

Growing Apart: How Italy's Populist Radical Right Electorates Diverged in the 2024 EP Election

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Abstract

A further swing to the right characterised the 2024 European Parliament (EP) election. The Populist Radical Right (PRR) gained ground, becoming the most voted alternative in six European countries. Among these is Italy, where the honeymoon between Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia (Fdi) and its electorate persisted after 20 months of a fully right-wing cabinet comprising another PRR party, the Lega. Leveraging on an original survey conducted by the Italian Centre for Electoral Studies (CISE), we explore the determinants of PRR voting in the 2024 EP election in Italy. We test two classical theories of PRR voting: 'cultural backlash' and 'economic insecurity'. We also assess whether perceived local decline, recently identified as an important predictor of PRR orientations, played a role even in the EP election, an arena where local concerns should count less. Finally, we look at the impact of European issues and the major crises of the early 2020s, notably the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the Israel-Hamas conflict. The takeaway is that the Fdi and Lega electorates have grown apart: while still sharing nativism – a core ideological feature of the PRR family – they differ in other relevant aspects, notably socio-economic class and EU-related positions. The implications of these findings for the broader debate on the demand for PRR politics are discussed in the conclusion.

1. Introduction

The 2024 European Parliament (EP) election resulted in the most right-wing EP ever elected. Firstly, the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) confirmed its role as the pivotal EP group. Secondly, populist radical right (PRR) parties (Mudde, 2007) further improved upon their remarkable 2019 electoral performance (Zulianello and Larsen, 2021). For the first time, these parties took part in the EP election as a well-established political family. They had moved out of the political fringe in most European countries by winning national elections, joining coalition governments, or at least becoming *coalitionable* (Albertazzi and Vampa, 2021a). However, although their journey towards the 'mainstream' (Crulli and Albertazzi, 2024) is ongoing, the PRR family remains heterogeneous in terms of the parties' roles in their respective systems and EP group affiliations.

In some countries – most notably Italy – a PRR party is currently leading the cabinet, striking a balance between government credibility and maintaining a radical profile. Other PRR parties are junior partners in coalition governments, thus sharing the cost of governing, albeit with less evident responsibilities. Finally, most PRR parties are in

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opposition, and a few are still not properly integrated into their party systems (Zulianello, 2020). Regarding their positions within the EP, PRR parties are split between three groups: the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the new Patriots for Europe (PfE) – mostly corresponding to the old Identity and Democracy (ID) – and Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN). While all parties in these groups criticise the functioning of the European Union, particularly its migration policy, they have begun to diverge on other issues, such as responses to wars. During the previous legislature, the ECR had been ostensibly more Atlanticist compared to the ID, and so the new PfE and ESN groups seem less pro-Ukraine compared to the ECR. According to some pundits and academics (Ivaldi and Torner, 2023; Vassallo and Vignati, 2023, chap. 10), a rapprochement between the ECR and the EPP may also be underway, reflecting a ‘symbiotic relationship’ between the traditional centre-right and the radical right already detectable in many national contexts (Bale, 2018; Mudde, 2019).

As the PRR family is internally divided in terms of the parties’ roles in both national and European arenas, as well as their stances on relevant topics, we may also expect voters of different PRR parties to have diverged. Therefore, although PRR voting has already been studied from several angles (Ivarsflaten and Stubager, 2012; Spierings and Zaslove, 2017; Michel et al., 2020; Sipma and Berning, 2021), we deem the following research questions worthy of scholarly attention: [RQ1] What were the drivers of PRR voting in the 2024 EP election? [RQ2] Do classical explanations of PRR success hold, or did other contextual and EU-related issues play a key role? [RQ3] Are the determinants of the vote for different PRR parties the same?

We aim to answer these questions by focusing on an ideal case study: Italy. Following years of political marginalisation, the PRR party Fratelli d’Italia (FdI) rose to power in October 2022 (Chiaramonte and De Sio, 2024). Giorgia Meloni, the party’s leader, became Italy’s first-ever female Prime Minister and one of the most influential leaders across Europe. She leads a fully right-wing cabinet, including another PRR party – the Lega – headed by another well-known leader, Matteo Salvini. Although the two parties have experienced opposite electoral fortunes during the 2020s, both managed to increase their percentages in the 2024 EP election compared to the 2022 general election. The coexistence of two strong PRR parties makes it paramount for them to differentiate from one another (Puleo, Carteny and Piccolino, 2024). Hence, the two parties conducted different electoral campaigns and confirmed their memberships in two distinct groups: FdI is the largest party of the ECR; Lega is one of the largest within the PfE. Whether such differentiation went hand in hand with the diversification of their demand side (i.e., their electorates) remains to be tested empirically.

To conduct our analysis of PRR voting in the 2024 EP election we rely on an original survey by the Italian Centre for Electoral Studies (CISE), fielded at the beginning of the electoral campaign (De Sio et al., 2025). This survey allows us to test the two most established explanations of PRR voting: ‘cultural backlash’ and ‘economic insecurity’ (Norris and Inglehart, 2019). In addition, thanks to a specific item in the survey, we examine the potential role of perceived local decline. Recent comparative research by Arzheimer et al. (2024) has indeed reaffirmed what previous single-case studies (Arzheimer and Bernemann, 2023; Huijsmans, 2023) had already suggested: place-related evaluations and feelings help explain PRR voting. Does this hold true for the EP election, where local

concerns should play little or no role? Finally, we consider the impact of European issues and the major crises that have shaped the early 2020s: the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the Israel-Hamas conflict.

We illustrate our quantitative analyses after an overview of PRR performance in the 2024 EP election in both Europe and Italy, and the presentation of the research hypotheses and design. The main findings can be summarised as follows. First, FdI and Lega voters are still characterised by nativist attitudes, or aversion towards immigrants. This corroborates the notion that, of the three pillars of PRR ideology – populism, nativism, and authoritarianism (Rooduijn, 2014) – nativism is the most relevant. However, the similarities between the two electorates stop here. Indeed, FdI and Lega voters have grown apart in terms of socio-economic characteristics and EU-related attitudes. Lower social class and level of education correlate with voting for Lega, but the same is not true for FdI. Furthermore, whereas Lega's electorate is still characterised by hard Euroscepticism, FdI voters are not significantly more (or less) Eurosceptic compared to the Italian electorate at large. Consequently, as a by-product of FdI's massive electoral success, Meloni's voters no longer resemble the stereotypical PRR electorate, i.e., less educated and more economically insecure (Rydgren, 2012). We conclude by expounding on the implications of these results for the broader debate on the current state of the European PRR family.

2. The populist radical right navigating the 2024 EP election

Cas Mudde introduced his 2007 masterpiece 'Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe' as 'yet another book' on 'the *only successful new party family* in Europe' (Mudde, 2007, p. 1; our emphasis). At that time, PRR parties, understood as a sub-family of the 'far-right' (Rooduijn et al., 2023) characterized by acceptance of democratic rules while adopting a populist¹, nativist², and authoritarian³ ideology, were central players in only a handful of European countries. In addition, the legislative strength of the PRR in the EP was very limited. As reported by Zulianello and Larsen (2021), PRR parties gained only 3.1 percent of seats in the 2004 EP election. Therefore, describing the PRR family as truly successful at that time was probably exaggerated.

Almost twenty years later, however, the PRR family appears not only successful but also strongly embedded in European politics and institutions. Therefore, discussions on the potential – or already achieved – 'mainstreaming' of the PRR have spread over the last few years (Akkerman, De Lange and Rooduijn, 2016; Mudde, 2019; Vampa and

¹ Although we are aware that the scholarly debate on the true meaning of 'populism' is open (and probably never-ending), we ultimately subscribe to the definition provided by the 'ideational approach'. Based on this definition, populism can be understood as 'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people' (Mudde, 2004, p. 543).

² We adhere to the definition of 'nativism' provided by Cas Mudde (2007, p. 19), who conceptualised it as 'the idea that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation') and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state'.

³ We adhere to the definition of 'authoritarianism' provided by Cas Mudde (2007, p. 23), who conceptualised it as 'the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely'.

Albertazzi, 2021). Commentators seem to take for granted that PRR parties have ‘gone mainstream’ at least in some countries (e.g. Zulianello, 2022). In this regard, Crulli and Albertazzi (2024) took a more critical stance by emphasising that the PRR family can be seen as ‘established but not mainstream’ in Europe. What they mean is that PRR parties can, in fact, be considered ‘established’ in European politics, as they have alternated between government and opposition in as many as 15 countries until now. On the other hand, the ideas they propagate, especially nativist and authoritarian ones, are still only shared by a minority of Europeans, making PRR voters different from the European electorate at large.

2.1. Another step out of the fringe

Regardless of the extent to which PRR parties are ‘mainstream’, the 2024 EP election marked another step out of the political fringe for them. Their average vote share grew from 11.9% in 2019 to 13.3% in 2024 (Tab. 1). Consequently, the number of EP seats won by PRR parties has now reached its historical maximum. In the previous legislature, PRR parties occupied 138 seats (19.6% of the total EP seats). In the 10th legislature, this number has grown to 167 seats (23.2% of the total EP seats).

Table 1. Electoral performance and seats of PRR parties: comparison between the 2019 and 2024 EP elections.

Country	Party name	Acronym	Group	% 2024	Δ votes (24-19)	Seats 2024	Δ seats (24-19)
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria	FPÖ	ID→PfE	25.36	8.16	6	3
Belgium	People's Party	PP	/	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	Flemish Interest	VB	ID→PfE	14.5	2.4	3	0
Bulgaria	Attack	Ataka	/	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria	NFSB	/	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	Bulgarian National Movement	IMRO	ECR	2.09	-5.31	0	-2
	Volya	Volya	/	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	Revival	Revival	NI→ESN	13.98	12.94	3	3
Croatia	Homeland Movement	DP	New(ECR)	8.82	8.82	1	1
	Croatian Sovereignists	HS	ECR	4.01	-4.51	0	-1
Czechia	Freedom and Direct Democracy Tomio Okamura	SPD & Trikolóra	ID→ESN	5.73	-3.37	1	-1
Denmark	Danish People's Party	DF	ID→PfE	6.37	-4.43	1	0
	Denmark Democrats	DD	New(ECR)	7.39	7.39	1	1
Estonia	Conservative People's Party of Estonia	EKRE	ID→ECR	14.8	2.1	1	0
Finland	True Finns / Finns Party	PS	ID→ECR	7.6	-6.2	1	-1
France	National Rally	RN	ID→PfE	31.37	8.07	30	8
	Reconquest	REC	New(ECR)	5.47	5.47	5	5
Germany	Alternative for Germany	AfD	ID→ESN	15.9	4.9	15	4
Greece	Greek Solution	EL	ECR	9.3	5.1	2	1
	Popular Orthodox Rally + Patriotic Radical Union	LAOS + PATRIE	/	1.66	0.46	0	0
	Victory	NIKI	New(NI)	4.37	4.37	1	1
Hungary	Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Party + Christian Democratic People's Party	Fidesz+KDNP	EPP→PfE	44.82	-7.78	11	-2
Italy	Brothers of Italy	Fdi	ECR	28.75	22.35	24	18
	Lega Salvini Premier	Lega	ID→PfE	8.97	-25.33	8	-21
Latvia	National Alliance	NA/LNNK	ECR	22.07	5.58	2	0
	Latvia First	LPV	New(PfE)	6.16	6.16	1	1
Netherlands	Forum for Democracy	FvD	ECR→ /	2.49	-8.51	0	-3

	Party for Freedom	PVV	/→PfE	16.97	13.47	6	6
Poland	Law and Justice	PiS	ECR	36.16	-9.24	20	-6
Portugal	Chega	Chega!	/→PfE	9.99	8.49	2	2
Romania	Alliance for the Union of Romanians	AUR	New(ECR)	14.93	14.93	6	6
	S.O.S. Romania	SOS RO	New(NI)	5.03	5.03	2	2
Slovakia	Slovak National Party	SNS	/	1.9	-2.2	0	0
	We are family - Boris Kollár	SR	/	N.A.	-3.2	N.A.	0
Slovenia	Slovenian Democratic Party + Slovenian People's Party	SDS + SLS	EPP	37.8	11.5	4	1
	Slovenian National Party	SNS	/	N.A.	-4	N.A.	0
	New Slovenia – Christian Democrats	N.Si	EPP	7.68	-3.42	1	0
Spain	Vox	Vox	ECR→PfE	9.63	3.43	6	3
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	SD	ECR	13.17	-2.13	3	0
Avg/Total				13.3	2.04	167	0.88

Notes: PRR parties were identified by referring to the PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2023). Specifically, we classified as PRR parties those that the PopuList categorises as 'populist' and 'far right.' As Crulli and Albertazzi (2024, pp. 12-15) recently observed, 'Close examination of the definitions employed in the expert survey reveals that the label "far right" is actually applied to parties that fit Mudde's (2007) conceptualisation of the radical right, that is, parties that are nativist and authoritarian. Therefore, the PopuList labels as "populist" and "far right" those parties that Mudde originally described as populist radical right.' Table 1 also includes some recently established small parties that were not included in the latest iteration of the PopuList and/or whose classification as PRR is still debated among scholars (e.g., Niki in Greece and S.O.S. Romania). We decided to include these parties in the table based on relevant news articles and web sources. Membership in an EP group refers to the constitutive session of each legislative term. ECR = European Conservatives and Reformists; EPP = European People's Party; ESN = Europe of Sovereign Nations; ID = Identity and Democracy; NI = Non-inscrits; PfE = Patriots for Europe; / = no EP group.

A PRR party gained the relative majority of votes cast in as many as six countries: Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Hungary, and Slovenia. Two women stood out as the big winners of the 2024 EP election: Marine Le Pen in France and Giorgia Meloni in Italy. The RN's victory in France (from 23.3% of the national votes in 2019 to 31.4% in 2024) led to unexpected and dramatic consequences, as President Emmanuel Macron immediately announced the breakup of the French Parliament and called for new legislative elections. FdI's surge, on the other hand (from 6.4% of the national votes cast in 2019 to 28.8% in 2024), confirmed what surveys had already been suggesting during the previous months: the honeymoon between the prime minister and her 'people' is lasting much longer than expected.

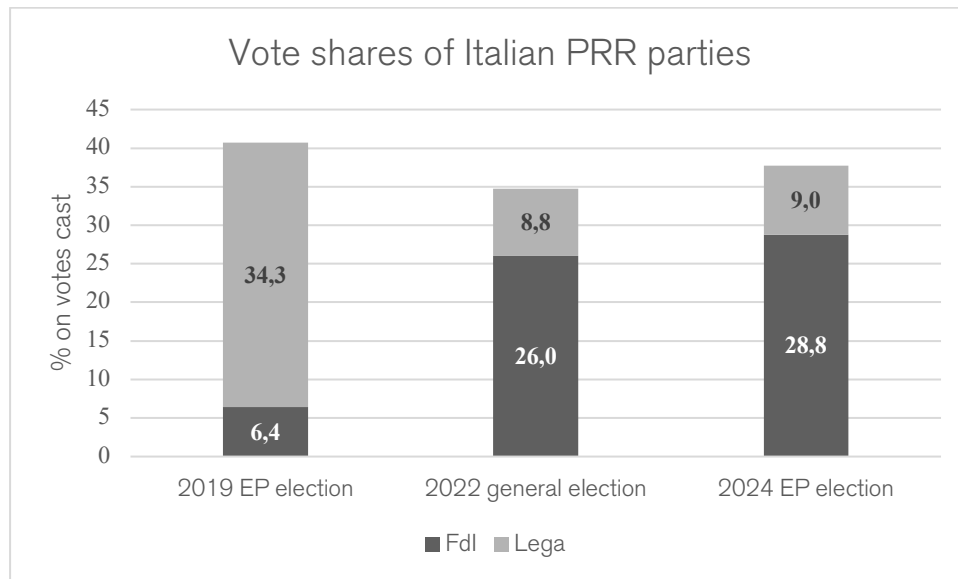
The fact that these two big winners belong to two distinct groups, with the RN being the major party within the new PFE and FdI the major within the ECR, is emblematic of the PRR's trajectory within European institutions. As thoroughly explained by McDonnell and Werner (2020), the history of PRR parties within the EP is one of 'non-cooperation'. Traditionally, PRR parties have either 'been isolated and/or shunned one another' (McDonnell and Werner, 2020, p. 12). The pattern of 'non-cooperation' is confirmed even now that PRR parties are a major force across the whole of Europe. A hypothetical group formed by all parties that scholars classify as 'PRR' (Rooduijn et al., 2023) would rank as second, after the EPP, in terms of seats. Nonetheless, the PRR family is split between two main groups, the PFE and the ECR, with the more extreme PRR parties gathered in a third group, the ESN launched by the *Alternative für Deutschland*. Finally, some PRR parties are also found in the EPP group (in Slovenia) and others do not belong to any group. Rather than joining forces, the PFE (mostly corresponding to the old ID with the addition of Orbán's Fidesz party) and the ECR seemed to have tilted in opposite directions in the months preceding the 2024 EP election. This was due to a mix of reasons, including different strategic opportunities for different PRR parties and international crises. For example, PRR parties have taken divergent positions on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as reported by Ivaldi and Zankina (2023). Hence, in the future, a rapprochement between the ECR and the EPP may be even more probable (or as probable as) PRR parties eventually forming a joint EP group.

2.2. The paradigmatic Italian case

Nowhere in the EU is this dynamic of 'growth without cooperation' clearer than in Italy. The two Italian PRR parties, Lega and FdI, are now perfectly established in both the national and European political systems, albeit with different EP affiliations. Despite having also completely different legacies⁴, Lega and FdI are commonly deemed to be among the most relevant representatives of the European PRR (Rooduijn et al., 2023). Only the classification of FdI is occasionally contested, for example, by those emphasising that the party does not constitute a menace to liberal democracy due to its alleged recent moderation (Vassallo and Vignati, 2023).

Accepting the labelling of both parties as 'PRR' leads to the observation that, for three consecutive times, a PRR party – Lega in 2019, FdI in 2022 and 2024 – has won elections in Italy (Fig. 1). Therefore, Italy appears to be the new promised land for the PRR family.

⁴ Lega was born as a regionalist populist party (Albertazzi and Vampa, 2021b). Only when Matteo Salvini became party leader did it evolve into a more canonical PRR party (Albertazzi, Giovannini and Seddone, 2018). FdI, on the other hand, is the 'heir' of the Movimento Sociale Italiano, a neo-fascist party of post-WWII Italy (Vampa, 2023; Vassallo and Vignati, 2023). Despite maintaining some continuity with this inconvenient past, Giorgia Meloni has managed to largely rid the party of its fascist legacy, and we tend to agree with those labelling the party as 'PRR' (Puleo and Piccolino, 2022).

Figure 1. Vote shares of Italian PRR parties over the last five years

Source: authors' elaboration of Italy's Ministry of the Interior data.

This contradicts the idea that Southern European countries should be less vulnerable to the diffusion of radical right sentiments and politics as they have experienced authoritarianism in a relatively recent past (Hutter, Kriesi and Vidal, 2018; Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). In fact, a convergence of these countries and the rest of Europe towards similarly high levels of support for PRR alternatives has been underway over the past decade (Crulli and Viviani, 2022).

Italy thus constitutes an overcrowded environment for the PRR (Puleo, Carteny and Piccolino, 2024). This has made it increasingly necessary for Lega and FdI to distinguish themselves from each other. Not only have the two parties renewed their affiliations to different EP groups, but they also adopted different strategies during the electoral campaign. Lega has tried to position itself to the right of FdI, in an attempt to attract former FdI voters who now see Meloni as no longer radical. FdI, on the other hand, has endeavoured to present itself as a credible and responsible government party, led by an internationally recognised strong leader. The opening slogans of the respective manifestos echo such distinct strategies. The title of Lega's manifesto was 'More Italy, less Europe', which recalls a classic nationalist and Eurosceptic stance typical of PRR parties across the continent. The title of FdI's manifesto was 'With Giorgia Italy changes Europe', suggesting the objective of a more proactive and influential role for the party's leader within the EU.

In addition to Euroscepticism and ethno-nationalism – which are found in Lega's manifesto with calls for the EU to do less and reaffirm Christianity against Islam – Lega took different positions from FdI with respect to ongoing international crises. Above all, Lega displayed lukewarm support for Ukraine's efforts (Biancalana, 2023).

In short, while both are *de facto* established parties (Crulli and Albertazzi, 2024), Lega still tries to depict itself as an outsider party challenging the EU, whereas FdI's manifesto and campaign reflected its role as a governing party. Therefore, beyond still playing the same nativist card, i.e., targeting those voters who are primarily against immigration, the two parties needed and tried to differentiate their profiles. Whether such differentiation in the supply side of these parties went hand in hand with the diversification of their demand side (i.e., their electorates) remains to be tested empirically. Recent research by Seddone and Zulianello (2023) has provided some initial clues on this issue. Using descriptive statistics, they found that, 'while nativist attitudes show minimal differences' (Seddone and Zulianello, 2024, p. 511) between the respective voters, 'substantial differences emerge in the realm of authoritarianism'. They also revealed that Lega's electorate regards FdI as a threat to democracy but the opposite does not occur. By adopting a multivariate perspective, we test for a broader diversification of the two electorates in the core part of the paper, after spelling out our research hypotheses.

3. Analysing populist radical right voting behaviour in the 2024 EP election: classic theories and contextual explanations

The two probably best-known theories of PRR voting are the ‘economic insecurity’ and ‘cultural backlash’ theses (Norris and Inglehart, 2019). Both can be seen as updates of the ‘modernisation theory’ originally advanced by Inglehart (1977), and as resuming some tentative explanations on the rise of new right-wing parties already formulated in the 1990s (Ignazi, 1992). The ‘economic insecurity’ perspective emphasises the consequences on electoral behaviour of the profound economic changes that have affected advanced post-industrial societies. According to this perspective, an increase in inequalities and material insecurity has pushed the weakest and ‘left behind’ social strata to turn their vote towards the PRR. The logic behind this theory is that ‘the feeling that survival is insecure leads to ethnocentric solidarity against outsiders and internal solidarity behind authoritarian leaders’ (Inglehart, 2018, p. 10).

The ‘cultural backlash’ perspective focuses on the new value orientations that spread during the transition from materialist to post-materialist societies. According to this second perspective, PRR voting reflects a rejection of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism – values that became shared by Europeans following the Silent Revolution (Inglehart, 1977) and the rise in education levels (Bornschier, 2010). The proliferation of post-materialist values – the theory argues – has ended up clashing with the views of those who remained tied to traditional and nationalist values, leading them to tilt towards PRR parties. The cultural backlash thesis has much in common with ‘neo-cleavage’ theory (Marks et al., 2021), which postulates the emergence of a new value-based cleavage (Kriesi, 2010) as an outgrowth of globalisation, pitting green-alternative-libertarian against traditional-authoritarian-nationalist parties and voters (Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Crulli and Emanuele, 2025).

Put simply, based on the ‘economic insecurity’ theory, we should expect ‘economically insecure’ people – unemployed, lower-class, those with lower living standards, or who perceive their economic situation as worsening – to vote for PRR parties more. Conversely, based on the ‘cultural backlash’ theory, we should expect ‘culturally insecure’ people – those ill at ease with societal changes brought about by cosmopolitan, multicultural, and progressive beliefs – to vote for PRR parties more. Although the ‘cultural backlash’ interpretation has received more confirmation than the ‘economic insecurity’ one, Inglehart and Norris themselves underline how the two theses are just two sides of the same coin. Therefore, our first two hypotheses are as follows.

H1 (‘cultural backlash’): ‘Culturally insecure’ voters were more likely to vote for Italian PRR parties in the 2024 EP election.

H2 (‘economic insecurity’): ‘Economically insecure’ voters were more likely to vote for Italian PRR parties in the 2024 EP election.

As the PRR has kept on growing in different countries, other explanations of its success have entered the scholarly debate. It has been noted that PRR parties tend to be much more successful in areas often referred to as places ‘that don’t matter’ (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018) or ‘left-behind’ (Pike et al., 2023). Hence, the geography of the PRR has flourished over the last few years as a very promising sub-strand of research. To be truthful, already in 2019 Jennings and Stoker had stressed the potentially relevant role that ‘the place’ was playing in the PRR surge:

There has been substantial debate recently as to whether the rise of populism, and the Brexit vote, can be attributed to ‘cultural backlash’ (...) or ‘economic insecurity’ (...). We consider this a false dichotomy, and believe that place allows us to better understand the intersection of economic change and cultural values. Our central argument is that places that have experienced relative decline have become more ‘closed’ on the ‘open-closed’, or ‘cosmopolitan-communitarian’, dimension (Jennings and Stoker, 2019, p. 159).

More recent contributions on the topic have underlined how both objective contextual conditions (e.g. Crulli & Pinto, 2025; Patana, 2022) and subjective place-related feelings (e.g. Arzheimer and Bernemann, 2023; Huijsmans, 2023) matter in understanding why the PRR is stronger in certain areas than in others. Summarising the main findings of studies on PRR’s geography, there is now a certain consensus that PRR

parties usually perform better in more remote rural areas (Crulli, 2024) and where the perception of ‘local decline’ is higher (Arzheimer et al., 2024). Therefore, our third hypothesis is that:

H3 (‘local context’): Rural dwellers and those who perceived that their neighbourhood’s conditions had worsened were more likely to vote for Italian PRR parties in the 2024 EP election.

In addition to now-classic and more recent theories of PRR voting, we cannot neglect that what we aim to explain here is voting in a specific type of election: the 2024 *EP election*. Therefore, it is fair to assume that EU-related issues were relevant. The PopuList classifies most European PRR parties, including the two Italian ones, as Eurosceptic (Rooduijn et al., 2023). Indeed, PRR parties usually embrace an ‘alt-European’ programme (McMahon, 2022), whereby Europe is ideally seen as a community of independent sovereign states. For most PRR parties, EU integration should not be pushed further, and intergovernmental cooperation between member states should be based on shared principles such as conservatism and nativism (against non-EU people). Hence, nativism and nationalism may well go hand in hand with Euroscepticism in the vision of PRR parties (Mazzoleni and Ivaldi, 2023). In addition, it has been shown by individual-level analyses that Euroscepticism is a relevant predictor of PRR voting (Werts, Scheepers and Lubbers, 2013; Arzheimer, 2018; Vasilopoulou and Zur, 2024). Hence, previous research points to an overall positive correlation between Euroscepticism and PRR voting in EP elections.

Nonetheless, Sofia Vasilopoulou (2009) already warned us not to take for granted that (all) PRR parties are equally Eurosceptic. This appears to be even truer in the current Italian context. FdI seemed to have softened its Euroscepticism even before the 2022 general election. Once in government, its position towards the EU has become even more pragmatic and ‘responsible’, as also evidenced by the constructive relationship established by von der Leyen and Meloni. Of course, we cannot rule out that the softening of FdI’s critiques towards the EU is temporary and instrumental, i.e., necessary ‘for the party’s attempt to strengthen its influence in the EU and for the smooth management of the NextGenerationEU funds’ (Baldini, 2024, p. 7). Nonetheless, the current moderation of FdI’s Euroscepticism – at least compared to the Lega, which has instead maintained quite unchanged its tone towards the EU – suggests formulating different expectations for voters of the two parties. Therefore, our fourth hypothesis is as follows.

H4 (‘EU issues’): the probability of voting for Italian PRR parties in the 2024 EP election was influenced by voter preferences on the EU; Eurosceptic positions were correlated with voting for the Lega more than FdI.

The 2024 EP election was also the first EP election taking place after – or in the midst of – three dramatic crises characterising the early 2020s, namely the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the Israel-Hamas conflict. All these events inevitably forced PRR parties to take a stance on issues that escape their usual political offer and rhetoric, such as healthcare and foreign policy (Bar-On and Molas, 2020; Ivaldi and Zankina, 2023). Therefore, it is consequential to assume that voter visions on these topics might have influenced their vote in the 2024 EP election. However, we might anticipate different effects of these crises on voting for the Lega or FdI. As regards the pandemic crisis, FdI was the only party constantly in opposition during the emergency, whereas Lega participated in Draghi’s cabinet. Concerning the Russia-Ukraine war, although FdI’s stances towards Russia used to be controversial, the Lega and Salvini himself had much closer ties to Putin before the Russia-Ukraine war intensified. Since 2022, Salvini has attempted to shed such a reputation, but still, his support for Ukraine appears to be weaker compared to Meloni’s (Biancalana, 2023). Finally, FdI has been characterised by stronger and undisputed Atlanticism compared to the Lega. This is also reflected in FdI’s good relationships with Netanyahu’s Likud (Vassallo and Vignati, 2023). Taken all together, these considerations lead us to formulate our last hypothesis.

H5 (‘2020s crises’): the probability of voting for Italian PRR parties in the 2024 EP election was influenced by voters’ views of the 2020s crises: the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the Israel-Hamas conflict. However, correlations between such views and voting were different for FdI and Lega.

4. Data and methods

Our analysis is based on individual-level survey data. Specifically, we draw on an original pre-electoral survey conducted by the CISE in May 2024 (De Sio et al., 2025). The number of observations is 1,204. In conducting our analyses, we weighted the sample by education level, combination of age and gender, geographical area and recall of the vote cast in the previous 2022 general election⁵.

Our first dependent variable (section 5.1) is a dichotomous variable distinguishing between respondents who declared an intention to vote for FdI and all the others. Our second dependent variable (section 5.2) is another dichotomous variable distinguishing respondents who declared an intention to vote for the Lega from all the others. The ‘others’ category comprises voters of other parties, abstainers and those who cast blank or spoiled ballots⁶.

As our dependent variables are binary, we ran a series of logistic regression models. First, we tested all our hypotheses through separate regression models. Secondly, we also ran full models, comprising all the independent variables previously utilised to test each hypothesis separately. This serves to give us a clearer idea of what factors were truly decisive in explaining voting for Italian PRR parties. All the models include the following controls: age, gender, education, left-right self-placement⁷, and the importance the respondent attributes to religion.

To test the ‘cultural backlash’ hypothesis, we selected three survey items. The first one regards the respondent’s nativism. The second one is a proxy for the respondent’s position towards abortion. The third one relates to the priority assigned by the respondent to combating violence against women. Therefore, the first independent variable in this model aims to capture a core pillar of PRR ideology, aversion towards migrants, whereas the other two are more broadly related to a ‘traditionalist-libertarian’ divide.

To test the ‘economic insecurity’ hypothesis, we considered a series of items regarding the respondent’s objective and subjective economic conditions. Specifically, we looked at the respondent’s occupational status and social class, their household living standards, as well as their retrospective and prospective economic evaluations (i.e., whether they think their household’s economic situation has worsened and/or will worsen).

To test the ‘local context’ hypothesis, we relied on two questions. The first reports the respondent’s type of residency, on a sliding scale from ‘a rural area or small village’ to ‘the centre of a big city’. The second question was meant to capture perceived local decline. Hence, respondents were asked whether they thought conditions in their residential area over the previous year had worsened, improved, or stayed the same.

To test the ‘EU issues’ hypothesis, we had four EU-related items available. The first is the classic question on ‘hard Euroscepticism’ (i.e., whether or not the country should leave the EU). The second asks the respondent’s opinion on the creation of a common EU army. A third one asks whether the respondent agrees with the statement that Italy should count more within the EU. A final, more original item enquires whether the respondent prefers to have another ‘grand coalition’ leading the EU commission, or rather an unprecedented clearly left- or right-wing coalition.

To test the ‘2020s crises’ hypothesis, we counted on a distinct question for each crisis. The first asks the respondent how Covid impacted their life prospects. The second considers what the respondent favours between pushing Israel to stop the war in Gaza and supporting the Israeli army’s intervention in Gaza. The third asks what the respondent thinks should be prioritised, between leading Ukraine and Russia to negotiate and supporting Ukraine up to the reconquest of its entire territory.

Table 1a reports the exact items’ wordings and scales, while Table 2a presents the descriptive statistics for all our variables and controls.

⁵ We repeated the analyses by weighting the data using the actual vote percentages gained by Italian parties in the 2024 EP election. Results do not change substantially.

⁶ We repeated the analyses by treating abstainers and those who cast blank or spoiled ballots as missing. Results were substantially unaltered. The results are presented in Tables 5a and 6a in Appendix II.

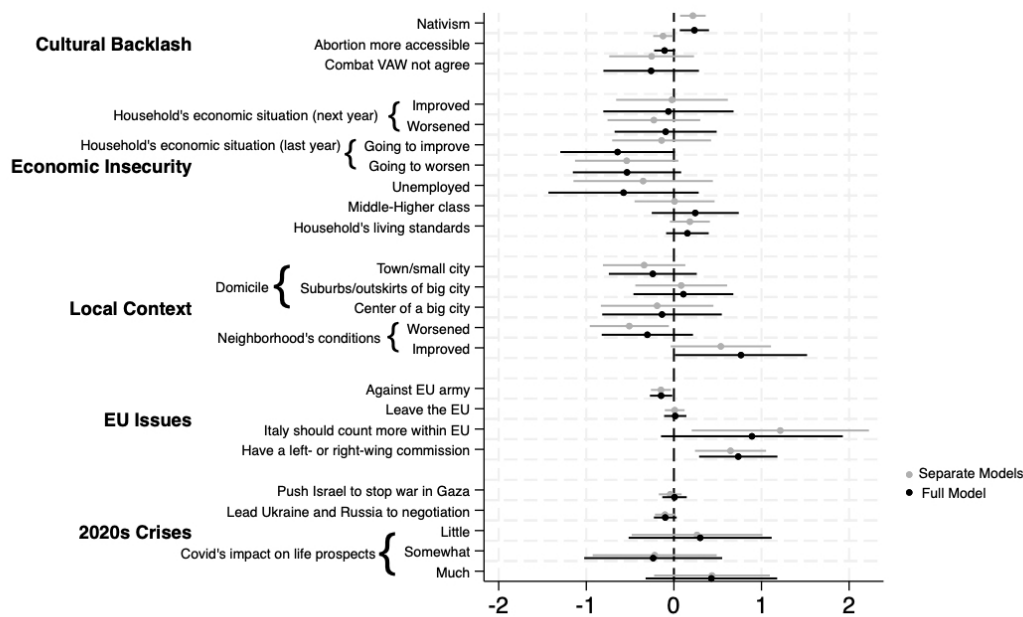
⁷ We did not include left-right self-placement as a control in the Lega’s models because none of Lega’s voters in our sample positioned themselves on the left.

5. Findings

5.1. Voting for Fdl in the 2024 EP election

Figure 2 shows the results of our logistic regression models predicting the intention to vote for Meloni's party in the 2024 EP election. Starting from the separate regression models, the first noteworthy result is that nativism is, as expected, a relevant predictor. Those thinking that Italy should limit the arrival of immigrants are clearly more likely to cast a vote for FdI. The 'cultural backlash' hypothesis is also supported by the statistically significant coefficient of abortion. The proxy we used to measure respondents' attitudes towards abortion was asking whether they thought pro-life groups should be allowed to access abortion clinics. This became a public issue in Italy in the months preceding the EP election, as Italy's Senate passed legislation allowing pro-life groups to have access to women considering abortion at public clinics⁸. Our regression model reveals that individuals who support pro-life groups informing women about to undergo an abortion were more likely to vote for FdI. Hence, we may conclude that being against making abortion more easily accessible increased the probability of voting for Meloni. This is not surprising, as Italy's prime minister herself has spoken out in favour of this measure and has notoriously reiterated her pride in being 'a Christian' and 'a mother'.

Figure 2. Coefficient plots of logistic regression models predicting intention to vote for Fdl in the 2024 EP election.



Notes: Coefficients of both the distinct models run to test each hypothesis separately and the combined full model are shown for each variable. All the models control for age, gender, education, left-right self-placement, and the importance the respondent attributes to religion. 10-90 CIs displayed. See Table 3a in Appendix 2 for the complete regression outputs.

Our second model, the one testing the 'economic insecurity' hypothesis, gave us 'non-findings'. In other words, none of the variables aimed at gauging whether the respondent was 'economically insecure' turned out to be statistically significant. Therefore, the takeaway here is that FdI's 2024 electorate did not appear to be economically connoted. Of the two classic theories of PRR voting, only the 'cultural backlash' one held in explaining FdI's support in 2024.

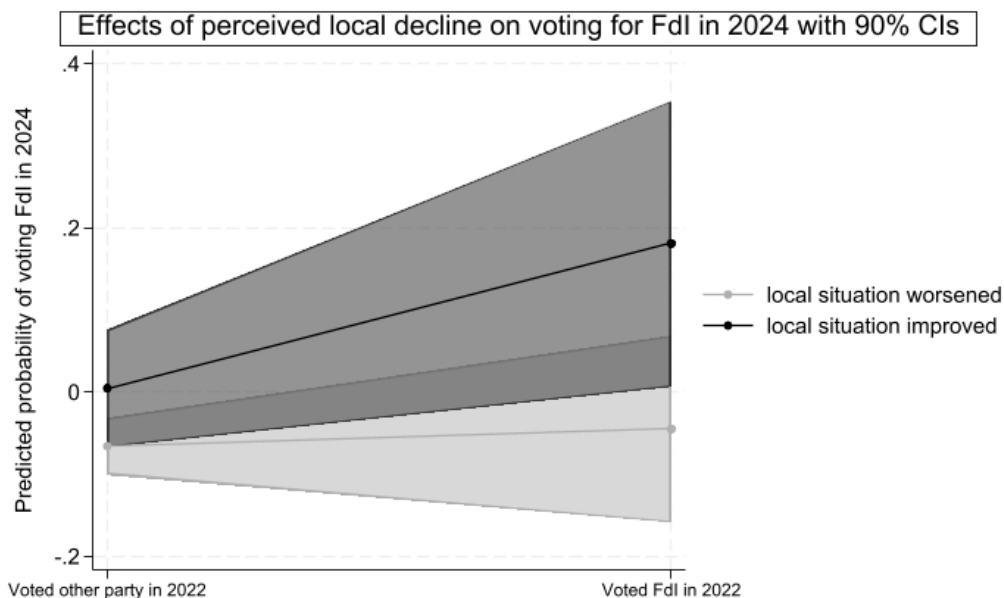
Two other unexpected findings came from our third model, which assessed the 'local context' hypothesis. First, voting for FdI appears to be unrelated to the respondent's type of residency. This contradicts post-electoral analyses, which revealed a clear geographical pattern. FdI was stronger in smaller Italian towns (Emanuele, 2024), thus re-confirming its 'village-oriented' characterisation (Chiaramonte et al.,

⁸ See: <https://www.euronews.com/health/2024/04/24/italy-passes-law-allowing-pro-life-groups-access-to-abortion-clinics>

2022). However, our analysis suggests that, once other individual-level socio-demographic factors (i.e., our controls) are taken into account, the place itself is not relevant in predicting a vote for FdI.

The second unexpected outcome was that higher perceived local decline predicts less likelihood of voting for Meloni's party. This finding contradicts recent related literature (Arzheimer et al., 2024), which has convincingly demonstrated that perceived local decline fosters PRR voting through the spread of nativist and populist attitudes. Therefore, we deemed this result worthy of more scrupulous examination. One factor Arzheimer and colleagues did not consider in their comparative research was whether the PRR was leading the country's government. Indeed, Italy is the only Western European country to be governed by the leader of a strong PRR party (Baldini, 2024). We hypothesised that the evaluation of one's local context was dependent on the more general evaluation of Meloni's government, or affiliation with her party⁹. Therefore, we ran our regression model regarding the local context again, this time by interacting the variable on perceived local decline with a dichotomous variable asking whether people voted for FdI in the previous 2022 general election.

Figure 3. Interaction between perceived local decline and vote for FdI in the previous 2022 Italian general election.



Source: Plot extrapolated from models in Table 3a (Appendix 2).

The result of this interaction term confirmed our additional hypothesis. As Figure 3 bears out, the feeling that the local situation has improved increases the probability of voting for FdI only among those who had already voted for the party in 2022. The idea that perceived local decline was conditional on a more general evaluation of Meloni was also confirmed by the observation that the majority of those who perceived their neighbourhood's conditions as having worsened (circa 72%) or remained the same (circa 58%) judged the outcomes of Meloni's cabinet as negative. Conversely, the majority of those who perceived the neighbourhood's conditions to have improved (circa 64%) judged the outcomes of Meloni's cabinet as positive. Although they must be interpreted with caution and cannot be generalised, these findings suggest that the explanatory power of perceived local decline on PRR voting may depend on whether the PRR party in question is ruling the country.

Other interesting remarks are inspired by our fourth model, which concerns EU-related issues. First, 'hard Euroscepticism', or the belief that Italy should leave the EU, is not related to voting for FdI. This corroborates the findings of recent related research by Puleo and colleagues (2024) and reflects the fact that,

⁹ As the Lega is also part of the government, the same argument may apply to Salvini's party. However, the key ministries are all controlled by FdI, with Salvini himself relegated to the Ministry of Infrastructure instead of the much-desired Ministry of the Interior. This may explain why evaluations of the local context do not correlate with voting for the Lega.

since being in government, Meloni has ostensibly moderated her previous well-known Euroscepticism. Secondly, those who were against the creation of a common EU army were also less likely to vote for FdI in 2024. This result may be *prima facie* surprising, but it aligns well with the party's undisputed Atlanticism (Vassallo and Vignati, 2023). The last two variables in this model also turned out to be statistically significant and substantively related to FdI voting. Hence, both the idea that Italy should count more within the EU and the preference for a future clearly left- or right-wing Commission instead of a 'grand coalition' were evidently correlated with higher chances of voting for Meloni's party. This suggests that FdI's voters were asking for (and believing in) a more proactive and leading role of the party within the EU. Once again, this aligns with the electoral campaign conducted by Meloni and FdI's manifesto, as briefly illustrated in section 2.2.

Finally, none of the variables in our last model, regarding the 2020s crises, achieved statistical significance. Hence, considerations about the pandemic and the ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East may have played a limited and non-influential role in pushing people to vote for FdI.

In conclusion, what variables were more decisive in voting for Meloni's party in the 2024 EP election? In other words, what variables maintained their statistical significance in the full model? By glancing at Figure 2 again, we can conclude that nativism, positive evaluation of one's local context¹⁰, being in favour of a common EU army, as well as supporting a clearly left- or right-wing EU Commission, were important drivers of the FdI vote. Except for nativism, the other predictors are certainly not among those usually deemed relevant in explaining PRR voting behaviour.

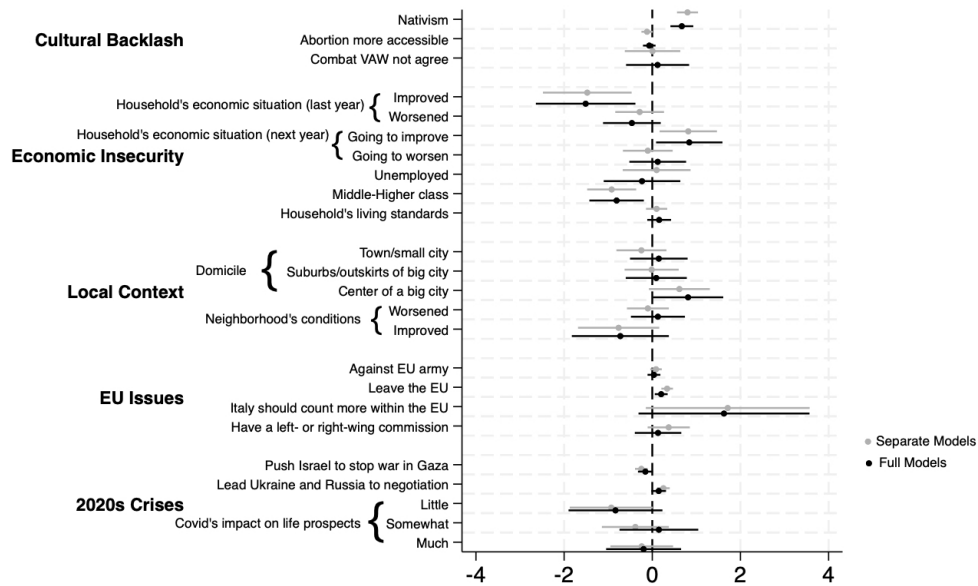
5.2. Voting for the Lega in the 2024 EP election

We repeated the same analyses using the intention to vote for the Lega as dependent variable. This helped us detect commonalities and differences in voting for the two Italian PRR parties. A first look at Figure 4 confirms that nativism is a key predictor of the Lega vote as well. The coefficient is even larger compared to the one observed in FdI's model, suggesting that Salvini's voters are even more opposed to the arrival of new immigrants. In fact, although the nativist variable ranges between 0 and 6, with 6 indicating the most nativist position, none of the declared Lega voters score below 3. Furthermore, the average score of Lega voters is approximately 5.6, while the average score of FdI voters is 5.2. In contrast, the average score of all other respondents in the sample is 3.7. In short, anti-immigrant sentiments still set Italian PRR voters apart from others, with Lega's supporters standing out as the most nativist. However, the other two variables in the 'cultural backlash' model do not reach the customary levels for statistical significance. Hence, more than broader traditionalist values, voting for the Lega appears to be mainly driven by strong aversion towards non-natives.

Differently from what was observed for FdI, the 'economic insecurity' model provides compelling evidence of the economic predictors of the Lega vote. First, those viewing themselves as belonging to the middle or higher social class appear less likely to vote for Salvini's party compared to those describing themselves as working class or lower class. Hence, economically insecure people appear to be more willing to turn their vote to the Lega. This interpretation is confirmed by the coefficient of another variable in the model. Those thinking that their household's economic situation has improved over the last year are also much less likely to vote for the Lega. The opposite applies to the variable relating to the prospective economic evaluation of respondents. Those believing that their household's economic situation is going to improve are significantly more likely to cast a vote in favour of the Lega. Therefore, Salvini's party seems to attract support from an economically peculiar type of voter: insecure and dissatisfied, but also hopeful about future economic possibilities.

The model concerning 'local context' does not yield any significant findings. However, similar to what was expounded upon regarding FdI, we know that the Lega also performed better in smaller Italian towns (Emanuele, 2024), as it has throughout its history. Therefore, the role of place in predicting Lega votes is probably absorbed by our control variables.

¹⁰ At least among those who had already voted FdI in 2022.

Figure 4. Coefficient plots of logistic regression models predicting intention to vote for the Lega in the 2024 EP election.

Notes: Coefficients of both the distinct models run to test each hypothesis separately and the combined full model are shown for each variable. All the models control for age, gender, education, left-right self-placement, and the importance the respondent attributes to religion. 10-90 CIs displayed. See Table 4a in Appendix 2 for the complete regression outputs.

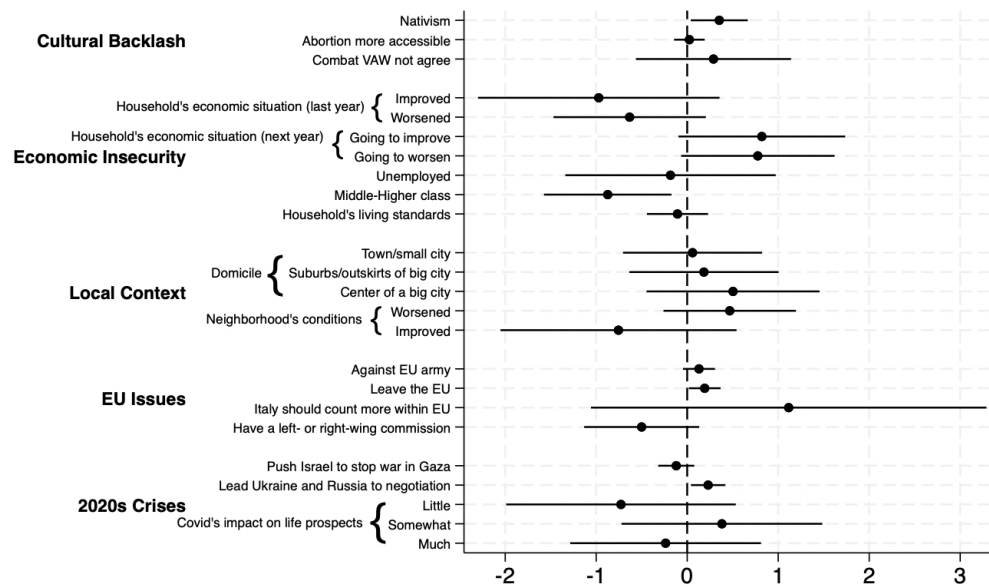
A clear indication emerges from our model on EU issues: Lega voters are still unequivocally Eurosceptic. The intention to leave the EU increases the probability of voting for Lega to a statistically significant and substantial extent. Instead, the other variables in this model are not statistically significant. All in all, this model seems to suggest that Lega voters care more about stopping the EU integration process than the role their party might hold within EU institutions.

Finally, and again differently from what was observed in the previous section, respondents' opinions about ongoing wars appear to explain voting for the Lega in the 2024 EP election. Specifically, a more 'pacifist' stance regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict correlates with lower chances of voting for Salvini's party. The opposite applies to the Russia-Ukraine war. Those believing that priority should be given to conducting Ukraine and Russia towards negotiation are more likely to vote for the Lega. Whether such correlation derives from pro-Russia sentiments we cannot say based on our survey analysis. Nonetheless, this seems to reflect the Lega's unenthusiastic solidarity with Ukraine. What we can claim is that, with respect to the evaluation of ongoing international crises, FdI and Lega voters seem to be motivated by different considerations.

However, these two variables regarding the respondent's position towards international crises are the only ones losing their statistical significance when running the combined full model. Based on the latter, we can therefore reaffirm that the typical Lega voter in 2024 was nativist, Eurosceptic, and economically fragile.

Table 2 and Figure 5 help us move towards the conclusions. Table 2 summarises the outcomes of our research hypotheses. Figure 5 displays the results of a multinomial logistic regression, which we performed as a last step to properly gauge which factors make people vote for the Lega instead of FdI. All the dissimilarities between FdI and Lega voters that we already underlined are confirmed by this final model. Belonging to lower social classes, as well as being more nativist, Eurosceptic and less supportive of Ukraine's military efforts, enhances the probability of voting for the Lega instead of FdI.

Figure 5. Coefficient plot of a multinomial logistic regression model predicting intention to vote for the Lega instead of Fdl in the 2024 EP election.



Notes: For the sake of conciseness, we only show the comparison between Fdl and the Lega, although the model uses voting intentions for all Italian parties as the dependent variable, thus comparing Fdl (the baseline category) with all Italian parties. The model controls for age, gender, education, left-right self-placement, and the importance the respondent attributes to religion. 10-90 CIs displayed. See Table 7a in Appendix 2 for the complete regression outputs.

Table 2. Outcome of research hypotheses

Hypothesis	Outcome	
	Fdl	Lega
H1 ('cultural backlash')	Overall confirmed	
H2 ('economic insecurity')	Rejected	Confirmed
H3 ('local context')	Rejected (those who perceived that the conditions in their neighbourhood had worsened were actually less likely to vote for Fdl; however, perceived local decline was conditional on having voted for Fdl and evaluation of Meloni's government)	
H4 ('EU issues')	Confirmed	
H5 ('2020s crises')	Rejected	Overall confirmed

6. Discussion and conclusions

This paper examined voting for the two Italian PRR parties during the 2024 EP election, which witnessed yet another surge for the European PRR family. We questioned whether the FdI and Lega electorates still share those characteristics that the literature has recognised as typical of PRR voters: nativist, traditionalist, economically insecure, Eurosceptic, and discontented with their living conditions.

Our response to this question would be a justified 'yes but'. FdI and Lega voters still form a typical PRR electorate insofar as both are nativist. Although Lega voters in 2024 appear to be even more against immigrants compared to FdI voters, both share opposition to the arrival of non-natives in their country. This finding corroborates what the literature on the PRR has been stressing for almost twenty years: despite populism, authoritarianism, and nativism all forming the ideological core of PRR parties, the latter remains the

most relevant element of the three (Mudde, 2007; Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart, 2022). Furthermore, on the demand side, anti-immigration attitudes are crucial in differentiating PRR voters from the rest of the electorate (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Crulli and Albertazzi, 2024). This held true in the context of the 2024 EP election in Italy, which also suggests that the ‘cultural backlash’ perspective on PRR voting is overall still valid (Tab. 2).

However, this represents the only common ground between the two electorates¹¹. Lega voters appear to be economically insecure, while FdI’s do not. Belonging to the middle or higher social classes – instead of the working or lower ones – is associated with a lower probability of voting for Lega, but not FdI. The two electorates have also grown apart in terms of their stances towards the EU. Euroscepticism – and weaker support for Ukraine – characterise Lega voters, whereas FdI voters do not appear significantly more Eurosceptic compared to the others. This finding is not entirely unexpected, as Puleo, Carteny and Piccolino (2024, p. 8) recently showed that ‘the link between the vote for FdI and evaluations of Italy’s EU membership is weak and lacks consistency’. Not finding an association between Euroscepticism and voting for FdI might also reflect the evident moderation of Meloni’s tone towards EU institutions. Hence, our research reaffirms the need to assess the role of partisan cues in shaping political attitudes.

Finally, some of the most interesting divergences between the FdI and Lega electorates emerge in terms of the control variables, which we have not commented upon thus far. FdI voters tend to be older (especially in the 55-64 age group), while the association between age and vote for the Lega is less clear. In addition, assigning high importance to religion predicted voting for the Lega but not for FdI. Finally, even more interesting is that those with a high level of education were less inclined to vote for the Lega, but this was not true for FdI. This last result is surprising for two reasons. First, the literature on PRR voting has always presented the level of education as arguably the most crucial predictor of PRR voting (e.g. Ivarsflaten and Stubager, 2012). Secondly, related research on voting for FdI in the 2022 general election still found a negative – although not very strong – correlation between higher levels of education and voting for Meloni’s party (Angelucci, Baldini and Soare, 2024). Therefore, our study is among the first to suggest that such an association between education and voting for FdI may be disappearing. This would be another inevitable consequence of the party enlarging its shares of supporters well beyond its original ‘*class gardée*’.

In conclusion, not only does the Lega currently represent ‘a noisy (and more radical) ally’ to the right of FdI (Baldini, 2024, p. 408), but Lega voters also appear more radical compared to the (much larger) electorate of Meloni’s party. This aligns with recent research highlighting relevant attitudinal differences between the two Italian PRR electorates (Seddone and Zulianello, 2023). Therefore, our findings raise the question of whether FdI’s affiliation with the PRR family ought to be re-evaluated. We concur with Mair and Mudde (1998) in deeming the nature of a party’s present electorate an ill-suited criterion to (re)classify parties into party families. Nonetheless, as Mair and Mudde themselves acknowledge, from Lipset and Rokkan (1967) onwards, the sociology of parties has been considered a key element for their inclusion in specific party families. In this sense, the fact that voters of FdI and Lega are tilting in different directions calls into question the changing social bases of PRR parties across Europe, particularly in contexts such as the Italian one, where a PRR party has succeeded in gathering and reconfirming widespread popular support.

While we do not aim to advance a different classification for FdI here, we can still offer some tentative insights into why and how FdI and Lega may no longer be placed under the same umbrella. We have noted how Meloni’s electoral campaign reflected the need for the party to differentiate itself from its fellow PRR competitor by presenting a more responsible image in light of its now-governing status. Our study conveys the idea that greater moderation on the supply side has coincided with greater moderation on the demand side of the party, at least compared to the Lega electorate. However, future research should analyse the ideological-programmatic and sociological features of the parties in conjunction, rather than separately, to have the final say on FdI’s current nature. In this regard, FdI’s ideological-programmatic positioning, as well as its continued affiliation within the PRR family, will (also) depend on the challenge coming from its right. The extent to which the Lega will continue being a relevant, noisy PRR ally of FdI will likely inform Meloni’s decision on whether to move to the centre by embracing a more typical conservative profile. As noted by

¹¹ In addition to left-right self-placement, as both FdI and Lega voters strongly positioned themselves to the right.

Baldini, Tronconi, and Angelucci (2022), while being a ‘rooted newcomer,’ FdI has already accomplished a major ideological rebranding by foregoing its post-fascist traditions. Time and scholarly attention will tell us whether the new competition environment will result in the party’s further gradual rebranding or whether it will still be appropriate to safely place FdI in the PRR party family, together with the Lega.

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7. Appendix

7.1. Survey items and descriptives

Table 1a. Survey items

Dependent Variables	Question	Scale
Vote for Fdl (2024 EP election)	'If you were to vote in the European election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?'	Recoded into a dummy variable. 0 = Other parties, blank or spoilt ballot, abstainers; 1 = Fratelli d'Italia.
Vote for Lega (2024 EP election)	'If you were to vote in the European election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?'	Recoded into a dummy variable. 0 = Other parties, blank or spoilt ballot, abstainers; 1 = Lega.
Independent Variables		
Nativism	'What should be done?'	Coded into a 1-6 scale. 1 = Continue to accept immigrants as now; 6 = Limit the arrival of immigrants.
Abortion more accessible	'What should be done?'	Coded into a 1-6 scale. 1 = Allow pro-life movements to enter abortion clinics; 6 = Deny pro-life movements' entry into abortion clinics.
Combat violence against women (VAW)	'Combat violence against women and femicide. Do you agree that this goal should be realised?'. Originally coded 1 = Very much; 2 = Somewhat; 3 = Slightly; 4 = Not at all.	Recoded into a dummy variable (1=1; 2 3 4=2). 1 = Very much agree; 2 = Not agree
Household's economic situation (last year)	'Over the past year, has your family's economic situation...'. Originally coded 1 = Much improved; 2 = Somewhat improved; 3 = Remained the same; 4 = Somewhat worsened; 5 = Much worsened; 6 = I don't know	Recoded into a variable with three categories (1 2=1; 3=2; 4 5=3; 6=missing). 1 = Improved; 2 = Remained the same; 3 = Worsened.
Household's economic situation (next year)	'And in the next 12 months, what do you think your family's economic situation will be like? It will be...'. Originally coded 1 = Much improved; 2 = Somewhat improved; 3 = Remain the same; 4 = Somewhat worsened; 5 = Much worsened; 6 = I don't know	Recoded into a variable with three categories (1 2=1; 3=2; 4 5=3; 6=missing). 1 = Going to Improve; 2 = Remain the same; 3 = Going to Worsen.
Unemployed	'What is your current employment status? Please choose only one of the following options:' Originally coded 1=Self-employed; 2=Employee; 4=Unemployed; 5=Student; 6=Working in the household; 7=Retired; 66=Others.	Recoded into a dummy variable (1 2 5 6 7 66=0; 4=1). 0 = Self-employed, Employee, Working in the household, Retired, Others; 1 = Unemployed
Social class	'If you were asked to choose one of these five labels for your social class, which one would you say you belong to - lower class, lower-middle class, middle class, upper-middle class, or upper class? Please choose only one of the following options:'. Originally coded 1=Lower class; 2=Working class; 3=Lower-Middle class; 4=Middle class; 5=Higher-Middle class; 6=Higher class; 77=Refuse to be classified.	Recoded into a dummy variable (1 2 3=1; 4 5 6=2; 77=missing). 1 = Lower-Middle class; 2 = Middle-Higher class.
Household's living standards	'Considering all aspects, where would you place approximately, your	Coded into a 1-7 scale. 1 = Poor household; 7 = Rich household.

	household's standard of living? Imagine a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means a poor household, 7 a rich household, and the other numbers the positions in between, where would you place your household?	
Domicile	'Would you say you live in ... ?'	Coded into a 1-4 scale. 1 = Rural area/small village; 2 = Town/small city; 3 = Suburbs/outskirts of big city; 4 = Centre of a big city.
Neighbourhood conditions	'Over the past year, the living conditions in the area where you live have:'. Originally coded 1 = Much improved; 2 = Somewhat improved; 3 = Remained the same; 4 = Somewhat worsened; 5 = Much worsened.	Recoded into a variable with three categories (4 5 = 1; 3 = 2; 2 1 = 3). 1 = Worsened; 2 = Remained the same; 3 = Improved.
Against EU army	'What should be done?'	Coded into a 1-6 scale. 1 = Create a common European army; 6 = Do not create a common European army.
Euroscepticism	'What should be done?'. Originally coded 1 = Leave the EU; 2 3 4 5; 6 = Remain in the EU.	Recoded (1 = 6; 2 = 5; 3 = 4; 4 = 3; 5 = 2; 6 = 1). 1 = Remain in the EU; 6 = Leave the EU.
Italy should count more within the EU	'Making Italy count more in Europe. Do you agree that this goal should be realised?'. Originally coded 1 = Very much; 2 = Somewhat; 3 = Slightly; 4 = Not at all.	Recoded into a dummy variable (3 4 = 0; 1 2 = 1). 0 = Don't agree; 2 = Agree.
Have a left- or right-wing EU Commission	'The European Commission has always been supported by a 'grand coalition' majority, with the left, centre and right in it. In your opinion, for the new European Commission to be formed after the June elections, we should:'. Originally coded 1 = Continue with a 'grand coalition' majority so as to have moderate and prudent decisions that avoid conflict and extremism; 2 = Have a clearly left-wing or clearly right-wing majority so that we have clear decisions that five years later voters can reward or punish; 3 = I don't know	Recoded into a dummy variable (1 = 0; 2 = 1; 3 = missing). 0 = Keep the Grand Coalition; 1 = Have a left- or right-wing EU Commission.
Push Israel to stop war in Gaza	'What should be done?'	Coded into a 1-6 scale. 1 = Support the Israeli army's intervention in Gaza, necessary for Israel's security from terrorism; 6 = Pushing Israel to stop military intervention in Gaza, which is resulting in genocide.
Lead Ukraine and Russia to negotiation	'What should be done?'	Coded into a 1-6 scale. 1 = Support Ukraine until its entire territory is reconquered, also by increasing military support; 6 = Lead Ukraine and Russia to a peace negotiation, recognising Russia's occupied territories.
Covid's impact on life prospects	'For each of the following crises, can you indicate how much each has contributed to changing the way you look at your future? The Covid-19 pandemic'.	Coded into a 1-4 scale. 1 = Not at all; 2 = Little; 3 = Somewhat; 4 = Much.

Vote for Fdl (2022 national election)	'Can you tell us which party you voted for in 2022?'	Recoded into a dummy variable. 0 = Other parties, blank or spoilt ballot, abstainers; 1 = Fratelli d'Italia.
Control Variables		
Age	'In what year were you born?'	Recoded into a 1-5 scale. 1 = 18-29; 2 = 30-44; 3 = 45-54; 4 = 55-64; 5 = 65+.
Gender	'Are you...?'	Coded into a dummy variable. 0 = Male; 1 = Female.
Education	'What is the highest level of education you have completed?' Originally coded 1=Nessuno; 2=Licenza di scuola elementare; 3=Licenza di scuola media inferiore; 4=Abilitazione professionale (2-3 anni); 5=Diploma di scuola media superiore (4-5 anni); 6=Laurea triennale di I livello; 7=Laurea specialistica di II livello/laurea vecchio ordinamento/laurea magistrale; 8=Master o scuola di specializzazione post-laurea; 9=Dottorato di ricerca; 77=Rifiuta; 88=Non so.	Recoded into a variable with three categories (1 2 3=0; 4 5=1; 6 7 8 9=2; 77 88=missing). 0 = Low education; 1 = Medium education; 2 =High education.
Left-Right self-placement	'Many people when talking about politics use the terms 'left' and 'right.' What is your position? Could you indicate your position on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'left' and 10 means 'right'?'.	Recoded into a variable ranging from 1 to 4 (0 1 2 3=1; 4 5 6=2; 7 8 9 10=3; 98=4; 99=missing). 1 = Left; 2 = Centre; 3 = Right; 4 = Refuse to place.
Religion	'What place does religion have in your life?'	Coded into a 1-4 scale. 1 = Not at all important; 2 = Slightly important; 3 = Moderately important; 4 = Very important.

Note: Translation from Italian to English by the authors.

Table 2a. Descriptive statistics

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Vote for Fdl (2024 EP election)	1204	0.15	0.36	0	1
Vote for Lega (2024 EP election)	1204	0.07	0.25	0	1
Age	1204	3.33	1.40	1	5
Gender	1204	0.51	0.50	0	1
Education	1201	0.92	0.72	0	2
Left-Right self-placement	1181	2.42	1.12	1	4
Religion	1137	2.37	1.05	1	4
Nativism	1200	4.07	1.73	1	6
Abortion more accessible	1204	4.38	1.73	1	6
Combat violence against women (VAW)	1204	1.16	0.37	1	2
Household's economic situation (last year)	1197	2.27	0.62	1	3
Household's economic situation (next year)	1153	2.22	0.63	1	3
Unemployed	1198	0.09	0.28	0	1
Social class	1169	1.47	0.50	1	2
Household's living standards	1204	3.72	1.06	1	7
Domicile	1204	2.27	0.99	1	4
Neighborhood conditions	1204	1.77	0.60	1	3
Against EU army	1204	3.47	1.81	1	6
Euroscepticism	1204	2.72	1.88	1	6
Italy should count more within the EU	1204	0.92	0.28	0	1
Have a left- or right-wing EU Commission	960	0.41	0.49	0	1
Push Israel to stop war in Gaza	1204	4.88	1.43	1	6
Lead Ukraine and Russia to negotiation	1204	4.13	1.69	1	6
Covid's impact on life prospects	1177	3.09	0.94	1	4
Vote for Fdl (2022 national election)	1204	0.17	0.38	0	1

7.2. Regression analysis

Table 3a. Logistic regression models predicting vote for Fdl in the 2024 EP election

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M4a	M5	M6	M7
	Controls	Cultural Back-lash	Economic Insecurity	Local Context	Interaction Model	EU Is-sues	2020s cri-ses	Full model
Age								
30-44	-0.151 (0.471)	-0.154 (0.486)	0.00432 (0.493)	-0.0109 (0.481)	-0.288 (0.577)	-0.0742 (0.481)	-0.116 (0.474)	0.233 (0.528)
45-54	0.754* (0.446)	0.744 (0.465)	0.921** (0.465)	1.045** (0.466)	0.753 (0.560)	0.739 (0.456)	0.662 (0.452)	0.978* (0.515)
55-64	1.189*** (0.451)	1.116** (0.467)	1.331*** (0.468)	1.432*** (0.471)	0.843 (0.567)	1.178** (0.463)	1.114** (0.454)	1.321** (0.516)
65+	1.064** (0.424)	0.982** (0.444)	1.089** (0.444)	1.243*** (0.443)	0.994* (0.528)	0.912** (0.435)	0.943** (0.426)	0.823* (0.494)
Gender (Female)	-0.261 (0.226)	-0.207 (0.232)	-0.171 (0.231)	-0.216 (0.232)	-0.0963 (0.280)	-0.111 (0.235)	-0.296 (0.231)	0.00681 (0.255)
Education								
Medium	0.205 (0.250)	0.212 (0.252)	0.128 (0.267)	0.236 (0.256)	0.148 (0.307)	0.115 (0.258)	0.258 (0.254)	0.0520 (0.289)
High	0.433 (0.346)	0.532 (0.360)	0.300 (0.363)	0.367 (0.353)	0.371 (0.417)	0.509 (0.357)	0.424 (0.351)	0.340 (0.397)
Left-Right self-placement								
Centre	3.687*** (1.302)	3.349** (1.307)	3.644*** (1.304)	3.651*** (1.303)	3.160** (1.326)	3.697*** (1.305)	3.614*** (1.304)	3.316** (1.318)
Right	5.892*** (1.288)	5.337*** (1.300)	5.820*** (1.291)	5.833*** (1.289)	4.655*** (1.311)	5.832*** (1.292)	5.862*** (1.291)	5.283*** (1.314)
Refuse self-placement	3.148** (1.348)	2.758** (1.355)	3.146** (1.350)	3.112** (1.349)	2.704** (1.374)	3.232** (1.352)	3.142** (1.349)	2.924** (1.370)
Religion								
Slightly important	0.317 (0.322)	0.233 (0.328)	0.316 (0.330)	0.252 (0.330)	0.0900 (0.396)	0.159 (0.336)	0.319 (0.328)	0.161 (0.370)
Moderately important	-0.118 (0.317)	-0.235 (0.331)	-0.116 (0.323)	-0.151 (0.324)	-0.266 (0.392)	-0.197 (0.328)	-0.138 (0.328)	-0.210 (0.370)
Very important	-0.315 (0.361)	-0.467 (0.374)	-0.348 (0.369)	-0.399 (0.370)	-0.451 (0.444)	-0.398 (0.371)	-0.328 (0.366)	-0.558 (0.408)
Nativism		0.217** (0.0887)						0.234** (0.101)
Abortion more accessible		-0.124* (0.0678)						-0.106 (0.0725)
Combat violence against women (Not agree)		-0.254 (0.294)						-0.260 (0.332)
Household's economic situation (last year)								
Improved			-0.0217 (0.388)					-0.0622 (0.452)
Worsened			-0.228 (0.322)					-0.0941 (0.354)
Household's economic situation (next year)								
Going to improve			-0.140 (0.343)					-0.643 (0.397)
Going to worsen			-0.539 (0.358)					-0.535 (0.376)
Unemployed			-0.351 (0.484)					-0.575 (0.522)
Middle-Higher class			0.00787 (0.278)					0.244 (0.302)
Household's living standards			0.183 (0.139)					0.155 (0.148)
Domicile								
Town/small city				-0.340 (0.286)	-0.409 (0.354)			-0.241 (0.305)
Suburbs/outskirts of big city				0.0837 (0.319)	0.332 (0.399)			0.109 (0.347)
Centre of a big city				-0.191 (0.390)	-0.136 (0.454)			-0.135 (0.415)
Neighbourhood conditions								
Worsened				-0.509* (0.274)	-1.402** (0.587)			-0.303 (0.317)

Improved	0.536				0.0637			0.766*
	(0.348)				(0.575)			(0.459)
Neighbourhood conditions*								
Vote choice in 2022								
Worsened*Brothers of Italy					1.111			
					(0.740)			
Improved*Brothers of Italy					1.148			
					(0.926)			
Against EU army					-0.148**			-0.146*
					(0.0694)			(0.0774)
Leave the EU					0.00944			0.0155
					(0.0684)			(0.0773)
Italy should count more within the EU								
(Agree)					1.215**			0.891
					(0.615)			(0.631)
Have a left- or right-wing EU Commis-					0.647***			0.735***
sion					(0.247)			(0.272)
Push Israel to stop war in Gaza							-0.0420	0.00755
							(0.0789)	(0.0848)
Lead Ukraine and Russia to negotia-							-0.102	-0.0983
tion							(0.0695)	(0.0791)
Covid's impact on life prospects								
Little							0.264	0.300
							(0.453)	(0.496)
Somewhat							-0.219	-0.236
							(0.430)	(0.479)
Much							0.435	0.428
							(0.401)	(0.457)
Constant	-6.786***	-6.727***	-7.302***	-6.722***	-6.385***	-7.691***	-6.246***	-7.889***
	(1.359)	(1.433)	(1.492)	(1.383)	(1.434)	(1.500)	(1.475)	(1.858)
Pseudo R2	0.314	0.329	0.331	0.328	0.502	0.336	0.326	0.386
Observations	874	874	874	874	874	874	874	874

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Table 4a. Logistic regression models predicting vote for Lega in the 2024 EP election

	M1 Controls	M2 Cultural Backlash	M3 Economic Insecurity	M4 Local Context	M5 EU Is- sues	M6 2020s' crises	M7 Full Model
Age							
30-44	1.703** (0.714)	1.080 (0.745)	1.765** (0.729)	1.690** (0.722)	1.460** (0.734)	1.620** (0.723)	1.159 (0.822)
45-54	1.161 (0.734)	0.661 (0.761)	1.007 (0.748)	1.061 (0.741)	0.970 (0.749)	1.176 (0.742)	0.585 (0.838)
55-64	1.324* (0.730)	0.787 (0.757)	1.303* (0.742)	1.212 (0.739)	1.214 (0.747)	1.426* (0.738)	0.856 (0.830)
65+	1.156 (0.709)	0.726 (0.739)	1.140 (0.727)	1.092 (0.716)	1.256* (0.727)	1.143 (0.717)	0.808 (0.824)
Gender (Female)	0.200 (0.262)	0.272 (0.281)	0.184 (0.271)	0.153 (0.265)	0.0966 (0.277)	0.200 (0.269)	0.176 (0.320)
Education							
Medium	-0.448 (0.282)	-0.347 (0.292)	-0.346 (0.299)	-0.479* (0.287)	-0.338 (0.293)	-0.458 (0.285)	-0.371 (0.334)
High	- 1.358*** (0.509)	-0.740 (0.534)	-1.157** (0.537)	-1.433*** (0.516)	-0.991* (0.526)	-1.236** (0.515)	-0.570 (0.604)
Religion							
Slightly important	1.060** (0.446)	0.846* (0.463)	1.124** (0.455)	1.085** (0.453)	1.034** (0.462)	0.863* (0.454)	1.088** (0.516)
Moderately important	0.960** (0.438)	0.768* (0.462)	1.012** (0.446)	0.990** (0.443)	0.956** (0.453)	0.748* (0.449)	0.839 (0.519)
Very important	1.401*** (0.455)	1.102** (0.482)	1.569*** (0.467)	1.548*** (0.465)	1.398*** (0.475)	1.219*** (0.465)	1.370** (0.540)
Nativism		0.800*** (0.145)					0.671*** (0.158)
Abortion more accessible		-0.118 (0.0779)					-0.0685 (0.0867)
Combat violence against women (Not agree)		0.00622 (0.383)					0.121 (0.435)
Household's economic situation (last year)							
Improved			-1.475** (0.611)				-1.512** (0.687)
Worsened			-0.287 (0.336)				-0.462 (0.398)
Household's economic situation (next year)							
Going to improve			0.816** (0.395)				0.839* (0.458)
Going to worsen			-0.102 (0.343)				0.124 (0.391)
Unemployed			0.0986 (0.468)				-0.233 (0.528)
Middle-Higher class			-0.921*** (0.338)				-0.809** (0.376)
Household's living standards			0.0985 (0.146)				0.156 (0.164)
Domicile							
Town/small city				-0.247 (0.345)			0.148 (0.397)
Suburbs/outskirts of big city				-0.0147 (0.373)			0.0907 (0.421)
Centre of a big city				0.615 (0.420)			0.812* (0.485)
Neighbourhood conditions							
Worsened				-0.0996 (0.289)			0.128 (0.372)
Improved				-0.763 (0.560)			-0.725 (0.669)
Against EU army					0.0853 (0.0792)		0.0381 (0.0887)
Leave the EU					0.338*** (0.0799)		0.202** (0.0887)
Italy should count more within the EU (Agree)					1.711 (1.130)		1.627 (1.179)
Have a left- or right-wing EU Commission					0.373 (0.291)		0.131 (0.321)
Push Israel to stop war in Gaza						-0.248***	-0.156

						(0.0877)	(0.102)
Lead Ukraine and Russia to negotiation						0.253***	0.146
						(0.0870)	(0.100)
Covid's impact on life prospects							
Little						-0.930	-0.835
						(0.573)	(0.648)
Somewhat						-0.384	0.150
						(0.462)	(0.543)
Much						-0.240	-0.196
						(0.432)	(0.517)
Constant							
	4.286***	-7.251***	-4.281***	-4.129***	7.507***	-3.715***	-9.525***
	(0.774)	(1.182)	(0.986)	(0.811)	(1.410)	(0.989)	(2.110)
Pseudo R2	0.0683	0.189	0.106	0.0822	0.152	0.107	0.273
Observations	877	877	877	877	877	877	877

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Table 5a. Logistic regression models predicting vote for Fdl in the 2024 EP election with abstainers and those who cast blank or spoiled ballots treated as missing values

	M1 Controls	M2 Cultural Backlash	M3 Economic Insecurity	M4 Local Context	M4a Interaction Model	M5 EU Is- sues	M6 2020s cri- ses	M7 Full model
Age								
30-44	-0.248 (0.511)	-0.236 (0.532)	-0.179 (0.542)	-0.0751 (0.535)	-0.484 (0.656)	-0.192 (0.522)	-0.110 (0.518)	0.0387 (0.594)
45-54	0.675 (0.489)	0.704 (0.510)	0.722 (0.518)	0.945* (0.522)	0.514 (0.639)	0.703 (0.496)	0.648 (0.497)	0.870 (0.571)
55-64	0.988** (0.493)	0.998* (0.512)	1.084** (0.519)	1.211** (0.524)	0.559 (0.639)	1.028** (0.503)	1.057** (0.498)	1.287** (0.573)
65+	0.631 (0.457)	0.605 (0.477)	0.544 (0.491)	0.771 (0.492)	0.537 (0.597)	0.523 (0.465)	0.588 (0.459)	0.419 (0.549)
Gender (Female)	-0.196 (0.241)	-0.152 (0.247)	-0.113 (0.248)	-0.149 (0.248)	-0.0555 (0.302)	-0.0937 (0.250)	-0.171 (0.248)	0.0558 (0.274)
Education								
Medium	0.269 (0.266)	0.242 (0.268)	0.201 (0.284)	0.336 (0.272)	0.368 (0.332)	0.184 (0.273)	0.342 (0.273)	0.216 (0.308)
High	0.558 (0.374)	0.676* (0.393)	0.346 (0.398)	0.547 (0.383)	0.662 (0.452)	0.647* (0.387)	0.565 (0.380)	0.451 (0.447)
Left-Right self-placement								
Centre	3.832*** (1.305)	3.505*** (1.311)	3.851*** (1.307)	3.822*** (1.306)	3.274** (1.326)	3.777*** (1.308)	3.749*** (1.307)	3.465*** (1.326)
Right	6.011*** (1.291)	5.468*** (1.307)	6.000*** (1.295)	5.963*** (1.292)	4.718*** (1.308)	5.919*** (1.297)	6.043*** (1.295)	5.523*** (1.329)
Refuse self-placement	3.934*** (1.355)	3.665*** (1.361)	4.022*** (1.362)	3.922*** (1.356)	3.488** (1.379)	3.945*** (1.361)	4.011*** (1.358)	3.941*** (1.392)
Religion								
Slightly important	0.348 (0.347)	0.264 (0.355)	0.371 (0.359)	0.207 (0.360)	0.100 (0.439)	0.259 (0.360)	0.313 (0.356)	0.201 (0.409)
Moderately important	-0.0964 (0.339)	-0.214 (0.351)	-0.0702 (0.348)	-0.172 (0.349)	-0.197 (0.424)	-0.113 (0.350)	-0.119 (0.353)	-0.117 (0.405)
Very important	-0.281 (0.383)	-0.403 (0.396)	-0.336 (0.393)	-0.421 (0.397)	-0.454 (0.481)	-0.217 (0.396)	-0.384 (0.390)	-0.494 (0.442)
Nativism		0.188** (0.0957)						0.187* (0.109)
Abortion more accessible		-0.144** (0.0704)						-0.132* (0.0766)
Combat violence against women (Not agree)		-0.154 (0.320)						-0.143 (0.362)
Household's economic situation (last year)								
Improved			-0.00478 (0.414)					-0.0336 (0.473)
Worsened			-0.122 (0.347)					0.0704 (0.392)
Household's economic situation (next year)								
Going to improve			-0.457 (0.368)					-0.926** (0.418)
Going to worsen			-0.685* (0.384)					-0.723* (0.409)
Unemployed			-0.0551 (0.516)					-0.311 (0.561)
Middle-Higher class			0.0158 (0.303)					0.303 (0.333)
Household's living standards			0.251* (0.150)					0.196 (0.160)
Domicile								
Town/small city				-0.428 (0.304)	-0.310 (0.381)			-0.411 (0.329)
Suburbs/outskirts of big city				0.130	0.322			0.0550

	(0.348)	(0.439)	(0.374)					
Centre of a big city	-0.406	-0.370	-0.352					
	(0.413)	(0.494)	(0.446)					
Neighbourhood conditions								
Worsened	-0.433	-1.310**	-0.0700					
	(0.291)	(0.598)	(0.353)					
Improved	0.431	-0.0867	0.781					
	(0.374)	(0.601)	(0.482)					
Neighbourhood conditions*								
Vote choice in 2022								
Worsened*Brothers of Italy		0.866						
		(0.782)						
Improved*Brothers of Italy		1.682						
		(1.194)						
Against EU army			-0.127					
		(0.0734)	(0.0827)					
Leave the EU			0.0616					
		(0.0717)	(0.0830)					
Italy should count more within the EU			0.398					
(Agree)								
		(0.675)	(0.685)					
Have a left- or right-wing EU Com-		0.552**	0.657**					
mission								
		(0.261)	(0.290)					
Push Israel to stop war in Gaza			0.0591					
			(0.0827)					
Lead Ukraine and Russia to negotia-			-0.165*					
tion								
			(0.0741)					
Covid's impact on life prospects								
Little			-0.0846					
			(0.508)					
Somewhat			-0.753					
			(0.482)					
Much			0.103					
			(0.455)					
Constant	-6.450***	-6.246***	-7.162***	-6.311***	-6.009***	-7.009***	-5.580***	-6.838***
	(1.377)	(1.457)	(1.543)	(1.407)	(1.455)	(1.547)	(1.511)	(1.993)
Pseudo R2	0.323	0.337	0.344	0.336	0.513	0.341	0.340	0.399
Observations	677	677	677	677	677	677	677	677

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Table 6a. Logistic regression models predicting vote for the Lega in the 2024 EP election with abstainers and those who cast blank or spoilt ballots treated as missing values

	M1 Controls	M2 Cultural Backlash	M3 Economic Insecurity	M4 Local Context	M5 EU Issues	M6 2020s' crises	M7 Full Model
Age							
30-44	1.696** (0.728)	1.084 (0.767)	1.692** (0.750)	1.735** (0.745)	1.253* (0.754)	1.569** (0.747)	0.723 (0.865)
45-54	1.030 (0.748)	0.535 (0.781)	0.807 (0.779)	0.966 (0.763)	0.726 (0.769)	0.963 (0.763)	0.269 (0.873)
55-64	1.055 (0.741)	0.582 (0.773)	0.985 (0.768)	0.963 (0.755)	0.813 (0.760)	1.044 (0.756)	0.348 (0.861)
65+	0.720 (0.718)	0.311 (0.751)	0.551 (0.756)	0.670 (0.733)	0.684 (0.737)	0.592 (0.733)	0.110 (0.852)
Gender (Female)	0.207 (0.269)	0.320 (0.291)	0.221 (0.280)	0.145 (0.275)	0.0505 (0.293)	0.228 (0.279)	0.195 (0.346)
Education							
Medium	-0.361 (0.293)	-0.373 (0.308)	-0.297 (0.312)	-0.397 (0.298)	-0.281 (0.313)	-0.412 (0.300)	-0.524 (0.368)
High	-1.356*** (0.519)	-0.688 (0.547)	-1.132** (0.554)	-1.470*** (0.529)	-0.925* (0.548)	-1.168** (0.528)	-0.580 (0.634)
Religion							
Slightly important	1.016** (0.453)	0.832* (0.475)	1.046** (0.464)	1.038** (0.463)	1.054** (0.476)	0.910* (0.465)	1.217** (0.556)
Moderately important	1.031** (0.446)	0.832* (0.468)	1.057** (0.457)	1.053** (0.453)	1.045** (0.465)	0.917** (0.459)	0.966* (0.550)
Very important	1.389*** (0.463)	1.194** (0.498)	1.604*** (0.479)	1.544*** (0.479)	1.559*** (0.497)	1.302*** (0.476)	1.604*** (0.589)
Nativism		0.804*** (0.148)					0.682*** (0.169)
Abortion more accessible		-0.119 (0.0799)					-0.0832 (0.0918)
Combat violence against women (Not agree)		0.0768 (0.402)					0.696 (0.463)
Household's economic situation (last year)							
Improved			-1.493** (0.622)				-1.862** (0.752)
Worsened			-0.444 (0.364)				-0.617 (0.449)
Household's economic situation (next year)							
Going to improve			0.630 (0.411)				0.561 (0.513)
Going to worsen			-0.106 (0.362)				0.127 (0.429)
Unemployed			-0.156 (0.492)				-0.422 (0.558)
Middle-Higher class			-1.071*** (0.344)				-0.841** (0.393)
Household's living standards			0.0461 (0.150)				0.102 (0.173)
Domicile							
Town/small city				-0.450 (0.356)			-0.0405 (0.427)
Suburbs/outskirts of big city				-0.0545 (0.386)			0.331 (0.457)
Centre of a big city				0.498 (0.435)			0.798 (0.539)
Neighbourhood conditions							
Worsened				-0.107 (0.302)			0.343 (0.413)
Improved				-0.881 (0.574)			-0.370 (0.701)
Against EU army					0.116		0.0701

					(0.0814)	(0.0935)
Leave the EU					0.425***	0.315***
					(0.0827)	(0.0959)
Italy should count more within the EU (Agree)					1.662	1.921
					(1.167)	(1.269)
Have a left- or right-wing EU Commission					0.135	-0.249
					(0.309)	(0.354)
Push Israel to stop war in Gaza					-0.223**	-0.131
					(0.0883)	(0.107)
Lead Ukraine and Russia to negotiation					0.264***	0.173
					(0.0875)	(0.108)
Covid's impact on life prospects						
Little					-1.209**	-0.830
					(0.598)	(0.713)
Somewhat					-0.509	0.134
					(0.488)	(0.605)
Much					-0.447	-0.332
					(0.458)	(0.582)
Constant	-3.758***	-6.775***	-3.278***	-3.497***	-7.064***	-3.160***
	(0.800)	(1.203)	(1.053)	(0.851)	(1.466)	(1.026)
Pseudo R2	0.0757	0.209	0.126	0.0944	0.190	0.123
Observations	679	679	679	679	679	679

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Table 7a. Multinomial logistic regression model predicting vote for the Lega instead of Fdl in the 2024 EP election

	Ref. category: Fratelli d'Italia	Vote for Lega vs Fdl
Age		
30-44		1.185 (0.958)
45-54		0.00364 (0.972)
55-64		0.0870 (0.958)
65+		0.230 (0.939)
Gender (Female)		0.0743 (0.382)
Education		
Medium		-0.251 (0.408)
High		-0.590 (0.669)
Left-Right self-placement		
Centre		14.36 (1960.2)
Right		13.24 (1960.2)
Refuse self-placement		14.08 (1960.2)
Religion		
Slightly important		0.703 (0.599)
Moderately important		0.840 (0.606)
Very important		1.343** (0.635)
Nativism		0.353* (0.190)
Abortion more accessible		0.0239 (0.103)
Combat violence against women (Not agree)		0.289 (0.518)
Household's economic situation (last year)		
Improved		-0.972 (0.807)
Worsened		-0.633 (0.509)
Household's economic situation (next year)		
Going to improve		0.820 (0.557)
Going to worsen		0.776 (0.512)
Unemployed		-0.184 (0.703)
Middle-Higher class		-0.873** (0.426)
Household's living standards		-0.106 (0.204)
Domicile		
Town/small city		0.0591 (0.465)
Suburbs/outskirts of big city		0.184 (0.499)
Centre of a big city		0.504 (0.578)

Neighbourhood conditions	
Worsened	0.467 (0.442)
Improved	-0.755 (0.789)
Against EU army	0.130 (0.107)
Leave the EU	0.192* (0.106)
Italy should count more within the EU (Agree)	1.115 (1.321)
Have a left- or right-wing EU Commission	-0.500 (0.384)
Push Israel to stop war in Gaza	-0.120 (0.120)
Lead Ukraine and Russia to negotiation	0.230** (0.115)
Covid's impact on life prospects	
Little	-0.727 (0.767)
Somewhat	0.382 (0.671)
Much	-0.237 (0.637)
Constant	-18.98 (1960.2)
Pseudo R2	0.415
Observations	874

Notes: For the sake of conciseness, we only show the comparison between Fdl and the Lega, although the model uses voting intentions for all Italian parties as the dependent variable, thus comparing Fdl (the baseline category) with all Italian parties. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$