

# MANIFESTO DI LONDRA

## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE ITALIAN COMMUNITY IN THE UK

New evidence, insights and  
recommendations

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MIRCO BRONDOLIN, ELISA DE PASQUALE,  
FEDERICO FILAURI, MATTEO M GALIZZI,  
FRANCESCA A GUIDALI, ADRIANO  
MANCINELLI, CHIARA MARIOTTI, MATTEO  
PAZZONA, ANDREA PISAURO, ANTONIO  
SALITURO, DIMITRI SCARLATO.

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## Executive summary

We investigate the impact of the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic - from March to June 2020 - on the Italian community in the UK by gathering new evidence from a large online survey and a set of in-depth interviews. The survey and interviews were conducted by the "Manifesto di Londra", an independent progressive observatory of the Italian community founded in London in 2017.

The survey and interviews collected information on individual characteristics and personal circumstances of the respondents, as well as on several dimensions potentially affected by the pandemic, including citizenship rights, employment, health, international mobility, wellbeing and trust in media and government. The findings uncover some previously undocumented facts on the impact of Covid-19 on the Italian community in the UK.

First, the vast majority of respondents in our sample were actively working in February 2020, and they were distributed in sectors broadly in line with the corresponding AIRE figures. The pandemics had a significant economic impact on them: 34% of our respondents declared that their employment situation changed as a result of the pandemic. Among these, 52% were furloughed, whereas 15% - mainly self-employed - saw a drastic reduction of activity. Also, 37% of our respondents declared that their economic situation had worsened, with 51% of respondents having received some form of financial help: 78% of these accessed programs offered by the British government, such as the Universal Credit or the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (commonly known as 'furlough scheme'), especially in the sectors most impacted by the crisis, such as hospitality, building, and manufacturing.

One-third of our respondents believed they could have got Covid-19, but they were not sure about it, while 10% were certain they had contracted the virus (with or without test). Nonetheless, the vast majority of our respondents did not take any Covid-19 test (89%) and did not seek any medical advice (70%); of those who sought advice, 4% were not able to access any help. About half of our respondents (50%) rated the quality of the received medical advice or service either poor or very poor.

While the vast majority of our respondents (90%) did not go back to Italy because of the Covid-19 crisis, a significant portion did (9%). This is in line with some indirect estimates made by the Italian Consulate in London suggesting that, from the beginning of the pandemic until the end of April, approximately 30,000 Italians (nearly 10% of the total of Italians listed in the AIRE figures) went back to Italy. Furthermore, many Italians living in the UK have changed their life plans following the Covid-19 pandemic. When asked whether the pandemic made them reconsider their plans to continue living in the UK, less than half of our respondents (47%) said they would still prefer to live in the UK. More than one in 10 respondents (12%) said that the pandemic had persuaded them to leave the UK while they did not intend to do so before the pandemic.

We conclude by discussing some of the policy gaps and recommendations motivated by our findings, including the additional challenges to securing citizenship rights and to accessing healthcare, social care, and welfare benefits posed by the combination of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit.

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**december 2020**

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