MOBILIZING THE PRECARIAT IN WESTERN EUROPE

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ELISABETTA GIRARDI

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Dean of the School of Social Sciences, University of Mannheim: Prof. Dr. Michael Diehl

First Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Thomas Bräuninger, University of Mannheim
Second Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Marc Debus, University of Mannheim

First Evaluator: Prof. Dr. Thomas Bräuninger, University of Mannheim
Second Evaluator: Prof. Dr. Marc Debus, University of Mannheim
Third Evaluator: Prof. Dr. Bernhard Ebbinghaus, University of Mannheim

SUMMARY

Across Western Europe, an increasing number of individuals is joining the ranks of the precariat, a diverse and rapidly expanding social group whose members are united by shared experiences of insecurity and vulnerability in the labour market. This trend is changing the composition of the Western European electorates, but its political implications remain uncertain. While numerical growth increases the electoral weight of precarious workers, for the precariat *as a group* to become politically relevant its members need to be collectively mobilized. Yet, mobilizing precarious workers has been historically deemed unfeasible and unprofitable. Shedding light on the political implications of precarization hence requires understanding whether, and under what conditions, the mobilization of precarious workers is today viable and beneficial for vote-maximizing parties. In this dissertation, I address this question by empirically investigating the precariat's mobilization potential, that is, its inherent capacity to be successfully mobilized.

First, I introduce a novel measurement strategy that allows to capture the latent concept of precarity quantitatively. Traditionally, occupational insecurity has been studied in the terms of a dichotomy between secure insiders and precarious outsiders, and the presence or absence of an open-ended employment contract has been regarded as a sufficient indicator of belonging to either of these two groups. However, the flexibilization of postindustrial labour markets has rendered formal employment status an inadequate and downward-biased indicator of belonging to the precariat. Hence, I develop a novel operationalization of precarity, conceptualized as labour market vulnerability, which is better suited for its measurement in the present context. Relying on survey data from the European Union Labour Force Survey, I employ Bayesian inference techniques to model an individual's probability (or risk) of experiencing unemployment or precarious employment based on a set of socio-demographic and employment-related factors. While other risk-based operationalizations of precarity exist, this approach offers a more nuanced and flexible estimation of labour market vulnerability which is readily usable for studying the effect of precarity on a wide range of socio-political phenomena. Thus, I employ it for investigating the mobilization potential of the precariat in Western Europe.

I posit that two key factors influence a group's mobilization potential: first, its mem-

bers' awareness of their group-specific interests, which provides a common ground on which they can be collectively mobilized; second, its members' propensity to political engagement, which increases the likelihood that they will respond to a mobilization effort. Jointly, these factors determine the viability and profitability of political parties' efforts to mobilize the precariat for collective action and support. Hence, I rely on survey data spanning 13 Western European democracies to examine the impact of precarity on policy preferences and political participation. The findings indicate that, despite their vulnerability to the development of a false consciousness and their limited access to the resources required for political engagement, the members of the precariat demonstrate awareness of their interests and display an above average propensity to participate in politics via non-institutional channels.

These results reveal the mobilization potential of the precariat and suggest that its mobilization could be both feasible and profitable for vote-maximizing parties. To corroborate this conclusion, I conduct a case study of the 2018 Italian election where a recent entrant in the political arena, the Five Star Movement, strategically targeted the precariat. This case offers an ideal opportunity to investigate whether precarious workers can be expected to respond to a mobilization effort by awarding the proponent party with their electoral support. Reinforcing the findings of the cross-sectional analyses, the results from this study show that precarity increased the propensity to vote and to support the Five Star Movement while diminishing support for parties perceived to bear responsibility for the precarization of the Italian workforce.

By focusing on the viability and profitability of mobilizing the precariat, this dissertation enhances our comprehension of the political implications of precarization. Its conclusions may provide an incentive for political parties to end the longstanding underrepresentation of precarious workers and, by doing so, break the vicious cycle of economic and political inequality that has long enmeshed individuals facing labour market disadvantage. Future research should investigate whether the mobilization potential of the precariat is being exploited by political parties, and this group is in fact emerging as a politically cohesive actor.

To my mother

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If political rights are necessary to set social rights in place, social rights are indispensable to keep political rights in operation. The two rights need each other for their survival; that survival can only be their joint achievement.

Bauman, 2007, p. 66

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation and research puzzle

Across Western Europe, labour markets are undergoing profound restructuring. In the post-war era, the achievements of the labour movement accustomed workers to unprecedented levels of employment security that, jointly with the development and expansion of the welfare state, contributed to their partial decommodification. These achievements were made possible by a peculiar political and economic conjuncture characterized by unprecedented economic growth and by the relative weakness of capital *vis-à-vis* labour (Streeck, 2014). In this context, a majority of workers were placed into the standard (open-ended, full-time, and socially protected) employment relationship (SER) that, by granting workers with a certain degree of security and income stability, decreased their vulnerability towards the employer and the vagaries of the markets. Since the 1970s, however, rising inflation and state indebtedness have posed an end to this era of economic growth, whilst a series of political and economic developments tied to neoliberal globalization shifted the balance of power towards the employers. A a result, employment protections have been gradually weakened and non-standard forms of employment liberalized, to the point that the standard employment relationship has been declared dead (Cappelli, 1999, p. 17).

Being the SER a crucial tool of decommodification (see Esping-Andersen, 1990; Bosch, 2004), its gradual dismantlement is not a mere shift in the dominant work paradigm but it is symptomatic of the gradual re-commodification of labour that weakens workers' bargaining power *vis-à-vis* the employer (Hyman & Gumbrell-McCormick, 2017). The non-standard forms of employment that proliferate in its vacuum re-establish a direct tie between income and market performance and jointly with the loosening of regulations for typical contracts deprive growing shares of the workforce of basic security. The result is spreading precarity, literally a status of temporariness, instability, and insecurity that is typical of a condition which is granted by favor without guarantee or right of permanence

(Treccani, n.d.) but here narrowly defined as the condition of insecurity and vulnerability that results from an individual's unstable position in the labour market. This acceptation of the term originates in the work of French Sociologists who used it to describe the condition of temporary and seasonal workers (Bourdieu, 1963; 1998) and has been popular in Latin-speaking countries for decades. However, in the face of the rising incidence of employment insecurity in post-industrial labour markets it has spread and strengthened, paving its way into the English language and gaining increasing attention in academic circles.

The direct consequence of spreading precarity (a.k.a. precarization) is that the *precariat*—the group of individuals in a condition of precarity—is growing. Like the old proletariat, the precariat is a social group whose members are identified on the grounds of their position in labour relations. However, it cannot be reduced to its modern form, as membership to this group is not defined by one's relationship to the means of production but rather by the volatile character of one's employment. Nonetheless, parallelisms have started to be drawn between the precarization trend and the booming of the proletariat in the Fordist era or mass production. In the words of an activist,

> The precariat is to postfordism as the proletariat was to fordism: precarious people are the social group produced by the neoliberal transformation of economy. It is the critical mass who is emerging from the everlasting whirl of multinational globalization, while firms and popular quarters are demolished and office districts and commercial chains are erected. It is the tertiary of malls and commercial chains, of services to firms and individuals; it is the cognitariat of information technology and communication industry. We are quite all precarious, consciously exploited or treacherously deceived by the flexibility ideology (Chainworkers' call for action, as cited by Doerr & Mattoni, 2014).

The numerical growth of the precariat necessarily raises questions concerning the political implications of precarization. By filling its ranks, precarization has the potential to increase the political relevance of this emerging social group. However, as it was the case for the XIX century proletariat, numerical growth is not a sufficient condition for it to become a politically relevant subject. Whether it will is a puzzle, solving which is crucial to shed light on the political implications of precarization.

1.2 Argument in brief

According to early scholars of mobilization, social change necessarily uproots individuals and its effects should naturally emerge in electoral statistics (Deutsch, 1961). Social

change is thus understood as the natural precursor of political mobilization, by which it is stabilized and institutionalized. When adopting this perspective, precarization could be expected to directly affect patterns of political behaviour and representation, which would award the precariat of political standing and relevance. However, this deterministic understanding of mobilization fails to explain how macro-level (societal) changes influence individual behaviour at the micro-level (Huntington, 1971). Following Cameron (1974), the translation of social change into action is impossible without an organization acting as an 'agent of mobilization' which induces individuals to new patterns of behaviour:

> The traditional view of mobilization conceives induction as passive and inevitable. Little attention, if any, is given to the organization or behavioral pattern into which an individual is inducted. Yet it is obvious that *induction is impossible without the existence of an organization which is seeking new members* (p. 140, emphasis added).

These words resonate cleavage theory in recognizing the crucial role of induction for the translation of the social into the political. Albeit political conflict is structured along historically determined lines of social conflict, social and cultural cleavages only turn politically relevant when they are politicized as such. It follows that mobilization is better conceived as an *intended* process consciously enacted by a collective agent. Borrowing from Etzioni (1968),

> it [mobilization] is here viewed as a project, deliberately initiated, guided, and terminated, and not simply as a byproduct or outgrowth of 'interaction' among social units or as a summation of the decisions of myriad participants. This is not to imply that mobilization has no unanticipated consequences or that the actor is in full control, but there is the assumption of a collective actor −be it a government, an organizational leadership, or a regional council− that mobilizes the resources. The change involved is in part intended (p. 244).

The opposition between these two approaches emerges clearly in the debate about the political relevance of social class. When in 1991 Clark and Lipset announced the death of class politics, their argument was built on the idea that parties had ceased to mobilize voters along class lines due to the decreasing importance of social class in society: since changes in social stratification −including the collapse of blue collar industries; the increasing differentiation of workers based on skill level; the expansion of the middle class; and the decline of traditional hierarchies in the family and in the economy− contributed to diminish the salience of class in society, the class cleavage was no longer crucial in politics. However, class conflict remains important today and dramatic inequalities in wealth, political influence, and ideology across classes persist (Hout et al., 1993; Evans &

Tilley, 2017). Hence, scholars have raised against the rushed announcement of the death of social class and class politics and the underlying deterministic understanding of the impact of the social on the political. It is not because class has decreased its salience in society that it has lost its salience in politics, the arrow must be reversed: it is the political system in general, and political parties in particular, that have ceased to mobilize voters along class lines (Hout et al., 1993; Crouch, 2004; Van der Waal, 2007; Evans and Tilley, 2017; Rennwald, 2020).

In the light of these considerations, mobilization should not be regarded as the inevitable consequence of social change. Social change turns politically important only when it is defined as such, acquiring positive or negative connotations. A deterministic understanding of mobilization is thus inadequate: some societal changes and societal cleavages are translated into politically relevant cleavages, but many others, possibly as important for the structure of society, are not. This implies that the political standing and relevance of the precariat in Western Europe does not necessarily follow from its numerical expansion. Rather, it is conditional upon its activation by mobilizing agents, primarily political parties, so as the political relevance of the Proletariat developed from the mobilization efforts of social democratic parties, that had in the creation of a working class consciousness their explicit objective.

> To politically organize the Proletariat, *to fill it with a consciousness of its situation and its task*, to make it mentally and physically ready for the fight and to preserve it, that is the real program of the social democratic workers' party of Austria (Social Democrats of Imperial Austria, Foundational Programme 1888, as cited in Zuber et al., 2023; emphasis added).

Whether and under what conditions political parties will engage and succeed in such a mobilization effort is an open question. As parties have both ideological commitments and electoral constraints, their incentive to mobilize a group is conditional upon the electoral return this effort might entail. In a context of dual labour markets, precarity was a prerogative of workers in marginalized and non-unionized sectors, the so-called labour market outsiders, while the securely employed and socially protected insiders, far more easy to mobilize thanks to their stable employment relationships and ties with trade unions, were largely insulated from it. In this context, the mobilization of precarious workers was assumed to be difficult and scarcely beneficial for political parties, so that the precariat remained without representation in the political arena (Rueda, 2005). However, over the past four decades atypical work arrangements were gradually liberalized and employment protections for regular contracts loosened. As a result, precarity has spread and has come to affect workers well beyond the growing army of unemployed, interns, independent contractors, platform workers, temporary employees, and working poor.

These trends have increased the pool of supporters who might be attracted via a mobilization effort directed at the precariat, creating an incentive for parties to target precarious workers. However, numerical growth is not a sufficient condition for the mobilization of a social group to be feasible and profitable. The feasibility and profitability of a mobilization effort are dependent on the group's inherent capacity to be successfully mobilized, i.e., its *mobilization potential*. In turn, this potential is conditional on (1) the existence of common interests among the groups members, which provides a common ground on which individuals living heterogeneous lives can be collectively mobilized; (2) the group members' *awareness* of these shared interests, which increases the likelihood that they will be effectively attracted by a mobilization effort conducted on this ground (cfr. McVeigh, 1995); and (3) the propensity of the group members to participate in politics, which affects the probability that they will respond to the activation effort by engaging in collective action.

In sum, the political relevance of a social group does not necessarily follow from its numerical expansion. Rather, it is conditional on the group members being collectively mobilized by political agents, primarily political parties, that by doing so contribute to render precarity politically salient. It follows that, to shed light on the political implications of precarization, it is crucial to understand whether and to what extent the mobilization of the precariat is today feasible and profitable for vote-maximizing parties. In this dissertation, I address this issue by carrying out a systematic investigation into the mobilization potential of the precariat in Western Europe.

1.3 Dissertation outline

This dissertation is composed of four empirical chapters. In the first chapter, I provide an overview of the shift of postindustrial labour markets away from dualism towards generalized precarization and contend that this shift has rendered formal employment status, i.e., the absence or temporary nature of an employment contract, an insufficient indicator of belonging to the precariat. Hence, I develop a novel operationalization of precarity that overcomes the rigid dichotomy between precarious and not precarious workers and allows to locate individuals on a continuous scale ranging from full security to absolute precarity. Specifically, I model individuals' vulnerability to unemployment and precarious employment based on a set of individual and employment-related factors. Relying on Bayesian inference techniques, I implement this model on a large dataset providing detailed information for hundreds of thousands of European citizens, the European Union Labour Force Survey Data. The resulting regression estimates allow me to calculate distributions of posterior predicted probabilities of precarity for any individual for which

the information used to estimate the models is available. These probabilities constitute a more precise estimation of labour market vulnerability as compared to formal employment status, and are thus better suited for measuring precarity in the present context. Additionally, they can be calculated for any individual for which basic socio-demographic information are available, including the respondents of most election surveys, which renders this approach suitable for studying the effect of labour market vulnerability on a wide range of socio-political phenomena. In conclusion, I validate this measurement strategy by calculating posterior predicted probabilities of precarity for European Social Survey respondents from 13 Western European countries and testing whether they are meaningful predictors of their declared past, present, and expected experiences with unemployment and atypical employment.

In the second and third chapters, I employ this strategy to investigate the interest awareness and propensity to political engagement of precarious workers in Western Europe. In the second chapter, I test the effect of precarity on the support for policies that reduce labour market vulnerability and thus protect the interests of precarious workers. These policies include the support for the state responsibility to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed and the reduction of the conditionalities attached to unemployment benefits. Additionally, I investigate whether this effect is undermined by the harbouring of neoliberal beliefs and conditional on economic hardship. The former test allows to shed light on the impact of the rhetoric of self-responsibility and of the neoliberal mantra 'there is no alternative' on the interest awareness of precarious workers. The latter allows to understand whether the precariat can be collectively mobilized in spite of the heterogeneity of its members, some of whom enjoy a relative degree of financial security which might reduce their interest awareness and responsiveness to mobilization efforts. The results of the analysis show a positive and substantive effect of precarity on support for those policy measures, an effect that is present even among the better off members of the precariat and that is not undermined by the harbouring of neoliberal beliefs.

In the third chapter, I investigate the impact of precarity on political participation. I contend that the recurrent finding of a negative relationship between the two is the result of the narrow focus of quantitative-based research on formal employment status−an insufficient indicator of labour market vulnerability− and electoral participation−a poor indicator of the precariat's political activism due to its dependency on supply-side factors. I thus resort to the risk-based operationalization of precarity to investigate its effect on participation via non-institutional channels, that are not only independent from parties' offer but also highly demanding in the amount of resources they require. The results show that precarity does foster political engagement, albeit this effect is only significant where

precarity is scarcely widespread and unemployment protections generous. In countries where precarity is diffused and unemployment protections are scarce, political engagement is high regardless of individuals' exposure to precarity.

The evidence collected in the first three chapters paints a bright picture of the mobilization potential of the precariat. While interest awareness does not automatically lead to political cohesion, it does contribute to render the mobilization of precarious workers as a group possible. Similarly, although an above average propensity to engage in politics via informal participation channels does not necessarily translate into an above average propensity to show up at the polling station, it does signal the group's political potential and indicate that precarious workers should not be disregarded as a politically alienated and irrelevant group. Therefore, these results suggest that engaging in induction efforts targeted at the precariat might be viable and beneficial for political parties. In the fourth chapter, I put this statement to the test by investigating whether, when such an effort has been conducted, precarious workers have responded by entrusting the party with their electoral support. The chapter is a case study of the 2018 Italian election, when a relatively new entrant in the electoral arena, the Five Star Movement, took over the representation of the precariat by centering its electoral campaign around a policy measure directly targeted at its members. The results of the analysis show that the induction of precarious workers was electorally beneficial: regardless of economic hardship, region of residence, and plenty of other socio-demographic and attitudinal factors influencing vote choice, employment insecurity increased support for this novel political force while dampening support for parties that held responsibility for the precarization trend.

The implications of these four studies are discussed in the concluding chapter of the dissertation. Following a brief summary of the results, I argue that, by exposing the mobilization potential of the precariat, they reveal that targeting precarious workers is both feasible and profitable for vote-maximizing parties. This conclusion calls for an investigation into whether, who, and how political actors will engage in this effort. I thus conclude the dissertation suggesting avenues for future research which would enlighten further our understanding of the political implications of precarization.

1.4 Novelty and contributions

This dissertation adds to our understanding of the political implications of precarization in Western Europe. Building on scholarship from the fields of labour studies, social movement studies, political economy, and comparative politics, it develops a novel framework for studying the Precariat as a political actor. The contributions it makes are both theoretical and empirical, and hold academic and real-world implications.

The first contribution is the development of a novel approach to measuring precarity which allows to reduce the gap between the concept and its quantitative measurement. To date, scholars of precarity have mostly relied on qualitative methods, employing interviews, participant observations, and case studies to shed light on how precarious workers live, perceive, and cope with their condition (Neilson, 2015; Malin and Chandler, 2016; Kesisoglou et al., 2016; Örnebring, 2018), as well as how this condition impacts their propensity to political engagement (Sinigaglia, 2007; Milkman and Ott, 2014; Mattoni and Vogiatzoglou, 2014; Della Porta et al., 2015; Mattoni, 2016; Vieira, 2021). Quantitative studies have remained a minority in this field of research due to the difficulty of measuring precarity and concomitantly conducting quantitative analyses of it (Alberti et al., 2018), and have narrowly focused on formal employment status to shed light on whether and how unemployment and atypical employment impact political attitudes and behaviour (Rueda, 2005; Burgoon, 2010; Marx, 2013; Marx, 2014; Rovny and Rovny, 2017; Schraff, 2018; Vlandas, 2020). Efforts to overcome this narrow focus have been recently conducted by scholars who developed composite indexes of precarity made up of several indicators measuring, among others, employment and working conditions, subjective perceptions of insecurity, and financial status (Lewchuck, 2017; Antonucci et al., 2018; Antonucci et al., 2023). These indexes constitute a great leap forward for the quantitative study of precarity and its socio-political repercussions, but require the implementation of original surveys as the information needed to construct them are not collected in publicly available opinion and election surveys. This renders the study of the political implications of precarity highly resources demanding, so that studies that employ this approach have been limited to a small number of countries and election years (Antonucci et al., 2018; 2023).

In order to cope with this shortcoming, in the first empirical chapter I add to these efforts by developing a measurement approach which is highly flexible and, albeit computationally intensive, scarcely resource demanding. My approach is based on a conceptualization of precarity as labour market vulnerability, a latent variable for which precarious forms of employment are a possible but not necessary manifestation. This latent variable is operationalized as the individual-specific probability (or risk) to face unemployment or atypical employment based on a set of socio-demographic, contextual, and employment-related factors. These probabilities are calculated resorting to regression estimates derived from binomial models implemented Bayesianly on data from the EU-Labour Force Survey. This procedure allows to obtain individual-specific distributions of posterior predicted probabilities of precarity that can be readily employed in quantitative analyses of precarity and its socio-political repercussions.

Theoretically, this approach builds on the contributions of scholars in the fields of

labour studies and political economy, who focus on the economic structures and systems that give rise to precarity. These contributions expose how labour market and welfare reforms (Kalleberg, 2009; Heyes and Lewis, 2014; De Stefano, 2014; Greer, 2016; Rubery and Grimshaw, 2016; Rubery et al., 2018; Knotz, 2018; Hajighasemi, 2019), globalization and European integration (Mosley and Uno, 2007; Kalleberg, 2009; Thornley et al., 2010; Olney, 2013; Bernaciak, 2015; Burgmann, 2016), and changes in the modes of business organization (Frade and Darmon, 2005) have eroded the decommodification function of the Standard Employment Relationship. My argument is that, in this changed context, labour market vulnerability varies widely across individuals holding the same kind of employment contracts, which renders formal employment status an insufficient and downward biased indicator of precarity (see also Lewchuck, 2017; Chauvin, 2017).

Empirically, this approach is loosely based on the risk-based conceptualization of insiders and outsiders developed by Schwander and Häusermann (2013), who assign scores of outsiderness to individuals grouped by age, gender, and social class based on how the average rate of unemployment and atypical employment in the group they belong to compares to the average rate in the workforce. This strategy is justified on the grounds that the relevance of labour market status in shaping an individual's attitudes and behaviours is determined by his or her expectations of labour market risk. Since these expectations are not only shaped by their momentary condition but are strongly linked to the labour market prospects of their social group, a risk-based approach is better suited for studying employment insecurity and its political implications. My approach builds on this argument, but improves the authors' operationalization of risk in three ways. First, by measuring it at the individual rather than the group level, it allows for a more precise estimation of labour market vulnerability. Second, by resorting to Bayesian inference techniques, it allows to account for the uncertainty that surrounds the estimated risk. Finally, precarity estimates and their uncertainty can be readily transferred to the respondents of publicly available opinion and election survey data, which renders it highly practical for studying the relationship between precarity and a wide array of socio-political phenomena.

By employing this novel measurement strategy, in the second and third empirical chapters I add to our understanding of the impact of precarity on policy preferences and political behaviour. The empirical evidence presented in the second chapter reveals that precarity decreases the propensity to harbour neoliberal beliefs and increases the support for policies that protect the interests of precarious workers, a positive effect which is not conditional on financial hardship. This evidence adds to the body of literature that studies the drivers of redistributive attitudes (Svallfors, 1997; Kullin and Svallfors, 2013; Guillaud, 2013; Acemoglu et al., 2015; Costa-Font and Cowell, 2015), and contributes to

the ongoing debate on the political potential of the precariat as a social group (Standing, 2014; Jorgensen, 2016). The empirical evidence presented in the third chapter exposes a positive and significant effect of precarity on the propensity to engage in politics via informal participation channels, albeit this effect emerges to be conditional on the overall incidence of precarity and on the availability of networks of support at the country level, which mitigate the risk associated with precarious employment. The results from this study also indicate that, where precarity is widespread and the shelter against unemployment scarce, there exists a higher propensity to participate in politics regardless of an individual's exposure to precarity. This evidence corroborates the findings from qualitative analyses of specific instances of precarious workers' activism (Mattoni, 2012; Doerr and Mattoni, 2014; Mattoni and Vogiatzoglou, 2014 ; Monticelli and Bassoli, 2017; Bassoli and Monticelli, 2018; Tassinari and Maccarone, 2017; Tassinari and Maccarone, 2020; Zamponi, 2020; Cini et al., 2022) and contributes to the literature that investigates the impact of socio-economic and occupational status on the propensity to engage in politics (Marx and Nguyen, 2016; Schäfer and Schwander, 2019; Kurer et al., 2019). By doing so, it also adds to the long lasting 'greed versus grievances' debate, that opposes evidence of a dampening effect of economic disadvantage on political engagement to the evidence of a mobilizing effect (Gamson, 1968; Schlozman and Verba 1979; Rosenstone 1982; Verba et al., 1995; Solt, 2008; Laurison, 2015; Kern et al., 2015; Genovese et al., 2016; Funke et al., 2016; Schäfer and Schwander, 2019; Schaub, 2021; Jungkunz and Marx, 2023).

To the best of my knowledge, these studies represent the first cross-country, large-N investigation in this strand of research. Via the provision of systematic, significant, and cross-sectional evidence, they complement case study evidence on the political awareness and activism among precarious workers and counter widespread assumptions on the alienating effect of precarity that have dominated the insider-outsider literature (Rueda, 2005; Rueda, 2007). Additionally, by testing the effect of precarity on political engagement and policy preferences while controlling for socio-economic status, they allow to isolate the effect of precarity from the effect of financial hardship, hence improving our understanding of the political implications of labour market vulnerability.

The relationship between precarity and political behaviour is also investigated in the fourth and final empirical chapter of this dissertation. While in third chapter I carry out a cross-sectional analysis of the effect of precarity on participation via non-institutional channels, in this final one I investigate the impact of perceived employment insecurity on the propensity to support challenger left and challenger right parties in the 2018 Italian election. This study furthers our understanding of the relationship between precarity and political behaviour and contributes to the growing strand of research that investigates the drivers of the success of challenger parties in Western Europe. Following De Vries

and Hobolt (2020), the arena of party competition resembles a market oligopoly where dominant parties enjoy a relative advantage over challengers, that is, both new and old parties without government experience. In the present context, however, the loosening of the ties between mainstream parties and their electorates have opened up opportunities for these political outsiders to act as issue entrepreneurs and challenge the dominance of their mainstream counterparts. Coherently, scholars have increasingly focused on the rise and success of these challengers, variably defined as new (Vidal, 2018), euroskeptic (Treib, 2020), radical (Burgoon et al., 2019; Harteveld, 2016; Bailey et al., 2016; Lachat & Kriesi, 1990), niche (Meguid, 2005; Wagner, 2012) and populist (Rama & Cordero, 2018; Mudde, 2004) based on the authors' interest into their origins, mobilization style, programmatic positioning or degree of radicalism. The success of these actors has been frequently tied to their appeal among economically insecure voters (see Lubbers et al., 2002; Werts et al., 2013; Rydgren, 2013; Oesch and Rennwald 2018; Gomez et al. 2016; Ramiro, 2016; Rooduijn et al. 2017). In particular, recent studies have underlined the importance of employment related insecurity: support for left wing challengers has emerged to be tied to a direct or indirect experience of job loss (Segatti & Capuzzi, 2016) and increasing unemployment rates have been shown to trigger a better performance of the far right (Stockemer, 2016). Coherently, precarity is increasingly featured among the drivers of support for challenger parties (Gidron and Hall, 2017; Tammes, 2017; Antonucci et al., 2021; Antonucci et al., 2023). My final chapter builds on, and contributes to, this emerging strand of research by focusing on the impact of precarity on vote choice in a specific election where only one among several challengers centered its electoral campaign around pro-precarious policies. This allows testing the effect of instrumental and symbolic considerations in driving the relationship between precarity and support for challenger parties, while also improving our understanding of the electoral benefits entailed in the representation of precarious workers.

Last but not least, this dissertation makes a theoretical contribution by developing a novel theoretical framework for the study of the precariat as a political subject. Currently, a debate is under way on whether the precariat can be considered a social class. This debate opposes scholars who deny this possibility on the grounds of the group's heterogeneity (Alberti et al., 2018; Wright, 2016) and scholars who contend that the precariat is indeed a *class in itself*, albeit still struggling to evolve into a class for itself (Standing, 2014). This dissertation advances this debate by recognizing the crucial role of induction for the emergence of the precariat a social class. Adopting a constructivist perspective and relying on social identity theory, cleavage theory, and mobilization theory, I argue that its emergence is conditional on the activity of political actors that by mobilizing the issue of precarity contribute to render it politically salient. This calls for a shift in focus,

from what the precariat *is* to what it *can be*. In other words, rather than focusing on the intrinsic characteristics of the group members in order to understand whether they meet the necessary criteria to be defined a social class, I investigate their mobilization *potential*, which determines whether their mobilization by hands of political parties is feasible, beneficial, and therefore likely to occur.

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MEASURING PRECARITY THROUGH RISK EXPOSURE: A BAYESIAN APPROACH

Abstract

This chapter develops a novel approach to measuring occupational precarity that narrows the gap between the concept and its quantitative measurement. Traditionally, occupational insecurity has been studied in the terms of a dichotomy between secure insiders and precarious outsiders within dual labour markets, and the presence or absence of an open-ended employment contract has been considered as a sufficient indicator of belonging to either of these two groups. However, the increasing flexibilization of postindustrial labour markets has rendered formal employment status an inadequate metric for precarity, creating the need for an alternative approach to measurement. Thus, in this chapter I develop a risk-based operationalization which is best suited for the present context. Relying on survey data from the European Union Labour Force Survey, I employ Bayesian inference techniques to model an individual's probability of experiencing unemployment or precarious employment based on a set of socio-demographic and employment-related factors. This method allows to estimate individual-specific distributions of posterior predicted probabilities of precarity that accurately capture labour market vulnerability and can be readily employed in quantitative analyses of precarity and its socio-political repercussions.

Keywords: precarity; precarization; labour market dualism; measurement; Bayesian analysis.

2.1 Introduction

The term 'precarity' (just like 'precarious' and 'precarization') comes from the Latin verb *precare*, to pray, and evokes a status of temporariness, instability, and insecurity that is typical of a condition which is granted by favor, temporarily permitted upon request, without guarantee or right of permanence (Treccani, n.d.). In Latin-speaking countries it has been used for decades to indicate the condition of individuals who lack employment-related security, an acceptation that has spread and strengthened following the flexibilization of postindustrial labour markets. As a result, precarity has received increasing attention within academic circles, and is today variably defined as 'the feeling of insecurity and instability in regards to work' (Malin and Chandler, 2017: 384); the condition of 'living in the present, without a secure identity or sense of development achieved through work and lifestyle' (Standing, 2011: 16); and 'the absence of those aspects of the standard employment relationship (SER) that support the decommodification of labour' (Rubery et al., 2018: 510).

While focusing on different aspects of the precarity experience, these authors among others (see also Della Porta et al., 2015) share an understanding of precarity as a condition of *vulnerability* that originates from an individual's unstable position in the labour market, but whose repercussions extend to other spheres, bearing material, social, and psychological consequences that affect the whole realm of existence. In the suggestive words of Lorey (2015),

> Precarization means more than insecure jobs, more than the lack of security given by waged employment. By way of insecurity and danger it embraces the whole of existence, the body, modes of subjectivation. It is threat and coercion, even while it opens up new possibilities of living and working. Precarization means living with the unforeseeable, with contingency (p. 1).

Following this scholarly tradition, precarity does not merely indicate the status of being into a certain kind of formal employment arrangements that lack permanency. Rather, it indicates a condition of insecurity and vulnerability of which those employment arrangements are a possible albeit not necessary manifestation.

This understanding of precarity calls for an analytical separation between the latent variable 'precarity' and an individual's observable employment status. However, in the field of quantitative research the issue of occupational insecurity is generally studied in the terms of a cleavage between secure insiders and precarious outsiders, and formal employment status as the sole criteria for inclusion in either of these two groups. Namely, insiders are those standing in the permanent, full-time, and socially protected employment relationship which was the norm in the post-war era; outsiders are those standing

outside this relationship, working in the informal sector or employed through a plethora of arrangements such as temporary, part-time, seasonal, on-call, or zero hours contracts, forced to frequent job changes and constantly exposed to the risk of unemployment.

Relying on formal employment status as a proxy of labour market vulnerability has clear measurement advantages for studying the impact of precarity on political attitudes and behaviours, as information on formal employment status is consistently available in election studies and readily usable for statistical analysis. However, it requires the assumption that workers with open ended contracts are largely insulated from the risk of unemployment. This assumption was reasonably sound in the post war era of stable and highly unionized labour markets, where little mobility existed between insiders and outsiders and permanent contracts provided a guarantee against unemployment, but over the past decades economic and political developments have been changing the structure of the Western European labour markets, causing precarity to spread and cease to be a prerogative of marginal workers standing outside the SER. This shift questions the continued validity of that assumption and, it follows, the suitability of formal employment status as a valid indicator of precarity.

In the light of these considerations, in this chapter I develop an alternative approach for the quantitative measurement of precarity which is better suited for studying it and its socio-political repercussions in the present context. First, I justify this effort by providing an overview of the restructuring of the Western European labour markets. I contend that a shift is under way from a situation of labour market dualism towards one of generalized precarization, and discuss the reasons why this shift has rendered the mainstream operationalization of employment insecurity biased. Second, I make the case for a risk-based conceptualization and operationalization of precarity and measure it as the probability to experience unemployment or precarious employment. Relying on EU-LFS data from thirteen Western European democracies, I resort to Bayesian inference techniques to model this risk based on a set of socio-demographic and employment-related factors. Based on the regression estimates, I obtain individual-specific distributions of posterior predicted probabilities of precarity that can be readily employed in quantitative analyses of precarity and its socio-political repercussions. Finally, I test empirically the validity of this measurement strategy and conclude by discussing its potential for studying the political implications of precarization.

2.2 The changing world of labour

The post-war era in Western Europe was marked by important achievements of the labour movement which rendered workers increasingly protected against market risks and accus-

tomed to steadily rising salaries and working conditions. These achievements were the outcome of what Polanyi (1944) had described as the counter-movement rising against the detrimental social consequences of market liberalism, in particular the transformation of labour into a (fictitious) commodity.

The main outcome of workers' struggles was the establishment of the standard employment relationship as the new norm in the post-war labour markets. The notion of standard employment relationship (SER) indicates the 'stable, socially protected, dependent, full-time job . . . the basic conditions of which (working time, pay, social transfers) are regulated to a minimum level by collective agreement or by labour and/or social security law' (Bosch 1986: 165). Its defining feature is not merely the form of employment relationship it establishes (full time, permanent, with a fixed career pattern), but also and especially the set of rights attached to it. Among others, the right to a guaranteed minimum number of working hours; to an hourly pay which increases in line with the cost of living; to reinstatement or compensation in case of redundancy or unfair dismissal; to holiday, sick and lay-off pay, paid paternal leave, pension and unemployment benefits; and to collective representation in the workplace (Rubery and Grimshaw, 2016). By these means, the SER grants workers with a certain degree of security and income stability which allows planning in the long term and provides them with a safety net to rely on in case of (un)expected events such as illness and old age. This security returns to the workers control over their lives, rendering them less vulnerable towards the employer and market trends and allowing them to resist excessive demands.

In conjunction with the consolidation and expansion of the welfare states, the SER performed a crucial social function by contributing to the de-commodification of labour: when workers are commodities in the market, they are entirely dependent on the cash-nexus for their well-being (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 105); the SER emancipates workers from this complete dependency by ensuring workers with alternative means of welfare and by loosening the ties between income and job performed (for an in-depth discussion on the decommodification function of the SER, see Esping-Andersen, 1990; Bosch, 2004; Frade and Darmond, 2005; Standing, 2007). However, the decommodification of labour brought about by the SER was only partial and fictitious. Fictitious because access to security and social rights remained conditional upon the successful participation in the labour market, so that security did not come to be a right, but rather an entitlement (Standing, 2007). Partial because, while workers in core unionized sectors came to be reasonably insulated from market risk, for workers in marginalized and scarcely unionized sectors employment and income insecurity remained the norm.

2.2.1 Dualism and its political implications

Observing the divide between sheltered and un-sheltered workers, economists coined the concept of dual labour market to indicate the two-tired system in which the core of the labour force enjoys reasonable pay and working conditions as well as a good degree of job and income security, while workers at the margins perform insecure, unattractive, and often poorly paid jobs (Piore, 1978). This dual system was recognized to foster social and economic inequality, but also to carry severe political implications.

First, insider and outsider status were theorized to result in diverging and oftentimes incompatible *policy preferences*. Following Rueda (2005; 2007), due to their high vulnerability to unemployment outsiders tend to favor active and passive labour market policies (LMPs) that facilitate their (re)integration in the labour market and provide them with a safety net on which they can rely during periods of inactivity. These policies are opposed by insiders because, while not providing them with any direct benefit, they foster labour market competition and increase the tax burden on their labour. Rather, insiders benefit from increasingly generous employment protection policies and legislation (EPL), that safeguard permanent workers against unfair dismissal and are the core determinant of employees' job security (see also OECD, 2020). These policies are supposedly opposed by outsiders because, by increasing turnover costs, they reduce their chances to enter the job market. This argument that dates back to Lindbeck and Snower (1988): following the authors, there exist labour turnover costs that can be exploited by insiders in the process of wage bargain from which outsiders, lacking representation via labour unions, are excluded. In phase of economic contraction, high turnover costs ensure that insiders will not be replaced by outsiders via underbidding, and impede wage setters to adjust to low growth rates. Strict employment protection legislation thus lowers labour turnover and increases hiring costs, consequently benefiting insiders to the detriment of outsiders. Although recent evidence challenges some of these expectations concerning outsiders' policy preferences (outsiders have been recently found to favor generous EPL −see Schwander, 2019−and to oppose demanding ALMP −see Fossati, 2018), the idea that there exists a direct relationship between formal employment status and policy preferences remains a consolidated assumption in the literature.

Second, individuals' position in the labour market was theorized to impact their chances of *political participation*. The workplace represents a fundamental locus of political socialization, in which necessary political skills are acquired (Sobel, 1993) together with the sense of political efficacy necessary to engage into political activities (Pateman, 1970). Conversely, job loss and a prolonged experience of unemployment have been shown to depress political participation (Marx & Nguyen, 2016), together with being trapped in atypical employment (Gallego, 2007). Furthermore, precarious work is hardly ever union-

ized work, and the lack of stable ties with unions seriously hampers outsiders' capacity for collective action. As a result, outsiders have long been assumed to be a group hard to mobilize on the basis of collective interests and identity and whose representation is not electorally beneficial due to its members' low political participation rates (Rueda, 2005).

Third, individuals' position in the labour market has been theorized to affect their access to *political representation*. Following Rueda (2005; 2007), since the interests of insiders and outsiders are different and largely incompatible, and since the representation of insiders is more electorally beneficial, starting from the 1970s social democratic parties elected insiders as their core constituency. As the other protagonists of the political scene in the post-war period, i.e., liberal and conservative parties, represented the interest of the self-employed and other upscale groups, outsiders remained without political representation. It follows that, in those contexts characterized by an insider-outsider cleavage, government partisanship significantly affects pro-insider policies, with social democratic governments promoting higher employment protections than conservative ones, but not pro-outsider policies, since neither social democratic nor conservative governments implement them. Such policies should only be promoted by social democratic governments in a context of lowering employment protections and of increasing instability of the unemployment rate, factors that render insiders more vulnerable to unemployment and approach their interests to the ones of outsiders (Rueda, 2006). However, recent evidence challenges the continued validity of these expectations. Bürgisser and Kurer (2021) find that across Europe policies defending the interests of outsiders have started to be promoted, while employment protection policies benefiting insiders have been reduced. They consider this to be the result of an increase in the electoral relevance of outsiders, stemming from their increasing numbers and political participation rates. In line with this argument, others have shown that unemployment and atypical employment, i.e. outsiderness, are on the rise (Oesch, 2006; Häusermann & Schwander, 2012).

In sum, according to the proponents of the dual labour markets theory there exists a line of division in societies between the insiders (workers with secure jobs highly protected from the risk of unemployment) and the outsiders (workers in precarious jobs or unemployed), whose interests and policy preferences are different and largely incompatible. This employment inequality translates into political inequality, as marginalization in the labour market reduces the chances for political participation which in turn results in poor political representation (Rueda, 2005; 2007). Building on these considerations, plenty of scholarship has been produced that investigates the impact of outsider status (variably operationalized as atypical employment, unemployment, temporary employment, and part-time employment) on electoral behaviour, with mixed results (for a review, see Schwander, 2019).

2.2.2 From dualism to generalized precarization

The important achievements of the labour movement in the direction of an increasing decommodification of labour during the post-war period were made possible by a peculiar political and economic conjuncture characterized by unprecedented economic growth and by the relative weakness of capital *vis-à-vis* labour (Streeck, 2014). Since the 1970s, however, rising inflation and state indebtedness posed an end to this era of economic growth. Jointly with a series of political and economic development falling under the umbrella term of neoliberal globalization, this caused a backlash towards labour re-commodification, shifting back the balance of power away from labour towards capital.

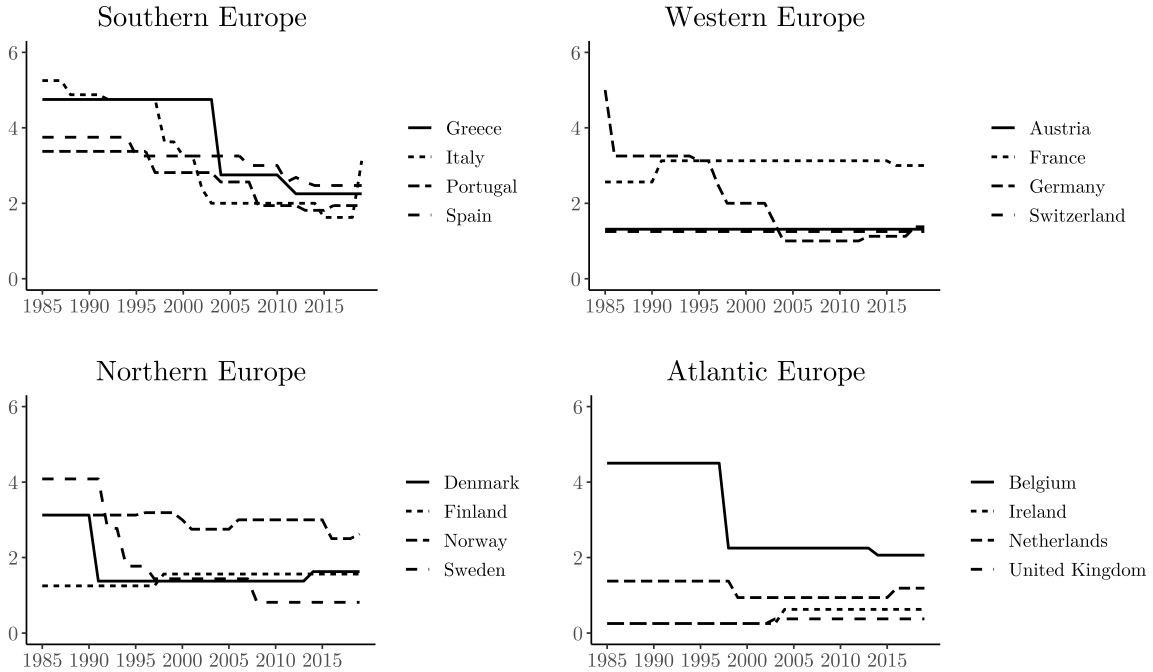
On the economic front, technological advances freed business from spatial constraints, allowing capital to escape state regulations and employers to relocate production based on the availability of cheap labour. At the same time, the feminization of the workforce, the entrance of India and China in the global market economy, and the weakening of barriers to immigration doubled the size of the global labour pool, thus increasing workers' competition and weakening their bargaining power within and across national borders (Kalleberg, 2009). In addition, the decline of the manufacturing sector heavily reliant on mass production and the expansion of the service sector centered around flexible production increased the demand for flexible work arrangements (see also Piore and Sabel, 1984). On the political front, the electoral victories of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States in the 1980s ushered a 'neoliberal revolution' fostering privatizations, cuts to social spending, and the retrenchment of employment protections. These largely unpopular measures were legitimated by the 'There Is No Alternative' rhetoric that, by imposing as self-evident and economically rational the most classic presuppositions of economic thought, presented state retrenchment as an inevitability (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 30).

Jointly, these developments contributed to severely undermine employees' bargaining power *vis-à-vis* the employer and to erode workers' employment security. Channelled by the neoliberal discourse, it became dominant the belief that the regulation of labour markets via state-mandated employment protection legislation has negative consequences on productivity and job creation. The cutback of employment protections was presented as the only feasible and responsible response to international competition, sluggish growth, and rising unemployment (see Heyes and Lewis, 2014; and Rubery et al., 2016), and flexible labour markets (exemplary cases being the UK and the USA) as a model for the allegedly over-regulated European countries. Flexibility was praised because allegedly capable of creating new jobs; facilitating outsiders' entrance in the labour market, thus narrowing the insider-outsider divide; reducing welfare dependency and welfare costs, thus solving problems of public financing; ensuring the dynamism and flexibility required in a

globalized market; promoting competitiveness and productivity; and offering employees novel opportunities for work-life balance (Rubery et al., 2016).

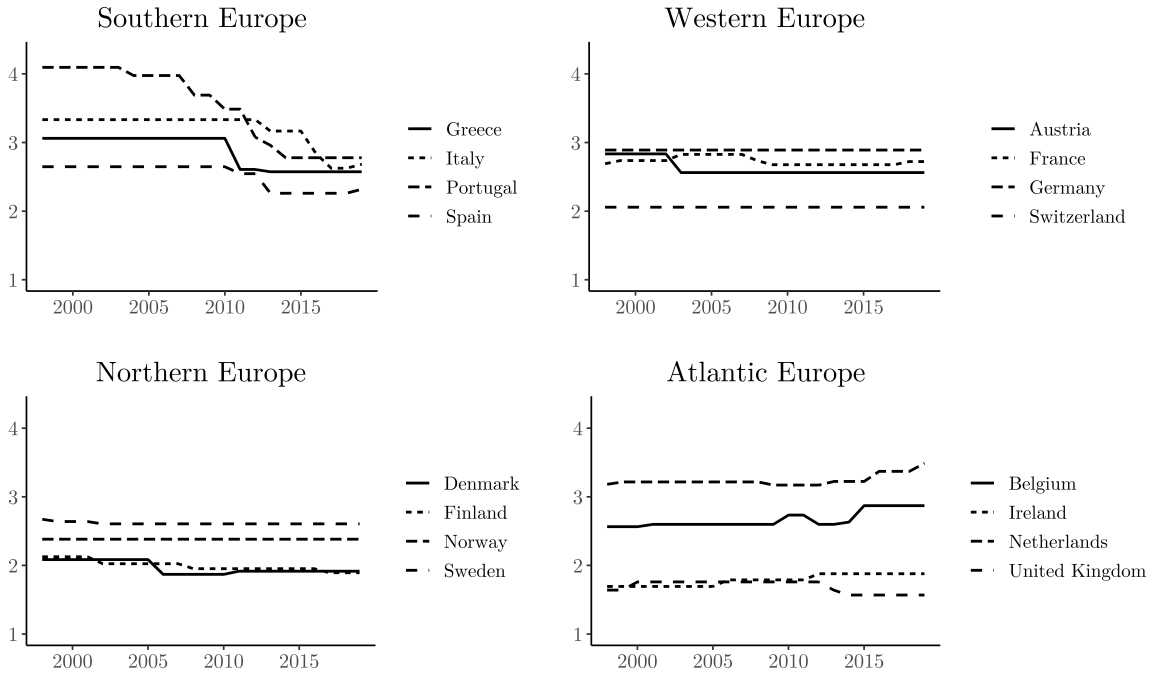
No unambiguous evidence exists in support of these arguments. To the contrary, plenty of empirical studies show that labour market flexibility has 'a way of biting back', entailing detrimental consequences for productivity and public finances (Rubery et al., 2016; see also Heyes and Lewis, 2014). Nonetheless, the crusade against employment protections was undertaken by international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Commission, that exercised pressure on national governments to implement cuts in employment protections as a way to respond to high unemployment and dualism. This trend was exacerbated by the process of European integration, as market integration not accompanied by the integration of regulatory institutions and social policies fostered social dumping while destabilizing national systems of social protection (Barbier & Colomb, 2014; Bernaciak, 2015). As a result, over the 1980s and 1990s employment protections were weakened and non-standard forms of employment liberalized (see Figures 2.1 and

Figure 2.1: Strictness of regulations on the use of temporary contracts, 1985-2019



Source: OECD (2023). The strictness of regulations on the use of temporary contracts is the average of indicators that measure the restrictions to employers' usage of temporary contracts (e.g. the valid cases for the use of fixed term contracts, maximum number of contract renewal and temporary contracts maximum (cumulated) duration). The measure is constructed on a scale 0-6.

Figure 2.2: Strictness of regulations on individual and collective dismissals, 1985-2019



Source: OECD (2023). The strictness of employment protections for permanent contracts is the average of four indicators that measure the strictness of the dismissal regulation of workers in permanent jobs (procedural requirements, notice and severance pay, regulatory framework for unfair dismissal and enforcement of unfair dismissal regulation). The measure is constructed on a scale 0-6.

2.2), to the point that the old system of secure lifetime jobs with predictable advancement, regular working hours, and stable pay was declared dead (Cappelli, 1999, p. 17).

Deregulation further accelerated following the onset of the financial crisis, especially in those countries where austerity reforms furthered the deregulation of labour markets and challenged the very fundamentals of welfare systems (Hajighasemi, 2019). Reportedly, these reforms were implemented as part of the 'flexicurity' agenda aimed at overcoming labour market rigidities seen as the alleged cause of inefficiencies, unemployment and dualism, while granting employment security via the combination of flexible contractual arrangements with effective active labour market policies and comprehensive social security (European Commission, 2022). However, the flexicurity approach revealed to be biased in that it is based on an understanding of job stability as a mean of income protection which can be replaced with unemployment benefits and active labour market policies. This overlooks that a crucial function of employment protections is the provision to the employees of some countervailing powers to business prerogatives. Once said protections are lifted the countervailing power is eroded, with severe consequences for the protection of fundamental human rights (De Stefano, 2014). In fact, flexicurity reforms amounted to

a generalized deregulation that shifted the balance of power towards the employer (Heyes & Lewis, 2014; Kahn, 2010; De Stefano, 2014), transferring the burden of labour market adjustments on the employees that became exposed to the 'full force of global market competition' (Crouch, 2014).

> There is a 19-th century feel to zero-hours contracts. Those on zero-hours contracts earn less than those on staff or on fixed-hours contracts. They have no rights to sick pay. Holiday pay is often refused. And there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to show that if they turn down work when it is offered - even if it is to take a child for a medical appointment - they will be pigeon-holed as not suitably 'flexible'. The choice to refuse work is, in reality, no such thing. These were the sorts of labour market practices that gave rise to trade unions in the first place. Back then they had a name: exploitation (Elliot, 2013).

Jointly with the gradual erosion of employment protections, this trend contributed to spread both the perception and experience of insecurity across larger and larger sectors of the labour force. As a result, while precarity as always been the norm for those who stood at the margins of the workforce, today it affects many who were previously sheltered from it, including workers in formally open-ended contracts. As clearly explained by Bourdieu (1998),

> The existence of a large reserve army, which, because of the overproduction of graduates, is no longer restricted to the lowest levels of competence and technical qualification, helps to give all those in work the sense that they are in no way irreplaceable and that their work, their jobs, are in some way a privilege, a fragile, threatened privilege (Bourdieu, 1998).

Summing up, insecurity has become a structural feature of the post-Fordist model of production. Neoliberal globalization has increased labour market competition, while loosening employment protections and liberalizing atypical employment. This trend has increased the number of workers hired with atypical contracts, while undermining the job security of previously sheltered insiders. As unemployment and precarious employment reach high levels, insecurity ceases to be a prerogative of (generally unskilled and poorly educated) outsiders and labour commodification returns to grow (Frade & Darmon, 2005), so that 'the norm of insecurity, widely believed to have been overcome in the mid-20th century, is increasingly re-imposed' (Hyman & Gumbrell-McCormick, 2017, p. 542). The result is a shift away from dualism to generalized precarization, where precarity becomes a 'majority condition' (Doogan, 2015), 'a sword of Damocles threatening most employees,

even if in different ways and to different degrees' (Appay, 2010, p. 30). As anticipated by Bourdieu (1998), 'job insecurity is everywhere now'.

2.3 Precarity: conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement

Following Adcock and Collier (2001), when measuring latent and multidimensional concepts −such as precarity− three phases are of crucial importance. First, it is necessary to move from the background to the systematized concept, that is, to identify the relevant dimensions that compose it (conceptualization). Second, the systematized concept has to be operationalized through the development of indicators that will be used for the measurement (operationalization). Third, scores of cases must be obtained (measurement). The accuracy of this process is essential for granting the validity of the measurement and avoiding systematic measurement errors, i.e. to make sure that the scoring of cases obtained from the measurement process adequately reflects the concept the researcher attempts to measure.

Starting with conceptualization, precarity indicates the condition of insecurity and vulnerability that originates from an individual's labile ties with his or her occupation in particular and with the labour market more generally. Its key element is the instability in regard to one's employment, or labour market *vulnerability*. This conceptualization underlies most studies that investigate the political implications of labour market insecurity. In the insider-outsider literature, it is explicitly acknowledged that it is in the different vulnerability to unemployment what divides and lays out the potential for conflicting interests between insiders and outsiders (see Rueda 2005; and Lindvall and Rueda 2012).

Coming to operationalization and measurement, formal employment status has been traditionally considered as a sufficient indicator for labour market vulnerability. To put it simply, unemployed and atypically employed individuals are assumed to be exposed to risks from which permanent employees are sheltered, which renders the absence or temporary nature of an employment contract a sufficient indicator of precarity. However, the shift from dualism towards generalized precarization has challenged the validity of this premise.

First, as the guarantees associated to permanent contracts decline and the 'reserve army' of the unemployed and atypically employed grows, we can no longer assume that workers in (formally) permanent employment are and feel insulated from the risk of unemployment. This issue emerges clearly in those countries where open-ended contracts are a weak guarantee of security and employers have little need or incentive to rely on temporary contracts. This is the case for liberal regimes such as the United Kingdom (see

Rubery and Grimshaw, 2016) and the USA, where the doctrine of the 'employment at will' allows the employment relationship to be terminated at any time, by any party, and for any reason, including no reason whatsoever (Appay, 2010, p. 31). This renders the 'formalization' of precarity superfluous and contributes to keep the number of formally precarious employment low, although the recent rise in the incidence of zero-hours contracts in the United Kingdom indicates that even where employment protections are low, employers are willing to use atypical contracts to further undermine the SER and its social function (Rubery and Grimshaw, 2016). In these contexts, relying on formal employment status as an indicator of insecurity is especially misleading because, as permanent employment relationships are no longer a shelter against occupational uncertainty, it is likely to underestimate the phenomenon and to reduce comparability with countries where more rigid regulations of standard employment provide higher incentives for employers to resort to atypical contracts (Kallberg and Vallas, 2018; Booth et al., 2002).

Second, just like there exists a huge variation in the level of security attached to the standard (permanent and full-time) employment relationship, there also exist noticeable differences in the level of protection associated with non-standard forms of employment. Replacement costs, regulations of hiring and firing, entitlements to holiday pay, maternity leave, and sick leave, all shape the level of insecurity associated with atypical (and typical) employment, but vary greatly across sectors and countries. It follows that solely focusing on formal employment status to infer an individual's vulnerability to unemployment is misleading when not complemented by information on the rights attached to these kinds of contracts (Chauvin, 2007).

Finally, an operationalization of precarity based on formal employment status is misleading in that it assumes similarity in the condition of all those who hold the same kind of contracts, and thus similarity in how this condition is experienced and perceived. This assumption does no longer hold in the present context of flexible labour market, where formal employment is a poor indicator of job security. Imagine a young graduate in engineering, temporarily employed in a large firm and whose qualifications open good employment prospects. Imagine now a low-skilled, middle-aged manual worker without specialized education, temporarily employed in a small firm operating in the logistics sector. When solely accounting for formal employment status both individuals are to be classified as precarious, although their employment prospects are likely to differ markedly.

An empirical test of the unsuitability of static measures solely relying on formal employment status to capture precarity has been conducted by Lewchuk (2017). The author addresses the following puzzle: among scholars and in the media, it is widely agreed that labour markets have been radically restructured, the SER has declined, and precarious work has become the new norm. However, when looking at official labour market

statistics the increase in the number of workers employed with formally precarious contracts is modest. To make sense of this apparent contradiction, Lewchuk develops a novel Employment Precarity Index (EPI) measuring employment insecurity on the basis of 10 indicators of job quality. These include, alongside formal employment status, the right to paid sick leave, expectations concerning the continuity of the relationship with the employer, the number and stability of hours worked, and income fluctuations. Based on data collected from a sample of Canadian workers, the author shows that a substantial number of individuals declaring to be in permanent employment are actually in precarious employment relationships. It follows that solely relying on formal employment status (measured through survey questions such as *Are you working full-time or part-time? Is your job permanent or temporary? Are you self-employed?'*) is misleading in that it underestimates the incidence of precarious work and assigns to the 'secure' category individuals actually facing precarious conditions. Based on these findings, the author concludes that,

> while official labour market data treat permanency and temporariness as binary categories (you are either permanent or temporary), in reality there is a continuum between the two extremes. The transition that researchers argue has taken place in labour markets over the last few decades might better be described as a shift along this continuum [...]. To fully understand the changes that have taken place in labour markets, researchers need to focus on more than the increased prevalence of temporary employment. Researchers need to explore changes in the security of jobs that official labour market data, and workers themselves, continue to report as permanent.

In the light of these considerations, the shift of postindustrial labour markets away from dualism towards generalized precarization holds serious implications for the empirical study of precarity. Since labour market vulnerability has come to vary widely across individuals who formally share the same employment status, relying on formal employment status to operationalize and measure precarity is misleading. This calls for a novel operationalization and measurement strategy for precarity which allows to better capture labour market vulnerability in the present context.

2.4 Measuring precarity: a risk-based approach

Within the insider-outsider literature, a measurement approach that overcomes the narrow focus on formal employment status to distinguish labour market outsiders from insiders has already been developed by Schwander and Häusermann (2013). The authors build on the consideration that policy preferences and voting behaviour are not only influenced by

one's current employment condition but also and especially by one's expectations of future labour market risks, which are in turn dependent upon past experiences and employment prospects. Hence, they classify individuals as insiders or outsiders based on the rate of atypical employment and unemployment in the occupational category they belong to. They combine five classes (capital accumulators; socio-cultural professionals; mixed service functionaries; blue collar workers; low service workers), two genders, and two age groups (below and above 40 years old) to identify 17 occupational categories[1]. For each one of these categories they calculate the risk of unemployment and atypical employment by relying on data from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). Based on this measure of risk they create country- and welfare regime-specific *maps of dualization* built on both a dichotomous and continuous measurement of outsiderness. The former codes as outsiders those individuals that belong to occupational categories whose rate of unemployment and atypical employment is significantly higher than that of the workforce average, all the others being coded as insiders. The latter attributes a score of outsiderness to each category on the basis of the difference between its rate of unemployment and atypical employment and the average rate in the entire workforce. This procedure returns the group-specific deviation (in percentage points) from the workforce average, that is, the group-specific 'degree of outsiderness'.

As compared to the traditional operationalization based on formal employment status, this risk-based approach allows to capture an individual's *vulnerability* in the labour market, and it is therefore better suited to measure precarity. However, two fundamental issues remain unaddressed. First, collapsing different occupational categories such as skilled and unskilled workers fails to account for the different risk of unemployment and atypical employment that is today associated with routine and qualified employment. Hence, this measure groups together individuals that, in the present context, can be reasonably expected to face radically different levels of vulnerability to unemployment. Second, relying on the average level of unemployment and atypical employment in the country as reference criteria to establish the level of outsiderness (or precarity) does not allow for cross-country comparability and entails the risk of under-estimating the incidence of precarity in those countries where the average risk of unemployment and atypical employment is high relative to those where the level is comparatively low.

In the light of these considerations, I follow Schwander and Häusermann (2013) by developing a risk-based operationalization of precarity, but in the empirical measurement of such risk I develop an alternative strategy that allows to cope with those shortcomings while allowing for a more precise estimation of risk. It does so by avoiding comparisons

[1]The members of the fifth class (Capital Accumulators) are not further disaggregated on the basis of age and gender because its members are considered to be insiders by definition.

with the country average; by calculating the individual- (rather than group-) specific risk of unemployment and atypical employment; and by relying on a wider array of socio-demographic and employment-related factors in estimating the risk (see Appendix A, Table A.1).

Concerning socio-demographic factors, age, gender, migrant status, and skill level are accounted for based on the consideration that younger, female, poorly educated, and migrant workers face a higher risk of unemployment as compared to their older, male, highly educated, and native counterparts. Younger workers face higher entry barriers due to their lack of experience, and are especially likely to be hired through precarious employment arrangements in recently liberalized labour markets. Additionally, they are especially vulnerable to unemployment due to the super-cyclical character of youth unemployment, which results in their greater sensitivity to business cycle conditions (OECD 2006)[2]. Women still face discrimination that can affect hiring decisions and promotions, while also disproportionately bearing care-giving responsibilities in a context of insufficiently family-friendly policies; coherently, across OECD countries unemployment rates are higher for women, who are also more likely to be employed part-time and, to a lesser extent, with temporary contracts. Migrants face unique challenges that undermine employment opportunities and make it more difficult to achieve stable and high quality employment, such as language barriers and legal restrictions on employment. Finally, in globalized economies low skilled individuals in both offshorable and not offshorable occupations face a higher risk of unemployment as compared to highly skilled workers, due to the higher level of competition for their jobs from both within and outside national borders (Dancygier and Walter, 2015).

Concerning employment-related factors, occupation type, sector of employment, professional status, and firm size are accounted for because of their impact on an individual's vulnerability in the labour market. As for occupation and sector of employment, in the present context of increasingly integrated markets, labour automation, and intensified migration, individuals employed in offshorable industries, performing jobs that can be easily digitized, or facing migrants' competition face a larger likelihood of unemployment or precarious employment than workers in sectors and occupations that are relatively sheltered from these risks (Blinder, 2009; Dancygier and Walter, 2015). The size of the workplace matters because larger firms have more resources they can employ to weather economic downturns and provide stability, which grants to their employees higher security as compared to employees in smaller establishments that are more susceptible to market fluctuations and financial challenges. Finally, as compared to self-employed workers, de-

[2]Compared to adult workers, young workers face a higher risk of job loss in times of poor macroeconomic performance due to the lower costs associated with their dismissal (Görlich, 2013)

pendent employees benefit from legal protections but lack control over their jobs and face risks associated with downsizing, restructuring, or changes in company policies.

In sum, several socio-demographic and employment-related factors concur in shaping an individual's vulnerability in the labour market, that is, an individual's exposure to precarity. Hence, these factors serve as explanatory variables in binomial logistic regression models that allow to estimate the probability that an individual i is precarious ($y_i = 1$ if i is either unemployed, involuntarily inactive, or in a formally precarious employment relationship) as opposed to not precarious ($y_i = 0$). Formally, for any individual i resident in country c,

$$Pr(y_{ic} = 1) = logit(\beta_{0c} + \beta_{1c} \cdot \text{age}_i + \beta_{2c} \cdot \text{gender}_i + \beta_{3c} \cdot \text{education}_i + \beta_{4c} \cdot \text{migrant}_i + \beta_{5c} \cdot \text{professional status}_i + \beta_{6c} \cdot \text{occupation}_i + \beta_{7c} \cdot \text{sector}_i + \beta_{8c} \cdot \text{firm size}_i) \quad (2.1)$$

Implementing model 2.1 returns regression estimates based on which individual-specific predicted probabilities of precarity can be calculated. In order to obtain reliable estimates, I rely on survey data from the European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), the largest comparative survey of European income and labour conditions which provides information from hundreds of thousands of European citizens, restricting the sample to individuals aged between 20 and 64 that, at the time of the survey, where either active workers, unemployed, or involuntarily inactive. Specifically, I rely on 2016 data from thirteen Western European countries comprising Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. This case selection allows to exemplify the method and is justified for validation purposes (see section 2.5), but the same procedure can be implemented on any combination of country-year according to the researcher's needs.

I implement model 2.1 following a Bayesian approach that allows for the estimation of the entire posterior distribution of the parameters. Using the R interface of Stan (Carpenter et al., 2017), I run each model for 1000 iterations in 4 chains where the first 750 iterations are discarded, procedure that returns a distribution of 1000 estimates for each parameter. Since I use the default non-informative priors ($\beta_k \sim \text{Normal}(0, 2.5)$), the posterior distributions closely approximate the results obtained from a maximum likelihood estimation. However, the Bayesian approach offers the advantage that, based on the estimated coefficients $\hat{\beta}$, I can generate a distribution of 1000 posterior predicted probabilities of precarity for any individual for which the basic socio-demographic information used to estimate the model are available, including the respondents of time-series and cross-sectional survey data such that of the European Social Survey. This allows us to resort to this measurement strategy to estimate the impact of precarity on a wide array

of social and political variables, as it allows to account for the uncertainty associated to the calculation of probabilities in the second stage of the estimation process.

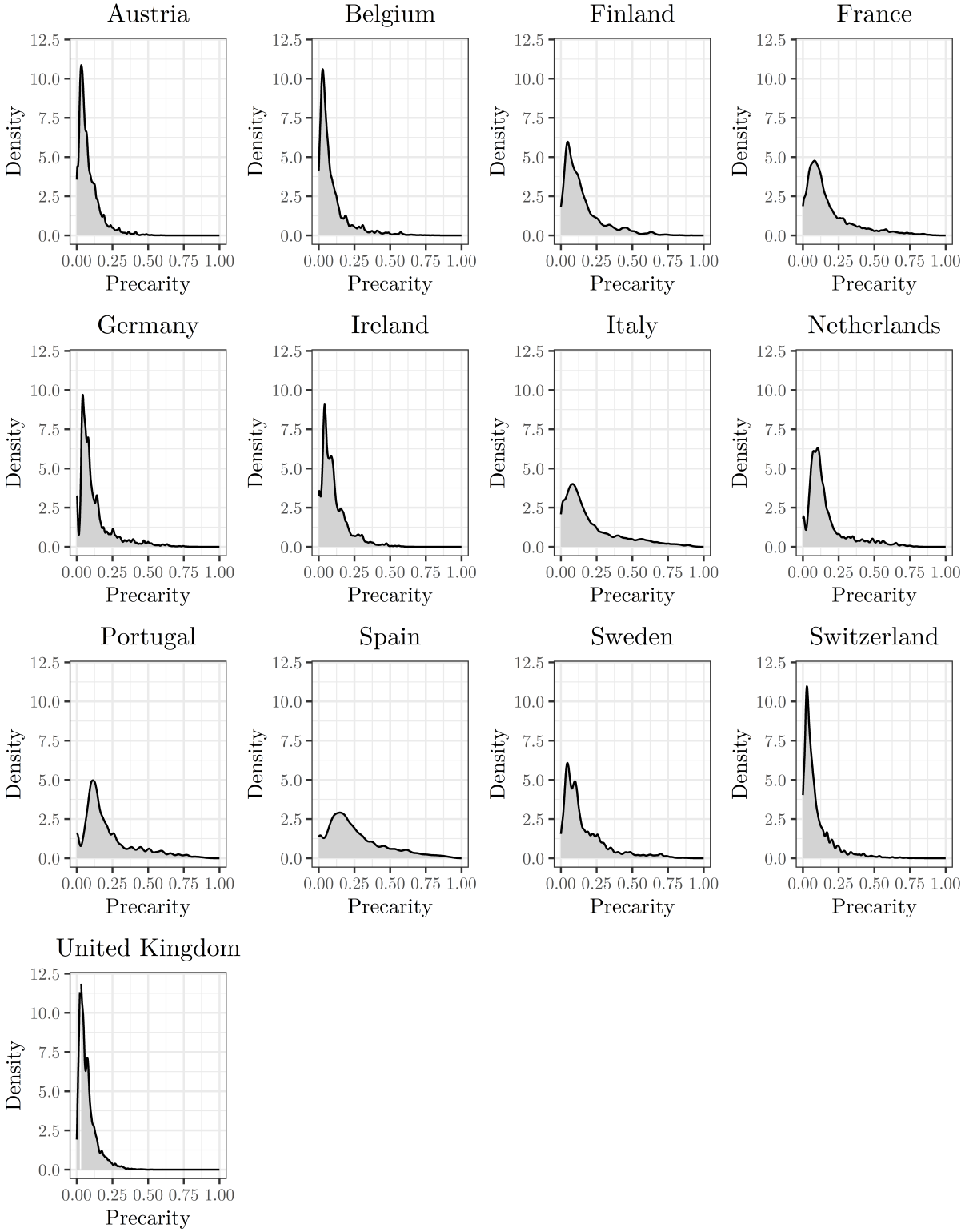
The regression results are presented in Appendix A, Tables A.2 and A.3. The Tables also report R squared and AUC-ROC values. The R-squared is a measure of how well the independent variables explain the variability of the dependent variable (i.e., precarity) which is obtained by comparing the observed variance in the response variable to the variance in the predictions generated by the model. A value close to 1 thus suggests that the model effectively explains the observed variation. This is the case across all models, as the R-squared consistently exceeds the 0.75 threshold. The AUC-ROC (Area Under the Receiver Operating Characteristic Curve) is commonly used in the context of binary classification models to measure a model's capability to discriminate between positive and negative classes. Once again, all models present high values that indicate a good predictive performance.

Figure 2.3 provides a visual display of the probability distributions. While probabilities tend to be negatively skewed across the whole sample, significant cross-country differences emerge. On the one end of the spectrum there are the Southern countries, that present a relatively high incidence of individuals facing medium to high risk. This is hardly surprising when considering these countries' unemployment and atypical employment rates, the latter driven by a combination of generous employment protections for standard employees and loose regulations for atypical employment, that respectively provide incentive and opportunity to employers for hiring and maintaining workers in non-standard employment. To the other end of the spectrum stands the United Kingdom, where the distribution is highly skewed and no individual faces a precarity risk higher than 60%. This is in line with the consideration that in liberal countries where employment protections for standard contracts are low employers have little or no incentive to resort to atypical contracts due to the flexibility associated with permanent employment.

2.5 Measurement validation

By moving beyond the snapshot of an individual's current employment status, the measurement strategy I propose in this chapter allows to locate individuals on the continuum between security and precarity. In this section, I assess the validity of this measurement by testing whether the scores of cases can be meaningfully interpreted in terms of the systematized concept that the indicator seeks to operationalize (see Adcock and Collier, 2001). Specifically, I assess whether the predicted probabilities of precarity are empirically associated with scores for other variables (the so-called criterion variables) which can be

Figure 2.3: Distribution of the probability of precarity by country, ESS data



Source: Predicted probabilities are calculated based on Bayesian models implemented on EU-LFS data from 2016. The curves display the probability distribution within each labour force, and should not be interpreted as a measure of the number of precarious individuals in each country.

considered direct measures of an individual's vulnerability in the labour market, namely, an individual's past, present, and prospected experience with unemployment and atypical employment.

I conduct this validity test by relying on survey data from the thirteen Western European countries included in the eight wave of the European Social Survey, namely Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. In this survey wave, respondents were addressed a series of questions concerning their past experiences with unemployment, current employment status, and expectations for future employment. Based on these questions, I construct three binary variables scoring 1 if the respondent (1) has have ever experienced a spell of unemployment lasting 12 months or more; (2) is unemployed or holds a contract of limited duration at the time of the survey; and (3) believes that unemployment in the upcoming 12 months is likely. In addition, I aggregate these variables to construct a composite indicator of vulnerability ranging from 0 to 3.

These four variables serve as dependent variables in four logistic regression models with fixed effects, having the probability of precarity as key explanatory variable. Models 1 and 2 investigate the relationship between precarity and, respectively, future and present vulnerability. Formally,

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot X_i + C_i + \epsilon_i \tag{2.2}$$

where y_i represents the unemployment vulnerability of individual i, β_0 is the general intercept representing the baseline vulnerability, β_1 is the coefficient for the key explanatory variable X_i (i.e., the probability of precarity of individual i), C_i accounts for the country fixed effects, and ϵ_i represents the random error.

Models 3 and 4 investigate the relationship between precarity and, respectively, past and overall unemployment vulnerability. These models have the same structure as Models 1 and 2, but include age as a control variable since young people, who are highly exposed to precarity, are unlikely to have experienced a long spell of unemployment due to demographic reasons. Formally,

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot X_i + \beta_2 \cdot \text{age}_i + C_i + \epsilon_i \tag{2.3}$$

I estimate each model following a Bayesian approach, running 4000 iterations in 4 chains where the first 2000 iterations are discarded and using the default prior on regression coefficients ($\beta_k \sim \text{Normal}(0, 2.5)$) after rescaling the explanatory variables. This procedure returns $w = 1, ..., 8000$ estimates for each parameter. Since precarity is measured as the probability to find oneself in unemployment or atypical employment given

a set of socio-demographic and contextual factors, each ESS respondent i is assigned $j = 1, ..., 1000$ posterior predicted probabilities of precarity. It follows that fitting 2.2 and 2.3 bayesianly yields a distribution of 1000 times 8000 ($J \cdot W$) estimates for each parameter. Averaging across these estimates as follows:

$$\hat{\hat{\beta}} = \frac{1}{J \cdot W} \sum \sum \hat{\beta_{jw}} \tag{2.4}$$

I obtain mean coefficient estimates that account for the uncertainty inherent in both stages of the analysis, namely the estimation of the predicted probabilities of precarity and of the effect of precarity on unemployment vulnerability. This procedure provides an accurate estimation of the true values of the parameters, allowing to draw robust and reliable conclusions.

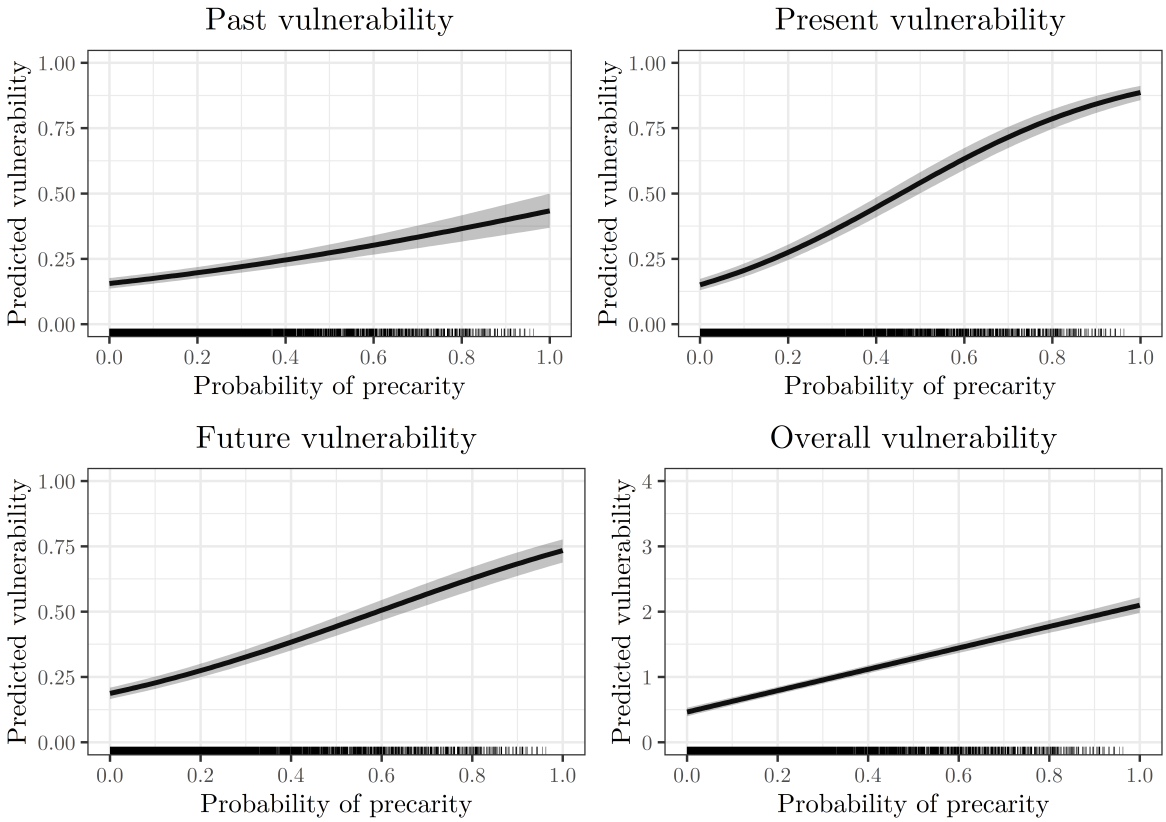
The results of the analysis are displayed in Table 2.1 and corroborate the validity of the proposed measurement strategy. Consistently across all models, the predicted probabilities of precarity are positively and significantly correlated with past, present, and future experience with unemployment. The size of the correlation is substantial: as shown in Figure 2.4, as the average individual's probability of precarity shifts from zero to one the predicted probability of having experienced a long spell of unemployment increases by 28 percentage points; of being currently unemployed or atypically employed by 74 percentage points; and of considering future unemployment likely by 55 percentage points.

Table 2.1: Bayesian logistic regressions of labour market vulnerability

	Future vulnerability	Present vulnerability	Past vulnerability	Overall vulnerability
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Precarity	2.49	3.80	1.43	1.63
	[2.46; 2.53]	[3.75; 3.85]	[1.38; 1.47]	[1.61; 1.66]
Age	—	—	0.02	0.01
			[0.02; 0.02]	[0.00; 0.01]
Constant	-2.07	-2.40	-3.66	
	[-2.08; -2.06]	[-2.41; -2.39]	[-3.68; -3.64]	[-0.02;0.00]
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	16,387	11,422	15,099	11,091

Notes: Table presents 95% credible intervals in parentheses.

Figure 2.4: Predicted probability of precarity and labour market vulnerability.



2.6 Discussion and conclusion

Precarity has always been a structural feature of capitalist labour markets, but over the XXth century the achievements of the labour movement mitigated it for workers standing within the standard employment relationship. The SER granted workers continuity and stability of income and employment and thus reduced vulnerability to the employer and to the vagaries of the market. Although not eradicated, precarity was reduced to a condition affecting a minority sector of the workforce, mainly composed of women, migrants, and seasonal workers employed in marginal and scarcely unionized sectors. Starting with the late 1970s, however, a series of economic and political developments caused a backlash towards labour re-commodification. The employment protections for workers in open-ended contracts declined, while the share of workers hired via non-standard employment arrangements (such as temporary, part-time, zero-hours, and on call contracts) increased. As a result, precarity has taken novel and extreme forms while becoming the new norm.

Being an individual's position in the labour market a crucial determinant of policy preferences and voting behaviour, the precarization of the workforce is bound to carry

severe political implications. However, investigating these implications poses a number of challenges, first and foremost tied to the difficulty of operationalizing the concept of precarity into a measurement suitable for quantitative analysis. The mainstream solution to this problem is to operate a dichotomous distinction between secure and precarious individuals based on their formal employment status, that is, conditionally on the permanency of their work contract. However, this approach is bound to suffer severe limitations in a context where permanent employment does no longer insulates from the risk of unemployment, and vulnerability varies widely across individual who formally hold the same kind of contract. The rigid operationalization of precarity as an 'in or out' condition has thus undergone severe criticisms, and alternative strategies have been developed by authors that rely on several indicators (among others: job tenure, perceived insecurity, opportunities for advancement, stability in working hours, and opportunities for work-life balance; see Antonucci et al., 2021 and Lewchuck, 2017) to capture the multidimensional nature of the precarity condition. However, relying on these nuanced measurements requires the implementation of original surveys, as information on such a wide array of indicators of job quality and stability are not available in publicly available voter studies. This renders the study of the political implications of precarity highly resources demanding; coherently, studies that employ this approach have relied on data from a limited number of countries and election years (Antonucci et al., 2018; 2023

In the light of these considerations, we are in need for an alternative approach to measuring precarity which is better suited for studying the political implications of precarization quantitatively. In this chapter, I develop such a novel approach: relying on a conceptualization of precarity as labour market vulnerability, I operationalize it as an individual's probability to face unemployment or precarious employment. I estimate these probabilities based on a set of socio-demographic (age, gender, sill level, migrant status) and employment-related (occupation type, sector of employment, professional status and firm size) factors that influence the security of an individual's position in the labour market, via the implementation of Bayesian logistic regression models on data from the European Labour Force Survey. In order to validate this approach, I provide empirical evidence that the predicted probabilities are good proxies of individuals' employment biographies.

As compared to the mainstream approach centered on formal employment status, this risk-based approach is better suited for capturing the latent concept precarity. It recognizes that precarity is not a binary condition but rather a matter of degree, and that a combination of several socio-demographic and employment-related factors contribute to determine an individuals position on the continuum between full security and precarity. Additionally, this approach is scarcely resource demanding, albeit computationally inten-

sive, and can be readily employed by scholars interested into the political implications of precarization.

As a final remark, scholars of precarity should bear in mind that the impact of precarity on policy preferences and voting behaviour is not deterministic, but rather conditional on whether it is accompanied by a subjective perception of insecurity and experienced as a limiting condition (see also Bauman, 2005; Kalleberg, 2009; De Stefano 2014; Antonucci, 2018; Valadas, 2021). Acknowledging this is crucial because, as noted by Herod and Lambert, 'if [workers] feel that their jobs are insecure and precarious this can cause them to behave in ways that workers who do not feel insecure do not, regardless of where they fit on any given matrix' (2016).

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THE PRECARIAT: UNVEILING POLICY PREFERENCES AND MOBILIZATION POTENTIAL

Abstract

Are precarious workers aware of their shared interests and can therefore be mobilized by political parties on this common ground? Answering this question is crucial to understand whether the precariat can become a politically cohesive and relevant subject. In this chapter, I address this issue by resorting to Bayesian inference techniques to investigate the impact of precarity on normative beliefs and policy preferences. The analysis, conducted on European Social Survey data from thirteen Western European democracies, reveals that precarious workers are indeed aware of their shared interests: not only does precarity increase support for policies that reduce labour market vulnerability, but this positive effect is neither conditional on financial hardship nor undermined by the harbouring of neoliberal beliefs. These results contradict widespread assumptions on the difficulties entailed in the mobilization of precarious workers and on the consequent political irrelevance of the precariat: although interest awareness does not necessarily translate into political cohesion, it does render collective mobilization possible.

Keywords: precarity; precariat; policy preferences; political mobilisation; false consciousness.

3.1 Introduction

Precarity, a condition of insecurity and vulnerability that originates from individuals' labile ties with their occupation and with the labour market, is on the rise in post-industrial societies. It is not a new phenomenon in capitalist economies, as the unprecedented degree of security that a majority of (Western) workers enjoyed during the thirty glorious years of the post-war economic boom was an historical exception and even then precarity remained the norm for female, migrant, and seasonal workers. However, in the present context of increasingly integrated global markets and labour automation the share of individuals employed via temporary and otherwise atypical work arrangements is growing and the employment protections associated with open-ended contracts are being loosened (see Kalleberg, 2009; Rubery et al., 2016). As a result, precarity is breaking out from its confinement in marginalized and not-unionized sectors, taking new and extreme forms while becoming the new norm (see Hardt and Negri, 2009).

The economic, societal, and psychological repercussions of this trend have been extensively investigated. Scholars agree on the detrimental impact that precarity has on mental as well as physical health (Benach et al., 2014; Rönnblad et al., 2019; Pförtner et al., 2022), job and life satisfaction (Bradley, 2021; Wang et al., 2022), and social integration (PEPSO, 2013). Differently, the political implications of precarization remain uncertain. As precarity evolves from minority condition to majority experience, the political and electoral weight of precarious workers increases. However, numerical growth is not a sufficient condition for precarious workers *as a group* to become a politically relevant, that is, for the *precariat* to emerge as a political subject. Political relevance requires political cohesion, which is conditional upon group members sharing some interests on the grounds of which they can be collectively mobilized (cfr. Huddy, 2013).

Among the members of the precariat, the existence of shared interests for public policies and social reforms that address the causes and consequences of unemployment vulnerability is hardly questionable. However, the awareness of these interests might be undermined by the heterogeneity which naturally follows from the group's numerical expansion, and by the vulnerability of its members to the development of a 'false consciousness' (cfr. Lukács, 1972). Hence, the question of whether and to what extent precarious workers are aware of their group-specific interests and thus open for mobilization remains open.

Answering this question is crucial to unveil the mobilization potential of the precariat, i.e. its inherent capacity to be collectively mobilized, and thus shed light on the political implications of precarization. This effort is also urgent on normative grounds. Historically, precarious workers have been under-represented in the political arena due to the scarce

electoral benefits entailed in their representation (Rueda, 2005). Unveiling the mobilization potential of the precariat can provide an incentive for political parties to take over their representation, and thus break a vicious cycle of economic and political inequality. In the light of these considerations, in this chapter I investigate whether precarity, net of socio-demographic and attitudinal factors, increases support for policies that defend the interests of precarious workers.

In what follows, I discuss the shared interests of precarious workers and the obstacles that might impede their recognition. I do so by relying on the literature on the political economy of redistribution, and on the concept of false consciousness as developed by Marxist scholars and recently revitalized by social psychologists aiming to explain the mechanisms that allow people to adapt to political systems and situations that harm their own interests. Relying on survey data from thirteen Western European democracies, I resort to Bayesian inference techniques to empirically investigate whether precarity is associated with support for policies and social reforms that reduce labour market vulnerability, and whether this association is conditional upon belief systems and financial hardship. I conclude by discussing the implications of the findings for the emergence of the precariat as a politically relevant subject.

3.2 Self-interest, policy preferences, and political voice

The relationship between self-interest, policy preferences, and political voice has been extensively investigated in the academic literature that aims to explain when and why citizens support and demand redistribution. Early scholars in this field adopted a quasi-deterministic approach, assuming a direct link between income, redistributive preferences, and vote choice. A famous example is Meltzer and Richard's rational theory of the size of government (1981), that directly infers a government's redistributive efforts from the position of the decisive voter in the income hierarchy. This theory assumes that individuals' preferences and demands for redistribution are directly determined by their income: individuals with income below the mean benefit from, and thus favour and demand, higher redistribution; individuals with above the mean income benefit from, and thus favour and demand, lower redistribution. It follows that under majority rule an increase in inequality should lead to an increase in redistribution via the widening of the gap between the mean income and the income of the decisive voter, an expectation also known as the redistribution hypothesis.

Despite its popularity, empirical evidence contradicts the predictions from this model (see Kenworthy and McCall, 2008). No statistically significant relationship between higher inequality and increasing redistribution exists, and '[h]istory reveals a Robin Hood para-

dox in which redistribution from rich to poor is least present when and where it seems most needed' (Lindert, 2004, p. 15). This contradiction is traced back to the simplicity of the premises on which the theory is based. First, in democratic regimes policy decisions do not simply reflect the preferences of the median voter, due to policy makers' permeability to affluent citizens and organized interests (see Gilens, 2005; Gilens, 2012; Hacker and Pierson, 2010; Acemoglu et al., 2015). Second, ideology and social preferences tend to trump self-interest in shaping attitudes towards redistribution (Fong, 2001), although income does retain a moderating effect (Kulin and Svallfors, 2013; Armingeon and Weisstanner, 2021). Third, and of great relevance here, individuals often mis-evaluate their own position in the income hierarchy (Kelley and Evans, 1995; Evans and Kelley, 2004; Cruces et al., 2013; Bublitz, 2016), and do not necessarily express their preferences through voting (Schäfer and Schwander, 2019).

The idea that individuals systematically fail to recognize their position in society, and hence their own interests, is far from novel and has been extensively used by socialist scholars to explain the failure of the working class in developing its revolutionary potential (see Fromm, 1984). In traditional Marxist theory, workers' awareness of their collective interests is crucial for political mobilization. However, this awareness is impeded by the pervasive influence that the dominant groups in society exert not only on the economic system, but also on education, media, culture, and religion; in Marx's own words, 'the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production' (1845-46). This idea of the permeability of the majority to the ideology of the dominant classes was further developed by Antonio Gramsci, who coined the notion of cultural hegemony to identify a regime of domination where the existing social order is accepted by the vast majority and maintained through ideological and cultural means. In this system, compliance from the dominated is ensured via the imposition of values and beliefs that prevent the disadvantaged groups in society from becoming aware of their real interests. The product of this ideological domination is the development of a false consciousness: 'a phenomenon whereby a class, in its actions, overlooks and thereby reproduces the social conditions and forms of its own oppression' (Lukács, 1971, p. 93).

The concept of false consciousness has been recently revitalized by social psychologists aiming to explain when and why people accept and embrace situations that harm their own interests. In this strand of literature, false consciousness is defined as 'the holding of false beliefs that are contrary to one's social interest and which thereby contribute to the disadvantaged position of the self or the group' (Jost, 1995, p. 397; see also Cunningham, 1987). There exist several, not mutually exclusive, types of false consciousness (Jost, 1995). The first is the failure of group members to perceive injustice and disadvantage,

overlooking their structural causes and crediting the procedural justice of the system. The second is fatalism, the belief that collective action is futile, embarrassing, or exhausting. The third is believing that one's position in the social hierarchy is deserved and justified in virtue of one's incapability of occupying a different, better, role (see also Jost et al., 2004). The fourth is the shifting of blame away from the system towards the self, other group members, or outsider scapegoats. The fifth is the identification with the oppressor, which is often accompanied by the discrimination of co-group members. The sixth and final type is the cognitive and/or behavioural resistance to change, the sticking to old ideas and behaviours that are no longer suitable or functional.

These different forms of false consciousness harm personal and group interests by contributing to political acquiescence or diverting the target of grievances. It follows that false consciousness, via the severing of the link between self-interest, policy preferences and political voice, quashes a group's political potential. Although it has been originally developed to explain the proletariat acquiescence with the capitalist system, this concept well applies to the study of the precariat and its mobilization potential.

3.3 The precariat: between self-interest and false consciousness

The term precarity indicates the condition of insecurity and vulnerability that originates from labile ties with one's occupation and with the labour market. Its key feature is the instability in regard to one's employment, or unemployment vulnerability. This vulnerability entails detrimental psychological and material consequences spanning from anxiety and unease to concrete difficulties in long-term planning. It follows that, despite their radically different backgrounds and life experiences, precarious workers can be expected to share an interest into policy measures that address or soften the causes and consequences of this vulnerability, decreasing insecurity within and outside the labour market.

Policies that meet this criterion and have the potential to improve the living conditions of the precariat can be grouped in two clusters. The former concerns the implementation of active labour market policies and the regulation of flexible employment, that increase precarious workers' chances to find employment and exit precarity traps. The latter concerns the state provision of benefits and services, particularly those targeted to the unemployed, that address the immediate consequences of vulnerability by providing means of welfare alternative to labour market participation. The more these benefits are universal, generous, and unconditional, the more their decommodifying effects and capacity to grant precarious workers with a minimum level of security. Coherently, Standing (2014) identifies in the introduction of an universal basic income scheme (UBI) the key

policy goal for the precariat: by providing a stable source of income that is not tied to employment status, this measure ensures the basic level of economic security and autonomy that lacks in the contemporary labour market.

In the light of these considerations, when adopting a deterministic understanding of the relationship between self-interest, policy preferences, and political voice we would expect precarity to be positively associated with support for both these policy clusters. This association is necessary for precarious workers to be successfully mobilized on the grounds of their shared status, and for the precariat to become a politically relevant subject. However, two main factors might mitigate this association. First, in the context of neoliberal capitalism precarious workers may adopt beliefs that undermine awareness of their interests. Second, this awareness might be conditional on precarity being accompanied by economic hardship. Jointly, these two factors question the political potential of the precariat *as a group*.

Concerning the former factor, the concept of cultural hegemony has been introduced in the previous section to identify a situation where the existing social order and power structures are maintained via the imposition of cultural and ideological norms. In the present context, this concept comes handy to interpret the impact of the neoliberal rhetoric on precarious workers' acquiescence towards the status quo.

First, the neoliberal rhetoric undermines precarious workers' awareness of their disadvantaged condition via the romanticization of the instability of precarious employment, depicted as 'fun and flexible' (see Malin and Chandler, 2017). The very vocabulary used by the advocates of employment protections retrenchment discloses this strategy, being characterized by the avoidance of the negatively charged term 'precarity' and the usage of the positively charged term 'flexibility' instead (Fleetwood, 2007; Appay, 2010). Second, by prizing the 'active' precariat, depicted as hardworking and resilient, and vilifying the 'idle' precariat, depicted as lazy and welfare dependent, it promotes division and antagonism and challenges the very grounds of in-group solidarity (Nielson, 2015, p.192). This 'divide and rule' strategy is best exemplified in the identification of employment protections for labour market insiders as the root cause of the disadvantaged condition of the outsiders, which frames precarity as a problem of too much, when it really is a problem of too little, power of labour (Rubery et al., 2018). Third, by depicting precarity as the result of individual failures, this rhetoric emphasizes self-responsibility, transforming precarity into an individual affair and shaking off its structural components (Mrozowicki and Trappmann, 2021, p. 234). The resulting acquiescence with the status quo is reinforced by the There Is No Alternative (TINA) rhetoric that, by presenting the dominant economic and political system as the only feasible option, disregards any alternative as not viable.

Plenty of qualitative studies expose precarious workers' permeability to these rhetorical claims (see Malin and Chandler, 2017; Kesisoglou et al., 2016; Örnebring, 2018). Exemplary is Vieira's (2021) analysis of the backlash of platform delivery couriers against the attempt of the Spanish Government to combat bogus self-employment, that sparked protests under the slogan *Sí soy autónomo* (Yes I am self-employed). The very psychological reactions that have been shown to accompany precarity reflect this permeability (Nielsen, 2015). These include withdrawal, which is most common among those on the edge of falling into precarity and involves the demonisation and vilification of the precariat that is seen as the cause, rather than the victim, of spreading precarity. Disavowal, which is most common among the upwardly aspiring members that embrace the rhetoric of self-responsibility and believe in the fairness of an allegedly meritocratic system that will reward their ability and dedication with security. And simple denial, although the sustainability of this strategy is ever more challenged as reports of precarization spread (p. 186). It follows that precarious workers' awareness of their collective interests might be undermined by the harbouring of beliefs that, by weakening the tie between self-interest and policy preferences, also erode the group's political potential.

The second obstacle to the development of interest awareness among the members of the precariat arises from the group heterogeneity. The members of this group differ on a wide array of dimensions, which creates differentials in the extent to which the condition of precarity is experienced and perceived as a limiting condition. Among these dimensions stands out income: albeit it is most widespread in low-paid sectors of the workforce, precarity also affects workers in better paid professions; in addition, precarious workers enjoy different access to household safety nets that can mitigate their vulnerability (see Häusermann et al., 2016). Among the better-off members of the precariat, financial soundness might weaken the association between precarity and preference for security-increasing policies. If awareness of shared interests is conditional on financial distress, the very existence of a collective consciousness around which the precariat as a group can be mobilized is questionable.

Summing up, precarious workers share an interest into state-sponsored policies and reforms that tackle the causes and consequences of their vulnerability. These include the promotion of labour market reforms countering the flexibilization trend; the investment into active labour market policies; the provision of unemployment benefits and other social transfers; and the lifting of conditionalities that reduce the decommodifying effects of these benefits. When adopting a deterministic understanding of the relationship between self-interest, policy preferences and political voice, we would expect precarity to be positively associated with support for these policies (hypothesis 0). However, awareness of these shared interests is potentially undermined by the exposure to the neoliberal

rhetoric and by the psychological reactions to insecurity that expose precarious workers to the development of a false consciousness, that is, to the 'harbouring of false beliefs that sustain one's own oppression' (Cunningham, 1987, p. 25). In addition, precarious workers' awareness of their collective interests might be conditional upon precarity being accompanied by financial hardship.

Against this background, competing hypotheses can be formulated. If, as suggested by a wealth of qualitative studies, precarious workers are vulnerable to the neoliberal rhetoric, we should observe a positive or null association between precarity and the harbouring of neoliberal beliefs (hypothesis 1a). We should also observe a negative moderating effect of those beliefs on the relationship between precarity and support for pro-precarious policies (hypothesis 2a). If, however, self-interest trumps neoliberal beliefs, we should observe a negative association between precarity and neoliberal beliefs (hypothesis 1b), and a positive or null moderating effect of those beliefs on the relationship between precarity and support for pro-precarious policies (hypothesis 2b). Evidence supporting hypotheses 1a and 2a would constitute evidence of false consciousness within this group. Evidence supporting hypotheses 1b and 2b would allow to draw the opposite conclusion. Furthermore, if precarious workers' awareness of their collective interests is in fact conditional upon precarity being accompanied by financial hardship, we should observe a positive moderating effect of economic hardship on the relationship between precarity and support for pro-precarious policies (hypothesis 3a). If, however, precarious workers are aware of their shared interests regardless of their momentary financial condition, the moderating effect should be negative or null (hypothesis 3b).

3.4 Data and operationalization

Empirically investigating the relationship between precarity, neoliberal beliefs, and policy preferences requires access to detailed information on each one of these three variables. I hence rely on survey data from the eight wave of the European Social Survey for the thirteen Western European countries for which information are available, namely Austria, Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. In this survey wave, conducted between August 2016 and December 2017, respondents were addressed a battery of questions targeted towards measuring welfare attitudes. These include items that allow capturing respondents' support for policies that protect the interests of precarious workers, as well as their harbouring of neoliberal beliefs. In what follows, I describe the variables used for the analysis; descriptive statistics are available in Appendix B, Table B.1.

Policy preferences

Four survey items allow to capture respondents' level of support towards policy measures that defend the interests of precarious workers. Based on these four items, I construct numeric variables where higher values indicate a higher level of support (for the distribution of these preferences by country, see Appendix B, Figure B.1).

First, respondents were asked to state to what extent it is the government's responsibility to ensure a reasonable standard of living to the unemployed. Responses range from 0 to 10, where 0 stands for 'not governments' responsibility at all', 10 for 'entirely government's responsibility'. This item is well suited for capturing respondents' support towards the state provision of unemployment benefits, that grant precarious workers a minimum level of income security in the eventuality of job loss.

Second, respondents were asked three questions concerning the preferred level of conditionality of these benefits. Specifically, they were asked which amount, if any, of unemployment benefits should be lost by a recipient who (1) refuses to regularly carry out unpaid work; (2) turns down a job offer on the grounds that it pays a lot less than his/her previous employment; and (3) turns down a job offer for which (s)he is overqualified. Responses ranged from 1 to 4, where 1 indicates that the recipient should lose all unemployment benefits, 4 that (s)he should keep them all. Respondents were randomly addressed this question as referred to either unemployed people in general, unemployed people aged 50 years or older, unemployed people aged between 20 and 25 years, and unemployed single parents with a 3-year-old child. Within each one of these four groups, responses to the three questions are consistent, with a Cronbach's alpha that exceeds the 0.7 threshold in all cases (respectively $\alpha = 0.755$, $\alpha = 0.746$, $\alpha = 0.745$, and $\alpha = 0.735$). Therefore, I average across the three items to obtain a conditionality index where higher values indicate a preference for unconditional benefits. Given their dependency on unemployment benefits and given that their bargaining power vis-à-vis the employers increases as conditionalities decrease, precarious workers have a direct interest in lowering conditionalities.

Third, respondents were asked to express their opinion on the statement 'the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels'. Responses range from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates strong agreement, 5 strong disagreement. This item is well suited for capturing respondents' attitudes towards the state provision of public services and transfers that, by performing a redistributive and social insurance function, benefit individuals who cannot count on continued market participation for their well-being.

Finally, respondents were asked their opinion towards the introduction of a basic income scheme. The scheme was described as having the following characteristics: the government pays everyone a monthly income to cover essential living costs; it replaces

many other social benefits; the purpose is to guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living; everyone receives the same amount regardless of whether or not they are working; people also keep the money they earn from work or other sources; this scheme is paid for by taxes. This proposal meets the criteria that Standing (2014) identifies as necessary to render an UBI the best tool for the emancipation of the precariat: basic in its amount; universal in the pool of its recipients; and not paternalistic in its modality (unconditional, paid in cash−not vouchers−and to individuals−not households).

Neoliberal beliefs

I measure the degree to which respondents harbour neoliberal beliefs by relying on an index derived from three survey items. These items report, on a scale from 1 to 5, respondents' level of agreement with the following statements: most unemployed people do not really try to find a job; social benefits and services make people lazy; social benefits and services place a too great strain on the economy. Averaging across the three items I obtain a numeric variable indicating the degree of the respondents' internalization of neoliberal beliefs (for the distribution of these beliefs by country, see Appendix B, Figure B.2).

Precarity

I conceptualize precarity as labour market vulnerability and operationalize it as the individual-specific probability (or risk) to be in a condition of unemployment or precarious employment. This operationalization departs from the traditional approach that operates a dichotomous distinction between precarious and secure individuals, using the absence or temporary nature of an employment contract as a sufficient indicator of precarity. This approach is based on the assumption that workers with ended contracts are largely insulated from the risk of unemployment, which is reasonably sound in a context of dual labour markets (see Rueda, 2005). However, the continued validity of this assumption has been put into question by the rising incidence of atypical employment arrangements and by the loosening of the protections associated to open-ended contracts. In this newly changed context, precarity has ceased to be a prerogative of workers in formally atypical employment, which renders formal employment status an insufficient indicator of labour market vulnerability.

In the light of these considerations, I develop a risk-based operationalization of precarity which is better suited for capturing labour market vulnerability in the present context. Namely, I rely on binomial logistic regression models to estimate the probability that an individual i is precarious (i.e., unemployed, involuntarily inactive, or involuntarily employed with a part-time, temporary, or otherwise atypical contract) as opposed to

not precarious based on a set of socio-demographic and employment-related factors that have been shown in the literature to shape an individual's opportunities within the labour market (see Appendix A, Table A.1). Demographic factors comprise age, gender, education level, and migrant status, that jointly determine an individual's 'employability'; employment-related factors comprise professional status, sector of employment, occupation type, and firm size, that jointly determine the extent to which an individual can be easily replaced by his employer, and the level of employment protections he or she is entitled to. Formally, for any individual i resident in country c,

$$Pr(y_{ic} = 1) = logit(\beta_{0c} + \beta_{1c} \cdot \text{age}_i + \beta_{2c} \cdot \text{gender}_i + \beta_{3c} \cdot \text{education}_i + \beta_{4c} \cdot \text{migrant}_i + \beta_{5c} \cdot \text{professional status}_i + \beta_{6c} \cdot \text{occupation}_i + \beta_{7c} \cdot \text{sector}_i + \beta_{8c} \cdot \text{firm size}_i) \quad (3.1)$$

I implement the model on data collected in 2016 by the European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), restricting the sample to respondents aged between 20 and 64 that, at the time of the survey, where either working, unemployed, or involuntarily inactive. I rely on LFS data because, being the largest comparative survey of European income and labour conditions with several thousands observations per country-year, it provides sufficient statistical power to obtain reliable probability estimates. I estimate the model for each country separately because the strictness of employment protection legislation, the overall incidence of unemployment and atypical employment, and the extent to which precarious employment is as a 'stepping stone' towards permanent employment or a precarity trap' are context-dependent.

I run the analysis following a Bayesian approach using the R interface of Stan (Carpenter et al., 2017). I run 1000 iterations in 4 chains discarding the first 750 iterations. This procedure yields a posterior distribution of 1000 estimates for each parameter. Since I use the default non-informative priors ($\beta_k \sim \text{Normal}(0, 2.5)$), the posterior distribution closely approximates the results obtained from a maximum likelihood estimation. However, the Bayesian approach offers the advantage that, based on the estimated coefficients $\hat{\beta}$ (available in Appendix A, Tables A.2 and A.3), I can generate a distribution of 1000 posterior predicted probabilities of precarity for any respondent in any dataset containing information on the independent variables used to estimate the model. This allows to incorporate in the European Social Survey dataset both the predictions and the related uncertainty, which can be accounted for in the second stage of the estimation process (for an in-depth discussion, see analysis section).

The distribution of the posterior predicted probabilities within the ESS sample is displayed in Figure 3.1. While probabilities tend to be negatively skewed across the whole sample, significant cross-country differences emerge. On the one end of the spectrum are

Southern countries, that display a relatively high incidence of individuals facing medium to high probability of precarity. This is hardly surprising when considering these countries' high unemployment and atypical employment rates, the latter driven by a combination of generous employment protections for standard employees and liberalized atypical employment, that respectively provide incentive and opportunity to employers for hiring and maintaining workers in non-standard employment. To the other end of the spectrum stands the United Kingdom, where the distribution is most skewed and no individual faces a probability higher than 60%. This is in line with considerations that in liberal market economies where employment protections for standard contracts are low, employers have little or no incentive to resort to atypical contracts due to the flexibility associated with permanent employment (Rubery and Grimshaw, 2016).

Economic hardship

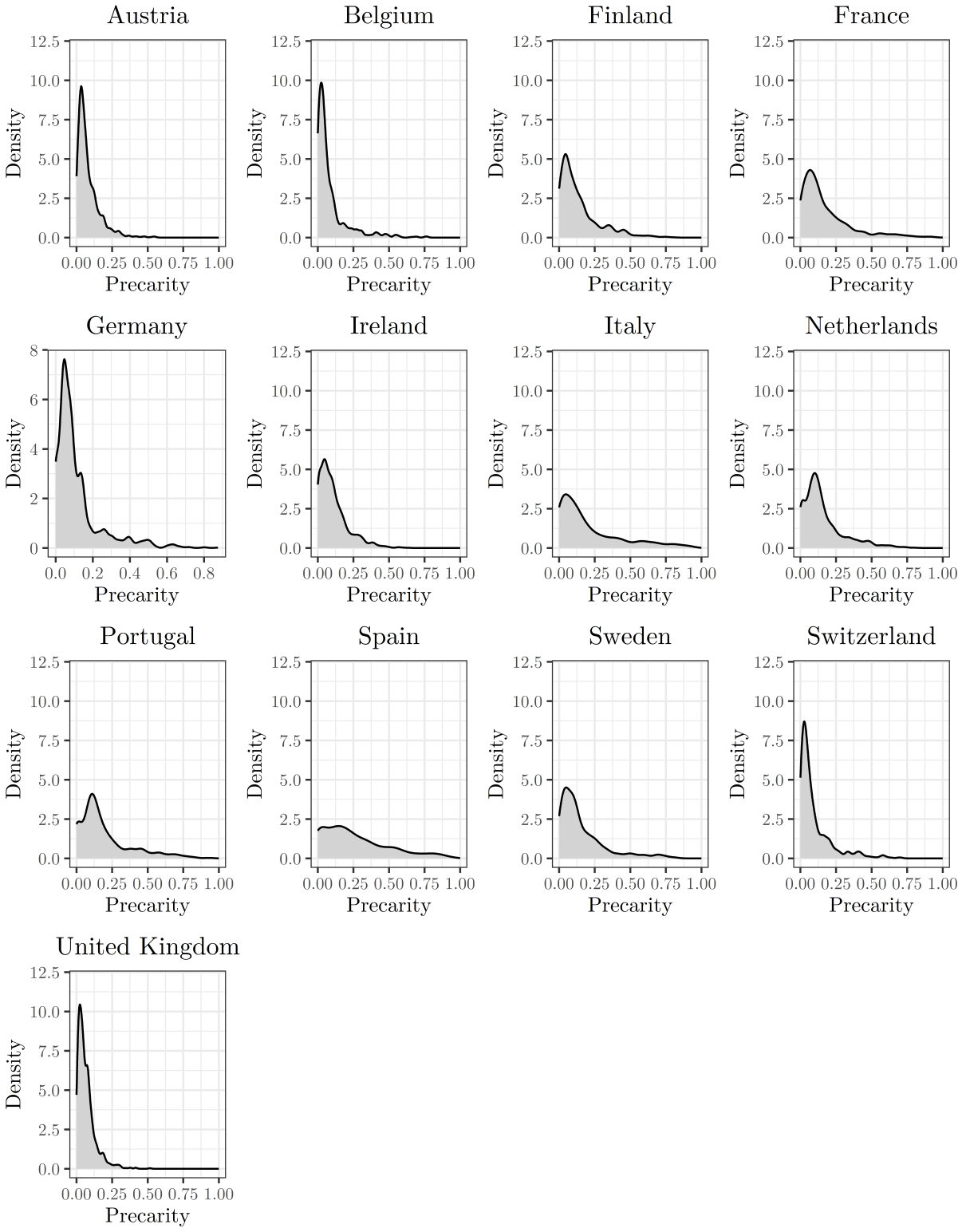
Information on respondents' economic hardship is retrieved from a question asking respondents their feeling about their household's income; available responses are 'Living comfortably on present income', 'Coping on present income, 'Difficult on present income', 'Very difficult on present income'. I turn this item into a numeric variable, with higher values indicating higher hardship.

Control variables

To isolate the relationship between precarity and policy preferences, as well as the moderating impact of neoliberal beliefs and economic hardship on this relationship, a set of socio-demographic and attitudinal variables must be controlled for. As for socio-demographic variables, age, gender, education level, and union membership are kept constant by virtue of their well-established correlation with precarity and policy preferences. As for attitudinal variables, I control for respondents' left-right ideology, concern for fairness as a personality trait, social trust, and trust in politicians.

Ideology is measured based on respondents' self-declared positioning on an 11 points left-right scale, where higher values indicate a right-leaning ideology. Concern for fairness as a personality trait is measured based on the degree to which the respondent declared to be a person who thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally and believes that everyone should have equal opportunities in life. These variables are controlled for due to the the well-established correlation between support for welfare state measures, left wing ideology, and equity concerns. Respondents' trust in politicians and social trust are measured on a scale from 0 to 10, where higher values indicate higher trust. Social trust is retrieved from an item asking whether the respondent believes that most people can be trusted or rather that you can't be too careful in dealing with people.

Figure 3.1: Distribution of the probability of precarity by country, ESS data



Source: Predicted probabilities are calculated for respondents of the eight wave of the European Social Survey based on Bayesian models implemented on European Union labour Force Survey data from 2016. The curves display the probability distribution within the labour force, and should not be interpreted as a measure of the number of precarious individuals in each country.

The reasoning behind the inclusion of these controls is based on the quality of government theory (Olsen and O'Connor, 1998), following which citizens' support of the welfare state is influenced by their trust that taxation will be handled in a fair, uncurrupted, transparent, non-discriminatory, impartial and competent manner by policy makers, and that other members of society will not free ride.

3.5 Analysis and results

In this section, I investigate empirically whether precarious workers are aware of the interests they share by virtue of their precarious condition. To reiterate, in order to state that awareness exists observing a positive association between precarity and support for policies that reduce insecurity is a necessary yet not sufficient condition. For the precariat *as a group* to be considered aware of its interests it is also important to investigate (1) whether and to what extent this group is permeable to the neoliberal rhetoric and hence to the development of a false consciousness; and (2) whether and to what extent interest awareness is conditional on economic hardship.

Concerning the impact of neoliberal beliefs and economic hardship on policy preferences, they can be reasonably expected to respectively decrease and increase support for policies and social reforms that protect the interests of precarious workers. I corroborate this expectation running a series of ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression models with fixed effects, including neoliberal beliefs and economic hardship among the explanatory variables. The models estimate their effect on support for a strong state responsibility in aiding the unemployed (Model 1); low conditionalities to be attached to unemployment benefits (Model 2); redistribution (Model 3); and the introduction of a basic income scheme (Model 4). Formally,

$$\begin{aligned} y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \text{Neoliberal beliefs}_i + \beta_2 \cdot \text{Economic hardship}_i \\ + \beta_3 \cdot X_{3i} + ... + \beta_k \cdot X_{ki} + C_i + \epsilon_i \end{aligned} \tag{3.2}$$

where y_i is the outcome variable (policy support), β_0 the general intercept, X_3 to X_k the controls, β_1 to β_k the slopes of the explanatory variables, C_i are country fixed effects, and ϵ_i the random error. In the sake of consistency with the following analysis, I implement the models following a Bayesian approach. The results are reported in Table 3.1, that presents mean regression estimates and 95% credible intervals.

In line with the expectations, harbouring neoliberal beliefs decreases support for policies defending the interests of precarious workers, while economic hardship increases it. The effect of right wing ideology is negative, while the effects of equity concerns and social

trust are positive albeit falling short of statistical significance in Model 2 (equity concerns) and in Models 3 and 4 (social trust). Interestingly, trust in politicians decreases rather than increases support for redistribution, which contradicts the expectations drawn from the quality of government theory.

Table 3.1: Bayesian logistic regressions of policy preferences (Models 1 to 4)

	Support towards..			
	Unemployment benefits	Unconditional benefits	Redistribution	UBI
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Neoliberal beliefs	-0.75 [-0.79; -0.71]	-0.27 [-0.29; -0.25]	-0.11 [-0.13; -0.09]	-0.10 [-0.11; -0.08]
Economic hardship	0.16 [0.11; 0.20]	0.06 [0.04; 0.08]	0.14 [0.12; 0.16]	0.10 [0.08; 0.12]
Age	0.00 [0.00; 0.01]	-0.00 [-0.00; -0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	-0.00 [-0.00; -0.00]
Gender: Female	0.02 [-0.04; 0.09]	-0.06 [-0.08; -0.03]	0.08 [0.05; 0.11]	-0.05 [-0.08; -0.02]
Education	-0.07 [-0.09; -0.05]	0.01 [0.00; 0.02]	-0.05 [-0.06; -0.04]	0.00 [-0.01; 0.01]
Union member	0.02 [-0.06; 0.10]	0.03 [-0.00; 0.06]	0.16 [0.12; 0.20]	-0.00 [-0.04; 0.03]
Ideology	-0.07 [-0.09; -0.05]	-0.03 [-0.03; -0.02]	-0.09 [-0.09; -0.08]	-0.05 [-0.05; -0.04]
Equity concerns	0.24 [0.21; 0.27]	0.01 [-0.00; 0.03]	0.12 [0.11; 0.14]	0.06 [0.04; 0.07]
Social trust	0.02 [0.01; 0.04]	0.01 [0.00; 0.02]	-0.00 [-0.01; 0.01]	-0.00 [-0.01; 0.01]
Trust politicians	0.03 [0.01; 0.04]	0.00 [-0.01; 0.01]	-0.03 [-0.03; -0.02]	0.02 [0.01; 0.02]
Constant	8.66 [8.31; 9.00]	3.53 [3.38; 3.68]	3.91 [3.74; 4.09]	2.60 [2.46; 2.74]
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	14,239	13,631	14,222	13,813

Note: Table presents mean estimates and 95% credible intervals in parentheses

After corroborating the expectations concerning the impact of neoliberal beliefs and economic hardship on policy preferences, I factor precarity into the analysis. I estimate four Bayesian OLS models with policy preferences as dependent variables and precarity as independent variable (Models 5 to 8). This allows testing whether precarity has in fact a positive effect on support for policies that protect precarious workers' interests, hence corroborating or disproving Hypothesis 0. Formally,

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot X_i + \beta_2 \cdot Z_{1i} + ... + \beta_{n+1} \cdot Z_{ni} + C_i + \epsilon_i \tag{3.3}$$

where y_i is the support for the policy by individual i, β_0 is the general intercept representing the baseline level of support, β_1 is the coefficient for the key explanatory variable X_i (precarity), Z_1 to Z_n are the remaining explanatory variables, β_2 to β_{n+1} their slopes, C_i the country fixed effects, and ϵ_i the random error.

I estimate this model following a Bayesian approach, running 2000 iterations in 4 chains where the first 1000 iterations are discarded and using the default prior on regression coefficients ($\beta_k \sim \text{Normal}(0, 2.5)$) after rescaling the explanatory variables. This procedure returns $w = 1, ..., 4000$ estimates for each parameter. However, as discussed in the operationalization section, precarity is measured as the individual-specific probability to be in unemployment or atypical employment. For each ESS respondent i, this probability is calculated based on the estimates from the Bayesian logistic regression model described in equation 3.1. This procedure returns $j = 1, ..., 1000$ posterior predicted probabilities of precarity for each respondent. It follows that fitting Model 3.3 Bayesianly for each posterior predicted probability of precarity j yields a distribution of 1000 times 4000 ($J \cdot W$) estimates for each parameter. Averaging across these estimates as follows:

$$\hat{\hat{\beta}} = \frac{1}{J \cdot W} \sum \sum \hat{\beta_{jw}} \tag{3.4}$$

I obtain mean coefficient estimates that account for the uncertainty inherent in both stages of the analysis, namely the estimation of the predicted probabilities of precarity and of the effect of precarity on policy preferences. The results are presented in Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2.

The results are presented in Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2. Table 3.2 presents mean regression estimates and shows that, across all models, the effect of precarity is positive and statistically significant. This result corroborates hypothesis 0 by showing that precarity does increase support for policies and state reforms that decrease vulnerability within and outside the labour market. Figure 3.2 provides a visual display of the magnitude of this effect. It shows that the effect of precarity is the largest on the support for a state responsibility for the unemployed, arguably the proposition that is the most straightforwardly beneficial for individuals vulnerable to unemployment. The effect is the weakest, albeit still positive and significant, on the support for unconditional unemployment benefits.

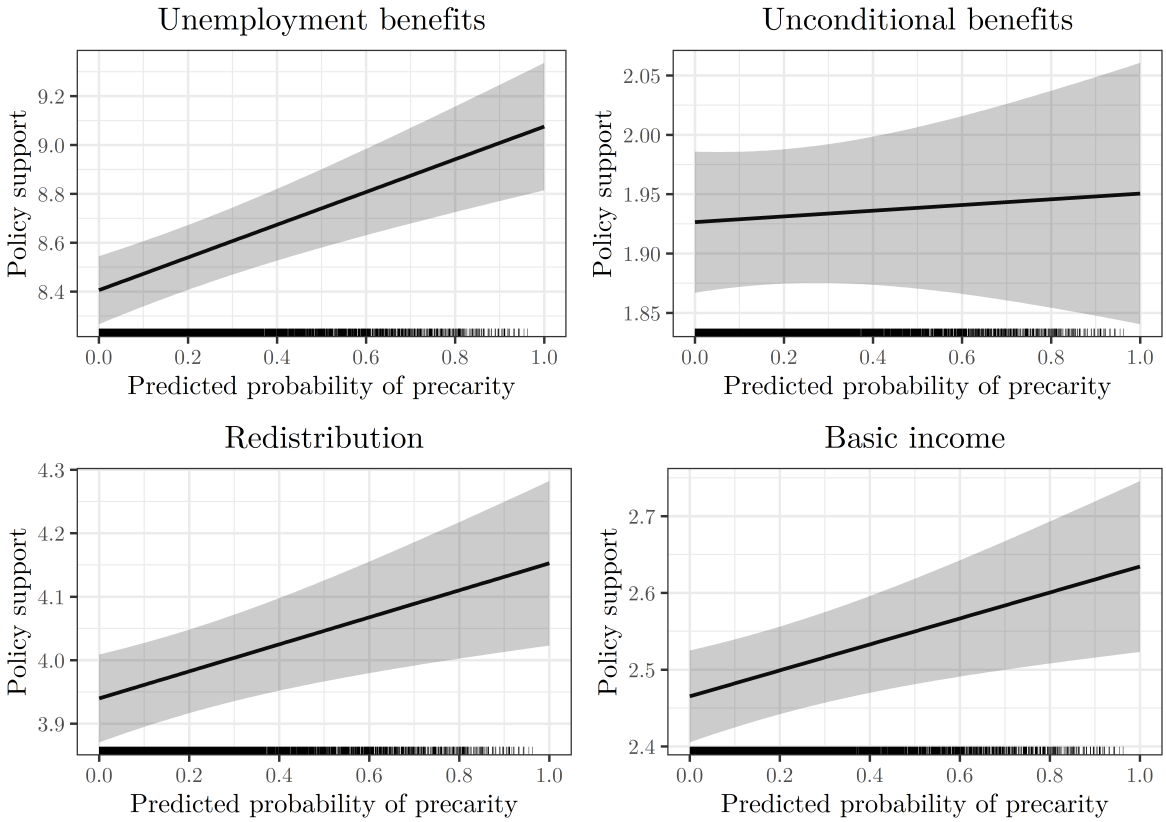
After unveiling the positive relationship between precarity and support for pro-precarious policies, I proceed testing whether and how harbouring neoliberal beliefs intervene in this relationship. First, I investigate the relationship between precarity and neoliberal beliefs

Table 3.2: Bayesian logistic regressions of policy preferences (Models 5 to 8)

	Support towards..			
	Unemployment benefits	Unconditional benefits	Redistribution	UBI
	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Precarity	0.67 [0.64; 0.70]	0.02 [0.01; 0.04]	0.21 [0.29; 0.23]	0.17 [0.16; 0.18]
Neoliberal beliefs	-0.74 [-0.75; -0.74]	-0.27 [-0.27; -0.27]	-0.11 [-0.11; -0.11]	-0.09 [-0.09; -0.09]
Economic hardship	0.15 [0.15; 0.15]	0.06 [0.06; 0.06]	0.14 [0.14; 0.14]	0.10 [0.10; 0.10]
Age	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]
Gender: Female	-0.01 [-0.01 ; -0.01]	-0.06 [-0.06; -0.06]	0.07 [0.07; 0.07]	-0.06 [-0.06; -0.06]
Education	-0.06 [-0.06; -0.06]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	-0.05 [-0.05; -0.05]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]
Union member	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]	0.03 [0.03; 0.03]	0.16 [0.16; 0.16]	0.00 [0.00;0.00]
Ideology	-0.07 [-0.07; -0.07]	-0.03 [-0.03; -0.03]	-0.09 [-0.09; -0.09]	-0.05 [-0.05; -0.05]
Equity concerns	0.24 [0.24; 0.24]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	0.12 [0.12; 0.12]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Social trust	0.02 [0.02; 0.02]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]
Trust politicians	0.03 [0.03; 0.03]	0.00 [0.00 ; 0.00]	-0.03 [-0.03; -0.03]	0.02 [0.02; 0.02]
Constant	8.41 [8.39; 8.42]	3.52 [3.52; 3.53]	3.84 [3.83; 3.85]	2.54 [2.53; 2.54]
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	14,239	13,631	14,222	13,813

Note: Table presents mean estimates and 95% credible intervals in parentheses

Figure 3.2: Effect of precarity on policy preferences



by implementing a OLS model (Model 9) with the same structure and procedure described in equations (3.3) and (3.4), using neoliberal beliefs as dependent variable and precarity as key explanatory variable. Second, I test whether and how harbouring neoliberal beliefs moderates the relationship between precarity and policy preferences, replicating models 5 to 8 while adding an interaction term between precarity and neoliberal beliefs (Models 10 to 13).

The results of the analysis are displayed in Table 3.3 and Figure 3.3. As it emerges from the negative coefficient of precarity in the second column of Table 3.3, precarity decreases the propensity to harbour neoliberal beliefs. This result counters the hypothesis that precarious workers are especially vulnerable to the neoliberal rhetoric of self-responsibility (hypothesis 1a) and corroborates hypothesis 1b, which posits that precarity partially shelters individuals from embracing beliefs that ultimately hamper their own interests. Concerning the moderating effect of these beliefs, the interaction term in Models 10 to 13 is consistently positive and significant, thereby corroborating hypothesis 2b. To ease the interpretation of this result, Figure 3.3 displays the effect of precarity on support for pro-precarious policy preferences separately for individuals who embrace and reject neoliberal statements. Among individuals that do not harbour neoliberal beliefs,

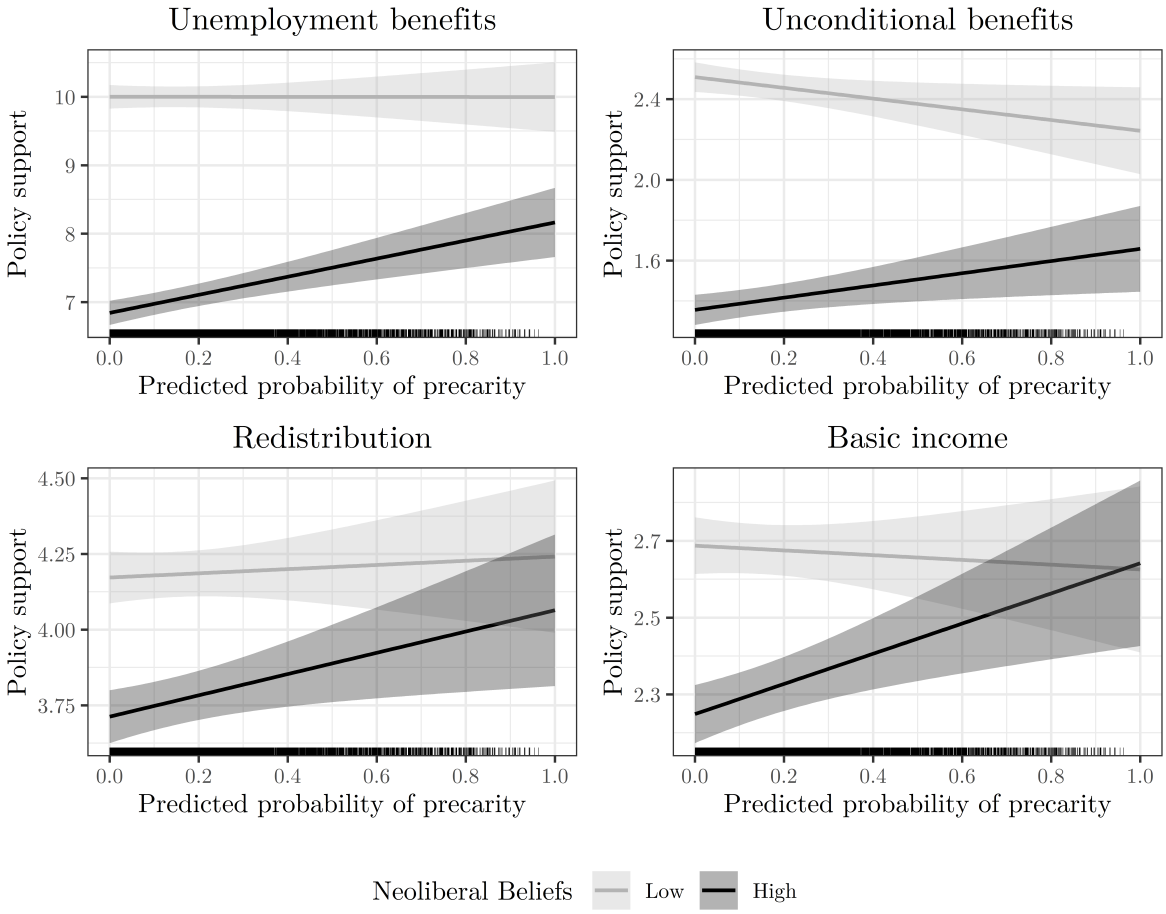
the effect is non-significant and support for those policies is consistently high regardless of precarious status. However, the effect of precarity turns positive and statistically significant among individuals that harbour neoliberal beliefs, mitigating (Models 10 and 11) or even trumping (Models 12 and 13) their negative effect. Jointly, these results question the vulnerability of the members of the precariat to the development of a false consciousness and suggest the existence of interest awareness within the group.

Table 3.3: Bayesian logistic regressions of policy preferences (Models 9 to 13)

		Support towards..			
	Neoliberal beliefs	Unemployment benefits	Unconditional benefits	Redistribution	UBI
	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Precarity	-0.32 [-0.34; -0.32]	-0.34 [-0.40; -0.27]	-0.41 [-0.44; -0.38]	0.00 [-0.04; 0.04]	-0.18 [-0.21; -0.14]
Neoliberal beliefs	-0.79 [;]	-0.29 [-0.79 -0.79]	-0.11 [-0.29; -0.29]	-0.11 [-0.12; -0.11]	 [-0.11; -0.11]
Economic hardship	-0.05 [-0.05; -0.05]	0.15 [0.15; 0.15]	0.06 [0.06; 0.06]	0.14 [0.14; 0.14]	0.10 [0.10; 0.10]
Age	-0.01 [-0.01; -0.01]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]
Gender: Female	0.06 [0.06; 0.06]	-0.01 [-0.01; 0.00]	-0.06 [-0.06; -0.05]	0.07 [0.07; 0.07]	-0.06 [-0.06; -0.06]
Education	-0.08 [-0.08; -0.08]	-0.06 [-0.06; -0.06]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	-0.05 [-0.05; -0.05]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]
Union member	-0.04 [-0.04; -0.04]	0.02 [0.02; 0.02]	0.03 [0.03; 0.03]	0.16 [0.15; 0.16]	0.00 [-0.01; 0.00]
Ideology	0.10 [0.10; 0.10]	-0.07 [-0.07; -0.07]	-0.03 [-0.03; -0.03]	-0.09 [-0.09; -0.09]	-0.05 [-0.05; -0.05]
Equity concerns	-0.08 [-0.08; -0.08]	0.24 [0.24; 0.24]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	0.12 [0.12; 0.12]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Social trust	-0.04 [-0.04; -0.04]	0.02 [0.02; 0.02]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]
Trust politicians	-0.02 [-0.03; -0.02]	0.03 [0.03; 0.03]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	-0.03 [-0.03; -0.03]	0.02 [0.02; 0.02]
Precarity x beliefs		0.33 [0.31; 035]	0.14 [0.13; 0.15]	0.07 [0.06; 0.8]	0.11 [0.10; 0.12]
Constant	3.86 [3.86; 3.87]	8.55 [8.53; 8.57]	3.58 [3.58; 3.59]	3.87 [3.86; 3.88]	2.59 [2.58; 2.59]
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	14-284	14,239	13,631	14,222	13,813

Note: Table presents mean estimates and 95% credible intervals in parentheses

Figure 3.3: Effect of precarity on policy preferences, conditional on neoliberal beliefs



As third and final step of the analysis, I test whether the interest awareness of precarious workers is conditional on socio economic status. Specifically, I am interested in unveiling whether the positive effect of precarity on support for pro-precarious policy preferences is only present among those members of the precariat who face financial hardship, while vanishing among those who enjoy financial security. If this is in fact the case, we should observe a positive moderating effect of economic hardship on the relationship between precarity and support for pro-precarious policies (hypothesis 3a). If, however, precarious workers are aware of their shared interests regardless of their financial condition, the moderating effect should be negative or null (hypothesis 3b). I test these hypotheses by replicating Models 5 to 8, including an interaction term between economic hardship and precarity (Models 14 to 17).

The results of the analysis are displayed in Table 3.4 and Figure 3.4. Across all models, the interaction term is negative and statistically significant, which indicates that economic hardship *reduces* the positive effect of precarity on support for those policies and reforms.

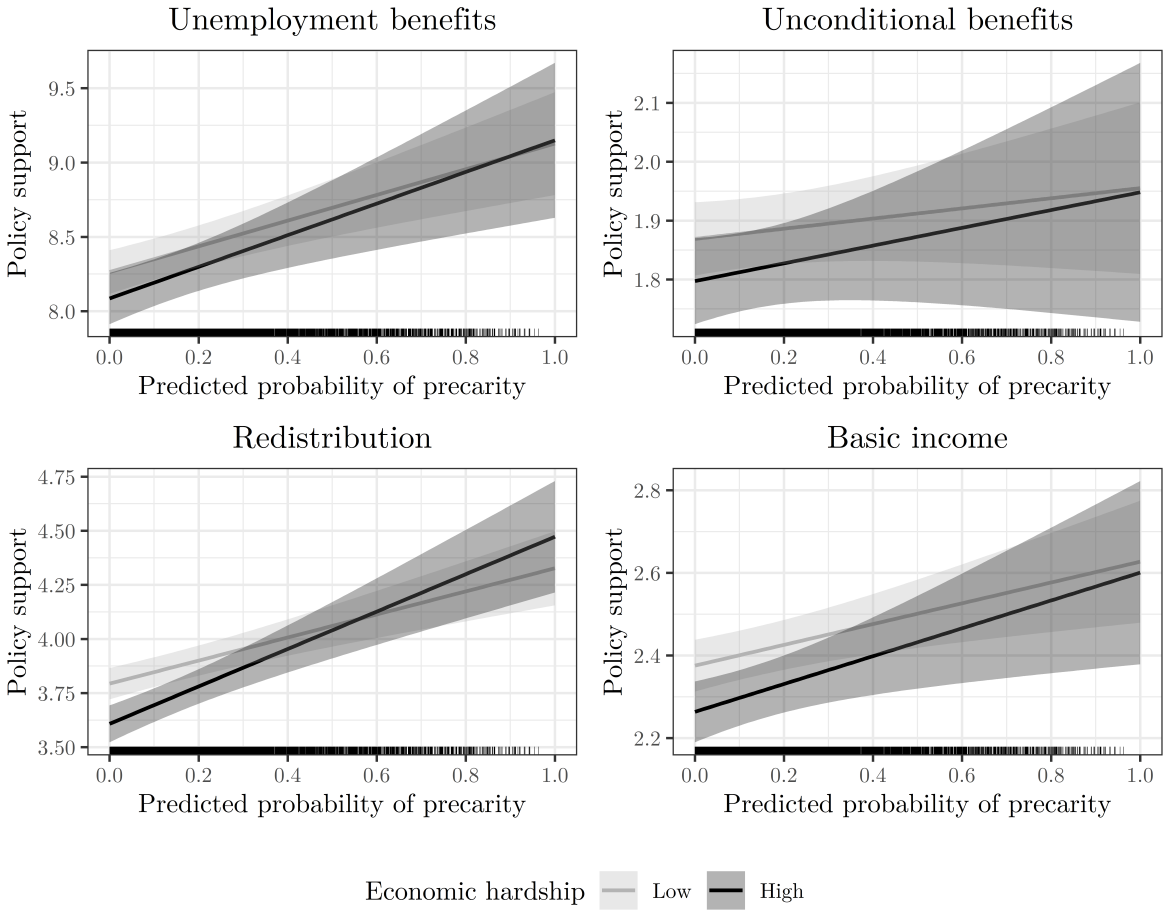
Figure 3.4 eases the interpretation of this result by displaying the effect of precarity on policy preferences among individuals who face and do not face economic hardship. Within both groups the effect is positive and significant, albeit stronger among the financially secure. This result corroborates hypothesis 3b: it counters the expectation that financial security may inhibit precarious workers' awareness of the interests they hold by virtue of their labour market condition, and suggests that the precariat could be effectively mobilized on the grounds of its members shared interests in spite of its heterogeneity.

Table 3.4: Bayesian logistic regressions of policy preferences (Models 14 to 17)

	Support towards..			
	Unemployment benefits	Unconditional benefits	Redistribution	UBI
	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Precarity	1.06 [1.00; 1.12]	0.15 [0.13; 0.17]	0.86 [0.83; 0.90]	0.34 [0.31; 0.36]
Neoliberal beliefs	-0.74 [-0.75; -0.74]	-0.27 [-0.27; -0.27]	-0.11 [-0.11; -0.11]	-0.9 [-0.9; -0.09]
Economic hardship	0.18 [0.17; 0.18]	0.07 [0.07; 0.07]	0.19 [0.18; 0.19]	0.11 [0.11; 0.11]
Age	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]
Gender: Female	-0.01 [-0.01; -0.01]	-0.06 [-0.06; -0.06]	0.07 [0.07; 0.07]	-0.06 [-0.06; -0.06]
Education	-0.06 [-0.06; -0.06]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	-0.05 [-0.05; -0.05]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]
Union member	0.02 [0.02; 0.02]	0.03 [0.03; 0.03]	0.15 [0.15; 0.16]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]
Ideology	-0.07 [-0.07; -0.07]	-0.03 [-0.03; -0.03]	-0.09 [-0.09; -0.09]	-0.05 [-0.05; -0.05]
Equity concerns	0.24 [0.24; 0.24]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	0.12 [0.12; 0.12]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Social trust	0.02 [0.02; 0.02]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]
Trust politicians	0.03 [0.03; 0.03]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	-0.03 [-0.03; -0.03]	0.02 [0.02; 0.02]
Precarity x Economic hardship	-0.20 [-0.23; -0.17]	-0.06 [-0.07; -0.05]	-0.33 [-0.35; -0.32]	-0.09 [-0.10; -0.08]
Constant	8.34 [8.33; 8.36]	3.50 [3.49; 3.51]	3.73 [3.72; 3.74]	2.51 [2.50; 2.52]
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	14,239	13,631	14,222	13,813

Note: Table presents mean estimates and 95% credible intervals in parentheses

Figure 3.4: Effect of precarity on policy preferences, conditional on economic hardship



3.6 Discussion and conclusion

A recurring theme in the literature about precarity is that precarious workers constitute a class in itself (or a probable/paper class) in that they share a set of everyday life experiences and material and social circumstances. To become politically relevant, they must evolve into a class for itself (or a real class) by developing awareness of their shared interests (see Standing, 2014; Neilson, 2015; Della Porta et al., 2015).

Consciousness of a commonality of interests was already present among the activists of the precariat movement in its early days. As it could be read in the call for action published by the Chainworkers collective on the eve of the 2005 MayDay parade against precarity,

> We demand social equality for all, the end of labour precarization and all forms of flexploitation, after two decades of labour market deregulation which

> have caused diffuse poverty and NOT reduced unemployment. We demand FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT for migrants and INCOME SECURITY FOR ALL as fundamental steps toward a truly social Europe (Chainworkers' call for action, as cited by Doerr & Mattoni, 2014).

However, whether and under what conditions this awareness is today present among the members of the precariat is a matter of debate, and it is questionable on two grounds. First, qualitative studies suggest that precarious workers are especially vulnerable to the development of a 'false consciousness' (cfr. Lukács, 1972) due to the harbouring of beliefs that obstacle the recognition of the structural causes of their condition and that encourage acquiescence with the status quo. Second, among the better-off members of the precariat interest awareness is plausibly undermined by the relative financial security that shelters them from the negative impact of unemployment vulnerability.

In this chapter, I contribute to shed light on this issue by investigating the policy preferences and normative beliefs of precarious workers. Relying on Bayesian inference techniques and on a novel operationalization of precarity, measured as an individual's vulnerability to unemployment or precarious employment, I investigate empirically the effect of precarity on the support for policies that reduce labour market vulnerability and on the propensity to harbour neoliberal beliefs. Additionally, I investigate whether interest awareness is undermined by the harbouring of those beliefs and conditional of financial hardship.

The results of the analysis show that, despite the obstacles that may impede precarious workers' awareness of their shared interests, precarity has a positive effect on support for policies that reduce vulnerability, a positive effect which is not undermined by the harbouring of neoliberal beliefs: not only are precarious workers less likely to believe the neoliberal mantra of self-responsibility, victim blaming and'there is no alternative', but among those who do, the positive effect of precarity on policy preferences is larger and trumps the negative effect of those beliefs on support for pro-precarious policies. What is more, the positive effect of precarity is not conditional on economic hardship, which indicates the existence of interest awareness even among the better off-members of the precariat.

By exposing the interest awareness of precarious workers, this chapter sheds some light on the mobilization potential of the precariat. Countering widespread assumption concerning the difficulties entailed in mobilizing a highly heterogeneous and vulnerable social group, it reveals that that there exists a common ground on which its members can be collectively mobilized. This finding is crucial to shed light on the political implications of spreading precarity in post-industrial societies. However, further research is needed to understand whether the mobilization of precarious workers is not only feasible but

also profitable for vote maximizing parties, and therefore likely to occur. Besides the hypothesized lack of interest awareness, the representation of precarious workers has long been considered hardly beneficial because of their scarce political engagement (see Reuda, 2005). Unveiling whether the precariat can emerge as a political subject thus requires shedding light on whether precarious workers participate in politics and are likely to respond to parties' mobilization efforts.

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PRECARITY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: MOBILIZATION OR WITHDRAWAL?

Abstract

How does occupational precarity affect political participation? Considering the negative effect of unemployment and atypical employment on turnout, many have suggested that precarity depresses participation by reducing the availability of the resources necessary for political engagement. However, precarity is also a source of grievances that increases the stakes of participating and may thus foster political engagement. In this chapter, I argue that the conclusion of a negative effect of precarity on participation results from a narrow focus on formal employment status and electoral participation, and hypothesize that the mobilizing effect of grievances trumps the demobilizing effect of scarce resources. Resorting to Bayesian inference techniques, I develop a risk-based operationalization of precarity and analyse survey data from thirteen Western European democracies to investigate the effect of precarity on non-institutionalized forms of participation that, unlike voting, are independent from supply-side factors and highly resource-demanding. The results show that precarity fosters political engagement and suggest that the precariat should not be disregarded as a politically alienated and irrelevant group.

Keywords: precarity; precarization; political participation; political mobilisation; protest.

4.1 Introduction

Political participation plays a pivotal role in democratic societies. It is through active engagement that citizens can exercise their influence on public policies, while holding accountable their elected representatives. However, individuals do not homogeneously participate in the political arena, as the financial, informational, and motivational resources necessary for political engagement are not equally distributed among citizens. In political systems where the representation function is delegated to vote-maximizing parties, these differentials in participation lead to differentials in representation which generate inequality in governmental responsiveness to citizens' interests and preferences (Gilens, 2005; 2012). Not only high, but also equal participation rates are thus essential indicators of democratic quality.

In the light of these considerations, a systematic investigation into the relationship between precarity and political participation assumes paramount importance. Precarity, a condition of insecurity and vulnerability that originates from an individual's labile ties with his occupation and with the labour market, is on the rise in post-industrial societies, on its way towards becoming the new norm. This trend has the potential to increase the electoral relevance of the precariat, a social group characterized by instability, insecurity, and vulnerability that has long remained without voice in the political arena (see Rueda, 2005). However, numerical growth is not in and by itself sufficient for political parties to take over its representation: as vote-maximizing agents, parties have an incentive to represent those groups that are not only relevant in size, but also likely to respond to their mobilization efforts. It follows that, in order to understand whether and under what conditions political parties might consider it beneficial to take over the representation of the precariat, it is imperative to understand whether and under what conditions precarious workers are most likely to participate in politics.

Despite the urgency of this matter, research on the relationship between precarity and participation remains inconclusive. On the one hand, the condition of precarity poses severe obstacles to political activism, first and foremost via its negative impact on the resources required for participation. Coherently, a wealth of quantitative studies have linked unemployment and atypical employment to abstention, and the scarce participation of marginalized workers has been traditionally considered one of the driving causes of their systematic under-representation in the political arena. On the other hand, precarity is a source of grievances which increases the stakes of participating, and qualitative studies have documented plenty of instances of precarious workers' mobilization that have taken place over the past two decades.

In this chapter, I aim to reconcile these contradictory arguments and evidence. Bor-

rowing insights from the literature on the political consequences of economic disadvantage, I develop a theoretical framework for studying the relationship between precarity and participation. I argue that the conclusion of a negative relationship between the two is the result of the narrow focus of quantitative-based research on formal employment status and its effect on electoral participation, and formulate the hypothesis that the mobilizing effect of grievances trumps the demobilizing effect of scarce resources. I put this statement to the test by analysing survey data from thirteen Western European democracies to investigate the effect of precarity on non-institutionalized forms of engagement that are independent from supply-side factors but highly demanding in the resources they require. In doing so, I resort to Bayesian regression techniques and on a risk-based operationalization of precarity that allows to overcome the rigid insider-outsider dichotomy. Additionally, I investigate the moderating impact on this relationship of contextual factors that affect the grievances of, and the resources available to, precarious workers. I conclude by discussing the implications of the findings for the emergence of the precariat as a political subject.

4.2 Precarity and participation

4.2.1 The resources versus grievances debate

The relationship between socio-economic status and political engagement is a widely debated topic in the literature on political participation. In this strand of research, two competing approaches have emerged that formulate diametrically opposite expectations and offer valuable insights for establishing a theoretical framework for the study of the relationship between precarity and political participation.

According to the proponents of the 'withdrawal hypothesis' (Rosenstone 1982) or 'civic voluntarism model' (Verba et al.1995), economic disadvantage depresses participation by reducing the availability of resources—such as time, information, financial means, and civic skills—required for political engagement. A variant of this theory also emphasizes the crucial role of political competence and efficacy, which are important prerequisites for participation but are negatively associated with economic disadvantage (Laurison, 2015; see also Hooghe and Marien, 2013; and Magni, 2017). This argument is supported by a wealth of studies that find a negative impact of economic inequality, poor personal and family background, and acute financial hardship on electoral participation (Solt, 2008; Schäfer and Schwander, 2019; Schaub, 2021; Jungkunz and Marx, 2023), as well as a negative impact of structural economic disadvantage on the propensity to engage in protest behaviour (Kurer et al., 2019).

Countering the expectations of the civic voluntarism model, the proponents of the 'mobilization hypothesis' (Schlozman and Verba 1979) or 'grievance model' (Gamson, 1968) posit that economic disadvantage mobilizes individuals. It does so by raising the stakes of participation, while also generating anger and frustration that stimulate political engagement. Evidence in support of this thesis has been predominantly collected at the country level, by studies showing that times of poor economic performance are characterized by rising levels of political participation (Kern et al., 2015; Genovese et al., 2016; Funke et al., 2016).

The civic voluntarism and grievance models offer valuable insights for establishing a theoretical framework for the study of the relationship between precarity and political participation. Not only is precarity positively related to economic disadvantage, but even net of socioeconomic status it negatively affects the resources necessary for political engagement and constitutes a powerful source of grievances.

As concerns the impact of precarity on the resources necessary for political engagement, the fierce competition that precarious workers face, alongside the awareness that they can be at any time replaced by others who are more productive, younger, or simply more desperate and thus open to accept poorer working conditions, hinders their ability to disconnect from work and dedicate time and energy to political and social activities. Additionally, the individualization of labour relations associated with precarity reduces the opportunities for political activation (see Mattoni and Vogiatzoglou, 2014), being the workplace a crucial setting of political socialization where individuals acquire political skills (Sobel, 1993) and the sense of political efficacy necessary to engage into political activities (Pateman, 1970). Finally, precarity undermines social ties (Lewchuk, 2017) that, by providing important cues for making voting decisions, reduce the resources required for participation (Armingeon and Schädel, 2015) and thus facilitate political engagement.

As concerns the impact of precarity on the grievances that motivate participation, the condition of precarity is well suited to trigger the sense of relative deprivation that underlies the civic voluntarism model. In societies characterized by a strong dualism in employment protections and opportunities (e.g., between private and public employees, or between workers in offshorable and non-offshorable sectors), precarious workers may feel relatively deprived as compared to their better sheltered counterparts (Marx, 2016). Furthermore, they are especially likely to suffer from relative deprivation when comparing their current situation to their past experiences or expectations for the future. For older members of the precariat, witnessing the erosion of employment protections and opportunities might result in actual and perceived status decline. For younger generations, precarious and uncertain career prospects may be compared to the relative security that previous generations enjoyed, which allowed for independence, early home ownership, and

family building. Additionally, the precarious youth is often university-educated, which can increase the status frustration that results from the gap between the promise for high income and security and the reality of being stuck in under-qualified and precarious jobs. Jointly, these factors render a positive relationship between precarity and participation plausible, especially in a context of generalized precarization where vulnerability is no longer a prerogative of workers in marginalized sectors.

In the light of these considerations, contradictory expectations can be formulated on the relationship between precarity and participation. On the one hand, the condition of precarity undermines the resources and opportunities necessary for political engagement and can be expected to reduce the likelihood to participate. On the other hand, precarity is a source of grievances which generate anger and frustration that might incentivize political activism. Shedding light on the political potential of the precariat requires understanding which mechanism, if any, is most likely to prevail.

4.2.2 Mobilization or withdrawal?

Existing studies seemingly support the withdrawal hypothesis. A wealth of quantitative research has exposed the negative impact of unemployment on political efficacy (Marx and Nguyen, 2016) and participation (Aytaç et al., 2020; Scott and Acock, 1979; for similar results on the effect of unemployment scars, see Azzollini, 2021), and atypical employment has been found to increase the likelihood to abstain from voting (Rovny and Rovny, 2017; Tuorto, 2022). Hence, the negative impact of precarity on political engagement has been long assumed, and with it the scarce benefits entailed in the representation of precarious workers (Rueda, 2005). However, the lion's share of these empirical studies operationalizes precarity based on the absence or temporary nature of an employment contract and relies on voter turnout as the key indicator of political engagement, choices that entail severe limitations for studying the impact of precarity on participation.

Moving past formal employment status

Precarity is here defined as the condition of insecurity and vulnerability that originates from an individual's labile ties with his occupation with the labour market. In this and other definitions, the key element is the instability of one's employment, or labour market vulnerability. This conceptualization underlies most studies that investigate the political implications of labour market insecurity: in the insider-outsider literature, it is explicitly acknowledged that it is in the different vulnerability to unemployment that lays the potential for conflicting interests between insiders and outsiders (see Rueda 2005; and Lindvall and Rueda 2012). Hence, existing studies focus on formal employment status

because they regard it as a good proxy for vulnerability. To put it simply, unemployed and atypically employed individuals are assumed to be exposed to risks from which permanent employees are sheltered.

This assumption was reasonably sound in a context of stable and highly unionized labour markets, where little mobility exists between insiders and outsiders and permanent contracts reasonably insulated from the risk of unemployment. However, its validity is challenged when the guarantees associated to permanent contracts decline and the reserve army of the unemployed and atypically employed grows. In the present era of ever more flexible labour markets, holders of permanent contracts are no longer automatically insulated from the risk of unemployment and the condition of precarity has ceased to be a prerogative of workers in formally atypical employment. As a result, the risk of unemployment varies widely across individuals who formally share the same employment status, and it is shaped by several individual and contextual factors (see also Schwander and Häusermann, 2013). It follows that an operationalization of precarity based on formal employment status is bound to suffer a severe validity bias, especially when being used by scholars interested in the impact of precarity on political behaviour, which is driven not only by one's current employment situation but also and especially by one's expectations of future labour market risk (Schwander and Häusermann, 2013; for an empirical test of the unsuitability of static measures solely relying on formal employment status to capture precarity, see Lewchuck, 2017).

Moving past electoral participation

The most used indicator of political participation is voter turnout. This narrow focus on electoral participation is justified by the very structure of modern representative democracies, where voting is the most crucial and widely accessible means of participation. However, the decision to vote or abstain is highly constrained by supply-side factors, namely existing parties and their programmatic offering (see Kurer et al., 2019). It follows that, in a context where no party represents the interests of precarious workers (see Rueda, 2005), their propensity to abstain can be hardly considered as an indicator of disengagement with politics. Albeit abstention is generally considered as an indicator of scarce political engagement, the decision to stay away from the ballot box can be regarded as a highly political act (Hay, 2007), used to express dissatisfaction with the system or with the absence of suitable-regarded alternatives. What is more, a negative relationship between precarity and voting could hardly be used to argue that the precariat is a group with little political potential, whose representation would not be electorally beneficial for political parties. Drawing such a conclusion would require observing a negative effect of precarity on turnout in contexts where suitable alternatives are available. Rather than

asking 'do precarious workers vote?', we should be asking 'do precarious workers vote when political actors engage in activation efforts, e.g. via the promotion of policies defending their interests or via direct appeals to a precarious identity or a precariat class?'.

Other than voting, there exist plenty of activities via which citizens can engage in politics, and which can be used to investigate the relationship between precarity and participation. In fact, as of today the list of such activities has expanded to become virtually infinite (Van Deth, 2001). They range from blatantly political acts, such as joining a political protest or demonstration or working for a political party, to nonpolitical activities used for political purposes, such as boycotting products, joining street parties, or participating in flash mobs[1] (Van Deth, 2016). To reduce this complexity, scholars have developed classifications, distinguishing between individualized and collective, legal and illegal, conventional and non conventional, and, most frequently, institutional and non institutional forms of participation. Institutional participation encompasses activities organized by the political system or political elite, such as contacting politicians and working for political parties and organizations. Non institutional participation encompasses elite-challenging activities not directly related to the electoral process, such as signing petitions, boycotting products, and participating to demonstrations (Hooghe and Quintelier, 2014).

Most studies that investigate the relationship between economic disadvantage and participation rely on this distinction, and demonstrate that those forms of participation are in fact associated with different dimensions (Hooghe and Marien, 2013; Hooghe and Quintelier, 2014; Kern et al., 2015; Bassoli and Monticelli, 2018). In the context of this chapter, however, focusing on participation via institutional channels to measure precarious workers' political potential is bound to suffer the same biases as focusing on voting. If the decision to vote or abstain is constrained by supply side factors, i.e., the availability of suitable options, the same holds true for the decision to contact politicians or work for political parties. Contrarily, non institutional participation strategies are largely independent from these constraints, and are better suited to investigate precarious workers' political potential.

4.2.3 Precarity and non-institutional participation

When looking at non-institutional forms of engagement, numerous examples of political mobilization among precarious workers have indeed taken place over the past two decades. Starting from the early 2000s, movements tailored towards constructing a common aware-

[1]These creative and expressive participation strategies were widely used in the early days of the precariat movement, where street art or theater-like performances were employed to sensitize the public and build a common consciousness (see Mattoni, 2012).

ness and subjectivity among the members of the emerging precariat flourished. The most renown example are the Mayday Parades (MP) against precarity, first organized in the city of Milan on the symbolic date of the 1st of May 2001 by a network of Italian activists. The parade, joined by 5000 protesters, constituted an attempt to construct and give political meaning to the very concept of 'precarity', around which precarious workers living heterogeneous lives could identify and constitute a cohesive and aware political subject (Mattoni and Vogiatzoglou, 2014).

> "We are precarious, atypical, subordinate-like, temporary. We are in job training, short term, apprenticeship. We are rented and on term. [...] We are the majority of those who enter the labour market. But we have no voice, we do not exist. Our condition is obscure, suffered in silence and in solitude. [...] The goal is to mobilize the whole social precariat through novel forms, more direct and less ideological, so that union activism networks spread all over Italy and the EU" (official website of the Chainworkers, as reported by Doerr and Mattoni, 2014).

In the following years, participation grew exponentially (by 2005, the protesters had become 120.000) and the movement expanded to become a European phenomenon (renamed EuroMayDay Parades, EP). The magnitude and the geographical coverage of the event make the EP the iconic example of the early mobilization of precarious workers, but movements with similar objectives proliferated all over Europe (Mattoni, 2012; Graham and Papadopoulos, 2021; see also Arribas Lozano, 2012 and Precarias a la Deriva, 2004 for the case of Spain).

The scope and goal of the movement evolved following the onset of the Great Recession, when the target shifted from identity and consciousness building towards the advancement of specific demands for improved working conditions (Graham and Papadopoulos, 2021). On the forefront of this struggle are platform workers, whose employment conditions bring the experience of precarity to the extreme. They are dependent employees in that they must respect shifts, wear uniforms, sign non-competition agreements, and can be unilaterally dismissed by the platform. However, they are formally contracted as self-employed, deprived from the guarantees associated with dependent employment while having to bear the entirety of the risks and costs of doing business (Hayns, 2016). The extreme vulnerability and isolation that this situation carries could be reasonably expected to severely hamper their capacity for political activism. However, platforms' attempts to further undermine these workers' rights have been met with fierce resistance. In 2015, Deliveroo drivers in the UK set up a strike and awareness campaign in reaction to an attempt from the platform to move them from time wages to a piecework system with

no base rate whatsoever, which would further exacerbate the precarity of their condition (Braithwaite, 2017; Hayns, 2016). In Italy, Foodora's assault on its couriers' rights was met with similar resistance (Tassinari and Maccarone, 2017).

Albeit the lack of a stable organization and the availability of a large reserve army did undermine platform workers' capacity to sustain mobilization over time, these cases powerfully suggest that mobilization is possible even within a highly individualized and vulnerable workforce. What's more, the non-institutional forms of participation via which this mobilization took place are highly demanding in the resources they require, which suggests that the grievances-driven positive effect of precarity on participation hampers the resources-driven negative effect. However, the evidence supporting this conclusion is anecdotal, and needs to be complemented with systematic quantitative evidence. I hence formulate the hypothesis that, net of economic hardship, precarity has a positive effect on non-institutional political participation (hypothesis 1), and submit it to systematic empirical testing.

4.2.4 Contextual moderators

In the previous section, I have hypothesized a positive effect of precarity on non-institutional participation (from now onward simply referred to as participation). However, this effect might be moderated by individual and contextual factors that either exacerbate or mitigate the detrimental economic and social impact of precarious employment. At the individual level, household income (Sinigaglia, 2007), social integration (Armingeon and Schädel, 2015), and marital status (Häusermann et al., 2016) have already shown to play a crucial role in providing individuals with a network of support. However, contextual factors can also be expected to be determinant.

First, the impact of precarious employment on participation can be moderated by the availability of a safety net that softens the detrimental consequences of unemployment. This moderating effect might be either positive or negative. On the one hand, generous and easily accessible unemployment benefits can reduce the grievances associated with precarity via the weakening of the feelings of relative deprivation, vulnerability, and anxiety that accompany it, hence weakening the positive relationship between precarity and participation (grievances mechanism). In fact, it has already been shown that the negative impact of perceived employment insecurity on life satisfaction is stronger in countries with less generous labour market policies (Carr and Chung, 2014), and that the degree to which people perceive their jobs to be insecure differs across countries depending on the design of labour market and welfare institutions (Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018). On the other hand, the availability of a safety net has a positive effect on the resources available for political engagement: by mitigating actual and perceived vulnerability, it increases the

capability of precarious workers to devote time and energy to political activities and might thus strengthen the positive effect of precarity on participation (resources mechanism).

Second, the extent to which precarious employment affects political participation may be moderated by the incidence of precarity in a country. Widespread unemployment and atypical employment provide precarious workers with signals about the structural causes of their condition. This fosters external attributions of responsibility that increase the propensity to blame the government for one's disadvantage and express dissatisfaction. Contrarily, low precarity rates foster internal attributions of blame, that are less likely to generate behavioural responses (Marx, 2016). It follows that a higher incidence of precarity may strengthen the positive effect of precarity on participation by exacerbating the mobilizing effect of grievances (grievances mechanism). This argument is consistent with studies showing that high and rising unemployment rates increase turnout (Cebula, 2017; Burden and Wichowsky, 2014), most markedly among the unemployed (Burden and Wichowsky, 2014; see also Aytaç et al., 2018 for similar findings on the interaction between unemployment rates and personal experiences with unemployment). However, high unemployment and atypical employment rates are indicative of a higher competition at the bottom of the labour market, i.e., of larger reserve armies that increase the vulnerably of precarious workers. It follows that widespread precarity exacerbates the vulnerability of precarious workers further reducing their capability to engage in politics and may thus weaken the positive effect of precarity on participation (resources mechanism).

Based on these considerations, competing hypotheses can be formulated on the moderating effect of unemployment benefits and of the incidence of precarity on the relationship between precarity and participation. If we consider their impact on grievances, easily accessible unemployment benefits can be expected to reduce the positive effect of precarity on participation, while widespread precarity to enhance it. Hence, we can anticipate that: the more accessible the unemployment benefits, the weaker the positive effect of precarity on political participation (hypothesis 2a); the higher the incidence of precarity in a country, the stronger the positive effect of precarity on political participation (hypothesis 2b). If we focus on their impact on resources, the opposite effect can be anticipated: the more accessible the unemployment benefits, the stronger the positive effect of precarity on political participation (hypothesis 2b); the higher the incidence of precarity in a country, the weaker the positive effect of precarity political participation (hypothesis 3b).

4.3 Data and operationalization

To unveil the relationship between precarity and political participation, I rely on survey data from the eight wave of the European Social Survey for a sample of 13 Western

European countries comprising Austria, Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Prior to discussing the methodology used for the analysis, I outline the operationalization of the key variables of interest. Descriptive statistics are available in Appendix C, Tables C.1 and C.2.

Dependent variable: Political participation.

In the eight wave of the European Social Survey, four questions were used to capture respondents' political engagement via non-institutional channels. Respondents were asked whether, in the 12 months preceding the survey, they had taken part in a lawful public demonstration, signed a petition, boycotted certain products, or worked for an association other than a political party. While each one of these activities is independent from supply side factors, participating in demonstrations and joining civil society associations can be singled out based on two criteria. First, they are much more demanding activities as compared to signing a petition or boycotting a product (for a similar argument, see Rodon and Guinjoan, 2018), which renders these activities most likely to suffer from the negative impact of resources on participation. Hence, focusing on such activities allows to conduct a conservative test of the hypothesis that precarity has a positive effect on participation. Second, while signing a petition or boycotting products are individual activities that take place in the private sphere, joining a demonstration or association are collective activities and thus better indicative of the mobilization potential of the precariat. In light of these considerations, I construct a dummy variable taking value of 1 if the respondent participated to a demonstration or worked for an organization over the year preceding the survey, 0 otherwise, and rely on it as the indicator of participation to be used for the analysis.

Independent variable: Precarity.

As extensively discussed in the theory section, in the present context of labour market flexibilization formal employment status is no longer a valid proxy of unemployment vulnerability. This vulnerability is conditional on several individual and employment-related factors that concern the characteristics of the worker and of the job performed. Demographic factors comprise age, gender, education level and nationality, that jointly determine an individual's 'employability'; employment-related factors comprise professional status, sector of employment, occupation type, and firm size, that jointly determine the extent to which an individual can be easily replaced by his employer, and the level of employment protections he or she is entitled to. I thus develop a probability-based operationalization of precarity that accounts for these factors in calculating the individual-specific probability

(or risk) to be in a condition of unemployment or precarious employment (see Appendix, Table A.1). Namely, I estimate the probability that individual i resident in country c is precarious ($y_i = 1$ if y_i is unemployed, involuntarily inactive, or involuntarily employed with a part-time, temporary, or otherwise atypical contract) as opposed to not precarious via the following binomial logistic regression model:

$$Pr(y_{ic} = 1) = logit(\beta_{0c} + \beta_{1c} \cdot \text{age}_i + \beta_{2c} \cdot \text{gender}_i + \beta_{3c} \cdot \text{education}_i + \beta_{4c} \cdot \text{migrant}_i + \beta_{5c} \cdot \text{professional status}_i + \beta_{6c} \cdot \text{occupation}_i + \beta_{7c} \cdot \text{sector}_i + \beta_{8c} \cdot \text{firm size}_i) \quad (4.1)$$

I implement model 4.1 on data collected in 2016 by the European Labour Force Survey (LFS), restricting the sample to individuals aging between 20 and 64 that, at the time of the survey where either working, unemployed, or involuntarily inactive. Being the LFS the largest comparative survey of European income and labour conditions (with several thousand observations per country-year), it provides sufficient statistical power to obtain reliable probability estimates. I estimate the model for each country separately because the strictness of employment protection legislation, the overall incidence of unemployment and atypical employment, and the extent to which precarious employment is as a 'stepping stone' towards permanent employment or a precarity trap' are context-dependent.

I conduct the analysis following a Bayesian approach and using the R interface of Stan (Carpenter et al., 2017). I run 1000 iterations in 4 chains discarding the first 750 iterations. This procedure yields a posterior distribution of 1000 estimates for each parameter. Since I use the default non-informative priors ($\beta_k \sim \text{Normal}(0, 2.5)$), the posterior distribution closely approximates the results obtained from a maximum likelihood estimation. However, the Bayesian approach offers the advantage that, based on the estimated coefficients $\hat{\beta}$ (available in Appendix A, Tables A.2 and A.3), I can generate a distribution of 1000 posterior predicted probabilities of precarity for any respondent in any dataset containing information on the independent variables used to estimate the model, including data from the eight wave of the European Social Survey. This allows to incorporate in the final dataset both the predictions and the related uncertainty, which can be accounted for in the second stage of the estimation process (for an in-depth discussion, see analysis section; a visual display of the distributions by country is available in Appendix B, Figure B.3).

Moderators: Unemployment benefits coverage and precarity incidence.

As a measure of a country's capability to mitigate the detrimental impact of precarity on actual and perceived insecurity, I rely on the percentage of its labour force which is insured from unemployment risk. I retrieve this information from the Comparative

Welfare Entitlements Project (CWEP), which provides detailed information about the structure and generosity of unemployment, sick pay, and pension insurance systems in 33 countries (Scruggs, 2022; Scruggs, 2022b). As a measure of the overall incidence of precarity, I calculate the country-specific average probability of precarity among survey respondents.

Control variables.

In each model, I control for a set of individual and country level variables that might confound the relationship between precarity and political participation. At the individual level, I control for socio-demographic variables comprising respondents' gender, age, education level, economic hardship, partnership status, and urbanization of the place of residence. Economic hardship and urbanization are numeric variables measured on a 4 points scale: the former is retrieved from a question asking respondents how they felt about their household income; available responses range from 'Living comfortably on present income' to 'Very difficult on present income'; the latter ranges from 'Rural area or village' to 'Large town or city'. Partnership status is operationalized as a dummy, scoring 1 if the respondent lives with a partner, 0 otherwise. Additionally, I control for attitudinal variables that include respondents' interest in politics, measured on an 4 points scale where higher values indicate higher interest, and trust in political institutions, as low trust might affect the overall propensity and incentive of citizens to participate in politics and manifest discontent. This variable is an index constructed by averaging among three survey items that capture, on a scale from 0 to 10, respondents' trust into parties, parliaments, and politicians (Cronbach's alpha = 0.884). Finally, I control for respondents' level of social integration via the inclusion of two dummy variables measuring respondents' church attendance and social ties. The variables take value of 1 for respondents who participate in religious functions or meet with family and friends at least once a month, 0 for respondents who do not.

Besides these individual-level controls, the main model includes country fixed effects to rule out the confounding effect of country level variables. In the models testing the moderating impact of unemployment benefits coverage and precarity, I follow Hooghe and Marien (2013) and include an additional control for the quality of governance, which might influence the propensity and incentive of citizens to participate in politics and manifest discontent. I retrieve information on this variable from the composite index of good governance developed by the World Bank. The index is constructed based on several indicators comprising voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. Observations range from Italy, the worst performing country with a score 72.60, to Switzerland,

the best performing with a score of 99.52.

4.4 Analysis and results

In this section, I investigate the relationship between precarity and political participation. To reiterate, the baseline hypothesis is that precarity has a positive effect on non-institutionalized forms of political engagement (hypothesis 1). I test this hypothesis implementing a binomial logistic regression model with country fixed effects (Model 1) having a participation dummy as dependent variable and the probability of precarity as key explanatory variable. Formally:

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot X_i + \beta_2 \cdot Z_{1i} + ... + \beta_{n+1} \cdot Z_{ni} + C_i + \epsilon_i \tag{4.2}$$

where y_i is the probability of taking part in a demonstration or joining a civil society association for individual i, β_0 is the general intercept representing the baseline probability of participation, β_1 is the coefficient for the key explanatory variable X_i (probability of precarity), Z_1 to Z_n are the remaining explanatory variables, β_2 to β_{n+1} their slopes, C_i the country fixed effects, and ϵ_i the random error. I estimate this model following a Bayesian approach, running 2000 iterations in 4 chains and using the default prior on regression coefficients ($\beta_k \sim \text{Normal}(0, 2.5)$) after rescaling the explanatory variables.

This procedure returns $w = 1, ..., 4000$ estimates for each parameter. However, precarity is operationalized as the probability to find oneself in unemployment or atypical employment given a set of socio-demographic and contextual factors. For each ESS respondent i, this probability is calculated based on the estimates from the Bayesian logistic regression model described in equation 4.1. This procedure returns $j = 1, ..., 1000$ posterior predicted probabilities of precarity for each respondent. It follows that fitting Model 4.2 Bayesianly for each posterior predicted probability of precarity j yields a distribution of 1000 times 4000 ($J \cdot W$) estimates for each parameter. Averaging across these estimates as follows:

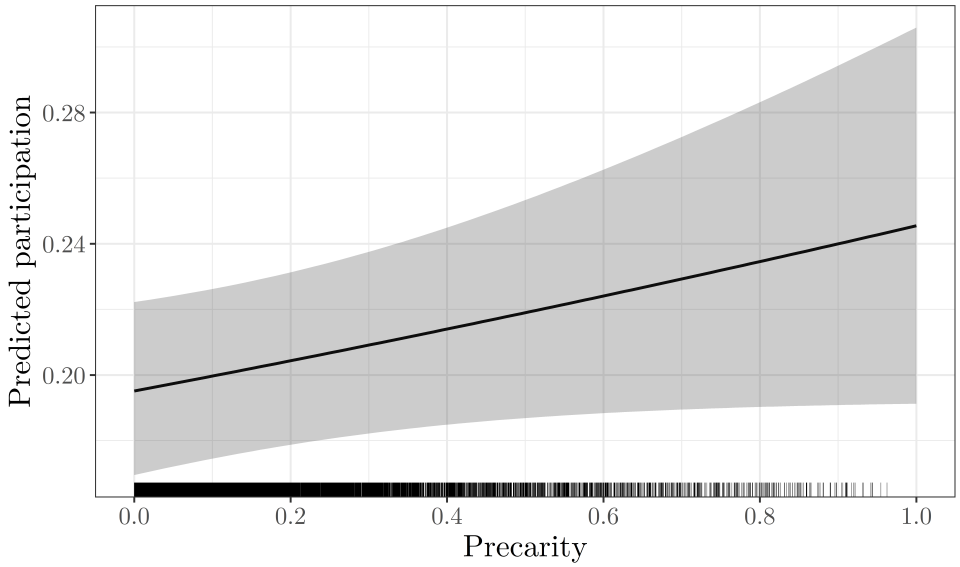
$$\hat{\bar{\beta}} = \frac{1}{J \cdot W} \sum \sum \hat{\beta_{jw}} \tag{4.3}$$

I obtain mean coefficient estimates that account for the uncertainty inherent in both stages of the analysis, namely the estimation of the predicted probabilities of precarity and of the effect of precarity on political participation.

Results are reported in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1, where the predicted probability to participate is displayed across different levels of precarity together with 95% credible

intervals. They show a positive and significant albeit small effect of precarity on participation, hence revealing that, in spite of the obstacles to participation which are associated with precarious employment, exposure to precarity does foster political engagement via resource-demanding participation channels. This result suggests that the mobilizing effect of grievances trumps the demobilizing effect of scarce resources, which is in line with the expectation formulated in hypothesis 1.

Figure 4.1: Effect of precarity on non-institutional political participation



As concerns the control variables, most of the coefficients point in the expected directions: being male, highly educated, interested in politics, and socially integrated are all positively and significantly associated with participation, while the effect of economic hardship, living with a partner, and urbanization is negative. Only the coefficients for institutional trust and age fail to reach statistical significance.

The analysis so far conducted reveals a positive relationship between precarity and political participation. Concerning the moderating effect of unemployment benefits coverage and of the incidence of precarity on this relationship, competing expectations have been formulated conditionally on whether the effect of these variables on grievances or resources is considered. When considering their impact on grievances, I expect unemployment benefits to weaken the positive relationship between precarity and participation (hypothesis 2a) and a higher incidence of precarity to strengthen it (hypothesis 3a). When considering their impact on resources, I expect unemployment benefits to strengthen the

Table 4.1: Bayesian logistic regressions of political participation (Models 1 to 3)

	Non-institutional participation		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Precarity	0.29 [0.25; 0.33]	-2.60 [-2.78; -2.42]	1.45 [1.33; 1.56]
Benefit coverage		-2.79 [-2.82; -2.76]	
Precarity incidence			8.16 [8.09; 8.22]
Female	-0.18 [-0.18; -0.18]	-0.23 [-0.23; -0.23]	-0.21 [-0.21; -0.21]
Age	0.00 [0.00; 0.01]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]
Education	0.44 [0.44; 0.44]	0.47 [0.46; 0.47]	0.46 [0.46; 0.46]
Economic hardship	-0.01 [-0.01; -0.01]	-0.01 [-0.01 0.00]	-0.01 [-0.02; -0.01]
Partner in household	-0.11 [-0.11; -0.11]	-0.01 [-0.02; -0.01]	-0.05 [-0.06; -0.05]
Urbanization	-0.02 [-0.02; -0.02]	-0.02 [-0.02; -0.02]	-0.02 [-0.02; -0.02]
Interest in politics	0.52 [0.52; 0.52]	0.51 [0.51; 0.51]	0.51 [0.51; 0.52]
Trust	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.00 [0.00; 0.00]	0.01 [0.01; 0.01]
Church attendance	0.27 [0.27; 0.28]	0.22 [0.22; 0.23]	0.22 [0.21; 0.22]
Social ties	0.58 [0.58; 0.58]	0.62 [0.62; 0.62]	0.57 [0.56; 0.57]
Quality of governance		0.03 [0.03; 0.03]	0.05 [0.05; 0.05]
Precarity x Coverage		4.57 [4.32; 4.82]	
Precarity x Incidence			-5.87 [-6.37; -5.40]
Constant	-4.28 [-4.30; -4.26]	-4.80 [-4.85; -4.76]	-9.44 [-9.47; -9.41]
Country fixed effects	Yes	No	No
Observations	15,905	15,905	15,905

Table presents mean estimates and 95% credible intervals in parentheses

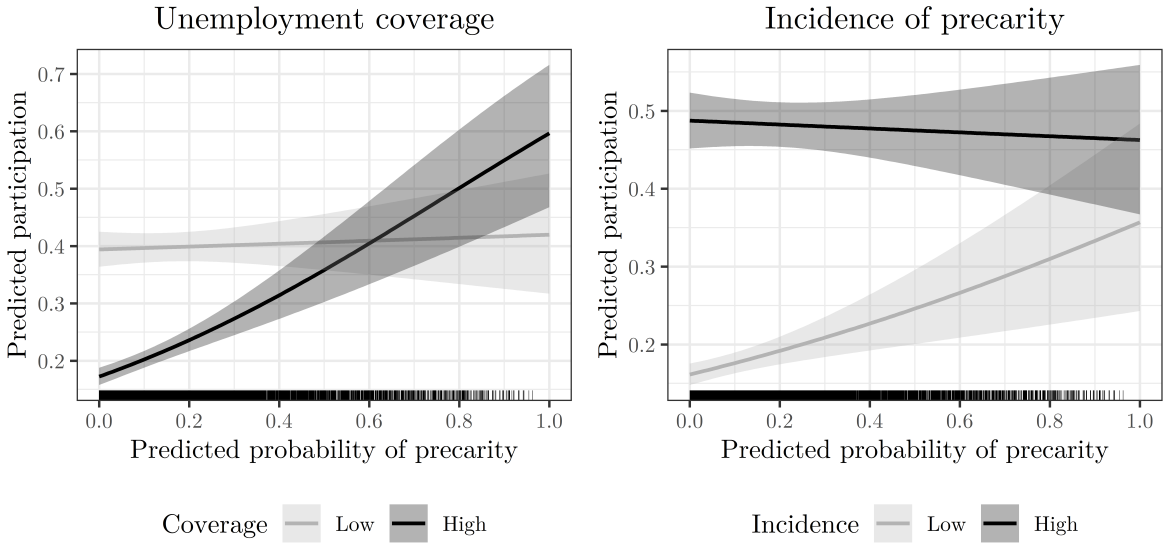
positive relationship between precarity and participation (hypothesis 2b) and a higher incidence of precarity to weaken it (hypothesis 3b).

I test these hypotheses by implementing two logistic regression models that follow the same procedure described in equations 4.2 and 4.3 but include an interaction term between precarity and unemployment benefits (Model 2) and between precarity and precarity incidence (Model 3) among the explanatory variables. Since the explanatory variables vary at the country level, country fixed effects are removed from the models while a country-level control for the quality of government is included.

Mean estimates and credible intervals are reported in Table 4.1. They corroborate hypotheses 2b and 3b, thereby exposing the moderating power of resources. In Model 2, the interaction term between precarity and the coverage of unemployment benefits is positive and significant, revealing that the availability of a network of support strengthens the positive effect of precarity on participation. To the opposite, in Model 3 the interaction term is negative and significant, revealing that a higher incidence of precarity weakens the positive effect of precarity on participation.

Figure 4.2 provides a visual display of the interaction effects, showing the predicted probability of participation across the precarity spectrum at high and low levels of unemployment benefits coverage (left panel) and precarity incidence (right panel). The predictions from Model 2 reveal that at high levels of coverage the probability to participate increases from less than 20% to about 60% following the shift of an average individual from null to full exposure to precarity, while at low levels of coverage the probability to

Figure 4.2: Effect of precarity on non-institutional political participation, conditional on contextual factors.



participate remains constant at around 40%. The predictions from Model 3 show that at low levels of incidence the probability to participate increases from about 15% to about 35% following a shift from null to full vulnerability, while at high levels of incidence the probability to participate remains constant at around 50%.

Jointly, these predictions suggest that, regardless of an individual's exposure to precarity, the inclination to participate is considerably higher in contexts where precarity is more prevalent. In such contexts, precarious workers are more likely to engage in political activities as compared to both their secure and precarious counterparts living in a context of low incidence of precarity.

4.5 Discussion and conclusion

In the literature on the political implications of employment insecurity, workers in condition of occupational precarity have been traditionally considered as a group systematically under-represented in the political arena. This under-representation was ascribed to the scarce electoral benefits entailed in their representation, resulting from their small number and, crucially, from their low levels of political engagement. As stated by Rueda (2005) in his seminal contribution, while conservative parties tend to represent the interests of upscale groups,

> social democratic parties have strong incentives to consider insiders their core constituency. There are historical and ideological reasons for this but there is also the fact that the other group within labour, outsiders, *tends to be less politically active and electorally relevant (as well as less economically independent) than insiders*' (p. 62, emphasis added).

However, as time goes by and employment insecurity moves from being a 'minority condition' to a 'majority experience' (Doogan, 2015), the first obstacle is lifted. What remains to be investigated is whether the members of the growing precariat are still characterized by below-average participation rates, as existing arguments and evidence on the matter remain inconclusive. On the one hand, the very condition of precarity poses severe obstacles to political activism, and a wealth of quantitative studies links unemployment and atypical employment to abstention. On the other hand, precarity is a source of grievances which might increase the incentive to participate, and qualitative studies have documented plenty of instances of precarious workers' mobilization.

Shedding light on this issue is of high normative importance, since unveiling the mobilization potential of this group can provide incentives for political parties to take over its representation and thus break a vicious cycle of mutually reinforcing economic and

political inequality. In this chapter, I address this issue by relying on Bayesian regression techniques to systematically investigate the effect of precarity, operationalized as the probability of finding one-self in a condition of unemployment or atypical employment, on non-institutional forms of political engagement, namely protesting and joining civil society associations. These means of participation are best suited for capturing the effect of precarity on participation, due to the their independence from supply side factors and to the relatively high amount of resources they require.

The results of the analysis reveal a positive effect of precarity on non-institutional political engagement, at both the individual and the country level. At the country level, the results indicate that there exists a higher propensity to participate in politics via non-institutionalized and resource-demanding channels in countries where precarity is widespread and the shelter against unemployment scarce. At the individual level, they show that the propensity to participate grows as precarity increases, suggesting that the mobilizing effect of grievances trumps the demobilizing effect of scarce resources. However, this effect emerges to be conditional on the moderating impact of unemployment benefits and precarity incidence, as the positive effect is only present at high levels of unemployment benefits coverage and low levels of precarity incidence. Conversely, when unemployment benefits coverage is low and the incidence of precarity is high, the propensity to participate remains relatively high regardless of the individual's vulnerability, as the effect of precarity turns null.

These results contradict widespread assumptions concerning the scarce electoral benefits entailed in the representation of precarious workers. Even though a high(er) propensity to participate in politics via non-institutional channels does not necessarily translate into an above average propensity to show up at the polling station, it is a strong indicator of this group's mobilization potential, i.e. its inherent capacity to be collectively mobilized. Hence, these results suggest that the precariat should not be disregarded as a politically alienated and irrelevant group and that its representation at the hands of political parties might be profitable. In order to corroborate this conclusion, future research should investigate whether, when a mobilization effort directed at the precariat has in fact been conducted, it has revealed electorally beneficial.

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PRECARIOUS WORK AND CHALLENGER PARTIES: PRECARITY AND VOTE CHOICE IN THE 2018 ITALIAN ELECTION

Abstract

Across Western European democracies, the last 20 years have seen a growth of precarious employment and the rise of challenger parties. Both trends are especially marked in Italy, where occupational insecurity has become the norm and over half of the electorate has turned to a challenger party. In this chapter, I investigate the relationship between these two phenomena, addressing the question of whether and how precarity in the labour market influenced vote choice in the 2018 general election. First, I provide descriptive evidence that the Italian labour market shifted from dualism to generalized precarization. Second, I empirically investigate the relationship between precarity and voting in this context. The results show that the perception of precarity, not formal employment status, influenced voting behaviour: it fostered participation, increased support for the Five Star Movement, and decreased support for the Democratic Party. These findings challenge core assumptions in the literature, first and foremost about precarious workers' low turnout rate, difficult mobilization, and consequent political irrelevance. They indicate that the electoral weight of precarious workers has increased, and their representation can be electorally beneficial.

Keywords: precarity, precarious work, labour market dualism, challenger parties, Italy, Five Star Movement, 2018 Italian election

5.1 Introduction

Italy, with its typically Mediterranean welfare system and labour market arrangements, has traditionally been considered an exemplary case of labour market dualism: a system where extreme peaks of generosity for workers in formal and permanent employment (the insiders) coexist with weak or even no social protection for the atypically employed, unemployed, or employed in the informal market economy (the outsiders) (see Ferrera, 1996). This inequality has straightforward social and economic implications, but it has also consequences in terms of policy preferences and political representation. Following the insider-outsider partisanship model developed by Rueda (2005), insiders benefit from generous employment protections and have their interests represented by social-democratic parties. By contrast, outsiders have an interest into active and passive labour market policies but are systematically under-represented due to their low participation rates. The result is a vicious cycle of mutually reinforcing economic and political inequality.

The insider-outsider partisanship model offered a key lens for understanding the relationship between employment status and voting behaviour in post-war Italy. However, since the 1990s profound changes have occurred in the international and domestic economic scene while parties in government promoted flexibilization reforms which altered the structure of the labour market. As a result precarity, here narrowly defined as the condition of insecurity and vulnerability that originates from individuals' labile ties with their occupation and with the labour market, ceased to be a prerogative of marginalized workers and became the new norm. The resulting shift from dualism towards generalized precarization questions consolidated assumptions in the insider-outsider literature and challenge the applicability of theories of political behaviour and representation in dualized societies to contemporary Italy.

This chapter aims to shed light on the political implications of precarity in the newly changed context. Concomitantly to the precarization of the labour market, profound transformations have occurred in the arena of party competition, where new and peripheral parties have succeeded in challenging the virtual oligopoly of mainstream parties. Albeit these two trends have been extensively but separately investigated by scholars in the fields of political economy and comparative politics, a few studies exist that link the two, providing reasons for, and evidence of, a positive relationship between precarity and radical or anti-establishment voting (among others, see Mughan et al., 2003; Marx and Picot, 2013; Ramiro, 2016). Notably, challenger parties have been theorized to attract precarious workers by providing them with an anti-establishment alternative to mainstream

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parties and promoting agendas that potentially improve their labour market conditions (Antonucci et al., 2021). Albeit this argument has great potential for explaining the restructuring of the Italian electoral landscape, its applicability to the Italian case has not been empirically investigated yet.

In what follows, I provide a detailed overview of the major labour market reforms implemented in Italy over the past three decades. I show that precarity is no longer a prerogative of workers in marginalized sectors, but also affects individuals in permanent employment. I thus argue that employment status and contractual arrangements are no longer sufficient indicators of labour market vulnerability: in a context of generalized precarization, the perception of insecurity better captures precarity in the labour market. I then resort to regression analysis techniques to empirically investigate the relationship between occupational precarity and vote choice in 2018 election. The results show that the perception of precarity, not formal employment status, influenced voting behaviour: it fostered participation, increased support for the Five Star Movement, and decreased support for the Democratic Party. These findings challenge core assumptions in the literature, first and foremost about precarious workers' below-average turnout rate, difficult mobilization, and consequent political irrelevance. They indicate that the electoral weight of precarious workers has increased, and that their representation can reveal to be electorally beneficial.

5.2 The Italian labour market: from dualism to generalized precarization

During the post-war reconstruction period, Italy experienced a long phase of economic growth that ensured welfare state consolidation and expanding employment protection legislation in defense of workers' interests (Brandolini et al., 2018). However, the country's highly fragmented income maintenance system, its selective *iper-garantismo* (term used to indicate the hyper-protection of regular workers, especially in the public sector) and its highly polarized system of welfare created a deep divide in protections and subsidization between workers in core and highly unionized sectors and workers in peripheral ones (Ferrera, 1996). This inequality in the distribution of protections and social benefits originated in the strengthening of trade unions and in the consequent expansion of workers' rights which followed the *autunno caldo* (hot autumn), a wave of strikes, occupations, and sit-downs that struck Italy in the fall of 1969. The reaction of employers to the resulting rigidification of the productive process was the transfer of productive activities to a secondary sector filled with marginal workers lacking the rights that unions had secured their core constituencies (Piore, 1980). Hence, the growth of the secondary sector

occurred in symbiosis with the increasing protection of the primary sector, so that by the 1980s Italy became the 'clearest case of labor market dualism in the industrialized West' (Piore, 1980, p. 384-385).

The extreme dualism of its labour market renders Italy a most-likely case for the play-out of Rueda's insider-outsider partisanship model (Rueda, 2005). The model predicts that, in contexts characterized by labour market dualism, neither social democratic nor conservative governments will promote pro-outsider policies, due to the low political participation of outsiders which renders their representation scarcely beneficial. Coherently, during the years of the First Republic (1947-1992) Italian parties not only failed to mitigate dualism but contributed to widening it. In these years, party competition was structured around three poles, with the DC (*Democrazia Cristiana),* since 1960s in organic alliance with the Socialist Party, at the center and two anti-system parties, the neo-fascist MSI (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*) and the communist PCI (*Partito Comunista Italiano*), at the extremes. This configuration worked against the adoption of universalistic social benefits, promoting competition within the left camp for the support of unionized workers. The result was a 'workerist' system of social insurance and labour market reforms benefiting unionized blue-collar workers (see Ferrera and Gualmini, 2004), coexisting with severe regulations limiting the use of fixed-term contracts and other forms of sub-employment. Besides sheltering insiders from competition (see Lindbeck and Snower, 1989), these regulations kept the share of workers in atypical employment low.

This situation gradually changed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when encompassing labour market reforms were approved to prepare the country's entrance in the European Monetary Union. Landmarks in this process were the Treu law (1997) and the Biagi reform (2003), adopted by center-left and center-right governments. The former provided an institutional framework for the resort to temporary employment and reduced disincentives to the use of fixed-term contracts. The latter further liberalized atypical employment via the institutionalization of new forms of atypical work arrangements. These reforms marked a shift away from the traditional concern for the security and income-protection of insiders, but left the core of protected workers virtually untouched. It was only in the aftermath of the financial crisis that retrenchment of insiders' rights begun. Following recommendations from the European Central Bank, the technocratic administration headed by Mario Monti promoted a package of austerity measures which included a structural reform of the labour market (Law 92/2012). With the alleged aim of removing structural obstacles to growth via the elimination of labour market rigidities, the first target of the reform was the loosening of insiders' protections. A first draft envisaged the elimination of the extensive short-term work (STW) schemes that, by ensuring the subsidization of temporary redundant employees in large firms, have long been considered the major source of

the *iper-garantismo* of Italian insiders. This proposal clashed with the fierce opposition of labour unions backed by the Democratic Party, and STW schemes for employees of large firms with more than 15 employees were maintained. Nonetheless, insider protections were significantly loosened via the weakening of legislation protecting workers with open-ended contracts from unfair dismissal (see Picot and Tassinari, 2017). In addition, the reform further liberalized atypical employment, eliminating the obligation to justify the stipulation of temporary contracts up to 1 year of duration.

In this phase, the actions undertaken by the Democratic Party were roughly in line with the predictions from Rueda's model. Despite its embrace of the flexibilization agenda in the 1990s, the party continued flanking labour unions for the protection of insiders' long-standing rights. This changed radically under the leadership of Matteo Renzi, elected party leader in December 2013. Renzi promoted a comprehensive reform, named Jobs Act, that substantially reduced insiders' protections by decentralizing the bargaining process and weakening firing rules. Most notably, it eliminated the obligation to the reinstatement of workers in case of unfair dismissal and limited the possibility to resort to those same STW benefits for the protection of which the Democratic party had mobilized in 2011.

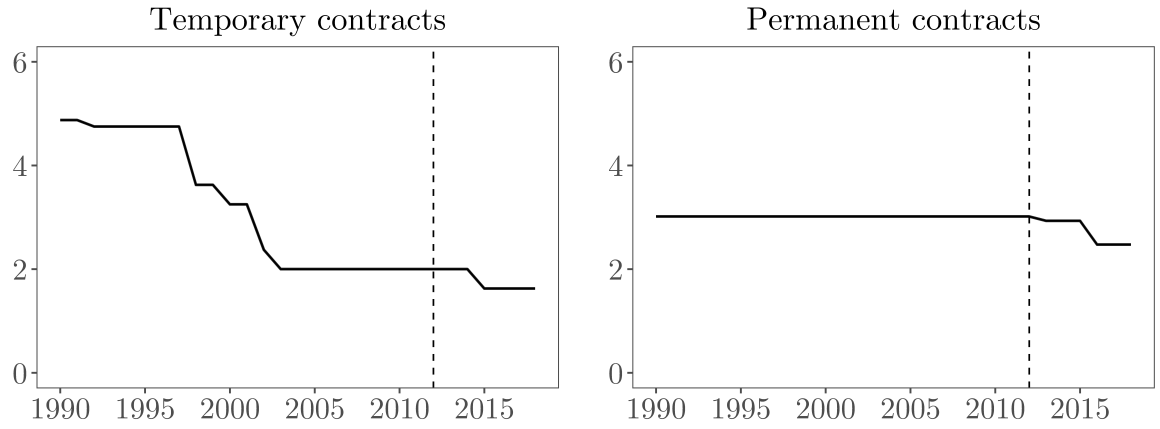
The approval of liberalizing reforms at the hands of the Democratic party raises the question of why a social democratic party should promote market-oriented policies that undermine the interests of its core constituency. This puzzle is neither new nor limited to the Italian case, as similar policies have been implemented by social democratic governments across Western Europe since the 1980s. Different explanations have been proposed. Following Klitgaard (2007), the shift of social democrats towards the promotion of market-oriented policies is aimed at the protection of their main political weapon, the welfare state, when its legitimacy is threatened by the persistence of poor economic performance and high levels of unemployment. Alternatively, Beramendi et al. (2015) attribute the shift to a change in the preferences of their voters away from social consumption towards social investment, change driven by the growing weight of highly educated individuals in their electorates (see also Gingrich & Häusermann 2015). The latter mechanism, partially modified, reasonably applies to the Italian case. Educated voters came to constitute a core constituency of the Democratic party (see Maraffi, 2018), and the Jobs Act has been interpreted as part of a broader strategy by the PD to gather the support from highly educated and upper classes. Although the liberalization of the labour market was promoted in combination with consumption-oriented policies, in fact, these policies were targeted to gather support from upper groups (Vesan and Ronchi, 2019).

Summing up, the precarization of the Italian labour market occurred in two stages. At first, reforms took place at the margins, institutionalizing the use of atypical work arrangements, enhancing employers' capability to resort to temporary contracts, and ex-

panding unemployment protection coverage to the widening group of atypical workers. In this phase the Democratic Party, in joint action with labour unions, defended insiders' interests, which is in line with the original formulation of the insider-outsider partisanship model. By 2012, however, the technocratic administration of Mario Monti and the democratic administration of Matteo Renzi caused a step change: the liberalization of atypical employment continued, but it was sided by the loosening of pro-insider employment protection legislation. This two-stage process emerges clearly in Figure 5.1, which displays trends in the strictness of employment protections for permanent (left panel) and temporary (right panel) contracts. It shows that, in the time frame 1990-2018, the restrictions to employers' usage of temporary contracts declined steadily, while the strictness of the dismissal regulation of workers in permanent employment remained unchanged for most of the period, declining from 2012 onward.

This combination of an increasing number of workers in atypical employment and lowering protections for workers with permanent contracts contributed, in joint action with an economic crisis which fostered job destruction especially within younger cohorts

Figure 5.1: Strictness of employment protections, 1990-2018



Source: OECD (2020). *The OECD Employment Database*. The strictness of employment protections for **permanent contracts** is the average of four indicators that measure the strictness of the dismissal regulation of workers in permanent jobs (procedural requirements, notice and severance pay, regulatory framework for unfair dismissal and enforcement of unfair dismissal regulation). The strictness of employment protections for **temporary contracts** is the average of indicators that measure the restrictions to employers' usage of temporary contracts (e.g. the valid cases for the use of fixed term contracts, maximum number of contract renewal and temporary contracts maximum (cumulated) duration). Both measures are constructed on a scale 0-6. The dotted line (drawn at 2012) signals the start of the second stage in the precarization of the Italian labour market.

(see Liotti, 2020), to the shift of the Italian labour market from dualism to generalized precarization. Following Hipp (2016), when the incidence of temporary employment is high, the more stringent the dismissal protections the higher the odds that workers do not worry about keeping their jobs. This evidence suggests that, in Italy, the weakening of the dismissal regulations and the concomitant liberalization of atypical employment created a fertile ground for the spread of perceived precarity. Following the reforms, not only the share of workers trapped in atypical and insecure jobs increased (among others, see Barbieri and Scherer, 2005; Brandolini et al., 2018; Baldini et al., 2019; Boeri and Garibaldi, 2019; Liotti, 2020), but permanent employment ceased to be a guarantee of security. In the dual system, a clear-cut division existed between the majority of workers in permanent employment and thus insulated from the risk of unemployment, and the minority of the unemployed and atypically unemployed. But as employment protections for workers with open-ended contracts loosen and the reserve army of the atypically employed and unemployed grows, the insiders are no longer sheltered by the actual and perceived risk of unemployment. Coherently, while at the beginning of the century only a marginal share of Italian workers feared job loss (16%), in 2018 concerned employees outnumbered their unconcerned counterparts (51%) (ITANES, 2001; 2018). This dramatic increase has not only been driven by the rising share of employees with temporary or atypical work arrangements (from 12% to 21% in the sample), but also by the spreading perception of precarity among permanent workers. In 2018, the 43% of employees on open ended contracts declared to have feared job loss, against the 12% in 2001.

5.3 Precarity and voting in the 2018 election

The shift towards generalized precarization calls into question core assumptions in the insider-outsider literature, and challenges the explanatory power of the model in contemporary Italy. First, as open-ended contracts are no longer guarantee against the actual and perceived vulnerability to unemployment, formal employment status might no longer be a reasonable predictor of policy preferences. Second, individuals in condition of occupational precarity can no longer be assumed to be a minority whose representation is not electorally beneficial. This raises the question of whether and how precarity influences voting behaviour in this newly changed context.

Concerning the first issue, studies that investigate the relationship between precarity and voting tend to focus just on formal employment status (for a review, see Schwander, 2019). This is justified on the grounds that different kinds of employment contracts and work arrangements entail different vulnerability to the risk of unemployment, which in

turn has an influence on policy preferences (see Rueda, 2005; and Lindvall and Rueda, 2012). This argument is reasonably sound when employment and income protection schemes grant insiders with high levels of job and income security. However, when employment protections decline permanent contracts no longer automatically shelter from the actual and perceived risk of unemployment, especially in a context of economic crisis and rising unemployment rates. It follows that perceptions of precarity and policy preferences can no longer be inferred by relying on information on workers' contractual arrangements (see also Lewchuk, 2017). In this context, 'the employment type describes the work (labour) organisation of special-type employees (for example, self-employed) or relations with the employer (for example, informal relations) but, admittedly, says nothing about the instability of the employee's social and economic situation' (Gasiukova and Shkaratan, 2019, p. 118). It follows that an operationalization of precarity based on formal employment status is bound to suffer a severe validity bias, especially when used by scholars interested in the impact of precarity on policy preferences and voting behaviour. In this context, the perception of insecurity concerning one's employment status is a better suited indicator of precarity than formal employment status and can be expected to hold more explanatory power in models of vote choice.

Concerning the second issue, the shift from dualism towards generalized precarization has important consequences for the representation of precarious workers. In the insider-outsider literature, the interests of labour market outsiders are assumed to be under-represented in the arena of policy making due to their low number and to the difficulties entailed in their mobilization, factors which render their representation hardly beneficial (see Rueda, 2005). In a context of generalized precarization, however, these obstacles are lifted. First, as precarity spreads the number of voters who can be attracted via the promotion of pro-outsiders policies increases. Second, when precarity is no longer prerogative of marginalized workers in peripheral sectors the interests of hardly mobilizable workers align with those of workers in unionized and core sectors. As a result, the electoral weight of precarious workers increases, creating incentives for political parties to represent their interests.

Not all parties, however, are equally equipped for, or likely to, mobilize the interests of precarious workers and attract their electoral support. Whether and how precarity influences vote choice is conditional on precarious workers considering some parties as responsible for their condition, and/or more willing or capable than others of improving their situation. In this respect, challenger parties seem to enjoy a comparative advantage over mainstream parties. Following Antonucci et al. (2021), the insecurity stemming from a vulnerable position in the labour market might pull voters away from mainstream towards anti-establishment options (symbolic mechanism). Precarious workers might also

refrain from mainstream parties because, by embracing the flexibilization agenda and converging on neoliberal and austerity policies, these parties are directly responsible of their increased insecurity. Conversely, they might turn to right wing challengers because these parties' welfare chauvinistic rhetoric attracts insecure voters who feel threatened by migrants' competition in the labour market, and to left wing challengers because these parties' radical stances against austerity measures and commitment towards redistribution directly addresses their economic insecurity (instrumental mechanism).

The instrumental and symbolic mechanisms theorized by Antonucci and co-authors can be reasonably expected to play out in Italy, although with some specifications. As for mainstream parties, since the 1990s both center-left and center-right parties have converged on the flexibilization agenda that contributed to spread insecurity among workers. This trend was exacerbated by the onset of the sovereign debt crisis, that severely affected the legitimacy of incumbent governments and mainstream parties. Across Southern Europe, the crisis prompted an 'electoral epidemic' marked by low levels of turnout, declining support for the incumbents, and diminishing trust (Bosco and Verney 2012) that soon turned into a government epidemic characterized by extreme electoral volatility and government instability (Bosco and Verney 2016; Hutter, Kriesi, and Vidal 2018). This loosened the ties between mainstream parties and their electorates (Marcos-Marne, Plaza-Colodro, and Freyburg 2020) and opened a niche for challenger parties to capitalize discontent against austerity and the need for a regeneration of the political system (Hutter, Kriesi, and Vidal 2018).

In this context, it is reasonable to expect a pull-out effect of precarity on support for mainstream parties. However, while the symbolic mechanism theorized by Antonucci et al. (2021) should work against the mainstream left *and* the mainstream right, the instrumental mechanism should work most strongly against mainstream left parties who hold the paternity of the most recent liberalizing reforms and are most exposed to blame-attribution due to their incumbent position at the time of the election. Based on these considerations, I expect that in the 2018 election, precarity has a negative effect on the probability to vote for mainstream parties, a negative effect which is stronger for parties in the center-left than for parties in the center-right coalition (hypothesis 1).

As for challenger parties, the convergence of mainstream parties on labour market deregulation can be expected to increase their appeal among precarious workers, which is in line with the symbolic mechanism theorized by Antonucci et al. (2021). Once again, however, the instrumental link should work most in favor of the left-wing challenger (i.e., the Five Star Movement) as compared to the right wing challengers.

The M5S was founded in 2009 by the comedian and activist Beppe Grillo and by the web entrepreneur Roberto Casaleggio. Although it is most renowned for its anti-

establishment and environmentalist stances, the movement is markedly pro-welfare (see also Vesan and Ronchi, 2019) and has been strongly committed against the precarization of the Italian labour market since its inception. Already in 2006, Grillo published 'Modern slaves: The precarious in the Italy of wonders (*Schiavi moderni: Il precario nell'Italia delle meraviglie*), a collection of short stories where precarious workers share their daily experiences of exploitation and insecurity. The book is an explicit critique against the reforming of the Italian labour market and the consequent precarization of Italian workers:

> The Biagi law introduced the precariat in Italy. A modern bubonic plague that affects workers, especially at a young age. Before it wasn't there, now it is. It turned work into timed projects. Salaries into charity. Rights into unreasonable claims. Everything became a project in order to apply the Biagi law and create the new modern slaves. (Grillo 2006, p. 6. Translation provided by the author).

In the comedian and activist's blog posts, the references to the emerging precariat were frequent, together with the call for the introduction of a citizenship income granting income security to all. In the 'Grillo's agenda' published in late December 2012, the measure ranked high in the 16 items list, second only to the introduction of an anti-corruption law (Grillo 2012). This commitment against precarity increased during the XVII legislature (2013-2018), when the Movement made a guaranteed minimum income measure named *Reddito di cittadinanza* (RdC) its flag policy and the pivot of the 2018 electoral campaign.

Although its name (literally 'citizenship income') seems to refer to a basic income guarantee that by definition is individual, universal and unconditional, the RdC is really a form of minimum income whose entitlement is subordinated to income and property criteria and to the adhesion to a process of work reintegration and social inclusion. The content of this measure and the rhetoric that surrounded it were clearly oriented towards attracting the vote of precarious workers so that, by centering its program around it, the M5S landed at the 2018 election presenting itself as the representative of this group. Once in government, the Movement lived up to its promises and confirmed its commitment against precarity: by 2019, the RdC entered into effect; in the same year, the *decreto dignitá* ('dignity decree') introduced measures limiting employers' capability to resort to temporary contracts, reducing temporary contracts' maximum duration and renewal period and strengthening regulations protecting workers from unfair dismissal. In addition, the *Decreto riders* was approved, which expanded employment and social protections for food-delivery couriers (see Carella and Marenco, 2022).

As concerns the right-wing challengers, Antonucci and colleagues (2021) theorize that their welfare chauvinistic stances should attract the support of precarious workers. In

addition, labour market outsiders have been theorized to overlap with the losers of globalization, and as such to represent one of their core constituencies. However, more recent studies show that such an overlap is largely mistaken (Häusermann, 2020) and that it is outsiderness, not exposure to international competition, the major driver of income and employment insecurities (Natili and Negri, 2022). Coherently, neither the League nor Brothers of Italy manifested a commitment towards the protection of precarious workers which resembles the one displayed by the M5S. It follows that, while the symbolic mechanism should equally benefit anti-establishment parties regardless of their ideology and programmatic positioning, the instrumental link should work especially in favor of the M5S. I therefore expect that, in the 2018 election, precarity has a positive effect on the probability to vote for challenger parties, a positive effect which is stronger for the Five Star Movement than for right wing challengers (hypothesis 2).

Finally, the impact of precarity on voting behaviour might be moderated by the individual's financial situation. Albeit sharing a condition of vulnerability in the labour market, precarious workers differ on a wide array of dimensions, including personal and household income. This creates differentials in the extent to which precarity is experienced as a limiting condition, and hence it is relevant in shaping vote choices. I hence hypothesize that, in the 2018 election, the effect of precarity on vote choice is larger when accompanied by financial hardship (hypothesis 3).

5.4 Data and operationalization

In order to test the above formulated hypotheses, I rely on survey data collected by ITANES in occasion of the 2018 general election and run multinomial logistic regression models testing the effect of perceived precarity on vote choice. I classify parties in four groups based on their ideology and mainstream or challenger status, relying on the definition of challenger developed by De Vries and Hobolt (2020) which includes parties without recent government experience. Based on these two criteria, I identify four party families: the mainstream left (the Democratic Party and other parties in the center-left coalition); the mainstream right (Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* and other parties in the center-right coalition); the challenger left (the Five Star Movement); and the challenger right (Brothers of Italy and the League, the latter being categorized as challenger due to the radical restructuring the party experienced under the leadership of Matteo Salvini).

The key explanatory variable in each model is respondents' perceived precarity in the labour market. I operationalize it by relying on the survey question *Over the last year, have you been afraid of losing your job?*. I classify respondents as precarious if they declared to have been very or somewhat afraid, as not-precarious otherwise; the

unemployed, to whom the question was not addressed, are all assigned to the 'afraid' category. This item is well suited for measuring perceived precarity in that the fear of job loss is not an indicator of perceived job insecurity only, which refers to the perceived probability of job loss. It is also not an indicator of perceived employment insecurity only, which refers to the perceived availability of alternative jobs. Rather, it is the result from a combination of both types of insecurity, of the anxiety related to potential job loss and the concomitant fear of not finding a new job (see Hipp, 2016).

In each model, I control for formal employment status by relying on a categorical variable with four levels: self-employment (reference-category); permanent employment; temporary employment; and unemployment. This allows to isolate the effect of perceived precarity from the effect of formal employment status, and test whether perceived precarity *and / or* formal employment status influenced vote choice. Additionally, I control for a set of socio-demographic and attitudinal variables. As for socio-demographic factors, I control for age, gender, education level, region of residence, and union membership. The inclusion of age, gender and education is necessary since younger, female, and less educated individuals are over-represented among precarious workers. The region of residence is included because differences in vote trends across Italian regions exist, with the M5S being more successful in Southern regions where unemployment, poverty and social distress are more widespread (Maraffi, 2018; Brancaccio et al., 2019; Tuorto, 2019). Finally, union membership is controlled for because of its well-established correlation with employment security and left-wing voting. As for attitudinal factors, I control for respondents' self-positioning on the left-right scale, attitudes towards the European Union and immigration, trust in political parties, populist beliefs, and judgement of the performance of the incumbent government (the Democratic administration of Paolo Gentiloni) on economic issues, which allows to rule out the possibility that the relationship between perceived precarity and vote choice is driven by an incumbent effect: among individuals dissatisfied with their employment situation the incumbent gets the blame and loses, the opponent thrives.

Finally, economic hardship is operationalized as a dummy scoring 1 if the respondent declared to be facing difficulties in living with the family income, 0 otherwise. This variable is at first included as a control and, in the second stage, is interacted with perceived precarity.

5.5 Analysis and results

Prior to testing hypothesis, I examine the relationship between precarity and turnout. Mainstream theories of representation in dualized societies link the under representation

of outsiders by hands of political parties to outsiders' low levels of political participation. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate whether this argument still holds true in present-day Italy. To accomplish this, I utilize a binomial logistic regression model (Model 1) to estimate the impact of precarity on voter turnout. Results are reported in Table 5.1 as odds ratios, which indicate the relative likelihood to vote the party considered in the estimation as compared to the party used as reference category: odd ratios greater than 1 indicate a higher likelihood, odd ratios smaller than 1 indicate a lower likelihood. They show that precarity increased the likelihood of voting: specifically, the predicted probability that an average individual voted increases by 5.3 percentage points as they shift from being not afraid to being afraid, a positive effect which is not conditional on economic hardship, as proven by the non-significant interaction term in Model 7 (Table 5.2). This result challenges one of the key assumptions in the insider-outsider literature, and exposes the relevance of shedding light on the relationship between precarity and vote choice.

I then proceed testing the hypotheses concerning the impact of precarity on vote choice. I focus on respondents who voted and run multinomial regression models to estimate the effect of precarity on the probability to support a challenger over a mainstream party. Model 2 estimates the relative likelihood to support the M5S and a right-wing challenger over any mainstream party; Model 3 the relative likelihood to support a mainstream left and a mainstream right party over any challenger party. The coefficient estimates, reported in Table 1 as odds ratios, point in the expected direction, indicating that precarity increased the odds of voting for a challenger relative to a mainstream party. Specifically, results from Model 2 show that the odds of voting for a left-wing challenger (i.e., the M5S) over a mainstream party are 1.68 times greater for precarious than for non-precarious respondents and the odds of voting for a right wing challenger are 1.21 times greater, although the latter coefficient fails to reach statistical significance. Results from Model 3 show that the odds of voting for the mainstream left over a challenger are 0.54 times smaller for a precarious than for a non-precarious respondent and those of voting a mainstream right party 0.96 times smaller, although this coefficient is also not statistically significant.

The results from Models 2 and 3 allow to draw conclusions on the relative likelihood to support challenger *as compared to* mainstream parties. These models suggest that precarity fosters support for challenger over mainstream parties although the effect is only significant for the challenger and mainstream left. However, they do not allow to draw conclusions on the effect of precarity on the probability to support each party *per se*. To address this issue, I run a multinomial model (Model 4) where I disaggregate the dependent variable vote choice in four categories (regression coefficients are displayed in

Appendix D, Table D.2). I then calculate how the predicted probability of an average voter to support each party changes as he shifts from not precarious to precarious (Appendix D, Figure D.1) and display the change in these probabilities in Figure 5.2.

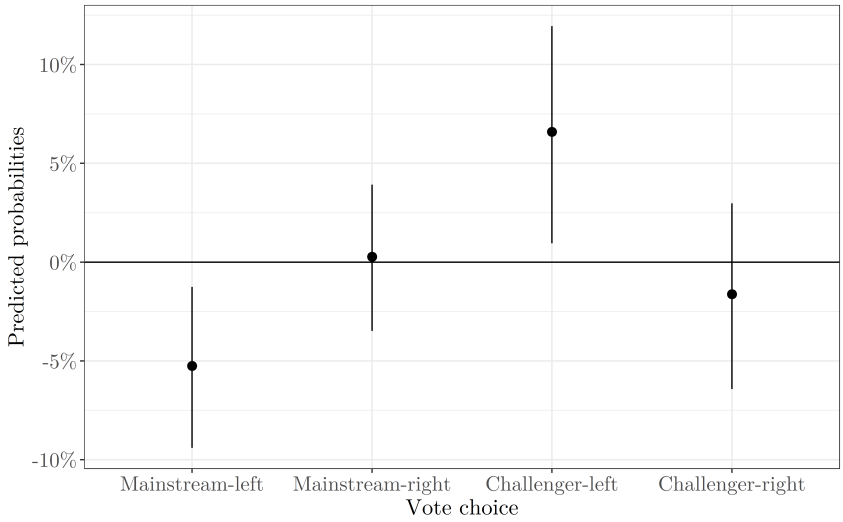
Table 5.1: Logistic regressions of turnout and vote choice (Models 1 to 3)

	(1)	(2)		(3)	
	turnout	chal. left vs mainstream	chal. right vs mainstream	main. left vs challenger	main. right vs challenger
Perceived precarity (no)	1.771**	1.679***	1.210	0.535**	0.964
	(0.225)	(0.198)	(0.243)	(0.256)	(0.273)
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)					
Permanent contract	1.543*	2.087***	0.811	0.727	0.601*
	(0.262)	(0.249)	(0.278)	(0.312)	(0.302)
Atypical contract	1.020	1.253	0.784	1.141	0.775
	(0.318)	(0.316)	(0.381)	(0.400)	(0.420)
Unemployed	0.872	0.834	0.580	1.624	1.048
	(0.358)	(0.356)	(0.438)	(0.446)	(0.469)
Age	1.034***	0.998	1.005	0.981*	1.004
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Gender	0.927	0.825	1.003	1.406	0.867
	(0.196)	(0.182)	(0.223)	(0.234)	(0.261)
Education	1.059	0.990	1.008	1.050	0.968
	(0.045)	(0.041)	(0.049)	(0.052)	(0.055)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)					
Centre	1.112	1.275	1.009	0.689	1.319
	(0.259)	(0.227)	(0.273)	(0.280)	(0.324)
South	0.941	1.865***	0.519**	0.444***	1.510
	(0.217)	(0.205)	(0.259)	(0.264)	(0.280)
Union member	1.408	1.168	1.534	0.874	0.830
	(0.251)	(0.213)	(0.270)	(0.265)	(0.318)
Ideology (ref. category: none)					
Left	1.009	0.319***	0.070***	4.453***	0.617
	(0.279)	(0.320)	(0.567)	(0.387)	(0.736)
Centre-left	2.603**	0.241***	0.050***	7.440***	0.938
	(0.382)	(0.322)	(0.610)	(0.392)	(0.731)
Centre	2.012	0.421**	0.453	2.722**	1.513
	(0.467)	(0.412)	(0.533)	(0.483)	(0.745)
Centre-right	1.018	0.372***	1.286	0.636	5.348***
	(0.301)	(0.355)	(0.399)	(0.484)	(0.494)
Ideology: Right (none)	2.725***	0.091***	1.174	0.263**	9.567***
	(0.334)	(0.345)	(0.362)	(0.566)	(0.468)
Attitudes: EU	1.045	0.517***	0.670**	2.219***	1.509**
	(0.146)	(0.134)	(0.157)	(0.184)	(0.175)

Attitudes: immigration	1.039	0.988	0.834***	1.095**	1.061
	(0.036)	(0.033)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.047)
Trust	1.071	0.959	1.090*	0.923	1.119**
	(0.047)	(0.042)	(0.051)	(0.053)	(0.056)
Populist attitudes	1.116	1.474***	1.480***	0.649***	0.756**
	(0.086)	(0.080)	(0.099)	(0.098)	(0.110)
Attitudes towards incumbent	0.967	0.722***	0.804***	1.863***	1.002
	(0.043)	(0.041)	(0.048)	(0.064)	(0.051)
Economic hardship (no)	0.909	1.209	1.171	0.842	0.881
	(0.205)	(0.182)	(0.231)	(0.228)	(0.266)
Constant	0.412	13.166***	2.734	0.010***	0.031***
	(0.800)	(0.791)	(0.936)	(1.034)	(1.048)
Observations	1,569	1,101		1,101	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	887.731	1,634.373	1,634.373	1,143.236	1,143.236

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odds ratios. Reference categories in brackets.
Notes: Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 5.2: Differences in the predicted probability of supporting a specific party family as a result of a shift in voter status from secure to precarious



The results of the analysis show that precarity had a significant effect on the probability of supporting the Five Star Movement, increasing it, and the Democratic Party, decreasing it. However, precarity did not have a significant effect on the probability of supporting either mainstream or challenger right parties. These findings support hypotheses 2 and 3 and align with the instrumental mechanism proposed by Antonucci et al. (2021). They show that precarious workers did not turn to challenger parties indiscriminately, but were drawn to the party that advocated for policies that directly safeguarded their interests. This indicates that it is not challenger and mainstream status *per se* that attracted or repelled precarious workers (the symbolic mechanism proposed by Antonucci

and colleagues), but rather instrumental considerations.

Concerning the effect on formal employment status, the results indicate that being in a permanent employment relationship increases the probability of supporting the M5S over a mainstream left party, although this effect is only statistically significant at the 0.10 confidence level. This result may seem counter-intuitive at first, as employees in standard employment relationships have been long considered the core-constituency of social democratic parties. However, it is in line with the consideration that the security of permanently employed individuals has been undermined by reforms promoted by the Democratic Party since 2014. As a result, it is reasonable for these voters to turn to the M5S, which spoke out against the trend towards flexibilization. In addition, neither unemployment nor atypical employment status increased the probability of supporting the M5S over any other party, a finding that holds even when perceived precarity is excluded from the models (Model 5, Table D.3 in Appendix D).

The lack of any significant effect of formal employment status on vote choice in Model 5 corroborates the expectation that perceived precarity, not formal employment status, is the most meaningful predictor of vote choice in contemporary Italy. However, formal employment status might be significant in that the effect of perceived precarity might vary across employment categories. To account for this possibility, I run an additional model which includes an interaction term between perceived precarity and formal employment status (Model 6, Table D.4 in Appendix D). The interaction term is not statistically significant, with one exception: the positive effect of permanent employment on the probability to support a mainstream right party over a mainstream left party is stronger for those who perceive their condition as precarious than for those who do not. This result is in line with the consideration that the reforms promoted by the PD since 2014 have directly undermined the employment security of the permanently employed, which makes it reasonable for the negative effect of permanent employment on mainstream left support to be stronger for those who perceive their condition as insecure.

In conclusion, I test whether the impact of precarity on voting behaviour is conditional on income security, i.e., stronger among the economically vulnerable and weaker among the financially sound, by running a model which includes an interaction term between precarity and economic hardship (Model 8). Results, displayed in Table 5.2, contradict hypothesis 3: interaction coefficients are non-significant, which indicates that the effect of precarity on vote choice is not conditional on economic hardship. This suggests that precarity has become relevant in shaping vote choice regardless of whether it is accompanied by financial distress.

Table 5.2: Logistic regressions of turnout and vote choice (Models 7 to 8)

	(7)	(8)		
	turnout	mainstream right vs mainstream left	challenger left vs mainstream left	challenger right vs mainstream left
Perceived precarity (no)	2.385***	1.116	2.341**	1.534
	(0.329)	(0.475)	(0.332)	(0.417)
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)				
Permanent contract	1.524	0.605	1.823*	0.631
	(0.262)	(0.423)	(0.326)	(0.379)
Atypical contract	1.022	0.560	1.044	0.601
	(0.319)	(0.563)	(0.408)	(0.495)
Unemployed	0.885	0.521	0.709	0.430
	(0.358)	(0.624)	(0.456)	(0.557)
Age	1.034***	1.027*	1.016	1.026*
	(0.009)	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.014)
Gender (Female)	0.934	0.644	0.713	0.841
	(0.196)	(0.342)	(0.237)	(0.290)
Education	1.057	0.922	0.957	0.960
	(0.045)	(0.075)	(0.054)	(0.065)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)				
Centre	1.132	1.782	1.522	1.284
	(0.260)	(0.421)	(0.288)	(0.353)
South	0.938	2.347**	2.756***	0.847
	(0.217)	(0.376)	(0.268)	(0.333)
Union member (No)	1.038	1.133	1.126	1.502
	(0.251)	(0.411)	(0.271)	(0.344)
Ideology (ref. category: none)				
Left	0.991	0.135**	0.265***	0.064***
	(0.280)	(0.802)	(0.392)	(0.618)
Centre-left	2.594**	0.114***	0.164***	0.038***
	(0.383)	(0.799)	(0.396)	(0.659)
Centre	2.007	0.516	0.361**	0.440
	(0.468)	(0.836)	(0.495)	(0.605)
Centre-right	1.012	7.197***	1.008	3.677**
	(0.302)	(0.652)	(0.490)	(0.530)
Right	2.753***	30.051***	1.141	13.995***
	(0.334)	(0.708)	(0.585)	(0.602)
Attitudes: EU	1.058	0.700	0.428***	0.530***
	(0.146)	(0.254)	(0.188)	(0.222)
Attitudes: immigration	1.038	0.928	0.946	0.796***
	(0.036)	(0.061)	(0.043)	(0.054)
Trust	1.068	1.279***	1.053	1.240***
	(0.048)	(0.076)	(0.054)	(0.066)
Populist attitudes	1.118	1.169	1.568***	1.587***

	(0.086)	(0.143)	(0.100)	(0.127)
Attitudes: incumbent	0.968	0.544***	0.532***	0.550***
	(0.043)	(0.081)	(0.065)	(0.074)
Economic hardship (no)	1.167	0.555	1.466	1.184
	(0.285)	(0.541)	(0.337)	(0.422)
Perceived precarity x	0.586	2.747	0.738	0.981
Eco. hardship	(0.415)	(0.701)	(0.461)	(0.574)
Constant	0.371	4.471	62.164***	17.941**
	(0.805)	(1.427)	(1.054)	(1.250)
Observations	1,569		1,101	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	888.032		1,765.629	

Notes: Coefficients are displayed as odd ratios. Reference categories in brackets.
Notes: Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Robustness checks

In order to increase confidence in the results, I replicate the analysis employing a series of alternative model specifications. First, I replicate models 2 to 4 while coding the League as mainstream right party (Models 2b to 4b). This allows testing whether Brothers of Italy, the only party other than the M5S without government experience, attracted the support of precarious workers. Results, displayed in Tables D.5 and D.6 in Appendix D, are consistent with the results from the main models. The effects of precarity on support for the M5S and the mainstream left remain significant, while no significant effect emerges for the challenger or mainstream right. This reinforces the conclusion that precarious workers did not turn indistinctly to anti-establishment and opposition parties, but to the one challenger that committed itself to the promotion of policies that directly safeguard their interests.

Second, I replicate models 1 to 4 on the sub-sample of respondents excluding the unemployed (Models 1c to 4c, Tables D.7 and D.8 in Appendix D), since the decision to include the unemployed in the 'afraid' category entails the risk that the correlation between precarity and vote choice may be driven by the inclusion of the unemployed in the 'afraid' category. Once again, however, coefficient estimates retain direction and significance.

Finally, I replicate the analysis while including respondents' recall of their vote choice in the 2013 general election among the controls (Models 1d to 4d, Tables D.9 and D.10 in Appendix D). Albeit with reduced significance, the main effects are confirmed after this rather demanding robustness check.

5.6 Discussion and conclusion

In Italy, precarity has become the new normal. In over twenty years of economic crisis and labour market reforms, employment protections have been cut back, permanent employment has declined, and 'flexible' work-arrangements have become more and more common. This restructuring of the Italian labour market was justified as the necessary response to slow growth, dualism, and rising unemployment, and the resulting precarization disguised as flexibility. Telling in this respect are the words of the at-times prime minister Mario Monti, who not only declared 'young people must get used to the idea that they will not have a permanent job for life', but also added 'let's say it, [permanent employment] is tedious' (la Repubblica 2012; translation provided by the author).

Although this trend is widely acknowledged among economists and in the popular media, research is still needed to shed light on its political implications. This is especially urgent in a context where the Italian (and European) electoral landscape is being radically restructured by the rise and success of challenger parties, success that has been recently hypothesized to be linked to spreading precarization. In this chapter, I contribute to the emerging body of literature which investigates the relationship between these two trends, while shedding light on the political implications of precarization in the Italian context.

First, I retrace the restructuring of the Italian labour market by focusing on the role played by political parties in its flexibilization, flexibilization that led to a shift from a situation of dualism to one of generalized precarization. Second, I build on a recent contribution by Antonucci et al. (2021) to formulate hypotheses on the impact of precarity on voting behaviour in this changed context. I empirically test these hypotheses by investigating the impact of precarity on the party preferences of Italian workers in the 2018 general election.

Three conclusions can be drawn from the analysis. First, the results show that, in a context of generalized precarization, it is perceived precarity, not formal employment status, the relevant driver of vote choice. This calls for measurement approaches that move beyond the rigid dichotomy which distinguishes secure from precarious workers based on the permanency of their employment contracts. Second, they show that precarity increases, rather than decreases, the odds of voting. This finding is in line with evidence by Marx and Picot (2013) and contradicts well-established assumptions about outsiders' low levels of political participation, to which was attributed the systematic under-representation of precarious workers' interests by hands of political parties. Therefore, the here reported evidence of above-average participation rates from outsiders is a crucial indicator of the increased electoral relevance of this group. Third, the study shows that the perception of precarity increased the odds of supporting the Five Star Movement,

a party committed to the fight against precarity, and decreased the odds of supporting the coalition headed by the Democratic Party. This result suggests that precarious workers can be effectively mobilized on the grounds of shared interests, which makes their representation electorally beneficial.

Although these findings shed some light on the relationship between precarity and voting, further research is warranted. The analysis stops in the very beginning of the M5S government experience, so that the question of whether precarious workers can represent a loyal constituency for the Movement remains open. Results from the 2022 election seem to provide an affirmative answer: the M5S was once again most successful in electoral districts with lowest median income and occupation rate; the Democratic party performed best in the electoral districts with good economic and employment indicators; and a less clear demographic pattern emerged for the center-right supporters (Saporiti 2022).

In addition, the findings raise the question of whether the successful performance of the M5S in the 2018 election will push other parties towards the representation of precarious workers. This issue is directly tied to the question of whether the M5S has been (or will be) able to become the 'owner' of the issue of precarity in the eyes of the electorate. Literature investigating the determinants of the success of challenger parties have in fact shown that the enduring success of challenger parties is conditional on issue ownership (see Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015), which is also found to be the condition for established parties to emphasize that issue in their policy agenda (see De Vries and Hobolt 2020, Abou-Chadi 2016). While these studies have been conducted focusing on the issues of immigration and European integration, it is reasonable to expect that these arguments also apply to a pressing social, economic, and political issue such as precarity.

Finally, although this chapter has focused on a single country and its conclusions are limited to the Italian context, the trends here detected are not country specific. They are shared with other Southern European countries where precarity has spread and left-wing challengers have obtained electoral successes comparable to the ones of the M5S, while also relying on a critique against precarity. Thus, further research on the electoral relevance of precarious workers in the region is warranted.

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CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

Precarity is on the rise in post-industrial societies. As employment protections are retrenched and flexible working contracts proliferate, a growing share of citizenry is deprived from security and stability. The economic, societal, and psychological repercussions of this trend have been extensively investigated, but its political implications are uncertain. Numerical growth increases the electoral weight of precarious workers, but for the precariat *as a group* to become politically relevant its members need to be collectively mobilized. Shedding light on the political implications of precarization hence requires understanding *whether, and under what conditions, the mobilization of precarious workers is feasible and profitable for vote-maximizing parties*, and therefore likely to occur.

In this dissertation, I provide theoretical explanations and empirical evidence that answer this question. In the first empirical chapter, I provide an overview of the shift of Western European labour markets away from dualism towards generalized precarization and develop a novel measurement strategy that captures precarity via an estimation of an individual's vulnerability in the labour market. This novel measurement strategy allows to capture the latent concept precarity quantitatively, and to conduct the large-N, cross-sectional analyses that are needed to shed light on its political implications. I then resort to this measurement strategy to investigate the mobilization potential of the precariat, that is, its inherent capacity to be collectively mobilized. In the second chapter, I investigate whether precarious workers are aware of their shared interests and can therefore be mobilized by political parties on this common ground. In the third chapter, I investigate the impact of precarity on the propensity to political engagement and can therefore be expected to respond to parties' mobilization effort. The analyses reveal that precarious workers are both aware of their interests and display an above-average propensity to participate in politics via non-institutional channels. Jointly, these results indicate that mobilizing the precariat might be feasible and profitable for vote-

maximizing parties. In the last empirical chapter, I corroborate this conclusion via a case study of the 2018 Italian election, when the Five Star Movement centered its electoral campaign around a policy directly benefiting precarious workers. This case shows us that, when a mobilization effort directed at the precariat has in fact been conducted, it has demonstrated to be electorally beneficial.

Countering the traditional understanding of the precariat as an alienated minority whose representation is scarcely beneficial for political parties, the results from these four chapters reveal that precarious workers are not only numerous (and growing), but also aware of their interests, politically engaged, and ready to support parties that advocate for their interests. These results hold theoretical implications, adding to the debate that surrounds the emergence of the precariat as a political actor and improving our understanding of the political implications of precarization. In political systems where calculations of electoral return are crucial determinants of political parties' representation efforts, these results also hold normative and practical importance: by unveiling the electoral benefits entailed in the representation of the precariat, they provide an incentive for political parties to engage in such a representation effort and thus break the vicious cycle of economic and political inequality that has long enmeshed those who suffer from a disadvantaged position within the labour market.

6.2 Avenues for future research

The analyses conducted in this dissertation constitute a leap forward in our understanding of the political implications of precarization in Western Europe. However, further research is needed to understand whether the mobilization potential of the precariat is in fact being exploited by political parties, and whether this group is in fact emerging as a politically cohesive actor. Addressing these issues requires investigating *whether*, *which*, and *how* political parties are mobilizing precarious workers, as well as the effectiveness of these efforts in the construction of precarity as a social identity.

In the introduction of this dissertation I discuss the key role of induction for the emergence of a social group as a politically relevant subject. Rejecting a deterministic understanding of the political repercussions of social change, I adopt a constructivist perspective according to which a social group becomes politically relevant only when it is mobilized as such. In this process, the *identity*, not only the existence, of the inducting agent is crucial, as it contributes to give form to the political actor that emerges from the induction effort.

As of today, challenger parties seem to be taking over the mobilization of the precariat. Scholars like Guy Standing (2011) and Neal Curtis (2021) identify in the rhetorical claims

of the new far right an appeal to the sentiments of anxiety of its members. At the same time, appeals to the precariat are made by political parties that challenge the establishment from the left of the ideological spectrum. As I write, the Italian Five Star Movement has launched on its social media platforms the hashtag *#BastaVitePrecarie* (#StopPrecariousLives), making an ever-more explicit appeal to the Italian precariat. Beyond Italy, similar efforts have been conducted by *Podemos* in Spain, *Syriza* in Greece, and *La France Insoumise* in France.

As extensively discussed in the fourth empirical chapter of this dissertation, the outsider status of these parties provides them with a competitive advantage in the mobilisation of the precariat over mainstream parties (Antonucci, 2018), including social democratic parties characterized by a decades-long commitment to labourism and workfare (Standing, 2018). However, whether it will be left or right wing challengers that will successfully take ownership of this pressing social issue is an open issue that deserves further investigation. It will determine whether the precariat will emerge as a progressive force united beyond national boundaries against the erosion of social rights, for the renovation of outdated welfare systems, and for the redistribution of the gains and losses of neoliberal globalization, or rather as the dangerous class theorized by Guy Standing, a reactionary and nationalist force whose anxiety and dissatisfaction are unloaded on outsider scapegoats.

Alongside the investigation into the identity of the mobilizing agents, future research should also investigate *how* this mobilization effort is being conducted. Over the past decades, research on party competition has overwhelmingly focused on how political parties position themselves relative to voters' preferences, following a logic of proximity, salience, framing, ownership, or selective emphasis (Meguid, 2008; Elias et al. 2015). However, political parties can compete for the electoral support of a group by resorting to both interest-based appeals (catering to its members' policy preferences) and to group-based appeals (catering to its members' feeling of group belonging) (Thau, 2019; Dolinski, 2022; Huber, 2022; Haffert, 2023). The chosen strategy is consequential: following a constructivist perspective, social identities are shaped through the very act of representation (Wolkenstein, 2021), so that group-based appeals can contribute to identity formation. In turn, the existence of a social identity facilitates political cohesion, and the establishment of a lasting electoral alignment between the group and the party which claims to represent it (Huddy, 2013).

In the light of these considerations, the question of whether political parties mobilize precarious workers by resorting to interest- or identity- based appeals is crucial. If mobilizing agents resort to interest-based appeals only, the political actor that will likely emerge from this mobilization effort is a group of atomized individuals tied together by

instrumental considerations, whose allegiances are likely to shift easily. If, however, mobilizing agents also resort to group-based appeals that elicit a sense of group belonging among the members of the precariat, their mobilization effort can lead to the emergence of a cohesive actor whose members are united by sentiments of group belonging. These sentiments might facilitate the establishment of a stable tie between the group and the mobilizing agent which resembles the privileged relationship between the working class and social democrats in the post-war period.

Empirically, addressing these issues calls for an in-depth investigation into political parties' programs and communication materials, as well as an investigation into voters' perceptions concerning which party, if any, best represents (or is committed to) precarious workers. Research should also investigate the effectiveness of these appeals for identity formation and ask whether a latent or manifest precarious identity already exists among the members of the precariat. Surveys, interviews, experiments, and focus groups are all suitable tools for collecting information on whether individuals perceive and identify themselves as precarious, as well as on how this identity ranks in salience, how its meaning varies across subjects and contexts, and whether it assumes positive or negative connotations.

In conclusion, the mobilization of the precariat at the hands of political parties can award this social group with representation in the electoral arena. However, the transformation of this representation into tangible improvements in the living and working conditions of the precariat hinges on the ability of the political forces representing it to secure a parliamentary majority. Yet, achieving such a majority is virtually impossible without resorting to cross-class alliances (see Przeworski, 1980). This consideration prompts investigation into whether and under what conditions precarious workers can form alliances with other social groups. Following Esping-Andersen, we need to think in terms of social *relations*, not social *categories*, as 'the structure of class coalitions is much more decisive than are the power resources of any single class' (1990, p. 116).

6.3 Final remark

The epigraph of this dissertation reads 'If political rights are necessary to set social rights in place, social rights are indispensable to keep political rights in operation. The two rights need each other for their survival; that survival can only be their joint achievement' (Bauman, 2007, p. 66). These words by Zygmunt Bauman enclose the significance of my research. By directly and indirectly contributing to the recommodification of labour, the precarization trend does not only jeopardize hard-won social achievements but also poses a threat to the exercise of fundamental political rights. As the forces driving this trend

are unlikely to abide any time soon, understanding whether and how precarious workers can assert their voices and take meaningful action not only is crucial for shedding light on contemporary labour and party dynamics, but is also pivotal for the future of our democracies.

6.4 References

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APPENDIX A

Table A.1: Predictor variables

Variable	**Levels**
Gender	Male
	Female
Age	20-65 by five years bands (20-24; 25- 29...)
Education	ISCED 0-2: Low
	ISCED 3-4: Medium
	ISCED 5-8: High
Migrant status	Native
	Not native
Professional status	Employee
	Family worker
	Self-employed
Occupation	ISCO 1: Managers
	ISCO 2: Professionals
	ISCO 3: Technicians and associate professionals
	ISCO 4: Clerical support workers
	ISCO 5: Service and sales workers
	ISCO 6: Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers
	ISCO 7: Craft and related trades workers
	ISCO 8: Plant and machine operators and assemblers
	ISCO 9: Elementary occupations
	ISCO 0: Armed forces occupations
Sector	NACE A: Agriculture, forestry and fishing
	NACE B: Mining and quarrying
	NACE C: Manufacturing
	NACE D: Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
	NACE E: Water supply; Sewerage, waste management and remediation activities
	NACE F: Construction
	NACE G: Wholesale and retail trade; Repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles

	NACE H: Transportation and storage
	NACE I: Accommodation and food service activities
	NACE J: Information and communication
	NACE K: Financial and insurance activities
	NACE L: Real estate activities
	NACE M: Professional, scientific and technical activities
	NACE N: Administrative and support service activities
	NACE O: Public administration and defence; Compulsory social security
	NACE P: Education
	NACE Q: Human health and social work activities
	NACE R: Arts, entertainment and recreation
	NACE S: Other service activities
	NACE T: Activities of households as employers; Undifferentiated goods and services producing activities of households for own use
	NACE U: Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies
Firm size	Below 10 employees
	Above 10 employees

Table A.2: Bayesian logistic regressions of precarity

	Austria	Belgium	Finland	France	Germany	Ireland	Italy
(Intercept)	-1.99	-0.66	-2.02	-0.34	-0.88	-1.70	1.12
	[-2.40, -1.60]	[-1.30, -0.11]	[-2.98, -1.06]	[-0.51, -0.17]	[-1.10, -0.67]	[-2.03, -1.38]	[0.93, 1.32]
Gender (reference category: male)							
Female	0.22	0.14	0.18	0.50	0.14	0.10	0.62
	[0.15, 0.28]	[0.05, 0.23]	[0.04, 0.33]	[0.47, 0.54]	[0.11, 0.17]	[0.03, 0.18]	[0.59, 0.65]
Age (reference category: $20-24$)							
25-29	-0.52	-1.11	-0.71	-1.26	-0.97	-0.74	-0.77
	[-0.62, -0.44]	[-1.22, -0.98]	[-0.92, -0.50]	[-1.31, -1.21]	[-1.01, -0.93]	[-0.86, -0.62]	[-0.85, -0.70]
30-34	-1.09	-1.77	-1.28	-1.89	-1.60	-1.28	-1.48
	[-1.18, -0.99]	[-1.92, -1.64]	[-1.51, -1.05]	[-1.95, -1.84]	[-1.65, -1.55]	[-1.40, -1.16]	[-1.55, -1.42]
35-39	-1.37	-2.10	-1.78	-2.23	-2.02	-1.43	-1.81
	[-1.48, -1.27]	[-2.24, -1.97]	[-2.02, -1.55]	[-2.29, -2.17]	[-2.07, -1.96]	[-1.55, -1.31]	[-1.87, -1.74]
40-44	-1.57	-2.26	-2.05	-2.41	-2.23	-1.30	-1.99
	[-1.68, -1.46]	[-2.41, -2.13]	[-2.29, -1.78]	[-2.47, -2.35]	[-2.28, -2.17]	[-1.41, -1.18]	[-2.06, -1.93]
45-49	-1.45	-2.45	-2.34	-2.49	-2.28	-1.18	-2.08
	[-1.55, -1.34]	[-2.61, -2.30]	[-2.62, -2.08]	[-2.54, -2.43]	[-2.34, -2.23]	[-1.30, -1.06]	[-2.15, -2.02]
50-54	-1.42	-2.61	-2.19	-2.62	-2.33	-1.20	-2.28
	[-1.52, -1.32]	[-2.76, -2.43]	[-2.46, -1.96]	[-2.67, -2.56]	[-2.39, -2.28]	[-1.32, -1.08]	[-2.35, -2.22]
55-59	-1.57	-2.88	-2.59	-2.69	-2.37	-1.30	-2.52
	[-1.68, -1.47]	[-3.06, -2.70]	[-2.86, -2.32]	[-2.76, -2.64]	[-2.43, -2.32]	[-1.44, -1.18]	[-2.59, -2.45]
60-64	-1.74	-2.91	-2.51	-2.45	-2.36	-1.48	-2.70
	[-1.92, -1.56]	[-3.22, -2.62]	[-2.81, -2.18]	[-2.52, -2.37]	[-2.43, -2.29]	[-1.64, -1.31]	[-2.78, -2.62]
Education (reference category: ISCED $1-2$)							
ISCED 3-4	-0.42	-0.34	0.03	-0.33	-0.56	-0.47	-0.18
	[-0.50, -0.34]	[-0.45, -0.23]	[-0.23, 0.30]	[-0.37, -0.29]	[-0.61, -0.52]	[-0.57, -0.38]	[-0.22, -0.15]
ISCED 5-8	-0.28	-0.31	-0.04	-0.46	-0.57	-0.65	0.10
	[-0.38, -0.19]	[-0.46, -0.16]	[-0.32, 0.26]	[-0.51, -0.40]	[-0.62, -0.51]	[-0.75, -0.54]	[0.04, 0.15]
Migrant status (reference category: native)							

Not-native	0.51	0.76	0.71	0.60	0.51	0.14	-0.11
	[0.45, 0.59]	[0.66, 0.87]	[0.40, 1.01]	[0.54, 0.65]	[0.46, 0.55]	[0.04, 0.23]	[-0.15, -0.07]
Professional status (reference category: employee 1)							
Family worker	-2.40	-2.41	-0.63	-1.01	-3.78	-0.94	-2.50
	[-3.32, -1.59]	[-3.56, -1.44]	[-4.10, 1.39]	[-1.48, -0.59]	[-5.38, -2.82]	[-1.34, -0.60]	[-2.68, -2.34]
Self-employed	-3.17	-4.14	-4.24	-3.53	-4.54	-4.09	-3.38
	[-3.72, -2.67]	[-5.94, -2.92]	[-7.98, -2.57]	[-3.87, -3.26]	[-5.26, -3.97]	[-5.05, -3.38]	[-3.58, -3.20]
Sector (reference category: NACE A)							
NACE B	-0.27	-1.13	0.15	-0.76	-0.36	0.80	-2.20
	[-1.36, 0.57]	[-3.39, 0.26]	[-2.01, 1.70]	[-1.24, -0.31]	[-0.82, 0.02]	[0.21, 1.37]	[-2.65, -1.79]
NACE C	-0.03	-0.73	0.56	-0.36	-0.15	0.18	-1.85
	[-0.38, 0.33]	[-1.22, -0.15]	[-0.20, 1.46]	[-0.50, -0.22]	[-0.32, 0.03]	[-0.07, 0.44]	[-1.94, -1.77]
NACE D	0.19	-1.44	1.28	-0.67	-0.28	-0.47	-2.08
	[-0.37, 0.75]	[-2.52, -0.51]	[0.28, 2.37]	[-0.93, -0.39]	[-0.53, -0.03]	[-1.29, 0.15]	[-2.33, -1.87]
NACE E	0.26	-1.42	-0.27	-0.43	-0.07	0.44	-1.72
	[-0.32, 0.80]	[-2.16, -0.67]	[-2.13, 1.25]	[-0.64, -0.23]	[-0.36, 0.19]	[-0.04, 0.92]	[-1.88, -1.57]
NACE F	0.55	-1.17	0.38	-0.35	-0.28	0.63	-1.65
	[0.18, 0.93]	[-1.69, -0.58]	[-0.38, 1.27]	[-0.49, -0.20]	[-0.47, -0.09]	[0.39, 0.91]	[-1.76, -1.54]
NACE G	0.50	-0.57	0.77	-0.49	0.15	0.44	-1.52
	[0.16, 0.86]	[-1.08, 0.01]	[0.03, 1.65]	[-0.63, -0.36]	[-0.03, 0.33]	[0.22, 0.70]	[-1.61, -1.43]
NACE H	0.49	-0.84	0.49	-0.51	0.21	0.16	-1.61
	[0.12, 0.88]	[-1.34, -0.24]	[-0.26, 1.35]	[-0.65, -0.36]	[0.01, 0.40]	[-0.11, 0.46]	[-1.72, -1.51]
NACE I	1.12	-0.09	0.97	-0.05	0.23	0.79	-0.55
	[0.76, 1.49]	[-0.60, 0.47]	[0.20, 1.88]	[-0.20, 0.10]	[0.04, 0.42]	[0.55, 1.06]	[-0.64, -0.46]
NACE J	0.35	-0.61	0.54	0.01	0.15	0.12	-1.78
	[-0.06, 0.78]	[-1.18, 0.00]	[-0.26, 1.45]	[-0.15, 0.18]	[-0.04, 0.35]	[-0.17, 0.43]	[-1.92, -1.65]
NACE K	0.07	-1.57	0.51	-0.64	-0.31	-0.15	-2.54
	[-0.35, 0.47]	[-2.26, -0.88]	[-0.38, 1.54]	[-0.81, -0.47]	[-0.52, -0.11]	[-0.48, 0.14]	[-2.69, -2.39]
NACE L	0.48	-0.48	0.90	-0.47	0.24	0.02	-1.34
	[-0.03, 0.98]	[-1.16, 0.25]	[-0.14, 1.97]	[-0.65, -0.29]	[-0.02, 0.53]	[-0.61, 0.56]	[-1.57, -1.12]

NACE M	0.47	-0.62	1.20	-0.22	0.33	0.34	-1.29
	[0.10, 0.83]	[-1.17, 0.01]	[0.45, 2.14]	[-0.38, -0.08]	[0.14, 0.52]	[0.07, 0.63]	[-1.39, -1.17]
NACE N	0.91	-0.17	0.92	0.17	0.59	0.70	-0.53
	[0.56, 1.27]	[-0.66, 0.39]	[0.22, 1.80]	[0.03, 0.30]	[0.40, 0.77]	[0.45, 0.98]	[-0.62, -0.44]
NACE O	0.89	-0.64	1.64	0.05	0.17	0.18	-2.05
	[0.54, 1.27]	[-1.14, -0.05]	[0.87, 2.52]	[-0.09, 0.18]	[-0.01, 0.35]	[-0.10, 0.46]	[-2.16, -1.94]
NACE P	1.50	0.71	2.14	0.62	1.09	1.16	-1.29
	[1.15, 1.88]	[0.19, 1.28]	[1.40, 3.05]	[0.48, 0.76]	[0.91, 1.28]	[0.92, 1.43]	[-1.39, -1.18]
NACE Q	1.19	-0.51	1.57	0.15	0.68	0.41	-1.42
	[0.84, 1.56]	[-1.01, 0.08]	[0.83, 2.45]	[0.01, 0.28]	[0.51, 0.86]	[0.17, 0.68]	[-1.51, -1.33]
NACE R	1.84	0.38	1.75	1.13	0.90	0.98	-0.47
	[1.47, 2.26]	[-0.17, 1.00]	[0.94, 2.65]	[0.96, 1.27]	[0.69, 1.10]	[0.70, 1.26]	[-0.59, -0.34]
NACE S	0.74	-0.79	1.93	0.43	0.41	0.45	-1.32
	[0.35, 1.13]	[-1.35, -0.18]	[1.15, 2.84]	[0.28, 0.58]	[0.21, 0.62]	[0.17, 0.77]	[-1.45, -1.22]
NACE T	0.64	-1.12	2.56	0.76	0.06	0.94	-0.90
	[0.04, 1.17]	[-2.39, 0.05]	[1.50, 3.67]	[0.61, 0.91]	[-0.18, 0.31]	[0.49, 1.44]	[-1.00, -0.80]
NACE U	2.73	0.19	2.23	0.19	0.28	-90.05	-1.37
	[2.11, 3.36]	[-0.38, 0.80]	[-1.12, 4.70]	[-0.40, 0.74]	[-0.38, 0.90]	[-295.39, -3.81]	[-1.91, -0.85]
Occupation (reference category: ISCO 1)							
ISCO 2	0.50	0.68	0.60	0.54	0.71	0.84	0.46
	[0.33, 0.68]	[0.42, 0.97]	[0.07, 1.14]	[0.43, 0.64]	[0.60, 0.81]	[0.64, 1.04]	[0.29, 0.65]
ISCO 3	0.16	0.60	0.48	0.82	0.45	0.80	0.27
	[-0.02, 0.35]	[0.34, 0.87]	[-0.06, 1.03]	[0.72, 0.92]	[0.34, 0.55]	[0.58, 1.04]	[0.08, 0.43]
ISCO 4	0.01	0.84	0.79	1.07	0.70	1.25	0.62
	[-0.17, 0.20]	[0.56, 1.12]	[0.27, 1.38]	[0.96, 1.17]	[0.59, 0.80]	[1.02, 1.48]	[0.43, 0.79]
ISCO 5	0.51	1.31	0.90	1.34	1.09	1.52	1.08
	[0.34, 0.70]	[1.05, 1.59]	[0.35, 1.48]	[1.24, 1.45]	[0.99, 1.20]	[1.33, 1.73]	[0.90,8 1.25]
ISCO 6	0.93	1.03	1.51	1.83	0.53	1.67	0.63
	[0.53, 1.29]	[0.43, 1.61]	[0.62, 2.38]	[1.69, 1.99]	[0.32, 0.72]	[1.32, 1.99]	[0.41, 0.83]
ISCO 7	0.12	1.04	0.51	1.28	0.65	0.83	0.90

	[-0.09, 0.32]	[0.74, 1.37]	[-0.07, 1.10]	[1.16, 1.39]	[0.53, 0.75]	[0.60, 1.10]	[0.72, 1.08]
ISCO 8	0.39	1.46	0.92	1.69	0.71	1.30	0.99
	[0.17, 0.61]	[1.17, 1.79]	[0.33, 1.57]	[1.59, 1.80]	[0.59, 0.83]	[1.02, 1.56]	[0.82, 1.18]
ISCO 9	0.76	1.58	1.40	2.09	1.20	1.58	1.70
	[0.59, 0.94]	[1.31, 1.86]	[0.83, 2.01]	[1.98, 2.18]	[1.09, 1.32]	[1.37, 1.81]	[1.52, 1.87]
ISCO 0	-0.20	-0.75	-0.36	0.53	1.82	-1.95	-0.44
	[-0.80, 0.39]	[-1.97, 0.20]	[-1.77, 0.84]	[0.32, 0.72]	[1.45, 2.19]	[-5.51, -0.14]	[-0.75, -0.11]
Firm size (reference category: Equal to or below 10)							
Above 10	-0.30	-0.25	-0.13	-0.34	0.06	-0.71	-0.39
	[-0.36, -0.23]	[-0.35, -0.15]	[-0.25, 0.00]	[-0.37, -0.31]	[0.02, 0.10]	[-0.78, -0.65]	[-0.42, -0.35]
Observations	77,609	36,011	9,990	174,951	226,109	50,585	16,3670
R squared	0.92	0.85	0.85	0.80	0.86	0.91	0.76
AU-ROC	0.752	0.802	0.774	0.798	0.778	0.774	0.817
	[0.752 - 0.753]	[0.802 - 0.803]	[0.772 - 0.776]	[0.798 - 0.798]	[0.778 - 0.778]	[0.772 - 0.776]	[0.817 - 0.817]

Notes: The Table presents 95% credible intervals in parentheses (80% for AU-ROC curves).

Table A.3: Bayesian logistic regressions of precarity

	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	United Kingdom
Intercept	-1.12	-0.02	0.98	-1.93	0.29	-4.14
	[-1.59, -0.69]	[-0.25, 0.22]	[0.59, 1.36]	[-2.19, -1.70]	[-0.12, 0.69]	[-5.41, -3.31]
Gender (reference category: male)						
Female	0.31	0.00	0.42	0.18	0.24	0.06
	[0.23, 0.39]	[-0.06, 0.04]	[0.36, 0.49]	[0.14, 0.22]	[0.15, 0.33]	[-0.04, 0.17]
Age (reference category: $20-24$)						
25-29	-0.57	-0.84	-0.72	-0.90	-1.08	-0.79
	[-0.69, -0.45]	[-0.95, -0.73]	[-0.88, -0.54]	[-0.96, -0.84]	[-1.24, -0.95]	[-0.95, -0.62]
30-34	-1.33	-1.68	-1.69	-1.48	-1.84	-0.97
	[-1.47, -1.20]	[-1.79, -1.58]	[-1.86, -1.52]	[-1.55, -1.42]	[-2.01, -1.66]	[-1.14, -0.79]
35-39	-1.74	-2.16	-1.99	-1.89	-2.13	-0.98
	[-1.90, -1.60]	[-2.25, -2.05]	[-2.14, -1.83]	[-1.95, -1.81]	[-2.29, -1.96]	[-1.15, -0.81]
40-44	-1.84	-2.39	-2.20	-2.18	-2.40	-1.17
	[-2.00, -1.70]	[-2.50, -2.29]	[-2.37, -2.03]	[-2.25, -2.11]	[-2.56, -2.23]	[-1.36, -0.99]
45-49	-1.93	-2.54	-2.39	-2.13	-2.33	-1.05
	[-2.07, -1.79]	[-2.65, -2.44]	[-2.55, -2.22]	[-2.20, -2.05]	[-2.50, -2.15]	[-1.23, -0.89]
50-54	-1.99	-2.61	-2.69	-2.28	-2.38	-1.03
	[-2.12, -1.85]	[-2.71, -2.50]	[-2.86, -2.52]	[-2.35, -2.21]	[-2.55, -2.23]	[-1.19, -0.85]
55-59	-2.01	-2.90	-2.94	-2.06	-2.53	-1.01
	[-2.17, -1.86]	[-3.02, -2.79]	[-3.11, -2.78]	[-2.12, -1.99]	[-2.73, -2.35]	[-1.19, -0.82]
60-64	-2.30	-2.77	-3.29	-1.91	-2.09	-0.71
	[-2.47, -2.14]	[-2.91, -2.64]	[-3.51, -3.07]	[-1.99, -1.84]	[-2.29, -1.91]	[-0.93, -0.51]
Education (reference category: ISCED $1-2$)						
ISCED 3-4	0.00	-0.05	-0.32	-0.24	-0.93	-0.11
	[-0.10, 0.11]	[-0.11, 0.00]	[-0.41, -0.23]	[-0.29, -0.19]	[-1.06, -0.80]	[-0.24, 0.01]
ISCED 5-8	0.17	0.42	-0.24	-0.20	-0.70	0.09
	[0.05, 0.29]	[0.33, 0.50]	[-0.33, -0.15]	[-0.26, -0.14]	[-0.85, -0.55]	[-0.04, 0.23]
Migrant status (reference category: native)						

Not-native	0.27	0.38	-0.07	0.88	0.45	0.66
	[0.08, 0.47]	[0.24, 0.51]	[-0.19, 0.06]	[0.81, 0.95]	[0.36, 0.54]	[0.53, 0.79]
Professional status (reference category: employee 1)						
Family worker	-1.64	-2.05	-2.88	-0.71	-2.15	-0.86
	[-2.70, -0.82]	[-2.48, -1.62]	[-3.56, -2.28]	[-1.26, -0.17]	[-2.91, -1.52]	[-2.28, 0.16]
Self-employed	-3.54	-4.54	-4.42	-3.31	-3.07	-1.82
	[-4.51, -2.86]	[-5.52, -3.80]	[-5.24, -3.77]	[-3.72, -2.94]	[-3.90, -2.39]	[-2.62, -1.18]
Sector (reference category: NACE A)						
NACE B	-1.32	-0.35	-1.09	0.00	-48.32	1.00
	[-3.43, -0.02]	[-0.73, 0.02]	[-1.73, -0.44]	[-0.57, 0.50]	[-177.36, -5.29]	[-0.47, 2.41]
NACE C	0.13	-0.58	-1.12	-0.01	-1.28	1.03
	[-0.21, 0.54]	[-0.74, -0.41]	[-1.34, -0.91]	[-0.22, 0.22]	[-1.61, -0.93]	[0.20, 2.25]
NACE D	-0.07	-0.66	-1.21	-0.07	-1.89	0.04
	[-0.81, 0.62]	[-1.08, -0.24]	[-1.73, -0.71]	[-0.47, 0.30]	[-3.01, -1.02]	[-1.60, 1.49]
NACE E	0.07	-0.27	-1.12	0.36	-0.71	0.96
	[-0.58, 0.67]	[-0.55, 0.01]	[-1.54, -0.71]	[0.04, 0.72]	[-1.46, -0.07]	[-0.11, 2.25]
NACE F	0.17	0.13	-0.16	-0.07	-1.07	1.08
	[-0.23, 0.59]	[-0.05, 0.30]	[-0.39, 0.06]	[-0.28, 0.15]	[-1.41, -0.71]	[0.20, 2.31]
NACE G	-0.01	-0.22	-1.22	0.64	-1.00	1.79
	[-0.36, 0.38]	[-0.38, -0.07]	[-1.41, -1.00]	[0.44, 0.87]	[-1.32, -0.67]	[0.97, 2.97]
NACE H	0.49	-0.09	-0.88	0.71	-0.96	1.34
	[0.11, 0.89]	[-0.29, 0.09]	[-1.12, -0.65]	[0.51, 0.94]	[-1.29, -0.54]	[0.49, 2.51]
NACE I	0.68	0.29	-0.30	0.75	-0.42	1.91
	[0.30, 1.07]	[0.12, 0.44]	[-0.52, -0.10]	[0.54, 0.97]	[-0.74, -0.07]	[1.06, 3.08]
NACE J	0.07	0.13	-0.88	0.23	-1.11	1.19
	[-0.32, 0.49]	[-0.11, 0.33]	[-1.16, -0.61]	[0.00, 0.49]	[-1.50, -0.71]	[0.26, 2.36]
NACE K	-0.12	-0.74	-1.68	0.20	-1.24	0.44
	[-0.51, 0.30]	[-0.99, -0.49]	[-2.02, -1.37]	[-0.04, 0.46]	[-1.61, -0.86]	[-0.49, 1.64]
NACE L	-0.44	0.64	-1.31	0.33	-0.93	1.00
	[-1.07, 0.15]	[0.31, 0.97]	[-1.98, -0.74]	[0.10, 0.57]	[-1.48, -0.40]	[-0.08, 2.27]

NACE M	-0.05	-0.03	-0.92	0.43	-1.06	1.11
	[-0.44, 0.34]	[-0.22, 0.15]	[-1.20, -0.65]	[0.23, 0.66]	[-1.40, -0.70]	[0.26, 2.26]
NACE N	0.93	0.59	-0.46	1.12	-0.24	1.77
	[0.58, 1.31]	[0.41, 0.76]	[-0.68, -0.25]	[0.92, 1.33]	[-0.55, 0.09]	[0.90, 2.99]
NACE O	-0.17	-0.32	-0.83	0.58	-0.11	1.07
	[-0.55, 0.21]	[-0.49, -0.14]	[-1.05, -0.62]	[0.37, 0.81]	[-0.46, 0.27]	[0.22, 2.27]
NACE P	0.40	0.03	-0.25	1.17	0.45	2.15
	[0.04, 0.79]	[-0.14, 0.19]	[-0.49, -0.02]	[0.97, 1.39]	[0.13, 0.79]	[1.31, 3.32]
NACE Q	0.28	-0.04	-0.30	0.99	-0.38	1.59
	[-0.07, 0.68]	[-0.20, 0.11]	[-0.50, -0.08]	[0.79, 1.22]	[-0.67, -0.05]	[0.77, 2.74]
NACE R	0.88	0.59	-0.06	1.55	0.14	2.03
	[0.47, 1.32]	[0.37, 0.80]	[-0.32, 0.22]	[1.32, 1.77]	[-0.24, 0.51]	[1.18, 3.15]
NACE S	-0.06	0.03	-0.64	1.16	-0.46	1.21
	[-0.51, 0.44]	[-0.18, 0.24]	[-0.90, -0.37]	[0.94, 1.39]	[-0.83, -0.07]	[0.29, 2.45]
NACE T	0.55	0.79	-0.46	2.00		1.36
	[-0.96, 1.80]	[0.61, 0.97]	[-0.69, -0.23]	[0.09, 5.88]		[-0.11, 2.85]
NACE U	-109.07	-1.39	-312.81	0.49	1.41	1.18
	[-394.44, -5.80]	[-2.39, -0.54]	[-1000.60, -13.88]	[-1.10, 1.69]	[0.70, 2.14]	[-0.79, 2.93]
Occupation (reference category: ISCO 1)						
ISCO 2	0.49	0.51	0.63	1.03	0.67	0.81
	[0.27, 0.70]	[0.33, 0.70]	[0.33, 0.96]	[0.89, 1.18]	[0.44, 0.91]	[0.56, 1.10]
ISCO 3	0.61	0.55	0.68	1.00	0.28	0.85
	[0.39, 0.83]	[0.36, 0.74]	[0.38, 1.02]	[0.86, 1.15]	[0.04, 0.53]	[0.57, 1.16]
ISCO 4	1.01	0.76	0.72	1.53	0.29	1.35
	[0.80, 1.25]	[0.57, 0.96]	[0.42, 1.03]	[1.38, 1.68]	[0.04, 0.57]	[1.09, 1.63]
ISCO 5	1.06	0.95	1.06	2.07	0.53	1.47
	[0.85, 1.29]	[0.78, 1.14]	[0.73, 1.39]	[1.93, 2.21]	[0.29, 0.79]	[1.23, 1.75]
ISCO 6	0.84	1.59	0.72	2.25	-0.02	1.04
	[0.39, 1.25]	[1.35, 1.83]	[0.29, 1.15]	[2.03, 2.47]	[-0.55, 0.43]	[0.24, 1.74]
ISCO 7	1.04	1.20	1.34	1.17	0.48	0.74

	[0.80, 1.28]	[1.02, 1.40]	[1.01, 1.66]	[1.01, 1.34]	[0.20, 0.74]	[0.35, 1.11]
ISCO 8	1.39	1.26	1.28	1.59	0.33	1.35
	[1.12, 1.65]	[1.05, 1.47]	[0.94, 1.62]	[1.43, 1.76]	[-0.02, 0.68]	[1.00, 1.67]
ISCO 9	1.53	1.84	1.84	2.39	0.88	1.89
	[1.29, 1.76]	[1.66, 2.04]	[1.53, 2.16]	[2.24, 2.55]	[0.58, 1.16]	[1.61, 2.16]
ISCO 0	-2.28	1.70	-0.35	0.90		-0.78
	[-5.95, -0.49]	[1.34, 2.02]	[-0.94, 0.27]	[0.54, 1.25]		[-3.96, 0.96]
Firm size (reference category: Equal to or below 10)						
Above 10	-0.29	-0.27	-0.34	-0.23	-0.18	-0.40
	[-0.38, -0.21]	[-0.31, -0.21]	[-0.41, -0.28]	[-0.26, -0.18]	[-0.29, -0.09]	[-0.51, -0.29]
Observations	28,788	57,772	29,443	127,183	32,583	28,831
R squared	0.85	0.81	0.79	0.82	0.86	0.94
AU-ROC	0.774	0.781	0.788	0.793	0.733	0.792
	[0.772 - 0.776]	[0.781 - 0.782]	[0.787 - 0.788]	[0.792 - 0.793]	[0.732 - 0.734]	[0.791 - 0.793]

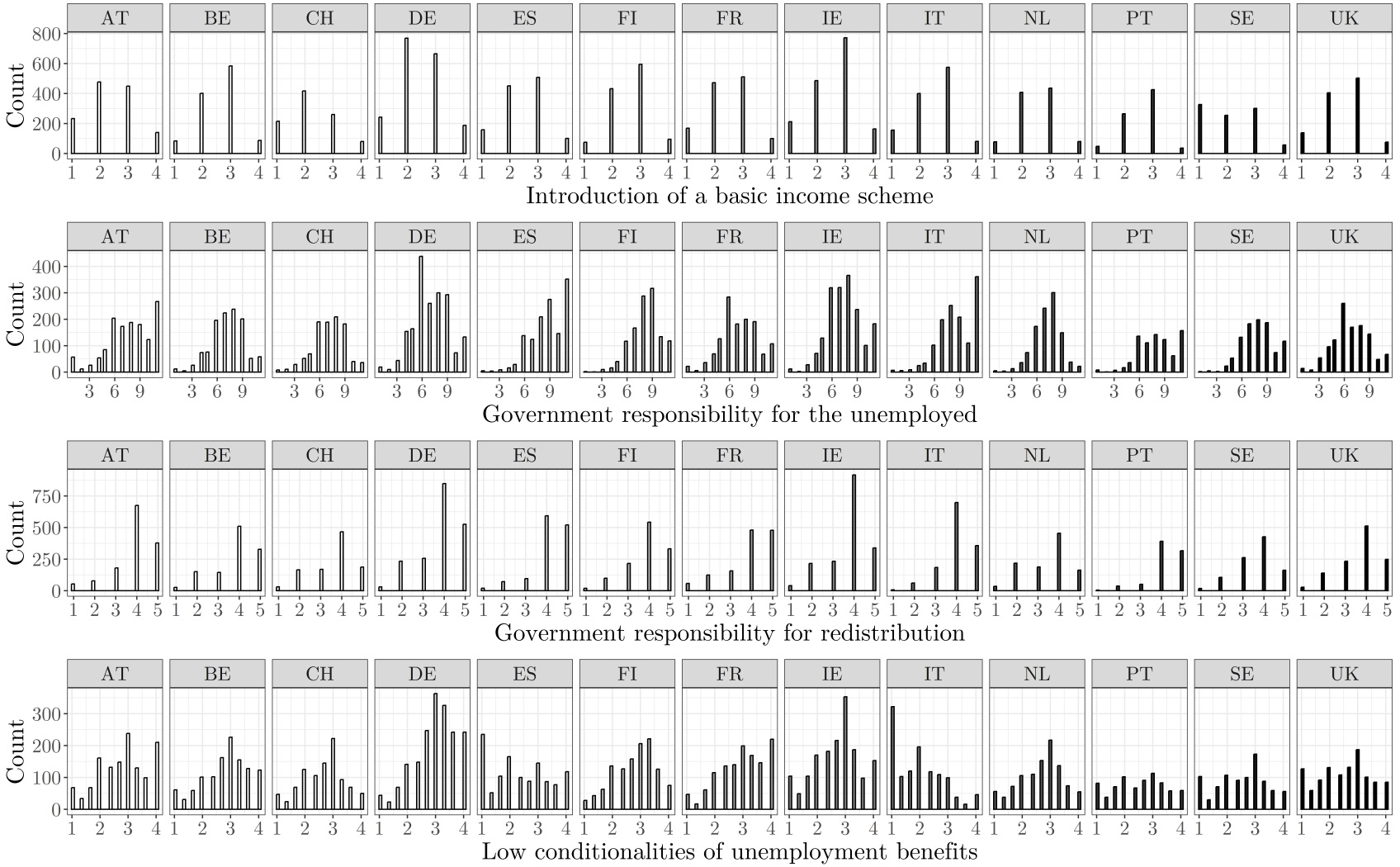
Notes: The Table presents 95% credible intervals in parentheses (80% for AU-ROC curves).

APPENDIX B

Table B.1: Descriptive statistics

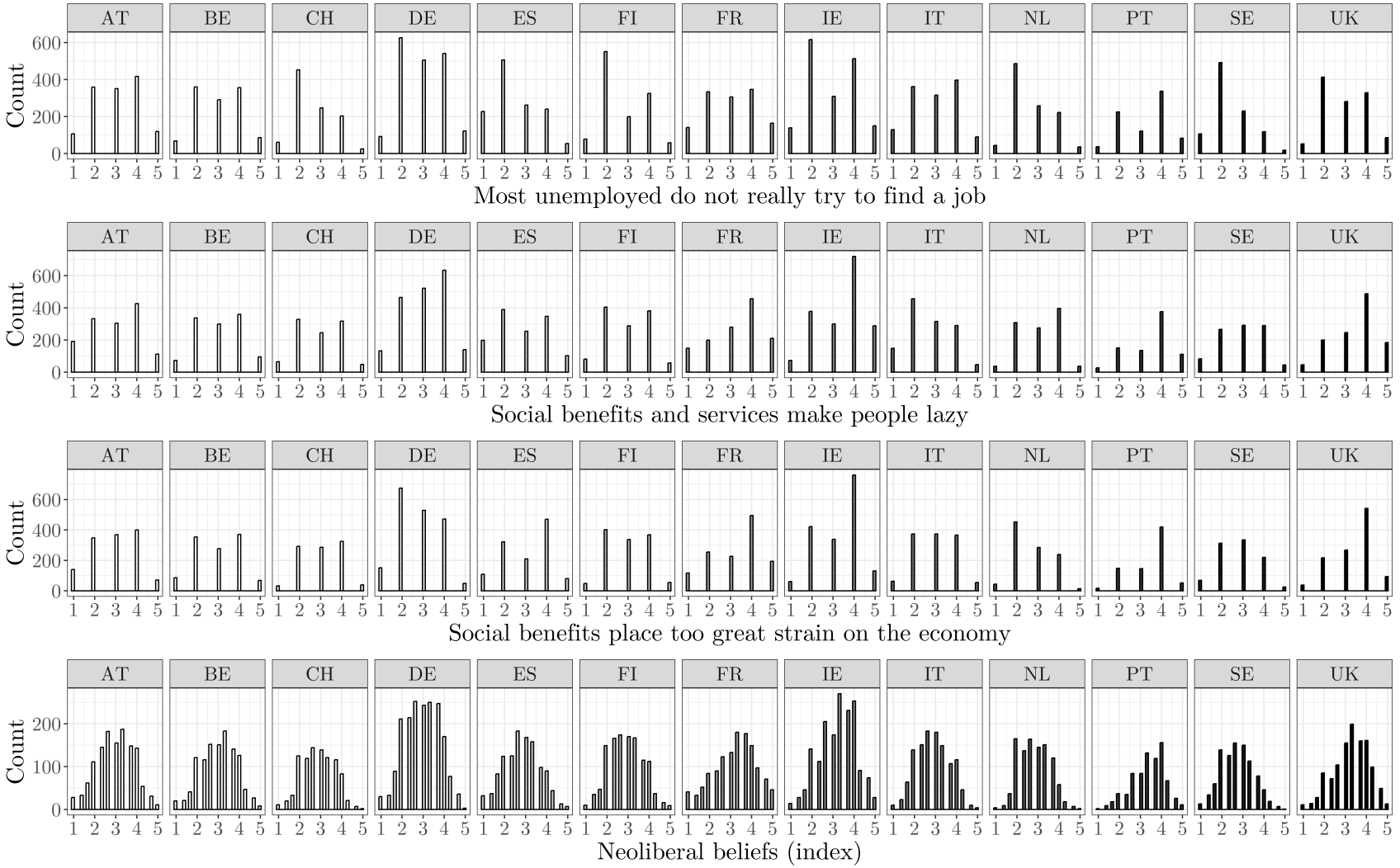
	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Age	16,430	44.084	12.311	20	64
Education	16,430	4.268	1.802	1	3 7
Union membership	16,398	1.231	0.422	1	2
Economic hardship	16,378	1.817	0.794	1	4
Ideology	15,012	5.894	2.093	1	11
Equity concerns	16,341	4.939	1.019	1	6
Social trust	16,421	6.441	2.250	1	11
Trust politicians	16,302	4.705	2.375	1	11
Support: unemployment benefits	16,316	7.619	2.142	1	11
Support: unconditional benefits	15,385	2.651	0.870	1	4
Support: redistribution	16,290	3.844	1.005	1	5
Support: UBI	15,643	2.449	0.827	1	4
Neoliberal beliefs (index)	15,622	3.015	0.847	1	5
Unemployed do not try to find a job	16,174	2.888	1.095	1	5
Benefits make people lazy	16,221	3.099	1.128	1	5
Benefits and services strain economy	15,909	3.049	1.052	1	5

Figure B.1: Support for pro-precarious policies by country



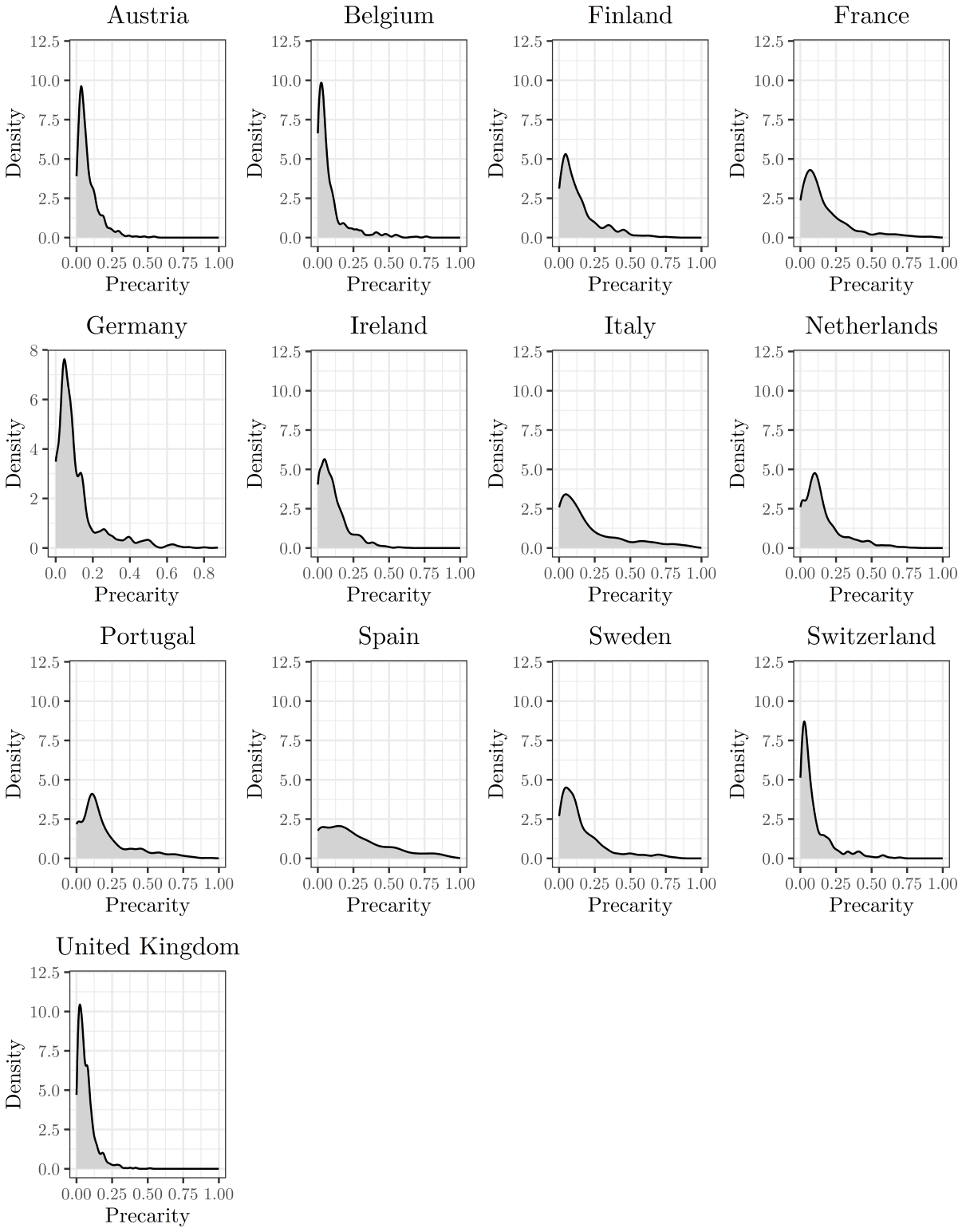
Source: European Social Survey (8th wave). Higher values indicate higher level of support. Preference for redistribution is measured on a scale from 1 to 10; for generous unemployment benefits on a scale from 1 to 5; for low conditionalities and for the introduction of a basic income on a scale from 1 to 4.

Figure B.2: Agreement with statements reflecting neoliberal beliefs by country



Source: European Social Survey (8th wave). Higher values indicate higher level of agreement. Each item is measured on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Figure B.3: Distribution of the probability of precarity by country, ESS data



Sources: Predicted probabilities are calculated for respondents of the eight wave of the European Social Survey based on Bayesian models implemented on European Union Labour Force Survey data from 2016. The curves display the probability distribution within the labour force, and should not be interpreted as a measure of the number of precarious individuals in each country.

APPENDIX C

Table C.1: Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Participation	16,404	0.278	0.448	0	1
Age	16,430	44.084	12.311	20	64
Gender	16,430	0.510	0.500	0	1
Education	16,430	2.101	0.677	1	3
Union membership	16,398	0.231	0.422	0	1
Economic hardship	16,378	1.817	0.794	1	4
Partner in household	16,386	0.643	0.479	0	1
Centre-periphery	16,426	2.029	1.069	1	4
Interest in politics	16,418	2.523	0.913	1	4
Trust	16,081	5.065	2.205	1	11
Church attendance	16,383	0.195	0.396	0	1
Social ties	16,416	0.862	0.345	0	1
Precarity (mean)	16,430	0.140	0.158	0.0001	0.963

Table C.2: Descriptive statistics for country-level variables

Country	Unemp. benefits coverage	Incidence of precarity	Quality of government
Austria	0.88	0.13	91.83
Belgium	0.95	0.18	90.87
Finland	0.73	0.20	99.04
France	0.83	0.28	90.38
Germany	0.86	0.16	93.75
Ireland	1.00	0.19	88.94
Italy	0.59	0.34	72.60
Netherlands	0.88	0.23	97.12
Portugal	0.83	0.33	85.58
Spain	0.75	0.41	84.13
Sweden	0.67	0.22	95.23
Switzerland	0.95	0.14	99.52
United Kingdom	0.85	0.11	92.79

Sources: Comparative Welfare Entitlements Project (unemployment benefits coverage), EU-LFS (precarity incidence), World Bank (quality of government). All variables are measured for the year 2016.

APPENDIX D

Table D.1: Labour market reforms, 1990-2020

Reform	**Government**	**Content**
Treu package, 1995-1996	Technocratic government (Dini and Prodi prime ministers)	Liberalization of temporary employment; Reduction of disincentives to the use of fixed-term contracts.
Biagi Reform, L 30/2003	Center-right coalition (Berlusconi prime minister)	Liberalization of temporary employment; Introduction of new opportunities for the use of non-standard forms of employment.
Art. 8, L 148/2011	Center-right coalition (Berlusconi prime minister)	Decentralization of Collective Bargain.
Fornero Reform, L 92/2012	Technocratic government (Monti prime minister)	Loosening EPL for open ended contracts; Expansion of unemployment protections for atypical workers; Regulation of non-standard employment.
Poletti Decree, DL 34/2014	Grand coalition (Renzi prime minister)	Liberalization of temporary employment.
Jobs Act, 2014-2015	Grand coalition (Renzi prime minister)	Loosening EPL for open ended contracts; Decentralization of collective bargain; Liberalization of non-standard employment; Incentives for usage of open-ended contracts.
Decreto dignitá, DL 87/2018	M5S-Lega (Conte prime minister)	Expansion of EPL protecting workers from unfair dismissal; Limitations to the usage of temporary contracts.
Reddito di Cittadinanza, DL 4/2019	M5S-Lega (Conte prime minister)	Minimum income guarantee; Expansion of active LMPs.
Decreto riders, DL 101/2019	M5S-Lega (Conte prime minister)	Expansion of employment and social protections for delivery couriers.

Table D.2: Logistic regression of vote choice (Model 4)

	(4)		
	mainstream right vs mainstream left	challenger left vs mainstream left	challenger right vs mainstream left
Perceived precarity (no)	1.695	2.017***	1.541
	(0.367)	(0.260)	(0.321)
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)			
Permanent contract	0.599	1.825*	0.628
	(0.422)	(0.326)	(0.379)
Atypical contract	0.577	1.035	0.599
	(0.563)	(0.409)	(0.495)
Unemployed	0.557	0.694	0.426
	(0.623)	(0.456)	(0.557)
Age	1.028*	1.016	1.026*
	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.014)
Gender	0.639	0.714	0.837
	(0.341)	(0.237)	(0.290)
Education	0.925	0.956	0.959
	(0.075)	(0.054)	(0.065)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)			
Centre	1.797	1.499	1.269
	(0.420)	(0.287)	(0.352)
South	2.303**	2.755***	0.840
	(0.374)	(0.268)	(0.333)
Union member	1.085	1.136	1.503
	(0.408)	(0.269)	(0.343)
Ideology (ref. category: none)			
Left	0.135**	0.266***	0.064***
	(0.801)	(0.392)	(0.618)
Centre-left	0.120***	0.163***	0.038***
	(0.797)	(0.396)	(0.659)
Centre	0.544	0.361**	0.441
	(0.833)	(0.494)	(0.605)
Centre-right	7.328***	1.013	3.704**
	(0.651)	(0.490)	(0.530)
Right	30.953***	1.146	14.097***
	(0.707)	(0.584)	(0.601)
Attitudes: EU	0.718	0.427***	0.532***
	(0.253)	(0.187)	(0.221)
Attitudes: immigration	0.924	0.948	0.796***
	(0.061)	(0.043)	(0.054)
Trust	1.273***	1.055	1.241***
	(0.076)	(0.054)	(0.066)
Populist attitudes	1.185	1.565***	1.589***
	(0.143)	(0.100)	(0.127)

Attitudes: incumbent	0.539***	0.533***	0.550***
	(0.081)	(0.065)	(0.074)
Economic hardship (no)	1.021	1.237	1.183
	(0.343)	(0.232)	(0.294)
Constant	3.511	67.245***	17.536**
	(1.422)	(1.051)	(1.244)
Observations		1,101	
Akaike Inf. Crit.		1,764.827	

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odds ratios.
Reference categories in brackets.
Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

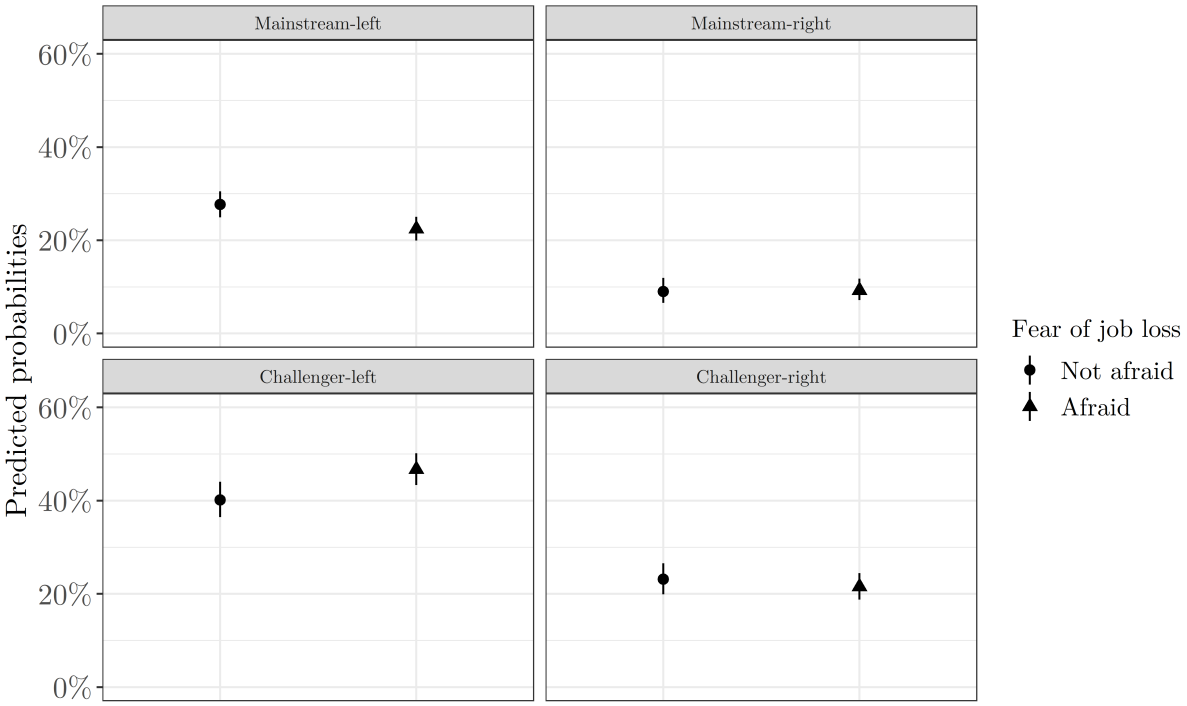
Table D.3: Logistic regression of vote choice (Model 5)

	(5)		
	mainstream right vs mainstream left	challenger left vs mainstream left	challenger right vs mainstream left
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)			
Permanent contract	0.556	1.627	0.585
	(0.411)	(0.309)	(0.365)
Atypical contract	0.755	1.304	0.723
	(0.541)	(0.390)	(0.476)
Unemployed	0.747	0.964	0.559
	(0.595)	(0.427)	(0.528)
Age	1.023	1.010	1.022*
	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.013)
Gender	0.706	0.781	0.907
	(0.334)	(0.228)	(0.282)
Education	0.912	0.922	0.938
	(0.073)	(0.051)	(0.063)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)			
Centre	1.896	1.615*	1.386
	(0.416)	(0.279)	(0.347)
South	2.578***	3.078***	0.919
	(0.366)	(0.259)	(0.326)
Union member	1.021	1.099	1.417
	(0.400)	(0.260)	(0.334)
Ideology (ref. category: none)			
Left	0.194**	0.388***	0.095***
	(0.784)	(0.354)	(0.595)
Centre-left	0.179**	0.232***	0.058***
	(0.780)	(0.360)	(0.637)
Centre	0.736	0.487	0.604

	(0.815)	(0.458)	(0.579)
Centre-right	10.892***	1.398	5.377***
	(0.628)	(0.460)	(0.503)
Right	46.678***	1.695	21.451***
	(0.688)	(0.558)	(0.577)
Attitudes: EU	0.698	0.439***	0.536***
	(0.246)	(0.179)	(0.214)
Attitudes: immigration	0.934	0.947	0.800***
	(0.060)	(0.042)	(0.053)
Trust	1.272***	1.037	1.231***
	(0.074)	(0.053)	(0.065)
Populist attitudes	1.172	1.560***	1.584***
	(0.140)	(0.097)	(0.124)
Attitudes: incumbent	0.549***	0.545***	0.559***
	(0.079)	(0.062)	(0.072)
Economic hardship (no)	1.104	1.276	1.228
	(0.330)	(0.222)	(0.282)
Constant	3.526	91.124***	16.472**
	(1.365)	(0.975)	(1.178)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,807.950	1,807.950	1,807.950

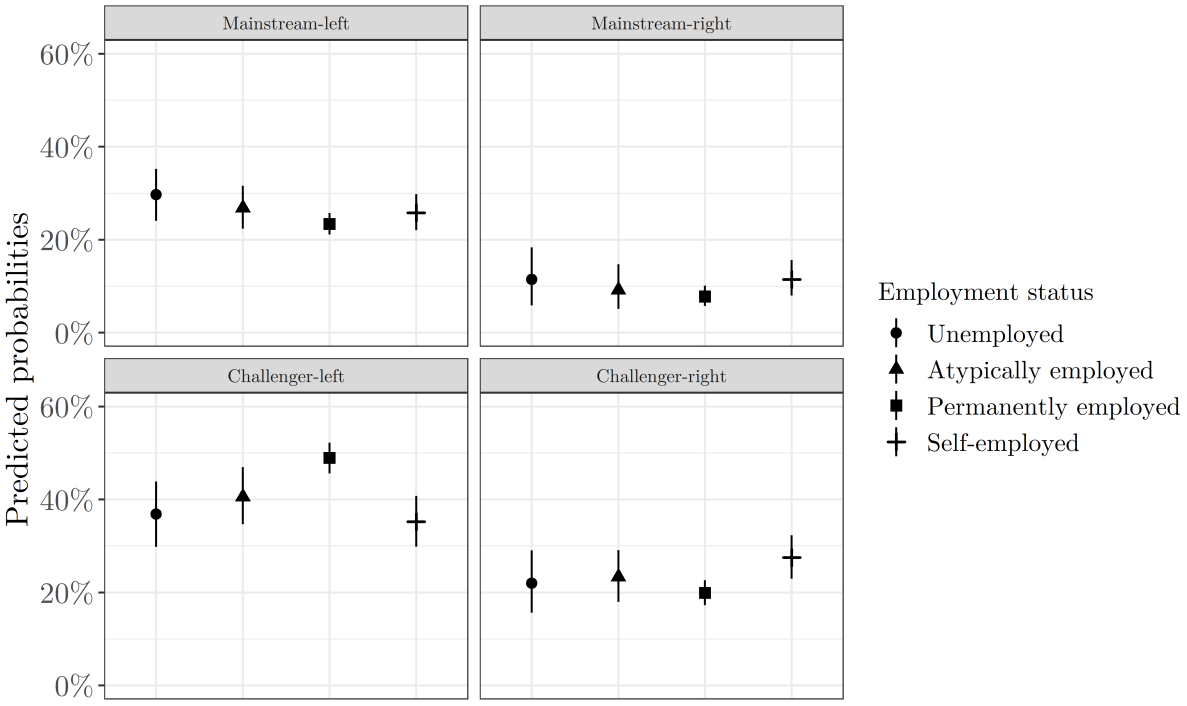
Notes: Coefficients are presented as odds ratios.
Reference categories in brackets.
Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure D.1: Vote choice by fear of job loss



Predicted probabilities are calculated based on the results from Model 4.

Figure D.2: Vote choice by employment status



Predicted probabilites are calculated based on the results from Model 4.

Table D.4: Logistic regression of vote choice (Model 6)

	(6)		
	mainstream right vs mainstream left	challenger left vs mainstream left	challenger right vs mainstream left
Perceived precarity (no)	0.373	1.336	0.960
	(0.696)	(0.546)	(0.620)
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)			
Permanent contract	0.234***	1.422	0.483
	(0.546)	(0.441)	(0.496)
Atypical contract	0.236	1.332	0.561
	(1.198)	(0.846)	(1.006)
Unemployed	1.118	0.933	0.738
	(0.357)	(0.251)	(0.306)
Age	1.025	1.017	1.027*
	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.014)
Gender	0.673	0.723	0.841
	(0.344)	(0.239)	(0.292)
Education	0.930	0.960	0.964
	(0.075)	(0.054)	(0.065)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)			
Centre	1.743	1.500	1.283
	(0.423)	(0.288)	(0.354)
South	2.499**	2.837***	0.889
	(0.378)	(0.270)	(0.336)
Union member	1.025	1.126	1.471
	(0.412)	(0.270)	(0.344)
Ideology (ref. category: none)			
Left	0.132**	0.257***	0.062***
	(0.802)	(0.394)	(0.619)
Centre-left	0.110***	0.160***	0.037***
	(0.801)	(0.398)	(0.661)
Centre	0.450	0.343**	0.416
	(0.842)	(0.496)	(0.607)
Centre-right	7.006***	0.979	3.564**
	(0.652)	(0.489)	(0.529)
Right	30.780***	1.155	14.106***
	(0.711)	(0.587)	(0.604)
Attitudes: EU	0.742	0.429***	0.529***
	(0.255)	(0.189)	(0.223)
Attitudes: immigration	0.928	0.949	0.797***
	(0.061)	(0.043)	(0.054)
Trust	1.266***	1.051	1.239***
	(0.076)	(0.055)	(0.067)
Populist attitudes	1.190	1.575***	1.598***
	(0.144)	(0.100)	(0.127)

Attitudes: incumbent	0.537***	0.533***	0.550***
	(0.082)	(0.065)	(0.074)
Economic hardship (no)	1.068	1.254	1.187
	(0.344)	(0.233)	(0.295)
Precarious x Permanent	8.958***	1.930	1.925
	(0.824)	(0.628)	(0.725)
Precarious x Atypical	5.855	0.907	1.349
	(1.369)	(0.972)	(1.152)
Precarious x Unemployed	1.118	0.933	0.738
	(0.357)	(0.251)	(0.306)
Constant	6.780	73.266***	20.444**
	(1.451)	(1.079)	(1.272)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,766.905	1,766.905	1,766.905

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odds ratios.
Reference categories in brackets.
Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table D.5: Logistic regressions of vote choice (Model 2b to 3b)

	(2b)		(3b)	
	challenger left vs mainstream	challenger right vs mainstream	mainstream left vs challenger	mainstream right vs challenger
Perceived precarity (no)	1.530**	1.316	0.535**	0.964
	(0.173)	(0.349)	(0.256)	(0.273)
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)				
Permanent contract	2.110***	0.650	0.727	0.601*
	(0.217)	(0.370)	(0.312)	(0.302)
Atypical contract	1.297	0.681	1.141	0.775
	(0.271)	(0.489)	(0.400)	(0.420)
Unemployed	0.890	0.315	1.624	1.048
	(0.305)	(0.705)	(0.446)	(0.469)
Age	0.992	0.981	0.981*	1.004
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Gender	0.853	1.108	1.406	0.867
	(0.157)	(0.319)	(0.234)	(0.261)
Education	0.992	1.161**	1.050	0.968
	(0.036)	(0.071)	(0.052)	(0.055)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)				
Centre	1.379*	1.818	0.689	1.319
	(0.194)	(0.402)	(0.280)	(0.324)
South	2.703***	3.530***	0.444***	1.510
	(0.178)	(0.360)	(0.264)	(0.280)
Union member	0.992	0.429*	0.874	0.830
	(0.185)	(0.470)	(0.265)	(0.318)

Ideology (ref. category: none)				
Left	0.545**	0.234	4.453***	0.617
	(0.259)	(1.257)	(0.387)	(0.736)
Centre-left	0.495***	0.532	7.440***	0.938
	(0.263)	(1.031)	(0.392)	(0.731)
Centre	0.669	2.858	2.722**	1.513
	(0.346)	(0.965)	(0.483)	(0.745)
Centre-right	0.363***	2.929	0.636	5.348***
	(0.274)	(0.830)	(0.484)	(0.494)
Right	0.083***	6.987**	0.263**	9.567***
	(0.263)	(0.767)	(0.566)	(0.468)
Attitudes: EU	0.621***	1.041	2.219***	1.509**
	(0.114)	(0.220)	(0.184)	(0.175)
Attitudes: immigration	1.064**	1.000	1.095**	1.061
	(0.030)	(0.062)	(0.042)	(0.047)
Trust	0.926**	0.958	0.923	1.119**
	(0.036)	(0.073)	(0.053)	(0.056)
Populist attitudes	1.322***	1.317*	0.649***	0.756**
	(0.071)	(0.150)	(0.098)	(0.110)
Attitudes: incumbent	0.799***	1.015	1.863***	1.002
	(0.035)	(0.065)	(0.064)	(0.051)
Economic hardship (no)	1.130	0.987	0.842	0.881
	(0.160)	(0.339)	(0.228)	(0.266)
Constant	3.079*	0.008***	0.010***	0.031***
	(0.677)	(1.472)	(1.034)	(1.048)
Observations	1,101		1,101	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,508.641		1,143.236	

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odds ratios.
Reference categories in brackets.
Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table D.6: Logistic regression of vote choice (Model 4b)

	(4b)		
	mainstream right vs mainstream left	challenger left vs mainstream left	challenger right vs mainstream left
Perceived precarity (no)	1.574	2.029***	1.863
	(0.312)	(0.260)	(0.427)
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)			
Permanent contract	0.658	1.835*	0.487
	(0.369)	(0.326)	(0.477)
Atypical contract	0.607	1.050	0.500
	(0.482)	(0.408)	(0.619)
Unemployed	0.525	0.704	0.201**

	(0.537)	(0.455)	(0.815)
Age	1.029**	1.017	1.007
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.019)
Gender	0.760	0.712	0.902
	(0.282)	(0.237)	(0.389)
Education	0.933	0.954	1.093
	(0.063)	(0.054)	(0.087)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)			
Centre	1.264	1.514	2.027
	(0.343)	(0.287)	(0.487)
South	0.930	2.788***	3.472***
	(0.322)	(0.268)	(0.440)
Union member	1.566	1.140	0.562
	(0.332)	(0.269)	(0.534)
Ideology (ref. category: none)			
Left	0.083***	0.264***	0.177
	(0.545)	(0.392)	(1.287)
Centre-left	0.040***	0.164***	0.264
	(0.611)	(0.396)	(1.072)
Centre	0.341*	0.353**	2.228
	(0.595)	(0.494)	(1.022)
Centre-right	4.259***	1.040	8.935**
	(0.515)	(0.490)	(0.927)
Right	13.523***	1.143	71.269***
	(0.595)	(0.585)	(0.924)
Attitudes: EU	0.565***	0.422***	0.624*
	(0.217)	(0.187)	(0.281)
Attitudes: immigration	0.832***	0.950	0.872*
	(0.051)	(0.043)	(0.072)
Trust	1.282***	1.060	1.146
	(0.064)	(0.054)	(0.090)
Populist attitudes	1.412***	1.554***	1.665***
	(0.121)	(0.100)	(0.177)
Attitudes: incumbent	0.535***	0.532***	0.603***
	(0.073)	(0.065)	(0.090)
Economic hardship (no)	1.139	1.235	1.096
	(0.285)	(0.232)	(0.403)
Constant	26.646***	68.815***	0.303
	(1.206)	(1.051)	(1.757)
Observations		1,101	
Akaike Inf. Crit.		1,679.474	

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odds ratios.
Reference categories in brackets.
Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table D.7: Logistic regressions of vote choice (Models 2c to 3c)

	(2c)		(3c)	
	challenger left vs mainstream	challenger right vs mainstream	mainstream left vs challenger	mainstream right vs challenger
Perceived precarity (no)	1.636**	1.233	0.522**	1.003
	(0.200)	(0.243)	(0.258)	(0.275)
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)				
Permanent contract	1.941***	0.773	0.784	0.673
	(0.252)	(0.279)	(0.313)	(0.304)
Atypical contract	1.140	0.749	1.194	0.876
	(0.320)	(0.383)	(0.405)	(0.423)
Age	0.989	1.001	0.982	1.012
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Gender	0.834	1.041	1.462	0.829
	(0.196)	(0.236)	(0.251)	(0.279)
Education	0.960	0.998	1.054	1.016
	(0.044)	(0.051)	(0.055)	(0.058)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)				
Centre	1.346	1.005	0.692	1.137
	(0.237)	(0.282)	(0.291)	(0.347)
South	1.666**	0.475***	0.498**	1.704*
	(0.220)	(0.274)	(0.284)	(0.296)
Union member	1.343	1.729*	0.804	0.638
	(0.221)	(0.280)	(0.271)	(0.343)
Ideology (ref. category: none)				
Left	0.254***	0.063***	6.438***	0.770
	(0.363)	(0.595)	(0.457)	(0.760)
Centre-left	0.193***	0.045***	10.739***	0.729
	(0.363)	(0.635)	(0.458)	(0.860)
Centre	0.301***	0.347*	3.978**	2.076
	(0.456)	(0.580)	(0.550)	(0.773)
Centre-right	0.259***	1.077	1.088	5.805***
	(0.399)	(0.441)	(0.537)	(0.540)
Right	0.079***	1.012	0.412	9.656***
	(0.384)	(0.406)	(0.612)	(0.512)
Attitudes: EU	0.510***	0.690**	2.136***	1.537**
	(0.142)	(0.165)	(0.195)	(0.185)
Attitudes: immigration	0.997	0.838***	1.102**	1.042
	(0.036)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.051)
Trust	0.948	1.080	0.937	1.123*
	(0.045)	(0.053)	(0.057)	(0.060)
Populist attitudes	1.534***	1.473***	0.625***	0.762**
	(0.085)	(0.102)	(0.104)	(0.116)
Attitudes: incumbent	0.728***	0.808***	1.846***	0.994
	(0.043)	(0.050)	(0.066)	(0.054)

Economic hardship (no)	1.163	1.101	0.952	0.862
	(0.193)	(0.239)	(0.241)	(0.278)
Constant	27.553***	3.984	0.006***	0.015***
	(0.847)	(0.987)	(1.105)	(1.116)
Observations	989		989	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,468.170		1,024.490	

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odds ratios.
Reference categories in brackets.
Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table D.8: Logistic regression of vote choice (Model 4c)

	(4c)		
	mainstream right vs mainstream left	challenger left vs mainstream left	challenger right vs mainstream left
Perceived precarity (no)	1.844*	2.051***	1.646
	(0.369)	(0.262)	(0.321)
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)			
Permanent contract	0.653	1.704	0.619
	(0.423)	(0.328)	(0.378)
Atypical contract	0.651	0.979	0.613
	(0.566)	(0.414)	(0.497)
Age	1.036**	1.012	1.028*
	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.015)
Gender	0.579	0.686	0.820
	(0.366)	(0.255)	(0.308)
Education	0.977	0.947	0.979
	(0.078)	(0.056)	(0.067)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)			
Centre	1.471	1.506	1.164
	(0.444)	(0.298)	(0.363)
South	2.339**	2.481***	0.780
	(0.398)	(0.288)	(0.356)
Union member	0.896	1.248	1.579
	(0.431)	(0.276)	(0.351)
Ideology (ref. category: none)			
Left	0.114**	0.185***	0.050***
	(0.854)	(0.461)	(0.666)
Centre-left	0.064***	0.113***	0.030***
	(0.943)	(0.462)	(0.703)
Centre	0.496	0.241**	0.320*
	(0.889)	(0.562)	(0.670)
Centre-right	4.532**	0.547	2.382
	(0.721)	(0.546)	(0.583)

Right	19.917***	0.761	9.325***
	(0.769)	(0.629)	(0.649)
Attitudes: EU	0.768	0.434***	0.572**
	(0.267)	(0.198)	(0.232)
Attitudes: immigration	0.902	0.947	0.790***
	(0.066)	(0.047)	(0.057)
Trust	1.256***	1.037	1.220***
	(0.081)	(0.058)	(0.070)
Populist attitudes	1.232	1.639***	1.604***
	(0.151)	(0.107)	(0.132)
Attitudes: incumbent	0.541***	0.539***	0.556***
	(0.085)	(0.067)	(0.077)
Economic hardship (no)	0.880	1.104	1.024
	(0.359)	(0.245)	(0.306)
Constant	2.107	112.325***	18.092**
	(1.519)	(1.125)	(1.317)
Observations		989	
Akaike Inf. Crit.		1,586.807	

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odds ratios.
Reference categories in brackets.
Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table D.9: Logistic regressions of turnout and vote choice (Models 1d to 3d)

	(1d)	(2d)		(3d)	
	turnout	chal. left vs mainstream	chal. right vs mainstream	main. left vs challenger	main. right vs challenger
Perceived precarity (no)	1.714**	1.586*	0.940	0.573*	1.080
	(0.261)	(0.245)	(0.296)	(0.309)	(0.330)
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)					
Permanent contract	1.577	1.820**	0.707	0.924	0.729
	(0.305)	(0.305)	(0.331)	(0.366)	(0.360)
Atypical contract	0.814	0.853	0.597	2.141	0.990
	(0.366)	(0.392)	(0.465)	(0.482)	(0.516)
Unemployed	0.871	0.547	0.773	2.379	1.241
	(0.425)	(0.448)	(0.521)	(0.542)	(0.579)
Age	1.024**	1.008	1.003	0.972**	0.996
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Gender	0.881	0.910	0.986	1.324	0.728
	(0.230)	(0.221)	(0.267)	(0.275)	(0.311)
Education	1.027	0.983	1.013	1.061	0.967
	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.058)	(0.060)	(0.065)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)					
Centre	1.191	1.193	1.567	0.726	0.845

	(0.312)	(0.278)	(0.327)	(0.330)	(0.396)
South	0.828	2.336***	0.834	0.358***	0.838
	(0.257)	(0.252)	(0.309)	(0.319)	(0.333)
Union member	0.863	1.215	2.194**	0.790	0.840
	(0.287)	(0.256)	(0.320)	(0.314)	(0.375)
Ideology (ref. category: none)					
Left	0.638	0.352**	0.097***	3.149**	0.547
	(0.343)	(0.409)	(0.659)	(0.497)	(0.888)
Centre-left	1.916	0.265***	0.097***	5.353***	0.840
	(0.464)	(0.408)	(0.670)	(0.490)	(0.792)
Centre	0.961	0.593	0.769	1.839	0.890
	(0.523)	(0.519)	(0.627)	(0.603)	(0.819)
Centre-right	0.566	0.492	1.509	0.608	2.817*
	(0.383)	(0.455)	(0.512)	(0.610)	(0.584)
Right	2.169*	0.126***	1.245	0.341	3.842**
	(0.423)	(0.433)	(0.469)	(0.663)	(0.547)
Attitudes: EU	1.084	0.694**	0.959	1.788***	1.099
	(0.176)	(0.163)	(0.194)	(0.216)	(0.212)
Attitudes: immigration	1.047	0.994	0.869***	1.052	1.032
	(0.043)	(0.040)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.055)
Trust	0.976	0.951	1.111*	0.927	1.095
	(0.054)	(0.051)	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.069)
Populist attitudes	1.125	1.422***	1.476***	0.607***	0.845
	(0.102)	(0.098)	(0.119)	(0.120)	(0.135)
Attitudes: incumbent	0.981	0.740***	0.788***	1.798***	1.023
	(0.051)	(0.049)	(0.056)	(0.072)	(0.061)
Vote choice 2013 (ref. category: abstain)					
Challenger left	11.681***	6.007***	1.097	0.317*	0.174***
	(0.305)	(0.425)	(0.506)	(0.597)	(0.542)
Mainstream left	8.209***	0.424**	0.486	4.272**	0.349
	(0.328)	(0.430)	(0.527)	(0.584)	(0.683)
Mainstream right	20.088***	0.206***	0.432*	1.486	2.850**
	(0.573)	(0.474)	(0.480)	(0.649)	(0.467)
Challenger right	6.075***	1.519	12.591***	0.192*	0.091***
	(0.444)	(0.652)	(0.614)	(0.926)	(0.684)
Economic hardship (no)	0.860	1.136	1.435	0.810	0.843
	(0.239)	(0.221)	(0.278)	(0.268)	(0.319)
Constant	0.246	3.640	0.771	0.035***	0.237
	(0.935)	(0.985)	(1.143)	(1.257)	(1.205)
Observations	1,331	1,015		1,015	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	660.361	1,191.929		876.046	

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odds ratios.
Reference categories in brackets.
Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table D.10: Logistic regression of vote choice (Model 4d)

	(4d)		
	mainstream right vs mainstream left	challenger left vs mainstream left	challenger right vs mainstream left
Perceived precarity (no)	1.682	1.996**	1.242
	(0.444)	(0.319)	(0.395)
Employment status (ref. category: self-employed)			
Permanent contract	0.556	1.471	0.505
	(0.500)	(0.388)	(0.453)
Atypical contract	0.403	0.553	0.344*
	(0.691)	(0.500)	(0.614)
Unemployed	0.500	0.401	0.472
	(0.765)	(0.563)	(0.675)
Age	1.025	1.028**	1.025
	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.017)
Gender	0.540	0.750	0.752
	(0.406)	(0.281)	(0.348)
Education	0.921	0.942	0.958
	(0.087)	(0.062)	(0.076)
Region of residence (ref. category: North)			
Centre	1.293	1.280	1.682
	(0.502)	(0.342)	(0.424)
South	1.720	3.390***	1.288
	(0.451)	(0.326)	(0.407)
Union member	1.365	1.195	2.297**
	(0.480)	(0.321)	(0.409)
Ideology (ref. category: none)			
Left	0.146*	0.349**	0.105***
	(1.004)	(0.505)	(0.742)
Centre-left	0.126**	0.207***	0.084***
	(0.906)	(0.499)	(0.742)
Centre	0.397	0.497	0.692
	(0.957)	(0.625)	(0.735)
Centre-right	3.884*	1.049	3.488*
	(0.790)	(0.619)	(0.673)
Right	9.359***	0.887	8.611***
	(0.807)	(0.674)	(0.702)
Attitudes: EU	0.653	0.531***	0.682
	(0.299)	(0.220)	(0.265)
Attitudes: immigration	0.946	0.982	0.860**
	(0.070)	(0.051)	(0.063)
Trust	1.267**	1.044	1.267***
	(0.093)	(0.066)	(0.081)
Populist attitudes	1.467**	1.663***	1.819***

	(0.175)	(0.125)	(0.157)
Attitudes: incumbent	0.560***	0.557***	0.542***
	(0.093)	(0.074)	(0.086)
Vote choice 2013 (ref. category: abstain)			
Challenger left	0.395	3.614**	0.643
	(0.781)	(0.603)	(0.696)
Mainstream left	0.088***	0.221**	0.246**
	(0.863)	(0.596)	(0.705)
Mainstream right	2.151	0.423	1.011
	(0.757)	(0.679)	(0.727)
Challenger right	0.872	1.586	13.737**
	(1.174)	(1.020)	(1.038)
Economic hardship (no)	1.124	1.225	1.589
	(0.408)	(0.275)	(0.356)
Constant	6.396	19.029**	4.932
	(1.672)	(1.293)	(1.530)
Observations		1,015	
Akaike Inf. Crit.		1,294.641	

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odds ratios.
Reference categories in brackets.
Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure D.3: Differences in the predicted probability of supporting a specific party family as a result of a shift in voter status from secure to precarious