

#StopMES

A disinformation campaign analysis of suspicious activity in and surrounding Italy.



Social Media Intelligence Unit

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#StopMES

Context:

We were approached by colleagues from SOMA, the European Disinformation Observatory, with a request for assistance after they identified some suspicious activity in Italy relating to the #StopMES narrative.

Scope:

We used a number of specialist tools to access Twitter API records and ascertain what level of activity was occurring around the use of this hashtag and the accounts pushing the narrative.

Available data:

10 days to 11th December 2019

Data Summary:

We have identified 46,100 tweets in total of which 84% (38,600) were retweets which is highly indicative of inorganic behaviour and topic interference. Only 1,700 (4%) were replies.

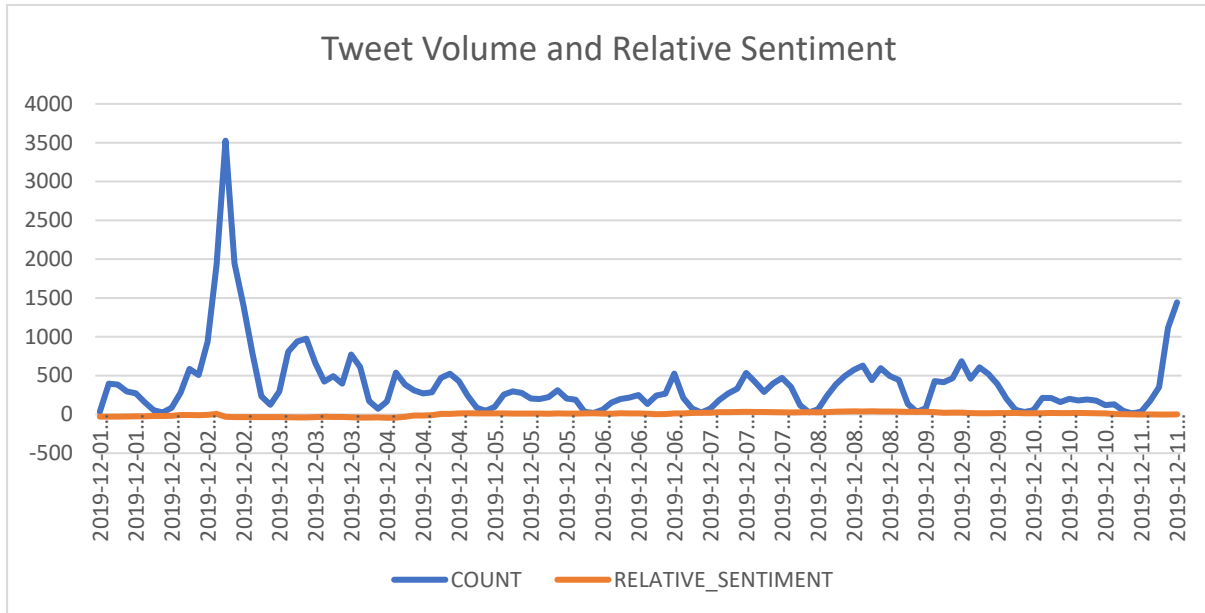
The maximum number of tweets per minute during this period was 78, which is indicative of human-managed as opposed to automated behaviour.

According to the gender data recorded by Twitter, 35% of the tweets came from females and 65% from males.

Analysis:

Tweets on the topic peaked on December 2 though there are signs of consistency with conversation timing across the ten day period, escalating in the afternoon before dropping off again overnight. This largely confirms the topic is being driven by humans due to the expected rest period between midnight and 0600.

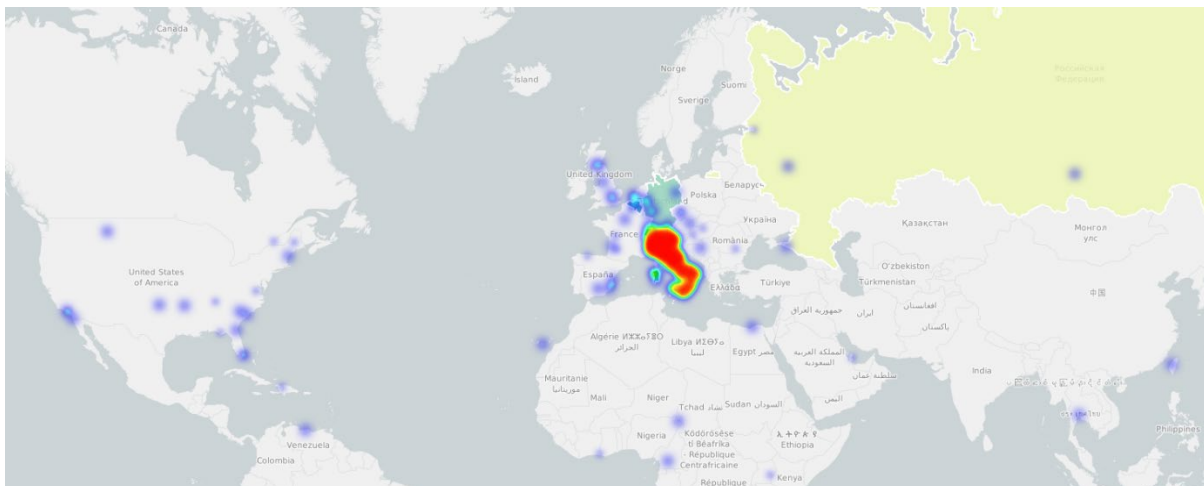
Relative sentiment – a simple measure of emotion around the hashtag – shows it remains close to zero or in negative numbers, meaning it is an adverse emotional topic.



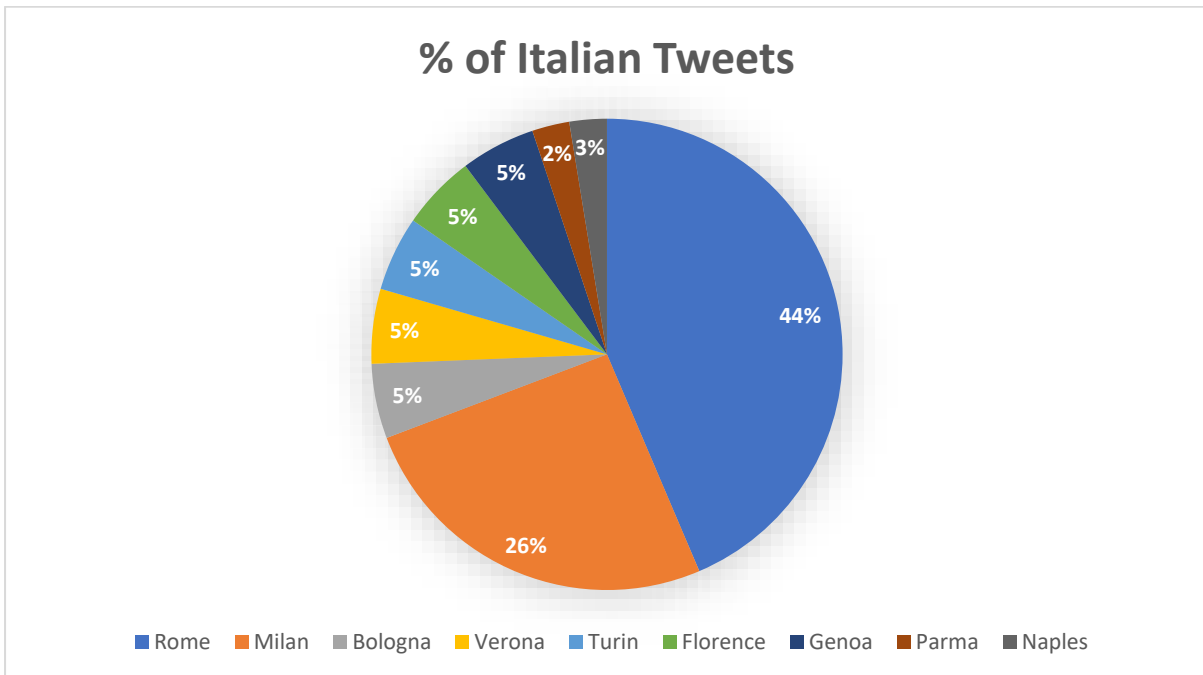
Considering the nature of the conversation, the geography is interesting.

As you would expect there is a high concentration of activity in Italy, however hotspots exist not only in Europe but Africa, the US, and Russia. This is a further indicator of inauthentic behaviour given the issue is highly localised.

98% of the tweets, however, were in Italian and 88% of the tweets originated in Italy.

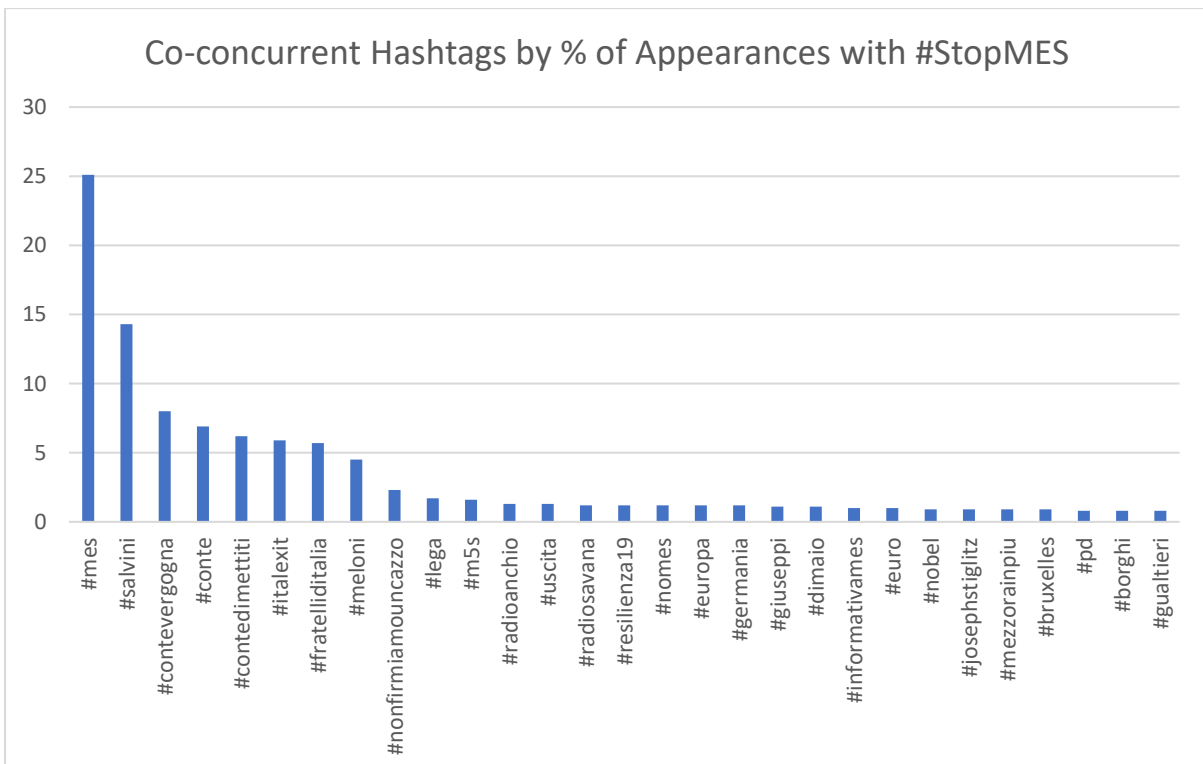


Within Italy, the bulk of the conversation originated in Rome (44%) and Milan (26%) with a small distribution across other major cities.



A number of additional hashtags have been in use alongside #StopMES, which is known as co-concurrence. Aside from #mes which you would expect, #salvini is the second most used co-concurrent tag.

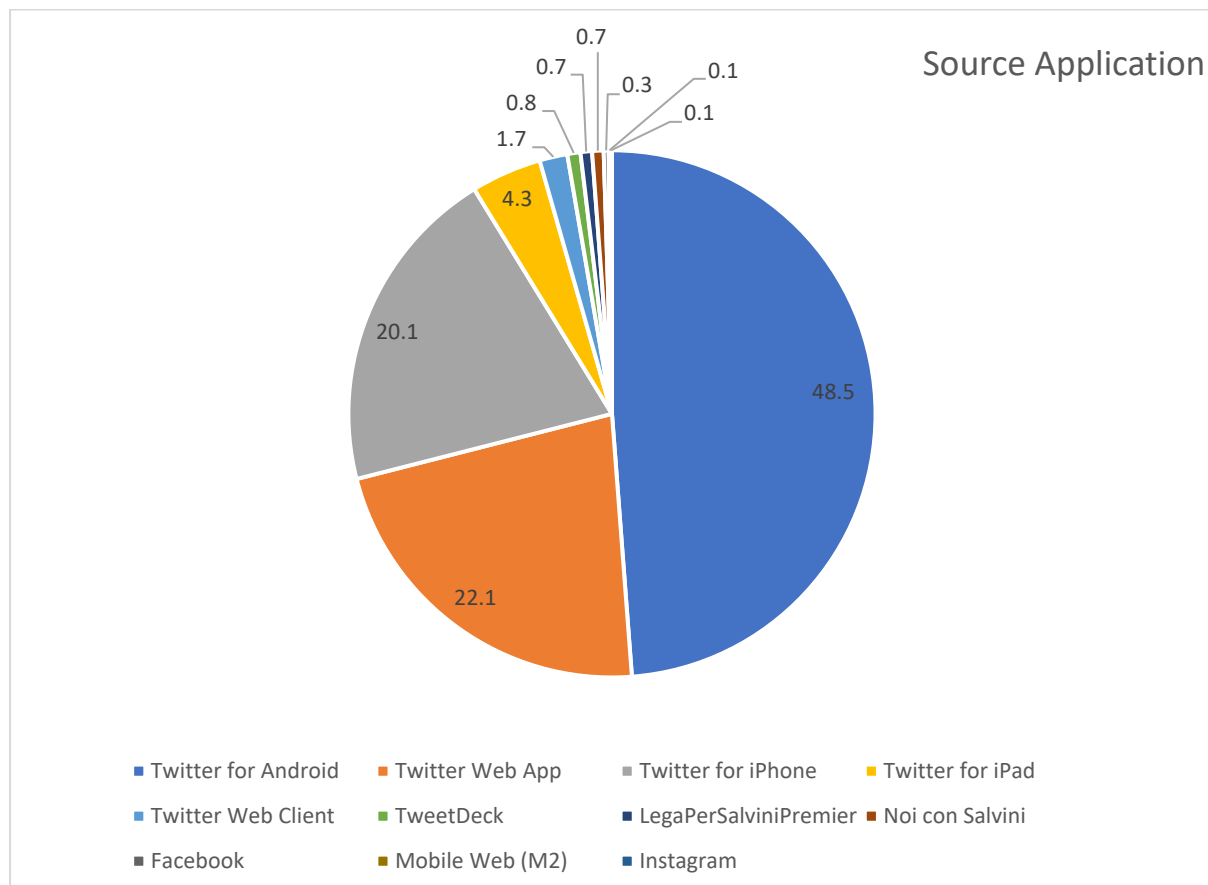
Others include #italexit, #nonfirmiamouncazzo, and even #m5s and a red circle emoji was used in 9.8% of the tweets.



Within the text of the tweets, the most used word is “conte” which also ties in with the third and fourth most used hashtags #contevergogna (conte shame) and #conte.



Most of the content was posted from Android devices (48.1%) and via the web (22.1%) or iPhone (20.1%) however it is worth noting that 1.4% of the overall tweets came from native apps called LegaPerSalviniPremier and Noi con Salvini.



URLs:

A number of unique URLs were found in a number of the tweets, distributed across 8 websites.

Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxzWgsWbXs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ols5fnvHjw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ij255wQghc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxmFI05cNbM>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/salviniofficial/videos/2585655984815700/>

<https://www.facebook.com/salviniofficial/videos/1163433587191458/>

<https://www.facebook.com/giorgiameloni.paginaufficiale/videos/1143868145817393/>

<https://www.facebook.com/salviniofficial/videos/2645870838785039/>

PSCP.tv:

<https://www.pscp.tv/w/cLUSszE3OTc4NjV8MvIwS2tZTFZtZG9KaksMeLuSygY9jLnPw0Cq5QfdLvpXFPWLVFveiryB8nFO>

<https://www.pscp.tv/w/cL4tJzE3OTc4NjV8MU1ZeE5QZFFyd1BHd9D1AuBSsoQKNoZ21ieLvs5HqZTEpyN5TISiF3Ycg8Q1>

https://www.pscp.tv/w/cMDPEDE3OTc4NjV8MXIvS016RU9OYVdHUZfgBj0Efdq7hX5GFwarEwzTXFQGPo2IBZRuN_T1p-CR

<https://www.pscp.tv/w/cLUfFjg2ODIwNXwxWXBLa1IMVm1kb0pqmTihZo3FRXCwJzjerzoXv2BscoeZncC2UhpPDbWzVow=?t=11s>

Lantidiplomatico.it:

https://www.lantidiplomatico.it/dettnews-ecco_come_il_mes_ha_aiutato_la_grecia_i_numeri_del_dramma_del_paese_oggi/29278_31948/

https://www.lantidiplomatico.it/dettnews-paolo_maddalena_accettare_il_mes_significa_essere_servi/82_31983/

https://www.lantidiplomatico.it/dettnews-secondo_il_collaboratore_pi_stretto_di_macron_litalia_ha_ragione_ad_obiettare_contro_il_mes_le_urogruppo_dovrebbe_rinviare_laccordo/11_32039/

https://www.lantidiplomatico.it/dettnews-mes_aumentano_i_rischi_di_una_crisi_finanziaria_indotta_per_depredare_litalia/11_32037/

ilsussidiario.net:

https://www.ilsussidiario.net/news/dietro-le-quinte-gli-alleati-insospettabili-del-nuovo-monti-in-arrivo/1958464/amp/?_twitter_impression=true

<https://www.ilsussidiario.net/news/fondo-salva-stati-ecco-come-funziona-il-mes-e-come-puo-metterci-in-crisi/1955047/>

ilsole24ore.com:

<https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/mes-maio-chiede-rinvio-l-italia-non-puo-firmare-buio-ACzasU2>

<https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/l-altola-cer-la-proposta-riforma-mes-non-da-benefici-all-italia-ACYtwE1>

video.twimg.com:

https://video.twimg.com/ext_tw_video/1200197970454556672/pu/vid/1280x720/BV8fOSnMPZXJLmgn.mp4?tag=10

https://video.twimg.com/ext_tw_video/1201407629051998209/pu/vid/1024x576/c9ZW4QVBVvgZZ14E.mp4?tag=10

orizzonte48.blogspot.com:

<http://orizzonte48.blogspot.com/2019/12/superata-la-legalita-costituzionalecome.html>

<http://orizzonte48.blogspot.com/2019/11/il-mes-2-e-i-suoi-fratelli-il.html?m=1>

lavocedlepatriota.it:

<https://www.lavocedelpatriota.it/basta-fregature-stopmes-fdi-manifesta-a-bruxelles/>

<https://www.lavocedelpatriota.it/stopmes-fdi-da-battaglia-alla-camera-e-in-piazza-per-fermare-sottoscrizione/>

fanpage.it:

<https://www.fanpage.it/economia/mes-centeno-gela-litalia-nessun-motivo-per-cambiarlo-salvini-attacca-da-conte-altra-bugia/>

We recommend that these pages are archived using the Wayback Machine and that interested parties should utilise the Chrome Extension "Crowdtangle" to seek further information on distribution of these links across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Reddit.

Tweets:

The most influential tweets of the #StopMES collection during the ten day period were:

<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1203400786077790214>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1202346471896571904>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201769822436122624>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201781155072237570>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201998269716537344>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201998718637105152>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1204740199026171904>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1204756997314359297>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201529333149585410>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201531997354627072>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201537882424524801>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201538523016368130>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201540683762409473>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201541614289768449>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201542826787516417>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201543368209240064>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201543585738264576>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201544743941001222>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201575534582489088>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1203774485901561856>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201798558166536192>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1204095219781816320>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201503765519425541>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201534325721903109>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201552075500466176>
https://twitter.com/Libero_official/status/1204380428129439744
<https://twitter.com/threadreaderapp/status/1201182494697172992>
<https://twitter.com/DSantanche/status/1204016354774388736>
<https://twitter.com/DSantanche/status/1204033371690717191>
<https://twitter.com/DSantanche/status/1201551354378031104>
<https://twitter.com/hermanntertsch/status/1204092149601636353>
https://twitter.com/_MicroMega_/status/1202302062920380416

The most retweeted posts of the collection were:

<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201503765519425541>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201978207177715714>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201543368209240064>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201552075500466176>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1204006073184571392>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201963538836791297>
https://twitter.com/mattia_lz/status/1202208685268840448

<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1202993337290121218>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1204729677752877058>
https://twitter.com/borgh_i_claudio/status/1203655797214986241
<https://twitter.com/AntonioGrzt/status/1201612869948841984>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201798558166536192>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1204057360291041280>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1202278809027911692>
<https://twitter.com/RadioSavana/status/1202656527921942528>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201770138577653760>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201535258065289217>
<https://twitter.com/FratellidItalia/status/1201463370089672704>
<https://twitter.com/FratellidItalia/status/1201496978204635138>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1202907937200627719>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201534325721903109>
<https://twitter.com/AMorelliMilano/status/1203374654095802374>
<https://twitter.com/molumbe/status/1202257685195964418>
<https://twitter.com/FratellidItalia/status/1204069265118310400>
<https://twitter.com/rubino7004/status/1201410946842804225>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201538523016368130>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1203041314750844929>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201544989949476865>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201529333149585410>
https://twitter.com/benq_antonio/status/1201793121648041985
<https://twitter.com/molumbe/status/1203703748645838854>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201542228197412865>

The most quoted tweets of the collection were:

<https://twitter.com/maryfagi/status/1203680718251024385>
<https://twitter.com/molumbe/status/1203703748645838854>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201978207177715714>
https://twitter.com/borgh_i_claudio/status/1201509522201858048
https://twitter.com/borgh_i_claudio/status/1204070306513588224
<https://twitter.com/FratellidItalia/status/1201496978204635138>
<https://twitter.com/loFausto/status/1201160326709960704>
https://twitter.com/marco_gervasoni/status/1201023806044884992
<https://twitter.com/VittorioBanti/status/1203411246705451008>
<https://twitter.com/gilardisil/status/1201565846159724545>
<https://twitter.com/littleboypc/status/1201139299485396992>
<https://twitter.com/GiuseppeConteIT/status/1201181044457775105>
<https://twitter.com/giuslit/status/1201178359763472389>
https://twitter.com/miia_2018/status/1204143070956183552
<https://twitter.com/danielescarfati/status/1201491613173866497>
<https://twitter.com/gilardisil/status/1202490258740436992>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1204006073184571392>
https://twitter.com/borgh_i_claudio/status/1204446869860093952

<https://twitter.com/RadioSavana/status/1200050305188188160>
<https://twitter.com/FratellidItalia/status/1204060379531358208>
<https://twitter.com/moschettopres/status/1201515451681005568>
<https://twitter.com/PatriziaRametta/status/1201507663483420672>
https://twitter.com/borghi_claudio/status/1204093941106302976
https://twitter.com/SebCochard_11/status/1202926750432419840
<https://twitter.com/RogerHalsted/status/1202219761712685057>
<https://twitter.com/BuompaneG/status/1203648348558897152>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201552075500466176>
<https://twitter.com/MauroSutto/status/1201514051014135808>
<https://twitter.com/VittorioBanti/status/1201805773027852290>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1204729677752877058>
https://twitter.com/borghi_claudio/status/1201566093023875080
https://twitter.com/borghi_claudio/status/1202264679772545024

The tweets most replied to across the collection were:

<https://twitter.com/GiuseppeConteIT/status/120118104457775105>
<https://twitter.com/GiuseppeConteIT/status/1201473215224274945>
<https://twitter.com/GiuseppeConteIT/status/1201201490062434308>
<https://twitter.com/GiuseppeConteIT/status/1204405437698674691>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201543368209240064>
<https://twitter.com/Mov5Stelle/status/1203310100460515328>
<https://twitter.com/CarloCalenda/status/1203735326851846149>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1203041314750844929>
<https://twitter.com/davidefaraone/status/1201779635689836545>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1202346470281764864>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201503765519425541>
<https://twitter.com/Corriere/status/1202473871913472000>
<https://twitter.com/PastorellaGiu/status/1203718573589446657>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1204712586828271617>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201802016563040256>
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1202174417968738304>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1202243760664522752>
https://twitter.com/borghi_claudio/status/1202264679772545024
<https://twitter.com/CottarelliCPI/status/1202271348359233536>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1202278809027911692>
https://twitter.com/Rinaldi_euro/status/1201876432600928257
<https://twitter.com/ManlioDS/status/1202608277315555328>
https://twitter.com/borghi_claudio/status/1203635788514316289
<https://twitter.com/AlbertoBagnai/status/1203669523481673728>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1203801066984394753>
<https://twitter.com/nzingaretti/status/1201519622505336832>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201769822436122624>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201781150475325440>
<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1201781155072237570>

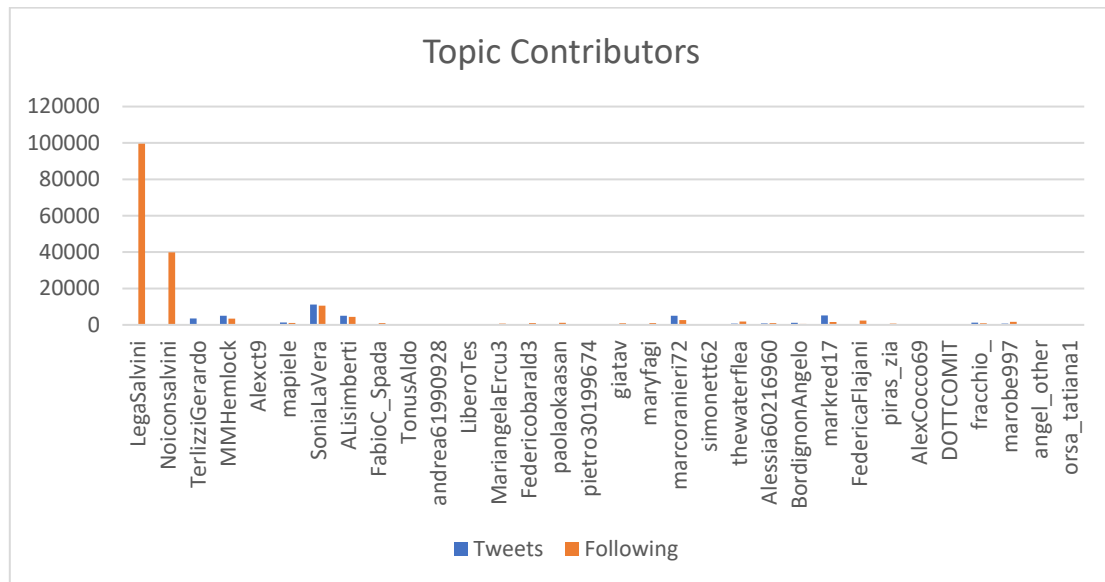
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1201798558166536192>
<https://twitter.com/La7tv/status/1201814825061486592>
https://twitter.com/graziano_delrio/status/1201563048642826241

Two collections of the oldest and most recent tweets in the collection are appended in CSV format.

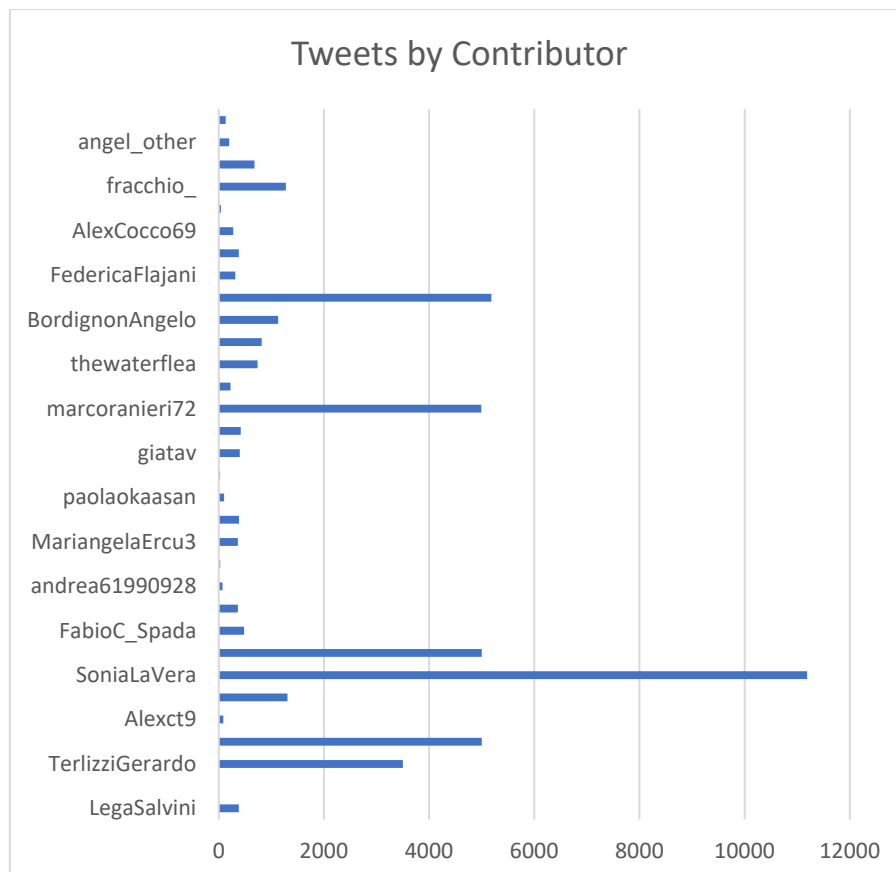
Influence and Distributors:

The most influential figures discussing the #StopMES topic are Matteo Salvini and Geogie Meloni, supported by the official Fratelli d'Italia and Lega accounts.

The distribution of tweets on the topic, however, is notably across a broader range of accounts with varying follower counts:



The majority of the tweets are, in fact, coming from accounts with much smaller audiences:



Of these 32 accounts discussing the topic the most, we dip sampled the six which have each produced over 3,000 tweets on the #StopMES topic during the 10 day period.

All of them passed standard testing, indicating they are human-managed accounts not using automation.

	Botometer	Bot Sentinel
TerlizziGerardo	1.3	0%
MMHemlock	1.4	42%
SoniaLaVera	1.3	0%
ALisimberti	1.2	0%
marcoranieri72	1.2	0%
markred17	1.3	6%

Conclusion:

There are signs that #StopMES is an artificially inflated or inauthentic topic as set out above and it would appear to be the case that the inauthenticity is human-led which indicates this a deliberate and carefully crafted narrative campaign centred around Salvini and Meloni using the networks of Lega and Fratelli to enhance audience visibility.

There are some good indicators that actors not native to Italy are involved in this effort.

Ends.