

Income Support Policies and Voting Behavior in a Dual Country. Evidence from Italy

Gianluca Monturano¹, Giuliano Resce², Giulia V. Sonzogno³

¹Department of Economics - University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

²Department of Economics - University of Molise

³Social Sciences - Gran Ssso Science Institute

This work offers a novel contribution on the relationship between economic policy interventions and electoral outcomes and on how economic policies can shape the political landscape. By leveraging a counterfactual approach and a unique dataset, this work investigates the causal link between a large income support measure introduced in Italy (i.e. *Italian Citizenship Income*) and votes for the incumbent party, taking into account geographical and institutional factors. Our results show that the introduction of an income support program does not affect citizens' voting behavior in favor of the ruling party. What drives the consensus are local socio-economic conditions in which the measure is implemented vis-à-vis the measure per se on the pocketbook.

The document analyzes in depth the impact of Citizenship Income (CI) on voting behavior in Italy, a pioneering initiative aimed at combating poverty and promoting social inclusion. Through a counterfactual econometric analysis, using an innovative dataset that combines electoral, socioeconomic and geographic information, the study explores the complex dynamic between income support and voters' political preferences. The research highlights how, contrary to expectations, the IC did not lead to a significant increase in electoral support for the governing party. This result challenges the prevailing hypothesis that directly associates welfare policies with a gain in votes, suggesting instead that other factors, such as local socioeconomic conditions and public perception of support measures, play a crucial role.

The study delves into the heterogeneity of the Italian context, highlighting how regional differences, in particular between the North and the South of the country, influence the reaction to income support policies. This analysis demonstrates the importance of considering local specificities when evaluating the effectiveness of welfare measures and their impact on electoral dynamics. Attention to geographic and socioeconomic details enriches understanding of how public policies are perceived and what effects they may have on voter behavior.

In conclusion, this work contributes significantly to the debate on income support policies, challenging the simplified narratives that automatically link such measures to electoral benefits. It offers valuable insights for reflection on how electoral preferences are influenced by a complex set of factors, underlining the need for more sophisticated political and communication strategies that take into account the socio-economic and geographical context. The research opens new perspectives for future studies, inviting a more detailed examination of the intersection between economic policy, welfare and voting behavior, with the aim of formulating more effective and balanced public policies.

This approach highlights a richer and more multifaceted analysis of Citizenship Income and its impact on political and social dynamics in Italy, highlighting the complexity of the interaction between welfare policies and electoral behavior in a context characterized by profound diversity