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COVID-19 Labor Market Protection and Support for the Welfare State: Job Retention Versus Job Loss in Four European Countries

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a natural setting to study how labor market protection policies may influence welfare attitudes because while lockdowns and economic recession threatened millions of jobs, job retention schemes shielded many workers from unemployment. We investigate support for unemployment protection and the unemployed among people active in the labor force and participating in the Mannheim Corona Study in Germany, Coping with COVID-19 in France, ResPOnsE in Italy, and the British Social Attitudes survey in Great Britain. Two-way fixed effects analyses on the German data show that there was a general increase in respondents' support over the onset of the pandemic and that while job loss significantly boosted support, there was little attitudinal difference between those who experienced job retention and those who continued working. We confirm these patterns with cross-sectional analyses in all four countries, providing comparative insight into attitudes across the largest European economies. Unemployment is materially similar to job retention, but because it is associated with higher support, we contend that nonmaterial factors such as risk perceptions may be consequential in influencing preference changes when individuals lose their jobs.

The welfare state is designed to mitigate risks, and scholars have established that people's perceived risks influence their welfare attitudes (Cusack, Iversen, and Rehm 2006; Rehm 2009). However, few studies have attempted to investigate how social policies might shape individuals' attitudes, partially because it is not feasible to implement an experimental design that assigns different benefits across an eligible population. However, because popular support can help sway future policy paths (Cappelen et al. 2018; Chung, Taylor-Gooby, and Leruth 2018), it is crucial to gain insight into the influence that social policies may have on individuals' welfare attitudes. This is especially true at a time when unstable employment (Kalleberg 2011) and

crises (Enggist, Häusermann, and Pinggera 2022) have exposed wide swaths of the working population to heightened risks, and welfare retrenchment has made access to social protection more conditional (Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser 2004; Ferragina 2022; Jessop 1993; Seeleib-Kaiser 2008).

We contend that the COVID-19 pandemic provides a natural setting for addressing this blind spot. Unlike previous contexts (Wehl 2019), lockdown measures and economic recession provoked an unanticipated layoff threat for workers even in stable employment, while unprecedented employment protection measures shielded many Europeans from job loss (Ebbinghaus and

Lehner 2022). Indeed, by the end of April 2020, up to 20% of the German labor force (IMF 2020), and 30% of the French labor force (Lambert et al. 2020) had applied to job retention schemes, and similar proportions of workers elsewhere in Europe were relying on such policies (Drahokoupil and Müller 2021). Given the role that the welfare state played in protecting workers against the labor market crisis, we have the opportunity to compare the attitudinal consequences of job retention and job loss.

This context motivates us to address the following question: compared to continuous employment over the first year of the epidemiological crisis, how do experiences with job retention and job loss each influence support for unemployment protection and the unemployed?

We rely on data collected between January 2020 and January 2021 on preferences among people active in the labor force in Germany by the German Internet Panel (GIP) and the Mannheim Corona Study (MCS), in France by the Coping with COVID-19 project (CoCo), in Italy by the Response of Italian Public Opinion to the COVID-19 Emergency (ResPOnsE), and in Great Britain by the British Social Attitudes survey (BSA). We deploy a two-step analytical strategy. First, we use two-way fixed effects to uncover the role that changes to labor market status and perceived risk of job loss may have on influencing support for the unemployed among German respondents over the onset of the pandemic. Second, we conduct cross-sectional analyses using data from all four countries to confirm the longitudinal results. These countries represent the largest European economies, and their welfare states differ in important ways (Esping-Andersen 1990; Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser 2011). While the German, French, and Italian welfare states have offered strong unemployment protection to labor market insiders (Emmenegger et al. 2012), unemployment benefits in the UK have been historically less generous. At the same time, narratives of welfare scrounging and the need for economic self-reliance are prevalent in the UK (Romano 2015; Somers and Block 2005). This allows us to provide comparative insight into the attitudinal consequences of the pandemic and the unprecedented policy responses taken in Europe.

The results show that there was a generalized, temporary increase in support for the state providing the unemployed with a decent standard of living among German workers over the onset of the pandemic. Those who experienced job loss boosted their support even more—in line with patterns found over the 2008 financial crisis (Margalit 2013; Naumann, Buss, and Bähr 2016)—while those who experienced job retention demonstrated a similar change in attitudes as those who worked continuously. These patterns are confirmed in the comparative analyses, which show a positive correlation between being jobless and support for unemployment protection and the unemployed, and no significant difference in support between those on job retention and those in regular work. We also show that increased risk of job loss is positively correlated with increased support for the unemployed in Germany, but it does not explain differences in preference changes between workers with different labor market trajectories.

These results may challenge a key assumption in welfare attitudes research that preference changes due to job loss are primarily influenced by changes in individuals' immediate material circumstances. Specifically, job loss is materially similar to job retention (both involve a lack of work and decreased income) but associated with greater risks (a return to work is not guaranteed). By comparing attitudes between people with these two labor market experiences, our results suggest that increased support for unemployment benefits and the unemployed among those who lose their jobs may be mainly influenced by non-material mechanisms that are linked to the unemployment experience such as a heightened risk of future financial hardship (Rehm 2009), belief changes about the unemployed such as what help they deserve, or contact with other unemployed individuals.

This article contributes to previous longitudinal studies of labor market protection preferences (Margalit 2013; Naumann, Buss, and Bähr 2016). Extending our study across countries, and focusing on a period when unemployment and risk of job loss were less anticipated and not only concentrated among people in weak labor market positions, lends greater generalizability to our results (Wehl 2019). We also contribute to the burgeoning literature on the welfare attitude consequences of the pandemic (e.g., Ares, Bürgisser, and Häusermann 2021; de Vries et al. 2023; Ebbinghaus, Lehner, and Naumann 2022; Enggist, Häusermann, and Pinggera 2022; Ferragina and Zola 2022; Ferragina et al. 2023; Gandenberger et al. 2023; Reeskens, Muis, et al. 2021).

In the following sections, we examine how the pandemic and labor market protection in the four countries under study may influence attitudes toward unemployment benefits and the unemployed before presenting our analytical strategy and results. We then discuss the political and policy implications that our findings may carry.

1 | Conceptual Framework

People's welfare attitudes are commonly understood to be both rooted in their long-term values and susceptible to short-term change based on their immediate circumstances (Jæger 2006; Owens and Pedulla 2014). The COVID-19 pandemic creates a promising context to study how rapid changes to people's circumstances may influence support for unemployment protection and the unemployed. Not only was the labor market crisis exogenous, unanticipated, and sufficiently wide-reaching to threaten millions of workers' jobs, including those in stable employment, but unprecedented employment protection measures helped many avoid job loss across Europe. While we do not exclude the possibility that the pandemic may prompt long-term changes in people's values, we are primarily interested in understanding how employment trajectories during this time may have influenced attitudes toward unemployment protection and the unemployed.

Welfare attitudes need to be understood as multifaceted (Roosma, van Oorschot, and Gelissen 2014) as they may refer to a diverse set of groups (the unemployed, pensioners, people with disabilities, or others), and aspects (perceptions of policy effectiveness, readiness to pay taxes for welfare programs or views on the misuse of welfare programs, Svallfors 2011, 2012). Aware

of this complexity, we focus our analyses on attitudes toward unemployment benefits and the unemployed.

1.1 | COVID-19 Pandemic Labor Market Crisis and Attitudes

Research on the aggregate attitudinal consequences of the pandemic suggests that popular support may have moved in diverging ways (Ares, Bürgisser, and Häusermann 2021; Ebbinghaus, Lehner, and Naumann 2022). On the one hand, with widespread threats to health and economic well-being, self-interest considerations may have led people to support robust social protections (Bonoli et al. 2022). Individuals support policies if the expected benefits are greater than the costs (Iversen and Soskice 2001; Meltzer and Richard 1981), and so people who are currently (Margalit 2013; Naumann, Buss, and Bähr 2016), or expect to become unemployed (Rehm 2009; Marx 2014) may favor unemployment protection more than those in stable employment. Increased unemployment and the risk of mass layoffs brought on by the pandemic and nonpharmaceutical interventions like lockdown measures may have therefore boosted support for unemployment protection. What is more, the pandemic may have triggered a solidaristic response to the difficulties faced by others (Gandenberger et al. 2023; Reeskens, Roosma, and Wanders 2021). Given that job loss or the inability to work during lockdown was largely out of the individual's control, the perceived deservingness of people relying on labor market protection policies at this time may have been higher (van Oorschot 2000, 2006).

On the other hand, spikes in state spending, public deficit, and debt may have generated concerns about the need to pay back what was spent, thereby reducing popular support for unemployment benefits (Ebbinghaus, Lehner, and Naumann 2022). There is evidence that such a reaction took place after the 2008 global financial crisis as people widely embraced the imperative for austerity measures as a response to perceived overspending (Blyth 2013; Stanley 2014). However, empirical evidence from the early stages of the pandemic suggests that this was not the case in this crisis. With the unprecedented and unpredicted exogenous shock, many Europeans may have boosted their support for labor market protection policies (Enggist, Häusermann, and Pinggera 2022) and recognized that austerity measures were inappropriate (Ferragina and Zola 2022).

Attitudes toward unemployment benefits and the unemployed may have also diverged across social groups at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as material inequalities were amplified (Witteveen 2020). In many economic recessions, risks are primarily concentrated among those already in disadvantaged positions (Atkinson and Morelli 2011), meaning that the costs of social protections tend to outweigh the potential benefits for high earners in secure employment. This can exacerbate a reaction against high public spending levels among these social groups (Rehm 2016). However, the COVID-19 pandemic was unique in comparison to other crises in recent decades because it may have suddenly heightened uncertainty of employment and economic security for a wide swath of the population, including people in previously stable positions. This may have contributed to a generalized increase in perceived risks (Ebbinghaus,

Lehner, and Naumann 2022), a context that is associated with higher support for social insurance like robust labor market protection to weather the crisis (Rehm 2016). These remarks provide the basis for our first hypothesis:

H1. *On average, people active in the labor force will demonstrate higher favorability for unemployment protection during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic than before its onset.*

1.2 | Individuals′ Labor Market Experiences and Attitudes

Germany, France, and Italy have historically offered generous unemployment protection, especially for workers with permanent contracts and high wages (Emmenegger et al. 2012). The UK stands apart for providing unemployment benefits with comparatively low generosity and high means testing. At the pandemic's onset, all four countries complemented their unemployment protection policies with the expansion or creation (in the case of the UK) of robust employment protection called job retention (Müller, Schulten, and Drahokoupil 2022; OECD 2020a; see also Sacchi, Pancaldi, and Arisi 2011).[1] These policies permitted firms to maintain employees on their payroll by reducing their hours, often completely, and to receive state subsidies to pay wages lost to unworked hours (Müller, Schulten, and Drahokoupil 2022). They were instated with the objective of reducing skill dispersion during a period that would have otherwise witnessed mass layoffs (Ebbinghaus and Lehner 2022).

The job retention policies were overall successful in reducing unemployment, but the pandemic still led to a significant number of job losses. The pattern was similar in all four countries, with the key risk factor being the sector, industry, and occupation in which one worked. Industries related to food services, tourism, and accommodation, leisure, and entertainment were the hardest hit by the COVID-19 crisis, as most jobs could not be worked from home and were considered nonessential. Although the uptake of job retention measures was highest in these industries, they also had the highest relative share of job losses, indicating that the protections in place may have been insufficient to completely mitigate the effects of the pandemic (Adams-Prassl et al. 2020; Fana, Pérez, and Fernández-Macías 2020; OECD 2020b, 2021a, 2021b; Pope and Shearer 2021). The key difference between those who were able to successfully use the job retention programs and those who lost their job was the type of contract: job loss was less likely for salaried employees on permanent contracts and more likely for employees working on part-time, fixed-term, and temporary contracts. Since nonpermanent jobs are concentrated in these industries, this further exacerbated the situation (Adams-Prassl et al. 2020; Insee 2020; OECD 2021a).

The above disparities translated into the pandemic having an uneven impact across different demographic groups, particularly affecting women, young people, and those with low education levels (Adams-Prassl et al. 2020; Cribb and Salisbury 2021; OECD 2021a, 2021b). The overrepresentation of these groups in the most affected sectors, along with their higher concentration in part-time and temporary roles, contributed to their higher unemployment rates.

The benefits provided by unemployment protection and the job retention schemes were similar in Germany, France, and Italy. Eligibility for both was typically extended to all employees with a work contract, with access to the former requiring prior contributions to the social security system and access to the latter requiring reduced working hours due to the pandemic restrictions. Replacement rates usually amounted to 60%–80% of lost wages, except for very high earners and some Italian workers, and the duration of benefit eligibility extended to a year or more. The UK was somewhat of an outlier in comparison. While the financial support provided by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was comparable to the other three countries, as it covered most employees on reduced hours and replaced 80% of gross wages, access to unemployment benefits required means testing and social security contributions for the previous two to three years, and amounted to £84.80 per week. The experiences of job retention and unemployment benefits from the worker's perspective in the four countries under study are summarized in more detail in Table 1.

Unlike the material similarities that unemployment and job retention benefits afforded, we contend that the experiences of job loss and job retention entailed substantially different risks. Individuals evaluate their risks based on the information they possess about their situations, including their labor market status, macroeconomic conditions (Ahrens 2023), and the social protections for which they are eligible. In the context of the pandemic, those who lost their jobs may have been likely to perceive a heightened risk of long-term unemployment, influenced in part by poor hiring trends (Cusack, Iversen, and Rehm 2006), and of economic hardship, informed by the individual's anticipated capacity to maintain a decent standard of living without employment. For those on job retention, however, perceived risks may have been reduced because there was a guarantee of return to work and therefore the preservation of future income.

This difference in perceived risks between those who lose their jobs and those who experience job retention may be crucial for their attitudes, as support for social protection increases with risk exposure (Rehm 2009). People tend to be risk averse, and therefore favorable to changes in the present that will diminish the possibility of undesirable future outcomes. Researchers have demonstrated that the distribution of risks can help explain differences in support for social protection across groups. In countries whose welfare states maintain a high degree of universalism like Sweden, people have historically been more supportive of redistribution than in countries with more conditional welfare states like the United States (Larsen 2008, 2016; see also Korpi 1980; Svallfors 1997). This may be in part due to a more even distribution of risks across the socioeconomic spectrum (Rehm, Hacker, and Schlesinger 2012).

We postulate that a similar perspective can be used to understand differences in support for unemployment benefits and the unemployed across labor market statuses during the pandemic. For those whose work remained uninterrupted, any heightened job insecurity in a context of generalized uncertainty may contribute to a boost in support over the onset of the pandemic. For those who lost their jobs, both the poor present circumstances including diminished income, as well as the risks of financial insecurity and prolonged unemployment in a recession environment

may influence their preferences. Experience with job retention may stand in between. While workers in this position experienced a decrease in income and working hours similar to those who lost their jobs, they maintained a work contract and a guarantee of return to work and stable future income. We use these variations in risks across labor market statuses to frame our second and third hypotheses:

H2. *Experiencing unemployment in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic will be associated with higher support for unemployment protection and the unemployed compared to those who worked continuously.*

H3. *Experiencing job retention in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic will be associated with no significant difference in support for unemployment protection and the unemployed compared to those who worked continuously.*

2 | Data and Methods

We first examine attitudes toward unemployment protection among people active in the German labor force from January 2020 to January 2021 and who experienced different work status trajectories between employment, job loss, and job retention. We take advantage of the longitudinal nature of the German data to control for all unobserved time-invariant factors that may influence individual attitudes, allowing us to get closer to an experimental design for testing the role that work status changes have on attitude changes. We then confirm these findings with cross-sectional analyses conducted on people who were employed, unemployed, and on job retention in Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain in 2020.

2.1 | Four Data Sources

We collected data on people who were eligible for job retention and unemployment benefits.[2] This includes individuals who were employed (as well as those on parental or sick leave), unemployed, or on job retention schemes over the surveying period, and excludes those who were inactive in the labor force and self-employed. Data were collected online in Germany by the GIP and the MCS (University of Mannheim), in France by the CoCo project (an extension of the Étude Longitudinale par Internet pour les Sciences Sociales, or ELIPSS, housed at SciencesPo), in Italy by the ResPOnsE project (University of Milan), and in Great Britain by the BSA survey (NatCen). The German, French, and British data are probability samples of the general population. The Italian sample was drawn from an opt-in, online community managed by a commercial research institute that is stratified by area of residence with quotas drawn by gender and age group (Vezzoni et al. 2020). Posthoc analyses of the sample show that it meets the WHO's standards for analyzing the social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and weights have been created to correct for imbalances between the sample and the Italian population.[3]

The MCS administered 16 waves on a weekly basis between March 23 and July 16, 2020, and we make use of data gathered on 1775 participants who experienced different work status

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TABLE 1 | Summary of the experiences of job retention and unemployment benefits from the worker's perspective in Germany, France, Italy, and the UK.

Job retention	DE	FR	IT	UK
Eligibility	Effectively all employed people with reduced hours except those in "mini-jobs"; compensation paid once 10% of the firm's workforce had substantial loss in working hours	Effectively all employed people with reduced hours	Effectively all employed people with reduced hours	March to June, 2020: Effectively all employed people whose working hours had been reduced to zero for three weeks; July 2020 onwards: Effectively all employed people with reduced hours
Payout	60% of wages on lost hours (67% for workers with children); 70% (77% with children) after 4 months on the scheme; 80% (87% with children) after 6 months on the scheme; caps calculated based on many factors including initial gross wage, tax bracket, number of working hours lost, and region of residence (Müller 2021)	84% of wages on lost hours (70% after social security contributions); floor set at the minimum wage; cap on income over 4.5 times the minimum wage (equivalent to 6927€ gross per month in 2020)	For workers with income up to 2160€/month: 940€; For workers with income above 2160€/month: 1129€ (Faioli and Bologna 2023); 80% gross wage cap	80% gross wage; cap equal to 2500 GBP
Duration[a]	24 months	12 months	Extended multiple times	Extended multiple times for an effective maximum duration of 19 months
Adjustments to the pandemic	Increase of payout for those on the scheme for more than 4 months; lowered firm and employee eligibility criteria	Lowered eligibility criteria: Inclusion of temporary and part-time workers, workers at public companies, etc. (Vincent 2021); extension of the maximum duration	Creation of a short-time work scheme for people not eligible for the pre-existing job retention schemes; lowered firm and employee eligibility criteria: Inclusion of employees outside the industrial sector and in firms with fewer than 15 workers (Faioli and Bologna 2023); simplified application procedure	Creation of the scheme
Adjustments during the first year of the pandemic	Extension of the maximum duration from 12 to 24 months in September 2020	Copayment from companies starting in June 2020	Copayment from companies from August to December 2020	Possibility to retain part-time working hours introduced in July 2020; copayment from companies from September to October 2020 (Fulton 2021)

(Continues)

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TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Unemployment	DE	FR	IT	UK
Eligibility	Contribution to unemployment insurance for 12 of the 30 months prior to application; requirement to actively seek employment	Proof of work for 6 months in the two years prior to application; requirement to actively seek employment	Contribution to unemployment insurance for 13 weeks in the four years prior to application (lowered for people in the entertainment sector and atypical employment)	Regular contribution to the national insurance scheme for two to three years prior to application; means testing on savings for access to Universal Credit
Payout	60% of average wages (67% for workers with children) from the 12 months leading up to job loss (*Arbeitslosengeld I*); long-term unemployed were subjected to means testing and a low, social assistance payout was applied, usually amounting to no more than several hundred euros per month (*Arbeitslosengeld II*)	Determined by average daily wage; 75% wage cap	1470€/month gross cap[b]; income up to 1352€/month: 75% of the monthly reference income. Income above 1352€/month: 1014€ (75% of 1352€) + 25% of the reference income exceeding the ceiling	84.80 GBP/week[b]
Duration	The initial period was dependent on length of contribution to the insurance scheme	2 years		182 days[b]
Adjustments to the pandemic	Extension of payout by 3 months for those already unemployed at the start of the pandemic			

[a]Initial duration periods were extended several times in 2020 in many countries so that job retention was available continuously from March 2020 to January 2021 in all four countries (Drahokoupil and Müller 2021).
[b]As of 2024.
Source: Authors' elaboration.

trajectories between employment, job loss, and job retention over that period. We also use data collected in waves 45 (January 2020), 49 (September 2020), and 51 (January 2021) of the GIP. The CoCo project consists of eight waves administered from April 2020 to April 2021, and we rely on data gathered from 476 participants who were employed, unemployed, or on job retention in the fourth wave (May 2020) for the cross-sectional analyses.[4] In Italy, ResPOnsE was administered as a rolling cross-sectional survey over four waves during the first year of the pandemic, and we make use of data from 3912 participants who were employed, unemployed, or on job retention in the first wave from May to July 2020. The BSA is a repeated cross-sectional annual survey of the British population, and we make use of data from 2226 participants who were employed, unemployed, or on job retention in the 2020 survey round administered between October and December 2020. Figure 1 visualizes the timing of data collection in all four countries.

2.2 | Outcome Variables

Each survey was administered independently, meaning that attitudinal questions differ from country to country and tap into different aspects of support for unemployment benefits and the unemployed. In the GIP and MCS, the outcome variable of interest asks if "the state [should] be responsible for ensuring a decent standard of living for the unemployed," evoking people's preferred role of government and an element of deservingness (van Oorschot 2000). Responses to this question range from "0, *Should not be at all responsible*" to "10, *Should be fully responsible*." The CoCo project administered two questions. The first is strictly about policy preferences and whether "compared to the situation before the pandemic...we need more, the same, or less spending on unemployment insurance," with responses taking one of five possibilities from "*Much less*" to "*Much more*." The second evokes welfare scrounging and perceived laziness of the unemployed (Somers and Block 2005), asking whether "the unemployed could find a job if they really wanted," with respondents grouped into those who (totally) disagree and those who (totally) agree with the statement. ResPOnsE asked to what extent benefits in case of unemployment are "an essential characteristic of democracy," with responses ranging from "1, *Not at all essential*" to "10, *Definitely essential*." Finally, the BSA asks whether respondents believe that the unemployed could find a job if they really wanted one, similarly to CoCo. Responses were on a five-point scale from "*Disagree strongly*" to "*Agree strongly*."

Although these variables offer a multidimensional view of attitudes toward unemployment protection and the people who benefit from it, they also preclude direct comparisons across the four countries. For this reason, we look for common preference patterns between people with different employment statuses across countries, which may provide a more robust indication of how reliance on job retention schemes can influence attitudes than by only examining a single country context.

2.3 | Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Analyses

Research on welfare attitudes often relies on cross-sectional data to describe the association between people's circumstances and preferences. We begin with this approach by presenting weighted descriptive analyses that investigate cross-nationally the sociodemographic characteristics of people who experienced continuous work, job loss, and job retention, and what their attitudes are toward unemployment and the unemployed. We then estimate regression models to examine the correlations between work status and attitudes while controlling for a wide array of sociodemographic factors. These models can be specified as:

$$y_i = \beta_{0i} + \beta_i \mathbf{X}_i + \varepsilon_i$$

The preferences y of each individual i are modeled as a function of predictor variables contained in the vector $\mathbf{X}$ with coefficients β and respondent residual ε. A model for each attitude is estimated using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) or logit for binary outcome variables.

However, achieving accurate estimations of the correlations between work status and the outcome variables can be difficult due to omitted variable bias, in which the estimate of direct effects includes the sum of the true effects and any unobserved indirect effects. In addition, cross-sectional analyses are limited in their capacity to establish causal claims because they cannot identify the temporal order of an event and a change in attitudes. Because we wish to determine the effect that experience with job loss and job retention have on attitudes toward unemployment benefits and the unemployed, we implement a two-way fixed effects model on the longitudinal German data. This approach considers only changes within individuals and is unbiased by unobserved time-invariant confounders that often influence both labor market status and preferences. We also introduce a time-fixed effect to account for the social and economic changes that all respondents experience from one survey wave to the next. This is particularly important over the onset of the pandemic, in which deep economic recession and changes to

FIGURE 1 | Timing of data collection in all four countries, where each rectangle represents one collection period. For example, in Germany, work status was collected 19 times and the outcome variable three times, and data were collected in Italy once with a 3-week gap in collection.

the labor market likely influenced attitudes. The two-way fixed effects model can be specified as:

$$y_{it} = \beta \mathbf{X}_{it} + c_i + f_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

In this case, $\mathbf{X}$ represents time-varying predictor variables, c_i are individual-specific effects, and f_t are time-specific effects. Two-way fixed effects models have their limitations (Naumann 2023; Vaisey and Miles 2017), including the risk of bias from omitted time-varying variables, the assumption of parallel time trends between those who experienced job loss or job retention, and those who remained in work, and the possibility of inferential bias due to nonrandom panel attrition.

We expect omitted variables not to challenge the validity of the longitudinal analyses because of the inclusion of time-fixed effects. Regarding attrition, weekly response rates in the MCS were over 60% (Blom et al. 2020). To understand how attrition is patterned in our data, Table A1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents by how many times they participated in the survey waves where the outcome variable was administered and for whom we have information on labor market trajectories. Most people participated in all three waves, and women, the young, and those with lower educational attainment were slightly overrepresented among respondents who participated only once. We use a response propensity weight to account for such panel attrition bias.

2.4 | Predictor Variables

Our primary predictor variable of interest is labor market status. In our cross-sectional analyses, we specify this as the individual's status at the time of their response to the outcome variable. This includes (1) people who are at work or on temporary parental or sick leave, (2) on job retention, and (3) unemployed. The goal of reducing the possibility of both omitted variable bias and model overfitting informs our choice of additional predictors, and so we focus on controlling for the most important factors that may influence attitudes toward unemployment and the unemployed.[5] These include gender (men and women), age (in 5-year brackets in Germany and France, and continuous in Italy and Great Britain), age-squared (in Italy and Great Britain), and educational attainment.[6] We also include monthly household income (continuous in € in Germany and France, four groups in Great Britain including £0–£1410; £1411–£2560; £2561–£4350; £4351+), monthly household income-squared (in Germany and France), and socioprofessional class (the PCS-6 in France and the NS-SEC in Great Britain).[7]

In our longitudinal analysis, we consider changes to individuals' labor market statuses between January 2020 and January 2021. The MCS collected data during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic at high frequency (Blom et al. 2020), so respondents' labor market statuses are available on a weekly basis (see Figure 1 Above). Longitudinal surveys of welfare attitudes tend to gather information on respondents' labor market statuses several times a year at most, meaning that our analyses are comparatively sensitive to brief spells of job loss. This is advantageous for the period that we study, during which rapid

changes to labor market statuses may have been more common, although it also implies that we do not separate the long-term unemployed from those who experienced a very short period without a job.

We must account for many potential unique paths between working, job retention, and unemployment. We assign respondents to five, simplified groups, including people who (1) worked continuously or were on temporary parental or sick leave, (2) lost their job and returned to work, (3) lost their job and remained out of work, (4) relied on job retention and returned to work, and (5) relied and remained on job retention. To empirically examine whether changes to perceived risks influence attitudinal shifts, we introduce an additional analysis that controls for respondents' self-reported likelihood of job loss in the 12 months following the survey (*not at all likely*, *unlikely*, *moderately likely*, *quite likely*, *very likely*).[8] This question was posed in the same three waves as the outcome variable of interest, allowing us to treat it as a time-varying predictor variable. However, it was not administered to the unemployed, meaning that we lose those in ongoing unemployment from this analysis and must therefore limit the conclusions we can draw from it.

3 | Results

Overall, our longitudinal results provide evidence that there was an increase in support over the onset of the pandemic (H1). The cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses show that, compared to those who worked continuously, respondents who experienced job loss demonstrate a greater level or increase in support for unemployment benefits and the unemployed (H2). While we expected a similar level of support among respondents who relied on job retention compared to respondents who worked continuously (H3), our findings do not entirely support such a null effect. Job retention is related to changes in support for unemployment benefits, albeit weaker than an unemployment experience. We elaborate on these findings below.

3.1 | Descriptive Results

Before testing our hypotheses, we first wish to get a sense of the proportions of people in different labor market statuses and their characteristics by sociodemographic group. Table 2 presents the weighted proportions of German respondents with different trajectories based on information gathered 19 times from January 2020 to January 2021. It also presents weighted proportions of French, Italian, and British respondents with different statuses collected cross-sectionally.

In all four countries, most people were employed at the time of surveying, suggesting that despite occasionally strict nonpharmaceutical interventions like lockdowns and curfews, labor forces were able to adapt and continue working. Nonetheless, a substantial portion of respondents experienced job loss or job retention, and there is some variation in magnitude across countries. This may reflect both structural differences in national labor markets, as well as timing differences in surveying. For example, unemployment is higher among our Italian respondents

TABLE 2 | Weighted proportions table of German respondents with each labor market status trajectory and French, Italian, and British respondents with each labor market status by sociodemographic groups, based on data collected between January 2020 and January 2021.

DE (trajectories) Jan 2021	Continuously employed/on leave	Job reten., returned to work	Job reten., ongoing	Job loss, returned to work	Job loss, ongoing	FR (cross-sectional) April–May 2020	Employed/ on leave	Job retention	Unemployed
Sex									
Men	69.9%	17.1%	6.7%	3.6%	2.7%	Men	71.6%	22%	6.4%
Women	80.4%	9.7%	4.0%	4.4%	1.5%	Women	67.3%	14.4%	18.3%
Age									
18–34	74.8%	11.7%	5.7%	6.4%	1.4%	18–34	45.5%	23.2%	31.3%
35–44	71.8%	15.3%	8.0%	3.4%	1.4%	35–44	70.3%	21.8%	7.9%
45–54	73.3%	16.0%	5.3%	3.3%	2.2%	45–54	74.7%	17.1%	8.2%
55+	79.1%	11.7%	2.9%	2.6%	3.7%	55+	83.8%	6.7%	9.5%
Education									
Less than uni	69.7%	16.5%	6.9%	4.6%	2.4%	Less than uni	68.7%	19.8%	11.4%
Some uni and more	81.6%	9.9%	3.5%	3.0%	1.9%	Some uni and more	69.8%	15.1%	15.1%

IT (cross-sectional) May–July 2020	Employed/ on leave	Job retention	Unemployed	UK (cross-sectional) Oct–Dec 2020	Employed/ on leave	Job retention	Unemployed
Sex							
Men	80.3%	6.9%	12.8%	Men	88.3%	5.1%	6.6%
Women	67.6%	10.1%	22.3%	Women	87.6%	5.5%	6.8%
Age							
18–34	69.6%	6.4%	24.0%	18–34	87.4%	4.5%	8.1%
35–44	74.1%	10.5%	15.5%	35–44	89.8%	4.6%	5.6%
45–54	75.9%	7.2%	16.9%	45–54	89.2%	6%	4.8%
55+	78.3%	9.1%	12.6%	55+	85.5%	7%	7.6%
Education							
Less than uni	70.9%	9.4%	19.7%	Less than uni	83.2%	7.9%	9%
Some uni and more	84.7%	5.5%	9.8%	Some uni and more	91.8%	3.4%	4.9%

than in our British sample, perhaps due to more rigid labor market policies in Italy, and the fact that ResPOnsE data were collected in the spring of 2020, while the BSA administered their survey in the autumn when nonpharmaceutical interventions were less restrictive.

Moreover, experiences with job loss and job retention were unevenly distributed across sociodemographic groups. Higher rates of unemployment were generally associated with women, the young, and the less educated. Similarly, the young or middle-aged, and the less educated were more likely to experience job retention, although no clear gender pattern appears to emerge across all four countries, with German and French men, and Italian women experiencing higher rates of it. These patterns suggest that social groups with traditionally weaker labor market positions may have been more exposed to job loss and job retention,[9] aligning with previous research (Adams-Prassl et al. 2020; Cribb and Salisbury 2021; OECD 2021a, 2021b).

Turning our attention to attitudes, Figure 2 presents the weighted mean response to each outcome variable of interest among people who were working or on temporary leave, unemployed, or on job retention. In all cases, those who are unemployed are more supportive of unemployment policies and the unemployed than those working. Those on job retention appear similarly or mildly more favorable to unemployment protection than those working, although in Great Britain they agree more that the unemployed could find a job if they really wanted. From a longitudinal perspective, Germany posed the same question twice after the onset of the pandemic, and we can see that all respondents were mildly more enthusiastic about the state providing the unemployed with a decent standard of living in July 2020 than in January 2021.

3.2 | Longitudinal and Cross-Sectional Results

We begin with the two-way fixed effects analysis conducted on German workers (Table 3). The time-fixed effects at the
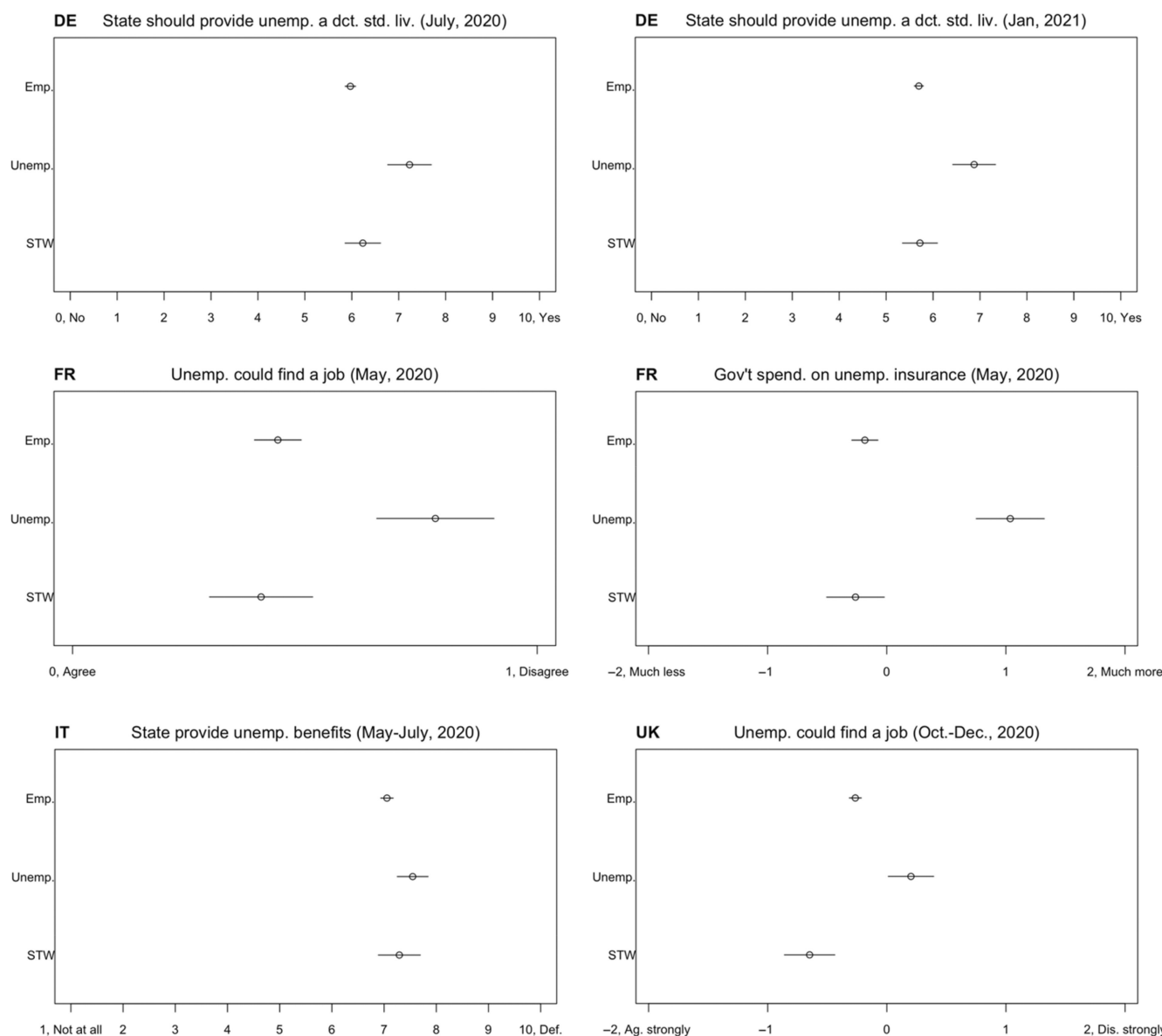
FIGURE 2 | Weighted mean levels of support for unemployment protection and the unemployed and 95% confidence intervals among people working or on leave, unemployed, and job retention (single predictor, weighted OLS regressions).

TABLE 3 | Two-way fixed effects regression results among respondents active in the German labor market from January 2020 to January 2021.

	Outcome variable
	State should provide unemp. a dct. std. liv. (0, *No*–10, *Yes*)
Job retention, returned (ref: Continuously working)	0.097
	(0.147)
Job retention, ongoing (ref: Continuously working)	0.395[*]
	(0.167)
Job loss, returned (ref: Continuously working)	0.407
	(0.281)
Job loss, ongoing (ref: Continuously working)	0.955[***]
	(0.284)
July 2020 (ref: January 2020)	0.459[***]
	(0.061)
January 2021 (ref: January 2020)	0.172[**]
	(0.062)
Observations	4113
R^2	0.036
Adjusted R^2	−0.449
F statistic	16.946[***] (df = 6; 2736)

*$p<0.05$; **$p<0.01$; ***$p<0.001$.

bottom of the table show how support among the continuously employed (the reference group) changed over time. Respondents who worked continuously were estimated to increase their support for providing the unemployed with a decent standard of living by 0.46 points on the 0 (*no state responsibility*) to 10 (*full state responsibility*) response scale from January to July 2020, suggesting that the pandemic boosted favorability toward state assistance. The economic recession, as well as individual disruptions to normal routines like working from home and the epidemiological risks for in-person workers may have contributed to a perceived increase in job insecurity for many people, despite the robust social protections put in place. From January 2020 to January 2021, the change in workers' support was 0.17 points, suggesting that as the uncertainty of the economic and employment outcomes of the crisis receded, perceived risks may have declined as well. If risk perceptions are the primary explanation for these temporal differences, support may have been even higher at the very beginning of the pandemic between March and July 2020 than what we can observe. Nevertheless, the temporal evidence found in these results provides evidence in favor of H1, that workers increased their support for unemployment protection during the pandemic and especially closer to its onset. One should note though that this trend is based on people who were eligible for job retention and unemployment benefits, which includes individuals who were employed (including those on parental or sick leave) but excludes those who were inactive in the labor force or self-employed.

Turning to the role that different labor market trajectories play in changing attitudes, people who experienced job loss increased their support for the state to provide the unemployed with a decent standard of living more than those who worked continuously. Those who lost their jobs and returned to work and those who lost their jobs and remained out of work increased their support by 0.41 and 0.96 points more than those who remained working. Meanwhile, those who experienced job retention and returned to work and those who experienced ongoing job retention increased their support by 0.10 and 0.40 points more than those who remained working.

Three remarks can be made from these results. First, the experience of job loss appears to heighten people's support for the unemployed, and it may leave a reduced, but lasting effect even after the individual returns to work (Naumann, Buss, and Bähr 2016). Job loss leads to a drop in income and an increased risk at the same time so it is difficult to infer which of these two mechanisms is responsible for the attitude change. Unlike job loss, job retention should affect risk perceptions but have similar effects on the individual's income situation. Therefore, second, and against our expectation, job retention temporarily boosts support for the unemployed. However, the effect is weaker than the one of job loss and nearly disappears among those who returned to regular work. Therefore, while H3 is rejected, these results are still in line with our overall theoretical argument that the experience of job retention may have left less of a mark on people than the experience of job loss during the pandemic. The third remark helps confirm this interpretation, as the effect of job retention on boosting support is milder than for those who lost their jobs. By comparing the magnitudes of the coefficients associated with these trajectories, we see that the experience of job loss and return to work a similar effect to the experience of ongoing job retention.

To further compare the effects of experiencing job loss and job retention, Table A2 presents the same model with the reference group changed to those in ongoing unemployment. It shows that those who experienced job retention and returned to work demonstrated a significantly lower increase in support than those who were in ongoing job loss. Additionally, Table A3 presents a weighted two-way fixed effects analysis, and it confirms some of the findings in the main analysis. Those who lost their jobs are estimated to have a greater increase in support, while those in job retention do not show a statistically significant increase in support compared to those who worked continuously. Nonetheless, the unweighted and weighted analyses differ in some respects. While those who lost their jobs and returned to work were estimated to increase their support by 0.41 points compared to those in continuous work in the former model, the same group has an estimated increase of 0.08 points in the latter model. In this case, we tend to rely on the unweighted analysis because the weights we use are not designed for subsample analyses like ours, where the sample is restricted to those active in the labor force at a certain time point.

Overall, these analyses provide evidence that experiencing unemployment in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with higher support for the unemployed compared to those who worked continuously, and that there is less of a

difference in changing support between those who experienced job retention and those who worked continuously.

To investigate whether these attitudinal patterns may be explained by changing risks when individuals experience a disruption in their labor market status, we measure the role that perceived risk of job loss may have on changing support for the unemployed. We introduce a time-varying control in the two-way fixed effects model that shows that an increase in perceived risk of job loss has a significantly positive effect on support for the unemployed (Table 4). Given that we lose those who experienced ongoing job loss because risk perceptions were not gathered from the unemployed, we take a stepwise modeling approach that allows us to determine the effect of controlling for risk. By comparing the estimates in models 1 and 2 in Table 4, we see that the introduction of risk perceptions as a control reduces the magnitude of the job retention effect on attitudes by less than 0.1 points on the outcome scale and overall results remain unchanged. Therefore, against our expectation, we do not have clear evidence that job retention is more similar to continuously working once we control for the perceived risk of job loss. That said, we do not have the data to test the role of other types of risks on changing attitudes over time, such as the risk of financial precarity. We discuss this in more detail in Section 4.

To further explore this unexpected finding, we examine how the different employment trajectories affect unemployment risk perceptions (Table 4, model 3). Based on the time fixed effects, we observe a general increase in perceived unemployment risk among the continuously employed (0.13 points on the 5-point measurement scale between January and July 2020). This increased risk perception only slightly recedes in January 2021 and clearly remains above the prepandemic level (0.11 in January 2021). We assumed that job retention programs would provide job security and prevent increased unemployment risk perceptions. This assumption is not supported by our data. The increase in perceived unemployment risks is stronger among those who experience job retention compared to those who continuously work. The change is somewhat weaker among those who returned to work (0.29) compared to those who experience ongoing job retention (0.45) which suggests that returning to a previous job leads to slightly lower risk perceptions again. We also observe that unemployment risk perceptions among those who lost their job after January 2020 but found a new one by January 2021 experienced a decrease in risk perceptions (−0.55 compared to the continuously working). While we cannot observe whether this change happened before or during unemployment or after the return to employment, we tend toward the interpretation that finding a job has a potentially strong effect on reducing risk perceptions. Overall, this additional, explorative analysis of the trends of unemployment risk perceptions does not support our assumption that those in job retention schemes have similar risk of job loss perceptions to those continuously employed. This might be one explanation for why the inclusion of the perceptions in our main empirical analysis does not change results.

TABLE 4 | Additional two-way fixed effects regression results among respondents working or on job retention in the German labor market from January 2020 to January 2021.

	Outcome variable		
	State should provide unemp. a dct. std. liv. (0, *No*–10, *Yes*)		Reported unemp. risk (1, *Not at all*–5, *Very likely*)
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Job retention, returned (ref: Continuously working)	0.104	0.068	0.287***
	(0.144)	(0.145)	(0.048)
Job retention, ongoing (ref: Continuously working)	0.390*	0.332*	0.451**
	(0.165)	(0.167)	(0.054)
Job loss, returned (ref: Continuously working)	0.294	0.364	−0.548***
	(0.341)	(0.342)	(0.112)
July 2020 (ref: January 2020)	0.430***	0.413***	0.132***
	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.020)
January 2021 (ref: January 2020)	0.166**	0.153*	0.108***
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.020)
Perceived risk of unemployment (ref: None)		0.128*	
		(0.059)	
Observations	3963	3963	3978
R^2	0.029	0.030	0.079
Adjusted R^2	−0.460	−0.458	−0.384
F statistic	15.504***	13.721***	45.246***
	(df = 5; 2637)	(df = 6; 2636)	(df = 5; 2647)

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

Our comparative, cross-sectional analyses (Table 5) help confirm the patterns found in the main longitudinal analyses. Support for unemployment protection and the unemployed is higher among people who were without a job than people who were working at the time each question was administered in the four countries. In contrast, support levels are only mildly higher among people who were on job retention than among people who were working, and none of these differences is statistically significant. These results have their limitations, including their incapacity to establish the temporal order of attitudinal versus labor market status changes, the risk of omitted variable bias, and the fact that the magnitudes of the coefficients are not comparable across countries due to differences in the model specifications. However, the patterns that emerge when comparing the estimates of different labor market statuses within countries appear to provide evidence of a similar pattern to the longitudinal analyses. Consequently, they help confirm H2 that experience with unemployment is associated with higher support for unemployment benefits and the unemployed than being in regular work or on temporary leave. While H3 is not clearly supported by our results, the consistently weaker relationship between being on job retention and higher support for the unemployed (compared to being unemployed or having lost a job) supports the general theoretical argument that risk perceptions and other nonmaterial mechanisms are the main drivers of support for unemployment benefits and the unemployed. The cross-sectional analyses also suggest that attitudinal patterns across different labor market statuses that emerged during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic may have been similar across European countries that established robust job retention policies meant to protect against mass layoffs.

Finally, we make a couple of provisional remarks about support patterns across sociodemographic groups (Table A4). When compared to attitudes across social groups, being unemployed appears to be among the strongest predictors for higher support for unemployment benefits and the unemployed. In addition, regarding attitudes toward whether the unemployed could find a job in France and Great Britain, younger people, workers in intermediate and managerial professions, and Brits with higher education appear less likely to see the unemployed as capable of finding a job if they wanted. These patterns do not seem to extend to other attitudes, suggesting that perceptions of the unemployed as lazy or as welfare scroungers (Somers and Block 2005) may be divisive when compared to policy-related questions. Nonetheless, we recognize that these comparisons should be taken with a grain of salt, given that the models across countries are not identical.

4 | Discussion and Conclusions

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was an exceptional time for European labor markets as nonpharmaceutical interventions triggered the temporary closure of entire sectors, deep economic recession, and the expansion of robust employment protection policies. Our objective was to examine this context from the individual perspective and to shed light on how labor market protection can influence attitudes toward unemployment benefits and the unemployed. The analyses of people active in the German labor force show that there was a generalized increase in support for providing the unemployed with a decent standard of living after the onset of the pandemic. With the unexpected closure of entire economic sectors, workers even in stable positions faced heightened job insecurity, which may have temporarily boosted support. Additionally, the exogenous nature of the economic crisis meant that individuals' needs were likely out of their own control, which may have increased perceptions of deservingness for those who were unemployed during this time. The possibilities of either a reaction against overspending or a transformative change in attitudes did not come to pass. Rather, the increase in support appears modest and temporary.

Comparing the attitudinal differences that emerge among people with different labor market trajectories, those who experienced job loss show the strongest increase in support, while this increase is weaker among those who experienced job retention. Similar patterns appear between those who were employed, unemployed, and on job retention in our cross-sectional analyses in Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain, giving us comparative insight into attitudes during the pandemic across the largest European economies.

While our analysis of job loss risk does not clearly support our expectation that risk perceptions are similar between those on job retention and those who worked uninterrupted, the overall finding supports the argument that attitudinal changes due to job loss are not mainly linked to changes in the immediate material situation. This is because those who experienced job retention often found themselves in material circumstances that resembled unemployment, including a lack of working hours and reduced income. Instead, our analyses point to the importance of other theoretical, nonmaterial mechanisms in influencing preferences, which are linked to the unemployment experience. This may include other risk perceptions such as potential future financial hardship, as well as the updating of beliefs about the unemployed and what help they deserve, or even contact with other unemployed people.

We acknowledge, however, that testing these mechanisms is beyond the scope of our data. Future research may wish to address this limitation by investigating the role that risks such as a decrease in expected future income (Rehm 2009) may play in influencing attitudinal variations across people with different labor market statuses. A second limitation of our study is that while the pandemic amplified layoff risks for people even in stable employment, the likelihood of experiencing job loss and job retention were not equally distributed across the socioeconomic spectrum. Selection bias into different labor market statuses makes it difficult to study labor market protection preferences from a self-interest perspective (Wehl 2019). Although our within-individual research design among German respondents controls for this because it is not biased by unobserved time-invariant factors, the results of our cross-sectional analyses should be interpreted with the caveat that they are not entirely devoid of omitted variable bias.

From a social policy perspective, our results shed light on how the emergency labor market protection policies taken by European governments over the COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced attitudes toward unemployment benefits and the unemployed. Specifically, job retention may have created a

TABLE 5 | Cross-sectional regression results among respondents active in the German, French, Italian, and British labor markets. NB: Country-specific control variables can be found in the full table in the Appendix.

			Outcome variable			
Country	DE	DE	FR	FR	IT	GB
Question	State should provide unemp. std. liv. (0, *Not at all*–10, *Completely*)		Unemp. could find job (0, *Agree*–1, *Disagree*)	Gov't should spend (–2, *Much less*–2, *Much more*) on unemp. insurance	State should provide unemp. bens. (1, *No*–10, *Yes*)	Unemp. could find job (–2, *Agree strongly*–2, *Disagree strongly*)
Administered	June–July 2020	Jan 2021	May 2020	May 2020	May–July 2020	Oct–Dec 2020
Work Stat: Unemployed (ref: Working/on leave)	1.176*** (0.301)	1.062*** (0.225)	0.800 (0.442)	0.454* (0.180)	0.500** (0.169)	0.581*** (0.123)
Work Stat: Job retention (ref: Working/on leave)	0.281 (0.220)	0.083 (0.169)	0.248 (0.301)	0.173 (0.129)	0.245 (0.210)	–0.191 (0.122)
			Full table with all country-specific control variables can be found in Table A4			
Constant	6.420*** (1.164)	5.209*** (0.595)	–1.742 (1.290)	–0.301 (0.548)	7.393*** (1.248)	–0.131 (0.331)
Observations	1613	2666	427	408	1723	1911
R^2	0.046	0.039		0.124	0.027	0.070
Adjusted R^2	0.031	0.031		0.069	0.019	0.062
Log likelihood			–265.988			
Akaike Inf. Crit.			581.977			
Residual std. error	2.281 (df=1587)	2.168 (df=2642)		0.895 (df=383)	2.167 (df=1707)	1.109 (df=1894)
F statistic	3.031*** (df=25; 1587)	4.682*** (df=23; 2642)		2.249*** (df=24; 383)	3.198*** (df=15; 1707)	8.904*** (df=16; 1894)

*$p < 0.05$;**$p < 0.01$;***$p < 0.001$.

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perception of a soft landing for what otherwise could have been an economic disaster. As a result, the reduced likelihood of poor outcomes like financial hardship provided by these social policies may have contributed to stability in attitudes toward unemployment benefits and the unemployed during the pandemic. Indeed, for the millions of workers who benefited from job retention schemes across Europe, the pandemic may have been a unique but financially endurable crisis and not a catastrophic moment in their labor market trajectories. This provides a potential explanation for the gap that many studies have found between the renaissance of the welfare state in public discourse and relative stability in welfare attitudes in 2020 (e.g., Ares, Bürgisser, and Häusermann 2021; Ebbinghaus, Lehner, and Naumann 2022; Reeskens, Muis, et al. 2021).

While our study suggests that emergency employment protection policies contributed to substantial attitudinal stability over the first year of the pandemic, we encourage future studies to investigate longer-term attitudinal consequences of the unprecedented social spending. The "whatever it costs" approach to funding labor market protection (Macron 2020) may upend acquiescence to austerity measures that characterized the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis (Ferragina and Zola 2022), making the post-COVID era a distinctly different attitudinal landscape in Europe from the 2010s. The first step to this will be situating short-run analyses of the pandemic's onset in the long term to give researchers a better understanding of how this crisis and the unique social policy responses to it disrupted life but provided economic stability for many.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study can be accessed at GESIS (at https://doi.org/10.4232/1.13700 [MCS], https://doi.org/10.4232/1.13588 [GIP wave 45], https://doi.org/10.4232/1.14322 [GIP wave 49], https://doi.org/10.4232/1.13833 [GIP wave 51]); Sciences Po (at https://doi.org/10.21410/7E4/TSRUHC); the University of Milan (at https://doi.org/10.13130/RD_UNIMI/W3AFKS); and UK Data Service (at http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-9005-1).

Endnotes

[1] Job retention includes short-time work, furlough, and wage subsidy schemes. There are several differences that distinguish these types of programs (Drahokoupil and Müller 2021), and those offered by the four countries included in this study match the technical definition of short-time work, in part because compensation for lost working hours was channelled through the firm, and not paid directly to the worker (in the case of furlough). The UK program is popularly referred to as furlough, although it is classified as a short-time work scheme (Müller, Schulten, and Drahokoupil 2022).

[2] Eligibility for job retention and eligibility for unemployment benefits do not overlap exactly. For example, unlike access to unemployment benefits in Germany, 10% of employees at a firm had to experience reduced working hours before job retention payouts were subsidised. Meanwhile, unemployment benefits in 2020 could only be accessed if the individual had made at least 12 months of social security contributions in the 30 months preceding application. Given that our data do not allow us to filter respondents on every eligibility criterion, we recognize that there may be a few cases of individuals in our samples who

were not eligible for the two forms of labor market protection at the onset of the pandemic. Nevertheless, we expect these to be exceptional.

[3] ResPOnsE contains weights calculated based on age, gender, highest level of education, and area of residence. Among the other surveys, the MCS contains response propensity and raking weights that project the characteristics of the MCS to the GIP sample and to the German population, respectively. They are calculated using employment and occupational sector, as well as information taken from the Mikrozensus on age, gender, highest level of education, federal state of residence, marital status, household size. The ELIPSS contains post-stratification weights calculated using information taken from the census on age, gender, highest level of education, area of residence (ZEAT), and nationality. The BSA contains weights calculated based on age, gender, highest level of education, area of residence, ethnicity, and housing tenure.

[4] We do not apply a longitudinal analysis to these data for two reasons. First, while one outcome variable of interest had not been asked since 2017 before the pandemic, the other was unique to the CoCo project, meaning that determining the influence of the pandemic onset on attitudes may be difficult. Second, the sample size is small and only captures a handful of people who became unemployed during the pandemic.

[5] Our data sources do not allow us to control for sector or type of contract, because when this information is available, it was not systematically gathered from the unemployed. We therefore control for diverse sociodemographic differences and recognize that they may absorb unobserved effects related to the quality of the respondent's work. We also make the decision not to harmonise controls across countries because our objective is to determine whether there are common attitudinal patterns between work statuses, and not to make direct comparisons.

[6] The levels are country-specific, although they range from no/elementary qualifications to a university degree or higher in all four cases. The German classification includes (1) Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung, (2) Schüler/-in und besuche eine berufsorientierte Aufbau-, Fachschule o. ä., (3) Keinen beruflichen Abschluss, (4) Beruflich-betriebliche Berufsausbildung, (5) Beruflich-schulische Ausbildung (Berufsfachschule, Handelsschule, Vorbereitungsdienst für den mittleren Dienst in der öffentlichen Verwaltung), (6) Ausbildung an einer Fachschule der DDR, (7) Ausbildung an einer Fach-, Meister-, Technikerschule, Berufs- oder Fachakademie, (8) Bachelor an (Fach-)Hochschule, (9) Fachhochschulabschluss (z. B. Diplom, Master), (10) Universitätsabschluss (z. B. Diplom, Magister, Staatsexamen, Master), (11) Promotion, (12) Ein anderer beruflicher Abschluss. The French classification includes (1) Aucun diplôme, (2) CEP (certificat d'études primaires), (3) BEPC, brevet élementaire, brevet des collèges, (4) CAP, brevet de compagnon, (5) BEP, (6) Baccalauréat général, brevet supérieur, (7) Baccalauréat technologique ou professionnel, brevet professionnel ou de technicien, BEA, BEC, BEI, BEH, capacité en droit, (8) Diplôme de 1er cycle universitaire, BTS, DUT, diplôme des professions sociales ou de la santé, d'infirmier(ère), (9) Diplôme de 2e ou 3e cycle universitaire (y compris médecine, pharmacie, dentaire), diplôme d'ingénieur, d'une grande école, doctorat, etc. The Italian classification includes (1) Elementare/privo di titolo, (2) Media inferiore, (3) Superiori in corso, (4) Diploma di istituto professionale (3 anni), (5) Diploma di maturità (5 anni), (6) Università in corso/nessuna laurea conseguita, (7) Diploma universitario/laurea breve, (8) Laurea triennale di I livello, (9) Laurea specialistica di II livello o laurea 4–5 anni, (10) Master/scuola di specializzazione post laurea, (11) Dottorato di ricerca. The British classification includes (1) No qualifications, (2) Other qualifications, (3) Qualifications below A-levels, (4) A-levels/SCE highers, (5) Other higher education, (6) Degree or equivalent, and above.

[7] The French PCS-6 includes the groups (1) Agriculteurs exploitants, (2) Artisans, commerçants et chefs d'entreprise, (3) Cadres et professions intellectuelles supérieures, (4) Professions intermédiaires, (5) Employés, (6) Ouvriers. The British NS-SEC includes the groups

(1) Managerial and professional occupations, (2) Intermediate occupations, (3) Lower supervisory and technical occupations, (4) Semiroutine and routine occupations, as well as Small employers and own account workers, which we exclude because they are self-employed.

[8] We treat this variable as continuous in the model. Utilising a dichotomized version of the variable between no risk ('*not at all likely*') and some risk (all other response categories) produces very similar results (analyses not shown).

[9] The uneven distribution of job loss and retention across social groups does not compromise the generalizability of our fixed-effects analyses, which are robust to time-invariant factors. They do, however, underscore the importance of including diverse sociodemographic controls when estimating our cross-sectional models. We discuss the associated limitations in more detail in Section 4.

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Appendix

TABLE A1 | Characteristics of respondents who responded to one, two, and three GIP/MCS waves where the outcome variable of interest was administered.

	Number of completed surveys		
	One	**Two**	**Three**
Sex			
% Women	53.4	46.6	46.2
Age			
% 18–34	29.3	21.8	21.3
% 35–44	15.6	22.8	21.5
% 45–54	35.4	26.5	31.1
% 55+	19.7	28.9	26.0
Education			
% Less than uni	56.1	49.8	46.1
% Some uni and more	43.9	40.2	53.9
N	148	637	1521

TABLE A2 | Two-way fixed effects regression results among respondents active in the German labor market from January 2020 to January 2021 (with work status trajectory reference group changed).

	Outcome variable
	State should provide unemp. a dct. std. liv. (0, *No*–10, *Yes*)
Continuously working (ref: Job loss, ongoing)	−0.955***
	(0.284)
Job retention, returned (ref: Job loss, ongoing)	−0.858**
	(0.312)
Job retention, ongoing (ref: Job loss, ongoing)	−0.559
	(0.321)
Job loss, returned (ref: Job loss, ongoing)	−0.548
	(0.327)
July 2020 (ref: January 2020)	0.459***
	(0.061)
January 2021 (ref: January 2020)	0.172**
	(0.062)
Observations	4113
R^2	0.036
Adjusted R^2	−0.449
F statistic	16.946*** (df = 6; 2736)

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

TABLE A3 | Weighted two-way fixed effects regression results among respondents active in the German labor market from January 2020 to January 2021.

	Outcome variable
	State should provide unemp. a dct. std. liv. (0, *No*–10, *Yes*)
Job retention, returned (ref: Continuously working)	0.026
	(0.145)
Job retention, ongoing (ref: Continuously working)	0.277
	(0.167)
Job loss, returned (ref: Continuously working)	0.080
	(0.271)
Job loss, ongoing (ref: Continuously working)	0.741**
	(0.287)
July 2020 (ref: January 2020)	0.556***
	(0.063)
January 2021 (ref: January 2020)	0.194**
	(0.065)
Observations	4113
R^2	0.035
Adjusted R^2	−0.451
F statistic	19.553*** (df = 6; 2736)

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

TABLE A4 | Full cross-sectional regression results among respondents active in the German, French, Italian, and British labor markets.

					Outcome variable				
Country	DE			FR			IT		GB
Question	State should provide unemp. std. liv. (0, *Not at all*–10, *Completely*)			Unemp. could find job (0, *Agree*–1, *Disagree*)	Gov't should spend (−2, *Much less*–2, *Much more*) on unemp. insurance		State should provide unemp. bens. (1, *No*–10, *Yes*)		Unemp. could find job (−2, *Agree strongly*–2, *Disagree strongly*)
Administered	July, 2020	Jan, 2021		May, 2020	May, 2020		May–July, 2020		Oct–Dec, 2020
Work status									
Work Stat: Unemployed (ref: Working/on leave)	1.176*** (0.301)	1.062*** (0.225)	Work Stat: Unemployed (ref: Working/on leave)	0.800 (0.442)	0.454* (0.180)	Work Stat: Unemployed (ref: Working/on leave)	0.500** (0.169)	Work Stat: Unemployed (ref: Working/on leave)	0.581*** (0.123)
Work Stat: Job retained (ref: Working/on leave)	0.281 (0.220)	0.083 (0.169)	Work Stat: Job retained (ref: Working/on leave)	0.248 (0.301)	0.173 (0.129)	Work Stat: Job retained (ref: Working/on leave)	0.245 (0.210)	Work Stat: Job retained (ref: Working/on leave)	−0.191 (0.122)
Gender									
Women (ref: Men)	0.020 (0.116)	−0.199* (0.085)	Women (ref: Men)	0.185 (0.233)	0.035 (0.099)	Women (ref: Men)	0.185 (0.107)	Women (ref: Men)	0.070 (0.053)
Age									
21–25 (ref: <21)	1.229 (1.238)	0.848 (0.629)	30–34 (ref: 18–29)	2.239* (0.899)	−0.128 (0.369)	Age (continuous)	0.023 (0.031)	Age (continuous)	−0.042** (0.013)
26–30 (ref: <21)	0.401 (1.268)	1.000 (0.641)	35–39 (ref: 18–29)	0.367 (0.778)	−0.393 (0.334)	Age²	−0.00004 (0.0003)	Age²	0.001*** (0.0002)
31–35 (ref: <21)	0.261 (1.265)	0.743 (0.639)	40–44 (ref: 18–29)	0.633 (0.762)	−0.061 (0.328)			
36–40 (ref: <21)	0.595 (1.267)	0.881 (0.639)	45–49 (ref: 18–29)	1.494 (0.768)	0.109 (0.329)			
41–45 (ref: <21)	0.846 (1.266)	0.803 (0.641)	50–54 (ref: 18–29)	1.347 (0.770)	0.139 (0.330)			
46–50 (ref: <21)	0.863 (1.267)	0.717 (0.640)	55–59 (ref: 18–29)	1.835* (0.768)	0.198 (0.329)			
51–55 (ref: <21)	0.560 (1.263)	0.566 (0.636)	60+ (ref: 18–29)	1.188 (0.785)	−0.084 (0.337)			
56–60 (ref: <21)	0.825 (1.264)	0.676 (0.638)						
61+ (ref: <21)	0.798 (1.271)	0.782 (0.646)						

(Continues)

TABLE A4 | (Continued)

Country		DE		FR			IT		GB
Question		State should provide unemp. std. liv. (0, *Not at all*–10, *Completely*)		Unemp. could find job (0, *Agree*–1, *Disagree*)	Gov't should spend (–2, *Much less*–2, *Much more*) on unemp. insurance		State should provide unemp. bens. (1, *No*–10, *Yes*)		Unemp. could find job (–2, *Agree strongly*–2, *Disagree strongly*)
Administered		July, 2020	Jan, 2021	May, 2020	May, 2020		May–July, 2020		Oct–Dec, 2020
Education									
Schüler/-in (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	CEP (ref: Aucun)	2.415 (2.373)	2.079* (1.032)	−0.824 (1.410)	−0.487 (0.701)	Media inferiore (ref: Elementare/privo di titolo)	−1.359 (1.122)	Other (ref: No qualifications)	0.368 (0.317)
Keinen beruflichen Abschluss (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	BEPC (ref: Aucun)	−0.432 (0.632)	0.151 (0.449)	−0.561 (0.808)	0.119 (0.345)	Superiori in corso (ref: Elementare/privo di titolo)	−0.365 (1.667)	Qualifications below A levels (ref: No qualifications)	0.265 (0.178)
Beruflich-betriebliche Berufsausbildung (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	CAP (ref: Aucun)	−0.778 (0.531)	−0.344 (0.388)	−1.020 (0.798)	−0.238 (0.342)	Diploma di istituto professionale (3 anni) (ref: Elementare/privo di titolo)	−1.374 (1.116)	A levels/SCE Highers (ref: No qualifications)	0.401* (0.182)
Beruflich-schulische Ausbildung (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	BEP (ref: Aucun)	−0.582 (0.562)	−0.053 (0.411)	−0.942 (0.754)	−0.248 (0.321)	Diploma di maturità (5 anni) (ref: Elementare/privo di titolo)	−1.234 (1.099)	Other Higher Education (ref: No qualifications)	0.493** (0.183)
Ausbildung an einer Fachschule der DDR (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	Baccalauréat général (ref: Aucun)	−1.374* (0.685)	−1.117* (0.494)	0.115 (0.776)	0.412 (0.330)	Università in corso/nessuna laurea conseguita (ref: Elementare/privo di titolo)	−1.366 (1.112)	Degree or equivalent, and above (ref: No qualifications)	0.905*** (0.178)
Ausbildung an einer ...Fachakademie (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	Baccalauréat professionnel (ref: Aucun)	−0.800 (0.549)	−0.473 (0.402)	−0.514 (0.754)	−0.025 (0.322)	Diploma universitario/ laurea breve (ref: Elementare/privo di titolo)	−1.962 (1.130)		
Bachelor an (Fach-) Hochschule (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	Diplôme de 1e cycle (ref: Aucun)	−0.514 (0.580)	−0.050 (0.423)	−0.031 (0.722)	−0.038 (0.308)	Laurea triennale di i livello (ref: Elementare/privo di titolo)	−1.607 (1.112)		

(Continues)

TABLE A4 | (Continued)

	Outcome variable					
Country	**DE**		**FR**		**IT**	**GB**
Question	**State should provide unemp. std. liv. (0, Not at all–10, Completely)**		**Unemp. could find job (0, Agree–1, Disagree)**	**Gov't should spend (–2, Much less–2, Much more) on unemp. insurance**	**State should provide unemp. bens. (1, No–10, Yes)**	**Unemp. could find job (–2, Agree strongly–2, Disagree strongly)**
Administered	**July, 2020**	**Jan, 2021**	**May, 2020**	**May, 2020**	**May–July, 2020**	**Oct–Dec, 2020**
Fachhochschulabschluss (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	−0.344 (0.560)	−0.177 (0.404)	0.331 (0.744) [Diplôme de 2e ou 3e cycle (ref: Aucun)]	0.114 (0.317)	−1.488 (1.102) [Laurea specialistica di ii livello o laurea 4–5 anni (ref: Elementare/privo di titolo)]	
Universitätsabschluss (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	−0.105 (0.547)	0.318 (0.397)			−1.568 (1.112) [Master/scuola di specializzazione post laurea (ref: Elementare/privo di titolo)]	
Promotion (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	0.659 (0.641)	0.623 (0.459)			−1.082 (1.145) [Dottorato di ricerca (ref: Elementare/privo di titolo)]	
Ein anderer beruflicher Abschluss (ref: Noch in beruflicher Ausbildung)	−0.673 (0.637)	−0.114 (0.471)				
Household income						
Household income (in €)	−0.0002 (0.0001)		−0.0003* (0.0001)	−0.0001 (0.00006)		−0.070 (0.096) [Household income: £1411–£2560 (ref: < £1410)]
Household income^2	0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)		−0.048 (0.094) [Household income: £2561–£4350 (ref: < £1410)]
						−0.059 (0.098) [Household income: £4351+ (ref: < £1410)]

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TABLE A4 | (Continued)

			Outcome variable			
Country	DE		FR		IT	GB
Question	State should provide unemp. std. liv. (0, *Not at all*–10, *Completely*)		Unemp. could find job (0, *Agree*–1, *Disagree*)	Gov't should spend (−2, *Much less*–2, *Much more*) on unemp. insurance	State should provide unemp. bens. (1, *No*–10, *Yes*)	Unemp. could find job (−2, *Agree strongly*–2, *Disagree strongly*)
Administered	July, 2020	Jan, 2021	May, 2020	May, 2020	May–July, 2020	Oct–Dec, 2020
Socioprofessional class						

French PCS

Artisans, commerçants et chefs d'entreprise (ref: Agriculteurs exploitants)			0.671 (0.911)	0.066 (0.386)		
Cadres et professions intellectuelles supérieures (ref: Agriculteurs exploitants)			1.190 (0.826)	0.377 (0.348)		
Professions intermédiaires (ref: Agriculteurs exploitants)			0.665 (0.790)	0.223 (0.335)		
Employés (ref: Agriculteurs exploitants)			0.435 (0.803)	0.096 (0.340)		
Ouvriers (ref: Agriculteurs exploitants)			0.909 (0.861)	0.144 (0.365)		

NS-SEC[*]

Intermediate occupations (ref: Managerial and professional occupations)						0.220[**] (0.081)
Lower supervisory and technical occupations (ref: Managerial and professional occupations)						0.072 (0.103)
Semiroutine and routine occupations (ref: Managerial and professional occupations)						0.061 (0.090)

	DE (July 2020)	DE (Jan 2021)	FR (find job)	FR (spend)	IT	GB
Constant	6.420[***] (1.164)	5.209[***] (0.595)	−1.742 (1.290)	−0.301 (0.548)	7.393[***] (1.248)	−0.131 (0.331)
Observations	1613	2666	427	408	1723	1911
R^2	0.046	0.039		0.124	0.027	0.07
Adjusted R^2	0.031	0.031		0.069	0.019	0.062

(Continues)

TABLE A4 | (Continued)

			Outcome variable			
	DE		**FR**		**IT**	**GB**
Country						
Question	**State should provide unemp. std. liv. (0, *Not at all*–10, *Completely*)**		**Unemp. could find job (0, *Agree*–1, *Disagree*)**	**Gov't should spend (−2, *Much less*–2, *Much more*) on unemp. insurance**	**State should provide unemp. bens. (1, *No*–10, *Yes*)**	**Unemp. could find job (−2, *Agree strongly*–2, *Disagree strongly*)**
Administered	**July, 2020**	**Jan, 2021**	**May, 2020**	**May, 2020**	**May–July, 2020**	**Oct–Dec, 2020**
Log likelihood			−265.988			
Akaike Inf. Crit.			581.977			
Residual std. error	2.281 (df=1587)	2.168 (df=2642)		0.895 (df=383)	2.167 (df=1707)	1.109 (df=1894)
F statistic	3.031*** (df=25; 1587)	4.682*** (df=23; 2642)		2.249*** (df=24; 383)	3.198*** (df=15; 1707)	8.904*** (df=16; 1894)

Note: The NS-SEC classification in the UK excludes "Small employers and own account workers" because they are considered self-employed.

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

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