



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Second Quality of Work Survey reveals decline in working conditions

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The preliminary results of the second Quality of Work in Italy Survey, carried out in 2006 by the National Training Agency, show that working conditions have tended to decline since the 2002 survey, although overall job satisfaction is still high. Italian workers seem to be less satisfied with their job autonomy, pay, job security and career opportunities. In general, factors causing gender gaps both at the workplace and in private life persist.

Introduction

In June 2007, the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training ([Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori, Isfol](#)) presented the preliminary results of the second Quality of Work Survey (*II Indagine sulla qualità del lavoro in Italia*), which was carried out between June and October 2006; the full report is expected in 2008. The 2006 survey was conducted using the same methodology as in the previous edition in 2002 ([IT0503SR01](#)). As before, it featured multistage random sampling, based on computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) with a sample of 2,000 workers, including employees and self-employed persons. The sample is based on and the data are weighted against the Labour Force Survey (LFS) carried out by the Italian National Statistics Office ([Istituto nazionale di statistica, Istat](#)). The 2006 survey questionnaire is based on the [European Working Conditions Survey \(EWCS\) questionnaire](#) and was revised to reflect both changes to the latest EWCS questionnaire in 2005 and recent labour market legislation, in particular Law 30/03 on employment and the labour market ([IT0307204F](#)).

Results of the 2006 Quality of Work survey are compared both with the [previous edition in 2002](#), with the 2005–2006 survey entitled ‘Working Italy today’ ([L’Italia che lavora oggi](#)), conducted by the Economic and Social Research Institute ([Istituto di Studi e Ricerche Economiche e Sociali, Ires](#)) ([IT0609049I](#)), and with the 2002 work enquiry carried out by Democrats of the Left ([Democratici di Sinistra, DS](#)), entitled ‘Changing work’ (*Il lavoro che cambia*; Carrieri, Damiano, Ugolini, 2005) ([IT0511NU02](#)). The Ires ‘working Italy today’ survey and the DS ‘Changing work’ survey differ in their methodological design. The former combines face-to-face and CATI interviews in 11 Italian regions with ex-post weight to ensure sample representativeness with respect to employment by sector, unionisation rate, and occupational status. The latter does not follow any sample design in order to ensure any sort of representativeness.

Labour market profile

The increase in the employment rate in Italy since 1995 is largely due to temporary jobs, both among employees and self-employed persons, which now represent 12.5% of employment. The Isfol survey includes all persons employed. A distinction is made between the following employment status categories:

- ‘standard employees’ (*dipendenti standard*) refers to ‘permanent employees’, that is, persons working on an indefinite employment contract;
- ‘temporary employees’ (*temporanei*) are both employees and self-employed persons hired on a temporary basis. This includes economically dependent workers ([IT0501NU01](#)) and freelancers;
- ‘standard self-employed’ (*indipendenti standard*) refers to self-employed persons – for example, entrepreneurs, lawyers or doctors – carrying out autonomous activities and employing employees or junior partners at their work premises.

Job satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction is still very high but shows a slight decline: more than 88% of respondents claim that they are ‘satisfied or fairly satisfied’ with their job, compared with 90.6% in 2002. Women show a slight increase, from 91.1% in 2002 to 91.9% in 2006, while satisfaction among men has declined from 90.2% to 85.7%. Such figures for job satisfaction are notably higher than those of the almost contemporary Ires survey, which recorded 77.9%, and of the Istat multipurpose survey ‘Everyday life 2006’ ([La vita quotidiana 2006 \(2.7Mb PDF\)](#)), which recorded 76.8%. Nonetheless, both of the latter surveys confirm that women are more satisfied than men are, at 81% and 75.8% respectively according to the Ires survey, and at 78.1% and 75.9% according to Istat.

Job satisfaction increases in line with educational level, from 85.2% among those having achieved compulsory education to 92.1% among those holding a third-level degree. At the same time, satisfaction increases as work seniority rises up to a period of 11–20 years (90.6%), then declines to 87.1% among those having a seniority greater than 20 years. Furthermore, job satisfaction first increases with age (from 82.2% among those aged less than 25 years to 93.5% among those aged 25–34), then varies between 85.8% and 91.5% before declining among those aged more than 65 years to 71.6%. This pattern is more or less confirmed in the Istat multipurpose survey: less than 70% of respondents aged 18–24 years are ‘very’ or ‘fairly satisfied’, while 77.7% of those aged 25–34 are; this proportion reaches up to 79.3% among those aged 65–74 and then declines for those aged more than 75 years. It is worth noting that the gender gap in terms of job satisfaction is negligible for those aged 25–64 years; however, young men aged 20–24 are much less satisfied than women in the same age group, at 66.2% and 75.2% respectively.

When looking at other components of job and work satisfaction, the picture is more mixed. Satisfaction with working time, the work atmosphere and type of work show small changes with respect to the 2002 survey, while career opportunities (-12.9 percentage points), pay (-7.7 percentage points), autonomy (-7.4 percentage points) and job security (-5.9 percentage points) show a significant decline (Table 1).

Table 1: Satisfaction with specific aspects of job, by sex, 2002–2006 (% of workers)

This table outlines men's and women's satisfaction with their working time, autonomy, job security, pay, work climate, work tasks and career opportunities.

	2002			2006		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Working time	77.3	81.1	78.7	75.6	81.4	77.9
Autonomy	91.3	89.2	90.5	83.2	82.9	83.1
Job security	84.3	85.9	84.9	79.9	77.6	79.0
Pay	65.4	61.8	64.0	59.9	50.8	56.3
Work atmosphere	88.3	91.3	89.4	90.8	90.7	90.8
Tasks and type of work	90.4	91.4	90.8	88.4	90.5	89.2
Career opportunities	60.8	54.4	58.4	48.9	40.1	45.5

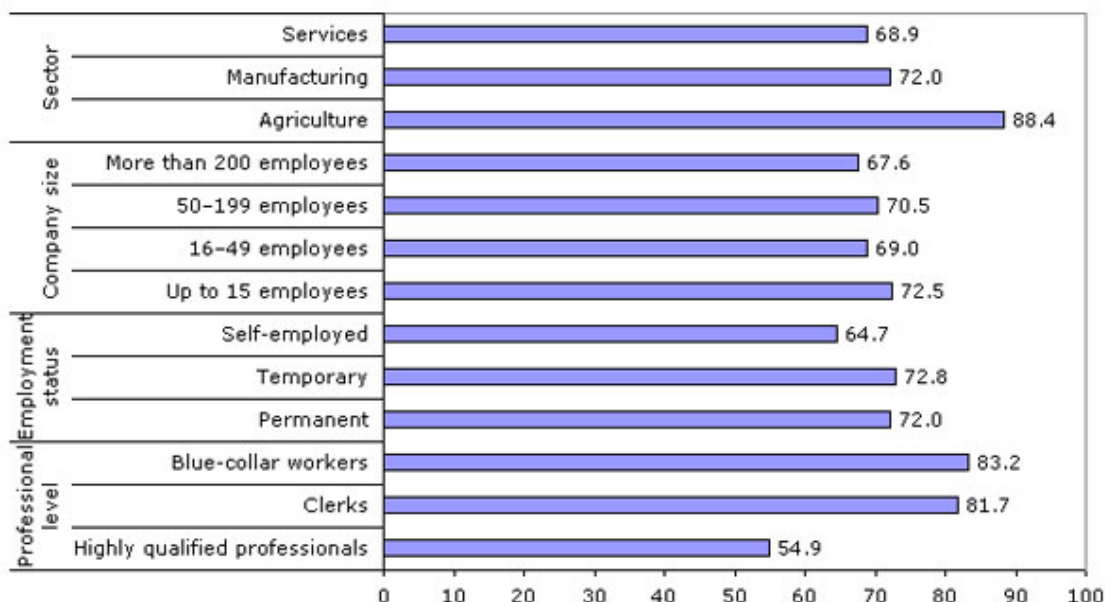
Note: Slight discrepancies arise between the above totals for 2002 and those cited in the previous survey data report; the above are drawn from the original microdata.

Source: Isfol, Quality of Work Survey 2002 and Second Quality of Work Survey, 2007

Work intensity and learning opportunities

Some 69% of respondents report that their job involves repetitive tasks, compared with 71% of those surveyed in 2002. This proportion is significantly higher in the agricultural sector (88.4%) and among employees, particularly those holding a temporary employment contract, and moderately declines as the company size increases (Figure 1). It is worth noting that 54.9% of highly qualified professionals state that their job is characterised by repetitive tasks; this feature is also reported by 83.2% of blue-collar workers and 81.7% of clerks.

Figure 1: Repetitive tasks, by sector, company size, employment status and professional level (% of workers affected)



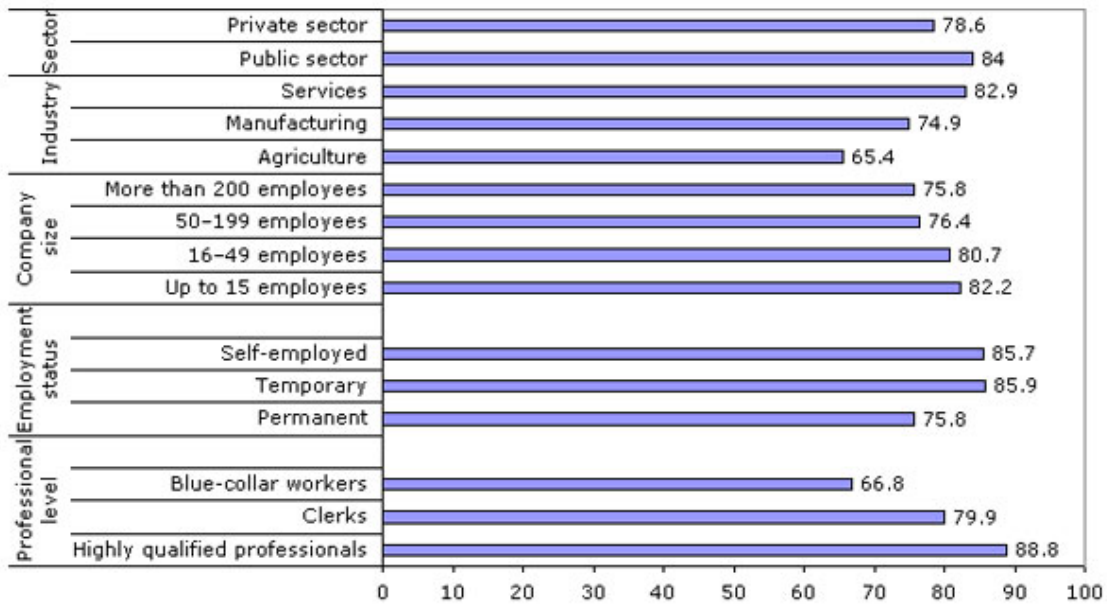
Repetitive tasks, by sector, company size, employment status and professional level (% of workers affected)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Learning opportunities show a significant increase from the previous survey, at 80% in 2006 compared with 75.5% in 2002. Such opportunities are most prevalent in the services sector (recorded by 82.9% of respondents) and public sector (84%), while they decline as the company size increases, from 82.2% when the company has up to 15 employees to 75.8% when over 200 workers are employed (Figure 2). The 2006 survey found that a higher proportion of temporary workers avail of learning opportunities in their job than was the case in 2002: from 64.9% in 2002 to over 85% in 2006.

According to the 2005–2006 survey carried out by Ires, 57.7% of those surveyed report that they have training opportunities within their company; however only 25% of all respondents state that such opportunities were offered by the company, while 32.7% explained that they try to learn by themselves. This latter proportion represents a decline from the 38% found in the 2002 DS work enquiry where a similar question was included.

Figure 2: Learning opportunities, by sector, company size, employment status and professional level (% of workers reporting same)

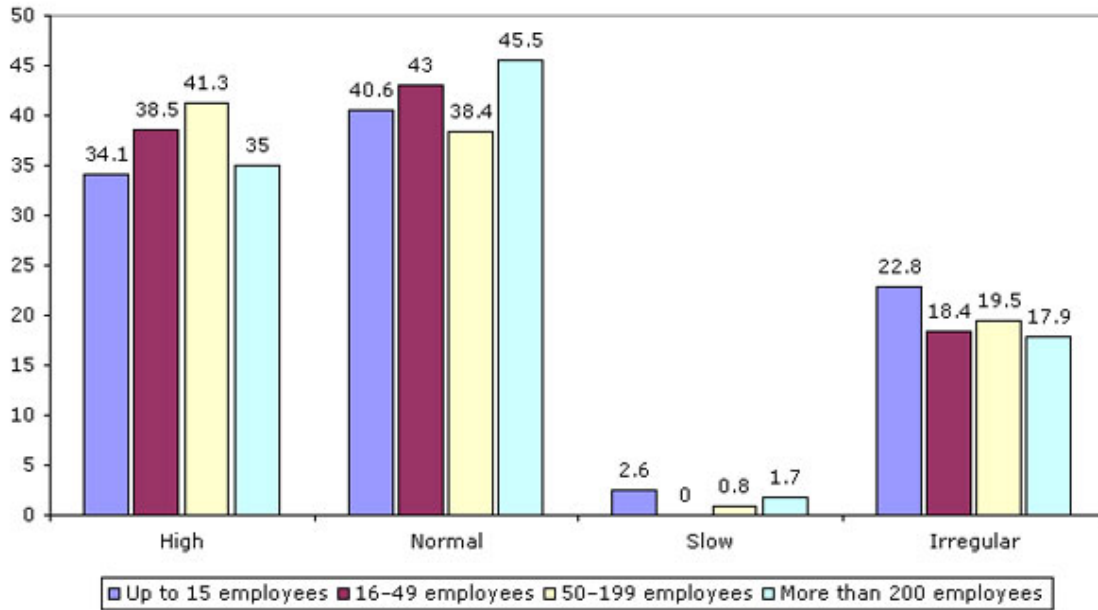


Learning opportunities, by sector, company size, employment status and professional level (% of workers reporting same)

Source: Isfol, 2007

The proportion of workers reporting a high or irregular pace of work increased from 47.7% in 2002 to 56.9% in 2006. The increment for those citing a high work pace is 2.5 percentage points. Companies with more than 200 personnel show a more balanced pace of work, while an irregular pace declines with company size (Figure 3). The proportion of respondents reporting a high pace of work increases up to companies having 50–199 employees, then declines.

Figure 3: Pace of work, by company size (% of workers)

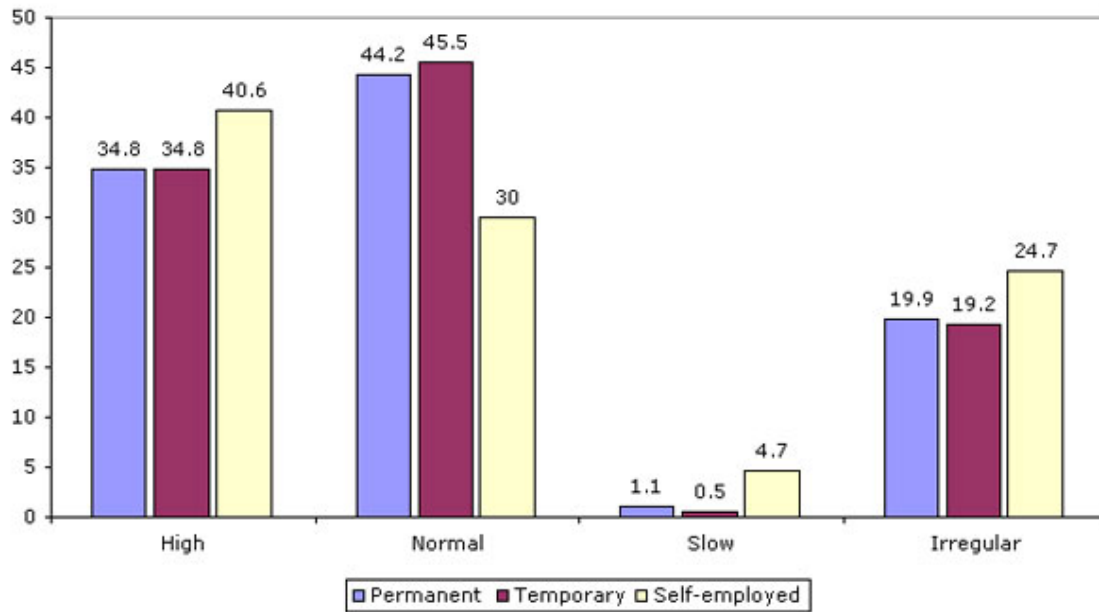


Pace of work, by company size (% of workers)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Self-employed workers report the highest values for working at a high and irregular pace of work (Figure 4), as do highly qualified professionals. Customer and user demand are the main factors affecting pace of work (reported by 76.8% of respondents), followed by production targets (44.4%) and control by colleagues (43.2%) and superiors (39.5%). Only 24.2% of respondents cite automatic machinery as controlling their pace of work and this proportion reduces to 14% in the services sector. In terms of occupation, the pace of work of highly qualified professionals is mainly determined by demands of people (customers and users) outside the workplace, while demands from people within the workplace (colleagues and superiors) are important determinants for clerks. At the same time, blue-collar workers report higher pressure in terms of work pace from the technological environment.

Figure 4: Pace of work, by employment status (% of workers)



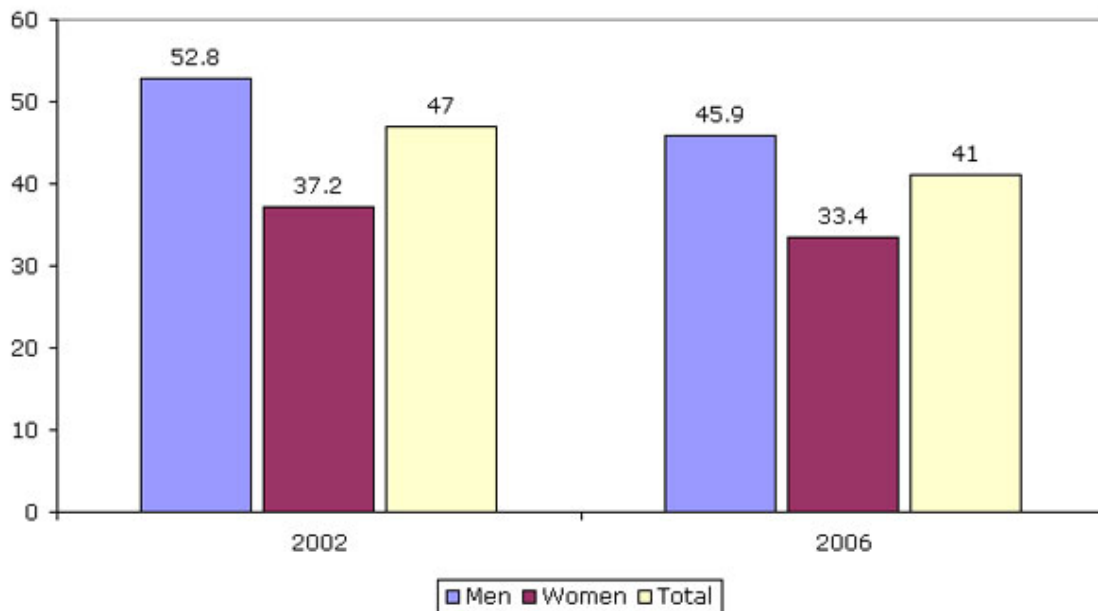
Pace of work, by employment status (% of workers)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Career opportunities

A total of 41% of respondents believe that they have opportunities to develop in their careers, which represents a decline of six percentage points with respect to the 2002 survey (Figure 5). Only one third of women consider that they have any opportunities for career advancement (-3.8 percentage points compared with 2002), although this decline is less severe than for men (-6.9 percentage points). Both age and seniority are negatively related to career perspectives, while educational and professional level show a strong positive association. Self-employed workers perceive higher opportunities than employees do, at 46.6% and 39% respectively, although the former also show a notable decline from their proportion of 65.5% in 2002. In terms of company size, respondents working in companies with 16–49 employees report fewer career opportunities, amounting to less than 35% in the private sector. The opposite is true for those working in companies with more than 200 employees, reaching 47.4% in the private sector.

Figure 5: Career opportunities, by sex, 2002–2006 (% of workers reporting same)

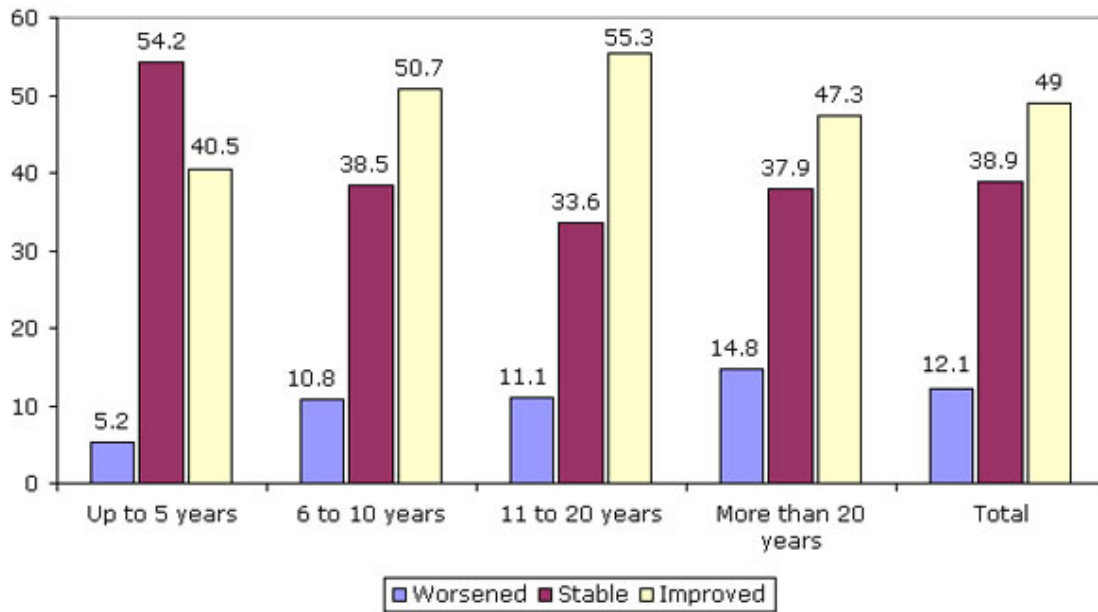


Career opportunities, by sex, 2002–2006 (% of workers reporting same)

Source: Isfol, 2007

A retrospective investigation of respondents' career development gives a further insight. Men report higher improvements than women do, at 51.2% and 45.5% respectively. A similar proportion of both sexes (12%) report that their career path has disimproved, while 36.7% of men and 42.3% of women consider that their career is stable. At the same time, career improvements increase with work seniority, from 40.5% for those with up to five years to 55.3% when respondents have 11–20 years of seniority (Figure 6). However, the proportion reporting career improvements declines to 47.3% for those with more than 20 years of seniority.

Figure 6: Assessment of past career, by work seniority (% of workers)

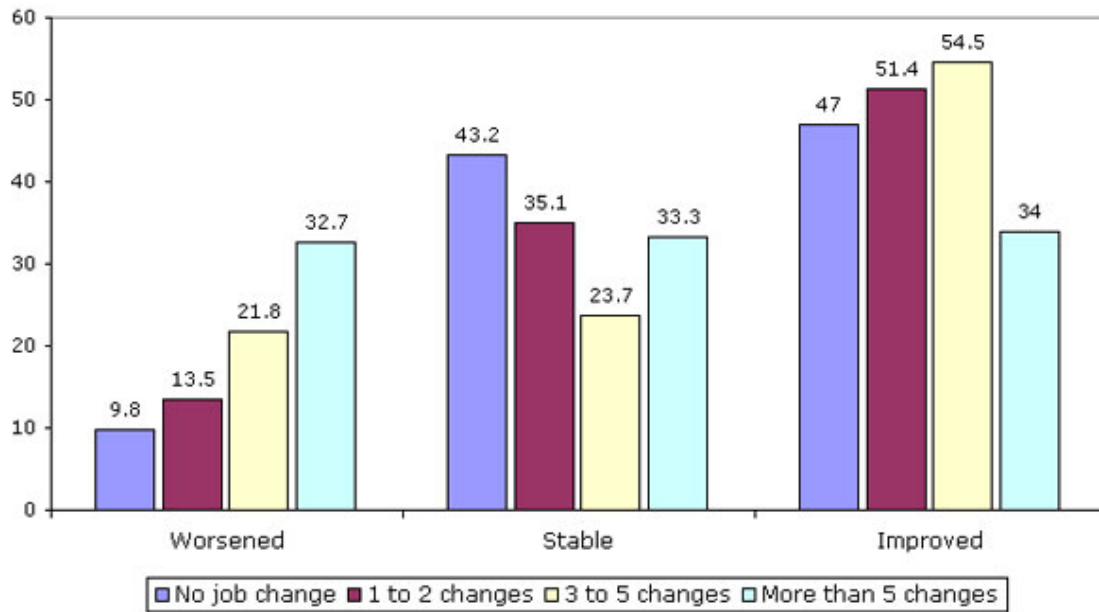


Assessment of past career, by work seniority (% of workers)

Source: Isfol, 2007

It is often argued that in an economy dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) few career opportunities arise in the current workplace, with more possibilities offered by labour mobility. Asked about the consequences of changes in their working life, one in two workers (49%) claimed that job changes had been positive and had led to improvements. Meanwhile, 39% claimed that such changes had been neutral and 12% stated that the changes had been negative. Those workers whose careers had involved many changes of job (five or more) were much more likely, at 32.7% of respondents, to indicate that their work situation had disimproved; workers experiencing moderate job mobility (one or two career job changes) or no job mobility are much less likely to say that their situation has deteriorated (Figure 7). These results confirm findings from both the 2002 DS enquiry and the working Italy today survey carried out by Ires in 2006.

Figure 7: Assessment of past career, by job mobility (% of workers)



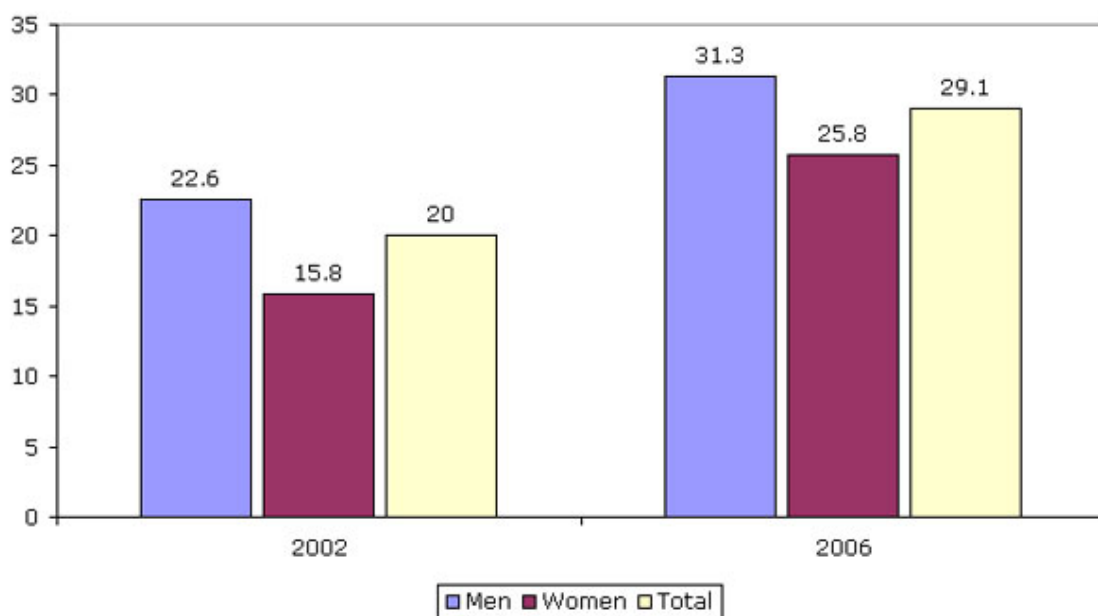
Assessment of past career, by job mobility (% of workers)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Health at work

Overall risk perception for health and safety at work shows a significant increase of 9.1 percentage points, with some differences between the sexes (Figure 8). Pace of work has a strong positive association with health risks: while only 3.7% of those working at a low work pace report that their health is at risk, 46.4% – a proportion almost 13 times higher – of those working at a high pace report risks for their health. Workers who have an irregular pace of work report lower risks than those recording a normal work pace (19.2% and 30.6% respectively). Blue-collar workers cite the highest perception of a risk to health (40.8%) while clerks report the lowest (22.3%).

Figure 8: *Health at risk, by sex, 2002–2006 (% of workers exposed)*

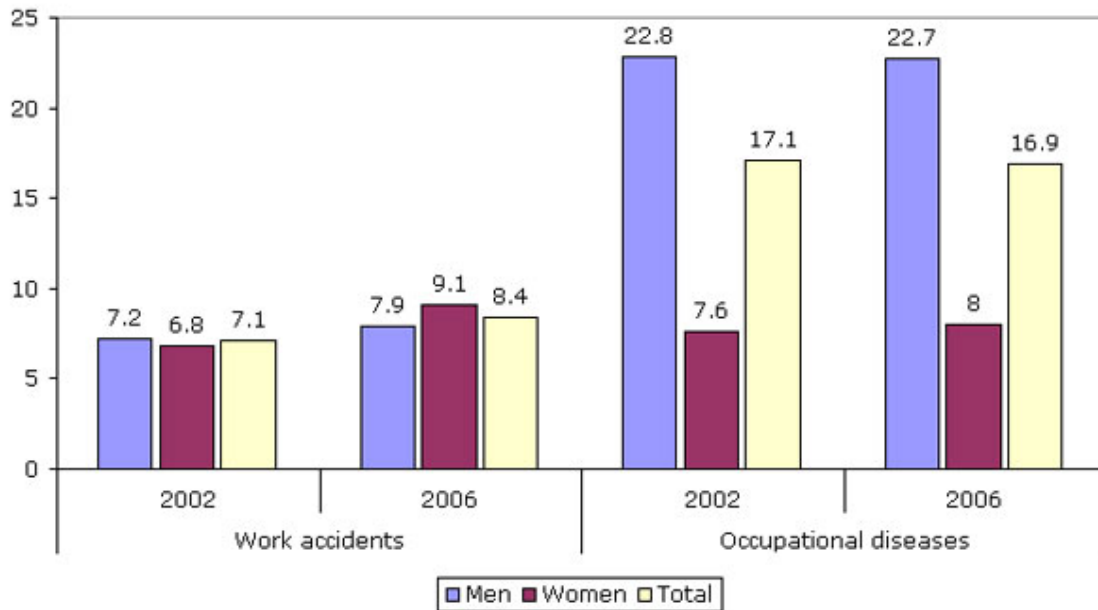


Health at risk, by sex, 2002–2006 (% of workers exposed)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Figure 9 summarises trends for both work accidents and occupational diseases. While the latter are stable at about 17% of workers in 2002 and 2006, the former show an increase from 7.1% to 8.4%. The rise in work accidents is particularly notable for women, from 6.8% to 9.1%, resulting in a higher occurrence than was the case for men in 2006 (7.9%). No information is provided on trends according to occupation, which would make it easier to detect possible composition effects. However, according to the 2006 survey, 30.2% of blue-collar workers – compared with about 4% of both clerks and highly qualified professionals – report incapacitating occupational diseases.

Figure 9: Occupational diseases, by sex, 2002–2006 (% of workers affected)

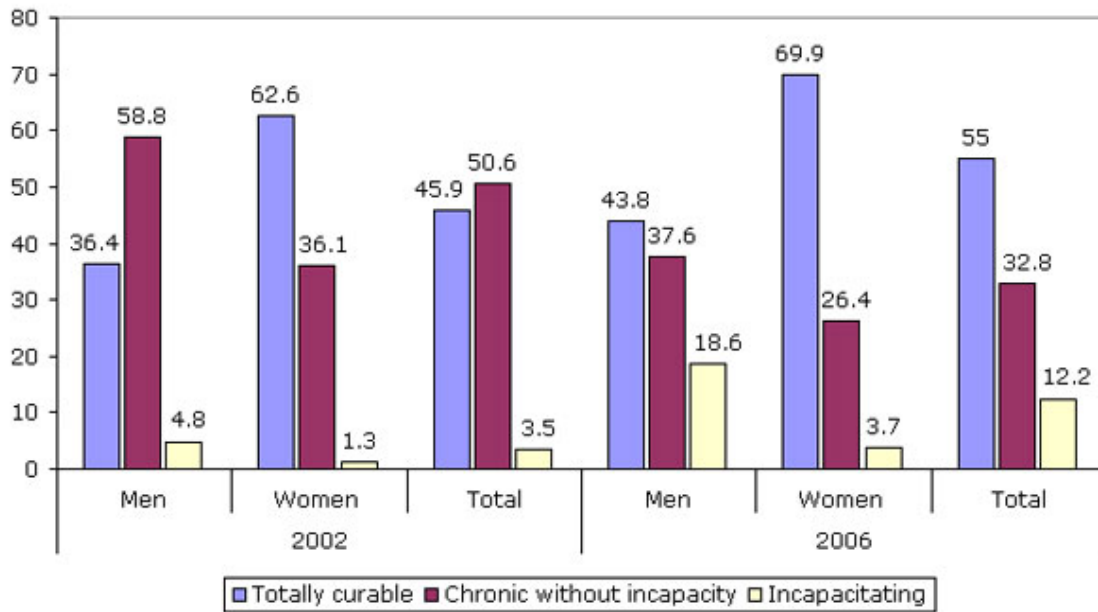


Occupational diseases, by sex, 2002–2006 (% of workers affected)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Occupational diseases show an increase in both mild and incapacitating cases, especially in the latter instance for men – from 4.8% in 2002 to 18.6% in 2006 (Figure 10). Meanwhile, work accidents show a decline in incapacitating cases, particularly among women (from 5.7% to 1.8%), but an overall increase in serious incidents was found (from 18.4% to 26%) (Figure 11).

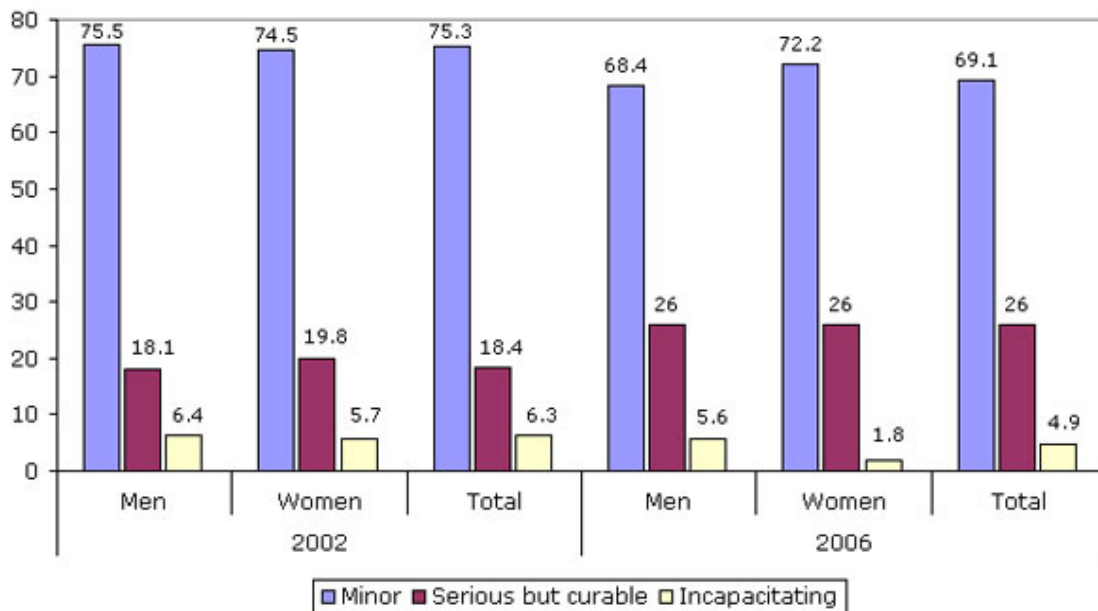
Figure 10: Occupational diseases, by severity, 2002–2006 (% of such diseases)



Occupational diseases, by severity (% of such diseases)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Figure 11: Work accidents, by severity, 2002–2006 (% of such accidents)



Work accidents, by severity, 2002–2006 (% of such accidents)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Impact of working time

Working time impacts on both occupational diseases and work accidents. The proportion of mild or totally curable diseases declines as working time increases (from 69.7% when working less than 30 hours a week to 48.5% when working more than 45 hours), while incapacitating cases increase from 5.4% when working less than 30 hours a week to 27.9% when working more than 45 hours (Table 2).

Table 2: Occupational diseases, by severity and working time (% of such diseases)

This table shows how people working more than 45 hours a week are exposed to the highest levels of occupational diseases.

Severity	Less than 30 hours a week	30–45 hours a week	More than 45 hours a week
Totally curable	69.7	50.5	48.5
Chronic without incapacity	25.0	39.1	23.6
Incapacitating	5.4	10.3	27.9

Source: Isfol, 2007

At the same time, reported work accidents affect 10.2% of respondents working less than 30 hours a week, increasing to 21.5% when working more than 45 hours; this proportion is 18% for those working between 30 and 45 hours and the total average is 16.9%. More specifically, both serious but curable and incapacitating accidents increase from 17.6% and 0% respectively for those working less than 30 hours a week to 39.1% and 6.3% for those working more than 45 hours (Table 3).

Table 3: Work accidents, by severity and working time (% of such accidents)

This table shows how people working more than 45 hours a week are exposed to the highest levels of work accidents.

Severity	Less than 30 hours a week	30–45 hours a week	More than 45 hours a week
Minor	82.4	71.5	54.6
Serious but curable	17.6	23.1	39.1
Incapacitating	0.0	5.5	6.3

Source: Isfol, 2007

Effect of employment status

Working conditions of temporary workers are worse than average: 63% of them perform physically heavy tasks, compared with 59% of permanent employees and 40% of self-employed workers. Furthermore, 43% of temporary workers report psychological stress, compared with 30% of permanent staff and 38% of self-employed persons, while 50% of temporary workers

report that their job involves a significant mental strain, compared with 30% of permanent and 38% of self-employed workers.

However, temporary workers report lower rates of both occupational diseases (7.5% compared with 8.2% and 9.6% respectively for permanent and self-employed workers) and work accidents (11.2% compared with 19.8% and 14.5% respectively of permanent and self-employed workers). Nonetheless, temporary workers report higher levels of occupational diseases than both permanent and self-employed workers when work seniority is lower than 20 years (Table 4).

Table 4: Occupational diseases, by employment status and seniority (% of workers affected)

This table shows that temporary workers with up to 20 years of seniority report higher levels of occupational diseases than other workers.

Seniority	Permanent employees	Self-employed persons	Temporary workers
More than 20 years	11.0	14.0	6.1
11 to 20 years	6.3	3.7	8.5
6 to 10 years	2.4	3.0	4.1
Up to 5 years	4.9	5.5	9.9

Source: Isfol, 2007

Moreover, when seniority is lower than five years, the incidence of work accidents is higher among temporary workers than among permanent employees and self-employed persons (Table 5).

Table 5: Work accidents, by employment status and seniority (% of workers affected)

This table shows that temporary workers with up to five years of seniority report higher levels of work-related accidents than other workers.

Seniority	Permanent employees	Self-employed persons	Temporary workers
More than 20 years	21.9	23.1	17.8
11 to 20 years	21.6	4.6	19.3
6 to 10 years	12.2	3.6	9.0
Up to 5 years	3.8	-	4.7

Source: Isfol, 2007

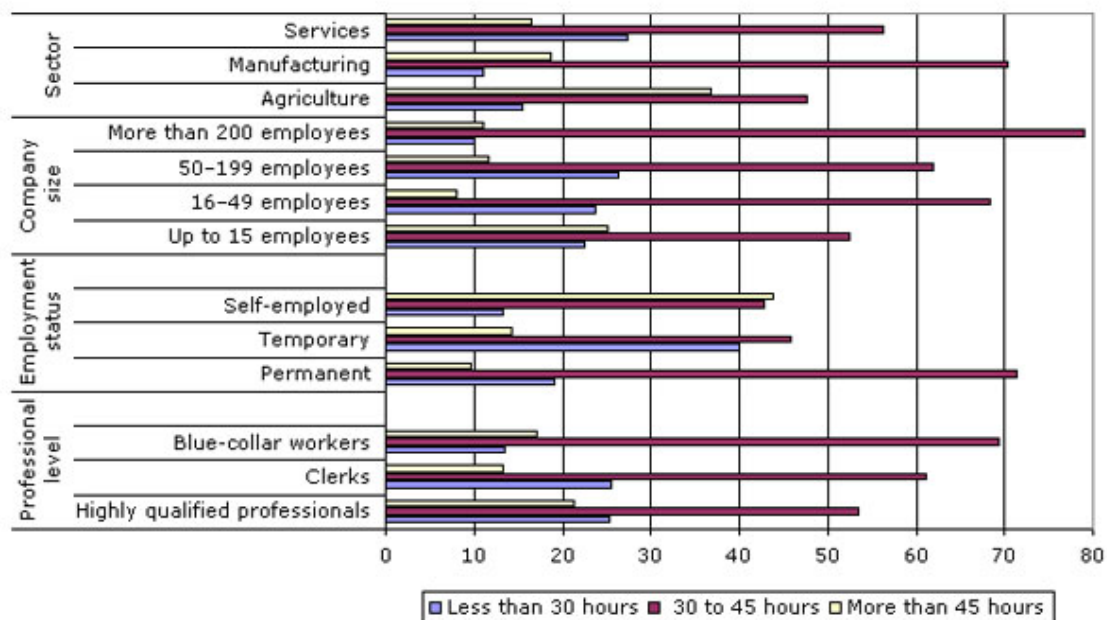
Working time and work–life balance

Average weekly working time declined from 39 hours in 2002 to 38 hours in 2006. However, no overall information regarding the proportion of part-time workers is reported.

The agricultural sector shows the highest share of long working hours (about 37% of these workers report working more than 45 hours a week) and the highest average working time (43 hours a week). By contrast, the services sector has the highest proportion of workers with shorter working hours: almost 28% of the survey respondents in this industry report working less than 30 hours (Figure 12). The average working time is 40.6 hours a week in the private sector, while in the public sector it stands at 32 hours. Some 25% of respondents working in companies with up to 15 employees report long working hours (more than 45 hours); then the proportion of those working long hours rapidly declines as the company size increases. The share of short working hours (less than 30 hours) progressively increases with company size up to 50–199 employees (from 22.5% to 26.3%) and then drops to 10% in companies with over 200 employees. Meanwhile, the proportion of respondents working 30 to 45 hours increases as the company size increases, up to 78.9%.

Highly qualified professionals record the highest share of long working hours (25.3%), while the highest incidence of part-time work (25.6%) is found among clerks. According to the working Italy today survey carried out by Ires, 8.2% of respondents work more than 45 hours a week, 14% of respondents work part time (7.3% of men and 24.9 of women), and over 73% of employees in the private sector work more than 40 hours a week.

Figure 12: Working time, by sector, company size, employment status and professional level (% of workers)



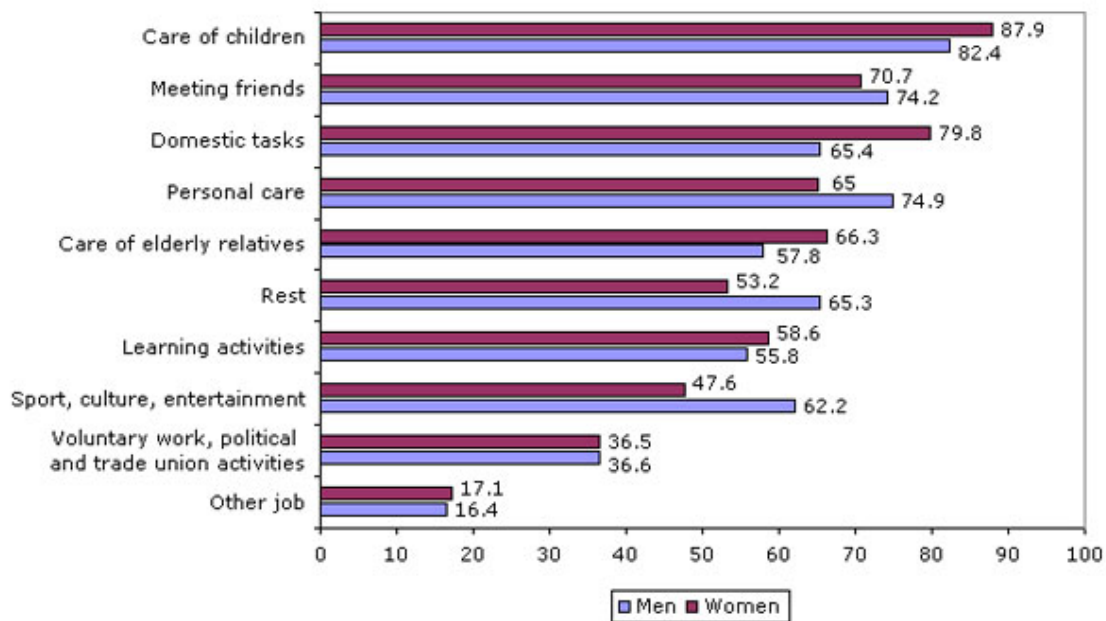
Working time, by sector, company size, employment status and professional level (% of workers)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Work-life balance shows different trends between the sexes: while men report a significant improvement compared with the 2002 survey (from 67.8% to 74.1%), women report a slight worsening of 1.2%, thereby reducing the gender gap. The lack of a gender data breakdown on working times prevents further discussion on the issue.

Satisfaction about being able to give sufficient time to various aspects of private life is highest in relation to care of children (mentioned by over 80% of respondents), meeting friends, domestic tasks and personal care (each about 70%) (Figure 13). However, significant gender differences arise: women report a better balance in respect of care responsibilities, domestic tasks and learning activities, but would like to devote more time to themselves and to social and political engagement (Figure 14). Meanwhile, men report a better work–life balance in relation to meeting friends, personal care, rest and sport, cultural activities and entertainment, but would like to devote even more time to the latter pleasure pursuits. According to the Isfol report, women show a more responsible attitude while men reveal a more hedonistic approach to private time, thus confirming results from the 2003 [time use survey \(in Italian\)](#) carried out by Istat.

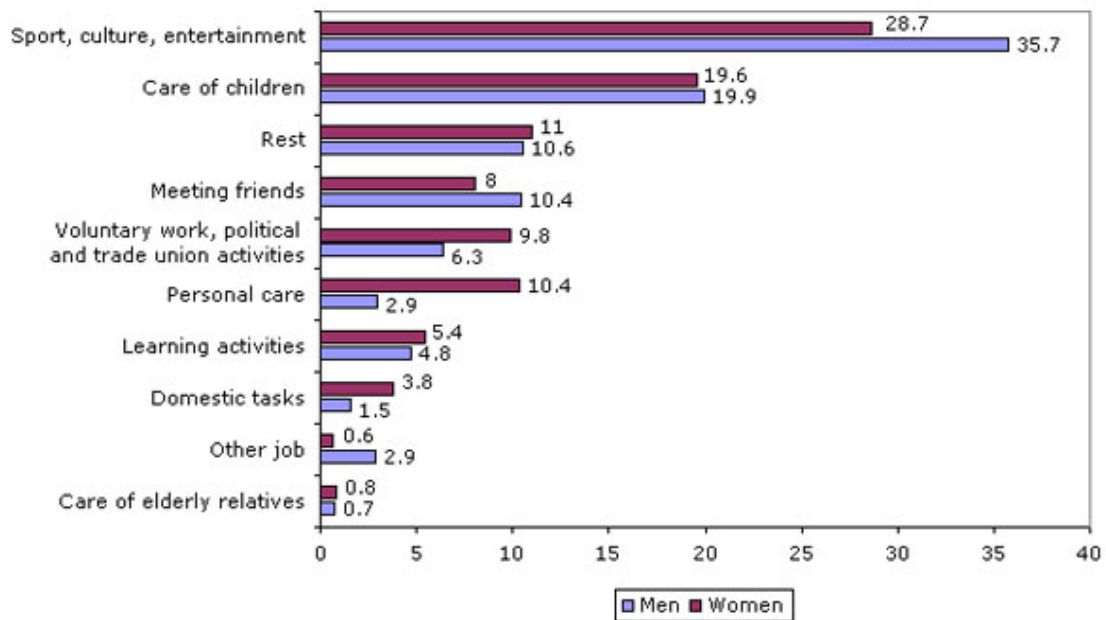
Figure 13: Satisfaction with time spent on specific aspects of personal life, by sex (% of workers)



Satisfaction with time spent on specific aspects of personal life, by sex (% of workers)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Figure 14: Activities to which workers would like to devote more time, by sex (% of workers)



Activities to which workers would like to devote more time, by sex (% of workers)

Source: Isfol, 2007

Pay

A clear segmentation of net earnings emerges according to employment status: almost one temporary worker in two (46.8%) earns less than €900 a month, while 70.2% of permanent employees earn €900 to €1,750 a month and 28.5% of self-employed persons earn more than €1,750 a month (Table 6). These figures appear consistent with Ires findings: the average wage of permanent employees is €1,010 a month while employees on temporary contracts earn €800 a month. Among temporary workers, 59% of those working more than 40 hours a week earn less than €1,000 a month.

Table 6: Monthly net earnings distribution, by employment status (% of workers)

This table outlines how much self-employed, permanent and temporary workers earn per month.

	Self-employed persons	Permanent employees	Temporary workers
Less than €250	1.0	0.2	2.8
€250 to €500	5.7	1.9	18.4
€500 to €900	10.7	13.1	25.6
€900 to €1,250	25.7	36.9	33.3
€1,250 to €1,750	28.3	33.3	13.7
€1,750 to €2,500	13.2	9.5	6.1
More than €2,500	15.3	5.0	0.1

Source: Isfol, 2007

Commentary

The preliminary results of the second Quality of Work Survey show a decline in satisfaction levels among Italian workers when compared with the results of the 2002 survey, although according to the Istat surveys this decline is generally more moderate. The quality of work findings reflect the combination of good labour market performance in Italy with a 5% increase in employment over the 2002–2006 period mainly due however to temporary employment contracts, with stagnating productivity. The outcomes in relation to quality of work are a decline in career opportunities, an increased feeling of job insecurity both for young and older workers, and increasing risks for health. Nevertheless, a good work atmosphere, suitable working times and acceptable types of work keep job satisfaction high. Such trends are consistent both with the results of the working Italy today survey carried out by Ires and with local-level surveys, such as those conducted in the province of Bolzano ([IT0608019I](#)).

Women still report higher overall job satisfaction than men but cite low satisfaction levels in respect of career opportunities and pay because they hold the majority of temporary jobs. Furthermore, they bear a disproportionate share of the burden of domestic tasks and family care, while men show little interest in sharing this responsibility.

However, the full reports of the Isfol and Ires surveys, which will be published in 2008, will provide a more in-depth investigation of the quality of work in Italy and allow a better examination of trends in relation to a wider array of issues, giving a more accurate picture of quality of work.

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