

# The COVID-19 Pandemic: A Brake or an Accelerator of the Decision to Leave the Parental Home?

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# Introduction

- In spring 2020, when lockdown measures were imposed all over Europe, mobility limitations as well as closure of schools and workplaces altered individuals' everyday lives
- Young adults' wellbeing heavily affected by the restrictions ([Eurofound, 2021](#)), increased stress and conflict between parents and cohabiting adult children ([Evandrou et al., 2021](#))
- Lack of evidence on the decision to leave home during the pandemic (in 2020) for young adults living with parents

# Aims

1. Identify how home-leaving patterns have changed in 2020 compared to the previous years, in all European countries
2. Assess how Covid-related restrictions affected leaving home decisions in Southern Europe, and how this varies according to young adults' and their households' economic conditions

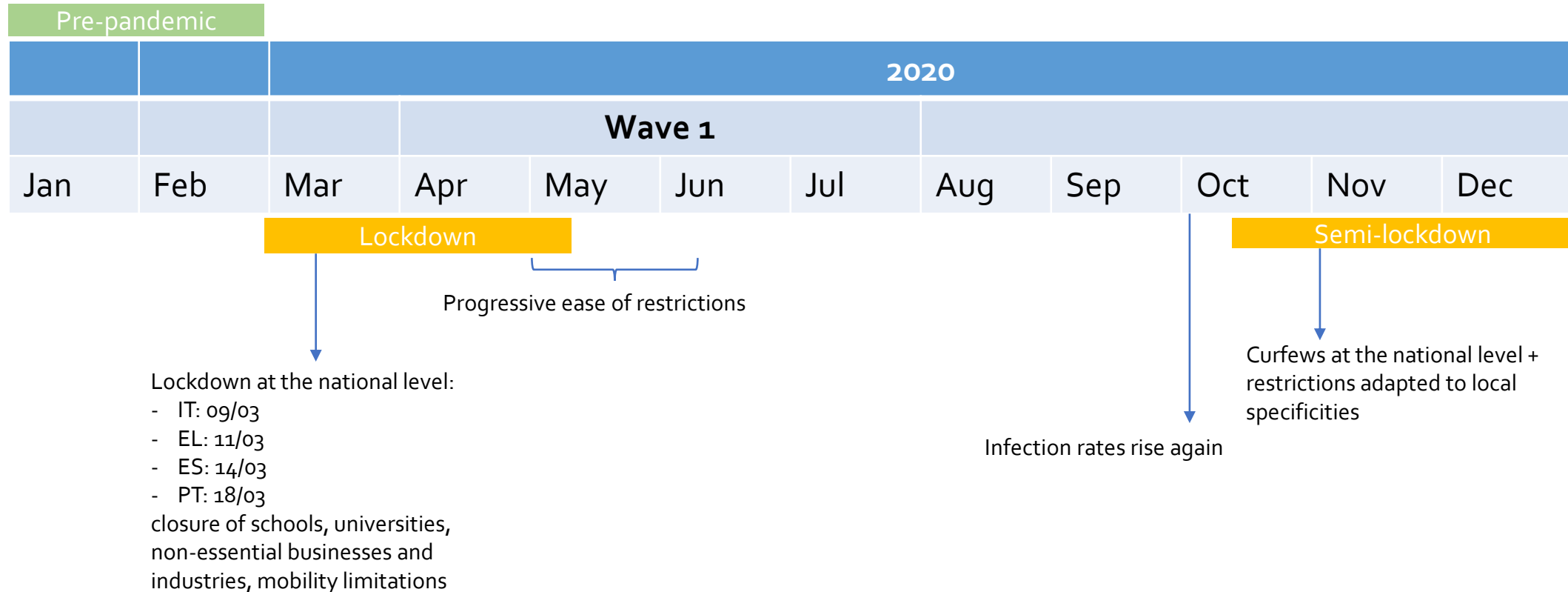
# Why Southern Europe?

Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy represent a homogenous group of countries:

- Strong family ties (Reher, 1998)
- «Latest-late» pattern of the transition to adulthood (Billari, 2004)
- High incidence of inactivity, unemployment, and school dropout among young people, well before 2020
- Leaving home intentions revised downwards in 2020 in IT + ES (Luppi et al., 2021)



# 2020 in Southern Europe: a timeline



Compared to the rest of Europe: tightest restrictions, higher excess mortality, largest drops in GDP and employment rates (European Commission, 2022)

# Leaving home

- Key event in young adults' transition to adulthood, ideally marking independence from parents
- Economic downturns are associated with increased rates of co-residence with parents (Aassve et al., 2013)
- Determinants: cultural (norms, family structure) and economic factors (welfare state, employment opportunities, availability of dwellings, economic resources at the individual and family level), expectations about the future

# Hypotheses

In Southern European countries:

Being employed is positively associated with leaving home  
No hypothesis on household income

2 diverging expectations about the effect of Covid restrictions:

- (a) *Protection effect*: Prevent young adults from leaving, as expectations about the future worsen
- (b) *Independence effect*: Encourage young adults to leave, in order to escape enforced co-residence or to safeguard parents from Covid-19 contagion

# Data

## European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), longitudinal component 2017-2020

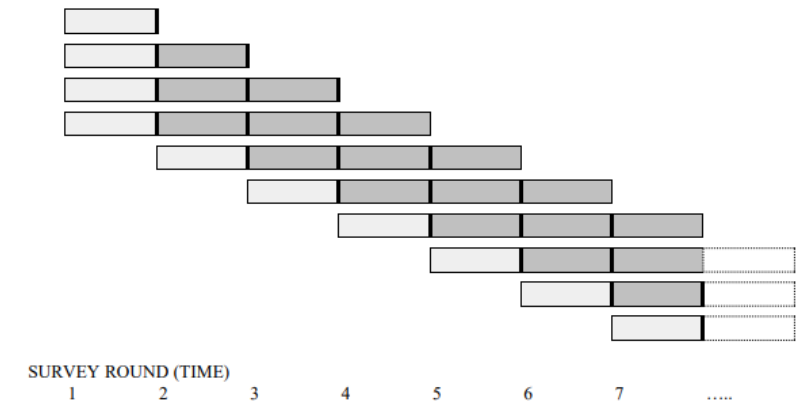
- Unbalanced short panel with rotational design
- Household survey
- Restructured from years to quarters

**!** In 2020, fieldwork was affected by the pandemic.

Most countries conducted it in a period including the 1° quarter; IT, ES, PT, EL from the 2° quarter onwards.

Figure 2. Illustration of the rotation pattern in year one

PATTERN FROM YEAR 1





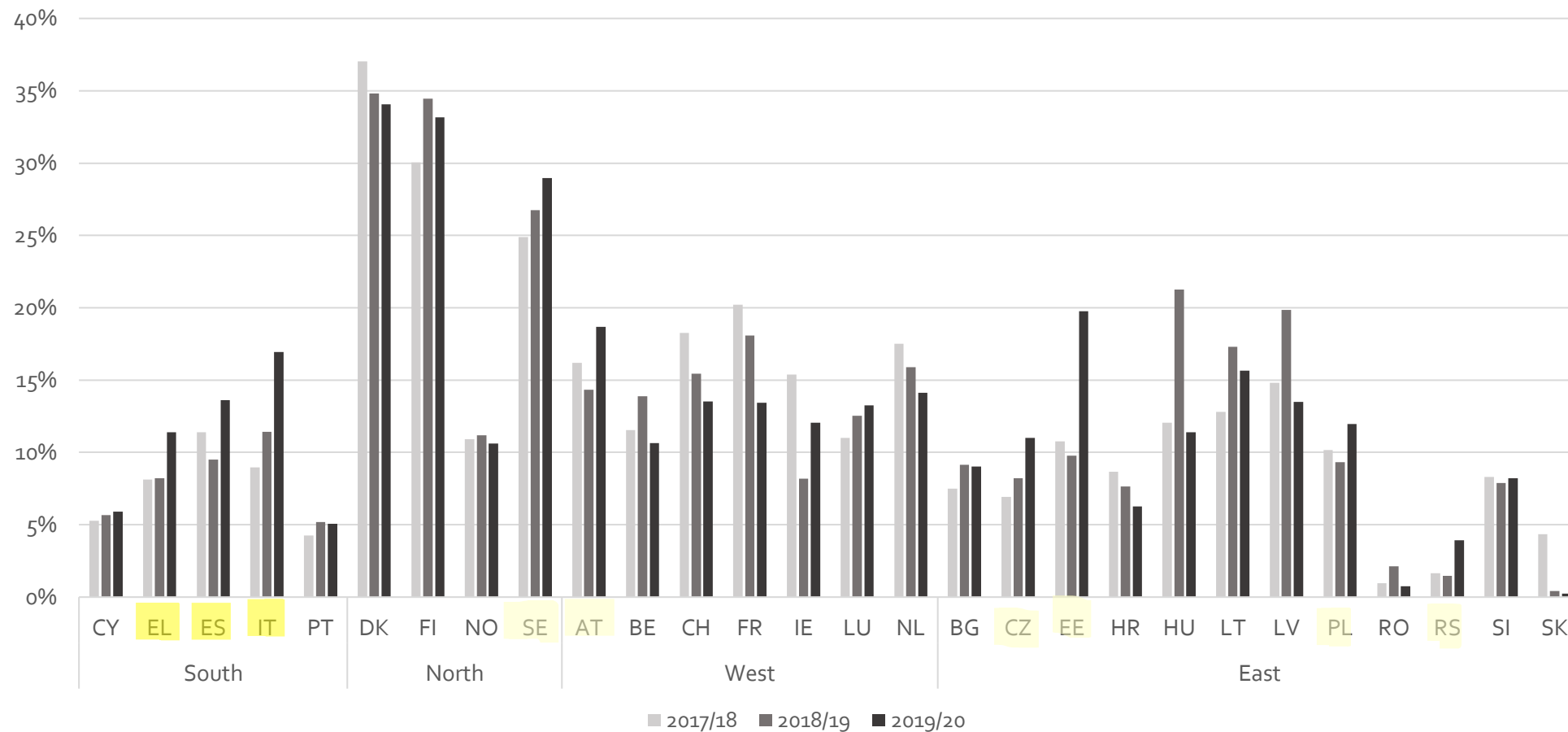
# Methods

Young people: aged 18-35 at first observation

- 1. Descriptive analysis:** home-leaving rates ( $t-1, t$ ), all countries  
$$\frac{\text{young adults leaving the parental home } (t)}{\text{young adults living with their parents } (t-1)}$$
- 2. Regression analysis:** discrete-time event history models on ES, PT, EL, IT  
Sample: young adults living with their parents at first obs,  $n = 16,416$   
(105,984 person-quarters)
  - Models: logistic regression (Allison, 1982), survival time calculated since age 18
  - Explanatory variable: Stringency Index (Ritchie et al., 2020), recoded into categories
  - Controls: eq. disposable household income, employment status, crowding index, country and quarter fixed effects, gender, age

# Descriptive results

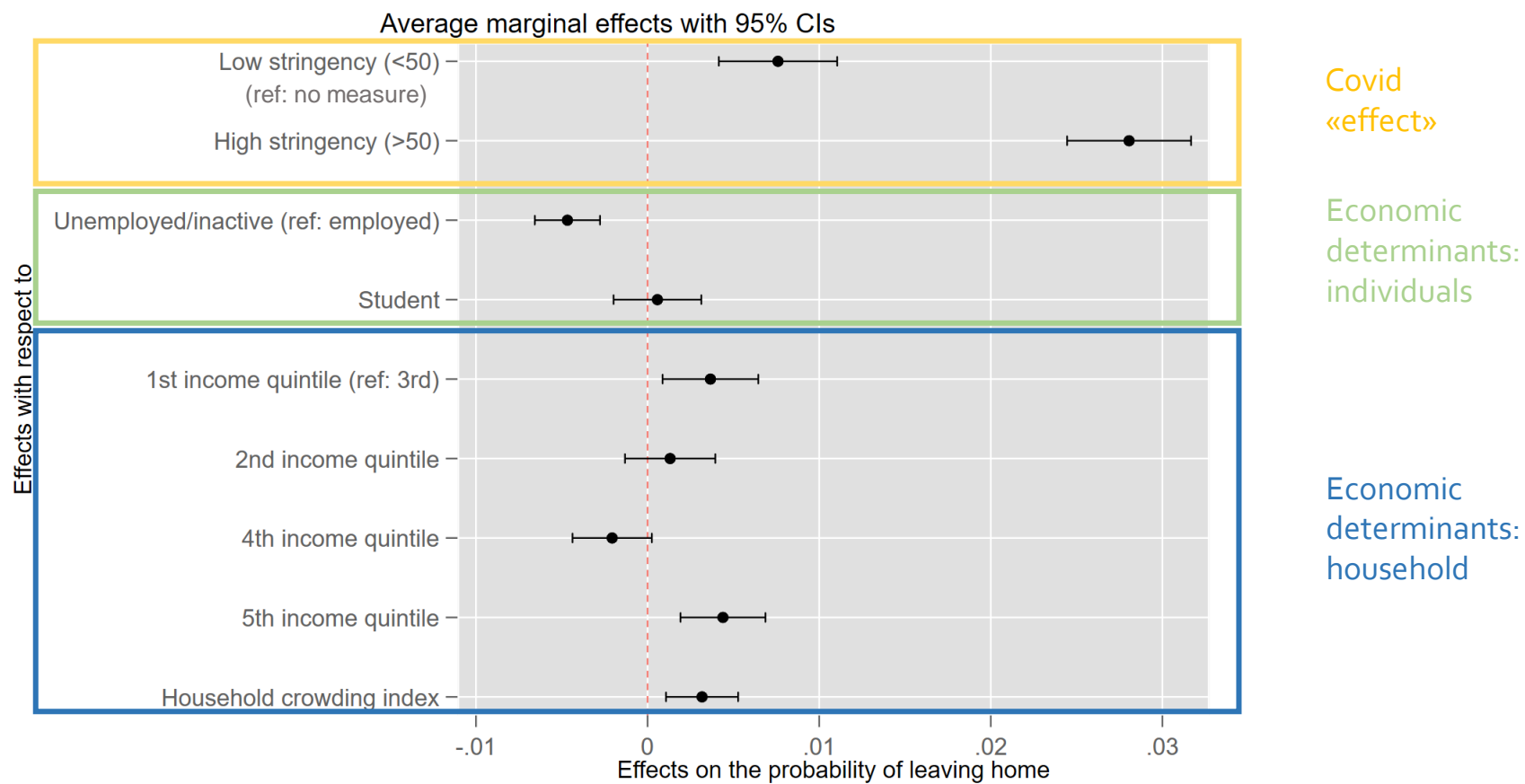
Home-leaving rates (t-1, t), by country



Own calculations based on EU SILC 2017-2020, longitudinal component

# Regression results

Discrete-time EH models (logit)

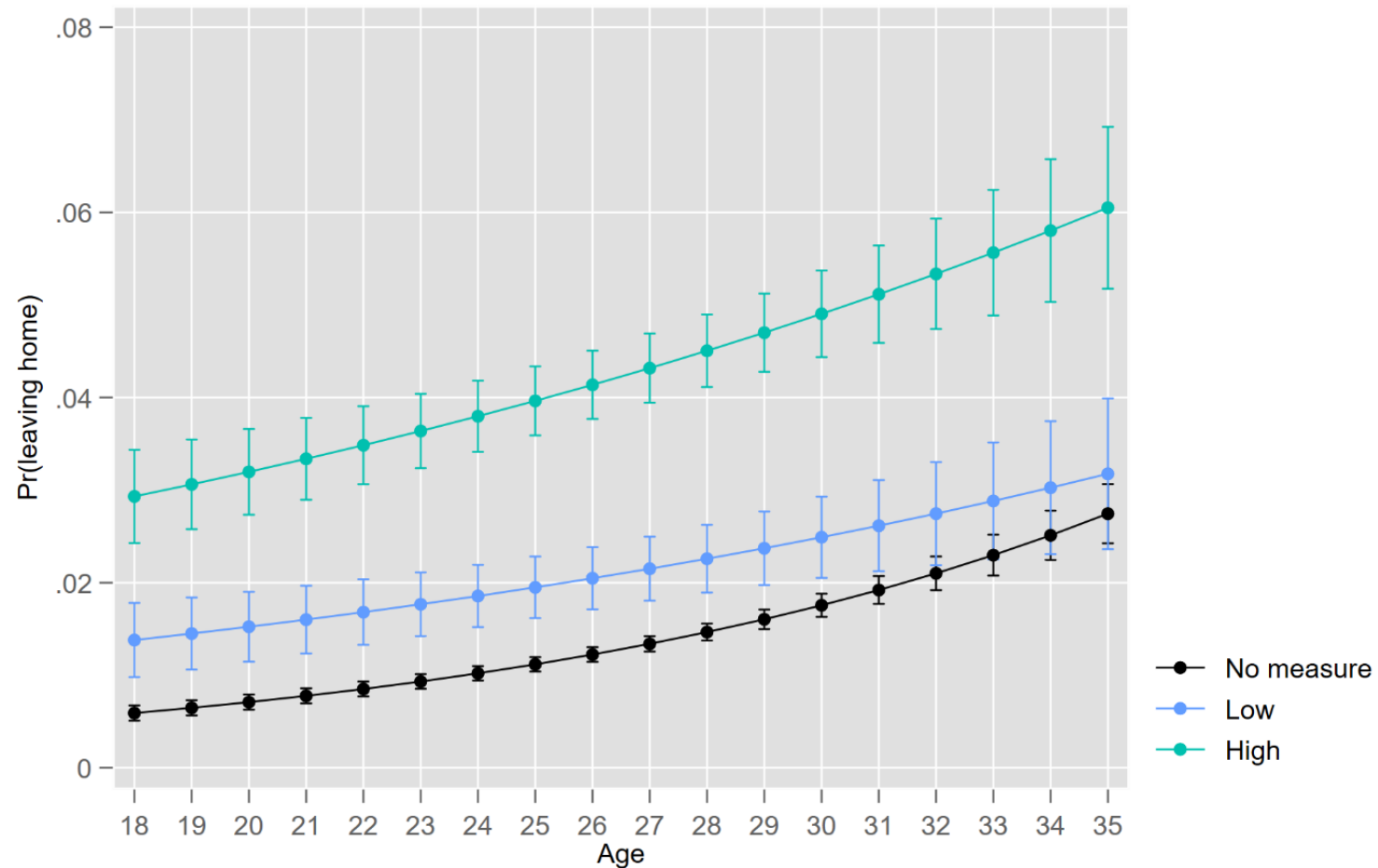


N = 105,894 person-quarters

The model controls for gender, country fixed effects, quarter fixed effects, age, age squared

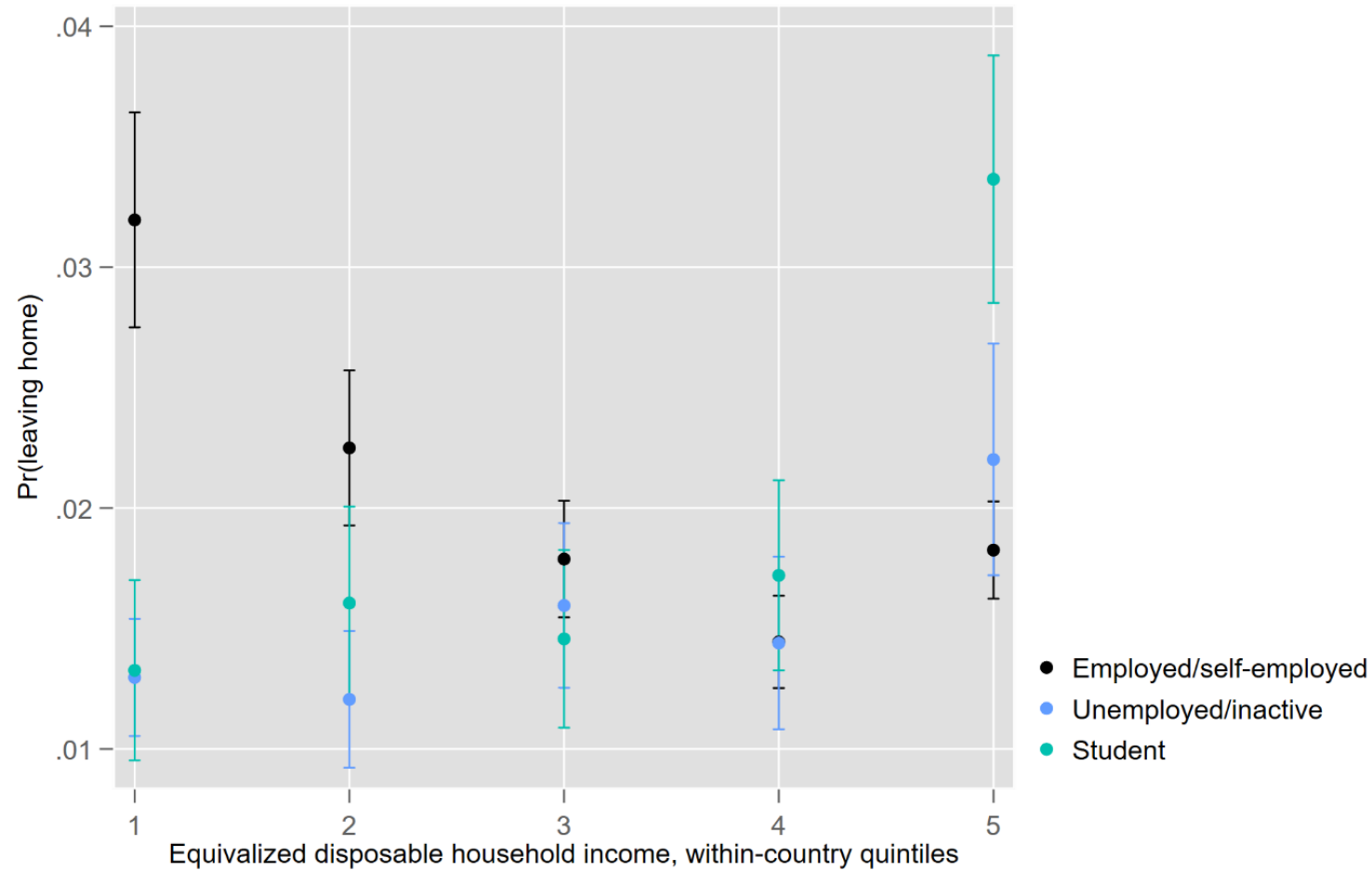
# Additional models: interaction terms

Predictive margins of Stringency Index # age on the hazard of leaving home, with 95% C.I.



# Additional models: interaction terms

Predictive margins of household income quintile # employment status on the hazard of leaving home, with 95% C.I.



# Conclusions

- Home-leaving rates in 2020 overall lower, except for Southern Europe
- High level of restrictions **increased** the likelihood to leave in Southern Europe, irrespective of the family background: Independence effect prevails over protection effect
- Interpretation: strategy to increase young adults's own wellbeing, negatively affected by the pandemic
- Being employed increases the probability of leaving, but this association depends on household income

# Discussion

## *Caveats:*

- No retrospective histories available
- Causal interpretation: not possible
- Short-term perspective, temporary phenomenon?

## Data:

- Use of longitudinal weights for descriptive analysis?
- Pool data from other years in order to maximise the sample?
- How can we isolate the Covid “effect”? (Compare results excluding 2020 / with longitudinal data 2016-2019..)

# Thank you!

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