UNIVERSITÀ DI TRENTO

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Center for Social Inequality Studies

# Gender inequality and family resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy

*Elisa Brini[1,3], Stefani Scherer[2,3], Agnese Vitali[2,3]*

Family Life and the Changing World of Work
15 September 2022, Warsaw

*[1]University of Oslo, [2]University of Trento, [3]Centre for Social Inequality Studies*

# Background

- Concerns that the pandemic may exacerbate existing **gender inequalities**.

- Women were hit harder than men in terms of **housework or childcare** workload (Del Boca et al. 2020 for Italy; Andrew et al., 2020 for England; Zamberlan et al. 2021, 2022 for the UK;), **mental load** (Raile et al., 2020 about the US), **domestic violence** (Donato 2020 about Italy; Parry and Gordon, 2021 about South Africa).

- Were women more disadvantaged **in the labour market** than men?

| Women hit harder | *vs* | Little gendered consequences |
|---|---|---|
| (e.g. ,Collins et al. 2021; Dias et al. 2020; Landivar et al. 2020; Raile et al., 2020 for the US; Quian and Fuller, 2020 for Canada; Andrew et al. 2020 for England). | | (e.g., Adams-Prassl et al. 2020; Alon et al. 2021; Baert, 2021 across countries; Brini et al. in Italy; Farré et al., 2020 for Spain; Globisch et al. 2022 for Germany; Hupaku and Petrongolo for the UK; Villarreal and Yu, 2022 for the US). |

# Gender & recessions

- **Sector Effect**

  Some sectors are more sensitive to business cycles swings

  - During the 2008 Great Recession men were more employed in sensitive sectors (e.g., construction and manufacturing) and women more employed in more protected sectors (e.g., service sectors or public employment) (Hoynes et al., 2012).
  - Shut-down sectors during the Pandemic were female-dominated in many American and European countries.

- **Added Worker Effect**

  To cope with an event of sustained earnings losses, members in families temporarily increase in the labor supply (Woytinsky, 1942; Lundberg, 1985).

  - Women react to their partner's employment loss by increasing their participation in the labour force (Baldini et al. 2018, and Ghignoni and Verashchagina, 2016 for Italy; Stephens, 2002 and Starr, 2014 for the US).

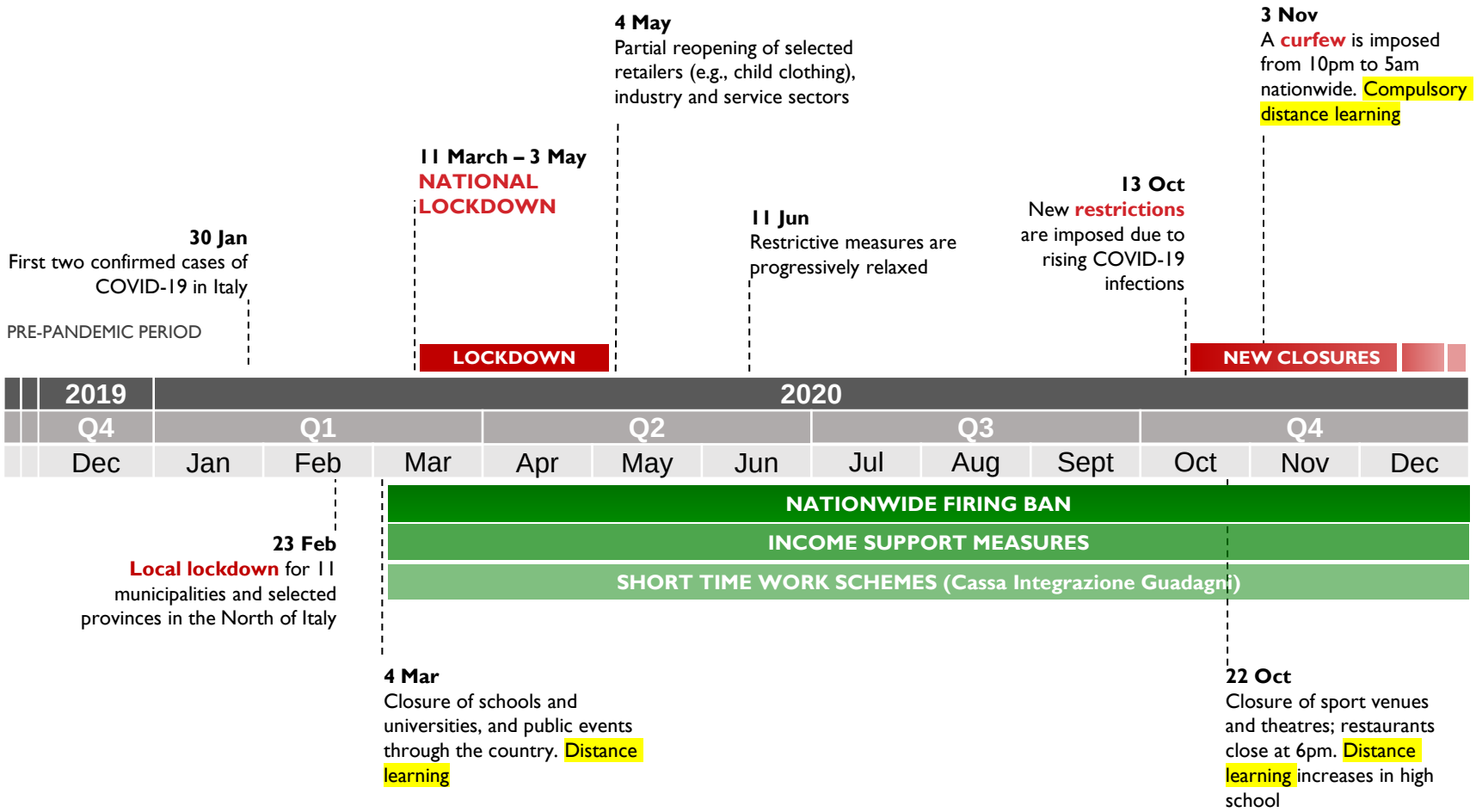
# Research questions

1. How has the pandemic affected men versus women's working conditions in Italy?

2. Was the family a buffer against employment loss and reduction?

3. Which social groups were affected the most?

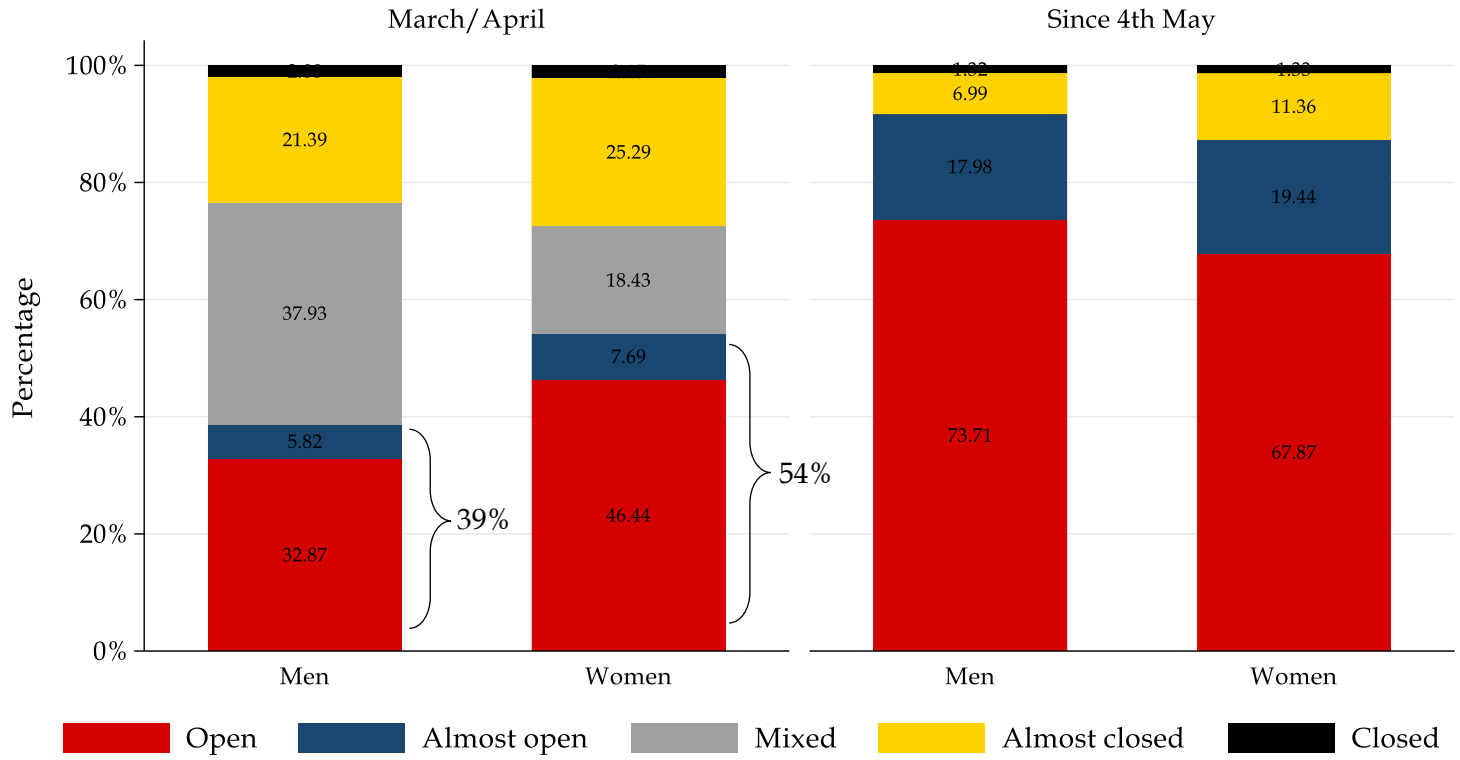
# The Italian context of the pandemic




Center for Social Inequality Studies

# Compositions of Italians Economic Sectors

Fig 1 – Percentage of employed aged 25-59 in 2019, by sex and degree of openness of the economic sector in the early stages of COVID-19 pandemic




*Source*: our elaboration on Eurostat data, Employment by sex, age, and economic activity [lfsa_egan2].

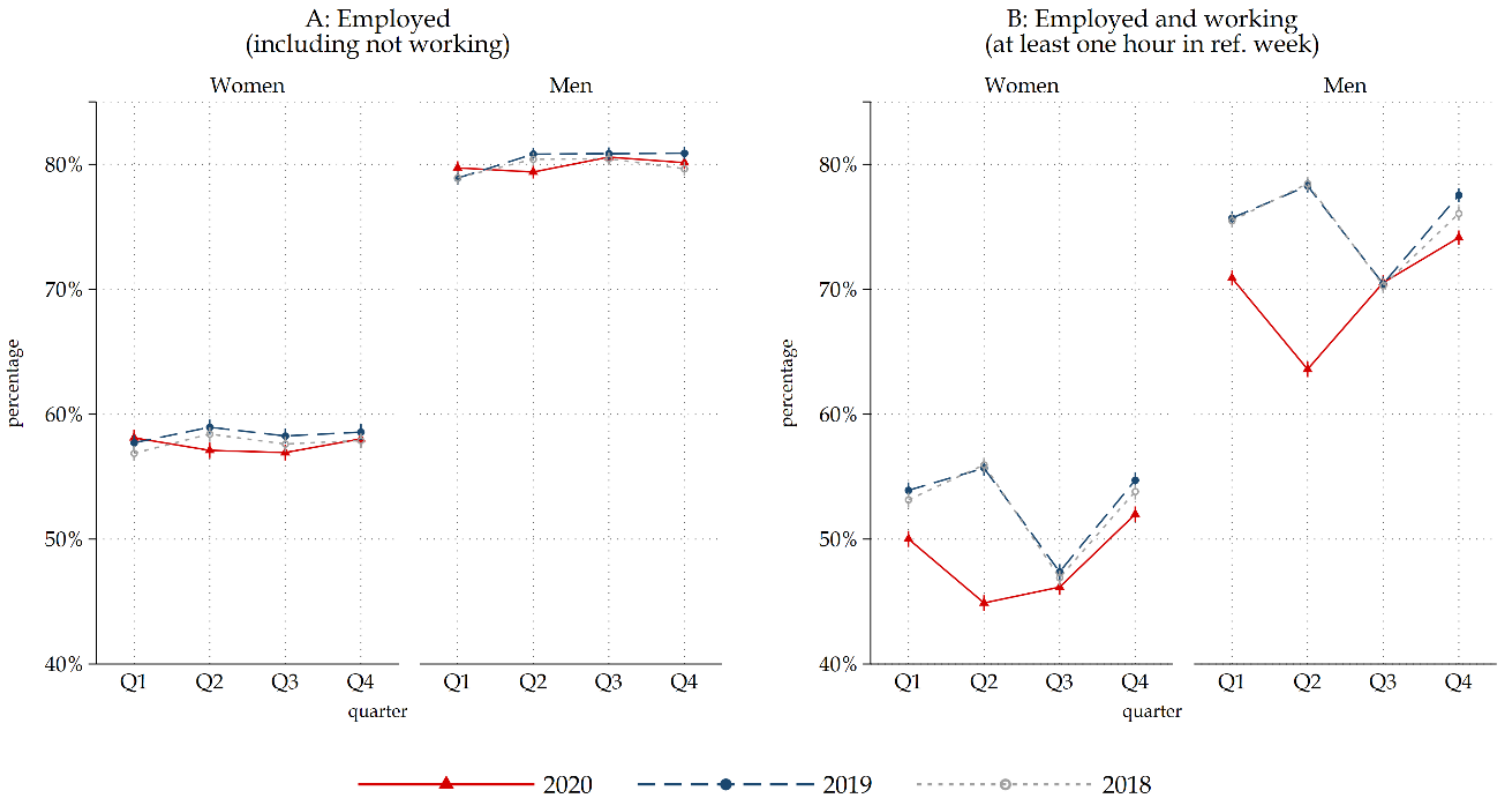
*Note*: Based on the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers (DPCM) 22/03/2020 (valid from March 23 to April 3), substantially equivalent to DPCM 10/04/2020 (valid from April 14 to May 3), and similar to the DPCM 11/03/2020 (valid from 12 to 25 March), we define the economic sectors as follows: "Open": Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Mining and quarrying; Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities; Public administration and defense; compulsory social security; Education; Human health and social work activities; Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use. "Almost open": Professional, scientific, and technical activities. "Mixed": Manufacturing; Construction; Transportation and storage; Information and communication; Financial and insurance activities; Administrative and support service activities. "Almost closed": Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; Accommodation and food service activities Other service activities; "Closed": Real estate activities; Arts, entertainment, and recreation; Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies. For a similar classification see INPS (2021).

# Data

- Italian LFS 2018-2020
  - employment status and hours worked in the week before the interview
  - employment status at *t–1 (employed, unemployed, fulfilling domestic tasks, student* or *retired from work)*
- Descriptive
  1. Evolution of working conditions for men and women throughout 2018–2020.
     SAMPLE: Men and women aged 15–64 in the workforce at the time of the interview (N=552,437)
- Analyses
  2. Loss of employment and working hours throughout 2020 in association with gender compared to 2019.
     SAMPLE: Men and women aged 15–64, employed at *t–1* (N=250,349)
  3. Responsiveness to partner's job displacement during the pandemic – the AWE.
     SAMPLE: cohabiting partners aged 25–50, not students, retired or unable to work at *t–1* (N=83,042)
  4. Loss of employment and working hours throughout 2020 in association with socio-demographic and employment characteristics compared to 2019.
     SAMPLE: Men and women aged 15–64, employed at *t–1* (N=250,349)

# Trends in Employment

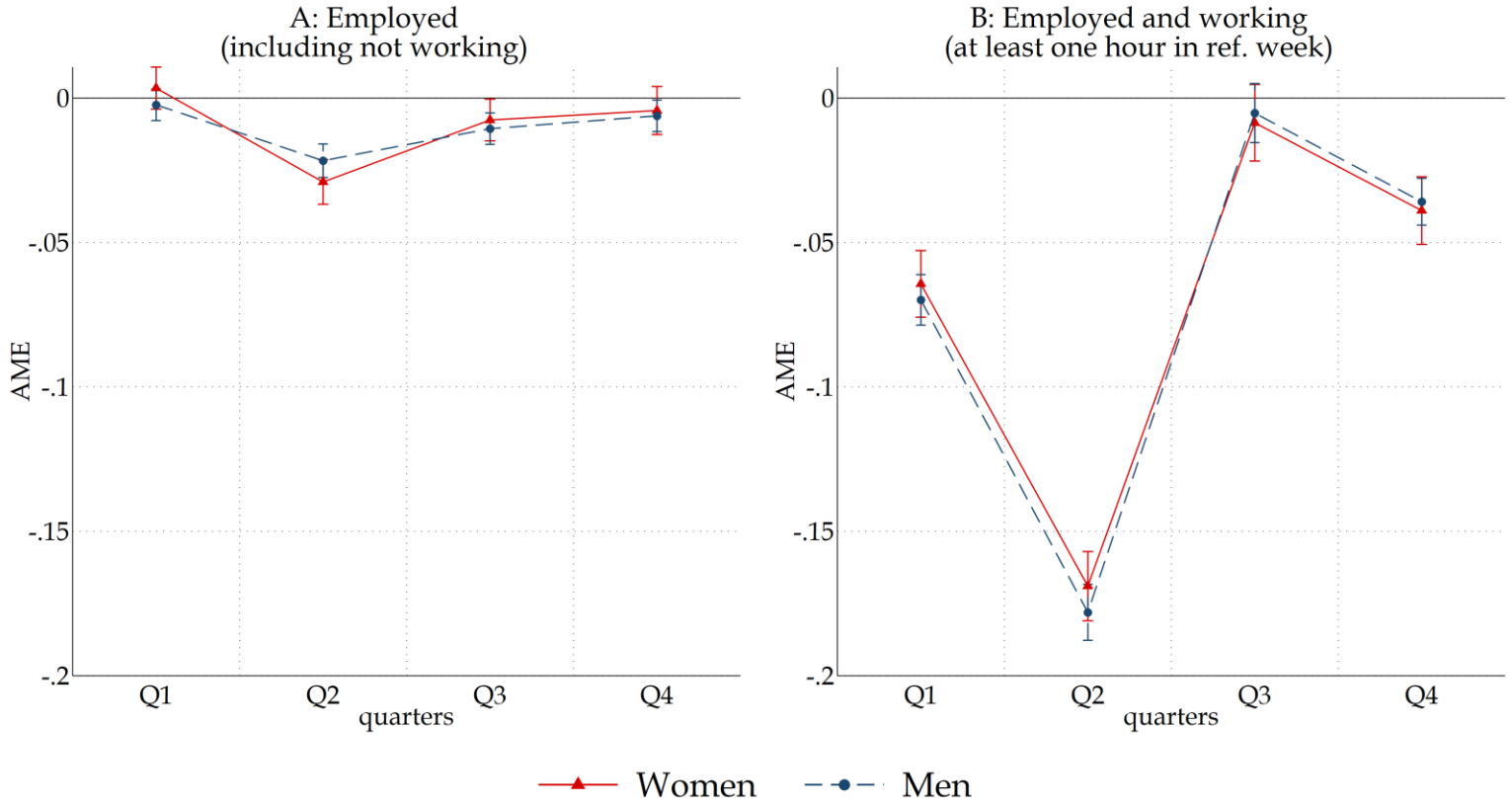
Fig 2 – Percentage of women and men ***employed*** (panel A) and percentage of women and men ***employed and working*** (panel B) across quarters of 2020, 2019, and 2018




*Source*: Italian LFS 2018–20, weighted estimates.
*Notes*: Women and men aged 15–64, not students, not unable to work, not retired (N=552,437).

# She-cession? Job loss and reduction of working hours

Fig 3 – Quarter-yearly differences in the probability of being **employed** (panel A) and **employed and working** (panel B), conditioned on being employed at *t–1*

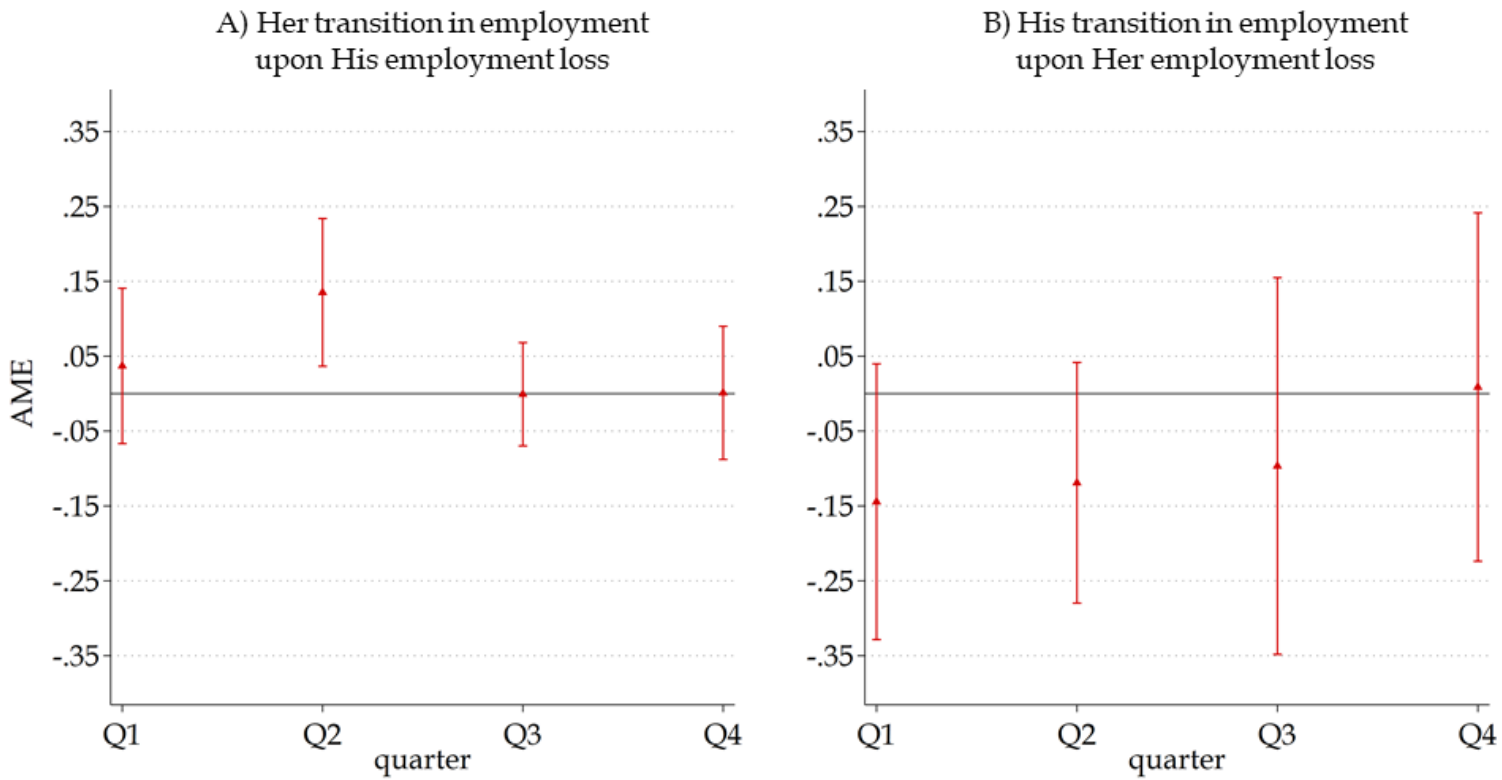



*Source:* Italian LFS 2019–20, weighted estimates.

*Note*: AME of 2020 vs 2019 from logistic regression of being employed (Panel A) and of being employed and working (at least one hour in the reference week) (Panel B). Models include interaction with sex. No difference when introducing controls for population composition in terms of age, education, type of contract, household type, migrant background, and region of residence. Age group 15–64, not students, not unable to work, not retired and employed at *t–1* (*N*=250,349).

# Added Worker Effect

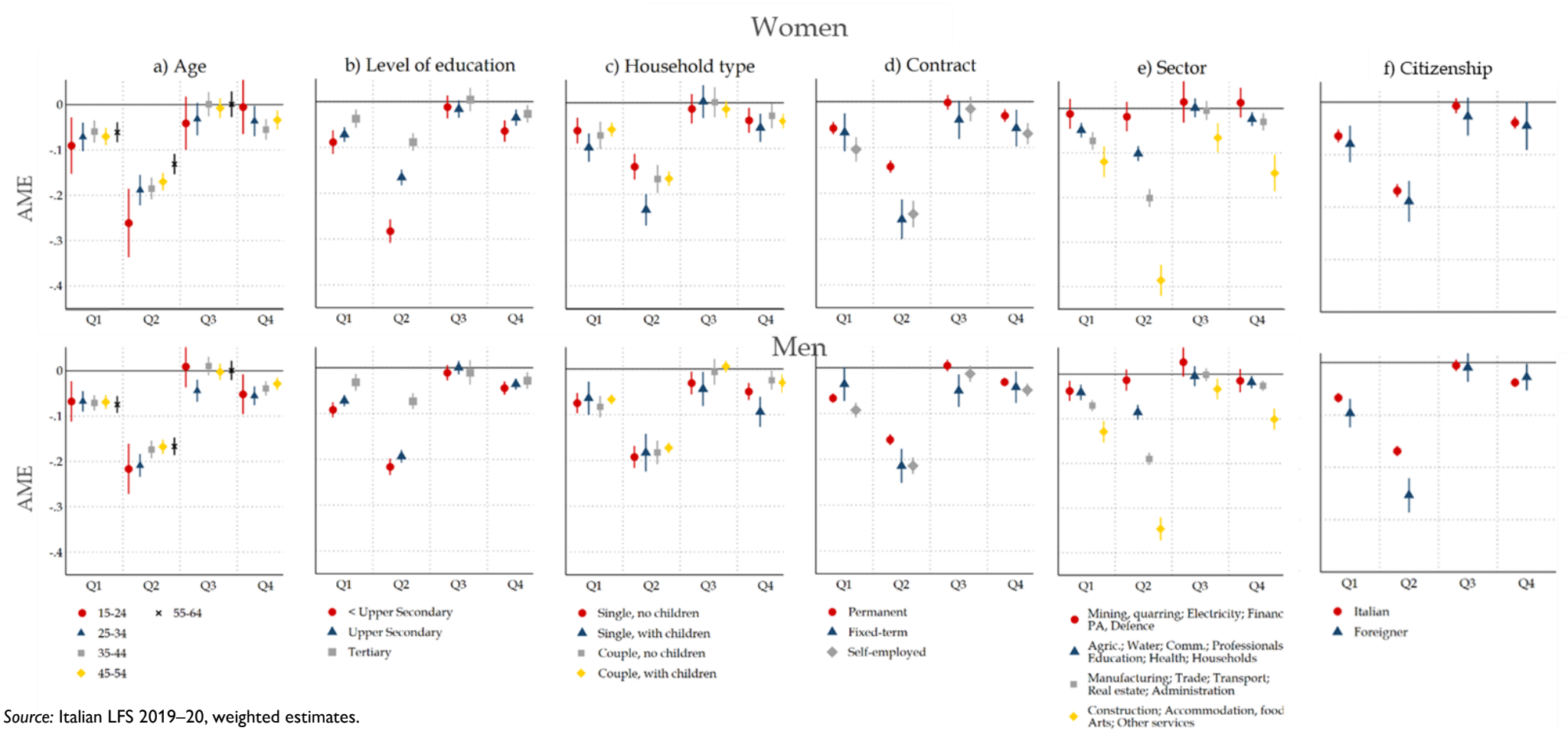
Fig 4 – Effect of ***partner's job loss*** on transition to employment for women (A) and men (B)




*Source:* Italian LFS 2020, weighted estimates.
*Note*: Panel A) AME of His transition from employed at *t-1* to not employed at *t* on Her transition from not employed at *t-1* to employed at *t* (N=8,734). Panel B) AME of Her transition from employed at *t-1* to not employed at *t* on His transition from not employed at *t-1* to employed at *t* (N=1,079). Controls include partners' age, education, number of children, region of residence. Couples with partners aged 25–50, who in the year before the interview were not students, retired or unable to work.

# Gender and beyond

Fig 5 – Effect of the pandemic on the probability of being **employed and working**, by **sex** and **socioeconomic groups**, conditioned on being employed at *t–1*

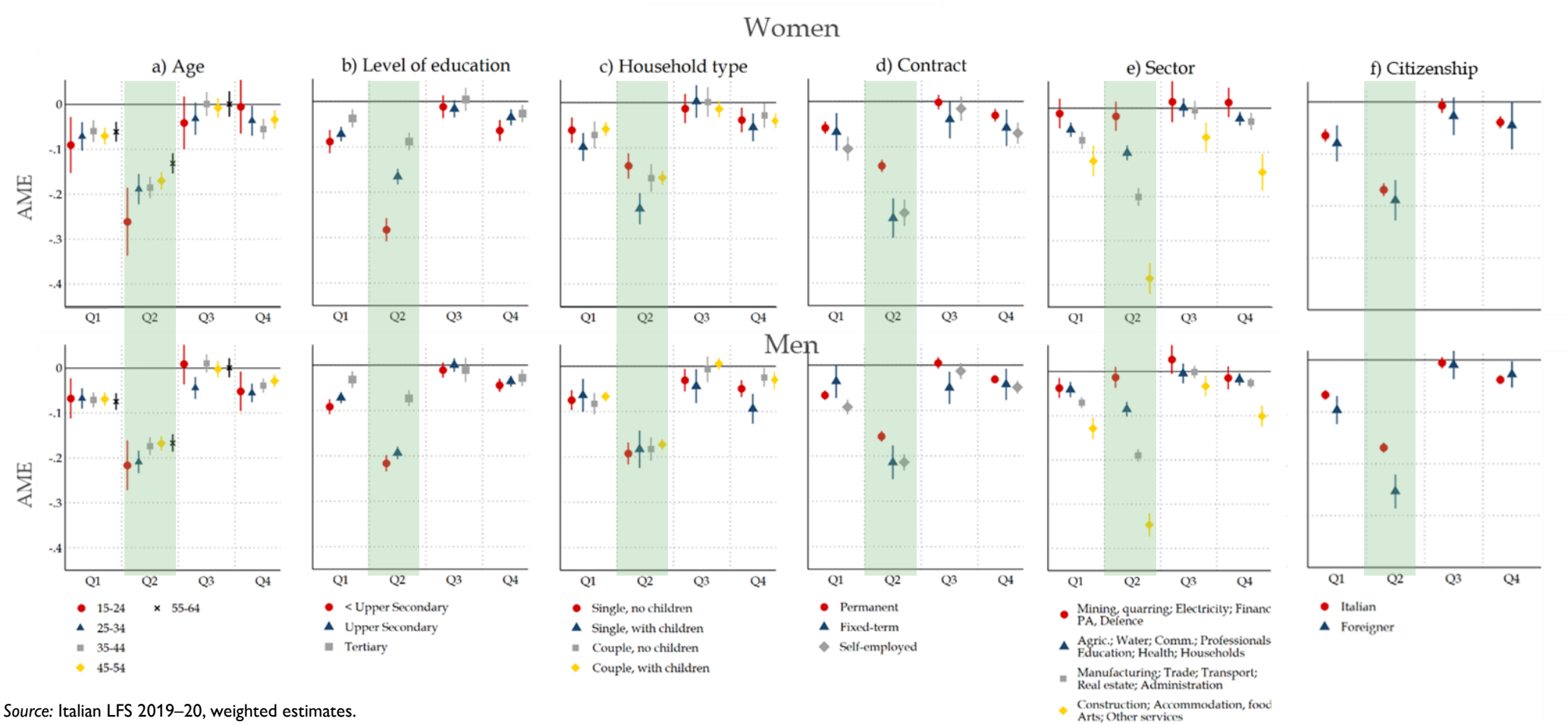



*Source:* Italian LFS 2019–20, weighted estimates.

*Notes*: AME of 2020 vs 2019, resulting from logistic regression of being employed and working (at least one hour in the reference week). Models include interaction with sex and controls for population composition in terms of age, education, type of contract, household type, migrant background, and region of residence. Age group 15–64, not students, not unable to work, not retired and employed at *t–1* (*N*=250,349).

# Gender and beyond

Fig 5 – Effect of the pandemic on the probability of being **employed and working**, by **sex** and **socioeconomic groups**, conditioned on being employed at *t–1*

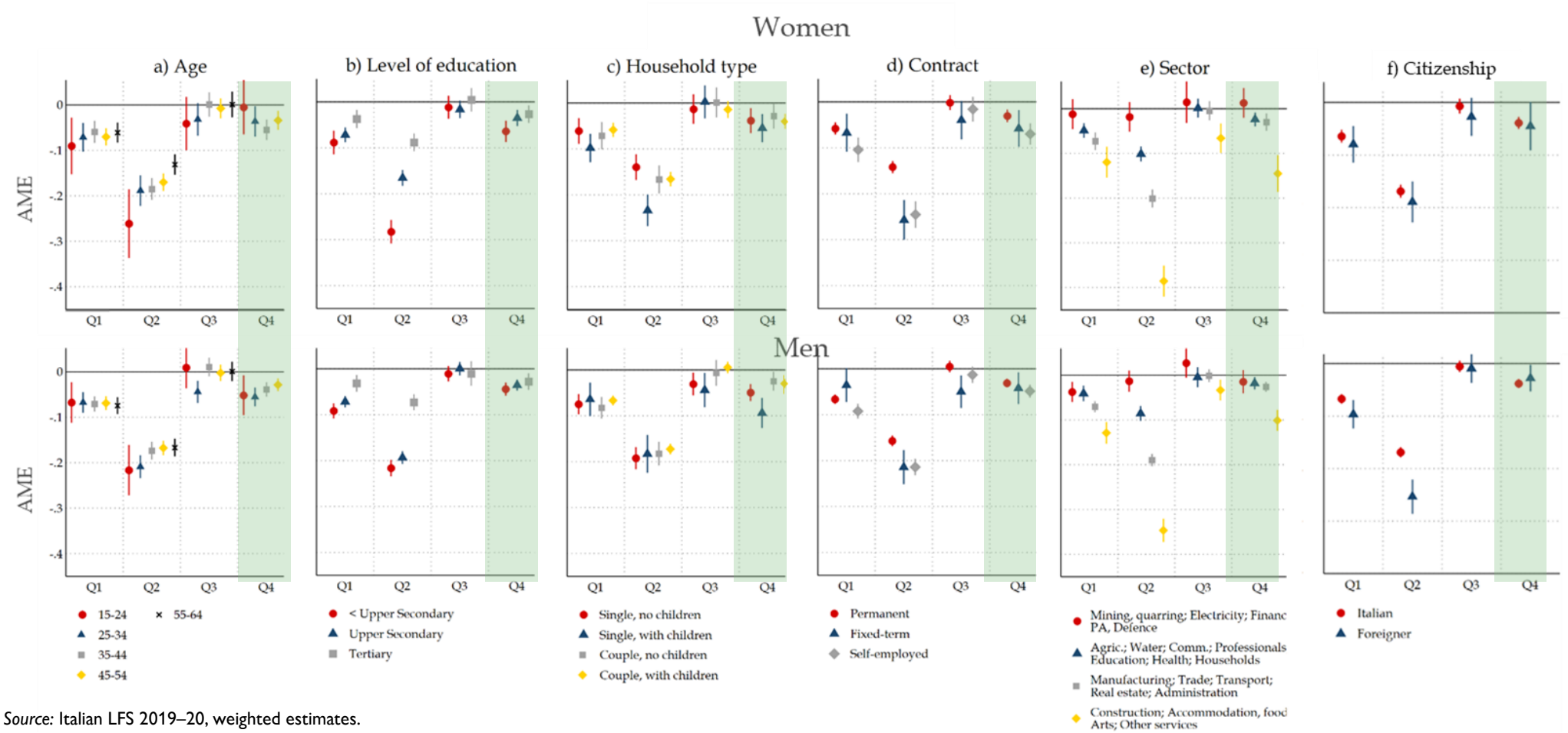



*Source:* Italian LFS 2019–20, weighted estimates.

*Notes*: AME of 2020 vs 2019, resulting from logistic regression of being employed and working (at least one hour in the reference week). Models include interaction with sex and controls for population composition in terms of age, education, type of contract, household type, migrant background, and region of residence. Age group 15–64, not students, not unable to work, not retired and employed at *t–1* (*N*=250,349).

# Gender and beyond

Fig 5 – Effect of the pandemic on the probability of being **employed and working**, by **sex** and **socioeconomic groups**, conditioned on being employed at *t–1*




*Source:* Italian LFS 2019–20, weighted estimates.

*Notes*: AME of 2020 vs 2019, resulting from logistic regression of being employed and working (at least one hour in the reference week). Models include interaction with sex and controls for population composition in terms of age, education, type of contract, household type, migrant background, and region of residence. Age group 15–64, not students, not unable to work, not retired and employed at *t–1* (*N*=250,349).

# Summary & Conclusions

- The pandemic in Italy came with a massive **reduction of working hours for both men and women** during the lockdown periods, but with rather limited impact on employment.

- Compared to other countries, gender differences in the consequences of the pandemic on employment conditions are much more contained in Italy – **no evidence for a '*she-cession*'**

- Women played a major role in maintaining families' income, with a small **rise in female breadwinner households** in response to the partner's job loss (added worker effect).

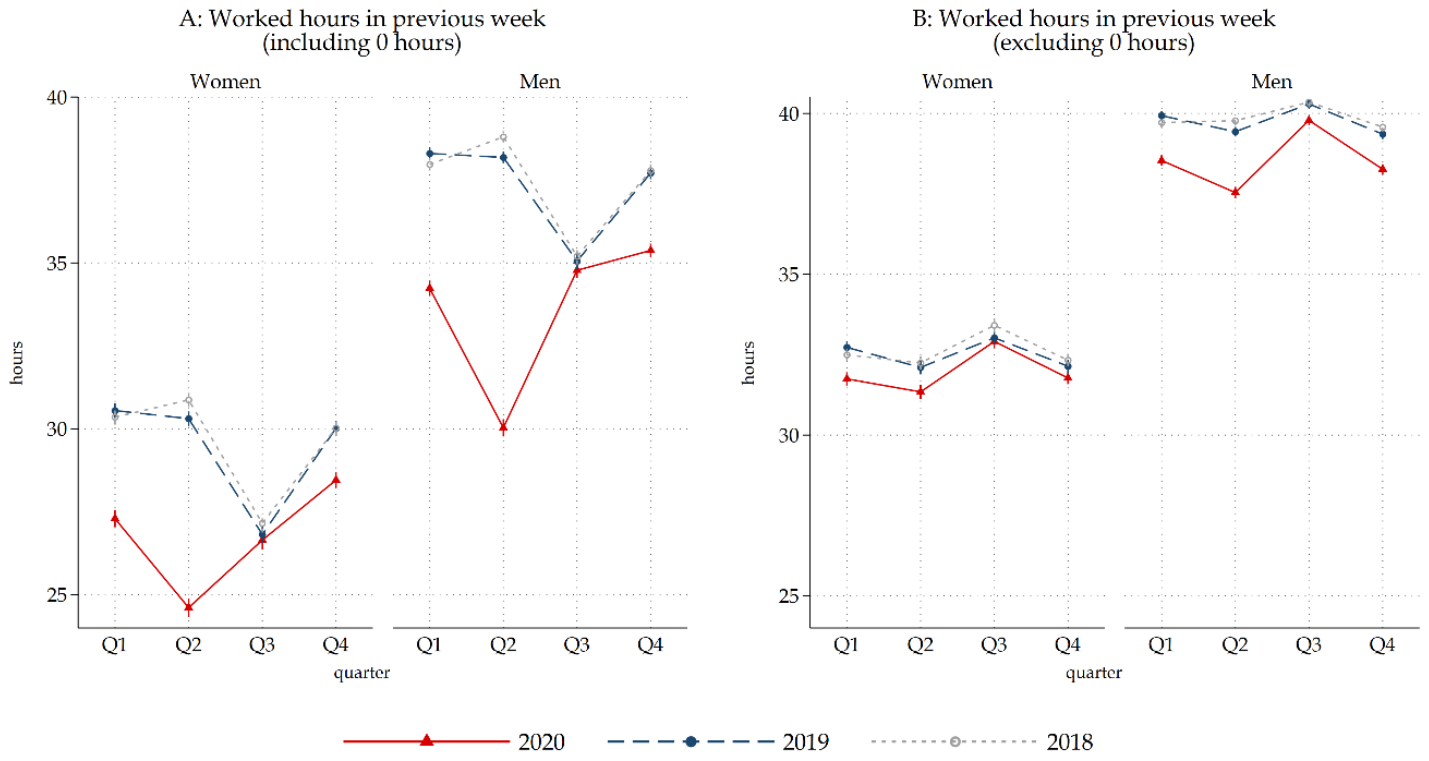
- **Other inequalities dominate** over gender inequalities: the recession had a disproportionate impact on the **youngest**, on the **lower educated**, persons with **fixed-term contracts,** those working in **specific economic sectors** and **migrants** – just like previous recessions.

- The pandemic-induced penalties turned out to be particularly **persistent** among the lower educated, single parents.

Thank you for the attention

elisa.brini@sosgeo.uio.no

# Average hours worked in the week before the interview by women and men, across quarters of 2020, 2019, and 2018




*Source*: Italian LFS 2018–20, weighted estimates.
*Notes*: Panel A includes people employed and working 0 hours (N=378,356). Panel B includes people employed and working a positive number of hours (N=341,670). Age group 15–64, not students, not unable to work, not retired.