (who earns more pays higher percentages)	78%	Introduce a flat tax	22%	75%
Suspend the economic sanctions against Russia	43%	Maintain the economic sanctions against Russia	57%	75%
Maintain the ban on nuclear power plants in Italy	47%	Resume construction of nuclear power plants in Italy	53%	74%
Prioritise environmental protection, even at the cost of economic growth	66%	Prioritise economic growth, even at the cost of environmental protection	34%	74%
Keep receiving immigrants like now	32%	Limit the reception of immigrants	68%	73%
Stop supplying weapons to Ukraine	59%	Keep supplying weapons to Ukraine	41%	72%
Legalise euthanasia in cases of incurable diseases	86%	Keep euthanasia always illegal	14%	70%
Stay in the EU	72%	Leave the EU	28%	70%
Reduce income inequality	79%	Not reducing income inequality	21%	69%
Effectively guarantee the possibility of having an abortion	82%	Limit the possibility of having an abortion	18%	68%
Keep collecting past unpaid tax bills	51%	Forgive past unpaid tax bills	49%	65%
Not install new regasification plants	24%	Install new regasification plants	76%	65%
Maintain the 110% super bonus aimed at fostering energy-efficient homes	69%	Abolish the 110% super bonus aimed at fostering energy-efficient homes	31%	63%
Stay in NATO	73%	Leave NATO	27%	63%
Increase the penalties for those who discriminate and commit crimes against homosexuals and transsexuals	71%	Maintain the existing penalties for those who discriminate and commit crimes against homosexuals and transsexuals	29%	61%
Maintain the figure of the President of the Republic elected by Parliament, acting as a guarantor	42%	Introduce presidentialism	58%	58%
Maintain the current powers of the judiciary in Italy	52%	Reduce the powers of the judiciary in Italy	48%	57%
Maintain the current level of access to social services for immigrants	57%	Limit access to social services for immigrants	43%	56%
Increase the inheritance tax on assets beyond 5 million euros	67%	Not increase the inheritance tax on assets beyond 5 million euros	33%	53%
Grant citizenship more easily to legal immigrants' children who were born and raised in Italy	57%	Maintain the current legislation on granting citizenship to legal immigrants' children who were born and raised in Italy	43%	52%
Legalise soft drugs	56%	Keep soft drugs illegal	44%	49%

Source: 2022 CISE/ICCP survey; Mannoni et al. 2022.
Note: For some issues, a clear distinction between progressive and conservative policy goal was not applicable (e.g., weapon supply to Ukraine, sanctions to Russia). In those instances, each of the two opposite policy goals was arbitrarily assigned to either column; such assignation does not reflect the nature of those policy goals as progressive or conservative.

affairs as per immigrants' reception and would instead reduce the number of immigrants the country receives. It should be noted that the overall priority attributed to the latter is higher than that attributed to the former two issues, who lie at the bottom of the table.

As per what regards civil rights and freedom more in general, these are spread across the table, with salience ranging from 70% on euthanasia, to 49% on legalisation of soft drugs. On these issues, respondents consistently expressed a preference for the more progressive policy goal. The sample revealed massive support for legalising euthanasia in cases of incurable diseases (86%) and effectively guaranteeing the possibility of having an abortion (82%). The goal to punish acts of discrimination and crimes more severely against LGBTQ+ community members was solidly welcomed, too (71%). The most controversial issue here was the legalisation of soft drugs. To begin with, as mentioned above, it was not

even deemed relevant by most respondents in the sample, resulting as the least salient among all positional and valence issues. Still, a majority would rather see soft drugs legalised than not, further confirming a general tendency to oppose conservative positions regarding civil rights and individual freedom.

Beyond the more commonly salient issues during the last electoral campaigns in Italy (D'Alimonte 2019), the 2022 Italian national election was the occasion for some issues to find renewed attention in the public debate. The first example of that is the issue of environmental protection and energy consumption. While the general imperative goal to protect the environment seems to be prioritised by four Italian voters out of five, more specific policy goals about protection from global warming do not seem to enjoy the same support. On the one hand, most voters claim they would prioritise environmental protection even at the expense of economic growth (66%) and prefer not to abolish the tax bonus aimed at fostering energy-efficient homes (69%). On the other hand, less than 25% oppose the new installation of new regasification plants, and less than 50% believe Italy should maintain the ban on nuclear power plants.[10]

The second instance of a topic that was usually not part of the list of most debated ones during the campaign is, for obvious reasons, Italy's position towards Russia and Ukraine in the context of the war. Respondents were asked whether Italy should keep providing weapons to Ukraine and whether it should maintain the economic sanctions against Russia. Italians perceived both issues as a priority the country and the future government should deal with. However, as for the specific positions, the electorate seems to be split into halves, with a mild majority preferring to maintain the sanctions against Russia (57%) but also stop supplying weapons to Ukraine (59%).

As for the institutional format of the country, the sample shows Italians tend to prefer to maintain the current status quo. The Italian electorate seems to firmly prefer to remain in the EU (72%), and NATO (73%), and slightly more than 50% prefer to maintain the judiciary's power as it is now instead of reducing it. However, Italians appear way more convinced to embrace change regarding their form of government (one last novelty of this election). Almost 60% would give up the figure of the President of the Republic elected by the Parliament, acting as guarantor of the Constitution, and elect themselves a president instead.

In other words, the 2022 Italian electorate emerges as aligned on a shared agenda consisting of economic and financial stability, effective management of the immigration flows, the climate crisis, and, even more urgently, the energy crisis. An electorate that is evidently unsatisfied by the implementation of the policy on the basic income (which before being introduced enjoyed broad support among voters) but that otherwise takes neatly progressive stances on economic issues (e.g., flat tax, minimum wage, tax on large assets above 5 million euros) and civil rights (abortion, euthanasia, soft drugs, protection of LGBTQ+ community members).

One may argue that social desirability (Karp and Brockington 2005) might have contributed to biasing the overall picture of the electorate's preferences. However, it is worth mentioning that for those instances where the issue was also salient in the 2018 Italian elections, and as such included in the 2018 CISE/ICCP survey (see De Sio et al. 2019), a trend still seems to emerge towards more inclusive attitudes among the electorate. To begin with, in 2018, the general picture that emerged was that of a public opinion with progressive stances on the economy and conservative stances on immigration (Emanuele et al. 2020). This ambivalence somewhat still echoes in nowadays public opinion, as the sample appears more reluctant to massively side for the progressive policy goal when it comes to immigration than when economic issues are involved.

Yet, compared to four years ago, on most issues the electorate seem to have further moved towards the left. In 2018, 79% wanted to introduce the minimum wage – now that goal is cheered by 84%. In 2018, 74% rejected the flat tax – now that number increased to 78%. In 2018, only 47% would support the legalisation of soft drugs – now 56% do. Even on the issue of immigration, where on both occasions respondents were found to take the most closed, conservative, non-inclusive attitudes, this tendency is unequivocal. In 2018, 79% wanted to limit the number of immigrants, 60% to restrict their access to social services, and 56% would not want to ease the process of granting citizenship to children of legal immigrants. Four years later, those percentages have fallen to, respectively, 68%, 43%, and 43%, thus getting 11, 17, and 13 percentage points closer to a more inclusive position.

That is perhaps the most striking finding here, especially if juxtaposed with the election results: an overall *left-leaning* electorate handing in the government to a convincedly *right-wing* coalition. How to make sense of such apparently paradoxical outcome? First, it should not be overlooked that the success of the conservative coalition resulted from the vote choice of those who went to

---

[10] It should be noted to this regard that, in a referendum held in 2011 with a registered turnout of 55%, 94% of voters chose to abrogate the norms that would have allowed to produce nuclear energy in Italy (Di Virgilio 2012).

the polls on September 25 – which is two thirds of the electorate. Whereas data shown so far discusses the preferences of the whole public opinion, including that third of the electorate who did not go to vote. Hence, the unprecedented abstention of this national election might have itself played a role in this mismatch between the progressive positions of electorate and the conservative profile of the parties who formed the government.

A second explanation could be related to Meloni's ability to capitalise on the discontent of a portion of the electorate. According to the 2022 CISE/ICCP survey data, few weeks before the election day an abundant 35% of the respondents had a negative opinion of the Draghi government (more than 20% judged it "quite negatively" and more than 15% "very negatively"). While 60% of Italians were overall satisfied with the government led by Mario Draghi (Emanuele and Improta 2022), by firmly opposing it – and being the only party doing so – FDI was probably able to gain the trust and support of many of those unsatisfied voters.

Finally, what data seems to suggest is that, once again, the party competition is played not merely on parties' positions on policy goals but also and most importantly on a combination of issue salience and leaders' credibility to successfully pursue salient policy goals (De Sio and Weber 2014). We saw above that FDI matched the position of the electorate on the issues of basic income and retirement age. If one thinks that both issues ranked second by salience among all positional issues (the first being the introduction of minimum wage, which the evidence shows is not so divisive after all) and adds to that the consideration of Meloni as more credible than anyone else to abolish basic income, the electoral success FDI obtained vis-à-vis the general progressive inclinations of the overall electorate seems much less of a contradiction.

TRACING VOTERS' IDENTIKIT: THE EXPLANATORY ROLE OF SOCIODEMOGRAPHICS ON VOTE CHOICE

To gauge the features of the third dimension under enquiry regarding a better appreciation of the 2022 results, we now focus on investigating the predictive ability of sociodemographic characteristics over vote choice in these elections. As extensively explained by van der Eijk et al (2006), vote choice is generally conceptualized as a function of (1) the characteristics of the voter, (2) the alternatives of parties available in the political arena; and (3) a decision rule, which specifies how the utility assessments made on these two aforementioned conditions lead to the concrete choice.

Here, a rigorous analysis assessing the effect of voters' characteristics on their propensity to vote (PTV) for Italian parties running in 2022 national elections has been conducted. Given the structure of the Italian party system, a profile of the Italian constituents is drawn for each party or coalition considered. For this purpose, once again data from the 2022 CISE/ICCP survey have been employed (De Sio and Angelucci 2022), from which multivariate model estimates were drawn. To establish the impact of voters' characteristics on their propensity to vote for a specific party, the sociodemographic categories of age, gender, education, and social class have been considered.

In this regard, Figures 4-8[11] below display the propensity to vote, based on the aforementioned sociodemographic categories, for the main Italian political parties in descending order of electoral share. Many interesting conclusions can be highlighted, starting from the undisputed winner, FDI (Figure 4). First, whilst we could have expected and forecasted a direct relationship between the female constituency and the vote for FDI due to the female leadership of Giorgia Meloni, this association does not emerge. During the 2022 election, men and women had nearly the same propensity to vote for FDI (on average, the propensity to vote for FDI is equal to 3.7 circa for both genders), and the difference between the two propensity values is not significant. A similar picture can be drawn when it comes to age: FDI reaches voters across the entire age scale, with a slightly higher – yet not significant – tendency for constituencies between 55 and 64 years old.

In this regard, education and social class depict a different story. When looking at the results for education, the biggest category of FDI voters comes from a low education background, mainly holding the elementary or secondary school level (average vote propensity equal to nearly 4.2 for elementary-school constituencies, and 3.3 for secondary-school). In line with the traditional conservative profile, most Italian citizens voting for FDI also belong to the middle class (mean propensity = 4.4 circa), followed by the upper class. Additionally, the figure illustrates that the difference in the propensity to vote for this party between the middle and the lower classes is highly significant. In contrast, the difference between the middle and upper classes' estimates does not hold any significant result. Notwithstanding the

---

[11] Figures 4-8 display histograms depicting the average propensity to vote (PTV) on a 0 to 10 scale by gender, age, education level, and social class. The data employed for these analyses are based on the 2022 CISE/ICCP survey. The results derive from multivariate models estimated on a sample of 861 observations. Error bars are shown to evaluate the statistical significance in the differences.

Figure 4. Propensity to vote for FDI on a 0 to 10 scale by gender, age, education level, and social class. *Source*: Angelucci and Improta (2022).

Figure 5. Propensity to vote for the League on a 0 to 10 scale by gender, age, education level, and social class. *Source*: Angelucci and Improta (2022).
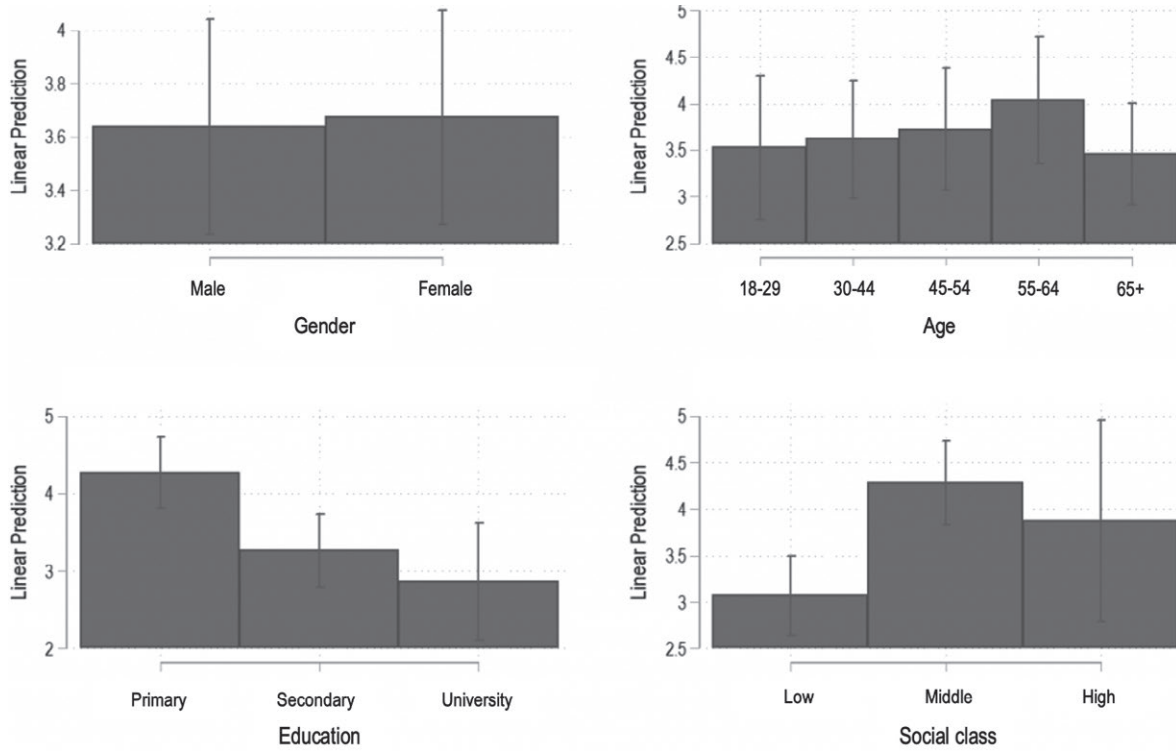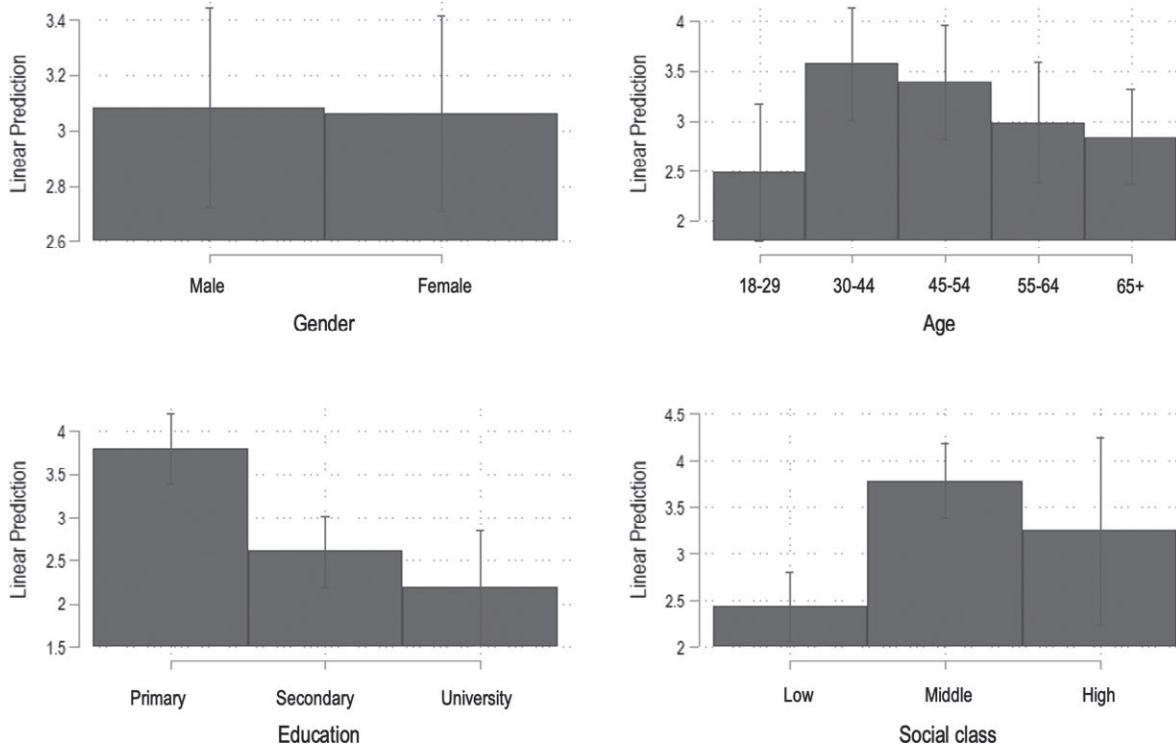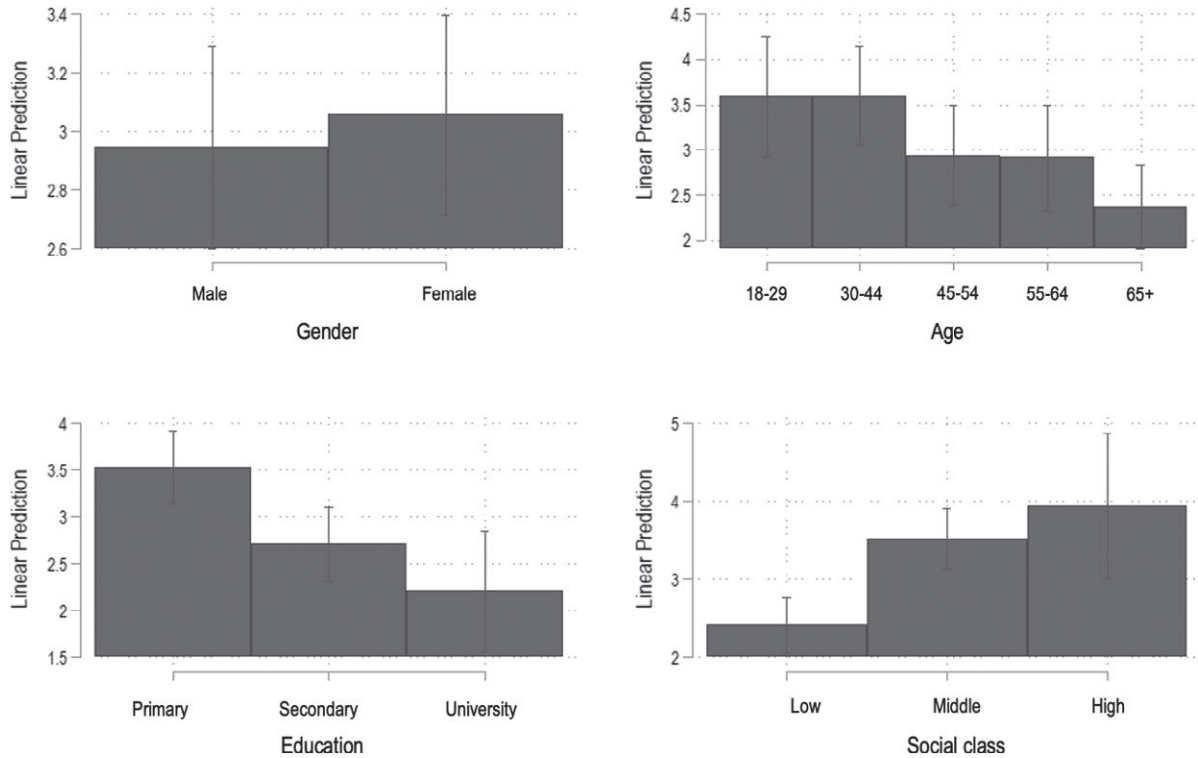
Figure 6. Propensity to vote for FI on a 0 to 10 scale by gender, age, education level, and social class. *Source*: Angelucci and Improta (2022).

various attempts of FDI to increase its appeal over the working class, the results on education and social class pinpoint FDI as a traditionally conservative party that attracts the least educated and middle-class electorate (Angelucci and Improta 2022).

Similar to the voter identikit constructed for FDI, the voter profile for the League presents no significant difference in the propensity to vote for gender nor the level of education and social class compared to the findings illustrated for FDI. The League seems more appealing among middle-class and less educated voters. The average propensity to vote for the League is higher among citizens in the 30-44 and 45-54 age ranges, against the 55-64 age range exhibited for FDI. Consequently, the similar voter profile depicted for both the League and FDI and the sharp decrease in support for the League registered during the 2022 elections (nearly a loss of 8 percentage points since the 2018 electoral share) informs about electoral transitions from the League to FDI (Mannoni and Angelucci 2022).

After FDI and the League, FI constitutes the third party by the size of the centre-right coalition of the 2022 general elections, followed by Us Moderates (NM). However, the findings exhibited for FI significantly differ from the scenario presented for FDI and the League.

While FI shares nearly the same result concerning the level of education and gender, acquiring increased support equally among male and female voters with lower levels of schooling, on average, the party attracts more voters from the upper class (the result significantly differs from the estimate drawn for the working class). A secondary, surprising effect registered for FI regards the variable of age: unexpectedly, the party plays a major engagement among young voters from 18-29 and 30-44 age ranges, although the propensity to vote in this age class in respect to the other ranges is not statistically significant.

From Figure 7, it is possible to observe that male voters have a slightly higher propensity to vote for PD than female ones, although this difference is not significant. For what concerns age, the Democratic Party continues to obtain more support from the youngest (18-29) and oldest (65+) age ranges, as occurred in previous elections (Paparo 2018; Angelucci and Improta 2022). Moreover, in line with previous elections' results (Barisione et al. 2018), we can observe that, on average, highly educated voters (holding a university degree) are more inclined to vote for PD than lower-educated citizens. An interesting finding regarding this party's support relates to social class. Among the lower social classes,
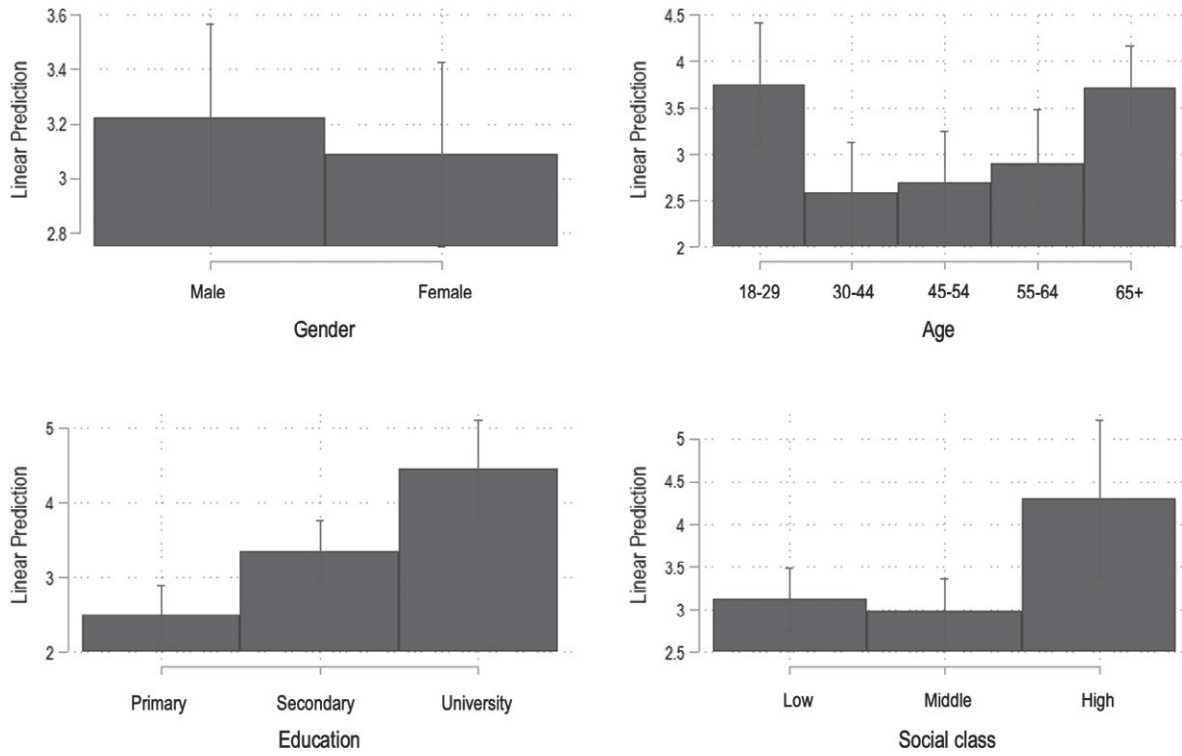
Figure 7. Propensity to vote for PD on a 0 to 10 scale by gender, age, education level, and social class. *Source*: Angelucci and Improta (2022).
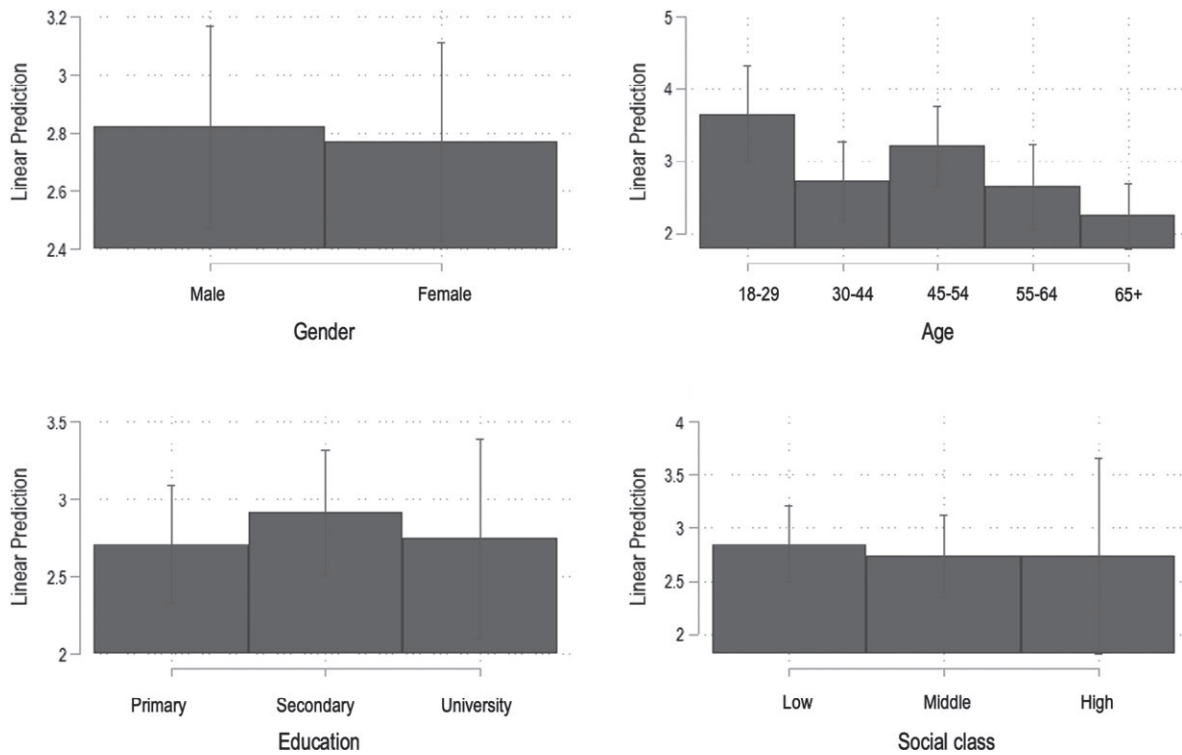

Figure 8. Propensity to vote for M5S on a 0 to 10 scale by gender, age, education level, and social class. *Source*: Angelucci and Improta (2022).

the propensity to vote for the party remains low, without significant differences; however, for the upper classes, it strikes with a considerably higher estimate. The difference between the upper and the middle classes' estimates is statistically significant, indicating that the PD performs well in wealthier social classes. However, the difference recorded disappears when comparing upper and lower class. Overall, the 2022 election's result suggests that, just as in 2018 (De Sio 2018), the PD was substantially unable to attract voters from the lowest social classes, thus being unsuccessful in stemming the tide of change brought about by Meloni.

Lastly, the findings related to the M5S shows that the party was capable to attract support from the full range of the electorate, contrary to the direction of the electoral campaign implemented by Giuseppe Conte, who targeted progressive voters (La Stampa 2022). The variables of gender and social class present no statistically significant results, confirming that voters from any class and gender have approximately the same propensity to vote for the M5S. A similar finding is also displayed for education: although citizens holding secondary-level education exhibit a slightly higher propensity to vote M5S, this difference in estimates is not significant. Conversely, age presents perhaps the most interesting result: younger generations (18-29), followed by middle-aged voters, show a higher likelihood to vote for M5S compared to other age ranges. Overall, the M5S establishes itself as a party attracting different voters, with exceptional support from young voters.

CONCLUSION

The present article has uncovered the main features underpinning the 2022 Italian election by delving into the voters' sociodemographic characteristics, issue preferences, and inter-election loyalty. The findings show insightful elements. Held in a context of increased economic, international, and domestic tensions, the election's result was the complete and total victory of Giorgia Meloni's FDI. However, the specificities of the electorate emerging from our scrutiny of their issue preferences depict a more composited story.

Notably, although on issues the 2022 Italian electorate has been a left-leaning one overall, it was also more concerned with immigration flow management and economic stability, particularly the energy crisis, than with other issues. Additional factors underpinning Meloni's success may lie in the increased citizens' discontent towards incumbents, especially during crises (Bojar et al. 2022), parties' mobilisation capabilities

(Donà 2022; Pirro 2022), and the role of her leadership in an increasingly personalised politics (Marino et al. 2022; Musella 2022). In particular, the salience of some specific issues and the leaders' credibility to tackle them could have played the lion's share in such a public opinion environment.

Moreover, another interesting finding is related to the FDI electorate's sociodemographic characteristics. Unexpectedly to some, the female leadership of Giorgia Meloni – an exceptional case in the Italian political landscape – did not elicit a growing electoral support from women. Men and women, indeed, record almost the same propensity to vote for FDI. An essential characteristic under investigation contributing to boosting Meloni's support is that of education. When observing the results about education levels, people with low education have a higher propensity to vote for FDI. This result is in line with established research demonstrating the closeness of less educated population strata to conservative parties and positions at large (Diamanti 2013). Finally, regarding vote flows, FDI effectively enhanced its starting positions in 2018, confirming its competitiveness even in traditionally unfavourable contexts such as large cities. However, this is true for Turin and Florence. Naples, in this regard, is an exception. The city confirmed its loyalty to the M5S, even after its difficulties deriving from governmental experience, e.g. parliamentary defections.

All in all, the 2022 Italian election was – again – an election of records: from the new all-time low in turnout for Italian general elections to the installation of a government formed by two populist radical right parties (Garzia 2022). Among such interesting events, Meloni was sworn in as the first female prime minister in the country's history. The government formation process was less labyrinthine than in the past, and, after initial turbulence, the portfolio allocation was conducted by satisfying most of the centre-right coalition partners' preferences. Meloni is now confronted with crucial challenges, particularly in the economic arena. Like many other European and non-European countries, Italy is again under tremendous pressure. Will the new government handle it?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

Allum, P. A. (1974). Voting in Naples, 1946-68: A Framework and Two Analyses. *Comparative Politics*, *7*(1), 87-108.

Angelucci, D., & Maggini, N. (2019). Elezioni in Italia–Le elezioni europee del 26 maggio 2019. *Quaderni dell'Osservatorio elettorale QOE-IJES*, *81*(1), 157-178.

Angelucci, D., & Improta, M. (2022). L'identikit degli elettori italiani 2022: I principali partiti a confronto. Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/26/lidentikit-degli-elettori-italiani-2022-i-principali-partiti-a-confronto/

Angelucci, D., Trastulli, F., & Flumeri, E. (2022). Tiene la correlazione reddito di cittadinanza-voto al M5S. Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/27/tiene-la-correlazione-reddito-di-cittadinanza-voto-al-m5s/

Barisione, M., Bellucci, P., & Vezzoni, C. (2018). *Vox Populi: Il voto ad alta voce del 2018*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Bojar, A., Bremer, B., Kriesi, H., & Wang, C. (2022). The effect of austerity packages on government popularity during the great recession. *British Journal of Political Science*, *52*(1), 181-199.

Boldrini, M., & Paparo, A. (2022). I flussi elettorali a Firenze. Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/10/11/i-flussi-elettorali-a-firenze/

Boldrini, M., Mannoni, E., & Paparo, A. (2022). I flussi elettorali a Napoli. Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/27/i-flussi-elettorali-a-napoli/

Bordignon, F., Diamanti, I., & Turato, F. (2022). Rally 'round the Ukrainian flag. The Russian attack and the (temporary?) suspension of geopolitical polarization in Italy. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, *14*(3), 370-387.

Capati, A., & Improta, M. (2021). Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde? The Approaches of the Conte Governments to the European Union. *Italian Political Science*, *16*(1), 1-22.

Capati, A., Improta, M., & Trastulli, F. (2022). COVID-19 and party competition over the EU: Italy in Early Pandemic Times. *European Politics and Society*, 1-22.

Chiaramonte, A., & D'Alimonte, R. (2018). The new Italian electoral system and its effects on strategic coordination and disproportionality. *Italian Political Science*, *13*(1), 8-18.

Collini, M., Mannoni, E., & Paparo, A. (2022). I flussi elettorali a Torino. Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/28/i-flussi-elettorali-a-torino/

Conti, N., Pedrazzani, A., & Russo, F. (2020a). Policy polarisation in Italy: the short and conflictual life of the 'Government of Change'(2018–2019). *South European Society and Politics*, *25*(3-4), 317-350.

Conti, N., Marangoni, F., & Verzichelli, L. (2020b). Euroscepticism in Italy from the Onset of the Crisis: Tired of Europe?. *South European Society and Politics*, 1-26.

Cotta, M. (2020). The anti-establishment parties at the helm: From great hopes to failure and a limited resurrection. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, *12*(2), 126-139.

Curini, L., & Pinto, L. (2017). *L'arte di fare (e disfare) i governi: Da De Gasperi a Renzi, 70 anni di politica italiana*. Milano: EGEA.

D'Alimonte, R. (2013). The Italian elections of February 2013: the end of the Second Republic?. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, *5*(2), 113-129.

D'Alimonte, R. (2019). How the populists won in Italy. *Journal of Democracy*, *30*(1), 114-127.

D'Alimonte, R., De Sio, L., & Franklin, M. N. (2020). From issues to goals: A novel conceptualisation, measurement and research design for comprehensive analysis of electoral competition. *West European Politics*, *43*(3), 518-542.

De Sio, L., & Weber, T. (2014). Issue yield: A model of party strategy in multidimensional space. *American Political Science Review*, *108*(4), 870-885.

De Sio, L., & Weber, T. (2020). Issue yield, campaign communication, and electoral performance: a six-country comparative analysis. *West European Politics*, *43*(3), 720-745.

De Sio, L. (2018). Il ritorno del voto di classe, ma al contrario (ovvero: Se il PD è il partito delle élite). In V. Emanuele e A. Paparo, *Gli sfidanti al governo. Disincanto, nuovi conflitti e diverse strategie dietro il voto del 4 marzo 2018*. Rome: LUISS University Press.

De Sio, L., De Angelis, A., & Emanuele, V. (2018). Issue yield and party strategy in multiparty competition. *Comparative Political Studies*, *51*(9), 1208-1238.

De Sio, L., Emanuele, V., Maggini, N., Paparo, A., Angelucci, D., & D'Alimonte, R. (2019). Issue Competition Comparative Project (ICCP). GESIS Data Archive. Cologne. ZA7499 Data file version 2.0.0, doi: 10.4232/1.13374

De Sio, L., & Lachat, R. (2020). Issue competition in Western Europe: an introduction. *West European Politics*, *43*(3), 509-517.

De Sio, L., & Angelucci, D. (2022). Le intenzioni di voto CISE/ICCP: Un possibile "effetto Churchill" sul voto del 25 settembre? Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Eletto-

rali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/08/le-intenzioni-di-voto-cise-iccp-un-possibile-effetto-churchill-sul-voto-del-25-settembre/

De Sio, L., Boldrini, M., & Trastulli, F. (2022). Domande degli elettori e offerta dei partiti: declino dei temi economici (tranne m5s) e polarizzazione indotta. Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali: https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/08/domande-degli-elettori-e-offerta-dei-partiti-declino-dei-temi-economici-tranne-m5s-e-polarizzazione-indotta/

Diamanti, I. (2009). *Mappe dell'Italia Politica: Bianco, Rosso, Verde...e Tricolore.* Bologna: il Mulino.

Diamanti, I. (2013). *Un salto nel voto: Ritratto politico dell'Italia di oggi.* Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Di Mascio, F., Natalini, A., & Profeti, S. (2022). The Draghi Government put to the Test by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, *14*(4), 402-408.

Di Virgilio, A. (2012). Elezioni in Italia–Referendum 2011 e regionali in Molise: torna il quorum, Iorio è confermato, crescono i segnali di insofferenza. *Quaderni dell'Osservatorio elettorale QOE-IJES*, *67*(1), 163-172.

Donà, A. (2022). The rise of the Radical Right in Italy: the case of Fratelli d'Italia. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, *27*(5), 775-794.

Emanuele, V., & Paparo, A. (2018). *Gli sfidanti al governo. Disincanto, nuovi conflitti e diverse strategie dietro il voto del 4 marzo 2018*. Rome: LUISS University Press.

Emanuele, V. & Maggini, N. (2019). Il M5S "resiste" solo nelle province a maggior richiesta di assistenzialismo. Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2019/05/27/il-m5s-resiste-solo-nelle-province-a-maggior-richiesta-di-assistenzialismo/

Emanuele, V., & Chiaramonte, A. (2020). Going out of the ordinary. The de-institutionalization of the Italian party system in comparative perspective. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, *12*(1), 4-22.

Emanuele, V., Maggini, N. & Paparo, A. (2019). Un'opinione pubblica di sinistra sull'economia e di destra sull'immigrazione: il terreno ideale per partiti post-ideologici?. In A. Chiaramonte and L. De Sio (Eds.), *Il voto del cambiamento. Le elezioni politiche del 2018* (pp. 61–80). Bologna: Il Mulino.

Emanuele, V., Maggini, N., & Paparo, A. (2020). The times they are a-changin': party campaign strategies in the 2018 Italian election. *West European Politics*, *43*(3), 665-687.

Emanuele, V. & Improta, M. (2022). Gli italiani e il giudizio sui tre governi della legislatura: Draghi il più apprezzato, ma entrambi i governi Conte superano il 50% di giudizi positivi. Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/09/gli-italiani-e-il-giudizio-sui-tre-governi-della-legislatura-draghi-il-piu-apprezzato-ma-entrambi-i-governi-conte-superano-il-50-di-giudizi-positivi/

Emanuele, V., Improta, M., Boldrini, M., & Collini, M. (2022). La peggiore performance della sinistra italiana. Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/26/una-delle-peggiori-performance-della-sinistra-italiana/

Emanuele, V. (2022). Sud chiama Nord? Voto e territorio nell'Italia del 2022. Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/29/sud-chiama-nord-voto-e-territorio-nellitalia-del-2022/

Fabbrini, S. (2022). Governmental change in 2019 Italy: domestic factors or European constraints?. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, *30*(3), 433-444.

Flickinger, R. S., & Studlar, D. T. (1992). The disappearing voters? Exploring declining turnout in Western European elections. *West European Politics*, *15*(2), 1-16.

Galli, G., Capecchi, V., Cioni Polacchini, V. & Sivini, G. (1968), *Il comportamento elettorale in Italia.* Bologna: il Mulino.

Garzia, D. (2022). The Italian parliamentary election of 2022: the populist radical right takes charge, *West European Politics*, DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2022.2148603

Goodman, L. A. (1953). Ecological regression and behavior of individual, *American Sociological Review*, 18, 663–664.

Ignazi, P. (2018). *I partiti in Italia dal 1945 al 2018.* Bologna: Il Mulino.

Improta, M. (2022). Unpacking government instability. Cabinet duration, innovation, and termination events in Italy between 1948 and 2021. *Quaderni di scienza politica*, *29*(2), 151-180.

Improta, M. & Trastulli, F. (2022). Anatomia del "destra-centro" italiano: passato, presente e futuro. Rome: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/rom/19555.pdf

Improta, M., Emanuele, V. & Angelucci, D. (2022). Fuga dalle urne: affluenza mai così bassa nella storia della Repubblica. Rome: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/27/fuga-dalle-urne-affluenza-mai-cosi-bassa-nella-storia-della-repubblica/

Karp, J. A., & Brockington, D. (2005). Social desirability and response validity: A comparative analysis of overreporting voter turnout in five countries. *The Journal of Politics*, *67*(3), 825-840.

La Stampa (2022). "30 minuti al Massimo", l'intervista integrale a Giuseppe Conte del direttore Giannini: dal programma elettorale alle candidature e la destra. Last accessed December 10, 2022. https://www.lastampa.it/rubriche/30-minuti-al-massimo/2022/08/16/

video/30_minuti_al_massimo_lintervista_
integrale_a_giuseppe_conte_del_direttore_giannini_
dal_programma_elettorale_alle_candid-6610035/

Landini, I., & Paparo, A. (2019). Italy: Complete over-
turn among government partners: League doubled,
M5S halved. In De Sio, L., Franklin, M.N. and Russo
L. (eds), *The European Parliament Elections of 2019*,
Luiss University Press, Rome, 173-179.

Loner, E. (2022). Winners or losers? Using Twitter to
evaluate how the COVID-19 pandemic changed the
images of political leaders in Italy. *Contemporary Ital-
ian Politics*, 1-18.

Mair, P. (2009). *Representative versus responsible govern-
ment*. Cologne: Max-Planck Institute for the Study of
Societies.

Mair, P. (2013). *Ruling the void: The hollowing of Western
democracy*. New York: Verso books.

Mannoni, E., & Angelucci, D. (2022). I flussi elettorali tra
politiche 2018 e 2022: Lega e M5S alimentano FdI.
Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.
luiss.it/cise/2022/09/26/i-flussi-elettorali-tra-polit-
iche-2018-e-politiche-2022/

Mannoni, E., Maggini, N., & Angelucci, D. (2022). Cosa
vogliono gli elettori? Roma: Centro Italiano Studi
Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/cise/2022/09/09/cosa-
vogliono-gli-elettori/

Marino, B., Martocchia Diodati, N., & Verzichelli, L.
(2022). The personalization of party politics in West-
ern Europe (1985–2016): evidence from an expert
survey. *Acta Politica*, *57*(3), 571-596.

Musella, F. (2022). *Monocratic Government: The Impact
of Personalisation on Democratic Regimes*. Berlin: De
Gruyter.

Newell, J. L. (2022). Italian politics and Russia's invasion
of Ukraine: Quo vadis?. *Contemporary Italian Politics*,
14(2), 115-117.

Palloni, A. (1979). Internal colonialism or clientelistic
politics? The case of Southern Italy. *Ethnic and Racial
Studies*, *2*(3), 360-377.

Paparo, A. (2018). Challenger's delight: The results of the
2018 Italian general election: The results of the 2018
Italian general election. *Italian Political Science*, *13*(1),
63-81.

Pirro, A. L. (2022). Performing (during) the Coronavirus
Crisis: The Italian Populist Radical Right between
National Opposition and Subnational Government.
Government and Opposition, 1-17.

Puleo, L., & Piccolino, G. (2022). Back to the Post-Fascist
Past or Landing in the Populist Radical Right? The
Brothers of Italy Between Continuity and Change.
South European Society and Politics, 1-25.

Russo, L., & Valbruzzi, M. (2022). The impact of the pan-
demic on the Italian party system. The Draghi gov-
ernment and the 'new'polarisation. *Contemporary
Italian Politics*, *14*(2), 172-190.

Schadee, H. M., & Corbetta, P. (1984). *Metodi e modelli di
analisi dei dati elettorali*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Schadee, H., Segatti, P., & Vezzoni, C. (2019). *L'apocalisse
della democrazia italiana: alle origini di due terremoti
elettorali*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Stokes, D. E. (1963). Spatial models of party competition.
American political science review, 57(2), 368-377.

Tarchi, M. (2018). Voters without a party: The 'long
decade'of the Italian centre-right and its uncertain
future. *South European Society and Politics*, *23*(1),
147-162.

Trastulli, F., & Flumeri, E. (2022). Il dato dell'affluenza
per regioni e zone geopolitiche. Roma: Cen-
tro Italiano Studi Elettorali. https://cise.luiss.it/
cise/2022/09/26/il-dato-dellaffluenza-per-regioni-e-
zone-geopolitiche/

Van der Eijk, C., van der Brug, W., Kroh, M., & Frank-
lin, M. (2006). Rethinking the dependent variable in
voting behavior: On the measurement and analysis of
electoral utilities. *Electoral Studies*, 25(3), 424-447.

Vicentini, G., & Galanti, M. T. (2021). Italy, the sick man
of Europe: Policy response, experts and public opin-
ion in the first phase of Covid-19. *South European
Society and Politics*, 1-27.

APPENDIX

Table 5. Adjusted source percentages for vote shifts in Turin between the 2018 and 2022 elections.

				2018									
	LEU	PD	PD allies	Centre-left candidate	NCI	FI	Centre-right candidate	FDI	Lega	M5S	Other	No Vote	Total
2022													
No Voto	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.3	5.2	0.1	0.0	9.6	15.3	1.7	67.7	100.0
Italexit	2.3	19.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	4.7	3.8	6.3	1.3	57.9	4.3	0.3	100.0
Centre-right candidate	0.0	13.3	0.0	2.5	3.3	13.7	3.7	12.1	31.6	18.9	0.0	0.8	100.0
FDI	0.0	11.7	0.4	1.6	0.9	19.7	1.6	9.8	37.8	16.3	0.2	0.0	100.0
Lega	0.0	7.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	8.0	1.1	0.0	46.8	28.9	0.0	6.9	100.0
Us Moderates	6.8	30.1	10.1	0.0	2.0	14.2	7.1	17.5	7.1	0.0	5.1	0.0	100.0
FI	0.0	10.7	1.2	0.0	1.0	44.6	1.3	5.8	15.6	19.8	0.0	0.0	100.0
Civic Engagement	0.3	28.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.8	2.3	17.8	0.0	41.8	100.0
PD	8.5	74.7	7.6	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.6	0.0	0.5	100.0
More Europe	16.0	16.9	39.8	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.0	0.0	0.6	8.9	9.6	100.0
SIVER	28.9	0.0	27.9	1.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	22.3	18.5	100.0
Centre-left candidate	11.2	37.2	16.3	0.0	0.2	0.0	1.3	3.0	0.0	19.3	1.0	10.5	100.0
M5S	4.3	4.0	0.0	1.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.8	63.5	0.8	22.0	100.0
AZ/IV	0.0	39.3	16.0	1.9	0.2	28.0	3.5	11.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Others	18.2	0.0	11.6	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.6	23.3	23.2	14.7	100.0

Source: Authors' elaboration based on 2022 CISE/ICCP survey.

Table 6. Adjusted destination percentages for vote shifts in Turin between the 2018 and 2022 elections.

				2018								
	LEU	PD	PD allies	Centre-left candidate	NCI	FI	Centre-right candidate	FDI	Lega	M5S	Other	No Vote
2022												
No Voto	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.5	28.4	23.6	4.2	0.0	31.1	33.4	24.8	87.5
Italexit	0.7	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.7	7.3	2.9	0.1	4.1	2.1	0.0
Centre-right candidate	0.0	0.5	0.0	2.1	5.4	1.1	3.7	3.0	1.8	0.7	0.0	0.0
FDI	0.0	8.1	1.0	25.2	28.1	29.5	30.4	46.2	40.4	11.7	1.1	0.0
Lega	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	14.2	4.1	7.0	0.0	17.0	7.1	0.0	1.0
Us Moderates	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.0	1.6	0.6	3.6	2.2	0.2	0.0	0.7	0.0
FI	0.0	2.0	0.8	0.0	8.6	18.2	6.6	7.4	4.5	3.9	0.0	0.0
Civic Engagement	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.4
PD	33.8	64.2	22.3	20.6	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.8	0.0	0.3
More Europe	14.6	3.3	27.0	9.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.2	0.0	0.1	12.4	1.2
SIVER	26.8	0.0	19.2	5.2	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	31.7	2.3
Centre-left candidate	2.8	2.0	3.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	1.9	1.1	0.0	1.1	0.4	0.4
M5S	8.2	1.6	0.0	13.5	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	27.3	2.3	5.6
AZ/IV	0.0	14.4	20.1	15.4	2.7	22.3	35.3	28.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Others	12.6	0.0	6.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	3.6	24.5	1.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' elaboration based on 2022 CISE/ICCP survey.

Table 7. Adjusted source percentages for vote shifts in Florence between the 2018 and 2022 elections.

	2018															
	Popular civic	Together	PD	More Europe	Centre-left candidate	FI	FDI	Lega	NCI	Centre-right candidate	LEU	M5S	No Vote	Others	Others left	Total
2022																
PD	1.0	0.0	72.9	2.1	0.5	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.7	10.1	0.0	0.3	1.9	100.0
SIVER	0.0	0.5	18.6	17.6	0.8	0.0	0.0	4.1	0.0	0.0	28.4	3.1	0.0	2.1	24.7	100.0
Civic Engagement	3.9	1.8	51.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6	22.7	2.2	0.0	100.0
More Europe	0.9	6.2	25.3	24.1	4.4	3.6	3.1	13.4	0.0	1.6	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.5	100.0
Centre-left candidate	2.9	0.0	25.0	7.9	1.7	5.4	0.0	4.4	1.6	0.0	19.7	5.6	16.9	0.0	8.9	100.0
AZ/IV	0.5	2.6	46.4	15.9	2.1	15.2	8.3	0.0	2.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
FI	0.9	0.0	22.8	0.0	0.0	40.7	5.7	0.0	1.6	3.1	0.0	1.8	19.7	0.0	3.6	100.0
FDI	0.0	0.2	22.7	3.6	1.8	19.3	14.7	29.7	1.2	0.7	0.0	3.5	1.4	1.2	0.0	100.0
Lega	0.5	0.0	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	44.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	43.1	0.0	4.6	0.5	100.0
Us Moderates	5.8	1.2	6.9	9.5	0.0	41.3	16.4	0.0	6.6	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	2.7	8.9	100.0
Centre-right candidate	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	22.4	8.6	25.5	0.7	2.2	9.5	18.6	0.0	9.6	0.0	100.0
M5S	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.6	21.5	60.3	12.8	1.9	0.4	100.0
No Vote	0.0	0.5	0.7	0.0	0.1	1.1	0.7	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.8	71.2	0.4	1.1	100.0
Others	1.0	1.1	26.1	3.0	0.0	0.0	7.3	3.9	0.0	0.5	0.0	30.6	15.0	2.2	9.3	100.0

Source: Authors' elaboration based on 2022 CISE/ICCP survey.

Table 8. Adjusted destination percentages for vote shifts in Florence between the 2018 and 2022 elections.

	2018														
	Popular civic	Together	PD	More Europe	Centre-left candidate	FI	FDI	Lega	NCI	Centre-right candidate	LEU	M5S	No Vote	Others	Others left
2022															
PD	46.9	0.0	56.9	10.0	13.5	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	37.6	14.8	0.0	8.1	13.1
SIVER	0.0	4.1	3.8	21.5	5.6	0.0	0.0	2.8	0.0	0.0	28.6	1.2	0.0	13.5	43.3
Civic Engagement	1.9	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.0
More Europe	5.7	27.7	2.9	16.5	16.7	1.8	2.6	5.1	0.0	12.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.2
Centre-left candidate	7.6	0.0	1.1	2.1	2.6	1.1	0.0	0.7	4.4	0.0	4.4	0.5	0.9	0.0	3.5
AZ/IV	11.5	38.2	17.6	36.5	25.9	25.1	23.1	0.0	46.0	24.8	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.0	0.0
FI	4.7	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	15.7	3.7	0.0	8.8	18.4	0.0	0.3	2.0	0.0	2.8
FDI	0.0	3.6	11.3	10.8	29.5	41.9	53.7	49.9	34.4	24.4	0.0	3.3	0.8	19.2	0.0
Lega	2.8	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	13.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.5	0.0	13.5	0.4
Us Moderates	4.7	0.7	0.1	0.8	0.0	2.5	1.7	0.0	5.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	1.1
Centre-right candidate	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.2	1.4	1.9	1.0	3.3	1.1	0.8	0.0	6.9	0.0
M5S	8.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0	11.1	27.8	29.4	3.8	15.6	0.8
No Vote	0.0	20.7	0.8	0.0	4.0	5.0	5.6	22.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	36.4	88.0	14.4	10.8
Others	5.9	4.4	2.6	1.8	0.0	0.0	5.4	1.3	0.0	3.6	0.0	5.8	1.7	7.1	8.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' elaboration based on 2022 CISE/ICCP survey.

Table 9. Adjusted source percentages for vote shifts in Naples between the 2018 and 2022 elections.

			2018										
	LEU	PD	Centre-left candidate	Centre-left allies	NCI	FI	Centre-right candidate	FDI	Lega	M5S	Other	No Vote	Total
2022													
More Europe	7.7	31.0	4.8	21.3	0.0	9.0	1.0	2.6	0.9	7.2	14.5	0.0	100.0
SIVER	21.2	27.8	4.4	6.1	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.1	8.4	1.1	29.0	0.0	100.0
Civic Engagement	0.0	5.3	0.0	0.3	0.9	0.0	0.1	2.7	0.0	43.6	9.2	38.0	100.0
PD	10.5	50.7	2.2	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	1.8	21.9	5.3	0.0	100.0
FI	0.1	0.0	0.7	0.0	3.3	63.7	0.4	6.6	0.0	24.7	0.5	0.0	100.0
Lega	0.0	4.5	0.0	12.6	0.0	30.4	0.0	2.2	2.9	43.1	4.3	0.0	100.0
FDI	2.1	26.2	0.0	2.2	2.7	37.6	1.5	7.6	11.9	8.0	0.3	0.0	100.0
Us Moderates	0.0	54.5	2.3	0.0	3.8	28.4	1.7	3.1	6.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
UPS	18.0	0.0	1.3	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	1.1	17.5	54.5	1.7	100.0
Centre-left candidate	13.7	28.5	4.5	9.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	2.9	6.4	22.0	12.8	0.0	100.0
M5S	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	64.6	0.0	33.1	100.0
Centre-right candidate	0.0	39.8	0.0	13.7	3.5	32.6	2.8	1.3	6.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
AZ/IV	0.0	49.5	0.2	7.0	3.6	32.2	1.5	3.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Others	0.8	16.7	2.7	0.0	0.7	7.7	0.4	4.8	4.9	49.5	11.9	0.0	100.0
No Vote	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	6.1	0.0	0.9	0.5	25.9	0.7	65.5	100.0

Source: Authors' elaboration based on 2022 CISE/ICCP survey.

Table 10. Adjusted destination percentages for vote shifts in Naples between the 2018 and 2022 elections.

			2018									
	LEU	PD	Centre-left candidate	Centre-left allies	NCI	FI	Centre-right candidate	FDI	Lega	M5S	Others	No Vote
2022												
More Europe	4.5	4.2	13.6	17.1	0.0	1.1	6.1	1.9	0.7	0.3	6.2	0.0
SIVER	19.5	6.0	19.4	7.7	0.0	0.0	7.8	1.3	10.4	0.1	19.4	0.0
Civic Engagement	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.2	1.4	0.0	0.4	1.5	0.0	1.3	3.1	0.8
PD	42.9	48.5	43.7	28.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.6	10.0	5.7	15.9	0.0
FI	0.3	0.0	5.7	0.0	20.5	23.7	7.4	14.4	0.0	2.8	0.7	0.0
Lega	0.0	0.5	0.0	8.5	0.0	3.2	0.0	1.3	1.9	1.3	1.6	0.0
FDI	6.3	18.3	0.0	8.8	28.3	23.6	47.7	27.9	47.3	1.5	0.6	0.0
Us Moderates	0.0	1.2	1.0	0.0	1.3	0.6	1.8	0.4	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
UPS	14.9	0.0	5.4	5.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	1.2	0.9	33.0	0.1
Centre-left candidate	2.7	1.3	4.3	2.5	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.7	1.7	0.3	1.8	0.0
M5S	8.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.8	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	41.5	0.0	16.1
Centre-right candidate	0.0	1.2	0.0	2.4	1.6	0.9	3.9	0.2	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
AZ/IV	0.0	16.5	1.2	13.7	18.3	9.6	23.0	5.2	5.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Others	0.3	1.7	5.7	0.0	1.1	0.7	1.9	2.6	2.8	1.4	3.8	0.0
No Vote	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.8	17.6	34.0	0.0	28.6	16.4	43.1	14.0	82.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' elaboration based on 2022 CISE/ICCP survey.