HAS THE PANDEMIC MADE US BETTER? COVID-19 EFFECTS ON CITIZENS' POLITICAL ATTITUDES



PhD Candidate: Irene Rodríguez-López Supervisor: Toni Rodon

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INTRODUCTION

The problem: What is happening?

Two years of **COVID-19 pandemic**: challenges for democracy. How has the population reacted to the COVID-19 threat and its consequences?

What do we know about it?

- •Population **attitudinal change** due to:
 - COVID-19 health threat
 - First restriction measures
 - Non-health related COVID-19 consequences
- •Existence of a "rally-around-the-flag" effect: increase in government approval, institutional trust and satisfaction with democracy in the first stages of the pandemic (e.g., Bækgaard et al., 2020; Bol et al., 2020; De Vries et al., 2020, Esaiasson et al., 2020).
- •First evidence of a fade-out of this increase (Johansson et al., 2021).

What is missing?

Accounting for: PANDEMIC FATIGUE

Haktanir et al. (2021), Lilleholt et al. (2021), World Health Organization (2020). What are the population's attitudes after two years of pandemic?

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected citizens' political attitudes?

PAPER 1

RQ: What is the effect of living in or near a high-risk infection area on support for radical right parties (RRPs)?

ANALYSIS 1

Observational

Hypothesis: The higher the COVID-19 infection rates are in a given region, the higher the support for RRPs will be in that same area.

- •Cross-country analysis of RRP support in European countries with RRPs in the opposition and that have held elections in the last year.
- •DV: RRP vote share in that region
- •IV: COVID-19 incidence the week before the elections
- •Method: Multivariate Regression

ANALYSIS 2

Observational

Hypothesis: The closer an individual lives to a high-risk area for COVID-19 infection, the more likely they are to vote for RRPs.

•Case study: Analysis of Catalonia's 2021 elections using

•Case study: Analysis of Catalonia's 2021 elections using individual-level data from the Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió

- •DV: Reported vote intention for Vox
- •IV: COVID-19 incidence the week before the elections
- •Method: Multivariate Regression

PAPER 3

RQ: Do government restriction measures decrease satisfaction with democracy among the population?

ANALYSIS

Quasi-experimental

- **Hypothesis**: Ceteris paribus, people living in areas which enforce COVID-19 prevention measures will be more likely to have lower satisfaction with democracy than the ones who live in non-restricted areas.
- Case study: Catalonia's December 2021 municipal restrictions
- **DV:** Satisfaction with democracy
- IV: Implementation of government restrictions
- Method: Regression Discontinuity Design

PAPER 2

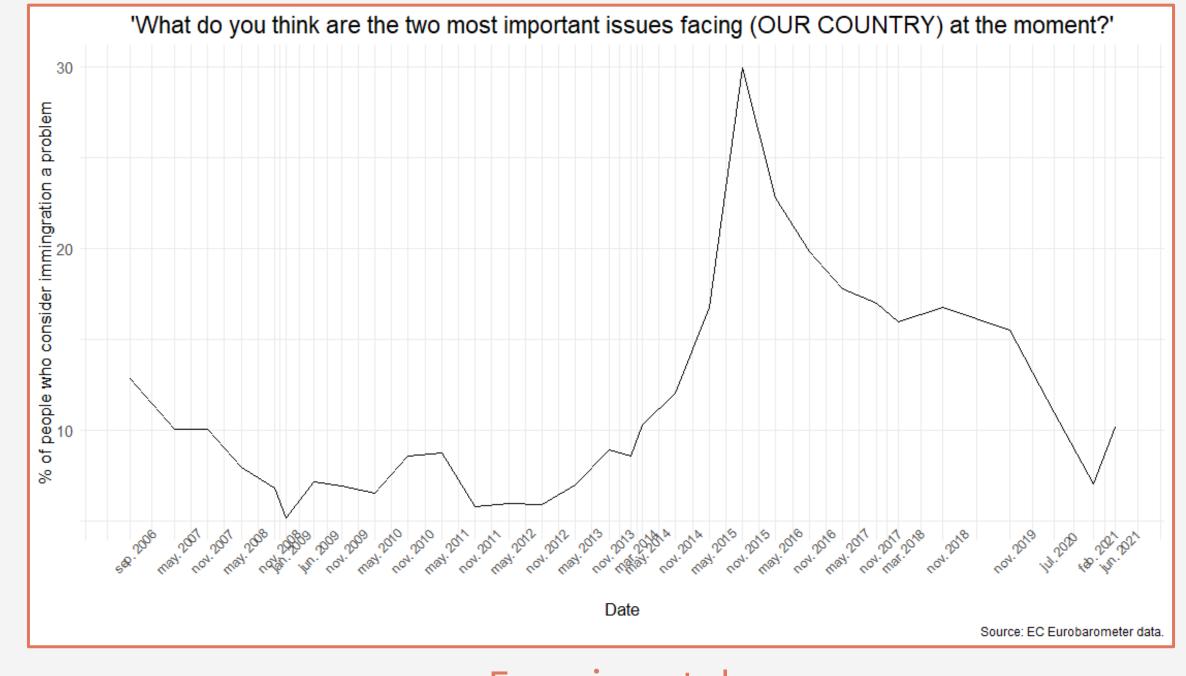
RQ: Does personal exposure to COVID-19 affect citizens' attitudes towards immigration? If so, how?

ANALYSIS 1

Observational

Hypothesis: Those individuals more severely affected by the virus will have more negative attitudes towards immigration

- •Data: ESS Round 10 (2020-2021)
- •**DV**: Attitudes towards immigration
- •IV: Personal exposure to COVID-19
- •Method: Multivariate Regression



ANALYSIS 2

Experimental

- Method: Survey priming experiment
- Objective: Explore the mechanisms through which attitudes towards immigrants have potentially changed
- (Preliminary) Prime topics:

"normalized", Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties, 31(1), pp. 321-34.

- Immigration as a health threat
- Immigration as an economic burden
- Immigration benefitting from the public health system
- Countries included: Germany, Poland, Spain, The Netherlands, United Kingdom.

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