

Report on Coronavirus survey in Italy: first two waves

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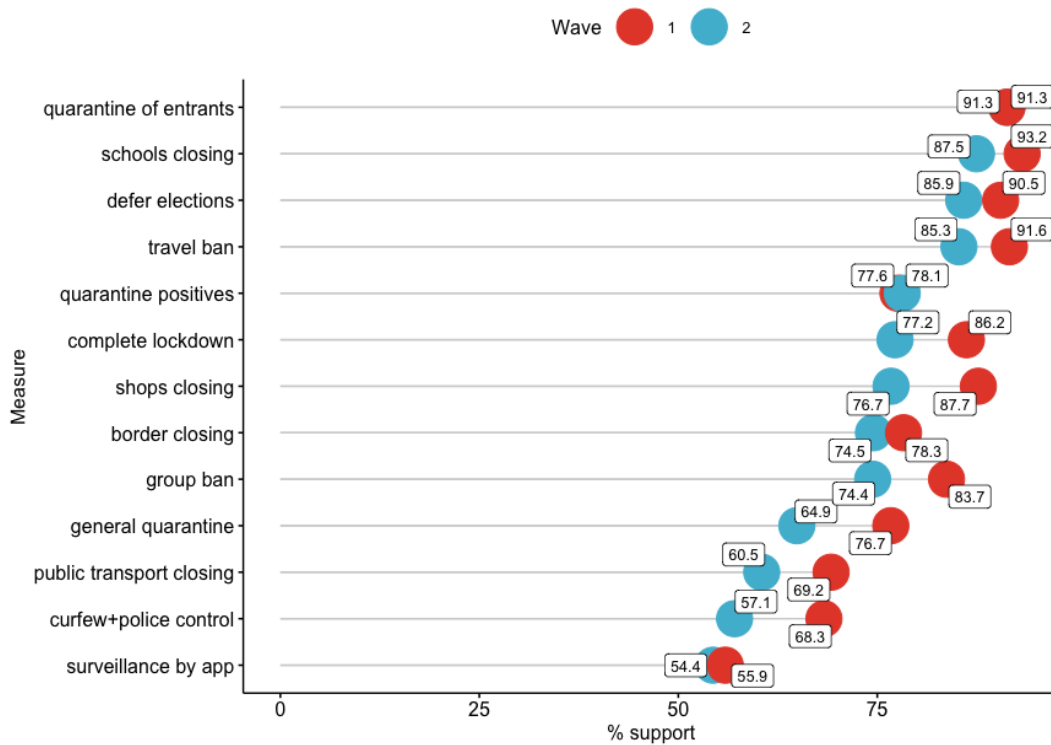
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In this report, we focus on the agreement with government measures to prevent the spread of the virus, with the general assessment with the government's responses in the domains of health and economic policy, and with the general satisfaction with the government and the EU. For each aspect to be discussed, we present the differences between the government (and its two major components) and the opposition, with non-voters (and the small group of voters of other parties) in between the two major camps. The report is based on two waves of a representative online survey by IPSOS that have been in the field on March 28-30 and on April 15-17, 2020.

Agreement with government measures

As shown in Figure 1, agreement with the various measures taken by the government to prevent the spread of the virus is generally rather high, more than half of the Italians agreeing with all measures. However, there are large differences. The most accepted measure, quarantine of entrants, is agreed by more than 90 percent of Italians, whereas the least accepted one, surveillance by app, is agreed by slightly more half. Agreement has also dropped slightly for most measures between wave 1 and wave 2, with the exception of quarantining positives and entrants where it has stayed the same. This drop can be particularly noticed for measures such as imposing a general quarantine, curfew and police control, group ban, and shops closing, where 10 percent or more respondents show less support for these measures in wave 2 than in wave 1.

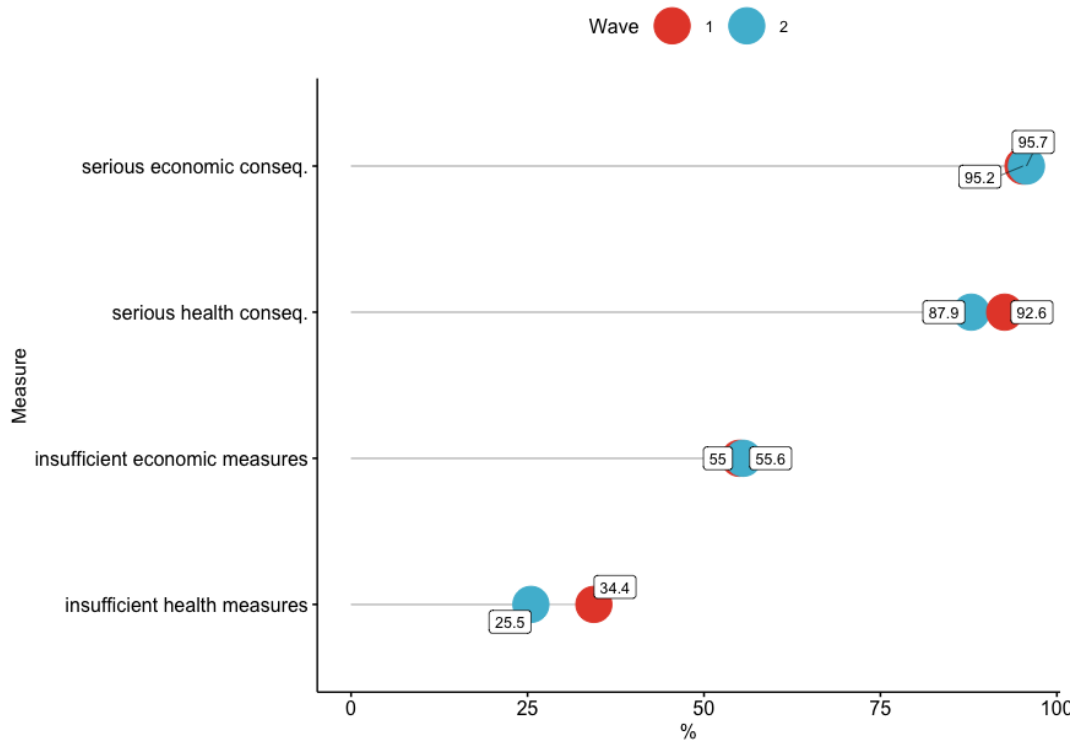
Figure 1: agreement with measures, by wave



Overall assessment of the health and economic measures

Figure 2 shows that the Italians are generally quite weary of both the economic and the health consequences of the crisis. However, if their perception of the seriousness of the health consequences has slightly decreased by wave 2 (from 92.6 to 87.9 percent), the perception of the economic consequences stayed mostly the same. Italians are also quite critical of the government's responses, more so with regard to the economic measures than to the public health measures. A third of the respondents (34.4 percent) consider the public health response of the government insufficient and a majority (55 percent) considers the economic response insufficient. But the critique has been reduced by almost 10 percent with regard to the health measures between the two waves, while it hardly changed with regard to the economic measures.

Figure 2: Shares of Italians considering the public health and economic consequences of the crisis as serious and the public health and economic response insufficient



If generally all Italians are more critical with regard to the economic response than to the health response, the share of people who consider the economic and public health responses insufficient varies heavily by political camp, as shown in Figure 3. Thus, the adherents of the parties in the opposition are much more critical in both respects than the adherents of the parties in government, with the non-voters closer to the parties in government. But even 43.7/47.1 percent of PD+ voters and 49.8/46.7 percent of M5S voters are critical of the economic measures taken by the government. Also, people with economic difficulties are more critical of the government's policy measures in the two domains, with the economic response being more criticized, as shown in Figure 4. These differences are, however, less pronounced than the differences between the political camps.

Figure 3: Shares of Italians who consider public health and economic response insufficient, by political camp

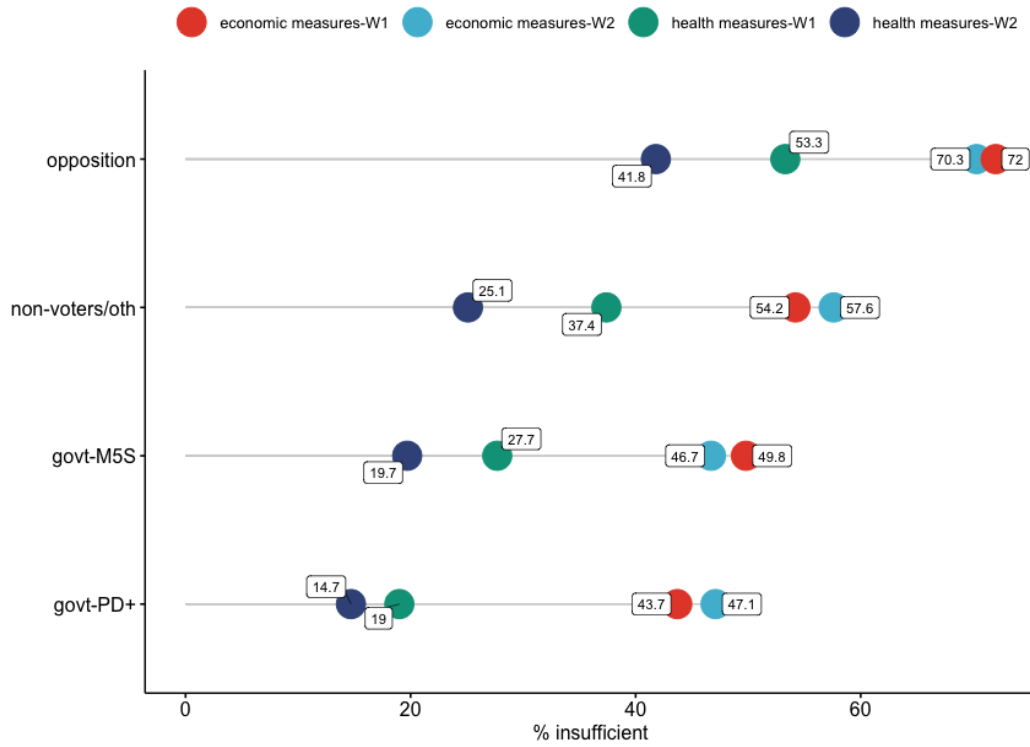
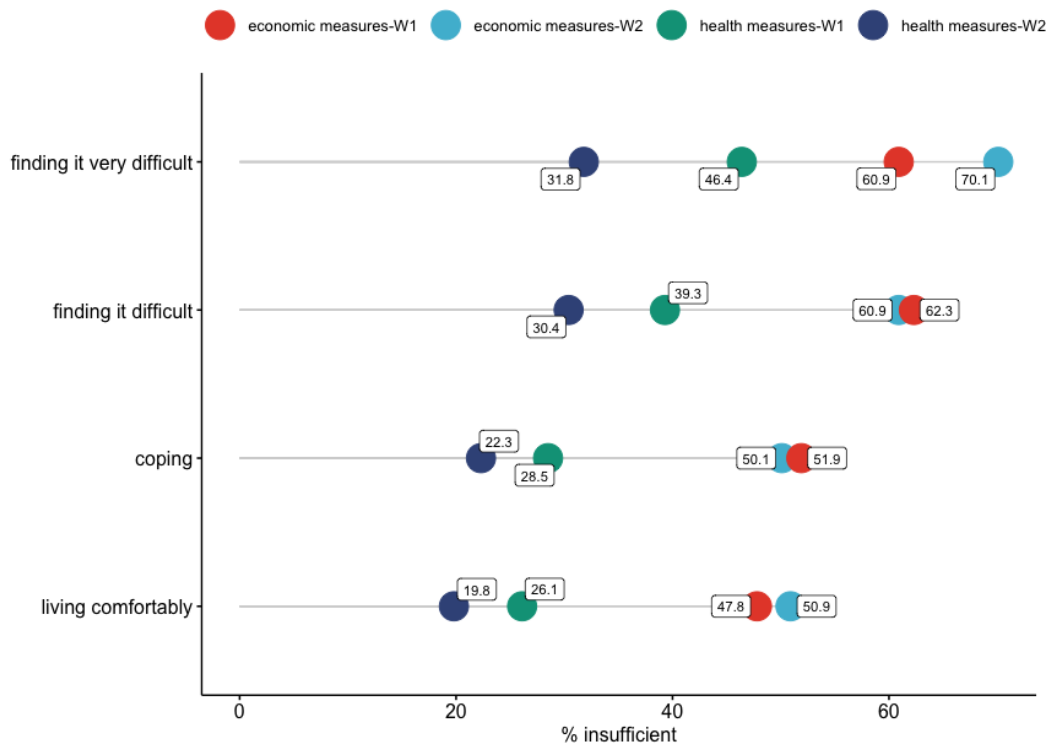


Figure 4: Shares of Italians who consider public health and economic response insufficient, by personal economic difficulties



Overall satisfaction with the government

As Figure 5 shows, the overall satisfaction with the government is a function of the political camp of the respondent. Almost two-thirds of the PD+ supporters declared themselves satisfied, whereas only a third of the opposition did so. Additionally, satisfaction with the government has also decreased among the latter by more than 7 percent between wave 1 and wave 2.

Figure 5: overall satisfaction with the government, by political camp

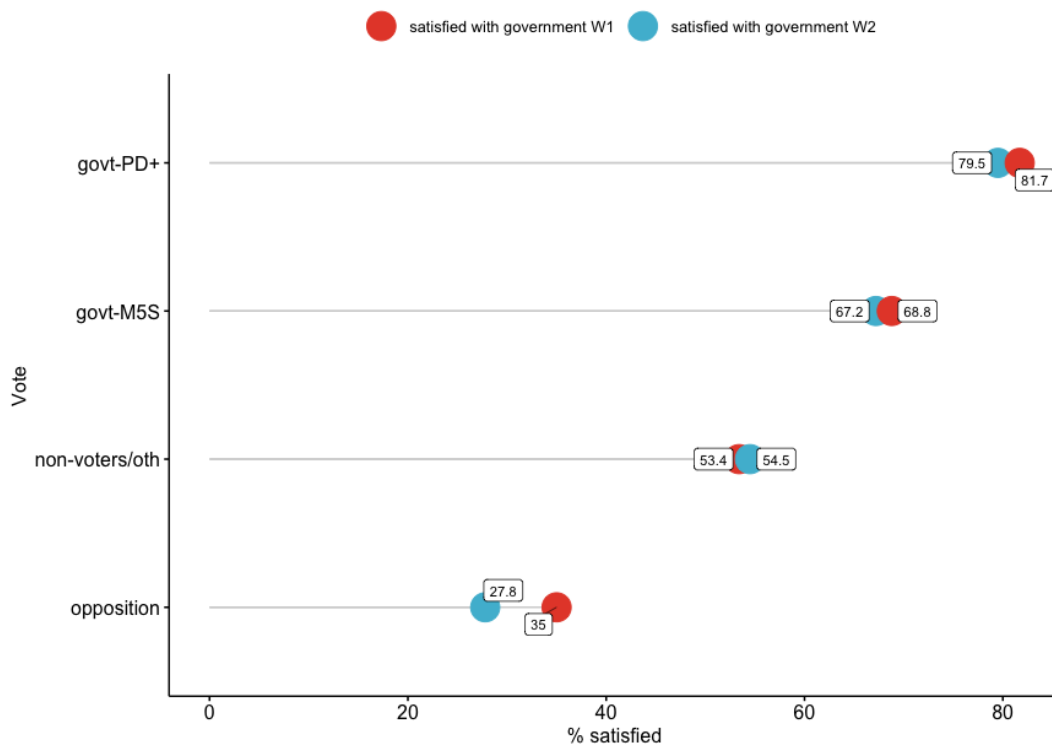
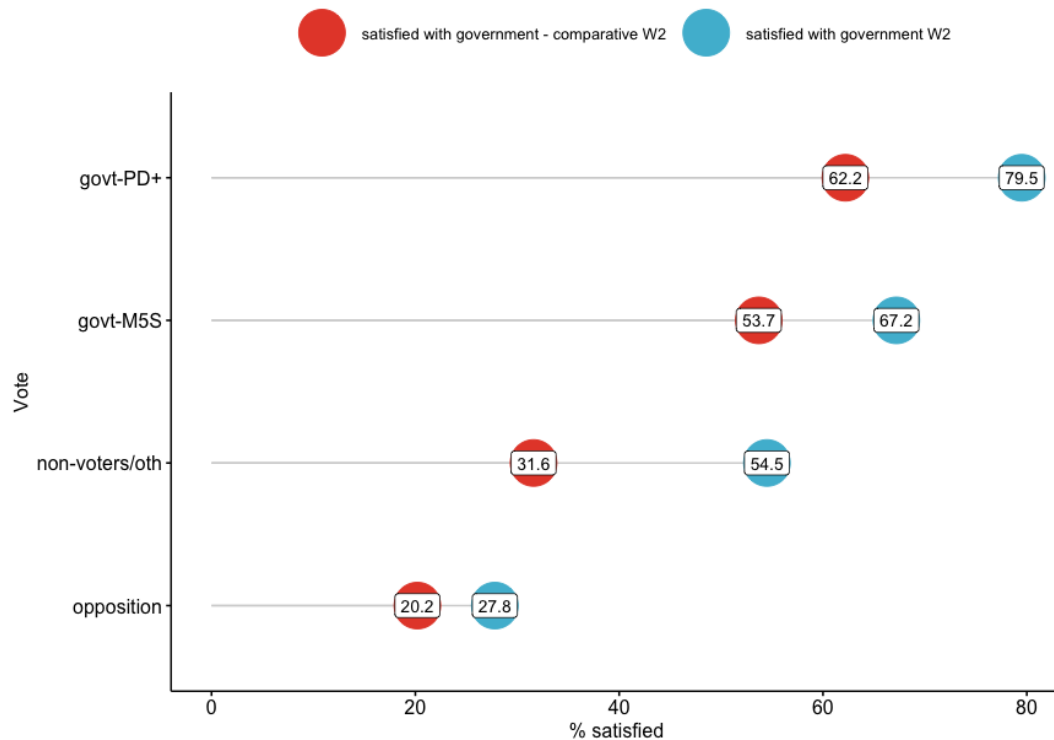


Figure 6 also presents satisfaction with the government (only for wave 2), but adds a comparative assessment: how do the Italians see their government's performance in comparison to other governments. The results indicate that Italians are less satisfied with their government when assessed comparatively, than when assessed generally. However, we can again notice large differences between political camps. As we can see, a majority of the adherents of governing parties think that the Italian government did better in fighting the virus than other governments, while only a fifth of the opposition (20 percent) thinks the same.

Figure 6: satisfaction with the government, overall and in comparison with other governments, by political camp (wave 2 only)



Compliance with the government health measures

The overall compliance with the government's health measures is very high, as is shown by Figure 7. Only the last two measures are not followed by large majorities of the Italians: stocking food and/or medicine, and stocking masks. But this is for quite understandable reasons. At the time of wave 1 of the survey, masks were not readily available and the same applies for medicine. Figure 8 shows that generally compliance has somewhat increased across all political camps, but in particular among opposition and Five Star Movement supporters.

Figure 7: compliance with government health measures, by wave

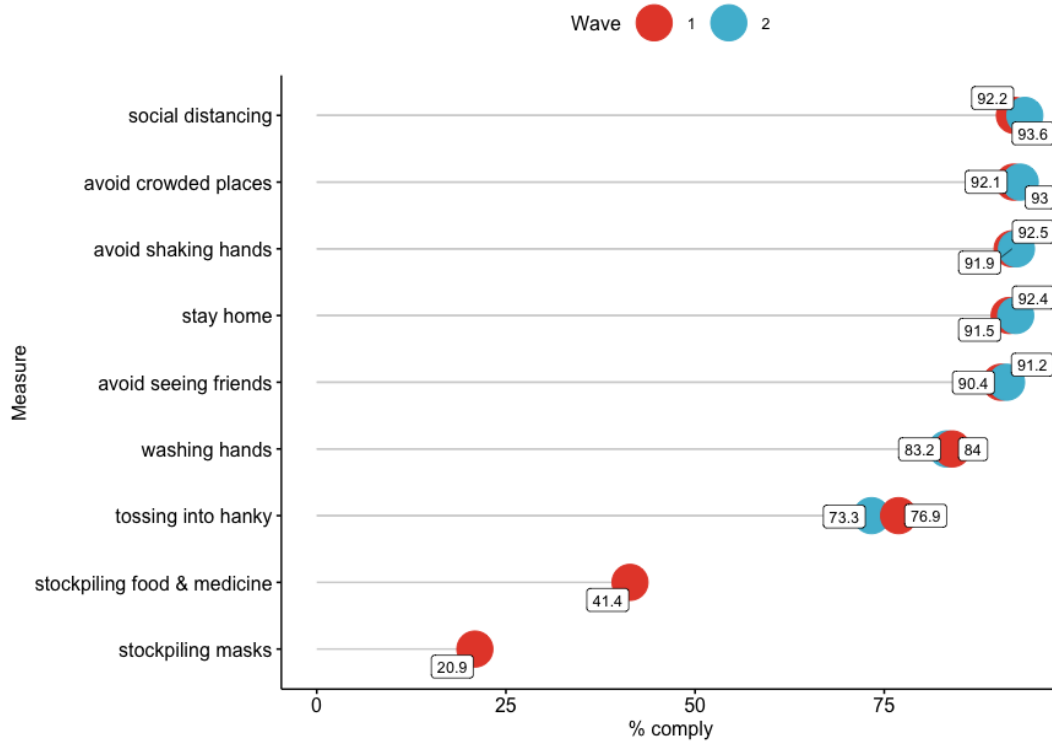
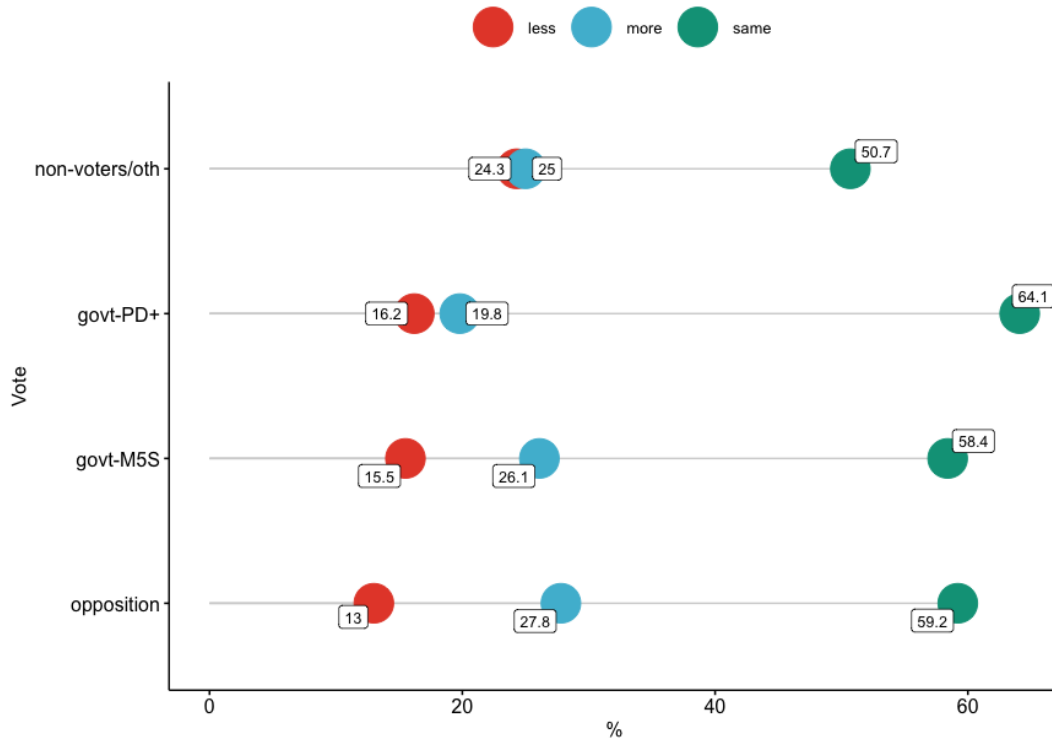


Figure 8: changing compliance, by political camp

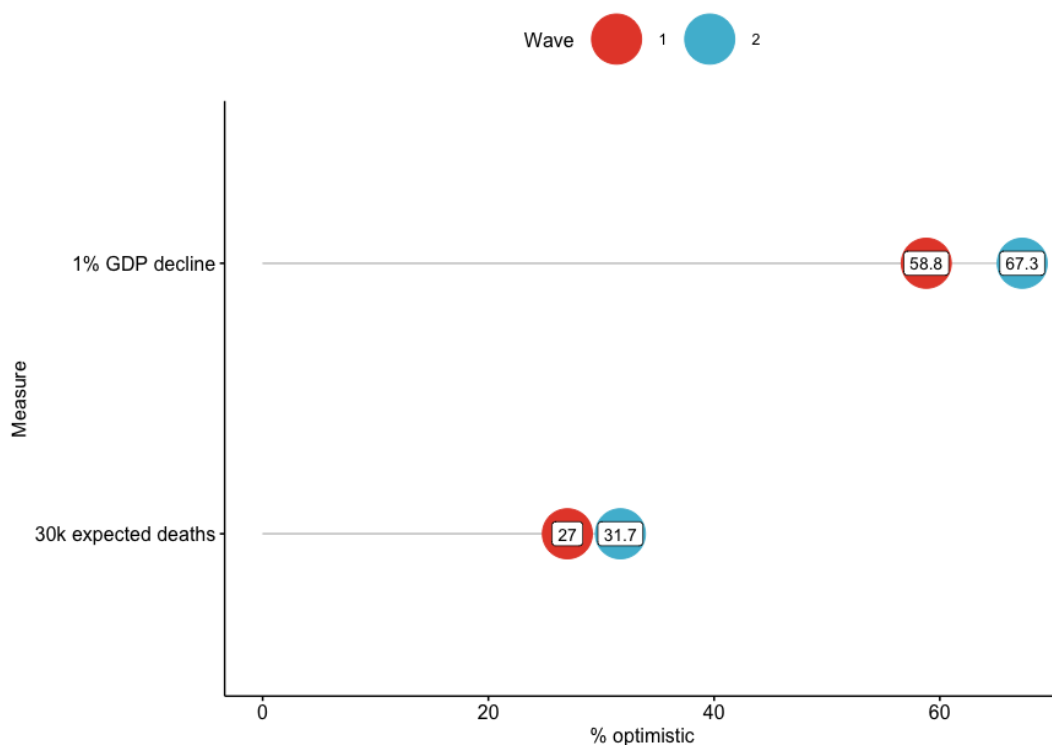


Expectations with regard to public health and the economy

The next two figures present the expectations of the Italians with regard to the decline of GDP per year, and with regard to the number of deaths due to the Coronavirus. They were asked whether they considered a 1 percent decline in GDP over the next year as pessimistic or optimistic, and a similar question was asked with regard to the expected number of deaths. These figures present the number of respondents who considered these expectations as rather optimistic, which means that they are more pessimistic with regard to the outcome of the crisis than the questions suggest. Figure 9 refers to the overall share of those who consider the development implied by the questions as optimistic.

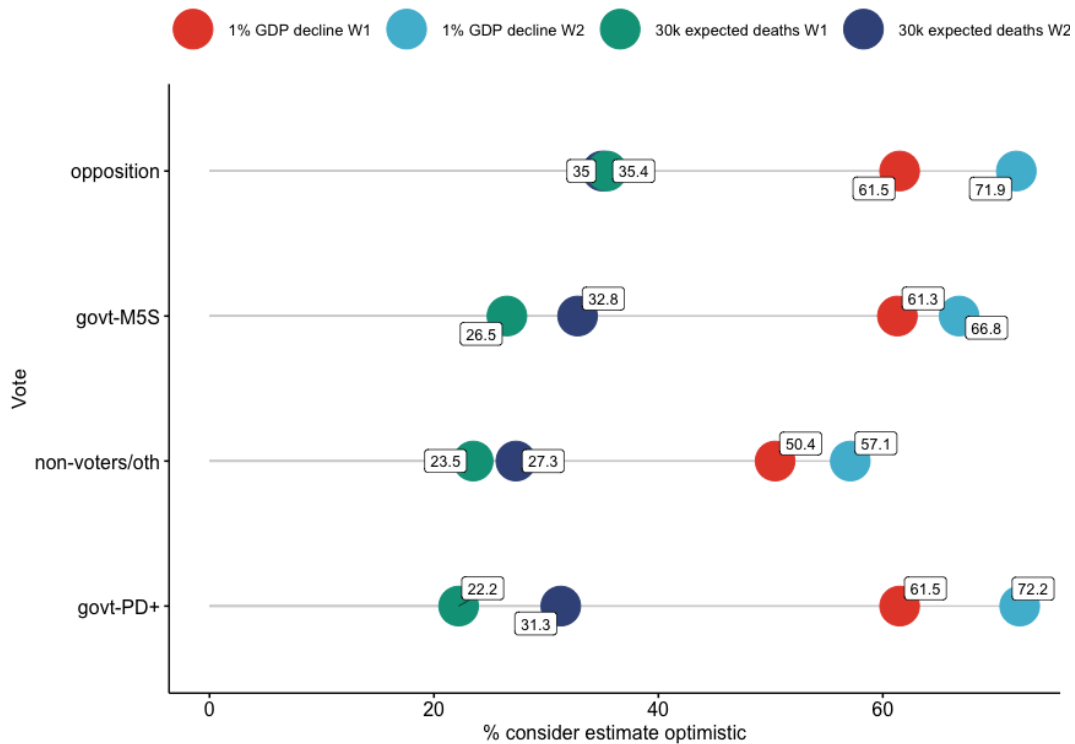
Interestingly, the respective shares increased somewhat between the two waves, i.e. people became more pessimistic over the two weeks between the two waves, even if the differences are rather small. Roughly a third now thinks that 30'000 deaths is a rather optimistic expectation. At present (April 26), the death toll of the Coronavirus in Italy stands at 26'600. The two-thirds majority who thinks that 30'000 deaths is probably what will be the end result or even a too pessimistic expectation are not too far off the mark, given what the current figures are telling them. Similarly, the two thirds of the Italians who think that a GDP decline of 1 percent is too optimistic are also likely to be correct: the IMF expects a decline of GDP for Italy in 2020 of -9.1 percent (April 17). It is surprising that a third of the Italians still think that the economic decline will not be greater than 1 percent.

Figure 9: expected decline of the GDP and number of deaths, by wave



Note that by looking at Figure 10, these expectations are not dependent on one's partisanship in either of the two waves, except that the non-voters are more likely to get it wrong in what regards their economic decline expectations.

Figure 10: expected decline of the GDP and number of deaths, by political camp



Dissatisfaction with the EU

The Italian opposition has been very critical of the EU during the period preceding wave 2. In particular, the Italian government has pleaded for the introduction of Eurobonds, an instrument of economic solidarity. What is the opinion of the Italians about the Eurobonds, and how satisfied are they with regard to the EU's management of the crisis?

Figure 11 shows that two-thirds of the partisans of the government camp clearly support the Eurobonds, while a majority of the partisans of the opposition and of the non-voters does not do so. Figure 11 also shows that a two-thirds majority of the opposition is dissatisfied with the EU's management of the crisis, while a two-thirds majority of the governing left is satisfied with the EU. Figure 12 looks at the combination of the two aspects. The support of Eurobonds does not make a difference for the assessment of the EU's crisis management on the government's side, but it increases dissatisfaction among non-voters and partisans of the opposition.

Figure 11: Support of Eurobonds and dissatisfaction with EU, by political camp

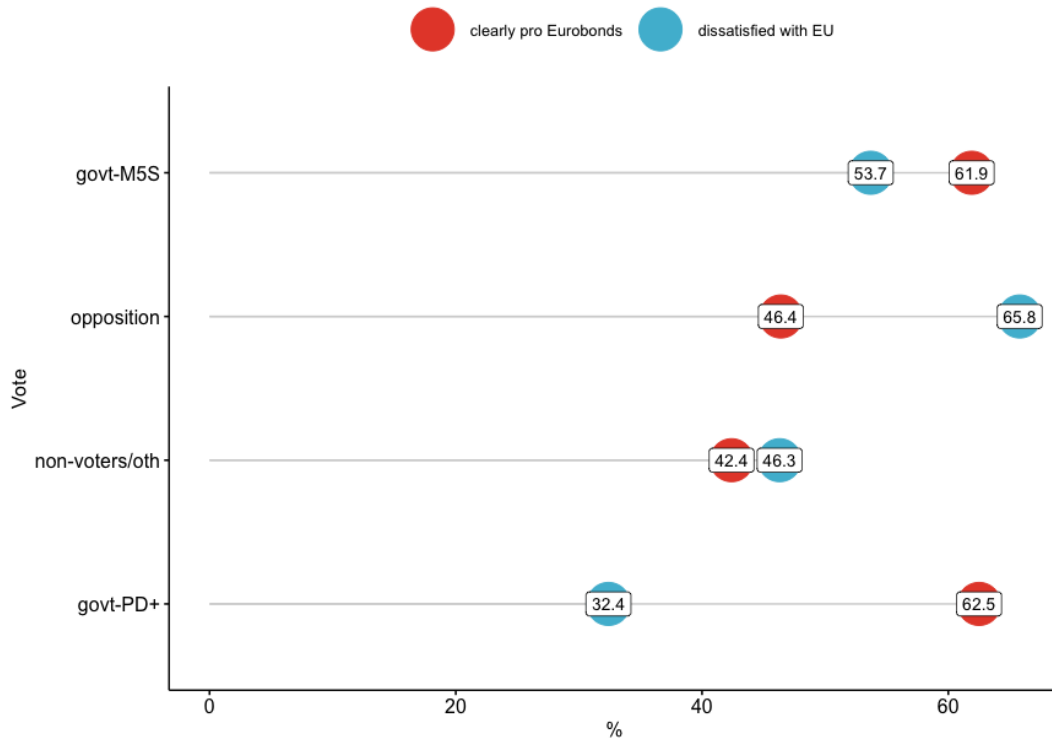


Figure 12: Dissatisfaction with EU as a function of support of Eurobonds, by political camp

